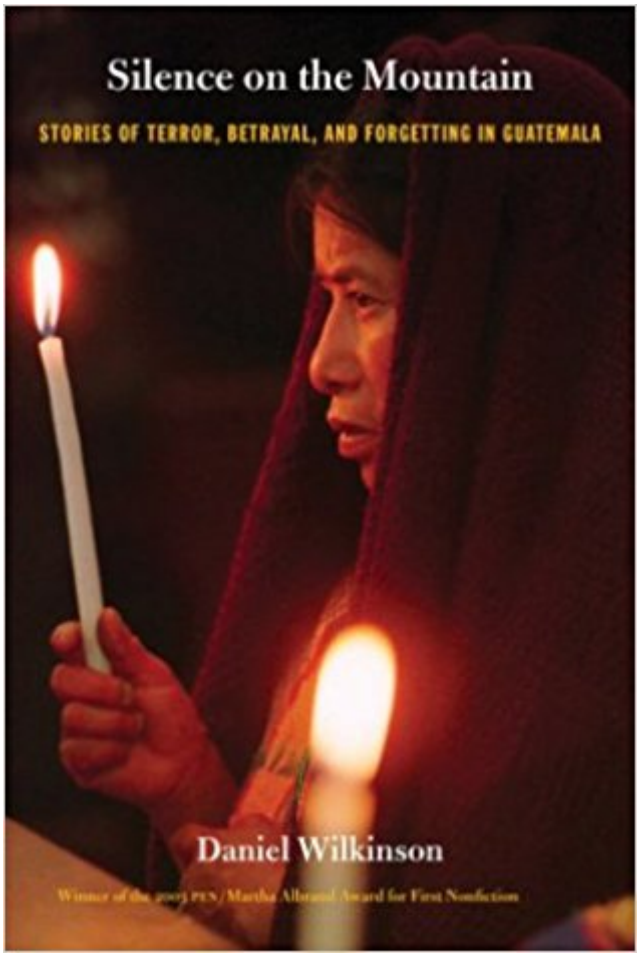
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# Silence On The Mountain: Stories Of Terror, Betrayal, And Forgetting In Guatemala (American Encounters/Global Interactions)




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## Synopsis

new in paperbackSilence on the Mountain is a virtuoso work of reporting and a masterfully plotted narrative tracing the history of GuatemalaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s thirty-six-year internal war, a conflict that claimed the lives of some 200,000 people, the vast majority of whom died (or were Ã¢â ¬Å“disappearedÃ¢â ¬Â•) at the hands of the U.S.-backed military government. Written by Daniel Wilkinson, a young human rights worker, the story begins in 1993, when the author decides to investigate the arson of a coffee plantationÃ¢â ¬â„¢s manor house by a band of guerrillas. The questions surrounding this incident soon broaden into a complex mystery whose solution requires Wilkinson to dig up the largely unwritten history of the countryÃ¢â ¬â„¢s recent civil war, following its roots back to a land reform movement that was derailed by a U.S.-sponsored military coup in 1954 and to the origins of a plantation system that put GuatemalaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Mayan Indians to work picking coffee beans for the American and European markets.Decades of terror-inspired fear have led the Guatemalans to adopt a survival strategy of silence so complete it verges on collective amnesia. The authorÃ¢â ¬â„¢s great triumph is that he finds a way for people to tell their stories, and it is through these storiesÃ¢â ¬â •dramatic, intimate, heartbreakingÃ¢â ¬â •that we are shown the anatomy of a thwarted revolution that has relevance not only to Guatemala but also to countless places around the world where terror has been used as a political tool.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Written in the vein of a Robert Kaplan travel journal, this profound book traces the history of Guatemala's 36-year internal struggle through personal interviews that recount the heart-wrenching stories of plantation owners, army officials, guerrillas and the wretchedly poor peasants stuck in the middle. Wilkinson's narrative unfolds gradually, beginning with his quest to unlock the mysteries of the short-lived 1952 Law of Agrarian Reform, which saw the redistribution of land to the working class. He goes on to explain many of the causes and consequences of the country's political and social problems. At one point, Wilkinson vividly describes how the entire town of Sacuchum uncharacteristically gathered to recount for him and thus record for the outside world how the army raped, tortured and massacred members of the community because they were believed to have supported the guerrillas. Much of what's revealed in Wilkinson's account of the country's trials is hard to stomach, especially his description of CIA involvement in Guatemala. In many instances, Wilkinson's personal story gets in the way of the larger account he is trying to tell, and the book becomes more about him (he was just out of college in 1993, when he made the trip) than about events in Guatemala. However, this book is both easy to read and compelling, and Wilkinson's little self-indulgences are easily forgivable given the powerful subject matter and how well it is told by Wilkinson, now a lawyer with Human Rights Watch. B&w photos.Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A member of Human Rights Watch, Wilkinson considers Guatemala's 36-year civil war and the 200,000 lives it has cost. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I don't think I'm so objective because I feel that once you've been to a place, when you read about it, you can visualize it in your mind and you have an emotional attachment to it. Like when I read A Moveable Feast after living in Paris, it came alive and it was like the streets were in front me as Hem described them. But A Moveable Feast, this book ain't; not for the writing or anything but more because this is a book that carefully handles a difficult topic. This book sheds light on the modern history of Guatemala from around the 1940s to mid or late 1990s. I lived in Quetzaltenango/ Xela for about six months and am kind of embarrassed to admit that I knew none of this before going and while I was there. My friend recommended it to me and I read it upon returning home.History is always hard to write because it's a perspective and never an absolute truth.But I think Wilkinson did a great job. It's true that people clam up and don't often want to talk about a history like this. I encountered this in China and no one ever really spoke of anything like this while I was in

Guatemala. Wilkinson writes well, clearly and frankly about what he observed and carefully delineates the steps he took to find out what happened. His history is informed and has feelings and ideas without getting overwrought or too emotional.

Sad but reality!

This is an engaging inquiry into the terror which occupied much of the highlands during the rebellion and a good history of what led up to that rebellion. It is well written but sometimes it is difficult to keep all the characters straight since there are so many involved in this history.

A valuable tale from a foreigner's naÃƒÆ'Ã Â ve point of view

time and again i let myself be surprised by the atrocious acts committed or supported by my government. the hypocricy of the CIA and of US foreign policy in general is nothing new, but this book tells guatemala's story from a very personal angle. the repressive practices of the post-50's guatemalan government are shocking and important to understand in and of themselves, along with the US involvement in those practices. but what is most outstanding about this book is the human face wilkinson puts on the tragedy. in his travels on a harvard fellowship, he meets many of the major players in the drama, as well as the ordinary people who suffered from the violence. the result is a book not entirely sympathetic to the guerrilla fighters, not entirely condemning of the guatemalan government, but entirely focused on the outcomes of the civil war that are still being faced by the rural poor in the guatemalan highlands. we are responsible as us citizens -- if we are us citizens, that is :) for understanding this story, since our government is largely responsible for supporting the violence over so many decades.also, this is an amazing read. it's intelligent, funny, well-written all around. it's not entirely chronological, but more like a travel journal-cum-historical flashbacks. i read it in preparation for a trip to guatemala, and am so glad that i did. everyone should read this book.

I read this in prelude to a visit to Guatemala, and it helped me learn a bit about the complicated and nuanced history of the country. Presents a balanced treatment of the various forces that made the Guatemalan civil war o bloody.

Very interesting and informative.

Good work for Mr Wilkinson.For some time i was looking for a book on the Guatemalan civil war and this was definetly a good start.Mr Wilkinson goes deep into the Guatemalan jungle to talk to people,soldiers and politicians that were involved in this terrible war.The way he explains the importance of the events is very good and he also describes the involvement of the United States which is not a good one. I specially enjoyed Mr Wilkinson’s conclusion in which he explains the ramifications of recent political upheavals in Guatemala where a lot of people are not afraid anymore of expresing themselves and how minorities like indians are getting some of their land back.The only problem that i had with this book is that Mr Wilkinson is too "slow" in his account.He spends way to many pages describing situations and personal experiences that have no relations with the topic of the book whatsoever.For example, he describes how some chickens eat what’s on the floor, he describes an accident he had in his motorcycle and he even describes an encounter with a "witch". For me this was just pages in which i just wanted to finish reading so i could get to the important stuff.BUt again its a good book.

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