

## INTRODUCTION

Although there had been numerous isolated studies dealing with Chicano history and culture for many years, it was not until the 1960s, with the advent of the Chicano social, political and cultural movement, that such studies began to be treated as part of a related area of study—Chicano Studies. In fact, the 1960s saw the establishment of many Chicano studies programs in colleges and universities throughout the southwestern United States and beyond, including programs in Mexico, Canada and Europe. There has since been an enormous increase in all activities related to Chicano studies. For example, to accommodate this increase in interest and activity, many private and university publishing houses, distribution outlets and literary and scholarly journals were established. There is now a respectable number of published works in all of the traditional disciplines—history, sociology, psychology, anthropology, education, literature and linguistics—addressing Chicano issues. Works range from brief scholarly essays to lengthy monographs in the social sciences; from bilingual collections of poetry, drama, and short stories to classic and innovative novels; from literary criticism to sophisticated studies on the linguistic expression of Chicanos.

On the other hand, the earliest studies of Chicano folklore can be traced to the late nineteenth century. Since the early twentieth century, Stanford University, the University of New Mexico, the University of Texas, the University of Arizona and others have amassed vast holdings of Chicano folklore materials in their libraries, and have sponsored research by illustrious pioneers such as Aurelio Macedonio Espinosa (California); Arthur Leon Campa (Colorado); Juan Bautista Rael and Rubén Cobos (New Mexico); and Américo Paredes (Texas), who have made invaluable contributions to the field. Their works, which can be found in the

principal folklore journals, in books and monographs, and in unpublished manuscripts and recordings housed in university archives, all attest to the intensity of the research activity in the first half of the twentieth century. During the Great Depression the Works Project Administration (WPA) also sponsored many Chicano folklore research projects throughout the region. Thus, in sheer volume, Chicano folklore compilations rival those of entire nations. And the quality is unsurpassed.

The articles selected for inclusion in this anthology are representative of hundreds of relatively brief scholarly articles, and sometimes less formal articles, which have appeared in the leading folklore journals such as the *Journal of American Folklore*, *California Folklore Quarterly* (later *Western Folklore*), *New Mexico Folklore Quarterly*, *New Mexico Folklore Record*, the *Publications of the Texas Folklore Society*, as well as in numerous regional and local magazines.

The list of folklorists who have made significant contributions through the years but are not represented here includes John J. Bourke, J. Frank Dobie, John Englekirk, Jovita González, Alan and John Lomax, Soledad Pérez, J. D. Robb, Stanley I. Robe, Merle Simmons, and Américo Paredes. Unfortunately, the Center was not able to secure permission to reprint two outstanding articles by Américo Paredes who may well be the Dean of Chicano folklorists.

There are also major exhaustive and authoritative studies which, unfortunately, could not be edited adequately for inclusion in this anthology. There are, for instance, full-scale collections of folktales (José Manuel Espinosa, *Spanish Folktales From New Mexico*, and Juan B. Rael, *Cuentos Españoles de Colorado y de Nuevo Méjico*); legends and folktales (Arthur L. Campa, *Treasure of the Sangre de Cristos: Tales and Traditions of the Spanish Southwest*); poetry (Arthur L. Campa, *Spanish Folk-Poetry in New Mexico*); the folksong (Juan B. Rael, *The New Mexican Alabado*); the corrido (Américo Paredes, *With His Pistol in His Hand: A Border Ballad and Its Hero*); folk drama (Juan B. Rael, *The Sources and Diffusion of Mexican Shepherds' Plays*, and Arthur L., Campa, *Los Comanches: A New Mexican Folk Drama*); the proverb (Rubén Cobos, *Southwest Spanish Proverbs*); folk religion (Marta Weigle, *Brothers of Light, Brothers of Blood: The Penitentes of the Southwest*); and folk medicine (Ari Kiev, *Curanderismo: Mexican American Folk Psychiatry*).

Not to be forgotten are bibliographies which have been compiled, the most recent of which is Michael Heisley's comprehensive and authoritative

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work, *An Annotated Bibliography of Chicano Folklore from the Southwestern United States* (Los Angeles: UCLA, Center for the Study of Comparative Folklore and Mythology, 1977).

Because the present collection of essays is intended in part to give a historical perspective to the subject, it is important to reiterate the fact that until 1848 the Southwest was Mexican territory, and that much Chicano folklore is therefore of Mexican (and ultimately, Spanish peninsular) provenience. However, because many of these "Mexican" and "Spanish" folk traditions soon began to assume a Chicano flavor, often with noticeable differences within the Southwest, distinctive features of Chicano folklore have always been noted along with universal features. This is, perhaps, most clearly seen in the works of Américo Paredes, who for many years has studied differences between the folklore of Greater Mexico and that of the Southwest. His now classic discovery of the Texas origins of the classical form of the "Mexican corrido" itself, and his use of patronymics such as "Texas-Mexican" and "Mexico-Texan," reflect his concern that Chicano culture be accepted on its own merits.

Although Chicano studies and folklore conference programs indicate that activity continues in Chicano folklore studies, there is a paucity of major compilations of the type produced in earlier years. Among the principal reasons for this decline is the popular notion that folklore is strictly a thing of the past, an anachronism, and, among some young Chicano scholars, that the study of folklore is passé. Related to this notion is the assumption that those who studied Chicano folk traditions in the past contributed to stereotyped pejorative images of the Southwest Mexican (i.e., "slumbering under the cactus"). This is certainly an unfortunate posture in an age of rapid change in Chicano society and culture, including folklore. Historically, neglect of folklore studies invariably created great lacunae which later could only be partially filled.

To be sure, the study of folklore alone does not provide a complete, comprehensive or totally impartial account of any culture, since folklore deals only with certain aspects of culture. Chicano folklore studies, for instance, do not always reflect the rural and urban unrest which has existed in the Chicano community in the face of oppression. For more complete documentation of those sentiments, and related activities, one must consult the historical record. But, as the work of Américo Paredes and others has proven, folk genres such as the ballad and joke, which have been more thoroughly documented, are laden with social statements.

In the last analysis, then, the picture of Chicano culture is greatly enhanced by the study of folklore.

As far as we know, folklore has always been a part of humankind's experience. In Western civilization, actual "collections" date back thousands of years to the Panchatantra (ca. 200 B.C.), and ancient Greek and Roman mythology. There is also ample documentation of medieval European myths, tales, legends, exempla and ballads. In the New World, Spanish chroniclers of the Conquest documented most of what is known about ancient Native American myths, legends and other folklore. All of these collections suggest that there have always been individuals who were aware of the existence and value of folklore, and who endeavored to preserve it for posterity. But the formal, organized study of folklore did not emerge until the latter part of the nineteenth century. And most of the serious work of systematic collection, classification and analysis has been accomplished in this century, especially during the first half.

Probably because folklore consists of cultural phenomena which have often been associated with nonprestigious culture, it has rarely been introduced as an academic subject at any level. Consequently, in spite of its antiquity and value, and in spite of the work undertaken by folklorists, there is still very little general awareness about the technical meaning of folklore. It should be said that popular terms such as "primitive," "quaint" and "picturesque"—all of which have been used to characterize folklore—are not part of recent discussions or definitions of folklore. Even features such as antiquity, traditionality and historic-geographic distribution, which certainly apply to folklore, do not always help to define the subject inasmuch as these features may also apply to non-folkloric cultural phenomena.

The term "folk-lore," a compound derived from the Latin "vulgos" (English-*folk*; German-*volk*), and Gaelic *lore* (traditional knowledge) was coined and proposed in 1848 by an Englishman, William Thom, as a more suitable term for describing the "knowledge of the people." Gradually, "folklore" became widely accepted, and translated into many other languages, although folklorists still use some of the older expressions in English as well as in other languages. In Spanish, for example, *saber popular*, *tradiciones* and *cultura popular* are often used interchangeably with *folklor* and *folklore* (sometimes spelled *folclor*/ *folclore*).

Several generations of folklorists have attempted to find a precise and succinct definition of folklore, but there is still no single statement which

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satisfies everyone. This is in part due to the interdisciplinary nature of folklore. That is, it assumes many forms—literary and nonliterary, verbal and non-verbal, material and artistic. More importantly, though, for many years folklorists believed that both “folk” and “lore” were central to any definition. But, once it became generally accepted that everyone is “folk,” and that “lore” may in any case evolve or disappear altogether, the emphasis shifted away from describing “folk groups” and listing folk genres to establishing the parameters of the folklore process itself. As a general rule, we may say that folklore refers to phenomena which are: 1) cultural, i.e., created, transmitted, and shared by a group rather than existing in isolation; 2) traditional, i.e., able to withstand the test of time, as opposed to fleeting phenomena such as fads; 3) anonymously created and transmitted, unlike (professional) forms which are clearly identified as the creation of individual artists or authors; 4) transmitted orally rather than in written form or through mechanical means; 5) non-institutionalized, i.e., not created or transmitted through official channels such as schools or government agencies; and 6) functional, i.e., serves a purpose such as entertainment, or to express cultural values. Depending on the situation, there is room for flexibility in all but the first of the above criteria.

Although genres, per se, do not define folklore, the following categories (and sub-categories) are examples of materials which meet the above criteria: Folk Literature (prose—myths, folktales, legends; poetry—ballads, poems, songs; drama—religious and secular); Folk-Say (riddles, proverbs, slang, etc.); Folk Belief (folk medicine—healers, herbs, practices; witchcraft; folk religious beliefs and practices); Superstitions; Folk Arts and Crafts; Folk Music and Dance; Folk Dress; Folk Architecture; Folk Food; Folk Customs/Folk-Life.

Finally, in order to distinguish between folklore and the scholarly examination of folklore materials and information, folklorists, especially in the United States, have begun using the term “folkloristics” to refer to the study of folklore. This is a useful distinction to make because the study of folklore is often confused, especially by students, with the folklore process. In short, one may study folklore without learning folklore.

Although it is possible to work with folklore material without actually collecting in the field, folklorists have always endeavored to combine field research with the usual research in libraries. This is because folklore in

its authentic forms is usually found in the field (and in unwritten form) rather than in libraries. Field research methods typically include: 1) identifying and locating good informants, or even simply locating individuals who might know prospective informants; 2) interviewing informants in order to gather information; 3) writing, tape-recording or photographing information; and 4) transcribing, classifying, analyzing and interpreting information. Compilation, classification, analysis and interpretation have also been expedited in many instances by training students, even young children, in methods of field collecting. Many countries, especially those with limited resources, and several states in the United States have actually incorporated such activities into educational programs with great success.

In conclusion, the study of folklore has evolved from the pure and rudimentary compilations which date back to classical antiquity to the rigorous thematic, structural and historic-geographic study of methodically collected materials, which was typical of the first half of the twentieth century, and finally, to the most recent analyses of folklore in its socio-cultural context. Because research in Chicano folklore began in the late nineteenth century, and continues to the present, examples of all of these approaches can be found in Chicano folklore bibliographies.

One such bibliography is at the end of the monograph. Serious students of folklore will find this volume a most helpful tool in understanding Chicano folklore.

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