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Gerding, Henrik

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Later, laterculus, and testa
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Abstract*
For centuries antiquarians and archaeologists have tried to reconcile the terminology of ancient writers on architecture, such as Vitruvius, with the perceived realities of the material record. One particular issue of debate concerns the interpretation of different words for “brick” in Latin. In this paper it is argued that earlier attempts to settle this question are unsatisfactory and leave several problems unresolved. A thorough examination of literary and epigraphic sources, combined with new insights in Hellenistic brick usage, suggests that primary distinctions in Latin brick terminology were based on shape and size, rather than on a mere division between fired and unfired bricks. Thus, it is argued that later basically signified a large moulded block, but normally was used to indicate mud bricks; that laterculus changed over time from being a diminutive (a small later) to becoming the standard term for the relatively thin fired bricks of the Roman Imperial period; and that testa originally and primarily signified a fragment of a roof tile (or a potsherd), but from the 1st century AD also may designate typical Roman Imperial bricks, after they have been divided into smaller, often triangular, pieces.

Keywords: later, laterculus, testa, bricks, fired bricks, mud bricks, Roman architecture, Vitruvius

Introduction

Basically, Latin has three different words for brick: later, laterculus, and testa. The different meanings and English translations of these and other closely related words according to the Oxford Latin Dictionary can be listed as following:2

1 later -eris, m.
   1 A brick; -eres ducere, to make bricks. b (sg.) brickwork, bricks. c (prov. after Gk. πλίνθον πλύνειν) -erem lauare, to waste one’s labour.
   2 A block, bar, ingot (of metal).

laterāria -ae, f. A brickworks, brick-kiln.

laterarius -a -um, a. (of earth) Used for brickmaking.

laterculus -i, m.
   1 A small brick, tile; (also sg.) brickwork.
   2 A brick-shaped mass, block; a hard cake or biscuit.
   3 (surv.) A square piece of land, parcel.

latericum -(i)i, n. Brickwork; (pl.) brick walls.

latericus -a -um, a. Made or constructed of brickwork, brick.

testa -ae, f.
   1 An object made of burnt clay: a an earthenware jar or other vessel. b a brick or tile. c (collect.) pulverized tile or earthenware (as material for pavements; also as colouring). d (transf.) a dark red eruption on the skin. e a method of clapping, perh. with the flat of the hand.
   2 A fragment of earthenware, shard, crock. b (in general) a fragment, splinter (esp. of broken bone or tooth); (app. also of a bone in its natural state).
   3 The hard outer covering of a crustacean, snail, etc., shell. b (applied to a sheet of ice; also app. of glass or sim.).

testaeus -ius -a -um, a.
   1 Made of bricks or tiles of burnt clay; (also, of pavements, etc.) made of such tiles, etc., pulverized. b resembling brick or pottery of burnt clay, esp. in colour.
   2 (of animals) Having a hard outer covering or shell: (also of the covering).

testarius -(ii) (-ii)i, m.
   1 A maker or seller of bricks or pottery of burnt clay.

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1 As will be shown, there are also a few other words, which in some circumstances attain a meaning equivalent to “brick”, such as tegula.

2 At present the Theaurus Linguae Latinae only treats the words deriving from later. On these, OLD and the Theaurus are essentially in agree-
2 (in mining, perh.) One who gleans through the fragments of ore.

As can be gathered from this tabulation, the words later (1), laterculus (1) and testa (1b) all carry the meaning of "a brick". The entry for testa implies that this word should be understood to indicate a brick made of fired clay, whereas laterculus is presented as a diminutive form of later, "a small brick". However, the emphasis on these particular distinctions together with the habitual use of an identical translation ("brick"), although basically correct, effectively conceals some important nuances and differences in the way these words were used and understood by ancient writers. An in-depth analysis of these differences, including a revision of prevailing interpretations, may shed new light on some hitherto unresolved issues, contribute to a better understanding of certain passages, for example in Vitruvius, and also advance our insights into Roman brick industry. Furthermore, this study may be helpful in future investigations on the formation of Latin technical vocabulary and its relation to everyday language.

Methodology

The questions raised in this paper are affected by several complicating factors. Apart from the fact that each of the three main words had several different meanings, these words could also be used on different linguistic levels: in the everyday language of ordinary Romans, in the academic language of the educated élite, and in the technical jargon of a specialized corps of professionals, all at the same time. Some distinctions that were made in technical terminology may not have been relevant in the vulgar vocabulary. Thus, we may have both technical and non-technical varieties of each word. Furthermore, languages are not static. New words are adopted and new meanings are affixed to extant words as a response to the appearance of new customs, technologies, practices, and ideas. Therefore, the main approach of this paper will be to investigate if changes and nuances in the use of the different words can be correlated with known variations in the appearance and usage of bricks in antiquity. For this reason, it is essential that we give as full as possible an account of the literary source material, and also that we first try to exhaust the internal evidence that is provided by it, before we start comparing it to the archaeological one. This is not to say that the interpretation of texts takes precedence over discussions on archaeological finds, or vice versa, only that we should try to get the full picture of each category before making inferences between them. A common pitfall is to build a hypothesis on a narrow selection of examples from both categories, which appear to corroborate each other, and then extrapolate this interpretation on a general level.

In order to provide a general background to the topic, I will first outline the development of the use of bricks in antiquity. This overview is based mainly on an in-depth study of the archaeological evidence for fired bricks from the Hellenistic period, undertaken by the present author. Secondly, I will give a short summary of previous and prevailing interpretations of the words in question. Then will follow an overview of relevant testimonia from ancient literature, where the use of the different words in each passage will be discussed with regard to its internal context, in order to narrow down the possible meanings. Most of the authors were living and writing in the city of Rome but they are dispersed widely in time: from the early 2nd century BC to the 4th century AD. Thus, the usage of words will be analysed also from a chronological point of view, before it is compared with the archaeological record in search of possible convergences. The excerpts are presented in full in a catalogue together with what is deemed to be their most likely interpretation.

A more direct way of confronting this problem would be to make a systematic inventory of brick stamps and compare the occurrence of the words later, laterculus, and testa with the actual objects that they designate. However, for several reasons this approach turns out to be less rewarding than might be expected. Roman brick stamps include a wealth of information, including the owner of the estate, the manager of the workshop, and even the brick maker, but do not normally give the name of the object itself. For some curious reason roof tiles seem to differ from bricks in this regard, as we occasionally find the word tegula in stamps, abbreviated or written in full. Sometimes the more general term opus doliare is used to signify the stamped item. The second obstacle lies in the limitations of the published record. Even though Roman bricks stamps have for a long time been meticulously studied and published, especially those found in and about the city of Rome, the epigraphic content of the stamps are rarely accompanied by a description of the object they were imprinted on. Even worse, many epigraphists tend to use a perfunctory terminology that does not distinguish between bricks and roof tiles, calling everything "tegulae", "Ziegeln", or "laterizi". Photos and illustrations, if there are any, are generally restricted to the stamp itself. Thus, we cannot say for certain, just by con-

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4 Gerding 2006; 2008; Östborn & Gerding 2015; Gerding & Östborn forthcoming.
5 For this study a chronological limit was set at the end of the 4th century AD, mainly because of the transformation of the Roman brick industry during the course of that century (see e.g. Wilson 2006, 231).
6 For an overview of Roman brick stamps, see Steinby 1978.

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3 Langslow 1989, 34.
sulting the standard publications, whether stamps containing the word *tregula* were used also on bricks. Even if they were, the same stamp could have been used indiscriminately for different types of products in the same *figlina*.7

We have a few examples of the words *later* and *laterculus* being mentioned in graffiti inscribed on bricks by brick makers before firing, often to keep track of production.8 In some cases it is also possible to compare the use of words with the bricks themselves, although it is not always certain that the text refers to the object it was written on. It should be kept in mind that these graffiti, unlike the literary testimonia, derive from many different parts of the Roman world. They are also much more difficult to date than proper stamps. Still, this material has been incorporated in the catalogue and will be discussed below.

**The development of bricks**

Mud bricks have been used widely and continuously all around the Mediterranean from the Neolithic period to the present day, whereas the use of fired bricks in masonry for a long time was limited to the Near East.9 It did not appear in the Graeco-Roman world until the second half of the 4th century BC.10 The earliest finds have been made in the north Aegean, but fired bricks soon spread to Epirus, Sicily, and southern Italy. They also started to turn up in Etruria and Cisalpine Gaul during the course of the 3rd century BC. However, the use of fired bricks was limited and sporadic throughout the Hellenistic period. Generally, Hellenistic fired bricks have the same approximate dimensions as contemporary mud bricks, although these dimensions may vary from one by one foot (*tetradoron*) to one-and-a-half by one-and-a-half feet (*sesquipedalis*), which in reality means anything from about 30 to more than 50 cm on each side, depending on the size of the local foot standard. The thickness varies between 6 and 14 cm, but is usually found in the range of 8–10 cm. There are also some cases of smaller bricks, representing “half-bricks”, and larger ones, exceeding two feet in length. In northern and north-central Italy the majority of Hellenistic bricks have the same typical dimensions: c. 30 × 45 cm, representing one by one-and-a-half Attic-Roman feet. This corresponds to the type of brick that Vitruvius labelled *lydion*.11

In Campania, from the early 1st century BC, a completely different kind of brick came to dominate the market: bricks made of roof tiles. The practice of reusing roof tiles and other terracotta elements in various forms of masonry goes back almost as far the use of proper bricks, and was particularly rife in southern Italy.12 This usage might seem as a waste of money since roof tiles are more complex and consequently more costly than plain bricks, but a good supply of broken or discarded roof tiles may have made it economical even so. In Campania the usage became more systematic and pervasive. The tiles had their flanges cut off and they were then divided into smaller pieces. These *ersate* bricks were considerably thinner than ordinary Hellenistic bricks (c. 3–4 cm) and smaller overall. They were also used in a different way than before: instead of solid brickwork we now find the combination of brick masonry and Roman concrete,13 where an exterior brick casing provided both lost shuttering and protective surface for the concrete core.14 This innovation may not have originated from Campania, but certainly was further developed in this region. Brick-faced concrete appears also in northern Italy, possibly as early as the mid-2nd century BC,15 but here the large Hellenistic bricks continued to be used both as aggregate and as facing.

As far as we know, fired bricks were not introduced in the city of Rome until the late Republican or early Augustan era.16 This might seem strange but should be viewed against the background that the diffusion of fired bricks was slow and hesitant during the entire Hellenistic period.17 When they finally appeared in the Roman capital, they arrived together with the Campanian tradition of using broken tiles. Bricks made of roof tiles continued to be utilized in and around Rome at least until the middle of the 1st century AD, but at some point in time, probably in the late Augustan or early Tiberian reign, proper bricks started to be manufactured in the lower Tiber valley. These square bricks were made in different sizes, the most common of which was the *besalis* (½ of a Roman foot on either side), but they all retained the relative thinness of roof

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7. The fact that dimensions are specified (*tregula secipedalis*, *tregula bipedalis*) in some stamps from the Hadrianic period (*CIL* 15.650–651) indicates that we are actually dealing with a particular product, probably bricks or floor tiles.
8. Scholz 2012. According to Matijašić (1986) it was a supervisor, in charge of several brick makers, who made the graffiti in order to keep a record of the daily production.
10. Gerding 2006; Östborn & Gerding 2015. For a full account of the development, see Gerding & Östborn forthcoming.
11. Vit. De arch. 2.3.3.
12. A well-documented early example can also be found in Fregellae in central Italy (Coarelli 2000).
13. Roman concrete may be more correctly described as “strongly mortared rubble construction” (DeLaine 2001, 230).
14. Pieces of bricks/tiles were also often used as aggregate in the concrete core. Since the aggregate was laid in the mortar (sometimes in orderly rows) and not pre-mixed, as in modern concrete, the distinction between “masonry” and “Roman concrete” is not as clear-cut as it might first appear.
17. Östborn & Gerding 2015; Gerding & Östborn forthcoming.
Roman brick industry developed rapidly, and the mass production of standardized bricks eventually made the use of broken roof tiles redundant. These "Imperial" bricks were exported and widely copied in the provinces. However, large “Hellenistic” bricks continued to be used both in northern and southern Italy parallel to the smaller variant, and they also spread to other regions (e.g. Illyria and Spain). There appears to have been a convergence in size over time between the two categories. The later lydion, for example, tends to be thinner (5–6 cm) than its earlier Hellenistic counterpart, whereas the small besalis was increasingly supplanted by larger standard sizes (sesquipedalis and bipesalis).

Previous research

In previous discussions on the exact meanings of the Latin words for brick, and their relationship to the archaeological and architectural remains, laterculus is generally seen simply as a diminutive form of later and is therefore usually omitted. The use of the remaining two words is often perceived as a reflection of the existence in the Roman period of two kinds of bricks: unfired bricks (i.e. mud bricks) and fired bricks. The matter is further complicated, however, by the epithets bricks: unfired bricks (i.e. mud bricks) and fired bricks. The use of the remaining two words is often perceived as a re

This observation, if anything, should have made him question his own theory that later could carry the different meanings of “mud brick” and “fired brick”, the author continues to suggest that later coctus/ coctilis is “a sun-dried brick, slightly hardened in the kiln”, a statement which he himself later contradicts. Moreover, Van Aken expresses his astonishment over the fact “that the latter classical authors usually continue to speak of the coctus, when they mean brick”. This observation, if anything, should have made him question his own theory that later in the Imperial period regularly meant “fired brick”. Finally, he also got some facts wrong; his assertion that “walls built of brick only [i.e. solid brick walls] did not exist”, is probably influenced by the completely dominating use of bricks as facing on concrete walls in Roman Imperial architecture, especially in the capital, but not entirely correct.

22 According to Van Aken (1952, 144) the shift towards a new primary meaning of the word later occurred in the Claudian-Neronian time; according to Coarelli (2000, 89) it had taken place already in the late Republican period.
23 Pernier 1920.
24 Van Aken 1952, 140: testa can be a broken tile or a proper brick. Cf. also Helen 1975, 16.
25 Coarelli (2000, 89), for example, equates testaceus and latericus.
26 Van Aken 1952, 141. E.B. Van Deman seems to have held the view that the term later would have applied also to semi-baked bricks, as a solution to the “Arezzo paradox” (Blake 1947, 278).
27 Cf. Van Aken 1952, 142. The interpretation was also criticized by Coarelli (2000, 88) as unfounded.
28 Van Aken 1952, 144.
29 Van Aken 1952, 146. Solid brick walls can be found in several places, e.g. in northern Italy (Manzelli 2001).
However, neither of the two theories presented above fit with the evidence (archaeological and literary) and essentially they are based on three false assumptions:

1. The distinction between *later* and *testa* primarily represents that between unfired and fired bricks (the first theory).
2. *Later* merely means “a brick” and may signify any type of brick (the second theory).
3. *Testa* becomes equivalent with “fired brick” and may signify any type of fired brick (both theories).

In this paper it is argued that:

1. *Later* originally and primarily signified a moulded block of a certain approximate shape and size, i.e. a large slab that could only be lifted with two hands.
2. When no epithet is used, *later* usually signifies a large block of unfired clay (i.e. a mud brick).
3. *Later coctus/coctilis* signifies a fired brick of the same shape and size as a typical mud brick.
4. *Testa* originally and primarily signified a fragment of a roof tile (or a potsherd).
5. From the middle of the 1st century AD *testa* may also signify typical Roman Imperial bricks, i.e. relatively thin bricks which have been divided into triangular pieces.
6. *Laterculus*, although at first it may have been a diminutive form of *later*, came to be used for denoting (Imperial) Roman fired bricks (especially *besales*), which have not yet been broken into triangular pieces (*testae*).

The main point of the argument is that *later* was never used to describe the typical triangular bricks of the Roman Imperial period. Rather, the use of this word together with the attribute *coctus/coctilis* provides literary evidence for the continued use of large “Hellenistic” fired bricks into the Imperial period.

Presentation of literary testimonia

132 passages were collected from 31 different authors (see Table 1). In the following section only a brief summary of the testimonia is provided; for the full material, see the appended catalogue. The passages are presented in chronological order, starting with Plautus.

There is no internal evidence for the exact meaning of *later* in Plautus (*Truculentus* 305); nor was it relevant to the play. The word *laterculus* (*Poen. 325*), however, has for a long time been understood to signify some kind of cake, probably because it was shaped as a small brick. The proverb *laterem lavare* (“to wash a brick”), used by Terentius (*Phorm. 186*) as a metaphor for wasted labour, indicates a mud brick rather than a fired brick, as the context implies not only wasted labour, but an action that is counterproductive. The passages from Cato’s *De agricultura* demonstrate three important things: 1) that *later*, in this context, most probably was used to signify mud brick; 2) that the word *laterculus* could be used to indicate objects of a certain shape, rather than a certain material; and 3) that *testa* could signify both a fragment of a roof tile and (collectively) broken pieces of terracotta (either roof tiles or pottery). This is also supported by later texts: in the writings of Lucilius (*frag. 324*) later clearly indicates mud brick, and in that of Sisenna (*frag. 11*) *testa* is a fragment of a roof tile.

Cicero’s use of *later* implies that it constituted a common building material in Rome and that it was still employed in his time, but the passages are inconclusive as to its exact meaning, as are those by Sallustius and Livius. In a roughly contemporary source (Caes. *B Civ*. 2.10.6), however, *later* must be mud brick, since it could be damaged by water, and this meaning can also be assumed in other passages from that text, including the related words *latericus* and *latericium*, since they all refer to the same building. The exact meaning of *latericium* in this context is less clear but, in view of the technical character of the text, the word seems to indicate something different from a *later*. Varro is the first to distinguish between *later coctilis* and *later crudus* (*Rust. 1.14.4*), but in his earlier writing he used *later* without epithet (*Sat. Men. 248*). He also refers to mud brick walls (*Sat. Men. 530: latericia*) as an old, perhaps outdated, building method. In two cases *later* is used to describe blocks of gold. Nothing in Varro contradicts the translation of *testa* as a “fragment of a roof tile”, although it is clear that the word could have other meanings as well (e.g. “snail shell”). *Opus testaceum* (*Rust. 3.11*) may, therefore, be understood as some kind of brickwork made of broken roof tiles.

Vitruvius also makes the distinction between *later coctus* and *later crudus* in his treatise (1.5.8). However, he only makes use of the term *later coctus* one more time, as he describes the

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31. H.T. Riley (1887, 313 n. 1) mentioned both possibilities. However, the idea that the metaphor is about the futility of washing away the red colour of a fired brick (cf. Otto 1890, 187) seems rather far-fetched. Instead, the use of the proverb by Ambrosius (*De virginitibus 3.4.19*) clearly paints the picture of a dissolving mud brick.
32. Coarelli (2000, 89) mentions Cic. *Div. 2.99* as a case where *later* is used for fired brick, but it is not stated what evidence this conclusion is based on, internal or external. The passage can be compared with Cas- sius Dio (39.61.1–2), who describes the destructive effect of the flood in 54 BC on the houses in Rome, as they were made of *παλίνθου* (i.e. mud bricks).
ancient walls of Babylon in the following sentence,\(^3\) and the expression *later crudus* is never repeated again. Instead the words *later*, *latericius* and *latericium* are used consistently without any further specification. In at least eight cases (2.3.1; 2.3.2; 2.3.4; 2.8.16; 2.8.17: 2.8.18 ter) these words definitely imply mud brick and in another seven cases (2.3.3; 2.3.4; 2.8.9 ter; 2.8.10; 2.8.16) they almost certainly do. Some of these occurrences are inconclusive, strictly speaking, but in view of their close proximity to and shared context with unambiguous cases, *later* must be regarded as synonymous with *later*

\(^3\) On the *topos* of the walls of Babylon, see below.
crudus here as well.\textsuperscript{34} In three cases (2.1.7; 2.8.5; 6.8.9) the internal evidence points neither way.

In at least one case (2.8.19) testa quite obviously signifies pieces of broken roof tiles; in another one (7.13.3) it is used to denote a fragment of a shell (not included in the catalogue). In several passages (2.5.1; 5.10.3; 7.1.3; 7.4.1 \textit{bis}; 7.4.3) testa is mentioned as an important ingredient in mortar or plaster. This could be either broken roof tiles or potsherds, and it is also difficult to say whether they were crushed into a fine-grained powder (as a substitute for sand) or merely broken in very small pieces before mixing (Italian \textit{cocciopesto}). Similarly, the word \textit{testaceus} is used to describe pavements or wall coatings that include terracotta fragments of various sorts (7.4.3; 7.4.5). In some instances, however, Vitruvius’ use of \textit{testa} (2.8.4; 2.8.19) and \textit{structura testacea} (2.8.17; 2.8.18; cf. 2.8.20) clearly indicates that large chunks of roof tiles were used for the construction of walls, probably both as facing and as aggregate in the concrete core, perhaps even in solid brick masonry.\textsuperscript{35} It is reasonable to assume that \textit{spicata tiburtina testacea} (7.1.4; cf. 7.1.7) is a pavement consisting of rectangular pieces of roof tiles laid in a herring-bone pattern. \textit{Later testaceus} (8.3.8) is a unique combination of words, but it appears that it is meant to be synonymous with \textit{later coctus}, as the term is used to describe the ancient walls of Babylon.\textsuperscript{36}

The use of \textit{regula sesquipedalis} (5.10.2) and \textit{regula bipedalis} (5.10.2 \textit{bis}; 7.4.2) in Vitruvius has not been discussed before, to my knowledge, and deserves mention. This could possibly be roof tiles, reworked and reused as floor tiles, but the specified dimensions and obvious need for uniform size leads me to believe that \textit{regulae}, in this case, signify ready-made floor tiles. The use of this term may be due to their similarity to roof tiles in size and, especially, in thickness. This applies also to \textit{regula hamata} (7.4.2), which perhaps should be amended as \textit{regula mamata} (cf. Plinius, \textit{HN} 35.46.159: \textit{mammatis}). These were definitely custom-made tiles, having small rounded protrusions on one side. When placed vertically on interior walls, the small knobs would distance them from the wall surface and create continuous air slots. These slots allowed hot air to circulate through the walls of \textit{calidaria} in baths, and provided protection for wall paintings in damp environments. The use of the expression \textit{regulae sine marginibus} (5.10.3) is inconclusive and could be explained either as reworked roof tiles or as plain tiles. \textit{Laterculi besales} (5.10.2) were used for \textit{pilae} in a hypocaust and must be understood as fired bricks of a certain shape and size (two thirds of a foot square).

In sum, it can be concluded that, although Vitruvius was aware of fired bricks (1.5.8), in his second book he only discusses mud bricks and mud brick construction. The long digression that starts at 2.8.9 and continues until 2.8.16 clearly aims at proving that mud bricks should not be despised as a lowly building material. Consequently, the walls of Arretium that are mentioned in 2.8.9 were made of mud bricks, at least in Vitruvius’ mind, regardless of the fired bricks that were found by Pernier. He does, however, describe the practice of using broken roof tiles as a “substitute” for fired bricks in certain situations. This seems to reflect the usage of building materials in the city of Rome in the early 20s BC.\textsuperscript{37}

The older Seneca (\textit{rhetor}) repeats the proverb of Plautus (\textit{laterem lavare}) whereas the younger one (\textit{philosophus}) references this practice in different contexts. This seems to reflect the usage of building materials in the city of Rome in the early 20s BC.\textsuperscript{37}

The Odeion in Tauromenion exhibits large “Hellenistic” fired brick which have been broken into triangular pieces and used as facing on concrete walls. Possibly, the hybrid expression \textit{later testaceus} refers to this usage.

\textsuperscript{34} The entire chapter 2.3, for example, is obviously dedicated to mud bricks.

\textsuperscript{35} Adam (1994, 65) has suggested that \textit{structura testacea}, which was applied as a protective layer on top of mud brick walls (Vitr. \textit{De arch.} 2.8.18), could designate either fragmented or powdered tiles (cf. the use of \textit{testaceus} in Vitr. \textit{De arch.} 7.4.3). However, it is obvious that quite large fragments are intended here, since the crowning structure only could be made to project from the wall by placing the pieces in superimposed layers, each corbelling the lower one.

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\textsuperscript{37} Gerdinger 2008.

\textsuperscript{38} We may only speculate whether Vitruvius influenced Hyginus, or if it was the other way around.

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\textsuperscript{39} In the case of Ovidius, it is difficult to establish whether a missing \textit{lateribus} or \textit{laterculi} is implied, or if the epithet \textit{coctilis} refers directly to \textit{muris}. The meaning, however, would be the same: “walls of fired bricks”.
we might assume that this word now indicates some kind of fired brick. In this text testa signifies both shell and fragment. Pavimenta testacea (1.6.13) could be interpreted as a tiled floor, made of broken roof tiles (cf. Vitruv. De arch. 7.1.4), but the most likely reading may be a plastered floor, including small pieces of potsherds (cocciopesto). Frontinus, on the other hand, never mentions later or laterculus and testa only once (Ag. 2.125), when citing a senatorial decree from 11 BC. The exact meaning cannot be deduced, but it is probable that testa signifies broken or powdered terracotta (used as an ingredient in water-resistant plaster), since it was intended for repairing the aqueducts.

Plinius maior has a lot to say about bricks. Some of it seems to derive from Vitruvius, and in these passages later is used consistently for mud bricks. Otherwise Plinius frequently shifts between later/laterculus and later/laterculus crudus. The latter phrase probably reflects instances when the author wished to express himself with greater precision, although to a modern reader it causes some confusion. The epithet coctus/cocci is also used occasionally. Of particular interest is the use of laterculus for blocks of salt and stone (31.41.84; 36.14.68), which is reminiscent of Varro’s (Sat. Men. frags, 96, 474) and Tacitus’ (Ann. 16.1) mention of blocks of gold (lateres aurii). Plinius minor obviously exhibits some concern for technical matters in his letters to Trajan, although the format does not allow him to go into details. Thus, he uses the expression opus testaceum to signify brickwork of some kind. From the contexts (an aqueduct and a theatre) it can be inferred that we are dealing with some kind of fired bricks, probably combined with Roman concrete (i.e. heavily mortared rubble).

The famous saying about Augustus’ transformation of Rome, which is quoted by Suetonius (Aug. 28.3), has often been taken to mean that the first emperor found a city built of fired bricks (latericus) but left one of marble. However, the internal evidence of the text is inconclusive as to the nature of the bricks. The same goes for the passage from Digesta. Celsus is discussing a legal question, where the expression aenus lateribus circumstructus probably is merely intended to establish that the water container was located within the walls of the building in question. Tertullianus’ use of lateres is also inconclusive. Arnobius (Ado. nat. 4.6) uses laterculi crudi to signify mud bricks and contrasts them with testa, which then should indicate some kind of fired bricks. However, it cannot be ruled out that these testae were made of roof tiles.

In one of Ausonius’ poems (Parentalia 11) testa obviously signifies a roof tile. Since it is thrown away by the tiler, it was most likely broken. Ammianus Marcellinus uses laterculus coctilis in his descriptions of contemporary military buildings in a Near Eastern setting. Ambrosius’ use of the proverb laterem lavare has already been mentioned (see n. 31 above). In at least one other passage (De Cain et Abel 2.3.10) he uses later to denote mud bricks. Justinus (Epit. 1.2.7) returns to the theme of the walls of Babylon, and describes them as being made of later coctus (collect.).

Some additional texts are also worth mentioning. Liber artis architectonicae by Cetius Faventinus contains many references to bricks, but they were not included in the catalogue. This text clearly represents an abbreviated version/copy of Vitruvius, which closely follows the terminology of the original. Therefore it cannot be regarded as independent evidence, apart from providing an indication that the vocabulary of Vitruvius still made sense in the late 3rd/early 4th century AD. Even this conclusion is uncertain, though. Neither is Palladius included, as he falls outside the chronological time frame of this study. Still, some observations will be made, as he makes for an interesting comparison with Vitruvius. Palladius clearly intends mud bricks when he stipulates the correct time of the year for making lateres (6.12). However, when discussing the proper way to construct a granary floor (1.19.1), he favours the word laterculus. He recommends the use of bipeds (i.e. bipedales) or smaller laterculi. The context makes it clear that Palladius is speaking of two kinds (sizes) of fired bricks/tiles. The question is whether the word laterculi refers only to the smaller category of tiles, or both? Possibly the word tegula has been left out.

As already mentioned, the walls of Babylon appear to have constituted a popular topos in Greek and Roman literature. These walls, which were rebuilt and extended during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar in the 6th century BC, were truly remarkable. It is obvious that the great renown of the walls of Babylon to a large extent was founded on their enormous dimensions (thickness, height, and length), but the fact that the new outer circuit was constructed completely of fired bricks, a decision that must have added immensely to the building costs, probably also contributed to their universal fame. Thus, they are mentioned in different contexts, for example by Herodotos (1.179) and Aristophanes (Aves 552). The subject of the walls also appears with later authors: Diodorus Siculus (2.7; 17.115), Vitruvius (1.5.8; 8.3.8), Hyginus (Fab. 223), Strabon (15.3.2; 16.1.5), Ovidius (Met. 4.57–58), Martialis (9.75), Curtius (5.1.25), Lucanus (Bellum civile 6.49), Flavius Josephus (AJ 10.219), Justinus (Epit. 1.2.7), Orosius (Historiae adversum paganos 2.6.7–9), and Cassiodorus (Var. 7.15). All mention the walls of Babylon, stressing that they were made of fired brick. Only Plinius maior (HN 6.30.121; 35.51.182)

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40 van de Mieroop 2003, 265. Cf. the walls of Uruk, as described in the Epic of Gilgamesh (Tablet 1).

41 The Old Testament (Genesis 11.3) describes how the tower of Babel was built of fired bricks. The story may originally go back to the 2nd millennium BC, but the text was compiled in the 6th or 5th BC and therefore probably alludes to the immense brick production of Nebuchadnezzar and his restoration of the ziggurat in Babylon with fired bricks.
omits this fact in his treatment of the famous walls. The popularity of this *topos* is without doubt related to the fact that the walls of Babylon was considered one of the seven wonders of the world, although the *topos* seems to be older than any of the known lists of wonders.

**Presentation of epigraphic material**

In addition to the literary testimonia, 15 graffiti and three passages from monumental epigraphic texts were also collected. In at least 13 cases the graffiti can be associated with brick production, as they were written on bricks before or shortly after they were laid out to dry and before they were fired (*Table 3*).\(^42\) These scribbles were left by brick makers and the words they used, *later* (6), *laterculus* (5), *laterculus capitularis* (1), *bipes* (1), most likely denote the items they were currently producing. In some cases this seems to be beyond doubt (cat. nos 134, 136, 142, 143, 145). The more humorous texts (cat. nos 133, 135, 137, 144) may possibly refer to brick making in general, rather than the exact objects on which they were found. A further complicating matter is the fact that the graffiti in question all derive from fired bricks, but could signify the unfired, “green” bricks rather than the finished product. Inscribed production numbers were probably meant to be read before firing. The newly moulded bricks were laid out to dry for several weeks before they went to the kiln. By then the daily records had most likely already been tallied. Whether this distinction would affect the choice of words, however, is impossible to determine. Mainly for this reason, this evidence will be left out of the analysis below.

Two occurrences of the word *later* on walls in Pompeii (cat. nos 146, 147) are inconclusive as to their exact meaning. A funerary inscription from the vicinity of Rome (cat. no. 148), which has been dated to AD 136, describes the sepulchral monument as *testacius*, i.e. made of testae, but reveals no further clues.

Finally, the Dioecletian price edict merits some closer scrutiny (cat. nos 149, 150). This famous inscription includes regulations for the wages of various professions.\(^43\) Two paragraphs (7.15–16) concern brick makers. A possible translation would be:

(To the maker) of crude [i.e. unfired] bricks (which are) to become fired bricks, a daily remuneration (should be paid); for four bricks of two feet (in length), under the condition that he prepares (the clay) at his own expense, (and that he has been) supplied with food: two *denarii*.

In the same way (to the maker) of bricks of clay [i.e. mud bricks] a daily remuneration (should be paid); for eight bricks, under the condition that he prepares (the clay) at his own expense, (and that he has been) supplied with food: two *denarii*.

H. Blümner interpreted *laterculus* as synonymous with *later coctus*, which must be correct.\(^44\) However, he wanted to substitute *praestet* for *praeparet* and understood it to mean that the brick maker should supply various ingredients, such as tempering agents and straw, at his own expense. Rather it means that the preparation of the clay was included in the compensation.\(^45\) Thus, the brick maker had to pay an assistant from his own wage or prepare the clay himself. Brick makers normally work in pairs, with a senior worker (moulder) shaping the bricks and an assistant (temperer) mixing, treading, and handing over the clay.\(^46\) This means that the specified remunerations actually had to cover the work of two persons. According to common estimates an experienced brick maker (with an assistant) can shape up to 1,000 bricks in a day.\(^47\) This would have earned them about 250 *denarii* (or 125 *denarii* each) a day, according to the price edict. This seems far too much compared to other comparable trades, and probably reflects the significance of the size of the bricks. According to another Roman inscription (**ILS 8675**) a group of brick makers each made about 200 bricks a day.\(^48\) Assuming that they all had assistants and that the bricks in question were *bipedales* to be fired, it would result in a daily wage of about 50 *denarii*, which is perfectly consistent with other wages in the price edict. The remuneration is the same for making eight mud bricks (*lateres*) as for making four crude bricks, which are later to be fired.\(^49\) However, the latter are specified as *bipedales* (two by two feet and about six cm thick). The size of the mud bricks is not stated, but if we assume that they belong to the *lydion* category (one by one-and-a-half feet and about eight cm thick), eight of these would amount to the same volume as four *bipedales*. Thus, it appears that the wages were strictly related to the amount of clay that was processed.

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\(^{42}\) In some cases the objects are fragmented or lost, and may therefore have been roof tiles. Similarly, it cannot always be verified that the letters were actually incised before firing, and not after.

\(^{43}\) For commented editions of the edict, see Mommsen & Blümner 1893; Lauffer 1971.


\(^{45}\) Cf. Lauffer 1971, 235.

\(^{46}\) See e.g. Hampe & Winter 1965, 27, 49, 108, 209.


\(^{48}\) Cf. Matijašić 1986 and Catalogue no. 141.

\(^{49}\) The use of *later* to designate “green bricks”, which are meant to be fired, can also be found in Hieronymus’ Vulgata (Genesis 11.3).
Table 2. Words used to signify bricks (including roof tiles used as bricks). In the fifth column, "Yes" and "No" indicate that the interpretation is considered certain or almost certain, whereas "Yes?" and "No?" designate a probable interpretation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Fired</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Roof tile</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Plautus</td>
<td>Truculentus 305</td>
<td>c. 190 BC</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Terentius</td>
<td>Phorm. 186</td>
<td>161 BC</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Cato</td>
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<td>later</td>
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<td>?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Cato</td>
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<td>c. 160 BC</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>No?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Lucilius</td>
<td>frag. 324</td>
<td>c. 125 BC</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>No</td>
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<tr>
<td>Varro</td>
<td>Sat. Men. 248</td>
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<td>later</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
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<tr>
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<td>51 BC</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
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<td>later</td>
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<td>?</td>
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<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
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<td>?</td>
<td></td>
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<td>?</td>
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<td>besalis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Plinius</td>
<td>HN 35.49.171</td>
<td>c. AD 75</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plinius</td>
<td>HN 36.17.81</td>
<td>c. AD 75</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martialis</td>
<td>9.75</td>
<td>c. AD 95</td>
<td>later coctus</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celsus</td>
<td>Dig. 19.1.38.2</td>
<td>c. AD 120</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertullianus</td>
<td>De resurrect. mortuorum 35</td>
<td>c. AD 207–217</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edictum de pretiis</td>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>AD 301</td>
<td>later crudus</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edictum de pretiis</td>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>AD 301</td>
<td>laterculus</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>2’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edictum de pretiis</td>
<td>7.15</td>
<td>AD 301</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>2’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edictum de pretiis</td>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>AD 301</td>
<td>later ex luto</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&lt; 2’</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Edictum de pretiis</td>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>AD 301</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>&lt; 2’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnobius</td>
<td>Adv. nat. 4.6</td>
<td>c. AD 297–303</td>
<td>laterculus crudus</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arnobius</td>
<td>Adv. nat. 4.6</td>
<td>c. AD 297–303</td>
<td>testa</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammianus Marcellinus</td>
<td>24.2.12</td>
<td>c. AD 380–390</td>
<td>laterculus coctilis</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ammianus Marcellinus</td>
<td>24.4.19</td>
<td>c. AD 380–390</td>
<td>later coctilis</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambrosius</td>
<td>De virginibus 3.4.19</td>
<td>c. AD 374–397</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambrosius</td>
<td>De Cain et Abel 2.3.10</td>
<td>c. AD 374–397</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambrosius</td>
<td>De Abraham 2.9.65</td>
<td>c. AD 374–397</td>
<td>later</td>
<td>?</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Justinus</td>
<td>Epit. 1.2.7</td>
<td>c. AD 390?</td>
<td>later coctus</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Analysis of word usages

Table 2 presents a summary of all passages, in which a single word or a combination of words has been used to signify the noun “brick” (or something equivalent). This résumé excludes the graffiti incised on green bricks, due to their inherent ambiguity. Adjectives like latericus and testaceus, as well as words for brickwork, brick walls etc., have also been left out. Although this selection reduces the available source material, it allows for a more straightforward comparison. The most common expression is later (40), followed by later crudus (8), later coctus/coctilis (?), laterculus (6), laterculus coctilis (4), testa (4), tegula (4), laterculus crudus (2), later testaceus (1), later ex luto (1), besalis (1), and coctilis (1). The two last adjectives should probably be supplemented with the headwords laterculus and later, which seem to have been left out.50 In this context tegula is actually used to indicate a (large) floor tile or revetment tile of terracotta, and therefore would not normally be translated as “a brick” in English. However, in reality there would be no difference between a large thin Roman brick and a floor tile. The use of the words tegula and bipes/bipedalis has not been systematically explored in this study and may therefore be underrepresented.

Not in a single case can later, used alone, be shown with any probability to indicate fired bricks. In 25 cases, however, distributed over all periods, the internal evidence convincingly demonstrates that later (definitely or most probably) was meant to indicate mud bricks. Conversely, there is no example where laterculus definitely refers to a mud brick. In at least three cases laterculus by itself seems to indicate fired bricks;51 the other three cases are inconclusive or uncertain. In one of these Curtius (7.3.8) clearly contrasts later with laterculus when he describes some domestic buildings in the East: the lower parts of the houses were built of the former kind of bricks, the upper parts of the latter. Also here the interpretation of laterculus as fired bricks seems likely, although far from certain.52 Furthermore, it is noteworthy that in two other passages, where laterculus does not signify a proper brick, the word still refers to something that has been baked in an oven (Plaut. Poen. 325; Cato, Agr. 109.1). Still, as with later and testa, the distinction between later and laterculus cannot be explained solely as a matter of unfired or fired clay, since it does not account for the occasional use of the epithets crudus and coctus/coctilis.

Testa, as a word for “brick”, only occurs four times. In three cases we are definitely dealing with some kind of fired bricks, and in one of these it is obvious that they are made of roof tiles (Vitr. De arch. 2.8.19). The fourth passage is probably also indicating roof tiles reused as bricks (2.8.4). Even more interesting, though, is the frequent use of testa for fragmented or crushed tiles/potsherds (at least 18 passages). Thus, Lucanus (Bellum civile 6.49) is the earliest case where this word can be assumed, with some confidence, to have been used to signify ordinary fired bricks.

If we now turn to the use of the adjectives latericus and testaceus (14 and 15 occurrences respectively), the observed pattern is confirmed. In ten cases latericus is certainly or almost certainly used to indicate that something is made of mud bricks; the remaining four cases are inconclusive. Testaceus is more difficult to determine with absolute certainty, but in at least seven passages it refers to something which includes fragmented or crushed terracotta, often broken roof tiles, and the same interpretation can be applied in most of the others. Only one phrase stands out: later testaceus (Vitr. De arch. 8.3.8).53 The use of the noun latericium (brickwork, brick wall) must be regarded as inconclusive, but in three cases (out of a total of eight) it is definitely or most probably used to indicate a structure made of mud bricks. In none of the cases can it be positively shown that we are dealing with fired bricks.

As already mentioned above, the habit of using later to signify mud bricks seems to remain unchanged throughout the entire period that has been studied. Some other possible developments over time can be noticed, however. It is striking, for example, that the word latericus, which clearly carries a diminutive implication in some of the earlier texts (Plaut. Poen. 325; Cato, Agr. 109.1), is combined with the adjective besalis by Vitruvius, with pedalis by Plinius maior and with bipedalis in the Diocletian price edict. This probably reflects a change in the meaning of the word. It should also be noted that both later and latericus are used by brick makers to signify green bricks which are meant to be fired (Table 3). In two cases (cat. nos 134, 136), the word later can be firmly connected to the lydion size category. Laterculus, on the other hand, is at one time associated with a besalis (cat. no. 133) and at another with a bipedalis (cat. no. 143).

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50 Cf. the use of bipes in Palladius 1.19.1 and ILS 8673 (cat. no. 145). It should be noted that the word coctilis only appears in connection with bricks.

51 These can be supplemented by some later literary evidence (Palladius 1.19.1; Isid. Origines 19.10.14).

52 It would perhaps make more sense to use fired bricks at the base of a mud brick wall, as a substitute for the stone socle, but it could also serve as a protective crowning of the wall (cf. Vitr. De arch. 2.8.18).

53 For a possible interpretation of later testaceus, see above n. 36.
Table 3. Words used to denote bricks in graffiti made by brick makers. The last two columns refer to the object carrying the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cat. no.</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Size</th>
<th>Brick</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>133</td>
<td>CIL 3.8277.3</td>
<td>Imperial</td>
<td>later(sic)us</td>
<td>c. 28 × 28 cm</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>134</td>
<td>CIL 3.11383</td>
<td>3rd cent. AD</td>
<td>later(us)</td>
<td>44 × 31 × 5.5 cm</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>135</td>
<td>CIL 3.14336.3</td>
<td>Imperial</td>
<td>Later(---)</td>
<td>thickness 6.5 cm</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>136</td>
<td>IMS 2.227</td>
<td>Imperial</td>
<td>lateres</td>
<td>41 × 30 × 5 cm</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>137</td>
<td>CIL 5.8110.176</td>
<td>Imperial?</td>
<td>lateres</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>138</td>
<td>de Alarcão &amp; Etienne 1976, no. 359</td>
<td>Imperial?</td>
<td>lateres</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>139</td>
<td>de Alarcão &amp; Etienne 1976, no. 367</td>
<td>Imperial?</td>
<td>lateres</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>140</td>
<td>Serrano Ramos &amp; Atencia Páez 1981, no. 58</td>
<td>Imperial?</td>
<td>lateres</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>141</td>
<td>Scholz 2012, no. 24</td>
<td>after c. AD 180</td>
<td>later(sic)os</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>142</td>
<td>IDR 3.6.310</td>
<td>AD 106–271</td>
<td>laterculus</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>143</td>
<td>Scholz 2012, no. 82</td>
<td>c. AD 130–230</td>
<td>laterus(lit. capitulares)</td>
<td>c. 60 × 60 cm</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>144</td>
<td>Scholz 2012, no. 83</td>
<td>Imperial (Late Roman)</td>
<td>laterolos</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>145</td>
<td>ILS 8673</td>
<td>AD 228</td>
<td>bipedas</td>
<td></td>
<td>Yes?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An alternative interpretation

One particular passage in Vitruvius (2.3.3) offers an important clue to the meaning of the different words and their usage: “…fiunt autem laterum genera tria …” Vitruvius continues by naming these types and defining them as bricks of different size and/or shape: tetradoron, pentadoron, and lydion. All three classes are still roughly of the same size, though: between one and one-and-a-half feet in length. In the preceding passage Vitruvius is clearly discussing mud bricks, but archaeological finds have shown that the classification would have applied also to Hellenistic fired bricks. When Vitruvius wants to describe smaller units (e.g. besales) he uses laterculus and for larger sizes he uses tegula. This allows us to formulate a comprehensive hypothesis:

Roman brick terminology was not primarily based on differences in material and fabric (i.e. fired vs. unfired clay), but rather on shape and dimensions. A large block (at least one foot long on either side and with a considerable thickness) would be a laterculus; a large but relatively thin tile might be called a tegula, regardless of whether it had flanges or not. All three words may encompass entities made of different materials: lateres and laterculus could be blocks made of fired or unfired clay, as well as of gold, stone, paste, or salt; whereas tegulae could designate both terracotta and marble tiles. Since the vast majority of all lateres were mud bricks, also during the Roman Imperial period, usually no epithet was needed. However, in certain contexts it was deemed necessary or appropriate to be more specific, either for making distinctions or for the sake of clarity. It could also be a matter of convention, as for example in descriptions of the walls of Babylon, where the presence of fired bricks constituted a topos. Thus, it is not necessary to postulate a transformation of the general connotation of the word laterculus, on the other hand, probably went through a significant shift in meaning, from denoting small blocks of any kind to predominantly representing the standardized fired bricks that were produced in the Imperial brick yards: the laterculus of Caesar might have been just small mud bricks, the laterculus of Vitruvius were small fired bricks, whereas the laterculus in the Diocletian price edict were fired but not particularly small (two by two feet). The latter development probably also corresponds to a shift in Imperial brick production from predominantly besales to sesquipedales and bipedales. All of them, however, could be broken up into smaller units.

The fired bricks that were being made in central Italy from the late Augustan period onwards were considerably thinner than the old Hellenistic bricks (the production of which continued into the Imperial period in other parts of Italy and also in some provinces). The thickness of these new bricks was probably influenced by the reuse of roof tiles, which was common both in Campania and Latium by the end of the 1st

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54 Gerding & Östborn forthcoming.
55 Cf. bricks stamps mentioning tegula secipedalis and tegula bipedalis (CIL 15,650–651). These are probably plain square tiles, rather than roof tiles.

56 See e.g. Livius 42.3.2.
century BC. By making them thinner than traditional Hellenistic bricks the firing process could be made more efficient and the risk of cracking was greatly reduced. The modest thickness also made them easier to break into neat triangular pieces when used as facing in concrete walls. Small receding bricks, regardless of whether they were irregular fragments of roof tiles or triangular bats, bonded well with the concrete core. More importantly, though, they were small enough to be lifted with one hand by the mason while he held a trowel in the other. This allowed a much quicker working pace when compared to the Hellenistic bricks, which usually weighed well over 20 kg and could only be lifted with two hands. The advantages of speed and comfort obviously outweighed the fact that an increased number of bricks had to be laid to reach the same wall height.

The difference in size, and consequently also in cost, quality, handling, and usage, was significant and motivated a clear linguistic distinction between the Hellenistic (thick) laterococcus and the Imperial (thin) laterculus coccilis. Since the employment of small mud bricks probably was very limited, the epithet could be dropped without the risk of any confusion. This means that laterculus, from the early Imperial period onwards, can be assumed to be synonymous with laterculus coccilis. One of the best examples of this is the Diocletian price edict. It is probably also the case in Vitruvius (5.10.2), COLUMella, and Palladius. As already mentioned, however, most of these laterculi were broken up into triangular pieces. After that they were probably not called laterculi, but testae. The word testa originally refers to some kind of fragment, usually a piece of a broken roof tile. However, the triangular brick bats of the Roman Imperial period were used in the same manner as the testae of Varro and Vitruvius, and they were also made in a similar way, that is by breaking up a terracotta tile/brick into smaller pieces. Thus, it would not be surprising if the word testa was transferred onto this new standardized building unit. Admittedly, the use of testa for triangular bricks (or any kind of brick for that matter) is not well testified in the literary sources, but can be deduced from expressions such as opus testaceum, found for example in the letters of Plinius minor.

The Roman brick makers do not demonstrate any attempts to distinguish between fired and unfired bricks in their graffiti, nor was there any need to. These short messages, directed to their immediate colleagues, were often hurried and abbreviated, but the context made the content fully clear. It would be more important for them to be able to specify brick dimension, since it was related to output, work effort, and earnings.

To sum up, the basic significance of later seems to be closer to the concept of “a block” than “a brick”, although in practice the word was used predominantly to denote mud bricks. Laterculus clearly lost its diminutive connotation with time, but was retained to indicate the standardized (relatively thin) Imperial bricks, thus distinguishing them from the more block-like later. The principal connotation of testa (in this context), on the other hand, reverts to the act of breaking up something that is hard or crustaceous, and the outcome of this act (broken pieces or fragments). It should be emphasized that the connotation of later as “a block” has been recognized before, as is evident from the entry in Oxford Latin Dictionary. It has generally been regarded as a secondary or parallel meaning, though. By bringing this implication of the word to the fore it is possible to reach a better understanding of the nuances in Latin brick terminology and how the different words relate to various distinctions such as those between fired and unfired bricks, Hellenistic and Imperial bricks, custom made and recycled bricks.

HENRIK GERDING
Department of Archaeology and Ancient History
Lund University
Box 192
SE-221 00 Lund
henrik.gerding@klass.lu.se

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57 The habit of breaking up bricks into triangular pieces and use them as facing on concrete walls was occasionally taken up in areas where large Hellenistic bricks continued to dominate, as can be seen e.g. in the theatre and odeum in Tauromenion (both probably from the period of Hadrian). However, the remains clearly show that the thickness of these bricks made it difficult to break them into regular pieces, even if they had been scored diagonally before firing.

58 See e.g. Blake 1947, 303; Bukowiecki 2010, 145.

59 Since the triangular bricks only functioned as lost shuttering and facing, the concrete core being the load-bearing element, these bricks did not need full width throughout their entire length.

60 The difference in weight between a fired lydion and a besalis is substantial: c. 21 kg compared to c. 2.4 kg.

61 Cf. Chabat 1881, 25: “Les briques cuites étaient désignées sous le nom de latères cotti ou laterculi et affectaient la forme carrée ...”

62 Roman Imperial bricks were usually notched along the diagonals before firing, in order to make this procedure easier (see e.g. Blake 1947, 302.)


64 Cf. the Greek equivalent πλίνθος.
Testimonia

Plautus (fl. c. 204–184 BC; Truculentus c. 190 BC)
1. Plaut. Truculentus 305 (Lindsay) – later
AS. nihil mirum (utus est maceria) lateres si ueteres ruont. [Inconclusive: lateres = bricks of unknown type]

2. Plaut. Poen. 325 (Lindsay) – laterculus
AG. opscero hercle, ut mulsa loquitur! MI. nil nisi laterculos, sesumam papaueremque, triticum et frictas nuces. [Laterculi probably signifies cakes shaped like small bricks.]

Terentius (c. 190–159 BC; Phormio 161 BC)
3. Ter. Phorm. 186 – later
GE. quod quom audierit, quod eiu’ remedium inveniam iracundiae? loquarne? incendam; taceam? instigem; purgem me? laterem lavem. [Later most probably signs a mud brick (a metaphor for wasted/counterproductive effort – a mud brick becomes grimer, the more it is washed; cf. Ambrosius, De virginibus 3.4.19).]

4. Cato (234–149 BC; De agricultura c. 160–150 BC)
Villa lapide calce; fundamenta supra terram pede, ceteros parietes ex lateri, iugamenta et antepagmenta quae opus erunt indito. [In view of the use of a stone socle, later (collect.) most probably signifies mud bricks.]

5. Cato, Agr. 18.7 – testa
... eo calcem cribro subcretam indito alte digitos duo, ibi de testa arida pavimentum struito; ubi structum erit, pavito fricatoque, uti pavimentum bonum siet. [Testa (collect.) probably signifies potsherds or pieces of broken roof tiles.]

6. Cato, Agr. 38.3 – later
Si parum altam fornacem habebis ubi facias, later summat statuito aut caementis cum luto summat extrinsecus oblitino. [Later (collect.) probably indicates mud bricks, considering the suggested use of lutum (the bricks would eventually be baked by the heat from the kiln anyway).]

7. Cato, Agr. 39.2 – laterculus
Ubi sarseris, qui colorum eundem facias, cretae crudae partes duas, calcis tertiam conmisceto; inde laterculos facito, coquito in fornace, cum conterito idque inducto. [Laterculi = (small?) blocks (of chalk and lime)]

8. Cato, Agr. 109.1 – laterculus
De ervo farinam facito libras IIII et vini cyathos IIII conspar gito sapa. Postea facito laterculos, Sinito conhibant noctem et diem. Postea commisceto cum eo vino in dolio et oblitino post dies LX. [Laterculi = small blocks (of paste)]

9. Cato, Agr. 110.1 – testa
Odorem deteriorem demere vino. Testam de tegula crassam puram calfacito in igni bene. Ubi calebit, eam picato, resticula alligato, testam demittito in dolium inimum leniter, sinito biduum oblitum dolium. [Testa = fragment of a roof tile]

10. Cato, Agr. 113.1 – testa
Ut odoratum bene sit, sic facito. Sumito testam picatam, eo prunam lenem indito, suffito serta et schoeno et palma, quam habent unguentarii, ponito in dolio et operito, ne odor exeat, antequam vinum indas. [Testa most probably indicates a fragment of a roof tile (cf. De agricultura 110.1).]

Lucilius (fl. c. 132–117 BC; d. 103/2 BC)
11. Lucil. frag. 324 (Marx) – later
<et> laterem qui ducit, habet nihil amplius na<tu>m quam commune lutum a paleis cenoque aceratum. [Later = mud brick (only mud bricks are mixed with straw)]

12. Lucil. frag. 681 (Marx) – later
cribrum, incerniculum, lucernam, in laterem, in telam licium. [Inconclusive: The meaning of later is unclear (among the possessions of a frugal wife).]

Sisenna (c. 120–67 BC; Historiae c. 80–70 BC)
13. Sisenna, Historiae frag. 11 (Peter) – testa
... dissipatis imbricum fragminibus ac testis tegularum ... [Testa = fragment of a roof tile]

Cicero (106–43 BC; De domo sua 57 BC; Ad Atticum 5.12 51 BC; De divinatione 44 BC)
Neque porro illa manus copiaeque Catilinae caementis ac testis tectorum meorum se famem suam expleturas putaverunt ... [Testae probably indicate the broken roof tiles of Cicero’s ruined house, corresponding to the caementa of the walls.]

15. Cic. Att. 5.12.3 – later
Cui rei fugerat me rescribere, de strue laterum, plane rogo, de aqua si quid poterit fieri, eo sis animo quo soles esse ... [Inconclusive: lateres = bricks of unknown type]
16. Cic. Div. 2.99 – *later*
Fac in puero referre ex qua adfectione caeli primum spiritum duxerit; num hoc in latere aut in caemento, ex quibus urbs effecta est, potuit valere?

[Inconclusive: *later* (collect.) = bricks of unknown type]

Caesar (100–44 BC; De bello civile 49–48 BC)

17. Caes. BCiv. 2.8.1 – *later*
Est animadversum ab legionibus, qui dextrae partem operis administrabant, ex crebris hostium eruptionibus magno sibi esse praesidio posse, si ibi pro castello ac receptaculo turrim ex *later* sub muro fecissent.

[Later (collect.) most probably signifies mud bricks (refers to the same building as 2.10.6).]

18. Caes. BCiv. 2.9.2 – *laterculus*
Hanc super contignationem, quantum tectum plutei ac vinearum passum est, *later(icolu) adstruxerunt* ...

[Inconclusive: *laterocalu* = (small?) bricks of unknown type]

19. Caes. BCiv. 2.9.4 – *later; latericium*
... emque contabulationem summam *lateribus lutoque constravertunt*, ne quid ignis hostium nocere posset, centonesque insuper iniecerunt, ne aut tela tormentis immissa tabulationem perfringerent, aut saxa ex catapultis *iniecerunt*, ne *aula* hostium noceret. *Latericium* frequentius ita significaret. *Latericii* ... aggerem novi generis atque inauditum ex latericiis duobus muris senum pedum crassitudine atque eorum murorum contignatione facere instituuerunt acqua fere altitudo, atque ille congesticius ex materia fuerat agger.

[Latericia probably signifies brickwork of mud bricks, considering the speed of the work (cf. 2.16.1).]

Sallustius (86–35 BC; Historiae c. 40 BC)

24. Sall. Hist. frag. 4.79 – *later*
... clausi *lateribus* altis pedem ...

[Inconclusive: *lateres* = bricks of unknown type]

Varro (116–27 BC; Saturae Menippeae c. 81–67 BC; De re rustica 37 BC)

25. Varro, Sat. Men. frag. 96 (Astbury) – *later*
Ludon fluens sub Sardibus flumen tulit aurum, *later* quod *conquadruuit regius* *[later* = block (of gold)]

26. Varro, Sat. Men. frag. 248 (Astbury) – *later*
hic ut quadrato *later*e stipatae strues

[Inconclusive: *lateres* (collect.) = bricks of unknown type]

27. Varro, Sat. Men. frag. 530 (Astbury) – *latericium*
antiqui nostri in domibus *latericiis*, paululum modo lapidibus suffundatis, ut omorum ecfergerent, habitabant *[latericia = walls of mud bricks (need protection from moisture)]]

28. Varro, Sat. Men. frag. 474 (Astbury) – *later*
ubi dicuntur barbari innumerabiles *lateres* aureos habuisse *[lateres = blocks (of gold)]

29. Varro, Rust. 1.14.4 – *later coctiles; later crusdus*
Quartum fabrile saepimentum est novissimum, maceria. Huius fere species quattuor, quod fiant e lapide, ut in agro Tusculano, quod e *latericibus coctilis*, ut in agro Gallico, quod e *latericibus crusdus*, ut in agro Sabino, quod ex terra et lapillis compositis in formis, ut in Hispania et agro Tarentino.

[*lateres coctiles* = fired bricks]

[*lateres crusdus* = unfired bricks (mud bricks)]

30. Varro, Rust. 2.3.6 – *testa*
Id, ut plaque, lapide aut *testa* subtorni oportet, caprile quo minus sit uliginosum ac lutulentum.

[Testa (collect.) probably signifies pieces of reused or broken roof tiles.]

31. Varro, Rust. 3.11.2 – *testaceus*
Circum totem parietem intrinsecus crepidino lato, in qua secundum parietem sint tecta cubilia, ante ea vestibulum earum exaequatum tectorio *operc testaceo*. 
[Opus testaceum signifies some kind of wall structure involving testa, probably masonry of broken roof tiles.] 32. Varro, *Rust.* 3.16.27 – testa
... in qua aqua iacent testae aut lapilli, ita ut extent paulum, ubi adsidere et bibere possint. [testa = fragments (of broken roof tiles?)]

**Vitruvius (De architectura c. 35–25 BC)**

33. Vitru. *De arch.* 1.5.8 (Granger) – lateroctus; later crus
Sed ubi sunt saxa quadrata sive silex seu caementum aut coctus later sive crus, his erit utendum. Non enim, uti Babylone abundantes liquid bitumine pro calce et harena ex cocto late re factum habent murum ...

*lateroctus* = fired brick
*later crus* = unfired brick (mud brick)
*later (collect.)* = fired bricks (the walls of Babylon)

34. Vitru. *De arch.* 2.1.7 (Granger) – latericius
... non casas sed etiam domos fundatas et *latericiis* parietibus aut e lapide structas materiaque et tegula tecta perficere coeperunt ...

[Inconclusive: *latericius* = made of bricks of unknown type]

35. Vitru. *De arch.* 2.3.1 (Granger) – later
Itaque primum de *lateralibus*, qua de terra duci eos opoteart, dicam.
*lateres* = mud bricks (mixed with straw and vulnerable to rain)

36. Vitru. *De arch.* 2.3.2 (Granger) – later
... igitur tectoria ab structura seiuincta propter tenuitatem per se stare non possunt, sed franguntur, ipsique parietes fortuito sidentes vitiantur. Ideo etiam Uticenses *laterem*, si sit aridus et ante quinquennium ductus, cum arbitrio magistratus fuerit ita probatus, tunc utuntur in parietum structuris.
*later = mud brick (only mud brick would continue to dry in a wall)]

37. Vitru. *De arch.* 2.3.3 (Granger) – later
Fiunt autem laterum genera tria ...

*Lateres* most probably signify mud bricks (cf. 2.3.1–2.)

38. Vitru. *De arch.* 2.3.4 (Granger) – later; semilateria; semilateri
Fiunt autem cum his *lateralibus* semilateria. Quae cum structur, una parte *lateralibus* ordines, altera *semilateres* ponuntur. Ergo ex utraque parte ad lineam cum structur, alternis coriis parietes alligantur et mediis *latices* supra coagmenta conlocati et firmitatem et speciem faciunt utraque parte non invensum.

*Lateres* most probably signify mud bricks (cf. 2.3.1–2.)

[Semilateria most probably signifies *lateres* divided in half.
*semilaterae* = *lateres* divided in half (necessary to break joints in the described bond)]

39. Vitru. *De arch.* 2.3.4 (Granger) – later
Est autem in Hispania ... *lateres* cum sunt ducti et arefacti, proiecti natant in aqua.

*lateres* = mud bricks (only dried; cf. Plinius *HN* 35.49.171)

40. Vitru. *De arch.* 2.5.1 (Granger) – testa
Etiam in fluviatia aut marina si qui testam tunsam et sucretam ex tertia parte adiecercit, efficiet materiae temperaturam ad usum meliorem.

*testa (collect.)* = fragments of terracotta

41. Vitru. *De arch.* 2.8.4 (Granger) – testa
... ex rubro saxo quadrato aut ex testa aut ex silicibus ordinariis struat bipedales parietes ...

*Testa (collect.)* probably signifies pieces of broken roof tiles (used as bricks).

42. Vitru. *De arch.* 2.8.5 (Granger) – latericium
... et ita uti *latericia* struentes alligant eorum alternis coriis coagmenta ...

[Inconclusive: *latericia* = brick walls of unknown kind]

43. Vitru. *De arch.* 2.8.9 (Granger) – latericium; later; latericiis
De *latericiis* vero, dummodo ad perpendicularum sint stantes, nihil deductur ... Itaque nonnullis civitatis et publica opera et privatas domus etiam regias a *laterae* structas licet videre: et primum Athenis murum ... item Patris in aede lovis et Herculis *latericias* cellas ... in Italia Arretio vetustum egregie factum murum.

*Latericia* most probably signifies walls of mud brick (cf. 2.8.16.)

*Later (collect.)* most probably signifies mud bricks (cf. 2.8.16.)

*Latericius* most probably means “(made) of mud bricks” (cf. 2.8.16.)

44. Vitru. *De arch.* 2.8.10 (Granger) – later
... regis Mausoli domus ... parietes habet *laterae* structos ...

*Later (collect.)* most probably signifies mud bricks (described as an inexpensive building material; cf. 2.8.16.)

45. Vitru. *De arch.* 2.8.16 (Granger) – latericius
Cum ergo tam magna potentia reges non contemperint latericiorum parietum structuras ... non puto oportere inprobare quae sunt et *latericia structura* facta aedificia, dummodo recte sint tecta.

*Latericius* most probably means “(made) of mud bricks”.

*structura latericia* = brickwork made of mud bricks (only mud brick would have to be covered)
46. Vitruvius. De architectura. 2.8.17 (Granger) – latericus
Latericii vero, nisi dipilinthei aut tripilinthei fuerint, sesquipedali crassitudinem non possunt plus unam sustinerem contigitationem.

47. Vitruvius. De architectura. 2.8.17 (Granger) – testaceus
Itaque pilis lapideis structuris testaceis, parietibus caementicii altitudines extructae ...

48. Vitruvius. De architectura. 2.8.18 (Granger) – latericus; testaceus; later
Quoniam ergo explicata ratio est, quid ita in urbe propter necessitatem angustiarum non patiuntur esse latericios parietes, cum extra urbem opusCert is his uti, sine vitis ad vetustatem, sic erit faciendum. Summis parietibus structuris testaceis sub tegula subicatur altitudine circiter sesquipedali habeant pro integra pa...
Vitr. De arch. 7.4.1 (Granger) – testa 
His perfectis paries testa trullissetetur et dirigatur et tunc tec-
torius poliatur.

Inconclusive: later (collect.) = bricks of unknown type (in Heraclea in Aetolia)

Livius, 44.11.5 – later 
... non ad eandem crassitudinem, qua veterem murum, sed simplici laterem ordine structos esse.

Inconclusive: lateres = bricks of unknown type (in Cassandreia)

Ovidius (43 BC–AD 17; Metamorphoses c. AD 2–8)

70. Ov. Met. 4.57–58 – coctilis 
contigus tenuere domos, ubi dicitur altam coctilibus muris cinxisse Semiramis urbem.

[(lateralis/laterculi?) coctiles = fired bricks (the walls of Babylon)]

Seneca (rhetor) (c. 50 BC–AD 40; Controversiae after AD 34)

73. Sen. Controv. 10 præf. 11 – later 
ille Passiöno prima eius syllabà in Graecum mutata obscenum no-

[Later most probably signifies a mud brick (cf. Ter. Phorm., 186).]

Seneca (philosophus) (c. 4 BC–AD 65; Quaestiones naturalis AD 62–65)

74. Sen. QNat. 3.25.5 – later 
erat in Sicilia, est adhuc in Syria stagnum in quo natant lateres et mergi proiecta non possunt, licet grauia sint.

[Inconclusive: lateres = bricks of unknown type]

Curtius (fl. mid 1st century AD)

75. Curt. 5.1.25 – laterculus coctilis 
Murus instructus laterculo cocticil, bitumine interlitus ...

[Laterculus cocticillus (collect.) = fired bricks (the walls of Babylon)]
76. Curt. 5.1.29 – *laterculus coctilis*
Cooctili laterculo structi sunt, totum opus bitumine adstringitur.
[*laterculus coctilis* (collect.) = fired bricks (public works in Babylon; cf. Herodotos 1.179–186)]

77. Curt. 7.3.8 – *later; laterculus*
Tuguria later ab imo struunt et, quia sterilis est terra materia in nudo etiam montis dorso, ad summum aedificiorum fastigium eodem laterculo utuntur.
[Inconclusive: *later* (collect.) = bricks of unknown type (different from *laterculus*)]

78. Curt. 8.10.25 – *later crudus*
XXXV stadium murus urbem conplectitur, cuius ima saxo, superiora crudus later sunt structa. Lateri vinculum lapides sunt, quos interposuere, ut duriori materiae fragilis incumbe ret, simulque terra humore diluta.
[*later crudus* (collect.) = mud brick (the walls of Babylon)]

Lucanus (AD 39–65; *Bellum civile* AD 62–65)

79. Luc. *Bellum civile* 6.49 – *testa*
Nunc vetus Iliacos attollat fabula muros adscribatque deis; fragili circumdata alternat, simulque terra humore dilutae.
[*testa* (collect.) = fired bricks (of unknown type)]

Columella (*De re rustica* AD 60–65)

80. Columella, *Rust*. 1.6.13 – *testacea*
Tum deinde cum exaruit, simili modo pavimenta testacea, quae pro aqua receperint amurcam mixtam calci et harenas, super-sternunt et magna vi pavilicus inculcantur atque exponiuntur; omnesque parietum et soli iuncturae testaceis pulvinis fibulantur.
[*testacea* = (made) of terracotta fragments]

81. Columella, *Rust*. 6.14.6 – *latericum*
Itaque cum id accidit, veteri latericio trito, prius quam diinuantur, colla consangiri oportet et deinde, cum adsiccerint, subinde oleo inbui.
[Inconclusive: *latericum* = bricks (brickwork) of unknown type]

82. Columella, *Rust*. 6.15.1 – *testa*
... si forte surculum calcaverit, aut acuta testa vel lapide ungu lam pertuderit.
[*testa* = fragment (of a tile or brick?)]

83. Columella, *Rust*. 7.5.8 – *testa*
... quae tamen prius aspera testa defricta vel pumice reducserat.
[Inconclusive: *testa* is probably a piece of tile or brick]

Sub porticibus deinde quadratae harae caementis vel etiam laterculis extruuntur ...

85. Columella, *Rust*. 9.1.2 – *later crudus*
Modus silvae pro ciusque facultatibus occupatur, ac si lapidis et operae vulcae suadet, haut dubie caementis et calce formatiis circumdatur murus, sin alter crudus late ac luto constructus.
[*later crudus* (collect.) = mud bricks]

86. Columella, *Rust*. 9.6.4 – *latericum*
Nam quod maxime movet Celsum, ne sint stabula vel igni vel furibus obnoxia, potest vitari latericio circumstructis alvis, ...
[Inconclusive: *latericum* = wall made of bricks of unknown type]

87. Columella, *Rust*. 9.7.2 – *later; laterculus*
Superponuntur deinde sive, ut Celso placet, latericis facta domicilia, sive, ut nobis, alvaria praeter quam tergo et frontibus circumstructa; seu, quod paene omnium in usu est qui modo diligenter ista curant, per ordinem vasa disposita ligantur vel circumstructis alvis, ...
[Inconclusive: *lateres* = bricks of unknown type (the contradiction of *laterculi* may suggest that unfired bricks are indicated).]

[*Laterculi* probably signify fired bricks, otherwise the walls would be damaged by rain (cf. 11.3.2).]

88. Columella, *Rust*. 11.3.2 – *later*
Democritus in eo libro, quem Georgicon appellavit, parum prudenter censet eos facere, qui hortis exstruant munimenta, quod neque lateres fabricata maceries perennare possit pluviis ac tempestatibus plerusque infestata neque lapides supra rei dignitatem poscat inpensa; [Inconclusive: *later* = mud brick]

Plinius major (AD 23/24–79; *Naturalis historia* c. AD 73–77)

89. Plin. *HN* 2.61.147 – *later coctus*
Eodem causam dicente lateribus coctis pluuisse in acta eius anni relatum est.
[*lateres* cocti = fired bricks]

90. Plin. *HN* 2.84.197 – *later*
Tutissimi sunt aedificiorum fornes, anguli quoque parietum postesque, alterno pulsu renitentes. et later terreno facti partes minore noxa quasuntur.
[Inconclusive: *later* (collect.) = bricks of unknown type (fired bricks would probably withstand earthquakes better than mud brick).]
91. Plin. *HN* 7.56.193 – *laterculus coctilis*
E diverso Epigenes apud Babylonios DCCXX annorum ob-
servationes siderum *coctilibus laterculis* inscriptas docet, gra-
vis auctor in primis;

*laterculis coctiles* = fired clay tablets

92. Plin. *HN* 7.56.194 – *lateraria*

Laterarias ac domus constituerunt primi Euryalus et Hyper-
bius fratres Athenis; antea specus erant pro domibus.

*laterariae* = brickworks (this is described as the first build-
ing material adopted by man, which implies mud bricks; cf.
Martin 1965, 47 n. 1])

93. Plin. *HN* 17.21.98 – *later*

Sabina herba propagine seritur et avolsione; tradunt faece vini
aut e parietibus *later* tuso mire ali.

*Later* (collect.) most probably signifies mud bricks.

94. Plin. *HN* 18.23.98 – *later crudus*

Lentem torrerì prius, dein cum furfuribus leviter pisi aut ad-
dito in sextarios XX *lateris crudi* frusto et harenae semodio.

*later crudus* = mud brick

95. Plin. *HN* 18.73.301 – *latericius*

Horrea opere triumpedali crassitudine parieths *latericii*
exasedifi-
carì iubent aliqui, praeterque superfine impleri nec adflatus ad-
mittere aut fenestras habere illas;

*Inconclusive:* *latericius* = made of bricks of unknown type

96. Plin. *HN* 19.45.156 – *laterarius*

Odit hiemem et umorem ac fimm, apricis gaudet ac siccis ter-
raque quam maxime *lateraria*, cinere vult nutriri.

*laterarius* = used for making bricks (of unknown type)


Quidam et aquam diluto *lateri crudo* inimicam his putant.

*later crudus* = mud brick (remedy against ants)

98. Plin. *HN* 30.20.63 – *laterculus crudus*

... alter sacrificio quodam facto *crudis laterculis* ad formam
camini atque, ut sacrum peractum est, obstructo sacello.

*laterculi crudi* = (small?) unfired bricks


In Colossis flumen est, quo *lateres* coniecti lapidei extrahuntur.

*Inconclusive:* *lateres* = bricks of unknown type (the marvel of
the transformation indicates mud brick)

100. Plin. *HN* 31.41.84 – *laterculus*

E Cappadocia qui in *laterulus* adfertur, cutis nitiorem dicitur
facere.

*laterculi* = moulded blocks (of salt)

101. Plin. *HN* 35.46.159 – *laterculus coctilis*

... vel adsiduitate satiand figinarum opera, dolis ad vina ex-
cogitatis, ad aquas tubulis, ad balineas mammatis, ad tecta
imbricius, *coctilibus laterculis* fundamentisque aut quae rota
fiunt, propter quae Numa rex septimum collegium figularum
instituit.

*laterculi coctiles* = fired bricks

102. Plin. *HN* 35.48.169 – *later crudus*

Inlini quidem crates parietum luto et *lateribus crudis* exstrui
quis ignotar?

*lateres crudi* = mud bricks

103. Plin. *HN* 35.49.170 – *later*

Lateres non sunt ex sabulo neque harenoso multoque minus
calculoso ducendi solo, sed et cretoso et albicante aut ex rubrica
vel etiam sabelo, masculo certe. Finguntur optime vere, nam
solstitio rimosi fiunt. Aedificiis non nisi bimos probant, quia et
intritam ipsam eorum, priusquam fingantur, macerari oportet.

*lateres* = mud bricks (cf. *Vitr. De arch. 2.3.2*)

104. Plin. *HN* 35.49.171 – *later*

Pitanæ in Asia et in ulteriore Hispania civitatis Maxilua
et Callet fiunt *lateres*, qui sacci non erguntur in aqua. Sunt
enim e terra pumicosa, cum subgi potest, utilissima.

*lateres* = mud bricks (cf. *Vitr. De arch. 2.3.4*)

105. Plin. *HN* 35.49.172 – *lateriicius*

Graeci, praeterquam ubi e silice fieri poterat structura, *latici-
cios parietes praetulere*

*Latericius* most probably means “(made) of mud bricks” (cf.
*Vitr. De arch. 2.8.9*)

106. Plin. *HN* 35.49.173 – *latericius*

Lacedaemon quidem *latericii* parietibus excisum opus tec-
torium propter excellantiam picturae ligneis formis inclusum
Romam deportavere...

*Latericius* = (made) of mud brick

107. Plin. *HN* 35.49.173 – *latericius*

In Italia quoque *latericii* parietibus excisum opus tec-
torium propter excellantiam picturae ligneis formis inclusum
instituit.

*Latericii* most probably means “(made) of mud bricks” (cf.
*Vitr. De arch. 2.8.10*)


Antiquissima, quod equidem inveniam, Halicarnasi domus
Mausoli Proconnesio marmore exculta est

*Latericius* most probably means “(made) of mud bricks” (cf.
*Vitr. De arch. 2.8.10*)


navesque duas in latitudinem patulas pedalis ex codem
lapide ad rationem gerninati per duplicem mensuram ponder-
is oneratas ita, ut subirent obeliscum pendentem extremitates suis in ripis utrimque; postea egestis laterculis adlevatas naves excepisse onus:

[laterculi = pedales (ex lapide) = (one foot) blocks (of stone)]

110. Plin. *HN* 36.17.81 – later

alius lateribus e luto factis exstructos pontes, peracto opere lateribus in privatas domos distribuitis ...

[Lateres most probably signify mud bricks (used by the Egyptians).]


Gracci e lapide duro aut silice aequato struunt veluti latericius parietes.

[Inconclusive: latericius = (made) of bricks of unknown type (probably indicate large bricks laid in regular courses)]

112. Plin. *HN* 36.54.175 – testa

Harenæ tria genera: [...]. Si et testae tusae tertia pars addatur, melior materia erit.

[tests (collect.) = terracotta fragments (cf. *36.62.186*)]


Uliginosa et ubi salsguo vitiet testaceo sublini utilius.

[testaceus = of terracotta fragments (cf. *36.19.7.4.1*)]


Similiter fiunt spicata testaceae.

[Testaceus probably means “(made) of tile fragments” (cf. *Vitr. De arch. 7.1.4.*)]

115. Plin. *HN* 36.63.188 – testaceus

... testaceum pavimentum ...

[testaceus = (made) of terracotta fragments (cf. *Columella, Rust. 1.6.13.*)]

Martialis (c. AD 38–104)

116. Martialis 9.75 – later coctus

Non silice duro structilive caemento, nec latero cocto, quo Samiramis longam Babylonæ cinxit, Tucca balneum fecit:

[Later coctus (collect.) = fired bricks (the walls of Babylon)]

Frontinus (c. AD 30–104; *De aquae ductu urbis Romae* c. AD 98)

117. Frontin. *Ag.* 2.125 – testa

... ex agris privatorum terra, limus, lapides, testa, harena, ligna ceteraque quibus ad eam rem opus esset ...

[Testa probably signifies crushed terracotta intended for water-resistant mortar/plaster. (The text quotes a senatorial decree from 11 BC on the repair of aqueducts.)]

Plinius minor (c. AD 61–112; *Epistulae ad Traianum* c. AD 111)


Manent adhuc paucissimi arcus: possunt et erigi quidam lapide quadrato, qui ex superiore opere detractus est; aliqii pars, ut mihi videtur, testaceo opere agenda erit, id enim et facilius et vulnus.

[Inconclusive: opus testaceum = brickwork of fired bricks or reused tiles]


... quia sint caemento medii fatti nec testaceo opere praecincti.

[Inconclusive: opus testaceum = brickwork of fired bricks or reused tiles]

Tacitus (c. AD 56–120; *Annales* c. AD 115)

120. Tac. *Ann.* 16.1 – later

... quo magna vis auri continetur, non in formam pecuniae sed rudi et antiquo pondere. lateres quippe praegravis iacere, adstantibus parte ala columnis ...

[Lateres = blocks (of gold)]

Suetonius (c. AD 69–125; *Vita divi Augusti* c. AD 115–125)


Urbem neque pro maiestate imperii ornatam et inundationibus incendiisque obnoxuit adeo, ut iure sit glorius marmoream se relinquere, quam latericiam acerbesse ...

[Inconclusive: latericius = (made) of bricks of unknown type]

Celsus (fl. AD 106–129)

122. Celsus, *Digesta* 19.1.38.2 – later

Firmus a Proculo quaesiit, si de plumbeo castello fistulae sub terram missae aquam ducerent in aenum

[Celsus 19.1.38.2 – later = (made) of bricks of unknown type]

Tertullianus (c. AD 160–240; *De resurrectione mortuorum* after AD 207)

123. Tert. *De resurrectione mortuorum* 35 – later

Sic et parietis corpus non alius admittam quam caementa, quam saxa, quam lateres.

[Inconclusive: lateres = bricks of unknown type]

Arnobius maior (d. c. AD 330; *Adversus nationes* c. AD 297–303)

124. Arn. *Adv. nat.* 4.6 – laterculus crudus; testa

Lateranus, ut dicitis, deus est fociorum et genius adiectus quo hoc nomine, quod ex laterulis ab hominibus crudus caminorum istud exaedificetur genus. Quid ergo? si testa aut materia fuerint quacumque alia fabricati, foci genios non habebunt,
et ab officio tutelae quisquis iste est Lateranus abscedet, quod regni sui possessor non luteis constructa est formis? [laterculi crudi = (small?) unfired bricks (cf. Plin. *HN* 30.20.63)] [Inconclusive: *testa* (collect.) = fired bricks or reused roof tiles]

125. Arn. Adv. nat. 6.16 – *testa coctilis* ... *coctilibus testis* succumbitis ... [Inconclusive: *testae coctiles* = terracotta objects (bricks?)]

*Ausonius* (c.AD 310–394; *Parentalia* after AD 379) 126. Auson. *Parentalia* 11 – *testa* occidis emisae percussus pondere *testae*, abiecit tecto quam manus artificis. non fuit artificis manus haec: manus illa cruenti certa fuit suppositura reum. heu, quae uota mihi, quae rumpis gaudia, Pastor! illa meum petit tegula missa caput. [*testa* = * tegula* (probably broken since it was thrown away)]

*Ammianus Marcellinus* (c.AD 330–395) 127. Amm. Marc. 24.2.12 – *laterculus coctilis* ... in Euphratis fluenta proiectae cautes eminentius turbantur, in qua excelletant minae murorum bitumine et coctilibus *laterculi fabricatae*, quo adiectii genere nihil esse tutius constat. [*laterculi coctiles* = fired bricks (the citadel of Pirisabora)]

128. Amm. Marc. 24.4.19 – *later coctilis* cum enim ut saepe discorsurae partes leiusies concertarent, abuisue incusso ariete, qui paulo ante erat admnotus, sternitur cum enim ut saepe discessurae partes leiusies concertarent, firmissime structa, cuius ruina muri contiguum latere coctili superiore) – *lateres* = green bricks to be fired (inscribed on brick before firing; 28 × 28 cm)]

*Ambrosius* (c.AD 340–397; *De virginibus* after AD 374) 129. Ambrosius, *De virginibus* 3.4.19 – *lateres* Sed ille, sicut is qui laterem lauat, saecularia sacriabulorum frustra cupiebat abolere; magis enim se oblinebat luto qui remedium a uloluptate quaerebat. [*later = mud brick (cf. Terentius, *Phormio* 186)]

130. Ambrosius, *De Cain et Abel* 2.3.10 – *lateres* Ideo et dominus in euangelio inanem populum gentilium miseratus laborum, qui *lateres* construerunt lutilentae superstitionei et uloluptati corporis dediti, solidum fidei murum aedificare non possent, ...

[*later = mud brick*]

131. Ambrosius, *De Abraham* 2.9.65 – *lateres* Ita ergo et nos in hac terra adlictionis fugiamus *lateres* formare, ...

[Inconclusive: *lateres* = bricks of unknown type]

*Justinus* (Epitom. *Historiarum Philippicarum* Pompei Trogi c. AD 390?) 132. Just. Epit. 1.2.7 – *later coctilis* Haec Babyloniam condidit murum que urbi *cocto latere* circumdedit, arenae vice bitumine interstrato, quae materia in illis locis passim inventur e terra exaestuata. [*later coctilis* (collect.) = fired bricks (the walls of Babylon)]

**Epigraphic material**

133. *CIL* 3.8277.3; Scholz 2012, no. 54 (Golubinje, Moesia superior) – *laterculus* [Fac] *later(uc)lus* [CC(?)] [F]uriane | [m]ale dor[m]is si nun fecheris [*Latercoli most probably signify green bricks to be fired (inscribed on brick before firing; 44 × 31 × 5.5 cm)]

134. *CIL* 3.11383; Matijašić 1986; Scholz 2012, no. 23 (Sc(as), Pannonia superior) – *lateres* V Kal(endas) Aug(ustas) | Severus et | Fortunatus | *later(es)* CCCCXXXX [*Lateres = green bricks to be fired (inscribed on brick before firing; fragment 28+ × 25+ × 6.5 cm)]

135. *CIL* 3.14336.3; p. 2328,179 (Novi, Dalmatia) – *laterculus* Vivas f(elix) | qui *later(cula) | qui facie(s) [*Latercoli probably signify green bricks to be fired (inscribed on brick before firing; fragment 28+ × 25+ × 6.5 cm)]

136. *IMS* 2.227; Scholz 2012, no. 67 (Viminacium, Moesia superior) – *lateres* Gesubalu(s) | Bitus q(uis) | *exibi(t) | lateres(s) | numerus(s) / CCCC [*Lateres = green bricks to be fired (inscribed on brick before firing; 41 × 30 × 5 cm)]

137. *CIL* 5.8110.176; *ILS* 8674; Scholz 2012, no. 84 (Aquileia) – *lateres* Cave malum si non | raseris *lateres* DC | si raseris minus malum formidabis [*Lateres probably signify green bricks to be fired (inscribed on large brick or tile before firing)]
138. de Alarcão & Etienne 1976, no. 359 (Conimbriga, Lusitania) – later
Agilio | CI lateres
[Lateres probably signify green bricks to be fired (inscribed on brick before firing?)]

139. de Alarcão & Etienne 1976, no. 367 (Conimbriga, Lusitania) – later
Titus (ecit) VI lateres
[Lateres probably signify green bricks to be fired (inscribed on brick before firing?)]

140. Serrano Ramos & Atencia Páez 1981, no. 58 (Baetica) – later
Natalis feci lateres decurioni mun(icipii) kau(s)tas numero V | (e)ct XXX
[Lateres probably signify green bricks to be fired (inscribed on brick before firing?)]

141. Scholz 2012, no. 24; Peacock 1982, 143 (Holdeurn, Germania inferior) – laterculus
Kal(endis) Iuni(is) | Quartus | laterculos | n(umero) CCXIII
[Laterculi probably signify green bricks to be fired (inscribed on brick or roof tile before firing)]

142. IDR 3.6.310; Scholz 2012, no. 80 (Apulum, Dacia) – laterculus
F(ecit) MI | laterculos | CCLXXXIII
leg(io) XIX G(emia) [Laterculi = green bricks to be fired (inscribed on brick before firing)]

143. Scholz 2012, no. 82; Peacock 1982, 143 (Haselburg, Germania superior) – laterculus capitularis
Stratura tertia | laterc(u)li capi(u)lares | n(umero) CCCLXXV
[Laterculi capitulares = green bricks to be fired (inscribed on brick before firing; square brick used in suspensura, probably bipedalis)]

144. Scholz 2012, no. 83; Gudea 1988 (Sacidava, Moesia inferior) – laterculus
[--- laterculos [--- cunditer ... fecit ... ?] [---] milia eos [---]
[Laterculi probably signify green bricks to be fired (inscribed on brick before firing)]

145. ILS 8673; Scholz 2012, no. 25 (Casilinum AD 228) – bipes N.D.E.T.C | idibus Iul(is)is Celer inget | bipes VXXXI
Ac(tem) Casilino | Modesto II et Probo co(n)s(ulibus)
[Bipes = green bricks to be fired (2 feet square; inscribed on large brick or tile before firing)]

146. CIL 4.2325 (Pompeii) – later
Logadi lateres XXXIX
[Inconclusive: lateres = bricks of unknown type (inscribed on a wall)]

147. CIL 4.4273 (Pompeii) – later
Lateres LX | Mag(e) vale
[Inconclusive: lateres = bricks of unknown type (inscribed on a wall)]

148. CIL 6.10242.10 (Rome AD 136) – testacius
... A MONIMENTO TESTACIO ...
[Inconclusive: testacius = (made) of fired bricks or reused roof tiles]

149. [Diocletianus], Edictum de pretiis rerum venalium 7.15 [AD 301] – later crudus; laterculus; later
Later crudus ad laterculos diurnam mercedem, in lateribus quattuor pedum vinum, itu ut ipse sibi insensam praeparet, pasto
π duos
[Later crudus (collect.) most probably signifies green bricks which are meant to be fired (2 feet square).]
[Laterculi most probably signifies fired bricks (2 feet square).]
[Lateres = lateri crudus (2 feet square)]

150. [Diocletianus], Edictum de pretiis rerum venalium 7.16 [AD 301] – later
Item lateris ex luto diurnam mercedem, in lateribus no. octo, itu ut ipse sibi insensam praeparet, pasto
π duos
[later ex luto (collect.) = mud bricks]
[lateres = lateres ex luto]

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