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ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΥ
ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΑΝ



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ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΟ ΜΟΥΣΕΙΟ ΘΕΣΣΑΛΟΝΙΚΗΣ

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M. Vickers

HELLENISTIC THESSALONIKI

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THE authors of several recent books on ancient town planning have tacitly assumed that the plan of the city of Thessaloniki was first laid out in Hellenistic times, but the reasons for this assumption have never been worked out in detail.¹ Indeed, the last scholar to work on the town planning of Thessaloniki, H. von Schoenebeck, came to the conclusion that the city was planned in the Roman period.² The purpose of this article is to examine such evidence as there is for Thessaloniki in Hellenistic times.



FIG. 1.—Plan of Thessaloniki before the fire of 1917

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¹ E.g., F. Castagnoli, *Ippodamo di Mileto e l'urbanistica a pianta ortogonale* (Rome, 1956) 77; R. Martin, *L'Urbanisme dans la Grèce antique* (Paris, 1956) 169; A. Giuliano, *Urbanistica delle città greche* (Milan, 1966) 200.

² H. von Schoenebeck, 'Die Stadtplanung des römischen Thessalonike' in *Bericht über den 6. internationalen Kongress für Archäologie* (Berlin, 1940) 480.

were painted with a frieze of vegetal ornaments. Unfortunately, this tomb had already been robbed of its contents when found, with the exception of two stone cushions and a footstool.⁹¹ A cist grave, however, found nearby in 1958, produced some very fine jewellery which included three necklaces, a pair of bracelets adorned with animals' heads, a pair of earrings in the form of Erotes, and a brooch, all in gold. The presence of dolls amongst the other finds suggest that this was the burial of a young girl.⁹² The richness of the grave goods here is reminiscent of the even more elaborate jewellery that was found at the outbreak of the last war, in a late fourth-century grave at Sedes, only ten kilometres away from Thessaloniki.⁹³

Mention ought, perhaps, to be made here of the votive relief in the Thessaloniki Archaeological Museum, and presumably from the city, which bears a representation of a horseman attacking a leaping bull with a lance. It was set up in honour of a local hero Hippalcmus, by a certain Seleuceus, and has been dated to the first quarter of the second century B.C.⁹⁴

THE HARBOUR

Nothing much is known about the Hellenistic harbour at Thessaloniki. Livy mentions that Perseus' fleet sheltered there during the final Macedonian war,⁹⁵ but that is all. According to Zosimus, writing at the turn of the fifth and sixth centuries there was no harbour as such until Constantine built one in 322.⁹⁶ There is no reason to doubt the fact that Constantine did build a harbour where there was none in the fourth century A.D.; Zosimus was no friend to Constantine and would hardly have given him the credit for something he had not done, though it is difficult to know what relevance, if any, his statement has to the situation in Hellenistic times.

SUMMARY

It would seem that the plan of Thessaloniki (FIG. 4) was laid out at the time of the city's foundation by Cassander in c. 316 B.C. and that it has close parallels in the plans of other early Hellenistic cities. There was possibly an agora in the upper city from the beginning, but the principal, commercial agora of the Hellenistic city was probably closer to the sea. A large open space to the west was possibly a 'sacred area' in Hellenistic times, but the only religious centre whose site is known with any degree of certainty is the Serapeum. A gymnasium is known to have existed to the north of the city from the late Hellenistic period at least, and a nearby stadium probably goes back to Hellenistic times as well.

The Hellenistic fortifications probably followed the lines of those of the mid-fifth century A.D. In common with many other Hellenistic cities there is an acropolis incorporated in the city wall, but the fortifications of Thessaloniki are slightly anomalous in that the lower stretches of the east and west walls run parallel with some of the streets of the city plan.

Thus, even though the reconstruction of Hellenistic Thessaloniki may be an elusive and often a speculative business, the statement of an anonymous writer to the effect that 'il ne reste à Thessaloniki aucun vestige de la ville hellénistique'⁹⁷ is certainly exaggerated.

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford

MICHAEL VICKERS

⁹¹ *BCH* lxxiii (1949) 531; *Makedonika* ii (1941-52) 602.

⁹² *BCH* lxxxiii (1959) 706-7, figs 25-6; *JHS*. *Arch. Reports* 1958, 13 (fig. 15); R. A. Higgins, *Greek and Roman Jewellery* (London, 1961) 166, 172.

⁹³ *AA* 1939, 256; *BCH* lxxiii (1939) 314, fig. 27, 315; *AA* 1940, 268.

⁹⁴ U. Hausmann, *Griechische Weihreliefs* (Berlin, 1960) 84, fig. 49; J. and L. Robert, *Bull. ép.*, 1962,

168, No. 180.

⁹⁵ Livy xlv 10. Cf. K. Lehmann Hartleben, 'Die antiken Hafenanlagen des Mittelmeeres' in *Klio*, Beih. xiv (1923) 285.

⁹⁶ *καὶ τὸν ἐν ταύτῃ λιμένα, πρότερον οὐκ ὄντα, κατασκευάσας*, *Hist.* ii 22. For the date of Zosimus, see A. Cameron, *Philologus* cxiii (1969) 106-10.

⁹⁷ *Thessaloniki, un petit guide* (Thessaloniki, 1953), cited by Ph. Petsas in *Makedonika* ix (1969) 154.