

## **Final Narrative: AIPS Senior Fellowship 2017-18**

**Project Title:** UAE Coastal Archaeological and Heritage Project (UAE-CAHP)

**Principle Investigator:** Uzma Z. Rizvi, Associate Professor of Anthropology & Urban Studies.

**Dates for Project:** February 2017-July 2017 – **Dates for Grant:** May 2017-July 2017

**Location:** Sharjah, United Arab Emirates

The UAE Coastal Archaeological and Heritage Project (UAE-CAHP) is a multiyear, transdisciplinary project that focuses on the threshold of sand and water in the United Arab Emirates. This research praxis conducted along the coastal region of the UAE aims to gather new data (as archaeological and ethnographic material) as well as reconsider existing data (museum collections, newspapers, and publications). This project incorporates geomorphology, landscape survey, ethnographic practices, critical heritage discourse, contemporary art and archaeological poetics. At the core of this project is the desire to contextualize the many relationships between the UAE and Pakistan/Northern India through time, to theorize the concept of a ‘coast’ as a threshold which has the capacity to engender forms of marginal subject positionality, and the impact such a position makes on subsequent aesthetic forms and critical heritage discourse. Key concepts that drive the project include: mobility, fluidity, cosmopolitanism, threshold, coasts, gulfs, critical heritage, and aesthetics.

The AIPS Senior Fellowship supported a three-month fellowship period based in Sharjah, UAE. The funding received provided a travel stipend, a per diem, and funding for supplies. It is important to note that as this is a transdisciplinary project over a three-year period, different grants will cover different portions of the project.

This project illuminates the histories and significance of the Gulf region and Indian Ocean littoral within the larger 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BCE world. It provides clear evidence for the prehistory of Indian Ocean trade routes and the prehistory of immigration of communities from South Asia to the Gulf. More specifically, the time spent in the UAE working on questions of archaeological heritage allow for discussions of belonging to emerge that have the capacity to transcend issues of citizenship. In doing so, there are ways in which one may speak of belonging to a landscape through labor (white/blue/manual/etc.) that provide a nuanced approach to the contemporary discussion of ‘gulf labor’ –the issues of livelihood and feelings of being indentured are far more complicated, and have colonial antecedents that are rarely discussed in the scholarship. This research links archaeology, heritage, cultural labor, colonialism and ways by which belonging can be understood in a contemporary Gulf context. These forms link belonging not only to the laboring landscape but also one that is the site of possible remittance. Although South Asia is not the only ‘homeland,’ it is the one that the research will focus on as it features highly in discussions of manual labor, and makes explicit the archaeological connections between these two land masses, making the gulf then not a place of separation, but one of connections.

I am immensely appreciative of the support from the American Institute of Pakistan Studies and will acknowledge the fellowship in all publications that emerge from UAE-CAHP.