

Lauacrum: just another word for baths? How the terminology of baths may have reflected changes in bathing habits

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Abstract

The word *lauacrum* has been interpreted in various ways, but has never been the subject of a thorough research. The term seems to have appeared in the 2nd century AD as a neologism to denote 'the act of submerging oneself in the water of a pool' or the place where this bathing took place, i. e. the bath house or a pool. Just as the word *thermae* appeared in the 1st century AD to designate a new type of bath house and a subsequent new mode of bathing, the author argues that the word *lauacrum* was also introduced to denote a change in bathing habits. By combining the literary, juridical, epigraphic and archaeological evidence of *lauacra*, it is proposed that the word reflected a bathing habit which focussed more on personal washing. These individual ablutions took place in single-person pools, whether or not followed by a dip in the communal ones. This form of individual bathing may have replaced the previous tradition of washing at the *labrum*. The small type of pool used for this purpose, may have influenced both the form and the terminology of Christian baptismal fonts.

Het woord *lauacrum* is op verschillende wijzen geïnterpreteerd, maar is nooit het onderwerp geweest van een diepgaande studie. De term lijkt te verschijnen in de 2de eeuw n. C. als een neologisme om de handeling van 'zich onderdompelen in badwater' te beschrijven of om aan te geven waar deze handeling zich voltrok, namelijk in het badhuis of de badkuip. Net zoals het woord *thermae* verscheen in de 1ste eeuw n. C. om een nieuw type badhuis en de daarmee samengaande nieuwe badgewoontes te benoemen, zo ook zou volgens de auteur het woord *lauacrum* geïntroduceerd zijn om een veranderd badbezoek aan te duiden. Door de literaire, juridische, epigrafische en archeologische bewijzen van *lauacra* te combineren, wordt geargumenteed dat het woord een badgewoonte aanwees die meer aandacht besteedde aan een persoonlijke wasbeurt. Deze individuele wasbeurten vonden plaats in een eenpersoonsbadkuip, al dan niet gevolgd door een plons in het gemeenschappelijke bad. Deze individuele handeling verving mogelijk de voorgaande traditie om zich individueel te wassen aan het *labrum*. Het kleine type badkuip dat hiervoor werd gebruikt, zou ook de vorm en de terminologie van het Christelijke doopvont hebben kunnen beïnvloeden.

Résumé

Le mot *lauacrum* a été interprété de manière différente, mais n'a jamais été le sujet d'une étude approfondie. Le terme semble surgir à partir du 2ème s. apr. J. C. comme un néologisme pour exprimer «l'acte de se submerger dans l'eau d'un bain » ou l'endroit où se déroule cette action, c'est-à-dire les bains ou la piscine. Comme le mot *thermae* est apparu au 1er s. apr. J. C. pour désigner un nouveau type de bains et les nouvelles coutumes balnéaires, l'auteur propose que le mot *lauacrum* a été introduit pour indiquer un changement dans les coutumes des baigneurs. En combinant les indices littéraires, juridiques, épigraphiques et archéologiques du terme *lauacrum*, il est argumenté que le mot désignait la mode de se baigner dans des petits bassins, éventuellement suivie d'une submersion dans les grandes piscines collectives. Cet acte individuel a peut-être remplacé l'habitude de se laver autour du *labrum*. Le type de petit bassin utilisé à une telle fin aurait pu influencer la forme et la terminologie des fonts baptismaux chrétiens.

Lauacrum: just another word for baths? How the terminology of baths may have reflected changes in bathing habits

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Bath houses were undoubtedly one of the most characteristic public buildings of a Roman town.⁽¹⁾ Yet, there does not seem to be a single agreed Latin term for them, as was the case for other public buildings such as *theatrum* or *basilica*. Instead, several terms have been identified to denote bath houses in both epigraphy and literature. Most common are *thermae* and *balneum* (pl. *balnea*), but other terms include *lauacrum*, *balinea*, *balneolum* and *thermula*.⁽²⁾ Of these alternatives, *lauacrum* is a special case. Appearing in both textual and epigraphic evidence, it is often simply translated as ‘bath house’ or ‘bathing’. However, a close inspection of the numerous attestations reveals a more context-specific use of the term. This article will first assess how research dealt with bath-related terminology and in particular with the term *lauacrum*. Next, the term will be framed in its historical context by examining when and how it was introduced into Latin literature and epigraphy and how it related to the existing bath-related terminology. Finally, an attempt will be made to explain why the term was introduced by approaching the written evidence through the contemporary archaeological evidence of Roman baths. Starting from the principle that the ground plan reflects the route taken by the bathers and hence bathing habits, it will be argued that the word *lauacrum* may have been introduced as a result of a change in these bathing practices and only afterwards evolved into a more general term.

1. Roman baths: a problem of terminology

The terms *bal(i)neum* and *thermae* have been chosen in modern research to denote Roman baths houses. Both words have Greek roots, with *balneum* stemming from βαλανεῖον (public baths) and *thermae* from θερμός (hot).⁽³⁾ As the two terms seem to have been interchangeable and equally

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(1) The literature on Roman baths is too exhaustive to reproduce here. For an extensive bibliography, see MANDERSCHIED, 1988, DELAINE, 1988, MANDERSCHIED, 2004 and MARÉCHAL, 2012.

(2) FAGAN, 1993, p. 333; GINOUVÈS *et al.*, 1998, p. 109; GROS, 1996, p. 388.

(3) NIELSEN, 1990, p. 6; WEBER, 1996, p. 39.

popular, some scholars have justifiably cautioned against a generalized use of the word *thermae*.⁽⁴⁾ The difference between the two terms has long been explained by their size. Thus in modern research, *balnea* has come to signify a small type of neighborhood baths, while *thermae* were the large and luxurious imperial facilities.⁽⁵⁾ Inge Nielsen's theory, which defines *thermae* as large bath buildings with an exercise court (*palaestra*) or large hall, and *balnea* as small baths without such facilities, has not won much support.⁽⁶⁾ Alternative hypotheses stressing the public or private ownership, or symmetry and axuality in design, fail to explain why some obviously small private baths are still called *thermae*.⁽⁷⁾ It seems that Garrett Fagan's proposition fits the evidence best. According to this scholar, the word *thermae* appeared for the first time during the 1st c. AD to describe a new type of luxurious bath house. The Baths of Nero in Rome probably set a new standard for luxury. Was it not Martial who quipped *Quid Nerone peius, quid thermis melius Neronianus?*.⁽⁸⁾ Seneca's famous critique on the well-lit and lavishly decorated buildings of his time (middle of the 1st c. AD) refers to this new-found taste for luxury.⁽⁹⁾ On the other hand, the small, dark and mainly utilitarian baths – sometimes referred to as the 'Republican type' in modern research – were still labeled with the old term *bal(i)nea*.⁽¹⁰⁾ In addition, we could also argue that besides this luxury component, the introduction of new and better heating techniques during this period may also have incited the introduction of a new word for these better heated baths.⁽¹¹⁾ It is not a coincidence that *thermae* derives from the Greek word for hot.

The difference between *balneum* and *thermae* is more difficult to discern in the epigraphic record, as inscriptions are often found out of context. Furthermore, it is often a simply impossible task to identify the archaeological remains of the bath house mentioned in an inscription. But by examining a limited data-set – a good example being the appendix in Fagan's 1999 book – some interesting remarks about the difference in terminology can be made. From the 44 bath-related inscriptions referring to private benefactions, 27 use the term *balnea*, while only 16 use *thermae*.⁽¹²⁾ Of these latter, only five (11% of the total set) speak of actual construction, while the other 11 commemorate restorations of pre-existing buildings (25% of the total). Conversely, of the 27 *balnea*-inscriptions, 21 (or 47%) speak of construction

(4) Already STACCIOLI, 1961, p. 92; GROS, 1996, p. 388.

(5) BRÖDNER, 1983, p. 41; HEINZ, 1983, p. 27-28; YEGÜL, 1992, p. 43; GROS, 1996, p. 389.

(6) NIELSEN, 1990, p. 3. For critical reviews of this thesis, see DELAINE, 1993, p. 349; YEGÜL, 1993, p. 185.

(7) See the evidence of Martial, described in FAGAN, 1999, p. 15.

(8) "What is worse than Nero, what is better than Nero's baths?". Mart. *Ep.* VII, 34.

(9) Sen. *Ep.* 86, 6-7.

(10) FAGAN, 1999, p. 17-18.

(11) For the evolution of the hypocaust system during the 1st c. AD and the importance of the introduction of box-tile wall heating (*tubuli*), see ROOK, 1978, p. 271; ROOK, 1979, p. 305-307; ADAM, 1984, p. 292; GRASSMANN, 2011, p. 40-41.

(12) FAGAN, 1999, p. 233-328. Clearly, the difference between the two terms was not one of ownership, as private benefactors commissioned the building of both *balnea* and *thermae*.

and seven of reconstruction (or 16%). This imbalance could point to the fact that the costs for building large luxurious *thermae* were perhaps too much for one man to bear.⁽¹³⁾ On the other hand, the embellishment or the restoration of parts of the most important baths in the city, the *thermae*, certainly increased the benefactor's prestige.

However, even if the difference between *thermae* and *balnea* could be summarized by a difference in luxury and maybe originally also by the former's use of better heating techniques, it is difficult to assess the degree to which the Romans themselves made such a clear distinction. When was a facility luxurious enough to be called *thermae*? And did the heat-aspect of the word *thermae* gradually lose its differentiating character when *balnea* were equipped with the best possible heating systems? In any case, it is interesting to notice how the introduction of the word *thermae* in the second half of the 1st c. AD was probably the result of a change in bath house architecture and hence also in bathing habits.

2. *Lauacrum* in earlier research

The *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* makes clear the difficulty in translating the word *lauacrum*. The many possible interpretations are subdivided into secular and religious uses.⁽¹⁴⁾ In its profane sense, the term is explained as a place where one could wash or as the act of washing itself. In a religious sense, it can mean a ritual cleansing or even the ablutions preceding certain religious acts. Subsequently, in a Judaeo-Christian context, it can also be restricted to denote the sacrament of baptism. Unfortunately, these different interpretations often did not find their way into the translations. Hence, *lauacrum* has been simply translated as 'bath house' or 'bathing', while in a Christian context it has been reduced to 'baptism' or 'holy washing'. In modern research on Roman baths the word has received only limited attention, often briefly mentioned as just another synonym for *thermae* or *balneum*.⁽¹⁵⁾ Pierre Gros mentions the word as an old Latin term in connection with *lauatio* and *lauatrina* (both meaning bathroom), and thus as a part of the private washing installation of a house, situated near the kitchen.⁽¹⁶⁾ Similarly, Fikret Yegül defines *lauacrum* as the bath suite of a house or as a synonym for a small bath or *balneum*.⁽¹⁷⁾ Other scholars often do not bother to mention the term or only treat it in a footnote.⁽¹⁸⁾ Nevertheless, some have been puzzled by the different contexts in which the word has been found. In discussing his

(13) Figures derived from FAGAN, 1999, p. 283-299. All the inscriptions are dated between the 1st and the 4th c. AD. The attestations of *balnea* and *thermae* peak in the 2nd and 3rd c. AD.

(14) Ed. Teubner, Volumen III, pars altera, sectio I (1955-1970), c. 1032-1035.

(15) In RICHARDSON, 1992, p. 385 the entry for Roman baths is '*Thermae, balineum, lauacrum*'.

(16) GROS, 1996, p. 388.

(17) YEGÜL, 1992, p. 491.

(18) For example in Nielsen's appendix, there is no separate entry for *lauacrum*, although she does mention it on several occasions in her text. She is inclined to use it as a synonym for *thermae* and *balnea* (NIELSEN, 1990, p. 3).

extensive collection of bath-related inscriptions, Garrett Fagan is surprised to find combinations such as *lauacrum thermarum*.⁽¹⁹⁾ He concludes therefore that *lauacrum* “apparently describes part of a bathhouse, possibly the heated section”.⁽²⁰⁾

3. *Lauacrum* in Latin literature

3.1. *The period from 200 BC to AD 100*

If *lauacrum* really was just another word for baths, and in particular for small (private) baths, it would seem normal to find most literary attestations in Republican and Early Imperial texts, the periods that saw the full development of this building type. And yet there is no occurrence of the word in the oldest texts about baths. In Plautus (2nd c. BC) we find several references to public and private bath houses, both referred to as *balineas*.⁽²¹⁾ The act of washing is called *lauatio*.⁽²²⁾ Similarly, Varro (116 – 27 BC) speaks only of *balneum* or *balneae* when mentioning bath houses.⁽²³⁾ For private bathrooms inside a house *lauatrina* is preferred.⁽²⁴⁾ A well-known and interesting passage in *De Lingua Latina* concerns the ‘introduction’ of the bath houses in Rome:

Primum balneum (nomen est Graecum), cum introiit in urbem, publice ibi consedit, ubi bina essent coniuncta aedificia lauandi causa, unum ubi uiri, alterum ubi mulieres lauarentur; ab eadem ratione domi suae quisque ubi lauatur balneum dixerunt et, quod non erant duo, balnea dicere non consuerunt, cum hoc antiqui non balneum, sed lauatrinam appellare consuessent.⁽²⁵⁾

Varro clearly states that the older generation used the word *lauatrina* for their private baths (bath rooms) instead of the new Greek word *balneum*. There is no mention of *lauacrum*.

If we move further along the timeline, the attestations of Roman baths become more frequent. As remarked by Fagan, the word *thermae* makes its first appearance only in the 1st c. AD, probably after the dedication of

(19) FAGAN, 1999, p. 236, where the author discusses *lauacrum* in the inscription CIL III, 324. See also appendix E5.

(20) FAGAN, 1999, p. 236.

(21) Plaut. *Most.* III,2 (756); *Asin.* II,2 (357); *Persa* I,3 (90); *Poen.* V,2 (975); *Rudens* II,3 (383); *Trin.* II,4 (406).

(22) Plaut. *Most.* I,3 (160-161).

(23) Varro *Rust* I,55,4; *Ling.* VIII,25; 29; IX,41; 61.

(24) Varro *Ling.* V, 25; IX,41.

(25) Varro *Ling.* IX,41: “The first *balneum* (the name is Greek), when it was brought into the city of Rome, was as a public establishment set in a place where two connected buildings might be used for the bathing, in one of which the men should bathe and in the other the women. From the same logical reasoning each person called the place in his own house where baths were taken, a *balneum* ; and they were not accustomed to speak of *balnea* in the plural, because they did not have two in one house — though our forbears were accustomed to call this not a *balneum*, but a *lauatrina*.” (transl. by KENT, 1938, p. 490-492).

the Baths of Nero in Rome.⁽²⁶⁾ Prior to this event, authors write only about *balnea* or the possibly slightly older variant *balinea*. When Cicero (106-43 BC) writes to his friend Atticus, he speaks of the *balineum* in his villa being prepared for guests or of his visits to the public *balneum*.⁽²⁷⁾ To his brother Quintus, he talks about the rearrangement of the *balnearia*, in this case the private bathing suite, of a villa.⁽²⁸⁾ The famous architect Vitruvius (1st c. BC) is an important source for the architecture of Roman baths. In his fifth book *On Architecture*, he describes how to build a *balineum*.⁽²⁹⁾ Contemporary writers such as Horace (65 – 8 BC) Livy (59 BC – AD 17), Ovid (43 BC – AD 17), Frontinus and Petronius (both 1st c. AD) speak exclusively about *balnea* or *balinea*.⁽³⁰⁾ Even Celsus (1st c. AD) refers only to *bal(i)nea* in his medical treatises.⁽³¹⁾ With Martial (AD 38/41 – 101/104) the word *thermae* is introduced next to *balnea*.⁽³²⁾ Pliny the Younger (AD 61 – 112) holds to the word *balineum*, while Fronto (AD 95 – 166) writes to his friends about *balnea*.⁽³³⁾

3. 2. The period from AD 100 to AD 300

It is in the work of Aulus Gellius (c. AD 125 – 180) that we find the earliest known attestation of the word *lauacrums* in Latin literature. It is used only once, when referring to the hot summers spent in the villa of Herodes Atticus in Greece. The Latin text reads:

Atque ibi tunc, cum essemus apud eum in uilla, cui nomen est Cephisia, et aestu anni et sidere autumnii flagrantissimo, propulsabamus incommoda caloris lucorum umbra ingentium, longis ambulacris et mollibus, aedium positu refrigeranti, lauacris nitidis et abundis et collucentibus totiusque uillae uenustate aquis undique canoris atque aubus personante.⁽³⁴⁾

It is clear that *lauacris* refers here to a private facility as part of the villa. When looking at the adjectives *nitidis* (shining, glittering) and *abundis*

(26) FAGAN, 1999, p. 17-18. See *infra*.

(27) Cic. *Att.* II,3,4 (*balineum*); XIII,52,1 (*in balneum*); XV,13,5 (*e balineo*)

(28) Cic. *Q.Fr.* III,1 1-2. See also *Att.* XIII,29 for *balnearia* as private baths. For other references to baths and bathing in Cicero's work, see FAGAN, 1999, p. 415-416.

(29) Vitr. *Arch.* V,10.

(30) Hor. *Ep.* I,92; XI,13; XIV,15; Livy, *Urb.* XXIII,7; Ovid, *Ars. Am.* III,640; Frontinus, *Aq.* II,91-94; 107. For other references to baths and bathing in Petronius, see FAGAN, 1999, p. 421.

(31) For the references to bathing in Celsus, see FAGAN, 1999, p. 415.

(32) See *supra*. For other references to baths and bathing in the works of Martial, see FAGAN, 1999, p. 419-420.

(33) For other references to baths and bathing in Pliny's *Epistulae* see FAGAN, 1999, p. 422. For the references in Fronto, see FAGAN, 1999, p. 417.

(34) Gell. *Noct. Att.* I,2,2: "And there at that time, while we were with him at the villa called Cephisia, both in the heat of summer and under the burning autumnal sun, we protected ourselves against the trying temperature by the shade of its spacious groves, its long, soft promenades, the cool location of the house, its elegant *lauacra* with their abundance of sparkling water, and the charm of the villa as a whole, which was everywhere melodious with plashing waters and tuneful birds." (transl. after ROLFE, 1927, p. 5).

(copious) referring to *lauacris*, it is notable that they describe properties of water rather than those of a building.⁽³⁵⁾ Thus it seems that *lauacris* could be interpreted here as the actual pools with the water they contained, instead of the bath house as a whole, especially as, whenever Gellius speaks of baths in the rest of the work, he always refers to them as *balnea*.⁽³⁶⁾

In Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (AD 123/125 – 180) there are more than a dozen attestations of the word *lauacrum*.⁽³⁷⁾ In most of these cases, *lauacrum* refers to the act of bathing and not to a building. A good example is *Met.* IX, 30 in which a dead body is buried after an *ultimo lauacro* (last washing). When talking about a bath house, Apuleius prefers *balneum*.⁽³⁸⁾ The following phrase in *Met.* XI, 23 underlines the difference between the two terms: *deducit ad proximas balneas et prius sueto lauacro traditum, (...) purissime circumrorans abluat*.⁽³⁹⁾ It is clear in this case that a person is led *ad balneas* (to the bath house) in order to get a *lauacrum* (washing). And yet it is also in the work of Apuleius that we find the word *lauacrum* to denote a bath house as an architectural structure: *Quod sciam, templis et lauacris et ceteris operibus longe cunctas ciuitates antecellimus*.⁽⁴⁰⁾ This is the only time that Apuleius uses *lauacrum* this way, as he usually prefers the general word *balneum*. One could even wonder if Apuleius wrote *lauacrum* - in its primary meaning of 'washing place' or even 'pool' - as a *pars pro toto* for *balneum*.⁽⁴¹⁾

Tertullian (AD 160 – 240) uses *lauacrum* as an act of bathing and even in the religious sense of baptism. Several good examples are found in *De baptismo*.⁽⁴²⁾ In some cases, *lauacrum* clearly refers to the pool in which this washing took place:

Sic et tactus reprehenditur, siquidem eadem pauimenta manibus asperiora, pedibus leuiora creduntur; et in lauacris idem calidae lacus feruentissimus primo, dehinc temperatissimus renuntiatur.⁽⁴³⁾

In one case, he also calls the baptismal font a *lauacrum*: *semel ergo*

(35) The adjective *nitidus* is often used to evoke the glint of water on marble, see DE HAAN, 2006, p. 351. Precisely the pools were often decorated with marble slabs.

(36) Gell. III,1,1; X,3,3; XIV,1,23; XIX,10,1-5.

(37) Apul. *Met.* I,7; II,11; 19; III,12; 23; IV,5; 7; 8; V, 2; 3; 8; VIII,7; IX,17; 30; XI,1; 23. For other references to baths and bathing in Apuleius' work, see FAGAN, 1999, p. 413-414.

(38) Apul. *Met.* I,5; 23-25; III,16; IV,8; V,15; IX,21; X,13; 15; XI,23.

(39) "Then he led me to the nearby bath house and after I was left to the accustomed washing, he purified me by sprinkling water over me." (translation by the author)

(40) *Met.* II, 19: "Really, I think we distinguish ourselves by far from all other cities by our temples, baths, and other commodities."

(41) One other possible examples of *lauacrum* as a term for a bath house could be *Met.* III,12.

(42) There are too many attestations of the word *lauacrum* in the work of Tertullian to enumerate here. For most of the references, see the *TLL*, vol. II, p. 812-813.

(43) Tert. *De anim.* XVII,3: "On the same principle our touch is censured, when the identical pavement which seemed rough to the hands is felt by the feet to be smooth enough; and in the *lauacrum* a stream of warm water is pronounced to be quite hot at first, and beautifully temperate afterwards." (transl. after HOLMES 1870)

lauacrum inimus, semel delicta abluuntur, quia ea iterari non oportet.⁽⁴⁴⁾
For describing a bath building, Tertullian uses the standard term *balneum*.⁽⁴⁵⁾

It is clear that by the 3rd c. AD, the word *lauacrum* had several meanings, primarily referring to the act of washing/bathing – including also religious cleansing – the pools used for this washing and the building in which this took place.⁽⁴⁶⁾

3.3. The period from AD 300 to AD 500

From the 4th c. AD onwards, we find the word *lauacrum* frequently being used in both secular and religious contexts. In the *Res Gestae* by Ammianus Marcellinus (AD 330 – 395), all three words *balnea*, *thermae*, and *lauacrum* are used to designate bath houses.⁽⁴⁷⁾ Combinations such as *Constantinianum lauacrum*, *lauacro Agrippae* or *Valentini lauacri* leave little room for alternative interpretations, as the word clearly refers to bath houses as an architectural structure, commissioned by emperors and leading citizens.⁽⁴⁸⁾ But unlike *balnea*, which is only used in the meaning of a bath building, the term *lauacrum* is also found when there is an intended association with water and hygiene. In the passage at XIV, 6, 23 the senatorial elite is described as afraid of diseases, as every messenger returning from a sick friend *non ante recipiant domum quam lauacro purgauerint corpus*.⁽⁴⁹⁾ In two cases, the term is even used in connection with natural hot springs, e.g. *Gumathenam (...) in qua uicus est Abarne nomine sospitalium aquarum lauacris calentibus notus*.⁽⁵⁰⁾

Similarly, the *Scriptores Historia Augusta* (end of the 4th c. AD) mention *lauacrum* as one of the three terms to denote bath houses.⁽⁵¹⁾ Again, *balnea* and *thermae* are used only to designate the actual buildings, while *lauacrum* can also be used for the act of bathing.⁽⁵²⁾ Nevertheless, the general trend in the different chapters is to apply the word *lauacrum* as a synonym for

(44) Tert. *De bapt.* 15,3: “We enter, then, the font once: once are sins washed away, because they ought never to be repeated.” (transl. by THELWALL, 1869)

(45) For references to baths and bathing in the work of Tertullian, see NIELSEN, 1990, p. 202.

(46) These are more or less the different meanings of *lauacrum* found in the *TLL*, vol VII, p. 812-813.

(47) For *balnea*, see Amm. Mar. XXVI,6,14; XXVIII,4,9; XXIX, 2,28. For *thermae*, see Amm. Mar. XXVIII,4,10. For *lauacrum*, see Amm. Mar. XIV,6,23; XVI,10,14; XVIII,9,2; XXVIII,3,8; 4,19; XXIX,6,19; XXX,5,16; XXXI,1,2; 4.

(48) Respectively Amm. Mar. XXVII,3,8; XXIX,6,19; XXXI,1,2.

(49) “He shall not be admitted to the house before he has washed his body by a *lauacrum*”.

(50) Amm. Mar. XVIII,9,2: “The Gumathena region (...) in which lies the *vicus* called Abarne, known for its warm *lauacra* of healing waters.” (transl. by the author). The other mention is at XXVIII,4,19 where the unknown *Silvani lauacro* is linked to the *Mamaeae aquis* in Baiae.

(51) For other references to baths and bathing in the *SHA*, see FAGAN, 1999, p. 417-418. The word *lauacrum* is found in *Hadr.* XI,6-7; XIX,10; *Ant. Pius* VIII,3; *Marc. Aur.* XXIII,8; *Heliog.* VIII,6; XVII,8-9; *Alex. Sev.* LIII,2.

(52) *SHA, Hadr.* XI,6-7.

balnea or *thermae*. Thus one can find both *lauacra mixta* and *balnea mixta*, or, the baths of Caracalla in Rome being called *lauacrum* and *thermae*.⁽⁵³⁾ Although there is debate on how, when and by whom the *Historia Augusta* came about, it is interesting to notice that whenever the word *lauacrum* appears, a synonym is used elsewhere in the same book. There does not seem to be an author-related or time-related preference for the use of *lauacrum* over *balnea* or *thermae*. In another example of a survey of Roman emperors, Eutropius (second half of 4th c. AD) mentions the *lauacri, quae thermae Antoninianae appellantur*.⁽⁵⁴⁾ Leaving aside possible stylistic motives for using two different terms for a bath house, Eutropius' words may reflect a more general habit of describing any sort of 'bathing location' in the generic sense of the word as a *lauacrum*, while the large imperial structures still retained their 'title' of *thermae*.

In a poem about the river Mosel, Ausonius (4th c. AD) sings the praises of a villa with adjacent bath building.⁽⁵⁵⁾

*Quid quae fluminea substructa crepidine fumant
Balnea, feruenti cum Mulciber haustus operto
Voluit anhelatas tectoria per caua flammās
Inclusum glomerans aestu expirante uaporem?
Vidi ego defessos multo sudore lauacri
Fastidisse lacus et frigora piscinarum,
Vt uiuis fruarentur aquis, mox amne refotos
Plaudenti gelidum flumen pepulisse natatu.*⁽⁵⁶⁾

Besides the importance of both words for the metre of the poem, it is worth noting that Ausonius chooses *balnea* to announce the fact he is going to talk about a bath house and then continues with *lauacrum* when describing the part of the bath house where the actual washing took place. The link that is implied with *lacus* and *piscina*, both terms for cold pools, must be seen in the same context. In the *Poemata* of Ausonius' friend Paulinus of Nola (AD 353 – 431), the word *lauacrum* appears as a term to designate baptism.⁽⁵⁷⁾ However, there is also a possible description of *lauacrum* as the actual font: *Ut deponentibus in lauacro terrenae imagines uetustatem*,

(53) *Lauacra mixta*, see *SHA, Marc. Aur.* XXIII,8. For *balnea mixta*, see *Alex. Sev.* XXIV,2. For the baths of Caracalla, see resp. *SHA, Heliog.* XVII,8-9 and *Carac.* IX,4 ; 9 for *lauacrum* and *thermae*.

(54) Eutrop. *Brev.* VIII,20. "the *lauacra*, that are also called the *Thermae Antoninianae*". See also VII,15 about the *thermae, quae ante Neronianae dictae nunc Alexandrianae appellantur*. "the *thermae*, that before were called *Neronianae* and now are called *Alexandrianae*" and IX,4 about the *lauacrum* built by Decius in Rome.

(55) *Aus. Mos.* 337-349. For a further study of the poem, see Busch, 1999, p. 59-62.

(56) *Aus. Mos.* 337-344: "What of their baths, contrived low down on the verge of the bank, which smoke when Vulcan, drawn by the glowing flue, pants forth his flames and whirls them up through the channeled walls, rolling in masses the imprisoned smoke before the scorching blast! I myself have seen some, exhausted by the intense heat of the baths, scorn the pools and cold plunge-baths, preferring to enjoy running water, and, straightway refreshed by the river, buffet the cool stream, threshing it with their strokes." (transl. EVELYN-WHITE, 1919, p. 250)

(57) Paul. Nol. *Poema* VI,265 ; 283.

imitanda caelestis animae occurat effigies.⁽⁵⁸⁾ Apparently, the font was covered by a dome depicting the stars in the night sky. In the works of Augustine (AD 354 – 430) and Ambrose (AD 340 – 397) *lauacrum*, and more specifically the combination *lauacrum regenerationis*, is the standard formula to designate the sacrament of baptism.⁽⁵⁹⁾ When referring to bath houses, Augustine reverts to *balneum*.⁽⁶⁰⁾

Moving towards the 5th c., Sidonius Apollinaris (AD 430 – ca. 490) speaks only of *bal(i)nea*, even when he praises his own villa-baths.⁽⁶¹⁾ There is a lot of uncertainty about the date of Commodianus' work. Now generally placed in the 3rd c. AD, alternative hypotheses place it around the 4th or 5th c. AD. If one is to believe the early 3rd c. date, the use of the word *lauacrum* to designate 'baptism' would be an early attestation.⁽⁶²⁾ The poet Rutilius Namatianus (writing around AD 417) mentions both *thermae* and *lauacra*.⁽⁶³⁾ The latter is used in connection with the water supply: the aqueducts of Rome, described as *flumina* (rivers), are praised for their supply of *lauacra* as big as a *lacus* (lake).⁽⁶⁴⁾ In a second example, a legendary bull found the *fons* (source) of some *lauacra*, probably alluding to hot springs.⁽⁶⁵⁾ Two poems in the *Anthologia Latina* describe the baths commissioned by the Vandal king in North Africa.⁽⁶⁶⁾ The baths themselves are described as *t(h)ermae*, while the phrase *hic fessos artus uiua lauacra fouent* probably refers to the advantage of hot pools.⁽⁶⁷⁾

In medical treatises, such as Cassius Felix' *De Medicina* (5th c. AD), one finds both *balneum* and *lauacrum* to denote baths.⁽⁶⁸⁾ Additionally, *lauacrum* is often used in the sense of pool, as is implied by such combinations as *in lauacro feruenti*, *lauacris frigidis*, or *lauacris calidis*.⁽⁶⁹⁾ A passage about treating a recurring fever states that the patient should bathe with honey-water in a *calidiori lauacro* ("in hotter *lauacra*") and after the *calidioribus cellis* ("the hot rooms") he should *in piscinam descendere* ("descend into

(58) Paul. Nol. *Epist.* XXXII,2 (*ad Severum*) (PL LXI, col. 200): "That to those who lay down the earthly idols in the *lauacrum*, an image imitating the celestial sphere appears." (translation by the author)

(59) Aug., *Conf.* I,11; *Civ. D.* I,27; II,4; XIII,4; 7; XX,8; 17; 26; XXI,14. Ambr., *De myst.* VII,35 ; 37-38.

(60) Aug. *Conf.* II,3; IX,12.; *Civ. D.* XIV,17; XXI,10.

(61) Sid. Ap. *Epist.* I,8,2; II,2,4; 9,8; V,8,2; 17,10; *Carm.* 18 ; 19.

(62) Commodian. *Instr.* 47.; *Carm. Ap.* 679. But see *Carm. Ap.* 670 for the use of the more general term *balnea* as baths. Already Tertullian had used *lauacrum* to denote the ritual washing of Christians. See *supra*.

(63) For *thermas*, see Rutil. Nam. *Red.* I,249; for *lauacra* see *Red. Suo* I,102; 255-259.

(64) Rutil. Nam. *Red.* I,102.

(65) Rutil. Nam. *Red.* I,255-259.

(66) *AL* 202 ; 205. For a study on these bath-related building epigrams, see Busch, 1999, p. 240-265.

(67) *AL* 202,1 (*thermis*) ; 5 (*lauacra*). "Here the vivid *lauacra* keep the exhausted joints warm."

(68) For *lauacrum*, see Cass. Fel. *Med.* I,16; II,5; IX,3; XVI,1; XXVIII,1; XXIX,1; XLIX,3-5; L,2; LIII,4; LV,5; LVII,2; LX,1; LXXI,3; LXXVI,14. For *balneum*, see *Med.* I,13; 18; VI,2; XLV,3.

(69) Cass. Fel. *Med.* XVI,3; XXVIII,1; L,2.

the cold pool”).⁽⁷⁰⁾ This clarifies that the *lauacrum* is not the hot part of the baths (called *cellae*) as a whole, but more specifically the pools of this hot part. The cold pool is called the *piscina*. In the works of another medical writer, Caelius Aurelianus (turn of the 4th – 5th centuries AD), the word *lauacrum* is mainly used to denote the act of bathing.⁽⁷¹⁾ Just as in the work of Cassius Felix, the combinations *lauacra feruentia* or *lauacra frigida* are used, although the latter is often specified with the Greek term *psychrolusia*.⁽⁷²⁾ It seems in these cases however, that *lauacrum* should be understood as cold and hot bathing, as Aurelianus uses the word *solium*, or, in unique cases *scaphula* or *rhigolyton*.⁽⁷³⁾ For the bath house as a building, *balneum* is used.⁽⁷⁴⁾ A similar use of bath-related terminology is found in the *Euporiston* of Theodorus Priscianus, another medical writer of the 4th or 5th century. While bath houses are referred to as *balnea*, the term *lauacrum* is used for the act of washing or bathing.⁽⁷⁵⁾ Again, the combinations with *frigida*, *calida* or *fomenta* (hot) underline the water-related connotations of the word *lauacrum*.⁽⁷⁶⁾ In some cases, we could even interpret *lauacrum* as the pool in which the treatment should take place. Adjectives such as *marinis* (“of sea-water”) or *salsis et bitumineis* (“salted and bitumen-like”) that accompany *lauacra* involve the type of water used in pools.⁽⁷⁷⁾ In discussing the therapy for scabies, Theodorus proposes to prepare several decoctions and then lead the patients to the bath house (*in balneis pertractentur*). *His sane calidum lauacrum aquarum dulcium procurandum est, in quo supradicta linimenta adhibenda sunt*.⁽⁷⁸⁾ In contrast to the aforementioned *in balneis*, the term *lauacrum* is used to specify the water-related part (pool) or activity (washing/bathing) of the bath house.

(70) Cass. Fel. *Med.* LVII,2.

(71) The attestations of the word *lauacrum* are too numerous to enumerate here. Some good examples are found in Cael. Aurelian. *Morb. ac.* I,96; II,50; III,185; *Morb. chr.* I,16 ; 28; II,24 ; 29; V,72.

(72) For *lauacra feruentia*, see *Morb. chr.* V,134. For *calida lauacra*, see *Morb. ac.* III,206. For *lauacra frigida*, see *Chron. Dis.* I,47; III,10; V,134. For *psychrolusia*, see *Morb. chr.* I,47; III,10; 40; 88; V,134.

(73) For *solium* see *Morb. Chr.* III,117; IV,100; *Morb. ac.* I,162. For *scaphula*, see *Morb. ac.* II,232. The lecture of *rhigolyton* (*Morb. chr.* I,93) is uncertain. It is the only attestation of the word in ancient literature.

(74) For *balneum*, see *Morb. ac.* III,151.

(75) For *balneum*, see *Eup.* I,12; 14; 19; 93-94; II,27; 48; 69; 78-79; 87; III,21-22; 25; for *lauacrum* as bathing, see *Eup.* I,19; 30; 92; 95; 97; II,7; 43; 76; III, 11.

(76) For *lauacra frigida*, see *Eup.* I,92. For *lauacris fomenitis*, see *Eup.* I,97. For *lauacrum calidum*, see *Eup.* I,93; II,43.

(77) See resp. *Eup.* I,95 and II,106; and II,82. For the use of the different types of water in Late Antique medicine, see GARZYA, 1994.

(78) “Here indeed care should be taken of the hot lavacrum with sweet water, in which the above mentioned mixtures should be applied.” (*Eup.* I,93) (translation by the author).

3.4. The period from AD 500 to AD 700

From the 6th c. AD onwards, the use of *lauacrum* to designate baptism becomes more frequent. This is especially clear in the work of Gregory of Tours (AD 538 – 594). When describing the baptism of Clovis, he writes off a ‘new Constantine’ proceeding *ad lauacrum*.⁽⁷⁹⁾ In this case, *lauacrum* could even mean the font in which the baptism took place. Similarly, when the Visigoth king of Spain, Thrasamundus forces a Catholic virgin to convert to Arianism, she is led *in illud caenosum lauacrum*.⁽⁸⁰⁾ If the interpretation of *lauacrum* as font is somewhat problematic in the passages above, there can be little doubt about the interpretation of the term *piscina* as font in a passage about baptism.⁽⁸¹⁾ Just as was the case in Augustine’s work, *lauacrum* is often combined with another word (*sanctum*) to underline the religious focus.⁽⁸²⁾ The word *balnea* is still used for bath buildings.⁽⁸³⁾

There is no such religious connotation in the work of the historian Jordanes (6th c. AD). While recounting the Gothic conquest in Thrace, the army is said to have enjoyed the hot springs near Anchiali:

Ibi ergo multis feruntur mansisse diebus aquarum calidarum delectati lauacris, quae duodecimo miliario Anchialitanae ciuitatis sunt siti, ab imo suae fontis ignei scaturrientes, et inter reliqua totius mundi thermarum innumerabilium loca omnino precipua et ad sanitatem infirmorum efficacissima.⁽⁸⁴⁾

Again, there is a preference for *lauacrum* when talking about natural hot springs and their associated pools. The term for a normal bath house remains *balneum*, which is illustrated by a passage about king Theodahad hiring some assassins to kill his aunt. The order is carried out immediately: *in balneo strangulata est*.⁽⁸⁵⁾

In the work of Cassiodorus (AD 490 – 585) the hot springs of *Aponum* (near Padua, Italy) are mentioned. According to the author of the *Variae*, King Theodoric wrote to the architect Aloisius about restoring the baths (*thermae*). These natural springs apparently had a special quality, namely that they became hotter when a woman tried to bathe together with the men by entering the *lauacrum*, forcing everyone to exit them.⁽⁸⁶⁾ In another passage, the water of the Nile is deemed inferior to the water of the Aqua Claudia in Rome, flowing to *lauacris ac domibus*.⁽⁸⁷⁾ In these contexts, *lauacrum* could

(79) *Lib. Hist.* II,31.

(80) *Lib. Hist.* II,2: “in this foul *lauacrum*”.

(81) *Miracula* I, 34 (PL LXXI, col. 725).

(82) Attestations of *sanctum lauacrum*: *Lib. Hist.* VI,17; 27; VII,22; VIII,9; X,1; 28.

(83) *Lib. Hist.* I,36; III,31; V,20, X,16.

(84) *Get.* XX,109: “There they are said to have stayed for many days, enjoying the baths of the hot springs which are situated about twelve miles from the city of Anchiali. There they gush from the depths of their fiery source, and among the innumerable hot springs of the world they are esteemed as specially famous and efficacious for their healing virtues.” (transl. by MIEROW, 1915, p. 82).

(85) *Get.* LIX,306: “She was strangled in the baths”.

(86) *Var.* II,39,4-6.

(87) *Var.* VII,6,4: “to *lauacra* and houses”.

be interpreted as bath houses, but a more restricted meaning as ‘pools’ is also possible.

Two poems of Venantius Fortunatus (AD 540 – ca. 600) point in the same direction. In describing private villas near Bordeaux, he mentions the restoration of the private baths: *reddidit interea prisco noua balnea cultu, quo recreant fessos blanda lauacra uiros*.⁽⁸⁸⁾ The *blanda lauacra* are obviously a specific part of the *balnea* mentioned just beforehand. An interpretation as a pool would make sense when talking about refreshing exhausted men (*recreant fessos ... uiros*). A second poem also stresses the purifying, clean character of the word *lauacrum*, as it is linked to a clean house: *nam quod pulchra domus, quod grata lauacra nitescunt, consolidatorem te cecinere suum*.⁽⁸⁹⁾ The combination of *lauacrum* with a form of the verb *nitescere* could refer to the glint of the water in a pool decorated with marble slabs.⁽⁹⁰⁾

In the work of Isidore of Sevilla (7th c. AD), *lauacrum* is primarily used to denote baptism.⁽⁹¹⁾ His explanations of the etymology of bath-related words mention the traditional terms *thermae*, *balneum*, and *gymnasium*, but *lauacrum* only appears to as the act of bathing.⁽⁹²⁾

3.5. The Early Medieval Period

Although the Medieval period falls beyond the scope of this article, it is worth verifying whether the word *lauacrum* was still used in the post-Roman period. In Early Medieval Italy, it seems to disappear from the epigraphic and literary record. The most frequent term for baths, both private and public, is *balneum* or *ualneum*.⁽⁹³⁾ The archaeology of bath houses from this period may offer some explanations.⁽⁹⁴⁾ These medieval bath houses in Italy were characteristically rather small.⁽⁹⁵⁾ If *lauacrum* is to be interpreted as a pool, the word perhaps became redundant during the Middle Ages, when the act of washing was not part of an extended experience, but in fact the only act in the whole bathing process. In other words, there was no longer a use for several small and large pools, as the bathing habit consisted only of washing in a tub. On the other hand, there are medieval codices in Rimini and Ravenna that mention *balneum cum uaso*.⁽⁹⁶⁾ The *uasum* may well have been a portable basin that was used for ablutions.

(88) *Carm.* I,18,15-16: “In the meantime he restored the baths so one could take care of one’s body, with stylish *lauacra* that rejuvenate even exhausted men.” (translation by the author).

(89) *Carm.* I,20, 21-22: “For the house, because it is beautiful, and the *lauacra*, because they glitter pleasingly, have praised you as their restorer.” (translation by the author).

(90) See above, note 35.

(91) *Etym.* VI,19,50; XVIII,59,1; *Sent.* I,23,22,1.

(92) *Etym.* XV,2,39-42. Interestingly, Isidore called the baptistries *delubra* and the washing away of the sins *ablutio peccatorum* (*Etym.* XV,4,9).

(93) STASOLLA, 2002, p. 21.

(94) See *infra*.

(95) See CASKEY, 1999, p. 170-180; STASOLLA, 2002, p. 44-57; HUBERT, 2007, p. 133.

(96) FANTUZZI 1801, p. 28-30 ; 181-191, see also STASOLLA, 2002, p. 51-52.

4. *Lauacrum* in juridical texts

The use of the word *lauacrum* in the juridical texts of Late Antiquity confirm the overall picture outlined above. In the *Codex Theodosianus* (finished in AD 438), *thermae* and *balnea* are used to denote bath buildings, while *lauacrum* is used for ‘the act of washing/bathing’.⁽⁹⁷⁾ A good example that connects *lauacrum* to a purely hygienic function, is a law that obliges prisoners to be led *ad lauacrum sub fida custodia*.⁽⁹⁸⁾ One would expect a prison to have a simple washing facility, rather than a fully functional bath house where prisoners could relax. Furthermore, accompanying criminals to a public bath house would be needlessly dangerous. Another law requires taxes to be paid on the income *ex horreis balneis ergasteriis tabernis domibus cenaculis*, yet it specifies that salt mining *quae populi romani lauacris inseruiunt* is to be exempted.⁽⁹⁹⁾ The law refers to the incomes of salt mines that were used for the operating costs of the Roman baths.⁽¹⁰⁰⁾ The fact that the supervisors of the salt mines were also responsible for the maintenance of the baths, could have had another advantage. The salt could have been used to make soap or to create the artificial sea water used in baths for curative purposes.⁽¹⁰¹⁾ Perhaps the choice of the word *lauacrum* could be explained here by the emphasis on the washing aspect of the baths?

In a law concerning pagan rituals and temples, objects that were formerly consecrated to pagan sacrifices should be removed *ab usibus lauacrorum uel publicis affectibus*.⁽¹⁰²⁾ One could imagine that oil flasks and libation plates once used in sacrifices were reused for personal washing (be this religious as in baptism or otherwise). A law of AD 382 again stresses the difference between *lauacrum* and *balneum*. Large houses should receive no more than 2-inch water conduits to supply their *lauacris lautioribus* (washing pools). Smaller houses are only permitted to have conduits of 1 inch or even a half inch, *si tamen huiuscemodi balneas easdem habere*.⁽¹⁰³⁾ This last specification seems to refer to the presence of the *lauacra lautiora* mentioned earlier, i.e. bath houses with pools necessitating large amounts of water. On several occasions, *lauacrum* also means baptism.⁽¹⁰⁴⁾ In Justinian’s

(97) For references to baths and bathing in the Theodosian Code, see NIELSEN, 1990, p. 197. Should also be added: VII,11,1; IX,3,7; 45,4,pr; 45,4,1; XII,1,131; XV,5,5; XVI,5,5; 6,2,pr; XVI,10,20,3.

(98) *Cod. Th.* IX,3,7: “to the *lauacrum* under the supervision of a guard.” (translation by the author).

(99) *Cod. Th.* XI,20,3: “of the warehouses, baths, workshops, taverns, and two-story houses.” The salt mining “which serves the *lauacra* of the Roman people.” (translations by the author).

(100) *Cod. Th.* XIV,5,1.

(101) For sodium carbonite used as soap in Roman baths, see NIELSEN, 1990a, 143. Numerous medical authors write about the beneficial effects of salt/salted water. They were often used in bath houses, see GARZYA, 1994, p. 109-110; JACKSON, 1999, p. 110-111; BLONSKY, 2014b, *passim* (with references to earlier bibliography).

(102) *Cod. Th.* XVI,10,20,3: “from the use of the *lauacra* or from anything to do with the state of the body of the people.”

(103) *Cod. Th.* XV,2,3: “that is if they actually have such a *balneum*” (translation by the author).

(104) *Cod. Th.* XV,5,5; XVI,5,5; 6,2,pr.

codification, there are no attestations of *lauacrum* in the *Digesta* and the *Institutiones*. Only *bal(i)neum*, and on rare occasions *thermae*, is found.⁽¹⁰⁵⁾ In the Codex Justinianus, some laws of the Theodosian Code on bathing are repeated.⁽¹⁰⁶⁾ The terms *thermae* and especially *balnea* are preferred for bath buildings, *lauacrum* for the act of bathing or baptism.⁽¹⁰⁷⁾ An interesting law of emperor Justinian dated AD 533 states that a man can divorce his wife if she had an abortion or if she *ut commune lauacrum uiris libidinis causa habere audeat*.⁽¹⁰⁸⁾

5. *Lauacrum* in inscriptions

In contrast to the terms *thermae* and *balnea*, the word *lauacrum* is less frequently found on inscriptions.⁽¹⁰⁹⁾ Especially during the first two centuries AD, attestations are rare. A lead pipe found in Rome mentions the text *in lauacro Agrippinae* (E1) and dates from the time of emperor Hadrian (AD 117 – 138). This water pipe may have been intended to feed the Baths of Agrippina, but it could also have been made specifically to feed pools. In fact, the pipe has been found underneath a structure that is described as a *fons quadratum* (a square fountain) by the accompanying text in the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. An inscription also found in Rome (E2) is sometimes attributed to the 1st c. and sometimes to the beginning of the 3rd c.⁽¹¹⁰⁾ Again, it is difficult to interpret the meaning of *lauacrum*, as it could mean both ‘pool’ or ‘bath house’. The same problem arises in an inscription found in *Gholaia* (Libya) (E4), mentioning the restoration of a *labarcum*, probably a corruption of *lauacrum*.

A study of the inscription about a bath house found in *Misenum* (Italy) from the end of the 2nd – beginning of the 3rd c. AD makes clear that the *lauacrum* is only a part of the bath house (E3). The fact that T. Fl. Avitus, duovir and censor, supplied the *lauacrum* of the *balnea publica* with 400 cartloads of firewood indicates that the *lauacrum* is a heated part of the bath house. Similarly, an inscription from *Nicomedia* (Turkey) dating from the

(105) For references to baths and bathing in the *Digesta*, see NIELSEN, 1990, p. 197. Should also be added: II,4,20; VII,1,13,8; 4,12,pr; VIII,2,13,pr; 2,19; 5,8,7; IX,2,50; XIII,6,5,15; XXX,41,8; XXXII,91,4; XXXIV,2,25,10; 2,32,7; 40,1; XXXV,2,80,1; XLIII,8,2,9; XLIII,21,3,6; L,1,27,1; 4,1,2; 8,2,4; *Inst.*, I,5.

(106) For example: *Cod. Th.* IX,3,7 = *Cod. Just.* I,4,9,pr.; *Cod. Th.* XVI,6,2,pr = *Cod. Just.* I,6,1.

(107) For *balneum* and *thermae*, see *Cod. Just.* I,47,1; V,37,22,1; VIII,10,1; 10,5; XI,43,6,pr; 43,6,2-3; XII,40,6. For *lauacrum*, see *Cod. Just.* I,4,9,pr; I,6,1; V,17,11,2; VIII,11,19.

(108) *Cod. Just.* V,17,11,2: “spurred on by desire, she should dare to take a communal *lauacrum* with (other) men.” (translation by the author).

(109) The strategy for finding the attestations of *lauacrum* in the epigraphic data is explained at the beginning of the appendix. In some cases, the identification of the word was proposed by the editors of the corpora, but could not be confirmed (*HEp* 2,502; *ICUR* I,1483; AE 1967,364). These inscriptions were not included in the present study.

(110) The name Ti. Claudius Marcellinus appears as a procurator under both Domitian and Caracalla (see CORBIER, 1981). The fact that so few attestations of *lauacrum* date from before the 3rd c., could be an argument for the later date of the inscription.

time of Diocletian, praises the emperor for the restoration and enlargement of the *lauacrums* of the *thermae Antoninae* (E5). A 3rd c. building inscription from *Singidunum* (Serbia) begins with *alma lauacrorum lympa*, the natural spring as a feeder of the *lauacra*, which entails the construction of splendid baths made out of stone (*ex lapide perfectae balneae*) (E6).

Other inscriptions all date from the 4th c. AD or later. A slab found in *Thuburbo Maius* (Tunisia) with a two-sided inscription (E9) from the time of Julian (AD 361) relates the completion, adornment and dedication of the baths in just eight years, “after adding everything and completing everything that the *lauacra* required.” As Nielsen and Fagan have already pointed out, *lauacra* here refers to a part of the *thermae*, possibly the pools.⁽¹¹¹⁾ Further evidence for *lauacra* as a term for pools, is found in two inscriptions from the same period. In a very fragmentary inscription, the local council of *Thignica* (Tunisia, AD 393) repaired the aqueduct and gave water, formerly for private use, to the *lauacris* (E10). Even clearer is the inscription commemorating the work of the freedman *Furius Togius Quintillus* in *Tarentum* (Italy) in the second half of the 4th c. AD (E11). He brought water to the *Pentascinensibus thermis* because the *lauacra* could not be visited anymore after the water flow had been cut off by an earthquake. In *Castellum Tingitanum* (Algeria), a mosaic inscription from the 4th c. welcomes bathers with “Skin, often you keep my limbs warm in the lavacrum” (E12). In a hot region like Africa, this mosaic may have joked about how cold the pool (*lauacrums*) was. A 5th c. AD inscription from *Madauros* (Algeria) mentions the *curator rei publicae* who restored the baths (E13). More specifically, the dilapidated *cellam balnearum* (room of the baths) with a *lauacrums* that could not be used any more, was restored. Again, *lauacrums* is obviously a specific part of one of the rooms.

There is even less evidence in the epigraphic record of *lauacrums* as a synonym for *thermae* or *balnea*. This is even more striking when compared to the literary evidence, where, especially from the 4th c. AD onwards, *lauacrums* came to mean the act of washing/bathing and sometimes the location where this took place, i.e. a bath house. On an undated mosaic in the baths of *Tigaua* (Morocco) (E14), the restoration of the *lauacra* is commemorated, but it is perfectly possible that only a part of the baths was restored. A mutilated inscription of the 4th c. AD found in *Fanum* (Italy) probably described the benevolence of a rich patron, donating *hiemis et aestatis lauacrums* (E7). Again, it could be either that this person supplied the town with a set of winter and a set of summer baths, or, perhaps more likely, that he equipped preexisting baths with two types of pools. In an undated inscription found in Rome (E17), the commissioner of the inscription defends the *balnea* against criticism, asserting that it is not bathing but excess and debauchery which lead to sinful actions. The final line stresses the ‘innocence’ of the *lauacrums*, which could be interpreted as baths or the act of bathing: *[non] nostris nocet officii nec culpa la[u]acri / quod sibimet generat lubrica uita malum est.*⁽¹¹²⁾ Another example comes from Asia Minor. The public and private *labacra* of *Orcistus* (Turkey) are mentioned as status-symbols of the town

(111) NIELSEN, 1990, p. 139; FAGAN, 1999, p. 276.

(112) “(Baths/Bathing) does not harm our duties and bathing is not guilty of what it brings forth: a slippery lifestyle is the evil.” (after BUSH, 1999, p. 537-538)

(E8). The fact that *labacra* is mentioned next to the term *forum* points to the fact that, in this case at least, the term denotes the actual buildings.

There are several inscriptions in which *lauacrum* is used to denote baptism.⁽¹¹³⁾ Not surprisingly, most of these were found in Rome and date from Late Antiquity. They are often difficult to date, as imperial titles have often been omitted. In some cases, the context of the term is not clear, as large parts of the inscriptions have vanished. The surviving text, however, indicates the ‘religious character’ of the inscriptions (B1, B5, B10), especially when the *lauacrum* is accompanied by the adjective *sanctum* (B2). As baptism in Early Christian times was administered at the end of one’s life – to wash away one’s sins before starting the journey to Heaven – the term *lauacrum* is also found on funerary-related inscriptions (B3, B7, B8). Just as in the literary sources, this ‘holy washing’ is sometimes singled out as the only true washing. In an inscription found in the Lateran baptistry in Rome (dated ca. AD 440), the message reads *insons esse uolens isto mundare lauacro seu patrio premeris crimine seu proprio* (B6).⁽¹¹⁴⁾ The *lauacrum* was an essential prerequisite for ascension to Heaven, marking out the Christians from their fellow citizens (B4, B9).

6. Why was the term *lauacrum* introduced?

6.1. Linguistic interpretations

Etymology

The textual and epigraphic evidence makes clear that the word *lauacrum* only appeared somewhere during the first half of the 2nd c. AD. On a linguistic level, the word is obviously connected to the verb *lauare* (to wash / to bathe). It stems from the Indo-European root *leu-*, which means ‘to let flow over’.⁽¹¹⁵⁾ Hence *lauacrum* is also connected with words as *lauatio* (washing, bathroom) and *lauatrina* (privy, bathroom), as noted by Pierre Gros.⁽¹¹⁶⁾ Furthermore, its link with *labrum* is interesting. According to Marius Victorinus (4th c. AD), an author of philosophical, rhetorical and grammatical works, the word *labrum* was an abbreviation of the word *lauabrum*.⁽¹¹⁷⁾ The only other reference to this word is in Lucretius’ *De rerum natura* (first half of the 1st c. BC): *denique si calidis etiam cunctere lauabris plenior et lueris*,

(113) See the epigraphic appendix numbers B1 to B10.

(114) “The person who wants to be innocent is here made clean by washing, whether from the guilt of the first parent or from one’s own.” (transl. by FERGUSON, 2009, p. 769).

(115) TUCKER, 1976. The Greek λουεῖν (to wash) is also derived from this root. For the interpretation of *lavare* as “to bathe” rather than “to wash”, see BLONSKI, 2014a, p. 241-246.

(116) See note 16.

(117) *Ars Gramm.* VI,9,20 as mentioned by LECLERQ, 1910.

solio feruentis aquai quam facile in medio fit uti des saepe ruinas!⁽¹¹⁸⁾ The opposition of *lauabris* to *solio* (bath tub, pool) is intriguing and could mean that *lauabrum*, like the early attestations of *lauacrum*, referred to a place to wash.⁽¹¹⁹⁾ In the work of Cato the Elder (234-149 BC), the word *labrum* appears to denote a basin. When summing up what an olive-farm should consist of, he mentions *labrum lupinarium I*, (...), *labrum eluacrum I*, *solium I*, *labra aquaria II*.⁽¹²⁰⁾ The *labrum eluacrum* (wash-basin) in contrast to the *solium* (bathing tub) is especially interesting. Did the *lauacrum* originally denote the room in which the *labrum eluacrum* stood? If this was the case, it would be normal to find some textual attestations of this 'bath room'. And yet, the word *lauacrum* does not appear until the 2nd c. AD.

It is not difficult to imagine how such wash basins found their way to public bath houses. Already in the Greek and Hellenistic worlds, the athletes of the gymnasium could refresh themselves at a washing stand called λουτήρ or λουτήριον⁽¹²¹⁾ Just as *la(ua)brum* was linked to the verb *lauare*, λουτήρ was clearly linked to λουεῖν (to wash / to bathe). In some of the earliest bath houses found in Sicily and Magna Graecia (3rd - 2nd c. BC), these wash basins were added to the bath rooms.⁽¹²²⁾ The relaxation and washing functions seem to have had separate facilities since the earliest times. In the contemporary written sources concerning baths, these washing stands are called *labrum* (pl. *labra*).⁽¹²³⁾ Archaeological evidence of these *labra* are in the form of large, shallow basins on a pedestal.⁽¹²⁴⁾ They often stood in a niche or apsis (*schola*) of the cold room or the hot room and were used for personal ablutions before entering the communal pools.⁽¹²⁵⁾ These *labra* are found in private as well as public baths, from the 2nd c. BC until at least the 1st c. AD.⁽¹²⁶⁾ After the 1st c. AD, they are more difficult to recognize in the archaeological record as the *schola labra* disappear. It is, however, likely that their function was adopted by other conveniences such as pools or fountains.

The different meanings of lauacrum

Just as the word *thermae* seems to have appeared as a result of a change in bathing architecture and bathing practices, so may the word *lauacrum* have

(118) "Once more, if you linger in hot baths, when you are over-full and you are washed, how easily will you fall unconscious in the middle of the hot water pool" (VI,799-801) (translation by the author).

(119) However, there is always the possibility that *lauacris* was changed into *lauabris* during transcription.

(120) "one basin for lupinaria, one wash-basin, one bathing tub, two water basins" (*Agr.* X,4).

(121) GINOUVÈS, 1962, p. 77-99.

(122) BROISE, 1994.

(123) For the literary attestations, see *TLL* VII, p. 812-813. For the epigraphic evidence, see FAGAN, 1999, p. 369.

(124) For the archaeological finds, see NIELSEN, 1990, p. 158.

(125) These niches are called the *schola labra* by Vitruvius (*De arch.* V,10,4).

(126) The archaeological finds range from the early Republican times, such as in *Fregellae* (2nd c. BC, Latium, Italy, see TSIOLIS, 2013), until the early imperial times, such as in Pompeii (Forum Baths, see PESANDO and GUIDOBALDI, 2006, p. 82-85).

been introduced to denote a new bathing mode or habit. Could it be that the *lauacrum* was actually one of the conveniences that had made the *labrum* obsolete? The literary and epigraphic evidence in some cases clearly supports the interpretation of a *lauacrum* as a pool. The etymological links with *lauare*, *lauabrum* and *labrum* in any case point to the undeniable wash-related origin of the word. The fact that the term was later used for the bath house itself, would not be a surprising evolution.⁽¹²⁷⁾ In the Greek-speaking part of the empire, a similar evolution took place. The word λουτρόν, originally denoting the washing facilities at the gymnasium, increasingly replaced βαλανεῖον as term for public bath houses in both texts and inscriptions during Late Antiquity.⁽¹²⁸⁾ It must nevertheless be stressed that *lauacrum* was never exclusively used to denote a pool, but always retained its connotation of bathing and washing.

6.2. Archaeological interpretations

The bathing habits at the start of Late Antiquity

In the 3rd c. AD the bathing habit was more popular than ever.⁽¹²⁹⁾ Every city in the empire worthy of its name had at least one public bath house. The emperors of the 2nd c. had tried to outclass their predecessors by ordering ever bigger and better baths to be erected. In Rome, this building frenzy culminated in the Baths of Caracalla (dedicated in AD 211), the biggest baths built at that time and offering leisure and entertainment for around 3000 people.⁽¹³⁰⁾ The sequence of necessary rooms had since long been fixed in a bathing route.⁽¹³¹⁾ It led the bathers from the dressing rooms (*apodyterium*) to the large cold room (*frigidarium*) and on into the tepid room (*tepidarium*), the sweat room (*sudatorium*) and the hot room (*caldarium*) with its several heated pools (*alveus* or *solium*). At last, a refreshing dive into the cold pools (*piscina*) of the cold room or in the open air swimming room (*natatio*) concluded the bath-related activities. Other possible services provided by bath houses ranged from sports to epilation and massage. As the large imperial *thermae* could hardly be beaten for size and decoration, the smaller bath houses and private baths that wanted to stand out had to invest in special features or services. Heated pools (*calida piscina*), sun bathing rooms with large windows (*solarium*) or the presence of expert masseurs may have given certain baths an edge over the competition.

(127) Just as in modern Italian, the word ‘bagno’ can mean bathroom, toilet, bath house, spa or the act of bathing, all depending of the context in which the word is used.

(128) DENIZEAU and REDON, 2009, p. 401.

(129) For an evolution of bath houses in the Roman empire, see the works noted under n. 1.

(130) For the imperial baths at Rome, see NIELSEN, 1990; YEGÜL, 1992; RICHARDSON, 1992.

(131) For the bathing routes inside Roman public baths, see among others NIELSEN, 1990, p. 67-72; THÉBERT, 2003, p. 377-401. For the different rooms of a bath house, see esp. NIELSEN, 1990, p. 153-166. For the dangers of attributing Latin terms to the different rooms, see REBUFFAT, 1991, p. 6-7.

When comparing the archaeological remains of bath houses from the High Empire (1st - 2nd c. AD) to those of the Late Empire (3rd - 4th c. AD) and Late Antiquity (5th- 7th c. AD), the most noticeable difference – except for overall size – is the preference for round forms and smaller pools in the later periods.⁽¹³²⁾ Besides the newly built baths, already existing baths were often equipped with such small pools for individual use. These complemented the large communal pools rather than replaced them. Thus it seems that the construction of these pools was a choice rather than a necessity. The first evidence for these individual tubs appears around the end of the 2nd c., roughly around the time when the term *lauacrum* starts to appear in literature and epigraphy.⁽¹³³⁾ René Ginouvès considered these small pools to be the result of a new bathing practice. He argued that the elite desired a more personal form of bathing, separated from the common bathers.⁽¹³⁴⁾ In a study of Late Antique baths in Ostia, Janet DeLaine concurs with this idea and proposes the thesis that these small pools played a part in the religious ablutions preceding classical, Christian and Jewish cult acts.⁽¹³⁵⁾ In studying the small pools of the bath houses in *Gallia Narbonnensis* (southern France), Alain Bouet suggests a more personal, possibly even medical, use of these individual tubs.⁽¹³⁶⁾ In this respect, it is interesting to note how natural hot water spas such as Hammat Gader (Israel) or *Aqua Flauianae* (Algeria) frequently had small-sized individual bathing tubs to ensure personal treatment for every patient and thus focusing on a personal wash.⁽¹³⁷⁾ After considering the evidence presented above, we could add a fourth possible explanation for introducing these small pools. Keeping in mind the introduction of the new term *lauacrum* – likely connected to a washing function – the idea is that these pools actually served the same function as the *labrum* once did. In these small pools, the bathers could have a quick wash, whether or not followed by a dip in the communal pools. The fact that these small pools, just like the *labra*, are found at the beginning of the bathing route, in the *frigidarium*, or at its end, in the *caldarium*, would appear to support this possibility.⁽¹³⁸⁾ The next difficulty is to examine whether the word *lauacrum* can be linked to the archaeological remains of these small pools.

(132) The transformation of baths and the bathing habit during Late Antiquity is also the current research subject of the author.

(133) It is often difficult to date the archaeological remains, especially small construction works. The North Baths in *Volubilis* (Morocco) were already equipped with such a small pool that supplemented the *alveus* of the *caldarium*. The abandonment is dated to the beginning of the 3rd c., giving a *terminus ante quem* for the addition of the small pool. See THÉBERT, 2003, p. 273-275 and p. 680-683, pl. cxxx-cxxxiii.

(134) GINOUVÈS, 1955, p. 150-151. This idea fits within the thesis that bath houses tried to outclass the competition by offering exclusive facilities and services, see *supra*.

(135) DELAINE, 2006, p. 340.

(136) BOUET, 2003, p. 291-292. See already GINOUVÈS, 1995, p. 150.

(137) For Hammat Gader, see HIRSCHFELD, 1997, esp. fig. 11. For *Aqua Flavianae*, see THÉBERT, 2003, p. 190-191 and esp. p. 620, pl. LXXI. 4-5. Maybe it was more than a coincidence that these therapeutic bathing facilities were often called *lauacra*.

(138) It is nevertheless clear that some bath houses built in Late Antiquity no longer had communal pools, but were equipped only with the small ones. In these cases, one could imagine that these individual pools combined both the relaxation and washing functions.

Linking lauacrum to the archaeological evidence

The discussion concerning *thermae* and *balnea* has revealed how difficult it is to link a specific term to an architectural concept. Consequently, if one tries to relate a Latin term and its associated architectural concept to the archaeological remains, the problems become even more complicated. When *lauacrum* is used as a term to denote an entire bath house, it is sometimes possible to link a text or an inscription to surviving remains.⁽¹³⁹⁾ For *Gholaia* (Libya) (E4), the bath house of the Legionary camp has been partially excavated, but no specific amenities stand out.⁽¹⁴⁰⁾ If, on the contrary, *lauacrum* is used to designate a separate part of a bath building, it is very difficult to match the word to a specific room.⁽¹⁴¹⁾

As the *lauacra* mentioned by ancient authors are normally not known archaeologically, we can only turn to the epigraphic attestations of excavated baths. But the actual remains of the baths in question are often badly excavated or even unknown. This is the case for the aforementioned inscriptions of Rome (E1, E2, E17), *Misenum* (E3), *Nicomedia* (E5), *Fanum* (E7), *Orcystus* (E8), *Castellum Tingitana* (E12) and *Tigaua* (E14). The baths of *Tarentum* (mentioned in E11) are too badly excavated and preserved to enable a detailed analysis.⁽¹⁴²⁾ The baths in *Thignica* (modern Ain Tougga, Tunisia) were excavated in the beginning of the 20th c., but recently a new Franco-Tunisian campaign has been launched.⁽¹⁴³⁾ The inscription (E10) is dated to AD 393 and probably refers to a restoration of these baths. Yvon Thébert, however, exercises caution in attributing the events recorded in the inscription to archaeological phases.⁽¹⁴⁴⁾ The ground plan shows three, possibly four pools which can be connected with the *lauacra* that received water after the restoration: two cold ones in the *frigidarium*, a small rectangular one in the southern apsidal room, and maybe an even smaller fourth in a transitional room south of the cold room.⁽¹⁴⁵⁾ No other amenities that require water, such as latrines or a *nymphaeum*, have been found, which mean that the *lauacra* of the inscriptions must have been the pools.

For the inscription of *Thuburbo Maius* (near modern El-Fahs, Tunisia) (E9) there is less doubt about the attribution to a specific bath house. The large Summer Baths have a long and complex building history. The baths were originally built at the end of the 2nd – or beginning of the 3rd c. AD and remained in use until the 4th or even 5th c. AD.⁽¹⁴⁶⁾ According to the

(139) See for example Amm. Marc., *Res Gest.* XXVII,3,8 where the author speaks of the *Constantinianum lauacrum* in Rome, known through the 16th c. drawings by Palladio and some small excavations carried out in the 1980's (VILUCCHI, 1985).

(140) REBUFFAT, 1977 with previous bibliography.

(141) For the problems of naming an excavated room of a bath house with a Latin term, see REBUFFAT, 1991, p. 1-7; NIELSEN, 1993, p. 3-4; DELAINE, 1993, p. 353.

(142) See LIPPOLIS, 1984; NIELSEN, 1990, p. 49, note 93. Ground plan in MANDERSCHIED, 1988, nr. 357.

(143) CARCOPINO, 1907, p. 30-38. The new campaign is headed by A. Bouet and F. Colleoni. The first results are expected soon.

(144) THÉBERT, 2003, p. 166.

(145) See fig. 1. See also THÉBERT, 2003, p. 165-166.

(146) THÉBERT, 2003, p. 167.

excavation data, the ground plan was significantly altered at a late date, when the *caldarium* was transformed from a rectangular room with two rectangular *alvei* into a cruciform room with three apsidal pools.⁽¹⁴⁷⁾ Although a bath house with such a long lifespan could easily have undergone several important restorations and changes, it could very well be that the complete remodelling of the *caldarium* was the event recorded in the inscription. Even if little is known about the duration of such building activities, the eight years mentioned in the inscription point to quite important works. The phrase “adding everything and completing everything that the *lavacra* required” could be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, *lauacrum* could stand for the entire hot bathing part, adding an additional pool and transforming the architectural scheme, with more emphasis on rounded forms. On the other hand, *lauacrum* could stand for the new hot pools installed in the *caldarium*, with a remodelling and new decoration of the pre-existing pools.

The inscription of *Madauros* (near modern M'Daourouch, Algeria) (E13) probably refers to the Large Baths, possibly built in the 3rd c. AD.⁽¹⁴⁸⁾ There are several inscriptions linked to these baths and all concern restoration works.⁽¹⁴⁹⁾ However, the major changes took place at a late date, Y. Thébert placing these in the Vandal or Byzantine period.⁽¹⁵⁰⁾ The entire heated sector was remodelled, with only two of the original four rooms being restored.⁽¹⁵¹⁾ This event could very well be linked to the

*ce[lla]m balnearum lon[ga] serie temporum ruina desolatam usi[busque]
lauacrorum den[e]gatam sumptu prop[rio et] camoeram cum suspensuris
constructam nou[is] ab splendido ordin[e] decretis titulis ded[icauit].*

The fact that the old baths were *usibusque lauacrorum denagatam* could also explain why the archaeologists found two small pools newly constructed in the apse of one of the heated rooms. The two options are the same as for *Thuburbo Maius*. The *lauacra* in the inscription could refer to the heated rooms of the baths that fell out of use, thus being replaced by new *camoeram cum suspensuris*, or to the hot pools that were restored when the baths received a new heated sector. In any case, the comparison of the epigraphic and the archaeological evidence demonstrates that the *lauacrum* must have been a heated part of the bath house, either the heated sector as a whole or only the hot pools.

6.3. Religious interpretations

The written evidence shows a third important interpretation of the word *lauacrum*. Already in the work of Tertullian, the term appears in a strictly religious context of holy washing or baptism.⁽¹⁵²⁾ It was certainly not religious

(147) THÉBERT, 2003, p. 168-169. See fig. 2.

(148) THÉBERT, 2003, p. 214-216.

(149) THÉBERT, 2003, p. 513. For the other inscriptions: *ILAlg* I,2109 and *ILAlg* I,2110.

(150) THÉBERT, 2003, p. 216.

(151) See fig. 3.

(152) See notes 42 -45.

in origin as Tertullian also uses it in a bath-related sense. Furthermore, the earlier attestations in Aulus Gellius are also related to baths and not to ritual washing.⁽¹⁵³⁾ If *lauacrum* was a standard Latin word for washing, it is easy to understand why the Christians adopted it to denote their ‘holy washing’. The adjectives ‘*sanctum*’ or ‘*regenerationis*’ may have been used to clearly distinguish the normal activity from its Christian variant. But if the word also had a connotation of – or maybe even had its origin in – a small pool, then it could very well be that in a Christian context it originally meant the baptismal font. The literary and epigraphic evidence, however, is problematic. In fact, attestations of baptismal fonts in literature are rare. The texts mention baptism as an act instead. The aforementioned passage in which Tertullian compares Jewish bathing habits with Christian baptism is a rare example of the term *lauacrum* denoting the actual baptismal font.⁽¹⁵⁴⁾ The two passages in Gregory of Tours may also allude to the actual font.⁽¹⁵⁵⁾

John Malalas, a Greek-speaking historian of the 6th c., alludes to a parody of a Christian baptism in a mime play in which an actor was pushed into “a large bath-house tub full of warm water”.⁽¹⁵⁶⁾ Writing in Greek, Malalas obviously did not use the term *lauacrum*, but the link between the bath house pools and baptism is nevertheless interesting. What is even more remarkable, is that the other Latin word for a font, *baptisterium*, was originally a term to describe a pool in a bath house.⁽¹⁵⁷⁾ The fact that other terms like *piscina* and even *alveus* are sometimes used to describe a baptismal font, is a clear indication that the Christians used the terminology of bath house pools when referring to baptismal fonts.⁽¹⁵⁸⁾ These observations also reinforce the idea that *lauacrum*, just like *piscina* and *alveus*, was a Latin word for pool. The fact that the terms for pool were used to describe a font is not surprising, as the early baptismal font resembled, and was undoubtedly inspired by, the pools of the baths. In a passage by Socrates Scholasticus (lived ca. AD 380-450), we learn that the followers of John Chrysostom gathered in a bath house on Easter-day, the traditional moment for baptism.⁽¹⁵⁹⁾ J. DeLaine’s idea that the small pools inside the baths may have served as baptismal fonts, especially at a time when the baptistry as an architectural structure did not exist, seems therefore even more appealing.⁽¹⁶⁰⁾

To summarize, it could be that the early Christians adopted the contemporary word for an individual pool of a public bath house to denote the basin in which they performed their own ‘holy and regenerative washing’.

(153) See note 34 and 36.

(154) Tert., *De bapt.* 15,3; see note 44.

(155) See note 71 and 72.

(156) John Mal., *Chron.* XII,50.

(157) For example in Pliny, *Epist.* II,17,11; Sid. Apoll., *Epist.* II,2,8; see also *CIL* IX, 4974 for the term *baptisterium* in the context of a bath house. See also LECLERQ, 1910, 386-387; *TLL* vol. II, c. 1719-1720; NIELSEN, 1990, p. 155.

(158) For the literary attestations of bath-related word like *piscina*, *alveus*, *colymbus*, etc. see LECLERQ, 1910, p. 387-390. In Greek, both *κολυμβήθρα* and *λουτρον*, originally denoting plunge-pools, are used to refer to fonts.

(159) *Hist. Eccl.* VI,18. The passage is also found in Sozomen, *Hist. Eccl.* VIII,23 and Palladius, *Dial. Vit. Joan. Chrys.* IX.

(160) DELAINE, 2006, p. 340.

The word may then have gradually adopted a more general meaning of the act of baptism itself. Just as the meaning of *lauacrum* in a bath-related context may have evolved from 'pool' to 'bath house', so it could have evolved in a religious context from 'font' to 'baptism'. Even if *lauacrum* does not seem to have had a religious origin, the adaption of the word by Christianity must certainly have contributed to its spread and acceptance.

Conclusions

The literary and epigraphic attestations of the word *lauacrum* have made clear that this word was not just another Latin term for bath house or bath room. It only seems to appear from the 2nd c. AD, yet the reasons for its introduction remain obscure. The fact that the word stems from a Latin verb *lauare* and not from a Greek term, as was the case with *balneum* or *thermae*, may point to a conservative linguistic reaction, i.e. the desire to invent a new term for 'the most Roman of all habits'. However, the precedent of *thermae*, a term that seems to have been introduced to designate a change in bathing architecture (and subsequent habits), pushes us to investigate whether a similar process was at work for the introduction of *lauacrum*. When looking at the material evidence of the period in question, we can observe that small-sized pools for individual use were introduced to complement the large communal pools. Several explanations have been proposed for this new trend, including a Christian prudishness which wished to avoid close bodily contact, a religious use (for baptism and initiation rites), an exclusive use by the elite, or a medical use. Combining the introduction of the new term *lauacrum* with the introduction of these small pools, we could argue that both introductions were the results of a change in bathing habits. This change was, however, not an introduction of a new custom, but rather a reinvention of an existing one. Until the end of the 1st c. AD, the act of washing oneself before entering a communal pool was carried out at the *labrum*. When the *labrum* disappeared, the function may well have been assumed by small individual pools. The introduction of the word *lauacrum*, etymologically linked to *lauare* and *la(u)brum*, may also have been a reflection of this changed bathing habit.

It is however difficult to link the archaeological remains of the small pools to the literary and epigraphic evidence of the term *lauacrum*. Literary evidence as well as juridical sources confirm that *lauacrum* was often used to denote a specific part of a building, more specifically water-related amenities. Furthermore, the attestations of *lauacrum* in Christian contexts underline that the connotation of washing was central in the reuse of the term to designate the 'regenerative washing' or baptism of the Christian community. The early baptismal fonts are similar to the small individual pools found in bath houses and the terminology to denote these fonts was almost exclusively copied from words denoting pools - including *baptisterium*, *alueus*, *piscina* and possibly also *lauacrum*. It seems plausible that both the terminology and the technology of bath-house pools were copied, until the baptistry became an independent architectural unit. The epigraphic evidence offers more opportunities for comparisons with the surviving archaeological remains. When structures mentioned in a *lauacrum*-inscription are identified, we see

that the works which were concerned the reorganization of the heated sectors and the pools.

Taking all the above evidence together, we propose a complex semantic evolution of the term. Originally introduced to designate a small pool for individual use the (individual) act of submerging oneself in the water of a pool. The word gradually took on a more general meaning of 'bathing' and by extension also 'bath house'. In a Christian context, the word similarly could denote the baptismal font or the act of baptism itself. These three different meanings, bonded by the communal idea of submerging in water, continued to coexist and gained popularity in Late Antiquity. The changed bathing habits – performing a simple ablution in a tub whether or not followed by entering the communal pools – may well have replaced the tradition of washing at the *labrum*. This would point to an interesting continuity of a quick ablution in the Roman bathing habits, down from the early Republican to Late Antique times, but at the same time reveal a more personal bathing experience.

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Figures

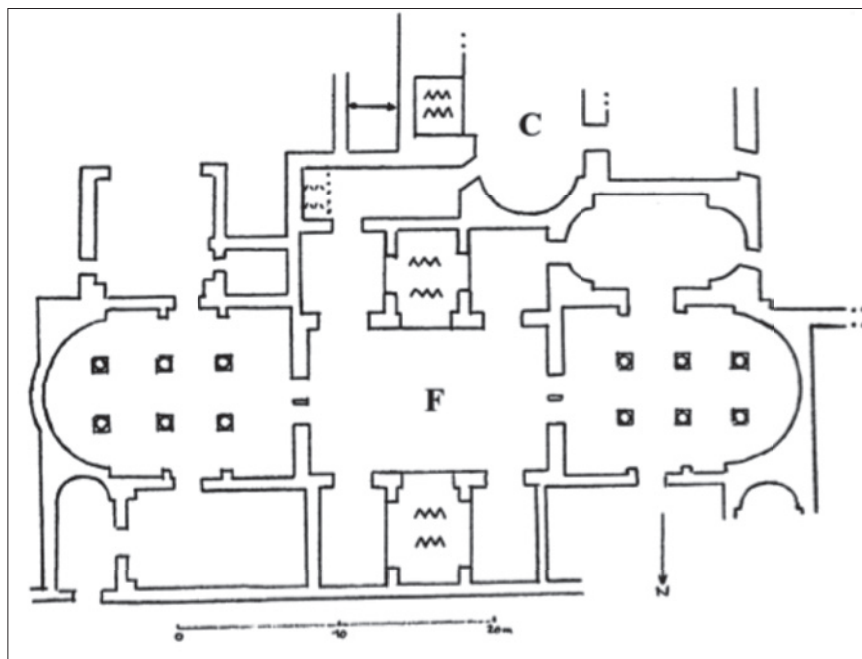


Fig. 1: Ground plan of the baths in *Thignica* (Tunisia) (F: *frigidarium*; C: *caldarium*, $\Lambda\Lambda$ = pool; arrows: location of furnace) (After: Thébert 2003, p. 606, pl. LVI.4)

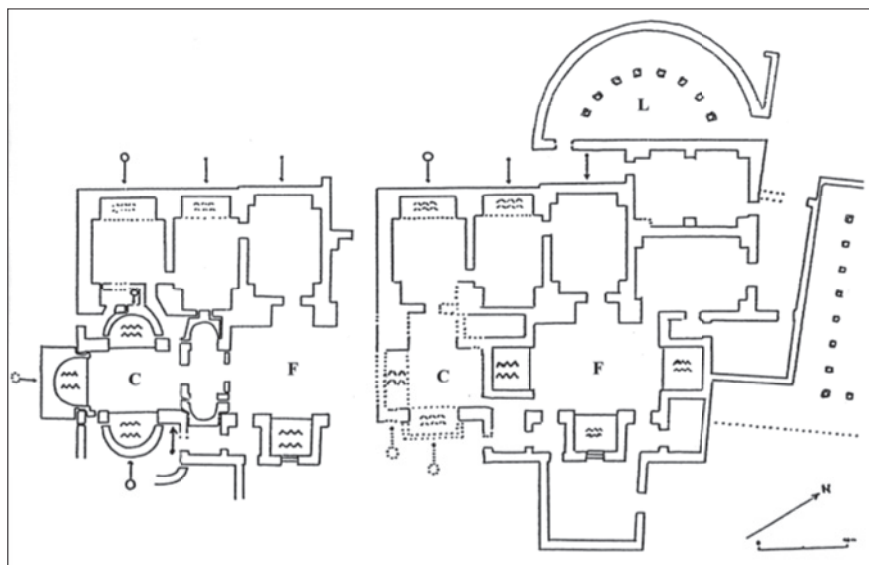


Fig. 2: Ground plan of the Summer Baths in *Thuburbo Maius* (Tunisia) (left: last phase; right: first phase; F: *frigidarium*; C: *caldarium*; L: latrines; $\Lambda\Lambda$ = pool; arrows: location of furnace) (After: Thébert 2003, p. 609, pl. LIX.3-4)

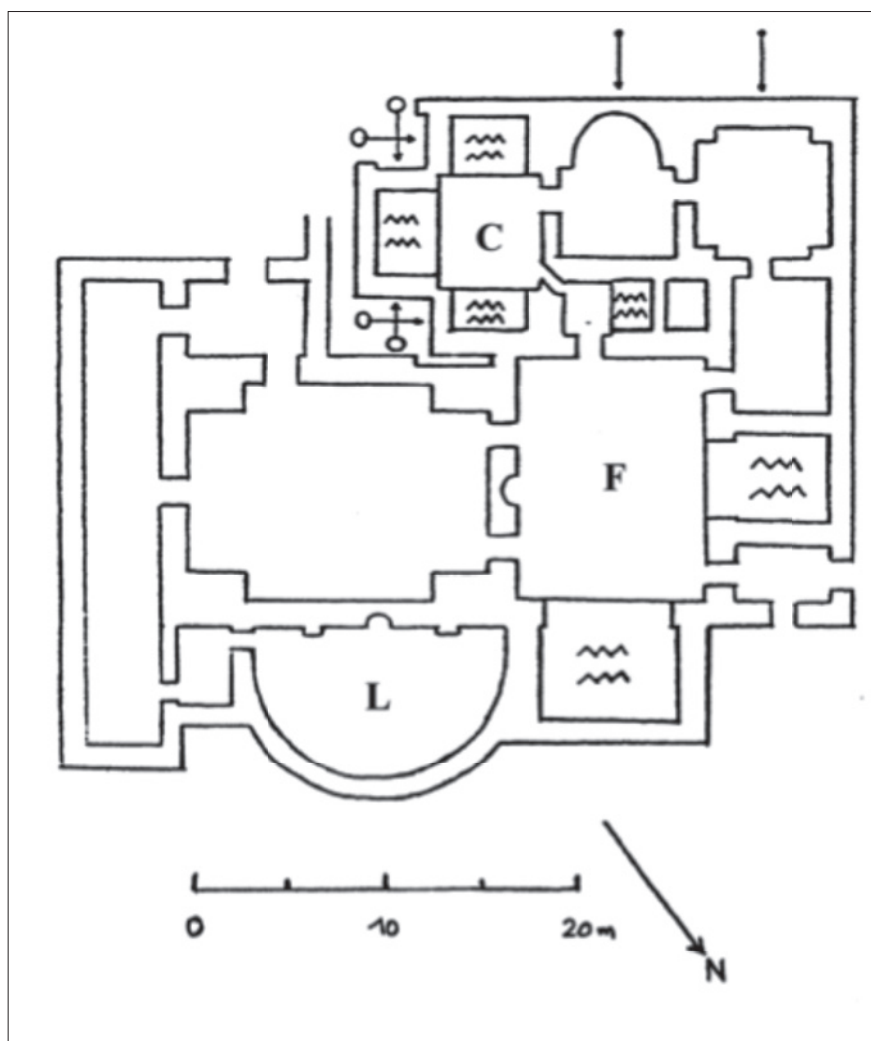


Fig. 3: Ground plan of the Large Baths in *Madauros* (Algeria) (F: *frigidarium*; C: *caldarium*; L: latrines; $\sim\sim\sim$ = pool; arrows: location of furnace) (After: Thébert 2003, p. 641, pl. XCI.2)

Appendix: Inscriptions mentionning *lauacrum*

Introduction

It is impossible to give an exhaustive overview of all the Latin inscriptions mentioning the word *lauacrum*, as the corpus of the epigraphic evidence is simply too large and too dispersed to study. For the present appendix, the author made use of the various online epigraphic databases as search tools to trace relevant references. These online references were then cross-checked with the published versions. The consulted databases include the European EAGLE-project (Europeana network of Ancient Greek and Latin Epigraphy), the Epigraphik-Datenbank Clauss-Slaby (EDCS), the Epigraphic Database Heidelberg (EDH), the Epigraphic Database Rome (EDR) and the Inscriptions of Roman Tripolitania (IRT). In addition, earlier research by I. Nielsen (1990, p. 203-208), G. Fagan (1999, p. 233-347) and Y. Thébert (2003, p. 486-521) made a good starting point to trace bath-related inscriptions in the large corpora, such as the *CIL*, the *ILS*, the *ICUR*, etc. To complement these studies, the volumes from 1999 onwards of the *Année Épigraphique* (*AE*) and the *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* (*ZPE*) were consulted.

Each inscription was given a code, consisting of a capital letter (E or B) and a number, to facilitate referencing in this paper. The inscriptions that refer to *lauacrum* in a bath-related context are referred to with an E-code, while those referring to *lauacrum* in a baptism-related context have a B-code. Within these two categories, the inscriptions are ordered chronologically (when possible). For each inscription, the following information is given:

- Ref.: the reference to the original publication, sometimes followed by a reference to later corrections.
- Loc.: the location where the inscription was found, starting with the Latin place name. The modern location and the modern country are added in brackets.
- Date: the date of the inscription. The elements from which this date was deduced are mentioned in brackets.
- The latest edition of the text as found in the most recent publication found under Ref.
- Transl.: the translation of the inscription into English made by the author (unless otherwise stated). No translation was attempted if the inscription was too badly damaged.

Lauacrum in bath-related inscriptions

E1

- Ref.** *CIL* XV, 7247
- Loc.** Rome, in the vineyard of the monastery of S. Lorenzo in Panisperna
- Date** 2nd c. AD (imperial titles)
- Text** *In lauacro Agrippinae / Imp(eratoris) Caes(aris) Trai(ani) Hadriani Aug(usti) sub cur(a) Trebelli Marini Martialis ser(uus) fecit.*
- Transl.** “Into the *lauacrum* of Agrippina. Of Emperor Caesar Trajanus Hadrianus Augustus. By responsibility of Trebellius Marinus Martialis. His slave made this.”

E2

- Ref.** *CIL* VI, 8501 = *ILS* 1487 = *ZPE* 43, 75 (= Corbier 1981)
- Loc.** Rome

- Date** 1st c. or beginning of the 3rd c. AD (prosopography)
Text *Ti(berius) Claudius Marcellinus / [Proc(urator) A]ug(usti) a patrimonio // Dicauit Aug(usto) / et la<u =b>acrumque quae / sunt intra maceriam.*
Transl. “Tiberius Claudius Marcellinus, procurator of Augustus for the patrimony, dedicated to Augustus the *lauacrum* and everything within the enclosure.”

E3

- Ref.** *CIL* X, 3678 = *ILS* 5689
Loc. *Misenum* (Miseno, Italy)
Date End of 2nd – beginning of 3rd c. AD (prosopography)
Text *T(ito) Fl(aui)o Au(ito) / Forensi Il(uir(o) iter(um) q(uin)q(uennali) omnib(us) / munerib(us) functo hic / idem ad lauacrum bal/near(ium) publicar(um?) ligni / duri uehes n(umerum) cccc en/thecae nomine in perpetuum obtulit ita / tamen ut magistratuus / quod annis successorib(us) / suis tradant filio / T(iti) Fl(aui) Au(iti) u(iri) e(gregii) patron(o) col(oniae) ordo et popul(us) Misenat(ium).*
Transl. “To Titus Flavius Avitus Forensis, *duouir* for the second time, censor, having completed all the duties of office. This same man supplied four hundred cartloads of hardwood to the *lauacrum* of the public baths in perpetuity as an appurtenance of his estate, in such a way that the magistrates pass them on each year to their successors. The *ordo* and people of Misenum (dedicated this monument) to the son of T. Flavius Avitus, *uir egregius*, patron of the colony.” (FAGAN, 1999, p. 312)

E4

- Ref.** *AfrRom* 7.11, 152 = *LibAnt* 1969/70, p. 142
Loc. *Gholaia* (Bu Njem, Libya)
Date AD 202- ca. 270 (foundation and abandonment of *Gholaia*)
Text *Nu/mina // inu/icta // Iunius Amicus hs qui e(t) l<ib=bi>rarius / pr<i=eg>o<r=l>em la<u=b>a<cr=rc>{ }um ex parte restituit / cum omne numerum militum*
Transl. “The unconquered Numen. Iunius Amicus HS (?) and copyist restored the former *lauacrum* from one party with the whole unit of soldiers.”

E5

- Ref.** *CIL* III, 324 = *ILS* 613
Loc. *Nicomedia* (Izmit, Turkey)
Date Between AD 285 – 305 (imperial titles)
Text *Perpetu[o] Imp(eratori) [d(omino) n(ostro)] / C(aio) Aur(elio) Val(erio) Diocletian[o] / p(io) f(elici) Aug(usto) cuius pr[o]/uidentia etiam / lauacrum ther/marum ant[o]ni/niarum fundi/tus euersum sua / pecunia amplifi/catum p[o]pul[o] suo / exhiberi iussit.*
Transl. “To the perpetual emperor, our lord C. Aurelius Valerius Diocletianus, *pius, felix*, Augustus, whose foresight ordered that the *lauacrum* of the *Thermae Antoninianae*, which was completely ruined, also be opened for his people, after it had been restored and enlarged at his own expense.” (FAGAN, 1999, p. 236)

E6

- Ref.** CIL III, 6306 = CIL III, 8153 = CLE 273
Loc. Singidunum (Belgrado, Serbia)
Date 3rd c. AD (paleography)
Text *Alma lauacrorum de sa[xis deci]do lymphā, / et sunt ex lapide perfecta[e piscina]e pulchrae / laetis inque locis natus la[cus haec] tamen ipsis / tunc cum sospes erat coniux [---] in usum / emeritis quondam Alexandri nomine dignae. / Raucisoni lapidoso cadunt [---]te liquores. / Tam laudati operis dominus ue[---] et auctor / in suae memoriam uoluit con[secrare] maritae / ut tamen et lector nomen [cognosce]re possis / singulae declarant exordia [li]niae primae. / Aelia cum Tertia subole de coniuge [cas]ta // Ael(ius) Tertius //*
Transl. “I, clear water, feeder of the *lauacra*, fall from the rocks. Thus from stone a splendid bath house is created and into this delightfull place a lake is born.” (continues)

E7

- Ref.** AE 2007, 535
Loc. Fanum (Fano, Italy)
Date 3rd c. AD or later (paleography)
Text *Splendore ciuitatis ad mon[---]/mis hiemis et aestatis lauac[rum [---] patro]/nus ciuitatis Setorius Aux[---]/nis subtraxisset fatale decret[um --- hu]/iusce ciuitatis cum fatr[---] / summam manum pro[---].*
Transl. “For the splendour of the city [...] a *lauacrum* of winter and summer [...], Setorius, patron of the city withdrew the fatal decree [of this?] city with [...] the highest hand [... continues]”

E8

- Ref.** CIL III, 352 = ILS 6091 = AE 1999, 1577
Loc. Orcistus (Ortaköy, Turkey)
Date AD 331 (prosopography)
Text *[S]ac[rae] li[tte]r[ae](?) hae(c) quae in precem con[tu]lis[tis et nominis] / et dignitatis reparationem iure qua[erunt] obtine[re] proinde uicari intercessionem qua[e fuerant] mu[tu]lata ad integrum prisgi(!) honoris r[educi] san[cimus] ut et uos oppidumque dilig[entia] tui[tum] expetito legum adque appellationis s[plendore] / perfruamini infra scrib[is] / haue Abiabi carissime nobis / incole Orcisti iam nu[n]c oppidi et / ciuitatis iucundam munificen[tiae] nostrae materiem praebue[runt] Ablabi carissime et iucundiss[im]e quibus enim studium est urbes uel n[on] uas condere uel longaeuas erudire uel in termortuas reparare id quod petebatur acc[e]ptissimum fuit adseruerunt enim uicum suum / spatiis prioris aetatis oppidi splendore floruisse ut et annuis magistratum fascibus orn[a]retur essetque curialibus celebre et popul[o] / ciuium plenum ita enim ei situ ad[qu]e ingenio / locus opportunus esse perhib[etur] ut ex quattuor partib[us] e[od]e totidem in sese confluan[t] / uiae quibus omnibus publicis mansio tamen [u]tilis adque accomo[da] esse dicat[ur] aquar[um] / ibi abundantem affluen[tiam] labacra quoque / publica priuataque forum istatuis(!) ueterum / principum ornatum populum comm[un]entium / adeo celebrem [ut se]dilia [qu]ae ibidem sunt [fa]cile conpleantur pr[ae]ter[ea] ex decursibus / praeterfluentium [aquarum] aquim[en]lin[arum] numerum copiosum quibus cum omni[bus] memoratus*

locus abundare dicatur c[on]/[t]igisse adseruerunt ut eos Nacolenses si[bi] / [a]dnecti ante id temporis (...)

Transl.

“An imperial letter (?). The elements you have gathered in your request demand with just cause that you obtain the reinstatement of your name and dignity. We have also decided that, by intermediary of the *uicarius*, everything which has been taken away, be reinstated to full former glory, in a way that you and your village, protected by diligence, enjoy, as you have requested, the splendours of the laws and the good name (of a city). Below, I have written(?): ‘Greetings, Ablabius, who is dear to us. The citizens of Orcistus, which is an *oppidum* and town from now on, have offered a pleasant matter to our munificence, dear and delightful Ablabius. Because for those (like us) who make the effort of erecting new towns, embellish old ones or repair the decaying ones, what they demanded has been very well accepted. They have indeed confirmed that their *uicus* flourished with the splendor of an *oppidum* during a preceding period, as a result of which it equipped itself with the yearly magisterial *fascēs*, was fitted with *curiales* and was full of a people of citizens. Besides, thanks to its site and its innate quality, this location is very advantageous, because, approaching from four directions there are roads crossing each other for which a road station is, as is said, useful and equipped for all public needs. There is a large abundance of water that comes flowing, and also public and private *lauacra*, a forum embellished with statues of former *principes*, a population so large in number that the seats are easily filled in, and, furthermore, thanks to the the slope of the waters that arrive, a large number of water mills. However, even if the above-mentioned place has all these things, it has happened (they have confirmed) that the inhabitants of Nacolia had demanded to be annexed to them before this present situation. (continues)” (after CHASTAGNOL, 1981, p. 389)

E9

Ref

AE 1916, 87 (recto)/88 (verso) = *ILAf*r 273

Loc.

Thuburbo Maius (near El Fahs, Tunisia)

Date

AD 361 (imperial titles)

Text

(verso) *[Beatissimo saeculo dd(ominorum)] nn(ostrorum) C[onstanti Pii Fel]lici[s Maxim]i [et inuictissimi Augusti] et Iuli[ani no]bil[issimi] Cae[saris pro]co[ns]ulatu Clo[di H]ermogenian[i] u(iri) c(larissimi) p[ro]c(onsulis) [p(rouinciae) A]fricae et le[gatione] [Crepe]rei Optatiani u(iri) c(larissimi) leg(ati) Karthag(inis) [t]hermas [aes]tiales po[s]t ann[os solidos] octo i[n]tra septimum mensem a[d]iectis omnibus perfectisq[ue] cuncti[s] qu[i]bus lauacra ind[i]gebant Ann[i]us Namptoiuius flam(en) [p(er)]p(etuus) iurisconsultus magister st[udiorum] cur(ator) rei p(ublicae) cum Thub[ur]bi[t]anae [u]rbis ordine amplissim[o] c[on]iunct[a] que eius plebe [per]fecit excoluit dedicauit.*

Transl.

(verso) “In the most prosperous age of our masters Constantius, *pious*, *felix*, Maximus, the most invincible Augustus, and Julian, the most noble Caesar, in the proconsulate of Clodius Hermogenianus, of senatorial rank, proconsul of the province of Africa, and in the legateship of Crepereus Optatianus, of senatorial rank, legate of Carthage, Annius Namptoius, perpetual priest, jurist, master of studies, curator of the city, along with the most eminent *ordo* of the city of Thuburbo and the entire plebs, after adding everything

and completing everything that the *lauacra* required, completed, adorned, and dedicated the summer baths within the seventh month [of his year in office?], after eight whole years.” (FAGAN, 1999, p. 276)

E10

Ref. *CIL* VIII, 1412 = *CIL* VIII, 15204

Loc. *Thignica* (Aïn Tougga, Tunisia)

Date AD 393 (prosopography)

Text *aquae]ductos taetra ac deformi caligine mersos et nullo felici aspect[u gaudentes(?) ---] / [--- proconsulatu Ae]mili Flori Paterni u(iri) c(larissimi) et inlustris et Eri Fani Geminiani u(iri) c(larissimi) leg(ati) c(ai) uib[---] / [---] ualet in sple[ndidissimo municipio(?) ---]m et Fl. P.? Geminio prouisionis [---] beneficio quae usui [priuato(?) ero]gabatur lauacris praestitit quae hac uiduata on[eribus illis? iussit f]fieri ciuib[us] / [---]n [--- k]andido ffl(aminibus) p(er)p(etuis) dd(uumuiris) [---] sumtu public[o restituit(?) ---] et dedicauit.*

Transl. The reconstruction of the text is difficult, as the inscription was found in 15 fragments. “(...) he has strengthened in the wonderful (*municipium*?) the aqueduct that had been submerged in foul and deformed mist and in no aspect fruitful (...) (...) for the benefit he appropriated (the waters?) that used to be put to private use, and gave them to the baths as a matching benefaction for his foresight (...) Under the proconsulship of Aemilius Florus Paternus, of senatorial rank, and Erius Fanius Geminianus, of senatorial rank (...) eternal *flamines* and *duumuires*, (...) out of public expenses, he (restored) and dedicated (this).” (after FAGAN, 1999, p. 311-312)

E11

Ref. *ILS* 5700 = *AE* 1896, 112 = *AE* 1897, 19

Loc. *Tarentum* (Taranto, Italy)

Date second half of 4th c. AD (prosopography)

Text *Pentascinsibus thermis quae longo temporis / tractu intercepto aquae meatu lauacris fre/[quen]tari desierant undis largioribus affluen[tem ny]mphalem aquam in meliores usus sua / [impensa ---] Furius C(aius) l(ibertus) Togi[us] Quintil[us] / induxit / [---]lio Petrio u(iro) p(erfectissimo)*

Transl. “Furius Togi[us] Quintill[us], freedman of Gaius, brought flowing nymphal water in more copious surges to the *Thermae Pentascinsenses* at his own expense and for their better use. For a long time the baths had ceased to be visited in their *lauacra*, owing to the interruption of the water supply by an earthquake. [Aure?]lius Petrius, *uir perfectissimus*, saw to the work.” (FAGAN, 1999, p. 312)

E12

Ref. *CIL* VIII, 21518 = *CLE* 335 = *ZPE* 129, 309 = *ZPE* 133, 249 = *AE* 2006, 1816 = *AE* 2006, 1817

Loc. *Castellum Tingitanum* (Orleansville, Algeria)

Date end of the 4th c. AD? (paleography)

Text *Siliqua frequens foueas mea membra lauacro.*

Transl. “Skin, often you keep my limbs warm in the *lauacrum*”

E13

Ref. *ILAlg* I, 2108 = *AE* 1908, 68
Loc. *Madauros* (M'Daourouch, Algeria)
Date AD 407-408 (imperial titles)
Text *Excellens glo[ria ddd(ominorum) nnn(ostrorum) inuic]/tissimorum prin[cipum Arcadi(i), H]onor[i(i), et Theodosi(i)] / semper Auggg(ustorum), adm[inistrante P]omp(eio) Proc[ulo] / u(iro) c(larissimo), procons(ule) p(rouinciae) A(fricae), leg[ato ---] Q(uinto) Thersio Cri[spino] / Megetio u(iro) c(larissimo), Cl(audius) S[ise]na Germanianu[s] / curator rei p(ublicae) cel[la]m balnearum lon[ga] / serie temporum ruina desolatam usib[usque?] / lauacrorum den[e]gatam sumptu prop[r]io et / cam{o} eram cum suspensuris constructam noui[s] / ab splendido ordin[e] decretis ded[ic]auit[.]*

Transl. “The excelling glory of our lords, the invincible and foremost Arcadius, Honorius and Theodosius, everlasting *Augusti*. To the administrator Pompeius Proclus, *uir clarissimus*, proconsul of the province of Africa, legate of Numidia and to Quintus Thersius Crispinus Megethius, *uir clarissimus*, Claudius S[ise]na Germanianus, *curator* of public affairs (ordered) the room of the baths, which lay in ruins for a long period of time and were inaccessible in their *lauacra*, and the rooms constructed with new *suspensurae* (to be built) at his own expenses. He dedicated (these) following issued decrees by the magnificent Ordo.”

E14

Ref. *CIL* VIII, 10946 = *CIL* VIII, 21497 = *CLE* 281
Loc. *Tigaua* (El-Kherba, Algeria)
Date Unknown
Text *Tu modo frumenti / domito uirtute / rebeli / respicis ac reparas / dumis contacta / lauacra*

Transl. “You, after fruitfully taming the revolts with your courage, looked at the *lauacra* and repaired them, as they were covered with thorn-bushes.”

E15

Ref. *HEp* 7, 458 = *HEp* 16, 477
Loc. Fortuna (Spain)
Date Unknown
Text *] / ocean[- - -] / Vel[- - -]er[- - -]D[- - -] / his perfe[cti]s(?) [- - - / - - -] NIV[- - -]LE [- - -] / aurea lenis dir[- - -]es [- - -] / custodisse VAL[- - -] / hoc autem PER[- - -] / paruum oculis TAM[- - -] / an hiems quam egeb[- - -] / siue lata cepit [- - -] / hos refereretur [- - -] / hic ille MEL[- - -]VER [- - -] / qui suus ad [- - -]rum [- - -] / uti[- - -]R[- - -]VACR[- - -]fendo[*

Transl. The inscription is too damaged to reconstruct a coherent text.

E16

Ref. *IGBulg* III, 1.1477b
Loc. *Vetus Augusta Area* (Hissar, Bulgaria)
Date Unknown
Text *[---] fontis aquarum calida[ru]m [---] / [--- ab i]nssesis Veteri Aug(ustae) Ar<e=i>a[e ---] / [---]erat teporatis usque lauac[ris ---] / [---]s et odere(!) penitu[s ---] / [---] olim uenerari p[---] / [---]xerant ueter[---] / [---]torem [*

Transl. The inscription is too damaged to reconstruct a coherent text. However, the line *fontis aquarum calidarum* (“of the sources of warm waters”) points to a bath-related context of the term *lauacris*.

E17

Ref. *ICUR* I, 1485 = *ILCV* 1901

Loc. Rome (Italy)

Date Unknown

Text *Balnea quae fragilis suspendunt corporis aestum / et reparant uires quas labor afficerit / quae constricta gelu ualidis aut solibus usta / admixto latici membra [liquore] leuant, / [ut]amur causa propri[ae] suadente] salutis / [at] caue ne mors sit me]dicina homini / lubrica ne sensus rapiat turpetque [u]oluptas / effera ne mentem luxuries stimulet / ebria neu uino dapibus neu uiscera crud[a] / dissol[u]at fluxu corde lab[ante] gula / sobria sed casto foueant [tibi] membra lauacro] / et quaesi]ta salus sit sine damno animae]. // Haec [tibi si quis amor uitae] te tangit h[onestae] / [quicumque es homi]num dicta fuisse [putes] / [tu tam]en ista magis cautus seruare me[mento] / grex sacrate d(e)o corpore men[te] fide] / cui bellum cum carne subest quae et uic[ta] resurgit] / quam cohibere iu[u] at si refo[u]ere p[aras] / clau[--- ---s]aluti [---] / uulnere [ne doleas ---] quod medeare iterum / [--- in]ueni bene parta remedia carn[is] / [--- ---] / [non] nostris nocet officiis nec culpa la[u]acri / quod sibimet generat lubrica uita malum est.*

Transl. “Baths, that alleviate the rage of the fragile bodies and repair the virtues, that were weakened by labour; baths, that reinvigorate the limbs which were immobilised by frost or burned by the sun, when the water is mixed, these are the baths we want to use for our good health. (Yet be aware that) the medicine (does not become the doom) of man! That slippery lust does not carry of and defiles the senses, that unrestrained luxury does not stimulate the mind, that the water of the initiated, when they are drunk from wine or recently fed by hearty meals, does not dissolve, when the vulnerable heart loses all control. Sober, the body will refresh itself (in a purifying bath) and the dead (health will not harm the soul). This is said to you (if you love a life of glory, wherever you are). But be aware that you remember these precautions even better, you herd by God blessed in body, mind and faith, who battle the flesh permanently. That you will bring it down, when it rises again while you get ready to refresh yourself (...) if you are not sick from a wound that you have to heal again (...) I have found a good remedy for the flesh (...) (Bathing) does not harm our duties and bathing is not guilty for what it brings forth: a slippery lifestyle is the evil.” (after BUSH, 1999, p. 537-538)

Lauacrum in baptism-related inscriptions

B1

Ref. *BCTH* 1951/52, 212

Loc. Depienne (Tunisia)

Date 4th c. AD or later (paleography)

Text *]lio per<e=i>o fidei // uel an(n)os / [---] ini<q=c>u(u)m hic qui pr//[o] ximus [---] / [---] lauajcro fonte pater [---] / [---]que uehitur studii [---] /*

[---]mque renascen[t ---] / [---] asp<e=i>r (h)ic et subito [---] / [--- su]
prema dies K[---] / [---]que corrip[i]

Transl. The text is too damaged to reconstruct. The combination [laua]cro fonte in combination with renascen[t] (“they are reborn”), however, suggests that the text concerned baptism.

B2

Ref. *CIL* VIII, 20910

Loc. Tipasa (Tipaza, Algeria)

Date 4th c. or later (date of the monument)

Text Juc / [---]mus / [---] iniquis / [---]em fili(i) / [---]ue secutus / [--- ---] / [---]
au / [---]ien / [--- ---] / [---]ae est / [---]mpi[---] sunt sanc/ta lauac[ra]

Transl. The text was part of a mosaic in the baptistry (4th c. or later), but was too damaged to reconstruct. The combination of sancta laua[cra] (“holy washing”) clearly points to a religious connotation.

B3

Ref. *ICUR* I, 1371 = *ILCV* 1520 = *CLE* 731

Loc. Rome (Italy)

Date 4th c. or later (paleography, decoration)

Text ---] colonus / [--- --- p]rima / [--- --- a]more / [--- sanguineo lauit deus
i]pse lauacro // s[--- ---]us / hic tibi finis er[at] uitae dulcissime nate
/ se<d=t> pater omnip<o=q>tens oro miserere lab[orum] / tantorum
misere[re] animae non dig[na] / feren<t=i>is. _____

Transl. The first part of the inscription, ending with the word lauacro, is too badly damaged to reconstruct. It continues with phrases pertaining to death, making clear that this was a funerary inscription. (“Here, for you, it was the end of your happily lived earthly life.”).

B4

Ref. *ICUR* II, 4096

Loc. Rome (Italy)

Date AD 366 – 384 (reign of pope Damasus I)

Text Non haec humanis opibus non arte magistra / [--- ---] / sed praestante
Petro cui tradita ianua caeli est / antistes christi co<m=n>posuit Damasus
/ una Petri sedes unum uerumque lauacrum / uincula nulla tenent [quem
liquor iste lauat].

Transl. “Not by (aid of) human works, nor by masterly art (...) but by (the strenght of the) exceptionnal Peter, to whom the key of heaven was given, Damasus, the overseer of Christ, composed this. The one chair of Peter and the one and true washing do not hold any chains that are washed by this liquid”

B5

Ref. *ICUR* V, 13814b

Loc. Rome (Italy)

Date 4th c. or later (paleography)

Text Jma / [--- uene]randa decora / [--- perf]usa lauacro / [---c]aelestibus
auxit

Transl. The inscription is too damaged to reconstruct. However, the words *ueneranda decora* (“splendor/dignity that should be venerated”) and *caelestibus* (“heavenly”) clearly point to a religious interpretation of *lauacrum*.

B6

Ref. *ILCV* 1513 = *AE* 2010, 124

Loc. Rome, Lateran baptism (Italy)

Date ca. AD 440 (date of the monument)

Text *Gens sacrandā polis hic semine nascitur almo, / quam fecundatis spiritus edit aquis. / Mergere, peccator sacro purgande fluent: / quem ueterem accipiet, proferet unda nouum. / Nulla renascentum est distantia, quos facit unum / unus fons, unus spiritus una fides. / Virgineo faetu genitrix ecclesia natos, / quos spirante eo concipit, amne parit. / Insons esse uolens isto mundare lauacro, / seu patrio premeris crimine seu proprio. / Fons hic est uitae qui totum diluit orbem/ sumens de Christi uulnere principium. / Celorum regnum sperate, hoc fonte renati; / non recipit felix uita semel genitos. / Nec numerus quenquam scelerum nec forma suorum / terreat: hoc natus flumine sanctus erit.*

Transl. “Here is born from life-giving seed a people, consecrated to another city, whom the spirit brings forth from the fertile waters. To plunge in the holly purifying flood the sinner, whom the wave receives as old but gives forth as new. None reborn is different from those it makes one, one font, one Spirit, one faith. Mother church as a virgin brought forth those who are born, whom she conceived by the divine breath and brought into being in the flowing water. The person who wants to be innocent is here made clean by washing, whether from the guilt of the first parent or from one’s own. Here is the font of life which bathes the whole world, its ultimate source the side of Christ wounded. Reborn in this font for the kingdom of heaven, the blessed life does not receive those born only once. Be not afraid of the number or kind of your sins, for the one born in this river will be holly.” (FERGUSON, 2009, p. 769)

B7

Ref. *ICUR* II, 4112

Loc. Rome (Italy)

Date AD 498 – 514 (reign of pope Symmachus)

Text *Sumite perpetuam sancto de gurgite uitam / cursus hic est fidei mors ubi sola perit / roborat hic animos diuino fonte lauacrum / et dum membra madent mens solidatur aquis / auxit apostolicae geminatum sedis honorem / Christus et ad caelos hinc dedit esse uiam / nam cui siderei commisit limina regni / hic habet in terris altera claustra poli / Symmachus hunc statuit sacri baptismatis usum / sub quo quidquid erat incipit esse nouum.*

Transl. “Take up the perpetual life out of the holly whirlpool. This is a passage of faith where only death vanishes. Here the souls are made stronger by means of the divine font of the *lauacrum* and while the limbs are wet, the mind is strengthened by the waters. Christ augmented the double honor of the apostolic chair and gave this to be the way to the heavens, for he to whom He united the thresholds of the celestial kingdom, has the other locks of the heavens here on earth. Symmachus erected this for the use of the sacred baptism, under which anything that was, begins to be new.”

B8

Ref. *ILCV* 1521
Loc. *Ebora* (Evora, Portugal)
Date AD 543 (converted date)
Text *Dum simul d(u)lcem cum uiro carpere uitam, / ilico me Fortuna tulit semper noxsea cunctis. / Vita dum uixi uenantia nomen in seculo gesi. / Ter deciens quater in pace quietos pert(uli) annos. / Ultimum iam solui deuitum comunem omnibus unum. / Hoc loco erga meos elegi quiescere proles, / [no]ndum quos Domin<u=o>s [uo]cauit purgatos un[da l] abacri. / Requi[eu]it in pace sub d(ies) xi [kal(endas)] februar(ius) er(a) DCXXXI.*

Transl. “While enjoying a sweet life with my husband, there the injurious Fortuna carried me off all together. During the life I lived, my name was Venantia for the people of my generation. I died in peace after 34 peaceful years. I have fulfilled the ultimate objective, the only communal one for everyone. Thus I have chosen to rest on this spot with my descendants, whom the Lord has not yet called to be cleansed by the wave of the washing. She took rest in peace on the eleventh day of the Kalends of February of the year 631.”

B9

Ref. *CIL* III, 6379 = *CLE* 283
Loc. *Salona* (Solin, Croatia)
Date Unknown
Text *] / inuidosque meos ci[ues ---] / et desperantes Torqu[---] / sed nullus fugiat laua[crum(?) ---] / nympharum pateant d[---] / gaudemus Domini uenir[e(?) ---]*

Transl. “(...) and my envious citizens (...) and desperate Torq(?) (...), but no one runs away from the *lauacrum* (...) of the nymphs are open (...) We rejoice the coming of the Lord (...)”

B10

Ref. *ILAfr* 404
Loc. *Carthago* (Tunis, Tunisia)
Date Unknown (possibly 4th c. or later)
Text *]idemor[---] / [--- s]imul cum lau[acris ---] / [---] pietatis ha[---] / [---] itmihicru[---] / [---]auepar[*

Transl. The inscription is too damaged to reconstruct. The word *pietatis* (genitive of *pietas*: “devotion, piety”) reveals that this text had a religious message.

ABSTRACT

The word *lauacrum* has been interpreted in various ways, but has never been the subject of a thorough research. The term seems to have appeared in the 2nd century AD as a neologism to denote ‘the act of submerging oneself in the water of a pool’ or the place where this bathing took place, i.e. the bath house or a pool. Just as the word *thermae* appeared in the 1st century AD to designate a new type of bath house and a subsequent new mode of bathing, the author argues that the word *lauacrum* was also introduced to denote a change in bathing habits. By combining the literary, juridical,

epigraphic and archaeological evidence of *lauacra*, it is proposed that the word reflected a bathing habit which focussed more on personal washing. These individual ablutions took place in single-person pools, whether or not followed by a dip in the communal ones. This form of individual bathing may have replaced the previous tradition of washing at the *labrum*. The small type of pool used for this purpose, may have influenced both the form and the terminology of Christian baptismal fonts.

Lauacrum – Roman baths – bathing habits – bathing terminology – baptism and baptisteries – Late Antiquity

SAMENVATTING

Het woord *lauacrum* is op verschillende wijzen geïnterpreteerd, maar is nooit het onderwerp geweest van een diepgaande studie. De term lijkt te verschijnen in de 2^{de} eeuw n.C. als een neologisme om de handeling van ‘zich onderdompelen in badwater’ te beschrijven of om aan te geven waar deze handeling zich voltrok, namelijk in het badhuis of de badkuip. Net zoals het woord *thermae* verscheen in de 1^{ste} eeuw n.C. om een nieuw type badhuis en de daarmee samengaannde nieuwe badgewoontes te benoemen, zo ook zou volgens de auteur het woord *lauacrum* geïntroduceerd zijn om een veranderd badbezoek aan te duiden. Door de literaire, juridische, epigrafische en archeologische bewijzen van *lauacra* te combineren, wordt geargumenteed dat het woord een badgewoonte aanwees die meer aandacht besteedde aan een persoonlijke wasbeurt. Deze individuele wasbeurten vonden plaats in een eenpersoonsbadkuip, al dan niet gevolgd door een plons in het gemeenschappelijke bad. Deze individuele handeling verving mogelijk de voorgaande traditie om zich individueel te wassen aan het *labrum*. Het kleine type badkuip dat hiervoor werd gebruikt, zou ook de vorm en de terminologie van het Christelijke doopvont hebben kunnen beïnvloeden.

Lauacrum – Romeinse baden – badgewoontes – terminologie van baden – doop en doopvonten – Late Oudheid

RÉSUMÉ

Le mot *lauacrum* a été interprété de manière différente, mais n’a jamais été le sujet d’une étude approfondie. Le terme semble surgir à partir du 2^{ème} s. apr. J.C. comme un néologisme pour exprimer « l’acte de se submerger dans l’eau d’un bain » ou l’endroit où se déroule cette action, c’est-à-dire les bains ou la piscine. Comme le mot *thermae* est apparu au 1^{er} s. apr. J.C. pour désigner un nouveau type de bains et les nouvelles coutumes balnéaires, l’auteur propose que le mot *lauacrum* a été introduit pour indiquer un changement dans les coutumes des baigneurs. En combinant les indices littéraires, juridiques, épigraphiques et archéologiques du terme *lauacrum*, il est argumenté que le mot désignait la mode de se baigner dans des petits bassins, éventuellement suivie d’une submersion dans les grandes piscines collectives. Cet acte individuel a peut-être remplacé l’habitude de se laver autour du *labrum*. Le type de petit bassin utilisé à une telle fin aurait pu influencer la forme et la terminologie des fonts baptismaux chrétiens.

Lauacrum – bains romains – coutumes balnéaires – terminologie des bains – baptême et fonts baptismaux – Antiquité Tardive