The Big Muddy follows centuries of human efforts to conceptualize this landscape of mud as a place with firm barriers between water and land, and then make these conceptions reality. A few examples: early French explorers repeatedly failed to locate the mouth of the Mississippi out of an inability to imagine a vast, multi-channeled delta. Rice, and then indigo, tobacco, and sugar encouraged settlers to drain, divide, and levee the landscape. A Review of Morris, Christopher, The Big Muddy: An Environmental History of the Mississippi and Its Peoples from Hernando de Soto to Hurricane Katrina. H-Environment, H-Net Reviews. January, 2013. Hernando de Soto and his fellow Spaniards initially referred to the Mississippi River as the Rio Grande for its immense size. That habit was gradually replaced with the use of the river's Indian name, Meaot Massipi (or "Father of the Waters"). De Soto earned a fortune from Dávila’s conquest of Panama and Nicaragua, and by 1530 he was the leading slave trader and one of the richest men in Nicaragua. In 1531, he joined Francisco Pizarro on an expedition in pursuit of rumors of gold located in the region that is now northwestern Colombia, on the Pacific coast. In The Big Muddy, the first long-term environmental history of the Mississippi, Christopher Morris offers a brilliant tour across five centuries as he illuminates the interaction between people and the landscape, from early hunter-gatherer bands to present-day industrial and post-industrial society. Product Details. Format: Hardcover. Language: English. ISBN: 0195316916. ISBN13: 9780195316919. Release Date: August 2012.