Until the 19th century, the Indus civilisation was totally unknown. As Robinson observes in his wonderfully eloquent and informative new book, neither Alexander the Great, who invaded India in the 4th century BC, nor Asko Mauya, the emperor who ruled most of the subcontinent in the 3rd century BC, was even dimly aware of it. But in the last 100 years, archaeologists have identified more than 1,000 settlements in an area of Pakistan and India that covers 800,000km², with a population to rival Ancient Rome at its peak. Two millennia before their Roman counterparts, the people of the Indus had mastered urban planning, water storage, irrigation, drainage, and sanitation – including the world’s first toilets. But, interestingly, they left no monumental buildings: no palaces, temples, statues, or grand tombs. Their language remains an enigma: most inscriptions are found on seals, but often too tantalizingly brief to decipher. Though many have tried to break the code, and some claim to have succeeded, the Indus language remains largely a mystery.

Robinson examines by chapter every aspect of this deliciously intriguing civilisation, from religion, society, art, trade, and agriculture, to their origins, disappearance, and rediscovery. One of a series on lost civilisations, this book gives a comprehensive account of the Indus people, condensed into a highly accessible volume – and a very good read indeed.

Although Scandinavia is relatively young in terms of human occupation compared to its European neighbours, this book shows that it is a rich area for studying important archaeological questions such as how humans adapted to extreme climate and environmental changes, how and why people colonised new lands, and the consequences of the change from hunter-gathering to farming and the emergence of early states. The anecdote-packed narrative is full of examples of type sites, and each chapter ends with a summary of the key changes that took place during each time period.

This book fills a gap in the market – being one of the few overviews of Scandinavian prehistory written in English. Price steers the book away from being too academic, while still including a detailed reference section at the end for those wanting to explore each topic further. Price’s fascination with Scandinavia and extensive experience excavating in Denmark shines through on every page.