

Subsistence practices in the Indus Tradition: A fishy perspective

Fish remains from two archaeological sites of the Indus Tradition, Balakot and Harappa, provide a unique perspective on the economic and social structure of Indus subsistence patterns relating to coastal marine and interior riverine fisheries. Both sites offer temporal sequences of fish remains that span the Regionalization Era through the Integration Era, and into the Localization Era, as defined by Shaffer (1992). At Balakot, we see a shift from a village-based subsistence strategy to an economy that appears to be drawn into a much more regional economy that appears to have included trade in dried fish. At Harappa, we have a much larger assemblage of fish remains that spans differing use of fish both during the Ravi Phase to the so-called deurbanization phase after the Harappan Phase of the Integration Era. Unfortunately, much of the materials from the Localization Era is in a disturbed context due to historic “brick-robbing” of the later deposits at the site. By examining this specific assemblage of faunal remains, we can look at the spatial and temporal variability across a large landscape, suggesting that this economy went through a series of transformations during this long time frame of 1,400 years.