

Metallic Empire: Science, Energy, and Industrial Imperialism in the John Percy Collection, 1817–89

AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership PhD Studentship

University of Warwick and Science Museum, London

Applications are invited for a fully-funded PhD studentship (fees and maintenance) to be held at the Department of History, University of Warwick and the Science Museum, London. The studentship is funded through the Arts and Humanities Research Council's Science Museums and Archives Consortium Collaborative Doctoral Partnership (CDP) scheme. The project will be supervised jointly by Dr James Poskett (Warwick), Dr Katayoun Shafiee (Warwick), Dr Richard Dunn (Science Museum), and Mr Ben Russell (Science Museum).

Deadline for Applications: Friday 29th April 2022, 17:00 (BST)

Project Outline

This PhD project focuses on the colonial and industrial history of the John Percy Collection, held at the Science Museum, London. The Percy Collection comprises over 3,700 mineralogical specimens, including coal from South Africa, silver from Australia, and copper from India. The collection was made by John Percy FRS (1817–1889), and then subsequently acquired by the South Kensington Museum on his death. A study of the Percy Collection provides an excellent opportunity to uncover the imperial and colonial origins of a significant early acquisition by the Science Museum.

Alongside these colonial legacies, this project will also uncover the hidden contributions of under-represented groups in the history of modern science and industry. From Indian translators to Japanese craftspeople, a range of individuals played a part in the making of the Percy Collection. This project will therefore provide a new foundation for presenting the collection to a diverse public.

Percy himself was one of the leading metallurgists of his day, publishing a number of important multi-volume works. A Fellow of the Royal Society, as well as a lecturer at the Royal School of Mines, he had an immense influence on the development of scientific studies of minerals and metals during the nineteenth century. Despite this, the Percy Collection, and John

Percy himself, have not been the subject of any detailed academic study. This project will explore the colonial and industrial origins of the Percy Collection, placing it within its nineteenth-century context.

The project will begin by reconstructing the network of collectors and informants that John Percy relied on to build his collection. Percy never travelled beyond Europe, but through his contacts in the army, industry, business, and colonial administration, he was able to acquire specimens from all over the world. Percy's scientific studies of various metals and minerals were deeply shaped by these colonial connections. For example, Percy studied coins produced by colonial mints, and he dedicated an entire volume to the different coals found throughout the British Empire.

As well as his network of colonial collectors, Percy also relied on a host of intermediaries. One of Percy's major interests was the metallurgical knowledge of different cultures. For example, Percy employed a Persian diplomat named Mirza Mehdi Khan to translate an earlier Mughal account of gold smelting in Delhi; similarly, when it came to Japanese metallurgy, Percy relied on an English translation of the *Kodo Zuroku* [Memoir on Smelting Copper, 1801]. This project will therefore connect the history of nineteenth-century science, energy, and industry with colonial history and non-European forms of knowledge.

Within the project there is plenty of scope for the student to follow their own interests. The successful candidate may be interested in a particular theme (such as energy or industry), a particular resource (such as coal or copper), or a particular region (such as Sub-Saharan Africa or East Asia). Equally, the successful candidate may wish to combine themes, resources, and regions as part of the project.

The Studentship

The studentship (which is governed by UKRI's terms and conditions) offers funding for 45 months (3.75 years) or part-time equivalent. There is the possibility of the studentship being extended for an additional three months to provide professional development opportunities. Alternatively, up to three months of funding may be used to pay for the costs incurred in taking up professional development opportunities.

The award pays tuition fees up to the value of the full-time home UKRI rate for PhD degrees. Research Councils UK Indicative Fee Level for 2022/2023 is £4,596. The award pays full maintenance for both home and international students. The UKRI National Minimum Doctoral Stipend for 2022/2023 is £16,062, plus an additional CDP maintenance payment of £1000/year (London partner organisation allowance).

International Applicants

International applicants awarded funding through for this studentship will not be required to cover the difference between home and international fees. This will be met by the University of Warwick. International students are therefore very much encouraged to apply.

The Applicant

The studentship is open to both home and international students. It may be taken up on either a full-time or part-time basis. Applicants should have a good undergraduate degree and a distinction-level Master's degree (or equivalent professional experience) in History, History of Science, Museum Studies, Human Geography, Science and Technology Studies, Postcolonial Studies, or a cognate discipline. Applicants should have experience in the analysis of primary and secondary historical sources. Familiarity with the history of science, the history of technology, the history of museums, environmental history, or the British Empire would be an advantage. Applicants must be able to demonstrate an interest in the museum sector.

We want to encourage the widest range of potential applications and are committed to welcoming students from different backgrounds to apply. We particularly welcome applications from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic candidates as they are currently underrepresented in the sector at this level.

How to Apply

Applications should be submitted by the normal postgraduate research application process. For full information, advice and access to the Warwick University application portal, please visit: <https://warwick.ac.uk/study/postgraduate/apply/research/>

In the research application details section of your application, please list Dr James Poskett as proposed supervisor and the project description as 'Metallic Empire: Science, Energy, and Industrial Imperialism in the John Percy Collection, 1817–89'.

In the funding information section, the source should be listed as 'SCHOLARSHIP- AHRC Collaborative Doctoral Partnership PhD Studentship'.

The following documents must be included in order for your application to be considered:

- A covering letter (maximum two pages) outlining your qualifications and suitability for the studentship, particularly in terms of previous experience and future career aims.
- A CV (maximum two pages).
- A sample of your academic written work (around 6,000 words maximum).

Applications should be submitted no later than **Friday 29th April 2022 at 17:00 (BST)**

Deadline for receipt of references: 4th May 2022, 12:00 noon (BST).

References are required ahead of the online interviews. It is the candidate's responsibility to ensure that referees are available and aware of this deadline and to ensure that these are submitted ahead of the interview week.

Please contact Kay Jones (PGHistoryOffice@warwick.ac.uk) if further application support is required.

Shortlisted candidates will be invited to attend an online interview with the project supervisors on **Monday 9 May or Tuesday 10 May 2022**. They will be expected to explain their own response to the project and the directions they might want to take it.

Full Terms and Conditions

For full terms and conditions, including UKRI and eligibility criteria, please see [here](#). For further guidance on the classification of 'home' and 'international' students, please see [here](#).

Enquiries

Informal enquiries may be directed to Dr James Poskett (j.poskett@warwick.ac.uk).