

# Kassope, the City in whose Territory Nikopolis was Founded

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During a research project on classical domestic architectural forms in ancient Greece Wolfram Hoepfner and the author met Sotiris Dakaris in 1976. With enthusiasm we accepted his suggestion of conducting excavations in Kassope together with the University of Ioannina. It is in memory of Sotiris Dakaris that we express our indebtedness and gratitude here.<sup>1</sup>

A branch of the tribe of the Thesprotoi, the Kassopaeans settled in the southwestern coastal region of Epirus during the time of Pseudo-Skylax *kata komas*, i.e. probably in a small open settlement.<sup>2</sup> Since, however, a city *KASSOPA* in this region is already mentioned in an inscription in Epidauros from 360–355 BC, we must reckon the founding of the city as a synoikismos of the Kassopaeans shortly before the middle of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.<sup>3</sup> The Kassopaeans established their new tribal capital in an orthogonal arrangement in the saddle below the Zalongon mountain to the north. The city was enclosed by a 2.5 km long wall, which also incorporated the towering rock cliffs to the west, thereby forming a „double acropolis”,<sup>4</sup> a peculiarity known in other ancient cities of Northwestern Greece as well.

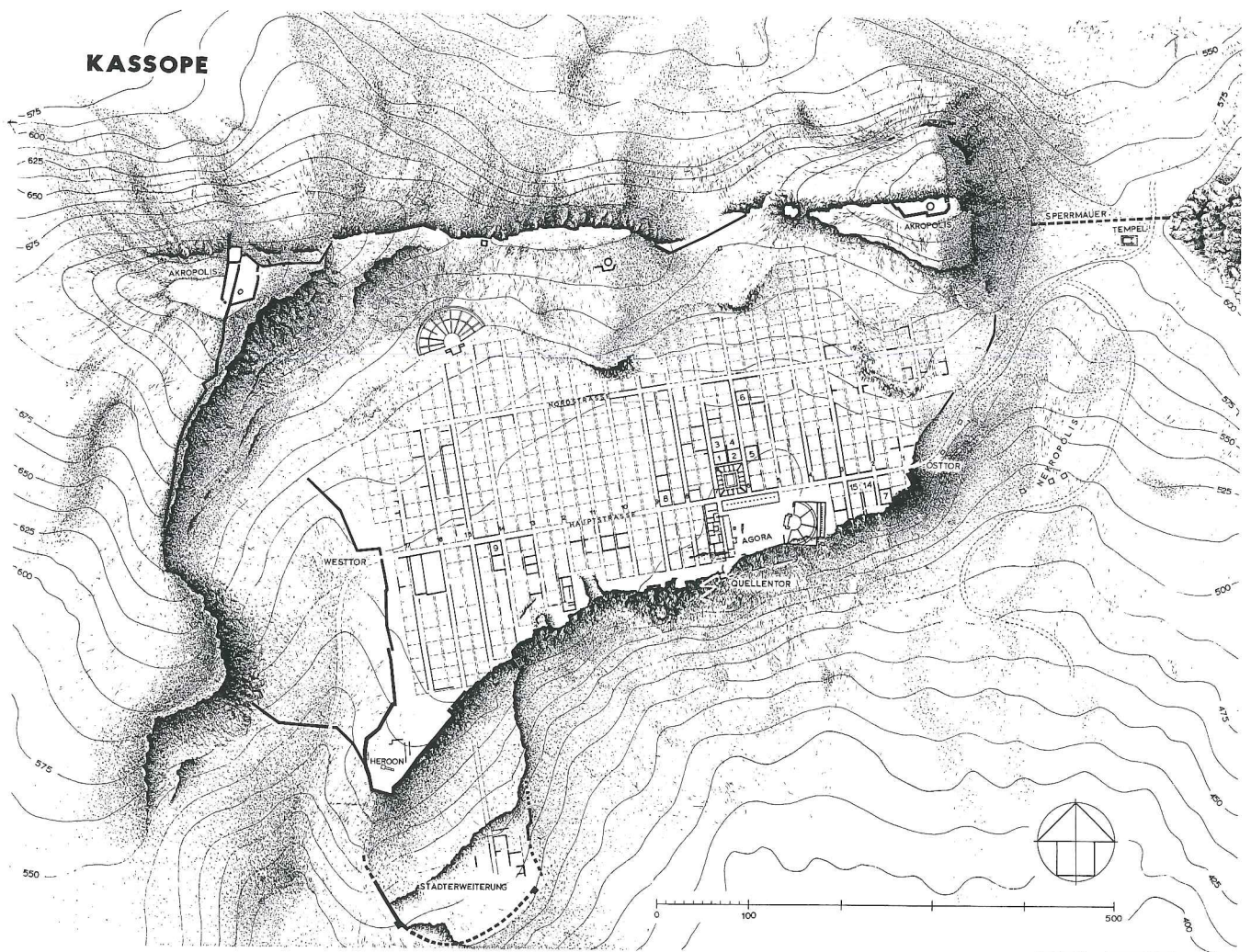
The city was organised along a 600 m long, 6 m wide main street, that ran from the eastern to the western city gate (Fig. 1). It was crossed by 19 narrower streets (4.50 m in width), that led to the rows of houses of the longitudinal insulae. Insulae in the middle of the city constitute eight pairs of houses, which were separated by a 1 m wide drainage channel. The northern boundary of these insulae was formed by the north street, that runs parallel to the

main street. It in turn is adjoined by the continuation of the insulae, extending irregularly up the slope to the north. Likewise, more insulae continue to the south of the main street, varying in their length according to the terrain available. The Agora is also located in this area, its width equalling that of two insulae and passed tangentially on the north by the main street. The two stoas lie on the north and south sides of the Agora area, while the Prytaneion and the mint are situated behind the west stoa, the so-called Katagogion behind the north stoa (Fig. 2). To the east of the Agora lies the Buleuterion, which resembles a theatre and takes up the area of 1.5 insulae. The theatre itself is located in the northwestern part of the city on the steep slopes of the mountain.

Standing on a rock promontory to the southwest of the city is a barrel-vaulted grave chamber with a *dromos*, which probably was originally covered by a tumulus. Located within the city's walls, this extravagant, laboriously erected grave must have been in honour of a hero, probably of the *ktistes*, i.e. the city's founder, and hence it can be dated to the time of the city's foundation c. 370/60 BC.

Until now, no remains, which would indicate a temple, have been discovered within the city walls. Larger ruins within the city that have not yet been excavated and that extend over more than the area of one house have been observed along the wall south of the main street near the west gate and next to the southern wall in the west of the city. These sites could conceal cult places. However, the principal sanctuary was without doubt the temple of the city's goddess Aphrodite. Most likely erected before the synoikismos on the





Zalongon pass, the preserved foundations of the temple lie 300 m to the northeast, outside the city walls.

The plan of the city was evidently not oriented towards a division into *insulae* and city districts, as is known from Hippodamos in Piraeus, but more likely was according to the plan of colonial coastal cities in southern Italy and Sicily. This is quite understandable, in view of the intensive trade relations of Kassope on the west coast of the Greek mainland with the cities on the Adriatic and in lower Italy. Yet, we also find a regional peculiarity in the originally uniform house plans, that obviously were already established before the city's founding.

Town-houses with a hearth room (*Herdraum-Häuser*) were erected on lots

14.40 m long and 15.60 m wide, all following the same scheme (Fig. 3). The courtyard was entered from the street through a two-winged entrance with a stone threshold; this was adjoined to the right and the left by the one-storied *Andron* as well as by workrooms. Towards the back stood the two-storied *Oikos*. From the courtyard one entered the central hearth room, which reached two-stories in height to the roof. The hearth was located in the middle of the room, and the steep wooden stairs led from a stone base to the upper story, whose rooms in turn formed a wooden gallery encircling the hearth room. The sleeping quarters were most likely on this level, since only rooms for weaving and storage (i.e. household activities) and baths were found on the lower level next to the hearth. As a rule, the baths were always located on the outer

Fig. 1. Kassope, plan of the city, founded in c. 370/60 BC.





Fig. 2. Aerial view of Kassope from the east (1980). Left: area of the Agora; centre: "Katagogion"; right: residential area.

walls of the house near the drainage channel. The floor of the baths was covered with baked brick-sized tiles; a bathtub was slightly sunken into the floor near the outer wall; thereby surplus water could run off through an opening in the wall into the channel.

Since the inner and outer walls of the house were built with air-dried bricks upon a low stone foundation, during the excavation it could be confirmed by the stair-threshold in the hearth room that the two-storied part of the house was in the back. However, the plan of the sleeping quarters could not be comprehended at first. Again, thanks to a joint excavation with Sotiris Dakaris in ancient Orraon, near the village Ammotopos, a house from the classical period was investigated, whose ashlar walls were completely pre-

served as high as the roof. It corresponded with the ground-floor plan of houses in Kassope; but more importantly, in Orraon holes for the beams were preserved in the walls of the two-storied hearth room, thus enabling a complete reconstruction of the stairs and the gallery to the upper sleeping rooms.

In the course of the almost three and a half centuries of the city's history neither the original land allotments nor the uniform type of house plans remained the same in Kassope. Nevertheless, house no. 5 demonstrates that even after several renovations and its change from a place of residence to economic purposes and then again a residence, by the first century BC the traditional hearth room had not been removed; in the final building phase the time-honoured floor plan was used again.



The excavations revealed that two decisive breaks must have occurred during the city's history. S. Dakaris presumed that the Kassopaeans were allied with the neighbouring Molossens from 170-168 BC, thus on the side of the Macedonian king Perseus. This would imply that following the disastrous defeat of the Macedonians and their allies by the Roman army under Aemilius Paullus by Pydna in 168, the Kassopaeans were also subject to the terrible sentence on the Epirotes. The ensuing destruction of cities, the massacre or abduction into slavery<sup>5</sup> of 150,000 inhabitants could not have taken place without leaving its traces in Kassope as well. Yet, no destruction level was recognizable in the city's private houses. By contrast it could be proven that the municipal Katagogion and the Prytaneion were destroyed by fire at this time. Hence, had the city not fallen under the sentence of the Romans (indeed, the Kassopaeans stemmed from the Thesprotoi, who allegedly supported the Romans (turbulences in the neighbouring regions and the embittered struggles for power would nonetheless have shaken political stability.

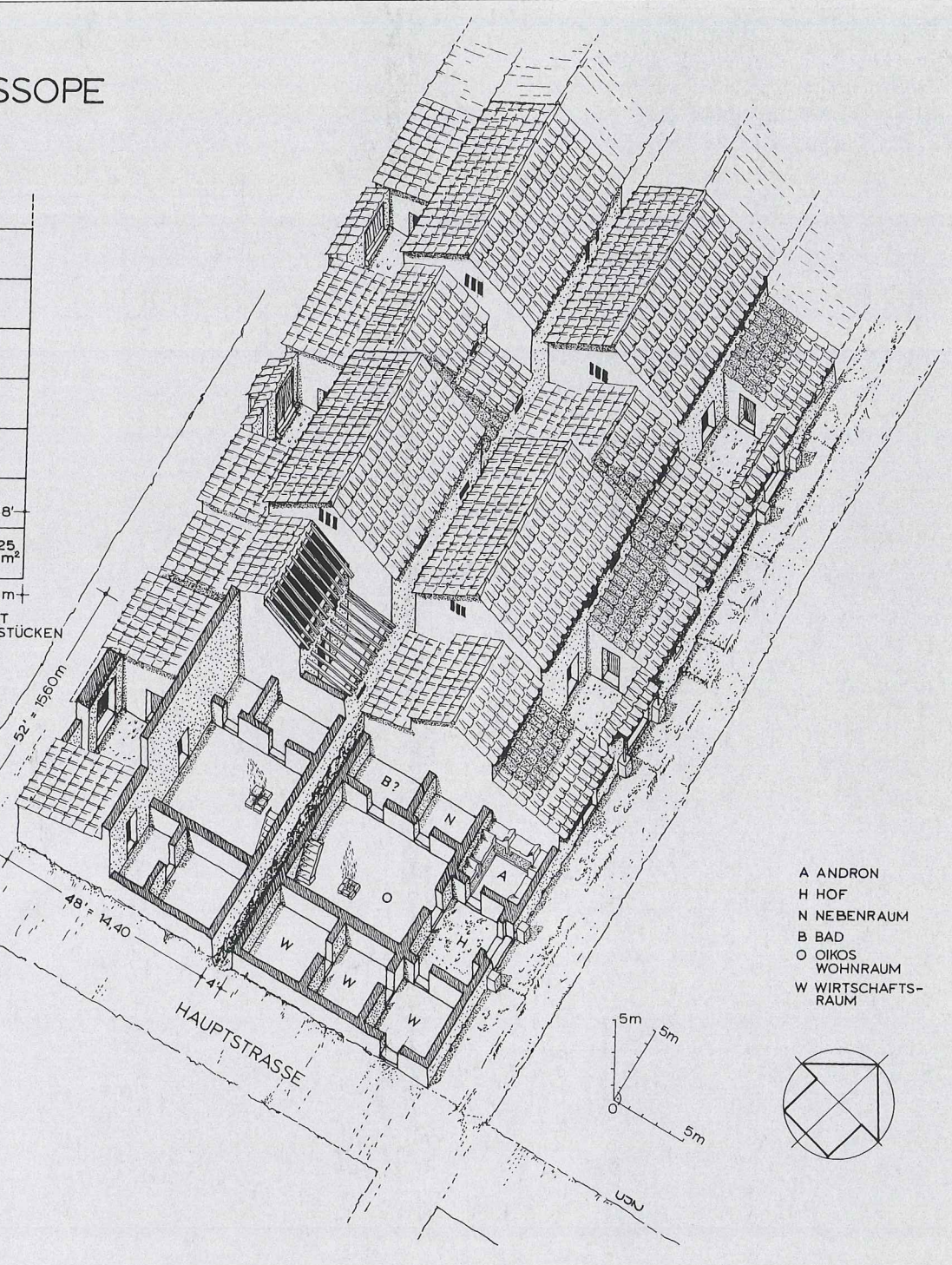
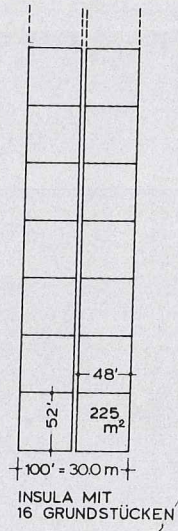
Based on the stratigraphy and research on the pottery, Konstantina Gravani can prove in the following paper that an abrupt decline occurred in Kassope after 167 BC. Not only was there a reduction in productive enterprises, but a distinct decrease in the population can also be assumed. The remaining residents were able to expand their houses onto neighbouring lots, and everywhere poor-quality renovations can be observed. A functional community could not have continued for years after

the conflagration of the municipal buildings in the Agora. As late as the 40s of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC did the situation become stable enough again for the city to flourish for over one hundred years. This ended when, following his victory at sea near Actium in 31 BC, Augustus founded the „victory city” of Nikopolis on the territory of the Kassopaeans, within view to the south of the late classical city of Kassope. The Kassopaeans were forced to leave their traditional home and resettle in the new metropolis.

The fact that not only the population, but the statues of their heroes and honourable citizens were relocated to Nikopolis as well, including presumably the temple of the city goddess Aphrodite, can be deduced from the total absence of any fragments of statues from the more than 40-odd preserved anathema bases in the Agora and even the smallest of fragments from the superstructure of the temple of Aphrodite. A single house of the 12 excavated revealed remains indicating its further use during the first century AD, and is contemporary with the Roman tile construction (facade for a spring ?) in the modern village of Kamarina.<sup>6</sup> Kassope remained abandoned, and only in the late Medieval period was the area to the west of the ancient Agora used for crop cultivation and vineyards, recognisable through the heaps of stones and the stone wall encircling the fields. The fields were laid out and cultivated by the members of the nearby Zalongon monastery, situated at the foot of the towering Zalongon cliff, that played such a prominent role in the history of Greece in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



# KASSOPE



- A ANDRON
- H HOF
- N NEBENRAUM
- B BAD
- O OIKOS  
WOHNRAUM
- W WIRTSCHAFTS-  
RAUM

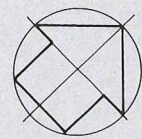
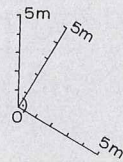


Fig. 3. Kassope, reconstruction of the insulae in the 4th century BC, with floorplan of two typical houses.



# Notes

## NOTE 1

This paper relates to the publications about the excavations in Kassope, which have already appeared:

S. I. Dakaris, *Kassope, Neoterer Anaskaphes 1977–1983*, University of Ioannina 1984; W. Hoepfner/E. L. Schwandner, *Haus und Stadt im klassischen Griechenland, Wohnen in der klassischen Polis I*, 75 ff. (München 1986); renewed issue (München 1994) 114 ff. Reference to these original publications is highly recommended when using the information and results presented in this paper. Lengthy quotations from the studies were avoided here, in order not to overburden the contents.

## NOTE 2

For the meaning *kata komas*, cp. the paper of Jacob Isager in this publication.

## NOTE 3

Pseudo-Skylax 31 f.; for the dating cp. N. G. L. Hammond, *Epirus, The Geography, the Ancient Remains, the History and the Topography of Epirus and Adjacent Areas* (Oxford 1967) 517–18.

## NOTE 4

Cp. F. Noack, *AA* 1916, 218–221 (“Zwei-Kuppen-Stadt”).

## NOTE 5

Polybios 30. 15; Strabon 7. 7. 3; Livius 45. 34; Plinius *NH* 4. 39; Plutarch, *Aemilius Paullus* 29.

## NOTE 6

The remaining section of the Roman tile wall, which was originally located near the modern spring, was no longer present in 1997.

