

Boime, E. I. 2002. "Fluid boundaries": Southern California, Baja California, and the conflict over the Colorado River, 1848-1944. Ph.D. dissertation. Universidad de California, San Diego. 419 pp.

The river that forged the Colorado River delta continues to invite comparisons to the Nile because its manipulation has served as the basis of human activity in the region. Not only has the Colorado provided a requisite water supply, its deltaic deposits--scoured from the canyon floors of Utah and Arizona--have created an extremely rich and fertile alluvial plain that has supported various populations for millennia. The focus of modern development has taken place in the delta's northern portions, which contain the Imperial Valley (in California) and the Mexicali Valley (in Baja-California). Because the delta's current population consumes more water per acre than anywhere along the river's 1,700-mile path, it has inevitably figured prominently in basin-wide questions over supply and demand.

The project examines the delta's comprehensive development in relation to the international competition over finite water resources. It draws connections between the endeavor to subjugate the Colorado and the interrelated policies that have marked borderland relations, including those pertaining to conquest, foreign investment, national security, and immigration. All these elements influenced the consequential outcome of the 1944 United States-Mexico Water Treaty.

While U.S.-Mexican relations have not by themselves provided functional explanations for the region's vast networks of dams, reservoirs, aqueducts, and irrigation ditches, they do serve as a useful prism to examine certain underlying values and ideologies. Nation building and desert reclamation were intimately tied on both sides of the border. The history of these endeavors, moreover, is inseparable from the histories of both countries.