



## ANR project ETKnoS (2016-2020)

### *Call for Applications: 2-year post-doctoral position in Linguistics/Ethnolinguistics*

**ETKnoS-Encoding and Transmitting Knowledge with a String: A comparative study of the cultural uses of mathematical practices in string-figure making (Oceania, North & South America).**

ETKnoS is a research project funded for four years by the French National Research Agency (ANR 16-CE27-0005-01). It is devoted to the study of the practice of "string-figure making" -which consists in producing a figure or design with a loop of string, by carrying out a succession of operations on this loop, using mostly the fingers. Known in numerous societies where an oral tradition prevails, this practice brings into play gestural sequences similar to algorithms concurrently with the enunciation of terms and even specific stories or chants. The overall objective of ETKnoS is to understand the mathematical dimension of such a practice, by considering its place in particular cultural and linguistic contexts (cf. <http://www.sphere.univ-paris-diderot.fr/spip.php?rubrique170&lang=en>).

Based on anthropological and ethnolinguistic analysis of data (to be) collected in several societies of Oceania (in Papua New-Guinea and in Vanuatu), in South America (Paraguayan Chaco...) and in North America (including the Arctic), ETKnoS investigates the relationships between the sequences of operations and the words that are spoken or sung during these sequences. One particular goal is here to reach a better understanding of the extent to which, in these societies, the practice of string-figure making constitutes/constituted a method for the organization and the transmission of knowledge (either mythological, cosmological, sociological, geographical, etc.), involving the use of mathematical concepts.

ETKnoS' interdisciplinary team is coordinated by the ethnomathematician Eric Vandendriessche (CNRS), and presently includes an anthropologist (with a specialization in Inuit studies), and two linguists (respectively specialized in Melanesian and Inuit languages). Two post-docs will complete the research team.

ETKnoS invites applications for a full-time 2-year post-doctoral position in (Ethno-/Field) Linguistics which will be hosted at the University of Paris Diderot in the laboratory SPHERE ("Science, Philosophy, History", UMR 7219, CNRS & Université Paris Diderot).

It is expected to start on November 1, 2017, or as soon as possible thereafter.

Salary and social benefits in accordance with the University's rates.

To qualify for the position, candidates are required to have completed their PhD in Linguistics —or in Anthropology, with a specialization in Ethnolinguistics. The candidates should also have demonstrated significant competence in an "Indigenous" language, preferably one from Melanesia (such as Kilivila, in the Trobriand Islands). However, any application focusing on an oral tradition society from Oceania, South America or North America will be carefully considered.



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Sciences, Philosophie, Histoire  
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The successful candidate will start by reviewing and analyzing the existing sources (ethnographic, ethnological/ethnolinguistic and anthropological data) on string-figure making as practiced in a particular cultural area, selected on the basis of the candidate's linguistic expertise. The candidate will then be invited to carry out a 'participant-observer' ethnographic research for a significant period of time, in order to gather original data on string figure-making (*i.e.* to collect procedures leading to the figures, as well as linguistic materials related to this practice). This research will be first conducted within a given social group. The investigations should thereafter be enlarged to neighboring groups, with the view to studying the possible variations both in the procedural and linguistics aspects of string figure-making from one group to another. The third phase of this position will be devoted to the analysis of the collated materials.

Applications should be sent no later than September 15, 2017 to Eric Vandendriessche ([eric.vandendriessche@univ-paris-diderot.fr](mailto:eric.vandendriessche@univ-paris-diderot.fr)).

They shall contain: an application letter (including motivation), a short CV (2-3 pages, with a publications list), a written sample of academic work (e.g. thesis and/or a recent paper), contact information for two possible referees (name, institution, email contact).

Review of applications will start on September 16, 2017 and the result will be announced on October 16, 2017.

For further information please contact Eric Vandendriessche  
[eric.vandendriessche@univ-paris-diderot.fr](mailto:eric.vandendriessche@univ-paris-diderot.fr)