

Journal of West African Languages XVII, 2 (1987)

THE PARTICLE OF CONTRAST *maa* IN WAAMA

Kathrin Brückner

Société Internationale de Linguistique
Benin

The particle *maa* in Waama basically occurs in three different positions in the clause. If it occurs immediately after the subject, it indicates contrast between propositions or it foregrounds the information of the marked clause. If it occurs clause initially, it has a subordinating function and can express relationships of time, manner or cause, or it can introduce a headless relative construction. If it occurs clause finally, it has a demonstrative function with anaphoric reference to the preceding context, or it reinforces the meaning of an ideophone. There is an interesting relationship between the subordinating and demonstrative function of *maa* on one hand and the relative and demonstrative pronoun *maa* of the abstract noun class on the other hand.

La particule *maa* en waama se trouve en trois positions différentes dans la proposition. Si elle se trouve juste après le sujet, elle indique un contraste entre deux propositions, ou bien elle se met en vedette l'information de la proposition marquée par *maa*. Si elle se trouve au début de la proposition, elle a une fonction subordonnante et peut exprimer des relations temporelles, causales ou des relations de manière, ou bien elle peut introduire une construction relative. Si elle se trouve à la fin de la proposition, elle a une fonction démonstrative avec référence anaphorique au contexte précédent, ou bien elle renforce un idéophone. Il y a une relation intéressante entre les fonctions subordonnante et démonstrative de *maa* d'un côté, et le pronom relatif et démonstratif *maa* de la classe nominale abstraite de l'autre côté.

0. INTRODUCTION

When I started learning Waama¹, I was at first puzzled by the particle *maa*. It seemed to have a confusing number of different meanings and functions, and it also occurred in various positions within the clause. I soon discovered there were three possible positions. For each position, however, there were two or more different meanings. In one position *maa* seemed to indicate some kind of contrast on the discourse level, in the two other positions it had a function on the sentence level. There also seemed to be a relationship between *maa* and the relative and demonstrative pronoun of the abstract noun class, both of which have the same surface form *maa*. In order to find answers to these questions I undertook to write this paper.

1. MAA AFTER THE SUBJECT

Maa occurring immediately after the subject expresses some relation of contrast between phrases, clauses or sentences.

I found two broad categories of contrast. First there is the contrast between propositions. Sometimes, and in more specific contexts, the meaning of such a contrast can be narrowed down to be either (i) a contraexpectation, i.e., a contrast between what was expected to happen and what actually happened (examples 1 and 2), or (ii) a contrast of limitation or exception, in which some item which is an exception to a general rule is marked as contrasting with the many items which do obey the general rule (example 3). In still other contexts, there is a contrast between the propositions but not of a kind that can be subsumed under (i) and (ii) (example 4).

Second, there is the foregrounding kind of contrast in which a certain piece of information is marked with **maa** to foreground it (and therefore to contrast it) in relation to what is not so marked (and therefore background). It should be noted that foregrounding is one kind of contrast but not the only kind. Let us first look at the contrasts between propositions.

- 1 **CONTEXT:** Mosquito, Hand and Ear went fishing together. Ear caught some big fish, Mosquito only some very little ones. While they all slept the following night, Mosquito got up quietly and stole Ear's big fish. When Ear got up and could not find his fish any more, he said to Mosquito: 'My fish were bigger than yours, and yet I cannot see them any more.' Mosquito answered:

N MAA ta ba kpaan.²

I BUT past neg take.al.df³

'As for me, I did not take them.

In asking Mosquito the question in the preceding context, Ear at least suspected that Mosquito had stolen the fish. But contrary to Ear's suspicion and Ear's expectation that Mosquito would admit it, the latter denied that he had done so.

- 2 **CONTEXT:** A hunter went hunting a lot. His father had told him not to hunt on the other side of the stream. One day he had hunted all the animals on this side, when he saw that there were still animals left on the other side. So he wondered what he should do. He remembered his father's advice but, when the norms of his culture would have expected him to follow that advice, he, in fact, thought and decided against it. Thus:

¹**N MAA ba sookiti n kori n bende.**

I BUT neg be able.prog I go home.df my empty handed

²**N da daji -di.**

I fut cross.df -foc

¹But I **MAA** cannot go home empty handed.

²I will cross the river.'

So examples 1 and 2 illustrate *maa* as contraexpectation.

3 **CONTEXT:** There was a great famine in the country.

Taambu MAA ñ dori maa tem.
karite tree BUT seq produce.df thus id
'But the karite tree MAA produced like mad.'

The karite tree's bearing fruit is an exception to the general rule that nothing is produced during the famine. Example 3, therefore illustrates *maa* as contrast of limitation or exception.

4 **CONTEXT:** In a sermon, the speaker is calling the hearers to turn away from the world and to do God's work.

¹Dà ba i sa ò de ti kà puke maa ti ta
it neg be that he say.ep we it hold.df how we rel
nɛki -dan. ²Dá MAA bibi sa ti tabina
want.stat foc it BUT ask.perf that we be united-with.stat
ò Sikima-di.
his Spirit foc

'¹It is not that he (God) said we should work how we want to.
²But MAA we have to be united with his Spirit.'

Here the relation between propositions expressed by clauses 1 and 2 is a more general kind of contrast. Specifically the contrast is between what God did not say, (i.e. what the world would want us to do), and what God wants us to do, (and, in fact, did say in the preceding context).

Having discussed *maa* expressing contrast between propositions, let us now turn to the foregrounding *maa*. In these cases, *maa* foregrounds the participant referred to by the subject noun or pronoun that it follows, thus drawing the hearer's attention to that participant and contrasting him with the background.

Such foregrounding may introduce a new participant (examples 5 and 6), foreground an old participant (7), or bring an old participant who had been off stage back on stage (8, 9). A possible gloss would be 'now look'.

5 ¹Waaro den-di bo. ²ò MAA ì waati.
hunter dp foc be.ep he NOW LOOK cont hunt.prog

6 ³Daanyonde ò kpento MAA ñ wò maasi ò wa: '...'
one day his father NOW LOOK seq him say.df he say.ep

'¹Once upon a time there was a hunter. ²He MAA went hunting.
³One day his father MAA said to him "...''

Examples 5 and 6 are the first two sentences of a folktale. Clause 1 introduces the hunter. In clause 2 *maa* following the pronoun ò 'he' foregrounds the hunter as the actor of the first action. In clause 3 the hunter's father is introduced. He is the actor of the next (speech) action and *maa* on ò kpento 'his father' foregrounds the father.

The next four examples are from the same story as example 1.

- 7 **CONTEXT:** Mosquito, Hand and Ear went fishing together. They came close to the river when Mosquito saw some fish in the river. He suggested that they go and catch them. So they went.

¹Bà ta nente bunde ce, ²bà MAA ñ tibe
they when arrive.perf river near they NOW LOOK seq throw.df

pɛɛma.
poison

- '¹When they arrived at the river, ²they MAA threw the poison in.'
(This poison kills the fish so they can be caught easily.)

In this example *maa* foregrounds the participant referred to by *bà* 'they' (i.e., Mosquito, Hand and Ear) in the new location, *bunde ce* 'near the river'. Clause 1 merely establishes a setting for the actions of clause 2 and the following clauses.

- 8 **CONTEXT:** When Ear had caught some big fish and Mosquito some little fish, they all went to sleep. While the others were sleeping, Mosquito got up and stole Ear's fish. When Ear noticed later that his fish had disappeared, Mosquito denied the theft. Then Hand suggested that they all go down to the river to swear and thus put a curse on the thief.

Nɔka MAA wa: 'Nɔɔna ti taka ti yiri bun ce...'
hand NOW LOOK say.ep let.df we go.df we swear.df river near
'Hand MAA said: "Let's go and swear near the river..."'

Hand has been introduced in the beginning of the story as one of the three who went fishing. In the above example *maa* foregrounds Hand, who is now coming back on stage.

- 9 **CONTEXT:** Following Hand's suggestion they came back to the river to pronounce the curse.

Ò MAA nɛɛ wa" 'Pɛn bunde, ...'
he NOW LOOK there say.ep you.sg.em river
'There he (Hand) MAA said: "You, river, ..."'

In the preceding context the locational framework of the river is reestablished. Then *maa* in example 9 foregrounds Hand within the new location and gets him swearing to the river.

- 10 **CONTEXT:** They had put a curse on the one who had stolen the fish so that the thief would become different from normal people. Then they went on their way when suddenly Mosquito's arm started hurting and became very skinny. Then the same thing happened to the other arm and to his body. Then he said 'I can't walk any more, let's lie down here'. They were shown a hostel, went in and lay down.

¹oŋo MAA ñ daabe koŋa, nɔka ñ sɛkɛ
 he.em NOW LOOK seq lie.df side hand seq be between.df

tiire, tuuku kon tɔɔka.
 middle ear side other

²ò MAA ñ yikisi yĩende sa ³oŋo MAA
 he NOW LOOK seq get up.df night that he.em NOW LOOK

bukisi. ⁴ò MAA nɛɛ sindi tuuku, tuuku ñ yĩn
 tiptoe.df he NOW LOOK there wake up.df ear ear opt take

yĩndi yiraka. ⁵ò MAA ñ yikisi.
 away curse he NOW LOOK seq get up.df

'¹He (Mosquito) MAA lay on one side, Hand in the middle, Ear on the other side. ²He MAA got up at night so that ³he MAA could tiptoe. ⁴There he MAA woke up Ear, so that Ear would take the curse away. ⁵He MAA got up.'

CONTEXT: He (Mosquito) said: 'Ear, take the curse away so I'll get bigger.' Hand MAA tried to hit him and said: 'I told you to admit, and you denied the theft.' Mosquito MAA said: 'I sinned.'

To understand this example we need to look at the series of events in the preceding and following context. The preceding passage has the attention on events: they swore near the river, went on, Mosquito's limbs and body turned skinny one by one, and they went to stay in the hostel. *maa* occurs only once in the passage, namely in the clause that says, 'They MAA were shown a hostel'. This clause puts all the participants in the new location, the hostel. Then, in the example, each of the five clauses begins with a coreferential pronoun referring to Mosquito and each one of the pronouns is marked with *maa*. The narrator's purpose in doing this is to keep the audience attention on the participant, Mosquito, and on his plight, rather than on any events. In fact, the events lie down (clause 1), get up (2), tiptoe (3), wake up (4) and get up (5) are not actions that advance the story plot.

In the passage following the example the attention is back on the events moving the plot. *maa* occurs twice, once to mark Hand who comes back on stage, the second time to mark Mosquito who finally admits his theft. But consecutive *maa*'s do not come on a series of coreferential pronouns as they did in the text excerpt of example 10.

2. MAA CLAUSE INITIALLY

If *maa* occurs clause initially, it subordinates the information in the clause. To subordinate information, *maa* occurs initially before a main clause, and *ta* immediately before the verb phrase. *ta* shifts the clause information off the main event line and *maa* acts as a subordinator. The *maa* ... *ta* construction can occur sentence initially or after the main verb of the sentence. When it occurs sentence initially, it functions as a headless relative (examples 11, 12, 15, 16, 19 below). When it follows the main verb, it functions as the object or manner complement of that verb (examples 13, 14, 23).

maa ...ta can express relationships of time (examples 11, 12), manner (13, 14), and occasionally cause (15, 16).

Time relationships:

- 11 ¹Deewo yaanwɛnde, MAA ti TA woosi yerika ti ñ
 yesterday evening WHEN we REL finish.perf work we seq
 kori, ²n maa ñ takun pasitɛɛri yete.
 go home.df I now look seq come.df pastor house
 'Last night, when we had finished work and went home, ²I went
 to the pastor's house.'

Example 11 is found at the beginning of a story, when a major setting needs to be established for the events that follow. Note that the situational information given by the **maa ... ta** clause is preceded by the compatible time expression **deewo yaanwɛnde** 'yesterday evening'. Note that clause 1 is new information.

The next example occurs in a different context, in the middle of a text.

- 12 **CONTEXT:** the speaker and his friends were walking through the bush.

¹MAA ti TA condi, ²yontoyon maa kpiiri nuɲa.
 WHEN we REL go.prog one now look direct.prog in front
 'While we were walking, ²one of us walked in front.'

Note that the information in clause 1 of example 12 is given information, retrievable from the preceding context.

Maa ... ta in a time relationship can express both consecutive (example 11) and simultaneous (example 12) events. The aspect of the verb in the relative clause indicates which kind we are dealing with. For simultaneous events we find the progressive aspect, for consecutive ones the perfective aspect.

Manner relationships:

If **maa ... ta** expresses a manner relationship, it does not occur sentence initially, but rather as the complement of a main verb.

- 13 ¹N nɛki n yi tɔkɔ ²MAA Wɛɲuro daaŋo
 I want.stat I you.pl explain.df HOW God the other day
 TA ti pɛnna ³sa ti bo Puuya.
 REL us save.perf when we be.ep Puuya
 'I want to explain to you ²how God saved us the other day,
³when we were in Puuya.'

'How God saved us...' (clauses 2 and 3) functions as a manner complement to the main verb 'explain'.

- 14 **CONTEXT:** In a sermon the speaker calls the hearers to do God's work.

¹Dà ba i sa ²ò de ³ti kà puke ⁴MAA ti TA
it neg be.ep that he say.perf we it hold.df HOW we rel

nɛki
want.stat

'¹It is not that ²he (God) said ³we should do it (the work)
⁴how we want.'

Again, 'how we want' functions as a manner complement to 'do the work'.

Causal relationships:

If *maa ... ta* expresses a causal relationship, it occurs sentence initially as a headless relative.

- 15 **CONTEXT:** A hunter went hunting a lot. His father told him only to hunt on this side of the stream. When he had hunted everything on this side, he saw there were animals on the other side.

¹ò maa ninti faaka daḡare yakisu bo.
he now look see.prog stream other side animals be.ep

²MAA ò TA ninti yakisu bo faaka daḡare, ³ò sɛki
AS he REL see.prog animals be.ep stream other side he then

ṅ bansi sa ⁴ò da daḡi ⁵ò nɛɛ su ta.
asp think.df that he fut cross.df he there them shoot.df

'¹He saw there were animals on the other side of the stream.
²As he saw there were animals on the other side of the stream,
³he thought ⁴he would cross and ⁵shoot them there.'

The *maa ... ta* in clause 2 introduces a headless relative reflecting a causal meaning. Note that it is given information referring back to the information of clause 1.

- 16 **CONTEXT:** The hunter story explains why the whites are richer than the blacks. At the end of the story we hear the following conclusion:

¹MAA ò TA koi yaki ḡa, ²danda-di seke yuḡo
AS he REL kill.perf animal that this foc cause.perf today

yiporiba ta kpaati dà ṅ kpɛndi yiribitiriba.
whites rel be rich.dv it seq exceed.df blacks.

'¹As he killed that animal, ²that is what caused that today the white people are richer than the blacks.'

Example 16 shows an extremely emphasized cause-effect relationship. The causal flavour of *maa ... ta* is triply reinforced by *danda-di seke* 'that is what caused'. This construction often occurs at the end of folktales to make the point of the tale unmistakably clear. (Folktales often try to explain some phenomenon of the present, actual world.)

It seems that 'time, manner, and cause' is a very wide area of meaning for one particle. However, the speaker has the means to be explicit if he wants to. So **maa ... ta** is a more general conjunction used when the speaker does not want to be explicit, or when he does not want to be redundant.

Maa ... ta only occasionally expresses a cause relationship, and in these cases the causality inherent in **maa** itself is weak.

When the speaker wants the causality to be clear and explicit, **maatori ... ta** is used. However, the conjunction **maatori** cannot occur sentence initially. It occurs in conclusions, but not in the flow of a narrative. **Tori** on its own is a postposition meaning 'for'. So the compound **maatori** can be literally translated by 'for which reason'.

Examples:

- 17 **CONTEXT:** The speaker tells how the Israelites were punished in the desert for their unbelief towards God. He comes to the following conclusion:

¹**Bà** den kp̄ii -di c̄ka mii, ²**MAATORI** bà TA paana naare.
they dp die.perf foc way in BECAUSE they REL not faith

'¹They died en route ²because they did not have faith.'

- 18 **CONTEXT:** In a sermon we hear about the effects of the things of the world on people. The conclusion is as follows:

¹**Dà** bibi sa ti fiki yanduuya denda,
it ask.perf that we discard.df world poss

²**MAATORI** ti TA yini sa dà i yonda daa ta
BECAUSE we REL know.ep that it be.ep something which rel

da miḡi -di.
fut pass.df foc

'¹We have to discard the things of the world, ²because we know that it is something that will pass.'

In the examples 17 and 18 **maatori** introduces the second clause and makes it explicitly the reason for the information of the first clause. Both sentences conclude the paragraph they occur in.

Maatori cannot occur sentence initially. However it is possible to invert the order of clauses in the above sentences and to replace the **maatori** by **maa**. Example 17 would then look like the following elicited sentence:

- 19 ¹**MAA** bà TA paana naare, ²bà den kp̄ii -di
AS they REL not have.ep faith they dp die.perf foc

c̄ka mii.
way in

'¹As they did not have faith, ² they died en route.'

This sentence could, like example 17, be the conclusion of the paragraph it occurs in, provided clause 1 is given information, or it could be part of a narrative passage. In any case the emphasis on the cause is weak.

The relationship of manner can be made explicit by using *sa maa ... ta*, which expresses not just manner, but also similarity and is best translated by 'like'.

20 ¹N nɛki n fɔ ²SA MAA Wɛɣuro TA nɛki.
I want.stat I live.df LIKE WHAT God REL want.stat

Sa maa is literally translated by 'like what', which means, in fact, the same thing as 'how'.

21 **CONTEXT:** The speaker comes to the end of his report on how God had saved him from the snake.

¹Wɛɣuro ti pɛnna, ²SA MAA Wɛɣuro yaama TA yoote sa:
God us save.perf LIKE WHAT God word REL say.perf that:

'¹God saved us, ²like what the Bible said.'

CONTEXT: 'Whenever you go somewhere, and even if you tread on snakes, I will help you and you won't be bitten.'

If *sa* occurs on its own, it means 'like' in an adverbial phrase. Example:

22 **CONTEXT:** Someone was very thirsty and is now drinking.

ò yāu SA yoyo.
he drink.prog LIKE camel
'He is drinking like a camel.'

It is not surprising, that both *maatori ... ta* and *sa maa ... ta* do not occur frequently in narrative texts, but occur much more often in exhortatory and expository text.

Maa can also function as a relative pronoun of a headless relative construction as in examples 23 and 24. (Relative clauses with obligatory heads are different surface structures and have a restrictive function. They are described in section 4.)

23 **CONTEXT:** The hunter, who saw animals on the other side of the stream, thought he wanted to cross the stream.

ò ñ tɛndi ²MAA ò kpento TA wò maasi.
he seq remember.df WHAT his father REL him tell.perf
'¹He remembered ²what his father had told him.'

Here the headless relative clause 2 is the (propositional) object of the verb 'remember'.

24 **CONTEXT:** The speaker has come to the end of a narrative on how God had saved him and his friends when they faced a snake in the bush. He closes with the following conclusion:

¹MAA Wɛɣuro TA nɛki, ²mamma-di MAA TA da basi.
WHAT God REL want.stat that foc WHAT REL fut do.df

'¹What God wants, ²that is what will be done.'

In the examples 23 and 24 **maa** ... **ta** is not a conjunction, but the relative pronoun of a headless relative. It corresponds to the English 'what' in 'what God wants' or 'what his father told him'.

3. MAA CLAUSE FINALLY

If **maa** occurs clause finally, it has a demonstrative function. There are two variants of this usage: it can either reinforce the meaning of an ideophone or it can be a demonstrative pronoun with anaphoric reference to the preceding context.

In the following two examples the ideophones **tem** and **caii** have an adverbial function. **Tem** means 'a lot', and **caii** means something like 'absolutely, completely'. For example, when, after a meal the food is all finished **caii**, there is not even a crumb left over. In example 26 below the **fonio** (a kind of very fine grain) should be cleaned **caii**, i.e., no dirt at all should remain.

The function of **maa** is to further reinforce the meaning of the ideophone. A possible gloss for **maa** could be 'look how!'.

Examples:

25 **CONTEXT:** There was a big famine in the country.

Taambu maa ñ dori MAA tem.
karite tree but seq produce.df LOOK HOW id
'But the karite tree produced, look how much!'

26 **CONTEXT:** Voodoo visited Death and came home with a special plan in mind.

¹Kaasibu seke bu peebe ñ wusi peema,
voodoo cause.perf his wives seq wash.df fonio

²ma ñ dɛuki MAA caii.
it opt get clean. df LOOK HOW id

'¹Voodoo made his wives wash some fonio ²so it would get clean: look, no dirt is left!'

The next two examples show **maa** functioning as a demonstrative pronoun with anaphoric reference to information in the preceding context.

27 **CONTEXT:** Voodoo, having been cheated by Death, planned to get his own back by frustrating Death. So he had his wives wash some fonio and stick it to the mat that served as a door. When Death came to visit him, Voodoo told him to come in. When Death pushed the mat aside, the fonio fell on the floor and so Voodoo had an excuse to get angry with Death.

¹Kaasibu wa: 'Tèn basi n baḡare tiirima, o
Voodoo say.ep first make. df my door straight you.sg

maa yuḡun ti daaran.'
now look enter.al.df we greet.df

²Kuun ka basi MAA bu ka cante sa
 death when do.perf THIS, he when take.perf that
 bu duure dà wa: 'Yararaa.'
 he hang up.df it say.ep id

'¹Voodoo said: 'First make my door straight, then enter and we shall greet each other. ²When Death did this, when he picked up (the fonio) to hang it up, it said 'Yararaa'. (Yararaa imitates the noise of the falling grain.) In other words, he did not manage to fix the door up, so he still could not come in to talk to Voodoo. (The final outcome of the story is that Death never succeeded in entering the house.)'

The *maa* 'this' in clause 2 refers back to the information of clause 1 'first make my door straight'.

28 **CONTEXT:** The speaker is telling how he was going very fast on his motorbike and turning into a road at a crossing when he saw another motorcyclist riding along the road, also going very fast.

¹Maa n ta yɛmbi MAA, ²n mɛɛnde ti nuɣutina
 when I rel see.perf THIS I find.perf we approach.perf
 ti tɔɔba -di.
 we others foc

'¹When I saw this, ²I found that we approached each other.'

Here *maa* 'this' refers back to the situation on the road as described in the preceding context, i.e., two motorbikes going very fast and one of them turning out of a crossroads onto another road.

The demonstrative *maa* with anaphoric reference can be part of a fixed expression like *maa den ponde yini* 'after this' or *maa borika* 'like this'. Such fixed expressions can come in any position in the clause. Their use is illustrated in the next two examples.

29 **CONTEXT:** In a discourse about house building, it was first mentioned that a complete house needs to have a foundation, walls, and a roof. The function of the foundation and the walls was then discussed in detail. Sent. 29 is the transition to the discussion of the roof.

¹MAA DEN PONDE YINI, datiku ka bo, bikire
 THIS POSS BACK ON foundation if be.ep wall
 bo, ²wee -di kpaari panto nu?
 be.ep what foc remain.prog now question

'¹After this (lit. on the back of this), if there is a foundation and a wall, ²what is now remaining (i.e., missing in order to have a complete house)?'

In the example *maa den ponde yini* is a fixed expression meaning 'after this'. *MAA* 'this' refers back to the detailed discussion of foundation and walls.

30 **CONTEXT:** It is generally known in Waama country that too much late rain can destroy the millet crop. After a heavy late rain, someone said:

¹Tando ka dɔru MAA BORIKA, ²ti kan ba kɔbu
rain if fall.prog THIS MANNER we more neg harvest.prog

sooya.

millet

'¹If rain is falling like this, ²we won't harvest any millet anymore.'

Maa borika, literally 'this manner', is also a fixed expression and means 'like this'. **Maa** 'this' refers back to a known situation in the current cultural context, i.e., the rain threatening the millet crop.

Having examined the different usages of **maa**, we shall now display their various positions, meanings, and functions on chart 1.

Chart 1: A summary of the functions of **maa**

Position	Meaning + Function	Example
after the subject	'but' - contrast or contraexpectation, 'now look' - participant salience, prolonged participant salience	1 - 4 5 - 9 10
clause initially and a) sentence initially	'when', 'while' -time relationships (can be preceded by a time phrase), 'as' - causal relationships,	12 11 15 16 19
b) initially in a clause that follows the main verb	'how' - manner complement of of main verb, 'what' - object of main verb in a headless relative construction	13 14 23 24
c) as part of a compound connective	maatori 'because' sa maa 'like'	17 18 20 21
clause finally followed by an ideophone	'this' - demonstrative pronoun with anaphoric reference to preceding information, (as part of a fixed expression it can occur anywhere in the clause), 'look how!' - reinforcing the ideophone	27 28 29 30 25 26

4. DEMONSTRATIVES AND RELATIVES

In section 2 **maa** was shown to have a relative function, while in section 3 the same surface form **maa** was shown to have a demonstrative function. We shall now have a closer look at demonstrative and relative structures in Waama.

There are various noun classes in Waama. For each noun class there is one surface form which serves equally well as a demonstrative adjective 'this' in the phrase 'this + noun' or as a relative pronoun 'which' in the construction 'noun which X'.

Chart 2 gives examples of these forms for 3 nouns representing three different noun classes.⁴

Chart 2: Demonstratives and relatives

	Demonstrative adjective	Relative pronoun (with ta)
yiro 'man'	woroo 'this'	woroo 'who'
yerika 'work'	kaa 'this'	kaa 'which'
yaama 'speech'	maa 'this'	maa 'which'

The relative structure is fairly straightforward: the relative pronoun (RPRN) comes at the beginning of the relative clause and **ta** comes immediately before the verb phrase (examples 31, 32). This kind of structure is the same kind as the **maa ... ta** subordinating structure of section 2, except that here, there are various different pronouns in the position where the **maa** was in section 2. Furthermore, the function of the relative clause here is restrictive, whereas the subordinated clauses of section 2 have a non-restrictive function. Examples:

31 **Yerika KAA ti TA da puke kà kpɛn.**
work RPRN we REL fut hold.df it big.dv
'The work that we do is extensive.'

32 **N mi bisu SUU TA takinde.**
I not know.ep children RPRN REL come.perf
'I don't know the children that came.'

33 **CONTEXT:** The speaker tells how he was riding along the road on his motorbike and almost crashed into another motorbike. They had both come to a standstill and, still frightened, looked at each other speechless:

Ti ba yɛn WOROO TA daari.
we neg see.perf RPRN REL right.dv
'We did not see who (which one) was right.'

In example 33 we have a headless relative construction. The referent of the relative pronoun **woroo** is either one of the two participants mentioned in the previous context and is well defined in this sense.

Looking at example 23 again (repeated below for the reader's convenience), we can now see clearly that we are dealing with the same structure as in example 33.

23 1ò ñ tɛndi 2MAA ò kpento TA wò maasi.
 he seq remember.df WHAT his father REL him tell.perf
 '1He remembered 2what his father had told him.'

The clause introduced by *maa* (clause 2) functions as the object of the verb 'remember'. It is a headless relative whose meaning is completely understood on referring back to the advice that the hunter's father had given him. Although the noun *yaama* 'speech' was never mentioned in the preceding context, the speaker understands *maa* as referring to this abstract noun.

In order to support our hypothesis that *maa* is a demonstrative in certain contexts, we shall also have a closer look at demonstrative structures.

The demonstrative adjectives function as near deictics, i.e. they point to something that is close to the speaker either physically or psychologically.

34 **CONTEXT:** There was a hunter who hunted a lot. His father told him:

10 ka waati 2o ba seji o daɲi
 you.sg if hunt.prog you.sg neg accept.df you.sg cross.df

FAAKA KAA.
 STREAM DEM

'1If you go hunting, 2don't accept to cross this stream.'

Here *kaa* is the demonstrative corresponding to the noun *faaka* 'stream'. The stream was obviously known to both the hunter and his father, and *kaa* indicates that they were both clear as to what stream the father was talking about.

35 **CONTEXT:** In a sermon the speaker talks about Jesus:

ò cɛsɛnde TIŋA KAA den mii.
 he descend.al.perf EARTH DEM poss in
 'He came down onto this earth.'

It is clear to both the speaker and the hearer what earth we are talking about. *Kaa* 'this' highlights the fact that Jesus came to this earth, close to us, even though it is known that there is no other earth.

The demonstratives that belong to the various noun classes are used as demonstrative adjectives with anaphoric reference, not as demonstrative pronouns.

NOTES

¹Waama is spoken in the north of Benin, West Africa, by some 32,000 people (Commission Nationale de Linguistique 1980a:12). These people are located within the province of Atacora and are scattered throughout the administrative districts of Natitingou, Toukountouna, Tanguiéta and Kouandé (Commission Nationale de Linguistique 1980a:62-63). The language has been classified by Westermann and Bryan (1952:68) as belonging to the Gur family of Niger-Congo languages.

The Société Internationale de Linguistique began research work among the Waama people in 1981. I have been a member of the project since August 1984. The present paper is based on some 130 pages of text representing the following discourse genres: narrative, conversational, procedural, and expository/exhortatory.

Field research has been carried out under an agreement with the Centre National de Linguistique Appliquée of Benin. I am grateful to them for their permission to conduct research in that country. Many Waama people, particularly Samuel Pormaté and Martin Sakoura, generously contributed their knowledge and time to this project. Special thanks go to Dr. Ivan Lowe, International Linguistic Consultant of the Summer Institute of Linguistics, for his invaluable help in the preparation of this paper at a workshop held in Lomé, Togo, from November to December 1986.

²In Waama there are 14 consonant phonemes: voiceless stops p, t, c, k, kp; voiced stops b, d (one allophone of d is represented by r in the orthography); fricatives f, s; nasals m, n, ŋ; semivowels y, w. Oral vowels are i, e, ɛ, a, u, o, ɔ; nasal vowels are ɪ̃, ɛ̃, ā, ū, ɔ̃. There are two phonemic tones, high and low. They are not written in the orthography. By convention certain particles and pronouns are marked with an accent '́', when confusion between minimal tone pairs is possible.

³Following is a list of the abbreviations used in the examples:

al	allative	neg	negation
cont	particle of continuity	opt	optative particle
dem	demonstrative	perf	perfective aspect
df	dependent form	pl	plural
dp	distant past	poss	particle of possession
dv	descriptive verb	prog	progressive aspect
em	emphatic form	rel	relative marker
ep	extra-paradigmatic verb	rprn	relative pronoun
foc	focus	seq	sequential particle
fut	future tense marker	sg	singular
hab	habitual	stat	stative aspect
id	ideophone		

⁴The following chart gives the same information for representative nouns of all possible noun classes.

	singular	plural	pronoun		rel/dem	
			sg	pl	sg	pl
man	yiro	yiriba	ō	bā	woroo	baa
rice	baakifa	baaki	fa	yi	faa	yii
tree	tiibu	tiina	bu	na	buu	naa
throat	dɔɔku	dɔɔna	ku	na	kuu	naa
work	yerika	yerisu	kā	su	kaa	suu
mosquito	doonfa	doonsu	fa	su	faa	suu
worm	wākitata	wākitana	ta	na	taa	naa
river	bunde	bunya	de	ya	dee	yaa
wood	daaku	daatu	ku	tu	kuu	tuu
speech	yaama	---	ma	--	maa	--
thing	yonda	---	dā	--	daa	--

REFERENCES

- Commission Nationale de Linguistique. 1980a. Mini-atlas de la Province de l'Atacora. Cotonou: Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique.
- Commission Nationale de Linguistique. 1980b. Projet Atlas et Etudes Sociolinguistiques, première phase. Cotonou: Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche Scientifique, Agence de Coopération Culturelle et Technique.
- Lowe, Ivan. 1985. Notes from 1985 Lomé workshop. Unpublished manuscript.
- Marchese, Lynell. 1977. Subordinate clauses as topics in Godie. *Studies in African Linguistics*, Supplement 7: 157-164.
- Peter-Bremicker, Ursula. 1985. Waama: Langue Voltaïque du Bénin. Diploma Thesis. Paris: Ecole Pratique de Hautes Etudes.
- Westermann, Dietrich and M.A. Bryan. 1952. *The Languages of West Africa. Handbook of African Languages, Part II.* London: Oxford University Press.

ERRATUM

Bruce Connell has sent us a correction to a reference at the end of his article on Noun Classification in Lower Cross, *JWAL* XVII.1, May, 1987. The publishing detail for the Mukarovsky article should be "Weiner Volkerkunderliche Mitteilungen, 11(6), 65-83, 1963" not "Africa und Zie".