

## Preface

Josiane Cauquelin documented the special ritual language of the Nanwang Puyuma shamans at the last possible moment. When she began her work among the Puyuma in 1983 no fewer than 19 shamans worked daily at Nanwang; by 2006 only two were left, and by 2007 no one any longer had full command of the rituals. Cauquelin's work is a stark reminder of how swiftly an intangible cultural treasure can be lost.

No more striking demonstration could be given of what may happen when a scholar is willing to immerse herself/himself in the daily life of a people and to develop relationships of affection and trust, an involvement going much farther than mere data-collecting field trips. Cauquelin lived with a Puyuma family and learned to speak the everyday language fluently, and the shamans themselves (all women) not only allowed her to record their rituals but willingly explained both their spoken and their kinetic components.

Cauquelin's earlier publications on the Nanwang Puyuma include a *Dictionnaire Puyuma-Français* (1991); a general linguistic description, "The Puyuma Language" (1991); a major ethnography, *The Aborigines of Taiwan: The Puyuma—From Head-hunting to the Modern World* (2004); and a number of additional articles and conference papers. Both ethnologist and linguist, the scope of her work would not have been possible had Cauquelin categorized herself narrowly as either one or the other. In an era of ever-increasing specialization, Cauquelin's study reminds us of how much our disciplines may lose in their abandonment of holistic research. In a profoundly true sense, the interface between language and culture is seamless. Ethnology that ignores language, and linguistics that ignores culture, are both limited in their potentialities and are the poorer for their exclusivity.

This documentation of Nanwang ritual texts is unique. Such a ritual language has never been described for any of the other aboriginal groups of Taiwan; either they never existed, or they have been overlooked, or they have simply disappeared. Cauquelin's rescue of this priceless material has significance far beyond the geographical confines of her own fieldwork.

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