

Faculty of Humanities, Leiden University Centre for the Study of Religion is looking for a

**PhD candidate in Iranian Studies/History of Religions (2 positions of 1.0 FTE)**

**Vacancy number 18-308**

**Project description**

The PhD candidate will carry out research in the framework of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research ([NWO](#)) funded project, *Keepers of the Flame: The Reconfiguration of the Zoroastrian Priesthood in Sasanian and Early Islamic Times*, led by Professor Albert de Jong. This project examines the history of the Zoroastrian priesthood in two periods of transformation: the Sasanian Empire and the early Islamic period. The project as a whole aims to answer the question how Zoroastrianism survived the loss of its empire. The project will study the build-up and transformation of the Zoroastrian priesthood in the context of innovative theorizing about *longue durée* history of religion, the transformation of Iranian identity, and the role of religious specialists.

The PhD candidate will join a research team that will consist of four members: two PhD candidates, one post-doctoral researcher, and the project leader. They will participate in regular team meetings and present their research findings at scholarly venues, as well as in field trips to Iran and India.

**Key responsibilities**

The two PhD candidates will each study a specified topic within the project focusing on a particular period:

- *The Zoroastrian Priesthood in the Sasanian Empire*; this project examines the role of Zoroastrian priests in the Sasanian Empire (224-651 ce). The candidate will bring together the relevant sources (epigraphic, material, literary), and analyse them in light of recent developments in Sasanian history and in the study of religion. By asking the central question how the priestly hierarchy and priestly duties were interconnected with the Sasanian imperial strategy, this project will lead to a reassessment of the role of priests in the empire, and of the role of the Sasanian empire in the development of Zoroastrianism;
- *The Zoroastrian Priesthood in Early Islamic Iran (651-1078 ce)*; this project will ask the question what happened to the Zoroastrian priesthood when the Sasanian empire was destroyed. The candidate will bring together and analyse the relevant sources (in Middle Persian and Arabic) in light of current insights in early Islamic and Iranian history and in the study of religion. A particular focus of the project will be the transformation in the self-understanding of Zoroastrianism and its connections with Iranian identity.

**Selection criteria**

- An MA degree in Iranian or Middle Eastern Studies, or in the Study of Religion. Candidates near completion of the degree will be considered;
- Demonstrable interest in theorizing pre-modern religions;
- Fluency in English;
- Willingness to work in an international and competitive research environment;
- Ability to work independently and as part of and in support of a larger team;
- For project 1 *The Zoroastrian Priesthood in Early Islamic Iran (651-1078 ce)* excellent command of Middle Persian, thorough knowledge of the religious history of ancient Iran and a keen interest in theorizing pre-modern religious and cultural history; excellent command of the source material in the relevant languages; knowledge of Persian is highly desirable; knowledge of Syriac and Arabic will be considered a great asset; experience in working with disparate source materials (both textual and material); knowledge of Sasanian history and the history of Iranian religion;

- For project 2 *The Zoroastrian Priesthood in Early Islamic Iran (651-1078 ce)* excellent command of Middle Persian and Arabic thorough knowledge of the religious history of early Islamic Iran and a keen interest in theorizing pre-modern cultural and religious history; excellent command of the source material in the relevant languages; knowledge of Persian is highly desirable; knowledge of the early medieval history of Iran and the Muslim world.

### **Our Faculty/ Institute**

The Faculty of Humanities is rich in expertise in fields such as philosophy, religious studies, history, art history, literature, linguistics and area studies covering nearly every region of the world. With its staff of 995, the faculty provides 27 master's and 25 bachelor's programmes for over 7,000 students based at locations in Leiden's city centre and in buildings in The Hague.

The PhD students will hold a position in the Leiden University Centre for the Study of Religion ([LUCSoR](#)). LUCSoR brings together expertise in specific religions with a comparative approach that draws on a variety of humanistic and social scientific disciplines. In an open discussion and with a fresh pair of eyes LUCSoR strives to understand religion in a changing world. LUCSoR works closely together with the Leiden University Institute for Area Studies ([LIAS](#)).

### **Terms and conditions**

We offer a fixed-term post from 1 December 2018 until 30 November 2022. The appointment will initially be for 12 months and if evaluated positively, with an extension of 3 years and must lead to the completion of a PhD thesis. The salary range for a PhD student is from €2,266- to €2,897 gross per month (pay-scale P) based on a full-time appointment.

Leiden University offers an attractive benefits package with additional holiday (8%) and end-of-year bonuses (8.3 %), training and career development and sabbatical leave. Our individual choices model gives you some freedom to assemble your own set of terms and conditions. For international spouses we have set up a dual career programme. Candidates from outside the Netherlands may be eligible for a substantial tax break. More at <https://www.universiteitleiden.nl/en/working-at/job-application-procedure-and-employment-conditions>.

### **Diversity**

Leiden University is strongly committed to diversity within its community and especially welcomes applications from members of underrepresented groups.

### **Information**

Enquiries can be made to Professor Albert de Jong via email [a.f.de.jong@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:a.f.de.jong@hum.leidenuniv.nl).

### **Applications**

Applications must be received **no later than 7 September 2018**. Interviews, including short research presentations, are planned for the end of September 2018. Applications should be in English, and be submitted to [vacatureslias@hum.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:vacatureslias@hum.leidenuniv.nl), with the items listed below included in this order in **one single PDF document** named 'FAMILY NAME – Given name – 18-xxx':

- A CV including education and employment history and publications;
- A letter of motivation;
- A 3-page research proposal, elaborating one of the two research topics specified above, in relation to the overarching theme of the project. The research proposal should be accompanied by an annotated sample bibliography of no more than two pages;
- A writing sample in English of 10-20 pages (e.g. (part of) MA thesis);
- Names, positions and email addresses of two referees (no reference letters).

*Acquisition following this advertisement is not appreciated.*

