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 are seeking a

Post-doctoral researcher / computer scientist with a strong background in computational and 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 two years with a possibility of extension to three years after positive evaluation during the first year. 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 post-doc in the CALC project, you will actively assist the development of computational methods in comparative linguistics, by designing and implementing algorithms and interfaces in Python and JavaScript. You will assist our team to carry out computational analyses of data, prepare data for computational analysis, and develop new algorithms to ease data curation, preparation, and analysis. You will further assist in the establishment of extensive databases for testing and training of software algorithms and the training of doctoral students in the team.

Your qualifications:
You have a strong background in computer science, ideally in the relatively young discipline of computational historical linguistics. Knowledge of basic algorithms for sequence comparison in bioinformatics is also a plus, as much of our work involves automatic approaches to sequence comparison as carried out in the LingPy software package (http://lingpy.org). You have a strong knowledge of the Python programming language and know how to create interfaces in JavaScript frameworks, as you will contribute to the further development of the EDICTOR tool for computer-assisted language comparison (http://edictor.digling.org). You should have some basic knowledge of linguistics and historical linguistics (or be interested to acquire them quickly). Some familiarity with the Sino-Tibetan language family is also a plus, but our team will help you to acquire additional skills quickly. 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. Remuneration will follow the public service pay scale (TVöD 13, 100%), according to qualification and experience. In addition, social benefits are paid according to the regulations of the Civil Service. The fulltime-position is for 2 years with the possibility of extension to 3 years after positive evaluation.
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-POSTDOC]" 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 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.