6

The World in a Bowl

Intimate and Delicious Everyday Spacetimes on the Silk Road

Archaeologists are frequently strangers at the mercy of other people's hospitality. One might say that, in general, anthropology is dependent on the cosmopolitanism of others, on the ability to answer questions about one's own world in the paradigmatic language of an outsider, to volunteer as someone else's allegory. It's certainly not a coincidence that much of the foundational writing in anthropology is on the power of hospitality to construct and cement relationships between people: between guest and host, client and patron, insiders and outsiders. A central—though not always appreciated—role in these negotiated relationships is played by exchanges of gifts, and in particular, by the provision of food by a host to their guest. As explored especially by the anthropologist Nancy Munn, the act of welcoming and feasting one's guests wraps both parties (guest and host) in a web of shared spacetime, tying together people's future lives and actions with shared pasts rooted in the ground where the food is nurtured and grown, and in the bodies of those who shared a meal.[1] Drawing a term from her Gawan interlocutors, Munn called this spacetime *skwayobwa*, the shared world made in the sharing of food and hospitality. Earlier in the twentieth century, Mary Douglas explored how the action of sharing food is polyvalent and unpredictable, in that eating a meal warps the scales of social power structures, such that people can literally consume culture.[2] A ramification of the polyvalent sensuousness of food is that the imagination of cooking entails the construction of complex worlds of "place and time, desire and satiety, the longing for home and the lure of the wider world" to the scale of sensual, embodied experience.[3] Decades of anthropological discussion of the role of feasting, or the sharing of food in ritual and public ways, have developed a disciplinary appreciation of meal spacetimes as tournaments of cultural value, zones of transformation.[4] A shared meal is not just an invitation but also an act of

cosmopolitics: an injunction to the eater to orient their body within the configured expectations and cosmological orientations of their host.

In this chapter I will examine the role played by eating, but also by preparing and serving food, in mediating the situated experience of a world. Over the course of the previous chapters, I have explored the ways in which the Silk Road is imagined and constructed, both by medieval and by modern people. As I explained at the outset, such an exploration is rooted in understanding how medieval people experienced, thought about, and represented worlds of different scales, and how those imaginaries enable cosmopolitanism, or action-in-worlds. The Silk Road, as it turns out, looks very different at the scale of a single caravanserai than at the scale of a route, or at the scale of a written, literary work. In this chapter I narrow my gaze to one of the most intimate scales available: the span of meals shared within the Arai-Bazarǰuł caravanserai. In doing this, I am taking seriously the possibility that the Silk Road world was a place imagined in everyday actions and casual encounters; I am therefore arguing that the cosmopolitan practice of imagining the space of the Silk Road was possible for not only literate travelers and princely patrons, but also for people who left no historical record of their own. This chapter explores the routine encounters between travelers and hosts, and the construction through these encounters of a shared culture and mutual regard as fellow travelers in the same world. In other words, drawing upon the discussion of the previous chapters I will develop an idea of the caravanserai—and its surrounding village—as a node of *everyday cosmopolitanism*.

A simple meal can be complex. In the summer of 2009, I was in Armenia exploring the territory around Mount Aragats, trying to learn firsthand about medieval landscapes. I was at the time a guest of the Gyumri regional museum, where I made myself a nuisance with my combination of academic and practical ignorance. One morning in an effort to help me learn the topography of early medieval architecture in the surrounding area (and almost certainly to get me out of his hair), Hamazasp Khachatryan, the director of the Shirak museum, dumped me on a bus and told me to ride it to its terminus, the village of Sarakap, where I could find a seventh-century medieval church. Even better, there were the remains of a caravanserai (Jrapi) a few hills over, rescued from the dammed waters of the Akhurean River a few decades previous. I rode a rickety *marshrutka* down the western border until it came to a wide turning stop in front of the fountain and small store that marked the center of Sarakap village; hoisting my pack, I walked among small square houses, sheds, and barns, moving uphill toward the back edge of town, where ruins are frequently to be found. Walking up a side street I passed a woman, who regarded me keenly and then doubled back to ask if I needed help. I asked her where the "old church" was, and she pointed, giving me easy directions to find what once had been a tetraconch chapel, in a small square (really just an opening in the houses) a few streets further on. The church roof had collapsed, and in the Soviet period the church at Sarakap had, like many Armenian churches,

been used as a hay barn. At some point in the last few years a corrugated tin roof had been placed over the remaining lintels, the building swept, and candles, icons, and devotion returned to the space.

After collecting my photographs and sketches and notes, I started to wander back through the town toward the road. Suddenly a waving figure popped into the street; it was the same woman, who introduced herself as Ana and demanded that I come into her house for a rest. I quickly found myself in a bright room of a type which I will always associate with small Armenian villages: well-swept wood floor, tall windows lined in long lace curtains, a table with a piece of floral-printed plastic draped over it. As I sat obediently, Ana fetched a pot of just-boiled coffee and one of a pair of teenage girls brought a saucer of wrapped chocolates arranged in a ring; I suspected that a seven-or-so-years-old boy sitting in the next room watching MTV on a flatscreen TV had just been sent to buy them. Ana sat and watched me drink my tiny cup of coffee, nudging fruit and chocolate toward me. She performed a gesture I have since seen many Armenian women practice, where she plucked a chocolate off the plate, unwrapped it, and placed it gently, insistently, next to my coffee cup, as if to finally overcome my frustrating reticence. We talked about my life in Chicago, my parents, and her family; her husband was in Russia for several months working in construction, there was no work in the village or the cities here. As I finally rose to leave she sent one of the girls back to the kitchen, to return with a cellophane bag, which Ana then filled with warm bread and fresh cheese from the plate on the table, certain I could not have eaten enough to sustain me on my imminent one-mile walk. And so it was that two hours later I found myself standing on the edge of the highway waiting to catch a bus back to Gyumri, munching on what is still perhaps my favorite thing to eat in Armenia: fresh chewy bread and a salty crumble of homemade cheese.

In the following years I would eat a lot of meals in a lot of village houses in Armenia and I've cooked my share as well. But I often find myself thinking about this midmorning meal with Ana because of the intimacy of it, and the spontaneity of her hospitality. She opened her house to a young person in weird clothes who had appeared out of nowhere in her town because she felt some conviction that merely giving me directions and setting me on my way was insufficient. Plus she was curious, plus perhaps she was bored and wanted a story to tell later, plus perhaps a hundred other reasons I can't know. But the meal she shared with me transformed me, cementing a memory of that village and of a slice of that woman's life in embodied memory with the taste of thick coffee and too-sweet candy, the smell of a house where fresh cheese and yogurt are stored, where the floor has just been swept with a hand-tied broom and the tan dust hangs in the air. Of course, I was transformed for Ana as well, from a stranger to a guest with a name and parents and a story and strange table manners, whose eyes lit up at the sight of real coffee. It's the mechanics and dynamics of these mutual transformations that sustain my fascination with *everyday eating*, with small rituals and routine gestures

that fall under the radar when archaeologists talk about the power of "feasts." By textbook definition, my meal with Ana was the opposite of a feast: it was private, intimate, simple, and ordinary. But I would refer to the recent work of archaeologists interested in the power of cuisine and the everyday and argue that in routine and small rituals the structures of power and normalcy, of culture, are mortared into place.[5] Leading this conversation is archaeologist Christine Hastorf, who has argued through her work on cooking and eating in numerous contexts for the critical significance of intimate cuisine as part of a continuum of transformative practice that also contains feasting. As Hastorf explained, there is a useful analytic distinction between discursive (performed or spoken) and nondiscursive (undiscussed, taken-for-granted) aspects of the social work of practice, that nonetheless is quite blurry for practitioners: "The discursive side of practice includes those performative, commemorative, and semantic processes that actively and consciously draw upon and transmute the long-lived social traditions of a community. In contrast, non-discursive practices include habitual, bodily practices that tend to be unconscious, or at least non-verbal, routinized, and 'natural.'"[6] While people do occasionally draw discursive attention to cultural norms in their daily practice, much of the heavy lifting of culture is done by things that are left unsaid because they are obvious, undisputable, or "the way things have always been done." Cuisine especially is a dense tangle of nondiscursive cultural norms, from the way that vessels, utensils, or even furniture conform to accepted ways of eating, to ideas about who in a community procures, prepares, serves, and eats different kinds of everyday foods. As Hastorf explores in her analysis of cooking, serving, and eating, daily meals combine both discursive and nondiscursive practices in complex ways to reinforce structured relationships of gender, family, community, power, and identity. This is a critical intervention especially for archaeologies of medieval foodways, where approaches to eating have long been directed by understandings of dietary practice (or dietary prohibition) drawn from texts. Recently this conversation has shifted, thanks in particular to the work of members of the POMEDOR working group focused on the materiality of foodways in the medieval Mediterranean.[7] As Yasemin Bagci and Joanita Vroom pointed out, nondiscursive foodways which shaped the lives and worldviews of medieval people are recoverable by interdisciplinary methods, by thinking about the materialities contained in textual accounts, and the capacities of everyday material assemblages to produce and sustain social preferences and cultural worldviews.[8]

FOOD AND EMBODIED WORLDS

Why, then, should we not look to everyday rituals like the making of meals and the feeding of guests for mechanics by which shared cultures like that of the Silk Road were made? Why shouldn't the space created by practices of serving food to travelers, and their eating it, be as significant a world as the architectural spaces of

caravanserais or the inscribed and endowed landscapes of local politics? Archaeological approaches to cuisine have demonstrated the capacity for the material artifacts of cooking, serving, and eating to mediate intersections between daily practice and larger-scale social phenomena, thereby framing the experience of travel.[9] Food allows a person to viscerally remember other, distant times and places, and to literally enclose that spatiotemporal vastness within their body.[10] And to return to the argument made by Munn, fed bodies themselves travel, transplanting memories, tastes, and appetites, the cyclical spacetimes of daily meals, into complex mnemo-material worlds.[11] In high medieval Armenia, the link between foodstuffs and the other scalar worlds we have explored so far is made explicit for me in a particular pot form, what archaeologists call the "stamp-belted *karas*." Archaeologists working all over the world make links between ceramic bodies and human bodies. Whether ceramic vessels are made to emulate human forms, or used to contain cremated burials, human beings tend toward an affinity to these round-bellied, strong-shouldered objects. An astoundingly popular form in the Caucasus in the high Middle Ages, the stamp-belted *karas* bears a wide belt along the "shoulder" of the pot, depicting repeating stamped patterns of vegetal, animal, and human figures.[12] These bands mirror, not only the long bands of decoration on the exterior of churches (such as Tigran Honenc'i's church of St. Gregory), but also bands of figural *tiraz* embroidery found on medieval elite silken garments across the Silk Road worlds. The *karas*, a glossy red *mise en abyme*, helps me add one more scale to the linked microcosms we have already discussed: the *karas* holds food that is then contained within a human body, itself contained within architecture, contained within the world of imagined life. These scalar worlds—vessels, bodies, buildings—were linked together with common ideas about power, beauty, and desire.[13]

Considering food and the Silk Road, I will think about participation and global culture in two ways. First, I reiterate that cooking and eating was a critical practical means by which material cultures were put into use and transferred over space and time. So much of contemporary emphasis on the ancient Silk Routes has been on the transfer of domesticated crops and artistic styles, modes of dress and music, across vast expanses. Often these analyses produce maps with schematic arrows arcing between the Far East and Europe, along which an ear of millet or a single apple glides like a kid down a waterslide. The spatiotemporal scale of these engagements frequently disregards the work of people who cooked and served foods, who experimented with cooking vessels and spices and ways of preparing meat, grain, and fruit, and who were the technical specialists responsible for whether food cultures "stuck" in particular places. Following on anthropological discussions of practice theory by Ortner and others,[14] but also on theories of practice,[15] I am interested in the ways that making food entails participation within and production of global cultures by agents who aren't necessarily thinking about globality while they are working. This brings us back to an interesting

aspect of the multivalency of material cultures. Sometimes drinking tea with sugar (for instance) prompts you to muse on the global chains of human interaction, differential power, and transit that made that everyday beverage possible in your part of the world.[16] More often, however, tea is just tea, or reminds you of any number of other embodied spacetimes and personal worlds; nonetheless, the fact of your global participation remains.

The second way that I want to conceptualize food and global culture is in terms of how hospitality and the sharing of meals were everyday encounters that actually produced the conditions of possibility for global cultures at local scales (and vice versa). In this sense, the cultural practice of welcoming strangers and feeding them (for free or for pay) makes travel, exchange, and interaction possible across large scales. Recently, Oya Pancaroğlu has drawn attention to the significance of hospitality—and especially the feeding of strangers—as an institution for knitting together the multiple, diverse populations of eastern Anatolia and the southern Caucasus in the tumultuous period punctuated by the Seljuk and Mongol invasions.[17] Pancaroğlu focuses on the wording of *waqf* documents (the endowment documentation of Muslim institutions like caravanserai or madrasas) commanding their attendants to feed all "comers and goers," regardless of sect.[18] In an exceptional example, she cites a late thirteenth-century eyewitness account of the serving of honeyed sweets to every guest at the Karatay Sultan Han.[19] The language of the *waqf* documents is very similar to that used in the inscriptions on Armenian caravanserais, committed to the welcoming of "passers-by" and "others." These locally rooted traditions or institutions of hospitality therefore grease the skids of global movements, even if some of the participants in these acts of hospitality are themselves relatively immobile. In thinking about cooking, serving, and eating as necessary practices that make long-distance trade and travel possible, we suddenly have to confront a complexification of the idea of *infrastructure* discussed in the last chapter. If infrastructure is material culture that enables and sustains the transit or movement of people or things, then the complex of skills and assemblages around cooking, serving, and eating is infrastructure as well. Recall the example of the highway systems built in during the New Deal that I mentioned in the last chapter. We habitually conceive of highways, bridges, tunnels and gas stations as infrastructure—but what about the other "services" along the route? Think about motels and restaurants as part of the apparatus of infrastructure that makes a road trip even conceivable in a landscape of highways. I'll be returning to the idea of the roadside restaurant later in this chapter; first, let's get back to Arai-Bazarǰuł.

FOOD BY THE SIDE OF THE ROAD: ASSEMBLING A CUISINE AT ARAI-BAZARǰUŁ

As I discussed in the previous chapter, the floors of the caravanserai were scattered with the broken remains of ceramic vessels; more critically, the gutters were filled

with a dense mix of decomposed human and animal waste as well as ceramics and food waste (animal bones and plant remains) that had been swept off of the nearby floors into the gutters. Though 100 percent of the ceramic artifacts from the excavation were collected when we excavated, only those materials recovered from closed cultural contexts (preserved floors and gutters, covered by a solid layer of collapse which contextually "sealed" the materials) were analyzed.[20] These contexts include the troughs and flagstone barn floors and the clay central gallery floors and flagstone-lined gutter features. From the materials taken from these contexts, I selected out "diagnostic" ceramic fragments. Diagnostic is a relative term in archaeology, meaning that which enables a conclusion to be drawn. A sherd or bone that is very useful to one specialist may be confounding or useless to another, depending on training, experience, or area of research. My definition of "diagnostic" changes constantly as I learn more about medieval ceramics; however, a stable, practical definition combines formal characteristics that allow me to identify the shape of a vessel (such as a rim, a handle, or a base), decorative characteristics that allow me to categorize how the vessel or part of vessel was decorated (both in terms of designs and techniques like burnishing or glazing), and finally, technical characteristics that enable me to say something about how the vessel was made (for instance, temper or marks from fingers or a wheel), or how it was used (pitch deposits for waterproofing, soot deposits from long exposure to fire, drilled holes from repair).

The diagnostic ceramics from Arai-Bazarǰuł were analyzed both through comparison with published corpuses and in collaboration with Frina Babayan at the Armenian National Academy of Sciences Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography. The first thing we established based on the ceramic assemblage from Arai-Bazarǰuł was that, according to comparisons with dated materials from Dvin and other sites, the ceramics from the caravanserai were made during the thirteenth through fourteenth centuries. This finding corroborated the proposed date of the building (1213) and confirmed that we are looking at the remains of meals cooked, served, and eaten when the caravanserai was used by medieval travelers during the Vač'utyan period in the Kasakh Valley. Beyond this general date, it was possible to make a series of more specific observations about the types and forms of ceramic found at the caravanserai. Very quickly: a *type* of ceramic is the general technical and decorative style that a specific fragment might belong to, such as "blue and white porcelain," or "Terra Sigillata ware" or "Fiesta ware"—these names denote particular techniques, time periods, or even places of distribution and use. A ceramic *form* is related to the practical use or capacity of that object: bowl, platter, milk strainer, chamber pot. Archaeologists assign vessels that they find to both types and forms based on techniques of generalization; in other words, these categories can be useful, but are famously slippery in that one person's bowl is sometimes another's cup and so on.[21] So I will endeavor to explain what we found at Arai Bazarǰuł, and, more critically, why this combination of types and forms is

important for us. Crucially for the story that this chapter tells, ceramics are the material technology of cooking, serving, and eating food that, when combined with ingredients, practices, and ideas (cooking techniques, table manners, tastes, and norms) constitute a *cuisine*, or an eating culture.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the fragmented ceramic equipment we found in the road inn was plain by most medievalists' standards. The caravanserai assemblage contains bowls, jars, and pitchers, including fragments of large cooking and storage jars as well as smaller jars and jugs. One lid handle fragment was found on the flagstone floor of one of the stable areas; this style of lid was ubiquitous in medieval Armenia and could have covered anything from a cooking jar to a small oven. The vast majority (98 percent) of the materials recovered from the caravanserai floors and prefloor fills were unglazed red wares.[22] Jars and cooking pots were made of the same clay and generally tempered with the same mixture of micaceous and obsidian sands, and their rims fired to a similar range of medium reds. The bodies (rounded sides and bottoms) of jars could vary in color from grayish to a warm gray-brown, and many body fragments were burned, confirming that they were used for cooking. The similarity of clay color and inclusions indicate that these red ware vessels were made from the same clays, possibly sourced nearby.[23] This finding corroborates the historical suggestions that caravanserais were supported by neighboring villages. Excavations more recently at the Selim caravanserai in Vayots Dzor indicate that the monumental infrastructure of that fourteenth-century building was also rooted in local materiality at the scale of food, drink, and other ceramic practice (see fig. 17).[24]

Bowl Food

The excavations recovered a representative assemblage of fragments of rims from bowls. These bowls varied in their shapes: some of them were *globular*, meaning that their bodies curved smoothly from rim to foot, while others were *carinated*, with a sharp break between a more cylindrical upper body and the curving lower body. Both of these bowl forms probably had ring-form bases and were thrown on a potter's wheel. The bowl rims fell into two large categories: plain round rims (22.4 percent) and flattened-round rims (34.2 percent). Regardless of their styles, the bowl fragments from the inn floors were consistently covered with a redder slip (a paintlike suspension of fine clay in water) and then burnished till they shone. An even brighter red slip was painted along the rims and insides of the bowls. The red slip decoration could vary in consistency or fullness of application—some bowls appear to have been cursorily wiped with the red slip in a single pass, especially in the case of a number of rounded-rim bowl fragments. Other bowls were evenly covered in a bright red slip on exterior and interior and finely burnished to a glossy, enamel-like shine. Looking at these fragments as an assemblage, you start to get a sense of what a "good bowl" looked like in the thirteenth century. Such a bowl would sit in the hand, on the table, or on the ground,[25] with a gleam of bright

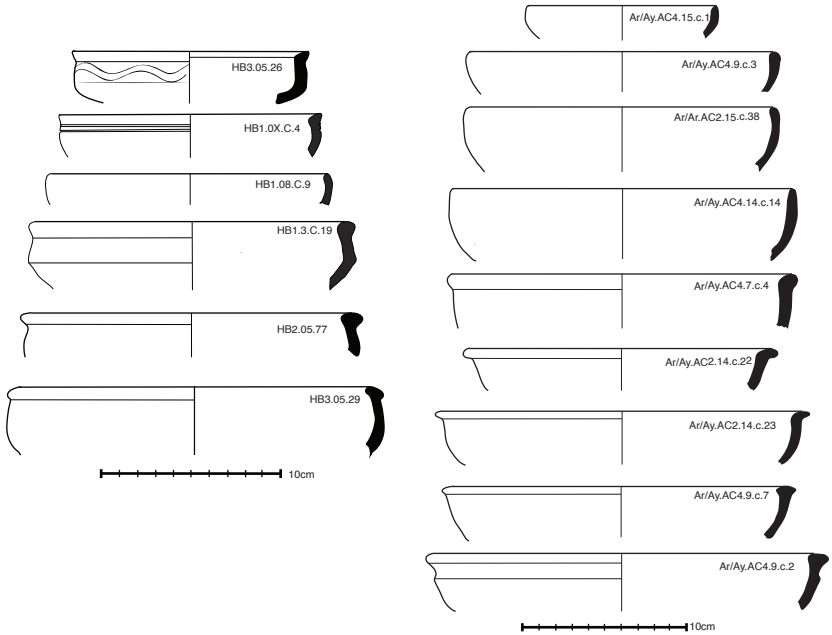

FIGURE 17. Red-slipped redware bowls from Ambroyi village (left) and from the Arai-Bazarǰuł caravanserai (right). Drawn by the author.

red at the rim, and from above would present a shiny red interior to surround the contents. A preference for bowls like this was widespread in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries, not only in the Kasakh but across Armenia.[26]

Jar Cooking

The assemblage from the caravanserai includes an assortment of rim fragments from cooking jars of similar size, all in the 18–25cm rim diameter range. These jars were produced of red-to-buff clay with sandy inclusions, frequently slipped and burnished on the exterior, and especially on their rims, till they were glossy dark brown or gray. Though no complete vessels were found at Arai-Bazarǰuł, the body fragments recovered in combination with the rim assemblage indicates that these jars had rounded bodies, wide necks, and upright rims like a thick collar. One fragment of such an upright rim included a partial strap handle, which would have attached to the vessel shoulder. The inside of the rim's lip was frequently notched and slanted, so that a lid could be fit snugly onto the jar. While we didn't recover a whole jar from Arai-Bazarǰuł, from the large number of body fragments and from comparisons from finds at other sites we can reconstruct what these jars looked like. It is highly probable that the cooking pots used at the Arai-Bazarǰuł *karavanatun* had thick, coarsely curving and perhaps hand-formed bases, like

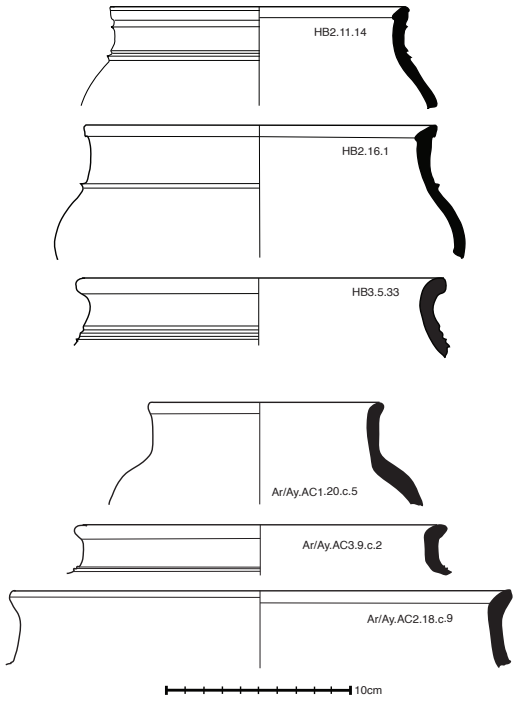

FIGURE 18. Redware cooking jar rims from Ambroyi village (top) and Arai-Bazarǰuł caravanserai (bottom). Drawn by the author.

reconstructed wide-mouth red ware jars which have been found at the high medieval highland site of Yełegis, in Vayots Dzor (see fig. 18).[27]

Not all of the ceramics in the caravanserai were red wares—though most of them were. A considerable portion of the shoulder and neck profile of a decorated white-ware jug was recovered from the fills just above the flagstone floor;[28] jugs like this one are common finds from urban excavations in Armenia, but they have also been found in large quantities at well-connected towns like Arpa, in Vayots Dzor.[29] We also found a literal handful of glazed ceramic bowl fragments; all in all, these outliers rather confirmed the general picture of a relatively utilitarian ceramic assemblage used for serving and eating at the caravanserai.

Eating Space in the Caravanserai

Statistical analyses of the distributions of pottery types within different contexts demonstrate that the red ware assemblage of jars and red bowls was associated with the parts of the building intended for the use of human residents. As mentioned in the previous chapter, a chi-square analysis assessing the occurrence of bowls and jars on the clay floors, versus in gutters or on barn floors, shows strongly nonrandom distribution.[30] Cross-tabular analysis showed that of the diagnostic

assemblage of bowl and jar fragments, only 7 percent was found on the clay floors, while 45 percent was recovered from the gutter features. Meanwhile, only 14 percent of the total number of jar and bowl fragments were recovered from the stable areas.[31]

This pattern of deposition of ceramics suggests that the vessels for eating and cooking were largely used in the road inn's central gallery, where travelers could eat at some minimal distance from their animals (and animal waste). That ceramic fragments were largely found in the waste gutters and not pressed into the clay floors suggests as well that food preparation was concentrated within part of the unexcavated portion of the building or, more probably, that cooking occurred in some other location external to the caravan hall itself. This possibility is corroborated by the faunal evidence: very few bone fragments were found on the floors; instead, many small bone fragments were found within the rubbish deposits in the gutters. While the floors may have been swept, this observation also supports the scenario of food being prepared in a single location or in a different context than the caravan hall. In other words, a local cook (or cooks) was preparing food that was then served to travelers, as opposed to each traveler preparing their own meal.

Complementary Assemblages, Shared Daily Lives: Ceramic Materials from Ambroyi Village

Who was cooking in these jars, if not the caravan travelers? In part to answer this question, and to broaden the overly simplistic image of self-sufficient caravans disembedded from local landscapes, in 2013–14 I and a team of colleagues excavated a section of the village of Ambroyi, which in the thirteenth to fourteenth centuries would have abutted and enclosed the Arai-Bazarǰuł caravanserai.[32] This village was a cluster of structures built from undressed stones pulled from the nearby streams, with floors cut into the hard yellow clay of the Kasakh Valley. The greater part of the village was destroyed in the twentieth century by intensive agriculture in the Kasakh Valley; in the preserved section we investigated, we found a dense cluster of ovens and the storage, processing, and garbage pits associated with cooking (see figs. 19a and 19b).[33]

A full account of these excavations is published elsewhere;[34] what is important for this discussion is the evidence we uncovered which suggested that the villagers at Ambroyi and the travelers staying in the caravanserai shared a material world at the level of ceramic assemblages. In particular, the ceramic assemblage at Ambroyi is a "matched set" with that at Arai-Bazarǰuł. We found the same straight-necked cooking jars and red-slipped bowls, indicating that the food eaten at the inn was also cooked and eaten in the village. I vividly remember sitting at a desk in the medieval department in Yerevan in 2015 with Astghik Babajanyan, holding up bowl fragments from the village and road inn and marveling that they could have been from the same vessel.

FIGURES 19A and 19b. Handbuilt clay ovens (*tonir*s) in living and working spaces at Ambroyi. Photos by the author.

These finds required me to rethink the data from the caravanserai. Glazed ceramic types which when found in 2011 in tiny quantities at the road inn were thought to be commodities carried by the travelers,[35] were found in larger fragments and greater quantities in the village. These included bowls decorated with white slip and incised vegetal designs and covered in clear yellow or green glazes, as well as green, yellow, and brown polychrome dishes. This suggests that these sgraffiato and splashware vessels *were* imports, and that the village and inn were connected in complex loops of transit and transfer. The villagers procured serving wares (as well as colored glass bracelets and vessels) through their proximity to the trade routes which connected settlements in the highlands. Then, perhaps, the village cooks used their imported sgraffiato "services" to serve guests in the inn, complicating the directionality of exotic and local material cultures, of foreigners and natives.

Tasty Seeds and Tasty Bones: Macrobotanical and Faunal Data

While the ceramic material gives us a wealth of information about who cooked and how they cooked and served, we are still left with the important question of *what* was cooked in the jars and served into the red burnished bowls. To inform on this question I turn to the plant and animal remains from the gutter features in the caravanserai. The macrobotanical remains from Arai-Bazarǰuł represent a unique source of information about medieval plant economy and diet. So far within the Republic of Armenia, contemporary botanical evidence is published from only two contexts; the settlement of Norabak 1 and medieval layers at Getahovit-2 Cave site.[36] Plant remains from the road inn were recovered using standard floatation and wet-sieving techniques. The first stages of cleaning and analysis of these materials were done by Dr. Roman Hovsepyan in Aparan and in Yerevan, as mentioned

in the anecdote at the beginning of the last chapter. Subsequently, the botanical data were studied in detail by Anna Berlekamp.[37] Archaeozoological information from the medieval period in Armenia is even rarer, as most medieval excavations do not retain faunal materials. The faunal data from cultural levels were recovered from unscreened soils and analyzed by Dr. Belinda Monahan in Chicago.

The majority of plant remains from cultivated plants are charred cereal grains, especially wheat and barley.[38] Millet, another common grain, was also found in lesser quantities. Both predominant species of millet, the broomcorn millet (*Panicum miliaceum*) and foxtail or Italian millet (*Setaria italica*) were recorded in the caravanserai assemblage. Millet is a summer grain, while wheat and barley are winter crops requiring more water. Millet was probably cultivated in the lowlands (such as the Araxes River Valley to the south), as the environment of the Kasakh Valley is too severe (though this hypothesis remains to be substantiated for the climatic conditions of the high medieval period). Berlekamp proposed that this data combining summer and winter crops shows us year-round cropping of fields serving the caravanserai.[39] This tells us about the seasonality of agricultural life in the Kasakh Valley (providing detail for the lifeworld described in chapter 4), as well as suggesting that the caravanserai may have been used in winter as well as summer—though it is also possible that travelers were fed stored grain. Charred seeds of various species of legumes (*Fabaceae*) were also recovered. All the recorded cultigens are considered to be traditional crops for the territory of Armenia, and have been recorded since the Iron Age up to the beginning of the previous century.[40] Findings of rose hip, grapes, and plum pits round out the image of plant diet at the *karavanatun*, which seems to be dominated by cereal grains. Presuming that a portion of this charred grain material did not come from sacks of grain stored in the caravanserai, the assemblage suggests a cuisine which incorporated cooked whole grains as well as (or instead of) bread.

The botanical remains also contained traces of plants which were imports to the Kasakh Valley, including figs, pomegranate, olives, and almonds. These were found in the channels, a combination of practice and preservation: travelers ate the fruits and nuts and discarded the pits into the waste channels or onto the floors. Berlekamp noted as well what the nonhuman guests at the caravanserai would have been eating: sorrels (*rumex sp.*) and sedges (*Cyperaceae*) which may have grown in the streams running down the slope of Aragats or along the Kasakh River, as well as small wild legumes, which were common fodder.[41] Berlekamp also points out a crucial aspect of both data and of daily life in the caravanserai: much of the carbonized wild plant material would have been contained in dung which was burned for fuel, a common practice in antiquity as well as in the present.[42] Imagine the interior of the caravanserai lit by small fires built of dung bricks or chips, producing sharp, thick smoke and ashes swept at intervals from the floors into the nearest gutter.

The other hard and durable evidence we have from the various tasty, nourishing, and memorable meals in the caravanserai are fragments of animal bone, remains of meat served and eaten in various forms. This faunal (animal) evidence indicates that the food consumed on the site included a large amount of mutton or goat meat in addition to beef and chicken, as well as a smaller quantity of pork. All of the animal remains found were quite fragmentary, mostly tiny shardlike pieces, which is commensurate with the meat being chopped up and cooked in pots rather than roasted or grilled.[43] Just over 2 percent of the assemblage showed evidence of having been burned, indicating that only a minority of the bone fragments came into direct contact with fire (i.e., further evidence that they were boiled or stewed). The micromorphological study of cut marks on the bone fragments found some evidence for butchery, which was mostly of a chopping nature rather than carving or slicing meat off of bones, and generally gives us the impression that the meat that ended up in the pots served to travelers at the caravanserai was attached to chopped up bones and joints, and perhaps involved a lot of gristle and fatty marrow.

FROM DATA TO CUISINE

The combined ceramic, faunal, and botanical data from the caravanserai therefore provides us with a partial *cuisine assemblage*: a combination of ingredients and instruments which shed light on food practice, enabling us to draw conclusions regarding a number of questions related to cuisine at the caravanserai.

*What were they eatin*g? To summarize the above evidence: The gutter contexts of the caravanserai produced charred seeds of cereal grains (wheat and barley) and legumes. The faunal evidence from the Arai-Bazarǰuł *karavanatun* indicated that the food consumed on the site included mutton or goat meat in addition to beef and chicken, as well as pork. All the animal remains found were quite fragmentary, suggesting meat chopped up and cooked in pots rather than roasted or grilled. The majority of the evidence for butchery was evidence for chopping up bones rather than removing meat from bones: this suggests that the food provided to travelers at the inn was a stew of toasted grains and legumes, with occasional scraps of fatty meat and bones. A dish similar to this is still eaten and beloved among Armenians and in the Persian world as well: *herisa*, a greasy, heavy porridge. If you have ever eaten *herisa*, then you can imagine the thick steam that would rise off a pot of this stew as it was placed on the table or floor, and further imagine how such a stew would "stick to your ribs" (as my mother would say). I could thus hypothesize as well, based on our knowledge of the dairying practiced in villages like Ambroyi, that there was probably a hefty dollop of butter or ghee added to the stew as well—though of course this is an ingredient that, like seasonings, leaves few archaeological traces if used in small quantities.

What did they eat it with? The ceramic assemblage from the caravanserai complements the faunal and botanical evidence. We found the set of dishes that you would need to prepare a thick stew of grains and fatty meat, cooking it over a coal fire (perhaps in a *tonir* oven such as those we found at Ambroyi), and to serve it out to a small gathering of guests, each of whom might have received their own red-rimmed bowl. Comparisons with data from other sites help us think about whether travelers eating at the inn would have thought this meal was familiar, tasty, or "comforting." The assortment of ceramic types (wares and forms) found at Ambroyi and used to serve meals to travelers at the *karavanatun* is formally similar to the red ware assemblage that made up a significant portion of dining materiality in castles and monasteries as well as cities in the highlands during the same period. The recovery of a similar combination of wares and forms from sites like Tełenyacʿ Vankʿ, Yełegis, and Daštadem in Armenia, and Gritille in eastern Turkey suggests that such culinary practices were not merely a phenomenon of the caravan hall, but also occurred in other contemporary social contexts.[44] Cooking in rounded, straight-rimmed jars and serving the resulting meal in an assemblage of small (approximately 15cm diameter) footed bowls seems to have been a factor in "local" Anatolian and Caucasian cuisine.[45]

Now we have two of the three components—technology plus ingredients—that make up a cuisine. How can we use the first two plus different kinds of historical evidence to reveal the third: practices? Historical as well as archaeological data suggest that patterns in the ceramic repertoire—such as a strengthened emphasis on deep cooking pots and small serving bowls—might have accommodated a "globalizing" food practice among the administrators, soldiers, traders and travelers who moved through the Near East and Eurasia in the medieval period.[46] Further, recipes preserved from the same period suggest that the cuisine which accompanied the pottery technology found in the caravanserai also bore a significant relationship to medieval imaginations of "comfort food"; that is, cuisine that was associated, not with an exotic place of origin (despite potentially exotic ingredients), but with the imagined and embodied world of wholesome tradition. Muhammad bin Hasan al-Baghdadi wrote *The Book of Dishes* in Baghdad around 1226; this book indicates that canonical or "traditional" cuisine at that time drew on regional influences even while remaining familiar. The recipes in Baghdadi's *Kitab al-ṭabīḫ* were compiled as a work of courtly art; however, the book was not meant as some airy confection, for al-Baghdadi disavowed "strange and unfamiliar dishes" in favor of wholesome foods that were "well known and in common use" in his time and place.[47] In other words, al-Baghdadi's cookbook was not a performance of exoticism but a manual of canonical taste and food practice, a cartography of taste within which the author centrally situated himself, stating essentially "this is what home tastes like."

Discussion of the *Kitab*, as well as of other books of the same title written by medieval Arab authors, frequently focuses on the ingredients of the recipes and

their influence on European cuisine,[48] but I am interested also in the implications of the cooking and preparation instructions provided in the *Kitab*—the hints at medieval culinary *practice*.[49] Two of the ten chapters (chapter 2 "Plain Dishes," and chapter 4, "Harisa and Baked Dishes") instruct the aspiring thirteenth-century cook on preparing dishes of grains and meats boiled in stone or clay pots. From this culinary source, it appears that a significant part of medieval Baghdadi "comfort food" was made up of dishes prepared by chopping meat and fat with spices, boiling them with rice, wheat, chickpeas, or lentils, and then serving the settled mixture directly from the pot it was cooked in. Often the cook is instructed to wipe the rim of the cookpot with a clean cloth, in the interest of aesthetics. One could imagine the ceramic repertoire that would accommodate such an everyday cuisine, which was derived in part from Persian and Turkic recipes for classic dishes like *herisa*:[50] a pot big enough for boiling but with a rim narrow enough for a snug lid, with handles for transferring it from fire to table, and bowls for serving the resulting semiliquid food. Perhaps the interior as well as the exterior of the rim of the pot would even be burnished to a ruddy shine, the better to offset the contents as it was set in the midst of hungry diners.

Al-Baghdadi's cookbook is complemented by a manual by Hu Sihui, the title of which (*Yinshan Zhengyao*) translates as *Proper and Essential Things for the Emperor's Food and Drink*. Dated to 1330, this book attests to a shift in culinary worlds: the center of proper and tasty eating is now, according to the author, the table of the Mongol Yuan emperors. The manual contains a record of the recipes recommended to the court of the Mongols and is a testament to the "pretentions of cultural universality" which persisted within the Mongol Empire in the early fourteenth century.[51] Summarized as "a deliberate attempt to represent the Mongolian world order in visible, tangible, edible form," the manual combines nostalgia for comforting traditions as well more exotic cartographies into a single empire of taste.[52] The recipes described in the *Yinshan Zhengyao* represent a fusion of Mongol steppe ingredients with Turkic cooking practices as well as Chinese tastes.[53] Significantly for our purposes, the translators point out that the majority of recipes in this fourteenth-century manual for health are combinations of meat and starches, boiled together in a single pot; while this was foreign to Chinese culinary traditions, such practice aligned with Mongol cosmological health practice.

These recipes illuminate how the cooking of grains and fatty meats together could result in either a cosmologically nutritious Mongol repast or a comforting Baghdadi *herisa* (or both). These dishes also resemble the *dugi* eaten by "Turks" in the Crimea encountered by traveler Ibn Battuta in the 1330s. According to the traveler, the Turks prepared *dugi* by boiling grain in water and adding small pieces of meat (if they had it): "then every man is given his portion in a dish, and they pour over it curdled milk and sup it."[54] All of these simple, stewy, starchy dishes resemble the food which may have been on the standing menu at the Arai-Bazarǰuł caravanserai. Notice as well that Ibn Battuta describes the portioning out of the stews

into individual bowls, conjuring again the image of travelers sitting together and sharing a common meal served by a local host. While these sources provide links between recipes and material assemblages, numerous textual accounts confirm the central place of *herisa* within medieval and early modern Armenian imaginaries. James R. Russell compiled references to *herisa*, including an episode in the great medieval epic *The Daredevils of Sasun* (*Sasna cṙer*). In the vignette, the hero David steals a huge pot of *herisa* from pious but hypocritical villagers and feeds it to his fellow men.[55] An early modern folk tale further links *herisa* with carnivalesque leveling of heroes and villagers, specifically situated in the courtyard of a caravanserai.[56] By the Ottoman period, *herisa* was eaten as part of Armenian ritual sacrifice (*matał*), and elegized as a Shrovetide food invented by Gregory the Illuminator[57]—a belief that persists into the present.[58]

Returning back to the anthropological discussion of food and embodied politics at the beginning of this chapter, we are presented with a challenge if we try to define the meals served and eaten in the Arai Bazarǰuł caravanserai, or in similar spaces along the Silk Road, in simple terms. The power relations that structure the spacetimes of serving, eating, and embodied memory of these meals—or in the term proposed by Appadurai, their *gastropolitics*—are complicated, challenging the categories of ritual and routine, of ceremonial and domestic.[59] For instance, was the caravanserai, as monumental infrastructure where travelers carried out mundane and intimate practices like eating, sleeping, scratching, eliminating, and so on, a private space or a public space? Does such a categorical distinction between public (politics) and private (daily routines) help us in this case? The stew cooked in a rammed-earth kitchen at Ambroyi and served from an earthenware cook-jar at the caravanserai was greasy, warm, unassuming, and satisfying, but was it *just* an everyday home cooked meal? Or did the fact of hospitality and the architectural space of the caravanserai remind travelers that the food they ate was a "feast" presented by Vačʿe Vačʿutyan, their absent host nonetheless present in the space he had endowed? Is a meal eaten in a caravanserai therefore ceremonial or domestic—or *both/neither*, pointing out the necessity of dissolving the apparent distinction between these concepts in order to analyze the social power of the Silk Road culinary spacetime? Imagined after the example set by Douglas, the complex spatial politics of Silk Road hospitality are encapsulated in the complicated geography of the food itself. How do I "theorize" a tasty stew that was cooked literally in a hole in the Armenian ground, as local as you get, but which was also "comfort food" according to Mongol and Baghdadi cookbooks with cosmographic aspirations, making it something like a cosmopolitan dish? How might the cosmopolitan-ness of a food like *herisa* be further complicated by its folkloric role as a greasy and delicious carnivalesque social lubricant? The space I ultimately found to think through food which is simultaneously here-and-everywhere is the roadside restaurant, and it is that brightly lit, hypermodern space that I will briefly visit before concluding this chapter.

THE SPACE OF *ROAD FOOD*

In the United States we have an academic term for cuisine that is simple to make but hard to forget, which tastes so good that it sparks nostalgia and collapses class distinction. The American gastro-ethnographers Jane and Michael Stern drew this range of culinary experiences in North America under a single heading, calling it *road food*.[60] In their foundational conceptualization of the cuisine concept, Stern and Stern defined road food not in terms of its ingredients per se, but in terms of where it is found and how it is made: "Roadfood means great regional meals along highways, in small towns and in city neighborhoods. It is non-franchised, sleeves-up food made by cooks, bakers, pitmasters, and sandwich-makers who are America's culinary folk artists."[61]

Immediately emerging from this definition and significant for our discussion of scalar worlds and their perception, road food in America according to Stern and Stern is at once resolutely local ("small towns," "non-franchised") but also somehow quintessentially and universally American ("sleeves-up," "folk art"). Road food therefore belongs to no town or region in particular but to the polyglot nation as a whole. To eat road food means that no matter in which highway or neighborhood restaurant a traveler dines, they can know that they are eating something that is both authentically local but also, somehow, reassuringly familiar. This near contradiction between particularity and universality which sits at the heart of road food as a concept dovetails with the imaginary of cosmopolitanism as I am endeavoring to construct it. The capacity of food to enable tactile and concrete co-presence at the same time as participation in other places, times, and wider communities makes road food an apt locus for the cosmographic negotiations of medieval cosmopolitanism. It helps me think about how travelers could enjoy the intimate and comforting pleasure of a simple meal while simultaneously participating in the construction of global culture. As or more importantly, the spacetime-bending capacities of road food means that the people who cook and serve it are themselves critical agents in world-making, are themselves architects of global cultures.

Road Food and a Cosmopolitics of Care

There is a tension in registers in road foods, whether medieval *herisa* or Waffle House hash browns, that points to a critical question of agency, and of subjectivity. In the medieval context, this means questioning what modes of practice are to be considered productive of cosmopolitan spaces, of Silk Road histories. To be road food, a cuisine must be both authentic, culturally true, as well as simple. Road food is made by *cooks*, not chefs—but that doesn't make it any less sublime.[62] Similar to the space of the caravanserai, road food challenges the inherent distinction between domestic and ceremonial, between everyday and ritual, which is supposed to be at the center of the difference between meals and feasts.[63]

Ethnographic description of roadside restaurants stresses the emphasis placed on nourishment, on care of the guest. Barbara Ehrenreich documented the impulse to care on the part of waitresses in a hotel restaurant, even when that care came out of their own minimum-wage salaries, describing how in the middle of a long shift in a tourist restaurant "the service ethic kick[s] in like a shot of oxytocin, the *nurturance hormone*."[64] The server of road food—whether an all-night truck stop waitress, an urban greasy spoon server, the cook at the back of a dive bar—performs a *work of care* (though it may not appear so), in that this work of culinary world-making and spatial transformation is performed in the course of a labor of making another person at home in a place that is not their home. The work realm of hospitality has only relatively recently been drawn into academic conversations about "care work," or the ways of being and making which used to be called "unproductive labor" or "maintenance labor" under strict Marxist rubrics.[65] This is relevant to our conversation, because it means that making the work of hospitable servers visible as part of the cosmopolitan making of global spaces on par with the construction of buildings or the writing of geography is a bit of an uphill feat. Yet I hope this chapter reveals that the difference between the world-building of a caravanserai and the world-building of a road food meal is not one of significance, but of scale—and even then, the slippery spacetimes of cuisine enable unpredictable embodied shifts across scales of space and memory. Returning again to the work of Nancy Munn and the concept of *skwayobwa*, it is ultimately the practices of hospitality—of welcoming, housing, feeding strangers—that constructs the possibility for people to live in the same future world.

Before reaching the Black Sea coast in 1331–2, Ibn Battuta arrived at the port city of al-Alaya (Alanya), a significant medieval entrepot and the endpoint of an overland route staged with Seljuk-period caravanserais.[66] Ibn Battuta noted the exceptional hospitality of the people of the city, which manifests in open gifts of simple food:

> One of their customs in that country is that they bake bread on only one day each week, making provision on that day for enough to keep them for the rest of the week. Their men used to bring us warm bread on the day it was baked, together with delicious viands to go with it . . . and would say to us, "the women have sent this to you and beg of you a prayer."[67]

What I find remarkable in this account is the parallel in the request of the women bakers providing bread to travelers, and the language of inscriptions left in *karavanatn'ner* by their donors, as well as within the *waqf* documents and inscriptions attached to Seljuk hans and lodges (described in the last chapter).[68] Patrons, princes, and baker women feed the traveling stranger, and ask in return for the gift of their hospitality to be carried forward as their guest moves along their journey and remembers them in prayer and in imagination. This suggests a messiness in the spacetime of hospitality when considered at the scale of cooking, feeding, and

eating. It also points to a modality of power: despite the politeness of the request to be remembered, the guest has ultimately little agency in carrying with them a *memento* of their host in the form of a meal eaten, a little world stuck to their ribs.

I found myself thinking about this slippery spacetime at one point in 2015, as we were in the midst of excavations at the Ambroyi village site. My collaborator Frina Babayan had received a request from a *spʿyurkʿahay* friend in the city to bring them a large quantity of "real *matsoun*"[69]—in other words, authentic, homemade yogurt prepared by a village woman from her own cows and sheep. Homemade yogurt in Armenia is thick and grassy, often with a rich skim of butterfat on the surface; it's delicious and thought to be a cure-all. Ando, one of the team, put Frina in touch with a woman in the village, and the two of them conferred on quantities, modes of delivery, and price. As the *matsoun* was reaching completeness, we stopped by to visit the producer at her house in Arai village; we were welcomed into her front room and seated in our dig clothes on her spotless sofa. Frina and I asked interested questions about how the yogurt was made: What made this woman's product the best in the village? What kind of milk did she use? What vessels? I remember clearly that the woman related an interesting piece of information in an offhand way: the real secret, she said, was not the ingredients but the souring process. As she said: "I have one old garment [*hin šor*] that I always use to cover the milk while it turns. If I don't use that one, it doesn't work out." I remember remarking that the woman definitely said *šor*, referring to something that a person would wear (or a scrap of clothing used as a rag) rather than *ktor*, a more neutral word for a piece of cloth. Reflecting on this later, I realized that the special ingredient in that woman's yogurt was possibly the lactobacillus from *her own body and home*, residual within an old cast-off shirt or skirt. Her repeated cuisine practice therefore mattered at scales both larger and (much) smaller than her own discursive reflection. It still makes me smile thinking of that woman's intimate flora being so famously delicious, and making the trip down the highway to Yerevan, and on a plane back to Los Angeles. This incident also made me think about agency: this literal embodiment of a portable, potable memory was not deliberate on the part of the village woman, and not perceived by the diasporan woman; nonetheless, both were collaborators within the construction of a complex and global shared spacetime enacted in desire, practice, and bodily memory.

These parallels across inadvertently global generosity and explicitly spatiotemporal hospitality demonstrate the centrality of care to the spacetime of medieval Armenian politics—more importantly, however, it shows that the quotidian was political, and the mundane was cosmopolitan. This parallelism—or, I would argue, identity—between the practice of hospitality at the scales of sharing food and of building monumental infrastructure demonstrates that the spaces at the side of the road where food was prepared and served were key to the spacetime of the Silk Road, not a local quotidian apart from it or impacted by it. For the people at Ambroyi, whose houses abutted the ashlar walls of the Arai-Bazarǰuł caravanserai,

encounters with travelers *were* everyday occurrences. It is possible that they could get bored of travelers—that the experiences of encounter that for Ibn Battuta or William of Rubruck were profound were, for them, mundane: the arrival of hungry, dusty travelers who needed to be fed and housed along with their animals, and who had similar stories of the road behind them and dreams of the road ahead. The people of Ambroyi contained these linear narratives within the cycles of planting and harvest, pasturing animals and slaughter, dairying, cooking, serving, and cleaning, repair and mending. Reflecting on the cosmopolitics required in the margins of globalization, Owen Sichone discussed the necessity of hospitality to frame the movement of travelers, observing: the "woman who has never left home lives her cosmopolitanism by welcoming the world."[70] Examining the case study of hospitality and power in Armenia as a representative of cultures widespread in the high medieval Silk Road world, it emerges that realms of quotidian and encounter, care and transcendence share overlapping and nested spacetimes, contained in and containing both everyday cycles and the potential for transformation.