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NAMES OF HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHICAL PLACES AND ARTICLES USED WITH THEM

The paper analyses the use of articles with the names of historical geographical places and related issues (focused on prehistoric and ancient times) in the English language. The paper is divided into three parts. The first one summarizes general rules for the use of articles with geographical names in prescriptive English grammar books. The second part contains a table which aims to present the list of the historical geographical names with corresponding articles. The final one concentrates on the analysis of the actual use of articles with the historical geographical names as found in the following books on history: The Concise History Encyclopaedia and The Western Experience.

1. Introduction

Generally, the functioning of articles in the English language is far from being clear. As for geographical names, the rules for the use of articles with these lexemes have been summarized and are easy to be found in any book on English grammar. Nevertheless, the use of articles with historical geographical place names is the area which has not been covered yet. Due to the large amount of the gathered material, we were bound to concentrate only on two historical periods – prehistoric and ancient times.

2. Various approaches to the use of articles with geographical names

Studying the essential prescriptive grammars of the English language we have found the following information:

The Heinemann ELT English Grammar (1998, p. 172) suggests the zero article for the following geographical names: continents (Africa); countries, states, departments (England, California, Hampshire); cities, towns, villages (Sydney, Bilbao); individual islands (Crete); lakes (Lake Geneva); individual mountains (Mount Fuji) and streets (Oxford Street). However, the definite article is introduced for: countries and states when they include a countable noun (the Federal Republic of Germany); plural place names (the West Indies) and for names such as the Arctic, the Antarctic, the Far East, the Costa Brava.

The definite article is to be used with the names of oceans, seas (the Pacific); rivers (the Mississippi); canals (the Panama Canal); deserts (the Sahara); island groups (the Canaries); hotels, cinemas (the Plaza Hotel, the Cannon Cinema); museums, clubs (the Prado Museum, the Black Cat Club) and restaurants, pubs (the Hard Rock Café).

Names of hotels, restaurants named after the people who started them + the possessive's (*Marcy's Hotel*) and churches named after saints + the possessive's (*St Peter's Church*) represent the exceptions to the above mentioned rule.

According to Murphy (1989, p. 148), the definite article is obligatory also in these instances: mountain ranges (the Rocky Mountains, the Rockies); galleries (the National Gallery); bridges (the Golden Gate Bridge) and cardinal points (the north of Mexico).

Moreover, articles are not applied in the following geographical names: roads, squares, parks (*North Road, Time Square, Central Park*) and names of important buildings and institutions when the first word is the name of a person or a place (*Lincoln Centre*).

Eastwood (1994, p. 210) introduces the definite article in these cases: the Gambia, the Ukraine, the Matterhorn, the Eiger, the Hague, the Bronx, the Mall, the Strand and also for the names of by-passes, motorways (the York by-pass, the M6). The definite article is not placed before the names of most bridges (Westminster Bridge). If the name is premodified by an adjective, the definite article is to be used (the Royal Opera House).

Swan (2005, p. 65) recommends the zero article when a title of the principal public building and organization of a town begins with the town name (*Salisbury Cathedral*). However, the usage varies with the names of less important institutions ((*the*) Newbury School of English).

Longman English Grammar (1998, p. 70) contributes with these extra exceptions: *the Jungfrau* (mountain); *Death Valley* (the name of a valley without the definite article); *the Argentine*, *Argentina*, *(the) Sudan*, *(the) Yemen* (countries).

At the same time, this is the only book where the use of articles with some historical references is mentioned: *Ancient Greece*,

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Medieval Europe, Pre-war/Post-war Germany, Roman Britain (all of them used with the zero article); the Dark Ages, the Renaissance, the Stone Age (all of them used with the definite article).

According to A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language (1985, p. 293), the definite article is suggested for these exceptions: the Great Salt Lake, the Bodleian (Library); the City, The West / East End (of London);

The usage of the definite and indefinite article alternates in the following instances: (the) Argentine, (the) Ukraine, (the) Sinai, (the) Bosphorus.

The definite article is the only acceptable option with the names of other geographical names of coastline (the Gulf of Mexico, the Cape of Good Hope, the Bay of Biscay, the Strait of Magellan, the

Sound of Bute, the Isle of Man, the Isle of Wight) and with the names of regions (the Crimea, the Saar, the Punjab, the Ruhrthe (Deep) South, the Midwest).

3. The use of articles with the analysed geographical names and related issues

The table below aims to present the list of geographical names and related issues covering two historical periods - prehistoric and ancient times as found in the following books: *The Concise History Encyclopaedia* and *The Western Experience*. Articles with individual geographical names and related issues, as they occurred in the analysed texts, have been included, as well. The geographical names are classified according to their reference in the given books.

Empires

the Persian Empire	the Egyptian Empire	an Athenian empire	the western Roman empire
the Persian empire	the Roman Empire	the Athenian Empire	the Eastern Empire
a Persian empire	the Empire	the Athenian empire	the Mauryan Empire
Sumer	the Holy Roman Empire	Mediterranean empire	early Rome
	the late Roman Empire	the Byzantine Empire	the Great Babylonian Empire
	the Assyrian Empire	the Western Empire	the Gubta empire

Kingdoms

the Akkadian kingdom	kingdom of the Hittites	the Seleucid kingdom
Ebla as an independent kingdom	the Egyptian kingdom	Macedonian monarchy
the Babylonian Kingdom	the Hittite kingdom	the kingdom of Pergamum
the kingdom of Babylon	the Hittite Kingdom	the kingdom of Pontus
Babylon	the great kingdom of the ancient Near	the Parthian kingdom
the kingdom of Egypt	East	the kingdom of Kush
Early Egypt	the Israelite kingdom of antiquity	Nubian kingdom of Kush
Upper Egypt	the Kingdom of the Medes	the strong kingdom of Mari
Lower Egypt	the Chaldean Kingdom	Maghada
the Old Kingdom	Oriental kingdoms	The kingdom of Axum
the New Kingdom	the Eastern kingdom	Middle Kingdom (China)
the Middle Kingdom	the kingdom of Macedonia	Germanic kingdoms
	Saxon England	

Empires

States	Media	the Athenian state	the state of Zhou
Turkey	Lydia	the Roman Republic	united imperial China
Iraq	Greece	the Republic	Han China
Syria	classical Greece	the Roman state	Gubta India
Palestine	the Dorian states	Roman Italy	Roman Britain
Ethiopia	the Greek states	Jordan	classical Japan
the modern state of Israel	Sparta	the ancient China	the Assyrian state
Phoenicia	Macedonia	Bavaria	the Chaldean state
Persia		Iberia	

COMMUNICATIONS

Cities, towns & villages

Jericho, the city of Jericho	Niniveh	Pompeii	the city of Tiahuanaco
Jerusalem	Persepolis	Damascus	Chalcis
Jarmo	Knossos	the town of Sinope	Miletos
Uruk	Mycenae	Constantinople	Smyrna
Aleppo	Troy	Harappa	Eretria
the city of Ebla	Olympia	Mohenjo-daro	Cyrenaica
Babylon	Byzantium	Anyang	Marathon
Athens, the city of Athens	the city of Byzantium	Ur	Niani
Memphis	Corinth	Elam	Yelwa
Giza	Miletus	Anyang	Maghada
the city of Cairo	the city of Miletus	Isin	Ajanta
Cairo	the village of Plataea	Elam	Pataliputra
Thebes	the town of Potidaea	Napata	Nalanda
Akhetaton	Syracuse	Meroë	Heian
Karnak	the polis of Thebes	Jenne-jeno	Nara
Kadesh	the city of Alexandria	Laventa	Izumo
Hattuska	the city of Pergamum	the city of Babylon	Tikal
Carthage	the village of Cumae	Tarquinia	Palenque
Canaan	the city of Messana	Judah	Yaxchilán
the town of Sheckem	the village of Pidna	Tyre	Copán
the city of Ashur	the town of Pharsalus	Ecbatana	Calakmul
Sparta	Ephesus	the city of Teotihuacán	El Mirador
Delphi Sardis	Antioch		
Delphi Sardis	Antioch		

Valleys

the Indus Valley	the valley of the upper Tigris	the rich Po valley	the Danube valley
the Nile Valley	River	the Tigris-Euphrates Valley	
	the Valley of the Kings		

Mountain ranges

the Taurus Mountains	the Apennine range	the Hindu Kush mountains

Mountains & hills

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Tell Mardikh	Mount Sinai	Mount Olympus	the Pnyx	Mount Hopango

Rivers

the Tigris the Tigris River the upper Tigris River the Euphrates	the Nile the Nile River the White Nile the Blue Nile	the Indus River the Jordan River	the Po River the Tiber River the Tiber the Rubicon River	the upper Yellow River the Rhine River the Danube River
the Euphrates River	the Blue Mile	the Halys Kivel	the Rubicon River	

Seas

the Mediterranean	the Red Sea	the Aegean	the Dead Sea	the Adriatic Sea
the Mediterranean Sea	the Aegean Sea	the Black Sea		

Deltas

the Mekong delta

Regions

Asia Minor	the Delta	Bithynia	the Hittite territories
western Asia Minor	Punt, a territory	Thessaly	northern Arabia
the entire Near East	the Balkan areas	the Roman province	the Israelite territories
the ancient Near East	Ionia, the region of Ionia	of Britain	Nubia
Anatolia	the territory of Messenia	Gaul	Arabia
central Anatolia	Etruria	Judea	the Tasili area
the region of Akkad, Akkad	Illyria	the Middle East	the Bantu
the region of Syria	Achaea	Siberia	Nok
Ebla's territory	Nearer Spain	Brittany	Axum
the Near East	Farther Spain	Alaska	Bactria
Mesopotamia	Cilicia	the Levant	southern Mesopotamia
the Fertile Crescent	the Assyrian lands	Alaca	northern Mesopotamia
the European mainland			

Buildings & monuments

the Acropolis	the Wailing Wall	the Great Bath
the Athenian Acropolis	the Hanging Gardens	the walls of Jericho
the Aswam Dam	the Hall of a Hundred Columns	the temple of Marduk
the Tower of Babel	the Palace of Minos	the Great Wall
Bel, the Tower of Babel	the mighty Gate of the Lionesses/	the Western Wall
the Great Pyramid	the Lion Gate	the ancient fortress of Masada
the Step Pyramid of Zoser	the Parthenon	the Shinto Kasuga Shrine
the pyramid of Khefre	the Colosseum	
the Temple in Jerusalem	the Valley Temple	
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Nationalities & tribes

the Aztecs	the Asiatics	the Jews	the Etruscans
the Mayas	the Israelites	the Greeks	the Athenians
the Sumerians	the Hittites	the Chaldeans	the Messenians
the Semits	the early Indo-Europeans	the Iranians	the Spartans
the Eblaites	modern Jews	the Medes	the Corintians
the Mesopotamians	the Canaamites	the Melians	the Romans
the Babylonians	the Phoenicians	the Persians	the Apennines
the Egyptians	the Philistines	the Minoans	Celtic peoples known as Gauls
the Macedonians	the Assyrians	the Trojans	the Gauls
	the Romans	the Dorians	

Continents

east Africa	central Africa	central Asia	southeast Europe
East Africa	western Asia	Central America	negro west Africa

Islands & peninsulas

the Sinai Peninsula	the island of Corcyra	the island of Samos	the island of Sicily
the island of Crete	the island of Euboea	the island of Melos	the southern peninsula of
the Peloponnese	the island of Salamis	the Italian peninsula	Greece
the Peloponnesus	the island of Delos		the island of Corsica and
			Sardinia

Others

the Bering Strait	the Judaean desert	the Silk Road
the Atlantis seaboard	the Sinai desert	the Indian subcontinent
		the Asia-North America land
		bridge
	· ·	the Atlantis seaboard the Sinai desert

The rule that the definite article is used with countries when they include a countable noun applies according to our analysis to the names of empires and kingdoms, as well (the Assyrian Empire, the Akkadian kingdom). When the name of an empire or kingdom does not contain a common noun, the zero article is suggested (Sumer, Upper Egypt). The indefinite article is used only in constructions like to become an Athenian empire, a Persian empire. The use of articles with the names of historical states is based on the above mentioned general principles (the Chaldean state, Han China).

As for the names of cities, towns, and villages, all the analysed lexemes are combined with the zero article, except for the names with of-construction (*Uruk*, the city of Ebla, the town of Sheckem, the polis of Thebes, the village of Plataea).

The articles preceding the names of valleys (the Indus Valley), mountain ranges (the Taurus Mountains), mountains and hills (Sinai), rivers (the Euphrates), seas (the Aegean) and continents (central Africa) correspond with the generally prescribed rules; the only exception is the Pnyx (mountain).

Concerning the names of deltas, only one instance was found, namely *the Mekong delta* with the definite article.

Several instances of important buildings and monuments occurred, all with the definite article (the Acropolis, the Wailing Wall, the Great Pyramid, the Tower of Babel).

The names denoting regions are determined in two ways, either with the definite article (the Near East, the Delta, the Levant), or with the zero article (Asia Minor, Nubia, Anatolia). The use of the definite article with the of-construction is obvious (the region of Ionia, the territory of Messenia). It may be assumed that certain geographical names of regions (similarly to the names of moun-

tains) penetrate into English in their original form i.e. with the article or not, e.g. Asia Minor taken from Latin.

Based on the general rule the definite article is applied with the names of nationalities and tribes if they refer to nations (or tribes) as a whole (the Semites, the Mesopotamians, the Aztecs). Only two instances with the zero article (not referring to the whole nation) occurred (modern Jews, Celtic peoples known as Gauls).

Concerning the names of peninsulas they are used with the definite article in all the found instances (the Sinai Peninsula, the Peloponnnese). When being a part of the of-construction the names of islands are combined entirely with the definite article (the island of Salamis, the island of Sicily).

The use of articles with other found geographical names of coastline and deserts is based on the general rule, i.e. the definite article is applied (the Atlantis seaboard, the Dardanelles, the coast of Attica, the Judaean desert). The following three non-classified geographical names are accompanied with the definite article (the Asia-North America land bridge, the Indian subcontinent, the Silk Road).

4. Conclusions

The analysis of the gathered material shows that general rules for the use of articles with geographical place names are applicable to the names of historical (some of them not existing any more) geographical places, as well. Our aim is to continue in this field of research focusing on further periods of human history, namely the Middle Ages and the New Age in order to cover the use of articles with remaining historical place names.

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