The modern understanding of political association has centered resolutely on the person of the citizen, whose interactions with other members of the body politic establish and reproduce the possibilities and limits of sovereignty. However, rarely do we interact with one another directly as citizens. Rather, a vast assemblage of things, from ballots and bullets to crowns and regalia to licenses and permits incessantly intrudes upon our political relations. What role has this assemblage played in the historical formation of our political practices? This lecture examines the transformation of communities in the Caucasus from small-scale Early Bronze Age villages committed to an ideology of egalitarianism to Late Bronze Age complex polities predicated on radical inequality, organized violence, and a centralized apparatus of rule. These formidable social transformations were made possible by the efficacious operation of a vast machinery that reordered human communities, forging the polity in the articulation of things and persons along three linked dimensions: sense, sensibility, and sentiment. It is by attending to these points of articulation between our things and our selves that we can reverse engineer the enduring political machine.

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