



A Favored Place: San Juan River Wetlands, Central Veracruz, A.D. 500 to the Present

Alfred H. Siemens

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The wetlands of the San Juan Basin in Central Veracruz, Mexico, have been a favored place since the fifth century A.D., when Prehispanic people built an extensive network of canals and raised fields that allowed for almost year-round agriculture. Alfred Siemens' discovery of the remains of this network in the 1970s led him to uncover fifteen centuries of land-use history in the region. This book contains a full record of his findings.

Siemens organizes his history of the San Juan Basin around the question: What relationships exist between Prehispanic agriculture and the production systems of the tropical lowlands in our own time? This focus allows him to chart the changes in human perceptions and uses of the landscape, from the Prehispanic wetland agricultural system to the drained pastures of today's cattle ranches.

Amplified with air oblique photography, maps, and tables, and enriched with data from archaeology and colonial archives, this is an authoritative historical geography of a wetland landscape. Or, in the author's more modest words, "It seems to me that what I have here is a biography of a swamp."

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