

**Sami De Giosa**

***Text and Stone: A history of Christian Symbols in Mamluk Architecture in Cairo (1250-1517AD)***

**Monday Majlis Online on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 17:00-18:30 (UK time)**

**Centre for the Study of Islam, Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, Exeter**

**Register please on this link:**

<https://universityofexeter.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJYoceqoqDktE9DWrSxb4MX7x-9Ctgy68Sz6>



A column in Al-Nasir Muhammad Mosque, Cairo Citadel 1318. Photo by Sami L. De Giosa.

**Abstract:** The focus of Sami's talk is on the use of spolia from Christian monuments in Egypt utilized within Islamic settings up until the Mamluk period. The instances explored in this talk offer an understanding of the Islamic remembrance and reverence of the past mixed with a need to build monuments at an incessant pace, and the demand for construction material as well as architectural elements. On the other side a deeper, esoteric level is explored with practices found in Egypt amongst the Royal Patronage of the Mamluk sultans, with a specific focus on the aesthetic symbols normally associated with religion, or in the case of Islam their lack thereof. With the main case study, Sami's talk examines the foretold and untold of a famous case of Christian spolia utilised in the Mosque of Sultan Al-Nasir Muhammad situated in the Citadel of Cairo. The historical analysis follows a trail of a high and popular culture, utilitarian as well as occult reasons behind what appears to be a calculated practical move of architectural remnants from the provinces to the Egyptian capital.

In the spirit of the label 'Majlis' and also to make the talks even more interesting, our speakers present the topic discussed as embedded in their own journey. You can watch the previous Majlises here [https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8YRkUahFj\\_81oJzCSDLTx4kVQQgeHLC-](https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL8YRkUahFj_81oJzCSDLTx4kVQQgeHLC-), but we don't record the Q&A in order to keep the discussion free. Please come and enjoy the talks and the discussions : ) If you'd like to be included in the CSI (Centre for the Study of Islam (Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, University of Exeter) mailing list, please contact the CSI Manager: Sarah Wood ([s.a.wood2@exeter.ac.uk](mailto:s.a.wood2@exeter.ac.uk)). We'll be happy to welcome you!

István T Kristó-Nagy <https://arabislamicstudies.exeter.ac.uk/staff/kristo-nagy/>

Far from providing certainties, Sami raises questions about the use of primary sources, of information known and given for granted about monuments and people, and ultimately reflects on the ambivalent nature of history, architectural and textual, and its many 'veiled' truths.



**Bio: Sami L. De Giosa** is currently assistant professor at the College of Fine Arts and Design, University of Sharjah. He previously worked as head of the Islamic Museum at the Sheikh Abdullah Al-Salem center in Kuwait, as Research Fellow at SOAS University of London in the department of Cultures and Languages and as senior Barakat fellow at the University of Oxford. He has curated Islamic art and culture exhibitions including Hajj: Memories of a Journey Exhibition at the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in Abu Dhabi in 2017-2018 and worked at the British Museum as curator on the Zayed National Museum project. Sami completed his PhD in Art History at SOAS, University of London on the revival of architecture and arts in Cairo during the late 15th century. His publications include among others, topics on tile production during the Mamluk period and an upcoming edited book on artistic exchanges between Islam and Christianity in the Mediterranean during the Medieval period published by AUC Press, <https://aucpress.com/9781649033376/>, [https://www.sharjah.ac.ae/en/academics/Colleges/fa/dept/finearts/Pages/ppl\\_detail.aspx?mcid=17&clt=en](https://www.sharjah.ac.ae/en/academics/Colleges/fa/dept/finearts/Pages/ppl_detail.aspx?mcid=17&clt=en)