

Subject: Marriage Among the Lamet and the Baci Concept.

This custom seems to have originated in India. The procedure is that a couple of roosters or a pig is sacrificed and after long incantations the wrists of those partaking in the ceremony are bound. It is then considered that "the souls are fastened to the bodies." This rite is constantly performed on all important occasions among the Lamet and is partly a kind of welfare ceremony and implies really a wish for success and the keeping of good health. The ceremony is followed by a little feast of eating and drinking together.

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Lamet Hill peasants in French Indochina.

allow me to sit on a horse and return to the Lamet. I then remained with them until the middle of June. Some days were devoted to the great sacrificial festivals that the Thai-Lu in Tafá hold before cultivation of the fields begins. Tafá, as a matter of fact, was the starting point for my trips in the Lamet territory, since it is centrally located. There also the head of the Lamet canton has his residence.

From the very beginning it had been my intention to travel right across the province Haut-Mékong, in order to find out what people lived in the neighborhood of the Lamet, and to which language group they belonged. Their languages were totally unknown. Therefore, I started out in the middle of June, and headed for Muong Sing via Vieng Phoukha, the heart of the district occupied by the Khuen tribes. This place has previously been of importance for the Lamet district, before the existence of Houeisai and Tafá. From there I continued to Muong Luong Namtha, where after a short visit I rode over the mountains which divide the Nam Tha Valley from the slopes of Muong Sing, and which is about 1900 meters high. I remained in Muong Sing until middle of July. From there I made excursions to the Akha tribes living in the neighborhood.

When I left Muong Sing the rainy season was at its height, and I went by foot over the high mountains back to Vieng Phoukha, and from there back to the Lamet territory. As a matter of fact, I took quite another route on the way back from that I took when I rode to Muong Sing.

I then remained in the Lamet district until the end of January, except for a couple of short trips to Houeisai, where the nearest post and telegraph offices were located and where I could exchange money. One cannot use paper bills in the Lamet district, and since only small copper coins and the smallest silver pieces are accepted, the money I needed was so heavy that I had to engage special bearers for this purpose alone.

Not until the beginning of September did I come across a village where I could stay longer than a few weeks. This was due to the fact that here I could solve the food problem by transporting supplies from Tafá and Lao villages lying along the Nam Tha. It was the village of Mokala Panghay, and there I was able to remain until the end of January, at which time I returned to Hanoi. In the other Lamet villages my sojourn had been limited to three weeks for the longest stay, but as a rule the time was much shorter. Thus my stay in Lamet villages has totalled only about eight months. However, during all my trips in the province of Haut-Mékong, I have had Lamet people in my service.

CHAPTER 2.

Neighbors of the Lamet

The Lamet live in Northern Laos in French Indochina on both sides of the boundary between the province of Haut-Mékong and the protectorate Luangprabang, a Laotic feudal state. Around them live a large number of unknown tribes. In the little province of Haut-Mékong alone, with a diameter of about 250 km., there live at least 25 different tribes, each of which speaks its own tongue, often incomprehensible to the neighbors, and has besides its own particular culture. This confusion of peoples is quite peculiar, and is commonly the case in the whole of Further India and in parts of southernmost China. Few places on earth can reveal such an ethnic and linguistic confusion as this part of the world. In this case the best comparative example is the Caucasus. Before going into detail about the culture of the Lamet, I shall first try to give a description of the tribes neighboring the Lamet, and a short survey of the history of the tract. In fact, this is rather necessary in order to understand the community life of the Lamet depicted in the following.

The confusion of peoples in Further India has come about largely through the immigration from southern China of various kinds of people, since the Chinese have pushed them down from the north, away from their original home areas north of the Yangtze River. Originally, southern China was not Chinese, and in many ways is still not so. This migration of peoples is in progress even today, and while I was in the Lamet district I had the opportunity of observing among other things the contact between the different population groups, such as the Thai and the Lamet, or other tribes. Speaking generally, however, these peoples live quite isolated from one another, since they speak different languages and have different customs. The distance between villages is considerable, and this naturally contributes to the fact that the populations do not mix to any great extent. This is also the case in regard to their cultures. There is one exception, however, and that is the influence extended by the Thai peoples, about which more will be said later on.

In order to obtain greater clarity in this tangle of populations, it is best to begin with linguistic conditions. Thus the so-called Mon-Khmer-speaking peoples must be considered as belonging to Further India's earlier aborigines, and the Lamet are included in this group. Most of these peoples are quite primitive, with the exception of the Mon and the Khmer, both of which have a high civilization which they originally got from India. The rest however, like the Lamet, are rather primitive cultivators of forest clearings.

The Mon-Khmer languages are as yet little investigated, and it is still uncertain whether all the peoples that are usually included in this group can be assigned to one language group. However, there is much that points in this direction, although I cannot go deeper into the subject just now. In any case, the Lamet language has many similarities in common with Mon, Khmer and other languages of this family, but great differences also crop up which heretofore have not been considered as being characteristic of the Mon-Khmer languages. For example, Lamet lacks infixes, which are usual in most Mon-Khmer languages. It differs from these also in that it has intonation, and forms new words by means of change of vowel, etc., to name a couple of examples. I have discovered that intonation exists also in languages nearly related to Lamet. However, I shall refer to this in a work devoted to language.

The Mon-Khmer languages are divided into many groups, of which the so-called Palaung-Wa group is the most northerly and stretches from Burma over north Thailand (Lawa) and all of north Indochina, almost as far as the Tonkin delta. It is possible that before the invasions from northern China took place, this language group stretched in an unbroken line over this district. Judging from historical sources, the Lawa tribe was spread over all of northern Siam, possibly from the Mon territory in southern Burma and Siam to the northern part of the Mekong, that is to say right within the Lamet district.¹⁾

The Lamet's nearest neighbors in the Palaung-Wa group are the Khmu, the Kha Bit, Kha Hok, Cón, and Lamáng. Of these the Khmu are considered "brothers" of the Lamet. When the Lamet speak of their neighbors, they name themselves and the Khmu as one. The culture of both peoples is similar to a degree, and it is evident that they feel a strong kinship, since the Lamet often mingle with the Khmu. In several Lamet villages there are to be found families which can be traced in origin to

¹⁾ G. Coedès: Documents sur l'histoire politique et religieuse du Laos occidental. Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême Orient, T. XXV. Hanoi, 1925.

TABLE I. Tribes in the Province of Haut-Mékong.

<i>Palaung-Wa:</i>	
Lamet	3 806
Khmu	1 778
Khuen	2 915
Cón	73
Kha Doy	61
Kha Bit	58
Other Kha	3 605
<i>Tibeto-Burman:</i>	
Akha	3 423
Kha Khui	423
Mossü	24
Mossü Dam	529
Mossü Deng	1 120
<i>Man-Meo:</i>	
Meo	271
Yao	2 129
Lantén	574
<i>Thai:</i>	
Nió	108
Thai Neua	688
Black Thai	1 271
Yuan	3 003
Niang'	122
Lu	?
Khun	?
Lao	?
<i>Others of undetermined language groups:</i>	
Kha Sida	31
Paná	112

Note: Kha Hok and Lamáng do not appear in the province of Haut-Mékong. Annamese, Chinese and French are not included in this table.

the Khmu. Many villages are more or less Khmu-ized. This refers especially to the Upper Lamet, who are also strongly influenced by the Khmu as regards their language.

It appears that the Lamet, in referring to their neighbors, consider themselves and the Khmu as the earliest inhabitants, and the other peoples as migrators. The Lamet look upon themselves as the older

brother and the Khmu as the younger. They tell of this in the following legend:

"There was once upon a time a mole, who often associated with the girls in heaven. This mole was in the habit of gnawing apart the traps set in the forests. One day the owner of some traps was digging in the forest, and he came across the mole, who had just gnawed apart his traps. Whereupon the mole said: 'If you do not kill me I will tell you how you can escape the deluge.' The owner of the traps promised then not to kill the mole. And the mole said that the man and his sister should make a big drum, and live in it during the deluge. But I shall remain in my hole in the earth, said the mole. The owner of the traps did as the mole told him, and lived with his sister in a big drum while the deluge lasted. When the waters had subsided, the brother and sister made a tube in order to find out if all the water had evaporated.

"When the earth was free of all the water, the brother and sister came out of the drum. They were the only two human beings left on earth. The brother had tried to find a woman he could marry, but in vain. The sister had also tried to find a man she could marry, but had had no luck. They did not know what to do. Just then there came a bird, the *tiokok*, who sang: 'You two should marry each other.'

"After they were married the woman became pregnant and gave birth to a gourd. She did not know what to do with it, so she placed it in the garden, where it grew, and became bigger and bigger; and one day the brother and sister heard noises inside of it. It was the noise of people who were inside the gourd. Thereupon the husband made a hole in the gourd with an iron bar which had been heated by fire, and out of the hole came the Lamet, Khmu, Lantén, Meo and Yao. Because of the rust on the iron, and the soot round the burned hole, these people were black. When the other people still inside the gourd noticed this they became terrified, and they called out to the brother to cut out another hole so that they need not become black in the face like those who had gone before. The brother did as they asked, and thereupon the various kinds of Thai peoples came out. This is the explanation for their being so light in complexion, while the other races are so dark."

Tribes belonging to the Tibeto-Burman language family are to be found in the most northern part of the province of Haut-Mékong, and are represented by the Akha, Mossü, Kha Khui and possibly the Kha Sida. However, none of these can be said to be immediate neighbors of the Lamet. According to Roux, the Phu-noi, who also belong to this language family, lived in olden times farther south near Vieng Phoukha. I cannot state with certainty, whether they came in contact with the Lamet. At the present time the Phu-noi live in the Fifth Military Territory northeast of the province of Haut-Mékong.¹⁾

> ¹⁾ H. Roux: Deux tribus de la région de Phongsaly. Bulletin de l'École Française d'Extrême-Orient. T. XXIV, Hanoi. 1925, p. 452.

Among those immigrating at a later date, are the Man and Meo peoples, and they are immediate neighbors of the Lamet. The former are represented by the so-called Lantén, who appeared first about the year 1900, wandering in from the Chinese boundary in the Fifth Military Territory down to the Lamet district. Their emigration was due to fear of the numerous robbers in the Chinese border districts. However, they have no contact with the Lamet that is worth mentioning. Another of these Man peoples are the so-called Yao, who came from northern Tonkin about a decade before the Lantén. They live north of the Lamet district, and between them and the Yao mountains there is a large unpopulated territory.

The Thai peoples are among the earliest into Further India. They are represented by a number of tribes in the province. In the southern part of the Lamet district there are a few Laotic villages along the river Nam Tha. This settling of the Lao, however, is of very recent date, and the emigration has occurred only during the last few decades. As a rule, the Lao frequent the district along the Mekong, and especially that near the mouths of its tributaries.

Before the French had laid claim to the province of Haut-Mékong in 1896, its southern part had belonged to Siam, and was under the rule of the Prince of Xieng-Khong, to whom the Lamet were taxpayers. Taxes were paid chiefly in beeswax, which is much in use by the Buddhistic Siamese. The Thai tribe living in the province of Xieng-Khong are the so-called Yuan. In Siam they are also called Lao or Western Lao, in contradistinction to the Lao in French Laos. The Yuan are also to be found in the province of Haut-Mékong in Houeisai along the banks of the Mekong River and in Muong Luong Namtha, where they arrived at the end of the nineteenth century.

According to the Lamet, there were nevertheless in olden times considerably more Yuan in existence than nowadays, and it is apparent that the Lamet have been strongly influenced by the Yuan, which can be seen in a great many borrowed words, in religious formulas where they have taken certain phrases from the Yuan incantations, and likewise in the practice of their medicine men. Yuan is also the Thai dialect used as a lingua franca in the southern part of Haut-Mékong. This Lamet tradition is supported by historical facts, which are forthcoming in the investigations Lefèvre-Pontalis has made of the history of northern Laos.¹⁾

¹⁾ Mission Pavie, Indochine, 1879—1895. T. V. Voyages dans le Haut Laos. Paris, 1902. P. Lefèvre-Pontalis: Les Younes du royaume de Lan Na ou de Pape, in: T'oung Pao, II, vol. 11—12. Leyden, 1910—11.

In former times the Yuan had settled in certain valleys in the Lamet district. An old caravan path traverses the whole province as far as China, and along this way it seems that ruins of Yuan buildings are to be found, as is also the case in the interior part of the country. The only ruin I have seen was the foundation of an old stupa in Tafá, which very likely was an important center in olden times. I have also tried to find ruins and historical monuments, but because of the Lamet's fear of Yuan spirits, they never dared to show me these monuments. Inscriptions on stones are said to be found in the neighborhood of the village of Sithoun. Vieng Phoukha was once an important center and apparently very densely populated.¹⁾ Nowadays, however, only the Lu and Khuen who have wandered in live there. The latter are really identical with the Khmu, the difference being only that the Khuen have adopted Buddhism. Formerly they were soldiers in the service of Siamese princes. The village lies on a great plateau, which is well irrigated, and it is apparent that great possibilities for Thai settlement exist there. The same regards the great plateau around Muong Luong Namtha.²⁾ There also, it is likely that there was once a densely populated settlement, according to documents which General Salan had collected.

Beyond this the history of the province of Haut-Mékong is very little known. It is possible that information can be obtained from old Siamese documents. Such are to be found in the National Library in Bangkok. The Lamet themselves have nothing to relate about the history of the district further back than the Yuan period. They insinuate, however, that in olden times there were many feuds, with invasions by Chinese bands from the north and Burmese from the west. I learned from an old Khmu man in a village in the Lamet district, that the Burmese in olden times had invaded the Lamet district. At that time there were only Lamet and Khmu in those regions. The Burmese made prisoners of the natives and took them to Burma, where they were forced into military service. In order to prevent them from escaping, their hair was colored with lime. He related further:

"Long, long ago there was constant warfare in these regions. My grandfather told me about this. At that time, as a matter of fact, it was dangerous to walk along the forest paths, and no one dared to live in the villages at night, for at any minute one might be attacked and have one's head cut off. Some people surrounded their villages with wolf-pits for protection. At last

¹⁾ According to an old Yuan MS in General Salan's possession.

²⁾ Lucien de Reinach: *Le Laos*. Paris, about 1911, p. 80.

the situation became absolutely unbearable, for no one dared to make forest clearings, but found their existence in the forests. A few determined men agreed then to demand help from the Yuan, and they made a road through the forest in order to come to the Yuan. When the road was ready, they had worn out five axes, and then the Yuan came and put an end to the fighting."

This tale suggests head-hunting. This manifestation of warfare is of course quite common among certain peoples in Assam and the Shan States, and for that matter, the Lamet's near relatives the Wa are notorious head-hunters. I have tried every means of finding something in the life of the Lamet which would indicate that they like all their kin were head-hunters in olden times, but no such thing has become obvious in either their traditions or their culture. It is of course quite possible that they have not been head-hunters. Even if this practice appears among some tribes, it is not necessarily granted that it was general or belonged to a certain "stage" of culture which all of the Mon-Khmer tribes in Further India must have gone through.

Thus the history of Haut-Mékong is somewhat obscure, and it is possible that further investigation into the traditions of the people, and into Burmese and Siamese documents, can at some future time bring to light the happenings of the past.

There are a great many Thai tribes represented in Haut-Mékong other than those already mentioned. Thus we have the Nió and the Khun along the banks of the Mekong. Both are believed to have immigrated from the Shan States. The Nió were pirates even up to the time of the arrival of the French, and along with other deeds they plundered Xieng-Khong, at which time they took the prince prisoner. This was the cause for certain Lu tribes moving in to French territory at the time of the pacification of Haut-Mékong. These Lu came originally from Ou-Neua, in the northern part of the Fifth Military Territory, in about 1890. They had left this district because of the constant attacks from the much-feared Ho, Chinese bandits. These border attacks were in progress even in our days. Some of their kinsmen united with these Lu, refugees from Muong Lem in the Wa territory in the northern Shan States, driven away by the headhunting Wa. Most of these Lu wandered for months before they finally settled in Siam and in Muong Luong Namtha. From Siam they wandered into the Lamet district, and settled partially in Tafá, and partially in other villages in the neighborhood. This invasion of Lu into the middle of the Lamet district has been of great importance for the Lamet. Like all of the Thai peoples, they settled in the valleys, where it was possible to lay

out irrigated rice fields. In this way they did not take any land away from the Lamet, who dwell on the mountain ridges. Tafá became the most important Lu village, and is even now the center for the administration of one Lamet canton.

Before the Lu settled down in Tafá, only thick-stemmed trees were to be found in the valley, according to what older Lamet men have told me. As I mentioned previously, the valley had been settled, which could be proved partly by the ruins of a Buddhistic stupa, and partly by the meaning of the word *Tafá*. Tafá is the Lu expression for *tapha*, which means "bathing-place of the monks," and by this the name of the place suggests that a monastery must have existed there. But the stupa is already a proof for this fact. The Yuan settlement which according to the tradition of the Lamet once existed in Tafá, must have been very ancient, for no one could remember anything about it, and the thick-stemmed forest which was seen on the arrival of the Lu also points to this.

The Lu living in the Lamet district and its outskirts came from Ou Neua, as has already been said. This village, like most of the Lu villages in the Fifth Military Territory, belonged formerly to the so-called Sipp-song-panná — wrongly translated "the land of 12,000 rice fields" — a feudal realm ruled by the Lu. The capital of this realm was Xieng-Hung in the Chinese Shan States, where the prince of these states still resides. The realm was broken up through the conquest by the French of the Fifth Military Territory.

In Haut-Mékong there are also other Lu to be found to the north in the Muong Sing area. These belonged originally to the feudal principality Xieng-Tong (Kheng-tung) in the southern Shan States (Burma), and was incorporated in 1900 with Haut-Mékong through the London Treaty. Previously these Lu belonged to British Burma. The boundary between the principality Xieng-Tong and the Yuan dominions in southern Haut-Mékong seems to have followed along Muong Luong Namtha. Boundary stones mark the old frontier line. Thus before the arrival of the French, Haut-Mékong was divided between these two feudal states. The Lu in Muong Sing speak a different dialect from that of their kinsmen in the southern parts of the province, and have also different customs. However, they have had no contact with the Lamet, and the case is the same with another Thai people in Muong Sing, the so-called Thai Neua.

Some Lamet villages lie outside the province of Haut-Mékong and belong to the "kingdom" (a feudal realm like other Thai states) of Luang-prabang, or, to use its right Laotic name, *Lan-xang*: "The realm of a

million elephants and the white umbrella." This territory, including the Thai peoples, is ruled by the Lao. However, the settling of Lao within this part of the Lamet district is very scanty, and they have taken up their abode here in the glens of Nam Tha recently. As a rule the Lao have a habit of remaining near the mouths of the tributaries of the Mekong, where they buy up the products which the Khmu, the Lamet, and other mountain tribes deliver. For the Lao in northern Laos, in contrast to those who live to the south, are merchants and handicraftsmen rather than farmers. They manufacture their own wares, such as textiles, pottery, ornaments, iron products, etc., and travel around with them to the more primitive mountain tribes, with whom they exchange these things for rice, stick-lac, and other products. The Lao merchants often paddle their canoes up the tributaries of the Mekong in order to sell their wares to the primitive mountain folk. This trade has acquired quite an importance in the economic life of the Lamet, and I shall refer to it further on in a chapter on trade.

Some of the Lao settled farther up the tributaries in order to be nearer their clients in the mountains. It is also possible that they wanted to compete with those living near the mouths of the rivers.

Thus the Lao settled where it suited them best commercially, for example, where a path met a river, a fork, or a place that the mountain people could easily reach with their bamboo rafts. Agriculture took second place, and since the Lao like the Lamet have ordinary swiddens, it was not necessary to seek land suitable for irrigation. The southern Lao and the Lu, on the other hand, are mostly farmers, and cultivate rice only in irrigated fields. Some Lu have also settled along the Nam Tha in the neighborhood of Lamet villages, but since they are not merchants, but mainly farmers, they have come where they found irrigable land.

In the Lamet district around the Nam Tha I had the opportunity of visiting a Laotic village of the above-described kind. This village existed mostly on trade with the Lamet. It lay only about two hours by foot from Mokala Panghay. It was really made up of two villages, one of which was the first Laotic settlement in the district. The Lao there told me that they came there first on their trading trips, and later on stayed for a time in order to establish a market with the Lamet and Khmu. Gradually they became permanently settled there. Since they had no women along, they chose wives among the Lamet and Khmu women. Thus a peculiar mixture of a village came into being, which was interesting to study. The plan of the village was typical of the Lamet villages in these

regions. It was built round an open square with a typical Lamet men's house in the middle. The dwellings had certain details which were Laotic, and some which were of Lamet type. The Lamet had helped with the building, and done it according to their ideas, and the Lao had directed the enterprise and thus included certain Laotic details. Later on some Khmu had come to the village. The population therefore consisted of Laotic men, a few Khmu men, and chiefly Lamet women. The children were a mixture of three components.

About a hundred meters from this village, lay a pure Laotic village with a Buddhistic temple and all that goes with it. This village had come into being later on, when it was seen that the first Laotic pioneers had flourished there. However, during recent years trade had been poor, and the Lao had been obliged to change over to agriculture in order to exist. This picture of Laotic infiltration in a territory populated by primitive tribes belonging to the Palaung-Wa group, is of particular interest. As is obvious from this description, the land had originally been settled by the Lamet, Khmu, and other Palaung-Wa peoples. All these tribes are primitive swidden farmers, living in the forests on plains or up in the mountains. Later on Thai tribes have immigrated and partially subjugated the primitive tribes in the district. The Thai call all these by a common name "Kha," which has become a kind of class label for non-Thai peoples. Thus the Thai always say, Kha Lamet, Kha Khmu, Kha Hok, etc. Even the prominent and cultured Cambodians are called Kha. This word means servant or slave, which is due to the fact that the Kha were subjugated and incorporated into the Thai peoples' feudal states, and that the Kha became to a great degree dependent upon their masters, to whom they paid taxes, and were forced into other kinds of service. This concerns chiefly the Khmu. The Lamet on the other hand seem to have been rather independent.

Thus in contrast to the Kha, were the Thai, which really means *people*. But as an opposite for *kha*, the slaves, the word *thai* has come to mean free people, and through that "the free." The Siamese like to translate the word *thai* as "the free," and Siam is called in Siamese *Muong Thai* — Thailand — The Land of the Free." This translation, "The Land of the Free," has been official during the war, when Siam proclaimed that it wished to be called Thailand.¹⁾

¹⁾ This changing meaning from *people* to "the free" is quite interesting, since we have an analogy to it among the Indo-European languages: *Leute* (German) and *люди* (Russian) = people, seems to be the same word as *liber* (Latin) = free.

How this infiltration of Thai proceeded, we do not know in detail as yet, and just as little has been brought to light in regard to the process of contact between the Thai and the primitive inhabitants. My short sketch of the settling of the Lao near the Nam Tha gives only one example of this.

During the latter part of my expedition, I visited the Black Thai in Tonkin. At that time I discovered to my surprise that these Thai, like the Lamet, were organized into totemic clans. When I investigated the totem myths about the origin of these clans, I found that they resembled those of the Lamet quite closely. I also came across a tradition that certain clans were originally of "Kha" derivation. The appearance of these people suggests that this is probably so. The Black Thai, unlike other Thai peoples, are quite thick-set and dark-complexioned, about the same as the Khmu. But this is not the reason for their being called the Black Thai. Their name comes from the fact that the women wear black blouses.

The Black Thai have also certain customs which point to Kha origin. It is possible that the Thai who immigrated, as in the Laotic case described above, mixed with the original inhabitants, who in these parts consisted of Khmu. These Thai are organized feudally, and the nobility are obviously of pure Thai origin, while the lower clans are mixed. This process has certainly been in progress to a wide extent wherever the Thai have wandered in.

The Muong tribes who live on the hills right at the edge of the Annamese delta in Tonkin and northern Annam, are supposedly also a result of this migration of peoples and contact of cultures. G. Maspéro regards their language as a kind of proto-Annamese.¹⁾ But their culture has very little in common with the strongly civilized Annamese, and resembles mostly that of the Black Thai in organization, manners and customs. Muong is really a collective term for a number of different tribes. However, the Muong have as yet been very little studied.²⁾ Judging by all that I have seen, I get the impression that they, like the Black Thai, are a mixture of Thai and primitive inhabitants. It is possible that the differences between the various Muong tribes are due to different proportions in this mixture.

¹⁾ Georges Maspéro: *Grammaire de la langue khmère*. Paris, 1915, pp. 17 seq.

²⁾ At the time of reading the proofs of this passage the work by Jeanne Cuisinier: *Les Mu'ông, géographie humaine et sociologie*, Paris 1948, came to my knowledge.

The original inhabitants that the Thai mixed in with must certainly have been of Palaung-Wa origin. Tribes belonging to this language group live almost as far out as the mountains bordering on the delta and the coastal plains, and it is possible that they once lived on the very edge of the delta.

The Annamese, Indochina's largest group of people, have their origin in Tonkin and northern Annam. In language and culture they are very strongly influenced by the southern Chinese. Nevertheless, as yet no one has been able to establish the relation of the Annamese to other languages. Maspéro has suggested an hypothesis that the Annamese language is a mixed product, exactly like their culture. The language mixture should consist of four component parts. If we eliminate the many Chinese borrowed words, we have a language strongly resembling Muong, which Maspéro considers to be proto-Annamese. He goes on to show that the phonetics in the Annamese language as well as parts of the grammatical construction, are of Thai type. But words for certain vital things, such as parts of the body, numbers, and others, are of Mon-Khmer origin. Besides these, there should exist a fourth element, the relation of which he cannot set forth. The words considered to be of Mon-Khmer origin belong, in my opinion, to the Palaung-Wa group. A great many ordinary words in the Lamet, Khmer, and other nearly related languages are to be found in the Annamese. This cannot be due to borrowing from Annamese on the part of these primitive people, for they have had almost no contact with the real Annamese.

From my own experience in the Lamet-Lao mixed village, referred to previously, and among the Black Thai, I should consider it probable that Maspéro is on the right track. Apart from the mystical fourth component, about which nothing is known, I should like to set up the working hypothesis that the Annamese were originally made up of a mixture of Thai and Palaung-Wa peoples who lived in the border territory around the Tonkin delta. This should have produced a culture similar to the one existing among the Muong tribes. Their farming should have been based on the cultivation of rice by means of so-called irrigation, which is typical of the mountain valleys in Indochina. This mixed population should thus have dwelt right on the edge of the Tonkin delta, where the valleys begin to widen down towards the plains. Through the introduction of so-called elevation-irrigation, which includes the building of extensive embankments — possibly due to Chinese influence — it became possible to colonize and cultivate the delta region. In order

to see how far this hypothesis agrees with facts, much research yet is needed among the Annamese and the peoples of northern Indochina. Thus it is not only a question of studying the "pure" cultures, but also of taking notice as well of the interesting mixture phenomena.

Finally, we have still another migration to take into consideration, namely the French, but since there were only four Frenchmen in the whole province of Haut-Mékong, and none in that part of the Lamet district lying within the protectorate of Luangprabang, the Lamet have very little immediate contact with the French. No missionaries of any kind have made their appearance. To be sure, once a missionary journeyed through the province of Haut-Mékong in order to distribute bibles, but since the Lamet are unable to read they did not receive any. On the other hand, indirect influence of the French has taken a faster hold, but we shall deal with this in a later chapter in which I examine the changes within the Lamet culture due to outside influence from foreign peoples. I shall then make a summary of the relation of the Lamet to their neighbors.

In order to get a survey of the neighbors of the Lamet, I shall now describe a horseback journey through the Lamet district.

If we ride along the caravan route which goes from Houeisai to the Lamet district, we come upon a Khmu village only 3 km. from Houeisai. Leaving it, we ride through jungle-clad mountains, and valleys overgrown with thick-stemmed trees or with bamboo. At the distance of about 19 km. we arrive at a Lantén village. The people living there have originally come from northern Tonkin. It is a village comprised of only three houses. The first halting place lies about 25 km. from Houeisai, and there we see a Khmu village. Farther in and north of the caravan route about 2 km. away, there is a comparatively large Lu village right on the bank of the Nam Ngao. Here also the first Lamet villages appear. However, they lie higher up in the mountains, quite far from the route. The Khmu village lies on flat ground, which seems to be the case with most of the Khmu villages in this district. But there are also Khmu tribes who, like the Lamet, build up on the mountain ridges. It may be a case of two different Khmu tribes. The people in the Lu village originate from the Wa territory in the northern Shan states.

We continue along the caravan route and meet practically no settlement in almost the whole of the second lap of our journey, but narrow paths lead in to Lamet villages on both sides of the way. These villages lie at about three or four hours' distance by foot through the forest.

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The third lap is just as devoid of villages as the second, and only towards the end of it do we reach Tafá, a large Lu village of about 500 inhabitants. We are then in the middle of the Lamet district without as yet having seen a single Lamet village along the caravan route. However, they surround Tafá far up on the mountain ridges, and the very nearest one is situated not more than half a day's journey by foot from Tafá. At the points where the caravan trail crosses the highest mountain ridges, one can get a good view of the surrounding mountains. When the weather is fine one can then see the Lamet villages from a great distance. They look like small reddish-brown spots in the middle of the sea of jungle green.

We leave Tafá behind us and continue on our way, and after a day and a half we find ourselves up in the mountains, and we pass by the first Lamet village, Sot Noi, and this is soon followed by others. We take shelter for the night near Pouvé luong, which is a Lamet village with a good streak of Khmu. The next village does not lie so far away from the route, and it is populated only by Khmu. From there we pass several other Lamet villages, and finally come to the last one bordering on the caravan route, Mokahang Tai, about five days' journey from Houeisai. Some hundred meters from this lies a Lu village whose inhabitants originate from Ou Neua. Not so far away lies another Thai village populated by the so-called Niung. They too have migrated rather recently into the province, and have originally come from the Chinese border in the Fourth Military Territory. The reason for their departure is the usual one, they fled in the face of Chinese bandits, and wandered about looking for a suitable place for their irrigated rice fields. The distance from their present dwelling place to the old one is about 380 km. as the crow flies!

We are now right in the neighborhood of Vieng Phoukha, but before we come there, we pass a little village inhabited by Cón. These people speak a language which is closely related to Lamet, but they have originally come from the Burmese boundary near the most northwest corner of the province of Haut-Mékong. It is possible that they are identical with the Kha Doy, and possibly also with the Palaung or Wa. Here we leave the Lamet district and enter the territory of the Khmu tribes. From Vieng Phoukha paths branch out in several directions, one leading to Muong Sing over the territory of the Yao tribes, and another following unpopulated regions to Muong Luong Namtha. Besides these, there are more paths leading elsewhere.

So far we have held fast to the caravan route. But should we leave it and try to reach the Lamet villages, it would be a rather difficult problem,

for it is not always possible to find the paths. Sometimes one must walk for hours in the hills, and sometimes an almost invisible path leads straight over the steep mountains. In this case it is quite necessary to have a Lamet guide, for no one else can find the way. Sometimes the paths are very clearly cut out, so that one could even take pack animals along, but at times they can be so overgrown that it is practically necessary to have men along who go ahead and chop the way clear. However, the distance between the Lamet villages is not very great, and one can always calculate on spending the night in one of them. It is seldom that one is obliged to sleep in the forest, but should this be necessary, one can put up at old halting places, where surely the Lamet have spent the night as far back as they can remember. The Lamet villages are not visible until one comes right upon them. The first sign of them is usually an open place where piles and remains of abandoned barns can be seen. A little nearer one meets a whole group of barns, and then one can be sure of being right in the vicinity of the village, and what the village looks like will be described in another chapter.

CHAPTER 15.

Cultural Drives

It is a wellknown thing that when analysing and describing a community, one can as a matter of fact take any one of the many aspects as a starting point. The more points of view there are, the better the picture of reality is likely to be. In sociology one often comes across a common mode of expression which says that "everything is interrelated." If we should set out from a principle like this, one aspect only ought to really suffice, for then we could include all the details in the social activity into a single starting point. If we set out from culture or from community life as an entirety, it is indeed very possible that everything depends upon everything else, that is to say, all parts and categories within community life, but it is not necessarily true that every part is immediately dependent on every other part in a culture, nor that one part of a culture must necessarily cohere with another. For example, sometimes religion and art are coupled into one category, sometimes they are independent of each other, sometimes the economic life can affect important and large sections of community life, but it happens quite as often that with economy as a starting point, one finds that everything does not cohere with it. Thus it is not always the case that such a thing as certain esthetic manifestations like music must necessarily cohere with economy, not even religion. As far as the Lamet are concerned, it is indeed difficult to see such a connection between their music and economy. Since it is not easy, however, to get a general view of the whole and to ascertain all the connections, it can be of certain interest to start from quite a different point, in order to obtain a view of the community life of the Lamet. Therefore I intend to make an attempt in this chapter by way of experiment at using the wellknown Thomas' four wishes¹⁾ as a point of departure in order to see where this can lead us.

Every category of culture has certain functions, that is to say, it is aimed at satisfying certain needs within the community. Because of the

¹⁾ Cit. R. E. Park and E. W. Burgess: Introduction to the science of sociology. Chicago 1930, pp. 488 seqq.

integration of various elements, these categories grow larger or smaller, according to how many different parts they encompass. In this connection the categories of culture can be classified according to size, as the Americans do, for example,¹⁾ in items, traits, trait complexes, etc. Each such a larger or smaller category forms a unit of its own which has its special functions.

Needs could be classified in the same way. We can speak of a need of protection against cold, and in this connection the community categories which supply the members of the community with wood, clothing, etc. are in function. We can also speak of protection against rain, wind etc. and all the climatic factors. Many of the categories which are a response to the physical surroundings, can naturally in their turn be ascribed to certain desires. These desires are to a great extent of economical character, and are aimed partly at establishing security, or more correctly, a feeling of security. But there are other desires as well in social life, and Thomas has set up four desires or wishes, which he considers to be social atoms. Added to the desire for security, these are, the desire for new experience, the desire for recognition, and the desire for response. These desires are satisfied by means of different categories, and at the same time one category can satisfy many other desires. There is always something to be found which is of value in a community, which serves as a goal for these desires, certain values of positive or negative character. Thus, in spite of the fact that one category is directed towards several goals, I shall first make an attempt at using the desire of the Lamet for security as a point of departure.

In the preceding chapters we have seen how the Lamet satisfy their economic needs, protection against climatic factors in the form of houses, fire, clothes and food. We have also ascertained that there exists a certain "social insurance" or rather insurance for old age, in their community, in the fact that old people have their given place in the life of production and in the family. It is surely likewise with invalids. To be sure, I have only observed one case. This was a man in Mokala Panghay who had a knee injury that rendered him partially incapable of work. Meanwhile he occupied himself with handicraft, and looked after children, and in this way had the same function as an old person. It would be interesting to get hold of further material of this kind, in order to see how the Lamet manage such situations. Unfortunately my stay there was altogether too short to allow me to collect material of this kind for study.

¹⁾ Ralph Linton: The study of man. New York, London, 1936, chap. 22.

In most communities it is generally the case that technique does not seem to be sufficient for establishing a strong enough feeling of security. Altogether too many unknown factors make their appearance in reality, and too much seems to be ascribed to fate or chance. It is here, then, that irrational thinking creeps in, and religion and magic begin to play an important part in social life. Thus the Lamet's knowledge of medicine is based on magical treatments, which proceed from conceptions about the soul of man and the spirits in the surrounding supernatural world. I shall not describe the methods used by the medicine man of the Lamet in this book; I only wish to mention in this connection, that it is extremely seldom that any purely pharmaceutical knowledge is shown on the part of the Lamet, but instead, all the ability of the medicine man is based on seeking after lost souls and finding out which spirits have been the cause of sickness. When he has found the reason, which is done by divining by means of eggs — he reads in the blood streaks of germ plasma — he sets about healing the sick person by means of spells and sacrifice for the demons of sickness. The Lamet have evidently learned this art from the Yuan, and it is difficult to say to what degree they have something of their own that distinguishes their medicinal precepts from those of the Yuan.

Since the uncertainty of life is great, they attempt to predict possible events, and act accordingly, and this is done by means of manifestations, omens and dreams. Omens of this kind, *mrā*, play quite a role, and can have far-reaching results. Thus for example, it is considered to be a very bad omen, *mrā ku lok*, if a wild hen, a roe or some other wild game of the forest happen to come into the village. Everybody is afraid that he is going to die. And if a wild bird happens to enter one of the dwellings, somebody in the house is surely going to die. This happened in one of the northern villages, for a turtledove had happened to fly into a house, and shortly afterwards one of the members of the household had died. Once in Mokahang Tai roe and wild chickens had come into the village, which resulted in the whole village moving immediately out of pure fright. Some time afterwards the village burned down. This story was told to me with real credibility by the village inhabitants of Mokahang Tai. When the Lamet set out for hunting, they are very careful to avoid the regular roads, for if they should meet a pregnant woman it would be a bad omen.

What holds good in connection with omens, is also true of dreams, and the latter play quite a part in the life of the Lamet, but it is not

possible for me to go into this subject here. In certain cases dreams can be caused by evil spirits, and then a person becomes so ill that not even the medicine men have the power to heal him.

In the preceding pages we have seen how the Lamet attempt to secure themselves in their life of production by means of various and magical actions. I shall try to make a little summing up in this matter, without making a general exposé of the whole religion of the Lamet. I have already published in another connection some of the religious conceptions of the Lamet,¹⁾ but here I shall make certain modifications and look at the material from a particular point of view, namely that of religion and magic as a sort of investment for security or certainty in the life of production, or in other words, see which magical and religious means are used for complementing the practical activity and experience of the Lamet, in order to attain the values which are the goals for their desires. This is of course only one of the functions of primitive religion, but it is also most certainly a very important function.

Supernatural beings and other religious entities and categories undoubtedly play an important part in the life of the Lamet. A Lamet cannot undertake the least thing without taking into consideration his conceptions of the supernatural world. However, there are people who are more religious, and those who are less so, among the Lamet just as anywhere else. Many a time I have noticed that particularly among the younger generation there are those who disregard some of the rules that ought to be followed for the sake of the spirit world. Some of them even told me that they did not believe much in all this, but in spite of their rationalism, they still acted according to tradition and made the required sacrifices. Pressure from the older generation is also brought to bear in regard to religious matters, and young people have great respect for all their elders. Even though the younger element state that they do not believe in all the spirits, I could not get away from the impression that they are just a little afraid that perhaps something supernatural exists after all.

One of Tapia's sons in Mokala Panghay helped me to map a swidden. I needed some bamboo rods as stakes for triangulation, and the boy went and fetched these in the forest, and we placed them out in the swidden. His father, old Tapia, happened to see this and he became both troubled and angry, and he scolded his son for having done this. *phi é̄m*, the

¹⁾ Izikowitz, K. G.: Fastening the soul. Some religious traits among the Lamet (French Indochina). Göteborgs Högskolas Årsskrift, Göteborg, 1941.

dangerous spirit of the swidden, might see these bamboo twigs and come down to harm both harvest and people on the swidden. The son knew this very well, but told me that he did not believe in it at all. A few days later Tapia fell ill, and it was the general opinion that the spirit of the swidden had brought about the illness.

Another time the same boy accompanied me on a hunting trip, and we pursued a herd of boars. We happened to approach an apparently virgin forest, and at first the boy did not dare to enter it with me, since evil spirits had their haunts there. I reminded him that he did not believe in such things, and he then answered that it really was not so dangerous to go through the forest in pursuit of the wild hogs. He finally followed me through the forest, but he was evidently just a bit uncertain, and gradually decided that it was safest to sacrifice some chewing betel and a little tobacco to the dangerous spirits, which he obviously believed in, in spite of everything. He laid his sacrifice on a leaf on the ground, and mumbled a short spell, saying that he only intended to pass through the forest without disturbing anything or shooting. Later on the wild hogs went down into a glen on the other side of this forest, and not until we came there did we succeed in shooting a single animal. The boy declared afterwards that if we had not sacrificed to the spirits, the wild hogs would never have left the woods, and we would never have succeeded in getting any of them. This can be regarded as a typical example of their way of dealing. Even if the youth have an indifferent attitude towards the spirits in daily life, yet there will always be situations in which they "prefer the certain to the uncertain" so to speak, and make sacrifices to the spirits simply for fear of not attaining their goal.

In the previous chapters I have described a number of ceremonies of religious and magical character that are connected with the life of production. Before making a summary of this, I must first describe the most important cult of all existing among the Lamet, namely that of the ancestor or house spirits, since this plays such a central role in their entire social life. I shall describe this cult in spite of the fact that my material is exceedingly scanty.

The Ancestor Spirits

The ancestor spirits are called *mbrōy n'ā*, sometimes also *prierr* or *phi* is used instead of *mbrōy*. The word *n'ā* means dwelling, and the spirits are therefore simply called house spirits. The Lamet emphasize the fact, however, that these spirits are those of departed parents, and this becomes

obvious in prayers and formulas to the house spirits, or ancestor spirits as they can also be called. For this reason also, such expressions as *phi un'* and *phi nē* are sometimes used, which mean father spirit and mother spirit respectively.

These spirits are the most important of all, and the family is dependent upon them to a very large extent. As a matter of fact they are the central figures in the lives of the Lamet, who believe that if they look after these spirits properly, the whole family will have good health, many children will be born, the harvest will be successful, and all their wishes will be fulfilled. Whatever a Lamet is about to undertake he must inform the house spirits. If he should forget to do so, he is likely to meet with some mishap, and I shall relate an example of this in the following. It is of special importance to sacrifice to the ancestor spirits in all the changes that occur in life, when marriage takes place, at burials, in adoption, etc. For example, a new jug of rice wine cannot be opened without a sacrifice being made to the house spirits and their being informed on the matter. In this case the lid of earthenware that covers the jug is carried to the altar and placed at its base, and a little mash is laid on it.

It is the housefather that has charge of the sacrifices made to the ancestor spirits, and since these spirits are considered to be more important than all others, it might be said that the housefathers are in a way the most important "priests" in the community of the Lamet, even more important than the *xamiā*, who as a matter of fact has very little power of decision.¹⁾

The Lamet consider it of importance that the ancestor spirits live in the house. Elsewhere in this book I have described how the spirits are called to a newly built house (pp. 160-161). The house spirits are particularly fond of buffaloes, and for this reason the skull of the buffalo sacrificed to these spirits is hung at the altar of ancestors. Among the Lower Lamet moreover, the gable corners of the dwellings are decorated with wooden

¹⁾ This is of course very important from a social point of view. Since the ancestor spirits are considered to be more important than the village spirit — the dearest possessions of the Lamet and their economic surplus go to the ancestor spirits — this naturally contributes to a lessening of the power of the village priest, and at the same time a lessening of the coherence within the village, or of the latter as a social unit.

The question is whether the *xamiā* can possibly have developed from the housefather as "priest." If it is true that the village spirit is the ghost of his ancestors, he thus fulfills his duty to his ancestors by sacrificing to the village spirit. Thus it is easy to see why the *xamiā*'s office is hereditary. This is something to be investigated further.

pieces that are sculptured in the shape of buffalo horns. They believe that these please the house spirits. "When they see the horns they enter the house," my informers told me. I have asked about this very thing a number of times in different villages, and there is no doubt about my having the right slant on the matter. In the beginning, however, my views regarding this were somewhat different, because there are investigators who believe that these gable horns should have the effect of frightening evil spirits.

In anthropological literature it has also been stated that the cult of buffalo horns has originally had some connection with the moon cult. It is possible that this is so in regard to Africa, but I have not met with any information of this kind among the Lamet. They also have a kind of gable horn with tassels on the watch houses on the swiddens, which are intended for enticing the soul of rice to the watch house. Here we see that the idea is the same.

It is strange, however, that all of the houses of the Lower Lamet do not have the buffalo horn ornament, but only a few of them, and on various occasions I have tried to find out the reason for this. It is possible that only those houses whose owners are rich enough to be able to sacrifice buffalo to the ancestors have these ornaments. Therefore I strongly suspect that this is a sign of dignity, because the sacrifice of buffaloes gives a man prestige in the community. But I have never got any direct support in this supposition, because the Lamet are extremely nervous about telling who are the owners of buffaloes, or who are rich.

On the other hand, these gable ornaments are never seen among the Upper Lamet in the form of buffalo horns, but instead a sculptured gable horn of the type shown in fig. 55 is now and then to be seen. If this is a sign of dignity or something else, I am unable to say. The Lamet themselves declare that the ornament is there only because it is beautiful.¹⁾

At the entrance of the dwellings there are small sacrifice bowls as well, and these are made of plaited work (*yōin*) and are intended for the house spirits.

The animal most often sacrificed to the house spirits is the buffalo, the most expensive of all the domestic animals of the Lamet. On the other hand, the village spirits must be contented with a pig, a dog or chickens,

¹⁾ In this connection I can remark that the so-called Black Thai, who are surely a mixture of invading Thai peoples and the original inhabitants, that is to say, close kin of the Lamet, also have a kind of ornament on their gable corners. Among these people, however, it is purely a symbol of rank, which only higher officials and nobility are allowed to use in their feudally organized society.

and "simpler spirits" only with chickens or dogs. This is proof enough of how the house spirits are estimated. On p. 200 I have pointed out an interesting linguistic difference indicating of class as well, which is used in regard to buffalo alone among animals. The classifier *kun* = elderly person, is used for a buffalo. Now when buffaloes are used for sacrifice, and this only in connection with persons who have died, or with the ancestor spirits, I have begun to suspect that there ought to exist some kind of mystic connection between buffaloes or persons and the ancestor spirits. It is quite possible that such a thing exists, but in spite of repeated effort I have not come across anything to prove this. The Lamet are exceedingly secretive in regard to their burial customs and everything in connection with the ancestor spirits. If I had been successful in getting hold of the prayer formulas that are repeated at the sacrifice of buffaloes, I might have come upon some indication of a possible connection here. It is not at all certain that such a thing exists. The sacrifice of buffaloes can have another principle. As a point of departure in a renewed attitude of this question, I should like to assume that buffaloes are possibly the most suitable animal for strengthening the ancestor spirits in their activity.¹⁾ Buffaloes are in fact the largest and strongest of all the domestic animals of the Lamet, and in their wild state they are among the most dangerous and bravest of all animals. Because of their size and their fine meat, they have surely been the object of hunting formerly (see chap. 9).

The Lamet are extremely afraid of disturbing the good will of the house spirits in the slightest degree, which is of course easy to understand, since so much depends upon them. For this reason the behavior of the individuals in a dwelling is checked by a number of rules of taboo. Thus I could not sit inside the dwelling and make notes, nor take measurements of the house, for they feared that the spirits would not like this. It was looked upon as a dangerous activity, or perhaps too, it was considered to be masculine work, and such may not take place within the dwellings. Therefore all masculine handiwork, whatever it may be, must take place outside of the dwellings, either in the private *čog* or in the *čog yig* or in the village square. Nor can any food that is seasoned with red pepper be prepared

¹⁾ R. Karsten: *The origins of religion*, London, 1935, p. 261, stresses among other things the strengthening of spirits or gods by means of the character of the object of sacrifice as well as its qualities. In the following I shall return to this theory. — "But the sacrifice may above all be magical in the sense that it transfers to the god the power which is hidden in the sacrificial victim, especially in those parts such as the blood, the heart, and so forth."

within the dwellings. Why just this is forbidden, I have not been able to find out. It is an herb that has been introduced relatively late, and if it is roasted over the coals, as the Lamet sometimes do, the smoke from it has an unpleasant effect on the eyes. It is possible that the Lamet consider the herb to be so strong that the house spirits could dislike it. But I never observed the use of red pepper in driving away spirits.

There are other rules as well in regard to the ancestor spirits, as for example that of strangers not being allowed to sleep in the dwellings, and that of bachelors not being allowed to sleep "on the other side of the hearths" (see p. 61).

The Lamet think that those who can afford to do so should sacrifice to the house spirits once a year, and preferably a buffalo. However, this sacrifice can be performed only in case the housefather has been ill. If he has not been ill during the preceding year, he can keep his buffalo. A man who has not made the sacrifice of a buffalo to the house spirits during the dry season is not allowed to do so while the rice is growing, even if he should become ill. Instead, he performs a little ceremony for the house spirits in the watch house on the swidden, just before the harvest begins. If a man is not wealthy enough to surrender a buffalo, a zebu-cow can serve for the sacrifice. However, this is the case only in regard to the Upper Lamet. If he is so poor that he does not even own the latter, he must be satisfied with the sacrifice of a pig. However a man of this description has no standing among the Lamet, and therefore he cannot expect to get any amount of help from his house spirits either. If a poor man has an accident and the medicine man shows him after the process of divining that he has sinned against the ancestor spirits, who are thus the cause of his illness, he must in any case make the sacrifice of a buffalo. In this case the poor man is forced to get hold of a buffalo, and his nearest kin on the masculine side, or some friends in his clan must come to his assistance. The man concerned is allowed to keep the skull, but the greater part of the buffalo meat which is not distributed in the village, is kept by the owner of the buffalo. If he gets well again, then he must repay the owner of the buffalo in the form of wage work or rice. I never met up with a case of this kind, so I am not in a position to give any further details on the subject. It is obvious that it would be extremely interesting to know how this judicial and economic proceeding takes place and affects those concerned.

The most important part of the buffalo sacrifice is the skull, and particularly the horns. The Lamet believe that the house spirits have their

living quarters in the skull itself. If this is provided with long horns, it is highly valued, and is something which makes its appearance in their prayers for a good harvest.

Unfortunately I have never attended the whole ceremony for the house spirits. The Lamet are not very willing about letting strangers take part in this. On the occasion of most of the more important feasts, the village is closed off so that no stranger can come in, and no one can leave. In Mokala Panghay one of the richer men, Tapía, had arranged for a feast for his ancestors, but he postponed it until after I had gone away. No one mentioned anything about this, although I asked a number of times if they were going to sacrifice a buffalo soon. As a matter of fact, I suspected that Tapía would soon be having a sacrifice feast, since he had not had one the previous year, and had moreover been quite ill during the harvest time. He sacrificed to other spirits instead. As soon as I left the village — these were my last days among the Lamet — I heard that Tapía was going to sacrifice to his ancestors. It happened that I had some sons of his in my caravan, and they asked to be allowed to return home as soon as possible, and it was only then that I found out what was about to take place. Tapía had kept the thing so secret, that neither my servants nor I had heard a word about it. Naturally the whole village knew about it, for before such a feast can begin the women must prepare for it by setting about making wine and distilling a large amount of brandy. It was most certainly due to the great respect the people had for Tapía, that they had not mentioned the subject, for he had the rank, the honor and the dignity that belong to the *lem*.

Once, however, I happened by pure chance to get in on a feast of this kind. I entered a village without having first notified anyone of my arrival, which is generally the custom otherwise. The main part of the feast was already over, the buffalo was slaughtered, the meat distributed, and all the prayers already gone through. Only a couple of days remained before it would be all over.

The man who arranged the ancestor feast had happened to wound his knee with a heavy chopping knife two months or so previously. He had been doing work of some kind in the woods, and the knife had slipped. His knee swelled up, and he could not walk. The medicine man who examined the situation declared that the ancestor spirits were the cause of the accident. The sick man then remembered that he had neglected to inform his house spirits about going out in the woods to work. The knee socket was very much swollen, and he could not stretch out his leg, but had to

move about with the help of a couple of stout sticks, hopping on one leg. He had most certainly been ill with this two months or even more when I arrived at the village. The lower part of the leg was quite emaciated, and it was obvious that the muscles were beginning to wither. He had already performed a number of sacrifices for the house spirits without any result in the way of betterment, and now he was making yet another attempt. The sick man had become an invalid, and had to sit at home in the village and look after children and make baskets. He had a large family, however, and was a rich man, so he certainly was not suffering from any serious drawback economically. If the case had been that of a poor man, it would have been decidedly more interesting to study.

A feast for the ancestors usually lasts ten days, and the first of these should be a "good" or "lucky" day (see chap. 8). This day is selected by the medicine man according to the calendar of the Lamet. The buffalo is slaughtered on the first day. On this occasion it is tied to a sacrifice pole outside the house, and then killed by means of the stroke of an axe on the neck, and simultaneously a stab in the breast from a lance. After this its throat is cut open in order to get the blood to flow out. The latter is kept in cheap Chinese porcelain bowls. The buffalo to be sacrificed should be black, and should have long horns. The spirits do not like the white ones. The bell worn by the buffalo is then hung up on the sacrifice pole, and if a man belongs to the roe clan (*tā pōś*) he fastens a long bamboo stick to the pole also. In some villages I saw a stick like this (*tūor*) with a triangular piece of plaited work hanging from the top. This is called *mblāi*.

The buffalo is then cut up, and the head is cleaned and the brain and eyes removed. The skull is hung at the altar of the ancestors in the middle of one of the long walls. It is placed on a pole which is painted with stripes running horizontally. Buffalo blood is used as paint. This stick must be of a certain variety of wood which is called *éig riē*. *riē* is a fruit tree with edible fruit. The latter is rather sour, and I am not acquainted with the Latin name of the tree. In Laotic it is called *mak phot*. I have no information concerning why just this particular tree is used.

Grass is placed in all the openings in the skull, that is, the holes for the eyes, the nose and mouth. A lot of sacrificial blood is spattered onto the wall near the altar, and the axes, knives and the lance used in killing the buffalo and cutting it up, are placed on the floor near the altar.

All the members of the household are obliged to wear painted faces as long as the feast for the ancestor spirits lasts. For a man, this consists

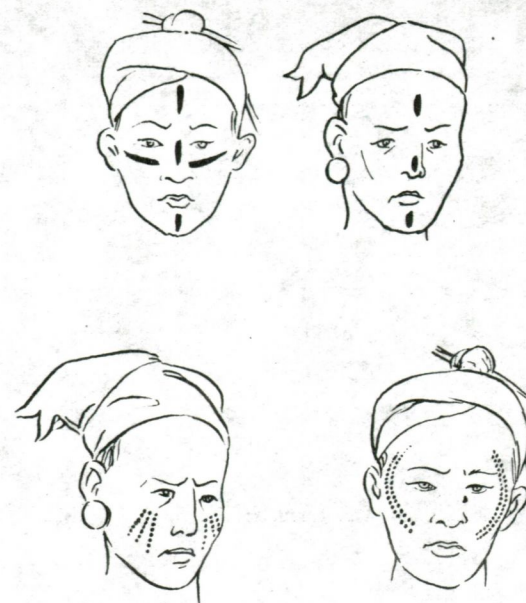


Fig. 128. Face paintings for the ancestor ceremony. Above, paintings from Upper below, from Lower Lamet.

of a couple of charcoal lines going from the upper lip over the cheeks towards the forehead. These represent buffalo horns. The women have a few streaks under the eyes. The painting is different for the Upper Lamet, as can be seen from fig. 128. The painting is done with charcoal and is called *hal pttay*.

To the left of the door of the house a big wooden sword is fastened, and a few sacrifice baskets are hung, in which some of the buffalo meat is placed. A number of different dishes are prepared from this, soup more than anything else, and a dish of very finely chopped meat mixed with herbs, which is eaten raw. This is the festival food of the Lamet. It is placed in Chinese porcelain bowls which are laid on a shelf near the altar. The family members then dress up in their finest clothes, and the whole village is invited to come and eat and drink. All day and all night long visitors pay their calls, and they sit and talk and eat a little with the family. For weeks previous to the festival, the women have been busy arranging the alcoholic drinks, and great quantities are consumed on such occasions. For ten whole days and nights the drinking goes on. That part

of the buffalo meat that is not consumed at the feast is distributed to the various houses in the village. What remains is kept by the owner of the buffalo, who dries it. It is evident that a feast of this kind is a tremendous expenditure for the Lamet. The buffalo represents an investment in itself, and added to this is all the other food included in the menu, such as chicken, pork and the like, which is sacrificed to the ancestor spirits at the same time. Great quantities of rice are of course consumed at this time as well, not only in the form of food, but transformed into wine and distilled drinks. Besides all these things, other wild and cultivated plants that are accessible at the time are included.

Bronze drums also come into play during the feasts for the ancestors, and are used for enticing the spirits of the ancestors to the house. It is important that these drums are whole and have a good sound. The Lamet originally bought bronze drums from the Niang peoples, who seem to have been the makers of them, according to my informants. These people live in *Muong Kiem*, four days by foot from Chiangmai in Siam. Niang is probably a Karen tribe. The shape of the drums is of the so-called type IV, which is considered to be the latest of the bronze drums.¹⁾ It is this type that is used by the Khmu and other tribes in Laos. The Lamet did not know anything about the meaning of the ornaments on the drums. A bronze drum is considered to be the height of luxury, and the most expensive thing any of them can acquire. It is considered to be equal in value to four buffaloes, and sometimes even more if it has a particularly fine sound. By way of further comparison I can say that a buffalo that was worth about 30 piasters in 1938, was considered to correspond to one year of service marriage, or more correctly, one buffalo equals the surplus or the savings it is possible to collect during a year of work.

When the bronze drums are not in use, they are buried in the ground in some secret place known only to the housefather. This can be far out in the forest. In the Lamet language bronze drums are called *klō*, and this word is evidently borrowed from the Karen language, since they have the same name in the language of this tribe.²⁾

Besides the bronze drums, gongs and cymbals are used at the feasts for the ancestors, and a number of Laotic *sampots*, a kind of loin cloth of silk, are to be seen.

The festival for the ancestors is at the same time a display of all that

¹⁾ Franz Heger: *Alte Metalltrommeln aus Südostasien*. Leipzig, 1902.

²⁾ H. I. Marshall: *The Karen people of Burma*. The Ohio State University Bulletin, vol. 26, no. 13, Columbus, 1922, p. 317.

the family owns in the way of articles of luxury and things saved. We know that an exhibition of the surplus production or the like occurs among other primitive peoples as well.

In the house of the sick man referred to here, where the feast of ancestors took place, there were no less than five bronze drums and several gongs hung up, one of the latter being the largest I have ever seen. It had a very beautiful verdigris green patina, and was certainly one meter in diameter. These musical instruments represented a great amount of wealth. The housefather informed me that all of these things were old heirlooms. He himself had been too poor and had had too much hard luck to be able to add to his wealth. Since the important sacrificial ceremonies were already over, I was allowed to enter the house, mostly because I was expected to have with me some European medicine that might help the injured leg.

On the beams above the altar of ancestors, a collection of *sampots* had been hung, these being of high quality silk, and made in beautiful *ikat* technique. My Laotic secretary declared that they were very old, and that the art of making them no longer existed in Laos. He supposed that even the Lao had imported them all the way from Cambodia. There were a lot of people in the house who sat and talked and drank liquor. Unfortunately I could not get anyone to recite the prayer formulas for me, since the sacrifices were already performed. Some women and children beat ceaselessly on the drums and the gongs. This music continued all day and all night, day after day without cessation. Two days after my arrival it was *sgi kat*, the Sabbath of the Lamet, and the last day of feasting. The drums were to be buried in all secrecy the following day somewhere in the forest. The silks, however, are kept in the barns.

When the ancestor feasts take place, the opportunity is taken for performing a number of other ceremonies as well, such as the adopting of children, the initiation of *lem*, and the celebration for having acquired a new drum.

A similar feast is held when parents are buried, and at this time, too, buffaloes are slaughtered. But on this occasion the latter are not tied at the sacrifice poles, but at the steps leading to the house, where they are slaughtered. Nor are they struck with axes at this time, but instead are killed only by the thrust of a lance and by cutting the throat.

It is obvious that since the house spirits are believed to be the ghosts of dead parents, the ritual of burial must have an intimate connection with the feasts for the ancestors. These two occasions are the only ones at which such great feasts are held and when buffaloes are sacrificed, and bronze drums and other parade objects are used and displayed.

In this chapter I have spoken of ancestor spirits and house spirits as if they were one and the same for reasons which I explained at the start. If we now consider them to be those of dead parents, the latter must then be ascribed to the forefathers. But if a man has separated from the main family and set up his own household, that is to say, he lives in his own house, he also sacrifices to the ancestor spirits in his home, in spite of the fact that his parents are alive. Thus when house spirits are spoken of in the same connection, it can be due to a confusion of house spirits and a special cult for the spirits of ancestors. In order to clear this up, rather wide comparative research is necessary. The cult of ancestor spirits exists among a large number of the different peoples of East Asia, and it is possible that it has spread like a kind of new religion from one place to vast parts of Asia. I shall not take up this problem here, but return to it in a special investigation.

We can state therefore, that the greatest feast, combined with the greatest economic expenditure, is directed towards the ancestor spirits. Since the Lamet consider these to be the most important of all, it is quite natural that articles of luxury and a large part of production are consumed at these feasts. In return it is expected that the ancestor spirits should give happiness and success in all the undertakings of the family. But this feasting has at the same time another function. A man who can afford to acquire all these expensive things which are connected with the cult of ancestors, and sacrifice so much at these rites, must be a particularly clever person, and thus his reputation and his prestige grow with every feast. In this connection social prestige plays an excessive part, and I should even like to assume that the feast of ancestors and all connected with it is the driving force in the entire economic and social life of the Lamet. It forces the more aspiring and ambitious to produce more than what is required for the necessities of life. Through the fact that the whole village partakes in these feasts and is supplied with food and drink, the family or house group gets into contact with the whole village, and apart from this it acquires respect in other villages as well.

Thus we see how the ancestor cult acts as a very important factor in the economic life of the house group, and besides, how it satisfies "the desire of security," that is to say, how it contributes to an increased feeling of security for the house group in all the vicissitudes of life. In other words, the economic sacrifices invested by the Lamet in the cult of ancestors are to be considered as something like a spiritual social insurance. And not this alone, for it also contributes to a satisfying of "the desire

of recognition," i. e., the family's struggle for social recognition as one of the desires that are worth striving for in the social life of the Lamet. If one wishes to investigate a community and try to find the action in it, it is often practical to try to find out what the desires and values are, and to see with what means and in which way the community works in order to reach these goals. These form one of the most important axes upon which the whole machinery of the society and its various wheels and parts rotate.

Rites and Economic Activities

A number of things are sacrificed to spirits at the rites that are connected with economic life, such as the heads or other parts of animal bodies, blood, cooked rice, wooden pieces symbolizing coin, tobacco, betel cuds and *mey*. In this connection it is interesting to notice a certain difference between sacrifice and rites in the various economic processes.

As far as I know, there are no particular rites of religious or magic character connected with the gathering of wild plants, and these plants that are used by the Lamet are accessible regularly at certain seasons. There is no lottery or uncertainty bound up with this part of the life of production. Nor have I come across any rites connected with fishing among the Lamet. It is quite possible that this exists, but fishing plays such an insignificant part in these regions, that it is possible that no rites connected with them have ever come into being. In this case, hunting is of decidedly greater importance, as well as being more uncertain. No matter how well the ways and habits of game are known, hunting is always bound up with a great amount of uncertainty. As we saw in the chapter on hunting, it is coupled with a chain of rites for the forest spirit. In this connection it is really the skulls of game that play the greatest role. The principle is that the spirit must be enticed into the skulls and live there.

To some extent, the sacrifice for the hunt is regarded as a kind of exchange according to the principle: "Here is a hen, now give me game instead," which one says to the forest spirit when sacrificing to it. Then when an animal has been caught, part of it must be given back to the forest spirit in the form of certain pieces of meat or certain parts, which are sacrificed on the spot where the trap is laid in the woods. This is done in order that one may continue to get game, and for the same reason the skull is kept, the Lamet say. But there are two interpretations that might be the explanation for this. The sacrifice of parts of the animal in the

woods is probably done with the view of returning more valuable parts of the animal, so that the power of production of the spirit will not be lessened. In other words, it can be regarded as a kind of spiritual conservation in hunting.

The keeping of the skulls of game has probably in view even the acquiring of power and control over one of the most important parts of the animal, in order to assure oneself further prey. Just because the forest spirit is supposed to live in the skulls, power can be acquired over it. However, all this is pure assumption, and in order to prove its probability, further field research is necessary, as well as comparative investigation of hunting rites, and the conceptions about various parts of animals and their usage, among the Lamet and other tribes of Further India.

The skull comes also into play in the sacrifice of buffaloes to the ancestor spirits, and here as well the Lamet believe that the ancestor spirits come and live in the skulls. Evidently the same conception lies back of this sacrifice and sacrifices for the hunt. Besides, the heads of nearly all kinds of domestic animals are used as sacrifices.

Since I suspected that the skull in some way might be regarded as a center of power, I cross-examined the Lamet on this point. However, I got no information on the matter, which might be due to the fact that I placed my questions from the wrong angle. Asking questions is often like adjusting a radio to short wave. One should almost know the answer beforehand, and get the "station" right away. If the question is a little askew, no answer is obtained. In my questioning I set out with the idea that animals possibly had something that resembled a soul. But the Lamet positively denied that such phenomenon could exist in regard to animals. In spite of this, however, I should not consider it improbable that the skull is a kind of center of power. In the preceding pages I have pointed out that one of the tribes neighboring the Lamet, the Puli-Akha, have a conception of this kind (p. 94). They believe that the head-soul of a man represents masculine potency, or the power of reproduction. The same kind of a conception is probably what lies back of the wild Wa's head-hunting. Human heads are used in sacrifices made to the spirits of the swiddens, in order to get a better harvest. I got this information from the Lu, who formerly lived in the Wa States. Besides, the Wa are a tribe that is closely related to the Lamet. Moreover, this conception seems to be the basis for the use of heads as trophies in many other parts of the world, not only in Southeast Asia, among the Dyaks and Naga peoples, but among the American Indians as well. Thus the head becomes the

site of a kind of life "energy," which the owner of the head can make use of. This energy is particularly concentrated in the hair, and this tallies with the conception of the Puli-Akha. The Lamet believe that the spirits come and live in the skulls. How to explain the relation between this supposed life "energy" and the spirits, is probably not so easy. In this case I should like to think it likely that the life "energy" is just a part of the spirit, according to the principle *pars pro toto*, that is, it is identical with the spirit itself, which in some way has the power of entering all kinds of skulls. This probably sounds a trifle strange, but the Lamet have just about the same conception of the character of the soul of rice and of souls in general. The soul of rice exists not only in the grains, but in the whole straw, and in fact in the whole field of rice, and it can be collected part for part. One can hardly speak of a rice soul for every straw, but rather of a common soul of rice for the whole district. It is likewise in regard to the souls of human beings. To be sure, they are concentrated in the head and knees, but these are only the centers of emanation, and each soul rules over its own half of the body, meeting in the region of the navel. The fact that spirits and souls can to some extent be regarded as personified beings, need not detract from the conception of their diffuse and somewhat "flowing or emanating" character. Thus, if one has the skull of an animal and performs the ceremonies required for getting a part of the forest spirit "to flow into" the skull, one obtains simultaneously power over the spirit in its entirety. If this explanation is correct, we return naturally to the question of the relation of ancestor spirits to buffaloes. Looking at it purely logically, the life "energy" in buffaloes should then be identical with the ancestor spirits. This is of course conceivable, but it is also only speculation, and unfortunately I am not in a position to give any information as to how the matter really stands in the Lamet's world of conception. It is not unlikely that the sacrificing of heads was an old tradition, to which the sacrificing to ancestor spirits was later adapted.

Thus we see that the same kinds of rites are performed, and the same kinds of sacrifices are made, within two important spheres of the production life of the Lamet, namely hunting, and the use of cattle. In both cases the skull plays the main role, and it is probable that conceptions of similar character lie back of it all. In these cases it is men who perform the rites, and who are responsible for this production.

If we take a look at the rites connected with agriculture, we find in part quite another variety of ceremonies, which are centered only

around rice. No particular ceremony is performed for wild plants, and the case is the same in regard to cultivated plants, excepting rice, of course. A great many spirits are sacrificed to while cultivation goes on, but it is all concentrated to begging these spirits not to prevent the rice from growing and bearing fruit. They do not bother about the other plants, which are not mentioned in prayers either. Sacrifice is made in the usual way to these various spirits, either with the heads of animals, or with food and drink of various descriptions. However, the most important thing in connection with agriculture is to protect, preserve and gather up the soul of rice, i. e., the growing "power" of the rice. Just here an entirely unique conception makes its appearance, one not to be found in the other production processes. All the ceremonies in connection with the soul of rice are aimed at binding it and keeping it within the barns. Now, since this ceremony is connected with rice and no other plant, we must assume that a cult of this description has been introduced together with rice, i. e., the Lamet learned it at the same time that they learned how to cultivate rice.

It is not rice alone that is treated in this manner, but the soul of human beings and the village spirit as well. Human souls and the soul of rice bear the same name, which, however, does not necessarily mean that both of these have originally been regarded as the same thing. In an article on the religion of the Lamet¹⁾ I have tried to show that it is possible that rice and the accompanying conception of the soul of rice are something of recent introduction, and that the Lamet have then probably given this peculiar growing "power" of the rice the same name that they had for the souls of humans. They have identified, so to speak, a new conception of life "energy" in plants with that they already had in regard to people. This could explain why rice and no other plant is considered to have a soul in the mind of the Lamet. On the other hand, it is quite another thing that certain trees, stumps, branches, etc. are able to have spirits, which according to the understanding of the Lamet belong to other categories of supernatural beings, however.

There is another difference as well between the rites for agriculture and other production. It is not men alone that take part in the agricultural ceremonies, but women as well, and as we have seen in the chapter on agriculture, the latter even perform "the ceremonial inaugural sowing." This must be seen together with what has previously been pointed out,

¹⁾ Izikowitz, *op. cit.*

namely that agriculture is carried on by both men and women, and that women to a large extent take charge of the distribution of rice.

Thus we see that the Lamet use means of magic and religious character in trying to assure themselves of good results for their production. This occurs partly by means of sacrifice and prayers and magical paraphernalia of various kinds. These activities are mostly aimed at driving away the dangerous spirits which might injure production, and at supporting those who can in any way further it. The latter takes place then in different ways and with various means, and with the little material on hand as a point of departure, the following can be assumed to be true. First of all we have gift-sacrifice to different kinds of spirits. This sort of sacrifice is made to the dangerous spirits only, in order to make them contented and go away. Other means for driving them away is also used, but I shall not discuss this here. Moreover, compensation-sacrifice comes into play, such as that made to the forest spirit.

Karsten's theory about sacrifices for reinforcement is of importance. This can explain a lot in the religious life of the Lamet. It is evident, therefore, that all blood sacrifices must be included in this category, for example, when the stones of the village spirit are smeared with the blood of the slaughtered pig, or when blood is spattered on the altar of ancestors, or blood and rice is stuck on to the head and the knees in sacrificing to the two souls of humans, or on to a bronze drum in order to give it a better sound, or on the crossbow in order to have better luck in hunting, etc. The term *poh* = "to renew" could be explained in the light of this theory. This term is used in sacrificing to the village spirit, when health and prosperity, a plentiful supply of water in the springs, and a good harvest are prayed for. The first ceremony for the village spirits is performed right at the beginning of the rainy season, when the entire life of production is quiet, and when the supply of food is low, and also when the water in the springs has nearly run dry. When the rains come everything naturally comes to life again. All nature starts anew, the little mountain streams are once more filled with water and fish, and edible plants shoot forth in the forests, and once more the time for cultivation has arrived. The whole village is renewed, and in a way the life of the people gets a fresh start. I tried in every way to get a more detailed explanation of this term from the Lamet, but I must confess that in spite of repeated discussions with them I did not have any real success. In any case it is evident that all the ceremonies for the village spirit have some connection with this process of renewal in nature, and with the change in the weather, and the

ceremony itself is aimed at putting this renewal into action, or reinforcing it.

The village spirits represent first of all the interest of the whole village, and are therefore bound up with many branches of the life of the village people. The ancestor spirits have a similar function, but are particularly directed to the welfare of the family, and to its prestige most of all. For this reason I should like to assume that the ceremonies in both these cases are particularly aimed at renewing and reinforcing the power of the village and the ancestor spirits, so that these forces can help human beings to the greatest possible extent in their efforts. The more one can strengthen these forces and get them to be kindly disposed, the greater their contribution to man will be in his effort for greater security and prestige.

The two other ways of becoming assured of a good result in production are to obtain power over the spirits by means of the skull of the animal sacrificed at the rites, and to retain life "energy" by binding the soul of rice or the village spirit. To some extent both of these methods are aimed at similar goals, and it is only the methods that differ.

However, the different methods are combined in religious and magical activities, and this probably coheres with different conceptions of the supernatural beings and their character. The various conceptions and the actions bound up with them must be assumed to have entered into the life of the Lamet at different periods of history, either internally, through situations that the Lamet culture has met up with, or as a thing borrowed from foreign religions. It is probably most correct to assume that here it is a case of "both" instead of "either, or."

Thus I should consider it probable that certain conceptions and rites belong to the time when the Lamet occupied themselves with hunting and gathering, and that the actual hunting rites are a survival from that time. We could then continue to assume that gradually the raising of cattle was introduced, and that the same rites as were used in hunting were then applied to domestic cattle, that is, the sacrifice of heads. However, there must have appeared other conceptions as well just here, such as the strengthening effect of the sacrifice, for example. But the interpretation of the spirit entities has probably been the same. It is practically impossible just now to place the conception of the human soul in any chronological connection, but it is evident that when the cultivation of rice was introduced, the idea of growing "power" was adapted to the conception already existing in regard to the soul. This is of course a rather peculiar departure, for the

rites connected with rice are widely different from those connected with other processes of production.

It is possible that we could even make a classification of the various supernatural beings of the Lamet, by investigating them institutionally, so to speak, in connection with different forms of sacrifice and their functions. In this way we could surely see the matter in its entirety to better advantage, and we might even be able to discern the various categories of conception, which most likely belong to different epochs in the history of the Lamet.

The Lamet believe in a large number of different supernatural beings, some of which are nature spirits of various sorts (*mbrög*, sometimes pronounced *mrög*) and some the spirits of people who have died, *prierr*, even the spirit of death, and others *sí*, which can be translated best with "ghost." Sometimes the word *mbrög* is used for both nature spirits and *prierr*, and very often this term is replaced by the word *phi*, which is the Laotic word for spirits. There are a number of other beings besides, which have names, to be sure, but no indication of category. By way of example I can name *hār*, *toy* and *lör*, all of which are connected with the cultivation of swiddens. There is no common name for all these various beings, and the Lamet strongly deny that *hār* has anything at all in common with a *mbrög* or another category of spirit. For this reason I have wondered a good deal whether a being like *hār* really can be regarded as a spirit. During my research I tried in every way possible to find out the character of this entity, and I did not come across anything that prevented it from being treated as a spirit. What the exact difference is between *mbrög* and *hār*, I have not been able to figure out, even though I know the qualities of the different spirits. I have finally reached the conclusion that I got caught in the Lamet's own tangled web of thought, purely and simply. It is of course a very common thing for primitive people to be lacking general conceptions in some cases, and it is therefore quite natural that they do not have a general term for all the various kinds of spirit entities. Our term spirit can very well be used here as a general conception for all kinds of supernatural beings, which are more or less personified. Then even if there are several categories of spirits, they must all be regarded as spirits, since their common traits and their treatment is somewhat similar. The Lamet see only the differences between them, and disregard the similarities.

A conception of somewhat different character is the soul (*klpā*), which is only to be found in human beings and rice. As we have seen, the soul of

rice is treated to a certain degree as a spirit, and in some cases it is even called *mbrōg*. If we ask the Lamet for an explanation for this, we find out that when they speak of *mbrōg ḡ*, they mean *klpū ḡ* = the soul of rice. It is likewise with the human soul.

There are other categories as well, which are decidedly more difficult to understand, and which can hardly be characterized as any kind of spirit or soul. These are rather to be regarded as some sort of quality. *hrkiāk* is a conception of this kind, and can be interpreted as courageous or courage, wicked or wickedness, and even rich. Then we have the word *muit*, which indicates a kind of strength of will in people. A man who has *muit* can command others, and he can get plants to grow well. A third conception is *ken*, which can be best translated as life, even if this does not fully cover the meaning of this word. Energy might be a better word. If a person is tired, he has only a little *ken*. These three conceptions must really be regarded as qualities belonging to living beings. The first two are to be found only in human beings, but the last one can belong to plants and animals as well. However, these qualities cannot be transferred to other persons, and in spite of repeated efforts I have not succeeded in finding out what can possibly lie back of these conceptions. I have never heard of any ceremonies existing in connection with them.

These are only a few of the religious conceptions of the Lamet, and it is not my intention to try to make any detailed analysis in this connection, or any description of these conceptions. My purpose here is only to point out the role played by religious and magical rites in the satisfying of certain goals of desire. It is thus evident that these rites, in the connection in which they have been described, have the important object of contributing, together with institutions or activities of more practical, technical, character, to the desire for security first of all. By means of the various rites, the Lamet try to assure themselves of success in the struggle against sickness as well, and generally in the struggle for food and existence.

Nearly all the ceremonies of the Lamet are of magic-religious character. The purely social ones are of little importance, or not very ceremonious in character. Initiation ceremonies are lacking, and the matrimonial ones are practically the same as any other ceremony meant for establishing relations between people, like the formalities bound up with the receiving of guests, the forming of friendship ties, etc. All of these contacts take place mostly in connection with meals, and even if they are tied up with certain customs and habits in regard to behaviour, they are so simple that they progress without any great amount of formality. The existing



Fig. 129. Harvest.

formalities are really borrowed from the Thai peoples. This refers, for example, to the greeting of strangers with bowls filled with eggs, flowers and candles, and to the *tuktī* ceremony. On the other hand, it is quite apparent that a large number of conceptions lie back of all these things — even if they are borrowed. I shall not take up this matter here, but content myself with stating that these things have the function of satisfying the desire of response, and play an important role in the reciprocity and harmony that distinguish the social life of the Lamet, and which are necessary for all kinds of societies.

If the religious and magical actions are partly aimed at establishing security, one of them at least has moreover the important purpose of satisfying the Lamet's desire for social reputation. This refers to the cult of ancestors, as we can easily understand, for it is this that dominates the social life of the Lamet and is its stimulus. This striving for prestige plays a particularly important part in the economic life of the Lamet, and urges them to a surplus production. It also influences the family to stick together, and the power of the housefather or the parents over the other members of the family must also be seen from this angle. The striving for prestige is something of an agitating factor in the emotional life of the Lamet, and if some new means should make its appearance and be more effective for the satisfying of this desire, it is possible that it would

take effect with the Lamet. At the same time such a possibility is counteracted by the desire for security. One knows what one has, but not what might be. As long as the community satisfies the desire for security, and the desire for recognition can be reached, and both of these support each other, nothing new is created, and nothing new is imbibed from the outer world. In other words, the society becomes conservative, and no interest for new experience can be roused. However, the Lamet are not an isolated people. All around them there are other tribes with other cultures, and they cannot avoid coming in contact with new experience. Thus I shall make an attempt in the next chapter to describe how the desire for new experience in connection with the desire for recognition can act as a "wedge" in the community life of the Lamet.

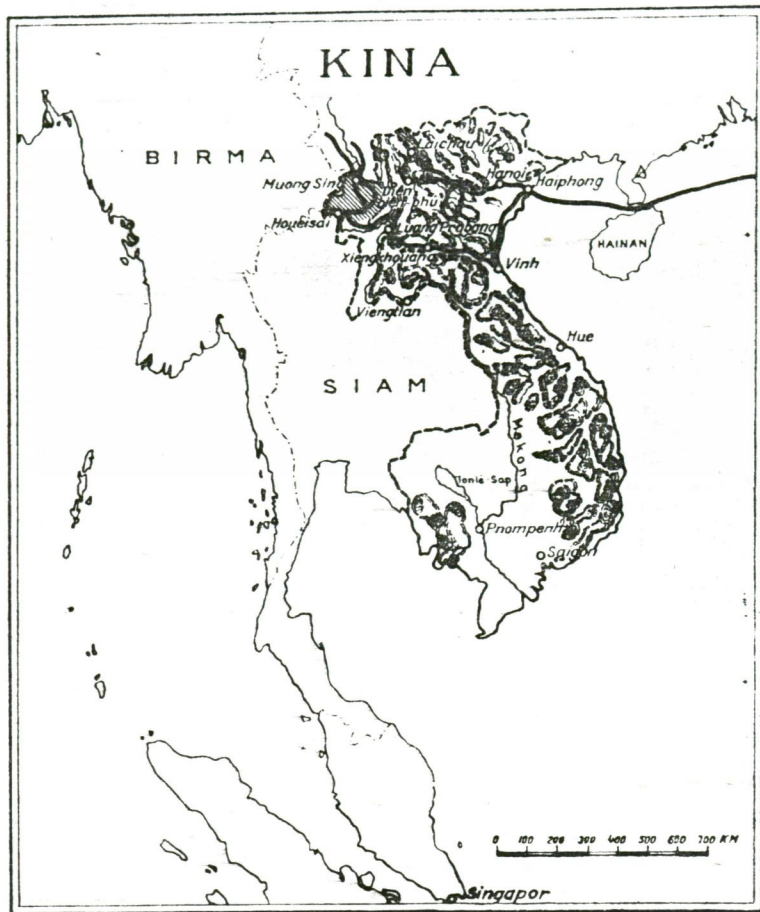
CHAPTER 16.

Changes in the Social Life

The Lamet, like all other peoples, have a long history, during which their community and culture must have gone through a number of changes. However, their own historical tradition is extremely scanty, and so short, that no important conclusion can be derived therefrom, especially since they have no written records. Besides, the information we have about the Lamet from other sources is of very little value, and this includes even Pavie's journeys. Thus the only way in which we can trace any such changes is either by means of archaeology or comparative anthropological study. Meanwhile, all archaeological investigation in these regions is lacking. Possibly then, we might be able to construct with the help of comparative anthropology certain more or less probable connections with neighboring cultures. In this way we would only get at outside influence. Yet, we might take for granted, for example, that the Lamet have not always cultivated rice or had any agriculture to speak of, and that at one time they even had no stock raising. By studying economic activities in all their connections, as I have attempted to do in this book, we should then be able to draw forth different stages of culture based on economic institutions. Then, by eliminating these one by one, together with all the categories belonging to them, we should perhaps be able to reconstruct to some degree the main features in the history of the Lamet. However, the entire culture could not be got at in this way, and the same process would have to be repeated in connection with other non-economic institutions. I shall not go into this matter here, however, but instead make an investigation of this nature in connection with comparative study in another work.

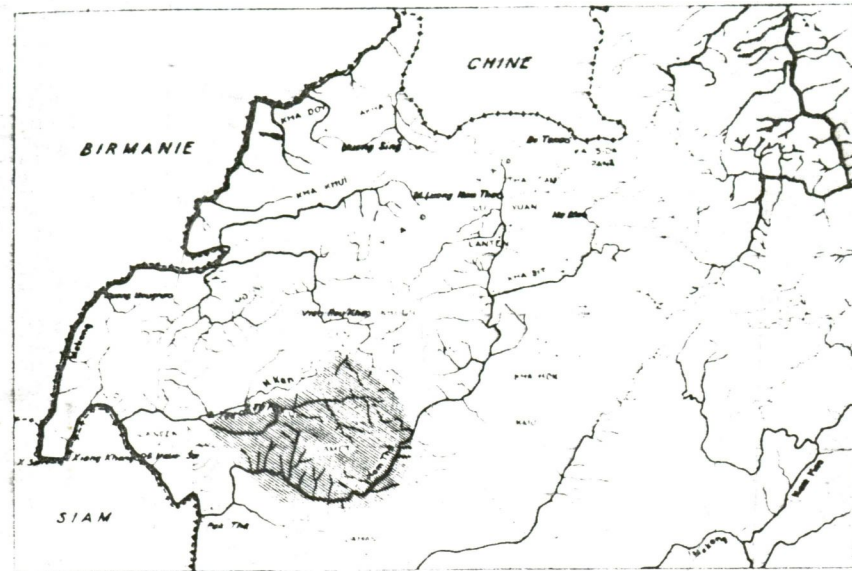
In this chapter I shall limit myself to viewing the changes I was able to observe during my field research, that is, the current ones, and even those that have taken place during the last generation.

We can only see the external influences on a culture by means of historical reconstruction, and thus we are not at all able to find out what relation



Map. 1. The author's itinerary in French Indochina. The hatched area is the province of Haut-Mékong.

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 Area Development Advisor
 Ban Houei Sai, Houa Khong
 Laos



Map. 2. The province of Haut-Mékong. The Lanet area is shaded.

instead of turning back, for they were within easy reach with Hamoi as a starting point.

While among the Lamet, I began by learning their phonetics. Unfortunately I could not get hold of an interpreter who could speak Lamet. This was because no one besides the Lamet themselves could speak the language. However, nearly all grown-up Lamet master the Yuan language -- this at least refers to the men. They speak it quite fluently. Yuan is a Thai dialect which is closely related to the Lao, and therefore a Lao has no difficulties at all in understanding Yuan, nor a Lamet in understanding Lao. For this reason I made use of a French-speaking Lao as intermediary. Fortunately, Lao is fairly easy to learn, and within a few months I could follow and check the interpreter's questions and the Lamet's answers. Gradually I was able to ask questions myself, and I learned to speak Lao. The interpreter became more and more of a secretary and intermediary, and was useful above all as a "walking dictionary." Finally I even got along in Lao without an interpreter.

But of course this was not enough. From the very beginning I realized that I was obliged to learn as much as I could of the Lamet's own language, for this would then be the best means in my possession for making progress. However, I must confess that I never did learn to speak Lamet, nor to understand their conversation completely, as time did not allow this. On the other hand, I had soon mastered so many Lamet words that I could use their own terms, which was very helpful to me. Even though their language looks simple enough when written down, it was quite a while before the essentials in their phonetics became clear to me. A great many grammatical categories and sentence structures are not yet quite clear. Chinese has been studied for a long time, and by many researchers, but in spite of this sinologists still discuss the meaning of different particles and sentence structures. Therefore I could not be expected to be able to explain and translate after only a short stay among the Lamet. At the time that I wrote down the texts, I considered it better to collect a few and get them as exact as possible, rather than to collect a large number of poorly checked ones.

The writing down of texts took place in this way: I had one of my men to relate in Lamet in a rather slow conversational tone, while I wrote down the text as fast as I could. While my informant told us what he had to say, my head boy Ai Kam sat and listened intently. He was a very intelligent man, and I had trained him specially for this purpose. Unfortunately, his personal knowledge of the culture of the Lamet was minimal,

in spite of the fact that he belonged to the tribe, for he had been away a long time in Siam. I then went through the text with Ai Kam, and wrote it out properly and started to translate it. Meanwhile the text was read aloud for the informant, in the presence of other Lamet persons, in which way it was rechecked. The translation required a lot of time and tried one's patience to the utmost. Even if I translate every word and get the meaning of a sentence explained in Lao, there can be cases where I remain uncertain because of the peculiar construction. For this reason I am unable to publish all the texts in this book, since I am obliged to compare the material very carefully from a linguistic point of view.

Through the texts I have come across a great many interesting questions in the culture of the Lamet, and because of them I am convinced that it is absolutely necessary for an anthropologist to study the language of a tribe from the very beginning. There is hardly anything that supplies so good a starting point for various questions as just texts on magic and the like.

Data on the expedition.

I arrived at Houeisai, the capital of the province of Haut-Mékong, in January 1937, and immediately set out for the Lamet territory, with the village Pouvé Luong as my goal. However, this village had been ravaged by fire, and a new one was under construction, which was interesting to observe. Since Pouvé was not a pure Lamet village, being largely populated by Khmu, I left it and travelled to other Lamet villages in the vicinity. It was, however, difficult to stay any length of time in these villages because of the difficulty in obtaining food. The Lamet do not like to sell their few domestic animals. So I decided to stay only a short while in each village and do a bit of reconnoitering. Before long, I hoped I would come across a village where I could settle for a longer time. I rode therefore through the Lamet district until about the middle of March when I had an accident with my leg that made it necessary for me to return to Houeisai.

During my stay in Houeisai, I had the company of a Lamet boy who taught me the principles of the language. Besides, I got in touch with men from several other tribes. Before returning to the Lamet district, I took the opportunity of going down the Mekong to Luangprabang in order to attend the great festival held by the Lao at their New Year. It was not until the beginning of May that my leg had healed enough to

allow me to sit on a horse and return to the Lamet. I then remained with them until the middle of June. Some days were devoted to the great sacrificial festivals that the Thai-Lu in Tafa hold before cultivation of the fields begins. Tafa, as a matter of fact, was the starting point for my trips in the Lamet territory, since it is centrally located. There also the head of the Lamet canton has his residence.

From the very beginning it had been my intention to travel right across the province Haut-Mekong, in order to find out what people lived in the neighborhood of the Lamet, and to which language group they belonged. Their languages were totally unknown. Therefore, I started out in the middle of June, and headed for Muong Sing via Vieng Phoukha, the heart of the district occupied by the Khuen tribes. This place has previously been of importance for the Lamet district, before the existence of Houeisai and Tafa. From there I continued to Muong Luong Namtha, where after a short visit I rode over the mountains which divide the Nam Tha Valley from the slopes of Muong Sing, and which is about 1900 meters high. I remained in Muong Sing until middle of July. From there I made excursions to the Akha tribes living in the neighborhood.

When I left Muong Sing the rainy season was at its height, and I went by foot over the high mountains back to Vieng Phoukha, and from there back to the Lamet territory. As a matter of fact, I took quite another route on the way back from that I took when I rode to Muong Sing.

I then remained in the Lamet district until the end of January, except for a couple of short trips to Houeisai, where the nearest post and telegraph offices were located and where I could exchange money. One cannot use paper bills in the Lamet district, and since only small copper coins and the smallest silver pieces are accepted, the money I needed was so heavy that I had to engage special bearers for this purpose alone.

Not until the beginning of September did I come across a village where I could stay longer than a few weeks. This was due to the fact that here I could solve the food problem by transporting supplies from Tafa and Lao villages lying along the Nam Tha. It was the village of Mokala Panghay, and there I was able to remain until the end of January, at which time I returned to Hanoi. In the other Lamet villages my sojourn had been limited to three weeks for the longest stay, but as a rule the time was much shorter. Thus my stay in Lamet villages has totalled only about eight months. However, during all my trips in the province of Haut-Mekong, I have had Lamet people in my service.

CHAPTER 2.

Neighbors of the Lamet

The Lamet live in Northern Laos in French Indochina on both sides of the boundary between the province of Haut-Mekong and the protectorate Luangprabang, a Laotic feudal state. Around them live a large number of unknown tribes. In the little province of Haut-Mekong alone, with a diameter of about 250 km., there live at least 25 different tribes, each of which speaks its own tongue, often incomprehensible to the neighbors, and has besides its own particular culture. This confusion of peoples is quite peculiar, and is commonly the case in the whole of Further India and in parts of southernmost China. Few places on earth can reveal such an ethnic and linguistic confusion as this part of the world. In this case the best comparative example is the Caucasus. Before going into detail about the culture of the Lamet, I shall first try to give a description of the tribes neighboring the Lamet, and a short survey of the history of the tract. In fact, this is rather necessary in order to understand the community life of the Lamet depicted in the following.

The confusion of peoples in Further India has come about largely through the immigration from southern China of various kinds of people, since the Chinese have pushed them down from the north, away from their original home areas north of the Yangtze River. Originally, southern China was not Chinese, and in many ways is still not so. This migration of peoples is in progress even today, and while I was in the Lamet district I had the opportunity of observing among other things the contact between the different population groups, such as the Thai and the Lamet, or other tribes. Speaking generally, however, these peoples live quite isolated from one another, since they speak different languages and have different customs. The distance between villages is considerable, and this naturally contributes to the fact that the populations do not mix to any great extent. This is also the case in regard to their cultures. There is one exception, however, and that is the influence extended by the Thai peoples, about which more will be said later on.