



PhD researcher position

The University Research Priority Program (URPP) “Language and Space” at the University of Zurich is inviting applications for a funded PhD position within the research group “Areal Morphology” (cf. <http://www.spur.uzh.ch/en/research/arealmorphology.html>).

Project description:

The Ancient Near East is a cultural, political, and economical hotspot and melting pot with more than 4000 years of uninterrupted documentation of linguistic history. Up until the mid first millennium CE, various languages belonging to the Afro-Asiatic, Hurro-Urartian, and Indo-European language families are known to have coexisted with at least four language isolates contributing to the mixture. This unique configuration is an ideal testbed for tracing the distribution and spread of linguistic features within and across families and is of particular interest for estimating the impact language isolates can have on the typological profile of languages from larger families.

In cooperation with the supervisors, the GIS Group of the UZH URPP “Language and Space”, and the wider interdisciplinary community in the language sciences at Zurich the successful applicant will carry out research on the spatiotemporal diffusion of morphological patterns in the Ancient Near East. The main goal is to specify the role of contact in trait diffusion by using extralinguistic information as a proxy, in particular information relating to geopolitical and socio-economical history (economic system, ruling system, migrations, displacements), physical geography (obstacles, affordance, trade routes), and population genetics. It is planned to correlate linguistic and extralinguistic data in order to specify their effect on the diffusion of feature specification in space and over time.

Funding and expected outcomes:

Funding for the position is limited to three years, salary is according to the Swiss National Science Foundation pay scale for PhD employees. The successful applicant is expected to complete his/her PhD dissertation at the University of Zurich within this timeframe. The PhD will preferably be cumulative, consisting of four papers. The exact topics of the papers will be determined in accordance with the applicant's background and preferences, and papers may be co-authored with the supervisors and other researchers, but they must reflect original and independent work by the PhD candidate.

Requirements:

The candidate must hold a Master's degree in linguistics received at the latest by the time he/she takes up his/her position. Top candidates will have excellent results from their Master's degree courses/thesis, a focus on or interest in typology and historical linguistics, and a firm command of quantitative methods in linguistics. Knowledge of GIScience is an asset.



Start date: September 1, 2018

Application

Applications with the usual documents (cover letter, CV, transcript of BA/MA studies) should be sent as a single PDF document to Balthasar Bickel (balthasar.bickel@uzh.ch) and Paul Widmer (paul.widmer@uzh.ch) by June 15, 2018. Two letters of reference should be sent directly by independent referees to the same e-mail addresses. For more details, please contact balthasar.bickel@uzh.ch or paul.widmer@uzh.ch.