By moonlight, the ruins appear ... soul-disturbing... . And here again [are] the mournful appearance of the wretched, black-fated cemetery city, and the deep, dismal wails of the Akhuryan [river].

—S. M. Tsotsikian, 1914

Ani was a mysterious place in the tales my grandmother told me when I was a child. A dead city in daytime, a living city at night. The streets come to life, the shops open up, the workshops go into activity. [The] scent of hot bread come[s] from bakeries. The houses light up... . Ani is the reason I chose archaeology as my profession.

—Participant, Kars Stakeholder Workshop, 2010

Visitors often describe Ani as mysterious and haunting. Located on a remote triangular plateau overlooking a ravine separating Turkey from Armenia, this medieval ghost city was once one of the Silk Road’s cultural and commercial centers. Now it is the largest cultural heritage site in eastern Turkey. Ani boasts extraordinary ruins of great diversity: churches, mosques, a fire temple, ramparts, palaces, and rock-carved dwellings built over the centuries by successive Christian and Muslim dynasties. However, its most celebrated monuments are Armenian churches from the tenth through the thirteenth century (Figures 1 and 2). Ani’s inextricable link to this Armenian Christian layer is expressed by its medieval moniker, “The City of 1001 Churches.”

Ani is currently at the center of an ambitious preservation campaign spearheaded by the Republic of Turkey’s Ministry of Culture and Tourism (MCT), supported by a historic partnership of the ministry and the World Monuments Fund (WMF), financed in part by the US Department of State’s Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. Ani’s possible nomination to the UNESCO World Heritage List has been announced; indeed, in April 2012, Turkey added Ani to its “tentative list” of properties suitable for eventual inscription on the list.

These high-profile government initiatives occur at a time of unprecedented deliberation within Turkish civil society about the country’s foundation and modern history, often articulated through cultural heritage. An ongoing and contested debate within civil society questions the tenets of official Turkish historiography, including the notion of a monolithic nature of Turkish identity. The discussion could be described as a rediscovery of the past and the religious and ethnic diversity of Turkey’s society; it seeks to uncover and acknowledge repressed episodes of the twentieth century.
Figure 1 Plan of Ani, after Nicolai Iakovlevich Marr and Hovsep Orbeli, redrawn with additional material by Raymond Kévorkian and Adèle Kamsarakan (from Raymond Kévorkian, ed., Ani: Capitale de l’Arménie en l’an mil [Arles, France: Actes Sud, 2001]).

Partial key:

9 Palace; near 30, Lion’s Gate; 51 Church of the Redeemer; 53 Church of Abughamrents; 73 Cathedral; 82 Church of St. Gregory of Tigran Honents; 95 Mosque of Manuchhir; 96 Medieval bridge.
Foremost in these rediscoveries has been the destruction of Anatolia’s Armenian communities through genocide. The civil society debate continues in the face of significant resistance and suppression, such as the prosecution of intellectuals whose public statements some may perceive as “insulting” to the Turkish nation or government institutions. The temporal convergence of the official MCT restoration and the public debate about non-Muslims in the late Ottoman Empire has positioned Ani at the center of dialogue about the ambiguities of preservation and the politics of cultural memory in contemporary Turkey. This debate resonates worldwide because of Ani’s international prominence as an architectural masterpiece; for Armenians globally Ani is a sacred place, a central cultural reference, and a symbol of nationhood.

Until recently, Ani was better known as an endangered heritage site than as a showcase for preservation. Over the course of the twentieth century, the integrity of its monuments has been threatened by natural disasters as well as human ravages of war, neglect, looting, and intentional damage. The WMF included Ani on its “watch list” of monuments in danger in 1996, 1998, 2000, and again in 2002. Moreover, in 2010, the Global Heritage Fund designated Ani as one of twelve cultural heritage sites in the developing world “on the verge” of vanishing. Preservation or even maintenance has been challenging owing to the site’s remote location, seismic activity, and sheer size, as well as its presence in the economically disadvantaged province of Kars. In addition, Ani is located on a sensitive international border. Once separating NATO from the Soviet Union, the border of the Republics of Armenia and Turkey has been closed since 1993, and the countries do not have diplomatic relations.

Ani’s centrality to Armenian history and culture has made political and ideological considerations inevitable in preservation decisions by the authorities. For Turkish state institutions, the history of Armenian presence in Anatolia constitutes a politically charged issue. Most sensitive is the legacy of the Armenian Genocide of 1915–22. Although the genocide took place during the Ottoman Empire, the Republic of Turkey pursues an official policy of denial. Apart from historical events, the Turkish state’s current treatment of its citizens whose religion differs from the Sunni Muslim majority has come under scrutiny. Non-Muslims, especially Christians and Jews, are extremely vulnerable in Turkey today, where they face discrimination and state-sanctioned or state-condoned violence. The inherently contradictory phrase “indigenous foreigners” (yerli yabancılar) used by the Turkish courts to describe aboriginal Christians captures the separate-and-unequal situation of Turkish citizens of Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek descent. In short, while Turkish civil society engages in an unprecedented travail de mémoire, the state’s position on key sensitive issues remains relatively unchanged.

Consequently, Ani’s state of preservation or disrepair is necessarily located at the intersection of politics, history, memory, and bureaucracy. Numerous, diverse institutions and groups, local and global, wealthy and cash-strapped, claim a stake in Ani. Within Turkey, in addition to the government as represented by the MCT, stakeholders include the municipality of Kars, which has tried to harness Ani’s tourism potential, as well as residents of the village of Ocaklı near the ruins, whose homes use stones harvested from the monuments. Moreover, the Republic of Armenia considers Ani a key component of its own national history, and the State History Museum in Yerevan devotes a special hall to it. Elsewhere, the worldwide diaspora, consisting mostly of descendants of survivors of the Ottoman Armenian Genocide, considers the medieval city an important religious and communal place; “Ani” is one of the most popular given names for Armenian women. Turkish, Armenian, and international nongovernmental organizations have championed Ani as one of their causes. The number of prestigious international heritage organizations investing in Ani underscores its worldwide significance and emphasizes the widespread belief that its architecture is a critical part of humanity’s shared heritage. Without the benefit of extensive institutional
support, independent heritage activists have harnessed the potential of “virtual heritage,” exemplified by the website VirtualAni.org. Clearly, these parties are asymmetrical in terms of their financial resources and access to the site.

This article traces the evolution of Ani as an object of preservation and the subject of debate about heritage since the late nineteenth century. Ani poses dilemmas shared by other cultural heritage sites in danger in postconflict societies: its extraordinary architecture underscores its importance for world heritage while it also presents economic opportunity through tourism, yet its history prompts questions about a painful recent past that the state refuses to acknowledge. The situation recalls other complex, contested cultural sites such as Jerusalem, Belfast, Mostar, Bamiyan, or Beirut.  

Ani is a unique monument anchored in the contemporary politics of Turkey, Armenia, and the region, but it has broader implications for the theory of heritage applicable to other layered and disputed sites in the eastern Mediterranean and more generally in societies having experienced war, civil conflict, or genocide. I argue that in such situations it is not possible to preserve a cultural heritage site while avoiding questions about painful histories. Such contested heritage sites burden preservationists and observers with specific responsibilities. Such sites are often instrumentalized for political ends by authorities or other groups; they are politicized in official memory as well as in unofficial counter-memory in ways that are neither equivalent nor symmetrical.

Complicating matters are questions about the identification and inclusion of stakeholders and about ensuring responsible and sustainable preservation. Even further, I argue that Ani, like other contested heritage sites, can be more than representative of cultural identity. Cultural heritage can and should play a privileged role in the exploration of difficult pasts. Heritage can be a medium for reconciliation rather than only contestation. This is undoubtedly a fraught and complex issue. Recent preservation projects like the Old Bridge at Mostar revealed that the bridge’s postwar reconstruction, propped up by funding and awards from international organizations, functioned as a powerful emblem of political unification, but communal reconciliation on the ground remained elusive, rendering the reconstruction a hollow symbol. Mostar’s iconic bridge, burdened with the symbolism of unification and reconciliation, is something of a cautionary tale, a reminder of both how difficult and how pivotal reconciliation is to postconflict societies. Given its centrality in the politics of preservation and memory, as well as the multilayered nature of the issues involved, understanding Ani is critical to the larger theory and practice of contemporary cultural heritage.

The Site

Ani’s urban design and architecture take full advantage of its geographical setting (see Figures 1 and 2). On a high plateau delimited by two ravines, the site offers natural defenses on three sides. Inhabited since the Bronze Age, Ani flourished in the tenth and eleventh centuries when it became the capital of a medieval Armenian kingdom. Later under Byzantine, Seljuk, and Georgian sovereignty, it maintained its status as a commercial and cultural center on the Silk Road. The Mongol invasion, coupled with a devastating earthquake in 1319 and changing trade routes, marked the city’s decline. It was all but deserted by the eighteenth century.

Merely getting to Ani is a challenge. It is located 26 miles (about a 45-minute drive) from Kars, the closest city and the capital of Kars Province. Kars airport is served only by domestic Turkish airlines.17 Bus service between Kars and Ani is infrequent. The nearest inhabited village is Oçaklı, a farming village with little infrastructure. Since Ani is administered by the Kars Museum under MCT jurisdiction, visiting Ani for any length of time requires a permit and an official guide provided by the museum. As the coleader of a tour of Ani for the Friends of the American Research Institute in Turkey in 1996, I was warned repeatedly by Kars Museum employees and the assigned official guide about photography restrictions and advised that border guards in the Republic of Armenia could fire upon us (although none were visible). These restrictions relaxed somewhat after 2004 with the site’s demilitarization.18

Ani comprises over 78 hectares, some of which is inaccessible. An average visit lasts about five hours.19 The visitor approaching from the north faces the impressive outer ramparts and enters the city at Lion’s Gate (Aslanlı kapı). Two precipices define the site: the valley of the river Arpa Çayı (Akhuryan) to the east and to the west the valley of the Alaca Çayı (Ani River), a tributary of the Akhuryan. Historically, the earliest settlement was to the south, at the tip of the triangular plateau (Kız kale/Aghchkaberd).20 The citadel (Mijnaberdi), at the site’s highest section, features a palace complex. To the citadel’s north, at the narrowest point of the plateau, stand the ramparts erected by Ashot III in 960–961 CE. Ashot, a scion of the Armenian Bagratid dynasty, obtained the title “Prince of Princes” from the Byzantine and Arab empires, the great powers of the day, and made Ani his capital. Less than thirty years later, his grandson Sinbat II built the famous double ramparts to the north, nearly 3 miles long. The space between the two walls was urbanized along an artery extending between Lion’s Gate and the structure known as the Mosque of Manuchihr, just inside Ashot’s walls.21 The best-known monuments of Ani are scattered
between the two ramparts. Among these, two structures are currently undergoing restoration: the cathedral (Büyük Katedral/Mayr Tachar) (989–1001 CE), attributed to the medieval Armenian architect Trdat, and the Church of the Redeemer (Keçel or Aziz Pirkiç Kilisesi/ Prkich or Amenaprkich Church) (1035 CE). Christina Maranci has shown that Trdat’s career was pivotal to architectural exchange between medieval Armenia and Byzantium. Trdat was entrusted with the repair of the western section of the dome of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople, which had been damaged by an earthquake in 989 CE. In addition to being a node in the link between the Armenian and Byzantine traditions, Ani was also a place of encounter for Armenian, Georgian, and diverse Islamicate cultural traditions, links that are not yet fully understood.

The city’s location on the Silk Road and its status as an economic crossroads made it a strategic political and military target with a complex political history. Bagratid rule ended when the Byzantines annexed Ani in 1045 CE. Barely twenty years later, in 1064 CE, the Seljuks, led by Alp Arslan, conquered the area. By 1072 CE, they had installed at Ani a vassal dynasty, the Shaddadid emirs of Kurdish origin. The Mosque of Manuchihr is the best-known monument associated with this period. The Shaddadids defended Ani from repeated Georgian incursion until 1199 CE, when Queen Tamar’s armies took the city. Subsequently ruled by the Georgian-Armenian dynasty of princes known as the Zakarians (Georgian: Mqargrjeli; Armenian: Erkaynabazuk), Ani flourished again, building such extraordinary structures as the Church of St. Gregory in 1215 CE, sponsored by the merchant Tigran Honents (also known as Resimli Kilise). The advent of Mongol rule in 1239 CE, combined with a devastating earthquake and reorientation of trade routes to southern Anatolia and Mesopotamia, led to the eventual decline and abandonment of Ani as a viable city, although it remained a pilgrimage site and monastery until the eighteenth century.

The “Discovery” of the Ghost City

The discovery of Ani by modern archaeologists and intellectuals differs from discoveries of similar sites in the Middle East, as local elites played a central role in its excavation and appropriated it as a cultural symbol. In the early nineteenth century, the first modern European travelers’ reports about an alluring ghost city began to circulate via evocative engravings (Figure 3). Later in the century, photographs of Ani were circulated commercially among the urban bourgeoisie of the Russian and Ottoman empires. Photographs probably taken between 1875 and 1880, such as “Ruines d’Arménie: Ani” by Ohannes Kurkdjian (1851–1903?), were sold as boxed sets of forty stereoscopic photographs (Figure 4).

The Russian empire annexed the region around Kars, including Ani, as a result of the war of 1877–78 waged against the Ottoman Empire. The period of Russian occupation and its contribution to the cultural heritage of eastern Turkey is all but forgotten today. Yet at the time, Ani was central to czarist cultural policies in the region. Moreover, the imperial Russian administration enabled Armenian intellectuals from cosmopolitan South Caucasian cities like Tiflis (Tbilisi) to gain access to what was known as the Kars Oblast, or province. This proved decisive for Ani’s transformation into an archaeological site, architectural monument, and cultural destination.
Indeed, the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg sponsored excavations at Ani by the Orientalist Nicolai Iakovlevich Marr (1864–1934), first in 1892–93, then extensively between 1904 and 1917 (Figure 5).25 Russian scientific interest was spurred partially by the archaeological activities in the Middle East of the rival imperial powers of Britain and France. While the excavation was clearly inscribed in an imperialist project of knowledge and power, nonetheless experts with roots in the region predominated. Marr and his Russian colleagues collaborated with and were financed by Armenian intellectuals from nearby urban centers such as Tbilisi as well as from the Ottoman Empire. Many of these scholars later became influential in Russian and Soviet academic circles.

Thus Ani became the proving ground for the architect and historian Toros Toramanian (1864–1934), who was trained in Istanbul and Paris; the medievalist Hovsep Orbeli, later director of the Hermitage Museum (1934–1951); the Islamicist Vasily Bartold (1869–1930); and the archaeologist Ashkharbek Kalantar (1884–1942), later keeper of the Asiatic Museum in St. Petersburg.26 The photographers Aram Vruyr (1863–1924) and his son Artashes created a visual record, as did the Ottoman Armenian painter Arshak Fetvachian (1866–1947).27 Marr’s team surveyed and mapped the site, excavated, conserved several buildings, and published studies.28 They transformed the historic Mosque of Manuchihr into a museum, along with a new purpose-built structure, to display their finds.29 Their publications remain the key sources for the study of Ani today. The Russian excavation entered Ani into the record of world architectural history and prompted scholarly and popular interest in the...
site and in Armenian medieval architecture generally. Articles in Russian and European journals, as well as the Armenian-language press in the Russian and Ottoman empires, evidence the site’s prominence. The postcards issued by the Ani Museum and more than fifty stereoscopic sets by Aram Vruyr show the wide circulation of imagery of Ani.30

Just as Ani entered the European imagination as an intact medieval Christian city in the remote South Caucasus, Armenian communities in the Russian and Ottoman empires came to view the ancient site as key to their religious, communal, and national heritage. Shortly after his election as Catholicos of All Armenians, Matt’eos II Izmirlian (1845–1910) symbolically reclaimed Ani as a long-lost sacred site by undertaking a formal pilgrimage from his seat in Echmiadzin in 1909. Enormous pomp and ceremony surrounded the first patriarchal visit to Ani in nine centuries. Believers thronged the site, following the catholicos’s tour of the ruined churches, accompanied by Marr and Toramanian (Figure 6). His retinue included, among others, a young Ottoman-Armenian priest from Istanbul, Grigoris Balakian (1875–1934), whose 1910 book recording the pilgrimage also seems to constitute the first study of Ani published by an Ottoman subject. Balakian, who described himself as Turkish Armenian (“T’rk’ahay”), opined: “He who wants to know the Armenian, must go to Ani.”31

For secular intellectuals, Ani, the capital of a medieval Armenian kingdom, became a symbol of lost statehood. A 1914 travel guide to Ani reflects an Ottoman Armenian’s wonder at the discovery of his own great medieval past revealed by archaeology.32 Historical novels about the Bagratid period of Ani’s history were published and went through multiple print runs.33 One artifact in particular caught the public’s imagination: a nearly freestanding, almost life-size statue of King Gagik I (reigned 989–1020 CE), the patron of Ani’s most beautiful churches, which occupied a place of honor in the museum (Figure 7). Such sculptural portraits at this scale are exceedingly rare in Armenian art.34

Armenian communities made Ani a destination for festive visits, performing both religious rites and museum-going rituals. Artashes Vruyr, the young photographer on Marr’s team, vividly described the celebration of the Feast of the Holy Mother of God at Ani.35 Inhabitants of neighboring towns arrived to participate in Mass at the cathedral and a religious procession among the ruins, witnessed animal sacrifices at the cathedral’s entrance, and partook of food cooked in communal cauldrons. The visitors also gawked at the artifacts in the museum:

In those days Marr’s museum [hnadarant] [was] filled with curious visitors. They observed, entranced, the various excavated objects that had been carefully placed in glass display cases….
Beneath the vaults of the columned hall stood the statue of Gagik I, the great peace-loving and wise king of the Armenian world, sculpted of tufa stone. The visitors reverently gazed at the great sovereign…. Some observed the masterpiece with admiration, [while] some others, with bitter hearts, imagined they flew for a moment toward the depth of centuries, visualized the glorious past of their ancestors and remembered their present state.

Vruyr’s account reveals how the general public understood Ani’s excavations at that time: individuals read in the artifacts, especially the royal statue, the history of medieval greatness and sovereignty and drew a sharp contrast between this past and their current condition as subjugated subjects of Ottoman or Russian rule. Ani was arguably the earliest archaeological site in the Middle East or the South Caucasus to become a popular destination for locals as well as a touchstone for indigenous intellectuals in addition to its attraction to foreign tourists and scholars.

The 1917 Russian Revolution abruptly ended this phase of Ani’s history. The following years saw the devastation of World War I, the Ottoman Empire’s extermination of its own Armenian population during the genocide of 1915–22, armed conflict between the Russian and Ottoman empires, the disintegration of the Russian empire, the short-lived Democratic Republic of Armenia, and the Turkish–Armenian War. Five years after the publication of his study of Ani, Grigoris Balakian was among the leading Ottoman Armenian intellectuals and community leaders whom the Ottoman state rounded up in Istanbul on or about 24 April 1915, one of the events marking the beginning of the genocide.

At Ani, as the Turkish army approached in 1918, archaeologist Kalantar was able to remove some items from the museum to safety, mostly small objects, leaving behind large works like the statue of Gagik. The artifacts left behind are no longer in situ today: they were looted, destroyed, or perhaps relocated. Some of the excavation’s most historically important finds were thus lost and are known only through publications and photographs.

Ani’s identification as a central Armenian symbol during the early twentieth century had been so pervasive that it had entered the consciousness of the Turkish nationalist movement as well, however, this time as a potential target. The commander of the Eastern Front, Kâzım Karabekir, was ordered to destroy Ani in May 1921: “It is necessary to move aside every single stone of these Ani ruins, and to abolish their trace from the face of the earth. If you do this you will have rendered a great service to Turkey.” Karabekir was unable or unwilling to fully carry out this order.

By late 1921, the Treaty of Kars delineated the border between what had become the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic and what would soon become the Republic of Turkey. Ani fell west of the border in Turkey. In 1922, Kalantar managed a final clandestine visit to Ani: his photographs show the museum in a pillaged, destroyed, and abandoned state. The medieval city remained a critical symbol for Armenians, now layered with an additional narrative of loss. The fraction of Ottoman Armenians who managed to survive were in large part prevented from returning to or remaining in their ancestral homes. Among them, Balakian joined the Armenian diaspora, where as bishop of the Armenians of Marseille, he reflected on the shining moment of his pilgrimage to Ani. The fate of the city has been linked to the history of the Republic of Turkey ever since.

**Ani in the Republic of Turkey**

The Middle East emerged from the devastation of World War I within a new global political map that included the Republic of Turkey and the Soviet Union with its member socialist republics. Following World War II, Turkey became a key member of the NATO alliance and was caught in Cold War tensions between the Soviet Union and the West. Ani fell on one of only two borders between NATO and the Soviet Union. Due to its frontier location, Ani remained relatively marginal to the construction of Turkish national patrimony and its dominant narrative over the twentieth century. Instead, the Turkish Republic’s nationalist architectural historiography emphasized the Seljuk dynasty as the first “Turkish” state in Anatolia. This perspective assigned Ani a place in the country’s patrimony as the locus of the first known “Turkish” mosque in Anatolia, the Mosque of Manuchir. This distinction continues to be emphasized.

The presence of Armenian communities or monuments has been sparingly mentioned in official Turkish historiography, silenced, or actively repressed. In international academia as well the reticence about these issues has long been pervasive. Donald Quataert expressed the avoidance of this subject as a “heavy aura of self-censorship” among historians of the Ottoman Empire and modern Turkey, “a wall of silence” that has only recently begun to crumble. Within Turkey, fieldwork on Armenian monuments was restricted, researchers were harassed or arrested, and the monuments themselves were neglected and sometimes intentionally damaged in a process many have characterized as “cultural genocide.” Consequently, the Armenian layer of Ani’s history remains downplayed in its signage. The nearly complete absence of the adjective “Armenian” is so consistent as to be certainly intentional. Even when signage indicates the names of rulers, churches, or dynasties, official publications about the site rarely, if ever, use the term “Armenian” to describe.
either the ethnicity of former inhabitants, the religion to which churches are dedicated, or the alphabet and language of inscriptions.47

In light of Cold War tensions, the difficulty and fraught nature of travel to the Soviet border and the Turkish state’s discriminatory policies against its ethnic and religious minorities, Ara Güler’s 1965 photograph of the Church of St. Gregory of Tigran Honents, one of the easternmost monuments on the Ani plateau, is especially poignant (Figure 8). The great Turkish Armenian photographer and journalist oriented his camera to capture the abandoned ruin rising among the wildflowers, with Soviet Armenia visible in the background, just out of reach. Güler’s chosen viewpoint defied the prevalent photography restrictions against taking pictures of the frontier, a militarized zone.48

With the fall of the Soviet Union, archaeological research and international engagement with Ani was renewed, presumably due to the gradual demilitarization of the border area.49 Since 1991, the MCT has led both restorations and excavations at Ani. Beyhan Karamaşalı (1934–2008), a professor at Hacettepe University in Ankara, began her tenure as director of excavations in 1998. Surveys and excavations were conducted by Turkish and French teams under the direction of Karamaşalı and Jean-Pierre Mahé (École Pratique des Hautes Études and the Institut de France, respectively). The French team worked on the citadel and the ramparts and published their conclusions.50 However, the 1990s are remembered now as a period of aggressive excavation and ill-advised restoration without documentation. The Turkish teams cleared the soil that had accumulated on some monuments since Marr’s excavations and excavated several civic structures.51 These excavations were published only in short articles in specialized venues.52 This generally is not unusual in archaeology, especially about archaeological excavations in Turkey, where there are often exceedingly long time lags between excavation and publication. The lack of comprehensive excavation archives has also been criticized.53 Karamaşalı was a publicly acknowledged member of the extreme-right Nationalist Movement Party (known as MHP after its Turkish initials); for many observers, Ani’s poor treatment under her directorship aligned with that party’s ultranationalist ideology.54

In addition to excavation, restorations were undertaken since 1993, coordinated by the governorate of cultural assets and museums within the MCT. The Mosque of Manuchihr, the palace (variously called Seljuk Palace, Merchant’s Palace, or Bagratid Palace), and the outer ramparts were restored with no apparent integrated conservation plan (Figures 9 and 10). Why these structures were prioritized while vulnerable buildings such the Church of the Redeemer were left in danger of collapse is unexplained, but many have noted that churches were subject to neglect. Turkish and international observers were alarmed by piece-meal efforts at restoration and stabilization, some carried out with less-than-professional quality, particularly those using bulldozers. This period is now excoriated as “destructive restoration” or “ersatz monstrosities.”55 Even recent MCT documents euphemistically describe “problems of...
conservation ... incorrect restoration practices.” In the wake of these deleterious activities, international and Turkish heritage organizations intensified their advocacy on behalf of Ani, resulting in its inclusion on the “watch list” of the WMF four times in a row. Given Karamağaralı’s considerable power and near-exclusive control over Ani in her capacity as director of excavations, her cooperation was sought for some of these efforts. This advocacy spurred international exhibitions such as Ani: Capitale de l’Arménie en l’an mil, at the Pavillon des Arts, Paris, in 2001, which displayed photographs and objects from the Marr excavation preserved at the State History Museum of Armenia and published a substantial catalog edited by Raymond Kévorkian with an essay by Karamağaralı among others. Also in 2001, the book Ani: World Architectural Heritage of a Mediaeval Armenian Capital, edited by S. Peter Cowe, advocated for more transparent and professional preservation processes.

Renewed interest in Ani prompted action from Turkish government agencies, international heritage organizations, and local nongovernmental organizations. A Turkish NGO...
dedicated to cultural heritage, the Historical Heritage Protection Foundation (Tarihi Miras Koruma Vakfi) began initiatives to focus national and international attention on Ani’s precarious state of preservation. It secured partnerships with experts on the ground as well as with judiciously chosen international heritage organizations, including the Samuel H. Kress Foundation via the World Monuments Fund, the Cultural Heritage Foundation, and the Landmarks Foundation in New York. Established in 1996, the Historical Heritage Protection Foundation supports many cultural heritage sites in Turkey. Its founders included Karamağarali herself; the organization is led by Verkin Arioba, a prominent Turkish citizen of Armenian origin who is politically active on the center-right. In 1998, the foundation produced a high-quality report on the state of the site, coauthored by Karamağarali and Gionata Rizzi. It even resorted to legal action to terminate the poorly conducted restoration of the fortification wall. However, the damage to the ramparts was “irrevocable.” The overrestoration remains glaringly visible. At Lion’s Gate, the entrance to the ghost city, the restoration’s aggressive layering of new stone altered the configuration of the beloved logo of the city, the lion relief. The restoration removed the cross, which was formed by colored diamond-shaped stones, surmounting the animal figure. For many observers, this desacralization was formed by colored diamond-shaped stones, surmounting the animal figure. For many observers, this desacralization constituted intentional removal of a cross, understood as a campaign to erase signs of Christian Armenian presence in Anatolia (Figure 11).

The 1999 reconstruction of the structure known as the palace (twelfth–thirteenth century) has also proved ill advised. Yavuz Ozkaya, the restoration architect recently tasked with reversing the damage, observed that the reconstruction was “entirely fictional, having no basis in history”; it used inappropriate materials, notably excessive cement containing soluble salts that contaminated the original remains; it severely compromised the ancient structure by adding more load than it could bear; and it created a drainage problem. He has proposed entirely removing the 1999 reconstruction.

Not only have these ill-conceived restorations harmed the structures, sometimes irreparably, but they also created a climate of concern among preservation activists since they confirm their worst fears about the fate of Armenian monuments in the Republic of Turkey. Before-and-after photographs of problematic “restorations” circulate widely and foster distrust in the Turkish state’s role as custodian of the site, especially since many of the flawed reconstructions remain in place.

Other activities ostensibly aimed at securing the ruins were implemented in ways damaging to the archaeological layers. Visitors often comment on the unsightly accumulation of animal waste inside Ani’s monuments from grazing livestock belonging to the villagers of Ocaklı. In 2002, a security fence was erected around the site. Put up to keep out animals, the fence construction and the concrete foundations of the posts have done more harm than good. In addition, once the grazing ceased, the area has become overgrown with vegetation, which further endangers the monuments.

Karamağarali’s retirement around 2006 provided an opportunity to rethink the site’s management. As a first step, the MCT appointed a scientific advisory committee of academics from the Middle East Technical University in Ankara to devise an overall vision for Ani. The advisory board’s report set the tone for the next steps; however, such recommendations can be implemented only at MCT’s discretion. Corresponding to the MCT, the municipality of Kars endeavored to capitalize on Ani’s potential to attract tourist dollars. Kars, the key regional stakeholder, is a frontier city of demographic and political complexity. Orhan Pamuk explored some of these tensions in his novel Snow. Kars has a layered history of its own and traces of its non-Muslim past have been largely demolished in the past century. The same Bagratid dynasty who made Ani their capital also sponsored Kars’s medieval cathedral, called Surb Arakelots in Armenian (Church of the Holy Apostles, 930–943 CE). Today this architecturally and historically important structure is used as a mosque called Kümbet Camii. Recent debates and preservation efforts within Kars have focused on the city’s architectural past and proximity to the Armenian border. This effort is reflected most acutely in the controversial erection of a nearly 100-foot-high

Figure 11  Before-and-after photographs of aggressive restoration in the 1990s of the lion relief at Lion’s Gate, 2014 (screenshot of the website of Arbeitsgruppe Anerkennung–AGA).
statue supposedly dedicated to Turkish–Armenian dialogue, which was shortly followed by its spectacular demolition in 2011, after Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan publicly excoriated it.\textsuperscript{73} In addition to strains within the city and its hinterland, tensions exist between Ankara’s central control and Kars’s local control over provincial assets. The Kars municipality worked with the Global Heritage Fund to revitalize its historic district.\textsuperscript{74} It also commissioned studies from a team led by Mona Serageldin, a development specialist with extensive experience in the Islamic world, seeking advice about sustainable development and ecotourism in the province and about improved management of its cultural assets.\textsuperscript{75} Within the province, Ani is the site most likely to attract international tourism. Indeed, Kars Museum records indicate that foreign visitors to Kars overwhelmingly go to see Ani, while Turkish visitors tend to stop at the Kars Museum.\textsuperscript{76} Regarding Ani’s management, the advice Serageldin’s team gave to Kars municipality was similar to the advice the scientific advisory committee offered the MCT. The experts urged the suspension of all excavation and restoration for which there was no master plan in place, emphasized the need for the safety of the site, and advocated educating the local villagers about the importance of the site’s integrity and engaging them to ensure its protection. This last point is critical; at Ani, as at similar sites throughout the world, locals engage in illegal “informal excavation” to search for presumed buried treasures.\textsuperscript{77} The experts urged the repair of the structures most in danger of collapse with advanced, scientific, reversible, and noninvasive preservation methods. They suggested investing in improved signage and tourist information as well as amenities such as a visitor center, a gift shop to sell maps, books, and souvenirs, and a café. In short, reasonable advice appropriate for any similar heritage site.

The years since 2006 have seen ongoing implementation of some aspects of the MCT’s vision. Activities have included the preparation of preliminary site management plans and capacity-building workshops with local and regional stakeholders. The cooperation of international organizations has mandated a higher degree of reporting and transparency.\textsuperscript{78} This reporting, however, has also highlighted some of the shortcomings of the process, which will be discussed later in this article.

On the ground, the MCT currently directs both archaeological excavations and the restoration of specific monuments. The restorations since 2006 seem to evince a more professional approach with sophisticated design methods and advanced technology. They have proceeded monument by monument, apparently on the basis of urgency. Any intervention has been preceded by various surveys. In 2006, the Global Heritage Fund conducted a laser survey of monuments such as the cathedral. Buildings and the surrounding landscape were recorded using high-definition digital survey technology known as three-dimensional laser scanning.\textsuperscript{79} The scanning produces three-dimensional models and can generate various architectural views. Also in 2006, the ministry issued a tender for the restoration of two monuments: the Church of St. Gregory of Tigran Honents and the Mosque of Manuchihr (Figures 12 and 13). Following a competition, the project was carried out by Yavuz Özkaya, principal of the firm PROMET Proje Mimarlık Restorasyon in Ankara. Özkaya’s approach to historic preservation is scientific, aiming to respect all layers and attempting to preserve with minimal intervention.\textsuperscript{80} At an early stage, Özkaya worked with the research support of Veronica Kalas, an architectural historian specializing in Byzantine structures in Turkey. The first phase of the restoration of these two structures was completed by 2010.\textsuperscript{81} This work has been

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{image.png}
\caption{The Church of St. Gregory of Tigran Honents (1215, restored in 2010), 2012 (photo by Yavuz Özkaya).}
\end{figure}
The research published by Kalas and Özkaya on these two critical monuments is extraordinarily important. The laser scan of the buildings revealed both the visible and the invisible layers of construction without the need for excavation. At a level of detail previously imperceptible, the authors were able to discern that the Mosque of Manuchihr is, in fact, a layered building. The scan confirmed that the mosque was not purpose built but rather, with some judicious additions, incorporated an extant building (possibly a commercial structure predating the Seljuk period). This explains why the mosque does not have the proper orientation toward Mecca (qibla). This new understanding of the building raises questions about the overall history of the site and provides additional insight into medieval architectural culture. Exploring architectural history in depth, based on a study of construction layers, had not been possible since Marr’s excavation at the site.

Using a strict methodology, Özkaya’s firm began the restoration of these two monuments by thoroughly surveying the remains using three-dimensional scans as well as...
excavating and cataloging fragments on the ground to understand the structure of the buildings and to evaluate the most urgent conservation problems. Özkaya implemented such improvements as shelter roofs and the notion of “detectable layering” and addressed the severe drainage problems, which allowed the buildings to dry naturally, preserving their paint layers. Özkaya’s approach to preservation does not reconstruct buildings back to their original state but rather documents existing layers, stabilizes the remains, uses original materials wherever possible, and promotes scientific understanding of the structure and its interpretation as part of a site management plan. According to this design philosophy, for example, the Church of St. Gregory of Tigran Honents’s conical dome was not reconstructed but rather cleaned, stabilized, and given a shelter roof. This philosophy is distinct from a different preservation approach that restores medieval Christian churches by reconstructing their domes and placing crosses on them. The latter approach, sometimes used in Greece, Armenia, and Georgia, may also involve returning the churches to active Christian liturgy.

The restoration plans of the Ministry of Culture are proceeding apace. In 2008, Özkaya’s firm won the tender to restore additional structures. Since the summer of 2011, he has been supervising the restoration of the Church of Abughamrents. In 2012, Özkaya also began to tackle the restoration problems of the palace and remove some of the “excessive” wall added in 1999. Since July 2012, Özkaya has also coordinated the restoration of the Church of the Redeemer. Along with the cathedral, it is being conserved through the much-publicized historic partnership between the Ministry of Culture and the World Monuments Fund with support from the US Department of State’s Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. Given that the WMF has a number of active projects throughout Turkey, their relationship with the MCT is important and multifaceted; in recent years, there has been “growing respect and partnership” between the two. Judiciously, the WMF has partnered with the Turkish NGO Anadolu Kültür for their work on Ani. Its president is Osman Kavala, a well-known entrepreneur, philanthropist, and intellectual who has expressed bold progressive views on many cultural and political issues. Anadolu Kültür is ideally situated for positive change in a site such as Ani because Kavala is well connected in business and government circles and particularly interested in Anatolian cultural heritage, human rights, and “cultural dialogue with Armenia.”

Current preservation work at Ani targets the emergency condition of vulnerable structures and thus proceeds monument by monument. The preservation work undertaken by WMF and its partners on the two churches at Ani presents many technical challenges. According to an inscription in Armenian on its exterior, the Church of the Redeemer was built in 1035 CE to house a piece of the True Cross. Özkaya describes it as “one of the most vulnerable yet astonishing structures in Ani (maybe on earth).” Dramatically sliced in half after its eastern section collapsed during a storm in 1957, the church features a unique and complex architecture based on a play of geometric shapes. The plan is circular but the exterior constitutes a nineteen-sided polygon; the interior features eight apses and the high drum is round. The wall paintings on the interior are in poor condition, and some have been whitewashed with industrial paint. The building has long been in a structurally precarious state.

To address the Church of the Redeemer’s conservation, Özkaya assembled a multidisciplinary team with specialists in engineering and seismology in addition to preservation design. Using scientific technology, his firm monitored the effect on the building of wind, humidity, seismicity, and other conditions, and studied structural cracks. A three-dimensional scan and catalog of the fallen pieces as well as some excavation in the vicinity revealed that the Church of the Redeemer sits on what appears to be a circular pedestal. Additional excavation and clearing uncovered the original floor and found the remains of a bell tower with related structures nearby; such work will eventually clarify the monument’s articulation to the urban fabric. Özkaya’s team coordinated its work with that of the excavators. While Özkaya’s approach to preservation is sophisticated, his current team at Ani does not include, in any formal manner, specialists in medieval architectural history. Thus the medieval historical sources known to exist are not readily accessible to the preservationists; moreover, no one on the team seems able to read most of the previous research on Ani, which is published in Russian and Armenian. While experts have advised repeatedly to supplement on-site research on construction techniques with archival research in the Ani collections in Yerevan, I am not aware that such research has been officially carried out. On an informal, unofficial level unrelated to MCT, however, there has been a degree of dialogue with some experts on medieval architecture from the Republic of Armenia and beyond, such as Armen Kazaryan, as well as with architects within the Turkish Armenian community. In addition, nongovernmental initiatives have resulted in productive workshops with participants from Turkey, Armenia, and abroad: one was held in Istanbul in 2010 and another at Ani in 2013. Proceedings of the workshops have not been published. Nevertheless, apart from WMF, the MCT-sponsored restoration process, in general, does not include formal collaborations with international experts on Armenian architecture.
Despite these challenges, Ani also presents tremendous opportunities. Unlike other Anatolian structures, such as Seljuk masterpieces located in dense urban centers in Konya, for example, Ani is a pristine medieval site without modern constructions or a resident community that would be displaced by conservation; it is not threatened by a dam, as are sites such as Hasankeyf in southeastern Turkey; and the retirement of Karamağaralı created the opportunity to appoint new, hopefully more successful, site managers and archaeologists. Despite the fragility of some of its monuments, Ani is arguably well preserved as an urban ensemble and has the rare advantage of conveying a sense of the medieval urban fabric as a whole.

But nagging questions remain about the overall management and interpretation of the site, especially given the steady increase in visitors. Some believe that eventually the signage may present a more informative view of the site’s history and fully acknowledge its multicultural, diverse past. Thus far, however, interpretation and the dissemination of information on Ani have adopted a “very couched and careful presentation” tone. For example, the WMF’s evocative, short video on the site’s conservation provides historical and architectural information while managing to avoid using any linguistic or ethnic adjectives.

**Instrumentalizing the Rhetoric of Multiculturalism**

The rhetoric official Turkish state organizations use when they refer to Ani often invokes the trope of multiculturalism to describe this multilayered site. It is undoubtedly appropriate to discuss Ani in terms of a crossroads of cultures. However, sometimes multiculturalist rhetoric is used to gloss over, erase, or silence Ani’s most crucial layers. A dissonance often creeps into official evaluations of Ani’s cultural significance. For example, in 2010, workshop participants highlighted Ani as a “multicultural Silk Road settlement” without once naming the ethnic or religious groups that made up this diversity (Armenian, Georgian, Greek, Kurdish, and Russian, in addition to Turkish), while the site’s significance continues to be linked primarily to its status as “one of the first entrance points of Turks at their arrival to Anatolia [ṣîd]” and the location of “the first ever Turkish Mosque [in Anatolia].” This produces the distinct impression that a revision of official historiography has not taken place at this level, and the idea of a multicultural heritage is not uniformly valued. Ani is a primarily non-Muslim site in a majority-Muslim country; it has also been framed within an Armenian/Turkish dichotomy. Yet neither a Christian/Muslim nor an Armenian/Turkish paradigm fully conveys the subtlety of the site and its context. Modern Turkey is, at least ostensibly, secular. While some of the players discussed in this article (for example, MCT officials) are certainly Turkish, they may or may not identify primarily as Muslim and appear not to be acting foremost as representatives of Islam, whereas other parties (like some politicians) seem to combine Islamic piety with ultranationalist rhetoric. That said, recent years have seen an evolution in Turkey’s connection with Muslim identity or regional variations of that identity as well as an evolving relationship with its Ottoman-Islamic past. On the other hand, the category of “Armenian” is not congruent exclusively with the category of “Christian” as defined for Turkey, since a number of distinct Christian groups have lived and continue to live in the country. For example, the Byzantines were also Christian, and modern Turkey has adopted a very different attitude toward the cultural heritage of that historical group. These distinctions are meaningful insofar as Turkey’s official cultural and tourism discourse embraces a diversity of cultural groups in its modern identity, yet the Armenians are not acknowledged in these conceptions and celebrations of Turkish heritage, identity, or history. The official web portal of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (www.goTurkey.com) sets the tone in its overview of Turkey’s cultural attractions. It situates Turkey as the point of contact of Europe and Asia, and its list of the storied groups contributing to Turkey’s cultural heritage omits the Armenians. When the word “Armenian” does appear, its context links the group to the long-ago medieval era without connection to Turkey’s diminished, albeit still vibrant, Armenian community and without mentioning why eastern Anatolia is bereft of Armenians today. It would seem that the language of benign multiculturalism, projected on a vaguely sketched past, is effectually instrumentalized to erase the actual history of social heterogeneity and to silence the legacy of persecuted minority groups. The language of multiculturalism thus bolsters the dominant groups’ own cultural capital and minimizes actual social difference. This distorts the avowed goal of multiculturalist rhetoric to acknowledge, promote, and value social heterogeneity and comity.

Despite this ambiguity, this rhetoric indicates a new shift in Turkey’s official discourse on its cultural patrimony. The MCT’s recent phase of restoration at Ani coincides with the introduction of limited acknowledgment at the state level regarding Turkey’s minorities such as the Armenians, Alevis, and Kurds. Some observers attribute this shift to the influence of the Justice and Development Party (known by its Turkish initials as AKP), which has dominated Turkish politics since 2002. The AKP is often described as socially conservative, economically liberal, and moderate Islamist. Indeed, the AKP-dominated government, especially its
leader, Prime Minister Erdoğan, has achieved tremendous change in Turkish society, diminishing the decades-old stranglehold on power of the traditionally Kemalist, nationalist, secularist elite and allowing greater participation of its base constituency of pious Sunni Muslims, who traditionally were disempowered. In reality, many of the AKP’s ostensibly great changes have stopped short of challenging the core tenets of the Turkish Republic. The perception and treatment of social differences, particularly of ethnic and religious minorities, are such core issues, as is the state policy of denial of the Armenian Genocide. In recent years, Erdoğan and other government officials have publicly discussed long-repressed episodes of Turkey’s violent past; nevertheless, as Bilgin Ayata and Serra Hakyemez argue regarding the Dersim massacres (1937–38), such actions are far from representing a good-faith engagement of the past but rather have created a “new truth regime” crafted by the AKP on its own terms, one that can also “open new domains for manipulation, injury, and re-victimization.”

The persistent denial of the Armenian Genocide and the near silencing of Armenian history in Turkey continue to inflict harmful consequences on Armenian communities, namely, the loss of their culture, religion, and language. In 2010, UNESCO classified the Western Armenian language in Turkey as “definitely endangered” on its “Atlas of World Languages in Danger.” Not only are past injustices officially denied but present minorities in Turkey also remain extremely vulnerable in many ways. Of non-Muslims, the Christian and Jewish citizens of Turkey, whose number hovers around a minuscule one hundred thousand in a country of nearly seventy-seven million, have been subject to persecution by the state and victims of hate crimes by fellow citizens, frequently carried out with impunity. The victimization of Armenians through hate speech remains normalized in Turkey in everyday interactions as well as in official pronouncements. In her research, Jennifer Dixon explicates state institutions’ strategies of sustaining and enacting Turkey’s official narrative of denying the Armenian Genocide and stigmatizing its own Armenian citizens. Dixon observes “the striking continuities among political elites from the Young Turk through the Republican periods, the concentrated interests of a small group of business and political elites whose wealth can be traced back to confiscated Armenian assets, and the homogenizing and Turkifying nature of Turkish national identity.” In 2001, the Turkish government established the high-level interagency Committee to Coordinate the Struggle with the Baseless Genocide Claims (Asılsız Soykırımı İddialarıyla Mücadele Koordinasyon Kurulu, or ASİMKK). The committee’s apparent task is to plan and coordinate a centralized campaign of genocide denial both domestically and internationally. The politician Devlet Bahçeli has emphasized the importance of ASİMKK’s role in educating young people “about the past, present, and future of unfounded allegations of genocide,” including using the state educational curriculum. It is surely not coincidental that Bahçeli has used Ani in his political speeches. According to author Baskın Oran, the MCT’s preparations to neutralize the upcoming centennial of the Armenian Genocide in 2015 feature a booklet authored by Yusuf Halaçoğlu to coach tourist guides in the state’s position of denial. Widespread sanctioned denial of the past and vilification of Armenian citizens are directly related to the management of Armenians’ cultural heritage in Anatolia.

While the 2013 Gezi Park incidents highlighted the centrality of neoliberal urbanism and historic reconstruction to the AKP’s and Erdoğan’s vision of a transformed Turkish society, less discussed are facets of AKP’s policy concerning cultural heritage management, archaeological excavation, and cultural tourism. Minister of Culture and Tourism Ömer Çelik summarized his position on the cultural heritage of Anatolia thus: “The policy of our ministry of culture … is this: the historical heritage in Anatolia will be preserved in some way without exception.” While this statement seems inclusive of the many cultures that have left their mark on the Anatolian landscape, Çelik went on to explicitly deny the Armenian Genocide and admonished what he called the “genocide lobby” within the Armenian diaspora. This suggests that while AKP rule has heralded an important shift in attitude and action, key elements of the Turkish state narrative on the Armenian issue remain trapped in a hardened rhetoric of denial and threat. Çelik’s words illustrate the close link between political goals and the manipulation of cultural heritage that has been a hallmark of MCT activity in the last decade.

The fact that culture and tourism share the same ministry in Turkey has prompted criticism that the tourism industry’s pursuit of profit might be the driving force in cultural management decisions. Recently, as part of Turkey’s investment in religious tourism, the state has initiated the preservation and limited revival of selected Christian sacred sites for liturgy. Long-neglected holy places such as the Greek Orthodox Monastery of Sumela in Trabzon Province have proved lucrative since they are enormously popular with foreign pilgrims. In addition to economic concerns, politics also plays a role in the recent treatment of Christian sites in Turkey by state entities. The international community has requested and even pressured Turkey into safeguarding its non-Muslim religious sites. In addition to the European Union, the US House of Representatives passed Resolution no. 306 “Urging the Republic of Turkey to
safeguard its Christian heritage and to return confiscated church properties.” 118

The centrality of politics for Christian sites in Turkey is illustrated by the highly politicized, publicized, and state-controlled restoration of the Armenian Church of the Holy Cross (915–21 CE) on Aghtamar Island (or Akhtamar, Aghtamar) on Lake Van in Van Province, which opened as a museum in 2007.119 One of the most recognizable and historically important buildings of Armenian architecture, Aghtamar had stood deserted since World War I. The process of restoration involved clerics from the Armenian ecclesiastical hierarchy in Turkey, albeit in a supporting role with little input rather than a true partnership. Controversially, the Turkish state granted the Armenian patriarchate in Istanbul permission to celebrate Mass at the Aghtamar Church-Museum in 2010 for the first time since the genocide—but only after yielding to international pressure and only for one day per year.120 Media commentators debated whether this decision constituted an opportunity to herald a transformed attitude toward long-neglected Armenian cultural sites in Anatolia or perhaps it just showed the government’s power to manipulate its minority communities for public relations without meaningful change. In her insightful essay on the debates surrounding the restoration of Aghtamar, Bilgin Ayata clarified that the initiative to restore the Church of the Holy Cross came from Erdoğan himself and that high-level decision making dominated the process. She also showed how the state’s goals were primarily political and secondarily economic; official rhetoric described the restoration’s functions: as an instrument to counter international accusations of genocide denial, as a gesture toward improving the relations between the Republics of Turkey and Armenia, as an indication of Turkey’s religious tolerance, and as a potentially lucrative destination for faith tourism.121 Ayata tracked how the restoration was debated in the Turkish press. The prominent journalist Cengiz Çandar criticized the state’s actions: “You restore a historical church and find absurd reasons for not putting a cross and a bell onto it? Who will believe that you are secular, or that you ‘respect all faiths,’ or that you represent ‘the alliance of civilizations against the clash of civilizations.’ What you do is simply ‘cultural genocide.’” 122 International observers also criticized the Aghtamar restoration, including Peter Balakian in Holocaust and Genocide Studies.123

The broader context of Ani’s restoration encompasses nonstate entities also conserving and exhibiting the Armenian cultural heritage in Turkey. In contrast to government projects is the restoration of the Church of St. Kirakos (Surp Giragos) in Diyarbakır. Established in the sixteenth century and once the largest church in the region, it was restored and reopened for religious services in 2011 through the joint efforts of a private foundation, the Diyarbakır municipality, and the Armenian patriarchate in Istanbul.124 Diyarbakır is a vital center for Kurds in Turkey and in recent years has charted an independent path by embracing its current and past non-Muslim communities, including extraordinarily moving mass commemorations of the Armenian Genocide by non-Armenians, some of whom acknowledge being descendants of the perpetrators. This inclusiveness indicates the willingness of some nonstate institutions in Turkey to forge what we might term “counterheritage,” embracing what official rhetoric keeps silent. Diyarbakır offers an alternative model for the management of Armenian heritage sites in Turkey, one that grants stakeholder status and agency to appropriate local as well as Armenian community groups. The case of St. Kirakos also resonates with the related issue of Armenian communal endowment properties (vakıf properties) confiscated by the Turkish state and ardously difficult to recover; this important issue exceeds the present article’s scope.125

Differences notwithstanding, at Sumela, Aghtamar, and St. Kirakos the restoration of religious sites coincided with the resumption of Christian liturgy, albeit in strictly limited ways. By contrast, the MCT has never raised the possibility of resuming liturgy at Ani. This may be due to the fact that, apart from a brief revival in the early twentieth century during the Russian excavation, Ani did not house a living community at the time of the genocide, although it has remained a sacred site and a pilgrimage destination for Armenians worldwide.126 However, Ani has been affected by the MCT’s previous restorations of the Church of Aghtamar and the Monastery of Sumela as well as the highly publicized, if circumscribed, Christian celebrations with MCT permission. Indeed, some ultranationalist parties mobilized their constituents to protest what they interpreted as “the invasion” of Turkey by the Greek and Armenian diaspora symbolized by the restoration of the sacred sites at Sumela and Aghtamar. In protest of the first Mass authorized at Aghtamar in 2010, the far-right Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) (to which Karamağaralı had belonged) made Ani the destination of a political rally; MHP held a group Islamic prayer in the cathedral and staged a performance by an Ottoman-style mehter military marching band.127 This action was led by politician Devlet Bahçeli, the longtime chairman of MHP and a supporter of ASİM KK, the state committee tasked with proactive genocide denial. In this example of political stagecraft, the choice of the location is highly significant. For one thing, it required the organized travel of most participants to Ani rather than gathering in an urban population center. It cannot be a coincidence that the MHP supporters neglected
the nearby “first-ever Turkish mosque in Anatolia,” choosing instead to hold their devotions in a clearly Christian and Armenian-identified ruin.

More recently, several architecturally significant churches that had been functioning as state museums have been converted into functional mosques. The thirteenth-century Church of Hagia Sophia in Trabzon, a museum restored by an international team of scholars, was converted into a mosque in 2013. This suggests that museum status may not preserve a Christian site in Turkey from being appropriated or reappropriated for religious use by Muslims. Such contested and fraught actions constitute the broader context in which the new wave of restoration at Ani is unfolding.

At the present time the new discoveries at the medieval ghost city are not widely known, and the research of the last few years is largely unpublished. There is little communication, let alone consultation or cooperation, among specialists in Turkey and experts in Armenian architecture, particularly from Armenia. Over the past century, two parallel historiographies of Ani have evolved that are pointedly not in communication or dialogue. The legacy of the suppression and neglect of Armenian heritage sites in Anatolia is implicated in this. For decades, formal state-approved research on Armenian sites was not possible. Consequently, individuals and groups documenting Armenian heritage in Anatolia frequently operated without the benefit of government permission. This not only limited the ability to research but also instilled deep distrust in state structures. This lack of accessible information, combined with the history of poor preservation, contributes to the impression that Ani is on the verge of imminent disappearance. The sense of urgency about the need to protect the site is reflected in its listing in October 2010 by the Global Heritage Fund as one of twelve sites in danger of vanishing in the developing world.

**Heritage as Contest or Heritage as Reconciliation**

Ani is an example of a site that sparks ongoing debates about methods of preservation, the historical past and its significance today, local control as opposed to central control, and the entanglement of heritage and trauma. Ani’s implication in the politics of memory is encapsulated by the subtle alteration of the site’s name. Many government signs and publications refer to Ani with an undotted “ı,” which is a letter in the Turkish alphabet and a phonoeme distinct from the dotted “ı.” Many place-names in Turkey have been changed under the republic, some to erase their association with Armenians, Greeks, or Kurds. The change is subtle, perhaps even imperceptible to an English speaker unfamiliar with Turkish script, yet it is hardly trivial. Anı (undotted) follows Turkish vowel harmony, whereas Ani (dotted) does not, showing the term’s non-Turkic origin. The change presumably aims at making the site name sound more “Turkish,” erasing an aspect of its past and altering its perception in the present, a strategy widely used for toponyms in Republican Turkey. In a telling irony, Anı (with an undotted i) means “memory” in Turkish. The name change, the avoidance of the word “Armenian” in site interpretation, and the minimizing or erasure of the Armenian layer of Anatolian history contribute to a lacerating silence. These changes are part of the processes by which, as Zeynep Kezer cogently argues, “even the most conspicuous vestiges of their existence were rendered invisible to those who remained behind.” Despite its conspicuous visibility as a famed heritage site, Ani’s Armenian layer is rendered invisible, or at least illegible, as a sign of Armenian history.

And yet, once this “wall of silence,” to use Donald Quataert’s phrase, is cast aside, once one listens to the current debates on history and remembrance among Turks and Armenians, the centrality of Ani as a physical entity and symbol becomes even more apparent. Ani’s Armenian layer and its identification with the eradicated Armenian community of Turkey hover unspoken over the site’s fate. The distance between Kars (Turkey) and Gyumri (Armenia) is only about 41 miles, and the two cities were linked by railway until 1993. Yet the continued lack of diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey and the closed border mean that citizens of Armenia must undergo expensive, difficult, and inconvenient travel through a third country or through Istanbul to visit a site central to their culture and religion. Geopolitical realities dictate that the constituency most likely to visit Ani is effectively cut off from it.

Peter Balakian writes, “Whether an Armenian looks from across the border in Armenia, … or anywhere else, the ruins of Armenian culture inside present-day Turkey are captive sites to which Armenians have no organic or even accessible relationship.” Reflecting on the dimension of loss that Armenian cultural heritage sites in Turkey represent, Balakian adds, “Inside Turkey, Armenian ruins represent a forbidden past, an irreclaimable history, a ruptured process of mourning—all inseparable from this paradox of an embodied absence.” The image Balakian evokes—an Armenian in the Republic of Armenia looking toward Ani across the border, barred from entry—illustrates the power dynamics at play. One could argue that the process of preserving a site so central to Armenians while effectively excluding them as stakeholders exemplifies an act of power. The asymmetries of power at Ani are acute: the Turkish state’s institutions and international heritage organizations...
on the one hand and a persecuted minority of Turkish Armenians and a small, struggling Armenian state and a globally spread diaspora on the other.

International organizations, most prominently the WMF, constitute another category of parties who have an important role in Ani’s preservation. Prestigious and well-funded international NGOs can have some leverage in negotiations with state institutions and have succeeded in directing attention and resources toward neglected or little-known sites, including Ani. NGOs are ostensibly nonsectarian, nonpolitical groups able to influence the management and preservation of architecture and the articulation of identity. However, the tension between state and international values and goals has long preoccupied critics of cultural heritage. Scholars of the international cultural heritage management scene observe that NGOs such as UNESCO must observe strict protocols, and they remain ultimately beholden to states. Government bodies such as ministries of culture ultimately retain decision-making power over implementation. Within the international heritage regime, states are invested with a great deal of power over preserving or neglecting monuments and otherwise controlling cultural heritage sites on their territory. The network of international agencies of conflict management and protection of cultural heritage is ultimately dependent on states’ willingness or ability to cooperate. When a state refuses to cooperate fully, the international heritage regime yields few options. States can decline to cooperate because of inability or because they are participants in, beneficiaries of, or primary agents of destruction of a cultural heritage even in peacetime: an extreme example is that of the Buddhas of Bamiyan, destroyed in 2001 by Afghanistan’s Taliban government. Indeed, at worst, a heritage activist or scholar advocating for a site in danger could lead to the targeted destruction of that site. Dread of such a deleterious outcome prompts some scholars of Armenian cultural heritage to argue that the best way to safeguard Armenian sites in Turkey is to avoid calling attention to them. The perception that cultural heritage sites are held hostage to political decisions is troubling and may hinder or numb critical analysis by scholars.

The heavy weight of the “Armenian issue” has no doubt contributed to Ani’s neglect and ill-treatment over the years. Perhaps it can yet be transformed into an opportunity. Ani’s identification with Armenians and medieval Armenian culture as well as its poignant history has earned devotees throughout the world. If one agrees that history—the rigor of investigation and study of historical facts—provides an alternative to selective nationalist narratives, then the medieval past would less likely be instrumentalized in the service of political narratives. Indeed, the rigorous and professional study of Ani’s architecture has the power to counter modern nationalist taxonomies. The bulk of the ruins relate to Armenians, but over its lifespan the city itself formed part of a complex cultural and political landscape, the multiplicity of which is lost to nationalist narratives. A critique of such ideologically charged historiography could also touch upon how binary claims on this site by opposing parties edit out its richer historic tapestry. Kalas and Ozkaya’s short essay on the layers of construction, as well as Rachel Goshgarian’s ongoing research, based on thorough on-site investigation of the material remains and medieval primary sources, suggests a productive direction for the city’s architectural history. Ani emerges as a great medieval architectural laboratory, a site where architectural principles, ideas, and construction techniques were created and shared by diverse groups for various purposes, even as they crafted monuments to stage their distinctive identities. This presents an opportunity to fashion the site’s interpretation along innovative lines not only as an emblem of national traditions but also as a special city where groups met and created new forms of expressive culture. Such a presentation of material would give substance and depth to the much-repeated topos of Ani as a multicultural hub along the Silk Road.

Conversations have begun among academics suggesting that Armenian experts are among the stakeholders who should be included in Ani’s preservation. Ani is ideally located—in geography, in history, and in imagination—as a catalyst for dialogue and reconciliation, as fraught as these issues are. This is precisely the role it plays in the Armenia–Turkey project “Ani as a Cultural Bridge between Armenia and Turkey,” which is led by the Institute for Historical Justice and Reconciliation based in The Hague and intended to increase confidence building among Armenian and Turkish historians, cultural experts, and civil society leaders. In particular, the ruined medieval bridge over the Akhuryan/Arpa River, defining the closed border, is one of the most photogenic views of Ani and a powerful symbol of a sundered relationship (Figure 14). The cover of a book by Hrant Dink, the iconic Turkish Armenian journalist and human rights activist whose 2007 assassination shook Turkish society, shows the author looking toward the deep ravine spanned by the ruined bridge at the closed international boundary under the haunting title “two near peoples, two distant neighbors.” With its figure standing on the Turkish side of the border, this image mirrors the figure gazing at Ani from Armenia invoked in Peter Balakian’s essay reflecting on the dimension of loss.

The bridge itself has been the focus of several reconciliation and dialogue projects. Organized by the Washington,
D.C.–based nonprofit HasNa, the Armenian-Turkish Stonemasonry Cooperation Program brings together stonemasons, architects, cultural tourism experts, and private-sector representatives from the Armenian city of Gyumri and the Turkish city of Kars for training and dialogue “to promote cross-border efforts to preserve their common cultural heritage through restoration, the opening of new markets, and tourism.” As laudable as these dialogues might be, they also evince disconnection between the iconic status of Ani as a symbol of collaboration and reconciliation and the actual treatment of the site, where any activity on the ground is subject to MCT policies. This signals the gap between civil society debates and state initiatives, especially for sensitive issues. Yet these dialogues represent an enormous change in the climate and tenor of nongovernmental Armenian–Turkish relations that, despite setbacks, has steadily gained momentum since the early years of the twenty-first century. The involvement in Ani’s restoration of the WMF and Anadolu Kültür, two institutions with extensive records in heritage and human rights advocacy, respectively, may succeed in closing the gap between civil society’s will to remember and the state’s will to control public memory.

At Ani, I experienced the jarring contrast between architecture’s presence and the erasure of its history. I retraced the steps of scores of pilgrims, tourists, scholars, and treasure hunters. Nearly thousand-year-old monuments stood in their inescapable materiality, bearing signs of wear and tear from harsh weather and the ravages of the human hand, from illegal excavation trenches to graffiti and industrial paint, even the mutilation of faces on wall paintings. On this site, so layered with history, the signage I read combined half-stated facts with errors and fabrications, rendered all the more bizarre by poor English translation, that obscured the Armenian layer of the site (Figure 15). We all—the armed guards, villagers, official guides, and tourists—knew what was being silenced; we understood what terms should not be uttered. Few who visit Ani are unaware that once Armenians lived there, that they built the ghost city long ago, and that, across the ravine, they survive in the Republic of Armenia. It was as if the official erasure of the Armenian layer imposed itself upon us, forcing us into a complicity of silence. The tantalizing proximity of the border, implacably sealed, and the sight of botched restoration projects produced a sinking feeling. Yet, once out of earshot of the official guide, away from the perceived censorship of power, conversation flowed about the architectural remains, their expressive capability, and their rich historical context. Wall paintings exposed to the elements glittered with jewel-like colors. Saints and kings

Figure 14 The medieval bridge over the Akhuryan/Arpa River looking northeast, 2012. The cathedral and the Church of the Redeemer appear on the left (photo by Armen Kazaryan).
stared at us with gouged-out eyes. A church with a muqarnas portal stood ruined. Above a vertiginous ravine, a monastery perched dangerously over the Akhuryan’s rushing waters. The windswept site, altitude, and rugged terrain left an indelible impression on me as on countless others.

“Can there be a conciliatory heritage?” asked the anthropologist Erica Lehrer in her study of sites related to the polarized national Polish and Jewish views of Jewish heritage in Poland. In the case of Ani as well, the contest over the site and its meaning has resulted in the emergence of two distinct, parallel, and polarized historiographies. Untangling the history of the emergence of Ani as an object of heritage, as this article attempts, can help us to understand how this site figures in these historiographies, a necessary step for a move forward. Cultural heritage is often promoted as an opportunity for sustainable development. Can it not, or should it not, also be central to projects for justice, truth, and reconciliation? I do not suggest these are easy or obvious processes or that they are not burdened by intractable asymmetries of power but rather that, as daunting as they are, they should be attempted. I argue that full acknowledgment of the site’s complex medieval history and its fraught modern interpretations is critical. Choices made regarding Ani’s preservation cannot escape political implications, and contests over the site’s meaning should be acknowledged rather than ignored and engaged in rather than silenced. It is possible that, once admitted, the difficult issues at Ani can become opportunities for creative solutions. Only then can contested cultural heritage be transformed into opportunity for encounter, dialogue, reflection, and perhaps even reconciliation.

Notes
1. S. M. Tsotsikian [Tsotsikean], Ayts’ m’ Ani’qaghak’in [A visit to the city of Ani] (New York: Tparan Kochnaki, 1914), 22 (in Armenian). This article is based on research in Turkey and Armenia. I thank the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey and the State History Museum of the Republic of Armenia (Anelka Grigoryan, director). I also thank the anonymous referees of JSAH, Peter Balakian, Patricia Blessing, Rachel Goshgarian, Talinn Grigor, Veronica Kalas, Osman Kavala, Raymond H. Kévorkian, Christina Maranci, Yavuz Özkaya, Scott Redford, Mark Weber, and especially Keith David Watenpaugh. All translations from Armenian, French, Russian, and Turkish are mine unless otherwise noted. For names of locations in Turkey, I have used present-day Turkish toponyms with Armenian names in parentheses. For names of monuments, I have used the English versions with Turkish and Armenian in parentheses. For names of locations in Turkey, I have used present-day Turkish toponyms with Armenian names in parentheses. For names of monuments, I have used the English versions with Turkish and Armenian in parentheses. I have used the Library of Congress romanization system for Armenian, simplifying its diacritics.
3. This cooperation was announced in 2009 and is currently being imple-
mplemented. World Monuments Fund (WMF), “Turkish Ministry of Culture
and Tourism and World Monuments Fund Collaborate on Historic Conser-

4. This statement has been made to the press more than once by Kars
Province Culture and Tourism Office director Hakan Doğanay. See, for
example, “Ani’de dinamit patlatıldı iddiası geçeri yanıstemiyor,” Agus
(Istanbul), 14 Aug. 2012 (in Turkish).

5. Permanent Delegation of Turkey to UNESCO, “Historic City of Anı,”

6. For an analysis of the legal climate surrounding such prosecutions,
particularly article 301 of the Turkish penal code, see European Court of
ı report, Anay. See, for
example, for Anı’s history with me.

7. William J. Cameron, The Armenian Genocide, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, Mass.:

8. As Mona Serageldin noted, a lack of professional security personnel
has led to a safety problem for the site and its visitors. See Orba
report, Serageldin, Year One Progress Report (2007), 48. For an application for
a permit to visit Anı, which states the photography restrictions,
see http://www.virtualani.org/ephemera/permit.htm (accessed 25 July
2013).


10. For a short overview of Anı’s history, see W[ilhelm] Barthold
[Vasily Bartold] and V. Minorsky, “Anı,” Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed. The
most recent source for the site’s history and architecture is Raymond H.
Kévorkian, ed., Anı: Cape taille de l’Arménie en 1926 (Arles, France: Actes
Sud, 2001). A key source remains N[jenahat] [Jakovlevich] Marr, Anı,
Knizhnaia istoriya goroda i raskopki na meste gorodishcha [Anı: History of the
city according to literary sources and the excavations of the ancient city]
(Leningrad: Ogiz, Gosudarstvennoe sozialnoeekonomicheskoe izdatelstvo,
1934) (in Russian). For a recent translation, see Nicolas Yacovlevich
lrique Anı, 2001). See also Paolo Cuneo et al., Anı: Documents of Armenian
Architecture 12 (Milan: Edizioni Ares, 1994). Virtualani.org also provides
a comprehensive resource on Anı and surrounding sites.

11. “Manuchihr” is spelled variously in the literature. I follow the spelling
of the Encyclopedia of Islam; see C. E. Bosworth, “Shaddadids,”

12. The use of this term by the Supreme Court of Appeals is analyzed by
the human rights lawyer Orhan Kemal Cengiz in his “Minority Founda-
tions in Turkey: An Evaluation of Their Legal Problems,” Human Rights
/index.php?option=com_content&contentview=article&id=293:aliasminority-
foundations-in-turkey-an-evaluation-of-their-legal-problems&catid=84:

13. On the use of stones from Anı’s monuments in the construction of
homes in Oacak, see, for example, Jean-Pierre Mahé, “Epigraphic
Evidence on the Site of Anı,” Kazi Sancaqları Toplantısı 21, no. 2 (1999),
432–38.

14. The Armenian propensity to name children after cities, monasteries,
lakes, or mountains of their lost or inaccessible homeland appears to be
mostly a postgenocide phenomenon. Examples abound, such as Ararat,
Masis, Araks, Sevan, Daron, Van, Varak, Nayiri, and Anı.

15. For a summary of some of these issues and bibliography, see Helaine
Silverman, ed., Contested Cultural Heritage: Religion, Nationalism, Erasure,

16. On the politics of the Mostar Bridge, see Michael Ignatieff,
“The Bridge Builder,” in Empire Lite: Nation Building in Bosnia, Kosovo,
Afghanistan (London: Vintage, 2003); Emily Gunzburger Makáš, “Rebuilding
Mostar: International and Local Visions of a Contested City and Its
Heritage,” in On Location: Heritage Cities and Sites, ed. D. Fairhild Ruggles
(New York: Springer, 2011); Jon Calame and Esther Charlesworth, Divided
Cities: Belfast, Beirut, Jerusalem, Mostar, and Nicosia (Philadelphia: University

17. Transportation to Kars is by highway. Orba
report, section 3.1; Mona Serageldin et al., Year One Progress Report: Strategies for Sustainable
Development, Kars, Turkey, Phase II (Cambridge, Mass.: Institute for Inter-
national Urban Development, 2007).

18. 20. For a short overview of Anı’s history, see W[ilhelm] Barthold
[Vasily Bartold] and V. Minorsky, “Anı,” Encyclopaedia of Islam, 2nd ed. The
most recent source for the site’s history and architecture is Raymond H.
Kévorkian, ed., Anı: Cape taille de l’Arménie en 1926 (Arles, France: Actes
Sud, 2001). A key source remains N[jenahat] [Jakovlevich] Marr, Anı,
Knizhnaia istoriya goroda i raskopki na meste gorodishcha [Anı: History of the
city according to literary sources and the excavations of the ancient city]
(Leningrad: Ogiz, Gosudarstvennoe sozialnoeekonomicheskoe izdatelstvo,
1934) (in Russian). For a recent translation, see Nicolas Yacovlevich
lrique Anı, 2001). See also Paolo Cuneo et al., Anı: Documents of Armenian
Architecture 12 (Milan: Edizioni Ares, 1994). Virtualani.org also provides
a comprehensive resource on Anı and surrounding sites.

21. “Manuchihr” is spelled variously in the literature. I follow the spelling
of the Encyclopedia of Islam; see C. E. Bosworth, “Shaddadids,”

Cultural Exchange in Byzantium and Armenia,” JSAH 62, no. 3 (2003),
294–305.

23. One of the most influential of these is M. F. Brosset, Les ruines d’Anı: Capitale de l’Arménie sous les rois Bagratides, aux Xe et XIe s.; Histoire et
description, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Commissionnaires de l’Académie impéri-
elle des sciences, 1860–61). See Augustin-François Lemaître (1797–1870),
Grande muraille dite de Smbat vue de l’extérieur de la ville, côté nord-ouest
(Paris: Imprimerie des Arts libéraux, 1817). One of the most influential of these is M. F. Brosset, Les ruines d’Anı: Capitale de l’Arménie sous les rois Bagratides, aux Xe et XIe s.; Histoire et
description, 2 vols. (St. Petersburg: Commissionnaires de l’Académie impéri-
elle des sciences, 1860–61). See Augustin-François Lemaître (1797–1870),
Grande muraille dite de Smbat vue de l’extérieur de la ville, côté nord-ouest
(Paris: Imprimerie des Arts libéraux, 1817).

24. [Steven Sim], “Stereoscopic Photographs of Anı,” http://www.virtualani
.org/kurkdjian/index.htm and http://www.virtualani.org/kurkdjian

25. On the history of Marr’s excavation, see Marr, Anı, Knizhnaia istoriya,
Marr, Anı–Rêve d’Arménie; Raymond H. Kévorkian, “Les campagnes de
fouilles à Anı (1892–1893 et 1904–1917),” in Kévorkian, ed., Anı: Anarchie,
Masis, Araks, Sevan, Daron, Van, Varak, Nayiri, and Anı.

26. On the Ottoman-born T oros T oramanian’s legacy, see Christina
Maranci, Medieval Armenian Architecture: Constructions of Race and Nation
(Louvain: Peeters, 2001).

28. Among the earliest studies are those published in the “Ani series” by the Imperial Academy in St. Petersburg. These publications are very difficult to find today; a full set is preserved at the State History Museum of Armenia. For the earliest visitor’s guide to Ani, see I. [Hovsep] Orbeli, Khachkuri patutavitad gur govanstsechi Ani [Short guide to the settlement of Ani] (St. Petersburg: Tipografia Imparatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1910) [in Russian]. An early translation of Orbeli’s work into Armenian is Y. [Hovsep] Orbeli [L.A. Orbeli], Anuy Azerknerav. Patmuten, Ayxmanan Vichak, Pegmnamen [The ruins of Ani: History, current state, excavations], trans. Yusik [Archbishop] (Vagharshapat [Echmiadzin]: Mayr Ator Ejmiatsni Tparan, 1911) [in Armenian].


31. Grigoris Balakian (also romanized as Palak’ean), Nkaragart’vun Ani erakerknerer [Description of the ruins of Ani] (Istanbul: Tagrat’twn H. Matt’osean, 1910) [in Armenian]: “nine centuries” (98), “He who wants to know …” (vii), “T’t’k’ahy” (91), among others. Peter Balakian is currently translating and editing this important study. I thank him for discussing his ongoing research with me. For Grigoris Balakian’s career as a leader in the Armenian Apostolic Church, see Armenian Golgotha (1922–59), trans. Peter Balakian and Aris Sevag (New York: Knopf, 2009) [in English].


33. In memory of that event, 24 April is the day of commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. Grigoris Balakian survived his ordeal to write a memoir; see G. Balakian, Armenian Golgotha, trans. P. Balakian.


35. In memory of that event, 24 April is the day of commemoration of the Armenian Genocide. Grigoris Balakian survived his ordeal to write a memoir; see G. Balakian, Armenian Golgotha, trans. P. Balakian.

36. Vruyr, Anium, 16; Kévorkian, Ani, 52. The objects taken to Yerevan were incorporated into the State History Museum of Armenia, Yerevan. See Evgenya Mushchyan, Hatkanibakan tiuts uk tangaranayin zboghyutsunyaver, vol. 11, Ani kagbaki peghmenneri haytnaborcavats arakaranev [Catalog of the museum’s collections, vol. 11, Objects found during the excavations of the city of Ani] (Yerevan: Hayastan Hratarakhtyun, 1982) [in Armenian].

39. Among Marr’s most historically important finds was the crucial series of inscriptions on the Mosque of Manuchir, which have been central to Turkish official historiography’s linkage of Ani with the Seljuk dynasty. The earliest (and I believe only) study of the inscription is V[asily] Bartold, Perikladiakai nadpis na stene. Aniiskoi mezheti Manucue [The Persian inscription on the wall of Ani’s Manuche Mosque] (St. Petersburg: Tipografia Imparatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1911) [in Russian].


41. For Ashkharbek Kalantar’s 1922 photographs, see Vruyr, Anium, unpaginated plates.

42. Balakian, Armenian Golgotha, 71–72.


44. Among Marr’s most historically important finds was the crucial series of inscriptions on the Mosque of Manuchir, which have been central to Turkish official historiography’s linkage of Ani with the Seljuk dynasty. The earliest (and I believe only) study of the inscription is V[asily] Bartold, Perikladiakai nadpis na stene. Aniiskoi mezheti Manucue [The Persian inscription on the wall of Ani’s Manuche Mosque] (St. Petersburg: Tipografia Imparatorskoi Akademii Nauk, 1911) [in Russian].

45. Manuchir, a Shaddadid vassal of the Seljuks, was emir of Ani from 1075 to 1118 CE. The official city guide of Kars promotes this structure as “the first Turkish mosque ever built in Anatolia.” Ahmet Çolak et al., Kars Gezi Rehberi [Kars travel guide] (İstanbul: Tablet Bettiçi, 2009), 57 [in Turkish]. This is also cited as constituting the cultural importance of the site: Permanent Delegation of Turkey to UNESCO, “Historic City of Ani,” ref. 5725, submitted 13 Apr. 2012, http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5725 [accessed 23 July 2013]; Orbağlı report; UNESCO website “Site Management Plan for the Ancient City of Ani,” http://www.unesco.org/new/en/venice/about-this-office/single-view/news/site _management_plan_for_the_ancient_city_of_ani. An example of the presentation of Ani in keeping with this view of Turkish historiography is Mukrmin Hal Idinan, Türkiye tarihii, ırkçılıklar devari, i, Anadolu’nun Fetbi [History of Turkey, the period of the Seljuks, I: The conquest of Anatolia] (İstanbul: Aşgın Mathaas, 1944), 58 (in Turkish).

46. Donald Quataert, “The Massacres of the Ottoman Armenians and the Writing of Ottoman History,” Journal of Interdisciplinary History 37, no. 2 (2006), 249 (aura) and 250 (wall).


47. In general, official heritage site interpretation in Turkey does not use terms other than Turkish for Armenian as well as Greek or Georgian sites. For some observers, there is some indication that this might change in the future. Nevertheless, it is notable that during the recent inauguration of the restored medieval Armenian Church of Aghtamar on Lake Van, the speech by the representative from Ankara mentioned neither the word “church” nor “Armenian.” Laure Marchand and Guillaume Perrier, La Turquie et le fantôme Arménien: Sur les traces du génocide (Aixes, France: Actes Sud, 2013).

48. The photography restrictions are discussed above (see note 18).

49. Before the 1990s, there was limited archaeological activity at Ani, although the records are fragmentary. Kılıç Kökten conducted drilling and surface research activities in 1942 and 1943. Kemal Balkan conducted archaeological excavations in 1964 and 1965. See Orbağı report.


51. Some of this clearing was done by bulldozer. VirtualAni documents some of this activity, which is also critiqued by the Orbağı report.

52. Short reports of excavations are published yearly in the official Kazi Sonaçları Toplantısı.

53. Orbağı report, section 3.4.

54. The MHP is noted, among other things, for its militancy against the left and against ethnic and religious minorities. On Karamağarlı’s link to this party see “MHP Welcomes Newcomers to Its Ranks,” Hurriyet Daily News, 19 May 1998. See also Hofmann, “Armenians in Turkey Today,” 41.


56. Orbağı report, section 5.1: “Problems of conservation related to buildings, incorrect restoration practices, and the fact that an integrated conservation plan has not yet been made.” Permanent Delegation of Turkey to UNESCO, “Historic City of Ani,” ref. 5725, submitted 13 Apr. 2012, http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5725 (accessed 23 July 2013): “Until recent decades, the surviving structures of Ani were in a state of deterioration caused by nature and human factors. In addition, some of the churches were subject to restorations with some problems” (emphasis added).

57. Kévorkian, Ani.


59. The Historical Heritage Protection Foundation supports, for example, the medieval cemetery at Ahtal, where Karamağarlı had excavated since the 1970s.

60. See http://www.tmkvtr.org. Arioba holds strong views on issues related to the Armenian community of Turkey. Her views are contested within the Armenian community and by those on the Turkish left. It is perhaps not coincidental in this early phase that the organization able to have an impact was politically more conservative.


62. According to Arioba, “This [termination of the ramps’ questionable restoration] was only achieved after a legal investigation was completed against the contractor, who was not solely responsible for the damage. Unfortunately, the damage done seems to be irrevocable.” See tmkvtr.org, see also “The Destruction along the City Walls,” http://virtualani.org/history/restorations.htm (accessed 25 July 2013). The original configuration is observable in Ohannes Kurkdjian’s dramatic photographic photograph no. 2 of the “Ruines d’Arménie: Ani” series (see Figure 4); and in a photograph published in G. Balakian, Nkaragrut’iwn, 25.

63. The website of the German NGO Arbeitsgruppe Anerkennung—AGA starkly juxtaposes before-and-after photos of the lion relief, http://www.agr-online.org/ethnocide/turkey.php?locale=en. The restoration firm has not indicated they intentionally removed the cross (see Figure 11). Other crosses embedded in the ramparts have remained in situ. I thank Veronica Kalas for discussing the details of construction of this section with me. A photograph in G. Balakian, Nkaragrut’iwn, 25, clearly shows the original architectural context of the lion relief surmounted by the cross.

64. For a severe critique, see Orbağı report. See also Yavuz ÖzKay, “Architec[atural] Documentation and Historic Preservation Projects of the Prominent Structures at Ani Archaeological Site” (paper presented at the workshop “Architectural Preservation at Ani,” Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations, Koç University, Istanbul, 15–17 Apr. 2011). I thank Yavuz ÖzKay for sharing his paper with me.

65. ÖzKay, “Architect[ural] Documentation and Historic Preservation Projects.” The removal of the reconstruction at the palace has not yet been conducted.


69. Orbağı report. Excavations led by Yasar Çoruhlu have continued.


74. Global Heritage Fund, “Kars Kaleći: Revitalization of Kars Historic Ottoman District and the Living Cultures of the Caucasus [sic]: Master Conservation Plan; Global Heritage Fund in Partnership with Kars Municipality, the Mayor of Kars, and Anadolu Kulture [sic] [i.e. Anadolu Kültür],” 2005.


76. Serageldin, Kars Municipality Institutional Assessment, 71. The number of visitors to Ani has been rising steadily: up 27 percent in 2011, the year that saw 21,460 visitors to the site of which 60 percent were foreign nationals, according to Kars Culture and Tourism director Hakan Doğanay; see “Ani Looks for Inclusion on World Heritage List,” Hurryet Daily News, 15 Aug. 2011. The number of visitors to Ani was said to have doubled between 2011 and 2012, to about 43,657, and one-third were foreign, according to Hakan Doğanay, quoted in “Ruined City of Ani Set for New Excavations,” Hurryet Daily News, 26 Oct. 2012, http://www.hurryetdailynews.com/ruined-city-of-ani-set-for-new-excavations.aspx?PageID=238 & nid=33230&NewsCatID=375 (accessed 2 July 2013).

77. Marchand and Perrier, La Turquie, 94–95. Residents of Anatolian sites where Armenians once lived tenaciously cling to the widespread belief that Armenians “hid their gold,” prompting many illegal, informal excavations of residences, religious buildings, cemeteries, and archaeological sites. This is a problem in many locations throughout Anatolia and has created serious difficulties for research teams on the ground at Ani today. For example, researchers affiliated with the WMF found their work at Ani disrupted and equipment missing: “However all of them [their digital photography equipment supplies] were removed by local villagers who thought that the station markers actually showed the locations of a treasure.” Bora Sayin, “A Diary of Work at Ani: Part II,” World Monuments Fund Journal, Jan. 2012, 2014, http://www.wmf.org/journal/diary-work-ani-part-ii (accessed 26 July 2013).


79. A similar survey in 2011 sponsored by the WMF is described in Sayin, “A Diary of Work at Ani.”

80. Yavuz Özkaya, email communication to author, 8 Apr. 2012.


82. Veronica Kalas and Yavuz Özkaya, “Art and Architecture at Ani in the Thirteenth Century: The Church of Tigran Honents and the Mosque of Minuchir,” in Georgian Arts in the Context of European and Asian Cultures, ed. Dimitri Tumanishvili et al. (Tbilisi: Georgia Arts and Cultural Center, 2009), 211–16. I am grateful to Professor Kalas for sending me a copy of this publication.

83. Özkaya, “Architectural Documentation and Historic Preservation Projects.”

84. Özkaya’s term. Email communication to author, 3 Apr. 2012.

85. This cooperation was announced in 2009 and is currently being implemented. The US Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation has funded other projects in Turkey in the past five years. See http://exchanges.state.gov/heritage/afcp.html.


89. Özkaya, “Architectural Documentation and Historic Preservation Projects.”

90. Orbaşi report, 19, includes an eyewitness account of the storm.


93. Interview with Mark Weber of the WMF, New York, 15 Feb. 2013. Weber showed me a short publication on Armenian architecture by Toros Toramanian in English translation, apparently provided to WMF by Osman Kavala as a historical resource.

94. See, for example, the recommendations in WMF 2009 report, 28.

95. Dr. Armen Kazaryan (also spelled Ghazarian) is deputy director of the Research Institute of the Theory and History of Architecture and Town Planning of the Russian Academy of Architecture and Construction Sciences (NIITIA RASN) and coauthor with Robert Ousterhout of “A Muqarnas Drawing from Thirteenth-Century Armenia and the Use of Architectural Drawings During the Middle Ages,” Muqarnas 18 (2001), 141–54. Kazaryan has served as a scientific consultant for a Turkish nongovernmental organization for the Church of the Redeemer conservation project since April 2013. Email communication to author, 16 Jun. 2014. I thank Alin Dökmeceyhan Pontiğlül for discussing with me the Turkish Armenian architects’ association Haycar. Interview, Istanbul, 13 Apr. 2014. For coverage of Yavuz Özkaya’s lecture on Ani to the Haycar association, see Lora Sarı, “Ani zamanı direniyor,” Agos (Istanbul), 28 Mar. 2014 (in Turkish).

96. The workshop “Architectural Preservation at Ani” took place at the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations, Koç University, Istanbul, 15–17 Apr. 2011. I thank Scott Redford, director of the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations, for discussing the workshop with me. No publication of the proceedings is planned. I interviewed several workshop participants who saw it as a tremendous opportunity for exchange, although they had some significantly different points of view on preservation and historical documentation. The workshop “Ani in Context” took place in and around Ani 28 Sept.–3 Oct. 2013. Sponsored by the Norwegian

97. I thank Veronica Kalas for discussing some of these points with me. To gain a sense of the kind of pressure an active contemporary urban context places on Seljuk sites in Anatolia, see Blessing, “Reframing the Lands of Rum.”

98. The expression is Mark Weber’s; interview with Mark Weber of the WMF, New York, 15 Feb. 2013. Weber explained that, in general, the WMF creates Memoranda of Understanding with relevant state bodies such as culture ministries that include a range of agreements specifically on how information about a cultural heritage site may be disseminated. My understanding from my conversations in Istanbul with Osman Kavala is that Anadolu Kultür’s priority was the conservation of the monuments rather than signage or interpretation, which appears to be the official purview of the MCT.


101. “Turkey: the cradle of cultures and civilizations connecting Europe and Asia and capital of civilizations that have reigned [sic] the lands of Anatolia for centuries. Since the beginning of history, Anatolia, well known as one the earliest settlements, has continued to flourish with the migration of various tribes, and accumulated a large cultural heritage through a line of succeeding empires and civilizations. Many empires ranging from the Sumerians to the Hittites, the Lydians to the Byzantines and the Seljuks to the Ottomans have once thrived and expired within the borders of Turkey,” http://www.goturkey.com/en/pages/read/overview.

102. For example, an article that extolls “the region’s predominant culture—the Great Seljuk and Anatolian Seljuk civilization,” a feature in Skyfel, the in-flight magazine of Turkey’s flagship airline, Turkish Air/Türk Havayolları, states, “Akdamar Island is one of the region’s outstanding sites. It is also home to a church regarded as sacred by the Armenians who once inhabited the region.” Bahar Ilmaz, “Balm to Farhad’s Heart/Ferhat” in Yüreğine Derman Doğu Anadolu,” Skyfel, Sept. 2011. Considering the strong ties between the government and the airline, by implication the article also reveals the Turkish state’s continued discomfort with aspects of its history. I thank one of JSAH’s anonymous reviewers for this suggestion.

103. Despite the glittering façade of recent economic growth and openness toward European Union norms, however, the broader human rights record of Turkey remains bleak. Reporters Without Borders describes Turkey as “the world’s biggest prison for journalists.” Reporters Without Borders, “Press Freedom Index 2013,” http://en.rsf.org/press-freedom-index-2013,1054.html (accessed 3 July 2013). The cultural, social, and political cleavages of Turkish society became strikingly apparent to the world during the violent events of June 2013 surrounding the protests held at Gezi Park in Istanbul and several other Turkish cities.

104. Bilgin Ayata and Serra Hakyemez, “The AKP’s Engagement with Turkey’s Past Crimes: An Analysis of PM Erdoğan’s ‘Dersim Apology,’” Dialectical Anthropology 37, no. 1 (Mar. 2013), 131–43. For a broader analysis of AKP’s Armenian policy, see Marchand and Perrier, La Turquie.


109. Ibid., 478. The committee is cochaired by no less than the foreign minister and the head of the National Security Council.

110. European Stability Initiative, Noah’s Dove Returns: Armenia, Turkey, and the Debate on Genocide (Berlin: ESI, 2009), 7; quoted and analyzed further in Dixon, “Defending,” 479. Bağcıklı has 1.05 million followers on Twitter (as of 18 July 2014).


114. “Bakan Ömer Çelik: Diasporayla daha çok konuşulmaz” [Minister Ömer Çelik: We have talk to the diaspora more], Agos (Istanbul), 25 Apr. 2013 (in Turkish). This is an interview with the minister of culture and tourism Ömer Çelik by Rober Koptaq, editor of the influential Turkish Armenian newspaper Agos.
115. Ibid. Çelik does not define what he terms the “genocide lobby” but suggests that it harms Turkish–Armenian relations. Çelik’s party affiliation is AKP.


119. The name of this site has become highly politicized. I adopt the transcription of the Armenian name of the site, “Aghtamar.” Many writers in Turkish use “Ahtamar,” a Turkish transcription of the Armenian name, as opposed to the name recently championed by the state, “Akdamar” (“white vein” in Turkish), which is perceived as an erasure of the island’s Armenian past. For a discussion of the politics of naming at Aghtamar, see among others, Ayata, “Tolerance.”

120. For Aghtamar’s restoration analyzed by a noted Turkish journalist of Armenian origin, see Rober Kopta, “AKPin Ahtamar Açılımı,” Bianet, 26 Mar. 2007. I thank Nora Tataryan of Sabanci University for sharing her ongoing research on Aghtamar with me. David Ignatius reported that President Obama had personally requested that Erdoğan allow services to take place at Aghtamar and some other Christian sites in Turkey. “Obama’s Friend in Turkey,” Washington Post, 7 June 2012.


126. On Ani’s status within the jurisdiction of the Armenian clergy at the dawn of the twentieth century, see Tsotisikian, Aydy’ me Ani k’agh’kin; 26; G. Balakian, Nkaragrut’iwn.

127. See “Bahceli’i de namaz kildi” [Bahçeli prayed at Ani], NTV, http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25136847; “Turkish Nationalists Rally in Armenian Holy Site at Ani,” BBC News, 1 Oct. 2010, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world/europe-11454014. The military marching band performance appears in the embedded video. For a discussion of this rally and its coverage, see Ayata, “Tolerance,” 18–19. At some level, the rally at Ani can be interpreted as part of the long-standing opposition between the MHP and the ruling AKP party, given that the AKP, and Erdoğan personally, are strongly associated with the restoration of Ahtamar.


129. In Turkey, academic research at most state archives and museums or excavation and some surveying at heritage sites requires a research permit for foreign citizens that entails considerable state oversight of the research and access control, involving the diplomatic corps and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the past, researchers working on sensitive topics had little chance of being granted a research permit. See the American Research Institute in Turkey’s guide to research permits at http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/ARIT/ResearchPermit.htm. For a critique of the process of granting or denying permits for archaeology, see Eldem, “Die Schätze der Antike.”


132. International observers often comment on this silence: “To visitors, Turkey omits all mentions of Armenia from descriptions of Ani’s history and focuses on the city’s Turkish and Muslim influences.” Ella Morton, “Ani, the Ancient Armenian Ghost Town,” Slate.com, 19 Mar. 2014.


136. See, for example, the diversity of participants at the 2011 and 2013 international workshops discussed in note 96. The questions of who should represent Armenian heritage in Turkey as “captive sites” in Peter Balakian’s formulation, vulnerable to arbitrary destruction.

137. I was urged by a knowledgeable and well-meaning colleague to refrain from critiquing the preservation process at Ani precisely for fear of causing further damage at the site. This view reflects some observers’ acute sense of Armenian heritage in Turkey as “captive sites” in Peter Balakian’s formulation, vulnerable to arbitrary destruction.

138. See, for example, the diversity of participants at the 2011 and 2013 international workshops discussed in note 96. The questions of who should represent Armenian citizens of Armenian origin have been part of Ani’s recent preservation history. By comparison, the Republic of Georgia and Turkey have created protocols that will enable Georgia to restore the monastery of Oshki in eastern Turkey, with some cooperation with the WFM; see http://www.wmf.org/project/oshki (accessed 26 July 2013); and “Turkey to Restore Ancient Georgian Church in East,” Hurriyet Daily News, 16 Oct. 2011.

139. See the reports from 2009 to 2011 at http://www.historyandreconciliation.org.


141. Hrant Dink, İk ik yakın balk iku uzay komus [Two near peoples, two distant neighbors], 2nd ed. (İstanbul: Uluslararası Hrant Dink vdf, 2008) (in Turkish). The cover in question is that of the book’s French translation, published by Actes Sud in 2009. The same bridge also serves as the logo of Gamurç (“Bridge” in Armenian), a popular program on the IMC TV channel hosted by journalist Aris Nalcı.
142. HasNa defines itself as a nonprofit that promotes cross-cultural understanding and economic development in postconflict communities, including Turkey and Cyprus. See http://hasna.org/program-countries/armenia-turkey/crafting-peace (accessed 19 July 2013). I thank Christina Maranci for alerting me to this program.

143. In addition to signage at Ani, the Kars Museum also provides information about Ani, which is equally problematic in its content. See Sade-Mete, “Fragmented Memory.” For example, the English version of the signage near the Church of St. Gregory of Tigran Honents is as strange in content as it is ungrammatical: “This church was ... built in 1215 by rich Merchant Tigran Honentz from Ani when Georgions were dominant. After a jametun was added to church. Because of the decoration of stone relief animal motifs outside the monument it is also called The Church of St. Gregory the Illuminator or the The Church of Sirli. The Symbolic animal motifs, which were decorated as relief in Turkish animal style, were taken from the Turkish Animal Calendar. It is accepted that these animal figures were added when Ani was taken by Ilhanli.”