

THE MANUSCRIPTS



INTRODUCTION TO DELTA MANUSCRIPTS

While these manuscripts were always *intended* for publication, they were never *prepared* for publication. Before a publisher could be found, before even a publication agreement could be reached between Fisk and the Library of Congress, the manuscripts were misplaced, set aside, or filed away, and the authors moved to other pursuits. The details of final drafts were never addressed. The manuscripts reprinted here are the last drafts produced, and except for the most basic copyediting, we have left them intact rather than guessing how the authors might have done their final tweaking.

A book was always the end goal of the study, and this compendium is as near to that goal as can be achieved; with the addition of the Adams manuscript, it actually comprises more than was originally intended. That the manuscripts were found in the Lomax archives six decades after they went missing may reveal much about how research is, and is not, shared, attributed, and published. Like an old photograph rediscovered, this work opens a window into the past, one that had been boarded up, revealing a vision rich with cultural detail. Six decades lost, the recovery of this research helps us not only to see a vanished way of life but also to understand how fragile our sense of the past is, how each version we construe is only the latest draft, how important it is to recover as many of our storytellers as we can.