

Final Report for AIPS-Summer Research Grant 2019

Research: The Life of the Indus Delta: A More-Than-Human Ethnography

The AIPS-Summer travel grant allowed me to travel to Pakistan during summer 2019 to conduct preliminary research. During summer, broadly my purpose was to select the field site(s) for my upcoming longer ethnographic work, to collect ecological data on Indus river and delta, and to establish contacts with environmental and water governance institutions. All this was important for my research which is trying to understand the changing material and multispecies entanglement in Indus delta as a result of environmental degradation of delta due to altered flow of water. And how material and multispecies relations shape the human practices.

In Summer, I conducted research for two months (June and July). In the first month, I visited the Indus delta, and stayed there for more than a week. I travelled to different creeks; visited various villages and helmets in those creeks; and participate observed fishing people practices during fishing. My purpose for visiting the Indus delta, creeks and villages was to select research site(s) for my long-term field research.

After my first visit to delta, I again visited the delta in the month of July. This time my purpose was to conduct preliminary interviews and participate observe the fishing activities. I worked with fishermen in catching the fish, learning some of the fishing techniques, while exploring why, when and how they deploy different techniques to catch the fish, and how and what kind of relationship fishing communities establish with the delta, and its multispecies world. I also conducted various interviews with fishing people, especially some elderly persons around the questions such as history of deltaic ecology, the changes that have had happened over time, how those changes effects the deltaic ecology, and everyday life of fishing communities. I was also interested in Indus Shad, locally called *Pallo*, both because of its economic importance but also due to its cultural and religious significance. My interviews with local people provided significant information on Indus Shad.

Other than delta, I also travelled to Karachi, the provincial headquarters of Sindh Province, where most of head offices of institutions are located which are involved in governance of Indus delta. I was able to meet and conduct interviews with the officials of Sindh Forests Department, who manages the mangrove forests in the delta. Sindh Irrigation Department, who were involved in the management of agriculture in the delta in past, which today however, is not possible due to seawater intrusion and lack of river water flow int the delta. I was also able to meet nongovernment organization officials including WWF, and IUCN. Both these organizations are working on various projects in Indus delta including livelihood for fishing communities, mangrove forests growth and conservation.

I was also able to collect ecological data such river flow data, rainfall patterns and precipitation, and fish capture data. The preliminary analysis of this data allowed me to understand the relationality of material (water) and multispecies (fish) relationship and how this relationship has changed overtime; the interviews with fishing community further complimented above relationship, and overall this solidified my research questions and methods.