OXFORD UNIVERSITY MUSEUMS AHRC COLLABORATIVE DOCTORAL PARTNERSHIP

Department of History, University of Durham in collaboration with Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford

Reconnecting the Pitt Rivers Museum’s Zande collections with their historical and contemporary contexts in South Sudan

Applications are invited for an AHRC-funded Ph.D. studentship based at the University of Durham: “Reconnecting the Pitt Rivers Museum’s Zande collections with their historical and contemporary contexts in South Sudan”. This is one of the studentships awarded by the Oxford University Museums AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership. The partner institutions are the University of Durham and the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford. The studentship will be supervised by Dr Cherry Leonardi at the University of Durham and Dr Chris Morton at the Pitt Rivers Museum. The student will be enrolled at, and will receive their Ph.D. from, the University of Durham. This full-time studentship, which is fully funded for 3 years, with the option of up to 6 months additional funding for related professional development, will begin on 1 January 2018.

The Project

The research project will focus on a major, multi-stranded anthropological fieldwork collection at the Pitt Rivers Museum, formed by E. E. Evans-Pritchard in Zandeland, South Sudan, between 1926 and 1930. Evans-Pritchard’s fieldwork provided the basis for, among other publications, his ground-breaking study of Zande witchcraft, oracles and magic. The project will explore the various elements of the collection – objects, photographs, texts and recordings – in relation to one another and to other materials about or from the Zande area, in order to better understand the historical contexts in which they were gathered by Evans-Pritchard, and their contemporary significance for the Zande people and for the new state of South Sudan. In the process it will also advance theoretical and methodological approaches to the study and use of ethnographic museum collections and their historical and contemporary resonances.

The project aims to use this fieldwork collection (1) to examine the historical context of 1920s southwest Sudan, a period and region which has been studied in little detail previously despite being a time of major change under the colonial economy and government; (2) to explore the contemporary meaning and significance of the collections at both the local level where the material was collected – and where people have named familial connections to it – and at the broader level of the creation of cultural and educational resources in a new nation such as South Sudan; and (3) to advance theoretical and methodological approaches to the use of ethnographic collections in historical research and in cultural heritage work. These aims will be accomplished by a series of interlinked objectives: (i) to extend the museum’s understanding of its own material by connecting objects to the anthropological and historical literature and to other archival and museum collections; (ii) to identify and work with Zande people on the contemporary meanings of such collections and to exhibit the material and those responses; (iii) to digitize Evans-Pritchard’s manuscript collection and make it available on the museum’s website, enabling remote engagement; (iv) to work with international agencies (eg UNESCO) and their representatives working in South Sudan or with the South Sudanese diaspora on the use of collections in educational and heritage projects.

The project will involve both academic analysis of the Zande collections and practical curatorial and digitisation work on them. The ongoing insecurity in South Sudan is likely to preclude fieldwork in the country but alternative possibilities will be explored for working with Zande communities in neighbouring countries and the wider international diaspora, involving interviews, meetings and
exhibitions. The research will help the museum understand the potential of its collections for nation building, education and cultural revival. The student will be trained in anthropological, educational, historical and archival research methods, which cut across established research boundaries and which will help drive the next phase of collections research in ethnographic museums.

Financial Support

Subject to standard AHRC eligibility criteria, the studentship will cover tuition fees at home/EU rate and provide a maintenance award at RCUK rates for a maximum of 3 years of full-time doctoral study from 1st January 2018 with the option of up to 6 months additional funding for related professional development. See http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/media/news/160125/

In addition, the Pitt Rivers Museum will provide research expenses of up to £2,000 to the student each year, to a maximum of £6,000 over the duration of the studentship, to cover costs associated with undertaking research in Oxford.

Eligibility

We are looking for a highly promising and suitably qualified student who will value the opportunity of combining academic research with involvement and training in a leading British museum. Applicants should have a strong academic record including a high Merit or Distinction (or equivalent) at Masters level in a relevant discipline (such as history, anthropology, African studies or museum studies) and a willingness to work across these disciplines while based primarily in a history department. Previous experience of work in museums or archives and of fieldwork in Africa or with diaspora communities would be an advantage but is not essential.

In addition all applicants should meet the AHRC’s academic criteria and residency requirements, including holding a first or upper-second class honours degree or equivalent; having completed a Masters-level qualification by 1 January 2018, and being a resident of the UK or European Economic Area (EEA). Note that in general, full studentships are available to students who are settled in the UK and have been ordinarily resident for a period of at least three years before the start of postgraduate studies. Please see: http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/documents/guides/research-funding-guide/. The successful applicant will be expected to reside in Durham when not undertaking work at the PRM or research elsewhere.

How to Apply

Interested candidates are asked to submit the following by the deadline of Monday 13 November 2017:

1. A letter of application (maximum 2 sides of A4) explaining how their current academic interests relate to the doctoral project, their reasons for applying for the studentship, and how their prior education and other experiences have equipped them to undertake the project;
2. A curriculum vitae (no more than 2 pages);
3. Full transcripts of all previous degree results;
4. Evidence of competence in English if your first language is not English;
5. A writing sample (maximum 7,000 words);
6. Two academic references (submitted directly by the referees not the applicant; see below). The referees should ideally be familiar with the candidate’s academic work, and able to assess their potential and preparedness to undertake PhD research.

These materials should be sent by email to Harriet Warburton, Oxford University Museums Research Facilitator (harriet.warburton@ashmus.ox.ac.uk) no later than 5pm on Monday 13 November.

Applicants should also ensure that their referees email references for the attention of Drs Leonardi and Morton to the same email addresses – harriet.warburton@ashmus.ox.ac.uk - by the same deadline (13 November). It is the responsibility of applicants to ensure that references, as well as the applications, are received by the deadline. Please ensure the subject line of all the emails is “CDP Studentship: PRM/Durham”.

Interviews are likely to be held in Oxford on Monday 27 November for shortlisted applicants.

Further Information

Informal enquiries relating to the project can be directed to Dr Cherry Leonardi - d.c.leonardi@durham.ac.uk

Further information about the Department of History at the University of Durham is available at https://www.dur.ac.uk/history/

Frequently asked questions about graduate admissions at Durham are at https://www.dur.ac.uk/postgraduate/apply/

Further information about research at the Pitt Rivers Museum is available at https://www.prm.ox.ac.uk/museumresearch.html

For any other information please contact Dr Harriet Warburton, Oxford University Museums Research Facilitator (harriet.warburton@ashmus.ox.ac.uk)