

## Doctoral Candidate needed

### **The adaptive nature of culture. A cross-cultural analysis of the returns of Local Environmental Knowledge in three indigenous societies**

Duration of contract: January 2012- December 2014

Duration of field work: January 2012-June 2013

Researchers debate the role of culture in shaping human adaptive strategy. Some researchers suggest that the behavioural adaptations that explain the success of our species are partially cultural, i.e., cumulative and transmitted by social learning. Others find that cultural knowledge has often resulted in maladaptive practices, loss of technologies, and societies' collapse. Despite the importance of the debate, we lack empirical and comparative research on the mechanisms through which culture might shape human adaptation. Researchers working on this project will collect data to test a pathway through which cultural knowledge might enhance human adaptive strategy: the individual returns to culturally evolved and environment-specific knowledge. To carry out the study, one more doctoral candidate is needed to serve as a research associate.

*Responsibilities:* The selected student would register in the PhD program of Environmental Sciences and Technology Institute at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB) (<http://icta.uab.cat/formacion/doctorat.jsp>) and work in a team with four other PhD students and two Post-Doctoral fellows. The student will be responsible for collecting data for the project and preparing it for analysis. The student will be paired with a postdoctoral fellow to collect a set of comparable panel data in a foraging society, the Baka (in South-East Cameroon). Data collection would include administering surveys on local ecological knowledge, household economics, food consumption, and use of natural resources. An important aspect of the field work centres on how to obtain culturally specific measures of variables that can be compared across communities and ethnic groups. Data would be collected during 18-months of field work ([http://icta.uab.cat/Etnoecologia/proyecto.php?Id\\_proyecto=63](http://icta.uab.cat/Etnoecologia/proyecto.php?Id_proyecto=63)).

*Profile:* Candidates should have an official master's degree and a strong background in the social or natural sciences, including courses in statistics and research methods and be fluent in English and French. Candidates should also be comfortable with the idea of living in tropical rain forests (e.g., heat, mosquitoes, monotonous diet) and tolerance for bouts of medical problems common in tropical conditions (e.g., parasites). Candidates should also show interest to learn from other cultures. Previous field experience would be highly valued. Students would be encouraged to pursue their own research plans and collect data for their dissertation.

*Contract terms:* The student will be hired with a full time contract as pre-doctoral fellow for 3 years (the first three-months will be a probation period) by UAB and they will work at the Ethnoecology Laboratory (<http://icta.uab.cat/Etnoecologia/mission.php>), although 18 continuous months will be in the field. The annual salary is of about 14.400€. Medical insurance and expenses while in the field associated with the project (i.e., translators) will also be paid for. The project will also cover two round-trips from Barcelona to the field site. Field work is scheduled to begin in January 2012, but familiarization with the project, the bibliography of the area, and coordination with other members of the team has already started and we would like to see the new candidate incorporated to the team ASAP.

*To apply:* Interested students should contact Victoria Reyes-García ([victoria.reyes@uab.cat](mailto:victoria.reyes@uab.cat)) ASAP. We will select the first suitable candidate. The application should include a letter of interest, a current cv, and a list of 2-3 professors familiar with the student that might write letters of recommendations (letters will only be asked for short-listed candidates).

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