DAAD Egypt

COSIMENA

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst
German Academic Exchange Service

PROGRAMME

OIB-COSIMENA Research Colloquium IV on Diverse Sciences in Islamic Civilization – Science in the Service of Knowledge

"Recent Archaeological Discoveries at the Citadel of Salah al-Din, Cairo: Architecture, Material Culture, and Historical Context"

Wednesday, 4th November 2026

ORIENT INSTITUT BEIRUT
المعهد الألماني للأبحاث الشرقية

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5:15– 6:00 p.m.	**Registration**
6:00–6:15 p.m.	**Greeting Words** **Dr Sahar Aly** *(Deputy Director, DAAD Regional Office Cairo)* **Dr Christoph Mainberger** *(Head of Science & Climate, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany to Egypt) (tbc)*
6:15–7:00 p.m.	**PRESENTATION** INPUT **"Recent Archaeological Discoveries at the Citadel of Salah al-Din, Cairo: Architecture, Material Culture, and Historical Context"** **Dr Mohamed Ibrahim** *(Ain Shams University/the Institut Français de l'Archéologie Orientale in Cairo/IFAO)*
7:00–7:20 p.m.	**Q & A Session** MODERATION **Dr Simon Conrad** *(Orient-Institut Beirut)*
7:20–7:30 p.m.	**Wrap-Up & Feedback**
7:30 – 8:30 p.m.	**JOINT NETWORKING RECEPTION**

Concept Note & Biography of the Speaker

Concept Note 1

"Recent Archaeological Discoveries at the Citadel of Salah al-Din, Cairo: Architecture, Material Culture, and Historical Context"

This lecture presents the results of recent archaeological excavations conducted at the Citadel of Salah al-Din in Cairo, focusing on the excavation areas of Arab al-Yasar, the Saqiya hydraulic complex, and al-Hattaba. The investigations have revealed important architectural remains associated with the Citadel's hydraulic infrastructure, including wells, saqiyas, water conduits, and associated installations that formed part of the medieval water supply system. Excavations have also documented architectural features and archaeological deposits that contribute to a better understanding of the development of the southern and northern sectors of the Citadel and their relationship to the surrounding urban landscape. By integrating archaeological evidence with historical and architectural sources, the lecture examines the evolution of these areas, their functional significance, and their role within the broader urban and military organization of the Citadel, highlighting the contribution of recent excavations to the study of Cairo's Islamic heritage.

Dr Mohamed Ibrahim

Assistant Professor, Ain Shams University & Scientific Researcher at the Institute Français de l'Archéologie Orientale in Cairo (IFAO)

Dr Mohamed Ibrahim is an Assistant Professor of Islamic Archaeology at Ain Shams University and a researcher affiliated with IFAO. He leads the Cairo Citadel Mission (Operation de Terrain 23123), directing the excavation and study of the southern and northern outer walls of the Citadel of Salah al-Din al-Ayyubi.

Participants' Feedback

Scan and share your feedback with us!

COSIMENA Network

If you would like to join our COSIMENA network and receive news about upcoming events, please scan this QR code:

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email us at: *cosimena@daadcairo.org*

Partners

Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD)

It was in 1960 when the DAAD Regional Office was established on the basis of the German-Egyptian Cultural Agreement. Since then, the academic relations between Egypt and Germany have evolved steadily. The close cooperation has unwrapped new horizons for the scientific bonds of both countries to further develop and flourish. Thousands of Egyptian scholars have benefited ever since from these ties. *https://www.daad.eg/*

Clusters of Scientific Innovation in the Middle East and North Africa (COSIMENA)

In the scope of COSIMENA the DAAD Office Cairo realises interdisciplinary events on current issues in science and innovation, such as workshops, conferences, roundtable discussions, the German Science Day, the COSIMENA Science Night and a Summer School. Several activities aim to bring together various stakeholders from science, business, government, and civil society. Especially, scientists are promoted and supported through networking opportunities. *www.daad.eg/cosimena*

Orient Institut Beirut

The Orient-Institut Beirut (OIB) is an independent academic research institute, belonging to the Max Weber Foundation. It is mainly funded through the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany. It conducts interdisciplinary research on the Arab world and the region of West Asia and North Africa at large. Its research community comprises long-term research associates from Germany and short-term visiting fellows from all over the world, who represent the major disciplines of the humanities and social sciences, including Islamic and Arab studies, history and anthropology of the Middle East, as well as sociology and political sciences. *https://orient-institut.org*

OIB-COSIMENA Research Colloquium IV

The importance of science throughout history cannot be disputed. Already in ancient Egypt, it was the foundation for advancement in various fields, as demonstrated by the excavated finds. Science has not only led to awe-inspiring buildings, based on accurate mathematics as well as astronomy, but also to longer life expectancies, more comfort, and a greater ability to mine resources and use them. The importance of science also lies in its role in building knowledge, problem-solving, developing new technologies, improving medicine, and enabling informed decision-making, which together drive economic growth and social progress, still extremely relevant for our times.

Science and religion are two dialectically related ways of understanding the world. While science relies on observation and experimentation, religion uses faith and spiritual experiences. Their relationship is complex, debated and changed throughout history. Many scientists were persecuted by religious authorities, such as Hypatia (c. 350–415 AD), the mathematician, astronomer, and philosopher in Alexandria, Copernicus (1473-1543), also a mathematician and astronomer, and Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), the “Father of Modern Science." Some of the Muslim scientists were also persecuted like Ibn al-Haytham (Alhazen) (c. 965–1040 AD), the famous pioneer in optics, Ibn Rushd (Averroes) (c. 1126–1198 AD), who was also a physician, as was Ibn Sīna (c. 980–1037 AD), to name but a few.

Yet sciences in Islam were not only covering religious sciences like exegesis, the Prophet’s traditions, sayings and biographies, laws and regulations, but Muslims devoted considerable time to other sciences. They may have started their scientific interests to serve religion, such as grammar and syntax to interpret the Qur’an and ensure it was read and recited in the proper manner. **Paperology** was important to write down the Qur’an, which they also did using exquisite calligraphy. **Astronomy** was developed to determine times of prayer and the beginning of the lunar months for fasting and pilgrimage, but it did not stop there. Islamic architecture was devoted to creating beautiful mosques and schools and continued to develop its unique style.
Islamic scholars made significant contributions to algebra, trigonometry, and geometry, which were often applied to architecture and astronomical instruments. **Archaeology** was also of interest, to find out about civilizations before them and to follow the Qur’anic directives of learning from kingdoms long gone, to avoid their mistakes. Advances in medicine, optics, and chemistry were documented in scientific texts and physical remains found at archaeological sites. Innovations in engineering, like city planning and water management, and construction, were a direct result of advancements in scientific knowledge, influencing urban design, with examples including planned cities, mosques, baths, gardens, hospitals and schools.
Muslim scholars tried to decipher hieroglyphics to unlock the secrets of the Pharaohs. Ibn Waḥshiyya for example, wrote a book titled *Kitāb Shawq al-mustahām fī maʿrifat rumūz al-aqlām* (The Book of the Desire of the Maddened Lover for the Knowledge of Secret Scripts) and Thawbān b. Ibrāhīm, known as

Dhūl-Nūn al-Miṣrī used his knowledge of Coptic to further the study of these symbols. Champollion made use of their scholarship. Though some Muslim rulers, such as al-Azīz ʿUthmān tried to demolish the Pyramids, Muslim jurists and historians such as Ibn Iyās and al-Maqrīzī argued for the preservation of Pharaonic buildings and structures.

Islamic Art is known for the "Arabesques", intricate interwoven geometric designs or complex geometric patterns creating a sense of order and infinity. "Arabesques" were also used in churches and synagogues, and the same artisans produced them. The questions around geometric designs are also tied to representations and conveyors of political power (also epigraphy) and work across media. Moreover, "arabesque" forms and patterns migrated across the medieval worlds and informed distant aesthetic traditions and sociopolitical settings.

Calligraphy is another art form used to inscribe verses from the Qur'an as well as other decorative phrases that are often integrated into architectural elements like walls and domes. They are not only found in mosques, often featuring large domes, minarets, and arches, but also on other important structures including domed churches, madrasas (schools), palaces, and tombstones as well as objects for ritual and daily use made of different materials from wood or glass to metal and leather, as well as paper and parchment.

The applied sciences, including pharmacology, medicine, astronomy, geography, and optics, also played an important role in knowledge production and transfer, from the ancient world to late antiquity, from Muslim empires to medieval Europe and back again. Geographers like al-Idrīsī (1099–1166), who wrote *Nuzhat Mutʿat al-Mushtāq fī Iktirāf al-Afāq* (Amusements for Him Who Desires to Travel Around the World), al-Masʿūdī (c. 896–956), who wrote *Murūj al-Dhahab* (The Meadows of Gold), blending history, geography and social commentary, and Ibn Battuta (1304–1369), the famous traveller, contributed significantly to **geography and cartography**.

Arab Christian scientists were vital to the intellectual flourishing of the Islamic Golden Age, acting as essential intermediaries in the preservation and transmission of Greek knowledge, like for example Ḥunayn ibn Isḥāq (c. 809–873 AD), who was arguably the most significant figure in the entire translation movement, and also Yaḥya ibn ʿAdi (c. 893–974 AD) who played a vital role in translating works from Syriac into Arabic. Ibn Sina, often called the "father of early modern medicine", yet he also worked on astronomy, geology and alchemy. Ismāʿīl ibn al-Razāz al-Jazarī created the first robotics as outlined in his book *Kitab fi ma'rifat al-hiyal al-handasiya* (The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices), to name a few.

This lecture series will focus on the different sciences of Islamic civilization, covering a vast geographical area, from the Middle East and North Africa to South Asia and China, as well as the different sciences developed in different parts of the Islamic Empire. Unlike the previous series, this one will not be divided into three clusters, as it aims to cover different sciences that were all important to civilization, continuity and also to creating religious harmony between the various populations of the medieval world. The series will highlight the different sciences, as well as the global cooperation between the empires as well as between the different religions, in preserving, using, and increasing knowledge, and what we can learn from that and apply today.

Dates of the planned events

1. Wednesday, 8th April 2026
2. Wednesday, 13th May 2026
3. Tuesday, 9th June 2026
4. Wednesday, 9th September 2026
5. Wednesday, 14th October 2026
6. Wednesday, 4th November 2026
7. Wednesday, 2nd December 2026

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DAAD Außenstelle Kairo
DAAD Regional Office Cairo
11 El-Saleh Ayoub St.
off 26th July, Zamalek,
11211, Cairo

Project Coordination
Dr Yasmin Amin, OIB
Nermine Abdelaty, DAAD

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