

Urban Identity in Phoenicia: "Hippodamian" versus "Contour" Planning
S. Rebecca Martin (University of Minnesota)

Little inquiry has been made into the validity of the term "Hippodamian Plan" or what impact its ascription might have on our perceptions of supposedly "Hippodamian" towns outside of the Hellenic world. The term is derived from the Milesian Hippodamos (born c. 500 B.C.E.), a constitutional theorist and sometime urban designer.

From Aristotle's *Politics* (2.1267b22ff) and other sources, it is apparent that Hippodamos was concerned primarily with planning theory; if Aristotle's characterization is correct, Hippodamos espoused or wrote the first utopia. Hippodamos has been linked to a few practical projects, but the Peiraeus is the only plan certainly carried out under his supervision. Even in the construction of the Peiraeus his major contribution was establishing specific divisions of territory.

The extent to which "Hippodamian" planning can be considered Greek depends on how much emphasis is placed on Hippodamos' theories versus their apparent physical manifestation. Of course Hippodamos' ideals were not executed widely even in Greece, but his name has come to be associated with rational city planning. The term "Hippodamian" has been accepted by Levantine archaeologists to refer generally to grid planning, without any regard to Hippodamos' specific theoretical concerns and despite the fact that the grid plan itself is widely-recognized for its greater antiquity in the Near East.

The "disciplined grid,"¹ however, with a master plan and all houses facing the street, is not well-documented in the eastern Mediterranean before the beginning of the fifth century B.C.E. Previously a contour-style plan—one that responds directly to the topography of a site—was predominate. Contour plans are considered typical of Phoenician and especially Punic settlements. Once these settlements begin to share physical characteristics with Greek cities, they are associated by archaeologists with Hippodamos and begin to lose their Phoenician identity to the narrative of the Hellenization of the East.

By looking closely at the plans of some southern Phoenician cities, we will observe that the contour plan was never fully replaced by the disciplined grid. Indiscriminate use of the term "Hippodamian" suggests, without support, that city planning itself arose in a Greek milieu. While the opposite might be the case, it is equally possible that the disciplined grid arose precisely in the zone of Greek-eastern contact in which Phoenicians operated.

¹ F. Castagnoli, 1971. *Orthogonal Town Planning in Antiquity*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.