

Arabic Lesson 3: The Declension of Nouns

Notes on Lesson & Translating Exercise

Take note of following definitions & grammatical rules:

1. Declension means the way in which noun change to show number and case.
2. Case: the ending which indicates the role of a noun or its equivalent. There are 3 cases: nominative (*raf'*), accusative (*naSb*) & genitive (*jar*).
3. Nouns and adjectives ending with dammatayn [ۙ] are said to be in the nominative case. Of course, if the noun or adjective is definite, then tanwin will disappear and there will be only one damma. A noun is in the nominative case when: (i) it is the subject (i.e. doer) in a verbal sentence. Examples from the Qur'an: [ۙ]جَاءَكُمْ رَسُولٌ *a messenger has come to you* (44:17). Here *messenger* is the subject in indefinite form, so it ends with dammatayn. Another example: وَعَدَ اللَّهُ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ – *Allah has promised the believers* (9:72). Here *Allah* is the subject in definite form, so it ends with one damma. (ii) It is the subject (or the first part – *mubtada*) of a non-verbal sentence, and when (iii) it is a compliment (*khobar*, i.e. giving information about the first part) in non-verbal sentence. The oft-repeated takbir is a good example of subject & its compliment: اللَّهُ أَكْبَرُ i.e. Allah is Great. Here Allah is subject & Akbar is its compliment. In the Qur'anic verse وَالذَّارُ الْآخِرَةُ خَيْرٌ *and the next abode is better* (7:169), the subject is *al-darul'l-akhiratu* and *khayrun* is its compliment.
4. Nouns and adjectives ending with fathatayn are said to be in the accusative case. All Arabic letters besides taa marbutah (ة) has an added alif after fathatayn (ۙ). A noun is in the accusative case when (i) it is the object (i.e. on which an action is being done) of a verbal sentence. Example: أَقْتَلْتَ نَفْسًا زَكِيَّةً – *Did you kill an innocent person/soul?* (18:74). Here *nafsan* is the object of the sentence, and *zakiyyatan* is the adjective of *nafsan*. Note there is an added alif after sin fathahtayn but there is no alif after taa marbutah fathatayn. (ii) It is controlled by particles like إِنَّ, أَن, لَكِنَّ & لَٰكِنَّ. These mean: indeed, that & but respectively. Example from the Qur'an: إِنَّ اللَّهَ وَمَلَائِكَتَهُ يُصَلُّونَ عَلَى النَّبِيِّ *Indeed, Allah and His angels bless the Prophet* (33:56). (iii) It is used as an adverb.
5. Nouns and adjectives ending with kasratayn (ۙ) are said to be in genitive case. A noun is in genitive case when (i) controlled by a preposition such as عَلَى on, فِي in, مِنْ from, etc. (ii) we wish to indicate possession. As in the verse وَكَلِمَةُ اللَّهِ هِيَ الْعُلْيَا *and the word of Allah is the highest* (9:40). Here, Allah is genitive because it indicates possession (i.e. word of Allah). In the verse لَيْلَةُ الْقَدْرِ خَيْرٌ مِنْ أَلْفِ شَهْرٍ *the night of Ordainment is better than a thousand months* (97:3) *al-qadri* is genitive on account of possession & *alfi* is genitive because it is controlled by particle *min*.
6. Line 3 نَحْنُ فِتْنَةٌ (2:102) in the Exercise (p.28) has been translated as: we are a test (AQQ), we are for a trial (AYA), we are a trial (MHS), we are a temptation (MMP).