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DHSI Work and Deliverables

When people ask me what I have been doing this summer, I respond with, “mapping the Aurelian Wall.” The answer is always the same, and with that simple answer, it does not seem like much goes into it. That was not, and is not the case. Mapping the wall has been tedious, complicated, and in the end rewarding. The first difficult thing was finding a map of the Aurelian Wall. Most maps were from tourist books, just drawn onto a png without any distinct markers. It took me a little bit to find an “accurate” map of the Aurelian Wall. I put the word accurately in quotations because even with this map, there is some hesitation of whether or not it is accurate. After finding the map of the Aurelian wall, I had to figure out how to get this picture of a piece of scrip mapped onto an online map.

Professor Muccigrosso has taught me and my partner a lot about the digital humanities, and with that different websites with tools that are a part of the digital humanities. One of those tools is, mapwarper.net. On the website, I anchored the map I was using as a guide onto a modern online map. Anchoring the points allowed the program to run and place the script map on top of the online one. This allowed me to use Map Warper as a reference and guide to map the Aurelian Wall.

I mapped the Aurelian Wall with the program, Geojson. Using the LineString feature I mapped the Aurelian Wall along the street, using Map Warper as my guide. After mapping the first draft of the wall, I went back with another program called, vector.rocks. There is where I fixed alignment and made the map more accurate based on the street view. After that, I went back to Geojson with the file and created polygons where all the towers and gates are on the wall. I did this by looking at a street view map and tracing over the towers and gates there.

Mapping the Aurelian Wall has been both challenging and rewarding. What I hope the result is, a map that people can interact with and use for digital humanities. To build upon this project one might add a buffer along the wall, and a person can see if their point is in the Aurelian Wall or not.

In addition to mapping the Aurelian Wall, I also mapped the divisions of the Roman Republic voting tribes. The map of these tribes is found in the book, The Voting Districts of the Roman Republic: the Thirty-Five Urban and Rural Tribes by Lily Ross Taylor. The maps are in the back of the book, and the ones I will map are the two maps that show the tribes directly by Rome, the “The Thirty-One Rural Tribes with Tribal Divisions Before 232 B.C.” and “The Seventeen Oldest Rural Tribes.” These two maps go along with the data set my project partner did. Where they mapped the towns of the Roman Republic and the voting tribes they belonged to.

I mapped the tribes by importing the maps from Taylor into the website Map Warpers. Through pinning points on the maps from Taylor and the online maps, Taylor’s maps are warped onto an online and interactive map. At first, this seemed like a fairly easy process, but connecting points and warping proved to be very difficult. This is because when I would add points on one side, the computer would warp, and the points would be connected, but the other side would be messed up and unusable. I had to keep adding more and more connections to try and get as accurately warped as I could. In the end, I was able to get the warped maps to line up in certain areas, such as the cities and lakes, but along the coast, the map’s alignment is still off. Overall, the warping of the map was very difficult.

Once the two maps were warped, I exported them as geotiff’s. Meaning that the image of the warped maps can sit upon other maps in programs such as GIS. This is helpful to future scholars. Building on top of that project, I mapped the two maps in geojson. Much like my mapping of the Aurelian Wall, I drew the boundaries on the map with a LineString, and drew lakes with the Polygon tool. This, which I went in thinking differently, was very difficult. This is because I had to freehand the tribe’s boundaries on the map when the modern map did not have the same characteristics as the ancient ones. Taylor’s maps are not perfect, they are, what seems to be, lines drawn onto a sheet of paper. This proved difficult during warping and also during geojson mapping. For example, Taylor marks the lake, Fucinus Lacus, this lake has been filled in during modern times. Comparing and drawing on the boundaries was overall very difficult and time-consuming.

Due to the freehanded map drawing, there is human error. Meaning, not all the rivers are perfectly drawn, or a boundary might be off by a certain number of point degrees. In the future, one would fix the human error, possibly, in the program, vector.rocks. Overall, the maps were completed to the best of my ability. I believe that they are satisfactory given the challenges I faced while completing them, I used my best judgment, and that has paid off. I hope that a person would use these maps coupled with my project partner’s map of the towns in the voting districts.