

# Lamet

Data source: eHRAF

Secondary source

Entered by Emily Pitek, Human Relations Area Files

*\* Data Source entry, prepared based on data sourced from an external project.*

*\* Secondary Source entry, prepared from a literature review by a Ph.D. RA*

Entry tags: Religious Group, Southeast Asian Religions

The Lamet are native to the northwestern part of what is now known as Laos. This entry focuses on the Lamet living in this region around the time of 1940, and draws primarily from the work of principal ethnographic authority Karl Gustav Izikowitz. At the time Izikowitz was conducting field work among the Lamet (1936-1938), the region was governed by France, and was known as French Indochina. Despite being under French political rule, the Lamet culture was not greatly influenced by European culture. Each Lamet village is an independent unit, and no formal political office exists beyond the level of the village. However, the Lamet have seven totemic, patrilineal, exogamous clans that cut across villages and regulate marriage ties. The most important social unit is the house group, which is comprised of an extended family led by a housefather. Each village includes several house groups. There is somewhat of a hierarchy among the housefathers, with those who are lem (wealthiest) having greater influence within the village. The individual most closely resembling a chief is the xamiā (priest of sacrifice), whose authority varies in each village depending on personality and status. The xamiā's responsibilities include performing all sacrifices to the various spirits of the village, ensuring order is kept and the spirits are not disturbed, and supervising the community house. The position is hereditary in the male line. Religious ceremonies focus around hunting, agriculture and the seasonal cycle, death/burial rites, and maintaining the good will of spirits to ensure the wellbeing of the village. Lamet supernatural beings include village spirits, ancestor spirits (also known as house spirits), and forest spirits. Additionally, rice possess a spirit in the same way that a human possesses a soul. Medicine men are also present, and use divination to determine which spirit is causing illness and what needs to be done to appease the spirit. For the Lamet, religion does not exist in a distinct sphere of life, but is bound up with the functioning of society as a whole. Consequently, this entry considers the religious group to be coterminous with the society.



Date Range: 1915 CE - 1945 CE

Region: Northwestern Laos

Region tags: Asia, Southeast Asia, Lao People's Democratic Republic

Northwestern Laos, ca. 1940

## Status of Participants:

✓ Elite    ✓ Religious Specialists    ✓ Non-elite (common people, general populace)

## Sources

Print sources for understanding this subject:

— Source 1: Izikowitz, K.G. 1951. Lamet. *Etnologiska Studier* 17:1-375. Göteborg.

— Source 2: Izikowitz, K.G. 1985. *Compass for Fields Afar: Essays in Social Anthropology*. Göteborg.

— Source 3: Divale, W. 2004. *Codebook of Variables for the Standard Cross-Cultural Sample*. World Cultures:

The Journal of Cross-Cultural and Comparative Research.

– Source 1: Tuden, A. & Marshall, C. (Oct., 1972). Political organization: Cross-cultural codes 4. *Ethnology*, 11(4), 436-464.

– Source 2: Murdock, G.P. (1967). *Ethnographic Atlas*. Pittsburgh, PA: University of Pittsburgh Press.

## General Variables

### Membership/Group Interactions

Are other religious groups in cultural contact with target religion:

– Yes

Notes: "...it is apparent that the Lamet have been strongly influenced by the Yuan [a neighboring tribe], 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" (Izickowitz, 1951:23). Note: See Izickowitz, 1951 pages 19-33 for a full description of the neighbors of the Lamet. "...the European culture has influenced that of the Lamet to a very small extent...No missionaries have ever made their appearance" (Izickowitz, 1951:344).

↳ Is there violent conflict (within sample region):

– Field doesn't know

Notes: SCCS Variable 1649, Frequency of Internal Warfare (Resolved Rating), indicates that no resolved rating was made (Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Is there violent conflict (with groups outside the sample region):

– I don't know

Notes: SCCS Variable 1650, Frequency of External Warfare (Resolved Rating), indicates that no resolved rating was made (Ember and Ember, 1992; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

Does the religious group actively proselytize and recruit new members:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating that the Lamet actively recruit new members.

Does the religion have official political support

– Yes

Notes: For the Lamet, religion does not exist in a distinct sphere of life, but is bound up with the functioning of society as a whole. Consequently, this entry considers the religious group to be coterminous with the society. In this way, the religion is considered to have political support.

↳ Is religious infrastructure paid for by the polity:

– No

Notes: It does not appear that religious infrastructure is present.

↳ Are political officials equivalent to religious officials:

– Yes

Notes: "In reality, each village forms a unit for itself. The chiefs of today are appointed by the French, and this institution existed at least partly under the Siamese period. But even this is not original for the Lamet, for they have no real chief as a matter of fact. What most resembles a chief in the Lamet villages, is the priest of sacrifice, *xəmiā*. There is only one *xəmiā* in each village, and his office is hereditary in the male line...The duty of the priest of sacrifice is to perform all the sacrifices made to the different spirits of the village, and also to see that order is kept in the village, so that the village spirits are not disturbed. He has also supervision of the community house...and all that goes on there. In this way his power is limited to the village itself, or rather to the section where people live, for he has no jurisdiction over the lands, the clearings, or the woods belonging to the village" (Izikowitz, 1951:112-113).

## Size and Structure

Number of adherents of religious group within sample region (estimated population, numerical):

– Estimated population, numeric: 6000

Notes: "Lamet is a small tribe - about 6,000 persons - living in the northwest corner of French Indochina (the state of Laos), between the Nam Ngao and Nam Tha, two branches of the Upper River Mekong" (Izikowitz, 1985:212).

Are there recognized leaders in the religious group:

– Yes

Notes: "In reality, each village forms a unit for itself. The chiefs of today are appointed by the French, and this institution existed at least partly under the Siamese period. But even this is not original for the Lamet, for they have no real chief as a matter of fact. What most resembles a chief in the Lamet villages, is the priest of sacrifice, *xəmiā*. There is only one *xəmiā* in each village, and his office is hereditary in the male line...The duty of the priest of sacrifice is to perform all the sacrifices made to the different spirits of the village, and also to see that order is kept in the village, so that the village spirits are not disturbed. He has also supervision of the community house...and all that goes on there. In this way his power is limited to the village itself, or rather to the section where people live, for he has no jurisdiction over the lands, the clearings, or the woods belonging to the village" (Izikowitz, 1951:112-113). "Besides this priest, there is also a medicine man (*mət*) in the village. His function is only to heal the sick, or more correctly, to try to find out which spirits are the cause of sickness, and where lost souls who have left the body have gone; moreover, he performs the sacrifices for the demons of sickness. The medicine men have no power in the village, and no particular position of rank. They are not paid for their work, and have no special privileges" (Izikowitz, 1951:116).

↳ Are close followers or disciples of a religious leader required to obediently and unquestionably accept the leader's pronouncements on all matters:

– No

Notes: "His [the *xəmiā*] authority in the village can therefore be considerable, but it varies in the different villages, possibly depending upon his personality. But his wealth also plays a part

in the case" (Izickowitz, 1951:113).

## Scripture

Does the religious group have scriptures:

Scripture is a generic term used to designate revered texts that are considered particularly authoritative and sacred relative to other texts. Strictly speaking, it refers to written texts, but there are also "oral scriptures" (e.g. the Vedas of India).

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of scripture among the Lamet.

## Architecture, Geography

Is monumental religious architecture present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of monumental religious architecture.

# Beliefs

## Burial and Afterlife

Is a spirit-body distinction present:

Answer "no" only if personhood (or consciousness) is extinguished with death of the physical body. Answering yes does not necessarily imply the existence of Cartesian mind/body dualism, merely that some element of personhood (or consciousness) survives the death of the body.

– Yes

Notes: "The kplu is neither a mbrong [supernatural being] nor a spirit having any kind of form. It is something that gives life to the human body and to the rice, and seems, to some extent, to be related to the soul substance believed in by the Malays, or to the body or functional soul (Körperseele in Wundt's terminology). But it has not quite the same qualities as these conceptions, and has nothing at all to do with the prierr yom, or spectre of the dead, which leaves the body after death. It is more of a sort of fluid, like electricity, which can leave the body if it is not treated in the proper way" (Izickowitz, 1985:221).



Spirit-mind is conceived of as having qualitatively different powers or properties than other body parts:

– Yes

Notes: "The only thing besides rice that possesses a kplu [soul], is man, and here we have two of them, one situated in the head and the other in the knees, each ruling the upper and lower parts of the body, respectively, and finding a boundary line in the region of the navel" (Izickowitz, 1985:217-218).

## Belief in afterlife:

– Yes

Notes: "Before the body was carried away on a bier by the male relatives, the housefather cast a long spell, that, according to what I was told, guided the spirit of the dead girl along the way to the village of dead people on the other side of the Mekong" (Izikowitz, 1985:228).

↳ Is the spatial location of the afterlife specified or described by the religious group:

– Yes

↳ Afterlife in vaguely defined horizontal space:

– Yes

Notes: "Before the body was carried away on a bier by the male relatives, the housefather cast a long spell, that, according to what I was told, guided the spirit of the dead girl along the way to the village of dead people on the other side of the Mekong" (Izikowitz, 1985:228).

## Reincarnation in this world:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence indicating the presence of a belief in reincarnation.

## Are there special treatments for adherents' corpses:

– Yes

Notes: "When a Lamet dies, his body is placed in a coffin, which is the hollowed log of a tree. For rich men the coffin is made of especially hard wood, while for the poor anything is good enough. The dead body is dressed in the owner's best clothes, and then the coffin is buried. At the cemetery, one long, narrow stone is erected over the place where the head lies, and another where the knees are situated" (Izikowitz, 1985:225).

↳ Interment:

– Yes

Notes: (Izikowitz, 1985:225)

↳ Corpse is flexed (legs are bent or body is crouched):

– No

Notes: (Izikowitz, 1985:225)

↳ Corpse is extended (lying flat on front or back):

– Yes

Notes: (Izikowitz, 1985:225)

↳ Corpse is upright (where body is interred in standing position):

– No

Notes: (Izikowitz, 1985:225)

↳ Cannibalism:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of cannibalism.

Are co-sacrifices present in tomb/burial:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of co-sacrifices.

Are grave goods present:

– Yes

Notes: "...the dead man is given wooden knives when he is laid in the coffin. The grave of a man is decorated with his crossbow and wallet, and tools, and that of a woman with an apparatus for distilling rice wine, and a few broken vessels, and moreover, baskets and a 'rain-coat' are hung on the middle pole of the grave" (Izikowitz, 1951:108).

↳ Personal effects:

– Yes

Notes: "...the dead man is given wooden knives when he is laid in the coffin. The grave of a man is decorated with his crossbow and wallet, and tools, and that of a woman with an apparatus for distilling rice wine, and a few broken vessels, and moreover, baskets and a 'rain-coat' are hung on the middle pole of the grave" (Izikowitz, 1951:108).

Are formal burials present:

– Yes

Notes: "When a Lamet dies, his body is placed in a coffin, which is the hollowed log of a tree. For rich men the coffin is made of especially hard wood, while for the poor anything is good enough. The dead body is dressed in the owner's best clothes, and then the coffin is buried. At the cemetery, one long, narrow stone is erected over the place where the head lies, and another where the knees are situated" (Izikowitz, 1985:225).

↳ In cemetery:

– Yes

Notes: "The cemetery is always situated outside the village, and those that I observed were no more than 300 metres away, in the one case, and in the second about four kilometres. The third case was an old abandoned place. In all three cases the cemeteries were situated deep in the forest and no paths led to them" (Izikowitz, 1985:226).

↳ Family tomb-crypt:

– No

Notes: (Izikowitz, 1985:226)

↳ Domestic (individuals interred beneath house, or in areas used for normal domestic activities):

– No

Notes: (Izikowitz, 1985:226)

## Supernatural Beings

Are supernatural beings present:

– Yes

Notes: "Ancestor, forest, and village spirits have already been mentioned as the most important and most common spiritual beings...They are all called mbrong (spirits) by the Lamet, but the word phi is also often used, although this word is borrowed from the Thai language. There are many kinds of mbrong in the Lamet supernatural world, and the Lamet themselves are not sure of the actual number" (Izikowitz, 1985:219).

↳ A supreme high god is present:

– No

Notes: According to SCCS Variable 238, High Gods [note: equivalent to Ethnographic Atlas column 34], a high god is either absent or not reported (Murdock, 1962-1971; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Previously human spirits are present:

– Yes

Notes: "In addition to the mbrong, there are other categories of supernatural beings, as for example, the priérr, the spectre of the dead, the sí-ep and sí-ong, the fire-ghost and ghost of men dead by accident, etc." (Izikowitz, 1985:220). "The klpu of the dead rests in the grave, fastened by stones, while the spirit of the dead goes away to the village of dead men" (ibid, pg. 228).

↳ Human spirits can be seen:

– Yes

Notes: "The mbrong and priérr are real spirits which sometimes can have form. Among the Upper Lamet some of the spirits are considered to be like 'young men dressed in white'. And among the Lower Lamet I once heard that the mbrong ying can sometimes appear as a huge man" (Izikowitz, 1985:244).

↳ Human spirits can be physically felt:

– I don't know

↳ Human spirits have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– I don't know

↳ Human spirits have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "These spirits [the ancestor, or house, 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" (Izickowitz, 1951:323).

↳ Human spirits communicate with the living:

– I don't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings are present:

– Yes

Notes: "Ancestor, forest, and village spirits have already been mentioned as the most important and most common spiritual beings...They are all called mbrong (spirits) by the Lamet, but the word phi is also often used, although this word is borrowed from the Thai language. There are many kinds of mbrong in the Lamet supernatural world, and the Lamet themselves are not sure of the actual number" (Izickowitz, 1985:219). "It seems to me that the mbrong have always existed and have no origin, which is not the case with the other [the ghosts of humans]" (Izickowitz, 1985:220-221). "Every village has its own particular spirits, of which the principals are mbrong ying (the village spirit proper), the spirit of the *cong*, the spirit of water or the village spring, the spirit of the village gate, and the other lesser ones. The mbrong ying is the most important of all, and lives under the ground of the village territory, i.e. where the village stands, and not outside its limit where a greater expansion of territory lies" (ibid, pg. 228). "Rice possesses *klpū* just as a human being does, and the soul of rice is called *klpu gō*" (Izickowitz, 1951:243).

↳ These supernatural beings can be seen:

– I don't know

↳ Non-human supernatural beings have deliberate causal efficacy in the world:

– I don't know

↳ These supernatural beings have indirect causal efficacy in the world:

– Yes

Notes: "The village spirit represents, or symbolizes the life of the village, and the sacrifices made to him are for the well-being and health of the village, for a good crop,



and for protection from all kinds of dangerous influences; these results are evidently to be obtained by casting spells during the ceremonies in honour of the spirit" (Izickowitz, 1985:229).

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit positive emotion:

– Yes

Notes: "The mbrong are good and bad, dangerous and benevolent; some, if treated right, can be of great help while other can never be any good, but will stay away from human domains if sacrificed to properly" (Izickowitz, 1985:221).

↳ These supernatural beings exhibit negative emotion:

– Yes

Notes: "The mbrong are good and bad, dangerous and benevolent; some, if treated right, can be of great help while other can never be any good, but will stay away from human domains if sacrificed to properly" (Izickowitz, 1985:221).

↳ Mixed human-divine beings are present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of mixed human-divine beings.

↳ Does the religious group possess a variety of supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: "Ancestor, forest, and village spirits have already been mentioned as the most important and most common spiritual beings...They are all called mbrong (spirits) by the Lamet, but the word phi is also often used, although this word is borrowed from the Thai language. There are many kinds of mbrong in the Lamet supernatural world, and the Lamet themselves are not sure of the actual number" (Izickowitz, 1985:219).

↳ Organized by kinship based on a family model:

– No

↳ Power of beings is domain specific:

– Yes

Notes: Ancestor spirits appear to have power in the domain of the home and family, while village spirits appear to have power in the domain of the village community. Forest spirits appear to have power in the domain of the forest and wild animals.

## Supernatural Monitoring

Is supernatural monitoring present:

This refers to surveillance by supernatural beings of humans' behaviour and/or thought particularly as it

relates to social norms or potential norm violations.

– I don't know

Notes: Ethnographic evidence suggests that it is important to keep the good will of spirits in order to maintain the general welfare of the community and family. However, it is unclear if the spirits are particularly concerned with social norms, or if the spirits preferred to be treated in a certain manner. "For instance, when a Lamet had broken a taboo or committed a 'sin' against a spirit, or has had bad luck, he takes a few leaves from the roofing and going to a brook throws them there and washes his hands and feet. A similar purification ceremony is performed on agricultural implements every night when the daily work is done...One may not wear ornaments or a turban, must keep silence, etc. for fear of disturbing Har [tree spirits] who can cause the failure of crops if displeased" (Izickowitz, 1985:234). "These spirits [the ancestral or house 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" (Izickowitz, 1951:323). "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, not take measurements of the house, for they feared that the spirits would not like this" (Izickowitz, 1951:325).

Do supernatural beings mete out punishment:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for more detailed information regarding supernatural punishment.

↳ Is the cause or agent of supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

Notes: The Har [tree spirit] (Izickowitz, 1985:234) as well as house/ancestral spirits (Izickowitz, 1951:325) are described as agents of supernatural punishment.

↳ Done only by high god:

– No

Notes: According to SCCS Variable 238, High Gods [note: equivalent to Ethnographic Atlas column 34], a high god is either absent or not reported (Murdock, 1962-1971; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Done by many supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: The Har [tree spirit] (Izickowitz, 1985:234) as well as house/ancestral spirits (Izickowitz, 1951:325) are described as agents of supernatural punishment.

↳ Done through impersonal cause-effect principle:

– No

↳ Is the reason for supernatural punishment known:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for reasons for supernatural punishment.

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– I don't know

↳ Done to enforce group norms:

– Yes

Notes: "For instance, when a Lamet had broken a taboo or committed a 'sin' against a spirit, or has had bad luck, he takes a few leaves from the roofing and going to a brook throws them there and washes his hands and feet. A similar purification ceremony is performed on agricultural implements every night when the daily work is done...One may not wear ornaments or a turban, must keep silence, etc. for fear of disturbing Har [tree spirits] who can cause the failure of crops if displeased" (Izikowitz, 1985:234).

↳ Done to inhibit selfishness:

– I don't know

↳ Other [specify]

– Yes

Notes: "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, not take measurements of the house, for they feared that the spirits would not like this" (Izikowitz, 1951:325).

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in the afterlife:

– I don't know

↳ Supernatural punishments are meted out in this lifetime:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for examples of supernatural punishments in this lifetime.

↳ Supernatural punishments in this life are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– I don't know

↳ Punishment in this life consists of bad luck:

– Yes

Notes: "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" (Izickowitz, 1951:323).

↳ Punishment in this life consists of crop failure or bad weather:

– Yes

Notes: "For instance, when a Lamet had broken a taboo or committed a 'sin' against a spirit, or has had bad luck, he takes a few leaves from the roofing and going to a brook throws them there and washes his hands and feet. A similar purification ceremony is performed on agricultural implements every night when the daily work is done...One may not wear ornaments or a turban, must keep silence, etc. for fear of disturbing Har [tree spirits] who can cause the failure of crops if displeased" (Izickowitz, 1985:234).

↳ Punishment in this life consists of sickness or illness:

– I don't know

Do supernatural beings bestow rewards:

– Yes

Notes: "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" (Izickowitz, 1951:338). "These spirits [the ancestral or house 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" (Izickowitz, 1951:323).

↳ Is the cause/purpose of supernatural rewards known:

– Yes

Notes: The village spirit and the ancestral spirits are described as agents of supernatural reward (Izickowitz, 1951: 323,338).

↳ Done only by high god:

– No

Notes: According to SCCS Variable 238, High Gods [note: equivalent to Ethnographic Atlas column 34], a high god is either absent or not reported (Murdock, 1962-1971; Retrieved from Divale, 2004).

↳ Done by many supernatural beings:

– Yes

Notes: The village spirit and the ancestral spirits are described as agents of supernatural reward (Izikowitz, 1951: 323,338).

↳ Done through impersonal cause-effect principle:

– I don't know

↳ Done to enforce religious ritual-devotional adherence:

– Yes

Notes: "These spirits [the ancestral or house 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" (Izikowitz, 1951:323).

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in the afterlife:

– I don't know

↳ Supernatural rewards are bestowed out in this lifetime:

– Yes

Notes: See questions below for examples of supernatural reward in this lifetime.

↳ Supernatural rewards in this life are highly emphasized by the religious group:

– I don't know

↳ Reward in this life consists of good luck:

– Yes

Notes: The heads of animals captured while hunting are sacrificed to the spirit of the forest, "...which is supposed to rule all the animals in the forests and which gives the Lamet good luck in hunting" (Izikowitz, 1951:73-74).

↳ Reward in this life consists of healthy crops or good weather:

– Yes

Notes: "These spirits [the ancestral or house 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" (Izickowitz, 1951:323).

↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced health:

– Yes

Notes: "These spirits [the ancestral or house 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" (Izickowitz, 1951:323).

↳ Reward in this life consists of enhanced reproductive success:

– Yes

Notes: "These spirits [the ancestral or house 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" (Izickowitz, 1951:323).

## Messianism/Eschatology

Are messianic beliefs present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of messianic beliefs.

Is an eschatology present:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of an eschatology.

## Practices

### Membership Costs and Practices

Does membership in this religious group require castration:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of required castration.

Does membership in this religious group require fasting:

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of required fasting.

Does membership in this religious group require forgone food opportunities (taboos on desired foods):

– Yes

Notes: "The priest is forbidden to eat certain things. In the village of Sithoun the xəmiā told me that for the first three years after being appointed priest he was not allowed to cut cane or palm leaves, nor should he eat the meat of monkeys, snakes, or tigers. If he should do these things he would lose the respect of the spirits" (Izickowitz, 1951:115).

Specific to this answer:

Status of Participants: ✓ Religious Specialists

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of adults:

"Adults" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition of a human who is 18-years-old or older and who is legally responsible for his/her actions, then please specify that difference in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of children:

"Children" here referring to an emic or indigenous category; if that category is different from the popular Western definition, please specify that different in the Comments/Sources: box below.

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require self-sacrifice (suicide):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of human sacrifice.

Does membership in this religious group require sacrifice of time (e.g., attendance at meetings or services, regular prayer, etc.):

– No

Notes: No ethnographic evidence for the presence of required time sacrifices.

Does membership in this religious group require participation in large-scale rituals:

i.e. involving two or more households; includes large-scale "ceremonies" and "festivals."

– Yes

Notes: "In a way the greater feasts partaken of by all in the village form milestones. This is especially so in regard to the festivals for the spirits of the village. The first of these is held a few days before sowing

take place, that is, when the rains have come, and the second occurs when the rice has reached a height of about 20 cm. With the celebrating of the second festival, community life undergoes a change, by the greater part of activity taking place out on the swiddens" (Izikowitz, 1951:166). "Before sowing can take place, festivals are held in all Lamet villages in honor of the spirits of the village. The time for this ceremony is decided by the xəmiā. He is the one who chooses a day which he considers to be 'good,' and he is the one who leads the whole ceremony for these important spirits, who are connected with the welfare of the whole village" (Izikowitz, 1951:218).



Are there orthopraxy checks:

Orthopraxy checks are mechanisms used to ensure that rituals are performed in a standardized way, e.g. through the supervisory prominence of a professionalized priesthood or other system of governance, appeal to texts detailing the proper procedure, etc.

– Yes

Notes: "When new houses are to be built in the village, or when a new village is to be founded, it is the priest of sacrifice who officiates as 'building committee.' At feasts and ceremonies which are taken part in by the whole village, or performed simultaneously by all in the village, it is the xəmiā who decided which days are, and which are not suitable for the occasion" (Izikowitz, 1951:113).

## Society and Institutions

### Levels of Social Complexity

The society to which the religious group belongs is best characterized as (please choose one):

– A tribe

Notes: SCCS Variable 237, Jurisdictional Hierarchy Beyond Local Community [Note: Equivalent to Ethnographic Atlas Column 32], indicates that the Lamet have no levels of political authority beyond the local community (Murdock, 1962-1971; Retrieved from Divale, 2004). "...at one time there was a chief in Mokahang Tai who rules over eight Lamet villages. However, he had a Siamese title of nobility, and served mostly as tax bailiff. I have not discovered the slightest trace of any original organization between the villages of the Lamet themselves. In reality, each village forms a unit for itself. The chiefs of today are appointed by the French, and this institution existed at least partly under the Siamese period. But even this is not original for the Lamet, for they have no real chief as a matter of fact. What most resembles a chief in the Lamet villages, is the priest of sacrifice..." (Izikowitz, 1951:112). Principal ethnographic authority (Izikowitz, 1951:84) notes that the Lamet have seven totemic clans that are patrilineal and exogamous; each clan has an origin myth telling of the clan's ancestor and relation to their totem. Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1967) Column 20, Patrilineal Kin Groups and Exogamy, indicates that the Lamet have "sibs ('clans' in British usage), i.e., lineages whose core membership normally comprises residents of more than one community."

### Bureaucracy

Do the group's adherents interact with other institutional bureaucracies:

– Yes

Notes: At the time the principal ethnographic authority was living with the Lamet, the Lamet were



governed by the French (see Izikowitz, 1951:112).

### Taxation

Are taxes levied on the group's adherents by an institution(s) other than the religious group in question:

– Yes

Notes: "The Lamet were under French administration, and were obliged to pay taxes to this government" (Izikowitz, 1951:344).

### Enforcement

Does the religious group in question provide an institutionalized police force:

– No

Notes: According to Tuden and Marshall (1972), column 10: Police, "police functions are not specialized or institutionalized at any level of political integration, the maintenance of law and order being left exclusively to informal mechanisms of social control, to private retaliation, or to sorcery".

Does the religious group in question provide institutionalized judges:

– No

Notes: According to Tuden and Marshall (1972), column 9: Judiciary, "supreme judicial authority is lacking at any level above that of the local community".

### Calendar

Does the religious group in question possess a formal calendar:

– Yes

Notes: "The Lamet have a calendar system that is made up of a combination of ten and twelve days. These run together in a sixty-day-cycle, that is to say, five 'weeks' of 12 days and six of 10 days make up such a cycle. The Lamet have learned this system from the Yuan, and originally it is supposed to have been Chinese...Only a few Lamet are acquainted with this system. First of all the priest, and then the medicine men. It is used for calculating the lucky and unlucky days" (Izikowitz, 1951:171).

### Food Production

Does the religious group in question provide food for themselves:

– Yes

Notes: The Lamet rely primarily on agriculture for subsistence. Animal husbandry and hunting provide secondary forms of subsistence, and gathering supplements the diet. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.

↳ Please characterize the forms/level of food production [choose all that apply]:

- Gathering
- Hunting (including marine animals)
- Pastoralism
- Small-scale agriculture / horticultural gardens or orchards

Notes: The Lamet rely primarily on agriculture for subsistence. Animal husbandry and hunting provide secondary forms of subsistence, and gathering supplements the diet. Source of information from Ethnographic Atlas (Murdock, 1962-1971), retrieved from Divale, 2004; Variables 203-207, 232.