

EXCAVATION AT THE CITADEL
(AL QAL'A)
AMMAN 1977

by

Crystal-M. Bennett

The third season of excavations on the Qal'a (the Citadel) in Amman (Fig. 1 ADAJ. Vol. XXII p. 174) took place from the 10th July to the 8th September 1977, though key personnel stayed on after that date to work on the planning, sections, drawings of small finds and analysis of the pottery. The personnel was largely the same as in 1976¹ As in the two previous seasons the excavations were sponsored and financed mainly by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities²

Our goals were two-fold : to finish off Area C (Fig. 2, ADAJ. Vol. XXII, p. 177) and then to extend northwards and eastwards in Area B, (see Figs 1 and 4 in ADAJ. 1973 Vol. XX, pps. 133 and 138).

To achieve our first goal it was necessary: 1) to get complete house plans for the three main periods already discovered in the 1976 season - the 10th/11th Century A.D., (possibly Fatimid) Umayyad and Byzantine; 2) to analyse in detail and depth the existing defensive wall; 3) to reach bedrock in all relevant areas and 4) to expose the much earlier periods which obviously lay to the west of the Umayyad defensive wall in C.O. (Fig. 2, ADAJ. Vol. XXII, p. 177).

1. See the 2nd Preliminary Report in ADAJ., Vol XXII, 1977-8 p. 178. Mrs. Sue Balderstone replaced Mr. Upton as Architect Surveyor; Mr. Simon Lamb was Photographer and new Site Supervisor were Misses A. Budeiri, P. Assinder and V. Segreti. Mr G. Ramahi was Dept. Represent-

In the event, Area C was not finished (Plates LXI,1 and LXI,2) in the time allotted so the completion of the house plans of the post Umayyad (? Mamluk) periods in the BXX and BXXX trenches and the extension eastwards from Trench BXIX, Loci 1 and 2 in order to expose the large Byzantine building which was going under the easternmost baulk (Fig. 4, ADAJ. Vol. XX, 1975 p. 138) remained for another season.

It was soon obvious that if we wished to analyse the existing defensive wall, we would have to open up to the south of the C Area. This was done some 30 metres from Trenches C.O. and C. XXX. This new area was named D (Fig. 1,) and as it was very closely supervised by the Assistant Director, Mr. A. Northedge, his findings are reported separately in an Appendix to this report.

To obtain one of our objectives in Area C, it was necessary to remove some of the 10th/11th Century A.D. walls (Fig. 2) and to expand the working areas within the original 5 metres square trenches, by destroying baulks as soon as they had been understood and drawn. (Already, in the previous season, in C.I., the removal of the overall plastered

tative.

2. Our grateful and sincerest thanks are due to H.E. the Minister of Tourism, Mr. Ghaleb Barakat, to Dr. Adnan Hadidi, Director General of the Department of Antiquities and to all their staffs for their help and co-operation.

Umayyad floor had revealed a Byzantine building in the rubble fill with a doorway in the middle of the trench with two well cut door jambs (Pl. LXII,1). There had also been evidence of Byzantine occupation in three other areas - the trenches C. VIII, IV and III. Bedrock had been reached in several trenches in the previous season but had not been recognized as such. It varied in depth from 4 metres in C.I to 2 metres in C.VII going eastwards up the slope. It is difficult with this soft limestone to differentiate between a hard plaster floor and actual bedrock.

10th/11th Century Period

As will be seen from the plan (Fig. 2 in ADAJ. Vol. XXII, p. 177), at the end of the season in 1976, we had uncovered in Area C. small rectangular houses, with roughly built dry stone walls and rooms varying from $2\frac{1}{2}$ - $3\frac{3}{4}$ m x $2\frac{1}{2}$ - 3m.

These had been built into, on and over the Umayyad defensive wall and over the western Umayyad building. The clearest examples are to be seen in Trenches C. II/III, IV/V and C.I/XI, the latter two trenches incorporating the Umayyad defensive wall. There was a gap in occupation between the scattered *ad hoc* building of these houses and the very large coherent town planning during the Umayyad period.

The 10th/11th Century houses of the Fatimid period were very poorly built and reflect an adverse change in prosperity from the preceding Umayyad period. As will be seen in the Plan (Fig.3), in C.IV and especially in C.V. (the eastern wall), these buildings are

often at a different angle from the earlier Umayyad walls on which they partially rest.

The large rooms of the Umayyad period were re-used as store rooms as is clearly seen in C.XIV (Fig.3) Although it was stated in the Second Preliminary Report that the eastern limit of this occupation was the Umayyad street running almost exactly north-south and separating Trenches C.V., XV and XXV from C. VI, XVI, XXVI and XXXVI, further excavation has shown clearly that there was a period of rebuilding and re-occupation in several rooms of the eastern Umayyad building; and this phase appears to be contemporary with the late buildings under discussion nearer the fortification wall.

In the present season, while dismantling some of the 10th/11th Century house walls in C.II(Pl.LXII;2), we discovered a cache of small objects - mostly jewellery - and obviously belonging to a lady. The cache included six complete and four incomplete copper bells - two clappers from the bells (presumably parts of a necklace) two rings with the inset stones missing, one shell, one piece of sharpened bone, some copper pieces (Pl.LXIII.1 and 2) and a gold half dinar of the Fatimid Caliph Al-Hakim (Pl. LXIV.1 and 2).

This particular coin was minted in 407AH/1016-17 A.D. Unfortunately, the name of the mint is missing from the coin. The Caliph, Al Hakim, reigned from 386-411 AH/996-1021 A.D., when he disappeared³. The Fatimid coins of the Hakim period were all struck in Egypt in the year 397AH/1007 A.D. Found in association with our coins was some pottery,

3. It is worth recording that issues under two other Fatimid Caliphs are known in Jordan: three coins from Al Mu'izz's reign and three from the reign of Al'Aziz. Four other coins of

Al Hakim are also known. See ADAJ., Vol. 1. (1951), Sir Alec Kirkbride: Recent Finds of Arabic Gold Coins, p. 18.

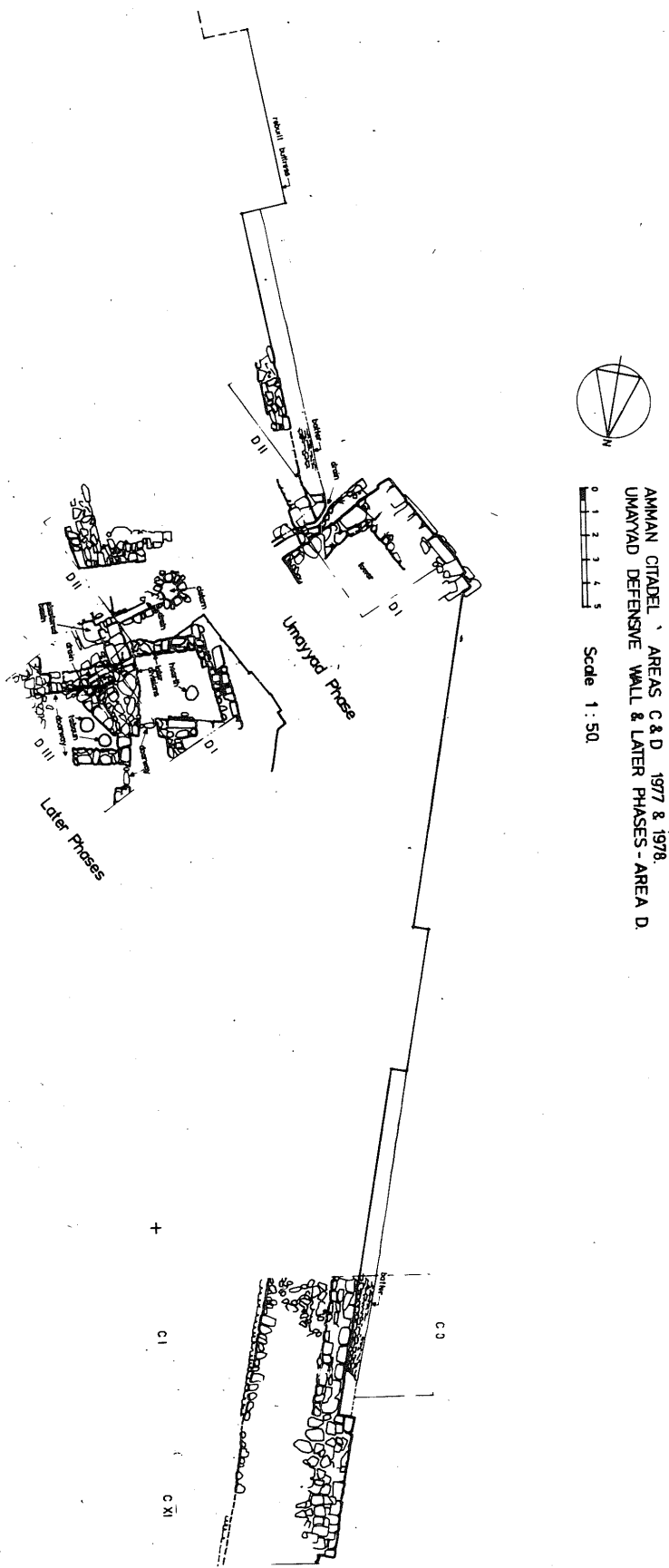


Fig. 1

which it is hoped, when studied, will prove a useful addition to our knowledge of the pottery of this period. While it is not entirely clear from the stratigraphy whether this hoard was laid down before or during the construction of the house over it, it does help to confirm the general context of the last phase of occupation as the late 10th/11th Century A.D.

If we assume that the Fatimid occupation was around 1000 A.D., then there is a gap of something like 250 years between this and the Umayyad occupation. The accumulated debris, which is not a deliberate fill, but rather a natural collapse of an abandoned site - at its very greatest depth it is less than 150 cms - hardly seems enough for a span of 250 years.

Umayyad Structures

As will be seen from the Plan (Fig. 2) there are two distinct *insulae* to the west and east of the main street, which first appeared in C.V. The houses are approximately rectangular, the individual rooms measuring 5 m x 4 m. The main street was 3m wide plus or minus 25cms. There is little to add to what has been described in the 2nd Preliminary Report regarding the buildings of the Umayyad period, except that the outline of the house in the eastern Umayyad building has become much clearer, and it is possible that room B belongs to a second house abutting the first to the north. However Trenches C.III,IV and V pose some difficulties: in these areas apart from the north-south wall in C.V, and the remains of a wall north of the steps in C.III (as yet undated), there are no walls which can be assigned to the Umayyad period and one goes from the 10th/11th Century to the Byzantine period. There is, however, a very definite plaster floor of the Umayyad period which has been cut for the foundations for a later wall. (Plate LXV,1). It is possible that this area was an open courtyard associated with the Umayyad

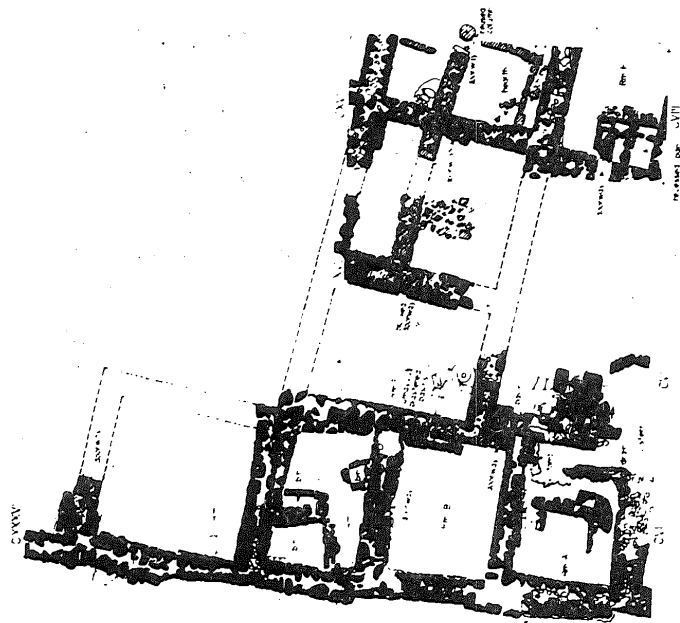
building immediately to the north in trenches C.XXX-XV and XXV.

Remains of the Byzantine Period

It is now clear that underlying the Umayyad buildings, which have been set on a levelling fill (Pl. LXV,2) that varies from 20 cms to 2 metres, we have a complex of Byzantine buildings of some importance. In C.I as reported in the 2nd Preliminary Report a Byzantine doorway was discovered leading into a room to the west, (Pl. LIX). The southern Byzantine wall in C.I goes under the Umayyad defensive wall, but was not picked up in C.O. Presumably it makes an angle with the north-south wall in C.O under the defensive wall. In this season (Pls. LXVI,1 and 2) two doorways were found in the adjoining trench C.II, one with an arch adjacent to the portal, and both leading into rooms further east, though in the southern portal (as Pl. LXVI,2 shows) there is a very definite and strong wall running north-south east of the arch. Obviously this portal has gone through several phases and whether we shall be able to elucidate them is, as yet, an unknown quantity.

The latest floor in this area produced a follis of Constans II (641-668), which may in fact be an Arab copy or a poor Byzantine forgery. In either case it is clear that occupation of the Byzantine levels continued into the Umayyad period.

The steps in C. III, over which a 10th/11th Century wall had been erected remain anomalous. The whole of this area from C.III to C.V inclusive has been so badly robbed, and there is so much collapse, that it is difficult to clarify the stratigraphy. To the north and slightly west in C.V, an odd feature emerged - what looked like steps from a tessellated floor which extended into C. XIV and went up to a doorway. The *tesserae*



AMMAN CITADEL AREA C 1976 & 1977 & 1978.

Scale 1:50

Late phase (11th C)

Umayyad

Byzantine

Middle / Late Bronze

Legend :

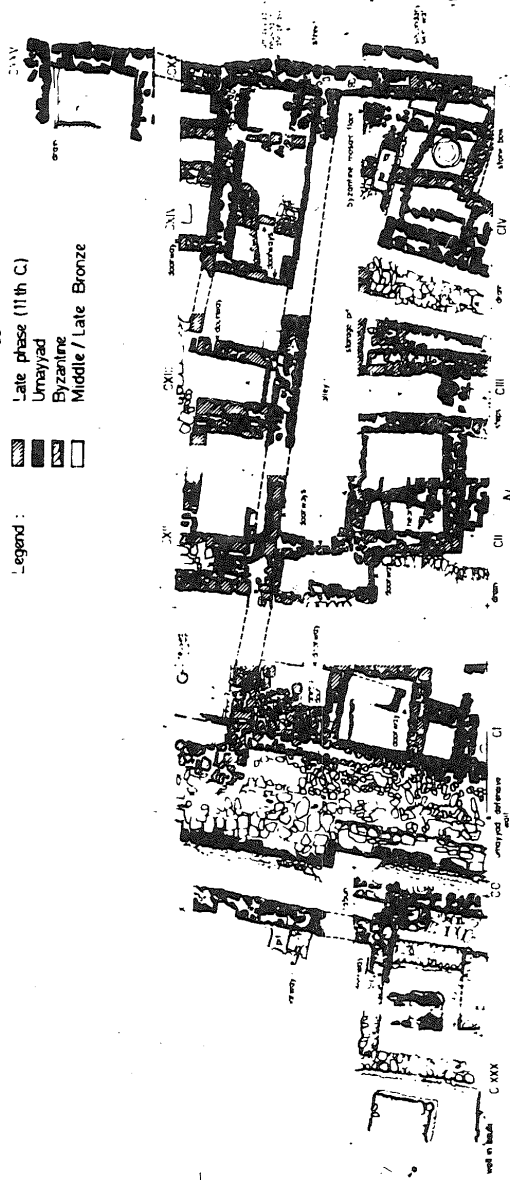


Fig. 2

were very large, coarse and white, and probably represent parts of a large mosaic floor which has long since disappeared. A curious feature of this area was that the earth to the north of the doorway, which was almost in the baulk, was plastered with a fine lime plaster⁴.

Water Catchment and Drainage

Another feature worthy of comment is the attention to water catchment and drainage. It was reported in the previous report that a water drainage complex had been found in room E and trench C. VII. In the 1977 season in C. XXV where three walls, north, south and east, were visible to a height of 2 metres, a plastered drain obviously for roof drainage ran down the wall into a drain. This drain was subsequently covered by a 10th/11th Century floor, and went out of use, (Pl. LXVII, 1)

The drain shown on the plan (Fig. 2 in ADAJ Vol. XXII p. 177) in C. II has been cut into the Umayyad fill, and is likely to be contemporary with it. It is rough and unlined, as is a second north-south drain uncovered in 1976 in C. IV overlying a fine plaster floor. This second drain is similar but has not so far been dated. However the majority of drainage works in this area appear to be related to the Umayyad phase.

The Umayyad Defensive Wall

This wall has a series of buttresses at regular intervals of c. 15 metres, measuring 4 metres across at the inset and 4.50 metres at the offset. It was built in three sections: two outer walls enclosing a loose rubble fill or core, set in red clay (*terra rossa*). A fuller description of various aspects will be found in the

accompanying report on Area D.

Bedrock was reached in several pertinent areas up the slope from C. I inside the town wall - notably C. I, II and XVII, nearly the furthest east limit of our excavation in C area.

Conclusions

We can restate, therefore, that the sequence of occupation on this western slope of the summit of the Citadel and to the east and inside of the defensive wall is as follows:

Stratum I modern debris.

Stratum II slight traces of post 11th Century occupation unassociated with structures

Stratum III 10th/11th Century occupation with structures of an earlier period. c. 750 - 980 A.D.

Stratum IV Abandonment and slight squatters' settlement.

Stratum V Several phases of Umayyad occupation.

Stratum VI Levelling - off of fill with some Umayyad mixed with Byzantine pottery.

Stratum VII Short period of neglect with Byzantine pottery abundant.

Stratum VIII Substantial Byzantine settlement founded on bedrock.

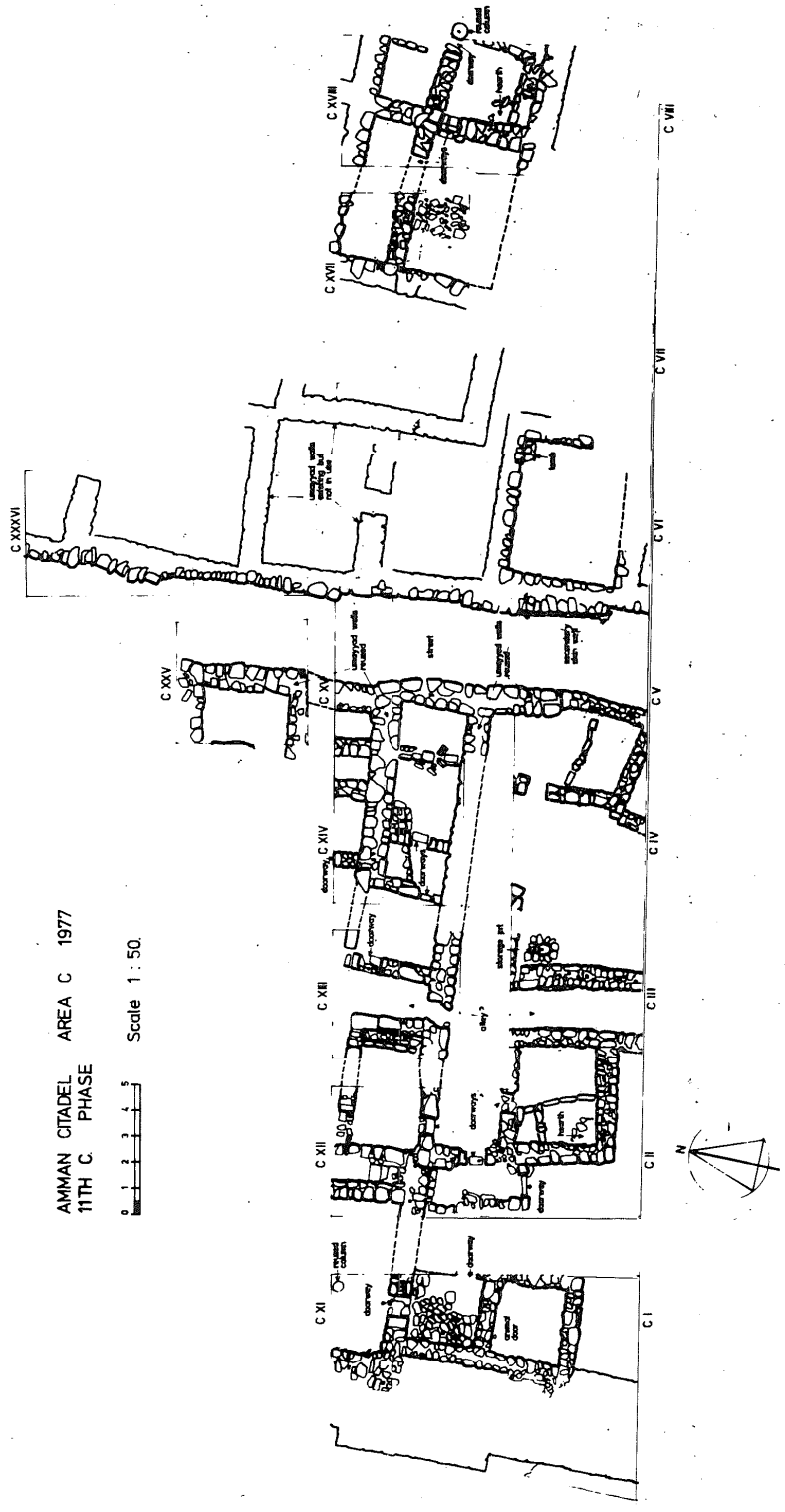
Thus we have achieved three of the four objectives in our first goal.

The Area outside the Fortification Wall

(Plate LXVII, 2) and Fig. 2)

There remain to be discussed the two trenches C. O. and C. XXX west of the Umayyad defensive wall. These show a very different picture of occupation and need much expansion in all directions Unfortunately to the

4. This was referred to in ADAJ., Vol. XXII, p. 178 and see Fig 2 on p. 177 in the same volume.



AMMAN CITADEL
11TH C
AREA C 1977
PHASE

Scale 1:50.

Fig. 3

west, there is a steep drop of several metres to the main road. It was remarked in last year's report, that in C.O. Byzantine occupation was missing. Further excavation this season proved this wrong. The north/south wall in C.O. (Pl. LXVIII, 1) which is to the west of the battered revetment may be part of the Byzantine building complex in C.I and II. A hearth had been constructed against this wall, which must relate in time to the two walls forming a right angle in the northern side of C. XXX/0, in the east/west side of which a clear but blocked doorway is to be seen (Pl. LXVIII, 1)

The stratigraphy in this area was very difficult to establish because of the restricted space in which one could work and of the permanent fear of stones falling. On the other hand it was essential that we should investigate the mystery of the appearance of the late M. Bronze IIc/Late Bronze jug and a level with nothing but Late Bronze pottery. C.XXX, therefore, immediately to the west of C.O. with an intervening baulk of two metres (necessary because of the trees) was opened up. This baulk comprised mainly a terrace wall running north/south and was removed as soon as planned.

In the western part of the trench two walls or rather one complete wall and the eastern

face of a parallel wall emerged: the easternmost wall running under the so-called Byzantine wall and the western wall way below the later Tower (?) construction. The fill between these two walls contained nothing later than Roman sherds with a sprinkling of Late Bronze and a few Iron Age. The construction of the eastern wall, consisting of small stones very carefully laid in mortar, was quite different from the other walls. It is possible that this wall (casemate construction ?) could be part of the Roman defences, though the small size of the stones hardly warrants this.

On the other hand it does bear a marked resemblance to a very long wall running east-west in Area A (and which Dr. Zayadine has ascribed to the early Roman period). The wall (dotted on the plan) (Fig. 2) running almost due south-north (the southern end is under a vast lip of loose stones), we have provisionally assigned to the MBIIc/LB on the somewhat tenuous evidence of the jug found in 1976 with an associated level of the same period.

Obviously this area is of great importance to all interested in the total history of the Citadel and must receive priority treatment in any further excavations.

May 24th, 1979

Crystal-M. Bennett