

CANAL Tehuacan Valley Fossil Canals		STATUS Early canals have been abandoned		ACS
STATE/PROVINCE: State of Puebla, Mexico				HAER
COUNTIES:				
LOCATION (Endpoints of Canal): Tehuacan Vicinity, 150 mi. SE of Mexico City.		DATES IN USE		LIFT LOCKS No./ SIZE
TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS:		L E N G T H CANAL SLACKWATER TOTAL		
		1 c.200 A.D.		Present
		2		None
		3		
		4		
HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:				
<p>Although they may not have been navigated, these canals deserve attention as one of the best preserved, and one of the most spectacular, early irrigation systems. Because these canals were fed by mineral spring water rather than river water, thick layers of calcium carbonate have been deposited over the years, making them rock hard. In prehistoric times, canals were probably abandoned when they became clogged with this deposit, but now those still in use are cleared regularly with iron tools. The local name for the fossil canals is teocatl, or "stone snakes," for in places the ground has eroded away leaving the canals on pedestals up to 3.5 meters high. Archaeologists are taking advantage of the remarkable preservation of this system to study its evolution over the years. The system consists of five major fan-shaped units in a 25 Km region between Tehuacan and San Jose Miahuatlan. There is a possibility that these units were linked, and since some canals were up to 3 meters wide and one deep, they may have been navigated, as were irrigation canals in Salt Lake City, Tucson, Yucatan, and Peru - a possibility which prehistoric archaeologists should consider when investigating irrigation and drainage canals. Tehuacan mineral water is bottled and exported and does in fact deposit a healthy precipitate as it evaporates and loses its carbonation.</p> <p>Also of interest in the same region are chain well systems (called qanats in the Near East), tunnels carrying water, with frequent shafts or wells to the surface through which the tunnels were constructed and maintained, and up which water can be drawn. Some of these even supplied water to a hydro plant, now abandoned. The well systems are thought to have been introduced by the Spanish, so are more recent than the irrigation canals.</p>				
NAMES & ADDRESSES OF GROUPS CONCERNED WITH CANALS PRESERVATION/RESTORATION:				
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: The canals, wells and other sites are described and mapped in THE PREHISTORY OF THE TEHUACAN VALLEY, V.4, CHRONOLOGY AND IRRIGATION, Ch.3, "Water Control Systems of the Tehuacan Valley," by R.B. Woodbury and J.A. Neely. R.S. MacNeish, Ed., University of Texas Press, Austin, 1972, 290pp.				
UNPUBLISHED RECORDS, PHOTOS, DRAWINGS (CEHR, HAER, HABS, Local or Regional Historical Societies, Libraries, etc.):				
EXISTING OR RECOMMENDED LANDMARK STATUS (CEHR, National Register, etc.):				
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