



# **This Delta, This Land: An Environmental History of the Yazoo-Mississippi Floodplain**

*Mikko Saikku*

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*This Delta, This Land* is a comprehensive environmental history of the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta—the first one to place the Delta's economic and cultural history in an environmental context. The Delta, the floodplain between two great rivers in the northwestern corner of Mississippi, has changed enormously since the Civil War. Agriculture, lumbering, and flood-management schemes have transformed it beyond recognition—and beyond any prospects for a full recovery.

However, says Mikko Saikku, the 150 years following the Civil War brought greater environmental change than we generally realize. Indeed, the long-term environmental history of the Delta is much more complex than our current view of it, which privileges recent periods rather than presenting the entire continuum. Looking across thousands of years, Saikku examines successive human societies in the Delta, drawing connections between environmental and social problems and noting differences between Native Americans and Euro-Americans in their economies, modes of production, and land-use patterns.

Saikku's range of sources is astonishing: travel literature, naturalists' writings, government records, company archives, archaeological data, private correspondence, and more. As he documents how such factors as climate and water levels shaped the Delta, he also reveals the human aspects of the region's natural history, including land reclamation, slave and sharecropper economies, ethnic and racial perceptions of land ownership and stewardship, and even blues music.

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