A Preliminary Study on the Verbal System of the Syrian Dialect of Ṭarṭūs

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Abstract   The present study focuses on the analysis of the verbal system of Arabic spoken in Ṭarṭūs, a city located on the west coast of Syria. The research analyses the verb above all from the aspectual and modal point of view, with hints to some traits of the rural dialect imported into the city from the Alawite community. The variety of Ṭarṭūs and the surrounding areas falls within the subgroup of coastal dialects of Syria (Behnstedt 1997) and since, as Procházka (2013) points out, they are among the least studied yet, this research may constitute a starting point for further studies and insights into the variety of Ṭarṭūs and the dialects of this area.

Keywords   Arabic dialectology. Syrian varieties. Ṭarṭūs dialect. Verbal system.

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1 Introduction

The Syrian-Lebanese-Palestinian area is probably among the most studied dialect areas of the Arabic-speaking world. To contextualise and frame the linguistic topic examined here, that is the verbal system of Arabic spoken in the coastal city of Ṭarṭūs (western Syria), a general and rapid overview on the studies carried out and the sources of the Syrian dialects will be made below.

We owe to Cantineau (1953, 1956), one of the most famous dialectologists, fundamental research for the classification of Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian dialects. Taking a step back, a contribution to the knowledge of Syrian dialects was made by the collection of Damascene fairy tales by Østrup (1897). Apart from sporadic examples, the first studies on the varieties of this area appeared in the twentieth century; among this early research it is appropriate to mention Harfouch (1914), who wrote a practical guide to the Arabic spoken in Syria and Palestine and a collection of proverbs. The role of the Academy of the Arabic language of Damascus (established in 1919) was also important, in fact this Academy stimulated research on dialectisms in modern literary Arabic.

The first linguistic atlas of the Syrian-Palestinian area was written by Bergsträsser and dates back to 1915. Regarding the most recent geographical atlases, Behnstedt's (1997) on Syrian dialects is fundamental.

Among the various resources on the dialect of the Syro-Lebanese area some of the most famous dictionaries still in use today are worth mentioning: Barthélemy (1935-1969), a supplement, was published by Denizeau (1960) and the English-Syrian Arabic dictionary of Stowasser and Ani (1964). Regarding the most well-known grammars, we can mention that of Nakhla (1937) on the Lebanese-Syrian dialects, followed by many others including that of Grotzfeld (1965) on the Damascus dialect. Among the most recent manuals on Middle Eastern dialects are: Kassab (1987), Kallas (1995) specifically on the Lebanese dialect, Cowell (2005) and Durand, Ventura (2017).

Among the contemporary scholars who have devoted themselves to Syrian varieties are: Lentin (1994a; 1994b; 1996), Firănescu (2015; 2019), Dahmash (2005a; 2005b; 2010), Procházka (2013; 2020) and Berlinches (2016).

The dialect of Ṭarṭūs and the surrounding areas is part of the subgroup of coastal dialects of Syria,[1] which are among the least studied so far.

Concerning the studies on the dialects of the west coast, Procházka (2013) collected data and provided a linguistic analysis on the dialect of the island of Arwād. Behnstedt, in the *Encyclopedia of Arabic*

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[1] Group C-9 on map 501 (Behnstedt 1997).

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e-ISSN 2385-3042

Language and Linguistics (2009), under the entry "Syria", dedicates a section to the coastal dialects of Syria. Other sources on the *sāḥil* dialects are the dictionary *Mawsū'at al-'āmmiyya s-sūriyya* written by 'Abd ar-Raḥīm (2003) and the aforementioned work by Behnstedt *Sprachatlas von Syrien* (1997).

In order to fully illustrate the linguistic aspect, it is appropriate to explain the social and community composition of the city of Ṭarṭūs. The population is made up of Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims, Ishmaelites, Christians and Alawites, the latter coming from the surrounding rural areas. It is possible to distinguish, in a general way, two dialectal variants, the urban and the rural ones, the latter imported from the Alawite communities. Within the urban dialect, as also reported by the informants interviewed for this study, there are presumably communal varieties, that is religious ones, on which however not enough information is available.

The city of Ṭarṭūs was relatively unaffected by the civil war: this contributed to the influx of half a million immigrants from the rest of Syria, especially from Homs and Aleppo, complicating the linguistic situation, as well as the socio-demographic one.

2 Objectives and Methodology

The research aims at examining, in a preliminary way, some characteristics of the verbal system of the variety spoken in Ṭarṭūs from the aspectual and modal point of view, with particular reference to preverbs and related constructions, with hints to some traits of the rural dialect imported into the city by the Alawite community.

The *corpus* of this research is mostly based on the lyrics of Abu Hajar, a rapper from Ṭarṭūs, born in 1987. He attended high school in Latakia, later enrolled at University in Jordan, at the Faculty of Economics, and after obtaining his degree, he returned to Syria. In 2007 he was arrested for the socio-political content of some of his songs; after the outbreak of the civil war in Syria he was again incarcerated for two months because of his activities as a rapper and his political ideas. So the singer decided to escape from Syria and after long journeys he arrived in Italy and lived in Rome until 2016.

The collection of lyrics analysed in this study has been expanded over time and is made up of twenty texts, which mostly deal with political and social issues concerning Syria.[2]

Through the singer, I was able to meet other Arabic speakers from Ṭarṭūs residing in Italy in 2014-15, who represented precious sources

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[2] The first core of texts were used for research on language and rap. Then new texts were selected to have more material for the present study.

to integrate the present research. The other informants are mostly male, between twenty-five and thirty-five, and are educated.

The examples given below, which aim to shed light on some aspects of the verbal system of the dialect of Ṭarṭūs, are therefore taken both from the lyrics of the songs and from the interviews carried out with the Arabic speakers originally from Ṭarṭūs.

The linguistic observations reported may offer a starting point for a linguistic analysis of a little known Arabic variety, also thanks to the precious information provided by the informants themselves during the course of this research.

Although the interviews as oral sources can be considered privileged in this type of work, the numerous lyrics have greatly increased and enriched the data on the variety of Ṭarṭūs, which is rather complicated to investigate since the difficult situation ongoing in Syria makes field research impossible.

3 Notes on the Transcription System

3.1 Vowels

The etymologically long vowels, in post-tonic open syllables, are transcribed only when they are pronounced as such (therefore according to a phonetic and non-phonemic transcription), so the final vowels, which are long in Standard Arabic, are here made short: for example *ana* 'I', *darasna* 'we studied', but if a suffix is added, this vowel recovers its etymological length, attracting the accent to itself such as *ḥaku* 'they told', but *ḥakū-li* 'they told me'.

Superscript vowels $^{ə i u}$ are used to indicate a support vowel, called epentetic or anaptyctic, and have the same duration as *ə i u* but play a different phonemic role. Such epentetic vowels can be found in the following cases: in rear position, as the majority of Eastern varieties do not tolerate a cluster of two consonants in the pausal context; in attack position, at the beginning of a sentence when there are themes starting with two consonants and in clusters of three or more consonants, not tolerated by Eastern dialects.

3.2 Consonants

- /q/ is transcribed ' to represent the voiceless laryngeal occlusive [ʔ]. In some cases, this phoneme is realized as a uvular [q] (as in Standard Arabic) and is transcribed *q*;
- the consonant ج *ğīm* is transcribed *ž* and has a fricative-type realization such as the French *j* [ʒ];

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- consonants *b*, *r*, *l*, *m* have emphatic variants, respectively transcribed as *ḅ* (for example *ḅāḅā* 'dad'), *ṛ* (*safaṛ* 'trip'), *ḷ* (*Aḷḷāh* 'God') and *ṃ* (*ṃāṃā* 'mom');
- regarding the interdental consonants, in the dialect under consideration we can find: *ṯ* > *t*, rarely *ṯ* > *s*; *ḏ* > *d*, rarely *ḏ* > *z*; *ḍ* > *ẓ*, *ḍ*.

4 Verbal System

On the typological level, the Syrian dialect of Ṭarṭūs, like other Arabic dialects, can be defined as having an SVO (subject-verb-object) structure.

We encounter the basic opposition perfective-imperfective as in the majority of Arabic dialects. The perfective uses suffixes to express a completed, finished action and therefore it renders the past tense. The imperfective, constituted by a conjugation with prefixes, expresses an action not yet completed, not finished.

Like the majority of sedentary varieties, the Arabic of Ṭarṭūs too uses preverbs to indicate temporal nuances in the imperfective.[3]

While Standard Arabic distinguishes three schemes (CaCaCa - yaCCu/a/iCu, CaCiCa - yaCCaCu, CaCuCa - yaCCuCu), the spoken Arabic of Ṭarṭūs, like the majority of Syrian and Eastern dialects in general, is based on two basic schemes:

- CaCaC - yǝCCo/eC, e.g.: *daras*, *yǝdros* ('he studied', 'he studies') - *ḥamal*, *yǝḥmel* ('he brought', 'he brings')
- CǝCeC - yǝCCaC, e.g.: *šǝreb*, *yǝšrab* ('he drank', 'he drinks')

The former are action verbs, the latter are verbs of state in which the scheme absorbs both the CaCiCa and CaCuCa verbs of standard Arabic.

4.1 Perfective

The conjugation of the perfective in Pattern I of a regular triconsonantal root is as follows:

I Scheme		
	Singular	**Plural**
1	*darast*	*darasna*
2 (m.)	*darast*	*darastu*

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3 For preverbs see Durand's study (1991).

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2 (f.)	*darasti*	
3 (m.)	*daras*	*darasu*
3 (f.)	*darset*	

II Scheme		
	Singular	**Plural**
1	*šrəbt*	*šrəbna*
2 (m.)	*šrəbt*	*šrəbtu*
2 (f.)	*šrəbti*	
3 (m.)	*šəreb*	*šərbu*
3 (f.)	*šərbet*	

We note the absence of gender opposition in the 2nd p. pl. and in the 3rd p. pl., common to most of the sedentary varieties, while the Bedouin dialects and part of the rural ones retain the gender distinction in the plural.

- Geminate verbs undergo the typical treatment of dialectal Arabic: there is a lengthening before consonant suffixes, adapting to the conjugation of defective verbs, for example: *maddēt* 'I have stretched', *maddēna* 'we have stretched'.
- Regarding the defective verbs, the conjugation is as follows:

	Singular	**Plural**
1	*ḥkīt*	*ḥkīna*
2 (m.)	*ḥkīt*	*ḥkītu*
2 (f.)	*ḥkīti*	
3 (m.)	*ḥəki*	*ḥəkyu*
3 (f.)	*ḥəkyet*	

We observe that before the consonant suffixes we have *ī* and before the suffixes starting with a vowel the weak -*y*- returns.

The following examples are reported:
- *w-ḥatta iza ḥkīt* (And even if I speak).
- *ḥābeb əḥki ḥarbashāt ma ḥkīt ʿann-a mən ʾabᵊl* (I would like to say scribbled words never said before).
- *btaʿref šū ʿamm-o ḥallī-ni ʾəll-ak kīf rbīt* (You know, uncle, let me tell you how I grew up).

What has been illustrated differs from the Damascene Arabic and from other Syrian dialects in which there are two types of conjugation for final-weak verbs:

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I Type		
	Singular	**Plural**
1	ḥakēt	ḥakēna
2 (m.)	ḥakēt	ḥakētu
2 (f.)	ḥakēti	
3 (m.)	ḥaka	ḥaku
3 (f.)	ḥaket	
II Type		
	Singular	**Plural**
1	nsīt	nsīna
2 (m.)	nsīt	nsītu
2 (f.)	nsīti	
3 (m.)	nəsi	nəsyu
3 (f.)	nəsyet	

From the data reported here it is evident that in the verbal system of Ṭarṭūs the verb *ḥaka*, belonging in theory to the first typology, refers in practice to the conjugation of the defective verbs of the CəCi scheme (*nəsi*), reducing the two typologies to a single one.[4]

4.2 Imperfective

As in all Syrian dialects (and Eastern varieties in general), the usual present is constructed with the imperfective preceded by the preverb *b*-. The absence of preverbs has a modal value of the subjunctive mood.

The following is the conjugation of the simple indicative present:

	Singular	**Plural**
1	bədros	mnədros/bnədros
2 (m.)	btədros	btədᵊrsu
2 (f.)	btədᵊrsi	
3 (m.)	byədros	byədᵊrsu
3 (f.)	btədros	
1	bəḥmel	mnəḥmel/bnəḥmel
2 (m.)	btəḥmel	btəḥᵊmlu
2 (f.)	btəḥᵊmli	
3 (m.)	byəḥmel	byəḥᵊmlu
3 (f.)	btəḥmel	
1	bəšrab	mnəšrab/bnəšrab
2 (m.)	btəšrab	btəšrabu

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4 This phenomenon represents an isogloss of Beirutian Arabic.

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2 (f.)	*btəšrabi*	
3 (m.)	*byəšrab*	*byəšrabu*
3 (f.)	*btəšrab*	

It is noted that the preverb *b-* is assimilated to *m-* in the 1st p. pl., but not always, in some cases it remains *bnə*.

Examples:

- *bukra mnəḥtəfel sawa w-ḥaqq*[5]*-ak byəržaʿ* (Tomorrow we will celebrate together, your rights will return).
- *nurīd ḥurriyyet əl-žamīʿ w-ma mənḥīd* (We want everyone's freedom and we will not give up).
- *nəḥna bnəḥmī-k* (We protect you).
- *šū bnərtāḥ* (How we are relieved).

4.3   Concomitant Present

The preverb *ʿam-* is used for the concomitant present. From the collected *corpus* we observe that the preverb *ʿam-* is often followed by the preverbal theme of the present *b-*: this characteristic is in common with the Palestinian Arabic. In Syrian dialects *ʿam-* is more frequently followed by an imperfective, therefore by a non-preverb theme.

The following examples are given in the dialect of Ṭarṭūs (the examples in the *corpus* are numerous, here only a few are reported):

- *bass kəlmāt-i ʿam-bəṭṭīr* (But the words are flying).
- *ʿam-bəfšal* (I am getting discouraged).
- *ʿəmr-i ʿašar ᵊsnīn bass ʿam-bəḥki ḥaki r-ržāl* (I am ten, but I am talking like an adult).
- *w-ana ʿam bəġraʾ bə-l-žəhᵊl* (I am drowning in ignorance).
- *w-ʿam-bīṣīr* (What is happening?).

But there are also cases in which the preverb *ʿam-* is directly followed by the imperfective, such as:

- *kəlmāt-i ʿam tətbaḥḥar* (My words are evaporating).
- *ʿam-mūt mn əl-žūʿ* (And I am starving).
- *w-ʿam yəmši bēnāt-on* (He is walking among them).

A distinctive feature of the Alawite dialect of Ṭarṭūs is the rendering of the preverb of the concomitant present that from *ʿam-* becomes *m-*. This characteristic can also be found in the dialect of the nearby island of Arwād, as evidenced by the study by Procházka (2013).

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5   In this case the speaker renders the phoneme / *q* / as a uvular [q] in the same way as in classical Arabic, probably to emphasise the term.

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Some examples taken from the *corpus*:
- *m-amzaḥ* (I am kidding).
- *m-anzil* (I am coming down).
- *m-ašrab* (I am drinking).

4.4 Future

A preverb with a future value is employed, a trend already present in Standard Arabic with *sa-* or *sawfa.* In many dialects of the Mashreq area, preverbs *raḥ* and *ḥa-* are used to mark the future; they derive from *rāyeḥ* (from Standard Arabic *rāʾiḥ*, active participle of the verb *rāh* 'to go') (Durand 2009, 374).

In the case of the dialect of Ṭarṭūs, to render the future, the preverb *raḥ-* is usually followed by the imperfective, as occurs in many Syrian varieties, but in some cases *raḥ-* is followed by the preverb *b-*.

Some examples are shown below:[6]
- *la-ṭūl əl-ʿəmᵊr raḥ-bəḍḍall žuwwa bə-ʾalb-i* (Until the end of my life she will remain in my heart).
- *əṣ-ṣabiyye l-filasṭīniyye ma raḥ-bəṭṭayyeʿ əl-hawiyye* (A Palestinian girl will not lose her identity).
- *ma raḥ-bətkaffi ši* (Nothing will be enough).
- *raḥ-bizīd ət-taʿtīr* (The misery will increase).
- *rūḥ-o raḥ-bətḍall ᵊtnādi fal-təḥyā blād-i!* (His spirit will continue to cry: Long live the country!).

We find the preverb *b-* probably for phonetic reasons: whenever the verb begins with an emphatic consonant. This occurs, however, not in a systematic way, in fact, as we can see from the examples given, *b-* is not always followed by an emphatic consonant.[7]

In most cases, however, we observe *raḥ* followed by the imperfective, as in the following examples:
- *ma raḥ-kaffi fī-hon kəlmāt-i* (My words will not be enough for them).
- *raḥ-mūt* (I will die).
- *w-raḥ-nəḥlam* (And we will dream).
- *raḥ-yəbʾa l-ʿabd bə-ʿubūdiyyt-o* (The servant will remain in his bondage).
- *ma raḥ-yənsā-na* (He will not forget us).

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6 In these cases it seems that the reason is a phonetic one: both verbs begin with an emphatic consonant. Furthermore, normally the assimilation that is produced by *bətḍayyeʿ* is *bəḍḍayyeʿ*.

7 This point certainly remains to be investigated and further analysed.

In some cases, in the *corpus*, we find the preverb *ḥa-* (in this case never followed by *b-*), as in the next examples:

- *ḥa-ətkərr* (He will roll).
- *ḥa-tkallim* (I will speak).
- *ḥa-ansa-kom* (I will not forget you).

4.5 Imperative

The imperative is used only in the 2nd p. sg. and pl. In Pattern I, the regular triradical verb has the following inflection, as in most of the Syrian sedentary varieties:

	Singular	Plural
2 (m.)	*dros*	*drəsu*
2 (f.)	*drəsi*	
2 (m.)	*ḥmel*	*ḥməlu*
2 (f.)	*ḥməli*	
2 (m.)	*smaʿ*	*smaʿu*
2 (f.)	*smaʿi*	

Unlike Damascene Arabic, in which we have a vowel lengthening (*drōs*, *ḥmēl*, *smāʿ*), here the vowel is short.

For the 1st p. sg. and pl. a cohortative is obtained by prefixing *yaḷḷah*. It is possible to resort to *ḫalli-* lit. 'let' followed by a suffix pronoun or by the verb in the imperfective.

Examples:

- *ḫallī-ni ʾəll-ak kīf rbīt* (Let me tell you how I grew up).
- *ḫallī-ni ʾəll-ak kəll-ši ḫallī-ni əḥki bə-ḫtiṣar* (Let me tell you everything, let me give you a summary).
- *Aḷḷāh iḫallī-ni ṣ-ṣaḥḥa* (May God let me be healthy).
- *ḫalli d-dənye kəll-a taʿref ənn-o s-sawra lāzem təšʿal* (Let the whole world know that the revolution must ignite).
- *ᵊnḫalli l-lēl əl-aswad aḫḍar* (Let the night turn green).

4.6 Prohibitive

The negative imperative is obtained by negating the imperfective with *ma* or *la*. To express the prohibitive it is also possible to resort to the adverb *balāš* and *ḫāž/ḥaže* lit. 'enough!' + imperfective, as in all Syrian dialects.

Examples:

- *ḥāž tətmaʾṭaʿi bə-l-ʿāšeʾ* (Stop tearing your lover apart).
- *ḥāž dalᵊʿ iza kān kəll hayda dalᵊʿ* (Stop playing if this is all a game).

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4.7 Negation of the Verb

The verbal sentence is negated using the negation *ma* followed by the verb. In the *corpus* there are examples of the Alawite dialect of Ṭarṭūs which uses *a-* for the negation, as shown in the following sentences:

- *a-baʿref, wa-ḷḷahi a-baʿref* (I do not know, really, I do not know).
- *a-baʿref šū hayya* (I do not know what this is).

The auxiliary *ba'a* preceded by *ma* is also used for negation with the sense of 'no more'. This negation is also used in the dialect of Ṭarṭūs as reported in the following example:

- *a-baqa bašrab ʿaṣīr* (I do not drink juice anymore).

In this last example we note that in the Alawite dialect the phoneme /q/ is rendered as a uvular [q] (trait common to rural areas) and not as a voiceless laryngeal occlusive [ʔ] (as generally occurs in the urban speech of the Mashreq area).

4.8 Nominal Sentence Negation

- *mān-ek ḥabībt-i baʿd ha-l-laḥẓa ḥabībt-i mātit* (You are no longer my love, after that moment my love is dead).
- *Armīnāṣṭīniyye haydi mān-a žinsiyye haydi ʾaḍiyye* (Armenastine, this is not a nationality, it is a cause).

In Syrian Arabic *māl-* + suffix pronoun is more frequent, e.g.: *māl-i* (I am not), while in Lebanese Arabic we find *man-ni* with the doubling of the phoneme /n/.

4.9 Derived Stems

Regarding the derived stems of the verb, as in dialectal Arabic as a whole, also in the dialect of Ṭarṭūs we find the advanced decomposition of Pattern IV *ʾafʿal* with causative meaning, mostly replaced by Pattern II *faʿʿal*. As in other Arabic dialects, Pattern VII *nfaʿal* is normally used to express the passive.

4.10 Pseudo-Verbs and Servile Verbs

Pseudoverbs are not verbs at the morphological level but behave syntactically as verbs. In order to express the idea of possession, in the Arabic of Ṭarṭūs too we find *ʿand-, maʿ-, il-* + suffix pronoun; *bədd-* + suffix pronoun is used for 'to want' (etymologically *bədd-i* derives

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e-ISSN 2385-3042

from *bi-widd-ī* 'in my desire'). The pseudoverbs negate themselves through the negation *ma* typical of verbs.

In the variety of Ṭarṭūs, among the servile verbs we attest the following:

- *Lāzem* is an active participle used as servile with the imperfective. Because *lāzem* is an active participle, it is negated by *məš*.
- The servile *məmken* is properly an active participle (Pattern IV '[it is] possible') used as servile with the imperfective; *məmken* is negated by *məš*.

The expression *ma fiyye* is also used for negation (in this case we use the preposition *fī* + pronoun suffix to express 'to be able'), closer to Palestinian Arabic (instead of the more common *ma fī-ni*), as in the following example: *ma fiyye ṭhammal aktar ʿəmr-i ʿam-bəḫsar* (I cannot take any more, I am wasting my years).

4.11   Other reflections taken from the *corpus*

- Verbal scheme **faʿlā*[8]

It is possible to identify a pattern **faʿlā - yifaʿlī*, unattested in Standard Arabic, with essentially, but not limited to, denominative value. From the *corpus* we can detect: *ṭaʿma, yṭaʿmi* 'to feed', (< *ṭaʿām* 'food'): *mʿallem-on bidarres-on w-ana biṭaʿmī-ni ʾatᵊl* (Their teacher teaches and I get beaten up) (*biṭaʿmī-ni ʾatᵊl* is a colloquial idiom, lit.: beatings feed me).

- Quadriconsonantal verbs of Pattern II

From the name *maqṭaʿ* 'section', 'division', the quadriconsonant verb of Pattern II *ətmaʾṭaʿ, yətmaʾṭaʿ* 'tear apart'[9] is obtained as in the following example: *ḫāž tətmaʾṭaʿi bə-l-ʿāšeʾ* (Stop tearing your lover apart).

- Loans

As regards the verbs, in the *corpus* we find a loan of Aramaic origin: the verb *naṭar, byənṭor* 'to wait' from Syriac *nᵊṭar*, now entered in the standard lexicon.

5   Conclusions

From what has been reported, it appears that the verbal system of the spoken Arabic of Ṭarṭūs has many features in common with the majority of Syrian sedentary dialects.

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8   This kind of verbs differ from quadriconsonantal verbs in that they are derived from triconsonantal words such as *farsha yfarsh*i "to brush" (Durand 2009, 391).

9   Woidich (2006) reports the verb *itmanẓar*, "to be admired", deriving from the nominal theme *manẓar* "panorama".

To summarise the peculiarities of the variety of Ṭarṭūs, we highlight: defective verbs have only one type of conjugation (CəCi); the negative nominal proposition is mostly rendered through *mān-* + suffix pronoun; in the imperative the vowel is short, unlike in the dialect of Damascus; for the concomitant present the preverb *ʿam-* is sometimes followed by the preverb of the present *b-*; in the future tense we find the preverb *raḥ-* (usually followed by the imperfective, but in rare cases followed by the preverb *b-*) and the preverb *ḥa-*.

Very interesting is the religious and social composition of Ṭarṭūs, of which the Alawites form a large part. In general it is possible to distinguish two dialectal variants, the urban and the rural ones, the latter imported from the Alawite communities. It is above all the Alawite variety that has distinctive features, such as the preverb of the concomitant present becoming *m-* (*m-ašrab* 'I am drinking') and the negation of the verbs rendered through *a-* (*a-baʿref* 'I do not know').

Although this research has dealt with the verbal system of the vernacular of Ṭarṭūs outlining the tenses and modes of the verb and also providing information on preverbs and related constructions, the linguistic observations reported are not intended to provide a complete overview of the verbal system of Ṭarṭūs, whose examination should clearly be based on a larger sample of speakers, which is difficult to find because a field research is still not easy to carry out due to the complicated socio-political situation of the country.

This work represents a starting point to examine an aspect of the little-known vernacular of the Syrian coast which must be explored and investigated in a broader and more systematic way, and a first approach for further linguistic reflections on the verbal system in the Syrian variety of Ṭarṭūs.

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