

Weld, K. (2014). *Paper cadavers: The archives of dictatorship in Guatemala*. Duke University Press.

*Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala* is an examination of the discovery of archival materials and that discovery's impact on the history, present, and future of Guatemala. From the accidental discovery of the "secret" National Police Archives to the consequences of sorting and understanding what was found, forces still waged war. The archives were never "secret" per se, merely undisclosed, with their actual location unknown to most. The activists saw the archives as a way to seek reparation for the atrocities of war crimes. The government and other factions saw the archives as something to be destroyed, because of the blame and evidence contained within.

The author spent time working with The Project, the group that was created to sort through the archives. During this time, she began a study of the effects of the archives on the community, the government, and the nation as a whole. The documents, termed paper cadavers, pointed to war crimes during a brutal time in Guatemalan history. The documents also provided long-sought answers to so many families who had longed to know the fate of lost loved ones.

Intimidation from the Guatemalan government, sinkholes, Molotov cocktails, fires, and drive-by shootings did not keep the archives from being documented. Records were scanned and codified, even though much of what was uncovered was only fragments of documents. A group called The Peace Archives and The Project both released findings in books and digital archives, showcasing evidence against a multitude of the National Police. The government continued to squash any attempts at prosecution.

I thought the book was interesting, but it was not entirely what I was expecting. This book was more of a study of the people associated with the archives, and the effects that the work had on them. I thought it would be a more studious rendering of how the archives were processed.

*Paper Cadavers: The Archives of Dictatorship in Guatemala* is a great book if the reader is interested in learning about the civil war in Guatemala. It is also an interesting study of the finding of the National Police Archives. While it does explain some of the archiving processes, the author spends more time focused on the impact of the archives on the people doing the archiving. She briefly looks at how the archives were used to further social justice. She also examines the many attempts to keep the details of the archives from public consumption, even though the archives only confirmed what many civilians already knew.

I would recommend this book to anyone interested in the history of the Guatemalan civil war, the National Police Archives, and the emotional and physical impact the archives had on those preserving it. It is well written and well documented. There are reference notes on every chapter and the introduction. This book is a good starting point for a more intensive study of the National Police Archives of Guatemala.

Lara Taylor