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]); islands, countries, states, cities, towns, villages ([the Plaza Hotel, the Cannon Cinema]); museums, farms, 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,]
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 | Kingdoms | Empires |
|---------|----------|---------|
| the Persian Empire | the Akkadian kingdom | States |
| the Persian Empire | Ebla as an independent kingdom | Turkey |
| a Persian empire | the Babylonian Kingdom | Iraq |
| Sumer | the kingdom of Babylon | Syria |
| | the kingdom of Egypt | Palestine |
| | Early Egypt | Ethiopia |
| | Upper Egypt | the modern state of Israel |
| | Lower Egypt | Phoenicia |
| | the Old Kingdom | Persia |
| | the New Kingdom | Media |
| | the Middle Kingdom | Lydia |
| | | Greece |
| | | classical Greece |
| | | the Dorian states |
| | | the Greek states |
| | | Sparta |
| | | Macedonia |
| | | the Athenian state |
| | | the Roman Republic |
| | | the Roman state |
| | | Roman Italy |
| | | Jordan |
| | | the ancient China |
| | | Bavaria |
| | | Iberia |
| | | the state of Zhou |
| | | united imperial China |
| | | Han China |
| | | Gubta India |
| | | Roman Britain |
| | | classical Japan |
| | | the Assyrian state |
| | | the Chaldean state |
### Cities, towns & villages

| Cities, towns & villages | Cities, towns & villages | Cities, towns & villages | Cities, towns & villages | Cities, towns & villages |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Jericho, the city of Jericho | Niniveh | Pompeii | the city of Tiahuanaco |
| Jerusalem | Persepolis | Damascus | Chalcol |
| Jarmo | Knossos | the town of Sinope | Milesios |
| Ur | 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 | Nia |
| Memphis | Corinth | Elam | Yelva |
| Giza | Mileteus | Anyang | Maghada |
| the city of Cairo | the city of Mileteus | 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 | Lavena | Izumo |
| Hattuska | the city of Pergamum | the city of Babylon | Tikal |
| Carthage | the village of Cuma | Tarquinia | Palenque |
| Canaan | the city of Messana | Judah | Yaxchilan |
| the town of Shechem | the village of Pidna | Tyre | Copan |
| the city of Ashur | the city of Pharsalus | Ecbatana | Calakmul |
| Sparta | Ephesus | the city of Teotihuacan | El Mirador |
| Delphi Sardis | Antioch | | |

### Valleys

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

### Mountain ranges

| Mountain ranges | Mountain ranges | Mountain ranges |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| the Taurus Mountains | the Apennine range | the Hindu Kush mountains |

### Mountains & hills

| Mountains & hills | Mountains & hills |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Tell Mardikh | Mount Sinai |
| | Mount Olympus |
| | the Pnyx |
| | Mount Ilopango |

### Rivers

| Rivers | Rivers | Rivers | Rivers |
|--------|--------|--------|--------|
| the Tigris | the Nile | the Indus | the Po River |
| the Tigris River | the Nile River | the Indus River | the Tiber River |
| the upper Tigris River | the White Nile | the Jordan River | the Tiber |
| the Euphrates | the Blue Nile | the Halys River | the Rubicon River |
| the Euphrates River | | | the upper Yellow River |

### Seas

| Seas | Seas | Seas | Seas |
|------|------|------|------|
| the Mediterranean Sea | the Red Sea | the Aegean Sea | the Adriatic Sea |
| | the Mediterranean Sea | the Aegean Sea | the Black Sea |
| | | | the Dead Sea |
### Deltas

- the Mekong delta

### Regions

| Asia Minor | Mesopotamia | Bithynia | the Hittite territories |
|---|---|---|---|
| western Asia Minor | the Fertile Crescent | the Delta | northern Arabia |
| the entire Near East | the Delta | Punt, a territory | the Israelite territories |
| the ancient Near East | the Balkan areas | the Balkan areas | Nubia |
| Anatolia | the region of Ionia | the region of Ionia | Arabia |
| central Anatolia | the territory of Messenia | the territory of Messenia | the Tasili area |
| the region of Akkad, Akkad | Etruria | Etruria | the Bantu |
| the region of Syria | Illyria | Illyria | Bactria |
| Ebla’s territory | Achaea | Achaea | southern Mesopotamia |
| the Near East | Nearer Spain | Nearer Spain | northern Mesopotamia |
| Mesopotamia | Farther Spain | Farther Spain | |
| the Fertile Crescent | Cilicia | Cilicia | |
| the European mainland | the Assyrian lands | the Assyrian lands | |

### Continents

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

### 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 Canaanites | 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 Doriens | |

### 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 Pyramid of Khefre | the Colosseum | the Shinto Kasuga Shrine |
| the Temple in Jerusalem | the Valley Temple | | |

### Continents

| east Africa | central Africa | central Asia | southeast Europe |
|---|---|---|---|
| East Africa | western Asia | Central America | Central America |
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 Shechem, 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 Pyx (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 mountains) 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 Peloponnesus). 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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