



**SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY
HIGHER LEVEL
PAPER 1**

Tuesday 2 May 2006 (afternoon)

1 hour

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Do not open this examination paper until instructed to do so.
- Read the passage carefully and then answer all the questions.

Texts in this examination paper have been edited: word additions or explanations are shown in square brackets []; substantive deletions of text are indicated by ellipses in square brackets [...]; minor changes are not indicated.

Extract from Gordillo, Gastón, 2002. The Breath of the Devils: Memories and Places of an Experience of Terror. American Ethnologist 29:33-57.

Between the early 1900s and late 1960s, the Toba [of Northern Argentina] worked in the Tabacal sugar plantation, [...] a dazzling, contradictory place of excess. This was an excess of commodities (firearms, clothing, utensils), which made them return every year in spite of harsh working conditions, and excess of disease, death, and terror. The terror of the plantation was best
5 expressed in their belief in devils and the *KiyaGaikpi* “cannibal people”. [...]

By 1930, Toba [seasonal] labour migrations were regular. At Tabacal, the Toba became part of a diverse group of workers hierarchically organised by the administration along ethnic lines. The administration assigned different tasks to each group, [paying] wages according to what it considered to be their culturally specific working skills. The top of the hierarchy was formed
10 by Criollo permanent factory workers.* Next, the Chiriguano, a slash-and-burn horticulturalist group [...] were considered the best indigenous labourers. The hunting and gathering Toba group were ranked lowest on the scale. They were considered unskilled seasonal labourers, received the lowest wages, and suffered the worst working conditions. The forms of ethnicity dominating social interactions in the cane fields were produced by the incorporation of various
15 groups into a single political economy.

The Toba believed that devils inhabited the mountains overlooking the cane fields. Invisible, they came down from the mountains to spread diseases and death. The labour migrations threatened, not just individual lives, but also the Toba’s social reproduction as children [...] are remembered as the most likely victims of the plantation.

20 The Toba remembered that they buried their dead in the forests surrounding the cane fields, but the following year those forests were cleared to plant sugarcane. The Toba’s memories of the bones of their people scattered in the fields served as a grim reminder that they were leaving their most basic possession, their own bodies, literally swallowed by fields of sugarcane.

High mortality rates and fear of devils did not deter most Toba from going to the plantation.
25 The desire for commodities available on the sugar plantation, reinforced by the Toba’s growing inability to survive through hunting and gathering, [was] stronger than the threat of death in the cane fields. [...]

According to the Toba, [as well as devils at Tabacal there were] the *KiyaGaikpi* people who ate human flesh. The nature of social relations in the cane fields shaped Toba ideas about the
30 *KiyaGaikpi*. Many Toba considered them rich and also told stories of [how] they killed people. [One Toba said] that the *KiyaGaikpi* used to leave packages of money by the road, tied with string, to attract, capture and devour people. Other Toba remembered them using money to buy their prey. Thus the people whose only commodity while at the plantation was their labour believed that they were being bought and sold as a new type of commodity: as meat. The attitudes

* Criollos are a population of mixed colonial and indigenous descent.

- 35 projected on these cannibals reflects the Toba experience of workers reduced to consumable and disposable objects. Moreover, the Toba believed that their flesh was for the *KiyaGaikpi*, not only a commodity for consumption, but also a means of exchange. A story about a Toba man who did a day's work for the *KiyaGaikpi* relates that they paid him with a grim commodity: the hand of a dead worker.
- 40 The Toba internalized the ethnic hierarchies created in Tabacal as demonstrated by their belief that the *KiyaGaikpi* thought their flesh had a "bad taste". On the plantation, the Toba were despised, and they projected this attitude on the *KiyaGaikpi*. Yet they found that elements of their aboriginality played to their advantage. A Toba told me "They don't find Toba flesh tasty because they don't eat nice things. They'd much rather eat white people, for whites have nice
- 45 food and the *KiyaGaikpi* find their flesh very nice." [...]

The meanings and practices that Toba projected onto the *KiyaGaikpi* pointed to some of the disturbing experiences that shaped their work conditions. Fear of the *KiyaGaikpi* expresses a particular aspect of the Toba experience in Tabacal: the fear of losing one of the few things they still owned while working there, their own bodies, consumed by exhausting work, disease

50 and death. Connections between exploitation and cannibalism are [not] restricted to this area. Narratives about people being "consumed" or "eaten up" in factories and mines are common among workers around the world.

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1. What was the relationship between hierarchy and ethnicity on the plantation? [6 marks]
 2. How were the Toba's beliefs about death and disease an expression of their working conditions on the plantation? [6 marks]
 3. Compare the Toba's response to their work experience with the response to work experience of **one** other group you have studied in detail. [8 marks]
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