

Reviews

AFRIBORIA

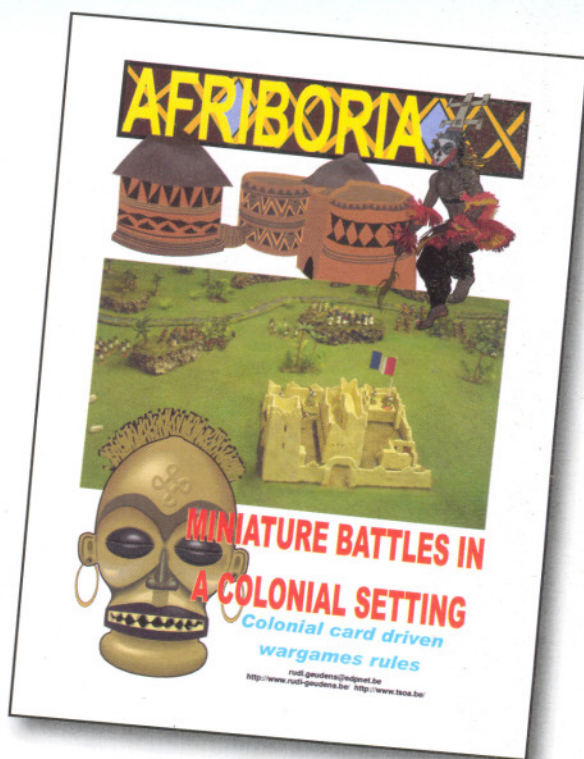
A set of free 28mm colonial Rules by the
Antwerp Fusiliers
(Tin Soldiers of Antwerp Club)

Reviewed by Richard Denning. Photos by Rudi Geudens.

Every year the October Wargames Association puts on a game at our favorite show, the Sheffield Triples. Our games, whilst quite presentable, do not look as gorgeous as many superb wargames, but we get a lot of interest and many folk pop back to see how the game is going. We usually hope to get the game moving so that spectators see action and change.

This year we put on a Sudan game set in the 1880s campaign called "Rescuing Lady Hamilton Smythe". It was a fairly light hearted game based loosely on a relief column trying to bring some civilians back from a distant town to the Nile. About a dozen of us played a fast and furious game with excitement climbing. On Sunday I called out the victory point scores. They started at 9:2 to the British and reached 20-all as the native last turn occurred! Finally on the very last dice roll of the game the natives killed another British unit - another victory point - and won the game! Lady Hamilton Smythe was last seen hiding in a building surrounded by Fuzzies!

Below: A "native" Arab army, mainly B & C-class infantry (8 figure units) with one A class (6 figures - accompanied by a mounted officer) and B & C class cavalry & camelry (5 figure units).



The rules we used were *Afriboria*. This is a free set of wargames rules available on line from the Antwerp Fusiliers (the name used by the Tin Soldiers of Antwerp (TSA) to publish their rules). These guys look like they have fun wargames! Their web site actually has several sets of rules including *Afriboria*. It is a very colourful site with lots of campaign material - check it out.

The rules originate in mechanisms used by several board game companies in their games. These are *Memoir 44* a WW2 game by the superb Days of Wonder company, *Battlecry* which is ACW from the veteran Avalon Hill and the new *Commands and Colours: Ancients* from GMT. They have been adapted to better fit the colonial period. They are designed really for 28mm scale individually based figures, but could be used with most scales and multiple figures stuck on a base/although some admin on paper will be needed.

The battlefield has to use a hex cloth with 6" hexes. We used a template to mark out hexes. The visual effect is a little on the negative side, although the Antwerp guys have suggestions for a making the hexes quite subtle. Another option would be to purchase the hex modules from Kallistra's Hexon system, which however will cost a little and only use 4" hexes. *Afriboria* has a page on using 4" hexes in the game.

Units are six figures for A class European infantry, eight for B and C class natives and lesser well trained Europeans. Cavalry are five figures. Artillery and machine guns have about four figures. You can then organise two units in to a platoon in a single hex with a NCO. Further organisation yields companies of 4 units under an officer.

Now, a central part of the game is that units must have a colour designation. Units are either blue, green or red units. This may be achieved by having a small part of a base with a colour on it (or using a small sticker). So a third of your army might be red, third blue and a third green. You may mix up to two colours in the same platoon or company. There is an element of strategy in how you elect to divide your force and whether to have all same colour companies or mixtures.

Why? Well, that comes in with the action cards - the engine of the game. The action cards will specify how many and which colour units to move, eg it might say - move three blue units, or one of each colour. Units in a platoon or company may be moved as IF THEY WERE ONE unit of that colour. So say you have one blue and three reds in a company you could move the entire company, but it only counts as being one blue unit against that MOVE 3 blue card you just played. However only units of the correct colour can battle/shoot that turn. If two units are together in the same hex with an NCO or officer and they are both the same colour they can fire as only one unit. Mixing colours means you increase the chance of getting a useful card but dilute the attacks as maybe only half your company can actually shoot/melee.

The teams each get a handful of cards and then replenish one per turn. Action cards might also activate random event cards as well. It's very easy command and control and players grasp it very quickly. Well in our case *fairly* quickly. Lets just say no one in my group is a mensa member.

The only chart in the game shows how far units can move and fire, move and not fight and also how many dice at a certain range they roll to fight.

The dice are special dice with different symbols on - a modern bullet symbol, an ACW minie bullet, a musket ball, crossed swords, flag and shield. A class infantry will score hits if their dice come up showing any bullet symbol, B class only on Minie balls and musket balls and C class on musket balls. The crossed swords applies to natives in hand-to-hand and gives them some reason to close to contact. Flags are like morale tests - you must retreat that many hexes as there

Pictures on this page are from *The cigars of the pharao* Afriboria-variant demo game staged at the Red Baron's convention earlier this year, we added some Tintin "character" cards & figs.



are flags. Finally shields are used for saving rolls against melee hits and shooting hits. Crossed swords also save against shooting hits.

The dice system is very easy to pick up and soon players know the numbers of dice and get on with it. There are no modifiers for being hit in flank or rear. Facing does not exist in these rules. These rules are simple and quick and I reckon are great fun but maybe some wargamers who favour more realistic and complex rules might not like them as much as many demo gamers who quite often like simple easy mechanisms.

All the rules are available on the web site - action cards, dice symbols and rules in attractive art work and pdf format. Just print them off and laminate the cards. Print the dice symbols of on sticky back paper and slap on blank dice.

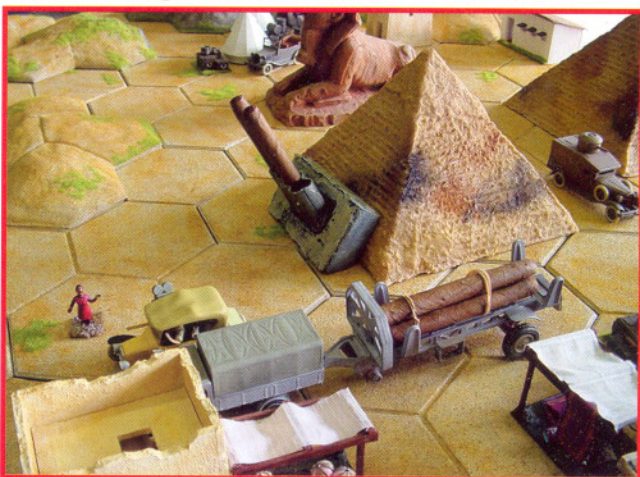
So in summary the game is light and fast moving, at times frustrating, but often fun. The Antwerp Fusiliers have an ongoing campaign set in a mythical Africa and you can find out more on their website.

Relevant Websites:

Antwerp Fusiliers: www.tsoa.be

Kallsitra (hex boards) www.kallsitra.co.uk

Richard Denning is the producer of the UK based gaming pod cast *itstime4games* which reviews wargames and board games. Find out more on www.itstime4games.com





Afriberia - Designer's Notes

Having been involved in the hobby as a gamer, distributor and manufacturer ("Gedemco" buildings & scenery, for those who can still remember the 80s) from the early '70s till 1990, I've seen all kinds of rules pass the review, from the simple D6 affairs of our "founding fathers" to the most complicated chart ridden stuff around. When I picked up wargaming again about six years ago



(lucky for me I never sold my armies!), one of the first projects I tackled was getting into the then very popular pirate games. Since I wanted to combine (28mm) naval combat with land operations, and I couldn't find the rules to do so, I created a set of my own incorporating several decks of "special cards" and making use of poker dice. The game was tested and played a number of times by a team of seasoned gamers at TSA (Tin Soldiers of Antwerp, my local club) and used in a demo at the major Belgian naval base at Zeebrugge. Though "Jolly Roger" (as I named my rules) is a fun game to play, I was not entirely satisfied with the speed or the time it took to play the game: my ultimate goal was a game that would

be concluded in 2-3 hours, involving 2 to 6 players (or more...), ideal for a club night or demo. It was during one of our pirate games that someone pointed out the (then) brand new *Memoir '44* game by Richard Borg and its predecessor *Battle Cry* to me. Needless to say I immediately bought both games, not so much to play them as to study the rules mechanics. Since these (great) games are rather hybrid boardgames aimed at a wider audience than the hard core wargamer, I realised it would take some tinkering to end up with rules that would satisfy the more demanding miniature gamer. Quite a challenge, but the first result of my efforts ("North against South", a table top variant of *Battle Cry*) saw the introduction of larger units (8 figures for infantry, 5 for cavalry and 4 for artillery) and the possibility to create "brigades" of up to six units. I now had succeeded in creating a miniature game that could be concluded in 2-3 hours, with victory for one side or the other remaining in the balance sometimes up to the very last minute. With several commanders on each side, a lot depends on how they cooperate as a true staff, since they have only one pool of cards to pick their orders from. The ultimate test of the system really came when we used it as a "team building tool" for a major international corporation. One of the participants had any prior knowledge of wargaming whatsoever. In less than 30 minutes the 10 executives involved were able to conduct their troops as seasoned

gamers (or better...) and entered in the spirit of the game by calling each other "General!" and even saluting when addressing a colleague! In the end it looked like a miniature version of *Gods & Generals* or *Gettysburg*... They had such fun ("beats paintball as a team building tool any time!") that we were asked to organise more sessions with other employees. It is really very rewarding for a wargamer to see how such raw recruits can be drawn into a game so easily...

Meanwhile, TSA demanded more rules for different historical periods and I decided to do myself a favour by tackling the 19th century Colonial Wars (my favourite) next. Thus *Afriberia* was born. The main problem to be solved was that – contrary to ACW – dividing the battlefield in three sections is not a very workable option in most colonial engagements. This was solved by replacing the "battlefield sections" by "colour coding" all units as either red, green or blue and adapting the command cards accordingly. A, B & C classifications were also introduced to reflect the difference between well armed (and trained) Europeans and native armies or tribesmen and some more cards were added to the deck. I noticed Richard Dennings' remark on the lack of modifiers in case of a flank or rear attack in his excellent review. As a matter of fact, once you are familiar with plotting your tactics based on the cards at hand, it is possible to strike a decisive blow without the need of flank or rear modifiers, at least with our rules covering the gunpowder eras. Flank and rear are taken into account however in the Medieval set *Lords & Levies* (siege rules to follow soon). On the workbench for the moment are our WW2 rules ("The World at War"), to be play tested this fall, *Renaissance Raiders* (Border Reivers and the like) and *Scum of the high seas* (hex base pirate rules). More periods are to follow, we hope, and, yes; we do have fun wargames at TSA (so much that we are willing to share our rules with all of you for free at <http://www.tsoa.be/>). Have fun!

Rudi Geudens