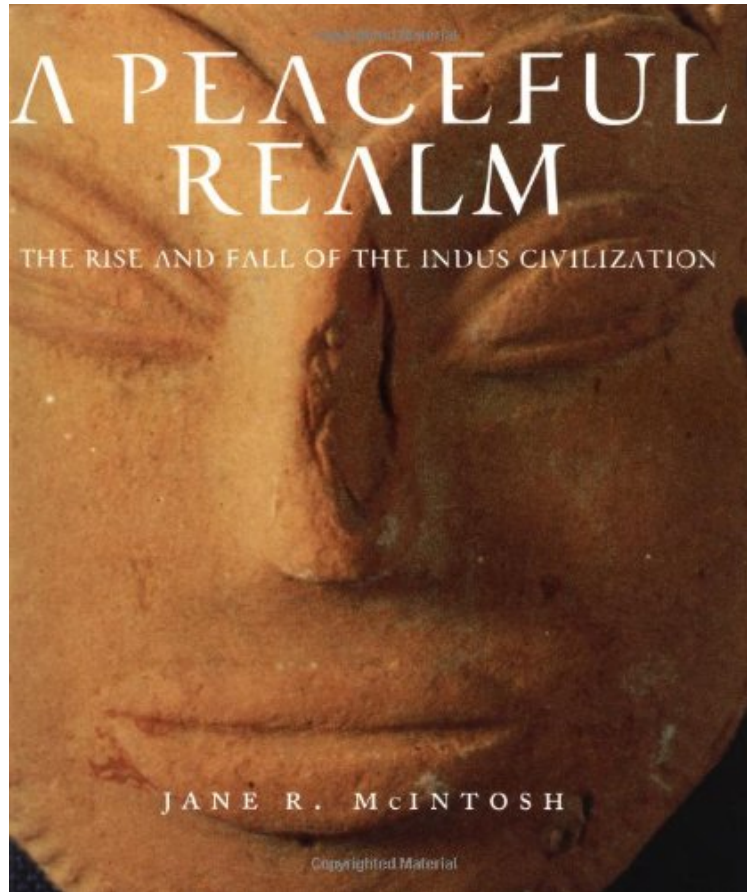


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## A Peaceful Realm : The Rise And Fall of the Indus Civilization

Jane McIntosh

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**Jane McIntosh : A Peaceful Realm : The Rise And Fall of the Indus Civilization** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Peaceful Realm : The Rise And Fall of the Indus Civilization:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Cream of the Harrapan CropBy Joe AdamsI purchased about six books from and was disappointed with a couple fo them - thing, derivative works based on more substantial explorations. But unfortunately there are few meatier works to draw from.Author Macintosh has done an excellent job of mixing anthropological references with photographs of a wide variety of artifacts from the Indus River Valley sites. The is a real sense of finding and exploring something new and different.The author also falls victim to preconceptions - on one page she tells us that we do not know who figures are intended to represent, and on the following page refers to the 'priest-king' figure used most often to represent the culture. Either we don't know and need to find out, or we do know and the culture is just the same as every other culture we do know. We don't know about the culture, social structure, religion or beliefs of the lost civilization. They left no indications of a standing army, but were powerful traders along the south Asian coast from distant Burma to the Persian Gulf. We suspect the religious

foundation of the Vedic cycles may have begun in this region, but cannot confirm that. The book has wonderful pictures and frequently becomes the book on the Indus River Valley Civilization many of us have hoped to read. But it falls short and we are still waiting for a definitive work on the people who preceded the Aryans on the subcontinent.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Rare Peaceful Civilization By G. Joy Robins I reread this book recently. I was dazzled when I read it a few years ago. The most important impression it left was that the ancient Indus/Saraswati Civilization was not only civilized but peaceful. No convincing evidence had been found as of 2002 that there had been the kind of inequality and violence associated with other great civilizations. No evidence has been found of an aggrandized ruling class supported by armed force. There is no evidence of wars of conquest to enlarge and enrich the elite. It appeared to be a very widespread and prosperous culture without those features. It was apparently administered by Priests who built temples but not palaces. When I mentioned this at the time at a meeting of the local Archaeology Society, the expert speaker dismissed my question with "Conclusions can't be made at this stage from what has not been found". Well, time has passed, much more digging has been done and the major conclusion that has been drawn is that the so called Aryan invasion never happened. There was plenty of population movement and extensive trade, but no invasion. The Indus/ Saraswati Civilization also seems to be much older than previously supposed and was not only peaceful, but the common people shared in its prosperity. In fact, according to Feuerstein, Kak Frawley (In Search of the Cradle of Civilization), it was just as influential as the ancient civilizations of the Middle East. While the script has not been deciphered, the custom of having a whole class of people devoted to memorizing and preserving the Vedic literature in tact from ancient times, seems to have given us a more ancient record than even the Bible. While I recommend both books highly, the breathtaking illustrations in A Peaceful Realm make it my first choice.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A mysterious realm By Ashtar Command "A Peaceful Realm" by Jane McIntosh is an excellent introduction to the Indus Valley Civilization, a mysterious high culture that flourished 4000 years ago in the northwestern part of the Indian sub-continent. The author summarizes what I take to be the current scholarly thinking about the Indus culture. The book is intended for the general reader, but since it's written from an archeological perspective, some people may find it boring. Brace yourself for an over-view of excavations, excavations and even more excavations! Jane McIntosh is obviously not a journalist... Still, I give the book four stars, because it's very informative and fascinating, and the archeological perspective is inevitable anyway. Since most written records of the Indus Valley Civilization have been lost, and those that remain are undeciphered, most of what we can know about this ancient culture is due to...well, archeological excavations. There are at least three things that make the Indus culture mysterious. First, it was a highly developed civilization with large cities (the largest had perhaps 100,000 inhabitants), a uniform culture, and a well-developed division of labor, including vast trade networks. This suggests some kind of empire with a large and efficient state administration. Yet, nobody has been able to find the rulers of the Indus people! There are no royal palaces, no cult statues of kings, and all burials were relatively simple. Also, all people seem to have been well-nourished, suggesting the non-existence of an underclass. This has led some daring people to suggest that the Indus civilization was relatively egalitarian, making it a curious anomaly among high cultures. McIntosh doesn't go that far. She believes that a ruling class did exist, and suggests other reasons for why it remains invisible in the archeological record. Perhaps the rulers were a caste of ascetic priests, whose ruling function was marked precisely by the absence of any worldly goods? The Indus peoples may also have showed their rank in ways we don't comprehend today. Studies of burials and sculptures suggest that jewelry or bracelets may have been used to denote rank, and seals with different animal motifs may have been caste symbols. Curiously for a culture ruled by priests, there are no temples either! At Mohenjo-Daro, a large structure known as the Great Bath have been uncovered, which may have been a kind of sanctuary for ritual purification, but this remains an educated guess. Second, the Indus Valley culture was completely peaceful, and this peace seems to have lasted for at least 700 years, maybe more! This too is almost unique among high cultures, and indeed among "primitive" cultures as well. The towns of the Indus peoples did have large walls, but they were not defensive, but built mostly to impress, and perhaps to make sure that merchants moving in and out of the towns paid the proper dues. There is no evidence that the walls were ever attacked or destroyed by foreign armies. Nor are there any remains of a developed military technology, no siege engines for instance, and the weapons found were probably used for hunting. That a hierarchical, priest-ridden empire could be peaceful is counter-intuitive, and sounds almost too good to be true, but this is what the archeological record suggests. Nor was the Indus Valley Civilization brutally destroyed by invading Indo-Aryans, as once assumed. It seems that the civilization broke down for other reasons, including ecological disasters and a shift in agriculture, which eventually turned the once prosperous cities into backwater slums, eventually forcing the inhabitants to abandon them. The third mystery of this culture is the Indus script, which nobody has been able to decipher (yet). McIntosh is confident that the script records an agglutinative language, which in an Indian context would mean a Dravidian language. Other linguistic evidence also suggests that the Dravidians settled in India before the Indo-Aryans, making the Indus culture the obvious candidate for a Dravidian culture. One fact not mentioned by the author is that genetic evidence confirms that Dravidians came to India earlier than the Indo-Europeans. The claim that the Indus Valley Civilization was Dravidian is controversial, especially in modern India, where various nationalist groups among both Dravidians and Indo-Aryans try to claim the Indus peoples for themselves. In America, there are

Black groups which claim that the Indus peoples were Africans. (The aboriginal peoples of India may have been related to Negritos, Papuans and Australian Aborigines). Still, the case for the Indus-Saraswati cultures being Dravidian seems rock-solid. It also seems as if later Indian religion ("Hinduism") is a mixture of Indus and Aryan elements. While the religion of the Indus culture is difficult to interpret in the absence of written records, it seemed to include worship of cows or buffalo, mother goddesses, the cult of Shiva or Durga, yoga, ritual purification through water, stellar worship based on astronomical observations (the author mentions this piece of information only in passing!), and perhaps even fire altars. When the Aryans entered the Indian sub-continent, they took with them their own gods, such as Indra or Vishnu, other kinds of rituals, and eventually wrote the Vedic scriptures. Together, these strands united to form Hinduism as practiced today. Of course, the Indus Valley Civilization raises a lot of philosophical questions. How can a hierarchical society be benign and peaceful? How can a ruling class refrain from show off its wealth or power? Was there even a ruling class? And if not, how did these peoples get along so well together? (Perhaps precisely because of that?) McIntosh doesn't answer these questions. They are left for the reader to ponder...(For more on the Indus Valley culture, see the commentary section below!)

A broad account of the Indus civilisation that developed within the Indus Valley from c.4000 BC. McIntosh ably discusses the rise and fall of the civilisation and its main features including farmers and the rural economy, crafts, urbanism, religion, society, the Indus script, trade and the legacy that was left behind.

"An informed, lucid, and imaginative rendering of one of the major, and least known, ancient civilizations." -- -C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, Stephen Philips Professor of Archaeology, Harvard University  
About the Author Jane McIntosh is a professional writer on prehistory and archaeology. She holds a degree in European prehistory and a Ph.D. in Indian archaeology from Cambridge University. Widely traveled, she has worked on many excavations in Britain and abroad. She now lives in the west of England.