Alexei Ermolov, the infamous Russian general who ruthlessly brought the Caucasus to heel in the early nineteenth century, understood all too well that peoples of the mountains can at times be rather proficient at what James Scott (2009) has called “the art of not being governed.” From the days of Pushkin to the era of Putin, Russia’s conquest of the Caucasus takes its place in the annals of imperialism as an exceptionally protracted affair. It provides but one example of how expansionary projects of rule sometimes stumble in their attempts to subdue and make legible geographically difficult zones in the face of efforts to protect relative autonomy and self-governance. What is particularly illuminating about Ermolov’s stereotypical figuring of the unruly mountain brigand is, first, an unexpected rhetorical turn that locates the subversion of imperial power not explicitly in the fixities of nature, but in the vicissitudes of culture: the mountain renegade takes refuge not literally in the craggy folds and long shadows of the Caucasus, as Ermolov might at first seem to suggest, but instead finds metaphorical cover under the protection of highland institutions of law. Mountains are here not determinative in undermining Russian sovereignty; and yet, in lending to law the material metaphor of cover, perceptibly they loom, a forceful presence that enables its continual corrosion. Second, there is the conspicuous contradiction at the heart of Ermolov’s contemplation, whereby the peoples of the mountains are both lawless and law-bound at one and the same time. How can the mountaineers be ungoverned when it is precisely the legitimacy of Caucasian principles and regulations of collective association that makes imperial governance less than fully attainable?

This chapter provides our first foray into satrapal conditions in the dahyu of Armenia—both the conditions of subjection imposed by the conjoint efforts of

---

Delegates and Proxies in the *Dahyu* of Armenia

The mountains are full of free and ungoverned people, where renegades can always find refuge under the cover of laws which are contrary to our interests.

—General Alexei Petrovich Ermolov (1820)¹
imperial people and things (governance, in Ermolov’s sense), and at the same time the conditionals or limitations, borne of local social logics, that human–thing collaborations in the mountains may have placed on sovereign prerogative. The essentializing trope of the timeless mountain brigand has no place in this story. And yet it remains the case that evidence for governance in the sense that imperialists like Ermolov have in mind is difficult for us to see among the Achaemenid Empire’s “peoples of the hills” (Burney and Lang 1971). Across the region, delegates and proxies appear to have been in exceedingly short supply. It is an open question whether the empire’s northern highlands were passively “left behind by civilization” (Scott 2009: 9)—a land seen by the Persians as “little more than a wild, inhospitable area of comparatively little value” (Summers 1993: 86) and best suited to deportees and exiles (Briant 2002: 179, 320)—or whether the scarcity of imperial things attests to lifeways that, under the cover of both mountains and customs, were deliberately orchestrated “as adaptations designed to evade both state capture and state formation” (Scott 2009: 9). The question at the heart of this chapter is not one of submission or resistance, compliance or defiance, consensual embrace or contentious refusal. At issue instead is the conjunction of human intentions and object efficacies that can collaborate to create what Scott (2009: 7) calls the “intermediate zone,” neither fully within nor outside the empire, in which lifeways both alternative to and consistent with the principles of imperial sovereignty ambiguously coexist.

In an evidentiary sense, what obtains in this region during the mid-first millennium B.C. is that difficult conjuncture of lives lived lightly on the landscape and lives at the periphery of archaeology’s vision, traditionally fixed on the lowland centers of “civilization.” This chapter is therefore, it must be said at the outset, a study in fragments. I mean this in more than the general sense that holds true of all archaeological inquiry. In this case, the lacunae are truly gaping, for across the approximately 400,000 km² that made up the dahyu of Armenia, targeted archaeological research into the Iron 3 period (ca. 600–300 B.C.) has been virtually nonexistent.² The reasons for this are broadly twofold. The first is a long-standing privilege accorded to the region’s prehistory, and the attendant preoccupation with phenomena that relate to the emergence of the first villages, the first signs of social hierarchy, or the first complex polities. Compounding this tenacious legacy of the social evolutionary paradigm is the equally powerful allure of “civilization,” which persistently draws archaeology’s attention to apical phases of complexity on the highland (best represented by periods of Urartian, Seleucid, Artaxiad, and Roman dominance), when technologies of writing, the arts, urbanism, monumental architecture, and the like serve to emplace the region, however peripherally, in familiar tropes and trajectories of momentous human achievement. The Iron 3 period, a time of neither pristine innovation in the structure of societies nor of autonomous state power, falls between the cracks of these hegemonic
archaeological dispositions. As a result, the fragments available are virtually all the result of happenstance—unsought findings from surveys and excavations designed to investigate earlier periods, chance discoveries from construction or agricultural work, isolated and unscientific acquisitions of the art market.\textsuperscript{3} Despite this state of affairs, it is nevertheless possible to sketch the broad contours of satrapal conditions across the highland, and the workings of a small but compelling collection of delegates and proxies. It is hoped that the necessarily tentative conclusions drawn from such an effort provide the stimulus for future research that might support or force reconsideration of the arguments advanced in these pages.

BORDERS AND FRONTIERS

Rarely have imperial formations sought to create fixed, territorially exclusive borders. For all the color-coded maps that purport the organization of political space to be neatly bounded, more often than not empires “have been unwilling or unable to close their frontiers” (Colás 2007: 19), ever intent on bringing new populations of the known world into their universal embrace. “Agents of imperial rule,” Stoler and McGranahan (2007: 10) note, have often “invested in, exploited, and demonstrated strong stakes in the proliferation of geopolitical ambiguities.” Missions to civilize the benighted or to faithfully deliver on divine will are ill served by hard internal edges and inflexible frontiers.

To the best of our knowledge, the Achaemenids never produced something like a two-dimensional imperial map. Instead, as many scholars have observed (Briant 2002: 180; Herrenschmidt 1976; Lincoln 2012: 43–46; Tourovets 2001: 252; Vogelsang 1992: 96), they rendered their cartographic imaginary through the directional ordering of toponyms or ethnonyms or visual depictions of peoples in various representations of the empire’s territorial possessions. Such “lists,” which varied somewhat from one to the next, would “plot spatial, ethnic, and political relations as a set of concentric circles surrounding a privileged center” (Lincoln 2012: 43). Thus, for instance, the earliest such list appearing on the Bisitun inscription plots Persia in its permanent place at the center, then an inner circle of privileged near neighbors and former great powers, then an outer ring of more distant entities ordered according to cardinal directions, and finally two more remote peoples in the far north and far south. Since later lists included peoples not yet conquered, we may suppose that the Achaemenids produced a cartography of imperial space that was a “model for, rather than model of, what they purported to represent” (Winichakul 1994: 130). In this they were hardly unique. According to Carl Schmitt (2003: 281), “Every true empire around the world has claimed . . . a sphere of spatial sovereignty beyond its borders.”

In virtually every royal representation of the imperial expanse, the dahyu of Armenia is claimed self-assuredly and unequivocally to fall squarely within the
We have already seen the Armenian delegation on the east staircase façade of the Apadana at Persepolis (figures 9, p. 18, and 10, p. 20), bringing as gifts before the king an amphora (likely of silver) and a horse. Indeed, in this studied visual contemplation of the empire's cultural and political geography, Armenia occupies a prominent place as the leading delegation in its row, and thus in close proximity to the king. Root (forthcoming) has suggested that the conspicuous forward positioning of the Armenian delegation, coupled with its clustering with two other groups with which the Armenian delegates share sartorial traits (Medes and Elamites), may signal the region's constitutive place in an emerging imaginary of a pan-Iranian identity. That is, the Armenians are not only included in the imperial vision, but in this one instance they are symbolically accorded cultural prominence. Greek sources, for their part, would appear to attest to the governmental and economic institutions that bound the region to the empire in practical terms. It is from these sources that we learn of powerful satraps with close ties to the crown, and of the dahyu's tributary obligations, which may have taken the form of both silver and horses.

Yet Schmitt's cautionary comment on the imperial habit of laying sovereign claim to territories in excess of effective sovereign control haunts any effort to reckon with the exercise of Achaemenid power in this supposedly constituent subject realm. As we shall see in this chapter, there are awkward silences that tell a different story about the efficacy of rule in this region, silences that press us to ask whether the Achaemenids artfully claimed to fully possess what they never fully mastered. It is noteworthy, for instance, that the Bisitun inscription (see chapter 1) is conspicuously inconclusive with respect to the reconquest of Armenia, leaving open the possibility of less-than-decisive military gains. Not unlike Ermolov, it appears that Darius too had known his share of recalcitrance in the upland plateau of southern Caucasus. And while written sources tell of no other rebellions in the region, there is a curious instability in the figuring of Armenia in the imperial imaginary. In contrast to the prominent placement of the delegation on the Apadana relief, Darius's tomb façade (figure 6, p. 8) places the personification of Armenia in the bottom register of “throne-bearers,” rather far from the Medes and Elamites, who continue to occupy the first and second positions (Root forthcoming). Such visual incon sistency may point to an underlying anxiety surrounding the status and integrity of Armenia within the imperial whole, at least during Darius's reign.

It is in this context that the boundaries of the dahyu refuse neat delineation. Broadly speaking, falling within the compass of this chapter is the highland region that spans west to east, from the northern Euphrates to the Lesser Caucasus, and north to south, from the southern shore of the Black Sea and the low-lying Kura River valley to the western shores of Lake Urmia (map 2). This region, densely crisscrossed with a nearly unbroken web of formidable mountains, is the highest
upland zone of southwest Asia. Geographically and environmentally, it is host to considerable variability. Immediately south of the Great Caucasus mountains are three orographic and vegetative zones: in the west, the low-lying Colchian Plain; in the center, the higher-elevation hills and temperate grasslands of the Iberian Plain; and in the east, the lowland semidesert of the Shirvan steppe. The Kura River provides a southern limit to these low-elevation regimes, running west to east, parallel to the Caucasus Mountains, until it drains into the Caspian Sea. The Kura and its drainages water this central belt of the South Caucasus, except in the far west, near the Black Sea, where the Rioni (Phasis) River dominates. Proceeding further south, in all but the far east, elevations rise once again as the various mountain chains that make up the Lesser Caucasus transition into the highland zone that stretches in a single orographic province as far west as the Anti-Taurus Range. This highland plateau is drained by several major river systems, including the eastward-flowing Araks River and the southward-flowing Tigris and Euphrates. I shall call this rugged, high-altitude plateau variously the dahyu of Armenia or the Armenian highland.

In nearly all directions, other imperial lands neighbored the dahyu, with Achaemenid Cappadocia and Cilicia lying to the west, Mesopotamia and Syria to the south and southwest, and Media to the east/southeast. But the Achaemenid cartographic imaginary suggests that the fuzzy northern frontier of Armenia, conventionally demarcated along the southern edge of Great Caucasus Mountains that bisects the isthmus separating the Caspian from the Black Sea, loosely delimited not only Armenia but also the empire itself. The mountain chain and the lands just beyond, where the Caucasus gives way to the Eurasian Steppe, was no imperial dahyu at all, its inhabitants thus unbeholden to the Achaemenid sovereigns. Armenia was, in other words, a northern bridgehead in the unfinished advance against the Lie (see chapter 1, p. 4).

LANDSCAPES OF AMBIVALENCE AND EVASION: SETTLEMENT PATTERNS

We left the Armenian highland in chapter 4 with an account of the seventh-century B.C. renovation at Erebuni, which entailed the transformation of a typical Urartian fortress complex, characterized by labyrinthine spatial arrangements and correspondingly segmented, regulated activity areas, into a space of congregational politics enabled by the material properties and architectonics of the columned hall. This was, as we saw, an unusual revitalization; the demise of the Urartian Empire is otherwise associated with the repudiation of virtually all of that regime’s most important delegates, namely, the hilltop fortresses that dotted the highland from the plains of Erzurum to Ararat. During the centuries of Urartian control,
the fortresses connected people across vast stretches through shared understandings of how certain topographies and spaces must play a role in the organization of political association. As both a topographic and an architectural monolith, the fortress became the material and symbolic fulcrum of what was, by all accounts, a heavy-handed political apparatus that severely impinged on the social lives of its subjects—at least those in the vicinities of the hilltop citadels. Indeed, the Urartian kings successfully established the fortress as the location par excellence of political power on the highland, standardizing both its operation in built form and its resonance in diverse media (A. T. Smith 2003). Their dependence on the fortress was particularly intense through the period of imperial formation and initial consolidation, when it tightly pulled together bureaucratic, religious, and distributive functions. Fortresses were effective structuring institutions; the practices that took place within and around them reproduced the conditions of possibility that ordered social life. Fortresses worked to make alternative practices unthinkable.

A comparative analysis of surveys conducted across the highland suggests that an ambivalence surrounding the fortress as an indispensable material pivot of social and political life may have extended beyond the most privileged centers of authority during the centuries that followed the unraveling of the Urartian polity.9 To the extent possible, this analysis tracks the fate of the fortress and other patterns of settlement during the sixth through fourth centuries B.C. by examining the topographic position of sites, or their relative siting vertically, on the variegated terrain of the highland, as well as patterns of settlement continuity or change, which can measure the degree to which groups of people went on the move as the political fortunes of the region changed from Urartian to Achaemenid hegemony.10 The analysis draws on eight survey projects (map 3), each having varying strengths and weaknesses in terms of methodology and data publication: the systematic Tsaghkahovit Plain survey, located in the small mountain depression north of Mt. Aragats, and organized under the auspices of Project ArAGATS (Smith, Badalyan, and Avetisyan 2009); the University of Melbourne’s systematic Bayburt Plain survey in the Çoruh River drainage of the northwestern highland (Sagona and Sagona 2004); the unsystematic Ijevan reconnaissance survey, in northeast Armenia’s Kura River drainage, organized by Stepan Esayan under the auspices of Armenia’s Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography (Esayan 1976); the extensive and unsystematic Doğubeyazit and Erciş surveys of the Araks River drainage and wider environs, conducted by Catherine Marro and Aynur Özfirat (Marro and Özfirat 2003, 2004, 2005); the unsystematic southern Lake Sevan Basin survey, organized by Italian and Armenian teams (Biscione et al. 2002); the unsystematic surveys in the Lake Urmia region conducted by German and Italian teams (Belgiorno 1984; Kleiss 1973: 83–89; 1974: 80–82; 1975: 58–60; 1979: 290–298; Kleiss and Kroll 1976: 108–113; 1979: 213; Kroll 1976: 166–170); and the unsystematic Muş Plain survey,
a salvage effort led by American, Canadian, and Turkish researchers (Rothman 1992, 2004; Rothman and Gülriz 1997).

A comparison of the findings from these efforts tentatively suggests that the broad contours of collective life on the highland changed radically during the Iron 3 period. Several regions that were either in the heartland of the Urartian Empire and inscribed with numerous fortress constructions (such as Doğuüneyazıt and Erciş), or that hosted a major Urartian fortress (such as the Lake Urmiya region, with Bastam), were substantially vacated by the time the Achaemenid Empire was ascendant. Nor is there concomitant evidence for new, large settlements in these regions that might have hinted at settlement reorganization rather than regional abandonment. Bearing all caveats of survey methodologies in mind, it is as though there was an exodus from regions that were dense with fortresses occupied during the centuries of Urartian rule, particularly near the major fortresses of the Urartian governmental apparatus. It is reasonable to ask whether the collapse of Urartu created the possibility of social disruption amongst groups in the vicinity of the Urartian fortresses that served to dissociate them from the weakened authorities of the dying regime and relocate elsewhere. Even as several regions that were near Urartu's political establishment witnessed a severe out-migration, some locales that had, as it seems, remained largely beyond the sphere of Urartian control, and had been scarcely occupied during Urartu's ascendancy, came to be settled in the subsequent centuries. In the Tsaghkahovit Plain and in the mountains of Ijevan, for example, social life returned or intensified during the sixth through fourth centuries.

Given that the clearest evidence for out-migration is in the more southern of the surveyed regions on the highland ( Doğuüneyazıt, Erciş, and Urmiya) and that the evidence for in-migration is in the more northern of the surveyed regions (Tsaghkahovit and Ijevan), it is possible that, at a general scale, people were moving northward, perhaps following the removal of Urartian controls that concentrated labor and resources near royal fortresses. A northward movement would also amount to a flow of people further from the Achaemenid centers of power in Iran and Mesopotamia—a spatial separation that may well signal a tactic of evasion from the long arm of the imperial state.

At the same time, the comparison of surveys also suggests that communities were changing their practices and breaking from some of the rules of the past, once promulgated by the fortress. This is apparent not only through departures from once heavily fortressed regions, but also through changes in site location within regions, from higher to lower ground. In those regions that were largely abandoned, there is evidence that groups who continued to inhabit these substantially vacated areas regarded fortresses with some ambivalence. Thus, in the Erciş region, lower-lying sites were favored. In the Doğuüneyazıt region, the numbers of fortress sites and open settlements are equal (in both regions, the numbers of
sites are very low, only four in each). In Urmia, however, the fortress remained an important locale of habitation. Turning to places that evince possible constant levels of settlement intensity—namely Muş, the southern Lake Sevan area, and maybe Bayburt—there may be a trend toward lower-lying sites.\footnote{14}

Not only were people possibly moving away from fortress locations in the Iron 3 period, they were generally moving away from sites with strong associations with the preceding centuries. Several new sites in the southern Lake Sevan region were established, while most of the Iron 2 (Urartian) sites that were abandoned had not been active in the Iron 1 period. Moreover, most of the sites that were continuously occupied had been loci of activity in the Iron 1 period. Similarly, in the Muş region, several new sites were founded in the Iron 3 period. Most of the continuously occupied sites evince deep histories of occupation, reaching back into Iron 1 and the Late Bronze Age. In contrast, the majority of the abandoned Iron 2 sites had been newly founded in the Iron 2 period, and thus these sites were less rooted in local settlement histories.

The pattern in regions that were previously unsettled is particularly interesting. In the Tsaghkahovit and Ijevan regions, there was a strong preference for habitation near or in fortified locales. This may have been a defensive choice, as communities sought protection from threats beyond the dahu’s frontiers. Apart from such strategic considerations, putting down new roots without building (or rebuilding) a fortress may have been regarded as a radical violation of the basic principles of social order, as they had come to be defined by the end of the Iron 2 period. Yet, as we shall see in the next chapter, even in such northern regions, the proclivity toward fortified, elevated dwelling was tempered by a countervailing effort to redefine and reduce the importance of the fortress in sociopolitical life. In sum, despite a tendency toward survey methods that give preference to likely fortress locations, the emerging picture from comparative survey analysis suggests that the role of the fortress changed during the centuries of Achaemenid dominion—perhaps not decisively and perhaps not universally, but nevertheless palpably. It could be said that the entanglements with the fortress began to loosen.

In chapter 4 I suggested that the appearance of the columned hall in various parts of the highland emerged out of a disaffection with the technologies of the complex polity. The coarse-grained picture that side-by-side survey affords adds some weight to this view. I am inclined to attribute (a) the movement away from areas of former Urartian power, and (b) the northward movement away from the core interior zones of the Achaemenid Empire, coupled with (c) the general ambivalence surrounding the fortress, to the very same turn away from the overbearing practices of state control. That is, I associate these settlement patterns with the rejection of institutions of administration and materialized ideologies of social asymmetry. In the next chapter we shall observe, at higher resolution than
comparative survey can provide, the ways in which agro-pastoral communities and the material affiliates with which they were bound collaboratively developed the arts of not being governed. Yet at the regional scale of the dahyu, it is nevertheless possible to point to signs of disengagement, evasion, and ambivalence vis-à-vis the spaces of the complex polity. In terms of interregional politics, mountaineers and mountain landscapes partnered in placing limits on the possibility of effective Achaemenid sovereignty in the dahyu, while local considerations put into question the entanglements with the fortress institution that had previously encouraged a politics of hierarchically regulated political association. It was against this arguably inhospitable backdrop that the empire’s material delegates worked to enforce the terms of subjection.

SILVER DELEGATES

Paramount among these delegates were the precious metal drinking paraphernalia of the feast, an apparatus whose vitality the Persians appear to have well understood. Consider this seal impression (figure 28) from a Persian-era coffin at the Mesopotamian city of Ur (Collon 1996: 74, pl. 20, fig. 10g; Curtis and Tallis 2005: no. 124). Prominently positioned in the center of the scene is a fluted, horn-shaped drinking vessel (known as a rhyton) that terminates in a plastic rendering of the foreparts of a winged sphinx. In the field above the rhyton floats a fluted, one-handled jug of the type used to pour wine into the horn. Below is a flexed arm, which holds the rhyton as though preparing to raise it to a mouth. The arm is a body fragment, a human sherd, whose disarticulation from the body of the reveler contrasts with the integrity of the unbroken vessels that are the focal point of the image. The rhyton, disproportionately large in relation to the arm, is the most assertive participant in this unusual communion of a human part and object wholes.

This unusual glyptic scene unsettles ontological boundaries in more ways than one. For, can the human arm fragment be said to be any more fully human than the human-headed sphinx vessel? And what entity brings vitality to the encounter? Is it the personless arm that holds the vessel, or is it the vessel itself, which dictates the terms of the arm’s exertion? Entirely cleaved from body and mind, the “human” brings to the action no more intention than the vessel, which I suggest plays the determinative role not only by virtue of its centrality in the scene but in the requirements for use that it imposes on the disjoined limb. As we turn to the making of satrapal conditions in Armenia, it is the efficacies of just such vessels of commensal consumption and their conjoint actions with human revelers that come to the fore. In what follows, I examine how a corpus of silver drinking vessels worked to extend into the mountains the material entanglements and sociopolitical values of the imperial court by virtue of both their physical properties and the practical mediations they afforded.
The silver rhyton, a drinking vessel of thin sheet metal with animal foreparts and horn, is a quintessential hallmark of the imperial repertoire of fine consumption vessels. The Achaemenid rhyton takes its place in a long line of metal vessels that played an important part in elite commensality and gift exchange in the Near East since at least the early second millennium B.C. It is likewise but one instantiation of the widespread and exuberant use of various kinds of metal drinking paraphernalia in ritualized feasting events across much of the Mediterranean, Eurasia, and southwest Asia during the first millennium B.C. Allowing for variability in styles, methods of production, and rituals of use across such vast extents, it is nevertheless fair to say that by the mid-first millennium B.C. metal drinking vessels afforded a common sensibility of elite identity, as well as, it must be supposed, an interconnected world of shared metallurgical know-how, unprecedented in

Figure 28. Photo (above) and illustration (below) of a seal impression from Ur (source: Curtis and Tallis 2005, fig. 124, courtesy of Dominique Collon).
their geographic scope. It is in the context of this enduring and widespread field of praxis that the rhyton with animal terminal emerged out of metal workshops during the early decades of Achaemenid rule.

Approaches to these materials can take multiple forms. There are compelling grounds, for example, to blur the boundaries among distinct spheres of metallurgical production and consumption in order to trace the connections that forged a shared Eurasian affection for alcohol imbibed from containers of precious metal. In the interconnected world of the first millennium B.C., there is every reason to suppose that users understood metal drinking vessels as objects of desire and distinction well beyond the bounds of their own social or political communities. And yet, my interest here is to attend precisely to the kinds of work such things did in a particular imperial polity that placed extraordinary, even unprecedented, emphasis on the importance of metal vessels in reproducing the terms of political association, as we have already seen from the Apadana relief discussed in chapter 1. It was in that chapter too that I pressed the case for a prescient recognition in ancient Persian religio-political philosophy of the indivisibility of sovereignty and matter/metal. It is for these reasons that the analysis advanced here examines the role of silver vessels as delegates operating within the broad Achaemenid ecumene, setting to one side the transcontinental connections in which they were also imbricated. Silver vessels either known to be from the dahyu of Armenia or unprovenienced vessels thought to be from Armenia focus these discussions. We begin with the evidence that is less fraught.

In 1968, in the course of construction activities at the foothill of Erebuni (see chapter 4), workers chanced on an astounding discovery: a hoard of five silver vessels, deliberately flattened, and inserted into a “big jug” (bol’shoi kuvshin—Arakelyan 1971: 143). The buried group of smashed objects contained three rhyta in the shape of horns with animal terminals and one goblet-rhyton with a hole in the base, as well as a fifth vessel now lost (figure 29). The goblet-rhyton has a smooth-surfaced neck and shoulder, a body with narrow vertical grooves, and a hole in its base through which drink could pass. One of the rhyta takes the form of a calf’s head, the upper part of the horn adorned with a relief frieze likely depicting a symposium among four figures rendered in repoussé: a man (perhaps Asclepius) seated on a throne, with one hand positioned in a gesture that anticipates the imminent receipt of a drinking bowl, or phiale; a woman who approaches him with just such a bowl; another woman playing double pipes; and a third woman seated on a throne or stool playing a cithara (or lyre). The remaining two rhyta depict recumbent horses, in one case with a straddling rider. They provide further evidence for the close association between Armenia and the horse (figure 9, p. 18). Indeed, if the testimony of the Greek written sources is taken at face value, the horse rhyta from Erebuni would seem to symbolically conjoin into singular objects the dahyu’s twin tributary obligations of silver and horses.
The horse-with-rider rhyton is particularly interesting as a virtually unique example of the form. Whether it depicts a specific individual, as is often proposed, or an archetypal, pan-Iranian horseman, David Stronach (2011: 263) is surely correct in suggesting that the vessel betrays "barely concealed hints of high political ambition." The Erebuni cache is among the few assemblages of precious metal in the territory of the Achaemenid Empire to be securely associated with an excavated site, although precise archaeological provenience is lacking.

Two silver rhyta of uncertain provenience have been linked to Armenia. The Louvre bought one in 1897 from a dealer, who said it came from Erzerum, in today’s eastern Turkey. This bent rhyton (with no pour hole) has a horizontally fluted horn that terminates in a recumbent gazelle. The second was...
acquired by the British Museum in that same year as part of the Franks bequest, which included the notoriously dubious “Oxus Treasure,” though the rhyton and associated silver artifacts were separate, and said to be from “near Erzincan” (not far from Erzurum). The vessel (figure 30) is once again horn-shaped, with partial gilding, and depicts a horned winged griffin with outstretched lion paws and a pour hole in the chest (Dalton 1964). It was with this same bequest that the British Museum acquired three deep silver bowls with rounded bottoms and carinated rims (a form so closely tied to imperial canons of taste that it has come to be known as the “Achaemenid bowl”) and a silver bowl (figure 30) with embossed decoration of lotus flowers, also known as a phiale (another quintessential Achaemenid form). Summers (1993: 96) has conjectured that the “Erzincan” objects were originally found as a set, possibly in a burial. Some have rightly urged caution with respect to the integrity of such sets when they occur on the art market, since they may speak more to the cunning of forgers and the tricks of antiquities traders than to ancient practices of consumption and deposition (Gunter and Root 1998: 11; Muscarella 1977: 165–166). Finally, two additional silver vessels said to be from the dahyu of Armenia take the form of amphorae with zoomorphic handles. The silver gilt animal-handled amphora in the Rothschild collection is vertically fluted, with two spouts at the base, its handles taking the shape of leaping ibexes
(Amandry 1959: Pl. 24). Likewise there are two matching ibex handles from a single lost amphora, one now in Berlin and the other in the Louvre.\textsuperscript{26}

To the best of my knowledge, none of these vessels has been deemed a forgery (Muscarella 2000). Moreover, the purported derivations, while entirely unsupported, are nevertheless not implausible. The Erebuni hoard provides direct evidence that silver rhyta were in circulation in the *dahyu*. While the zoomorphic amphora carried by the Armenian delegation on the Apadana does not offer direct support for the provenience claims of the two amphorae, it does point to an association between the region and the form (even if not an exclusive one).\textsuperscript{27} As for the Achaemenid bowls, their ubiquity across the empire and beyond precludes any assessment of the strength of the provenience claim to Erzincan. What we are left with, then, is the recognition that sound and independent evidence makes the provenience claims on the rhyta and amphorae credible, but still unverifiable. By the most conservative logic, the foregoing discussion, which rests on the assumption that the unprovenienced vessels were deposited somewhere in the *dahyu*, and possibly in the purported vicinities, might be considered a thought experiment on how interpretation could proceed if such vessels were to emerge from secure contexts.\textsuperscript{28}

\textit{Delegate Matter}

How did the material properties of the Erebuni rhyta and the unprovenienced vessels work to conscript users on the highland into relationships that bound the *dahyu* to the empire and compromised regional sovereignty? Phrased another way, what role did silver play in the Achaemenid project of rule? The answer defies a simple brief, but a striking discovery from the excavations of Babylon in 1883 provides an intriguing point of entry into the complexities of the question. Uncovered in that year was a hoard of silver things existent in what can only be called advanced biographical states. There were broken fragments of coins that traced to mints across the eastern Mediterranean. There were melted lumps or sheets of silver in various unshapely states. Most striking of all were the broken pieces of fine jars and bowls in Achaemenid styles: a jar handle in the shape of a winged bull that had been hacked off the rim of the vessel with a chisel (and then further destroyed with blows to the head that left the bull nearly decapitated); a single embossed gadroon from a *phiale*; the right eye and curled forelocks of a bull’s-head vessel—all flattened, crumpled, and twisted, in some cases nearly beyond recognition (Reade 1986; Robinson 1950).

The hoard from Babylon nicely attests to the commingling of two distinct monetary standards in the Achaemenid world, one based on a currency in coinage and the other an unminted currency in weighed silver. While the precise find spot of the Babylon hoard is not known, and thus we cannot pinpoint its location in
the circulatory flows of silver into and out of imperial centers such as Babylon, its composition mirrors what is understood from written sources concerning the payment of taxes and tribute. By all accounts, the already monetized Greek cities of Asia Minor paid their debts in coin, but all tribute-paying lands contributed part of their obligation to the crown in the form of weighed silver. Importantly, only a minimal percentage of the annual silver tribute would be transformed into regal coinage (Briant 2002: 408; Zournatzi 2000). The life cycle of silver payment could in fact take a variety of forms. On clear view in the Babylon hoard is a currency in what is called hacksilver, fragments cut from finished silver objects that, as bullion, could serve monetary functions. Tribute (and a parallel economy in the form of a “voluntary” tax in “gifts” to the crown) often took the shape of silver vessels, assessed by weight, which were used or stockpiled in their given finished forms. There is less evidence for the melting and manufacture of ingots by royal workshops, although that possibility cannot be excluded, and certainly some inflows of silver scrap would find their way to metallurgists in the service of the court, to be assayed and refined (Zournatzi 2000), and then crafted into an array of luxury items that, as we shall see, fueled the empire’s “tournaments of value” (Appadurai 1986). The administration may well have devised an imperial silver quality standard, regulated if not according to a specified purity of silver then to a percentage of copper alloy (Zournatzi 2000).

Textual evidence, both Greek and Persian, make plain that weighed silver also flowed out of imperial coffers in a complex system of redistribution (Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1989). Silver was one of the main media of royal benefaction. Rations to workers were sometimes disbursed in silver (Briant 2002: 422), as were gifts to valued individuals who, in one way or another, earned the king’s favor through good deeds (305, 313). The testimony of Greek writers leaves little doubt that the Achaemenid kings also gave gifts of metal to visiting dignitaries and privileged subjects in the form of finished products like jewelry and silver and gold vessels, whose values were assessed by weight, in addition to their symbolic worth (Briant 2002: 307; Gunter and Root 1998: 23; Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1989; Simpson 2005: 104). Such material gifts were often given on the occasion of a royal banquet. Giving was, as Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1989: 140) notes, the king’s “most important duty,” the mark of good, benevolent, and just kingship. It also of course created reciprocal obligations of loyalty.

Much has been written on silver in the Achaemenid Empire, and it is not my purpose here to survey that field. Before returning to the Armenian highland, what I wish to bring forward from this brief sketch is the ontological implications of a silver economy in which matter and object, substance and form, instrumental and social value are indivisible. Even as some silver things may have enjoyed a long shelf life, they belonged to a system of metal flows in which silver was recurrently transfiguring from the liquid to the solid state, from monetary instrument to iconic
enabler of the feast, from wrought spectacle to hacked fragments of crumpled, folded, twisted metal, from larger to ever-smaller bits of hacksilver, then back into the furnace and on to another finished form. Repeated over and over in unscripted cycles, each material state was liminal, unfixed—an ephemeral repository of what once was and a harbinger of what could come next. It is the elemental properties of silver that make this chameleonic circulation possible, a matter always and ever in a “vital state” (Deleuze and Guattari 1987; see also chapter 1), a nonhuman protagonist that can be fairly said to have kept the imperial machinery in motion no less efficaciously than the imperial agents who were beholden to it.

Silver, in other words, acquired the prerogative to bring about political effects in the Achaemenid world. It took a share in the forces of political reproduction and transformation. As the medium of tribute, it determined the grounds of compliance and noncompliance, of economic viability and vulnerability. As a medium of royal prestige goods and royal gifting, silver also became a “matter” of imperial dependence, a locus of autonomous power, whose continuous and regulated flows were critical to sustaining the sovereign’s prerogative. In chapter 3 I argued that, among other requirements, things of empire are delegates when the imperial establishment is fettered by its own need for the physical substances out of which they are made, such that the polity becomes unviable or inconceivable in the collective absence of such matter. Such delegates sometimes take the form of things whose material substance itself brings about affective responses in their users rather than working only instrumentally to enable practical solutions to everyday requirements. The Achaemenid silver vessels (and other luxury items of silver) were just such “gentle things” (see p. 70).

Let us now return to the material states of the silver vessels from Erebuni and elsewhere in the dahyu. The flattened condition of the Erebuni vessels now invites interpretation as things in arrested transition between utensil and bullion, between whole and fragment. Babken Arakelyan (1971: 154), the first to publish the Erebuni hoard, suggested that the vessels were flattened and stuffed into the ceramic jar in haste, in a moment of crisis—an impending raid, perhaps, in the heady closing years of the empire. Close chronological analysis in recent studies has left open this possibility, and has occasioned comparison to a hoard deposited in a ceramic jug at Pasargadae (Treister 2013, 2015). While I do not dispute that a crisis may account for the abandonment of the jug, the flattened condition of the vessels (given what is known of hacksilver) suggests less a scramble to sequester than the deliberate removal of silver from contexts of consumption and its forced entry into a “new” phase as monetary instruments. A number of factors not born of imminent threat could have provoked such a need to liquidize assets and store them as uncoined silver. Given that, by all accounts, tribute in the form of silver was customarily rendered in finished goods, it is probable that the hoard was not being held in reserve for the crown but was removed from such flows (in which
one or more of the pieces very plausibly once circulated) and made available for smaller economic transactions regulated by weight in silver.\textsuperscript{32} In any case, this much is clear: the vessels’ silver properties thrust users at Erebuni into the same dependencies, material flows, and regulatory mechanisms that bound imperial agents elsewhere.\textsuperscript{33}

It is of course more difficult to comment on the silver of the unprovenienced vessels. I wish to go no further than to address the co-occurrence of the three deep carinated bowls said to be from “near Erzincan.” Studies have shown that Achaemenid silver vessels, specifically the distinctive \textit{phialai}, often occurred in sets, with their combined weights in grams corresponding in round-number equivalence to the Achaemenid coin type known as the \textit{sigloi} (Vickers 2002). A well-known example is the likely set of silver \textit{phialai} associated with the Persian king Artaxerxes I (Gunter and Root 1998). Other supporting evidence for such sets includes the Parthenon inventories, where Achaemenid silver \textit{phialai} are always counted in sets, with their combined weights indicated (9–10), as well as the so-called Darius Vase, which depicts a seated treasurer who is approached from one side by a man carrying as tribute a stack of three \textit{phialai}, while from the other side there approaches an individual presenting his taxes in the form of a sack of coins (figure 31). The combined weight of the three silver deep Achaemenid bowls does indeed correspond to a coin standard, in this case 300 \textit{drachmai}, a Greek currency minted not only on the mainland but also in the Greek regions of Asia Minor, like Lycia, that were a part of the Achaemenid Empire (Carradice 1987).\textsuperscript{34} Meanwhile, the \textit{phiale}, at 541.3 g, corresponds to 100 \textit{sigloi}. The privileged actors of the Armenian highland who may have acquired and used these vessels were ensnared in regimes of value that shaped the Achaemenid economy and were based in large measure on the affordances of silver.

It is impossible to say at what point in their biographies the unprovenienced silver vessels were removed from circulation. But if they were deposited in burials or hoards it would seem once again that, as at Erebuni, highlanders interrupted a possible centrifugal destiny of silver as tribute or gift to the center. It is worth noting in this regard that several delegations on the Apadana relief bear as gifts before the king the deep, so-called Achaemenid bowls like those from “near Erzincan” (Calmeyer 1993; Walser 1966).\textsuperscript{35} And indeed, the one “Achaemenid bowl” in the collection for which chemical composition is known contains a percentage-copper alloy that is consistent with the values Zournatzi (2000) has proposed as a possible Achaemenid standard, suggesting yet again that the vessels tied their users to imperial systems of value and practice.\textsuperscript{36} The vessels from the highland helped make possible the multidirectional silver flows that powered the material and symbolic economy of the empire. They imbricated their users in the cycles of tribute, gifting, royal redistribution, and imperial dependency on silver that materially reproduced the Achaemenid Empire.
Feasting with Delegates

The status of a thing as a delegate hinges on not its material properties alone, but also the practical mediations that such imperial things afford. In what way did silver vessels, like those from Erebuni and possibly elsewhere across the highland, also mediate, through direct somatic encounter, the practices that reproduced the sovereign prerogative to rule? It was through the institution of the feast that these nonhuman things made their own difference to the routines and rituals that sustained the Achaemenid polity. As with Achaemenid silver, much too has been written on the importance of the banquet in the practices and principles of Achaemenid kingship (e.g. Briant 1989; 2002: 286–297; Dusinberre 2013: 114–140; Gunter 1988: 22–30; Henkelman 2010)—ritual events involving the communal consumption of food and drink that conform in various respects to what Dietler (2001) has called “patron-role” and “diacritical” feasts. Like both modes of feasting, the Achaemenid royal banquet entailed “the maintenance of existing inequalities in power relations” (76). Royal feasts always involved the legitimation of the monarchic institution and attendant asymmetries in social and political relations. Such feasts, in accordance with the “patron-role feast,” entailed excessive quantities of food and drink, and were premised not on equal reciprocation but on the reproduction of unequal patterns of hospitality. Consistent with the expectation of generosity that marked the “patron-role” feast, Achaemenid royal banquets entailed royal gifting to guests (nobles, foreign dignitaries, etc.) in the form of metal vessels (among other things) by “the king as omnipotent gift-giver,” the consummate magister of Mauss’s potlatch (Gunter and Root

At the same time, the emphasis on style, through both differential cuisine and the use of luxury drinking vessels, more closely recalls Dietler’s (2001: 85) “diacritical” feasts, in which styles of consumption serve as “a diacritical symbolic device to naturalize and reify concepts of ranked differences in the status of social orders or classes.” As implements for the serving and consumption of wine—that most seminal lubricant of Achaemenid “commensal politics” (Dietler 2001)—vessels of gold and silver, including rhyta, phialai, amphorae, and deep bowls, were of such critical importance to enabling Achaemenid feasts and the sociopolitical relations they forged that, among Greek authors at least, “by the mid-fifth century the association of precious-metal wine-drinking vessels with the Persian elite had practically become a literary trope” (Dusinberre 2013: 118).

Also in keeping with Dietler’s description of “diacritical” feasts, Achaemenid royal feasts were subject to emulation by those who “attempted elevation of status through representational means” (Dietler 2001: 86). Dusinberre (2013: 140) has especially focused on how privileged regional actors in Asia Minor replicated Achaemenid practices of commensality at the local level through both styles of action and the use of metal vessels that worked, in her view, to signify membership in the Achaemenid elite and thereby participate in “establishing, legitimating, and perpetuating imperial authority” (on Thrace, see Ebbinghaus 1999). It is indeed in Asia Minor that we find some of the best evidence for the styles of commensal politics established by the royal court and emulated by regional elites. Controlled and illicit tomb excavations in that region have yielded silver drinking bowls (both phialai and the deep variety), while visual depictions such as the relief frieze on the Nereid monument at Xanthos (figure 32), which shows a reclining banqueter at a drinking party holding a rhyton in one hand and a bowl in the other, inform the embodied performance of the feast (Ebbinghaus 2000). In Dusinberre’s view (2013: 128 and passim), these practices were taken up in Asia Minor through deliberate manipulation on the part of imperial authorities. Mimetic feasting with glass and ceramic “copies” of the silver vessels (or what I discuss at length in chapter 6 as ceramic “proxies”) occurred at a greater social remove from state actors.

To return, then, to the dahyu of Armenia, it is now clear that the silver bowls, rhyta, and amphorae from (or possibly from) the highland constitute imperial delegates on account of their material properties and the practical mediations they would have afforded in the conduct of elite feasting. The vessels would have enabled collective repasts that enforced modes of consumption in accordance with the norms of the Achaemenid banquet. The rhyta in particular imposed demands on their users that forced compliance with imperial practice. We have already seen how the rhyton called for a very particular manner of drinking: the spout at the front required a reveler to pour wine into a bowl or drink directly until the horn was empty, or else perhaps block the orifice with a finger until ready to serve. This
unique kind of vessel placed unusual stipulations on its users, compelling them to continuously abide somatically by the requirements of the form (putting the vessel down when it was full would cause the liquid to spill out of the pouring hole). Rhyta allow little room for bricolage, for artful manipulations of use, but instead entrap users into prescribed embodied practices and enlist in this effort a wider assemblage of things, like jugs and bowls. The ritual meals in which these vessels were used presumably worked to define and naturalize privileged status and the exclusivity of the imperial elite, as well as to channel competition within such raffied circles on the Armenian highland (Dietler 2001: 86). In other words, to some extent, satrapal conditions of subjection were imposed through the work of these delegates, which conscripted highland actors to engage in Persian practices that reproduced their own subordination.

Silver Delegates and Imperial Ideology

Compared to their decisive role as mediators in the routines of Achaemenid commensal politics, less can be said at present concerning the work of silver vessels in sustaining the core principles that underlay Achaemenid sovereignty, another quality that determines a thing’s status as a delegate. Gunter and Root (1998: 26–28) have made the point that dining and wine drinking in the Achaemenid court context would have incorporated cultic dimensions, and while the specifics elude us, they have suggested that the phiale in particular, with its floral forms, may in some way be connected with the realm of the paradise. Drawing on the work of Herbert Hoffmann (1989), Niccolò Manassero (2010: 247–250) has likewise probed the religious, specifically Zoroastrian, significance of the rhyton, in terms of the vessel’s symbolic relation to kingship, libation, cosmic order, flowing liquids, fertility, and purity.

Here I suggest that the animal-handled amphorae may offer greater purchase on the links between Achaemenid feasting and the fundamental tenets of the
imperial politico-religious worldview. My interest here is in the tactile requirements of the two-handed silver vessel, the movements and muscle senses entailed in its use, which I propose may inform its capacity to intervene in forging dispositions of responsibility or affection toward the underlying political values that attached subjects to sovereigns. I arrive at this suggestion by way of Achaemenid glyptics, and one particularly prevalent theme within its iconographic repertoire, that of the “heroic encounter” (figure 33). Against the backdrop of its long and shifting life in western Asiatic glyptic, Mark Garrison and Margaret Root (2001) have carefully discerned the motif’s social significance in the Achaemenid context. They define the heroic encounter as a scene in which “a protagonist exerts power or control over animals or creatures in a manner that explicitly transcends the plausible” (42). In one of its compositional formats (figure 33a), the motif entails a central male figure in direct physical engagement with animals on two sides, often through the seizure of the beasts’ necks, heads or limbs.

The identity of the hero is, as Garrison and Root convincingly argue, deliberately ambiguous—only sometimes marked as royal, but more often intelligible generically as the “Persian Man” conjured in royal inscriptions (Root 1979: 305). The “Persian Man” was a potent and potentially inclusive ideological construct that cued a masculine ideal to which many males could likely relate, given the antiquity and wide distribution of the heroic-encounter theme. It was thus also one to which they could (or should) aspire (Garrison and Root 2001: 57). It is the
“Persian Man” who bears the burden of assisting the kings in their struggle to constitute proper sovereignty, as we learn from the poetic metaphor of a warrior on Darius’s tomb at Naqsh-i Rustam: “the spear of a Persian man has gone forth far.” Indeed, it is with spear in hand that we see one such “Persian Man” on a cylinder seal recovered near the Iron 2–3 site of Horom, to the west of Tsaghkahovit (figure 33b). Although the compositional format of the heroic-encounter theme in this instance differs from the image of heroic control that is of most relevance to the present discussion (figure 33a), this seal from Armenia, very likely a delegate in its own right, would have done its part in extending the ideals behind the “Persian Man” into the Caucasus. Familiarity with the heroic encounter imagery as well as, likely, its sociopolitical associations is also indicated by a seal of similar composition from nearby Vardadzor, on the southwest shore of Lake Sevan (Kara-petyan 2003: fig. 54,53).

The gesture entailed in the images of heroic control depicted on a seal like the one in figure 33a is consonant with that afforded by the animal-handled amphora, whose use demands the single-handed grasp of one or both sides of a leaping beastly body. Across these two thingly domains of image and object there is a “coherence” that reinforces and perhaps co-constitutes their mutual conceptual and practical entanglements (Hodder 2012). The violation of natural scale (that is, the diminutive size of the animal relative to the human who grips it) is inconsequential for this interpretation, for both the seals and the vessels portray or require a gesture of physical engagement with the beasts that transcends the plausible. Taken on their own, then, the vessels may be seen to invoke an immanence just before the domination of prey—an anticipatory moment that can be played out again and again before each seizure of the handles to pour the next round. Through the practice of conspicuous consumption, the vessels could have allowed the individual’s transfiguration into the “Persian Man,” an identity that takes hold as he takes hold of the handles that provide for his metamorphosis into the hero of a dangerous encounter, and the ideal male subject.

Insofar as the heroism of the hunt is what brings the zoological abundance of the paradise into being, it is tempting to speculate that the “vessels of heroic encounter” once again cohere with the themes of the paradise, though this is conjectural. We might also suppose that attendant to the privilege of becoming a “Persian Man” was an obligation in turn to protect the abundance that the wine-filled amphora embodies, just as scenes of hero-encounter in other media (seals and monumental sculpture) are tied in various ways to protection, whether of commodities or spaces (Garrison and Root 2001: 58). The “Persian Man” who comes into being in the grasping of the vessel assumes in return the responsibility to safeguard its contents from danger or unauthorized use and, by extension, perhaps to safeguard the cosmological project in whose name the bounty of the grape has been harvested. Users on the highlands who engaged with the silver zoomorphic
amphorae were, I suggest, bound up in reproducing affects of care toward the core imperial values that orbited around the “Persian Man.”

**ARCHITECTURAL PROXIES**

Two seemingly incompatible interpretations emerge from the comparative survey analysis and the silver delegates. The former, I suggested above, points to the repudiation of the complex polity at the regional scale, a turning away from both the spatial technologies of the fallen Urartian kingdom and the long arm of the contemporary Achaemenid Empire. The latter, I have just concluded, worked effectively to create a class of regional elites who in some measure complied with the norms of Achaemenid political culture. It may be tempting to hypothesize, on the basis of these seemingly opposed phenomena, a deep sociological division, whereby a privileged few—the paradigmatic local collaborators on which so many empires have relied—opted in, while the highland public tried to opt out. But a return to the columned halls of the *dahyu* suggests that architectural proxies do not permit such a comfortable resolution.

It is no coincidence that at least one of the sites to which we now turn is spatially associated with the silver delegates. The fortress of Erebuni, discussed at length in the previous chapter, came to host a columned hall sometime in the late seventh century or soon thereafter. Along with the halls at Nush-i Jan and Godin Tepe, the Erebuni hall would be taken captive by the Achaemenids and provide the rudimentary template for the empire’s most salient architectural delegates (figure 18, p. 98). A reasonable terminus post quem for the abandonment of Erebuni would correlate with the latest vessel in the silver hoard discussed above, which is to say the third quarter of the fourth century B.C. The second site relevant to this discussion is the small hilltop fortress of Altintepe, located on the Erzincan Plain (map 2, p. 86). It lies approximately 100 km south of the Bayburt Plain, discussed in the comparative survey analysis as an area of active settlement during the Iron 3 period, and possibly a destination for groups migrating into the area (Khatchadourian 2008: 360–364). Altintepe sits atop a steep, conical mound that rises up at the eastern end of the plain (Özgüç 1966, 1969). During the Iron Age, it hosted three periods of occupation. After an initial Urartian phase, the site was reconstructed in a second Urartian phase, which is marked by a temple surrounded by colonnades, a menos wall and ancillary storerooms, a structure to the south (perhaps a hall of two rows of columns), tombs, and a buttressed fortification wall. During the third phase, a columned hall was built atop the earlier structure to the south of the menos (figure 34). The hall was made of thick mud-brick walls stacked atop a stone socle. Eighteen wooden beams set on poorly finished round stone bases supported the structure’s roof. Access to this space (44 × 25.30 m) was afforded through an entrance in the
east. Apart from a hearth in the hall’s northeastern quadrant, there were no preserved fixed architectural features; however, fresco fragments were found on the floor of the hall (Özgüç 1966: 47–58). The dating of this third phase is a matter of debate in the specialist literature; for the time being, I regard the hall at Altıntepe as one built only after the Achaemenids had already taken captive this highland architectural innovation and transformed it into a delegate of paramount efficacy in the reproduction of imperial sovereignty (see chapter 4). Some have suggested

**Figure 34.** Site plan of Altıntepe (courtesy of Geoff Summers; source: Summers 1993, fig. 2, redrawn from Özgüç 1966, pl. VI).
a possible linkage between the hall at Altintepe and the silver vessels said to be from “near Erzincan” (Simpson et al. 2010: 438; Summers 1993: 93). While this is of course only speculation, the two forms of evidence do point to different patterns of sociopolitical activity that would seem to be reserved for the dahyu’s more privileged actors.

By the late sixth century B.C. the columned halls at Erebuni and Altintepe would have shared a definite affiliation with the political landscapes of the Achaemenid heartland (see chapter 4). After being taken captive in the early decades of the Achaemenid project, the highland halls were invariably repositioned within the universe of the empire’s nonhuman architectural participants. Now analogous to a distinctly imperial built form, halls such as those at Erebuni and Altintepe took on the role of representatives of the material delegates in Persepolis and Susa. Indeed, it is the very architectonic analogy between the halls of Fars and Khuzistan and the dahyu that long led scholars to typologically and chronologically situate the latter in an Achaemenid frame of reference.

In chapter 3 we learned that proxies are involved in the work of political representation, and that such work emerges out of assignments to act that derive from both human and nonhuman sources. Rather than standing in for a person, a material proxy stands in for one or more things, and if “loyal” in its effects, it faithfully reproduces the practical affordances and semiotic mediations of the delegate for which it substitutes. In the case of Erebuni and Altintepe, viewing the halls as dutiful proxies would mean understanding them as locales for the efficacious replication, on a more modest scale, of the political routines and religio-political claims linked to the delegate halls of the heartland. We would speak of the halls as venues for audience, for hierarchical relations between superiors and inferiors, for (as some have) the activities of ruling satraps of the dahyu (Sagona 2004: 313; Summers 1993: 96; Ter-Martirosov 2001: 160; 2005a: 50). Yet when conceptualizing imperial matter, I argued that proxies invariably “share in or take power from the represented” (Taussig 1993: 2), potentially leading to the slow erosion of those powers. And they can go even further than this, becoming unruly vis-à-vis the material delegates they represent. I discussed three opportunities for slippage that inform whether proxies can be said to be rapscallion siblings to their delegate partners. One of these pertained to the company that proxies keep, or the immediate assemblage of humans and things with which they collaborate in the production of social life. Site formation processes coupled with the methods of excavation at both Erebuni and Altintepe prohibit a consideration of this factor, as we remain in the dark about the object assemblages once associated with these buildings. Yet it is nevertheless possible to assess the opportunities for roguery on the basis of the halls’ material properties and the human designs that may have surrounded their construction and use. Doing so will cast doubt on the interpretation of these halls as effective representatives of their distant delegates.
The Erebuni and Altuntepe halls entangled their builders and users in rather different material webs than did their counterparts in Fars and Khuzistan. For instance, the socles of both buildings were made of local andesite blocks, a volcanic rock with a deep history of use as a building material on the highland, and one quite different from the gravel-and-shingle foundations and the gigantic limestone slabs that underlay the mud-brick walls of Susa and Pasargadae, respectively. A further deviation at both sites is the stone used for the bases. In the case of Erebuni, the bases were made of thick slabs of tuff, a type of rock, formed from volcanic ash, that is readily available in southern Caucasia, while at Altuntepe, andesite bases from the earlier Urartian constructions were reused. Neither of these materials, andesite or tuff, figures in the columned halls of the heartland. These are not materials that entrapped the most privileged agents of empire into relations of dependence, and the viability of imperial sovereignty was in no way contingent on their extraction and regulation. While the halls of both regions required the regular maintenance of mud-brick superstructures and wooden beams, these two materials were long in use on the highland, and thus imposed no new dependencies, just as the stones used in the halls of the dahuymu merely resituated users within continuing relations of reliance on local masons already skilled at working the locally available materials. As I argued in chapter 3, the differing relational properties of delegates and proxies between their chemical composition and the human groups they entrap give rise to a potential for proxies to bend the rules, by virtue of their very material constitution.

For the case at hand, perhaps the most compelling evidence for the roguery of the highland proxies relates to the human designs that account for their built forms. We may note, for instance, the numerous formal and architectonic deviations from the major columned halls of the imperial heartland: their occurrence in rectangular versus square plans (not seen in any of the major halls of Fars after Cyrus and perhaps Cambyses), the absence of porticoes and corner towers, the limited number of points of entry, the significantly diminished scale, the use of roughly finished columned bases, and, not least, the siting of the halls atop fortified hills rather than on open plains. At Erebuni, users during the Achaemenid era maintained the original seventh-century form that is best associated with the halls at Godin and Nush-i Jan. Even more notably, at Altintepe, builders and users replicated the more “archaic,” distinctly highland features of hypostyle construction. In both cases, there are few indications of earnest efforts at imperial emulation, but instead an allegiance to the hypostyle hall as originally instantiated in the highland during the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.

Ambiguity remains, however, for we cannot speak here of a politics of resistance or rejection. In light of early Achaemenid acts of captivation, the materiality of the halls and the practices they afforded could have been consonant with both highland and heartland political values, even despite differences in material,
design, and the topographic siting of the buildings. That is, the very same features that had once, during earlier centuries, enabled practices of political association conjured as an alternative to political complexity—namely, the denial of frontal orientation through a relentlessly symmetrical forest of columns and the affordance of participatory indoor congregation, undirected movement of traffic, and unfixed patterns of interaction—were now also compatible with an Achaemenid worldview. That worldview had transformed the columned hall into a venue for the performance of monarchical authority and a material instantiation of the hierarchical compact between sovereigns and subjects (see chapter 4).

What I would like to suggest, then, is that the ambiguity surrounding the highland halls during the mid-first millennium B.C. may be less (or at least not only) a function of a fragmentary archaeological record than the very work of crafty “secondary consumption” and the tactical arts of “making do” that make for unruly proxies (Certeau 1984). The users of the halls could have preserved the distinctly highland political practices that first took shape in the pre-Achaemenid period, in just the same way as the buildings preserved highland materials and architectural forms. Indeed, in this work the halls themselves were material accomplices, inviting human efforts at gentle play in the arts of consumption. Yet at the same time users to some degree remained within bounds, conforming to expected norms of political association by operating within a built landscape that had become, by this time, quintessential to the Achaemenid political project. The latter they did not only by adopting a spatial idiom that would have been deemed highly appropriate to imperial agents, but also by partaking, with silver bowls, rhyta and the like, in empire-wide elite institutions of commensality. Greater clarity is not to be had here, in part, I suggest, because clarity was not on offer in the interior of an imperial province that increasingly appears to exemplify what Scott (2009: 7) called an “intermediate zone,” neither fully within nor outside the empire, a zone in which a sociopolitics of conformity and autonomy could coexist. The question that inevitably arises from the recognition of the fragility of sovereignty in the dahyu is: What might an imperial response to such conditions of ambiguity look like? That is, what architectural delegates could be tasked to more effectively advance the making of acquiescent subjects?

ARCHITECTURAL DELEGATES

It is at the northern frontier of the dahyu that we see the clearest evidence for an imperial response to the frailty of sovereignty on the highland. In turning in this last section to today’s northwestern Azerbaijan, it would seem, according to the discursive tropes of the Achaemenid cartographic imaginary, that we are approaching the edges of their known world. And yet, it turns out that these edges were in fact remarkably porous boundaries. Archaeological evidence indicates
in no uncertain terms that communities of the mountains and the temperate grasslands residing beyond the Kura River valley engaged with the imperial polity to their south through the regular traffic of things and associated aesthetic sensibilities. From the Dnieper basin in the west to the Altai region in the east—and with a particular concentration in the south Urals—excavated burial mounds have revealed objects that Mikhail Treister has termed “Achaemenid,” “Achaemenid-inspired,” or in the “Achaemenid style”: seals and sealings, elaborate silver and gold vessels (e.g. rhyta and bowls), jewelry (e.g. torques and bracelets), and weapons (e.g. a knife and sword—Fedoseev 1997; Treister 2010, 2014; Treister and Yablonsky 2012). Closer to the presumed frontier itself, in regions of modern Georgia north of the Kura River, researchers have uncovered wealthy burials (in most cases postdating the Iron 3 period), including the well-known Akhalgori and Kazbegi hoards, containing heirloomed Achaemenid silver vessels as well as other local finery of gold, glass, and pottery in distinctively Achaemenid styles (Knauss 2005, 2006). The northward flows of objects across the mountains and into the steppe thus plainly point to a permeable frontier, routinely penetrated through patterns of interaction that likely included a combination of gift exchanges, trades, and raids. Indeed, the possibility of lucrative interactions across this frontier may partly explain the hypothesized northern movement of settlement activity in the highland during the mid-first millennium B.C. Ijevan and Tsaghkahovit are the two surveyed regions that lie closest to the northern frontier, and it is in these regions where we saw the arrival or intensification of settlement activity.

It is also in these northeasterly regions of southern Caucasus, at the edges of the dahyu of Armenia or of Media, that we find the clearest case of an Achaemenid architectural delegate anywhere outside the imperial heartland, at the site of Karačamirli.41 The recently discovered settlement is located in the Šamkir District of modern northwestern Azerbaijan, at the confluence of the Kura River and its southern tributary, the Shamkirchay (Babaev et al. 2007; Babaev and Knauss 2010; Babaev et al. 2009; Knauss et al. 2010, 2013). Ongoing investigations have uncovered a spacious compound consisting of a large rectangular enclosure (450 × 425 m) detected through geophysical survey. At the center of the enclosure, on the level hill of Gurban Tepe, are the remains of a large plastered mud-brick building (65.50 × 62.90 m) marked by a columned hall (figure 35). The hall was entered though a portico in the east and surrounded on the remaining three sides with subsidiary columned rooms (Knauss et al. 2013). The building’s mud-brick walls, whose component blocks conformed in their dimensions to Achaemenid standards (14), rested atop a gravel foundation. At 27 by 27 meters, the columned hall at Karačamirli is just under half the size of Darius’s hall at Susa. The hall’s roof was supported by six rows of six wooden columns, which rested on limestone bases in the form of a circular torus on a square doubled-stepped plinth. In addition
to these bases, which are formally comparable to limestone column bases from Persepolis and Susa, found in situ in two rooms of the west wing were bell-shaped bases that also mirror bases from the heartland sites and happen to measure 52 cm in diameter, a Persian royal cubit (15). Notably, the interval between the rows of
columns in the hall is not uniform, such that there exists a slightly pronounced central aisle that leads from the doorway to a platform against the western wall. On the whole, the structure on the central hill of Guban Tepe resembles in plan the Palace of Xerxes at Persepolis, with its central hall, single portico, and surrounding colonnaded rooms. According to Knauss and colleagues, the building is best understood as a palatial complex that conjoined activities of residence, administration, and audience, overseen by a Persian official appointed to these northern limits of the empire.

In direct alignment with Gurban Tepe, atop a small mound that falls along the course of the eastern perimeter wall, excavations have revealed a large mud-brick building (figure 36) measuring 22 by 23 meters and consisting of three columned areas (two porticoes and a central hall), flanked symmetrically on the north and south by long and narrow rooms (Babaev et al. 2007; Knauss et al. 2010). The bell-shaped limestone column bases carried wooden columns and capitals that supported a flat roof estimated to have reached a height of around 6 meters. The overall architectural design suggests that the structure was a gate, or propyleion, and its closest formal parallel is the tripylon gate at Persepolis. Between the propyleion and Gurban Tepe, and indeed in most of the area surrounding the central mound, the apparent absence of built remains suggests to the excavators an open, garden space or “paradise” akin to the one at Pasargadae and, perhaps at one time, Persepolis (see chapter 4; Knauss et al. 2013: 19).

The details of the stonework, the dimensions and regularity of the mud bricks, the use of gravel foundations, the square plan of the hall, the overall plan of the
gate, and the possible presence of an expansive garden suggest that Karačamirli was the work of designers and craftpersons deeply familiar with architectural canons and techniques elaborated at the imperial centers in the heartland. Corroborating this view is the utter absence of comparable traditions in the Kura River region prior to the sixth century B.C. Based on ceramics as well as architectural parallels with Persepolis, the investigators date the founding of Karačamirli to the reign of Xerxes or his successor, Artaxerxes I, which is to say, some time during the fifth century B.C., after 486.

What makes the complex at Karačamirli a delegate? With regard to its material properties, the columned hall (and associated buildings) reproduced the same dependencies as those that ensnared imperial agents in Khuzistan and Fars. The hall's users and builders at Karačamirli, just like those at Susa and Persepolis, shared a common reliance on gravel, limestone, timber, and mud brick—and on craftpersons with the skills necessary to acquire and work them in accordance with imperial measures and formal templates. The maintenance of the hall at Karačamirli, just as at the heartland sites, would therefore have imposed the same obligations of care. In its material constitution, the columned hall on Karačamirli's Gurban Tepe is the clearest conceivable case of an architectural delegate outside of the imperial heartland.

In terms of its mediating role in the practices of political association, the hall enabled collective gathering less in the tradition of the congregation (as at Ere-buni and Altintepe) and more in accordance with the sovereign's requirements for audience and ceremonial reception, as had been the case for the columned halls of the heartland since Darius. It is in this regard that the defined central aisle inside the hall, which is oriented toward the raised platform in the western wall, is particularly notable. Also in keeping with the halls of Pasargadae, Susa, and Persepolis, the Karačamirli hall's columns worked, in assemblage with the probable surrounding garden, to realize the exalted cosmological aspirations of the Achaemenid establishment that I discussed in the previous chapter. That is, the columns here collaborated with those of southwestern Iran to uphold the edifice of empire and recreate a small refuge where Ahuramazda's original creation could endure, uncorrupted by the pernicious Lie. Significantly, the columned hall at Karačamirli produced these effects on an imperial frontier, where it was poised as the material vanguard against the unknown world that lay beyond the Achaemenid dynasty's (and hence Ahuramazda's) putatively just embrace.

The excavators of Karačamirli have described the site as a case of “imitatio regis” (Knauss et al. 2013: 26). But its buildings are in no way mimetic, least of all the columned hall. Rather, by virtue of the material dependencies it put in place, the practical affordances of its use, and its complicity in sustaining the political and cosmological values critical to Achaemenid imperial sovereignty, the Karačamirli hall is in every respect an archetypical delegate that shared in the prerogatives
of imperial sovereignty with its human creators and architectural partners in southwestern Iran. The hall and associated complex no doubt created conditions of compromised sovereignty among communities in the Kura River basin and surrounding regions. The building would have required the conscription of local labor and the exploitation of local resources for its construction and maintenance. It quite possibly facilitated the collection of taxes. And it undoubtedly transformed the lived experience of a landscape that had never before witnessed such monumentality or participated in the attendant institutions of power.

CONCLUSION

Let us now return to where this chapter began, to questions of evasion in the mountains in response to the designs of distant imperial sovereigns. Rephrased in terms of the logics of satrapal conditions, we return to assessing the role of things in forging both the experience and the limits of imperial sovereignty in this dahyu. In chapter 1, I explained that, in one of two senses, an inquiry into satrapal conditions fixes its gaze on the interventions of things as efficacious participants in the distributed work of aspirational sovereignty. In this sense, the satrapal condition is concerned with the ongoing, everyday making of acquiescent subjects who, like the atlas figures on the Achaemenid reliefs, “uphold” the imperial project through imposed, encouraged, or even chosen entanglements with things that, to varying degrees, transform habits, persons, and political and social lives. The delegate silver vessels entangled their users in empire-wide material dependencies of the Achaemenid elite, and afforded practices surrounding the consumption of food and drink that were inextricably tied to the royal court. They worked to produce privileged actors with sufficient commitment to the imperial project to ensure that the dahyu met the crown’s annual tribute obligations. Likewise, the columned hall at Karačamirli extended into the Caucasus political practices of public gatherings that brought sovereigns and subjects face to face, and the associated principles of collaborative hegemony. This architectural delegate would have, through its own material capacities, transformed the lived experience of the Kura region, calling on local communities to work, gather, and contribute in the name of the crown.

However, the satrapal condition is not exhausted by experiences of subjection, but refers as well to the inherent limitations on imperial sovereignty that arise from the inevitable dependencies on the practical action and material entanglements of its subjects. The evidence may be threadbare, but it is sufficient to discern that the “people of the hills” also had their say in establishing the limits of sovereign prerogative in the dahyu even after the Achaemenid “enclosure movement” (Scott 2009: 4) to integrate and control the Armenian highland was underway. The tentative picture that emerged from the analysis of regional settlement patterns suggested a movement away from the spaces of former Urartian power and
possibly a northward movement away from the reach of imperial controls. Consistent with these efforts were those of the proxy halls at Erebuni and Altintepe, which, in their conformity to the seventh-century buildings of the highlands, worked together with their human users to uphold local political values developed in the preconquest period that were premised on the repudiation of strictly hierarchical figurations of political authority. They helped forge a *dahyu* that was, judging by all available archaeological evidence, uninterested in, if not averse to, the technologies of imperial governance. The proxy halls enabled local leaders to act differently, but within bounds, to incorporate old ways of being and governing into the new. Analogies between highland and heartland spatial practices could have allowed the subtle attenuation of effective imperial rule, as the halls enabled everyday forms of semi-autonomous action that were most immediately consistent with the “localized forms of sovereignty” (Humphrey 2004: 420, 435) of the recent past. The halls played a part in the workings of regulated autonomy on the highland, in negotiating the quiet bargains that made Achaemenid imperial hegemony possible and fragile at one and the same time.

There is reason to think the Achaemenid sovereigns were uncertain whether they would get the better end of those bargains. In the fifth century B.C., king Xerxes ordered that an inscription be placed high on a rock cliff on the southern façade of the fortress at Tushpa, former capital of the Urartian kingdom, on the eastern shore of Lake Van (figure 37). The text was carved on a blank niche chiseled into the precipice by his father, Darius. It reads:

> A great god is Ahuramazda, the greatest of the gods, who created this earth, who created yonder sky, who created man, created happiness for man, who made Xerxes king, one king of many, one lord of many.

> I (am) Xerxes, the great king, king of kings, king of all kinds of people, king on this earth far and wide, the son of Darius the king, the Achaemenid.

> Xerxes the great king proclaims: King Darius, my father, by the favour of Ahuramazda, made much that is good, and this niche he ordered to be cut; as he did not have an inscription written, then I ordered that this inscription be written.

> Me may Ahuramazda protect, together with the gods, and my kingdom and what I have done. (Kuhrt 2007: 301)

In political terms, the Tushpa inscription served to “rebrand” Tushpa’s mountain bluff as a landscape of submission to a foreign power. In carving the niche and inscription at this fortress, the heart of the former Urartian Empire, Darius and Xerxes were making a claim on the foundations of authority that had long prevailed in the region, now remade as a *dahyu* of empire. But there can be little doubt, this was not a monument meant for mere mortals. Its location on the high craggy tor made it difficult to see, and in a region with virtually no trace of literacy, it would have, in any event, been unintelligible to most observers. What calls for
our attention, therefore, is the cosmological connotation of the text. Why would the kings have placed such an encomium to Ahuramazda—surely the intended audience of the inscription—in this of all dahyāva? This chapter’s account of the major delegates and proxies from Armenia helps explain Xerxes’s pious entreaty for divine support. For it suggests that the mountainous dahyu—a land that substantially constituted the imperial interior even as it marked the empire’s porous northern frontier—was, at least in the time of Xerxes, a place where Ahuramazda’s protection in realizing the aspirations of Achaemenid sovereignty was still very much in need.