

Einladung zum Schöne-Vortrag – Invitation to the Schöne lecture

# White Projection

von Dan Hicks

23. November 2020, 19:00 online

How did British corporate-militarist colonialism seek to justify the dispossession of Africa during the Victorian period? This lecture reconsiders the logic of the British imperial ideology of the "punitive expedition", and its wider implications. The method involved ascribing to a supposed enemy some minor infraction, for example a breaking of a treaty, or other more general wrong, such as the practice of slavery. These were used as pretexts to excuse and even to justify large-scale military attacks, desecrations, killings, and dispossessions.

The talk suggests that this shuffling of positions, in which the brutality, the violence, and the iconoclasm of British naval raids were ascribed to the victims of these attacks, was part of a wider pathology of British colonialism and race "science", which I call "White Projection". The talk traces the endurance of this colonial device through ideas of "reprisals" from Ireland to Kenya during the 20th century, and to Iraq and Calais in the 21st century. It also considers how this framing persists in contemporary push-back against the progress of Black Lives Matter - through the fake idea of the "culture wars", and the idea of African restitution as iconoclastic attack on museums, rather than part of the processes of truth, memory and reconciliation that will make our world culture museums fit for the 21st century. Museums, that is, where nothing is stolen.

Dan Hicks is Professor of Contemporary Archaeology at the University of Oxford and Curator at the Pitt Rivers Museum. His latest book is *The British Museums: the Benin Bronzes, Colonial Violence, and Cultural Restitution* (2020).

Der Schöne-Vortrag wird in diesem Jahr online durchgeführt.

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