

William Belcher, AIPS Travel Grant Summary Report on Presentation at Annual Conference on South Asia, Madison, WI

PRESENTATION SUMMARY: This presentation summarized over thirty years of research on ancient fisheries of the Indus Valley Tradition, ca. 3,300 to 1,700 BCE, focusing on two archaeological sites in Pakistan – Balakot, near Sonmiani Bay, in Baluchistan; and, Harappa, on the River Ravi, near Sahiwal, Punjab Province. At the riverine site of Harappa, modern local fisherfolk use both fish traps, sweep/seine nets, and hooks to capture fish; however, the primary time is during the post-monsoon seasons between September and April. Isolated oxbow lakes are created after the flood withdrawals, leaving “pockets” of fish across the landscape – these create easily accessible areas for fishing, particularly of carps and catfish. These fish were an important part of the diet during the Indus Valley Tradition as well and dominate the archaeological materials. Along the marine coast, the diversity of fish species and genera is extremely high, but with dominance for specific fish (such as *dhoter* [*Pomadasys argenteus/hasta*], sua [*Protonibea diachanthus*], and marine catfish [Ariidae]). Additionally, ethnographic research on dried fish remains in the markets of Karachi indicates that five species of marine fish probably were traded to Harappa from the marine coast. In summary, while the fishing strategies at both sites were broad-based, they focused on a few species at specific times of the year.