

SWAHILI
ISLAMIC POETRY

BY

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VOLUME III

MI'RĀJ AND MAULID



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Al-Hamasa

The arabesque on the cover has been designed after one on a carved door-post that the author photographed in the Old City, Mombasa.



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CONTENTS

VOLUME I

Preface	IX
I. Introduction	I
1. The setting	I
2. The origins of Islamic culture on the Coast	2
3. Some notes on Swahili history	5
4. The sources of Swahili Islamic literature	9
5. Types of Swahili literature.	12
6. Swahili poetry	13
7. Metre: <i>hisarambe</i> and <i>ukawafi</i>	15
8. The transliteration of the texts and the spelling of literary Swahili	25
II. Mohammed and the Celebration of his birthday	31
1. Mohammed in Swahili Islamic legendary literature.	31
2. Mohammed's miracles	38
3. The Maulid celebrations.	41
4. <i>Maulidu'l-Barzanji nathran</i> , translation of Barzanji's Maulid in prose.	48
III. Cosmology of Swahili literature and oral traditions	61
1. Introduction	61
2. The Archangels	62
3. The prophets.	65
4. Supernatural beings	69
5. Spirits and superstitions	72
6. Exorcising the spirits.	80
7. Witchcraft and the evil eye	84
8. The soul and Paradise	87
9. Hell	95
10. The firmament	95
11. The Earth	97
12. The basis of legal concepts.	98
IV. The Maulid rhyming in <i>da</i> , Swahili translation by Mohammed bin 'Uthmān	102
1. Introduction	102
2. Text	104
3. Translation	105

CHAPTER EIGHT

MOHAMMED'S NOCTURNAL JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM AND HIS VISIT TO THE SEVEN HEAVENS AND TO HELL

INTRODUCTION

The *Miiraji*, Arabic *Mi'rāj*, is only briefly mentioned by modern Arabic biographers of Mohammed and European students of Arabic literature. It does not belong to the topics of 'high-brow' literature, but there are numerous booklets in post-classical Arabic which are not only found in bookshops all over the Islamic world, but which play an important part in the ceremonies connected with the cult of Mohammed. Mu'allim Yaḥyā Ali Omar, of Mombasa, writes me: "In the country of the Swahili, the tradition of the Miiraji which was written by Najmu'd-Dīn al-Ghaiṭiyy, is recited customarily and this story is not in verse (*nadhmu*), it is prose (*nathri*). The Sheikh (*shehe*) recites the Arabic words, and then translates it into Swahili, over a period of three nights from 24-26 Rajabu and on the 27th the Swahili keep a fast (*hufunga ṣaumu*)."

Najmu 'd-Dīn Al-Ghaiṭiyy (sic) must have had a special attraction for the Islamic peoples that his work is now accepted as a central piece in the ritual of the night of Mi'rāj, yet he is not even mentioned in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*. His prosework on the Mi'rāj has been translated into Swahili and provided with a very interesting *Kitangulizi* (Foreword) by the well-known Mombasa scholar Al-'Amin bin Aly, who also did the translation. He writes (p. 1): "The events of that night, when the Prophet was sent to the Holy House (*Baiti 'l-Mukaddasi*) and climbed up into Heaven, happened to him while he was awake, these were no happenings in a dream as some people think, because if it had happened in a dream, it would not have been decried as a lie by the unbelievers, for it is no miracle if a person dreams that he goes to far-away places or climbs up to Heaven. In this story it is mentioned how the Prophet reported it to the unbelievers among the Koreish, and this is how he left the house: After morning prayers that morning, he told his cousin Ummu Hani, with whom he was staying: "This night I have been sent to the Holy House, I came home this morning at daybreak, and I am now going to tell it to my friends." Ummu Hani, out of love and respect for the Prophet, and seeing that

harm would come to him, seized his garment and said: "Please do not go and tell your relatives, they will call you a liar, and those who are converted will revert to paganism (*ukafiri*).” The Prophet tore himself away from her with force and went out. Ummu Hani called her maiden and told her to go and follow the Prophet and see where he went, to hear what he would say and to come back and tell her. Nab'a, the slave girl, went out and saw the Prophet who was sitting in front of the Kaaba with Abu Jahli and others and telling them about his night journey. She went back and told her mistress what she had seen. This story shows how the Prophet wished to hide nothing that came from God, even if it would be the cause of being abused and harmed, and of being called a liar. This is clear evidence of the Prophet's honesty (*uaminifu*).

"There are people who deny the Miiraji and their argument is that it is impossible to climb up to Heaven. These are people without any religion, so we cannot speak with them (*hatuna maneno nao*), because having no religion at all, how will they believe in any religion? But if they are people with a religion, we tell them that such a Miiraji has happened to the prophets of the past and it is no wonder that it happened to the last of the prophets, our Lord Muhammad, because all these things were done by the Almighty and the Almighty gives to whom He wishes and is not asked why He acts thus. And the proof (*dalili*) that the Miiraji or something similar has happened to previous prophets is as follows:

1. *Jeneses* 3, 24 (sic; this is meant to refer to Genesis 5, 24). "Enokhu walked with God, after that he was no longer visible because God had taken him away." To these words the priest (*kasisi*) William Smith has said that God sent Enokhu to Heaven while he was alive so that disease, pain and death would not reach him. This is accepted by Jews, Christians (*Wamasihiya*) and Muslims."

2. Al-Amin then quotes the story of 2 Kings 2, 1-11 in which Elijah is taken up to Heaven by a chariot of fire (*gari ya moto*) and a whirlwind (*upepo wa kisulisuli*), and concludes: "These words too are accepted by Jews and Christians, and so it is clear that Elijah went to Heaven while he was alive."

3. The author then quotes St Mark 16, 19, in which Jesus "was received up into heaven and sat on the right hand of God". He comments that Jesus' ascension is accepted by Muslims, but not the Christian doctrine (Mark 14, 62) that he sat on God's right. An interesting point, not mentioned by Al-Amin, is that Jesus had already risen when he was received in heaven and the question arises whether he was alive in the normal sense of the word.

4. Paul's second letter to the Corinthians contains a mysterious passage (2 Cor. 12, 2-4) about a man who was "caught up into Paradise and heard unspeakable words", even the 'third heaven' is mentioned, as well as the question as to whether the man was 'in the body or out of the body'. Al-Amin concludes that this man too was sent up to heaven and that Christians believe in this story although the man was not even a prophet. Al-Amin might have added the visions of Ezekiel 1, 26, and of Isaiah 6, 1. Both prophets have a vision of God on His Throne, surrounded by His angels, visions which seem to be forerunners if not actual examples of the story of Mohammed, at least of some of its details. Al-Amin winds up his argument by saying that as these stories are found in the Bible they must be believed by all men, "except by those who follow no religion at all".

Al-Amin concludes his preface by saying that "Al-Ghaity's Miiraji is the only one recited in the towns of East Africa", and that he added nothing to it.

The text of the Miiraji presented here is the same as the one published in the journal *Swahili* 36/2, Dar es Salaam 1966, with kind permission of the editor. The text has been provided with diacritic marks, many corrections have been made in the translation, in the light of further research carried out since then, and, as will be seen, the notes to the translation are entirely new. The notes to the text and the *apparatus criticus* can be found loc. cit. pp. 105-107, 152-156. Certain parts of the introduction have been reprinted here because they seem to be relevant to Islamic literature. Some details can also be found in the fourth chapter of my *Traditional Swahili Poetry*, Leiden, Brill 1967.

As I have shown (*Swahili* 36/2, pp. 141-150), the Swahili versions of the legend are all remarkably close, with the exception of Dammann's, which is much longer and presents the episodes in a different order.

The Arabic prose versions of Barzanji and Ibn 'Abbās too are very similar in their treatment of the matter, and very close to the three Swahili versions I published. As these latter are all based on Al-Ghaity's, I will give here an analysis of his prose version in Al-Amin's translation.

1. The Prophet is asleep in the Hijri in front of the Kaaba, when three angels, Jiburili, Mikaili and one unnamed, lift him up and carry him to the well Zamzam, and lay him down on his back. It is said, adds Al-Amin in parenthesis, that the roof of Mohammed's house was split open and that Jiburili descended through it.

2. Jiburili opens Mohammed's breast from the dimple in his throat to his belly and tells Mikaili to bring a basin of zamzam-water to cleanse the heart with and make it gay. He takes out the heart, washes it three times,

and takes out the evil that was inside. After three basins of water, Mikaili brings Gabriel a golden vessel filled with wisdom and faith which the latter pours out into the heart, filling it with clemency, knowledge and Islam (*usilamu*). Finally he closes it and puts the seal of prophecy (*Muhuri wa Utume*) between Mohammed's shoulders.

3. Buraki is brought, saddled and bridled; she is a white animal, higher than a donkey and lower than a mule. When she climbs a hill, her hind legs stretch out, and when she climbs down, her front legs. She has two wings. She shows recalcitrance (*ushupavu*) and Jiburili tells her that she has never yet carried a nobler creature than the Prophet. She feels ashamed. In the past, the prophet Ibrahim rode her on his way to Mecca. Stanza 5d-9, on p. 243.

4. They set out, Jiburili holding the stirrup on the right and Mikaili holding the bridle on the left. They travel through a region with date trees and Jiburili tells Mohammed to dismount and pray, near Medina. They travel on, Buraki placing her hoofs each time as far as her eye sees. The second time Mohammed is told to dismount and pray, it is in Madyana, at the "tree of Musa", in Turi Sinaa, where God spoke to Moses. The third time, Mohammed has to pray in Baiti Laham where Isa, the son of Mariyamu was born, near the palaces of Syria. Stanza 10-12.

5. Travelling further they meet an *Afriti wa kijini*, a demoniac monster carrying a firebrand. Jiburili teaches Mohammed a formula to pronounce (*matamko*): "I take refuge (*najilinda*) with the Essence of the Almighty and His perfect Words (*matamko*) against which no good or bad being can transgress, I seek refuge against the evil that is in the earth and that which comes out of it, from the temptations (*maondo*) of night and day, from all sudden events, except the good happenings." The demon falls down prostrate and his firebrand is extinguished. Stanza 13.

6. They go on and see people planting one day and harvesting the next, and every plant is returned to its previous state. Jiburili explains: These people fought for the sake of the Lord, their reward is seven hundred-fold. Stanza 14.

7. Next comes the scene of stanza 15-17 [which I have discussed in *Swahili* 36/2, p. 143, and *Trad. Swah. Poetry*, p. 207-209]. The woman is called *msusi* or *msonzi*, a hair-plaiter, as one can see them at work anywhere in Africa. Firauni demands that the woman give up her faith (Islam) but she refuses. She is then put in a copper cauldron which has been placed over the fire. Her sucking infant son says: "Get in, mama, do not delay, for you are right."

8. They see people whose heads are broken and each time restored,

and so on, without ever stopping. They neglected the obligatory prayers. Stanza 18.

9. People with rags in front and behind are eating like camels and goats, feeding on the thorn trees of Dharii and the tree of bitterness Zakumu. They paid no *zakati* and the Lord did not wrong them at all. Stanza 19.

10. The people who leave good meat uneaten, but eat the raw and the rotten meat. Gabriel says: "This is the example of a man who has a good lawful wife but goes to a forbidden woman and lies with her, and of a woman who leaves her husband and goes to a forbidden man and lies with him until dawn." Stanza 20.

11. They come across a tree on the road which tears the clothes of whoever passes it. This is the example of people who intimidate others and hinder them on the road of God. Stanza 21.

12. The man who swims in a river of blood, swallowing stones all the time, is the example of the usurer (*alae riba*). Stanza 22.

13. The man who has collected a load of firewood but cannot carry it, yet he adds to it; he is the example of men who have deposits (*amana*) of others in their possession but cannot repay, yet they want to take more. Stanza 23.

14. The people whose tongues are being cut off, and their lips as well, with iron scissors, everything cut off comes back at once and is again cut off. They have preached dissent and sedition (*fitina*), they said things which they never did. Stanza 24.

15. The people with copper claws scratching their own faces open, are the example of the slanderers who break the reputations of others. Stanza 25.

16. The hole out of which a cow comes that cannot go back into it, is the example of a man who says a big word and then regrets it. Stanza 26.

17. A man calls out to Mohammed on the right, but Mohammed does not answer. If he had done so, his community would have become Jewish. Stanza 32.

18. Another man, calling from the left would have made the Muslims into Christians, if Mohammed had answered him. Stanza 33.

19. A woman with beautiful ornaments calls Mohammed. She is the World, and if he had reacted, his community would have forgotten the Hereafter. Stanza 34.

20. The next creature calling Mohammed is Iblisi, the enemy of God. Stanza 25.

21. An old woman calls Mohammed. She is the example of life in this world, for nothing will be left to us but old age and infirmity.

22. They arrive at the Holy House, Buraki is tied to the ring in the wall used also by the other prophets who tied her there previously. They enter the mosque through the Eastern gate. Jiburili leads Mohammed to the front row to take up his place as the leader of the prayers for all the prophets who were sent to Mankind before him. They all praise him and Ibrahim says: "You are better than any of us." Stanza 36-40.

23. Thirst seizes Mohammed and Gabriel brings him two cups, one with milk and one with wine; Mohammed chooses the milk. Gabriel says: "If you had drunk the wine, your community would have been lost." Stanza 41.

24. Now the *Miiraji* is brought by which the souls of the children of Adam climb up. It is made of silver and gold and beset with pearls. It comes down from the Garden of Firdausi. On both sides there are angels. Stanza 42.

25. The gate of the first heaven is called *Baitu'l-Hafādhā*, 'the Gate of Preservation'. Its ruler is Ismaili, and there are seventy thousand angels, each having an army of 70,000 under his command; they came to earth only in the night when the prophet died. Mohammed and Gabriel are admitted and see Adam who is shown all the souls of his descendants; when he sees a good soul, he says: "Place him in Paradise," and when he sees a bad one, he says: "An infidel soul, place him in the Fire." Mohammed smells perfume, which comes out of the right hand gate, and an awful stench from the left hand gate. Behind it he sees the adulterers (*wazinifu*) and usurers. Stanza 42-45.

26. In the second heaven they meet Jesus and John who resemble each other in dress as well as in the colour of their hair. Stanza 46-47.

27. At every gate Jiburili is asked whether Mohammed has been called to the prophecy, to which he replies: "He has now." In the third heaven, they meet Yusufu who is the most beautiful person Mohammed has ever seen. Stanza 48.

28. Idrisi resides in the fourth heaven. God has raised him to an exalted state. [In Dammann's version (p. 27), David and Solomon reside here.] Stanza 49-50.

29. In each heaven the same solemn ceremony of courteous greetings between Mohammed and the resident prophet is repeated. In the fifth heaven they meet Hārūn, whose long beard is half white and half black, hanging down as far as his navel. He is busy telling stories to the children of Israel. Gabriel says: "This is Hārūn the son of 'Imrān, whose people love him very much." Stanza 51.

30. Moses in the sixth heaven is surrounded by a very large community,

but before Mohammed has time to show his envy, Gabriel says: "Look up," and Mohammed sees his own community which number 70,000. Moses has a reddish complexion and long hair, as if he had two robes on. He says: "People say that I am holier than he, but Mohammed is holier before God than I am." Then he bursts into tears, and when asked about the reason, he says: "I weep because a young man has been given the prophecy after me and those who enter Paradise in his community are more numerous than those in mine." Stanza 52-55.

31. In the seventh heaven they meet Ibrahim seated in the gateway of Paradise on a golden throne, resting with his back against the *Baiti'l-maamuri*, which Al-Amin glosses as *Nyumba ya ibada* 'House of Worship'. Ibrahim tells Mohammed that he should admonish his community to plant trees in Paradise, "because its sand is nice and its land is wide". He goes on to explain that trees in Paradise are praises of God. Stanza 56-58.

32. Mohammed sees people with white faces like paper, and others with unclean faces who bathe in a river and come out with their colour a little purified, after which they go and bathe in another river, and in a third one, so that finally they may join their paper-white companions, having become equally white. Gabriel explains that the white people are those who never mixed their faith with disobedience (*maasiya*), and those with soiled faces are the ones who mixed good and bad deeds in their lives but later repented, and God accepted their repentance. The names of the rivers are: the first one is *Rahmatu'llahi* 'God's mercy', the second is *Ni'imatu'llahi* 'God's bliss', and the third is *Wasaqāhum Rabbuhum sharāban ṭahūran* 'Their Lord quenched them with a pure beverage' (Koran 76, 21). The Prophet is told that this is his place and these are his people (*umati zake*). He sees his people divided in two groups, some with paper-white clothes on, and some with ashy grey clothes on. Mohammed enters the House of Worship, together with his people, but those with the grey clothes on are prevented from entering. So the Prophet prays in the House of Worship with those who believe in him. The *Baiti'l-Maamuri* is so situated that if you dropped a stone from it, it would fall straight on top of the Kaaba in Mecca. Each day 70,000 angels enter the House of Worship for prayers, and none of them ever returns. Entering this House for worship after admission to Paradise, is the last duty every believer has to perform. Stanza 59-64.

33. "After this he was caused to climb the *Sidrati'l-Muntaha* (glossed as *Mkunazi wa mwisho*; Greenway¹ gives for *mkunazi zizyphus jujuba*).

¹ Dictionary of Plantnames.

Anything that comes from the earth ends here and is here received, and what comes from above is also received here. From under this tree there emerge four rivers of unpollutable water (*maji yasiyoharibika*) which never changes its sweetness; rivers of sweet wine and rivers of pure honey. The shade of the tree is so large that a man on horseback riding 70 years would not emerge from under it. Its jujubes are as big as waterbags (*viriba*), and its leaves are as large as elephants' ears; every leaf has its angel. By God's order the leaves can suddenly change their colours, from ruby-red to emerald-green, their beauty is such that no man can describe it. "It was here, near the Jujube tree, that Mohammed saw Gabriel in his true appearance: he had six hundred wings, each one reaching to the edges of the sky, and marvellous jewels scintillated in his wings, like pearls and rubies and gems which only God knows. Stanza 65-67.

34. "Afterwards they followed the river Kauthar until they entered Paradise and saw things which no human eye has yet seen, and things the thought of which never passed the human heart. On the gate was written: 'The reward for an alm is tenfold and the reward for a loan is eighteenfold.' Gabriel explained: "It is because a beggar may be begging although he already has something, but whoever asks a loan is in real need."

They went on and saw cupolas made of pearl and pomegranates as large as buckets and birds as large as camels. Mohammed asked: "Are these also blessed?" Gabriel answered: "Those who eat them are even more blessed, and I hope that one day you too will be allowed to eat them." Stanza 67-71.

35. "Mohammed was then shown the Fire of God's wrath and vengeance, so hot that if stones or pieces of iron were thrown into it, it would eat them all. He saw people in it who were not corpses, and he was told that they were the slanderers who had 'eaten' their fellow men. He saw Maliki the gatekeeper (*bawabu*) of the Fire, a most revolting appearance, his face contorted with anger. Mohammed greeted him, he answered, and shut the gate. Stanza 72.

36. Higher up the Tree, Gabriel had to return. Mohammed was covered by a multicoloured cloud. Here, just below the Throne, Mohammed met the brilliant appearance of the man who all his life repeated God's Names, and whose heart was in the mosque." [*Trad. Swah. Poetry*, p. 231-2.] Stanza 74-76.

37. Mohammed sees God and prostrates himself before Him. God says: "Ask what you like." Mohammed says: "Thou hast given Abraham purity (*usafiwa*) and a great kingdom to David, and mastery over the jinns to Solomon, as well as power over the winds, and Thou hast given the Gospel

to Jesus as well as the power of healing the blind and those stained with leprosy (*mbalanga*), and even the power of raising those who had already died at Thy command, and Thou hast preserved him from Satan." God answers: "I made you my favourite, I send you to *all* people, to announce Paradise and Hell, I made your heart gay and took away all your troubles, I exalted your name, so that I am not mentioned unless together with you. I made your community the best of all, the most righteous, and in the end no words of theirs will suffice unless they testify in your name; you are My servant and My Prophet, and I have granted to your community, that among them there will be men who will carry the good tidings in their hearts. You were the first prophet I created, you will be given the final message, and at the Judgement you will be judged first. I have given you the 7 miraculous verses which will be recited by all (*Fātiḥa*). I have also given you the final verses (Sura 2, 280-6) which stem from the treasure under the Throne (*hazina iliyo tini ya Arishi*), which I have not given to any other prophet. I have also given you the river Kauthar, the eight parts of Islam, the Hijra, the Holy War, the Sadaka, the fast of Ramadhani, to order good works and to prohibit evil." (Note that it is considered a privilege if one has the duty to order and to forbid one's fellow men, to tell other people their duty). Stanza 77-83.

38. Allah continued: "Since the day I created heaven and earth, I fixed fifty prayers for you and your community as a duty. And everyone who does not mix God's adoration with any other worship, will be forgiven even his mortal sins." And Allah gave him the last verses of the Koran (2, 254-286). The cloud travelled away and Gabriel seized him by the hand, and flew quickly away with him, past Ibrahim who said nothing, towards Moses who welcomed them: "What did you do, Mohammed, and what duties have you got?" Mohammed replied: "Fifty prayers a day." Moses told him: "Go back and ask for a reduction, because your community will never be capable of such a task. I have come to know people before you were born, they have no strength in their bodies or in their hearts." Mohammed turned to Gabriel, as if to ask his advice, and Gabriel said: "Yes, go back if you wish." Mohammed went back quickly up into the Tree, was again enveloped in the cloud, bowed and knelt, and begged for a reduction. (Etcetera, 9 times).

"Finally, the Almighty said: "You, Mohammed." He said: "At Thy service." "Now there are only five prayers, but it does not modify My original decision, and he who does the original number of prayers will receive tenfold reward." Stanza 84-91.

39. "They descended to the first heaven where they saw heavy clouds

of smoke and heard terrifying voices. Gabriel explained: "Those are the satans flying before the eyes of mortals so that they may not think of the kingdom of Heaven, and if these devils were not there, mankind would see great wonders." Stanza 92.

40. "On their return they overtook a caravan; one of the camels was laden with two bags, its skin was half white and half black. It shied, broke loose, ran away and stumbled so that it broke a leg. Another caravan had lost a camel that had been caught by another tribe. Mohammed greeted them and they said: "This is the voice of Mohammed." He arrived in Mecca at dawn. Stanza 93-95.

41. "The next day he met Abu Jahli who asked him if he had any new story to tell, with the purpose of mocking him. Mohammed said he had, and told him. Abu Jahli called all his friends, and Mohammed had to tell them his adventures. They swore by the idol Uzza that they did not believe him, except Abu Bakari *aş-Siddiki* (the Believer) who believed him. Stanza 96-101.

42. "The Meccan unbelievers challenged Mohammed to give them an accurate description of the Great Mosque (Baitu'l-Mukaddasi) in Jerusalem, which several of them knew from previous journeys. Mohammed was seized by great anxiety (*akashikwa na hamu kubwa*), but the mosque was brought close to him (*akakurubishiwa msikiti*), and was placed near the house of his brain (*nyumba ya akili*), so that he could look at it and answer the questions like: "How many doorways does it have?" (Of course none of the others could see it). So he could count the doors while looking at it. And they all said: "It is true, it is true." Stanza 102-104.

43. "Then they asked news about their caravans and Mohammed told them what he had seen. They asked him when the caravans would arrive and he said Wednesday. When the Wednesday arrived, the Koreish went out to wait for the caravan, but towards the end of the day it had not yet appeared. Mohammed prayed and God added a little to that day, the sun was checked until the caravan turned up. The travellers confirmed Mohammed's reports about the lost camels. So the Koreish called Mohammed a sorcerer (*mganga*). The Almighty sent down a verse of the Koran for this purpose: "We did not make you an example to hold up before people except in order to test them." Stanza 102-108. So far Al-Amin.

This legend is one of the central pillars of Islamic myth because:

1. In it Mohammed receives his mission personally from Allah, seeing Him eye to eye.
2. The five daily prayers—not in the Koran—are here incorporated in the system of duties instituted by God's personal order to Mohammed.

3. Mohammed is explicitly called the best of all the prophets by (the souls of) those prophets themselves, including Moses and Jesus, and even by God Himself.

4. God calls Mohammed his most beloved and first created creature, and adds: "My Name will not be called without yours; you will enter Paradise first, and your followers behind you, they are the best of all communities."

5. Mohammed's Koran is God's final and definitive message to Mankind.

6. Mohammed is shown Heaven and Hell and it is explained to him why their inmates are there, and what retribution they receive for which works.

7. All this provides the Mohammedans with the justification for their religion.

More than any other part of Swahili literature, the Miiraji represents the myth of Islam. It reflects the apotheosis of Mohammed, his elevation by God to the first place in the coherent system of His creation. And it is precisely for this reason, that the Miiraji gives at the same time a complete description of the extraterrestrial cosmos as it was then known, or imagined. Yet we must never think of the Miiraji as a beautiful tale of mystery and imagination. Both as a narrative of an episode—the most important episode—in the Prophet's life, and as a description of the universe, the Miiraji gives its readers *elimu*, useful knowledge. The existence of Paradise and Hell cannot be denied by a Muslim because they are repeatedly mentioned in the Koran which he must accept as God's true and immutable Word. In it God Himself says that He has created seven heavens in levels: *sab'a samawatin tibāqan*, 71, 15; 67, 3. In this one expression, the main concept of the celestial structure is basically laid down. The Miiraji, insofar as it is a description of the extraterrestrial spheres, is merely a commentary and an explanation of the divine Word. The majority of popular Islamic myths, such as the histories of the prophets, the descriptions of the tortures in Hell and the forecasts about the Last Day can be considered merely as elaborations of the succinct phrases of the Holy Book of Islam for the common people. The Koran as the one sure guide to universal truth, has shaped the world-view of the Islamic peoples for all times. The Miiraji does not give a symbolic allegory, it is the description of reality, and at the same time it places Mohammed in the very centre of Creation whereas God resides at the top.

The seven heavens are many times larger than our earth, and this reflects their relative importance. This vale of tears is but a house of transition, in which we are destined to stay for a brief spell, before moving on. If we endure the testing period successfully, we shall have a happy

rest in our graves until the Last Day dawns. After the Final Judgment every soul will be assigned a place according to its merits in one of the heavens, and dwell there to all eternity. The outer layers of the spheric universe will serve as a definitive domicile and this accounts for its gigantic dimensions. The hope, indeed the fervent desire, to reside for ever in the highest possible place, is the very motivation for every pious Muslim, to perform all the arduous tasks which the *shari'a* prescribes. Endless repetition of prayers, the more often the more meritorious, fasting even to the point of not drinking the whole day, a constant fear of meeting a pernicious temptation round the next corner, all this is suffered patiently for the sake of eternal peace and joy. A description of those joys and of the alternative tortures is therefore most relevant to the daily life of every Muslim. That is what makes it worth while.

The Islamic picture of the Universe is pre-copernican. The earth is in the centre, the sun is merely a lamp (Koran 76, 16) which God placed together with the moon in the zodiac (25, 61); it moves towards a fixed point (36, 38), along a calculated course (55, 5). Sun and moon worship God (22, 18), and will on Doomsday be overturned and 'collapsed'. This cosmology is immutable. A world-religion is based on it.

PRAYER

In this legend three major motifs are combined into one story, around which the 'flesh' of more or less detailed descriptions of episodes and personages can be arranged by every individual story-teller. The most prominent motif is the glorification of the Prophet, with two 'peaks', the climax of the story which is the vision of God—with his own eyes—and how he received his mission from the Almighty (the Throne is sometimes described but God never is); the other 'key point' of the nocturnal journey is the necessary recognition of Mohammed by all the other prophets of history, given in the form of a common prayer at which Mohammed is invited to serve as imām. This 'recognition scene' implies not only that Mohammed is the greatest of all prophets, but also that the Islamic salāt is recognized by all the prophets as the correct way of worshipping God.

The second motif is the description of the known world—from a scientific point of view the imagined world. The earth is a flat surface between the depths of Hell and the vaults of the sky. Above it, the skies are constructed in levels, but one can rise up through the middle, for the *miiraji* (or *kipandio*, a platform or a rung of a rope-ladder), is let down right through the centre from Abraham's mosque in the seventh heaven down to Jerusa-

lem. It is interesting to note here that Mohammed's volte-face from Jerusalem to Mecca as the focus for all Muslim prayers is still reflected in this contradiction of our Swahili data: If the heavenly Kaaba is perpendicular above the terrestrial Kaaba in Mecca, how can a ladder, let down from there, arrive in Jerusalem? The *isrā'*, Mohammed's night journey from Mecca to Jerusalem, was conceived by Mohammed in a period of history when the Jewish-Christian cosmology still prevailed, which placed Jerusalem in the geographical centre of the earth as the central sanctuary (the *Masjidul-Adnā*, 17, 1). It is on the Holy Rock (*ṣaḥra*) of Jerusalem that the Caller (*munādi*) will stand when God has ordered Israfil (Iserafili) to sound the Trumpet, to call all men to rise from their graves. It is to that one point that all human beings will be gathered on the Day of Gathering (*Maḥashara*) after their resurrection. Jerusalem (Ar. *al-Quds*, Sw. *Kudusi*) was the city of King David (Nabii Daudi) who received the psalms (*zaburi*) from God and was constantly praying before his lamp in the niche in this very 'mosque'. Abraham had tied his mount Burāk to its walls, before riding to Mecca on her. Jesus had preached here and healed the sick and the lame. It was therefore by necessity in this 'mosque' that Mohammed had to be recognized by all his predecessors as their *halīfa* (successor), their *imām* (religious leader), as well as the seal (*kifungo*) or keystone of the line of prophets, the one who was destined by God as the bringer of His ultimate Truth. In the course of his career, Mohammed arabicizes his religion, and the centre of the earth is shifted from Jerusalem to Mecca: all Muslims must turn to Mecca when praying. This direction (*qibla*, Sw. *kibula*) is logically connected with the Miiraji.

It was from Jerusalem that Jacob (Yaakubu) saw the ladder to heaven (Genesis 28, 12), and called out: "This is the House of God and the Gate of Heaven (28, 17). The term 'House of God' (*Bait-Allahi*) is now used by Islamic writers in Swahili as another name for the *Masjidul-Ḥarāmi* in Mecca. The very expression 'the angels of God ascending and descending' (Gen. 28, 12) occurs in Swahili poetry, in allusions to the angels in Heaven (*hupanda na kushukia*). At the time of Mohammed there was, of course, no mosque but a Christian cathedral on the Rock of Solomon.

The change of direction is discussed in the Koran 2, 142-152. Although East and West belong to God (2, 115), and He is vast, so that wherever man turns, there will be His face (ib.), yet it is now decided that all prayers must be directed towards the *Masjidul-Ḥarāmi* because: "We have made you a community of the middle" (or: 'a central church' *ummatan wasatan*, 2, 143). From now on, Mecca is the centre of the lower universe, to which all believers must direct their prayers. After formu-

lating for themselves the *nia* 'intention' they must shut out from their minds all other thoughts and concentrate on God alone. And so every prayer becomes a journey to Mecca in the spirit, and thence an ascension to God, the only One to whom prayers may be directed. Yet God is all-embracing *Al-Muḥīṭu* (2, 18; 3, 120; 4, 108; 4, 126; 8, 47; 11, 92; 41, 54; 85, 20). It is here that the three major motifs of the legend of the Miiraji coincide: the ascension to God, the institution of the salāt, and the prayer in the mosque with the other prophets. Mecca is the centre of the earth, straight above it is the celestial mosque, straight above that is the Throne. The prayer of the faithful on earth is in theory an imitation of the prayer of the 70,000 angels in the House of Worship in the seventh heaven. The number is the same as the supposed number of the faithful on earth. The celestial cock (Dammann, *Dichtungen*, p. 22) crows every day at the right time for the morning prayer. Mohammed was the *imām* in the celestial mosque as well as in the mosque of Jerusalem; he is the religious leader of the prophets and the angels, so he is *a fortiori* a leader of men. Life in the seventh heaven is not only the ideal for the future, it is already the ideal way of life, to be copied by all pious Muslims, here on earth. In this manner, Paradise becomes a meaningful concept for the present day as well as for the remote future, and it is this legend which links the two periods, because it relates how Mohammed was the first and the last man to be shown all the regions of the heavens in order that he might tell his people how the celestials live and pray. Life on earth must be a replica of life in Heaven, just as the structure of the universe is such that the earthly sanctuaries are replicas of the heavenly ones. This imitation of worship as it is in Heaven, is itself the *ṣirāt*, the road to Paradise, mentioned in the Koran in this very connection: 2, 142. We must conclude that the *ṣirāt* leads straight up from earth to heaven and so it is rather a stairway than a bridge, and the easiest way to climb it after Judgment is to have prepared oneself for it during one's life on earth; the more one concentrates on the ascent, the easier it will be once the time has arrived.

The second motif, the description of the universe, is disappointing from a Western point of view because it gives only the theological and prophetic universe, not the astronomical firmament. In this respect, the Miiraji gives a pre-aristotelian view of the cosmos, with no mention of the planets; the celestial bodies are no more than playthings for their Creator, it is not really worth while to study their stations and movements. Whims of the Almighty have not yet been replaced by laws of Nature. The sky is full of His saints and prophets.

The third motif, the salāt, is perhaps the most important. God tells His

Prophet that the shahāda, the first pillar of Islam, will contain both their names, and that all Muslims must pray 50 (reduced to 5) times a day. These are the only pillars that are incumbent on every adult Muslim, man or woman. The ritual prayer is by far the most prominent aspect of Islamic ritual in particular, and of all behaviour of Mohammedans in general. The Miiraji is the guidebook for the spiritual journey, the *Imitatio* of Mohammed. It is here more than in any other aspect of life that Mohammed is the guide on the road to salvation and to *wuṣūli*, union with God. The seven levels of heavens are seven stages of perfection in which the adept must achieve the seven virtues, which are associated with seven prophets. The first stage is penitence (Adam) and the highest is worship (Abraham). Mohammed's place is at the top of the Lotus Tree of the End, where Dante places his Rosa Mystica, the circular arrangement of the souls of the faithful, enraptured in contemplation of the *visio beatifica*; this unfolded flower of souls grows at the Tree of Life, for that is none other than the Lotus Tree of Paradise.

Before a soul can become a petal of the Rose, it has to be purified in the *Haudhi*, a pond along the river Kauthar. Purification means cleansing of the sins, the first one of which is unbelief (*kufr*).

A long evolution has made the Arabic narrative of the Mi'rāj into the elaborate story we have before us, of which the Swahili versions are fairly accurate and complete translations. Some motifs which may have been essential to the story in its Byzantine or Middle Persian form, are here present only in rudimentary form, so that we have to guess the original significance; other aspects have been rectified until they were in line with Islamic doctrine. The firmament is imagined as a gigantic theatre or concert hall, with a ground floor, and the balconies and *loges* in seven levels above it, the sun, the moon and the stars hanging like lustres and chandeliers from the ceiling. The stairway to heaven is in the centre, leading straight up to Paradise and beyond that to the foot of the Throne. On the ground floor the stage is set for the human comedy. Darkness reigns in the basement, all the light comes from above. All things on earth are perishable, but the skies are eternal and immutable. Even time seems illusory, for what is expected on earth at the end of the world, is already taking place in heaven: the souls being purified, being admitted to Paradise and rejoicing, although they ought still to be in their graves. The outer immovable world is the real one, the vale of tears below is an illusion. Suffering will pass. Only the meaningful is real.

UKAWAFI WA MIIRAJI
BISIMILLAHİ ARRAHAMANI ARRAHİMİ

1. Nanza kunudhumu kwa isimu yake Karima
Mola mu'adhamu mtukufu mwenyi rehemu.
Hazina ukomu swifa zake mwenyi 'adhama
Şala na salamu na mbawazi zendee T'umwa.
2. Na alize thumma na şahaba tuwaşalie
Tunali miradi maongoni mwao tungie.
Siku ya kıyama wasimame watuombee
Tupate wokovu siku nzito ya Jahannama.
3. Basi, nikomile, sikithiri muno dibaji,
Kwani nina mambo nayapenda kuyađiriji.
Ni hađithi ngema ya usiku wa Miiraji.
Yake mwenyi jađa, mupandishwa juu la sama.
4. Ilipowađia Mola wetu kudhihirisha
Jađa ya Nabia Jiburilu alimushusha.
Alipomwendea, alilele, kamuamusha:
Ondoka silale, Mola wako akwita hima.
5. Alipoamuka muombezi wakapasua
Kifua na nyongo zođe ghashi wakaziđoa.
Wakisha kushona kana kwamba hakupasua.
Uwene Buraki mbele zake amesimama.
6. Jiburilu kamba: Mola wako akusallimu
T'umiwe kukwita kwenda nawe kwake Karimu.
Upande Buraki wende hima uđakađamu!
Buraki katupa Jiburilu katakallama:
7. Simkengeuke kipendo kye Mola Karimu!
Kamba: mkonowe ushishie muwi şanamu.
Ndipo k'akataa kunishika yake jisimu
Jiburilu kamba: mtukue kipendo kyema.
8. Kamba: mariđaba, kutukua ndio ađabu
Nami nayajua, yanelea yenyi thawabu.
Bali nina yambo nami kwake naliđulubu
Dhamana ya p'epo kuniweka mađala pema.

4 b. *Jaha*, Ar. *jāha*, is God's special gift to Mohammed, his destiny. The word can mean 'lucky star, good luck, talent (in the special meaning it has in the Gospel), honour'. In Swahili poetry it is exclusively used with reference to Mohammed.

THE POEM OF THE LADDER

- 1 a. I begin to compose my poem with the name of the generous God,
b. the exalted Lord, holy and merciful.
c. There is no end to the praises of Him that hath greatness.
d. Prayers and pious greetings may go to the Prophet.
- 2 a. And also to his family and companions, let us pray for them;
b. we have the wish to enter their ranks (in Paradise),
c. on the Day of Resurrection, that they may rise and pray for us,
d. so that we may be saved on the difficult day of Gehenna.
- 3 a. Enough, I have finished, I will not extend the foreword too much,
b. because I have some matters I want to present in poetic form.
c. It is the good legend of the night of the ascension
d. of the honoured one who was allowed to climb up to heaven.
- 4 a. When the time had come (for) our Lord to reveal
b. the future vocation of the Prophet, He sent down Gabriel.
c. The Prophet slept; he went to him where he was and woke him up:
d. "Rise, do not sleep, your Lord calls you, quick!"
- 5 a. When the Intercessor woke up, they opened
b. his breast and took out all evil and dishonesty.
c. When they had finished sewing it, it was like not having been
opened.
d. He saw Burāk standing in front of him.
- 6 a. Gabriel said: "Your Lord sends you greetings.
b. I have been sent to call you, to go with you to where God is.
c. Mount Burāk and go quickly, proceed!"
d. Burāk shied, Gabriel spoke:
- 7 a. "Do not turn away from him! (He is) the Beloved of the generous
God!"
b. (But Burāk) said: "His hand held an abominable idol.
c. Therefore I refuse to be grasped by Him."
d. Gabriel spoke: "Carry the good Beloved one."
- 8 a. She said: "I accept; to carry (him) is good behaviour (for me).
b. I know that, it is clear to me, that a reward is connected with it.
c. But I have a request which I would like to submit to him:
d. a guarantee of Paradise, that (he may) put me in a good place."

6 d. *Kutuđa*, lit. 'to jump up, to throw oneself,' said of horses.

9. Buraki kuona mambo yake yote kutimu
Kumudhamania muombezi wake Karimu.
Akanika kiwa kwa furaha na tabasamu;
T'umwa kamupanda akaomba Mola Karima.
10. Kwenda-kwe Rasuli akafika pake Mađina
Jiburilu kamba: shuka hapa mwombe Rabbana.
Şali taraka'i raka'ati mbili za suna
Kisha umtaye Mola wako matayo mema.
11. Kisa wakenenda wakafika Ŧuri Sinina,
Jiburilu kamba: řali hapa T'umwa Amina.
Ndipo pa-munāja wake Musa buni 'Amrana
Palikuwa shani ya maneno yake Kađima.
12. Kisa wakenenda wakafika Beřilařamu
Alipozaliwa T'umwa 'Isa buni Maryamu.
Jiburilu kamba: řali hapa uřakađamu
Muombe Rabbuka sapa ndipo mařala pema.
13. Kisha wakenenda wakaona jinni shađiđi
Na kinga kya moto kumulika T'umwa Sayyiđi.
Jiburilu kamba: soma đua, omba Wađuđi;
T'umwa akasoma, 'ifuriři likazizima.
14. Kisha wakenenda, mambo mangi wakayaona,
Wakaona watu, wakiyaa p'unde huvuna.
Jiburilu kamba: watu sao mujahiđina;
Wendao jiađi wajaziwe majaza mema.

- 9 c. *-nika*, from *-inika*, cp. the reversive *-inuka*, 'to rise up', *-ina* 'to bow'.
- 10 a. His place is actually his grave: Mohammed is told to pray on the site of his own future grave, which is destined to be a holy place.
- 11 c. *Munāja* 'secret confidences' refers to God's revelations to Moses near the Burning Bush (Exodus 3, 5). Because the Lord manifested Himself there, the place is sacred, also for Muslims (Koran 28, 30).
12. The Burning Bush, or the Tree, as it is called in Islamic tradition (*řhajara*, Koran 28, 30; the place is called the Sacred Valley *Wādi'l-Muřaddas*, 20, 12; 79, 16), was the same tree from which Moses cut a stick 'ařā with which he later struck the sea so that it split (Koran 26, 63).
- 12 a. It was believed that Bethlehem was a big city in Syria.
c. *uřakađama* could be interpreted to mean: 'that you may be the first one'.
d. The place where Jesus was born is the third of the three holy places at which Mohammed is told to pray; these represent the three major prophets of history: Moses, Jesus and Mohammed.

- 9 a. Burāk saw all her requests granted.
b. the Intercessor of the generous Lord God guaranteed it to her.
c. And she bowed her head with joy and smiled;
d. the Prophet mounted her, praying to his Lord God.
- 10 a. The Prophet set out and arrived in Medina, his place (where he would be buried).
b. Gabriel said: "Dismount here and pray to our Lord.
c. Pray and kneel down two times as is customary,
d. then you will mention your Lord's name with proper recitations."
- 11 a. After that they went and arrived at the mountain Ŧūr in Sinai.
b. Gabriel said: "Pray here, trustworthy Prophet.
c. This is the place of (God's) communication with Moses, son of Amran;
d. Here was the Glory of the words of the Everlasting God."
- 12 a. After that they went and arrived in Bethlehem,
b. where Jesus, the son of Mary, was born.
c. Gabriel said: "Pray here, stand in line (for prayer).
d. Pray thy Lord here for it is a good place."
- 13 a. After that they left and saw a terrible demon,
b. with a burning log to set the Lord Prophet alight.
c. Gabriel said: "Recite a formula (a chapter from the Koran), pray to thy Lord."
d. The Prophet recited (a prayer), and the demon was extinguished.
- 14 a. After that they went and saw many things.
b. They saw people who were sowing, and they reaped a short time later.
c. Gabriel said: "These people are the soldiers of the Holy War,
d. they who go to war in order that they may be rewarded with good rewards."

- 13 d. 'The demon was extinguished', so that we are led to assume that the demon was himself the fire and indeed the formula is supposed to protect one's house against fire of any kind. For the text of this magic formula see *Swahili* 36/2, p. 153.
- 14 d. It is believed that the souls of those who are killed in the Holy Wars will go to Paradise without having to wait in their tombs for the Day of Judgment. This belief is based on Koran 3, 169: 'Do not reckon those who died on the Way of God as dead, no, they are alive with their Lord and receive sustenance.'

15. Kisha wakenenda wakanuka 'arufu njema,
Jiburilu kamba: ni 'arufu ya mke mwema.
Kimushana nywele mke 'asi asyo huruma
Binji Firauni kafiri-mbi asyosilima.
16. Siku ye kitana kikanguka akala'ini
Binji kanena wala'ini baba kwa nini?
Hali una Mola mwengineuwe wamubaini.
Kamba Mola wangu ni Muumba nti na sama.
17. Habari zikenda Firauni akasikia
Akawakusanya mke mwema na wana pia
Ndani mwa mafuta moto ndani mwa şufuria.
Ndio 'arufu-ye inukayo ya watu wema.
18. Kisha wakenenda wakaona watu dhamima
Wakipondaponda vitwa vyao nyundo za chuma.
Jiburilu kamba: ni wazito wa şala kwima
Hawana wakaŋi, şala zao haziwi ŋama.
19. Kisha wakaona watu wawi mbele na nyuma,
Wana vitambaa vya ziraka wala Zaŋuma.
Jiburilu kamba: watu sao si watu wema
Hawaŋi zaka, mali yao ya Jahannama.
20. Kisha wakaona watu wawi wakila nyama
Mbiŋi, wakiwaŋa nyama mbivu ilio ngema.
Jiburilu kamba: ni wazinzi walipokoma
Wake na waume wazingao wasiokoma.

- 15 d. *Kusilima* 'to surrender, submit', equals the Arabic infinitive *islām* 'submission, surrender', i.e. to God (Koran 6, 71; 22, 34; 40, 66); the faithful are submitted (*muslimūna*: 27, 81).
- 17 d. See for this history my *Traditional Swahili Poetry*, p. 209. Evil is associated with a bad smell, just as virtue is with a pleasant fragrance like perfume. The woman's name is given as Fānah or 'Āsiya, or Māshiŋa 'hairdresser'. She stepped into Pharaoh's boiling oil because she would not adore him.
- 18 c. It is essential to rise just before dawn to perform the *şalaŋi - asubuŋi*, the most important of the five daily prayers; sleeping is in any case strongly discouraged in Islam. The morning is the time to ask forgiveness (Koran 3, 17); woe unto those who neglect their prayers (107, 4-5); the *şalat* at night is strongly encouraged: 17, 79; 20, 130; 50, 40; 73, 2, 20. Vigils are still a frequent form of worship.
- 19 b. Those who were too miserly to pay their *zakāt* ('social welfare tax', see R. Levy, *The Social Structure of Islam*, Cambridge 1962, p. 160, 249), because they preferred to go well-dressed, are punished by being clothed in rags in the hereafter; moreover, they have to eat the Zaŋoom (Koran 44, 44), a tree the fruits of which will boil in the stomachs of the damned like molten metal.

- 15 a. They went on and smelled a good smell. Gabriel said:
b. "It is the fragrance of a good woman.
c. She combed the hair of a rebellious pitiless woman,
d. a daughter of Pharaoh, the bad infidel who had not surrendered.
- 16 a. "(One) day the comb fell and she cursed.
b. The princess said: "Why do you curse father?
c. If you have another God, please explain Him."
d. She (the woman) said: "My God is the Creator of earth and heaven."
- 17 a. "The news went to the Pharaoh and he understood.
b. He collected the good woman and all her children as well,
c. in boiling oil inside a cooking pot;
d. and this is the good smell that rises from good people."
- 18 a. After that they went on and saw unpleasant people,
b. beating their heads with iron hammers.
c. Gabriel said: "They are the ones who found it heavy to rise for prayer,
d. they had no time, their prayers were not complete."
- 19 a. After that they saw bad people,
b. having rags in front and behind; they were eating Zaŋoom.
c. Gabriel said: "These people are not good.
d. They did not pay the taxes for the poor, their wealth was for Hell."
- 20 a. After that they saw bad people, eating
b. raw meat, and they left the well-cooked meat uneaten.
c. Gabriel said: "Those are the adulterers when they have ended
d. (their lives), women and men who are going around endlessly."

- 19 d. Wealth collected on Earth must be given away to the poor on Earth where it is needed; in the hereafter it can only harm its possessor. Keeping money for oneself is greed, spending it for oneself (*kula fedha* 'to consume money', lit: 'to eat silver') will be punished by having to eat it in molten form, glowing hot.
- 20 d. *Kuzinga* 'to turn round, like a whirlwind'; Sacleux gives also: 'rôder la nuit avec des mauvais desseins (sorcier); commettre l'adultère'. The deverbial noun *mzinzi* 'adulterer' appears to be a direct derivative from this verb. The connecting association is that people (but especially women) who wander about at night, have the power to bewitch (cp. *kuzingua* 'désensorceler') and so to force their victims to have intercourse with them; seduction is seen as the result of witchcraft, and those who seduce others to commit sins are agents of Satan. For the association between raw meat and unmarried women, see my *Trad. Swah. Poetry*, p. 211, where the association is between rotten meat and adulterous women. In Dammann, *Dichtungen* p. 16-17, an assortment of tortures is enumerated for women who have committed varieties of adulterous sins.

21. Kisha wakanenda wakaona mti ndiani
Kupasua nguo apitaye hana amani.
Jiburilu kamba: ni wakazi wa vingojoni
Waṭṭindao ndia, jaza yao ni Jahannama.
22. Kisha wakenenda wakaona mto wa damu
Muna watu ndani wangilia wakila sumu.
Jiburilu kamba: watu sao wala haramu;
Ndio jaza yao wajaziwa kesho Kiyama.
23. Kisha wakenenda wakaona mutu dhalili
Huṭaka jitweka haiwezi tweka thaḱili,
Kuzidia tena kuongeza haihimili;
Jiburilu kamba: ni amana katika dhima.
24. Kisha wakenenda wakaona watu shaḱiya;
Wakikaṭwa ndimi kwa maḱasi zikirejea.
Ndio hali yao wakaṭwapo ndimi kumea.
Jiburilu kamba: ni waongo wasyo kalima.
25. Kisha wakenenda wakaona watu shururi;
Wapapura nyuso kwa makucha yao ṣufuri.
Jiburilu kamba: ni wambao watu jairi.
Siku ya Kiyama nyuso zao hazina nyama.

- 21 c. *Wakazi wa vingojoni*, 'the sitters in the waiting places, who cut (sic) the way', are without doubt the prostitutes waiting for their prey. This on the strength of the Arabic versions of Naqshabandī and Barzanji (see my notes in *Swahili* 36/2, p. 144). Neither the Swahili version, nor the Koran is explicit on this point. The Koranic text (7, 86) refers to the people of Madyān to whom the prophet Shu'ayb had been sent; apparently they blocked his way and hindered him and his adherers in the performance of their religious duties. Presumably the moral of the episode is that those who prevent others from worshipping Allah will in Hell become entangled in the thorny branches of a tree standing in the middle of the road.
- 22 c. There are several explanations possible for this verse. Firstly, that these are the people who have eaten forbidden food during their lives; this would refer primarily to pork, but it might also be an allusion to drinking wine, hence the allegory of the river of blood. Secondly, it has been explained as the punishment for the misers and money-lenders who 'squeeze the blood' of their victims. I think now however, that the most probable interpretation is that these sinners have eaten meat that was not ritually slaughtered and so have eaten animal blood, which is poison because the blood contains the 'spirit' of the animal. In Swahili country, raw blood is drunk only by witches who in this way incorporate the spirit of the animal. Witchcraft is a mortal

- 21 a. After that they went and saw a tree on the road,
b. that tore off clothes; whoever passed had no peace.
c. Gabriel said: "They are those who sit at the waiting places,
d. they block the way, their reward is Hell."
- 22 a. After that they went on and saw a river of blood,
b. there were people in it, they went in and ate poison.
c. Gabriel said: "Those people have eaten forbidden food;
d. This is their reward, with which they will be rewarded tomorrow,
on the Day of Resurrection."
- 23 a. After that they went and saw a humiliated man.
b. He wanted to take up a load (on his shoulders), but he could not
lift it, (it was) too heavy.
c. He tried again, increasing it, but he could not carry it.
d. Gabriel said: "That is lending on pawn."
- 24 a. After that they went and saw unhappy people,
b. their tongues were being cut with scissors, but they (the tongues)
came back.
c. That is their condition, when they have cut their tongues off, they
(the tongues) grow again.
d. Gabriel said: "They are the liars who do not have Reason."
- 25 a. After that they went and saw wicked people;
b. Scratching (their) faces with claws of copper.
c. Gabriel said: "They are the people who are unjust.
d. On the Day of Resurrection their faces have no flesh."

- sin since it means making use of the magic powers of Satan. For the other exegeses see my notes quoted above and *Trad. Swah. Poetry* loc. cit.
- 23 d. *Amāna* 'trust, earnest, security, deposit, object given for safe keeping'. *Dhima* 'Contract, caution, guarantee, safeguard, responsibility, protection'. See the *Encyc. of Islam*, s.v. So, *amana katika dhima* must mean 'a deposit as a safeguard'. The moneylender-on-pawn will have to try and carry all the pawns he took during his life from his victims. The obvious implication is that he will have to try and carry them across the Hell-bridge into Paradise.
- 24 d. The liars are of course those who say anything that is contrary to Islamic doctrine, and so their words are seditious and therefore equivalent to rebellion against God and disobedience to His words.
Kalima 'discourse, reason, philosophy'.
- 25 c. *Jairi* 'unjust, oppressor'. Comparing this version of the Miiraji with the others (*Trad. Swah. Poetry*, p. 213, *Swahili* 36/2, p. 144) 'unjust' refers to unjust words, these people are the slanderers and calumniators who 'deface' their fellow men; also the quarrelsome people who abuse their neighbours.

26. Kisha wakaona t'undu ndogo kama kunazi,
Akaṭoka ng'ombe kurejea tena ḥawezi;
Jiburilu kamba: anenaye asomaizi,
Hunena maneno akayuta yanḍa kiuma.
27. Kisha wakenenda wakaona wangwa ṭawili
Na sauṭi njema na 'arufu isyo mithali.
Jiburilu kamba: sikiliza T'umwa Rasuli
Sauṭi ya p'epo yalingana Mola Karima.
28. Rabbi nawaṭaka watu wangu nawaṭamani.
Ni neema nyingi nawangoja wayao lini.
Mola kamwambia: ni wako-we kulla mumini.
Wake na waume uwaḍai nyingi neema.
29. Kisha wakenenda wakaona wangwa wa ḥari,
Na sauṭi mbaya munkari kama ḥimari,
Na 'arufu mbaya, kaḥimili mwenyi ṣaburi.
Jiburilu kamba: ni sauṭi ya Jahannama.
30. Yalingana Rabbi nauzika kwa nyingi ḥari:
Nataka shururi watu wangu, watu wa nari.
Mola kamwambia: ni wako-we kulla jabbari,
Wake na waume wa'asiyo Mola Karima.
31. Kisha wakenenda wakaona nguzo ya nuri
Imeṭukuliwa na malaki wake Bashiri.
Jiburilu kamba: wamuriwe kuikariri
Nguzo ya imani kuiweka nṭi ya sama.
32. Kisha wakenenda kasikia mutu kinadi;
T'umwa kanyamaza asitike yake miradi.
Jiburilu kamba: we ṣabie ndiye Yahudi.
Lau utishile umaṭio wawe kama.

26 c. In contrast to the preceding stanza, these people have spoken rashly, without discernment (*kumaizi*) and soon regretted what they had blurted out. To control one's tongue (*katawala ulimi*) is a virtue one finds advocated in all Swahili books on good behaviour. Presumably those who neglected this advice will be squeezed through their own mouths like a bull through a hole as small as a jujube fruit. Or is it just an allegory?

27-30. Heaven and Hell are, like the Earth, the Grave and the Pen, creatures of God with a personality of their own who can speak with a human voice. Contrary to Man, they are all obedient servants of the Lord, and are desirous to fulfill the purpose for which they were created. If only men could understand their language they would hear the warning. Note that the contrast is: the faithful believers (*mu'mini*) as against the tyrants and oppressors (*jabbari*). Faith, a religious virtue, is rewarded with Paradise; tyranny, a moral vice, is punished with hellfire. An emotional attitude in the one case, misbehaviour against one's fellow men in the other.

- 26 a. After that they saw a small hole as big as a jujube.
b. A cow came out and wanted to go back again but could not.
c. Gabriel said: "He who speaks without discernment.
d. He speaks words, then he regrets them (because) they begin to sting."
- 27 a. After that they went on and saw a vast plain,
b. and (heard) a pleasant voice, and (perceived) unequalled smells.
c. Gabriel said: "Listen, Messenger-Prophet:
d. The voice of Paradise that speaks to God Most Generous."
- 28 a. (The voice said:) "Lord, I want many people, I long for them.
b. I am great beatitude, I wait for those who will come... when?"
c. God told him: "Yours is every faithful person,
d. women and men for whom you claim great happiness."
- 29 a. After that they went and saw a plain of heat,
b. and the ugly voice of Munkar, like donkeys,
c. and perceived unpleasant smells (which) he endured, being a man of patience.
d. Gabriel said: "It is the voice of hell."
- 30 a. It said: "Lord, I am plagued with excessive heat;
b. I want the immoral people, my people of the fire."
c. The Lord answered: "Every oppressor is yours,
d. the women and the men who rebelled against the Mild Lord."
- 31 a. They went on and saw a pillar of light:
b. it was carried for the Messenger by His angel.
c. Gabriel said: "They have been ordered to hold steady
d. the pillar of faith and to place it under the sky."
- 32 a. They went on and heard a man calling;
b. the Prophet was silent, for he did not respond to his (the other one's) intentions.
c. Gabriel said: "You young one, he is a Jew;
d. If you had answered him, your community would have been like him."

In other versions, Hell enumerates with relish the many different types of tortures it has in stock.

31 d. The column of Light is the faith of Islam; it is placed under the sky, evidently in order to support it. Underlying this allegory there is the belief that the sky, and with it the cosmos, is kept up by the community of the faithful. As the Throne of the Almighty rests on top of the sky, the ultimate consequence is that the believing souls are the foundation of God's Throne. In other words: Heaven is built on faith.

32-33 Mohammed's behaviour is, of course, meant to be imitated by all his

33. Tena kasikia mlingani jiha shimali
T'umwa kanyamaa asitike yake maḳali.
Jiburilu kamba: ni Naṣara muja dhalali.
Aṭaka poteza umaṭio ṭariḳi njema.
34. Kisha wakenenda wakaona muke muzuri
Uvee libasi na ḥulia za ṭafahuri.
Jiburilu kamba: ni ḍunia yenyi ghururi.
Kuonyesha wema dhahirini, ndani ni ṭ'ama.
35. Kisha wakanenda wakaona mutu shaibu,
Akimulingana muombezi asimujibu.
Jiburilu kamba: ni 'aḍui yako Ḥabibu,
Ndiye Ibilisi maleuni ndiye rajima.
36. Kisha wakanenda wakaona Mitume pia;
Wakamuitia kwa salamu njema ṭabia.
Kisha wakafika nyumba k'uu, wakaingia
Beṭi Muḳaḍḍasi, nyumba njema yenyi 'adhama.
37. Walipowaswili musikiṭi wenyi baraka,
Wakaona nuru jiha mbili zikimetuka,
Moja miḥirabu Ḍaaūḍi ya mushabaka,
Ya poli ni nuru za ḳaburi ya Mariama.
38. Wakangia ndani wakaṣali raka'aṭeni,
Wawene Mitume yikutene musikiṭini.
Jiburilu thamma kainuka akaadhini,
Akaḳimu ṣala, wasijue nani imama.
39. Jiburilu kamba: tangulia, ndiwe imamu;
Mitume i nyuma yako, mbebe uṭaḳaḍamu;
Saaḍa ni yako na ḥeshima na ṭaadhimu,
Ndiwe muṭeule muombezi wa woṭe wema.

followers: to follow the straight road to God and Paradise, and never to listen to Jews and Christians, the slaves of error, who are on the wrong road.

- 34 c. The world is full of illusion, because in the beginning of life it seems all beauty and pleasure to us, but in the end it turns out to be full of ugliness, pain, disease and suffering, and finally death. So, one should not live for this world but for the next.
- 35 c. Satan is the enemy of God and therefore the enemy of Mohammed. *Rajimu*, lit. 'stoned', like adulterers who are driven from a town with stones by the townspeople. Satan is banished by God: Koran 15, 34.
- 36-40. All the prophets God ever sent to Earth, are resuscitated in this night and are sent to Jerusalem, the sanctuary of the Jews, not just to pray there with Mohammed, but to be led by him in their prayers. Mohammed leads even Gabriel the archangel in his prayers. It is the apotheosis of Mohammedan

- 33 a. Again they heard somebody facing them, from the left side;
b. the Prophet was silent for he did not respond to his (the other one's) words.
c. Gabriel said: "It is a Christian, a slave of error,
d. he wants to lead your community astray from the right road."
- 34 a. They went on and saw a beautiful woman.
b. She was wearing a showy dress and necklaces.
c. Gabriel said: "That is the world, full of illusion,
d. showing the good things conspicuously, but inside there is misery."
- 35 a. They went on and found a grey-haired person.
b. He addressed the Intercessor, but the latter did not answer.
c. Gabriel said: "He is your enemy, Beloved!
d. He is the cursed devil, the outcast."
- 36 a. They went on and saw all the other Prophets,
b. they called out to him with greetings (showing their) good character.
c. After that they arrived at a big building and went in,
d. the Holy House, the good abode of Glory.
- 37 a. When they reached the blessed Mosque,
b. they saw light radiating from two directions,
c. one from the niche of David with the window,
d. and the other one was a lighthouse from the grave of Mary.
- 38 a. They went inside and prayed a salāt of two prostrations.
b. They saw the Prophets meet in the Mosque.
c. Gabriel then went up and called the prayer-call.
d. He performed the salāt but they did not know who would be the leader of the prayer.
- 39 a. Gabriel said: "You must be leader of the prayer, you are imam;
b. the Prophets are behind you, you step forward and stand in line.
c. Yours is the salvation and the honour and the glorification.
d. You are the chosen Intercessor for all people of good will."

prophetology, by which all the prophets who ever lived (including Moses and Jesus, mentioned by name in other versions) willingly pay homage to the last and greatest of all the prophets. Mohammed is told to stand as the leader (*kutaḳaḍama*) in the line of worshippers. The social structure of every community of Muslims is hereby transferred to the level of the prophets, who, as we have seen (see p. 65), are one of the two highest categories of creatures. Of these, Mohammed is the leader and spiritual guide, just as the man who leads the prayers in any mosque in the Islamic world, is the one person accepted by all as the most pious and most learned of them all.

40. Wakisha kuşali kulla mtu akadhukuru
Swifa zake Mola na neema akishukuru,
Wakajifahari kwa zipawa zake Ghafuru
Swifa zake T'umwa ziziđie zao Mitumwa.
41. Ikashika nyota muungamo, zikaja zombo
Kya ziwa na maji na 'asali na tamu tembo
Kađitari ziwa muombezi, kaşibu ombo
Ombo wa imani taufiki yake Karima.
42. Kisha ikashuka Miiraji yake p'eponi
Ipambiwe fedha na dhahabu na marijani;
Akapanda T'umwa na amini hađa mbinguni
Wakabisha lango wakatika watu wa sama.
43. Wakamba: ni nani mwenyi nuru zeneye sama?
Jiburilu kamba: muombezi wawi na wema.
Wakaufungua kwa haraka na himahima.
Wakamulakia kwa heshima na taadhima.
44. T'umwa kamuona babu yetu, T'umwa Adamu
Rođo za dhurriya kaonyeshwa kazifahamu;
Iwapo sađi rođo njema, kađabasamu.
Kulia iwapo rođo mbovu ya Jahannama.
45. Akanza salamu muungamo; akirađili
Kamba: marađaba mwana mwema T'umwa Rasuli
Saađa ni yako mwenye jađa, ndiwe awali
Ndiwe mwenye mbele na Mitume yođe i nyuma.
46. Kisha wakakia wakafika wingu wa pili;
Kubisha vivile na kwitika kama awali;
Amuwene Isa na Yađiya wođe wawili
Şura zao moyo mufano-we wana wa mama.

- 41 a. God makes His prophet thirsty in order to test him, and then sends four goblets which arrive suspended in the air.
b. Honey represents the pleasure-seeking attitude of *la dolce vita*, wine represents the religions of the Christians and Jews who drink wine at their ceremonies. Milk represents the religion of honest cattle breeders, the ideal of the Muslims.
42. It is not quite clear how the Swahili author visualized the *miiraji*, knowing the immense distances that separate Earth from the first heaven. In one of the other Swahili versions the word *jukwaa* is used which means a platform utilised in Swahili ports for hoisting cargo onto a dhow. Most likely, the *miiraji* is pictured as such a *planquier* on which the travellers step and are transported upwards.
- 43 a. Mohammed's divine inspiration could be seen by 'knowing' souls such as sages, angels and prophets, in the form of a brilliant light, but the majority

- 40 a. When they finished praying every man pronounced Allah's names,
b. the qualities of the Lord, and was grateful for the bliss.
c. They congratulated themselves with the gifts of the Forgiver.
d. The qualities of the Prophet surpass those of the other Prophets.
- 41 a. Thirst seized the Confessor, and cups arrived,
b. filled with milk, water, honey and sweet palmwine.
c. The Intercessor chose the milk and he obtained his request,
d. the prayer for faith and guidance from God.
- 42 a. Finally a ladder descended from heaven,
b. decorated with silver and gold and corallite;
c. the Prophet and his faithful friend ascended to heaven.
d. They knocked on the gate and the celestial beings answered.
- 43 a. They said: "Who is the owner of the Light that spreads through Heaven?"
b. Gabriel answered: "The Intercessor of the good and the evil."
c. They opened it with haste and hurry,
d. and met him with respect, paying him homage.
- 44 a. The Prophet saw our forefather, the Prophet Adam;
b. he was shown the souls of his progeny and he recognised them;
c. where there was a happy and good soul, he smiled;
d. weeping when it was a bad soul for Hell.
- 45 a. He began his salaam to the Confessor saying:
b. "Welcome noble son, Messenger, Prophet.
c. The guidance is yours, having the star of fortune,
d. you are the leader, going at the head and all the Prophets go behind you."
- 46 a. After that they passed on and arrived at the second heaven;
b. knocking as before and being answered as the first time.
c. He saw Jesus and St. John, both of them,
d. their appearance was identical like children of one mother.

of mankind was too blinded by evil to perceive it.

- 44 a. Adam is sitting between two arched gateways, one leading into Hell, the other into Paradise. There he is shown every single soul of his descendants, recognises him or her as the son or daughter of so and so, and smiles happily when they are led up into Heaven. When they are thrown down the other gate into the oven of Hell, he bursts into tears. Indeed a subtle punishment for the original Sinner.
- 45 c. For the Star of Fortune see 3c & 4b.
- 46 d. The second heaven, or to speak in classical terms, the second celestial sphere, is ruled by Gemini, the Twins, here represented by Jesus and John who were first cousins from their mothers' side.

47. Kaṭoa salamu; wakanuka kumwondokea
Kwa kumu'adhimu na ḥeshima na kumwitia.
Walipoagana wakakia wakafikia
Uwingu wa t'atu wakabisha kwa ṭa'adhima.
48. Wakaitikiwa: maraḥaba mwenye 'adhama.
Uwene ṣaḍīḳi Yuusufu na ṣura njema;
Akanza salamu muungamo, ndio ḥeshima.
Akaḥurubisha akaweka maḥala pema.
49. Kisha wakafika wingu wa nne kwa ṭaisiri,
Jiburilu kamba: funguani yupo Bashiri.
Kamba: maraḥaba pita naye, pasi uṣiri,
Saada ni yake muombezi kiumbe kyema.
50. Alipowaṣwili kalaḳiwa na Iḍirisi,
Ni yake maḳamu wingu wa nne pake julusi.
Kamba: maraḥaba ukunḍuke uṭanafasi,
Saada ni yako mwenye jaḥa isiyokoma.
51. Kisha wakakia wakafika wingu wa ṭano;
Wakangia ndani wakaona Nabi Haruno;
Kawaḳaribisha kwa ḥeshima ṭukufu muno,
Wakaomba Mungu kuagana kwa dua njema.
52. Kisha wakakia muombezi na Jiburilu
Wa ṣiṭa uwingu wakafika woṭe wawili.
Wakabisha lango kwa ḥeshima na ṭabujili,
Wakafunguliwa wakaona Musa Kalima.

- 47 b. The two guardians of the second heaven have been informed beforehand that the Prophet of God's Definitive Word would be arriving. Also, as prophets, they know the future greatness of Mohammed.
- 48 b. Yusufu, the Biblical Yoseph, is called *ṣaḍīḳi* which may have various meanings: sincere, upright, truthful; credulous, a believer; trustworthy, a true friend.
- 49 c. *He*, the one who speaks from inside the fourth heaven, is Idris (50a).
- 50 c. *kukunḍuka* 'to unfold oneself, become unwrinkled' (especially of foreheads), so: 'to become cheerful, to unfrown, to relax'.
kuṭanafasi 'to catch one's breath, breathe freely, rest'.
Idris is one of the most mysterious figures in Islamic mythology. He is mentioned only twice in the Koran (19, 56 & 21, 85). Horovitz (*Koranische Untersuchungen*, Leipzig 1926, p. 88) identifies the form of the name with Andrēas. The identity of the mythical character seems to be with Enoch (Aḥnuḥ) and ultimately with the God Mercury (see *Encyclop. of Islam*, s.v. Hirmis). Enoch is mentioned only once in the Bible (Genesis 5, 21-24).

- 47 a. He greeted them, and they rose to stand for him,
b. to honour him with respect and call him by name.
c. When they had parted, they passed on and arrived
d. at the third heaven, and they knocked with reverence.
- 48 a. They were answered: "Welcome, honourable one."
b. He saw the sincere Joseph with his fine appearance.
c. He began greeting the Confessor with respect.
d. He welcomed him and put him in a good place.
- 49 a. After that they arrived at the fourth heaven rapidly.
b. Gabriel said: "Open ye, the Good Messenger is here."
c. (He) said: "Welcome, come through with him without delay."
d. The divine assistance is with the Intercessor, the good creature."
- 50 a. When he arrived he was met by Idris.
b. The fourth heaven was his post, his seat.
c. He said: "Welcome, be at ease and rest awhile."
d. Divine assistance is yours, you have good fortune without end."
- 51 a. After that they passed on and arrived in the fifth heaven.
b. They went in and met the Prophet Aaron,
c. he welcomed them with the highest respect;
d. they prayed to God and parted with a good prayer.
- 52 a. Then they passed on, the Intercessor and Gabriel,
b. in the sixth heaven they arrived, both of them.
c. They knocked on the gate with respect and reverence.
d. It was opened for them and they saw Moses, the one to whom God spoke.

Enoch lived 365 years, as many as there are days in the year. He walked with God, and he did not die but God took him. If Enoch was in some way connected with the sun, this would explain why he did not die. In the Islamic sphere he is then identified with Alexander's cook (whose name may have been Andreas?), who falls accidentally in the Well of Life and so becomes immortal (see Hooykaas, *Over Maleise Literatuur*, Leiden 1947, p. 161; a different version in Pagliaro & Bausani, *Storia della Letteratura Persiana*, Milano 1960, p. 683, where the ones who gain immortality are Elias and Khezr; a similar version in Indonesia in Poerbatjaraka, Voorhoeve & Hooykaas, *Indonesische Handschriften*, Bandung 1950, p. 41).
If Idris is indeed identical with Mercury, this would fit his position in the fourth, i.e. middle region.

- 51 b. For Aaron see my TSP, p. 221, and the *Enc. Isl.* s.v. Hārūn.
- 52 d. Moses is called the Word of God because God spoke to him and gave him the first of the scriptural revelations (*Taurati, Zaburi, Injili, Kuruani*).

53. Wawene jaishi yake Musa imekingama
Akambiwa T'umwa: nua kiṭwa ukitazama.
Kaona jaishi, hatambui palipokoma.
Kambiwa: jaishi uonayo ni yako T'umwa.
54. Kamuona Musa umbo lake ini la nyama,
Yuna nywele nyingi zisimeme za ṭomaṭoma,
Kaṭoa salamu muombezi kuṭaṭadama.
Musa akajibu: maraḥaba bi aḥi mwema.
55. Ndiwe ndugu mwema muombezi wa watu jama
Ni wako umaṭi afudhali ya wote uma;
Wendapo kwa Mola ukipawa yake karama
Nasi tukumbuke ngwatujali wako ḥuḍuma.
56. Kisha wakakia wakafika wingu wa saba.
Jiburilu kamba: nimekuya naye Ḥabiba,
Fungua mulango akapita T'umwa-ye Raba.
Wakaufungua akapita T'umwa Karima.
57. Akaona mutu mwenye jaḥa kuu jalili,
Kauliza T'umwa: mutu gani? Kamba: Ḥalili.
Mwendaniwe Mola ndiye jaḍḍi yako aswili.
Kamupa salamu yake jaḍḍi Iburahima.
58. Kamuḥaribisha kamwambia: jaḥa ni yako,
Ai muombezi, waḥubiri umaṭi wako,
Wapande mipando ya p'eponi waweke mbeko,
Na mipando yake Subuḥana ḥaṭṭa 'Adhima.
59. Na hapo walipo pana watu weupe muno
Kama ḥaraṭasi na wangine maṭangamano,
Wangia motoni wakiunga wawa mufano.
T'umwa akanena: watu gani wenye ḥeshima?

53. The army of Moses is his *umma*, his church, i.e. all the Jews of history together, all the followers of the religion of Moses. Mohammed is envious of his colleague and desires to see his own *umma*. Immediately, he is told to look up, and there, in heaven, he can see all the Muslims of all times and of all countries, all the Mohammedans in one enormous herd which looks like a cloud obscuring the light of Heaven. Moses then expressly acknowledges that Mohammed is a greater prophet than he, and that he will be glad to serve him.
54. Moses has hair covering all his body, like wool, and a long white beard; he is leaning on the stick that struck water from the rock. He is of tall stature, but has the shape of an animal, presumably of a sheep, since he is covered by white wool. See *Trad. Swah. Poetry*, p. 222.
- 55 c. *Karāma* is a prophet's power, given by God's generosity, to work wonders, especially to cure the sick.

- 53 a. They saw the army of Moses, in a state of readiness,
b. and the Prophet was told: "Raise your head and look!"
c. He saw the army, he could not see where it ended.
d. He was told: "The army you are seeing is yours, Prophet."
- 54 a. He saw Moses, his shape was like that of an animal,
b. he had many hairs standing upright, in spikes.
c. The Intercessor greeted him first.
d. Moses answered: "Welcome to my good brother."
- 55 a. "You are the good brother, the Intercessor for the whole flock,
b. and your community is the best of all communities.
c. When you go to God, you will be given His Generosity,
d. then remember us too, that He may grant us to be your servants."
- 56 a. Finally they passed on and arrived at the seventh heaven.
b. Gabriel said: "I have come with the beloved.
c. Open the gate that the Prophet of the Lord may pass."
d. So they opened up and God's Prophet passed.
- 57 a. He saw a person of high rank and great state.
b. The Prophet asked: "Which man is it?" He said: "Khalil,
c. the friend of God, he is your grandfather and origin."
d. He gave salaam to his forefather Abraham.
- 58 a. He (Abraham) welcomed him and said: "Yours is the honour.
b. O, Intercessor, announce to your community,
c. that they must climb the rungs into Paradise and pay homage,
d. and the rungs of glorification to the highest Lord."
- 59 a. And where they were, there were many white people,
b. (as white as) paper, and others mixed;
c. they went into the fire, then joined those who were similar;
d. the Prophet said: "What sort of people are those dignified ones?"

- 57 b. Abraham is called the Friend (*Ḥalil*) of God, Koran 4, 125, where Islam is equated with the religion (*milla*) of Abraham, the seeker of God (*ḥanif*). Abraham was prepared to sacrifice his son to God (37, 102). Abraham instituted the *ḥejira* to Mecca (22, 27) and was God's chosen one (16, 121). Abraham is Mohammed's forefather through Isma'īl, see p. 33, 49, 65, 287.
- 58 d. The implication of this verse is entirely mystical. Mr. Faruk Topan tells me that among the Ismailiya it is customary *before prayer* to meditate upon the *Mi'rāj*, as a preparation for the journey which every worshipper of Allah makes towards the divine Light during prayer. This custom seems to me to be the key to stanza 58. During the *Miiraji*, Mohammed is instructed by Allah regarding the five obligatory prayers. The faithful have to concentrate during prayer on the significance of the spiritual journey to God which every prayer is: one step out of this world, one step out of oneself; this step is the penitence with which the journey begins: the station of Adam. See stanza 44 and p. 88, 241.

60. Jiburilu kamba: watu sao ja k̄araṭasi
 Ndio watu wema, h̄awatendi mambo h̄asisi,
 Na sao wangine waṭengene na wasiwasi
 Watendao mawi, wakaṭubu wakawa wema.
61. Kisha wakakia wakaona hapo walipo
 Beṭi ma'amuri iwashiwe ṭini mwa pepo,
 Wakangia ndani wakaṣali wawene sapo
 Zikwi sabu'ini za malaka, viumbe vyema.
62. Na 'iḍaḍi siyo kulla siku kungia ndani
 Wangine wangine kwa zamani zoṭe na ḥini;
 Wazuri baiṭi ma'amuri, ni yao shani,
 Kulla azuruye aṭokapo haruḍi nyuma.
63. Na mwadhini wao Jiburilu ndiye amini
 Ni imamu wao Mikaila mwenyi wazini,
 Siku ya juma'a kuṣalisha raka'aṭeni;
 Wakisha kuṣali kumuomba Mola Karima
64. Dua ya amini wadhinio kuwaombea
 Naye Mikaili mwa imamu kashufaia,
 Na woṭe jamaa maamuma kuwawania,
 Dua maḥubuli zipaazo yuu la sama.
65. Kisha wakakia, Kurusii wakaenda,
 Daraja ya nane Miiraji ya nubuhiya,
 Penyi Siḍiraṭi Muniṭaha wa mambo pia;
 Wawene ajabu nyingi muno isiokoma.

59-60. The white people are the pure souls who may travel unmolested into Paradise. The grey people are the souls with stained records. The black people are the sinners (Muslim sinners that is, the others never even arrive in Paradise). These sinners are black because the journey across the bridge over the Fire took them many years, as their virtues and good acts which they had sent on ahead, were weak, so that they became charred by the flames, and pitchblack. They have to be washed in the Haudhi, Mohammed's pool, to be cleansed of their sins.

- 61-62. The crowded house where 700,000 angels come to pray every day without ever returning, is the celestial replica of the Kaaba of Mecca where Abraham had his station (Koran 2, 125; 3, 96). Or rather, the terrestrial Kaaba was built, by Abraham, after the model of the one in Paradise.
- 63 c. *Wazini* 'charge', lit: 'weight', cp. *mizani* 'scales'. The first and foremost duty of the angels is to pray to God on behalf of Mankind and to praise Him (Koran 13, 13; 21, 20; 33, 43).
- 64 a. The angels in the celestial mosque (for the crowded House is the central mosque of the universe) are specially assigned to pray to God on behalf of the faithful, whose prayers it is their duty to listen to with great care. For the Heavenly Mosque see my *Trad. Swah. Poetry*, p. 223.

- 60 a. Gabriel said: "These people like paper,
 b. they are the good people, they commit no ignoble deeds;
 c. and these others, they became entangled in temptation.
 d. They are the ones who committed bad deeds and then repented and became good."
- 61 a. Then they passed on and saw there, where they were,
 b. a crowded house, built right under Paradise.
 c. They went inside and prayed.
 d. They saw there 700,000 angels, good creatures.
- 62 a. And this number entered the house every day,
 b. others and again others in the past and in the present time.
 c. They visit the crowded house, it is their glory.
 d. Everyone who visits it and comes out, will not return there.
- 63 a. And their announcer of the prayer is the faithful Gabriel.
 b. Their leader of the prayer is Michael who is in charge,
 c. on Fridays, to lead the prayers of two prostrations.
 d. They prayed a ritual prayer, and then a personal prayer to the Lord Most Generous.
- 64 a. They pray for the prayers of the faithful which they hear,
 b. and Michael intercedes in prayers as the imam.
 c. And the whole communion of the guided is together pleading for them,
 d. (saying) accepted prayers which rise straight up to heaven.
- 65 a. Finally they passed on, heading for the Throne,
 b. the eighth step of the Stairway of Prophethood,
 c. where there is the Jujube-tree of the End of all things.
 d. They saw many wonderful things, without ending.

- b. *Mwa* implies *mwahali* 'in the place of, in the function of'.
 c. *Ma'amuma* passive adj. 'guided, led'; cp. *imamu* 'leader of prayers'.
Kuwawania, lit. 'to fight for them'; here: 'to argue for them', i.e. the faithful.
 d. *Maḥubuli* 'accepted', in Swahili always implies: 'by God'.
 65 a. *Kurusii*, God's Throne, see my *Trad. Swah. Poetry*, p. 69 & 232. Koran 2, 256.
 b. After the seven heavens there are three more levels of the Universe: the Tree, the space below the Throne, and the *Malakuti*, the divine proximity.
 c. The Lotus-tree of the End (Koran 53, 14) is an enormous tree, its shade cannot be traversed by a running horse in a thousand years. It seems to be the tree of life (*shajara hayawani*) which grows just under the Throne, so that its top forms the space immediately below the Throne.
 On every leaf an angel can sit and pray. Every leaf represents a human life; when it falls, Death will descend and take another soul. It is towards this tree that the human souls wish to fly, to perch on it and praise God.

66. Wawene tinimwe mito mine wote yajiri,
Mai na maziwa na 'asali, wa nne hamuri,
Na k'unazi zake tamu muno kama sukari,
Jani lake moya lafunika wote 'umama.
67. Hakuna muweza kuwifuwa katvu hakuna,
Illa Mola wetu mwenyi 'ezzi k'uu Rabbana,
Apendalo kuwa ni 'amuri: kun fa yakuna!
Akaugeza wasiweze kuutezama.
68. Kisha kauona mto wake T'umwa Bashiri
'Atwiya ya Mola na inale ni Kauthari,
Wakaufuasa kuwandama yake athari
Hata wakafika nyumba njema yenyi neema.
69. Wakaona mambo ya viumbe wasioona
Wala kusikia kwa habari wenye kunena,
Wala muyawaza kwa moyoni katvu hakuna.
Wawene langoni yandishiwe hadithi njema.
70. Sadaka ni moya kwa 'ashara ndio jaza-ye,
Na kumi na nane yuwambiwa akiridhiye
Mutaka qaradha kutakaye kwa dharura-ye.
Muumba sadaka kuombayo ali na nema.
71. Akaona p'epo, mufanowe hakuiona
Ipambiwe fedha na dhahabu kwa marijana
Na zabarujudi na yakuti yenyi launa
Na nau'u nyingi za hariri njema na'ima.
72. Kisha wakatoka kaonyeshwa moto mukali,
Kaona vituko vya 'adhabu hakuhimili.
Kakosa fahamu ikazulu yake akili,
Jiburilu thamma kamudhummu akafahama.

- 66 a. Only the 'interior', i.e. Paradisiacal, rivers are mentioned, see my *Tvadi Swah. Poetry*, p. 227. The rivers contain the four life-giving liquids.
b. *Hamuri*, wine, is a celestial, non-toxic beverage, see p. 90.
c. For desert nomads, like the Bedouins, the ideal of Paradise is immense shade.
d. *Kun* 'Be!' 'Become!' This is the basis of all Creation. Allah draws all things from their non-existence by merely ordering them to exist. It is the literal and consistent application of the principle of omnipotence. This phrase, found *passim* in the Koran, is one of the foundations of Koranic theology. For God the miraculous creation is easy.
- 68 d. The river Kauthar 'Abundance', given by Allah to the faithful (Koran 108, 1).
d. This is Baitu'n-Na'imu, the Blissful House, see p. 88.
- 70 a. The inscription on the door of Paradise gives the rate at which the virtuous are rewarded: ten rewards in Heaven for one alm given on Earth.

- 66 a. They saw under it four rivers all flowing,
b. water and milk and honey, and wine the fourth;
c. and its jujube fruits are very sweet, like sugar;
d. one leaf of it covers all nations.
- 67 a. There is nobody who can be praised, indeed there is not,
b. except our Lord Almighty,
c. what pleases Him is only an order: "Be!" And it is!
d. He alters it and they cannot keep looking at it (at the tree).
- 68 a. Finally, the Bringer of Good Tidings saw his own river,
b. a present from God, its name is Abundance.
c. They followed it and went along its bed,
d. until they arrived at the good House of Beatitude.
- 69 a. They saw many creatures they had never seen,
b. nor heard by reports from tellers of tales;
c. and you did not yet think of it in your heart at all.
d. They saw written on the door a good tradition:
- 70 a. "One is the alm and tenfold is its reward;
b. and eighteenfold is promised to him who lends
c. to a person who asks for a loan having suffered a loss.
d. He who created the sacrifice to be asked for, He has also bliss (to give).
- 71 a. He saw Paradise, he had never seen its likeness.
b. It was adorned with silver and gold and corallite,
c. and with emeralds and rubies full of colour,
d. and many kinds of silk, good and pleasant.
- 72 a. Then they went out and were shown a fierce fire,
b. and he saw terrors of punishment, he could not bear it.
c. He lost consciousness, his senses left him.
d. Gabriel embraced him thereupon and he regained consciousness.

- c. *Dharura* 'loss, damage'.
d. God who instituted offerings and sacrifices, has also instituted the blessing which those who give receive.
An alternative interpretation would be: the person who gives the alm, is the one who creates it, who causes the alm to exist, and he has also the bliss of giving. Finally, the first word of this line can be read *Muomba*, in which case the translation is: He who begged for an alm also receives bliss, i.e. in alms giving both the giver and the receiver are blessed.
- 71 a. Mohammed is the only living man who has seen Paradise.
d. In Paradise the pious souls will be dressed in silk: Koran 22, 23; 76, 12, 21.
72. Like Jesus, Mohammed visits Hell, but of course he is not allowed to liberate the sinners from it. He just faints.

73. Daraja ya nane akakia T'umwa Bashiri
Jiburilu kwenda hakuweza kataahari.
Akamba: siwezi kwenda mbele hatita shibiri,
Sapa ndipo pangu, Muombezi katakadama.
74. Pakaja kiwingu kya rehema yake Jalili,
Kikamufunika Muombezi T'umwa Rasuli.
T'umwa kamwambia: haja gani yako Halili
Ambayo wataka ni uswia kwake Karima.
75. Jiburilu kamba: haja yangu niitakayo,
Siku ya swirata niwe kinga ya umatiyo
Ninyoshe mabawa yawe kinga ya zao nyayo,
Usiwapateo moto harri ya Jahannama.
76. Kisha akakia rafurafu ikenda naye
Kapita hijabu zote pia kamuonaye
Mwaliwa Ta'ala, pasi kefa kwayo maoye
Wala pasi ena pa kwimia wala makama.
77. Mola yumuwene kwa maoye yote mawili,
Akanza salamu tahiyatu yake Jalili.
Mola kamujibu: na salamu yako Rasuli,
Ndiwe mutaule wa kuwekwa mahala pema.
78. Alipomuona Mola wake aso mithali,
Asiweze neno kutamuka yake kauli;
Akenda sijiqa. Kamwambia Mola Jalili:
Omba utakalo utapewa yote timama.
-
73. Gabriel, like all creatures, has his limits, and he has now reached it: if he were to go beyond this boundary of the *ulaika*, the realm of the angels, he would be drowned in the divine light. Gabriel comforts his friend Mohammed by hugging him to his breast with his wing and promising him that God has called him to an even higher position than he, Gabriel, has ever had, and so he must not be afraid but trust the Lord. So he goes on.
74. And sure enough, at that moment, God orders a special group of high-altitude angels to bring the *rafurafu*, which according to some is a cloud; *kiwingu* 'a little cloud', is always used for a special shade to protect Mohammed against light and heat. Others describe *rafurafu* as a veil of green silk to protect the Prophet's eyes. Finally, the *rafurafu* is called a sedan-chair (*maq'ad*), carried by forty angels. I have discussed the relevant literature in *Swahili* 36/2, p. 148.
75. Mohammed does not neglect to offer his friend Gabriel something very precious: a request which Mohammed, God's favourite, will make with the Lord on his behalf. Gabriel, who as an angel, can have no selfish wish, can think of only one thing: that he may be allowed to protect the miserable souls who will be plodding along the razor's edge, from the flames of the Fire. On Doomsday, after the Judgment is over, the souls will have to find their way to Paradise across the Narrow Bridge. Of course, it is only the souls of

- 73 a. The Messenger passed on to the eighth rung of the ladder.
b. Gabriel could not go and stayed behind.
c. He said: "I can not go further one span.
d. Here is my place." The Intercessor went on.
- 74 a. There came the cloud of Grace of the Majesty,
b. and covered the Prophet.
c. The Prophet said to him: "What is your need, friend?
d. What you wish is only an order for God."
- 75 a. Gabriel said: "My desire, that which I wish:
b. That on the day of the Bridge I may be the shield for your community.
c. That I may stretch out my wings to be a protection for their foot-steps,
d. lest the hot fire of hell gets them."
- 76 a. Finally he sat down on the palanquin and it went with him.
b. He passed all veils and finally saw Him,
c. my Holy Lord, without physical appearance, with his eyes
d. and there was nowhere to stand, no standing place.
- 77 a. He saw the Lord with his two eyes.
b. He began his salaam and his reverential greetings to the Majesty.
c. God answered him: "Salaam to you, Prophet.
d. You are the chosen one who was placed in a good position."
- 78 a. When he saw Him, his Lord without equal,
b. he could not utter a word with his voice;
c. he went down on his knees; the Majesty spoke to him:
d. "Ask whatever you want and you will receive it all complete."

the good Muslims whom Gabriel wishes to protect.

- 76 a. The palanquin: see the note to v. 74.
Hijabu, the veils which hide God from the eyes of men. The veils are nothing but our own wish to remain separate individuals with a will of our own and with the illusion that we have an objective perception.
- c. *Kefa*, *kaiifa* 'quality, description', here means: describable feature of appearance. The implication is that God did not take on some visible shape such as one sees in a dream or in a vision, but that He showed Himself to Mohammed as He really was, that is, undescrivable, featureless. In spite of that, Mohammed—and all the popular texts insist on this point—sees God with his eyes, otherwise it would have been a dream or an illusion, no real journey through space, no meeting face to face.
- d. There was no place to stand, i.e. Mohammed was suspended in the air, hanging in the sky before the face of God. Alternatively, it could mean that there was no distance between God and His Prophet, nothing in between.
- 77 b. Note the ceremonial courtesy between God and His Prophet as well as between the (souls of the) prophets among themselves.

79. Kamba: Mola wangu, muja wako Ibrahimi
Ni wako mwendani, nami nini yangu sehemu?
Mola kamwambia: nawe T'umwa wangu fahamu?
Ni kipendo kyangu afudhali ya wote T'umwa.
80. Kamba: tumupele Daaūdi yake zaburi,
Na Sulaimani kumiliki jinni na tweri;
Nawe ni awali ya Mitume, ndiwe aheri
Nidhukuriwapo na isimu yako i nyuma.
81. Na kamaye 'Isa akipoza kulla kilema,
Na kuwafufua wafeo yake kalima,
Nawe nikupele kufufua na mangi kama
Ni yako kanizi ya 'arishi isiyokoma.
82. Na umaṭi wako afudhali kuliko pia,
Siku ya ḳiyama uṭakuya kushuhudia.
Pindi wakanapo makufari wote nambia
Hawakuṭabia mambo yao walio tumwa.
83. Ai muombezi wa awali ḥaṭṭa aheri,
Muombea umma siku nzito ya maḥashari;
Siku ya swiraṭa kutandikwa yuu la nari,
Ndiwe muombezi siku hiyo wawi na wema.
84. Saya upeweyo, haku mtu aliyepawa;
Uḥimidi kwayo ushukuru zangu zipawa.
Nikufaridhie ḥamusini ṣala ṭukuwa,
Wewe na umaṭi kulla siku ṣali ṭimama.
85. Ḥijabu ya nuru ikondoka; akarejea
Alipo amini Jiburilu akafikia.
Wakashuka wote wakaona Musa Nabiya,
Akamuḥubiri ḥabariye ḥaṭṭa kukoma.

- 79 b. *Ḥalili* 'friend', see the note to v. 57b.
Mohammed's envy is of course a projection of the uncertainty of the Mohammedans: is Mohammed really the best and the greatest of all prophets? God himself has to confirm it: Mohammed is His favourite.
- 80 a. The psalms are placed on a line with the other revealed books.
b. Sulemani, who is a prophet in Islam, ruled the demons: Koran 34, 12-14; 38, 37-38. The demons worked for him, forging copper, making crockery and building pavilions, and they carried him where he wished.
c. Mohammed's message is final, he brings God's definitive Word to Man.
- 81 d. Mohammed's one great miracle is the Koran, which is a part of the well-kept Book, the mother of books, under God's Throne.
- 82 d. The point is that although Jews and Christians may deny that the Koran in

- 79 a. He said: "My Lord, Your servant Abraham
b. is your friend, and I, what is my share?"
c. The Lord spoke to him: "You are my Prophet, remember.
d. My Beloved is better than all Prophets."
- 80 a. He said: "We have given David his psalms;
b. and you are the best of Prophets, you are the final one.
c. And Solomon the power over demons and birds.
d. When I am mentioned by Name, your (name) will be (mentioned) after.
- 81 a. "And as Jesus has been healing every lame man,
b. and as his Word resuscitated those who had died,
c. I have given you to resuscitate many as well.
d. Yours is the treasure of the Throne which has no end.
- 82 a. "And your Community is better than all (the others).
b. On the Day of Resurrection you will come to witness.
c. When all the unbelievers deny, I tell you,
d. they did not follow the words of those who were sent.
- 83 a. "O, Prophet of the first and the last,
b. who will intercede for your community on the heavy day of rally.
c. On the day of the narrow Bridge, that will be stretched over the fire.
d. You will that day pray for the bad and the good.
- 84 a. "These things that you have been given, there is no other person who received them.
b. Praise God for them, give thanks for My gifts.
c. I have made compulsory fifty prayers for you to carry out.
d. You and your community, pray them completely every day."
- 85 a. The veil of light was raised and he went back,
b. and arrived where the faithful Gabriel was.
c. They both descended and saw the Prophet Moses,
d. and he (Mohammed) told him the story unto its end.

particular and Islam in general, contain the only and ultimate truth, this is because they (or rather their ancestors) did not follow the exact words of their own prophets: Moses and Jesus preached exactly the same as Mohammed, and would confirm that he had the final word. The Jews and Christians have falsified the scriptures.

- 83 b. *Maḥashari* 'gathering, collecting', when all Mankind will be gathered (15, 25; 37, 22).
c. The Bridge as thin as a hair, strung over the Fire.

86. Musa kamwambia: umaṭiwo ḥawaḥimili,
 Ṣala ḥamusini kulla siku zawa thaḳili;
 Rejea kwa Mola, umuombe yake fadhili,
 Akupunguzie, ni dhaifu wako ḳauma.
87. T'umwa karejea pa munaja wake Karimu,
 Akawaombea ṭaḥafifu wake ḳaumu.
 Akapunguziwa ṣala ṭano kazifahamu.
 Kafika kwa Musa, kamwambia: rejea T'umwa!
88. Omba ṭaḥafifu kwa Mwaliwo, Mola laṭifu.
 Ikawa kunenda na kurudi kuyikallifu,
 Ḥaṭṭa kapungua ṣala ṭano za ṭaḥafifu.
 Mola kamwambia: uridhii yangu hukoma.
89. Kwani aswiliye ṣala ṭano ḥatamukeni;
 Wapawa thawabu ṣala kumi twaa yaḳini;
 Ndio ḥesabu-ye ṣala ṭano kwa ḥamusini;
 Ḥaliṭabaḍali neno lake Mola ḳaḍima.
90. Mwenye kunuwia kuitenda 'amali njema
 Hupowa ḥasana kwa fadhili zake Karima.
 P'indi atendapo yuwalipwa malipo mema;
 Ḥasanaṭi moya malipoye kumi ṭimama.
91. Mwenye kunuwia kuitenda 'amali mbaya
 Asipoitenda ḥanḍikiwa kwa yake nia;
 Na mwenye kutenda kandikiwa moya kwa moya
 Kwa fadhili zake Mola wetu mwenye reḥema.
92. Kisha wakashuka wakafika wingu wa ṭini;
 Wakaona vumbi na sauṭi na moshi ndani.
 T'umwa kamuliza Jiburilu: ni watu gani?
 Kamba: Sheṭani wazuiwa kuona sama.
93. Kisha wakashuka na usiku wakawaṣwili
 Beṭi Muḳaḍḍasi nyumba njema tangu 'aswili.
 Wawene Burāḳi yu papale pake awali,
 T'umwa kamupanda kwa isimu yake Karima.

- 87 c. The praying load is reduced by five prayers a day to 45 daily prayers.
 88 b. In total, the Prophet went up and down between Moses and God, nine times.
 d. *Uridhii*, lit. 'pleasure'.
 89 b. Supererogatory prayers are still strongly recommended as highly meritorious.
 91 d. One for one, i.e. one punishment for one sin, whereas for one good work one receives tenfold reward, and the mere intention to sin is not counted.

- 86 a. Moses told him: "Your Community will not bear it.
 b. Fifty prayers every day is too heavy for them.
 c. Turn back to the Lord, beg Him a favour,
 d. let Him reduce it for you, your people are weak."
- 87 a. The Prophet went back to the place of meeting with his generous Lord.
 b. He begged for alleviation in favour of his people,
 c. and he got reduction of five prayers and remembered them.
 d. He arrived at Moses' place, and he told him: "Go back, Prophet."
- 88 a. "Ask for alleviation from your God, the lenient Lord."
 b. And it was a going and returning, he took charge of this task.
 c. Until He reduced it to five prayers as an alleviation.
 d. God told him: "My favours have now come to an end."
- 89 a. "For do not say that five prayers are the original number.
 b. They will be given a requital, so take ten prayers, to be certain.
 c. This is the number of five prayers out of fifty."
 d. The Eternal God did not change His word."
- 90 a. "Whoever intends to do a good work,
 b. Receives clemency for his good acts from God.
 c. When he does so he will be rewarded with a good reward.
 d. For one act of charity is rewarded with ten rewards in total."
- 91 a. "Whoever intends to do a bad deed,
 b. if he does not commit it, he will not be noted as having had the intention;
 c. and he who did it will be noted one for one,
 d. by the favour of our Lord who is Merciful."
- 92 a. Finally they descended and reached the heaven below;
 b. they saw dust (and heard) voices and smoke was inside.
 c. The Prophet asked Gabriel: "What sort of people are they?"
 d. He said: "The satans are prevented from seeing Heaven."
- 93 a. After that they descended and arrived in the night,
 b. in the Holy Temple, the House of eternal Boon.
 c. They saw Burāk, she was on the same place as originally.
 d. The Prophet mounted her in the Name of God.

92. God throws meteors (*shihabu*) at the devils who try to penetrate heaven, hoping to glean some information about the future. Koran 15, 16-18; 37, 6-10, 67, 5. 'Thieves are punished with a bright flash.'

94. Katika kwenenda wakaona wangi ngamia,
Waṭokao Shamu Maḳureshi kawapitia.
Waonapo wanyama Buraḳi wakakimbia,
Moja kavunḳika lake ondo, siweze kwima.
95. Wakanenda tena wakaona wangi ba'iri;
Moya kapotea, wakenenda kumuḳabiri.
Kaṭoa salamu muombezi T'umwa Bashiri.
Wakamba: sauṭi ya salamu ni yake T'umwa.
96. Kisha wakenenda wakafika Makka na giza
Kusijacha sana akakaa T'umwa kawaza.
Aliwaḥaufu Maḳureshi yao mayaza
Na kukadhibisha kwa ḥabari yake ya sama.
97. Katika kuwaza na kumaka T'umwa Rasuli
Yumuvene 'aṣi male'uni Abu Jahali.
Akamuḳasisi kwa dhiḥaḳa kuyua ḥali:
Ai Muḥammaḳi nakuona uso kunama.
98. Una yambo gani kuu mno la kughayiri?
Ukaṭabaddali wako uso usinawiri;
Kunambia nami, nikayua yako ḥabari;
Siyo ḥali yako tuyuayo Abu Ḳasima.
99. Akamba: na'amu, t'akwambia yangu ḥabari;
Usiku wa leo nalikwenda mbali safari,
K'afika mbinguni nikaona Mola Jabbari,
Akanipa mambo ya kuṭunza wangu mutima.
100. Akazikusanya male'uni zoṭe ḳabili
Kuisikiliza ḥabari-ye T'umwa Rasuli.
Alipowezeza ḥabariye yote kamali
Pakawa kiṭeko na dhiḥaḳa na kumuzoma:
101. "Ai Muḥammaḳi, ni uwongo yako ḥabari,
Usiku umoya wafikia mbali safari!
Mbingu ukazisha ukaona Mola Jabbari
Uziḳie shani, uwongo-we ḥashaye T'umwa.

95 d. Flying low over the desert along the caravan route Jerusalem-Mecca, Mohammed 'buzzes' a number of his fellow townsmen who are on their way to the city. One camel in the first caravan becomes skittish on seeing Burāk and her rider whizzing over; it stumbles and breaks a knee joint. One camel of the next caravan they overtake, takes to flight and has to be recaptured. Mohammed shouts to his townsmen: "Your camel is behind that hill!" So the men call to each other in surprise: "Was that not the voice of Mohammed bin Abdullah?"

- 94 a. While travelling they saw many camels
b. coming from Syria, with the Koreish; he passed them.
c. When the animals saw Burāk they fled.
d. One broke its knee so that it could not stand.
- 95 a. They went on again and saw many caravan camels;
b. one got lost and they went to put it in line.
c. He gave salaam, the Prophet,
d. and they said: "The voice that speaks salaam is that of the Prophet."
- 96 a. After that they went and arrived in Mecca while it was still dark.
b. It was not yet dawning noticeably; the Prophet sat and thought.
c. He was afraid of the Koreish and their scheming,
d. that they would deny his story about Heaven.
- 97 a. While he was still thinking and wondering, the Prophet
b. saw the cursed rebel against God, Abu Jahali.
c. He came to put indiscrete questions in order to mock him and to know the situation:
d. "O Mohammed, I see you are bending down your forehead ('hanging down your head')."
- 98 a. "Which matter do you have that is so big as to change you?
b. You have changed, your forehead is not shining.
c. Tell me, let me know your story.
d. There is so very little that we know about you, father of Kasim!"
- 99 a. And Mohammed said: "Yes indeed, I will tell you my story;
b. this night I went on a far journey.
c. I reached heaven and saw God the Compeller,
d. and He gave me words to cherish in my heart."
- 100 a. The cursed man gathered his whole clan, and they all appeared,
b. to hear the story of the Prophet.
c. When he had told them every story to perfection,
d. there arose laughter and mockery, and he was jeered.
- 101 a. "Say, Mohammed, it is a lie, your story.
b. Have you really arrived back in one night from a long journey?
c. You have traversed heaven and you saw God the Compeller?
d. You are magnifying your dignity, it is all lies, unworthy of a Prophet."

97 b. Abu Jahl, Mohammed's uncle and one of his worst enemies, was cursed by the Prophet and killed at Badr, see Tor Andrae, *Mohammed*, London 1956, p. 126 & 145.

102. Habari za mbingu na 'arishi hatuziisi;
Kwani hatukwenda hatupati kuzikaisi;
Utwambie swifa za baiṭi-li-Muḳaḍḍasi,
Kwani tumekwenda, twaziyua zote 'alama.
103. Moyo wake T'umwa ukangia nyingi shughuli,
Mambo ya usiku asiweze kuyafaswili.
Mola ka'amuru Jiburilu kuinakili
Yote kuiweka mbele zake kuiṭezama.
104. Akawaṣwifia ṣwifa zake kizikariri
Kapima kwa nyayo na dhira'a ḥaṭṭa shibiri.
Na Abubakari naye kamba: ai Bashiri
Ndizo ṣwifa zake, uṣwibie zote 'alama.
105. Wote Maḳureshi wakanena: ai Amini,
Ndizo ṣwifa zake umeziye kuzibaini;
Tuna watu wetu safarini, bani fulani,
Waṭakuya lini, utwambie tukifahama.
106. Kamba: watu wenu kawa mbali, waṭaṭokea
Ijuma ya ṭano ndio siku yao ya kuya.
Yalipowaḍia siyo siku wakangojea
Wasiona kuya ḥaṭṭa yua buḍi kuzama.
107. T'umwa Muḥammaḍi akaomba Mola Waḍuḍi
Yua kuwaḳifu kuṭimia yake mi'aḍi.
Wakawaṭokea watu wao wote 'iḍaḍi.
Na yua lilipo ikaṭimu yake kalima.
108. Wakamba: ni kweli ṣwifa ndizo mezifaṣwili;
Naye ni saḥiri kama hayo kwake ḳalili,
Kwani yuapenda ḍini yetu kuibaṭili,
Ḥatumufuati tukawaṭa wetu ṣanama.
109. Naye muombezi tangu siku ya kwenda sama,
Kinuka 'arufu ya misiki na ṭibu njema,
Apitapo ndia 'arufuye siyakukoma;
Wapitao ndia hutambua kapita T'umwa.
110. Basi, nikomile Miiraji kuinudhumu
Kwa ḥamuḍi yake Maulana, Mola Karimu.
Ṣala na salamu na mbawazi na ṭaadhimu
Zimwendeye T'umwa na alize na wote jama.

103 c. *Kuinakili* lit. 'to copy it', 'to transfer it on to paper', i.e. to translate all that happened into human language.

107 b. *Kuwaḳifu* 'to cause to stand, stop, halt'. Cp. Joshua 10, 12-13.

- 102 a. "The story of heaven and God's throne, we do not know it,
b. because we cannot go and verify it.
c. Give us a description of the Holy Mosque,
d. because we have travelled, we know its features."
- 103 a. The heart of the Prophet was plunged in worries,
b. not being able to give details of what had happened that night.
c. The Lord ordered Gabriel to make a written report
d. and to put it in front of him to look at.
- 104 a. And he described for them the appearance (of the Holy Mosque)
and repeated it;
b. he measured it all out in feet and yards and even spans.
c. And Abu Bakari said: "Oh, Prophet,
d. this is its description, you have "caught" exactly all the outward
looks."
- 105 a. All the Koreish said: "You reliable one!
b. This is its description, you have made it completely clear.
c. Our men are travelling just now, the sons of so-and-so.
d. When will they arrive, tell us, that we may understand."
- 106 a. He said: "Your people are still far away, they will appear
b. on the fifth Friday from now, that is their day of arrival."
c. When this day came they were waiting.
d. They did not see anything until the Sun was due to set.
- 107 a. The Prophet prayed to his beloved God,
b. to hold the sun on its place in order to fulfill his promise.
c. And then their people appeared before them, the complete number.
d. And while the sun was still there his word came true.
- 108 a. They said: "It is true, the description you gave in such detail.
b. But he is a sorcerer as these things are a small matter for him.
c. Because he wants to annihilate our religion.
d. But we will not follow him and abandon our idols."
- 109 a. And the Intercessor since the day of his going to heaven,
b. had a fragrance about him of musc and pleasant perfumes.
c. When he passed on the road, his fragrance lingered.
d. The passers-by on the road knew: here passes the Prophet.
- 110 a. I have finished writing the Miiraji in poetic form
b. in praise of our Lord the Generous God.
c. Prayers and salaams and grace and glorification
d. may go to the Prophet and to his family and all his people.
- 108 c. *Kubaṭili*, lit. 'to nullify, make void, refute, disprove, invalidate'.
d. Allah made them blind, so they adore their idols.

111. Rabbi turehemu kwa rehema yako 'azizi,
Warehemu wote wasomao na wasikizi.
Sote turehemu kwa baraka za muombezi
Siku ya kiyama utwokoe na Jahannama.
112. Na mwenye kutunga mja wako Muhuyi-Dini,
Asuma'i jaza kwa hidima yake amini
K'awe miongoni mwake T'umwa kesho p'eponi;
Mwenye kuhudumu watu wema hupata mema.
113. Hattha ye kalubu kufuata wenye kahafu
Kungia p'eponi kwa lutufu yako Latifu.
Fa kaifa, swiye twatumai kwako wokofu
Kwa baraka zake muombezi wawi na wema.

Tamma hadithu Mi'rāji Rasūli bihamdi 'llāhi Maliki
'l-jalili wa shallā 'llāhu 'alā sāhibi 'l-wajihī
'l-jamili Sayidinā Muḥammadi 'l-hādi ilā
sawā 's-sabili wa 'alā ālihi wa ṣaḥa-
bihi wa man taba'a hadāhum
ila yōmi 'l-ba'athi
wa nushuri.

Amin
Amin
Amin.

Tārēhe 8 Jumāda 'l-'Awali sanaḥi 1314.

.....oOo.....

- 111 a. Lord, have mercy upon us with your gracious mercy.
b. Have mercy upon all who read this and on the listeners.
c. Have mercy upon us all through the blessing of the Intercessor.
d. On the day of resurrection save us from damnation.
- 112 a. And the poet is your servant Muhuyi-Dini,
b. who hopes for a reward for his service from the Prophet.
c. That I may be in the ranks of the Prophet tomorrow in Paradise.
d. He who serves good people acquires good things.
- 113 a. Even the hound of the seven sleepers in the cave
b. entered Paradise through Your kindness, o Kind One.
c. That is why we hope for Your salvation,
d. with the blessing of the Intercessor for good and bad people.

Here ends the tradition of the heavenly journey of the Prophet in praise of
God, King and Majesty.

May God say grace over the Friend of the beautiful Face,
our Lord Mohammed, the guide on to the smooth road,
and over his family and his companions,
and over whoever follows their guidance,
toward the day of resuscitation
and resurrection.

Amen

Date: 1st of November of the year 1896.

113 a. The dog of the Sleepers in the cave is mentioned in the Koran 18, 18-22.

Epilogue. *Sawā-sabili* the level road, or the straight road, to God, or to one's destination. Koran 28, 22.