

# **The Ancient Villages of Northern Syria: An Archaeological and Historical Survey of the "Dead Cities" in the Afrin Region and its Vicinity (Pre-2010)**

## **I. Introduction: The Enigmatic "Dead Cities" and the Afrin Region**

### **A. Defining the "Dead Cities" (Ancient Villages of Northern Syria)**

Northwestern Syria is home to a remarkable concentration of abandoned ancient settlements, collectively known as the "Dead Cities" or, in the context of their UNESCO World Heritage designation, the "Ancient Villages of Northern Syria".<sup>1</sup> These sites, predominantly dating from Late Antiquity and the Byzantine period (c. 1st-7th centuries AD), offer an unparalleled window into rural life during a transformative era.<sup>1</sup> The somewhat evocative term "Dead Cities," popularized by the early 20th-century traveler Joseph Mattern, reflects their extraordinary state of preservation, largely due to centuries of abandonment following their economic decline.<sup>4</sup> It is important to note, however, that these were primarily *villages* and agricultural settlements rather than large urban metropolises, a distinction crucial for understanding their socio-economic fabric and the specific nature of the communities they represent.<sup>1</sup> These ancient villages provide exceptional testimony to the lifestyles and cultural traditions of rural civilizations that developed in the Middle East, illustrating the transition from the pagan Roman world to Byzantine Christian society and showcasing a sophisticated mastery of agricultural production within a challenging limestone environment.<sup>1</sup>

### **B. Scope and Focus: The Afrin District and its Environs (Pre-2010 Knowledge)**

This report specifically investigates the "Dead Cities" situated within the modern administrative boundaries of the Afrin district and those located in immediately contiguous areas, particularly the Jebel Simeon massif, which shares profound historical and geographical connections with the Afrin region. The Afrin River valley serves as a key geographical marker for this study.<sup>6</sup> The temporal scope of this analysis is strictly limited to archaeological and historical knowledge available *before 2010*. This specific timeframe is chosen to establish a baseline understanding of these sites prior to the significant disruptions and transformations that have affected Syrian cultural heritage in subsequent years. Documenting the state of knowledge at this juncture provides a valuable historical record, a

snapshot of a relatively stable period of research and site condition, which can serve as a crucial reference for future comparative studies concerning site degradation, loss, or new discoveries emerging from a different context.<sup>9</sup>

## **C. Overview of Historical and Archaeological Significance**

The "Dead Cities" of Northern Syria, including those in and around the Afrin district, hold immense significance for understanding regional history, the evolution of architectural forms (especially ecclesiastical buildings), the socio-economic patterns that characterized Late Antiquity, and the profound impact of Christianity's spread in a rural context.<sup>1</sup> The architectural remains, from domestic dwellings and agricultural installations to elaborate churches and monasteries, speak with eloquence of a vibrant society that flourished for centuries before its eventual decline.<sup>3</sup>

## **II. Historical and Geographical Context of the "Dead Cities" in Northern Syria (Pre-2010 Perspective)**

### **A. The Limestone Massif (Belus in Antiquity): Environment and Resources**

The "Dead Cities" are predominantly situated within the rugged limestone uplands of northwestern Syria, an area known in antiquity as Belus, encompassing notable features like Jebel Sem'an and Jebel Halaqa.<sup>1</sup> The landscape is characterized by its distinctive grey limestone, which served as the primary building material for the ancient settlements.<sup>3</sup> The terrain presented both opportunities and challenges for its inhabitants. While sources describe the soil as suitable for certain crops, particularly olive trees, water resources were carefully managed.<sup>1</sup> There has been some scholarly discussion regarding the past environment, with suggestions that the now largely eroded limestone surfaces may have once supported a layer of topsoil and perhaps more extensive woodland than is evident today.<sup>4</sup>

### **B. Chronology of Occupation: Roman Prosperity, Byzantine Flourishing, and Eventual Abandonment**

The earliest settlements in the region of the Dead Cities began to emerge in the 1st century AD, often initiated by prosperous landowners from the plains who established seasonal villas on the limestone slopes and cultivated olive groves, the crop best suited to the terrain.<sup>1</sup> These communities experienced their zenith between the 4th and 6th centuries AD, a period largely coinciding with the height of the Christian Byzantine Empire's influence in the region.<sup>3</sup> This era of prosperity saw the construction of numerous well-built stone structures, including many churches and monasteries.

The decline and eventual abandonment of these vibrant rural centers occurred primarily between the 8th and 10th centuries AD.<sup>1</sup> Several factors are believed to have contributed to this process. The devastating Persian-Byzantine wars of 603-630 AD severely disrupted

regional stability and trade.<sup>3</sup> The subsequent Arab conquests in the 7th century, while not immediately leading to the destruction of the villages, altered the political and economic landscape.<sup>4</sup> The interruption of the vital olive oil trade, particularly with major urban centers like Antioch and Apamea, is considered a primary cause for the economic downturn that forced inhabitants to leave.<sup>3</sup> Other contributing factors may have included epidemic diseases, such as plagues, and a gradual emigration of the Christian population over several generations.<sup>4</sup> The remarkable preservation of many of these sites is a direct consequence of this relatively peaceful abandonment and the lack of significant subsequent resettlement or stone reuse for nearly a millennium in many areas, creating an unparalleled archaeological "snapshot" of Late Antique rural life.<sup>1</sup> This contrasts sharply with sites that experienced continuous occupation, where later building phases often obliterated earlier remains. However, even before 2010, a trend of agricultural resettlement in the Limestone Massif was noted, posing a potential new threat to the integrity of certain villages and their landscapes.<sup>1</sup>

### **C. Socio-Economic Drivers: The Olive Oil Economy**

The economic foundation of the Dead Cities was overwhelmingly reliant on the cultivation of olives and the production and export of olive oil.<sup>3</sup> This commodity, highly valued throughout the Mediterranean world, was traded extensively with major cities like Antioch and Apamea, bringing considerable wealth to the region.<sup>3</sup> The architectural remains, including numerous olive presses found within the settlements, attest to the scale of this industry.<sup>11</sup> The inhabitants demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of their environment, developing hydraulic techniques to manage water resources and implementing organized agricultural plot plans, vestiges of which are still discernible in the landscape.<sup>1</sup> However, this heavy dependence on a single cash crop rendered the regional economy exceptionally vulnerable to external shocks. The disruption of trade routes, whether through conflict or shifts in political control, had a direct and severe impact on the prosperity of these communities. The lack of significant economic diversification meant that once the olive oil trade faltered, the economic basis for these settlements collapsed, leading to their relatively rapid decline and abandonment.<sup>3</sup> This historical trajectory serves as a compelling case study on the inherent risks of monoculture economies, even in antiquity, and illustrates how geopolitical events occurring far from the production zones can have catastrophic local consequences.

### **D. The Religious Transformation: From Paganism to Christianity**

One of the most significant cultural shifts evidenced by the Dead Cities is the transition from the ancient pagan world of the Roman Empire to the increasingly dominant Byzantine Christianity.<sup>1</sup> Architectural remains clearly chart this transformation. Earlier structures include pagan temples, but these are gradually superseded by an impressive proliferation of Christian edifices, including numerous churches, chapels, and monastic complexes.<sup>1</sup> Christian symbols, such as crosses, the Chi-Rho monogram, and depictions of olive branches and flowers, become ubiquitous in the architectural decoration.<sup>3</sup>

The Christianization of this rural landscape appears to have been profound and

comprehensive, resulting in a substantial investment in religious architecture. This suggests more than just nominal conversion; it points to a deep integration of Christian faith and practice into the social and economic fabric of these communities. The wealth generated from the lucrative olive oil trade was significantly channeled into the construction and embellishment of these religious structures, transforming the landscape into a testament to Christian piety and communal organization.<sup>1</sup> The influence of ascetic figures, most notably St. Simeon Stylites, whose nearby sanctuary at Qal'at Semaan became a major pilgrimage destination, further spurred religious fervor and the growth of monasticism throughout the region.<sup>3</sup> This active participation in religious life and architectural expression challenges any notion that these rural areas were merely passive recipients of religious trends dictated by urban elites; instead, they were vibrant centers of Christian culture in their own right.

### III. Prominent "Dead Cities" and Archaeological Sites in and around the Afrin District (Pre-2010)

The Afrin district and its immediate environs, particularly the Jebel Simeon massif, host several significant "Dead Cities" and related archaeological sites that were subjects of study and documentation before 2010.

#### A. Barad (Brad) (Afrin District)

**Location and Historical Overview:** Barad is a mountainous village situated in the Afrin District, northwest of Aleppo.<sup>12</sup> It is recognized as one of the largest and most extensive ancient sites among the Dead Cities.<sup>12</sup> The settlement reached its apogee during the 5th and 6th centuries AD when it functioned as an important administrative center for the northern region of Jebel Simeon.<sup>13</sup> Its origins, however, trace back to an earlier agricultural settlement in the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, primarily focused on olive cultivation. The site expanded notably in the 4th century before experiencing a decline in the 7th century.<sup>13</sup>

Key Archaeological Features (pre-2010):

The archaeological landscape of Barad, as documented before 2010, is rich and varied:

- **Julianos Cathedral/Church:** A prominent structure is the Julianos Cathedral, a large three-aisled basilica constructed between 399 and 402 CE (or 395-402 AD according to other sources).<sup>12</sup> It featured a sizable *bema* (an elevated platform for clergy) in the center of the nave, a characteristic element of Syrian church architecture, and was one of only two such large basilicas known in Northern Syria from before 400 CE.<sup>12</sup> There is evidence suggesting it may have been erected on the site of an earlier Roman temple, reusing some of its architectural elements.<sup>13</sup>
- **North Church:** Another significant religious edifice is the North Church, a well-preserved wide-arcade basilica dated to 561 AD.<sup>12</sup>
- **Qasr al-Barad Monastery:** Located to the southwest of the main village site, the Qasr al-Barad monastery complex included a single-nave South Church, residential buildings for monks, a hostel for pilgrims, and a distinctive tower.<sup>12</sup>

- **Roman-era Bathhouse (Thermae):** Barad possessed a large public bathhouse, a testament to its civic development.<sup>12</sup> This structure is thought to date to the 2nd century and may have belonged to a wealthy landowner's residence.<sup>13</sup>
- **Other Structures:** The site also contains the remains of five warehouses, a meeting house, a magistrate's residence, tombs, and a *tetrapylon* – a four-arched monumental gateway, likely a grave monument from the 2nd or 3rd century AD.<sup>12</sup>

**Significance:** Barad's extensive ruins underscore its role as a major administrative and religious hub within the Dead Cities network.<sup>13</sup> It gained particular religious importance as the reputed burial site of St. Maron, making it a significant pilgrimage destination for Maronite Christians.<sup>12</sup>

**Pre-2010 Research:** Barad has been mentioned in several scholarly works on Syrian antiquities published before 2010, including those by Warwick Ball, Ross Burns, and others.<sup>12</sup> A notable event was the visit of a Lebanese delegation led by Michel Aoun in February 2010 to commemorate the 1600th anniversary of St. Maron's death, highlighting the site's continued cultural resonance.<sup>12</sup>

## **B. Cyrrhus (Nabi Hourī / Qorosh / سیروس) (Afrin River)**

**Location and Multi-Period History:** Cyrrhus, known locally as Nabi Hourī and historically as Qorosh, is strategically located on or near the Afrin River, approximately 70 kilometers northeast of Aleppo.<sup>6</sup> Its history spans several millennia. Founded by Seleucus I Nicator around 300 BC, it was named after the Macedonian city of Cyrrhus.<sup>7</sup> Under Roman rule, from the 1st century AD onwards, Cyrrhus became an important military outpost, housing the Legio X Fretensis, and a commercial center.<sup>6</sup> The city's strategic importance led to its fortification, notably under Emperor Justinian I in the 6th century.<sup>7</sup> Following the Arab conquest in 637 AD, the city became known as Qorosh.<sup>7</sup> It gradually declined and was largely in ruins by the 13th century.<sup>7</sup>

Major Monuments (pre-2010):

The archaeological remains at Cyrrhus are extensive and reflect its long and varied history:

- **Roman Bridges:** Two well-preserved Roman bridges are notable features, one of which is particularly imposing and architecturally significant, attesting to Roman engineering prowess.<sup>7</sup>
- **Theatre:** Cyrrhus boasted a large Roman theatre, considered the second largest in Syria after Bosra, with a diameter of approximately 115 meters, indicating the city's size and importance.<sup>7</sup>
- **Fortifications & Citadel:** The city was protected by extensive fortifications dating from the Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, and Islamic periods.<sup>7</sup> A Byzantine citadel was constructed on the hill behind the theatre.<sup>7</sup>
- **Churches/Basilica:** Foundations of a substantial basilica church have been identified.<sup>7</sup> Historical sources mention that Cyrrhus had as many as ten churches during the Byzantine era.<sup>15</sup> It gained fame as Hagiopolis ("Holy City") due to the presence of the relics of Saints Cosmas and Damian, which were housed in a major basilica, making it a

significant pilgrimage destination.<sup>7</sup> An earlier Roman temple dedicated to Zeus is believed to have been converted into a church.<sup>7</sup>

- **Nebi Houri Mausoleum:** A distinctive hexagonal Roman-era tower tomb, dating to the 2nd or 3rd century AD, is located at the site. It was later incorporated into a mosque complex and became the focal point of the local veneration of Nabi Houri, a revered prophet, thus ensuring its continued preservation and use as a pilgrimage site.<sup>7</sup>
- **Roman House with Mosaics:** Archaeological work by a Lebanese-Syrian mission led to the discovery of a Roman house adorned with mosaics and wall paintings, dated to the late 2nd or early 3rd century AD.<sup>14</sup>

#### Pre-2010 Research & Condition:

Cyrrhus has been the subject of archaeological investigation over many decades. An early French mission, led by Edmond Frézouls, worked at the site from 1953 to 1976, with a particular focus on the theatre.<sup>15</sup> More recently, a Syrian-Lebanese mission, co-directed by J. Abdul Massih, Sh. Al Shbib, and involving M. Gelin, commenced work in 2006. This mission aimed to study the city's urbanism, fortifications, and undertake restoration of key monuments.<sup>14</sup> Several publications detailing their findings appeared in 2009 and 2010.<sup>17</sup> The site faced challenges even before 2010. Looting occurred in October 2008, leading to its inclusion on the World Monuments Fund (WMF) Watch List for 2008. The WMF initiated a project in 2009 to protect the recently discovered Roman house, constructing a shelter and arranging for the transfer of some mosaics to the Aleppo Museum for safekeeping.<sup>14</sup> Despite these efforts, reports from May 2010 indicated that the site was generally poorly maintained.<sup>16</sup> This pre-2010 activity by the Syrian-Lebanese mission and the WMF signaled a growing local and international interest in these sites, moving beyond earlier survey work towards more intensive excavation, detailed study, and crucial conservation efforts. This momentum underscored a positive trajectory for the understanding and preservation of Cyrrhus, making subsequent disruptions due to conflict particularly unfortunate.

### C. Kharab Shams (Jebel Simeon / Mount Laylun / Afrin Region)

**Location and Historical Context:** Kharab Shams is an early Byzantine settlement located in the Jebel Simeon area, also referred to as Mount Laylun, within the broader Afrin region, northwest of Aleppo.<sup>11</sup> Its name, translating to "Sun Ruins," is believed to derive from the numerous engravings of the sun disc found on ancient structures within the village.<sup>19</sup> The settlement flourished primarily between the 4th and 6th centuries AD, during the peak of the Christian Byzantine era.<sup>19</sup>

#### Key Archaeological Features (pre-2010):

Kharab Shams is particularly renowned for its well-preserved ecclesiastical architecture:

- **4th-Century Basilica:** The most significant monument at Kharab Shams is its impressive basilica, dating to the late 4th century AD.<sup>11</sup> It is considered one of the oldest and best-preserved Christian structures in the Levant.<sup>5</sup> This basilica features a classic layout with two rows of columns supporting arcades, varied capital styles, a central *bema*, and a semicircular apse.<sup>11</sup> An inscription reportedly suggests a construction date of 372 AD, with modifications in the 5th century.<sup>11</sup> Its high columnar arcades have led to

it being referred to as the "stilts church".<sup>20</sup>

- **Pagan Temple:** Evidence of pre-Christian occupation exists in the form of remains of a facade of what is believed to have been a pagan temple. This structure features a lintel decorated with depictions of the sun, moon, a bull's head, and floral wreaths, and is tentatively dated to the 3rd century AD.<sup>11</sup>
- **6th-Century Church:** A smaller, single-hall church, also dating to the Byzantine period (6th century), is situated at the top of the plateau and is noted for its good state of preservation.<sup>11</sup>
- **Other Structures:** The site also includes the ruins of villas, an olive press, and various residential houses from the Byzantine period.<sup>11</sup>

**Pre-2010 Research:** Kharab Shams was studied by several prominent early and mid-20th-century archaeologists, including Howard Crosby Butler, Georges Tchalenko, Georges Tate, and Alice Naccach.<sup>11</sup> More contemporary pre-2010 documentation includes a visit by scholar Emma Loosley in May 1997<sup>21</sup> and photographs taken by Jim Gordon in November 2009.<sup>20</sup>

## **D. Fafertin Church (Jebel Simeon)**

**Location and Significance:** The village of Fafertin is located in the Jebel Sem'an region, an area historically populated by Kurdish communities.<sup>3</sup> Its primary claim to archaeological fame lies in the ruins of its ancient church.

**Architectural Features (pre-2010):** The church at Fafertin is particularly significant due to an inscription, discovered by H.C. Butler, dating its construction to 372 AD.<sup>3</sup> This makes it one of the oldest, if not the oldest, dated churches in Northern Syria and a crucial monument for understanding early Christian architectural development in the region.<sup>3</sup> As of pre-2010, only the apse and parts of the north wall and its doorway were well-preserved.<sup>3</sup> The original church had a nave of seven bays with columns featuring Doric and Tuscan capitals.<sup>22</sup> The complete plan of the church was recorded by Howard Crosby Butler during his expedition in 1905, providing invaluable data for a structure that had since suffered further deterioration.<sup>22</sup> The concentration of such early and well-preserved churches – Fafertin (372 AD), Kharab Shams (late 4th century), and the Julianos Cathedral at Barad (399-402 AD) – within this relatively compact geographical area of the Afrin district and Jebel Simeon underscores the region's rapid and intensive Christianization. It suggests that this area served as an early and important hub for Christian architectural development in rural Syria, possibly influencing practices in other rural communities. This was not a peripheral backwater but an active center of Christian life and architectural innovation from an early stage of the Byzantine period.

## **E. Other Notable Sites and Features in the Vicinity**

While the focus is on sites within or immediately adjacent to the Afrin district, the broader context of the Jebel Simeon and North Syrian limestone massif is essential. The monumental complex of **St. Simeon Stylites (Qal'at Semaan)**, though not a "Dead City" in the same sense of an abandoned village, was a hugely influential pilgrimage center located in Jebel

Simeon.<sup>3</sup> Its presence undoubtedly impacted the religious and economic life of the surrounding villages, including those discussed.

Other Dead Cities like **Serjilla**, with its well-preserved baths and villas, **Mushabbak**, known for its late 5th-century basilica, and **Burjke**, with its Byzantine ruins including a church, are often cited as characteristic examples of these settlements in Northern Syria, illustrating typical architectural features and community layouts.<sup>3</sup>

Furthermore, the Afrin region possesses a deeper historical stratigraphy beyond the Late Antique period. The Syro-Hittite settlement of **Ain Dara**, located south of Afrin town and featuring a Luwian stele from the 9th-8th century BC, provides evidence of much earlier civilizations in the valley, offering a richer, multi-layered historical context for the area.<sup>6</sup>

The varying scales and functions of these sites are also noteworthy. While many were primarily agricultural villages dependent on olive cultivation, sites like Cyrrhus, with its military garrison, strategic position on trade routes, and role as a major pilgrimage destination, and Barad, which served as an administrative center and also attracted pilgrims, developed into more complex settlements. This demonstrates a clear hierarchy within the "Dead Cities" landscape, reflecting the broader patterns of Roman and Byzantine provincial organization and highlighting that these settlements were not a monolithic entity but a networked system with diverse roles.

## F. Table of Key Archaeological Sites

The following table summarizes key information for the primary archaeological sites discussed within or in close proximity to the Afrin district, based on knowledge available before 2010.

**Table 1: Key Archaeological Sites in/near the Afrin District (Based on Pre-2010 Knowledge)**

Site Name (Alternate Names)	Location (District/Proximity to Afrin)	Key Historical Periods of Occupation	Major Architectural Features (Pre-2010)	Notable Pre-2010 Research/Discoveries & Key Scholars/Missions	Relevant Document IDs
<b>Barad</b> (Brad)	Afrin District, Aleppo Governorate	Roman (2nd-3rd c. AD), Byzantine (fl. 4th-6th c. AD), decline 7th c. AD	Julianos Cathedral (399-402 AD), North Church (561 AD), Qasr al-Barad Monastery, Roman bathhouse, tetrapylon, warehouses,	H.C. Butler; studies by Ball, Burns, Less; St. Maron pilgrimage site; visit by M. Aoun (2010)	<sup>12</sup>



			tombs		
<b>Cyrrhus</b> (Nabi Houri, Qorosh, (سیروس))	Afrin River, NE of Aleppo	Seleucid (f. c. 300 BC), Roman, Byzantine (Hagiopolis), Islamic (Qorosh); decline by 13th c. AD	Roman bridges, Roman theatre, fortifications (Hellenistic to Islamic), Byzantine citadel, Basilica (Sts. Cosmas & Damian), Nebi Houri mausoleum (Roman tomb), Roman house with mosaics	E. Frézouls (French mission 1953-76); Syrian-Lebanese mission (J. Abdul Massih, Sh. Al Shbib, M. Gelin) from 2006; WMF 2008 Watch, 2009 project (looting response)	<sup>6</sup>
<b>Kharab Shams</b>	Jebel Simeon / Mount Laylun (Afrin region), NW of Aleppo	Byzantine (fl. 4th-6th c. AD), possible earlier pagan phase (3rd c. AD temple)	4th-c. Basilica (c. 372 AD, "stilts church"), 6th-c. Church, remains of pagan temple, villas, olive press	H.C. Butler, G. Tchalenko, G. Tate, A. Naccach; E. Loosley (1997 visit); J. Gordon (2009 photo)	<sup>5</sup>
<b>Fafertin Church</b>	Jebel Simeon, Kurdish village	Byzantine (church dated 372 AD)	Ruins of basilica (apse, parts of N. wall well-preserved), inscription dating to 372 AD	H.C. Butler (1905 survey and recording of plan)	<sup>3</sup>

## IV. Architectural Heritage and Material Culture (Pre-2010 Findings)

The Dead Cities of Northern Syria, including those in the Afrin region, exhibit a rich and distinctive architectural heritage, primarily utilizing the readily available local limestone. Pre-2010 research had extensively documented these features.

### A. Ecclesiastical Architecture

Churches and monasteries are among the most prominent and well-studied structures. The dominant form for churches was the basilica, though variations existed, including

single-aisled and, more commonly, three-aisled plans.<sup>3</sup> Key features included apses, which could be semi-circular or, in some later examples, rectangular; narthexes (entrance halls); and often porticoes.<sup>4</sup> A particularly notable Syrian characteristic was the *bema*, an elevated platform or tribune for the clergy, often located in the center of the nave, as seen in the Julianos Cathedral at Barad and the basilica at Kharab Shams.<sup>11</sup>

Monasteries formed significant complexes, typically comprising a church, cells for monks, and hostels to accommodate pilgrims, such as Qasr al-Barad near Barad and the extensive complex of St. Simeon Stylites at Qal'at Semaan.<sup>3</sup> Construction was robust, employing massive ashlar masonry of local limestone.<sup>3</sup>

Architectural decoration, while often restrained, was skillfully executed. Carved stone elements included lintels over doorways, column capitals (exhibiting Doric, Tuscan, Corinthian, and Ionic orders, as well as local adaptations and composite forms), friezes, and cornices.<sup>3</sup> Christian symbols were frequently incorporated into the decoration, with crosses in various forms, the Chi-Rho monogram, olive branches, and floral motifs being common.<sup>3</sup> The scholarly work of Christine Strube, focusing on the architectural decoration of churches in the North Syrian limestone massif, particularly their capitals, door, and cornice forms from the 4th to 7th centuries, provides crucial typological and chronological frameworks for understanding these elements.<sup>23</sup> This architectural style, while rooted in classical traditions, developed distinct regional Syrian characteristics. This suggests a vibrant local Christian culture that was not merely imitating imperial centers like Constantinople but was actively adapting and innovating, leading to a unique provincial Byzantine architectural expression. This regionalism implies a degree of cultural autonomy and localized theological articulation within the broader Byzantine Christian sphere.

## **B. Civic and Domestic Structures**

Beyond religious edifices, the Dead Cities contained a range of civic and domestic structures indicative of a prosperous and organized society. Villas belonging to wealthy landowners were common, often substantial two-storied buildings with verandas or porticoes.<sup>3</sup> Public buildings also featured prominently in larger settlements. Bathhouses, such as those found at Serjilla and Barad, provided important communal amenities.<sup>3</sup> Meeting houses, sometimes referred to by archaeologists as "cafes" (as at Serjilla), and warehouses (as documented at Barad) further point to a developed civic and commercial life.<sup>3</sup>

Agricultural installations were integral to the economy. Olive presses are frequently found among the ruins, attesting to the primary industry.<sup>11</sup> Cisterns for water storage and protective stone walls enclosing agricultural plots were also common features, demonstrating careful resource management and land organization.<sup>1</sup> The investment in such substantial and well-built domestic and public structures, alongside the numerous religious buildings, points to a prosperous and socially stratified rural society. The wealth derived from agriculture clearly supported not only religious devotion but also a comfortable lifestyle and developed civic amenities for at least a segment of the population. These were functioning communities with a complex social and civic life, reflecting the overall economic health of the Syrian

countryside during Late Antiquity.

## **C. Funerary Practices and Monuments**

Funerary architecture in the Dead Cities was also distinctive. Tombs were typically stone-built, ranging from simpler interments to more elaborate mausolea, such as those at Barad and the unique hexagonal tomb at Cyrrhus, which was later integrated into the Nabi Hourī shrine.<sup>3</sup> Sarcophagi were also used. A particular form of grave monument found in the region is the *tetrapylon*, a four-sided arched structure, an example of which exists at Barad.<sup>12</sup>

## **D. Decorative Arts**

While stone carving was the primary medium for architectural embellishment, other decorative arts were also present, particularly in more affluent contexts. Mosaics, for instance, were discovered adorning the floors of the Roman house excavated at Cyrrhus.<sup>14</sup> Wall paintings were also found in the same structure.<sup>14</sup> Although mosaics and frescoes are generally less emphasized in the provided pre-2010 documentation for the more rural Dead Cities compared to major urban centers of the Byzantine Empire, their presence at a significant site like Cyrrhus is noteworthy and indicates the penetration of such decorative traditions into the region.

# **V. History of Archaeological Exploration and Research (Pre-2010)**

The archaeological wealth of the Dead Cities in Northern Syria, including those in the Afrin region, has attracted scholarly attention for over a century and a half. The history of this research, as understood before 2010, reveals an evolving approach to these unique sites.

## **A. Pioneering Surveys and Documentation**

The "rediscovery" of the Dead Cities by Western scholarship can be traced to the 19th century, with the work of individuals like the Marquis de Vogüé in the 1860s being instrumental in bringing these remarkably preserved ancient settlements to broader attention.<sup>3</sup> His publications, often featuring detailed architectural drawings, laid an early foundation for their study.

The early 20th century saw more systematic expeditions. Among the most significant were those led by Howard Crosby Butler of Princeton University, who conducted extensive surveys and documentation between 1899 and 1909.<sup>4</sup> Butler's meticulous work, published posthumously, provided comprehensive architectural plans, photographs, and descriptions of numerous sites, forming an invaluable corpus of data that remains relevant.<sup>4</sup>

In the mid-20th century, Georges Tchalenko made profound contributions to the study of the Dead Cities. His three-volume work, "Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord" (published 1953-1958), offered detailed site plans, photographs, and an influential socio-economic theory centered on the rise and fall of an olive monoculture economy.<sup>4</sup> Tchalenko's research significantly shaped the understanding of these settlements for decades and established

them as a key case study for understanding the rural economy and settlement patterns of the Byzantine Levant, influencing broader historical narratives about the period.<sup>4</sup>

## **B. Significant 20th and Early 21st-Century (Pre-2010) Work Relevant to Afrin Area Sites**

Building on this foundational work, research continued throughout the 20th century and into the early 21st century, with several projects and scholars focusing on sites within or relevant to the Afrin area:

- At **Cyrrhus (Nabi Houri)**, a French archaeological mission directed by Edmond Frézouls conducted excavations and studies from 1953 to 1976, focusing particularly on the Roman theatre.<sup>15</sup> More recently, a collaborative Syrian-Lebanese mission, involving scholars such as J. Abdul Massih, Sh. Al Shbib, and M. Gelin, commenced work in 2006. This mission had ambitious goals, including further excavation, the study of urbanism and fortifications, and the restoration of key monuments.<sup>14</sup>
- The work of **Georges Tate**, particularly his detailed studies of sites like Serjilla, provided further insights into the domestic architecture and social organization of the Dead Cities.<sup>11</sup>
- **Christine Strube's** specialized research on Byzantine architectural decoration in Northern Syria, focusing on elements like capitals, doorframes, and cornices, offered crucial typological and chronological analyses for understanding the artistic and constructional trends in the region's churches.<sup>23</sup>
- Comprehensive guidebooks, such as Ross Burns' "The Monuments of Syria," served to synthesize existing knowledge and make information about these sites, including those in the Afrin area like Barad, accessible to a wider audience before 2010.<sup>12</sup>
- The Syrian Directorate-General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) played an ongoing role in overseeing and often collaborating in archaeological projects across the country.

This history of research reflects an evolution in archaeological methodologies and priorities. Early explorations by Western scholars were often characterized by broad surveys and architectural documentation. Over time, particularly in the later 20th and early 21st centuries (pre-2010), there was a discernible shift towards more focused excavations, collaborative international projects involving local expertise, and an increasing emphasis on conservation and site management. This maturation of archaeology as a discipline in the region fostered a more holistic and collaborative approach to understanding and preserving this unique heritage, a trend that was clearly gaining momentum in the years leading up to 2010.

## **VI. State of Preservation and Heritage Concerns (As Understood Before 2010)**

The state of the Dead Cities, as documented before 2010, was a complex picture of remarkable preservation alongside emerging threats.

### **A. General Condition of the Sites**

A defining characteristic of the Dead Cities is their generally exceptional state of preservation.<sup>1</sup> This is largely attributed to their relatively gradual abandonment and, crucially, the lack of significant subsequent resettlement or systematic reuse of their stone for nearly a millennium in many areas.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, walls of houses, churches, and other structures often stood to considerable heights, sometimes almost fully intact, offering a vivid impression of ancient village life.<sup>3</sup> Some sites, or parts of them, like certain areas of Serjilla, were described as nearly undisturbed.<sup>3</sup> Even in more ruinous locations, substantial architectural remains were typically visible.

## **B. Threats and Conservation Challenges (Pre-2010)**

Despite this generally good condition, several threats and conservation challenges were recognized before 2010:

- **Natural Deterioration:** The passage of centuries inevitably led to natural weathering and decay of the ancient limestone structures.
- **Modern Encroachment and Reuse:** In some areas, ancient settlements were being impacted by modern development. This included the expansion of contemporary villages encroaching upon archaeological zones and, occasionally, the reuse of ancient stone blocks and lintels in new constructions.<sup>3</sup> A notable concern was the trend of agricultural resettlement within the Limestone Massif, which had the potential to affect the integrity of both the built heritage and the ancient agricultural landscapes.<sup>1</sup> This highlighted an inherent tension between the preservation of these ancient landscapes and the resource needs of modern communities, a challenge that was already apparent before 2010.
- **Looting and Illicit Excavation:** The illicit removal of antiquities was a documented problem. The Roman house with mosaics at Cyrrhus, for example, was subjected to looting in October 2008, with further incidents reported in 2009.<sup>14</sup> This indicated that even in a period of relative national stability, these sites were vulnerable to such activities.

## **C. Early Conservation Efforts and Management (Pre-2010)**

Awareness of the heritage value of the Dead Cities and efforts towards their conservation were growing in the years leading up to 2010:

- **UNESCO Recognition Process:** The "Ancient Villages of Northern Syria" were inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2011.<sup>1</sup> However, the nomination process, including detailed documentation and management planning, was well underway before 2010. This included plans for a management structure involving eight archaeological parks and two management centers, which were being established around 2010.<sup>1</sup>
- **World Monuments Fund (WMF) Involvement:** The WMF played a role in addressing urgent conservation needs. Following the looting at Cyrrhus, the site was placed on the WMF's 2008 Watch List. In 2009, the WMF initiated a project to protect the endangered Roman house with its mosaics and wall paintings. This involved the construction of a protective shelter using traditional materials and techniques and the careful transfer of

two major mosaic panels to the Archaeological Museum of Aleppo for conservation and safekeeping.<sup>14</sup> The swift response by the WMF to the looting at Cyrrhus signaled that illicit excavation was a recognized threat and that international mechanisms for heritage protection were being activated.

- **Restoration by Archaeological Missions:** Some archaeological missions, such as the Syrian-Lebanese team at Cyrrhus, included restoration components in their work programs, aiming to stabilize and conserve specific monuments.<sup>15</sup>

## **VII. Conclusion: The Legacy of Afrin's Dead Cities (Pre-2010 Perspective)**

### **A. Recapitulation of Significance**

The "Dead Cities" located in and around the Afrin district of Northern Syria, as understood from research conducted before 2010, represent an archaeological and historical resource of global importance. They offer an exceptionally well-preserved testament to rural life, socio-economic structures, religious transformations, and architectural traditions during Late Antiquity and the Byzantine era.<sup>1</sup> These ancient villages provide a unique window into the transition from paganism to Christianity in a provincial setting, revealing how this profound cultural shift manifested in the landscape, architecture, and daily life of these communities.<sup>1</sup> The wealth generated primarily from olive cultivation fueled not only a distinctive Christian architectural efflorescence but also supported a complex and relatively prosperous rural society.<sup>3</sup>

### **B. The Value of the Pre-2010 Baseline**

The body of knowledge accumulated through more than a century of archaeological exploration and scholarly research prior to 2010 is of inestimable value. It established a critical baseline for understanding the history, development, and material culture of these sites. This pre-2010 record, encompassing detailed surveys, architectural documentation, excavations, and socio-economic analyses, forms the foundation upon which all subsequent assessments of change, damage, or new discoveries must be built. The dedicated work of numerous Syrian and international scholars laid the groundwork for the international recognition of these sites, culminating in their inscription as a UNESCO World Heritage property. This collective scholarly effort was not merely an academic pursuit but a direct contribution to the global acknowledgment of the Outstanding Universal Value of the Ancient Villages of Northern Syria and the imperative for their protection.<sup>1</sup>

### **C. Areas for Future Inquiry (as implied by pre-2010 knowledge)**

While this report focuses on summarizing pre-2010 knowledge, the research from that period also implicitly pointed towards avenues for future investigation. For instance, more detailed excavations of domestic areas within various settlements could further illuminate the daily lives of their inhabitants. Expanded research into trade networks, both local and

long-distance, could refine understanding of the region's economic integration. Comparative analyses between the larger administrative or pilgrimage centers like Barad and Cyrrhus, and the smaller, primarily agricultural villages, could offer deeper insights into the social and economic hierarchies within the Dead Cities landscape. The continued study of architectural typologies and decorative motifs, building on the work of scholars like Christine Strube, would also remain a fruitful area of research. The pre-2010 understanding of the Dead Cities in and around Afrin thus provided not only a rich account of a bygone era but also a roadmap for continued scholarly engagement with this remarkable heritage.

## VIII. Works Cited

- <sup>3</sup> Toth, A. B. (1991, January). The Dead Cities of Northern Syria. *CNEWA*. Retrieved from <https://cnewa.org/magazine/the-dead-cities-of-northern-syria-30509/>
- <sup>1</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (n.d.). *Ancient Villages of Northern Syria*. Retrieved from <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1348/> (Primary information accessed reflects pre-2010 nomination data and descriptions)
- <sup>6</sup> Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Afrin, Syria*. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrin,\\_Syria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrin,_Syria) (Content accessed reflects historical data largely pre-dating 2010 for ancient periods)
- <sup>12</sup> Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Barad, Syria*. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barad,\\_Syria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barad,_Syria) (Content accessed reflects historical and archaeological data largely pre-dating or current as of early 2010)
- <sup>5</sup> MED-O-MED. (n.d.). *Ancient Villages of Northern Syria (Syrian)*. Retrieved from [https://medomed.org/featured\\_item/ancient-vilages-of-northern-syria-syrian/](https://medomed.org/featured_item/ancient-vilages-of-northern-syria-syrian/) (Content describes sites based on established pre-2010 knowledge)
- <sup>14</sup> World Monuments Fund. (n.d.). *Cyrrhus (Nebi Houri)*. Retrieved from <https://www.wmf.org/projects/cyrrhus-nebi-houri> (Describes project initiated in 2009 based on 2008 events)
- <sup>7</sup> Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Cyrrhus*. Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrrhus> (Content accessed reflects historical and archaeological data largely pre-dating 2010)
- <sup>18</sup> Archiqoo. (n.d.). *Kharab Shams*. Retrieved from [https://archiqoo.com/locations/kharab\\_shams.php](https://archiqoo.com/locations/kharab_shams.php) (Site information reflects established pre-2010 knowledge, UNESCO inscription 2011 based on prior data)
- <sup>2</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (n.d.). *Syrian Arab Republic - UNESCO World Heritage Convention*. Retrieved from <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/sy> (Lists inscription dates, Ancient Villages 2011, based on pre-2010 nomination)
- <sup>15</sup> Discover Syria. (2011, January 16). *سيرة (Nabi Houri Site)*. Retrieved from <http://www.discover-syria.com/news/10002> (Article published early 2011, detailing work from 2006 onwards)
- <sup>19</sup> eSyria. (2008, December 27). *خرب شمس « قرية من التاريخ »*. Retrieved from <https://www.esyria.sy/2008/12/%D8%AE%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%B3-%D9%82%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AE> (Article dated 2008)

- <sup>11</sup> الموسوعة العربية (Arab Encyclopedia). (n.d.). خراب شمس (موقع). Retrieved from <https://arab-ency.com.sy/archeology/details/166952> (References pre-2010 scholars and findings)
- <sup>9</sup> Révolution Permanente. (2018, March 14). *Afrin : silence, l'armée turque massacre les kurdes*. Retrieved from <https://www.revolutionpermanente.fr/Afrin-silence-l-armee-turque-massacre-les-kurdes> (Post-2010 context, used to frame the importance of pre-2010 baseline)
- <sup>10</sup> Terresainte.net. (2025, February). *Syrie : restaurer le patrimoine archéologique pour relancer le tourisme*. Retrieved from <https://www.terresainte.net/2025/02/syrie-restaurer-le-patrimoine-archeologique-pour-relancer-le-tourisme/> (Post-2010 context, used to frame the importance of pre-2010 baseline, image from 2010)
- <sup>26</sup> Le Journal du CNRS. (2014, December 2). *En Syrie, un patrimoine en péril*. Retrieved from <https://lejournald.cnrs.fr/billets/en-syrie-un-patrimoine-en-peril> (Refers to pre-2009 work of G. Tate)
- <sup>16</sup> Rome Art Lover. (2010, May). *Cyrrhus*. Retrieved from <https://romeartlover.tripod.com/Cyrrhus.html> (Page added May 2010)
- <sup>17</sup> ArScAn. (2015, March 29). *Cyrrhus : étude de la citadelle*. Retrieved from <https://arscan.parisnanterre.fr/cyrrhus-etude-de-la-citadelle/> (References publications from 2009, 2010 regarding mission from 2006)
- <sup>20</sup> Wikimedia Commons. (2010, October 13). *File:Kharab Shams Basilica, Dead Cities region, NW Syria.jpg*. Retrieved from [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kharab\\_Shams\\_Basilica,\\_Dead\\_Cities\\_region,\\_NW\\_Syria.jpg](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kharab_Shams_Basilica,_Dead_Cities_region,_NW_Syria.jpg) (Photo dated Nov 2009)
- <sup>4</sup> Wikipedia (German). (n.d.). *Tote Städte*. Retrieved from [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tote\\_St%C3%A4dte](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tote_St%C3%A4dte) (Reflects established pre-2010 scholarship by Butler, Tchalenko, etc.)
- <sup>8</sup> Wikipedia (German). (n.d.). *Afrin*. Retrieved from <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrin> (Historical data largely pre-2010 for ancient periods)
- <sup>13</sup> Wikipedia (German). (n.d.). *Brad (Syrien)*. Retrieved from [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brad\\_\(Syrien\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brad_(Syrien)) (Reflects established pre-2010 knowledge, citing literature up to 2009)
- <sup>28</sup> Amazon.com. (n.d.). *The Monuments of Syria by Ross Burns*. Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com/Monuments-Syria-Ross-Burns/dp/1845119479> (Publication date July 15, 2009)
- <sup>24</sup> University of Edinburgh Library Catalogue. (n.d.). *Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord*. Tchalenko, Georges. Retrieved from [https://discovered.ed.ac.uk/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991240943502466&context=L&vid=44UOE\\_INST:44UOE\\_VU2&lang=en&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=sub%2Cexact%2C%20Syria%20--%20Antiquities](https://discovered.ed.ac.uk/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991240943502466&context=L&vid=44UOE_INST:44UOE_VU2&lang=en&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=sub%2Cexact%2C%20Syria%20--%20Antiquities) (Publication 1953-58)



- <sup>23</sup> Wikipedia (German). (n.d.). *Christine Strube*. Retrieved from [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christine\\_Strube](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christine_Strube) (Lists publications from 1993, 2002)
- <sup>27</sup> Loosley, E. (2017). *The Church and Monastery of St. Symeon Stylites the Elder, Qal'at Sim'an*. In *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Archaeology*. (Refers to pre-2010 work by Strube and Tchalenko, and pre-2011 fieldwork context)
- <sup>22</sup> Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Fafertin*. Retrieved from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fafertin> (Refers to Butler's 1905 expedition and pre-2011 UNESCO context)
- <sup>5</sup> MED-O-MED. (n.d.). *Ancient villages, Syria*. Retrieved from [https://medomed.org/featured\\_item/ancient-vilages-of-northern-syria-syrian/](https://medomed.org/featured_item/ancient-vilages-of-northern-syria-syrian/) (Lists Fafertin church with 372 AD date, based on established pre-2010 knowledge)
- <sup>25</sup> Loosley, E. (2018). *Symeon Stylites the Elder and the 'Shrouded Revolution' in Late Antiquity*. In *Syria and the East*. Brill. (References Tchalenko's foundational work)
- <sup>21</sup> Architecture and Asceticism (University of Exeter). (n.d.). *Kharab Shams*. Retrieved from <https://architectureandasceticism.exeter.ac.uk/items/show/170> (Visit dated May 1997)
- <sup>1</sup> UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (n.d.). *Ancient Villages of Northern Syria*. (Internal document, data reflects pre-2010 submission for 2011 inscription)
- <sup>3</sup> CNEWA. (1991, January). *The Dead Cities of Northern Syria*. (Internal document, article dated 1991)
- <sup>12</sup> Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Barad, Syria*. (Internal document, reflects pre-2010 data including Aoun's 2010 visit and pre-2010 publications)
- <sup>11</sup> Arab Encyclopedia. (n.d.). *Kharab Shams*. (Internal document, references pre-2010 scholars like Butler, Tchalenko, Tate)
- <sup>7</sup> Wikipedia. (n.d.). *Cyrrhus*. (Internal document, reflects pre-2010 archaeological knowledge and missions)
- <sup>4</sup> Wikipedia (German). (n.d.). *Tote Städte*. (Internal document, summarizes pre-2010 scholarship by Mattern, Butler, Tchalenko)
- <sup>13</sup> Wikipedia (German). (n.d.). *Brad (Syrien)*. (Internal document, summarizes pre-2010 knowledge of Barad's features and chronology)
- <sup>17</sup> ArScAn. (n.d.). *Cyrrhus : étude de la citadelle*. (Internal document, details Syrian-Lebanese mission from 2006, with publications in 2009, 2010)
- <sup>15</sup> Discover Syria. (2011, January 16). *Cyrrhus (Nabi Houri)*. (Internal document, article published early 2011, detailing French mission and Syrian-Lebanese mission from 2006)
- <sup>16</sup> Rome Art Lover. (2010, May). *Cyrrhus*. (Internal document, webpage dated May 2010 describing site condition)

## Works cited

1. Ancient Villages of Northern Syria - UNESCO World Heritage Centre, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1348/>
2. Syrian Arab Republic - UNESCO World Heritage Convention, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://whc.unesco.org/en/statesparties/sy>

3. The Dead Cities of Northern Syria | ONE Magazine - CNEWA, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://cnewa.org/magazine/the-dead-cities-of-northern-syria-30509/>
4. Tote Städte – Wikipedia, accessed May 11, 2025, [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tote\\_St%C3%A4dte](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tote_St%C3%A4dte)
5. Ancient villages, Syria - Med-O-Med, accessed May 11, 2025, [https://medomed.org/featured\\_item/ancient-vilages-of-northern-syria-syrian/](https://medomed.org/featured_item/ancient-vilages-of-northern-syria-syrian/)
6. Afrin, Syria - Wikipedia, accessed May 11, 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrin,\\_Syria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrin,_Syria)
7. Cyrrhus - Wikipedia, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cyrrhus>
8. Afrin - Wikipedia, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afrin>
9. Afrin : silence, l'armée turque massacre les kurdes - Revolution Permanente, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://www.revolutionpermanente.fr/Afrin-silence-l-armee-turque-massacre-les-kurdes>
10. Syrie : Restaurer le patrimoine archéologique pour relancer le tourisme | Terresainte.net, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://www.terresainte.net/2025/02/syrie-restaurer-le-patrimoine-archeologique-pour-relancer-le-tourisme/>
11. موسوعة الآثار في سورية - الموسوعة العربية, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://arab-ency.com.sy/archeology/details/166952>
12. Barad, Syria - Wikipedia, accessed May 11, 2025, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barad,\\_Syria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Barad,_Syria)
13. Brad (Syrien) – Wikipedia, accessed May 11, 2025, [https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brad\\_\(Syrien\)](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brad_(Syrien))
14. Cyrrhus (Nebi Hourî) - World Monuments Fund, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://www.wmf.org/projects/cyrrhus-nebi-houri>
15. اكتشف سورية - النبي هوري, accessed May 11, 2025, <http://www.discover-syria.com/news/10002>
16. Cyrrhus, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://romeartlover.tripod.com/Cyrrhus.html>
17. Cyrrhus : étude de la citadelle – Arscan, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://arscan.parisnanterre.fr/cyrrhus-etude-de-la-citadelle/>
18. Kharab Shams - Archiqoo, accessed May 11, 2025, [https://archiqoo.com/locations/kharab\\_shams.php](https://archiqoo.com/locations/kharab_shams.php)
19. خراب شمس " قرية من التاريخ" - eSyria, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://www.esyria.sy/2008/12/%D8%AE%D8%B1%D8%A7%D8%A8-%D8%B4%D9%85%D8%B3-%D9%82%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%A9-%D9%85%D9%86-%D8%A7%D9%84%D8%AA%D8%A7%D8%B1%D9%8A%D8%AE>
20. File:Kharab Shams Basilica, Dead Cities region, NW Syria.jpg - Wikipedia, accessed May 11, 2025, [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kharab\\_Shams\\_Basilica,\\_Dead\\_Cities\\_region,\\_NW\\_Syria.jpg](https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kharab_Shams_Basilica,_Dead_Cities_region,_NW_Syria.jpg)
21. Kharab Shams - Architecture and Asceticism, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://architectureandasceticism.exeter.ac.uk/items/show/170>
22. Fafertin - Wikipedia, accessed May 11, 2025, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fafertin>
23. Christine Strube - Wikipedia, accessed May 11, 2025,

[https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christine\\_Strube](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christine_Strube)

24. Villages antiques de la Syrie du Nord. - University of Edinburgh - DiscoverEd, accessed May 11, 2025,  
[https://discovered.ed.ac.uk/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991240943502466&context=L&vid=44UOE\\_INST:44UOE\\_VU2&lang=en&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=sub%2Cexact%2C%20Syria%20--%20Antiquities](https://discovered.ed.ac.uk/discovery/fulldisplay?docid=alma991240943502466&context=L&vid=44UOE_INST:44UOE_VU2&lang=en&adaptor=Local%20Search%20Engine&tab=Everything&query=sub%2Cexact%2C%20Syria%20--%20Antiquities)
25. The Historiography of Qalʿat Simʿān: a Curiously Under-Studied Field - Brill, accessed May 11, 2025,  
<https://brill.com/display/book/edcoll/9789004388451/BP000002.pdf>
26. En Syrie, un patrimoine en péril | CNRS Le journal, accessed May 11, 2025,  
<https://lejournald.cnrs.fr/billets/en-syrie-un-patrimoine-en-peril>
27. Architecture and Asceticism: Cultural interaction between Syria and Georgia in Late Antiquity - OAPEN Library, accessed May 11, 2025,  
[https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/37840/9789004375314\\_webready\\_content\\_text.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/37840/9789004375314_webready_content_text.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)
28. The Monuments of Syria: Burns, Ross: 9781845119478 - Amazon.com, accessed May 11, 2025,  
<https://www.amazon.com/Monuments-Syria-Ross-Burns/dp/1845119479>