

## FOLKLORE AND FOLKLIFE

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sort of tradition, the "lore" in "folklore" carries with it suggestions of literary aspects of culture, the "life" in "folklife" suggests totality of relationships in community. Hence, in my usage of the terms, I prefer to include folklore under folklife, as part to whole, and limit folklore to "verbal arts" or "folk literature," while leaving folklife to denote the total folk-cultural context. In other words, folklife is the total folk-culture as seen in all of its ramifications and expressions, verbal, material, and spiritual.

While definitions of folklore and folklife differ as to content, the two have tended to agree for the most part on (1) a common process and (2) a common method. The common process which both have focused upon has been the process of transmission of cultural artifacts and systems from one generation to another, within the framework of community and tradition. In this process, the usable past is communicated to the present. Folklorists and folklife scholars also agree on a common method—field work, either direct or via the questionnaire approach—which enables them to study folk-cultural phenomena directly and currently. While the field-work approach is shared with other social sciences, the folklorist and folklife scholar must also study the transition of his current materials through history, adding a strong vertical or historical orientation to balance the horizontal approach to contemporary data.

Whatever term individual scholars may prefer, and despite the great variance in delimiting the

content of the two areas, several present trends are evident in both. First, Americans concerning themselves with their own folk-cultural past are just now beginning to realize how interdisciplinary this study has to be. Folk culture is as broad (and as studiable) as life itself, and almost every discipline has something to contribute to our understanding of folk-cultural phenomena, whether we are studying a song, a riddle, a flail, a plow, or a settlement pattern. Sociologists, anthropologists, cultural geographers, art historians, and historical archeologists are only a few of the related disciplines whose scholars are studying folk culture and folk-cultural artifacts.

The second contemporary trend noticeable in both Europe and America is an increasing quest for and insight into the relevance of folk-cultural studies. Our present urban crisis, the racial crisis, and the international crisis are all helping the folklorist and the folklife scholar to find their way to increased relevance. In studying the past as reflected in the living traditions of the present, in looking at traditional ways of organizing life in the past, we realize how very much our own American regional folk-cultural past continues to affect the everyday life of ordinary Americans. To paraphrase a common American proverb, "You can take the man out of the folk, but you can't [always, successfully, or completely] take the folk out of the man." To put it in perhaps more academic terms, in E. Estyn Evans' words, "Nothing less than the whole of the past is necessary to explain the present."



*Navaho Indian Weaving.*

Defining "folklore"—one of the favorite academic games of the 20th Century—has enlivened most recent sessions of the American Folklore Society and many university classes and student forums.

In the English-speaking world, two related terms are now being used for folk-cultural phenomena and their study—folklore and folklife. While both contain the word "folk" and imply relationship to some sort of community and some