Hog Plow and Sith: Cultural Aspects of Early Agricultural Technology.
By Peter H. Cousins.
Pp. 19, illustrations, map, notes, photographs.
No price indication, paperback.

Review note by Warren E. Roberts.

Peter H. Cousins, Curator of Agriculture at Greenfield Village and Henry Ford Museum, has produced an interesting and useful illustrated pamphlet of only nineteen pages on two early agricultural implements, an unusual plow and a short handled scythe of unusual shape called a sith. His research is based mainly on actual examples in museum collections and on early written and manuscript sources. He seems not to have undertaken any fieldwork but it is possible that these two implements went out of use so long ago that fieldwork would prove to be fruitless. His pamphlet immediately calls to mind similar research carried out in the past on northern Europe where there has been for a long time deep interest in agricultural implements. Cousins focuses his attention on culture areas and this orientation is likewise characteristic of northern European folklore research. It is instructive to the folklife researcher to see that some museum collections in the United States are both large enough and well enough documented to make research of this sort possible. The information presented, the method of research employed, and the data given on museum holdings all make this pamphlet valuable to folklife researchers in the United States.

Pp. xvi + 327, bibliography, notes to the songs, map, glossary, index of Greek titles and first lines.
$12.50 cloth.

Reviewed by David Kilpatrick.

The title of this book is an accurate indication of the poetic nature of this collection of 110 folksongs collected approximately 10 years ago in Greece. The author admits that it is not a "definitive or scholarly collection" but she has none the less provided us with an enjoyable and a valuable volume of folksongs (including music and translations), many of which have not been previously available in any other publication. Its format, readability, and the material itself, make it an important supplement to a study of modern Greek folksong. Anyone interested in the folk music of this area of the world should definitely add it to his library.

The strong point of the book is the texts. They are beautifully printed in Greek with easily followed English translations. No attempt has been made to reproduce the poetic meters or rhyme schemes of the Greek or to make the English translation singable, but the English translations do maintain the forceful
poetic imagery and feelings of vitality and pathos found in many of the song lyrics. Greek words which do not translate well are simply retained in the English texts and are explained in the glossary. The glossary does not always clarify all the words adequately for someone completely unfamiliar with Greek language and a few definitions are rather misleading. Kumboloyi is better known as "worry beads" than the terms "secular rosary" which is given. Greek men usually think of their worry beads as "a companion" and the analogy of a rosary stretches the meaning far beyond the significance attributed to them by most Greeks. The lauto is an eight-stringed, fretted lute, not a four-stringed instrument. There are four courses of strings and the distinctive sound comes partly from the doubling of the strings. The syrtos and tsamikos are not circle dances but are, rather, line dances which sometimes form a semi-circle. The explanation found in the introduction, as to what constitutes tsakismata ("metrically extraneous words and phrases," p. 10), and the specific examples of tsakismata as found in the song texts (which the author has underlined) may sometimes be questioned. Sometimes words and phrases which seem essential to the lyrics both poetically and semantically, have been underlined as tsakismata. The transcription of the text is often an extremely difficult job, especially in folksong material, where there are many insertions of non-lexical syllables and phrases, and here the author has done a superb job.

It seems that among the general public, there is increasingly a pervasive sense of the inadequacy of printed transcriptions of aural events or proceedings. The author states that copies of her field tapes are archived both at the Academy in Athens and at Columbia University but neglects to say whether or not any of these recordings are available to students or scholars who are specialists in the area. Some publications are now providing a few flexidisc recordings of material transcribed in the text of the book, as examples (for instance, Kenneth Peacock's Songs of the Doukhobors, Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1971; and Mantle Hood's The Ethnomusicologist, New York: McGraw Hill, 1971). Certain elements of style such as timbre and some ornamentation still seem to defy notation and are clarified only by listening to the actual sounds from which the transcription was taken. In the center of the book, there are eight pages of excellent black and white photographs of musicians and environment which help to give a feeling for the setting of the recordings. The photographs of the people and artifacts would seem to be analogous to a few recorded examples which would give a better idea of the music and might resolve some of the questions raised by some of the apparent errors in the musical notation (for example, the erratic bar lines and missing key signature in song No. 72 which is described in the glossary as a slow dance in duple time). The author has taken the collections of Baud-Bovy, Chianis, and others, as her models for format which includes a transcription of a single melodic strophe and an outline of the mode below it. She states that the transcriptions "are of one musical strophe only, usually the first." The first verse of melody has usually been distrusted as being unrepresentative of the version found more consistently in later verses. This option does not, however, require the determining of a representative or composite melody. The problem is that the outline of the mode which follows includes the assigning of a hierarchy of pitches including a "tonic" and this would assume a certain amount of analysis of the variants found in other verses. An even more disturbing problem is that the songs are listed by region and identified by ethnic minority, (e.g. songs No. 38 and 39 are Pontic and songs No. 14-25
are Vlach) each of which ethnic group has many distinctive folkloric characteristics. If one were to listen to recorded examples of their music, aural differences would probably be quite noticeable, yet this is certainly not apparent in the transcription. It seems in fact, that there has been an attempt to avoid analysis and conclusions and even general observations about the regional characteristics or individual styles which are found throughout Greece. Rather, concentration has been placed upon detailed and complete documentation of the songs chosen for this collection, and to leave them unencumbered by detailed analysis. In terms of giving credit to informants, helpers and noted authorities in the field who have assisted and checked the manuscript, it is a model of documentation which other collectors might well emulate.

The few minor criticisms made here are actually rather insignificant when the work is taken as a whole. The overriding response to the book should be gratitude for an excellent presentation of well-chosen material provided by one who is very sensitive to the beauty of Greek folk song.

By Jerry Mangione.
2p. xvi + 416, bibliographies, illustrations, index.

Review note by Richard Sweterlitsch.

A recent work which has some passing interest to the folklorist is this book by Jerry Mangione, who was once the National Coordinating Editor of the Federal Writers' Project, and as such has a great deal of inside knowledge about the workings of the Project. The bibliography indicates that Mangione interviewed a great many person involved at various levels of the project. The bulk of the book is devoted to describing the bitter ideological, political and personality conflicts which went on inside the Project, and which limited the value of some of the Project's publications. Of course included is some discussion of the folklore collection and publishing done by the Project. The slave narrative project, climaxing in Botkin's Lay My Burden Down: A Folk History of Slavery (Chicago, 1945), was based in FERA, and so was the idea for the Writers' Project investigation into folklore. "Alsberg (Director of the Writers' Project), quick to appreciate the Project's capacity to gather folklore on a larger scale than ever attempted in the United States, as early as 1935 began instructing field offices (Katharine Kellock wrote the first set of instructions) on the art of reporting local customs and lore" (p. 265). Eventually John Lomax, much to the displeasure of the AFS, was brought in. The Society in 1937 "formally rejected the Writers' Project as a legitimate instrument for gathering folklore with a resolution declaring that only a scientifically trained folklorist was qualified to collect 'dependable folklore.' Lomax shrugged off this slap in the face with the wry observation that 'presumably, the collector must go out among the people dressed in cap and gown,' but Alsberg took the resolution seriously enough. The following year he replaced Lomax with Botkin, whose credentials were impeccable" (p. 276).