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Inscriptions and Authority in Ani

Ani[1], the medieval capital of Armenia, provides some of the best evidence for the changing urban environment of eastern Anatolia in the Seljuq period. Between 1000 and 1300 the city moved between all the major powers that sought to control the region: the Armenians, the Byzantines, the Seljuqs, the Shaddadids, the Georgians, the Mongols and the Ilkhanids. All left their mark on the city. In this paper, I concentrate on one way in which they all left their mark: through inscriptions[2].

Inscriptions are prominent throughout the city. Monumental texts survive inscribed all along the walls of the city, over its gates, and on all its surviving monuments[3]. These must represent only a fragment of those that once existed, judging by the many that were recorded from the middle of the 19th century but are now lost. They document foundations and pious acts, donations of land and gifts, tax concessions and duty remissions, and appeals to the people of the city.

The inscriptions have been studied by historians and art historians for what they reveal about the artistic, political, religious, social and economic histories of the city[4]. However, inscriptions had other functions beyond recording or conveying information. These were major commissions in their own right, often laboriously carved in carefully formed scripts. Some are commanding simply through their extent (**fig. 1**)[5]. Others reproduce the format and design of written documents on parchment or paper: documents in stone[6]. They were carefully sited on the façades of buildings and other structures across the city, partly in order to be read, but partly also to be seen. They had a public presence for those who could not necessarily read, or at least those who could not necessarily read the particular alphabet in which each was inscribed. Both the familiarity and the unfamiliarity of scripts could convey meanings. It is these other functions of inscriptions that this paper investigates.

For anyone approaching Ani in its heyday in the early 11th century, inscriptions would have immediately given a sense of the city's self-identity. The original 10th-century walls (subsequently encased by the larger fortifications of the early 13th century) included foundation inscriptions that recorded the building of towers and gates[7]. Unsurprisingly, these were written in Armenian. Whether approaching travellers were Armenian or not, and whether they were literate or not, the clarity and size of the inscriptions – their bold letter forms – announced the city as an Armenian centre. As with the inscription of Ashot on tower 20 (**fig. 2**), the city's Christian allegiance was underlined by the cross that precedes the text, and then reinforced by the plethora of other crosses and khatchkars built into the walls and churches that filled the city. This clear, linguistically defined identity is in marked contrast to the distinctly ambiguous signpost that now greets tourists to the city (**fig. 3**)[8]. The Armenian inscriptions constantly reiterated the message of a pious, Christian centre, concerned with the commemoration and salvation of souls, and funded by the mercantile wealth of the city's merchants and noblemen. This use of language on the exteriors of buildings to demarcate the city's public spaces is comparable to that in Fatimid Cairo, analysed by Irene Bierman in her 1998 book »Writing Signs, the Fatimid public text«[9].

However, the subsequent history of Ani means that any simple association of language and identity becomes much more problematic. The frequent divorce between the religion, language, culture and ethnicity of the rulers and that of the Armenian majority of the population means that inscriptions set up by the rulers took on new roles in the city. Between 970 and 1320 Ani came under the control of seven different ruling elites, using between them at least six different spoken, religious and administrative languages: Armenian, Greek, Arabic, Georgian, Turkish and Persian. All continued to inscribe

1 The most recent western publication on Ani is Kévorkian, Ani. – The classic study remains Marr, Ani, transl. as N. I. Marr, Ani. Rêve d'Arménie (Paris 2001). – See also Cuneo et al., Ani. – Cowe, Heritage.

2 This paper arises from an AHRC-funded research network: »Viewing Texts: Word as Image and Ornament in Medieval Inscriptions«, part of the Beyond Text project (www.beyondtext.ac.uk). It draws on inscriptions and texts in Armenian, Arabic, Georgian, Greek, Persian, Syriac and Turkish. Given this diversity in many cases I have had to rely on existing translations (which I present here in English versions); I am confident that these convey the sense of all the texts, but readers needing to check the accuracy of particular details are recommended to refer back to the original publications, which I have cited in all cases.

3 The principal publication of the Armenian inscriptions is the Corpus inscriptionum Armenicarum (CIArm). – Also Basmadjian, Inscriptions.

4 The literature is extensive; examples include: Mahé, Testament 1319-1341. – Dondua, Aniiskoj nadpisi 643-670. – Mahé, L'étude 295-309.

5 The longest, on the church of Tigran Honents of 1215 runs to 24 lines running across three bays of the south façade. – CIArm, no. 188. – Basmadjian, Inscriptions, no. 40 (transl. in: Mahé, Testament 1323-1324).

6 Bartol'd, Persidskaja nadpis' 313-338.

7 For example CIArm, no. 13. – Basmadjian, Inscriptions no. 7. – Image in: Mahé et al., Problèmes fig. 4.

8 Attempts to present a mono-cultural (and disappointingly non-Armenian) account of the city have existed for decades: compare Kinross, Journey 69.

9 Bierman, Signs.

Fig. 1 Ani, church of St Gregory the Illuminator of Tigran Honents. Inscription on the south façade; 1215. – (Photo A. Eastmond).

Fig. 2 Ani, walls: tower 20. Inscription of Ashot. – (After Mahé et al., Problèmes fig. 4).

public texts across the urban landscape. The locations of the inscriptions and their different languages show that the shifts in ownership of the city led to changes in the use of its buildings and urban fabric, as the focus of governmental attention moved between buildings and areas of the city.

These complexities have often been lost in modern histories of Ani. The various corpuses of inscriptions in Ani by Ioseph Orbeli, Karabet J. Basmadjian and Gabriella Uluhogian focus only on the Armenian inscriptions, even to the extent of splitting multi-lingual inscriptions and dis-

carding their non-Armenian elements (even when these form the principal element of the texts)[10]. Those parts of the inscriptions in Arabic, Persian or Georgian have to be hunted down, scattered in a range of other books and periodicals. The consequent appearance of a monoglot, purely Armenian, city in the great corpuses is unfortunate. It is exacerbated by the decision of many historians of the city to focus only on its »Golden Age«, a euphemism for its pre-Byzantine Armenian period (i. e. before the Byzantine takeover of 1045), presenting its later history as a long litany of decline (relieved only by the brief resurgence under the Mqargrdzeli/Zakarid family, 1199-1236)[11]. Even during its Armenian heyday, the identity that the city's Armenian inscriptions proclaimed enveloped a more complex and mixed society. It drew on the range of religions and nationalities that were required to sustain the international trade on which the city's wealth depended[12]. Every change in the city had repercussions further afield: the capture of the city by the Seljuqs in 1064 was celebrated by a *fetihnāme* read out in the caliphal palace in Baghdad[13].

The problems inherent in discussions of identity are clear from the case of Burhān al-Dīn Abu Nasr Mas'ūd, the qadi of Ani at the time of its 1161 Georgian conquest. He records that: »They captured and killed and went away carrying [their booty]. By sword and dagger many men perished. They captured Muslim men and women, young and old, and took them away into captivity. Among the rest they caught me and all my relatives by the hand of the Georgian Ivane but as I could remember the scripture of the Gospel, [apposite] to their conditions, in the words of [their] master, this knowledge became the reason of my liberation from the clutches of these dragon-like infidels«[14]. In a world in which men held numerous identities depending on religion, ethnicity, language, occupation and social class, it would seem that it was possible even for a Muslim qadi to move between these, shifting emphasis away from his religious identity and on to his linguistic competence, in order to save himself.

As we have seen, the Armenian campaigns to build, extend and rebuild the walls of the city left their mark, both as crosses and as inscriptions. The Seljuq, Shaddadid and later the Ilkhanid rulers of the city did not replace these texts. They do not seem to have sought to erase the city's history. Instead Arabic texts were added, but only to newly built towers, as for example tower 28, recording an addition by Mīnuchīhr himself:

»In the name of God, clement and merciful, [I] Mīnuchīhr, son of Shavūr, the great, the victorious, the able director, father of the brave, ordered the construction of this round tower[15]«.

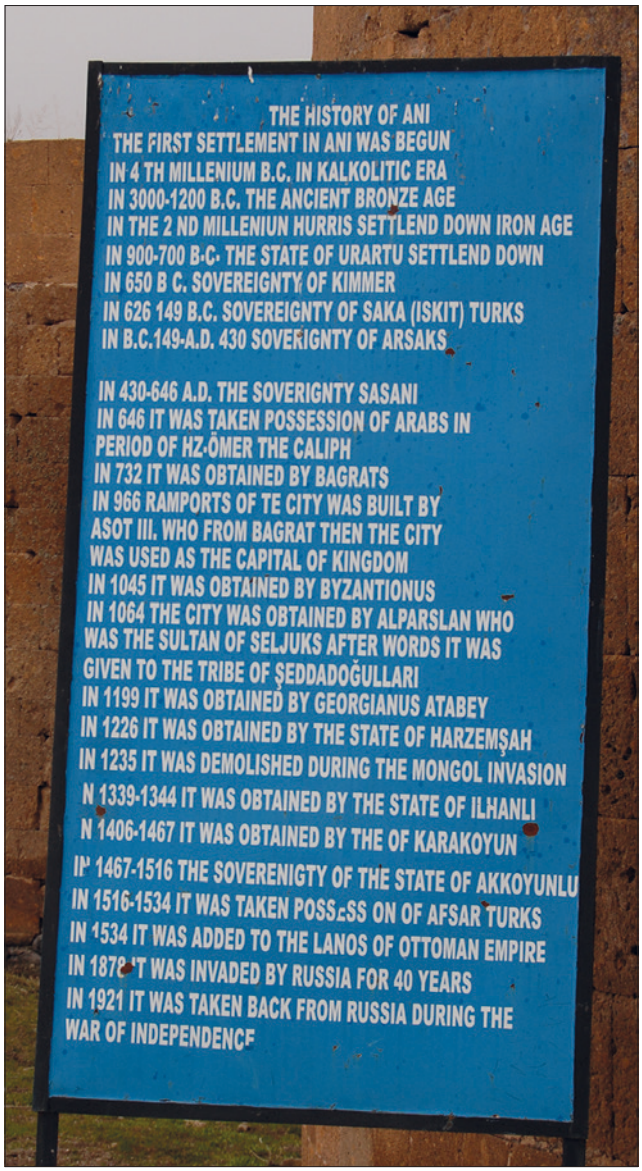

Fig. 3 Modern signpost at the entrance to the city of Ani. – (Photo A. Eastmond).

This approach to the defences of the city can be contrasted with Seljuq practice elsewhere in Anatolia: in Antalya, the conquest of the city from the Byzantines in 1216 by Izz ad-Dīn Kai Kā'us I (1211-1220) led to the extraordinary *fetihnāme* text being inscribed on the ends of more than 40 column shafts embedded into the walls of the city[16]. These encircled the town with both newly rebuilt walls and the symbolic enclosure of the victory text – re-presenting the city as a Seljuq, Muslim city. In contrast, in Sinope Izz ad-Dīn Kai Kā'us's earlier conquest of 1214 was commemorated with

10 For example CIArm, no. 187. – Basmadjian, Inscriptions no. 48, who make no mention that it is attached to a longer Georgian inscription. – Uluhogian, Les églises 393-417 restricts itself to inscriptions on Armenian churches in the city.
11 This is most evident in the essays Der Manuelian, Capital 1-11. – Hakobyan, Odyssey 13-21. The chapters on the later history of Ani in Kévorkian, Ani are a notable exception to this.
12 Manandian, Trade 136-350.
13 Izz al-Dīn Ibn al-Athīr (Richards) 155.
14 Minorsky, Studies 89.
15 Brosset, 3e rapport 142-143. Other inscriptions are noted in Mahé et al., Problèmes 755: »Au nom d'Allah, Menuçehr a ordonné la construction de cette tour ronde«. – Minorsky, Studies 106 addition to 88: a mutilated Kufic inscription in poor Arabic which names the builder of a gate as Fakhr ad-Dīn Shaddād. Arabic inscriptions are now gathered in Chačatrian, Korpus nos 24-25.
16 Redford/Leiser, Fetihnāme.

Fig. 4 Sinope. Bi-lingual inscription on city walls; 1215/1216. – (Photo © Cathie Draycott).

simpler foundation inscriptions, including a bi-lingual Arabic and Greek inscription when the walls on the west side of the city were reinforced with new towers (**fig. 4**):

Arabic: »[This construction] has taken place by the grace of Allah the most high, in the reign of the victorious sultan Izz al-Dunyā wa-'l-Dīn Abu l-Fath Kai Kā'us ibn Kai-Khosraw, proof of the prince of the faithful. I, Badr ad-Dīn Abou-Bakr, master [or prince] of…, the slave who needs the mercy of Allah the most high, have made this tower and this curtain wall. In the month of Rabi II, of the year 612 [= 1215/1216]. Has written…«

Greek: »On the first of November, on Sunday, the fortress of Sinope was taken by the great sultan Izz ad-Dīn Ka'us. And I, the servant of the great sultan, Badr ad-Dīn, son of Abou-Bakr, have built a tower and curtain wall. And this had been begun in April, in the … indiction and was completed on the first of September of the year 6724 [= 1215/1216] in the fourth indiction[17]«.

The inscription reveals a tension between form and content. The form is a statement of Seljuq power, with the Arabic text dominant over the Greek, and the titles of the sultan acknowledged. The contents, indeed the decision by Badr ad-Dīn to include a Greek text at all, suggest a more complex relationship in which both power and names (both men's names are presented in Graecized form as Azatines Kaikaous and Patratines Poupakes) must be presented in terms amenable to the majority Greek population.

17 The bi-lingual inscription and a second Arabic inscription are recorded by Blochet, Note 75-83. – See also Vasiliev, Mesarites 180-182. The history of Sinope is given in Bryer/Winfield, Pontos 71-72. All the inscriptions at Sinope have now been analysed by Redford, Sinop 125-129, who notes an additional Greek word in the left margin of the inscription: »O Sisimaritis«, the man from Simaris, presumably referring either to the governor or to the scribe.

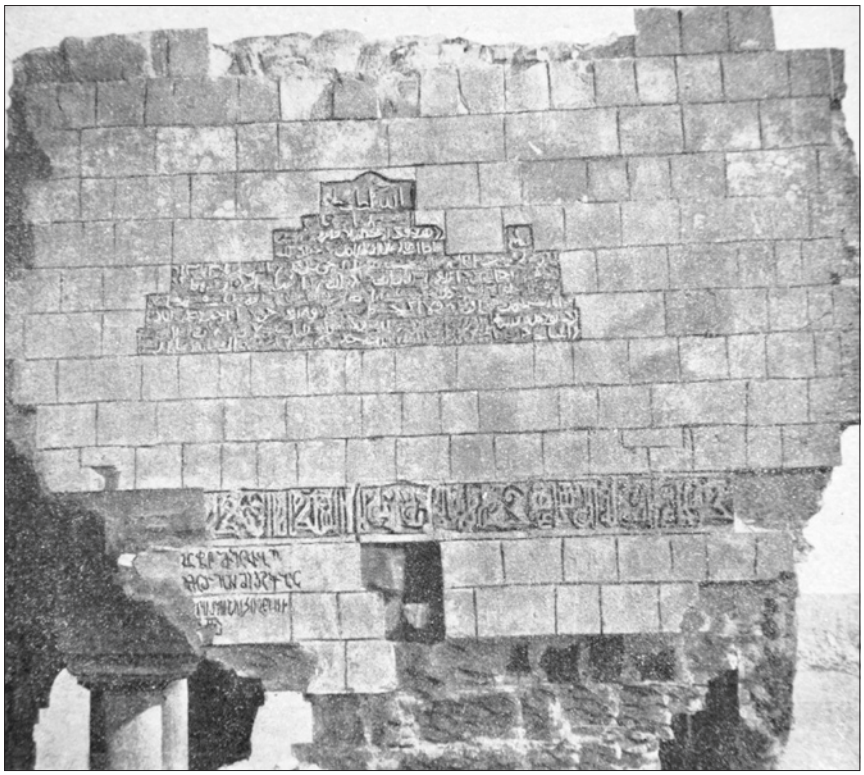

Fig. 5 Ani, mosque of Mīnuchīhr. West façade. The top inscription in the Ilkhanid yarligh of 1319, the kufic inscription running in a band across the façade is the foundation. Inscription of Mīnuchīhr, below this to the left are the remaining parts of the tri-lingual inscription of 1237/1238. – (After Bartol'd, Persidskaja nadpis' fig. 31).

The cumulative, layering nature of the history of Ani is evident in other aspects of the city's early Muslim history. In addition to inscriptions, the identity of the city was also conveyed by its major monumental buildings and their ornamental vocabulary. The Christian chronicles that record Ani's history do not mention inscriptions when they talk about the conquests of the city. Instead they are interested in other symbols of victory and conquest. The fall of the city in 1064 is marked in Matthew of Edessa's history by the removal of the silver cross from the dome of the cathedral and its transfer to the mosque in Nakhichevan where it was placed at the threshold, presumably to be trodden upon by all those coming to pray[18]. It was replaced by »that hated symbol«: a crescent[19]. 60 years later Vardan Arewelc'i's chronicle celebrated the reversal of this procedure, and the installation of a new cross after one of the brief expulsions of the Shaddadids by the Georgians that punctuated the city's history in the 12th century. This would seem to suggest that the cathedral was converted into a mosque between 1064 and 1124, but apart from this literary evidence (which closely follows a well-known topos of Christian defeat), there is no surviving evidence of the cathedral otherwise being re-used. No structural alterations remain to indicate the qibla, and no Arabic inscriptions were added to the exterior to join those inscribed by the previous Armenian and Byzantine governments (nor its there any evidence of such texts having been removed by later Christian administrations)[20]. The fact that inscriptions continued to be added in Armenian into the 14th century suggests that there was continuity in the building's use within the Christian Armenian community in the city[21]. We must assume that the majority of the population remained Armenian throughout the periods of »foreign« rule and maintained their places of worship where possible. The chronicle of Al-Fāriqī contains many references to the continued influence of the Christian hierarchy in the city during the Shaddadid period: »[in 1155] the priests revolted in the city of Ani and captured it from Fakhr ad-Dīn Shaddād b. Mahmud b. Mīnuchīhr«, and again in 1161 he notes a revolt led by priests[22].

Instead, the Shaddadid rulers of Ani imposed their presence on the city through new buildings. The most prominent was the mosque erected by Mīnuchīhr at a key point in the city, the junction of the main street that led from the Lion gate to the old walls of Ashot and the edge of the ravine over the solitary bridge that crossed the river Akhurian. At this point it visually dominated the two principal routes into the city, from the north and the east, as well as the only access point to and from the palace on the acropolis at the tip of the peninsula. Although the date of the current structure

18 Matthew of Edessa, Chronicle (Dostourian) 104.

19 Thomson, Compilation 125-226. 202.

20 Inscriptions inscribed under Armenian rule before 1045: CIArm, nos 101. 111. – Basmadjian, Inscriptions nos 8. 12. – Under Byzantine rule (1045-1064): CIArm, nos 107. 106. – Basmadjian, Inscriptions nos 20. 23. – Evans, Gospel 93-94, has suggested that the Muslim rulers may have removed wall paintings from the interior of cathedral when it was converted into a mosque. However, this forms part of a different argument about whether Armenian churches were indeed painted in this period, and cannot account for the possibility of later changes to the cathedral, or the question of whether its conversion to a mosque was little more than a rhetorical device by outraged Armenian historians.

21 For example: CIArm, nos 101. 103. 118. 109. – Basmadjian, Inscriptions nos 8. 100. 76. 86 for the years 1001, 1235, 1280, 1319.

22 Minorsky, Studies 88-89.

Fig. 6 Ani, mosque of Mīnuchīhr. Minaret. – (Photo A. Eastmond).

Fig. 7 Ani, mosque of Abu Mā'maran. Minaret. – (After Giuzal'ian, Persidskaja nadpis').

is unclear, early 20th century photographs record a Kufic inscription on the north façade of the building that named its founder (**fig. 5**):

»[In the name of Allah, most gracious, most merciful, the construction of this mosque and mi]naret was ordered by the great emir Shuja al-daula Abu Shujā Mīnuchīhr b. Shavūr in the government of our lord, the exalted sultan, the great Shahanshah [the great king of all peoples, ruler of the Arabs and Persians, king of the Ea]st and West, Abu-l Fath Malikshah b. Alp-Arslan…[23]«.

The dominance of the mosque over the city must have been confirmed by its minaret, and this too embedded Muslim belief in an inscription in its stonework (**fig. 6**). However, in this case the misspelling of the Bismallah (by joining the initial alif to the lam so that الله becomes لله) suggests an uneasy relationship between the masons and Islam[24]. Although the mistake is clear and legible to those literate in Arabic, it does not seem to have affected the function or status of the minaret.

Ani's second mosque, that of Abul Mā'maran, also lay on the principal street, and dominated one of the city's main marketplaces. In 1199, on the eve of the expulsion of the Shaddadids, a new inscription was inscribed on its minaret (**fig. 7**) (the minaret collapsed early in the 20th century, and the text is now lost). It maintained the display of non-Armenian power in the centre of the city and provided continuing

23 Kračkovskaja/Kračkovskij, Ani 671-695. – Chačatrian, Korpus no. 23. The inscription is also in Répertoire, no. 2707.

24 I am very grateful to Sheila Blair for alerting me to this.

Fig. 8 Ani, Georgian church. Inscription of Catholicos Ep'ipane; 1218. – (After Marr, Ani fig. 182).

evidence of the Shaddadid use of buildings and inscriptions to demarcate power and assert authority within the urban fabric of the city.

However, at this point we need to consider the nature of this inscription in more detail. The text divides into three sections, each in a different language. The principal text is in Persian:

»I who am Sultan bin Mahmūd bin Shavūr bin Mīnuchīhr al-Shaddādī, for the prolongation of the days of the grandfather and my children thus have ordered: that the sale of cotton goods from this point, which is the mosque of the Abul-Mā'maran, down to the shop which is a pious foundation, we have ordered that buying and selling should be carried on in this very place. Whoever to this order causes a distortion, let him be subject to God's anger, may He be exalted[25]«.

It is supplemented by two further texts. The first, in Arabic, gives the date: »Dated 595 [= 1199]«, and the second, in Armenian, provides local confirmation and support for the main text: »May those who firmly maintain [this] be blessed by God. Amen«.

Clearly symbolic capital lay in the choice of script, allied to its religious location. However, there is a divorce between the appearance and symbolism of the inscription and its meaning. Although it appeared on the minaret of the mosque and so superficially resembled foundation and dedicatory inscriptions found on Seljuq buildings across Anatolia, it was not written in Arabic, and did not bear words from the Qur'an. Instead it employed the elite secular language of the Shaddadids, Persian, and its contents were purely economic. It was written in the language of power, rather than that of the Armenian populace at whom its strictures must primarily have been aimed.

The Abul Mā'maran inscription raises a series of questions about the audience for non-Armenian and multi-lingual inscriptions in the city; and about the nature and function of these inscriptions, for which Linda Seidel's term »stone charters« seems most appropriate[26]. At whom were these inscriptions aimed, and how were their demands expected to be enforced? Should we deduce that the local population was bi-lingual, or were the inscriptions solely aimed at the Shaddadid elite or visiting Persian merchants? If we assume that many Armenians in Ani could not read Arabic script, could they be expected even to distinguish between Arabic and Persian – to understand that this was an economic rather than a religious inscription? How did such viewers relate the primary text (in this instance Persian) to the confirmatory Armenian text added at the end? At the very least, it suggests that there was still a distinction (and a hierarchy) between the ruling and popular languages in the city.

The form and contents of this text, particularly its use of direct first-person speech (»I who am Sultan…«), suggests that it was simply the monumental, permanent version of a law promulgated elsewhere, and stored in duplicate on paper or parchment in a government archive. Should we assume that the inscription simply repeated the language in which the law was issued in order to avoid the kinds of problem about translation and the designation of an authoritative text that currently slow down the EU law-making system? Were these texts deliberately »foreign« (i. e. did their authority lie in their use of non-Armenian languages and scripts?), or was it merely a bureaucratic convenience?

25 Giuzal'ian, Persidskaja nadpis' 633. – Translated, with amendments by Minorsky, Studies 100. – Khanykof, Quelques inscriptions 193, also has a slightly erroneous transcription, unsurprising given the circumstances of his brief winter visit (-24 °C).

26 Seidel, Legends 15.

Fig. 9 Hekim Han, near Malatya. Tri-lingual inscription over the entrance to covered han; 1218-1220. – (Photo © Katharine Branning).

A similar set of questions about hierarchies of language and meaning arises again after the Georgian conquest of the city in 1199. An extensive Georgian inscription was added to the Georgian church in Ani in 1218 (**fig. 8**)[27]. Again it raises many questions about the relationship between public texts and power. It was carved on the exterior wall of a church near the city walls. It is an admonition to priests not to overcharge, and to the laity to pay up their dues for services.

»The divine voice says: ›freely you have received, freely give‹ [Matt 10.8], that is, the immortal God says to you: have you given anything to me for this grace, which you received from me? Any yet you were selling the great grace, which was freely given by me. If I have freely given, you certainly must not sell prayers to the people. Now, my trusted priests of Ani, do not become a hindrance to the Word [of the Lord] and also do not transgress the apostolic commandment for that which is vain and transitory. It is altogether improper for you to receive even 100 *drams* for blessing a marriage, [50 are sufficient]; and if you can, offer bread to eat. Similarly with respect to the dead, if there is need of something... it is more necessary to look to the care of the soul, the more so if you can give as many as 100 *tpiluri*; and ... if you can, offer bread to eat, and offer other things according to your means. All that can be freely given to the priests, you should give. Georgians who reside in this city, [you must remember] how greatly you once honoured them. You need prayer and worship from your priests. Do not be loath to give to them according to your means, which they deserve. Above all give joyfully without being coerced, ›for the Lord loves what is given with joy‹ [2 Cor 9.7]. And love them as your spiritual fathers as they love you as their spiritual children. Do not neglect to pray, and above all, do not trade in God's love, but follow the most desirable way of God's commandments. This was written by me, the Catholicos Ep'ipane, in my own hand, when I blessed the churches of Ani. Let the 100 *tpiluri* drams [for occasional church rites] remain, but one *danga* should be given for three. As for the calf hide which you priests have taken in full as fee for mass up till now, you lay people, should give it to them, so they may serve you. And what good does it do for us to change our ecclesiastical rituals? Whoever alters this, my order, does not [follow Christ, for this is] the command of God and his saints. Koronikon 438 [+780 = 1218]«.

It is clearly the verbatim text of a sermon presumably delivered during a visit by the Georgian catholicos to the city. The fact that it directly takes his words (»…written by me in my own hand…«) indicates how literal a transcription it is. However, the words have an immediacy that the formal, upright Georgian *asomtavruli* script cannot evoke, and that presumably most inhabitants of the city could not comprehend.

The 18 lines of Georgian text are supplemented by one line of Armenian at the end, which merely acts to confirm the contents:

27 The inscription was reconstructed by Marr, but is now lost: Marr, Nadpis 1433-1442. – Taq'aishvili, Inscription 216-224. – Mahé, L'étude 296-297.

»In the year 667 [+551 = 1218] I, Lord Gregory, chief bishop, and I, Vahram, emir of this city, bear witness to these regulations of the [Georgian] catholicos«.

The location of the inscription, near the main Lion gate, made a very public statement of the new power of the Georgian catholicos; and the acquiescence of the Armenian emir of the city, Vahram, and the local bishop, Gregory. As Jean-Pierre Mahé has pointed out, the text followed an Armenian inscription that was inscribed on the façade of the church of the Holy Apostles the year before[28]. That text lightened the tax burden on – presumably – the non-Chalcedonian churches. The Georgian inscription seems to be response to this and appears to represent a very public tax war being fought between the different Christian confessions and between languages across the city. The Georgian inscription raises other, more difficult questions about the relationship between language and identity. A number of scholars have argued that this text was not simply aimed at a Georgian population arriving in Ani in the wake of its conquest in 1199, but rather that the choice of language here was designed to signify a confessional identity within the Armenian community. They have proposed that the inscription was aimed at those Armenians who had converted from the pre-Chalcedonian Orthodoxy of the Armenian Church to the Chalcedonian Orthodoxy of the Georgians and Greeks[29]. However, even if Ep'ipane's text was primarily aimed at Armenian converts, then language is clearly being used here as an artificial marker of identity, in which authority lies in the foreignness of the script.

A third inscription can be added to this small group. In the 1860s Marie Felicité Brosset recorded a tri-lingual inscription on the mosque of Mīnuchīhr dating to 1238[30]. The Armenian and Georgian texts can still be seen in the lower left corner of the one surviving photograph of the mosque's west façade (**fig. 5**), but I am no longer able to make out any fragments of the Persian:

Persian [no longer visible]: »In *hejira* 635 [= 1237/1238], the sinner, Zikéria, son of the late…«

Georgian [upper two lines]: »In *koronikon* 458 [= 1238] I, the atabeg Zakaria, I have confirmed this[31]«.

Armenian [lowest line]: »Those who observe this, may they be blessed by God«.

The loss of the Persian means we can no longer follow the context of this inscription, but the survival and format of the Georgian and Armenian confirmatory texts suggest that it followed the model of the 1199 and 1218 inscriptions.

At first sight, these three inscriptions seem to confirm straightforward assumptions about power in the city: the confirmatory texts in Armenian (and later Georgian) reveal their lower status. They are visibly inferior to the main texts, and seem to perform a textual *proskynesis*, humbled and deferential. However, the balance of power is finer than this suggests. In the eyes of Armenian viewers, the texts must have looked different. It was only these single lines in Armenian that gave the »foreign« texts any credence. They converted potentially meaningless jumbles of letters into authoritative texts. The alien scripts have no power (beyond the very fact of their presence, signifying foreign domination) without a means to translate that power into local terms. They are simply ornaments without impact. The non-Armenian texts' power resides simply in their scale and prominence, rather than in their contents. Their authority is ultimately only conferred by the Armenian seals of approval added underneath. Seen in this light, questions about readability become less important, what matters is the relationship between texts and the crucial role played by those apparently incidental confirmatory texts.

The use and arrangement of languages in these inscriptions is markedly different from those in practice elsewhere in the region. The Armenians in Bethlehem, for example, employed bi-lingual inscriptions in a very different way when they commissioned new doors for the church of the Nativity in 1227:

Arabic: »This door was finished with the help of God, be he exalted, in the days of our Lord the Sultan al-Mālik al-Mu'azzām in the month of Muharram in the year 624 [= 1226/1227]«.

Armenian: »The door of the Blessed Mother of God was made in the year 676 [= 1227] by the hands of Father Abraham and Father Arakel in the time of Hetum, son of Constantine, king of Armenia. God have mercy on their souls[32]«.

These texts are balanced in form, each is given equal prominence on its own valve of the door. However, they differ in content, the two texts each deferring to its own audience. This is similar to the way that the two texts that make up the bi-lingual Greek and Latin inscription that accompanied the mosaic decoration of 1169 each reordered their content to flatter the Greek and Latin rulers respectively. The different texts give each ruler precedence over the other in their »own« language[33]. The church of the Nativity, no doubt, was subject to particular local conditions, not least because the south transept was an established site of Muslim pilgrimage, and this may have resulted in greater sensitivity on behalf of the makers of the doors[34]. Nevertheless, it shows that the use of inscriptions in Ani was markedly different in format.

28 CIArm, no. 56. – Basmadjian, Inscriptions no. 49. – Mahé, L'étude 296-298.
29 For an overview of the issues involved see Eastmond, Art and Identity, in which I argue against Arutiunova-Fidanian, Les Arméniens 463-477 and Arutiunova-Fidanian, Self-Awareness 345-363.
30 Brosset, 3e rapport 139-140.
31 Khanykof, Quelques inscriptions 197. – The date is corrected in Khanykof, Note 83.
32 Jacoby, Doors 121-134. – Hunt, Eastern Christian Art 333-335.
33 Folda, Holy Land 347-351.
34 Pringle, Kingdom of Jerusalem 154 discusses the Arabic graffiti in the church (for example by the shoulder of St Fusca on the column painting on the south side of the nave: »Whoever made it has passed away. Al-Rabi Ibn 'Umar al-Ma'rri has written it on 20 Jumada I, the year 588 [3 June 1192]«).

Fig. 10 Ani, church of the Holy Apostles. East façade of the gavit; ca. 1217. – (Photo A. Eastmond).

This is also apparent from another contemporary inscription, on the Hekim Han near Malatya erected ca. 1218-1220 (**fig. 9**)[35]. This caravanserai was commissioned by the Syriac-Armenian Abu Sālim ibn Abu l-Hasan, a deacon and doctor from Melitene, to generate income for his family. The design of the structure follows the format of other hans of the early 13th century, and has two inscriptions, one over the main entrance, the other inside the courtyard, over the entrance to the covered section of the han[36]. The exterior inscription is in Arabic, but the internal one is trilingual. In both cases the Arabic text contains standard platitudinous praise of the sultan; but the interior Armenian and Syriac texts depart from this, and request prayers for the builder. The internal inscriptions read:

Arabic: »In the days of the reign of the victorious, exalted Sultan, the most powerful Shahanshah, possessor of the necks of nations, master of the sultans of the world, Mu'sharrāf al-Dīn al-Aziz [?], Lord over land and sea, strength of the world and religion, triumph of Islam and of Muslims, crown of kings and sultans, honour of the house of Seljuq, Abu l-Fath Kai Kā'us ibn Kay-Khosrāw ibn Kiliç Arslan, proof of the ruler of the faithful – God give strength to his victory – ordered the building of this blessed Han of this poor servant in need of the Mercy of the God by the exalted Abu Sālim ibn Abu l-Hasan, the deacon and doctor from Melitene, at the date of the month of the year six hundred and fifteen«.

Syriac: »This Han was completed on 1 Teschrin in the year 1530 [= 1218] by Abu Sālim, the doctor and archdeacon, the son of the late Abu l-Hasan, the archdeacon and doctor, from Melitene. He had it built for the maintenance of his blessed son Abu l-Hasan and as a gift of his love for him and to his blessed deceased ancestors. May whoever reads this say a prayer for them«.

Armenian: »In 667 [= 1218] in the reckoning of the Armenians I had this hostel built as an act of welfare. [Greatly] blessed are you who enters here and rests. This you must say without forgetting: the god of the Heaven and the Earth, may you be merciful to Po-Selem, the senior doctor, the son of the great Pulhasan, the doctor, of the Syrians from Melitene«.

Unlike the Bethlehem inscriptions, here we have distinctions between public and private texts, official and personal. To distinguish between the external and internal inscriptions would seem false in this commercial building, in which we must assume that all spaces were open equally to the caravans. The non-Arabic texts are clearly geared, like the Bethlehem texts, to their own audiences. However, whereas the Bethlehem inscriptions were carved to give the appearance of equality, those at the han were clearly hierarchical in presentation, with the majority of space devoted to the formal Seljuq text and the informal, personal inscriptions given secondary place. In spiritual terms, however, it is surely the two Christian languages that were the more important as they convey the crucial appeal for salvation and the request for intercession and prayer. However, in contrast to the inscriptions from Ani, it is the Arabic text in this instance that legitimises the building and the prayers it requests.

In all these cases of multi-lingual inscriptions, the visual hierarchy of the texts does not always correspond to the

35 Acun, Kervansaraylar 105-119. – Erdmann, Karavansaray I, no. 18.

36 Erdmann, Karavansaray I, no. 18. – The exterior inscription reads: »Of the blessed [hostel] in the days of the reign of the most powerful [Sultan] 'Ala al-Dunya wa-'l-Dīn Kaykubad ibn Keykhusraw«.

importance of each text to its respective readers. Unfamiliar scripts convey meanings because of their conjunction with the familiar, and do not therefore need to be read in order to convey their authority. These are different from the multi-lingual inscriptions on Sicily, which use different languages to convey essentially the same (Christian) message[37].

The second area highlighted by the Persian inscription on the mosque of Abul Mā'maran is its format as a »stone charter«. This is another area that can be investigated in depth in Ani, notably from a series of ten inscriptions added between 1217 and 1320 to the gavit of the church of the Holy Apostles[38]. This was an early 11th-century church that was expanded in the early 13th century by the addition of a gavit on its southern side. In form this building was clearly indebted to Seljuq architectural designs, both for the overall structure of its porch (**fig. 10**), and for the muqarnas construction of its central dome[39]. The architectural similarities highlight the importance of texts as a means of articulating identity in Ani when so many other facets of the contemporary environment were almost indistinguishable from that of the Seljuq world around them.

By the 1260s, at which time Ani was under Ilkhanid rule, the gavit seems to have acted as a central deposit for legal affairs, especially those concerning taxes and import duties. The interior and exterior of the building are replete with inscriptions recording changes to levies – usually the alleviation of taxes, but occasionally impositions (such as the ban on Sunday street trading after the earthquake of 1276)[40]. These are truly stone charters, and are set out in the form of a written scroll (**fig. 11**). At the top appears the date and the issuing authority, and at the end the name of the scribe (presumably of the original document, rather than the carver of this stone version). The gavit is like a noticeboard, but one from which no old notices can be removed. This was undoubtedly the intent of those that commissioned the inscriptions, but it must have made the church a rather bewildering site, with its overlapping remissions of taxes.

These texts show a marked difference from the earlier Shaddadid inscriptions in the city about trade. Whereas those inscriptions were in Persian, these are all in Armenian, despite their ultimate authority coming from Iran. Indeed six of the inscriptions begin their texts with the words »[In the name of] the Ilkhan«[41]. They even adopt Mongolian terms, notably the word *yarligh* (imperial decree) which appears in the inscription of 1270[42]. The form of the inscriptions, with their contents set out in tall, thin columns in the niches on the exterior echoes that of scrolls, such as the surviving

Fig. 11 Ani, church of the Holy Apostles. Inscription in niche on the east façade of the gavit; 1272. – (Photo © Rowena Loverance).

Ilkhanid firman of Geykhatu issued in 1292, now in the Art and History Trust collection[43]. Some of the texts even seek to enforce their provisions on their Mongol rulers (called, *Tajiks*, Turks, in the text)[44]. Although the form of the charter is Ilkhanid and it uses adopted language, the inscription is still in Armenian. We are faced with the opposite situation from the Abul Mā'maran inscription, in that this inscription is designed to appeal to the non-Armenian population, but is placed in a relatively private location inside the gavit, and also uses Armenian as its language[45]. Although it does not have an official Ilkhanid seal, it was still issued by a powerful and well-connected figure, Khuandze, wife of the atabeg Shahanshah II, and daughter of the Ilkhanid Sahib Divan.

37 Even in these cases, there are clear distinctions between the languages employed: Zeitler, Urbs felix 114-139.
38 CIArm, nos 56 (inscribed in the year 1217). 88 (between 1253 and 1276). 75 (1269). 74 (1270). 72 (1276). 80 (1276). 85 (1276). 76 (1280). 84 (1303). 82 (1320). – Basmadjian, Inscriptions nos 49. 67-69. 72-75. 81. 87.
39 Cuneo et al., Ani 95-96.
40 CIArm, no. 76. – Basmadjian, Inscriptions no. 75.
41 CIArm, nos 75. 74. 72. 80. 76. 84. – Basmadjian, Inscriptions nos 68. 69. 72-73. 75. 81.
42 CIArm, no. 74. – Basmadjian, Inscriptions no. 69.
43 Soudavar, Selections no. 9. – Komaroff/Carboni, Genghis Khan fig. 47; cat. 68.
44 CIArm, no. 82. – Basmadjian, Inscriptions no. 87.
45 Administrative, judicial and other civil functions have been noted for the gavits at Haghbat and Sanahin: Mnatsakanian/Alpago-Novello, Hakhpat 8. – Ghalpakhtchian/Alpago-Novello, Il complesso monastico 10. – See also: Mnatsakanian, Architektura. – Ghafadarian, Hovhannavank.

The inscription can be contrasted with a final text, set up in the same year 1319, on the mosque of Mīnuchīhr (**fig. 5**)[46]. This was one of the last major Ilkhanid interventions in the city and concerns the paying of taxes and bribes and the need to keep trade in the city, and to stop families moving away. It is set out as a written document now transcribed into stone, with its title, *yarligh*, set out above the text on the right hand side, its official issuing phrases and names in the central titles, and the details of the proclamation below. This is clearly meant to be a public transcription of that text, but raises again the problem of audience. It certainly demonstrates Ilkhanid power, but its desire to reassure the populace that the future of the city is secure in the face of corruption among the elite seems odd. Presumably the people it aims to placate were those least likely to speak Persian, let alone read it. It has no Armenian countersignature, but was perhaps the most imposing inscription in the city at the time. The use of Persian was perhaps to demonstrate the Ilkhan Abu Sā'īd's direct interest in the welfare of the city (even if day-to-day control of the city remained in the hands of Khuandze and her family)[47]. The contrast between this inscription and its contemporary on the church of the Holy Apostles shows the degree to which the selection of language was a choice made by the rulers of the city, which conveyed as much as the contents of each text.

From this overview a number of points emerge. The first concerns the relatively restricted nature of the relationship between language and location. Even though victors' texts were posted throughout the city of Ani, they were all carefully constrained by place: Persian and Arabic appear only on mosques, even when the contents of the texts (notably the Persian texts) are not religious, but concern the city as a whole. None appears on a Christian building. It suggests that there was great conservatism in the association of language, culture and building type. Although it is evident that inscriptions were carefully placed around the city to ensure their prominence and visibility, the effects of location had to be filtered through Armenian texts in order to convert the scripts into authoritative texts.

Second, it is difficult to see these inscriptions as markers of identity. In almost every case the texts seem to be directed at the speakers of other languages. The addition of confirmatory texts in Armenian at the end of so many of the non-Armenian texts demonstrates the emphasis placed on ensuring that the indigenous population was drawn into viewing these monumental inscriptions as a whole. The use of more than one language tells us little about poly-lingual literacy in Ani (although this certainly existed)[48]. Instead, I think it is more revealing about the potency of language in eastern Anatolia throughout this period. The layout and presentation of the later 13th-century inscriptions in the form of transcribed *yarlighs*, and the contents of the Georgian inscription of 1218 indicate that these were simply monumental versions of promulgations. They show the need to publicise laws as publicly as possible, and hint at a litigious society in which bureaucratic details must be publicised to be obeyed. The choice of language probably more often relates to the original [official] language of the edict than the audience at which it was aimed. The inscriptions reveal the authority of words, in whatever language they appear.

46 Bartol'd, Persidskaja nadpis'.

47 Sinclair, Economy 39-52, argues that scholars have over-read this inscription as evidence of direct Ilkhanid control. I agree in that clearly the local rulers were still dictating tax policy; but think that the choice of language was to give the impression of their interest.

48 See, for example, the introduction to Rapp, Royal Annals 6-8.

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Zusammenfassung / Abstract / Résumé

Inschriften und Herrschaft in Ani

Zwischen 970 und 1320 geriet Ani, die mittelalterliche Hauptstadt Armeniens, unter die Kontrolle von sieben verschiedenen herrschenden Eliten, die untereinander im Bereich von Religion und Verwaltung wenigstens sechs verschiedene Sprachen nutzten: Armenisch, Griechisch, Arabisch, Georgisch, Türkisch und Persisch. Dieser Aufsatz untersucht die Art und Weise, wie Monumentalinschriften von jeder dieser Gruppen über die Stadtlandschaft verteilt wurden, um der Stadt ihre Herrschaft aufzuzwingen, wobei sowohl die visuellen als auch die wörtlichen Bedeutungen der Texte berücksichtigt warden. Es wird vorgeschlagen, dass kurze übereinstimmende armenische Texte, die gewöhnlich längere arabische, persische und georgische Texte begleiteten, ein wesentliches Mittel dafür waren, den alteingesessenen Einwohnern die Herrschaft der fremden Texte zu übersetzen.

Inscriptions and Authority in Ani

Between 970 and 1320, Ani, the medieval capital of Armenia, came under the control of seven different ruling elites who used at least six different religious and administrative languages, Armenian, Greek, Arabic, Georgian, Turkish and Persian, among themselves. This paper examines the ways in which monumental inscriptions were inscribed across the urban landscape by each of these groups in order to manifest their authority over the city. It considers the visual as well as verbal meanings of the texts. It proposes that the short corresponding texts in Armenian, that usually accompany longer Arabic, Persian and Georgian texts, were the key means of translating the authoritative nature of the foreign texts for local inhabitants.

Les inscriptions et l'autorité à Ani

De 970 à 1320, la capitale médiévale de l'Arménie, Ani, passa sous le contrôle de sept élites successives qui, dans les domaines religieux et administratif, utilisèrent au moins six langues différentes: l'arménien, le grec, l'arabe, le géorgien, le turc et le perse. Cet article examine les différentes façons dont chacun des groupes intégra les inscriptions au paysage urbain pour imposer son autorité sur la ville, tenant compte à la fois des sens visuel et littéral des textes. L'auteur avance que les courts textes arméniens correspondants, qui accompagnent généralement les textes plus longs en arabe, perse et géorgien, furent un moyen essentiel de transmettre aux autochtones l'autorité des textes étrangers.