Chapter 4

Extensions and commonalities in negative existential cycles in Arabic

David Wilmsen
American University of Sharjah

The many varieties of Arabic together exhibit numerous existential particles, all of them negated with the usual verbal negator *mā* or occasionally the common Semitic *lā*. A few of those, *ʔys*, *šī*, and *bī*, exhibit stages of a negative existential cycle. All three cycles share commonalities. Associated with an incipient stage A>B, each undergoes a univerbation between the negator and the existential particle. With the *šī* cycle, this involves either reflexes of a fusion between the negator *mā* and *šī* as *māšī*, or a further step involving the negator *mā*, a 3rd-person pronoun *hū* or *hī*, and the existential particle *šī: mā hū/hī šī* > *mahūš* > *mūš* > *muš/miš*. A univerbation of the existential *bī* proceeds along an analogous pathway: from *mā bi* through *mā hū bi* > *mahub* > *mub*. As for *ʔys*, it has fused with the negator *lā* to form *laysa*. In all three cycles, these univerbations extend into the domain of equational sentence negation. Another commonality is that as the cycles progress, the original existential particles themselves disappear, to be replaced by new ones. In the *bī* and *šī* cycles, it is the preposition *fī* 'in', which has become grammaticalized as an existential particle. In the *laysa* cycle, existential *ʔys* is replaced by demonstratives *hunāka* and *θamma* 'there'. The univerbations in all three cycles can operate in sub-domains of verbal negation. The stages that the three cycles have reached permit a comparative diachrony. Because the *laysa* cycle is the only one to reach a full-on stage C>A, it must be the longest running, followed by the *šī* cycle, which appears to be entering upon a Stage C in Egyptian Arabic and has done in one southern Yemeni variety. The *bī* cycle, having reached only an incipient stage A>B and beyond would be the most recent.

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1 Introduction

Extant spoken Arabic varieties exhibit amongst themselves reflexes of at least six separate existential particles. Of these, two show developments characteristic of a negative existential cycle (Croft 1991) variously distributed amongst Arabic dialects. For its part, the Arabic of writing, descended from an archaic form, no longer spoken as a native language and different in many ways from the many varieties of spoken Arabic, also shows signs of having passed through a negative existential cycle. We shall summarize the workings of the cycle with each of the three existential particles, observing the commonalities that their cycles share with each other.[1] The stages of completion that these respective cycles have reached will admit proposing a relative chronology.

The first of the cycles to be addressed in §2, is called the *laysa* cycle, after the negator *laysa*, which derives from an existential *ʔys*, no longer in use. The earliest Arabic writing of any length, the Quran, dating to the seventh century, exhibits an early stage of the cycle, with later stages to be seen in collections of the prophetic tradition of the ninth century, in some writings from Muslim Spain of the twelfth century, and subsequent writings, up to the present day.

The second, addressed in §3, is called the *šī* cycle, after an existential particle *šay(y)/šē/šī* of the southern Arabian Peninsula attested in spoken Arabic dialects of the lower Arabian Gulf, Oman, and Yemen. Some original data from Emirati Arabic that will be presented as examples of usage are drawn from a series of oral history recordings, in which pre-nineteen-sixties residents of the old town of Sharjah describe life in the emirate before the oil boom. These are housed at the Sharjah Museums Authority (SMA), acknowledged here with thanks.

The third, addressed in §4, is the *bī* cycle, named for an alternate to the better-known existential particle *fī* of which Croft speaks (1991: 7). Some of the data from that discussion are also drawn from the SMA recordings. Statistics pertaining to usage of existential negators involving *bī* come from a corpus of Gulf Arabic (Gumar).[2]

Finally, §5 addresses some of the salient commonalities that the three Arabic cycles share, placing those into the broader typology of negative existential cycles, there and in the conclusion placing them into a historical perspective.

[1] The four other Arabic existential particles (listed in Table 1 at the start of section 3) show no sign of entering a negative existential cycle.

[2] https://camel.abudhabi.nyu.edu/gumar/

2 The *laysa* cycle

An existential particle *ʔys* is attested in a few medieval Arabic lexicographical works.[3] In the earliest of these, the eighth-century Omani lexicographer al-Farahidi (d. 786 AD) says that, in his day, *ʔys* may have fallen out of usage except for a single living idiomatic expression, which he adduces:

(1) *ʔat-ni b-h mn ḥyθ ʔys w lys*
come.PFV PREP-PRO.M.3SG PREP ADV EX CONJ NEG.EX
'He came [to] me with him/it from wherever. (lit. where there and not there)' (al-Farāhīdiī 2003: 105)

al-Farahidi remarks that *ʔys* denotes existence, and *lys*, which he derives from *lā ʔys*, denotes nonexistence. Some ninth-century Arabic philosophical writing uses the two with those meanings (Gihami 2002: 35). Soon afterwards, the affirmative existential particle *ʔys* disappears from living usage, leaving the negative *laysa* abundantly attested in the Arabic of writing from that day to this. Consequently, we may assume that an existential particle *ʔys* did once obtain in some varieties of Arabic and it that was negated with the common Semitic negator *lā*:[4]

(2) *lā ʔys*
NEG EX
'Not there [is]'[5] (al-Farāhīdiī 2003: 105)

The regular Arabic verbal negator, *lā*, negating an existential particle, makes this a characteristic type A construction, in which, as Croft defines it, "there is no special existential negative form, and the negative existential construction is the positive existential predicate plus the ordinary verbal negator" (1991: 6–7). In the Arabic of writing, verbal negations almost always proceed with a reflex of *lā* (sometimes *mā*):

(3) *lā a-ʕraf*
NEG 1SG-know.IPFV
'I [do] not know.' (Adwan 2000: 144, 158)

[3] The *laysa* cycle is examined in much greater detail in Wilmsen (2016a).

[4] Other Semitic languages possess similar existential particles, with some, including Arabic, retaining only the negated form. Their origins are much discussed and debated amongst Semiticists. Nevertheless, despite some disagreement around the derivation of *laysa* (Wilmsen 2016a, Al-Jallad 2018), a plurality consensus holds that it does, indeed, derive from *lā ʔys* (see Blau (1972), Gensler (2000), Lipiński (2001: 464–465, 488–489); summarized in Wilmsen (2016a: 329–331) & Wilmsen (2017: 298–299).

[5] In Arabic, a copula is usually not expressed in present time predications. The enclosing of the English copula in brackets in the gloss is meant to reflect that.

2.1 Stage A>B of the *laysa* cycle

Croft continues, defining a stage A>B as involving "a special existential negative form, usually but not always a contraction or fusion of the verbal negator and the positive existential form" (1991: 7). This is what the surviving negative existential particle *laysa* is. A Stage A>B would have seen a conventional negation of existential *ʔys* with *lā*, as that in example (1), coexisting with *laysa*. That may have happened before Arabic became fully attested in writing, but there is no remaining record of it. Nevertheless, *laysa* can stand by itself in denying the existence of something, to the extent that the thing denied need not be mentioned. In modern writing, this holds especially for negating locational sentences of the type, 'At/for/in/with the X is/are Y' (4a). Nor is *laysa* the sole negator of existential predications; the regular negator *lā* also negates them without the need for an expressed existential particle (4b):[6]

(4) a. *laysa fī l-maktab illā anā w anta*
NEG.EX PREP DET-office CONJ PRO.1SG CONJ PRO.M.2SG
'There [is] not in the office except you and I.' (Adwan 2000: 273)

b. *lā ilāha illā llāh*
NEG god except Allah
'[There is] no god except Allah.' (Quran 37:35)

As such, *laysa* does function as a special negative existential form in certain types of existential negations, whereas the usual negator *lā* can also negate existential predications, albeit without need for an expressed positive existential. This would be a type of a stage A>B.

2.2 Extension into equational sentence negation

Aside from that, *laysa* also negates non-verbal predications of all sorts, whether existential or otherwise. This has been the case at least since the 7th century AD, when extensive Arabic writing began to appear:

(5) a. *laysa ka-miθli-hi šayʔ*
NEG.EX PREP-likeness-PRO.M.3SG thing
'There [is] not [a] thing like His likeness.' (Quran 42:11)

[6]The examples of usage with *laysa* are from written sources, meaning that geographical provenance is largely irrelevant. A map charting the spoken Arabic dialects that are passing through negative existential cycles that are addressed below can be found in Figure 1.

b. *laysa ð-ðakaru ka-l-ʔunθā*
NEG DET-male PREP-DET-female
'The male [is] not like the female.' (Quran 3: 36)

Sentences of the type in (5) are what Li and Thompson call "equational sentences … in which an identificational or member/class relationship is expressed between two NPs" (1977: 419). That is, equational sentences express relationships between the subject and predicate that in languages like English, French, and Spanish require a copula. Equational sentences are characteristic non-verbal predications in spoken and written Arabic alike, in which a copula, verbal or otherwise, is lacking. When a copula is needed, it is usually one of the 3rd-person pronouns (Li & Thompson 1977: 431–433):[7]

(6) Palestinian Arabic (Li & Thompson 1977: 431)

a. *hiyye le-mʕallme*
PRO.F.3SG DET-teacher
'She [is] the teacher.'

b. *il-bint hiyye le-mʕallme*
DET-girl PRO.F.3SG DET-teacher
'The girl [is] the teacher.'

Li & Thompson (1977: 420) label sentences of the first type (6a) "topic-comment constructions" and the second "subject-predicate constructions", noting that both Hebrew, and Palestinian Arabic (among other languages) have developed a copula by means of the topic-comment construction. In actuality, what holds for Palestinian Arabic holds, with minor variations, for all varieties of Arabic: when a copula is needed, it is expressed as a 3rd person pronoun. As far as written Arabic is concerned, topic-comment and subject-predicate constructions alike are characteristically negated with *laysa*, while verbal predications are negated with reflexes of *lā*, as in (3).

2.3 Subsequent stages of the *laysa* cycle

A stage B would see "only a special negative existential form" (Croft 1991: 9). Veselinova (2014: 1338; 2016: 153) observes that stages of the cycle, especially a stage B, may be skipped entirely, and it appears that the *laysa* cycle has done so. Occasionally, however, *laysa* can negate verbs, characteristic of a stage B>C (Croft

[7] For more on equational sentences and the copular function of 3rd person pronouns in Arabic, see Eid (1983, 1991) and Choueiri (2016).

1991: 9–10), and when it does, it is usually for pragmatically marked purposes, notably in posing contrasts between a denial and an assertion (7a) or in rhetorical negations (7b), as in the following from an early genre of Arabic literature, collected sayings of the prophet Muhammad (*Hadith*) compiled by al-Buḫārī (2000: d. 870):

(7) a. *laysa ya-riθ-u-ni ʔillā ʔibnat-i*
NEG.EX 3M-inherit.IPFV-IND-PRON.1SG except daughter-PRO.1SG
'None inherits [from] me except my daughter.' (al-Buḫārī 2000: Vol. VIII p. 151)

b. *a laysa ʔamara-kum*
Q NEG.EX command.PFV-PRON.2MPL
'[Has] he not commanded you?' (al-Buḫārī 2000: Vol. VI p. 864)

In (7a), the predication might still be read as an existential negation: 'There is none inherits from me.' Nevertheless, *laysa* can occasionally negate verbs in apparently unmarked usage:[8]

(8) *laysa ya-drī kayfa ħadaθa al-ʔamr*
NEG 3M-know.IPFV ADV happen.PFV DET-thing
'He knows not how the thing happened.' (Kanafani 2006: 28)

Because the negation in (7) and other verbal negations with *laysa* would usually be effectuated with a reflex of *lā*, the choice to negate the verb with *laysa* must invest the statement so produced with some added pragmatic meaning.

As for a Stage C, "in which the negative existential form is the same as the ordinary verbal negator" (Croft 1991: 11), the *laysa* cycle reached it only in the extinct 12th century Arabic dialect(s) of Muslim Iberia (Al-Andalus), where reflexes of *laysa* had become, "an almost universal negator of the perfective, … imperfectives, and nominal sentences" (Corriente 2013):

(9) a. *las kān dara-yt-uh*
NEG.EX be.PFV.3S know.PFV-1S-PRON.3M
'I had not known it.' (Corriente 2013: 126)

b. *las ni-sammī aḥad*
NEG.EX 1S-name.IPFV one
'I mention not anyone.' (Corriente 2013: 126)

[8] A rarity in other spoken varieties of Arabic, reflexes of *laysa* survive as what Holes (2006: 26) calls a "fossilized remnant" in some southern Peninsular dialects of Arabic, where they can negate verbal predications (Al-Azraqi 1998: 142–144), typical of a stage B>C.

c. *las niḥun ṣibyān*
NEG.EX PRO.1PL children
'We [are] not children.' (Corriente 2013: 126)

2.4 Terminal stage of the *laysa* cycle

Nevertheless, *laysa* has everywhere entered upon a Stage C>A, "in which the negative-existential-cum-verbal-negator begins to be reanalyzed as only a negator, and a regular positive existential … comes to be used with it in the negative existential construction" (Croft 1991: 12).[9] In the Arabic of writing especially, two existential particles *θamma* and *hunāka*, both meaning 'there', and a passive-voice construction involving the verb *ya-ǧid* 'he finds' > *y-ūǧad* 'it [is] found' appear in the 8th and 9th centuries (Wilmsen 2016a: 354–356). The usual verbal negator *lā* most often negates the verb form: *lā y-ūǧad* (lit. 'it [is] not found' understood to mean 'there is not'; example [10a]). Otherwise, *laysa* negates the two existential particles, as in the following from the Hadith collections of Ibn Ḥanbal (d. 855) and al-Buḫārī (10b & 10c):

(10) a. *fa-lā y-ūǧad fī-hi šay?*
CONJ-NEG M.3SG-found.IPFV PREP-PRO.M.3SG thing
'And there [is] not in it [a] thing.' [lit. 'And not found in it thing']
(al-Buḫārī 2000: Vol. VIII p. 1256)

b. *laysa θamma dinār wa-lā dirham*
NEG.EX EX currency CONJ-NEG currency
'Not there [is] [a] dinar and not [a] dirham.' (al-Buḫārī 2000: Vol. VIII p. 1323)

c. *laysa hunāka dinār wa-lā dirham*
NEG.EX EX currency CONJ-NEG currency
'Not there [is] [a] dinar and not [a] dirham.' (Ibn Ḥanbal no date: Vol. IX, p. 507)

Both of the latter two existentials, originate as remote demonstrative pronouns, corresponding in usage to English 'there'. In the earliest extensive Arabic writing, the Quran, dating to the middle seventh century, *θamma* appears once as an existential particle, but a reflex of *hunāka* appears only as a demonstrative.

[9] Croft actually says "a regular positive existential verb" (Croft 1991: 12). But in Arabic, the existential particles are almost always not verbs. For its part, *laysa* exhibits the peculiar quality of inflecting as a perfective verb to negate present-time predications. There is no sign that it ever existed in an imperfective form (see discussion in Wilmsen 2016a: 341–346).

Negation of either with *laysa* begins to appear in writing after the middle of the ninth (Wilmsen 2016a: 354–355). The *laysa* cycle had thus passed through all of its stages by that time.

It can rightly be asked why all stages of the *laysa* cycle appear to be stacked one atop the other. In the first place, Croft himself notes the overlap of stages (1991: 22; c.f. Veselinova 2016: 146, 149, 151–154). In the second, the Arabic of writing was codified in the eight through tenth centuries and has changed but little since then, such that Arabic texts produced in the eighth century remain intelligible to readers today, and modern writers adhere to their modes of expression (Wilmsen 2016a: 340). As it stands, the *laysa* cycle is not likely to proceed further, with *laysa* becoming the regular negator, precisely because of the archaic character that its users cultivate to the present day, tolerating but little deviation from it. Noteworthy, too, is that *laysa* is used in writing but hardly ever in speech.

3 The *šī* cycle

For their parts, spoken varieties of Arabic possess between themselves several existential particles (Eid 2008).[10] These are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Existential particles in spoken Arabic varieties

Existential particle	Negation	Provenance
aku	*mā-kū(-š)*	Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain
bī	*mā bī(-š)*	Syrian steppes, central/ southern Arabian Peninsula
fī	*mā-fī(-š)*	Libya, Egypt, Levant, Arabian Peninsula/Gulf
kāyen	*mā-kāyen-š*	Morocco, Algeria
šī	*mā šī*	Bahrain, UAE, Oman, Yemen
θamma, famma, emm	*mā (θ/f)ammā-š, mem-š*	Tunisia, Malta

Most dialects of Arabic possess only one existential particle, but the Arabic varieties of the southern Arabian Peninsula are remarkable for the presence of multiple particles. Bahrain has *aku, fī*, and *šay* (Holes 2016: 110); the Yemen has *šī, fī*, and *bī* (Behnstedt 2016: 346–348, maps 136 & 137); and Oman and the UAE

[10]The *šī* cycle is examined at greater length in Wilmsen (2020a).

possess both *fī* and *šī* – the latter variously realized as *šay?, šayy, šē*, or *šī* (Reinhardt 1894: 112; Johnstone 1967: 170; Brockett 1985: 24; Holes 1990: 71; Holes 2016: 24–28; Davey 2016: 162). All of these are negated with the negator *mā* common to all spoken dialects of Arabic, which, characteristic of a stage A, negates verbal predications and non-verbal existential predications alike. Indeed, (Croft 1991: 7) adduces usage from Syrian Arabic as an example of a stage A. Compare Croft's examples with an almost identical matched pair from Emirati Arabic:

(11) Emirati Arabic (Sharjah)

a. *mā a-ʕraf ism-ə*
NEG 1SG-know.IPFV name-PRO.M.3SG
'I know not its name.' (SMA data)

b. *mā šay biyūt*
NEG EX houses
'There [were] no houses.'(SMA data)

For its part, the exential particle *fī* has not proceeded beyond Stage A, but exential particle *šī* has. In Emirati Arabic, *šī* shares the existential function with *fī*:

(12) Emirati Arabic (Sharjah)
mā šī fayda
mā fī fayda
NEG EX benefit
'There [is] no benefit.' (SMA data)

A contrast in usage obtains between the two particles in their affirmative and negative functions in Emirati Arabic. Wilmsen (2020a: 528) had observed from limited data that the negation *mā šī* occurs about twice as often as the affirmative *šī* and that affirmative existential predication occurs more often with *fī* than with *šī*. The SMA recordings, from which some of the data for the current study come, reveal a more precise view of the matter. In them, speakers who have occasion to use existential predications use a reflex of *māši* in negation 90 times, as opposed to 32 with *mā fī*. To the contrary, they use *fī* in affirmative existential predication 34 times as opposed to their using *šī* in the affirmative only six times, with some speakers not using it at all. That is, full 85 percent of existential predications are with *fī* and 72.8 percent of existential negations are with a variant of *māši*.[11]

[11] A similar situation obtains in Yemeni Dialects of Arabic, in which, as Behnstedt observes, "the negative form may differ from the positive one in its base lexeme … such as *bū* 'there is', *mā šī* 'there is not' (2016: 345). We shall return to existential *bī* below.

These figures are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Occurrences of Emirati existentials and their negations in SMA oral histories

	šī	*fī*	*māšī*	*mā fī*
Speaker 1F	0	0	25	4
Speaker 2F	3	1	21	5
Speaker 1M	0	10	18	8
Speaker 2M	2	13	17	7
Speaker 3M	1	5	6	4
Speaker 4M	0	5	3	4
Totals	6	34	90	32
Percentages	15	85	72.8	26.2

3.1 Stage A>B of the *šī* cycle

Such alternation in usage is in accordance with Croft's conception of Stage A>B, in which "a special negative existential form is found … in addition to the regular existential form" (1991: 7). In this case, the regular existential form being precisely the *fī* that he adduces, albeit for the Syrian Arabic of Damascus. So, too, are univerbations between the negator and the existential particle common in a stage A>B, the negator so formed existing side-by-side with the regular negator + existential particle construction. Existential *šī* does form a univerbation with the negator *mā* to form *maši*. In such a form, reflexes of *maši* can stand alone as an element of negation:

(13) Emirati Arabic (Sharjah)
lā? (.) mašay (.) inʃidm-it ha-l-ašyā?
NEG NEG.EX disappear.PFV-F.3SG DEM-DET-things
'No. There [are] not. These things have disappeared.' (SMA data)

A caveat is that according Croft, "the contracted form is the newer one" (Croft 1991: 7). This is likely true of *maši*; but existential *fī* and its negation *mā fī* are relatively new, too. This much has been said about Omani dialects of Arabic (Brockett 1985: 24; Holes 1990: 71; Bernabela 2011: 61; Davey 2016: 171). It appears to be true of Emirati Arabic, too.

3.2 Extension of Stage A>B in the *šī* cycle

A further univerbation occurs between the negator *mā*, a 3rd-person pronoun *hū* 'he/it [is]' or *hī* 'she/it [is]'), and the existential *šī*, usually but not always reduced to /-š/:

(14) a. *mā hū šī* > *māhūš* > *mūš* > *muš*
NEG PRO EX NEG NEG NEG

b. *mā hī šī* > *mahīš* > *mīš* > *miš*
NEG PRO EX NEG NEG NEG

A clear indicator of the derivation comes from Tunisian Arabic and the closely related peripheral (or remnant or enclave) variety of Arabic Maltese. Tunisian Arabic exhibits several reflexes of both, including *māhūš(i) mauš(i), mūši, muši, muš,* and *māhīš(i) mayīš, maiš, mîši, miši, miš;* it even has a reduced form *mumš*, derived in the same manner as that in (14), but with the plural 3rd person pronoun *hum* 'they/them' (Singer 1984: 718). For its part, Maltese exhibits the derivation in its orthography, which represents the word, realized *mūš* in speech, as <mhux>. Other such precursors to *muš* and *miš* are widely attested and well documented in Arabic dialects from the Yemen to Morocco.[12]

Like *laysa*, both *maši* and *muš/miš* have extended into the negation of equational sentences, especially in dialects of the Yemen (Watson 1993: 253, 258),[13] where, for example, in the dialect of Sana'a, Yemen, either *miš* or *muš* in addition to shortened forms *māš* or *maš* negate equational sentences (Watson 1993: 253–256):

(15) a. *māš hī* *ħāliy-ih*
NEG PREP.F.3SG pretty-F.SG
'She [is] not pretty.' (Watson 1993: 256)

b. *anā miš fi-l-bayt* *ğāls-ih*
PRO NEG PREP-DET-house sitting-F.SG
'I [am] not sitting at home.' (Watson 1993: 258)

In Arabic varieties elsewhere, reflexes of *muš/miš* and *maši* also negate nonverbal predications as the usual negator of equational sentences:

[12] Rather than reference the many studies documenting the phenomenon, reference is here made to the discussion in Wilmsen (2014: 100–101).

[13] In Emirati Arabic, equational sentences are usually negated with *mū* or *mub*, more on which below.

(16) a. Lebanese Arabic (Beirut)
hiyye miš hōn
PRO.F.3SG NEG DEM
'She [is] not here.' (Own data)[14]

b. Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)
ir-rayyis miš hina
DET-headman NEG DEM
'The boss [is] not here.' (Woidich 2006: 334)

c. Moroccan Arabic (Casablanca)
huwa maši hna
PRO.M.3SG NEG DEM
'He [is] not here.' (Harrell 2004: 155)

The negator *miš* is found in Emirati Arabic, too, but it is likely a borrowing from Egyptian and Levantine varieties of Arabic, brought to the Emirates by the large expatriate populations of speakers of those varieties, who are attracted to the Emirates by the many career opportunities.

3.3 Excursus on grammatical *šī*

It behooves us to note the plural *ašyāʔ* 'things' in (14) and its singular form *šayʔ* 'thing' in (10a), one of the many words with that designation in Arabic (c.f. *ʔamr* in [8]). Before much was known about existential *šī*,[15] speculation had it that the *ši* in negation (i.e., the suffixed /-š/ in some varieties in Table 1) derives from the word for 'thing'. The stock demonstration of this being as follows:

(17) *mā katab ši* > *mā katab-š*
NEG write.PFV thing NEG write.PFV-NEG
'He wrote not [a] thing.' > 'He wrote not.'

As such, it has even been suggested that it plays a role in a presumed *Jespersen cycle* in Arabic (Lucas 2007). Briefly, Jespersen cycle refers to the process whereby a lexical item such as, emblematically, the French word *pas* 'step' becomes closely bound up with negation and can come to replace the negator itself,

[14] The Lebanese examples in (17) and (19) are drawn from my observations while living in Beirut from 2007 to 2016.

[15] Although it had been attested sporadically since the late 19th century (Reinhardt 1894: 112; Johnstone 1967: 170; Brockett 1985: 24), it has remained largely unexamined until recently (Holes 2016: 24–28, Wilmsen 2017, 2020a).

as with some colloquial French varieties, which negate with *pas* alone without the standard preposed negator *ne*. The difficulty with postilating this cycle for Arabic, as pointed out by Woidich (1990: 139), is in the unmotivated change of valence between the transitive 'he didn't write a thing' and 'he didn't write' and the loss of the predicate between 'it is not a thing' and 'it is not.' What is more, it happens that reflexes of *šī* perform many functions in spoken Arabic varieties; in interrogation, negation, as an indefinite article, and a quantifier (Wilmsen 2014: 44–63; Wilmsen 2017). All of these are presumed to derive from the *šī* of 'thing' (for a recent iteration of this, see Glanville 2018), even though many of them are quite un-thing-like in semantics.

3.4 The B>C Stage of the *šī* cycle

A true stage B would see "only a special negative existential form" (Croft 1991: 9). That has not yet occurred in the Arabic dialects possessing reflexes of *šī* as an existential particle. Like the *laysa* cycle, the *šī* cycle appears to have skipped a stage B. It resumes in Stage B>C, which Croft defines as "gradual substitution of the negative existential for the verbal negator in only part of the verbal grammatical system" (1991: 10). Accordingly, *miš/muš* and reflexes can occasionally negate verbs:

(18) Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)

a. *miš ħa-yi-gi*
NEG FUT-3-come.IPFV
'He will not come.' (Doss 2008: 87)

b. *miš ʔul-ti la-k*
NEG say.PFV-1SG DAT-PRO.M.2SG
'[Did] I not tell you?' (Doss 2008: 87)

c. *miš ittafaʔ-t maʕ-āh ʷa-bass maḍḍ-ēt-uh*
NEG agree.PFV-1SG PREP-PRO.M.3SG PREP-ADV had.sign.PFV-1S-PRO.3M
'I didn't just agree with him; I had him sign.' (Doss 2008: 86)

d. *bi-ya-axud fulūs miš bi-y-gīb fulūs*
HAB-3-take.IPFV money NEG HAB-3-get.IPFV money
'He takes money; not brings money.' (Al-Sayyed & Wilmsen 2017: 248)

e. Lebanese Arabic (Beirut)
b-a-ʕzim-kon *ʕalā ʔahwe miš ti-šrab-ū* *šāy*
HAB-1SG-invite.IPFV-PRO.2PL PREP coffee NEG 2-drink.IPFV-PL tea
'I'm inviting you for coffee; [Mind] you not drink tea [beforehand].'
(Own data)

Verbal negation with *miš/muš* instead of the usual *mā* usually imparts some especial pragmatic meaning to the negation. That in (18b) is a rhetorical negation, a negative assertion intended to solicit an affirmative reply; in (18c) it is metalinguistic negation, denying something other than the truth value of the utterance (the speaker, did, in fact, agree); (18d) contrasts a negated proposition against its affirmative; and (18f) is a dehortative (Wilmsen 2016b). In any of these, the regular verbal negator *mā* can, and usually does, apply. As such, these are not true instances of a Stage B>C. For its part, (18a), as an example of a regularly applied verbal negations in a specific sub-domain of verbal negation, is a manifestation of a true Stage B>C. It furthermore appears that *miš/muš* is trending towards the negation of pragmatically unmarked verbs in the dialect of Cairo (Brustad 2000: 303; Doss 2008; Håland 2011; Wilmsen 2020a: 519).

3.5 Stage C and beyond of the *šī* cycle

A characteristic Stage C appears in only two dialects of Arabic: the Egyptian Arabic of the Sharqia governorate north of Cairo, and in the dialect of the Abyan province of southernmost Yemen. As for the former, *miš* "used for negation of imperfect and perfect verbs … appears to be common" (Håland 2011: v, 70–72):

(19) Egyptian Arabic (Sharqia Governorate)

a. *miš xad-it* *ʕalā l-luġa*
NEG take.PFV-F.3SG PREP DET-language
'She [has] not taken to [= gotten used to] the language.' (Håland 2011: 59)

b. *miš yi-nfaʕ*
NEG 3-benefit.IPFV
'It benefits not.' (Håland 2011: 72)

So, too, have there been reports of the spread of verbal negation with *muš/miš* in the dialect of the capital city Cairo (Brustad 2000: 301–306; Doss 2008; Wilmsen 2020a: 525), but these remain to be explored in greater detail. It is, nevertheless, a phenomenon of which speakers of Egyptian Arabic are aware (Brustad 2000: 301; Håland 2011: 65–72).

As for the latter, "the Abyani dialect, in particular the Zingabari dialect ... employs a single negative marker mish [sic] to negate all types of constructions" (Ahmed 2012: 33), making it a true stage C:

(20) Yemeni Arabic (Abyan Governorate)

a. *bū-k* *miš* *dafaʕ* *dayūn-uh*
father-PRO.M.2SG NEG pay.PFV debts-PRO.M.3SG
'Your father paid not his debts.' (Ahmed 2012: 35)

b. *miš* *ya-zūr-u* *giddit-hum* *ðī-l-ayām*
NEG 3-visit.IPFV-PL grandmother-PRO.3PL DEM-DET-days
'They visit not their grandmother these days.' (Ahmed 2012: 38)

A stage C>A appears to be attested only in dialects of Egypt, wherein *muš/miš* may occasionally negate the existential *fī*, which is otherwise more normally negated with the verbal negator *mā*:

(21) a. Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)
miš *fī* *sabab* *muħaddad*
NEG EX reason defined
'There [is] no special reason.' (Doss 2008: 89)

b. Egyptian Arabic (Sharqia Governorate)
miš *fī* *šuɣl* *hina*
NEG EX work DEM
'There [is] no work here.' (Håland 2011: 71)

Meanwhile, the erstwhile existential particle *šī/šay* has almost completely lost its identity in most varieties of Arabic, where it has become grammaticalized into a new negator *miš/muš*, as well as assuming other functions (Wilmsen 2014: chpt. 3; Wilmsen 2017). This bespeaks another commonality with the *laysa* cycle: As the existential particle is incorporated into a negator and becomes involved in all manner of equational-sentence negation, it loses its existential identity and is replaced by a newer existential particle.

4 The *bī* cycle

An existential *bī* obtains from the Syrian Plateau (Behnstedt 1997: 346–348, map 336), through Central Arabia (Ingham 1994: 44–45), to the Yemen (Behnstedt 2016: 346, map 136).[16] As with the existential particle *fī* (Croft 1991: 7), negations of ex-

[16] I have addressed the *bī*-cycle in greater detail in an as yet unpublished manuscript Wilmsen (2020b).

istential particle *bī* are usually type A, with the regular verbal negator (in spoken Arabic *mā*) negating the existential particle:

(22) a. Yemeni Arabic (al-Hudeidah)
mā ya-ʃref-š ðe
NEG M.3SG-know.IPFV-NEG DEM
'He knows not that.' (Simeone-Senelle 1996: 210)

b. Yemeni Arabic (Sana'a)
hānā mā bih ħadd
DEM NEG EX one
'Here there [is] no one.' (Watson 1993: 163)

Both existential *bī* and existential *fī* likely derive from an original common Semitic preposition **pi* meaning 'in' (Lipiński 2001: 470), and, as prepositions, the two are often interchangeable in their usage (Cowell 2005: 479). Likewise, as existential particles, the two are also almost identical in their usage, albeit usually appearing separately in distinct dialects, probably both deriving from the preposition and an affixed 3rd person pronoun:

(23) *bī-/fī-h* > *bī(h)/fī(h)*
PREP-PRO.M.3SG EX

Of the two, *bī* shows signs of entering a negative existential cycle, whereas *fī* does not.

4.1 Excursus on grammatical *bi-*

Aside from being an existential particle and a preposition meaning 'in' or 'with', the latter often with instrumental usage, for example, *bi-l-īd* 'by hand', *bi-* performs other grammatical functions in diverse varieties of Arabic, serving as a proclitic marker of the indicative mode in Egyptian (Woidich 2006: 61, 280–284) and Levantine (Cowell 2005: 180, 324–329) varieties of spoken Arabic.[17] Woidich delineates its major functions in Egyptian Arabic as marking the actual (a) or habitual (b) action of the verb:

(24) Egyptian Arabic (Cairo)

a. *dilwaʔti bi-t-labbis il-ʃarūsa*
ADV IND-F.2SG-dress.IPFV DET-bride
'Now, she [is] dressing the bride.' (Woidich 2006: 281)

[17]Retsö (2014: 64) lists other Arabic dialects where it also functions as such.

b. *l-ʔaṭri bi-y-ʔūm is-sāʕa tamanya*
DET-train HAB-M.3SG-arise DET-hour eight
'The train leaves at eight.' (Woidich 2006: 281)

It also functions as a marker of futurity (Cowell 2005: 326):

(25) Syrian Arabic (Damascus)
baʕd bukra b-i-rūḥ ʕa-l-madrasa
PREP tomorrow FUT-3-go.IPFV PREP-DET-school
'The day after tomorrow, he will go to school.' (Cowell 2005: 324)

Marking futurity is also one of its main functions in the dialects of the Arabian Gulf, Oman, and Yemen (Persson 2008, Retsö 2011, 2014). In Egyptian and Syrian Arabics, the future so marked is more of an imminent potentiality, whereas in southern peninsular Arabic the future could be any time from near (26a) to far (26b):

(26) Emirati Arabic

a. *iðā ṣār maʕ-i šayy b-a-ttaṣil*
COND happen.PFV PREP-PRO.1SG thing FUT-1SG-contact.IPFV
fī-k
PREP-PRO.M.2SG
'If anything happens with me, I'll call you.' (Jarad 2017: 750)

b. *b-a-kammil dirāst-i f-amrīkā*
FUT-1SG-continue.IPFV study-PRO.1SG PREP-name
'I will continue my studies in America.' (Jarad 2017: 751)

The origins of the verbal prefix *bi-* are also disputed, with some proposing that in Gulf and southern peninsular varieties of Arabic it is a verb of volition *abā/y-abī* 'he/it wanted/he/it wants' (Retsö 2014: 67; Owens 2018: 217–219), while that of the Egyptian and Levantine dialects of Arabic is the preposition *bi-* (Retsö 2014: 66, 70).[18]

[18]The derivation of the *bi-* verbal prefix in the Arabian peninsular dialects makes sense, in that verbs of volitions are very common sources for future markers. A simple reconstruction from that source, however, is complicated by its use in Yemeni and Omani Arabic as marking both the habitual/indicative and the future. See discussion of the merits of these and other derivations and references to the pertinent studies of the matter in Wilmsen (2020b), where it is argued that another grammatical function of *bi-*, as an adjunct to negation, addressed in the next section, does, indeed, arise from the preposition *bi-*, but by way of existential *bī* (< *bi-hi* 'in it'), which then becomes involved in an attenuated negative existential cycle.

4.2 Negations with *bi-* in equational sentence negation

Another grammatical function of *bi-*, not hitherto explored in any depth, is its involvement in negation, whereby it may act conjointly with the regular verbal negator *mā*, usually in the negation of equational sentences:

(27) Emirati Arabic (Sharjah)
čidb ʕalā xaṭa mā bi-zēn
lie PREP fault NEG NEG-good
'[A] lie about an error [is] not good.' (SMA data)

The two negators *mā* and *bī* can merge into a single negative particle, by which they act upon equational sentences in a manner analogous to that of *māšī*:

(28) a. Omani Arabic (Sharqiyya)
ʕadan māb zēna al-ħīn
name NEG good DET-time
'Aden [is] no good now.' (Holes 2008: 485)

b. Emirati Arabic (Sharjah)
ba-ti-ylis-ūn fī l-maylis ti-smaʕ-ūn fī-h
FUT-2-sit.IPFV-PL PREP DET-majlis 2-hear.IPFV-PL PREP-PRO.M.3SG
šay mab zēn
thing NEG.EX good
'You would sit in the majlis, hearing something in it not good.' (SMA data)

Another commonality, attested form in Gulf Arabic from Kuwait through the Emirates is a univerbation of the negator *mā*, the 3rd person pronoun *hū*, and *bī*, yielding *mub* (Holes 1990: 64, 73, 116, 243):

(29) Emirati Arabic (Sharjah)
mub fi-š-šarğə
NEG PREP-DET-place.name
'Not in Sharjah.' (SMA data)

The derivation of *mub* would have proceeded along a similar pathway to that of *muš/miš*:

(30) *mā hū bi* > *mahub* > *mub*

4.3 The *mā hū bī* sequence: Southern Arabia *mā-hū*

Remnants of this process are on display in southern Arabic varieties from the southernmost Hadramawt province of Yemen (Al-Saqqaf 1999: 185–186) into Najd (Ingham 1994: 44) in central Arabia, and the Hijaz along the west coast (Omar 1975: 41). In these dialects, personal pronouns can affix to the negator *mā*:

(31) a. Haḍrami Arabic (Southern Yemen)
māhu rayyiẓ minn-ak il-kalām da
NEG.M.SG agreeable PREP-PRO.M.2SG DET-word DEM
This word [is] not right from you.' (Al-Saqqaf 1999: 186)

b. Haḍrami Arabic (Southern Yemen)
is-sitra māhi mumħūẓa
DET-wall NEG.F.SG mudded
'The wall is not plastered.' (Al-Saqqaf 1999: 186)

c. Zahrani Arabic (Southern Saudi Arabia)
al-bint māhi fi-d-dār
DET-girl NEG.F.SG PREP-DET-house
'The girl [is] not in the house.' (Alzahrani 2015: 305)

d. Zahrani Arabic (Southern Saudi Arabia)
ar-raǧǧāl māhu hinya
DET-man NEG.M.SG here
'The man [is] not here.' (Alzahrani 2015: 307)

In the central Hijaz, a reduced form *mū* exists alongside *māhu*:

(32) *huwwa mū min hina*
PRO.M.3SG NEG PREP DEM
'He [is] not from here.' (Omar 1975: 41)

4.4 The *mā hū bī* sequence: Central Arabia *muhub*

Some of the dialects of the central Arabian Peninsula take *māhū* and *mū* a step further, affixing /-b/ on the negator + pronoun:[19]

[19]See Prochazka (2010: 127) for a rough distribution of peninsular dialects that augment *mā* + pronominal suffix with /-b/.

(33) Najdi Arabic (Central Saudi Arabia)

a. *Ali muhub fi l-bēt*
name NEG.M.3SG PREP DET-house
'Ali [is] not in the house.' (Binturki 2015: 75)

b. *as-syār-a mahīb xarban-a*
DET-automobile-F NEG.F.3SG ruin-F
'The car [is] not broken down.' (Binturki 2015: 76)

According to Ingham (1994), the elements can be further reduced, while remaining discrete units:

> In nominal sentences the construction *ma...b-* occurs. This is a peculiarity of Central Najdi [Arabic] and occurs also as an alternative structure in Classical [i.e., written Arabic].[20] With the *ma...b-* construction, the relevant personal pronoun is also introduced producing a topicalized structure of the type 'Hasan, he is not here'. The resulting complexes *ma hu b-* 'he is not' or *ma hi b-* 'she is not' are often reduced to *mu hu b-* or *mu b-* and *mi hi b-* or *mi b-*. (Ingham 1994)

Ingham does not speculate as to the origin of the *b-* in these. For his part, Binturki (2015: 74, 133; after Matar 1976) proposes that it derives from an "an emphatic –b". The parallel development between *muš/miš* and *mub*, however, suggests the possibility of a derivation from the existential particle *bī*. Wilmsen (2017: 288–289) discusses the quasi-copular qualities of grammaticalizations of existential *šī*. The *bī* of negation also possesses a quasi-copular quality.

4.5 The *mā hū bī* sequence: Arabian Gulf *mub*

Negating non-verbal predications with *mub* is emblematic of Gulf Arabic in general, but it is more common in the southern Arabian Gulf than in the northern, with the frequency of usage increasing dramatically between Kuwait, where *mū* accounts for more than 90 percent of usage, and the United Arab Emirates, where *mū* barely reaches 40 percent of usage, and *mub* approaches 50. These figures, summarized in Table 3, come from an electronic corpus of Gulf Arabic (Khalifa

[20]The reference is to negations of equational sentences with *laysa*, which can optionally occur with *bi-*; for example, *laysa ğayyid* and *laysa bi-ğayyid* both mean '[It is] not good,' with no apparent pragmatic difference between the two. Negations with *mā … bi-* are a less-common option in written Arabic.

et al. 2016). The corpus comprises a genre of online conversational novels, composed in conversational Gulf Arabic of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE. Not every country (and thus its corresponding dialect) is represented equally in the corpus, with roughly 61 percent of the texts coming from Saudi writers, to only thirteen percent from writers from the UAE, with numbers dropping considerably from there. Nevertheless, by comparing frequencies within each dialect area, an idea may be formed about the common usage within each one.

Table 3: Instances and relative frequencies of non-verb negators in Gulf Arabic varieties

	Kuwait		Bahrain		Qatar		UAE	
	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#
mū	**92.46**	18609	**67.28**	475	**27.75**	543	**39.71**	20065
mahub	0.15	30	10.20	72	6.75	132	1.60	809
mub	**5.41**	1089	**20.25**	143	**46.29**	906	**47.43**	23963
hub	1.98	399	2.27	16	19.21	376	11.26	5690
Totals	100%	20127	100%	706	100%	1957	100%	50527

As may be seen, negation techniques for non-verbal predications form a cline from Kuwait to the Emirates, whereby Kuwaiti Arabic uses *mū* in roughly 93 percent of such negations and *mub* a scant 5.4 percent. The further south the dialect area, an inverse relation develops, with Qatari and the Emirati dialects use of the negator *mub* rising to between 46 and 47 percent against the use of *mū*. Noteworthy, too, is the negator *hub*, used in Qatari and Emirati Arabic.

As for the dialects of the two other GCC member states, the Gulf Arabic corpus shows an 86.5 percent usage of *mū* in texts from Saudi Arabia and a corresponding 9 percent usage of *mub*. For its part, usage in Omani texts is almost exclusively with *mū* at over 98 percent of occurrences. Omani dialects are a separate grouping from those of the Arabian Gulf, and the Saudi Arabian dialects represent at least four distinct regional groupings, central (Najdi); western (Hijazi); southern, closely related to Yemeni Arabic; and those of the eastern seaboard, which fall within the Gulf Arabic type. The origins and locales of the Saudi authors cannot always be determined, such that it cannot be certain whether they are all writing from the eastern province, in which Gulf dialects prevail. Nevertheless, the ratios of *mū* and *mub* conform to the cline from the northern Gulf to the southern.

4.6 Subsequent stages of the *bī* cycle

Generally, a negator of non-verbal predications, *mub* may occasionally negate verbs with the same sort of pragmatic intent with which the negation of verbs with *miš/muš* in (18), that in (34a) being a dehortative and in (34b) contrasting a negated proposition against its affirmative:

(34) Emirati Arabic (Sharjah) (SMA data)

a. *mub t-yī-ni ʕugub sana ti-gūl waṭani*
NEG 2-come.IPFV PRO.1SG PREP year 2-say.IPFV patriotic
'[Mind] you not come [to] me after a year, to say [that you are a] patriot.'

b. *sār i-ṭāliʃ mnū yi-digg il-bāb mub gāl*
go.PFV 3-see.IPFV who 3-knock.IPFV DET-door NEG 2-say-PFV
gūm-ī fulān-a inti tāliʃ-ī-h wa lā fulān
arise.IMP-F so-and-so-F PREP look.IMP-F-PRO.3MS CONJ NEG so-and-so
gūm tāliʃ-ah
arise.IMP look.IMP-PRO.M.3SG
'He [himself] went [to] see who knocks [at] the door; he said not "Get up you or you, see who".'

As with verbal negations with *mub* or *miš/muš*, any of these negations can also be accomplished with the regular verbal negator *mā* or, in the prohibitive, *lā*. The use of an otherwise non-verb negator invests the utterances with an added element of meaning. As such, verbal negations with *mub* are not true expressions of a stage B>C, but they do provide impetus for a "gradual substitution of the negative existential for the verbal negator in only part of the verbal grammatical system" (Croft 1991: 10), as would be characteristic of that stage.

There is a stage C in the *bī* cycle. It is possible, however, to find *mub* negating existential *fī* in a manner consistent with a stage C>A:

(35) Emirati Arabic (Abu Dhabi)
il-ʕarab mub fī fi-l-bēt
DET-ethnonym NEG EX PREP-DET-house
'The people [are] not there in the house.' (Al-Rawi 1990: 121)

5 Discussion

Of the three Arabic negative existential cycles, the *laysa* cycle has progressed through all stages of the cycle, reaching Stage C in an extinct variety of Arabic in

which reflexes of *laysa* were the most common negator of verbal and non-verbal predications alike. It also, to this day, usually negates newer existential particles, in the characteristic manner of a Stage C>A. The *šī* cycle has progressed into a characteristic Stage B>C in its regular negation of futurity in verbs with *miš/muš*, a univerbation of the regular verbal negator, the 3rd-person pronoun, and the existential particle. As for the C stage and beyond, only in a few dialects of Egyptian Arabic does it appear to have moved or to be moving into a true stage C. Otherwise, only the dialects of the Abyan province of the southern Yemen have reached a complete stage C. For its part, the *bī* cycle only manifests stages of the A arc of the cycle, its sole similarity of a stage A>B being its univerbations leading to *mub*, analogous in all respects to *miš/muš* of the *šī* cycle. A univerbation by itself is not a condition for a stage A>B; the negator so formed must also continue to negate existential predications. Only in the *laysa* cycle is that to be seen, and then only in certain contexts involving locatives. It would appear that in all three cycles, the univerbation forms in an incipient stage A>B, whereupon the new negator begins to act upon other types of predications, notably equational sentences of all types. In that respect, neither *mub* nor *miš/muš* are negative existential particles as such, negating, as they do, other types of equational predications than the existential ('it is not' as opposed to 'there is not'). They do, however, derive from univerbations between the negator, a 3rd-person pronoun, and an existential particle.

A word about the missing Stage B is in order. Calling for elaboration of the negative existential cycle model, Veselinova (2014) holds that it should, "allow for lexicalizations of negation other than special negative existentials to enter the Cycle", observing that "it is a process in which not just negative existentials but also other lexicalizations of negation are involved" (2014: 1338, 1139). A commonality between all three cycles in Arabic is in an incipient stage A>B univerbation extending into equational sentence negation. Considering that at that stage in all three, too, the existential particle begins to lose or completely loses its identity as such, skipping a stage B seems inevitable. The stages of all three cycles are tabulated in Table 4, the darkly shaded cells indicating a clear manifestation of the relevant arc of the cycle, the lightly shaded ones indicating a partial or incipient entry onto a stage:

A relative chronology emerges from this. In her examination of the cycle in several language families, Veselinova (2014: 1373; 2016: 154) estimates a time frame of about two millennia for the completion of the cycle. Accordingly, by the schema in Table 4, the *laysa* cycle would be the longest running. It appears in the earliest extensive Arabic writing, dating to the 7th century AD, more than 1,300 years before present, by which time, it had reached Stage A>B (Wilmsen 2016a: 350).

Table 4: Stages of Arabic negative existential cycles

Cycle	Stage A	Stage A>B	Stage B	Stage B>C	Stage C	Stage C>A
laysa	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
šī	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
bī	✓	✓		✓		✓

By Veselinova's reckoning, the *laysa* cycle should have begun more than half a millennium before attested usage appears, that is, around the 2nd century AD. Indeed, it could have begun even earlier than that. Considering that it reached Stage C in the Arabic of Al-Andalus at the latest by the 12th century, its beginnings may extend to the 9th century BC.

By that same scenario, the *šī* cycle must have begun later, although it is impossible to date how much later, because the earliest documentation of an existential *šay* does not come until the end of the 19th century (Reinhardt 1894: 112), late in the progression of the cycle. By that time, the univerbation *miš/muš* had been observed as a negator of equational sentences and in the negation of verbs (Vollers 1890: 44). If the *šī* cycle has taken anywhere as long as the *laysa* cycle to come near to completion, it must have begun about the time that the *laysa* cycle was reaching Stage B, that is, the 8th or 9th century at the latest.

For its part, the *bī* cycle is evidently the youngest of the three, having reached incipient stages A>B and early manifestations of a stage A>B only. Nor does it seem likely that it will progress further. It appears that the negator *mub* had only recently reached its current form in Gulf varieties of Arabic after 18th century tribal migrations to the Gulf from the Najd (Holes 2006: 28–30), where a negator *bī* appears to have originated.

5.1 Extensions and commonalities

In worldwide and family-based sampling of languages Veselinova (2016) presents a preliminary typology of the negative existential cycle, cataloguing numerous features that appear frequently in languages undergoing it. The three Arabic cycles share in some of these, also exhibiting some properties of their own.

5.1.1 Overlap of stages

Noticeable is the cotemporal occurrence of several stages of a negative existential cycle. This is a defining feature of the negative existential cycle as Croft ini-

tially conceived of it: "The sequencing is not absolute: it is not the case that one diachronic process is completed before the next process in the sequence begins [...] Thus, sequencing of diachronic processes must allow for temporal overlap" (Croft 1991: 22). This is seen to an extreme degree in the *laysa* cycle, in which all stages are present and overlapping. Otherwise, a complete overlap of stages is unusual. Veselinova (2016: 151–154 and passim) confirms this, finding, "overlap of different, non-sequential types/stages [...] in one and the same language" (2016: 154, emphasis added) to be common.

More typical, then, is the *šī* cycle, in which stages A and A>B overlap in the Arabic dialects of the Yemen, where univerbations *māšī* and *miš/muš* are both found, both extending into the realm of equational sentence negation. Elsewhere, in the dialects of the Levant and Egypt, the existential particle is *fī*, not *šī*, although remnants of an affirmative existential *šī* persist in an indefinite quantifier (Wilmsen 2017), but the univerbation *miš/muš* of a stage A>B persists as an equational-sentence negator and as a negator of a specific subdomain of verbal negation, characteristic of a stage B>C. Verbal negations with *miš/muš* are documented in Egyptian Arabic in the late nineteenth century and mid-twentieth century, but they must have been occurring earlier. Wagner (2010: 158) has recently documented a verbal negation with *mš* in a fifteenth-century document from Egypt. A stage C is not documented until the 20th century in a provincial dialect of Egyptian Arabic, but it, too, likely emerged before then.

In the *bī* cycle, too, the existential particle is present in a stage A in a set of Arabic dialects, in the Yemen, central Arabia, and the Syrian Plateau, but the later stage A>B appears in the univerbations *mab* and *mub* in Gulf dialects. In those latter dialects, too, the existential particle is either *šī* or more recently *fī*, not *bī*, but remnants of an existential *bī* persist in the negation complex *mā b(i)*. Indeed, in the Gulf dialects, with their A>B univerbations *māšī* and *mub*, the *šī* cycle and the *bī* cycle themselves overlap. The same might be said for Yemeni varieties, where *mā b(V)*, *mā šī*, and *māšī* are found.

5.1.2 Renewal of the existential particle

Veselinova speaks of the "constant renewal of the negative existential" (2016: 173). In the Arabic cycles it is the affirmative existential particle that is constantly being renewed. In all three, the original particle disappears as the cycle progresses. That of the *laysa* cycle, *ʔys*, has long ago disappeared. In those Arabic varieties outside the southern Arabian Peninsula passing through the *šī* cycle, the existential particle *šī* has ceased to be used as such. Although grammaticalizations of the particle do persist, their existential origin is no longer transparently recognizable. In all cases, other existential particles arise to take the place of the

erstwhile existential particles that have disappeared into other grammatical operations. To paraphrase Veselinova, existential predication "is so important in human language that it is constantly maintained" (Veselinova 2016: 173).

5.2 A final commonality between Arabic negative existential cycles

We may coincidentally end, as Veselinova does (2016: 174), by drawing a distinction between the negative existential cycle and the Jespersen cycle. The *bī* and *šī* cycles share another remarkable commonality between the negators *mahub* and *mahūš*, by which each may do without negative element *ma*, resulting in the negators *hub* (cf. Holes 1990: 64, 73, 116; 2016: 106) and *huwāš* (Reinhardt 1894: 22):

(36) a. Emirati Arabic (Dubai)
anā hub hindiyy-a
PRO.1SG NEG Indian-F
'I [am] not Indian.' (Gumar)

b. Omani Arabic (Ad Dakhiliyah)
huwā-š ʕumāni
PRO.M.3SG Omani
'He [is] not Omani.' (Own data)

This gives the appearance of a so-called "Jespersen cycle" but Veselinova 2016: 53 points out a crucial difference between the two cycles: In the Jespersen cycle a particle that has little or nothing to do with negation eventually comes to oust the older negator. Contrariwise, in the negative existential cycle, an item that does belong to the negative domain is gradually incorporated into verbal negation.

6 Conclusion

The manifestations of the Arabic negative existential cycle are scattered across the map of the Arabophone world, with some varieties exhibiting only parts of the cycle. The negator *laysa*, is used universally in writing throughout the Arabophone world, but it is almost non-existent in speech, surviving as a remnant only in dialects of central and southern Saudi Arabia. The *laysa* cycle had reached the final C>A arc of the cycle but it was effectively blocked from proceeding further after the codification of the Arabic of writing beginning in the 8th century.

For its part, existential *bī* has not spread beyond the Arabian Peninsula, including the Syrian Steppes, and the *bī* cycle, too, appears the have been stymied from further development. Because the Gulf varieties of Arabic, where *mub* is

most often found, already possess other existential particles, it appears that *mub* itself has been shunted into the negation of equational sentences.

The existential particle *šī* exists as such only in the dialects of the southern Arabian Gulf, Oman, and the Yemen, yet its grammaticalizations occur in Arabic varieties from the Yemen to Morocco. So, too, is it the only one of the three cycles that appears to remain active, having already reached a full-on stage C in the Arabic of the southern Yemen, and it appears to be entering a stage C in Egyptian varieties of Arabic, too.

It appears, then, that the origin of the three existential cycles of Arabic is in Arabic varieties of the southern Arabian Peninsula, for it is there that remnants of all three remain.

Abbreviations

1	1st person	IPFV	imperfective
2	2nd person	M	masculine
3	3rd person	NEG	negator
CONJ	conjunction	NEG.EX	negative existential
DAT	dative	PFV	perfective
DEM	demonstrative	PL	plural
DET	determiner	PREP	preposition
EX	existential	PRO	pronoun
F	feminine	Q	interrogative
FUT	future	SG	singular
HAB	ongoing/habitual	SMA	Sharjah Museums Authority
IMP	imperative		
IND	indicative		

Sources

Gumar corpus: https://camel.abudhabi.nyu.edu/gumar/

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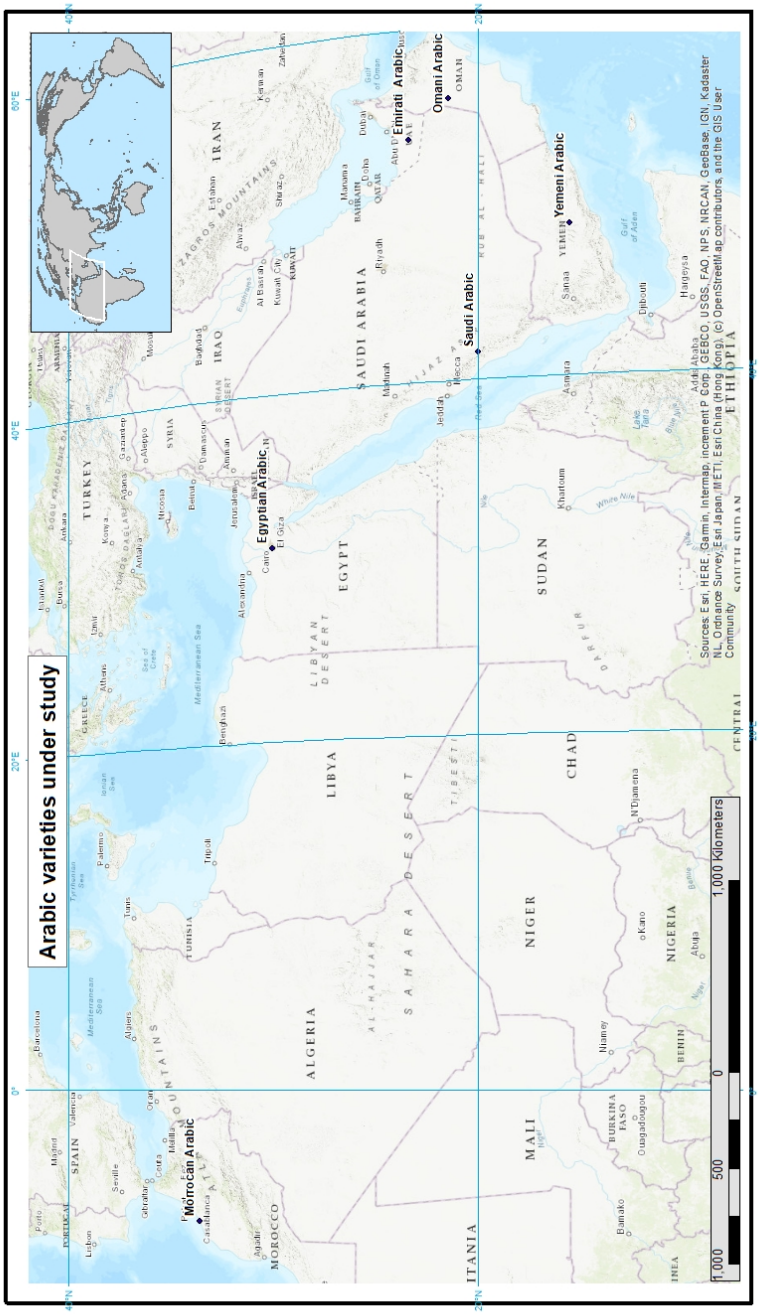

Figure 1: Arabic varieties under study