Pascale Rabault-Feuerhahn. *Archives of Origins: Sanskrit, Philology, Anthropology in Nineteenth Century Germany*. Translated by **Dominique Bach** and **Richard Willet**. (Studies in Cultural and Social Sciences, 9.) 336 pp., app., bibl., index. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2013. €68 (cloth).

Pascale Rabault-Feuerhahn's *Archives of Origins* is an intellectual as well as institutional history of Sanskrit philology in nineteenth-century Europe. The author's main focus is Germany, which dominated this discipline for much of the century, and she also studies in depth important Indologists based in France and Britain. Addressing herself to the English-speaking audience, Rabault-Feuerhahn begins by relating her work to the criticisms made by the prominent American Indologists Ronald Inden and Sheldon Pollock of the peculiar German Orientalism that showed an enthusiasm for a place in ancient history that was never Western or Christian, nor a German colony. Then the author provides a nuanced and fine-textured analysis of the evolving reasons for such enthusiasm in the nineteenth century.

The book consists of three parts that correspond to three generations of Sanskrit philologists. After a brief survey of its prehistory, the author examines the beginning of modern Sanskrit studies by British colonists, including William Jones, and the first circle of such studies in Paris, where most of the early German supporters or scholars of this specialty—Wilhelm von Humboldt, Friedrich and August Wilhelm Schlegel, and Franz Bopp—first learned Sanskrit. Rabault-Feuerhahn then explicates the intellectual and institutional context in which the first chairs in Germany were created, at Bonn and then Berlin. Intellectually, Friedrich Schlegel contributed a Romantic longing for the original Revelation in an ancient India that was not yet corrupted by Enlightenment reason and for a perfect language before its irreversible decline. Though not sharing the notion of a perfect *Ursprache*, Bopp contributed a comparative analysis of the grammars of Sanskrit and its related languages. Institutionally, August Wilhelm Schlegel navigated Sanskrit philology out of its earlier subordination to the teaching of Oriental languages (which Hebrew had dominated) and, together with Bopp, imparted to Sanskrit philology a scientific rigor, on the model of classical philology, that earned it a solid base in the newly reformed, research-oriented Prussian universities.

In the second period (ca. 1840–1879) German Indology was hegemonic in Europe. Leading figures focused their work almost exclusively on the Vedas. Though disagreeing on where the Vedic people had first lived (Asia or Europe), they believed that this people was the ancestor of the Indo-Germans and distinct from contemporary Indians. Some maintained that Vedic religion preserved the root of what later became the European religion (Christianity).

In the third period, from around the 1870s to the turn of the twentieth century, prominent figures realized that the pristine or primitive character of the Vedic age had been exaggerated. Furthermore, they encountered the development of anthropology—most importantly in Britain—which replaced philological comparison based on etymology with a comparativism that focused on ritualistic and sociological dimensions. The importance of ancient India and the Vedas was diluted, although the understanding of the Vedas persisted as the ultimate aim of Sanskrit studies throughout this period.

As Rabault-Feuerhahn points out or implies, nineteenth-century Sanskrit philology was not short of ironies. Many thought Sanskrit was important, but students took the course only to understand the basics of comparative grammar, rarely showing any interest in Sanskrit documents. Besides, although philologists first introduced the idea of the Aryan, the Sanskrit philologists, many of whom were politically liberal, resisted or openly rejected the appropriation of this historical term to refer to the contemporary German people.

Rabault-Feuerhahn leaves behind several important issues that tease her readers. Despite the importance of comparative grammar (or comparative philology), the substance, accomplishments, and development of comparative philology are largely bypassed. Likewise, although she suggests that Sanskrit scholars finally expanded their interest beyond the Vedas to ancient Buddhism and Jainism in the last decades of the nineteenth century, she scarcely discusses the work in those subjects. Moreover, despite

the controversy around the Nazis' Aryanism, which will intrigue any potential reader, the author stops short of connecting her story to the appropriation of the notion of the Aryan, limiting her analysis to academic discourses (which were at some remove from the abusive racism) and closing her book a generation before the Third Reich. Finally, one wonders whether the archaeological excavations in the Middle East that, as Suzanne Marchand points out, challenged the towering stature of classical philology in German academia did anything similar to Sanskrit philology. None of these omissions is problematic for the author's treatment of her core subjects, however.

Teasers aside, this book has distinctive merits. It exhibits a special sensitivity to the diaspora of Jewish Sanskrit philologists, who, depressed by the overcrowding of German academia, had to find careers in France. It also offers a useful chronology of Sanskrit philology, a table of chairs in Sanskrit and comparative philology at German-speaking universities, and a list of major journals, all of which are helpful. Perhaps most important, its sensitivity to sociopolitical and institutional contexts sets this book apart from previous histories of the subject. In addition, the translators deserve credit for making the English prose fluent and elegant. In sum, *Archives of Origins* presents a cogent argument, thorough analyses, and a lucid narrative on nineteenth-century Indology

Ku-ming (Kevin) Chang

Nancy Forbes; Basil Mahon. *Faraday, Maxwell, and the Electromagnetic Field: How Two Men Revolutionized Physics*. 320 pp., illus., bibl., index. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2014. $25.95 (cloth).

Why are books like this published? Are their readers aware that they are being grossly misled, both in specifics and generally about the nature of the scientific exploration and understanding of the world and of its place in society and history? Do such authors deliberately set out to mislead? Or are they merely unaware of their own incompetence and ignorance?

This is the latest in a line of recent books about the nineteenth-century natural philosopher Michael Faraday, including those by Colin Russell (2000), James Hamilton (2002), and Alan Hirshfeld (2006), which assume that because Faraday knew no mathematics, he is therefore easy to write about (try that argument replacing Faraday with Charles Darwin). Since this book also includes chapters on James Clerk Maxwell, who mathematized Faraday's theory of the electromagnetic field, it would seem unlikely that Faraday was conceptually easy—a thought that, it appears, has not occurred to the authors.

Nancy Forbes is an American science writer, now working in the Defense Department, with no obvious historical experience, while Basil Mahon is a former British Army officer who has previously published books on Maxwell (*The Man Who Changed Everything*) and Oliver Heaviside (*Maverick Mastermind of Electricity*). Not being trained scholars, they are somewhat cavalier with their references or lack thereof. Thus they provide (p. 120) a theological interpretation of Faraday's 1854 report on Joseph Watson's method for electrically illuminating lighthouses, without referencing either the primary document or the source of the interpretation.

Like all popular science writers, the authors instantly revert to standard meaningless tropes—"genius" (p. 17), "groundbreaking" (p. 26), "giant strides" (p. 43), and so forth—to explain what they evidently either do not understand or are too lazy to be bothered to do the necessary work to comprehend. So, for example, they use letters from the first source they encountered rather than systematically studying the most recent scholarly editions, which would have provided a rather different perspective. One can always tell when writers have or have not done their Faraday homework properly by the year they ascribe to his declining the nomination to be President of the Royal Society (on the grounds that it is a corrupting position). This event occurred in 1858, but a misdated letter in an early biography gave it as 1857—an ascription followed here (p. 123). Gamma minus.