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myanmar news & insight

PEACE CALL FAILS

Two-pronged strategy with scorched-earth policy getting the junta nowhere

SONGS OF MEMORY

BOOK AND RECORDINGS OFFER INSIGHT INTO THE INDIGENOUS CULTURES OF THE GOLDEN TRIANGLE

Traditional Music of the Golden Triangle: Karen, Hmong, Iu Mien, Lahu, Akha, and Lisu

The Songs of Memory Book, with an attached Flash Drive of music, has just been released by author and documentarian Victoria Vorreiter, who explores and records the age-old music, ceremonies, and culture of the mountain peoples who call Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, and China home—the Karen, Hmong, Iu Mien, Lahu, Akha, and Lisu.

This expanded new edition, the culmination of two decades of fieldwork, includes documentation of newly-found, seldom heard musical instruments and traditions that are so rare, the majority of indigenous peoples no longer perform, much less know them. The work reveals vivid accounts of musicians, spirit intermediaries, ritual specialists, headmen, wise elders, craftsmen, and

villagers, which are brought to life by over 800 colour photographs.

The addition of the Songs of Memory Flash Drive, with 78 minutes of dynamic recordings and detailed liner notes, offers readers and listeners an absorbing multi-sensory experience to explore deeply the ancestral soundscape of the mountain peoples of Southeast Asia. In combination, these Songs of Memory essays, photographs, and recordings provide a comprehensive archive of practices that are quickly and quietly disappearing so future generations can treasure them.

As Richard K. Diran, author of *The Vanishing Tribes of Burma* – a book much loved by Aung San Suu Kyi – said, “Ms Vorreiter has worked for many years chronicling the diverse ethnic minorities of South East Asia, photographing, documenting, and writing about their culture, and collecting their clothing and jewelry. This comes just in time as these people are on the verge of having their unique cultures absorbed by their far larger host countries.”

Mr Diran added, “Her newest initiative, the Songs of Memory book and recordings continues this vision. Coming from a musical background, Victoria has approached the subject of preserving ethnographic culture from her unique viewpoint of cataloguing and making available indispensable recordings of the tribal music, the sounds of which will last far after the instruments cease to be played by those magical people who played them. Bravo, Victoria, for your fine and monumental dedication and enduring work!”

Anthropologist and author Dr. Peter ten Hoopen remarked he too was deeply impressed with Ms Vorreiter’s ethnographic work, and Songs of Memory in particular, for four specific reasons. “First is her fieldwork

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Traditional Music of the Golden Triangle



Victoria Vorreiter

in the Golden Triangle, a remote area many researchers avoid because of its history of political unrest and attendant personal risks. Second is the depth and the precision of her documentation. Every instrument is described meticulously and shown in images. Third is the photography, which is first rate. And fourth is her fine recordings of secular songs, sacred chants, and instrumental music of the highland groups of the Golden Triangle, which can be heard in a flash drive that comes with the book."

"Her photography is not just technically immaculate, but most importantly, shows an intimacy with her subjects that can be achieved only by deep immersion in the community. I expect Songs of Memory to remain the most important source on its subject for many years to come."

To learn more about this priceless insight into these age-old songs, chants, and instrumental music of the mountain cultures of Myanmar and beyond, please visit:

The Songs of Memory Book and Flash Drive

<https://tribalmusicasia.com/book.php>

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Karen S'gaw Musicians Playing Kwaeh Horns New Year Festival, Chiang Mai, Thailand 2009



Lahu Shi Villager and Grandson Beating his Jegkho Drum Celebrating the Harvest Festival Wan Kong Pyak Tae, Keng Tung, Myanmar January 2005



Akha Pawmee Musician Beating her Dhum Drum in the New Year Festival in Keng Tung, Myanmar December 2006