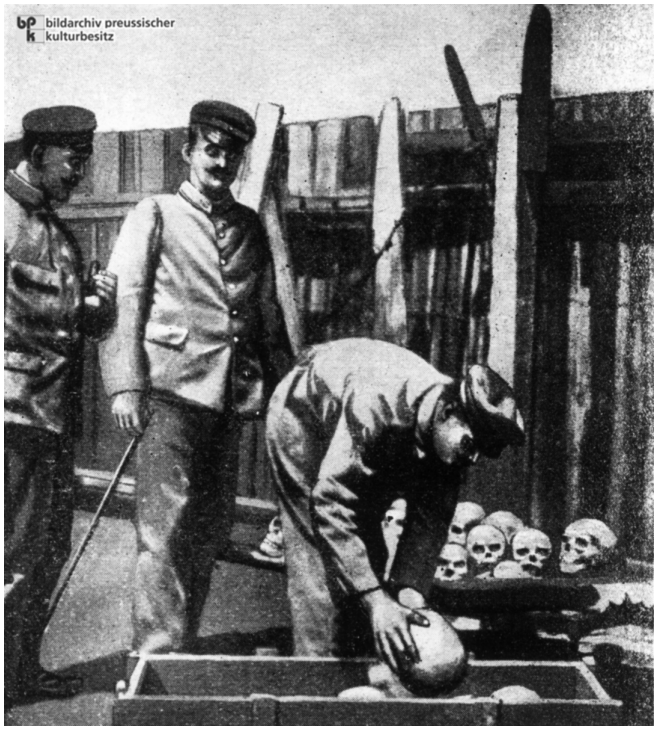
Soldiers with Herero Skulls for Transport to the Institute of Pathology in Berlin (c. 1904–08)

Abstract

In this ghoulish image from the Herero Wars in colonial German Southwest Africa (present-day Namibia, 1904–1908), soldiers load the skulls of Herero tribesmen either executed or killed in battle for transport to the Institute of Pathology in Berlin, where they were to be measured for anthropological classification and most likely put to use in advancing the cause of phrenology. A pseudo-science, phrenology involved measuring skulls and using those measurements to make assumptions – typically racist ones – about intellectual abilities or personality traits. Additionally, this image shows the extent to which the German military, as an information conduit between the Empire's peripheries and its centers of knowledge production, was caught up in the country's research imperative. German networks of knowledge – opportunistic, utilitarian, omnivorous – were that far-reaching.

Source



Source: Soldiers with Herero skulls for shipment to the Institute of Pathology in Berlin (c. 1904-08).

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