

PRESERVING CULTURAL HERITAGE

In November last year, representatives of an indigenous group celebrated the repatriation of their ancestors' remains. These have now also been buried. The skulls, which are more than 200 years old, were returned to the Wanniyalaeto by the University of Edinburgh. Scientists from the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History in Jena also attended the ceremony.

The skulls became part of the University of Edinburgh's anatomical collection more than 100 years ago (the British colony of Ceylon remained in existence until 1948). During the repatriation process, the Jena-based research team led by Patrick Roberts and Oshan Wedage investigated the human remains under the supervision of the tribal elders and obtained new information about these indigenous hunter-gatherers. While some tribe members cultivated trade relations with farmers and made use of colonial power structures, others preferred to live independently on the resources provided by the tropical forest.

By performing biochemical analyses of the skulls, the Max Planck scientists were able to prove for example that the tribe had long been managing the tropical forest. "Like many indigenous peoples, the Wanniyalaeto are now losing their livelihoods and the right to hunt on what is traditionally their territory," says Roberts. The study is now helping the tribe assert their hunting rights. Another goal is to actively involve tribal members in wildlife conservation by having them work as rangers, thus giving them access to additional sources of



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Veddah chief Uruwarige with one of the nine skulls during the repatriation ceremony at the University of Edinburgh.

income. The knowledge gained will also feed into the Wanniyalaeto's cultural heritage museum in Dambana, where the indigenous group is preserving its language, subsistence strategies, social structures and burial practices for future generations. The dead are particularly important to the Wanniyalaeto: "Although the remains of our ancestors were in Edinburgh, their spirits stayed with us in Sri Lanka. The reuniting of their spirits and physical remains is a very special moment for my people," said Wanniyalaeto chief Wanniya Uruwarige in Edinburgh.

Several news outlets, including the BBC, the Times and various local news channels and newspapers in Sri Lanka, reported on the ceremony in the Scottish university town. "We are delighted to be returning these culturally important artefacts," said Tom Gillingwater, Chair of

Anatomy at the University of Edinburgh. "It was an honor for us to work with the Wanniyalaeto, to consult with them and learn more about their traditions and cultural heritage," says Roberts. The theft of the skulls was just one of a series of atrocities that took place in colonial times. "I hope that other European institutions will follow the example set by the University of Edinburgh and develop clear policies on the return of ancestral remains."

Oshan Wedage, who is still working with the Wanniyalaeto in Sri Lanka, adds: "Although the need for repatriation is the product of a sad period in history, I hope that this repatriation ceremony will elevate the cause of the Wanniyalaeto and encourage the government of Sri Lanka to consider that the tropical forests are best preserved in collaboration with their traditional stewards."

ASSISTANCE WITH CHILDCARE

Part of the pilot project offering childcare for infants is again being extended. Doctoral researchers with funding contracts and post-docs with contracts based on the Collective Wage Agreement for the Civil Service (TVöD) will continue to receive funding from the Max Planck Foundation enabling them to pay for childcare for their infants. However, in view of the family policy measures adopted by the federal states, this will only be available for the first year of their

child's life (from the 3rd to the 12th month). For the most part, the family packages offered by the federal states do not take this age group into account.

At the beginning of the year, the family service agreement with pme was extended for another six years. The services previously offered are set to continue: staff will still be able to make use of extensive consulting services and get help finding care services for children above and below man-

datory school age (usually from 0 to 14 years) and for relatives in need of long-term care. As a rule, the consulting and placement fees charged by pme are covered centrally by the MPG. The actual childcare or long-term care service must be paid for by the employees themselves. New provisions have been introduced, particularly for childcare during conferences and in-house care during vacation periods; these relate for example to minimum group sizes.

COMMUNITY NEWS



On the podium at the inauguration of the Planck Academy on February 13, 2020: chairperson Marion Schmidt; Anna-Maria Karl - Head of Global Talent Sourcing, Daimler AG (until December 2019); Norbert Sack - Leadership Consultant, Berlin; Katharina von Knop - founder and CEO Digital Trust Analytics; Thomas Weitz - Professor at the University of Goettingen (from left to right).

NEW WAYS OF DEVELOPING TALENT

What do people need who are deciding on their next career steps in times of great mobility and flexibility? What is important for young people undergoing training, for leaders in the field of science management, or for Directors? The newly founded Planck Academy, a central element of the “MPG 2030” process, has the answers.

“Attracting talented people, no matter what stage they are at in their careers, familiarizing them with the particularities of our organization and supporting them as they develop their careers – these are important goals for the Max Planck Society,” said President Martin Stratmann at the inauguration of the Planck Academy, which took place at the Harnack House in Berlin on February 13, 2020.

“What’s more, the development of talent is one of the competitive factors critical to the success of research facilities, since top employees at all levels can now choose where they want to work.” The continuing edu-

cation and advanced training programs offered by the Planck Academy focus on the individual needs of each employee. It bundles all centralized personal and career development services under one virtual roof, and targets all employees from Directors, Max Planck Research Group Leaders and executives in science management and administration to junior scientists and employees in administration, IT and technology. The projects currently focus on leadership, talent management, onboarding and diversity.

The Planck Academy’s program is easy to access. Various learning, development and network formats are used alongside classroom and online formats, coaching, mentoring, and tools for self-reflection. One key point is that the Planck Academy combines classroom teaching with virtual offerings such as e-learning modules, how-to videos and webinars. These are based on the Learning Management System, LMS for short.

More about the Planck Academy in MAX

POSITION ON CLIMATE PROTECTION

A conference held by the Alliance of Science Organizations in Germany in November 2019 included a presentation by the Max Planck Society of its “Climate Protection Strategy”. This paper, which was approved by the President in consultation with the Presidential Council, also contained material from a position paper compiled by the Directors (Bodenschatz/Erb: “How to CO₂-mpensate? – Max Planck Action for Sustainable Science”) and points raised in a paper on CO₂ compensation published by the Max Planck Sustainability Network.

The Presidential Committee “Climate Protection at the MPG – Goal-Based Measures and Their Prioritization” was established with Tobias Bonhoeffer and Ariane Rauschek as co-chairs for the purpose of advancing the subject within the Max Planck Society. Moreover, during a meeting of the Scientific Council held on February 20, the following statement by the committee regarding sustainability within the Max Planck Society was approved by a show of hands (with two abstentions and one vote against): “The members of the Max Planck Society’s Scientific Council see climate protection as a supremely important social issue. Each organization and each individual is called upon to focus their activities accordingly. This also applies to the Max Planck Society. The members of the Scientific Council therefore request the Administrative Headquarters to ensure that the Max Planck Society makes an ambitious, clearly visible contribution to climate protection as soon as possible.”