

The overarching goal of the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History is to explore the history of humans using state-of-the-art analytical methods. Scientists from different disciplines, such as genetics, linguistics, archaeology, anthropology and history are working together to answer fundamental questions about the biological and cultural evolution of man from the paleolithic until today, and they jointly develop innovative methods, in particular in the areas of genome sequencing, language documentation, bioinformatics and phylogeography.

We offer positions for

Two doctoral students with a strong background in computational and / or historical linguistics

to begin on 01.04.2018 (or later, actual starting date negotiable) as a member of the ERC-funded research project "Computer-assisted language comparison (CALC): Reconciling Computational and Classical Approaches in Historical Linguistics" (led by Dr. Johann-Mattis List) for the duration of three years. This project seeks to investigate the history of the Sino-Tibetan language family within a novel interdisciplinary framework for language comparison which reconciles computational and classical approaches in historical linguistics.

Your tasks:

As a doctoral student in the CALC project, you will have the chance to actively assist the development of new methods in comparative linguistics, either by designing and implementing algorithms in Python yourself, or in collaboration with programmers. You will assist our team in curating, preparing, and analyzing comparative datasets with the goal to shed light on general processes of language change in the languages of the world and specific processes of language change in the Sino-Tibetan language family.

Your qualifications:

Our call targets two basic profiles of eligible candidates: students (master-degree or equivalent) with a focus on computational linguistics and students with a focus on historical linguistics. You have a strong background in computational linguistics or in historical language comparison. As a computational linguist, you should have a good command on Python or be willing to learn the programming language quickly. As a historical linguist, you should have a basic knowledge of the Sino-Tibetan language family or the willingness to learn more. A knowledge of modern visualization techniques using JavaScript technology is an absolute plus for candidates with a computational background, and a knowledge of Chinese is a great plus for all candidates, as it will greatly facilitate to deal with the various sources our project is involved with. You have strong team player qualities (you will work in an interdisciplinary and international team where communication and team work among the members will be crucial for the success of the project). You have great interest and curiosity regarding language change and language evolution (if you have always been interested in diachronic linguistics and the mysteries of language change, you will have the chance to work intensively on these questions, and potentially even contribute to their solutions).

Our offer:

We offer an interesting and responsible job in a competitive, dynamic and stimulating international research environment. As a member of the CALC project, you will be able to learn new skills and enhance existing ones. In this way you can contribute to shed light on the history of one of the largest and most fascinating language families in the world.

In addition, you will have the chance to participate in the newly founded International Max Planck Research School of the Institute where you can embark on cross-disciplinary studies. Remuneration under the Max Planck PhD contract will follow the public service pay scale (TVöD E13, 50%). The positions are for 3 years.

The Max Planck Society is committed to employing more handicapped individuals and especially encourages them to apply. The Max Planck Society seeks to increase the number of women in areas where they are underrepresented and therefore explicitly encourages women to apply.

Your application:

Please submit your application no later than 31.01.2018, to: mattis.list@shh.mpg.de, and make sure to write "[CALC-DOC]" in the header of your email (note that this is important, especially with the []-brackets, as we won't consider applications which do not follow this schema). Please attach a short statement of motivation (maximally one page), your current CV, and a list of publications (including your bachelor and master theses) in a single PDF file. If you mention forthcoming publications, please attach the drafts as well to the same PDF. If you have questions regarding the research project and the general ideas behind the CALC project, please write an email to the same email address as given above with "[CALC-QUESTION]" in the header, and we will gladly answer your questions or provide more information regarding the project and the requirements for this position.

Information regarding the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History can be found at <http://shh.mpg.de/>. Information regarding the line of work that will be pursued in the CALC project can be found at <http://calc.digling.org>.