

SEEWIESEN

Max Planck Institute  
for Ornithology

# LECTURE SERIES

FALL/WINTER 2017/18



MAX-PLANCK-GESELLSCHAFT

THURSDAY | February 22, 2018 | 13 P.M. | HOUSE 4 LECTURE ROOM

## WULF SCHIEFENHÖVEL

Max Planck Institute for Ornithology, Human Ethology Group

### Modern models of the past: Fieldwork among the Eipo, Highlands of West-New Guinea

Modern archaeology has made substantial progress in interpreting finds stemming from our early ancestors. Yet, stones, bones and beads cannot tell the full story of prehistoric life. When, in 1974, interdisciplinary research began to explore the hitherto isolated Eipomek Valley and its people, we met neolithic gardeners-gatherers-hunters who lived according to their traditions and had hardly any knowledge of the outside world. To learn their language and understand their thoughts, feelings and behaviours was a fascinating adventure. Humankind is united by evolved universals, which are much stronger than the separating effects of culture. This also true for natural science: the Eipo are extremely skilled observers of nature, their botanical and zoological taxonomy matches our scientific Linnaean system. Since the early 1980ies, the Eipo have turned to Christianity, a political, rather than a theological decision, and have so far fared rather well. From stone adze to computer in less than two generations was a transition easier than expected by us. The human brain is extraordinarily flexible – one does not need to have to read Aristotle to be a functioning member of modern society. Anthropological, ethno-archaeological and archaeological fieldwork undertaken jointly with Marian Vanhaeren and her team of Bordeaux University is likely to yield new insights concerning the early history of human inhabitation of the second largest island of our planet; it began 60,000 years ago.

#### WHO IS WULF SCHIEFENHÖVEL

- 1965** Begin of ethnomedical fieldwork in New Guinea
- 1970** Dr. med., University of Erlangen
- 1974 – 1976** Field Director, DFG Interdisciplinary Priority Programme in Irian Jaya (West-New Guinea)
- 1977 –** present senior researcher, Max Planck Institute for Behavioural Physiology, later Ornithology
- 1984** Habilitation for Ethnomedicine and Medical Psychology, 1991 professor for these disciplines, University of Munich
- 1990 – present** Guest professor for Human Ethology, Institute of Psychology, University of Innsbruck, lecturer for human ethology, University of Groningen. Former president International Society for Human Ethology and German Anthropological Society, former fellow of Institutes of Advanced Study at Wissenschaftskolleg Berlin, Collegium Budapest, Centre for Interdisciplinary Studies (ZIF) Bielefeld, Hanse-Wissenschaftskolleg Delmenhorst and guest professor, University of Bordeaux

#### SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Schiefenhövel, W. (2014) Human Ethological Perspectives on Prehistoric Adaptation and Dispersal in the Central Highlands of New Guinea. In: Sanz, N. (Ed.) Human Origin Sites and the World Heritage Convention in Asia. World Heritage Papers 39. UNESCO, Paris & Ciudad de Mexico: 235-254
- Schiefenhövel, W. (2014) On the human ethology of food sharing. *Anthropological Review* 77, 3: 356-370
- Sütterlin, C., Schiefenhövel, W., Lehmann, C., Forster, J. & Apfelauer, G. (Eds.; 2014) Art as Behaviour. An Ethological Approach to Visual and Verbal Art, Music and Architecture. Hanse Studies Vol. 10. Bis-Verlag, University Oldenburg
- McGrew, W.C., Marchant, L.F. & Schiefenhövel, W. (Eds., 2013) The Evolution of Human Handedness. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences* 1288

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