

BOOK REVIEW

Lost Civilizations: The Secret Histories and Suppressed Technologies of the Ancients by Jim Willis. Visible Ink, 2019. 624 pp. ISBN13: 978-1578597062.

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<https://doi.org/10.31275/20201813>

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Lost Civilizations is at once intriguing but also challenging to conventional wisdom. Perhaps that is as it should be, and Willis certainly has created an interesting compendium of mysterious archaeological events combined with a generous exploration of mythology.

Readers of SSE's *Journal of Scientific Exploration* should know I am not a fan of the "Out of Africa" theory. There have been too many recent discoveries made, to support the notion that human life began in a single remote location. We can think of the discovery of the Denisovan that interbred with hominids who did migrate from Africa. What Willis repeatedly points to is apparent DNA anomalies in which samples indicate connections between groups for which there is no logical explanation. As an example, there are traces in Australia that are commensurate with those from South America that must have occurred long before any known contact had happened.

While Willis would agree, *Lost Civilizations* suggests the timelines may be off by many thousands of years, a concept that is hard to integrate into demonstrable history. If somebody built things, where did such previously unknown groups come from? It is in questioning that Willis adds significant value. What we mean by "lost civilizations" is basic to the book. But more fundamentally, he asks how is "civilization" defined? There are multiple definitions, and he states that what it means to be civilized does not equate to the organization of villages or cities.

Further, if civilizations were "lost," where did they come from and

where did they go? How did seemingly thriving communities suddenly cease to exist? Then, why is it that some societies not only physically disappear, but also seem to be erased from the memories of survivors or other groups that may have interacted with them. His examples of lost groups abound and signal a warning to modern society. If previous complex organizations disappeared, often with no immediate trace, could the same thing happen to our current civilization?

We know that the relatively recent discoveries of Goebekli Tepe offer a huge challenge for conventional archaeology. First reported in 1963, the site contains large stone structures with glyphs carved into the columns and may be twelve thousand years old (thus predating the Egyptian pyramids by more than seven thousand years). Yet, there is no record of what culture made them; where did they come from and where did they go? The development may parallel an event that occurred eleven thousand two hundred years ago that ushered in what is known as the Younger Dryas. The Younger Dryas was a period annotated by sudden geophysical changes including rapid rise in ocean levels and onset of an ice age.

Willis explores several alternative scenarios including terrestrial cataclysms and astronomical events such as collision with large bodies possibly a meteor or coming into the gravitational influence of a previously unknown extremely large object. He does note that climate change may have led to the demise of some cultures as is suspected with the Anasazi in the southwestern United States. When coupled with population growth, he notes that the confluence stresses the agricultural capability to meet the needs.

Interestingly, he speculates that wealth disparity and inequities cannot be sustained and has led to the devolution of prior societies. Without the author saying it, his commentary is a fair geopolitical analysis of what is happening to our society. He points to the epic tales of Gilgamesh as an example that suggests the past may be a prologue and worthy of serious consideration.

Willis suggests that studying mythology is a worthy effort but that present archaeologists eschew it for lack of physical evidence. Nonetheless, while specific details may vary, there are often core elements that transcend time and space. In fact, he asks how is it that the fundamental components are recorded despite being attributed to

societies separated by oceans. Of particular interest are the common themes found in myths of origin of the human species and interaction with beings accredited as “gods.”

Then, too, there is controversy about whether or not a civilization disappeared as proclaimed in folklore. One example might be the supposed extinction of the Maya. That belief is popularly held today. Yet, when we traveled throughout the area they had inhabited, the current residents noted that they were, in fact, the descendants of the original Maya. As they told us, “We are here and didn’t go anywhere.” What is certainly true is that there is much to learn about the prior culture. Using satellite archaeology and advanced foliage penetrating technologies, we see that the size and scope of their civilization was far greater than previously thought.

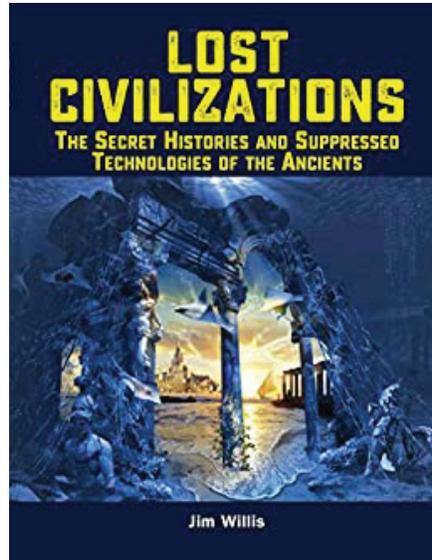
Willis draws on the works of a wide variety of experts. They range from very credible scholars to neophytes and dilettantes who are highly speculative at best. And as a theologian, he liberally intersperses the text with religious references.

Where Willis is correct is his analysis that there is a strong bias in academia in favor of status quo. On page 70 he states, “Unfortunately, Egyptologists, like well-entrenched professionals everywhere, tend to pull their wagons into a circle whenever they feel threatened.” He also noted that most universities do not support mavericks in hiring and certainly not in tenure. There are many SSE members who can attest to those issues.

An extreme example of such bias was experienced by Stephan Schwartz using remote viewing in triple-blind archaeological experiments in Egypt. There, he caught the monitoring Egyptologist moving stakes placed by his remote viewers the day before. Though no excavation had occurred and nothing yet located, the monitor deemed it necessary to alter the site just in case the information proved to be accurate. Nothing was going to be allowed that did not comport with established doctrine. The entire story can be found in Schwartz’s book *The Alexandria Project* and supports the problems encountered by those with evidence contrary to conventional wisdom.

Lost Civilizations does have sections covering the entire world including Antarctica. There Willis addresses the well-known Piri Reis map that purported to show the actual outline of the continent which is

now covered in ice. The idea is that it was made at a time before the ice had formed which would have been many thousands of years ago. Selectively he has chosen examples that fit his hypothesis that history is wrong (and he is probably right). There could be several volumes if all anomalies were included. He did not address one of my favorites, that of Ollantaytambo in Peru. There, massive stones were cut and transported five kilometers and up a substantial cliff by an unknown mechanism.



Then there is Sacsayhuaman that offers similar puzzlements. In the sprawling Matta Grosso region in the center of the continent, there recently have been indications of quite large urban areas that have yet to be fully explained. The point is that there is credible evidence to indicate the conventional theories of history are at least incomplete.

As a major section of the book, the importance of mythology in consideration of past technology, civilizations, and cultures is discussed by Willis. Appropriately he notes that almost all societies have stories of their origin, such as the concept of Eden in the Old Testament of the Bible. While there are differences, there are many similarities as well. These point to a common basis in fact, even if the cultural details vary.

He goes so far as to include the “Big Bang Theory” as a creation myth of physicists. In an interview with an unidentified physicist (PP), that person states,

We don't know why. We don't even think about why. We leave that to philosophers and (shudder) theologians and mystics. Some of us, maybe even most of us, don't think 'why' is a consideration. It just happened, that's all.

That response sure sounds like a myth.

Human fascination with flight deservedly gains attention. From flying carpets to vimanas, associated with Zarathustra/Zoroaster, Willis includes many accounts of airborne craft, and tangentially mentioned are the wars written about in the Upanishads replete with armed military warships. Others have speculated that nuclear weapons may have been employed in existential conflicts between the gods. While this short chapter is intriguing, there is probably enough material for an entire book—but there are time and space constraints on any manuscript.

Rightfully, there is discussion about the most fabled “lost continent” of all, Atlantis. Admittedly, the possibility of pre-cataclysmic civilizations has long been an interest of mine. So much so that I dived the area off the Bahamas photographing some very captivating artifacts that lie in the shallow waters there. Mentioned by Plato, repeatedly the location of Atlantis has been the subject of great speculation. But that is hardly the only hidden area. Mentions here include the possibility of Lemuria or Mu located somewhere in the Pacific (or maybe the Atlantic). A new one for me was the description of Cascadia, and a large sunken land mass in the Pacific Northwest.

In addition to submerged civilizations, Willis writes about those that may be underground. Correctly he notes that the legends of some First Nation people have them emerging through a tunnel from underground. He does cover known subterranean structures as well. Included is Cappadocia, a truly fascinating site we have visited in central Turkey. These sites were usually designed to evade would-be conquerors, but could accommodate a large community numbering in the thousands of people.

There is a brief section on Joseph Smith and the development of doctrine for the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints. Here, Willis admits to being a “Mormon detractor” and reports having studied extensively Smith’s history; he does state that the *Book of Mormon* could not have been written “without spiritual help of some kind.”

Other myths include the tales of Quetzalcoatl of the Aztecs, the Norse legends of Ragnarök, and the famous female warriors, the Amazons. Taking a bigger leap, the author explores the “Reptilian Hypothesis,” noting that a poll taken in 2013 found that four percent of those responding “endorsed a notion that ‘reptilian people control the world . . . and are gaining power.’”

Willis ends by asking if we could be the next lost civilization. Meaning, is it possible that our current civilization could disappear with minimal, if any, trace of prior existence? In that section he asks several poignant questions, ones that have been the foundations of philosophy from time immemorial:

- Who are we?
- What gives our life meaning?
- Where did we come from?
- When did we begin our journey?

Obviously, he does not provide answers and leaves it to readers to address those complex issues.

In the end, *Lost Civilizations* will challenge what you think you know about ancient history while simultaneously pushing credulity. It is worth reading, but not to the exclusion of known facts and common sense.