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Mariacarmela Flaviano, Università di Napoli "L'Orientale"

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Preliminary remarks on linguistic variation within Nafusi Amazigh based on data from Yefren (Libya)

Mariacarmela Flaviano
Università di Napoli "L'Orientale"
m.flaviano@unior.it

Abstract

The paper outlines three elements of variation among two geographically close Berber languages spoken in the Nafusa Mountains (Libya), the Amazigh[1] spoken in Jadu and Jemmari on the one hand and the Amazigh spoken in Yefren on the other hand, identified as two sub-groups of Nafusi Berber (Naït-Zerrad 2012). The variety spoken in Jadu and Jemmari is documented in a grammar by Beguinot (1931), while the Yefren variety lacks a grammar or a comprehensive linguistic description. This paper investigates and compares three aspects based on available data from Jadu and Jemmari, included in Beguinot's grammar, and some newly transcribed texts from Yefren. The comparison concerns the so-called state distinction (annexed/free) morphologically marked on nouns, non-verbal constructions, and verbal negation. The paper aims to provide some preliminary data on the Amazigh spoken in Yefren, which currently lacks a proper grammatical description, outlining some elements of variation with the Amazigh spoken in Jadu. The paper is not intended to be an exhaustive analysis but rather a preliminary study, part of a larger project.

Keywords

Amazigh / Nafusa / Libya / Inter-dialectal variation

1 - Introduction

This contribution gives a general overview of three aspects of inter-dialectal variation within two Amazigh varieties spoken in the Nafusa Mountains (Tripolitania, Libya). One variety is spoken in the western part of the mountains, in Jadu and Jemmari, and the other in the eastern part, in Yefren.

Berber languages form a family within the Afro-Asiatic phylum, spoken discontinuously on a vast territory that stretches from the Atlantic Ocean in the west to the

[1] Berber and Amazigh are two terms used to refers to the same group of languages and as the umbrella term to identify people of North Africa of non-Arab origin. However, being the former the exonym and the latter the endonym, introduced last century, it is nowadays the most widespread and preferred one. In this paper the two terms are used interchangeably.

Siwa Oasis in Egypt in the east, and from the Mediterranean coast (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya) in the north, to the Sahel territories of Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso in the south.

Due to the significant variation within the Berber languages family, scholars have yet to achieve a consensus on a shared subclassification. However, it is possible to identify certain blocks, such as Zenaga in Mauritania, the Tuareg languages, and various languages of Morocco and Algeria, which seem to be related at certain levels and are traditionally grouped under the label "Northern Berber". The languages of Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt are usually classified as "Eastern Berber" as defined by Kossman (2012:18–19). However, from a historical perspective, Kossmann illustrates that different blocks are identified (2020:284–85): the Tuareg and Zenaga groups; the Moroccan languages, divided into two subgroups (the western Moroccan block and the northwestern block); and the Zenatic block, which includes the languages of eastern Morocco, western Algerian, the Sahara oasis, Tunisia, Zwara, Sokna, and El-Foqaha in Libya, and Siwa in Egypt. Kabyle (Algeria) is considered an independent block, as are Ghadames and Awjila (Libya).[2]

In Libya, different regions across the country are confirmed to be Berber-speaking, although all available data remain outdated. Along the Mediterranean coast, the city of Zwara is known as a Berber-speaking area, based on the works of Terence Mitchell (1953) and Luigi Serra (1964, 1968). Further south, near the border between Algeria, Libya, and Tunisia, the oasis of Ghadames has been recognized as a Berber-speaking area through the studies of Jacques Lanfry (1968, 1973). South of Ghadames, Mohamed Nehlil (1909) collected data from the Tuareg-speaking area of Ghat. In the interior, Tommaso Sarnelli (1924) and Umberto Paradisi (1963) registered data from Sokna and El-Foqaha, respectively. However, by the time Italians scholars conducted fieldwork in the 1960s, these languages had already become highly endangered due to the limited number of speakers. It is very likely that Amazigh is no longer spoken in these areas. On the northeastern edge, in Awjila, another Berber language was described by Umberto Paradisi (1960, 1961).

The corpus collected by nineteenth-century scholars consists of transcribed narrative texts, such as folktales, fairy tales, songs, religious texts, geographical descriptions, and ethnographic accounts.[3]

Amazigh is spoken alongside Arabic in the Nafusa Mountains, although its exact distribution remains unclear.

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2 For a general overview on Berber family, see Kossmann (2012, 2020).

3 Some of these collections of texts have recently been utilized by scholars to produce linguistic descriptions, such as Kossmann's work on Ghadames (2013) and van Putten's study of Awjila (2013).

Early data on Nafusi were gathered by Italian scholars (Beguinot 1931; Buselli 1921, 1924; Cesaro 1949; Provasi 1973), and these remain the only available data in recent times (Benkato and Pereira 2016: 162). All the data were collected from speakers from Jadu and Jemmari, in the western part of the mountains. Beguinot, who published a reference grammar for Nafusi, highlighted that the language spoken on the eastern part of the mountains, in Yefren, differs from the one described in his grammar (Beguinot 1931:viii).

Regarding inter-dialectal variation between these varieties, only a few articles have been published (Nait-Zerad 2012; Souag 2020; Souag, Di Tolla, and Schiattarella 2020). However, no description of the Amazigh spoken in Yefren has been published to date, although Di Tolla and Shinnib published a revised edition of Beguinot's grammar in 2020.

2 - Methodology and Corpus

Considering the political situation in Libya, the challenges non-Libyans face in accessing the field for security reasons, and the recent pandemic, the material produced through the personal efforts of activists is invaluable. Moreover, in recent years, the impact of COVID-19 has compelled scholars, including linguists, to adapt their data collection methods due to limited field accessibility. This has led to the emergence of "Remote Fieldwork" or "Distributed Fieldwork," with a shift toward utilizing online spaces. The pandemic prompted innovative approaches to linguistic research, from entirely new projects (Grzech and Tisalema Shaca 2022) to new data collection methods (Neely 2021) and transcription approaches (Rice 2021). Online fieldwork, which had already begun gaining attention before COVID-19, has since been considered a structured alternative methodology (Williams *et al.* 2021).

In this context, this paper investigates three aspects in which the two varieties differ as a preliminary study for a description of the Amazigh spoken in Yefren, with a focus on: 1. state marking on nouns; 2 nonverbal predication; 3 verbal negation.

The comparison is based on data available in the current literature as well as new data collected and transcribed by community members from Yefren. The corpus consists of seven transcribed oral narratives recorded during 2000 and 2001. The recorder did not retained information about the number of people interviewed and their exact location. However, it seems that most of the recordings were conducted among elders in the village of Ait Bexbu (p.c.).[4] The recordings were posted online on the Tawalt website, which was later shut down. In 2013, these recordings were transcribed and compiled

4 Personal communication: this detail emerged during online meetings focused on analyzing and translating the corpus. The individual who conducted the recordings is a resident of the mentioned village.

into a short booklet.[5] The booklet comprises fourteen texts, with the first seven from Yefren and the remaining seven from Fassato, located in the western part of the Nafusa Mountains. The texts vary in length: in a 12-point font, the longest text spans four pages, three texts cover two pages each, two texts are one page each, and one text is half a page. This study primarily conducts a text-based comparison of the aforementioned aspects among several Berber languages, including Nafusi as spoken in Jadu and Jemmari (Beguinot 1942), located in the western part of the mountains, and the variant spoken in Yefren, situated in the eastern area of the mountains.

3 - State marking on nouns

In Berber languages, nouns agree in gender, number, and state through morphological means such as prefixes (for gender, number, and state), suffixes (for gender and number), and apophony (for number).

Berber languages mark nouns for gender in masculine and feminine, number in singular and plural, and state in absolute and annexed, also known, according to the French tradition, as *état libre* and *état d'annexion*.

The paper focuses exclusively on state marking. The function of state opposition has long been debated among scholars. Basset (1932:173) describes state opposition as the result of a relationship between the noun in the annexed state with the element that precedes it, which can be a preposition, a noun or a verb. Chaker (1988:5) explains state opposition as the expression of the relation of determination between two nominals. Galand (2010:123-24) suggests that its function lies somewhere in between "case", as in Latin and Greek – with the "genitive" being the closest category –, and the "construct state" of Afro-Asiatic languages.

A more recent reanalysis of the function of state distinction was provided by Mettouchi and Fraizyngier (2013:9-12), who recognize state opposition as a previously undescribed category in typology. The authors define annexed state in the following terms: «The annexed state provides the value (in the logical sense) for the variable of the function grammaticalized in a preceding constituent» (Mettouchi and Frajzyngier 2013:13). According to the authors, grammaticalized functions are carried by certain elements such as clitics, prepositions, person markers, etc. These functions are valued by the noun in the annexed state that follows them. In this sense, state opposition serves as a coding strategy for these grammatical functions.

Regarding the distribution of annexed state, Kossmann (2007:431) identifies the

5 I wish to thank Madghis Bouzakhar, an independent researcher who is actively involved in promoting and preserving the Amazigh language in the Nafusa Mountains, who generously shared these texts with me. Moreover, several online meetings were organized between March and April 2021 to discuss and translate the texts.

the following contexts, highlighting the most common conditions that enable state marking in nouns: 1. when the noun is the lexical subject of the verb (and placed after it); 2. after most prepositions; 3. after a few other elements, such as the word u "son of"; 4. after numerals (not in all dialects).

A general overview of the morphology of state noun marking, with some examples, is adapted from Kossmann (2007:432-33) in Table 1 where it is shown that noun prefixation for state marking varies according to the stem initial (stems are separated by hyphens):

Type 1 (consonant initial stem)						
m. sg.	ABS	*a-ɣyul*	m. pl.	ABS	*i-ɣyal*	donkey
	ANN	*wə-ɣyul*		ANN	*yə-ɣyal*	
f. sg.	ABS	*ta-zday-t*	f. pl.	ABS	*ti-zday-in*	palm tree
	ANN	*tə-zday-t*		ANN	*tə-zday-in*	
Type 2 (consonant initial stem followed by a full vowel)						
m. sg.	ABS	*Ø-ḍar*	m. pl.	ABS	*i-ḍar-ən*	foot
	ANN	*u-ḍar*		ANN	*i-ḍar-ən*	
f. sg.	ABS	*t-wašun-t*	f. pl.	ABS	*ti-wašun-in*	girl
	ANN	*t-wašun-t*		ANN	*t-wašun-in*	
Type 3 (vowel initial stem)						
m. sg.	ABS	*Ø-anu*	m. pl.	ABS	*Ø-anu-tən*	well
	ANN	*w-anu*		ANN	*w-anu-tən*	
f. sg.	ABS	*t-azar-t*	f. pl.	ABS	*t-azar-in*	fig tree
	ANN	*t-azar-t*		ANN	*t-azar-in*	

Table 1 - Morphology of state marking in Figuig Berber

In the so-called Easter Berber varieties, noun marking for state seems to have disappeared in most languages, as is the case for Awjila (van Putten 2013:54) and Ghadames (Kossmann 2013:20–21). However, some of the syntactic functions, for which noun is marked by the prefix for languages of Morocco and Algeria, seem to be marked in some Eastern Berber languages through accent movement. Regarding Nafusi, Brugnatelli (1986) notes in his analysis of the texts presented by Beguinot in his grammar

that, in Nafusi of Jadu and Jemmari, the accent shifts to the previous syllable when nouns are preceded by certain prepositions (*n*, *di*, *in*, *s*, *dəd*, *af*, *dənnəg*) or exclamation particles (*a*, *ai*, *ya*). Moreover, Brugnatelli notes that in this language, the accent on a noun shifts when it serves as the subject of a verb that follows it. In contrast, other Berber languages use an annexed state for this grammatical function.[6]

Considering the findings presented above, this paper analyzes some examples from the corpus where the accent is not marked in the transcription. Hence, the analysis focuses only on state opposition marked by prefixes.

As described by Beguinot (1931:27-41), in Jadu and Jemmari, prefix modification is used solely to code gender and number. However, as previously noted, Brugnatelli (1986) observes that Nafusi encodes some of the syntactic functions of state typically marked by prefix morphology in other languages through the accent movement.

In the corpus, nouns were selected based on contexts that facilitate state marking in Berber languages. Specifically, inclusion criteria required that both the absolute state form and the annexed state form of the nouns be present in the texts.
Examples (noun preceded by prepositions):

1a)	*tə-wwa=yas*	*il*	***utərras-nn-əs*** (ABS.*atərras*)
	3SG.F-say.PFV=3SG.IO	to	man.ANN-of-3SG
	She told to his man (husband).		
1b)	*t-ugur*	*il*	***wəmniš*** (ABS.*amniš*)
	3SG.F-go.PFV	to	cat.ANN
	She went to the cat.		
1c)	*yə-čur*	*s*	***waman*** (ABS.*aman*)
	3SG.M-fill.PFV	with	water.ANN
	It was filled with water.		
1d)	*yə-ss-bəd tirkəft*	*n*	***iləɣman*** (ABS.*iləɣman*)
	3SG.M-CAUS-stop caravan	of	camel.PL
	He stopped the caravan of camels.		

Prepositions enabling noun marking in the corpus are the following: *g* "in", *f* "on", *səg* "from", *il/in* "to", *s* "with", *n* "of".

Nouns are marked in the annexed state when they follow another noun they spe-

6 In Tunisian Berber (Guellala, Jerba) and Siwa (Egypt), accent movement seems to also mark certain syntactic function, as noted respectively by Vycichl and Chaker (1984) and Schiattarella (2020), among others.

cify as in the following examples (fr. *Complément d'un autre nom*):

1e)	*tizəqwin*	***uɣasru*** (ABS.*ɣasru*)
	room.PL	ANN.fortress
	The rooms of the fortress.	

1f)	*yid*	*d*	*ixəf*	***ujrut-n-ək*** (ABS.*ajrut*)
	DEM	COP	head	companion.ANN-of-3SG
	That is your companion's head.			

The corpus does not allow for a comprehensive morphology of state marking but includes only certain categories of nouns. For stems with a consonantal initial preceded by a vowel *a-* or *i-* (masculine singulars and plurals), the annexed state is marked by prefixing *wə-*, *u-*, *i-* with consequent falling of the *a-* or switching into *-ə-* and *i-* (*abrid/ ubrid/wəbrid*; *aɣərzul/ uɣərzul*; *amniš/wəmniš*). When the stem starts with *-a*, the annexed state is marked by *w-* (*aman/waman*; *anu/wanu*).

When the stem starts with a consonant followed by a full vowel, state is marked by *u-* (*ṭar/ uṭar*; *zaw/uzaw*; *ɣasru/uɣasru*).

For nouns with stems preceded by *t-*, *ta-*, *ti-* (feminine singulars and plurals), these occur multiple times in the corpus but remain unchanged. State marking seems neutralized for this group of nouns (*tbušilt* 'girl', *tbušilin* 'girls', *tamamt* 'honey', *tamništ* 'cat (female)', *tazəqqa* 'room', *tizəqwin* 'rooms'). The following examples illustrate one noun for each type of stem (preceded by *t-*, *ta-*, *ti-*), where the nouns are preceded by prepositions and are expected to modify the prefix:

1g)	*t-uš=as*	*il*	*tbušilt*
	3SG.F-give.PFV=3SG.IO	to	girl
	She gave (to her) to the girl.		

1h)	*tẓiwa*	*n*	*tamamt*
	SG.F.plate	of	honey
	Plate of honey.		

1i)	*t-ss-əffəɣ*	*əlli*	*g*	*tizəqwin*
	3SG.F-CAUS-get.out	REL i	n	room.PL.F
	She got out what was in the rooms.			

Consonantal initial stem (preceded by *a-*; *i-*):

	ABS	ANN

cat	*amniš*	*wəmniš*
camel	*alɣam*	*wəlɣam*
dog	*aɣərzul*	*uɣərzul*
path	*abrid*	*ubrid; wə-brid*
companion	*ajrut*	*ujrut*
camels	*iləɣman*	*iləɣman*
man	*atərras*	*utərras*

Vowel initial stem (*-a*):

	ABS	ANN
water	*aman*	*waman*
well	*anu*	*wanu*

Consonantal initial stem followed by a full vowel:

	ABS	ANN
foot	*ṭar*	*uṭar*
feet	*iṭarən*	*iṭarən*
hair	*zaw*	*uzaw*
citadel	*ɣasru*	*uɣasru*

Stem preceded by *t-*; *ta-*; *ti-*:

	ABS	ANN
girl	*tbušilt*	*tbušilt*
girls	*tibušilin*	*tibušilin*
honey	*tamamt*	*tamamt*
cat (f)	*tamništ*	*tamništ*
room	*tazəqqa*	*tazəqqa*
rooms	*tizəqwin*	*tizəqwin*

4 - Non-verbal predication

Although predication in Berber languages is generally provided by the verb, the core element of a sentence, non-verbal predication is also attested (Chaker 2015). Focusing on non-verbal predication, Berber languages utilize multiple structures that vary according to the concerned language. Chaker (2015: 2-4) lists three main structures: 1. juxtaposition, used in Tuareg languages, as in *Mūsa, amɣar n Ahaggar* "Musa (is the) chef of Ahaggar"; 2. insertion of non-verbal copula *d*, as seen in Berber languages traditionally classified "Northern Berber", including most languages of Morocco and Algeria, as in *Muḥənd, d Amaziɣ* "Mohand (is a) Berber"; 3. use of the verb *g* ("to be") as found in Chleuh (Morocco), resulting in construction like *Muḥənd, iga Amaziɣ* "Mohand is an Amazigh". Additionally, Berber languages employ other means to express nonverbal predication, such as combination of lexical forms, adverbs, or grammatical units (interrogatives, prepositions, etc) together with personal affixes (Chaker 2015:5).

Berber languages of Libya employ non-verbal copulas that vary across the languages. In Awjila, the copula *d* is used (van Putten 2013:148) as in Zwara (Mitchell 1953:28). In Ghadames, nonverbal predication is expressed either through juxtaposition or the copula *ənte* (Kossmann 2013:149-50). An example from Sarnelli's texts suggests that in Sokna, nonverbal predication is expressed through juxtaposition as in *arĕm-mūnénnes moqqâr* "its pomegranate(s) were big" (referring to the pomegranates of a pomegranate tree) (Sarnelli 1924:31).

The paper only deals with non-verbal predication where the second element is a noun. Specifically, the paper compares two types of nonverbal clause constructions: classificational (examples 2a and 2b) and equational clause constructions (2c-2d) as defined by Haspelmath (forthcoming):

> Classificational clauses express the membership of the (definite) subject referent in the class denoted by the (indefinite and nonreferential) predicative nominal while equational clauses in some sense "equate" the two definite nominals (Haspelmath forthcoming:3).

In Jadu and Jemmari, non-verbal predication is achieved through juxtaposition, as shown in the following example (2a) taken from Beguinot (1931:65):

2a)	*nəčč̣ənt*	*tibušilin*
	1PL.F	girl.PL
	We are girls.	

On the other hand, as shown in example (2b) from the corpus, in Yefren, non-verbal predication for the same construction – where an independent pronoun (in this case

implied) is followed by a noun – is achieved using the particle *d* as non-verbal copula:

2b)	*ukan*	*d*	*abušil*	*awi-t*	*čəm*
	if	COP	boy	2SG.IMP.keep-3SG.M.DO	2SG.F.
	If it is a boy, you keep him.				

The following two examples (2c-2d) deal with a subtype of equational constructions, deictic-identificational clauses, when one of the nominals is a demonstrative. In 2c, taken from Beguinot (1931:121), nonverbal predication is achieved through the juxtaposition of the demonstrative tuha and the nominal tməzgida that follows it:

2c)	*tuha*	*tməzgida*
	DEM	mosque
	This is a mosque.	

In Yefren, the following example (2d) from the corpus shows that deictic-identificational clauses are constructed using the copula d between the demonstrative and the nominal that follows, as also noted by Di Tolla and Schiattarella (2020:289) in order to achieve the predicative function:

2d)	*yəwwa=yas*	*sulṭan*	*yid*	*d*	*ixəf*	*ujrut-n-ək*
	3SG.M.say.PFV=IO.3SG	sultan	DEM	COP	head	companion-of-3SG
	The sultan told him: "That is your companion's head".					

5 - Verbal negation

Negation in Berber languages is typically marked by negative markers, which can precede, follow, or occur on both sides of the verb. Additionally, certain Berber languages use specific negative verb stems.

The most widespread combination of these elements seems to be the presence of a preverbal, the verb form with or without a dedicated verbal stem, and the presence of a post-verbal element, as stated by Chaker (1996:1) and confirmed in Lafkioui and Brugnatelli (2020:13). A comprehensive synchronic overview of negation in Berber languages is outlined by Lafkioui and Brugnatelli (2020:5-19).

As for the preverbal element, the most common element used is *wər*, and its allomorphs *wəl*, (*wə*, *wu*, *u*, *wul*, *ul*). For the postverbal, the elements *ši*, *ša*, *š*, *kra*, etc, are used. The preverbal marker results from the grammaticalization of **w* (negation

element) and a verbal root **r*.[7] It has a pan-Berber origin and is the obligatory element in negative context. The postverbal marker of nominal origin can either be omitted or substituted by other units. This postverbal element is also found in spoken Arabic. However, the notion that it was borrowed from spoken Arabic is widely rejected among Berber scholars.[8]

In terms of verbal forms used in a negative context, Berber languages generally feature a basic tripartite verbal system based on aspectual opposition among the perfective, imperfective, and aorist, which convey modal and aspectual values. Only perfective and imperfective aspects display negative stems. The presence in the paradigm of the negative stems for the perfective and imperfective aspects varies across Berber languages. In this regard, Berber languages exhibit what Mettouchi (2012:2-3) describes as «double asymmetry». Berber languages display specific forms[9] for the negative context and are characterized by a paradigmatic reduction of forms in the negative context. Mettouchi (2012:3) argues that the asymmetry detected among Berber languages indicates that they encode negative forms independently from the positive contexts, implying that these languages belong to a group where there is not a tight bond between the positive and the negative context.

In the Libyan context, Berber languages show significant variation in verbal negation in terms of the preverbal and postverbal markers. In Jadu and Jemmari, negation is marked according to the most common pan-Berber pattern, namely with the preverb *wel* and postverbal *ši*. In Sokna and El-Fogaha, negation is expressed by preverbal markers such as *(i)ngi*, *ənk(i)*, *la*, *ul* for Sokna and *nk* for El-Fogaha; in Awjila and Zwara, negation is expressed by a postverbal marker only: *ka*, *k(i)ra* and *š* respectively. Moreover, among Libyan Berber languages, Zwara and Ghadames display negative verbal stems for both the perfective and the imperfective (cf. Table 1 in Lafkioui and Brugnatelli (2020:19)).

Lafkioui and Brugnatelli classify negation into three main types, further subdivided into two categories based on the absence or presence of negative verb stems, as illustrated in the following scheme where [NEG] is the negator (preverbal or postverbal), [V] is the verb, and [VNEG] refers to a specific stem for negation:

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7 Analyses of the origin of the preverbal have been proposed, among others, by Chaker (1996:2–3), Brugnatelli (2011) and Galand (1994).

8 Chaker (1996:5) explains the origin of the postverbal element as the result of a convergent evolution in the development of negation, stemming from the contact between the two languages: «On doit plutôt envisager une évolution convergente par contact, allant dans le sens la constitution d'une négation à deux éléments, le second élément étant puisé, dans les deux langues, dans les mêmes classes lexico-sémantiques». Lafkioui and Brugnatelli (2020:20-21) argue that «is Berber to be regarded as a substrate in the development of double negation in North African Arabic».

9 The term "forms" here is used as a synonym of "stems" to avoid repetitions.

Type 1	NEG + V/VNEG	1a: NEG + V 1b: NEG + VNEG
Type 2	NEG + V/VNEG + NEG	2a: NEG + V + NEG 2b: NEG + VNEG + NEG
Type 3	V/VNEG + NEG	3a: V + NEG 3b: VNEG + NEG

As described by Beguinot (1931:63), in Jadu and Jemmari, negation is marked according to type 2a. This scheme is applied to both declaratives and prohibitives negations. Concerning verbal forms used in a negative context, in Jadu and Jemmari only, the perfective and imperfective aspects are used in a negative context, in complementary distribution. For declaratives, the verb in the perfective is used, while for prohibitives, the imperfective is used, as showed in the following examples provided by Beguinot (1931:95): *wuttarši* (<*wu-ttar-ši*) "don't open" where *wu* is the preverbal negator, *ttar* the imperfective of the verb *ar* "to open" and *ši* the postverbal negator.

Examining the examples from the corpus, it appears that in Yefren the negation marker is *mi*, which precedes the verb, as noted by Lafkioui and Brugnatelli (2020:9). The examples (3a-3b) show that the negation is marked according to type 1a, with the negation marker appearing before the verb in both perfective (3a) and imperfective constructions (3b), and the absence of negative verb stem. Negation of declaratives seems to adhere to type 1a, while prohibitive constructions (3c) appear to follow type 3a, with a negative marker following the verb in the imperfective.

3a) *təwwa=yas a baba **mi** ufiɣ-t lkəmbus-nn-ək*
3SG.F.say.PFV=3SG.IO VOC father NEG find.PFV.1SG-3SG.DO hat-of-2SG.M
She told him: "Oh father, I didn't find your fez"

3b) *Dis tamәṭṭutt **mi** təddərn=as inaɛnš*
EXIST woman NEG IPFV.live.3PL.M=3SG.IO child.PL.M
There was a woman who couldn't have children

3c) *ət-tarəm-**š** il iğən lən ad nas*
IPFV-2M.open.PL-NEG to anyone until IRR 1PL.come.AOR
Don't open (the door) to anyone until we come back!

6 - Conclusions

This paper investigates three different elements of inter-dialectal variation that

characterize two Berber languages spoken in the Nafusa Mountains, precisely in the Yefren area. This area lacks a comprehensive study and, as demonstrated, it displays peculiar elements of variation at different levels.

The analysis conducted is a text-based comparison of the following aspects of variation: state marking on nouns, nonverbal predication, and verbal negation. The comparison is based on data available in the current literature and new data from Yefren.

The study highlights how languages spoken in the Nafusa Mountains, at the inter-dialectal level, differ in noun marking concerning state opposition, which has disappeared in the western area but still seems to be marked in the eastern area of the mountains, particularly when a noun is preceded by a preposition or specifies another noun. Secondly, nonverbal predication was compared with regards to classificational and equational clauses. Nonverbal predication, for the variety of Jadu and Jemmari, is expressed by juxtaposition and through the non-verbal copula *d* in Yefren. Finally, the negation of declarative and prohibitive clauses was compared. The two varieties differ in the way negation is marked: double markers are used in Jadu and Jemmari (*wəl* and *ši*), while Yefren uses a preverbal negator (*mi*) for declaratives and a post-verbal negation marker (*-ši*) for prohibitive.

The study lays the foundation for a larger project that aims to describe the Amazigh spoken in the eastern part of the Nafusa mountains.

The examples provided in the paper are contained in a short corpus that constitutes the starting point for a larger database planned as an outcome of an ongoing project. Given this, the analysis presented represents a preliminary approach to the variation that characterizes these two languages. A more detailed analysis, based on new data that is currently being collected, is necessary for a more thorough and comprehensive examination. This would include, in relation to what has been presented here, a complete list of contexts and means used in Yefren to mark state opposition and nominal morphology in general. Regarding non-verbal predication, only a few constructions have been analyzed in the paper, and a complete overview of non-verbal constructions is expected to be achieved. Finally, while negation has been explored in the verbal domain, other domains remain to be explored.

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APPENDIX

List of abbreviations

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ABS	absolute
ANN	annexed
CAUS	causative
COP	copula
DEM	demonstrative
DO	direct object
EXIST	existential
F	feminine
IMP	imperative
IO	indirect object
IPFV	imperfective
M	masculine
NEG	negator
PFV	perfective
PL	plural
REL	relativizer
SG	singular