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WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

Department of Classics

De Ornanda Instruendaque Urbe:

**Julius Caesar's Influence on the Topography of
the Comitium-Rostra-Curia Complex**

by

Anne E. Truetzel

A thesis presented to the
Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
of Washington University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
degree of Master of Arts

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~ Bibliographical Note ~

Because of the number of written sources cited in this paper, I have included a Testimonia section in the hopes of facilitating the reader's contact with relevant primary sources. Here I have collected ancient passages discussing the location and form of each structure. In the process of assembling these passages, sourcebooks such as Peter Aicher's *Rome Alive* and Donald Dudley's *Urbs Roma* have been indispensable, as have references from topographical dictionaries such as the *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae* and Lawrence Richardson's *A New Topographical Dictionary of Ancient Rome*; where relevant, I have supplemented these passages with others already known to me from previous research. Footnotes in the body of my thesis will refer the reader to the appropriate passage in the Testimonia; the notation "T5", for example, indicates that the full passage can be viewed on the fifth line of the Testimonia section. Within the Testimonia section itself, passages are listed in order of their appearance in the body of the text. The original text of the passage is provided, in Latin or Greek, as is an English translation; unless otherwise noted, the Latin or Greek text is based on the most recent Teubner edition available for the author and work in question, while all translations are my own.

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[n]am de ornanda instruendaque urbe, item de tuendo ampliandoque imperio plura ac maiora in dies destinabat: in primis Martis templum, quantum nusquam esset, extruere, repleto et conplanato lacu, in quo naumachiae spectaculum ediderat, theatrumque summae magnitudinis Tarpeio monti accubans...[t]alia agentem atque meditantem mors praevenit.

For concerning the adornment and arrangement of the city, and likewise the protection and amplification of the empire, [Caesar] designed a greater number of and more extensive plans by the day: in the first place, to build a temple to Mars, of a size which had never existed, filling in and leveling the lake in which he had put on the spectacle of a naval battle, and [to build] a theater of immense size beside the Tarpeian mount....Death prevented him from doing and planning such things.

Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 44

~ Introduction ~

In the epigraph on the previous page, the biographer Suetonius lists a number of building projects planned by Julius Caesar that were cut short by the dictator's death.¹ This passage has often been dismissed by scholars as fanciful; Paul Zanker, for example, asserts the following in reference to this passage:

When Caesar finally turned to the problem of Rome's appearance shortly before his death, it is revealing that his solution was a utopian one. He wanted to...create a new Hellenistic city. Apparently he considered the old one beyond redemption.²

Perhaps Zanker is correct in so far as the scale and expense of the projects mentioned by Suetonius would have rendered them nigh impossible to implement even had Caesar lived beyond the Ides of March. Yet, I disagree with his claim that Caesar gave up on the "redemption" of Rome's appearance. As we will see, Caesar did implement other building projects within Rome, some of which may even have been completed prior to his death. And these projects did not necessarily seek to recast Rome wholesale in the mold of a Hellenistic city. In fact, as I will argue, Caesar's projects in the Forum

¹ Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 44 = T1.

² Zanker 1988, 19-20.

Romanum, for example, worked to rationalize the position and orientation of certain structures without extensive disruption to the surrounding landscape.

Moreover, the passage from Suetonius attests to plans for a larger scale and more coherent building program than that with which Caesar is generally credited: “concerning the adornment and arrangement of the city, Caesar designed a greater number of and more extensive plans by the day.” Admittedly, Suetonius’ portrayal of Caesar’s concern for the city’s appearance may have been affected by the relationship between emperor and city in the biographer’s own day, under Trajan and Hadrian. Yet it is likewise certain that the “adornment and arrangement” of Rome were serious concerns in the late Republic; there seems to have been anxiety in Roman society of the late Republic (of which Caesar himself was a part) over the incongruity between Rome’s status as world power and her disordered and relatively humble urban fabric.³ In the second Verrine oration of 70 BCE, Cicero directly connects the adornment of the city (*ornare*) with the renown of Rome and her empire: “Many kings, many free states, many rich and powerful private citizens surely have in mind to adorn the Capitolium as the merit of the temple and the renown of our empire demand.”⁴ And yet, seven years later in the *De Lege Agraria*, Cicero’s description of Rome does not resemble a city adorned as her “renown demands”; he imagines a scornful response from Capuans who might visit Rome:

They will laugh at and despise Rome, located among mountains and valleys, raised up and elevated with garrets, with not very good roads, with very narrow paths, as compared to their own Capua, spread out on a very flat area...⁵

³ For a more detailed discussion of anxiety over Rome’s appearance, particularly as compared to Hellenistic cities, see Zanker 1988, 18-19 and Favro 1996, 45-50.

⁴ Cicero *In Verrem* 2.4.68 = T2.

⁵ Cicero *De Lege Agraria* 2.35.96 = T3.

Livy, too, seems to perceive and try to excuse Rome's disorganized landscape; describing the city's rebuilding process after the Gallic sack of 390 BCE, he writes:

...the city began to be rebuilt indiscriminately...Haste eliminated concern for making the streets straight, while they were building on empty ground, disregarding [any] distinction toward another person's [property]. This is the reason that...the appearance of the city is more similar to a [city that has been] appropriated than to [one that has been] parceled out.⁶

Regardless of the accuracy of this particular vignette, the passage from Livy, as well as those from Cicero mentioned above, attest to a perception of Rome in the late Republic as a city that was neither *adornata* nor *instructa*.

~ Traditional Republican Building Processes ~

This lack of organization is surely due in part to the traditional way in which public buildings were commissioned and constructed during the Republican period. Most public buildings were not constructed or financed by the senate and people of Rome but by private individuals, particularly by triumphant generals (*triumphatores*) out of their spoils of war (*ex manubiis*); generals and politicians competed with one another to build ever more luxurious monuments, concerned primarily with enhancing their own *auctoritas* by means of the construction.⁷ As a result, monuments built by different individuals sprang up more or less haphazardly, without planning or organization by a centralized authority. Moreover, projects undertaken tended to be those that would contribute to personal glorification, not necessarily to the overall welfare of the city.⁸

⁶ Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 5.55.2-5 = T4.

⁷ For further information on public building processes in the Republican period, see Strong 1968, Zanker 1988, 18-25 and Favro 1996, 50-55.

⁸ Zanker 1988, 20: "But projects such as city planning, water supply, or sewage system were too slow and not flashy enough for their taste. Even the restoration of old temples did not provide a suitable means of self-aggrandizement, especially since such work was strictly regulated by religious law."

The result was a city of poorly organized streets, buildings at odd angles to one another and brand new manubial monuments cheek-by-jowl with dilapidated structures no longer in regular use. This was the Rome described by Cicero and Livy above.

~ **The Augustan Transformation?** ~

Yet Rome had undergone such a profound transformation by the end of Augustus' reign that Suetonius could make the following famous proclamation:

[Augustus] improved the city, [which had] not [been] adorned in proportion to the grandeur of the empire and [which was] liable to floods and fires, to such an extent that he rightly boasted that he was leaving behind [a city] of marble that he had received [as a city] of brick.⁹

Naturally, Augustus has received the majority of the credit for the adornment and organization of Rome. His influence on the urban fabric of Rome has been the subject of several books by prominent scholars in the last thirty years, including Pierre Gros' study of religious architecture under Augustus in *Aurea Tempia*, Paul Zanker's monumental *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus* and Diane Favro's broader analysis of Augustus' impact on the city as a whole in *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*. There is no doubt that Augustus' building program deserves this attention, and I may even go so far as to agree with Favro's assessment that "[w]ielding a singular vision and singular voice, Augustus created a focused urban image."¹⁰ Yet all too often, one receives the impression that Augustus invented the idea of a large-scale and cohesive building program entirely on his own. Although his contribution to Rome's urban image is undeniably innovative and unparalleled in scope, I would argue that he did have some

⁹ Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 28 = T5.

¹⁰ Favro 1996, 19.

precedents to follow, namely, the building projects instituted by the last two *dictatores* of the Republic: Lucius Cornelius Sulla and Gaius Julius Caesar.

The prominence and personal power of Sulla and Caesar prompted building programs of hitherto unparalleled scale and cohesiveness. Not for these two *dictatores* the financing *ex manubiis* of only one or two stand-alone buildings. As shown in Figure 1, Sulla was associated with the construction or reconstruction of three important buildings in the center of Rome (the Tabularium¹¹, the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus and the Curia Hostilia) as well as two other temples whose precise locations are unknown. Yet Caesar's projects were even more extensive and primarily clustered in the vicinity of the Forum Romanum, the political heart of Rome and, therefore, a particularly prominent and charged environment for new building projects (Figures 1-2). The undertakings in question for Caesar include a reorganization of the Comitium-Rostracuria complex in the northern corner of the Forum Romanum, the construction and reconstruction of the Basilica Iulia and the Basilica Aemilia¹² on the southwestern and northeastern edges of the Forum Romanum, respectively, and the enlargement of the Forum Romanum by the annexation of the newly created Forum Iulium (Figures 2-3).

Despite the large number of projects initiated by Caesar, extended examinations of the sort performed by Zanker and Favro are markedly absent for the dictator. In fact, to the extent that Caesar's building projects are analyzed at any length, the focus is

¹¹ Although Quintus Lutatius Catulus is credited with the construction of the Tabularium (as we will see in the second chapter), there is some reason to see Sulla's hand in the project; Favro (1996, 56), for example, argues that, "its scale, prominence, proximity to other Sullan projects, and the involvement of Catulus all point towards [Sulla's] involvement."

¹² As we will see, although the restoration of 54 BCE is attributed to L. Aemilius Paullus, Caesar seems to have financed this work from the spoils of the Gallic Wars.

almost exclusively on the Forum Iulium.¹³ In contrast, very little analysis has been done on Caesar's alterations to the Forum Romanum proper. My thesis attempts to make a contribution to this perceived gap in the scholarly discourse, taking as a case study Caesar's reorganization of the structures in the northern corner of the Forum Romanum.

~ The Comitium-Rostra-Curia Complex ~

The interrelated structures of the northern corner of the Forum Romanum (Comitium, Rostra and Curia) provide a particularly fruitful subject for such an analysis because of their political importance. In the mid Republican period, the Comitium, the traditional meeting place for certain of Rome's assemblies, was a circular area approximately 30 meters in diameter¹⁴ surrounded by steps; its form closely resembled that of a theater's orchestra (Figure 3).¹⁵ The Republican senate-house, the Curia Hostilia, was positioned directly north of the Comitium, above the topmost step of the latter structure and on axis with it, while the Republican speaker's platform or Rostra formed the southern curve of the Comitium itself, lying roughly opposite the Curia Hostilia (Figures 2-3). The topographical connection of the structures visually manifested their symbolic connection in terms of traditional Republican political processes:

¹³ Hastrup (1962), Ulrich (1993) and Westall (1996) have all made important contributions to our understanding of the Forum Iulium.

¹⁴ Diameter estimated based on scale drawing provided by Coarelli (1986, 139).

¹⁵ The topography described here is based on the widely accepted view postulated by Coarelli (1986, 119-160). However, as will be discussed below, some scholars still question whether the Comitium was ever fully circular.

The Comitium was the oldest seat of political and judicial activity in the city. Its various components duly reflected the tripartite nature of the Roman constitution: the popular assembly...corresponds to the central area, which was set up for meetings; the Senate is associated with the Curia Hostilia and the nearby Senaculum; the Rostra calls to mind the magistrates who spoke from this platform.¹⁶

As will be discussed in the following chapters, Caesar significantly altered all three of these structures: he leveled and paved over the Comitium, effectively eliminating it as a topographically-demarcated area; he simultaneously destroyed the preexisting Republican Rostra and created a new speaker's platform at the northwestern end of the Forum Romanum; and he tore down the Republican Curia Hostilia and constructed a new senate-house, the Curia Iulia, further to the east and with a different orientation.

Naturally, the symbolic value of these actions has received some scholarly attention.

Filippo Coarelli, for example, posits that "Caesar's political action was revealed in broad daylight through this undertaking of complete destruction of the old Republican symbolism, which found its most radical expression in the architectural structures of the Comitium."¹⁷ Yet this explanation seems simplistic and fails to incorporate a detailed analysis of Caesar's changes to each of these structures. My thesis undertakes this analysis and attempts to reach a more nuanced reading of Caesar's building activity in the northern corner of the Forum Romanum.

I analyze Caesar's alterations to the Comitium, Rostra and Curia one by one; the first chapter addresses his leveling and repaving of the Comitium, the second chapter deals with his relocation of the speaker's platform and the third chapter examines his

¹⁶ Coarelli 2007, 54.

¹⁷ Coarelli 1985, 237: "L'azione politica di Cesare si manifesta in piena luce attraverso questa operazione di totale scardinamento della vecchia simbologia repubblicana, che trovava la sua espressione più radicale nelle strutture architettoniche del Comizio."

relocation and reorientation of the senate-house. Each chapter begins by setting forth the archaeological and written evidence for the form and location of the structure in question both immediately prior to and immediately following Caesar's intervention. I then examine any possible precedents set for Caesar's changes by earlier leaders, most notably Sulla. Finally, I interpret potential rationales behind the changes or potential impacts the changes could have had on Caesar's public image. Two general considerations pervade this interpretation in each chapter. First, it is critical to examine the function of each structure immediately before and after Caesar's interventions. When viewed in this light, Caesar's changes represent, I argue, a realignment of each structure's form with its function in his day. Second, it is imperative to consider the changes to each structure in conjunction with the other structures, not in isolation; in other words, the change in the position of the speaker's platform must be examined together with the elimination of the Comitium, and the new location of the senate-house must be analyzed along with the changes to both of the other structures. Such an examination reveals, I argue, a more cohesive plan for the Forum Romanum on Caesar's part than scholars have previously acknowledged. Thus, it seems that Caesar's building projects really did prefigure, in both extent and internal coherence, those eventually undertaken by Augustus. Caesar represents an important intermediary step in the transition from the *triumphator* who builds a single self-aggrandizing monument to the emperor who comprehensively redesigns the urban image of Rome.

~ Comitium and Comitiae ~

The late Republican antiquarian Varro reports to us the origin of the name of the Comitium: “The Comitium [was named] from the fact that to it [the Romans] came together for the *comitia curiata* and for the sake of lawsuits.”¹⁸ Thus, even the structure’s name was related to its traditional function as a location for voting assemblies (*comitia*), and, as a result, the Comitium was often symbolically connected to the power of the populace. Unsurprisingly, then, scholars have seen Caesar’s leveling and paving over of the Comitium as particularly radical. Christian Meier, for example, concludes that, “This was a bold and imperious invasion of the old centre of the city and the world...The old meeting place of the popular assembly had to make way for Caesar’s new buildings. It was a powerful demonstration of his pretensions.”¹⁹

In this chapter, I address the same issue of reading Caesar’s alterations but from a slightly different perspective. After reviewing the literary and archaeological evidence for Caesar’s leveling of the area, I survey the probable form of the Comitium in the mid to late Republic. I then examine the possible precedent of encroachment on the Comitium set by Sulla in his reconstruction of the Curia Hostilia ca. 80 BCE. Finally, I

¹⁸ Varro *De Lingua Latina* 5.32.155 = T6.

¹⁹ Meier 1996, 467-468.

analyze the degree to which the Comitium still served its original political function as a meeting place for Roman voting assemblies at the time of Caesar's renovations. Through these analyses I attempt to reach a more nuanced reading of Caesar's leveling and repaving of the Comitium.

~ **Evidence for Caesar's Leveling and Repaving of the Comitium** ~

The literary record is surprisingly silent on the issue of renovations of the Curia-Comitium area, in general, and of the Comitium, in particular.²⁰ In fact, no mention is made of Caesar's leveling and repaving of the area, despite several references to his beginning and Augustus' completion of the rebuilding and relocation of the senate-house.²¹ This silence is, perhaps, instructive: one would certainly expect Caesar's effective destruction of the Comitium to be mentioned alongside his construction of the Curia Iulia, particularly if the action was as "bold" and "imperious" as Meier, for example, claims. Yet regardless of our interpretation of the literary record's silence, the fact remains that very little information on Caesar's changes to the Comitium can be gleaned from written sources.

Fortunately for our purposes, the archaeological record is more informative, although systematic excavations were not undertaken until the turn of the twentieth century. As early as 1845, however, Theodor Mommsen first realized that the Comitium was an open space rather than a building situated at the eastern end of the Forum Romanum as was previously thought.²² In 1871, Henri Jordan proposed a location for the

²⁰ Anderson (1984, 14) comments on this surprising silence as well.

²¹ E.g., Dio Cassius 44.5.1-2 and 51.22.1 = T7-8; Augustus *Res Gestae* 19 = T9.

²² Mommsen 1845, 288-317. Useful summaries of the history of scholarship on the site of the Comitium are provided by Platner-Ashby (1929, 134-137), Anderson (1984, 14-19), Coarelli (1986, 119-120 and 1993, 309-314), Richardson (1992, 97-98) and Ammerman (1996, 124-127); the following description is greatly indebted to these summaries.

Comitium to the east of the Arch of Septimius Severus, and Christian Hülsen further refined the proposed position of the Comitium in 1893.²³ Yet, it was not until the stratigraphic excavations of Giacomo Boni between 1899 and 1901 that the proposed location of the Comitium was confirmed.

Through four stratigraphic soundings in the area of the Republican Rostra,²⁴ Boni discovered twenty-seven strata; his test pits remain to this day the most extensive excavation carried out in the area of the Comitium.²⁵ Unfortunately, however, his work was only partially published, and the interpretation of his results was largely left to other contemporary scholars, perhaps most notably Giovanni Pinza.²⁶ Pinza divided the strata into six major datable levels ranging from the Regal period to the time of Caesar's construction of the Curia Iulia (see left column of Figure 4).²⁷ Pinza's interpretation was later revised by Einar Gjerstad after the latter's reexamination of the structures from 1939 to 1941 (see center column of Figure 4). Unlike Pinza, Gjerstad recognized eight, rather than six, distinct levels amongst Boni's twenty-seven strata.²⁸ Gjerstad's stratigraphic divisions have won wide acceptance, although his absolute dating of the eight levels has been refuted effectively.²⁹ In 1947, for example, Giuseppe Lugli rejected Gjerstad's dating of the first level to ca. 450 BCE, instead arguing for an earlier date in the sixth

²³ Jordan 1871-1907, 1.2: plan; Hülsen 1893, 79-94.

²⁴ For the location of the Republican Rostra, see Figures 2-3.

²⁵ The only other major excavation at the site was undertaken by Pietro Romanelli in the mid-1950s and published in 1984; this investigation, however, focused almost exclusively on the area near the Lapis Niger (Romanelli 1984).

²⁶ Boni 1900; Pinza 1905.

²⁷ Pinza 1905, particularly 50-53. Lugli (1947, 17-18) and Anderson (1984, 15) provide useful summaries of Pinza's findings.

²⁸ Gjerstad 1941. Lugli (1947, 18-23) and Anderson (1984, 15) provide useful summaries of Gjerstad's findings.

²⁹ It is a testament to the importance of Gjerstad's findings that both those who accept (e.g., Krause 1976) and reject (e.g., Coarelli 1986, 119-160) his absolute dating adopt (with only minor deviations) his division of the strata into eight distinct levels.

century BCE.³⁰ Although Gjerstad's proposed dating system was followed wholesale by some scholars such as Clemens Krause, Lugli's modifications were adopted by Coarelli with few alterations and have since been widely accepted (see right column of Figure 4).³¹

Most relevant to the current discussion are these scholars' treatment of the stratigraphic level of Caesar's reorganization of the area. Both Gjerstad and Coarelli attribute the seventh level to the Caesarian transformation. Gjerstad describes this level in the following way:

The pavement is all travertine except in front of the Curia [Iulia], which portion is luna marble. The Lapis Niger is currently set in this pavement. It rests, as is usual, on a filling of earth, and in this [filling] were also found fragments of the Lapis Niger.³²

Coarelli's description of this level echoes Gjerstad's statements and adds the following:

The pavement of this phase changes orientation with respect to the preceding [phase] and assumes a northwest / southeast course, identical to that of the Curia Iulia...In this phase, the monuments of the Republican Comitium were permanently covered.³³

Thus, the general picture obtained of the seventh level is a pavement covering the monuments of the Republican Comitium, incorporating the Lapis Niger in its current

³⁰ Lugli 1947, 21-23.

³¹ Krause 1976; Coarelli (1986, 119-160; 2007, 52-54). Anderson (1984, 15), for example, states: "[Lugli's] reconstruction of the history of the Comitium has won wide acceptance from scholars." Lugli did not propose his own systematic dating system but rather argued for or against various assertions by Pinza, Gjerstad and Goidanic.

³² Gjerstad 1941, 119: "Il lastrico è tutto di travertino, fuorché di fronte alla Curia, la qual parte è di marmo lunense. Il Niger lapis è attualmente incastrato in questo lastrico. Esso posa, come si solito, su una riempitura di terra e anche in questa furono trovate schegge del Niger lapis."

³³ Coarelli 1986, 127: "Il lastricato di questa fase cambia di orientamento rispetto al precedente, e assume un andamento nord-ovest / sud-est, identico a quello della *curia Iulia*...In questa fase furono definitivamente ricoperti i monumenti del Comizio repubblicano."

position, oriented on line with the Curia Iulia and made primarily of travertine but of luna marble near the Curia Iulia.

Yet, despite their general agreement on the appearance of this level, Gjerstad and Coarelli date it slightly differently, as is visually represented in Figure 4. Gjerstad dates the immediately preceding sixth level to Faustus Sulla's rebuilding of the Curia Hostilia after its destruction in the fire of 52 BCE and assigns the seventh level to Caesar's construction of the Curia Iulia in late 45 / early 44 BCE.³⁴ Coarelli, however, rejects Gjerstad's dating of the sixth level to ca. 52 BCE and instead proposes a date of ca. 80 BCE, arguing that the sixth pavement "was covered by the Forum of Caesar and therefore antedates 54 BCE, the year of the beginning of the Caesarian works."³⁵ The evidence adduced by Coarelli for the beginning of work on the Forum of Caesar is a letter from Cicero to Atticus from 54 BCE that mentions Cicero's recent purchase of land on Caesar's behalf for the latter's construction project.³⁶ The letter does not specifically mention the beginning of construction at this time,³⁷ the forum was not dedicated until 46 BCE³⁸ and Caesar spent most of the intervening period away from Rome engaged in wars in Gaul, Greece, Egypt and Africa. As a result, it is impossible to pinpoint, as Coarelli does, the exact date for commencement of work on the Forum Iulium and to use it as a *terminus ante quem* for the sixth pavement; at best, we can definitively assert that the sixth pavement must have been covered by 46 BCE.

³⁴ Gjerstad 1941. See also Krause 1976, 44-48.

³⁵ Coarelli 1986, 136: "...la precedente, la sesta, fu ricoperta dal Foro di Cesare, ed è quindi anteriore al 54 a.C., anno di inizio dei lavori cesariani."

³⁶ Cicero *Ad Atticum* 4.16.8 = T10.

³⁷ In fact, it is unclear whether at this point Caesar even envisioned a separate forum; Cicero's use of the term *explicaremus* suggests a conception of the new project as an extension of the existing Forum Romanum (Anderson 1984, 42). Thus, it would seem that substantial revisions to the initially envisioned project must have occurred after 54 BCE.

³⁸ Dio Cassius 43.22.2 = T11.

In fact, although Coarelli (mistakenly) provides 54 BCE as the date for the commencement of construction of the seventh level, he himself agrees with Gjerstad's later date for the completion of work on this level: "The permanent disappearance of the archaic monuments of the Comitium beneath the new pavement took place in the years immediately preceding 44 BCE."³⁹ Coarelli links this seventh pavement of the Comitium to the repaving of the Forum Romanum as a whole in regular slabs of travertine around the same time.⁴⁰ Thus, a coherent narrative of Caesar's alterations to the Comitium emerges from Gjerstad's and Coarelli's descriptions: in the years immediately preceding Caesar's assassination in 44 BCE, he paved over the Comitium primarily with regular travertine slabs, on the same orientation as the Curia Iulia then under construction and coinciding with a simultaneous repaving of the Forum Romanum proper in the same material. In effect, Caesar made the ground level and pavement of the Comitium equivalent to that of the Forum Romanum, and the Comitium ceased to be a topographically-demarcated area after that time.

~ The Form of the Mid Republican Comitium ~

Unfortunately, it is likewise difficult to reach consensus on the topography of the Republican Comitium as a whole prior to Caesar's elimination of it as an area distinct from the Forum Romanum. As demonstrated in Figures 5 and 6, respectively, the explorations undertaken by Boni and Gjerstad were limited to the southern portion of the Comitium. As a result, without more extensive excavation of the area, very little can be

³⁹ Coarelli 1986, 136: "La sparizione definitiva sotto il nuovo pavimento dei monumenti arcaici del Comizio ebbe dunque luogo negli anni immediatamente precedenti il 44 a.C." This statement does not mean that Coarelli dates the end of the seventh level to 44 BCE; rather, he argues that construction of the seventh level began in 54 BCE, construction was completed near 44 BCE and the seventh level remained in use until 9 BCE. Gjerstad, on the other hand, argues that construction of the seventh level was both begun and completed in 44 BCE and that the seventh level only remained in use until 29 BCE.

⁴⁰ Coarelli 1986, 136.

asserted definitively concerning its overall shape on the basis of archaeology alone; moreover, further archaeological excavation is hampered by the presence of the church of Santi Luca e Martina on the presumed site of the Republican senate-house and Comitium. Yet several topographers, most notably Coarelli, have analyzed the extant archaeological evidence in conjunction with literary references in order to propose a generally accepted reconstruction of the area throughout its usage in Republican times.

Several discoveries in the middle of the twentieth century allowed scholars of the time to reach a tentative consensus. As shown in Gjerstad's schematic plan of the southern portion of the Comitium (Figure 7), platform J, belonging to the fifth level of both Gjerstad's and Coarelli's stratifications and usually associated with the mid to late Republican Rostra, was curved and approached from the north via a number of steps.⁴¹ Naturally, however, the question remained as to whether or not the curve continued beyond this segment to result in a semicircular or even fully circular shape for the Comitium.

The excavation of the curia-comitium complex at Cosa in 1954 (Figure 8) radically altered the context of this debate. On the northeastern side of the forum at Cosa, excavators uncovered a circular area with an interior diameter of 8.60 m. and which was surrounded by three surviving rows of steps; this whole structure was surrounded in turn by a rectangular circuit wall. The excavators identified this area as the town's comitium. A passageway from the comitium's center to the southwest provided access onto the forum, and a rectangular building of two stories, identified as the town's curia, was positioned on the other side of the comitium at the top of its steps and directly on axis

⁴¹ Gjerstad 1941, 117; Coarelli 1986, 126.

with the entrance.⁴² In 1957, one of the excavators at Cosa, Lawrence Richardson, Jr., suggested a similarity between the curia-comitium complex at Cosa and that in Rome.⁴³ His use of a *comparandum* from an Italian town would influence subsequent scholars in their analyses of the complex in Rome.

In his article of 1977 and monographs on the Forum Romanum in the 1980s, Coarelli proposed a scheme of reconstruction for the Comitium that gained widespread acceptance and remains the quintessential treatment of the topic. Coarelli posited two general phases in the form of the Comitium prior to Caesar's transformation of it. In the first phase, dating to his first through fourth levels (Regal period through ca. 264 BCE), the Comitium was a square or rectangular area, oriented on the cardinal points, at the north side of which stood the Curia Hostilia (square area outlined with dotted line in Figure 3).⁴⁴ In the immediately succeeding phase (Coarelli's fifth level), however, the shape of the Comitium changed radically: it took on a slightly larger, circular form surrounded by steps with the Curia Hostilia again positioned on the north side and on axis with it but with a slightly different orientation (circular area outlined with solid line in Figure 3).⁴⁵

⁴² Richardson 1957, 49-51.

⁴³ Richardson 1957, 49.

⁴⁴ Coarelli 1986, 138-146. Passages from Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia* (7.60.212 = T12), Varro's *De Lingua Latina* (5.32.155, 6.9.89 and 6.2.5 = T6, 13 and 14, respectively) and Censorinus' *De Die Natali* (24.3 = T15) are invaluable resources for reconstructing the shape of the area prior to the First Punic War; all of these passages support an orientation of the Comitium and Curia along the cardinal points, a fact agreed upon by all scholars since Mommsen (Anderson 1984, 18). The fact that the Comitium was an inaugurated *templum* supports the proposed rectilinear shape of the structure (Varro *Lingua Latina* 7.2.7-8 = T16) as does the presence of a line of "pozzi votivi" aligned along the southern side of the Comitium, perhaps intended to support stakes dug into the earth in place of trees which are known to have constituted the limits of a *templum* upon its initial consecration (Varro *De Lingua Latina* 7.2.9 and 7.2.13 = T17-18; Coarelli 1986, 140). Prior to Coarelli, both Detlefsen (1860) and Hülsen (1893) hypothesized a square form of the Comitium in archaic times.

⁴⁵ Coarelli 1986, 146-152.

The primary pieces of evidence adduced by Coarelli for this mid Republican reconstruction are the similar curia-comitium complexes at Cosa, Paestum and Alba Fucens (Figure 9, numbers 4, 1 and 3, respectively) that date to approximately the same period (ca. 270 BCE, late fourth / early third century BCE and late third century BCE, respectively, as compared to Coarelli's proposed dating to ca. 264 BCE of the circular Comitium in Rome):

The excavations of the comitia of Paestum, Cosa and Alba Fucens demonstrate the existence of circular complexes inserted within a square area (the area of a *templum!*) which in Rome is attested to by the pits that border the southern side of the Comitium.⁴⁶

Of course, Coarelli's reconstruction is only a hypothesis, as the majority of the Comitium (aside from the area near the Rostra) remains unexcavated. As a result, the door is left open to debate, and several scholars have raised concerns about the likelihood of a fully circular Comitium. Even before Coarelli's classic treatment of the topic, Krause had analyzed the same *comparanda* (as well as the *ekklesiasterion* at Agrigento and the theatral circle at Samothrace) and concluded that the area could not have been entirely circular, though in the Sullan period it may have had a circular "orchestra" which formed the center of its general wedge-shaped form.⁴⁷ More recently, in 1998, Paolo Carafa

⁴⁶ Coarelli 1986, 151-152: "Le scoperte dei comizi di Paestum, di Cosa e di Alba Fucens dimostrano l'esistenza di complessi circolari, inseriti entro un'area quadrata (l'area del *templum!*) area che a Roma è testimoniata dai pozzetti che limitano il lato sud del Comizio." He concludes that the solution that better corresponds to "the topographical situation, the archaeological remains, the comparisons with similar monuments and the information from the literary sources is that of a circular cavea, partly derived from the slopes of the Arx, partly constructed artificially" ("...la soluzione...assai meglio rispondente alla situazione topografica, ai resti archeologici, ai confronti con monumenti simili e ai dati delle fonti letterarie, è quella di una cavea circolare"). For Coarelli's view of possible Greek models for the Comitium, see Coarelli 1985, 1-21.

⁴⁷ Krause 1976, 61 and 66. As Coarelli (1986, 146) points out, Krause errs in uncritically accepting Gjerstad's dating system which accounts for Krause's incorrect dating of the circular elements (of the fifth level) to the Sullan period. Krause's *argumentum ad ignorantiam* is also faulty: the absence of extant archaeological evidence for a fully circular Comitium is not proof that such evidence does not exist and would not be found were the rest of the Comitium fully excavated.

raised further objections to Coarelli's reconstruction; amongst these, he argued that a road, identified as the Via Sacra, bordered the Republican Rostra to the north and thus would have to have run directly through a stepped, circular region if Coarelli's reconstruction were to be accepted.⁴⁸ Only a full excavation of the Comitium will finally decide the matter, but at this point Coarelli's reconstruction remains fundamental; in fact, even his detractors acknowledge the importance of his work.⁴⁹

Moreover, regardless of the exact configuration of the Comitium, Rostra and senate-house, the structures were undoubtedly closely connected topographically in the mid to late Republican period. It is this connection to which scholars like Meier and Coarelli tacitly appeal in seeing Caesar's leveling of the Comitium as "imperious" and symbolic of the dictator's destruction of the political institutions of the Republic. Yet, as we will see, Caesar may not have been the first dictator whose buildings impinged upon the Comitium, and all evidence points to the fact that the Comitium had ceased to be a site of regular political action among the Roman *populus* long before Caesar's alterations to it.

~ The Precedent of Sulla ~

As dictator in 81 BCE, Sulla made a series of constitutional reforms including an increase in the size of the senate from 300 to 600 members.⁵⁰ Presumably in order to

⁴⁸ Carafa 1998, 150-151. Morstein-Marx (2004, 47-48 n. 42) provides a useful summary of the objections to a circular Comitium.

⁴⁹ For example, Morstein-Marx (2004) refers to Coarelli's reconstruction as "the widely accepted view of Filippo Coarelli, whose plan is frequently adapted and reprinted" (47) and states that "Despite Carafa's revision of various points, Coarelli 1986:119-99 and especially 1985: 11-123, remain fundamental" (45 n. 33).

⁵⁰ Because of the lengthy civil wars in Italy followed by further senatorial deaths through Sulla's proscriptions, the number of senators was probably substantially lower than the traditional figure of 300. Not only did Sulla fill the vacancies of the traditional 300 members by admitting to the senate a number of troops who particularly distinguished themselves in battle, but he also increased the total number of senators to 600 by adlecting *equites* among his supporters (Sallust *Bellum Catilinae* 37.6 = T19; Dionysius

accommodate this larger senate, Sulla tore down the existing Curia Hostilia and had a new senate-house built.⁵¹ Although the new senate-house begun by Sulla ca. 81 BCE retained the same general location and orientation as the early and mid Republican Curia Hostilia, it seems to have been larger than its predecessors. The character Piso in Cicero's philosophical work *De Finibus* remarks: "Even looking upon our senate-house – I mean the [Curia] Hostilia, not this new [one] which seems to me to be smaller since it became larger – I was accustomed to think about Scipio, Cato, Laelius but above all [about] my grandfather."⁵² This passage has been a subject of intense debate amongst scholars. Some have attributed the remark to the rebuilding of Sulla's senate-house by his son Faustus Sulla after it burned down during Clodius' funeral in 52 BCE; presumably, the reason for this attribution is the fact that the work was composed by Cicero in 45 BCE, after Faustus Sulla's commission to rebuild the structure.⁵³ However, we ought to note, as Coarelli rightly does, that the dramatic date of the dialogue is 79 BCE, suggesting that Piso's comment was directed at Sulla's senate-house upon which work had just commenced, rather than his son's building upon which work would not commence for almost thirty years.⁵⁴

of Halicarnassus 5.77.5 = T20; Appian *Bellum Civile* 1.100 = T21; Keaveney 1982, 174-175). He also took measures to ensure the sustainment of this higher level: the number of quaestors was raised from 8 to 20 and quaestors were now automatically enrolled as senators after their term in office (Tacitus *Annales* 11.22.6 = T22; Keaveney 1982, 175). For a recent argument that Sulla did not increase the size of the senate to such an extent, see Santangelo 2006.

⁵¹ Dio Cassius 40.50.2-3 = T23. Richardson (1978, 364) and Coarelli (1986, 149 n. 34) both posit this same rationale for Sulla's construction of a larger senate-house.

⁵² Cicero *De Finibus* 5.2 = T24.

⁵³ For example, Platner (1929, 143) argues, "Cic. de fin. v. 2 (written in 45 B.C.)...must also refer to this curia [of Faustus Sulla], and not to that of the elder Sulla..." The same interpretation can be inferred from Anderson (1984, 13) and Richardson (1992, 102). Dio Cassius (40.50.2-3 and 40.49.2 = T23 and 25, respectively), Cicero (*Pro Milone* 33.90 = T26) and Asconius (*In Milonianam* 12 = T27) attest both to the destruction of the Sullan building in 52 BCE and to Faustus Sulla's subsequent reconstruction.

⁵⁴ Coarelli 1986, 149 n. 34: "Book V of the *De Finibus* is set in 79 BCE: therefore it must treat the reconstruction of Sulla, initiated in the previous year (and certainly not the senate-house of Faustus Sulla,

If we can agree that Sulla's senate-house was, in fact, larger than its predecessors, it remains to determine the extent and direction of its enlargement. This issue cannot be resolved with certainty without thorough excavation of the area surrounding the Comitium, but both written and archaeological evidence point to a compelling answer. Of primary importance is a passage in Pliny the Elder's *Naturalis Historia*: "I find [that] statues [were] erected to Pythagoras and Alcibiades in the horns of the Comitium...These stood until Sulla the dictator built the senate-house there."⁵⁵ The term *cornua comitii* has sparked endless debate as to the shape of the Comitium prior to the Sullan period.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Coarelli, Richardson and Morstein-Marx all argue that this passage is evidence that the façade of Sulla's senate-house was located further south and closer to the Rostra than its predecessor's; in other words, Sulla extended the front and (perhaps) back walls of the senate-house in order to add to its size.⁵⁷

Coarelli also adduces an item of material evidence to support his argument. He draws attention to a stretch of pavement in white mosaic inset with colored stones and located at a right angle to the façade of the church of Santi Luca e Martina (Figures 3 and 10), which he dates to the Sullan period on the basis of its style and ascribes to the pavement of the Sullan senate-house; because this pavement is located further south than the southern façade of the mid Republican Curia Hostilia posited by Coarelli (Figure 3), he argues that the location of this pavement supports his proposal of a southward

of 52 BCE...)" ("Il libro V del *de finibus* è ambientato nel 79 a.C.: si deve quindi trattare della ricostruzione di Silla, iniziata l'anno precedente (e non certo della Curia di Fausto Silla, del 52 a.C...).")

⁵⁵ Pliny the Elder *Naturalis Historia* 34.12.26 = T28.

⁵⁶ Whereas Richardson (1978, 364) and Coarelli (1986, 152) see the term *cornua comitii* as consistent with a circular reconstruction of the mid Republican Comitium, scholars such as Carafa (1998, 155) and Morstein-Marx (2004, 47 n. 42) have raised doubts over how *cornua* can be understood to refer to a portion of a circular area.

⁵⁷ For these scholars' interpretation of this passage in terms of Sulla's southward extension of the front façade of the senate-house, see Richardson 1978, 364; Coarelli 1985, 241 and 1986, 152; and Morstein-Marx 2004, 54 n. 69. Only Carafa (1998, 155) dissents on this point.

extension of the senate-house by Sulla.⁵⁸ Admittedly, this argument is tenuous; after all, Coarelli does not even have irrefutable evidence for the southern limit of the mid Republican Curia Hostilia.⁵⁹ Moreover, the written evidence mentioned above is also subject to interpretation. In my view, at most we can conclude that the senate-house rebuilt by Sulla was larger than its predecessor; it is possible that the Sullan building extended further to the south than the mid Republican Curia Hostilia, but, given the evidence current available, it is impossible to make any certain conclusions.

If Coarelli is correct, however, there could be important implications for our understanding of Caesar's alterations to the area. If, for example, the Sullan senate-house was wider and deeper than the previous senate-house as shown in Coarelli's proposed reconstruction of the area in Figure 11, the Sullan senate-house would have impinged fairly significantly on the north side of the Comitium. As a result, Caesar's transformation of the Comitium as a whole would have had a precedent in the appropriation of a portion of the Comitium by Sulla, another very powerful dictator though one with distinctly different political leanings.⁶⁰

~ The Political Function of the Comitium in the Late Republic ~

Sulla's possible destruction of a portion of the Comitium ca. 80 BCE may also suggest that at that time the Comitium was no longer fulfilling the same political functions as it had previously.⁶¹ The Comitium originally served as the primary meeting

⁵⁸ Coarelli 1986, 156.

⁵⁹ The third chapter discusses Coarelli's proposed reconstruction of the mid Republican Curia Hostilia and evaluates his evidence for it.

⁶⁰ Whereas Caesar is generally thought to be a *popularis*, Sulla supported the senatorial class and was one of the *optimates*; the destruction of part of the Comitium by a staunchly conservative *optimas* like Sulla certainly suggests that such an action need not be considered "radical."

⁶¹ Coarelli (1986, 158) also makes this inference: "The destruction of these structures is explainable by the loss of the functions that the stepped area had had in the preceding period" ("La demolizione di queste strutture è spiegabile con la perdita delle funzioni che l'area a gradini aveva avuto nel periodo precedente").

place for the curiate assembly and tribal assemblies, as well as the preferred location for *contiones*; indeed, its circular, stepped form probably developed in response to the area's use as a meeting place for large groups of people.⁶² However, as we will see, by the late Republic, these political activities seem to have moved elsewhere and the form of the Comitium was no longer directly connected to its political function as a meeting place for the Roman populace.

During the Republic, Roman voting assemblies exercised authority in three different fields: electoral, legislative and judicial.⁶³ Responsibilities in these fields were shared among the major assemblies: the centuriate assembly (*comitia centuriata*), the curiate assembly (*comitia curiata*) and the tribal assemblies (*comitia tributa* and *concilium plebis*).⁶⁴ It is important to note the difference between *comitia* and *contiones* in the mid to late Republic; although both terms refer to gatherings of the Roman populace for political purposes, the two phenomena are distinct: the *contio* was a preliminary public meeting open to the entire populace in which the audience was unsorted, while the *comitia* was a gathering of enfranchised citizens who were sorted into

He briefly mentions the cessation of use of the Comitium as a gathering place for *contiones* / *comitia* but primarily focuses on the movement elsewhere of the praetors' tribunal and the seat of the tribunes and *triumviri capitales* (158-160). I will focus on the first of these changes for several reasons: it is treated less extensively by Coarelli; the Comitium's function as a gathering place for the assemblies of the populace is most apposite to its symbolic identification with the Roman people in the interpretations of Meier and Coarelli described above; and the praetors' tribunal and the seat of the tribunes and *triumviri capitales* seem to have been located in the portion of the Comitium destroyed by Sulla's alterations, not Caesar's (Coarelli 1986, 158-159).

⁶² The similar function of the formally comparable structures discussed above (the curia-comitium complexes of Cosa, Paestum and Alba Fucens, the *ekklesiasterion* of Agrigento and the theatral circle of Samothrace) lends support to this idea.

⁶³ Nicolet 1980, 218.

⁶⁴ Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 15.27.5 = T29; Taylor 1966, 3; Staveley 1972, 122; Nicolet 1980, 217-226.

units for the purpose of voting.⁶⁵ Although I will address *contiones* in further detail below, the current discussion is restricted to *comitia* proper.

The *comitia centuriata* met to elect the consuls, praetors and censors and originally served as the primary legislative and judicial body; however, by the end of the second century BCE, most legislation was passed through the tribal, rather than centuriate, assembly while criminal jurisdiction, except in cases of *perduellio*, had been transferred to permanent lawcourts.⁶⁶ As a result, by the late Republic “the role of the *comitia centuriata* was essentially an electoral one.”⁶⁷ Because the *comitia centuriata* was originally a military organization made up of *equites* and *pedites*, when sorted into units it could not meet within the *pomerium* and, as a result, generally gathered in the Campus Martius for voting procedures:

[M]oreover, it is impious for the *comitia centuriata* to take place within the *pomerium*, because it is necessary that the army be summoned outside of the city, [and] it is not lawful [that it] be summoned within the city. Therefore, it [was] customary [that] the *comitia centuriata* be held on the Campus Martius and [that] the army be summoned for the purpose of defense since the populace was occupied in casting their votes.⁶⁸

As a result of this restriction, the Comitium was never a meeting place for the *comitia centuriata*, and meetings of that assembly would have been unaffected by Caesar’s reappropriation of the area of the Comitium.

⁶⁵ Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 13.16.2-3 = T30; Taylor 1966, 1-2; Staveley 1972, 153-154; Morstein-Marx 2004, 34-36.

⁶⁶ Taylor 1966, 5; Staveley 1972, 128-129; Nicolet 1980, 223-224. For a fuller treatment of the *comitia centuriata*, see the discussions by Taylor (1966, 5-6, 85-106), Staveley (1972, 122-129) and Nicolet (1980, 219-224).

⁶⁷ Nicolet 1980, 224.

⁶⁸ Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 15.27.5 = T29. See also Cicero *Pro Rabirio* 4.11 = T31; Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 6.20.10 = T32; Taylor 1966, 5; Staveley 1972, 150; Nicolet 1980, 246-247.

The *comitia curiata*, on the other hand, was closely linked to the space of the Comitium. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, for example, Varro explains the name of the Comitium by its use as the meeting place for the *comitia curiata*.⁶⁹ Indeed, the Comitium seems to have been the primary meeting place for the *comitia curiata*, though there is some evidence for meetings elsewhere.⁷⁰ The exact function and organization of the *comitia curiata* in the early to mid Republic are difficult to recover. The most abundantly attested function was to pass the *lex curiata* (a “rubber-stamp” of sorts conveying *imperium*) in favor of newly elected consuls and praetors; amongst the other responsibilities of the assembly were the inauguration of certain priests, the effecting of adoptions and the authorization of transfers of patricians to the plebs.⁷¹ According to Aulus Gellius, the citizens were sorted according to “families of men,” but not much more is known about the makeup of the *comitia curiata*.⁷² It is generally agreed that by the late Republic the voting function of the *comitia curiata* had ceased to have more than formal significance.⁷³ Indeed, Cicero provides evidence from 63 BCE that, in place of a full-scale vote of the people, each *curia* was represented by a single lictor; scholars generally believe that this was a long-standing practice by the time of Cicero’s attestation.⁷⁴ Thus, by Caesar’s time the *comitia curiata* was effectively defunct as a voting assembly; as a result, the movement elsewhere of gatherings of the *comitia*

⁶⁹ Varro *De Lingua Latina* 5.32.155 = T6.

⁷⁰ Taylor (1966, 5) discusses the couple of cases in which this may have occurred.

⁷¹ Taylor 1966, 3-4; Staveley 1972, 122-123; Nicolet 1980, 218. It is uncertain whether the *lex curiata*, informally called the *lex de imperio* was connected with the conferral of *imperium* to the new magistrates; Taylor and Nicolet argue in favor of this understanding, while Staveley disagrees.

⁷² Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 15.27.5 = T29.

⁷³ Taylor 1966, 4; Staveley 1972, 123; Nicolet 1980, 218-219.

⁷⁴ Cicero *De Lege Agraria* 2.11.27-12.31 = T33. Taylor 1966, 4: “Perhaps as early as 218 the custom attested for the year 63 of having each *curia* represented by a lictor had developed.” Staveley 1972, 123: “with the decline of close aristocratic control over the populace the substitution for the people of thirty lictors must have been an early development.”

curiata, necessitated by Caesar's leveling and paving over of the Comitium, would likely have had little to no impact on the voting experience of the populace at large.

Unlike the *comitia curiata*, the tribal assemblies were quite active in the mid to late Republic. There were two assemblies of the thirty-five tribes: the *comitia tributa* was attended by all citizens, was presided over by a consul or praetor and elected curule aediles, quaestors, military tribunes and other special officers; the *concilium plebis* was open only to plebeians, was presided over by the tribune of the plebs and elected tribunes and aediles of the plebs as well as other special officers.⁷⁵ Both assemblies had legislative powers, as well; bills passed by the *comitia tributa* were officially called *leges* while those passed by the *concilium plebis* were called *plebiscita*.⁷⁶ However, after the *lex Hortensia* of 287 BCE made *plebiscita* binding on the entire populace, the bulk of legislation in Rome was carried out by the *concilium plebis*.⁷⁷ Although both tribal assemblies also originally exercised judicial powers, as in the *comitia centuriata* these activities declined as permanent courts became increasingly more prevalent from the second century BCE.⁷⁸ Thus, the *concilium plebis* mainly served as the primary legislative body in Rome in the late Republic, while both the *comitia tributa* and the *concilium plebis* remained important electoral bodies throughout this period.

The tribal assemblies made use of different meeting places depending on the type of activity to be voted upon. For tribal electoral assemblies (both in the *comitia tributa*

⁷⁵ Taylor 1966, 6, 59-60; Staveley 1972, 129-130; Nicolet 1980, 224-226. In practice, however, these distinctions of terminology were not always observed (Taylor 1966, 60; Nicolet 1980, 225). There is also debate as to the degree of difference between the functions of the *comitia tributa* and the *concilium plebis*: Nicolet (1980, 226), for example, argues that “[v]irtually the only real distinction between these assemblies was the question of what magistrate summoned and presided over them”; Taylor (1966, 61), however, claims that “there were, and there continued to be, more differences in the tribal assemblies of *populus* and *plebs* than various modern writers...have been disposed to admit.”

⁷⁶ Taylor 1966, 60; Staveley 1972, 131; Nicolet 1980, 225.

⁷⁷ Taylor, 1966, 6, 60; Staveley 1972, 131-132.

⁷⁸ Staveley 1972, 131; Nicolet 1980, 224.

and the *concilium plebis*), there seem not to have been restrictions on the place of meeting; but in practice, at least during the last century of the Republic, tribal electoral assemblies met exclusively on the Campus Martius.⁷⁹ Thus, electoral meetings of the tribal assemblies would not have been affected by Caesar's elimination of the Comitium as an architecturally-defined area.⁸⁰

The Comitium was, however, the primary meeting place in the mid Republic for tribal legislative assemblies, in particular of the *concilium plebis*.⁸¹ However, the Forum Romanum proper seems to have replaced the Comitium as the primary gathering place for legislative meetings of the tribal assemblies beginning in 145 BCE, as attested by both Cicero and Varro.⁸² Cicero asserts that C. Licinius Crassus, tribune of the plebs in 145 BCE, "first began [the practice of] treating with the people (*agere cum populo*) [while facing] towards the Forum [Romanum]."⁸³ Varro similarly comments upon a change in tribal voting procedure undertaken by Crassus: "[he] first led the people from the Comitium into the seven *iugera* of the forum for hearing laws (*ad leges accipiendas*)."⁸⁴ It is important to note that both Cicero and Varro must be referring to legislative tribal *comitia*, not simply preliminary *contiones*: the phrases *agere cum populo* and *leges accipiendas* are both technical expressions related to comitial, not contional, procedure.⁸⁵ From both of these references, it is clear that as of 145 BCE the magistrate

⁷⁹ Plutarch *Gaius Gracchus* 3.2 = T34; Cicero *Ad Atticum* 1.1.1 = T35; Taylor 1966, 47, 78; Staveley 1972, 150-151; Nicolet 1980, 247-250.

⁸⁰ In fact, Caesar monumentalized the area used for voting in the Campus Martius by building the so-called *Saepta Iulia* (Cicero *Ad Atticum* 4.16.8 = T10).

⁸¹ Taylor 1966, 21, 41; Staveley 1972, 151-152; Nicolet 1980, 247.

⁸² A related remark by Plutarch (*Gaius Gracchus* 5.4 = T36) will be discussed in greater detail below.

⁸³ Cicero *De Amicitia* 25.96 = T37.

⁸⁴ Varro *De Re Rustica* 1.2.9 = T38.

⁸⁵ As we have seen, Aulus Gellius (*Noctes Atticae* 13.16.2-3 = T30) definitively associates the term *agere cum populo* with the *comitia* not *contiones*; the phrase *ad leges accipiendas* is "a technical expression for turning a bill into law by giving a favorable vote on it" (Taylor 1966, 25; see also *TLL* s.v. "accipio").

summoning a legislative tribal assembly (generally a tribune of the plebs as most legislation was passed through the *concilium plebis*) would stand on the Rostra, facing toward the Forum Romanum proper with his back to the Comitium, and the people would gather into sorted units for voting in the Forum itself, not in the Comitium.⁸⁶ Thus, by the time of Caesar's intervention in the Comitium, the structure had not served as the meeting place for tribal *comitia* for over 100 years, and its destruction would not have affected the then-current practice of legislative tribal assemblies.

Although *contiones* were not held exclusively in connection with voting *comitia*,⁸⁷ because the two phenomena often occurred in conjunction with one another and because *contiones*, too, were important political gatherings, they should be addressed here as well, beginning with those *contiones* associated with *comitia*. In the case of elections, a single *contio* was held immediately before the commencement of voting procedures and consisted of a prayer and directions to voters.⁸⁸ For legislative and judicial matters, a series of *contiones* took place in the days leading up to the *comitia* and included speeches by orators; the final *contio* generally took place immediately prior to the *comitia* for the issue at hand.⁸⁹ Naturally, *contiones* immediately preceding *comitia* (i.e., all electoral *contiones* and the final legislative and judicial *contiones*) most likely took place in the same location as the *comitia* itself. Thus, in the late Republic *contiones*

Staveley (1972, 152) and Nicolet (1980, 247) interpret these passages in the same way. Coarelli (1986, 158) mistakenly associates the procedural change by C. Licinius Crassus with *contiones*.

⁸⁶ See Figures 2-3 for the relative locations of Comitium, Rostra and Forum Romanum proper.

⁸⁷ Taylor 1966, 15: "*Contiones* could also be held for a number of purposes other than as preliminaries to voting assemblies; for example, the consul could summon a *contio* to report on any issue of public interest and lower magistrates could address the people regarding affairs connected to their offices."

⁸⁸ Taylor 1966, 16, 57; Staveley 1972, 152-153.

⁸⁹ Taylor 1966, 7, 16, 57; Staveley 1972, 143-144. In fact, for judicial matters three *contiones* were required to precede the voting *comitia* with a fourth and final *contio* (*quarta accusatio*) taking place on the day of the vote itself; an interval of twenty-four days was mandated between the posting of the proposed bill or judgment (in legislative and judicial matters, respectively) and the *comitia* (Cicero *De Domo Sua* 16.41 and 17.45 = T39-40; Cicero *Philippics* 5.3.8 = T41; Appian *Bellum Civile* 1.74 = T42; Greenidge 1901, 345-349; Taylor 1966, 16, 19).

preceding electoral meetings of the centuriate and tribal assemblies met on the Campus Martius as did final judicial *contiones* in cases of *perduellio*,⁹⁰ while final legislative *contiones* preceding the voting procedures of the tribal assemblies originally met in the Comitium.

For preliminary legislative and judicial *contiones*, as well as for *contiones* unrelated to the voting assemblies, there was more flexibility in location, though the Rostra was the most common location of address for officials summoning *contiones*.⁹¹ As in the case of tribal *comitia*, originally the populace seems to have gathered in the Comitium to listen to the speeches of the presiding magistrates; Plutarch, for example, attests to this practice before the time of Gaius Gracchus:

... [although] all popular orators before him [had] looked at the senate and so-called Comitium, at that time he [was] the first to speak in the assembly [while] turned toward the Forum [Romanum]...⁹²

This passage is fraught with difficulty, particularly in relation to the Ciceronian and Varronian passages described above.⁹³ Some scholars take the passage at face value, arguing that Plutarch is addressing a change in contional procedure instituted by Gracchus while Cicero and Varro refer to the similar change in comitial procedure earlier instituted by Licinius Crassus.⁹⁴ Others, however, argue that Plutarch's passage is a "doublet" of those of Cicero and Varro that is mistaken on two counts: first, in implying that the change was related to contional rather than comitial procedure and second, in

⁹⁰ As noted above, by the late Republic only cases of *perduellio* were tried by the *comitia centuriata*; all other judicial matters had been turned over to permanent lawcourts.

⁹¹ Taylor 1966, 15, 21.

⁹² Plutarch *Gaius Gracchus* 5.4 = T36.

⁹³ Taylor (1966, 23) fully explains the difficulties with Plutarch's assessment.

⁹⁴ E.g., Coarelli 1985, 157-158.

ascribing the change to Gracchus rather than Licinius Crassus.⁹⁵ It seems most likely to me that Plutarch's reference is, indeed, a mistaken "doublet." Since the audience at *contiones* was not limited to enfranchised citizens, as that of voting *comitia* was, it is probable that the crowd at the former was at least as large as, and probably larger than, the crowd at the latter;⁹⁶ as a result, if the move from Comitium to Forum Romanum was primarily due to the limited space in the former structure,⁹⁷ we might expect the change in location for *contiones* to have occurred at least as early as, if not earlier than, the change for *comitia*. Moreover, it seems improbable that crowds would have continued to gather in the Comitium for *contiones* after it had become common practice for them to gather in the Forum proper for *comitia*; it would have been particularly absurd in the case of *contiones* immediately preceding voting *comitia* – surely, the crowd would not have gathered in the Comitium for the *contio* and then filed out to the Forum Romanum for the *comitia*, necessitating a sort of "pirouette" on the Rostra on the part of the presiding magistrate.⁹⁸ Thus, it seems most plausible that the change in contional procedure was at least contemporaneous with, if not anterior to, the change in comitial procedure.

Moreover, it is notable that regardless of their interpretation of Plutarch's passage,

⁹⁵ E.g., Taylor 1966, 23-24; Staveley 1972, 252 n. 284; Morstein-Marx 2004, 46-47 n. 38. Taylor (121 n. 31) ingeniously posits that Plutarch's confusion may have stemmed from a Greek source referring to Crassus, as Greek sources often did, by his *praenomen*, Gaius, alone.

⁹⁶ At the end of a *contio* preceding a *comitia* in the Forum, the presiding magistrate gave the command *discedite* (Staveley 1972, 152-153); as Staveley discusses, it is very difficult to connect this term with our presumption that the ensuing action involved a sorting of the crowd into voting units. Perhaps, we might understand this otherwise unclear statement as an instruction to the disenfranchised members of the audience to "depart"; such an interpretation would lend support to my assertion that the crowd at a *contio* tended to be larger than that at *comitia*.

⁹⁷ The issue of the capacity of the Comitium is notoriously fraught with difficulty, not least because of the lack of consensus as to the shape and size of the structure. Morstein-Marx (2004, 45 n.36) provides a useful summary of various scholarly estimates of capacity in the Comitium and the Forum proper, which range from 1,000 to 6,000 for the former structure and from 6,000 to 20,000 for the latter; in any case, the capacity of the middle Forum is undoubtedly greater than that of the Comitium.

⁹⁸ Morstein-Marx (2004, 46-47) likewise notices the implausibility of this situation; I have adopted his terminology of "pirouette" which seems apposite to the absurdity of such a scenario.

scholars unanimously agree that the practice of the speaker facing toward the Curia Hostilia during *contiones* could have continued no later than 133 BCE.⁹⁹ Thus, by the time of Caesar's leveling of the Comitium, the structure had ceased to be the location for *contiones* at least 90 years previously, if not earlier. In summary, then, by the late Republic the initial function of the Comitium as a gathering place for the populace, either for *contiones* or for *comitia*, had been discontinued for at least a couple of generations.

~ **Conclusion** ~

Thus, Caesar did indeed have a significant impact on the topography of the Comitium. In fact, he leveled and paved over the Comitium, effectively eliminating its preexisting status as an area demarcated from the Forum Romanum proper. However, this action may not be as "radical" as some scholars have argued. First of all, there may have been a precedent for Caesar's action in the encroachment on a portion of the Comitium by Sulla, a man who actually prided himself on his conservatism. Moreover, there is every indication that long before Caesar's time the Comitium had ceased to serve its original function as a meeting place for *comitia* and *contiones*. Perhaps, then, we should see Caesar's leveling of the Comitium not as a radical obliteration of a bastion of Republicanism but as a realignment of the structure's form with its function. Because the Comitium was no longer a meeting place for the populace, it no longer required a circular, stepped shape. In fact, as we will see, when taken together with Caesar's movement of the Rostra, his leveling of the Comitium constitutes a rationalization of the

⁹⁹ Morstein-Marx (2004, 46-47) likewise argues for a contemporaneous dating of the change in conitional location. Taylor (1966, 23-25) argues that orators had faced toward the Forum beginning with the construction of the Antiate Rostra in 338 BCE. Coarelli (1985, 157-158), however, accepts Plutarch's comment as true and, thus, tacitly dates the change in conitional procedure to 133 BCE.

area's topography in order to render it more consistent with and convenient for the usage of the space in his time.

~ **Rostra: *Quam Oculatissimo Loco*** ~

Naturally, Caesar's leveling and paving of the Comitium significantly affected the other structures in its vicinity. While a detailed analysis of the effect on each edifice or statue lies beyond the scope of this paper, the following two chapters will address Caesar's roughly simultaneous alterations to the two structures most closely related to the Comitium: the Rostra (speaker's platform) and the Curia (senate-house).

Pliny the Elder says of the Imperial Rostra that it was the "most conspicuous place."¹⁰⁰ As we will see, this very conspicuousness may lie at the heart of Caesar's movement of the Rostra to its position in Imperial times. In this chapter, I first delve more deeply into the evidence supporting the location of the speaker's platform in the Republican period and then examine the written and archaeological evidence for Caesar's construction of the new speaker's platform. For the sake of clarity, I will refer to the former as the "Republican Rostra" and the latter as the "Imperial Rostra," despite the fact that construction work on the "Imperial Rostra" began before the Imperial period proper. Next I analyze the new position of the Imperial Rostra in terms of contional and comitial experience. Finally, I contextualize the new location with respect to Caesar's other projects in the Forum Romanum.

¹⁰⁰ Pliny the Elder *Naturalis Historia* 34.11.24 = T43.

~ Location of the Mid- to Late Republican Rostra ~

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the mid to late Republican Rostra is now generally thought to have been located along the curved southern edge of the Comitium opposite the Curia Hostilia (Figures 2-3). The structure's location has generated substantial debate amongst scholars in the past, however, so an examination of both written and archaeological evidence will be useful for the present analysis.

Varro, in his *De Lingua Latina*, describes the Republican Rostra as being “in front of the Curia Hostilia.”¹⁰¹ Diodorus Siculus, describing the posting of the Twelve Tables on the Rostra in 449 BCE, uses similar language: “...to the Rostra [which] at that time [was] placed in front of the senate-house”¹⁰² but does not explicitly specify to which senate-house he refers. In his commentary on Cicero's *Pro Milone*, Asconius also attests to the close physical relationship between the Republican Rostra and senate-house and likewise fails to call the senate-house by name: “[f]or at that time the Rostra was not in the place where it is now but at the Comitium, almost joined to the senate-house.”¹⁰³ Asconius' lack of specificity has provoked extensive debate: does Asconius mean that the late Republican Rostra was “almost joined to” the senate-house standing at that time (the Curia Hostilia) or the senate-house standing in his own day (the Curia Iulia)?¹⁰⁴ Moreover, perhaps we should see a similar interpretive issue in Diodorus Siculus' statement, despite the fact that this passage has not raised as many concerns among

¹⁰¹ Varro *De Lingua Latina* 5.32.155 = T6. This work was completed after July 45 BCE but before Cicero's death on 7 December 43 BCE (Conte 1994, 211). As we will see, the new Rostra may have been begun by Caesar by this time but was not completed until 42 BCE; as a result, it seems most likely that Varro here describes the location of the mid to late Republican Rostra.

¹⁰² Diodorus Siculus 12.26.1 = T44.

¹⁰³ Asconius *In Milonianam* 12 = T27.

¹⁰⁴ Asconius' commentary seems to have been written between 54 and 57 CE (Conte 1994, 578) and thus, the location of the Rostra “now” refers to the position of the Imperial Rostra while the Rostra “at that time” must refer to the late Republican Rostra.

scholars as that of Asconius. Admittedly, though, in the case of Diodorus Siculus, the two alternatives would not result in a substantive difference in locating the Republican Rostra: in either case, a structure “in front of the senate-house” would be roughly in the area of the Comitium (Figures 2-3). There is more at stake in interpreting Asconius’ remark, on the other hand, because of the passage’s greater specificity: a structure “almost joined to the senate-house” could be in different locations depending on whether the senate-house in question is the mid Republican Curia Hostilia, the larger Sullan reconstruction of the Curia Hostilia or the Curia Iulia.

It is on this point that scholars have disagreed. Coarelli, for example, has argued for different interpretations in different articles. In the 1985 volume of his book on the Forum Romanum, he argues that the senate-house mentioned by Asconius must be the Sullan reconstruction of the Curia Hostilia.¹⁰⁵ Yet Coarelli seems to have changed his mind, for the 1986 volume of the same book asserts that the Curia Iulia was more likely the point of reference since the Curia Hostilia had disappeared by the time of Asconius’ writing.¹⁰⁶ Then, in his 1993 article in the *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae*, Coarelli puts forth both alternatives, without coming down on either side of the argument.¹⁰⁷ Morstein-Marx supports Coarelli’s initial argument for the Sullan reconstruction of the Curia Hostilia, while Richardson seems to tacitly identify the “senate-house” with an older phase of the Curia Hostilia.¹⁰⁸ I tend to think that Asconius here refers to Sulla’s rebuilding of the Curia Hostilia. In addition to the arguments adduced by the aforementioned scholars, I find Asconius’ reference to the Comitium

¹⁰⁵ Coarelli 1985, 240-241.

¹⁰⁶ Coarelli 1986, 142.

¹⁰⁷ Coarelli 1999, 213.

¹⁰⁸ Richardson 1973, 222 and 1992, 335; Morstein-Marx 2004, 54 n. 69.

illuminating: as discussed in the previous chapter, the Comitium was no longer a demarcated area in the Imperial period, and yet Asconius uses the phrase *ad Comitium* as a way of describing the location of the late Republican Rostra. Perhaps we should see his mention of the *curia* as a parallel reference to a structure that similarly no longer existed in his day: the late Republican Curia Hostilia.

Thus, on the basis of these three passages from Varro, Diodorus Siculus and Asconius, we can conclude that the late Republican Rostra was located close to and in front of the reconstructed Curia Hostilia and near the Comitium. Two other passages, however, provide seemingly contradictory evidence and have provoked further debate. Both Livy and Pliny the Elder describe the origination of the name “Rostra” from the attachment of ships’ beaks (*rostra*) to the speaker’s platform following the Roman naval victory over the Antiates in 338 BCE; in both cases, the authors refer to the Rostra as being “in the Forum.”¹⁰⁹ On the basis of these passages, Richardson has argued for the existence of two different speakers’ platforms: one early platform in the Comitium directly in front of the Curia Hostilia and a platform in the Forum Romanum that was not built until 338 BCE.¹¹⁰ Coarelli strongly disagrees with this interpretation,¹¹¹ and currently no other scholars seem to accept Richardson’s assertion. Indeed, in my view, the passages of both Livy and Pliny seem to refer to the attachment of beaks to a preexisting structure rather than a separate construction *ex ovo*. Pliny simply says that beaks were “attached to the platform” without any mention of new construction. The passage in Livy is more complicated since it includes the participle *exstructum*:

¹⁰⁹ Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 8.14.12 = T45; Pliny the Elder *Naturalis Historia* 34.11.20 = T46.

¹¹⁰ Richardson 1973, 222-223 and 1992, 334-335.

¹¹¹ For example, Coarelli 1986, 142 n. 16: “The attempt by Richardson to distinguish the Rostra of the Comitium from the Antiatic Rostra is unacceptable...” (È inaccettabile il tentativo del Richardson di distinguere i *Rostra* del Comizio dai *Rostra* antiatici...)” See also Coarelli 1985, 241 n. 32.

rostrisque earum suggestum in foro exstructum adornari placuit. While this participle could be interpreted as circumstantial with the resulting translation “it was resolved that a platform [be] erected in the Forum [Romanum and] adorned with the beaks of these ships,” it could also be an attributive participle with the translation “it was resolved that the platform [which was] erected in the Forum [Romanum] be adorned with the beaks of these ships.” In the absence of any other mention of construction, I lean towards the latter interpretation.

If we agree that all of these passages refer to one speaker’s platform, then it remains to reconcile the descriptions of the Republican Rostra as *ad Comitium*, *ante Curiam Hostiliam* and *in foro*. Several passages discussed in the previous chapter provide guidance for this reconciliation. Varro, Cicero and Plutarch all attest to a change in practice by orators speaking from the Rostra during the Republican period: whereas previously they stood on the Rostra facing the Comitium, after C. Licinius Crassus, they stood on the Rostra facing the Forum proper.¹¹² In order for such a change to be possible, we must imagine a speaker’s platform that forms a boundary between Comitium and Forum; in this way, the Rostra could be used as a platform for addressing crowds in either Comitium or Forum, and it would be both *ad Comitium* and *in foro* (Figures 2-3).

Moreover, the archaeological record seems to confirm this proposed solution. As mentioned in the previous chapter, excavations by Boni and Gjerstad uncovered an area now identified as the location of the Republican Rostra: platform C and platform J represent different phases of construction of the Republican Rostra (Figures 7 and 12). Specifically, construction of platform C is attributed by both Gjerstad and Coarelli to the

¹¹² Plutarch *Gaius Gracchus* 5.4 = T36; Cicero *De Amicitia* 25.96 = T37; Varro *De Re Rustica* 1.2.9 = T38. For further discussion of these passages, see the previous chapter.

third level of the Comitium and was replaced by platform J during the fifth level of the Comitium; the latter remained in place until Caesar's elimination of the Comitium shortly before his death.¹¹³ The position of these platforms coincides quite well with the information from the written sources above; as shown in Figure 7, platforms C and J are in front of the Curia Hostilia and form a boundary between the Comitium itself and the Forum Romanum proper. Thus, a firm location for the late Republican Rostra emerges: along the southern edge of the Comitium.

~ **Evidence for Caesar's Construction of the Imperial Rostra** ~

The passages from Diodorus Siculus and Asconius discussed in the previous section also provide further information: at the time of these authors' writing, the Rostra was no longer in its traditional location. In fact, Asconius explicitly states that the Rostra had changed location: "at that time the Rostra was not in the place where it is now."¹¹⁴ Diodorus Siculus is less overt, merely using the term τότε to draw a contrast with the Rostra's location in his day.¹¹⁵ Both of these passages allude, then, to an event about which we are informed explicitly by Dio Cassius:

... and the platform [which was] previously in the middle of the Forum [Romanum] was moved back into its present position, and the statue[s] of Sulla and Pompey were returned to it. And for this Caesar obtained glory, and because he yielded to Antony both the honor of the work and the inscription on it.¹¹⁶

Dio Cassius places this action amongst Caesar's activities at the beginning of 44 BCE; yet it is difficult to determine whether this date marks the inauguration or completion of

¹¹³ Gjerstad 1941; Coarelli 1986, 124-126 and 1999, 213. One should note that, despite disagreement between Gjerstad and Coarelli on the absolute dating of these levels (Figure 3), both scholars agree that platform J would have constituted the late Republican Rostra up until Caesar's destruction of it along with the Comitium itself.

¹¹⁴ Asconius *In Milonianam* 12 = T27.

¹¹⁵ Diodorus Siculus 12.26.1 = T44.

¹¹⁶ Dio Cassius 43.49.1-2 = T47.

construction. The reference to a dedicatory inscription lends weight toward the latter but in and of itself is not sufficient evidence to claim that the Imperial Rostra was completed prior to Caesar's murder on the Ides of March in that year. Furthermore, Sextus Pomponius, a jurist writing under Hadrian, Antoninus Pius and Marcus Aurelius, is quoted in Justinian's *Digesta* referring to the Imperial Rostra as *rostra Augusti*; this appellation suggests at least some input from Augustus, despite the absence of any direct reference to the first emperor's work on the structure.¹¹⁷

Fortunately, the archaeological record provides further information. Since the moment of its discovery in 1835, the so-called "Rostra Augusti", a platform located at the northwestern end of the Forum Romanum (Figure 13), has been identified as the Imperial Rostra.¹¹⁸ This monument consists of two separate but connected structures: 1) a semi-circular concrete platform to the northwest with a rear staircase and 2) a larger rectilinear platform of *opus quadratum* to the southeast. Of primary importance in interpreting this monument is an understanding of the relationship between (and, consequently, the relative chronology of) the two structures. Although the beginning of the twentieth century saw some debate over the relative dating of the two parts of the monument, the hemicycle is now agreed to antedate the rectilinear structure.¹¹⁹ Coarelli, among others, has argued for this relative chronology, introducing four primary pieces of evidence. First, the southeastern façade of the hemicycle, which is now blocked from public view by the rectilinear feature, was faced in expensive marble (Figure 14); Coarelli

¹¹⁷ Pomponius in Justinian *Digesta* 1.2.9.43 = T48.

¹¹⁸ Verduchi 1999, 214; Coarelli 1985, 245.

¹¹⁹ Coarelli 1985, 247. For one (no longer accepted) argument for an earlier dating of the rectilinear structure than the hemicycle, see Jordan 1871-1907, 1.2.239-244.

persuasively draws attention to the absurdity of such an arrangement if this façade was not originally open to view without the encumbrance of the rectilinear structure:

...it appears evident that the rich marble decoration that covers the façade of the hemicycle would be incomprehensible if intended to remain closed inside the confined setting proceeding from the construction of the rectilinear façade, a setting certainly not accessible to the public and, among other things, entirely devoid of light.¹²⁰

Second, Coarelli points to the relative positions of the moldings of the two structures; on the northern side, the lower molding of the rectilinear structure overlaps that of the hemicycle and the latter has been “broken off in order to allow buttressing”.¹²¹ The photograph and line drawing provided by Coarelli (Figures 15-16) do seem to portray this relationship, but without seeing the relationship in person, I would be hesitant to stake the argument on this point alone. Yet Coarelli’s third argument provides another piece of persuasive evidence: the lower molding of the hemicycle sticks directly out of the Caesarian pavement of the Forum Romanum which, in turn, abuts the hemicycle, while the Augustan pavement of the Forum clearly abuts the lower molding of the rectilinear façade. As a result, Coarelli argues, the following relative chronologies must hold: the hemicycle must predate (but just slightly) the Caesarian pavement (ca. 44 BCE), the rectilinear feature must postdate the hemicycle and, in turn, predate the Augustan pavement (14 BCE - 9 BCE).¹²² Finally, Coarelli argues that the building materials and methods used for the hemicycle are consistent with those current in the late Republic. He provides as precedents Republican buildings that used the types of marble employed in

¹²⁰ Coarelli 1985, 247: “...apparirà evidente che la ricchissima decorazione marmorea che copre la facciata dell'emicyclo sarebbe incomprensibile, se destinata a restare chiusa entro il ristretto ambiente ricavato con la costruzione della facciata rettilinea, ambiente certamente non accessibile al pubblico, e tra l'altro del tutto privo di luce.”

¹²¹ Coarelli 1985, 254: “Qui infatti la cornice inferiore della tribuna rettilinea si sovrappone all'analogha cornice dell'emicyclo, che in questo punto è spezzata per permettere l'addossamento.”

¹²² Coarelli 1985, 254-255.

the hemicycle (Africano and Porta Santa) and points out that the attachment of plasterwork directly onto the concrete core (as in the hemicycle) is not an Imperial practice but, rather, consistent with a dating to the late Republic.¹²³ As a result of these arguments, it is generally accepted that the hemicycle is the Caesarian Rostra while the rectilinear façade represents Augustus' later addition to the structure.¹²⁴

Yet some concerns have been raised over these attributions. First, no fittings have been found in the extant slabs of Porta Santa on the hemicycle's façade that would enable the attachment of bronze *rostra*. Coarelli argues that the holes may have been located in the pilasters of Africano marble but at a higher elevation that is no longer preserved.¹²⁵ While this proposal could be true, it is virtually impossible to prove and we should be hesitant to disregard entirely the difficulty posed by the absence of fittings for the *rostra*. Another possible concern is the relatively small size of the hemicycle. Richardson, for example, explains that “[t]he platform is clearly inadequate to accommodate the accumulation of monuments that must have found place there, and we have our choice of extending it on supports...or of finding a place for the Rostra Caesaris elsewhere.”¹²⁶ Unfortunately, there is no easy explanation to satisfy this concern either, but in general the points in favor of these attributions seem to outweigh those potentially militating against it. The location of the so-called Rostra Augusti is consistent with the description provided in the written sources, and the building material and methods of the hemicycle as well as its position relative to the Forum pavement are consistent with a dating to the late Republic.

¹²³ Coarelli 1985, 256-257.

¹²⁴ Verduchi 1999, 214-215.

¹²⁵ Coarelli 1985, 255.

¹²⁶ Richardson 1992, 337.

If this structure is, indeed, the Imperial Rostra, then Caesar's change in the location of the speaker's platform represented a significant departure from tradition. No longer was the Rostra closely connected to Comitium and senate-house; rather, it stood alone in the center of the Forum Romanum. Yet, it is possible to see more at work in Caesar's movement of the Rostra than mere radicalism.

~ **The Political Function of the Central Forum in the Late Republic** ~

As discussed in the previous chapter, by the late Republic the Comitium had long fallen into disuse as a location for *contiones* or *comitia*. In fact, beginning with Licinius Crassus in 145 BCE, speakers standing on the Rostra had turned toward the Forum Romanum proper to address the crowds gathered there rather than towards the Comitium.¹²⁷ So how then was the space of the Comitium used during *contiones* or *comitia*? At worst, it simply may have remained vacant, although that eventuality seems unlikely if a particularly large crowd were gathered in the Forum. It is more likely that the Comitium also filled with people to watch and listen to the speeches or other activities; yet, with the speaker facing away from the Comitium, standing room in the Comitium was surely not at a premium. Spectators standing there would neither be able to see the face and gestures of the speaker nor be able to hear as clearly. Moreover, if we imagine the entire central Forum area filled with spectators, as represented visually by the region of Figure 17 that is shaded in red, the speaker would be virtually surrounded on all sides by spectators. Of course this arrangement would make the task of oratory more difficult and less effective; but the prospect of being entirely surrounded while speaking in the Forum could even be downright perilous during the tumultuous political

¹²⁷ Plutarch *Gaius Gracchus* 5.4 = T36; Cicero *De Amicitia* 25.96 = T37; Varro *De Re Rustica* 1.2.9 = T38. For further discussion of these passages, see the previous chapter.

environment of the late Republic where the presence of gangs in the Forum was woefully prevalent.¹²⁸

When considered in terms of the contional or comitial experience, the location of the Imperial Rostra was infinitely more practical. If we imagine the Forum in this incarnation filled with spectators, as represented visually by the region of Figure 18 shaded in red, nearly everyone in attendance would be able to see the speaker's face; perhaps a few would be to the speaker's side if, for instance, a spectator were standing in the former Comitium, but no spectator would need to stand behind the orator. The benefits of such an arrangement are numerous for everyone involved. Spectators could gain the full experience of the speech: seeing the expressions and body language of the speaker as well as hearing the orator's voice clearly as it was projected forward. Orators could more easily and effectively address the audience in front of them, and they could rest easier knowing the likelihood of being surrounded by an angry mob was significantly lower. In sum, the new location of the Rostra would have improved the experience for all those involved and made more efficient use of the space. In fact, the efficiency of this arrangement recalls Pliny the Elder's statement from the beginning of this chapter: it is perhaps self-evident that the most conspicuous place (*quam oculatissimo loco*) in the Forum Romanum makes for the ideal position to situate a speaker. Thus, we should see Caesar's movement of the Rostra not as a high-handed dismantling of the traditional order but as a practical measure that served to realign the form of the area to suit its function at that time.

¹²⁸ Cicero (*Pro Sestio* 76 = T49), for example, describes his brother's near-death experience at the hands of Clodius' gangs in 57 BCE: "...having been driven from the Rostra, he lay in the Comitium and covered himself with the bodies of slaves and freedmen and then defended his life by the protection of night and flight, not of law and justice."

~ A New Axis for the Forum Romanum ~

As I have argued, Caesar's elimination of the Comitium and relocation of the Rostra were tied to one another and, even more importantly, to the functionality of these spaces. This consideration of the interrelatedness of buildings reveals a more cohesive view of the ancient cityscape on Caesar's part than most Republican Romans had hitherto displayed. Indeed, if we look briefly at Caesar's other building projects in the Forum Romanum, it will become clear that his projects were connected and served to create a more unified and uniform monumental area at Rome's heart.

Yet even before Caesar's interventions in the topography of the Forum Romanum, an important preliminary step had taken place. During his consulship in 78 BCE, Quintus Lutatius Catulus built the Tabularium, the records office located along the saddle between Arx and Capitolium (Figure 19).¹²⁹ An inscription commemorates this construction: "Quintus Lutatius Catulus, son of Quintus, [grandson] of Quintus, [as] consul, according to the decision of the senate took care and likewise approved that the substructure and records office be built."¹³⁰ The Tabularium and its substructure constituted a monumental façade of multiple stories looking out on the northwestern edge of the Forum Romanum.¹³¹ The importance of this building as a backdrop for activity in the Forum Romanum has been recognized by several scholars; Favro, for example, states:

¹²⁹ Richardson 1992, 376-77; Sommella 2000, 17-18.

¹³⁰ CIL I² 737 = T49.

¹³¹ Richardson 1992, 376; Sommella 2000, 17.

The Tabularium's towering elevation served as a formal curtain wall defining the northwestern edge of the Forum Romanum. Thus, the project reflects a concern with the staging of new and existing structures into a cohesive scheme. Such urban choreography was well known in Hellenistic cities where...it was made possible through individual effort.¹³²

Thus, at its construction, the Tabularium both monumentalized and distinctly defined one edge of the Forum Romanum. Yet the other edges of the Forum were neither monumental nor well defined. For example, the façades of the Temple of Saturn and the Temple of Castor and Pollux along the southwestern edge of the Forum Romanum were not aligned; nor was the space between the temples uniform or monumental but rather consisted of different shops that fronted directly onto the Forum and hid the rather short Basilica Sempronia behind them (Figure 17). This lack of monumentality and cohesion would start to change as Caesar undertook his building projects in the 40s BCE.

In addition to Caesar's alterations to the Comitium-Rostra-Curia complex, he began construction on a monumental basilica, the Basilica Iulia, in the area previously occupied by the Basilica Sempronia along the southwestern edge of the Forum between the Temple of Saturn and the Temple of Castor and Pollux (Figures 18-19).¹³³ Caesar also seems to have financed (at least in part) the rebuilding of the Basilica Aemilia along the northeastern edge of the Forum, directly opposite the new Basilica Iulia.¹³⁴ Favro succinctly explains the impact of these two structures: "...the Basilicae Julia and Aemilia rose in opposition six degrees off parallel. These huge structures reinforced the new axis

¹³² Favro 1996, 56. Richardson (1992, 376) makes a similar remark: "[The Tabularium] consists of a number of distinct parts but served especially to provide a dramatic backdrop to the northwest end of the Forum Romanum..."

¹³³ Augustus *Res Gestae* 20 = T51; Richardson 1992, 52.

¹³⁴ Plutarch *Caesar* 29.3 = T52; Appian *Bellum Civile* 2.26 = T53; Cicero *Ad Atticum* 4.16.8 = T10; Richardson 1992, 54-56.

and blocked views outward to the rest of the city.”¹³⁵ The effect described by Favro can be seen in Figures 19-20; after Caesar’s construction and financing of these basilicas, three of the Forum Romanum’s edges were lined with imposing edifices (Tabularium, Basilica Iulia and Basilica Aemilia). Together these buildings defined a new longitudinal axis for the Forum Romanum from northwest to southeast.

The traditional Comitium-Rostra-Curia complex, oriented strictly along the cardinal points, was distinctly at odds with this new axis.¹³⁶ The elimination of the Comitium eliminated its disruption of the new lines of the Forum. But the new Rostra played a more important role; positioned in the middle of the northwestern edge of the Forum Romanum, the Rostra strengthened the new axis even further (Figure 19). And the new axis served to direct attention more overtly to the Rostra, thereby making it *quam oculatissimo loco*.

~ Conclusion ~

It is clear from the evidence reviewed that Caesar initiated the relocation of the speaker’s platform from its traditional location in the Republican period (along the southern edge of the Comitium) to the center of the northwestern edge of the Forum Romanum. Naturally, there is something “radical” about this project: Caesar relocated a structure that had remained in the same location for centuries. Yet this does not seem to have been radicalism for the sake of radicalism. Rather, the rationale behind the old organization of Comitium and Rostra no longer had currency; the new organization of Forum and Rostra was better adapted to the way the spaces functioned in Caesar’s day.

¹³⁵ Favro 1996, 69. As she points out in her notes, the earlier basilicas (Basilicae Sempronia and Fulvia) did not define the edges of the Forum as “crisply” because they were rather smaller and shorter than the new, monumentalized basilicas.

¹³⁶ Figure 2 (which shows both Republican and Imperial structures) provides a visual sense of this incongruity in alignment.

The new location and orientation of the Rostra enhanced the experience of oratory for both speaker and audience, improving sight- (and sound-) lines. Moreover, the new location of the Rostra helped to emphasize the recently developed northwest-southeast axis of the Forum around which the rest of the square was beginning to rally. The movement of the Rostra, then, seems to have been part of a broader, more cohesive plan to rationalize and monumentalize the Forum Romanum.

~ From Curia Hostilia to Iulia ~

Of Caesar's building program in the northern corner of the Forum Romanum, the structure most readily visible to modern visitors is the Curia Iulia, the Imperial senate-house (Figure 21). Although a senate-house had existed in Rome since time immemorial in the form of the Curia Hostilia, Caesar's construction of the Curia Iulia went against the traditional grain: his planned senate-house would have a different location and orientation than all previous iterations of such a structure.¹³⁷ The early and mid Republican Curia Hostilia was oriented along the cardinal points and stood on the north side of and on axis with the Comitium with its front façade facing toward the Rostra and Graecostasis (Figures 2-3). Even Sulla's reconstruction of the Republican senate-house, perhaps called the Curia Cornelia rather than the Curia Hostilia,¹³⁸ retained this traditional location and orientation though its size surpassed that of its predecessors and, as a result, it may have impinged upon the Comitium (Figure 11). Yet Caesar positioned his Curia Iulia on the northeastern side of the Comitium (upon which it also impinged), oriented on a northeast-southwest axis, facing the Forum Romanum but with its rear façade

¹³⁷ The extent to which Caesar himself influenced the location, orientation, dimensions and form of the final structure will be discussed below; the building was not completed by Caesar himself but rather finished by Augustus in 29 BCE.

¹³⁸ This issue will be discussed below.

perpendicular to and opening onto the southwestern side of the Forum Iulium (Figures 3 and 19).

Perhaps understandably, this action has been interpreted as high-handed and indicative of Caesar's political subordination of the Senate. Coarelli, for example, states:

“...the back entrance of [the Curia Iulia] opened, without any mediation, onto the *porticus duplex* of the Forum [Iulium], in a subordinate and marginal position with respect to the Temple of Venus Genetrix: in this way, the state of subjection of the Senate with respect to the new power was emphasized in a most conspicuous way.”¹³⁹

Similarly, Paul Zanker calls the Curia Iulia “a kind of annexe to the Forum Iulium”¹⁴⁰ and argues that Caesar's alignment of the Curia Iulia with the Forum Iulium was “a symbolic gesture that cocked a snook at all Republican traditions.”¹⁴¹

Yet these arguments are too simple; they address only the Curia Iulia's relationship to one of the many surrounding structures (the Forum Iulium) and fail to address the functional value of Caesar's relocation of the senate-house sufficiently. In this chapter, I attempt a more thorough analysis. After examining the written and archaeological evidence for Caesar's work on the Curia Iulia, I consider the relative locations of Curia Hostilia and Iulia. I then review the precedent set by Sulla through his rebuilding of the senate-house and address the religious issues inherent in the relocation of an inaugurated *templum*. Finally, after reviewing possible rationales for Caesar's construction of the Curia Iulia in its final location and orientation, I examine the structure

¹³⁹ Coarelli 1985, 236-237: “...l'ingresso posteriore di quest'ultima si apriva, senza alcuna mediazione, sulla *porticus duplex* del Foro, in posizione subordinata e marginale rispetto al tempio di Venere Genitrice: veniva così sottolineato nel modo più evidente lo stato di soggezione del senato rispetto al nuovo potere.”

¹⁴⁰ Zanker 2009, 293.

¹⁴¹ Zanker 2009, 290.

in conjunction with the other major elements of Caesar's building program in the northern portion of the Forum Romanum: namely, the Comitium and Rostra.

~ **Evidence for Caesar's Construction of the Curia Iulia** ~

Dio Cassius states that early in 44 BCE, Julius Caesar was permitted the honor of building a new senate-house: "When [Caesar] accepted these [honors], [the senators] assigned to him the [charge of]...constructing a new senate-house, since the [Curia] Hostilia, although repaired, had been demolished..."¹⁴² It is difficult to determine how far (if at all) construction had progressed by the time of Caesar's murder on the Ides of March in 44 BCE. The building was certainly not complete; in fact, it was not inaugurated until 29 BCE under Augustus.¹⁴³ Some scholars have interpreted the aforementioned passage in Dio Cassius as sufficient evidence in and of itself for Caesar's commencement of building activity on the Curia Iulia prior to his death.¹⁴⁴ Yet the passage does not explicitly attest to the beginning of construction but rather to Caesar's receipt of permission for such construction. As a result, Nicholas Purcell, for example, has argued that construction did not begin under Caesar in 44 BCE but rather under the triumvirate in 42 BCE.¹⁴⁵

Several references in the written record seem to support Purcell's proposal. In 43 BCE, there was a vote to rebuild the Curia Hostilia, presumably in lieu of continuing (or beginning) work on the Curia Iulia: "Then a severe plague befell nearly all Italy, and on

¹⁴² Dio Cassius 44.5.1-2 = T7.

¹⁴³ Dio Cassius 51.22.1 = T8; Augustus *Res Gestae* 19 = T9.

¹⁴⁴ For example, Richardson (1992, 103) calls the Curia Iulia the "curia begun by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. to replace the Curia Hostilia as rebuilt by Faustus Sulla." Likewise, Coarelli (2007, 57) says, "Julius Caesar began the construction of a new Senate chamber to replace the earlier Curia Hostilia," and Platner (1929, 143) calls the building "the new senate house begun by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. just before his assassination."

¹⁴⁵ Purcell 1995, 337.

account of this it was voted that the Curia Hostilia be rebuilt...¹⁴⁶ However, the rebuilding of the Curia Hostilia was never undertaken; rather, the following year the triumvirs “began to build the senate-house named Iulian after [Julius Caesar] beside the so-called Comitium, as had been voted.”¹⁴⁷ Purcell’s interpretation of these passages as evidence that “[n]othing had been done [on the Curia Iulia] by the beginning of 43” seems plausible.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, it may be significant that in the *Res Gestae* Augustus uses different language to describe his work on the Curia Iulia, on the one hand, and the Forum Iulium and Basilica Iulia, on the other.¹⁴⁹ In the first instance he says, “I built” (*feci*), the same term used for his construction *ex nihilo* of the Temple of Mars Ultor and the Forum Augustum.¹⁵⁰ Yet in the latter case, he specifies that he “completed [*perfeci*] the Forum Iulium and the basilica [Iulia], which was between the Temple of Castor and the Temple of Saturn, works begun and almost finished by [his] father.”¹⁵¹ At the very least, this difference in terminology implies that the Curia Iulia was closer to a state of nonexistence (like the Temple of Mars Ultor and the Forum Augustum) than to a state of near completion (like the Forum Iulium and the Basilica Iulia) by the time of Augustus’ undertaking of the project.

The archaeological record for Caesar’s initiation of work on the Curia Iulia provides further information. As discussed in the first chapter, both Gjerstad and Coarelli

¹⁴⁶ Dio Cassius 45.17.8 = T54. Tortorici (1993, 332) views this proposition as evidence for a “vigorously resumed senatorial opposition” (“l’opposizione senatoria riprese vigore nuovamente”), but I find no indication in the passage itself for senatorial opposition to the Curia Iulia *per se* either in 43 BCE or prior to that time; rather, this suggestion is posed as a typically Roman conservative reaction to a series of prodigies.

¹⁴⁷ Dio Cassius 47.19.1 = T55. Our understanding of this passage is dependent on how we interpret the imperfect ἠκοδόμουν; I personally think it is an “inchoative imperfect,” implying either the beginning or resumption of construction. The reference to the voting of the construction (ὡςπερ ἐψηφίστο) must refer back to the decree of 44 BCE (Dio Cassius 44.5.1-2 = T7).

¹⁴⁸ Purcell 1995, 337.

¹⁴⁹ Purcell (1995, 337) also takes note of this difference.

¹⁵⁰ Augustus *Res Gestae* 19 and 21 = T9 and 56, respectively.

¹⁵¹ Augustus *Res Gestae* 20 = T51.

date the seventh level of the Comitium to the Caesarian period (i.e., the years immediately preceding Caesar's death in 44 BCE). Coarelli describes this pavement and the contemporaneous paving of the Forum Romanum proper in the following way: "This pavement of the Forum coincides with the seventh [pavement] of the Comitium, clearly oriented with the Curia Iulia and the new Rostra."¹⁵² Because the seventh pavement of the Comitium, the contemporaneous pavement of the Forum and the foundations of the new Rostra can be dated to the Caesarian period (as we have seen in the previous two chapters), the orientation of the Curia Iulia with these structures may support a similar dating of the commencement of construction on that building.

Excavations of the area between the Curia Iulia and Forum Iulium (Figures 22-23), undertaken in 1985-1986 and published by Chiara Morselli and Edoardo Tortorici, also shed light on the issue. These scholars successfully distinguish between the "original nucleus of the Caesarian intervention" (the portions in solid black in Figure 22) and the "continuation of the works on the part of Augustus" (the portions in solid black in Figure 23).¹⁵³ Morselli and Tortorici conclude that "it is likely that work on the Curia [Iulia] had scarcely begun when, in March of 44 BCE, Caesar was killed."¹⁵⁴ This archaeological evidence, in conjunction with the references from the written record discussed above, suggest that very little of the Curia Iulia was completed by Caesar prior to his death in 44 BCE. At most, we can attribute to the dictator the decision on a new

¹⁵² Coarelli 1985, 136: "Questa pavimentazione del Foro coincide con la settima del Comizio, chiaramente orientata con la *curia Iulia* e i nuovi *Rostra*."

¹⁵³ Morselli and Tortorici 1990, 222: "Tali riferimenti [puntuali nelle fonti letterarie], unitamente ai risultati degli scavi 1985-86, hanno permesso di riconoscere il nucleo originale dell'intervento cesariano dalla prosecuzione dei lavori da parte di Augusto."

¹⁵⁴ Morselli and Tortorici 1990, 42-43: "È probabile che i lavori alla Curia fossero appena iniziati quando, nel marzo del 44 a.C., Cesare venne ucciso."

location and orientation for the senate-house; the final size and form of the building probably owe more to Augustus than to his predecessor.

The location and orientation of the Curia Iulia has also been a source of debate amongst scholars. The only reference to the building's location in the ancient sources is a remark by Pliny the Elder: "...the senate-house which [Augustus] was dedicating in the Comitium."¹⁵⁵ As noted in the first chapter, the correct location of the Comitium was not proposed until 1871.¹⁵⁶ A dozen years later, on the basis of an analysis of the literary sources and unpublished Renaissance drawings, Rodolfo Lanciani correctly identified the church of Sant'Adriano with the ancient Imperial senate-house.¹⁵⁷ After the church of Sant'Adriano was dismantled, it was confirmed to be, in fact, a Diocletianic rebuilding of the Curia Iulia (Figure 21); it is located on the northeastern side of the Comitium and is oriented on a northeast-southwest axis, perpendicular to and opening onto the southwestern side of the Forum Iulium (Figures 3 and 19).¹⁵⁸

Debate since Lanciani's time has centered on whether or not Diocletian's rebuilding adhered to the original plan of the Curia Iulia and, thus, whether or not the extant structure accurately represents the location, dimensions and orientation of the Caesarian foundations. Richardson argues that the original Curia Iulia probably had the same orientation as Diocletian's building but may have stood somewhat northwest of the extant structure.¹⁵⁹ However, as early as 1969, Lily Ross Taylor and Russell T. Scott persuasively argued that certain features of the interior design of Diocletian's building are only explicable in terms of pre-Augustan voting procedures, suggesting that this building

¹⁵⁵ Pliny the Elder *Naturalis Historia* 35.10.27 = T57.

¹⁵⁶ Jordan 1871-1907, 1.2: plan.

¹⁵⁷ Lanciani 1883.

¹⁵⁸ Platner-Ashby 1929, 144; Richardson 1993, 103; Coarelli 2007, 57.

¹⁵⁹ Richardson 1978, 359-362 and 1992, 103. See also Anderson 1984, 50-51.

must have been closely modeled on the Caesarian-Augustan structure.¹⁶⁰ The excavations of 1985-1986 confirmed this latter postulation: concrete work and blocks of travertine attributed to the Caesarian-Augustan Curia Iulia were found directly beneath the extant Diocletianic building.¹⁶¹ These findings allowed Tortorici to assert definitively that “the Diocletianic building corresponds in both dimensions and orientation with the original plan of the Curia Iulia.”¹⁶² Thus, we obtain a clear picture of the location and orientation chosen by Caesar: a rectangular site on the northeastern side of the Comitium (upon which it impinged), oriented on a northeast-southwest axis, facing the Forum Romanum proper but with its rear façade perpendicular to and opening onto the southwestern side of the Forum Iulium (Figure 19).

~ The Location and Orientation of the Curia Hostilia ~

The new location and orientation of the Curia Iulia were significantly different from those of previous senate-houses. The Curia Hostilia, the construction of which was attributed in antiquity to the semi-legendary king Tullus Hostilius,¹⁶³ was the original senate-house of Rome and was intimately connected with the Comitium; Livy, for example, calls the early Republican Comitium the “forecourt of the senate-house.”¹⁶⁴ Unfortunately, without further excavation of the area surrounding the Comitium, it is impossible to pinpoint on an archaeological basis the precise location, orientation and dimensions of the early or mid Republican Curia Hostilia. Fortunately, however, the

¹⁶⁰ Taylor and Scott 1969, 538-539; they conclude, “[i]n size, site, orientation, and, we believe, in details of interior design [the Diocletianic building] reproduces the Curia Julia of 29 B.C.”

¹⁶¹ Morselli and Tortorici 1990, 229; Tortorici 1993, 332-333.

¹⁶² Tortorici 1993, 333: “Tali nuovi ritrovamenti hanno permesso di chiarire definitivamente...che l’edificio diocleziano corrisponde per dimensioni ed orientamento all’impianto originale della *c.I.*”

¹⁶³ Varro *De Lingua Latina* 5.32.155 = T6.

¹⁶⁴ Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 45.24.12 = T58.

written record provides important pieces of evidence that have enabled Coarelli to propose a reconstruction of the structure that has received widespread acceptance.

The most important source for the reconstruction of the space of the Curia-Comitium is a passage from Pliny the Elder:

In the Twelve Tables only the rising and setting [of the sun are] are mentioned, [but] after some years *meridies* ('noon') was also added, the *accensus* of the consuls proclaiming it when, from the senate-house, he caught sight of the sun between the Rostra and the Graecostasis; he also proclaimed *suprema* ('the last [hour]'), [when] the sun had gone down from the Columna Maenia to the Carcer, but this [was done] only on fair days, all the way up until the First Punic War.¹⁶⁵

This passage describes the use of the Comitium and its surrounding monuments as a sort of solar clock in the years following the promulgation of the Twelve Tables in 449 BCE. On the basis of this passage, Coarelli argues that in this period the Curia Hostilia must have stood on the north side of the rectilinear Comitium with its front façade looking toward the Rostra and Graecostasis located on the south side (square area outlined with dotted line in Figure 3); only this positioning would enable a viewer looking south from the Curia Hostilia to see the sun between the Rostra and Graecostasis at midday.¹⁶⁶ It is significant that Coarelli's proposed location for the early Republican Curia Hostilia has been accepted even by those who disagree with his reconstruction of the Comitium; for example, even Carafa locates the early Republican Curia Hostilia north of the Comitium,

¹⁶⁵ Pliny the Elder *Naturalis Historia* 7.60.212 = T12. The topography of the area suggested in this passage is also confirmed by a series of other *testimonia*: Varro's *De Lingua Latina* (5.32.155, 6.9.89 and 6.2.5 = T6, 13 and 14, respectively) and Censorinus' *De Die Natali* (24.3 = T15); Coarelli (1986, 138-142) cites all of these passages as relevant to his argument.

¹⁶⁶ Coarelli 1986, 141. Anderson (1984, 17-18) also provides a useful summary of the argument.

oriented on the cardinal points with its front façade facing the Rostra (Figure 24).¹⁶⁷ Thus, although it is difficult to plot the precise lines of the early Republican Curia Hostilia, its general location and orientation can be reconstructed with a fair degree of certainty: it was a rectangular building oriented along the cardinal points, located on the north side of and on axis with the Comitium (probably beneath the modern-day church of Santi Martina e Luca), with its front façade facing toward the Rostra and Graecostasis located on the southern side of the Comitium (square area outlined with dotted line in Figure 3).

Surprisingly, there is no mention in the written record of restoration work on the Curia Hostilia from the time of the Gallic sack ca. 390 BCE to Sulla's reconstruction of the senate-house ca. 80 BCE; yet it is hard to imagine that such an extensively used structure did not require restoration work over such a lengthy period.¹⁶⁸ It seems most likely that renovations or restorations of some sort were undertaken at various points in time, but either the renovations were not recorded or the record of them has not survived to modern times. As a result, given the evidence currently available, it is impossible to state with certainty whether the mid Republican Curia Hostilia retained the exact same location and orientation as the early Republican structure described by Pliny the Elder. However, Coarelli has collected several pieces of physical evidence to suggest that this was, indeed, the case.

North of the church and east of the ancient *clivus Lautumniarum*, a spur of tufa was discovered upon which stands a retaining wall in *opus quadratum* (Figures 3 and 10),

¹⁶⁷ In fact, there is unanimous agreement that the early Republican senate-house was strictly oriented along the cardinal points (Anderson 1984, 18: "All scholars since Mommsen have accepted that the Comitium and Curia were strictly oriented during the Republic.")

¹⁶⁸ Anderson 1984, 14.

which seems to date no earlier than the third century BCE, a date corresponding to Coarelli's fifth level of the Comitium.¹⁶⁹ Coarelli argues that this retaining wall formed the western edge of a terrace that extended east all the way to the area that would become the *tabernae* of the Forum Iulium; the terrace, he argues, supported the mid Republican Curia Hostilia (Figures 3 and 10).¹⁷⁰ He draws attention to the shape of the third *taberna* from the south located at the northeast corner of the church of Santi Martina e Luca: "the back wall of the third *taberna* from the south adopts a perfect north-south course, clearly adapting to the eastern wall of the Curia [Hostilia]."¹⁷¹ Finally, Coarelli points out the remains of a tufa wall in *opus quadratum* running approximately east-west and located between the retaining wall and *tabernae* (Figures 3 and 10): this he identifies as a terracing wall demarcating the northern limit for the mid Republican Curia Hostilia.¹⁷² On the basis of these three pieces of evidence, Coarelli persuasively argues that in the third century BCE, at the time of the change in the form of the Comitium from rectilinear to circular, the Curia Hostilia underwent substantial restorations or complete reconstruction but retained approximately the same location and orientation as the early Republican Curia Hostilia described by Pliny the Elder (circular area outlined with solid line in Figure 3).¹⁷³

Thus, Caesar's decision in the construction of the Curia Iulia to diverge from the long-standing location and orientation of the senate-house may, indeed, seem radical to scholars. Moreover, it is certainly true that the rear façade of the Curia Iulia was

¹⁶⁹ Coarelli 1986, 154.

¹⁷⁰ Coarelli 1986, 154-156.

¹⁷¹ Coarelli 1986, 154: "In particolare, il lato posteriore della terza taberna a partire da sud assume un andamento nord-sud perfetto, adattandosi palesemente al muro orientale della Curia."

¹⁷² Coarelli 1986, 154.

¹⁷³ Coarelli 1986, 156.

perpendicular to and opened onto the Forum Iulium, rendering the senate-house, in some scholars' opinions, little more than a forecourt for a structure dedicated to Caesar's divine heritage. However, as we will see, Sulla's reconstructed senate-house had already set a precedent for divergence from tradition, and if we consider the Curia Iulia in conjunction with Caesar's alterations to the Rostra and the Comitium, it appears not as an imperious upheaval of tradition but as part of a unified plan for rationalization of the area.

~ The Precedent of Sulla ~

As discussed at length in the first chapter, the senate-house rebuilt by Sulla ca. 81 BCE seems to have been larger than its predecessors, though it is difficult to determine with any certainty in which direction this extension ran. Yet Sulla's changes to the dimensions of the senate-house, regardless of their precise specifications, provided Caesar with some precedent for alteration of the traditional size and location of such a building, though Caesar's alterations were, of course, more extensive.

Perhaps as importantly, however, Sulla's expansion of the senate-house affords interesting insights on a potentially important issue: the religious implications of the alteration of the boundaries of an inaugurated *templum*. After all, it is a well-attested fact that the Curia Hostilia (and the Curia Iulia) was, in the words of Varro, a "*templum* on earth," that is, "a place limited by certain formulaic words for the sake of augury or [taking] the auspices."¹⁷⁴ As a result, we might reasonably suppose an individual like Sulla or Caesar to be in danger of impiety when changing the boundaries of such a space that had been determined through religious ritual. However, by examining ancient

¹⁷⁴ Varro *De Lingua Latina* 7.2.8 = T16. For explicit designation of the senate-houses as *templa*, see Varro *De Lingua Latina* 7.2.10 = T59 and Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 14.7.7 = T60; further analysis of these two passages follows below. For a modern discussion of *templa*, see Weinstock 1932.

passages regarding *templa* and by analyzing the example set by Sulla, we can come to a more nuanced interpretation of this issue.

The most extensive ancient discussion of *templa* is that of Varro in book seven of *De Lingua Latina*. Here, amongst other things, he treats the issue of “inviolability” (*sanctitas*):

[As to the fact] that [Ennius] adds that *templa* are wild places [*tesca*], those who have written glossaries say that *templa* are inviolable [*sancta*]. This is false: for the Curia Hostilia is a *templum* and is not inviolable [*sancta*]; but that they think that a *templum* is a consecrated building [*aedes sacra*] seems to be because of the fact that in the city [of] Rome most consecrated buildings are *templa*, [and are] likewise inviolable [*sanctae*]...¹⁷⁵

The key term in this passage is *sanctus*, the primary meaning of which is “secured by religious sanctions, sacrosanct, inviolable.”¹⁷⁶ Presumably, inviolability is the very characteristic which would preclude movement of the boundaries of *templa*. However, Varro adamantly denies the *sanctitas* of a *templum* and explicitly distinguishes between a “consecrated building” (*aedes sacra*) and a *templum*: although *aedes sacrae* are inviolable and most in Rome are *templa*, *aedes sacrae* need not be *templa* nor are *templa* necessarily inviolable. A passage in Aulus Gellius adapted from Varro provides further clarification:

...he instructed and demonstrated that, unless a decree of the senate is passed in a place established by an augur, which was called a *templum*, it was not legitimate. Therefore, both in the Curia Hostilia and in the [Curia] Pompeia and afterwards in the [Curia] Iulia, although these places were profane [*profana*], *templa* were established by augurs so that in them legitimate decrees of the senate could be passed [according to] the tradition of our ancestors.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Varro *De Lingua Latina* 7.2.10 = T59.

¹⁷⁶ *OLD*, s.v. “sanctus,” 1a.

¹⁷⁷ Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 14.7.7 = T60.

In this passage the key term is “profane” (*profanus*) which more specifically means “not consecrated” and serves as the antonym for the word *sacer*, which appears in the Varronian passage above.¹⁷⁸ Thus, when this passage is taken together with the first passage, the message is clear: although the Curia Hostilia and Curia Iulia are *templa*, they are *profanae*, that is, neither *sacrae* nor *sanctae*; in other words, they are neither inviolable nor sacrosanct. Therefore, Sulla’s or Caesar’s redefinition of the boundaries of the senate-house need not be seen as a violation of sacrosanctity as the redefinition of the boundaries of an *aedes sacra* might be. In fact, as we will see, Sulla rebuilt examples of both types of structure (*templum* and *aedes sacra*) and his different treatment of the two exemplifies the different status of the buildings discussed by Varro.

After the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus burned down in 83 BCE, Sulla undertook to rebuild it, though the majority of the reconstruction was completed by Quintus Lutatius Catulus after Sulla’s death in 78 BCE.¹⁷⁹ In describing the rebuilt temple, Dionysius of Halicarnassus emphasizes its retention of traditional foundations: “for the [temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus] built after the fire in the time of our fathers was devised upon the same foundations, differing from the ancient [temple] only in the extravagance of its material...”¹⁸⁰ Indeed, Sulla and Catulus seem to have rigidly prioritized conservatism in choosing the position of the new temple; as Aulus Gellius relates, for example, Catulus’ desire to alter the *area Capitolina* for aesthetic reasons was thwarted by religious scruples regarding the *favisae*:

¹⁷⁸ *LS*, s.v. “profanus,” I.

¹⁷⁹ Valerius Maximus 9.3.8 = T61; Tacitus *Historiae* 3.72.1-3 = T62; Plutarch *Publicola* 15.1 = T63.

¹⁸⁰ Dionysius of Halicarnassus 4.61.4 = T64.

Quintus Catulus, [as] overseer of rebuilding the Capitolium, had said that he had wanted to lower *the area Capitolina*, so that there might be an ascent to the temple by more steps and the podium might be higher in proportion to the size of the pediment, but that he could not do this since the *favisae* prevented [him]. [He said that] these [i.e., *favisae*] were certain chambers and cisterns which were in the area beneath the earth where ancient statues which had fallen from this temple and certain other sacred objects from consecrated gifts were accustomed to be placed.¹⁸¹

Both of these passages demonstrate the conspicuous scrupulousness of Sulla and Catulus in their restoration of the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus. Their behavior in this regard stands in marked contrast to Sulla's choices in rebuilding the senate-house: for the latter project, there seems to have been no concern with retaining the traditional foundations of the Curia Hostilia. In fact, this difference in Sulla's treatment of the two structures exemplifies the very difference in the buildings' status discussed by Varro: the Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus was an *aedes sacra* and, thus, was inviolable and its foundations could not be altered, but the senate-house was only a *templum* and not an *aedes sacra* and, thus, was not subject to the same restrictions of inviolability. As a result, we should not see either Sulla's or Caesar's changes in the location and orientation of the senate-house as religiously problematic.

~ **Possible Rationales for the Construction of the Curia Iulia** ~

Yet the most important questions still remain: why did Caesar initiate construction of a new senate-house so soon after Faustus Sulla's restoration of the Sullan structure, and why did Caesar alter the position and orientation of the senate-house? For

¹⁸¹ Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 2.10.2-3 = T65. For modern discussions of Sulla's and Catulus' conservatism in this project, see Richardson 1992, 223; De Angeli 1997, 149-150; and Stamper 2005, 82.

the first of these questions, Dio Cassius provides two explanations, one of which he calls the “pretext” (πρόφασις) and the other the true reason (ἔργω):

...[the senators] assigned to [Caesar the charge of]...
constructing a new senate-house, since the [Curia] Hostilia,
although repaired, had been demolished, on the pretext that
a temple of Felicitas was to be built there, which Lepidus,
indeed, completed [while] Master of the Horse, but in truth
so that the name of Sulla should not be preserved on it and
that another [senate-house], newly constructed, might be
named Iulian...¹⁸²

This passage has provoked extensive debate for two reasons. First, there is no other record (either written or material) of the aforementioned Temple of Felicitas allegedly built by Lepidus. As a result, some scholars, such as Richardson, conclude that Dio Cassius’ explanation is improbable and may be distorted.¹⁸³ Others, however, argue that absence of other evidence for the Temple of Felicitas is not necessarily equivalent to evidence for the absence of the structure; Coarelli, for example, states, “This is a true story, even if little documented.”¹⁸⁴ The second concern with Dio Cassius’ statement has to do with the attachment of the “name of Sulla” to his senate-house: it is unclear whether either the senate-house built by Sulla or that rebuilt by his son was ever called the “Curia Cornelia.”¹⁸⁵ Dio Cassius’ accounts are ambiguous: he refers to the senate-house as “Hostilian” both when describing the building constructed by Sulla¹⁸⁶ and that rebuilt by Faustus Sulla,¹⁸⁷ but in reference to Faustus Sulla’s restoration of the senate-house he states, “For it was the [Curia] Hostilia and had been remodeled by Sulla; on account of this [reason] there was a decision about it [i.e., the senate-house] and so that, having been

¹⁸² Dio Cassius 44.5.1-2 = T7.

¹⁸³ E.g., Richardson 1978, 364-365 and 1992, 102-103.

¹⁸⁴ Coarelli 1985, 236: “Si tratta di un episodio reale, anche e poco documentato.”

¹⁸⁵ For a more extensive discussion of the issues involved, see Richardson 1978, 364 and Coarelli 1993, 331.

¹⁸⁶ E.g., Dio Cassius 44.5.1-2 and 40.50.2-3 = T7 and 23, respectively.

¹⁸⁷ E.g., Dio Cassius 45.17.8 = T54.

rebuilt, it take his [i.e., Sulla's] name.”¹⁸⁸ Indeed, this statement itself attests to the confusion involved in Dio Cassius' terminology. If, in fact, the senate-house built by Faustus Sulla was not called the “Curia Cornelia,” the “true” reason provided by Dio Cassius for the construction of the Curia Iulia makes little sense.¹⁸⁹ Although I am more inclined to agree with Coarelli and accept the explanation provided by Dio Cassius, I would not rule out Caesar's own personal input in motivating the Senate's decision that a new senate-house be built. And here we come to the second question stated above, to which Dio Cassius provides no explicit response: why did Caesar choose the location and orientation that he did for the Curia Iulia?

Presumably Coarelli and Zanker would respond to this question with something like the following: “in order to underscore the subordinate position of the senate, represented by the senate-house, to Caesar himself, represented by the Forum Iulium.” Yet, as I mentioned at the start of this chapter, this response, though it may have some merit, is not sufficient; it only analyzes the position of the Curia Iulia with respect to one surrounding structure (the Forum Iulium) and fails to take into account Caesar's simultaneous changes to those other structures of the Forum Romanum with which the senate-house had always been so closely connected: the Comitium and Rostra. As we have seen in the previous two chapters, in the years leading up to his death, Caesar undertook substantial alterations to the Comitium and Rostra. In fact, he paved over and effectively eliminated the Comitium as a topographically-demarcated area, and he moved the Rostra from its position during the Republican period along the southern curve of the

¹⁸⁸ Dio Cassius 40.50.2-3 = T23.

¹⁸⁹ For other concerns with Dio Cassius' statement, see Richardson 1978, 364-365; among the issues discussed is the likelihood that a temple built to Felicitas (a god adopted by Sulla as his own) would serve to remove memory of Sulla from the area.

Comitium to a position further south and west along the newly established longitudinal axis of the Forum Romanum. Caesar's movement and reorientation of the senate-house, I argue, should be seen as part and parcel of a cohesive plan involving these other alterations in addition to the Forum Iulium.

Because in the mid Republican period magistrates often proceeded directly from meetings of the Senate within the Curia Hostilia to *contiones* or *comitia* directed from the Rostra on the southern edge of the Comitium, it is generally assumed that senators often watched the proceedings of such gatherings from a privileged position on the topmost step of the Comitium in front of the Curia Hostilia (Figure 25); likewise, from this position the senators would serve as a backdrop to the action of the *contio* or *comitia* for those citizens and non-citizens gathered in the Forum below (Figure 26).¹⁹⁰ However, after Caesar's movement of the Rostra to the western end of the Forum Romanum (Figures 2 and 19), the façade of the Curia Hostilia would no longer have provided such an advantageous position; senators would have had a side-view of the speaker on the new Rostra and would have been quite far removed from the crowd in the central Forum. Caesar's placement of the Curia Iulia addressed these problems: its position southeast of the Curia Hostilia and the southwest-northeast alignment of its façade afforded an unobstructed view of the Rostra for those standing on the senate-house steps (Figures 2 and 19). In fact, this arrangement even improved upon the relative positioning of senate-house, Comitium and Rostra in the mid to late Republic. For, as discussed in the first chapter, as of 145 BCE speakers from the Rostra in *contiones* and *comitia* no longer

¹⁹⁰ I focus here on the implications of looking out from and looking toward the exterior of the senate-house rather than the experience of senators within the senate-house for a simple reason: the senators' experience within the senate-house would not be affected significantly by its location or orientation while the sight lines towards and from the senate-house would be affected.

faced the Curia Hostilia but rather the Forum proper; as a result, senators standing in front of the Curia Hostilia would have seen only the back of the speaker on the Rostra (Figure 25), resulting not only in a less aesthetically pleasing view but also in a potential hampering of their ability to hear the speaker's address clearly. Yet after Caesar's alterations, senators on the top step of the Curia Iulia could see the speaker's face and gestures and hear him clearly. Thus, the new position of the senate-house represented a functional improvement not only over the situation were Caesar to have left the senate-house in its traditional location but also over the traditional arrangement of senate-house, Comitium and Rostra.

We also ought to examine how the new position and alignment of the senate-house relates to the newly emphasized northwest-southeast axis of the Forum Romanum. As discussed in the previous chapter, the new location of the Rostra in conjunction with the new Basilica Iulia and rebuilt Basilica Aemilia served to create a strong longitudinal axis for the Forum Romanum (Figure 19), which had previously had a more or less haphazard layout. The Curia Hostilia, oriented along the cardinal points, did not at all align with the new southwest-northeast axis of the Forum. Yet the new Curia Iulia did not precisely align with the new axis either; rather, it is some thirty degrees north of northwest. So how does it fit in? The answer, I think, lies in its connection to the Forum Iulium.

In a letter to Atticus, Cicero reveals how difficult (and expensive) an enterprise was the procurement of sufficient land for construction of the Forum Iulium; Caesar did not confiscate private or public land but rather purchased land from private citizens

willing to sell.¹⁹¹ Moreover, the natural topography of the land acted as a constraint; specifically the slope of the Arx bounded the space available for a forum to the west and a spur connecting the Quirinal and the Arx acted as a boundary to the north and northeast (Figure 27).¹⁹² The preexisting Argiletum (Figures 19 and 27), an important thoroughfare leading into the Forum from the Subura, likewise marked the southernmost limit for the Forum Iulium; in fact, the orientation of the Argiletum from northeast to southwest probably influenced the orientation of the Forum Iulium itself and the Curia Iulia in turn.¹⁹³ Thus, we should see the Forum Iulium's orientation and position as relatively fixed or at least very difficult to change substantially. And the Forum Iulium's axis is not precisely aligned with the northwest-southeast axis that developed in the Forum Romanum (Figure 19). Therein lies the importance of the Curia Iulia's orientation: the senate-house can act as a unifying element between the two *fora*.

We have already noted that the rear wall of the Curia Iulia neatly abuts the southwestern wall of the Forum Iulium. But the senate-house's southeastern wall also lies flush against the Argiletum, on the other side of which is the nearly parallel northwestern wall of the Basilica Aemilia (Figure 19). Thus the Curia Iulia is tied via its orientation to both Forum Romanum and Forum Iulium. Furthermore, the front façade of the Curia Iulia faces onto the Forum Romanum just where the latter begins to widen significantly; at such a juncture, the absence of perfect alignment is more readily

¹⁹¹ Cicero *Ad Atticum* 4.16.8 = T10.

¹⁹² Indeed, Anderson (1985, 45) notes that even in its final form the Forum Iulium was prevented from having a regular shape as a result of the area's topography. One should note the spur that once created a saddle between the Arx and the Quirinal (Figure 27) was leveled by Trajan to create his own forum and cannot be seen in the modern topography of the city.

¹⁹³ Claridge (1998, 148), for example, posits: "The site chosen [for the Curia Iulia] had a new alignment, probably determined by the main street in the area, the *Argiletum*, which led into the old Forum from the valley between the Esquiline and Viminal hills..."

concealed. As a result, the Curia Iulia is able to tie together Caesar's various building projects in both Forum Romanum and Forum Iulium.

~ **Conclusion** ~

Thus, Caesar's choice to change the location and orientation of the senate-house was, indeed, untraditional. Yet, this action may not be as imperious or high-handed as it seems at first glance. First of all, in Sulla, Caesar had a precedent for deviation from the traditional foundations of the senate-house, and Sulla's changes to the dimensions of the senate-house should also dissuade us from seeing negative religious repercussions in Caesar's movement of a *templum*. It is true that the new Curia Iulia abutted the Forum Iulium, and this is an important relationship. Yet it is not the only topographical relationship that must be taken into account; rather, the changes to the Comitium and Rostra must be considered as well. When viewed in conjunction with these other monuments, the new location and orientation of the senate-house clearly allows for improved sightlines to and from both the new Rostra and the central Forum Romanum. Moreover, its relationship with Forum Iulium together with its connection to the Forum Romanum allows the Curia Iulia to unify the two *fora*. Thus the Curia Iulia does indeed serve "architecturally as a connector between the two fora"¹⁹⁴; but this need not have the sinister connotations implied by Zanker and others. Rather, we should see Caesar's movement of the senate-house as the linchpin of his plan to create a unified and monumental Forum Romanum designed to optimize its functionality.

¹⁹⁴ Anderson 1984, 35.

~ Conclusion ~

As we have seen, then, Julius Caesar had a profound effect on the topography of the Comitium-Rostra-Curia complex in the northern corner of the Forum Romanum. In the period leading up to his death in 44 BCE, Caesar initiated a complete transformation of this area: he leveled and paved over the Comitium, the traditional meeting-place of the popular assemblies; he relocated the Rostra, the speaker's platform, from the southern curve of the Comitium to the center of the northwestern edge of the Forum Romanum; and he transferred the Curia, the senate-house, further southeast and reoriented it on a northeast-southwest axis. Although these projects were only completed by his successor after his death, Caesar was responsible for the choice and commencement of work in this area.

How, then, are we to interpret this Caesarian transformation? This question is all the more important due to the highly charged political nature of the structures affected; Comitium, Rostra and Curia were traditionally linked to the three branches of the Republican Roman constitution: people, magistrates and senate. As a result, scholars have often viewed Caesar's actions as radical and indicative of his dismantling of Republican government. While Caesar's projects are undeniably innovative, this

conclusion is insufficient. My thesis attempts to approach Caesar's alterations in a more nuanced way.

Fundamental to this analysis is a refusal to view the Roman Republic as a monolithic entity. In her survey of the periodization of the institution of the Roman Republic, Harriet Flower astutely argues against a sense of continuity and instead portrays "the" Republic as a series of ever-changing Republics, with the resulting conclusion that the "Republic" of Caesar's day bore little resemblance to the "Republic" of, say, 200 BCE.¹⁹⁵ At the heart of this thesis is the same insistence on discontinuity in Republican practices. Those who emphasize the "radical" nature of Caesar's alterations to the Comitium-Rostra-Curia complex tacitly make a faulty comparison: between the structures after Caesar's intervention, on the one hand, and in the heyday of the mid Republic, on the other. Practically speaking, the Comitium-Rostra-Curia complex had long since stopped functioning politically as a cohesive unit by the time of Caesar's intervention: by 133 BCE at the latest, the Comitium ceased to be the meeting place for voting assemblies. Instead, then, of comparing the post-Caesarian Comitium, Rostra and Curia to their idealized mid Republican incarnations, this thesis attempts to make comparisons with "Republics" nearer in time and practice to the "Republic" of Caesar's day. Namely, I examine possible precedents set by Sulla some thirty years earlier, and I consider the function of each structure both immediately before and immediately after Caesar's interventions.

Through these analyses, I determine that Caesar's alterations to the configuration of the Comitium, Rostra and senate-house represent an attempt to rationalize the area in terms of its usage in his day. Since speakers on the late Republican Rostra turned toward

¹⁹⁵ Flower 2009.

the Forum Romanum and away from the Comitium, the Comitium no longer required a circular, stepped shape to accommodate assemblies. Moreover, as a result of this change in contional practice, the space inside of the Comitium was no longer put to effective use; listeners gathered there could neither see nor hear the speaker effectively. Yet Caesar's movement of the Rostra addressed this issue: the new location and orientation of the Rostra enhanced the experience of oratory for both speaker and audience, improving lines of sight and sound. But the new location of the speaker's platform, the Imperial Rostra, was not well positioned vis-à-vis the Republican senate-house: the façade of the Curia Hostilia no longer provided an advantageous vantage point of the Rostra for senators gathered on the steps of the senate-house. Caesar's movement of the senate-house, then, can be seen as a confrontation of this problem: the façade of the new Curia Iulia was aligned southwest-northeast and thus afforded a perfect view of the Imperial Rostra. Thus, Caesar's changes to the positions and forms of the Comitium, Rostra and senate-house combined to transform the area of the Forum Romanum into one better suited for oratory as practiced in Caesar's time.

Moreover, the very fact that we can see the alterations to the Comitium, Rostra and senate-house working together reveals a cohesiveness of concept beyond that with which Caesar is usually credited. Indeed, Caesar's alterations to the Comitium-Rostra-Curia complex should be considered, I argue, in conjunction with his construction and financing of construction, respectively, of the Basilicae Iulia and Aemilia. Together these projects aimed to organize the previously haphazard topography of the Forum Romanum and, specifically, to establish a strong new northwest-southeast axis for the Forum's structures. Perhaps, then, in Caesar's building projects we can see a precursor

for the type of cohesive urban plan instituted by Augustus and later emperors; Suetonius may not have been far off in his seemingly grandiose statement that Caesar had plans *de ornanda instruendaque urbe*.

~ Testimonia ~

1. [n]am de ornanda instruendaque urbe, item de tuendo ampliandoque imperio plura ac maiora in dies destinabat: in primis Martis templum, quantum nusquam esset, extruere, repleto et conplanato lacu, in quo naumachiae spectaculum ediderat, theatrumque summae magnitudinis Tarpeio monti accubans...[t]alia agentem atque meditantem mors praevenit. (Suetonius *Divus Iulius* 44)

For concerning the adornment and arrangement of the city, and likewise the protection and amplification of the empire, [Caesar] designed a greater number of and more extensive plans by the day: in the first place, to build a temple to Mars, of a size which had never existed, filling in and leveling the lake in which he had put on the spectacle of a naval battle, and [to build] a theater of immense size beside the Tarpeian mount....Death prevented him from doing and planning such things.

2. multi reges, multae liberae civitates, multi privati opulenti ac potentes habent profecto in animo Capitolium sic ornare ut templi dignitas imperiique nostri nomen desiderat. (Cicero *In Verrem* 2.4.68)

Many kings, many free states, many rich and powerful private citizens surely have in mind to adorn the Capitolium as the merit of the temple and the renown of our empire demand.

3. Romam in montibus positam et convallibus, cenaculis sublatam atque suspensam, non optimis viis, angustissimis semitis, prae sua Capua planissimo in loco explicata ac †prae illis semitis† irridebunt atque contemnent... (Cicero *De Lege Agraria* 2.35.96)

[The Capuans] will laugh at and despise Rome, located among mountains and valleys, raised up and elevated with garrets, with not very good roads, with very narrow paths, as compared to their own Capua, spread out on a very flat area and †as compared to those paths†...

4. [a]ntiquata deinde lege, promise urbs aedificari coepta...[f]estinatior curam exemit vicis dirigendi, dum omissis sui alienique discrimine in vacuo aedificant. [e]a est causa ut...formaque urbis sit occupatae magis quam divisae similis. (Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 5.55.2-5)¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ This text is based on the most recent available Oxford Classical Text edition of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*.

Then [when] the law [had been] rejected, the city began to be rebuilt indiscriminately...Haste eliminated concern for making the streets straight, while they were building on empty ground, disregarding [any] distinction toward another person's [property]. This is the reason that...the appearance of the city is more similar to a [city that has been] appropriated than to [one that has been] parceled out.

5. [u]rbem, neque pro maiestate imperii ornata et inundationibus incendiisque obnoxiam, excoluit adeo, ut iure sit gloriatus, marmoream se relinquere, quam latericiam accepisset. (Suetonius *Divus Augustus* 28)

[Augustus] improved the city, [which had] not [been] adorned in proportion to the grandeur of the empire and [which was] liable to floods and fires, to such an extent that he rightly boasted that he was leaving behind [a city] of marble that he had received [as a city] of brick.

6. comitium ab eo quod coibant eo comitiis curiatis et litium causa[e]. curiae duorum generum: nam et ubi curarent sacerdotes res divinas, ut curiae veteres, et ubi senatus humanas, ut curia Hostilia, quod primus aedificavit Hostilius rex. ante hanc rostra; cuius id vocabulum, ex hostibus capta fixa sunt rostra; sub dextra huius a comitio locus substructus, ubi nationum subsisterent legati qui ad senatum essent missi; is graecostasis appellatus... (Varro *De Lingua Latina* 5.32.155)

The Comitium [was named] from the fact that to it [the Romans] came together for the *comitia curiata* and for the sake of lawsuits. *curiae* are of two types: both where priests attend to divine affairs, like the ancient *curiae*, and where the senate [attends to] human [affairs], like the Curia Hostilia, [so-called] because the king Hostilius first built [it]. In front of [the Curia Hostilia] [was] the Rostra; this [was] its name [from the fact that] *rostra* ('beaks') seized from the enemy were attached [to it]; to the right of [the Rostra] from the Comitium [was] a lower area where the legates of the nations who had been sent to the senate remained; this [was] called the Graecostasis...

7. ὡς δὲ ταῦτα ἐδέξατο, τὰ τε ἔλη οἱ τὰ Πομπηῖνα χῶσαι καὶ τὸν ἰσθμὸν τὸν τῆς Πελοποννήσου διορύξει βουλευτήριόν τε τι καινὸν ποιῆσαι προσέταξαν, ἐπειδὴ τὸ Ὀστίλιον καίπερ ἀνοικοδομηθὲν καθηρέθη, πρόφασιν μὲν τοῦ ναὸν Εὐτυχίας ἐνταῦθα οἰκοδομηθῆναι, ὃν καὶ ὁ Λέπιδος ἱππαρχήσας ἐξεποίησεν, ἔργω δὲ, ὅπως μήτε ἐν ἐκείνῳ τὸ τοῦ Σύλλου ὄνομα σώζοιτο καὶ ἕτερον ἐκ καινῆς κατασκευασθὲν Ἰούλιον ὀνομασθεῖν... (Dio Cassius 44.5.1-2)

When [Caesar] accepted these [honors], [the senators] assigned to him the [charge of] filling the Pontine marshes and cutting a canal through the Peloponnesian isthmus and constructing a new senate-house, since the [Curia] Hostilia, although repaired, had been demolished, on the pretext that a temple of Felicitas was to be built there, which Lepidus, indeed, completed [while] Master of the Horse, but in truth so that the name of Sulla should not be preserved on it and that another [senate-house], newly constructed, might be named Iulian...

8. ἐπεὶ δὲ ταῦτα διετέλεσε, τὸ τε Ἀθήναιον τὸ Χαλκιδικὸν ὀνομασμένον καὶ τὸ βουλευτήριον τὸ Ἰουλίειον, τὸ ἐπὶ τῆ τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτοῦ τιμῇ γενόμενον, καθιέρωσεν. (Dio Cassius 51.22.1)

When he finished these things, [Augustus] dedicated the temple of Minerva, called the Chalcidicum, and the Curia Iulia, [which had been] built in honor of his father.

9. curiam et continens ei chalcidicum...feci. (Augustus *Res Gestae* 19)¹⁹⁷

I built the Curia [Iulia] and the Chalcidicum adjoining it.

10. Paulus in medio foro basilicam iam paene texerat isdem antiquis columnis. illam autem quam locavit facit magnificentissimam...itaque Caesaris amici, me dico et Oppium, dirumparis licet, <in> monumentum illud quod tu tollere laudibus solebas, ut forum laxaremus et usque ad atrium Libertatis explicaremus, contempsimus sescenties sestertium; cum privatis non poterat transigi minore pecunia. (Cicero *Ad Atticum* 4.16.8)

Paulus has already almost roofed with the same old columns his basilica in the middle of the Forum [Romanum]. But he is making [the part] which he gave out on contract most magnificent...And so, the friends of Caesar, I mean myself and Oppius, though you burst [with anger], have considered of little value 60,000 sesterces for that monument which you used to raise on high with praise, in order to enlarge the Forum [Romanum] and extend it right up to the Atrium Libertatis; [a transaction] could not be settled with private [citizens] for less money.

11. τὴν γὰρ ἀγορὰν τὴν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ κεκλημένην κατεσκευάσατο· καὶ ἔστι μὲν περικαλλεστέρα τῆς Ῥωμαίας, τὸ δὲ ἀξίωμα τὸ ἐκείνης ἐπηύξησεν, ὥστε καὶ μεγάλην αὐτὴν ὀνομάζεσθαι. ταύτην τε οὖν καὶ τὸν νεῶν τὸν τῆς Ἀφροδίτης ὡς καὶ ἀρχηγέτιδος τοῦ γένους αὐτοῦ οὔσης ποιήσας καθιέρωσεν εὐθύς τότε... (Dio Cassius 43.22.2)

For [Caesar] constructed the forum named after him; and it is more beautiful than the [Forum] Romanum, but it increased the reputation of the [Forum Romanum], with the result that it [is] called μεγάλη ('great'). So having built this [forum] and the temple to Venus, since she [was] the founder of his family, he dedicated [them] straightaway at that time [in 46 BCE]...

12. XII tabulis ortus tantum et occasus nominantur, post aliquot annos adiectus est et meridies, accenso consulum id pronuntiante, cum a curia inter [r]ostra et [g]raecostasin prospexisset solem; a columna Maenia ad carcerem inclinato sidere supremam pronuntiavit, sed hoc serenis tantum diebus, usque ad primum Punicum bellum. (Pliny the Elder *Naturalis Historia* 7.60.212)

In the Twelve Tables only the rising and setting [of the sun are] mentioned, [but] after some years *meridies* ('noon') was also added, the *accensus* of the consuls proclaiming it when, from the senate-house, he caught sight of the sun between the Rostra and the Graecostasis; he also proclaimed *suprema* ('the last [hour]'), [when] the sun had gone down from the Columna Maenia to the Carcer, but this [was done] only on fair days, all the way up until the First Punic War.

13. hoc idem Cosconius in actionibus [sui]scribit praetorem accensum solitum [tum] esse iubere, ubi ei videbatur horam esse tertiam, inclamare horam tertiam esse, itemque meridiem et horam nonam. (Varro *De Lingua Latina* 6.9.89)

¹⁹⁷ This text is based on the most recent available Loeb Classical Library edition of Augustus' *Res Gestae*.

Cosconius records the same in his *Actiones* that the praetor was accustomed to order his *accensus*, when it seemed to him to be third hour, to call out that it [was] the third hour, and likewise *meridies* ('noon') and the ninth hour.

14. *suprema summum diei, id ab superrimo. hoc tempus XII tabulae dicunt occasum esse solis; sed postea lex Plaetoria id quoque tempus esse iubet supremum quo praetor in comitio supremam pronuntiavit populo. (Varro De Lingua Latina 6.2.5)*

suprema ('last') [means] the last [part] of the day, it [is] from *superrimum* ('last'). The Twelve Tables say that this time is sunset; but afterwards the *lex Plaetoria* orders that this time also be *supremum*, [the time] at which the praetor in the Comitium has announced to the people *suprema* ('the last [hour]').

15. *...tunc meridies, quod est medii diei nomen, inde de meridie; hinc suprema. quamvis plurimi supremam post occasum solis esse existimant, quia est in XII tabulis scriptum sic: 'solis occasus suprema tempestas esto.' sed postea M. Plaetorius tribunus plebiscitum tulit, in quo scriptum est: 'praetor urbanus, qui nunc est quique posthac fuat, duo lictores apud se habeto isque <usque> supremam ad solem occasum ius inter cives dicito.'* (Censorinus *De Die Natali* 24.3)

...then *meridies* ('noon'), which is the name of the middle of the day, next *de meridie* ('afternoon'); then *suprema* ('the last [hour]'). Although many think that *suprema* ('the last [hour]') is after sunset, because in the Twelve Tables it is written: 'Let sunset be the *suprema* ('last') time [of the day].' But later Marcus Plaetorius [as] tribune passed a plebiscite, in which it was written: 'Let the [man] who is now *praetor urbanus* and whoever will be in the future have with him two lictors and let him give judgment among the citizens up to the *suprema* ('the last [hour]'), sunset.'

16. *eius templi partes quattuor dicuntur, sinistra ab oriente, dextra ab occasu, antica ad meridiem, postica ad septemtrionem. in terris dictum templum locus augurii aut auspicii causa quibusdam conceptis verbis finitus. (Varro De Lingua Latina 7.2.7-8)*

Of this *templum* the four quarters are named [thus], the left [quarter] to the east, the right [quarter] to the west, the front [quarter] to the south, the back [quarter] to the north. On the earth a place limited by certain formulaic words for the sake of augury or [taking] the auspices [is] called a *templum*.

17. *in hoc templo faciundo arbores constitui fines apparet et intra eas regiones qua oculi conspiciant... (Varro De Lingua Latina 7.2.9)*

In making this *templum*, it is evident that trees are set [as] boundaries and within these regions [is] where the eyes are to view...

18. *extemplo enim est continuo, quod omne te(m)plum esse debet conti<nu>o septum nec plus unum introitum habere. (Varro De Lingua Latina 7.2.13)*

For *extemplo* ('on the spot') is *continuo* ('without interval'), because every *templum* ought to be fenced in uninterruptedly and have not more than one entrance.

19. deinde multi memores Sullanae victoriae, quod ex gregariis militibus alios senatores videbant, alios ita divites, ut regio victu atque cultu aetatem agerent, sibi quisque, si in armis foret, ex victoria talia sperabat. (Sallust *Bellum Catilinae* 37.6)

Then many, mindful of Sulla's victory, that they saw some [men made] senators from common soldiers, [and] others [made] so rich as to live [their] lives in Regal luxury and pomp, each for himself hoped for such things from victory, if he should be under arms.

20. βουλήν τε γὰρ ἐκ τῶν ἐπιτυχόντων ἀνθρώπων συνέστησε... (Dionysius of Halicarnassus 5.77.5)

For [Sulla] composed the senate of commonplace men...

21. αὐτῇ δὲ τῇ βουλῇ διὰ τὰς στάσεις καὶ τοὺς πολέμους πάμπαν ὀλιγανδρούση προσκατέλεξεν ἀμφὶ τοὺς τριακοσίους ἐκ τῶν ἀρίστων ἰππέων, ταῖς φυλαῖς ἀναδοὺς ψῆφον περὶ ἐκάστου. (Appian *Bellum Civile* 1.100)

To the senate itself, [which was] very scant of men on account of the seditions and wars, he enrolled in addition about 300 [men] from the best knights, having presented the vote to the tribes concerning each [one].

22. post lege Sullae viginti creati supplendo senatui, cui iudicia tradiderat. (Tacitus *Annales* 11.22.6)

Later, by a law of Sulla, twenty [quaestors were] appointed [in order to] supplement the senate, to which he had handed over judicial investigations.

23. ἐλθόντος τε αὐτοῦ οὐ πολλῶ ὕστερον ἔξω τε τοῦ πωμηρίου πρὸς τῷ θεάτρῳ αὐτοῦ σὺν φρουρᾷ ἠθροίσθησαν καὶ τὰ τοῦ Κλωδίου ὅσα ἀνελέσθαι ἐγνώσαν, τό τε βουλευτήριον τῷ Φαύστῳ τῷ τοῦ Σύλλου υἱεῖ ἀνοικοδομησαί προσέταξαν. ἦν μὲν γὰρ τὸ Ὀστίλιον, μετεσκεύαστο δὲ ὑπὸ τοῦ Σύλλου· διὸ τοῦτο τε περὶ αὐτοῦ ἔδοξε, καὶ ὅπως ἐξοικοδομηθὲν τὸ ἐκείνου ὄνομα ἀπολάβῃ. (Dio Cassius 40.50.2-3)

[When Pompey] arrived not long after, they gathered outside the *pomerium* near his [i.e., Pompey's] theater with a garrison and resolved to take up the bones of Clodius, and they enjoined Faustus, the son of Sulla, to rebuild the senate-house. For it was the [Curia] Hostilia and had been remodeled by Sulla; on account of this [reason] there was a decision about it [i.e., the senate-house] and so that, having been rebuilt, it take his [i.e., Sulla's] name.

24. [e]quidem etiam curiam nostram – Hostiliam dico, non hanc novam, quae minor mihi esse videtur posteaquam est maior – solebam intuens Scipionem, Catonem, Laelium, nostrum vero in primis avum cogitare... (Cicero *De Finibus* 5.2)

Even looking upon our senate-house – I mean the [Curia] Hostilia, not this new [one] which seems to me to be smaller since it became larger – I was accustomed to think about Scipio, Cato, Laelius but above all [about] my grandfather...

25. τὸ γὰρ σῶμα τοῦ Κλωδίου ἀράμενοι ἔς τε τὸ βουλευτήριον ἐσήνεγκαν καὶ εὐθέτησαν καὶ μετὰ τοῦτο πυρὰν ἐκ τῶν βάθρων νήσαντες ἔκαυσαν καὶ ἐκεῖνο καὶ τὸ συνέδριον. (Dio Cassius 40.49.2)

For lifting the body of Clodius, they carried [it] into the senate-house and put it in order and after this, piling up a funeral-pyre out of the benches, they burned both [the body] and the senate-house.

26. ...ille denique vivus mali nihil fecisset cui mortuo unus ex suis satellitibus curiam incenderit? (Cicero *Pro Milone* 33.90)¹⁹⁸

...would [Milo] have done no evil [while] alive [if], [while] dead, one of his accomplices burned down the senate-house?

27. T. Munatius Plancus et Q. Pompeius Rufus...contionati sunt eo ipso tempore plebemque in Milonem accenderunt quo propter Clodi corpus curia incensa est, nec prius destiterunt quam flamma eius incendii fugati sunt e contione. erant enim tunc rostra non eo loco quo nunc sunt sed ad comitium, prope iuncta curiae. (Asconius *In Milonianam* 12)¹⁹⁹

Titus Munatius Plancus and Quintus Pompeius Rufus...held a *contio* and inflamed the populace against Milo at that very time when the senate-house burned down on account of the corpse of Clodius, and they did not cease until they were put to flight from the *contio* by the flame of that fire. For at that time the Rostra was not in the place where it is now but at the Comitium, almost joined to the senate-house.

28. [i]nvenio et Pythagorae et Alcibiadi in cornibus comitii positas...eae stetero, donec Sulla dictator ibi curiam faceret. (Pliny the Elder *Naturalis Historia* 34.12.26)

I find [that] statues [were] erected to Pythagoras and Alcibiades in the horns of the Comitium...These stood until Sulla the dictator built the senate-house there.

29. [i]tem in eodem libro hoc scriptum est: '[c]um ex generibus hominum suffragium feratur, curiata comitia esse; cum ex censu et aetate, centuriata; cum ex regionibus et locis, tributa; centuriata autem comitia intra pomerium fieri nefas esse, quia exercitum extra urbem imperari oporteat, intra urbem imperari ius non sit. [p]ropterea centuriata in campo Martio haberi exercitumque imperari praesidii causa solitum, quoniam populus esset in suffragiis ferendis occupatus.' (Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 15.27.5)

Likewise in the same book [of Laelius Felix] it is written: 'When voting is done according to families of men, it is the *comitia curiata*; when according to property and age, [the *comitia*] *centuriata*; when according to regions and localities, [the *comitia*] *tributa*; moreover, it is impious for the *comitia centuriata* to take place within the *pomerium*, because it is necessary that the army be summoned outside of the city, [and] it is not lawful [that it] be summoned within the city. Therefore, it [was] customary [that] the *comitia centuriata* be held on the Campus Martius and [that] the army be summoned for the purpose of defense since the populace was occupied in casting their votes.'

30. [e]x his verbis Messalae manifestum est aliud esse cum populo agere, aliud contionem habere. nam cum populo agere est rogare quid populum, quod suffragiis suis aut iubeat aut vetet, contionem autem habere est verba facere ad populum sine ulla rogatione. (Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 13.16.2-3)

¹⁹⁸ This text is based on the most recent available Oxford Classical Text edition of Cicero's *Pro Milone*.

¹⁹⁹ This text is based on the citation at Coarelli 1985, 239.

From the words of Messala it is clear that *cum populo agere* ('to treat with the people') is one thing [and] *contionem habere* ('to hold a *contio*') is another. For *cum populo agere* ('to treat with the people') is to ask the people something which by its votes it is either to order or to forbid, but *contionem habere* ('to hold a *contio*') is to speak to the people without asking anything.

31. tune...qui in campo Martio comitiis centuriatis auspicato in loco crucem ad civium supplicium defigi et constitui iubes... (Cicero *Pro Rabirio* 4.11)

you...who, on the Campus Martius at the *comitia centuriata* in an inaugurated place, give orders that a cross be constructed and erected for the punishment of citizens...

32. [i]n campo Martio cum centuriatim populus citaretur et reus ad Capitolium manus tendens ab hominibus ad deos preces avertisset, apparuit tribunis, nisi oculos quoque hominum liberassent tanti memoria decoris, nunquam fore in praeoccupatis beneficio animis vero crimini locum. (Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 6.20.10)²⁰⁰

When on the Campus Martius the people were being summoned by centuries and the defendant [i.e., Marcus Manlius], stretching his hands toward the Capitolium, had turned his prayers from men to the gods, it was clear to the tribunes that unless they released the men's eyes from the memory of so great a glorious deed, there would never be a place for the charge in their minds, preoccupied with his good service.

33. nunc, Quirites, prima illa comitia tenetis, centuriata et tributa, curiata tantum auspiciorum causa remanserunt...[s]int igitur decemviri neque veris comitiis, hoc est populi suffragiis, neque illis ad speciem atque ad usurpationem vetustatis per XXX lictores auspiciorum causa adumbratis constituti. (Cicero *De Lege Agraria* 2.11.27-12.31)

Now, Romans, you keep those *comitia* as the chief, the *centuriata* and the *tributa*, the [*comitia*] *curiata* have remained only for the sake of the auspices...So then let the *decemviri* be appointed neither by the genuine *comitia*, that is by the votes of the people, nor by those [*comitia*], [which] as to the form and the use of antiquity [are] feigned through thirty lictors for the sake of the auspices.

34. ὁ δὲ πᾶσαν ὑποψίαν ἀπολυσάμενος καὶ φανεὶς καθαρὸς, εὐθύς ἐπὶ δημαρχίαν ὥρμησε, τῶν μὲν γνωρίμων ἀνδρῶν ὁμαλῶς ἀπάντων ἐναντιουμένων πρὸς αὐτόν, ὄχλου δὲ τοσοῦτου συρρέοντος εἰς τὴν πόλιν ἐκ τῆς Ἰταλίας καὶ συναρχαιρεσιάζοντος, ὡς πολλοῖς μὲν οἰκῆσεις ἐπιλιπεῖν, τοῦ δὲ πεδίου μὴ δεξαμένου τὸ πλῆθος ἀπὸ τῶν τεγῶν καὶ τῶν κεράμων τὰς φωνὰς συνηγεῖν. (Plutarch *Gaius Gracchus* 3.2)

But having freed himself of all suspicion and having appeared innocent, [Gaius Gracchus] immediately made a move on the tribunate, with all the men of note uniformly opposing him, but with so great a throng pouring into the city from Italy and helping in the canvassing that houses were lacking for many and their voices resounded from the roofs and tiles [since] the plain [i.e., Campus Martius] did not hold the multitude.

²⁰⁰ This text is based on the most recent available Oxford Classical Text edition of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*.

35. nos autem initium prensandi facere cogitaramus eo ipso tempore, quo tuum puerum cum his litteris proficisci Cincius dicebat, in campo comitiis tribuniciiis a. d. XVI Kalend. Sextiles. (Cicero *Ad Atticum* 1.1.1)

I had thought of making a beginning of canvassing on the plain [i.e., Campus Martius] at the tribunician elections on July 17th, the very time when Cincius told me your boy was setting out with these letters.

36. τοῦτον τὸν νόμον εισφέρων τὰ τ' ἄλλα λέγεται σπουδάσαι διαφερόντως, καὶ τῶν πρὸ αὐτοῦ πάντων δημαγωγῶν πρὸς τὴν σύγκλητον ἀφορώντων καὶ τὸ καλούμενον κομίτιον, πρῶτος τότε στραφεὶς ἔξω πρὸς τὴν ἀγορὰν δημηγορῆσαι, καὶ τὸ λοιπὸν οὕτω ποιεῖν ἐξ ἐκείνου, μικρᾷ παρεγκλίσει καὶ μεταθέσει σχήματος μέγα πρᾶγμα κινήσας, καὶ μετενεγκῶν τρόπον τινὰ τὴν πολιτείαν ἐκ τῆς ἀριστοκρατίας εἰς τὴν δημοκρατίαν, ὡς τῶν πολλῶν δέον, οὐ τῆς βουλῆς, στοχάζεσθαι τοὺς λέγοντας. (Plutarch *Gaius Gracchus* 5.4)

[While] introducing this law, [Gaius Gracchus] is said to have been especially earnest in other [ways] and, [although] all popular orators before him [had] looked at the senate and and so-called Comitium, at that time he [was] the first to speak in the assembly [while] turned toward the Forum [Romanum] and to do this from that time onward, having stirred up a great matter with a small alteration and change of bearing, and changing in a manner the constitution from an aristocratic [one] to a democratic [one], it being necessary for those speaking to address the people, not the senate.

37. [C. Licini Crassi]...atque is primus instituit in forum versus agere cum populo. (Cicero *De Amicitia* 25.96)

...and [Gaius Licinius Crassus] first began [the practice of] treating with the people [while facing] towards the Forum [Romanum].

38. eiusdem gentis C. Licinius, tr. pl. cum esset, post reges exactos annis CCCLXV primus populum ad leges accipiendas in septem iugera forensia e comitio eduxit. (Varro *De Re Rustica* 1.2.9)

Of the same family [was] Gaius Licinius [who], when he was tribune of the plebs, 365 years after the expulsion of the kings, first led the people from the Comitium into the seven *iugera* of the forum for hearing laws.

39. si quod in ceteris legibus trinum nundinum esse oportet, id in adoptione satis est trium esse horarum, nihil reprehendo... (Cicero *De Domo Sua* 16.41)

But if in other laws it is necessary that there be [an interval] of three *nundinae*, this is sufficient in [a law concerning] adoption, [that there] be [an interval] of three hours, I do not at all refute [it]...

40. nam cum tam moderata iudicia populi sint a maioribus constituta, primum ut ne poena capitis cum pecunia coniungatur, deinde ne improdicta die quis accusetur, ut ter ante magistratus accuset intermissa die quam multam inroget aut iudicet, quarta sit accusatio trinum nundinum prodicta die, quo die iudicium sit futurum... (Cicero *De Domo Sua* 17.45)

For on the one hand, the courts of the people established by our ancestors are so regulated that, first, capital punishment is not connected with money, [and] second, lest anyone be accused on a day [that has] not [been] appointed beforehand, the magistrate makes the accusation three times with [an interval of] a day allowed to elapse before he proposes a great [penalty] or makes a judgment, [and] the fourth accusation is on the pre-appointed day of three *nundinae* on which day the judgment will take place...

41. ubi lex Caecilia et Didia, ubi promulgatio trinum nundinum, ubi poena recenti lege Iunia et Licinia? (Cicero *Philippics* 5.3.8)

Where [is] the *lex Caecilia et Didia*, where [is] the proclamation of three *nundinae*, where [is] the penalty [according to] the recent *lex Iunia et Licinia*?

42. ...(τετράκις δὲ ἐχρῆν κηρυττομένους ἐν ὠρισμένοις ὥρων διαστήμασιν ἀλῶναι)...
(Appian *Bellum Civile* 1.74)

...(for it was necessary to make an arrest [by] proclaiming [the charge] four times at determined intervals of time)...

43. in qua legatione interfecto senatus statuam poni iussit quam oculatissimo loco, eaque est in rostris. (Pliny the Elder *Naturalis Historia* 34.11.24)

[Since Gnaeus Octavius had been] killed in this legation, the senate ordered [that] a statue be placed in the most conspicuous place, that is, on the Rostra.

44. καὶ τελεσθείσης τῆς ὑποκειμένης νομοθεσίας, ταύτην εἰς δώδεκα χαλκοῦς πίνακας χαράξαντες οἱ ἕπατοι προσήλωσαν τοῖς πρὸ τοῦ βουλευτηρίου τότε κειμένοις ἐμβόλοις.
(Diodorus Siculus 12.26.1)

And [when] the undertaken legislation [had been] completed, the consuls, having engraved it onto twelve bronze tablets, nailed [them] to the Rostra [which] at that time [was] placed in front of the senate-house.

45. [n]aves Antiatum partim in navalia Romae subductae, partim incensae, rostrisque earum suggestum in foro exstructum adornari placuit, [r]ostraque id templum appellatum.
(Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 8.14.12)²⁰¹

Some of the ships of the Antiates were carried off into the dockyards in Rome, some burned, and it was resolved that the platform erected in the Forum [Romanum] be adorned with the *rostra* ('beaks') of these [ships], and this *templum* [was called] the Rostra.

46. [C. Maenio]...eodemque in consulatu in suggestu rostra devictis Antiatibus fixerat anno urbis CCCCXVI... (Pliny the Elder *Naturalis Historia* 34.11.20)

...and in the same consulship [Gaius Maenius], [when] the Antiates [had been] defeated, had attached the *rostra* ('beaks') [of the ships] on the platform in the 416th year of the city...

²⁰¹ This text is based on the most recent available Oxford Classical Text edition of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*.

47. ...καὶ τὸ βῆμα ἐν μέσῳ που πρότερον τῆς ἀγορᾶς ὄν ἐς τὸν νῦν τόπον ἀνεχωρίσθη, καὶ αὐτῷ ἢ τοῦ Σύλλου τοῦ τε Πομπηίου εἰκὼν ἀπέδοθη. καὶ ἐπὶ <τε> τοῦτω εὐκλειαν ὁ Καῖσαρ ἔσχε, καὶ ὅτι τῷ Ἀντωνίῳ καὶ τῆς δόξης τοῦ ἔργου καὶ τῆς ἐπ'αὐτῷ ἐπιγραφῆς παρεχώρησε. (Dio Cassius 43.49.1-2)

...and the platform [which was] previously in the middle of the Forum [Romanum] was moved back into its present position, and the statue[s] of Sulla and Pompey were returned to it. And for this Caesar obtained glory, and because he yielded to Antony both the honor of the work and the inscription on it.

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48. hic cum in legatione perisset, statuam ei populus Romanus pro rostris posuit, et hodieque extat pro rostris Augusti. (Pomponius in Justinian *Digesta* 1.2.9.43)²⁰²

Since [Servius Sulpicius] had died in a legation, the Roman people placed a statue to him in front of the Rostra, and even today [it] is visible in front of the Rostra of Augustus.

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49. subiit tamen vim illam nefariam conscleratorum latronum et, cum ad fratris salutem a populo Romano deprecandam venisset, pulsus e rostris in comitio iacuit seque servorum et libertorum corporibus obtexit vitamque tum suam noctis et fugae praesidio, non iuris iudiciorumque defendit. (Cicero *Pro Sestio* 76)

Nevertheless, [Quintus Tullius Cicero] endured that abominable violence of the wicked brigands and, when had come to plead for his brother's preservation, having been driven from the Rostra, he lay in the Comitium and covered himself with the bodies of slaves and freedmen and then defended his life by the protection of night and flight, not of law and justice.

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50. Q. Lutatius Q. f. Q. [n.] Catulus co(n)s(ul) substructionem et tabularium / de s(enatus) s(ententia) faciendum coeravit [ei]demque / pro[bavit]. (CIL I² 737)²⁰³

Quintus Lutatius Catulus, son of Quintus, [grandson] of Quintus, [as] consul, according to the decision of the senate took care and likewise approved that the substructure and records office be built.

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51. Forum Iulium et basilicam quae fuit inter aedem Castoris et aedem Saturni, coepta profligataque opera a patre meo, perfeci... (Augustus *Res Gestae* 20)²⁰⁴

I completed the Forum Iulium and the basilica [Iulia], which was between the temple of Castor and the temple of Saturn, works begun and almost finished by my father...

-
52. ...Παύλῳ δ'ὑπατεύοντι χίλια καὶ πεντακόσια τάλαντα δόντος, ἀφ' ὧν καὶ τὴν βασιλικὴν ἐκεῖνος, ὀνομαστὸν ἀνάθημα, τῇ ἀγορᾷ προσεκόσμησεν, ἀντὶ τῆς Φουλβίας οἰκοδομηθεῖσαν... (Plutarch *Caesar* 29.3)

...and having given Paulus the consul fifteen hundred talents, out of which he [i.e., Paulus] adorned the Forum [Romanum] with the basilica, a famous monument, erected in place of the [basilica] Fulvia...

²⁰² This text is based on the citation at Coarelli 1985, 240.

²⁰³ This text is based on the citation at Sommella 2000, 17.

²⁰⁴ This text is based on the most recent available Loeb Classical Library edition of Augustus' *Res Gestae*.

53. ...Παῦλον δὲ χιλίων καὶ πεντακοσίων ταλάντων ἐπρίατο μηδὲν αὐτῷ μήτε συμπράττειν μήτε ἐνοχλεῖν... Παῦλος μὲν δὴ τὴν Παύλου λεγομένην βασιλικὴν ἀπὸ τῶνδε τῶν χρημάτων ἀνέθηκε Ῥωμαίοις, οἰκοδόμημα περικαλλές... (Appian *Bellum Civile* 2.26)

...but for fifteen hundred talents [Caesar] bought [from] Paulus [his agreement] neither to help nor harm him [i.e., Caesar]...and from this money Paulus erected for the Romans a basilica called [that] of Paulus, a very beautiful building...

54. ἐπεγένετο μὲν οὖν καὶ ὁ λοιμὸς ἐπ' αὐτοῖς πάσῃ ὡς εἰπεῖν τῇ Ἰταλίᾳ ἰσχυρός, καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τὸ τε βουλευτήριον τὸ Ὀστίλιον ἀνοικοδομηθῆναι... ἐψηφίσθη... (Dio Cassius 45.17.8)

Then, in addition to these things, a severe plague befell nearly all Italy, and on account of this it was voted that the Curia Hostilia be rebuilt...

55. ...καὶ τὸ βουλευτήριον τὸ Ἰούλιον ἐπ' αὐτοῦ κληθὲν παρὰ τῷ [κ]ομιτίῳ ὠνομασμένῳ ὠκοδόμουν, ὥσπερ ἐψηφίστο. (Dio Cassius 47.19.1)

And [the triumvirs] began to build the senate-house named Iulian after [Julius Caesar] beside the so-called Comitium, as had been voted.

56. in privato solo Martis Ultoris templum forumque Augustum ex manubiis feci. (Augustus *Res Gestae* 21)²⁰⁵

On private ground I built the temple of Mars Ultor and the Forum Augustum out of war-spoils.

57. idem in curia quoque, quam in comitio consecrabat, duas tabulas inpressit parieti. (Pliny the Elder *Naturalis Historia* 35.10.27)

[Augustus] also engraved two pictures onto the wall in the senate-house which he was dedicating in the Comitium.

58. ...et omni auro et argento, quicquid publici quicquid privati est, in comitio in vestibulo curiae vestrae cumulato... (Livy *Ab Urbe Condita* 45.24.12)²⁰⁶

...with all the gold and silver, whatever [belongs to] the state, whatever belongs to a private citizen, having been heaped up in the Comitium in the forecourt of your senate-house...

59. quod addit templa ut si<n>t tesca, aiunt sancta esse qui glossas scripserunt. id est falsum: nam curia Hostilia templum est et sanctum non est; sed hoc ut putarent aedem sacram esse templum <videtur> esse factum quod in urbe Roma pleraeque aedes sacrae sunt templa, eadem sancta, et quod loca quaedam agrestia, quod alicuius dei sunt, dicuntur tesca. (Varro *De Lingua Latina* 7.2.10)

²⁰⁵ This text is based on the most recent available Loeb Classical Library edition of Augustus' *Res Gestae*.

²⁰⁶ This text is based on the most recent available Oxford Classical Text edition of Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*.

[As to the fact] that [Ennius] adds that *templa* are *tesca* ('wild places'), those who have written glossaries say that [*templa*] are *sancta* ('inviolable'). This is false: for the Curia Hostilia is a *templum* and is not *sancta* ('inviolable'); but that they think that a *templum* is a consecrated building seems to be because of the fact that in the city [of] Rome most consecrated buildings are *templa*, [and are] likewise *sanctae* ('inviolable'), and that certain rural places, because they belong to some god, are called *tesca* ('wild places').

60. [t]um adscripsit de locis, in quibus senatusconsultum fieri iure posset, docuitque confirmavitque, nisi in loco per augurem constituto, quod templum appellaretur, senatusconsultum factum esset, iustum id non fuisse. [p]ropterea et in curia Hostilia et in Pompeia et post in Iulia, cum profana ea loca fuissent, templa esse per augures constituta, ut in iis senatusconsulta more maiorum iusta fieri possent. [i]nter quae id quoque scriptum reliquit non omnes aedes sacras templa esse ac ne aedem quidem Vestae templum esse. (Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 14.7.7)

Then [Varro] wrote about the places in which a decree of the senate may legally be passed, and he instructed and demonstrated that, unless a decree of the senate is passed in a place established by an augur, which was called a *templum*, it was not legitimate. Therefore, both in the Curia Hostilia and in the [Curia] Pompeia and afterwards in the [Curia] Iulia, although these places were *profana* ('profane'), *templa* were established by augurs so that in them legitimate decrees of the senate could be passed [according to] the tradition of our ancestors. Among these things [Varro] also left this writing [that] not all consecrated buildings are *templa* and not even the temple of Vesta is a *templum*.

61. Puteolis enim ardens indignatione, quod Granius princeps eius coloniae pecuniam a decurionibus ad refectionem Capitolii promissam cunctantius daret... (Valerius Maximus 9.3.8)

For [Sulla], burning with indignation at Puteoli because Granius, the leader of this colony, [was] too slow [to] provide the money promised by the *decuriones* for the restoration of the Capitolium...

62. arserat et ante Capitolium civili bello...curam victor Sulla suscepit, neque tamen dedicavit: hoc solum felicitati eius negatum. Lutatii Catuli nomen inter tanta Caesarum opera usque ad Vitellium mansit. (Tacitus *Historiae* 3.72.1-3)

The Capitolium burned down previously during the civil war...As victor, Sulla undertook administration [of its rebuilding], but did not dedicate [it]: this alone [was] denied to his good fortune. The name of Lutatius Catulus remained among such great public works of the emperors all the way up until Vitellius.

63. [ἔ]οικε δὲ καὶ περὶ τὸν δεῦτερον ναὸν ὁμοία τύχη γενέσθαι τῆς καθιερώσεως. τὸν μὲν γὰρ πρῶτον ὡς εἴρηται Ταρκυνίου κατασκευάσαντος, Ὀρατίου δὲ καθιερώσαντος, ἐν τοῖς ἐμφυλίαις πολέμοις πῦρ ἀπώλεσε. τὸν δὲ δεῦτερον ἀνέστησε μὲν Σύλλας, ἐπεγράφη δὲ τῇ καθιερώσει Κάτουλος Σύλλα προαποθανόντος. (Plutarch *Publicola* 15.1)

A similar fortune of dedication also seems to have occurred for the second temple [of Jupiter Optimus Maximus]. For during the civil wars a fire destroyed the first [temple], [which], as has been said, Tarquinius built but Horatius dedicated. Sulla erected the second [temple] but Catulus claimed credit for its dedication [since] Sulla died early.

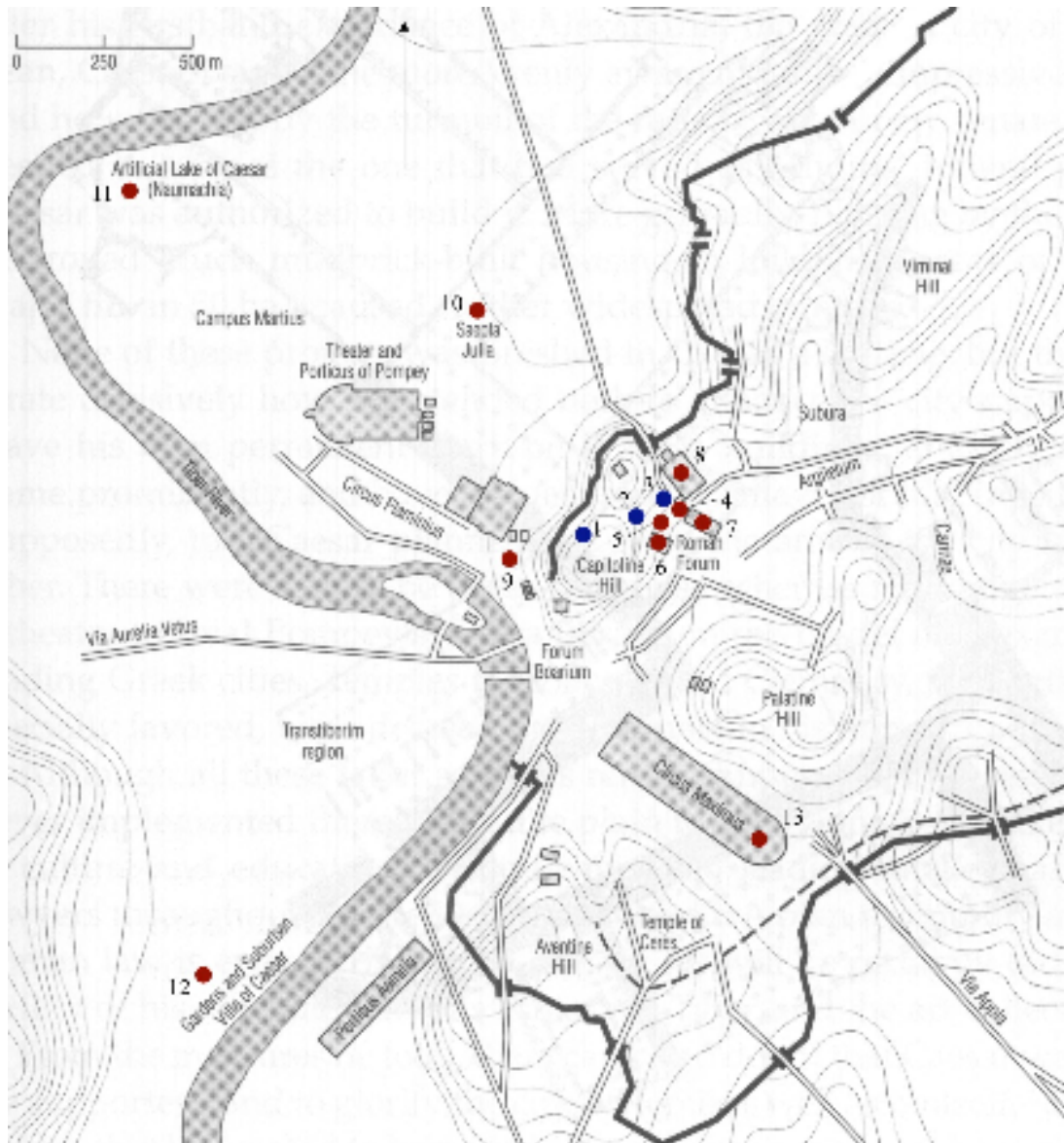
64. ἐπὶ γὰρ τοῖς αὐτοῖς θεμελίοις ὁ μετὰ τὴν ἔμψησιν οἰκοδομηθεὶς κατὰ τοὺς πατέρας ἡμῶν εὐρέθη τῇ πολυτελείᾳ τῆς ὕλης μόνον διαλλάττων τοῦ ἀρχαίου...
(Dionysius of Halicarnassus 4.61.4)

For the [temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus] built after the fire in the time of our fathers was devised upon the same foundations, differing from the ancient [temple] only in the extravagance of its material...

65. Varro rescripsit in memoria sibi esse, quod Q. Catulus curator restituendi Capitolii dixisset voluisse se aream Capitolinam deprimere, ut pluribus gradibus in aedem conscenderetur suggestusque pro fastigii magnitudine altior fieret, sed facere id non quisse, quoniam favisae impedissent. [i]d esse cellas quasdam et cisternas, quae in area sub terra essent, ubi reponi solerent signa vetera, quae ex eo templo collapsa essent, et alia quaedam religiosa e donis consecratis. (Aulus Gellius *Noctes Atticae* 2.10.2-3)

Varro wrote in response that he remembered that Quintus Catulus, [as] overseer of rebuilding the Capitolium, had said that he had wanted to lower the *area Capitolina*, so that there might be an ascent to the temple by more steps and the podium might be higher in proportion to the size of the pediment, but that he could not do this since the *favisae* prevented [him]. [He said that] these [i.e., *favisae*] were certain chambers and cisterns which were in the area beneath the earth where ancient statues which had fallen from this temple and certain other sacred objects from consecrated gifts were accustomed to be placed.

Figure 1



Projects of Sulla ●

- 1: Temple of Jupiter Optimus Maximus
- 2: Tabularium
- 3: Curia Hostilia
- Projects with unknown locations:
- Temple of Hercules Custos (Circus Maximus)
- Temple of Hercules Sullanus (Esquiline)

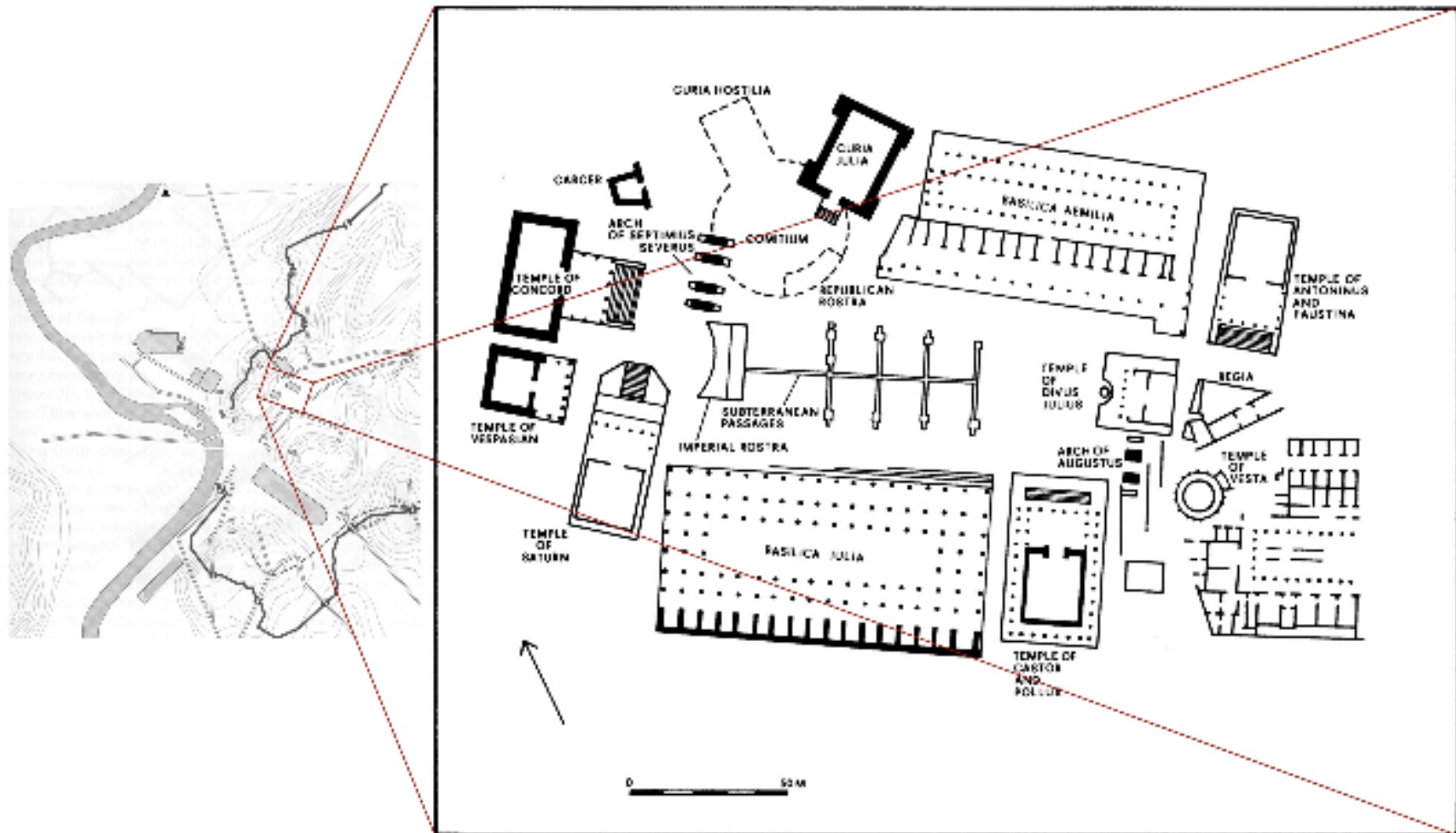
Projects of Caesar ●

- 4: Curia Iulia
- 5: Rostra Iulia
- 6: Basilica Iulia

Projects of Caesar (cont'd) ●

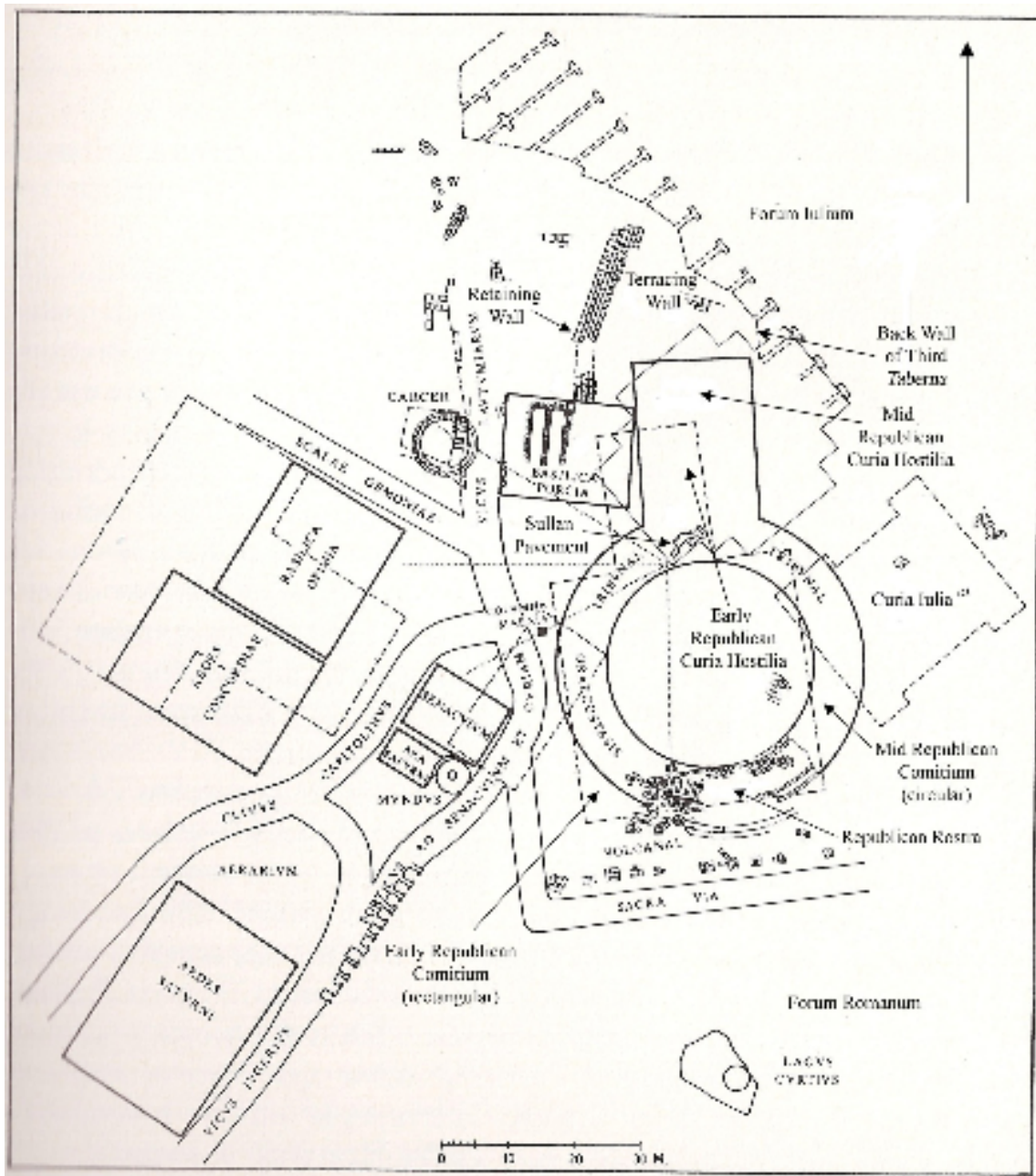
- 7: Basilica Aemilia
- 8: Forum Iulium
- 9: Theater near the river
- 10: Saepta Iulia
- 11: Naumachia Caesaris
- 12: Horti Caesaris
- 13: Circus Maximus
- Projects with unknown locations:
- Temple of Clementia Caesaris
- Tumulus Iuliae (Campus Martius)
- Temporary stadium (Campus Martius)
- Hunting theater (Campus Martius)

Figure 2



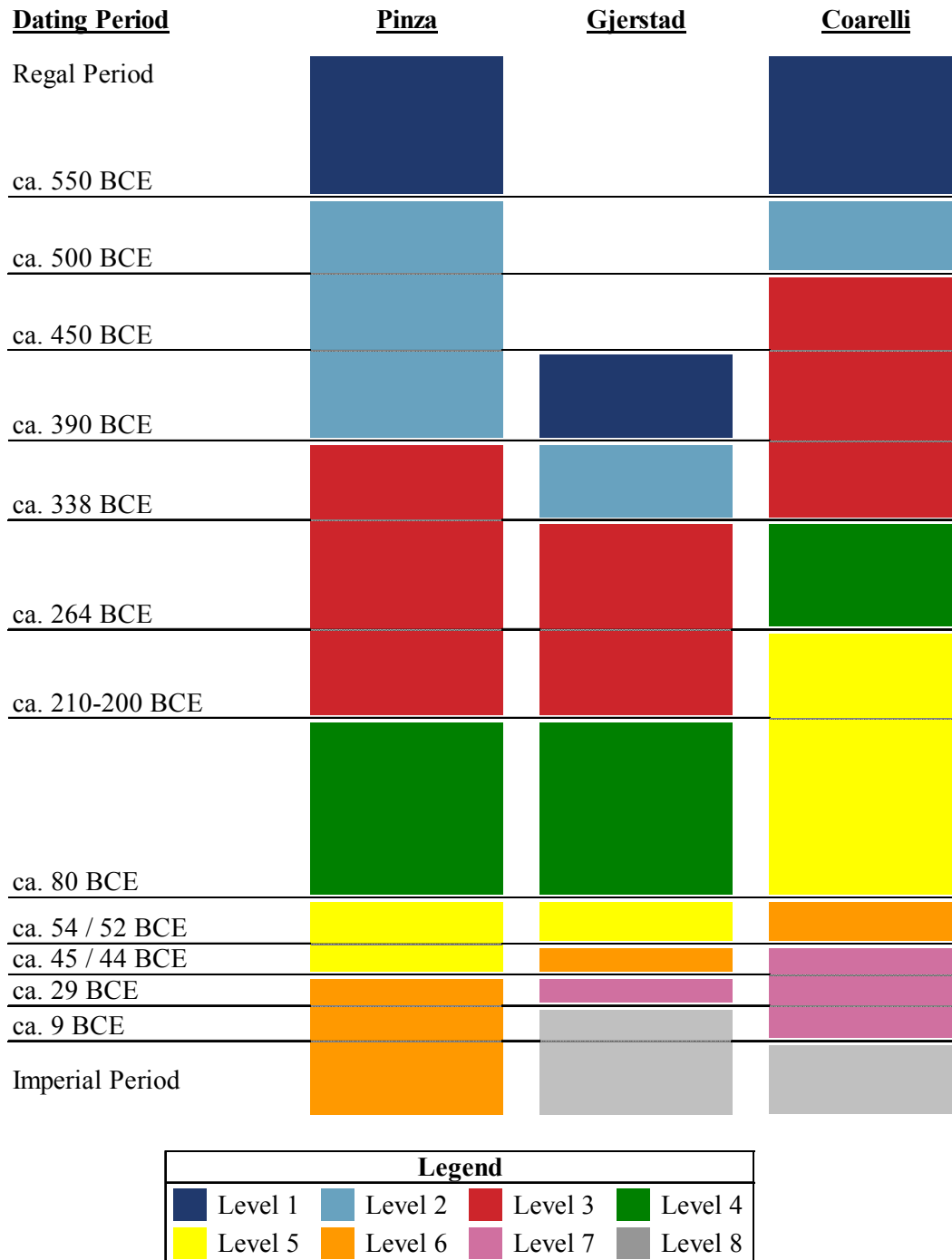
Plan of the Forum Romanum with both Republican and Imperial structures

Figure 3



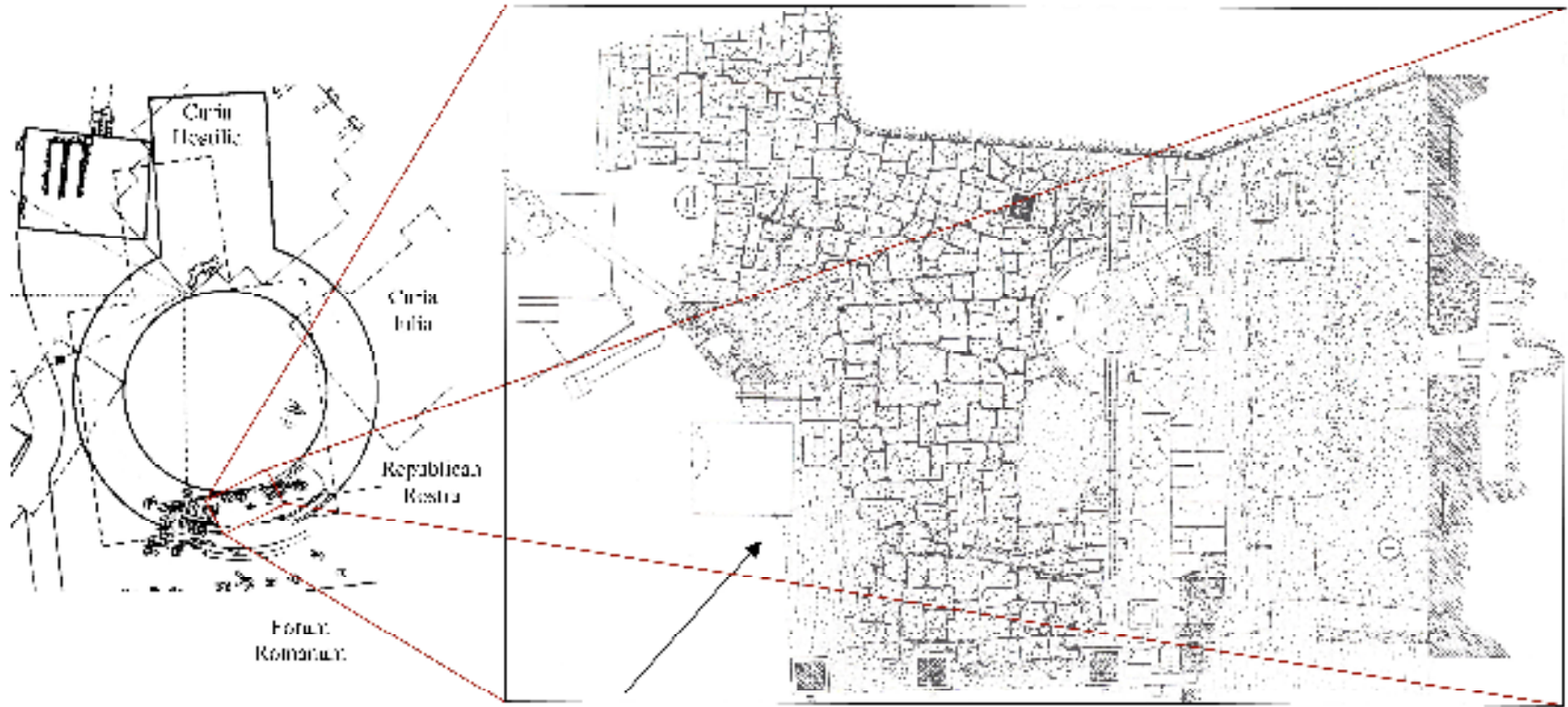
Schematic plan of the Republican Comitium-Rostra-Curia complex (Coarelli)

Figure 4



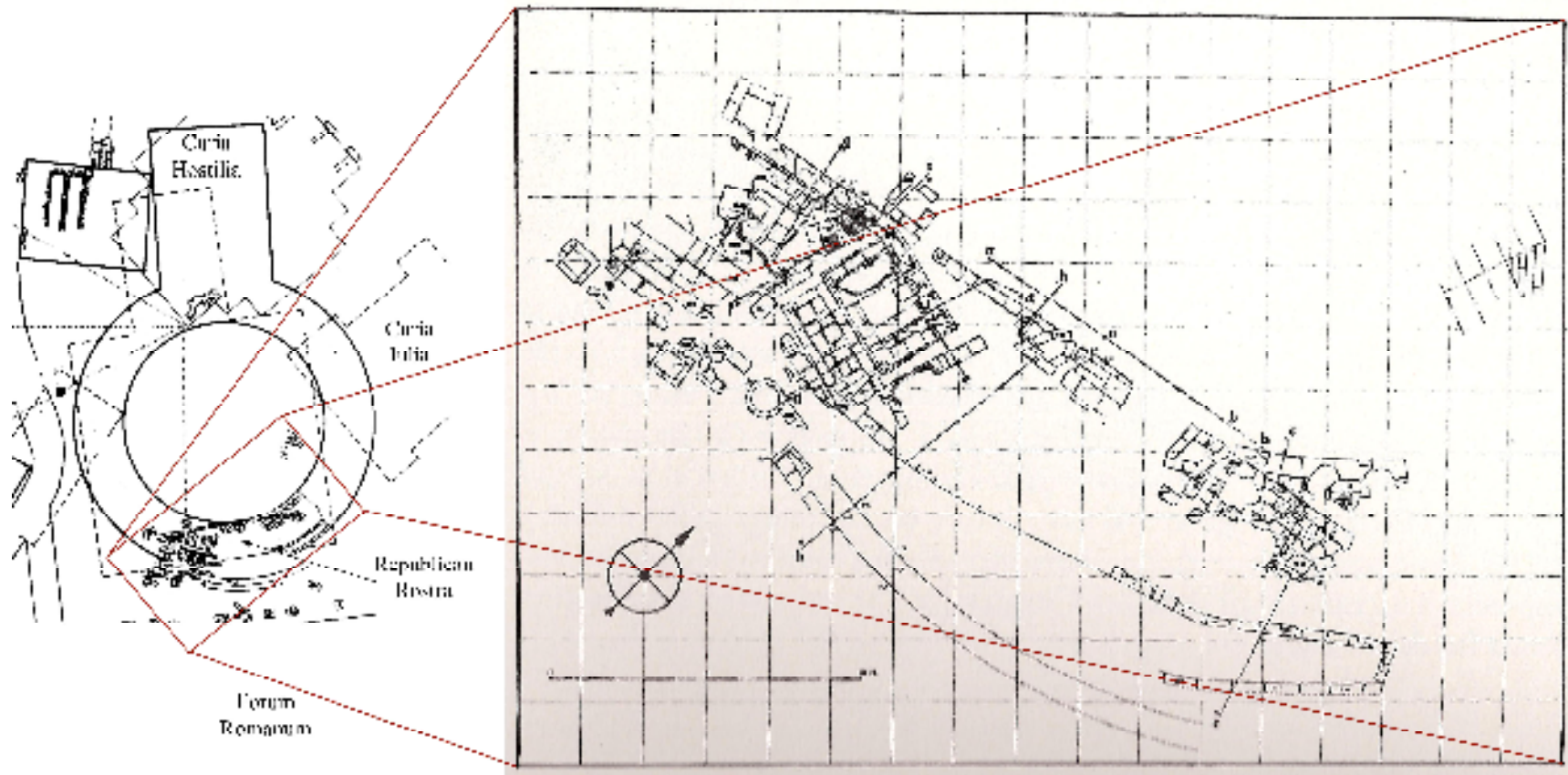
Schematic timeline of the levels of the Comitium posited by Pinza, Gjerstad and Coarelli

Figure 5



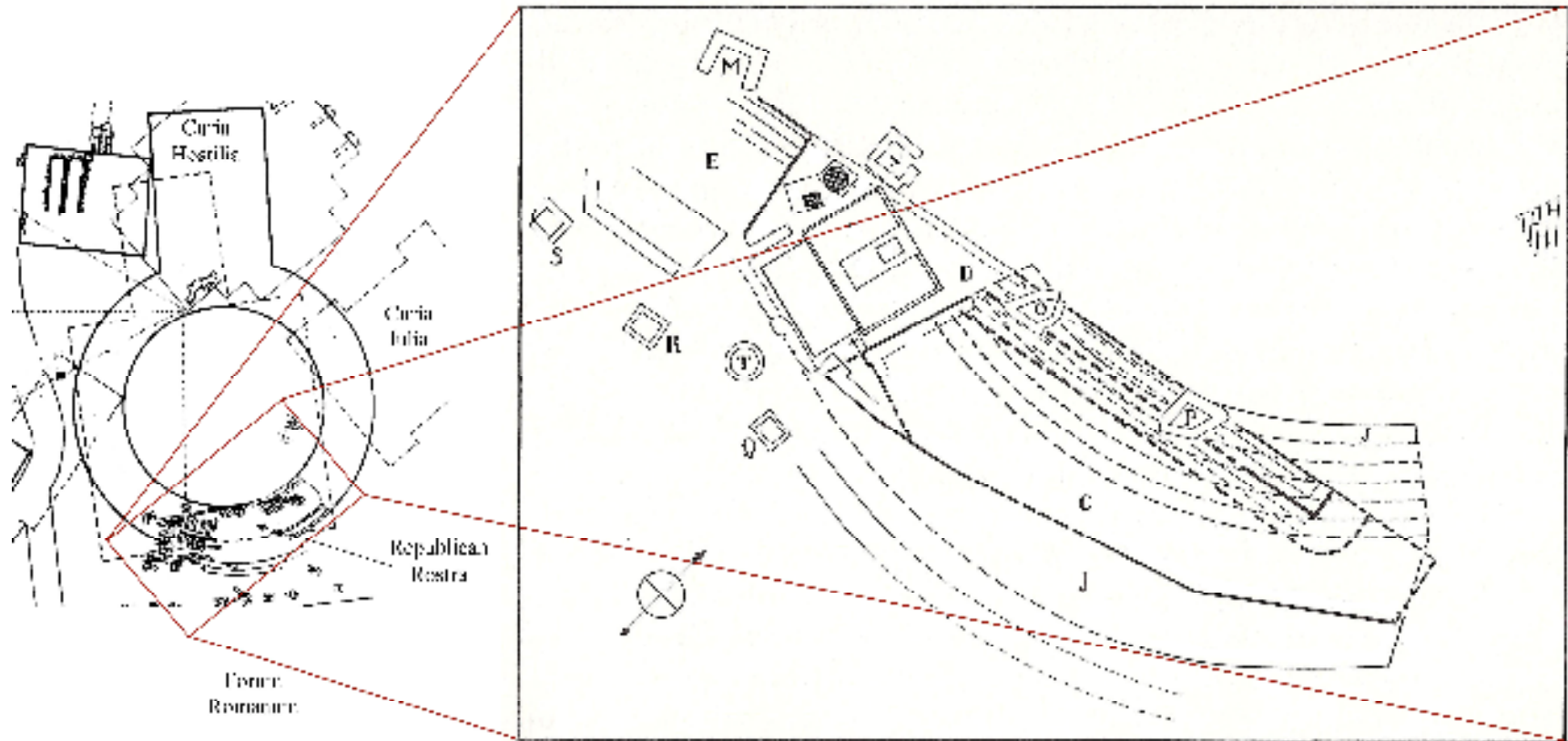
Plan of Boni's excavations of the southern section of the Comitium

Figure 6



Plan of Gjerstad's excavations of the southern section of the Comitium

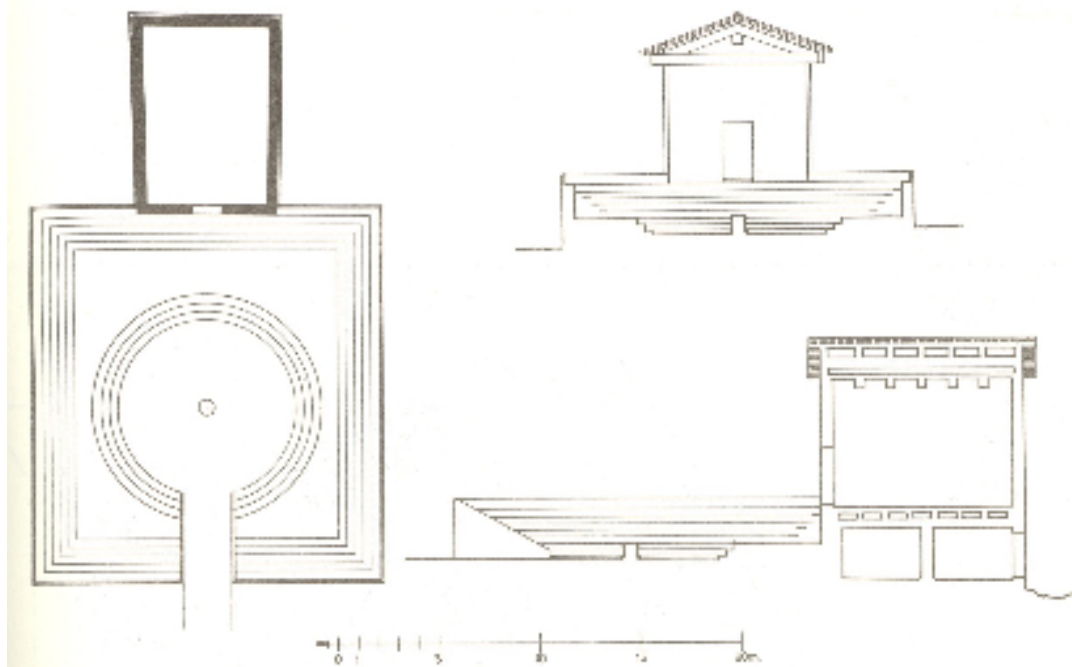
Figure 7



Schematic plan of Gjerstad's excavations of the southern section of the Comitium

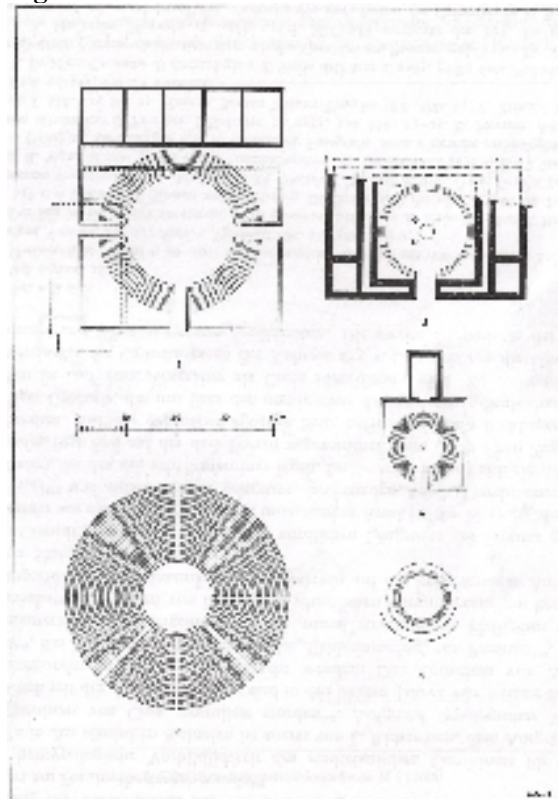
- C: Early Republican Rostra
- D: Trapezoidal area incorporating the monuments located below the *Lapis Niger*
- E: Graecostasis
- J: Mid to late Republican Rostra
- M-T: Holes of various sizes and shapes

Figure 8



Reconstruction of the 1st phase of curia-comitium complex at Cosa

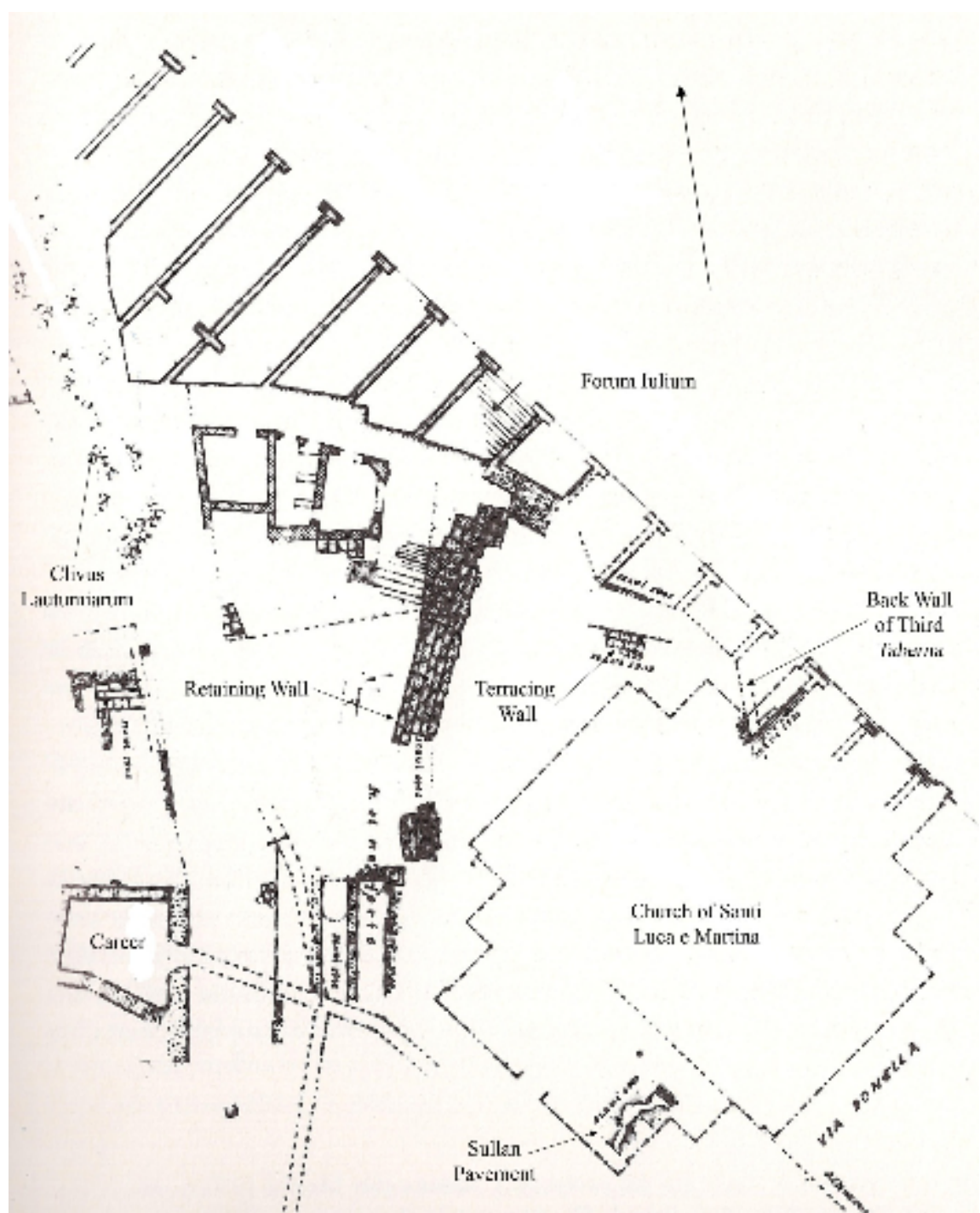
Figure 9



Schematic plan of comparable curia-comitium structures

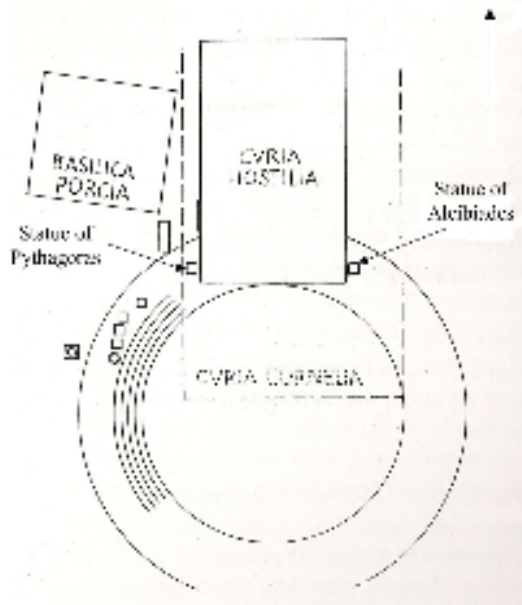
1. Ekklesiasterion of Paestum
2. Ekklesiasterion of Agrigento
3. Comitium of Alba Fucens
4. Comitium of Cosa
5. Theatral circle of Samothrace

Figure 10



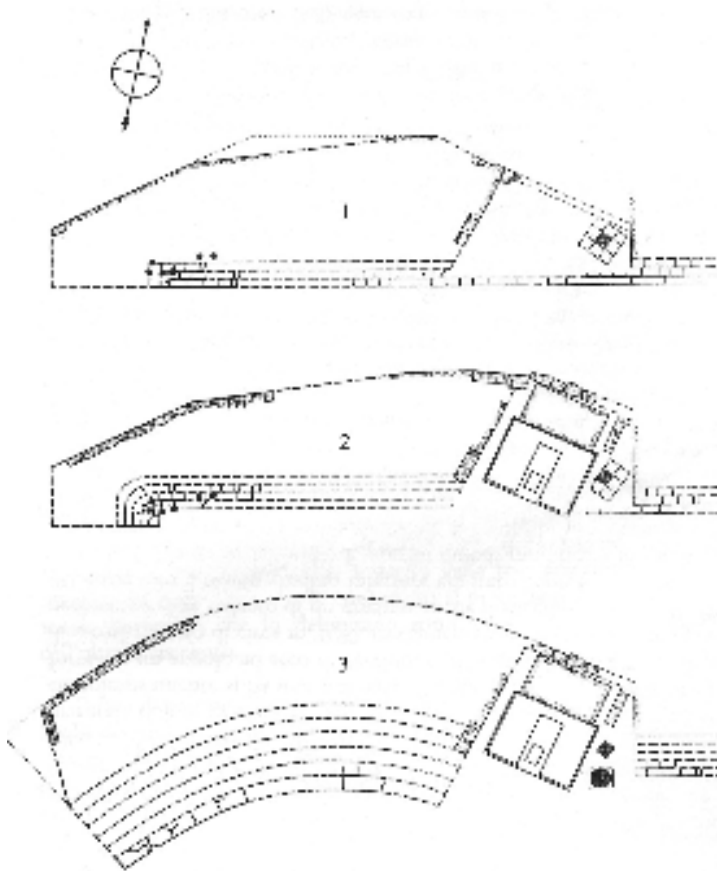
Plan of the church of Santi Luca e Martina and the surrounding area

Figure 11



Schematic plan of the Curia Cornelia and Sullan Comitium with proposed location of statues *in cornibus*

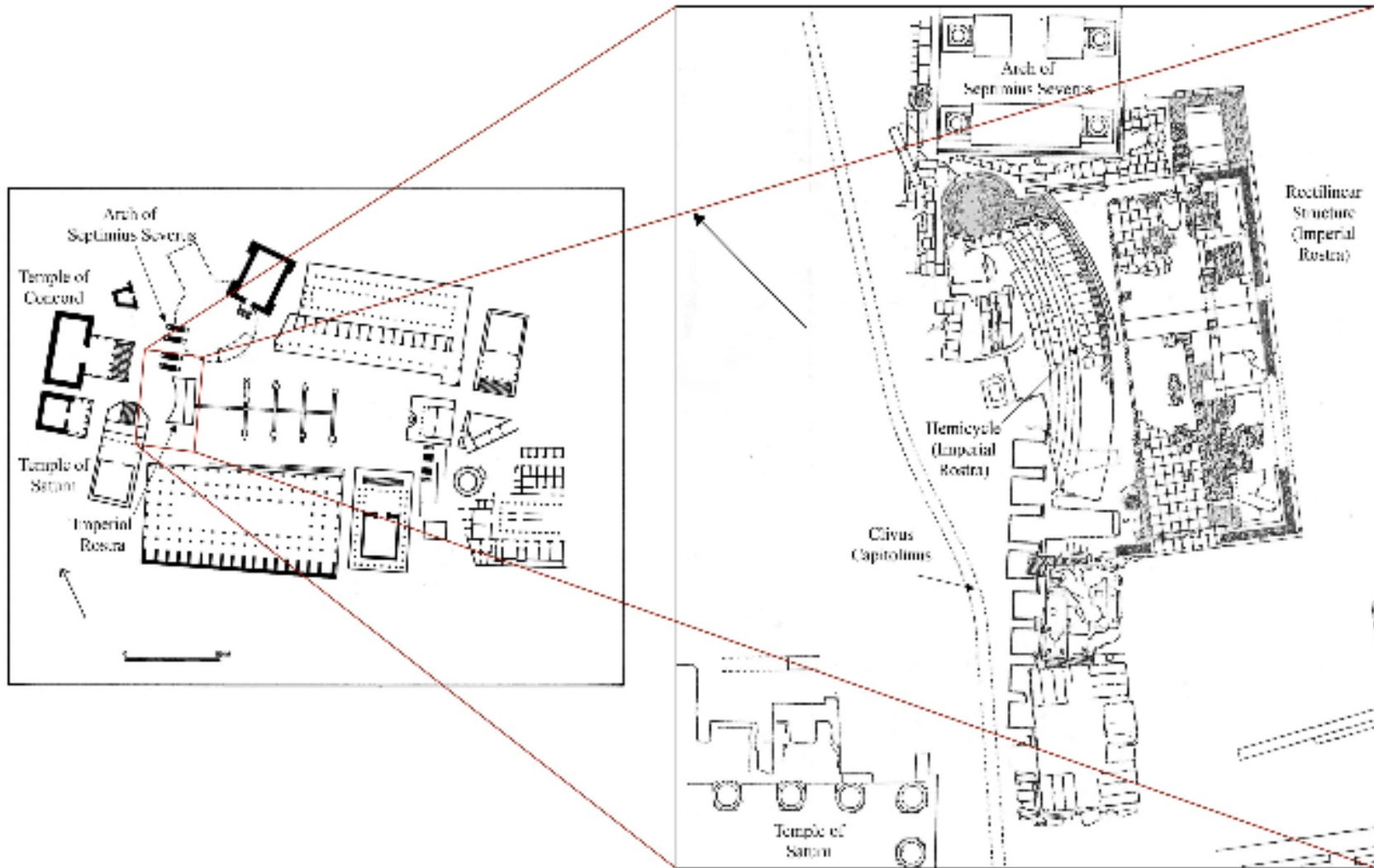
Figure 12



Schematic plan of the phases of the Republican Rostra

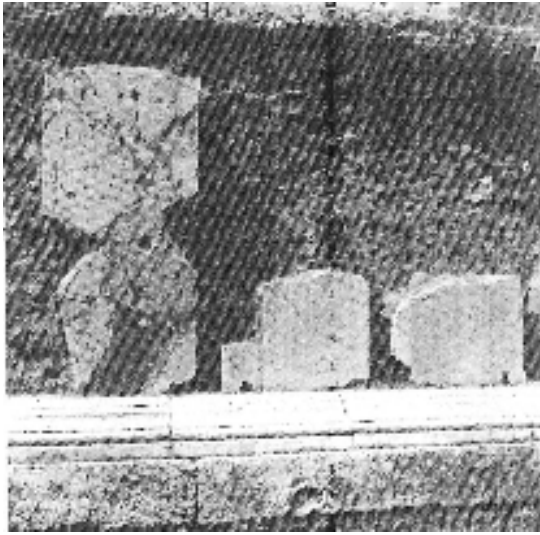
1. First level (Platform C)
2. Second level (Platform C)
3. Third level (Platform J)

Figure 13



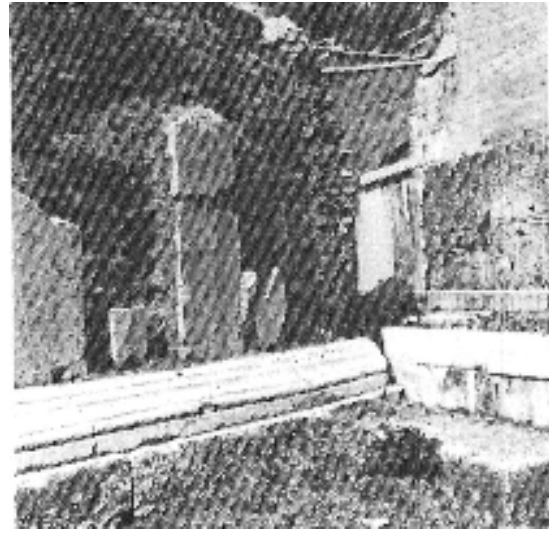
Plan of the Imperial Rostra, including both hemicycle and rectilinear structures

Figure 14



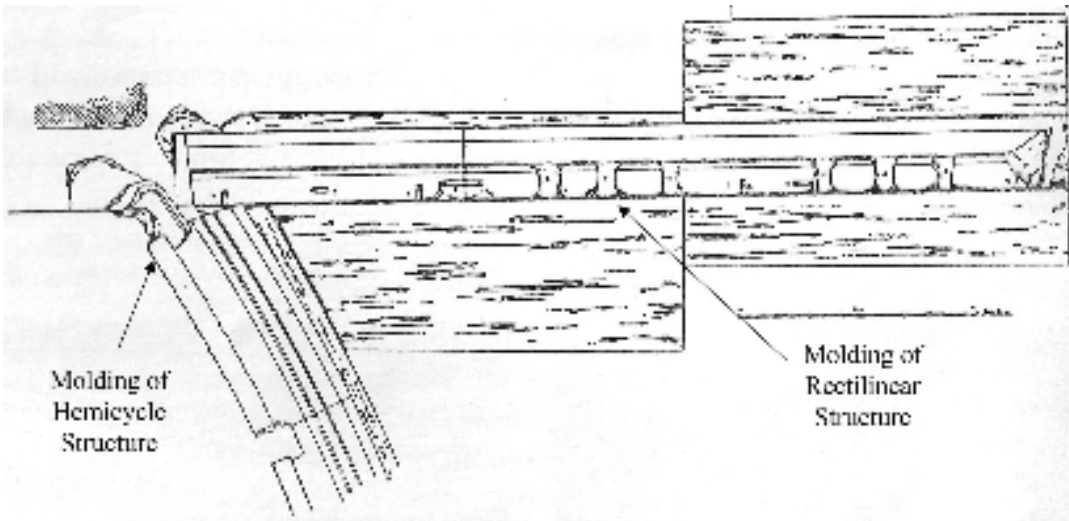
Southeastern façade of the hemicycle structure of the Imperial Rostra

Figure 15



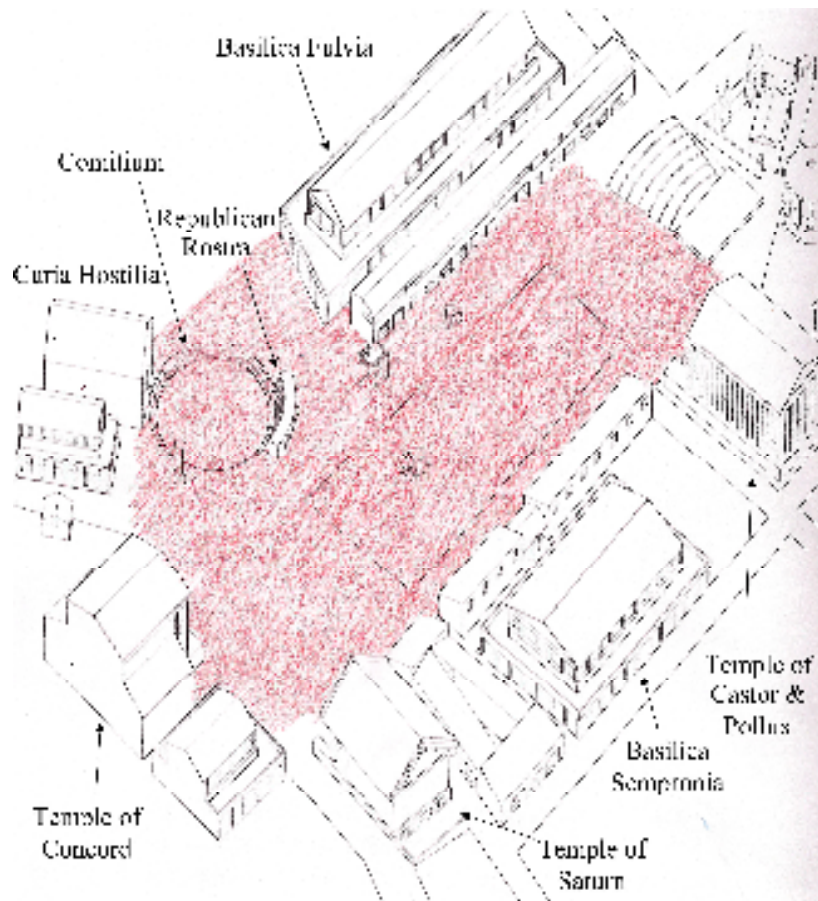
Abutting moldings of the hemicycle structure (left) and the rectilinear structure (right) of the Imperial Rostra

Figure 16



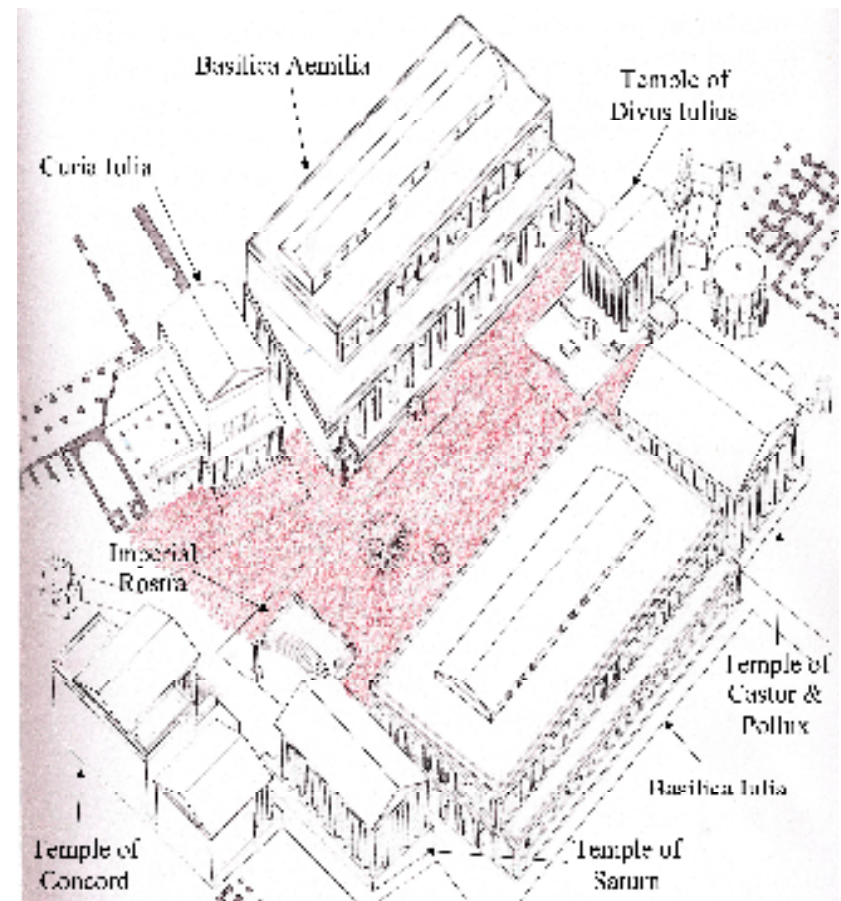
Plan of the abutting moldings of the hemicycle structure (lower left) and the rectilinear structure (top) of Imperial Rostra

Figure 17



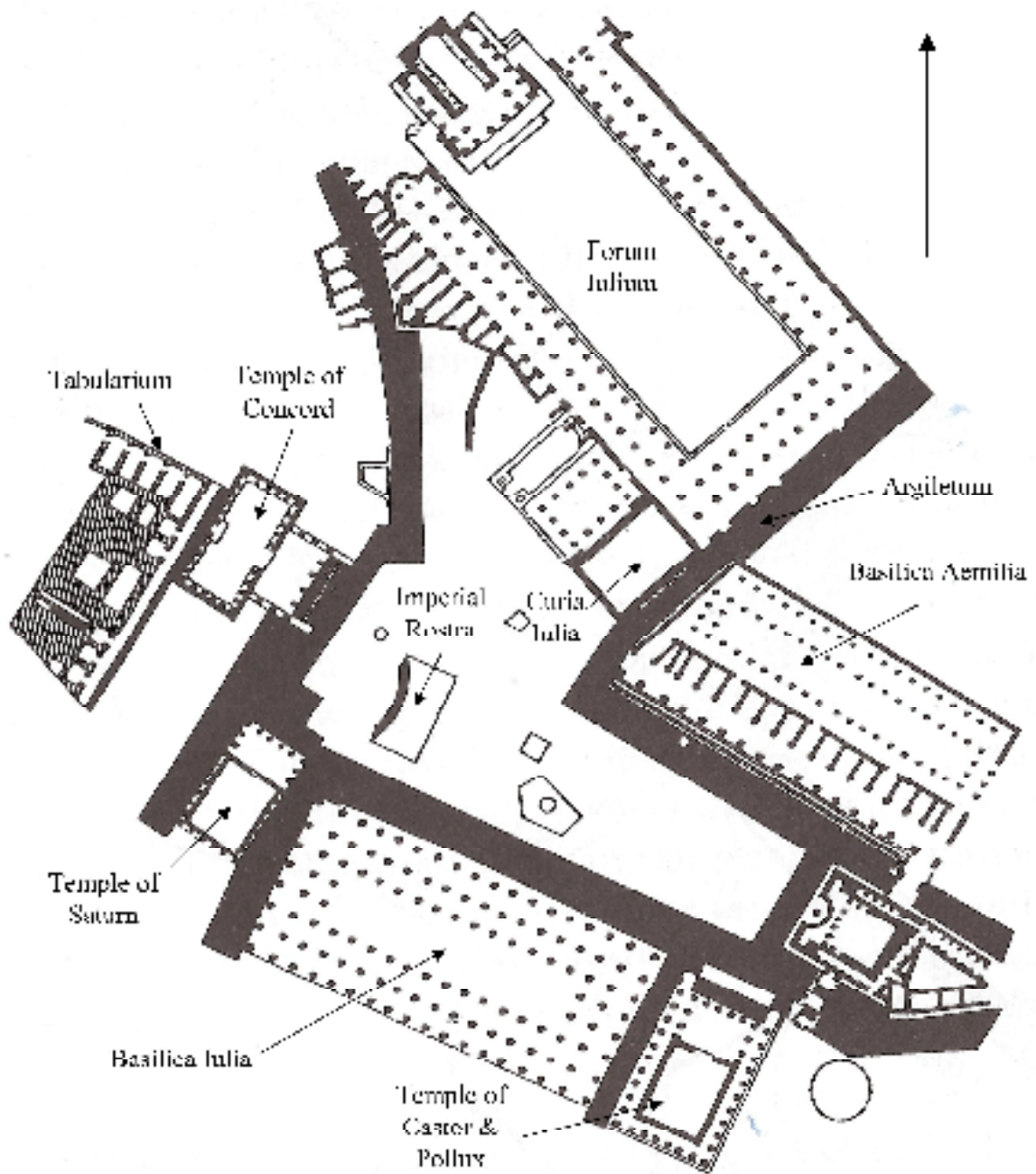
Reconstruction of the western Forum Romanum (2nd c. BCE)

Figure 18



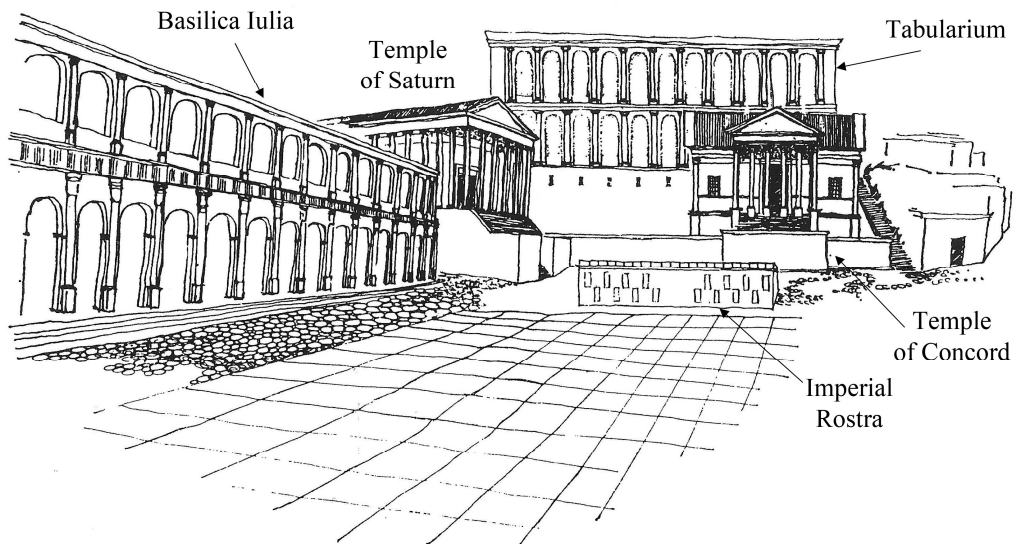
Reconstruction of the western Forum Romanum (1st c. CE)

Figure 19



Plan of the Forum Romanum and the Forum Iulium in the Imperial period

Figure 20



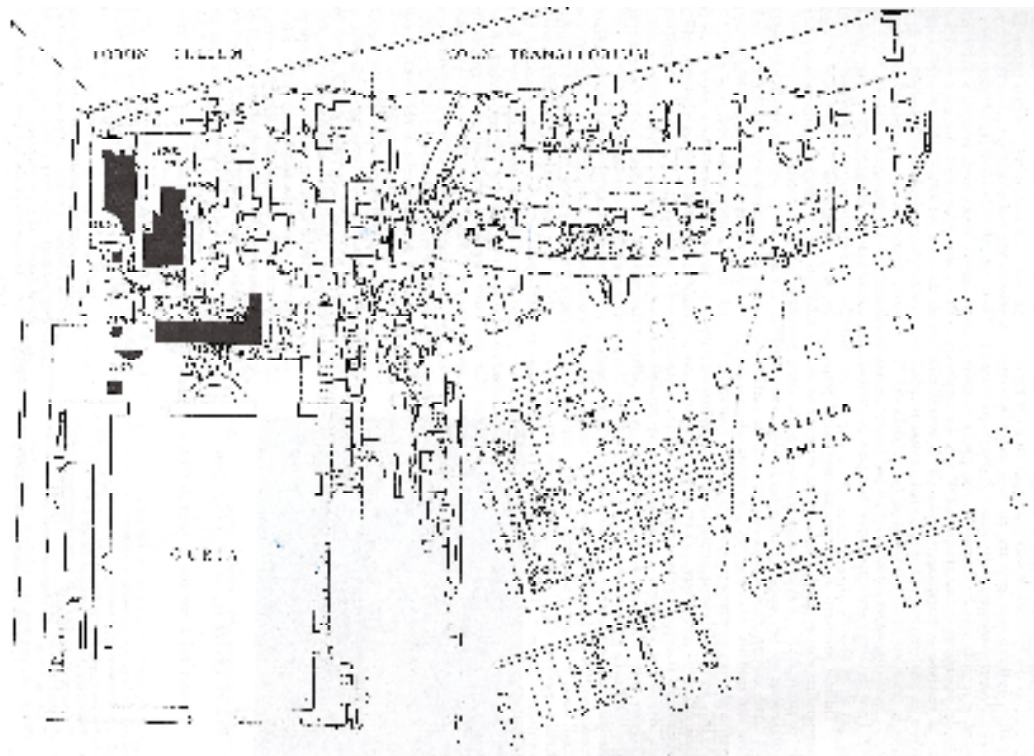
Reconstructed view of the post-Caesarian Forum Romanum from southeast to northwest

Figure 21



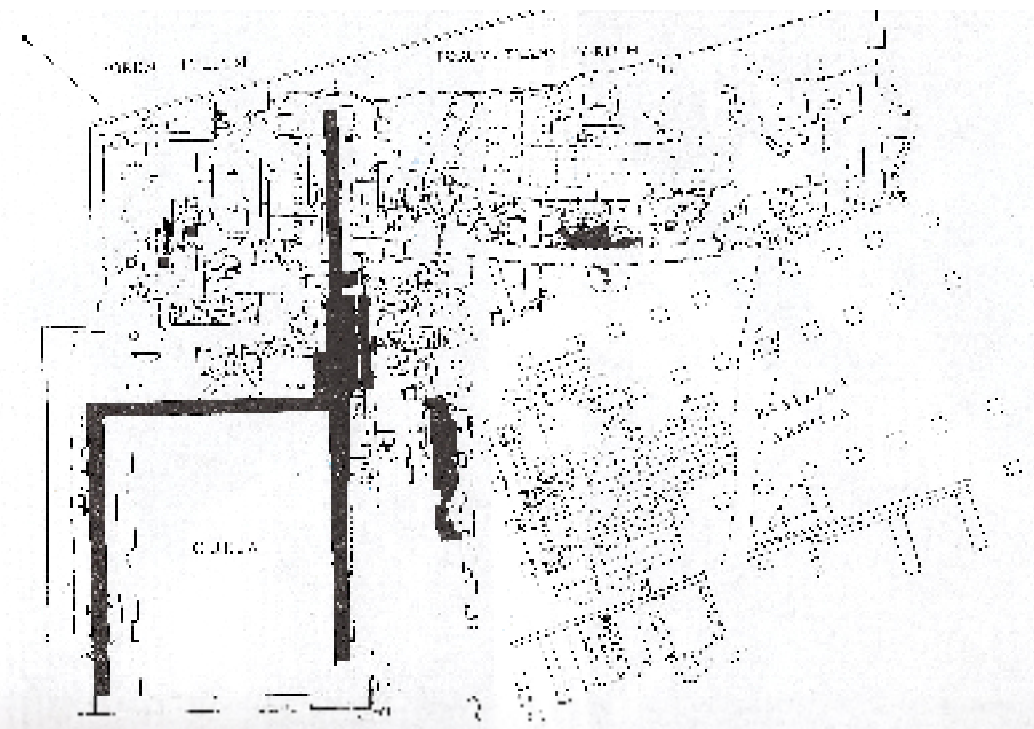
Front façade of the Diocletianic rebuilding of the Curia Iulia after Boni's restorations

Figure 22



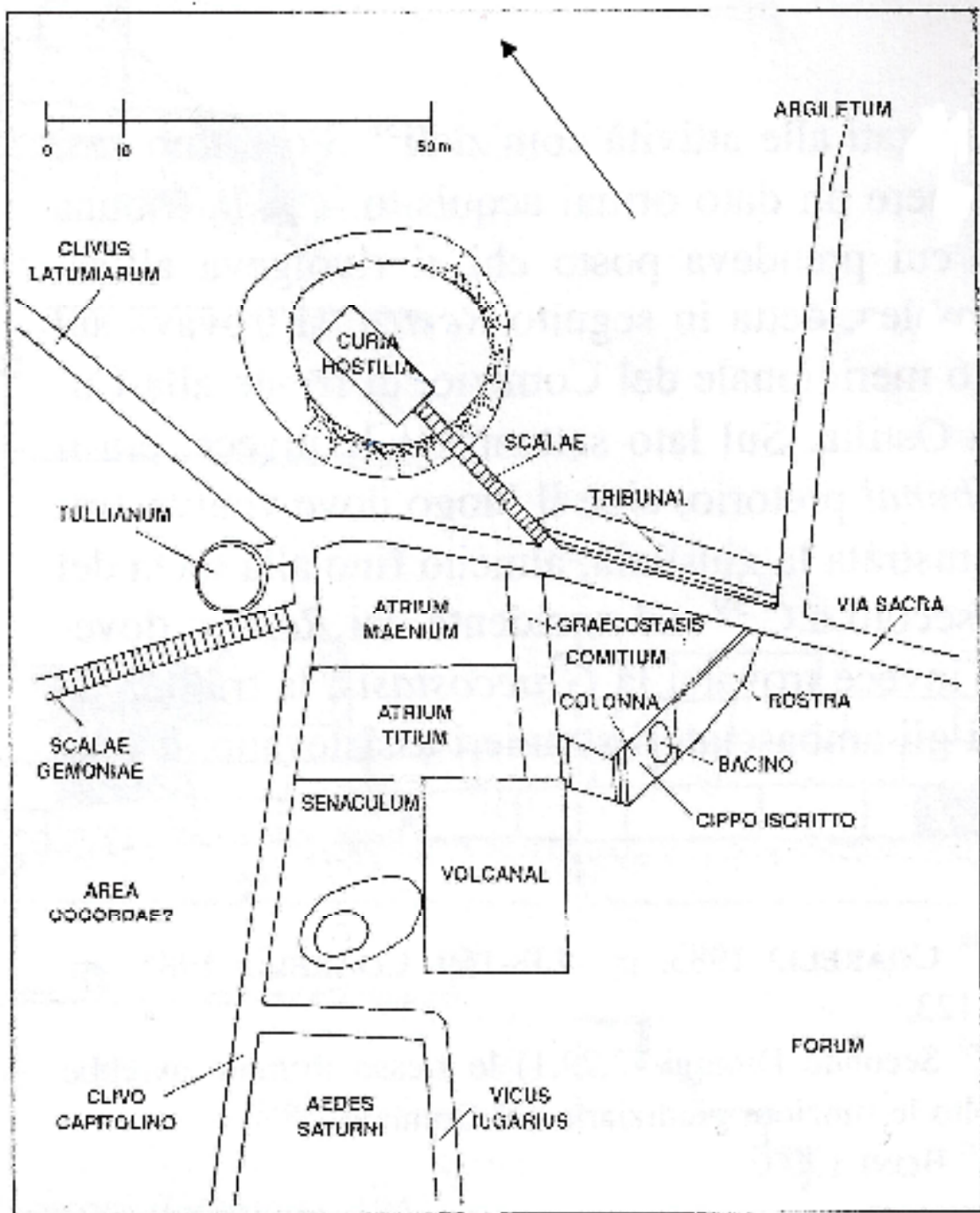
Plan showing Caesarian works (in solid black) on Curia Iulia and Forum Iulium

Figure 23



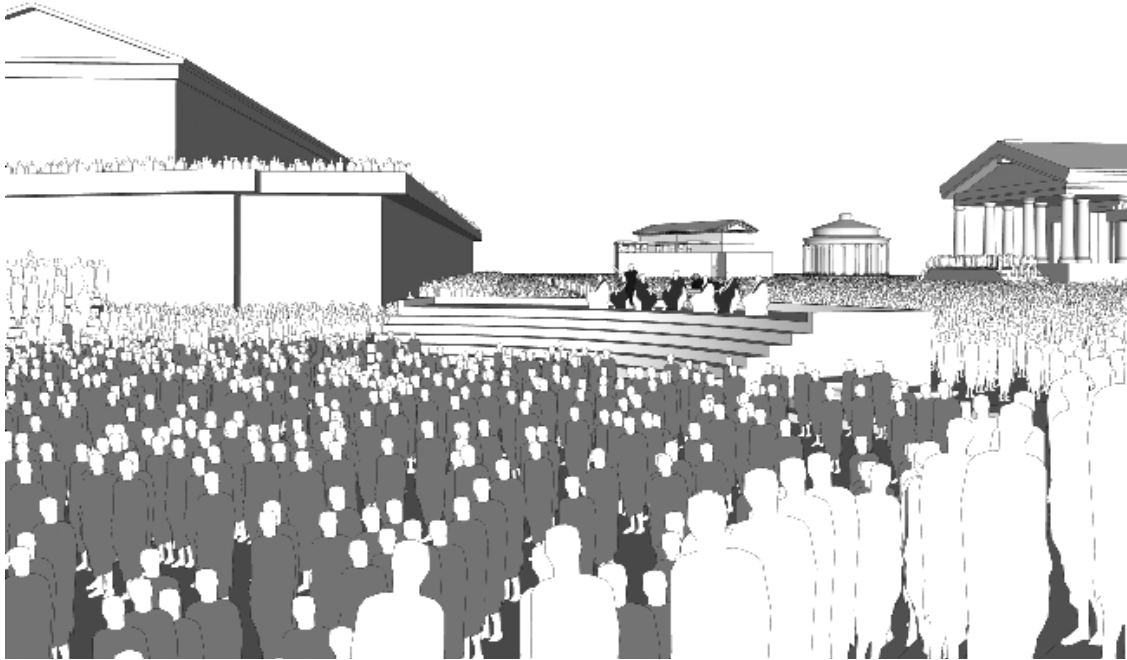
Plan showing Augustan works (in solid black) on Curia Iulia and Forum Iulium

Figure 24



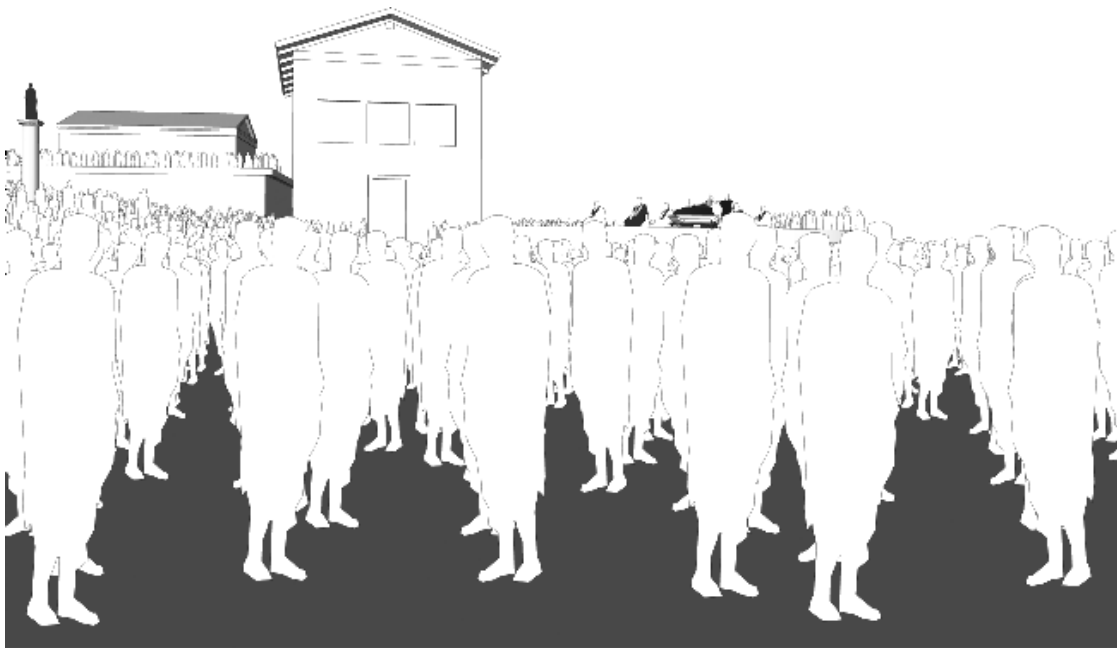
Schematic plan of the early Republican Curia Hostilia (Carafa)

Figure 25



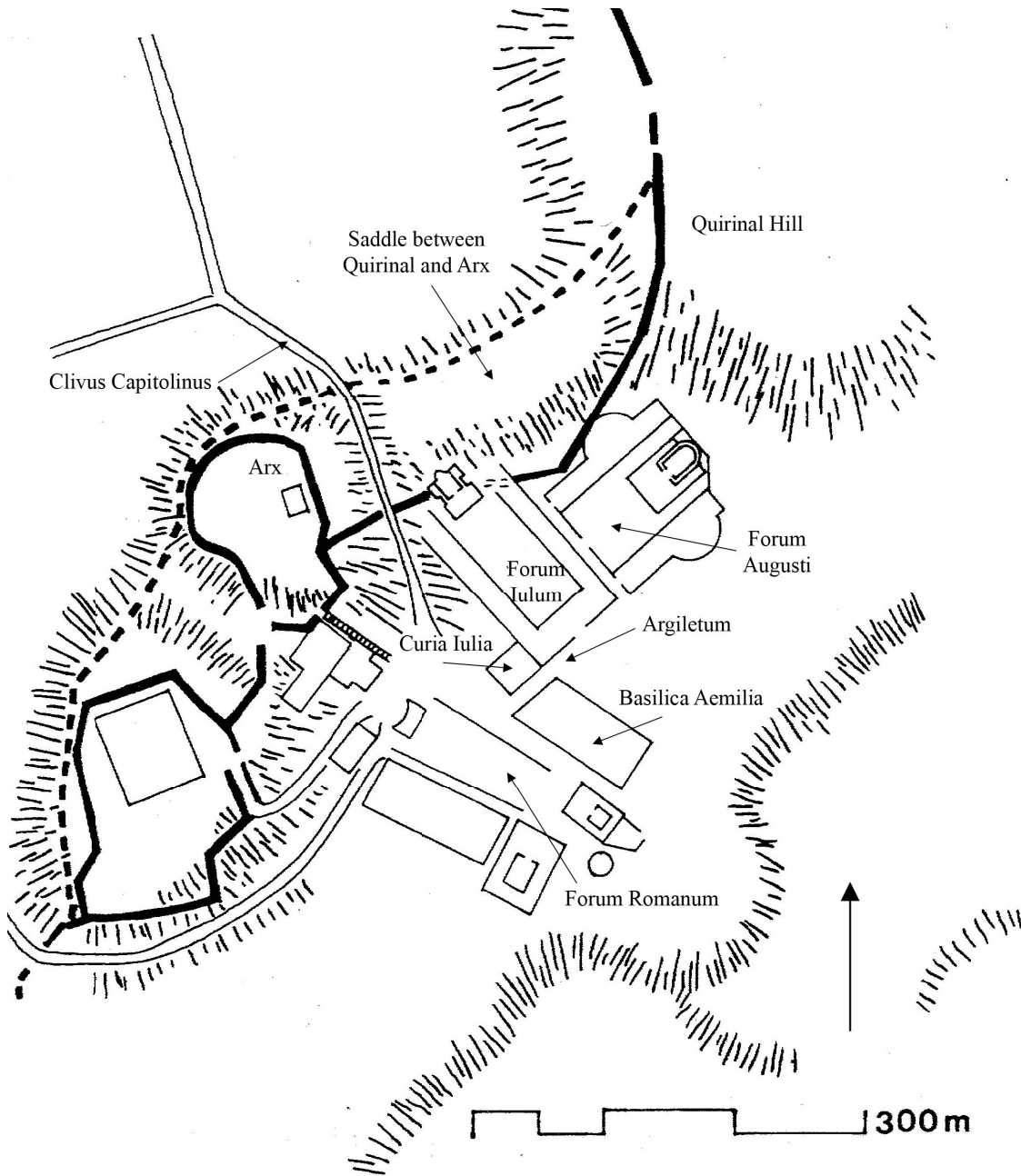
Reconstructed view of the Republican Rostra and Forum Romanum from the Curia Hostilia

Figure 26



Reconstructed view of the Republican Rostra and Curia Hostilia from the Forum Romanum

Figure 27



Plan of the Forum Iulium and its surrounding natural topography

~ Abbreviations~

AJA: American Journal of Archaeology

AnalRom: Analecta Romana Instituti Danici

Ann. Ingegneri: Annali della Società degli ingegneri e degli architetti italiani

AnnInst: Annales Institutorum

Atti Lincei: Atti della Reale Accademia dei Lincei, Memorie della Classe di Scienze Morali, Storiche e Filologiche

BICS: Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies of the University of London

CCG: Cahiers du Centre Gustave Glotz

JRS: Journal of Roman Studies

JSAH: Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians

MAAR: Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome

MonAnt: Monumenti antichi

NSc: Notizie degli scavi di antichità

OpArch: Opuscula archaeologica

RM: Mitteilungen des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts, Römische Abteilung

TAPA: Transactions of the American Philological Association

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