

David Wilmsen*

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 *fī* 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/šī/šī* 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/mahīš*. At that point, the existential particle *šī* loses its identity as such to be reanalyzed as a negator, with reflexes of *mahūš/mahīš* 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/mahīš* 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

*Corresponding author: David Wilmsen, Department of Arabic and Translation Studies, American University of Sharjah P.O. Box 26666, Sharjah, United Arab Emirates, E-mail: dwilmsen@aus.edu

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 predications. These, he labels $A \sim B$, $B \sim C$, and $C \sim A$, 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 $A \sim B$, $B \sim C$, and $C \sim A$. He often seems to mean the same thing by the two; but at other times, by $X \sim Y$ 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.¹ 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-ʕref*

NEG HAB-1SG-know.IPFV

‘I know not’

b. *mā fī ħada bə-l-bēt*

NEG EXIST one PREP-DET-house

‘[Is] there no one in the house?’

(Croft 1991: 7)²

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-ʕrif-š* *ðe*

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)

ma-fi-š ħaga 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 *fī* that Croft adduces likely derives from the preposition *fī* ‘in’ (notice its second occurrence as a preposition in [2b]). Existential *fī* 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 *mā* alone, that is either *mā* or a univerbation of the negator *mā* and the 3rd-person pronoun *hū*, yielding *mū* (or *mu*). In dialects negating with *mā ... š*, it is characteristically *mūš* (or *muš* or *miš*).

(3) a. Syrian Arabic (Aleppo)

l-miškli fi-na mu 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)

mūš fi-l-masā

NEG PREP-DET-evening

‘Not in the night’

(Simeone-Senelle 1996: 217)

The common assumption has been that the – *š* in these negations derives from one of the many Arabic words for ‘thing’ *šay?* (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 – *š* as a grammaticalization of another existential particle *šī* (also *šay(y)*, *šē*, and *šī*). It is our intent here to examine the manifestations of that cycle, the existence of which makes possible

³ But compare the word *ħaga* ‘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 Pimenta (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)

lō šē ṣahħa al-ħamdu li-llāh
 if EXIST health DET-praise DAT-god
 ‘If there [is] health, thanks to God’
 (Eades 2009: 92)

- c. Omani Arabic (Dhofar, Southern Oman)

šē riyāl
 EXIST riyal[currency]
 ‘There [is] [a] riyal? (= ‘Have you got a riyal?’)’
 (Davey 2016: 180)

- d. Bahārna Arabic (North western Bahrain)

šay ṭabīx
 EXIST cooking
 ‘[Was] there cooking?’
 (Holes 2016: 27)

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

- (5) Emirati Arabic (Sharjah)

šay internet wa free wifi
 EXIST N CONJ ADJ N
 ‘There [is] Internet and free Wi-Fi’
 (Own data)⁴

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)

šay Ṣaḡāḡ = fīh Ṣaḡāḡ
 EXIST sandstorm EXIST sandstorm
 ‘There [is a] sandstorm’
 (Al Hashemi and Islem 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 *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 *fī*. 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 *bī*, of *fī*, and of *šī*. Of these three, *fī* and *bī* and their reflexes are more widespread (cf. also Watson 1993: 14, 163, 255, 387).

In Emirati Arabic, existential *fī* can occur interchangeably with *šī* 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)

fī ruṣāṣ (.) *šay ruṣāṣ*

EXIST lead EXIST lead

'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, *bī* and *fī* look to be grammaticalizations of Arabic prepositions meaning 'in'. The latter has undergone further grammaticalizations

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 apocopations fore and aft, and a stress shift" (2018: 120), suggesting, instead an Akkadian or southeastern Babylonian Aramaic substrate origin.

Table 1: Arabic existential particles and their negation.

	Particle	Negated	Distribution
1	aku	mā ku(-š)	Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, UAE
2	bī(h)	mā bī(h)(-š)	Central Arabia, Syrian steppes, Yemen
3	fī(h)	mā fī(h)(-š)	Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, Levant, Libya, Yemen
4	kāyen	mā kāyen-š	Algeria, Morocco
5	šī	mā šī	Oman, UAE, Yemen
6	θamma	mā θamma-š	Libya, Malta, Tunisia

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*, *šū*, *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)

xdəm-t *šī*
 work.PFV-2MSG Q
 ‘[Have] you worked?’
 (Caubet 1983: 234)

- b. Libyan Arabic (Benghazi)
šif-t aħmad amis ši
 see.PFV-2MSG name yesterday Q
 '[Did] you see Ahmad yesterday?'
 (Owens 1984: 102)
- c. Lebanese Arabic (Beirut)
kān-u li-ħāl-on ši
 be.PFV-3PL DAT-condition-PRO.3PL Q
 'Were they by themselves?'
 (Own data)
- d. Bahārna Arabic (North western Bahrain)
fī wēn zaraḥ-t-ūn xawāfir šay
 PREP where plant.PFV-2-PL seed.beds Q
 'Where [have] you planted? Seed beds?'
 (Holes 2016: 27)
- e. Omani Arabic (Musandam Peninsula)
šind-kum ḥadā? 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)
maḥ-ak ši xamsīn alf šaraf
 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)
maḥ-ak ši 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)
šand-ak ši xobz
 PREP-PRO.2MSG Q/EXIST bread
 'At you [there is] bread?' = 'Have you any bread?'
 (Caubet 1983: 235)

d. Tunisian Arabic (Tunis)

θamma šī šāba qamḥ is-snā

EXIST Q crop wheat DET-year

‘There [is] [is there] a wheat crop this year?’

(FSI 1961: 2:4 and 2:8)

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)

šī bih gahwa wallā bunn wallā māšī

Q EXIST coffee CONJ coffee.beans CONJ NEX

‘[Is] there coffee or coffee beans, or [is] there not?’

(Watson 1993: 294)

b. Yemeni Arabic (Abyan Governorate, Southern Yemen)

ši Ťaṭā-k šīy

Q give.PFV-PRO.2MSG thing

‘[Did] he give you anything?’

(Ahmed 2012: 40)

c. Omani Arabic

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. *ḥak-ēt šī yusuf il-yōm*

speak.PFV-2MSG Q name DET-day

‘You spoke [is it?] [with] Joseph today?’

(Own data)

b. *b-t-Ťarf-ū šī ayy sāŤa badd-u yi-rṣaŤ*

HAB-2-know.IPFV-PL Q which hour FUT-PRO.3MSG 3-return.IPFV

‘You know [is it?], what time he will return?’

(Own data)

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)
lāzim šay naqd
 necessary 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 – *šī*

With *šī* at the end of a verb phrase, placing *mā* before the phrase gives the negative reply. Consider the following minimal pair:

- (13) Tunisian Arabic
 a. *smaʕ-t-ši*
 hear.PFV-2MSG-Q
 ‘You heard? (< ‘You heard, is it?’)’
 b. *mā-smaʕ-t-ši*
 NEG-hear.PFV-1SG-NEG
 ‘I heard not (< ‘Not I heard, it is’)’
 (FSI 1961: Unit 4:3)

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’ *šayʔ* (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) *mā smaʕ-t šayʔ* ‘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 *šayʔ* ‘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) *ayy šayʔ* ‘which thing’ > *ayš* ‘what’
 (Wilmsen 2014: 40–41)

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) *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 *mūš* 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 *mūš*, *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 kabīr*
 DET-house NEG ADJ(large)
 ‘The house [is] not large’
 (Ahmed 2012: 60)
- c. *anā muš rāyih 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’ *rāh* ‘he/it went’/*yi-rūh* ‘he/it goes’) as non-verbal predications. This is crucial for Stage B > C, in which the negator *mūš* 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 *rāyih* ‘going’.⁸ As a participle, it is usually pronounced *rāyih* (M), *rāyh-a* (F), and *rāyh-in* (PL) ‘going’, but as a grammaticalized marker of an anticipated future it can also appear as *rāh* or *rāha* and as a verbal prefix *ha-*, uninflected for gender or number.

(18) Syrian Arabic (Damascus)

- a. *rāha šaf-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. *ʔaddēš rāh tə-bʔa hōn*
 Q FUT 2-remain.IPFV DEM
 ‘How long [are] you going to stay here?’
 (Cowell 2005 [1964]: 323)
- c. *l-məfti ha-yə-ʕlen 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 *rāyih* 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* *rāyih al-yawm*
 PRO.1SG-NEG going DET-day
 ‘I [am] not going today’
 (Ahmed 2012: 61)
- b. [*inta* ‘you’ >] *mā-nte-š* *wālif*
 NEG-PRO.2MSG-NEG accustomed
 ‘You [are] not [a] accustomed’
 (Simeone-Senelle 1996: 217)
- c. [*hī* ‘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. *hū-šī* ‘he/it is?’ > *mā hū šī* ‘not he/it is’ > *mā hūš* ‘not he/it [is]’ > *mahūš* ‘not’ > *mūš* ‘not’ > *muš* ‘not’
 b. *hī-šī* ‘she/it is?’ > *mā hī šī* ‘not she/it is’ > *mā hīš* ‘not she/it [is]’ > *mahīš* ‘not’ > *mīš* ‘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.

(21) Maltese (Valetta)⁹

a. *ū-š l-arloġġ ʔēed fu? il-meyda*
 PRO.3MSG-Q DET-watch PTCP(located) PREP DET-table
 ‘[Is] the watch on the table?’

b. *l-arloġġ mūš ʔēed fu? il-meyda ū-š*
 DET-watch NEG PTCP(located) PREP DET-table PRO.3MSG-Q
 ‘The watch [is] not on the table—is it?’
 (Borg and Azzopardi 1997: 5)

For their part, negators of the forms *mahūš/mahīš*, *mūš/mīš*, 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:

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

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

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. *ħmīr šē*
 donkeys EXIST
 ‘There [were] donkeys’
 (Eades 2009: 92 and 96)
- b. *mā šē ħmīr 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
la? (.) 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,

from which many of the Omani dialects descend (Holes 1989: 455–456, 2006: 27–30, 2016: 6–7), used, as Vanhove explains, “to express the denying of the existence of something” (1996: 198).

- (24) Yemeni Arabic (Abyan Governorate, Southern Yemen)

gul-k māšī ūāše
 say.PFV-1SG NEX 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 NEX
 ‘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)

zamān il-awwal mā šay ibir (.) ibir māšī
 time DET-first NEG EXIST needles needles NEX
 ‘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 *māšīlā*. 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, *mūš* 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 *maʕa* ‘with’ used to express possession.

- (27) Yemeni Arabic (Abyan Governorate, Southern Yemen)
māši maʕa-h ʕiyāl
 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/maš*,” (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 wāhida*
 NEG N(time [instance]) ADJ(one)
 ‘Not all at once (lit. ‘Not one time’)’
 (Watson 1993: 258)
- c. *miš dāʕiman*
 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-ši* and *mā-hī-ši*; those of western Algeria and Morocco do so with reflexes of *mā-ši* (Harrell 2004 [1965]: 155; Caubet 1996: 84).

- (29) a. Algerian Arabic (Mazouna)
ma-ši mliħa
 NEG ADJ
 ‘Ce n’est pas bien’
 (Caubet 1996: 84)
- b. Moroccan Arabic (Fès-Meknès)
əl-ktāb ma-ši fuq ət-ṭābla
 DET-book NEG PREP DET-table
 ‘Le livre n’est pas sur la table’
 (Caubet 1983: 232)
- c. *āna ma-ši ṭbēb*
 PRO.1SG NEG N
 ‘Je ne suis pas médecin’
 (Caubet 1993: 44)
- d. Moroccan Arabic (Casablanca)
huwa maši hna
 PRO.3MSG 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 *māši*, 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.¹¹ The Arabic varieties that utilize the discontinuous *mā ... š* in verbal negation, which do, indeed, also utilize reflexes of *māšī*, *miš*, and *muš* in negating non-verbal predications, tend to negate existential particles as they do verbs: that is, with negative *mā* – and an enclitic – *š*. Indeed, prepositions used in expressing possession (as in Example (27)) are also negated as pseudo-verbs.

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

mā-maš-ī-š *šiyāl*

NEG-PREP-PRO.1SG-NEG children

'Not with me [are] children' = 'I have no children'

(Watson1993: 266)

In that case, those Arabic varieties negating non-verbal predications with reflexes of *māšī* and *muš/miš* do not exhibit a true stage B, because those negators, although derived from existential *šī*, do not nowadays usually negate existential predications as such. This is noteworthy in itself. It appears that once the existential particle *šī* 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 *mā ... š* 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 *māšī* and *muš/miš*.

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

Nevertheless, *muš/miš* 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 *mā ... š* and the non-verbal *muš/miš*, 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

¹¹ 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.

action is indicated with grammaticalizations of the participle *rāyih* ‘going’, mostly /ħa-/ but occasionally also /rāh(a)-/ (examples in (18)). True to their participial origin, grammaticalizations of *rāyih* are negated with *muš/miš*.

(31) Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)

a. *ħa-yi-rgaħ*

FUT-3-return.IPFV

‘He shall return’

(Woidich 2006b: 334)

b. *miš ħa-yi-rgaħ*

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):

- (32) Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)
miš b-a-kallim ṣalā l-fulūs
 NEG HAB-1-speak.IPFV PREP DET-money
b-a-kallim ṣann-ik inti
 HAB-1-speak.IPFV PREP-PRO.2FSG PRO.2FSG
 ‘I [am] not talking about money; I [am] talking about you’
 (Own data)

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)
ana miš šuf-t il-mara ana šuf-t is-sett
 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?’:

(34) Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)

miš ʔul-ti la-k innu miš ħa-yi-gi

NEG say.PFV-1SG DAT-PRO.2M COMP NEG FUT-3SG-come.IPFV

‘[Did] I not say to you that he would not come?’

(Doss 2008: 87)

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)’.

(35) Jordanian Arabic (Amman)

miš tu-ʔlub kull il-menyu

NEG 2-request.IPFV ADJ DET-menu

‘[Mind] you not order the whole menu!’

(Own data)

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)

ʕayda mū tark-it-u mišān wāḥid tāni
 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)

abū-na nāṭir taḥit 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 *mū* in Syrian Arabic (for another dehortative usage of *mū*, see also Cowell 2005 [1964]: 387) and Kuwaiti Arabic. In Moroccan Arabic, the same sort of thing is accomplished with *māšī*, which clearly derives from the usual verbal negator *mā* and the existential particle *šī*.

- (37) Moroccan Arabic (Casablanca)

- a. Rhetorical negation

māšī kun-t f d-dār
 NEX be.PFV-1s PREP DET-house
 ‘Were you not in the house?’
 (Brustad 2000: 304)

- b. Dehortative

xṣṣ-ək tə-hdar ʕla kullšī hād l-hāzāt
 must-2s 2-speak.IPFV PREP everything DEM DET-things
māšī t-šūf žūž
 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 *šī* cycle and are not part of a negative existential cycle *per se*.

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-ḡurr balad-i bal*
 NEG HAB-1SG-harm.IPFV nation-PRO.1 CONJ
b-a-nfaḥ-ha
 HAB-1SG-benefit.IPFV-PRO.3

‘I [am] not harming my country; rather, I benefit it’

(Al Khamissi 2007: 149)

b. *il-ḥukūma miš bi-t-fakkir yēr fi-s-suyāḥ*
 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 *ḡarr/yi-ḡurr* and *fakkār/yi-fakkir* mean respectively ‘to harm’ and ‘to think’. Their participles *muḡirr*, 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 be negated with *muš/miš*.

(39) *miš muḡirr/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 *muḡirr* 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 *mā ... š*, also negates verbs with a reflex of *mūš* (in Tunisian Arabic, *mahuš*, *mūš*, *muš*, 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-šāwin-š* *ħatta tarf*
 not 3M-help.IPFV-NEG even bit
 'He [does] not help even [a] bit'
- b. *muš/mahuš yi-šāwin* *ħatta 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 *muš* or *mahuš* as opposed to the habitual meaning, which is negated with the discontinuous *mā ... š*. In a study of progressive aspect in Tunisian Arabic, McNeil (2017) points out that negation of imperfective verbs with *muš* 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 *muš/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-γanni* ‘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-γanni* *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’ *nāyīm* means ‘sleeping’ and *ʔām/yi-ʔūm* ‘he arose/he arises’ *ʔāyīm* means ‘standing.’ The only verb whose participle expresses a lexicalization of the root is the first *yanṇā/yi-yanṇi* ‘he sang/he sings’: its participle *muṇanni* (fem. *muṇanniyya*) means ‘singer’ not ‘singing’, such that *anā miš muṇanniyya* does not mean ‘I [am] not singing’; it means ‘I [am] not a singer.’ As such, the opening phrase, *anā miš ba-ḡanni* 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* Håland (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)

- a. *miš xad-it ʕalā l-luḡa*
 NEG take.PFV-3FSG PREP DET-language
 ‘She [has] not taken to (= gotten used to) the language’

- b. *miš yi-nfaḥ*
 NEG 3-be.of.benefit.IPFV
 '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 dafaḥ 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 ḏī 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 maḥ-hum ḥattā riyāl*
 NEX PREP-PRO.3PL ADV currency
- b. *miš maḥ-hum ḥattā riyāl*
 NEG PREP-PRO.3PL ADV currency
- c. *mā maḥ-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.¹² 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-ya ʔalam*
NEG PREP-PRO.1SG pen

b. *mā-maʕ-ī-š ʔalam*
NEG-PREP-PRO.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’, *ʕand* ‘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-ʕand-ū-š flūs*
NEG-PREP-PRO.3SG-NEG money

‘Not at him [is] money’ = ‘He doesn’t have money’

b.¹³ *mā-l-ū-š maʕna*
NEG-DAT/PREP-PRO.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., *ʕand*]” (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 *maʕ*, 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)

miš ʕand-i ʕarabiyya

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 *ʕand* ‘at’, *maʕ* ‘with’, and *li-* ‘to’ used as pseudo-verbs in possessive constructions and *fī* ‘in’ as an existential particle, adducing five utterances with *ʕand*, one each with *li-* and *maʕ*, 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 *ʕand* with *miš*. Oddly, a few Cairenes in Håland’s sample rejected its negating *maʕ*, 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 *mā ... ṣ̌*. 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*

NEG NEG EXIST

‘No, there is not [a taximeter]’

b. *miš fī niḏām hina*

NEG EXIST system DEM

‘There is no system here’

(Håland 2011: 64)

c. *miš fī sabab muḥaddad*

NEG EXIST reason defined

‘There is no special reason’

(Doss 2008: 89)

d. Egyptian Arabic (Sharqia Governorate)

miš fī šuyl hina

NEG EXIST work DEM

‘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 fī-ha illa girid*

NEG PREP-PRO.3FSG PREP monkey

b. *miš fiha illa girid*

NEG EXIST PREP monkey

‘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 *mahūš/mahīš* are. They are not existential negators as such, but they are negators derived from existential *ši/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 *mahūš/mahīš*, 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 *mš* 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 *lā* are restricted, most often to prohibitives. The common Semitic negator *lā*, 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 *šī* cycle before the diaspora of AD 640.

As for subsequent stages, verbal negations with *muš/miš* of the B > C stage of the *šī* 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 *mūš* 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 *fī* 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 *šī* 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 *šī* 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 *fī*, 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 *fī* and *šī* operate, the negation *māšī* occurs more often than the affirmative *šī* at a ratio of about 2:1, affirmative existential predication being more common with *fī*. 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 *mā* or *mā - š*, such as *bū* 'there is', *mā šī* 'there is not', or *šī/mā bišš*" (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

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

bi- series		fi- series		ši- series	
There is	Not there is	There is	Not there is	There is	Not there is
bī	mā bīš	fī	fīši	hū šī	mā šī
bī	mā bišš	fī	lā fī	šī	mā bisš
bih	mā bišš	fī	mā bišš	šī	mā šī
bih šī	mā bih šī	fī	mā būš		
bih	mā fīš	fī	mā fī		
bih	mā šī	fī	mā fīš		
bū	mā šī	fī	mā fišš		
buh	mā buhš	fī	mā šī		

Source: Behnstedt (2016): 346–348

of existential *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 *fī* was already present in southern dialects before the modern era, and the contact of which Behnstedt speaks must date to an earlier era.

6 Conclusions

The focus here has been on the Arabic dialects of the southern Arabian Peninsula because it appears that existential *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. *bū-k* *mā dafaʕ dayūn-ah*
 father-PRO.2MSG NEG pay.PFV debts-PRO.3MSG
- b. *abū-k* *ma-dafaʕ-š dayūn-uh*
 father-PRO.2MSG NEG-pay.PFV-NEG debts-PRO.3MSG

c. *bū-k* *miš dafaʕ 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)

COMP	complementiser
CONJ	conjunction
DAT	pronoun indicating a dative relationship, usually equivalent to 'to' or 'for'
DET	determiner
DEM	demonstrative
EXIST	existential particle
FSI	Foreign Service Institute
FUT	particle prefixed to verbs, indicating anticipated future action
HAB	particle prefixed to verbs, indicating ongoing/habitual action
IPFV	imperfective verb
N	noun
NEG	negator
NEX	negative existential
PFV	perfective verb
PREP	preposition
PRO	pronoun
PTCP	participle
Q	question particle
F	feminine
M	masculine
PL	plural
SG	singular
1	1st person
2	2nd person
3	3rd person

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