

Obituary Albert SCHACHTER (1932–2024)

The editors of Teiresias Journal Online are shattered to learn about the death of Albert Schachter on November 29, 2024. Albert has been the doyen of Boiotian Studies for more than five decades. His research has fostered the exploration of the region and its people across antiquity, from Mycenaean to later Roman times, like that of no other scholar. Everyone who has had the pleasure of knowing him in person realizes, however, that Albert would not have wanted to hear such praise.

Albert founded “Teiresias. Online Review and Bibliography of Boiotian Studies” and served as its co-editor and, from 1980, sole editor for almost the entire stretch of the journal’s initial series. In 2015 he entrusted Fabienne Marchand with this task but continued to advise the journal whenever approached. In this capacity as progenitor of Teiresias – an open-access journal *avant la lettre* geared toward the exchange of knowledge and dissemination of scholarship on the study of ancient Boiotia – he also assisted with the transfer of the journal from McGill University to the University of Münster and journal relaunch under its new label Teiresias Journal Online. In the 1970s, he was the co-editor of Teiresias’ Epigraphica section. Albert also served as co-editor and then sole editor of the first Teiresias supplement series and as honorary board member of the new Teiresias Supplements Online.

Teiresias was established at a time when Ancient Historians were typically fascinated with the grandeur of Athens, its democracy and empire, and Sparta as the all too obvious adversary to all that. Greek history beyond Athens and Sparta was neither of interest to the mainstream of scholarship of the 1970s, nor was it actually considered possible to delve into non-Athenian

realms in any substantiated sense. Regionalism and ethnic identity were mostly uncharted territories, and Boiotia and its people – thanks to an ancient saying – were regarded as backwards. Albert was well familiar with the spirit of the day and yet he chose a different route. Born in Winnipeg, he went on to study at Jesus College in Oxford where he graduated in 1956 and earned his PhD with a thesis on “Cults of Boiotia,” written under the tutelage of David Lewis. The PhD experience put Albert on a pioneering path. If sources, or the lack of the same, were the problem, it required a hard-wired collection of all of the available evidence. From 1981 to 1994, four volumes of “Cults of Boiotia” (Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies, Supplements) were published, a thoroughly organized and extremely laborious collection of all sources that spoke to the conduct of religion and ritual in ancient Boiotia. When ethnic identity formation became a key topic in Ancient History from the 1990s, “Cults of Boiotia” was the indispensable go-to item for everyone who was interested in regional cross-fertilization and notions of ethnic belonging – and for everyone who engages in those conversations today. “Cults”, in many ways, was among the most foundational books in Greek history at the time.

Maybe “Cults” was also indicative of the fact that full-fledged monographs were not Albert’s favorite research format to publish his findings. In 2016, his publication “Boiotia in Antiquity. Selected Papers” (Cambridge UP) assembled some of his most important articles, including several original contributions. Although at the time Albert insisted that the book was not a monograph, nor even a quasi-monograph, it was remarked that the collection was a history of Boiotia in pieces. If Albert’s approach to Boiotia was holistic in that he fully covered and interpreted all epigraphic testimony, archaeological data, numismatic evidence, and literary tradition, “Boiotia in Antiquity” put this type of scholarship between two bookends. Thematically, virtually all major topics of Boiotian history were covered from the beginnings to the end of antiquity, presented in compelling intellectual fashion, and in Albert’s unique narrative style, refreshingly immune to jargon.

Albert taught at McGill University in Montreal from 1951 until 2001. Hiram Mills Professor of Classics and a two-time head in the Department of Classics, Albert chaired the curriculum committee for the Faculty of Arts and served as its Associate and Acting Dean. After his retirement, he relocated to Oxford with his wife, where they lived a quiet, but not secluded life.

A familiar visitor to the Bodleian library and weekly attendant at the Monday Epigraphy Workshop, Albert's scholarly voice and advice were heard and respected long after his retirement from McGill; university politics had never been his thing to begin with. At Oxford he enjoyed welcoming academic friends and junior scholars, sharing his stupendous knowledge and expertise with them in his modest, warm-hearted manner, and passing on his enthusiasm for Boiotia to the academic generations after him.

Albert Schachter is survived by his loving wife June. His scholarship, generosity, and kindness are missed by everyone in the Teiresias family. He lives on in scholarship and in our hearts.

The TJO editors