IN MEMORIAM

Dr. Judith Freedman

Judith Freedman, who died in London on 20 December 2009, was for fifty years associated with the production of the *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, which her husband Professor Maurice Freedman had helped establish half a century earlier and which served and serves as the vehicle for the dissemination of high-quality research into problems of social formation, ethnic identity and demography amongst Jews both of the diaspora and of Israel.

Dr Freedman was herself a scholar of international repute. Born into the large and well-connected Djamour family in Egypt on 22 September 1921, she was educated at the University of Cairo and at the London School of Economics, where she completed her doctoral research. This investigation, focussing on issues of kinship and matrimony within the Malay community of Singapore, resulted in two influential monographs, *Malay Kinship & Marriage in Singapore* and *The Muslim Matrimonial Court in Singapore*.

Her professional interest in the social anthropology of south-east Asia had brought her into contact with a fellow researcher in this field, Maurice Freedman, late of the Royal Artillery. The couple were married in London in 1946. She collaborated with Sir Raymond Firth (her doctoral supervisor, Professor of anthropology at LSE and one of the founders of modern social anthropology) in his researches into issues of family and kinship in a south London borough. Maurice, meanwhile, had returned to LSE as a lecturer, succeeding Firth as Professor of anthropology there in 1965. Five years later Maurice moved to Oxford, where, on the retirement of Sir Edward Evans-Pritchard, he had been elected to its prestigious chair of social anthropology, and to an All Souls fellowship. Ever strong in her prejudices, Judith insisted on remaining in London: though she had numerous Oxford friends, she could not abide its donnish society and the high-table politics it spawned.

Judith and Maurice did however share a passion for interdisciplinary studies. They were both deeply committed to their Jewish identities, and preoccupied with problems of Jewish survival and development in the post-Holocaust world. Encouraged by LSE’s new director, the economist Sir Sydney Caine (whom the Freedmans had known at the

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University of Malaya, where Caine had been vice-chancellor), Maurice and LSE’s renowned Professor of sociology, Morris Ginsberg, reacted positively to an invitation from Dr. Aaron Steinberg, head of cultural department of the World Jewish Congress, to establish an interdisciplinary academic journal devoted to the study of Jewish social relations. So was born (1959) the *Jewish Journal of Sociology*, with which Judith Freedman’s name and reputation were pivotally connected first as assistant editor and later, following Maurice Freedman’s sudden and unexpected death in 1975 at the comparatively young age of 54, as managing editor and secretary.

That the *Journal* survived both the heartbreak of Maurice’s early death and the withdrawal of WJC funding five years later is due entirely to Judith Freedman’s efforts. But for this single-minded (some would say obstinate) devotion she paid a heavy price. Her own academic career — which had promised much — came to a halt.

It is easy to overlook now how important the *JJS* was in providing a vehicle for the publication and dissemination of research of the highest quality touching both upon British Jewry and upon the larger Jewish world. Judith gave the most generous of interpretations to the meaning of ‘sociology’. In the pages of the *Journal* are to be found essays and book reviews covering every conceivable aspect of Jewish history and of Jewish social affairs, the peer-reviewed material of interest not merely to sociologists and social scientists but to historians, philosophers and students alike of Judaism and of comparative religion. The regular ‘Chronicle’ section, which Judith herself composed, provided the distilled essence of relevant published research findings worldwide.

To the (unpaid) editorship of the *Journal* Judith brought the most rigorous academic standards. To its publication she devoted all her considerable energies, even when grave illness would have led a less single-minded editor to relinquish the role. She produced each issue of the *Journal* almost single-handedly, insisting — completely undaunted by the advent of the digital age — on the submission by post of two typescript copies of manuscripts that were to be considered for publication. But her standards of editorship and production were impeccable and her yardsticks of academic rigour were beyond question. She also insisted on what would now be termed ‘plain English’. She was known to rewrite articles completely where she felt that the quality of English was not sufficiently robust, a conviction she carried into everyday life, sometimes refusing to settle bills until they were rewritten so as to be — in her view — intelligible.

Judith was buried on 23 December 2009 near to her husband at the Golders Green cemetery of the West London Synagogue of British Jews. There were no children of the marriage.

*Geoffrey Alderman*