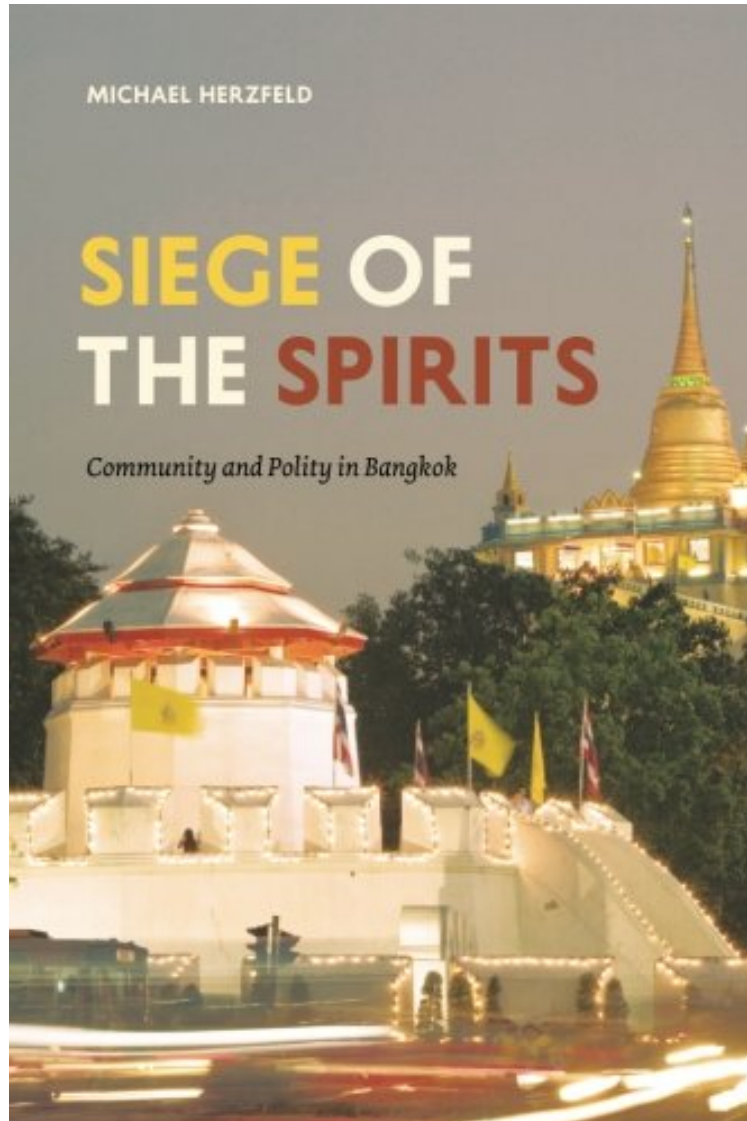


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Siege of the Spirits: Community and Polity in Bangkok

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Michael Herzfeld : Siege of the Spirits: Community and Polity in Bangkok before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Siege of the Spirits: Community and Polity in Bangkok:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Must read for social anthropologistsBy Joelle BahloulYet another outstanding contribution in ethnography and urban studies by Herzfeld

What happens when three hundred alleged squatters go head-to-head with an enormous city government looking to

develop the place where they live? As anthropologist Michael Herzfeld shows in this book, the answer can be surprising. He tells the story of Pom Mahakan, a tiny enclave in the heart of old Bangkok whose residents have resisted authorities demands to vacate their homes for a quarter of a century. Its a story of community versus government, of old versus new, and of political will versus the law. Herzfeld argues that even though the residents of Pom Mahakan have lost every legal battle the city government has dragged them into, they have won every public relations contest, highlighting their struggle as one against bureaucrats who do not respect the age-old values of Thai/Siamese social and cultural order. Such values include compassion for the poor and an understanding of urban space as deeply embedded in social and ritual relations. In a gripping account of their standoff, Herzfeldwho simultaneously argues for the importance of activism in scholarshiptraces the agile political tactics and styles of the communitys leadership, using their struggle to illuminate the larger difficulties, tensions, and unresolved debates that continue to roil Thai society to this day.

Herzfeld writes anthropology as if delivering a fireside chat, without a trace of jargon, and with humanity filling the frame. He narrates the negotiations between community members and bureaucrats in graphic detail. He dissects the vocabulary used by both sides. He places the whole issue within the framework of Thailand's present and past. . . . Herzfeld's book tells the story of the community with great color and verve but also places it in an international context of community, state, and heritage.