

## To the urban planning of Serdica (Abstract)

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Serdica had an agora following the Greek model of urban planning (fig. 1). The bouleterion is immediately to the east of the area. The known building is most probably from the late 2nd c. AD. A massive cavea was built within the building in the late 3rd c. AD. It is possible that the bouleterion had an earlier phase that relates to the remains registered under the known building. The latest possible date for the functioning of the agora is the middle of the 5th c. AD.

The street network and the complex of the agora were integrated and interdependent at the time of the initial planning in the first half of the 2nd c. AD. Significant events in the urban development in the next decades and centuries resulted in changes in both the type and appearance of the agora and the entire urban planning and street network.

The known decumanus maximus links the western and the eastern gates of Serdica (figs. 3 and 5). This street, however, was built together with the construction of the urban fortification in the 170s AD. Most probably, the initial decumanus maximus was decumanus "E" that was initially 11.22 m wide and bisects the area (fig. 4).

The place of the north gate and the orientation of the buildings in the adjacent urban zone (figs. 2, 3, and 5) suggest that the cardo maximus did not follow a straight line after the end of the 2nd c. AD. There are two opinions for the place of the cardo maximus due to the uncertain location of the south gate (figs. 2 and 3). According to the first hypothesis, the layout of the main street – in this case cardo "M" – should follow the western boundary of the agora (figs. 4 and 5). The second opinion suggests that the layout of the main street – in this case cardo "A" – should be next to the axis of the area,

following the north-south line (figs. 1, 4, and 5). The latter variant is more acceptable as an element of the common concept of urban planning, but further evidence is still needed for its confirmation.

The data for other streets of Serdica suggest that some were traced later than others. For example, cardo "3" and the eastern via sagularis are later than the other known cardines (figs. 1 and 5). A later construction (about the end of the 2nd c. AD) is also possible for the two decumani, traced in the central western zone, including the so-called decumanus Naissus (fig. 5).

The available evidence suggest that the initial urban plan of Serdica included two main insular modules, the larger measuring around 53 by 53 m, i.e. 180 by 180 Roman feet. However, the hypothesis for a plan with only one main module should not be overlooked. In this case, this would have been the smaller module, with width (north-south) varying between 21 and 24 m, depending on the different widths of the decumani (fig. 4).

It seems that the construction of the fortification in the 170s AD was conformed to the western and the southern boundaries of the initial urban planning (fig. 4).

The specific characteristics of the terrain in the northern urban zone may account for the difference in the planning (figs. 2, 3, and 5). It is also possible that the incorporation of the northern part in the cadastral base took place during the fortification of the city in the late 2nd c. AD.

Indirect evidence for changes in the planning and the street network in the late 3rd or the first half of the 4th c. AD is the location of the known architectural remains from this time that were found in the

southern zone of the fortified city (figs. 2 2 and 3 2). A large military-economic complex from the same time is found next to the southern sector of the western wall; the buildings (warehouses or/and barracks) are divided by passage-ways. It is possible that some of these passage-ways duplicate the earlier decumani (fig. 5).

At present, there is no reliable evidence for other changes in the cadastral base and the street network of the Late Roman and the Early Byzantine Serdica. There is, however, some data for the steady decline of the road maintenance, for destruction and narrowing of the initial streets and for the abandonment of certain sectors.