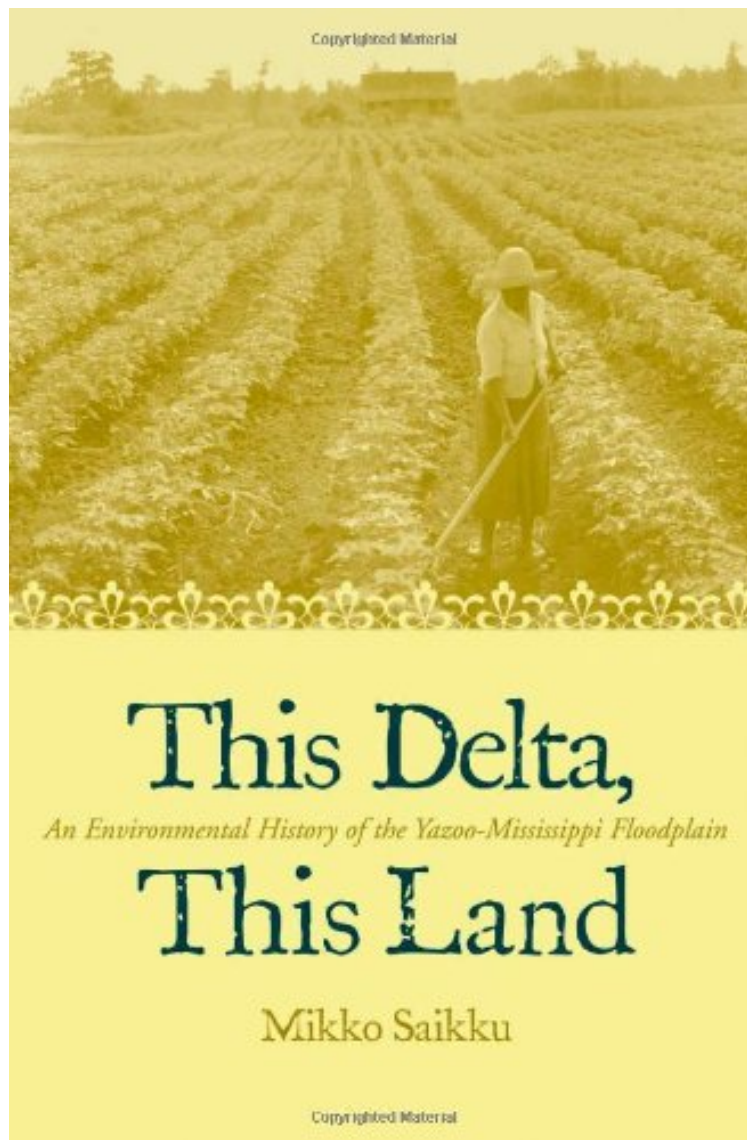


(Download pdf ebook) This Delta, This Land: An Environmental History of the Yazoo-Mississippi Floodplain

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

Mikko Saikku

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Mikko Saikku : This Delta, This Land: An Environmental History of the Yazoo-Mississippi Floodplain before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised This Delta, This Land: An Environmental History of the Yazoo-Mississippi Floodplain:

9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. A striking achievement relating culture and heritage to the physical land. By Kurt Grussendorf It is ironic that it takes a Finnish author to really pry off the lid of Southern environmental concerns. The fact that Finland is so involved with the timber culture and adapting architecture to the land makes it a bit more understandable as I have never seen a more complete inventory of soil and timber done for the Mississippi Delta. The haunting voice of Faulkner and the roar of the Delta bear and cougar is drowned out by the sawmill and the tractor engine. Most important should be a reassessment of the monoculture of growing just one timber species or crop rather than diversification. Large parts of the forested land of the South are sterile deserts that sustain only one species-- be it pine or cotton, or soy beans that render the land vulnerable to species extinction and parasites that have no natural predators to control their spread. Thus, the demise of the Ivory Billed woodpecker, the bear, and the Delta panther and the rise of the boll weevil and row on row on pine trees that sustain very little ecological variety and are subjected to toxic chemical fertilizers and insecticides. I am not a radical environmentalist, but I do see the sterility of the monoculture in forestry and agriculture. There is a positive note, some effort is being made to preserve old growth hardwoods and even the remaining bear population--but the Delta is forever changed.

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.

Saikku's is a refreshingly northern European take on an interesting and important aspect of North American environmental history. He is comfortable with geology, paleontology, botany, and zoology, and he has mastered not only historians' methodologies and 'theories' but those of scientists as well. He is deserving of respect. (Jack Temple Kirby author of *Poquosin: A Study of Rural Landscape and Society*) This Delta, This Land is Faulknerian in scale rich in sense of place, broad in implications. This is what environmental history needs right now a work that puts ecology and economy back into the center of the picture, without neglecting the cultural meanings of nature. It is redolent of a place that looms large in American history, literature, and folklore. An outstanding contribution. (Donald Worster Hall Distinguished Professor, University of Kansas) Often publications in American environmental history, written by born-and-bred Americans with various axes to grind, are too broad in subject matter and too parochial in interpretation. This book, a history of a specific region, the Yazoo-Mississippi Delta, by a scientifically sophisticated, deeply informed European scholar who only wants to know what happened, is a happy exception. (Alfred W. Crosby Professor Emeritus, University of Texas at Austin) This book is highly recommended for an academic audience or an interested general reader. (Environment and History) Saikku's sweeping study will appeal even to those steeped in Delta history. He weaves together an impressive body of secondary works, travel accounts, and primary sources. (Journal of Southern History) An essential addition to the core collection of anyone seriously interested in understanding our Delta. Make room on your bookshelf next to *Lanterns on the Levee*, *Most Southern Place on Earth*, *Development Arrested*, and *Forgotten Time*. (Life in the Delta Magazine) A wonderful piece of work in concept, research, and writing. (James Fickle Professor of History, University of Memphis) The strength of this book is its weighty compendium of scientific information about the floodplains natural setting . . . an impressive variety of sources . . . Saikku's detailed look at timbering on the Delta's Panther-Burn Plantation is a superb case study of boom-bust industrialization. (Environmental History) About the Author Mikko Saikku is a lecturer in North American Studies at the University of Helsinki.