



ZMO-Kolloquium 2013

Thursday, May 30th, 2013, 6 pm

***Azazeel* and Politics of Historical Fiction in Egypt**

Lecture by Saba Mahmood

Venue:

Zentrum Moderner Orient
Kirchweg 33

14129 Berlin

Based on fourth century Christological debates and the travels of an Egyptian monk, the Arabic novel *Azazeel* (2008) was accused of defaming Christianity and fomenting Christian-Muslim sectarian strife in Egypt by the Coptic Orthodox Church. The conflict over the novel was quickly characterized as a standoff between religious proscription, and the secular liberal commitment to freedom of artistic and literary expression. This way of casting the debate failed to comprehend the complex stakes *Azazeel* mobilized, eliding substantive disagreements about religion, history, and literature. Through a careful reading of the novel, the response it elicited from the church as well as the Christological debate at the heart of the novel, this talk forces us to reconsider what it means to claim the autonomy of literature from history; to cast religion as a human invention; and to ponder the humanity of Christ.

GEFÖRDERT VOM



Bundesministerium
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und Forschung

Saba Mahmood teaches in the department of anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley. She is the author of *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (2005), and a co-author of *Is Critique Secular? Blasphemy, Injury, and Free Speech* (2009). Her work focuses on questions of secularism, religious politics, and gender in the Middle East. Mahmood is currently working on a book entitled *Political Secularism, Geopolitics and Minority Rights: Reflections from Egypt* while in residence at the American Academy in Berlin. She is the recipient of a number of awards including from the Carnegie Corporation of New York, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Henry Luce Foundation.