Introduction

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The moment and context of the writing of *The Ruins of Ani* is one of historic drama embedded in a small, epic-like journey that the young *vartabed* (celibate priest), Krikor Balakian, made with twelve other clergymen in June 1909. The pilgrimage was led by Matteos II, the Catholicos of the Armenian Church, which defined the importance of the occasion. Balakian, who already had diplomatic responsibilities for the Armenian patriarchate in Constantinople (Istanbul), embarked on the pilgrimage with a passion to see this sacred place of which he had dreamed for so long. In 1909 the ruined medieval city of Ani was still part of the Russian Empire, and so the Catholicos, who was seated in the historic capital of the Armenian Church in Etchmiadzin, just 30 miles from Yerevan in Russian Armenia, was able to organize such a pilgrimage as part of a religious and cultural expedition.

At a certain moment near the end of this travel-memoir-history, Balakian confesses: “I was overjoyed at this opportunity to see Ani, I had a thirst to see those eternal monuments of the past glory of our forefathers. I wanted to kiss that holy soil.” Balakian’s affect is certainly not ambiguous; for him and, one might suggest, for the Armenian imaginary, Ani embodies a historical truth. This ruined medieval city was once a great capital city of “eternal monuments” and a center of Armenian civilization. For Balakian, then, the topography and landscape of the Shirak plain on which Ani is situated is

a sacred geography. Arriving there in late June 1909, Balakian writes: “we could see the white-haired Masis [Mt. Ararat] proud and imperious, which as Khorenatsi wrote: ‘sprouted like a tree from the earth.’ The mountain rises like a colossal tree, or a monolithic tower of stone created by God . . . is not this mountain which rises on the heart of Armenia, a silent monument to the ancient glory and sorrow of the Armenians?” What could be more mythic to this priest: God, ancient glory, Mount Ararat, are all here as an original setting for Armenia’s historical past.

The affective tone and the intellectual perspectives of *The Ruins of Ani* are often defined by discovery, astonishment, and, at times, even revelation. The reader of this compact, hybrid monograph will find that the energizing voice of the author (the young priest Krikor Balakian, who would later become the bishop of the Armenian Church of South France) creates a narrative that is both scholarly and personal.

To witness this excavation of Ani in June 1909 was to witness a kind of resurrection, a retrieval from the lost Armenian past—with the good news that, in some way Ani lives and that the Armenian past is still touchable, alive in some remnant way with implications. The news was: the Armenian past was glorious, and Armenians must, in whatever way, retrieve it. Nicholas Marr, the Russian archaeologist who began the great dig at Ani in 1892, exclaimed on this day [25] June 1909 to the Catholicos, Matteos, upon his arrival: “it’s been almost nine centuries since a patriarchal visit to Ani has occurred.” And, until now, Balakian informs us, “not one scientific investigation or excavation has been conducted, although various Armenian and European scholars have visited and studied Ani.” There is, in Balakian’s account of this pilgrimage, both a framing of the event and a framing of his monograph as historically significant.

The city of Ani occupied an area of about 200 acres on the Shirak plain in the Armenian Highlands in the southwest Caucasus, and today this area lies inside Turkey, abutting the border with the Armenian Republic. The city was founded by the Armenian

The main entrance gate and northern walls, constructed 989, renovations eleventh to thirteenth centuries.

Bagratuni (Pakraduni) Dynasty around 950 c.e. on what was then the famous Silk Road, and was the capital of the Armenian Kingdom. The citadel walls, still visible at the highest part of the ramparts, were built by the Armenian prince Ashot III in 960–61, and his grandson Smbat II built “the famous double ramparts to the north, nearly 3 miles long.”¹ From its founding it became a place of obsessive church building, and so it accrued the name City of 1001 Churches, a symbolic phrase—but certainly there were scores of churches and chapels in the city and environs.

The Byzantines annexed the city in 1045. In 1064 Alp Arslan and the Seljuk Turks conquered Ani, and they installed the Kurdish Shaddadid emirs to rule the city until the Georgians conquered it in 1199. During this period both Armenian and Georgian princes known as the Zakarians ruled the city. The Mongols, during their imperial sweep into the Caucasus under Genghis Khan, conquered the city in 1239, and the legendary Tamerlane sacked the city in

the 1380s. But upon his death the Turkish clans known as the Black Sheep (Kara Koyunlu) took over the city. A large earthquake destroyed much of the city during this period and sent the trade routes of that part of the Silk Road south to Anatolia and Mesopotamia. This added to the abandonment of the city by the fifteenth century, although Ani was part of the Safavid empire until it was taken by the Ottomans in 1579.² Although it remained a pilgrimage site and housed a monastery until the eighteenth century, Ani seems to have fallen out of all use. But in the early nineteenth century when European travelers returned from the region with reports about the ruins of Ani, new awareness of the history began to emerge.³

After the Russians annexed Ani and the Kars Oblast (province) following the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–78, there emerged a new interest in the site. By 1880 photographs of Ani by Ohannes Kurkdjian were being sold in stereoscopic sets. And in the next decade, the Imperial Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg sponsored the first excavation project, which was conducted by Nicholas Marr, an “Orientalist” of the Caucasus who was also a linguist, historian, and budding archaeologist when in 1892 he began his first dig at Ani. Marr, who was trained at St. Petersburg University and would later become a faculty member there, conducted a dig and a scholarly recovery project, which led to his founding the Ani museum on the grounds. Marr’s work was supported by Russian and Armenian scholars and benefactors, and his team surveyed and mapped the site, excavated and restored various buildings, collected significant artifacts, and published scientific studies in journals giving rise to a modern discourse about the city and its history. Among the Armenian collaborators were the architect and historian Toros Toramanian; the medievalist Hovsep Orbeli, who later became the director of the Hermitage Museum; the photographers Aram Vruyr and his son Artashes; and the painter Arshak Fetvadjian, who created a visual record of the site and its evolving form.⁴

During the period from 1892 to 1915 Ani was, for Armenians, a symbol of lost glory and political power and autonomy as well as an emblem of cultural pride and hope for a new future. During

World War I, in which the Armenian Genocide was carried out, Marr's work was halted and then assaulted as war broke out between the Russian and the Ottoman armies. When the Russian army left the war in 1917 in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution and victory, Turkey took control of Ani and the Kars province. Then, in the war between the newly hatched Republic of Armenia and Turkey in 1918, the Armenian army, comprising genocide refugees and survivors, managed to take control of Kars province for a short time before it lost it again to the Turks in 1920. The expedient Treaty of Kars in 1922 made between the new Soviet Union and the Turkish government wrestled Kars, and Ani with it, away from Armenia. In a strange occurrence in the spring of 1921, the commander of the Third Ottoman army, Kazim Karabekir was ordered by Atatürk to destroy "every single stone of these Ani ruins, and to abolish their trace from the face of the earth."⁵ And, for whatever reasons, Karabekir did not follow through with the order. Some of Ani was ransacked and destroyed and some of it left as it was, and as Christina Miranci notes, the museum on site was destroyed: "its doors pried off the hinges and the roofs removed"; in some accounts the artifacts were sent by train to Tiflis and disappeared and in other accounts the contents of the museum were buried in various locations.⁶

Among other things, *The Ruins of Ani* affords a kind of topological view of Ani from an early twentieth-century Armenian intellectual perspective. The idea of Ani as a site of Armenian historical achievement and a place of historical memory had been a current in Armenian contemporary culture since the 1890s when Nicholas Marr began his excavations of the city. Balakian quotes Catholicos Matteos II speaking at the public moment of reception to Professor Marr at the gates of Ani in late June of 1909: "Through your excavations, you reveal to the whole world the true picture of the magnificent past of a misfortunate and exiled people." The Catholicos's words here bring the past and present into a dialectical awareness that defines "this Ani moment" in which past glory and present suffering are part of a conjoined history.

The grounds of Ani, May 2015.

Balakian's own take on this dialectic of the past and present in the Armenian predicament is embedded in his use of Dante in his introduction: "What is more grievous and heartrending than to recall the glory of past days when one is living in days of misfortune." Balakian's take on Dante bears an affirmative twist: "it is not *only* grievous," he continues, "but it is on the contrary, consoling." And, the consolation is that it reminds us of a grand Armenian past: "Armenian glory," "Armenian genius," "the living," and "eternal monuments" that are Ani. For Balakian, this is inspiring, an emblem of hope and possible cultural revitalization.

The Ruins of Ani is also an investigation of the architectural and aesthetic achievements of tenth-century Armenian architecture. Using the work of H.F.B. Lynch and Charles Texier, Balakian argues that what Lynch called "Armenia's native genius," and singular talent . . . in the art and technology of architecture" were a

Broken stone bridge over the Akhurian River, circa tenth to thirteenth centuries.

foundation for medieval European Gothic architecture and deserve their rightful place in history:

While Lynch ascribes the origin of Gothic architecture to the East, another scholar, the Frenchman [Charles] Texier goes a step further with a definite assertion that the Gothic style has an Armenian origin, and that the architectural *chef d'oeuvre* style, Gothic, had come to central Europe by means of emigration from the city of Arpa Chay, which is another name for Ani and the Turkish name of the Akhurian River.

Thus, when the first invasions of Ani by Alp Arslan began in 1064, some of the population began to migrate in groups to Poland, Wallachia, Moldavia, and central Europe, and they brought with them, among other things, their arts and crafts. Thus the Armenians of Ani created a foundation in medieval central Europe for the incomparable Gothic style, which in its forms and variety of

Akhurian River snaking along the eastern border (closed by the Turkish government) of Ani between Turkey and Armenia.

beautiful carving and stonework was the chef d'oeuvre of all architectural styles.

I would note among those monumental achievements of Gothic architecture: Venice's San Marco basilica, Milan's cathedral, Paris's Notre Dame, and London's Westminster Abbey, each known

Main cathedral built by the architect Trdat circa 950–1000. (Courtesy of Christina Maranci.)

to the world as glorious expressions of Gothic architecture from their respective historical moments. Thus, Ani’s renowned cathedral bears the early imprint of Gothic architecture. Its tall and delicate columns, its ovoid interior, and its hollow arches have inspired marvel in European scholarly travelers.

Balakian’s observations of the achievements of Armenian medieval church architecture are perceptive, and anyone who visits an Armenian medieval church today will probably corroborate what he notes:

If we wish to summarize the chief characteristics of the Armenian architectural style of the buildings of Ani, we can say the following: (1) General simplicity of the style of the architectural plan; (2) Integrity, and in various parts perfect harmony of the architectural structure; (3) In order to avoid monotony, abundance of arches, pillars, and carvings and particular regularity in ornamentation, without

boastful superfluity; (4) Decorum and rich variety of carved ornamentation; (5) A mysterious darkness that is observable in this type of ancient Armenian construction, which is neither darkness nor light, and which leaves the viewer with a mystical feeling or experience. This corresponds with the church's aim of nourishing the soul; (6) The pointed cupola positioned in the middle of Armenian temples is also a native characteristic of Armenian architecture; no other Christian church has this feature, and we find it, beginning with the cathedral of Holy Etchmiadzin, on the majority of old and new Armenian churches in the Caucasus.

For Balakian, Trdat was the innovative architect of the era—a canonical figure for Armenians, and the man who designed the Ani Cathedral with groundbreaking techniques. He was so respected that he was called to Constantinople in 990 by the Byzantine emperor Basil II to renovate Hagia Sophia after an earthquake devastated the church. Although Balakian celebrates the achievement of other churches at Ani, such as Tigran Honents/St. Gregory (Krikor) the Illuminator, the Church of the Holy Savior, and the Church of the Holy Apostles, he dwells on the Cathedral as the jewel in the crown. For him, Trdat's masterpiece is the monument "full of grace," and "of the highest artistic merit, denoting a standard of culture which was far in advance of the contemporary standards in the West." Here, as in his reflection on other moments at Ani, Balakian's exuberance veers toward a tone of romantic Armenian exceptionalism, but he does, of course, note the impact of Arabic, Byzantine, and Persian traditions on Armenian building.

He introduces the reader to features of the Armenian decorative and aesthetic traditions—their brilliance and beauty; he underscores the art of the masonry, both interior and exterior, and the carefully polished tufa stones of the churches which are exemplary artistic manifestations of the Shirak region. Balakian points out that "the [stones] are joined with such refinement," and this has "been a subject of amazement for scholarly visitors." The "creative and aesthetic skill" of this masonry also comes from an understanding and use of the range of the stone's color: tan, brown, chocolate, red, pink, gray. He also notes that the elaborate inscriptions (the epigraphs)

on exterior walls are decoratively elegant and intellectually rich, and each “sheds light on . . . Armenian civilization, and on the character, and moral and intellectual state of the Armenian people at that time.”

“A misfortunate and exiled people”—let me return to those words of the Catholicos in his public speech that day with Nicholas Marr in June 1909. The words open into the other dominant narrative of *The Ruins of Ani*—one that is both historical and contemporary.

There is a dialectic running through the narrative in which Armenian exceptionalism—the once triumphant civilization embodied by Ani—is contrasted with a history of conquest, colonization, and ruin—often a conquest at the hands of Turkic tribes—Sultan Alp Arslan and the Seljuks, Genghis Khan, Ogedei Khan and Charmaghan, and Tamerlane. The historical narrative of Armenia has been defined by periods of autonomy and peace and then conquest, ruin, and persecution. The invasion of Ani by Seljuk Turk warrior Alp Arslan in 1064 begins an evolving typology of conquest and destruction that defines most of the remaining history of Ani. Balakian exclaims that “Ani speaks more to the heart of the Armenian visitor than to the eye, for these ruins still bear the imprint of the vandalism and barbarism of the Arabs, Seljuks, Persians, and Greeks.” He continually refers to those “greedy enemies” who pillaged and conquered “this magnificent capital of the Pakraduni Kings.”

He also reminds us that “the pages of Armenian history do not bear a blacker and more fiendish inscription than of the expeditions of Genghis Khan’s Tatars. And Genghis Khan’s successor (Ogedei Khan)’s large army under the commander Charmaghan would conquer and pillage Ani as well, as would Byzantines, Georgians, Kurds, and Mongols. And in 1387 Tamerlane, seeking to restore Genghis Khan’s power, destroyed Ani so thoroughly that it “became uninhabited,” ending the presence of Armenia’s royal capital.

But the history of conquest and ruin is inseparable from the present. In this moment of June 1909 and the ensuing year when Balakian was writing this monograph, the condition of the Armenians

Church of St. Krikor (Abughamrents). (Courtesy of Christina Maranci.)

in the Ottoman Empire was sliding backward. In the southern region of Adana in April 1909 a horrendous episode of massacre exploded. The new Young Turk regime had come to power in 1908 after a nonviolent revolution, conducted by the military, had deposed Sultan Abdul Hamid II from his political control of the

empire (he would remain caliph of all Sunni Muslims of the empire). The revolution promised constitutional changes for Christian and other minorities in what was hoped to be a new, more democratic system. The progressive, new regime introduced some constitutional changes aimed at inclusion of ethnic minorities, but the changes were never enacted, in part, because the flow of reactionary backlash from conservative Islamic factions and loyalists to the sultan led to a counterrevolution in the spring of 1909. And the bloodiest episodes of this counterrevolution were carried out against the Armenian population in the city and environs of Adana. In a region where there was even more poverty and political corruption than the sagging empire was hampered by, Armenians were a target for the intense backlash against Christian minorities. Armenians and Greeks were economically well off in Adana, and this too spurred resentment. The counterrevolution led to the looting of Armenian businesses in the city, which set off a month of mass killing of Armenians in what one historian called the “worst blood bath in modern history.”⁷ In the end, between 20,000 and 30,000 were dead.

What had preceded the Adana massacres less than twenty years earlier had been an even more extreme episode of mass violence. The massacres in the Abdul Hamid period erupted in 1894 in retaliation to Armenian protests for tax reform and other peaceful, civic protests for constitutional protections of minorities. Over a two-year period (1894–96) between 100,000 and 200,000 Armenian civilians were killed—only for their ethnic identity. It was a campaign of unprecedented mass violence in modern history, and it elicited relief and rescue efforts from across Europe and the United States that were also unprecedented. Thus the elation among Armenians during the period of Ani’s uncovering arose in a context fraught with the reign of terror and massacre. And this complex situation helps us to understand this moment in Vartabed Balakian’s historiographical view. Reading *The Ruins of Ani* in the wake of the Adana massacres, one might see this monograph as a reclamation of historic Armenia with its hope for a cultural renaissance in the coming age.

The Armenian Genocide and Cultural Destruction

Within five years of the publication of *The Ruins of Ani*, Krikor Balakian would be among the 250 cultural leaders arrested in Constantinople on April 24, 1915. And after surviving nearly four years in prisons and camps and in wilderness, disguised as a German soldier, Greek vineyard worker, German engineer, among other guises, he wrote his memoir of his four years in the killing fields, *Armenian Golgotha*.⁸ His survivor memoir remains today a key text in the witness memory of the Genocide. And looking back, one can see too that *The Ruins of Ani* reverberates in another pertinent way because it affords us a view of the significance of cultural property and its destruction as a component of genocide.

The eradication of the Armenian population in Turkey in 1915 has been noted as the first episode of genocide carried out in a modern form, which is to distinguish it from genocide carried out in premodern modes, often in the contexts of conquest, colonialism, and war starting in antiquity and continuing into the early twentieth century with the destruction of the Herero of Namibia by the Germans.⁹ However, unlike genocidal campaigns before 1915, the Ottoman Turkish extermination of the Armenians is marked by certain salient features that define what came to be modern genocide: the focused use of government apparatus—bureaucracy, military, technology and communications, and nationalist ideology—in order to first target and isolate and then eliminate an ethnic or cultural group—that is, a stateless subgroup of the larger population—in a concentrated period of time.

Looking back at the twentieth century, one can see that the Armenian Genocide was a seminal event in the evolution of what genocide in the modern era would become. When Adolph Hitler said to his military advisers, eight days before invading Poland in 1939, “Who, today, after all, speaks of the annihilation of the Armenians?”¹⁰ he was using the example of the success of the Ottoman government’s ruling party in 1915 (Committee of Union and Progress, hereafter, CUP), in eliminating a targeted minority population from Turkey. And he was emboldened by the fact that what

had been in Europe and North America a highly publicized human rights disaster had disappeared from popular consciousness less than two decades later.

In conceptualizing the Armenian Genocide, it is important to note the significance of cultural destruction as a crucial dimension of the Ottoman government's final solution for the Armenians. The burning and razing of churches; the torture of men, women, and children with Christian crosses; the mass killing of Armenian intellectuals; and the forced conversion of Armenians to Islam were continual acts of assault from the 1894 to 1896 period of the Hamidian massacres to the 1909 Adana massacres and on through the period of genocide from 1915 until the end of World War I. These modes of violence embody the destruction of culture that Raphael Lemkin—who formulated the concept of genocide as a human rights crime—conceived of as part of the act. Lemkin understood genocide as involving both the mass killing of people in a targeted ethnic group and the destruction of their culture.¹¹

What we see in the Armenian Genocide is a range of the decimation of culture. In conjunction with the mass killing and forced marches of the Armenian population, the Ottoman bureaucracy was focused on destroying, silencing, or appropriating (1) cultural property, (2) cultural producers: intellectuals, artists, teachers, clergy, (3) institutions that bear belief–value systems, and (4) historical territory—its cultural identity and significance.¹² The Armenian patriarch Malachia Ormanian compiled statistics in 1912–13 at the request of the Ottoman government. The statistics showed that there were 2,538 Armenian churches; during the Genocide all except a handful were plundered, taken over, set on fire, razed or demolished.¹³ Similarly the 1912–13 census also shows that there were at least 1,996 Armenian schools and 451 Armenian monasteries, almost all of which were destroyed.¹⁴ These facts are pertinent to the issues surrounding the ruins of Ani today, for the CUP's destruction of Armenian churches and schools was inseparable from the project of eradicating Armenian identity and history throughout Turkey, significant portions of which were historic Armenia.

One deep-seated fear among the Ottoman ruling elite was the historical legitimacy of Armenian civilization on its indigenous lands in much of central and eastern Turkey. Along with the Greeks, Assyrians, and Kurds, the Armenians were a salient, indigenous civilization of Anatolia, which had come under Ottoman rule by the sixteenth century. Armenians were natives going back to about the sixth century B.C.E. and had flourished as an empire across Anatolia and the Armenian Highlands during the reign of Tigran the Great in the first century B.C.E. They had also established a significant kingdom in southern Anatolia during the Middle Ages, known as Lesser or Cilician Armenia. For about 2,500 years then, Armenians had maintained a continuous culture in significant parts of the territory that would become Ottoman Turkey. They were a distinctive ethnic group, culturally and intellectually defined, by their becoming the first nation to declare Christianity its religion in 301.¹⁵ And much of the evidence of Armenia's historical continuity was embedded in the churches, monasteries, and schools and in various forms of public and sacred art, including the omnipresent *khatchkars* (large carved stone crosses) that were found in cemeteries, churches, and other civic spaces in all Armenian towns and sections of cities. Not only were the churches destroyed by the gendarmes, killing squads, and local populations but many of the more than 2,500 churches were subsequently turned into barns, arsenals, brothels, artillery training areas, restaurants, night clubs, and cafes. And in the case of the ruined churches of Ani, the remaining buildings and ruins have been deliberately misnamed as Hittite or Byzantine in the site signage and in the tourist guides and maps in order to cover up their Armenian identity. The Armenian writing inside the churches has been painted out.¹⁶

Post-Genocide Legacy

The legacy of cultural destruction in any genocidal history plays out in complex ways. The Armenian aftermath is inseparable from the predicament of both exile and exclusion from its own historical past. Many of the ruins of Armenian monuments and buildings, sacred

and secular, have been demolished, appropriated, and eroded by negligence and assault since 1915. The landscape of Turkey is covered with ruins of Armenian churches among other architectural monuments. And even the remains have been subject to continued erosion and removal throughout Turkey over the past decades.

Because of Turkey's state policy of denial of the Armenian Genocide history and its unwillingness to make any gestures of apology or restitution, or even to show minimal concern for the victimized culture, and because of the history of oppression of minorities in Turkey from the birth of the modern Turkish republic in 1923 through the present, the land and places of most of historic Armenia inside Turkey, have been walled off to Armenians both inside and outside of Turkey. The 60,000 Armenians living in Turkey today have access to the patriarchate and several other churches in Istanbul, but the rest of Turkey is, for them, no different than for the Armenians in the Republic and Diaspora.

Although Armenian tourists can view some of these sites for brief moments on tourist-controlled visits, they can do so only in a context defined by police surveillance and a state tourist industry that mislabels the ruins and structures in order to deny Armenian historical identity, and the ruins come to haunt the Armenian communities in ongoing ways. Inside the Turkish state, Armenian ruins are taboo and represent a forbidden past, an irreclaimable history, a paradox of an embodied absence, one in which loss and the widening exilic gap amplify each other. Looking on from the Armenian–Turkish border, at the ruins of Ani, into a zone that is closed by Turkey with barbed wire and military guards, adds another dimension to the aftermath of what I call the Armenian lockout-predicament.

Whether an Armenian is looking on from the Republic of Armenia that borders northeastern Turkey, or from the Middle East, Europe, North and South America, Russia, Australia, or elsewhere, in the Armenian diasporic experience, the ruins of material culture are forbidden, locked away, boarded up. And this predicament creates another dimension of trauma. Not only does the “exilic gap,” as

Signage, City of Ani, no mention of Armenia.

Hamid Naficy calls it, “never close”¹⁷ but in the Armenian case, I would suggest, the sense of loss grows within witnessing of continual ruin.

Furthermore, in the age of Internet gazing, instant image-news on the Internet, zeroing in on terrains and places with Google Earth, Armenians, like other diasporan cultures, can watch their monuments erode and disappear in unprecedented ways. The recent episode of a fashion shoot by Turkey’s *Elle Magazine* at Ani, in the fall of 2011, brought the complexity of virtual reality, capitalism, commodification, and cultural property into a kind of semiotic performance.¹⁸ As Turkish fashion models were depicted in alluring poses for advertising high fashion and sexy clothes amid and inside the ruins of the churches of Ani, Armenians around the world expressed their anger and shock. Thus, the materiality of the monuments can become a paradoxical absence–presence that reifies the wound. The Armenian gaze on these sites is, in some way, inextricable from the event of the Genocide and the continuous denial by successive Turkish governments. The taboo and falsified status

of vanishing Armenian ruins inside Turkey remain a material emblem of an unresolved, traumatic history.

One recent manifestation of the continued trauma of the Armenian post-genocide predicament is dramatized in a congressional resolution proposed by the Armenian, Greek, and Assyrian communities in the United States in June 2011. House Resolution 306 “Urging the Republic of Turkey to safeguard its Christian heritage and to return confiscated church properties” to the Armenian, Assyrian, and Greek communities whose cultural heritages were destroyed by the Ottoman Empire in 1915. It was passed by the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Relations by a vote of 43–1 on July 21, 2011.

The resolution embodies in its scope and focus on the loss of its material culture and ensuing cultural remains in Turkey, a creative attempt to deal with the lockout predicament. Arguing that Turkey as signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights has affirmed the freedom of religious belief and the practice of religious worship, and that Turkey has been cited now three years in a row by the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom for imposing “serious limitations on freedom of religion or belief,” the Armenian community in the United States asks Turkey to allow free religious practice and

(3) the return to their rightful owners all Christian churches and other places of worship, monasteries, schools, hospitals, monuments, relics, holy sites, and other religious properties, including movable properties, such as artwork, manuscripts, vestments, vessels, and other artifacts; and

(4) all the rightful Christian church and lay owners of Christian church properties, without hindrance or restriction, to preserve, reconstruct, and repair, as they see fit, all Christian churches and other places of worship, monasteries, school, hospitals, monuments, relics, holy sites, and other religious properties within Turkey.¹⁹

The language of H. Res. 306 underscores a dimension of a protracted trauma and a need to reestablish a socially viable and active relationship with cultural identity and historical tradition and place,

in order to make a bridge across the big hiatus of the post-genocide predicament.

Current Situation

In the past decade there has been a collaborative effort to save and restore Ani. In 1996 the World Monuments Fund designated two major Armenian Churches—the main Cathedral and the Church of the Holy Savior—as endangered world monuments and put them on their Watch Program. Since that moment of international recognition, the WMF has undertaken a “documentation and conservation program that has resulted in the stabilization of the two churches and in improvements in the larger landscape of the city.”²⁰ Subsequently, the WMF’s work brought in support from the Norwegian Institute for Cultural Heritage, and this has led to degrees of collaboration with the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism, and two Turkish nongovernmental organizations, Osman Kavala’s Anadolu Kültür, and the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations at Koç University. Since 2006, new collaborations between the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the WMF, together with an international group of scholars and professional experts, have brought greater international awareness about Ani, as well as higher preservation standards, including careful documentation and more transparent methods of restoration.

In the fall of 2013 these organizations sponsored a weeklong workshop at Ani during which an international group of scholars, including Turks and Armenians, met to assess the current state of the major and endangered buildings at Ani and in the surrounding region. The group established what they called a Risk Assessment Matrix in which they ranked 28 structures for their significance and for their vulnerability on scales of 1 to 25 and 1 to 35, respectively. They used the following rubrics to help formulate their assessments: (1) heritage significance, (2) intactness of building form, (3) exterior significant fabric, (4) interior significant fabric, (5) archaeological remains.²¹ The impressive publication *Ani in Context* (2014) represents a step forward in the process of recovery and restoration

and in various ways is in conversation with Balakian's *The Ruins of Ani*.

Nevertheless, restoration has started and stopped over the past decade because politics and logistical challenges have interceded. The restorations of various sites, including the Armenian churches of Tigran Honents (St. Gregory the Illuminator), Holy Savior, and the Main cathedral, are on hold at the moment, and the only ongoing work on the site is related to the Surp Prkitch (Holy Savior) church. This project has been overseen by the Turkish architect Yavuz Özkaya within the frame of an agreement between the Ministry of Culture and the WMF, which is using funds from the U.S. Ambassadors Fund. Armen Kazaryan, an Armenian scholar of architectural history, who teaches in Moscow, is also an adviser, and this creates some small spirit of Armenian–Turkish collaboration. Yavuz has also made an agreement with an Armenian architect and masonry expert who has cut stones in Armenia and brought them to Ani to install on the walls.

There is a similar cooperation agreement between the Ministry and the WMF regarding the Cathedral. However, this is still in a planning phase, and no work has been done on the site. Similarly, there have been excavations around the Cathedral and Surp Prkitch in order to create better access to the foundations and to unearth the stones that have fallen from the structures. Earlier, the Menuchir mosque and the Tigran Honents church had some restoration to shore them up. And the erosion of the buildings of Ani that has occurred since Balakian took his extraordinary photographs in 1909, which are included in this edition, is alarming.

The inclusion of Ani in UNESCO's list of World Heritage Sites has given some impetus and stature to the restoration project. And tourism has also been an impetus for Turkey to move ahead because the region is poor and whatever economy it would generate would be welcome. Turkey's nomination of Ani to UNESCO's Heritage List also has a pragmatic dimension because it improves Turkey's international image. Although the Turkish government has found it convenient to claim that these gestures toward collaboration

Church of Tigran Honents, close view.

indicate some genuine concern for Armenian heritage in Turkey, this is still window dressing. The fundamental problem remains: the Turkish government has not engaged in historically truthful restoration of the buildings of Ani nor in any accountability for the history of the human rights crimes committed against the Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians in the first decades of the twentieth century, and this includes the massive range of destruction of Armenian heritage and culture throughout Turkey.

Turkey appears far from dealing with these ethical realities, and in its proposal to UNESCO, even the use of the word *Armenia* is remarkably rare. The official narrative emphasizes the multicultural characteristics of Ani with pagan, Christian, and Muslim monuments and the presence of Seljuk, Armenian, and Georgian architectural traditions. And now, with the new ultra-right wing government of President Erdogan what can we expect in the future?

In the fall of 2016 noted philanthropist and businessman Osman Kavala, art historian Christina Maranci, Ottoman historian Rachel Goshgarian, and I met at the United Nations with the

Interior of the main cathedral, whitewashed apse in background.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (Ms. Cihan Sultanoglu, the director of the Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States) and WMF. In that meeting there was a strong feeling that the designation of Ani in 2016 as a UNESCO World Heritage Site would help to safeguard the site and further efforts to stabilize the monuments. However, our meeting did not result in the Turkish government bringing the UNDP aboard. In 2016, Mr. Kavala was planning to prepare an exhibition on Ani, which he hoped would bring more attention to the project, and he announced that “the objective of his proposed exhibit would be to expose the masterpieces and the landscape with strong visual material, and to try to find a language which should describe the Armenianness of Ani as well as the multicultural richness of the city.” Kavala had previously brought together the Turkish architect Yavuz with two Turkish and Armenian photographers and the scholar Armen Kazaryan. But then politics intervened, and in the current reign of terror and purges that President Erodgan is conducting in the wake of the failed coup of July 2016, the chances for

any movement on restoration at Ani and historical truth reckoning seem slim. And then, in October 2017, Mr. Kavala—one of the most prominent, humane, and generous philanthropists and forces for democracy in Turkey—was arrested and imprisoned on fabricated charges that he was conspiring to overthrow the Turkish state. The international outcry for his release is another expression of moral protest against the evaporation of intellectual freedom in Turkey today.

But, the question remains: can the restoration of Ani become a bridge between the Republic of Armenia and Turkey today? In the wake of the Armenian Genocide and in the matrix of the Turkish state's denial of its crimes against the Armenian people and their culture, history, and heritage, can there be a fully realized effort to recover Ani? The idea of recovery is essential because it is predicated on the idea that restoration must entail an honest and truthful representation of the historical facts of the city—its origins and its cultural achievements.

As one can see from the current signage at Ani, placed by the Turkish Board of Tourism in the past decade, there has been no progress on this front. Even though the older blue signs were replaced with the more modern white and black signs about a decade ago, there is still no mention of the word *Armenia* on any them, although there are a few names of Armenian historical figures like the architect Trdat and the Bagratuni dynasty, but without context or identification of their Armenian identities. Even the name of the city has been changed in the official Turkish documentation: instead of Ani (Arm. Անի), it has become ANI, which translates in Turkish as “memory”—the irony of which has not gone unnoticed by scholars and commentators.²² The situation remains: at the site of Armenia's most important medieval city there is no official designation of the city's Armenian history and buildings. Tourists and visitors Turkish and non-Turkish would have to recognize on their own that the dramatic inscriptions carved into the stone exteriors of some of the churches are medieval Armenian inscriptions. Or the tourist who is intrigued by the word *Bagratuni* might do

Church of the Holy Redeemer, undergoing restoration by the World Monuments Fund.

a quick search on her iPhone to find that the word refers to the Armenian rulers of the region in the tenth century. Ani does bear the layers of its history and it also has buildings from the Seljuk, Georgian, Mongol, and Byzantine conquests and periods of rule. But Ani was founded and built by a great Armenian dynastic family and remains a central place in Armenian history.

In addition to its intellectual and historical contributions, *The Ruins of Ani* offers another building block to an imagined bridge between Turkey and the Armenian Republic and Diaspora. Bala-kian's monograph contributes the historical truth and cultural evidence that are necessary in creating a responsible dialogue between the two cultures. Ani could become a heritage site of hope and of peace, a place of cultural and political negotiation in the wake of the post-Genocide impasse between Turkey and the Armenians. It is a unique site that has the potential to open a space between the two cultures. One can see in Ani a place and opportunity in which

Signage, City of Ani, no mention of Armenia.

the Armenian Republic and Armenian Diaspora and Turkey might negotiate a way toward truth and reconciliation. The ethical issues that emerge from the gridlock of Turkish denialism and the Armenian quest for social justice are dramatic. Armenia's most important, intact ruin lies inside Turkey, wedged at the Armenian–Turkish border; its presence haunts the Republic of Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora. Ani's falsified reality represents one more self-destructive and dysfunctional manifestation of Turkish nationalism. It was not a coincidence that the *New York Times* put a large color photograph of the ruins of Ani as the lead image on the front page (April 17, 2015) for its story on the one hundredth anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. The headline read: “A Century After a Genocide Turkey’s Denial Only Deepens.” The image of Ani still haunts us today and remains an emblem of the failed reckoning on the part of Turkey.

Ani is, today, a popular tourist site for anyone traveling to the region, but its revenues belong to Turkey, and the irony is not lost

Tigran Honents church sign, the word Armenian absent.

on anyone. Given the massive destruction of Armenian lives and Armenian property conducted by the Ottoman Turkish empire and modern Turkish state in the past hundred and thirty years, it would be a small gesture of social justice for Turkey to return Ani to the Armenian Republic, which abuts Ani at its western border.

Many options could ensue and Armenia and Turkey could share tourist revenue and restoration priorities and practices. Might the lost city not become an example to the world about how cultural heritage can play an ethical role in conflict resolution? If Turkey were able to acknowledge the Armenian historical past, it would be an organic gesture forward, one that would help both Turkey and Armenia.

Ani offers the possibility of becoming a mutually beneficial, historical site—and a place of meeting where truth must precede reconciliation. The banishment of the word *Armenia* at Ani continues to create a sense of the absurd, and this serves both Turkey and Armenia badly. The call for a continued and robust restoration project at Ani offers an unusual geopolitical opportunity. Notwithstanding Turkey's current tenor of state repression and extreme nationalism, there will be a future with new directions. And Ani can embody one of them. The still sizeable remains of this historic Armenian city should not have to wait much longer for its truth.

Notes

Photos in the Introduction are by Peter Balakian unless noted otherwise.

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4. *Ibid.*, 532–533.

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18. Balakian, "Raphael Lemkin, Cultural Destruction, and the Armenian Genocide," 83.
19. H. Res. 306, "Urging the Republic of Turkey to safeguard its Christian heritage and to return confiscated properties." 112th Congress of the United States, 1st Session.
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21. *Ibid.*, 7.
22. Maranci, *The Art of Armenia: an Introduction*, 272; Watenpugh, "Preserving the Medieval City of Ani," 545.

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