

YUHUM OF THE WARRIORS

魂魄

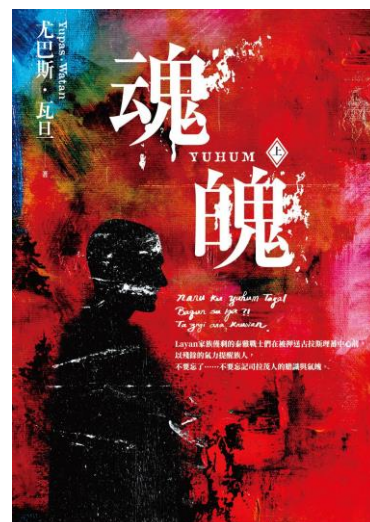
* 2023 Golden Tripod Award

Twenty years of research and another decade of writing went into this historical novel, the first in the history of Taiwanese literature to focus on the Atayal perspective. Creating a written history for an indigenous people who have no writing system, it also documents a language at risk of disappearing.

Out hunting with his friends one day, Yupas, an Atayal tribesman, has an accident and feels his soul leave his body. When he regains consciousness, he encounters an old man he once met many years ago in the mountains. The old man is Kbuta, a hero of Atayal legend – a traditional soul summoning ritual has evidently called Yupas back in time to the Slamaw tribe of a hundred and thirty years earlier.

Under Kbuta's tutelage, Yupas studies the traditional ways, learning the tribe's myths, legends, and history of mass migrations. By participating in the daily lives of his ancestors, including their hunting parties and headhunting practices, he develops a better understanding of how the Atayal people view the soul and the relationship between man and nature.

Yupas's amazing experience is not a wholly positive one, however – one day, the sound of Japanese gunfire echoes across the mountain and gradually approaches. Before long, the tribe is compelled to take up arms and fight against Japanese colonial aggression in what will prove to be just the start of a twenty-year war. Keenly aware that they may not have the strength to withstand the powerful Japanese army, the Atayal must nonetheless fight for their very survival. As for Yupas, he must bear witness to this heavy history...



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This is Yupas Watan's first novel, written after many years of field research. It is also Taiwan's first historical war novel written by an Atayal elder. Yupas uses first-person narration to lead readers on this journey of the soul, carrying them back in time to experience the blood and tears of war and the iridescent brilliance of the Atayal spirit.

Yupas Watan 尤巴斯·瓦旦

Yupas Watan is a Miaoli Atayal tribe member and cultural historiographer. Since attending a PhD program in the Department of Anthropology at National Taiwan University, he has held part-time teaching positions at multiple universities. He has for many years devoted himself to recording the oral life histories of Atayal elders, as well as researching the history of Atayal migration and wars, their witchcraft culture, and changes in the Atayal language. Through his writing, he hopes to pass down Atayal culture to future generations.