



Introduction to the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre (TAEC) Luang Prabang, Lao PDR

2016-2017

The Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre is a museum in the UNESCO World Heritage town of Luang Prabang, Lao PDR. It is the only independent museum and resource centre in Laos dedicated to the collection, preservation, and interpretation of the traditional arts and lifestyles of the country's many and diverse ethnic groups.

TAEC features professional exhibitions on the ethnic cultures of Laos, a Museum Shop promoting handicrafts from village artisans, activity centre, library, and a café serving cold refreshments. In addition, the TAEC Boutique on the main street in Ban Vat Sene, features locally produced, fair trade products including the exclusive Heirloom Collection. The Heirloom Collection features products made by master artists and certified for authenticity.

To date, TAEC has welcomed over 120,000 Lao and international visitors, and has rapidly emerged as a regional leader in cultural heritage management and community development. TAEC is guided by a Board of Advisors, consisting of anthropologists and textile scholars.

The Centre was founded by Tara Gujadhur and Thongkhoun Souththivilay who now serve as Co-Directors. Tara Gujadhur is an American with an anthropology background and 15 years' experience in indigenous community development and sustainable tourism in southern Africa and Southeast Asia. Thongkhoun Souththivilay is a Luang Prabang native trained in Japan, the Netherlands, and Thailand who worked at the Luang Prabang National Museum for over 10 years as the Collection Manager and a conservator. Together they began work on TAEC in 2006, building a collection, researching, and working with ethnic communities, and curating the permanent exhibitions. The Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre was launched on 5 July 2007.

Today, TAEC is engaged in a broad range of museum and community engagement activities, reflecting its commitment to supporting living ethnic minority communities to preserve and promote their cultural heritage while looking towards the future. TAEC's exhibit information is in Lao and English, with French, German, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese translations also available.

TAEC's Activities Include:

- **Exhibitions**

The permanent exhibition contains text, photographs, and objects from villages throughout the north of Laos. These exhibits explore the unique cultural aspects of four of Laos' most well known ethnic minority groups: Akha, Hmong, Kmhmu and Tai Lue.

The newest special exhibition, ***"Seeds of Culture: From Living Plants to Handicrafts"*** opened in September 2016. This exhibit features the Job's tears (Coix) plant, indigenous to mainland southeast Asia, to demonstrate the important relationship between humans and nature. It was guest curated by Dr. Yukino Ochiai, a Japanese ethnobotanist at Ryukoku University, who has researched Job's tears for over 15 years, amassing an unparalleled collection of objects featuring the plant's seeds.

TAEC's information is in Lao and English, with French, German, Spanish, Chinese and Japanese translations also available. Based on professional museum standards, artefacts are rotated regularly and archival lighting, mounting, and display techniques are employed.

- **Advocacy and Livelihoods**

TAEC recognises the need to support livelihood development in ethnic minority communities, which represent a disproportionate percentage of the poor in Laos, as well as foster the more long-term goal of cultural pride and identity building. TAEC's Museum Shop, TAEC Boutique, and online shop sells crafts sourced directly from artisan communities, promoting handicraft skills and livelihoods based on traditional arts - keeping these precious arts alive and reducing the need to migrate to larger cities and towns for employment.

On average, 50% of the shop's income goes directly to the handicraft producers themselves, and currently provides over 600 ethnic minority women, men and their families in 12 provinces with supplementary income. According to fair-trade and sustainability principles, TAEC works closely with handicraft producers, providing small loans and payments upfront, training in product design, quality and small business practices, and logistical support. TAEC has supported artisans to visit Luang Prabang to participate in cultural exchange activities.

TAEC is developing further advocacy activities with ethnic minority communities, and is currently working on plans for a network of community museums located in ethnic villages in northern Laos.

- **Education**

TAEC encourages Lao communities and youth to learn about Laos' ethnic diversity by offering free admission to all Lao citizens and running school outreach activities and student tours. TAEC also provides professional development and training for cultural and tourism workers. In 2010 TAEC staged a community festival to promote understanding of and respect for ethnic cultures in Luang Prabang.

TAEC has a growing library of books, articles, CDs, DVDs and photographs on ethnology, Laos, history, and Southeast Asian arts, and acts as a repository for ethnology research in Laos. Resources are in English, Lao, Thai, and French. When funding permits, TAEC plans to develop a public resource room, with searchable databases and lending capabilities.

- **Preservation and Documentation**

The TAEC permanent collection consists of over 400 objects from 30 ethnic groups, documented and preserved for future generations using locally appropriate archival methods. The Centre is also responsible for maintaining artefacts on loan from private collections.

- **Research**

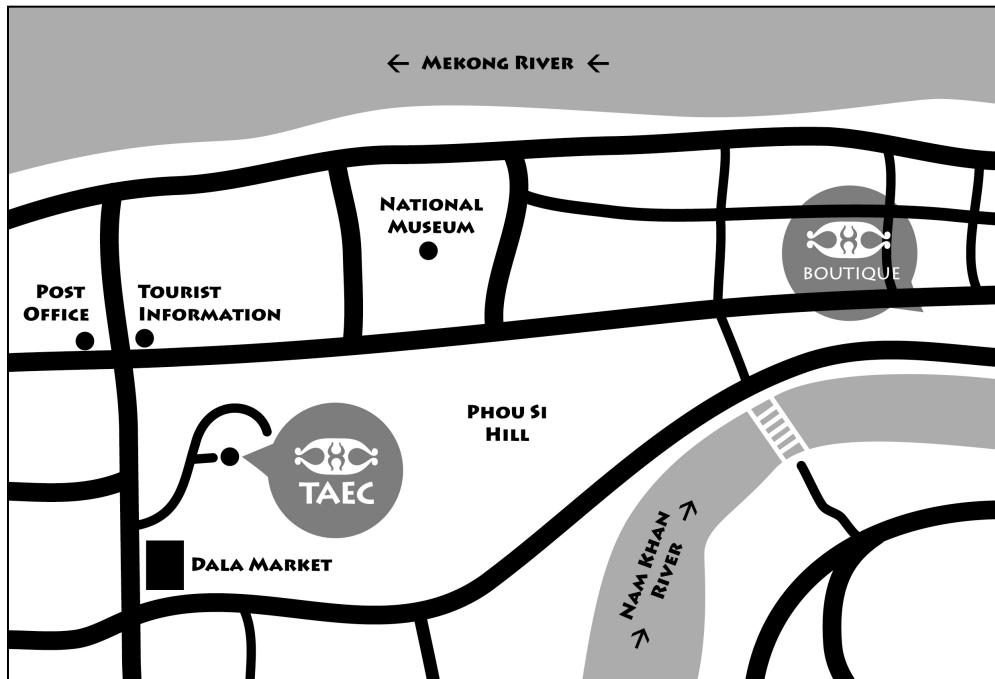
TAEC conducts primary research in ethnic communities, developing close relationships to localise and enrich the information collected. TAEC's own team visits the field periodically to document festivals and special events, gather information on collection objects, and research future exhibit themes. TAEC is an active participant in international ethnology and traditional arts scholarship, and has presented conference papers in Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, the USA, and Vietnam.

Vision

To become a centre for learning and exchange on the ethnology and artisanal heritage of Laos that promotes appreciation for the cultures and skills of Laos' peoples, stimulates investment and preservation of their crafts, and supports their sustainable livelihood development.

Mission

To promote pride and appreciation for the cultures and knowledge of Laos' diverse peoples, support ethnic communities to safeguard their tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and promote their sustainable livelihood development.



LOCATIONS

TAEC Museum & Museum Shop - Exhibitions and Museum Shop at the foot of Phou Si Hill behind Dara Market

Entry Fee: 25,000 Kip and free for Lao citizens

Open Tuesday – Sunday

9am-6pm

Phone: +856 071 253364

TAEC Boutique – Fair Trade, handmade, ethnic handicrafts made in Laos.

Located on the main road in Ban Vat Sene, across from Villa Santi Hotel.

Open Everyday

9am-9pm

Phone: +856 030 5377557

Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre (TAEC)

Ban Khamyong

Luang Prabang

Lao PDR

www.taeclaos.org

information@taeclaos.org



*The TAEC logo is derived from a Lamet design carved onto wooden rice granaries.
The Lamet are an Austroasiatic ethnic group living in Luang Namtha and Bokeo provinces.*