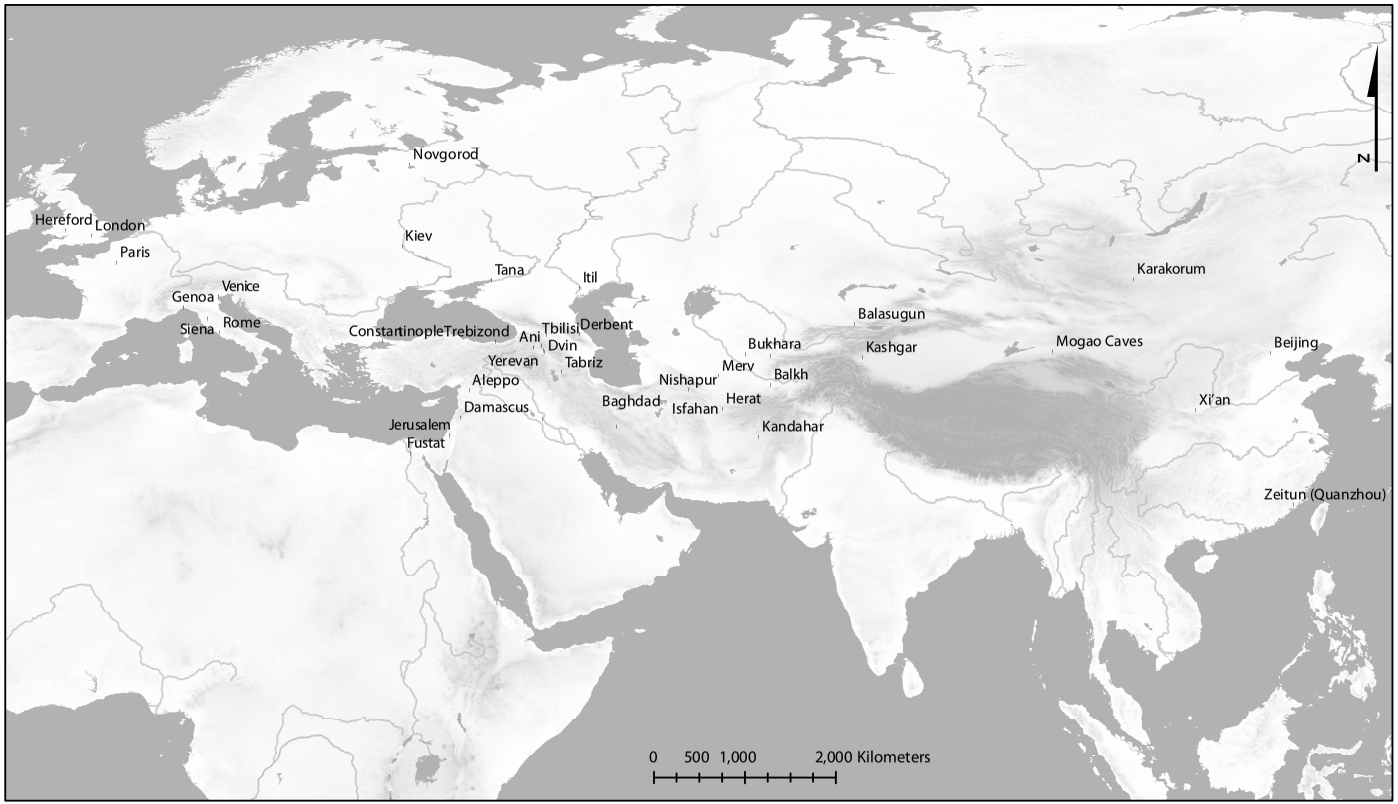
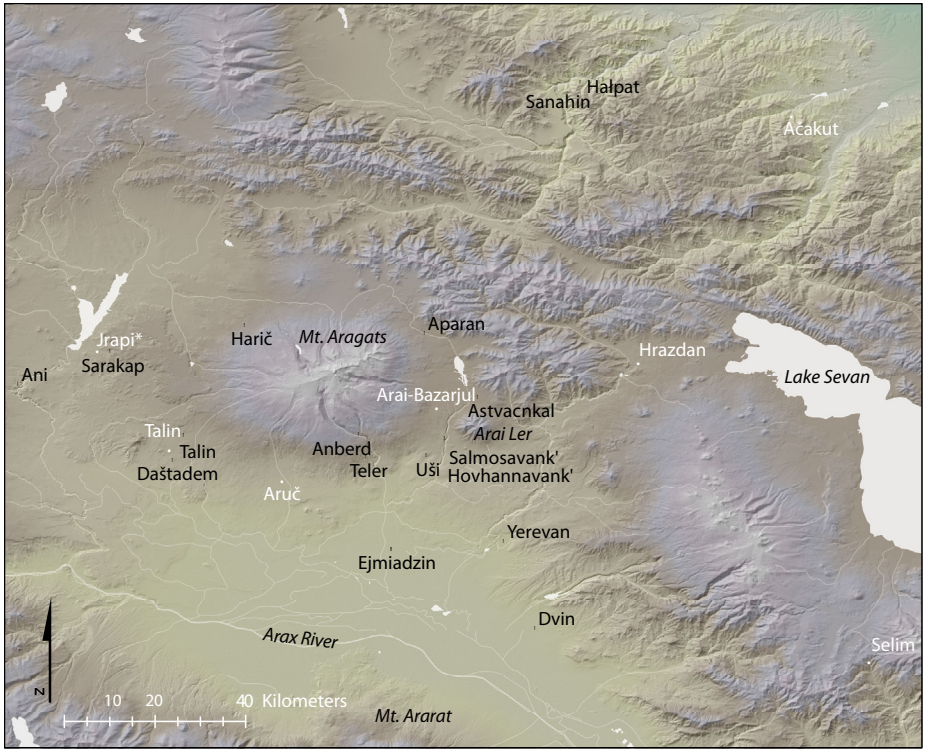
1

The Silk Road, Medieval Globality, and "Everyday Cosmopolitanism"

Sitting in the shadow of the north wall of the ruined caravan house (*karavanatun*) at Arai-Bazarǰuł on a clear day in summer, one can see four mountain peaks. To the west above Aragats, the tallest mountain in the Republic of Armenia, clouds catch and gather, threatening to descend and change the day from sun to hail in minutes. To the northeast, the stooping shoulder of Tełenis hefts a load of radio antennas and cell towers above the Tsaghkunyats range. To the southeast, roads heading toward Lake Sevan pass behind the green slopes of volcanic Arai Ler. Due south from where the now collapsed doorway of the *karavanatun* would have opened onto the mountain road, the double peaks of Ararat appear over the horizon of the Kasakh Valley as it falls away toward the plain of the Araxes River below. The caravan inn, now a solitary ruin in a hay field, sits far out on the shoulder of Mount Aragats. Unlike the medieval villages, forts, and churches which still remain in the Kasakh Valley, tucked on mountain slopes and into the curves of riverbanks, the caravan house occupies the center of the view, sitting atop a rise in the surrounding wheat fields, which affords a sense of expansive proprietorship to the shepherds, harvesters, and archaeologists who rest in the shade of the ruined wall. Sitting there, drinking coffee from a shared jam jar, one's eyes follow the trailer-trucks, marked with Turkish and Iranian names, as they roll north- and southward through the Kasakh Valley (now a primary route of the international transit trade through Armenia) and disappear behind the mountains. Conversation under the wall frequently turns to the world beyond the horizons. There is a solid consensus that Soviet shovels still beat the newer Chinese ones for quality, and everyone in the village has a brother, a father, or a husband who is currently working in Russia or Uzbekistan in construction. In Aparan, up the valley, one woman remembered traveling to Moscow as a little girl and standing in the crowd to see Stalin's embalmed corpse. And all the older passing shepherds remember when, during



MAP 1. Eurasia with some of the major sites referenced in the text. Map created by the author. (Data sources for the maps are: https://ace.aua.am/gis-and-remote-sensing/vector-data/; www.diva-gis.org/documentation; https://earthexplorer.usgs.gov.)



MAP 2. The central valleys of highland Armenia, with sites mentioned in the text. Map created by the author. Placenames in white denote caravanserais.

the period of *kollektivizatsiya* (collectivization), Soviet tractors dug up the hillside and uncovered bread ovens, gleaming red clay jars, coins, and human bones. These relationships, material, actual, intimate and remembered, tie the village people at Arai-Bazarǰuł into the world—even as the stones in the *karavanatun* wall (and in the walls of their houses) tie them to a medieval time when a village here sat along the edge of a highway traveled by caravans, kings, Mongols, merchants, and slaves: one of a number of routes and networks now called the *metaksi čanaparh*, or Silk Road (see maps 1 and 2).

This book is the product of nearly a decade of thinking about medieval (tenth through fifteenth centuries a.d.) *cosmopolitanism*, or the practices of imagining the multiply scaled worlds within which one is situated, and of dwelling (acting, dreaming, making) within those worlds.[1] Specifically, I investigate ideas of cosmopolitanism connected to the modern concept of the Silk Road, and how our understandings of medieval worlds are dependent on scales of doing, perceiving, analyzing, and imagining. I am interested in the connection between the practical cultural experiences of thinking oneself in relation to a broader world containing topographies of difference and distance, and the grand bundle of phenomena linking sites and subjects in Eurasia—travel, trade, encounter, and cultural

transformation—which, since the nineteenth century, has been referred to as the medieval "Silk Road." This catchy modern phrase ties up many directions of research, and—as I will explore in the next chapter—a lot of baggage as well. In particular, I agree with Khodadad Rezakhani that the idea of a singular east-to-west highway privileges western desire as an engine of global history, neglecting the cosmopolitan imaginations, agencies, and labors of people in the worlds in-between.[2] In writing about the Silk Road, I shall frame it as an intersection of phenomena in need of explanation, not as an explanation in itself. Most critically, I will abjure assigning "the Silk Road" historical agency: the Silk Road does not bring, impact, influence, transport, carry, or enable. But I, like many of my colleagues, appreciate the (qualified) usefulness of the Silk Road as a way of bracketing zones of interaction and influence, routes of exchange, spheres of shared culture, topographies of taste and desire, and linked cosmopolitan worlds. In a similar mode, the Silk Road can be used to provide a number of framings at different scales for the peoples, places, and material cultures discussed in this book.

A space of roads. The most common representation of the Silk Road is as a line, or a series of lines, stretching east-west across the middle of Eurasia. The lion's share of discussion has focused on the central and eastern stretches of these lines, connecting Transoxiana to western China; for more than a century our Romantic vision of Sogdian merchants, wandering Buddhist monks, and nomad armies has been framed within the Romantic narratives of the imperial explorers and adventurers who "discovered" these landscapes and looted their antiquities.[3] But these were not the only roads. In the high Middle Ages, Armenia was situated at a crisscrossing of mountain routes connecting a number of regions to form commercial and political relationships. One route ran north and west, to the Black Sea port of Trebizond, a major entrepot for Italian traders and a gateway to the Mediterranean. Other routes went north through Tbilisi and Derbent, through the lands of the Khazars to the valley of the Volga, thence northward to Novgorod, eastward across the steppe, or westward to the Baltic. Routes east from the highlands ran through cities such as Tabriz, Rayy, and Nishapur, then into the deserts and mountains of Central Asia.[4] Southwestern roads through Byzantine and Seljuk Anatolia connected the Ararat plain with Aleppo and the Eastern Mediterranean, with Jerusalem and Mecca. Of course, the routes did not stop there: maritime and overland routes of travel tied medieval Eurasia together in networks of reconfiguring integration, from the North Sea to the north coast of Africa, to the dynamic sea lanes of the Indian Ocean.

Caravans. The Silk Road is also a shorthand for the endeavors of medieval travel through Eurasia. Historians will frequently point out that most people traveled very short distances, and most merchants carried relatively few goods.[5] People did tend to travel in groups in the Middle Ages, whether a cavalcade of crusaders or a band of pilgrims. The term *caravan*, from the Persian *karvan*, is widely used to describe a group of travelers, usually accompanied by an armed escort; it is also a

component within the most common term for medieval and later roadside inns, called *caravanserai*s (caravan halls). The specific practices of caravans varied from region to region and through history, as well as depending on who was traveling (whether a band of pilgrims, merchants, or a royal emissary). By the seventeenth century, for example, silk caravans through Persia could contain a thousand beasts, and were protected by road guards.[6] Of course, hundreds of miles of the Silk Roads were also pilgrimage routes: the thirteenth-century merchant and traveler Ibn Battuta described traveling with other Muslims to Mecca along the hajj route in a caravan big enough to merit a guard of hundreds of horsemen and archers.[7] Women traveled in the Middle Ages—as artisans, pilgrims, merchants, musicians, emissaries, brides, and slaves—even if they left fewer written accounts of their movement.[8] The nonhuman composition of caravanserais also varied, but included some combination of horses, donkeys, oxen,[9] camels, and frequently dogs. Though, according to the geographer Ibn Hawqal the donkeys of Armenia were famous in the tenth century, we have reason to believe that all kinds of caravans passed through Armenia. The camels in Armenia were also apparently famed in the tenth century, and a fragment of a high medieval stamp-impressed wine jar excavated from Armavir, in the Ararat plain, is decorated with a procession of laden camels.[10]

Silk Road stuff. As is demonstrated by myriad museum exhibitions, the span of the Silk Road is also sensed in things. These included, at any given time, many of the key commodities of the medieval world: foodstuffs and spices, medicines, perfumes, beads and ornaments, plants and animals and their parts, precious metals, gems, paper, oils, beeswax and honey, furs, wine, books and texts, building materials, human relics, vessels of crystal, metal, wood, and ceramic, and enslaved peoples. And of course, textiles: linens, cottons, woolens, silks in raw and woven forms, dyestuffs, tapestries, tents, carpets, and clothing. Though it is a commonplace to point out that silk was only one of many commodities transported along the Silk Road, it is difficult to overemphasize to a modern audience how important textiles were for the construction of global medieval cultures, and medieval politics at world scales. Developing scholarship, including commodity-biography approaches,[11] demonstrates the role of textiles in integrating political performance, embodied cosmology, continent-spanning political economies, and revolutionary technologies. Transported textiles from China have been found in the northern Caucasus, while tartan-wrapped mummies have been discovered in the sands of the Tarim Basin;[12] and gold-twined silk draped precious objects, sublime spaces, and powerful, beautiful human bodies everywhere in-between.

Roads, journeys, and things. Already, it is apparent that to imagine the Silk Road requires thinking across scales. Synthetic volumes on the history of the Silk Road dance across these scalar jumps: for instance, Frances Wood's *Silk Road* ranged from the life span of a silk worm, to the swath of nineteenth-century Great Game geopolitics, to the fall of molded draperies on a single Chinese terracotta sculpture.[13] I am convinced that these scalar jumps, mediated by travel accounts,

objects, and landscapes, are not only necessary for us to think the medieval Silk Road; they are also key to the ways that people in the Middle Ages could imagine a global cultural world in the space of their daily lives.

THE WORLDS OF OUR STORIES

What was the Silk Road experience *like*, in the span of one day spent traversing the Kasakh Valley, part of a single journey from the coast of the Mediterranean to Mongol Karakorum? From the history written in the late thirteenth century by the monastic historian Kirakos Ganjakec'i, we know that one of the medieval travelers along the Kasakh road was Het'um (also Hethum or Heyton), the king of Armenian Cilicia.[14] In 1254 a.d. Het'um traveled eastward to Karakorum to pay homage and declare his fealty to the Mongol khan, Möngke. Ganjakec'i's narrative—and mine as well—brackets a period of transition in Armenia and the broader region, as relationships of power and identity were reorganized and reoriented to accommodate Mongol rule; Ganjakec'i was himself a captive of the Mongols. Having journeyed north and east from the Mediterranean coast, Het'um departed the Seljuk city of Kars and traveled further east and north. Entering once more into lands ruled by Christian kings, and where perhaps more Armenian was spoken than Turkic, Het'um passed counterclockwise around the southern slope of volcanic Mount Aragats. Based on archaeobotanical data, we know that in the medieval period this was a landscape of fields, woodlands, and fruit orchards crossed by marshy streams; perhaps to his right-hand side Het'um might have seen the plain of Ararat patched in fields of wheat, barley, and millet.[15] By traveling this way along the mountainside, Het'um entered the administrative realm of the Vač'utyans, a newly founded dynasty of Armenian princely women and men. The Vač'utyans and their contemporaries are referred to in historical sources as *mecatun išxanner* (great, or noble, princes). This term is understood by twentieth-century historians to refer specifically to this class of princely folk who bought their hereditary estates with cash earned from trade. At the time of Het'um's travels the material power of the Vač'utyans was in a process of repositioning, situating their dynastic power as locally stable even as the hierarchy above them and borders around them shifted.

Perhaps passing the night with his retinue at the newly built *karavanatun* at Aruč, the traveling king would have been informed by the local managers of that road inn about new construction projects throughout Aragatsotn, directed by old Vač'e, his wife Mamaxatun, their son K'urd, and K'urd's wife Xorišah Mamikonyan. At this point on the highland road, farms and gardens to either side of the highway would be part of the hereditary lands given (or perhaps sold) to Vač'e Vač'utyan by his patrons the Zak'aryans.[16] The road inn and its associated buildings were part of this local power infrastructure, a location for the collection of fees and taxes on the goods transported on the roads, as well as a point for charitable provision of food and shelter to travelers and pack animals. A few years before Het'um's passage, these fees would have ultimately swelled the coffers of the

Georgian Bagratids; his journey intersected with the effective transition of power whereby the Ilkhanid Mongols surmounted the local hierarchy within which the Vačʿutyans and Zakʿaryans (as well as other families throughout the highlands, and emirs through Anatolia) acted as administrators. Perhaps as he entered the *karavanatun* at Aruč, Hetʿum may have even seen an inscription attesting to this fact on its entrance, decorated in the same style as the Seljuk *hans* he had avoided or entered in disguise on his way up through Anatolia.[17]

Rounding the peak of Aragats toward the medieval river town at Ashtarak, medieval travelers on the mountain road may have noted the new domes of the monastery of Teł̇er rising above the high horizon: this church was completed in a.d. 1221 and endowed by Mamaxatun Vačʿutyan in her own memory and that of her husband Vačʿe in 1232.[18] Taking the northern fork toward Aparan and Lori a few miles later, a traveler in Hetʿum's time may have remarked on the likewise newly renovated monastery of St. Sarkis at Uši, perched on the shoulder of the left-hand hills with a commanding view of the valley below.[19] The encounter of these medieval travelers with the Aragatsotn landscape was, perhaps, informed by differential knowledge that the revenues they paid in hostels and at the gates of cities along the route went to pay for these new buildings they passed on the road, and that such revenues along with yields from farms supported the people living and working inside those buildings. Other travelers may have had different associations with this route. Today, the road that climbs between Ashtarak and Uši, passing near the Vačʿutyan-era monasteries of Hovhannavankʿ and Sałmosavankʿ, is renowned by Armenians, especially in the summer. In June and July the already-narrow road is crowded with stalls selling produce from the nearby gardens: cherries, apricots, melons, and jewel-toned sheets of sticky fruit leather waving in the breeze from passing cars. Travelers in the Middle Ages may, like their early modern and modern counterparts, have been led up the road by senses other than the visual, including the smells of dung fires and cooking that promised a hearty meal at the next stop.

Climbing the northbound road between the peaks of Aragats and Ara, Hetʿum would have passed a lofty stone caravan hall standing just west of the road on the mountain's shoulder, surrounded by the wooden roofs and smoking chimneys of a village. Hetʿum himself passed by this hall, as his stopping point was the castle of the Vačʿutyan princes at Vardenut. The history you are currently reading will, however, join other medieval travelers in turning off the road here, looking back out on the medieval Silk Road world from inside the high stone doorway of the caravan hall, framed by the mountains of the Kasakh Valley (see fig. 1).

The carefully negotiated relationship between Hetʿum and Möngke Khan was a small but emblematic part of transmutating sociopolitical landscapes of high medieval Eurasia. In order to situate the stories of the Kasakh Valley, and thus of this book, I will briefly tell some perhaps familiar tales of the Middle Ages that intersect and entwine in the space (central Armenia) and time (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) of our stories.[20] I will start with an arbitrary benchmark. In the second half of the eleventh century the Caucasus was invaded in several waves

FIGURE 1. A view of the Kasakh Valley from the ramparts of a Bronze Age fortress on the slope of Mount Aragats, facing southeast toward Mount Ara (Arailer). Foreground: remains of a Yezidi transhumant pastoralist campsite with a corral. The Arai-Bazarǰuł caravanserai is just beyond the brown protruding hill in the center-left of the figure. Photo by the author.

by groups of Turkic peoples from Central Asia and the Iranian plateau. These culminated with the Seljuk invasions in the 1060s, which conquered the capital city of Ani and organized Armenia within Seljuk administration.[21] Under Malik Shah (r. 1072–92) in particular, patterns of taxation and land tenure in Armenia were reorganized according to expanding Seljuk models. The Seljuk period entailed a continuation of the fragmentation, which had begun under hostile Byzantine administration, of the dynastic landscape in Anatolia and the South Caucasus into small, mutually antagonistic princedoms and emirates.[22] For the next several centuries, Armenian political leaders (princes, heads of dynastic families, and ecclesiastical leaders) would navigate loyalties with neighboring rulers of multiple faiths. As will be discussed in later chapters, the Seljuk period also had a profound influence on artistic and architectural styles in Armenian-speaking communities.[23]

In 1070–71, waves of Seljuk invasions washed over Jerusalem, turning what had been a regional and Eurasian conflict into a Mediterranean and then European one. Within five years of the call to arms at Clermont in 1095, European Christians had established the first crusader kingdoms within the Levant. Through the following century, the Eastern Mediterranean was reconfigured as a colonial contact zone which knotted together far-flung cultures and political configurations, from

the Baltic to North Africa to the Indian Ocean. The Fourth Crusade (1202–4) temporally corresponded with the capture of the Armenian highlands by the Georgian Bagratids. Taking advantage of a violent Byzantine transfer of power, Queen Tamar's expansion reorganized the political landscape from Constantinople to the southeastern Black Sea.[24] In 1204 Constantinople was taken and plundered by the Venetians and opportunistic crusaders, who set up a relatively short-lived Latin kingdom. The Georgian Bagratids established the Byzantine-Georgian empire of Trebizond, expanding as well into the Seljuk territories of the South Caucasus (including the Kasakh Valley).[25] The resulting political reconfiguration further connected the cities of the Caucasus with the Black Sea coast, as well as with the Eastern Mediterranean, manifesting in a period of trade and dynamism in the early thirteenth century.

The territorial expansion of Mongol clans under the leadership of Genghis Khan in the third decade of the thirteenth century shifted political tectonics and global imaginaries across Eurasia. The initial conquest of Khwarezmia in 1219–20 disrupted political landscapes stretching from Transoxiana to the Iranian plateau.[26] The ramifications of this expansion had a ripple effect on the Caucasus, as an advance wave of Mongol armies chased fleeing Khwarezmian leaders as far as northern Armenia; these forces looted the locals before returning to the steppe.[27] In Christian Europe, the "discovery" of the Mongols resulted in an effective collision of worlds. As Maurizio Peleggi memorably put it,[28] from a Eurocentric perspective "the sudden irruption of the Mongol armies in Eastern and Central Europe in the winter of 1240–1 can be seen as the reversal of Columbus landing in Haiti in October 1492."[29] But, as in Sahlins's framing of the arrival of Cook in Polynesia,[30] the Mongols were received into preexisting European categories for *others*, and into expectations of how such others would act. As Peleggi himself observed, the Mongols were slotted into descriptions of the pagan hordes Gog and Magog, recorded by early medieval apocryphal sources as having been walled behind distant mountains by Alexander the Great.[31] Genghis himself was viewed through a lens polished by tales of Prester John, the fabled Christian king in the east, which had been circulating in western Europe for more than a century by this point.[32] The casting of the Mongols as potential allies in the crusades, if not as messianic Christian figures, motivated exploratory dispatches to the Mongol court over the later thirteenth century. The most famous of these emissaries, William of Rubruck, crossed the path of King Het'um on his journey, and weaves mentions of Prester John into his account of the Uighurs and other peoples subject to the khan.[33] It is with a degree of historian's schadenfreude that I imagine the European reception of the general Mongol response to these envoys: gracious pleasantries, and frank requests for continued tribute from the kings of the west to the ruler of the world.[34]

The Mongols invaded highland Armenia in 1236; these events are recounted with horror by the cleric eyewitness Kirakos Ganjakec'i, who opens the chapter on the "Tatars" in his circa 1240 *History* by stating simply: "this is the end of time."[35]

Ganjakec'i and many of his contemporaries understood the Mongol invasions to be a fulfilment of twelfth-century prophecies which foresaw the apocalypse as ushered in by a "nation of archers" let loose from behind the Gates of Darband (a clear parallel to the more widespread belief described above).[36] Within a few decades, Armenian historians had become more circumspect. In his late thirteenth-century *History of the Nation of Archers*, Grigor Aknerc'i (d. 1335) framed the conquest thus: "the wise princes of the Armenians and Georgians realized that it was God Who had given [the Mongols] the power and victory to take our lands, [and] they went to the T'at'ars in submission and promised to pay taxes."[37] At the turn of the fourteenth century, the bishop Step'anos Orbelyan described the conquest of Baghdad, Jerusalem, and the Levant by Hulagu Khan in 1258–59: "In all this, Hulagu displayed unmeasurable bravery. Because he greatly loved Christians, all the nations of believers willingly submitted and gave him active assistance."[38] This shift in tone reflects a shift in historical circumstance. By the 1299 date of Orbelyan's *History of Syunik* the highlands had been integrated within the Mongol Ilkhanate. Princes and religious leaders—including Step'anos and his princely kin—traveled to the Mongol center to negotiate mutual political relationships. At the same time, technologies of power—raiment, symbols, and powerful objects and substances—moved across Central Asia and the Mediterranean, drawing diverse political cultures into shared material and symbolic worlds. Beginning with Mahmud Ghazan Khan's conversion in 1295, the Ilkhanids were officially Muslim; their political culture for the next several decades combined aspects of Central Asian and Islamic cultures as well as Persian influences. The latest inscriptions discussed in this book come from around 1330; interestingly, a few years later Ambrogio Lorenzetti supposedly completed *The Martyrdom of the Franciscans* in the church of San Francesco in Siena, a fresco depicting a Mongol warrior as one among an assembly of eastern national types. Peleggi presented this fresco as a demonstration of the "domestication" of the Mongols within the Mediterranean imagination: by this point the Mongols are merely exotic foreigners, rather than inhuman others.[39]

This narrative of conquests and reconfiguring borders of control is only one way to tell the story of the Eastern Mediterranean and wider world in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries—and it floats at a particular scale, above the frames of individual human lifetimes or the breadth of major journeys.[40] Even so, this story of political shifts still truncates the broader world of interactions, rumors, desires, and exchanges within which these peoples and places were tangled: what we now might call the Silk Road worlds. It also barely considers the space or scale of imagination, of what dreams crusaders had of the lands beyond mountains, or how highlanders in the Caucasus dreamed of mythical places like Venice, Karakorum, or Jerusalem. My concern with situated experience of the Silk Road at different scales is in part methodological: how do archaeologists talk about the Silk Road from the scale of our excavated assemblages, from landscapes, from architecture? But I am also challenged by historical and archaeological approaches to the Silk

Road as a premodern parallel to modern "cosmopolitanization" in the context of globalization: the processes of making universal culture through the transcending of local traditions. If we are to draw this comparison we must draw as well from postcolonial and feminist critiques of globalization's mechanics across perceived scales, and in particular of the presumed opposition between a cosmopolitan, impactful, modern global, and a traditional, parochial, impacted local—or in Doreen Massey's terms,[41] the presumed opposition between the space of the local and the time of global history.

THE WORLDS OF THE SILK ROAD: SPACETIME AND COSMOPOLITANISM

The Silk Road is a scalar problem in time as well as space: the span of the Silk Roads has been plotted on geologic time scale,[42] but also in the close encounters between individual people. As you read this book you will notice that my use of the phrase *the Silk Road* is conceptual rather than concrete. As an archaeologist, I have walked the paths and stood on the bridges that were trod by people and animals in the Middle Ages. I know that routes are real, physical places. On the other hand, as both an archaeologist and a historian I know that the "Silk Road" represents much more than a mappable set of land (and sea!) routes, many of which were seasonal, meandering, subject to infrastructural and political vagaries and kept open by the labor of pastoralists. While mapping out the locations of "Silk Road things" like scraps of silk, stringed instruments, or Chinese porcelains may create a dot-matrix map of apparent connections and points of hand-off, the mapping of human imaginaries and understandings is not as straightforward. As demonstrated by Eva Hoffman, exchange of cultural ideas in the Middle Ages was a slippery process happening at multiple scales at once;[43] thinking about roads is just part of the question. Much of the extant, engrossing, varied literature on the Silk Road explores the art and artifacts that enable us to re-create links across space and time.[44] Alternately, analyses like Valerie Hansen's *Silk Road* or numerous works by Susan Whitfield use textual and archaeological evidence to track the movement of ideas as well as materials, images, and cultures.

My project in this book messily overlaps with the work that precedes it. My data come from Armenia, a region privileged in the medieval period as well as in the twenty-first century to be considered both the center of the universe by its inhabitants and the edge of nowhere by nearly everyone else. Most importantly, my question centers on the sharing, not of precious objects, religious ideas, or particular traded goods, but of *spacetimes*, which I will gloss throughout the book as *worlds*. Each of my chapters is an engagement with the question of Silk Road worlds at different scales of encounter, but these scales are roughly nested inside one another and feed back into each other in tangled loops. My primary interest is in understanding how medieval people, participating to different extents and with

varying degrees of agency, imagined a world that was tied together through shared culture—what we from our modern perspective could call a Silk Road ecumene, perhaps—even as they were situated in particular, plural worlds. What did the Silk Road world look, feel, or taste like to them—and did people in a medieval place such as Armenia think of themselves as on the edge or in the center of that world? At stake in this interrogation is the historical applicability of *cosmopolitanism*, a term usually reserved for urban, western, male, literate, global, modern subjects, to those "local" persons situated along the Silk Road as well as those moving along it in journeys of transcendental encounter.[45]

The concept of *spacetime* ties this book together, allows me to think about a plurality of Silk Road worlds, about the making of them, and about how such world(ing)s enabled a shared cultural cosmos within which to be or act cosmopolitan was to coexist with difference at multiple scales. Spacetime is not my own word; however, I will use it to "tie ties" and to "world worlds" (to draw from Haraway) in ways that pull tools from disparate theoretical projects in order to think and write the scales of everyday and cosmopolitan, to knot together the multiple temporal and spatial worlds involved in this story.[46] Many of these tools are words, which I will endeavor to use consistently, even as I attempt to stretch and recontextualize them.

Across numerous writings but most notably in her 1986 book *The Fame of Gawa*, Nancy Munn explored the ties that hold the world together for the Gawans, one of the many communities which made up the Papua New Guinean "Kula ring." As a world in motion and an object of long-term anthropological study, the Kula ring is very similar to the Silk Road and posed for Munn many of the same challenges of scale and simultaneity. In particular, Munn was interested in the forces (values) which mediated the situating of the Gawans in relation to each other and to the outside world, and that carried their efficacy, their *fame*, across space and time. She conceptualized this process of value creation and transformation in terms of individual and group ability to "extend or expand intersubjective *spacetime*—a spacetime of self-other relationships formed in and through acts and practices."[47] Spacetimes are produced in action and interaction, maintained in thought, memory, and practice. Critically, Munn demonstrated that things and people can also be spacetimes, loci for the construction of potential, the putting-in-motion of futures; gardens, meals, gifts, canoes, human bodies. Running through Munn's work is a driving assertion that events and practices don't happen "in space and time"; rather, they create spacetimes as they happen.[48]

These created spacetimes in turn are happenings; a spacetime is the world of possibilities for actions, thoughts, dreams within it. This idea of setting as an agent in action, of space and time as participants in happenings rather than the parameters of what happens, resonates with the idea of the *chronotope* (time-space), a significant concept within literary criticism. The chronotope was formulated by Mikhail Bakhtin, most famously in his 1937 *Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel*. In proposing the chronotope as an analytical term in literature, Bakhtin

drew on conversations within science and mathematics; the inextricableness of space and time and their nonneutrality in events are of course central to quantum physics. As Bakhtin put it: "time, as it were, thickens, takes on flesh, becomes artistically visible; likewise, space becomes charged and responsive to the movements of time, plot and history."[49] Playing with this idea, Bakhtin explored the nonneutrality of place within the action of classical Greek story forms. Bakhtin's *romance time* is thus a different, alien world from the everyday world the reader inhabits, as is *adventure time*. While Bakhtin posited these chronotopes in the context of ancient Greek narratives, their significance is in the power they still have, their potencies as worlds we occupy when we tell stories. As Bakhtin explored, adventure time is the world we visit whenever we watch an action movie; if you have ever wondered why the hero always arrives just in time no longer how far they had to travel, or why crucial pieces of information are always delivered at the last possible moment, then you have wrangled with adventure time. These chronotopes have been honed over centuries of dreaming and writing and, as I will explore, they enclose our histories of fact as well as our fictions.[50]

The aim in exploring the making of spacetimes is not to argue that the world is whatever we write or make it to be. But human actions—from the "prosaic" routines of everyday life to momentous journeys, great loves, heroic feats—happen in worlds that are imagined as they are lived. This brings me to arguments from philosophies of science which assert the importance of human beings in all of this, and in particular of human perceptions (desires, imaginings, ideas, plans, schemes) mediated by embodied experiences. The body-shaped spacetimes of human beings are crucial for locating their action in the world, and their ability to make the worlds that situate that action, their power. Human bodies interact in cyborg ways with worlds of material culture,[51] with landscape, with architecture, with the worldbuilding *apparatuses* that Karen Barad defined as "material (re)configurings or discursive practices that produce material phenomena in their differential becoming."[52] Our things are spacetimes, our spacetimes have bodies. The last tool I will add to my kit is an argument made by Elizabeth Grosz: that spacetimes are made by people with bodies, and those bodies are gendered in the (nonbinary) sense of being *different*. The practices of knowing worlds—whether the world of events observed by science, or the worlds of human action researched by archaeologists and historians—are rooted in bodily difference: they are not recording the same world from different perspectives, but are making different worlds. This last tool is therefore a simple idea with ramifications for what stories we tell about the Silk Road and how we tell them: the necessity of according different situated subjects the "possibility of a different space-time framework."[53]

These different bodies are the mediators of the varying scales of worlds and world-making which make up the Silk Road of this book—and critically, situate imagination of those worlds and the place of human beings within them. To give a brief illustration: the medieval Hereford *mappa mundi* is an effective example of how embodiment mediates multiple scales of dwelling and of imagining the

world(s) one is in. The Hereford map is a large (especially for its time, ca. 1300) map of the world, drawn in black, red, and gold ink on a single sheet of vellum, square on the sides and pointed at the top as an artifact of the body of the calf from which it was skinned. The map follows the "TO" mapmaking format, locating Jerusalem in the bullseye center of a circular world divided into two continents (Europe and Africa) downward and one (Asia) above. At the top of the map sits Christ; at the margins roam monstrous and miraculous creatures. The British Isles are located in the bottom left-hand corner of the map, and Hereford is visible as a town enclosure sketched alongside a schematic Wye River. That is, Hereford is *almost* visible; despite the overall incredible preservation and clarity of the Hereford map, the drawing of Hereford itself has nearly been wiped away.[54] Just imagine: years of medieval people looking at the map, and physically locating themselves by resting a fingertip on top of their city. Think of the work of literal indexicality that is achieved by pointing with an (index) finger at the spot on the map, and creating a line with your body from your finger to your feet, planted in the "real" Hereford—and situating that real space in turn within a world ringed by a wheeling zone of miracles and monsters. The map therefore is only a world "in itself" to the extent that it is read, touched, and understood by a human with their own embodied memories, habits, knacks, and knowledges. The world of the Silk Road was just as contingent on the capacities of embodied human perception to mediate its multiple spatiotemporal scales.

This question of edges and centers is important, as it raises the further question of the eligibility of medieval people living in on-the-road places like Armenia to participate within an emergent subject position in the history of the Middle Ages: that of *cosmopolitanism*. The quality of cosmopolitanism, or the state of being a citizen of the world, has a long philosophical pedigree dating back to the ancient Greeks. Cosmopolitanism is concerned with a person's capacity to be of a place, but also of the world—conceived frequently, modernly, by writers like Immanuel Kant or Hannah Arendt, as a *single* world of universal human values.[55] To be or become cosmopolitan, a person must transcend (overcome, rise above) their parochial worldview—and movement through the world is generally the first and best way to do this. Hence the early modern European enthusiasm for the Grand Tour, a hobby of the young and wealthy who traveled to the Mediterranean and the Middle East in order to experience the transcendental benefits of culture and history, and come back transformed (or at the very least, reassured of the superiority of their own culture).[56] The idea that one must travel to transcend, that there is a salutary effect of traveling, on the spirit and soul, is a modern idea with medieval roots. Yet standard genealogies of cosmopolitanism start with the Enlightenment, presuming something modern about the mobility and reach of Europeans at the expense of increasingly circumscribed colonial "locals."[57] Postcolonial debates over the form that a nonwestern cosmopolitanism might take move on the fulcrum of power inherent in a mobility at the expense of another's rootedness, of

transcendence bought at the price of another's immanence.[58] These critiques are empowered by feminist tools for breaking down the binaries which reserve an Enlightenment cosmopolitan universalism for the Enlightenment's own universal, masculine, mobile, deterritorialized subject. Such tools include Pollock et al.'s *cosmofeminine*, signifying "an argument for situated universalism that invites other universalisms into broader debate based on a recognition of their own situatedness,"[59] which helps me think through intimate, embodied, and everyday medieval cosmopolitanism*s* (with intended emphasis on the *s*).

This postcolonial critique echoes concerns of ongoing conversations among medievalists, eager to resolve the apparent contradiction of "medieval cosmopolitanism" by thinking through the ways that people in the Middle Ages imagined their categorical others.[60] A central issue in these discussions is the role of medieval travel literature in evoking a world delineated in difference, traversed by a cosmopolitan subject, and understood as part of a single, orderly Creation. The idea that *travel enlightens* is frequently backed up with the accounts of travel and encounter, delight and wonder, which were written by medieval merchants, pilgrims, and adventurers—some of which will be discussed in the following chapters. One effect of this long backward gaze of modern cosmopolitanism is the idea that, if there were cosmopolitan, enlightened people in the "dark ages" of the medieval period, then these people were cosmopolitan by virtue of their mobility or their urbanity: to be cosmopolitan you either traveled or lived in a city and let the world come to you on the backs of people and/or animals. Archaeological use of the term cosmopolitanism usually deploys it as an aesthetic, to describe the harmonious blending of features from multiple, potentially antagonistic, cultures within an object, assemblage, or site. But cosmopolitanism as it continues to be explored is not an ethos exclusive to cities, or to urban "tolerance," even as it continues to shape debates over the relation between urban and state sovereignties. As Derrida explored at the end of the last century, defining cosmopolitanism in ethical rather than aesthetic terms requires that we define it as *hospitality*. This means contending with the politics of cosmopolitanism-hospitality as extending beyond state-situated tolerance (or intolerance) to the sovereignty entailed in hospitable care extended by the "local" to the "global."[61]

Building in part from debates over cosmopolitanisms of the present, I have long been dissatisfied with the exemplar of medieval cosmopolitanism being Marco Polo, or even Ibn Battuta—men whose accounts of travel were so marvelous that they have survived the centuries. If cosmopolitanism means to frame your actions and selfhood within a world (which for you is also *the* world), then cosmopolitanism in the Middle Ages (and in the present) might be messier, may entail transcendent encounters in unpredictable spaces, and in a diversity of bodies. Critically for a historical archaeology of the Silk Road, not all or even many of these persons leave a written account for us to find. Even more complex a barrier to "finding" the evidence for these lives and cosmoplitanisms is the long, durable

resistance in history and archaeology to considerations of spacetimes other than that of romantic adventure as places to go and look for worldly cosmopolitics. Chief among these other spacetimes is the so-called local world of everyday life, of domestic work, and of routine maintenance.

EVERYDAY COSMOPOLITANISM AS A FEMINIST PROJECT IN SPACETIMES

In reconstructing the places and landscapes of the Silk Road in Armenia, I became increasingly aware that the Silk Road itself is itself a spacetime, an imagined topography that constrains our perceptions of the people we think of as living in it or moving through it. This imagined landscape that shapes archaeological thought about Silk Road societies is narrative and gendered. I want to be clear up front: this is not a book about "finding women" along the Silk Road, but an uncoupling of our historical idea of the Silk Road from the narrative projects established by patriarchal norms. In a summary reflection of her interrogations of embodied, oppositional paradigms within geography, Doreen Massey asserted that our work as feminists "involves not only working on gender but also, and I think in the end perhaps even more importantly, it involves confronting the gendered nature of our modes of theorizing and the concepts with which we work."[62] The Silk Road landscape is narrative because our imagination of it privileges written accounts (stories) and in turn the subjectivities of the protagonists of those stories. It is gendered because the protagonist of the standard Silk Road narrative is global, mobile, and male, and the landscape of Silk Road travel is a spacetime of *his* cosmopolitan transformation through encounters with exotic local peoples and natures.

One of my goals here is to make this persistent story-space more visible and more strange; chapter 2 is a grappling with the Silk Road as a narrative spacetime of western imagination. One of the challenges confronting a critical archaeology of the medieval Silk Road is the paradox of reconstructing medieval landscape, conceived (following Bender) as "time materializing."[63] This paradox lies in the fact that, as the "medieval" is that place and time when parts of our recognizably modern world were being licked into shape, it is also the period when many of our ways of representing and imagining space-time were enhanced: the map, the collection, and most important for this book, the travel account: a polysemous progenitor to now-distinct genres including the archaeological survey report, the ethnography, and the adventure novel. I am keenly interested in the ways that narratives of medieval travel shaped our modern imaginary of Silk Road landscape as a spacetime of male adventure, a series of transformative encounters *oriented* from west to east.

This imagined landscape of materialized time matters for our reconstructions of medieval lives defined in their relation to the Silk Road, because the chronotope of adventure is narratively defined in opposition: to the everyday life of routines and rituals, of nature's seasons, of maintenance tasks, of home.[64] And if adventurous journey-space is the chronotope of stories with traveling male agents

and protagonists, then this space of small politics, of daily meals and seasonal schedules, is a feminized space—the space of return.[65] The co-construction of gender and the space-time of the everyday has also been observed within feminist critiques of geography and of "everyday history" as disciplines that construct the everyday as a female domain even while excluding it from spaces of power and historical event. As effectively summarized by Massey, our modern categories for thinking space are shaped by long-standing cultural oppositions which map onto one another, such that we struggle to not think about the world as divided into global/dynamic/historical/transcendent/*male* on the one hand and local/static/eternal/immanent/*female* on the other.[66] As observed by Dorothea Wierling, this opposition relegates the feminine to the everyday, and cordons off both within the realm of pre- or noncultural nature.[67] Within archaeology, critical interventions in the study of past politics and economy demonstrated that to "reveal" overlooked mechanisms of past social transformation, it is first necessary to scrap gendered categorizations of production, politics, and work, and of the spacetimes in which they occur. Elizabeth Brumfiel's work systematically dismantled presumptions about what constitutes ancient politics; examining the role of work done by women within the Aztec Empire, she demonstrated that any distinction between domestic economy and political life was a baseless hindrance to good history.[68] Likewise, Francesca Bray's work on political ideologies of labor in Imperial China emphasized the centrality of women's weaving within a system of production which bulwarked the coherence of not just the state, but the cosmos.[69] For my approach to the Silk Road, what is especially important about these feminist approaches to craft—and to the worlds that craft makes—is that they illuminate the political significance, not just of women, but of the cosmofeminine spacetimes ignored by archaeologists and historians as outside the realm of economics, politics, and history.

The seemingly fixed centrality of the transformative encounter to our idea of cosmopolitanism is deep at the heart of my analysis of these narrative spacetimes as dialectical and gendered. The opposition between transcendent subjects and alienated, objectified *others* is an old question in feminism: Simone de Beauvoir initially stated the "problem of feminine destiny" as whether women would be subjects in their own histories, or objects in the lives of others.[70] Our repeated reliance on the narrative spatiotemporal opposition between a Silk Road space of cosmopolitan masculine transcendence and a local medieval everyday therefore privileges male heroes and manly stories—and furthermore privileges male, mobile subjects who left written accounts over the characters who are outside the landscape materialized in written history. These people and their spaces are written but do not always write, and are vulnerable to being evacuated out of the literary space of the Silk Road we think we already know, due to the scale at which we tell the Silk Road story.

All of this matters because this book is ultimately about spacetimes, about shared worlds, and about the question of who participated in the making of them and dwelled within them. I want to shift our thinking to the embodying

capacity of writing and the cosmological power of built spaces, as well as to the agencies of everyday objects and the activities of "ordinary" people. In my orientation to thinking about how global culture in the Middle Ages worked I am motivated by writings which argue that matter and space, including bodies and the possibilities of embodiment, *matter* for thinking society and history.[71] Throughout the book I am therefore urgently curious about what happens to the subject (rather than the hero) of a Silk Road history if my account centers on the making and living of worlds. In this sense then my worlds are a bit like Karen Barad's *apparatuses*, described above. Such an articulative view of mattering in the world is posthuman, not in the sense that humans aren't important, but in that we step away from the view that (male, universal) human subjects are the privileged architects of reality, history, spacetimes. So this book will be centrally, tenderly concerned with the doings of people, including some "big men": princes like Vačʿe Vačʿutyan and Tigran Honencʿ, and big-world-makers like Marco Polo and Ibn Battuta. But what happens to our appreciation of these medieval humans if we submerge them in the worlds they co-constructed, if we take seriously Barad's assertion that "determinately bounded and propertied human subjects do not exist prior to their involvement in natural cultural practices"?[72] Then, I hope, the medieval world of the Silk Road becomes plural, and the making of it/them a multiscalar, tentacular question. The rest of this book is me asking this question from the perspective of the Kasakh Valley Armenia, working from scale to slippery scale.

In chapter 3 I start to pick apart the high medieval narrative of Armenia and reweave it as a regional world constructed in spaces and practices. In particular, I examine the construction of architectural spaces as situated in landscape, and constitutive of the embodied selves of Armenian builders. Ultimately, this chapter will look at the concern for, and intersection of the space-body-building of medieval Armenian politics with, the spaces of production, hospitality, of seasonality and working rhythms—in short, of everyday life. In chapter 4 I consider world making in medieval Armenia at the scale of a single landscape, the Kasakh River Valley of Aragatsotn. The medieval Kasakh Valley was shaped both by practices of mobility as well as through projects profoundly concerned with locally emplaced power. The Kasakh Valley that we visit in this chapter was also made through historically layered storytellings, by medieval patrons in epigraphic projects, by patriotic Armenian historians, and by generations of archaeologists. I myself figure among these latter; in this chapter I also consider the way that medieval life in the Kasakh Valley was detected and reconstructed through my own archaeological surveys. Part of what appears in archaeological study of the material landscape of the Kasakh Valley are the spaces made and inhabited by medieval people who did not "build worlds for others to live in," in the literal, monumental sense of princely patrons, but who nonetheless made and dwelled in material spacetimes which contained both the Kasakh Valley and the Silk Road world. Reflecting over the traces of these people raises the question of the lifeways that both situated and

enabled acts of princely dedication and political memory, which are commonly glossed as *everyday* in contradistinction to the evental realm of construction and inscription.

These everyday spacetimes are also the domain of the people who live along the road, who appear in travel accounts of the Silk Road as either helpful hosts, enticingly exotic others, or alien antagonists. If we allow the Silk Road to be an adventure story with a protagonist, then the inhabitants of medieval everyday spacetimes "along the Silk Road" are doubly vulnerable to the time tricks that affect everyday or quotidian spaces. The medieval as a landscape, a time-materializing, is frequently conjured as a long everyday in opposition to the arrow of modernity's progress.[73] Even as modernity is performed as that which leaves the stasis of the Middle Ages behind in sources as diverse as Fernand Braudel and Arthur C. Clarke, medieval time is materialized as seasonal, cyclical, and flexible in opposition to the rigid and progressive clock-time of capitalist modernity. So there is an aggravated tendency, in imaginaries which inform research, to consign the local nonprotagonists of the medieval Silk Road to an endless quotidian to the side of the road walked by the traveler, who by virtue of his encounters with such others becomes more modern and more of a cosmopolitan world-subject.

To world the everyday medieval otherwise is to try to step outside of these determinist loops. In chapter 5 I look at the caravanserai or road inn; a hybrid Silk Road space, an apparent chimaera of linear travel-time and the small worlds of local politics. Medieval caravanserais are attaining a new level of global visibility recently, after the movements starting in the mid-1980s to develop Silk Road heritage and tourism in Central Asia. In addition to generally being visually prepossessing buildings, caravanserais are physical manifestations of the intangible modern associations with the Silk Road: long camel journeys, exotic adventure, the display of power and wealth, the footprints of "lost" cultures. Popular images of caravanserais are also emblematic of the challenges to reconstructing their social role; we frequently see them as picturesque, isolated ruins beside a dusty road, without another building (let alone a village) in sight. Speaking from experience, this perception of caravanserais has been produced in part by some creative camera angles on the part of travelers and archaeologists, editing out the other people, spaces, and activities that might spoil the romance.

Ultimately, what brings me back to the space-time of the medieval caravanserai is the question of scales. Caravanserais must work in multiple scales, that of the route network and that of this day's stopping place, this particular building; they demand that we think in multiple scales as well. They challenge the cherished opposition between local and global—as with Latour's railroad, the spaces between caravanserais are "continuous paths that lead from the local to the global, from the circumstantial to the universal, from the contingent to the necessary, only so long as the branch lines are paid for."[74] Indeed, what medieval caravanserais make unavoidable is thinking about the importance, the indispensable essentialness, of

hospitable cultures in making the worlds of the Silk Road by "paying for" those local connections. Hospitality is a shifted framework for writing a history of the medieval Caucasus, where scholarship has for a long time been concerned with tracing borders back through linear, genealogical time. You may notice that I do not spend much time debating the details of the "identity" of the Armenians I write about. I am more interested in their doings, in the practices which were shared by people and which constructed worlds of mutual intelligibility, than in running down the moments of performed difference which can be perceived from a modern perspective as antecedent to modern nation-states. There are plenty of histories that do this already. In short, I am interested in what people were doing, rather than who they were; I will endeavor to delineate spacetimes in practice which created worlds of mutual regard and legibility for their practitioners. However, I will use the term *Armenian* to refer to folk who wrote (or commanded others to write) in Armenian, who endowed Christian churches, and who were identified as such in medieval Armenian histories. Similarly, the ethics of hospitality are frequently taken for granted as a functionalist aspect of Near Eastern and Central Asian Muslim politics. I try to move beyond this Orientalist assumption and look at hospitality as a power-laden way of captivating subjects in spacetime, and as a practice of making worlds.

Chapter 6 is the closest encounter with hospitable world-making on the Silk Road, a mattering at the smallest scale afforded by archaeological and historical data. In this chapter there are few named characters, as I try to center on the apparatuses of hospitality constructed in cooking and eating, in comfort making in the space of the caravanserai and in adjoining, conjoined village spaces. Ultimately the very slipperiness of these medieval multiscalar engagements may reveal the entire linear framework of scales as wobbly. The spacetimes produced in serving, eating, and remembering food are not scaled-down versions of the continent-spanning worlds written in a textual account according to some metric by which a grain of carbonized barley is smaller in scale than an illuminated copy of Marco Polo's *Travels*. Apparatuses enclose and construct apparatuses, worlds make worlds, world builders are themselves built. As I discuss in the final chapter, for me this shift in thinking about the Silk Road is important as well as useful, in addition to being more interesting in the story it ultimately may help me tell. I would like to construct these multiple cosmopolitanisms of the everyday as an antidote to the airless, scorched-earth story of the universal subjects of Kantian cosmopolitanism or global capitalism. I have tried to take seriously the implications for archaeological and historical writing of a commitment to storytelling, of a situating of subjectivity (mine) in the making of worlds in the medieval past. The result, this book, is an attempt to show the mechanics of my making sense of the medieval Silk Road everyday in Armenia, including the space-time contractions of metaphor, and, where possible, the interventions of caring "locals."