# *i-longa* in the Tablets of the Sulpicii
## and the Tablets from Herculaneum

The use of *i-longa* is very different from that of *apices* in the tablets of the Sulpicii and the tablets from Herculaneum. For one thing, *i-longa*s are far more common than *apices*. In the TPSulp. tablets I count 799 instances of *i-longa* (compared to 76 *apices*), which appear in all but 16 of the 127 documents.[1] In the TH[2] tablets they appear in 26 documents out of 40, and I count 243 instances in total. They also differ in the range of phonemes which they represent. Adams (2013: 104–8) discusses the use of <i> in the tablets of the Sulpicii at some length, although without a rigorous collection of examples. He observes that it is found for long /iː/ (as might be expected on the basis of the grammatical tradition), for short /i/, and for /j/, both word-initially and word-medially between vowels.[2] The large numbers of *i-longa* in the tablets of the Sulpicii make a full investigation difficult, but 163 cases are used to write a synchronic short vowel (with 19 of these being vowels which were originally long), which equates to 20% of the total.[3]

The Herculaneum tablets contain 243 instances of *i-longa*, of which there are 209 instances of <i> representing a long vowel,[4] 5 cases where it represents a long vowel subsequently

---

[1] As given in Appendix XI in Camodeca (1999: 412–20), and omitting one instance of *mì[n]or* (46), which appears twice. Documents without *i-longa* are: TPSulp. 20, 47, 59, 76, 82, 97, 100, 102, 104, 113, 116, 124, 125, 126, 127, some of which do not contain any contexts in which its use would be possible. 115 is in Greek letters.

[2] The use for /j/ is of linguistic importance, because, in words like *uadimonìum* (TPSulp. 27) <i> is used on what was originally a short /i/ in hiatus, but which was desyllabified to give /j/. If one could demonstrate that <i> was used more often in hiatus contexts than for short /i/ in other contexts it would suggest that this development had already taken place by the time of the tablets of the Sulpicii.

[3] 15 on /i/ resulting from iambic shortening (*mihi, sibi, tibi, ubi*) and another 4 of third singular perfects in /it/.

[4] Including *infra* (TH[2] 89), whose first vowel was originally short, but was lengthened before /nf/.

shortened,[5] 14 where it represents an original short vowel,[6] 8 representing /j/,[7] and 7 representing original /i/ in hiatus, for which it is uncertain whether this represents /i/ or /j/ (on which see fn. 2 and p. 292 fn. 2).[8] Combining original /i/ and /i/ as the result of shortening (but not /i/ in hiatus) gives us a proportion of 19/243 (8%). Clearly <ì> is used to represent /i/ much less frequently at Herculaneum than in the tablets of the Suplicii.[9]

In the tablets of the Sulpicii, Adams suggests that <ì> seems to be used particularly often on long /i:/ (or /i/ which was originally long) when it comes at the end of the word, and also particularly on the initial /i(:)/ of a word, even where the *i* is short, in both cases as a decorative device. The problem with these claims is that in order to know if *i-longa* is used more often in a particular position we need to be able to compare the cases both where *i-longa* is used and where it isn't used. So, to assess whether *i-longa* is used particularly when word-final we would need to count all instances of (long) final /i(:)/ which was written with and without *i-longa* (which would be a very large task) and compare this with all instances of long /i:/ which are not word-final (which would be an immense task). I do not intend to attempt this process, but I would observe that the number of instances of final /i:/ is likely to be very high in the tablets, both because it appears in a large number of Latin endings and because genitives of the second declension feature particularly heavily in the lists of witnesses. Thus, the fact that a large number of instances of *i-longa* appear word-finally may reflect the very high

---

[5] *spopondìt* (TH² 61), *a[b]soluìt* (TH² 85b), *ibì* (TH² 77 + 78 + 80 + 53 + 92), *[mi]hì, [mi]hì* (TH² 89).

[6] *ìt[aque, Tì.* (TH² 89), *ìn* (TH² A2), *Tì.* (TH² 6), *Tì.* (TH² 77 + 78 + 80 + 53 + 92), *emìsse, ìn* (TH² 61), *Tì.* (TH² A12), *ìn, ìnde* (TH² 4), *Tì., Tì., Tì.* (TH² A13), *Tì.* (TH² A14). It is uncertain whether the second vowel of *Vibì[di]ae* (TH² 59 + D01) is long or short.

[7] *eìus* (TH² 89), *Veḷḷèìo* (TH² 5 + 99), *Ìaṇ[uari ?]* (TH² A3), *ìusto* (TH² D13), *eìus, Maìas, fideì[ussore]* (TH² A8), *Tetteìus* (TH² 4).

[8] *Nonìum, Secundìaṇị* (TH² 77 + 78 + 80 + 53 + 92), *Memmìo* (TH² 61), *Arruṇtìo, Pìeri, Pìe[ri* (TH² A13), *Miccì[onis]* (TH² 49).

[9] A Fisher exact test gives a *p*-value of 0.0001 for these figures, i.e. the difference between the rates is significant at a *p*-value of 0.05. The test was carried out using the Easy Fisher Exact Test Calculator at Social Science Statistics (www.socscistatistics.com/tests/fisher/default2.aspx, accessed 21/09/2021).

number of instances of word-final long /iː/ rather than a higher ratio of *i-longa* usage in this environment.

Along similar lines, it struck me at first sight that in the more manageable Herculaneum corpus the use of *i-longa* seemed to be greater in the lists of witnesses on the tablets than in other contexts. However, this is probably a reflection of the frequency of the second declension genitive singular in *-ī* in that context, rather than being due to a difference in the usage of *i-longa*. I count 138 instances of *i-longa* used to write gen. sg. in *-ī* in witness lists, versus 136 instances of it being written without *i-longa* (i.e. practically 50% of instances). In other parts of the tablets, I have found 25 instances of the gen. sg. with *i-longa*, and 21 without it, a distribution which suggests that there is no difference between use of *i-longa* in witness lists and elsewhere.[10]

To give an idea of the usage of <ì> in the tablets of the Sulpicii, I have collected all examples of <ì> and <i> at the beginning of a word. This is achievable thanks to the excellent analytical indexes in Camodeca (1999). This allows me to compare the distribution of word-initial <ì> when used to represent long /iː/, short /i/, and /j/. There are 39 instances of initial long /iː/ written with <ì>, and a further 8 written with <i> (83%). There are 174 examples of initial /i/, of which 65 are written with <ì> (37%). There are 153 examples of initial /j/, of which 96 are written with <ì> (63%). From this we can conclude that the use of *i-longa* word-initially is not solely ornamental, since if so, we would expect an equal distribution of use among the categories. These figures suggest that <ì> is being systematically used to represent /iː/, but not /i/. Use of <ì> for /j/ is much more common than for /i/, but also notably less common than for /iː/. If someone were to count all examples of /i/ followed by a consonant vs /i/ in hiatus in the TPSulp. corpus, the distribution could be compared with these figures to ascertain whether <ì> was being used intentionally to represent /j/ arising from /i/ in hiatus.

---

[10] A Fisher exact test gives a *p*-value of 0.6362 for these figures, i.e. the difference between the rates is not significant. The test was carried out using the Easy Fisher Exact Test Calculator at Social Science Statistics (www.socscistatistics.com/tests/fisher/default2.aspx, accessed 21/09/2021).

Since so many of the TPSulp. documents are *chirographa*, they allow us to test whether there is any significant difference in usage of *i-longa* between scribes and other individuals. The answer is yes: while there is no significant difference between scribes and other writers in use of <ì> to write /i:/ (Table 41) or /j/ (Table 42),[11] the scribes use <ì> to represent /i/ much more frequently than other writers (Table 43).[12]

Table 41 *Use of <ì> for /i:/ in the tablets of the Sulpicii*

|  | ì for initial /i:/ | i for initial /i:/ |
|---|---|---|
| Scribes | 31 | 14 |
| Individuals | 8 | 3 |

Table 42 *Use of <ì> for /j/ in the tablets of the Sulpicii*

|  | ì for initial /j/ | i for initial /j/ |
|---|---|---|
| Scribes | 78 | 45 |
| Individuals | 18 | 12 |

Table 43 *Use of <ì> for /i/ in the tablets of the Sulpicii*

|  | ì for initial /i/ | i for initial /i/ |
|---|---|---|
| Scribes | 66 | 77 |
| Individuals | 11 | 32 |

[11] Apart from some uncertain cases, for /i:/ I also left out instances of *ìnfra* and *infìtiari*, in which I take it that the vowel was phonetically [i:] but phonologically [i]. A Fisher exact test gave a *p*-value of 1. For /j/ the *p*-value was 0.7287 (to four significant figures).

[12] I again omit instances of *ìnfra* and *infìtiari*. The *p*-value is 0.0212, which is significant at ≤ 0.05.

254

This suggests a difference in the practice (and hence, presumably, the training) of scribes and individuals: scribes appear to be trained to use *i-longa* for short word-initial /i/, about half the time, whereas individuals only do so a third of the time. The words with initial short /i/ marked with an *i-longa* consist of *id*, *ideo*, *in* (and its misspelling *im*) and words beginning with *in-*, *ipso*, *is*, *Isochrysi*, *ita*, *italum* and *item*. There is no clear correlation between use of the *i-longa* on a short vowel and stress in TPSulp.; these correlate in 80 instances out of 163.

Given the very high amount of tokens of <i> that consist of *in* and *im* (44 out of 77; all but 1 by scribes), I wondered whether there was some linguistic factor regarding *in* which could explain this distribution. Allen (1978: 65) notes that *i-longa* is found inscriptionally in sequences where *in* is followed by a word beginning with a fricative, where we would expect lengthening before nasal plus fricative clusters. But the tablets of the Sulpicii show no particular correlation between use of *i-longa* in *in* and a following fricative (Table 44).[13]

In the interests of completeness, I have also checked in the TPSulp. tablets whether there is any correlation between use and non-use of the *i-longa* in *in* and its differing semantics and case of its complement (Table 45).[14] Although *in* is found much more

Table 44 *Use of* ìn *and* in *by following segment in the tablets of the Sulpicii*

|  | *ìn* (and *ìm*) | *in* |
|---|---|---|
| Before /f/, /s/ | 9 | 21 |
| Before another sound | 30 | 53 |

---

[13] A Fisher exact test gave a *p*-value of 0.656, which is not significant at $p \leq 0.05$. I omitted instances which are followed by a break in the tablet which does not allow the editor to fill in an expected word, since it cannot be known what consonant came next. I have also omitted 4 instances where *in* is followed by a numeral.

[14] I omitted several instances where the case of the following word cannot be ascertained, and also 4 instances where either the wrong case has been used, or a substandard spelling or error makes it uncertain which case was intended: *in de sigulos* for *in diēs singulōs*

255

Table 45 *Use of* ìn *and* in *according to the case of its complement in the tablets of the Sulpicii*

|          | *in* | *in* (or *im*) |
|----------|------|----------------|
| + acc.   | 11   | 12             |
| + abl.   | 30   | 51             |

frequently followed by an accusative than by an ablative, no significant correlation is found.[15]

Since I have found no linguistic factor which would explain the preponderance of *i-longa* used to write short <i>, it seems to me likely that scribes received training, or developed a practice amongst themselves, which encouraged them to use *i-longa* in this context, and especially in the word *in*. Adams may be right to see this practice as decorative, but in the light of the similar practices of the stone-masons of the Isola Sacra inscriptions (see Chapter 19) I suggest that the same reason applies: to increase legibility in a sequence of letters which involves several vertical strokes close together.[16]

Other factors for use of <ì> on short /i/ might be similar to those found for *apices*, including a way of marking out names, and perhaps particularly imperial names. Flobert (1990: 106) observes in his corpus three examples of *Tìb.*, stating 'it is evidently a way to mark out the imperial *praenomen* carried by Tiberius and Claudius' (c'est manifestement une façon de célébrer le prénom impérial porté par Tibère et Claude). In the tablets of the Sulpicii there are 28 examples of the abbreviation *Tì* for *Tiberius*, and only 5 of *Ti.*, while in the Herculaneum tablets there are 8 of *Tì.* and 3 of *Ti.* A tendency for *i-longa* to be used in this abbreviation was also

(68.3.3), *in porticum Augusti* (85.2.4), *in porticum Aug(usti)* (86.2.4–5), both for *in porticū*, *in quod erat scriptum* (90.2.5–6) for *in quō erat scriptum*. The numbers are different from the preceding table due to differences in preservation of the initial letter following *in* versus maintenance of evidence for the following case.

15 The *p*-value is 0.4688, using the Easy Fisher Exact Test Calculator at www .socscistatistics.com/tests/fisher/default2.aspx (accessed 22/07/2021).

16 A very clear sequence *in* without *i-longa* can be seen in line six of page 4 of the drawing of tablet 101 at Camodeca (1999: 651); it can be compared with *in* as the first word of tablet 25, page 2 (Camodeca 1999: 488).

256

noted by Christiansen (1889: 37–8).[17] However, I am not certain that this is due, as claimed by Flobert, to the celebrity of the emperors: it is the case that most, but not all, of the instances in the tablets of the Sulpicii refer to Tiberius or Claudius, who bore this name, while none of the instances at Herculaneum do. It is perhaps possible that the esteem attached to this name meant that the association of the abbreviation with *i-longa* spread to uses not referring to an emperor, and if so it must have lasted after Claudius' death, since the tablets containing *Tì.* are mostly datable to the 60s AD. But it is also notable that the sequence TI is the kind in which lengthening of the <i> occurs for reasons of legibility in the Isola Sacra inscriptions.

One might even wonder if there could be more localised reasons for use of *i-longa* in some cases. In TPSulp. 45, the *chirographum* of one Diognetus, slave of C. Novius Cypaerus, we find (along with a number of other substandard spellings) *ube* for *ubi* 'where' and *legumenum* for *leguminum* 'of pulses' as a result of the falling together of /i/ and /eː/. In the scribal portion of the text these words are spelt *ubì* and *legumìnum*. Is it possible that the scribe reacted to Diognetus' misspellings by emphasising the correct vowel with an *i-longa*?[18]

---

[17] Gordon and Gordon (1957: 192) were doubtful both of the frequency of use of *Tì.* and of the use of *i-longa* to mark out the name, or to mark an abbreviation: '[i]t seems to us rather that the tall I [i.e. *i-longa*] probably represents uncertainty about the vowel quantity or error of some other sort'.

[18] The scribe does use *i-longa* for other instances of short /i/, however: *Tì(berio)*, *Tì(berii)*, *ìn* (twice), *ìtem*, *ìntercolumnia*. As in *leguminum*, <i> is next to a letter involving a horizontal stroke in all these words.