

disciplinary perspectives brought to bear on the material by each contributor—political science, history, ethnomusicology, religious studies—illuminate the multiple ways that competitive music performances have emerged across the region. Each piece can be read on its own terms, but also as part of the larger project of the book. Furthermore, each contributor provides a worthy list of references for his or her area of study, and these all come together in a well-rounded bibliography of East African studies. My one complaint is the rather extensive use of the word “ngoma” in the book, a word that has an important and complex history throughout Southern, Eastern, and Central Africa. However, it does not apply in every situation, and in at least one case, its appearance indicates a far too liberal—if not erroneous—application. Gunderson does address the reasons for including it in so many essays, and he argues rightly about its importance in his introduction, but he cannot justify including it where it does not belong. This is a small point, though, and does not detract from the overall importance of the book. It does, however, emphasize the necessity of maintaining scholarly precision, especially in a work that purports to make a significant contribution to an emerging literature on expressive cultures in East Africa.

---

Jerrilyn McGregory. **Wiregrass Country**. Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, *Folklife in the South* Series, 1997. Pp. xix + 171, halftones, index, notes. \$45.00 cloth, \$18.00 paper.

Gregory Hansen  
Florida Folklife Program, Tallahassee

Wiregrass Country is a large geographic region in America's Deep South. Covering much of Florida's northwestern panhandle, the region expands upward to the southeastern corner of Alabama and stretches to southwest Georgia's coastal plain. The region is named for a species of plant that once provided ground cover in much of the area. Originally extending to the Chesapeake Bay, today the wiregrass ecosystem is greatly reduced and seriously threatened by agricultural development and restrictions on controlled burning. Despite the drastic changes in the natural landscape, Jerrilyn McGregory shows that the region's

cultural environment retains a distinctive folklife that is rooted in a complex web of environmental, historical, and cultural interrelationships. The book is a study of the social history and contemporary folk culture of the area, and McGregory contributes to the research findings within the *Folklife in the South* series edited by William Lynwood Montell. Her book is a welcome addition to the series, which includes folklife studies in South Florida, Louisiana, Kentucky, the Ozarks, and the Carolina Piedmont region.

*Wiregrass Country* is organized into three sections: "The Land and Its People," "Words, Music, and the Oral Tradition," and "Recreation and Leisure." McGregory provides a thorough and inclusive sketch of the area's historical development within the initial section by first focusing on current perceptions about the Deep South and then writing an overview of the history of settlement, slavery, agriculture, and industry in the region. She continues with a social history in the second section by providing an historical context for contemporary forms of folklife such as Sacred Harp singing, legend telling, and numerous folk beliefs related by contemporary residents. The book's third section consists of chapters on games and special events, festivals, and outdoor activities. These chapters focus on calendar rituals, local gatherings, hunting, fishing, and sports-related traditions. McGregory closes with a short conclusion; ample endnotes provide additional commentary, and bibliographic references complete her study.

Although this book and all of the publications in the "Folklife in the South" series are appropriate for classes on regional folklife and social history, *Wiregrass Country* is written for a popular rather than an academic audience. The book's frame of reference is interesting, for much of the orientation is developed from an African-American perspective. McGregory provides a view of Wiregrass Country that often exposes the implicit perspectives of writing history and completing ethnographic description from a white point of view. Her approach often begins with the experiences of people of color, but at times, her inclusive approach to history is not always as well integrated into the overall scheme of writing. Despite some flaws that are more stylistic than substantive, McGregory succeeds in writing a work that presents the area's folklife with an eye toward being representative.

Readers with an interest in the folklife of America's southland will find a wealth of stories, ethnographic descriptions, and material from over forty interviews with residents of the area. The book should also appeal to anyone interested in relationships between culture and environment, and McGregory develops solid arguments that demonstrate how studies of folklife can contribute to environmental studies and the management of ecosystems. McGregory meets her goal of surveying and describing the folklife of this region. Her conclusions are appropriate and should interest readers new to folklife studies, and her analysis of the folklife that she documents will provide an introduction for researchers interested in completing more in-depth studies of the genres and items found in the region.

---

Roy Judge. **The Jack-in-the-Green: A May Day Custom.** 2d ed. London: FLS Books, (1979) 2000. Pp. x + 212, halftones, drawings, photos, map, index of locations, index. \$12.95 paper.

Elizabeth Matson  
University of Wisconsin, Madison

Originally published in 1979 as a thesis, this second edition of *The Jack-in-the-Green* includes some additional material and discussion of the rise and fall and rise of this particular folklore phenomenon up until 1995, but the bulk of the material appears to be a reprint from the original edition.

The book's chief value lies in the revelation and demarcation of this unusual custom, particularly for those who have never before encountered a Jack-in-the-Green. To summarize, a Jack-in-the-Green is a conical framework covered with greenery and flowers. It is worn by a man so that only his legs and his face are visible. Traditionally in England, Jack-in-the-Green dances through the streets on May Day, generally in the company of other figures such as milkmaids, chimney sweeps, and clowns.

Though Roy Judge does not spend any time speculating as to why this May Day tradition began, he meticulously locates its origins in the mid-1600s with the milkmaids who borrowed plates and silver