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Konferenzsaal
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14129 Berlin-Nikolassee**Einladung / Aushang****Donnerstag, 24. Mai 2007, 18 Uhr s.t.*****Ijtihad* and Religious Authority in Modern Islam:
The Discourses of the Sunni `Ulama****Lecture by Prof. Muhammad Qasim Zaman
(Princeton University)****Presentation: Prof. Dr. Roman Loimeier**

Few terms have been invoked more often in modern intra-Muslim debates than *ijtihad*, which may broadly be characterized as the effort to arrive at new legal rulings in light of the Islamic foundational texts. Against the overlapping challenges of the Islamists, modernist and liberal Muslims, and modernizing Muslim governments, many among the traditionally educated Muslim religious scholars, the *`ulama*, of Sunni Islam have often expressed grave misgivings about *ijtihad* on grounds that those seeking it are not equal to the task, that it opens the door to capricious interpretations of God's word, and that it would only exacerbate intellectual and religious anarchy in Muslim societies. Others, however, have endorsed it, though often in quite different ways and with varied implications. A question that has received rather little attention from observers of modern Islam, and which this talk will examine with illustrations from the Middle East and South Asia, is how the *`ulama*'s discourses on *ijtihad* relate to their conceptions of religious authority. If the rhetoric of *ijtihad* offers opportunities to liberal modernists and Islamists to stake out their claims in competition with those of the *`ulama*, what sort of opportunities does it offer to the *`ulama* for the articulation or reconfiguration of their own authority in a fragmented religious sphere? More broadly, what debates on religious and political authority do the *`ulama*'s discourses on *ijtihad* illuminate in the modern and contemporary Muslim world?

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