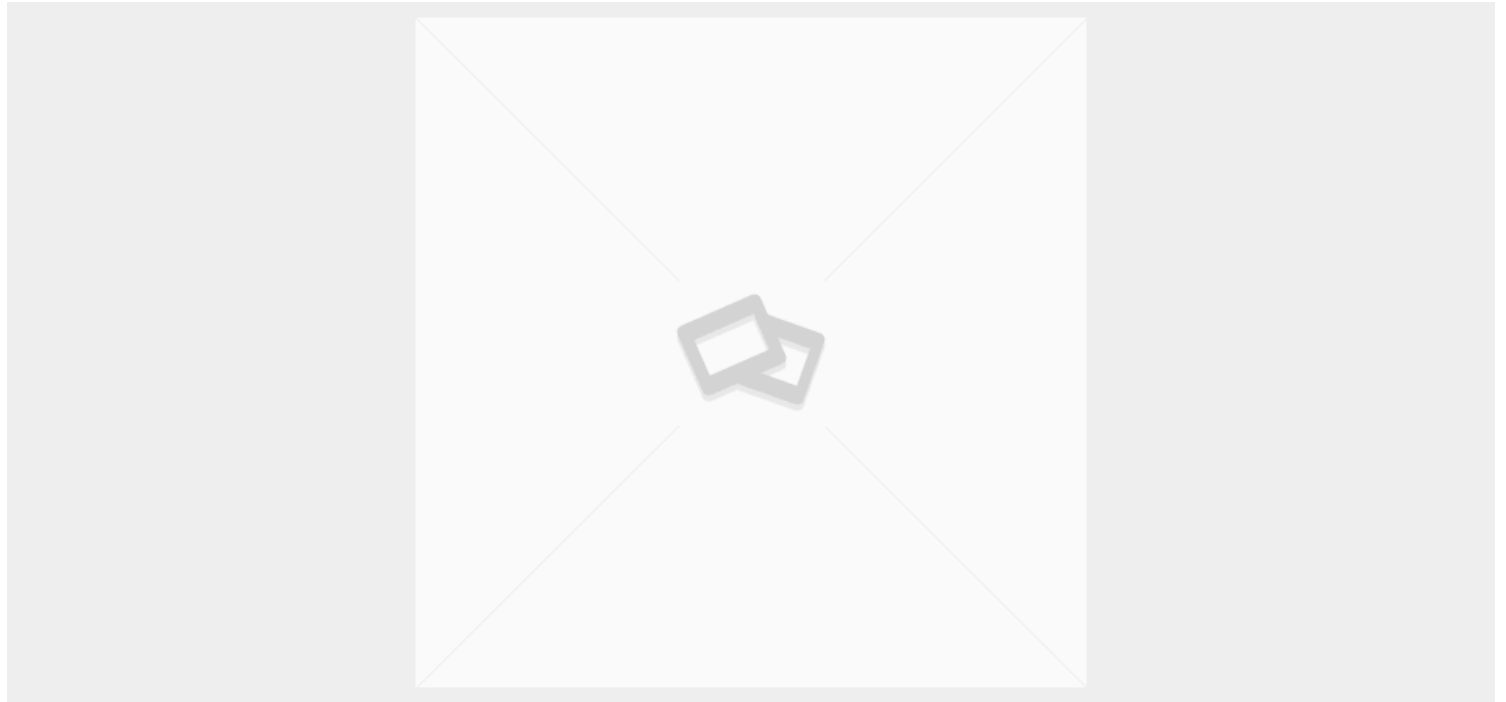
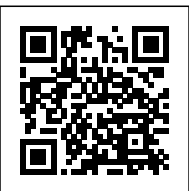


ARMENIANS IN MADRAS

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Ten years ago there were only two Armenians left in Chennai (Madras), India. One of them—Michael Stephen-- was the guardian of the city's 130-seat St. Mary's Armenian Church. It's here that the first Armenian newspaper was printed in the late 1700s. In an interview, Mr. Stephen said: "The Armenian built their church here in their cemetery, after the original 1712 church was demolished in 1746 during the French occupation of Madras." The thriving Armenian community was composed of traders and refugees from Persia, Iraq, and Armenia. "The Armenian trade was to west Asia and east up to the Philippines. It took in cottons and textiles, timber, precious stones, hemp and spices. From what I can see, they all made their fortunes here. They were very very religious people and contributed greatly to the churches they belonged to," said Mr. Stephen. Services are still held when a priest visits with a group of Calcutta Armenians four to six times a year. There were about 140 Armenians in Calcutta in 2003.

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