



Acknowledgments

This book project required me to wear good walking shoes. Historians generally wander to and from the archives, at times walking off to see specific sites and spaces. We all develop routines and habits, defined by various pressures to gather the materials we need before having to return to our desks. For this volume, I found myself indoors in Berlin and Koblenz, London and Windhoek. Plus, I visited smaller institutions and libraries in Frankfurt, Karlsruhe, Basel, Lüderitz, and Swakopmund. I still think about certain materials, conversations, smells, or quirks—spaces leave impressions on researchers. Yet for this book, I also had the privilege and pleasure to make use of weekends to wander off the beaten paths, outside the metaphorical dim light of a dusty archive and into the bright and stunning landscapes of Namibia. At one point I gazed over Lüderitz from atop Diamantberg (diamond mountain) to get a sense of Germany's first colonial holding and gateway point—a natural harbor indeed. A stroll to Shark Island gave me a sense of a space intimately connected to German history. Seeing the railway leading inland, across desert dunes, or wandering the former diamond town of Kolmanskop on a hot afternoon, brought colonial ambitions to life. Trips to Swakopmund, at first look a charming seaside with impressive avenues, reminded me of my own Western gaze. There, I visited the remains of German efforts to create a gateway into central Namibia; there, a field of graves situated beyond the morning fog on the edge of town speaks volumes to the inherent destructiveness of German colonialism. Later, a drive along Skeleton Coast to Cape Cross brought home the wrath of the coastline and the need for a safe harbor. That day my guide sketched the Benguela Current onto the sand as we stood in front of the beached fishing trawler *Zeila*. A drive into the Namib Desert—that stunning, hostile, yet vibrant landscape—left similar impressions on me. Nature is not just a backdrop.

Funding and the gracious help of many made all of this possible. I originally conceptualized this project while still teaching at Northern Arizona University; since then research grants from Bridgewater College gave me a chance to slowly chip away at the archival record, one visit at a time. A summer stipend from the National Endowment for the Humanities allowed me to expand my scope; it also helped me to speed up the process of completing the book. Then there was the assistance, guidance, and patience of archivists and librarians,

the backbone of any history book. I relied on the kindness of individuals at the Bundesarchiv in Berlin-Lichterfelde and Koblenz, the Kolonialbibliothek in Frankfurt, the National Archives in London, and the Afrikabibliographien in Basel; in Namibia, I strained the patience of archivists and librarians at the National Archive and Library in Windhoek, the Wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft in Windhoek, and the Sam Cohen Library in Swakopmund. An array of museums in Windhoek, Lüderitz, and Swakopmund, apart from tours of all kinds, also shaped this volume. I also want to acknowledge the help of random strangers, individuals I never met but who were kind enough to forward an email to the right person or to share documents I needed. It takes a village, especially in a pandemic. Werner Hillebrecht and Albertina Nekongo in Windhoek, as well as Vickie Montigaud-Green at Bridgewater, deserve special mention—but many more could easily be included. Early feedback came at conferences in Seattle, London, Berlin, Burlington, Basel, and Columbus—thank you to organizers, fellow panelists, and commentators. As I worked more on articles and eventually the manuscript, kind colleagues from my department and beyond provided helpful advice and feedback. Later on several colleagues were kind enough to read parts of the manuscript, or provide feedback in other ways. Thank you specifically to Rob Gordon in Vermont, Dag Henrichsen in Basel, Jonathan Beard in New York, and Romie Nghitevelekwa in Windhoek for making the time to read the full manuscript. I appreciate it. I am also grateful to all anonymous reviewers and to the editors at Berghahn—to Christof Mauch for seeing a place for this volume in the series, and to Sula Ahmad and Lizzie Martinez for guiding the editorial process. Finally, the completion of the manuscript was built on the patience of family and friends. My wife Jennifer—and our dog Petey—here in Virginia certainly heard about this project more than they wanted to. I remain grateful to them. To my parents in Germany, to whom I dedicate this volume, I owe much. Thank you for instilling a sense of curiosity in me—it has served me well.

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