



*Safed: plan of the citadel.*

in three caves consisted of 51 complete pottery vessels, including a storage jar, bowls, jugs, and an alabastron; 28 bronze weapons, among them an ornamented “duckbill” axe, chisel axes, spearheads, daggers, and a knife blade; 24 toggle pins from the Middle Bronze Age IIA, the transitional Middle Bronze Age IIA–B, and the Middle Bronze Age IIB; and a scarab from the late Middle Bronze Age IIB.

**THE PRE-CRUSADER MOUND.** The ceramic and numismatic evidence from the surveys and soundings, which supplemented the meager historical sources, attests to a history of continuous settlement in pre-Crusader Safed. Evidence of habitation was uncovered from the Middle and Late Bronze Ages, Iron Age I–II, Persian, Hellenistic (a large amount of sherds of the so-called Galilean coarse ware), Hasmonean (a coin of Alexander Jannaeus), Roman (numerous sherds of the Kefar Hananya type of pottery), Byzantine, and Early Islamic periods.

**THE CRUSADER PERIOD.** The excavations, carried out mainly in the southwestern part of the citadel, uncovered remains of defensive towers and walls with loopholes, vaulted rooms, cisterns, and a moat, all of which belonged to the large thirteenth-century Crusader castle whose construction is recorded by Benoit of Alignan. The castle was oriented north–south. One of its walls, 2 m thick and 25 m long (W200), had five identical loopholes, 1.8 m wide and 1.2 m deep, with oblique slits 9 cm wide. To its south the excavations uncovered part of an imposing curved wall (W109), 6 m long and 3.2 m wide, with a mason’s mark in the form of an axe on one of its stretchers and one loophole set in the wall (A) and subsequently sealed. Between the walls and within their confines was a succession of vaulted rooms (S8, S12, S15). In the debris of the easternmost room (S15) were discovered a sculpted stone head of a saintly figure (originally an architectural element) and a fragment of another head. South of these was a cistern (S14) with a thick coating of hydraulic mortar on its northern and eastern walls (W204, W211). Further to the east, M. Dothan discovered in 1951 another curved wall (W300), supported by small buttresses, with remains of a paved passageway and a water drainage channel opposite its southern facade; to their south, part of the core of an outer curved fortification wall was found in 2001.

**THE MAMELUKE PERIOD.** After conquering Safed in 1266, Baybars rebuilt the Crusader fortress, adding a massive round tower on the top of the citadel, a well-fortified gateway on the western side of the castle, and probably also a 42-m-long hall (S5). The upper gate tower, 20 by 15 m, with walls 7 m thick, was faced with unusually large blocks, laid as stretchers against a thick core of masonry. Its western wall (W107), with a sloping facade, was never completely buried and appears on the Survey



*Sculpted head of a saintly figure, Crusader period.*

of Western Palestine plan. In the southeastern corner of the tower, where it joins the facade of the Crusader wall of the previous phase, the upper part of a latrine was uncovered. The access ramp, ascending from north to south, is 24 m long and 7–8 m wide. In the vicinity of the entrance to the ramp, sockets of hinges and bolts were found, suggesting the presence of a lower gate with a double door.

Outside the gate, within an accumulation of fallen debris, a large fragment of an ornamented limestone lintel was found; on one of its faces is a carved lion with its right leg raised, probably part of the lintel of the lower gate. This lintel very likely originally bore two lions facing each other, the coat of arms of the Mameluke Sultan Baybars. The ramp consists of a slope with elongated steps and pilasters set at regular intervals on the inner face of its western wall; between them were oblique loopholes and along its eastern side was a corridor (S4) whose function has not yet been clarified. Several cracks in the walls of the gateway structures are evidence of seismic activity; subsequent repairs are seen in the structure of the ramp.



*Baybars gate complex, looking southeast.*

The great round tower at the top of the citadel, built of large limestone blocks, was partly uncovered; it had a circular cistern (10 m in diameter and 10.5 m high) in its center. Surrounding the tower’s upper section was a round corridor. These remains conform well with the “splendid tower” described in Mameluke sources as a spiral ramp leading to the top and attributed to Baybars.

Among the small finds from this period are a large quantity of glass and pottery, including local reddish plain ware, glazed plates decorated with incised motifs, and various imported wares from Syria, Egypt, Italy (Venetian), China (Celadon and Ming), and Spain. A small hoard of 37 silver coins (19 Mameluke and 18 Venetian) from the fifteenth century was also found.

The 2002 excavations directed by M. Cohen on the southern fringes of the southwestern part of the city, somewhat distant from the citadel, also yielded remains of the Mameluke occupation and augment the historical sources that describe Safed as a large city during that period. The remains of the two monumental Mameluke buildings—the Red Mosque and the Zawiyet Banat Hamid mausoleum—also attest to that rich period in the history of Safed.



*Lion lintel of Baybars from the lower gate.*