

# The Cultural Landscape of Ancient Villages of Northern Syria in the Memories of Displaced Locals and Diaspora

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## **Abstract**

Since the outbreak of the Syrian conflict in 2011, Syria's rich archaeological heritage has faced serious threats, including looting and damage. This destruction is prevalent across the Ancient Villages in Northern Syria, some of which are part of World Heritage sites. There are a huge number of displaced local people who have sought refuge within the cultural landscape of northwest Syria. The significance of the cultural landscape created by the physically endangered ancient villages of North Syria makes the research for this thesis crucial. There is the possibility that cultural heritage could be used as one tool in helping reduce the psychological trauma of people in the diaspora and even in internal post-war recovery in Syria. There are social connections that can be created through stimulating mutual memories of this special cultural landscape. The research focuses on cultural landscapes in Idlib province in northern Syria. The features of cultural heritage at these archaeological sites can be assessed carefully, identifying their resonance with the memories of locals as well as the connection between the monuments and displaced locals. The study aims to explore issues of the importance of heritage to support the post-war psychological recovery of the community in the Syrian diaspora, drawing upon their memories of home as well as mapping their memories of the home where special echoes in old buildings can have new meaning. The role that such significant cultural landscapes play in the preservation of collective memory and post-war psychological recovery will be pivotal.

**Keywords:** Cultural Landscape, Displacement, Cultural Heritage, Memory, Northern Syria