

Mawlid falls in the month of Rabi' al-awwal in the Islamic calendar.

Shias observe the event on the 17th of the month, coinciding with the birth date of their sixth Imam, Ja'far al-Sadiq, and Prophet Muhammad while

Sunnis observe it on the 12th of the month.

The basic earliest accounts for the observance of Mawlid can be found in 8th century Mecca, when the house in which Prophet Muhammad was born was transformed into a place of prayer by Al-Khayzuran (mother of Harun al-Rashid, the fifth and most famous Abbasid caliph). Public celebrations of the birth of Muhammad did not occur until four centuries after his death. It was originally a festival of the Shia ruling class, not attended by the common people, with the first official Mawlid celebrations occurring in Egypt towards the end of the 11th century. The early celebrations included elements of Sufic influence, with animal sacrifices and torchlight processions along with public sermons and a feast. The celebrations occurred during the day, in contrast to modern day observances, with the ruler playing a key role in the ceremonies. Emphasis was given to the Ahl al-Bayt with presentation of sermons and recitations of the Qur'an. The event also featured the award of gifts to officials in order to bolster support for the ruling caliph.

The practice spread throughout the Muslim world, assimilating local customs, to places such as Cairo, where folklore and Sufic practices greatly influenced the celebrations. Saudi Arabia is the only Muslim country where Mawlid is not an official public holiday [Source](#)