

Bonner Querschnitte

Bonn Profiles – Press Reports

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Schirmmacher thanks the Department of Archaeology of the Ministry of Culture of Bangladesh for preserving the Armenian church in Dhaka

(Bonn, 03.06.2026) The Armenian Church in Dhaka, also known as the Armenian Apostolic Church of the Holy Resurrection, is one of the oldest Christian monuments in Bangladesh. It is located in the Armanitola district of Dhaka's Old Town, a former Armenian quarter that takes its name from the Armenian community that has resided there since the 17th century. The church was built in 1781 on a plot of land that had previously been used as an Armenian cemetery and stands today as a silent testament to a migrant community that has long since disappeared.

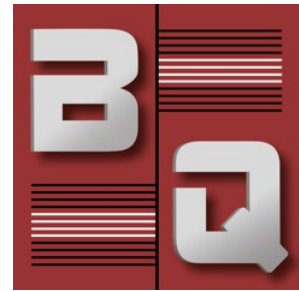
Schirmmacher was met on site (see photo gallery: <https://thomasschirmmacher.net/?p=25637>) by the Muslim caretaker and an Armenian representative of the board, and was interviewed by two German journalists for a film. He thanked Ms. Sabina Alam, Director General of the Department of Archaeology, and Minister of Culture Nitai Roy Chowdhury, to whom the Department of Archaeology reports. It is not a matter of course that they would preserve an old church building in which regular services no longer take place and for which none of the churches in the country—which make up about 0.4 % of the population—feel responsible. About 91 % of Bangladesh's population is Muslim, and about 8–9 % is Hindu.

The “Department of Archaeology” of the Bangladeshi Ministry of Culture is the government agency (Bengali: প্রত্নতত্ত্ব অধিদপ্তর, Pratinottoyo Adhiddoptor) responsible for the research, preservation, and legal regulation of archaeological sites and finds in

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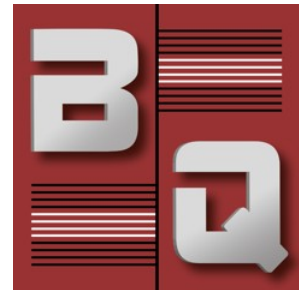
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The Armenian Church in Dhaka, Bangladesh © BQ/Martin Warnecke

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Bangladesh. The agency operates under the Antiquities Act (originally enacted in 1968, with several amendments) and maintains a list of just over 500 sites in Bangladesh.

The church was financed and built by the Armenian merchant community in Dhaka, which was primarily active in the cotton, jute, and tanning industries. The reason for its construction was the desire for a permanent place of worship of their own, which would accommodate the Armenian Apostolic Rite modeled after Etchmiadzin. The architecture shows clear colonial and subcontinental influences: The building has a rectangular layout, with high arches, several entrances, and numerous windows that create a light-filled interior atmosphere.

Over the course of the 19th century, the church was fitted with a striking tower and a clock, whose bell could once be heard from afar and served as the city's timekeeper. However, both the tower and the clock were destroyed by the devastating earthquake of 1897, an episode that exemplifies the turbulent history and vulnerability of this monument. In the decades that followed, the Armenian presence in Dhaka dwindled rapidly until the community had virtually disappeared by the 20th century.



Thomas Schirmmacher at the pulpit of the Armenian Church in Dhaka, Bangladesh © BQ/Martin Warnecke

Despite the absence of an active Armenian community, the church remains of great architectural and cultural significance. It is situated on a large plot of land that includes a cemetery where numerous Armenian gravestones and a statue of Catachik Avatik Thomas have been preserved, considered the last visible traces of the once-vibrant community. The site is now managed as a historical cultural monument by the Department of Archaeology under the supervision of the Bangladeshi Ministry of Culture and is open to visitors during the day.

Thus, this Armenian church is today primarily a place of remembrance and historical education. It symbolizes the diversity of religious and ethnic groups in Dhaka and the long history of trade and migration in South Asia, in which Armenian merchants served as intermediaries between Europe, Persia, and Bengal. For today's visitors, it offers a peaceful oasis amid the hustle and bustle of the Old City, where the traces of an almost forgotten community are still clearly visible.

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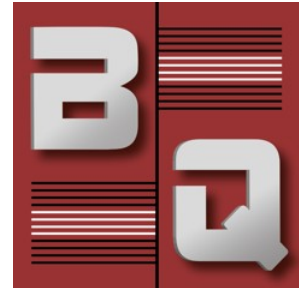
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Downloads and Links:

- **Photo 1:** The Armenian Church in Dhaka, Bangladesh © BQ/Martin Warnecke
- **Photo 2:** The oldest gravestone in the cemetery, dating from 1714 © BQ/Martin Warnecke
- **Photo 3:** Thomas Schirmmacher at the pulpit of the Armenian Church in Dhaka, Bangladesh © BQ/Martin Warnecke

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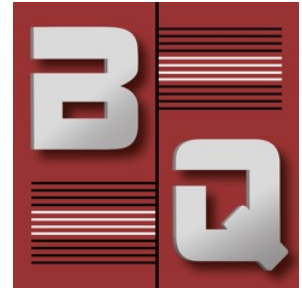
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