Questions in Ama
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0. Introduction

0.1 Goal of presentation

+ questions are an important part of human verbal interaction
- they serve to fulfill the desire to balance the apparent mismatch between speaker and addressee wrt. the information both have
- help to establish and develop the common ground underlying the conversation
+ questions and focus constructions have similar functions: they ask for resp. provide information missing in the common ground of one interlocutor - this is reflected in similar structures cross-linguistically
+ part of our projects work is the investigation of polar questions following the observation that these can have different formal characteristics in some languages, dependent on the scope of focus: on some single element of the clause or on the truth value operator
→ study of the structural and functional properties of questions in general in Ama

+ the present paper is a first study of questions in Ama; it aims primarily at the description of the different question types in the language
- it also intends to show how questions and focus constructions are structurally related

+ in general, three types of questions can be differentiated: constituent questions, polar questions and alternative questions (cf. Krifka 2011: 1744)
- constituent questions and alternative questions ask for special information to fill an open proposition, alternative questions already offer two alternatives for which the proposition holds
- yes/no-questions (polar) principally request the truth value of a proposition – they constitute in most languages two thirds of the questions in a conversation (Mitterer & Stivers 2007: 44)

0.2 General information on Ama

+ genetic affiliation: Ama: Nilo-Saharan, Eastern Sudanic, Nyimang (together with Affiti)
+ geographic distribution: spoken in Sudan, Kordofan province, in the Mandal hills west of Dilling (at eight mountains: Nitil, Krumiti, Kelara, Salara, Kushi, Foss, Fada (Founy), Kodungung, Kushi) – lots of migrants in Khartoum and Cairo, where the data come from
- no dialectal differentiation
- language seems to be viable, despite the arabophone politic of the government
- number of speakers: given with 70,000 in 1982, many speakers settle outside the core area
+ typological properties:
  o agglutinating
  o tone language (with 3 level tones)
  o 7-vowel system, with u and i as variants of u and i with unclear status, centralized e in some environments (Stevenson 1957)
  o verb-final word order
  o head-modifier order in the noun phrase
  o dependent marking
  o no number marking on the noun, but on the verb, no grammatical gender
  o case marking by means of suffixes which follow the last modifier in a noun phrase
  o aspectual differentiation of verbs
+ characteristics of clause structure of main declaratives (1):
- word order: SOV (nearly always given in elicitation)
- in second position (whatever comes before): assertive particle a or ba (the second one with more emphatic value)
- there might be some other verbal particles, indicating TAM or information-structure
(1) out-of-the blue:
Ábdù á ānúŋ ìrbíyā nyíg
PN ASS 3S.POSS car fix.PFV
[SBJ] [OBJ ] [V ]
[TOP] [FOC ]
Audu repaired his car.

+ but: the seemingly strict finality condition for the verb can be canceled by discourse considerations, mainly insofar that all known information might follow the verb → Ama as discourse-configurational language
(2) [kā tēg ] [kāmāl dō ] [kēr-i ] [gīr-3]? PC.FOC give.PFV PN DS wife-DAT money-ACC
VP SBJ I.OBJ OBJ
Did Kamal GIVE the money to his wife?
1. Content questions

1.1 The inventory of interrogative words

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Stevenson 1938</th>
<th>my data</th>
<th>literal translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>who? (all in nominative)</td>
<td>ŋane (sg.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ŋani (pl.)</td>
<td>ŋánɛ</td>
<td>who + FOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what? (all in nominative)</td>
<td>ki ŋa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eŋine</td>
<td>ki ŋa</td>
<td>thing which</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ŋa, ŋina ki</td>
<td>àŋí(ŋe)</td>
<td>what + FOC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>which?</td>
<td>wʊnə, ŋa</td>
<td>wʊnə, ŋa</td>
<td>? + ?TOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>where?</td>
<td>wun, wun ṭa (emph.)</td>
<td>wun, win</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how?</td>
<td>ŋada</td>
<td>ŋada</td>
<td>who + ?TOP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>how many?</td>
<td>maŋ(ɛ)</td>
<td>maŋ</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kum (Arab.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>when?</td>
<td>ouŋwoðu</td>
<td>àŋjódo</td>
<td>what + ?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>what time?</td>
<td>sa maŋɛ</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>time + how many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nyoŋŋa maŋɛ</td>
<td></td>
<td>sun + how many</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nyoŋŋa wundɛɛ</td>
<td></td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>why?</td>
<td>ouŋu gidɛai</td>
<td>àŋu gidɛai</td>
<td>what.GEN + for</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Inventory of interrogative words in Ama

- comparison of Stevenson’s and my data reveals that some of the forms Stevenson recorded are not attested in my data; furthermore, for ‘how many’, young people now used the Arabic word
- the interrogative pronouns ŋane, ki ŋa and ŋa, as well as the interrogative modifier wʊnə and maŋ are inflected for case
- the interrogative adverbs wun, ŋada, àŋjódo and àŋu gidɛai are invariable, whereby the latter two already seem to present derived forms from àŋi ‘what’
+ of interest are also the forms of ŋánɛ and àŋjɛ́ which are built out of a general interrogative pronoun on which the focus marker is suffixed
- evidence for the strong relation of wh-questions and focus constructions which both make use of the same construction
- at least for ŋánɛ, this form seems to be lexicalized (in nominative case) – accusative is derived from this form
1.2 Structural features of content questions

1.2.1 Subject questions

- interrogative pronouns are ŋánɛ̄ for human, and ăŋĩnɛ̄ for non-human subjects, as well as the interrogative modifier ̪agi and maŋ which follow the noun they modify
- interrogative phrase is always in sentence-initial position
- in most cases, there is a final question marker a – there is no clue for the moment to determine when it occurs
- no assertive particle allowed
- same structure as in answer to such a question – only difference is the lack of the declarative particle in the question and the lack of the final question marker in the answer
- whether there are differences in intonation is a matter of further research

(3) ŋánɛ̄ kùbɛ́-ɔ̀ bér á?
who.FOC glass-ACC break.PFV Q
WHO has broken the glass?

(3a) bùd̪íŋɛ́ bá nɛ̄ kùbɛ́-ɔ̀ bér.
little.girl ASS FOC glass-ACC break.PFV
THE LITTLE GIRL broke the glass.

(4) question marker in clause-final position
ŋánɛ̄ án tɛ́fɛ́ ɔ̀ áá sá ɲɔ́n?
who.FOC 1S.ACC see.PFV Q 1S watch take.PFV
WHO saw me when I took the watch?

(5) no final question marker?
ŋánɛ̄ wâr á dɔ́sɔ̀ ́tɔ́l?
who.FOC want ? food-ACC eat.PFV
WHO wants to eat food?

(6) interrogative phrase with ‘which’
wá ̪agi nɛ́ wàd̪ ɔ́ nyàlã wáni-ągãg?
people which FOC speech one speak.IPFV-DIR
Which people speak the same language to each other?
àŋì nɛ in subject position – question for whole event (all-new question)
(7) àŋìnɛ́ fié à?
   what.FOC do.PFV Q
   What happened? {My car broke down.}

(8) è wà dù jēē "áŋìnɛ́ yọŋ tí yĩ tũrũ?"
   and people DEF say.PFV what.FOC 2S catch.PFV 2S cry.IPFV
   And the people said, "What happened to you that you are crying?"

1.2.2 Questions for non-subject constituents
+ included here: direct and indirect objects, obliques, adverbial phrases
+ two different structural types:
  - in situ questions: interrogative phrase takes normal position in the clause, mostly
    with final question marker, interrogative word is inflected for case
  - ex situ questions: interrogative phrase occurs sentence-initially, mostly no final
    question marker, interrogative word not inflected for case (= cleft construction)
    → reflects focus constructions for non-subjects
  - in situ questions occur much more often in my data

ŋā - who (human objects) – ex situ question
- difference to subject question: no final marker, after clefted phrase, the background
  clause is introduced by the conjunction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>object question</th>
<th>cf. subject question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(9) ŋānɛ́                  é kër tířé?</td>
<td>ŋānɛ́ kàmál-úŋ tířé à?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>who.FOC CNJ woman call.PFV</td>
<td>who.FOC PN-ACC call.PFV Q</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHOM did the woman call?</td>
<td>WHO called Kamal?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9a) kàmál-úŋ bá nɛ́ é ín tířé.</td>
<td>She called KAMAL.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kamal-ACC ASS FOC CNJ 3S call.PFV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- no instance of in situ question with human object in my data
áŋī(-dɔ) – direct object

ex situ question  
in situ question

(10)  
àŋínɛ́  è kɛ́ r t̪âl  ?  kɛ́ r áŋĩ-ɗɔ́ t̪âl  à  ?
what.FOC  CNJ  woman  eat.PFV  woman  what-ACC  eat.PFV  Q
WHAT did the woman eat?

àlfūl  bâ nɛ́  è kɛ́ r t̪âl.  kɛ́ r á  àlfūl-ó  t̪âl.
bean  ASS  FOC  CNJ  woman  eat.PFV  woman  ASS  bean-ACC  eat.PFV
It was the BEANS that she ate.

(11)  
yǐ  Mariam- u  áŋĩ-ɗɔ́  t̪ɛ́ g  à?
2S  PN-ACC what-DEF  give.PFV  Q
WHAT did you give to Mariam?

(11a)  
á  njuŋ  kîtáaɓ-ū  Máriam- ŋ  t̪ɛ́ g.
1S  2S.POSS  book-ACC  PN-ACC  give.PFV
I gave YOUR BOOK to Mariam.

ŋánɔ̄ - indirect human object

(12)  
in situ
yǐ  wɔ́ŋ  kîtáaɓ-ū  ŋanɔ̄  t̪ɛ́ g  à?
2S  1S.POSS  book-ACC  who.DAT  give.PFV  Q
To WHOM did you give my book?

(12')  
ex situ
ŋanɛ́  á  yǐ  wɔ́ŋ  kîtáaɓ-ū  t̪ɛ́ g?
who.FOC  ?CNJ  2S  1S.POSS  book-ACC  give.PFV
To WHOM did you give my book?

(12a)  
á  Máriam- ŋ  t̪ɛ́ g.
1S-Ass  PN-ACC  give.PFV
I gave (it) to MARIAMA.

(13)  
I  ŋanɔ́  kʊ́dɔ́  t̪ɛ́ g?
2S  who.DAT  goat.ACC  give.PFV
To WHOM did you give the goat? (Stevenson 1938: 91)
àŋī in non-verbal questions

(14) nò àŋī né ì?
DEM what be.IPFV Q
What’s that?

(14a) kitáábú à nē.
kítáábú bā nē.
book-ACC ASS be.IPFV
It’s a book.

áŋī-dɔ – VP questions

(15) kér àŋī-dɔ jìé ì?
woman what-ACC do.PFV Q
What did the woman do?

(15a) kér á fūl-ó Ńl.
womn ASS bean-ACC eat.PFV
The woman ate the beans.

áŋī-dɔ – SoA question

(16) {Audu loves his car. Yesterday I saw that he took care of it.}
índũ àŋī-dɔ jìe á ānúŋ àrbiy-ɛì?
3s.DEF what-DEM do.PFV Q 3S.POSS car.ABL
What exactly did he do with the car?

(16a) índũ nyìg.
3s.DEF fix.PFV
He fixed it.

tágí ‘which’

(17) as object, ex situ
wada tágéni í tāwēɛìn
speech which.?FOC 2S say.PFV
What do you say? (lit.: Which speech do you say?)
object in situ
é nyúŋ kér n̩ bèfí tágí n̩è?
and 2S.POSS woman DEM house which be.IPFV
Eh, your wife from which place is she?

(18a) tɔ̀ná a n̩è ɖ-áu.
Pn Ass be.IPFV ?-loc
She is from Tunde.

Compra - why?

(19) ex situ
áŋú gídài n̩è à wánɔ sigin-au n̩è-ɖì?
Why are those men in prison?

(20) in situ
é kɔl ʈɛrg̊ɛn-5 áŋi dã ɖeí á?
and man donkey-acc what for hit.PfV q
Why did the man hit the donkey?

‘what happened that …’

(21) má, áŋi-nè jiɛ-ì yí kojn-ɔ nɔf-ʈi-ɖì.
my.mom what.foc do.PfV-Q 2s face-acc not being happy-?-p
Mom, why are you angry? (lit. Mom, what happened that you are not happy? )

unclear cases – ‘why’

(22) éwú, é widẹŋ nɔ̀ ʊn ẹnjí há mài?
yes, and girl dem ? who neg know.IPFV
of course, why you don’t know this girl?
{you know her, is the guy not your relative, the father of the girl?}

(23) ẹnjí n̩è wùlù-go fɛ̀r bidijal há fɛdị?
who.foc son first-ord.acc ? tomato neg find.pfV
Why couldn’t the first child find the tomatoes?
ŋādā - how

(24) in situ

índō jìē é nyúŋ gósō dō ŋādā á súnŋ̄ḡ éyí ...
3S.DEF say.PFV C NJ 2S.POSS bull DEF how ? give.birth.PFV ?
He (the fox) said “How could your bull give birth?”.

(25) in situ

bóbwër, à ká ŋādā táï?
no, 1S FUT how go.PFV
No, how can I go? (The Arabs will catch me over there.)

(26) ex situ

ŋādā né yì há wàr é ká mádrás-āù táï?
how FOC 2S NEG want.IPFV CNJ FUT school-LOC go.PFV
Why can’t you leave for school? (lit. Why don’t you want to go to school?)

máŋ – how many

(27) á wór-ɔ máŋ wɔ áŋd̪á ...
1S year-ACC how have.IPFV ?whatever
How many years I have ... {I entered secondary school.}

(28) ē átāŋ ē, ē wór-ɔ káŋ wɔ hán
and now CNJ, CNJ year-ACC how_many(ARAB) have.IPFV it.is
and now, I have many years (here in Cairo), {and the white people (United Nations) opened an office for us (in Cairo).}

wún - where?
– seems to be used only in situ

(29) k̄r wún nè táì à?
woman where COP go.PFV Q
Where did the woman go?

(29a) ðrúbá-wɔ táì.
Europe-ACC go.PFV
She went to Europe.
(30) ín ċú wún nè?
calf DS where be.IPVF
(and said: my friend, the cow has given birth.) Where is the calf?

àŋdídó - when

(31) in situ
é nyéŋ kwái ċu àŋdídó múí?
CNJ 2S.POSS.sibling man DS when leave.IPVF
When is your brother leaving?

(31a) àŋí níŋ kwái ā iřóù múí.
1S.POSS sibling man ASS tomorrow leave.IPVF
My brother is leaving tomorrow. (Cairo 2011)

(32) what time? (Stevenson 1938: 94)
ex-situ
nyiŋan wundel nɛ i ka mɔ
sun what FOC 2S PC.FOC leave.PFV

in-situ
I nyiŋan maŋe mɔ a?
I a sa maŋe mɔ a?
I a sa maŋe ka mɔ?
2S ?FUT sun / time how_many PC.FOC leave.PFV Q
what time will you leave?
1.3 Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interrogative Word</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Final Question Marker</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subject</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŋánë</td>
<td>ex situ</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>àŋíné</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Object</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŋánë</td>
<td>ex situ</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>àŋí(né)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>àŋí-ɖɔ</td>
<td>in situ</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wun, win</td>
<td>in situ</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ŋaḍa</td>
<td>ex situ</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in situ</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>àŋóɖó</td>
<td>in situ</td>
<td>+/-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why?</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>áŋú ɡidáì</td>
<td>ex situ</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in situ</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Structural properties of interrogative words in Ama

+ in general, nearly all interrogative words can occur ex situ and in situ – in dialogues, nevertheless, there is a strong tendency that they occur exclusively in situ (with the exception of subject questions)
- this finding mirrors focus constructions where subject focus has to be marked by a cleft construction, whereas non-subject focus may be expressed by a cleft, but most often it uses an in situ strategy
+ as for the final question marker, it seems to be obligatory in subject questions – by this, the speaker disambiguate between ex situ subject and non-subject questions
- in non-subject questions, the final question marker is optional, or rather, the conditions for its use are not yet clear
- it might be that it is only used when the speaker wants to make sure that the question is understood as that, otherwise, the language is very economic
- or, it is possible to think of the question marker as tonal element only – that is a matter for future research
2. Polar questions

2.1 The structure of polar questions

- Dryer (2008) claims the following characteristics of yes/no questions cross-linguistically: question particles, interrogative verb morphology, interrogative word order, absence of declarative morphemes, interrogative intonation, or a combination of some of these features
  - yes/no questions are built by using the canonical sentence structure
    - basic word order SOV
    - no final question marker (in most cases)
    - no assertive sentence-particle
    - ?no special question intonation (has to be studied further)

  (33a) declarative clause
  ker bá këndë kàâ tàl.
  woman ASS beans PC.FOC eat.PFV
  {What did the woman do with the beans?} The woman ate the beans.

  (33b) yes-no question
  Àmínà këndë kàâ tàl.
  PN beans PC.FOC eat.PFV
  Did Amina eat the beans?

2.2 Polar questions and scope of focus

+ one can differentiate between unbiased (neutral) and biased polar questions, the latter ones are often expressed by question tags
  - answers to neutral questions are in general not especially marked but mirror the structure of the question
  - biased questions, on the other hand, already show some expectation concerning the answer – in this case, not every answer is successful in the given context, but there is a preferred answer

  (34a) bôrgòlëi á nån-ëli, ádà nàdà dá?
  thief ASS take.PFV-PASS, or how TOP?
  It is stolen, isn’t it?
(34b) expected answer
yei, ka nɔ̀n-ɛì.
yes, PC.FOC take.PFV-PASS
yes, it is stolen.

- polar questions asking for confirmation or non-confirmation of the truth of a proposition can normally simply be answered with “yes” or “no” (this kind of polar question is mostly found in conversation)
- when it is intended to ask whether a specific constituent fulfills the open proposition, the structure used is the same as in focused declaratives - in this case, it might be sufficient to answer with “yes”, but a negative answer necessarily requires a correction

2.2.1 Truth value of whole proposition

(35a) kákā kʊ́d̪-ɔ̀ kā tárá?
PN goat-ACC PC.FOC buy.PFV
DID Kaka buy a goat?

(35b) yei, kákā bā kʊ́d̪-ɔ̀ kā tárá.
yes, PN ASS goat-ACC PC.FOC buy.PFV
Yes, Kaka REALLY bought a goat.

(35c) bwér, kā há tárá.
no, PC.FOC NEG buy.PFV
No, she didn’t.

+ question is marked by ka before the verb – clearly indicating scope on truth value operator, cf. (36)

(36) {Audu loves his car. Yesterday I saw that he washed and polished it. And he did not fix it?}
positive polarity: affirmation
kā bā nyíg.
PC.FOC ASS fix.PFV
He DID.

- answer could be simply “yes” or “no”
- in the positive answer, particle ba has to be there; ka makes it sure / without ka, the sentence would not be appropriate to that question
2.2.2  Focus on subject

(37a) Kákā né ë kóɗ-ò tárá?
     PN  FOC  CNJ goat-ACC  buy.PFV
     Did KAKA buy a goat?
(37b) yéi, ín bá né (kóɗà) tárá.
     yes, 3S ASS FOC (goat) buy.PFV
     yes, SHE bought.
(37c) bwér, kā bá há tárá, é Àmìná né tárá.
     no, PC.FOC ASS NEG buy.PFV, CNJ PN FOC buy.PFV
     no, she didn’t, but Amina bought (it).

+ question is marked by
- subject cleft (cf. ex. (3))
- followed by background clause (may be introduced by conjunction ë)
- in clefted part, no assertive particle allowed (as in second part of (37c))
- no final question marker
- negative answer must include a correction of the false statement

2.2.3  Focus on object

(38a) kákā kóɗ-ò tárá?
     PN  goat-ACC  buy.PFV
     Did Kaka buy a GOAT?
(38b) yéi, kóɗ-ò bā tárá
     yes, goat-ACC ASS buy.PFV
     yes, she bought a GOAT.
(38c) bwér, bár-ò bā tárá.
     no, cow-ACC ASS buy.PFV
     no, she bought a COW.

+ question has structure of normal statement
- no special particle allowed, i.e. also no focus marker for predicate-centered focus
- following my informant, simple answer with ‘no’ would have been possible´(contrary to expectation)
3. Alternative questions

+ structurally, they show features of content questions and polar questions:
  - final question marker
  - no interrogative word
  - no word order change

(39) \( \text{wádá wèn ádà mídìɽɔ̀ kánî á?} \)
    \( \text{talk speak.IPFV or song.ACC sing.IPFV Q} \)
    (watching a video clip) Is he speaking or singing?

(39a) \( \text{ín índù wádă nákô wén, wó₃₃ kwáì.} \)
    \( \text{3S, 3S.DS talk only speak.IPFV 1S.POSS man} \)
    He is only talking, my friend.

(40) \( \text{kákā né ē kùd̪-ɔ̀ t̪áɽā ãdā Àfiē á?} \)
    \( \text{PN FOC CNJ goat-ACC buy.PFV or PN Q} \)
    Did KAKA or Afia buy a goat?

(40a) \( \text{kákā bā né t̪áɽā.} \)
    \( \text{PN ASS FOC buy.PFV} \)
    KAKA bought it.

(41) \( \text{àŋíné ā, kár ádā kàʃēl né á?} \)
    \( \text{what.FOC Q, female or male be.IPFV Q} \)
    What is it, a boy or a girl?

(41a) \( \text{kár á nē.} \)
    \( \text{female ASS be.IPFV} \)
    It is a girl.

4. Summary

+ formal encoding: the three different question types also differ structurally in Ama
  - content questions: interrogative word, word order change possible, (optional) final question marker
  \( \rightarrow \) shows a mixed pattern, as only subject questions have to have the interrogative word obligatorily in sentence-initial position, for all others the in situ position is preferred (but ex situ probably possible)
  - alternative questions: no word order change, no interrogative word, final question marker
- polar questions: no word order change, no interrogative word or question marker
  → polar questions are the least marked questions in Ama, as it is in many languages of the world

+ role of intonation: needs more investigation – a short look at differences between statements and corresponding polar questions does not show a clear difference in intonation – maybe there is a final low tone marker for polar questions
- but this low tone cannot be taken as tonal leftover of a segmental question marker, as those found in wh-questions are not always low toned (sometimes clearly high!)
  → this analysis will be done within the next weeks

+ relation to focus constructions: functionally and structurally, questions are closely related to focus constructions
- functionally: questions ask for missing information, answers provide this information (and should provide exactly and only this), following the scope of the question (maybe on a lexical element, but also on some sentential operator)
- structurally: in most cases, questions and their respective answers show the same basic structure, i.e. they are symmetrical
  - exception 1: ex situ wh-questions do not necessarily trigger ex situ answers
  - exception 2: answers in Ama are characterized by the dropping of all already known information, so that the answers are often elliptical

+ lack of the assertive particle as diagnostic element for questions
- assertive particles never occur in dependent clauses, but only in main declarative clauses (as for instance in answers to questions) – but: also not every main clause has such a particle, cf. beginning of a picture description in (42)

(42) wá āsà nɛ̄-ɖɪ ㄚ,
people three be.IPFV-P ?TOP,
ɛ́ tîr tʊɑg wɛ́ bɪbɪ ... ɚərən wó-ɖɪ.
CNJ together sit.IPFV house different. RED.near have.IPFV-P
There are three people, living together in different houses near each other.

ɛ́ nyələ ɖʊ́ ɖá, ɛ́ wɛ́ ɚəzəh̃i-ʊ wʊdąŋ nɛ́.
CNJ one DS TOP CNJ house blue-GEN person be.IPFV
and one is the blue house person.
(and one is the red house person.)
(and one is the green house person.)

é dì ééé, ìnj é țiláì șá
CNJ then eh, 3S ? go.PFV.P TOP
ț’un-șů tá finite-àù bàdèg è țǐďăr,
night-LOC ? sleep-LOC start.PFV.P CNJ lay_down.PFV.P
... and when they went to sleep at night, ...

(the story continues without any assertive particle in clause-second position)

+ in general, the use of ba in texts is very restricted
- in three narratives (191 clauses), ba occurs exactly four times (once in direct speech (43), once at the beginning of the story, twice in focus constructions)
- in three free discussions (now analyzed 170 clauses), ba occurs more often (8 times), but often in fronted topic constructions, for confirmation and as answer to questions (44)

(43) {And Bigmouth caught the rabbit, and the rabbit said,}
yī bǎ ţôm-5 tūuł fí CNJ 2S 1S NEG catch.PFV
You caught a piece of a wood, and you did not catch me.

(44) {Are you born Ama, my man?}
à bá àmá-ď-áû kū suŋéì
1S ASS Ama-DS-LOC ASS be_born.PFV
I am born as Ama.

→ thus, the value of the lack of the assertive particle as diagnostic element is not really high, but maybe together with intonation it helps to interpret (polar) questions as questions and statements as statements
Abbreviations

ABL  Ablative  INF  Infinitive
ACC  Accusative  IPFV  Imperfective
AD  Addressee  LOC  Locative
ADV  Adverb  NEG  Negative
ASS  Assertive  OBJ  (Direct) object
BEN  Benefactive  P  Plural
BG  Background clause  PASS  Passive
CAUS  Causative  PC,FOC  Predicate-centered focus
CNJ  Conjunction  PFV  Perfective
COND  Conditional  PN  Proper name
COP  Copula(tive)  POSS  Possessive
CQ  Constituent question  PST  Past
DAT  Dative  PURP  Purpose
DECL  Declarative  Q  Question
DEM  Demonstrative  RED  Reduplication
DS  Different subject  S  Singular
EMPH  Emphatic  SBJ  Subject
FOC  Focus (marker)  T,FOC  Term focus
FUT  Future  TOP  Topic
GEN  Genitive  V  Verb or vowel
HAB  Habitual  VN  Verbal noun
ID  Ideophone

References


