

## Review Article

### *German Colonialism in Africa*

*Sex and Control: Venereal Disease, Colonial Physicians, and Indigenous Agency in German Colonialism, 1884–1914.* By DANIEL J. WALTHER (New York: Berghahn, 2015; pp. 198. £78);

*Transnationale Biographien: Die Missionsbenediktiner von St. Ottilien in Tanganyika, 1922–1965.* By CHRISTINE EGGER (Cologne: Böhlau, 2016; pp. 396. €55);

*German Colonial Wars and the Context of Military Violence.* By SUSANNE KUSS, tr. ANDREW SMITH (Cambridge, MA: Harvard U.P., 2017; pp. 400. £32.95).

In August 2018, more than one hundred years after the end of German rule over South West Africa, the German Foreign Office oversaw the repatriation of the remains of several Ovaherero/Ovambanderu and Nama to Namibia. The remains came from both public and private collections in Germany and followed previous repatriations in 2011 and 2014. The repatriations were part of a larger programme of negotiations between Germany and Namibia regarding a shared colonial past, a programme invigorated by the acknowledgement in 2004 by the minister for development, Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, of German responsibility for crimes committed by the German colonial forces. The colonial past has also become a major talking-point within Germany. Since 2013, the activist group No Humboldt 21 has been protesting against an uncritical incorporation of ethnographic collections dating from colonial times into the planned Humboldt Forum in central Berlin. And in 2016–17 the German Historical Museum in Berlin staged a major exhibition on German colonialism that was attended by over 100,000 visitors.

Against this backdrop, three recent works have made new forays into our historical understanding of German colonialism. To varying degrees, they pick up on four broad trends within the burgeoning field of German colonial history: an increasing sensitivity to histories of the colonised; contextualising German colonial history within a wider European imperial framework; sustained attention to the transnational turn; and tracing the impact of empire on the colonial metropole.

Daniel Walther's *Sex and Control*, published in the Monographs in German History series by Berghahn, will be of interest not only to historians of Germany, but also to scholars working in the histories

of medicine and sexuality more generally. The study focuses on the ways in which the German colonial government exerted authority and power through biopolitics rather than, for example, the military or the police, with particular attention to both the extent and the limitations of this power.<sup>1</sup> Focusing on the management of venereal disease in the German colonies, Walther shows the ways in which colonial authorities targeted the bodies of German military men and, ultimately, female prostitutes in their attempt to control public health.

Controlling the nation through control of (particularly women's) bodies has long been a theme in German history. So what difference did colonialism make? The author argues that the racial hierarchies imposed by the colonial system facilitated the access of doctors to patient bodies, and they could require more of the population to submit to medical supervision than was possible in Germany.<sup>2</sup> According to Walther, 'in the overseas territories, [doctors] implemented the policies they did because they could, which in the end went beyond what was possible at home'.<sup>3</sup> In addition to white prostitutes and the military, they also tried to control indigenous groups through education, regulation and coercion, thus opening up a much larger field of experimentation.

One of the author's most provocative claims is that the colonial public health struggle was an essentially modern one; with the 'focus on disciplining the population through surveillance and normalization ... modern medicine sought to transform society and define who belonged in the nation-state and who did not according to the authority of scientific knowledge'.<sup>4</sup> He thus works not only within a Foucauldian framework, but picks up on the idea of colonial space being a 'laboratory of modernity', a space where technological, racial, social and medical innovations could be tested out on a subservient population before being applied to the metropole.<sup>5</sup> Walther pushes this thesis further, considering the colonies not as a testing ground, but as a place where doctors could *apply* knowledge and understanding.<sup>6</sup> This is an important qualification to make and has further implications for how historians see the nature of knowledge transfer between colony and metropole.

The study takes a 'pan-colonial' perspective across all German colonies, claiming that 'perceptions of non-Europeans from a medical perspective were largely uniform', as were 'responses to this threat'.<sup>7</sup>

1. D.J. Walther, *Sex and Control: Venereal Disease, Colonial Physicians, and Indigenous Agency in German Colonialism, 1884–1914* (New York, 2015), p. 2.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, p. 4.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 3.

5. See, for example, D. van Laak, *Imperiale Infrastruktur: Deutsche Planungen für eine Erschließung Afrikas, 1880–1960* (Paderborn, 2004); G. Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago, IL, 1991); P. Rabinow, *French Modern: Norms and Forms of the Social Environment* (Chicago, IL, 1995).

6. Walther, *Sex and Control*, p. 5.

7. *Ibid.*, p. 6.

This perspective inadvertently runs the risk of reproducing the gaze of the coloniser. Nevertheless, Walther attempts to take seriously the attitudes and motivations of indigenous populations, as they are reproduced in the colonial archives. Indeed, following the work of James Scott and Detlev Peukert, he argues for interpreting indigenous patients' compliance and/or non-compliance as part of a spectrum between 'complicity' and 'resistance'.<sup>8</sup>

The book begins with a useful short chapter introducing the reader to the most salient features of the campaign against venereal disease in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Germany. This is followed by three main parts, each consisting of several chapters. Part I ('Male Sexuality and Prostitution in the Overseas Territories') is a broad outline of sexuality and prostitution in the colonies written in a way that renders the book accessible to the non-expert while still engaging those more versed in the field of German colonial history. The second part ('Venereal Disease in the Colonial Context') includes insight into the nature of the source material and the reduction and objectification of the sick or diseased to statistics. Here, Walther offers a convincing case for a focus on venereal disease (VD) partly because of the sheer numbers involved. For example, the number of reported cases in Cameroon was second only to that for malaria in 1911/12;<sup>9</sup> in two districts in Togo in 1907/08, at least 40 per cent of the white population suffered from VD;<sup>10</sup> and in East Africa in 1903/04 there were more VD patients than malaria patients among the 'indigenous' population.<sup>11</sup> However, the discussion also shows the limitations of these statistics, particularly in relation to any group besides Europeans—groups defined by shifting colonial categories such as 'indigenes', 'coloured', 'white' or 'mestee'. Walther argues that this very ambiguity about whom to include or exclude in statistics allowed doctors and colonial officials to justify the application of 'broader and more uniform policies' than they might otherwise have done.<sup>12</sup>

The third part of the book, 'Fighting Venereal Disease in the Colonies', shows in particular how colonial authorities exerted their power not only in the implementation of control measures, but especially in the reaction to non-compliance with public health measures. It provides more detail on the actual treatment of those infected by venereal disease, and the increasingly coercive measures used to control them. These included interning non-European patients in fenced-in barracks and camps until they were deemed risk-free, similar to 'lock hospitals' in British colonies.<sup>13</sup> Here and elsewhere

8. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 59–60.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 76.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 123.

throughout the book, the author situates the German experience in a broader colonial context by including frequent references to secondary literature on the British case.

*Sex and Control* provides the reader with a great deal of insight into the mechanisms behind both the reach of venereal disease and attempts to control it in the colonies. Readers learn, for example, that German doctors attributed the spread of syphilis above all to unmarried white working-class men, although they also blamed Arab and Muslim populations in the African colonies, as well as Japanese and Chinese people in the Pacific territories. Explanations of the actual cause of venereal disease were subject to shifts and attributed above all to moral conditions.<sup>14</sup> A somewhat predictable medical discourse thus targeted non-white populations when it was politically expedient to do so. Attention to a possible overlap between discourses which focus on the working class in colony and metropole and on the racial underclass abroad, though briefly mentioned, might have been pursued further. What does become clear is that indigenes were used as test subjects even more than the underclasses in Germany because of racial hierarchies.<sup>15</sup> Clearly the colonial situation significantly altered discourse and practice. And yet one is left wondering whether there was more than just a one-way knowledge transfer from Germany to the colonies—whether the two were even more entangled than the analysis suggests. Chapter Nine, for example, reveals that information acquired in the colonies on the administration and dosage of Salvarsan, a drug used to combat syphilis, was subsequently applied in the metropolitan context.<sup>16</sup> Is there perhaps more evidence of a two-way knowledge exchange between colony and metropole?

The detailed discussion is backed, above all, by a plethora of statistics, which are included in a lengthy appendix. Closer scrutiny of these tables, however, shows a patchiness of data that is only briefly reflected on in the text.<sup>17</sup> The gaps in the data become particularly apparent when looking at Table 6, showing venereal diseases in German South West Africa from 1902/03 to 1911/12, where statistics are missing for half the years. This problem is, of course, compounded by the fact that only the reported cases are listed. Anyone working with German colonial statistics has come across frustrating blanks such as this, but one wonders whether it is wise to give quite so much attention to these numbers in Part II, given their unreliability. Ultimately the most important point was surely that doctors *perceived* VD as spreading widely across the colonies.

Indeed, perhaps as a counterweight to this statistical evidence, Walther also attempts a more nuanced, post-colonial reading of the archives

14. *Ibid.*, p. 81.

15. *Ibid.*, p. 110.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

17. *Ibid.*, pp. 83–4.

through attention to ‘indigenous agency’ in the final chapters. Although stated to be a substantial part of the argument in his introduction, this subject is given relatively little space, due to emphasis on the other themes the book also covers. The actual material that may contribute to an understanding of African agency is limited to a few tantalising glimpses rather than a sustained analysis. Nevertheless, the author does draw considerable insights from this evidence. He demonstrates above all that indigenous reactions to public health measures to control venereal disease varied. Some ‘Cameroonian fathers’ encouraged their sons to consult German physicians before marriage; some prostitutes ‘coveted’ a clean bill of health issued by colonial authorities because it facilitated their work.<sup>18</sup> Alternative reactions included patients trying to escape from treatment ‘camps’ in East Africa, prostitutes avoiding inspection through marriage in East Africa, and prostitutes targeted through surveillance in Cameroon simply leaving the area to avoid invasive procedures.<sup>19</sup> Can we then interpret these latter actions as forms of resistance? Walther stops short of drawing this conclusion explicitly, although the introduction suggests he would like us to understand the evidence in this way. In order to deepen this important part of the analysis, one might extend Walther’s reading of the slippages in colonial officials’ reports with further evidence—from missionary reports, for example.

Overall, this solidly researched study offers fascinating detail for scholars of German colonialism. For more general scholars of medical history and empire, it provides an interesting counter-perspective to the ‘laboratories of modernity’ thesis that deserves further exploration. The book is not a systematic study in comparative history; several examples from the British context are instead woven into the discussion at choice moments in order to put the German case into perspective. Nevertheless, these interjections suggest that German colonial medics did not differ greatly from their British colleagues, further substantiating the validity of considering German colonialism as part of a wider European project.<sup>20</sup> Through the discussion, readers also get a glimpse of the international networks that brought prostitutes to the colonies in the first place: brothels were run by French, German, Japanese and Chinese managers and featured women from a variety of backgrounds. There may well be scope for further inquiry by historians interested in these women’s lives, their migration around the colonial world, and the networks facilitating the globalisation of the sex trade.<sup>21</sup> For now, *Sex and Control* impresses upon readers the remarkable degree of authority

18. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 123, 125.

20. U. Lindner, *Koloniale Begegnungen: Deutschland und Großbritannien als Imperialmächte in Afrika, 1880–1914* (Frankfurt am Main, 2011); J.-U. Guettel, “‘Between Us and the French there are no Profound Differences’: Colonialism and the Possibilities of a Franco-German Rapprochement before 1914”, *Historical Reflections*, xl (2014), pp. 29–46.

21. Cf. Walther, *Sex and Control*, p. 44.

exercised by physicians in the German colonies before the First World War, which was not to be surpassed until the 1927 Law for Combatting Venereal Disease and later Nazi measures.<sup>22</sup>

Christine Egger's book, *Transnationale Biographien*, focuses on a very different kind of network. The study, situated both within and outside the German colonial context, traces missionary networks between the St Benediktus missionary society and the former German East Africa (Tanzania), Switzerland and the United States. The St Benediktus-Missionsgenossenschaft (otherwise known as the St Ottilien Congregation) was founded by the Swiss Father Andreas (Josef) Amrhein in 1884. It began as an organisation working out of Schloss Emming in Bavaria and spreading the Catholic faith to German East Africa. It continues to exist, with members of the congregation in Germany and Switzerland, but also in Tanzania, Togo, Namibia, the United States and the Philippines, among other locations. Egger approaches the history of this organisation with a 'translocal, transregional and transnational' perspective.<sup>23</sup> Her goal is to write the history of the modern Christian mission as part of the history of the European, American and African societies involved, but also with a view to a 'shared history of complex relationships and entanglements'.<sup>24</sup>

In doing so, Egger casts her chronological net wider than is usual, situating her analysis from the late nineteenth century to the 1960s. This allows her to include a 'second flowering' of the organisation's activities following the First World War and Germany's loss of political control over East Africa (it became a British mandate in 1919). The approach further substantiates claims for the continuity of colonial-era relations between Germany and its colonies into the inter-war period and beyond. Like Walther, Egger also considers both the colonial and metropolitan aspects of the organisation together.<sup>25</sup> However, whereas Walther puts relatively more weight on the colonial theatre, Egger seeks primarily to trace the effects that these missionary encounters abroad had on a German population at home. As she puts it: 'Did Peramiho and Ndanda become as apparent in St Ottilien as St Ottilien was in Peramiho and Ndanda?'<sup>26</sup>

The study takes a refreshing approach through a 'collective biography' of the *circa* 379 members of the Congregation of St Ottilien who were active in Tanganyika between 1922 and 1965. Evidence is based on necrologies and narrative interviews in Tanzania. Over the years, historians have found that missionary archives can reveal a plethora

22. *Ibid.*, p. 2.

23. C. Egger, *Transnationale Biographien: Die Missionsbenediktiner von St. Ottilien in Tanganyika, 1922–1965* (Cologne, 2016), p. 9.

24. *Ibid.*, p. 10.

25. A.L. Stoler and F. Cooper, 'Between Metropole and Colony: Rethinking a Research Agenda', in *eid.*, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, CA, 1997).

26. Egger, *Transnationale Biographien*, p. 11.

of information about German colonialism and transnational networks. However, Catholic missions have remained relatively untouched by scholarship. Most Catholic archives can be accessed only through the Vatican and are thus subject to restrictions. The St Ottilien archives, however, are retained by their abbeys in St Ottilien, Peramiho and Ndanda, and are more open to research.

One clear theme that emerges from this research is the idea of transnational, or imperial, careering.<sup>27</sup> Extending this concept into the missionary world, Egger includes not just ordained priests, but also 'Brudermissionare', that is, teachers, craftsmen, mechanics, engineers and doctors, as well as women members of the 'Frauenmission' who would help priests in the 'civilizing mission'.<sup>28</sup> Crucially, by placing the main part of her study in the 1920s to the 1960s, the author includes not just American and European, but also Tanganyikan missionary careers. This is an important attempt to overcome national and Eurocentric boundaries of historical research on German colonialism. At the same time, it suggests that *Landesgeschichte* may be a useful way of combining local with transnational histories.<sup>29</sup>

The book is divided into eight chapters. It begins with an overview of the colonial context and of St Ottilien and other missionary organisations in the nineteenth century. The narrative includes a fairly extensive section of background information, up to and including parts of Chapter Four. The discussion comes into full stride in this chapter, however, which focuses on *Lebenswelten*; here we encounter, for example, the life story of Rudolf Vierhaus, missionary in Tanganyika between 1922 and 1965. The most fascinating and analytical chapter, in this reader's opinion, is Chapter Five, a collective biography of missionary workers in Tanganyika. This is followed by a chapter zooming in on individual experiences, though not abandoning the biographical approach. The final chapter places these biographies within their transnational relationships and networks, through the lens of three transnational 'spaces': missionary associations, publications, and the mission-built churches and museum in St Ottilien.

The research is truly transnational in terms of archival work and has resulted in a logically organised and detailed study. The collective biography reveals some unsurprising commonalities in the missionaries' backgrounds: European missionaries were overwhelmingly from small, rural communities, from large, hard-working agrarian or small trade families, who in turn also learned a trade or received further education

27. See, for example, D. Lambert and A. Lester, eds., *Colonial Lives across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (New York, 2006); C. Jeppesen, "'Sanders of the River, Still the Best Job for a British Boy': Colonial Administrative Service Recruitment at the End of Empire', *Historical Journal*, lix (2016), pp. 469–508.

28. Egger, *Transnationale Biographien*, p. 59.

29. *Ibid.*, p. 33–4.

in a technical college. Several also took up the opportunity for further training at the Benedictine convent itself. The missionary-run training colleges were also key entry-points for the Tanganyikan brothers.<sup>30</sup> Perhaps surprising to some readers, however, will be the fact that German missionaries also took part in military service. Egger analyses its impact on some of their lives.

Throughout the work, the author also recognises the complicated relationship between missionary and (neo-)colonial ideals. For example, European missionaries were influenced by a desire to be a monk and missionary, but also by 'romantic ideas of an exciting life in far-off Africa', as well as desire for social improvement and security.<sup>31</sup> The mission's founder, Father Andreas Amrhein, was impressed by the display of non-European artefacts at the Paris World's Fair when laying out plans for his missionary work.<sup>32</sup> This suggests that understanding of the mission cannot be extracted from the politics and popularisation of empire, though Egger might have made more of this aspect through some more critical discourse analysis of the missionaries' own statements. Although the author briefly alludes to the mission emerging as a 'political phenomenon', one wonders what exactly this means.<sup>33</sup> For example, to what extent were these missionaries (like many others) involved in debates on restitution of the former colonies to Germany in the 1920s?

Through the nuanced *Lebenswelten* analysis leading into the 1950s and 1960s, readers learn about European missionaries' perspectives on agrarian 'development' projects, homesickness, increasing tensions with the British colonial government and, eventually, the political vision of Julius Nyerere, and setbacks *vis-à-vis* indigenous spiritual practices as well as Islam. But we also learn about the struggles of Tanganyikan-born missionaries; for example, Brother Bonaventura Malibiche's (failed) efforts to erect a cloister exclusively for black padres and brothers in the mid-1950s. Indeed, it was not until the 1980s that Tanzanian candidates were allowed entry into the convents of Peramiho and Ndanda.<sup>34</sup>

More of these latter kinds of perspectives would have been welcome, but overall the analysis reflects the geographically skewed origins of the St Ottilien missionaries. Overwhelmingly from Germany and Switzerland, they were not joined by members from the United States until after the Second World War. The first Tanganyikans were not taken in until the 1950s.<sup>35</sup> Therefore this study only includes eight missionaries who came from the United States and eleven born in Tanganyika. This

30. Ibid., ch. 5.

31. Ibid., p. 157.

32. Ibid., p. 56.

33. Ibid., pp. 51–2.

34. Ibid., p. 264.

35. Ibid., p. 77.



geographical imbalance is further visible in the individual biographies of six missionaries in Chapter Six: four are Europeans, one American and only one Tanganyikan. We thus hear very little from people like Malibiche himself, and the goals of illustrating a 'shared history' are thus only partially fulfilled.

The final chapter and brief conclusion show that East Africa did indeed find its way into Bavaria. This occurred by means of publications and especially through the missionary museum, which apparently hosts thousands of visitors per year.<sup>36</sup> Egger claims that, slowly but surely, the boundaries between 'self' and 'other' began to dissipate in the world-views of the missionaries.<sup>37</sup> Things have come full circle as today, as brothers from Tanganyika come to the small villages in Germany and Switzerland from which the original European missionaries departed.<sup>38</sup> The fruits of a *Landesgeschichte* approach, as laid out in the introduction, are unfortunately not as neatly resolved. Although frequent references to a regional identity are revealed in diary entries and architectural examples, this important sub-theme is left as a loose end and certainly deserves further attention and study. It would also have been interesting to know more about the women who were associated with the mission. Even though St Ottilien missionaries were exclusively male, the author alludes to the fact that women often served as 'household helps'. Despite the volume's almost 400-page expanse, the reader is thus still left with the feeling that the topic has not been exhausted and may offer several valuable leads for further research.

The final book under review takes a much more direct approach to one of the most contentious debates in German colonial history: the colonial *Sonderweg* thesis which suggests that National Socialist racial violence emerged from Germany's colonial conflicts.<sup>39</sup> Susanne Kuss' *German Colonial Wars and the Context of Military Violence* is a translation by Andrew Smith of her *Deutsches Militär auf kolonialen Kriegsschauplätzen* which was published by Ch. Links in 2010. Kuss analyses the causes and forms of violence perpetrated by the German Empire in three major colonial conflicts: the Boxer War in China (1900–01), the Herero–Nama War in German South West Africa (1904–07/8), and the Maji Maji War in German East Africa (1905–07/8). She challenges a new generation of historians who argue for continuity between German colonial wars and the

36. *Ibid.*, p. 329.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 333.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 334.

39. F. Fischer, *Griff nach der Weltmacht: die Kriegszielpolitik des kaiserlichen Deutschland, 1914/18* (Düsseldorf, 1961); H.-U. Wehler, *Das deutsche Kaiserreich, 1871–1918* (Göttingen, 1973); A. Césaire, *Discours sur le colonialisme* (Paris, 1955); H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (New York, 1966); R. Gerwarth and S. Malinowski, 'Hannah Arendt's Ghost: Reflections on the Disputable Path from Windhoek to Auschwitz', *Central European History*, xlii (2009), pp. 279–300.

Holocaust, and builds on Isabel Hull's findings on the tendency of German military culture to swift recourse to violence and 'radical' solutions.<sup>40</sup>

Kuss argues that each of these three theatres of war used different kinds of violence, including the 'random violence' of punitive exhibitions in the China campaign (a coalition war); the carefully planned military strategy that spiralled out of control and turned genocidal in German South West Africa; and the scorched earth policy in German East Africa. The author convincingly argues that a closer look at the specifics of each case-study is needed in order really to understand why the campaign in German South West Africa became genocidal and those in other theatres of war did not. Pinning explanations on 'specifically German' behaviour is thus considered an insufficient explanation.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, the author claims that, as much as colonial violence was anchored in the mental maps of the German soldiers themselves, historians must also consider the specific set of circumstances that motivated their conduct. Her argumentation is thus grounded on the side of contingency rather than large-scale continuities.

The author contributes to our understanding of these specific circumstances through a methodical analysis of six factors in each conflict: geophysical conditions; cultural geography (human settlement, infrastructure, economy); indigenous actors as one of the warring parties; German military personnel dispatched on behalf of the German Empire (origins, affiliations, ideological considerations and self-conceptions); external requirements (punishment, retribution, settlement, occupation; funding; legitimisation in parliament and the press); and 'friction'. The latter, a term borrowed from Carl von Clausewitz, includes contingent factors such as weather, timetable failures or bad intelligence.<sup>42</sup> At the heart of the analysis is the concept of a *Kriegsschauplatz* or 'theatre of war': a 'site of a battle as a clearly delimitable geographical area in which the warring parties conduct hostile operations'.<sup>43</sup> Geography, Kuss argues, matters as much as mentality.

The discussion is divided into three parts. Part I includes a description of each conflict, where the reader learns a great deal about the specific nature of, and outlets for, military violence. It also includes some original research, for example, on the nature of conflict from diary entries and previously neglected sources, including a letter relating to the Herero–Nama War. The latter shows that the Kaiser's decision to send Lothar

40. S. Kuss, *German Colonial Wars and the Context of Military Violence*, tr. A. Smith (Cambridge, MA, 2017), pp. 2–3. Cf. B. Madley, 'From Africa to Auschwitz: How German South-West Africa Incubated Ideas and Methods Adopted and Developed by the Nazis in Eastern Europe', *European History Quarterly*, xxxiii (2005), pp. 429–64; J. Zimmerer, 'Die Geburt des "Ostlandes" aus dem Geiste des Kolonialismus: Die nationalsozialistische Eroberungs- und Beherrschungspolitik in (post-)kolonialer Perspektive', *Sozial.Geschichte*, xix (2004), pp. 10–43; I. Hull, *Absolute Destruction: Military Culture and the Practices of War* (Ithaca, NY, 2005).

41. Kuss, *German Colonial Wars*, pp. 4–5.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 9.

43. *Ibid.*, p. 8.

von Trotha to take charge in German South West Africa went against the advice of the Chancellor, the minister of war, and the director of the colonial department in the foreign ministry.<sup>44</sup> By the end of this discussion, it is apparent that the war in German South West Africa was indeed an outlier in the conflicts analysed for this study.<sup>45</sup> Yet Kuss argues that 'the genocidal violence characterizing the war in German Southwest Africa emerged entirely independently of any conscious decision for or against a strategy of concerted racial genocide'.<sup>46</sup>

Part II comprises the bulk of the volume and is a diachronic analysis of those contingent factors influencing the causes of each conflict. It includes detailed statistical information and further data concerning white Europeans (chs. 4–6) and non-European indigenous actors (chs. 7–8). Readers learn much about contingent factors in military decision-making around these three conflicts. For example, the military council's decision to deploy members of the navy in the arid regions of South West Africa may at first appear to have been a grievous error. Yet as the most mobile of the fighting forces, the navy could be employed quickly, thus offering considerable advantages.<sup>47</sup> Further details on training and weaponry will be of most interest to military historians, and do not seem to have influenced the course of the conflicts. However, colonial wars did provide opportunities to test new weapons.<sup>48</sup> The author also re-examines the official guidelines regulating the conduct of warfare, pointing to the fact that there was no separate branch of training for the colonial army. The most innovative contributions (which, incidentally, are also of great interest to social and cultural historians) include information on ideology and the passage to war; environment and the enemy; and diseases and injuries. Indeed, the combination of cultural and military history works particularly well in this analysis to help readers understand the attitudes that soldiers brought with them to the colonial arena. It could usefully have been extended with personal accounts.

The final part of the analysis brings in international perspectives and voices from the metropole as well as tackling the thorny idea of military 'memory' which has been used to support the thesis of continuity in German military violence from 'Windhoek to Auschwitz'.<sup>49</sup> Here, the author revisits some well-known material from parliamentary debates and foreign views, including the statements of Colonel Frederic J.A. Trench of the British Royal Garrison Artillery. Some historians of German colonialism may already be familiar with these sources, but

44. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

45. *Ibid.*, pp. 56, 74.

46. *Ibid.*, p. 74.

47. *Ibid.*, p. 95.

48. *Ibid.*, p. 116.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 12.

they offer further useful context, together with some new insights from, for example, French perspectives.

The discussion pays particular attention to the multi-ethnic nature of these conflicts, as well as to the selective approaches to violence employed by the intervening forces. For example, during the Boxer War, American officials condemned the conduct of German punitive expeditions, and their own forces refrained from razing villages. While German forces were largely given free rein by the German government, the British commander, Major General Alfred Gaselee, was expected to inform the Foreign Office of any involvement in expeditions.<sup>50</sup> Like Walther, Kuss is thus aware of the importance of a comparative perspective in her analysis. Her portrayal of the conflicts also acknowledges the mixed nature of the fighting forces, including 'hybridised forces', volunteers in the regular army, navy and marine, Chinese forces, 'native' contingents in South West and East Africa, *rugaruga* (irregular African troops), mercenaries and protection forces. In fact, she argues that 'appreciation of these diverse motivations sheds light on the particular brutality exhibited by German naval personnel and Marine Infantrymen during the early stages of the war in German South West Africa. An explanation for such behaviour is not to be found in a particular and specifically German will to extermination as claimed by a number of scholars, but the complete inexperience and ignorance of colonial warfare on the part of the soldiers involved.'<sup>51</sup>

The author is frequently implicitly in dialogue with Isabel Hull, whose analysis of the Herero War (also in comparison to the Maji Maji and Boxer Wars) similarly calls for military specificities over ideology. Kuss engages in a systematic explanation of the battle at the Waterberg plateau, focusing not just on the infamous 'extermination order', as many non-military historians are wont to do, but explaining the contingent factors, including the rather desperate military situation of the Germans at Hamakari up to that point. She counters Hull's argument that Lothar von Trotha's order was *ex post facto* and that the extermination of the Herero had already begun by the time of its proclamation, claiming that the exact scope of the murders up to that point is impossible to ascertain.<sup>52</sup> She also counters Hull's argument that the sanctioning of terrorism in war was inherent to German military establishments. Kuss claims that this practice had been long established by all nations as a special branch of warfare and a process had been completed before Germany even acquired colonies.<sup>53</sup> Finally, she contends that Trotha 'did not intend to bring about a situation in which the Herero would be subject to a slow death through adverse natural conditions'.<sup>54</sup> This is

50. *Ibid.*, pp. 34–5.

51. *Ibid.*, p. 108.

52. *Ibid.*, p. 50.

53. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

54. *Ibid.*, p. 47; cf. p. 137.

a significant claim, since the traditional definition of genocide rests in part on the ‘intent to destroy’ a population.<sup>55</sup>

Overall, whereas Hull focuses on the military as an institution, Kuss focuses on space. The study’s anchoring in the spatial specificity of the *Kriegsschauplatz* concept is both a strength and a weakness. It is a strength in so far as it has generated a specific, detailed and well-researched study, but also a weakness because it forecloses discussion of the wider resonances of these conflicts. These reach beyond military intervention and involve mentalities, memories and legacies. Kuss argues ultimately that any lessons from colonial wars were ‘lost amid the impact of the First World War’.<sup>56</sup> Although this may be true of the military establishment, this narrow focus is perhaps too limited. Historians have shown that the impact of the war in South West Africa continued to resonate in popular and political culture well through the Weimar period, and Kuss herself considers politics to be an important contingent factor in the conflicts she analyses. Keeping the military, social and political spheres separate is therefore a largely artificial division. Further information from ego-documents rather than military directives might help historians overcome this divide and work toward a more sustained analysis of the actual experience of these conflicts, as Kuss sets out to do in the introduction.

*German Colonial Wars* engages in a stimulating dialogue with previous arguments and is a clear enrichment to the literature of the field. The high-quality and fluent translation makes it accessible to a wider audience. Parts could conceivably be assigned as reading for students of colonialism, empire and military history. Its particular value lies in a broader approach that does not lose the specificity of each case study. Although unfortunately it does not include a bibliography, it is an excellent first point of call for scholars wanting to do further research in this area.

Both Kuss and Walther’s studies show the extent to which the Herero War is still at the heart of scholarship on German colonialism. Although both include important comparative case-studies, their discussions at times remain skewed towards the situation in South West Africa. This is not least because of the comparatively large body of data available for Germany’s largest former settler colony. Yet both authors have taken important steps in putting the South West African situation into perspective to an extent that has not been achieved by previous scholars. As Egger’s book shows, there is also plenty of scope for research outside the Germany–Namibia nexus and even beyond

55. UN General Assembly, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, 9 Dec. 1948, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. lxxviii, p. 277, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3aco.html> (accessed 18 Oct. 2018); cf. K. Ambos, ‘What does “Intent to Destroy” in Genocide Mean?’, *International Review of the Red Cross*, xci, no. 876 (December 2009), pp. 833–58.

56. Kuss, *German Colonial Wars*, p. 290.

the colony–metropole framework into transnational or transcolonial dimensions. As all three authors have attempted to do, incorporating non-European perspectives into this analysis remains one of the most important tasks for historians of German colonialism, both in research and in a wider continuing engagement with the colonial past.

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