

Gregory Louis Possehl (1941–2011)

My first meeting with Greg was in 1971 when the Deccan Queen rumbled into the railroad station at Pune. Greg's wife and two children accompanied him. His research objective was the exploration of archaeological sites within the domain of the Harappan (Indus Age) Civilization in the state of Gujarat, India. Since that time we have co-authored several publications. Prior to his death in October 2011, he and I had in press in the journal *Advances in Anthropology* our manuscript entitled, 'Were there commercial communications between prehistoric Harappans and African populations?' His death at the age of seventy, due to heart failure, is a sorrow to his many friends who shared his interests in South Asian archaeology.

Greg's distinguished career began in 1964 with a BA degree from the University of Washington. This was followed by a MA degree three years later. His undergraduate mentor was Walter Fair-service, with whom Greg carried out field research in India and Pakistan. He completed his PhD in 1974 from the University of Chicago with R. J. Braidwood as his mentor. Among his academic positions were the following: Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, Vassar College (1972–73); Lecturer, Department of Anthropology, University of Pennsylvania (UPenn) (1973–75); Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, UPenn (1975–1981); Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, UPenn (1981–89); Professor of South Asian Archaeology and Curator of the Asia Section, University Museum, UPenn (1989–2011), with appointments in the University's South Asia Program, South Asia Regional Studies and Middle-Eastern Studies. Beginning in 2001, he was an Overseas Fellow, Churchill College, University of Cambridge.

Greg's research programmes were funded by the American Institute of Indian Studies (1977), the Smithsonian Foreign Currency Program (1978–1981) and the National Science Foundation (1986, 1991, 1995, 1999). Additional funding was awarded by his academic department and by individual donors. From these sources, he was able to explore and excavate the Harappan sites of Oriyo Timbo, Rojdi, Babar Kot and Lak-hueenjo, all in Gujarat, and the Gilund site in Rajasthan. In his later years, he

supervised archaeological research in Oman, where evidence of trade between the Near East and the Indus Valley was established. He and I carried out field research at the Chosla site in Gujarat.

The honours and awards that Greg received are as follows: from the Government of Uttar Pradesh in recognition of his lifetime contributions to Indian archaeology (2004), a Fellowship from the Indian Archaeological Society (2004), a Prize from the Foundation of Indian Publishers for his book *Harappan Civilization: A Contemporary Perspective* and from the Indian publishers of *Ancient Cities of the Indus* (1980).



Greg's teaching career included supervision of PhD dissertations since 1976, with over 25 postgraduate students by 2004. In that year he served as a mentor for over 20 students earning their Master's degrees. He emphasized in his teaching archaeological methods and theories with an special importance to the Indian subcontinent, the Near East and South East Asia. He focused on food production, history of agriculture, urbanization, cultural geography and history of archaeology. Greg appreciated working with students in a personal way in which paths to professional life were combined with his own values as an archaeologist and sound professional discipline.

For Greg, the university was an aristocratic institution. Service to his university included Chairmanship of the Senate Committee on the Faculty (1999–2001), Chairmanship of the President's Committee on Fair Labor Practices (2000–03) and membership in the School of Arts

and Sciences. He served on International Committees and the External Review Committee at New York University (1995) and on the Committee for Instructional Computer Development Funds (2000–01). At Deccan College, he was a consultant for the Computer Centre in Pune and on the Board of the Ancient India and Iran Trust in Cambridge (1997–2011).

These activities as an archaeologist, teacher and administrator are accomplishments of a fine scholarly career. But they do not define Greg's persona. For any man, personal qualities are inherent in the details of his life. My longstanding and close friendship with him discerned his honesty and passion for archaeology.

In his military career, Greg achieved the rank of Captain and was the Commander of a tank unit during the Vietnam war. His senior officers urged him to continue in the army, with the probability that he would be promoted in time to the rank of General. But this prospect was overridden by his love of archaeology and the desire to be a professor in a leading department of anthropology. Along with Greg's faithfulness to scholarship was his keen sense of humor, the following of a chivalric code of conduct and the love for his students and friends. On one occasion when Greg was our guest at a fine restaurant in Geneva, he noticed a young lady dining alone at an adjacent table. He invited her to our table when we ordered desserts, a characteristic of his kindness to others.

Greg was a frequent visitor to my home in Ithaca, where we spent hours together discussing current issues in archaeology and biological anthropology. He stocked his wine cellar in Philadelphia with the best vintages from the wineries along the shores of Cayuga Lake and Seneca Lake.

I write this obituary in the same study where Greg, my wife Margaret and I shared so many happy times. But Greg is still with us in his scholarly publications, records of field research in South Asia, and the heritage shared with his students.

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