

#### **04: Contact and change in the diversification of the Indo-Iranic languages**

##### **Lead supervisor:**

Prof. Dr. Russell Gray  
Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History  
Department of Linguistic and Cultural Evolution  
Kahlaische Str. 10  
07745 Jena, Germany  
Email: [gray@shh.mpg.de](mailto:gray@shh.mpg.de)  
<http://www.shh.mpg.de/2923/russellgray>

##### **Co-supervisors:**

Dr. Cormac Anderson  
Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History  
Department of Linguistic and Cultural Evolution  
Kahlaische Str. 10  
07745 Jena, Germany  
Email: [anderson@shh.mpg.de](mailto:anderson@shh.mpg.de)  
<http://www.shh.mpg.de/employees/44299/25522>

Prof. Dr. Martin Kümmel  
Friedrich-Schiller-Universität Jena  
Institut für Orientalistik, Indogermanistik, Ur- und Frühgeschichtliche Archäologie  
Seminar für Indogermanistik  
Zwätzengasse 12a  
07743 Jena, Germany  
E-Mail: [martin-joachim.kuemmel@uni-jena.de](mailto:martin-joachim.kuemmel@uni-jena.de)  
[https://www.oriindufa.uni-jena.de/en/k%C3%BCmmel\\_martin.html](https://www.oriindufa.uni-jena.de/en/k%C3%BCmmel_martin.html)

**Involved disciplines:** Contact Linguistics, Historical Linguistics, Linguistic Palaeontology, Linguistics

**Involved subjects:** historical comparative reconstruction, language evolution

**Number of positions requested:** 1

##### **Abstract:**

Indo-Iranic is the largest, and historically the most geographically extensive, branch of the Indo-European language family. It consists of hundreds of languages spread over a vast area of west, central and south Asia, with diffusion even further afield along with migration in the modern period. Included among Indo-Iranic languages are literary languages of global importance, such as Sanskrit and Persian, which have exerted a strong influence on neighbouring languages for millennia. This project offers the opportunity to a PhD student to examine processes of cultural contact and linguistic change in the Indo-Iranic-speaking area.

While Indo-Iranic languages began to diversify already millennia ago, their extensive attestation across a long historical period makes them an excellent site for observing processes of linguistic change. Processes of linguistic change in Indo-Iranic are relevant for better understanding of the origin and diversification of Indo-European languages more generally, which has been an important research theme for scholars in both FSU and MPI-SHH.

Throughout their histories, Indo-Iranic languages have been involved in a wide range of contact scenarios in very diverse social, political and cultural configurations. This has led to significant borrowing and convergence in different languages at different points in time. The wide diffusion of

Indo-Iranic into central Asia has led to contact with Turkic and other families of central and northern Asia, while there has been considerable contact in the western part of the Indo-Iranic area with languages of the Caucasus on the one hand and Afroasiatic languages on the other, while in the east of the area Indo-Iranic languages have been in contact with Dravidian and Sino-Tibetan ones. Not to be discounted either are phenomena of lateral transfer within Indo-Iranic, across the long history of the family.

A PhD student could contribute to this project in two ways. Firstly, they could collate and analyse instances of lateral transfer in given contexts. Secondly, they could help in developing suitable models for the investigation of lateral transfer in linguistic change. Indo-Iranic is an ideal laboratory for this. This work would naturally take place in a cross-linguistic environment, combining lines of evidence also from archaeology and archaeogenetics to draw inference about the history of peoples speaking Indo-Iranic languages.

While the focus of supervision for this project is obviously at the MPI-SHH, DLCE in particular, and the FSU, a prospective PhD student also stands to gain from the larger research networks in which both institutions are embedded.