

Origins and Sources of the Islamic Psalms of David

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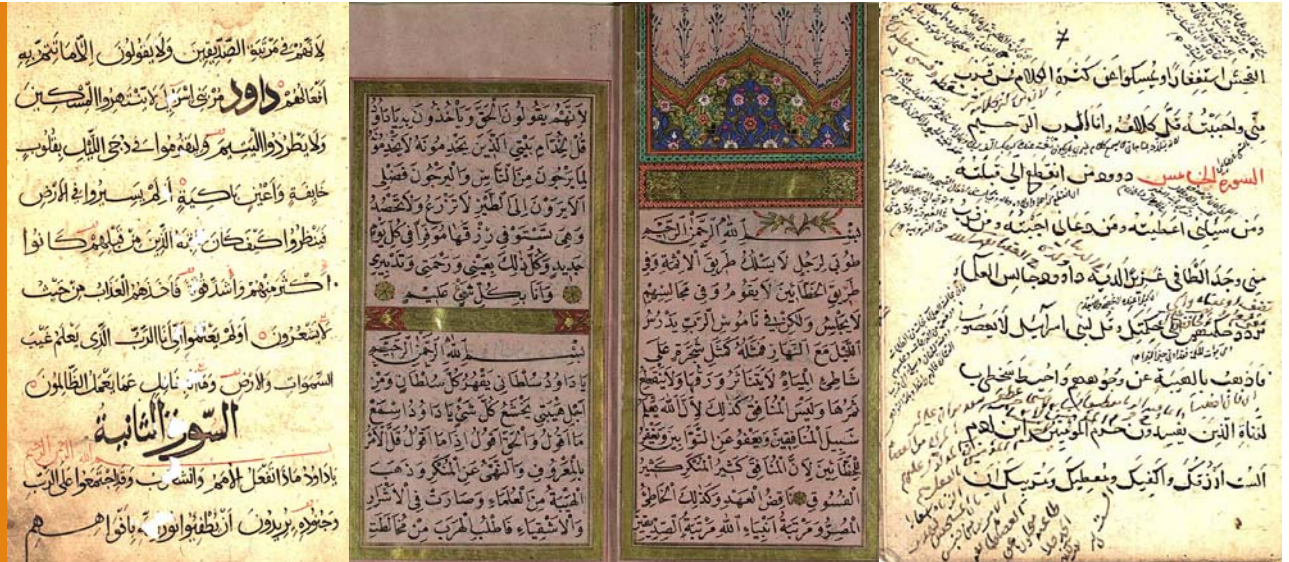


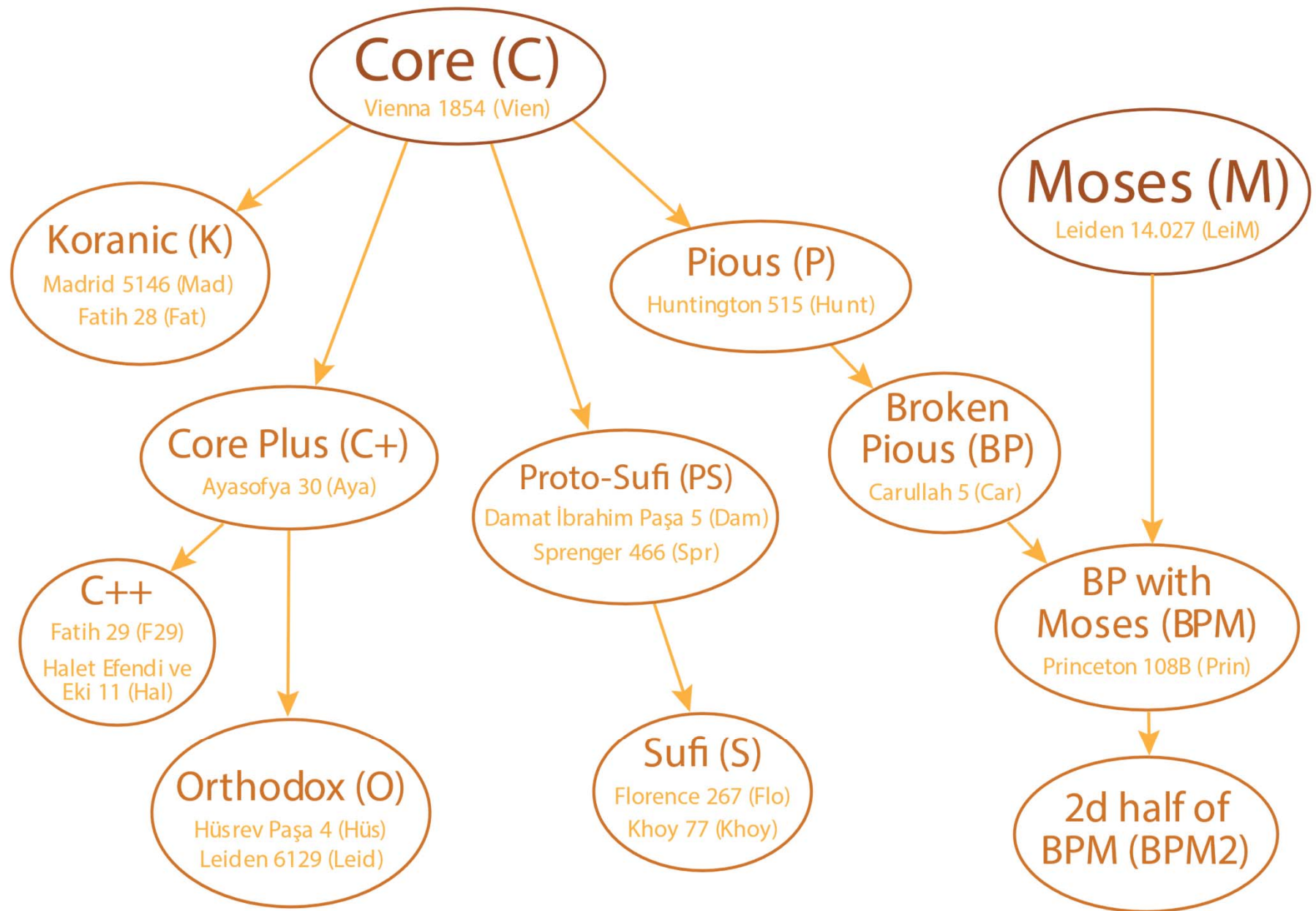
The Islamic psalms

Ascetic origins

Sources / inspirations

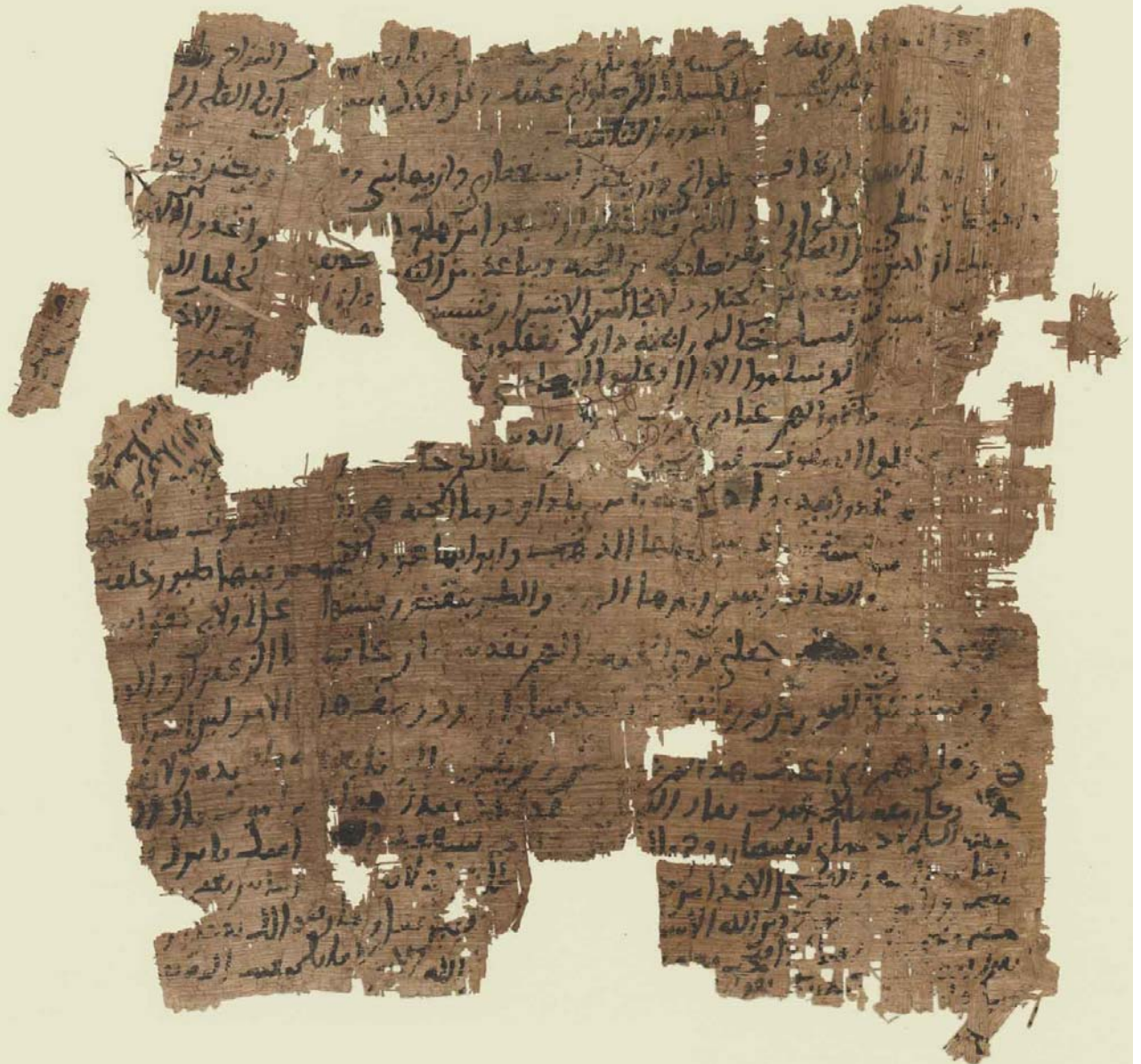
- Christian monasticism
- Biblical paraphrases
- Qur'an
- *Hadīth qudsī*
- Pseudo-scriptures
- *Qiṣaṣ al-anbiyā'*
- Wisdom literature
- *Zuhd*
- Conclusion





The Islamic psalms

Ascetic origins



The Islamic psalms

Ascetic origins

Core 4.5

Blessed are the anxious, those stricken with fear, who comfort orphans with food and nourishment.

Blessed are those who withdraw in silence from society and its vices, whose souls are afforded the most sublime insight.

Blessed are those who rise to spend the night in vigil.

The Islamic psalms

Ascetic origins

Sources / inspirations

- Christian monasticism

Abba Antony, in *The Book of the Elders: Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, trans. John Wortley, p. 25.

With **fear of God** before our eyes, let us ever be **mindful of death**. [...] While staying in the cell, collect your mind; remember the day of death; **behold the subsequent decomposition of the body**; consider the misfortune; accept the pain; **condemn the vanity of the world**; be attentive to due proportion and zeal that you might be able ever to remain in the same intended *hēsychia* [stillness, the life of a hermit] without weakening. Keep in mind, too, **the state of things in Hades** and think what it is like for the souls who are therein: in what most bitter silence, amidst what most **horrid groaning**, in what great **fear and agony**, in what apprehension as they anticipate the **unrelenting torment or the eternal and internal weeping**. But remember too **the day of resurrection** and of [our] appearing before God.

The Islamic psalms

Ascetic origins

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- Christian monasticism

Core 10

O ye people, do not forget the next world, nor let the splendor and radiance of this world delude you. O Children of Israel, if **you reflected on your end and destination**, and if you called to mind **the Resurrection** and what I have prepared on that Day for the disobedient, **you would laugh little and weep much!** [...] If only you would think how hard the ground and how cold and dark the **grave**; then you would speak little, but would frequently invoke my name and attend single-mindedly to me. For beauty is found only in the next life; the beauty of this world is fickle and fleeting.

Psalm 1 (RSV)

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water, that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. **In all that he does, he prospers.** The wicked are not so, but are like chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; **for the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.**

Core 1.1

Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but in the law of the Lord he studies night and day. He is like a tree by the water's edge, whose leaves are not scattered and whose fruit does not fail. **But few are those who act thus!** The hypocrites are not so, for **God knows the way of hypocrites and the way of sinners;** and because a hypocrite is full of deception, given to licentiousness, a breaker of covenants; and because **God knows the way of the God-fearing,** for they have the rank of the truthful, and they say nothing that their actions do not bear out.

Psalm 2:1-7 (NRSV)

(1) Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? (2) The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers **take counsel together, against the LORD and his anointed**, saying, (3) “Let us burst their bonds asunder, and cast their cords from us.” (4) He who sits in the heavens laughs; the LORD has them in derision. (5) Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, (6) “I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill.” (7) I will tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, **“You are my son; today I have begotten you.**

Core 2.1-2

O David, what do the nations and the peoples say? They have joined together against the Lord and his army. They wish to extinguish God’s light with their mouths, but God refuses that his light and his holiness should be extinguished.

O David, I made you my messiah and my prophet, but Jesus will be taken as a God beside me, on account of the power I vested in him, making him raise the dead.

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Core 96

David said: O Lord, do not lead me to ruin; do not let my enemies gloat over me; do not cast me from your door; do not make me despair of your mercy. My God, give me a truthful tongue that calls on you, and a heart that listens and obeys. Do not busy me with the affairs of the people, but busy me with remembering you, and occupy my heart with obeying you.

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Core 3.6

O David, say to the attendants who tend my House, relying fully on me and not on what the people have to offer them: **“Look at the birds; they neither plow nor toil nor sow, and yet each day they receive anew their full provision of ample nourishment. All this is under my supervision and management, for I know all things.”**

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Orthodox 119.1 (paraphrasing Q 112)

I am One, Singular, Absolute. I begat not, nor was begotten. I have taken neither spouse nor child. None is like unto me.

إِنِّي وَاحِدٌ أَحَدٌ صَمَدٌ لَمْ أَلِدْ وَلَمْ أُولَدْ وَلَمْ
أَتَّخِذْ صَاحِبَةً وَلَا وِلْدَانًا وَلَمْ يَكُنْ لِي كُفُوًا
أَحَدٌ.

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Core 100

By the night when it grows dark; by the day when it grows bright! [...] Happy is he who receives his book in his right hand and goes off to his people with his face beaming; but wretched is he who receives his book in his left hand or behind his back, and goes off to his people with a scowling face, his color turned pale, his lips swollen, and his tongue hanging out. [...] I know the unseen of the heavens and the earth, and I know which eyes are faithless and what each heart conceals. I am Hearing and Knowing.

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Core 20.1

O David, listen to what I say! Command Solomon to proclaim after you that I will give the earth as an inheritance to Muhammad and his community.

Q 21:105

We wrote in the Zabūr, after the Remembrance, that my righteous servants will inherit the earth.

Pss 37:29 (NRSV)

The righteous shall inherit the land, and live in it forever.

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Core 14

All ye creatures, if you make me your refuge, and put your trust in me as you pursue your daily bread, I will make a way for you to get it. **For when my servant loves me, I become his hearing with which he hears and his sight by which he sees;** if he contemplates a good deed I embolden him, and if he contemplates a bad deed I restrain him.

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Moses 22

O Moses son of ‘Imrān,
O bearer of revelation,
listen to my speech, for I am God, the pious
king.

There is no interpreter between you and
me.

To those who consume interest and
disobey, give good tidings of the wrath
of the Merciful One
and of the slashing [fiends] of hell.

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Core 78

O David, you have passed judgement on yourself; **you have caused men to be stricken that you might take pleasure in what they used to enjoy.** I knew already that I would build palaces for you, but when you did what you did I knew already that I would diminish that station of yours—and what calamity is greater than a calamity that diminishes your station before God?

Pious 56

O David I made you my Caliph on the earth that you might **judge rightly between people, but you followed your fancy** rather than obey your Lord, and **preferred your desire over the truth.** [...]

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Idrīs and Luqmān in *Mukhtār al-ḥikam*, 19, 277.

Reason without *adab* is like a barren tree; reason with *adab* is like a fruitful tree.

Moses 29 (from BPM 168)

Knowledge without works is like thunder and lightning without rain.

Knowledge without works is like a tree without fruit.

Knowledge without works is like a bow without a string.

Knowledge without the alms tax is like planting wheat on the rocks.

Knowledge is to a fool as pearls and sapphires are to animals. [...]

Prayer without the alms tax is like a body without a spirit.

And without repentance, knowledge and works and the alms tax are like building without a foundation.

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Saying attributed to al-Fuḍayl ibn 'Iyād
in al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, 12.

Blessed is he who recoils from society, is
drawn to his Lord, and weeps over his
offenses.

Saying related by Ibrāhīm ibn Adham
in al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, 20.

Do not hope to spend the night in vigil
while having eaten your fill; do not hope to
achieve sadness while getting plenty of
sleep; do not hope to attain the fear of God
while craving this world.

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