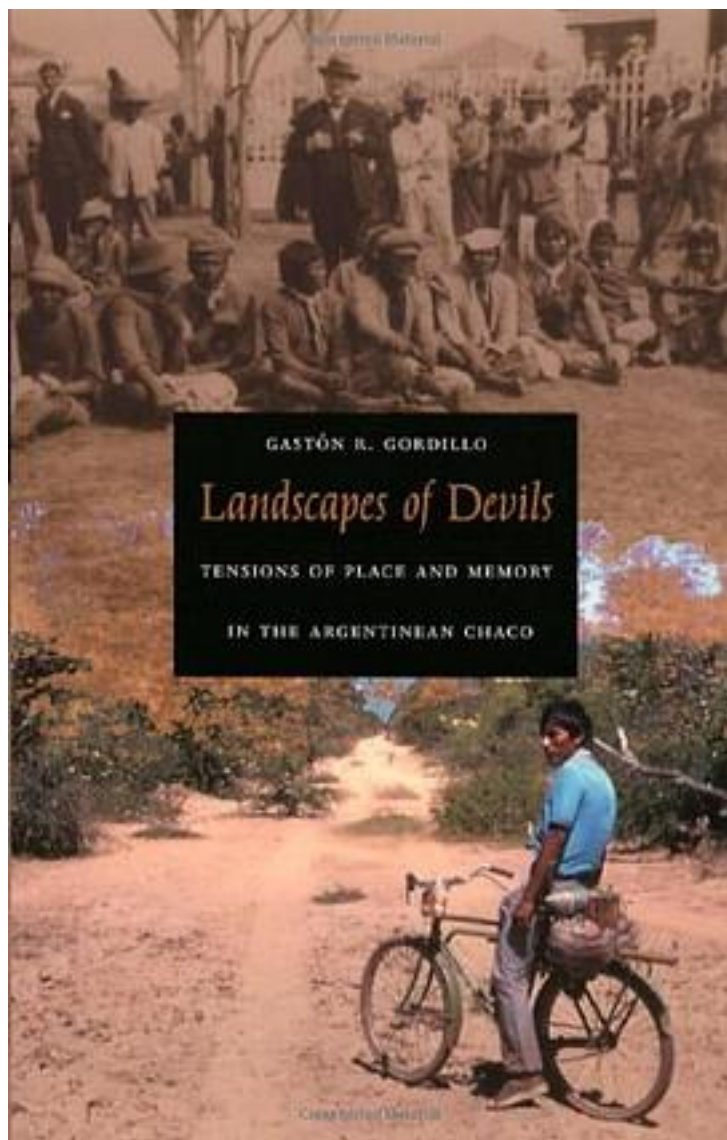


Landscapes of Devils



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Landscapes of Devils is a rich, historically grounded ethnography of the Toba, an indigenous people in northern Argentina's Gran Chaco region. In the early twentieth century, the Toba were defeated by the Argentinian army, incorporated into the seasonal labour force of distant sugar plantations, and missionized by British Anglicans. Gaston R. Gordillo reveals how the Toba's sense of themselves as aboriginal people with links to a particular homeland - however changing and fragile - anchors a distinctive collective identity. Focusing on the connections between memory and place, he examines the Toba's complex understanding of the bush which covers much of the Gran Chaco. Gordillo argues that places are not stable but are instead ongoing historical processes constructed in relation to other places. In Landscapes of Devils, he analyzes the experiences and places that have coalesced to produce the bush. A twenty-to-forty foot high mantle of hardwoods, cacti, and shrubs, the bush is charged with meaning for the Toba. The bush is not indigenous to the environment; it is the historical product of agricultural changes implemented by the Argentinian settlers and British missionaries in the early twentieth-century. Thus, for the Toba, the bush is intrinsically tied to their incorporation within the Argentinian nation-state and their demise as a politically and militarily autonomous group. Yet it has also represented a safe refuge from the exploitative labour conditions on sugar plantations. Combining extensive fieldwork conducted over a decade, historical research, and critical theory, Gordillo shows how they understand the bush in relation to forces including state violence, shamanism, disease, land encroachment by settlers, Anglican missionization, commodity fetishism, and seasonal labour.

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