Some Morpho-syntactic Aspects of Negation in Takrouni Arabic (Tunisia)
(research paper)
Salvatore Simone Termini, Università di Napoli "L'Orientale"

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Salvatore Simone Termini

Università di Napoli "L'Orientale"

salvo.termini57@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This contribution offers a description of some morpho-syntactic aspects of negation in the Arabic dialect spoken in Takrouna, which belongs to the group of the Tunisian coastal village dialects. This dialectal group has recently aroused significant interest in the field of Arabic dialectology, due to its importance for the history of North African Arabic and the rethinking of the labels through which Maghrebi dialects are classified (Benkato 2019; D'Anna 2020a; Guerrero 2018; Mion 2015, 2018). The paper analyzes data drawn from a corpus of 12 ethnotexts collected by William Marçais in collaboration with Abderrâhman Guîga (1925). It provides a description of the different types of negation and their uses, also by comparing them with other spoken Arabic varieties, both North African and Levantine. It delves into how data can be interpreted in relation to Jespersen's cycle. Lastly, it focuses on uses of the -*š* enclitic other than the negative function.

1 - Introduction

The present paper describes some morpho-syntactic aspects of negation in the Arabic dialect of Takrouna, a small village located on the homonymous hill on the Tunisian Sahel, between Hammamet and Sousse. Unfortunately, very little remains of the village today; nevertheless, Takrouni Arabic is of considerable linguistic importance, as well as the whole Sahli area: in recent times, a dialectological debate arose from the desire to question the labels through which Maghrebi dialects are classified, namely sedentary, Bedouin, and village ones (Benkato 2019; D'Anna 2020a; Guerrero 2018; Mion 2015, 2018); in this view, the study of Takrouni Arabic and Sahli varieties could help shed new light on the category of the *parlers villageois*[1] and on the dialectal history of

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[1] This label was introduced by William Marçais who described it in his contribution within the seminal work Initiation à la Tunisie (Marçais 1950:195-219). Although Marçais defined it as «une variété plus ou moins différenciée [des parlers citadins]» (Marçais 1950:207), D'Anna states that

Tunisia and North Africa. In particular, D'Anna and Mion launched a research project on the Tunisian Sahel in 2019, entitled "The Tunisian Sahel: Dialectological, Historical and Sociolinguistic Perspectives", which includes studies on the Takrouni dialect by Mion (2015, 2018). Given that they were mainly concerned with aspects of phonology and morphology, I decided to focus on syntax and to devote this paper to morpho-syntactic aspects of negation. The aim is to analyze the available data on the variety object of study collected from a corpus published by William Marçais and Abderrâhman Guîga (1925) and to observe what are the features that the dialect under investigation presents, whether they are similar to those of other varieties already studied in the Sahli area and if they show any peculiarities that are not attested elsewhere.

2 - Methodology and Corpus

The data used in this study were drawn from a corpus of 12 ethnotexts entitled *Textes arabes de Takroûna. Transciption, traduction annotée, glossaire*, published in 1925 by William Marçais in collaboration with Abderrâhman Guîga (Marçais & Guîga 1925). The texts have a variable length, ranging from 3 to 11 pages each, and deal with everyday life aspects in Takrouna including events that had a cultural significance for the community living in the village, such as the rain-calling ritual. Guîga was Marçais's only informant, but unfortunately, there is not much information available about him: Marçais affirmed that «l'un de nous deux est né à Takrouna en 1889 et y a vécu jusqu'à l'âge d'homme» (Marçais & Guîga 1925:XVIII), while Mion (2018:109) stated that he was «an enseignant et poète originaire de ce village [Takrouna] qui s'était formé à l'école de Tunis».

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it is not an independent category, but that it rather represents a group of mixed or contact varieties. The author has demonstrated his theory in his study on the Arabic dialect spoken in Chebba (D'Anna 2020a). Similar assumptions were made in my master's thesis (Termini, 2023), in which I analyzed phonological and morphological data regarding the variety spoken in Takrouna that were drawn from the corpus by Marçais and Guîga (1925). Presumably, a sedentary variety was spoken in this village, but then, with the second wave of Arabization, it took on Bedouin traits. However, its more isolated location led to a partial bedouinization, resulting in a mixed variety with a majority of sedentary traits. Mion (2015:275) states : «Selon Marçais (1938), avant les invasions hilaliennes ces zones fort probablement n'étaient pas peuplées par des Arabes, mais plutôt par des sédentaires arabisés. Cette arabisation commence à Kairouan qui, assez tôt, perdra son rôle de centre politique et le cèdera à Mahdia puis à Tunis. C'est à cette phase que l'on pourrait faire remonter les traits purement sédentaires, voire citadins, tels que la réalisation sourde du *qāf, la neutralisation du genre à la 2ème pers.sg. des systèmes pronominaux et verbaux et, très vraisemblablement, la semiconsonantisation du morphème pluriel -w dans les verbes défectueux, comme le suggère sa présence en maltais aussi». Mion's statement corroborates the two-waves theory: non-Arabic speaking but sedentary populations were Arabized within the first wave, starting from Qayrawān, and acquired sedentary traits. Later, with the second wave, there would be contact between the aforementioned populations and the invading tribes which resulted in a partial Bedouinization.

From a methodological point of view, I adopted a qualitative approach due to the limited amount of data provided by the corpus. Therefore, the occurrences were collected and described by categorizing them into three different types of negation based on Brustad's tripartition: verbal, predicative, and categorical negation (Brustad 2000:277-314). Next, the collected data were examined in relation to the three stages of Jespersen's cycle and compared with the data regarding other dialects spoken in the same area, namely those of Mahdia and Chebba (D'Anna 2020b). Particular attention was devoted to the third stage, which is considered to be the most innovative one: little evidence concerning this stage has been found in Maghrebi Arabic varieties. All instances of the -*š* enclitic drawn from the Takrouni corpus were analyzed to determine its functions and whether it represented an example of third stage negation or not.

3 - **State of the Art**

The field of Arabic dialectology lacks comprehensive studies on syntax to the present day: scholars and researchers tend to privilege phonological and morphological descriptions in their works, rather than providing a complete analysis of syntactical aspects. The reason why syntax is usually neglected may be related to the fact that no proper isoglosses have been identified yet that would allow a classification of spoken Arabic varieties according to syntactical criteria. However, the field of syntax has begun to attract more interest, in particular as far as the domain of negation is concerned.

Among the scholars who devoted their studies to negation, Otto Jespersen's contribution *Negation in English and Other Languages* (Jespersen 1917) is worth mentioning. In this work, he proposed a theory according to which the development of the expression of negation in different languages follows a three-stage cycle:

I. In the first stage, only a pre-verbal particle is present;
II. In the second stage, a suffixal particle is added, resulting in a circumfix;
III. In the third stage, the original prefixal particle is eventually lost.

Jespersen himself exemplified it by observing the development of verbal negation in the French translation for "I do not say" (Jespersen 1917:7):

Stage I	*jeo*	*ne*	*di*	
Old French	1SG	NEG	PR:say:1SG	
Stage II	*je*	*ne*	*dis*	*pas*
Middle French	1SG	NEG	PR:say:1SG	NEG
Stage III	*je*		*dis*	*pas*
Colloquial French	1SG		PR:say:1SG	NEG

It has been demonstrated that this cycle also applies to spoken varieties of Arabic as follows: *mā- > mā- … -š > -š*. This has been convincingly explained by Lucas (2007, 2009, 2018) and Diem (2014). They argued that the suffix *-š* derives from the grammaticalization of the indefinite *šayʔ* "thing", likely from its adverbial use with the meaning of "not at all". Later, it was grammaticalized, losing phonetic material, and approaching the verb to be modified. The process is attributed to the speakers' need for emphasis, conveyed through the use of *šayʔ*. However, over time, this emphatic trait was lost, and the now grammaticalized element became part of the circumfix used to express negation in many contemporary Arabic dialects (D'Anna 2020b:4).

Nadia Chaâbane's paper "La negation en arabe tunisien" (1996) provides valuable insight into the negative markers that Tunisian Arabic varieties feature and their usage.

Another work that should be taken into account is *Syntax of Spoken Arabic* by J.E. Brustad, (2000). This publication is a seminal contribution for researchers who investigate the syntax of the spoken varieties of Arabic. Brustad analyzed numerous syntactic aspects by comparing four dialects, namely Moroccan, Egyptian, Syrian, and Kuwaiti Arabic. She also provided valuable data on different types of negation and the possible uses of related markers by speakers.

Luca D'Anna (2018) conducted similar research on verbal negation in Fezzani dialects (Libya) from both a diachronic and a synchronic perspective. Regarding the Tunisian Sahel area, he examined the dialects of Mahdia and Chebba to determine which stages of the Jespersen's cycle they exhibited (D'Anna 2020b). He also compared the data with Moroccan dialect, which is considered to be a particularly conservative stage II dialect (D'Anna 2020b:6). In the two Sahli varieties, examples of the third stage were found, which have not been previously attested in Maghrebi varieties except for Maltese.

4 - Types of Negation

The negation strategies identified are the same as those described by Brustad (2000:281-83): verbal, predicative, and categorical.

4.1 - Verbal Negation

In an unmarked context, verbal negation in the prefixal and suffixal conjugation and in pseudo-verbs is realized through the circumfix *mā-… -š*. As also described by Brustad (2000:286), when verb phrases consist of multiple elements, negation is applied to the first element, which becomes the focus of the negation itself.

1)	*mā-txallīw-nī-š*	*nṭaṛṛad-kum*
	NEG-IPFV.2:let:PL-1SG-NEG	IPFV.1:dismiss:SG-2PL

Do not force me to dismiss you (Marçais & Guîga 1925:53, 242).[2]

2)	*hāk el-xuṭfa*		*lli*	*taʕraf-hā*		*f-ən-nās*
	DEM DEF-theft		REL	IPFV.2:know:SG-3.F.SG		in-DEF-people
	w-xoffət		*l-īd*		*ḥnē*	*mā-ʕand-nā-š*
	and-agility		DEF-hand		1PL	NEG-at-1PL-NEG

We ignore these thefts that you have observed in other people (lit. That theft and larceny that you have known in other people does not belong to us) (Marçais & Guîga 1925:53, 242).

The "negative copula", i.e., the combination of an independent personal pronoun and the circumfix *mā-…-š*, is marked on the syntactic level, since it involves the use of markers that are generally used for verbal negation; but it is also pragmatically marked, because it negates a presupposition made by the interlocutor. This characteristic of the negative copula is also underlined by Brustad in the dialects she analyzed in her study (Brustad 2000:297).

In example (3), the context is that *ʕAgīl* has left in search of beasts that he can sacrifice to invoke rain. After a short time, the speaker spots someone returning and wonders if it is *ʕAgīl*. The question he asks himself is constructed using the negative copula, *mā-hū-š*, in that the assumption that it could be him is denied, since he has only recently left. The speaker's own subsequent considerations confirm what has just been stated.

3)	*zaʕma*		*mā-hū-š*		*ʕagīl*
	really		NEG-3.M.SG-NEG		ʕAgīl
	qubāl-ī		*mī-zāl*		*bəkri*
	observation-1SG		NEG-PFV:stop:3.M.SG		early
	mā-yaʕmal-ši		*ḥatta*		*ḏḥayyit*[3]

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2 In this work, I adopted the system of transcription used in the Encyclopedia of Arabic Language and Linguistics (Versteegh 2006:VIII) with the exception of the glottal plosive and the voiced pharyngeal fricative, which were transcribed respectively with the symbols /ʔ/ and /ʕ/ instead. As far as transcriptions and translations are concerned, both have been adapted from those provided by Marçais (Marçais & Guîga 1925). As a matter of convenience, two page numbers are given in the bibliographic reference: the former refers to the original text, the latter to the original translation.

3 Marçais explains that Tunisians living in rural areas are not familiar with the division of the day into hours. On the contrary, there are various ways of marking time, including relying on periodic activities of pastoral life. Therefore, the expression *ḏḥayyit ʕᵘžūl*, which literally means "little morning of the calves", refers to the time from 8:30 to 9:30 in the morning (Marçais & Guîga 1925:211).

NEG-IPFV.3M:do:SG-NEG	until	DIM.morning
ʕᵘžūl	*w-ed-dunya*	*bʕīda*
calf.PL	and-DEF-world	far.F
mā-fī-ḥāl-ū-š	*mšē*	*w-žē*
NEG-in-state-3.M.SG-NEG	PFV:go:3.M.SG	and-PFV:come:3.M.SG

Oh, my word! Is that not ʕAgīl? [...] In my opinion it is still too early. Calves have not returned yet and everyone is far. He cannot have had time to go and come back (Marçais & Guîga 1925:15, 198).

The negative imperative is referred to as "prohibitive" and is achieved through the use of different markers. According to Brustad (2000:294-295), these markers have a variable geographical distribution: while *lā* is widespread everywhere except for Cairene Arabic, *mā* is mainly found in North Africa and Syria. Moreover, Brustad (2000:295) states that the use of *lā* and *mā* varies according to the pragmatic function they serve. Assuming that speakers have an inclination to be more polite to friends than to relatives, she concludes that lā expresses less imperative force than *mā*.

Upon analyzing the few examples found in the Takrouni corpus, it is unclear what the prevailing tendency is. While *lā* expresses a certain imperative force, *mā* appears to attenuate this force in order to maintain the principle of politeness in one example. However, in the other example, this principle is violated by expressing aggression.
In example (4), a heated discussion is going on between Ḥasan and ʕAlī following Sī el-Ġerīb's decision to appoint Ḥasan as model worker, which is not accepted by ʕAlī, who believes he has done a better job. The verbal negation *lā-taḍṛob* has the characteristics of a categorical negation: in particular, the structure is syntactically marked, since the marker *lā* is used without the suffix enclitic *-š*, and pragmatically, because it assumes the characteristics of a peremptory prohibition, as also suggested by Chaâbane (1996:118): «Il s'agit d'une interdiction ou d'un avertissement avec un verbe à la conjugaison préfixale».

4)	*lā-taḍṛob*	*fē-ha*	*ḍarba*	*kīf*
	NEG-IPFV.2:strike:SG	in-3.F.SG	blow	like
	yūqeʕ	*ḍarb*	*ən-namm*	*fi wuṣṭ*
	IPFV.3:take.place:M.SG	shot	DEF-penis	in middle
	el-faddān			
	DEF-field			

Do not strike a single blow [with your scythe], should a violent fight take place in the middle of the field (Marçais & Guîga 1925:41, 236).

In example (5), a *qui pro quo* occurs between Ḥalīma and ʔAžmīya during the harvest: the former accuses the latter of taking a bunch of spikes from her. However, it is

clear from the very beginning that the tone of the conversation is more subdued. In this case, the negative imperative *mā-tāxū-š* is constructed as a standard verbal negation through the use of the circumfix, which makes the structure syntactically unmarked and weakens the imperative force of the verb, resulting in an informal polite request.

5)   *ġluṭṭ*   *sāmeḥ-nī*   *hā-l-qāyla*
         PFV:make.a.mistake:1SG   IMP:forgive:2SG-1SG   DEM-DEF-heat

         l-mabṛūka   *ʕaskret*   *fi ṛāṣ-ī*
         DEF-blessed.F   PFV:gather:3.F.SG   in head-1SG

         w-mā-ʕet-š   *nfarrez*
         and-NEG-PFV:come.back:3.F.SG-NEG   IPFV.1:distinguish:SG

         kūʕ-ī   *mən*   *būʕ-ī*
         thumb-1SG   from   big.toe-1SG

         mā-tāxū-š   *aʕlī-ya*   *uxayyt-ī*
         NEG-imp.2:take:SG-NEG   on-1SG   sister.DIM-1SG

         I made a mistake! Forgive me! This scorching sun has gone to my head,
         I did not know whether I was coming or going (lit. I could not distinguish
         my thumb from my big toe). Do not blame me, my darling! (Marçais &
         Guîga 1925:47, 239).

In example (6), a little girl notices that a dog is sleeping on the grain and promptly orders it to go away. However, the father hearing his daughter shouting to chase the animal away, reproaches her and warns her to be quiet and not to disturb it, since it has happened before that a dog would sleep on the grain and later turned out to be a source of blessing.[4] Therefore, considering the given context, it is possible to assume that in this case the negative imperative expresses peremptoriness, since the father is urging his daughter on shutting up so that the dog's positive influence is not pushed away.

6)   *yā bhīma*   *mā-tqūl-š*   *eḏheb*
         VOC beast   NEG-IPFV.2:say:SG-NEG   IMP:go.away:2SG

         f-əl-qāʕa   *qūl*   *kaṯṯoṛ*
         in-DEF-farmyard   IMP:say:2SG   IMP:multiply:2SG

         xallī-h   *mā-ṭhayyr-ū-š*
         IMP:let:2SG-3.M.SG   NEG-IPFV.2:disturb:SG-3.M.SG-NEG

         You fool! Do not say "Go away!" in the farmyard! Say "Multiply!"!

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[4] In the phase preceding the measuring of the grain, it is indeed a good idea to avoid using words that might turn the blessing away; these are therefore replaced with more propitious ones (Marçais & Guîga 1925:284-85)

Leave it alone, do not bother it! (Marçais & Guîga 1925:75, 269).

4.2 - Predicative Negation

Predicative negation is expressed through the marker *miš(i)*, sometimes in the variant form *mūš*, and thus negates any element within the sentence that has a predicate function, such as adjectives or even a complement.

7)	*mūš*	*kīf*	*ən-nhāṛ*	*l-wāḥed*
	NEG	like	DEF-day	DEF-one
	wēn	*ywālī-h*		*yaṣṛaḥ*
	where	IPFV.3:be.friends:SG-3.M.SG		IPFV.3:graze:SG

It is not like in the daytime, where everyone goes where they want to go (Marçais & Guîga 1925:83, 293).

This type of negation is also found in relation to participles due to their dual nature, both verbal and nominal. As stated by Brustad (2000:289) «participles are commonly predicated, and in such cases are negated with predicate negation», which is, indeed, *miš(i)* or *mūš* in the case of the variety spoken in Takrouna.

8)	*īd-ek*	*mīši*	*ṯābta*	*f-əz-zarrīʕa*
	hand-2SG	NEG	ACT.PTCP:be.firm.F	In-DEF-seeding

You do not have a firm hand when you sow (litt. Your hand is not firm in sowing) (Marçais & Guîga 1925:7, 183).

4.3 - Categorical Negation

Finally, the last type of negation is categorical negation, which can be defined as the negation of «a whole category rather than to some specific item or member of a category» according to Harrell (1962:154). Three levels are identified: verb phrase, single sentence element, coordinated structures (Brustad 2000:306).

Regarding the verb phrase, it is a syntactically marked negation as it often involves the use of *mā* without the enclitic *-š*.[5] It is usually found in context with specific elements that impose constraints, namely negative polarity items (NPIs, see also §5.1).

- *ʕomr* ("life" = "never")

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[5] This is attested in spoken Tunisian Arabic in general (Chaâbane 1996:120-24), as well as in other North African varieties, for instance the Moroccan variety spoken in Casablanca, where the absence of the enclitic *-š* can be either compulsory or optional, depending on the items preceding the negative prefix *mā* (Adila 1996:104-07).

9)   *ʕomr-ī*   *mā-nəmši*   *mʕā-kum!*   *abadan! abadan!*
       life-1SG   NEG-IPFV.1:go:SG   with-2PL   never never

       Never (in my life) will I go with you! Never! Never! (Marçais & Guîga
       1925:23, 202).

- *ḥadd* ("somebody" in affirmative contexts, "nobody" in negative ones)

10)   *mā-ġāb*   *ḥadd*   *mən-hum*
       NEG-PFV:miss:3.M.SG   nobody   of-3PL

       None of them was missing (Marçais & Guîga 1925:31, 227).

- *ḥatta* ("even", also in combination with other words, such as *ḥāža* or *wāḥed*)

11)   *enti*   *kīf*   *umm-nā*   *ḥatta wāḥed*
       2SG   like   mother-1PL   even one
       mā-yižubd-ek   *w-əllī*   *yižᵘbd-ek*
       NEG-IPFV.3:throw:SG-2SG   and-REL   IPFV.3:throw:SG-2SG
       nšōlqū-h
       IPFV.1:fight:PL-3.M.SG

       You are like a mother to us. No one will trouble you, and those who do,
       we will tear them apart (Marçais & Guîga 1925:23, 202).

- *w-aḷḷāḥi* ("I swear to God!")

12)   *w-aḷḷāḥi*   *mā-naʕarf*
       I swear to God   NEG-IPFV.1:know:SG
       hā-l-ʕaqal   *ʕand xū-ya!*
       DEM-DEF-mind   at brother-1SG

       I swear to God, I do not know where my brother's head is!
       (Marçais & Guîga 1925:77, 270).

- *kān* ("except", grammaticalized as an exceptive particle)

13)   *mā-xḏēt*   *āməs*   *kān*   *ṯnēn*
       NEG-PFV:take:1SG   yesterday   except   two
       waḥda   *mən-nā*   *waḥda*   *mən-nā*
       one.F   of-3.F.SG   one.F   of-3.F.SG

       They did not give me but two (sacks): one of this (grain) and one of the

other (barley) (Marçais & Guîga 1925:3, 181).

- *šay* ("thing", it means "nothing" in negative sentences)

14)   *hāḏi*   *snawīya*   *mā*   *fē-hā*   *šay*
           DEM.F   yearly.F   NEG   in-3.F.SG   thing
           This [is a] yearly [obligation]. There is nothing we can do about it
           (Marçais & Guîga 1925:83, 293).

Negation can be expressed by emphasizing a single element of the sentence, typically through the use of *w-lā*, which conveys the meaning of "not one", "nobody", or "not at all".

15)   *w-bdāw*   *yiddāḥru*   *kīf*   *əž-žmāl*
           and-PFV:begin:3PL   IPFV.3:push:PL   like   DEF-PL.camel
           w-lā wāḥed   *ṛāšəf-hā*   *l-wāḥed*
           and-NEG one   ACT.PTCP:give.way-3.F.SG   to-one
           And they began to push like camels, with no one giving way to the other
           (Marçais & Guîga 1925:35, 228).

With regard to coordination, these are correlative particles that relate two or more coordinated nouns, adjectives, or propositions by negating them absolutely. Usually, the structures employed in this context are *lā…lā* or *lā…w-lā.*

16)   *wžūh-hā*   *ḥmuṛ*   *w-ʕuraq-hā*
           face.PL-3.F.SG   red.M.PL   and-sweat-3.F.SG
           znānər   *w-lākun*   *lā ʕayya*
           fringed.handkerchief.PL   and-but   NEG tiredness
           w-lā kalla
           and-NEG fatigue
           Their faces were red and sweat was dripping down, but no sign of
           tiredness nor fatigue (Marçais & Guîga 1925:33, 228).

However, it is important to note that negative coordination does not always have to be expressed categorically. Syntactically and semantically unmarked coordinated structures can also be found. In example (17), the elements placed in correlation do not constitute the totality of possibilities, but alternatives: it is, therefore, an open set. The latter feature is what distinguishes unmarked coordinated negation from absolute negation in which, on the contrary, the negated elements are part of a closed set, thus

conferring categoricity from a semantic point of view (Brustad 2000:310-12).

17) *īḏa*   *ʕand-hum*   *mā-yažḥᵉdū-š*   *ʕᵘlī-h*
     HYP   at-3PL   NEG-IPFV.3:deny:PL-NEG   on-3.M.SG

     w-mā-yqaṣṣᵒṛū-š   *mʕā-h*
     and-NEG-IPFV.3:miss:PL-NEG   with-3.M.SG

     If they have (beasts), they will not deny them to him and they will not
     refuse to help him (Marçais & Guîga 1925:13, 197).

5 - Considerations on Jespersen's Cycle

The interest that this area of syntax has generated stems in part from the study of a process that came to be known as the Jespersen's cycle. It has previously been explained how this cycle works and how it is accomplished in varieties of Arabic.

As far as Takrouna dialect is concerned, it can be stated that it is a stage II variety, although there are instances of stage I as well, as it has already been observed in the previous paragraphs; on the contrary, no significant occurrences of stage III were found. A brief discussion of the different stages will be offered below in order to look more schematically at the contexts in which each of them occurs.

5.1 - Stage I

As noted above, both markers, *lā* and *mā*, are present at this stage. The marker *lā* is of more restricted use, as it is mostly attested as an adverb in negative responses. As an actual marker, however, it occurs in: 1. prohibitions and threats; 2. coordinated structures, including verb + noun/pronoun structures.

18) *bə-s-snē*   *lā-yisulmu*   *mən-ni*
     with-DEF-year   NEG-IPFV.3:run.away:PL   from-1SG

     lā-hīya   *w-lā-hūwa*
     NEG-3.F.SG   and-NEG-3.M.SG

     Within the year, neither she nor he could get away from me (Marçais &
     Guîga 1925:111, 317).

19) *w-lākunti*   *mā-bē-yasmaʕ-ni*
     but   NEG-PVB-IPFV.3:hear:SG-1SG

     w-mā-kānū   *yfukkū*
     and-NEG-PFV:be:3PL   IPFV.3:abandon:PL

     ella   *mā-xḏāw*   *ġmāḏ*   *əz-zarrīʕa*
     REL   NEG-PFV:take:3PL   close.the.eyes   DEF-seeding

They would not hear me. They would not leave until after they had concluded the planting (Marçais & Guîga 1925:11, 185).

Moreover, example (20) would suggest a possible use of *lā* in negative objective clauses. However, the lack of further examples makes it impossible to test the veracity of this hypothesis.

20) | *w-xāyf* | | *ʕ^ula* | *hā škayyoṛt-ēn* |
and-ACT.PTCP:fear | | on | DEM bag-DU.DIM
lā-yufuṛṭu | | *ʕ^ulī-ya* | *f-əl-mākla*
NEG-IPFV.3:exceed:PL | | on-1SG | in-DEF-food

And I am afraid these two bags are not enough to feed me (Marçais & Guîga 1925:3, 181).

The marker *mā*, on the other hand, occurs more frequently, but in combination with the suffix enclitic *-š*. In fact, the contexts in which it is attested without such enclitic are mostly due to constraints: the presence of the so-called NPIs causes the contextual use of circumfixal negation to give the sentence too much emphasis; for this reason, the prefixal negation is used.

21) | *ġudwa* | *ʕ-aṣ-ṣbāḥ* | *bəkri* |
tomorrow | on-DEF-morning | early
mā-yusbuq-ni | | *ḥadd*
NEG-IPFV.3M:precede:SG-1SG | | nobody

Nobody is going to precede me tomorrow bright and early in the morning! (Marçais & Guîga 1925:143, 355)

5.2 - Stage II

After having described the different types of negation, it can be argued again that the variety under investigation is identified with the second stage of verbal negation. In fact, the circumfixal negation *mā-... -š* is the standard one and it is used in several contexts, some of which have already been mentioned in the previous paragraphs:

- in unmarked verbal negation, both for the prefixal and suffixal conjugation;

22) | *mā-šuft-š* | *bəkri* | *w-l-awlād* |
NEG-PFV:see:2SG-NEG | early | and-DEF-boy.PL
mšakᵊlka | *fī-h*
PASS.PTCP:grab.at.F | in-3.M.SG

Have you not seen earlier when the boys grabbed at it? (Marçais & Guîga 1925:129, 335)

- to negate pseudo-verbs;

23)   *nžī-kum*   *ʕᵘla ṛāṣ-ī*   *w-ʕēn-ī*
      IPFV.1:come:SG-2PL   on head-1SG   and-eye-1SG
      w-mā-ʕand-ī-š   *mrūwa*
      and-NEG-at-1SG-NEG   chivalry
      I will go with you with all my heart and without any merit (Marçais
      & Guîga 1925:143, 355).

- with existentials;

24)   *mā-ṯamma-š*   *qadd-kum*   *naġġāra*   *w-baḷḫāẓa*
      NEG-EXIST-NEG   like-2PL   bad.player.PL   and-cheat.PL
      There are no players as bad and cheating as you are (Marçais & Guîga
      925:35, 229).

- in negative purpose clauses; with regard to this type of sentences, D'Anna (2018:76-79) argues that for the Fezzān area, the tendency is to preserve the first stage, especially in the Bedouin varieties. On the other hand, Takrouni Arabic, similarly to other Maghrebi dialects, proves to be innovative in this respect, since it systematically presents circumfixal negation: of the eight attested examples, only one shows the prefixal negation *mā*, which is the result of a constraint triggered by the NPI *ḥadd*.

25)   *bāš*   *mā-yanġaṛ*   *ḥadd*
      COMPL   NEG-SBJV.3.M:be.jealous:SG   nobody
      xḏē   *muḥamməd*   *w-qāl*
      PFV:take:3.M.SG   Muḥammad   and-PFV:say:3.M.SG
      l-sāləm   *ellī* *qṣam*   *mʕā-h*
      to-Salem   REL   PFV:divide:3.M.SG   with-3.M.SG
      tāxu   *ṛ-ṛāṣ*   *w-ulla*   *l-baʕbūṣ?*
      IPFV.2:take:SG   DEF-head   or   DEF-tail
      In order for nobody to complain, Muḥammad asked Salem, with whom he had
      divided his companions, "Do you choose heads or tails?" (Marçais & Guîga
      1925:31, 227).

26)   *šadd-l-u*   *wāḥed*   *režl-ē-h*

         PFV:keep.still:3.M.SG-to-3.M.SG   one   paw-DU-3.M.SG

         bāš   *mā-yeṣṣakkak-š*   *qbal*

         COMPL   NEG-SBJV.3.M:struggle:SG-NEG   before

         eḏ-ḏbīḥa

         DEF-sacrifice

         Another man kept his paws still, so that he could not move before the sacrifice (Marçais & Guîga 1925:17, 199).

- in negative conditional clauses; although only five examples were found, the situation appears very similar to that of negative purpose clauses, since in all cases the negation used is *mā-… -š*.

27)   *īḏa*   *mā-yḥebb-š*   *sanžq-u*

         HYP   NEG-IPFV.3:want:SG-NEG   flag-3.M.SG

         yṛōḥ   *ftāyl*   *w-ʕāṛ-na*   *ʕᵘlī-h*

         IPFV.3M:go:SG   shred.PL   and-blame-1PL   on-3.M.SG

         If he refuses, his flag will be torn in shreds and our blame will fall on him (Marçais & Guîga 1925:19, 200).

5.3 - Stage III

This stage is the most innovative one, especially in relation to Maghrebi dialects, as at present it is only attested in Maltese (D'Anna 2020b) and in some varieties of Arabic spoken in the Tunisian Sahel, namely those of Mahdia and Chebba, which were investigated by D'Anna (2020b).

In the Takrouni dialect, only one instance of stage III negation is attested and it is in combination with the conjunction *kān: kān-ši mablūl* (Marçais & Guîga 1925:19). Specifically, this is a sentence in which both the main clause and the subordinate clause are negative: the former has the absolute negation la *ṛžaḥ-ḥa*, "no return", while in the latter, as already mentioned, only the enclitic *-š* appears. It could be assumed, then, that the marker *lā* is considered to be a sufficient element to attribute categoricity to the negation so that the negative prefix *mā* in the subordinate clause was omitted. However, it is essential to clarify the nature of the marker *kān*. On the one hand, if one interprets it as an exceptive conjunction, this example becomes such an exception that it cannot be admissible: all the other attested examples of negative exceptive clauses always present stage I negation. On the other hand, if the marker is given conditional-temporal value, then the hypothesis becomes more plausible. However, the lack of other instances in the same context does not allow us to confirm it.

28)	*w-aḷḷāh*	*lā*	*r̝žaḥ-ḥa*
	and-God	NEG	return-3.F.SG
	l-ez-zāwya	*kān-ši*	*mablūl*
	to-DEF-zaouia	if/until-NEG	PASS.PTCP:get.wet

It [the flag] will not return to the zawiya until it gets wet (Marçais & Guîga 1925:19, 200).

For Mashreqi varieties such as Palestinian and Lebanese Arabic, Lucas (2007:423) hypothesized that the reasons leading to the transition from the second to the last stage are phonetic in nature: he argued that the presence of the preverb *b-* or a bilabial in general at the beginning of the verb would have led to the gradual transition from *mā* to *a*; this prefix then weakened to the point of disappearing, so that only the suffixed enclitic *-š* was left. On the contrary, the preverb *b-* is not very productive in Maghrebi varieties; therefore, it is not plausible that the forementioned process applies for these varieties too.

6 - Other Functions of the *-š* Enclitic

In this last section, some uses of the enclitic *-š* are presented, although they are not strictly related to the topic of negation. It was thought appropriate to include such data because they are part of reflection that arose from research aimed at finding examples of stage III of verbal negation, which instead led to unexpected results, but still of particular interest for further studies.

It concerns uses of the enclitic *-š* other than the negative one. In this regard, it is worth mentioning some studies by David Wilmsen (2013, 2014, 2016), which were devoted to the *-š* enclitic and its origin in Arabic dialects. In particular, he hypothesized (Wilmsen 2014:14879) that this particle originated from a proto-Semitic third personal pronoun which was attested as an interrogative at the beginning but was later reanalyzed as negator resulting in the post-verbal negation. Therefore, according to him, Arabic never underwent Jespersen's cycle. However, as D'Anna pointed out (2020b:5), several scholars (al-Jallad 2015; Lucas 2018; Souag 2016) have rejected Wilmsen's hypothesis. Nevertheless, similarities can be found between the contexts in which the enclitic *-š* carries an interrogative function according to Wilmsen and the data on Takrouni Arabic collected in this paper. Hence, regarding the Arabic variety spoken in Takrouna, this particle was attested in the following contexts:

1. When the following verb takes the value of the subjunctive as the mode of irrealis. After observing a real fact, an individual perception and evaluation is expressed, but it does not correspond to reality. Therefore, this construction reflects an interpretational

judgement of the speaker. The examples found are referred to the second and the third feminine singular person of the verb *qāl* in the prefixal conjugation, *tqūl-š*. When translated, it corresponds more to an impersonal conditional.[6]

29)   *l-yūm*   *ʕand-na*   *nhāṛ-ēn*   *fi māṛṣ*

DEF-day   at-1PL   day-DU   in march

w-əd-dunya   *tqūl-š*   *ᵃʕlē-ha*

and-DEF-world   IPFV.3F:say:SG-INTERR   on-3.F.SG

ṣēf

summer

Today it is the second day of March but you would say it is summer (Marçais & Guîga 1925:13, 197).

30)   *āmma*   *ʕatārs*   *žəbt-hum*

but   goat.used.for.sacrifice.PL   PFV:bring:2SG-3PL

w-aḷḷāhi   *tqūl-š*   *ᵃʕlī-hum*   *frātəl*

I swear to God   IPFV.2:say:SG-INTERR   on-3PL   Bullock.PL

What goats to sacrifice you have brought us! [...] I swear to God, you would say they are bullocks! (Marçais & Guîga 1925:17, 199).

2. As a dubitative in questions for two purposes, namely (1) when a positive answer is expected, sometimes also as a confirmation of what has been said (in this sense it corresponds to question tags in English) or (2) when one wants to attract the attention of the interlocutor and arouse interest with regard to what is about to be said (it is, therefore, a rhetorical question). Such usage of the particle *-š* was attested also by Wilmsen (2014:54-55), according to whom it functions as a tag, the sentence being interpreted either "Did you [verb], or not?" or "You [verb], right?". The scholar also states that in the examples he provided the enclitic always implies a polar reply from the interlocutors. It has already been pointed out that in the following examples in this paper, even though they are polar questions, the speaker always expects a positive answer from the interlocutor, apart from the question in example (31), which is rhetorical, so a negative response would be expected.

It has been observed that this enclitic in interrogative function is attested not only

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6 The Italian translation of these sentences helps better understand the function that the enclitic has in this context: that is because Italian has two separate conjugations for subjunctive (*sia, siano*) and conditional (*si direbbe*) which makes it clearer what message the speaker is trying to convey:

1. Oggi è il secondo giorno di marzo ma si direbbe che sia estate!

2. Che capre da sacrificare che ci hai portato! [...] Per Dio, si direbbe che siano dei torelli!

in relation to verbs, but to various categories:

a. verbs in the prefixal conjugation

31)   *taʕrfū-š*   *yā žmāʕa*   *qālu*
IPFV.2:know:PL-INTERR   VOC group   PFV:say:3PL

kull   *wēn*   *yūləd*
every   when   PASS.IPFV.3M:be.born:SG

sġīr   *f-əl-mdīna*   *tūld*
little   in-DEF-city   PASS.IPFV.3F:be.born:SG

əṭmenya   *f-əl-ʕaṛab*   *bāš*
eight   in DEF-Arab.PL   COMPL

yəxədmu   *ʕ^ulī-h*
SBJV.3:work:PL   on-3.M.SG

Do you know, comrades? They say that every time a child is born in the city, eight are born among the rural Arabs for them to work for him (Marçais & Guîga 1925:79, 270).

b. verbs in the suffixal conjugation

32)   *āmma*   *ʕ^utārs*   *žəbt-hum*
but   goat.used.for.sacrifice.PL   PFV:bring:2SG-3PL

ġlēt-š   *fī-hum*
PFV:pay.a.lot:2SG-INTERR   in-3PL

What goats to sacrifice you have brought us! […] You have paid a lot for them, have you not? (Marçais & Guîga 1925:17, 199).

33)   *žəbt-l-ī-š*   *ḥāža*   *m-əs-sūq*
PFV:bring:2SG-to-1SG-INTERR   thing   from-DEF-market

Have you brought me anything from the market? (Marçais & Guîga 1925:87, 295).

c. pseudo-verbs

34)   *ʕand-ek-š*   *əxwēṣa*   *nḥās*
at-2SG-INTERR   ring   copper

w-šwayya   *w-šaq*   *w-wdēʕa*
and-thing.DIM   and-ammonia.rubber and-cowrie.shell

You have a copper ring, some ammonia rubber and a cowrie shell, do you not?

(Marçais & Guîga 1925:105, 314).

35)   *hayya*   *syād-i*   *ʕand-ī-š*   *ržāl*
        come.on   Gentleman.PL-1SG   at-1SG-INTERR   man.PL
        Come on folks! Am I dealing with men? (Marçais & Guîga 1925:61, 263).

Regarding pseudo-verbs, Wilmsen (2014:56) underlines that in such context the particle *-š* takes on a partitive meaning and questions present a polite hedge. In addition to this, he suggests that a certain negativity is implied so that the enclitic can be considered to have a "rhetorical negative" function. Hence, example (34) could also be read as "You do not happen to have a copper ring, some ammonia rubber and a cowrie shell, do you?". It is clear that the scholar insists on the partitive and interrogative quality of *-š*: «Accordingly, a recoverable original meaning is not 'you don't have a thing' and 'there is no thing' but simply 'have you any...'» (Wilmsen 2014:57).

d. pronouns

In example (36) a group of children are playing a game called *ʕḏayyem sāri* literally "traveling little bone"[7]. At one point, one of the players is accused of cheating and retrieving another bone. He then insists that it is not cheating and asks them to come closer to see for themselves that it is the right one by asking them the same question twice.

36)   *hū-ši*   *hūwa*   *hū-ši*   *hūwa*
        3.M.SG-INTERR   3.M.SG   3.M.SG-INTERR   3.M.SG
        Is it the right one? Is it the right one? (Marçais & Guîga 1925:125, 334).

Example (37) differs slightly from the others in that it is an indirect interrogative subordinate conveyed by the enclitic *-š*. In addition, although the question is not addressed to an interlocutor in this case, there is still an expectation of a positive outcome with regard to what is being inquired about, namely, checking how well the mill is holding.

37)   *xḏāt*   *waḥda*   *xalxlet*
        PFV:take:3.F.SG   one.F   PFV:shake:3.F.SG

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[7] Based on what is described in the text, the game consists of searching for a bone previously chosen from some found on the street. Then the bone is thrown in a random direction and the aim is to find it, catch it and go to score the point by giving a hit against a wall designated at the beginning of the game (Marçais & Guîga 1925:333-36).

l-qalb	*bās*	*tšūf-u*
DEF-heart	COMPL	IPFV.3F:see:SG-3.M.SG
hū-š	*ṣāməl*	*mlīḥ*
3.M.SG-INTERR	ACT.PTCP:resist	good

One of them began to shake the (mill) axle to ensure if it was standing firmly (Marçais & Guîga 1925:107, 315).

3. Finally, in example (38), the enclitic -š, which is suffixed to a verb in the prefixal conjugation, confers purpose value upon the proposition. This is maybe due to the fact that finding beasts is something that ʕAgīl hopes. However, further investigation would be necessary to better understand the use of the suffix in this context but unfortunately no similar examples were found in the corpus.

38)	*ʕagīl*	*hazz*	*mīya*	*taḥt-u*
	ʕAgīl	PFV:move:3.M.SG	hundred	under-3.M.SG
	w-dabb		*l-aṛ-ṛmēla*	*yalqā-š*
	and-PFV:proceed:3.M.SG		to-DEF-Remīla	IPFV.3.M:find:SG-INTERR
	šyāh			
	beast.to.be.sacrificed.PL			

ʕAgīl took with him a hundred francs and set out for be sacrificed (Marçais & Guîga 1925:13, 197).

7 - Conclusions

This paper provides an original contribution to studies on negation in the Tunisian Sahel. In particular, the article was concerned with describing the syntax of negation in the Arabic variety spoken in Takrouna. Although the corpus from which the data were taken was published in 1925, this study is nevertheless of considerable importance, as it has made it possible to depict a phase of the dialect that precedes its general levelling towards the variety spoken in the capital (Gibson 2002).

The analysis carried out on Takrouni dialect allowed us to observe the presence of the same types of negation attested in the dialects studied by Brustad (2000:277-314), albeit with very few differences in usage: as far as the prohibitive is concerned, it was not possible to associate markers with specific degrees of imperative force since no prevailing tendency was identified in Takrouni Arabic.

Secondly, the markers were examined in relation to the Jespersen's cycle. In particular, it was observed that this dialect can be classified as a second stage variety, the circumfix occurring with frequency in many contexts, both marked and unmarked. However, cases were attested where only prefixal negation is used, i.e. where there are NPIs resulting in constraints. On the other hand, with the exception of one sample for

which reservations can still be expressed, no significant cases of the third stage were found, in contrast to other varieties of Sahel itself. Finally, this research has serendipitously brought to light innovative uses of the enclitic *-š* that deviate from the negation theme on which this paper focuses. On the contrary, in the examples collected, the use of the enclitic is mainly interrogative and related to different contexts: it was observed that it is mostly used when the purpose is to arouse the interest of the interlocutor or to ask for confirmation of what has been said. However, further studies are needed: in fact, this article presents the results of preliminary work that will be followed by further research on other Sahli varieties.

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APPENDIX

List of abbreviations[8]

1	first person
2	second person
3	third person
ACT	active
COMPL	complementizer
DEF	definite
DEM	demonstrative
DIM	diminutive
DU	dual
EXIST	existential
F	feminine
HYP	hypothetical
IMP	imperative
INTERR	interrogative
IPFV	imperfective
M	masculine
MRK	marker
NEG	negative
PAS	passive
PFV	perfective
PL	plural
PTCP	participle
PURP	purpose

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[8] The acronyms PFV and IPFV, although corresponding to "perfective" and "imperfective", have been used here to denote two verb forms, namely the suffixal conjugation and the prefixal conjugation. Thus, these labels are not intended to denote specific characteristics of the verbal aspect.

PVB	preverb
REL	relative
SBJV	subjunctive
SG	singular
VOC	vocative