A Companion to South Asia in the Past

Edited by Gwen Robbins Schug and Subhash R. Walimbe
A Companion to South Asia in the Past
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A Companion to South Asia in the Past

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Gwen Robbins Schug and Subhash R. Walimbe

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Dedicated to Kenneth Adrian Raine Kennedy (1930–2014)
Biological anthropologist, mentor, and friend
FIGURE 0.1  Kenneth Adrian Raine Kennedy
# Contents

**Notes on Contributors** x

**Acknowledgments** xvii

**Formal Dedication** xviii

V.N. Misra

**Foreword** xx

Angela R. Lieverse

**Maps** xxvi

1 Introduction 1

*Gwen Robbins Schug and Subhash R. Walimbe*

## Part I  Paleoanthropology in South Asia 11

2 Mammalian Paleodiversity and Ecology of Siwalik Primates in India and Nepal 13

*Rajan Gaur*

3 A Decade of Paleoanthropology in the Indian Subcontinent (2005–2015) 32

*Parth R. Chauhan*

4 Archaic Genomes and the Peopling of South Asia 51

*Mark Stoneking*

5 Out of Africa and into South Asia: The Evidence from Paleolithic Archaeology 60

*Ravi Korisettar*
6 Hominin Fossil Remains from the Narmada Valley  
*A.R. Sankhyan*  
72

7 Mesolithic Foragers of the Ganges Plain and Adjoining Hilly Regions of the Vindhyas  
*J.N. Pal*  
86

8 Mesolithic Foragers of the Ganges Plain: Pathology, Stature, and Subsistence  
*John R. Lukacs*  
101

**Part II  Middle Holocene Farmers and Urban Dwellers**  
125

9 Current Perspectives on the Harappan Civilization  
*Vasant Shinde*  
127

*J.M. Kenoyer and R.H. Meadow*  
145

11 Bioarchaeology of the Indus Valley Civilization: Biological Affinities, Paleopathology, and Chemical Analyses  
*Nancy C. Lovell*  
169

12 More than Origins: Refining Migration in the Indus Civilization  
*Benjamin Valentine*  
187

13 Aryans and the Indus Civilization: Archaeological, Skeletal, and Molecular Evidence  
*Micel Danino*  
205

14 The Ahar Culture and Others: Social Spectrums of the Mewar Plain  
*Teresa P. Raczek*  
225

15 The Archaeology of the Late Holocene on the Deccan Plateau (The Deccan Chalcolithic)  
*Prabodh Shirvalkar and Esha Prasad*  
240

16 The Center Cannot Hold: A Bioarchaeological Perspective on Environmental Crisis in the Second Millennium BCE, South Asia  
*Gwen Robbins Schug and Kelly Elaine Blevins*  
255

17 The “Gandhara Grave Culture”: New Perspectives on Protohistoric Cemeteries in Northern and Northwestern Pakistan  
*Muhammad Zahir*  
274

**Part III  Historic Archaeology: Monuments and Meaning**  
295

18 Early Iron Age Megalith Builders of Vidarbha: A Historical View  
*P.S. Joshi*  
297

19 Situating Iron Age Monuments in South India: A Textual and Ethnographic Approach  
*K. Rajan*  
310
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 20  | A Review of Early Historic Urbanization in India  
*Reshma Sawant and Gurudas Shete*  | 319 |
| 21  | Historical and Medieval Period Archaeology  
*Monica L. Smith*  | 332 |
| 22  | The Transition to Agricultural Production in India:  
South Asian Entanglements of Domestication  
*Charlene A. Murphy and Dorian Q. Fuller*  | 344 |
| 23  | From Millet to Rice (and Back Again?): Cuisine, Cultivation,  
and Health in Southern India  
*Kathleen D. Morrison*  | 358 |
| 24  | Death and Burial among Two Ancient High-Altitude  
Communities of Nepal  
*Mark Aldenderfer and Jacqueline T. Eng*  | 374 |
| Part IV  | South Asia in Retrospect  | 399 |
| 25  | Prehistoric Archaeology in Bangladesh: An Overview  
*Shahnaj Husne Jahan*  | 401 |
| 26  | Archaeology of Nepal  
*Prakash Darnal*  | 412 |
| 27  | The Peopling of Sri Lanka from Prehistoric to Historic Times:  
Biological and Archaeological Evidence  
*Samanti Kulatilake*  | 426 |
| 28  | Theoretical Archaeology in India: An Anthropological Perspective  
*K. Paddayya*  | 437 |
| 29  | Moving Forward, Looking Back: The Collective Memory of  
Indian Anthropology  
*Abhik Ghosh*  | 450 |
| 30  | Anthropology and Museums in India  
*Kishor K. Basa*  | 465 |
| 31  | Human Skeletal Studies: Changing Trends in Theoretical and  
Methodological Perspectives  
*Subhash R. Walimbe*  | 482 |
| 32  | Where Are They Now? The Human Skeletal Remains from India  
*V. Mushrif-Tripathy, K.S. Chakraborty, and S. Lahiri*  | 496 |
| Index  | 534 |
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Deep gratitude and appreciation is extended to the authors who graciously agreed to write chapters providing an overview of the major themes and directions for new research in South Asian anthropology in honor of Dr. Kenneth A.R. Kennedy. We are so fortunate that before his death in 2014, we could work with Dr. Kennedy to develop the range of topics and a list of contributors; he was particularly excited about the diversity of contributors—male, female, senior and up-and-coming scholars, from South Asia and abroad—as he spent his career working with a broad range of scholars from different backgrounds and he sincerely valued the breadth of perspectives he gained from doing so. The editors would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their helpful suggestions and our series editors at Wiley Blackwell, Elizabeth Swayze and Mark Graney. We could not have done this project without you and we are grateful for your professional support and encouragement. Finally, the editors extend our sincere appreciation to our families; they make our work possible and worthwhile.
I consider myself fortunate to have had a personal and professional association with Professor Kenneth A.R. Kennedy over the last 40 years. His interests spanned diverse topics in human skeletal biology, ecology, and Asian studies. Professor Kennedy was a diplomate of the American Board of Forensic Anthropology and made significant contributions to this methodological aspect of the field. Most appealing to me, however, was his concern for human paleobiology in South Asia.

Geographically, his work spans Pakistan, India, and Sri Lanka, and academically it ranges from Pleistocene hominids to historic period skeletal specimens. Kennedy’s interest was not focused on osteological examination of the skeletons to talk of the “racial” affinities, a research trend that prevailed in the sixties and seventies; rather, he was keen to understand the nature of biological adaptations of the bygone populations in response to their lifestyle, food-procuring techniques, and health. He also used his data to comprehend biological continuity in ancient and contemporary populations. Credit goes to Professor Kennedy for introducing a paleodemographic approach to Indian human skeletal biology, which had a profound impact on the shape and direction of further anthropological research in the subcontinent. Moreover, his continued withstanding collaborations with several scholars across the subcontinent ultimately persuaded the discipline to accept human skeletons as an important component of Indian archaeology.

Among numerous publications, his magnum opus is *God-Apes and Fossil Men: Paleoanthropology in South Asia*. Published in 2000, it has no parallel among the many books on South Asian prehistory published in the last 90 years, the first being Panchanan Mitra’s *Prehistoric India*, published in 1923. Kennedy’s book represents the quintessence of six decades of research into Indian paleoanthropology. It is an unparalleled mine of information and new ideas, insights, approaches, and interpretations. It is marked by thoroughness, meticulousness, compactness, and natural flow and lucidity of style. The book pioneers a new approach involving the integration of data from archaeological,
paleontological, ecological, and anthropological investigations, giving a comprehensive picture of the origins, diversity, and lifeways of southern Asian populations and of the story of human life on the subcontinent through distinct cultural periods from the Paleolithic to the Iron Age.

A prolific writer and gifted teacher, he generously shared his knowledge of human skeletal biology and South Asian prehistory with colleagues and students. It is heartening that his indirect student and follower, Professor Subhash Walimbe, has floated the idea of a collection of essays in his honor, and I am still overwhelmed to know that a member of Kennedy’s third generation of scholars, Dr. Gwen Robbins Schug is taking a lead in getting the idea materialized. There cannot be a better way to appreciate and remember the contributions Professor Kennedy made to the field. A large number of scholars working South Asia have shared their research and each contribution also traces methodological and conceptual developments in their own areas of research. This volume will help synthesize the current state of our understanding of prehistory in this important world region.

It is my pleasure and honor to write a formal dedication for this volume.

V.N. Misra
Pune, India
I successfully defended my PhD dissertation in June 2005, the same month that my supervisor, the eminent Kenneth A.R. Kennedy, retired from Cornell University. Whether this impeccable timing was my doing or his was never determined, but it left me the proud and final graduate student of a world-renowned biological anthropologist. As such, I am honored to have been given this opportunity to write a few words about the legacy of Kenneth Kennedy as a mentor and scholar, including the lasting effect his work has had—both directly and indirectly—on countless other anthropologists over the years.

Kenneth Adrian Raine Kennedy was born in Oakland, California on June 26, 1930, the only child of Walter and Margaret Kennedy. He moved to San Francisco in 1941, graduating from Lowell High School in 1949 and attending the University of California, Berkeley, the following year. Kennedy received his BA in 1953 and his MA in 1954. His MA thesis, written under the supervision of Dr. Theodore D. McCown and entitled *The Aboriginal Population of the Great Basin*, focused on cranial and postcranial skeletal morphology and was later published as a report by the University of California Archaeological Survey (Kennedy, 1954; 1959). Kennedy then served a three-year stint (1954–1957) in the military, being stationed at the Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, DC, and the Landstuhl Army Medical Center in Germany. In 1958 he returned to Berkeley for his doctoral studies under the supervision of McCown and Dr. Sherwood L. Washburn, taking seminar courses on anthropological history and theory, concepts and problems in physical anthropology, and vertebrate paleontology, among others. Kennedy completed his PhD in 1962 with the successful defense of his dissertation entitled *The Balangodese of Ceylon: Their Biological and Cultural Affinities with the Veddas* (Kennedy, 1962). It was with his doctoral research—and thanks, in no small part, to the influence of McCown—that he began an illustrious and lengthy career studying the paleoanthropology of South Asia. In 1964, after a postdoctoral position at Deccan College (Pune, India), Kennedy accepted an assistant professorship at Cornell University (Ithaca, NY), where he put down roots and built his
career. Even after his retirement in 2005, he remained active as professor emeritus—teaching courses until 2010 and continuing his scholarly work—until his death on April 23, 2014.

Between 1962 and 1988, Kennedy spent over 50 months in South Asia, both as a visiting scholar and as a field researcher. His extensive paleoanthropological work on the sub-Himalayan landmass included visiting fellowships in India (Deccan College, Pune, and the University of Allahabad) and Pakistan (University of Islamabad), as well as numerous field research projects in Sri Lanka, India, and Pakistan. The scope of Kennedy’s work over the years was nothing short of astonishing, ranging geographically from Sri Lanka in the southeast to Pakistan in the northwest and spanning extensive temporal periods from the Miocene (e.g., the anthropoid apes of the Siwalik Hills) through the middle Holocene (e.g., the Indus Valley civilization).

The breadth—and depth—of his published works has left an enviable legacy. Over the course of his career, Kennedy authored or coauthored well over 100 academic papers on South Asian paleoanthropology alone, including over 50 journal articles (e.g., Kennedy, 1969; 1978; 1990; 1999; 2008a; Kennedy and Ciochon, 1999; Kennedy et al., 1984; 1991) and over 60 contributed book chapters (e.g., Kennedy, 1983a; 1984; 1992; 2003a; Kennedy and Singh, 1997). In addition, he edited and authored over a dozen books and monographs on the topic (e.g., Kennedy, 1975; Kennedy and Possehl, 1976; 1984; Kennedy et al., 1986a; 1992), including his much lauded 2000 publication of God-Apes and Fossil Men (Kennedy, 2000a). This latter volume, earning Kennedy the 2002 W.W. Howells Prize from the Biological Anthropology Section of the American Anthropological Association, outlined the extensive history of paleoanthropological research in South Asia and provided a broad and meticulous survey of the subcontinent’s prehistoric cultures. In it, he effortlessly integrated archaeological, paleontological, ecological, and anthropological data and offered key insights gleaned from his decades-long work in the region.

If he had limited his scholarly endeavors to South Asian paleoanthropology alone, the legacy of Kennedy’s career would still have been guaranteed. But Kennedy also made impressive contributions to forensic anthropology and the history of biological anthropology, easily establishing himself among the notable anthropologists of the twentieth century. Kennedy was one of the founding members of the American Board of Forensic Anthropologists, being awarded the distinction of Diplomate (DABFA) in 1978. His numerous forensic anthropological works included publications on occupational stress (e.g., Capasso et al., 1999; İşcan and Kennedy, 1989; Kennedy, 1983b; 1989; 1998; Wilczak and Kennedy, 1998), individual identification (e.g., Kennedy, 1996; Kennedy et al., 1986b), and the race concept (e.g., Kennedy, 1995a; 2008b), among others (e.g., Kennedy, 2003b; 2005). Kennedy was also well known for his interest in the history of science, particularly the developments and contributions of biological anthropology. He authored over 20 publications on a variety of historical topics ranging from early interpretations of Darwinian evolution to perspectives on the lives and works of many former mentors and peers (e.g., Kennedy 1985; 1995b; 1997; 2000b; 2010; Kennedy and Brooks, 1984; Kennedy and Whittaker, 1976; Little and Kennedy, 2010). He also penned several obituaries in honor of close friends and colleagues in the field (e.g., Kennedy, 2012; Kennedy and Hausfater, 1986).

In addition to his research activities, Kennedy devoted much of his career to service, particularly to professional organizations, scholarly journals, and student training. Over the years, he was a member of at least 19 professional societies, including the American Anthropological Association (AAA), American Association of Physical Anthropologists (AAPA), and American Academy of Forensic Sciences, being elected to the executive committees of all three. He assumed editorial roles for American Anthropologist (published
by the AAA) and the American Journal of Physical Anthropology (published by the AAPA), and wrote over 30 book reviews published in journals as diverse as Nature, Current Anthropology, Human Biology, and American Paleontologist.

While Kennedy was recognized with honors such as the T. Dale Stewart Award for Forensic Anthropology (American Academy of Forensic Sciences, 1987) and the W.W. Howells Book Award (AAA, 2002), perhaps his most lasting legacy was his contribution to teaching and mentorship. It is difficult for me to speak for the thousands of undergraduate and graduate students who took Kennedy’s courses at Cornell University between 1964 and 2010, but I can say without hesitation that he was a much adored professor and that his classes, although challenging, were always very popular. He offered senior undergraduate and graduate courses in human biology and evolution; human paleontology; forensic anthropology; and human evolution: concepts, history, and theory—as well as special topics graduate courses such as forensic anthropology and paleoanthropology of South Asia.

His seminar courses were particularly enjoyable because many evening sessions were held at his lovely custom-built home on Hickory Circle. Students would sip sherry or apple cider as they sat around his office fireplace discussing the topic of the week. Kennedy himself was always quick to spice up the conversation with personal anecdotes drawn from the vast vault of material he had amassed over years of travel, fieldwork, and professional experience. He was very adept at putting his students at ease in order to facilitate genuine conversation and stimulate debate, and he could skillfully yet subtly steer discussions back to the topic at hand whenever they strayed, as they were often wont to do. The highlight of the evenings would always be the coffee and homemade cake offered at the end of each discussion by Kenneth’s gracious and charming wife, Margaret Carrick Fairlie Kennedy (herself an accomplished composer). Together, Kenneth and Margaret could bring out the best in every student at those evening seminars and make each one feel valued through the simple act of treating everyone with the utmost courtesy and respect. Kennedy’s courses, like the man himself, were memorable not only for their content, but also for their character.

Kennedy supervised 11 successful doctoral students at Cornell University between the early 1970s and 2005, with the collective breadth of their thesis topics and subsequent professional trajectories reflecting the essence and richness of his own career. As a biological anthropologist with a broad and varied expertise, he was able to mentor burgeoning scholars and guide graduate research projects on topics as diverse as modern human variation (Işcan, 1976; Lukacs, 1977), skeletal and dental morphology (Levisky, 1987; Lukacs, 1977; Turkel, 1982; Wilczak, 1998), primate anatomy (Elgart-Berry, 2000; Lovell, 1987), human adaptation (Hanson, 1988; Levisky, 1987; Sponsel, 1981), skeletal and dental pathology (Lieverse, 2005; Lovell, 1987), bone microarchitecture (Hanson, 1988), forensic identification in mass fatalities (Kontanis, 2004), and habitual and occupational activity (Lieverse, 2005; Wilczak, 1998). Geographically, his students’ research projects included South Asia, the Amazon, the American Midwest, the California coast, and central Siberia; temporally, they spanned time periods from the Early Neolithic (c. 8000–6800 cal BP) to the present day. Despite this incredible diversity, Kennedy was able to instill in his students many of the core values that made him a great scholar and mentor, including an unwavering commitment to academic integrity, ethical and responsible research, an aptitude for collaborative and interdisciplinary investigation, an understanding of the history and development of intellectual thought, and a true appreciation for the academic and scholarly contributions of those who preceded them.

After the completion of their degrees, all of Kennedy’s doctoral students moved on to build careers in their chosen fields, most in academia, and many eventually supervising graduate students of their own, and they theirs. Indeed, an extensive scholarly lineage—an
academic genealogical tree, if you will—has been firmly established over the years, with Kennedy himself occupying the basal node. Numerous anthropologists today, working in South Asia or elsewhere, can trace aspects of their training and mentorship back to him. The legacy of Kenneth A.R. Kennedy, therefore, lies not only in his name and the vast collection of his scholarly works, but also in the many students that he influenced, and all the careers and research paths that he helped to mold along the way. As one of those former students, and on behalf of all of them, thank you, Professor Kennedy!

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References


Map 1  Paleolithic sites in South Asia
Map 2  Prehistoric sites in South Asia
Map 3  Protohistoric sites in South Asia