

Boston College  
The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences  
Department of History

THE ORIENT OF EUROPE: THE 'MYTHICAL IMAGE' OF INDIA AND  
COMPETING IMAGES OF GERMAN NATIONAL IDENTITY, 1760-1830

a dissertation

by

NICHOLAS A. GERMANA

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

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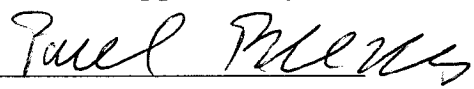
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The Orient of Europe: The Mythical Image of India and Competing Images of  
German National Identity, 1760-1830

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This dissertation is concerned with German academic and popular interest in India in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and how competing images of India signaled profound differences in thinking about the nature and status of German identity.

Much of the writing on German orientalism in the past two decades has concerned the issue of to what degree it resembles orientalism in France and Great Britain, i.e. countries with direct economic and colonial ties to South Asia. What is often overlooked is the explicit identification of Germany with India that is frequently found in the writings of German Indophiles in this period. The present work shows how German thinkers, especially those associated with the Early Romantic movement, set India up as an “ideal mirror”, in which they could perceive the image of the Germany they longed for – a nation whose greatness lay not in political and military power, but in the realm of culture and the spirit. Such an image was especially important during the years of French occupation and the Wars of Liberation against Napoleon. Indian mythology and symbolism were proclaimed as the original sources of German mythology and folklore, just as the Germans themselves were declared to be the direct racial descendents of ancient Indians.

The end of the Wars of Liberation, and the onset of the Restoration era, led to the decline of the romantic mythical image of India. As statist visions of German unity rose in prominence, especially in Prussia, this image of the connection between Germany and ancient India took on a new complexion. Politically volatile romantic “Indomania” gave way to a new, more acceptable, ideology – the ideology of *Wissenschaft*. Linguistic scholars such as Franz Bopp, powerful cultural icons like G.W.F. Hegel, and state officials exercised great power and led Sanskrit studies and Indology in a new direction beginning in the 1820s. The final chapter and conclusion examine the impact of these forces.

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In Berlin I concentrated my efforts at the Geheimes Staatsarchiv für Preussischer Kulturbesitz and the archives at Humboldt University. I wish to extend my gratitude to the impressive scholars who work at these institutions, and whose assistance was always of the highest scholarly caliber, in addition to being warmly and gladly given.

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Toronto (May 2006). I also wish to thank George S. Williamson for the time and ideas he shared with me in Berlin in February 2005.

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## **List of Abbreviations**

GStAPK = Geheimes Staatsarchiv für Preussischer Kultubesitz

HU = Archives of Humboldt University, Berlin

PREVIEW

## Introduction

If the regeneration of the human species started in the East, Germany must be considered the Orient of Europe.

August Wilhelm Schlegel<sup>1</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century, German orientalist scholars had come to be seen as “the Indians of Europe.”<sup>2</sup> In the latter half of the century, two of the most prominent Indologists in all of Europe were Friedrich Max Müller, who taught Sanskrit at Oxford, and Friedrich Nietzsche’s close friend Paul Deussen, who published highly influential works on the Vedanta and Indian mythology. By the early twentieth century, Indian philosophy and symbolism had become widely diffused throughout German culture. Theosophists and racialists helped to popularize notions about the “Aryan race”,<sup>3</sup> and Buddhist societies and journals bearing the swastika gained numerous members and subscribers.<sup>4</sup>

The growth of Indology and popular interest in India by Germans is remarkable considering the relatively late start they got compared to the British and French. Academic Indology had begun in those countries in the late eighteenth century as a result of imperial interests in South Asia. The most influential of the early orientalists were philologists. In France, Abraham Anquetil-Duperron rendered Latin translations of the Persian *Zend-Avesta* (1771) and the Sanskrit *Upanishads* (1787; 1801 in French). In

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<sup>1</sup> Cited from Leon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth: A History of Racist and Nationalist Ideas in Europe* (Edmund Howard, trans., New York: Basic Books, 1974), 192-3

<sup>2</sup> Foucher de Careil, *Hegel et Schopenhauer* (1862), cited in Roger-Pol Droit, *The Cult of Nothingness: The Philosophers and the Buddha*, (David Streight and Pamela Vohnson trans., Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 102

<sup>3</sup> George L. Mosse, *The Crisis of German Ideology: Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1934), 89-90

<sup>4</sup> Douglas T. McGetchin, *The Sanskrit Reich: Translating Ancient India for Modern Germans, 1790-1914* (Ph.D. Dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 2002), 222-224

Britain, the pioneering work was done by Charles Wilkins, who translated the *Bhagavad-Gita* into English in 1785, and Sir William Jones, who translated several important works into English, most notably the drama *Śakuntalā* (1789), by the playwright Kalidasa, who came to be regarded as the “Indian Shakespeare”. Both Jones and Wilkins were founding members of the Royal Asiatic Society of Calcutta, an institution founded at the behest of Governor-General Warren Hastings to uncover and explore all aspects of Indian culture in an effort to administer the empire there more effectively. The works of this collection of scholars and imperial officials entered wide circulation through their published proceedings, the *Asiatic Researches*.<sup>5</sup>

When German scholars became interested in these new findings, they had to go through the works of their French and English predecessors. In 1790, Georg Forster translated *Śakuntalā* into German, accompanied by his own copious explanatory notes. However, since Forster had no knowledge of Sanskrit, he translated the play from Jones’ English version. The play had an enormous impact, as will be seen in several of the chapters of this dissertation, especially those concerned with Johann Gottfried Herder, Novalis, and Friedrich Schlegel. In the mid-1790s, Herder also translated fragments of the *Bhagavad-Gita* into German, but once again the original source was the English translation. It wasn’t until just after the turn of the century, in 1802, when a German scholar would take up the study of Sanskrit first-hand. In that year Friedrich Schlegel traveled to Paris to study Persian, and end up studying Sanskrit under the British naval officer and Asiatic Society member Alexander Hamilton. His brother, August Wilhelm Schlegel, and Franz Bopp made the same trip eleven years later. It was not until the late 1810s that eager young German orientalist were able to train for their careers at a

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<sup>5</sup> Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe’s Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880* (Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking, trans., New York: Columbia University Press, 1984 [originally published in French, 1950]), 51-57

German university. The fact that academic Indology wasn't even really established in German universities until the third decade of the nineteenth century makes its rise to prominence that much more meteoric.

One measure of the success of Sanskrit Studies and Indology is the number of academic chairs established at German universities devoted to these emerging fields. Between 1818 and 1914, thirteen chairs were established in Sanskrit Studies and related fields. Significantly, the first six such appointments were made in Prussia between A.W. Schlegel's appointment at Bonn in 1818 and 1840. More than half of the total number of appointments in these fields in all of Germany, seven, were made at Prussian universities.<sup>6</sup> While these are not overwhelming numbers, they nevertheless point to successful growth of Indology in Germany, and they indicate a particular interest in Indological studies on the part of the Prussian government. As will be seen in Chapter Five, this interest in Prussia is attributable to a number of factors.

The reasons for French and British interest in Indian literature and culture are clear. The British governors in India recognized the key role the Indians' own legal, philosophical, and religious traditions could play in the efficient administration of the empire over such large numbers of people. This nativist approach, advocated by the so-called 'Orientalists', was bitterly opposed by the 'Anglicists', who argued for the imposition of modern, rational, British legal codes throughout the empire. This latter group took its philosophical inspiration from James Mill's Utilitarian principles. Even though French political and economic interests did not have much time to develop, French missionaries had become deeply entrenched in India. It was, in fact, largely thanks to the works of Jesuit missionaries that the earliest Sanskrit texts were uncovered and preserved.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> McGetchin, 145

<sup>7</sup> Schwab, 28-33

There were no such links between Germany and India. Even prior to the dissolution of the Holy Roman Empire, when one could technically speak of a Germany, there were no political or economic ties with any part of Asia. There were no notable excursions by Germans to South Asia, and most of the information that was available to them about India came from the recordings of Dutch missionaries.<sup>8</sup>

The question of German interest in India, especially in the early years, is a perplexing one. Edward Said confessed that it was unclear how exactly Germany fit into his model. In the Introduction to *Orientalism*, he stated that “at no time in German scholarship during the first two-thirds of the nineteenth century could a close partnership have developed between Orientalists and a protracted, sustained *national* interest in the Orient.” He continued, however, to try to define what constituted the importance of German Orientalism within the larger European framework: “What German Oriental scholarship did was to refine and elaborate techniques whose application was to texts, myths, ideas, and languages almost literally gathered from the Orient by imperial Britain and France.”<sup>9</sup> He concluded: “Yet what German Orientalism had in common with Anglo-French and later American Orientalism was a kind of intellectual *authority* over the Orient within Western culture. This authority must in large part be the subject of any description of Orientalism, and it is so in this study.”<sup>10</sup> This claim about the German role in the Orientalist project was not, however, elaborated upon in the text that followed.

In 1986, Said’s essay “Orientalism Reconsidered” (originally delivered as an address at a conference at the University of Sussex) addressed some of the criticisms that were leveled at his work. Again he directly addressed the question of German Orientalism, but in an even more puzzling way:

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<sup>8</sup> A. Leslie Willson, *A Mythical Image: The Ideal of India in German Romanticism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1964), 8-22

<sup>9</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), 19

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*

. . . I have grasped some of the problems and answers proposed by some of my critics, and because they strike me as useful in focusing an argument, these are the ones I shall be taking into account in the comments that follow. Others – like my exclusion of German Orientalism, which no one has given any reason for me to have *included* – have frankly struck me as superficial or trivial, and there seems no point in even responding to them.<sup>11</sup>

This deflection is remarkable in the face of his statement about the existence of German Orientalism from his book, and the prominence of Indology in Germany in the nineteenth century, reflected to no small degree by the fact that it was a German scholar, Max Müller, who became the first chair of Sanskrit at Oxford (1861).

Some scholars who have been influenced by Said have, however, turned their attention in the direction of Germany. Seen through the lens of Said's model, such statements as the one cited at the beginning of this Introduction are seen as an indication that Germans harbored a desire to 'colonize' the East intellectually, in order to make up for the fact that, unlike the British, they were unable to do so militarily. Edwin Bryant, for example, argues that comparative philology "offered certain German scholars an opportunity to compensate for their poor showing on the colonial scene."<sup>12</sup> Kamakshi Murti has also argued that German academic orientalism was the product of the desire to identify Germany with the imperial domination of the West over the East, and over India in particular.<sup>13</sup> Most scholars who treat the subject of German Orientalism (in the Saidian sense of the term, signified by the capital letter at the beginning) locate such imperial aims in the latter part of the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth centuries. Sheldon Pollock, for example, puts an interesting spin on the idea by proposing that in this later period we can observe German Orientalism turned inward, i.e. toward domination of

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<sup>11</sup> Edward Said, "Orientalism Reconsidered", *Orientalism: A Reader* (Alexander Lyon Macfie, ed., New York: New York University Press, 2000), 346

<sup>12</sup> Edwin Bryant, *The Quest for the Origins of Vedic Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 29

<sup>13</sup> Kamakshi P. Murti, *India: The Seductive and Seduced "Other" of German Orientalism* (Westport, CT: Greenwood press, 2001)

Europe.<sup>14</sup> Few have argued that German imperialist interests or desires existed before the late eighteenth century, at the earliest. Suzanne Zantop argued that German “colonial fantasies” date back to the seventeenth century, but her argument pertains to the Americas and Africa, not the Orient.<sup>15</sup> More recently, Todd Kontje has made the case for a plurality of German Orientalisms extending from the early eighteenth century to the mid-twentieth.<sup>16</sup>

Few scholars, however, attempt to account for the explicit *identification* with the Orient expressed in Schlegel’s quote, as well as elsewhere in the Romantic orientalist literature.<sup>17</sup> As historians and scholars in other humanist disciplines, it is, of course, critical that we do not simply take Schlegel’s sentiment at face value. On the other hand, many scholars have been considerably less critical when analyzing German claims to a similar kind of identification with the ancient Greeks. A handful of examples illustrate this point. Martin Bernal writes in *Black Athena*:

By the 1770s it was becoming clear that Germany had the potential to be a major cultural centre; however, this was not reflected politically . . . The combination of cultural strength with political weakness and disunity seemed to indicate that, while Germany could not become a new Rome, she could be the new Hellas.<sup>18</sup>

In *Down from Olympus*, Suzanne Marchand explains German philhellenism in part by the experience of political and military humiliation at the hands of the French during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars: “during the darkest hours of the

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<sup>14</sup> Pollock, Sheldon, “Deep Orientalism? Notes on Sanskrit and Power beyond the Raj”, *Orientalism and the Postcolonial Predicament – Perspectives on South Asia* (eds. Carol A. Breckenridge and Peter van der Veer, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993)

<sup>15</sup> Suzanne Zantop, *Colonial Fantasies. Conquest, Family, and Nation in Precolonial Germany, 1770-1870* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1997)

<sup>16</sup> Todd Kontje, *German Orientalisms* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2004)

<sup>17</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the ‘Orient’ in this quote will be assumed to be India for reasons that will be made clear in the course of the chapters on the Schlegel brothers.

<sup>18</sup> Martin Bernal, *Black Athena: The Afroasiatic Roots of Classical Civilization; Volume One: The Fabrication of Ancient Greece 1785-1985* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 214

Revolutionary Wars, German identification with the Athenian Empire – politically fragmented, conquered by force of arms, but united by a single language and spirit – became much more palpable . . .”<sup>19</sup>

Brian Vick has provided this insight on the importance of Greece for German intellectuals:

The basic assumption was that there was something special about the Germans that destined them to be the preeminent clearing house for the spiritual goods of the world’s great cultures, above all the Greeks, but more broadly was well. This mission even had a certain redemptive quality, one that particularly engaged classical philologists, for the Germans of their day were to succeed in fusing the legacies of Greco-Roman antiquity and the Christian-Teutonic Middle Ages into a new, modern phase of world history.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, as will be seen in Chapter Four, it was the legacy of the Indic Orient that many German intellectuals sought to fuse with that of the “Christian-Teutonic Middle Ages”, especially during the years of struggle against Napoleon and French power; classical philologists were, as a rule, much more cynical about efforts to glorify the German Middle Ages.

There are two salient features to each of the claims cited above. First, that there was a unique representation of German nationalism that was not statist, but rather what has come to be known as the *Kultur* nation. Second, that Germany looked outside itself to other cultures for models of national identity. While the Greeks were unquestionably one model that German intellectuals drew inspiration from, the image of Greece which they chose was not the one suggested by Marchand. Aside from the brief period of sympathy for the Greek war for independence, the image of Greece that was most popular in

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<sup>19</sup> Suzanne Marchand, *Down from Olympus: Archaeology and Philhellenism in Germany, 1750-1970* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 24-25

<sup>20</sup> “Greek Origins and Organic Metaphors: Ideals of Cultural Autonomy in Neohumanist Germany from Winckelmann to Curtius”, *Journal of the History of Ideas* (July 2002, Vol. 63, No. 3), 495-96

Germany was not a politically impotent victim of Turkish/Muslim imperialism, but that of Greece in the age of classical art and philosophy, i.e. the one popularized by Winckelmann in the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>21</sup>

The German fascination for the Greeks is as well documented as it is undeniable.<sup>22</sup> However, what hasn't been addressed is the question of why some of the most prominent German philhellenes turned their attention increasingly toward India in the decades from the 1790s to the 1820s. The Schlegel brothers and Wilhelm von Humboldt all began their literary and professional careers as devotees of ancient Greek culture before turning to ancient Indian philosophy and literature. Classical philology, focusing on Greek and Latin, was established in Germany by F.A. Wolf at Halle in 1787 under the name *Altertumswissenschaft*. Comparative philology, grounded in the study of Sanskrit and its relationship to other Indo-European languages, was founded a generation later with the publication of Bopp's *Conjugationssystem der Sanskrit* in 1816. A.W. Schlegel became the first scholar to teach Sanskrit in Germany at the University of Bonn in 1818. In other words, classical and comparative philology underwent institutionalization in German universities within a generation of each other, and in the cash-strapped years following the Wars of Liberation they had to compete with one another for increasingly rare state resources.<sup>23</sup>

One of the few scholars to recognize the significance of German identification with colonized peoples was Susanne Zantop. In her book *Colonial Fantasies*, she saw

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<sup>21</sup> Edith Butler's *The Tyranny of Greece Over Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1935) is still the most detailed record of this influence.

<sup>22</sup> In addition to the scholars cited above, cf. also Irmtraut Sahmland, *Christoph Martin Wieland und die Deutsche Nation: Zwischen Patriotismus, Kosmopolitanismus und Griechentum* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1990), and Dieter Sturma, "Politics and the New Mythology: The turn to late Romanticism", *Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (Karl Ameriks, ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000)

<sup>23</sup> The political and military humiliations suffered by Prussia were accompanied by massive reparation payments demanded by Napoleon. Matthew Levinger, *Enlightened Nationalism: The Transformation of Prussian Political Culture, 1806-1848* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 42-46

German intellectuals as identifying with various colonized peoples as a response to their own political and military weakness in contrast to the French, a sentiment enflamed by the humiliations of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars. Germany's weakness, however, is turned around and proclaimed as its greatest strength – “[p]olitical weakness thus translates into moral strength.”<sup>24</sup> Just like the poor native victims of European imperialism, the Germans stood far superior to their European contemporaries with regard to morality, virtue, and culture. As will be seen in Chapter One, Herder placed the innocent German alongside “Hindus” and Montezuma’s Mexicans as a model of virtue. Invoking the imagery of classical mythology, he proclaimed that surely Zeus himself would rather sup at the table of these poor innocents than lower himself to dine with those whose hands are stained with blood. Imagining the noble German alongside the simple and the virtuous, not to mention, primitive, victims of European imperialism has a strong New Testament logic. What we see here is a perfect example of the “inversion of values” which Nietzsche attributes to the slave morality – the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.

Another motivation for looking to India and the East for the foundations of a German national culture was the identification of classicism with enlightened, modern French culture. This way of thinking became especially prominent in the years of military conflict between the German states and French Republican and Napoleonic armies. In the case of Joseph Görres, one of the central figures of Chapter Four, his biographer Jon Vanden Heuvel writes, “[t]he German Romantics, by shifting their gaze to Persia and India, by praising these cultures as older, more original, and more fundamental than Greece and Rome, were dethroning the ancient world, and by extension, French

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<sup>24</sup> Zantop, 95

classicism.”<sup>25</sup> Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi makes the same argument about Friedrich Schlegel’s efforts to link German culture to Vedic India.<sup>26</sup>

The psychological shift toward identification with the East, and with the victims of western European imperialism, was, in part, a product of what Liah Greenfield sees as the ambivalence of many German thinkers toward the “West”. While the *Aufklärer*, and the *Bildungsbürger* generally, identified unambiguously with the image and ideals of the “Western world” in the eighteenth century (though this was by no means true of all German intellectuals), the Wars of Liberation inspired a new intense animosity toward the West:

Thus the moment Germans turned to national identity and acquired national pride, this pride was wounded, and not by Napoleonic conquest alone, but rather by the miserable and laughable state of their society, rendered conspicuous by the proximity of the West. Their hatred toward the West was fed by the very fact that the West existed.<sup>27</sup>

Greenfield frequently exaggerates when she writes of “the miserable and laughable state of their society” (at a time when Germany was producing such monumental cultural icons as Kant, Goethe, and Mozart), and the *ressentiment* that resulted. There was, however, an undeniable strengthening of an anti-French sentiment felt by many German intellectuals before the 1790s, and there were new efforts to construct a German identity that was fundamentally at odds with “western”, neo-classical French culture.

Germany’s real greatness was frequently seen as cultural, and many intellectuals argued that this greatness was precisely the *result* of its political weakness, not despite it.

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<sup>25</sup> Jon Vanden Heuvel, *A German Life in the Age of Revolution: Joseph Görres, 1776-1848* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2001), 138

<sup>26</sup> Chen Tzoref-Ashkenazi, “The Nationalist Aspect of Friedrich Schlegel’s *On the Language and Wisdom of the Indians*”, *Sanskrit and ‘Orientalism’: Indology and Comparative Linguistics in Germany, 1750-1958* (Douglas T. McGetchin et al. ed., New Delhi: Manohar, 2004), 107-130

<sup>27</sup> Liah Greenfield, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 372-373

The opposite logic held equally true, of course, that political strength resulted in cultural and spiritual poverty. This ideal of the great *Kulturnation* is nowhere expressed more clearly than in Friedrich Schiller's prose outline for the poem "German Greatness" (c. 1801):

The German Empire and the German nation are two different things. The majesty of the German never rested on the head of his prince. The German has founded his own value apart from politics, and even if the Empire perished, German dignity would remain uncontested. Their dignity is a moral greatness. It resides in the culture and the character of the nation that are both independent of her political vicissitudes. . . . While the political Empire has tottered, the spiritual realm has become all the firmer and richer.<sup>28</sup>

This is a remarkably paradoxical self-image which combines plainness, simplicity, and innocence with intellectual sophistication and cultural achievement. It is also the image many German thinkers constructed of India. Herder and Novalis in particular envisioned the ancient Indians as Rousseau's ideal 'noble savages'. Their closeness to nature was seen as an expression of their childlike purity, which stood in stark contrast to the cruel and inhuman behavior of India's Muslim and European conquerors. On the other hand, the Indians were the originators of the most extraordinary philosophical system, comparable to those of the masterful Greeks themselves. It was this combination of seemingly paradoxical characteristics that made the Indians so potent in the ancient world, and would do the same for modern-day Germans. It was these shared qualities that inspired A.W. Schlegel to proclaim – "If the regeneration of the human species started in the East, Germany must be considered the Orient of Europe."

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<sup>28</sup> Cited in David Aram Kaiser, *Romanticism, Aesthetics and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 54

In tracing the origins of German orientalism to contemporary debates about national identity, this dissertation has been influenced by several key critiques of Said that have appeared in the past ten to fifteen years. While remaining within the discourse on *Orientalism* by focusing on the production of knowledge about the Orient as a discourse of power, these critiques have turned their attention to internal debates about national identity, especially in the period following the French Revolution. The literary theorists Nigel Leask and Saree Makdisi have focused on the works of the British romantic writers, especially Shelley, Byron, and Coleridge, as examples of an ambivalence toward the East that points to conflicting images of British identity in the romantic, post-Revolutionary era.<sup>29</sup> The historians Javed Majeed and Thomas R. Trautmann have focused on the debate in Britain between the “Orientalists” like Warren Hastings and William Jones, and the “Anglicists” like James Mill, over British rule in India and the image of British identity reflected in that rule.<sup>30</sup>

These works each deal with British orientalism, and the absence of a similar critique in the case of Germany has been one of the key sources of inspiration for the present work. As indicated above, a number of scholars have attempted to make sense of German orientalism by incorporating it into the larger phenomenon described by Said. In these cases, it is argued that Germany stood alongside Britain and France, however awkwardly, in the imperialist production of orientalist knowledge. The fact that there were no German political or economic ties to the “Orient” until the late nineteenth century has been dealt with by insisting that their complicity with British and French

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<sup>29</sup> Nigel Leask, *British Romantic Writers and the East: Anxieties of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), and Saree Makdisi, *Romantic Imperialism: Universal Empire and the Culture of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998)

<sup>30</sup> Javed Majeed, *Ungoverned Imaginings: James Mill's The History of British India* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), and Thomas R. Trautmann, *Aryans and British India* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997)

orientalism was a product of their desire to imitate imperial power over the Orient in the only way that was open to them.

There is another possibility, and that is the focus of this dissertation. Instead of envisioning themselves as standing alongside the imperial victors, what would be the utility for German intellectuals of imagining themselves standing side-by-side with the *victims* of western European imperialism? The question here is surely one of utility. Orientalism, both popular and academic, came onto the scene in Germany at a crucial time when the institutions of national life were threatening to crumble under the pressure of competition for dominance within the *Reich*, especially between Prussia and Austria. It erupted into public discourse at the time when much of Germany was physically occupied by French forces. While it is often simply assumed that the Holy Roman Empire was essentially defunct and all but irrelevant by the late eighteenth century, a number of historians have shown just how vital the idea and institutions of the *Alte Reich* were even in its last days.<sup>31</sup> The importance of the Holy Roman Empire in terms of providing a framework for a uniquely German identity became especially clear during the first decade of the nineteenth century when political and military defeat at the hands of Napoleon culminated in the official dissolution of the Empire.<sup>32</sup>

In light of these circumstances, identification with the political and military victors in Europe would have made little sense, and, even more importantly, would not have been very useful. On the contrary, all of the new textual evidence that was emerging in the same period about the antiquity and sophistication of Vedic Indian

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<sup>31</sup> Mack Walker, *German Home Towns: Community, State, and General Estate, 1648-1817* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1971), 185-216; Klaus Epstein, *The Genesis of German Conservatism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1966), 595-671. Cf. also Karl Otmar v. Aretin, *Das Alte Reich. Vol. 3: Das Reich und der österreichisch-preußische Dualismus (1745-1806)* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1997), 489-531; John G. Gagliardo, *Reich and Nation: The Holy Roman Empire as Idea and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980), 187-289

<sup>32</sup> These events, and the impact they had on German orientalism and Indology, are the subject of Chapter Four.

culture provided German intellectuals with an enticing new model for identification or emulation for reasons alluded to above and explored in detail below. Between 1789 and 1819, the German states underwent a period of radical political, social, and cultural change, unquestionably the most radical since the Thirty Years' War in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. As will be seen, as the times and circumstances changed, so did the prevailing image or images of India. These images evolved to meet the needs of the moment, and therein lies, perhaps, the greatest utility of what A. Leslie Willson has called the “mythical image” of India – its malleability.<sup>33</sup>

Knowledge about India, and exposure to Indian literature, philosophy, and religion were very new for most Europeans in the late eighteenth century, especially to Germans. This novelty meant that the “mythical image” was still very pliable, a decided contrast to the long established image of Greece as the birthplace of classical civilization. The malleability of the image of India was something it shared with Germany. In his *Lyceum Fragments* (1798), Friedrich Schlegel wrote: “The only thing one can criticize about the model of Germany, which a few great patriotic authors have constructed, is its incorrect placement. It doesn't lie behind, but before us.”<sup>34</sup> India and Germany were both works-in-progress, and they could be, and were, used to shape one another. This is, of course, deeply ironic – that India, a three thousand year old civilization, was being created and shaped by a small group of German intellectuals in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. This irony underscores the central point of this dissertation: the “mythical image” of India was not really about India at all; it was entirely about Germany. Consequently, this dissertation is a critique of Said and much of the literature

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<sup>33</sup> A. Leslie Willson, *A Mythical Image: The Ideal of India in German Romanticism* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1964)

<sup>34</sup> *Friedrich Schlegel's Lucinde and the Fragments* (Peter Firchow, trans., Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 1971), 147; *Kritische Friedrich-Schlegel-Ausgabe, Vol. II* (Hans Eichner, ed., München: Verlag Ferdinand Schöningh, 1967), 151

on *Orientalism* only in so far as this work argues that what was really at stake in German orientalist debates was never really about India. This dissertation is about competing models of German identity, and how images of India reflected these debates at a critical time in German history.

While this dissertation was being written, Joseph Lennon published his book *Irish Orientalism*, which examines a similar phenomenon in Ireland.<sup>35</sup> *Irish Orientalism* raises some questions which are in many ways relevant to a study of German orientalism. In particular, Lennon explains the attraction of the Orient to Irish writers and intellectuals in terms of identification with other victims of British imperialism. Arguments about some past connection between India and Ireland, for example, are seen as cases of a “mutual ‘othering’”, and therefore, “[t]o study Irish writings on the Orient . . . is also to study Irish cultural narratives of antiquity, Celticism, and nation.”<sup>36</sup> The same statement could be made of Germany simply by substituting the word “Germanness” for “Celticism”. Just like many of the German thinkers whose works are explored in this dissertation, numerous Irish intellectuals in this same period sought to legitimize their national culture by grounding it in a cultural tradition that was both demonstrably ancient and noble, but was also associated with the imperial periphery.

A cursory comparison of Irish and German orientalisms uncovers a number of striking similarities, and a more detailed comparative study might turn out to be of great value in the discourse on Orientalism. As in Germany, the most frequently cited evidence for Indian roots of Irish culture was linguistic, and stemmed from William Jones’ discovery that Sanskrit was an older member of the same language family that included Celtic, as well as Greek, Latin, German, and several other more modern

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<sup>35</sup> Joseph Lennon, *Irish Orientalism: A Literary and Intellectual History* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2004)

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, xvii, xviii