Nahw - Methods of reflection of an اسم

Up until now we have learned that an اسم which is مُـعرَب will show its grammatical states using a ضَـمَّـة for رفع, a فَـتـْـحة for نصب , or a كَـسْـرَة for جر (or the corresponding تَـنوِين). However, there are situations in Arabic Language where it is not possible to show the grammatical states using either of these three methods. As an example take a look at :

1. جَـاء مُـوسىٰ *Musa came*

2. رَائيتُ مُـوسىٰ *I saw Musa*

3. مَـرَرْتُ بِـمُـوسىٰ *I passed by Musa*

In the first sentence مُـوسىٰ is the subject (i.e. in the state of رفع), in the second it is the object (i.e the state of نصب) , and in the third it is in the state of جر because of the حَـرْف , i.e. بِـ , in front of it. Yet, in none of the examples the grammatical states are shown using the usual signs of a ضَـمَّـة , or a كَـسْـرَة , or a فَـتـْحة. This is because the noun مُـوسىٰ is incapable of showing these signs. This leads us to the fact that variations can occur in the way grammatical states are reflected on an اسم . For our purposes we will divide اسم in 16 different categories and will see how each category will show its grammatical state in its own unique way. These 16 categories and their corresponding methods of reflection are listed in the table below and each category is then further explained in detail with examples. You can also click on any category to jump to its explanation:

#	Type of اِسم	رفع	نصب	جر
1	مُفْرد مُنْصَرِف صحيح	ضَمَّة	فَتْحة	كَسْرَة
2	مُفْرد قَائِم مقَام صحيح	ضَمَّة	فَتْحة	كَسْرَة
3	جَمْع مُكسَّر مُنْصَرِف	ضَمَّة	فَتْحة	كَسْرَة
4	جَمع مُونَث سَالِم	ضَمَّة	كَسْرَة	كَسْرَة
5	غَير مُنْصَرِف	ضَمَّة	فَتْحة	فَتْحة
6	6 Special Nouns	و	ا	ى
7	الْمُثَنّى	ا	ى	ى
8	كِلا وكِلْتا	ا	ى	ى
9	اِثْنَان واثْنَتَان	ا	ى	ى
10	جَمع مُذَكَّر سَالِم	و	ى	ى
11	All exceptions which do not fall in under the definition of جَمع مُذَكَّر سَالِم but are reflected in the same manner	و	ى	ى
12	تِسْعُونَ to عِشْرُونَ i.e. multiple of 10 up to 90	و	ى	ى
13	اِسم مَقْصُور	Assumed	Assumed	Assumed
14	مضاف which is جَمع مُذَكَّر سَالِم other than اِسم Any towards ى	Assumed	Assumed	Assumed
15	اِسم مَنْقُوص	Assumed	Explicit	Assumed
16	ى towards مضاف which is جَمع مُذَكَّر سَالِم	Assumed و	Explicit ى	Explicit ى

<u>Category 1:</u> (مُفْرِد مُنْصَرِف صحيح) This category can be titled in English as *Singular-Fully Declinable - No Weak Letters*. This is the category which we had discussed earlier as the one which shows its grammatical states in the usual manner. Examples:

- جَـاء زَيدٌ (*Zaid came*)

- رَأيتُ زَيداً (*I saw Zaid*)

- مَـرَرْتُ بِـزَيدٍ (*I passed by Zaid*)

Category 2: (مُـفْـرد قَـائم مقَـام صحيح) This category consists of any اسم which ends in a و or ى preceded by a سُـكُـون, e.g. دَلْـوٌ (*a bucket*) or ظَـبْـيٌ (*a deer*). Examples:

- جَـاء ظَـبْـيٌ (*a deer came*)

- رَأيتُ ظَـبْـيـاً (*I saw a deer*)

- مَـرَرْتُ بِـظَـبْـيٍ (*I passed by a deer*)

Category 3: (جَـمْـع مُـكسَّـر مُـنْـصَـرِف) or the *Fully Declinable Broken Plural*. As the name implies, this category consists of the declinable broken plural. Examples:

- جَـاء رِجَـالٌ (*A man came*)

- رَأيتُ رِجَـالاً (*I saw a man*)

- مَـرَرْتُ بِـرِجَـالٍ (*I passed by a man*)

Category 4: (جَـمع مُـونَـث سَـالِـم) or *The Sound Feminine Plural*. This has already been taken care of [here](#). I will repeat the examples, though:

- جاءَت المُـسْلِـماتُ (*The Muslim women came*)

- رَأيتُ المُـسْلِـمات (*I saw the Muslim women*)

- مَـرَرْتُ بالْـمُـسْلِـمات (*I passed by the Muslim women*)

Category 5: (غَـيَر مُـنْـصَـرِف). This is an اسم which contains either 2 of the 9 causes of change-restriction or 1 powerful cause which stands in the place of 2 causes. Some of the salient points regarding this category are:

- This category never gets a كَـسْـرَة or a تَـنوِين

- All feminine names fall into this category
- Most masculine names are not in this category, except those ending in a ة

- Names rhyming with اَفْـعَـلْ fall in this category

- Adjectives rhyming with اَفْـعَـلْ (e.g. the colors) fall in this category

Below, I list the 9 reasons, the presence of which (either two reasons or one powerful one) can cause an

اسم to become غَـيَر مُـنْـصَـرِف:

1. Transgression: A word leaves it original pattern and adopts a new one because of excessive usage. An example of this is the name عُـمَـر which used to be عَـامِـر but left its pattern to become عُـمَـر

2. Be an adjective: This is a property which needs to exist within the medium of a body and cannot exist without it. Thus, this has to be a quality like *beautiful* or *lazy*. Examples will include colors like اَحمَـر (*red*) or اَسْـوَد (*black*)

3. Be feminine: The following four reasons cause am اِسْم to be feminine:

- if there is a ة at the end. Note that even though طَـلْـحة is a man's name, yet the word is

  feminine since it has a ة at its end

4. if there is an اَلِـف مَـقْـصُـورة i.e. final اَلِـف not followed by a ء , for example: حُـبْـلىٰ

   (*pregnant*) or كُـبرىٰ(*the small one*). This is a powerful reason so it alone will cause an اِسْم to

   become غَـيـر مُـنْـصَـرِف

5. if there is an اَلِـف مَـمْـدُودة i.e. final اَلِـف followed by a ء , for example: عُـلَـمَـأُ (*men of*

   knowledge) or بَـيْـضأُ (*the white one*). This is a powerful reason so it alone will cause an اِسْم

   to become غَـيـر مُـنْـصَـرِف

6. if it is an understood feminine for example, زَيـنَـب ,which is the name of a girl

7. Be a name
8. Be plural
9. Be of foreign origin like يَـعْـقُـوب or اِسْـحَـاق or اِبْـراهِـيم

10. Be compound (two words linking together to become a name) like حَـضْـرمَـوت , which is a

    place in Yemen, or سِـبَـوَيه who was an Arabic grammarian

11. Be on the pattern of a verb. For example, اَحْـمَـد or اَكْـبَـر , both of which are on the pattern

    of اَفْـعَـلْ

12. Extra ا and ن at the end. Examples are عُـثْـمَـان or نُـعْـمَـان. Thus, in *Hadith* literature we

will see عَـنْ عُـثْـمَـانَ ابْـن with a فَـتْـحة on عُـثْـمَـان although there is a preposition, عَـنْ will see

, in front of it

Category 6: This category is composed of 6 special nouns

    1. اَبٌ (*a father*)

    2. اَخٌ (*a brother*)

    3. حَـمٌ (*a father-in-law*)

    4. فَـمٌ (*a mouth*)

    5. هَـنٌ (*a thing*)

    6. ذُو (*a possessor*). This is always followed by a noun

These will show their grammatical states according to type 6 under the conditions that they have to be

singular (dual will be dealt with in category 7 and plural has already been dealt with in category 3) and

they cannot be مضاف towards ى (which case will be dealt with in category 16).

Some examples are: رَأَيْتُ أَخَا مَـاجِـدٍ (*I saw* *Majid's brother went*) or ذَهَـبَ أَخُـو مَـاجِـدٍ (*Majid's brother*) or ذَهَـبْـتُ مَـعَ أَخِي مَـاجِـدٍ (*I went with Majid's brother*). Examples using ذُو would be: رَأَيْتُ ذَا مَـالٍ (*I saw a possessor of wealth*) or جَـاءَ ذُو مَـالٍ (*a possessor of wealth came*) would be:

above) وَ فَـوقَ كُـلِّ ذِى عِـلْـمٍ عَـلِـيم (*I passed by a possessor of wealth*) or مَـرَرْتُ بِـذى مَـالٍ or

every possessor of knowledge is the All Knowing)

<u>Category 7:</u> This deals with الْـمُـثَـنّـٰى or the *dual.* This is an اِسم to the end of which is attached

either an ا and a ن or a ي and a ن to indicate that *with it is another like it*. An example would be كَـتَـب

(*the two men wrote two letters to the two women*)الـرُّجُـلاَنِ مَـكْـتُـوبَـيِنِ إلىٰ الْـمَـرْأتَـيِنِ

There are some other words in the Arabic Language which are treated like duals e.g. اَبَـوانِ meaning

father and mother or قَـمَـرَانِ meaning *moon and sun* (and **not** two fathers or two moons) which

follow the same method of reflection as this category

<u>Category 8:</u> This includes two words كِـلا and كِـلْـتا meaning *both* (masculine and feminine,

respectively).   Examples   are   :   جَـاءَ رَجُـلاَنِ كِـلاَهُـما (*both men came*)   or   رَأَيتُ

(*I passed by both men*) مَـرَرْتُ بِـرجُـلَـيِنِ كِـليْـهِـمَا (*I saw both men*) or رَجُـلَـيِنِ كِـليْـهِـمَا

<u>Category 9:</u> This includes اِثْـنَـتَـانِ and اِثْـنَـانِ which means *two* (masculine and feminine,

respectively). For example: جَـاءَ اِثْـنَـانِ (*two [masculine objects] came*) or رَأَيتُ اِثْـنيْـنِ (*I saw two*

[masculine objects]) or مَـرَرْتُ بِـاثْـنيْـنِ (*I passed by two [masculine objects]*)

<u>Category 10:</u> *The Sound Masculine Plural* or جَـمع مُـذَكَّـر سَـالِـم has already been dealt with <u>here</u>. I

will give the usual examples, though: جاءَ الْـمُـسْلِـمُـونَ (*The Muslim men came*) or رَأيتُ

مَـرَرْتُ بِـاالْـمُـسْلِـمِـينَ (*I saw the Muslim men*) or الْـمُـسْـلِـمِـينَ) (*I passed by the Muslim men*)

<u>Category 11:</u> This category consists of those اِسم which are reflected the same way as Category 10 but

do not fall under the جَـمع مُـذَكَّـر سَـالِـم category. Examples of such اِسم are اُولُـوْ and its sisters.

The reflection of this category is shown by the following examples: هُـمْ أُولُـو الألْـبَـاب (*They are*

people of intelligence) or رَأيتُ أُولِـي الألْـبَـابِ عِـنْـدَ أُولِـي الألْـبَـابِ) (*I saw the people of*

intelligence by the people of intelligence). Other words which fall in this category are اهْـلٌ (*people of*)

and عِـلِّـيين (*the highest places*)

<u>Category 12:</u> This category constitutes multiples of 10 starting from 20 and going up to 90 (عِـشْـرُونَ

to تِـسْـعُـونَ) and are reflected using the same method as Categroy 10 and 11. Examples: جَاءَ

عِـشْـرُونَ رَجُـلاً (*twenty men came*) or رَأيتُ عِـشْـرِينَ رَجُـلاً (*I saw twenty men*) or مَـرَرْتُ

بِـعِـشْـرِينَ رَجُـلاً (*I passed by twenty men*)

<u>Category 13:</u> This category consists of اِسم of the form عِـيسىٰ or مُـوسىٰ i.e. an اِسم having an اَلِـف

at its end. Such اِسم are incapable of showing any إعْـرَاب and thus they are categorized مَـقْـصُـورَة

as having *assumed reflection*. Examples are:

جَـاء مُـوسىٰ (*Musa came*) or رَأيتُ مُـوسىٰ (*I saw Musa*) or مَـرَرْتُ بِـمُـوسىٰ (*I passed by Musa*).

Antoher set of examples would be: رَأيتُ عَـصاً (*I saw a staff*) or جَـاءَ عَـصاً (*a staff came*) or

مَـرَرْتُ بِـعَـصاً (*I passed by a staff*)

Category 14: This category consists of جَـمع مُـذَكَّـر سَـالِـم *other than* ا سم i.e. sound masculine plural, which is مضاف towards ى of first person, for example, غُـلاَمِـيْ (*my servant*) or بَـيْـتِـيْ (*my house*). Examples in this categories will be: جَـاءَ غُـلاَمِـيْ (*my servant came*) or رَأَيتُ غُـلاَمِـيْ (*I saw my servant*) or مَـرَرْتُ بِـغُـلاَمِـيْ (*I passed by my servant*)

Category 15: This category consists of ا سم which are called ا سم مَـنْـقُـوص i.e. they have a ي preceded by a كَـسْـرَة at their end. Only the state of نصب is reflected on them; the other two are assumed. Examples are: جَـاء اَلْـقَـاضِـيْ (*The Judge came*) or رَأَيتُ الْـقَـاضِـيَ (*I saw the Judge*) or مَـرَرْتُ بِـالْـقَـاضِـيْ (*I passed by the Judge*)

Category 16: This category consists of ا سم which are جَـمع مُـذَكَّـر سَـالِـم *and* are مضاف towards ى of first person. An example would be مُـسْـلِـمِـيَّ (*my muslims*). For the رفع case this was originally مُـسْـلِـموُىَ but the و becomes سَـاكِـنْ since it is appearing with a ى. In the second step the و is changed to a ى giving us مُـسْـلِـمُـيِى and the ضَـمَّـة is changed to كَـسْـرَة) for pronunciation reasons) to give us مُـسْـلِـمِـيَّ. However, the originals for the نصب and جر case were already مُـسْـلِـمِـيَّ. The set of examples in this category, then, would be: جَـاءَ مُـسْـلِـمِـيَّ (*my Muslims*

came) or مَـرَرْتُ بِـمُـسْـلِـمِيَّ (*I passed by my Muslims*) or رَئيتُ مُـسْـلِـمِيَّ (*I saw my Muslims*) or مَـرَرْتُ بِـمُـسْـلِـمِيَّ (*I passed by my Muslims*)

I hope this detailed introduction to methods of reflection for an اِسم will go a long way towards understanding this key concept in Arabic Language, Insha Allah.