

# A Gūrānī Mawlid

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## ABSTRACT:

The term *mawlid*, or *mawlūd* (< *mawlūdun fīhi*) refers to the verse and sometimes panegyric prose texts written in honor of the Prophet, his birth, and his life. *Laylat al-mawlid*, *mawlid al-nabī*, and *mawlid al-nabawī* were the cover names for the general celebrations on the occasion of the prophet's birthday (generally accepted as Monday, 12 Rabī' I). While authors of *mawlid* deal with diverse aspects of the historical life of Prophet, however, this textual tradition normally suffers from simplistic rendering of the realities of Prophet's life. A notable addition to the *mawlid*s, for example, includes the mythological trends which heavily have focused on the superiority of Prophet over the human. The *mawlid*s sometime include a number of mystical or non-Orthodox terms as well as a type of Shiite superiority over other Islamic sects<sup>1</sup>. Despite the serious limitations of the genre, the *mawlid*s are useful introductions to some religious, mythological, and even musical aspects of Islam<sup>2</sup>.

What is given here for the first time is merely a very brief introductory note on a newly-found Gūrānī<sup>3</sup> manuscript in which the Muslim Kurds' interest in the genre is visible. Although since the last decade Kurds devoted most of their energy to

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1 The Shiite *mawlid*s are sometimes known as *mawlid Ka'ba*, referring to the *imām* 'Alī's birth at Ka'ba (Pākatchī, 2003; Holmes Katz, 2007, 6-12).

2 *Mawlid* gave rise to a large number of works, in many different languages (Ja'fariyān, 2002).

3 Gūrānī *koinē* and its different dialects are spoken mostly by the Kurds in Kirmānshāh province (Hadank, 1930).

national studies, they also offered important contributions to *mawlid* scholarship, particularly textual studies, such as their editions, rarely accompanied by translations. The rise of attention to the *mawlid* religious texts perhaps is due to the same rise in national identity as *mawliids* (written in various Kurdish dialects) encourage a popular conception that it is a sign of Kurdish ethnic and cultural boom in the Islamic area. Whatever *mawlid*'s influence may have been, the present Gûrânî manuscript is a respected resource in the tradition and may prove helpful in providing some new aspects of this large body of Kurdish literature.

**Keywords:** mawlid, Gûrânî, Kurdish, religious literature.

### PUXTE:

Têgeha *mewlîd* an jî *mewlûdê* (*mewlûdun fîhi*) helbest û metnên pexşankî ên methîye ne yên ku derbarê (Muhammed) Pêxember, jidayîkbûna wî û jiyana wî de hatine nivîsîn. *Leylet-ûl mewlîd*, *mewlîda nebî* û *mewlîda nebewî* serenavên pîrozkirina roja jidayîkbûna Pêxemberî ne (bi giştî 12î meha Rebûûlewwe, roja dûşemê tê qebûlkin). Nivîskarên *mewlîdê* bi aliyên cuda ên jiyana dîrokî ya Pêxemberî ve eleqedar dibin û ev kevneşopîya metnî jî hinek aliyên aşkere yên jiyana Pêxemberî pêşkeş dikin. Servehîyeke girîng a ku li *mewlîdan* hatiye zêdekirin, meylên mîtolojîk in ku serdestiya Pêxemberî ya li ser mirovan nîşan didin. Di hinek *mewlîdan* de hin têgehên mîstîk an jî ne-dirust û herwisa cûreyekî serdestiya Şîtiyê ya li ser mezhebên din ên Îslamê jî cih digirin.<sup>4</sup> Digel hinek kêmasiyên girîng ên vî cûreyê edebî, *mewlîd* destpêkên kêrhatî ne ji bo hinek aliyên Îslamê yên dînî, mîtolojîkî heta muzîkî.<sup>5</sup>

Di vê nivîsarê de li ser destxetêke Goranî<sup>6</sup> ya nûpeydakirî danasîneke kurt hatiye pêşkeşkirin; Kurdên Misilman eleqeyêke zêde nîşanî vî cûreyê edebî didin. Herçend di nava van deh salên borî Kurdan zêdetir berê xwe dabe xebatên neteweyî jî, wan hevkarîyên mezin kirin li ser zanyariya *mewlîdê*; bi taybetî jî bi rêya xebatên metnî ên wekî edîsyon û piçek wergeran. Zêdebûna eleqeya li ser *mewlîd* û metnên dînî, dibe ku ji ber bilindbûna nasnameya neteweyî bin lewre *mewlîd* (ên ku bi gelek zaravayên cuda yên Kurdî hatine nivîsîn) rê li ber têgehiştineke popûler vedike ku ew nîşaneya zêdebûna Kurdan a neteweyî û çandî ye di qada Îslamê de. Bando-*ra mewlîd* her çi be jî, ev destxeta Goranî çavkaniyêke girîng e di kevneşopîyê de û dibe ku bibe alîkar û hinek aliyên nû bide vî cûreyê berfireh ê edebiyata Kurdî.

**Bêjeyên sereke:** mewlûd, Goranî, Kurdî, edebiyata dînî.

4 Ji ber jidayîkbûna Îmamê Elî ya di Kabeyê de, *mewlîdên* Şîi wekî *mewlîda Kabê* jî tên zanîn (Pâkatchî, 2003; Holmes Katz, 2007, 6-12).

5 *Mewlîdan* di gelek zimanan cuda de rê li ber gelek berheman vekirîye (Ja'farîyân, 2002).

6 Gûrânî *koinê* and its different dialects are spoken mostly by the Kurds in Kirmânshâh province (Hadank, 1930).

## 1. Introduction

Our knowledge of the earliest possible connections between Kurds and the *mawlid* literature is very limited. Possible connections come to mind with the ruler of Arbil, al-Malik Muẓaffar al-Dīn Kökbürī, a brother-in-law of the Ayyūbid Şalāḥ al-Dīn, which is said to have endorsed the first celebration of the Prophet in 604/1207-08 (EP<sup>2</sup>, VI, 895).

In later periods, there is a clear Kurdish familiarity with the subject which has come to light via the Turkish *mawlıds*. *Mevlid* (*Vesīletü'n-Necât*), the masterpiece of Süleymân Çelebi (d.825/1421), for example, since 9<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century is being read and listened with enthusiasm in Turkey (Mazıoğlu, 1974) and should be considered as the first Turkish *mawlid* that would have an impact on Kurdish ones (Çelebi, 1999).

A very clear sample of Kurdish interests in *mawlid*, however, is from much later times. The amicable relations between the *mawlid* and Kurdish ceremonies probably never came to an end as one of the most recited *mawlıds* in Arabic even today is that of Ja'far b. Ḥasan b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Barzanjī (d.1177/1764), a Barzanjī Kurd of 'Irāq and a respected jurist who served as the Shāfi'ī *muftī* of Medina. The traces of his influence and other members of the Shahrazur Barzanjī family in Medina normally are neglected (van Bruinessen, 1998). Barzanjī's *mawlid*, which is generally known simply as *Mawlid al-Barzanjī* (also entitled as *'Iqd al-Jawāhir fī Mawlid al-Nabī al-Azhar*, or *'Iqd al-Jawāhir fī Mawlid Şāḥib al-Hawd wa al-Kawthar*), has been published several times<sup>7</sup>. This has been the subject of a commentary by Barzanjī's descendant Ja'far b. Ismā'il Barzanjī (1317/1899-1900), another Kurdish Shāfi'ī *muftī* of Medina. It is entitled *al-Kawkab al-Anwar 'alā 'Iqd al-Jawāhir fī Mawlid al-Nabī al-Azhar* (Holmes Katz, 2007, 249, n.6).

Much more attention should, however, be paid to the *mawlıds* written in Kurdish dialects. What is known of the earlier character of Kurdish *mawlid* and of its position within Kurdish literature comes mainly from Kurmānjī sources. The most important one is the *mawlid* (better known as *Mevlidü'n-Nebī*) of Bāta'ī, or Malā Ḥusayn al-Bāti al-Shāfi'ī al-Ḥakkārī<sup>8</sup>. Several other Kurmānjī *mawlıds* are known to us. Of particular importance are Ḥasan Artüşhī's *Mevlid-i Nebī Aleyhi's-Selātü*

7 For an unknown manuscript, see MS No 11149/5, Mar'ashī Library, Qum. It is interestingly written on 24 Sha'bān 1250/25 December 1834 by a Kurdish scribe, named Mu'ammad Chalabī Riéwān b. Mu'ammad Āghā Katkhudāy Kurdī (Dirāyatī, 2010, x, 377).

8 There are many published and unpublished sources (Le Coq, 1903, 49-96; el-Batevī, 2006); and MSS. Nos. 4390 and 21 kept at Ankara Milli Kütüphanesi and Nevşehir-Ortahisar İlçe Halk Kütüphanesi, respectively.

*ve's-Selâm*, Muḥammad Amīn al-Ḥaydarī's *Mewluda Nebi*, Sayyid Badr al-Dīn's *Mevlûdâ Kurdî bi Zimanê Gundî*, Muḥammad Sirāj al-Dīn's *Dürra Birinci Mewluda Kirmancî* etc. (e.g. Sirâcuddīn, 2009).

It is interesting that the *mawlid* also became widely popular in Zâzâkî, whereby an increasing Zâzâkization took place, from its first attestation in Aḥmad Khâsî's *mawlid* to 'Uthmân Afandî's *Biyîşd Peygamberî*, Malâ Hunij's *Mevlid-i Peygamberî*, Malâ Kâmil's *Mevlid-i Nebî*, etc. (Korkusuz, 2004, 63-65; Kirkan, 2011; Xasî, 2012).

The situation with regard to the Sôrânî works, on the other hand, differs from Zâzâkî ones. For reasons of poor written literature, only a very few Sôrânî *mawlids* can be distinguished. Apart the local oral traditions, it was Gûrânî, Persian, and Arabic versions that was adapted and used by Sôrânî communities (Sanandajî, 2002). A famous *mawlid* that enjoyed great popularity in Sinne, in Iranian Kurdistan, is that of Bahâ' al-Dīn Shams Qurayshî, written in 1350/1931 (Qureyşî, 2011).

In Sôrânî cases, however, one should also state that the existing versions (normally in oral accounts) were so poor that it is hard to show a special characteristic. The term *mewlud* is also used today in and around Sulaymānīyya, Arbil and Kirkûk, in Iraqî Kurdistan, to refer to a gathering in which couplets are sung from a variety of poets on the loose theme of praise for the Prophet. Sôrânî oral *mawlids* used to be performed in neighborhoods throughout Sulaymānīyya, around the time of the Prophet's birthday as well as such occasions as deaths, anniversaries of deaths, such as *çile*, a gathering forty days after the death of a relative or friend etc.<sup>9</sup>

One also may pay particular attention to the scattered Gûrânî fragments preserved in the Iranian, Iraqî, and some personal libraries. Most of the important Gûrânî manuscripts extant today derive from earlier Kurdish literary tradition. In the case of *mawlids*, there is, to my knowledge, merely a unique written tradition with the same earlier characteristics; Gûrânî *mawlids* sometimes are quoted under other titles and names. A standard version, *Mawlid-nāma-yi Haḍrat Şalli Alayhi wa Sallam*, for example, exists in MS Tehran, Millî Library, No.7602 (Dig.2417), and remains unpublished (Dirāyatî, 2010, x, 380). The last folios of the manuscript include both an Arabic *şalawāt-nāma* and a Kurdish panegyric fragment composed in the honor of Prophet, probably all dating from 1032/1623 or 1302/1885<sup>10</sup>. Let us introduce one.

9 I would like to thank Andrew J. Bush for his comment and suggestion.

10 Because of the ambiguities of the script both dates are possible, though the second is preferable to me.

## 2. Manuscript

The full text of the Gūrānī *mawlid* in question is preserved in one manuscript, which was very possibly from a Kurdish hand came to enter the Library of Gulpāygānī, in Qum (nearby the shrine of *ḥadrat* Ma‘šūma, the sister of the eighth Shiite *imām*), in Iran. It is merely on the basis of the other manuscripts that we may guess that Khalīfa Shāhrukh Awrāmī was possibly the original depository of the Gūrānī *mawlid*. From other manuscripts of the collection, it is clear that Awrāmī (1953-2012), a Kurdish poet and religious man from Marīwān, had very good relations with the Gulpāygānī Library (Awrāmī, 2006). The Gulpāygānī collection, named after the scholar who acquired it, was built up mainly between 1991 and 2004. The Great Āyat Allāh Muḥammad Jawād Ṣāfi Gulpāygānī (born 1287AH) was a Shiite scholar of Gulpāygān (186 km north-west of Iṣfahān), having served as theologian by his demise in 1378 AH. A main part of the Library is his own personal books, but it is the later generations of the family, especially Āyat Allāh Ḥājj Shaykh Luṭf Allāh, which founded and extended the Library. Its goal described a reference library for the students of the Shiite theology (*tullāb*), containing mainly classical and religious books as may be necessary for their use (Ya‘qūbī, 2003).

MS 7120 is an anonymous *mawlid*, named *mawlūd-nāma* and catalogued as *manāqib*. It is written in *nasta‘liq* script while the marginal Arabic poems are in *naskh*. The manuscript has been produced by a certain scribe, named Ḥabīb Allāh b. Mīrzā Faṭḥ Allāh. The librarians are wrong where they date the manuscript to the 13<sup>th</sup>/19<sup>th</sup> century. In folio 11v., the author assigns it precisely to 1 Dhi al-Ḥijja 1317/1 April 1900 (MS *awwal Dhi al-Ḥijja al-Ḥarām shab-i Jum‘a* 1317).

With the introduction given above, we can proceed with the brief analysis of the sections of the Gūrānī manuscript. The identification of the present text as *mawlidīyya* (*mūlūdīyya*, *mīlādīyya*) is also possible. There is no systematic preference for *mawlidīyya* here. More strikingly, there is no such preference in the appointments made by our anonymous author. It seems that the Gūrānī poem in question is composed in honor of the Prophet because of the anniversary of his birth and in order to recite as a rule after ceremonies marking the *laylat al-mawlid*.

Because of the way in which the subjects mentioned in the text one cannot be absolutely certain of precisely how the author may have treated the writing of the *mawlid*, but from the evidence of his style we can see a number of apparent constructs which are closely akin to the translation of a later work. A preliminary passage is worth citing at length to illustrate this treatment:

هذا كتاب مولودنامه منقول من لغت العربی الی لغت الكردی لیسهل سریعاً  
انتقال الذهن الاکراد الیها لنظم الناظم علی قدر عقولهم و الله الموفق و الیه الاسترجاع

Reader became primarily familiar with this Gūrānī *mawlid* through the Arabic notes in the margin. The Arabic poems in the margins of the Gūrānī manuscript may lead one to suggest that it is a translation of Barzanjī's *mawlid* which incorporates elements of popular tradition. Both, for example, refer to the attendance of Mary, Āsiya, and other heavenly handmaidens at the birth of Prophet.

The first two folios of the manuscript (fols.1v.-2r.) include panegyric poetry in Arabic. This panegyric on Muḥammad begins with *tanzīlūhū* (incipit: یارب صلّ علی من حلّ فی الحرم) and then provides 50 *bayts* with the art of rhetoric. The excipit reads: و علی کلّ الخلفا, then *tamma*. After these introductory stanzas, each *bayt* being a particular sign of Prophet's spiritual life, the Gūrānī poem has begun to be properly recited.

The first folio of the Gūrānī text (fol.2v.) also became familiar with that Arabic practice through another 10 *bayts* in the margins. A next basic problem lay in the dating of Prophet's birth on a general Sunni belief that related his birth with the twelfth of the month Rabī' I (fol.3r.: شب دوازده ربیع الاول ▪ روی جهان اما مصطفی: (مرسل). From a previous *bayt* of the same folio it is clear that the author refers to the Prophet's appearance in the month of *rabī'* 'spring, time of rejoicing' as an auspicious omen for the Muslims (MS ای ماه مولود ماه خیراتن). The work continues with a description of reading *mawlid* as a meritorious deed which its importance is acknowledged by the Rightly-Guided Caliphs. It is held, the author says, in the highest esteem as reading the Qur'ān itself.

The next folios (3v.-4r.) are constituted by a folk story regarding the *mawlid* under the reign of Hārūn al-Rashīd, the fifth 'Abbāsīd caliph, foods and drinks in *mawlid* ceremonies, and an allusion to a certain Sheikh of Baṣra (MS (شیخ بصرایی)<sup>11</sup> and Fakhr al-Dīn Rāzī (d.606/1209), a famous theologian of Islam, with an apparent encouragement of *mawlid*'s reciting. In the folio 3v., the author used for the first time an Arabic *bayt* (صلّوا علیه و سلّموا تسلیما ▪ حتّی تنالوا جنّة و نعیم) to emphasize the harmony especially when the people were reciting the poem. It is frequently repeated thereafter. It is always written in *shanjarf* (red ink).

The next folios (4v.-6r.) cover a few poetries pertaining to Kurdish popular literature in which, because of commemoration, or prayer occasioned by ethical events, the main personality of the story has decided to recite annually the *mawlid* and

11 Probably the reference is to Ḥasan of Baṣra, a well-known Muslim theologian and preacher, born c.21/642.

perform the ceremony. In addition to its significance for religious customs and as a witness of the previous presence of *mawlid* issues in the history (particularly when it refers to the reign of ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān), the stories provide precious information on the use of *mawlid* in order to make a vow to give up bad deeds. The birthday of Prophet as an occasion for pious observances is a late custom for the circulation of alleged Prophetic statements about those acts of piety performed on that occasion. From folio 5v. to the folio 6r., there are 22 Arabic *bayts* in the margins.

Folio 6v., among other thing, include a wise saying of ibn Mas‘ūd al-Gharīb, concerning the high situation of Prophet. In marginal notes there are 12 Arabic *bayts* as well. The beginning of the main text of the *mawlid* is in the folio 7r., where we have 12 Arabic *bayts* in the margins. The folios 7v.-8r., constitute 14 Arabic *bayts* with the compositions in the *mawlid* genre.

The next Gūrānī *bayts* have been used to construct a narrative of some kind about the creation, Adam, and the creation of the Prophet with a highly colored account of his significance. It seems that a less well-authenticated *ḥadīth* that says Muḥammad was a Prophet ‘when Adam was between the water and the mud’, was to have an influence on this section (Holmes Katz, 2007, 13, 224). Moreover, his family background, ‘Abd Allāh and ‘Abd al-Muṭallib are also distinguished (fols.8v.-9r.). 12 Arabic *bayts* from the original Arabic *mawlid* are to be found in the folio 8v. Folio 9r., has in the upper register (to the right of the arch) a single Arabic *bayt*.

In the following section (fols.9v.-10r.) the author begins the formal analysis and argumentation of Prophet’s mother, Āmina and her pregnancy. As the *mawlid* of Barzanjī, the Prophet’s mother Āmina is a significant focus of attention. The folios 9v.-10r., also provide 20 Arabic *bayts* in their margins.

The base of the further portions of the work (fols.10v.-11r.) is the birth of Prophet and those who regard that birth with veneration: Eve, Mary, Sarah, and Āsiya of Israel. Here the poet inserts a single Arabic *bayt* to the Gūrānī text (يا امته بشراك) (سبحان من عطاك ■ بحملك بمحمد رب السماء هناك), very possibly from the main body of the Arabic *mawlid* he had before his eyes as a source of inspiration for his own *mawlid*. It is also mentioned in the margins (fol.9v.). The marginal notes to the folios 10v. and 11r. include respectively 13 and 15 Arabic *bayts*. There are some Persian words in the margins of the folio 11r.

The last folio (11v.) of the Gūrānī text, with 8 Arabic marginal *bayts* and a Persian note, interestingly also includes a very brief Persian instruction, giving to the readers of the *mawlid* (MS (درینجا بپا برخیزند), and a Persian *bayt* which indicates the high standing of Prophet’s birth in the eyes of the Muslims (MS (قدم بنهاد در دنیا (برحمت ■ جهان شد از رخ او رشک جنت).

The last section of the text is a *şalawât-nâma* that our anonymous author offered a Persian advice about its reading after the Gûrânî text. While the existence of such a *şalawât-nâma* has separately attracted Kurdish attention, the grouping of the *şalawât-nâma* with the *mawlid* texts supports its consideration as a Gûrânî symbol of *mawlid* collections. The *şalawât-nâma* of Khânây Qubādî is a specimen of an orthodox Shiite poem in honor of both Muḥammad and ‘Alî. To the same category must belong the manuscript of the National Library (MS No.7602) and the ‘*Aqīda-nâma* of Malâ Raḥîm Tâyjowzî (Minorsky, 1943, 94; Le Coq, *Kurdische Texte*, 95-96).

The last folio of the manuscript (12r.) provides an Arabic *khâtima* in which the name of the scribe, Ḥabîb Allâh b. Mîrzâ Faṭḥ Allâh, is also given. To my knowledge, he is otherwise unknown.

Important collections of Gûrânî words are found in the present manuscript. A promising study may also be the study of Gûrânî syntax.

### 3. Conclusion

Finally, it may be concluded that the Kurds played a major role in the early production of non-Kurdish *mawlids*. Strong evidence suggests, as shall be seen in the Kurdish tradition, that the Kurds made further additions and alterations to the genre as it was being copied for distribution in subsequent years. It is not clear if the Kurdish attempts led to an actual production or reproduction of the Arabic *mawlid*. However, a second and more fruitful Kurdish attempt was made in the later centuries by the same Kurds. Some useful Kurdish *mawlids* in different dialects were provided to the Arabic, Persian, and Turkish versions. One of the first authenticated translations of the Arabic *mawlid* is the one presented here.

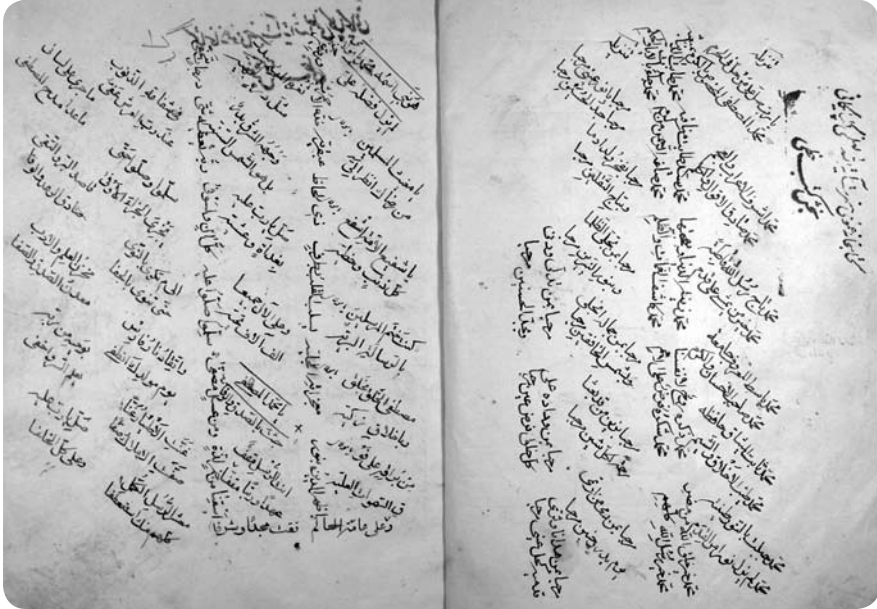
The present Gûrânî translation is a potent example of the prestige the genre must have had among the Kurdish community and how important it must have been to be included in the religious Gûrânî literature. It is a somewhat literal translation, with some fidelity to the original text as the primary objective. However, it is not an exaggeration to state that formatting every Arabic line and its Gûrânî version took more difficulty than the translation itself.



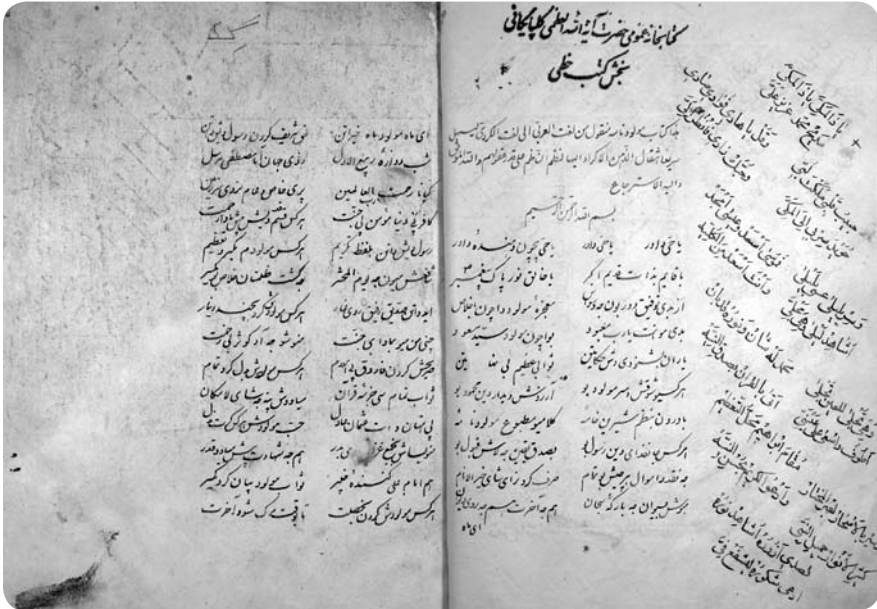
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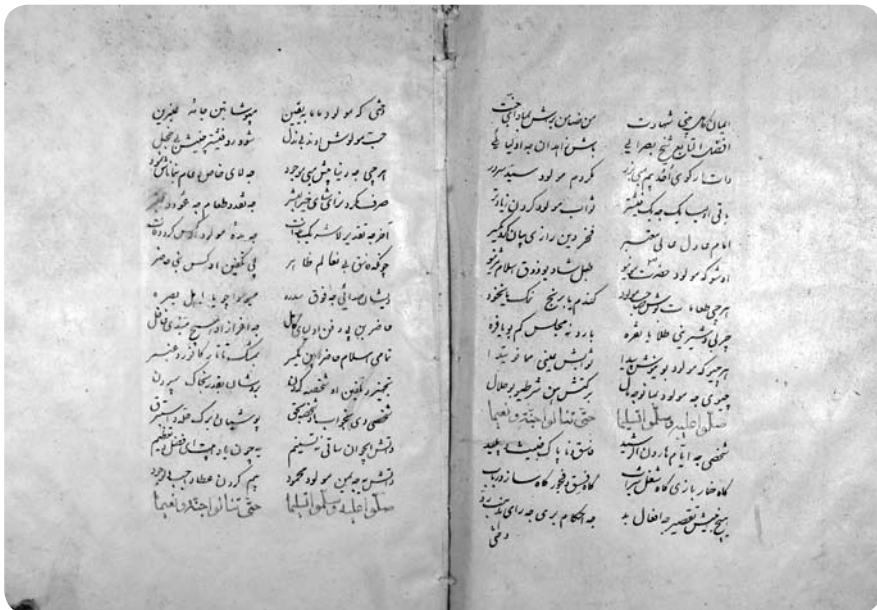
**Mewlûdeke Goranî / A Gûrânî Mawlid**  
(Pirtûkxaneyaya Gulpeyganî/Qum-Îran  
Gulpaygani Library/Qum-Iran)



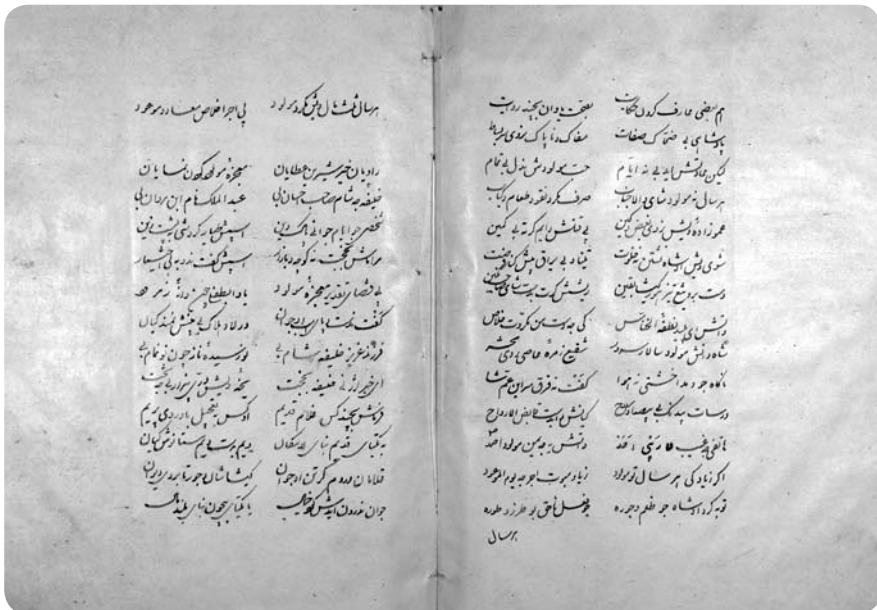
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