

## On the origin of *si* as an interrogative particle in Old Spanish

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An aspect of Spanish historical syntax that has passed virtually unnoticed in the literature is the presence in Old Spanish texts of interrogative structures introduced by the particle *si*:

*¿Si fue nunca qui son tan dulce oyesse en logar del mundo?*

[Alfonso X, *General estoria*, ca. 1270]

‘Has anyone ever heard such a beautiful sound?’

In this presentation I show how Old Spanish interrogative *si* originated in the Classical Latin conditional conjunction *si*, which in Late Latin became a complementizer in embedded interrogatives and eventually a polar interrogative particle. This evolution, which is documented primarily in Biblical translations and religious texts, parallels similar developments in Biblical Hebrew and Biblical Greek. The presence of direct interrogative *si* in non-religious Latin texts, and, more importantly, its continuation in medieval Romance varieties, evinces that this structure must have had some use in vernacular Latin.

The historical origin and evolution of the interrogative particle *si* constitutes an interesting case of grammaticalization from conditional marker to complementizer for embedded questions and then to interrogative particle in polar interrogatives. This is a grammaticalization path attested in other languages, but one which has not been considered in accounts of the historical origin of interrogative particles in grammaticalization studies.