

## Acre (Israel)

No 1042

### Identification

*Nomination* The Old City of Acre

*Location* Western Galilee

*State Party* Israel

*Date* 30 June 2000

### Justification by State Party

During its existence, Acre has been a unique example of the symbiosis between different cultures and values. Its geographical position made it a meeting point between east and west. The fact that various cultures struggled for control over the city ensured that all parties were exposed to each other's influence.

Acre's uniqueness becomes apparent when examining the Crusader city. The Crusaders brought European building technology with them to the Holy Land whilst utilizing local materials. They built in accordance with various needs that were dictated by the city's geographical position. Their relationship with the place and the local population led to the development of the hybrid city of its period, of which no comparable example exists in Europe

Crusader Acre evolved for 200 years, reaching the peak of its importance on a world scale at the time when it was the capital city of the Crusaders, and a main entrance for many visitors to the Holy Land. Another example of the city's uniqueness may be found in the way that Crusader Acre eventually played a role in Ottoman plans for building. After the Mamelukes captured the city they attempted to bury the original city. However, during rebuilding in the 18th century, the original Crusader buildings were used as foundations for the new buildings, thus keeping the basic Crusader city plan. **Criterion ii**

Acre is a living witness to the existence of two now extinct cultures – those of the Crusaders in the Holy Land and of the Ottomans. A Crusader city for pilgrims such as Acre could only exist in the Holy Land. As things developed in the region, Acre became the second most important city in the country after Jerusalem.

Since Acre was the capital of the second Crusader kingdom it offers today unique evidence of the highly particular lifestyle of the Crusaders, which lasted for a relatively short period in history before disappearing. The crux of this evidence of culture and life style is to be found in the lower level of the city in the multitude of

archaeological remains, preserved in superb condition for hundreds of years.

It is enough to walk around old Acre of today in order to get a constant sense of Ottoman culture because of the unusual degree to which its lifestyle has been preserved within the city walls and due to its geographical location. This happened despite the fact that changes in the socio-economic conditions led the wealthy classes to leave the city. **Criterion iii**

Acre demonstrated settlement and utilization of available land by great masses of people by military means, for a specific religious purpose. This was not in fact settlement for its own sake but in order to provide a stepping stone on the way to Jerusalem. Thus the city was a mixture of garrison and way station. This manner of settlement as part of a historical process over a short period of time is unique.

The Crusaders created a new culture in the land which did not seek either to perpetuate its influence on local culture or to absorb the influence of local culture. Thus in a moment Crusader Acre ceased to exist as soon as it was captured by the Mamelukes and the Crusades were over. There was no continuity of the special life style that had existed until that point. **Criterion v**

Acre is directly connected with a number of important historical world events, and also to the Baha'i faith.

In 1189 the Crusaders under King Guy de Lusignan laid siege to Acre in a two-year operation that went unparalleled in the tales of medieval wars of both the Christian and Muslim worlds. Salah-A-Din, Richard the Lion Heart, and Philippe II all participated in the war and Acre surrendered to the Crusader forces on 12 July 1191. Acre experienced its golden age as the capital of the Second Crusader kingdom from 1191 to 1291. It stood at a junction of international routes and was a trading centre between Europe and Asia. In 1291 the city was finally captured by the Moslems and systematically destroyed on the orders of Sultan El Ashraf.

In 1799 Acre became world-famous owing to the failure of Napoleon's army to capture the city after laying siege to it for a long time. The city's defenders, with the active aid of the English, managed to repel the French forces, forcing them to withdraw. "Tel Akko," previously called "King Richard Hill," was renamed "Tel Napoleon." The failure of the siege of Acre marked a turning point in Napoleon's career.

In 1868 the Baha'ullah arrived in Acre as a prisoner of the Ottoman Empire. He spent the remaining 24 years of his life in the city, first imprisoned in the city's fortress and later kept under house arrest in a small building in the alleyways of the old city. During his sojourn in Acre, the Baha'ullah wrote his most important work, setting out the laws and precepts to be observed by Baha'i adherents. He was freed towards the end of 1870 and went to live on a nearby estate outside the walls of the city. He died in 1892, his remains were buried on the estate, and to this day his tomb is the holiest shrine of the Baha'i.

During the British mandate in Palestine nine freedom fighters from the resistance were executed in the Gallows Room, part of the British prison occupying the citadel. **Criterion vi**

## Category of property

In terms of the categories of cultural property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *group of buildings*.

## History and Description

### History

Ancient Acre was situated on Tel Akko (or Tel El Fukhar), about 2.5km to the east of the location of the old city. Settlement at the tell appears to have begun during the Early Bronze Age (c 3000 BCE). Around 1900 BCE the town was fortified by a high earthen rampart with a brick gateway facing the direction of the sea. When the Israelites entered the land of Canaan Akko was one of the cities allotted to the tribe of Asher. In the centuries that followed it was under Assyrian rule in the 9th century BCE and between the 6th and 4th centuries BCE it was a Phoenician town under Persian rule. Following the conquest of the entire region by Alexander the Great and his early death, the area around Acre was first ruled by the Hellenistic Ptolemaic dynasty of Egypt and then the Seleucids of Syria.

The present city was founded on the peninsula in the earlier period (3rd–2nd centuries BCE) and named Antiochia Ptolemais after its founder, Ptolemy II of Egypt. There are still traces of fortifications, a wall, and tower from this period. Acre was a centre for international trade because of its strategic position and its natural port.

After a short period as part of the Jewish Hasmonaean kingdom in the 1st century BCE the city fell to the Romans in 63 BCE and became part of the province of Syria; it was granted the status of *colonia*. The first Christian pilgrims passed through Acre on their way to Jerusalem. In 330, during the Byzantine period, this region passed into the control of the Roman Empire. This was a time of economic and demographic expansion, when hundreds of churches and monasteries were established all over the Holy Land. The larger cities expanded and were encircled by new fortification systems; Acre retained its status as the principal port of the region.

During the early Arab period (638–1099), when the city, which reverted to its original name, Akko, formed part of the Caliphate of Cairo, many of the country's cities were abandoned and destroyed. Acre decreased in importance as an international port and the city limits were reduced to include several quarters around the port, where a Moslem naval fleet was stationed. Acre began its economic recovery during the 10th and 11th centuries and the port and city walls were rebuilt.

The Crusader period began for Acre in 1104, some five years after the fall of Jerusalem. Baldwin I, King of Jerusalem, and the Genoese commercial fleet cooperated in laying siege to Acre from land and sea until the city fell to the Crusaders. A new and special model of settlement evolved, characterized by defined and autonomous quarters. The king settled in the northern part of the city, where he built a fortified palace.

Genoese, Venetian, and Pisan merchants built autonomous quarters nearby the port. The military orders installed themselves nearby – the Hospitallers in the north

of the city to the west of the palace, the Templars in the south-west of the city, and the German Knights close to the eastern wall of the wall. Other important quarters included those of the Patriarch (in which the Church of the Holy Cross, Acre's main cathedral, was built), the French merchants (the Provençal quarter), and the English merchants. Moslem and Jewish merchants also settled in the city.

Many public buildings were erected – fortified buildings, churches, bathhouses, bakeries, courts and hostels for pilgrims and merchants, covered markets – and also private dwellings. During the two centuries of Crusader rule Acre developed into a wealthy and thriving trading city. It symbolized the interchange between the eastern and western cultures better than any other city.

In 1187, after the debacle at Hattin and the destruction of the Crusader army, the Moslems captured the whole of the Crusader lands and Acre was held for four years. It was not until 1191 that the Third Crusade led by Richard the Lion Heart led to the recapture of Acre and the adjoining coastal regions. A second Crusader kingdom was established with Acre as its capital, since the Crusaders were not able to retake Jerusalem.

From 1191 to 1291 the second Crusader Kingdom expanded its borders. New neighbourhoods such as Monmizar to the north were built and Acre was given a new double city wall. More palaces, churches, and public buildings were erected, at a time when styles in the west were changing from Romanesque to Gothic. This change in style was put into practice in Acre and recent excavations have revealed buildings that reflect the transition between styles and the initial establishment of the Gothic style in the 13th century.

The Mameluke period (named after the Moslem rulers of Egypt) began in 1291 with the conquest of Acre and continued until 1517. Acre came within the *mamluka* of Gaza. The city was destroyed and totally abandoned, with only a few buildings remaining around the port.

During the Ottoman period (1517–1917) Acre was described by pilgrims and merchants who visited it in the 16th and 17th centuries as a deserted ghost town, with some structures from the Crusader period still standing, some jutting out of the earth, and others buried. Reconstruction did not begin until the middle of the 18th century, under Daher El Amar, who renewed the port, manned it with officials and merchants, built a palace for himself, and rebuilt the fortifications.

The building of Ottoman Acre in the 18th and 19th centuries buried the remains of the Crusader city, thereby preserving the Crusader remains. In 1799 Acre attained world fame after Napoleon failed to capture the city, under the command of its Turkish ruler Ahmed El-Jazar, after a long siege.

Acre enjoyed renewed economic expansion in the 19th century. Mosques, bathhouses, and caravanserais were built. Wealthy merchants settled there, building grand mansions in the eastern Neo-Classical style of the end of the 19th century.

In 1868 Baha'ullah, founder of the Baha'i faith, arrived in Acre as a prisoner of the Ottoman Empire. He spent the remaining 24 years of his life in the city, first imprisoned in the city's fortress and later under house arrest in a small building in the alleyways of the old city. During his

sojourn in Acre, the Baha'ullah wrote his most important work, setting out the laws and precepts to be observed by Baha'i adherents. The Baha'ullah was freed towards the end of 1870 and went to live on a nearby estate outside the walls of the city. He died in 1892, his remains were buried on the estate, and to this day his tomb is the holiest shrine of the Baha'i.

After capturing Acre in 1918 and being given control of Palestine by mandate of the League of Nations, the British used the fortress as a prison. Several leading Jewish settlers were imprisoned there, and hangings also took place. The British developed the city outside the boundaries of the walls, constructing dwellings and administrative buildings. However, they did nothing to alter the fabric of life within the walls of the old city. The port fell into disuse as the nearby modern port of Haifa superseded it.

After Israel's independence in May 1948 only a few Moslem residents remained in the old city, but after the fighting had died down many Palestinian Arab refugees from other places began to arrive and settle in the old city, whilst many Jews settled in the new sections. At the present time the five thousand inhabitants of the walled city are exclusively Arab and some 80% are migrants from other parts of Israel.

#### *Description*

The built city comprises two levels:

*The Crusader city*, mainly subterranean remains, partly revealed and in a very good state of preservation – wall, quarters (Hospitaller, Genoese, Pisan, Venetian, *Burgus Novos*, etc), open and covered streets, monuments, drainage tunnels, systems of hideaway passages, shops, and dwellings.

*The Ottoman city*, built over the ruins of the Crusader city, using the earlier structures as foundations and thereby helping in the preservation of the remains of the Crusader city and its outline. The Ottoman city is characterized by its narrow alleyways, monuments, and inhabited dwellings with inner courtyards.

The *system of fortifications* comprises the city walls, gates, towers, and moat. The walls were built in stages between 1750 and 1840. They include the ruins of the Daher-El-Umar's wall (built 1750–51) and its Lion Gate, the El-Jazar wall, and the city gates (the Landward Gate, built by El Jazar, the Seaward Gate, and two entrances in the northern walls opened in 1910).

Two elements of the *water-supply system* survive: the remains of the water aqueduct, built by either Dahar El Umar or El Jazar, which brought water from the Kabri fountain to the city and supplied it to the bathhouses and the public fountain, and a reservoir constructed of five Ottoman barrel vaults.

There are several noteworthy *tombs of sheikhs and cemeteries*, including the Nebi Tzalah Tomb in the cemetery near the eastern wall, the Sheikh Yanis Tomb inside a room in a southern wall of the Jabhanee opposite to the Jazar mosque, the Sheikh Ana'am Tomb built in 1807–08 by Suliman Pecha, the Sheikh Az A-Dean Tomb north of the wall by the sea (traditionally considered to be the tomb of Dahar El-Amar), and three cemeteries – the Muzoleom, a cemetery behind Hann-Shuni, and the cemetery of St George's Church.

Acre has four historic *churches*: St John's Church, built in 1737 by the Franciscans, probably on top of the Crusader St Andrew's Church and now used by the Roman Catholic community; the Maronite Church; St Andrew's Church, apparently built on top of the Crusader St Anne's Church and now used by the Greek Catholic Church; and St George's Church, one of the most ancient in Acre and referred to in 17th century pilgrims' description as St Nicholas's Church (it is constructed on Crusader cross-vaults, which matches the description of St Lawrence's Church).

There are eight *mosques* within the nominated old city of Acre. The El-Jazar mosque, built in 1781 by El-Jazar, on the remains of the Holy Cross Cathedral, is one of the most important mosques in the country. It comprises religious institutions and a famous library. El-Jazar, Suliman Pecha, and their families are buried in the courtyard. The El-Zaituna mosque was built in 1745 by Husain Abed Elhadi. What are believed to be remains of the Hospitallers' Church are incorporated in its structure. The Snan-Basha mosque was built in 1806–7 by Suliman Pecha above the remains of the mosque built by Snan-Basha in the 16th century. The Elmualic mosque was originally a synagogue of the Jewish community in Acre and was converted into a mosque by Dahar El-Amar in 1746. Like most of the mosques in Acre it overlies Crusader remnants: this is also the case of the A-Ramal (1704) and A-Magdala (1710) mosques. The Shazalia mosque was built in 1862 by the Sheikh Ali Nur A-Dean El-Yasruti, founder of the Shazalia cult, whose body and those of his family are buried nearby. Also of importance is the El Burg' mosque, located near the wall at the Lion Gate.

Other fine examples of Moslem architecture in Acre are two *bathhouses*: the large Hammam El-Basha built by El-Jazar in the 18th century, apparently on top of an ancient bathhouse, and the small Hammam built by Dahar El-Amar in the 18th century and in continuous use until the 1940s.

Among the historic *khans* (caravanserais) are Khan El Umdan, built in 1784 by El-Jazar; Khan El-Farang', built in the 16th century by French merchants in the central courtyard of the Crusader-period Venetian quarter; Khan A-Shauardee, built in the 18th century by Dahar El-Amar; Burg' El-Sultan, a Crusader tower, reconstructed for use by the Mamelukes and later incorporated into the khan; the Donkeys Khan, built in 1810 and ruined by an explosion at an ammunition depot; and Khan A-Shune, built in the period of Dahar El-Amar over the remains of the Pisan quarter.

Two *Baha'i holy sites* are also in the area of the old city nominated for inscription: the Jabotinsky Tower and the Abud House.

There are two *markets*: the Turkish Bazaar (El-Jazar Market) and Shuk El-Abyad (the White Market), built by Dahar El-Amar and reconstructed in 1817 by Suliman Pecha after a fire.

The main *Government Building* is the Citadel, which was the Ottoman governors' palace and a prison during the British Mandate. It was built over the citadel of the Hospitallers, which includes the Knights' Halls, the Grand Munier, the Crypt, the "Beautiful Hall," and the courtyard. The Seraya is thought to have functioned as a courthouse during the Ottoman period

The urban structure of contemporary Acre is based on the following fundamental factors:

- Acre's geographical position on a natural bay was a significant reason for its development as a port. Being located on a peninsula with its limits defined by its walls and by the sea that defined its boundaries dictated the need for dense building, a characteristic feature of medieval cities.
- The Crusader city was built in clearly defined quarters.
- The Ottoman city blended with the Crusader remains, using them as foundations. It is characterized by its layout of blocks and buildings set around inner yards.

At first glance, Acre's winding streets and blocks of buildings appear to have grown in an unplanned way: it is difficult to perceive any particular order according to which the city might have been arranged. It was, however, carefully laid out: it is arranged around two complementary hierarchies, the hierarchy of areas of transit and the hierarchy of built areas and blocks of buildings.

The built areas consist of quarters, blocks of buildings, individual buildings, and apartments. Apartment dwellings form blocks set around inner courtyards, the blocks forming larger blocks and quarters.

The boundary of every built component of the city is defined by some kind of wall.

- At city level by fortified walls that surround the old city in its entirety, detaching it and cutting it off from anything outside.
- At block level by uninterrupted stone fascias at ground level which constitute a "wall."
- At larger block level by the formation of inner courtyards.

The urban characteristic of Acre is one of looking inwards and containment, reflecting the role of the home in traditional Moslem society. The facades of buildings serve to separate the home from the street, thereby protecting the inhabitants. Upper floors were built on at a later stage and clearly reflect western influence, with less closure and containment, reflected in large picture windows and balconies.

The areas of transit are also arranged according to hierarchy, following the same hierarchic principle as in built areas – division and gradual passage:

- Main thoroughfares running between the city churches and public centres and the perimeter route running parallel to the city walls.
- Alleyways leading from the main thoroughfares into the built-up masses of dwellings and circular alleyways that encompass the blocks.
- Secondary cul-de-sac alleyways that run into the blocks, usually as far as the inner courtyards and sometimes connecting with another thoroughfare.

The large blocks are set around inner courtyards, giving the impression from outside that they are built very densely and closed. Within, the courtyards form intimate empty spaces that allow access to fresh air and sunlight.

Inner courtyards are found in a number of styles: at ground level, open to the sky; at ground level, but covered; set on roofs. They fulfil a number of roles: they may serve a single apartment or dwelling, they may serve as nuclei for a number of buildings grouped together into a block, or they may be located between blocks. The courtyards are part of the typological and morphological characteristics of the city's construction.

## **Management and Protection**

### *Legal status*

The old city of Acre is designated an antiquity site under the provisions of the 1978 Antiquities Law. Article 29.a prohibits any of the following activities without the written approval of the Director of the Israel Antiquities Authority:

- building, paving, the erection of installations, quarrying, mining, drilling, flooding, the clearing away of stones, ploughing, planting, or interment;
- the dumping of earth, manure, waste, or refuse, including the dumping thereof on adjoining property;
- any alteration, repair or addition to an antiquity located on the site;
- the dismantling of an antiquity, the removal of part thereof or the shifting thereof;
- writing, carving, or painting;
- the erection of buildings or walls on adjoining property;
- any other operation designated by the Director in respect of a particular site.

### *Management*

Ownership of the property is divided between three main owners: the Israeli Land Administration (80%), the Muslim *Wakf* and the Christian Churches (15%), and private ownership (5%).

Following the establishment of the Old Acre Development Co Ltd (OADC) in 1983, a steering committee for urban planning drew up a new Master Plan for the old city of Acre for the years 1993–2000. The plan takes into account the international heritage of Acre, and takes account of the requirements of the Building and Urban Planning Law while considering the possibility of turning the city into a tourist attraction.

The main provisions are:

- Preservation of the special character of the old city of Acre – cultural, architectural, and aesthetic values.
- Preservation of the physical fabric whilst adapting to the modern quality of life.
- Provision of a solution to the inhabitants in the fields of residential accommodation, environment, community services, infrastructure, employment, and involvement in the process of developing whilst involving the public in the planning process.
- The development of tourism as a principal economic activity in Acre, Western Galilee, and throughout the State of Israel.

- Determining the permissible type of usage for each plot of land and building.
- Determining priorities and the distribution of resources.
- Provision of general planning whilst providing solutions to suitable specific programmes at the planning and execution stage.
- Provision of a solution for the planning framework of urban systems: ie transportation, infrastructures, sign posting, maintenance, management and preservation of the environment.

Preparation of the Plan involved a number of studies and surveys. These included a condition survey of the buildings, the development of a traffic plan, a study of the morphology of residential houses, a survey of potential tourist needs, and a survey of infrastructure of services (water, electricity, etc). As a result, areas in need of urgent intervention and priorities were identified.

The agencies with management authority under the terms of the Master Plan are the Acre Municipality, the OADC, the Israel Antiquities Authority (and its Conservation Department), and the Israel Land Administration (National Housing Authority). Site management is the responsibility of the OADC, a wholly state-owned professional body with expertise in management economics and marketing, and it is the OADC which coordinates the activities of the other partners. The Conservation Department of the Israel Antiquities Authority, which has a staff of conservation architects, engineers, archaeologists, and specialized conservators, is responsible for all conservation work.

Monitoring and control activities carried out under the plan are:

- Municipal inspection for enforcing the Building and Urban Planning Law;
- Archaeological inspection under the Antiquities Law (article 29.a);
- Conservation inspection;
- A Conservation Steering Committee composed of representatives of the following bodies: Conservation Department of the Israeli Antiquities Authority, the District Engineer, the Old Acre Development Company Ltd, the National Housing Authority, the Master Plan architect, the District Architect of the Israeli Land Administration, and a representative of the local community.
- A municipal tourist police.

Regular monitoring of the buildings in the old city is shared between the Municipality, the National Housing Authority, and the Conservation Department of the Israel Antiquities Authority, all of which are represented by inspectors on site.

ICOMOS considers that this plan and its implementation fulfil the requirements regarding management planning laid down in paragraph 24.b.ii of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention*.

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### *Conservation history*

A programmed approach to the conservation of the old city of Acre began in the 1990s. The first buildings survey had been carried out during the British Mandate. An extensive survey was made in 1962, and this served as the basis for the first master plan. From 1993 onwards there was a series of surveys of individual buildings, monuments, and blocks, and these have resulted in a number of technical manuals designed to provide architects, engineers, institutions, and private individuals with field solutions relating to specific aspects of the conservation and restoration of buildings. Restoration and conservation work on many of the major buildings are accompanied by scientific excavations, which are revealing many facets of the Crusader city.

At the present time the residential areas of the old city show little outward sign of the conservation effort over the past eight years. The facades of many of the buildings are in poor condition and there is substantial evidence of the use of inappropriate materials. The surfaces of many of the smaller streets and open spaces are poorly maintained. There is a profusion of cables and other infrastructural elements on the facades and pavements everywhere.

This appearance is, however, slightly misleading. The initial surveys showed that a large proportion of the housing stock was seriously decayed, to an extent that buildings were at risk and consolidation was urgently needed. This interior structural work has now been completed, as has the provision of underground conduits for electricity, telephone, and other services.

For the next stage of conservation and rehabilitation, a pilot project in a largely traditional residential area was selected. Work is in progress on this neighbourhood, adopting an overall approach rather than a piecemeal one directed to individual structures.

Excavation of the Crusader city beneath the Ottoman city is proceeding steadily. A number of innovative civil engineering solutions have been developed to stabilize cleared areas and permit exploration to continue.

### *Authenticity and integrity*

Two periods in history have contributed to the appearance of contemporary Acre: the Crusader period and the Ottoman period. The special nature of the city's evolution has led to the preservation of its authenticity and the principal values of each of the two periods and of the city in general.

Crusader Acre is today mostly subterranean and has only begun to be uncovered recently. The well preserved remains include large portions of the fabric of urban life and buildings with all parts intact – walls, quarters, streets, alleys, fortresses, public buildings, religious buildings, dwellings, and shops, together with the subterranean infrastructure, architectural details, original plasterwork, and masonry. Building plans are clearly identifiable and building technology and materials can be accurately determined.

The Ottoman city was built on the Crusader city and took the form of an urban system of alleyways, courtyards, and squares, reflecting the values of Moslem society. The geographical conditions that determined its development, together with its socio-economic structure, maintained

the integrity of Acre as essentially an Ottoman city, without significant changes in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Acre has retained its character as a port city, with a blend of public buildings, caravanserais (*khans*), and religious buildings alongside markets, small shops, and large residential quarters, together with an active port which is still a source of income and access to the city. The major proportion of Acre's individual buildings have remained largely in the same form as when they were built, with few alterations over the last 150–300 years. Ottoman Acre exists in an architectural/social bubble reflecting the meeting between east and west.

It may therefore be concluded that Acre fulfils all the criteria regarding integrity and reliability of information sources as expressed in the Nara Document and as required by paragraph 24.b.i of the *Operational Guidelines*.

## Evaluation

### *Action by ICOMOS*

A ICOMOS expert mission visited Acre in February 2001. A evaluation of the "outstanding universal value" of the nominated property was provided by the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Historic Towns and Villages (CIVVIH).

### *Qualities*

Acre is a well preserved example of a walled city of special historical interest. It was of major significance during the Crusader period in the Holy Land, first as its principal port and later as the capital of the second Kingdom of Jerusalem for a century. Following a long period of decline, during which it was still the main entry port for Christian pilgrims visiting Jerusalem, it flourished again in the 18th century as the capital of this part of the Ottoman Empire. Its historical trajectory gives it a unique character, in that the substantial remains of the Crusader city are preserved virtually intact beneath the typical Moslem city of the present day, and have in recent years been revealed by scientific excavation.

### *Comparative analysis*

There are three similar Mediterranean towns with which Acre may justifiably be compared: Rhodes in Greece (already on the World Heritage List), Famagusta (Magussa) in Cyprus, and Sidon in Lebanon. All three towns have long histories, and the relevant periods for comparison are from the Crusader period onwards.

Rhodes was founded after the expulsion of the Crusaders from the Holy Land and was exclusively a city of the Order of St John (Hospitallers). By contrast, Acre was founded during one of the peaks of the Crusader period, it became the capital of the kingdom, and its inhabitants represented the full range of Crusader orders, reflecting the history of the Crusades in the Holy Land.

Contemporary Rhodes is more like a medieval European city than Acre, which is in its present form an Ottoman city. It has also not undergone major restoration projects in the 20th century.

After the capture and partial destruction of Acre, Famagusta inherited its position as the main trading port in the region, although it never attained either Acre's

significance or the rate of development that it underwent at its peak. Famagusta essentially represents a city built during the process of withdrawal of the Crusaders. Furthermore, it did not form part of the itinerary of pilgrimages to the Holy Land. At first glance Famagusta seems similar to Acre: it is an example of a walled Ottoman port city that has undergone some changes. The essential difference between the two is that the Crusader city of Famagusta is not preserved in its entirety beneath the Ottoman city: it has instead been blended with Ottoman structures.

Sidon was also an important port city during the Crusader era, but it was one of many port cities whereas Acre was the capital. There is also far less evidence of the Crusader City in Sidon than in Acre.

### *ICOMOS recommendations for future action*

There is no buffer zone to provide protection of the setting of the old city of Acre defined in the plans provided with the nomination dossier, as required by the World Heritage Committee. This must be defined and appropriate regulations enacted before the property can be inscribed on the World Heritage List.

The most serious problem confronting those responsible for the conservation and maintenance of the old city is a social one. There is an almost total absence of pride of place. Few of the present-day inhabitants have any family ties with the city and so there is a lack of identification with it. Furthermore, many of the inhabitants are unemployed or poorly remunerated and so cannot afford to live elsewhere. If and when their personal fortunes change, they will immediately seek housing outside the walled city. As a result, they do not feel themselves under obligation to respect the appearance of what is to them no more than a transitory place of residence.

The task that confronts the managers of Old Acre is therefore fundamentally one of education, so as to demonstrate to the inhabitants that they live in a city with a long history and a rich heritage. The efforts already made over the past two to three years, since it became known that Acre appeared on the tentative list of Israel, need to be maintained and intensified. The educational programme should be accompanied by an intensified social programme aimed at improving the quality of life of the inhabitants of Acre.

The ICOMOS recommendation, that this nomination be *referred back* to the State Party, requesting the definition and regulatory protection of an appropriate buffer zone, and also information regarding existing and proposed educational and social projects relating to heritage protection and conservation, was endorsed by the Bureau at its meeting in June 2001.

This material was supplied by the State Party on 28 September and conforms fully with the requirements of the Bureau and ICOMOS.

**Brief description**

The townscape of the walled port city of Acre is characteristic of Moslem perceptions of urban design, with narrow winding streets and fine public buildings and houses. Beneath it lies almost intact the remains of its predecessor, the Crusader city, which is being revealed by archaeological excavation.

**Statement of Significance**

Acre is exceptional in that beneath its present-day appearance as a typical Moslem fortified city lie the remains of an almost intact medieval city on the European model. It bears exceptional material testimony to the Crusader kingdom established in the Holy Land in the 12th–14th centuries, and also to the Ottoman Empire in the 18th and 19th centuries.

**ICOMOS Recommendation**

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria ii, iii, and v*:

*Criterion ii* Acre is an exceptional historic town in that it preserves the substantial remains of the its medieval Crusader buildings beneath the existing Moslem fortified town dating from the 18th and 19th centuries.

*Criterion iii* The remains of the Crusader town of Acre, both above and below the present-day street level, provide an exceptional picture of the layout and structures of the capital of the medieval Crusader Kingdom of Jerusalem.

*Criterion v* Present-day Acre is an important example of an Ottoman walled town, with typical urban components such as the citadel, mosques, *khans*, and baths well preserved, partly built on top of the underlying Crusader structures.

**Bureau Recommendation**

That this nomination be *referred back* to the State Party, requesting the definition and regulatory protection of an appropriate buffer zone, and also information regarding existing and proposed educational and social projects relating to heritage protection and conservation.

ICOMOS, November 2001

Revised February 2002