

The Department of Near and Middle Eastern Civilizations

co-sponsored by the *Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities*
(Toronto Chapter)

Presents a lecture by

Dr. Verena Lepper

Curator of the Egyptian and Oriental Papyrus Collection of the Egyptian Museum,
Berlin National Museums
+ Honorary Professor at the Humboldt University, Berlin

The Hidden Treasures of Elephantine Island



Friday, 31st March 2023 from 6 – 8pm

Sidney Smith Hall Room 2108, UofT St. George

Elephantine was a militarily and strategically important island in the river Nile on the southern border of Egypt. No other Egyptian settlement is so well attested through texts over a period of 4000 years. Its inhabitants formed a multi-ethnic, multicultural and multi-religious community that has left vast amounts of written sources detailing their everyday lives, from the Old Kingdom (c. 2400 BCE) to beyond the Arab Conquest (in 642 CE). Today, several thousand papyri and other manuscripts from Elephantine are scattered in more than 60 institutions in 24 different countries across Europe and beyond. They are written in ten different languages and scripts, including Hieroglyphs, Hieratic, Demotic, Aramaic, Greek, Coptic and Arabic. 80% of these manuscripts have remained unpublished or unstudied until now. The Elephantine project aims to make these texts publicly available in an open access online research database. Incorporating cutting-edge methods from digital humanities, physics and mathematics, the project has been able to identify links between papyrus fragments from different collections in a veritable international 'papyrus puzzle undertaking', even allowing for the virtual unfolding of papyri. In bringing together medical, religious, legal, administrative, even literary texts, the database permits to study the micro-history of the everyday life of the local and global (i.e. 'glocal') community of Elephantine within its socio-cultural setting in Egypt and beyond.