

Oceanic Violence: Trafficking and Climate Exile in “Difficult Geographies” of the Indian Ocean World

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My research project examines the interaction of climate change, Indian Ocean aquatic borders, and colonial manipulations of the Indian Ocean deltaic ecologies in producing and sustaining littoral sexual economies in such regions. It will provide a gendered environmental history of the *longue durée* (the eighteenth to the twentieth century) of the evolution and workings of port brothels across the deltas of the Indian Ocean world, namely India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Vietnam, Burma, Kenya.

The continued focus on terra-centric borders has rarely encouraged in-depth study of the creation and functionalities of the aquatic borders that were unintentionally birthed with the event of decolonization. The project evaluates the performatives of the state in case of trafficking-in-humans and littoral sex work in the borderland deltaic margins with regards to the nature of the aquatic borders. While writing the undocumented subaltern history of sex work, the project adapts several methodologies. These will range from reading colonial archives, using local literature and archives by dissolving the distinction between the *kalpanic* (fictional) and the *aitihashik* (historical), to land revenue papers, colonial land tax documents, colonial maps, ethnography, missionary medical records, marine archives, oral history collection, and arts-based research methods such as drawing workshops and etho-theatre through wide community participation.

By adapting a variety of interdisciplinary research methods, the project furthers the ideation of “future archives” and theorizes the creation of “the accommodative apparatus,” which artistically records the unrecorded history of the silenced and the unarchived. The aim is to work on the draft of a book manuscript that expands on this project by incorporating the research conducted in the lower deltaic Bengal a decade ago.