

Which comparisons still stand

Mackenzie compares Indian gods to Norse, Greek, Celtic, Egyptian and Babylonian ones on nearly every page, in the same tone whether the parallel is a proven cognate or a dead theory. This grades them. Valice Press's writing.

Mackenzie compares constantly, and the comparisons are not all worth the same. This register sorts the ones he makes in these five chapters by how much weight each kind will bear. It is the apparatus this particular volume needs, because the comparisons are the reader's main difficulty and Mackenzie nowhere grades them himself — a Babylonian derivation and an Indo-Iranian cognate arrive in the same paragraph, in the same tone, with the same authorities cited.

Nothing here corrects his text. The point is to let a reader tell, while reading, which claims are still standing and which are the confident consensus of a school that no longer exists.

Indo-Iranian — the strong ones — chapters II, III, IV

What he compares. Yama and the Iranian Yima; the Indian *asuras* (demons) and the Iranian *ahuras* (gods); Mitra and Mithra.

Solid, and the best thing in the book. Sanskrit and Avestan — the language of the Indian hymns and the language of the Iranian scriptures — are so close that whole lines can be converted from one to the other by regular sound rules. These are not resemblances noticed by eye; they are cognates. That the same word names a god on one side of the Iranian plateau and a demon on the other is a genuine and important fact, still what specialists say, and the clearest evidence anywhere that the two religions are branches of one. Mackenzie's instinct here is right and his authorities — Moulton above all — were the best available. Where he hedges, it is usually because they hedged.

Wider Indo-European — the suggestive ones — chapters I, II, III, IV, VI

What he compares. Indra and Thor; Agni and Heimdal; Rudra as the Wild Huntsman; Twashtri and the Germanic Mimer; Indian demons and Celtic giants.

Partly, and read with care. The languages are certainly related: Dyaus, Zeus and the Ju- of Jupiter are the same word, which is not in dispute and is the strongest single case in this category. Some divine functions do recur across the family — a sky father, twin horsemen, a thunderer. But a shared function is not a shared god. Thunder gods with hammers occur in cultures with no connection at all, because thunder sounds like a hammer everywhere; and Mackenzie reaches for Thor the moment Indra picks up a weapon. Read these as invitations to notice a pattern, not as evidence of descent, and note that he almost never distinguishes the two cases.

Babylonian derivation — the dead ones — chapters I, II, III, IV

What he compares. Indra's world-shaping from the Babylonian creation myth; Mitra's Babylonian prototype; the suggestion that the Yama myth owed something to Babylon.

No — and this is the category to be most careful of. It belongs to a school of the 1900s, associated with Assyriology's first great expansion, which traced much of the ancient world's mythology back to Mesopotamia because Mesopotamia was where the newest and most exciting tablets were

coming from. It was contested at the time and it is not now maintained. Mackenzie is careful in form — he reports Moulton *wondering* whether the Yama myth owed anything to Babylon, rather than asserting it — but the wondering recurs often enough across the chapters that a reader may take it for the settled view. It was not settled then and it is not a live position now. Nothing in these chapters depends on it, which is worth knowing: you can discount every Babylonian paragraph and the book still works.

Egyptian, Chinese, Scottish and the rest — chapters I, II, VI

What he compares. The Chinese world-shaper; a Scottish hunting deity; the Egyptian artisan god and the chaos egg; Ra's three forms beside Surya's.

Illustrative only, and partly commercial. These arrive because the book was one volume of a mythology series and the reader was assumed to own, or to be persuadable into owning, the others. The Chinese world-shaper in chapter I is doing no analytical work whatever; it is there so that the first page of the first chapter opens on something familiar. That is a legitimate thing for a popular book to do, and it is not evidence about India.