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Homenetmen Glendale Ararat Chapter
Cultural Division

Get to Know...

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VAHAN DERIAN

January 28, 1885 – January 7, 1920

Vahan Derian was an eminent Armenian poet, lyricist and public activist. He is a famous poet known for his sorrowful, romantic poems, the most famous of which are still read and sung in their musical versions by people of all ages. Derian began his short life in the Javakhk region of Georgia, a mostly Armenian populated area of the country. Schooled in Tiflis, he then studied at the Lazarian College in Moscow, where he was exposed to symbolism and joined the Russian Social Democrats. He was jailed by Czarist police for his political activity.

He published his first book of poems, "Dreams at Dusk", in 1908, which made him an immediate sensation, Hovhannes Tumanian calling him the most original lyric poet of his age. He later published "Night Remembrance", "The Golden Legend", "The Return", "The Golden Link", "In the Land of Nairi" (where he substitute the word 'Nairi' for each instance where the word 'Armenia' would have suited), and "The Cat's Paradise". His poems are filled with images of rain, mist, pallid fields and shapeless shadows, symbols of sorrow, despair and eventually, peace. In 1913, Derian left Moscow University for the University of St. Petersburg, where he majored in oriental languages, intensifying his political involvement. After the revolution he became representative of Armenians in the Ministry of Nations, personally working with Lenin and Stalin. In 1916, Vahan Derian published a bundle of poems entitled *Land of Nairi* (in Armenian: (Yerkir Nairi), in which he uses *Nairi* in place of Armenia. Likewise in 1923, Yeghishe Charents wrote a satirical novella entitled *Land of Nairi*, using once again Nairi as a synonym for Armenia.

Vahan Derian died of Tuberculosis at age 35. Each year there is a commemoration of his life in Javakhk region (Akhaltzikhe and Akhalkalak), at Gandza village, where he was born.

