

In Chapter 6, Helina S. Woldekiros examines the roles of animals in the political economy of the Aksum kingdom in northern Ethiopia and Eritrea (50 BC–AD 800). Woldekiros uses faunal remains, historical texts, and the ethnoarchaeology of modern caravans to propose that the Aksumite state relied on multiple and varied methods of food provisioning, including markets, indirect provisioning, direct provisioning by local specialists, and specialized provisioning directed by the state. This excellent analysis shows how a state political economy can foster multiple forms of animal production and provide for the nonfood-producing elites in urban centers.

Patricia Martínez-Lira, Marcus Winter, Terry O’Conner, and Joaquin Arroyo-Cabrales in Chapter 7 explore animal use at the Zapotec site of Monte Albán, Mexico (500 BC–AD 850). These researchers found that Monte Albán was provisioned with deer through a complex system, presumably by hunting specialists. Elite contexts and a public space contained more diverse taxa than did non-elite contexts, but many other site contexts show little intrasite variability in meat consumption. As the authors note, the role of government and the social mechanisms related to animal procurement and distribution are topics for future study.

In Chapter 8, Sarah E. Newman combines ceramic imagery, ethnohistory, and faunal remains to interpret deer hunting through time, particularly during the Classic Maya period in Mesoamerica (AD 250–800). Newman uses zooarchaeological data from El Zotz, Guatemala—along with imagery of hunting scenes, human-deer interactions, and anthropomorphic deer depicted on Maya polychrome vessels—to skillfully show that when El Zotz was a royal dynastic kingdom, deer provisioning was not focused on managing meat scarcity; instead, it was a symbolically charged activity related to courtly prescriptions of sexualized royal performative behavior.

Tanya M. Peres in Chapter 9 examines garden hunting and meat redistribution at two Mississippian sites in Tennessee, dating to the early second millennium AD. Comparisons of faunal composition along with diversity and equitability values from the rural farmstead site of Brandywine Pointe to those from the village and mound site of Rutherford-Lizer show that, in contrast to rural farmers, the village inhabitants hunted primarily in “disturbed” garden habitats to acquire white-tailed deer, wild turkey, box turtles, and more exotic taxa. Both Peres and Newman highlight the significant roles of garden hunting in societies without domesticated mammals.

As shown in these case studies, there is much opportunity for future research to elucidate the multiple social and economic processes, behaviors, and cognitive meanings that complex societies used to feed themselves. This book will be of interest to anyone working on topics related to animal foods, animal economies, or provisioning.

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***Evolution of a Taboo: Pigs and People in the Ancient Near East.***  
**Max D. Price. 2020. Oxford University Press, Oxford. xvi + 312 pp.**  
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This book takes an interdisciplinary approach to the trajectory of pigs, both biologically and culturally. Max D. Price manages to weave together a holistic, large-scale story that incorporates temporality, contextual specificity, and regional contingencies. They do that by taking a linear methodology, rather than reverse engineering from the present into the past. Data are drawn from iconography, historical texts, and zooarchaeological studies. The result is a nuanced synthesis of the pig in the Near East from

two million years ago to the present day, the thesis of which is that the cultural significance of pigs has evolved over time. This approach is a welcome contrast to more universal narratives or single-theory explanations. Although the book acknowledges that pigs are subject to many kinds of taboos, it is mostly concerned with tracing the origin of food taboos in Judaism and Islam.

The first chapter introduces the reader to the subject. It also provides a captivating preamble on the power of taboo and its continued relevance, using the example of Egypt during the H1N1 epidemic in 2009. Chapter 2 presents the necessary background material on Near Eastern ecologies, the origins of *Sus scrofa*, the general process of domestication, and types of husbandry strategies. From this point onward, the book is organized chronologically. Chapter 3 takes the reader from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic periods. The intensification of hunting and the subsequent changing interactions between humans and pigs sowed the roots for the domesticated species that appears in the Middle Pre-Pottery Neolithic B. The cultivation of crops, sedentism, and the resultant deposits of food refuse drew pigs toward human populations. As familiarity between human population and pigs increased, domestication occurred. Chapter 4 discusses the shift to intensive husbandry and pigs as part of the Neolithic Package. Here, the author begins to link pigs to inequality, arguing that the Secondary Products Revolution segregated pigs from ruminants, whose wool and milk made them much more valuable assets. These secondary products enabled elites to consolidate their wealth, power, and authority. Pigs, in contrast, were associated with the lower classes, were rarely consumed in feasts, and are largely absent from ritual deposits. This economic impetus is a major theme of the book. During the Bronze Age, as discussed in Chapter 5, the emergence of state societies further exacerbated this inequality. The adoption of pig husbandry continued to decline in favor of domesticating animals that were more conducive to large-scale production. Economic pressures pushed pigs to large, urban settlements whose populations had preexisting food preferences for pork and where secondary products played peripheral roles. Still, pork was the sustenance of the working class, not the elite.

Chapter 6 surveys various theories on the origins of or rationales for pig food taboos, from health concerns to environmental mechanisms. Price argues that Near Eastern taboos arose from a combination of economic factors and ethnogenesis, as Israelites sought to differentiate themselves from other groups for whom pork consumption was part of their subsistence and foodways. Chapter 7 delves into this ethnogenesis as a political strategy to consolidate power by Judaic kings in the Iron Age during episodes of conflict between Israelites and Philistines; this taboo against pork would eventually be codified in Jewish Law, *halakha*, in the Torah. Discussing historical events, Chapter 8 demonstrates how pork became a touchstone for conflict between Jewish people and contemporary groups of Greeks, Romans, and Christians. It examines identity politics and ideologies surrounding pork and how the enforcement of the taboo reinforced ethnic differences. Pork consumption, therefore, became a means of Othering. Adherents of Islam likewise adopted the pork taboo, which is prohibited by the Quran (Chapter 9). This chapter also discusses transgression and the role of secularization in diluting the rigidity of food taboos today. The final chapter reiterates the complexity of the story of swine in the culture and history of the Near East as multifaceted and fluid. Taboo is not inevitable but ever evolving.

This book is a solid reference for zooarchaeologists, academic readers interested in human–animal relationships, and scholars who study livestock. Biblical literalists, however, may find it to be too skeptical of sacred texts. Because the book spends a good amount of time dealing with the chronologies of the Near East and the evolution of swine more generally, it is a good primer for students.

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