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Hidden landscapes and the images of the "unseen": from north-west Amazonia to the Middle Sepik region of New Guinea

Abstract: The traditional world of numerous indigenous groups stretches beyond what can be seen with the eyes of an ordinary living human. What does the "unseen" look like? And how accessible, or how well concealed, are the hidden landscapes? To address these questions, we turn to two societies across "Melazonia", a shared complex of beliefs and attitudes which spans Amazonia and New Guinea. The focus is on two societies – the Tariana of the core Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area in north-west Amazonia and the Manambu of the Middle Sepik in New Guinea. Special spirit-only places, where living people are believed to dwell after they die or if a spirit takes them there, are invisible to the eye of common mortals, but can reveal themselves under special circumstances. Among the people of the Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area, these are referred to as "the village/settlement of the Fish-like-people". Among the Manambu of the East Sepik, they are referred to as 'ghost villages'. These share some similarities (e.g., white people's riches), and are dangerous and alluring at the same time. Encounters with what lies beyond the human eye and perhaps human life represent an alternative, lived reality in the Vaupés and among the Manambu. Hidden as they are, they are part of the overall view and the overall landscape, stretching beyond a dichotomy between "real" and "surreal".

Keywords: Amazonia, the Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area, New Guinea, the Manambu, Fish-like people, ghost villages, colonial impact

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> "The wonderful has deep roots in the real and for that reason is able to use the surreal to create metaphors and images of the real that come to feel more real than reality, more truthful than the truth". Salman Rushdie, 2021, "Gabo and I", *Languages of truth. Essays 2003–2020*, p. 127. London: Jonathan Cape.

1 Preamble

The traditional world of numerous indigenous groups stretches beyond what can be seen with the eyes of an ordinary living human. What does the "unseen" look like? And how accessible, or how well concealed, are the hidden landscapes? To address these questions, we turn to two societies across "Melazonia".

As Gregor and Tuzin (2001a: 1) put it, "the question of the sources and the theoretical implications of remarkable similarities between societies in Amazonia and Melanesia" constitute "an intriguing, enduring mystery of culture history". The parallels include similarities in mythological and cosmological systems, men's cults, and flexibility in the composition of local and descent groups (the focus of chapters in Gregor and Tuzin 2001a, especially Bonnemère 2001 and Hugh-Jones 2001). These similarities – further emphasized by Descola and Taylor (1993: 14) – underlie the concept of Melazonia as a shared complex of beliefs and attitudes (originally proposed by Stephen Hugh-Jones at a conference leading to the publication of Gregor and Tuzin 2001b).

Our focus is on two societies – the Tariana of the core Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area in north-west Amazonia (see Section 2) and the Manambu of the Middle Sepik in New Guinea (see Section 3). The groups in question share the aftermath of the Colonial impact. They differ in the ways in which it is internalized, and in the conceptualization paths of the unseen world of spirits.

2 'Another world': a view from the Vaupés River Basin in north-west Amazonia

In §2.1, we start with a brief outline of the Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area, its cultural area and the place of the Tariana in it. We then turn to the classification of living beings in §2.2. In §2.3 we look at special grammatical properties of human referents in Tariana. The images of 'another world' – the world of Fish-like spirits – are the topic of §2.4. In §2.5 we turn to a few linguistic aspects of the stories about the Fish-likes. Their special features in the lore and the mythological cosmos of the Tariana and their neighbours are discussed in §2.6.

2.1 The Tariana within the context of the Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area

Tariana is spoken by about 70 people in two villages (Santa Rosa and Periquitos) within the linguistic area of the Vaupés River Basin in Brazil.

The multilingual Vaupés River Basin in north-west Amazonia spans adjacent areas of Brazil and Colombia. This is a well-established linguistic and cultural area known for its institutionalized multilingualism, based on the principle of language-based exogamy between speakers of Tariana and its East Tukanoan neighbours, which include Tukano (or Ye'pâ Masa), Piratapuya (or Wa'ikhana), Wanano (or Kotiria), Desano, and Tuyuca. Its major sociolinguistic feature is obligatory societal multilingualism which follows the principle of linguistic exogamy: "those who speak the same language with us are our brothers, and we do not marry our sisters". Language affiliation is inherited from one's father and is a mark of identity for each person. There is a traditional inhibition against mixing languages, viewed in terms of using recognizable loan forms, especially from Tukano or any other East Tukanoan language. The few borrowings from East Tukanoan languages are fully assimilated and no longer recognizable as foreign.

Intensive language contact between Tariana and East Tukanoan languages has resulted in the diffusion of numerous structural patterns. Comparison between Tariana and closely related Arawak languages outside the area helps distinguish features diffused into Tariana from Tukanoan languages from those inherited from the proto-language.

The Tariana used to be fluent in several East Tukanoan languages. Throughout the history of the Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area in Brazil in the 20th century, Tukano – the majority East Tukanoan language – has spread at the cost of other indigenous languages (including Tariana). Currently, Tukano is effectively the main indigenous language of the region, and all the extant Tariana use it on a day-to-day basis. In the 1990s and early 2000s, older and traditionally oriented Tariana spoke Tariana with their children. Now that most elders are gone, the majority of ethnic Tariana speak Tukano at home most of the time. Those who have moved to São Gabriel da Cachoeira – the capital of the municipality of the same name, which encompasses the Vaupés Basin – also speak regional Portuguese.

The exogamous network encompasses the East Tukanoans and the Tariana. They constitute the **core Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area**, based on the traditional societal multilingualism, intermarriage, and shared lifestyle and beliefs. They live on the riverbanks and share numerous cultural features, including slash-and-burn agriculture and fishing more than hunting (see Brüzzi 1977, and summaries in Aikhenvald 2010, 2022a). They divide into hierarchically organized clans (also called "sibs": see, for instance, S. Hugh-Jones 1979; C. Hugh-Jones 1979;

Jackson 1983; Aikhenvald 2010; and references therein). The internal hierarchy of clans is traditionally determined by the creation myth and the order of emergence of each clan (Chernela 1993, 2011 and p.c. on the Wanano; Aikhenvald 2003: 14–16 on the Tariana; Hugh-Jones 1988 on the Barasana).[1]

The river-dwelling Indians of the core Vaupés area co-exist with a cultural group of indigenous people who live away from the main river and are outside the multilingual exogamous network – the so-called *Makú*. Members of the 'Máku' cultural complex, including the Húpd'äh and the Yuhupdeh,[2] used to be essentially nomadic hunters and gatherers (some have acquired agricultural practices from their Tukanoan-speaking neighbours). They do not participate in the marriage network based on linguistic exogamy, and are generally considered

1 See Aikhenvald (2012: 75–83; 2022a) and references therein. Additional restrictions on marriage alliances in the area may be partly explained by the common origins of some groups. For instance, the Tariana do not intermarry with the Desano (perhaps due to the putative Arawak origins of the Desano).

Multilingualism in the Vaupés River Basin Area was first mentioned in a short paper by Sorensen (1967/1972), who addressed just the East-Tukanoan-speaking Colombian side of the area without taking account of the more diverse situation in Brazil (and further regions of Colombia). Sorensen's short paper opened a window onto some of the basics of the Colombian side of the multilingual Vaupés River, but provided only a partial view. A half-century later, the area of study has been extended into Brazil and other parts of Colombia, covering the entire area. Sorensen's work is of historical interest only; it has been superseded by more inclusive and detailed analysis (see, e.g., Aikhenvald 2010, 2012, 2022a).

The Húpd'äh are outside the language-based exogamous network of the Vaupés Area and are not their typical representatives. Throughout this paper, I use the names Húpd'äh and Yuhupdeh – the ethnonyms used by the people themselves, in agreement with the in-depth linguistic and anthropological analysis by Carvalho (2020), Carvalho and Carvalho (2011), and Silva and Silva (2012) (with some additions from linguistic work by Epps 2006, 2008a-b; see also Aikhenvald 2018d).

2 From a linguistic perspective, groups traditionally referred to as 'Makú' fall into two genetic units, not demonstrably related:

(1) Húpd'äh and Yuhupdeh, spoken in the Vaupés region, and also off the rivers Papurí and Tiquié (tributaries of the Vaupés in Brazil and Colombia) (see Carvalho and Carvalho 2011; Carvalho 2020; Silva and Silva 2012; and references therein) and Dâw (Martins 1994, 2004; Martins and Martins 1999), spoken outside the area, on the Upper Rio Negro (see Epps and Bolaños 2017 on genetic relationships between these languages). An alternative term for this grouping, believed to include Nadëb from the Middle Rio Negro, is *Nadahup*, rejected by the Húpd'äh and the Yuhupdeh because of its pejorative overtones, as meaning 'people of nothing': *nada* means 'nothing' in Portuguese, and the word *hup* means 'people' in both languages (Marcelo Carvalho 2020 and p.c.).

(2) Kakua, or Bará, spoken between the Papurí and the Vaupés rivers, mostly in Colombia, and its close relative Nikak (or Nukak), spoken in the vicinity of the Inirida and the Guaviare Rivers in Colombia (further away from the Vaupés; Epps and Bolaños 2017).

inferior by the members of the core Vaupés, often being described as their "servants" or "soldiers". Neither the Húpd'äh nor the Yuhupdeh have institutionalized multilingualism based on multilingual exogamy with other groups. Recently, a few instances of intermarriage between the Húpd'äh, the Yuhupdeh, and the Tukano have been attested (Marcelo Carvalho, Cácio Silva, p.c.). The Húpd'äh and the Yuhupdeh are currently developing new multilingual patterns with varying degrees of knowledge of Tukano (the major lingua franca of the region) and also of Portuguese (depending on the community: Marcelo Carvalho 2020 and p.c. 2023).

The traditional basis of their interaction with East Tukanoan peoples used to be the preparation of arrow poison, and the exchange of forest produce and game for fish, manioc and other fruits of slash-and-burn agriculture. Members of the exogamous marriage network, East Tukanoans and Tariana, have no knowledge of the "inferior" Makú languages, which are mocked by elders as reminiscent of "animal cries". Members of the Makú cultural complex are rarely included in origin myths.[3]

The interaction between the Makú and the River Indians in the Vaupés River Basin area does not involve institutionalized multilingualism, nor even full proficiency in the other group's language. There is some unilateral diffusion of patterns – from individual East Tukanoan languages into the languages of the Húp'däh, Yuhupdeh, and Kakua. This is quite unlike the patterns of language interaction within the core Vaupés area, where languages are bound in a multilingual network of language-based exogamy and ensuing multilateral diffusion (for a summary of linguistic diffusion within the core Vaupés area and beyond it, see Aikhenvald 2022a).

We will now turn to the world of humans and non-humans through the prism of the stories of the Tariana, speakers of a typical core Vaupés language.

3 See Silva and Silva (2012: 71–73, 77) for a comprehensive discussion of intra-clan exogamy and the issue of clan hierarchy among the Yuhupdeh and other groups within the *Makú* complex; see Silverwood-Cope (1990: 121, 127) on clan hierarchy and marriage patterns among the Kakua; see Reid (1979: 112), Carvaho and Carvalho (2011), and also Epps (2008a: 14–15) on the relationships between clans among the Húpd'äh. Silva and Silva (2012) discuss the recent development of slash-and-burn agriculture among the Yuhupdeh and the Húpd'äh; Carvalho (2020) addresses the mythology of the Húpd'äh. The Arawak origin of the term *Makú* (which is pejorative in the area) is discussed in Aikhenvald (2022a). Stephen Hugh-Jones (p.c. 2023) reports that the *Makú* are included in some versions of the Tukanoan "anaconda canoe" origin story.

2.2 The world and its inhabitants

The indigenous peoples of the core Vaupés River Basin share the spaces in which they live with other groups – White People, or non-Indians, animals, and spirits who inhabit the jungle. In §2.2.1, we start with those whose basic nature is human, focusing on the Tariana.[4]

2.2.1 The world of humans

Humans are divided into two groups, summarized in Diagram 1. The terms are given in Tariana. The classification is similar across the core Vaupés languages.[5] There is no generic term for all humans.

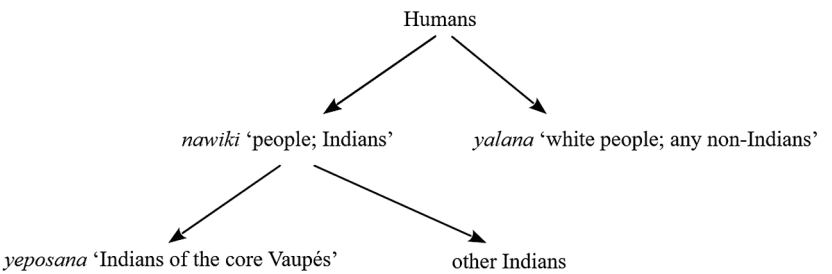

Figure 1: Categorization of humans in Tariana.

The notion of *nawiki* covers all indigenous peoples, both within the Vaupés area and beyond it, including the Baniwa of Içana-Kurripako (an Arawak-speaking group close to the Tariana; see Aikhenvald 2022a and references therein) and also more remote groups, including the Yanomami. The term *nawi-ki* (people-SINGULATIVE) has a robust Arawak etymology (from Proto-Arawak **nawi* 'people').

4 The discussion of the Tariana is based on an ever-growing corpus of stories and myths, collected over the past thirty years and analysed in collaboration with the speakers (see the latest description in Aikhenvald 2023). All the Tariana examples are given in the practical orthography also in use in the Tariana school, *Irine idakine*, in Iauaretê, Amazonas, Brazil.

5 According to Stephen Hugh-Jones (p.c. 2023), the Barasana distinguish *masa* 'human beings; indigenous people' from *gawa* 'non-indigenous people, foreigners' (covering White people and Afro-Colombians, and also the Cariban-speaking Carijona). The *masa* or *masa goro* 'real/true indigenous people' subsume speakers of East Tukanoan languages who share origin myths, ornaments, and lifestyles.

The *nawiki* divide into the Indians of the core Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area, termed *Yeposana*, and other Indians (with no general name, referred to just as *nawiki*). This is also the term for the Kubeo Indians (speakers of an East Tukanoan language within the core Vaupés) (Aikhenvald 2013: 60; Brüzzi 1977; the same principle is reflected in the Wanano terms for Indians listed in Waltz 2012: 31). A Desana will be *nawiki* and *Yeposana*. A Yanomami will be *nawiki* but not *Yeposana.* All the *Yeposana* are related. The Tariana are considered consanguine relatives, and other *Yeposana* will be affinal relatives (with the exception of the Desano, who are considered 'younger siblings' of the Tariana).

What defines humans across the board is language. The status of the Makú people, *ma(:)ki-ne*, is ambiguous. They are not considered *yeposana.* Some younger speakers say that they belong to the class of *nawiki* (usually in the context of the membership of indigenous organizations). Most traditional speakers of Tariana do not count them among *nawiki*, instead referring to them as *itsiri kayu-peni* (animal like-ANIM.PL) 'animal-like ones'. Members of the core Vaupés mock the speech of the Makú (the Húpd'äh and the Yuhupdeh they are exposed to) as unintelligible sounds like the noise of birds and animals (see also Biocca 1965; Brüzzi 1977; Carvalho 2020; Carvalho and Carvalho 2011; Silva and Silva 2012).

The notion of *yalana* covers all non-Indians and roughly correlates to what are referred to as "White people". Asians and Afro-Brazilians are also considered *yalana* (as is evidenced in Tariana stories). In Tariana stories, the *yalana* appear as overbearing bosses (this is also reflected in the A = S ambitransitive verb *-yalana-ta* (-white.person-CAUS) 'boss someone, be the boss (of someone)'). The term *yala-na* consists of *yala*, from Língua Geral Amazônica *yara* 'man' and the collective suffix *-na* 'people of'.

This is one of the rare borrowed forms in the language, which are no longer recognized as such. Similar to other languages of the area, there is a strong inhibition against recognizably borrowed forms (more on this in Aikhenvald 2010). Língua Geral Amazônica (Nhêengatú), a Tupí-Guaraní-based lingua franca, was formerly widespread in the area, and was familiar to older speakers of Tariana (a comprehensive discussion and references are in Aikhenvald 2013, see also Stradelli 1929). The same root *yara* appears in the terms for 'white man, boss' across East Tukanoan languages of the Vaupés, e.g., Wanano *ñara-iro* (white.man-MASC.SG) 'white man, patron' (Waltz 2012: 166). The collective suffix *-na* appears in numerous ethnonyms across the Vaupés River Basin Area and beyond it (including *Tariana, Yeposana, Mawayana, Carijona*, and many others) and may be a remnant of earlier patterns of areal diffusion (Aikhenvald 2022a).

The status of the *yalana* is ambiguous in yet another way. On the one hand, they are not considered the same as *nawiki* 'people, Indians' within the human classification. On the other hand, they are being incorporated into the origin myths.

What does this involve? Each *Yeposana* 'core Vaupés Indian' group has their own myth of origin which reflects the order of emergence of each clan and establishes the clan hierarchies – which clan appeared first and in what way (see Hugh-Jones 1979, 1988 on the Barasana; Chernela 1993 on the Wanano; Brüzzi 1977 for the traditional cross-core Vaupés patterns, mostly based on his work with the Tukano; and Aikhenvald 2003: 12; 2013).

Across the Vaupés area, myths are not fixed in stone. They change and transform to incorporate changing realities. As Hugh-Jones (1988: 141) put it, "for the Vaupés Indians, and presumably for many other tribal societies too, myth and history are not mutually incompatible, but co-exist as two separate and complementary models of representing the past". The White people have been made part of the origin myths, on a par with the sub-groups of the Tariana and of other Yeposana.

A major origin myth of the Tariana states that, due to their "knowledge", the Yalana managed to get hold of guns and clothing and to understand the value of money, while other groups (e.g., Tariana, Kubeo, Desano, Piratapuya) were helpless, "like children" (see, for instance, Hugh-Jones 1988 on how the White people were incorporated into the mythological cycle of the East Tukanoan group Barasana, and the description of the integration of the White people within the clan structure of the Tukano by Lima Barreto 2013: 62, based on the information obtained from his father, a Tukano shaman). That is, due to their cunning and quick reactions, the Yalana (White people) acquired the riches that they now possess, outdoing the ancestors of the Indians, who got little.[6]

As Hugh-Jones (1988: 151–152) puts it, "White People are integrated into myth at levels which range from the off-the-cuff parallels drawn between new phenomena and elements of myth through to higher-level contrasts and oppositions between whole myths which emphasize the differences between Whites and Indians and systematize the relations between them". However, "White people are not simply the equivalent of another Indian group". As we saw in Figure 1, they remain separate in human classification. At the same time, they are integrated into the complex of human-like entities as a target of transformations by shape-shifting entities. This is what we turn to now.

6 The transformations in the Tariana origin myths, with the inclusion of White people, can be dated to the early 1990s (Aikhenvald 2013). They were absent from earlier versions of the Tariana myths (documented in Brüzzi 1994: 69).

2.2.2 Shape-shifters: animals, jungle spirits, and creatures from 'another world'

A feature that permeates most if not all Amazonian communities is "a basic animistic ontological stance whereby humans and animals who share their interiority (*anima*) but differ in their physicality form part of a shared relational frame of interaction" (Carlin 2018: 315). This is captured under the notion of Amazonian "perspectivism" (see Viveiros de Castro 2013, and further references in Aikhenvald 2022b). At the beginning of time, various entities shared a general human condition. Throughout the mythological history of creation and the ensuing disruption, the varied types of humans – especially those who had "misbehaved" – transformed into animals and jungle spirits. The "continuity between species" manifests itself in the integration of humans, animals, and spirits into a "community of similars". Amazonian perspectivism operates on the basis of an intrinsic unity of humans on the one hand, and of animals and other jungle-dwellers on the other. Within the transformative world of Amazonians, a spirit can change its "clothes" (a typically Amazonian term for "outer appearance") and appear, to a human eye, in the disguise of an animal or of another human. The title of an oft-quoted paper by Rivière (1994), "WYSINWYG" ['What you see is not what you get'] captures this idea of the fluidity of disguise and the unity of nature. The intrinsic connection between "people" and animals and spirits is reflected in their shape-shifting nature. With one proviso – high-ranked shamans are the only humans with the capacity to shape-shift. The integration of animals within the world of humans is corroborated by a few grammatical features across Amazonia (including noun categorization and kinship systems).

Animals (*itsiri*) and most bigger birds (*kepiria*) are believed to be former *nawiki.* So are the jungle spirits (a classification and terminology can be found in Table 10, Aikhenvald 1999: 36). They form the following hierarchy in terms of their potency and hostile behaviour.

1. *ñamu,* a most dangerous spirit who can enter 'the clothing', or the outer shape of a person (typically a big white woman) or a jaguar, and is prone to 'stealing' the 'heart' (Tariana *-kale*), or the essence or vitality, of a person (see Aikhenvald 2022c on the notion of 'heart' as the essence of a human, and the actions of *ñamu*). People are aware of what not to do so as not to annoy a *ñamu*. He reacts adversely to small children crying, pregnant or menstruating women, the smell of burnt food in the jungle, eating cold food at night (in the jungle especially), and even to people doing work (e.g., hunting) on Good Friday (incorporating a recent prohibition, imposed on the Tariana by the Catholics since the early 1920s). A *ñamu* can only be overpowered by a shaman.
2. *waliru,* a dangerous spirit, also a shape-shifter, who can appear in the shape of people or animals, but can be overpowered by a human.

3. *ñaki*, a minor spirit who can take the shape of a person, a white deer or a tapir, and can be overpowered by a human.

Other, less dangerous, spirits are *ka-wana ka-hña* (REL-call REL-eat), a scary but harmless one who frightens people with his shout; and two "servants" of *ñamu* and *waliru – salu* 'a large armadillo' and *hurinari* 'a wild cat'. All are potential shape-shifters which appear in an animal disguise (usually not as humans).

A further group of shape-shifting entities are the 'Fish-like' Indians, called *Kuphe-ne Nawiki* (fish-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION Indian). They are categorized as *nawiki*, but do not share their living quarters with people or former people of any sorts (including animals and jungle spirits, former *nawiki*). They live underwater in a world of their own, *pa:-ehkwapi* (one/another-CL:WORLD), literally 'another world'.

The 'Fish-like' people have shape-shifting propensities. They can appear to the human eye as fishes, snakes, crabs and also mammals, especially tapir and deer, the two animal targets of shape-shifting jungle spirits (see, for instance, Reichel-Dolmatoff 1985 on the status of the tapir in north-west Amazonia, and Hugh-Jones 2019 and references therein). The alternative term for this group reflects their non-human disguise: *Mawali-ne Nawiki* (snake-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION Indian) 'Snake-like people'. Their disguise is often referred to as 'skin' or 'clothing' (see, e.g., Carvalho 2020).

The *Kuphene Nawiki,* the 'Fish-like' people, can take on a human shape. In their first appearance to a human in trouble, they are seen as big handsome white women or men, that is, disguised as *Yalana.* They lure unsuccessful hunters (Tariana *husaite*, Portuguese *panema*), or 'men not loved by women' (referred to as *ina meninite*) to "live" with them in their beautiful big underwater houses, hidden from the eyes of ordinary humans (Aikhenvald 1999: 33).[7] These hidden spaces, the status of the *Kuphene Nawiki,* the Fish-likes, and their relationships to the *Nawiki* 'Indians' and, as one of their visible shapes, to *Yalana* 'White people' are the main focus of this section.

Kuphene Nawiki can come into human spaces – river surfaces, the jungle, and even people's gardens – to lure people down below, threaten them, and on occasion help them out. Their status is ambiguous. They appear to be a type of *nawiki* 'indigenous people', and yet they are something else. This echoes the reference to the *wa'î-masi* 'fish person', plural *wa'î-masa* 'fish people' in Tukano as 'an intermediary state of a Tukano person' ("estado intermediário do *ye'pa-masi*""; 'Tukano.cultural. hero-person'; Ramirez 1997, volume 2: 209, 241).

7 More than half of the 120 Tariana stories recorded by myself in collaboration with the Tariana-speaking community contain a mention of the 'Fish-likes'.

The special status of the 'Fish-like' people can be seen through the grammatical make-up of this term in Tariana. This is what we turn to now.

2.3 How humans are special: the grammar of human referents in Tariana

This section – unlike our discussion in §2.2 and in §2.4 – reflects the facts of the Tariana language only. The existence of special features of the class of humans and the treatment of the 'Fish-people' in the neighbouring East Tukanoan languages remains an open question.

In Tariana, as in many languages, human referents form a special subclass of nouns (see Aikhenvald 2015: 87–88 for some general features). Nouns with human referents can be used with the human classifier *-hipa* with number words and can take gender-sensitive derivational suffixes (Aikhenvald 2003: 69, 89).[8]

What further differentiates the subgroups of humans and non-human animates is number marking. Individual animates, humans, and a few culturally important items have a bipartite number system, as follows:

(i) singular: formally unmarked;
(ii) plural: marked in various ways (depending on the semantic group of the noun's referent).

The majority of nouns with animate reference (other than kinship terms) and culturally important items (underived) mark their plurals with *-pe,* e.g., *yawi* 'jaguar', *yawi-pe* 'jaguars', *panisi* 'house', *panisi-pe* 'houses', *pedalie* 'old man', *pedalie-pe* 'old men'.

Subtraction is used for two human nouns (*i:naru* 'woman', *i:na* 'women', *maliẽri* 'shaman', *maliẽ* 'shamans'), and subtraction plus vowel addition is used for one noun, *tsiãri* 'man', *ãtsa* 'men'. Kinship terms have several plural markers, *-pe, -nipe, -sini, -kanape, -ne-ne*, and *-ne.* The choice depends on the kinship term itself.

A tripartite number system is a feature of collective terms with human, or human-like, referents. The values are: collective, singular (with a distinction between masculine and feminine) and individuated plural. There are two sets of markers, (I) and (II).

8 All animate referents require the classifier *-ite/ita* and the demonstrative *hĩ* (see Aikhenvald 2003: 89 for further discussion of classifier use in Tariana). The classification of all animate nouns as animates (rather than based on their shape) is the outcome of areal diffusion from East Tukanoan languages (as outlined in Aikhenvald 2010).

(I) collective *-na* or *-pe* (COLL:PEOPLE) 'people of a group'
singulative *-seri* (MASC.SINGL) 'masculine singular'
singulative *(i)-sa-do* ((INDEF)-spouse-FEM.SG) 'feminine singular'
plural (referents individuated) *-seni* (PL.INDIV) 'individuals of a group'

This technique applies to a number of ethnic groups, namely the Tariana, the Desano, and the Yeposana (also the term for the Kubeo, as mentioned in §2.2.1) – see example (1).

(1) a. *Taria-na* Tariana
Tariana-COLL:PEOPLE
'Tariana people'
b. *Taria-seri*
Tariana-MASC:SINGL
'Tariana person (male)'
c. *Taria-(i)-sa-do*
Tariana-(INDEF)-spouse-FEM.SG
'Tariana woman'
d. *Taria-seni*
Tariana-PL.INDIV
'Tariana individuals'

The origin of each of the ethnonyms is not known (although there are some hypotheses concerning potential Quechua origins of the name *Taria-*).[9]

The ethnonyms or group names of the second type contain a noun – a name of an animal or a substance – with which the group is associated.

(II) collective *-ne* (PL.OF.ASSOCIATION) 'people of a group, similar to the head noun'
singulative *-ne-seri* (MASC.SINGL-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION) 'masculine singular'
singulative *-ne-(i)-sa-do* (PL.OF.ASSOCIATION-(INDEF)-spouse-FEM.SG) 'feminine singular'
plural (referents individuated) *-ne-seni* (PL.OF.ASSOCIATION-PL.INDIV) 'individuals of a group'

9 There are further intricacies for a few other groups in this type of number marking. For instance, the term for the Wanano (also known as Kotiria), *Pa-numa-pe* (one-mouth-PL), does not take the collective *-na*.

An example is in (2). The Tukano people are associated with *yase* 'toucan', as 'people of toucan'.

(2) a. *Yase-ne* Tariana
toucan-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION
'Tukano people'
b. *Yase-ne-seri*
toucan-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION-MASC.SINGL
'a Tukano man'
c. *Yase-ne-(i)sa-do*
toucan-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION-(INDEF)-spouse-FEM.SG
'a Tukano woman'
d. *Yase-ne-seni*
toucan-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION-PL.INDIV
'Tukano individuals'

The same sets exist for other groups of Yeposana, e.g., *Surupe-ne* (clay-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION) 'the Tuyuca' (lit. clay-likes) and *Wiri-ne* (aphrodisiac-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION) 'the Barasana' (lit. aphrodisiac-likes).

The Tariana are believed to have originated out of a drop of blood shed by Thunder (*Enu*), their ancestor. The auto-denomination of the Tariana is *Iri-ne* (blood-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION) 'the Tariana' (lit. the ones associated with blood). The same marker *-ne* (PL.OF.ASSOCIATION) appears in the names for the Tariana subclans (see Aikhenvald 2003: 12), e.g., *Yawi-ne* (jaguar-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION) 'the clan of jaguars' and *Kali-ne* (creator.of.manioc-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION) 'clan associated with Kali, the creator of manioc'.

The Tariana of Periquitos refer to themselves as *Enu maki-ne* (Thunder Makú-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION), literally, '(those) associated with the Makú of Thunder'. We saw in §2.1 that the Makú were traditionally considered 'underlings' for the core Vaupés people. This denomination of the Tariana of Periquitos reflects their subservient position with regard to their ancestor, the Thunder (as was pointed out to me by the late Marino Muniz).

The terms for the Fish-likes are formed in a similar manner. The term for the animate entity they are associated with takes the set of plural markers in (II). In (3), the term is *kuphe* 'fish'. We saw in §2.2.2 that the other term in the same construction is *mawali* 'snake'.

(3) a. *Kuphe-ne* Tariana
fish-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION
'Fish-likes'
b. *Kuphe-ne-seri*
fish-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION-SINGL.MASC
'a Fish-like man'
c. *Kuphe-ne-(i)-sa-do*
fish-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION-(INDEF)-spouse-FEM.SG
'a Fish-like woman'
d. *Kuphe-ne-seni*
fish-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION-PL.INDIV
'Fish-like individuals'

The Tukano people are associated with toucans, but they are not toucans (see examples (2a-d)). Similarly, the Fish-likes are not fish. They are associated with fish, and appear as fish in one of their guises. The meaning of the plural *-ne* is that of similarity and association with the head noun.

From a typological perspective, the plural *-ne* in its meaning of similarity and association with the head noun is unusual. We mentioned above that *-ne* is a straightforward plural with a few kinship terms, all of which have a bipartite number distinction, with the singular ending in gender sensitive *-ri* 'masculine' or *-ru* 'feminine' versus the plural ending in *-ne*, e.g., *nu-daki-ru* (1SG-grandchild-FEM.SG) 'my granddaughter', *nu-daki-ri* (1SG-grandchild-MASC.SG) 'my grandson', *nu-daki-ne* (1SG-grandchild-PL) 'my grandchildren' (see Aikhenvald 2003: 167–168). Its 'likeness' or 'association' meaning is limited to ethnonyms and clan names with a tripartite number system (as shown in (2) and (3)).

The collective *-ne* 'plural of association' is different from what is known as the similative plural, defined as a marker of a set of things similar to the one defined by the head noun. A typical example, from Telugu, a Dravidian language, is in (4) (see Moravcsik 2017, and discussion therein). The similative plural is expressed via reduplication.

(4) *puli-gili* Telugu: similative plural
tiger-REDUP
'tigers and such; tigers and similar animals'

The focal constituent of the similative plural is a prominent token of a type. The difference between the similative plural and Tariana *-ne* in its meaning of a 'plural of association' is that the Tariana form exclusively refers to the association of the

referent with the head noun.[10] This meaning difference between a hypothetical similative plural reading and the plural of association in *-ne* is illustrated in (5).

(5) *mawali-ne* Tariana
snake-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION
'Snake-like (ones)'
*'Snakes and such-like' – hypothetical similative plural reading not applicable

In addition, singulatives and individuated plurals can be formed on the *-ne* forms in Tariana – something which never happens with similative plurals in the languages which have them.

The 'plural of association' marker is reminiscent of another grammatical phenomenon, found in Amazonian languages – similative-like suffixes in Cariban languages. Across many North Cariban languages, these markers have the meaning of 'being for all intents and purposes X but not in essence so', or 'be manifestly but not inherently X' (Carlin 2004: 124 for Trio; Carlin 2006: 328–330 for other North Cariban languages and for Mawayana, an Arawak language in contact with Waiwai and a few other Cariban languages). For example, the Trio form *wïtoto* means 'a human being'. If it takes the "facsimile-similative" suffix *-me,* the combination *wïtoto-me* will refer to something that appears to be a human being but in reality is not, as when a spirit manifests itself as a human. We hypothesize that, just like the similative marker in Cariban languages, this unusual meaning of plurality of association in Tariana could be considered a manifestation of Amazonian perspectivism in grammar (see Aikhenvald 2022b).

In essence, the non-singular or collective marker *-ne* in ethnonyms containing a common noun signals that the group referred to is associated with that common noun. In the case of the Fish-likes (*Kuphe-ne*), *-ne* reflects the fish-like-ness as one of the outer forms of the human-like entities (which are not human in their essence).

The term *yalana* 'White people' stands apart from other ethnonyms and names of groups of people in its number marking. The form *yalana* has a collective reference, in agreement with the meaning of suffix *-na* which it contains as a formative (cf. *-na* in *Taria-na* in (1a)). The form *yalana* can also refer to a non-Indian person (or man, as a masculine generic). It can combine with *-(i-)sa-do* (INDEF)-spouse-FEM.SG) yielding *yalana-(i)-sa-do* 'a white (non-Indian) woman', but it cannot take the

10 The existence of similative plurals and plurals of association in other languages of the Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area is a matter for further study (similar examples may be attested in Barasana (Stephen Hugh-Jones, p.c. 2023)).

masculine singulative *-seri* nor the individuated plural *-seni*. This is shown schematically in Figure 2.

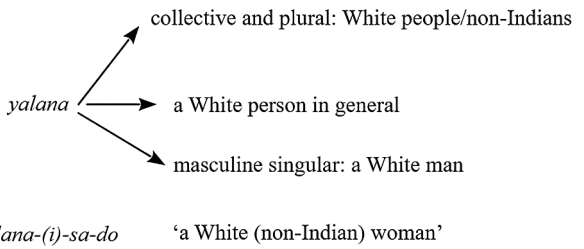

Figure 2: Plural and collective forms of *yalana* 'a White person'.

No other noun with human or non-human reference behaves like this. Historically, this aberrant behaviour of the noun *yalana* could be explained by the fact that *yala-* in *yala-na* is a nativized loan (as mentioned in §2.2.1).

2.4 The images of 'another world': how to get there and what happens then

'Another world' (*pa:-ehkwapi* 'one/another-CL:WORLD') is the prerogative of the Fish-likes, known as the *Kuphe-ne Nawiki* (referred to, in Tukano, as *Wa'î masa* 'Fish people'). Their alternative name in Tariana is *Mawali-ne* (snake-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION) 'snake-likes'. This reflects their capacity to transform and acquire the outer appearance ('clothing', or disguise) of snakes. The Fish-likes live in houses underwater, and appear to humans (mostly men, occasionally women) who are in trouble. Their typical targets are men who cannot get a wife, referred to as *i:na meninite* (women NEG +be.loved+NCL:ANIM) '(one) not loved by women', or who are unsuccessful in fishing and hunting (*husa-ite* 'be.unsuccessful-CL:ANIM', *panema* in regional Portuguese) and thus unable to feed their families. The special prominence of 'a man not loved by women' in stories involving Fish-likes reflects the traditional scarcity of marriageable women (especially in the context of the traditional polygamy, now gone).

We now turn to the typical steps in getting to and from 'Another world', and its appearance and repercussions.

A. Getting there. The male hero is typically unhappy, angry, and desperate at his failure to catch fish and game, and/or to get a wife. He goes to a rivulet (sometimes with an intention of calling it quits and committing suicide), saying to himself in his mind (6) or (7).

(6) *mawali nu-na di-hña-tupe* Tariana
snake 1SG-OBJ 3SGNF-eat-MALEF.IMPV
di-a-pidana dihmeta
3SGNF-say-REM.P.REP 3SGNF+think
'May the snake eat me (to my detriment), he said in his thoughts' (lit. he said he thought)

(7) *ka:-de nu-a nu-pa-niki*
in.vain-FUT.1P 1SG-go 1SG-rot-COMPL
di-a-pidana dihmeta
3SGNF-say-REM.P.REP 3SGNF+think
'I will rot for nothing, he said in his thoughts' (lit. he said he thought)

He keeps floating aimlessly on the water surface (*di-rahta di-a* '3SGNF-float 3SGNF-go'), usually in the direction of a hidden sleeve of the rivulet. In some instances, the man hears underground noise whose origin he does not quite understand. Then there appears a Fish-like Indian whom the man sees as a big and handsome *Yalana* 'a non-Indian'. This can be a young man (*nawiki walikiri*) or a big woman *(i:naru hanuma*) on a canoe. The Fish-like asks the man what's wrong, and says to him: "You are probably feeling bad in this world, come with me, I will take you". Then the Fish-like throws dust (or sap, or white liquid, in other versions) into the man's eye, or grabs his head and instructs him to close his eyes firmly, and then open them quickly. This is sometimes accompanied with the noise of the Fish-like hitting the surface of the water. A typical description is in (8).

(8) a. *dihwida-naku dhupa* Tariana
3SGNF+head-TOP.NON.A/S 3SGF+take
pima-sa-niki du-a-pidana
2SG+close.eyes-TIGHTLY-COMPL 3SGF-say-REM.P.REP
'She (the Fish-like) grabbed his head, "Close your eyes tightly completely", she said'
b. *haw di-a-pidana dima-sa-niki*
yes 3SGNF-say-REM.P.REP 3SGNF+close.eyes-TIGHTLY-COMPL
'Yes, he said, and closed his eyes tightly'
c. *da:pi-kha-ne du-yã-pidana uni-se*
liana-CL:CURVED-INSTR 3SGF-hit-REM.P.REP water-LOC
'She hit the water with a curved liana'

d. *hala* *di-eku* *di-a*
open.space 3SGNF-run/do.quickly 3SGNF-go
'An open space appeared quickly'

e. *pa:-ehkwapi-se-pidana* *di-uka*
one/another-CL:WORLD-LOC-REM.P.REP 3SGNF-arrive
di-dia-niki
3SGNF-get.back-COMPL
'He arrived in another world'

f. *kuphe-ne-ya-ehkwapi-se-pidana*
fish-PL.OF.ASSOCIATION-POSS-CL:WORLD-LOC-REM.P.REP
di-dia *diha*
3SGNF-get.back he
'He got to the world of Fish-like (people)'

g. *yakale-pasi-nha* *hiku*
settlement-AUG-PAUS appear
'There appeared a large settlement'

Several comments are in order.

Firstly, the verb *-ima* has two meanings, 'close one's eyes' (as in (8b)) and 'sleep'. The two related meanings are differentiated by their occurrence in serial verb constructions and thus the type of conventionalized event they take part in. In its meaning 'sleep', the verb *-ima* has to occur in a serial verb construction specifying a sleeping posture (hanging in a hammock, lying down or, occasionally, standing upright), e.g., *dima di-kwa* (3SGNF+close.eyes/sleep 3SGNF-hang) 'he slept hanging (in a hammock)'. This is consistent with the semantic and pragmatic role of serial verb constructions and their correlations with typified events in Tariana and in general (for more information on the role of serial verb constructions across the world's languages, see Aikhenvald 2018e: 178–185 and references therein; serial verbs in Tariana are discussed in Aikhenvald 2003: 423–448). In its punctual meaning 'close one's eyes', *-ima* never forms a serial verb construction with a posture verb, as there is no typical position associated with closing one's eyes.

Secondly, the manner of action of 'closing one's eyes' is specified by the Aktionsart enclitic *-sa* 'firmly, tightly' (Aikhenvald 2003: 349, 355). This enclitic is used with a wide variety of verbs of action, but never with any posture verb, nor with *-ima* in the meaning of 'sleep'. To iconically express the firm and sudden closure, the form is pronounced with a primary accent on it and high intensity. In other contexts, *-sa* is pronounced with a secondary accent, similar to an unstressed suffix, e.g., *duha isa dita-sa di-a-pida* (wound 3SGNF+close.up-TIGHTLY 3SGNF-go-PRES.REP) 'her wound reportedly closed up'.

In other similar stories, the man opens his eyes as abruptly as he closes them. This is expressed with a serial verb construction involving *-eku* 'run, do quickly', or the newly emergent Aktionsart enclitic *-wasa* 'jumpingly, suddenly' (from the verb *-wasa* 'jump').

After the Fish-like hits the surface of the water, the water opens up, as if one comes across a clearing in the jungle. This is expressed with the stative verb *hala* 'be open, appear as an opening'. In lines e-g in (8), the speaker explains that the man had arrived in another world, the world of the Fish-likes.

B. What does 'another world' look like to a human? As soon as the man opens his eyes and finds himself in 'another world', he sees a big settlement (*hanu-yakale* 'big-CL:SETTLEMENT') with big houses (see (8g)). One story explicitly states that these settlements have dwellings like White people's houses (*yalana-ya-dapana kayu* (white.person-POSS-CL:HOUSE like)). In another story, 'another world' is described as abounding in cars, as shown in (9).[11] This story was told by Leo Brito, one of the few representatives of the older generation of Tariana speakers, who has been exposed to the semi-urban environment of the mission centre Iauaretê and the urban environment of São Gabriel da Cachoeira, the capital of the municipality with the same name and a major city in the region, where many of the Tariana currently reside.

(9) *ka-koloka-whya-pe* *di-yena-kha* *di-a,* Tariana
REL-roll-CL:TRANSPORT-PL 3SGNF-exceed/pass-AWAY 3SGNF-go
'Cars went by'

pa:-whya *di-yena-kha* *di-a,*
one-CL:TRANSPORT 3SGNF-pass-AWAY 3SGNF-go
'one car passed by,'

pa:-whya *di-koloka-ka* *di-ñu* *di-a,*
one-CL:TRANSPORT 3SGNF-roll-SEQ 3SGNF-go.up 3SGNF-go
'one car having rolled up,'

pa:-whya *di-yena-kha* *di-a,*
one-CL:TRANSPORT 3SGNF-pass-AWAY 3SGNF-go
nemhani-ka-pidana
3PL+travel-DECL-REM.P.REP
'one (car) passed, they travelled'

11 Entry into the world of the Fish-likes involves partial transformation of the characters into White people or animals (as pointed out by Stephen Hugh-Jones, p.c. 2023).

The human man arrives in this new world poor and destitute, wearing torn trousers and no shirt or shoes. Before he meets the chief of the Fish-like's village (often the father of the one who had brought him into 'another world'), he is given a White person's outfit of good quality into which he is told to change – complete with black shoes, white socks, and a jacket (like the one a soldier would have), and also a watch. This is described in (10). In one of the stories, the man is given a golden ring *(hiwaru-puhwi* 'gold-CL:ROUND.RING.LIKE').

Portuguese terms are in bold.

(10) *Haw, diwesewya-nuku wasã-pita,* Tariana
OK then-TOP.NON.A/S let's.go-AGAIN
yarumakasi phiepanita-si-pita, du-a-pidana.
clothing 2SG+change-PROX.IMPV-AGAIN 3SGF-say-REM.P.REP
'OK, then let's go again, change your clothes here, she (the Fish-like woman) said'

Ai-mha yarumakasi phepanita-nipe du-a-pidana.
here-PRES.NONVIS clothing 2SG+change-NOM 3SGF-say-REM.P.REP
'here is the clothing for you to change (into), she said'

Du-dia, diha dhepanita-pidana,
3SGF-get.back he 3SGNF+change-REM.P.REP
'When she (the Fish-like woman) returned, he (the human man) got changed,'

hĩ kwaka hĩ matsa-peri pi-ña-mhade phia,
this whatever this good-COLL.PL 2SG-wear-FUT you.SG
'you will wear these good ones,'

hĩ ***sapatu*** *kada-peri,* ***meia*** *hale-peri pi-ña-mhade,*
this shoe black-COLL.PL sock white-COLL.PL 2SG-wear-FUT
'black shoes (Portuguese), white socks (Portuguese) you will wear,'

ai-naku[12] ***paleto*** *diha,*
here-TOP.NON.A/S jacket he
sirura ka-dite, ***kamisa*** *thuya,*
soldier REL-have+NCL.ANIM shirt all

12 The topical non-subject marker is pronounced as *-naku* by traditional speakers and as *-nuku* by younger speakers.

relogio, *nha keri-da-pe pi-erita-mhade phia.*
watch they sun/moon-CL:ROUND-PL 2SG-put.on-FUT you.SG
'here is a jacket like the one soldiers have, shirt and all, a watch you will put on' (said the Fish-like to the man)

Once the human man is dressed up, he is described as looking like a real white person (*yalana-tsuniri*). This is shown in (11).

(11) *Diha-sini yalana kayite-ka-pidana diha-sini,* Tariana
he-TOO White.person like+NCL:ANIM-DECL-REM.P.REP he-TOO
matsa-peri yarumakasi ka-ña-kali-ka-pidana
good-PL.COLL clothing REL-put.on-PAST.PART-DECL-REM.P.REP
diha-misini
he-TOO
'He too was like a white person, he too was dressed in good clothing'

The terms for the items of clothing are from Portuguese. Usually, if a speaker has to code-switch and use a Portuguese word, it will be accompanied by the oblique parenthetical *yalana yaku-nuku* (White.person speech-TOP.NON.A/S) 'in White person's language'. In the stories dealing with Fish-likes, this convention is breached, as we saw in (10). The only Portuguese word translated into Tariana is *relogio* 'watch' (Tariana *keri-da-pe)*.

The language the Fish-likes speak is, contrary to what the audience might expect, not 'the White person's language' (*yalana yarupe*). The big White Fish-like woman who encountered the man and took him into another world spoke Tukano to him in the first place. The man was surprised. The description of their first encounter is in (12).

(12) *Ne-pidana inaru-pasi du-daki hale-ma-pasi* Tariana
then-REM.P.REP woman-AUG 3SGF-body white-CL:FEM-AUG
'Then (there was) a big woman, white body,'

du-sale-maka-napi yalana-sa-do-pasi.
3SGF-hair-CL:SPREAD-shoulder white.person-spouse-FEM.SG-AUG
'the mane of her hair on her shoulders, a big white woman'

Kani-sika du-nu duhua hĩ, di-a-pidana.
where-INTER.INFER.REC.P 3SGF-come she this 3SGNF-say-REM.P.REP
'"Where has she come from?" he (the human man) said.'

Duha yaseniku-pidana du-sape-pidana
she Tukano.language-REM.P.REP 3SGF-speak-REM.P.REP
'"She spoke in Tukano."'

Kwe-mha yalana-sa-do yaseniku
how-INTER.PRES.NONVIS white.man-spouse-FEM.SG Tukano.language
du-sape-mha,
3SGF-speak-INTER.PRES.NONVIS
'"How come a white woman speaks Tukano?"'

kwaka-mha yaphini-mha
what-INTER.PRES.NONVIS thing-INTER.PRES.NONVIS
di-a-pidana.
3SGNF-say-REM.P.REP
'"What sort of thing is this?" he said'

This point is reiterated further on in the same story – that the Fish-likes did not speak White people's language, they spoke their own language, which is now Tukano. This replicates the current patterns of what is happening in the Brazilian Vaupés – most indigenous people of the area, including the Tariana, use Tukano more and more in their day-to-day life.

(13) *yalanaku-nuku ma-sape-de-pidana* Tariana
White.man.language-TOP.NON.A/S NEG-speak-NEG-REM.P.REP
'They did not speak the White man's language,'

na-yarupe-ne na-sape-ka-pidana
3PL-language-INSTR 3PL-speak-DECL-REM.P.REP
yaseniku-ne, yaseniku-ya
Tukano.language-INSTR Tukano.language-EMPH
'they spoke their language, Tukano, Tukano really,'

hi kasina alia-peni na-sape-nipe na-sape-ka-pidana
this now exist-PL.ANIM 3PL-speak-NOM 3PL-speak-DECL-REM.P.REP
'they spoke the language (the way of speaking) of those here now'

The new world is rich – replete with White people's food (usually hard to afford for Indians). This is described in (14).

(14) *Ne-nuku nha na-ira, pa-hña-nipe-ka-pidana,* Tariana
then-TOP.NON.A/S they 3PL-drink IMPERS-eat-NOM-DECL-REM.P.REP

yalana *yarupe* *pa-hña-nipe* *thuya-ka-pidana*
White.man thing IMPERS-eat-NOM all-DECL-REM.P.REP
'There they drank, there was their food, all White people's food'

Nhua *pumeni-peri* *nu-ira* *nhua* ***fanta****-nuku*
I sweet-COLL.PL 1SG-drink I fanta-TOP.NON.A/S
di-a-pidana *diha-misini*
he-say-REM.P.REP he-TOO
'He said, I will drink sweet (things), fanta'

Haw *du-a-pidana* *dhuta* *du-nu.*
Yes 3SGF-say-REM.P.REP 3SGF+take 3SGF-come
'Yes, she said (and) brought (it)'

Kwaka-pasi *pi-hña-mhade* *du-a-pidana.*
what-AUG 2SG-eat-FUT 3SGF-eat-REM.P.REP
Nhua ***pao****-de* *nu-hña* *di-a-pidana.*
I bread-FUT 1SG-eat 3SGF-say-REM.P.REP
'What big thing will you eat, she (the Fish-like woman) said. I will eat bread, he (the man) said'

Alia-ka-thuy-pidana-ta, *yalana-ya*
exist-DECL-ALL-REM.P.REP-AGAIN white.man-EMPH
yakale-ka-pidana
settlement-DECL-REM.P.REP
'There was everything, it was a White people's settlement'

The Fish-likes drink *cerveza* (from Portuguese *cerveja* 'beer') and prefer game meat to fish (game is rarely eaten by the core Vaupés Indians, because it is expensive to buy in shops, and hard to get by hunting, as game is becoming more and more scarce). Similarly to White people, they eat a lot of fruit.

The food eaten by the Fish-likes is the White person's food, which is considered "status food". But not everything in the Fish-likes's world is what it looks like, especially to a human. This is where perspectivism chips in again. The human is ordered to throw the bait (worms) he happens to have with him into the water. He then sees numerous fish (Tariana *murutu,* similar to the sword-fish) and their smaller subtypes coming to the surface. The Fish-likes kill numerous fish and eat them. For the Fish-likes, these fish are *kalaka* 'chicken', a high status and sought-after food in the Vaupés Area, associated with White-people-like affluence. It is now time for him to be taken to the head of the Fish-like's village. What does this encounter look like?

C. The encounter. As the man finds himself in *pa:-ehkwapi,* the other world of the Fish-likes, he is introduced to the *E:ni* 'chief', who is very often the father of the Fish-like woman who has brought the man to their world. She repeatedly warns the man that the Chief (or her father) and her other blood relatives (*du-kesi-pe* 3SGF-blood.relative-PL) are angry and can be unfriendly. What the man sees is snakes hanging around in hammocks. A large snake – the Chief himself (*e:ni*)[13] – comes to greet the man, sliding over his body, licking it and beating his tail over the man's thighs. Then his wife comes out, also in the shape of a snake, and then their daughters. By and by, the snakes acquire human shape. In all the stories, the man thwarts the potential danger of being attacked by a snake by keeping still and doing what he is told.

Tariana stories always contain a statement of the location where the events take place. However, in stories about Fish-likes, the exact locations of the Fish-likes' dwelling and of the locations where the humans are taken from are left vague. These locations are referred to as *Mawali-dapana* (snake-CL:HOUSE) 'Snake house', *Mawali-nai* (snake-CL:LAKE) 'Snake lake', or *Mawali-keru-nai* (snake.be.angry-CL:LAKE) 'Angry snake lake'. Storytellers sometimes give an approximate indication of the whereabouts of a reported happening (as we will see in §2.5, the stories are always cast in the reported evidential). For instance, the story of a young girl kidnapped because of her misbehaviour is said to have happened downstream from São Pedro (a settlement on the Vaupés River). The encounter described in (13) and (14) is said to have taken place not far from *Itana-taku* (or *Itali-numana,* or *Ita:-taku*), known in Portuguese as *Loiro* (the name under which it appears on the Brazilian maps; for a list of traditional placenames, see Aikhenvald and Brito 2000: 62).

D. Getting back. Getting back to the world of humans is simpler than getting to the underwater abode of Fish-likes. The Fish-like person may simply leave the human where he or she had taken him from, and the human comes up to the water surface. Or the Fish-like person puts sap into their eyes (once or three times, in different stories). The human closes his eyes firmly – the action marked with the enclitic *-sa* 'firmly' as in (8a). Then he finds himself in the same place where the Fish-like person has taken him from. This is described in (15).

(15) *diha-da* *iri-da-nuku* *dhuta-pidana* Tariana
it-CL:ROUND sap/blood-CL:ROUND-TOP.NON.A/S 3SGF+get-REM.P.REP
'She (the Fish-like woman) took the round (container) of sap'

13 Across the region, snakes are believed to be 'chiefs' of fish (Marcelo Carvalho, p.c. 2023).

Du-nua-pidana-pita *ai-ne-nuku* *madali-piu*
3SGF-pour-REM.P.REP-AGAIN there-LOC-TOP.NON.A/S three-times
peme-se-ne-nuku *madali-piu*
one+side-LOC-INSTR-TOP.NON.A/S three-times
'She poured (it) there (into his eyes) three times, one side three times'

Dima-sa *di-eku* *di-a,*
3SGNF+close.eyes-TIGHTLY 3SGNF-do.quickly 3SGNF-go
'He (the man) closed (his eyes) firmly quickly'

te *diha* *ũi* *diha* *di-ñu-mi* *di-a-pidana*
until he/it port he 3SGNF-go.up-NOM.LOC 3SGNF-go.up-REM.P.REP
di-ema
3SGNF-stand
'until he stood at the port, the place where he had gone upstream'

Duha-sini *alia-pidana* *walikasu*
she-too exist-REM.P.REP at.the.beginning
duha *duhta-mi-nuku.*
she 3SGF+take-NOM.LOC-TOP.NON/AS
'She (the Fish-like woman) had been there, too, at the place where she had taken (him)'

Diha *itawhya* *di-rahta-pidana*
he canoe 3SGNF-float-REM.P.REP
'His canoe was floating'

All the White man's attire is left behind, as the human is ordered to take it off. Sharing the experience of the world of the Fish-likes with others is fraught with danger. In one story, the man and a Fish-like go on a fishing expedition to punish a woman (by catching her in a fish trap and drowning her) who had not liked the man. They hear his mother cry for him, and the Fish-like suggests that he could go up and see the mother. He does this, and tells his mother he has now married a beautiful White woman (sic!). Then he summons his newly-wed Fish-like wife (by making a loud sound with a plate). The wife comes into the house: to the man she looks like a beautiful White woman. To the mother, she looks like a big snake. The mother collapses and dies.

The man – the human character within the stories – is always warned not to tell his mates about where he has been. In one story, he breaches the promise, gets sick, and dies. In another story he does as he is told, becomes a successful hunter, manages to pay off his debts (to a White patron) and lives happily ever after.

E. The gender issue. A typical character of a Fish-likes story is a man who is feeling destitute and ventures alone on a fishing (or hunting) trip (or wishes to commit suicide). In the Vaupés tradition, women do not fish, let alone go on a trip on their own. Women feature in Fish-likes stories on two occasions.

Scenario 1. This involves a Fish-like person trying to be helpful to a destitute woman, but failing to do so because of other villagers. Here is an example.

A poor destitute widow (who may or may not be accompanied by her small son) goes around crying. One day she goes to her garden and starts digging for worms as bait, planning to go fishing. She hears a noise underground, as if there was a stream there. She then digs further and further, and finds a real stream full of all sorts of good quality fish. A big White man appears and tells her to catch one when she and her son want to eat. He tells her to take as many as she needs, not more than ten, and not tell anyone. Then he disappears. The villagers keep wondering where she gets such good fish. True to her promise, she tells no-one, until such time as her husband's brother gets hold of the child and starts interrogating him, promising to kill him if he does not tell where they get the fish. Incidentally, this resonates with the motive of "a bad paternal uncle" found in many story-telling traditions across the core Vaupés.

The frightened child takes him to the garden, where they see the stream full of good fish. The bad uncle and the other villagers kill a lot of fish, not paying attention to the widow imploring them not to, on behalf of the Owner, the Fish-like. The villagers put on a feast, and the Fish-like man comes and tells the widow to keep away from the villagers. In the meantime, the villagers get drunk and the following day are asleep in their hammocks. In the middle of the night, the widow and her son, who have stayed out of it all day, hear rumbling underground – the sound of ground splitting and the village caving in. The widow and her son get down from their hammocks and go to the jungle, where they stay all night. As she walks, she has to step over a split in the ground, which is getting larger and larger until it subsumes the whole village, with all the people and their houses. The next day she comes back – the stream with fish is gone, and so is the village, with only one old man remaining to tell her what has happened. Following the etiquette of the core Vaupés, the woman is an outsider in the village (she is from another, marriageable group). Her fate is different from that of the people from her husband's village – she survives, and they perish.

Scenario 2. This involves the Fish-likes punishing a misbehaving young girl for breaching a taboo. When a woman menstruates, she is considered ritually unclean and dangerous *(puaya* 'different, adverse': more on this in Aikhenvald 2003: 601–602). A girl who is having her first period has to be placed into ritual seclu-

sion. Once upon a time, as the story goes, one such girl escapes and decides to go bathing at the port. As soon as she gets into the water, a canoe with a motor – like the ones mostly used by White people and coveted by the locals – comes up. There are three *Yalana* (White people) – one with a very white body, one black, and one blackish. This shows how Afro-Brazilians are incorporated into the category of *Yalana* – non-Indians. In another version of the story, the third man is said to be 'yellow' (presumably an Asian non-Indian). They grab her (despite her protest), put her into their canoe and take her upstream to their Snake-house *(Mawali-dapana*). They close her eyes tightly. The action is marked with the enclitic *-sa* 'TIGHTLY', as illustrated in example (8) above – and, similar to other arrivals in the world of Fish-likes, as soon as she opens her eyes she finds herself in another world. Her father goes looking for her and sees her washing her clothes in the middle of the stream on a heap of stones. He calls her, but she does not answer; instead, she jumps back into the river and dives down. The father realizes that she no longer exists as a person: she has married a Fish-like, and become a Fish-like woman. She is said to be seen washing her clothes in that stream on a heap of stones as a bad omen.

We have seen that the outcomes for women are perhaps not as drastic as for men, unless they involve a punishment for breaching a rule. Kidnapping a woman (often on mutual agreement by the relatives) used to be a common practice across the Vaupés Area (as illustrated in Scenario 2). The Fish-likes behave in similar ways to Indians.

F. Environmental message. The Fish-likes also have an environmental message for a man they take to their kingdom. One reason why the Chief of the Fish-likes is angry with the man is because people are killing too many fish and spoiling the environment – as the Fish-like woman says to the man in (16).

(16) *nhuaniri pi-na i-na hanipa-naka kerua* Tariana
1SG+father 2SG-OBJ 2PL-OBJ big+ADV-PRES.VIS be.angry
'My father is very angry with you (singular), with you (plural)'

hia da:kida wha wa:-nipe wa-hña-nuku
2PL always we 1PL+do-NOM 1PL-eat-TOP.NON.A/S
i-nitu i-hña-naka ihia du-a-pidana
2PL-steal 2PL-eat-PRES.VIS you.PL 3SGF-say-REM.P.REP
'You always steal-eat our food, she said'

The Fish-like woman who had brought the man to the underwater world further admonishes him, saying "this is what you all do, never kill too many, kill two or

three, four, five, and that's all. You spoil a lot, you always kill our food. Stop doing it, and tell your mates to do so". The man says "yes". This dialogue is in (17).

(17) *Pi-ka-thada-pada,* *hi-naka* *i-ni* *ihia,* Tariana
2SG-see-FRUST-DOUBT-COUNTEREXP this-PRES.VIS 2PL-do you.PL
du-a-pidana
3SGF-say-REM.P.REP
'You just look (to see), this is what you all do, she (the Fish-like woman) said'

Ai-nuku *kasina-nuku* *ika* *pã*
here-TOP.NON.A/S now-TOP.NON.A/S this.much all
mhãida-nha *i:nu-nha* *du-a* *du-kalite-pidana*
PROH-POLITE 2PL-kill-POLITE 3SGF-say 3SGF-speak-REM.P.REP
di-na
3SGNF-OBJ
'Here now do not kill all this much, she told him'

Ihia *inu-ka* *inu-nha* *du-a-pidana*
you.PL 2PL+kill-SEQ 2PL+kill-POLITE 3SGF-speak-REM.P.REP
ñamaita *o* *madalita,* *kehpunipe* *pa:kapi* *ika-ya.*
two+CL:ANIM or three+CL:ANIM four five this.much-EMPH
'If you kill, kill two or three, four five, this many, she said'

Hanupe-pu-naka *i-ni* *i-matsika* *i-a* *ihya*
many-AUG-PRES.VIS 2PL-do 2PL-spoil 2PL-go you.PL
'You are spoiling too much (of our food)'

wha *wa:-nipe* *wa-hña-nuku*
we 1PL+do-NOM 1PL-eat-TOP.NON.A/S
ihya *da:kida* *i-nu-naka*
you.PL always 2PL-kill-PRES.VIS
'you always kill our food'

du-a-pidana *du-kwisa-pidana* *nese-naku*
3SGF-say-REM.P.REP 3SGF-scold-REM.P.REP then-TOP.NON.A/S
'she said scolding then'

Khida *i-matada-nha* *ihya,*
be.finished 2PL-leave-POLITE you.PL
Hiku *pi-a* *pi-kalite-mhade* *phia* *pi-ketsi-pe-nuku*
thus 2SG-say 2SG-speak-FUT you.SG 2SG-relative-PL-TOP.NON.A/S
du-a-pidana
3SGF-say-REM.P.REP
'It is finished, stop it, you will say this to your relatives, she said'

Haw, *di-a-pidana,* *diha-misini.*
Yes, 3SGNF-say-REM.P.REP he-TOO
'Yes, he (the man) said'

This protectionist message – not to kill too many fish and to take only as many as one needs – is repeated from one story to the next. A widow (Scenario 1 in E above) is explicitly told not to take too many fish from the magic fish-hole, and when her co-villagers do so, they perish. A jungle spirit would provide similar advice: not to over-fish and also not to work – hunt or fish – on forbidden days (such as Good Friday, *Yapirikuri di-ñami-ni-kada* (Creator 3SGNF-die-PASS-CL:DAY) 'the day the Creator died').

The Fish-likes stories partly serve as cautionary tales about what not to do. The Fish-likes and the spirits of the jungle safeguard their living quarters from misbehaving humans, and also keep people in line with the rules, punishing them if they breach a taboo or a promise.

2.5 On some linguistic aspects of the stories about the Fish-likes

A notable feature of the languages of the Vaupés Area (including the core Vaupés and the members of the Makú cultural complex) is a system of obligatory evidentials which mark the information source on which a statement is based.[14]

Similar to East Tukanoan languages, Tariana has five evidentials – visual, non-visual, inferred, assumed (and general knowledge), and reported. Evidential markers are floating enclitics which attach to either the predicate or a focused constituent. The use of evidentials correlates with the type of story – this is

14 A comprehensive discussion of this category is in Aikhenvald (2004, 2018b) and other chapters in *The Oxford Handbook of Evidentiality* and a summary is given in Aikhenvald (2021a) and (2023); and also Silva and Silva (2012) on the Yuhupdeh. Similar information on the Húpd'äh was supplied by Marcelo Carvalho. A summary with further references is in Aikhenvald (2022a).

known as a "token" of a genre (Aikhenvald 2004; 2021a: 59–62 offers a general perspective on the concept).[15] The following points are particularly relevant for our current discussion.

– Stories which relate someone's personal experience – what one did and what one had visual information for – are cast in the visual evidential.
– Stories about what one cannot see with the human eye – including actions and attacks by the spirits of the jungle and actions of shamans – are cast in the nonvisual evidential (Aikhenvald 2019).
– Traditional culturally important stories – passed on from generation to generation – about the creation of the world and the travels of the Tariana ancestors, and also translations from other languages, are cast in the assumed and general knowledge evidential (see Aikhenvald 2023).
– Tales about animals, gossip and whatever one knows from someone else are couched in reported evidential.

All the stories dealing with Fish-likes are invariably couched in the reported evidential, as one can see from the glosses in examples (8)–(16). Using the reported evidential makes the stories sound less important than traditional stories cast as "general knowledge". They are sometimes even mockingly referred to as *mẽda-peri kalisi* (in.vain-COLL.PL story) 'stories for nothing, just stories'. This use may also be due to the fact that the person who tells the story is not the one who was actually there with the Fish-likes (as pointed out by Rosita Henry, p.c.).

A further feature of the stories about Fish-likes is a proliferation of Portuguese insertions. In stories recorded in the 1990s from the same speakers, Portuguese terms were used less than in stories recorded in the 2000s and more recently. For instance, a story told in 1999 by Leo Brito contains three tokens of Portuguese words. A similar story told in 2012 by the same speaker contains 15, all in the descriptions of the White-person-like underwater world (perhaps as a result of Leo's, and others', growing familiarity with the mainstream Brazilian reality). Following the speech etiquette in the Vaupés, Leo usually avoids Portuguese loans (or code-switches) in his speech and in stories in other genres (in which he is proficient). We hypothesize that the similarity between the world of

15 Further details on genres, evidentials and the paradigm of evidentials in Tariana can be found in Aikhenvald (2021a: 59–61; 2021b: 199–205). Aikhenvald (2019) focuses on the use of nonvisual evidentials for supranatural experiences. Readers should be warned against misinterpretations of the Tariana forms (taken out of the appropriate paradigm) by some quasi-typologists with no experience in the language, addressed in Mélac, Tournadre and Aikhenvald (this volume). No information is available for evidentials in stories about Fish-likes in other languages of the area, as the grammars and other sources do not discuss these stories.

the Fish-likes and the White people's world warrants almost unlimited use of Portuguese, the White man's language.

Another feature of the stories dealing with Fish-likes concerns a linguistic aspect of Amazonian perspectivism. What one sees as a 'snake', someone else will see as a 'big White person'. What is chicken to the Fish-likes appears as a swordfish to a human. The outer appearance depends on the perspective and on the perceiver. This can be shown in two ways. The man who marries a Fish-like woman sees her as a big woman – (18a) – but his human mother sees her as a snake – (18b).

(18) a. *di-ka-ka-nuku* *inaru-pasi-pidana* Tariana
3SGNF-see-SEQ-TOP.NON.A/S woman-AUG-REM.P.REP
'For him looking, it was a big woman'
b. *diha* *ha-do-ne* *du-ka-ka-nuku*
he parent-FEM-FOC.A/S 3SGNF-see-SEQ-TOP.NON.A/S
mawali-pasi-pidana
snake-AUG-REM.P.REP
'For his mother (not anyone else) looking, it was a big snake'

The topical non-subject marker *-nuku* marks the non-main clause 'as he/she looked' as a contrastive topic. Within the non-main clause, the focused subject *-ne* marks the 'perceiver'.

Another option is to include the subject in the non-main clause and omit the verb of 'seeing'. The subject of the non-main clause is then marked with the contrastive subject marker *-ne* (expressing the role of the subject in the elliptical non-main clause) and is followed by the topical non-subject marker *-nuku*, which marks the role of the erstwhile non-main clause in the sentence. An example is in (19).

(19) diha-ne-nuku sidua-na-pidana *Tariana*
he-FOC.A/S-TOP.NON.A/S arrow-CL:VERT-REM.P.REP
'For him (not anyone else) (looking), it was an arrow'

nawiki-ne-nuku mawali-pasi-pidana
3SGNF-see-SEQ-FOC.A/S-TOP.NON.A/S snake-AUG-REM.P.REP
'For the man (not anyone else) (looking), it was a big snake'

The sequence of *-ne* 'the focused subject' and *-nuku* 'the topical non-subject' represents an instance of double marking of syntactic function in Tariana. The suffix *-ne* marks the function of the NP in the embedded clause, while *-nuku* marks the function of the clause itself within the sentence. Tariana appears to be typologi-

cally unusual in having this special construction, which reflects different perspectives of different perceivers (discussed in Aikhenvald 2003: 160–161, and especially Aikhenvald 2022b: 434–435). This double case marking, which involves multiple perspectives, can be used in circumstances other than stories about the Fish-likes. These include time differences between Australia and Brazil and different ways of saying things in different languages. However, the overwhelming number of tokens is found in stories about Fish-likes and comments on them (at present, 420 out of 510 tokens).

Tariana stories about the Fish-likes thus stand apart from stories of other kinds. We now turn to interim conclusions and an areal perspective.

2.6 The Fish-likes in a transformative world: Tariana and beyond

The Fish-likes occupy a special place in the transformative world which encompasses human beings for the Tariana – who are typical members of the core Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area.

First, the Fish-likes belong to the category of *nawiki* 'Indians, indigenous people'. They behave like Indians do. We saw, in (12) and (13), that the Fish-likes are said to speak Tukano to the human man and also among each other, just like many Indians do nowadays. In the Tariana stories, they consistently address the human men as *naí,* a vocative form for a marriageable cousin (mother's brother's son or daughter), who typically comes from another language group. The marriage practice of Fish-likes involves kidnapping a woman, congruent with the traditional Vaupés practices (as mentioned in E in §2.4). They fish and hunt just like *nawiki*, Indians, using bows and arrows and fish traps.

Secondly, the Fish-likes have their own habitat not shared with humans or spirits of the jungle (former humans, as we saw in §2.2.2). Their habitat, 'another world', *pa:-ehkwapi,* lies underwater (especially under small rivulets). The water surface appears to serve as a boundary between the world of the humans and "another world" of the Fish-likes.[16] Vulnerable human men can be taken there by Fish-likes. In order to survive there and not to suffer when they get back to the human world, they have to follow the rules imposed by the Fish-likes.

16 I am grateful to Anne Storch for pointing out similar beliefs among some societies on the East African coast (the Mijikenda and the Swahili), whereby spirits live underwater, and the water surface serves as a boundary between the world of humans and the world of spirits. Similar to the Tariana, the world of underwater spirits is not the world of the dead, and contact with the underwater world may be sought for healing purposes.

Thirdly, the Fish-likes appear in varied disguises, seen differently depending on the perceiver. They appear in the disguise (or in the 'skin') of young, handsome White people (*yalana*) to those *nawiki* (Indians) whom they are about to take to their world. To others, they appear in the disguise of dangerous animals, typically *mawali* 'snake' (and sometimes others, such as *sa:ru* 'anteater'). The objects they use and the food they eat can also appear as something else to humans; for instance, what is an arrow for a Fish-like looks like a snake to a human. The Fish-likes can try to be helpful, but they can be dangerous, especially for those who do not do as they are told.

And **lastly**: The world of the Fish-likes, as seen and described by *nawiki*, has the best of the riches of the *Yalana,* the white people. This complements and completes the outlook of the Fish-likes as *yalana* 'White people'.

The Fish-likes span the potential dichotomy of *nawiki* and *yalana*, including the world of animals (former *nawiki*). The world of the White man (a non-Indian *yalana*) is integrated into the way in which the Fish-likes are believed to reside. The whole world is interconnected as one social space, through shape shifting and the different perspectives of different perceivers. The White man is not integrated into the world of the *nawiki* (a *nawiki* who tries and speak and behave as if they were a White person is ridiculed; see the examples in Aikhenvald 2010: 200–201). The image of a White man offers an additional dimension for the disguise of the inhabitants of another world (*pa:-ehkwapi*).

One further dimension of interrelations between the inhabitants of various worlds is reflected in shamanic transformations. Tariana shamans form a hierarchy, depending on their powers and degrees of initiation. The most powerful of the Tariana shamans can transform into a *Yawi* 'jaguar' and fly to the sky and further magical realms at night. Shamans in disguise never visit the world of the Fish-likes.

The interrelations between the Indians, the White people, and the rest of the universe are characterized by an ambiguity and shifting representations of reality, shaped by a combination of traditional views and the impact of the colonial invasion. As we have seen so far, there is a dynamism in these representations: as speakers acquire more and more acquaintance with the world of the *Yalana* 'white people', they transfer their knowledge into their descriptions of the world of the Fish-likes – Indians in *Yalana* disguise with unlimited access to the delectable parts of the *Yalana* life-style.

Tariana stories about the Fish-likes are highly likely to have been enhanced by diffusion from East Tukanoan groups in the Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area. No such stories have been documented for the neighbouring Arawak-speaking groups outside the Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area, including the Piapoko and the Baniwa of Içana-Kurripako (close genetic relatives of the Tari-

ana, whose languages belong to the same subgroup), and other Arawak groups who are believed to share a common origin. The special status of fish among the Hohôdene Baniwa, described by Estorniolo (2014), points towards some similarities with the Tariana. These similarities require further investigation.

The concept of "Fish People" or "Fish-likes" is shared across the whole of the Vaupés, going beyond the core Vaupés. The closest match is Tukano *Wa'i masa* ('fish people').

The first source to address the shared beliefs concerning *Wa'î masa* 'fish people' (Portuguese *Peixe(s)-gente,* or *manjuba*) among the various peoples of the core Vaupés was Brüzzi (1977: 320–321). His materials were collected in 1947–8 and in 1952–3. His consultants, from various groups (both the Tariana and speakers of East Tukanoan languages), told stories about how Fish People turned into fish and then reacquired their human form. In every instance, people would provide precise information about the timing and the location of such events. The Fish People would typically appear as dolphins and turn into beautiful women or handsome men, and then seduce Indians. The stories share striking similarities with what we have seen for Tariana. In one story, a woman ate forbidden food after giving birth and went to the river port with the intention of running away from her violent husband. There she met a handsome young man (a Fish Person) who took her into his underwater realm – a big town, with beautiful houses, silk cloth, and gardens. The presence of silk cloths – a product associated with White people's riches – is reminiscent of the White people's riches in the world of the Fish-likes in the Tariana tales. Similar stories are known among other groups, including the Tukano, the Wanano, and the Piratapuya (as reported to me by my Tariana teachers and their Tukano, Wanano, and Piratapuya wives).[17]

The Fish People appear in the mythological cosmos of the two closely related representatives of the Makú cultural complex, the Húpd'äh and the Yuhupdeh. According to the tradition of the Húpd'äh documented by Carvalho (2020: 97, 114), the Fish People (*hõp húp d'äh*) live in the river and are dangerous to humans (as

17 Lima Barreto (2013: 15, 65–71) describes the human and the fish-like disguise of the Wa'î masa and their aggressive behaviour towards humans who may be seen as a threat. His description is based on information from his grandfather, a powerful shaman called Ponciano Barreto (Ponciano Yai). There is no description of their underwater dwellings. The existence of Wanano stories on the Fish People was confirmed to me by Kristine Stenzel; however, her corpus does not contain any stories about them. That the Wanano and the Piratapuya tell multiple stories about fish people was also confirmed to me by Jovino Brito (a Tariana, proficient in both languages) and Glória Brito, his wife (a Piratapuya).

they can inflict illness, especially on vulnerable babies). The "blessing" shaman thwarts the dangers of aggressive Fish People. In their essence they are snakes. Along similar lines, the Fish People (*hõp-uy-reh* 'fish-INTERROGATIVE-COLLECTIVE') are a group of beings who live underwater and attack humans (Silva and Silva 2012: 186, 413; Cácio Silva p.c.).[18]

The stories about human-like entities – Fish-likes – reflect projections of the habitat of the indigenous people and their ways of life. In their disguise as White people, the Fish People straddle the boundary between humans and other entities – simultaneously presenting a threat and a lure to the real people, the Indians.

It would be fascinating to know how the dwellings of the Fish-likes were presented before the White Invasion and whether such stories existed at all; but no such information is currently available. At present, the stories about Fish-likes by the Tariana are evolving to incorporate more and more accoutrements of White people's habitat, as the Tariana acquire further knowledge of the outside world.

3 The 'ghost villages': a Middle Sepik angle

We now turn to another instance of an invisible yet well-known landscape – the dwellings of the dead among the Manambu of the Middle Sepik.

18 All the information about the Fish People in the Húpd'äh and Yuhupdeh traditions comes from Marcelo Carvalho and Cácio Silva respectively, based on their rich corpus of stories and in-depth knowledge of the languages. Patience Epps told me that she never documented any of these stories in Hup and had only heard of them.

Other groups of the core Vaupés offer a somewhat different picture. A mythic cycle of the Barasana, an East Tukanoan group in Colombia, identifies the Jaguar as an ancestor of White people, thus presented as "powerful, murderous and predatory and as being outside the bounds of civilized society" (Hugh-Jones 1988: 143). According to Hugh-Jones (1988: 153), "by the logic of the Barasana myth are on a par with the spirits of the dead, an inference supported by Barasana accounts of the exploits of the shaman-prophet leaders of last-century millennial cults. These men are said to have made regular visits to the world of the dead, a world described as being identical to the towns of White people". This is reminiscent of the pattern of integration of white people into the cosmology of other regions, including the Sepik in New Guinea (as we will see in §3). The presence and the power of White people within the context of a myth has been documented for the Jivaro (a large nation at the Andean foothills in Peru). The mythological first shaman is believed to be a white-skinned man living underwater in a house formed by upright anacondas, capable of transforming into an anaconda and supplying spiritual helpers to other shamans (Harner 1984: 154–155).

3.1 The Manambu of the Middle Sepik: a snapshot

The Sepik River Basin is the locus of immense linguistic diversity, unparalleled even within New Guinea itself. The area is home to about 200 distinct languages, grouped into at least ten families, plus about a dozen isolates. Geographical features of the area (mountains, waterways, and swamps), differences in the means of subsistence, patterns of contact, and interactions between groups are among the possible reasons for this diversity. The lives and livelihoods of the people of the Middle Sepik are closely linked to the spirits of various kinds (as aptly put by Falck 2018: 107–108). A further trait is what Bateson (1935: 181) described as "schismogenesis", or "complementary differentiation", whereby distinct groups try to be as different from each other as possible, at the same time maintaining "reciprocal patterns of interaction". This makes each group potentially special. In contrast to the people of the Vaupés, one needs to be careful in defining any trait as "typical" of the Sepik.

The people roughly divide between those who live on the banks of large rivers, or River People, and those who live off the Sepik River, or "inland" – Dry-land or Jungle People (more on this in Aikhenvald 2009, 2018b). The Manambu and the Western Iatmul (or the Ñaura) – speakers of closely related languages of the Ndu family – are River Dwellers. They are in a symbiotic albeit not too friendly relationship with the Dry-land People, who include Kwoma (Kwoma-Nukuma) and the Yalaku (Ndu).

The relationships between the Manambu and the Ñaura (or the Western Iatmul) are somewhat strained and ambivalent (more on this in Aikhenvald 2009; see also Harrison 1990: 20; 1993). Both groups live on the banks of the Sepik River. The Iatmul are more numerous and used to be ritually more powerful (for instance, many of the Manambu rituals and incantations were acquired from the Iatmul). The Manambu and the Ñaura – the two powerful groups of River Dwellers – live in the same natural environment, and share means of subsistence, patterns of warfare, social structure, and, to a large extent, their ritual system and values. At the same time, they are rivals; contacts between them used to be accompanied by outbursts of overt military conflict. And in times of peace, the attitude of the Manambu – the smaller group – towards the Iatmul is one of suspicion and distrust. This type of contact-conflict relationship tends to motivate divergence rather than convergence, and further exemplifies the idea of schismogenesis (see also Bateson 1958 [1936]: 175).

The Manambu language is spoken by about 3,000 people in five villages, of which Avatip is by far the largest.[19] Each of the three exogamous clan groups of

19 The other major Manambu-speaking village is Malu (located close to Ambunti, and the locus of the first encounters with early German explorers). A smaller village called Apa:n is an offshoot of Malu. Dialectal differences between Avatip and Malu are very minor (see Aikhenvald 2008: 620–621). When the Sepik River changed its course in the mid-1980s, most of the Avatip people

the Manambu (see §3.3) has its own ceremonial partners among the Dry-land Peoples (see Harrison 1990: 10, and an updated version in Aikhenvald 2009: 45). Indications are that numerous Dry-land People must have been absorbed into the Manambu as a consequence of intertribal wars for access to land (Aikhenvald 2009: 45; 2018b: 207). The linguistic complexity of Manambu may be due to the numerous substrata from the languages of subjugated groups (most of them currently unknown). Harrison (1990) offers a comprehensive account of the totemic structure of the clans and initiation rituals. At present, many of them are known only partially, and performed less and less, due to encroaching dominance of Christianity, out-migrations of the people, the growing presence of outsiders in most villages, and the gradual demise of initiation rituals (following the establishment of Australian control in German New Guinea). Nevertheless, many of the beliefs and attitudes remain, especially among those who still live on their ancestral lands.

A major feature of the Manambu, and of other peoples of the area, is the totemic ownership of names by each clan (see Aikhenvald 2008, forthcoming; Harrison 1990; and further discussion in Carvalho 2020: 94–100, 108–113, 132–134). Names of people and of important objects are owned by each clan and subclan. The mortuary ritual *Keketep* (lit. 'consuming for the last time'), which involves material compensation, continues to be performed (albeit in a shorter version than what was documented by Harrison 1982, 1990). The shape-shifting spirits and their transformations are the topic of §3.2. The place of White people in the Manambu cosmos is discussed in §3.3, before we turn to 'ghost villages' in §3.4.

moved from a place called Yentchangai to the present location of the village (Harrison 1990: 13; and plate 1 in Aikhenvald 2008); some stayed behind and formed Yawabak village. See Bragge (1990) on the history of Yuanamb (Yambon) village, and Aikhenvald (2018b) on the position of the Manambu language within the Ndu family. My corpus of Manambu contains over 30 hours of transcribed stories of various genres, plus conversations and fieldnotes (from participant-observation-based work). I started working with the Manambu people in 1995. The bulk of the corpus was collected during four lengthy periods of fieldwork in Avatip and the surrounding villages in 2001–2016. This corpus is being constantly expanded by ongoing interaction with speakers of Manambu. Aikhenvald (2008) is a comprehensive grammar of Manambu; Aikhenvald (2009) deals with the impact of language contact on Manambu and related languages. Examples are given in practical orthography (note that the stops b, d, g and the affricate j are prenasalized and pronounced as [^{m}b], [^{n}d], [^{n}g], and [^{n}j]).

3.2 Shape-shifters: the *apawul* of the jungle

People share some of their habitat with intangible spirits. A major spirit of the waterways and the guardian of the Sepik River is *Wujimawr* (who can appear in the shape of a crocodile and is potentially dangerous if it comes up to the surface of the river). The *apawul* jungle spirits (male and female) are human-like and live in large ficus trees.[20] They are invisible to humans and are covered in a totemic haze, as phrased in (20).

(20) *adiya* *baw* *taka-tepe-la-di* Manambu
DEM.DIST.REACT.TOP+PL+DEM.DIST haze put-stop-3FEM.SG.SUBJ-3PLO
'The haze covers them (preventing them from being seen)'

Humans and the *apawul* are believed to be distrustful of each other (e.g., example (14.24) in Aikhenvald 2008). The *apawul* used to live together with humans and be in a sibling relationship with them (in some stories, in Asiti, one of the ancestral villages of the Manambu, according to the late Peter Wakikat). This was phrased as follows by the late Tagata:kw, a highly knowledgeable woman.

(21) *Apawul* *nakaleb* *te-dian* Manambu
jungle.spirit together be/live-1PL
'We lived together with the *apawul* (the jungle spirits)'

The aggressive *apawul* fought with people and lost, so they retreated into the jungle *(kwareb)*. This is how the late Peter Wakikat described this, using a typical story telling device – a lengthy chain of dependent clauses.

(22) *Vya-de-k,* *tabu-n* *da-ku,* Manambu
hit-3MASC.SG-COMPL.DS run.away-SEQ go.down-COMPL.SS
yakya,
OK
'After he (the man) hit (the jungle spirit *apawul*), he (*apawul*) having run away (and) gone down, OK'

20 A similar crocodile spirit, *wanjemook*, is mentioned by Falck (2016, 2018) for the Ñaura. A partial analogy to the Manambu *apawul* appears to be the Ñaura *miunjumbu*; however, the existing sources do not provide enough information about their interactions with humans.

wun *menawa* *geñer* *ñamus* *ma:m*
I you.MASC+COMIT later younger.sibling older.sibling
du *te* *ma:n* *ya,* *wa-ku,*
man be NEG EMPH say-COMPL.SS
'I won't have a sibling relationship (lit. younger sibling-older sibling man) with you, having said (to the man)'

keda *tabu-n* *da-n,*
DEM.PROX.MASC.SG.REACT.TOP run.away-SEQ go.down-SEQ
da-ku,
go.down-COMPL.SS
'he (the *apawul*) having run off, having gone down,'

kedika *kwarbam* *mirem*
DEM.PROX.MASC.SG.REACT.TOP jungle+LOC up+LOC
kwa-kwa-na-di, *ke-di* *apawul.*
stay-HAB-ACT.FOC-3PL DEM.PROX-PL jungle.spirit
'these stayed in the jungle on top (of trees), these *apawul*'.

Kwa-da-kereb, *kep* *sekab* *te-bana-di.*
stay-3PL-AFTER:DS just far+at have-1PL.SUBJ-3PL.O
'After they (the *apawul*) stayed (there), we only have them at a distance'.

The *apawul* (as a category) and the totemic haze *baw* where they live have special names owned by each subclan (see Laki and Aikhenvald 2013; the most common names for the *apawul* are Apingali and Maimgawi). That is, the *apawul* do not belong to just one subclan (in contrast to White people).

The *apawul* consistently play tricks on people. An *apawul* can appear as a woman to a human woman (*meya ta:kw* 'real woman'). In one story, she tries to tickle the human baby, making it cry and trying to steal it. In another story, an *apawul* tries to get a group of human men into trouble by luring them into the jungle. The men fight the *apawul* and make them run away. The *apawul* look as if they were people (whenever they appear to them), but they are not. This is how the late Yuawalup described this, in (23).

(23) *la* *ta:kw* *vyakata* *ta:kw* *ma:,* Manambu
she+DEM.DIST.FEM.SG woman good woman NEG
'That woman is not a good woman',

kuprape *takw-al,* *ta:l,*
bad woman-3FEM.SG stay+3FEM.SG

kwarba-ke-l-al, *apawul-a.*
jungle-POSS-FEM.SG-3FEM.SG jungle.spirit-3FEM.SG
'she is a bad woman, a woman from the jungle, she is an *apawul*'

An *apawul* would steal fish, shrimp, and children. In one story, a woman is looking for her child and then realizes that *apawul* has stolen her baby, as in (24), also from a story told by Yuawalup.

(24) *a-de* *apawul-ad* Manambu
DEM.DIST-MASC.SG jungle.spirit-3MASC.SG
ñan nak kure-d.
our child take-3MASC.SG
'It is *apawul* who took our child'

The *apawul* are shape-shifters, not unlike Amazonian jungle spirits. This is a feature they share with other spirits in the Ñaura tradition (Christiane Falck, p.c. 2023). They can appear in the shape of humans to the villagers, and share living quarters with real humans. Otherwise, as mentioned above, they can see humans, but humans cannot see them. It is their behaviour and their bad intentions that betray them. None of them appear in the shape of White people.[21] We now turn to the White people in the Manambu cosmos.

3.3 White people in the Manambu cosmos

The worldview of the Manambu is constantly evolving, open to establishing new links and absorbing new developments. Europeans, or White people, have been incorporated into the Manambu clan structure.

The Manambu are divided into three exogamous clan groups, *Wulwi-Ñawi, Nabul-Sablap*, and *Gla:gw*. Each is associated with its own sets of totems, personal names, and names for important objects. Exogamy between clan groups is based on

21 Harrison (1982: 227) mentions the *apawul* as a "land spirit". The Manambu *apawul* shares some behavioural similarities with the *wiji'bu-lakwa* 'spirit-woman' mentioned by Jendraschek (2007, and in his stories and textual examples in 2008, 2012). His work does not contain any details about the beliefs or the spirits of the people. An alternative term for a wayward and larrikin *apawul* in Manambu is *mess*, likely to be cognate with Iatmul *masamdi* 'spirits' (Jendraschek 2008: 53). The shape-shifting properties of the *apawul* are reminiscent of Amazonian 'perspectivism'; but see Telban (2015) on the fundamental differences between Amazonia and New Guinea in this respect.

patrilineal descent. This is observed quite strictly: if someone marries 'wrongly', this creates a problem in the family and may result in "reassignment" of clan allegiance for one of the marriage partners, to avoid what is conceived of as incest.

The *Gla:gw* are associated with everything dark, including the jungle, the earth, and dark-feathered birds. The *Wulwi-Ñawi* clan group is associated with sun, moon, stars, and everything bright and white-coloured, including the white pelican, and birds and plants of light colour. Members of this clan group are held to have a lighter skin colour, in contrast to the *Gla:gw*, who are held to be darker. The skin colour and the objects associated with the *Wulwi-Ñawi* are referred to as *ñiki-ñiki* (blood-blood) 'red' or *wama-ka-wa:m* (white.cockatoo+LINKER-ADJ-white.cockatoo), in contrast to the *Gla:gw*, whose colour is held to be 'black' (*gla-gel,* or *gla-ka-gel)*. The *Nabul-Sablap* are said to be an "in-between clan group"; they have no colour assigned to them. Their totems include various birds, e.g., *tapwuk* 'chicken' and *ga:j* 'pelican'.[22]

The *Gla:gw* are held to be the autochthonous people of Avatip, the major village of the Manambu. The ancestral origin of the *Nabul-Sablap* lies to the west, at the presumed source of the Sepik River, which is held to have been carved by the two brothers from that clan (see Aikhenvald 2008: 12). The ancestral area (*wa:gw*) of the *Wulwi-Ñawi* clan group lies to the east, at the believed terminus of the Sepik River, from where the sun and other heavenly bodies (the totems of the group) rise.

The White people are referred to as *ñiki-sep* (blood/red-skin) or as *wama-sep* (white.cockatoo+LINKER/white-skin) and are considered to be members of the *Wulwi-Ñawi* clan group. So are all the attributes of White people, including their clothing and their writing (and the corresponding implements). The areas to the

22 The name *Gla:gw* can be interpreted in two ways. Some speakers explain it as a compound 'black-water', with an underlying form *gla-gu*. This contains the combining form *-gw* for 'water' (attested in a few other combinations, e.g., *tepa-gw* (coconut-LINKER-water:COMBINING.FORM) 'coconut water', *masa-gw* (betelnut+LINKER-water:COMBINING.FORM) 'spittle from chewing betelnut'. Alternatively, the term may go back to the root *gel* 'dark' with the fossilized plural marker *-gw* (attested in a few forms; see Aikhenvald 2008: 11, 130–131, and also Harrison 1982: 179). The etymology of the names *Wulwi-Ñawi* and *Nabul-Sablap* is unknown. Based on his extensive work in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Harrison (1982: 179–180) mentions that at that point the colour "white" was associated with the *Nabul-Sablap* clan group. This was not the case in the 1990s when I started my fieldwork. The incorporation of White people into the *Wulwi-Ñawi* clan group suggested to Harrison (1982: 179–180) was further justified by the fact that both are "immigrants" to the Avatip region. Among the Ñaura, the Nyoui moiety comprises the White people; *wolinimba* (East.wind-people) is the term for White people (Falck 2016 and p.c.). This form is cognate with *wali-neb* in Manambu.

east, including Australia, are considered to be *wa:gw,* or ancestral areas, of the *Wulwi-Ñawi*.

The eastern wind (the south-eastern trade wind) *Wali-mag* (east.direction-AFF) is a totemic belonging of the Wulwi-Ñawi clan group. The alternative term for the White people and everything associated with them contains the root *wali-* 'east'.[23] Europeans, or the White people, are referred to as *wali-du* (east-man) 'white man', *wali-ta:kw* (east-woman) 'white woman', or *wali-neb* (east-dryland.people) 'white people';[24] alternatively they are also called *ñiki-sep* 'red-skin' or *wama-sep* 'white-skin'.

Everything to do with the White people contains the term *wali,* e.g., *wali-kudi* (white/east-language) 'Tok Pisin, English'; *wali-na:gw* (white/east-sago) 'biscuit'; *wali-gus* (white/east-paddle) 'outboard motor'; *wali-gu* (white/east-water) 'alcohol'; *wali kañ* (white/east-bamboo.stalk) 'gun'.

A store-bought object will be distinguished from a similar traditional object by the form *wali-* being compounded with it, e.g., *bag* 'large machete-type knife', *wali-bag* 'store-bought big knife', *ka:m* 'knife', *wali-ka:m* 'store-bought knife', y*œj* 'traditional frying pan', *wali-yœj* 'store bought frying pan', m*œj* 'thread', *wali-mœj* 'wool, store-bought thread or wool'. The combining form *meya-* 'real' can be used to distinguish the traditional objects from the 'White-introduced' ones, e.g., *meya-mœj* 'traditional thread (used to make string bags)'. Similarly, *meya-kamna:gw* (real-food) 'indigenous food: sago, sweet potato, smoked fish, etc.' is in contrast to *wali-kamna:gw* (white/east-food) 'White people's food', which some older people shun.

Most Manambu are ostensibly Christians and have baptismal names. The term *wali-se* refers to the 'Christian name', as opposed to traditional names, *tep-a-*

23 The two European researchers working with the Manambu, anthropologist Simon Harrison and myself, have been adopted into the Maliau subclan of the Manambu and given names of the clan. Simon Harrison's name, *Yua-seseg*, contains the typical Maliau totem *Yua-* 'green snail shell'. My name, *Ñamamayrata:kw*, is the name of a powerful ancestress (also referred to as *Apa-wulwi-ta:kw* ('strong-Wulwi-woman'). Harrison (1982: 180) reports that two further subclans of the Wulwi-Ñawi, Ambasarak, and Sarambasarak (which appear to be no longer recognized as separate from the Sarak subclan; see Aikhenvald 2008: 12), claimed Queen Elizabeth II "as a joint totem of theirs", on the basis that the emu (interpreted as a cassowary, the specific totem of their subclan) "appears on the crest of the Australian government". This does not seem to be the case for the contemporary Manambu; things are in flux.

24 On occasion, the terms *wali-du* and *wali-ta:kw* are applied to non-Papuans no matter what their skin colour. In 2004, we had an impromptu visit of a group from *Médecins sans frontières* to Avatip, which consisted of a mixture of White people and African Americans; these terms were used to refer to them. See Falck (2016: 51) on the cognate *woli* in Ñaura. A similar use of the term *wali* 'east' was listed in the Ñaura (or Western Iatmul) wordlist (Jendraschek 2007), in *wali-ni'ba* (east-people) 'white people' and *wali-kudi* 'English, Tok Pisin languages'.

se (village-LINKER-name) 'village name', which are divided into numerous categories, described from a linguistic perspective by Aikhenvald (2008: 75–76; 2018c), and in general terms by Harrison (1990: 59–62). The term *wali* in Manambu does not bear any connections to 'spirit' or 'ghost'. In contrast, in the closely related Yalaku, a somewhat pejorative term for 'non-indigenous' or 'White' person is *kaba*, whose other meaning is 'ghost', or 'spirit' (Aikhenvald 2018b; see Bowden 1997: 42 on similar uses of *gaba* 'spirit, soul' in the unrelated neighbouring language Kwoma, from which the Yalaku form was borrowed).[25]

The fact that the White people have been incorporated into the clan and the totem system is concordant with the "importing" nature of the East Sepik peoples and many other groups across New Guinea, echoing Margaret Mead's 1938 observations concerning the Arapesh, who also live in the Sepik region. But access to the perceived opulence and the goods available to White people goes beyond a person's lifetime. We now turn to the unseen 'ghost villages' and their representations in stories and legends.

3.4 'Ghost villages'

In Manambu, a human has three facets – *sep* 'physical body', *mawul* 'mind, understanding; literally, the inside' and *kayik* 'spirit'.[26] When a person dies, their

25 Falck (2016, 2019) describes how she was consistently taken to be a spirit of a dead ancestor who had come back to the Ñaura village of Timbunmeli as a white woman. My experience with the Yalaku of the Middle Sepik has been somewhat similar. I was taken to be the returned spirit of the mother of one of my major teachers, Yafa Mark Chupandu (my classificatory son), who bestowed his mother's name Holengitalkwa on me. Other Yalaku people – all of them devout Christians – had an ambivalent attitude to this. This representation of White people has not been attested among the Manambu. This resonates with Lohmann's report about the Asabano of the West Sepik province (2019: 156): "In the early days of contact, Asabano elders suspected that European people were returned dead people – ghosts – possibly of their own people . . . These whites were haunting presences to the Asabano and other Melanesians who first beheld them. Hence recurrent speculations reported in Melanesia that the location of the land of the dead might be the countries where white people come from". See also Lohmann (2005) on how the ancestor of the Asabano had white skin, similar to the belief of the Orokaiva, of Oro Province, that the spirits of dead people sometimes return to life in white-skinned form (Bashkow 2000: 314). This representation of White people has not been attested among the Manambu.

26 See Aikhenvald (2015) for a full description and for some analogies in other Sepik groups, including the striking similarities between the Karawari *wambung* (Telban 1998: 59) and the Manambu *mawul*, and between the Kwoma *mayi* (Bowden 1997: 124), the Karawari *anggindarkwanar/kwanma* (Telban 1998: 61) and the Manambu *kayik*; further information on the Ñaura concepts and terminologies is in Falck (2016: 48–58).

kayik lives on, leaving the body and transforming into a *wudeb* 'a spirit, ghost'. These move to a *wudeb-a tep* (ghost-LK village), a 'ghost village' or a village of the dead. Villages of the dead, or ghost villages, are said to be located underground.[27]

In the stories and descriptions I listened to and recorded, the inhabitants of the village of the dead have been sometimes described as 'White people'. One speaker commented by saying (25) (addressing me).

(25) ñena-pek-adi *Manambu*
you.FEM.SG-LIKE-3PL
'They are like you (feminine)'

The underground location of the 'village of the dead' was described in several lengthy stories by the late Gaiawaliwag, one of the most knowledgeable Manambu female elders and the wife (and later the widow) of a powerful medicine man. Her stories deal with a common topic in the Manambu lore: orphaned children are left destitute at the mercy of their mean paternal uncle, and his wife, who is even meaner. Realizing how destitute they have become, their dead mother comes up from the underground (in some versions, from her grave in the cemetery) and helps them out by providing them with a tree on which money grows, saying that she has got plenty of money down there in the village of the dead. She travels in a car, which is seen as the utmost luxury (there are no cars in Avatip and very few in the local regional centre of Ambunti). The mother describes her big White-people-style house and the White people's food she eats every day, but refuses to share any food with her children, saying that only dead people are allowed to eat it.

Here is another example. In September 2013, we stayed in a house which belonged to Yuakalu (Joel) Luma, the widower of the recently deceased Ruth Nebekaru. Pauline Yuaneng Luma Laki, Yuakalu's elder sister, insisted that I should not be in the house on my own. As Pauline went off to make the arrangements for the upcoming launch of the Manambu grammar, Kamibau and I sat together on the veranda of the house. Kamibau told me about the signs of Ruth's presence she had heard during the night, and then started talking about the 'village of the dead'. She pointed in the direction of the house of Susan Motuway, a retired schoolteacher, saying that the village is right there, underground, but that it is better for us not to visit that place. According to Kamibau, the *wudeb,* or the 'dead people', live in big

27 Falck (2016: 51) mentions that the place of the dead for the Ñaura is believed to be associated with the eastern wind *woli* (see also Wassmann 1991: 200), which occurs in various terminologies for White people and their associated goods, and is cognate with the Manambu form *wali-* (see §3.3). Graveyards are sometimes described as 'doors' to the unseen parallel worlds of the dead (Christiane Falck 2016 and p.c. 2023).

underground houses with plenty of White people's food (*wali-kamna:gw* 'white/east food'), especially rice and the valued tin fish. Someone was even reported to have seen tins around that location, but the tins had then quickly disappeared. She then added that the *wudeb* had other *wudeb* working for them, namely those for whom no mortuary festival (*Keketep*) had been performed. Her words are quoted in (26).

(26) *wudeb-a tepa:m a-di keketep* Manambu
ghost-LK village+LK+LOC DEM.DIST-PL mortuary.ritual
kui-ma:r-na-di du ta:kw yawi
give-NEG.SUBORDINATE-ACTION.FOCUS-PL man woman work
kur-kwa-na-di
do-HABITUAL-ACTION.FOCUS-3PL
'In the ghost village, those men and women for whom the mortuary ritual has not been given do the work'

I asked her what the inhabitants of the 'ghost villages' looked like. She replied (27):

(27) *du-adi ñana-pek* Manambu
men/people we.PL-LIKE
'(They) are people, like us'

The term *du* 'man' in Manambu refers to a person or people in general (or even to a person's body; Aikhenvald 2015). Kamibau's explanation in (27) appears to imply that the inhabitants of the 'ghost villages', or the villages of the dead, may not be white; they are just like any people, except that we do not see them and they have access to all the goods and luxuries.

I then told Kamibau about Christiane Falck's work with the Ñaura, who use mobile phones to talk to their ancestors and to dead people, and asked her if the inhabitants of the Manambu 'villages of the dead' did any such things.[28] Kamibau looked at me with slight contempt and replied negatively, in (28).

(28) *ma:, atawa akes kur-kwa-na-di,* Manambu
no thus NEG.HAB do-HABITUAL-ACTION.FOCUS-3PL
Ñaura day-adi ja:p-adi
Ñaura they-PL thing-3PL
'No, they do not act like this, (these) are things of the Ñaura'

28 The role of technology in communication with the dead and with the spiritual world in general is shared by the Ñaura with the Karawari (Telban and Vávrová 2014 offer a general perspective).

To my question of whether the inhabitants of the village of the dead have mobile phones at all, Kamibau replied that they have many things, all the things White people have.

To sum up: the spirits of the dead, *wudeb*, live in their own villages supplied with White people's goods, including technology. Their location is underground and is vaguely known (it may or may not be connected with cemeteries). The question of the race of the *wudeb* is vague and perhaps irrelevant. In agreement with the inclusion of White people into the clan and totem system, no question of race arises. We are faced with the projection of the habitat and ways of life – real or coveted – of the White people onto the hidden realm of the dead, the 'ghosts', in their underground abode from which they may come and visit, but whose riches they are not entitled to share with the living. This resonates with what we have just seen for north-west Amazonia, in §2.6.

3.5 Beyond the Manambu: White people in the world of the dead in Papua New Guinea

Across Papua New Guinea, the locations of the dead are often associated with where White people come from – America and Europe. For the Eastern Iatmul of Tambunum, the village of the dead (*wundumbu ngai*)[29] "resembles a vibrant city, full of cars, packaged food, technology, commodities, and money. 'Now we think the dead live in America', said one man in the men's house to much agreement" (Silverman 2012: 124; 2013: 245–246). When the dead visit, they appear on "a shimmering, supernatural ship" which resembles – as people say – the former tourist ship *Melanesian Discoverer* (Silverman 2013: 246). This has distinct overtones of the "cargo cult" (a set of millenarian movements), and is also concomitant with increased expectations from the White people themselves, including anthropologists (see Silverman 2013: 248 for more information).

29 The forms *wundumbu* in *wundumbu ngai* in Eastern Iatmul and *undumbu* in *undumbu ge* Ñaura (or Western Iatmul) 'ghost village' are cognates with Manambu *wudeb*. The noun *tep* 'village' in Manambu is cognate with Yalaku *tepa* 'village'. The form *gay* occurs in some ethnonyms in Manambu. The cognate term *wudubu* in Iatmul is translated as 'spirit' in the construction *wudubu yi-* 'die, lit. spirit go/become' (Jendraschek 2007), and as 'ghost' in Staalsen and Staalsen (1973). The same root (probably borrowed from Iatmul) occurs in Karawari *wundubunar* 'spirit of a dead man, male ghost, ancestor' and its feminine equivalent *wunduma* (Telban 2019: 40). A spirit of a dead woman *wunduma* is considered 'good', while the male *wundubunar* is considered 'bad' – "wrathful and capable of striking even his own children or brothers" (Telban 1998: 164–165). In the ghost villages of the Eastern Iatmul, the newly deceased are said to be "boiled in water to slough off their black skin so they appear white" (Silverman 2012: 123).

The *undumbu-ge* (spirit-village/house) of the Ñaura (Western Iatmul) of Timbunmeli appears to be located within the Ñaura environment. The islands of Timbunmeli and Wondunumbuk are, in their invisible appearance, "Japan" and "Poland". The invisible realm that the spirits of the dead inhabit is conceptualised like a parallel world within Timbunmeli's life world – "walking paths are said to be highways on which cars drive, seating platforms are workshops (which produce tools), and the water of the Chambri Lake, where the village is located, is a city. Graves are the doors to the houses of the dead through which they can travel between the different realms of the living and the dead" (Falck 2019: 84). This is reminiscent of the itinerary of the mother in Gaiawaliwag's tales. Falck (2019: 84) adds to this that "not only spirits of the dead are believed to live in cities, but also bush- and water-spirits live in villages and cities, drive cars and ships".

In numerous instances across Papua New Guinea societies, including among the Karawari of the East Sepik (Telban 1998, p.c. 2023), the realm of the dead is associated with having access to European goods. In some instances, this has overtones of a 'cargo cult' – a set of beliefs in a new blessed age signalled by the arrival of goods and riches from supernatural sources (especially goods associated with Europeans). In the early 1950s, a dismissed policeman, Kesali, returned home to his village and set himself up as the 'king' of the Gogodala. He tried to base "his activities on dreams in which his ancestors, who were living in the 'village of the dead', promised him that they would send great quantities of European goods to the Gogodalas and told him that he had been appointed to lead his people to a new era of prosperity" (Weymouth 1984: 280). For the Asabano of West Sepik, one hears the noise of high-technology airplanes in haunted places, or in the hidden cities of the dead (Lohmann 2019: 149).

For the Kamula of Western Province, Australia is believed to be the place where the dead live, and from where they sometimes return as Kamula Europeans to help their living kin. Travelling to Australia has the potentiality of removing the cultural hero's (Yolisi) prohibition on the dead returning, and might even reverse death (Wood 2023: 311, 315, 321). The lands of the White people – Australia, Europe, and North America – are the realm of the dead, who enjoy the coveted goods and riches associated with the Whites (see also Falck 2016: 83–84; 2019). These lands remain invisible and hidden: the peoples who profess such beliefs and knowledge have never travelled too far from their native villages. This does not apply to the Manambu, maybe because they are too worldly and too familiar with the Western world. Many have travelled to Australia and the UK. The White people are integrated into the clan structure, yet their hard-to-obtain riches remain hidden in the ghost villages of the dead.

4 To conclude. The images and landscapes of the 'unseen' in Melazonia

In the two focal points in Melazonia the worlds of living people coexist and interact with the worlds of spirits as their lived realities and "basic orders of being", resonating with Harrison's (1990: 55) description of the two "paths" for the Manambu: "the world of outward, phenomenal appearances in which ordinary men and women live, and the hidden but more 'real' order peopled by spirits and ghosts".

For the Tariana and other representatives of the core Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area, the spirits of the jungle are former humans in animal disguise. The spirits known as 'Fish-likes' live underwater. They are shape-shifters (see also Carvalho and Carvalho 2011 on shape-shifting among the Húpd'äh). The humans see them in the shape of White (that is, non-Indian) men and women, or as snakes – which is what they appear to be in their essence. The world of the Fish-likes in the traditions of the Vaupés River Basin reflects typically Amazonian transformations – 'what you see is not what you get' (see Rivière 1994 on WYSINWYG).

To move into the Fish-likes's world is to step into a different reality, which the Tariana call *pa:-ehkwapi* 'another world'. Their world is unseen for the story-tellers, and it would be dangerous to describe it as an experienced reality. The stories are always told by someone other than the one who has actually had the personal experience of visiting 'another world', and are thus told using the reported evidential. This is in contrast to personal experiences with spirits which are treated as 'non-visual'. For a person to tell everyone about their own experience in the spirit world of the Fish-likes would be downright life-threatening. The reality of the Fish-likes has some of the accoutrements of the traditional Indian world, and the unseen locations are placed close to where the story-tellers reside (as mentioned in §2.4 and §2.6). At the same time, what one finds in the dwellings of the Fish-likes reflects the White people's goods and lifestyle (including silk cloths, big cities with large houses and cars, food and clothing). The more exposure the story-tellers get to the urban environment of non-Indians, the more details are included in the descriptions of the hidden world of the underwater people. The alternative reality of 'another world' – essentially hidden from the human eye – is a lure and a danger at the same time.

For the Manambu of the Middle Sepik in New Guinea, the world of spirits coexists with that of humans. A spirit can appear in an animal disguise (especially the crocodile; see §3.2) The jungle spirits, *apawul*, used to live together with people, and are now invisible to them but can still appear in human disguise and be harmful (§3.2). The disembodied *kayik* 'spiritual essence, spirit' of deceased people lives in a newly embodied form in hidden unseen villages underground – *wudeba tep* 'ghost

village'. The world of the dead constitutes an alternative reality, not available to the human eye. Their racial allegiance is ambiguous (in contrast to other Papuan groups, who equate spirits of the dead and ghosts with White people). The hidden villages cannot be seen with the human eye, and humans have no access to the riches they contain. The inhabitants of the hidden villages can come to the world of the living and even help them, but they cannot share what they possess: to eat their food, one has to die first. The villages have many of the accoutrements of White people, including cars and the coveted tin food, not unlike the Fish-likes in Amazonia. The locations of the ghost villages are known, but only approximately; it is too dangerous to come close to them, let alone to put them on a map.

The Manambu view of the alternative reality of the dead resonates with a number of instances across Papua New Guinea, where the land of the dead is equated with the lands of the White people (or Europeans) – Australia, Europe or North America – or viewed as hidden villages with access to White people's goods. A special feature of the Manambu cosmology is the consistent incorporation of the White people into the *Wulwi-Ñawi* clan group, whose totems are associated with the eastern direction and thus with the location of the White people, and with everything white and shiny.

The way in which the cosmology of the core Vaupés encompasses the White people is only somewhat similar to that of the Manambu. Across the core Vaupés River Basin Linguistic Area, White people are partly incorporated into the origin myths, on a par with Indians, *nawiki* (see Figure 1 in §2.2.1). White people, *yalana,* stand apart from the *nawiki* in many ways. They are the ones who enter the shape of the spirits, the Fish-like Indians (Figure 2 in §2.3, and §2.6). White people are viewed as one of the visible transformations of the shape-shifting Fish-likes. White people are like humans, but not equal to them. Among the Manambu they are the same as other humans, with their clan allegiance and designated totemic areas, *wa:gw*. This is a major point of difference in our two focal instances from Melazonia.

What do the unseen landscapes of the shape-shifting Fish-likes in the Vaupés and the Manambu underground villages of the dead have in common?

First, the stories about the Fish-likes in the Vaupés and the villages of the dead (or the ghost villages) among the Manambu describe the worlds which can be talked about but which are beyond what a human can see. They reflect projections of desired assets and objects and ways of life associated with the White people and their perceived riches (which are out of reach for many).

Secondly, the verbal images and the representation of the unseen underwater dwellings in the Vaupés and the underground villages of the Manambu incorporate the evolving experience of the surrounding world. This is what we see through narratives, gossip, and casual remarks. The alternative, unseen realities

expand to absorb new technologies and new material values linked to what is brought in by the Whites.

Thirdly, in both cases, the hidden worlds – the underwater and the underground ones – are dangerous, alluring as they are. They are unseen, and – at least in the Vaupés context – those who have been exposed to it had better keep it quiet, for fear of punishment. Within the Vaupés context, these are partly cautionary tales – a warning not to want too much and to stick to one's own rather than reach out for the riches of others.

The flow of each narrative and each stretch of conversation – told in the traditional languages – reflects the dynamics of people's interactions with each other and the outside world, and their aspirations, hopes, and visions as they evolve. And this is what we can discern behind the hidden landscapes. The dwellings of Fish-likes and the villages of the dead incorporate the evolving perceptions of the desired aspects of the surrounding world, and undergo transformations as people's exposure to it grows.

Encounters with what lies beyond the human eye and perhaps human life represent an alternative, lived reality both in the Vaupés and among the Manambu. Hidden as they are, they are part of the overall view and the overall landscape, stretching beyond a dichotomy between "real" and "surreal".

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3	first, second, third person
ACT.FOC	action focus marker
ADV	adverbial
AFF	affix
ANIM	animate
AUG	augmentative
CAUS	causative
CL	classifier
CL:ANIM	classifier for animates
CL:FEM	classifier for females
CL:VERT	classifier for vertical items
COLL	collective
COLL.PL	collective plural
COMIT	comitative
COMPL	completive
COMPL.DS	completive different subject
COMPL.SS	completive same subject
COUNTEREXP	counterexpectation
DECL	declarative

DEM.DIST	distal demonstrative
DEM.PROX	proximal demonstrative
DS	different subject
EMPH	emphatic
FEM.SG	feminine singular
FOC.A/S	focused subject
FRUST	frustrative
FUT	future
HAB	habitual
IMPERS	impersonal
INDEF	indefinite
INSTR	instrumental
INTER.INFER.REC.P	interrogative inferred recent past evidential
INTER.PRES.NONVIS	interrogative nonvisual recent past evidential
LK	linker
LOC	locative
MALEF.IMPV	malefactive imperative
MASC.SINGL	singulative masculine
NCL.ANIM	noun class “animate”
NEG	negation
NEG.SUBORDINATE	negation in a subordinate clause
NOM	nominalization
NOM.LOC	locative nominalization
O	object
OBJ	object case
P	person
PASS	passive
PAST.PART	past participle
PAUS	pausal form
PL	plural
PL.ANIM	animate plural
PL.COLL	collective plural
PL.INDIV	individualized plural
PL.OF.ASSOCIATION	plural of association
POLITE	polite command
POSS	possessive
PRES.NONVIS	present nonvisual
PRES.REP	present reported
PRES.VIS	present visual
PROX.IMPV	proximate imperative
REACT.TOP	reactivated topic
REDUP	reduplication
REL	relativizer
REM.P.REP	remote past reported
SEQ	sequential
SG	singular
SGF	singular feminine

SGNF	singular non-feminine
SINGL	singulative
SS	same subject
SUBJ	subject
TOP.NON.A/S	topical non-subject

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