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Articles in Seri

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ARTICLES IN SERI\textsuperscript{1}

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0. Numerous articles of three basic types are used in Seri to modify the noun phrase. The three types are: definite, indefinite, and general. The choice of definite article depends on the perceived position and on the number of the noun which it modifies. The indefinite article also agrees in number with the noun. The role of the noun phrase in the sentence is marked by word order; the article does not function to mark case.

1. The articles are listed below and then discussed in the following sections.

   Definite articles:
   \begin{itemize}
   \item Non-specified position \textit{k?} (sg.), \textit{koi} (pl.)
   \item Seated position \textit{kix} (sg.), \textit{koi} (pl.)
   \item Prone position \textit{kom} (sg.), \textit{koi} (pl.)
   \item Erect position \textit{kop/kap} (sg.), \textit{koi} (pl.)
   \end{itemize}
Moving
toward, close  
?ipmoka (sg.), ?išmokat (pl.)
toward, distant  
timoka (sg.), tamokat (pl.)
away, close  
?ipintika (sg.), ?išintikat (pl.)
away, distant  
?imintika (sg.), ?imintikat (pl.)
tintika (sg.), tantikat (pl.)

Indefinite articles:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
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2. Nouns generally require an article, and the article follows the entire noun phrase. Thus the article may be separated from the head noun by a noun, an adjective, or a relative clause (the main verb of which is always reduced to a nominalized form, although the relative clause may still contain a subordinate clause as in (5) below), or a series of such.

(1) ássa // ?a-χš  ?éekkee k-óoppoo+  šo ?-yóo-??o //
sure abs-pet small nom-[be black]a [1 sub]-past-see

Sure, I saw a small black dog.

(2) šix ?ap-á??iit ?-óo-??iit ki? k-fippee-?a //
thing nom-eat [1 poss]-nom-eat the nom-[be good]-decl

The thing that is eaten that I ate was good, i.e., the food that I ate was good.

(3) tóm me ?i-??-íppoot koi
money [2 ref] [1 poss]-nom-ca-[be exchanged] the
me  n-y-éx++ //
[2 ref] [2 sub]-past-take

You took the money that I paid you.

(4) šix k?wie kálìi ktam lemóoyan ki? tok k? thing person elder man Lemoyan the there [3 ref]

[3x //
[perf={be [seated]}]]

The deceased Old Man Lemoyan was there.

(5) me šó χa? in-t-óokta ktám psaak
[2 ref] how just [2 sub]-inter-[look at] man hunger
in-t-óoxii ma šix šo me k-á-a??iit kix //
[2 sub]-DP-die SCP thing a [2 ref] nom-ca-eat the

Just how do you look at the man who caused you to eat something when you were dying of hunger?, i.e., Just what do you think of
the man who fed you when you were hungry?

(6) ōχ t-pa-kta ma / šiχ ?apé-ššii šáa? kí?
   thus DP-pass-[look at] SCP thing nom-beat sun the
   k-yáai tintikā t-óo-??iti-it yoke //
   nom-[go to] the asser-intr-eat-rep [it is said]

When it was seen like that, the thing that was beaten that was going to the sun ate them, it is said., i.e., Then the one who had been beaten and was going to the sun ate them, it is said.

3. There are several definite articles and the choice of the article to be used seems to depend on the actual or perceived position of the noun, as well as the number of the noun. Some nouns may use only one of the positional articles since the position never changes. Some nouns may use any of the positional articles, depending on the position at the moment. Some nouns may use one or another depending on the meaning of the word in the particular context. In some cases there seems to be some degree of speaker discretion involved in the decision as to the position of an object.

3.1. The definite article for non-specified position k? is used when the position of the noun is not evident physically or from the context of the story. The singular article has three allomorphs, k?, ki? and k which are derived most easily from the underlying form k? by the following rules: \( ? \rightarrow \emptyset / \) [5] and \( \emptyset \rightarrow i / _C \). (The latter is a simplified version of a much broader and very widely used i epenthesis rule.) The plural article is koi.

The following examples illustrate the use of the definite article of non-specified position.

(7) Mařía ki? símmeet ki? k-áai-2a //
    Mary the bread the nom-make-decl

Mary is making bread.

(8) y-a-símmeet Mařía k //
    past-ca-bread Mary the

She made bread—Mary.

(9) xéppē k? iti t-om ma / ōχ ?anso ?ái k? i-m-ak-áttaaχ //
    sea the on DP-lie SCP thus just wind the trans-perf-ca-go

When it was on the water, then just the wind made it go.

(10) šiχkám k ?-éχ+ //
    fish the imp-take

Take the fish!
(11) konkaak i?máa koi ?ant š iki m-itóiix //
people other the place a [(3 poss)=side] perf-[go toward]

The other people went to another place, i.e., The other people went elsewhere.

(12) χwáan k i?-xo-níppaa-tim //
John the [1 sub]-emph-hit-rep

I am hitting John.

(13) kw[kke [itom] ki? míšx in-t-áa //
person [3 poss]-talk the well [2 sub]-inter-know

Do you know the Seri language well?

(14) sařáapi k ?e k-ámxk //
blanket the [1 ref] imp-bring

Bring me the blanket!

(15) ?ant k? iti m-póo-ttaax / šáa? k? iti m-p-i?-x /
land the on [2 sub]-DF-go sun the on [2 sub]-DF-be-cond

ksái kom mi-fít ki? ko n-s-áiı-a?a //
brush the [2 poss]-hair the [3 ref] [2 sub]-fut-do-TM

You should brush your hair in the daytime.

The word for 'yesterday' usually takes the definite article.

(16) moxímmaa ki? χwáan k ?áxš k? i-t-ak-ataax şix
yesterday the John the dog the trans-DF-go thing

k-a-náao ki? mos i-y-ak-áttaax //
om-ca-meow the also trans-past-ca-go

Yesterday, when John took away the dog, he also took the cat.

The definite article can be used when referring to something generically.

(17) šíxkám k-k?w ki? s-om-péx+ ?áa-ya //
fish nom-[be red] the fut-neg-pass-buy be-Q

Won't red snapper be bought?

(18) móosni ki? χo-míí //
turtle the emph-[not exist]

Turtles are scarce!
Now I will work with fish, i.e., I'm going fishing now.

3.2. When the object is viewed as being seated, the definite article kix denoting this position must be used. An allomorph kx often occurs when the following word begins with a vowel. The following examples illustrate the use of this article.

(20) sîmmeet kix k-óatW-i?a //

The bread is sweet.

(21) ñèítìm ñssoox kix ?ant k-áakkoox kix iti k-áa?ka-a? //

Hermosillo is in Mexico.

(22) šáa? kix k-ámxk //

Bring the watch!

(23) tótoWkW kix k?áX+ //

Don't grab the cholla!

(24) ta?qWkW kix ko nt-áa-ss-aat-a? //

We'll go to Tiburon Island.

(25) t-ámmook ma / ?a-no+ ?a-káaíx kix i-t-ámxk / DP-[be night] SCP abs-finger abs-put the trans-DP-bring

At night he brought the ring and showed it to the sun.

3.3. When the object is viewed as being in a lying or extended position, the definite article kom denoting this position must be used. The allomorphs kon and kon occur due to an m assimilation process in the language.

(26) kanóaa kom m-a-šíim //

The boat is pretty.
(27)  ámḅépee kon śix̣kám kí? k-átxo?-a //
    sea the fish the nom-[be many]-decl

    There are many fish in the sea.

(28)  i-náí+ kon t-mátx //
    [3 poss]-skin the inter-[be hot]

    Is his skin hot?

(29)  má̱st kon ko nt-íťtaat yoq //
    stone the [3 ref] dir-[move=pl] [it is said]

    They went to the mountains, it is said.

(30)  sá̱x̣oox kon kẉ t-aškam ma /
    shore the [3 ref] DP-[arrive=pl] SCP

    When they arrived at the shore....

(31)  i-k-á̱spox kon k-ámxk //
    with-nom-write the imp-bring

    Bring the pencil!

3.4. When the object is viewed as being in an erect position,
the definite article ḳop/kap denoting this position must be used.
The two allomorphs occur in free variation. The following examples
illustrate the use of this article.

(32)  kẉ tám kon t-á̱x̣s kon śix̣kám kí? kẉ y-á-a??iit //
    man the dog the fish the [3 ref] past-ca-eat

    The man fed the dog the fish.

(33)  kẉ [kkee kẉ tám kíx ?-á̱akkoo kon ko k-íIx̣x̣-i?i //
    person man the nom-[make house] the in nom-sit-decl

    The man is (seated) in the house.

This article occurs with some nouns which cannot be described as
being erect, as examples (34)-(36) illustrate.

(34)  má̱ sum kon t-á̱px̣ t-á̱p-χ̣ / im-mátx //
    air the outside DP-stand-cond perf-[be hot]

    When the air comes out, it is hot.

(35)  ó̱ ρ̣̣ po-pa-kta ta-χ̣ / šémmez kon ḳop
thus DF-pass-[look at] SCP-cond sunset the
Whenever it is like that, you shouldn't look at the sunset.

(36) psáák ik-ókòkta-?a //
    [2 sub]-[fut=neg=(look at)]-TM

I'm not afraid of being hungry.

3.5. When the object is viewed as moving or when the idea of "along" the object is intended, a definite article denoting movement must be used. There are several of these articles and the choice depends on the location of the object and the relative direction of the movement. These articles, which have been listed in Section 0 above, are repeated below.

- moving toward, close: ?ipmoka (sg.), ?išmokat (pl.)
- moving toward, distant: timoka (sg.), tamokat (pl.)
- moving away, close: ?ipintika (sg.), ?išintikat (pl.)
- moving away, distant: timintika (sg.), timintikat (pl.)
- moving away, distant: tintika (sg.), tantikat (pl.)

The following examples illustrate the use of the definite articles denoting movement.

(37) kanoa kwássoo+ tintika kanoa k-?ée+ tintika
    boat [nom=(be yellow)] the boat nom-[be red] the
    iki kʷ i=-?ín ak
    [(3 poss)-side] [3 ref] [3 poss]-nom-[be near] gen
    kanoa kwássoo+ tintika ya-χi
    boat [nom=(be yellow)] the [3 poss]-nom=intr]-finish
    t-ap k-éttaχ-i?a //
    DP-stand nom-go-decl

The yellow boat--compared to the red boat, the yellow boat standing last--goes., i.e., The yellow boat followed the red boat.

(38) χéppe an ?ant t-oit / χéppe timoka an ?ant t-oit /
    sea into down DP-touch sea the into down DP-touch

Falling into the sea, falling into the incoming sea....

(39) ?ant ši?i t-fín yoke ktám tintika //
    place a [3 poss]-side asser-[go toward] [it is said] man the

The man went away, it is said.
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Things nom-with-[bullet=pl] the [3 ref] asser-[arrive=pl]

\[\text{yoke} /\]

\[\text{it is said}\]

The soldiers arrived, it is said.

(41) \(\text{ant t-fi} \quad \text{ma-}X / \quad \text{aptko} \quad \text{ant timoka an i-}m-\text{-áao} /\)

\[\text{land DP-regain SCP-cond already land the in [l sub]-perf-travel}\]

When the land regains, I am already travelling in the land., i.e.,
By dawn I'm already up and around.

(42) \(\text{ant tintika t-kóoo} \quad \text{apá-kta-ya} /\)

\[\text{land the DP-[be whole] nom-[look at]-Q}\]

Is it like that all along the shore?

(43) \(\text{sáa? tantikat pt i-m-áss-i?a} /\)

days the together nom-neg-resemble-decl

Every day is different.

(44) \(\text{páa}X \quad \text{timoka ?ééšilim i-máa} \quad \text{so} \quad \text{ant k? i-táassiit i-máa}\)

\[\text{priest the camp other a land the [3 poss]-name other}\]

\(\text{s iki} \quad \text{s-éekin t-a tok kW-ó-t-a} /\)

\[\text{a [3 poss]=side fut-[pass through] DP-be there dir-DP-move}\]

When the priest—who was going to pass through another camp, a place with another name--arrived there....

(45) \(\text{óX} \quad \text{t-pa-kta} \quad \text{ma} / \quad \text{šíX} \quad \text{apé-éšii sáa? kí? k-yáa}\)

\[\text{thus DP-pass-[look at] SCP thing nom-beat sun the nom-[go to]}\]

tintika t-óo-??iit-in \[\text{yoke} /\]

the asser-intr-eat-rep [it is said]

When it was seen like that, the thing that was beaten that was going to the sun ate them, it is said., i.e., Then the one who had been beaten and was going to the sun ate them, it is said.

(46) \(\text{šlikkaa+k ?ísmokat k-óoX} \quad \text{ant kW} \quad \text{t-óii} /\)

\[\text{[bird=pl] the nom-[be all] down [3 ref] asser-[be=pl]}\]

All of the birds came down to him.

(47) \(\text{táax} \quad \text{iti kW} \quad \text{t-pa-kta} \quad \text{ma} / \quad \text{óot} \quad \text{?ipintika}\)

\[\text{that on [3 ref] DP-pass-[look at] SCP coyote the}\]

\[\text{[3 poss]-nom-lie here the [3 ref]-DP-lie [it is said]}\]
On its being seen like that, the coyote lay down in his resting place, i.e., So then the coyote lay down in his resting place.

3.6. The article ak seems to be used with objects whose perimeters are ill-defined, e.g., the face, the back of a basket, the mouth, the stomach, the bottom of something, the back of the head, and with some locative expressions. The allomorph ak occurs when this article is preceded by a consonant. The following examples illustrate the use of this article.

(48) in-yéen ak k-i?qi+k-i?a //
[2 poss]-face gen nom-[be dirty]-decl

Your face is dirty.

(49) ?e ?ápx ak ko ntí-ss-aa ka?a //
[1 ref] outside gen [3 ref] dir-fut-move TM

I am going outside.

(50) táx ?íkp ak that [(3 poss)=side] gen

the side of that

(51) ?í?jk ak iti m-íix //
here gen on perf-sit

There he is (seated).

(52) ?-áakkoo k? án ak m-i-k-óoppoo+ //
nom-[build house] the inside gen perf-with-nom-[be black]

The house is dark inside.

(53) ?ápx ak kw t-aškam /
water gen [3 ref] DP-arrive

When they arrived at the water....

(54) ?íš ak ko ?p-χ-íix //
here gen [3 ref] [1 sub]-emph-sit

I am (sitting) here.

(55) šáa? k? fimmee ak i-t-yai //
sun the [(3 poss)=(dwelling place)] gen trans-DP-[go to]

Going to the sun's dwelling place....

(56) kw?qáx ?émme ak ko nt-?a-mm-aat //
next [Camp ?émme] gen [3 ref] dir-[1 pl sub]-perf-[move=pl]

Next we went to Camp ?émme.
4. The indefinite articles are ūu for singular nouns and paκ for plural nouns and nouns of mass or liquid. The singular indefinite article has the allomorph ū preceding a vowel and often before a glottal stop, especially in fast speech. The following examples illustrate the use of these articles.

(58) kanóaa ūu ti ƞ-χó-aa //
    boat a there dir-emph-move

*There comes a boat!*  

(59) kanóaa-ta paκ ta ƞ-χó-aat //
    boat-pl some there dir-emph-[move=pl]

*There come some boats!*  

(60) ptkámn paκ ?a-yó-k-t //
    lobsters some [l pl sub]-past-[see=pl]

*We found some lobsters.*  

(61) ?áχ pak ?e -áas //
    water some [l ref] imp-[give to drink]

*Give me some water to drink!*  

(62) ?e šiχkám ūu sǐmmeet š iki k-í-??iit-iʔa //
    [l ref] fish a bread a [3 poss]=side nom-trans-eat-decl

*I am eating a fish with a (piece of) bread.*

These forms are also used as pronouns as seen in examples (63) and (64).

(63) paκ ?áχxoox i-m-áškam-iʔa  χo pak ?áχxoox
    some shore nom-neg-[arrive=pl]-decl but some shore
    k-áškam-iʔa //
    nom-[arrive=pl]-decl

*Some don't arrive at shore, but some do arrive at shore.*

(64) moχímmaa ūu ?-yó-o-ʔʔo //
    yesterday a [1 sub]-past-see

*I saw one yesterday.*

When used as pronouns, these forms may follow a definite noun phrase to indicate one or some of the total as illustrated below.
(65) šiṃkám koi pak ?a-t-onek / ?ap i-pxássii
fish the some [1 pl sub]-DP-carry deer [3 poss]-meat
tá koi táax mos pak ?a-t-onek / tok
there the those also some [1 pl sub]-DP-carry there
kw ?a-m-óii //
[3 ref] [1 pl sub]-perf-[be=pl]

Carrying some of the fish, also carrying some of that deer
meat, there we were.

(66) táax pak im-póo-mxk />
that some [2 sub]-DF-bring

If you bring some of that....

(67) óx t-pa-kta ma / i?máa tantikat š ?áa
thus DP-pass-[look at] SCP other the one there
nti-t-a-čx / tíx i-míi-??o //
dir-DP-move-cond [that one] trans-perf-see

It being seen thus, one of the others going along there,
he saw it., i.e., Then one of the others, as he was going
along there, saw it.

The word šo is used in noun phrases with negative verbs as illustrated
in examples (68) through (70) below. These noun phrases are singular
and are equivalent to the English expressions "none", "anybody", "any", etc.

(68) š ?ákx t-om-mí? yoke čikkaa
one somewhere asser-neg-[not exist] [it is said] things
tá koi //
there the

None of those people died, it is said.

(69) kw[kkee š i-s-kwáʔ??oo t-a k-iyy-aa-ʔa //
person a trans-fut-[neg=see] DP-be nom-trans-know-decl
He knew that he wasn't going to see anybody.

(70) po-máf p ta-čx / kw[kkee š ik-á-ʔiit
DF-neg-arrive SCF-cond person a inf-ca-eat
i-s-kwáʔ-ʔa //
trans-fut-[neg=know]-TM

If it doesn't arrive, no one will be able to fish.

(71) sínmeet š ano t-m-š? // čikkaa k-óatW š ano
bread a in asser-neg-be things nom-[be sweet] a in
There isn't any bread (in my house)--there isn't any sugar
(in my house)--there isn't any coffee (in my house).

I don't have any money.

A definite noun phrase occurs with the indefinite article *šo* in an
interrogative sentence when the speaker denies a previous statement
of another person. The verb is marked for future, and the denial
particle *tēe* occurs sentence final instead of a tense-mode marker.
This is illustrated in (73).

(73) *šo* po-pa-kta ta / kW [kk] pee *šo* ?ant Ḣisóna
how DF-pass-[look at] SCF person John a land Arizona

?apá? š ano mó-ss-aa tēe //
nom-call a from dir-fut-move denial

How would it be seen, a Seri John will come from a land called
Arizona?--Ha!, i.e., How on earth would Seri John come from
Arizona?--Of course he wouldn't!

When an indefinite noun phrase occurs in an interrogative sentence
and the answer to the question is implied by the speaker to be
obviously negative, the noun phrase is singular and contains the
article *šo*, as illustrated below.

(74) tʃx tóm *šo* k-yā-ya //
[that one] money a nom-have-Q

He has money?--Ha!

Compare example (74) with the following example in which a plural
indefinite noun phrase occurs in a declarative sentence.

(75) tʃx tóm pak i-yo-yāa //
[that one] money some trans-past-have

He has (some) money.

When the verb is negative, a definite noun phrase is often singular and
contains the article *šo*, thus adding emphasis to the negative statement.
This is illustrated below.

(76) *ʔ-o-yākk* *šo* ?é ?ant kw i-máis-iʔa
[l poss]-brother a [l ref] place [3 ref] nom-neg- [watch over]-decl

*ʃx* i-m-íi //
thus trans-perf-say
I don't take care of my brother!, he said to him.

The article ʂö is also used with nominalized verb forms which function as direct objects of negative verbs as illustrated below.

(77) i-pa-kta ʂ i-tkwá-a-to //
[3 poss]-[nom=pass]-[look at] a trans-[asser=neg=know]-decl
He didn't know its appearance., i.e., He didn't know about it.

(78) kw i-?-áai ʂ o ?-čo-m-áa //
[3 ref] [3 poss]-nom-do a [l sub]-emph-neg-know
I don't know its doing., i.e., I don't know about it.

When the verb is not negative, the indefinite article ʂö is replaced by the definite article k?. Compare example (79) below with (77) above.

(79) i-pa-kta k? i-yyaa //
[3 poss]-[nom=pass]-[look at] the trans-[perf=know]
He knows its appearance., i.e., He knows about it.

5. The two general articles are ?ak and ka?.

5.1. The article ?ak occurs with words which are used as labels for ideas or concepts. The allomorph ak occurs following vowels.

(80) elefaante ?ak táax šiχ k-kamm-i?a //
elephant gen that thing nom-live-decl
"Elephant"--that's an animal.

(81) peso ?ak táax koksar f-itom-i?a //
peso gen that outsider [3 poss]-talk-decl
"Peso"--that's a Mexican word.

This article also occurs with nominalized verb forms referring to the idea of the action expressed by that particular verb.

(82) xpeeššoox kon kw i-?-fik ak táax mos šiχ swordfish the [3 ref] [3 poss]-nom-kill gen that also thing
i-m-íippee-ʔa //
nom-neg-[be good]-decl
The killing of swordfish is also not a good thing.

(83) ko n-yá-fmox ak i?-yo-kéeppe //
[3 ref] [2 poss]-nom-[gather firewood] gen [l sub]-past-like
I like it that you are gathering firewood., or, I like the manner in which you are gathering firewood.
I have five pesos with which oranges are to be bought.

As the people saw it, that wasn't a good thing.

The sea is good—the day's falling somewhere would not be a very good thing, i.e., The sea is calm—it would be a shame to waste the day.

5.2. The article ka? occurs with singular nouns and nominalized verb forms and denotes the idea of totality, generality, and customariness.

They eat charcoal.

It grows on mountains.

Whenever I am afraid, I tremble.

Every morning the sun comes up.
(91) χάααα k? en ?άχW+ ka? kw ό-??lit // John the metal clam qen [3 ref] [perf=intr]-eat
John eats with a spoon.

(92) peš k-óoxk ka? šáa? k? iti ko '?-m-íšši // peso nom-[be two] gen day the on [3 ref] [1 sub]-perf-earn
I earn two pesos a day.

(93) χτίιp ka? iti yo-p-ákkii // [clam (sp.)] gen in past-pass-put
It is (always) put in a clam shell.

This article also occurs following the article ?ak when the latter is used with a nominalized verb.

(94) kw íi-fp ak ka? šiX š [3 ref] ([3 poss]=nom)-arrive gen gen thing a
   i-t-kwágmxk-i?o // trans-asser-[neg=bring]-decl
He never brings anything when he comes.

6. Certain noun phrases are not accompanied by articles. These are described below.

6.1. In a simple sentence of identification consisting of a noun phrase followed by a tense-mode marker, the noun phrase occurs without an article as example (95) illustrates. The article does occur in other types of simple construction, also illustrated in (95) and (97) below.

    sea-area the [nom=be]-decl agreement sea-area-decl
Is it the sea bottom? Yeah, it's the sea bottom.

(96) šiX k-ak-áttoo+i?a //
    thing nom-ca-[be timid]-decl
It is a dangerous thing.

(97) χfmmee-ya // χfmmee š i-?máa-?a //
    sardine-Q sardine a nom-[neg=be]-decl
Is it a sardine? It's not a sardine.

6.2. The use of the article distinguishes constructions in which a noun is modified by a possessor (possessive noun phrases) from constructions in which a noun is modified by a relative clause containing a possessive noun phrase coreferent to the noun which is modified by that relative clause. The article does not occur in the possessive noun phrase
in the latter type of construction. These constructions are illustrated below.

(98) kwâgm kop i-pnai+ k-ôi+ ki? x-a-šíim //
woman the [3 poss]-skirt nom-[be blue] the emph-ca-enjoy

The woman’s blue skirt is pretty.

(99) kwâgm i-pnai+ k-ôi+ kop x-a-šíim //
woman [3 poss]-skirt nom-[be blue] the emph-ca-enjoy

The woman whose skirt is blue is pretty.

(100) yôoš kix ék kix ?ákxy //
God the [(3 poss)=daughter] the somewhere

t-om-míi? yoke //
asser-neg-[not exist] [it is said]

God’s daughter (the sun) didn’t die, it is said.

In noun phrases modified by a relative clause or clauses, the article does not generally occur after each coreferent noun or nominalized form (see examples (2) and (4) above), though it will be pointed out later that this generalization does not always hold true.

The forms i?yaa, inyaa, and yaa are either irregularly derived forms of the verb /-yaa/ 'own, have' and mean 'that which I/you/he own(s)', or are possessed forms using the stem /-yaa/ in the sense of 'possession' and mean 'my/your/his possession'. They contrast with the plural forms which are regularly derived from the verb /-yaa/: ?-ó-yâat, m-o-yâat, o-yâat meaning 'that which we/you/they own'. Regardless of the actual analysis, these phrases function as relative clauses and so do not take the article if they modify a noun. These forms indicate possession and are used with nouns that cannot take the possessive prefixes. See examples (101) and (102) below.

(101) simalóon ki? t’ôoki yaa k ?akí t-îi? //
Cimalon the truck [(3 poss)=possession] the where inter-be

Where is Cimalon’s truck?

(102) ?apâspox ?-ánokkaax simalóon ki? yáa k ?ánt
paper nom-carry Cimalon the [(3 poss)=possession] the ground

kom ano x-íi? //
the in emph-be

Cimalon’s book is in the sand.

Relative clauses as above and as in (103) below are apparently non-restrictive and function as adjectives.
The man whose boat is broken is sad.

Sometimes the article occurs after the noun which is modified by a relative clause and, though it is not entirely clear that the analysis of these constructions is this simple, in these cases the relative clauses seem to be restrictive. This is illustrated by the following examples.

(103) kwód k-itám i-kanóaa k-táppoo+kiŋ k? i-mmooš
person man [3 poss]-boat nom-[be broken] the [3 poss]-heart
χo-méet //
emph-[be sad]

(104) šiXkám kí? k-ípppee koi táax ?áa témme //
fish the nom-[be good] the those [nom=be] [perf=say]
He said that the fish that are good--those are the ones
(that will be bought).

(105) kwaŋkoox ki? šáa? kix óX t-ée yoke //
[old man] the sun the thus asser-[intr=say] [it is said]
Father Sun said thus, it is said.

(106) šiX kí? k-óωp ka? ?-yo-kéeppe //
thing the nom-[be white] gen [1 sub]-past-like
I like the thing that is white., i.e., I like white.

6.3. The article does not occur after the first noun phrase of a complex noun phrase consisting of two noun phrases, the first of which indicates the material of which the object described in the second noun phrase is made.

(107) ?-a-šámt ?-áakkoo k? in-t-á??o //
nom-ca-adobe nom-[make house] the [2 sub]-inter-see
Did you see the adobe house?

(108) šiX k-ói+ ?a-pnái+ in-yáa ki?
thing nom-[be blue] abs-skirt [2 poss]-possession the
χ-a-šíim //
emph-ca-enjoy
Your blue denim skirt is pretty.

6.4. The article does not occur with non-specific nouns, as illustrated below.

(109) χwán k ?áX i-t-asi kafé mos pak i-míi-ssi //
John the water trans-DP-drink coffee also some trans-perf-drink
When John drank water, he also drank some coffee.

(110) ?e šíχʔap k-í-kw // [1 ref] thing deer nom-trans-kill [past=decl]

I was a killer of deer., i.e., I used to kill deer.

(111) ?ant íp ano ?-s-áai-aʔa // land [?] in [1 sub]-fut-do-TM

I will put salt on it.

6.5. Some noun phrases have become compound nouns whose meanings are either somewhat different or drastically different from the strict meaning of the words. The article does not occur with the individual nouns of these noun phrases. A few of these are given below.

(112) óot asáak ak táax šíxkámm-iʔa // coyote [(3 poss)=son] gen that fish-decl

Coyote's son--that's a fish.

(113) ?eʔe i-náit ?íp kix k-áískan-iʔa // plant [3 poss]-skin here the nom-[be hard]-decl

This bark is hard.

(114) šíx íkkeet

thing [(3 poss)=child]

pearl

(115) χíkkaa k-óoxp

things nom-[be white]

olivella shells, sparkplugs

Likewise, there are numerous idioms that are composed of a verb and a noun phrase. The article does not occur with the nouns of these noun phrases. Example (116) illustrates this type of idiom.

(116) kw[kkee ktám i-kanóaa k-táppo+kíŋ k? í-mmooš

person man [3 poss]-boat nom-[be broken] the [3 poss]-heart

χo-méet // emph-[be sad]

The man whose boat is broken is sad.

6.6. The article does not occur with nouns which are used to describe the manner in which the action is done.
(117) kóksař kw k-a-tíkpan-iʔa // Mexican [3 ref] nom-ca-work-decl

He works like a Mexican.

(118) ʔéʔʔee ʔaχ kw t-apxW+im ma-χ / stick just [3 ref] DP-[be broken] SCP-cond

Whenever it just breaks like a stick....

(119) ʔóoʔřa kó-o-ttaaχ // mule [3 ref]-go

Go like a mule!

This contrasts with the common use of the definite article with a noun, not necessarily definite, which indicates the instrument used, or the person or object associated with the action.

(120) ēenniim kop ko kwɛkW // knife the [3 ref] [imp=neg=kill]

Don't kill it with a knife!

(121) kóksař ki? kw k-a-tíkpan-iʔa // Mexican the [3 ref] nom-ca-work-decl

He is working with a Mexican.

6.7. The article is not used with nouns joined by the particle χaʔ 'and'. Compare the following sentences.

(122) péedřo kiʔ yó-o-fp // Peter the past-arrive

Peter arrived.

(123) péedřo χaʔ mařfa χaʔ ʔešítm íssoox ak ano míi-škam // Peter and Mary and camp huge gen in perf-[arrive=pl]

Peter and Mary arrived at the big camp (Hermosillo).

7. The article is used with certain locatives in expressions that receive a special stress. These expressions are used as demonstrative adjectives and take the place of the article. The definite article of non-specified position may not be used in this way. The articles denoting movement already contain a locative morpheme, as will be pointed out in Section 8, and so these receive only the stress. The following sentences illustrate these constructions.

(124) ʔá-χš k-óoppoo+ ?íŋ kop

abs-dog nom-[be black] there the

that black dog
(125) ?ást ?íp kíx
stone here the
this stone

(126) kóŋkáak ?íš koi ?a-s-éayox-aʔa //
people here the [1 pl sub]-fut-leave-TM
We should go away from these people.

(127) őχ i-t-áii yoke ńkkaa tá koi
thus trans-asser-say [it is said] things there the
She told those people thus, it is said.

(128) ?aŋt tá ?ak ?áaʔa //
place there gen [nom=be]-decl
It was in that place.

(129) tíiχ tok kW ő-t-a / ?aŋt toit /
[that one] there [3 ref] dir-DP-move down DP-touch
?aŋt ḗípmoka kW t-áfp ma /
place this [3 ref] DP-arrive SCP
He (a bird) came there, landed, arrived at this place....

(130) ?-áakkoo ?íš ak ano yóo-p //
nom-[build house] here gen in past-[be (standing)]
He was in this house.

These expressions are also used as demonstrative pronouns and are
used like the demonstrative pronouns ?ípíx 'this one', ?išáax 'these',
tíx 'that one', and táax 'those'.

(131) ?ípintika koi i-m-afítt-ipoʔo //
[this one] still nom-neg-pull-still-decl
This one (a boat) still isn't pulling it (a net).

(132) ?íš koi ?áaʔi //
here the [nom=be]-decl
These are they.

8. There is a close phonological and semantical relationship
between the definite articles and certain verbs. The following chart
illustrates these relationships. The verbs are cited in the absolutive
"subject" nominalized form.
The articles denoting movement also correspond directly to two certain irregular verbs. The verb mó-kk-a (toward-nom-move) may or may not be used with a locative. The plural form is mó-kk-aa-t. The verb ntí-k-a (away-nom-move) must be used with one of several locative morphemes; a common form is ko ntí-kk-a (there [3 ref] away-nom-move). The plural form is ntí-kk-aa-t.

Since the nominalized form above is the form always used in lieu of a relative clause when the subject of the relative clause is coreferential with the noun that the relative clause is modifying, it seems probable that the definite article is historically related to the corresponding verb. This thesis is also supported by the fact that the position of the article in respect to the noun also corresponds to the position of a relative clause (the nominalized verb form) in respect to the noun; they both occur after the noun. The rule governing the choice of article would be similar and historically identical to that governing the choice of verb of position or movement, whether the verb serves as a main predicate or in a relative clause.

FOOTNOTES

1 The data for this paper were gathered by my husband Edward W. Moser and me during the past twenty-five years of residence in the Seri area under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics. I have worked with many Seri and extensively with Maria Thompson, Lorenzo Thompson, Armando Torres and Roberto Herrera T. I am grateful for their help. A concordance of Seri texts, produced at the University of Oklahoma under National Science Foundation grant GS-1605, Project for Computer Support of Linguistic Fieldwork, was used in the analysis. I am especially grateful to Steve Marlett for his insights and assistance in organizing this paper.

Square brackets are used to enclose a gloss containing more than one word. = joins a gloss of more than one word when the Seri form is complex. / marks division between clauses. // marks division between sentences. Hyphens mark morpheme boundaries. The following abbreviations are used:
abs, absolutive
asser, assertive
ben, benefactive
ca, causative
cond, conditional
decl, declarative
dir, directional
DF, dependent future
DP, dependent past
emph, emphatic
fut, future
gen, general article
imp, imperative
inf, infinitive
inter, interrogative
intr, intransitive

neg, negative
nom, nominalizer
pass, passive
perf, perfect
pl, plural
poss, possessive
Q, question
ref, referent
rep, repetitive
SCF, subject change future
SCP, subject change past
sg, singular
sub, subject
TM, tense-mode marker
trans, transitive