

NORTH AMERICAN FOLKLORE



# F O L K

by Ellyn Sanna



# C U S T O M S



外文出版社  
FOREIGN LANGUAGES PRESS

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Folklore grows from long-age seeds. Just as an acorn sends down roots even as it shoots up leaves across the sky, folklore is rooted deeply in the past and yet still lives and grows today. It spreads through our modern world with branches as wide and sturdy as any oak's; it grounds us in yesterday even as it helps us make sense of both the present and the future.



# ***INTRODUCTION***

by Dr. Alan Jabbour



**W**hat do a tale, a joke, a fiddle tune, a quilt, a jig, a game of jacks, a saint's day procession, a snake fence, and a Halloween costume have in common? Not much, at first glance, but all these forms of human creativity are part of a zone of our cultural life and experience that we sometimes call "folklore."

The word "folklore" means the cultural traditions that are learned and passed along by ordinary people as part of the fabric of their lives and culture. Folklore may be passed along in verbal form, like the urban legend that we hear about from friends who assure us that it really happened to a friend of their cousin. Or it may be tunes or dance steps we pick up on the block, or ways of shaping things to use or admire out of materials readily available to us, like that quilt our aunt made. Often we acquire folklore without even fully realizing where or how we learned it.

Though we might imagine that the word "folklore" refers to cultural traditions from far away or long ago, we actually use and enjoy folklore as part of our own daily lives. It is often ordinary, yet we often remember and prize it because it seems somehow very special. Folklore is culture we share with others in our communities, and we build our identities through the sharing. Our first shared identity is family identity, and family folklore such as shared meals or prayers or songs helps us develop a sense of belonging. But as we grow older we learn to belong to other groups as well. Our identities may be ethnic, religious, occupational, or regional—or all of these, since no one has only one cultural identity. But in every case, the identity is anchored and strengthened by a variety of cultural

traditions in which we participate and share with our neighbors. We feel the threads of connection with people we know, but the threads extend far beyond our own immediate communities. In a real sense, they connect us in one way or another to the world.

传说故事、笑话、小提琴曲、棉被、快步舞曲、抓子游戏、圣徒日游行、蛇形栅栏、万圣节服装，这些东西有什么共同之处？乍看上去似乎没什么，但是所有这些人类的创造形式都属于我们文化生活和经验中的一部分，我们有时称之为“民俗”。

“民俗”指的是一种文化传统，老百姓把这种传统作为生活和文化架构中的一部分来学习和继承。民俗可以是以口头形式传播的，就像我们在朋友那儿听到的都市传奇故事，讲述者会向我们保证那确实是发生在他们堂兄的一个朋友身上的真事；也可以是我们无意间从街上学到的曲调或舞步，或是用已有的材料做出可使用或用来欣赏的东西的方式，就像姨妈缝制的棉被。我们通常已经了解了一些民俗知识，然而却不能确切地意识到是从哪里、又是怎样得到它们的。

尽管我们可以认为“民俗”这个词指的是来自于很久以前或从很远的地方流传而来的文化传统，而事实上，我们是把它作为日常生活的一部分来利用和享受的。它常常是普普通通的，但由于其独特性，我们往往会记住并珍视它。民俗是我们与社会群体中的其他人共享的文化，我们通过这种共享来确立自己的身份特征。我们第一个与他人共享的就是家庭的特征，而家庭习俗——如共享的饭菜、祈祷和歌曲——都帮助我们建立起一种归属感。随着年龄的增长，我们也学会了从属于其他的社会群体。我们的身份特征可以是种族的、宗教的、职业的、区域性的或兼而有之，因为没有人只具有一种文化特征。然而无论如何，各式各样的文化传统都是这些特征赖以生存并得以壮大发展的支柱。我们置身于这种文化传统之中，并与邻人共同分享。我们能够感受到自己与相识的人之间的关联，然而这种关联远远超出了我们所直属的生活范围。实际上，这种关联是以某种方式将我们与世界连接在一起。



Folklore possesses features by which we distinguish ourselves from each other. A certain dance step may be African American, or a certain story urban, or a certain hymn Protestant, or a certain food preparation Cajun. Folklore can distinguish us, but at the same time it is one of the best ways we introduce ourselves to each other. We learn about new ethnic groups on the North American landscape by sampling their cuisine, and we enthusiastically adopt musical ideas from other communities. Stories, songs, and visual designs move from group to group, enriching all people in the process. Folklore thus is both a sign of identity, experienced as a special marker of our special groups, and at the same time a cultural coin that is well spent by sharing with others beyond our group boundaries.

Folklore is usually learned informally. Somebody, somewhere, taught us that jump rope rhyme we know, but we may have trouble remembering just where we got it, and it probably wasn't in a book that was assigned as homework. Our world has a domain of formal knowledge, but folklore is a domain of knowledge and culture that is learned by sharing and imitation rather than formal instruction. We can study it formally—that's what we are doing now!—but its natural arena is in the informal, person-to-person fabric of our lives.

Not all culture is folklore. Classical music, art sculpture, or great novels are forms of high art that may contain folklore but are not themselves folklore. Popular music or art may be built on folklore themes and traditions, but it addresses a much wider and more diverse audience than folk music or folk art. But even in the world of popular and mass culture, folklore keeps popping up around the margins. E-mail is not folklore—but an e-mail smile is. And college football is not folklore—but the wave we do

at the stadium is.

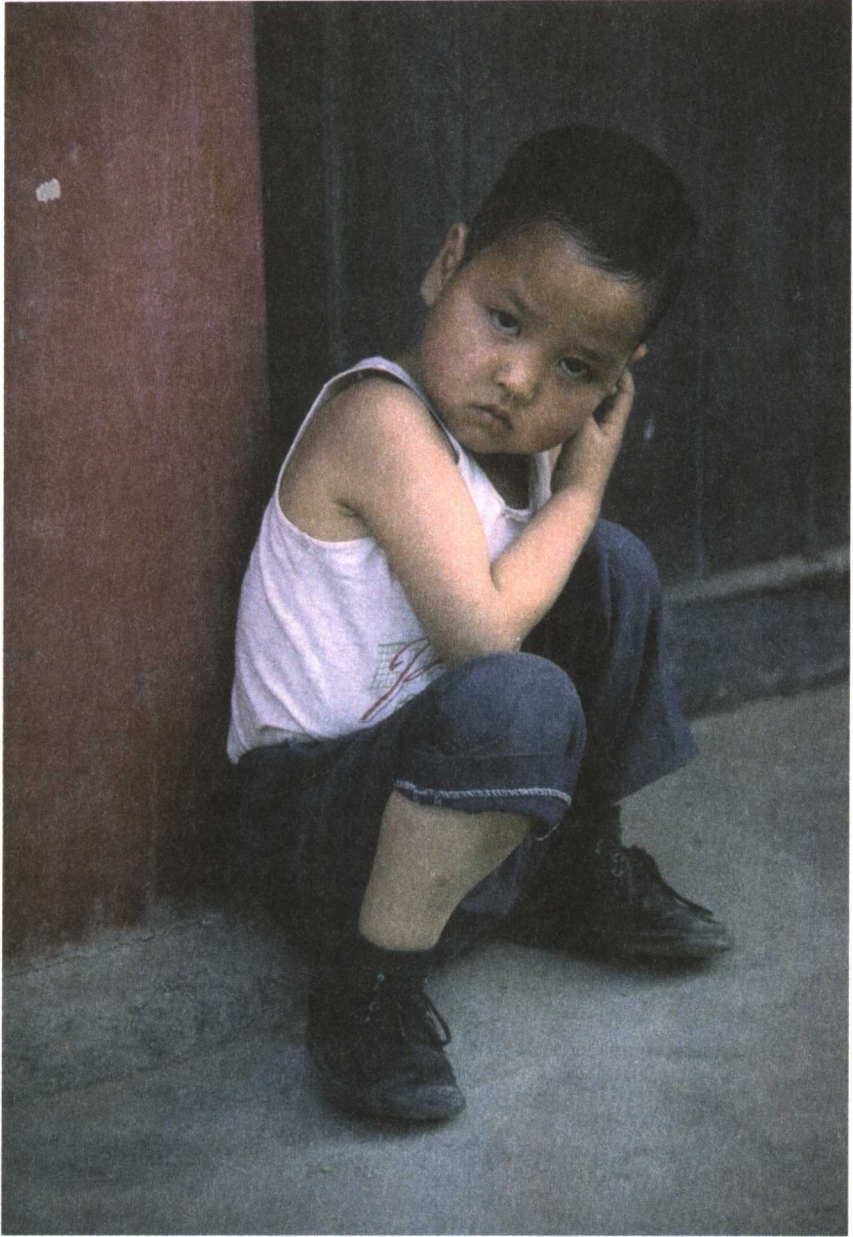
This series of volumes explores the many faces of folklore throughout the North American continent. By illuminating the many aspects of folklore in our lives, we hope to help readers of the series to appreciate more fully the richness of the cultural fabric they either possess already or can easily encounter as they interact with their North American neighbors.

民俗所具有的特点将我们与他人区分开来,例如某种舞步可能是非裔美洲人所特有的,某个故事是属于都市风格的,某首赞美诗是新教徒们吟唱的,某种烹调方法是法国移民的后裔发明的。民俗可以识别出我们,同时它也是我们彼此介绍的最佳方式之一。我们通过品尝他们的食品来了解北美大陆上新的种族群体,我们也可以从其他社会群体中汲取音乐的灵感。故事、歌曲以及形象化的图案在不同群体间传播,并在传播的过程中使所有人受益。因而民俗既是身份的特征、特殊群体的特殊标记,同时也是一种文化货币,通过与我们群体范围之外的人共享而实现它的价值。

民俗通常是人们在不拘形式的情形下学到的。有人,在某个地方,教会了我们那首跳绳的歌谣,然而我们可能记不起到底是在什么地方学到的,也不可能是从某本老师布置课后要读的书里看到的。在我们的世界中有正规知识的领域,然而民俗的领域却是通过共享和模仿,而不是通过正规学习来获得的。我们可以中规中矩地研习它——这正是我们现在正在做的——但是它天然的舞台却是在生活中非正式的、人与人之间的交流模式中。

并非所有的文化都属于民俗的范畴。古典音乐、艺术雕刻或长篇名著属于高层次的艺术形式,它们可能包含民俗的成分,但其本身并不是民俗的一部分。流行音乐或艺术可能基于民俗的主题和传统,但它们面对的是比民间音乐和艺术更为广泛和多样化的群体。然而,即便在流行文化和大众文化的领域里,民俗也一直不断地在边缘地带崭露头角。电子邮件不是民俗的一种——但电子邮件里的笑脸却是;大学足球不是民俗的一种——但我们在体育场中掀起的阵阵人浪却是。

本系列书探讨了北美大陆上民俗文化的众多方面。民俗作为文化的一个组成元素,人们或者已经拥有,或者在平时的交往中会轻易地碰到。通过对生活中民俗文化各个方面的解读,希望能够帮助读者更充分地品味民俗文化的丰富性。



*Children work to make sense out of their world by discovering patterns and categories.*



# Seeking Patterns

Superstitions, Customs,  
and Traditions

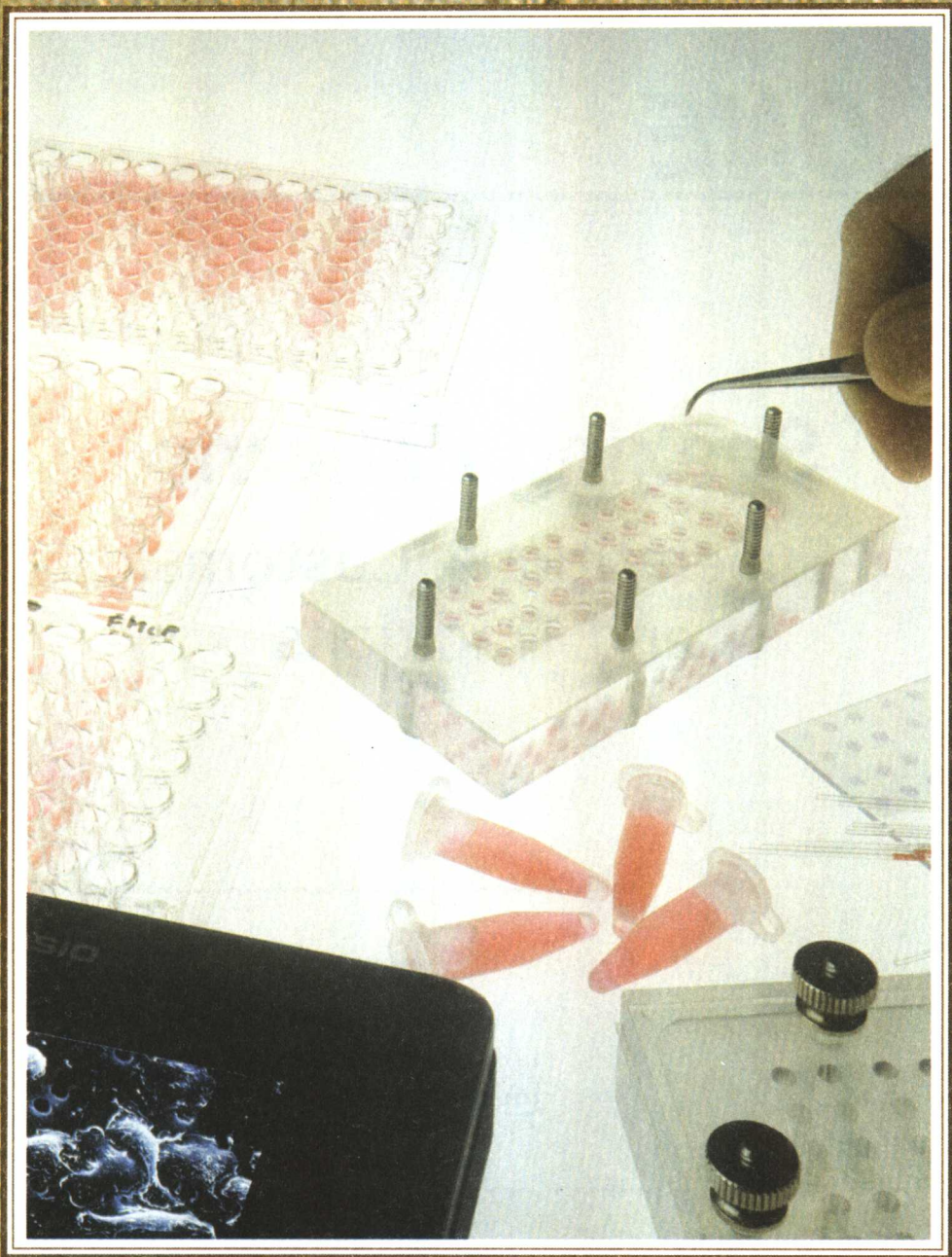
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寻找模式

迷信，习俗和传统

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*Scientists's theories are based on research—while customs, traditions, and superstitions are built on centuries of ordinary life.*



**H**uman beings crave order. Reality is a helter-skelter mass of conflicting messages and circumstances, a confusing jumble of coincidence and stimulus. At first glance, predictable patterns are difficult to spot. But the human brain is designed to seek and find shapes and recurring patterns.

From the days of our earliest development, we are busily sorting and classifying the world, trying to make sense out of everything we experience. Along the way, we develop a mental framework, a set of rules and categories, to help us create order out of reality's chaos. Children in the process of learning to talk learn that objects and animals, people and foods, all can be categorized. At first all furry things may be called "kee-kees" for kitty, but soon children will be able to fine-tune their mental slots as they learn the first words for doggie and bunny and horsey, and eventually more sophisticated words (and categories) like mammal, rodent, cattle, and feline.

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人类渴望秩序。现实是各种矛盾信息与环境的错综复杂的结合体，是一种各种巧合与刺激因素绞合在一起使人迷惑的混沌状态。乍看之下，似乎很难分辨出能够预料的模式，但是人脑天生就是要去发现和寻找图形和反复出现的模式的。

从人类的早期发展开始，我们就不停地在对这个世界进行整理和归类，试图了解我们所经历的一切。在这个过程中，我们发展出一种思维体系，即一套规则和分类来帮助我们现实的混乱中建立秩序。还在学说话的孩子就知道无论物体或动物，人还是食物都是可以分类的。最开始他们可能把所有毛茸茸的东西都当作小猫叫它们“小猫猫”，但很快他们就会调整头脑中的分类，因为他们又学会了诸如小狗、小兔还有小马等新词，最终他们还会学更复杂的单词（和种类）比如哺乳动物、啮齿类动物、家畜和猫科动物。





*Children explore their worlds, building an increasing understanding of the way things work.*

As children grow, they also gain a sense of how things happen. Those of us who are older may take these basic patterns for granted, but young children work hard to grasp the rules that predict life's flow. For example, they learn that it gets dark at night when they go to bed, and gradually they come to know that days are measured by this pattern of **recurring**<sup>1</sup> sleep and darkness; based on this pattern, they begin to understand the meaning of words like "tomorrow," "yesterday," and "today." For people who take daily naps, however, this can be a confusing concept; until she was four or five, my youngest daughter, who always took a long nap in the middle of the day, always spoke of the morning as "yesterday" and the late afternoon and evening as "tomorrow." Eventually, she learned that it was the periods of darkness rather than her sleep intervals that measured days, but in the meantime she was confused about one of human reality's most basic patterns.

Children are not the only ones who seek these patterns. Adults do also. Throughout our lives, we continually struggle to understand how life works. We look for patterns that will help us predict how we should live our lives in relation to the ongoing flow of events. We sort and

categorize and look for rules that will make sense out of life's entire mix of joys and sorrows. Like my daughter, sometimes we may shape a basic premise<sup>2</sup> that guides our life, not realizing that we've misunderstood the flow of cause and effect; some aspects of our mental structure may be built on errors or meaningless coincidence<sup>3</sup>. Despite that, however, the structure may still serve us well. It gives us a mental roadway to follow through life. It helps us feel comfortable in the midst of life's chaos.

随着孩子的成长，他们也开始认识到一些现象是如何发生的。我们这些岁数稍大些的人可能把这些基本现象的模式视作理所当然，但小孩子们却努力去把握这些能预测生活发展的规律。举例来说，他们了解到晚上他们上床睡觉的时候天就会变黑。渐渐的他们就明白了日子是通过这种反复出现的睡觉和天变黑的模式来计算的。在此基础上，他们开始明白诸如“明天”、“昨天”和“今天”这些词的含义。然而对那些有午休习惯的人来说，这可能却是非常令人困惑的概念。就像我的小女儿，她总是在中午睡一大觉，因此直到她四五岁的时候，她还总是把早晨称之为“昨天”，把傍晚到晚上这段时间叫做“明天”。最终她明白了日子是靠黑夜的间隔而不是她自己睡觉的时间来计算的，这个模式是人类现实中最基本的模式之一，但在这之前她对此是困惑不解的。

孩子们并不是惟一寻找模式的人群，大人们同样也这样做。在我们的一生中，我们都在不停地试图了解生活是如何继续的。我们寻找那种能够帮助我们根据不断发生的种种事情来预测着生活的模式。我们整理、归类并寻找那些能让我们从苦乐参半的生活中理出头绪的规则。就像发生在我女儿身上的那样，我们有时形成一个基本假设来指引我们的生活，却没有意识到我们误解了因果关系；我们头脑结构的某些方面也可能建立在错误或无意义的巧合上。但是如果不考虑这些，我们的头脑结构还是为我们工作得相当好的。它为我们提供了一条贯穿我们生命始终的智力通道，帮助我们从容应对生活中的种种纷乱。



- 
- 1 recur *v.* 反复出现，循环
  - 2 premise *n.* 假定，假设
  - 3 coincidence *n.* 巧合，巧事





*Patterns from cultures around the globe reveal the human desire to discover and express the meaning of reality.*