



DAVARU'L-MA'NAVI  
OF THE MEVLEVI ORDER

Rumi Prophecies

by Ibrahim Gamaral (4/07)

As a result of the amazing popularity of Mawlānā Rūmī's name in the West--and especially in America where translations and versions of his verses in English have made him the best-selling poet, after nearly 800 years--there has been an increased tendency to believe that the popularity of his name must have been prophesied.

This article reviews a number of versions of such prophecies in comparison to the earliest Persian sources in which prophecies were attributed to Mawlānā. The conclusion is that, if Mawlānā made any prophecies, none involved a prediction that his name would become famous. The strongest case is that he predicted that his words of deep spiritual meaning, insights, and secrets--and those words in his Masnavi, in particular--would become established in all nations and that these words of his would be recited in every clime, or region, of the world.

PROPHECY #1: In a book published in Turkey (translated into English) in the 1970's, the Director of the Mevlana Museum in Konya, Turkey, quoted Mawlānā as saying about Konya: "Don't be afraid. This city will be saved from the sword until the Day of Judgment."

PROPHECY #2: The same Director quoted Mawlānā as saying: "A time will come when my home will be in the centre of the city and it will flourish. Then wave upon wave of people will come to visit my Tomb."

PROPHECY #3: The same Director quoted Mawlānā as saying: "A time will come when... wave upon wave of people will come to visit my Tomb and my words will be forever on their lips."

PROPHECY #4: In a book published in America, an author quoted the Persian mystical poet 'Attār as telling Mawlānā when he was a little boy, "Someday your words will be heard around the world."

PROPHECY #5: In a published book, a contemporary Mevlevi leader quoted Mawlānā as saying, "My name and my words will be told among the lovers, centuries after my death."

PROPHECY #6: In a publication, another contemporary Mevlevi leader was quoted as saying of Mawlānā: "He says, 'I am the Sun. I will rise the West. And I will become a household word.'" The earliest Persian sources are (a) the works of Mawlānā's son, Sūṭān Valād; a biography by Mawlānā's disciple, Sepāhsālār; and a biography by Mawlānā's grandson/pupil, Afākī. It is the latter work (written between 1318-1360--45-67 years after Mawlānā's death) that attributes prophecies to Mawlānā.

Prophecies About The Destruction Of Konya

"Mawlānā said: 'Bahā' al-Dīn, as long as the blessed sepulchral shrine and the bones of the Great Master Bahā' al-Dīn-e Valād and our offspring and descendants and friends and disciples' remain in this city, this country (the Tā) will not suffer the indignity (hetta) of decline and the hoof of a foreign mount will not enter and the oppressor's sword will not be drawn against this people. Blood will not be shed and the city will not be entirely destroyed and devastated and it will not remain empty. The inhabitants of the city will always be secure and flourishing' in the sanctuary of the blessed sepulchral shrine," and they will be safe and sound from Time's calamities and the vicissitudes of night and day--if God Most High is willing!"

--Shams al-Dīn Ahmad-e Afākī, The Feasts of the Knowers of God (Manāqeb al-'ārefīn), translated from the Persian by John O'Kane, Boston: Brill, 2002 p. 559.

--from the Persian text of Afākī, Chapter 7, section 15 (p. 801, of Tāshīn Yazici's edition, 1961).

"our... friends and disciples" [ahbāb wa aṣḥāb-e mā]

"secure and flourishing" [īman wa khurām]

"the blessed sepulchral shrine" [torba-yé mubārak]

"Likewise, Mawlānā would frequently say: 'After this give Konya the title "City of the Friends of God," for every born person who comes into existence in this city will be a Friend of God. And as long as the blessed body of Bahā'-e Valad and his family line remain in this city, the sword will not be applied in this city and the enemy of the city will not succeed, but perish in the end. And Konya will be protected from the afflictions of the end of the world. Even now, if this city falls into ruin, it will be obliterated and despoiled, it will not be completely destroyed. Indeed, if it does fall into ruin, our treasure will still be buried there. As the poet' has said: 'Even if the Tatars destroyed the world through war./ The ruins would contain your treasure. Why be sad? In the end, spiritual people from the whole world will turn their faces in this direction and such joys will occur that the dead will yearn to rise, and our higher meanings and divine insights will take hold of the world.' And he also said: 'As long as there is a group who denies our family,' the people of this city will not find peace.'"

Afākī, trans. by O'Kane, p. 181

--Persian text of Afākī, Chapter 3, section 171 (section 169, p. 261, of Yazici's edition) "the City of the Friends of God" [madīna-yé awliyā]

"the poet: means Mawlānā, as quoted by Afākī"

"As long as there is a group who denies our family" [chāndān-ke dar shahr-e qūniya az munkir-ān-é khānādān-é mā qawmī bāsh- and]; more literally translated, "As long as there is a group of deniers of my family in the city of Konya"

"the people of this city will not find peace" [mardom-é īn shahr na-khwāh-ad āsūdan]

"Likewise, it is transmitted from the great among the virtuous disciples that in the time of Bājū Khān the city of Konya was besieged by a huge army. The inhabitants of the city one and all had recourse to Mowlānā. They beseeched him for help and appealed to him for assistance, saying: 'This is the time for mercy and affording protection.' Mowlānā replied: 'Do not be afraid! God Most High has bestowed you upon Shaykh Salāh al-Dīn.' Up to the arrival of the final Hour and the hour of the Resurrection this city will not be subjected to the slaughter and the sword of the Mongols. Whoever attacks Konya will not escape the thrust of our blow. And as long as the blessed body of the Great Master [Bahā'-e Valad]--God glorify his memory--is buried here in the earth, this kingdom will be protected and preserved from all afflictions. Moreover, this city will enjoy great fame throughout the world, and our descendants will always be safe here--if God is willing!"

--Afākī, trans. by O'Kane, p. 503

--Persian text of Afākī, Chapter 5, section 24

"Shaykh Salāh al-dīn: Mawlānā's first "chief disciple" (khalīfa), who was assigned to train the disciples to become dervishes

"the Great Master: refers to Mawlānā's father

Not surprisingly, there were legends that the spirit of Mawlānā miraculously protected the city of Konyā from the Mongols. Afākī tells a story of how the Mongols first encircled Konya, whose inhabitants became hopeless and begged for Mawlānā's help. He supposedly went out one of the gates of the city to the top of a nearby hill. The Mongols decided to attack him with arrows, but were miraculously unable to draw their bows. They mounted their horses, but the horses would not move forward. The inhabitants of Konya watched this and shouted, "God is Great!" The Mongol commander, Bājū tried to use his bow and horse with the same result, and then he declared: "That man in truth belongs to the Yarātghān." His anger must be avoided. In whatever city or province there is a man like this, those people will not be conquered by us." The Mongol commander spared the people of Konya (and other cities that submitted and offered large sums of money and other tribute) and ordered that the battlements (fortified walls) of Konya be torn down. When the people of Konya complained about this, Mawlānā said: "Let them destroy the battlements because it is assured for Konya's people that the city of Konya will be guarded and protected by another tower and curtain, not by this tower and battlement of stone which can be destroyed by a small cause and devastated by the least earthquake."

--Translated by O'Kane, p. 180 from Chapter 3, sections 169-70 of Afākī's work "Yarātghān: means "the gods."

Afākī tells a story of how, after Mawlānā's death, the Mongol ruler of the Seljuk state in Anatolia, Keyghātū Khān became angry over the killing of his ambassador and decided to kill all the inhabitants of Konya. He approached with a huge army. One night he had a dream in which Mawlānā came and began to strangle him and warned him to back off. He was extremely frightened and was weeping and shaking. He declared: "This city and this clime belong to Mowlānā, and whoever sets out to attack this region, no member of his lineage remains and he is destroyed."

--Translated by O'Kane, p. 230 from Chapter 3, section 257 of Afākī's work

In another place Afākī tells the same story differently: the Mongol ruler declared, "I also saw him in a dream last night. He was strangling me and saying: 'This city belongs to us! Now, oh Akhī,' I have adopted you as my father and I have renounced the bad intention I had. I have resolved not to cause trouble to the people of Konya and not to inflict harm on them." --Translated by O'Kane, p. 420 from Chapter 3, section 601 of Afākī's work

"Akhī: means "brother" in Arabic. This speech was supposedly directed to Mawlānā's son, Sūṭān Valad

PROPHECY #1: The following modern summary of this prophecy is clearly based on Afākī's stories:

"The people of Konya were greatly afraid. The Mongols had razed and burned every place they had passed through.... The elders of the city were in despair and appealed to Mevlāna for advice. Mevlāna replied, 'Don't be afraid. This city will be saved from the sword until the Day of Judgment. He who attempts to subject the city cannot be protected against our spiritual power. As long as the sacred body of Sultan 'A, i-Klema is buried here this land will be protected.'... Mevlāna was the spiritual support of Konya. Through him Konya was counted among the number of holy cities, and won honour throughout the east. On one occasion he said to his son Sultan Veled, 'As long as my holy Tomb, my fathers, ancestors, descendants, and those who love and befriend me remain in this city no enemy foot will tread upon this soil.'... --"Mevlana and the Whirling Dervishes," by Mehmet Oñder, Ankara: Güven Matbaası, 1977, pp. 178-79. Translated into English

COMMENT: Afākī's book is filled with miracle stories, of which few have any power to convince the modern reader. Obviously, Konya was not destroyed by the Mongols when they conquered the area during Mawlānā's lifetime. Most likely this was because the city of Konya and others in the region surrendered to the Mongol army and paid them great sums of money, cattle, horses, and other tribute. A second cause may have been the Mongols' own superstitious fear of destroying a town in which a great holy man lived. The miracle stories about how Mawlānā was able to prevent the Mongols from personally attacking him and of how, after his death, his spirit began to strangle the Mongol leader were clearly intended in order to "prove" that Konya was indeed under his spiritual protection.

The inhabitants of Konya were not slaughtered by the Mongols, but the prediction that "the hoof of a foreign mount will not enter" did not come true, since Mongol troops did enter the city. The prediction that the city would not be "entirely destroyed" came true, since the Mongols destroyed the walls and battlements of the city only. Konya continued under Mongol rule (via Seljuk regents appointed by the Mongols) for years after Mawlānā's death

Prophecies about "my tomb"

"There is also a true report that one day Mowlānā said: 'They will rebuild our tomb seven times. The final time a rich Turk will come forth and build my tomb with alternating bricks of gold and pure silver, and around my tomb a very big city will grow up and our tomb' will remain in the middle of the city.'"

--Afākī, trans. by O'Kane, p. 281

--Persian text of Afākī, Chapter 3, section 377 (section 348, p. 409, of Yazici's edition) "our tomb" [turba-yé mā]: means "my tomb"

"Likewise, Mowlānā would frequently say: 'After this give Konya the title "City of the Friends of God," for every born person who comes into existence in this city will be a Friend of God.... In the end, spiritual people from the whole world will turn their faces in this direction'...."

--Afākī, trans. by O'Kane, p. 181

--Persian text of Afākī, Chapter 3, section 171 (section 169, p. 261, of Yazici's edition)

"spiritual people from the whole world will turn their faces in this direction" [az tamāmat-é 'ālam mardom-é mā nawī rōy ba-d-īn-jānīb āwarda]; may also be translated, "from the entire world, spiritual people will turn their faces (and mounts and will travel) toward this direction."

"...one day Mowlānā said: 'Our companions will build our tomb high so that it will be visible from a great distance. Whoever sees our tomb from afar and has faith and puts trust in our Friendship with God.' God Most High will make him one of the number of the pardoned.' Especially if a person comes in perfect love, sincerity without hypocrisy, truth without metaphor, and certainty without doubt, and visits the tomb and performs prayers.' Moreover, every desire he has and asks for, God--He is sublime and exalted--will see that all his desires are fulfilled, that he attains his goals, and that he obtains his religious and his worldly quest."

--Afākī, trans. by O'Kane, p. 281

--Persian text of Afākī, Chapter 3, section 348 (section 347, p. 408, of Yazici's edition) "our Friendship with God" [walyāyat-e mā]

"the pardoned" [marḥūm-ān]

"and performs prayers [wa namāz gozār-ad]

PROPHECY #2: The following is an interpretation clearly based on Afākī's accounts:

"On one occasion he said to his son Sultan Veled,.... 'A time will come when my home will be in the centre of the city and it will flourish. Then wave upon wave of people will come to visit my Tomb...' These words are taken from an account of Mevlāna by Ahmed Efākī in his work.... These words of Mawlānā recorded by Ahmed Efākī were 600 years ago, are startling when one thinks of the Konya of today, so accurate was the prediction."

--"Mevlana and the Whirling Dervishes," by Mehmet Oñder, Ankara: Güven Matbaası, 1977, pp. 178-79.. Translated into English.

COMMENT: Mawlānā's tomb has been, and remains to this day, in the center of Konya, where it is more accessible to visitation. And Konya has been flourishing. However, Afākī did not quote Mawlānā as saying that great numbers would visit his tomb (in 1976 there were 400,000 Turkish visitors and 60,000 foreign ones; in 2004 there were 1,200,000 Turkish visitors and 200,000 foreign ones). Rather, the words quoted were: "In the end, spiritual people from the whole world" would travel in the direction of his tomb. It is true that people from all over the world do come to Konya to visit Mawlānā's tomb. The tomb was not rebuilt seven times--nor was it built with bricks of gold and silver, an unlikely prophecy to be made by such an ascetic saint and mystic.

Regarding the second quote from Afākī ("Our companions will build our tomb high..."), Franklin Lewis commented: "Most likely this report is a later fabrication circulated to justify the disciples' actions and to encourage pilgrims to visit the shrine, especially because, as we have seen, other reports conveyed by Afākī show Rumi opposed to receiving money from Tāj al-Dīn to expand the school." ("Rumi--Past and Present, East and West: The Life, Teachings and Poetry of Jalāl al-Dīn Rumi, 2003 revised edition, p. 427)

Prophecies about "my words"

"Likewise, Mowlānā would frequently say: 'After this give Konya the title "City of the Friends of God," for every born person who comes into existence in this city will be a Friend of God.... In the end, spiritual people from the whole world will turn their faces in this direction and such joys will occur that the dead will yearn to rise, and our higher meanings and divine insights will take hold of the world.'"

--Afākī, trans. by O'Kane, p. 181

--Persian text of Afākī, Chapter 3, section 171 (section 169, p. 261, of Yazici's edition)

"and our higher meanings and divine insights will take hold of the world" [wa mā 'ānī wa asrār-e 'ālam-rā forō gir-ad], may also be translated, "and our deep spiritual meanings and secrets will extend down and seize the world."

"There is also a true report that one day Mowlānā said: 'They will rebuild our tomb seven times. The final time a rich Turk will come forth and build my tomb with alternating bricks of gold and pure silver, and around my tomb a very big city will grow up and our tomb will remain in the middle of the city. At that time our Mathnavi will take on the role of a shaykh.'"

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--Persian text of Afākī, Chapter 3, section 347 (section 348, p. 409, of Yazici's edition)

"At that time our Mathnavi will take on the role of a shaykh" [wa dar ān zamān māṣnavī-yé mā shaykh-e kon-ad]; may also be translated, "And in that time our Masnavi will act (the part of) a sufi teacher [shaykh]"

"It is also transmitted that one day Shams al-Dīn, the son of Modares, was asleep in his room and out of thoughtlessness and negligence he had placed 'The Mathnavi behind his back. Suddenly Mowlānā came in and saw the book like that. He said: 'So these words of mine' came for this purpose, to fall into obscurity? By God, by God, from the place where the sun rises to the place where it sets," this meaning will establish itself, and it will go forth to the different climes" and there will be no gathering and assembly where these words are not recited"--to the point where it will be recited in temples and on stone benches, and all the nations will be dressed in the robes of this speech and will have their share in it."

--Afākī, trans. by O'Kane, p. 299

--Persian text of Afākī, Chapter 3, section 387 (section 388, p. 435, of Yazici's edition)

"these words of mine" [īn sokhan-é mā]: literally, "these words of ours"; means, "my words"

"--from the place where the sun rises to the place where it sets [az ān jā ke afāk sar mē-zan-ad tā ān-jā ke forō mē-raw-ad]; lit., "from the place where the sun strikes (its) head (up) to the place where it goes down"

"this meaning will establish itself" [īn mā nā khwāh-ad gerftan]: may also be translated, "The spiritual meaning (of the words) of the Mathnavi" will take hold and extend"

"and it will go forth to the different climes" [wa dar eqīm-hā khwāh-ad raftan]: may also be translated, "and it will travel to (all) the climates (or regions) (of the world)"

"and there will be no gathering and assembly where these words are not recited" [wa hich maḥfilé wa majma'è na-bāsh-ad ke īn kalām khwānda na-shaw-ad]; may also be translated, "And there will not be any meeting or gathering where these words will not be recited"

"to the point where it will be recited in temples and on stone benches [tā ba-jiddi ke dar mā'bad-hā wa miṣṭab-hā khwānda shaw-ad]; may also be translated, "to the extent that they will be read (out loud) in places of worship and on benches"

"and all the nations will be dressed in the robes of this speech and will have their share in it" [wa jāmi' -yé milāl az ān sokhan Hulāl pōsh-and wa ba-har dam-and shaw-and]; may also be translated, "And all religious communities will wear a garment (consisting) of those words continually."

A quatrain of Mawlānā's has been quoted by some as a prophecy about his words: "Those sweet words" that he spoke to each other Āre kept hidden in the heart of the domed sky; One day (that sky) will act as informer, like the rain, (And) our secrets" will grow up from (every) surface of the world."

--Mawlānā's Quatrain No. 1283 translated by Ibrahim Gamaral and Ravan Farhadi (from "The Quatrains of Rumi," an unpublished manuscript)

"those sweet words: ān khwosh sokhan-ān

"our secrets: sirr-e mā

"surface of the world: Sahr-e 'ālam

PROPHECY #3: The following is an interpretation clearly based on Afākī's accounts:

"On one occasion he said to his son Sultan Veled,.... A time will come when my home will be in the centre of the city and it will flourish. Then wave upon wave of people will come to visit my Tomb and my words will be forever on their lips.' These words are taken from an account of Mevlāna by Ahmed Efākī in his work. These words of Mevlānā recorded by Efākī who died 600 years ago, are startling when one thinks of the Konya of today, so accurate was the prediction."

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PROPHECY #4: The following is based on Dawlatshāh's account:

"Some time in thirteenth century Persia, a famous poet meets a precocious boy not yet in his teens and recognized something brilliant. 'Someday your words will be heard around the world,' he says. The poet was Attar, the boy Jelaluddin Rumi, and 700 years later that prophecy is coming true. Already vastly popular in the Islamic world, Rumi is now America's most read poet, in these words and in wicked days, his words are building a bridge over one of the great divides of our time."

--"A New Illuminated Rumi: One Song," by Michael Green, 2005, p. 6

COMMENT: Certainly, Mawlānā's words have been heard around the world and have set fire to many hearts. However, this prophecy can have no claim to authenticity because it was created 200 years after Mawlānā's death and is not in the earliest Persian sources.

PROPHECY #5: The following is an interpretation that appears to be based on Afākī's accounts:

"My name and my words will be told among the lovers, centuries after my death."

COMMENT: It is certainly true that Mawlānā's words have been told among lovers of God all these centuries after his death. However, there is no evidence that Mawlānā predicted that his name would be famous, or that it would be famous "centuries" after his death. Rather, his emphasis is clearly on his words of deep spiritual meaning--particularly his Masnavi. The version that "my words will be told among the lovers" is based on Afākī's accounts: (1) "spiritual people from the whole world will turn their faces in this direction... and our higher meanings and divine insights will take hold of the world"; (2) "All nations/religious communities will wear a garment (consisting) of those words continually"; (3) "there will be no gathering and assembly where these words are not recited" by people of "all the nations/religious communities" and in "every gathering and assembly"; (4) "our higher meanings and divine insights will take hold of the world..."; (5) "And in that time our Masnavi will act (the part of) a sufi teacher [shaykh]."

PROPHECY #6: The following appears to be an interpretation with some very slight connection to Afākī's accounts: "He says, 'I am the Sun. I will rise the West. And I will become a household word.'"

This may be related to the claim of another Mevlevi leader (the father of the one who claimed that Mevlana said "I will rise in the West"), who said: "Mesnevi was written seven hundred and fifteen years ago, and at that time Mevlana prophesied that the world of Islam is going to forget him. But years, centuries later, the Western world will appreciate him and understand him better. And this came true today. Even in Africa there are followers of Mevlana. Just as Gerald Ford is the President of the United States today, Mevlana is our President in Los Angeles." (Suleyman Hayati Loras Dede, mevlevi Shaykh from Konya, Turkey, speaking in today's Masnavi, California, 4/20/1976, audio recording [44:06 Turkish; 46:08 English translation], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-jPNZ2ZE0m0>).

COMMENT: Here, the emphasis is not on the endurance of Mawlānā's words, but on the fame of his name--predicated as becoming famous in the West (America and Europe). There may be an echo of two of Afākī's accounts: "There will be no gathering and assembly where these words are not recited" by people of "all the nations/religious communities" and in "every gathering and assembly"; "our higher meanings and divine insights will take hold of the world..."; (5) "And in that time our Masnavi will act (the part of) a sufi teacher [shaykh]."

PROPHECY #7: The following appears to be an interpretation with some very slight connection to Afākī's accounts: "He says, 'I am the Sun. I will rise the West. And I will become a household word.'"

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This may be related to the claim of another Mevlevi leader (the father of the one who claimed that Mevlana said "I will rise in the West"), who said: "Mesnevi was written seven hundred and fifteen years ago, and at that time Mevlana prophesied that the world of Islam is going to forget him. But years, centuries later, the Western world will appreciate him and understand him better. And this came true today. Even in Africa there are followers of Mevlana. Just as Gerald Ford is the President of the United States today, Mevlana is our President in Los Angeles." (Suleyman Hayati Loras Dede, mevlevi Shaykh from Konya, Turkey, speaking in today's Masnavi, California, 4/20/1976, audio recording [44:06 Turkish; 46:08 English translation], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-jPNZ2ZE0m0>).

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PROPHECY #10: The following appears to be an interpretation with some very slight connection to Afākī's accounts: "He says, 'I am the Sun. I will rise the West. And I will become a household word.'"

This may be related to the claim of another Mevlevi leader (the father of the one who claimed that Mevlana said "I will rise in the West"), who said: "Mesnevi was written seven hundred and fifteen years ago, and at that time Mevlana prophesied that the world of Islam is going to forget him. But years, centuries later, the Western world will appreciate him and understand him better. And this came true today. Even in Africa there are followers of Mevlana. Just as Gerald Ford is the President of the United States today, Mevlana is our President in Los Angeles." (Suleyman Hayati Loras Dede, mevlevi Shaykh from Konya, Turkey, speaking in today's Masnavi, California, 4/20/1976, audio recording [44:06 Turkish; 46:08 English translation], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-jPNZ2ZE0m0>).

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PROPHECY #11: The following appears to be an interpretation with some very slight connection to Afākī's accounts: "He says, 'I am the Sun. I will rise the West. And I will become a household word.'"

This may be related to the claim of another Mevlevi leader (the father of the one who claimed that Mevlana said "I will rise in the West"), who said: "Mesnevi was written seven hundred and fifteen years ago, and at that time Mevlana prophesied that the world of Islam is going to forget him. But years, centuries later, the Western world will appreciate him and understand him better. And this came true today. Even in Africa there are followers of Mevlana. Just as Gerald Ford is the President of the United States today, Mevlana is our President in Los Angeles." (Suleyman Hayati Loras Dede, mevlevi Shaykh from Konya, Turkey, speaking in today's Masnavi, California, 4/20/1976, audio recording [44:06 Turkish; 46:08 English translation], <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V-jPNZ2ZE0m0>).

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