

Presenter: Thomas L. Gertzen, University of Göttingen

Title: **“The Role of Paul de Lagarde and his ‘Germanic Ideology’ in the History of Egyptology”**

Panel: Modern History

The biblical scholar and orientalist Paul de Lagarde (1827–1891) played a crucial role in German intellectual history, especially for the disciplinary history of oriental studies. Fritz Stern suggested in his “The Rise of the Germanic Ideology” (1989) that “Lagarde’s scholarly contributions to philology and religious history, important though they were, have been largely superseded.” however, that he embodied “the type of malcontent who, in the 1920’s found a haven in the idealism of the Hitler movement.” Only a few years ago, in 2007, Ulrich Sieg identified Lagarde’s writings as one source of modern anti-Semitism.

Following on an early conflict with Heinrich Brugsch (1827–1894), professor of Egyptology in Göttingen, Lagarde initially despised the young discipline. But his attitude changed after he encountered Adolf Erman (1854–1937), founder of the ‘Berlin School’ of Egyptology and, like Lagarde, affiliated with the French- reformed community in Prussia. Erman sent his student Georg Steindorff (1861–1951) to Göttingen to study with Lagarde who became his doctoral dissertation advisor. Steindorff was Jewish but under Lagarde’s guidance, he converted to Protestant Christianity. Thereafter he completely aligned himself with Lagarde, particularly during the conflict with Leopold Zunz (1794–1886). Steindorff the convert considered himself completely divorced from Judaism. After World War I, he was instrumental in redefining German Egyptology as a *völkische* discipline. When the National Socialists came to power, Steindorff lost all his positions and was driven into exile. The ‘cultural code’ (Shulamit Volkov) had changed. After World War II, Steindorff engaged himself in the de-nazification of Egyptology, but even in that context, he continued to refer to Lagarde as a moralguide.

The paper analyses the implications of the Steindorff “case study” in the context of the rise of the allegedly ‘new’ racial, ethnic anti-Semitism in *fin-de-siècle* Germany, the increasing influence of *völkisch* ideology, and so called ‘Jewish self-hatred’ in the field of ancient Near Eastern studies and in Egyptology after World War I. It explores a new source of data resulting from the on-going efforts of the Egyptological Seminar, University of Göttingen, to edit the correspondences of Lagarde in the State Library there.