

Project Proposal  
January 2024



Sights, Sounds, Stories, Spirits  
of the Golden Triangle

A Dynamic Center of Indigenous Culture  
Chiang Mai, Thailand

*The ancestral traditions of the Golden Triangle,  
so vital a century ago, are in jeopardy of vanishing with the wind.  
Now is the time to shine a light on these vibrant cultures,  
for should we lose any of them,  
we surely lose a part of the soul of our humanity.*

Please join us in honoring, sharing, and sustaining  
endangered intangible traditions.

# Executive Summary

*'Reach Back, Reach Deep, Reach Out'*

## What

**Cultural Crossroads Asia**, a multi-cultural initiative in Chiang Mai, Thailand, will serve as a valuable repository, dynamic showcase, and far-reaching social initiative to preserve and sustain the material culture, history, traditions, and beliefs of the ethnic groups of the mountains of the Golden Triangle.

Through permanent and temporary multi-media exhibitions, public events, educational programs, on-going documentation, experiences of living culture, and outreach in the villages, **Cultural Crossroads Asia** aims to inspire and inform national and international visitors, while honoring and validating the full spectrum of people who share this corner of the world.

## Why

**Cultural Crossroads Asia's** mission is to collect, document, conserve, exhibit, and perpetuate the unique physical and cultural heritage of the numerous ethnic groups of Southeast Asia.

What makes **Cultural Crossroads Asia** distinctive from other institutions, however, is its pledge to work with indigenous groups in a lasting alliance, and to be guided by their vision and knowledge of protecting our planet. The preservation of culture and the environment must go hand in hand. In this way, new generations may begin to apply age-old practices creatively to contemporary challenges and endeavors. *We must look back to look forward.*

The world must bear witness to the majesty of the diverse cultures of our planet by making a commitment to swift action: preserving those ancestral arts that are vanishing and safeguarding those that are transforming. *Should we lose any of these practices, we surely lose part of the soul of our humanity.*

## Where

**Cultural Crossroads Asia** is excited to establish its home in Chiang Mai, the largest city of northern Thailand, known as a vibrant center of historical and cultural awareness – social, educational, artistic, and spiritual – as well as of commercial enterprise. Importantly, Chiang Mai, situated amidst mountains, forests, and fields, is also a thriving 'crossroads' of indigenous peoples, offering the region a profusion of unique colors, languages, and traditions.

**Cultural Crossroads Asia** is founded on two equal, yet complementary pillars:

- 1) **Cultural Crossroads Asia Center**: 'Preserving Tangible Culture' through ethnic artifacts, documentation, and media in a permanent center in Chiang Mai, Thailand.
- 2) **Living Legacy Project (LLP)**: 'Sustaining Intangible Wisdom' through outreach programs in ethnic villages that engage Master Tribal Wisdom-Keeper and Artisans to impart ancestral heritage to highland youth.

## When

With the **Cultural Crossroads Asia Foundation** successfully established in mid-2023, **CCA** was able to launch its first **Living Legacy Project**: the **Akha Oral Tradition School** opened in July 2023 in Ban Saen Suk, an Akha village in the mountains of Chiang Rai Province. Each week twenty-two Akha boys and girls are inspired by six Master Akha Musicians, who teach the ancestral songs, instruments, stories, and instrument craftsmanship they learned from family members in an unbroken chain of oral knowledge.

## How

The **Cultural Crossroads Asia Foundation** and the **CCA Board of Directors** serve to ensure that the proposal and its implementation are clear, all encompassing, and conducive to our ethnic partners, guests, sponsors, and donors.

A collaborative **Council of Indigenous Leaders and Future Leaders**, together with a **National and International Advisory Group**, will assist in the design and functioning of the CCA initiative.

The magnificent **Songs of Memory Archives** – books, photos, films, and recordings, and comprehensive collections of textiles, jewelry, musical instruments, artifacts, and tools amassed over two decades by researcher Victoria Vorreiter – will provide the cornerstone for the **Cultural Crossroads Asia's Exhibitions**.



*Thank you, Victoria, for this amazing and awe-inspiring exhibit. Your poetic descriptions of the traditional customs, beliefs, and ceremonies beautifully complemented the magnificent photos. It has truly made me re-think my own existence and connection with the natural world and inspired me to learn more about the ancient cultures before they are lost forever. Thank you so much.*

Marc Cavatgorta

*Victoria, Pauline and I went to the exhibition at the Three Kings (Chiang Mai Arts and Cultural Centre) and were truly amazed. Neither the Metropolitan Museum in New York, nor the Victoria and Albert Museum in London could have achieved what you have done. We spent a full two hours there until we could absorb no more.*

Anthony and Pauline Bottrill

*As one of the most important initiatives to counteract the spread of cultural amnesia, Victoria Vorreiter's **Hmong Songs of Memory** multi-media project deserves the highest recognition and support locally and globally. For the research community, her work points the way forward to a holistic methodological practice built on interdisciplinary partnership. This work is no doubt one of the most significant archives in recent musicological writings.*

Dr. Kjell Skjellstad

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