

### III.—The Etymology of Latin *sine*

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Latin *sine* has been variously derived by linguistic scholars, but as it has no exact equivalents even in Italic, and has supplanted an older *sēd*, it is best explained as a formation in pre-literary Latin, consisting of *\*sēd-ne*, just as *pōne* came from *\*postī-ne*. Details of the phonetic development are given.

The Latin preposition *sine* 'without' is peculiar in that, unlike other Latin prepositions, it is not easily explainable by equation with other inherited prepositions and prefixes in Greek, Sanskrit, etc., nor even by reference to material in Latin itself.<sup>1</sup> Historically we can note<sup>2</sup> that the old preposition for 'without' was *sēd*, which became *sē* about 200 B.C., found separately in a few old inscriptions and quoted laws, and surviving into classical Latin in a few compounds like *sēd-itiō*, *sēpōnō*, *sēdūcō*, *sēdulus* (derivative of *\*sē dolō* 'without guile'); but it was crowded out by *sine*, which was already firmly established by the time of Plautus.

The usual association of *sine*, made at least as long ago as 1879 by Bugge, is with Skt. *sanūtār* 'weit hinweg,' *sanitūr* 'ausser, ohne,' Av. *hanarə* 'fern von, ohne,' Gk. *āvev* 'without,' Ionic *ārep* 'without,' Gothic *sundrō* 'abgesondert, beiseite,' etc. These are commonly, but not by all, taken to be extensions of the root seen in Latin *sēd* 'without,' which is itself the same as the reflexive pronominal stem *\*s(y)e-*. Thence, by special comparison with Skt. *sanu-tār* and Gk. *āvev*, there was reconstructed a locative to a *u*-stem, *\*sṇnēu*,<sup>3</sup> as preform to *sine*; the development into Latin involves loss of the second part of the long diphthong in final position, iambic shortening, and vowel weakening in the first syllable when the whole word was unaccented.

This reconstruction was made in 1892 by Wackernagel,<sup>4</sup> in the face of an older view that *sine* was merely *sei*, older form of *sī* 'if,'

<sup>1</sup> Etymological summaries, with bibliography, in A. Walde, *Lat. etym. Wrth.* s.v., ed. 1 (1906), ed. 2 (1910); A. Ernout and A. Meillet, *Dict. étym. de la langue latine* s.v., ed. 1 (1932), ed. 2 (1939).

<sup>2</sup> Ernout-Meillet s.v.

<sup>3</sup> S. Bugge, *BB* 3.120 (1879); J. Wackernagel, *IF* 1.420 (1892), *\*sṇnē*; Walde, *LEW* s.v., *\*sṇnēu*.

<sup>4</sup> For example, found in A. Vaniček, *Etym. Wrth. d. lat. Spr.*<sup>2</sup> 302 (1881).

+ enclitic *ne* 'not'; this earlier theory was supposed to be supported by SEINE in an inscription of 123/2 B.C.,<sup>5</sup> and by a statement of Festus<sup>6</sup> that *nesi* was used for *sine* in a certain law. But SEINE is an obvious error in writing, however motivated,<sup>7</sup> and the *nesi* of Festus may really have been for *nisi* 'unless' in the meaning 'except.' Though the two specific arguments for the older view really have no validity, there remains the phonetic possibility that *sine* is from *\*sei-ne*, and such an origin of *sine* was still maintained at least as late as 1910.<sup>8</sup>

Meillet<sup>9</sup> in 1902 made another reconstruction, which did not separate *sine* from Skt. *sanutár*, etc., but took it most closely with Old Irish (adj.) *sain* 'different,' an *i*-stem: whence *\*s<sup>oni</sup>* as preform of *sine*, with assimilation of the first vowel as in *cinis*, *similis*. Brugmann<sup>10</sup> in 1911 accepted this view, specifying that *\*s<sup>yni</sup>* (his writing for Meillet's *\*s<sup>oni</sup>*) was the neuter of the stem seen in the Old Irish. In 1914 Lévi and Meillet<sup>11</sup> added Toch. B *snai* 'without' to the immediate cognates of *sine*.

Other views also have been advanced. Persson<sup>12</sup> in 1893 proposed the reflexive stem *\*s(u)e-* + demonstrative (not negative) particle *\*ne*, *\*se-ne* becoming *sine* by vowel weakening when the word was proclitic—that is, when the word was unaccented. In 1894 Henry<sup>13</sup> took *sine* to be the imperative of *sinō* 'permit,' functioning as a preposition. In the same year Lindsay<sup>14</sup> interpreted *sine* as *\*s<sup>eni</sup>* or *\*s<sup>enu</sup>*, identical with the first part of Skt. *sani-tar sanu-tar*, with the prior vowel becoming *i* when the whole word was in unaccented position. Other somewhat varying views there may have been, but if so they have eluded my search, except one which will be mentioned later.

<sup>5</sup> *CIL* 12.2.583.54.

<sup>6</sup> Festus 165b 26–27 ed. Müller: *Nesi pro sine positum (est in lege dedicationis arae) Dianae Aventinen(sis)*.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. F. Sommer, *Hdb. d. lat. Laut- u. Formenlehre* 2 74.

<sup>8</sup> As in F. Stolz and J. H. Schmalz, *Lat. Gram.* ed. 1, p. 294 (1885) to ed. 4, p. 409 (1910); but the 5th ed., p. 530 (1928), rewritten by M. Leumann and J. B. Hofmann, has shifted to Meillet's view.

<sup>9</sup> *Études sur l'étym. et le vocabulaire du Vieux-Slave* 153–154 (1902); also in Ernout-Meillet, s.v.

<sup>10</sup> K. Brugmann, *Grundriss d. vgl. Gram. d. idg. Spr.* 2 2.2.893–894 (1911).

<sup>11</sup> *MSL* 18.409 (1914); Ernout-Meillet 2 s.v. (1939) lists also Toch. A *sne*.

<sup>12</sup> P. Persson, *IF* 2.23 (1893).

<sup>13</sup> V. Henry, *MSL* 8.171 (wrongly cited as Havet, *MSL* 8.175 in Walde, *LEW* s.v.).

<sup>14</sup> W. M. Lindsay, *Lat. Lang.* 592 (1894).

I doubt if Latin *sine* is an old inherited preposition. It has no obvious correspondents in other languages, even in Oscan, where 'without' is *perum*; it replaced an older *sēd* just at the beginning of the literary period of Latin; it formed no verbal or other compounds whatsoever, in which it differs entirely from all other inherited prepositions in Latin: and it has a final short vowel after a single consonant, in which also it differs from other inherited prepositions. For the inherited prepositions with single medial consonant lost the final short vowel in Latin; thus *per* from *\*peri*, *ab* from *\*apo*, *ob* from *\*opi*, *sub* <sup>15</sup> from *\*upo*, *super* from *\*uperi*, etc. Only when there was a consonant cluster did the final short vowel survive: *ante* from *\*anti*, *ambe* and *ambi* as prefixes, from *\*ambhi*. An inherited *\*soni* should then have become perhaps *\*sen* (the product of the reduced vowel being uncertain, but not affecting the argument).

In view of this I propose that *sine* relates to *sēd* as *pōne* to *post*: *sine* is from *\*sēd-ne*, *pōne* from *\*posti-ne*. Fr. Muller <sup>16</sup> in 1926 almost reached the same view, but not quite; his pre-form is *\*sē-ne* (*\*se* relating to *\*sē* as *sēd* 'but' relates to *sēd* 'without,' and all being from the same root), which, according to him, is to *\*sě* as *\*post-ne* is to *post*, and *\*prō-ne* (in the adjective *prōnus*) is to *prō*. To return to my own special view: from *\*posti* + enclitic *ne* came, with syncope and regular phonetic changes, *pōne*, which did not differ in meaning from *post*; *pōne* is found in a number of passages in Plautus and other early writers, but afterwards only in verse or with an archaizing flavor, and never supplanted *post*. The same relation exists between *sēd* and *sine*, except that *sine* did supplant *sēd*; it is striking to find that *sine* and *pōne* agree in never becoming verbal prefixes. As for the disappearance of *sē(d)* and *pōne*, it may be significant that both are homophones of other more common Latin words.<sup>17</sup>

The phonetic development of *sine* from *\*sēd-ne* involves the assimilation of *d* to a following *n*, then the shortening of the long consonant intervocalic after a long vowel, and the shortening of the long vowel before the enclitic. These three changes must be practically simultaneous; the second and third of them are found in

<sup>15</sup> The *s-* of *sub* and *super* is a preposed element in Italic, not found in the cognates in other Indo-European branches.

<sup>16</sup> Frederik Muller Jzn, *Altital. Wrtb.* 420-421 (1926); he also remarks that neither *sine* nor *pōne* occurs as a verbal prefix.

<sup>17</sup> But, of course, so is *sine*; yet confusion of prep. *sine* with imperative *sine* would be less likely to occur than confusion of prep. *sē* with pronoun *sē*.

*hōdiē* from *\*hōd diēd*, and similar shortenings in the first syllable of *quāsī* from *\*quam-sei*, *nīsī* from *\*nei-sei*, and *quōque* 'also' from *\*quō-que*. There remains only the weakening of the prior *e* of *\*sene* when the word was unaccented, as in *mihi tibi sibi* from *\*mehei \*tefei \*sebei*.

The long vowel in the similarly formed *pōne* is no argument against this development of *sine*; for the *ō* of *pōne* was developed by compensatory lengthening when the *-s-* was lost in *\*posne* which had come by syncope from *\*posti-ne*. When the enclitic *-ne* was added to *\*posti* there was no long vowel which could be shortened by the enclisis; when *\*sēd-ne* was formed the long vowel was there, ready to be affected by the enclisis.