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Deltas and Humans: A Long Relationship now Threatened by Global Change

Thomas S. Bianchi

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Deltas and Humans: A Long Relationship now Threatened by Global Change Thomas S. Bianchi Humans have had a long relationship with the ebb and flow of tides on river deltas around the world. The fertile soils of river deltas provided early human civilizations with a means of farming crops and obtaining seafood from the highly productive marshes and shallow coastal waters associated with deltas. However, this relationship has at times been both nurturing and tumultuous for the development of early civilizations. The vicissitudes of seasonal changes in river flooding events as well as frequently shifting deltaic soils made life for these early human settlements challenging. These natural transient processes that affect the supply of sediments to deltas today are in many ways very similar to what they have been over the millennia of human settlements.

But something else has been altered in the natural rhythm of these cycles. The massive expansion of human populations around the world in both the lower and upper drainage basins of these large rivers have changed the manner in which sediments and water are delivered to deltas. Because of the high density of human populations found in these regions, humans have developed elaborate hydrological engineering schemes in an attempt to "tame" these deltas. The goal of this book is to provide information on the historical relationship between humans and deltas that will hopefully encourage immediate preparation for coastal management plans in response to the impending inundation of major cities, as a result of global change around the world.

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