



ລາວສຶກສາ ໑ Lao Studies I  
An International Conference  
DeKalb, IL USA 2005

[www.seasite.niu.edu/lao/laostudies](http://www.seasite.niu.edu/lao/laostudies)

February 24, 2005

Dear Sir/Madame:

We are seeking financial support for the First International Conference on Lao Studies (ICLS) organized by the Center for Southeast Asian Studies of Northern Illinois University and the United Laotian Community Development, Inc. of California. The San Francisco organizing committees' budget for the conference, including funding for approximately two overseas scholars, is estimated at US\$20,000. Some of the costs will be covered with registration fees, but that alone would not be sufficient. We are asking for donations from individuals, businesses, and organizations in a generous amount.

The ICLS is to be held on Friday-Sunday, May 20-22, 2005 in DeKalb, Illinois, USA. The main objective of this conference is to provide an international forum for scholars to present and discuss various aspects of Lao studies. The 2005 conference will feature papers on any topic concerning Lao Studies. Topics include all ethnolinguistic groups of Laos, the Isan Lao (Northeasterners of Thailand) and other ethnic Lao-(Tai) groups in Thailand, cross-border ethnic groups in Thailand, Vietnam, China, Burma, and Cambodia (e.g. Akha, Hmong, Khmu, Mien, Lao Phuan, Tai Lue, Tai Dam), and overseas Laotians (e.g. Lao-American, Hmong-American, Lao-French). The conference will also include a Film Festival, art displays by various artists, and a separate Lao Cultural Night organized by the Elgin Lao community.

Interest in this very First International Conference on Lao Studies is much higher than we expected when the idea first emerged. Not only will the meeting bring scholars together from all over the world, it will also unite the peoples of the Lao Diasporas who want to revive their sense of cultural and linguistic identity and that of future generations. A new community of young scholars is eager to see the conference take place; the old and wise fervently want it to take place too. As just one example among many encouraging testimonials, we received an e-mail from a retired bilingual Lao teacher living in Florida who, in a subsequent telephone call, said he has already contacted many of his former friends now living in Elgin to tell them that he is looking forward to having the chance to meet in May to listen to and discuss matters of common interest and importance.

The three days conference will feature invited speakers and paper presentations by scholars from around the globe on wide range of topics concerning Lao Studies. As of February 5, 2005 there are over 200 potential participants who are planning to join the conference. Scholars from Laos, Thailand, Japan, France, Belgium, Germany, United Kingdom, The Netherlands, India, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Austria, Australia, Canada, China and all regions of the United States are planning to attend. The United States embassy in Vientiane will provide funding for 4 scholars from Laos to attend the meeting. Confirmed speakers and attendees include Grant Evans, Ph.D. from Hong Kong, Venerable Pra Ajan Maha Bounkhong, President of Lao American Buddhist Monks of America from Hawaii, Hmong-American scholar and community leader Yang Dao from Minnesota, Somsonge Burusphat, Ph.D. Thai linguist from Bangkok, and Tiao (Prince) Nithakhong Somsanith from France, a grandson of the last Vice Roy of the

Kingdom of Laos and a scholar-artist on Indochinese textiles and art golden thread embroidery from the days of the Lao Royal Court.

Laos is a small country, poor in many ways but possessing a rich and vibrant culture. The time for the Lao and those interested in Laos to come together for an international conference has arrived. The conference will succeed only to the degree that financial support is forthcoming for this important first international conference dedicated to high quality scholarship. It is important that this opening conference be well attended so that many more conferences can be built on the anticipated success of the first one. We hope that we can count on you for that critical assistance. We would also deeply appreciate your advice on other avenues of approach for funding possibilities.

For more information please visit the conference's webpage at: [www.seasite.niu.edu/lao/LaoStudies](http://www.seasite.niu.edu/lao/LaoStudies)

Thank you for your support.

Very sincerely yours,



Vinya Sysamouth, *on behalf of the*  
First ICLS Organizing Committee:

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List of potential participants as of February 24, 2005 is 240 people. The list contains many scholars from various states of the United States as well as abroad, such as Lao PDR, Thailand, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Singapore, Vietnam, Austria, India, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, Nigeria, Philippines, Argentina, Sweden, Belgium and the United Kingdom. For an updated list please visit the ICLS webpage at: [www.seasite.niu.edu/lao/LaoStudies](http://www.seasite.niu.edu/lao/LaoStudies)