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Recent years there has been a significant and steady increase of academic and popular interest in the study of past civilizations. This is due in part to the dramatic coverage, real or imagined, of the archaeological profession in popular film and television, as well as to extensive journalistic reporting of spectacular new finds from all parts of the world. The Indus Valley Civilisation (IVC) was a Bronze Age civilisation in the northwestern regions of South Asia, lasting from 3300 BCE to 1300 BCE, and in its mature form from 2600 BCE to 1900 BCE. Along with ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia it was one of three early civilisations of the region comprising North Africa, West Asia and South Asia, and of the three, the most widespread, its sites spanning an area stretching from northeast Afghanistan, through much of Pakistan, and into western and northwestern India. The Indus River Valley civilization, also known as the Harappan civilization after the first site of their discovery, is a Bronze Age culture that spanned roughly from 3300 to 1300 BC. It stood toe to toe with the three other ancient heavyweights of the world – Egypt, Mesopotamia, and ancient China – often surpassing their scientific achievements; out of the four ancient cradles of civilization, the people of the Indus Valley could claim to be the largest and arguably most prosperous. This view is supported by studies on Indus graves and human remains that show everyone enjoyed similar health. There’s also speculation that Harappian traders traversed long distances over water in ships made of planks, with a single mast and a sail of cloth or woven rushes.