Apices and *i-longa*: Introduction

The *apex* was a diacritical sign which appears in inscriptional evidence above or to the right of the vowel sign it modifies.[1] The earliest datable example, according to Oliver (1966: 50), is *múrum* (CIL 1².679, 104 BC). We are informed by the writers on language that the purpose of the *apex* was to mark vowel length. Thus Quintilian notes, of the letters for vowels:

at, quae ut uocales iunguntur, aut unam longam faciunt, ut ueteres scripserunt, qui geminatione earum uelut apice utebantur aut duas . . .

When joined together as vowels, however, they either make one long vowel (as in the old writers who used double vowels instead of an *apex*) or two vowels . . .[2] (Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 1.4.10)

ut longis syllabis omnibus adponere apicem ineptissimum est, quia plurimae natura ipsa uerbi, quod scribitur, patent, sed interim necessarium, cum eadem littera alium atque alium intellectum, prout correpta uel producta est, facit: ut "malus" arborem significat an hominem non bonum, apice distinguitur, "palus" aliud priore syllaba longa, aliud sequenti significat, et cum eadem littera nominatiuo casu breuis, ablatiuo longa est, utrum sequamur, plerumque hac nota monendi sumus.

For example: it would be very silly to put an apex over all long syllables, because the length of most of them is obvious from the nature of the word which is written, but it is sometimes necessary, namely when the same letter produces different senses if it is long and if it is short. Thus, in *malus*, an apex indicates that it means "apple tree" and not "bad man"; *palus* also means one thing if the first syllable is long and another if the second is long; and when the same letter is found as short in the nominative and as long in the ablative, we commonly need to be reminded which interpretation to choose.[3] (Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 1.7.2–3)

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[1] On the varying shapes of the *apex*, see Oliver (1966: 149–50).
[2] Translation from Russell (2001).   [3] Translation from Russell (2001).

A fragment following the *De orthographia* of Terentius Scaurus in the manuscripts and sometimes attributed to him (see Zetzel 2018: 319) also provides some information about the *apex*:

> apices ibi poni debent, ubi isdem litteris alia atque alia res designatur, ut uénit et uenit, áret et aret, légit et legit, ceteraque his similia. super i tamen litteram apex non ponitur: melius enim [i pila] in longum producetur. ceterae uocales, quae eodem ordine positae diuersa significant, apice distinguuntur, ne legens dubitatione impediatur, hoc est ne uno sono eaedem pronuntientur.

> *Apices* ought to be placed where by means of the same spelling two different words are written, such as *uēnit* and *uenit*, *āret* and *aret*, *lēgit* and *legit*, and other similar instances. No *apex* is placed over the letter *i*: it is better for this to be pronounced long by means of *i-longa*. Other vowels, which, placed in the same order, signify different things, are distinguished by an *apex*, so that the reader is not impeded by uncertainty, that is so that he does not pronounce with the same sound these same vowels. ('Terentius Scaurus', GL 7.33.5–10)

From these two writers then, it is generally gathered that *apices* and *i-longa* were used to mark long vowels,[4] but they recommend using them only when words are distinguished only by length of a vowel. This part of the prescription of Quintilian and 'Scaurus', that *apices* should be used only to distinguish words that were otherwise written identically, is not followed in any inscription of any length (Rolfe 1922: 88, 92; Oliver 1966: 133–8).

A couple of letters may suggest that some writers aimed to use *apices* not only on long vowels, but also on most, if not all, long vowels (except for /iː/, which seldom receives an *apex*). One of these is CEL 8, written on papyrus, which is dated to between 24 and 21 BC, and probably comes from a military scriptorium. Kramer (1991) provides a different reading from that of CEL. If he is correct, this would be an example of (almost) every long vowel being marked:[5] 44 *apices* or *i-longa* on 49 long vowels, plus 1 *i-longa* on a short vowel; but of the 5 missing a mark, 2 are in areas where the papyrus is damaged, so they might have been

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[4] Strictly speaking, Quintilian says that they are placed over long syllables, but his examples all involve a length difference in the vowels. 'Terentius Scaurus' does not say explicitly that the *apex* marks long vowels, although his statement that one should use an *i-longa* instead of an *apex* with /i/ implies this – in principle he could equally be suggesting that *apex* be used to mark short vowels when there is a difference in vowel length between words otherwise spelt the same.

[5] Including a historic long vowel, in *tibì*.

lost.[6] CEL 83 is a papyrus letter from the Fayûm, described by the editor as 'in elegant epistular cursive' (in corsiva epistolare elegante), and again perhaps in a military context. Cugusi prefers a date in the second half of the first century AD, but second and third century dates have been suggested. This letter contains 14 *apices*, 7 on /ɔː/, 4 on /aː/, 1 on /eː/, 1 on /uː/ and 1 on /iː/ (there are no instances of *i-longa*). This compares to 3 other instances of /ɔː/ without an *apex* and 2 of /uː/ (and 9 of /iː/).

Apart from these rare cases, exactly what rule or rules governed the placement of *apices* therefore often remains obscure, and may vary according to time, place, register or genre, or training. There are three variables which are relevant for our discussion of *apices*, and to some extent also *i-longa*. These are (1) the position in the text or nature of a word which contains an *apex* or *i-longa*, (2) the position in the word of a vowel or diphthong which bears an *apex* or which is an *i-longa*, and (3) the nature of the vowel (or diphthong) that bears an *apex* : (a) is it long or short (if it is a single vowel), and (b) what vowel or diphthong is it? In the case of *i-longa*, the relevant question for (3) is whether it represents long or short /i(ː)/ or consonantal /j/. These variables are not necessarily independent: for instance, if the writer was marking all long vowels in a text with an *apex* or *i-longa*, or were following the advice of Quintilian and 'Scaurus' to only mark long vowels in homonyms, this would obviously determine their position in both the text and in the word. However, when the situation is not so clear-cut, as it nearly never is, it is important to take these variables into account, and to consider which apply. As we shall see, there is considerable variation in our texts, or at least those for which the editions provide information about *apices* and *i-longa*. This variation is extremely interesting in terms of the questions surrounding sub-elite education that I am addressing in this book, since it suggests that individual groups of scribes or stonemasons had developed their own rules for when and where to use these diacritics.

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[6] Under Cugusi's reading in CEL, there are only 12 *apices* out of 27 long vowels, by comparison with the use of *i-longa* to mark every /iː/ (and if *Nìreo* really stands for *Nērio*, one /eː/, with spelling confusion arising from the merger of /i/ and /eː/; Cugusi 1973: 661), with the exception of *Macedoni* (line 1) in the greeting.

Apices and *i-longa* have been the subject of a number of studies, which have discussed some of the variables which we have mentioned. The use of the *apex* primarily to mark long vowels (but not all long vowels) is largely confirmed by long inscriptions which presumably reflect elite usage such as the evidence of the *Laudatio Turiae* of 15–9 BC (CIL 6.1527, 6.37053; EDR093344), and the *Res Gestae Diui Augusti* of AD 14 (Scheid 2007; CIL 3, pp. 769–99), as discussed by Flobert (1990: 103–4). The first of these has 5 *apices* on short vowels or diphthongs out of 134 *apices* altogether (so 129/134 = 96% long vowels), while the *Res Gestae* has 9 out of 427 (418/427 = 98% long vowels). However, this is by no means consistent across all inscriptions. Flobert's (1990) corpus of inscriptions from Vienne and Lyon has 75–77% of *apices* on long vowels, and Christiansen (1889: 17) notes the relative frequency of an *apex* on <ae>.[7]

The passage of 'Scaurus' also implies that *i-longa* is the equivalent of the *apex*, that is it is used to mark vowel length for /iː/. While, again, this is true in some inscriptions, Christiansen (1889: 29–32) identified many cases where it represented /j/, and also suggested that it was used for purely ornamental purposes, at the start of an inscription, at the beginning or end of a line, or even to mark a new phrase (Christiansen 1889: 36–7). Many of the examples of ornamental or text-organisational *i-longa* are found on a short /i/. Very

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[7] Flobert includes instances of *i-longa* in his figures, but since the use of *i-longa* is different in both quantity and type in the Isola Sacra inscriptions and TPSulp. tablets, and *i-longa* is not recorded in the editions of the Vindolanda tablets, I have given here the figures of *apices* only. The numbers for Vienne and Lyon are not quite certain: *apices* on non-long vowels are 55–56 out of 224 *apices* in total, consisting of 38 instances of *áe* or *aé*, 1 of *áu*, then perhaps 16 or 17 short vowels under the *apex*. According to Flobert (1990: 106) there are 22 'quantitative faults' in the corpus (in which he does not include *apices* on diphthongs), but the data he gives consists of 4 instances involving *i-longa*, 16 of *apices* on short vowels, an instance of *Gallicae* printed without *apex* or *i-longa* (and described as one of three examples 'quite poorly established' (assez mal établis), and the third syllable of *cúráuérúnt* and *curauérunt* (23 items in total). Since *-ērunt* was certainly alive in poetry and may have still existed in (educated) speech, I do not count the *apices* on *-érunt* as on short vowels. Going by p. 108, we should read *Gallícae* rather than *Gallicae*, unless the *apex* on <i> is a mistake for an *i-longa*. It is not clear what inscription *Gallícae* comes from: the only instance of this word I can find in the corpus is *Gallic(ae)* in CIL 13.1807, which is printed with neither *apex* nor *i-longa*; the pictures available online at db.edcs.eu/epigr/bilder.php?bild=$CIL_13_01807.jpg;$CIL_13_01807_1.jpg&nr=1 and db.edcs.eu/epigr/bilder.php?bild=$CIL_13_01807.jpg;$CIL_13_01807_1.jpg&nr=2 (viewed 24/10/2018) are not of high enough quality to allow for certainty, but I do not believe there is an *i-longa*, and cannot tell whether there is an *apex*.

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similar conclusions were drawn from an examination of the inscriptions from Hispania by Rodríguez Adrados (1971), and from a corpus of military diplomas dating from AD 52 to 300 by García González (1994). This latter provides some further evidence for the use of *i-longa* as ornamental, or as a way of marking out text structure, in observing that use of *i-longa* in the abbreviation *imp-(erator)* correlates with position at the start of the diploma, and is not used so frequently in other places in the text (García González 1994: 523).

Rolfe (1922) identified several tendencies in placement of the *apex* (and *i-longa*) in the inscriptional texts he examined. Firstly, that they tend to be used frequently in some passages but not in others; two words in agreement often both bear them, but sometimes consecutive non-agreeing words also have them. Secondly, that they seem to add dignity or majesty to certain terms, especially connected with the Emperor and official titles; frequent use in names may also fall under this heading. Thirdly, they act as a type of punctuation, before a section mark in the *Res Gestae* or where punctuation is used in the English translation. Fourthly, they appear on the preposition *a*, and on monosyllabic words in general. Lastly, they mark preverbs, word division in compounds and close phrases, suffixes, case endings, and verbs in the perfect tense. In his study of *apices* and *i-longa*, Flobert (1990: 106), assuming that their basic purpose is to mark long vowels, suggests reasons for cases on short vowels. Like Rolfe, he sees them as a marker of an important word or name, and draws attention to the use of *i-longa* in his corpus in the name of the Emperor Tiberius (although for some doubt about this, see pp. 256–7).[8] More recently, Fortson (2020) has identified, in an inscription of the Arval Brothers (CIL 6.2080, AD 120), the use of *apices* and *i-longa* to mark out phrase units, generally on the last word of the phrase.[9]

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[8] Other reasons identified by Flobert include 'attaque énergique' on the first syllable, noting that 'it is known that the intensity of the initial syllable has left traces in the Romance languages' (on sait que l'intensité initiale a laissé des traces dans les langues romanes), analogy (e.g. *coniúgi* after *coniúnx*), marking of syllables long by position, as in *cúius* [kujjus], or 'contagion' in cases like *cúráuérúnt*, where the scribe was apparently on a roll after three *apices* on long vowels, and saw no reason to stop.

[9] Following all these factors, use of the *apex* and *i-longa* may strike the reader as rather overdetermined.

Most of the evidence for *apices* and *i-longa* mentioned above has come from inscriptions on stone or bronze, often with a particular focus on the long official/elite inscriptions such as the *Res Gestae* and the speech of Claudius from Lyon (CIL 13.1668).[10] In the following sections I will discuss the evidence of some sub-elite corpora, on stone in the case of the funerary inscriptions of the Isola Sacra, and on wax or wooden tablets in the case of the archive of the Sulpicii, and the texts from Herculaneum and Vindolanda.[11] These will suggest that use of *apices* and *i-longa* in these corpora was often rather different from the picture shown by our elite sources, and that it was often associated in particular with scribes and stonemasons rather than other writers, thus providing evidence for their orthographic education.

Since the relatively few letters which boast *apices* do not form a cohesive corpus in terms of time or place of composition, I will not discuss them at great length here.[12] A couple of relevant instances have already been mentioned above. In general, the letters match expectations on the basis of the evidence of the writers on language and the elite inscriptions in that the *apices* appear almost entirely on long vowels: out of a total of 73 *apices* (using the reading of Kramer 1991 for CEL 8), all but 2 or 3 are non-long vowels: the exceptions are *Cláudi* (CEL 72), *epistolám* (CEL 166), where the vowel is phonetically long [ã:], and perhaps *].gó* (CEL 85), which, if it is *ego*, marks a historically long vowel. This makes the divergent usage in the other corpora all the more striking (especially at Vindolanda, where many of the texts containing *apices* are letters).

Since, as already mentioned, and as will become even clearer from the discussion below, *i-longa* and *apices* generally cannot be considered as simply equivalents of each other for /i/ and other

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[10] The recent edition of Malloch (2020) regrettably does not include *apices* or *i-longae*, but does briefly discuss their use at Malloch (2020: 18–19).

[11] Unfortunately, editions often do not report the presence of *i-longa*; for example, the editors of the Vindolanda tablets give *apices* but not *i-longa* (but for some information on *i-longa* in this corpus, see Cotugno 2015), while in his edition of the London tablets, Tomlin (2016: 19) does not include *i-longa*, commenting that '[i]t serves to mark an initial letter . . . and is not confined to vowels which are quantitively long . . .', and giving only a couple of examples.

[12] These letters are CEL 8, 72, 83, 85, 140, 151, 154, 163, 166, 168, 173, 174, 175, 177, 191, 194.

vowels respectively, I will discuss the two features separately. The exception to this is the discussion of the Isola Sacra inscriptions with which I begin, where it makes sense to take the two together because their use is rather similar.

Before we turn to these particular corpora in detail, however, it is worth pointing out two serious methodological problems in dealing with *apices* and *i-longa*. One of these is the question of how to recognise long and short vowels. Latin underwent a number of sound changes which affected inherited long and short vowels, such that it is not always easy to be sure whether a given vowel was long or short at the time and place of writing of a given document, nor whether length was phonological or phonetic. Of particular relevance are iambic shortening and shortening of other long word-final syllables, and lengthening before /r/ in a syllable coda (see pp. 42–3). I will assume here that in originally iambic words which were paradigmatically isolated, like *ego* < *egō* 'I', the final vowel is short, but that all other originally long final vowels, even in iambic word forms which are not paradigmatically isolated, were long (or at least, it was known that these 'should' be long). I will also assume that vowels before coda /r/ could be phonetically long.

The second issue is the question of what is being counted. If we want to draw conclusions about the use of *apices* or *i-longa* it is important to know which vowels are marked in this fashion, but also which are not. For example, as we shall see, Adams observes that *apices* are particularly common on word-final /a(:)/ and /ɔ(:)/ in the Vindolanda tablets. However, this information is incomplete unless we also know what proportion these instances of *apices* make up of relevant vowels in these tablets. To take an example: suppose in the tablets containing <á> and <ó> these were the only vowels (or the only long vowels, or the only word-final vowels): this would make a significant difference to our analysis of how the *apex* was being used compared to a situation where there are plentiful examples of /a(:)/ and /ɔ(:)/ (not to mention /ɛ(:)/, /e:/ and /u(:)/) without *apices*.

This example was intentionally absurd. But, as we shall see, the tablets do contain a particularly high number of *apices* on long final /ɔ(:)/ compared to other text types. This does not necessarily

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mean that writers at Vindolanda were more fond of putting an *apex* on /ɔ(ː)/ in this position than on /a(ː)/, but may simply reflect a preponderance of this context: most of the tablets containing *apices* are letters written to and from men; consequently the greetings formula and addresses of these letters tend to contain large numbers of second declension nouns in the dative and ablative; likewise, names mentioned in the main text are more commonly men than women.

To collect all instances of vowels without *apices* as well as with *apices* in the Vindolanda tablets, or in other large corpora which have *apices* and *i-longa*, would be overwhelming, but I will look closely at some texts which have relatively large numbers, in order to get at least a qualitative idea of whether the picture from looking over the whole corpus seems to fit in with the practice in individual texts.

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