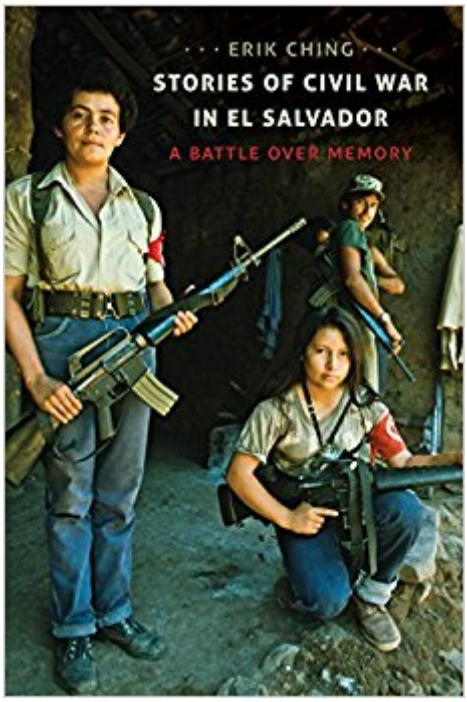
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Stories Of Civil War In El Salvador: A Battle Over Memory



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Synopsis

El Salvador’s civil war began in 1980 and ended twelve bloody years later. It saw extreme violence on both sides, including the terrorizing and targeting of civilians by death squads, recruitment of child soldiers, and the death and disappearance of more than 75,000 people. Examining El Salvador’s vibrant life-story literature written in the aftermath of this terrible conflict--including memoirs and testimonials--Erik Ching seeks to understand how the war has come to be remembered and rebattled by Salvadorans and what that means for their society today.Ching identifies four memory communities that dominate national postwar views: civilian elites, military officers, guerrilla commanders, and working class and poor testimonialists. Pushing distinct and divergent stories, these groups are today engaged in what Ching terms a "narrative battle" for control over the memory of the war. Their ongoing publications in the marketplace of ideas tend to direct Salvadorans’ attempts to negotiate the war’s meaning and legacy, and Ching suggests that a more open, coordinated reconciliation process is needed in this postconflict society. In the meantime, El Salvador, fractured by conflicting interpretations of its national trauma, is hindered in dealing with the immediate problems posed by the nexus of neoliberalism, gang violence, and outmigration.

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Customer Reviews

An engaging book about memory communities in El Salvador. . . . Well structured and highly readable.--American Historical ReviewAn excellent study, laudable for its lucidity and for presenting an important history to a broader reading audience. Essential--Choice

A brilliant, eye-opening book.Ã Â There is none other like it in English or Spanish.Ã Â Erik Ching doesn't just tell a history of civil war in El Salvador.Ã Â Rather, he shows how the clash of different social groups' specific, shared, and partial understandings of Salvadoran history in turn laid a foundation for the outbreak of war in the first place.Ã Â Important, engaging, and provocative.--Jocelyn Viterna, Harvard UniversityErik Ching demonstrates that social and political groups within El Salvador not only experienced their civil war differently, but structure their memory discourse so differently that the war's meaning and implications may be irreconcilable. His account helps to explain El Salvador's postwar debates, raises crucial questions about how memory communities construct coherent narratives, and will have a significant impact across multiple disciplines and beyond Central American studies.--William Stanley, University of New Mexico

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