# States and "Cases" in Arabic (T §1-2)

<div dir="rtl">

المَعرِفة وَالنَكِرَة

الإعراب

</div>

# In this lesson you will learn:

- Definite and indefinite states in Arabic  (المَعرِفة وَالنَكِرَة)
  - How to distinguish between them
  - Elision and assimilation of the definite article
- The three "cases" in Arabic (الإعراب)
  - How to distinguish between them
  - Their functions

Prerequisite: you can read words written in Arabic script (including short vowels)

# Preliminary remarks

Lessons are keyed to: W. Thackston, *An introduction to Koranic and classical Arabic: an elementary grammar of the language* (Bethesda, 1994 and 2000)

- Note idiosyncratic transliteration; outdated terminology
- Tip: use premade flashcards on Quizlet.com (search "Thackston Arabic") to memorize basic vocabulary

Recommended reference grammar:

- W. Fischer, *A grammar of classical Arabic* (New Haven, 2002)

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# Definite and indefinite states in Arabic
(المَعرِفة وَالنَكِرَة)

# The definite state - المَعرِفة

A noun (إسم) is <u>definite</u> if:

- It is prefixed with the definite article ال-
- It is the first member in an إضافة construction/construct state (see separate lesson on this topic)
- The short vowel following the last letter is the single form (i.e., single fatḥa, ḍamma, or kasra) (this is **always** true)

# The indefinite state - النَكِرَة

You can tell a noun is <u>indefinite</u> if:

- The short vowel following the last letter is the doubled form (i.e., double faṭḥa, ḍamma, or kasra), known as **a short vowel with a** *tanwīn* (تَنوين)

# Examples

1. المَلِكُ 2. وَلَدَ 3. المَملَكَةِ 4. الوُزَراءُ
5. في أَعيُّنِ الناسِ

1. al-maliku 2. walada 3. al-mamlakati 4. al-wuzarā'u 5. fī 'a'yyūni l-nāsi

# Warning: most texts in the "wild" are unvocalized!

1. الملك 2. ولد 3. المملكة 4. الوزراء
5. في أعين الناس

1. al-maliku 2. walada 3. al-mamlakati 4. al-wuzarā'u 5. fī 'a'yyūni l-nāsi

# Elision of the Definite Article

- Except at the start of a sentence, the ا in the definite article ال is **always** elided in pronunciation. It is still written in Arabic, but not typically in transliteration:

  - (*kaṯīru l-ǧunūdi*) كَثِيرُ الجُنودِ

- When preceded by a prefixing preposition, the ا in the definite article ال is elided in both writing and pronunciation

  - (*li-l-maliki*) لِلمَلِكِ

# Assimilation of the Definite Article

The ل in the definite article ال assimilates to (i.e., is pronounced the same as) the first letter that follows if this letter belongs to one of these three categories:

- Dentals (t, d, th sounds): ت، ث، د، ذ، ض، ط
- Sibilants (s and z sounds): ز، س، ش، ص، ظ
- Liquids (r, l, and n sounds): ر، ل، ن

See T 1 for an overview. Note: this is a matter of **pronunciation**, not orthography! When transliterating, one may choose to assimilate or not (but be consistent!)

# Examples

١. الزُهدِ ٢. الظَفَرِ ٣. الناسِ ٤. الدُنيا ٥. المُلكِ ٦. الشَبابُ ٧. السَنَةُ ٨. الطالِبِ ٩. الثانيُّ

1. al-zuhdi / az-zuhdi 2. al-ẓafari / aẓ-ẓafari 3. al-nāsi / an-nāsi 4. al-dunyā / ad-dunyā 5. al-maliki 6. al-šabāb / aš-šabāb 7. al-sanatu / as-sanatu 8. al-ṭulāb / aṭ-ṭulāb 9. al-ṯānī / aṯ-ṯānī

# The three "cases" in Arabic (الإعراب)

- Like other inflected languages, Arabic uses endings that are added to the base form of nouns and adjectives to indicate syntactical function

- Note on terminology

- There are three "cases" in Arabic:
  - Nominative/مَرفوع : used for nouns (and their adjectives) that are **subjects** and **predicates** of subjects
  - Genitive/مَجرور : used for **complements of all prepositions**; for the **second element of a construct state/إضافة construction**
  - Accusative/مَنصوب : for **direct objects** and all **verbal complements**: following the "sentence-head" particle إِنَّ; for **adverbial expressions**

# The endings

| Case | Indefinite | | Definite | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Nominative/مَرفوع | *malikun* | مَلِكٌ | *al-maliku* | المَلِكُ |
| Genitive/مَجرور | *malikin* | مَلِكٍ | *al-maliki* | المَلِكِ |
| Accusative/مَنصوب | *malikan* | مَلِكاً | *al-malika* | المَلِكَ |

Note: The indefinite accusative/مَنصوب requires an alif ا as the "seat" of the double fatha, **unless** the word ends with a tāʾ marbūṭa ة
Example: سَنَةً but رَجُلاً

مع سلامة!