



ANI

The Capital of the Bagratuni Kingdom of
Medieval Armenia

*"There is a glorious city in Armenia by the name of Ani where are
1000 churches and some 100 000 families inhabit".*

VINCENT DE BEAUVAIS (1190-1264)

Dominican monk







The map was compiled in Germany in 1853 and shows the situation in X century.

Extract from the Shpruner Atlas.

The Armenian Highland is the geographical area separated within the mountain ranges of the Lesser Caucasus, Pontus, Meghedukh, Taurus and those shaping the northern edge of Zagros, where the Armenian people took its origin from/since time immemorial and created its millennial history and culture.

Already during the Neolithic and Eneolithic periods early farming communities gradually emerged in the Armenian Highland which flourished in the early Bronze Age (IV-III millennia BC). In the II millennium BC ancient state formations appeared here (Tegarama, Nairi, Hayasa-Azzi, Arme-Shupria, etc.); later, in IX c. BC, one of the most powerful states of the ancient Middle East Urartu (Kingdom of Van) - emerged in the area. Within the boundaries of that state which embraced the entire Armenian Highland Van-Tushpa, Menuakhinili, Erebuni-Yerevan, Argishtikhinili-Armavir, Rusakhinili, Teshebani-Karmir Blur, and a number of other cities, appeared. They became the social, cultural and economic hubs upon

which, starting from VI c. BC, the Yervanduni (Orontid) rulers, founders of the Armenian kingdom and the inheritors of the history and culture of Urartu, anchored their dynasty. Under their reign the capital was transferred from Tushpa-Van to Armavir.

Henceforth, during the course of time, the successive Armenian dynasties, proceeding from the expediency of their times, moved the capital of Armenia from one location to another. During the reign of Artaxids (189 BC–1 AD), the capital was transferred from Armavir to the newly-built Artashat (and to Tigranakert, for a short while): Under the Arshakuni (Arsakid) dynasty reign (66–428), the city of Dvin became the capital of Armenia (336AD), and in the second half of IX c. under the Bagratuni (Bagratid) kings who had come to power at that time - in 961 the city of Ani was proclaimed Armenia's capital. This city was destined to become the important political, economic, religious, educational and cultural center of medieval Armenia.



Cathedral of Ani and St. Savior Church

THE LOCATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE CITY OF ANI



Plan of Ani



Ani is located in the Shirak district of the central Ayrarat province of historical Armenia, on a triangular cape surrounded by 35-80 m deep canyons where the beds of Akhurian and Ani Rivers (Tsaghkotsadzor, Alaca) meet. It is 1464 m high above the sea level, and occupies a territory of about 150 ha. As of today, it is an uninhabited ghost city in the Kars province of the present-day Republic of Turkey, not far from the Armenian-Turkish border, around 30 km southwest from the city of Gyumri.

In the Middle Ages Ani consisted of a citadel and the southward-located Inner Fortress (Aghjkaberd), the downtown area or "shahastan", and the suburbs. The citadel was located at the southwestern part of Ani, on a flat-topped hill. The citadel housed the royal palace, several churches, royal bath-house and other buildings. The royal palace occupied some 3500–4000 m². Judging from the ruins, the palace halls had been decorated with frescoes of civic nature. The royal bath-house consisted of seven rooms with hot and cold water pools functioned there.

Northeastward from the citadel, on a spacious upland, was stretched the Inner City. It had streets serving as markets with their trading stalls, an artisans quarter, inns and other secular and religious buildings. The city had guest houses, baths, a network of water supply system, and a sewage. The main streets were paved and had a width of up to 6 meters. The city was surrounded with a wall having a height of 8 to 10 meters, and a length of about 2,5 km. From the inner side, most

towers of the wall had 2 or 3 floors meant for the city guard. From the outer side, the wall was supplemented with a deep trench having a length of 500 m. Outside the walls, in the northward valley stretched the city's large suburbs.

Ani was linked to the outer world with several stone bridges built on Akhurian river. Based on what remained from the main bridge, it had a triple-arch structure. The left and right decks of the bridge were made from wood and were moveable. During the sieges of the city the left-wing carriage way was moved back thus making the bridge impassable.

From the northward direction the city had three famous gateways, each with double gates, one in the first row of the wall, and the



Those gateways were: the Lion Gate (or the Senior Door) in the center (with a nearby coat of arms of the city depicting a lion and a cross above it symbolizing the civil and religious authorities of the city, westward from it was the Kars Gate, and the Dvno (or Chequer-board) Gate was located eastward. On the



other was a bit further, on the main rampart.

Coat of Arms of the city. Before and after restoration.

slopes of the nearby canyons, especially in Tsaghkotsadzor and Gailadzor, there were numerous caves with rock-cut chambers serving as dwelling places and even a score of churches and chapels. The researchers have called this area Underground Ani. The excavations conducted in Ani by the orientalist Nicholas Marr, archaeologist Hovsep (Joseph) Orbeli

and architect Toros Toramanian during 1890s unearthed remains of water pipelines, prayer chambers, a network of tunnels. These rock-cut caves served in those times for the inhabitants of Ani both as dwelling places and defensive shelters.



View to the city from caves.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE AND WRITTEN RECORDS ON ANI FORTRESS

Information on historical and cultural realities on the territory of Ani in the archaic times has been obtained through remains containing material evidence discovered during the excavations carried out by the archaeologist and orientalist Nicholas Marr in late XIX and early XX centuries on the city site. According



Coins of Armenian King Tigran II (95–55 BC)

to these data there existed an early Bronze Age settlement here which lasted on also during the Iron Age (XI–VII cc. BC).

Remains evidencing of the existence of a hellenistic and antique settlement within the boundaries of Ani have been traced as well. Especially notable are the silver coin unearthed in the vicinity of Ani and issued in Artashat by the powerful King Tigran II (95–55 BC) of the Armenian Artaxid (Artashisian) royal dynasty and the silver tetradrachm issued by the Seleucid King Philip Philadelphos I (93–83 BC). The most impressive find from Ani referring to this period is the bronze mask of Dionysos. The specialists date the mask to the III–II cc. BC. The discovered materials tend to assume that the ancient settlement continued to exist at least up to III–I cc. BC. The most ancient part of the city is supposed to be the rocky ledge of Aghjkaberd (known as the Inner Fortress in the Middle Ages).

In the primary written sources Ani has been mentioned in a note by the historian Vardan Arelveltsi (Vardan the Easterner, 1198–1271 AD) on the Inner Fortress telling that the first Armenian Catholicos Grigor Lusavorich (St. Gregory the Illuminator, died in 331 AD) baptised the prince of the Inner Fortress.

Ani has also been referred to as an impregnable fortress in the work of Armenian chronicler Eghishe (V century) entitled "History of Vardan and the Armenian War" with regard to the



Coins of King Philip Philadelphos I (93–83 BC)

Armenian-Persian clashes of 450–451. Further, Ani is mentioned in the scripture by another chroniclet of the V century Ghazar Parpetsi with regard to the rebellion of 481–484, according to which to avoid battle with the Armenian commander Vardan Mamikonyan the Persian governor Atrvshnasp had retreated to the fortress of Ani.

The original written sources also testify that Ani, alongside with the provinces of Shirak and Arsharunik, belonged to the Kamsara-

kan noble family. The Armenian King Trdat the Great (287–330 AD) granted this royal estate to Kamsarakan princes as inheritable property and had also ranked the Kamsarakans amongst the senior lords. From the Kamsarakan period only the ruins of the V century granite rampart and VII century vaulted "Palace" church have been preserved.

In the beginning of IX century the Armenian prince Ashot Bagratuni (unknown–826 AD) purchased from Kamsarakan family the



Inner fortress of Ani (Aghjkaberd)

ownership of Arsharunik and Shirak provinces including the fortress of Ani. Since that period Ani has always been mentioned in the works by Armenian and foreign historians like Stepanos (Stephanos) Asoghik, Aristakes Lastivertsi, Matteos Urhayetsi (Matthew of Edessa), Ioannes Scylitzes, Michael Attaleiates, Ibn al-Athr, al-Farik, Ahmed bin Mohammed al-Jaafari, Sibte ibn al-Jawzi, Abul-Faraj Bar Hebraeus and others.



ANI AS THE CAPITAL OF ARMENIAN BAGRATUNI KINGDOM 961–1045

The first four successors of Armenian Kingdom (885–1045 AD) restored in 885 under the headship of Bagratuni (Bagratid) dynasty consecutively made the centers of their own possessions Bagaran, Yerazgavors (Shirakavan) and Kars as capitals of the country. This mutable state of affairs changed radically when Ashot III (953–977 AD), the son of Abas Bagratuni (929–953 AD) Ashot III Merciful moved from Kars to Ani and was crowned there in 961 by Catholicos Anania I Mokatsi (946–968 AD) and declared the city as the permanent capital of the country (all successive Bagratuni kings ruled here): The celebrations dedicated to the proclamation of Ani as the country's permanent capital was accompanied by the ceremony of coronation of Ashot III; the events were attended by renowned dignitaries from Armenia and neigh-

bouring Virk and Aghvank. The chroniclers also witness a grand military parade.

During the several next decades Ani became one of the largest cities of Armenia and the Middle East. Within a short span of time, the Ashotian (King Ashot's) Wall and, later on, the bigger King Smbat's Walls (under King Smbat II (977–989 AD)), churches, inns, guest houses, the royal palace, rock-cut dwellings, houses, baths, artisans and traders boutique rows and numerous other buildings were also built. Interestingly, around a dozen names of Ani's streets are mentioned in the stone inscriptions engraved in Ani's and neighbouring churches.

The capital city maintained closest religious and cultural ties with Argina, Horomos (the royal cemetery of the Bagratuni kings),





Bagnair, Arjo-Arich (Alaja), Tekor (Digor) and Khtzkonk and, from the defensive point of view, with the impregnable fortress of Maghasaberd (Magazberd) and Tignis.

The architects and builders of Ani constructed and decorated their city as a citadel of Christianity. Not surprisingly, even the city's defensive facilities, like the wall towers, had chapels and altars from the inner side. As testified by the historian Vardan Areveltsi (XIII c.) and corroborated by the excavations, King Ashot the Merciful built churches inside the wall towers. As to the King Smbat's Walls, apart from the chapels built inside, they also had multicolour stone layers depicting huge crosses, tens of cross-stones

and other carvings with protection symbolics. This was meant to fortify the massive city walls also with the heavenly power.

The Ani's role was also significant in terms of serving as a seat of the Armenian Catholicos and the venue for the ecumenical council conventions in 969, 971, 1038 and 1207 AD. After being proclaimed as the Seat of Catholicos, Ani became not only political, but also religious capital of the country. From 992–1046 AD, Ani was the seat of the Armenian Catholicos whose authority, apart from the Bagratuni Kingdom, extended also to the Armenian kingdoms of Vaspurakan and Syunik, as well as to all other Armenian-populated regions.

To accentuate Ani's spiritual significance, the Catholicos Sargis I Sevantsi (992–1019 AD) brought a part of relics of the blessed martyr Hripsime and her fellow virgin nuns from the main religious center of Vagharshapat (Echmiatsin) to Ani for keeping the remains in a specially built church adjacent to the



Cathedral. Ani became the seat of the Catholicoses Sargis Sevantsi and Petros I Getadardz who was exiled from the capital by the Byzantines in 1046 AD.

After that the Episcopacy of Ani, based in the Apostles church, took the lead in the city and country's religious life. In the works of a number of Armenian and foreign historians Ani is called a city of 1001 churches. Interestingly, this is reported not only by Armenian but also Arab, Assyrian, Georgian and European authors.

In the course of time churches were built in Ani by the members of the royal family, noblemen, clergy, and wealthy citizens. In X–XI centuries one after the other were erected magnificent churches often absorbing the classical traditions of the Armenian architecture and yet offering new interpretations of

the traditional forms. More famous were the Cathedral of Ani, King Gagik's (Gagkashen) Church, resembling the VII century Zvartnots Cathedral, Saint Apostles Church, with a resemblance to Echmiatsin Mother Cathedral, the Abughamrents (St. Gregory) Church, the Church of the Holy Saviour, the Church of St. Gregory of Tigran Honents, the Church of the Shepherd located outside the walls of the city and others. In those times in the vicinity of Ani flourished the monasteries of Horomos, Bag'nair, Arjo-Arich, Ktzkonk as leading centers of spiritual and cultural life.

Both in the churches within the city and the nearby monasteries flourished the Christian Armenian culture, functioned schools, were created historic works, and numerous manuscripts were written. In XI–XIII cc. there was a high school in Ani which thrived under





Grigor Magistros Pahlavuni (about 990–1058 AD) and Hovhannes Sarkavag Imastaser (1047–1129 AD). This school, as compared with others, had more of a secular trend. Ani also was home for the Armenian historians Samvel Anetsi (AD), Mkhitar Anetsi (AD), the poet Vardan Anetsi (AD), Sargis Vardapet Anetsi (AD) and others.

Ani reached its height under the King Gagik I

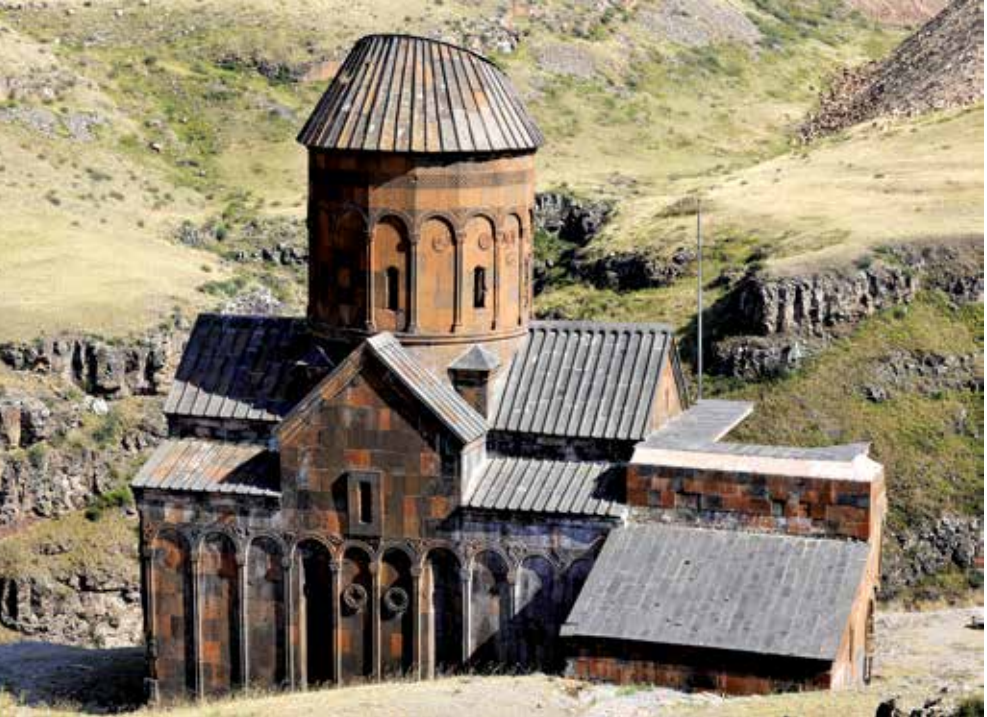
(989–1020 AD), when the international image of the state was bolstered and the trade ties expanded.

Beginning from the first quarter of XI c. the situation changed dramatically as far as the mighty Byzantine Empire was seeking to conquer the Bagratuni Kingdom and Ani. After the death of Gagik I, a feud started between his sons Hovhannes-Smbat and Ashot IV since



both had aspirations for the throne. To conquer Ani, Byzantine launched several military campaigns all of them ending up in defeat. Fearing of a new invasion by the Byzantine army, the heirless Hovhannes-Smbat bequeathed in 1023 Ani and the neighbouring lands to Byzantine. In reward, he was granted guarantees of security and the title of Magister.

After the deaths of Ashot IV (1040 AD) and Hovhannes-Smbat (1041 AD), when the Catholicos Petros I Getadardz and prince Vest Sargis, being pressured by the Byzantine royal court, tried to hand over Ani to the empire, they met the resistance of the patriot forces. Owing to the efforts by the military commander Vahram Pahlavuni the son of Ashot IV,



St. Gregory the Illuminator Church of Tigran Honents

Gagik II, was in 1043 AD proclaimed Armenian king. Throughout 1043–1044 AD the Byzantine troops on a number of occasions besieged Ani, the city remained impenetrable thanks to the resistance mounted by the Ar-

menian forces. However, after Gagik I was deceitfully invited to Constantinople and confined, the Armenian Bagratuni Kingdom fell into decline in 1045 AD and the city of Ani was passed on to the Byzantines.

ANI IN XI–XIV CENTURIES

Starting from 1045 AD, Ani became the seat of the Katepans – Byzantine governors. Although the urban life continued its regular pace, the Byzantines proved intolerant of the Armenian Church. Specifically, in 1046 AD the Byzantines exiled Catholicos Petros Getadardz from the city and never allowed the entrance of any Armenian Catholicos into Ani under their rule.

In 1064 AD, during the second invasion of Seljuk Turks led by Sultan Alp-Arslan, the enemy besieged Ani soon made use of the meek resistance by the Byzantine garrison soon seized the city causing terrible massacre and destruction. The Armenian chroniclers report of this event with great pain describing how the booming city was put to the sword. Arab Historian Izz al-Dn ibn al-Athir (1160–1233 AD) writes with regard to the

seizure of Ani by Alp-Arslan: "It was a blooming and crowded city which had more than five hundred churches...", and then adds that after taking the city with difficulty: "They entered the city and massacred innumerable people, many of the muslims could not get in because of the multitude of corpses". Historian Sibte ibn al-Jawzi (XIII c.), with regard to the seizure of Ani and making reference to the eye-witness of the events al-Kamil Abul-Favarizi, writes: "They say that there are one thousand churches and monasteries in the city", adding that "Ani had 700 thousand houses, and the Seljuks captured 50 thousand people".

Seven years after the seizure of Ani, in the decisive battle of Manazkert, the Seljuk Turks totally defeated the Byzantines and established dominance over entire Armenia.



Manuchihihr Mosque and St. Gregory Abughamrents Church



*Iron lamp from the
St. Gregory (Gagkashen) Church*

Alp-Arslan sold the half-ruined Ani to Abul-Aswar, the Emir of Dvin, who in his turn passed it to his son Manuchihr. Thus was laid the foundation for the Shaddadid Dynasty of Ani. Manuchihr (also Manuche or Manuchehr), who was a Bagratuni by birth from his mother's side (he was the son of Ashot IV's daughter) and considered himself the legitimate heir of the Bagratid dynasty, took efforts to improve relations with the Armenian population of the city. During Manuchihr's reign, in 1072 AD, the Catholicos Grigor Vkeyaser arrived in Ani, who conferred Barsegh Anetsi as bishop and established a separate episcopacy of the Armenian church for Ani and Shirak region.

Manuchihr reconstructed one of the buildings of the city (according to specialists, it could have been a catholical palace), added a minaret and transformed it into a mosque (Manuchihr Mosque): Since then and up to 1198 Ani was under the rule of the Shaddadid dynasty, passing, however, for several times,

from 1124 to 1126, 1161 to 1164 and in 1174 AD on to the Georgian kings in the result of their military campaigns. Under the Shaddadids some construction works, much less in volume than before, were carried out in Ani, namely, the city walls were fortified. There were two mosques in Ani.

Franciscan father William of Rubruck, who visited Ani in 1255 AD, made the following note in his travel diary: There are thousand churches here and two Arab mosques. This and other references to Ani's 1000 churches undoubtedly contain exaggeration, however, this wide-spread opinion testifies to the fact that in the Middle Ages the churches were really numerous in Ani.

After the death of Emir Sultan in 1198 AD Ani passes to the Armenian princely house of Zakarians (Zakarid) who were at service in the Georgian royal court. The Commander-in-Chief (amirspasalar) of the Georgian army Zakare Zakarian made Ani the administrative center of his vast possessions. Religious



Ani. Censer

and civil buildings were constructed in the city, the walls and bridges were renovated. Historians describe Ani of that period as the great capital of the universe and gave the city other honorary titles. Trade, craftsmanship and cultural life were blooming in the city. Ani was a large center of crafts. Developed were metalwork, pottery, construction works, trade, etc. The number of craft varieties reached up to 50. The produce enjoyed great fame not only within the country but also in the markets of neighboring and far-away countries. Especially well-known were textile and tapestry, carpets, items and arms made of metal, pottery. To illuminate the churches, palaces and houses the inhabitants of Ani used great quantities of oil; not surprisingly, numerous oil-mills were discovered during the excavations. It is also interesting that paper in Ani was produced from the oil-rich linseed stems.

The internal and external trade was developed no less than the crafts. Ani was an international transit trade hub. The city was on the crossroads of many caravan routes, namely,



Ani. Jug



Ani. Glazed plate

Ani-Tpghis (Tbilisi), Ani-Kars-Karin-Black Sea shore, Ani-Maiafarkin (Tigranakert)-Assyria, Ani-Yerevan-Dvin-Tabris roads which had acquired an especially great importance in X –XIII centuries, given the fact that the southern routes had become dangerous due to the military and political instability in the region. During the mentioned period Ani maintained trade and economic ties not only with Georgia, Aghvank, Persia, India, the coastal cities of the Black Sea, but also with Galicia, Poland, southern Russia and other countries. There was also the layer of rich citizens who became wealthy merchants and usurers (like Tigran Honents, Sahmaddin and others).

Ani was also a prominent center for the development of the Armenian urban architecture. Being shaped in X century, the local school extended certain influence on the architecture of European and other countries. In the end of X c., and the beginning of XI c. architect Trdat built the main (Mother) Cathedral of Ani and King Gagik's (Gagkashen) Church. It



Entrance to Jerusalem.

Gospel with illustrations from Bekhents Monastery of Ani, 1211 AD, Painter- Margare

was during the construction of the Cathedral that for the first were used arrow-like arched vaults, corymbose columns and other details which later spread throughout Europe and particularly in Gothic architecture. Same architect Trdat reconstructed the dome of Hagia Sophia in Constantinople at the end of X c.

In IX–XIII cc. Ani was also a scientific center with its numerous schools and workshops where manuscripts were written. The art of illustrating the manuscripts with miniatures underwent great development during the first decades of XIII c. in Ani and the nearby Monastery of Horomos. Manuscripts by

Hovhannes and Ignatios from Horomos have survived and reached the present day; also famous is the Haghbat Gospel illustrated in secular tradition by Margare the Painter in 1211 AD in Bekhents monastery of Ani. Among the well-known manuscripts of the Ani school is the famous book by Abas painter containing illustrations also by Ignatios. In 1298 AD in the Inner Fortress of Ani someone Yeghbairik copied and illustrated manuscripts. The last manuscript reached to our day from Ani dates back to the beginning of XV c. and is authored by the Bishop Hovhannes Voskeporik. Unfortunately, due to frequent ravage and outflow

of the population from Ani many manuscripts have been lost; the preserved ones, however, testify to the high level of development of the miniature school and manuscript culture.

The blooming period of Zakarians was marred with the invasions of the Mongols. In 1236 AD the Mongols besieged and captured the city causing great destruction. However, even during this period Ani was ruled by the Zakarians who had accepted the Mongols as their lords. Under the Zakarian reign a Chalcedonian community professing the faith of the Georgian church emerged in Ani.



Ani. Georgian Church

THE OUTFLOW OF ANI'S POPULATION AND THE FATE OF THE CITY'S RUINS

Until mid-XIV century Ani preserved its existence as a city. However, the incursions of the Mongols and, later, Turkem tribes, which created unfavourable conditions for the urban life, made the inhabitants of Ani to leave their home city in large groups in different periods of time and migrate to Georgia, Persia, southern Russia, Crimea, Poland.

The legend links the devastation of Ani with the earthquake of 1319 (presumably, the dome of the main Cathedral had collapsed at that time). In 1364 someone Shabaidin from Ani had left an inscription on the wall of the Katoghike (Holy Mother of God) church cursing those who destructed Ani. This means that the city had received a heavy blow in 1460s. The heavy taxes levied on Ani's citizens on the one hand, and the permanent invasions and looting on the other, made the life in the city impossible. That was why it was gradually emptied of its entire population.

From XVI century the ruins of Ani fell for last- ing periods under the Savafid Persia and, later, Ottoman Turkey.

In 1878 the territory of the uninhabited Ani passed to the Russian Empire. In 1892, upon the initiative of the Academy of Sciences of the Russian Empire and under the leadership of Nicholas Marr the excavations of Ani started to continue, with certain intervals, until 1917. If before that Ani was known to the Europeans through the travel notes written by visitors, now, owing to the excavations, the city was exposed to the scientific world. At the same time the excavations became a first test for the famous Armenian researchers of the XX century: orientalist Hovsep Orbeli, historian Nikoghayos Adonts, architect Toros Toram- nian, archaeologist Ashkharbek Kalantar, pho- tographer Artashes Vruir and others. The main part of the finds unearthed during the archae- ological excavation in Ani are now exhibited in



Panorama of the city from North



Today, on the Armenian-Turkish border, in the territory of the present-day Turkey, on the left bank of Akhurian river rise the ruins of the one-time magnificent Bagratuni capital as the millennial witnesses of the Armenian creative mind and strenuous effort.



Ani. Pottery fragments

the State Museum of History of Armenia, and some part - in Hermitage (St. Petersburg):

During 1918-1920 the ruins of Ani were encompassed within the borders of the first Republic of Armenia.

However, based on the Russian-Turkish Treaty signed in 1921 in Moscow, Ani was handed over to Turkey.



Ani. Reading-stand

Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Armenia

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Photographs generously provided by
HISTORY MUSEUM OF ARMENIA
HRAIR (HAWK) KHATCHERIAN

YEREVAN 2016