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A Meeting of Masks: Status, Power and Hierachy in Bangkok / Sophorntavy Vong
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A fresh understanding of the ongoing Thai political conflict is offered in this exploration of the connections between status, space, and social life in Bangkok. Looking beyond the 'urban-rural divide', the author points to a more complex reality in which city and countryside are linked by reciprocal relations based on status and class. Everyday interclass relations in Bangkok have seen a diminishment and marginalization of upcountry Thais by the urban middle classes, thus creating an incendiary dynamic exploited in the current political power struggle. At the same time, middle-class culture and identity are shaped by elite perceptions but aspirations for upward mobility are thwarted by structural constraints and a privileging of wealth and connections. Disenchantment is feeding a potentially explosive political situation yet there are few chances for reform while most people feel their only avenue for advancement is via the current system that many perceive as unjust.

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