



**Presented by:
Nardin Roshan Moniri
Farzad Memarzadeh**

Overview Of Today's Presentation

- History of Christianity
- Safavid Dynasty
- Replacement of Armenians from Old Julfa to New Julfa
- Brief overview of churches in Iran
- Vank Cathedral
- Vank Architecture

Christianity in Iran (Parthian):

- Christianity arrived in Iran during the Parthian (Ashkanian) period.
- Parthian Kings were tolerant of other religions and Christianity kept slowly but steadily advancing in various parts of the empire.
- At the time of the persecution of Christians in Rome many sought refuge in Iran and were given protection by the Iranian rulers. Though thousands of Persians embraced Christianity, Persia remained Zoroastrian with many adhering to the Cult of Mithra

History of Christianity (Sassanian):

- With Sassanian (A.D. 226-641), Christianity (and other religions) suffered resentment.
- When the Roman emperor Constantine made Christianity the state religion in Rome (AD 312) and himself the sovereign of all Christians, the new fate became associated with Iran's archenemy.



History of Christianity, Continue...

- Conversion of Armenians into Christianity and defection of some Armenian army units to Rome made the matters worse. Religious and national feelings were united and paved the ground for future persecutions that continued in Persia for a century after they had ceased in Rome, where they started in the first place

History of Christianity (Safavid Dynasty):

- Who?
- When?
- Where?
- Their impact?



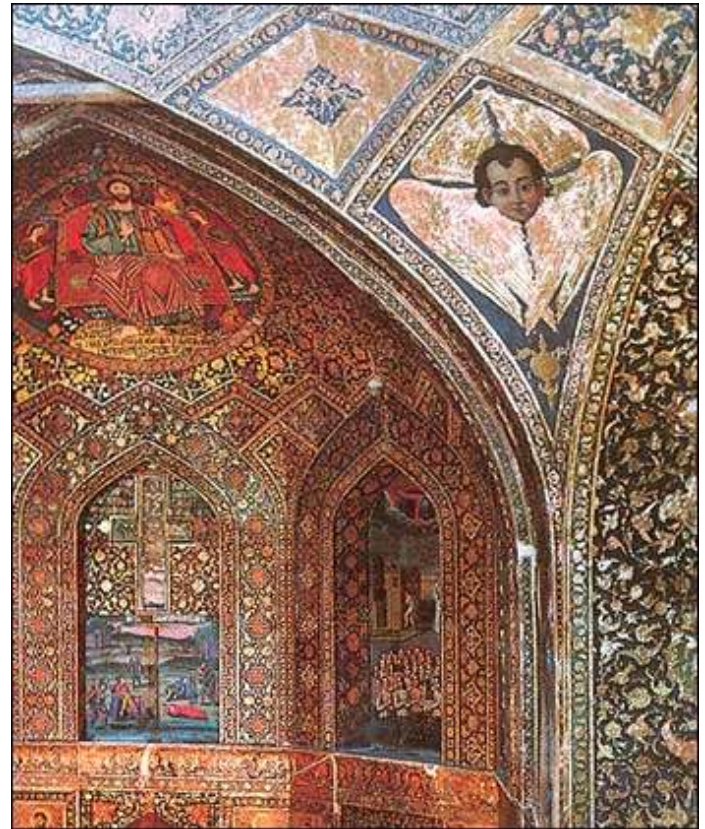
Question:

- 1) Why did Armenians move to Iran initially?
- 2) From which region of the world they are originally from?
- 3) Who was the mastermind behind their migration?

Impact of Iranian kings on Christianity:

- During the reign of Shah Abbas, the Safavid king, his wise policies caused a sizable number of Armenians from Armenia and Azarbaijan to transfer and settle in Isfahan and other regions of Iran such as shiraz and Gilan.
- After the death of Shah Abbas the First, his successor, Shah Abbas the Second, also paid close attention to the welfare of Armenians and more churches were erected in Jolfa.
- The influx of many Europeans during the reign of the Qajars led to the flourishing of other churches, in addition to those that were constructed previously.

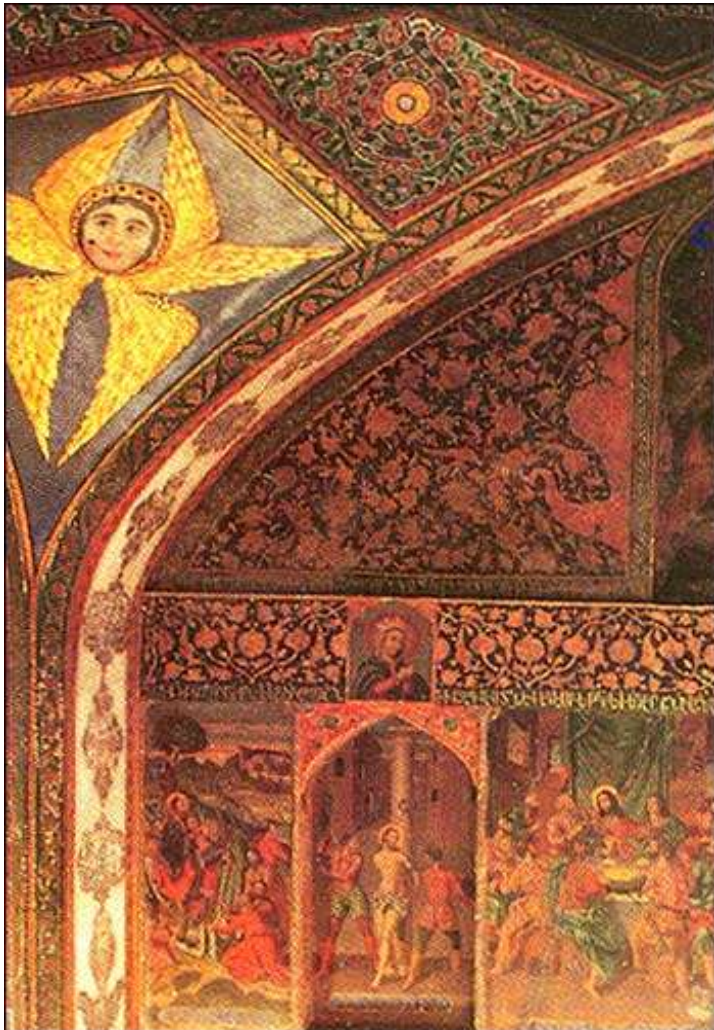
Bethlehem Church in Esfahan:



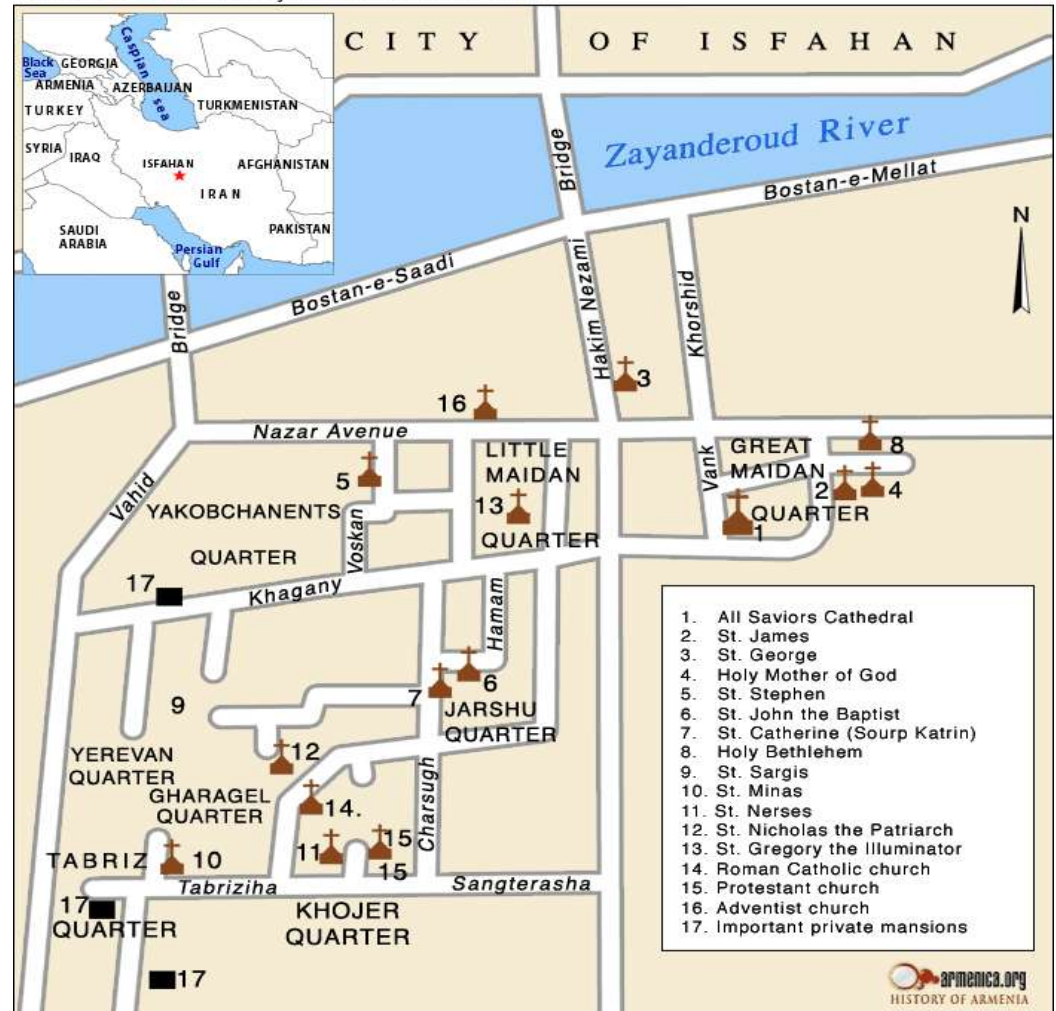
Saint Stephanos church in Azarbaijan:



Saint Mary's church in Jolfa Isfahan:

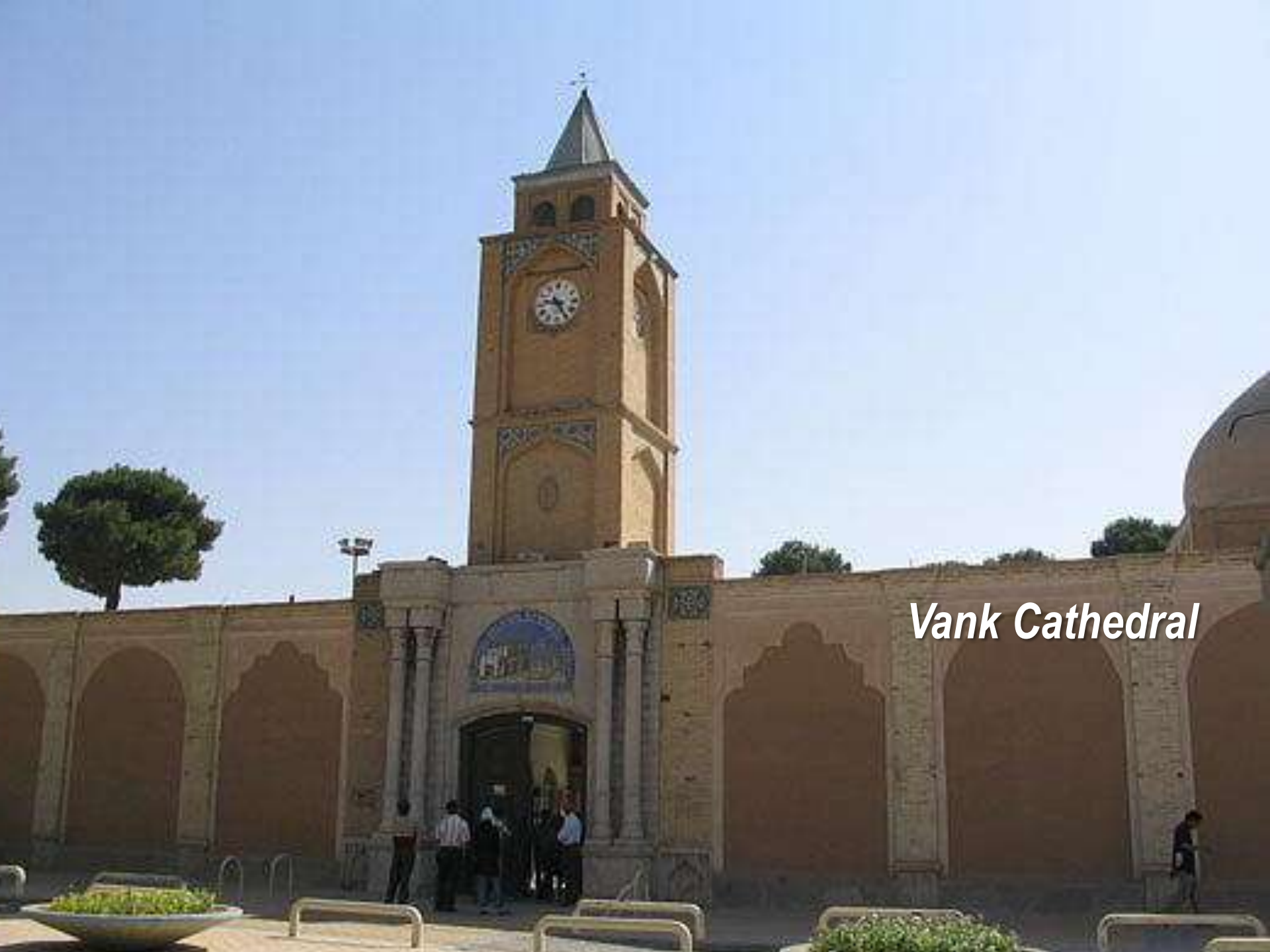


The Armenian Community of New Joufla at Isfahan



Sare Jouye Armaneh in Shiraz:





Vank Cathedral



Question:

- What does Vank mean and which language has given rise to this word initially?
 - Vank means “Cathedral” and it originally came from Armenian language.
 - According to Farsi dictionary:
Cathedral = Kelisa Jamee



Jolfa:

- Jolfa is the Armenian and Christian quarter of Isfahan which was established in 1603 during Shah Abbas I Safavid.
- Jolfa is on the south bank of the Zayandeh River and is linked to the Muslim part of Isfahan by Sio-se-pol bridge.
- The town of Jolfa on the Araxes River in Azarbaijan (now on Iran's northern border) at one time was the major Armenian settlement until Shah Abbas I imported Armenian families to new Jolfa in Isfahan.
- Today, Jolfa is a quiet suburb part of Isfahan with predominantly Christian community.

Vank Church Overview:



Exterior view of Vank Church and
its free-standing belfry

- Vank Cathedral is also known as The Church of the Saintly Sisters.
- At the beginning of the 17th century in 1606 during Safavid period, work on the cathedral began.
- However, in 1655, this Armenian church was rebuilt as the Christian community was rapidly growing in Isfahan.
- under the control of Archbishop David, the church was completed.

Vank external view:

The Vank Cathedral, comprises of a domed sanctuary such as a Persian mosque.

However, with the important addition of a semi-octagonal apsis and raised chancel, Vank Cathedral, acquires western styles too.

The exteriors of Vank Cathedral, are in comparatively contemporary brickwork and are outstanding

The exterior of this cathedral is compared equal to its richly festooned interior.



apse: a domed or vaulted recess or projection on a building especially the east end of a church; usually contains the altar

Vank Internal View:

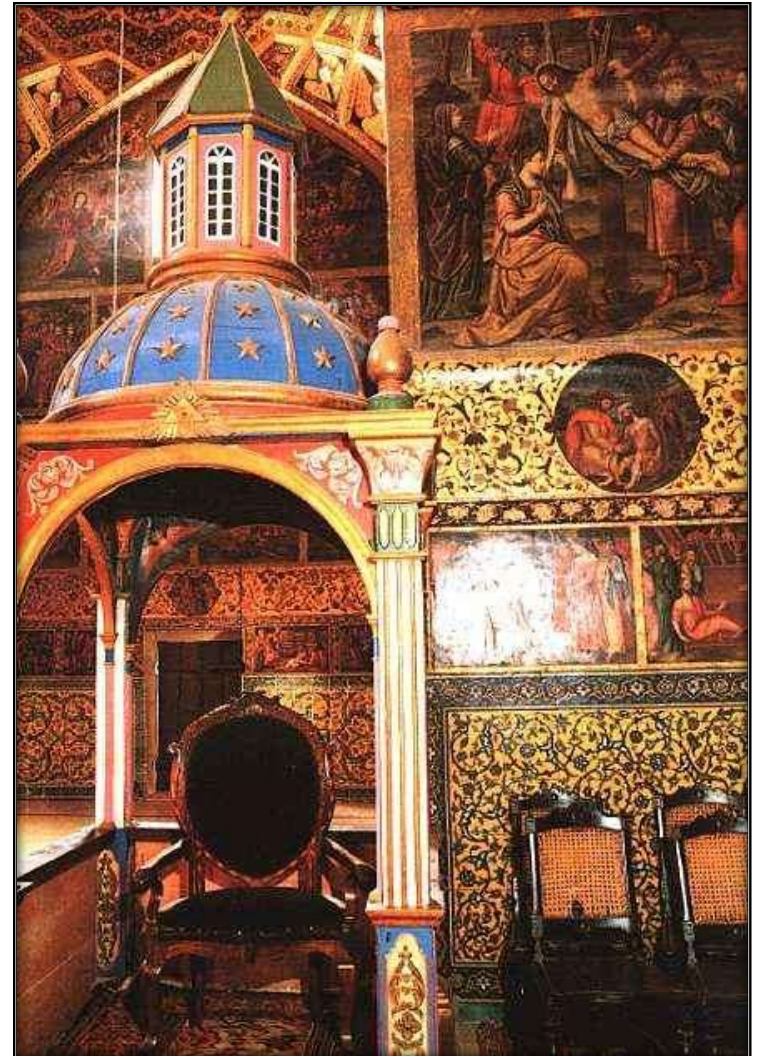
The interior of **Vank Cathedral** is embellished with some excellent paintings and gilded carvings.

It comprises a wainscot of rich tile work

The precisely blue and gold engraved central dome portrays the Biblical story of origin of the world and expulsion of man from Eden

There are decorations with a markedly Armenian motif of a cherub chief enclosed by folded wings.

The ceiling above the entrance is also designed with delicate floral carving in Persian miniature style.







Vank Courtyard:



Vank Courtyard:

The courtyard of Vank Cathedral, comprises a huge agnostic belfry over the graves of both Protestant and Orthodox Christians.

A tile work sign autographed in Armenian can be seen by the doorway to the cathedral

All the graves are placed along the exterior wall of the entrance including Armenian inscriptions

At the corner of the courtyard, you can see a raised area with a memorial of 1915 Armenian massacre in Turkey.



Vank Museum:

The museum of Armenian culture is the building next to the cathedral.

The museum displays 700 handwritten books, the first book printed in Iran, a variety of objects related to Armenian community in Isfahan such as Safavid costumes, tapestries, European paintings brought back by Armenian merchants, embroidery, and other ethnological displays related to Armenian culture and religion.

There are several carved stones showing scenes from the Bible outside the museum.



Vank Library:



The library of **Vank Cathedral**, comprises more than 700 handwritten books and lots of precious and exclusive resources for study in Armenian and medieval European languages and arts









THANK YOU!