

Dr. Elfriede R. (Kezia) Knauer

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BY DONALD WHITE

PENN MUSEUM HAS LOST a highly regarded authority on the Silk Road just months before the appearance of this special issue of *Expedition*. Dr. Elfriede Knauer died after a long illness, shortly

after agreeing to contribute to this issue. Kezia, as she was known to her family, friends, and colleagues, led an exceptional life. Born in Germany, she learned French, English, and Latin at an early age; her formal study of Classical Archaeology, Ancient History, the History of Art, and East Asian Studies eventually led to a Ph.D. from the Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Main, in 1951. That same year, she married Georg Nicolaus Knauer, now Professor Emeritus in the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. By her own account, her areas of specialization were Greek vase painting, the survival of classical themes in Renaissance art, the history of cartography, and classical influences on Central and East Asian art.

The Knauers came to the University of Pennsylvania in early 1975. In 1983, Kezia was appointed Research Associate in the Mediterranean Section at the Penn Museum, and from 1986 onward, served as a Consulting Scholar. She had the distinction of being elected a member of the American Philosophical Society in 1999, and additionally belonged to the Archäologische Gesellschaft zu Berlin. In 2002, she received the Director's Award for distinguished service to the Penn Museum.

Knauer's command of many subjects is reflected in her published work including *Coats, Queens, and Cormorants* (Zürich 2009), a compendium of articles dealing with the historical, cultural, and artistic interconnections between East and West. Her earlier book, *The Camel's Load in Life and Death* (Zürich 1998), specifically dealt with trade along the Silk Road, much of which was based on her firsthand observations; this book received the prestigious Prix Stanislas Julien in 1999 as the best book in Sinology. Yet for this writer and others who for the past 30 years attended the same lectures and meetings as the Knauers, perhaps the greatest proof of the breadth of her knowledge

came in the form of her questions and comments to the speakers which reliably followed every

talk. No matter the topic at hand, her questions were invariably models of perception and verbal lucidity, always delivered with disarming kindness and modesty to the very heart of the subject and leaving everyone better informed for having heard them.

Her knowledge of the Silk Road grew out of a series of journeys undertaken by the Knauers beginning in the early 1980s and continuing until a short time before her death. Indefatigable and adventurous travelers, they visited nearly every European country as part of Georg Knauer's library-based research into Latin translations of the Homeric epics, interspersed with excursions to Syria, Israel, Egypt, Tunisia, and the various Classical regions abutting the northern Mediterranean.

The capstone to four decades of travel included trips to China, Tibet, South Korea, Japan, the Philippines, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, India, and Pakistan, as well as to the Crimea, Ukraine, Armenia, and Georgia. This enabled Dr. Knauer to examine the Silk Route from the east and the west, a study which ended up as an all-embracing passion. The fruits of this took the form of books, articles, and a host of memorable public lectures, all of which established her as a leading expert in subjects too often avoided by specialists as linguistically, historically, and even physically too challenging to undertake.

For many of her friends, Kezia Knauer was part of a remarkable wave of European scholars who revolutionized the study of the classics, archaeology, and art history in this country during the 1930s, 40s, and 50s. Her reputation is destined to remain intact for years to come. One can only wish that she had been granted the time to write her recollections of travels along the Silk Road for this special issue. The Museum and all its friends shall miss her greatly. 🏠

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Elfriede R. (Kezia) Knauer, photographed by her husband in the early 1980s, just as their trips along the Silk Road began.