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THE ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE DEFINITE ARTICLE IN EGYPTIAN-COPTIC

Abstract: *The first appearance of the emphatic demonstratives p₃/t₃/n₃ in northern Egyptian letters of the 6th Dynasty and their absence from southern Egyptian sources indicates the growing difference between the language variants spoken in these broadly defined regions. Originating from the Old Egyptian pronominal stems p-/t-/n-, the use of these new demonstratives expands rapidly during the Middle Kingdom. In their weak form as definite articles, they indicate that a noun is known in discourse and thus signal a hitherto hidden grammatical category – definiteness. Once the definite article is grammaticalised and starts to be used with a priori definite nouns such as p₃ nṯr wˁ 'the sole god' or p₃ ḥḳ₃ 'the ruler' (18th Dynasty), the indefinite article appears. The further development in Demotic and Coptic shows that the article was on the way to becoming a noun marker. When attached to a relative phrase, it created a new noun, which could be further determined (ϩⲉⲛⲡⲉⲧⲛⲁⲛⲟⲩϥ 'some good deeds', ⲡⲡⲉⲧⲟⲩⲁⲁⲃ 'the saint'). The following article traces the regional origins of the definite article as well as the main principles governing their development.*

Keywords: *Definiteness; definite, indefinite and zero article; noun categories; specific and generic nouns; Egyptian-Coptic; northern Egyptian dialect; diachrony and linguistic topology*

Introduction

The emergence of the definite article is the most prominent indicator of the dramatic shift from older 'synthetic' to younger 'analytic' forms

in the Egyptian language. The article not only expresses the new grammatical category of definiteness, it also takes over the categories of number and gender, which were earlier carried by the noun stem itself. Its siblings are a new set of demonstrative pronouns *pꜣy/tꜣy/nꜣy,* possessives *pꜣy=/tꜣy= /nꜣy=* and *pꜣ/tꜣ/nꜣ n* 'he, she, they of'. Bi- and tripartite nominal clauses are now built with the new demonstratives instead of *pw*. In Sahidic Coptic, these forms include long and short variants for articles and clitic and non-clitic variants for demonstratives (Till 1955, 59, 97; Ernstedt 1986, 119-120; Layton 2004, 44, 48).[1]

Although the role of the productive base *pꜣ/tꜣ/nꜣ* in Late Egyptian is clear, the functioning of the article is still open to question. Some doubt has been expressed as to whether the article is really a grammatical tool, since 'the function of tools is to achieve some specific end. That is precisely what, in many cases, the article does not do, or at all events does only in a very slight and uncertain degree. Often it is mere useless ballast, a habit or mannerism accepted by an entire speaking community' (Gardiner 1963, 47).

The irregularities of article usage are encountered by any student of German, English or French. Generic nouns (i.e. nouns referring to kinds instead of concrete objects [Bussmann and Gerstner-Link 2008, 225]), can be used in German with definite or indefinite articles without a substantial change in meaning:

1. *Die Tannen sind Nadelbäume.*
Die Tanne ist ein Nadelbaum.
Eine Tanne ist ein Nadelbaum.
The plural form is used without the article:
2. *Tannen sind Nadelbäume.*
* *Tanne ist Nadelbaum* (Grimm 1987, 46).

German can place definite articles in front of proper names (e.g. *der Peter*), which is not possible in English or French. The usage of the indefinite article in Coptic with abstract and mass nouns in both singular and plural forms is also confusing: ⲟⲩϩⲟⲧⲉ 'fear' (sg.), ⲟⲩⲙⲟⲟⲩ 'water' (sg.), ϩⲉⲛⲁϥ 'meat' (pl.).

Although from the 'synchronic' perspective of the non-native speaker, many such cases do not make sense, their 'historic original was properly

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[1] Articles: ⲡ/ⲧ/ⲛ̄ (short) *vs* ⲡⲉ/ⲧⲉ/ⲛⲉ (long, e.g. before consonantal cluster: ⲧⲉⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ). Demonstratives: ⲡⲉⲓ·/ⲧⲉⲓ·/ⲛⲉⲓ· (clitic) vs ⲡⲁⲓ/ⲧⲁⲓ/ⲛⲁⲓ (non-clitic). 'Affected' demonstratives ⲡⲓ·/ϯ·/ⲛⲓ· also have non-clitic variants ⲡⲏ/ⲧⲏ/ⲛⲏ·. Both Till and Layton call clitic forms 'articles'.

motivated and purposeful' (Gardiner 1963, 47). The goal of this article is thus to uncover the origins of articles in Egyptian and to trace the development of their forms over a period of approximately 3000 years.[2]

The northern Egyptian origins of the definite article

The origins of the definite article lie in a dialectal drift which occurred between the language varieties spoken in the South and North of Egypt. Due to the scarcity of source material, we can only trace these changes from the 6th Dynasty of the Old Kingdom onwards. However, the *Abusir Papyri* display the weakened version of the Old Egyptian demonstratives *tw/tn/tf* in front of the noun as early as the 5th Dynasty:

3. *t nt šnwt* [...]

'This is belonging to the granary [...]' (*P. Cairo* 602, frame II = Posener-Kriéger 1968).

By roughly subdividing the colloquial sources available from the 6th Dynasty into 'southern Egyptian' and 'northern Egyptian', we can observe substantial differences in the usage of demonstrative pronouns.[3] Despite their scarcity, the northern letters contain a variety of demonstratives, ranging from the older series *pw/tw/nw* as dependent and independent pronouns to the newer *pn/tn/nn*:

4. *sḫꜣ nw ḏd.n.k n Jrtj sꜣ Yj*

'Remember this, which you have said to Irti's son Ii' (*P. Cairo* CG 25975 [*Cairo linen*], line 12 = Gardiner and Sethe 1928).

5. *rp ḫ[t] n ꜣtwt.(j) tw*

ḥr.tj ḥsf.(w) sꜣ n sj r nḏrwt.f

'The wood of this my bed will rot (?)

under the one, who removed the son of a man from his bed part' (*P. Cairo* CG 25975 [*Cairo linen*], lines 3-4 = Gardiner and Sethe 1928).

6. *sk hrw js pw wꜥ ḫb.tw.f n ꜣst tn ḥbs.tw.f*

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[2] Starting with tomb inscriptions of the 6th Dynasty around 2300 BC and ending with works of fiction by Coptic Archimandrite Shenoute in the 5th century AD.

[3] Southern sources include letters from Elephantine (*P. Berlin* 9010; *P. Berlin* 8869 [*Crimes of Sabni*]; *P. Turin* CG 54002; *P. Berlin* 10523 [*Bm*], 10523 [*Bn*], 10523, 2+4 [*Ab+Ad*]; *P. Straßburg* A, Ba, Bb, Be&f, Ca, Cb, Ep); from Balat in Dakhla Oasis (*Tablet* 3686; *Tablet* 4965); from Qubbet el-Hawa near Assuan (*A letter to Harkhuf by Pepi II in tomb A 8*) and from Naga ed Deir (*Naga ed Deir* MFA 04.2059; *Naga ed Deir* 3500; *Naga ed Deir* 3737). There are very few nothern sources. These comprise four letters from Saqqara (*P. Cairo* JE 49623; *P. Cairo* JE 52001A, B, C; *P. Cairo* CG 58043 = *P. Boulaq* 8; *P. Cairo* CG 25975 = *Cairo linen*).

'And it is one day, which is wasted for this battalion, when it is given clothes'[4] (*P. Cairo* JE 49623, lines 6-7 = Gardiner 1927).

In letters of the 1st Intermediate period, the old demonstratives peacefully coexist with Late Egyptian forms, both preceding the noun:

7. *mk grt jpty b3k.ty rd.yt nḫm sny*

nfr-ṯn-tt jṯ3j sh3 st

'Behold, those two the serving-maids, who have caused Seny to suffer, Nefertjentet and Itjai, let them fall' (*Oriental Museum Chicago Letter* 13945, line 5 = Gardiner 1930).

8. *mk grt jn.tw t3 mnṯ3t jrt mwt.k wdꜥ mdw ḥr.s*

'Behold, there is brought (to you) this vessel in respect of which your mother is to make litigation' (*Oriental Museum Chicago Letter* 13945, line 3 = Gardiner 1930).

The process occurring in the south is very different and can be described as a quantitative and qualitative selection applied to the form of demonstratives and their position. Firstly, although the number of attested 6th Dynasty sources in Upper Egypt is much bigger, we do not come across any archaic forms such as *tw* or *jpty* and the range of pronouns is restricted to *pn/tn/nn*. Secondly, once again in stark contrast to the Lower Egyptian dialect, their position becomes fixed behind the noun. Pronouns also retain their full form and nothing suggests their weakening:

9. *sk smr wꜥty sn-k.w jy.(w) r sp3t tn*

'Now the sole companion Senkaw has come to this nome' (*P. Turin* CG 54002, lines 11-12 = Roccati 1968).

Independent usage is exclusively reserved for the neutral demonstrative *nn*:

10. *jr swt wnn jr sh3w.k nn r sd ꜥḥ3*[...]

m33 rf sn.k jm m mrr rf sh3w.[*k*]

ḥ3ty-ꜥ ḥtm.tj-bjtj [...] *s3bnj r sn.k jm*

'If it will be the case, that you (lit. 'your scribe') have done this to break up the fighting [...],

then I (lit. 'your brother there') shall see whether you love

the nomarch, the sealer of the king [...] Sabni more than me' (*P. Berlin* 8869, lines 5-8 [*Crimes of Sabni*] = Smither 1942).

Southern sources provide two notable exceptions to the pattern outlined. The first comes from a letter of Pepi II to Harkhuf, found in the tomb of the latter in Qubbet el-Hawa (Asswan). It contains independent usage

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4 Lit. 'A day it is, one, it is wasted for this battalion, as it is clothed.'

of *nf*, and *pw* following the noun. These can be considered as traces of the northern dialect:

11. *jn jw mj nf jry n smr-wᶜty ḥr-ḫw.f*

'Is there (anything) like this, which was done to the sole companion Harkhuf?' (Qubbet el-Hawa, Grab A 8 = Eichler 1991, 153, line 13).

12. *s(j)p sp 10 n grḥ mrj ḥm.j m33*

dng pw r jnw bj3 pwnt

'Check 10 times at night, because my majesty really wants to see this dwarf, more than the tribute of Sinai and Punt' (Qubbet el-Hawa, Grab A 8 = Eichler 1991, 153, lines 20-21).

The fact that the cited passages occur in the direct speech of the king offers an explanation of the phenomenon. The language here represents the actual dialect spoken in his residence (Memphis). A similar stylistic device is later attested in the *Kamose Stela* and the *Kanais Decree of Sethos I*, in which the Late Egyptian of the king's speech stands out from the Middle Egyptian of the narration (Jansen-Winkeln 2011, 168).

Another evidence refuting the northern origin of the new demonstrative series *p3/t3/n3* is provided by inscriptions from the tombs of Tjauti (*T3wtj*) and Idu (*Jdw*) in Kasr el-Sayed of the seventh Upper Egyptian nome.[5] The tombs of the two nomarchs from the reign of Pepi II bear three examples of new demonstratives. They are found in the *Reden und Rufen* – inscriptions, which accompany scenes taken from daily life.

13. *dj n.j p3 nty ḥr nḏrt mnt*

'Give (it) to me, you, holding the haunch' (The tomb of *T3wtj*, Kasr el-Sayed = Säve-Söderbergh 1994, pl. 26: lower register).

14. *mk wj sḫs.j ḫr n3 nty m ᶜ.j*

'See, I hurry up carrying this, which is in my hand' (The tomb of *T3wtj*, Kasr el-Sayed = Säve-Söderbergh 1994, pl. 26: upper register).

15. *jrr.k n3 r tm wnmw*

'This is what you should do for the one, who does not eat' (The tomb of *Jdw*, Kasr el-Sayed = Säve-Söderbergh 1994, pl.10: 3rd register).

This time it is not the multiple language registers hidden in the text, but the layout and decoration of the tombs that can help solve the dialectal riddle. Säve-Söderbergh (1994, 35) notes that 'the style of decoration differs from that typical for Upper Egyptian provincial tombs at many other places. It is more elegant and the drawing of the lines is similar to that found

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[5] This place is famous due to the Coptic Gnostic library which was found there, but was named after the main centre of the region, the town Nag Hammadi (Säve-Söderbergh 1994, 18).

in the Teti cemetery (Mereruka, Kagemni, Khentika etc.) at Saqqara.'[6] The architecture of the tombs has characteristics 'which are only found in the Upper Egyptian 6th Dynasty tombs at Dershashe, in a nome, which is directly dependent on Memphis' (Säve-Söderbergh 1994, 40). Moreover, the titles linked with the royal pyramids indicate a 'close relationship with the capital' (Säve-Söderbergh 1994, 40).

A more detailed investigation is required to prove that the rock tomb inscriptions of Kasr el-Sayed were produced from templates created in the north. However, we can note at this point that the later demonstrative is in fact attested in one of the 6th Dynasty tombs of Giza:

16. *jrr jb.<j> p3 mrjj*

'Do me a favour, **the** beloved one' (The tomb of *K3j-m-ʿnḫ*, Giza = Junker 1938, Abb. 9: 2nd register).

The northern origin of the new demonstrative series *p3/t3/n3* helps to establish the location of the addressee of another important document – the *Heqanakht Letters*. These papyri have been dated to a 30 year period split between the reigns of Mentuhotep III of the 11th Dynasty and Sesostris I of the 12th Dynasty, although archaeological evidence strongly supports them being from the latter monarch's reign (Allen 2002, 130). Found in Thebes, the letters have Lower Egyptian features as demonstratives are represented exclusively by the newer set of *p3/t3/n3*. The only case in which *pn* is used is a fossilised expression in an oath:

17. *ʿnḫ n.j sj pn ḏd.j r Jp*

'As this man lives for me – I speak of Ip' (*Heqanakht Letter* 2, 40-41 = Allen 2002, pl. 6a)

This evidence supports Allen's (2002, 121) conclusion, shared by Brose (2014, 13), that Heqanakht's home region of *Nbsyt*, where the letters were intended to be sent, was located in the area around Memphis.

To sum up, the definite article developed around the 5th to 6th Dynasty from the Old Egyptian pronominal stem *p-/t-*, which retained its independent character in the northern Egyptian dialect. It could be weakened when placed in front of the noun and was probably strengthened by another element such as the locative adverb *ʿ3y* 'here'. A similar process is attested later in Coptic for the 'farther' demonstratives: ⲡⲉⲧⲙ̅ⲙⲁⲩ – 'this one (there)'.

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[6] Additionally, the scene of a cow being killed by allowing it to bleed to death finds its only parallel in the tomb of Ti (Saqqara) (Säve-Söderbergh 1994, 49).

The pattern of definite article expansion: from common to unique nouns

As outlined above, the origins of the definite article lie in the emphatic demonstrative, which can sometimes be translated as a vocative:

18. *dj n.j pꜣ nty ḥr nḏrt mnt*

'Give (it) to me, you ("the one there"), holding the haunch' (The tomb of *Ṯꜣwtj*, Kasr el-Sayed = Säve-Söderbergh 1994, pl. 26: lower register).

The more often it is used, the more it loses its original demonstrative /deictic nature: 'the point, at which a discourse deictic becomes a definite article is where it becomes compulsory and has spread to the point at which it means "identified" in general, thus including typically things known from context, general knowledge, or as with "the sun" in non-scientific discourse, identified because it is the only member of its class' (Greenberg 1978, 62).

The process of article expansion into different semantic categories will be outlined in this chapter. The article originally accompanies common nouns, both mass and abstract, but then gradually penetrates the semantic fields of proper/unique nouns. Unique nouns refer to solitary objects and do not need a demonstrative to be correctly identified by the addressee (e.g. the moon, proper names and body parts). As it spreads through the language, the article gradually 'conquers' all the semantic fields moving from the 'less unique' to the 'more unique' (Kroeber 1970, 7ff). This process can be described as follows:

Early Middle Kingdom[7]

Noun categories:

1. Common nouns (objects): *pꜣ š* 'the farm', *pꜣ ꜥḳw* 'the rations', *pꜣ dꜣjw* 'the cloth', *pꜣ pr* 'the house', *tꜣ wsḫ.t* 'the barge', *pꜣ šs* 'the letter', *pꜣ jt-mḥ* 'the barley', *pꜣ msw 5* 'the 5 children', *tꜣ bꜣkt nt pr Snn* 'the servant *Snn*', *pꜣ wꜥb Nḥt* 'the *wꜥb*-priest *Nḥt*'.

2. Common nouns (events): *pꜣ rdt jwt* 'that sending', *pꜣ jrt bjnw* 'that doing evil', *pꜣ hꜣb* 'that writing'.

3. Geographic terms: *pꜣ rsy* 'this south'.

4. Divisions of time: *pꜣ hrw* 'this day (today)'.

Middle Kingdom[8]

During the Middle Kingdom, article usage expands in existing categories,

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[7] Sources include, e.g. *Ḥeqanakht Letters*: 11th-12th Dynasties, Mentuhotep III/Sesostris I.

[8] Sources include *P. Kahun* and *P. Gurob*, *P. Brooklyn* 351446: 12th-13th Dynasties, *Semnah Dispatches*: 12th Dynasty, *P. Boulaq* 18: 13th Dynasty.

such as geographic terms and divisions of time, and embraces new areas, such as higher titles.

Noun categories:

1. Common nouns (objects): *p3 k3* 'the bull', *t3 jmy.t-pr* 'the testament', *n3 n Md3y* 'these Medjay', *p3 ᶜ3m 4* 'the 4 Asiatics'.

2. Common nouns (events): *p3 tkk* 'the violation'.

3. Geographic terms: *t3 ḫ3st* 'the desert', *p3 ᶜd* 'the desert-edge'.

4. Divisions of time: *t3 3t* 'this moment', *t3 rnp.t* 'this year', *p3 mšrw* 'this evening', *p3 ḥb* 'this festival'.

Additionally:

5. Temple and civil titles: *p3 wᶜb-njswt* 'the *wᶜb*-priest of the king', *p3 šs ḫrj ḫtm Yj-m-jᶜ.t-jb* 'the scribe in charge of the seal *Yj-m-jᶜ.t-jb*', *p3 jdnw n jmy-r3 sd3wty Jmny* 'the deputy of the treasurer *Jmny*', *t3 wnwt ḥwt-ntr* 'the priesthood of the temple', *p3 h3tj-ᶜ Jwny Ḳn-Jmy* 'the mayor of Armant *Ḳn-Jmy*', *t3 ḥw.t-ntr* 'the temple'.

6. Numbers: *p3* 40 'that 40', *p3* ½ 'that ½'.

Although widely attested during the Middle Kingdom, *p3* was still considered to be too colloquial, if not vulgar, for official language, as the following quote from the stele of Mentuwoser (*Mntw-Wsr*) proves:

19. *jnk mdw r r3-ᶜ srw*

šwy m ddw p3w

'I am one who talks according to the style of nobleman,

free of saying *p3*.' (Sethe 1960, 79, line 17).

One of the functions of the article in the sentence is deictic, meaning it indicates something that is either 1. already known or 2. will be introduced later. These two types of reference are called 'anaphoric' (backward) and 'cataphoric' (forward) respectively. A 'direct' anaphora indicates an object/action mentioned previously in the same text, e.g.:

20. *ᶜhᶜ nḫ3w n mfk.t m3.t ḥr ḥr mw* [...]

gm.n.f p3 nḫ3w w3ḥ ḥr p3 ḳy.t

'And **a pendant** of new turquoise fell into the water [...]

He found **the pendant** lying on a shard' (*P. Westcar* 5,16-5,17; 6,9-6,10 = Blackman 1988).

An 'indirect' anaphora indicates common knowledge shared by the listener and the speaker, e.g. *p3 ḥḳ3* 'the ruler'. The literary texts of this period show that anaphoric function can also be expressed using Middle Egyptian demonstrative pronouns. In the following example, *sḫty* 'peasant' is first introduced as an indefinite 'bare' noun and all the following attestations are accompanied by *pn*:

21. *s pw wn Ḫw-n-jnpw rn.f*
sḫty pw n Śḫt-ḥmȝt
jst wn ḥmt.f [*M*]*rt rn.s*
[...]*ḏd jn sḫty pn n ḥmt.f tn*
'There was a man named Khun-Anup,
a peasant of Salt-Field.
He had **a wife** whose name was [*M*]arye. [...]
Said **this peasant** to **his wife**' (*Eloquent peasant* R 1.1-1.2, 1.5 = Parkinson 1991).

Another Middle Kingdom document, the *Rhind Mathematical Papyrus*, utilizes both old (*pn*) and new (*pȝ*) forms in the same passage for anaphoric reference:

22. Question:
šȝ⁽ h.ȝn sšr r.f m ḥḳȝt NN pty rḫt.f
'**A container**, into which corn has gone to the amount of NN *ḥḳȝt*. What are its dimensions?'
Answer 1:
nj-sw 10 r 10 r 31/3 pȝ šȝ⁽ [...]
'It is 10 by 10 by 3 1/3, **the container** [...]'
Answer 2:
ḫpr ḥr šȝ⁽ pn m mḥ 10 r 10 r 3 1/3
mjtt pw
'**This container** proves to be of 10 cubits by 10 by 3 1/3.
That is the same' (*P. Rhind Mathem* PL. N, 46 = Peet 1923).
2nd Intermediate period and Amarna[9]

During the 2nd Intermediate period, the process of article expansion comes to an end in colloquial speech as it embraces unique nouns such as 'ruler', terms of kingship such as 'son' and body parts used metaphorically.

Noun categories:

1. Titles: *pȝ w⁽b* 'the *w⁽b*-priest', *tȝ ḳnbt nt srw* 'court of magistrates'.

2. Geographic terms: *pȝ tȝ 2* 'the two lands', *pȝ w n Nf*[*rw-sy*] *m hȝj* 'the region of Nef[rusi]', *pȝ tȝ* 'the land', *pȝ w n jnpwt* 'the Cynopolite Nome', *nȝ n dmjw n tȝ kmt* 'the towns of Egypt'.

3. Unique nouns: *pȝ ḥḳȝ* 'the ruler', *pȝ nsw Ḫwfw* 'the King Khufu', *pȝ jb* 'this mood' (lit. 'heart').

In Amarna, we can see that the new demonstratives have been officially introduced into literary and state texts, as evidenced by the *Great Hymn* and

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[9] Sources include *P. Westcar*, *Kamose Stela (FIP)* and *P. Mond* 1 and 2, *Great Hymn*, *Boundary Stelae*, *P. Gurob* (Amarna).

the *Boundary Stelae*. They all use definite articles with unique nouns: *p3 Rꜥ* 'Re', *p3 Jtn ꜥnḫ* 'the living Aton', *p3 nṯr wꜥ* 'the sole God', *p3 nb nḥḥ* 'the lord of eternity', *p3 Jtn* 'Aten', *p3 nṯr ꜥ3* 'the great god', *t3 ḥmt nswt wrt* 'the great king's wife', *p3 nṯr* 'the god', *p3 šw* 'the sun'.

Although the difference between the unstressed (*p3*, article) and stressed (*p3y*, pronoun) variants of the new demonstrative was already visible in writing during the Middle Kingdom (e.g. *jrj.n.st t3y* 'had done [made] **this**' [*Semnah Dispatches*, pl. IIa, 2 = Smither 1945]), it is not until the 18th Dynasty that documents (e.g. *Thutmosid Letters*) begin to consistently distinguish the two variants:

23. *šs jꜥḥ-msw p3y Pnjt*

'The scribe Aachmose, the man (this one) of Peniati'(*P. BM* 10102, *Recto*, 1-2 = Glanville 1928).

The full form, written *p3y*, thus reveals its possible origin as a combination of the weakened stem *p-* with an adverbial of place *ꜥ3y* 'here', which is attested five times in Heqanakht papers alone.

Specific and generic nouns

As the definite article gradually became grammaticalised from the end of the 2nd Intermediate period to the beginning of the New Kingdom, another important event was also occurring. The numeral *wꜥ* 'one' acquired an additional meaning as an indefinite article. This process probably started as early as the Middle Kingdom, but its first attestations date back to the 2nd Intermediate period:

24. *jmj ḏj n.j wꜥ n ḳ3ḳ3w*

'Let me be given **a** ship' (*P. Westcar* 8, 3 = Blackman 1988).

The arrival of the indefinite article is an important moment in the history of the Egyptian language. It enabled the formal division of common nouns into two groups according to the meaning expressed in the context: 1. 'specific' ones – denoting a particular object or event and marked by the definite or indefinite article and 2. 'generic' ones – referring to a class of objects, but not to any one in particular, marked by a 'zero article' (meaningful article absence).[10] Nouns can obtain a generic meaning in two ways:

1. Through <u>pragmatic</u> meaning of the utterance they are used in. Definitions and general statements create a naturally generic environment.

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[10] As we have seen, certain unique and abstract nouns fall into one of the categories based on their semantics. For example, proper names and body parts are overtly specific and originally rejected the definite article, whereas abstract nouns are naturally generic.

2. Through the <u>syntax</u> of the construction the noun is used in. The direct objects of compound verbs are often generic.

The first category (pragmatic generic nouns) is less resistant to the article. This can be seen in Demotic, in which specific nouns in generic patterns can be used with or without an article:

25. *ḥr tj rmṯ nb ḫpr nk rmṯ-rḫ pꜣ nt rḫ ꜥrḏ.f*

'All men acquire property; **a wise man** is the one who knows how to conserve it' (*'Onch-Sheshonqi* 13/9 = Glanville 1955).

26. *ḥr jr.w btw n rmṯ-rḫ r-ḏbꜣ sḥm.t jw mr.f s*

'Wrongdoing is done to **a wise man** because of a woman whom he loves' (*P. Insinger* 7/11 = Lexa 1926).

27. *ḥr ḫpr tꜣ wp.t n pꜣ sšl n pꜣ rmṯ-rḫ r-ḏbꜣ krf*

'The work of the devil happens to **the wise man** through cunning' (*P. Insinger* 12/7 = Lexa 1926).

Generic environments created through syntax are more immune to articles. They remain remarkably constant across Late Egyptian, Demotic and Coptic and can be summarized as follows:

1. Predication of a general characteristic:

jw.f m hꜣj m-dj tꜣy.f snt šr[jt]

'He being the husband of his younger sister' (Černý 1975, 71).

ϯⲟ ⲙ̄ⲙ̄ⲧⲣⲉ

'I am a witness' (Till 1955, 64).

2. Prepositional phrases:

m mꜣꜥ.t

'in truth' (Černý 1975, 72)

n ḳns/ⲛ̄ϭⲟⲛ̄ⲥ

'by force' (Spiegelberg 1925, 32)

(ḥ)r mr(.t)/ⲉⲙⲏⲣ

'on board' (Spiegelberg 1925, 32)

ϣⲁ ⲉⲛⲉϩ

'till eternity' (Till 1955, 64)

ϫⲓⲛⲛ̄ ϣⲟⲣⲡ̄

'from the beginning' (Till 1955, 64)

3. Direct object of compound verbs:

jr ḥt/ⲣ̄ ϩⲟⲧⲉ

'to be afraid' (Černý 1976, 299)

sḏm ḫrw

'to hear' (Černý 1975, 72)

ꜥš sgb/*ꜥš sgp*/ⲁϣϭⲁⲡ

'to scream' (Spiegelberg 1925, 32)

4. Negative expressions:

r-ḏd bn sḏm.j md.t

'Saying "I will not hear anything"' (Černý 1975, 72).

m-jr ḏ mt.t jw bn jw pȝy.s ṯȝ jn pȝy

'Don't say a thing those time it is not' (Johnson 1986, 78).

Ⲙ̄ⲡⲚ̄ϢⲒⲚⲈ Ⲛ̄ⲤⲀⲈⲞⲞⲨ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲚ̄ⲢⲰⲘⲈ

'We did not seek glory from any person' (Layton 2004, 40).[11]

The article as a noun marker

Parallel to the gradual 'conquest' of the noun categories, the article also took on another function as a nominaliser. When expanded by a relative clause, the definite article created new nouns, in which the initial *pȝ/tȝ/nȝ*, ⲡ/ⲧ-/Ⲛ̄ were no longer understood as articles and could be preceded by additional determiners (Ernstedt 1986, 166):

ⲡⲈⲦⲞⲨⲀⲀⲂ

'saint' ('the-one-who-is-pure')

Ⲙ̄ⲡⲈⲦⲞⲨⲀⲀⲂ

'the saints'

ⲚⲈϤⲡⲈⲦⲞⲨⲀⲀⲂ

'his saints'

ⲞⲨⲡⲈⲦⲞⲨⲀⲀⲂ

'a saint'

ϨⲈⲚⲡⲈⲦⲞⲨⲀⲀⲂ

'some saints'

ⲡⲈⲦⲚⲀⲚⲞⲨϤ

'good thing' ('this-which-is-good')

Ⲙ̄ⲡⲈⲔⲡⲈⲦⲚⲀⲚⲞⲨϤ

'his good deeds'

ⲞⲨⲡⲈⲦⲚⲀⲚⲞⲨϤ

'something good'

ϨⲈⲚⲡⲈⲦⲚⲀⲚⲞⲨϤ

'some good deeds'

Such compounds were used as subjects in adverbial clauses preceded by ⲞⲨⲚ̄ 'there is' and ⲘⲚ̄/Ⲙ̄ⲘⲚ̄ 'there is not', which marks them as undetermined. This rule holds true in both Coptic and Demotic:

28. ⲘⲚ̄ ⲡⲈⲦϨⲞⲂⲰ̄

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[11] Note that it is also a prepositional phrase and therefore falls into category 1.

'There is nothing hidden' (Till 1955, 236).

mn pꜣ nt ḥwš r pꜣ ꜥꜣ r-r.f

jw bn jw mtw.f pꜣ nt ḥwš.ṯ jn

'There does not exist the one, who (can) abuse his superior,

while he (himself) is not the one, who is abused' (Johnson 1986, 90).

The nominalising function of the definite article was already present during the New Kingdom. Late Egyptian phrases of the 'article + relative phrase' type could be accompanied by the determiner *nb* 'all', 'every'. With regular nouns, *nb* and the definite article were mutually exclusive:

29. *jr pꜣ prj nb m r.j m tꜣ-ḥꜣt*

'As for everything which I have said (lit. "which came out of my mouth") before' (Černý 1975, 82).

The process of article development for over 3000 years illustrated above roughly corresponds to the stages outlined by Joseph Greenberg (1978) in his article *How does a language acquire gender markers?* According to Greenberg, the article started its life as a demonstrative pronoun and proceeded through the following stages:

Stage I: definite article

Stage II: non-generic article (specific)

Stage III: noun marker

On the basis of Egyptian material, we can see that by the New Kingdom articles have embraced most noun categories. The only group of nouns 'consistently' resisting the article are the names of body parts, which also take synthetic possessives (Ernstedt 1986, 138). Generic pragmatic and syntactic environments, initially also immune to articles, start to display flexibility in Coptic. The article gradually moves towards becoming a nominal marker, as shown by its ability to nominalise relative phrases, just as the endings *t* (f.) /*w* (pl.) in the earlier stages of Egyptian marked nominalized verbal forms (infinitives, relative forms and participles).[12] In Coptic, the only 'reliable' markers of gender and number are articles, although gender marking on the noun stem is still a productive mechanism, as shown in words borrowed later: ϭⲁⲙⲟⲩⲗ/ϭⲁⲙⲁⲩⲗⲉ (Copt. 'camel'), compare with Arabic جَمَل

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[12] E.g. *jrt* ('to do', infinitive of 3ae inf. verb), *jrt.n.f* ('this which he has done' - relative form of the past), *jryt* ('this which has been done' - perfective passive participle).

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