Apices and *i-longa* in the Isola Sacra Inscriptions

Several of the Isola Sacra funerary inscriptions contain *apices* (see Table 31). The most important variable in the use of the *apices* is position in the text. Their main purpose is to emphasise the initial *dīs mānibus* formula (as noted by Christiansen 1889: 12) and/or some or all of the names on the tomb (particularly the names of the deceased, or the person for whom the tomb is intended).[1] As will be discussed shortly, although the *i-longa* is mostly used differently, in some cases it also takes part in this usage. Thus in IS 69, there are *apices* on *mánibus* and on three out of four of the non-abbreviated parts of the name formulas of the two dead women, while in IS 70, which uses the abbreviation *d. m.* for *dīs mānibus*, there are two name formulas which each receive an *apex* on the only long vowel (which is not /iː/) in the formula. In some cases words modifying these names are also given *apices*.

In the fairly long IS 253, the initial two name formulas do not receive an *apex*, but at the second mention of M. Antonius Vitalis an *apex* is used (on, unusually, an <i>). The two lines containing the name formulas at the start of the inscription are in larger letters than the rest of the text, so it is possible that these were already felt to be appropriately marked out, and not to require an *apex*.

Apart from IS 127, on which see directly below, out of 15 inscriptions containing *apices*, only 4 inscriptions (IS 97, 110, 169 and 314) place *apices* on words that do not fall into these categories. These *apices* are all on long vowels. The apparent disparities in these texts from the standard practice in the latter two are less stark than they may at first seem. IS 169 is the only inscription which contains the unabbreviated *dīs mānibus* formula and which does not place an *apex* on either of the words. However,

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[1] Similar emphasis has been put on the *dīs mānibus* formula and on names by means of variation in letter sizes in IS 82 and 92.

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Table 31 *Apices in the Isola Sacra inscriptions*

Inscription	dis manibus	Name(s) of deceased	Name(s) of builder	Other words
IS 69	dis mánibus	Alfíae M. f. Prócilláe	P. Sextilius Pannychianus	
IS 70	d. m.	Cónsidiae Saturnínae M. Licinius Hermés		
IS 72	dís mánibús	P. Betileno Synegdemo	Betiliena Antiochis	
IS 79	d.m.	Aphrodisíae karíssimaé béne merenti	L. Suallius Eupór	
IS 97	diis m. (right side)	C. Nummidius Fortunatus	Claudi Luperci	púrum[a]
IS 110		Ìuliae C. f. Quintae M. Antonio Hermeti		fili
IS 128	diis mánibus	Iúliae L. f. Apollóniae	C. Annius Proculus C. Nymphidius Ogulnianus	
IS 130	d. m.	Antoniáe Tyche matri optimáe	MMM Antonii Vitális, Capitó, Ianuárius fílii	
IS 169	dis manibus	Aristida Artemidori fíl. Rodius Petróniae Hygiae Petrónio Dextro		fécit eórum
IS 195		Ónesimé	Erós cónseru[	
IS 210	d. m.	M. Ulpio Marciano Marco Ulpio Eútacto	Ulpia	
IS 253	d.m.	M. Antonius Vitalis M. Antonius M. fílius Verus M. Antoní Vitalis		

IS 309	dis mánibus	Murdiae Apelidi	Ampliato Eróte Ampelide Nice	
IS 314		Ti. Plautí[		
IS 360	d.m.	]li Eutychetis	Jodius Deúther	agró

a The *apex* is not printed by the editors, but is noted in the commentary and is clear in the photograph.

the first line and most of the second, containing *dīs mānibus* and the first name formula, have been erased and rewritten. Since both of the other two name formulas in this inscription are given an *apex*, it is reasonable to suppose that the same would have been true of the first one, and probably also of *dīs mānibus*. In the case of IS 314 the inscription is extremely damaged and not much text remains, so it is impossible to know whether it would also have used *apices* on the *dīs mānibus* formula, or on some of the names as well.

IS 127 shows a markedly divergent, as well as highly enthusiastic, use of *apices*: the editors identify them as dividing words, indicating abbreviations, filling empty spaces, and indicating the accent. As to the accent position, I presume they refer to the small number of *apices* which appear above rather than between letters, on the initial letters of every word of the second line *Źosimes q́uae úixit*, and on *tabellĺ(arius)*. I would analyse the use of *apices* in the second line as emphasising the name of the deceased (the first line is simply *d.m.*).

The distribution by vowels and diphthongs is remarkably even, including, unexpectedly, on <i>:

aː	ɛ	eː	i	iː	ɔ	ɔː	u	uː	ae̯	ɛu
6	1	3	1	4	3	8	2	2	6	2

There is a weak tendency for the *apex* to be placed on long vowels: except for <u>, there are more *apices* found on the long version of each vowel than on the short; out of the 4 instances of non-abbreviated *mānibus* which bear the *apex*, all have an *apex* on the <a>, and only one (also) has an *apex* on the <u>; and some inscriptions (IS 70, 128, 309, 169, plus 314 and 253, in which only one *apex* is found) only use *apices* on long vowels. Also, all *apices* which are not on the *dīs mānibus* formula, on names, or on adjectives agreeing with names, are on a long vowel, although this may be a coincidence. But only 23/38 = 61% *apices* are on long vowels, with 8 being on diphthongs and 7 on short vowels. As we will see, this is a much lower rate than even the Vindolanda tablets or the tablets of the Sulpicii, both of which show a lower rate than the 75–77% in the Lyon and Vienne inscriptions examined by Flobert (1990). The position in the word is also evenly

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spread, with only 14/38 (37% plus 1 monosyllable) *apices* being on the final syllable (again, this is much lower than at Vindolanda or the tablets of the Sulpicii, which favour final syllables).

It seems pretty clear that in general the use of *apices* in the Isola Sacra inscriptions is for decoration/text structure rather than for the purpose of marking vowel length, although this may have been a secondary consideration, since some inscriptions only used *apices* on long vowels. IS 169 and perhaps IS 314 took a somewhat different approach, in which only long vowels were marked, even on words which are not part of a name or an attributive noun or adjective phrase – although even in IS 169, 2 out of 4 words with an *apex* are names.

We must remember that inscriptions from the Isola Sacra which contain *apices* are very much the minority. Nonetheless, the fact that there is a pattern in the use of *apices* in the inscriptions which contain them suggests some sort of educational tradition among the writers of these inscriptions, however broadly defined. We might think of a relatively formal tradition among those who were employed to compose funeral inscriptions or advise customers on their composition, a much looser tendency among some writers to reproduce what they find in looking at other funerary inscriptions, or even a habit passed along by the stonemasons of tombstones themselves, adding *apices* on their own initiative at the time of engraving the texts.

There are 84 instances of *i-longa* compared to 36 instances of *apices* in the Isola Sacra inscriptions, introducing the theme we will see in the tablets of the Sulpicii, and those from Herculaneum, of greater use of *i-longa* than of the *apex*. As in the other corpora, *i-longa* is found to represent long /iː/ (37; Table 33), short /i/ (34; Table 32), as well as /j/ (9; Table 34), plus 4 more uncertain whether short /i/ or /j/.[2] Unlike in the TH[2] corpus, where <ì> is massively favoured as a way to write /iː/, a (small) plurality but not a majority of <ì> in the Isola Sacra inscriptions represent /iː/. This matches with the use of *apices* in this corpus, where marking of long vowels was not a priority.

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[2] The uncertain cases are *Canìnìae*, *Pìae*, *Canìnìae* (all IS 160), *Valerìa* (IS 199). In Classical Latin these would all be on short /i/, but in at least some sociolects, short /i/ in hiatus had been desyllabified to /j/.

Table 32 i-longa *on short /i/ in the Isola Sacra inscriptions*

Word containing *i-longa*	Text
ìncomparabilì	Isola Sacra 16
ìn	
ìn	
Ìonici	Isola Sacra 60
Crescentìs	Isola Sacra 68
ìn	Isola Sacra 103
ìn	
ìta	Isola Sacra 106[a]
ìnferatur	
ìn	
ìn	
ìta	Isola Sacra 107
ìnferatur	
ìn	
piìssim(o)	Isola Sacra 126
piìssimae	Isola Sacra 128
piìssimi	Isola Sacra 130
piìssimae	Isola Sacra 132
piìssimae	Isola Sacra 154
piìssimis	Isola Sacra 156
priuìgnae	Isola Sacra 160
Maxìmo	
ìn	Isola Sacra 167
ìn	
quìbus	
piìssimo	Isola Sacra 169
piìssimo	Isola Sacra 177
piìss(imae)	Isola Sacra 183
sibì	Isola Sacra 269
fecìt	Isola Sacra 272
piìssimae	Isola Sacra 278
piìssimae	Isola Sacra 291
piìssimo	Isola Sacra 323
Tìtiniae	Isola Sacra 335

[a] The second *in* in the final line is not marked with an *i-longa* by the editors, but is clearly visible in the accompanying photo.

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Table 33 i-longa *on long /i:/ in the Isola Sacra inscriptions*

Word containing *i-longa*	Text
ìncomparabilì	Isola Sacra 16
diì	Isola Sacra 36
posterìsque	Isola Sacra 50
dìs	Isola Sacra 67
Auxesì	Isola Sacra 71
Dìdiae	Isola Sacra 75
libertìs	
diìs	Isola Sacra 97
diìs	
lìbert(is)	Isola Sacra 103
lìbertab(usque)	
lìbert(is)	Isola Sacra 106
lìbertabus	
lìbert(is)	Isola Sacra 107
lìbertabus	
Annianì	Isola Sacra 114
diìs	Isola Sacra 128
Antoniì	Isola Sacra 130
fìliì	
matrì	
Vìtális	
diìs	Isola Sacra 132
fìlis	Isola Sacra 160
Canìnìae	
lìbertìs	
lìbertìs	
lìbertabusque	
ìs	Isola Sacra 167
Ìtaliam[a]	Isola Sacra 223
Nicenì	Isola Sacra 225
quì	Isola Sacra 226
suìs	
Macrìna	Isola Sacra 228
ìdus	Isola Sacra 251
dìs	Isola Sacra 309
lìb(ertis)	
meì	Isola Sacra 320

[a] In context, as the first syllable of a hexametric line, <i> the is presumably considered long.

Table 34 i-longa *on /j/ in the Isola Sacra*
inscriptions

Word containing *i-longa*	Text
Lucceìae	Isola Sacra 16
conìugi	Isola Sacra 103
Ìuliae	Isola Sacra 110
Ìulia	Isola Sacra 153
ìus	Isola Sacra 167
coìux	Isola Sacra 210
Ìuniae	Isola Sacra 226
eìus	Isola Sacra 268
Ìanuarius	Isola Sacra 318

The reason for this fairly equal distribution is that, even more than with the *apices*, use of *i-longa* is often driven by non-strictly linguistic factors, in particular a tendency for *i-longa* to be used to create visual clarity when preceded or followed by a letter formed with an upright stroke. The clearest example of this is the use of <ì> for the second vowel in a sequence /i.i/ found in the word *piissimus*, which makes up 12/34 of the instances of *i-longa* for a short /i/. There was evidently a convention that in such a sequence the second <i> was lengthened for visual clarity.[3] Many of the examples occur in inscriptions in which *i-longa* was not otherwise used, despite the presence of other instances of <i> (IS 126, 154, 156, 169,[4] 177, 183, 278, 291, 323), which demonstrates that it is just this sequence which was targeted.

Unsurprisingly, where the second <i> in the sequence represented long /iː/, *i-longa* is also sometimes found. Again, in IS 36 (*diì*), 97 (*diìs*, twice), and 132 (*diìs*, *piìssimae*), it is only used in

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[3] As already observed by Gordon and Gordon (1957: 191), 'the I plus tall I [i.e. *i-longa*] is both more legible and handsomer than two I's [sic] of normal height'; see also Christiansen (1889: 39–40). Rodríguez Adrados (1971: 164) suggests that the avoidance of two identical strokes was due to the possibility of misunderstanding II as one of the ways of writing <e>. This seems unlikely with regard to the Isola Sacra inscriptions, however, where I have found no examples of II for <e>, at least in those inscriptions with published drawings or photographs.

[4] This inscription has no other examples of *i-longa*, but does use *apices*, only on long vowels.

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this context. The same is true of 128 (*diìs*, *piìssimae*, although long vowels are also given *apices* in *mánibus*, *Iúliae*, *Apollóniae*). In IS 130, three sequences of <ii> are found (*Antoniì*, *fíliì*, *piìssimi*), but the *i-longa* is also used to mark long /iː/ in *matrì* and *Vitális*. In these last two inscriptions, an interaction between use of *i-longa* and the decorational/emphatic purpose of the *apex* seems possible (*diìs* agreeing with *mánibus*, *piìssimae* with *Iúliae* and *Apollóniae*; *fíliì* and *piìssimi* agreeing with *Vitális*, *Capitó*, and *Ianúárius*). In *Ìdus* (251), the first letter of the word comes directly after the number IIII, so the *i-longa* here serves a useful function in marking off the number from the start of the word (although there is also an interpunct there is little space between the two).

Practically all the instances of *i-longa* for short /i/ can be explained by a similar habit, where I is next to N (*ìn*, *in-*), M (*maxìmo*) or T (*Crescentìs*, *ìta*, *Tìtiniae*, *fecìt*), as can many instances for long /iː/ and /j/: L (*lìbertis*, *lìbertabus*, *fìlis*), T (*libertìs*, *Ìtaliam*, *Vitális*), N (*Annianí*, *Nicenì*, *Macrìna*, *Antonì*, *conìugi*). In these cases, the adjacent letters all involve one or two uprights which, when adjacent to the single upright of I, could cause some confusion in reading.[5] Of course, this may be coincidental, and there are examples of <i> next to other letters. But support comes firstly from the very clear case of *Canìnìae* and *Can\inìae*, where the photo shows how much more difficult to segment the sequence NINI in the former and INI in the latter would be without the use of *i-longa*; and secondly from the fact that <i> is not in fact the only letter that takes place in this process. Thus we find, for example, <t> lengthened in *Sitti*, *merenti* (IS 68), *fecit*, *Rutiliae* (IS 49), *fecit* (IS 99), *optimáe* (IS 130), *libertis* (IS 241, left side), *Primitibus* (IS 315), *fecit, aditum*, *manumiserit* (IS 320), *Tattia* (IS 332, third <t>) and <l> lengthened in *libertis*, *libertabusque* (IS 14), *libertis* (IS 71), *libertab(usque)* (IS 120).[6]

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[5] Rodríguez Adrados (1971: 167) suggests that there was also another practical motivation for *i-longa* in these contexts, to avoid chipping.

[6] There are also various other contexts in which letters tend to be elongated in this corpus, notably <f> when followed by <e>, as in *fecit* and *felix*, as well as the abbreviation for *filius*, and <t> in *et*. In addition, it is not uncommon to find a letter elongated for which no such context emerges, sometimes for reasons of space, sometimes for no very obvious reason.

Most examples of *i-longa* can be explained by reference to this practice, as well as the tendency we have already seen in the discussion of *apices* to use it as one of several methods to emphasise personal names.[7] In IS 60, for instance, in addition to *Ìonici*, the <y> found in *Alypo* and *Chrysopolis* is considerably higher above the line of the other letters (although there are no examples of <y> in non-names in this inscription to compare it to); the initial <a> of *Alypo* appears in the photo also to extend higher above the line than elsewhere, although this is not commented on by the editors. The <f> of *f(ilio)* in the name formula is also described by the editors as 'grande' (as well as the <x> of *uixit*). In IS 71, *Auxesì* has an elongated <x> as well as the *i-longa*, as does the <f> of *Felici* (although, as noted in fn. 6, <f> tends to be elongated before <e> anyway). In IS 75, beside the *i-longa* of *Dìdiae*, the second <e> of the cognomen *Helpidis* bears what the editors call 'a stroke at the top, lengthened towards the left' (un trattino superiore ... allungato verso sinistra), which seems to be another way of marking out the name. In 130, every word in the sequence *Antoniáe Tyche matrì optimáe* has either an *apex* or an elongated letter (in the case of *Tyche* it is the <y>).[8]

Unlike with the *apices*, whose use might be a feature of the spelling of the writers of the inscriptions or a practice of the stonemasons themselves, the heavy usage of *i-longa* as a means of avoiding consecutive upright strokes seems more likely to be due to the stonemasons rather than telling us anything about subelite education more widely.

All in all, there are only a handful of cases of *i-longa* which do not fit into this picture. For example, in 167 the third line features a run of *i-longa* in *ìs quìbus ìus*, for which I do not have an explanation, but observe that <ì> is used here on a long /iː/, a short /i/ and a /j/ respectively, so is probably not marking a linguistic feature (there are several other instances of unmarked <i>, as well as two of *in*).

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7 Compare the results of Gordon and Gordon (1957: 195–6), who find, in their corpus, that *i-longa* is most common in short /i/ and /j/ when word-initial and that 'tall initial consonantal I is limited for the most part to the names of months, gods, and persons, and that tall initial short I is especially favored in the words *in*, *item*, and *ita*'.

8 García González (1994: 523–4) also identifies word-initial position more generally as a favoured place for elongation of the first letter.

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There may be one or two instances where the writers are intentionally marking long /iː/ (e.g. *quì* and *suìs* in IS 226), but on the whole I would attribute the remaining unexplained cases as due to the practical or aesthetic considerations of the stonemasons. The emphasis on practicality, decoration and text structure over phonology in the use of *apices* and *i-longa* in the Isola Sacra inscriptions is something to keep in mind as a parallel when considering usage in the other texts which we are about to look at: although of course in some ways the praxis of writing with ink or a stylus on wood or wax is very different from carving on stone, nonetheless there are – as we shall see – some similarities. They also give us an idea of the range of uses that these features can be put to, which are quite different from those implied by the writers on language and by elite inscriptions.