INFLECTED ARTICLE IN PROTO-ARABIC AND SOME OTHER WEST SEMITIC LANGUAGES*

Andrzej ZABORSKI
M. Zebrzydowskiego 1, 34-130 Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Poland

The Arabic, Canaanite and Modern South Arabian definite article has a common origin and goes back to an original demonstrative pronoun which was a compound inflected for gender, number and probably also for case. It can be reconstructed as *$han(V)$- for masc. sing., *$hat(V)$- for fem. sing. and *$hal(V)$- for plural. Assimilations of -n- and -t- to the following consonant (including -n-l- > -ll- and -t-l- > ll) neutralized the opposition of gender and number and led to a reinterpretation of either $hal/'al$- or $han/'an$->'am- synchronically as basic variant. In Aramaic the suffixed definite article was due not to simple suffixation of hā but to a resegmentation of the postposed compound demonstrative $hā$-$zē$-$[n(ā)]$ and suffixation of enclitic $hā$> -$ā$ which has been generalized.

The problem of the definite article in the West Semitic languages has been discussed by many scholars, so that there is a rather abundant literature on the subject and opinions differ widely. Older studies were briefly reviewed by Barth (1907), while in the most recent contribution D. Testen (1998) discusses most of the newer studies (e.g. Wensinck 1931, Ullendorf 1965, Lambdin 1971, Rundgren 1989) and he develops a hypothesis going back at least to Stade (1879, § 132a; cf. Croatto 1971) saying that the Arabic, Canaanite and Modern South Arabian[1] definite article goes back to an "assertative" particle *l (sic!) which is continued both by la- i.e. $lām$ at-$ta'kīd$ and by the definite article reconstructed as (a)l/(a)C1- (1998, 163-164).

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* This paper is part of a lecture presented at the meeting of the Oriental Committee of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Cracow, on May 13th 1999.

[1] In Mehri there is $h(ə)$-/$ḥ(ə)$/'a-, in Ḥarsūsi there is $ḥe$- (before initial '-, w- and y- like in Mehri but also before b-, d-, n-, r-) and 'a- (Johnstone 1977, 1, 54), while Jibbāli has 'a/e/$o(C_l)$- (it is not clear whether an "obsolete" i.e. archaic variant with $ḥ$- can be identified there, see Johnstone 1981, 101) which occur before both voiced and unvoiced consonants, cf. Johnstone 1970 and 1981, xxix-xxx.

Testen 1998, 179-190 has reconstructed Proto-Modern South Arabian *(ḥ)aC_1-, but I think that ḥ- was only a later variant due to *h > ḥ before '- and probably other gutturals and to '- > h/ḥ-, cf. personal pronouns $hēt$ "you" (sing.) in Mehri and Ḥarsūsi, Eastern and Central Jibbali het "you" masc., hit fem., Baṭhari $hεt$ masc., het fem., Hōbyōt $hεt$ masc., $haıt$ fem., Socotri '$ə$

Although a remote etymological relation between the definite article and *lām at-ta'kīd* cannot be excluded, nevertheless the explanation of the origin of the West Semitic prefixed definite article as an original demonstrative is the only reasonable solution since usually definite articles go back to demonstratives, for example Greek, Romance (preposed with the exception of Rumanian where it is suffixed but also preposed, cf. *lup-ul* < Latin *lupum illum* "the wolf" but *în al patrulea ceas* "at four o'clock", Ştefan cel Mare "Stephen the Great", cf. English "Charles the Great"), Germanic (usually preposed although suffixed or both

masc., *'ī* fem., but Ḥarsūsi *'etī*, Mehri *'ətáy*, Central Jibbali *'əti* "you two", Ḥarsūsi *'ətōm*, Central Jibbali *tum*, Mehri *'ətēn* "you" masc. plur., Ḥarsūsi *'ətēn*, Socotri *tin* "you" fem. plur., cf. Zaborski 1994, 257 who has reconstructed * *'ənta* (masc. sing.), * *'inti* (fem. sing.) and for plural * *'əntum* (not * *'ətēn* which is a misprint for the second masc. plur.!) and * *əntēn* respectively. Cf. Syrian Arabic and Neoaramaic pronouns with *h-* mentioned below which may indicate an early *h/'-* alternation or rather an addition of *h(a)-*! Cf. Ḥarsūsi *haṣbá'*, Baṭhari *ḥaṣbá'*, Hobyōt *eṣ̌əbá'*, Jibbali *'iṣbá'*, Socotri *'əṣba'*, Mehri *ṣ̌əbá'* "finger" (Johnstone 1977, 49; 1987, 397); Ḥarsūsi *ḥōna, hōneh*, Jibbali *hun*, Mehri *ḥō/hō* "where" (Johnstone 1987, 10) going back to '-y-n. Therefore I do not think that all forms like Ḥarsūsi *ḥayd* "hand" (cf. Johnstone 1987, 460; there is *ə'əd* in Socotri), *ḥaydēn* "ear" '(cf. Johnstone 1987, 3) with initial *ḥ-* (*h-* e.g. in Socotri) must always be interpreted as examples of a lexicalized i.e. "incorporated" article (Johnstone 1987, 1, 149-150, 163-164, 1977, 54-55), although in a number of cases this did take place (Matthews 1969 and Pennacchietti 1970; cf. also Praetorius 1908), e.g. in *ḥe-brē' ber* "son", *ḥe-nōf-/nōf-* "self" (Johnstone 1977, 175, 94; obviously "self" goes back to n-f-š), *ḥām* (Jibbali *'em*, Mehri *ḥam/ham* with rare indef. form *'ēm*) "mother". One of the reasons for the "incorporation" of the article was the fact that the article may be prefixed to nouns already defined by a suffixed pronoun, e.g. *nōf-eh/ḥe-nōf-eh* "by himself", Mehri *a-rībē-ki* "our (dual!) companion", *ḥərbāt-ya* "my companions" but *rībáy* "companion, fellow tribesman" (Johnstone 1987, 313). It is remarkable that quite frequently Southern Mehri has *h-* where northern Mehri has *ḥ-*, e.g. Southern *haydēn* versus Northern *ḥaydēn* "ear".

Initial labials are lost in definite forms in Jibbali (Johnstone 1980, 64),, e.g. *ēden* "the body": beden indef., *ōntə* "the daughters": *bontə* indef., *īn* "the children": *min* indef., but this is due to the loss of /b/ and /m/ in intervocalic position (cf. Johnstone 1981, xiv) i.e. after the vowel of the prefixed definite article, cf. *e-(k)kēr* (k-b-r) "the sheikh", *e-ġiél* (ġ-b-l) "the mountain", *e-gūl* (g-m-l) "the camel". Sometimes the labial /b/ and /m/ have left a trace as nasalization of the vowel e.g. in "the camel" mentioned above, *īndiq* "the rifle" < *'e-məndiq : məndiq* indef., *ōl* < **o-mol* "the domestic animals": *mol* indef., *īsnéd* < **e-misned* "the donkey": *məsnéd* indef., *āḥéf* < **a-məhef* "the place when one has spent the night": *məḥéf* indef., while elsewhere nasalized vowel changed to long vowel, see also Johnstone 1980, 68 (cf. 1977, xiv) for article before radical w- and y- where the article vowel is also long.

It is strange that Simeon-Senelle 1997, 412 suggests that the definite article "is always prefixed to the definite item, noun or adjective whose first consonant is voiced or ejective/glottalized" while it also occurs before unvoiced consonants in Jibbali where, moreover, gemination is retained at least before *fV-, šV-, sV-, ṣ́V-, tV, yV-* (Johnstone 1980, 66-67), cf. Jibbali *es-sélúm* "the peace", *eš-śoṭ* "the fire", *et-te'* "the meat", *eš-šum* "the heat", *ek-kob* "the dog", *ef-fa'm* "the leg", *aḥ-ḥáf* "the foot", *oḥ-ḥobz* "the bread". Elsewhere gemination has not been retained. It is interesting that there is an "elision" of the article before /s/, /š/, /ṣ/, /d̥/, /m/, /b/ in some Arabic dialects of Arabia and of Tunisia, cf. Rhodokanakis 1911, 111 for Ḍofār where it must be areal i.e. due to contact with Modern South Arabian where the definite article is disappearing. The definite article has disapeared under Turkic influence in the Arabic of Uzbekistan and is limited in use in some Mesopotamian *qəltu* dialects (Jastrow 1978, 110).

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preposed and suffixed in Swedish, for example Danish *den gamle mand*: Swedish *den gamle mann-en* "the old man"; Danish *det gode barn* : Swedish *det goda barn-et* "the good child"; Swedish *hus-et* "the house", *hus-en* "the houses") on which cf. Holder 1954 etc., not to mention other Hamitosemitic languages like Berber, Cushitic and Egyptian. The argument is not only typological – to deny the morphological and etymological identity of the definite article (whatever its variants may be!) with demonstrative morphemes would be quite irrational and all the hypotheses attempting to explain the definite article in Canaanite and in Arabic as going back rather to phonological phenomena (Ullendorf 1965, partially Wensinck 1931, Lambdin 1971 and Rundgren 1989) are artificial and based on a vicious circle. Ascribing gemination connected with the definite article to a "close connection with the following noun" is as faulty as the same explanation of gemination after *waw consecutivum* in Hebrew *wayyomer* which actually goes back to *wa-l-yomer < *wa-la-yomer (cf. Zaborski 1998, 283; Testen 1998).

Different forms of the definite article in Canaanite languages (perhaps including at least some varieties of Ugaritic – cf. the definite article *hn* hypothetically postulated by Aistleitner 1960, Liverani 1964, 182, Loprieno 1980, cf. Loewenstamm 1980, 65, note 52; pace Testen 1998, 166), in Arabic dialects including Classical Arabic and in Modern South Arabian languages go back to just one original form while the definite article of Tigre is another problem. This common origin is proved not only by the well known fact that from a phonetic and phonological point of view not only the changes ' > h and h > ', n > l and l > n are possible and the corresponding alternations, assimilations and dissimilations are attested historically (cf. Arabic *'inna* and Hebrew *hinnē*, Akkadian *annū* etc.; Christian 1953, 48; Fleisch 1990, II 66 and more recently Greenstein 1973), although the alleged consonant changes were not obligatory in every position and, first of all, in every period so that different relative chronologies must be taken into consideration. For example some Modern South Arabian initial *ḥ*- and *h*- might be later developments rather than archaisms, while Proto-Modern South Arabian definite article can be reconstructed as **ha/'a*- that is with laryngeal h/' and gemination with other variants being possible.

Disappearance of gemination of gutturals and /r/ in Canaanite as well as of voiced, glottalized/emphatic and some other consonants in some Modern South Arabian languages (although /ḥ/ is geminated in Jibbali) must be a later phenomenon just like lengthening of -*ā*- before an originally geminated guttural. The main thing is that gemination of the first consonant and the elision of initial *ha-/'a*- after some prepositions (in Classical Arabic also after every immediately preceding vowel) do not allow other explanation than a common origin of the definite article at least in the three major branches. Areal factors due to contact might have played only a secondary role.

Many scholars have tried to prove that the original form of the definite article in Canaanite was *ha*- (but there is *'a*- in Punic!) alone, and tried to explain the gemination of the first consonant following the article (gemination of e.g. /'/ and /ʿ/ must have always been phonetically different from gemination of

other consonants) as a kind of phonetic process (cf. Barth 1907 and 1913) but, naturally enough, such explanations disregarding comparative evidence have been artificial and representing typical vicious circles.

It is true that simple *h(a)-* occurs for example in the third person of the independent pronouns (*h-u-w-a, h-i-ya*) which are still used as demonstratives in Ugaritic, for example *mlk hwt* and in Sabaic where *h'* and *hw', hy'*, dual *hmy*, plural *hmw* are attested for remote deixis. It is also true that *ha-* occurs in compound demonstratives, for example in Akkadian *anniu*, originally either **'anniu* or **hanniu* (cf. Bravmann 1977, 415-416, Loewenstamm 1980, 67); *hā-* appears in Arabic *hā-ḏā, hā-'ulā'i*, Ḥarsūsi *ha-ḏēn* (Johnstone 1977, 49), Hebrew *hazē*, Syriac *hān(ā)* etc. and also with independent pronouns: Arabic *hā-'ānā, hā-'anta, hā-huwa* etc. (cf. Fischer 1959, 164-171 for personal pronouns with *'a-*), cf. Hebrew *ha-hū*, a number of Syrian Arabic dialects have *hint* masc., *hinti/e* fem., *hinto/u* masc. plur., *hintni* fem. plur. (Behnsted 1997, 251 and 252, 256), even 1st sing. *hana* "I" in NW Syria (Behnsted 1997, 250; cf. Syriac!), cf. Neo-West Aramaic *hāč-, hāš-* etc. and Ṭūroyo *hāt(e)*, and Modern South Arabian *hæt* (see note 1). Beja demonstratives are also often prefixed to personal pronouns, e.g. *ûn-ane* "I", *un-barûk* "you (masc.)" etc. Prefixed *hā-* can occur before a noun with a possessive suffix (Fischer 1959, 41). In Moroccan Arabic *ha-* at the beginning of a sentence (Fischer 1959, 49) is to be identified rather with "here!" which is certainly etymologically related but in this function not really a demonstrative. On the other hand *hā* masc., *hā-ī* fem. and *hā-ū* plur. of some Syro-Mesopotamian dialects of Arabic occur together with morphemes of gender and number (Fischer 1959, 52-56). The main thing is, however, that in all the forms quoted above *ha-/hā-* is accompanied by additional morphemes, which are not only deictics but also morphemes indicating gender and number. A hypothesis about original independent or free *ha/hā-* parallel to free *ḏā* is not quite improbable especially since nominals in old Semitic languages are normally accompanied by gender and number morphemes so that theoretically in some proto-dialects at least, simple *ha-* could be used as a preposed then prefixed, perhaps also as a postposed and then suffixed demonstrative. But such a hypothetical reconstruction may go back only to a much earlier prehistorical period that we can hardly reconstruct and only to some dialects of Proto-Semitic and even proto-Hamitosemitic since *ha-* has a Hamitosemitic origin: it occurs for example in Tuareg and in Kabyle Berber (Cohen, 1970-, 351) where it is also used together with demonstratives and suffixed pronouns. Apart from the substantive use of *hā* in some Syrian dialects (cf. Soukhne *əl-hā w əl-hā* "this and that" in Behnstedt 1994, 116, cf. Behnstedt 1997, 275) we do not have examples in which *ha-* occurs really free standing (it is not really free even in Arabic *hā-'inna-* (cf. Barth 1913, 72; Fischer 1972, 130 on *hā-'inna-ḏā, hā-'innā-ḏī* without personal pronoun) not to mention texts in which *hā-/ha-* could occur sometimes as a demonstrative and sometimes as an article in a way similar to the demonstratives used already also as a definite article in Homeric Greek and in Old English; cf. the stages of the development of the Egyptian definite article from demonstrative (Vergote 1983, III, 187-188).

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As a rule historical demonstrative pronouns in Semitic languages are compounds with the notable exception of the Arabic $\underline{d}\bar{a}$, $\underline{d}\bar{\imath}/t\bar{\imath}$, Hebrew $z\bar{e}$, Ethiopic $z\partial$ etc. series (cf. Fleisch 1990, II, 33). Therefore the old hypothesis that the historical definite article is also a compound containing at least two morphemes that is having the form *haC- is rather safe and different scholars have rightly proposed to reconstruct either *han- (Halévy quoted by Ungnad 1907, 211; cf. Ungnad 1908 and G. Beer quoting Nöldeke in Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft 62, 1908, 407) following the form attested in Old Arabic (Lihyanite with -n- at least before laryngeals and /q/, also Hasaitic and Safaitic; so far only ha- could be identified in Thamudic; also in an inscription of Tiglathpilesar III (744-727) in a loan from Arabic[2]) or *hal- following Classical Arabic ('al-, '$aC1$-, -l-, -C_1-; cf. Hebrew $h\bar{a}l$'$\bar{a}$ "out there"!) and some other dialects (hal-/haC_1- in Libya, Tunisia, Palestine Syria, Libanon and Mesopotamia) although neglecting other variants found in Arabic dialects, that is first of all Yemenite 'an-, 'in-, 'am-, 'im-, eb-, not to mention the dialects in the West Yemenite mountains which have only the 'VC_1- variant, the assimilation being exceptionless, cf. Behnstedt 1985, 16, 64; 1987, 85-86, 166, 215; Landberg 1909, II 281-290, Rhodokanakis 1911, 110-111 who says that in Ḏofâr assimilation is facultative in for example eb-$bint$, eb-$bil\bar{a}d$, ef-$fer\bar{a}s$, em-$m\hat{a}/el$-$m\hat{e}$. As has been mentioned, the hal- variant survives in a number of Arabic dialects and is an original compound (as suggested e.g. by Socin, Stumme, de Landberg and Fleisch – cf. Fleisch 1990, II 31, n. 2 on hal- which occurs already in very early Classical Arabic texts!) but not, against Nöldeke, a contraction of $h\bar{a}\underline{d}\bar{a}$ l- (cf. Fischer 1959, 47). Let us repeat: the strange behaviour of the first consonants following the definite article must be ascribed to an original compound demonstrative *haC or even *$haCV$, cf. among others Akkadian $anniu$ < *han-niu.

Since the prefixed definite article goes back to an original demonstrative and since historically attested demonstratives indicate gender, number and even (although less rigorously) case, the question is why the historical definite article does not indicate these categories at all? We know, for example, from the history of English that the loss of gender, number and case distinction in the definite article is a later, secondary development which took place in Middle English so that in the 14th century the article became fully indeclinable.

The clue is found in the gemination of the consonant following the definite article. While the first part of the compound definite article that is ha/'a- (Jibbāli and Soqotri variants 'e- and 'o- are later developments going back to 'eC_1- and 'oC_1-, cf. Arabic 'e-l-, 'i-l-, '∂l-, l-, li- etc.) was elided after an immediately preceding vowel, the second part that is at least historical -n- or -l- assimilated to consonants, either to apical consonants as in Classical Arabic or to all consonants as in Biblical Hebrew and other Canaanite languages as well as in modern Western Yemenite Arabic dialects and in Modern South Arabian. It

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[2] Arabic an-$naq\bar{a}tu$ "she camels" is interpreted by Livingstone 1997, 251 as *$hann\bar{a}q\bar{a}t(u)$. The reconstruction *han- is possible although not compulsory – it could be * 'an-. On another early occurrence of the prefixed definite article in Semitic cf. Pennacchietti 1968, 72.

should be emphasized that modern Arabic dialects must be taken into consideration in any historical-comparative study in the same way as other Semitic languages are used. In many dialects of Arabic which have *-l-* variant the number of consonants to which *-l-* of the definite article allegedly assimilates is bigger than in the dialect which is called Classical Arabic, for example, there is also assimilation to /g/ (either going back to {ǧ} or /q/), {ǧ}, {ž} and /k/. The exceptionless assimilation cannot be explained as due to contact with Modern South Arabian languages because, as far as we can judge, such contact has always been limited not only because of geographical distance but, first of all, we should expect rather a dominating influence of these Arabic dialects which have *'al-* variant, since they have always been in contact with dialects having only *'aC$_1$-*. A typological parallel may be mentioned here: the Beja definite article which goes back to a demonstrative pronoun with *-n-* deictic and prefixed gender/number morphemes has the following most frequent variants: *ū-* masc., *t-ū-* fem., *ā-* (*yi-* before *h-*) masc. pl., *t-ā* fem. pl. but the *-n-* of the original demonstrative has been preserved if the noun begins with *d-, ḍ-* (retroflex!), *g-* and it is usually *-m-* before *b-*, e.g. * án-da* "the men", *un-gerab* "the evening", *tum-bat* "a sisal like plant".

Isn't it strange that the *-l-* of a minority of Arabic dialects as well as **-l-* or **-n-* of all Canaanite languages and of Modern South Arabian allegedly assimilated to all the following consonants? Actually in Arabic *-l-* does not assimilate to following "sun", that is apical consonants in many roots in which the first and the second root consonant meet in imperfect yaC1C2vC3u: *laṭiġa/ladaġa, laṭama, ladaġa/laḏaʿa/lasaʿa, ladama, laduna, laḏiba/laziba, laziǧa/laziqa/laṣiqa, lazima, lasana/lasina, laṭaḫa, laṭasa/laṭaša/laṭaʿa* (cf. *laṭṭa*) - *laṭama, laṭafa/laṭufa, laẓiya*. Also compare the forms of the VIII class: *'ilta'ama, 'iltabasa, 'iltabaka, 'iltaṭama, 'iltaǧǧa, 'iltaġaʿa, 'iltaḫada, 'iltaṣaqa, 'iltaṭama* etc. etc. There is no assimilation of *-l-* when it is the second root consonant, as in *balṣ, balṭa^{tun}, tuld, ǧald, ǧild, ǧalsa^{tun}, ǧalṭ, ḥils, ḫuld, ḫulsa^{tun}, ḥilṣ, ḥalṭ, ḥilṭ, ḏulḏul, zulṭ, salt, suls, salsal, sulṭa^{tun}, šalta^{tun}, ṣald, ṭils, ġalṭa^{tun}, falta, falǧ, falṭaḫa, qald, qals, kaltam, kals, milṭ, hals, wald, wals*, although some -l-C$_3$ roots may be due to a dissimilation of an original geminated root while some geminated roots may go back to **C$_1$alC$_3$* with assimilation of *-l-* to C$_3$. There are even examples of lack of assimilation like *'alsun^{un}/'alsina^{tun}* "languages" (singular: *lisān*), *'alsan* "eloquent", *'alṭaǧ/'alṭaġ* "having a speech defect, lisping" (this is onomatopeic!), *'alṭāf* plural of *luṭf* "kindness", *'alzaǧ/'alzaq/'alṣaq* "more sticky", *'alzam* "more necessary", *'alṣāṣ* "thieves". All of this indicates that different relative chronologies as well as some morphological conditioning (sandhi!) must be assumed.

In Akkadian assimilation of /l/ to the following consonant is also quite rare although in Neoassyrian *lt > ss* while in Middle Assyrian *št > lt*, for example allegedly *massītu < maltītu < maštītum* "drinking bowl" and there was also l/n alternation (von Soden 1995, 43-44).

On the other hand assimilation of *t-* is quite frequent not only in the VIII class (cf. Hebrew hitpaʿel) but also elsewhere (cf. Fleisch 1990 I, 80 tṭ > ṭṭ, td >

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dd, td > dd, tǧ > ǧǧ, tš > šš) and, naturally enough, /t/ is incompatible with a considerable number of other consonants (cf. Kuryłowicz 1972, 18-23) and first of all with apical ones! This explains why the hypothetical *hat- variant of feminine has not survived. Although there are a considerable number of verbal roots with n- as the first consonant and an apical consonant as C_2 in Arabic, which explain the existence of 'Vn- variant in Arabic dialects, nevertheless Arabic n-assimilates in the following combinations: nb > mb, nr > rr, ny > yy, nw > ww, nl > ll (Fleisch 1990, I 85 and 95; Southern, Vaughn 1997), and in Hebrew and Akkadian prefixed n- assimilates to C_1 quite regularly in the N class of derived verbs and elsewhere (von Soden 1995, 42), which explains the disappearance of the *han- variant in Hebrew and other Canaanite languages as well as in a part of Arabic including some Old Arabic dialects. Obviously different relative chronologies must be taken into consideration.

My hypothesis is that actually -l- of the definite article originally did not assimilate to most of the "sun" that is apical consonants. The gemination of the first radical consonant after the definite article is due first of all to assimilation of o t h e r consonants which do assimilate or are incompatible with many other consonants. The resulting -CC- groups were phonetically and morphologically ambiguous since they could go back either to $-nC_1$-, $-tC_1$- or to $-lC_1$- and even to $-mC_1$-. In Canaanite, Modern South Arabian and some Yemenite Arabic dialects, assimilation has become the rule so that hypothetical cases of preservation of *-n-, *-t-, *-l- have been eliminated. So many assimilations of the second consonant of the definite article in West Semitic must be due not only to the alternation n/l and n/m but also to the occurrence of different second consonants of the definite article being actually gender and number morphemes.

The main hypothesis of the present paper is that the definite article was probably *han- for masculine singular (for n as morpheme of the masculine singular cf. Greenberg 1960, 317; cf. also Rundgren 1955), *hat- (less probably *had-) for feminine singular (cf. A. Fischer 1927) and *hal- for plural (cf. Biblical Aramaic 'ēl "these"). Since -t-, -n- and -l- assimilated to some following consonants, there was also a *haC₁- variant and there were postvocalic variants with elided ha/'a-. These reconstructed forms have parallels in the Syriac demonstratives hān(ā) masc., hād(ē) fem., hāllēn plur. which represent the closest system. As indicated, for example, by Loewenstamm 1980, 67, there is no necessity to analyse Syriac hānā as going back to *hādenā as did Brockelmann (1916, 102), Bravmann (1977, 414), Beyer (1984, 151) and others. These reconstructions have another partial cognate in Epigraphic South Arabian ḏn for masc., ḏt fem., while plural forms are analogous to singular having gender morphemes: 'ln masc. plur., 'l-t fem. plur.

My hypothesis can be reformulated so that the -l- of the definite article was originally the least prone to assimilation, it did not assimilate to all the "sun" that is apical consonants and it was only a morpheme of the plural. In Arabic the variant 'al- survived not only because -l- did not assimilate to some following consonants (i.e. "moon" consonants) but also because masculine *han-l > hal-l- and feminine *hat-l > hal-l- when the first consonant following the article

was *l-* and also because Arabic *'al-l-* could go back either to * *'an-l-* or to * *'at-l-* which made the plural function of *-l-* of the definite article blurred. In some cases the *-l-* of the Arabic article may be due rather to a dissimilation of a geminate or a dissimilation of masculine *-n-* before dental consonants. In other words the original plural function of *-l-* (cf. *-l-* in plural forms of demonstrative pronouns) has been obliterated since assimilations of *-n-, -t-, -l-* and consequent gemination (later also some possible dissimilations of geminates) neutralized the original gender a n d number contrasts so the *-l-* has been reinterpreted as a simple morph belonging to the definite article but without its specific plural function. In Old Arabic (at least in some dialects) and a number of later Arabic dialects *'an-* has been generalized although even there both variants, that is * *han-* and * *hal-* (later * *hal-* > *haC1-*), could originally coexist. Groups like *-n-n-* were also ambiguous and there could be a later, secondary alternation l/n too. Perhaps *'an-* has also left a trace in the dialects where /g/ and /k/ are treated as "sun" consonants, since, for example, Cairo Arabic *'ik-kitāb* may go either to * *'in-kitāb* or to *il-kitāb*. The loss of gender distinction through reinterpretation of -CC- and of surviving *-l-* or *-n-* (later *-n-* > *-m-*, still later resulting in *-b-*) was greatly facilitated by the fact that gender and number had already been indicated by gender and number endings or/and ablaut of the nominals so that gender and number distinction in the prefixed definite article was redundant although redundancy survives in the historical period, for example in Arabic *hādihi l-malika^(tun)*, compare Beja *tűn-te-tak-at* "this woman" where the feminine morpheme *t* occurs three times, that is in the demonstrative *tūn*, definite article *te-* (< * *ten!*) and the feminine suffix *-at*. It must be also taken into consideration that plural nouns are relatively rare, for example in Arabic where first of all internal plurals, that is original collectives are used.

This *-l-* of the original plural variant goes back to Proto-Hamitosemitic since we find it in Beja remote demonstratives *b-a-l-í-n* masc., *b-a-l-í-t* fem. "those" where *b-* occurring also in *bēn* masc., *bēt* fem. "that" has a cognate in Egyptian *-f* occurring in *p-f* masc., *t-f* fem. "that", though compare also *-p-* in plural forms, as in Old Egyptian *y-p-n* masc., *y-p-t-n* fem. "those". This *-l-* of the definite article * *hal/'al-* was different from *-l-* occurring in remote demonstratives, such as Arabic *dā-li-ka*. The latter is also found in *-ll-*, which occurs both in singular and in plural in Tigre and Akkadian demonstratives (cf. Barth 1913, 124 who thought about an extension of Proto-Semitic plural *-l-* to the singular) as well as in Biblical Hebrew *hallāzē* and in Mishnaic Hebrew *hallā*. This *-ll-* goes back to both *-nl-* > *-ll-* and *-tl-* > *-ll-* in the singular, so that in Akkadian there is *ullû* < * *h/'ul-l-ū* < ** *h/'an-l-ū* "that" masc., *ullītu* < * *h/'ul-lī-tu* < ** *h/'at-li-tu* "that" fem.; Hebrew *hallāzē* < * *han-lā-zē/hat-lā-zē* continues *-ll-* in the plural.

In Arabic script the *-l-* of the definite article is always written, but this must be due to the fact that Arabic script was introduced after *-t-* and *-n-* had been regularly assimilated (cf. Diem 1979-1983, part 4, 378, note 45) in the dialects which served as sources for the literary norm.

Why was *'am-* (later > *b*) generalized very early in Ṭayyi' Arabic as well as in some other dialects (see above)? This *-m-* can hardly be identical with the *-m-*

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which occurs in the plural, as in the Sabaic third person masc. plural *hmw* as well as in dual *hmy*. This *'am-* is most probably due to the *'an-* which resulted in *'am-* before labials (through assimilation) and some other consonants through dissimilation and a secondary reinterpretation of other cases of initial gemination such as -m-C₁-. It is very interesting that we have -*m*- in Assyrian *ammium* masc., *ammīłu(m)* fem., *ammiūtum* masc. plur. and *ammiātum* fem. plur. for "near" deixis, while *ullūm, ullīłu(m)* etc. are typical of Babylonian (von Soden 1995, 58).

What about case in the original definite article **han-* masc. sing., **hat-* fem. sing., **hal-* plur. without gender distinction? I think it is possible to go so far and hypothetically admit that there was case distinction although it might be too risky to reconstruct a regular three case inflection. Apart from Arabic *ḏū*, historically attested demonstratives usually have two cases although Old Babylonian has nominative *annûm*, genitive *annîm*, accusative *anniam* "this" (masc.). Therefore we may hypothetically reconstruct forms of the original demonstrative as ***hanV-, **hatV-*, and less probable ***halV-* where -V- stands for original vocalic case morphemes which were lost, perhaps due to syncopation. It should be emphasized that the definite article is inflected for case (two cases!) in Beja and Berber where the definite article is a good isogloss combining Beja and Berber (as well as Egyptian!), although this is not decisive since the Beja and Berber definite articles, going back to demonstratives, have different origin, and the morphemes of gender and number are prefixed to the demonstrative -*n*, like in Egyptian *pn, tn* where masculine *p-* goes back probably to **b-* < ***w-*, cf. Beja wun "this" (masc.).

The Aramaic definite article is suffixed and this is due, as admitted by most scholars, to the fact that demonstratives used as attributes were either preposed or postposed in some Semitic languages (e.g. Arabic), in others usually postposed (e.g. Akkadian, Ugaritic e.g. in *spr hnd* "this document", *lym hnd* "from this day"), while in some of them they were preposed, in Tigre being optionally preposed and postposed at the same time, for example *'əlli mədər 'əlli* "this country". The hypothesis proposed by Aartun (1959), who said that Aramaic -*ā* was due to suffixation of the vocative particle **yā'*, is less probable, since there is no reason why vocative forms should be generalized. A Syriac form like **b-yawm hā-zēn* resulted, according to the same sandhi rule that works in Arabic (Beyer 1984, 106 speaks about a simple assimilation, so that in masc. plur. **-ay-hā' > -ayyā*) in *b-yawm-ā zēn* "on this day"; *bayt-ā zenā* "this house" < **bayt ha-zen-ā* etc. The compound demonstratives with *hā-* have been reinterpreted, since there were also forms without *hā-*, that is there were both *hā-zēn* and *zēn* like in Arabic *hāḏā* and *ḏā*. On postposed *hā* in Palmyrene Arabic (Aramaic influence?) and elsewhere compare Fischer 1959, 52, 56 and 95. The final -*ā* also used with demonstratives e.g. in Syriac *hān-ā* (cf. Testen 1998, 146) is rather an innovation, that is an addition of the already existing definite article to all attributes, including demonstratives.

The definite article in Hadramitic is mainly -*hn*, for example *'qbt-hn* "the fortification", *s₁r-hn 'rmw* "the 'rmw valley", while in other Epigraphic South

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Arabian languages it is -*n*, for example *hgr-n* "the city", and this -*n* is normally interpreted as nunation which was originally used for determination. Whether Hadramitic -*hn* is an original demonstrative or something else needs further research although it is possible that here we have an isogloss linking Aramaic with Epigraphic South Arabian.

Definite article **han-* masc. sing., **hat-* fem. sing., **hal-* plur. goes back to Proto-West Semitic although there could be some secondary areal interference. Whether the whole area of the article which included 1. Berber, Beja and Egyptian, 2. West Semitic could owe this article to one source, e.g. Egyptian is a big question (pace Pennacchietti 1968, 73, n. 7 and 150). Some areal factors as well as universal tendency of demonstratives to become definite article cannot be excluded as one of the reasons for the spread of the prefixed definite article in the languages in question.

<div align="right">Kalwaria, April 1999</div>

Postscript: On July 12th 1999, when this paper was already being processed by the Editor, I got from Prof. R. M. Voigt an offprint of his paper "Der Artikel im Semitischen", Journal of Semitic Studies, 43, 1998, 221-258. This most important paper does not change my reconstruction presented in this contribution which appears in its original version.

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