

## **“Cheuang is coming again!”: Kmhmu millenarian rebellions in the borderlands of mainland Southeast Asia**

### **Frank Proschan**

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From the 1870s to the 1960s, the borderlands of northern Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam saw frequent uprisings of Kmhmu and other ethnic minorities in the form of millenarian rebellions. For the Kmhmu – the largest population of Mon-Khmer highlanders in northern Indochina – the possibility that their mythical culture hero Cheuang would return to lift the burdens of their daily lives has often held great promise and potential. Cheuang’s name has repeatedly been invoked to mobilize Kmhmu villagers to rebel against the inequities imposed by their local Tai-Lao overlords, or against French colonial authorities or Catholic missionaries. Successive waves of rebellions led to massive population displacements that shaped the current ethnolinguistic geography of the region. Even as the most recent Cheuang rebellions are fading in the memories of people who witnessed them a half-century ago, Cheuang himself remains an omnipresent hero in Kmhmu myths and folk tales and a symbol of Kmhmu identity.

**Frank Proschan** is an anthropologist and folklorist who has worked for decades with colleagues in Vietnam, Laos, Thailand, and Cambodia in collaborative research on languages, folklore, and ethnology, as well as conducting capacity building for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage and for museum development. In 2006, he took up a position at UNESCO, assisting in the global implementation of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage until his retirement in 2015.

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**12:00 Noon**

**Room 203, Luce Hall, 34 Hillhouse Avenue**