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Croft’s cycle in Arabic: The negative existential cycle in a single language

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Abstract: The negative existential cycle has been shown to be operative in several language families. Here it is shown that it also operates within a single language. It happens that the existential fi that has been adduced as an example of a type A in the Arabic of Damascus, Syria, negated with the standard spoken Arabic verbal negator mā, does not participate in a negative cycle, but another Arabic existential particle does. Reflexes of the existential particle šay(y)/šē/shī/shī of southern peninsular Arabic dialects enter into a type A > B configuration as a univerbation between mā and the existential particle šī in reflexes of mašī. It also enters that configuration in others as a univerbation between mā, the 3rd-person pronouns hū or hī, and the existential particle šī in reflexes of mahūš/mahiš. At that point, the existential particle šī loses its identity as such to be reanalyzed as a negator, with reflexes of mahūš/mahiš negating all manner of non-verbal predications except existentials. As such, negators formed of reflexes of šī skip a stage B, but they re-enter the cycle at stage B > C, when reflexes of mahūš/mahiš begin negating some verbs. The consecutive C stage is encountered only in northern Egyptian and southern Yemeni dialects. An inchoate stage C > A appears only in dialects of Lower Egypt.

Keywords: Arabic dialects, grammaticalization in Arabic, linguistic cycles, standard negation, negative existential cycle, southern Arabian peninsular dialects

1 Introduction

The negative existential cycle as outlined by Croft (1991) is a six-stage cycle whereby the negators of existential predications – those positing the existence of something with assertions analogous to the English ‘there is/are’ – overtake the role of verbal negators, eventually replacing them, if the cycle continues to...
completion. Croft proposes that the operation of the cycle is evident in three attested language types: “In Type A, the negation of the existential predicate is performed by the verbal negator. In Type B, there is a special negative existential predicate, distinct from the verbal negator. In Type C, there is a special negative existential predicate, which is identical to the verbal negator” (1991: 6).

According to Croft, languages of these three types display little or no variation within themselves, but other language types exhibit synchronic variation between their verbal negation and their negative existential predication. These, he labels A ~ B, B ~ C, and C ~ A, proposing that together, such languages provide, “an empirically testable method for determining the presence of direct historical links between synchronic language states in a typological classification of languages” (1991: 3). While proposing the negative existential cycle as the process by which languages reach their current states, he does not, however, follow the processes through any of the many languages that he adduces as exhibiting stages of the cycle, instead posing each example as displaying a characteristic type. He does, however, clearly state the hypothesis that these types also represent stages along a cycle:

The principles of grammaticalization theory suggest that the directionality of change implied in the synchronically variable types is A > B, B > C, and C > A. Thus, we hypothesize a negative-existential cycle, in which a special negative existential form arises (A > B), comes to be used as a verbal negator (B > C), and then is supplemented by the positive existential predicate in its existential function, restoring a ‘regular’ negative + existential construction (C > A). (Croft 1991: 6)

In a distinction worth preserving, Croft sometimes uses the symbols A > B, B > C, and C > A, but more often A ~ B, B ~ C, and C ~ A. He often seems to mean the same thing by the two; but at other times, by X ~ Y he is referring to language types and by X > Y he is referring to the diachronic process by which a language type moves from one stage of the cycle to the next.

It was not to be for another two decades after Croft’s initial outlining of the model that it was to be tested against data from language families. In an ongoing series of studies, Veselinova examines family-based samples (Veselinova 2013, Veselinova 2014, Veselinova 2016), whereby the operation of the cycle becomes clearer. In other recent work, Håland (2011: 75–77) and Wilmsen (2014: 173–176; Wilmsen 2016a) suggest that the cycle also operates in a single language: Arabic.

Naming Arabic as a single language, however, requires a proviso: With its multitudinous spoken dialects, Arabic is itself sometimes said to constitute not a single language but a family of languages (Retsö 2005, Retsö 2013), each dialect or group of dialects descending from a distinct parental dialect.
grouping. The operation of negation across the spectrum of Arabic dialects lends credence to that notion. In explicating Type A languages, Croft (1991: 7), without suggesting that a negative existential cycle functions in Arabic, brings an example from the Syrian Arabic of Damascus (from Cowell 2005 [1964]: 383 and 384) as an example of a type A language, in which a single negator mā undertakes negation of verbal predications and existential predications.

(1) Syrian Arabic (Damascus)
   a. mā b-a-Sref
      NEG HAB-1SG-know.IPFV
      ‘I know not’
   b. mā fī hada bə-l-bēt
      NEG EXIST one PREP-DET-house
      ‘[Is] there no one in the house?’
      (Croft 1991: 7)

This sort of negation obtains in most dialects of the northern Levant, most of the dialects of Mesopotamia, and most of those of the Arabian Peninsula, as well as some interior dialects of North Africa (see map A.1 in Appendix A). These dialects of Arabic show no sign of having passed through a negative existential cycle. On the other hand, in a large class of Arabic dialects, negation proceeds with the preposed negator mā and an enclitic – Š, obligatory in most verbal and existential negations.

(2) Yemeni Arabic (Tihama)
   a. mā ya-Srif-Š de
      NEG HAB-3MSG-know.IPFV-NEG DEM
      ‘He knows not that’
      (Simeone-Senelle 1996: 210)

1 The terms “spoken Arabic” and “Arabic dialect” are meant to distinguish the various regional varieties of Arabic from the Arabic of formal writing – in many respects, quite different from spoken Arabic, especially in interrogation and negation – not nowadays spoken as a mother tongue by any of its users. For existential predication and negation in written Arabic, see Wilmsen (2016a).
2 Existential predications in spoken Arabic are non-verbal, with no expressed copula, as such conforming neatly to Croft’s argument for “the special status of the existential situation as a ‘nonverbal’ predication” (1991: 18).
b. Yemeni Arabic (Taiz and Aden)

\[
\text{ma-}\tilde{\text{i}}-\text{ṣ̌} \quad \text{haga} \; \text{fi-t-talaga}
\]

NEG-EXIST-NEG thing PREP-DET-refrigerator

‘There [is] not [a] thing in the refrigerator’

(Ahmed 2012: 63)

For its part, this sort of negation is characteristic of some Arabic dialects of the Yemen; the southern Levant and the Levantine highlands; Egypt; and littoral North Africa from Libya to Morocco (map A.2, Appendix A). It is these that exhibit types of a negative existential cycle.

The existential particle \( \tilde{i} \) that Croft adduces likely derives from the preposition \( \tilde{i} \) ‘in’ (notice its second occurrence as a preposition in [2b]). Existential \( \tilde{i} \) is often classed as a “pseudo-verb” (Comrie 2008: 739–740), because, although it is not a verb, it is negated in the same manner as verbs. In its role as a preposition, it would characteristically be negated with a separate but related negator. In dialects negating with \( \text{mā} \) alone, that is either \( \text{mā} \) or a univerbation of the negator \( \text{mā} \) and the 3rd-person pronoun \( \text{hū} \), yielding \( \text{mū} \) (or \( \text{mu} \)). In dialects negating with \( \text{mā} \) \( \text{... ū} \), it is characteristically \( \text{mūš} \) (or \( \text{muš} \) or \( \text{miš} \)).

(3) a. Syrian Arabic (Aleppo)

\[
l-\text{miškli} \quad \text{fi-na} \quad \text{mu} \; \text{fi-yyon}
\]

DET-problem PREP-PRO.1PL NEG PREP-PRO.3PL

‘The problem is in us; not in them’

(Jarad 2015: 244)

b. Yemeni Arabic (Tihama)

\[
\text{mūš} \quad \text{fi-l-masā}
\]

NEG PREP-DET-evening

‘Not in the night’

(Simeone-Senelle 1996: 217)

The common assumption has been that the \( \text{- ş̣} \) in these negations derives from one of the many Arabic words for ‘thing’ \( \text{ṣ̌ay} \) (see Lucas 2007, Lucas 2015; Diem 2014 for recent assertions).\(^3\) To the contrary, the types of a negative existential cycle manifesting themselves in various spoken Arabic varieties suggest an alternate developmental pathway for the negator \( \text{- ṣ̌} \) as a grammaticalization of another existential particle \( \text{ṣ̌i} \) (also \( \text{ṣ̌ay(y)}, \text{šē}, \text{and ṣ̌i} \)). It is our intent here to examine the manifestations of that cycle, the existence of which makes possible

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\(^3\) But compare the word \( \text{haga} \) ‘thing’ in Example (2), which also obtains in all North African dialects of Arabic, including the Egyptian and Maltese.
an alternative account to the prevailing assumption about the grammaticalization of the discontinuous negator mā ... š in a large subclass of Arabic dialects. We shall call it the šī cycle. It so happens that the action of a šī cycle in Arabic also explains a phenomenon that has attracted attention in some quarters of Arabic dialectology: the occasional negation of verbs with reflexes of mūš. By the lights of the negative existential cycle model, this kind of negation would be expected to occur in a stage B > C. The operation of the šī cycle in some but not all dialects of Arabic also lends support to the assertion that Arabic resembles a family of closely related dialects if not outright languages.

Accordingly, the discussion begins in Section 2 with an overview of existential šī/šay in dialects of the southern Arabian Peninsula. Section 3 examines the two of its many grammaticalizations that are crucial to the operation of the šī cycle, a detailed examination of which comes in Section 4. This is followed by a discussion in Section 5 and some conclusions.

2 The existential particle šay(y)/šē/šī in Arabic

The many varieties of spoken Arabic between them possess at least six existential particles, all of them non-verbal (for which, see Eid 2008: 83–84 and our Table 1). It happens that the existential particle fī (1b) that Croft adduces is not involved in a negative existential cycle. Instead, it is šay and its reflexes that exhibit stages of a cycle. Eid specifies šay as a feature only of Omani Arabic, apparently with reference to its earliest attestation in Reinhardt’s grammar of some dialects of northern Oman (1894: 112 and passim). Nevertheless, about a decade after Reinhardt, Landberg (1905: 24, 25, and 191) documents an existential šī in southern Yemen. More than a half century later, Johnstone (1967: 170) mentions it as occurring in the dialects of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. Behnstedt (1985: 172–3 [revised in, 2016: 346]) and Piamenta (1990: 272–273) reaffirm its continued presence in the Yemen, and Brockett (1985: 24) and Holes (1990: 71) in Oman. More recently, researchers (especially Davey 2016: 171 and passim, and, with much greater attention; Holes 2016: 24–27 and passim) have paid it more attention in all Arabic dialects of the southern Arabian Peninsula except the Emirati.

(4) a. Yemeni Arabic (Sana’a, Northern Yemen)

šī  xobz
EXIST  bread
‘[Is] there bread?’
(Watson 2011: 31)
b. Omani Arabic (Jabal Hajar, Northern Oman)
\[\text{lē šē ṣahha al-hamdu li-llāḥ}\]
If there is health, thanks to God
(Eades 2009: 92)

c. Omani Arabic (Dhofar, Southern Oman)
\[\text{šē riyal}\]
‘There [is] [a] riyal? (= ‘Have you got a riyal?’)
(Davey 2016: 180)

d. Bahārāna Arabic (North western Bahrain)
\[\text{šay tabīx}\]
‘[Was] there cooking?’
(Holes 2016: 27)

As for Emirati Arabic, \(\text{šay(y)/šē/šī}\) is very much present (see dated examples in Appendix B).

(5) Emirati Arabic (Sharjah)
\[\text{šay internet wa free wifi}\]
‘There is Internet and free Wi-Fi’
(Own data)

A recent textbook for teaching Emirati Arabic to non-native speakers of the language specifically equates it with existential \(fī\), providing several examples of usage.

(6) Emirati Arabic (Abu Dhabi/Dubai)
\[\text{šay ϲaḡāḡ = fīh ϲaḡāḡ}\]
‘There is a sandstorm’
(Al Hashemi and Isleem 2015: 96)

Indeed, some propose that existential \(fī\) is replacing existential \(šī\), implying that it was once more common in all of these dialects than it now is. Holes (1990: 71)

4 Examples from my own data are drawn from observations of natural language use, gathered \textit{in situ} in Egypt, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and the United Arab Emirates.
after Brockett (1985: 24) says as much about Omani Arabic. Bernabela (2011: 61) implies the same for the Omani dialects of the Musandam Peninsula and Davey (2016: 171) for the southern dialect of Dhofar. As for Yemen, in Landberg’s (1905) Yemeni texts from the turn of the twentieth century, the more common existential particle, when one appears at all, is \( f\). Behnstedt (1985: 172–3, map 119, 2016: 346, map 136 and our Table 2) charts three existential particles in place in northern Yemen: reflexes of \( b\), of \( f\), and of \( s\). Of these three, \( f\) and \( b\) and their reflexes are more widespread (cf. also Watson 1993: 14, 163, 255, 387).

In Emirati Arabic, existential \( f\) can occur interchangeably with \( s\) or one of its reflexes, even in the speech of older Emiratis, as in this assertion by a middle-aged fisherman speaking of fishing techniques in use in the pre-oil era.

(7) Emirati Arabic (Ras al-Khaimah)
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{fi} & \quad \text{ruṣāṣ} \quad (.) \quad šay \quad \text{ruṣāṣ} \\
\text{EXIST} & \quad \text{lead} \quad \text{EXIST} \quad \text{lead}
\end{align*}
\]
‘There [were] lead [weights]... there [were] lead [weights]’

(Own data)

### 2.1 Existential negation in spoken Arabic

As for negation, all existential particles of spoken Arabic varieties are generally negated as pseudo-verbs, in the manner that Croft (1991: 7) adduces for Damascene Arabic: with the same negator that applies to verbal predications, \( mā\), a negator common to all varieties of Arabic (Example (1)). This is consistent with a type A. Nevertheless, some varieties of Arabic, notably those exhibiting types or stages of an existential cycle, negate their existential particles with the discontinuous negator \( mā\) ... \( š\), which is also in the same manner as they negate verbs (Example (2)). That is, they, too, are A types. This is shown in Table 1.

Most of these existential particles are grammaticalizations: \( aku\) and \( kāyen\) appear to derive respectively from the Arabic verb ‘to be’ \( ya-kūn\) and its participle \( kāyin\).⁵ For their parts, \( b\) and \( f\) look to be grammaticalizations of Arabic prepositions meaning ‘in’. The latter has undergone further grammaticalizations

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⁵ But see Holes (2016: 16–17) and especially (2018: 120–122), where he convincingly argues on phonological grounds against an Arabic derivation for \( aku\), noting, “unmotivated apocopeations fore and aft, and a stress shift” (2018: 120), suggesting, instead an Akkadian or southeastern Babylonian Aramaic substrate origin.
as a pre-verbal modal particle (Cowell 2005 [1964]: 415–416) and a post-verbal marker of telicity and progressivity (Woidich 2006a; McNeil 2017). As for šī, it has also undergone numerous grammaticalizations, two of them crucial to the negative existential cycle, as the following sections show.

3 Grammaticalizations of existential šī

The most pervasive of grammaticalizations of šī is the role it plays in interrogatives. Most spoken varieties of Arabic share the morpheme /š/ in their ‘what’ interrogatives of the type aš, ayš, ēš, šu, ašnu, or šinu, among others, and ‘why’ interrogatives of the type laš, layš, or lēš (for types and distributions, see the chart in Versteegh 2004: 244; for a thorough discussion with maps and more types, see; Obler 1975: 44–56).

3.1 Polar interrogative šī

In addition to what and why interrogatives, in many Arabic varieties across the Arabophone world, a reflex of šī poses a polar interrogative, requiring an answer of ‘yes’ or ‘no’, often coming at the end of the utterance as a tag (Holes 2004: 194; Cowell 2005 [1964]: 378).

(8)  a. Moroccan Arabic (Fès-Meknès)

\[
\text{xdam-t} \quad \text{šī}
\]

work.PFV-2MSG Q

‘[Have] you worked?’

(Caubet 1983: 234)
b. Libyan Arabic (Benghazi)

\[\text{sif-t ahmad amis } \text{ši}\]
see.PFV-2MSG name yesterday Q
‘[Did] you see Ahmad yesterday?’
(Owens 1984: 102)

c. Lebanese Arabic (Beirut)

\[\text{kān-u li-hāl-on } \text{ši}\]
be.PFV-3PL DAT-condition-PRO.3PL Q
‘Were they by themselves?’
(Own data)

d. Bahārāna Arabic (North western Bahrain)

\[\text{fi wēn zarāf-t-ūn xawāfir } \text{šay}\]
PREP where plant.PFV-2-PL seed.beds Q
‘Where [have] you planted? Seed beds?’
(Holes 2016: 27)

e. Omani Arabic (Musandam Peninsula)

\[\text{ṣind-kum ṣadāʔ } \text{šē}\]
PREP-PRO.3MPL enemies Q
‘Do you have [any] enemies? (lit. ‘At you [are] enemies)’
(Own data)

It may also appear immediately after the item in question, be it a verbal or non-verbal predication, where it retains something of its existential properties.

(9) a. Lebanese Arabic (Beirut)

\[\text{maš-ak } \text{šī } \text{xamsīn alf } \text{ṣaraf}\]
PREP-PRO.2MSG Q/EXIST fifty thousand change
‘With you [there is] fifty thousand [in] change? = ‘Have you change of a fifty-thousand note [= €30]?’
(Own data)

b. Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)

\[\text{maš-ak } \text{šī } \text{sigāra}\]
PREP-PRO.2MSG Q/EXIST cigarette
‘With you [there is] [a] cigarette?’ = ‘Have you a cigarette?’
(Woidich 2006b: 358)

c. Moroccan Arabic (Fès-Meknès)

\[\text{ṣand-ak } \text{šī } \text{xobz}\]
PREP-PRO.2MSG Q/EXIST bread
‘At you [there is] bread?’ = ‘Have you any bread?’
(Caubet 1983: 235)
In dialects of Yemeni and Omani Arabic, it can also come at the head of the phrase.\(^6\)

\(10\) a. Yemeni Arabic (Sana’a, Northern Yemen)
\[\text{šī bih gahwa wallā bunn wallā māši}\]
Q EXIST coffee coffee.beans CONJ NEX
‘[Is] there coffee or coffee beans, or [is] there not?’
(Watson 1993: 294)

b. Yemeni Arabic (Abyan Governorate, Southern Yemen)
\[\text{ši ġaṭā-k šiy}\]
Q give.PFV-PRO.2MSG thing
‘[Did] he give you anything’
(Ahmed 2012: 40)

c. Omani Arabic
\[\text{šī ahl-ik bākīn}\]
Q folk-PRO.3M remaining-PL
‘Are your parents still alive?’
(Holes 2008: 485)\(^7\)

In these cases, the existential particle is more analogous to ‘is it’ in meaning than it is to ‘there is’. This may be seen when verbal predications are queried.

\(11\) Lebanese Arabic (Beirut)

a. \[\text{ḥāk-ēt šī yusuf il-yōm}\]
speak.PFV-2MSG Q name DET-day
‘You spoke [is it?] [with] Joseph today?’
(Own data)

b. \[\text{b-t-ṣarf-ū šī ayy sāğa badd-u yi-ržā’}\]
HAB-2-KNOW.IPV-PL Q which hour FUT-PRO.3MSG 3-return.IPV
‘You know [is it?], what time he will return?’
(Own data)

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\(^6\) I have also occasionally heard it phrase initially in the Syrian Arabic of Damascus.

\(^7\) Wrongly attributed to Edzard in the print edition.
Indeed, even when used as a purely existential particle, šī is better understood as conveying the assertion of existence, incorporating quasi-copular qualities, analogous to the English ‘there be’. Consider:

(12) Emirati Arabic (Ras Al-Khaimah)

\textit{lāzīm šay naqd}

necessary \textsc{exist} criticism

‘Must there [be] criticism?’

(Own data)

The interpretation of šay in (12) is, in fact, ambiguous. It could be a quasi-copular existential particle (‘there be’) or a polar interrogative (‘is it?’). Its very ambiguity sets it up for reanalysis (see discussion in Wilmsen 2017). As a polar interrogative in a position directly after the verb or other part of speech in question, it becomes liable to reanalysis as a negator.

### 3.2 Excursus: Negation in Arabic

Arabic linguistics generally distinguishes negation as operating on either verbal or non-verbal predications and does not, therefore, usually recognize the by now well-rehearsed distinction “standard” negation, by which the negation of declarative verbal constructions in main clauses is designated in the negation literature (Miestamo 2007). Because non-verb predications are so prominent in any variety of Arabic, and their negation is, as a consequence, also common, it would be inappropriate to define the negation of these types of constructions as being something other than standard (cf. Dahl 2010: 10–11). Regardless of the nomenclature, however, the Arabist’s “verbal negation” corresponds to the typologist’s “standard negation”. Likewise, their respective “non-verbal negation” and what has been called for lack of a better term “non-standard negation” largely correspond, both of the latter referring to the negation of non-verbal and existential clauses. We shall, therefore, adhere to Arabist tradition by referring to such negations as either verbal or non-verbal.

### 3.3 Negation with enclitic – š(i)

With šī at the end of a verb phrase, placing mā before the phrase gives the negative reply. Consider the following minimal pair:
It is apparently negations like this that have led to the prevalent assumption in Arabic linguistics that negative – ši (or – š) derives from one of the Arabic words for ‘thing’ šay? (Lucas 2007, Lucas 2015; Diem 2014). By that model, the negative ending – š is a grammaticalization of that word, proceeding along a hypothesized pathway as follows:

\[ (14) \quad mā\, smaʕ-t\, šay? \, ‘I\, heard\, not\, [a]\, thing’ \, > \, mā\, smaʕt-š \, ‘I\, heard\, not’ \]

Evident in the example here is an inherent difficulty with this derivation: It fails to account for the retention of an erstwhile object šay? ‘thing’ in the negation of intransitive predications. Granted, once an erstwhile object is reanalyzed as a negator, it would then be available by “extension” or “actualization” (Lucas 2015: 84) to any negative construction (cf. Esseesy 2010: 65–66, who posits a grammaticalized negator – š extending from pseudo-verbs to verbs, not the other way round). This seems reasonable as far as it goes; but it leaves the same grammatical operator /š/ in interrogatives unexplained. That, too, has been regarded as deriving from ‘thing’ along these lines:

\[ (15) \quad āy\, šay? \, ‘which\, thing’ \, > \, āyš \, ‘what’ \]

By itself, this also seems reasonable enough; but accepting both is to suppose that two separate grammaticalizations have occurred to produce otherwise distinct phenomena: interrogation and negation. This not impossible, but it is unnecessary, when a single derivation is available, with the enclitic – š deriving from a polar interrogative ši, itself deriving from the existential particle.

\[ (16) \quad smaʕt-ši \, ‘You\, heard,\, is\, it?’ \, > \, mā\, smaʕt-ši \, ‘I\, heard\, not,\, it\, is’ \, > \, mā\, smaʕt-ši/š \, ‘I\, heard\, not’ \]
By that route, the *ayy šay* in (15) is simply the interrogative *ayy* ‘which’ and the existential-cum-copula ‘[it] is’ > ‘which is [it]?’. Extension or actualization notwithstanding, derivation from the existential particle is a more direct route than are repeated grammaticalizations of a word meaning ‘thing’. A polar interrogative is more closely related to a negator than is a hypothesised ‘thing’, a negative response being one of only two available options (discounting a hedge). From a polar interrogative, the existential particle šī can be reanalyzed as a negator, and it is as a negator that it passes through stages of the negative existential cycle.

Before finally turning to that, we must first briefly consider the derivation of the non-verbal Arabic negator *muš* of (3b). It may already have become plain that this must comprise what Croft has described as “a contraction or fusion of the verbal negator and the positive existential form” (Croft 1991: 7), characteristic of Croft’s Type A ~ B languages.

### 3.4 Non-verbal predicate negation in spoken Arabic

Most Arabic varieties negating verbs with the discontinuous morpheme *mā ... š* (Examples (3a) and (13b)) generally use a reflex of *muš*, *muš*, or *miš* for negating non-verb predications, that is, aside from prepositional phrases (3b), it negates nouns (17a), predicate adjectives (17b) and participles (17c), etc., all of them without a verbal copula.

(17) Yemeni Arabic (Abyan Governorate)

a. *muḥammad muš ṭayyār*
   
   name NEG N(pilot)
   ‘Muhammad [is] not [a] pilot’
   (Ahmed 2012: 62)

b. *il-bayt muš kābir*
   
   DET-house NEG ADJ(large)
   ‘The house [is] not large’
   (Ahmed 2012: 60)

c. *anā muš rāyiḥ al-yawm*
   
   PRO.1SG NEG PTCP(going) DET-day
   ‘I [am] not going today’
   (Ahmed 2012: 61)
The final example, (17c), illustrates the principle in Arabic dialects of negating participles (in this case, of the verb ‘to go’ ṭāḥ ‘he/it went’/yī-ṭāḥ ‘he/it goes’) as non-verbal predications. This is crucial for Stage B > C, in which the negator ṭūṣ and its reflexes, a fusion of the verbal negator and the positive existential form, begin negating “only part of the verbal grammatical system” (Croft 1991: 10).

The participle in Arabic describes states of being, or, as Cowell (2005 [1964]) describes it, a “consequent state”, explaining, “it describes its referent as being in a certain state of affairs as a necessary consequence of the kind of event, process, or activity designated by the underlying verb” (2005 [1964]: 262). That is, the participle in Arabic is nominal or adjectival, not verbal. Depending upon the type of verb from which it derives, the aspect of the participle can be perfective or progressive, among other meanings (see the discussion in Cowell [2005 [1964]: 262–276] and in; Owens and Yavrumyan [2008: 544–545]).

As a marker of a future eventuality, /h/ derives from ṭāḥ ‘going’. As a participle, it is usually pronounced ṭāḥ (m), ṭāḥ-a (f), and ṭāḥ-in (PL) ‘going’, but as a grammaticalized marker of an anticipated future it can also appear as ṭāḥ or ṭāḥa and as a verbal prefix ḥa-, uninflected for gender or number.

(18) Syrian Arabic (Damascus)

a. ṭāḥa šāf-la-k yā-ha
   FUT see.IPFV-DAT-PRO.2MSG ACC-her/it
   ‘I [am] going to see her/it for you’
   (Cowell 2005 [1964]: 322)

b. ḥaddēš ṭāḥ ta-b?a hōn
   Q FUT 2-remain.IPFV DEM
   ‘How long [are] you going to stay here?’
   (Cowell 2005 [1964]: 323)

c. l-mafti ha-yō-flen fatwa
   DET-mufti FUT-3-announce.IPFV fatwa
   ‘The Mufti will announce [a] fatwa’
   (Cowell 2005 [1964]: 323)

The participle has thus become a grammatical operator (or, as grammaticalization theory would have it, a “gram”). Grams of the participle ṭāḥiḥ continue to be

8 There is no true future tense in Arabic.
negated with *muš/miš*, itself a gram arising from a derivational pathway analogous to that in (16), as follows:

**3.5 Non-predicate pronominal negation in spoken Arabic**

Arabic varieties negating verbs with *mā* and a post-positive – *š* may also negate personal pronouns using the same discontinuous negator in what Woidich (2006b: 336) calls “non-predicate” negation, so called because the negation acts upon the subject, even though it is the predicate that is denied.

(19) Yemeni Arabic (a. Abyan Governorate; b. and c. Tihama, Western Yemen)

   a. [anā 'I '>] ma-na-š rāyiḥ al-yawm
      PRO.1SG-NEG going DET-day
      ‘I [am] not going today’
      (Ahmed 2012: 61)

   b. [inta ‘you '>] mā-n-te-š wālif
      NEG-PRO.2MSG-NEG accustomed
      ‘You [are] not [a] accustomed’
      (Simeone-Senelle 1996: 217)

   c. [hi ‘she/it '>] mā-hi-š wālif-a
      NEG-PRO.3FSG-NEG accustomed-F
      ‘She is not accustomed’
      (Simeone-Senelle 1996: 217)

In varieties utilizing the discontinuous *mā ... š*, the usual non-verbal predicate negators *muš* and *miš* derive transparently from *mā-hū-š* and *mā-hī-š*.

(20) a. hu-šī ‘he/it is?’ > mā hu-šī ‘not he/it is’ > mā huš ‘not he/it [is]’ > mahuš ‘not’ > muš ‘not’

   b. hi-ši ‘she/it is?’ > mā hi-ši ‘not she/it is’ > mā hiš ‘not she/it [is]’ > mahiš ‘not’ > miš ‘not’ > miš ‘not’

All steps in the cline in (20) remain attested throughout Arabic varieties. The earliest record of polar interrogative pronouns with an enclitic – *š* comes in Arabic texts from Arabophone Iberia of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (Wilmsen 2014: 69–70 and 81). Nowadays, they are attested in Tunisian Arabic and Maltese (Wilmsen 2016b), a peripheral variety of Arabic likely descended from Tunisian Arabic.
Maltese (Valetta)\textsuperscript{9}

\begin{itemize}
\item a. ū-š l-arloğġ įedd ċu? il-meyda
\end{itemize}

\begin{tabular}{llllll}
\text{PRO.3MSG-Q} & \text{DET-watch} & \text{PTCP(located)} & \text{PREP} & \text{DET-table} & \text{‘[Is] the watch on the table?’} \\
\end{tabular}

\begin{itemize}
\item b. l-arloğġ mūš įedd ċu? il-meyda ū-š
\end{itemize}

\begin{tabular}{llllll}
\text{DET-watch} & \text{NEG} & \text{PTCP(located)} & \text{PREP} & \text{DET-table} & \text{PRO.3MSG-Q} \\
\end{tabular}

\begin{itemize}
\item ‘The watch [is] not on the table–is it?’
\end{itemize}

(Borg and Azzopardi 1997: 5)

For their part, negators of the forms mahūš/mahiš, mūš/miš, and muš/miš, remain attested throughout the varieties of Arabic that utilize the discontinuous negator mā ... š (Wilmsen 2014: 100). These are Type A ~ B fusions of the negator, a 3rd-person pronoun, and the existential particle that enter into the B > C arc of the šī negative existential cycle, to which we may now at long last turn.

### 4 The šī Cycle in Arabic

To review, Croft (1991: 6) outlines the negative existential cycle as follows:

\begin{itemize}
\item Stage A: Negation of the existential predicate performed by the verbal negator
\item Stage A > B: Contraction or fusion of existential negator used alongside verbal negator
\item Stage B: Negative existential distinct from the verbal negator
\item Stage B > C: Negative existential begins to be used for verbal negation
\item Stage C: Negative existential form identical to the verbal negator
\item Stage C > A: Negative existential performs all negation
\end{itemize}

#### 4.1 Stage A: Negation of the existential predicate performed by the verbal negator

As Croft has delineated it, in Stage A of the negative existential cycle, “the negative existential construction is the positive existential predicate plus the ordinary verbal negator.” In spoken Arabic, this should, and does in some

\textsuperscript{9} The [h] in the 3rd-person pronouns hū and hī in Maltese has become silent, but its origin is apparent in the orthography, where the pronouns are rendered <hu> and <hi>; likewise, the [h] in mūš, which is rendered orthographically <mhux> (the <x> being the orthographic representation of [š]).
varieties, appear straightforwardly, with the verbal negator mā ‘not’ negating the existential particle šī ‘there is’: mā šī ‘not there is’ (item 5 in Table 1). Eades (2009) provides a minimal pair in elicited data from northern Oman.

(22) Omani Arabic (Jabal Hajar, Northern Oman)
   a. ḥmīr šē
      donkeys EXIST
      ‘There [were] donkeys’
      (Eades 2009: 92 and 96)
   b. mā šē ḥmīr maʕ-nā
      NEG EXIST donkeys PREP-us
      ‘There [were] not donkeys with us (= ‘We had no donkeys’)’
      (Eades 2009: 92)

Example (23) is a convenient minimal pair from Emirati Arabic in unelicited, naturally occurring speech.

(23) Emirati Arabic (Dubai)
   bi-t-gūl mā šī fayda
   FUT-2-say.IPFV NEG EXIST benefit
   laʔ (.) akīd šay fayda
   NEG ADV EXIST benefit
   ‘You will say, “There is no benefit.” No. Surely there [is] benefit’
   (Own data)

These negations, with the common Arabic negator mā, are characteristic of a stage A; but in order for a cycle to progress, a negative existential form must appear. Otherwise, the Arabic dialects of southern Arabia would simply be operating as Croft’s Type A languages.

4.2 Stage A > B: Contraction or fusion of the verbal negator and the existential particle

In Stage A > B as Croft defines it, “a special existential negative form, usually but not always a contraction or fusion of the verbal negator and the positive existential form, is found in addition to the regular existential negative form” (Croft 1991: 7). In its simplest form, fusion results in a univerbation of negative mā and existential šī to form māšī. This is duly attested in the dialects of Yemen,

(24) Yemeni Arabic (Abyan Governorate, Southern Yemen)
gul-k māšī ṭāše say.PFV-1SG NEG dinner ‘I said, there [is] no dinner’ (Vanhove 1996: 198)

An indication that the negator mā and the existential particle šī have become a univerbation is their usage with a meaning analogous to ‘nonexistent’

(25) Yemeni Arabic (Abyan Governorate, Southern Yemen)
wuṣul wu r-rās māšī arrive.PFV CONJ DET-head NEG ‘He arrived without a head [lit: and the head nonexistent]’ (Vanhove 1996: 198)

It functions in this manner in Emirati Arabic as well, where it is sometime difficult to differentiate between existential šī negated with mā and a univerbation of the two. Some speakers, however, will pronounce the existential particle in one manner (usually šay or šē) and its negation in another, usually šī, with the vowel shortened.10 This is illustrated in (26).

(26) Emirati Arabic (Abu Dhabi)
ẓamān il-awwal mā šay ibir (. ) ibir māšī time DET-first NEG EXIST needles needles NEG ‘In the old days, there [were] no needles. Needles [were] nonexistent’ (Own data)

Other univerbations also occur. Vanhove (1996: 197) attests four variants in her Yemeni data from a mountainous region of the Abyan governorate some two hundred kilometres northeast of Aden: māš, mšā, māšā, and māšilā. In her treatment of negation in the Arabic of Sana’a, in the north of Yemen, Watson (1993: 253) identifies māš, maš, miš, and muš as common negative particles. (1993: 253). Simeone-Senelle (1996: 216) maintains that in the dialects of the Tihama plain of western Yemen, muš is the most common, with

10 It is written as one word in the exchanges depicted in Appendix B.
variants *muš* or *meš*, depending on the dialect. Ahmed (2012: 33) identifies three in the southern Yemeni dialect of the Abyan governorate: *miš* (*miši*), and *māši*. None of these, however, is used exclusively as an existential negator; they having extended into other domains of non-verbal negation.

4.2.1 Stage A > B: Extension of the negative existential

Vanhove (1996) further observes that aside from denying existence, “*māši* ... is also used in equative, attributive, and possessive sentences” (1996: 198), that is, with nouns, prepositions, adjectives, and participles, etc. in the same manner as the negator *muš* in (3) and (17). In possessive sentences, *māši* negates the preposition *mašā* ‘with’ used to express possession.

(27) Yemeni Arabic (Abyan Governorate, Southern Yemen)

```
māši maša-h sīyāl
NEG PREP-PRO.3M children
```

‘Not [there are] with him children (= He has no children)’

(Vanhove 1996: 199)

What is more, some Yemeni dialects of Arabic use reflexes of *māši* interchangeably with *miš* and *muš* in negating non-verbal predications. Watson observes, “in general, any noun phrase used predicatively can be negated using *miš/māš*,” (1993: 252) and, “prepositional phrases which function as supplements or adverbials are (almost) invariably negated by *māš*, *maš*, *muš* or *miš*” (1993: 258).

(28) Yemeni Arabic (Sana’a, Northern Yemen)

```
a. hū miš yamani
PRO.3MSG NEG ADJ
‘He [is] not Yemeni’
(Watson 1993: 256)
b. māš marrih wāḥida
NEG N(time [instance]) ADJ(one)
‘Not all at once (lit. ‘Not one time’)
(Watson 1993: 258)
c. miš dāʔiman
NEG ADV(always)
‘Not always’
(Watson 1993: 258)
In this regard, the Arabic dialects of the North African littoral, exhibit a revealing dichotomy: Egyptian (Woidich 2006b: 334), Libyan (Owens 1984: 157), Tunisian Arabic (Caubet 1996: 85) and Maltese (Borg and Azzopardi-Alexander 1997: 89–90) negate non-verbal predications with reflexes of mā-hū-šī and mā-hī-šī; those of western Algeria and Morocco do so with reflexes of mā-šī (Harrell 2004 [1965]: 155; Caubet 1996: 84).

(29) a. Algerian Arabic (Mazouna)

\[ ma\-\text{ší} \; \text{mlīḥa} \]

\( \text{NEG ADJ} \)

‘Ce n’est pas bien’

(Caubet 1996: 84)

b. Moroccan Arabic (Fès-Meknès)

\[ āl\-\text{kṭāb} \; \text{ma-šī fuq āt-ṭābla} \]

\( \text{DET-book NEG PREP DET-table} \)

‘Le livre n’est pas sur la table’

(Caubet 1983: 232)

c. ānā  ma-šī ṭbēb

\( \text{PRO.1SG NEG N} \)

‘Je ne suis pas médecin’

(Caubet 1993: 44)

d. Moroccan Arabic (Casablanca)

\[ huwa \; \text{mašī hna} \]

\( \text{PRO.3MSGL NEG ADV} \)

‘He [is] not here’

(Harrell 2004 [1965]: 155)

Evidently, the original existential particle begins to lose its identity as such in the fusion māšī, and it has lost it entirely in the univerbations māš, maš, miš, or muš, which come to negate all manner of non-verbal predications.

4.3 Stage B: A negative existential form distinct from the verbal negator

A true realization of a stage B would see “only a special negative existential form” (Croft 1991: 9) and nothing else negating existential predications. In Arabic, this is
elusive.\footnote{At a workshop entitled The Negative Existential Cycle from a Historical-Comparative Perspective, held at Stockholm University on 4–May 5, 2017, an informal consensus amongst presenters emerged that a stage B is hard to identify and is perhaps often skipped. Veselinova (2014: 1338, 2016: 150 and 153) observes that in Slavonic languages, Stage B is skipped entirely.} The Arabic varieties that utilize the discontinuous \( m\ddot{a} \ldots \ddot{s} \) in verbal negation, which do, indeed, also utilize reflexes of \( m\ddot{a}\ddot{s}\ddot{i}, \ mi\ddot{s}, \) and \( mu\ddot{s} \) in negating non-verbal predications, tend to negate existential particles as they do verbs: that is, with negative \( m\ddot{a} – \) and an enclitic – \( \ddot{s}. \) Indeed, prepositions used in expressing possession (as in Example (27)) are also negated as pseudo-verbs.

(30) Yemeni Arabic (Sana’a, Northern Yemen)

\begin{verbatim}
  m\ddot{a}-ma\ddot{f}-i-\ddot{s}  fi\ddot{y}\ddot{a}l
  NEG-PREP-PRO.1SG-NEG  children
\end{verbatim}

‘Not with me [are] children’ = ‘I have no children’

(Watson1993: 266)

In that case, those Arabic varieties negating non-verbal predications with reflexes of \( m\ddot{a}\ddot{s}\ddot{i} \) and \( mu\ddot{s}/mi\ddot{s} \) do not exhibit a true stage B, because those negators, although derived from existential \( \ddot{s}\ddot{i}, \) do not nowadays usually negate existential predications as such. This is noteworthy in itself. It appears that once the existential particle \( \ddot{s}\ddot{i} \) begins to be associated with negation, in effect, becoming a negator of all types of predications, it becomes available for integration into verbal negation. This is consistent with Veselinova’s (2014: 1338, 2016: 172–173) contention that the negative existential cycle model should accommodate negators other than negative existentials entering the cycle. For its, part, negation with \( m\ddot{a} \ldots \ddot{s} \) is not a negator entering the cycle but a spinoff of the erstwhile existential particle out of the cycle into verbal and pseudo-verbal negation, as, indeed, are non-verbal negations with \( m\ddot{a}\ddot{s}\ddot{i} \) and \( mu\ddot{s}/mi\ddot{s}. \)

### 4.4 Stage B > C: Negative existential begins to be used for verbal negation

Nevertheless, \( mu\ddot{s}/mi\ddot{s} \) does re-enter the cycle at Stage B > C as Croft defines it: “gradual substitution of the negative existential for the verbal negator in only part of the verbal grammatical system” (1991: 10). Generally, a division of labor is observed between the verbal negator \( m\ddot{a} \ldots \ddot{s} \) and the non-verbal \( mu\ddot{s}/mi\ddot{s}, \) but the latter can apply to verbal predications under specific circumstances. The most regular of these is in negations of futurity. In some varieties of Arabic, future
action is indicated with grammaticalizations of the participle rāyiḥ ‘going’, mostly /ha/- but occasionally also /rāḥ(a)-/ (examples in (18)). True to their participial origin, grammaticalizations of rāyiḥ are negated with muš/miš.

(31) Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)
   a. ha-yi-rgaʕ
      FUT-3-return.IPFV
      ‘He shall return’
      (Woidich 2006b: 334)
   b. miš ha-yi-rgaʕ
      NEG FUT-3-return.IPFV
      ‘He shall not return’
      (Woidich 2006b: 334)

It was apparently not always thus. Reports of the Egyptian Arabic of Cairo from the latter third of the twentieth century attest negation of futurity with either the discontinuous negator mā ... š or with miš, with one writer (Aboul-Fetouh 1969: 113) claiming that negating futurity either mā ... š or muš/miš (and, indeed, all verbal negation) was in free variation, another calling negation of futurity with mā ... š optional (Abdel Massih 1975: 146), and another (Jelinek 1981: 21) saying that some Egyptians will negate futurity with mā ... š while others prefer miš. By the late twentieth century and the early 21st, however, negation of futurity with miš is obligatory (Brustad 2000: 303) or, if it does occur, negation of future with the discontinuous negator mā ... š is rare (Woidich 2006b: 334).

Be that as it may, the negation of futurity in Egyptian Arabic proceeds with miš for purely structural reasons. Other verbal negations with miš do occur, most of those with various pragmatic motivations.

4.4.1 Extensions of verbal negation with miš

In a systematic review of verbal negation with miš in Egyptian Arabic, Håland (2011: 28–33) posits three pragmatic motivations for negating verbs with muš/miš: contrastive, metalinguistic, and rhetorical negation.

4.4.2 Contrastive negation

In contrastive negation, “one negated and one positive fact stand in contrast to each other” (Håland 2011: 30). Egyptian Arabic is replete with examples of this (Brustad 2000: 302–306; Doss 2008):
In such contrastive negations, speakers might – and do – negate their verbal predications with the usual *mā ... š*, with little difference in meaning. Marking the contrast with the less usual form *miš* invests the utterances with additional meaning.

### 4.4.3 Metalinguistic negation

Contrastive negation may itself be contrasted with metalinguistic negation. Horn (2001: xx), who devotes much attention to the phenomenon, defines it: “a metalinguistic device for registering an objection to the content or form of a previous utterance (not to a proposition)”. Writing about such negations in Arabic, Mughazy (2003) provides illustrative examples:

(33) Egyptian Arabic (Alexandria)

\[
\text{ana } \text{miš } \text{šuf-t } \text{il-mara } \text{ana } \text{šuf-t } \text{is-sett}
\]

\[
\text{I NEG see.PFV-1S DET-wench PRO.1S see.PFV-1S DET-lady}
\]

‘I saw not the wench; I saw the lady’

(Mughazy 2003: 1146)

Here, the speaker does not deny seeing a woman but objects to the manner in which the interlocutor has referred to her.

### 4.4.4 Rhetorical negation

Håland’s final rubric, rhetorical negation, in which the negator *miš* poses a question of the type ‘is not X?:

[Text continues]
The question is clearly not a denial that the speaker had told an interlocutor something. Instead, it is a rhetorical device eliciting the interlocutor’s affirmation by posing the assertion as a negative question.

4.4.5 Dehortatives

To Håland’s three pragmatic categories, Wilmsen (2016c) and Al-Sayyed and Wilmsen (2017) add two more: dehortatives and negating progressive aspect of verbal predications. Of the two, only the negation of progressive aspect is undertaken without any marked pragmatic intention. The dehortative does convey pragmatic intent as a forceful admonition that the addressee not fail to carry out an action, expressing a meaning analogous to ‘mind you not do (something)’.

The admonition in (35) could just as well be conveyed with a prohibitive, involving the regular negation of the verb in the conventional manner (see discussion in Wilmsen 2016c: 136–138). Because it is not, but is negated in the manner of non-verbal predications, some additional meaning is conveyed.

A proviso must be that pragmatic verbal negations with what are otherwise usually non-verbal negators are not of themselves types or stages of a negative existential cycle, even if they are extensions of non-verbal negation into the verbal system. Pragmatically motivated negation with non-verbal negators is also evident in Arabic varieties negating with mā alone, which may use analogous structures to accomplish the same sort of purposes for which this kind of negation is used in varieties negating with mā ... š: the negator mū (< mā + hū), analogous to mūš (< mā + hū + š), in Syrian, Iraqi, and Gulf dialects of Arabic operates in the same manner.
(36) a. Rhetorical negation (Syrian Arabic, Damascus)

\[ \text{ʕayda mū tark-īt-ū mīšān wāḥid tānī} \]

name NEG leave.PFV-f.PRO.3ms CONJ one second

‘[Has] not Aida left him for another one?’

(Own data)

b. Dehortative (Emirati Arabic, Dubai)

\[ \text{abū-na nāṭīr tahīt gum mu t-ṭawwil} \]

father-PRO.1PL wait.PTCP PREP arise.IMP NEG 2-delay.IPfv

‘Our father [is] waiting downstairs. Get up; [mind] you not delay’

(Own data)

Brustad (2000: 303 and 305) adduces a few instances of contrastive negation and dehortatives with \textit{mū} in Syrian Arabic (for another dehortative usage of \textit{mū}, see also Cowell 2005 [1964]: 387) and Kuwaiti Arabic. In Moroccan Arabic, the same sort of thing is accomplished with \textit{māšī}, which clearly derives from the usual verbal negator \textit{mā} and the existential particle \textit{šī}.

(37) Moroccan Arabic (Casablanca)

a. Rhetorical negation

\[ \text{māšī kūn-t f d-dār} \]

NEX be.PFV-1s PREP DET-house

‘Were you not in the house?’

(Brustad 2000: 304)

b. Dehortative

\[ \text{xūš-ṣ kā t-ḥdar ʕlā kullīšī hād l-ḥāẓāt} \]

must-2s 2-speak.IPfv PREP everything DEM DET-things

\[ \text{māšī t-ṣūf źūž} \]

NEG 2-see.IPfv two

‘Be sure you speak about all of these things; you [must] not see [just] two’

(Brustad 2000: 305)

Brustad (2000: 306) correctly maintains that such verbal negations are marked strategies for negating the entire verbal argument as a predicate. As such, the employment of otherwise non-verbal negators in marked pragmatic situations is a regular, even predictable, usage. By themselves, they are not a phenomenon peculiar to the Arabic varieties that are passing through the \textit{šī} cycle and are not part of a negative existential cycle \textit{per se}. 

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4.4.6 Stage B > C: Progressive negation

On the other hand, verbs whose participles have been lexicalized to carry meanings that do not necessarily involve a progressive aspect can without any additional pragmatic load be negated with the non-verbal negator.

(38) Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)
   a. miš b-a-ḍurr balad-i bal
      NEG HAB-1SG-harm.IPFV nation-PRO.1 CONJ
      b-a-nfaʕ-ha
      HAB-1SG-benefit.IPFV-PRO.3
      ‘I [am] not harming my country; rather, I benefit it’
      (Al Khamissi 2007: 149)
   b. il-hukūma miš bi-t-fakkir yer fi-s-suyāh
      DET-government NEG HAB-3FSG-think.IPFV except PREP-DET-tourists
      ‘The government [is] not thinking of anyone but tourists’
      (Al Khamissi 2007: 113)

In these, the verbs ḍarr/yi-ḍurr and fakkar/yi-fakkir mean respectively ‘to harm’ and ‘to think’. Their participles muḍIRR, and mufakkira, do not describe a consequent state of their referents but have acquired the lexicalized meanings ‘harmful’ and ‘memo book’ respectively. In Egyptian Arabic and other varieties, these participles would normally negated with muš/miš.

(39) miš muḍIRR/mufakkira
    NEG harmful/memo book
    ‘[It is] not harmful/[a] memo book’

In context of the utterances in (38), however, using them would be to speak nonsense. The word muḍIRR does not collocate with human beings, and the government is not a memo book. To avoid such infelicities, verbs with lexicalized participles of divergent denotations from their base meanings can be negated with miš in order to retain the base meaning in the progressive. These provide a mechanism for the development of a stage B > C.

4.4.7 Stage B > C: Progressive negation with muš/miš in Tunisian Arabic

Tunisian Arabic provides a structural demonstration of this principle. It happens that Tunisian Arabic, which usually negates verbs with the discontinuous
negator ṭā ... ʾš, also negates verbs with a reflex of ṭūš (in Tunisian Arabic, mahuš, ṭūš, ṭuš, or miš) in contrastive and rhetorical negations and in negations of futurity. It negates progressivity in that manner, too. Belazi (1993) illustrates its operation:

(40) Tunisian Arabic

a. ma yi-Sāwin-ʾš hatta tarf
   not 3M-help.IPfv-NEG even bit
   ‘He [does] not help even [a] bit’

b. muš/mahuš yi-Sāwin hatta tarf
   NEG 3M-help.IPfv even bit
   ‘He [is] not helping even [a] bit’

(Belazi 1993: 60–61)

The progressive meaning is specifically negated with ṭuš or mahuš as opposed to the habitual meaning, which is negated with the discontinuous ṭā ... ʾš. In a study of progressive aspect in Tunisian Arabic, McNeil (2017) points out that negation of imperfective verbs with ṭuš in “the progressive construction ... is not only allowed, it is required: verbal [i.e., standard] negation is ungrammatical” (2017: 34–35, her emphasis).

That some verbs can be so negated under specific circumstances can apparently lead to a wider acceptability of verbal negation with reflexes of ṭuš/miš under other circumstances. This is being reported in Egyptian Arabic (Brustad 2000: 301–306; Doss 2008; Håland 2011). A prominent example of this is to be found in a 2012 popular music release of the singer Maryam Saleh, the title of the song itself exhibiting the negation type, anā miš b-a-yanni ‘I am not singing,’ also featured in the opening lyric along with a series of following verbs negated in the same fashion.

(41) Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)

anā miš b-a-yanni anā miš b-a-ʔūl
   PRO.1S NEG HAB-1S-sing.IPfv PRO.1S NEG HAB-1S-say.IPfv

anā miš b-a-nām anā miš b-a-ʔūm
   PRO.1S NEG HAB-1S-sleep.IPfv PRO.1S NEG HAB-1S-arise.IPfv

‘I [am] not singing; I [am] not talking; I [am] not sleeping; I [am] not getting up’ (www.maryamsaleh.com)

If progressive aspect were intended in these, it is not because the participles of three of the verbs are lexicalizations, conveying meanings other than the core meaning of the verbal root. The participle of the verb ʔāl/yi-ʔūl ‘he said/he says’
ʔāyil means ‘saying’. Likewise, the participles of nām/yi-nām ‘he slept/he sleeps’ nāyim means ‘sleeping’ and ʔām/yi-ʔām ‘he arose/he arises’ ʔāyim means ‘standing.’ The only verb whose participle expresses a lexicalization of the root is the first γannā/yi-γanni ‘he sang/he sings’: its participle muyanni (fem. muyanniyya) means ‘singer’ not ‘singing’, such that anā miš muyanniyya does not mean ‘I [am] not singing’; it means ‘I [am] not a singer.’ As such, the opening phrase, anā miš ba-γanni could be a deliberate negation of the verb whose participle does not impart progressive meaning. The others are not that but something else. Negations of verbs with miš without evident pragmatic motivations appear to be movement toward a full-on stage C.

4.5 Stage C: Negative existential form identical to the verbal negator

For a stage C to become fully realized in the šī cycle would require negation of all verbs with reflexes of muš/miš with no apparent pragmatic motivation. This has occurred or is occurring in at least two dialects of Arabic: A dialect of Lower Egypt and a dialect of southern Yemen:

4.5.1 Stage C in Egyptian Arabic

A few researchers (Woidich 1979: 93; Doss 2008: 81; Soltan 2011: 62) have remarked in passing the negation of verbs with miš in dialects of the Sharqia Governorate of the Nile Delta. It remains to be verified whether verbal negation with miš is obligatory or optional in the Sharqia dialect. Woidich simply states, “Öfter finden man die Negation miš wo nach Kairener Muster mā … š zu erwarten war. Die Beispiele sind aber zu wenige, um mehr als nur konstatieren zu können” (1979: 93). In her detailed study of verbal negations with miš Häland (2011: 70–72 and passim), conducting interviews and observations in the city of Zagazig, the provincial capital of Sharqia, says only that it “appears to be common” (2011: v) in Sharqia, apparently in negations of both perfective and imperfective verbal predications.

(42) Egyptian Arabic (Sharqia Governorate)

\[ \text{ passive negate negate negate verb } \text{ take PFV-3SG prep det language} \]

‘She [has] not taken to (= gotten used to) the language’
b. *miš yi-nfaš*
   NEG 3-be.of.benefit.IPV
   ‘It [is] no use (= ‘It will not do’)’
   (Håland 2011: 59 and 72)

Such regular negation of verbs with *muš/miš* in Egyptian Arabic usage is almost unprecedented in any other Arabic variety.

### 4.5.2 Stage C in Yemeni Arabic

Nevertheless, it is reported to be standard in a dialect of southern Yemen. Writing about her own native dialect, Ahmed states, “the Abyani dialect, in particular the Zingabari dialect ... employs a single negative marker mish [sic] to negate all types of constructions” (Ahmed 2012: 33).

(43) Yemeni Arabic (Abyan Governorate)
   a. *bū-k miš dafaš dayūn-uh*
      father-PRO.2MSG NEG pay.PFV debts-PRO.3MSG
      ‘Your father paid not his debts’
      (Ahmed 2012: 35)
   b. *miš ya-zūr-u giddit-hum ḍī al-ayām*
      NEG 3-visit.IPFV-PL grandmother-PRO.3PL DEM DET-days
      ‘They visit not their grandmother these days’
      (Ahmed 2012: 38)

Yet does she further observe, “prepositional phrases allow all variants of the negative marker” (2012: 39), those being *māši, miš*, and *mā*.

(44) Yemeni Arabic (Abyan Governorate)
   a. *māši maš-hum ḥattā riyāl*
      NEX PREP-PRO.3PL ADV currency
   b. *miš maš-hum ḥattā riyāl*
      NEG PREP-PRO.3PL ADV currency
   c. *mā maš-hum ḥattā riyāl*
      NEG PREP-PRO.3PL ADV currency
      ‘They have not even [a] riyal’
      (Ahmed 2012: 39)
Ahmed is silent on the negation of existential predications in the Abyani dialects. However those may proceed, the regular negation of verbs with miš in the dialect of Zinjibar is a clear instantiation of a stage C. For its part, the variability in negation of locative/possessives in (44) has implications for Stage C > A.

4.6 Stage C > A: Negative existential performs all negation

Yemeni Arabic can negate possessives, formed with maʕ ‘with’, either by a fused form of the negative existential māši or muš/miš, such as those in (27) and (44 a and b), or with verbal negator mā (44c) and its discontinuous analogue mā ... š, as in (30). The same is true of the Egyptian Arabic of Cairo (and others), which may negate maʕ possessive constructions either with miš or the discontinuous mā ... š of verbal and pseudo-verbal negation.

(45) Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)
   a. miš maʕ-yə ʔalam
      NEG  PREP-PREL.1SG pen
   b. mā-maʕ-i-ʃ ʔalam
      NEG-PREP-PREL.1SG-NEG pen
      ‘Not with me [is] [a] pen’ (= ‘I don’t have a pen with me’)
      (Woidich 2006b: 334–335)

Arabic possessive predications usually utilize prepositions maʕ ‘with’, ʃand ‘at’, and l- ‘to’ (Naïm 2008: 674–675), characteristically being negated not as prepositions with mū or muš/miš, but as pseudo-verbs (cf. Comrie 2008: 739) with mā or the discontinuous mā ... š.

(46) a. mā-ʃand-ū-ʃ flūs
      NEG-PREP-PREL.3SG-NEG money
      ‘Not at him [is] money’ = ‘He doesn’t have money’
   b.13 mā-l-ū-ʃ maʕna
      NEG-DAT/PREP-PREL.3SG-NEG meaning
      ‘Not to it [is] meaning’ = ‘It is meaningless’
      (Woidich 2006b: 335)

12 She addresses existential negation in Taiz/Aden only (our Example (2b)).
13 Stassen erroneously implies that this construction no longer exists in Cairene Arabic, remarking, “the dative marking on the possessor has been replaced by a preposition with the basic meaning ‘at’ [i.e., ʃand]” (2009: 323).
Such possessive constructions may be seen as either existential or locative sentences. The semantic and syntactic similarities and differences between existential predications and other forms of copular, locational, and possessive predications are widely discussed and debated (Creissels 2014: 1–10). Yet the discussion and debate has largely bypassed Arabic. The reason for this must be, in part, at least, as Eid (2008: 81) speculates, because of the “extraordinary similarity” between its copular, existential, locative, and possessive structures. It shares this quality with Semitic languages in general (Bar-Asher Siegal 2011: 51 and 55), which mark possessives as locatives such that possession is expressed thus: ‘at/to/with the possessor is the possessed’ (Bar-Asher Siegal 2011: 50; Creissels 2014: 60; Hengeveld 1992: 105 and 163–165; Simeone-Senelle 1996: 219). This is essentially an existential predication: ‘at/to/with the possessor, there is the possessed,’ in what Stassen (2009: 79–80) calls “zero-encoding” of “a full lexical be-predicate” and the “locative/existential”, citing the peripheral Arabic variety Maltese, the closely related Tunisian Arabic, and Cairene Arabic as exemplars.

In Cairene Arabic, negating other prepositional pseudo-verbs with miš is not as well established as it is in the negation of maʃ, but it does occur. Soltan (2011) maintains that it may occur optionally, if less preferably, with the preposition ʕand ‘at’ functioning as a pseudo-verb in a possessive construction.

(47) Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)

\[
\text{miš ūand-i ūaruβiyya}
\]

\[\text{NEG PREP-PRO.1SG automobile}\]

‘Not at me [there is] [a] car’ = ‘I don’t have a car’

(Soltan 2011: 259)

Likewise, in her examination of verbal and pseudo-verb negation with miš in the Egyptian Arabic of Cairo, Doss (2008: 89) observes miš negating prepositions ūand ‘at’, maʃ ‘with’, and li- ‘to’ used as pseudo-verbs in possessive constructions and fī ‘in’ as an existential particle, adducing five utterances with ūand, one each with li- and maʃ, and one with existential fī. In a closer examination of the phenomenon, Håland (2011: 62–65) solicits acceptability judgments from speakers of Cairene Arabic for Doss’s attestations, finding a high degree of acceptance for negating ūand with miš. Oddly, a few Cairenes in Håland’s sample rejected its negating maʃ, which is widely used and acceptable in Egyptian Arabic (Example [45]). A more intriguing result is that while most of Håland’s informants rejected the negation with miš of the existential particle fī, a few also accepted it. In Egyptian Arabic, the existential particle fī is usually negated as a pseudo-verb with ma ... š. Irrespective of informants’ opinions, Håland (2011) attests it on two occasions in conversations with speakers of
Cairene Arabic who were not amongst her informants ([48a] and [48b]) and one in an interview with a mother and daughter in Sharqia, where negation of verbs with miš is common (48d). Doss (2008: 89) provides a further example from Cairene Arabic culled from a television talk show (48c):

(48) Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)
   a. laʔ miš fī
      ‘No, there is not [a taximeter]’
   b. miš fī nizām hina
      ‘There is no system here’
      (Håland 2011: 64)
   c. miš fi sabab muhaddad
      ‘There is no special reason’
      (Doss 2008: 89)
   d. Egyptian Arabic (Sharqia Governorate)
      miš fī šuyl hina
      ‘There [is] no work here’
      (Håland 2011: 71)

A motivation for the existential negator miš extending its usage into the negation of pseudo-verbs is readily to hand in the obligatory negation of the same words with miš when they function as prepositions. Indeed, there can be ambiguity of function in the preposition fī as to whether it means ‘in it’ or ‘there is’.

(49) Egyptian Arabic (Sharqia Governorate)
   a. miš fi-ha illa girid
      ‘darin war nur eine Affe’
      (Woidich 1979: 93)

Such ambiguity and the regular negation of prepositions with muš/miš can motivate a change toward negating existential fī in that manner. If, then, miš negates existential fī in the dialect(s) of Sharqia and sometimes in the dialect of Cairo, this would be a manifestation of a stage C > A.
5 Discussion

Veselinova (2016: 172–173) speaks of negative lexicalizations assuming subdomains of standard negation, emphasizing the need for incorporating other lexicalizations into the negative existential cycle. That is what verbal negator mā ... š and non-verbal negators built upon reflexes of mahuš/mahiš are. They are not existential negators as such, but they are negators derived from existential šī/šay. They are both products of the cycle. The verbal negator mā ... š has spun out of it somewhere around Stage A > B; the reflexes of mahuš/mahiš, on the other hand, have reentered it at Stage B > C, when they began negating verbal predications.

The phenomenon of verbal negation with muš/miš in Egyptian Arabic has attracted some attention (Brustad 2000: 301–306; Doss 2008; Håland 2011). Reports are that speakers of Egyptian Arabic perceive it as being a recent change led by women (Brustad 2000: 303; Håland 2011: 65–72). A native speaker of Egyptian Arabic herself, Doss (2008) casts doubt onto the second of these, noting that as her study of the phenomenon progressed amongst women visiting a relative at hospital and the nursing staff there – also women, she began to notice the same sort of verbal negation with miš in the speech of some male physicians (2008: 87). Håland (2011: 59 and 65–72) puts paid to it entirely, observing: “57% of the informants who used miš or both miš and ma–š [with verbs] were female and 43% were male” (2011: 50). Håland concludes that this does not represent a “striking difference” (2011: 50).14

As to the second, its being recent, in one of the earliest descriptive grammars of any variety of spoken Arabic, Vollers (1890: 34) remarks the occasional negation of verbs with muš/miš. If the nineteenth century, when Vollers was writing, is recent in the history of Arabic, Wagner (2010: 158) has found an instance of verbal negation with muš/miš in a personal letter from Egypt (written by a father to his son, as it happens) from the fifteenth century. Querying the assumption that it may be a recent change in progress, Wagner (2010: 158), asks why it should be that in the six centuries since the writing of that letter, verbal negation with muš/miš has not prevailed over the standard negation with mā ... š. The negative existential model provides the answer:

14 In our data from Egyptian chat rooms (Al-Sayyed and Wilmsen 2017), when the gender of the “speaker” can be identified, the ratio of males to females negating verbs with miš is exactly 1:1.
5.1 Chronology

In her examinations of the operation of the cycle in several language families, Veselinova finds, “the partial takeovers of the verbal domain by the negative existential ... can be maintained for very long periods of time such that they appear more as stable states rather than phases in a cycle” (Veselinova 2014: 1372). By her estimation, the cycle takes about two millennia to complete (2014: 1370, 2016: 151). Arabic fits within such a timeframe. The recorded history of Arabic begins almost 1400 years ago, with the emergence of Arabic speaking Muslims onto the world stage, quickly extending their presence from their homeland in the Arabian Peninsula and the Fertile Crescent westwards to the Iberian Peninsula and eastwards to the borders of China, almost immediately beginning to write profusely in Arabic. Calling this series of events an Arab diaspora, Owens (2005, 2006: 2–4) dates its beginning conventionally to the year AD 640.

Negations with mā ... š, and miš do not appear until several centuries after the diaspora, the earliest unequivocal attestation of both coming in the fifteenth century: verbal negation with mā ... š in a cantilena composed in Maltese (Wilmsen 2014: 91–92 and references) and verbal negation with muš/miš in a letter from Egypt (Wagner 2010: 158). On the other hand, attestations of an existential šī/šē/šay are nonexistent until the modern era, with the earliest documentation of existential šī coming in Reinhardt’s (1894) description of a dialect of northern Oman and Landberg’s (1905) of a dialect of southern Yemen, theirs being among the first systematic descriptions of spoken dialects of Arabic. The modern Arabic varieties exhibiting types of a šī cycle are thus precisely the kinds of “languages for which philological evidence is not available and internal reconstruction may be difficult due to lack of a sufficient range of data” (Croft 1991: 25). Yet, clearly, the model itself cannot provide a chronology. That must be gained by means of a process that Owens (2018) has called “triangulation”, which he defines: “deducing what might have happened to lead to situation A by comparing it with B and C” (2018: 209). For our purposes, A is the current situation of the Arabic varieties exhibiting types in the šī cycle, B the earliest known attestations of the types, and C the similarities of type in widely separated varieties of spoken Arabic. As for C, by the technique advanced in Owens (2006), varieties of Arabic separated by wide geographical distance, having reached their current locales at different historical periods, that display similar traits between themselves, these traits also attested in earlier witnesses, can be said to have arisen from a common source. Or rather, the traits themselves can be seen to have arisen from a common source.
The results are revealing. The earliest extensive written attestations of Arabic date to the seventh or eighth century AD in the sacred text of Islam. In this and subsequent Arabic writing, both sacred and secular, negation with reflexes of {l} is standard (in the sense of usual and unmarked), and negations with mā are restricted, often appearing in instances of reported speech (Sjörs 2018: 28). In spoken Arabic, to the contrary, negation with mā is standard, whereas negations with là are restricted, most often to prohibitives. The common Semitic negator là, which Arabic shares with Northwest Semitic and East Semitic languages, can plausibly be reconstructed to Proto-Semitic (Sjörs 2018: 412–414). Meanwhile, rare epigraphic attestations of what appear to be a negator {m} are known from the Syrian Steppes in Safaitic (Al-Jallad 2015: 155–156), a South Semitic script expressing a language bearing affinities to Arabic. Known Safaitic inscriptions are undated and perhaps impossible to date, but they are thought to range between the first century BC and the fourth century AD (Al-Jallad 2015: 17–18). As such, negation with m/mā is probably a fairly late innovation in the prehistory of Arabic (Sjörs 2018: 238–249 and 406), but it is plausibly as old as two millennia, if not older. For their parts, modern Egyptian and North African dialects of Arabic began to be established in place in the seventh and eighth centuries AD, when Muslims gained control of the Levant in 637 and Egypt around 640, establishing control of Tunisia in 670, moving into Morocco around a decade or two later, and famously crossing the straights of Gibraltar into the Iberian Peninsula in 711. From Tunisia, Egypt, and Iberia, Arabic speakers will have begun settling in Malta around AD 870, when the Muslim Arab Aghlabid dynasty (827–909 AD) began extending itself into Sicily from its base in Tunisia, likely incorporating nearby Malta into its domains. Arabic speakers on Malta subsequently lost regular contact with the Arabophone mainland in 1091, when the Christian Norman Kingdom of Sicily wrested Sicily and Malta from the Muslims (Brincat 2008; Metcalfe 2009: Fiorini and Zammit 2016). Accordingly, because Maltese, the Arabic dialects of the North African littoral, all Egyptian dialects of Arabic, and those of the southern Levant negate verbs with mā ... š, it is almost certain that that sort of negation was present in those dialects by the ninth century AD and probably as early as the 7th. Beyond that, Levantine, Egyptian, and all North African dialects of Arabic possess existential particles other than šī (Table 1; maps A.3 and A.4 in Appendix A): in Levantine, Egyptian, and Libyan Arabic, it is fī; in Tunisian Arabic and Maltese, it is reflexes of θamma; in Algerian and Moroccan Arabic, it is kāyen. This suggests that existential šī had completely lost its existential identity to grammaticalization by the time that the speakers of the precursors of the modern southern Levantine, Egyptian, and North African dialects arrived
in place in the late seventh and early eighth centuries. That is, the precursors of those dialects had already reached a stage $A > B$ of a $\ddot{s}i$ cycle before the diaspora of AD 640.

As for subsequent stages, verbal negations with $mu\check{s}/mi\check{s}$ of the $B > C$ stage of the $\ddot{s}i$ cycle, such negation has been documented since Egyptian Arabic first began to be described systematically in the late nineteenth century (Vollers 1890: 34) and as early as the fifteenth century (Wagner 2010: 158). Meanwhile, Al-Sayyed and Wilmsen (2017) document the same sorts of verbal negations with $mu\check{s}$ in contemporary Maltese as Håland (2011) and others (Brustad 2000: 302–303 and 313–314; Doss 2008) discuss in Egyptian Arabic, including the negation of progressivity in verbal predications, in Maltese, like Egyptian Arabic, without the mediation of the preposition $fi$ of Tunisian Arabic. This suggests that Egyptian and Tunisian Arabic and Maltese could have entered a Stage $B > C$ by the time that Arabic speakers entered Malta in 870, if not beforehand.

It is only manifestations of what appear to be an inchoate $C > A$ stage in dialects of Egypt that may represent a recent change in progress.

### 5.2 Dialect contact

The enterprise of defining a chronology for the $\ddot{s}i$ cycle in Arabic is complicated by the phenomenon of dialect contact throughout the history of Arabic and likely obtaining throughout most or all of the language’s prehistory. The existential particle $\ddot{s}i$ exists as such in dialects of Arabic of the southern Arabian Peninsula, but even there, usage of the particle appears to be on the wane, it being replaced by existential $fi$, deriving from the preposition meaning ‘in’, brought with the dialects of Arabophone migrants from other parts of the Arab world to the Arabian Gulf (Holes 1990: 71; Brockett 1985: 20; Davey 2016: 171; Bernabela 2011: 61). In my own data from Emirati Arabic, where the two existential particles $fi$ and $\ddot{s}i$ operate, the negation $m\ddot{a}sh$ occurs more often than the affirmative $\ddot{s}i$ at a ratio of about 2:1, affirmative existential predication being more common with $fi$. Nor is it unusual for Arabic dialects of Yemen to possess an existential particle of one form, but negate existential predication with a negative existential particle of another (cf. Example (10a)). Some of this variability is captured in Table 2.

About this, Behnstedt observes, “the negative form may differ from the positive one in its base lexeme or vocalism, not only by added $m\ddot{a}$ or $m\ddot{a} – \check{s}$, such as $bu$ ‘there is’, $m\ddot{a} \ddot{s}i$ ‘there is not’, or $\ddot{s}i/m\ddot{a} bi\check{s}$” (2016: 347). Behnstedt, too, suggests that some of the discrepancies between existential particles and their negators “can be explained as due to contact” (2016: 347). The prevalence...
of existential \( \text{fī} \) in Yemeni dialects (Behnstedt 1985: 172–173, map 119, 2016: 346, map 136), which, as a poor nation, has not attracted large-scale migration from other parts of the Arab world, suggests that existential \( \text{fī} \) was already present in southern dialects before the modern era, and the contact of which Behnstedt speaks must date to an earlier era.

### Table 2: Existential particles and their negators in some Yemeni Arabic dialects.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bi-series</th>
<th>fi-series</th>
<th>šī-series</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is</td>
<td>Not there is</td>
<td>There is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bī</td>
<td>mà bīš</td>
<td>fī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bī</td>
<td>mà bīšš</td>
<td>fī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biḥ</td>
<td>mà bīšš</td>
<td>fī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biḥ šī</td>
<td>mà biḥ šī</td>
<td>fī</td>
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<tr>
<td>biḥ</td>
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<tr>
<td>biḥ</td>
<td>mà šī</td>
<td>fī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>biḥ</td>
<td>mà šī</td>
<td>fī</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


6 Conclusions

The focus here has been on the Arabic dialects of the southern Arabian Peninsula because it appears that existential \( \text{šī} \) is original to those dialects, particularly those of the Yemen, and the negative existential cycle began there. In her study of negation in dialect areas of southern Yemen, Ahmed documents the verbal negation types in three dialect areas of the Yemen (Appendix A, map A.4): the dialect(s) of the Hadhramaut Governorate (50a); the dialects of Taiz and Aden (50b), which she includes in a single dialect area; and the dialect(s) of the Abyan Governorate, especially that of the provincial capital, Zinjibar ((43a) shown again here as [50c]).

(50) Yemeni Arabic (Hadhramaut, Taiz/Aden, Abyan Governorate)

a. \( \text{bū-} \) mā dafaʕ dayūn-ah

fath-PRO.2MSG NEG pay.PFV debts-PRO.3MSG

b. \( \text{abū-} \) mā-dafaʕ-š dayūn-uh

fath-PRO.2MSG NEG-pay.PFV-NEG debts-PRO.3MSG
c. bū-k miš dafaš dayūn-uh
father-PRO.2MSG NEG pay.PFV debts-PRO.3MSG
‘Your father paid not his debts’
(Ahmed 2012: 35, 48, and 56)

The dichotomy between dialects negating verbs with and without a post-positive – š in (50 a and b) obtains across the Arabophone world, with some dialects of the Yemen (Watson 1993: 260–262; Simeone-Senelle 1996: 209–211; Ahmed 2012), southern and highland Levantine dialects (Cowell 2005 [1964]: 383), dialects of southern Iraq (Hassan 2015: 304–305), dialects of littoral North Africa (inter alia Caubet 1983: 230–233, 1993: 67–68; McNeil 2017: 181–183), and all Egyptian dialects (with the exception of those of Sharqia) negating verbal predications with mā ... š (e.g., Woidich 2006b: 334–335). Most other Arabic dialects negate verbal predications with mā alone (Appendix A, maps A.1 and A.2). It is the Sharqia and Zinjibar dialects, with their verbal negations with muš/miš that are peculiarly unusual.

The sequence in (50) reflects the developmental pathway of the cycle, with dialects negating verbs with mā alone retaining its earliest state and negations with muš/miš being terminal developments. The Yemeni dialects are the only Arabic dialects to exhibit the original and terminal stages of the šī cycle. This suggests that the šī cycle will have begun and reached Stage C in southern Arabian dialects of Arabic before or at the latest shortly after the AD 640 diaspora, that speakers of precursors to the modern Arabic dialects brought negators built upon šī with them from southern Arabia during and after the diaspora, and that the various negation types on display in the dialects negating with mā ... š and reflexes of muš/miš represent stages of the cycle that their parent types had reached by the time of the diaspora.

The spoken varieties of Arabic ipso-facto conform to Croft’s language types, but a subsection of them exhibit stages of the negative existential cycle. This lends credence to the proposition that the dialects of Arabic are close to being a language family rather than a family of dialects (Retsö 2005, Retsö 2013), with dialects negating with mā alone descending from one parental branch and dialects negating with the negator – š descending from another.

**Abbreviations**

ACC  accusative particle that precedes or prefixes a direct object
ADJ  adjective
ADV  adverbial (Arabic has few true adverbs)
References


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