

ERC PhD position Digital Palaeography and Dead Sea Scrolls Scribal Culture (216006)

Organisation

Since its foundation in 1614, the University of Groningen has enjoyed an international reputation as a dynamic and innovative center of higher education offering high-quality teaching and research. Balanced study and career paths in a wide variety of disciplines encourage the 30,000 students to develop their own individual talents. Belonging to the best research universities in Europe and joining forces with prestigious partner universities and networks, the University of Groningen is truly an international place of knowledge.

Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies The Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Groningen is a leading European institution for the study of religion. We are proud to be ranked as the best teaching and research center for religion in The Netherlands. We are committed to highest standards in critical academic research, and we translate our research into stimulating and cutting-edge teaching programmes. We train students to be independent and critical observers of the place of religion in its cultural and historical context, and we prepare them for the job market.

The Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Groningen (The Netherlands) provides a 4-years (1,0 fte) fully funded ERC PhD position for the research project Profiling Dead Sea Scribes.

Job description

This PhD subproject is embedded within a larger research programme titled The Hands that Wrote the Bible: Digital Palaeography and Scribal Culture of the Dead Sea Scrolls, funded by the European Research Council. The main objective of this interdisciplinary project is to shed new light on ancient Jewish scribal culture and the making of the Bible by investigating two aspects of the scrolls' palaeography: the typological development of writing styles and writer identification. The combination of new C14 samples and the use of computational intelligence as quantitative methods in order to assess the development of handwriting styles and to identify individual scribes will be used to cluster manuscripts as products of scribal activity in order to profile scribal production and to determine a more precise location in time for their activity, focusing, from literary and cultural-historical perspectives, on the content and genres of the texts that scribes wrote and copied and on the scripts and languages that they used.

The goal of the PhD subproject is to identify one or more prolific scribes of the Qumran manuscripts, to date these scribes, and to analyse quantitatively and qualitatively the scribal activity of one or more specific Qumran scribes. This subproject will compare the traditional palaeographical identification of specific scribes with the digital palaeographic identification, and choose the most prolific scribe of manuscripts that are, on the basis of existing scholarship, classified as so-called 'sectarian'. The PhD will correlate the manuscripts identified as copied by this scribe with two widely but not universally accepted hypotheses pertaining to sectarian manuscripts and literature.

The PhD will work together with a PhD at the Artificial Intelligence and Cognitive Engineering Institute (ALICE), and with a postdoc and student assistants at the Qumran Institute of the faculty.

Qualifications

The PhD student is expected:

-to have graduated with excellent results on a research-based MA thesis (preferably a research master) in Theology/Religious Studies, Biblical Studies, Hebrew and Aramaic Languages or another relevant discipline (by 1 August 2016 at latest)

-to have ample experience with the relevant languages, with qualitative methodologies such as literary analysis and cultural-historical approaches and the ability to combine these methodologies -to have an interest in the material aspects of the scrolls (palaeography and other aspects), and the ability to combine material approaches with qualitative methodologies focused on the texts' contents

-to have an interest to work with digital tools -to be able and willing to work in an interdisciplinary environment with computational intelligence, pattern recognition, and radiocarbon dating scientists -to be able and willing to work as part of a team of researchers in the context of a larger research programme -to be ambitious, highly motivated and wishing to make a career in research

-to be fluent in English (both oral and written) to have the abilities to finish the PhD thesis in four years; i.e., good skills in planning, taking initiatives, academic writing

-to be able and willing to communicate about research findings and results with non-academic actors, i.e. civil society.

Conditions of employment

The University of Groningen offers a salary of minimal € 2,174 gross a month in the first year to maximal € 2,779 (salary scale PhD students Dutch Universities) gross a month in the final year based on a full time position. In addition, we offer a 8% holiday allowance and a 8,3% end of year bonus. The 1.0 fte appointment is temporary for a period of four years. The successful candidate will first be offered a temporary position of one year with the option of renewal for another three years. Prolongation of the contract is contingent on sufficient progress in the first year to indicate that a successful completion of the PhD thesis within the next three years is to be expected.

Deadlines and procedures

You may apply for this position until 31 March / before 1 April 2016 Dutch local time by means of the application form (click on "Apply" below on the advertisement on the university website). Note that the procedure will include interviews. Selected candidates will be invited for an interview in Groningen or via Skype. Interviews are scheduled to take place on 15 April 2016.

The start of the PhD position is 1 September 2016.

Application requirements A complete application consists of the following credentials:

Curriculum vitae and a sketch of your intellectual history (ca. 600 words), indicating the factors that have brought you to your present focus of intellectual and scholarly interests and what you hope to learn from doctoral research at the Graduate School of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Groningen.

Your master's thesis and other major academic papers, if any. Papers should demonstrate your scholarly skills, be no longer than 30 pages, in your intended field of specialization, and representative of your best work.

A short research proposal concerning the topic of this PhD subproject (no more than 1000 words).

Two letters of academic recommendation from professors who can write knowledgeably about your personal and academic qualifications and your suitability for the chosen field of study; we reserve the right to contact your references for additional information pertinent to your application.

Official, that is, certified, transcripts from each college, seminary or graduate school attended; applicants enrolled in school at the time of application are asked to provide a list of current and projected courses for the academic year, and to send a transcript or informal record of fall term grades as soon as possible.

All of the above credentials are required except as noted. Applications with missing credentials will not be taken into consideration.

Please note that any copies of the required official documents must be authenticated. Diplomas, certificates, transcripts of records, and lists of grades must be submitted in the English or Dutch language. Any translation of originals not in these languages must be authenticated as well.

Unsolicited marketing is not appreciated.

Information

For information you can contact:

Prof. Mladen Popović, m.popovic@rug.nl

(please do not use for applications)