

African Studies PhD Scholarship (Arabic Sources for West African History, West African Manuscripts in the British Library)

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The Department of African Studies and Anthropology at the University of Birmingham (incorporating the Centre of West African Studies) and the British Library are pleased to announce a three-year studentship for students commencing their MPhil/PhD in African Studies in **September 2014**.

The studentship is attached to an AHRC funded Collaborative Doctoral Partnership awarded to the British Library for research and cataloguing related to its collection of West African Arabic manuscripts and its forthcoming exhibition: 'West Africa: Cultures of the Word'. The successful applicant will receive (at UK/EU rate) full tuition fees and maintenance funding (which was £13,726 for 2013/14, increasing annually), plus associated expenses (£550 yearly maintenance payment from AHRC; up to £1,000 per annum from the British Library to cover travel and related costs).

The doctoral project

The successful applicant will be expected to pursue doctoral research focused on the analysis and interpretation of particular themes, genres or types of Arabic sources for West African history and culture. The broader themes of the project may include any aspect or period of West African History, including Saharan institutions and societies and/or trans-Saharan connectivity. Proposals for the comparative study of Arabic sources across different African contexts will also be considered.

The British Library holds about thirteen volumes of West African manuscripts (some containing multiple, collated works). A core element of this collaborative doctoral project will be to identify, research and produce metadata for this collection (see below for further information). These manuscripts will potentially constitute one of the sources for this thesis.

Supervision arrangements and professional experience

This studentship offers a collaborative supervisory team that brings together two specialists from the University of Birmingham, Dr Benedetta Rossi, Lecturer in West African Studies, and Dr Anissa Daoudi, Arabic Language Coordinator at the Centre of Modern Languages, with the Curator for African Studies at the British Library, Dr Marion Wallace. The selected applicant will profit from the resources and networks of both partner institutions, becoming a full participant in the lively African Studies research community at Birmingham, while also gaining first-hand professional experience of curatorial work at the British Library in London, including cataloguing and exhibitions work. The student will be allocated office space in the Library and be able to participate in the Library's rich programme of public events, study days and student seminars, and to disseminate their research findings to academic and non-academic audiences. In the longer term, the blend of academic research and curatorial work should considerably enhance employment-related skills, while inspiring a project with considerable potential for knowledge exchange and public impact.

Qualifications

While supervision and training in Arabic language will be available at the Department of Modern Languages (Arabic division) of the University of Birmingham, a minimum qualification for the successful candidate will be proficiency in reading Arabic. Applicants should provide copies of language certificates or other proof of having received training in Arabic (preferably Classical Arabic) with their application. The candidate should have a research interest in West Africa. Expertise in relevant disciplines, for example the History or Anthropology of West Africa, or knowledge of West African languages and/or French, will also be an asset.

Due to AHRC regulations, applicants must be UK or EU residents and meet the **normal entry requirements for the MPhil/PhD in African Studies** (<http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/students/courses/postgraduate/research/cwas/african-studies.aspx>).

How to apply

To be considered for the African Studies PhD Scholarship, prospective applicants are invited to send a covering letter, CV, names and professional affiliation of two referees, and a research proposal of no more than 2000 words to Sheena Robertson (robersaz@adf.bham.ac.uk (<mailto:robersaz@adf.bham.ac.uk>)) by **Monday 13 January 2014**. The applicant should also ensure that, by this deadline, two reference letters are emailed to Sheena Robertson *by the referees* named in the application, specifying the applicant's name, referee's relation to the applicant, and skills that make the applicant a suitable candidate for the proposed research project. Shortlisted candidates will be interviewed via Skype and/or in person at the University of Birmingham. Interviews will take place as soon as possible after the submission deadline.

Residency Eligibility

PLEASE NOTE that, to be eligible for the full award (fees and maintenance), applicants must fulfil the AHRC's residency criteria. They must: 1. be settled in the UK; 2. have been resident in the UK for the last three years (and the primary reason for residence must not have been educational).

Applicants resident in the European Union may be eligible for a fees-only award.

For more information see <http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Student-Funding-Guide.pdf> (<http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/Student-Funding-Guide.pdf>), Annex A.

For questions, inquiries, or an informal discussion please contact Dr. Benedetta Rossi b.rossi@bham.ac.uk (<mailto:b.rossi@bham.ac.uk>) or Dr. Marion Wallace Marion.Wallace@bl.uk (<mailto:Marion.Wallace@bl.uk>) (who can also provide further information about the BL exhibition).