



## Invitation

Monday, 9 July 2018, 5 pm

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### From Extremism to Moderation: Religious Transformation in Contemporary Saudi Arabia

Lecture by **Besnik Sinani** (Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Society)

#### Venue

Zentrum für Literatur- und  
Kulturforschung  
Schützenstraße 18  
10117 Berlin

In 2017, Muhammad b. Salman, Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, announced the return of his country to religious moderation, a period in time that he marked as 'pre-1979.' In the West, where Saudi Arabia is often portrayed as a global promoter of a conservative and even extremist interpretation of Islam, the announcement of the Crown Prince was received with both enthusiasm and skepticism. What does Saudi religious moderation mean? How will it affect the religious policies of the country domestically and abroad? What are the driving principles of this policy, and how is it related to broader changes in the Saudi society?

Reflecting on years living and conducting research in Saudi Arabia, interviews in the country, and publications of Saudi institutions dedicated to the promotion of the idea of Saudi moderation, this presentation will position these questions in terms of both historical continuity and more recent transformations. Arguing against the notion of a divorce of the Saudi ruling family from Wahhabi Islam, as this drive to moderation has been presented at times, this presentation will highlight how representatives of the religious establishment have been part of the articulation of Saudi moderation. It will further argue that currently 'Saudi moderation' is not a blueprint, but rather an idea in the making.

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**Besnik Sinani** is a doctoral fellow at the Berlin Graduate School Muslim Cultures and Societies, Free University of Berlin. His research focuses on the study of Sufism in contemporary Saudi Arabia, where he has worked and later conducted research for over five years. He has previously written about Islam in the Balkans and about the Ba 'Alawi Sufi order and their presence in the Arab Gulf.