

Apices in the Tablets of the Sulpicii

In the tablets of the Sulpicii there are 76 instances of *apices* (Table 38).¹ 27 of them are on personal names. In the TPSulp. tablets, as at Vindolanda, *apices* feature particularly in parts of the tablets written by the scribes (Camodeca 1999: 39): out of 76 instances of *apices*, 74 are found in scribal parts, with the remaining two coming from the *chirographum* of A. Castricius (*deductá* 8I, *repraesentátum* 8I). This divide between scribes, who use *apices*, and individual writers, who mostly do not, suggests a difference in education for the purpose of writing, as at Vindolanda.

In the tablets of the Sulpicii, as at Vindolanda, *a* and *o* also make up a large percentage of all letters with *apices* (78%), as observed by Camodeca (1999: 39). But *e* and *u* make up a greater percentage of cases than at Vindolanda, and *au* and *eu* are also found with *apices*, unlike at Vindolanda (see Table 39).

The proportion of *apices* on long vowels is surprisingly small. I assume that originally long final vowels have not been shortened and that lengthening has taken place before coda /r/. Not including the two vowels of uncertain length this means that only 49/74 = 66% *apices* are on long vowels, with a further 5 on diphthongs. However, there are 4 instances of an *apex* on an originally short vowel in the accusative singular ending (*acceptám* 27, *arám* 16, *[Ho]rdionianám* 40, *Páctu[m]eìám* 40). This is likely to have become [ã:] before the first century AD (Adams 2013: 128–32), and the scribes may have therefore considered it a long vowel. This takes us to 72% (53 *apices* on long vowels out of 74).

The final syllable is a favoured site for the *apex*, with 35/71 (49%) of relevant *apices* on a final syllable (there are also two

¹ In addition to the 74 *apices* given in Index X by Camodeca (1999: 410–11), there are two not included: *mútua* (51) and *nominé* (3).

Table 38 *Apices in the tablets of the Sulpicii*

Apex	Text (TPSulp.)	Writer
Hósidio	1	Scribe
D]ióg[e]nis foró	1bis	Scribe
Hordiónianam		
Faustó	2	Scribe
nominé	3	Scribe
Sulpició		
arám	16	Scribe
Cinn[a]/mús		
Cadmó	18	Scribe
secundá		
noná	19	Scribe
áb	27	Scribe
acceptám		
ágitur		
causá		
eá		
eá		
eó		
eó		
eó		
eórum		
Faustó		
Fáustus		
Galló		
háberet		
ideó		
iudicátum		
m]eó		
s[t]ipulátio/[nem]		
tánt[am]		
tertiá		
á[ctum]	32	Scribe
Δipstán[o]		
Áug(-)	33	Scribe
[arbitr]átú	34	Scribe

Apices in the Tablets of the Sulpicii

Table 38 (*cont.*)

Apex	Text (TPSulp.)	Writer
Á(uli)		
contestatá		
chalcidicó	35	Scribe
ánte	40	Scribe
Á(uli)		
Faustó		
horá		
[Ho]rdionia/nám		
Páctu[m]eiám		
tertiá		
Titiano		
Eúni	45	Scribe
Irénaei		
Iúli		
Iúlii		
Mévii		
acceptiónis	47	Scribe
Hordeónió		
chirógraphum	50	Scribe
primás		
Eunús	51	Scribe
Eunús		
mútua		
séstertiis		
stipulátus		
Galló	55	Scribe
mé	57	Scribe
Alexándri	58	Scribe
Áfro	68	Scribe
[Q]uártiónis	77	Scribe
deductá	81	A. Castricius
repraesentátum		
chirográphum	82	Scribe
Pátulci		
Márius	84	Scribe
Tróphi	110	Scribe

Table 39 *Distribution of apices by vowels and diphthongs in the tablets of the Sulpicii*

Vowel letter(s)	Long ^a	Long nasalised	Short	Uncertain length	Diphthong	Percentage of total apices
a	21	4	8	2 ^b		46%
e	4		1			7%
o	20		4			32%
u	4		3			9%
au					4	5%
eu					1	1%
Percentage of total apices	64%	5%	21%	3%	7%	

^a Including [a:] by lengthening before coda /r/ in [Q]uáritónis.

^b There are two cases where I do not know the vowel length: the first vowels of *Páctu[m]eiam*, *Pátulci*.

monosyllables, and three abbreviations).² Camodeca (1999: 39) links this concentration on final syllables to Adams' explanation of the preference for final position at Vindolanda as reflecting shortening of word-final long vowels. However, of these 35, 26 are on original word-final long vowels, 4 are on final /ā:/ represented by <am>, 4 are on long or short vowels followed by /s/, and only 1 is on a short vowel, the ablative *nominé* (3.2.7). There are 10 instances of an *apex* on long word-final /a:/ (not including [ā:]), and none on word-final /a/. This suggests that the scribes were able to tell these sounds apart; there is practically no evidence for shortening of final long vowels, so it seems unlikely that the placement of *apices* on final syllables is to be explained in this way.

Outside final syllables, the picture is much more mixed. Omitting monosyllables, and abbreviated names, and the 2 instances where I do not know the vowel length, there are 36 cases of an *apex* on a non-final syllable, of which 11 are on a short vowel, 2 on a diphthong and 21 on a long vowel (including the vowel in the first syllable of [Q]uártionis). It is possible that there is a correlation here between stress and position of the *apex*, and the numbers of examples are slightly greater than at Vindolanda, which provides a little more confidence.³ The key evidence for such a correlation is in short vowels, which do not in themselves draw the accent, as long vowels and diphthongs do. For the short vowels, 9/11 = 82% instances of the *apex* fall on the stressed syllable (exceptions are *chirográphum*, *Hósidio*);⁴ this is

² These are *áb*, *mé*, *Áug(-)*, *Á(uli)* twice.

³ Flobert (1990) also draws attention to the tendency of *apices* on non-final syllables to appear on stressed syllables in the inscriptions he studies, both when placed over long and short vowels and diphthongs.

⁴ Given that so many of the instances of short vowel or diphthong with an *apex* are in disyllables, one could also argue that the rule is simply to mark the initial syllable of a word. Taking all the short vowels with *apices* into account this would give 7/11 (plus *Páctu[m]eíám*, *Pátulci*, if short). If one counts only words of three syllables or more, where it is possible to distinguish between accent placement and initial position, we find that an *apex* is put on a stressed short vowel in *ágitur*, *Alexándri*, *chirógraphum*, *D]ióg[e]nis* and *háberet*, and put on an unstressed vowel in *chirográphum* and *Hósidio* (5/7, plus *Páctu[m]eíám*, *Pátulci*, if short). It is put on a stressed initial syllable in *ágitur*, *háberet* and *Hósidio* (3/7, plus *Páctu[m]eíám*, *Pátulci* if short). The numbers are too small to be sure that accent position rather than word-initial position is a meaningful criterion. But an interpretation favouring initial placement works less well for cases of *apices* on diphthongs and long vowels, where only 10 instances of vowels in initial syllables have the *apex*, versus 13 in which the *apex* is placed elsewhere.

suggestive of a correlation between stress and *apex* placement, although not completely conclusive, especially since regardless of the length of the vowel, the (initial) *apex* cannot be on a stressed vowel in *Páctu[m]eiám* and *Pátulci*. Including diphthongs and long vowels gives us a total of $27/36 = 75\%$ of *apices* on non-final syllables that fall on stressed syllables.

However, this correlation does not provide evidence for lengthening of vowels in open syllables at this period, a change which took place on the way into Romance, and which may have already occurred by the third century AD in at least some varieties of Latin, with perhaps some occasional evidence for its occurrence earlier (Loporcaro 2015: 18–60; Adams 2013: 43–51, note in particular footnote 11). This is because, of the short vowels with an *apex* under the accent, only 6/9 are in an open syllable (*ágitur*, *chirógraphum*, *háberet*, *Márius*, *Tróphi*, *D]ióg[e]nis* vs *Alexándri*, *ánte*, *tánt[am]*). So it looks as though, if the correlation with the accent is correct, it is the position of the accent that is being marked, rather than stressed long vowels. Within the word, only about a third of the examples of an *apex* occur on a long vowel. This may be due to a tendency to mark with an *apex* vowels or diphthongs which were stressed, regardless of whether they were long or not.

In conclusion, the scribes in the tablets of the Sulpicii tended to use *apices* in two different ways which are unique to them: in final syllables they were usually placed on long vowels (including long nasalised vowels); in non-final syllables they tended to be placed on stressed syllables.