FLOYD GLENN LOUNSBURY

Floyd Lounsbury, one of the twentieth century's most influential anthropological linguists, passed away on May 14, 1998, shortly after his eighty-fourth birthday.[1] He is survived by his wife, Masako Yokoyama Lounsbury, their daughter Ruth, and a sister Elva. He was born in Stevens Point, Wisconsin on April 25, 1914, the son of John Glenn Lounsbury and Anna Louise Jorgensen Lounsbury, and spent his boyhood on a Wisconsin farm.

His first love was mathematics, and he graduated from the University of Wisconsin at Madison in 1941 with a major in that field. The course of his career was fortuitously set by Morris Swadesh's brief employment on the Wisconsin faculty from 1937 to 1939. In addition to studying linguistics with W. Freeman Twaddell, Lounsbury audited Swadesh's courses on American Indian languages and linguistic field methods. When Swadesh obtained funds from the Works Progress Administration for 'a phonetic vocabulary of the Oneida Indian language and the accumulation of native folk lore', he selected Lounsbury as his assistant. On Swadesh's departure from Wisconsin, Lounsbury became the project director. He devised an Oneida orthography, taught it to a dedicated group of young men who used it to collect texts on a variety of subjects from speakers of the language, and analyzed and disseminated these materials (Campisi & Hauptman 1981). WPA funding ended in the summer of 1940, but Lounsbury stayed on at Wisconsin in the M.A. program, preparing a thesis on Oneida phonology. World War II interrupted his plans, however, and the master's degree was not awarded until 1946.

During the war Lounsbury served as a meteorologist in the U.S. Army Air Corps in Brazil, where he learned Portuguese and puzzled his comrades by showing an interest in Brazilian culture. When the war ended he seriously considered a career in meteorology, but the offer of a fellowship from the Rockefeller Foundation convinced him that he should instead enroll as a graduate student in the department of anthropology at Yale, where he received the Ph.D. in 1949 with a dissertation on Oneida verb morphology. The publication of that work (Lounsbury 1953) established the basic framework and terminology that has been applied to the analysis of Iroquoian languages ever since.

He was hired immediately by the Yale department of anthropology, where he taught from 1949 until his retirement in 1979, being affiliated during most of that period with the department of linguistics as well. He was a Fellow of the Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (1963–64), and was on two occasions a Senior Research Scholar at Dumbarton Oaks in Washington (1973–74 and 1977–78). He was elected to the National Academy of Sciences in 1969, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences in 1976, and the American Philosophical Society in 1987. In 1971 he received the Wilbur Cross Medal from the Yale Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, the school's highest honor to one of its alumni. He was awarded an honorary LL.D. by the University of Pennsylvania in 1987, and was chosen to deliver the Distinguished Lecture at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association in 1990. A full bibliography of his work is available in Chafe 1998.

Lounsbury is known especially for his contributions to three distinct areas of scholarship: Iroquoian linguistics, the study of kinship systems, and the decipherment of Mayan hieroglyphs. In all three areas he played a leading role not only through his own contri-

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butions but also by setting much of their research agendas. Less widely known is his contribution to the study of hesitations in speech, published during the formative years of psycholinguistics, when he was influenced by information theory to hypothesize a relation between pausing and statistical uncertainty. Also less known is his unpublished fieldwork with Natchez, and with the Brazilian languages Bororo and Terena.

Lounsbury's influence on Iroquoian linguistics was profound. He himself worked to a greater or lesser extent with most of the extant Iroquoian languages, above all with Oneida, but also extensively with Mohawk, Cayuga, Tuscarora, and Cherokee. He determined the career paths of a succession of Yale students, some in anthropology and some in linguistics, whose work with Iroquoian languages followed his example: Wallace Chafe with Seneca and Onondaga, Paul Postal with Mohawk, Marianne Mithun with Tuscarora, Mohawk, Cayuga, and Seneca, Hanni Woodbury with Onondaga, Clifford Abbott with Oneida, William Cook with Cherokee, and most recently Bryan Gick with Oneida. He also significantly influenced the work of other Iroquoianists, including Gunther Michelson on Mohawk, Karin Michelson on Mohawk and Oneida, John Beatty on Mohawk, Nancy Bonvillain on Mohawk, Michael Foster on Cayuga, Blair Rudes on Tuscarora, and Janine Scancarelli on Cherokee.

Lounsbury was trained in the post-Bloomfieldian structuralist tradition, but he early felt the need to move beyond its ambivalence about semantics. He discovered in systems of kinship terminology an area where structuralist methods could be systematically applied to meaning in ways that paralleled their application to phonology and morphology. He mined the data in Morgan 1871 in ways that no one had before him, discovering, among other things, that the Iroquois themselves deviated from what was being called the Iroquois kinship system. This detailed empirical study led more generally to his first published results, which focused on Pawnee kinship usage (Lounsbury 1956). His approach was to analyze the denotations of kinship vocabulary in terms of a limited set of semantic 'components', much as linguists had defined phonological systems in terms of a limited set of features. Lounsbury showed that a small number of components and rules accounted for the data gathered by ethnographers on a variety of structurally disparate systems, as he demonstrated for the Iroquois, Crow, Omaha, and other systems in articles published during the 1960s, articles that were tours de force of both theoretical insight and attention to accuracy. This work had a seminal influence on the kind of research on diverse cultural systems that characterized anthropological linguistics at the time, stimulating work that was carried forward by Harold Conklin, William Sturtevant, Charles Frake, Paul Friedrich, Harold Scheffler, and many others.

During the 1950s Lounsbury became fascinated with Mayan hieroglyphs, and he began devoting increasing amounts of time to that topic. His interests eventually extended to all facets of hieroglyph interpretation. He concerned himself with problems in the dynastic histories of certain sites, the mythological content of historical inscriptions, the evolutionary history of individual signs in the script, and (building on his kinship work) the genealogy of Mayan rulers. In spite of the diversity of his research, it rested on two main foundations, one linguistic, the other mathematical.

In Russia Yuri Knorozov had argued that Mayan characters had phonetic values instead of or in addition to logographic ones. Lounsbury convinced himself of the correctness of that view, which nevertheless remained a minority view until sometime in the 1970s. By vigorously pursuing decipherment on his own, he was able to correct errors in Knorozov's work and to extend the substantive and methodological foundations for further decipherment along the same lines. His publications in the 1970s set

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forth clear methodological principles for the discovery and demonstration of phonetic values that lay behind a growing body of decipherments in the late 1970s and 1980s. It was fifteen years after he began working in this area before his first major paper on the subject appeared, but in the meantime he had influenced a number of students and colleagues through a now-legendary series of classes at Yale. They were attended by a new generation of students and colleagues: archeologists, linguists, art historians, and epigraphers, many of whom went on to become leading contributors to the field. Work that was done in his classes began to appear in important volumes in the late 1960s. As more Mayanists entered the field in the mid to late 1970s they began to come to similar conclusions, but it was in large part Lounsbury's persuasiveness, as he made his case for a linguistically oriented Mayan epigraphy, that led scholars to understand the close connection of Mayan writing with Mayan languages. Even while the principles of phonological representation were being established and a substantial amount of Mayan vocabulary being read, Lounsbury recognized that scant attention was being given to the grammatical analysis of hieroglyphic texts. He saw progress in this area as the 'last frontier' of Mayan epigraphic studies, and he provided direction and fundamental results that continue to play a central role in what has since become an active area of research to which many are contributing.

While Lounsbury provided direction and crucial results that became a cornerstone for much of this linguistically oriented work, by the time others began to take it up his own focus had come to rest in the domain of his first love, mathematics. Decipherment in Mesoamerica has almost always been based on the analysis of calendrical patterns. The astronomical, calendrical, and other mathematical tables in fifteenth-century hieroglyphic manuscripts and the neat but complex structural patterns of a variety of calendrical and astronomical cycles appealed to Lounsbury's mathematical mind. He worked on these problems from almost the beginning of his Mayan studies, eventually publishing a major synthesis of what was known concerning Mayan numeration, calendrics, and astronomy, an enduring and fundamental reference in this area (Lounsbury 1978). He continued to work actively on Mayan mathematics throughout the 1980s, extending his work to the investigation of astronomical knowledge, its calendrical structure, and cultural uses reflected in the hieroglyphic texts from the third to the ninth centuries.

In the 1990s Lounsbury began to cut back on Mayan projects, feeling an obligation to narrow his active research to Iroquoian studies and to Oneida and Tuscarora in particular, composing a Tuscarora version of the Iroquois Thanksgiving Address and collaborating with Bryan Gick on the interpretation of a major Oneida text that he had recorded much earlier from Damos Elm. Until quite recently he participated actively in conferences on both Iroquoian and Mayan topics, meeting frequently with friends and colleagues to discuss ongoing research in these fields. His presence, erudition, insight, and supportive friendliness will be greatly missed by all who are engaged in both fields of study, and by many others who came under his influence. He was deeply loved by all who were fortunate enough to work with him and to benefit from his wisdom and personality. He holds a very special place in our hearts, as in the fields to which he contributed so much.

[Wallace Chafe, *University of California, Santa Barbara*; John Justeson, *State University of New York, Albany*.]

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