

Lesson 2: Definite Articles

Definite Articles

Where indefinite articles denote a noun that is not specified, definite articles denote a specified noun. For example, when we talk of "the book," we are referring to a specific book. English has only one definite article - "the" - which is used regardless of the noun it defines. Coptic has eight different forms, which are attached directly to the beginning of the noun.

The Coptic definite article depends on the number and gender of the noun, as well as its strength (more on that later) and sometimes the letter it begins with. It is important to use the correct definite article because this gives information about the noun.

Masculine Articles: ⲁ - , ⲁⲓ - , ⲁⲓⲓ -

Feminine Articles: ⲓⲁ - , ⲓⲁⲓ - , ⲓⲁⲓⲓ -

Plural Articles: ⲁⲓⲓⲓ - , ⲁⲓⲓⲓⲓⲓ -

When to use each article is discussed below.

Plural Nouns

In the vast majority of cases, ⲁⲓⲓⲓ - is used as the definite article for nouns. For example: "the hands" would be ⲁⲓⲓⲓ ⲭⲓⲛⲓⲛⲓ.

The article ⲁⲓⲓⲓⲓⲓ - is used in constructions involving the word "of" (i.e. "the" <pl. noun> "of" <noun>). For example: "the hands of Aaron" would be ⲁⲓⲓⲓⲓⲓ ⲭⲓⲛⲓⲛⲓ ⲛⲁⲣⲟⲛⲓⲛⲓ.

Singular Nouns

The three masculine articles are equivalent to the three feminine articles.

ⲁ - will follow the same rules as ⲓⲁ -

ⲁⲓ - will follow the same rules as ⲓⲁⲓ -

ⲁⲓⲓ - will follow the same rules as ⲓⲁⲓⲓ -

Strong/Weak Articles

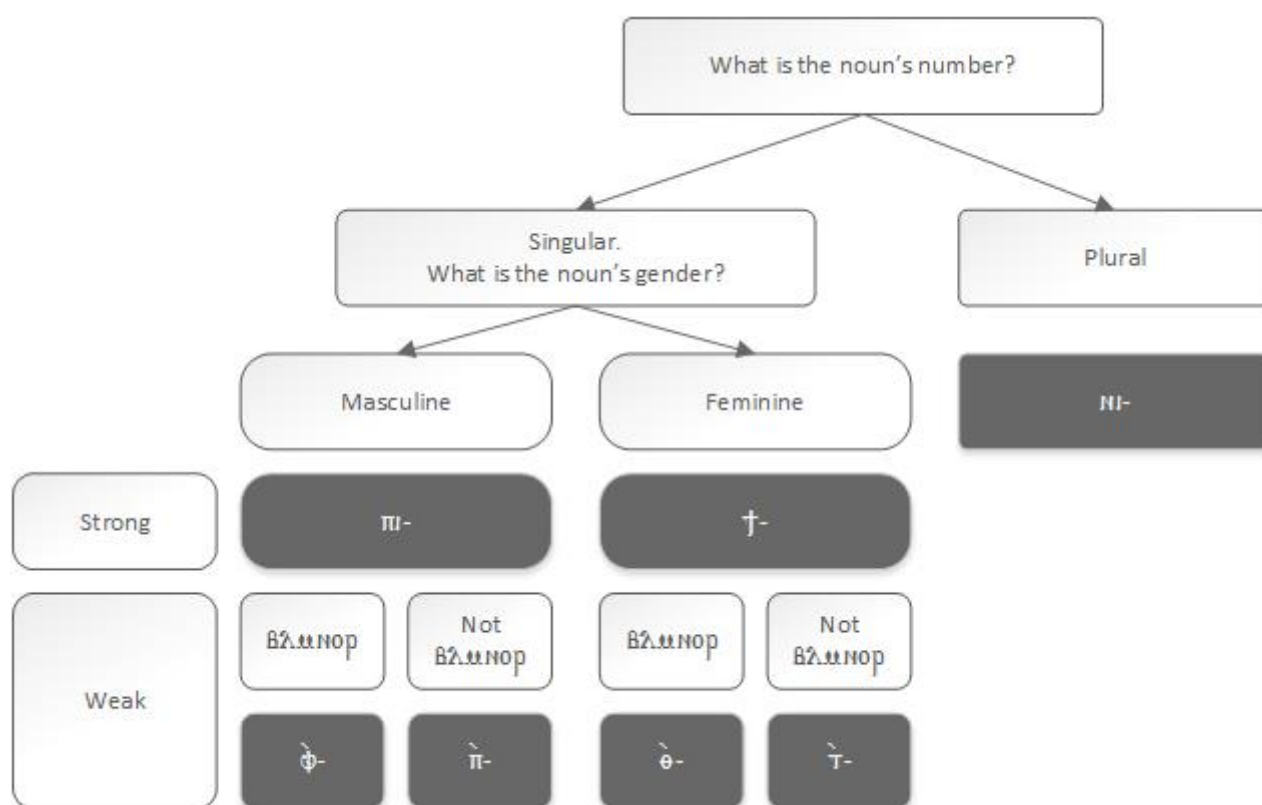
ⲁⲓⲓⲓ - and ⲓⲁⲓⲓⲓ - are considered strong articles.

ⲁ - , ⲁⲓ - , ⲁⲓⲓ - are considered weak articles.

Bilminor Articles

If the noun begins with any of the "Bilminor" letters (B b L l M m N n P p R r S s T t V v X x Z z) then`B` and`b` are used. If not, then`L` and`l` are used.

Summary



Examples

Singular		Plural	
ᠮᠠᠨ	The man	ᠮᠠᠨ	The men
ᠪᠠᠭᠤ ᠠᠨᠠᠭ	The woman	ᠪᠠᠭ ᠠᠨᠠᠭ	The women
ᠪᠠᠭᠤ	The boy	ᠪᠠᠭᠤᠨ	The children

†ⲉⲓⲣⲓⲛⲁ	The girl		
ⲉⲓⲡⲓⲥⲁ	The father	ⲉⲓⲡⲓⲥⲁ †	The fathers
ⲁⲓⲡⲓⲥⲁ	The Father (God)		
†ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The mother	ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The mothers
ⲁⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The Mother (St Mary)		
ⲉⲓ ⲙⲉⲓⲡⲓⲥⲁ	The son	ⲉⲓ ⲙⲉⲓⲡⲓⲥⲁ	The sons
ⲁⲓ ⲙⲉⲓⲡⲓⲥⲁ	The Son (Christ)		
†ⲙⲉⲓⲡⲓⲥⲁ	The daughter	ⲉⲓ ⲙⲉⲓⲡⲓⲥⲁ	The daughters
ⲁⲓ ⲙⲉⲓⲡⲓⲥⲁ	The Daughter (St Mary e.g. ⲉⲓ ⲙⲉⲓⲡⲓⲥⲁ ⲉⲓⲁⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ)		
†ⲉⲓⲁⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The old woman	ⲉⲓ ⲉⲓⲁⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The elders
ⲁⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The King (Christ)	ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The kings
ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The king		
ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ †	The god	ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ †	The gods
ⲁⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ †	God		
†ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The Trinity		
†ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The Church	ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The churches
ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The Cross		
†ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The dome	ⲉⲓ ⲁⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The domes
†ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The tower	ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The towers
†ⲙⲉⲓⲡⲓⲥⲁ	The censer		
ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The body		
ⲉⲓ ⲁⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ ⲙⲉⲓⲡⲓⲥⲁ	The blood		
ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The bread		
ⲉⲓ ⲁⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ	The chalice		

Interesting Cases

1. Some nouns seem like they should be using the weak article, but they always seem to use the strong article.
- Examples: †ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ , ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ , †ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ , †ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ , ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ

• These nouns are all actually Greek nouns and thus use the strong article (masculine or feminine). The rules above related to strong/weak and ⲉⲓⲙⲁⲧⲁ are only applicable to Coptic nouns.

- The Coptic equivalent of ⲧⲏⲛⲁⲓⲥⲉⲩⲱⲙⲟⲩ , for example is ⲛⲁⲓⲥⲉⲩⲱⲙⲟⲩ ⲧ which uses the weak article
- Nouns that are borrowed from Greek will retain their gender, except when they are neuter in which case they take on a masculine gender in Coptic.
- ⲛⲁⲓⲥⲉⲩⲱⲙⲟⲩ means "the King" but in the hymn of ⲛⲁⲓⲥⲉⲩⲱⲙⲟⲩ , we translate it as "O King" or "ⲕⲗⲙ ⲁⲓ" - why is this so?
 - This is called the vocative. The vocative refers to when the name of a person or thing is addressed or invoked. We will learn the vocative in a future unit, but one of the ways to express it is with the definite article.
 - In Greek, the vocative is expressed with ⲭ and this is sometimes borrowed in the Coptic
 - You can read more about the Vocative in Nabil Mattar Ch 11, Sameh Younan Ch 2.1.i

Application

Application 1: Singular Articles

This is an excerpt from the priest's prayer during the Offertory. All of the definite and indefinite articles are underlined below, and an explanation for each follows.

ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ : ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ : ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ . ܐܡܝܢ 2 ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ ܐܡܝܢ	Glory and honor, honor and glory, to the All-Holy Trinity, the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Peace and edification to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church of God. Amen.
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1. א - the article א is the singular indefinite article. א means "glory"
2. א - the article א is the singular indefinite article. א means "honor"
3. א - the article א is one of the singular feminine definite articles. א translates to "the All-Holy." With the prefix א -, the word means "of the All-Holy"
4. א - The word א means Trinity and is **not** using definite article א .
5. א - The article א - is one of the the singular masculine definite articles. Since א - is a weak article, this word is referring to the Father who is already well known to the reader - God, the Father. A strong article would have translated to "the father." א is used instead of א because the noun starts with א , a Bilminor letter.
6. א א - The article א -is one of the the singular masculine definite articles. Since א - is a weak article, this word is referring to the Son who is already well known to the reader - God, the Son. A strong article would have translated to "the son." א is used instead of א

because the noun starts with ω , which is not a Bilminor letter.

7. **אֶלֶּה** - The article **אֶלֶּה** is a singular masculine definite article. So the word **רוּחַ קֹדֶשׁ** means "the spirit." The full text read **רוּחַ קֹדֶשׁ קַדְשׁ** - "the spirit that is holy" - The Holy Spirit.
8. **אֶלֶּה שָׁלוֹם** - The article **אֶלֶּה** is the singular indefinite article. So **אֶלֶּה שָׁלוֹם** means "peace."
9. **אֶלֶּה** - The article **אֶלֶּה** is the singular indefinite article. **אֶלֶּה** is a verb meaning "to edify." It is used here as a noun, so **אֶלֶּה** means "edification."
10. **אֶלֶּה הַזֶּה** - The article **אֶלֶּה** is the singular feminine definite article. So **אֶלֶּה הַזֶּה** means "the one."
11. **אֶלֶּה הַזֶּה** - The article **אֶלֶּה** - is one of the the singular masculine definite articles. Since **אֶלֶּה** - is a weak article, this word is referring to the god who is already well known to the reader - God. A strong article would have translated to "the god." **אֶלֶּה** is used instead of **הַזֶּה** because the noun starts with **א** , a Bilminor letter.

Application 2: Single Definite Articles

This is an excerpt from the Anaphora of St. Gregory the Theologian in the Divine Liturgy.

□ □□ □↑□ □□□□□□ : □□ □□ `ω□□ x□ `□□ □: □□ □□□□ `□□ □: □□ □□ ω□□ □: □□ □□□□□ : □□ ω□`□□ 2: □□ □□□□□ : □□ □□ `ω↑ω□`□□ □: □□ □□ `ωg□□ g□□ □: □□ □□□□ 2: □□ □□ □ □□□□ `□□ `□ □□ □: □□ □□ □□□ ↑□□ □□□ □□□□ .	God the Lover of Mankind, the ineffable, the invisible, the infinite, the without beginning, the eternal, the timeless, the immeasurable, the incomprehensible, the unchangeable, the Creator of all, the Savior of everyone.
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1. □□□ † - God
2. □□□□□□□ - The Lover of Man
3. □□□ ׀ ♣ □ ♣ □ - The ineffable: the one that cannot be described
4. ׀ □□□□□□ - The invisible: the not seen
5. □□□ ׀ ♣ □ ♣ - The infinite: the cannot be counted
6. □□□□□□□ - The without beginning
7. □□ ♣ □ ׀ □□ 2 - The everlasting/eternal: the forever
8. □□□□□□□ - The timeless: the without time

9. - The immeasurable: the cannot be measured
10. - The incomprehensible: the cannot be examined
11. - The unchangeable: the without change
12. - The Creator: the one who creates
13. - The all
14. - The Savior: the one who saves

Application 3: Plural Definite Articles

These are excerpts from the Third Cantic as it is chanted during the Midnight Praise. All of the plural definite articles are underlined below, and an explanation for each follows.

<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> : <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> ...	Bless the Lord O you fountains, praise Him...
<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> : <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> ...	Bless the Lord O you seas and rivers, praise Him...
<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> : <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> ...	Bless the Lord O you whales and all that moves in the waters, praise Him...
<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> : <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> ...	Bless the Lord all you birds of the sky, praise Him...
<u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> : <u> </u> <u> </u> <u> </u> ...	Bless the Lord all you wild beasts and cattle, praise Him...

1. - The article is the plural definite article. So means "the fountains" or "the springs."
2. - The article is the plural definite article. So means "the seas." is an irregular plural for the singular meaning "sea."
3. - The article is the plural definite article. So means "the rivers." is an irregular plural for the singular meaning "river."
4. - The article is the plural definite article. So means "the whales."
5. - The here is not an article but rather the word is , an adjective meaning "every."
6. - The article is the plural definite article. So means "the waters."

7. אֵלֶּיךָ הַבָּרָא † - The article אֵלֶּיךָ is the plural definite article. So אֵלֶּיךָ הַבָּרָא † means "the birds." הַבָּרָא † is an irregular plural for the singular הַבָּרָא meaning "bird."
8. הַחַיָּוָה הַרְבִּיעִי - The article הַרְבִּיעִי is the plural definite article. So הַחַיָּוָה הַרְבִּיעִי means "the wild animals."
9. הַבְּהֵמָה הַרְבִּיעִי ׀ - The article הַרְבִּיעִי is the plural definite article. So הַבְּהֵמָה הַרְבִּיעִי ׀ means "the beasts" or "the animals."

Exercises

Exercise 1: Translate to Coptic

Translate the following into Coptic:

1. The man and the woman
2. The brother and the sister
3. The boy and the girl
4. The sky and the earth
5. The father and the mother
6. The father and the son
7. The Father and the Son
8. The brothers and the sisters
9. The fathers and the mothers
10. The women and the men
11. The boys and the girls
12. The king and the queen

Exercise 2: Translate to English

Translate the following phrases into English:

1. □□□□ □□ †□ 2□□
2. □□□□□ □□ □□□□
3. `□□ □□ `□□ 2□
4. □□ `□ 2□□ □□ □□ `□ x□□ 2
5. †□□□□ □□ †□□□□□
6. †ω□□□
7. □□□□ □□ □□ `□□ q
8. □□□□ □□ □□ `□□□
9. □□□□ □□ □□□ ωx
10. □□□□ □□ †□□□
11. □□ s□□□□ □□ □□□□□□
12. `□□□ `□ 6□□ `□□□ †□□□□□□□□□□

Resources

- Moawad Daoud Lesson 1

- ACTS 2990 Lesson 2A
 - Sameh Younan Chapter 2 (2.1.i, 2.1.ii)
 - Nabil Mattar Chapter 2, Chapter 4
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