

Culture, Climate and Environment Interactions at Prehistoric Wetland Sites

11 - 14 June 2014, University of Bern, Switzerland

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Session 2
Thursday afternoon, 12 June

Las Tablas de Daimiel: the archaeological, documentary and sedimentary record of a changing relationship between society and wetland for the last 4.000 years in central Spain

Juan I. Santisteban¹, Rosa Mediavilla², Silvino Castaño², Almudena de la Losa², Alberto Celis³

¹ Dpt. of Stratigraphy, Geological Sciences Fac., Complutense University of Madrid, Spain

² Geological Survey of Spain, Madrid, Spain

³ Museo Comarcal de Daimiel, Daimiel, Ciudad Real, Spain

Las Tablas de Daimiel National Park is a fluvial wetland located in the semi-arid interior of the Iberian Peninsula. Changes in climate and subsidence rates during the Holocene favored that previous fluvial systems changed from high-energy channels to low-gradient systems and the widening of the flooded area. As consequence of its peculiarities as a stable source of water, food and raw materials, this area has attracted people since Palaeolithic times and long term settlements are recognized to be as old as Bronze Age. But the history of the relations between mankind and the wetland has changed a lot through time as recorded by archaeological sites, documentary sources and the sedimentary record. Three stages can be identified in this relationship:

- 1) a “natural” stage (until Bronze Age), when people just exploited natural resources but didn’t attempt to modify them. This activity was conditioned by natural (climatic/hydrological) cycles.
- 2) a stage of light disturbances of the environment (since Roman times), characterized by the building of waterworks like dams and watermills. These caused modifications in the water paths but not in the quantity and quality of waters. The natural system and people activity was still ruled by the natural cycles but with a decreasing impact for the less amplitude ones.
- 3) a stage of heavy disturbances of the environment (since the XVIII century), characterized by major modifications of the water paths (channeling), increasing abstraction of surface and ground waters and major land use changes. These perturbations led to permanent modifications of the behavior of the wetland so, nowadays, the wetland is a man-sustained system.

Acknowledgments: This research is funded by the Spanish DG of Scientific and Technical Research through the project CGL2011-30302-C02-01. This abstract is a contribution to the International Geoscience Programme (IGCP) Project 618 - Groundwater@Global Palaeoclimate Signals.