daughter-in-law (meny) from the word for weasel (menét): "this bears witness to the wedding gifts offered in bygone years, when great importance was attached to the valuable skins of furry animals, including that of the weasel" (p. 126). Actually, it is vice versa: the name of a young woman has been carried over to a slender, graceful beast of prey. The function of animal names for young women, especially the daughter-in-law or bride, is generally captatio benevolentiae. The transfer of the term for bride to weasel appears, for instance, in some Balkan languages (e.g., Greek númfita) and in some Romance languages (e.g., Portuguese norinha). (E. Stankiewicz in JAF, 71 (1958), p. 119.)

Discussing magic, Dömötör notes: "Frazer calls the two major forms of magic imitative and sympathetic" (p. 166). In his Golden Bough, Frazer classifies the magic rites as (1) homeopathic or imitative, and (2) contagious. Both of these types of magic were given a general name—sympathetic magic, "since both assume that things act on each other at a distance through a secret sympathy." (James F. Frazer, The Golden Bough, 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1935), p. 54.)

Hungarian Folk Beliefs by Professor Dömötör is a significant work. It brings together all the basic information scattered in a great many sources and gives a trustworthy picture of Hungarian folk religion. Its coverage is all-inclusive and broad, paying special attention to beliefs and practices of recent times. The work successfully, though belatedly, brings to a close the circle of surveys of the Finno-Ugric beliefs.


Reviewed by Hugo A. Freund.

The study of comparative mythology was a predominant interest of the 19th century scholars in what are today called the fields of anthropology and folklore. Through
the cross-cultural study of myths, solar mythologists attempted under the tutelage of Max Müller to uncover naturalistic phenomena (such as the sun, moon or thunderstorms) in mythical figures. Other schools substituted animistic phenomena for natural ones but used the same methodology of comparative philology and close study of Indo-European mythology to uncover a "primitive" system of thought. By the beginning of the 20th century, interest in these questions waned. Finding fire behind every god or goddess had been discredited by the criticism of Andrew Lang and others.

Instead, 20th century folklorists place myth in the context of a group that exists in the here and now. Consideration of Indo-European mythology and culture has been forgotten except for the Frenchman Georges Dumézil and a corps of students and disciples. C. Scott Littleton's book is an introduction to Dumézil's thinking, the work of his disciples and the criticism leveled at all of them. As Littleton points out in the "Preface to the First Edition," this book is not an intellectual biography. Littleton is less a critic than a partisan reporter describing the content of Dumézil's work, although he does quibble with Dumézil on his use of the word "function."

Comparative linguistic studies of the 19th century determined the proto-language of such tongues as Latin, Greek, and Sanskrit. Some 6400 years ago a hypothetical Proto-Indo-European speaking group fanned out from the Kazakh-Kirghiz region. The Proto-Indo-European group eventually spread from Iceland to India. In studying the reconstructed protolanguage, Indo-European languages and mythology, Dumézil concluded that there must have been a Proto-Indo-European culture. He assumes that all the genetically related languages of Indo-European share a common set of collective representations, ideology and culture which can be compared and treated interchangeably. This assumption is the key to Dumézil's theory, but one must ask whether culture and language are so closely linked over such long periods of time and vast distances.

In this third edition, Littleton's book covers six areas. The first is a quick overview of Dumézil's theory, presented in the introduction. The second is a historical grounding. This includes a discussion on the nature of
of Proto-Indo-European as well as the scholarly research of comparative mythology that has preceded Dumézil. In the third, Dumézil's career (beginning in 1924 and spanning over forty-five years) is broken up into four periods: 1) The Formative Phase: 1924-1938; 2) The Developmental Phase: 1938-1949; 3) The Florescent Phase: 1949-1966; and 4) The "Phase of Belan": 1966-1971. In the fourth area of the book Dumézil's disciples and critics are given their turn. In the fifth, Littleton assesses Dumézil's system and theory, largely supporting Dumézil's conclusions. Sixthly and finally in the appendix to this edition, Littleton covers Dumézil's writings as well as the efforts of his disciples from 1973 to 1980. The appendix also contains a fascinating discussion on the links between Dumézil and Claude Lévi-Strauss. (It should be mentioned that Lévi-Strauss has discussed his debt to Dumézil and Alan Dundes also has noted Dumézil's importance.) One can easily see that Dumézil is at least a proto-structuralist. Dumézil does not set about the structuralist project of examining universals, particularly binary oppositions, but rather as Littleton points out, Dumézil is interested in the structured ideology that organizes a system of thought in a culture.

Dumézil's answer to the late 19th century critics is to emphasize ideology rather than a "naturalistic" analysis. Mythology, like ritual and custom, is seen as organized by a culture's ideology. Ideology is the organizing principle for all culture whether it be expressed in religion or mythology. The ideology of Proto-Indo-European culture is tripartition. Dumézil argues for a tripartite hierarchy of priests, warriors and herder-cultivators. This tripartite system is found in the social organization as well as in myths. For example, the priests' function in the "maintenance of magico-religious and juridical sovereignty or order" (p. 5). This cultural legacy of tripartite ideology continues into the various Indo-European cultures. Tripartite structures can be found to this day in German philosophical thought, Soviet Russia, and even in the United States Constitution (the division of government into three branches-- legislative, judicial, and executive).

Dumézil is a precursor to Lévi-Strauss in that he proposes two major oppositions within the tripartite system.
There is firstly, "an inherent Indo-European antagonism between the priest and the warrior" (p. 321). Secondly, the first two functions (priests and warriors) are in opposition to the third (herder-cultivators). It is only in this opposition that the third function is incorporated into the system.

In overemphasizing the notion of tripartition, Littleton does not explain the meaning of such a structure for a culture. (In this regard Dundes' study on "The Number Three in American Culture" would be helpful.) How is tripartition a part of the meaning and behavior of a festival celebration? Dumézil has at least studied carnival and ritual behavior (p. 47), but Littleton discusses such festive behavior only in terms of how they reflect the tripartite nature of Proto-Indo-European mythological systems. Because a discussion on the "active" nature of culture is missing, this volume is not for all folklorists but rather for those with special interests. One senses that there is more to Dumézil's theory of culture but Littleton has chosen to emphasize tripartition and the nature of mythological systems.

This book will be of concern to folklorists, anthropologists, and religionists interested in the school of new comparative mythology. The issue of Proto-Indo-European culture may be too narrow for most, but perhaps an ambitious soul can vitalize the notion of tripartition such that it is seen as an on-going process that energizes a culture.

Littleton is very adept at presenting the viewpoint of this new school of comparative mythology. He crisply presents the major conclusions of Dumézil's many books and articles. Perhaps it is too much to ask for a more balanced appraisal of this school's deficiencies. Dumézil's theoretical Proto-Indo-European culture is very much a hypothetical model that relies heavily on linguistic and mythological data to reconstruct ideology and culture. Proto-Indo-European culture existed just before the dawn of written records and it is perhaps this kind of data that Dumézil really needs in order to say as much as he does about culture and ideology.

NOTES