



## Call for Papers: panel on Semitic reading traditions

35<sup>th</sup> Deutscher Orientalistentag, 8–12 September 2025, Erlangen

Conveners: Benjamin Suchard (KU Leuven), Harald Samuel (University of Tübingen)

Semitic alphabets are largely consonantal in nature. Before the invention of explicit vocalization systems, readers necessarily relied on one of two things: knowledge of either the language in which the text was written or, especially in the case of sacred writings, a traditionally transmitted pronunciation—a reading tradition. Prestigious reading traditions feature prominently in the history of Judaism (Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic, Rabbinic Hebrew, Jewish Babylonian Aramaic), Samaritanism (Biblical Hebrew), Islam (Qur’anic Arabic), Middle Eastern Christianity (Syriac), and Mandaeism (Mandaic), and have recently been subject to a wave of renewed scholarly investigation (e.g. Suchard 2021; Van Putten 2022; Hornkohl 2023).

This panel aims to bring together scholars working on these different traditions to discuss methodological approaches to their study, explore parallels in their transmission and standardization, and examine their role in preserving historical linguistic features. Key questions include:

- How can we detect linguistic differences between a reading tradition and the original language(s) of the associated consonantal text?
- How did readers deal with conflicts stemming from dialectal and diachronic differences in language, theological or other content-related difficulties, or scribal error?
- How can the study of (dis)agreements between consonantal texts and their reading traditions inform our understanding of the history of religion?

We invite submissions from scholars at all career stages working on these topics. Please submit a title and abstract (max. 250 words, two to three references) to [benjamin.suchard@kuleuven.be](mailto:benjamin.suchard@kuleuven.be) by **23 February 2025**.

### References

- Hornkohl, Aaron D. 2023. *The Historical Depth of the Tiberian Reading Tradition of Biblical Hebrew*. Semitic Languages and Cultures 17. Cambridge: Open Book.
- Suchard, Benjamin D. 2021. ‘The Origins of the Biblical Aramaic Reading Tradition’. *Vetus Testamentum* 71 (1): 105–19.
- Van Putten, Marijn. 2022. *Qur’anic Arabic: From Its Hijazi Origins to Its Classical Reading Traditions*. Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 106. Leiden: Brill.