

Herculean Cult and its Topographical Dominance in the Forum Boarium

While scholars from Cressedi, Coarelli, Ziolkowski, and Ward-Perkins all have postulated on the building projects in the Forum Boarium, none have attempted to analyze the area's three Republican temples to Hercules as a group. The Forum Boarium constitutes one of the earliest centers of Rome where commercial, religious and recreational spheres of the city buttressed the area's importance for centuries. Livy, Macrobius, Ovid, Propertius, Solinus, Tacitus and Strabo mention Hercules and his connection to the nearby Aventine as well as the Forum Boarium. Richardson claims that this Herculean dominance in the area was due to the fact that it was the "oldest and most venerable cult center of Rome." The *Ara Maxima Herculis*, *Hercules Invictus*, *Aedes Aemiliana Herculis* and *Hercules Pompeianus* were all located in the Forum Boarium within a 2963.49 meter squared area and therefore were closely related in theme as well as location.

While the temple dedications were all to one deity, the patrons of said temples constituted successful military leaders who sought to memorialize their actions through a dedication in the Forum Boarium. Scipio Aemilianus, Lucius Mummius Achaicus and Pompey Magnus all made dedications to Hercules through temple construction or renovation in this zone. Scipio and Mummius were inherent rivals, as destroyers of Carthage and Corinth respectively, and I argue that they waged a topographical competition against one another. Pompey's temple most likely aimed at placing his name around Mummius and Scipio in order to illicit comparisons between him and the men.

Another important component worthy of discussion is the Hellenization of Rome starting around the 2nd century BCE. New artistic tastes and traditions were adopted by the Roman elite and the practice of looting the spoils of the defeated brought an immense influx of wealth to

Rome. Often triumphal generals would make a *dedicatio* or vow to a specific deity, that if they happened to win the battle, a fitting temple would be built to that deity. I therefore contend that their dedications ought to be analyzed within the context of temple dedications in mid Republican Rome by successful generals.

These Herculean monuments were not only connected due to their proximity to one another, but the nexus of the *Pons Sublicius*, *Pons Aemilius*, Circus Maximus, and the *Porta Trigemina* demanded a high volume of pedestrians during the day. Another component to the building topography is the legendary history of Horatius Cocles and Aeneas. Thus Romans conceptualized this area romantically in a way that cements its place in the legendary history of Rome as well as recognized the forum's economic capacity. Romans were also trained in the art of reading imagery (Elsner) through sculpture, topography and architecture and making connections between these facets to better conceptualize their own world. Furthermore, this collection of buildings paired with the crossroads of thoroughfares (Richardson) effectively forced movement in such a way that compelled pedestrians to conceptualize the conglomeration of religious, mythical and architectural components in the Forum Boarium.

Bibliography

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Figures

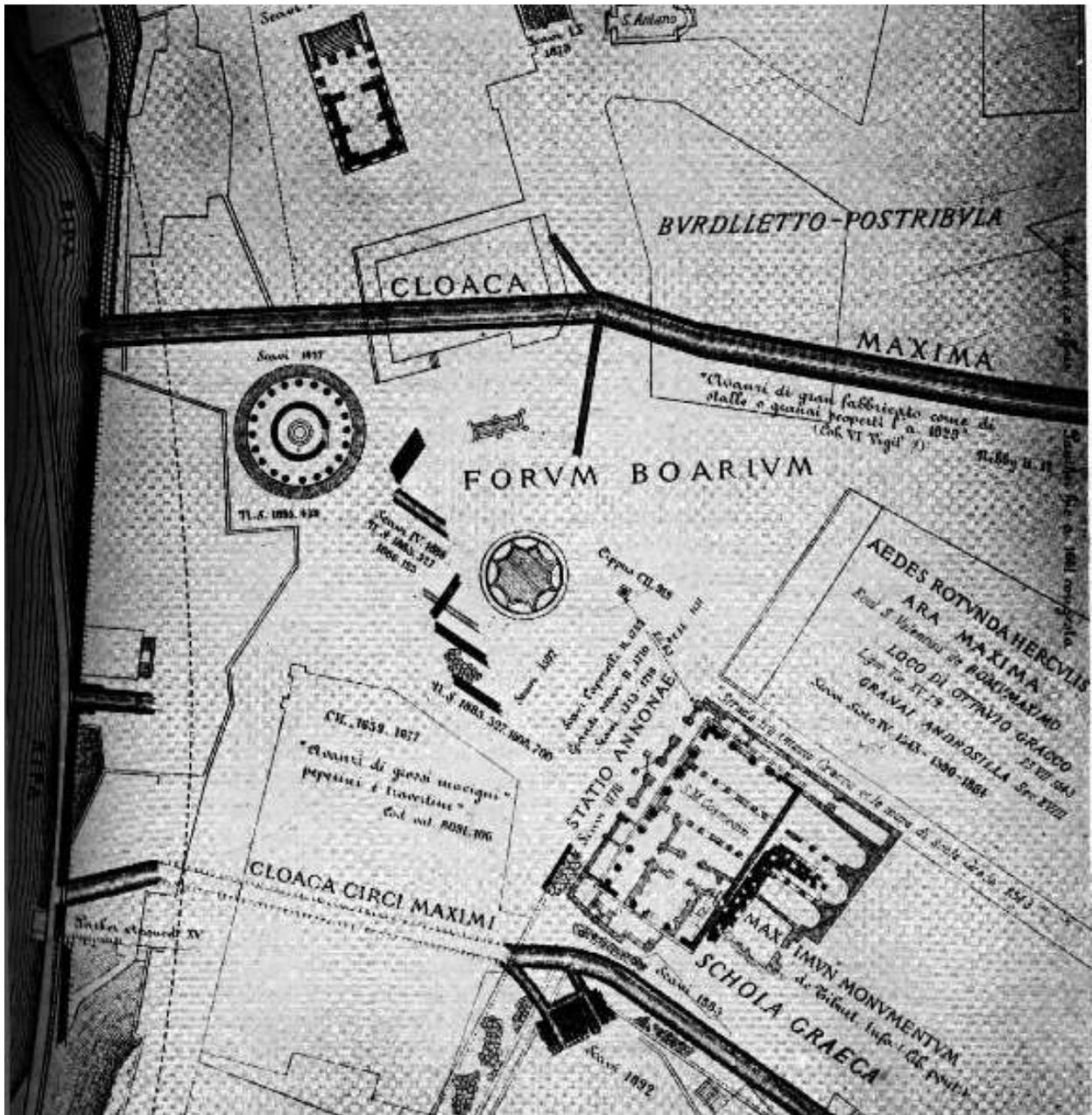


Figure 1- After Cressedi 1984 p.251 f11.

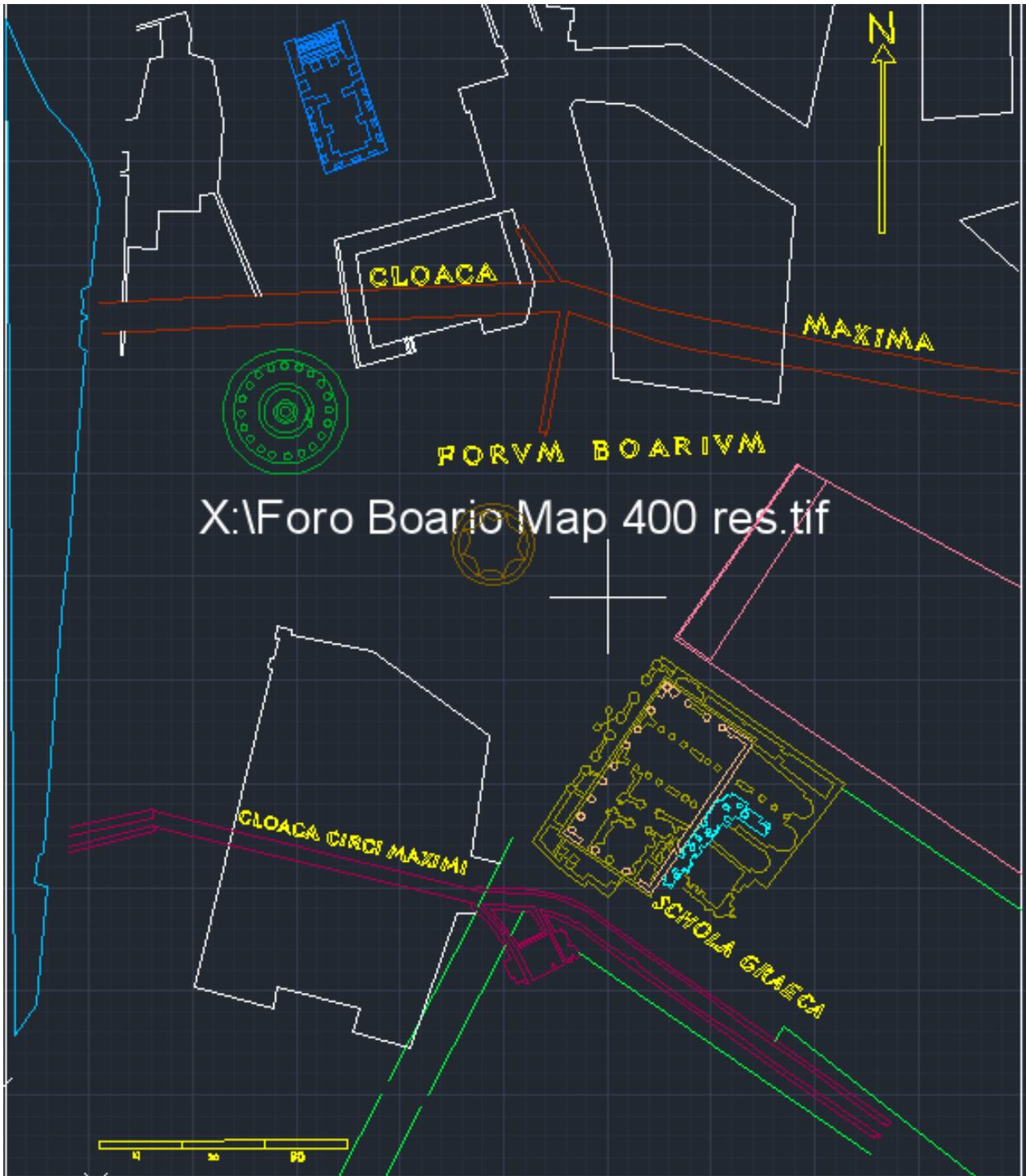


Figure 2 - Digitized map by author made with AutoCAD 14'; after Cressedi 1984 p.251 f11.