

Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America

ISSN: 2572-3626

Volume 1
Issue 1 *Special Issue: Politics and Religion in Amazonia*

Article 20

June 2003

Irving Goldman (1911–2002): A Brief Remembrance

Jean E. Jackson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti>



Part of the [Anthropology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Jackson, Jean E. (2003). "Irving Goldman (1911–2002): A Brief Remembrance", *Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 20.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.70845/2572-3626.1057>

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.trinity.edu/tipiti/vol1/iss1/20>

This Obituary is brought to you for free and open access by Digital Commons @ Trinity. It has been accepted for inclusion in Tipití: Journal of the Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Trinity. For more information, please contact jcostanz@trinity.edu.

OBITUARIES

Irving Goldman (1911-2002): A Brief Remembrance

JEAN E. JACKSON

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Irving Goldman, Professor of Anthropology Emeritus, Sarah Lawrence College, died on April 7, 2002 at the age of 90. He was one of Boas' last students, and Ruth Benedict sat on his Ph.D. committee. His first research, among Modoc Indians in Oregon and California, led to collaboration with Margaret Mead. He contributed four chapters to a book she edited, *Cooperation and Competition among Primitive Peoples* (1936). In 1939 he carried out fieldwork among the Cubeo (Pamiwa) of the Vaupés region of Colombia, publishing *The Cubeo: Indians of the Northwest Amazon* in 1963. The first modern ethnography of Tukanoan peoples, the book is still considered a seminal contribution to Amazonian studies and a splendid example of ethnographic writing. In 1975 Goldman published *The Mouth of Heaven: An Introduction to Kwakiutl Religious Thought*, a reinterpretation of the Kwakiutl potlatch, and *Ancient Polynesian Society* appeared in 1970. Both books are very highly regarded. *Heheneewa of the Cuduiari, an Introduction to Cuban Religious Thought*, based on field research between 1968 and 1970 and in 1979, will be published posthumously.

A lifelong resident of Brooklyn, Goldman was born September 2, 1911 to Russian-born parents. He graduated from Brooklyn College in 1933 and earned a Ph.D. in anthropology at Columbia in 1941. After teaching at Brooklyn College from 1940 to 1942, he moved to Washington, D.C., to work as a consultant at the Bureau of Latin American Research. Drafted into the army, he moved over to the State Department's Office of Strategic Services, also as an expert on Latin America. In 1947 he moved to Sarah Lawrence College, where he stayed until he retired in 1980. He then taught at the New School of Social Research until 1987. His wife of more than 50 years, Hannah Stern, died in 1986. He is survived by three nieces and Sonya Shenn, his partner for the last decade of his life.

Goldman was tough, and politically and morally forthright. A lifelong opponent of injustice and social inequality, he joined the American Communist Party in 1936, but resigned, quite disillusioned, in 1942. Called before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, he confirmed his own ties but refused

to name names, invoking his First Amendment rights to free speech. Few of those required to testify took that route, as the outcome was more uncertain than claiming the Fifth Amendment right to avoid self-incrimination.

I met Irving in 1971, in Mitú, Vaupés, when Peter Silverwood-Cope, a graduate student from Cambridge University, and I arranged a boat ride to visit Irving at the settlement on the Cuduyari River where he was staying. He was very warm and welcoming, despite the fact that neither Peter nor I had thought to bring him his mail! Irving and I kept in touch through the years, exchanging drafts of papers and seeing each other occasionally, at AAA meetings and at his home in Brooklyn Heights.

Irving is exactly the kind of senior scholar one wants to have working in one's geographical area of research. Utterly incapable of feeling threatened or competitive, he saw those of us doing fieldwork in the Vaupés at the time of his second research stint there—Peter, Steve and Christine Hugh-Jones and myself—as younger scholars doing interesting work, work he wanted to hear about and discuss. It occurred to me at the time that to some degree he saw his younger, 1939 fieldworker self in us. Whatever the reason, he was always generous and full of encouragement—even though surely he must have occasionally wondered just what we were up to. I am really referring to myself—he understood what Steve, Christine and Peter, and Patrice Bidou and Pierre-Yves Jacopin (French and Swiss students, respectively, of Lévi-Strauss) were up to. I am thinking in particular of a paper I sent to him early on, later published in *Ethnology*, brimming over with the kinship algebra fashionable in some places in the early 1970s. It is a bit embarrassing now to recall.

The Cubeo continues to serve as a model ethnography, in part because it succeeds so well at what is now referred to as “experience-near” ethnographic representation. Irving's knowledge of the Cubeo was so extensive, so successful was he at capturing Cubeo humor, their daily routines, their thoughts and feelings, that readers come away feeling they know them as real people. In his hands their rituals come alive as performances of paramount importance to the participants—the opposite of the all too frequently encountered arid text, its descriptions and theorizing devoid of emotional content.

As Irving aged he became even sweeter, and remained as modest as ever. In the early 1990s, Janet Chernela, a friend who worked in the Brazilian Vaupés, and I began planning an AAA session on the Northwest Amazon in his honor. He told us he really didn't want to do it. We stopped, of course, and while I respected his wishes, I still wish we could have shown our appreciation and admiration with a scholarly session discussing his lifelong interests in systems of thought, ranked societies, religion, and sociocultural evolution. He leaves behind an extraordinarily large number of scholars influenced by his superbly comprehensive field research, analytical perspective, and theoretical contributions.

Irving Goldman: A Brief Remembrance 157

I have recently been corresponding by e-mail with Sr. Orlando Rodríguez, a Cubeo from the Cuduyari, who works in the national indigenous rights movement. His uncle, Pedro Rodríguez, and father, Luís Rodríguez, collaborated with Irving in the 1970s fieldwork. On 13 February 2002, Orlando Rodríguez wrote me, requesting that I forward a letter he had written to Irving. Most unfortunately, by then Irving was too sick to be able to understand it. Although Orlando Rodríguez was a little boy when Irving was staying in his community, he remembers meeting him, and reports that reading the Spanish translation of Irving's ethnography, and listening to his relatives discussing the research, led to a decision to earn a degree in anthropology at the National University of Colombia. Orlando Rodríguez ends the letter with a wish that Irving know that he is very much remembered among the Cubeo and that they will remain his friend forever. It is a very touching letter, and would have pleased Irving immensely.

Irving leaves behind another community, a very large one of anthropological colleagues in the United States and Europe, who also will remember him and remain his friend forever.

August, 2002

Partial Bibliography of Irving Goldman

Books

- 1963 *The Cubeo: Indians of the Northwest Amazon*. Champaign-Urbana: University of Illinois Press (1979 2nd edition)
- 1970 *Ancient Polynesian Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- 1975 *The Mouth of Heaven: An Introduction to Kwakiutl Religious Thought*. New York: John Wiley Interscience.
- n.d. Hehenewa of the Cuduiari, an introduction to Cuban Religious thought (in progress at the time of death).

Articles, Commentaries, Reviews

- 1937a "The Ifugao of the Philippine Islands." In *Cooperation and Competition among Primitive Peoples*. Margaret Mead, editor, pp. 153–179. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- 1937b "The Kwakiutl of Vancouver Island." In *Cooperation and Competition among Primitive Peoples*. Margaret Mead, editor, pp. 180–209. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- 1937c "The Zuni of New Mexico." In *Cooperation and Competition among Primitive Peoples*. Margaret Mead, editor, pp. 313–353. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- 1937d "The Bathonga of South Africa." In *Cooperation and Competition among Primitive Peoples*. Margaret Mead, editor, pp. 354–381. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- 1940 "The Alkatcho Carrier of British Columbia." In *Acculturation in Seven American Indian Tribes*, Ralph Linton, editor, pp. 333–390. New York: Appleton-Century.

158 Jean E. Jackson

- 1941 "The Alkatcho Carrier Historical Background of Crest Prerogatives." *American Anthropologist* 43:396-418.
- 1948 "Tribes of Uaupés-Caquetá Region." In *Handbook of South American Indians, Volume 3: Tropical Forest Tribes*. Julian Steward, editor, pp. 763-798. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 143.
- 1950 "Psychiatric Interpretation of Russian History, A Reply to Geoffrey Gorer." *The American Slavic and East European Review* 9:151-161.
- 1955 "Status Rivalry and Cultural Evolution in Polynesia." *American Anthropologist* 57:680-97.
- 1957 "Cultural Evolution in Polynesia: A Reply to Criticism." *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 66:156-64.
- 1958a "Social Stratification and Cultural Evolution in Polynesia." *Ethnohistory* 5:242-249.
- 1958b "Variations in Polynesian Social Organization." *Journal of the Polynesian Society* 66:374-90.
- 1959 "Evolution and Anthropology." *Victorian Studies* 3(1):55-75.
- 1960a "The Evolution of Status Systems in Polynesia." In *Selected Papers of the Fifth International Congress of Anthropological Sciences*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- 1960b "The Evolution of Polynesian Societies." In *Culture and History: Essays in Honor of Paul Radin*. Stanley Diamond, editor, pp. 687-712. New York: Columbia University Press.
- 1964 "The Structure of Ritual in the Northwest Amazon." In *Process and Pattern in Culture: Essays in Honor of Julian Steward*. Robert A. Manners, editor, pp. 111-122. Chicago: Aldine.
- 1976a "Time, Space and Descent: The Cubeo Example." *Actes du XLII^e Congrès International des Americanistes* (1972), pp. 175-183. Paris.
- 1976b "Perceptions of Nature and the Structure of Society: The Question of Cubeo Descent." *Dialectical Anthropology* 1:287-292.
- 1976c "Reply to Donald T. Campbell, APA Presidential Address." *American Psychologist* 31:361-363.
- 1976d "Ritual Distribution and Exchange among the Southern Kwakiutl." Paper presented at the Northwest Coast Studies Conference, Vancouver, Canada.
- 1976e "Commemorative Review, Franz Boas, The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians." *Social Science Quarterly* (Special Issue: Social Science in America, the Last Two Hundred Years.) 57:221-223.
- 1980 "Boas on the Kwakiutl: The Ethnographic Tradition." In *Theory and Practice: Essays Presented to Gene Weltfish*. Stanley Diamond, editor, pp. 331-346. The Hague: Mouton.
- 1981a "Foundations of Social Hierarchy, A Northwest Amazon Case." Paper presented to the New York Academy of Sciences, Section on Anthropology, New York City.
- 1981b "Reflections of Nature in Vaupes Cultures." Reviews of *From the Milk River* (Christine Hugh-Jones) and *The Palm and the Pleides* (Stephen Hugh-Jones). *American Ethnologist* 8:383-389.
- 1982 "The Rational and the Visionary in Cubeo Religious Thought." Paper presented at the Graduate Faculty General Seminar, New School for Social Research, New York City.

Irving Goldman: A Brief Remembrance 159

- 1987a “Genealogy.” In *Encyclopedia of Religion, Volume 5*. Mircea Elaide, editor-in-chief, pp. 502–506. New York: MacMillan.
- 1987b “The Raw Deal of Captain James Cook; or Death by Conjuncture in the South Seas. Review article on *Islands of History* (Marshall Sahlins). *Ethnohistory* 34:201–206
- 1993 “Hierarchy and Power in the Tropical Forest.” In *Configurations of Power: Holistic Anthropology in Theory and Practice*. John S. Henderson and Patricia J. Netherly, editors, pp. 137–159. Published in Cooperation with the Society for Latin American Anthropology and the American Anthropological Association, as Volume 11: Society for Latin American Anthropology Series, Jeffrey David Ehrenreich, general editor. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Tipiti*

*Journal of The Society for the
Anthropology of Lowland South America*

Subscription Rates Subscriptions to Tipiti are a benefit of membership in SALSA (The Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America), and are available at the following rates:

United States/Europe Professional Member:	\$40.00
Latin America/Asia Professional Member	\$25.00
Student Member	\$25.00
Institutional rate	\$100.00

Subscriptions and membership dues should be sent to Donald Pollock, Secretary, SALSA, Department of Anthropology, SUNY at Buffalo, New York 14261 USA.

Payment may be made via credit card and in major currencies by contacting the SALSA secretary.

The current SALSA Board:

William Balée, President	Beth A. Conklin, At-large
Janet Chernela, President-elect	Clark Erickson, At-large
Donald Pollock, Secretary/Treasurer	Maria Moreno, At-large
Jeffrey David Ehrenreich, Editor, <i>Tipiti</i>	Anne-Christine Taylor, At-large

Copyright © 2003 by The Society for the Anthropology of Lowland South America.
All rights reserved; no reproduction without permission
ISSN: 1545-4703.

* "The *tipiti* is an extendable basketry tube made from reed strips, enclosed at the lower end and open at the upper. It is plaited on the bias, which is to say that the two sets of interwoven elements opposed to each other run diagonally in relation to the long axis of the tube ... In using this device to squeeze manioc, it is first compressed from both ends to widen the opening at the top. Through this opening, the tube is filled with grated manioc pulp. Once filled, the *tipiti* is hung from the end of a beam by a loop woven into the upper end of the tube. Through a similar loop at the lower end, a pole is inserted to be used as a lever. Pressing down on the lever stretches the *tipiti*, thus narrowing its diameter. As it stretches, the inner volume of the *tipiti* is reduced to about half of what it was when first filled with grated pulp. The pressure to which the resulting lateral compression subjects the contents of the device forces the poisonous juice of the manioc pulp to be extruded through the interstices of the plaited mesh, dripping down the outside of the tube."

[Quoted from Robert L. Carneiro, 2000, "The Evolution of the Tipiti." In *Cultural Evolution: Contemporary Viewpoints*, Gary M. Feinman and Linda Manzanilla, editors, pp. 61-93. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers.]