

CALL FOR PAPERS

Eighth International Conference on Lao Studies

When: Thursday, 10 September to Sunday, 13 September 2026

Where: Universität Heidelberg, Heidelberg, Germany

The Institute of Anthropology at the Centre of Asian and Transcultural Studies, Heidelberg University, and the Center for Lao Studies (CLS) are pleased to announce that the Eighth International Conference on Lao Studies (ICLS 8) will be held on September 10-13, 2025 in Heidelberg, Germany. The main objective of the conference is to promote Lao studies, broadly defined, by providing an international forum for scholars to present and discuss various aspects of Lao Studies.

Organizers:

Institute of Anthropology
Centre of Asian and Transcultural Studies
Heidelberg University
Voßstr. 2, Building 4110, 69115 Heidelberg
email: ethnologie@urz.uni-heidelberg.de

Center for Lao Studies
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email: info@laostudies.org

Theme

The Time and Space of Laos: Neighbors and transformations

It is not only in the idiom of "from landlocked to landlinked", that Laos has been recognized as a country intensely linked with its neighbors. It is also a fact that it is situated between countries of highly different political organizations and economic status. As such, Laos has managed to find unique ways of dealing with both external influences and internal transformations. This also implies multiples diachronic dimensions – Life in contemporary Laos is shaped by the distinct times of change, of tradition and of national and geopolitical developments. It also concerns space: besides Laos's borders with its regional neighbors, there are also wide-ranging international links, including those across Asia, into the Pacific, Europe or the Americas. Talking about space in Laos also implies contrasts between highland and lowland, city and countryside or river and forest. This addresses new modes of transportation and communication that

compress time and space, such as railroads, cellphones and the internet, but also the cycles of agricultural life and its transformation through climate change and cash cropping.

The Eighth International Conference on Lao Studies invites workshops and presentations that address these issues in a widely conceived way. It also intends to accommodate all academic scholarship in the social sciences and humanities related to Laos, to people identifying as Lao or to the country more generally, including people from all ethnic groups found in Laos, and diaspora communities all over the world.

Description

The conference will bring together Lao Studies scholars and researchers from all disciplines in the social sciences and humanities, and all intellectual and political perspectives, to share paper presentations, panel presentations, exhibits, performances, and cultural activities.

The following are included within the target groups of the conference:

- 1) All self-identified ethnic groups of Laos (e.g. Lao, Khmu, Hmong, Ieu-Mien, Akha, Phouan, Phou Tai, Nyouan, etc.);
- 2) Lao/Thai Isan and other ethnic Lao groups in Thailand (e.g. Lao Song, Phouan, Phou Tai, etc.)
- 3) Ethnic Lao living in Cambodia
- 4) Cross-border ethnic groups living in Vietnam, China, Burma, Thailand and Cambodia (e.g. Akha, Hmong, Phouan, Ieu-Mien, Khmu, Tai Lue, Tai Dam, Lahu, Brao, etc.)
- 5) Overseas diaspora originally from Laos or descendants of people from Laos (including French Lao, German Lao, Lao Americans, Hmong Americans, Khmu Americans, Australian Lao, Canadian Lao, etc.)

The following are some, but certainly not all, possible topics of interest to the conference organizers:

- Architectural Transformations
- Art and Music
- Border Trade and Interactions
- Buddhism and Other Religions
- Community
- Cultures of Ethnic Groups in Laos
- Education
- Ethnic Groups and Economic and Social Change
- Ethnomusicology
- Extractive Industries
- Families and Children
- Gender Relations
- Health and Illness
- History
- Identity Politics

- Infrastructures and their Effects
- Internet-Based Communications and Networking
- Language, Linguistics and Literature
- Lao American Issues
- Lao Heritage
- Lao People in the Regional/Global Economy
- Lao Relations with People from Other Ethnic Groups
- Large-Scale Economic Land Concessions
- Livelihood Changes
- Nature Conservation (including Wildlife and Protected Area Management)
- Nature-Society Interactions
- Politics
- Research Methodologies in Lao Studies
- Rural Development
- Transnational Networks and Relations
- Urbanization and Development

PROCEDURES and TIMELINES

1) Please submit abstracts for individual papers or organized panels in English until February 22nd, 2026, via this address Laostudies8@uni-heidelberg.de.

2) The conference abstract committee will review abstracts and send an acceptance letter with scheduling information and other instructions for submitting final abstract statements by early March.

3) Abstracts of panels and individual papers will be collected for distribution on-line.

General Contact information:

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Centre of Asian and Transcultural Studies

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Germany

International Conference on Lao Studies (ICLS) | Center for Lao Studies

Laostudies8@uni-heidelberg.de

ORGANIZED PANELS

Organized panels, composed of 3-4 scholars presenting formal papers and 1 or 2 discussants that can be scheduled into one-and-a-half-hour time slots are also invited. Panel organizers are requested to supply the following information:

- Title of the panel
- Conference theme(s) related to the panel
- Name, institution, address and email of the panel organizer
- Name, institution, address and email of each paper presenter
- Names, institutions, addresses and emails of the panel discussants
- Abstract (250 words or less) describing the panel as a whole
- Title of each paper and abstract (250 words or less) for each paper

INDIVIDUAL PAPERS

Individual papers will be grouped into coherent panels. The papers must include the following:

- Title of the paper
- Name, institution, address and email address of paper presenter
- Abstracts (250 words or less) with identified keywords.
- Related conference topic(s)

REGISTRATION

Please register here:

<https://conferencecentral.org/42>

All participants are requested to register online. Registration via the website is only for in-person attendance. The registration fee includes the conference program.

Early registration deadline is **April 15th, 2026**. Please note that there will be no refund for cancellation or absence.

Hybrid options

No panels are offered online-only. A limited number of registrations for online participation in select panels will be made available at the same rate. If you want to join online only, please do NOT register yet but send a message to Laostudies8@uni-heidelberg.de, with “Hybrid” as subject line. The limited online slots will be distributed by first-come, first serve principle. Online participants will then receive a separate link for registration before the end of the early-bird registration. Please understand that organizing a hybrid conference is more cost-intensive.

Conference Registration

Rate Type:	Early Registration On or before April 15th, 2026	Standard Registration After April 15, 2026
Regular Registration	€ 175	€ 200
Student Registration	€ 90	€ 125