



The Iron Dice of Battle

Albert Sidney Johnston and the Civil War in the West

TIMOTHY B. SMITH

Killed in action at the bloody Battle of Shiloh, Confederate general Albert Sidney Johnston stands as the highest-ranking American military officer to die in combat. His unexpected demise had cascading negative consequences for the South's war effort, as his absence created a void in adequate leadership in the years that followed. In *The Iron Dice of Battle*, noted Civil War historian Timothy B. Smith reexamines Johnston's life and death, offering remarkable insights into this often-contradictory figure.

As a commander, Johnston frequently faced larger and better-armed Union forces, dramatically shaping his battlefield decisions and convincing him that victory could only be attained by taking strategic risks while fighting. The final wager came while leading his army at Shiloh in April 1862. During a desperate gambit to turn the tide of battle, Johnston charged to the front of the Confederate line to direct his troops and fell mortally wounded after sustaining enemy fire.

The first work to survey the general's career in detail in nearly sixty years, *The Iron Dice of Battle* builds on recent scholarship to provide a new and incisive assessment of Johnston's life, his Confederate command, and the effect his death had on the course of the Civil War in the West.

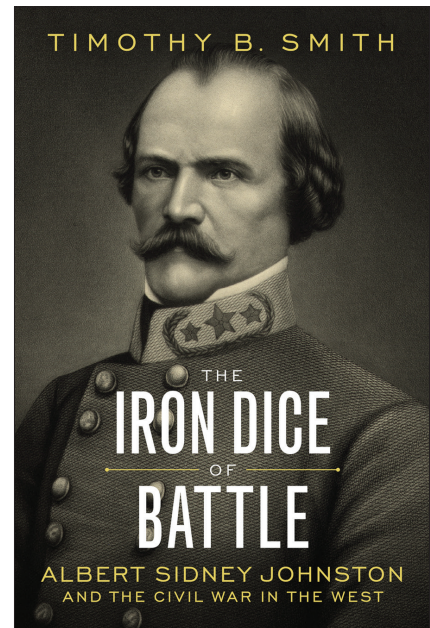
TIMOTHY B. SMITH is the author of eighteen books on the American Civil War, including *Early Struggles for Vicksburg: The Mississippi Central Campaign and Chickasaw Bayou, October 25–December 31, 1862*.

PRAISE FOR *THE IRON DICE OF BATTLE*

"Every Civil War figure should be fortunate enough to have such an important book written about his life and career by such an outstanding scholar."—**John F. Marszalek**, author of *Commander of All Lincoln's Armies: A Life of General Henry W. Halleck*

"Timothy B. Smith explores a man both flawed and formidable, a chess player by choice yet unafraid to 'roll the iron dice.' This is a much-needed modern view of a man of many contradictions."—**Larry J. Daniel**, author of *Engineering in the Confederate Heartland*

"Smith undertakes a painstaking analysis of Albert Sidney Johnston as a man and a soldier, illuminating his dual nature as a careful chess player and an impulsive gambler, and how it led him to the disasters of 1862. A truly fresh and perceptive study of perhaps the greatest might-have-been of the western Confederacy."—**Sam Davis Elliott**, author of *Isham G. Harris of Tennessee: Confederate Governor and United States Senator*



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