

states in search of stability. Sundberg's book is an exceptionally insightful and methodologically sound example of 'anthropology of authoritarianism'.

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A REGIONAL WAR OF COLONIAL ANNEXATION

The Horns of the Beast: The Swakop River Campaign and World War I in South-West Africa 1914–15.
By James Stejskal.

Solihull, England: Helion & Co., 2014. Pp. ix + 140. £16.95, paperback (ISBN 978-1-909982-78-9).

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Key Words: Namibia, South Africa, imperialism, military, war.

The centenary of the Great War is upon us and many historians of the global catastrophe of 1914–18 will be sentenced to hard labor in the quarry for some time to come. The present author is one of those, if new to the yard. James Stejskal, a former American diplomat in Africa, whose first book this is, has been laboring away at one of the war's subimperial African sideshows, the Union of South Africa's short campaign to overrun its neighboring colony of German South-West Africa. Although a small book, *The Horns of the Beast* certainly packs it in.

Drawing on a rich range of archival sources, contemporary literature, and secondary material, his study provides an extraordinarily detailed, meticulously plotted, densely atmospheric assessment of the fighting dynamics of the German South-West Africa campaign. In fact, given its extensive collection of fine maps and illustrations, appendices and chronology, this book's coverage of this corner of the world conflict has an almost encyclopedic quality. If anything, its subtitle, *The Swakop River Campaign*, is misleading. For all that its main concentration is on the decisive northern leg of the expeditionary assault led by South Africa's khaki-inclined prime minister, General Louis Botha, Stejskal's clear and well-written account provides a condensed history of this regional war of colonial annexation. However condensed, it nevertheless manages to find space for more marginal Rhodesian and Portuguese interests in the German South-West theatre.

While the military story lies at the center of its dozen or so crisp chapters, *The Horns of the Beast* also takes account of the aftermath of the transition from German colonial rule to South African administrative 'Trusteeship', until, many decades later, this territory slid from under Pretoria's paws to become an independent Namibia. As the author observes, it was 'that struggle and victory' that has come to define 'Namibia, its peoples, and politics', whereas today, 'World War I is but a distant memory for most Namibians; a conflict fought by outsiders over a land taken from its true owners' (p. 121).

That said, through his personal involvement in the Namib Battlefield Heritage Project, an effort to document and record First World War battle sites in Namibia, Stejskal has clearly been doing his own practical bit to ensure that memories of 1914–15 do not fade away entirely. Indeed, Chapter Seven, 'The Battlefields Today', is a haunting

photographic record of some of the scratchy pieces retrieved through battlefield archaeology, such as a few camp tins and bricks, and the burial sites of soldiers who perished in the 1918 Spanish influenza pandemic. Their poignancy as historical heritage is all the more striking in a current political climate of official Namibian, South African, and German indifference to the South-West Africa campaign, and with there being no other ‘compelling reason for anyone to care’ (p. 112) about its significance to their interwoven colonial pasts.

In other respects, though, the ‘new light’ promised by *The Horns of the Beast* illuminates only one dimension of the war in this region, that of the operational conduct by the invading and defending forces. Here, it adds precise and interesting detail on a wide range of campaign-related issues, ranging from desertion, to Baster involvement in hostilities, and to the ever forbidding environment. Such was the desert heat that the thermometers carried by the South African army ‘burst when the temperature climbed over 130 degrees Fahrenheit’ (p. 97).

Stejskal’s new volume does not substantially alter the established understanding of the impact of the First World War on German South-West Africa. London wanted the colony’s strategic port and wireless facilities knocked out to remove their threat to imperial communications. While eager to do England’s bidding, Pretoria was also after bigger fish. An invasion for conquest would enable Britain’s newest white dominion to reel in neighboring northwestern territory as a first step towards realizing its geopolitical vision of an expansionist ‘Greater South Africa’. Even if waged over tricky terrain, hostilities in German South West Africa were cheap as well as short. In the memorable words of the Boer loyalist, Deneys Reitz, a huge territory had been gained for fewer casualties than the cost of an average trench raid in France.

In calling the German South-West African campaign pivotal to Germany’s African interests and describing the colony as ‘its most prized African possession’ (p. 11), the author is, perhaps, exaggerating a little. Even the dim-witted Kaiser knew otherwise. Two decades earlier, Wilhelm II had concluded that, were his country ever to end up at war with Britain, South-West Africa could be jettisoned to concentrate all energies on the defense of German East Africa. For there lay not sand, but the temptation of the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf.

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MATERIAL LIFE IN THE CAPE UNDER THE VOC

Historical Archaeology in South Africa: Material Culture of the Dutch East India Company at the Cape.
Edited by Carmel Schrire.

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Many historical archaeologists will welcome the publication of this book, especially those with specialist interests in South Africa, the *Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie* (VOC, or