SWAHILI
ISLAMIC POETRY

BY

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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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CHAPTER EIGHT

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

INTRODUCTION

The Mi'raj, Arabic Mi‘rūj, 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 Yahyā Ali Omar, of Mombasa, writes me: “In the country of the Swahili, the tradition of the Mi‘raj which was written by Najmu’d-Dīn ʿAl-Ǧāḥīṭīyy, is recited customarily and this story is not in verse (nadhimu), it is prose (tāthri). 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 17th the Swahili keep a fast (hufunga saumu).”

Najmu ‘d-Dīn Al-Ǧāḥīṭīyy (sic) must have had a special attraction for the Islamic peoples that his work is now accepted as a central piece in the muqaddas of the Mi‘raj, yet he is not even mentioned in the Encyclopedia of Islam. His prose work on the Mi‘raj 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 Kureish, and this is how he left the house: After morning prayers that morning, he told his cousin Umnu 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.” Umnu 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 (uqafiri)." 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. Nabi'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 (saminifu).

"There are people who deny the Miraaj 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 nasi), 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 Miraaj 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 Miraaj or something similar has happened to previous prophets is as follows:

1. Genes 3, 24 (sic; this is meant to refer to Genesis 5, 24), "Enokha 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 Enokho 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 (uppepo 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 Miraaj is the only one recited in the towns of East Africa", and that he added nothing to it.

The text of the Miraaj 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 diacritics 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 Dammam's, which is much longer and presents the episodes in a different order.

The Arabic prose versions of Barzanji and Ibn 'Abbâs are both 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, Jibrîlî, Mikailî 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 Jibrîlî descended through it.

2. Jibrîlî opens Mohammed's breast from the dimple in his throat to his belly and tells Mikailî to bring a basin of zamzam-water to cleanse the heart 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 Usame) 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 (ushupava) 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 Sinan, 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 Afrili 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. 297–298]. The woman is called mswusi or msonsi, 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 (amina) 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 (futina), 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. Jibril 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 Ibrahimmu 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 Mi’raj 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-Hafūda, ‘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 (wazinifi) 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 Jibril 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 Ibrahimm seated in the gateway of Paradise on a golden throne, resting with his back against the Baitul-Maamuri, which Al-Amin glosses as Nyumba ya ibada ‘House of Worship’. Ibrahimm 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 repentened, and God accepted their repentance. The names of the rivers are: the first one is RahaMATULlahi ‘God’s mercy’, the second is Ni‘imatul’lahi ‘God’s bliss’, and the third is Warakhum Rabbukum sharawtul taharan ‘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 sahe). He sees his people divided in two groups, some with paper-white clothes on, and some with ash 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 Baitul-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 Mkuuni saa muwishi; Greenway¹ gives for mkuuni 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 (virihi), 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 Jujub 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 eightenfold.' 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 (usafira) 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 (Fātihā). I have also given you the final verses (Sura 2, 280–6) which stem from the treasure under the Throne (hazina ilīyo tīni 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 Sacka, 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. (Et cetera, 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 as-Siddihi (the Believer) who believed him. Stanza 96–101.

42. "The Meccan unbelievers challenged Mohammed to give them an accurate description of the Great Mosque (Baitul-Mukaddasi) in Jerusalem, which several of them knew from previous journeys. Mohammed was seized by great anxiety (akashikwa na hamu kulewa), but the mosque was brought close to him (akakurubishwa miskili), and was placed near the house of his brain (nyumbani 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 (mgaanga). 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 damu, 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 fitagaran, 71, 13; 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 sharī'ah 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 salaṭ 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 mira is (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 volto-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 isra’, 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 (sabr) of Jerusalem that the Caller (munādī) will stand when God has ordered Isra’il (Isareli) 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 (Mahashara) after their resurrection. Jerusalem (Ar. al-Quds, Sw. Kudusi) was the city of King David (Nabi 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 Bū’āk 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 halifa (successor), their imām (religious leader), as well as the seal (hisfendo) 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’-Harāmi 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’-Harāmi because: ‘We have made you a community of the middle’ (or: ‘a central church’ ummatan wasalā’ an, 2, 143). From now on, Mecca is the centre of the lower universe, to which all believers must direct their prayers. After formu-
iating 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-Mubahin (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 Miraji coincide: the ascension to God, the institution of the salat, 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) crow every day at the right time for the morning prayer. Mohammed was the imâm 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 sirâf, the road to Paradise, mentioned in the Koran in this very connection: 2, 142. We must conclude that the sirâl 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 Mîrâj 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 salât, is perhaps the most important. God tells His

Prophet that the shahâda, 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 Mîrâj is the guide for the spiritual journey, the Imiatio 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 umârî, 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 Handhi, 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 Mîrâj 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 logos 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.
1. Nanza kunudhunu kwa isimu yake Karima
    Mola mu'adhamu mufuku mwenyi rebeja.
    Hazina umonu swifa zake mwenyi sadhama
    Sapa na salamu na mbawazi Zendee T'umwa.

2. Na alize thumma na sahaba tuwasalie
    Tunali mirafi maononi mwao tunganji.
    Siku ya kiyama wasiamu Lewatomee
    Tupate wokovu siku nzito ya Jahannama.

3. Basii, nkonile, sikithiri muno dibaji,
    Kwani nina mambo nayapenda kuyadiriji.
    Ni hajithi ngema ya usiku wa Miraji.
    Yake mwenyi ja'ha, mpandishwa jua la sama.

4. Lipoawdia Mola wetu kudhihirisha
    Jaha ya Nabi Jiburilu alimushasha.
    Alipomwenda, aliile, kamuamusha:
    Ondoka silale, Mola wako akwita hima.

5. Alipoamuka muonbazi wakapasua
    Kifua na nyongo zothe ghashi wakazitoa.
    Wakisha kushona kana kwamba hakupasua.
    Uwene Buraqi mbele zake amesimama.

6. Jiburilu kamba: Mola wako akusallimu
    T'umiswe kukwita kwenda nawe kwake Karimu.
    Upande Buraqi wende hima ujjaajamu!
    Buraqi katupa Jiburilu katakallama:

7. Simkengeuke kipendo kye Mola Karimu!
    Kamba: mkontwe eshishie muumi samamu.
    Ndipo k'akataa kunishika yake jisimu
    Jiburilu kamba: mufuku kipendo kyema.

8. Kamba: marihaba, kutukua ndio adhabu
    Nami nayajua, yaneea yenzi thawabu.
    Bali nina yambo nami kwake nali buildup
    Dhamana ya pepeo kuniweka mahala pema.

4. b. Jaha, Ar. jaha, 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.

5. d. Kutupa, lit. 'to jump up, to throw oneself,' said of horses.

**THE POEM OF THE I-ADDER**

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 Intercensor woke them 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 Burak standing in front of him.

    b. I have been sent to call you, to go with you to where God is.
    c. Mount Burak and go quickly, proceed!”
    d. Burak shied, Gabriel spoke:

7. a. “Do not turn away from him! (He is) the Beloved of the generous God!”
    b. (But Burak) 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.”
9. Burâki kuona mambo yake yote kuitum
Kumudhamazona muomboki wake Karimu.
Akanika kitiwa kwa furaha na tabasamu;
Tumwa kamupanda aakaomba Mola Karima.

10. Kwenda-kwe Rasuli akaika pake Madina
Jiburilu kamba: shuka hapâ mwombe Rabbana.
Sali taraka' raka'ati mbili za suna
Kisha umtaye Mola wako matayo mema.

11. Kisa wakenenda wakaika Turi Sinina,
Jiburilu kamba: sali hapâ Tumwa Amina.
Ndipo pa-munâja wake Musa buni 'Amrana
Palikuwa shani ya maneno yake Kadjima.

12. Kisa wakenenda wakaika Betilahamu
Alipozaliwa Tumwa Isu buni Maryamu.
Jiburilu kamba: Salî hapâ utâka'damu
Muombe Rabbuka sapa ndipo mahlâ pema.

13. Kisha wakenenda wakaona jinni shaqidi
Na kinga kya moto murumika Tumwa Sayyidi.
Jiburilu kamba: soma diwa, omba Waqidi;
Tumwa akaoma, 'ifuriji ikazizima.

14. Kisha wakenenda, mambo mangi wakayaona,
Wakaona watu, wakuya p'unde huvuna.
Jiburilu kamba: watu sao mujahidina;
Wendao jihadi wajazive majaza mema.

9. c. -mka, from -mita, cp. the reverse -muka, '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. Munâja 'secret confidences' refers to God's revelations to Moses near the
Burning Bush (Exodus 3: 3). 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 (shajara,
Koran 28, 30; the place is called the Sacred Valley Wadi-Mukhadis, 20: 12;
70, 16), was the same tree from which Moses cut a stick atâdi with which he
later struck the sea so that it split (Koran 26, 63).
13. a. It was believed that Bethlehem was a big city in Syria.
14. c. Wâlahadâma 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. Burâk 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 twice 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 Tûr in Sinai.
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
horse against fire of any kind. For the text of this magic formula see Swahili
36/2, p. 133.
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 suste-
nance.'

THE POEM OF THE LADDER

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 Pharao, 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 Pharao 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 Zaqoom.
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."

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15 d. Kisulima ‘to surrender, submit’, equals the Arabic infinitive islám ‘submission, surrender’, i.e. to God (Koran 6: 71; 22: 34; 40: 66); the faithful are submitted (muslimáw). See this history my Traditional Swahili Poetry, p. 209.
16 d. Evil is associated with a bad smell, just as virtue is with a pleasant fragrance like perfume. The woman’s name is given as Fänah or ‘Asiya, or Måshi, ‘hairdresser’. She stepped into Pharao’s boiling oil because she would not adore him.
18 c. It is essential to rise just before dawn to perform the salát - asubibi, 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 1, 17); woe unto those who neglect their prayers (107: 4–5); the saalát at night is strongly encouraged: 17, 79; 20, 130; 50, 49; 73. 2, 20. Vigils are still a frequent form of worship.
19 b. Those who were too miserly to pay their zakáát (‘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 Zaqoom (Koran 44, 44), a tree the fruits of which will boil in the stomachs of the damned like molten metal.
20 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.
21. Kishwa wakanenda wakaona mtu njiani
   Kupasa nguo apitaye lhana amani.
   Jibirilu kamba: ni wakazi wa vingojoni
   Watindao njia, jaza ya ni jahannama.

22. Kishwa wakanenda wakaona mto wao jamu
   Muna watu ndani wakilia wakila sumu.
   Jibirilu kamba: watu sao wala jamu;
   Ndio jaza yao wajiziva kesho Kiyama.

23. Kishwa wakanenda wakaona mutu dhalili
   Hujaaka jitweka hawiwezi tweka thakili,
   Kuzidia tena kuongoza haibimili;
   Jibirilu kamba: ni amana katika dhima.

24. Kishwa wakanenda wakaona watu shakiya;
   Waikiaiwa ndimi kwa makasi zikireja.
   Ndio halı yao wakarwapo ndimi kumea.
   Jibirilu kamba: ni waongo wasyo kalima.

25. Kishwa wakanenda wakaona watu shururi;
   Wapapura nyuso kwa makucha yao sufuri.
   Jibirilu kamba: ni wambao watu jairi.
   Siku ya Kiyama nyuso zoa 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 Naqshabandi 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 Madyan 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 allusion 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

THE POEM OF THE LADDER

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
exxoges see my notes quoted above and Trad. Swah. Poetry loc. cit.

23 d. *Amuna* '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 katiha 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 Heli-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 Miraji with the
   others (Swah. Poetry, p. 213, Swahili 36/2, p. 144) 'unjust' refers to un-
   just 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, 
Akafika ng’ombe kureja tena hawezi; 
Jibirilu kamba; anenaye asomaizi, 
Hunena maneno akayuta yanda kiuma.

27. Kisha wakenenda wakaona wawangu tawili 
Na sauti njema na ‘arufu isyo mitahi. 
Jibirilu kamba: sikiliza Tumwa Rasuli 
Sautili ya pe’peo yalingana Mola Karima.

28. Rabbi nawatuka watu wango nawayamani. 
Ni neema nyingi nawangoja wayao linio. 
Mola kamwambia: ni wako-we kula mumini. 
Wake na waume wauadai nyingi neema.

29. Kisha wakenenda wakaona wawangwa wa hari, 
Na sauti mbaya munkari kama himari, 
Na ‘arufu mbaya, kahimili mwenyi saburi. 
Jibirilu kamba; ni sauti ya Jahannama.

30. Yalingana Rabbi nauziwa kwa nyingi hari; 
Nataka shururi watu wangu, watu wa nari. 
Mola kamwambia: ni wako-we kula jabbazi, 
Wake na waume wa’asiiyo Mola Karima.

31. Kisha wakenenda wakaona nguza ya wuri 
Imetukuliwa na malaki wake Bashiri. 
Jibirilu kamba: wamurwe kuikariri 
Nguza ya imani kuweka nji ya sama.

32. Kisha wakenenda kasikia mutu kinadi; 
Tumwa kanyama asitike yake miradi. 
Jibirilu kamba: we sabie ndiye Yahiadi. 
Lau utishile umaatio wawele kama.

26 c. In contrast to the preceding stanza, these people have spoken rashly, without discernment (kwaswali) and soon regretted what they had blurted out. To control one’s tongue (batusuwa 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, creations of God with a personality of their own who can speak with a human voice. Contrary to Maa, 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’tumu) as against the tyrants and oppressors (jabbabi). 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.
26 b. A cow came out and wanted to go back again but could not.
26 c. Gabriel said: “He who speaks without discernment.
26 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,
27 b. and (heard) a pleasant voice, and (perceived) unequalled smells.
27 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.
28 b. I am great beatitude, I wait for those who will come... when?"
28 c. God told him: “Yours is every faithful person,
28 d. women and men for whom you claim great happiness.”

29 a. After that they went and saw a plain of heat,
29 b. and the ugly voice of Munkar, like donkeys,
29 c. and perceived unpleasant smells (which) he endured, being a man of patience.
29 d. Gabriel said: “It is the voice of hell.”

30 a. It said: “Lord, I am plagued with excessive heat;
30 b. I want the immoral people, my people of the fire.”
30 c. The Lord answered: “Every oppressor is yours,
30 d. the women and the men who rebelled against the Mild Lord.”

31 a. They went on and saw a pillar of light;
31 b. it was carried for the Messenger by His angel.
31 c. Gabriel said: “They have been ordered to hold steady
31 d. the pillar of faith and to place it under the sky.”

32 a. They went on and heard a man calling;
32 b. the Prophet was silent, for he did not respond to his (the other one’s) intentions.
32 c. Gabriel said: “You young one, he is a Jew;
32 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.

31-33 Mohammed’s behaviour is, of course, meant to be imitated by all his
33. Again they heard somebody facing them, from the left side;
   a. the Prophet was silent for he did not respond to his (the other
      one's) words.
   b. They went on and saw a beautiful woman.
   c. She was wearing a shawly dress and necklaces.
   d. Gabriel said: “It is a Christian, a slave of error, and he wants to lead your community astray from the right road.”
34. 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.”
35. 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.
36. 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 light from the grave of Mary.
37. 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.
38. a. Gabriel said: “You must be leader of the prayer, you are imām;
   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.”

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.

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.

Satan is the enemy of God and therefore the enemy of Mohammed. Rajm, lit. ‘stoned’, like adulterers who are driven from a town with stones by the townspeople. Satan is banished by God: Koran 15. 34.

All the prophets God ever sent to Earth, are resurrected 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 Mohammedian prophecy, 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. Mohammed is told to stand as the leader (kutabagama) 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. When they finished praying every man pronounced Allah's names, a. the qualities of the Lord, and was grateful for the bliss. b. They congratulated themselves with the gifts of the Forger. c. The qualities of the Prophet surpass those of the other Prophets. d. Thirst seized the Confessor, and cups arrived, filled with milk, water, honey and sweet palmwine. 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 coralite; 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, 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.

41 a. Gods 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 a. It is not quite clear how the Swahili author visualised the miraaji, knowing the immense distances that separate Earth from the first heaven. In one of the other Swahili versions the word jukuuu is used which means a platform utilised in Swahili ports for hoisting cargo onto a dhow. Most likely, the miraaji is pictured as such a planarius 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 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. 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. They were answered: “Welcome, honourable one.”
  a. He saw the sincere Joseph with his fine appearance.
  b. He began greeting the Confessor with respect.
  c. He welcomed him and put him in a good place.
  d. After that they arrived at the fourth heaven rapidly.
49. a. Gabriel said: “Open ye, the Good Messenger is here.”
  b. (He) said: “Welcome, come through with him without delay.”
  c. 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, 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 Maleisie Literatuur, Leiden 1947, p. 161; a different version in Pugliaro & Bausani, Storia della Letteratura Persiana, Milano 1960, p. 683, where the one who gain immortality are Elias and Khezz; a similar version in Indonesia in Poebolon, 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. Hárán.
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, Kurani).
53. They saw the army of Moses, in a state of readiness,
   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. He saw Moses, he 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. “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. 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. 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, be is your grandfather and origin.”
   d. He gave salam to his forefather Abraham.

58. 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. 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?”

53. The army of Moses is his umma, his church, i.e. all the Jews of history to
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 coun-
tries, 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

55. Karima is a prophet’s power, given by God’s generosity, to work wonders,
especially to cure the sick.
60. 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. 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.

62 a. And this number entered the house every day.
b. and again others in the past and in the present.
c. They went inside and prayed.
d. They saw there 700,000 angels, good creatures.

63 a. And their announcer of the prayer is the faithful Gabriel.
b. whose leader 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 Prophecyhood,
c. where there is the Jujube-tree of the End of all things.
d. They saw many wonderful things, without ending.

69-60. 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, Mohammad'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. misani 'scales'. The first and foremost duty
of the angels is to pray to God on behalf of Mankind and to praise Him
(Koran 13; 12; 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.
66. Wawene ūninwe mito mine yoţe yajiri,
Mai na maziwa na ‘asali, wa nne ḥamuri,
Na k’unazi zake ṭamu muno kama sukari,
Jani lake moya lafunika wọte ‘umaraa.

67. Hakuna muweza kuśifuwa kaţtu hakuna,
Ilia Mola wetu mwényi ‘ezzi k’un Rabbana,
Apendalo kuwa ni ‘amur: kwa fa yakuna!
Akaugeuzu wasiweze kuģezaama.

68. Kisha kauona mto wake T’umwa Bashiri
‘Atwiy ya Mola na inale ni Kauthari,
Wakaufasa kuwandama wake athari
Hata wakašika nyumba njema yenye neema.

69. Wakaona mambo ya viumbe wasiiona
Wala kusikia kwa ḥebari wenye kunema,
Wala muyawaza kwa moyoni kaţtu hakuna.
Wawene langoni yanqishwiwe ḥadjithi njema.

70. Saţajka ni moya kwa ‘ashara ndio jaza-ye,
Na kumi na nane yuwambiwa akhiridhiye
Muţaka karadhıa kuţakaye kwa dharura-ye.
Mumba saţajka kuomboyo ali na nema.

71. Akaona p’pepo, nufanowe hakuiona
Ipamibwe fedha na dhahabu kwa marijana
Na zabarujudj ni yaku yi neya launa
Na nau’u nyingi za ḥariri njema na’ima.

72. Kisha wakaţoka kaoyeshwa moto mukali,
Kaona vituko vya ‘adhabu hakujumili.
Kakosa fahamu ikazula yake ‘akili,
Jiburitu thamma kamudhumumu akafahama.

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 humans.

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 Things saw his own river,
b. a present from God, its name is Abundance.
c. They followed it and went along its sides,
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 aim 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 coralite,
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.

66 c. Dharura ‘loss, damage’.

67 c. 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 essence is easy.

68 a. The river Kauthar ‘Abundance’, given by Allah to the faithful (Koran 101)
b. This is Baita‘n-Na‘imu, the Blissful House, see p. 88.

d. God who instituted offerings and sacrifices, has also instituted the blessing
which who give receive.

An alternative interpretation would be: the person who gives the alms, is the
one who creates it, who causes the alms to exist, and he has also the bliss of
giving. Finally, the first word of this line can be read Mumbi, in which case
the translation is: He who begged for an alms 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.

72 a. 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
Jiburili kwenda hakweza ka'ashaari.
Akamba: siwezi kwenda mbele b'atta shibiri,
Sapa ndipo pangu, Muonbizi ka'ashaadama.

74. Pakaja kiwingu kya rehema yake Jalili,
Kikamufunika Muonbizi T'umwa Rasuli.
T'umwa kamwambia: b'aja gani yako Jalili
Ambayo wataka ni uswia kwahe Karima.

75. Jiburili kamba: b'aja yangu niitakayo,
Siku ya swira maka ingia ya umahyo
Ninyoshe mabawa yawe ingia ya zaoo nyayo,
Uswapateo moto harri ya Jahanama.

76. Kisha akakia rafurafa ikenda naye
Kapita hijabu zoete pia kamaonaye
Mwaliwa Ta'ala, pasi kefa kwayo matoye
Wala pasi ena pa kwimia wala makama.

77. Mola yumuwene kwa matoye yoete mawili,
Akanza salamu tabiyatu yake Jalili.
Mola kamujibu: na salamu yako Rasuli,
Ndiwe mutese wa kuweka mala mera.

78. Alipomuna Mola wake aso mithal,
Asiwwe neno kutumuka yake kaauli;
Akenda sijida. Kamwambia Mola Jalili;
Omba utakalo utapowa yoete tizama.

73 a. The Messenger passed on to the eighth rung of the ladder.
b. Gabriel could not go and stay 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 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 footsteps,
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.
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."

73. Gabriel, like all creatures, has his limits, and he has now reached it: if he were to go beyond this boundary of the ulaha, 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 rafurafa, which according to some is a cloud; kivungu 'a little cloud', is always used for a special shade to protect Mohammed against light and heat. Others describe rafurafa as a veil of green silk to protect the Prophet's eyes. Finally, the rafurafa is called a sedan-chair (map'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 the good Muslims whom Gabriel wishes to protect.

76 a. The palanquin: see the note to v. 74.
b. 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. Keja, kusja '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, undescribable, 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 Iburahimu
Ni wako mwendani, nami ni yangu sehemu?
Mola kamwambia: nawe Tumwa wangu fahamu
Ni kipendo kyangu afadhali ya wote Tumwa.

80. Kamba: tumupele Daauqi yake zaburi,
Na Sulaimani kumiliki jioni na tweri;
Nawe ni awali ya Mitume, ndiwe aheri
Nidhakuriwako na isimu yako i nyuma.

81. Na kamaye 'Isa akipoza kulli kilema,
Na kuwafuuka waifeo yake kalima,
Nawe nikupele kufuliko na magui kama
Ni yako kanizi ya 'arishi isiyokoma.

82. Na uma ti wako afudhali kuliko pia,
Siku ya kiyama utukuya kushuhudia.
Pindi wakanaapo makufari wote nambia
Hawakutabia mambo ya wailo tumwa.

83. Ai muombezi wa awali haata aheri,
Muombea umma siku nzito ya mahashari;
Siku ya swira kutanidikwa yuu la nari,
Ndwe muombezi siku hiyo wawi na wema.

84. Saya upewego, haku mtu aliyepawa;
Uhimidi kwayo ushukuru zangu zipa wa.
Nikufaridhie hamusini sala tukuwa,
Wewe na uma ti kulli siku sali timama.

85. Hijabu ya nuru ikondoka; akarejea
Alipo amnini Jibirili aasafikia.
Wakashuka wote wakaona Musa Nabiya,
Akamuhubiri haariye haata kukoma.

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 dead and the good.

84 a. "These things that you have been given, there is no other person
b. who received them.
c. Praise God for them, give thanks for My gifts.
d. I have made compulsory fifty prayers for you to carry out.

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. Mahashari' gathering, collecting', when all Mankind will be gathered (15, 25:
37, 24).
c. The Bridge as thin as a hair, strung over the Fire.
The Poem of the Ladder

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

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
89 d. Uriëhì, lit. ‘pleasure’.
90 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.

92. God throws meteors (šīkāhā) at the devils who try to penetrate heaven, hoping to glean some information about the future. Koran 15, 10-18; 37, 6-10, 67, 5. ‘Thieves are punished with a bright flash.’
94. Katika kwenenda wakaona wangi ngamia,
Waˈɔkao Shamu Maˈɔureshi kawapitia.
Waonapo wanyama Buraˈk wakakimbia,
Moja kavunˈdi ka lake ondo, siveze kwima.

95. Wakanenda tena wakaona wangi baˈiri;
Moya kapotea, wakenenda kumudjabiri.
Kasua salamu nuumbezi Tˈumwa Bashiri.
Wakamba: sauti ya salamu ni yake Tˈumwa.

96. Kisha wakenenda wakafika Maka na giza
Kusijacha sana aˈakaa Tˈumwa kawaza.
Aliwajaufu Maˈɔureshi yao mayaza
Na kukadhibisha kwa ḥabari yake ya sama.

97. Katika kuwaza na kumaka Tˈumwa Rasuli
Yumuwenye ˈasi maleˈuni Abu Jahali.
Akamudjasisi kwa dhika kuyua ḥali:
Ai Muˈɔamadiri nakwona uko kunama.

98. Una yambo gani ku mao la kughayiri?
Ukataˈaˈjadi la wako uso usinawiri;
Kunambia nami, nikayua yako ḥabari;
Siyo ḥali yako tuyuayo Abu Kasima.

99. Amamba: naˈamu, ˈakwambia yangu ḥabari;
Usiku wa leo naliwenda mbali safari,
Kˈaˈfika mbinguni nikaona Mola Jabbari,
Akanipa mambo ya kuˈunza wangu mutima.

100. Akazikusanya maleˈuni zoˈte ᵇibili
Kuisikiliza ḥabari-ye Tˈumwa Rasuli.
Alipoweleza ḥabariye yoˈte kamali
Pakwa kйтеko na dhika na kumuzoma:

101. "Ai Muˈɔamadiri, ni uwongo yako ḥabari,
Usiku umoya wafikia mbali zsafari,
Mbingu ukazisha ukoana Mola Jabbari
Uzidi shani, uwongo-we hashaye Tˈumwa.

94 a. While travelling they saw many camels
b. coming from Syria, with the Koreish; he passed them.
c. When the animals saw Burák 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 dawnning; 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. Ḥabari za mbingu na ‘arishi ḥatuziisi;
   Kwani hatukwenda hatupatasi kuzikaasi;
   Utwambie swifa za baqita-li-Muqaddas,
   Kwani tumekwenda, twaziya zote ‘alama.

103. Moyo wake Tumwa nkangia nginingi shughuli,
   Mambo ya usiku asiweze kuyafasiwili.
   Mola ka'amururu Jiburihi kuziva
   Yothe kuweka mbele zake kuifezama.

104. Akawashifa swifa zake kizikariri
   Kapima kwa nyayo na dhira'a ḥatta shibiri.
   Na Abubakari naye kamba: ai Bashiri
   Ndizo swifa zake, uṣwilie zote ‘alama.

105. Wothe Makureshi wakakweli: ai Amini,
   Ndizo swifa zake umeziyc kuzibaaini;
   Tuna watu weto safarini, bani fulani,
   Watakuwa lini, niwambie tukifahama.

106. Kamba: watu wenu kwa mbali, waṭatoke;
   Ijuma ya tano ndio siku yao ya kuva.
   Yalipowajia siyo siku wakangojea
   Wasonie kuwa ḥatta yua buḍi kuzama.

107. Tumwa Muḥammad akakweli Mola Waqoje
   Yua kuwaṣṣa kuṣumiya yake mi'aḍi.
   Wakawatoke wa wa woṭe ‘iḍaṭi.
   Na yua lilio ikaṭimu yakc kailima.

108. Wakamba: ni kweli swifa ndizo mezifaṣwili;
   Naye ni sahiri kuma hayo kwake kaṭili,
   Kwani yaupenda dini yetu ikuṭaṭi,
   Ḥatumaufati tukawaṭa wetu saana.

109. Naye muomeza tangu siku ya kwenda sama,
   Kinuka ‘arufu ya misiki na ṭibu njema,
   Apitaṇo njia ‘arufuye siyakukoma;
   Wapitaṇo njia hatumba kapita Tumwa.

110. Basi, nikomile Miiraji kuimudumu
   Kwa ḥamudji yake Maulana, Mola Karimu.
   Šala na salamu na mbawazi na Šadimu
   Zimwendeye Tumwa na alize na wothe jama.

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103. *Kuziva:* lit. ‘to copy it’, ‘to transfer it on to paper’, i.e. ‘to translate all that happened into human language.
108. *Kuwaṭi:* lit. ‘to nullify, make void, refute, disprove, invalidate’. d. Allah made them blind, so they adore their idols.
III. Rabbi turehemu kwa rehema yako 'azizi,
   Warehemu wote wasomao na wasikizi.
   Soše turehemu kwa bara ka muombezi
   Siku ya kiyama utwokoe na Jahannama.

II. Na mwenye kutunga mja wako Muḥyī-Dini,
   Aṭuma'i jaza kwa ḥiḍima yake amini
   K'awe miongoni mwake T'umwa keso p'eponi;
   Mwenye kuḥuḍuma watu wema hupata mema.

III. Ḥaṭṭa ye ḋalubu kufuata wenye ḋahafu
   Kungia p'eponi kwa lutufu yako Laṭifi.
   Fa kaifa, swiye twaṭumai kwako wokofu
   Kwa bara ka zake muombezi wawi na wema.

Tamma haditi Muṭrāji Rasūli bihamdi 'llāhi Maliki
   'l-jalili wa ςallā 'llāhu 'alā ẓāhibi 'l-wajihi
   'l-Jamīli Sayidinā Muḥammadi 'l-hādi ila
   sawā 'l-sabili wa 'alā ʿlāhi wa saḥa-
   bihi wa man taba'a hadāhum
   ila yomi 'l-ba'athi
   wa nushuri.

Amin
Amin
Amin.

Tārehe 8 Jumāda '1-Ãwali sanātī 1314.

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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 Muḥyī-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.

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