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RESEARCH, DISCUSS, GROW:  
BECOMING CITIZENS



# The Armenian Community in Bulgaria

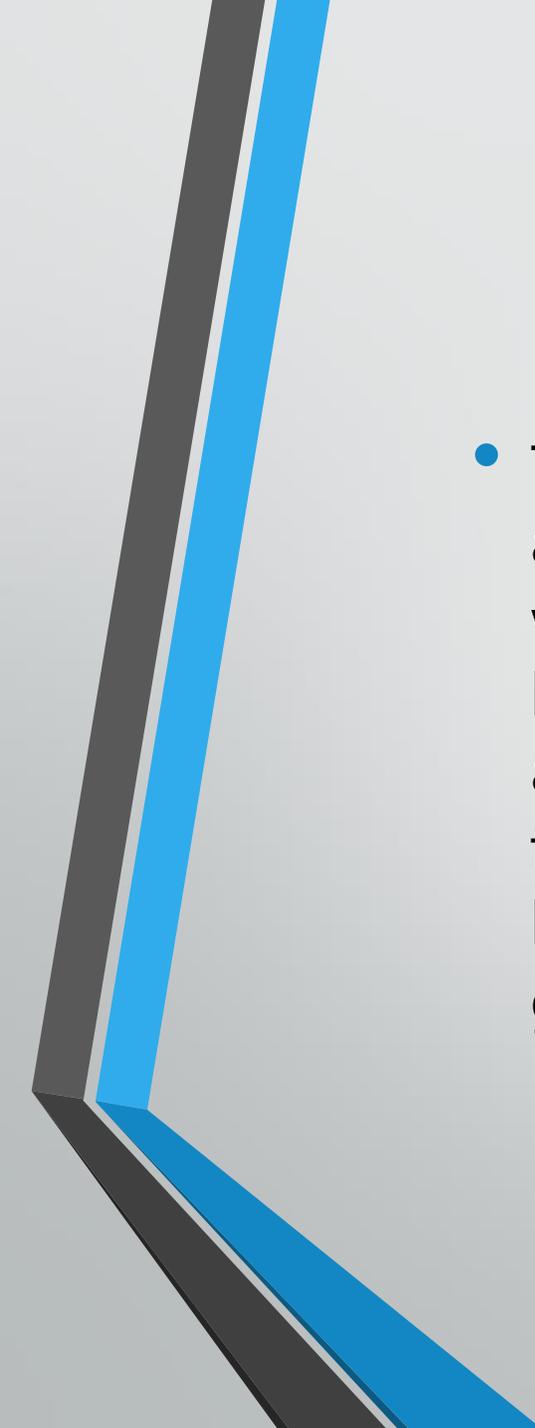
Dennis Angelov

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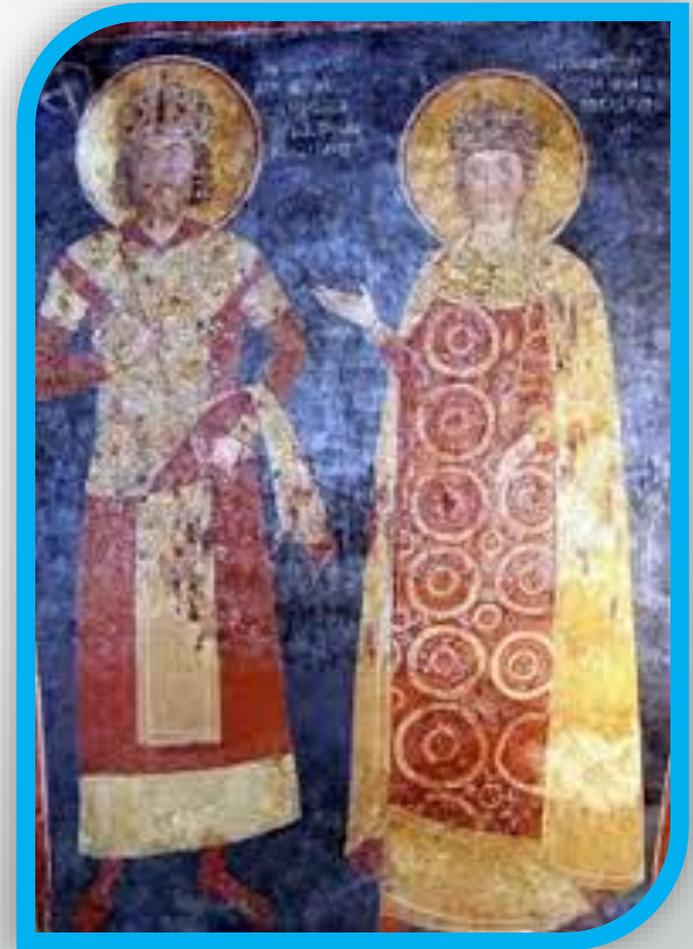
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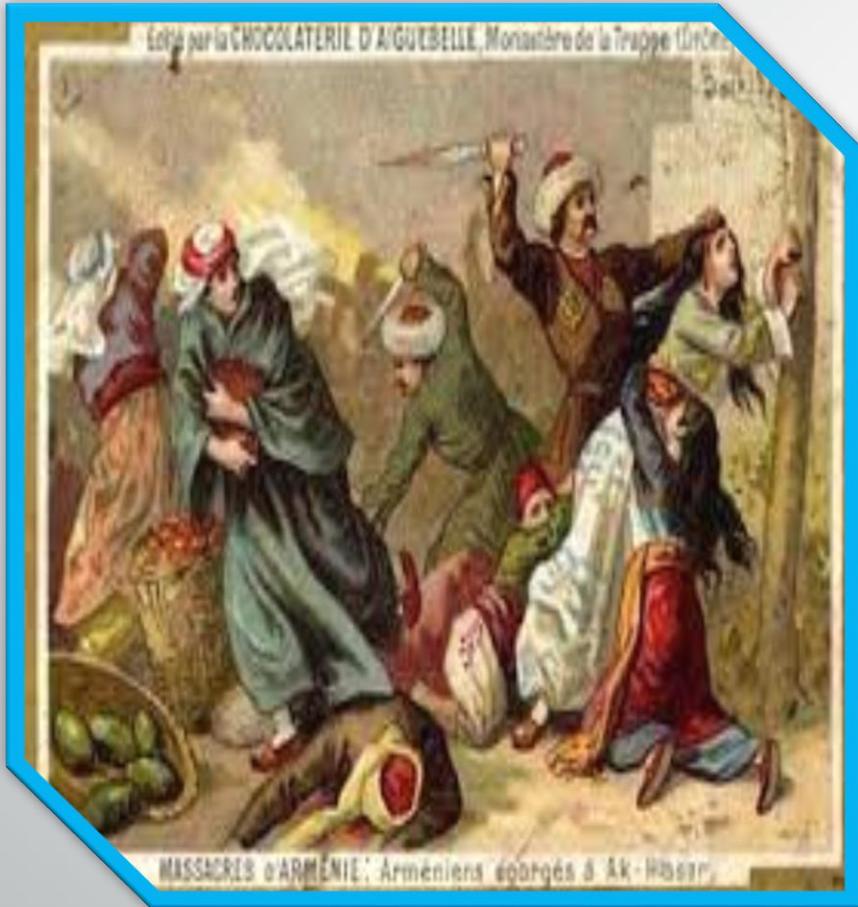


The Armenian people are an ancient Cristian nation living not only in Armenia but also in many Western countries. They belong to those scattered nations that despite their ancient origin do still exist today. The Armenian nationality is mainly concentrated in present Armenia and its neighboring countries such as : Nagorno Karabakh, Georgia, Iran and Turkey. There are many scattered Armenian communities all over the world where the population considerably outnumber those living in their motherland.

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- The Armenian country was established in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC in the area of Asia Minor. It was first known with its ancient name of Nairy which was often mentioned in the Assyrian and Babylon history being their neighboring country. The Armenian people were among the first to grow wheat and to cast iron. They were good at farming and cattle breeding. They were also renowned for their horses later used by the Byzantine emperors in their personal guard squads.

- The Armenian people had started settling the Balkan Peninsula at a large scale since the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD. From the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> century the Byzantine emperors settled hundreds of thousands of Armenian people around the region of Tracia, the Rodopi area and Macedonia. Some historians believe that Tzar Samuil's family lineage, on his mothers side, is of Armenian origin. Maria (Irina) Lakapina, the wife of Tzar Petar the 1<sup>st</sup> and a granddaughter of the Byzantine emperor, was also of Armenian origin. She was also the mother of Tzar Boris the 2<sup>nd</sup> and Tzar Roman. Tzar Simeon's son Ivan was also married to an Armenian woman.





The Armenian people were among the first to adopt Christianity as official religion in 301AD. The last Armenian kingdom (from 1050 to 1375) was situated in present Northeastern Turkey. By the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century its territory was ruled consequently by Persia, Byzantium, the Arabs, the Mongols and the Turks. In 1820 Russia annexed a part of the historic territory of Armenia which was by then under the Persian rule. The Armenian population inhabiting the historic Armenian territory within the Ottoman empire was subjected to a ferocious genocide between 1894 – 1918. More than 3 million Armenians were slaughtered.

- After the Armenian genocide in Turkey, during the Alexander Stamboliiski government, more than 22000 Armenians came to Bulgaria as refugees. In the following years many Armenians from Bulgaria left to settle to other countries throughout the world but a large part of them remained in Bulgaria. After the WW2 about 5000 Armenian people were sent to live in the USSR but many of them came back later. In the 1960s hundreds of families migrated from the People's Republic of Bulgaria to the USA.



- The Armenians who have decided to settle in Bulgaria have preserved their language and traditions in holiday celebrations and their traditional cooking. After their Christianization in 301 AD, the Armenian Church fidelity and the close observation of all church holidays have helped them keep their national identity intact. The mere fact that they have settled as a compact group in certain places in Bulgaria, building their own churches, schools and homes in town quarters or neighborhoods where no mixed marriages were allowed, helped them keep their traditions throughout the centuries.





- One of the main Armenian holidays in Armenia is Christmas or the Birth of Christ. It is celebrated on 6<sup>th</sup> January in the family and it is a tradition to go to the church together. Traditionally, the food served on the table is rice porridge and fish.



- The New Year Celebration, called Amanor, is one of the main Armenian official holidays. It is a noisy celebration with lots of traditional dishes, cookies, Armenian brandy and wine.

The holiday of St. Sarkis is celebrated in Armenia 63 days before Easter. It is very popular among all young people. On the eve of the holiday young women eat salty pies and there is a belief that they will marry the man who gives them water to drink in their night sleep. The holiday takes place on a Saturday from 18<sup>th</sup> January to 23<sup>rd</sup> February.



# Popular Armenians in Bulgaria



- Krikor Azaryan – Film Director
- Haigashot Agasyan -Composer
- Magardich Halvadgyan –Producer
- Levon Hampartzumyan Левон – Banker
- Astor (artistic pen name of Antranik Shavarsh Arabadgyan)-illusionist
- Villy Kazyasyan and Hilda Kazyasyan – jazz musicians
- Anton Hekimyan – journalist



Thank you for your attention!

