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المدرج الروماني في عمّان - الجمع - Plurals

Plurals: we have to live with them.

Plurals in Arabic are groups of three or more nouns. Before discussing plurals, it's important to note that Arabic differentiates between two different kinds of nouns:

RATIONAL BEINGS (RB)
>-humans
>-djinn
>-angels
>-talking animals
>-etc.

NON-RATIONAL BEINGS (NRB)
>-inanimate objects
>-regular non-talking animals
>-etc.

I have an (untestable and therefore totally unproven) hypothesis that this is due to the *jahiliyya* period of Arabic, the time before Islam when peoples in the Arabian peninsula could be Christian and Jewish but could also be animists - worshiping rocks and other objects (in addition to other religions present at the time). People needed a way to distinguish between the rocks that could communicate with you and be worshiped, and rocks that were just… rocks.

This lives on today in Arabic plurals:

FOR PLURAL HUMANS/RATIONAL BEINGS (RB):
Most plurals end in ون or ين.

These are groups of three or more men, or men and women combined. They are called 'sound masculine plurals.'

<u>Singular</u>   <u>Plural</u>
مصريّ   مصريّون
موظف   موظفون
مشغول   مشغولون

We use ـون when it is the subject of a sentence, and ـين when it is just about anything else in a sentence other than the subject:

هم طلاب طيّبون.

درّستُ طلاب طيّبين هذه السنة.

In dialects, it is always ـين:

مصريين طيّبين

What about groups of women or feminine objects (ending in ة)?

These plurals end in ـات. They are called 'sound feminine plurals'

<u>Singular</u>   <u>Plural</u>
مصرية   مصريّات
موظفة   موظفات
مشغولة   مشغولات

 This is true no matter where it is in the sentence, and for dialects as well.

ADJECTIVES ARE STUPID CROWDFOLLOWING MORONS.
    They just do whatever their noun is doing – including being plural.

مصريون جيّدون

موظفات مشغولات

بنات وحيدات

However, **When describing plural non-rational beings (NRB), aka non-humans:**

    Think **S**an **F**rancisco… **S**ingluar **F**eminine

ملابس تقليدي_ة_   مدن بعيد_ة_   متاحف صغير_ة_   أعمدة كبير_ة_

We already know that adjectives have to match their nouns when they are singular:

خيمة عربي_ة_   مدينة بعيد_ة_   متحف صغير   عمود جميل

RB or NRB is irrelevant. BUT it becomes relevant when we are talking about the plurals of these objects.

Here is a helpful flowchart of what to do with your adjectives when describing plurals (keep scrolling down):

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ARABIC ADJECTIVES

Is the noun singular or plural?

Singular

plural

Masculine or Feminine?

Human or non-human plural?

Masculine: no ة

Feminine: add ة

Human plural

Non-human plural

Men, men and women, or all women?

Add ة

Men: add ون / ين
Men and women: add ون/ ين

Women: add ات