

أُنْتَزِرُ وَ جَعْفَرُ

uṭēnzi wa ja'far
The Ballad of Ja'far

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

bismillāhi ar-rahmani ar-rahīmi

In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

(١) بِسْمِ اللَّهِ إِخْوَانٍ * پَمُونِ رَحْمَنِ * نَ الرَّحِيمِ يُونِ * نَدِي يَلَانْدَمِي

yaloandamiya ndiyo * yuwani rrahīmu na * raḥmāni na pamwe * ikhwāni llāhi bismi

[1] (1) bismillahi ihiwani * pamwe na rahamani * na ar-rahimu yuwani * ndiyo yaloandamiya

“In the name of God”, my friends along with “the Compassionate” and “the Merciful” -- know that that is what goes first.

(٢) پُلِكَنِ نْدُزَنُغُ * كَهِنْدَ مَتَمْبِزِ يَنْغُ * نَوْبَ خَبَرِ زَنْغُ * قِصَصَ چَلَنِجِرِي

chalonijiriya qīṣa * zangu khabari niwape * yangu matembezi k^henda * nduzangu pulikani

[2] (2) pulikani nduzangu * kenda matembezi yangu * niwape habari zangu * qīsa chalonijiriya

Listen, my brothers, I went on a journey. Let me give you my story, an account of what happened to me.

(٣) نِيلِ نَنْدَاءِ نَدِينِ * كَوْلِ نَ مَتِّ چُمْبَنِ * مِي أُكَمْتَمَنِ * كَوَ حَلَالِ كُرْضِي

kurīḍiya ḥalāli kwa * ukamtamani moyo * chumbani mṭu na kwali * ndiyani nendao nili

[3] (3) nili nendao ndiani * kwali na mtu¹ chumbani² * moyo ukamtamani³ * kwa halali kuridhiya⁴

I was going along the road, and there was a person in a room, and my heart desired her, and I was gratified lawfully.

(٤) نَ مَهْرِي يُونِ * نَلْمِپَ زَيْدَنِ * نَلِنَ پَ چَنْدَنِ * كَوَهَ كُمْفَلِي

kumvaliya kawahi * chandani peṭe nalina * zaydani nalompa * yuwani mahariye na

[4] (4) na mahariye yuani * nalompa zaidani * nalina peṭe⁵ chandani * kawahi kumvaliya

And know that as for her dowry, which I gave her as well, I had a ring on my finger, and I persuaded her to wear it.

(٥) عَلِي كُتَاكَ كَوَاكَ * أَنْ رَبِّ مِي وَكَ * أَكِنْدَ كَوَ مَكِ وَكَ * مَكْنُ هُمْفُمِي

humfumbiya mkono * wake mke kwa akenda * wake moyo ruba una * kwake kutoka ‘ali

[5] (5) Aliyi kutoka kwake * una ruba moyo wake * akenda kwa mke wake * mkono humfumbiya⁶

When Ali left [Atika] his heart was troubled -- when he went to his wife [Fatima], he hid his hand from her.

¹The woman's name is Atika, but we are not told this until 348b, with an end-of-line variant, Atiya, in 341d.

²Atika probably went indoors to hide from Ali. The custom is for women to hide from men of their own status. Therefore, if they hide when they see a man coming, the man will be pleased, because it is a compliment to him to be considered of noble status. On the other hand, if the woman does not hide, the man may be angry, because he will think she is looking down on him. Thus, women will not hide from lascivious people, but only from those who aren't, because they are worthy of more respect.

³Note that in the Y version it is Ali who desires Atika, but that in the R version it is Atika who desires Ali.

⁴Ali did not want to sin by committing adultery with her, so he decides *kuoa kwa siri*, to marry in secret. Among the Swahili it is possible to have an *mke wa siri*, secret wife, if it is thought that the first wife or other people would object. An *mke wa siri* has all the rights of an ordinary wife, except that the marriage is not publicised.

⁵This ring is an important factor in the rest of the story, because it had been given to Ali by his wife Fatima.

⁶i.e. to hide the fact that he was not wearing the ring.

(٦) مَوْنٌ بِنْتِ رَسُولٍ * يَلِ هَيْتًا مَلٍ * كَبِنْدَ مَوْنِي عَقِلٍ * خَبَرَ أَكْمَوْمِي

akamwambiya khabari * aqili mwenye kanenda * hayataamali yali * rasūli binti mwana
[6] (6) Mwana binti Rasuli⁷ * yale hayataamali⁸ * kanenda mwenye akili * habari akamwambiya
The Lady daughter of the Prophet was unaware of these things [until] someone in the know went and told her the news.

(٧) أَكْبِنْدَةُ كِزِي * فَاطِمَةُ أَكْمَوْمِي * شَيْخٌ عَلِيٌّ أُوْزِي * خَبَرَ هُكْسِي

hukisikiya khabari * uwozee ‘alii shēkhe * akamwambiye fāṭimah * kizee akenendae
[7] (7) akenendaye kizee⁹ * Fatima akamwambie * Shehe Aliyi uozee * habari hukisikiya
The person who went was an old woman, and she said to Fatima: Sheikh Ali has got married -- have you heard the news?

(٨) أَكْفَنِي مَشَوْشَ * فَاطِمَةُ كَمَكْنَشَ * عَلَامَ كَمُونَشَ * أَتْنَعُ أَكْمِي

akamṭiya utungu * kamuonesha ‘alāma * kamkanusha fāṭimah * mshawasha akafanya
[8] (8) akafanya mshawasha * Fatima kamkanusha * alama kamuonyesha * utungu akamṭiya
She tried to convince Fatima, but Fatima refused to believe her, but [the old woman] gave her proof, and made her worried.

(٩) مَوْنٌ بِنْتِ أَمِينٍ * هِيَ نَدِي تَمَكِينٍ * أَلِ نَ پَ چَنْدَنِ * كَوَهُ كُمْفِي

kumvuliya kawahi * chandani peṭe na ali * tamkini ndiyo hiyo * amīni binti mwana
[9] (9) Mwana binti Amīni¹⁰ * hiyo ndiyo tamkini¹¹ * ali na peṭe chandani * kawahi kumvuliya
Lady, daughter of the Trustworthy One, [said the old woman], this is true. He had a ring on his finger, and he took it off [to leave it] with her."

(١٠) سَجُو كَهَنَنْ نِ كُولِ * مِمِ سِمْتَامَلِ * أَرْدِپُ كَوِ رَسُولِ * بِي تَهْمَزَنْغِي

t^hamzingatiya yeo * rasūli kwa arudipo * simtaamali mimi * kweli ni k^hanena sijuwi
[10] (10) sijui¹² kanena ni kweli * mimi simtaamali * arudipo kwa Rasuli * yeo tamzingatiya
I don't know, said [Fatima], if that is true. I didn't pay him any heed. When he comes back from the Prophet's today, I will ask him.

(١١) أَكْفَنِي هِمَ هِمَ * أَسِيوَزِ فَاطِمَةَ * حَسَنِ أَكْمَمِ * بِيكَ نَمَكْلِي

namkuliya babako * akamṭuma ḥasani * fāṭimah asiiweze * hima hima akafanya
[11] (11) akafanya hima hima * asiiweze¹³ Fatima * Hasani¹⁴ akamṭuma * babako namkuliya¹⁵
But Fatima then acted immediately -- she could not restrain herself. She sent Hasan, [saying:] "I am summoning your father."

⁷i.e. Fatima.

⁸-taamali, observe.

⁹This old woman is likely a devil in disguise, whose aim is to stir up enmity between Fatima and Ali. Fatima realises this later (44). This devil reappears in a different disguise in an extended episode in R (45-93), where he tries to get the better of Ali.

¹⁰The Prophet was called *al-Amin* from his teenage years onward, because he was reliable and even-handed to all.

¹¹tamkini = hakika, kweli

¹²It makes more sense to follow R here, and place this stanza before the one beginning "Mwana binti Amīni...".

¹³hakuweza kustahimili.

¹⁴Hasan was Ali and Fatima's elder son, and Husayn (250) their younger.

¹⁵N. -amkulia = S. -itia

(١٢) نَمَكُلِي كَو سِرٍ * أَسِسِكِي بِشِيرٍ * كَنَدَ أَكْفَسِرٍ * مَبَل زَ تُمَو نَبِي

nabiya tumwa za mbele * akafasiri kenenda * bashiri asisikiye * siri kwa namkuliya

[12] (12) namkulia kwa siri * asisikie Bashiri * kenenda akafasiri¹⁶ * mbele za Tumwa Nabiya¹⁷

I am summoning him secretly, so that the Bearer of Good Tidings does not hear. [But Hasan] went and spoke [openly], in front of the Messenger, the Prophet.

(١٣) كَفَسِرٍ مُعِينٍ * هَمَكُلُو نِيْمَبِنٍ * أَكِسِكِي أَمِينٍ * عَجَبُ إِكْمَنْغِي

ikamngiya 'ajabu * amīni akisikiya * nyumbani hamkuliwa * mu'ayani kafasiri

[13] (13) kafasiri muayani * hamkuliwa nyumbani * akisikia Amini * ajabu ikamngiya

He addressed [Ali] openly [saying:] You are wanted at home. When the Trustworthy One heard this he was filled with wonder.

(١٤) أَكْمُوَزَ هَشِمٍ * بِي أَنْ فَاطِمَةَ * هُكُومَكُو كَو هَمٍ * نَائِي سِي مَزُوي

mazoweya siyo nāyo * hima kwa hukwamkuwa * fāṭimah unani yeo * hashima akamuza

[14] (14) akamuza Hashima¹⁸ * yeo una-ni Fatima * hukuamkua kwa hima * nayo siyo mazoeya

The Hashimite asked [Ali]: What is the matter with Fatima today? She wants you in a hurry, and that is not like her.

(١٥) عَلِي أَكِنْتِكَ * أَكِنَدَ كَو هَرَكَ * هَتَ نِيْمَبِنٍ كِفِكَ * مَوْن فَاطِمَ هَلِي

huliya fāṭima mwana * kifika nyumbani hata * haraka kwa akanenda * akainuka 'alii

[15] (15) Aliyi akainuka * akanenda kwa haraka * hata nyumbani kifika * Mwana Fatima huliya

Ali got up and went in haste until he arrived home. Lady Fatima was crying.

(١٦) هُرْمَ زَكَمَشِكَ * عَلِي كَشَوَشِكَ * كَمَبَ فَتَمَ پِلِكَ * أَلَلْنَلْ نَمِي

nambiya ulilonalo * pulika fatuma kamba * kashawishika 'alii * zikamshika huruma

[16] (16) huruma zikamshika * Aliyi kashawishika¹⁹ * kamba Fatuma pulika * ulilo nalo nambiya

Ali was seized with pity, and became perplexed. He said: Fatima, listen -- tell me what's wrong with you.

(١٧) أَنْ كِتَو هُكُومَ * أَمَ أَمَشِكُو نِ حُمَ * أَكْمَجِبُ فَتَمَ * كَو مَرَضِ سِكُلِي

sikuliya maraḍi kwa * fatuma akamjibu * ḥuma ni umeshikwa ama * hukuuma kitwa una

[17] (17) una kitwa hukuuma * ama umeshikwa ḥa huma * akamjibu Fatuma * kwa maradhi sikuliya

Do you have a headache, or have you a temperature? And Fatima replied: I am not crying because I am ill.

(١٨) مِم هَبَ نَلْتِكَ * وَو هُنَ هَتِكَ * نَ كَمَ كَهْتُ وَتَكَ * أَسْخَفُ كُنْمِي

kunambiya usikhofu * wataka k'hiṭu kama na * huteka hunena wewe * nalitoka hapa mimi

[18] (18) mimi hapa nalitoka * wewe hunena huteka²⁰ * na kama kitu wataka * usihofu kunambiya

[Ali said:] When I left here you were talking and laughing. And if there's anything you want, don't be afraid to ask me [for it].

¹⁶-fasiri lit. means "explain".

¹⁷In other words, the child forgot to give the message privately (*hakusema kwa siri*). In any case, for a man to be called away from the *baraza* by a message from home is very worrying, since it implies some emergency for which his presence is required.

¹⁸The Prophet belonged to the clan of Hashim in the tribe of Quraysh of the Hollow.

¹⁹-shawishika = -fanya wasiwasi, -fanya tashwish

²⁰This is a common expression meaning "you were in a good mood".

(١٩) وَتَكَ نِنْ نَدِيْنُغُ * نِيْفِدِ رُحْ يَنْغُ * مِيْ أُوْتِ مَتْنُغُ * نَوِ أُوْمِ كَلِيْ

kuliya ukome nawe * matungu uwate moyo * yangu roho niifidi * nduyangu nini wataka
[19] (19) wataka nini nduyangu * niifidi²¹ roho yangu * moyo uwate matungu * nawe ukome kuliya
What do you want, my dear, so that I may console you, so that your heart will leave aside pain, so that you will stop crying?

(٢٠) فَتَمَّ أَكْتَمَكَ * پِطْ يَكُ نَيْتَكَ * عَلِيْ أَكْشُتُكَ * هَوْنِ لَ كُمُوْمِيْ

kumwambiya la haoni * akashutuka 'alii * naitaka yako peṭe * akatamka fatuma
[20] (20) Fatuma akatamka * pete yako naitaka * Aliyi akashutuka * haoni la kumwambiya
Fatima replied: I want your ring. Ali was startled -- he could not see what he could tell her.

(٢١) كِيْشَ عَلِيْ حَيْدَرِ * نِنْ أَلْفَيْسِرِ * أَنِيْ أَبُوْ بَكْرٍ * تَهَكُوْنَدَ كُتُوْلِيْ

kutwaliya t^hakwenda * bakari abuu anayo * alilofasiri neno * ḥaydari 'alii kisha
[21] (21) kisha Ali Haidari²² * neno alilofasiri * anayo Abu Bakari * takwenda kutwaliya²³
Then Ali the Lion-like, the utterance that he spoke [was this:] Abu Bakr has it -- I'll go and fetch it.

(٢٢) پِطْ يَكُ يَ چِنْدَنِ * أَبُوْ بَكْرٍ سِ كِفَنِ * نِيْمُتُوْآءَ تَمَكِنِ * كُوْ أَلِيْنَمِيْ

uliyonambiya kwa * tamkini nimetwaa * kifani si bakari abuu * chandani ya yako peṭe
[22] (22) pete yako ya chandani * Abu Bakari si kifani * nimetwaa tamkini * kwa uliyonambiya
[But Fatima said:] "Your ring is for [your] finger -- it will not fit Abu Bakr. "I have discovered the real reason for what you told me.

(٢٣) هُنْ مُوْزِ نِ وَ پِلِ * مِمِ سِكُتَاْمَلِ * أَنْ نَ مَكَ وَ پِلِ * هَبِرِ نِيْمَسِيْ

nimesikiya habari * pili wa mke na una * sikutaamali mimi * pili wa ni mwezi hunu
[21] (23) hunu mwezi ni wa pili * mimi sikutaamali * una na mke wa pili * habari nimesikiya
"This is the second month [that you have not worn it] -- I did not realise this before. You have a second wife -- I have heard the news.

(٢٤) نَأْپَ وَاللّٰهِ نَدِيْنُغُ * نِ وَيْ يُوْكَ مَكَ وَنُغُ * نِ نِنْ عَدُوْ يَنْغُ * هِيْ أَلْنَزْلِيْ

alonizuliya huyo * yangu 'aduwi nani ni * wangu mke pweke wee ni * nduyangu wallāhi naapa
[22] (24) naapa wallahi nduyangu * niwe pweke mke wangu²⁴ * ni nani adui yangu * huyo alonizuliya
[Ali said:] I swear to God, dearest -- you are my only wife. Who is this enemy of mine who has told you this lie about me?"

(٢٥) كَمَجِبُ كُوْ لِسَنِ * مَتِيْ سِمْبَيْنِ * پِطْ أُمِيْ نِنْ * أُنِيْپُ تَهْرِيْ

t^hariḍiya unipapo * nani umpee peṭe * simbaini mtuye * lisani kwa kamjibu
[23] (25) kamjibu kwa lisani²⁵ * mtuye simbaini * pete umpee nani * unipapo taridhiya

²¹niifidi = niokoe. Therefore, lit., "so that I may save my soul, so that I will not be in distress". This expresses humility, and shows that the speaker cares very much about the other person.

²²haidari, lion. The epithet, "lion-like", is so closely associated with Ali that it is now more of a name than a descriptive metaphor.

²³Ali tells this lie to gain some time, but it doesn't work.

²⁴This is, at best, only half-true. Note that *kusema urongo asitete ni vizuri, si vibaya* – that is, it is justifiable to tell white lies to console your spouse, or in the interests of conciliation and marital harmony. For instance, once a husband arrived home late accompanied by a friend. The wife asked the husband why he was late and became suspicious when he did not reply. The friend saw trouble brewing and stepped in with the lie that the husband had been seeing about getting some money for her as a present, which of course placated her.

²⁵lisani < لسان, tongue. We could also emend to *hisani*, kindness, goodness, i.e. politely. See also 317a.

She replied eloquently: I will not disclose that person. Who have you given the ring to? [Only] when you give [it to me] will I be satisfied.

(٢٦) عَلَى أَكْبَيْنَ * تَهْكَومِي تَمَكِنَ * يَلْنَعِي كِسْمِنَ * تَهْكَوندَ كُتْلِي

kukutoleya t^hakwenda * kisimani yalingiya * tamkini t^hakwambiya * akabaini ‘alii
[24] (26) Aliyi akabaini * takwambiya tamkini * yalingiya kisimani²⁶ * takwenda kukutoleya
Ali declared: I will tell you what really happened. It fell into a well -- I'll go and get it out for you.

(٢٧) هِي نِنَ پَٹْ يَكْ * مَهَلْ أُيُوسِپْ * كَمَ هِي مَتَمَكْ * بِنْنَعُ سِتْمُومِي

sitomwambiya babangu * matamko haya kama * uiwesepo mahale * yako pete nena haya
[25] (27) haya nena²⁷ pete yako * maḥāli uiwesepo * kama haya matamko * babangu sitomwambiya²⁸
[Fatima said:] Well, your ring -- say where you have put it, for these words -- I do not [want to] tell my father [about them]."

(٢٨) عَلِي أَكُودِكْ * فَتَمَ كُكْسِرِكْ * أَلَيْنُكَ كَنَّا * أَكَنْدَ كُؤَ نَبِي

nabiya kwa akanenda * katoka aliinuka * kukasirika fatuma * akaudhika ‘alii
[26] (28) Aliyi akaudhika * Fatuma kukasirika * aliinuka katoka * akanenda kwa Nabiya
Ali was worried that Fatima was angry. He got up and left, and went to the Prophet.

(٢٩) أَكْمُوزَ هَشِمَ * أَلِ نَ نِنِ فَتَمَ * أَلِكَهَاتَ كَلِمَ * مَتْمُ أَكْمُومِي

akamwambiya mṭume * kalima alik^hāṭa * fatuma nini na ali * hashima akamuza
[27] (29) akamuza Hashima * ali na nini²⁹ Fatuma * alikata kalima³⁰ * Mṭume kamwambiya
The Hashimite asked him: What was wrong with Fatima? [Ali] interrupted him, and told the Prophet:

(٣٠) أَكْمُومِي شَرِيفُ * فَتَمَ مَنِكَلِفُ * زِيْپُ زِسْزُ خُوفُ * زِنْعُ نِمَمْتِلِي

nimemṭiliya zingi * khōfu zisizo ziyapo * menikalifu fatuma * sharīfu kamwambiya
[28] (30) kamwambiya Sharifu * Fatuma menikalifu * ziapo³¹ zisizo hofu³² * zingi nimemṭiliya
He told the Noble One: Fatima is annoyed with me -- white lies, I have told her many of them.

(٣١) أَلِكَلِي يَا رَسُولَ * نَمَ نِمْتَدَ كُولَ * كُمُومِي سِهْمِلَ * خُوفُ زِمْنَعِي

zimeningiya khōfu * sihimili kumwambiya * kweli nimeṭenda nami * rasūli yā alikiliya
[29] (31) alikilia³³ ya Rasuli * nami nimetenda kweli * kumwambiya sihimili * hofu zimeningiya
[Ali] was weeping: Oh Prophet! I've really done it now. I haven't the nerve to tell her. I'm filled with fear.

²⁶Another lie, again to gain some time, kamuulize Nabiya, so that he can go and ask the Prophet. But Fatima does not fall for this one either.

²⁷Or we could emend to huyanena, you still haven't said.

²⁸anamwogopa sana – Ali is greatly in awe of him.

²⁹The northern form of alikuwa na nini, based respectively on two verbs meaning “be”: -li and -wa.

³⁰lit. “cut the words”.

³¹-apa, curse, but -tia kiapo, swear an oath, such as nife nili kaffir, may I die an unbeliever. Ali has sworn a few oaths to Fatima out of necessity, but he is not bound by them because he swore them in order to preserve marital harmony.

³²i.e. oaths that have no frightening consequences.

³³-liki- is a past continuous tense. See also 98d, 99a.

(٣٢) تَنْ إِنْئَدَ سَيِّدٍ * أُمُونِي أَبْرُدٍ * كَيْئُكَ مُحَمَّدٍ * هَبْ كَأَنَدَمَ نَدِي

ndiya kaandama hapo * muḥamadi kainuka * aburudi umuonye * sayidi enenda tena
[30] (32) tena enenda Sayidi * umuonye aburudi³⁴ * kainuka Muhamadi * hapo kaandama ndiya
So you go, my Lord, and tell her to calm down. Muhammad got up, and then set out on the way [to Ali's house].

(٣٣) أَكْبَدَ أَكْجَلِسٍ * مُيْ أَنْ وَسَوَسٍ * كَيْفَنِي كَمْ هَيْسٍ * إِنْئَدِي كُمُونْغَلِي

kumwngaliya enendee * haisi kama kaifanya * wasiwasi una moyo * akajilisi akenda
[31] (33) akenda akajilisi³⁵ * moyo una wasiwasi * kayifanya kama haisi * endee kumwngaliya
He went [to the house] and sat down. His heart was confused, He pretended he knew nothing, [that] he had just come to look
in on her.

(٣٤) كُمُولِزَ هَشِمَ * وَلِ نَ نِنِ فَتَمَ * حَسَنَ مَكِّي هِمَ * عَلِي كُمُونْدَمِي

kumwandamiya 'alii * hima mekuya ḥasani * fatuma nini na wali * hashima kamuuliza
[32] (34) kamuuliza Hashima * wali na nini Fatuma * Hasani mekuya hima * Aliyi kumwandamiya³⁶
The Hashimite asked her: Was there anything wrong, Fatima? Hasan came [to us] in a hurry to fetch Ali.

(٣٥) فَتَمَ هَكْكَسِرٍ * أَكْمُونِي بَشِيرٍ * عَلِي نَدَكِ هَبِرٍ * يُوْ نِمَزِسِكِي

nimezisikiya yeo * habari ndake 'alii * bashīri akamwambiya * hakukasiri fatuma
[33] (35) Fatuma hakukasiri³⁷ * akamwambiya Bashiri * Aliyi zaḳe habari * yeo nimezisikiya
Fatima did not hesitate, she told the Bearer of Glad Tidings: The news about Ali -- I heard it today.

(٣٦) أَكْمُوْزَ أَمِينٍ * نِ كَمْ هَبِرِ عَنٍ * أَسْمَنْجِ نَيْمِينِ * أُكَجِ أَكْمَامْكَوْ

ukamuamkuwa ukaja * nyumbani usimngoje * gani habari kama ni * amīni akamuuzā
[34] (36) akamuuzā Amīni * ni kama habari gani * usimngoje nyumbani * ukaja ukamwamkuwa
The Trustworthy One asked her: What sort of news is it that you couldn't wait for him at home, and ended up sending for him?

(٣٧) أَكْنَمَ فَتَمَ * كُمْسَتَحَ هَشِمَ * يَلْمَتَكَ كَلِمَ * بِيكَ أَكْمُونِي

akamwambiya babake * kalima yalomtoka * hashima kumsitahi * fatuma akainama
[35] (37) akainama³⁸ Fatuma * kumsitahi Hashima * yalomtoka kalima³⁹ * babake kamwambiya
Fatima bowed down to show honour to the Hashimite, and words came tumbling out, and she told [everything] to her father.

(٣٨) يَوْتِ مَنُ هَي * أُسِطُّ نَ مُمِي * أَكْرُدِشَ كَلِي * فَاطِمَةَ الزَّهْرِيَّةِ

zzahrīyāṭ fāṭimāṭ * kiliyo akarudisha * mumeo na usiṭeṭe * hayo maneno yawate
[36] (38) yawate maneno hayo * usitete na mumeo * akarudisha kiliyo * Fatima az-Zahariya
Leave off these words, [he said]. Don't quarrel with your husband. And he comforted her, Fatima the Radiant.

³⁴ He is speaking as if *iko moto nyumbani*, there is a fire at home, and he wants Fatima to *apoe*, cool down.

³⁵ -jilisi = -keti. The Prophet is being subtle, and pretends he does not know what has happened, so that he can get to the bottom of things.

³⁶ -andama, follow someone directly, the two of you together, but -andamia, follow someone who has already gone ahead, so that each person is travelling alone, = -fuatia.

³⁷ i.e. *pale pale kampa habari yote*, there and then she gave him the whole story.

³⁸ Good children are shy in front of their parents, and show them respect.

³⁹ *ametokwa na maneno* – this occurs when one feels particularly when one feels strongly about something. If you want to emphasise a speaker's volubility, you can say *ametokwa na maneno yake na ya kuwazimu*, lit. he was come out of by his own words and those of his ancestors.

(٣٩) أَكْمَوْمِي مَوْنَعُ * أَتَكِبْ رَضِ يَنْعُ * نَ هَي مَنِ يَنْعُ * يُو أَكِيَسِي
 ukiyasikiya yuwa * yangu maneno haya ni * yangu radi utakapo * mwanangu akamwambiya
 [37] (39) akamwambiya mwanangu * utakapo radi⁴⁰ yangu * ni haya maneno yangu * yuwa ukiyasikiya
 He told her: My child, if you want my blessing, this is my advice -- you know, if you'll listen to it.

(٤٠) كُتِكَ كَوِكَ فَتَمَ * يَلِ أَكِيَسُكُمَ * كِشَ كَفُتَ كَلِمَ * بِيكَ أَكْمَوْمِي
 akamwambiya babake * kalima kavuta kisha * akayasukuma yale * fatuma kwake kutoka
 [38] (40) kutoka kwake Fatuma * yale akayasukuma * kisha kavuta kalima * babake akamwambiya
 For her part, Fatima weighed those [words] carefully, then she spoke [these] words, and told her father:

(٤١) أَكْمَوْمِي بِيْنَعُ * تُنَنَ نَ مُمَ وَنَعُ * كِيَسَ مَوْفُ يَنْعُ * سِ مَوْنِي كِيْنَدَلِي
 kupendeleya mwenye si * yangu maovu kabisa * wangu mume na tunani * babangu akamwambiya
 [39] (41) akamwambia babangu * tuna-ni na mume wangu * kabisa maovu yangu * si mwenye kupendeleya
 She said: Father, what quarrel do I have with my husband? [It was] my fault entirely, and I am not pleased [to have done it].

(٤٢) نَ مْتُ أَلْنِعْرِ * سَسَ نِمْفِكِرِ * هَئِيْنَدَلِي خَيْرِ * هَوَزِ كُتُونْعَلِي
 kutwangaliya hawezi * khēri haṭupendelei * nimefikiri sasa * alonighuri mṭu na
 [40] (42) na mtu alonighuri * sasa nimefikiri * hatupendelei heri * hawezi kutwangaliya
 And the person who deceived me -- now I have realised she did not want good fortune for us -- she couldn't look at us [without
 envy].

(٤٣) تَنَ هُضُمُ مَيْنِ * مَظِي نِ شَيْطَانِ * مَلَنَوَ مَلْعُونِ * نِيَهَ مَبْفُ كُنِيْتِي
 kuniṭiya mbovu niyah * mal'ūni mlaniwa * shayṭāni ni mṭuye * moyoni huḍumu tena
 [41] (43) tena hudhumu moyoni * mtuye ni shaitani * mlaniwa maluuni * nia mbovu kuniṭiya
 And the conclusion in my heart [is that] that person was a devil, a cursed one, a damned one, planting evil intentions in me.

(٤٤) هَي نِمِيْحَتِمُ * نَ مَنَعِنَ تَهْنُظُمُ * جَمِيْعَ مِيْفَهَمُ * نِمِيْنَدَ كَوْمِي
 kuwambiya nimependa * muyafahamu jamī'i * t^hanuzumu mengine na * nimeyakhitimu haya
 [42] (44) haya nimeyahitimu⁴¹ * na mengine tanudhumu⁴² * jamii muyafahamu⁴³ * nimependa kuwambiya
 I have completed these [things], and I will compose other [things], so that all of you may understand them -- I have been
 pleased to tell you [them].

(٤٥) فَهَمُنِ وَوُنْعَوْنَ * يُو نَوِبَ مَعَنَ * پِ يَنْعُ يَ عَيْنَ * حُجَّ نَلْوَاتِي
 naloiwatiya huja * 'ayna ya yangu pete * ma'ana niwape yeo * waungwana fahamuni
 [43] (45) fahamuni⁴⁴ waungwana * yeo niwape maana * pete yangu ya aina⁴⁵ * huja naloiwatiya
 [Ali said:] Pay attention, noble [listeners], so that today I may give you an explanation: my distinctive ring -- the reason I left
 it behind.

⁴⁰See note to 133c.

⁴¹The first part of the ballad, describing the *mke wa siri*, and the resulting friction between Ali and Fatima, and its resolution, is now complete. The next portion of the tale ("mengine"), describing Ja'far's meeting with his father Ali, and its results, now begins.

⁴²nuzumu, compose.

⁴³"that you may all understand it", or "that you may understand it all".

⁴⁴It seems that here we should envisage Ali explaining, after the events of the rest of the ballad, about the ring, and why he left it with Atika.

⁴⁵ya aina, one of a kind, i.e. nzuri.

(٤٦) نَلَيْتَوْتِ قَصِيدٍ * سِ مَهَبٍ كُنْزِدٍ * مَرَّ هُرَّاءَ وَوَلِدٍ * أَصِلَ إِكْبَتِي

ikapoteya asili * walidi huzaa mara * kunizidi mahaba si * qasidi naliwata

[44] (46) naliwata qasidi⁴⁶ * si mahaba kunizidi * mara huzaa walidi * asili ikapoteya⁴⁷

I left it for the purpose, not of increasing [her] love for me, [but lest] once the child was born, its heritage should be lost.

(٤٧) بَسِ نَلَيْفِكِرٍ * نَدِي يُتِ يَلْجِرِ * أَكْزَوَ جَعْفَرٍ * وَ مَوْلَانَا عَلِي

'aliya mawlānā wa * ja'fari akazawa * yalojiri yote ndiyo * naloyafikiri basi

[45] (47) basi naloyafikiri⁴⁸ * ndiyo yote yalojiri * akazawa Jaafari⁴⁹ * wa Maulana Aliya

Indeed, what I had foreseen was exactly what happened. Ja'far was born, [son of] Lord Ali.

(٤٨) أَكْسِنَعَ كَجَنٍ * نَ بَيْكَ وَكِفَنٍ * كُلُّ أَلَكْمُونٍ * صُورَ زَلِكْمَوْمِي

zalikimwambiya šūra * alokimuona kula * wakifana babake na * kijana akaisinga

[46] (48) akayisinga⁵⁰ kijana * na babake wakifana * kula alokimuona * sura zalikimwambiya

The boy grew up resembling his father. [To] everyone who saw him, his features said who he was.

(٤٩) وَتُ وَلِكِنُكُرٍ * عَلِي هَنَ هَبَرٍ * هَتَ مُمِي كَو سِرٍ * أَكْفِكَ كُمُومِي

kumwambiya akafika * siri kwa mmoya hata * habari hana 'alii * walikinukuri waṭu

[47] (49) watu walikidhukuri * Aliyi hana habari * hata mmoya kwa siri * akafika kumwambiya

People were talking about it, [but] Ali knew nothing of it -- not a single [person] secretly arrived to tell him.

(٥٠) أَلَيْبِنَدَ مَنَانٍ * كَمُونُ مَعِينٍ * كُنَ كِسِمَ مَوْتُنِ * أَكْنَدَ كُجَنْغَلِي

kuchangaliya akenda * mwiṭuni kisima kuna * mu'ayani kamuona * manāni alipopenda

[48] (50) alipopenda Manani * kamuona muayani⁵¹ * kuna kisima mwiṭuni * akenda kuchangaliya

When it pleased Providence [Ali] saw [Ja'far] in the flesh. There was a well in the forest, and [Ali] went to have a look at it.

(٥١) نَاءُ أَكْنَدَ كَو شَكٍ * مَاءِ أَسِيَّتِكَ * نَاءُ أَلِكْفِنِكَ * كَوَزَ أَكْجَنْدِي

akichendeya kiwazi * alikifunika nae * asipoyataka mai * shaka kwa akenda nae

[49] (51) nae akenda kwa shaka * mai asipoyataka * nae alikifunika⁵² * kiwazi akichendeya

And he went from suspicion, not wanting water. [Although] he had [earlier] covered it, it was open when he got there.

(٥٢) هَبُّ عَلِي حَيْدَرٍ * كَوَزَ نَ كُفِكِرٍ * وَمَكِّي مَكْفِرٍ * يُوُ كُفْنُلِي

kunifunuliya yeo * makafiri wamekuya * kufikiri na kiwaza * ḥaydari 'alii hapo

[50] (52) hapo Aliyi Haidari * kiwaza na kufikiri * wamekuya makafiri * yeo kunifunuliya⁵³

Then Ali the Lion-like pondered and considered: Unbelievers have come here to uncover it today in spite of me.

⁴⁶Amu qasidi = Mvita maqusudi.

⁴⁷That is, the child would not know who his father was – this would be very unfortunate, and Ali is anxious for this not to happen

⁴⁸Amu n[i]-al[i]-o = Mvita ni-l[i]-o, subject prefix + past marker + relative marker.

⁴⁹We might surmise that he was named Ja'far after Ali's brother Ja'far, who died at the battle of Mu'tah in 629 CE.

⁵⁰lit. "he moulded himself" to the appearance of his father.

⁵¹lit. "clearly".

⁵²Because in such a climate water is very valuable.

⁵³To annoy and frustrate him.

(٥٣) كِشْ أَكْتَمَكَ * نَ يُوْ تَهَكْفُنِكَ * سِنَ بُدِ تَهَمَشِكَ * مُتْيِيْ أَمْزُوِيْ

amezoweya mtuye * t^hamshika budi sina * t^hakifunika yeo na * akatamka kisha

[51] (53) kisha akatamka * na yeo takifunika * sina budi tamshika * mtuye amezoweya
Then he said: I will cover it again today, and doubtless I will catch that person who is behaving like that.

(٥٤) أَجْنُدَكَ هُكُ نَيْمِ * جَعْفَرِ كَيْغَمِ * لِيْلِ بَاءِ كَسُكُمِ * مَبَالِ أَكَلْتِيْلِيْ

akalatiliya mbali * kasukuma bao lile * kaegema ja'fari * nyuma huku achondoka

[52] (54) achondoka huku nyuma * Jaafari kaegema⁵⁴ * lile bao kasukuma * mbali akalatiliya⁵⁵
When he had gone off [to hide], in the meantime Ja'far approached, pushed off the plank [covering the well], and threw it far away.

(٥٥) مَبُزِ وَكَنُوْ كَوْ هِمِ * جَعْفَرِ أَكَلِكُ نَيْمِ * كِشَ نَاءِ كَيْغَمِ * عَلِيْ هُمَوْنَعَلِيْ

humwngaliya 'alii * kaegema nae kisha * nyuma ukaliko ja'fari * hima kwa wakanwa mbuzi

[53] (55) mbuzi wakanwa kwa hima * Jaafari ukaliko nyuma * kisha nae kaegema * Aliyi humwngaliya
His goats drank greedily and Jaafar was there behind them. Then he too came forward, and Ali watched him.

(٥٦) أَجْغَمِ كَرْدِيْ * تُتَشِنْدَنَ قَصِيْدِ * كَوْنَدَ يُوْ أَكْرِيْدِ * هَلِيْدِرِيْ أَكِيْ

akiya halidiriki * akirudi yeo kwanda * qasidi tutashindana * karadidi achegema

[54] (56) achegema karadidi⁵⁶ * tutashindana qasidi⁵⁷ * kwanda yeo akirudi * halidiriki akiya
As Ja'far approached, he was saying: We will compete tit-for-tat -- if he comes back today, he will not find [the plank] when he gets here.

(٥٧) چَمَبِ هُفَنِيْ نِ بَرِ * أَيِّ أَتَنِكِرِ * هِلِ لِيْطِ بَنْدَرِ * نَعْتِ تَهْمَفِنِكِيْ

t^hamfinikiya ngota * bandari lipete hili * atanikiri ayapo * biri ni hufanya chamba

[55] (57) chamba⁵⁸ hufanya nibiri⁵⁹ * ayapo atanikiri * hili lipete bandari⁶⁰ * ngota tamfinikiya
If he is challenging me, when he gets here he will submit to me. I'm at the end of my tether -- I'll teach him a lesson."

(٥٨) مَاءِ كَيْكَ كَيْكَ * نَ عَلِيْ أَكْتِكَ * مَكْنُ أَكْمَشِكَ * جَعْفَرِ كَمُوْمِيْ

kamwambiya ja'fari * akamshika mkono * akatoka 'alii na * kuṭeka kaṭika mai

[56] (58) mai katika kuteka * na Aliyi akatoka * mkono akamshika * Jaafari kamwambiya
[But] while he was drawing water, Ali came out [of hiding] and grabbed him by the arm. Jaafari said to him:

⁵⁴The Swahili belief would be that the boy has been led to that particular place "by the blood", i.e. because he is a son of his father's, the two have a bodily affinity, and tend to be attracted to each other, like magnets.

⁵⁵-atilia means "drop" in Mvita and "throw" in Amu.

⁵⁶The original Arabic word means "repeat", but in Swahili it is another word for -sema, speak.

⁵⁷lit. "we will compete in aim". Ali covered the well, Ja'far (as explained later in 184-5) has uncovered it, Ali have covered it again, and now Ja'far is uncovering it once more. Both are annoyed.

⁵⁸chamba, if.

⁵⁹i.e. if Ali is daring Ja'far to do something. (?) nibiri, challenge < نبر, raise one's voice, shout.

⁶⁰lit. "this [boat, jahazi] has gained the harbour", i.e. this state of affairs must come to an end.

(٥٩) وَوَهُنْشِكِينَ * مِمَّ سِكِّحِ سِنَّ * هَتَّ أَكُونَ جِنِّ * نَيُّو كُكُومِي

kukusomeya nayuwa * jini ni ukiwa hata * sinani sikuchi mimi * hunishikiyani wewe

[57] (59) wewe hunishikia-ni * mimi sikuchi sina-ni⁶¹ * hata ukiwa ni jini * nayuwa kukusomeya
Why are you grabbing hold of me? I'm not in the least afraid of you. Even if you were a jinn I would know how to read [the Qur'an] against you.

(٦٠) هَي نِمَزْفَسِرِ * سِكُّيَنَ كَو سِرِّ * أَكْتَكَ أَظْهَرَ * نَ زَيْدٍ تَهَكُّومِي

t^hakwambiya zaydi na * aẓhari ukitaka * siri kwa sikuyanena * nimezofasiri haya

[58] (60) haya nimezofasiri * sikuyanena kwa siri * ukitaka adhuhari⁶² * na zaidi⁶³ takwambiya
These [things] I have said, I have not spoken secretly -- if you want it in plain terms I will say even more to you."

(٦١) كَمْفُطِي كَو مَبَلِ * وَكَوَنَ سَاءَ مَبَلِ * كِشَ كَفُتَ قَوْلِ * جَعْفَرَ كَمَوْمِي

kamwambiya ja'fari * qawli kavuṭa kisha * mbili saa wakawana * mbali kwa kamvuṭiya

[59] (61) kamvutia kwa mbali * wakawana saa mbili⁶⁴ * kisha kavuta qauli * Jaafari kamwambiya
He pulled away from [Ali] and they fought for two hours. Eventually he spoke, Ja'far, and addressed him.

(٦٢) كَمَوْمِي مَبِينِ * مَوْنَ آدَمُ نَ نَنِ * بَبَ هَكَ دُونِي * نَدِي أَكُونِي

ukanioneya ndipo * duniyani hako baba * nani n ādamu mwana * mbaini kamwambiya

[60] (62) kamwambia mbaini⁶⁵ * mwana-adamu ni nani * baba hako duniyani * ndipo ukanioneya⁶⁶
He said to him: Explain to me what sort of person you are. [My] father is no longer in this world, and that is why you are bullying me.

(٦٣) كَمُوَزَ هُنَنِ * وَوَبِيكَ نَ نَنِ * كَمَبَ نِ پِ چَنْدَنِ * عَلِي كَيْغَلِي

kayangaliya 'alii * chandani peṭe ni kamba * nani ni babako wewe * hunenani kamuuzā

[61] (63) kamuuzā hunena-ni * wewe babako ni nani * kamba ni peṭe chandani * Aliyi kayangaliya
[Ali] asked him: What are you saying? Who is your father? [Ja'far] said: He is the ring on my finger. Ali looked at it.

(٦٤) پِ كُئِينَ كُوكِ * كِسَمَ نَ جِنِّ لَكِ * أَرْدِ أَسِكْتِكِ * نَ مَيْتِ كُمَنْغِي

kumngiya mayuto na * asikitike arudi * lake jina na kisoma * kwake kuiyona peṭe

[62] (64) peṭe kuiona kwake * kisoma na jina lake * arudi asikitike * na mayuto kumngiya⁶⁷
Once he saw the ring and read his name [on it], he stepped back greatly saddened and was filled with remorse.

⁶¹ sina-ni emphasises the negative – a person accused of theft may say sikuiba sina-ni, I didn't do any stealing at all. It may be shortened to sini. Thus the poem: kidege na uliwani? / silicha mtu sina-ni. The story is told of a witty tailor from Takaungu. A group of people had dropped into his shop for a chat, and after a while the tailor got up and went out to answer nature's call to urinate. He came back very quickly, which made some of the men there ask him jokingly why he had been so fast. He replied: sina kisonono sini!, I don't have gonorrhoea at all!, which was greeted with laughter. The men then said that even if this were the case, he should still have taken longer, since it takes some time to wash (kutama) after going to the toilet. The tailor replied, siṣali sini!, I'm not doing any praying!. This made everyone collapse with laughter – people may not pray, but they certainly would not tell other people that.

⁶² adhuhari = wazi-wazi, zaidi.

⁶³ This is fighting talk – jeuri!

⁶⁴ For a small boy to be able to hold his own against Ali, the champion warrior, is no mean feat.

⁶⁵ -m- here = -ni-. Compare 155a (R) and 304b.

⁶⁶ i.e. why are you picking on an orphan?

⁶⁷ The motif of a father and son unknowingly fighting each other is a recurrent one in literature – the most famous example is that of Sohrab and Rustum. Fortunately, in this case the father recognises his son before any damage has been done.

(٦٥) كِشَ هَبْ أَمَوْمِي * سِنْعَلِكُجِي * إِنْ لَكَ هَيْطَوِي * بَيْكَ نَدِي عَلِي

'aliya ndiye babako * huitwaye lako ina * singalikupijie * amwambie hapo kisha

[63] (65) kisha hapo amwambie⁶⁸ * singalikupijie * ina lako huitwaye * babako ndiye Aliya

Then he told [Ja'far]: I should not have attacked you. As for the name you are to be called, your father is [me], Ali.

(٦٦) نِنْعَلَيْتَز دَم * كَم سِكُكُفَهُم * أَكِشَ كَتَكَلَم * جَعْفَرِ كَمَوْمِي

kamwambiya ja'fari * katakalamu akisha * sikukufahamu kama * damu ningalipoteza

[64] (66) ningalipoteza⁶⁹ damu * kama sikukufahamu * akisha katakalamu * Jaafari kamwambiya

I would have spilt your blood if I had not recognised you. When he finished speaking, Jaafar spoke to him:

(٦٧) وَوَمْتُ هُمُون * هُمُوزِ لَكَ إِنْ * هُجُونِ أَجَعِن * أَلُونِ تَهَكْمِي

t^hakimbiya uliona * ujugina hujiona * ina lake humuuzi * humuona mtu wewe

[65] (67) wewe mtu humuona * humuuzi lake ina * hujiona ujugina⁷⁰ * uliona takimbiya

When you see someone, you do not even ask his name. You see yourself as a warrior, and you thought I would run away.

(٦٨) كُونَزِ نِطِ يَنْع * إِنْكَ إِي بِنْع * هُنْعَلُوَزِ مَتْنَع * مَوْلِيْنِ كُنْيِي

kuniya mwilini * matungu hungaliweza * babangu ewe inuka * yangu peye nipa kwanza

[66] (68) kwanza nipa peye yangu * inuka ewe⁷¹ babangu * hungaliweza matungu * mwilini kuniya

First, give me back my ring, and get up, father -- you would not have been able to inflict injuries on my body.

(٦٩) أَكَمَوْمِي مَمَك * نَمِيُو سُرَزِك * نَاءِ هَبْ أَتَمَك * إِنْ لَكَ أَمَوْمِي

amwambiye lake ina * atamke hapo nae * zake sura namuyuwa * mamake akamwambiya

[67] (69) akamwambia mamake * namuyuwa sura zake * nae hapo atamke * ina lake amwambiye

[Ali] told him [who] his mother [was]: I recognise her features [in you]. And then [Ja'far] spoke in order to tell [Ali] his name.

(٧٠) كِمَوْمِي كَفَسِر * مِمِ هَيْتُو جَعْفَر * وَ عَلِي حَيْدَر * نَ مَوَكِ نِ وَ تِسِي

tisiya wa ni mwaka na * haydari 'alii wa * ja'fari huitwa mimi * kafasiri kimwambiya

[68] (70) kimwambia kafasiri * mimi huitwa Jaafari * wa Aliyi Haidari * na mwaka ni wa tisiya

He spoke, saying: I am called Ja'far, [son] of Ali the Lion-like and I am nine years old.

⁶⁸The following stanzas are a bit unclear. The gist seems to be that Ali says he is Ja'far's father, Ja'far reproaches him for his earlier bullying behaviour, still suspicious and unsure whether or not to believe him, whereupon Ali describes Ja'far's mother to him, which convinces Ja'far.

⁶⁹-poteza = -tupa.

⁷⁰According to Sacleux, ujugina comes from a Galla word meaning "brave, courageous". It is said that Ali sifa yake ni shujaa, Ali is famed as a warrior, and Ja'far inherits this martial attribute, as his spirited fighting shows. Ali was a short man, but very strong. It is said that once he plunged his sword into the ground and challenged others to pull it out, but it was buried so deep that no-one could. Again, it is said that once when Ali was praying in the mosque his friends jokingly took his sandals (which in accordance with ritual he had of course removed before entering the mosque) and placed them on top of the lintel, where Ali, being short, could not reach them. As a retort, Ali took their sandals, grabbed hold of the mosque wall, lifted it up, put the sandals under the wall, and set it down again. Other important Muslims have their own attributes – Uthman, for instance, was known for his shyness, Hamza for his happy (even boisterous) disposition, and so on.

⁷¹Ja'far is suspicious.

(٧١) وَتَو مَبُزِ مَوْتُنِ * نَ أَوِيكَ نَدِيَنِ * تُونِدَ زُتُ مُيْنِ * جَعْفَرَ كَمَوْبِي

kamwambiya ja'fari * muini zeṭu ṭwenende * ndiyani uwapeke na * mwiṭuni mbuzi watowe

[69] (71) watoe mbuzi mwiṭuni⁷² * na uwapeke ndiani * twenende zetu muini * Jaafari kamwambiya
Bring your goats out of the forest, [said Ali], and herd them along the road so that we may go on towards the town, He told Ja'far.

(٧٢) كَمَوْبِي نِنْدَ زَنْعُ * نِنَ نَ مَوْلِمَ وَنْعُ * نِمُوغَ نَ مَمَنْعُ * كِشَ كِشَ نِتَكِي

nitakuya kesho kisha * mamangu na nimuwage * wangu mwalimu na nina * zangu nenda kamwambiya

[70] (72) kamwambiya nenda zangu * nina na mwalimu wangu * nimuage na mamangu * kisha kesho nitakuya
[But Ja'far] told him: I am going off -- I have my teacher whom I must take leave of, and my mother. Then I will come tomorrow.

(٧٣) كِشَ كُكِيْمَبُوْكَ * نَ مِيْمَ تِنْنِكَ * سَاءَ مِيْ اِكْفِكَ * بَبَ تَكُوْصَلِي

takuwasiliya baba * ikifika moya saa * tainuka mapima na * kukipambauka kesho

[71] (73) kesho kukipambauka * na mapema tainuka * saa moya ikifika⁷³ * baba takuwasiliya
When tomorrow has dawned, I will get up early, and when the first hour comes I will arrive with you, father.

(٧٤) اَكْمَطْبُ قَوْلِ * اَيْبُ نَدِيْ يِ مَبِلِ * يِ مَكَهَ نِ يِ كُفْلِ * اُسْتِكَ كَيْتِي

kupoteya usitake * kuvuli ya ni makah ya * mbali ya ndiya uyapo * qawli akamṭibu

[72] (74) akamṭibu qawli⁷⁴ * uyapo ndia ya mḃbili * ya Maka ni ya kuvuli⁷⁵ * usitake⁷⁶ kupoteya⁷⁷
[Ali] gave [Ja'far] some advice: When you come to the fork in the road, the way to Mecca is the one on the right -- just so you don't get lost.

(٧٥) كَمْرُدِشِي تَمَكُ * بَسِ هَيِ نِنْدَ زَكُ * مَوْلِمَ نَ مَمَكُ * نَ نَدُزُ نِسَلِيْمِي

nisalimiya nduzo na * mamako na mwalimu * zako nenda haya basi * tamko kamrudishiya

[73] (75) kamrudishia⁷⁸ tamko * basi haya nenda zako * mwalimu na mamako * na nduzo⁷⁹ nisalimiya⁸⁰
[Ali] replied to [Ja'far]: So, now, off you go, the teacher and your mother and your relatives -- give them my best wishes."

(٧٦) نَاءِ مَوْنِ وَ نَسَبِ * كَمَوْبِي مَرْحَبَا * نَمَ هُكَ اَقْرَبِ * اُجْنَدَ نِسَلِيْمِي

nisalimiya uchenda * aqraba huko nami * marḥabā kamwambiya * nasaba wa mwana nae

[74] (76) nae mwana wa nasaba⁸¹ * kamwambia marahaba * nami huko aqraba * uchenda nisalimiya
And [Ja'far], the noble child, told him: Thank you. And from me to your relatives there, when you go [there], greet them for me.

⁷²Ali suggests going back with him to Mecca, but Ja'far wishes to take leave of his family first. He must also ask permission of his teacher (122b), since he cannot leave the *chuo*, school, without being allowed. See also the note to 129b.

⁷³i.e. around 7.00pm.

⁷⁴akampa maneno mazuri, he gave him words of advice.

⁷⁵kuvuli = kulia.

⁷⁶usitake = usije.

⁷⁷Ali gives more directions than the ones here (see 266a/b), but in the event Ja'far forgets them all and almost gets lost in the scrubland (see 268-9).

⁷⁸This seems out of place, since Ja'far has not actually said anything for Ali to reply to. Perhaps we should emend by reading 122, 124, 123, 125.

⁷⁹nduzo < ndugu zako. ndugu can mean "cousin" as well as "brother".

⁸⁰-salimu is used for a person-to-person greeting, and this is the indirect form: "greet them on my behalf".

⁸¹Ja'far will therefore do what is right and expected of him.

(٧٧) سَلَامُ أَبُو بَكْرٍ * أَزْوَاجِ نَ ذُرِّي * سُرَاءَ نَ إِظْهَارِ * هُوَ نَوْفَهَمِي

nawafahamiya hao * izhāri na suzao * dhuriya na azwāji * bakari abuu salāmu

[75] (77) salamu Abu Bakari * aziwaji⁸² na dhuria * suzao na idhihari⁸³ * hao nawafahamiya⁸⁴

Greetings to Abu Bakr, your wives and children, both close and extended family -- I have heard of them.

(٧٨) بَسِ هَبْ جَعْفَرِ * أَكْمَوْمِي كَوْ هِرِ * نَ عَلِي حَيْدَرِ * مَنْعُ أَكْمَوْمِي

akamuombeya mngu * haydari ‘alii na * heri kwa akamwambiya * ja‘fari hapo basi

[76] (78) basi hapo Jaafari * akamwambia kwa heri * na Aliyi Haidari * Mngu akamuombeya⁸⁵

So then Ja‘far said goodbye to him, and Ali the Lion-like commended him to God’s care.

(٧٩) مُنِنِ كُنْغِي كَوَكِ * كِنْدَ كَو مَوْلِمِ وَكِ * كَمَبِ هَبَرِ زَكِ * كَوَهُ هَيْسِكِلِي

hayasikiliya kwao * zake habari kampa * wake mwalimu kwa kenda * kwake kungiya muini

[77] (79) muini kungia kwake * kenda kwa mwalimu wake⁸⁶ * kampa habari zake * kwao hayasikiliya

When [Ja‘far] entered his village he went to his teacher’s house, and gave him his news -- before going home.

(٨٠) أَكِشَ كُنَيْظُمُ * أَكَلِي مُعَلِّمُ * كَمَبِ وَنَيْي هَمُ * هَي أَمْرَمِي

umezonambiya hayo * hamu waniya kamba * mu‘alimu akaliya * kuyanuzumu akisha

[78] (80) akisha kuyanudhumu⁸⁷ * akalia mualimu⁸⁸ * kamba wanitia hamu⁸⁹ * hayo umezonambiya

When he had finished explaining [everything], the teacher wept, and said: You are making me worried with these [things] you have told me.

(٨١) وَنَيْي سِكْتِكِ * نَ وَنِغِ وَ مَوْدِكِ * وَ لَ نَ هُكُ وَ نَدَكِ * سَوِرِ كُزَوِي

kukuziwiya siwezi * wendako huko na wala * maudhiko wa wingi na * sikitiko waniya

[79] (81) wanitia sikitiko * na wingi wa maudhiko⁹⁰ * wala na huko wendako * siwezi kukuziwiya

You are making me sad and and very anxious. Yet that place you are going to -- I cannot keep you back from it.

⁸² Azwaj and Zubayr are the two people with Abu Bakr when Ja‘far meets them on the road (174, 175). This part of the story (i.e. how Ja‘far came to be at the well) has not been told yet – it is contained in a flashback a little later in the ballad. In Y it would seem that the name Azwaj has been confused with the word for “wife” (understandable in this context), and that *dhuria*, children, has then been substituted for Zubeir (as making better sense) – note that *dhuria* does not rhyme, whereas *Zubiri* would.

⁸³ This reading is uncertain – it seems to mean *nde na ndani*. Perhaps we should adopt that of R, and translate “I know (have heard of) their general qualities”.

⁸⁴ *-fahamia*, know of someone, hear about someone, while not knowing them personally.

⁸⁵ lit. “interceded for him to God”. If a parent is punishing a child, and a neighbour is present, the neighbour may plead for the child by saying, *namuombea, namuombea*, I ask mercy for him, I intercede for him. If the child is let off lightly, the neighbour will warn the child not to be naughty again, because he will not plead for him a second time.

⁸⁶ These stanzas show the great importance of the teacher in traditional Swahili life. The Islamic teacher is greatly respected and honoured. Ja‘far, as a good-mannered child (*mwana wa nasaba*, 126a), tells his teacher of his plans even before telling his mother. Among the Swahili, to bring someone his shoes is humiliating, making you look like a servant, but to bring a teacher his shoes is a mark of respect, and not something humiliating. Teachers get prestige, but no money, and the more students they have, the more esteemed they are. It is usual, indeed considered necessary, to stay with the same teacher, and to finish your course of instruction with him. It is said of one important sheikh that he was forced to move his abode to the next town because of a quarrel. Even though the next town was a fair distance away, all his original students from the first town came to his classes there. But after a while, one of them stopped coming. When he next saw this student, the teacher asked him the reason for this, and the student replied that he was prevented from attending the classes because his mother was sick, and, since caring for your parents is a duty in Islam, he had stayed at home to nurse her. The teacher said that because the student was so dutiful he would have a long life, but since he had unfortunately missed the classes he would never be successful in teaching. This prediction turned out to be true.

⁸⁷ *-nudhumu* usually means “compose”, (*-tunga*), but here it means “explain”, (*-eleza*).

⁸⁸ *anampenda yule mwanafunzi wake*, he is very fond of that pupil of his.

⁸⁹ Everybody, even a teacher, is apprehensive about the future.

⁹⁰ lit. “you are bringing me sadness and many anxieties”.

(٨٢) سِ رَحْمِ كُئِنْدَنِ * نَ هُكُ أُ حَلِّ غَنِّ * نَاءِ بَبَاكَ زَيْتَانِ * نَدِي وَ كُئِنْدَانِي

kuṭanguliya wa ndiye * ziṭani babako nae * gani ḥali u huko na * kuendani raḥimu si

[80] (82) si raḥimu kuendani⁹¹ * na huko u hali gani * nae babako zitani * ndiye wa kutanguliya

It is not easy to go there, and what sort of situation will you be in there, with your father at war, always in the front line?"

(٨٣) نَ كُكِكِنْدَ سِتَاكِ * كُونِ نِيَوِ نِ هَاكِ * نِ رَضِ أَلْفِ لَكِ * نَ زَيْدِ كِكُوَيْي

kikweteya zaydi na * laki alfu raḍi ni * haki ni nayuwa kwani * sitaki kukikinda na

[81] (83) na kuḥukukinda sitaki⁹² * kwani nayuwa ni haki * ni radhi⁹³ alfu laki * na zaidi kikweteya

Yet I don't intend to oppose you, because I know it is proper. you have my consent a hundred thousand times, and I give you [even] more [than that].

(٨٤) أَكْمَوْمِي مَوْلِي * مَمَاكَ أَيَفَاهَمُ * كَمَجِبِشَ كَلِمِ * كَوَاكَ سِيَسِكِلِي

siyasikiliya kwake * kalimu kamjibisha * ayafahamu mamako * mwalimu akamwambiya

[82] (84) akamwambia mwalimu * mamako ayafahamu * kamjibisha kalimu * kwake siyasikiliya⁹⁴

The teacher said to him: Is your mother aware of these [things]? And [Ja'far] answered him: "I have not yet gone home.

(٨٥) كَمَوْمِي إِنْ دَزَاكَ * أَكْمَوْلِي مَمَاكَ * أَسْكِرْ مَمَاكَ * نَاءِ تَكَلْكَوْمِي

takalokwambiya nae * matamko usikize * mamako ukamuulize * zako enda kamwambiya

[83] (85) kamwambia enda zako * ukamuulize mamako⁹⁵ * usikize matamko * nae takalokwambiya

And [the teacher] told him: Off you go, and ask your mother. Pay heed to the things that she will tell you.

(٨٦) كِشَ هِي كَلِمِ * هَبْ نَدِي كَيْنَدَمَ * مِي أَنْ هَلِمَمَ * كَوَاكَ مَمَاكَ أَكِنْدِي

akingiya mamake kwa * halimama una moyo * kayandama ndiya hapo * kalima hiyo akisha

[84] (86) akisha hiyo kalima * hapo ndiya kayandama * moyo una halimama⁹⁶ * kwa mamake akingiya

Once [the teacher] had finished these words, [Ja'far] then continued on his way. His heart was heavy as he went in to his mother's [house].

(٨٧) كِنْدِي كَوَاكَ كِبِ * كَوَا أُيْلِ نَ تَرْتِبِ * مَمَاكَ كَتَعَجَبِ * جَعْفَرِ أَكْمَوْمِي

akamwambiya ja'fari * kata'ajabu mamake * taratibu na upole kwa * kibu kaweka kingiya

[85] (87) kingia kaweka kibu⁹⁷ * kwa upole na taratibu⁹⁸ * mamake kataajabu * Jaafari akamwambiya

When he went in he put his stick away quietly and carefully. His mother was surprised, and spoke to Ja'far.

⁹¹i.e. the journey is dangerous.

⁹²sitaki kushinda na wewe.

⁹³radhi, consent, blessing, is of great importance to a person, whether it be from his mother, his father, or his teacher. People will become afraid if any of these three persons withhold their radhi, since it is held that without radhi you cannot prosper – anything you set your hand to will be blighted and fail. The teacher here gives Ja'far his radhi – if he had not given it, Ja'far would not have gone – and says that not only will he give his complete consent, but also (133d) that he will not change his mind once Ja'far has gone.

⁹⁴Amu -sika = fika. Compare -sita / fita.

⁹⁵The teacher is reminding Ja'far of his duty to his mother – he must also get her consent.

⁹⁶halimama = wasiwasi.

⁹⁷fimbo ya mbuzi (?)

⁹⁸Ja'far is trying to sneak back into the house. He is apprehensive about what he is going to tell his mother, and is also hurt that she did not tell him the full story about his past (150-1).

(٨٨) كَمَب سَو جَعْفَرٍ * وَتُؤْنَشَ جَوْرٍ * هُنْغِي كَم كَو سِرٍ * مَتُّ أَمَزِكِمْبِي

amezokimbiya mtu * siri kwa kama hungiya * jawri waṭuonesha * ja'fari siwe kamba

[86] (88) kamba siwe Jaafari * watuonyesha jauri * hungia kama kwa siri * mtu amezokimbiya⁹⁹

She said: That's not [like] you, Ja'far -- are you being insolent to us, entering as if secretly, [like] a person who has run away [and is trying to hide]?

(٨٩) نَاصِرِ نِ نَدُغُ يَكٍ * پَ هَپْ أَتْمَكِ * عَيْنِ يَ مَتِ يَكِ * هَتَكِ كُتُونْغَلِي

kuṭwangaliya hataki * yake mato ya 'ayni * atamke hapo papo * yake ndugu ni nāsiri

[87] (89) Nasiri¹⁰⁰ ni ndugu yake * papo hapo atamke * aini ya mato yake * hataki kutwangaliya

Nasir was [Ja'far's] brother, and at that moment he spoke up: To judge by his eyes, he doesn't want to look at us.

(٩٠) اِو مَم سَوْدِكِ * تَكُوْمِي حُجِ يَكِ * يُوْ اَنْ مَبِرِ وَكِ * وَوِلِ وَمَبِي

wamepoteya wawili * wake mbuzi una yeo * yake huja takwambiya * siudhike mama ewe

[88] (90) ewe¹⁰¹ mama siudhike * takwambia huja yake¹⁰² * yeo una mbuzi wake * wawili wamepoteya

Don't worry, mother -- I'll tell you the reason: today he was with his goats, [and] two of them went missing.

(٩١) وَمَتِكَ صَفْنِ * مَوْتَنَغِ هَوُوْنِ * كِشَ اَتَكَ مَوْتُنِ * يُوْنِ كَلِ لَ نَدِي

ndiya la kali ni yuwa * mwiṭuni atoka kisha * hawaoni mewatanga * safuni wametoka

[89] (91) wametoka safuni * mewatanga¹⁰³ hawaoni * kisha atoka mwiṭuni * yuwa ni kali la ndiya

They left the herd, they went off and he couldn't find them. And of course he is coming back from the forest -- the sun is fierce on the way.

(٩٢) كَتْنِكَ جَعْفَرِ * اَكْمِبِجِ نَاصِرِ * زِتَكْتِكَ جَوْرِ * يُوْ نِكِكُونْغَلِي

nikikwangaliya yeo * jeuri zitakutoka * nāsiri akampija * ja'fari kainuka

[90] (92) kainuka Jaafari * akampija Nasiri * zitakutoka jeuri * yeo nikikwangaliya¹⁰⁴

Ja'far got up and hit Nasir: Your impudence will leave you today, I'll see to it.

(٩٣) هَپْ مَم اَسِكِرِ * كَمَشِكِ جَعْفَرِ * اِوْپِ نِ مِي نَاصِرِ * هَپْ سِنْغَلِكِمْبِي

singelikimbiya hapo * nāsiri mii ni iwapo * ja'fari kamshika * asikiri mama hapo

[91] (93) hapo mama asikiri * kamshika Jaafari * iwapo ni mi Nasiri * hapo singelikimbiya¹⁰⁵

But his mother would have none of that, and grabbed Ja'far [and said to Nasir:] If I were you, Nasir, I would not have run away just now.

⁹⁹ anajifita, he is hiding himself.

¹⁰⁰ We are not told who Nasir's father is.

¹⁰¹ = wewe.

¹⁰² Nasir teases Ja'far, saying that he knows why Ja'far is quiet: (1) he lost two of the goats he was herding (140d), which would be a shameful thing, and (2) he is not strong enough to put up with the midday heat (141d).

¹⁰³ -tanga, scatter, spread out.

¹⁰⁴ If someone is impudent, and you try to remind him that he should behave better by asking him where his manners are, he may say: zimeningia kwa huku, zimetoka kwa huku, they came into me here, and went out there, that is, they went in one ear and out the other. If this is too much for the other person, he may say, like Ja'far: zitakutoka jeuri, zitakuingia adabu, your insolence will leave you, and good manners will enter you, and proceed to teach him a lesson, after which he may say, if successful: umekwisha pata adabu, you have finished getting manners, that is, I've taught you a lesson.

¹⁰⁵ i.e. don't run away from a fight.

(٩٤) نَاصِرِ نِ نَدُّغِ يَكُ * مُوَنِّغُ مَثُّتُ وَكُ * كِشَ نِ عَوْنِ يَكُ * وَتَ كُمْتَانْغُلِيَا

kumtanguliya wata * yako 'awni ni kisha * wako mṭoto mwanangu * yako ndugu ni nāširi

[92] (94) Nasiri ni ndugu yako * mwanangu mtoto¹⁰⁶ wako * kisha ni auni yako * wata¹⁰⁷ kumtanguliya
[To Jaafar she said:] "Nasir is your brother, my son, your younger brother -- you can depend on him [when you need help], so do not attack him.

(٩٥) أَلِنَمِي تِنِ * أَكُوْلُوْ هَنِنِ * يَمَكُطَ مُوْنَدِنِ * هَيِ نِمَزُكُوْمِي

nimezokwambiya haya * mwendani yamekupaṭa * haneni akiulizwa * tini aliinamiya

[93] (95) aliinamia tini * akiulizwa haneni * yamekupata mwendani * haya nimezokwambia¹⁰⁸
[Ja'far] lay down -- he did not answer when spoken to. [Nasir said:] "It was right on the mark, my friend, what I said to you."

(٩٦) هَبْ مَمَكِ أَجِبْ * نَاصِرِ هُتَادَبْ * كَوِ وِوِ نِ هَرَبْ * نَمِ نِيُوْ طَبِي

tabiya nayuwa nami * harabu ni wewe kiwa * hutaadabu nāširi * ajibu mamake hapo

[94] (96) hapo mamake ajibu * Nasiri hutaadabu * kiwa wewe ni harabu * nami nayua tabiya
Then his mother retorted: You are ill-mannered, Nasir -- when you are being naughty I can tell from your behaviour.

(٩٧) نَتَكَ زَكُ هَبِرْ * هَيِ نِبْ جَعْفَرِ * أَسْ أُسِمَمِ هَرِ * صُوْرَ زِمَكُطِي

zimekupoteya ṣūra * hari usimeme uso * ja'fari nipa haya * habari zako nataka

[95] (97) nataka zako habari * haya nipa Jaafari¹⁰⁹ * uso usimeme hari¹¹⁰ * sura zimekupoteya¹¹¹
[She told Ja'far:] I want [to hear] your news, tell it to me, Ja'far. Your face is flushed, and you are not your ordinary self.

(٩٨) جَعْفَرِ أَكْبَيْنِ * وَتَكَ هَبِرِ غَنِ * نِكُوْمِي لُغِ غَنِ * كُوْكَ إِوِ نِ بِي

piya ni iwe kwako * gani lugha nikwambiye * gani habari wataka * akabaini ja'fari

[96] (98) Jaafari akabaini¹¹² * wataka habari gani * nikwambiye lugha gani * kwako iwe¹¹³ ni piya¹¹⁴
Ja'far said: What news do you want? In what language should I tell you, so that it will be new to you?

(٩٩) كِكُوْمِي كِعْرَبْ * نِيُوْ أُتِنَجِبْ * تِنِ نُوْنِ عَجَبْ * مِمِ مُوْنِيُوْ كِكُوْمِي

kukwambiya mwenyewe mimi * 'ajabu naona tena * utanijibu nayuwa * ki'arabu kikwambiya

[97] (99) kikwambia kiarabu * nayuwa utanijibu * tena naona ajabu * mimi mwenyewe kukwambiya
If I tell you in Arabic I know you will answer: "I am perplexed again" [even if] I myself tell you.

(١٠٠) كِكُوْلُوْ أَلِكْ * بَبِ هُنَمِي هَكْ * تَنْغُ نِنِ مِمْبِ يَكْ * أَلْفَرِكِ دُنِيَا

duniya alifariki * yako mimba nina tangu * hako hunambiya baba * aliko kikuuliza

[98] (100) kikuuliza aliko * baba hunambiya hako¹¹⁵ * tangu nina mimba yako * alifariki duniya
If I ask you [whether] he is alive, my father, you tell me he is not: "When I was still pregnant with you he passed away from

¹⁰⁶Mvita mdogo. small = Amu mtoto = Gunya mdodi.

¹⁰⁷Perhaps emend to kumshanguliya. The mother tells Ja'far not to hit Nasir, because he was not serious and he was only teasing. She also reminds him that blood is thicker than water, and that in the last resort your family is your best friend.

¹⁰⁸Nasir says that his words have affected Ja'far, so there must have been some truth in them. But the mother stops his teasing this time.

¹⁰⁹She knows something has happened.

¹¹⁰hari = jasho.

¹¹¹lit. "[your] features have changed". -poteya here = -geuka, -badilika.

¹¹²-baini = -sema.

¹¹³Ja'far is angry that his mother hid the truth about his father from him.

¹¹⁴Amu piya = Mvita mpya.

¹¹⁵hako is the negative form of yuko, he is there, just as siko is the negative form of niko, I am there.

this world."

(١٠١) كِكْوَمْبِيَا يُمْنِن * أَتَعُوْزَ مَنَعِن * أَتَمْبِيَا وَفَن * خَيْرَ كُنَيْمَرِي

kuinyamaziya khēri * wafene utanambiya * mangine utageuza * yumuini kikwambiya

[99] (101) kikwambiya yu muini¹¹⁶ * utageuza mangine * utanambiya wafene * heri kuinyamaziya
If I tell you he is in the town, you will change to other [words] -- you will tell me [I've seen someone who] looks like him, and
it's better to keep quiet about it.

(١٠٢) وُو هِيَوَ فَرَس * وَلَ مَكَّهَ هُكَيْس * وَنَدَلِبَ مَجْلِس * أَكْمُونَ عَلِي

'aliya ukamuona * majlisi wendelepi * hukuisi makah wala * farisi huyawa wewe

[100] (102) wewe huyawa¹¹⁷ farisi¹¹⁸ * wala Maka hukuisi * wendele-pi majlisi¹¹⁹ * ukamuona Aliya¹²⁰
[His mother said:] You are not worldly-wise, nor do you know Mecca -- where did you go among people, that you saw Ali?"

(١٠٣) جَعْفَرَ كَبَيْن * ثَمُونَنَ مَوْتِن * صِفَ زَكِ مُعَيْن * أَكْتِكَ تَكْوَمْبِي

takwambiya ukitaka * mu'ayani zake şifa * mwiṭuni tumeonana * kabaini ja'fari

[101] (103) Jaafari kabaini * tumeonana mwiṭuni * şifa zake muayani * ukitaka takwambiya
Jaafar said: We met in the forest -- a clear description, if you want it, I will tell you.

(١٠٤) نِسِكِرَ نِرَدِد * كِو سِي اُنْرُد * كِمَ چَكِ هَكَزِد * كَمَ چَنُغُ اَنَغَلِي

angaliya changu kama * hakizidi chake kimo * unirudi siyo kiwa * niradidi nisikiza

[102] (104) nisikiza niradidi * kiwa siyo unirudi * kimo chake hakizidi¹²¹ * kama changu angaliya
Listen to me, let me speak -- if it is not him, correct me -- his height is not much taller than my own, look.

(١٠٥) نَ لَ پِلِ نِبَيْن * نِبِي زَكِ زَكْتُون * هَكْمِي اُپَان * نَ كَمَ سِي نَمْبِي

nambiya siyo kama na * upaāni hakumeya * kitwani za zake nyee * nibaini pili la na

[103] (105) na la pili nibaini * nyee zake za kitwani * hakumeya upaani¹²² * na kama siyo nambiya
And let me tell you the second thing: the hair on his head does not cover his bald patch, and if that is not so, tell me.

(١٠٦) نَ يَ ثَا تُ اُفَهَم * اُنَ تُنْدِي كُرْم * صِفَ زَكِ زَمْتِم * نَ هِزُ نِمَكْوَمْبِي

nimekwambiya hizo ni * zemetimu zake şifa * kuzimu ya tundu una * ufahamu ṭāṭu ya na

[104] (106) na ya tatu ufahamu * una tundu ya kuzimu¹²³ * şifa zake zemetimu * ni hizo nimekwambiya
And know the third thing: he has a hole [leading to the] Underworld (?). His description is complete -- it consists of these
things that I have told you.

¹¹⁶i.e. that he has seen someone who might be his father.

¹¹⁷ < kuwa.

¹¹⁸farisi, clever, skilful, originally meant "horseman, rider", for which skill is necessary. Compare farasi, horse, 228b. Both words are related to فرس, Persians, who were renowned for their heavy cavalry.

¹¹⁹majlisi = baraza: a meeting-place where men gather to chat and pass the time.

¹²⁰i.e. your daily life does not take you to the sorts of places where you might meet Ali.

¹²¹See note to 117c. People believe anecdotes about famous people, even if they are not likely or academically proven – as the many magazines retailing celebrity gossip can attest.

¹²²lit. "does not grow on the bald patch [that he has]". ana upaa [mkubwa], he's bald.

¹²³The meaning of this line is unclear. tundu means "hole, pit", and kuzimu means "the Underworld" – (kuzimu hakuna nyota, in the Underworld there are no stars) – but the implication here is obscure.

(١٠٧) نِ رَعُوفٌ وَ مَنُنٌ * كِشَ نِ جَعِنَ مَنْ * نَ أُكْتِكَ مَفْنٌ * هُنْ نِمَكُپِجِي

nimekupijiya hunu * mfano ukitaka na * mno jagina ni kisha * maneno wa ra'ufu ni
[105] (107) ni raufu¹²⁴ wa maneno * kisha ni jagina¹²⁵ mno * na ukitaka mfano¹²⁶ * hunu nimekupijiya
He is courteous of speech, and further, he is a great warrior. If you want a likeness of him, I have given you this one.

(١٠٨) هِيَ اُنْمَبِزِيُوُ * نِ كَوْلِ نَدِي يَلِي * نِبَ جِنْسِ يَوْءُوُ * هَتَ كُمْفَهَمِي

kumfahamiya hata * yaweeo jinsi nipa * yaliyo ndiyo kweli ni * unambiziyeo hayo
[106] (108) hayo unambiziyeo * ni kweli ndiyo yaliyo * nipa jinsi yaweeo¹²⁷ * hata kumfahamiya
[His mother said:] These things you have told me are indeed exactly correct. Tell me how it was that you came to recognise him."

(١٠٩) تَكُپُ تَنْغُ اَوْلِ * هِكْ چَاكْ نِ ثَقْلِ * كِتَنْغَ مَاءِ نِ غَالِ * نِكْتَكَسَ نِ نَدِي

ndiya na nikatakasa * ghali ni mai kitanga * thaqili ni chaka hiki * awali tangu takupa
[107] (109) takupa tangu awali * hiki¹²⁸ chaka¹²⁹ ni thaqili¹³⁰ * kitanga mai ni ghali * nikatakasa na ndiya¹³¹
[Jaafar said:] "I will give you [the whole story] from the beginning. This drought was severe, and wandering around [looking for] water was difficult, so I travelled further afield.

(١١٠) صَدَقِ يَنْغُ قَوْلِ * نِمْتَنْغَ بَرِ هِلِ * مَاءِ هَپَنَ مَهَلِ * نِ خَيْرِ كَيْرُدِي

kairudiya khēri ni * mahali hapana mai * hili bara nimetanga * qawli yangu šadiqi
[108] (110) šadiqi yangu qauli * nimetanga bara hili * mai hapana mahali * ni heri kairudiya
Believe my words: I wandered around in the hinterland, but there was no water anywhere, [and I thought] I'd better come back.

(١١١) هِنْدَ هَوَزَ مُيْنِ * نِنْدَ جَنْبِ غَنِ * كُوْنَ وَتْ وَنْغَنِ * وَتْ وَنْدِمَ نَدِي

ndiya wendeme waṭaṭu * wengine waṭu kuona * gani janibu nenende * moyoni hiwaza henda
[109] (111) henda hiwaza moyoni * niṅende janibu¹³² gani * kaṅṅa watu wengine¹³³ * watatu wendeme
ndiya¹³⁴
As I went along, pondering in my heart which direction I should take, I saw some people, three of them, coming along the road.

(١١٢) كَوْعَنَ وَكْ مَبْلِ * كَنَنْ تَمُّهَلِ * مَرَّ نِكِوَصِلِ * مَاءِ وَتَنْمَبِي

watanambiya mai * nikiwašili mara * taimuhuli kanena * mbali wako kawaona
[110] (112) kawaona wako mbali * kanena¹³⁵ tayimuhuli¹³⁶ * mara¹³⁷ nikiwasili * mai watanambiya
I saw them when they were far off, and I said to myself that I should wait -- once I get there they can tell me [where to find] water."

¹²⁴ = taratibu, polite.

¹²⁵ See 117c.

¹²⁶ -piga mfano, give an example of.

¹²⁷ Amu yaweeo = Mvita yalivyokuwa.

¹²⁸ hiki implies that the mother knows what drought he is referring to, i.e. she has experienced it too.

¹²⁹ chaka < -waka, burn.

¹³⁰ Because of this, Ja'far had to travel farther than normal with his goats to find water, and this led to his meeting up with Ali.

¹³¹ This comes very close to the English expression "hit the road". -takasa, stride along making a noise when your feet hit the ground.

¹³² janibu = upande.

¹³³ Or we could emend to wageni, strangers.

¹³⁴ The three of them were walking along moja kwa moja in Indian file - see the note to 35d.

¹³⁵ Note that -nena, speak, say, here means "intend".

¹³⁶ -yi-muhuli = -ji-ngojesha.

¹³⁷ mara here = pengine.

(١١٣) پَن كِفْلِ كِنِيسَ * هَتَ نَاءِ وَكَيْتَ * نَوَوْنَ وَكِنَسَ * سَلَامُ كَوَپِسِي

kawapisiya salāmu * wakinusa niwawene * wakapiṭa nao hata * kinyesa kivuli pana
[111] (113) pana kivuli kinyesa * hata nao wakapita * niwawene waḳiṭuṣa * salamu kawapisiya¹³⁸
Waiting (?) there in the shade until they had passed, when I had seen them go by I greeted them.

(١١٤) كَمَبِ مَوْنَدَبِ مَتِ * هِكِ نِ كِئُغِ كَٹ * هِلَ نَدْنِ مُكَيْتِ * لَيْطِ كِئِدُكِي

kupindukiya lipate * mukēti ndoni hela * kaṭi kipungu ni hiki * matiti mwendapi kamba
[112] (114) kamba mwenda-pi matiti¹³⁹ * hiki ni kipungu kati¹⁴⁰ * hela¹⁴¹ ndooni muketi * lipate
kupindukiya¹⁴²

I said: Where are you going in such a hurry? This is high noon -- why don't you come and sit down until the sun goes down a bit?

(١١٥) نَ هِلِ يُو سِ زِرِ * كَلْنَدَمَ نِ حَظَرِ * وَلَ زُو سِ آخِرِ * كَمَ مُتَلِمَيْي

mutalimaṭiya kama * akhiri si zeo wala * khaṭari ni kulandama * zuri si yuwa hili na
[113] (115) na hili yua si zuri¹⁴³ * kulandama¹⁴⁴ ni hatari * wala zeo¹⁴⁵ si ahiri¹⁴⁶ * kama mutalimatiya¹⁴⁷
You should know that this [sun] is not good [for you] -- to go about in it [for long] is dangerous, nor is the time so late that you will be delayed [if you stop here]."

(١١٦) وَكِسِي كَلِمَ * وَكِرُنْغِي نِيْمَ * وَوَلِ وَكَسِمَمَ * مَمِي كِنِيْلِي

kaniiliya mmoya * wakasimama wawili * nyuma wakizungukiya * kalima wakisikiya
[114] (116) wakisikia kalima * wakizungukia nyuma * wawili wakasimama * mmoya kaniyiliya
When they heard my words, they turned round. Two stood where they were, and one came up to me.

(١١٧) أَكَبِ أَكَبِيْنِ * كِنُوَزَ نَدُو نَنِ * أَوْ وَتُكَيِنِ * حَظَرِ كُفِيْكِي

kuṭufikiya khaṭari * waṭutakiyani aw * nani ndiwe kaniuza * akabaini akija
[115] (117) akija akabaini * kaniuza ndiwe nani¹⁴⁸ * au watutakia-ni * hatari ḳiṭufikiya
When he came over he spoke, and asked me: Who are you? And why are you concerned about us, and about danger coming to us?

(١١٨) سِسِ هَظْشِكِ يَكِ * وَلَ سِ نَدُغِ زَكِ * أَئْتِي مَتَمَكُ * يَيْسِنِ كُتُومَبِي

kuṭwambiya yapeseni * matamko uetaayo * zako ndugu si wala * yako haṭushiki sisi
[116] (118) sisi hatushiki yako¹⁴⁹ * wala si ndugu zako¹⁵⁰ * uetaayo matamko * yapese-ni¹⁵¹ kutwambiya
We will not take your [advice] -- we are not relatives of yours. The words you have spoken, what good is it to tell us them?"

¹³⁸Amu -pisa salamu = Mvita -toa salamu. The greeting salaam alekum is used only to groups of more than one person.

¹³⁹kama Wazungu, like Europeans!

¹⁴⁰kipungu-kati = mti-kati, saa sita, jua kali.

¹⁴¹Amu hela = Mvita hebu. Ja'far's invitation to the three men is not as polite as it might be, which partly accounts for their response.

¹⁴²We are to understand jua, sun. -pindukia is lit. "change direction", i.e. the sun ascends through the sky until noon, and then begins to decline.

¹⁴³Even though he is only a child, Ja'far gives advice to the men.

¹⁴⁴-andama = -fuata. See 34d.

¹⁴⁵Amu zeo, 9/10 = Mvita wakati. Compare njeo in Muyaka.

¹⁴⁶lit. "end".

¹⁴⁷-limatiya = -chelewa. In other words, if they stop for a bit, they will not arrive at their destination so late that they will sleep in the next morning.

¹⁴⁸This is a rude response. They are suspicious because he is being over-familiar, and yet they do not know him.

¹⁴⁹We understand maneno. This is very rude. There is a saying: usishike maneno ya wanawake, don't take the word of women.

¹⁵⁰Again, very rude.

¹⁵¹ilifaa vipi. -pasa, be obliged to, have to.

(١١٩) وَوٍ نِ مَوْنِ آدَمُ * نِ مَيْتَرِ قَوْمٍ * تَوْمِي تَكْفَهُمُ * كَوْنَدُ تُيُو طَبِي

tabiya tuyuwe kwanda * tukufahamu twambiye * qawmu mpoteza ni * ādamu mwana ni wewe
[117] (119) wewe ni mwana adamu * ni mpoteza qaumu¹⁵² * twambie tukufahamu * kwanda tuyue tabiya
Are you a human being, or [a spirit] who makes people lose their way? Tell us so that we can know you, let us first know your character.

(١٢٠) كَوَجِشَ قَوْلٍ * نِ دِينِ يَكِ رَسُولٍ * كَوِ وِوٍ نِ جَهْلِ * مِبِلِ زَنْعِ نُنْدُكِي

nondokeya zangu mbele * jahili ni wewe kiwa * rasūli yake dīni ni * qawli kawajibisha
[118] (120) kawajibisha qauli * ni dini yake rasuli * kiwa wewe ni jahili¹⁵³ * mbele zangu nondokeya
I answered them with the words: [My religion] is the religion of the Prophet --- if you are an unbeliever, go away from in front of me.

(١٢١) كَسِيكِي هُفَسِرٍ * هُمُوْتُ أَبُو بَكْرٍ * نَدُو وِوٍ نِ زُبَيْرٍ * وَتِ وِوِلٍ وَكِي

wakaya wawili wote * zubayri na wewe ndoo * bakari abuu humwiṭa * hufasiri kasikiya
[119] (121) kasikia hufasiri * humwita Abu Bakari * ndoo wewe na Zuberi¹⁵⁴ * wote wawili wakaya
And I heard him speak and call: "Abu Bakr, come here, and you Zubayr! And both of them came over.

(١٢٢) وَكِي وَكَسِمَمَ * أُسُ وَكَيْتَرَمَ * كَمَبِ مُكِمَفَهَمَ * وَجِهَ وَكِ نَبِي

nabiya wake wajhi * mukimfahama kamba * wakanitizama uso * wakasimama wakaya
[120] (122) wakaya wakasimama * uso wakanitizama * kamba mukimfahama * wajhi¹⁵⁵ wake Nabiya
They came over and stood, and looked at my face. [The first man] said: When you look at him closely, his face [resembles] the Prophet's.

(١٢٣) هُسِيكِي هُنَجِبُ * عَلِي بِنِ طَالِبُ * مَمَ وَمَتَعَجَبُ * كَوُ وِتِ هُنَنْغَلِي

hunangaliya wote kwa * wameta'ajabu mama * ṭālibu bin 'alī * hunijibu husikiya
[121] (123) husikia¹⁵⁶ ḥumjibu * Aliyi bini Talibu * mama¹⁵⁷ wametaajabu * kwa wote hunangaliya
When [the others] heard this, [they said:] He reminds me of Ali ibn Talib. Impossible!, they [said] in amazement, as they all stared at me.

(١٢٤) هِي نِ أَبُو بَكْرٍ * نَ هِي هَيْتُو زُبَيْرٍ * نَو لَكِ هُفَسِرٍ * اِن تَكَلِسِيكِي

tukalisikiya ina * hufasiri lako nawe * zuberi huiṭwa hoyo na * bakari abuu ni hoyo
[122] (124) hoyo ni Abu Bakari * na hoyo huitwa Zuberi * nawe lako hufasiri¹⁵⁸ * ina tukalisikiya
This is Abu Bakr, [said the first man], and this is Zubayr. But you have not spoken your name for us to hear it.

(١٢٥) اَكْتَمَكَ مَبُجٍ * مِمِ هَيْتُو اَزْوَجٍ * نَمِ سَسِ نَتْرَجٍ * نَ اِن لَكِ نَمْبِي

nambiya lako ina na * nataraji sasa nami * azwaji huiṭwa mimi * mbuji akatamka
[123] (125) akatamka mbuji * mimi huitwa azwaji¹⁵⁹ * nami sasa nataraji * na ina lako nambiya
This gentleman spoke: I am called Azwaj, and I now hope [you] will tell me your name too.

¹⁵²i.e. a jinn or devil.

¹⁵³jahili, someone ignorant of the truth, in this case of Islam.

¹⁵⁴Abu Bakr and Zubayr are two of the *masahaba*, the Companions of the Prophet, who made the *hijra* with him.

¹⁵⁵wajhi = uso.

¹⁵⁶hu- here = waka-.

¹⁵⁷mama! is an expression of disbelief.

¹⁵⁸mbona husemi?, why aren't you speaking?

¹⁵⁹azwaji is literally "spouse", so this name is strange. See also 127b.

(١٢٦) كَوْمِي نَمِكِرِ * نَمِ اِنْ كُفَسِرِ * مِمِ نَدِي جَعْفَرِ * وَ مَوْلَانَا عَلِيَّ

'aliyya mawlānā wa * ja'fari ndiye mimi * kufasiri ina nami * nimekiri kawambiya
[124] (126) kawambia nimekiri * nami ina kufasiri * mimi ndiye Jaafari * wa Maulana Aliya
And I told them: I have decided to speak my name too. I am Ja'far, [son] of Lord Ali.

(١٢٧) وَنُؤُزُ تَرْتَبُ * وَنَدَاءُ وَبِ غَرِيْبُ * هَپْ مَمَ كَوَجِبُ * نِتَكَلُ كَوْمِي

kawambiya nitakalo * kawajibu mama hapo * gharibu wapi wendao * taratibu waniuze
[125] (127) waniuze taratibu * wendao wapi gharibu¹⁶⁰ * hapo mama kawajibu * nitakalo kawambiya
And they asked me politely, Where are you going, stranger? Then, Mother, I answered them: telling them what I had [earlier] intended.

(١٢٨) نِمْتَنَعُ مَاءِ بَرَنِ * نِمِچْكَ سِيْوَنِ * مُبِزُ وَمِلِشَ يَنْ * سَسَ كَيْتَ هَلِي

haliya kuyuta sasa * yani wamelisha mbuzi * siyaoni nimechoka * barani mai nimetanga
[126] (128) nimetanga mai barani * nimechoka siyaoni * mbuzi wamelisha yani * sasa ḳẉa nyoṭa haliya
I have wandered about [searching for] water in the scrubland -- I am tired and I still haven't seen any. The goats have eaten all the grass, and now they are bleating for want of water.

(١٢٩) هُكُ مَمَزِيْطَ * مَاءِ هَمَكِيْكَتَ * مُبِزُ وَنَعُ وَنَ نِيْطَ * چَمَبَ مَوِيُو نَمِي

nambiya mwayuwa chamba * nyoṭa wana wangu mbuzi * hamkuyakuṭa mai * mmezopiṭa huko
[127] (129) huko mmezopita * mai hamkuyakuta * mbuzi wangu wana nyota * chamba mwayua nambiya
In that area you've passed through, have you not come upon any water there? My goats are thirsty -- if you know of [a well], tell me."

(١٣٠) وَكَنَجِبُ قَوْلِ * كَوْمَبِ كِسَمَ سِ مَبَلِ * لَكِيْنِ كَنَ ثَقِيْلَ * هِي نَدُو كَيْطِي

kuitiya ndoo hiyo * thaqili kina lakini * mbali si kisima kwamba * qawli wakanijibu
[128] (130) wakanijibu qauli * kwamba kisima si mbali * lakini kina thaqili * hiyo ndoo kuitiya¹⁶¹
They answered me with word that there was a well not far away. But, [they said,] it is difficult to put the bucket into it.

(١٣١) هِي مَاءِ نِ مَتَمُ * مَفْنُ وَ زَمَزَمُ * لَكِيْنِ سِيسِ فَهَمُ * كُكُوْنِي هُچَلِي

hucheleya kukuonya * fahamu sisi lakini * zamzamu wa mfano * matamu ni mai hayo
[129] (131) hayo mai ni matamu * mfano wa Zamuzamu¹⁶² * lakini sisi fahamu * kukuonya hucheleya¹⁶³
The water is sweet, just like Zamzam's, but we, you understand, are afraid to show it to you.

(١٣٢) اُوْپُ اُمِحْتَرِ * كُكِيْكَ تُتِيْرِ * وَ لَ اُسْتُفَسِرِ * نِ سِيسِ تُلُكُوْمِي

tolokwambiya sisi ni * usitufasiri wala * tutayari kukupeka * umekhitari uwapo
[130] (132) uwapo umehitari * kukupeka tu tayari * wala usitufasiri * ni sisi tulokwambiya
If you want to risk it, we are ready to take you there, but do not mention us, [that] it was us who told you [about it].

¹⁶⁰gharibu = mgeni.

¹⁶¹Because Ali has covered it up.

¹⁶²Zamzam is a sacred spring in Mecca, situated close to the Ka'aba.

¹⁶³tunaogopa. Because they are not sure how Ali will react to someone else using the well.

(١٣٣) وَكَيْؤُنِي أُسِطَ * هَبْ نَدِي كَفُوتَ * كُو مُوتُنِ وَكَيْطَ * مَبِي وَكَيْتَلِي

wakanitoleya mbiyo * wakapita mwiṭuni kwa * kafuwaṭa ndiya hapo * usiṭa wakanionya
[131] (133) wakanionya usita¹⁶⁴ * hapo ndia kafuata * kwa mwiṭuni wakapita * mḃḃe wakanitoleya¹⁶⁵
They showed me the way, and then I followed the path. They went into the forest, and directed me onwards.

(١٣٤) هَتَ كِدُسَ كِسِمَ * لِبْ بَاءَ كَسُكُمَ * كُو كِوْفُ كُتِزَمَ * وَءَ هُنِنَغَلِي

huniangaliya wao * kutizama kiwavu kwa * kasukuma bao lipo * kisima kidusa hata
[132] (134) hata kiḏoṣa¹⁶⁶ kisima * lipo bao kasukuma * kwa kiwavu kutizama¹⁶⁷ * wao huniangaliya
Until, when I came to the well, there was a plank there that I pushed away. They watched me from one side, looking at me.

(١٣٥) جَعْفَرِ اَتَمَكِ * بُو بَكَرِ سِشُتُكِ * كِسِمَ سِكَفُنِكِ * نِتْرُدُ كُكُومِي

kukwambiya nitarudi * sikifunike kisima * sishuṭuke bakari buu * atamke ja'fari
[133] (135) Jaafari atamke¹⁶⁸ * Bu Bakari sishuṭuke * kisima sikifunike * nitarudi ṅakwambiya¹⁶⁹
Ja'far said: Abu Bakr, do not worry -- do not cover the well. I will return, I tell you.

(١٣٦) سِنَ خُوفُ مِي وَنَعُ * كُنُو مَاءِ مَبِزِ وَنَعُ * كَنَنْ نَنْدَ زَنْعُ * نَزِتَكَسَ نَ نَدِي

ndiya na nizitakase * zangu nenda kanena * wangu mbuzi mai kunwa * wangu moyo khōfu sina
[134] (136) sina hofu moyo wangu * kunwa mai mbuzi wangu * kanena nenda zangu * nizitakase¹⁷⁰ na ndiya
I have no fear [in] my heart that my goats should drink the water. I said: I am going now, so that I can herd them along the road."

(١٣٧) يُو كُكِيْمَبُوكِ * نِنَ فُرَهَ هُتَكَ * مَلِشَنِ كِيوپِكَ * مُدَ وَ يُو كُوَاءَ

kuwaa yuwa wa muda * kiwapeka malishoni * huteka furaha nina * kukipambauka yuwa
[135] (137) yua kukipambauka * nina furaha huteka * malishoni kiwapeka * muda wa yua kuwaa¹⁷¹
When the sun rose [next day] I was laughing with joy, and took [the goats] to the pastures when the sun was burning hot.

(١٣٨) اَوَّلِ يِ سَاءَ سِتَ * هَبْ مَبِزِ كَوُسْتِ * نُونَ وَمِنَوْتِ * هُتْرَنَ كُكُمِي

kukumbiya na hutura * wameniwata naona * kawasuta mbuzi hapo * sita saa ya awali
[136] (138) awali ya saa sita * hapo mbuzi kawasuta¹⁷² * naona¹⁷³ wameniwata * hutura¹⁷⁴ na kukumbiya
Just before the sixth hour (noon), I was then driving the goats along, and I saw that they had broken away from me, running and frisking.

¹⁶⁴usita = barabara.

¹⁶⁵-toleya, give directions by accompanying a person to a good place to give them from.

¹⁶⁶-dosa = -gota, -gogota, knock, rap. As Ja'far walks over the planks covering the well, he hears the resonating sound of the well beneath them.

¹⁶⁷The meaning of this line is unclear.

¹⁶⁸Past tense.

¹⁶⁹Presumably Ja'far means that now he has found this well he will come back each day with his goats, so there is no point covering the well.

¹⁷⁰-takasa, shake, with nyayo, footsteps understood. The meaning is to shake the road by travelling a lot.

¹⁷¹-waa = -waka, burn.

¹⁷²Amu -suta = Mvita -shunga, -fukuza, shoo animals on, drive animals along.

¹⁷³The tense here gives the nuance of "suddenly". See also the notes to 60c and 92b.

¹⁷⁴-tura = -ruka, jump, bound.

(١٣٩) كَوْمِيَّيْ اِنْدَنْ * مُوكِيُو كِسْمَنْ * لَكِنْ هُفَالِيَنْ * نَدِمَ وَ كُوْطِيَّيْ

kuwatekeya wa ndimi * hufaliyani lakini * kisimani mwakuyuwa * enendani kawambiya

[137] (139) kawambia enendani * mwakuyua kisimani * lakini hufalia-ni * ndimi wa kuwatekeya¹⁷⁵

I told them: On you go -- you know where the well is. But what good will it do you, when I'm the only one who can draw water for you?

(١٤٠) وَكِنْدَ وَكِسْمَمَ * كُفُنِشُو كِسِمَ * بَاءَ نِكَلِسُكُمَ * نِمْنُ مَتْ أَكِيَّيْ

akiya mtu nimone * nikalisukuma bao * kisima kufunishiwe * wakasimama wakenda

[138] (140) wakenda wakasimama * kufunishiwe kisima¹⁷⁶ * bao nikalisukuma * nimone¹⁷⁷ mtu akiya

They went on and stood where the well had been covered over. I pushed away the plank, and I saw someone coming.

(١٤١) أَكِيَّيْ أَكْنِشِكَ * مَاءِ نِسِيَّيْكَ * مَمَ هَبْ كَتَمَكَ * يَ عَضَبُ كَمَوْمِيَّيْ

kamwambiya ghadabu ya * katamka hapo mama * nisyateka mae * akanishika akiya

[139] (141) akiya akanishika¹⁷⁸ * m̄aj̄i nisyateka * mama¹⁷⁹ hapo katamka * ya ghadabu kamwambiya

When he arrived he grabbed hold of me before I had drawn any water. Gosh! At that point I spoke, and addressed him angrily.

(١٤٢) نِكْمُحِمِدِ مَنْعُ * كُنِّيَّيْ بِنَعُ * كِنُوْزَ پَٹ يَنْعُ * چَنْدَنْ كَمْتَلِيَّيْ

kamtuleya chandani * yangu peṭe kaniuza * babangu kuneteya * mngu nikamuhimidi

[140] (142) nikamuhimidi¹⁸⁰ Mngu * kuneteya babangu * kaniuza peṭe yangu * chandani kamtuleya

I pleaded with God to send me my father. [The man] asked me about the ring on my finger, and I gave it to him.

(١٤٣) پَٹ أَكْتِزَمَ * كِجَ نَ هَلِمَمَ * يَسِيَّيْ يَ نِيْمَ * يَتَ يَكْمَرُدِيَّيْ

yakamrudiyā yote * nyuma ya yapisiye * halimama na kapija * akaitizama peṭe

[141] (143) peṭe akaitizama * kapija na halimama * yapisie ya nyuma¹⁸¹ * yote yakamrudiyā

He looked at the ring and became anxious. everything that had happened in the past, all of it came back to him.

(١٤٤) جَنْ اَلِيْنُوْلِيَّيْ * نِسْمَوْمِيَّيْ كَتَزَ * اَكْنِبَ مُؤَجَزَ * پِي نَ كُنِيْجِيَّيْ

kunipijiya na piya * miujiza akanipa * kaiza nisimwambiye * aliponiuliza jina

[142] (144) jina aliponiuliza * nisimwambie kaiza * akanipa miujiza¹⁸² * pia na kunipijiya¹⁸³

When he asked me my name I wouldn't tell him -- I refused. He told me things he could not have known [unless he was my father] giving me example after example.

(١٤٥) اُنِّيَّيْ صُوْرَ زَكَ * نَ صِفَ زَ نِيْمَبَ يَكُ * هَبْ كَيْتَ تَمَكَ * اِنْ لَنْعُ كَمَوْمِيَّيْ

kamwambiya langu ina * tamko kaeṭa hapo * yako nyumba za šifa na * zako šūra unipiye

[143] (145) unipee sura zako * na sifa za nyumba yako * hapo kaeta tamko * ina langu kamwambiya

¹⁷⁵i.e. there is no point in the goats running ahead of Ja'far and reaching the well before him, because once they are there they will have to stand and wait for him to get the water for them.

¹⁷⁶i.e. the well has been covered over again, in spite of Ja'far uncovering it the day before (184d) and telling Abu Bakr that there was no point in covering it (185c). The reason, of course, as we know from Ali's account earlier, is that he came to check on the well, and covered it (103b) when he found it uncovered.

¹⁷⁷Again, the tense gives the nuance of *suddenly* – see 138c.

¹⁷⁸What happens next has already been described in 108 ff.

¹⁷⁹mama! – see 173c.

¹⁸⁰Compare 202b.

¹⁸¹yale mambo yaliyopita zamani.

¹⁸²i.e. unless he really was Ja'far's father.

¹⁸³-piga mifano, give examples.

He described your features to me, and the characteristics of your house. Then I spoke and told him my name.

(١٤٦) نِكْمَوْمِي نِيكَ * نَزْرُوهُ هَكَكَ * نِ تِسِي زِسْرُ شَكَ * نَ وَو تَرَهْ طِي

tiya tarehe wewe na * shaka zisizo tisiya ni * hakika nizezoweo * nyaka nikamwambiya

[144] (146) nikamwambia nyaka * nizezoweo¹⁸⁴ hakika * ni tisia zisizo shaka * na wewe tarehe tiya¹⁸⁵
I told him [the number of] years since I was born -- definitely it is nine, and no mistake; and you should remember the number.

(١٤٧) خَبَرِ زَكَ تَمَمُ * نِمَكُپْ أَفْهَمُ * تَنَ نَ كَو مَوْلِمُ * نِمْرُدِ كُمَوْمِي

kumwambiya nimerudi * mwalimu kwa na tena * ufahamu nimekupa * timamu zake khabari

[145] (147) habari zake timamu * nimekupa ufahamu * tena na kwa mwalimu * nimerudi kumwambiya
The news about him is finished. I have completed it so that you may understand. And via my teacher's [house] I came back to tell him [about it].

(١٤٨) نِمْمُوغَ كَو خَيْرِ * اَسْبِهَ نِ سَفَرِ * نَوْمِي كَو جَبَارِ * نَ رَضِ كُنِيوِي

kuniweya raḍi na * jabāri kwa niombeya * safari ni asubhi * khēri kwa nimemuaga

[146] (148) nimemuaga kwa heri * asubuhi ni safari * niombea kwa Jabari * na radhi kuniweya
I have said farewell to him. [tomorrow] morning I will set off [to go to my father]. Intercede for me to the Almighty, and give me your blessing.

(١٤٩) تَنَ نَوْمِي مَنَعُ * تُبْنَدَنَ نَ بِيْنَعُ * نَمَ كِشَ مِي وَنَعُ * تَكِي كُونْغَلِي

kuwngaliya takuya * wangu mui kisha nami * babangu na tupendane * mngu niombeya tena

[147] (149) tena niombea Mngu * tupendane na babangu * nami kisha mui wangu * takuya¹⁸⁶ kuwngaliya
And intercede for me to God that my father and I will get along well together. And then [the people] in my town I will come and visit them.

(١٥٠) اَكِسِيكِي قَوْلِ * مَمَكِ اَسِحْمِلِ * اَكْتَرَدِدِ عَقْلِ * كَو مَكْنَدِ كَيْبِي

kaiṭiya makonde kwa * aqili akataradadi * asihimili mamake * qawli akisikiya

[148] (150) akisikia qauli * mamake asihimili * akataradadi¹⁸⁷ aqili * kwa makonde kayitiya
When she heard these words his mother could not bear it. She went out of her mind and beat herself with her fists.

(١٥١) كَيْبِنْدَ كَيْنْغَشَ * تَيْتِ اَكْرُشَ * هَتَ نَعُو كَمْفَشَ * اِكُو كُمْسَمِي

kumsomeya ikawa * kamvisha nguwo hata * akairusha tiyati * kayingusha kaiṭunda

[149] (151) kayitunda¹⁸⁸ kayingusha * tiyati akayirusha¹⁸⁹ * hata nguo kamvisha¹⁹⁰ * ikawa kumsomeya¹⁹¹
She took and threw herself down, she hurled herself to the ground, so that her clothing came undone, as if she was being read

¹⁸⁴ = nilizozaliwa.

¹⁸⁵ = kumbuka tarehe.

¹⁸⁶ i.e. he will return to his town for periodic visits.

¹⁸⁷ taradadi = -badilika.

¹⁸⁸ Amu -tunda = Mvita -twaa.

¹⁸⁹ She does not know what she is doing.

¹⁹⁰ The *kanga* is a wraparound garment, which is knotted, not sewn closed, so if someone is ill, tossing and turning, it can become undone. Ja'far holds it on and re-knots it. Similarly, it is considered unwise for a man to go into the kitchen, because while the woman is working there her *leso*, upper garment, may become undone.

¹⁹¹ This is somewhat exaggerated in this situation. The point is that her behaviour makes her look as if she is ill, and in such a case a common practice is to read to the sick person from the Qur'an, especially Chapter 36, *Ya Sin*. The main message of this chapter is that human beings are created by God, and wholly dependent upon him. Reading it comforts the sick person and their relatives, and is a sign of sympathy. Reciting the Word of God has beneficial effects in general. For instance, a rich man may pay a *mwalimu*, Islamic scholar to read the Qur'an over the man's wife every Friday, to keep her safe. If someone is going on a long journey, wellwishers may pass verses from the Qur'an around them while saying *Ngwakuhihadi*, may God protect you, and then give them the verses to protect them.

over.

(١٥٢) أَلَيْسَتْ فَهَمٌ * كَمُحَمَّدٍ كَرِيمٍ * كِشٍ أَكْتَكَلَمُ * مَنْعٌ أَكْمُومِي

akamuombeya mngu * akatakalamu kisha * karimu kamuḥimidi * fahamu alipopaṭa

[150] (152) alipopata fahamu * kamuhimidi Karimu * kisha akatakalamu * Mngu akamuombeya

When she regained her senses she thanked the Generous One, and then she spoke and prayed to God.

(١٥٣) يَا اللَّهُ مَلْ وَنَعٌ * نُنْصِرِي مَوْنَعٌ * نَ وَطْتُ وَ وَنَزَعٌ * حَفَظْنِ نِطْلِي

niṭiliya ḥifāzini * wenzangu wa waṭoto na * mwanangu ninuṣuriya * wangu mola allāhu yā

[151] (153) Ya Allahu Mola wangu * ninusuria mwanangu * na watoto wa wenzangu¹⁹² * ḥifadhini nitiliya¹⁹³

Oh God, my Lord, protect my child for me, and the children of my friends, place them for me in your care.

(١٥٤) إِنْ دَ هُنَ مَضَرَ * نِرَضِ أَلْفُ مَرَ * نَاوِ أَوْ نَ فِكِرَ * مِي نِمَكُوصِي

nimekuuṣiya moyo * fikira na uwe nāwe * mara alfu niraḍi * maḍara huna enenda

[152] (154) enenda huna madhara * ni radhi alifu mara * nawe uwe na fikira¹⁹⁴ * moḡa¹⁹⁵ nimekuusiya

[To Ja'far she said:] Off you go -- no harm will come to you. I bless you a thousand times. And that you should be sensible is the one [thing] I charge you to do.

(١٥٥) مِمِ أُيْنُوذِ * سِتْكَوَنَ غَيْظِ * إَوْبِ وَتَكَ رَضِ * نَ كَوَ عَلِي زَنْغِي

zengeya 'alii kwa na * raḍi wataka iwapo * għayẓi na sitokuwa * uyaponiudhi mimi

[153] (155) mimi uyaponiudhi * sitokuwa na ghaidhi¹⁹⁶ * iwapo wataka radhi * na kwa Aliyi zengeya¹⁹⁷

Even if you were to anger me I would not hold it against you. If you want a blessing [from him], then go and visit Ali.

(١٥٦) إِتْنَدِ أَوْ نِيُونِ * كَوَ بَيْكَ أَوْ تِنِ * نَ أَتْكَلْبَيْنِ * كَوَكِ لَوِ مَرَضِي

marḍiya liwe kwako * atakalobaini na * tini uwe babako kwa * nyaoni uwe itunde

[154] (156) itunde uwe nyaoni¹⁹⁸ * kwa babako uwe tini * na atakalobaini¹⁹⁹ * kwako liwe maridhiya²⁰⁰

Take care that you be humble and subservient to your father, and [accept] whatever he says to you without demur.

¹⁹²It would be selfish to pray only for yourself or your own children. The proper thing is to pray for others too, e.g. Muslims, or unbelievers who will become Muslims.

¹⁹³In other words, she is giving Ja'far her *radhi* – see 133c. In order to leave, Ja'far must have this. Hence the verse: *mwate asumbuke / hana radhi ya mamake*, let him remain troubled / he does not have the blessing of his mother. Likewise, an unsuccessful person may be referred to as someone *asiyekupata radhi ya babake*, she did not get his father's blessing. However, *watoto wa jeuri*, cheeky children, will say things like *radhi yako kaiweke mbuyuni*, stick your blessing in a baobab tree.

¹⁹⁴In other words, *siwe kama ng'ombe*, don't act stupidly.

¹⁹⁵We understand *jambo*, i.e. this is the one important thing she asks him to do.

¹⁹⁶*ghaidhi* = *hasira*, crossness, annoyance. A mother is always soft-hearted towards her children, unlike a father.

¹⁹⁷-*zengeya* = *-tafuta*. She is telling him: *fanya bidii kupata radhi ya Ali*, make an effort to secure Ali's blessing.

¹⁹⁸lit. "take care that you are under his feet". That is, be humble, and also obedient.

¹⁹⁹-*baini*, say.

²⁰⁰That is, do not refuse anything – the opposite of *-legea*, be remiss.

(١٥٧) نَ مُتَّمِ مُحَمَّدٍ * هُنَّ بَدِ كُكْرِدِ * أَلَلَهُ اللَّهُ جِتَهْدِ * نَغَاءُ أُبِطِ وَصِي

waṣiya upaṭe ngaa * jitahidi llāha allāha * kukuzidi budi hana * muḥamadi mṭume na
[155] (157) na mtume muhamadi * hana budi kukuzidi²⁰¹ * hala²⁰² hala jitahidi * ngaa²⁰³ upate wasiya²⁰⁴
And the Prophet Muhammad, there is no doubt that he is better than you, so mind you exert yourself to gain even a little
wisdom [from him].

(١٥٨) نَاءِ بِنْتِ حَبِيبٍ * كَتِ نَاءِ كَوِ ثَوَابٍ * كَوِ أَوْ نَ أَدَبٍ * أُمِطِي نَ كُمُونُغِي

kumwangukiya na umṭii * adabu na uwe kwake * thawābu kwa nae keti * ḥabību binti nae
[156] (158) naye binti Habibu²⁰⁵ * keti naye kwa thawabu²⁰⁶ * kwake uwe na adabu * umṭii na
kumwangukiya²⁰⁷

And as for the daughter of the Beloved One, stay with her politely; be courteous towards her, obey her and be humble towards
her.

(١٥٩) أَكَّتَكَ جَعْفَرٍ * نَ چَكَلِ كِتِيرِ * كَلِ نَ نُدِي نَاصِرِ * نَ مَوْلِمُ كَتِكِي

katokeya mwalimu na * nāṣiri nduye na kala * kitayari chakula na * ja'fari akatoka
[157] (159) akatoka Jaafari * na chakula²⁰⁸ ki tayari * kala na nduye Nasiri * na mwalimu katokeya
Ja'far arose [the next morning] and a meal was ready. He ate with his brother Nasir and then his teacher arrived [while they
were eating].

(١٦٠) وَكَتَنَغِي مِكْنُ * وَتِ وَتُّ مَفْنُ * أَكِنَنَ نَ مَنُ * نُدُغِي أَكِمُومِي

akimwambiya nduguye * maneno na akinena * mfano waṭaṭu wote * mikono wakatanganya
[158] (160) wakatanganya mikono²⁰⁹ * wote watatu mfano * akaṇeṇa na maneno * nduguye akimwambiya
They all put their hands [in the communal bowl] all three of them as equals. Then [Ja'far] said these words, speaking to his
brother:

(١٦١) أَكِمُومِي نَاصِرِ * يُوْ نُدِينُ كَوِ خَيْرِ * تَكِيرِدِ سَفَرِ * تَمَشَ تَكَلِي

takuleṭeya tamasha * safari takaporudi * khēri kwa nduyangu yeo * nāṣiri akamwambiya
[159] (161) akamwambiya Nasiri * yeo nduyangu kwa heri * takaporudi safari * tamasha²¹⁰ takuleṭeya
He told Nasir: Goodbye today, my brother -- when I come back from my journey I will bring you something nice.

²⁰¹ i.e. it goes without saying that anakushinda, he is superior to you.

²⁰² hala = hara, an exhortation to effort, as in hara mbee!, forward! hala hala is used when someone wants you to do something, and wants you not to forget, e.g. hala hala ukifika ulete barua, make sure you deliver the letter when you arrive.

²⁰³ ngaa, even without is similar to ingawa, although, even though, but distinct from it. Compare: ngaa hungii ndani ukauliza, even without getting in you can ask, even if you don't get in you can ask and ingawa umengia ndani, lakini ..., even though you get in, yet ..., even if you've got in, still ... In this line, the meaning is that even if Ja'far picks up little or no wisdom, he should still attempt to do it.

²⁰⁴ wasia is often translated as "last will", but its wider meaning is "wisdom", or "dos and dongs".

²⁰⁵ i.e. Fatima. The Prophet is also known as ḥabību'llah, Beloved of God.

²⁰⁶ i.e. vizuri, kama mama wa kambo, nicely, as with a stepmother. Because Ja'far will be living in Ali's house, he must be a polite guest.

²⁰⁷ -angukia, fall down before, prostrate oneself before, = -sujudia, i.e. submit. This would normally be humiliating (the only time you prostrate yourself should be before God), but Ja'far's mother is impressing on him the need for humility.

²⁰⁸ A meal with someone before they go on a journey is traditional, but watu wakenda mbali, chakula hukosa baraka, if people are going far away, food lacks savour, lit. blessing.

²⁰⁹ They all eat from the same bowl, since this is a special day – Ja'far is leaving. When you do not know if you will meet again, sharing a meal brings a special feeling of closeness.

²¹⁰ i.e. zawadi, a present.

(١٦٢) أَكْمَجِبُ أُپْسِ * نَيْطِي نَ فَرَسِ * نَيْمَ هِي سِمُئِسِ * نَتَّكَ كُمُونُغَلِي

kumwangaliya nataka * simuisi huyo nyama * farasi na nieteya * upesi akamjibu

[160] (162) akamjibu upesi * nietea na farasi * nyama huyo²¹¹ simuisi²¹² * nataka²¹³ kumwangaliya
[Nasir] answered him quickly: Bring me a horse -- I don't know [what] that animal [looks like], I would like to see one.

(١٦٣) كِشَ هَبْ كَتْمَكَ * أَكْمَبَ مَمَ هُتَكَ * مَمَكَ أَكَيْنُكَ * صَدَكَ كَمْتَلِي

kamtoleya şadaka * akainuka mamake * hutoka mama akamba * katamka hapo kisha

[161] (163) kisha hapo katamka * akamba mama hutoka²¹⁴ * mamake akainuka * sadaka²¹⁵ kamtoleya
When he had finished, then [Ja'far] spoke, and said: Mother, I am leaving. His mother got up and gave alms for him.

(١٦٤) هَبْ مَمَكَ أَتَكَ * إِنْدَ أَمْفُوتَ * أَكِمْتَمِي مَطَ * مَنُغَ أَكِمُومِي

akimuombeya mngu * maṭe akimṭemeya * amfuwate enende * atoke mamake hapo

[162] (164) hapo mamake atoke²¹⁶ * enende²¹⁷ amfuwate * akimtemea mate²¹⁸ * Mngu akimuombeya
Then his mother went out [after him], she went and followed him, spitting at him, praying to God for him.

(١٦٥) هِي نَاصِرِ مَوْلِمُ * مَسْمَشِ أَهْتِمُ * أَمْفُنْدَ نَ عِلْمِ * عَادَ يَكُ تَكْوَيْ

takweteya yako 'ada * 'ilimu na umfunde * ahitimu msomeshe * mwalimu nāşiri huyo

[163] (165) huyo Nasiri mwalimu * msomeshe²¹⁹ ahitimu²²⁰ * umfunde na²²¹ ilimu * ada²²² yako takweteya
[Then she said:] Teacher, Nasir here, teach him to read [the Qur'an] so that he may complete it. Teach him knowledge. I will pay your fee.

(١٦٦) أَكَيْنُكَ جَعْفَرِ * هَبْ كَلِي نَاصِرِ * مَمَكَ أَكْفَسِرِ * أُسِكُ أَتْرَجِي

atarejeya usiku * akafasiri mamake * nāşiri kaliya hapo * ja'fari akitoka

[164] (166) akitoka Jaafari * hapo kalia Nasiri * mamake akafasiri * usiku atarejeya²²³
As Ja'far was setting off then Nasir began to cry. His mother said: [ja'far] will be back by nightfall.

²¹¹Mvita huyo = Amu hoyo.

²¹²-isa, not know, is only used in the negative.

²¹³Nasir considers the horse an exotic animal, which suggests he comes from an isolated village. People may say: *yeyeni maskini ameona ngamia -- labda anakaa mji mdogo, that poor fellow there has just seen a camel [for the first time] -- he must live in a little village.*

²¹⁴ = natoka.

²¹⁵Contrast *sadaka* with *kafara*, expiatory offering – the former is given before doing something, the latter after doing something. The purpose of the *sadaka* is to protect Ja'far. If a person is ill, you might put money under his pillow, or rice under his bed, and then give that away as alms, in the hope that he will get better. Or to bring blessings to someone, you might circle them three times with the *sadaka*, and then give it away (compare the note to 201d).

²¹⁶Past tense.

²¹⁷ = alienda.

²¹⁸Making gentle spitting sounds (*pp-pp-pp*) at him, -*mtia mate*, signifies that she thinks he is *şarif*, noble, and to be admired.

²¹⁹Ja'far's mother asks the *mwalimu* to "cause Nasir to read", i.e. teach him how to read the Qur'an. Being able to read the Qur'an, even without understanding the detailed meaning of the words, is considered a first step in learning. The student will attend the *chuo*, school, for 3-4 years, and while he is there the *mfunzi* has wide latitude in terms of discipline – the student may be chastised with a *kikoto*, whip made of plaited grass, made by the student himself, if he makes mistakes, and it is said that the only constraint on the *mfunzi* is that *asaze mifupa na mato*, he should omit [damaging] the bones and the eyes. The books used will all have brown or tan covers, because white is considered harmful. Taha Hussein's *The Stream of Days* includes a passage on his similar schooling in Egypt in the early 1900s.

²²⁰kumaliza Kurani.

²²¹This knowledge would include detailed exegesis of the Qur'an, intricate knowledge of *fikhri*, grammar, awareness of religious ritual, etc.

²²²These fees will be paid in stages once certain portions of the Qur'an have been learned, and can be paid in kind (e.g. in food items such as *bisi*, roasted corn).

²²³She tries to comfort the child by saying things like *hendi mbali -- atakuja atakuletea peremendi*, he is not going far -- he will come back and bring you sweets.

(١٦٧) نَاصِرٌ أَكْتَمَكَ * نَمِيؤُ إِندَ مَكَه * كُنْتَعِ هَنْغَلِتَاكَ * أَسِپِيُنَ نَدِي

ndiya asipoiyona * hangalitoka kutunga * makah enda namuyuwa * akatamka nāsiri

[165] (167) Nasiri akatamka * namuyuwa enda Maka²²⁴ * kutunga²²⁵ hangalitoka * asipoiona ndiya²²⁶
Nasir spoke: I know he is going to Mecca. If he were going [to take the animals] to graze he would not take that road.

(١٦٨) أَوْ يَنْ سِكُوكُ * أَكِمُومِي تَمَكُ * كُوعِ وَنَدَنْ وَكُ * يَتِ نَلِيَسِيَكِي

naliyasiya yote * wako wendani kawage * tamko ukimwambiya * sikuwako yana aw

[166] (168) au yana sikuwako * ukimwambiya tamko * kawage wendani wako * yote naliyasiya
For was I not there yesterday when you said him [those] words to him: "Go and say goodbye to your friends." I heard everything.

(١٦٩) أَوْ وَنَدَ مَتْنَعِنِ * نَعُو هُتَكُلِيَنِ * سِكُ زَتِ سِمُونِ * هَتَ هِي كُنْمِي

kunambiya hayo hata * simuoni zoti siku * hutukuliyani nguwo * matungani wenda aw

[167] (169) au wenda matungani * nguwo hutukulia-ni * siku zote simuoni * hata hayo kunambiya
Or if he is going to the pastures, what is he carrying clothes for? I have never seen him [do that before]. So explain these [things] to me.

(١٧٠) جَعْفَرُ كَبَيْنِ * بَسِ وَلِيَنِ * أَوْ تُوَلَاغَنِي * مَنِ نَلَكُومِي

nalokwambiya maneno * tʷaliganani aw * waliliyani basi * kabaini jaʿfari

[168] (170) Jaafari kabaini²²⁷ * basi walilia-ni * au tʷaliganani-ni * maneno nalokwambiya²²⁸
Jaʿfar spoke: So why are you crying? Did we not agree on the things I said to you?

(١٧١) نَ كَمَ هُكِرِيضِكَ * نَمِي نِسِيَتِكَ * هُنَ هَتَ كُؤُذِكَ * سِكِتِكَ كُنِي

kuniṭiya sikitiko * kuudhika hata huna * nisyatoka nambiya * hukiridika kama na

[169] (171) na kama hukiridhika * nambiya nisyatoka * huna hata kuudhika²²⁹ * sikitiko kuniṭiya
And if you are not pleased, tell me before I go. You have no cause to be hurt and make me feel sad.

(١٧٢) أَكَجِبُ تَمَكُ * سِكُزَ هِي يَكُ * سِكُ زَتِ نِكُ * هَمُنُونِ كَلِي

kuliya hamunioni * niko zote siku * yako hayo sikuiza * tamko akajibu

[170] (172) akajibu tamko * sikuiza hayo yako * siku zote niko * hamunioni kuliya
[Nasir] answered with the words I don't disagree with these [plans] of yours -- all the days of my life you have never seen me cry.

(١٧٣) سَسَ هِي نَدَ عَقِلِ * نِمَزِيَتَامَلِ * نَ كُؤُ مَتَلِ تُلِ * زَهُ زَكُ زَ كُنِيَكِي

kuinukiya za zako zeo * tuli matuli kuwa na * nimezoyataamali * ʿaqili nda haya sasa

[171] (173) sasa haya nda akili * nimezoyataamali * na kuwa matuli-tuli * zeo zako za kuinukiya²³⁰
Now, these [things] are [a matter of] commonsense, [the things] which I observed. I am sad [because] it is time for you to go.

²²⁴Nasir is not stupid, and sees through her words.

²²⁵-tunga, graze.

²²⁶kama hakuona ndia, as if he does not know the right road, i.e. he is going in a completely different direction to his normal route.

²²⁷-baini, lit. explain.

²²⁸Referring to their earlier conversation in 227-8. amkumbusha, umesahau ..., he reminds him, you have forgotten He says something like: "You said you wanted a horse – how can I get one if I don't go?"

²²⁹haina maana, there is no justification for it.

²³⁰wakati wako wa kutoka. Being sad is natural for Nasir – his brother has stopped being a playmate and has now become a young man.

(١٧٤) أَكْمَوْمِي نَدِيكَ * هِيَ إِنَّكَ أَتُكَ * جَعْفَرُ أَتَمَكَ * كَوْنَدَ مَنَعُ نَوْمِي

niombeya mngu kwanda * atamke ja'fari * utoke inuka hi * nduyake akamwambiya
[172] (174) akamwambiya nduyake * ḥaya inuka utoke * Jaafari atamke * kwanda Mngu niombeya
He told his brother: So, off you go. Ja'far said: First intercede to God for me.

(١٧٥) نَاصِرِ أَكْبَيْنَ * أَتَكُيْكَ مَنَّ * سَلَامَ سَلِمِينَ * كَو عَفِي نَ عَفُو

‘afuwa na ‘afiya kwa * salimīni salāma * manani atakupeka * akabaini nāsiri
[173] (175) Nasiri akabaini * atakupeka²³¹ Manani * salama salimini * kwa afia²³² na afua²³³
Nasir said: May Providence keep you safe and sound, in health and free from affliction.

(١٧٦) هَبْ نَدِي كَيْنَدَم * كِنَدَ كُتْسِمَم * سَاءَ كُمْ إِكْمَم * نَاءَ مَكَهْ أَمْنَعِي

amengiwa makah nae * ikikoma kumi saa * kutosimama kinenda * kayandama ndiya hapo
[174] (176) hapo ndia kayandama²³⁴ * kinenda kutosimama * saa kumi ikikoma * naye Maka amengiwa
Then [Ja'far] set out, going on, not stopping, and at four o'clock he entered Mecca.

(١٧٧) مَكَهْ أَلِيْجِلِسِ * كَو بِيْكَ هَكُوسِ * كَمَبَ نَدِي سِتَكَسِ * كَوْنَدَ تَيْكَيْلِي

taiketiliya kwanda * sitakasi ndiya kamba * hakuisi babake kwa * alipojilisi makah
[175] (177) Maka alipojilisi²³⁵ * kwa babake hakuisi * kamba ndia šitaḳisi²³⁶ * kwanda tayiketiliya
When he arrived in Mecca he did not know his father's home. He said: I will not [try to] guess the road, first I will sit myself down.

(١٧٨) أَكَبَتِ جَعْفَرِ * أَكْمُونُ زُبَيْرِ * وَنَدَمِنَ نَ بَشِيرِ * مَكْنُ كَمُونَلِي

kamwinuliya mikono * bashīri na wendemene * zubēri akamuona * ja'fari akaketi
[176] (178) akaketi Jaafari * akamuona Zuberi * wendemene na Bashiri * mikono kamwinuliya²³⁷
Ja'far sat down and saw Zubayr -- he was walking along with the Bearer of Good News -- and Ja'far waved to him.

(١٧٩) مَكْنُ كَوُزَمَ * زُبَيْرِ أَكْسِمَم * أَكْمَوْمِي هَشِمَ * مَعْنِ وَطُ هُنْعِي

hungiya wetu mgeni * hashima akamwambiya * akasimama zubēri * kautizama mkono
[177] (179) mkono kautizama²³⁸ * Zuberi akasimama * akamwambiya Hashima * mgeni wetu hungiya²³⁹
Zubayr saw the wave and stopped. He told the Hashimite: Our guest has just arrived.

(١٨٠) أَكْمُوْزَ أَمِيْنِ * مَعْنِ وَطُ نِ نَنِ * وَسَكِي هُبَيْنِ * مَكْنُ نِي نَبِي

nabiya nipe mkono * hubaini wasikiye * nani ni wetu mgeni * amīni akamuuzā
[178] (180) akamuuzā Amini * mgeni wetu ni nani * wasikie hubaini * mkono nipe Nabiya²⁴⁰
The Trustworthy One asked: Who is our guest? And they heard [Ja'far] say: Give me your hand, Prophet.

²³¹-peka = -peleka, send. In other words, may God make it possible for you to go.

²³²To preserve the rhyme, afia and afua should be swapped around, as in R.

²³³The verb -afu, preserve, deliver, is the opposite of -tesa, suffer, be afflicted by, e.g. sickness, poverty, love.

²³⁴fuata ndia.

²³⁵-jilisi = -keti.

²³⁶= siioni.

²³⁷lit. "raised his hands to him".

²³⁸= akauona.

²³⁹anaanza kufika sasa, he is arriving just now.

²⁴⁰Ja'far, despite never having met the Prophet, recognises him immediately.

(١٨١) زُبَيْرٌ كَتَعَجَبُ * وَمُيُوبٌ حَيِّبُ * جَعْفَرٌ كَمَجِبُ * وَجِهٌ وَكَ نَبِي

nabiya wake wajhi * kamjibu ja'fari * ḥabību wamuyuwapi * kata'ajabu zubēri

[179] (181) Zuberi kataajabu * wamuyua-pi Habibu * Jaafari kamjibu * wajih wake Nabiya²⁴¹
Zubayr was amazed: How do you know the Prophet? Ja'far answered him: His face is that of the Prophet.

(١٨٢) كِشَ هَبْ كَبَيْنُ * كُو بِنْعُ نِيكِنُ * كَمْتُكُو أَمِينُ * كِنْدَ نَاءِ كُو عَلِي

aliya kwa nae kenda * amīni kamtukuwa * nipekeni babangu kwa * kabaini hapo kisha

[180] (182) kisha hapo kabaini²⁴² * kwa babangu nipekeni * kamtukua²⁴³ Aminini * kenda naye kwa Aliya
Then he said: Could you show me to my father's [house]? The Trustworthy One accompanied him and took him to Ali's [house].

(١٨٣) أَلِيكُونَدَ سَيِّدِ * كُوْءُ أَكِيْجِ هُدِ * فَتَمَ أَكْرَدِدِ * أَكَمَبَ هَكَ نَبِي

nabiya hako akamba * akaradidi fatuma * hodi akapija kwao * sayyidi alipokwenda

[181] (183) alipokwenda Sayidi * kwao akapija hodi * Fatuma akaradidi * akamba hako Nabiya²⁴⁴
When the Lord got there he called: Hello! Fatima answered and said: The Prophet is not here.

(١٨٤) أَكْمُوْرُ حُسَيْنِ * أَمْكُوْءُ نِ نِيَانِ * كِيْجَنَ أَكَبَيْنِ * نِ جَدِ يَنْعُ سِكِي

sikiya yangu jadi ni * akabaini kijana * nyāni ni amkuwao * ḥusayni akamuza

[182] (184) akamuza²⁴⁵ Huseni * amkuao²⁴⁶ ni nyani * kijana akabaini * ni jadi²⁴⁷ yangu sikiya
She asked Husayn: Who is calling? And the boy answered: Listen -- it is my grandfather.

(١٨٥) نَ جَدِ يَنْعُ رَسُوْلِ * يِي نَ وَتُ وَوِلِ * كُسِيْكِو قَوْلِ * كَتَاكَ كَمُوْنَعَلِي

kamwangaliya katoka * qawli kusikiyakwe * wawili watu na yeye * rasūli yangu jadi na

[183] (185) ḥi jadi yangu Rasuli * yeye na watu wawili * kusikiyakwe qauli * katoka kamwangaliya
It is my grandfather the Prophet, he and two people. When she heard these words, [Fatima] went out to see him.

(١٨٦) أَكِيْكَ جَعْفَرِ * كَمُوْلَزِ خَبَرِ * أَكِيْكَمَ كَفَسِرِ * فَتَمَ كَمِيْكِي

kampokeya fatuma * kafasiri akikoma * khabari kamuuliza * ja'fari akitoka

[184] (186) akitoka Jaafari * kamuuliza habari²⁴⁸ * akikoma kafasiri * Fatuma kampokeya²⁴⁹
When she came out, Ja'far asked her how she was. When he had finished speaking Fatima answered him.

(١٨٧) فَتَمَ كَتَاكَلَمُ * أَكْمُوْرُ هَشِيْمُ * بَبَ سِيْمَفَاهَمُ * كِيْجَنَ هِي نَبِي

nabiya huyu kijana * siyamfahamu baba * hashimu akamuza * katakalamu fatuma

[185] (187) Fatuma katakalamu * akamuza Hashimu * baba siyamfahamu * kijana huyu Nabiya
Fatima spoke And asked the Hashimite: Father, I still don't recognise this boy, Prophet.

²⁴¹ i.e. uso wake unamwonyesha, his countenance identifies him – the Prophet's features show a qualitative difference (tofauti) from everyone else's.

²⁴² akasema.

²⁴³ -enda naye.

²⁴⁴ alifikiri mtu anamtaka Mtume – Fatima thinks that someone has come to the house looking for the Prophet.

²⁴⁵ -uza = -uliza.

²⁴⁶ = aitaye.

²⁴⁷ = babu.

²⁴⁸ i.e. he asked hujambo?

²⁴⁹ = -itikia.

(١٨٨) سِكُ زُبِّ سِمُونٍ * إِنَّ لَكَ نَدِي نَنْ * مَتْمُ أَكْبَيْنِ * فَتَمَّ أَكْمَوْمِي

akamwambiya fatuma * akabaini mṭumi * nani ndiye lake ina * simuoni zote siku

[186] (188) siku zote simuoni * ina lake ndiye nani * Mtumi akabaini * Fatuma akamwambiya
I have never seen him before, What is his name? The Prophet spoke and addressed Fatima.

(١٨٩) أَكْمَوْمِي بَشِيرٍ * هِيَ نَدِي جَعْفَرٍ * وَ عَلِي حَيْدَرٍ * هِزْ صُورَ هُكَوْمِي

hukwambiya šūra hizo * ḥaydari ‘alii wa * ja‘fari ndiye huyu * bashīri akamwambiya

[187] (189) akamwambiya Bashiri * huyu ndiye Jaafari * wa Aliyi Haidari * hizo sura hukwambiya²⁵⁰
The Bringer of Good Tidings told her: This is Ja‘far [son] of Ali the Lion-like -- his features would tell you that.

(١٩٠) هَبْ سَيِّدِ أَمِينٍ * أَكْمُتُمْ حُسَيْنٍ * إِنْ دَ مَسِكِينٍ * بَيْكَ نَمَكُلِي

namkuliya babako * msikiṭini enenda * ḥusayni akamṭuma * amīni sayidi hapo

[188] (190) hapo Sayidi Amini * akamṭuma Huseni * enenda msikitini * babako namkuliya²⁵¹
Then the Lord, the Trustworthy One, sent Husayn: Go to the mosque, and call your father for me.

(١٩١) هَبْ كَتَكَ حُسَيْنٍ * كَفِكَ مَسِكِينٍ * بَبْ كُئِي مَعْنٍ * تُمُو كُكُونَدَمِي

kukwandamiya ṭumiwe * mgeni kuiye baba * msikiṭini kafika * ḥusayni katoka hapo

[189] (191) hapo katoka Huseni * kafika msikitini * baba kuiye mgeni * tumiwe kukwandamiya²⁵²
So Husayn went off and arrived at the mosque. Father, a visitor has come -- I have been sent to fetch you.

(١٩٢) كُنْ كِجَنَ مَزْرٍ * چَنَدَمِنَ نَ بَشِيرٍ * نَ إِنْ نِ جَعْفَرٍ * نِ هِلْ نِمَكَوْمِي

nimekwambiya hilo ni * ja‘fari ni ina na * bashīri na chendemene * mzuri kijana kuna

[190] (192) kuna kijana mzuri * chendemene²⁵³ na Bashiri * na ina ni Jaafari * ni hilo nimekwambiya²⁵⁴
There is a handsome boy there. He came with the Bringer of Good Tidings, and his name is Ja‘far -- I have told you everything now.

(١٩٣) چَنَبَوِ هِيَ كَلِمَ * پَپْ نَدِي كَيْنَدَمَ * مَلَنَغِنِ أَكِكَمَ * سَلَامُ كَوِپِسِي

kawapisiya salāmu * akikoma mlangoni * kayandama ndiya papo * kalima hiyo chambiwa

[191] (193) chambiwa hiyo kalima * papo ndia kayandama * mlangoni akikoma * salamu kawapisiya²⁵⁵
When these words had been said [Ali] set off immediately. When he reached the door [of his house] he greeted [those inside].

(١٩٤) سَلَامُ أَكْفَسِرٍ * هَبْ عَلِي حَيْدَرٍ * كَتَيْكَ جَعْفَرٍ * مَكْنُ كَمِپَكِي

kampokeya mkono * ja‘fari kainuka * ḥaydari ‘alii hapo * akifasiri salāmu

[192] (194) salamu akifasiri * hapo Aliyi Haidari * kainuka Jaafari * mkono kampokeya
While he was greeting [them], Ali the Lion-like, Ja‘far got up and took his hand.

²⁵⁰In the Mombasa expression, *umejizaa mwenyewe*, he's the spitting image of you.

²⁵¹ = *nimtia, namwita*.

²⁵² = *nimetumwa kukufuatia*.

²⁵³Sh. Yahya felt that *endemene* would be better here, since *kijana* (Class 7) is not a diminutive.

²⁵⁴i.e. I have told you the real cause. He tells the whole story in case Ali gets worried that there has been a crisis at home. Compare 13.

²⁵⁵-pisiya = *-pitisha*. In other words, he said *salaam alekum*.

(١٩٥) عَلِي كَيْتَ تَمَكُ * نِ سَلَامُ أُتَكَكَ * جُمْلَ وَنَدَنِ وَكَ * حَالِ زَاءِ نَمْبِي

nambiya zao hāli * wako wendani jumla * utokako salāma ni * tamko keṭa ‘alii

[193] (195) Aliyi keta tamko * ni salama utokako * jumla wendani²⁵⁶ wako * hali zao nambiya
Ali spoke: Is everything well where you came from? All your relatives, tell me how they are.

(١٩٦) أَكْمَجِبُ كَلَمُ * نِتَكَكَ نِ سَلَامُ * سِيُوِي هُكَ نِيَمُ * سِيَطِ لَكُومْبِي

lakukwambiya sipati * nyuma hoko ya siyuwi * salāma ni nitokako * kalamu akamjibu

[194] (196) akamjibu kalamu * nitokako ni salama * siyui ya ḥuḳo nyuma * sipati la kukwambiya
And [Ja’far] answered him with the words: Everything is well where I come from, [though] I don't know about after [I left]. I have nothing to tell you [since my departure].

(١٩٧) تَنَ بَبَ مَوْلِمُ * نَ مَمَ وَكُسَلِمُ * وَعَلَيْكَ السَّلَامُ * عَلِي كَيْكِي

kapokeya ‘alii * ās-salāma wa‘alayka * wakusalimu mama na * mwalimu baba tena

[195] (197) tena baba mwalimu * na mama wakusalimu * wa-aleka aṣ-ṣalaḥamu * Aliyi kapokeya
Also, father, [my] teacher and [my] mother greet you. Peace be with you, Ali answered.

(١٩٨) عَلِي أَكْبَيْنِ * نِمَكُنْجِ نَدِينِ * وَلِتْكَ زَاءِ غَنِ * مُبْنِ أُمْلَمِي

umelimaṭiya mbona * gani zeo walitoka * ndiyani nimekungoja * akabaini ‘alii

[196] (198) Aliyi akabaini * nimekungoja ndiani * walitoka zeo gani * mbona umelimaṭiya²⁵⁷
Ali spoke: I waited for you on the road -- what time did you set out? Why are you late?

(١٩٩) أَكْمَجِبُ قَوْلِ * أَصْبِحَ نَلِصَلِ * لَكِنِ بَبِ نِ مَبَلِ * إِنْ أَرَفُ وَ نَدِي

ndiya wa urefu ina * mbali ni baba lakini * naliṣali aṣubuḥi * qawli akamjibu

[197] (199) akamjibu qauli * asubuhi nalisali²⁵⁸ * lakini baba ni mbali * ina urefu wa ndiya
[Ja’far] answered him with the words: I prayed in the morning, but, father, it is far -- the road is a long one.

(٢٠٠) نَمِ كَيْتَ پَنْغَنِ * پَنَ مْتَنْدِ نَدِينِ * يَلِنْتُكَ مِيْنِ * يَلِ وَلْنَمْبِي

walonambiya yale * moyoni yalinitoka * ndiyani mṭende pana * pangoni kipaṭa nami

[198] (200) nami kipaṭa²⁵⁹ pangoni * pana mtende ndiani²⁶⁰ * yalinitoka moyoni²⁶¹ * yale walonambiya
And when I reached the cave there was the date-tree by the road, but they left my mind, the [directions] you had told me.

(٢٠١) كَيْوَتِ يِ كُفْلِ * كَأَنْدَمَ إِلِ مَبَلِ * هَتَ كِتَامَلِ * سَاءَ إِمْنِي

imenipiṭiya saa * kitaamali hata * mbali ilo kaandama * kuvuli ya kaiwata

[199] (201) kaiwata ya kuvuli * kaandama ilo mbali * hata kitaamali * saa²⁶² imenipitiya²⁶³
I left behind the [road] to the right and walked on for a long way until I realised a long time had passed.

²⁵⁶wendani can also cover friends as well as relatives.

²⁵⁷Amu -limatia = Zanzibar, Mvita -chelewa, Mvita -kawia.

²⁵⁸i.e. he had got up in time for prayers at 5.00am.

²⁵⁹Contrast -pata, arrive at somewhere en route to a destination, and -fika, arrive at the destination itself.

²⁶⁰These points were presumably part of the directions that Ali gave Ja’far in 124.

²⁶¹i.e. nilisahau, I forgot.

²⁶²saa, hour, is used here to signify the passage of time.

²⁶³We are to understand, “and I still hadn’t found the place I was trying to go to”.

(٢٠٢) كِشْ أُوْنِغْ كَيْطَ * إِئِ لَ بَرَّ كَيْطَ * إِلِ نَدِي كُوتَ * نِيْمَ نِسِيْرَجِي

nisiporejeya nyuma * kuiwata ndiya ili * kapita bara la iyu * kaeṭa uwinga kisha

[200] (202) kisha uwinga kaeta²⁶⁴ * iyu la bara kapita²⁶⁵ * ile ndia kuiwata * nyuma nisiporejeya²⁶⁶

Then I did something stupid -- I walked out into the scrubland and left the road behind, instead of going back.

(٢٠٣) سُرَ نَدَاءُ بَرَن * إِلِ نَدِي سِيْن * هُوْن نِكُ بَرَن * زَتَ زِمِنِيْتِي

zimenipoteya zote * barani niko huona * siiyoni ndiya ile * barani nendao sura

[201] (203) sura²⁶⁷ nendao barani * ile ndia siioni * huona niko barani * zote²⁶⁸ zimenipoteya

Wherever I went in the scrubland I couldn't find the road -- I realised I was [lost] in the scrubland, and I had lost track of all [the roads].

(٢٠٤) كِيْجَ فِكِرَ زَنْغُ * كَلْنَدَمَ غُوْلَنْغُ * نُرْدِي پَلِ پَنْغُ * كِشْ نِيْمَ كَرَجِي

karejeya nyuma kisha * pangu pale narudiya * langu guu kalandama * zangu fikira kipija

[202] (204) kipija fikira zangu * kalandama guu langu * narudia pale pangu * kisha nyuma karejeya

I cudgelled my brains and then retraced my footsteps and returned to my [correct] place and finally I got back.

(٢٠٥) كِشْ كُرْدِي نِيْمَ * هَبْ نَدِي كَيْنَدَمَ * پَنِي مُنْدِ كَكَمَ * صَالِ اِمْنِسَمِي

imenisimamiya ṣāla * kakoma mṭende penye * kayandama ndiya hapo * nyuma karudiya kisha

[203] (205) kisha karudia nyuma * hapo ndia kayandama * penye mtende kakoma * sala imenisimamiya

At last I turned back and then I followed the road. At the place with the date-tree I stopped -- it was time to pray.

(٢٠٦) أَوَّلِ يَ أَظْهَرِ * نَدِ نَدِي كَعْبِرِ * حُجَّ يَ كُجَّ أَخِيْرِ * مَعَانَ نِمَكُومِي

nimekwambiya ma'ana * akhiri kuja ya ḥuja * ka'abiri ndiya ndipo * azuhuri ya awali

[204] (206) awali ya aduhuri²⁶⁹ * ndipo ndia kaabiri²⁷⁰ * huja²⁷¹ ya kuja ahiri * maana nimekwambiya

Just after noon was when I set out [again] on the road. Regarding coming late, I have told you the reason.

(٢٠٧) كِمَلَزَ كُيْلِكَ * عَلِيْ اَكْتَمَكَ * مَوْنَنْغُ اِمْسَمْبِكَ * هَبْ كَنَنْ نَبِي

nabiya kanena hapo * umesumbuka mwanangu * akatamka 'alii * kupulika kimaliza

[205] (207) kimaliza kupulika²⁷² * Aliyi akatamka * mwanangu umesumbuka²⁷³ * hapo kanena Nabiya

When he had finished listening Ali spoke: My child, you have been through a lot. Then the Prophet spoke.

(٢٠٨) هَبْ كَنَنْ هَشَمَ * سِ هَبْ كِي سَلَامَ * نَدِي مَزْاِيْنَدَمَ * خَطَرُ هُمَزَنْغِي

humzengeya khaṭari * mezoiyandama ndiya * salām kuya haba si * hashima kanena hapo

[206] (208) hapo²⁷⁴ kanena Hashima * si haba kuya ṣalaṃa²⁷⁵ * ndia mezoindama * hatari humzengeya²⁷⁶

²⁶⁴ i.e. -fanya jinga la kipumbavu, do something blockheaded, lit. "do the stupidity of an idiot".

²⁶⁵ Where, of course, there are no paths.

²⁶⁶ i.e. instead of trying to retrace his footsteps.

²⁶⁷ = namna yeyote, whatever kind.

²⁶⁸ We understand ndia, paths.

²⁶⁹ Midday, when the sun is approaching its zenith, or just afterwards.

²⁷⁰ -abiri < عبر, traverse, cross was used in older Swahili to mean travel from continent to continent in a ship, but now it refers to travel in general.

²⁷¹ huja, reason, argument, proof.

²⁷² -pulika = -sikiza, listen carefully.

²⁷³ umepata taabu.

²⁷⁴ Note the use of hapo to refer to time instead of place: "at this point".

²⁷⁵ ingawa umetaabika, even though you were in distress.

²⁷⁶ He could have been attacked by robbers, lions, etc.

Then the Hashimite spoke: It is no small thing to arrive safely -- [on] the road he came along danger stalked him.

(٢٠٩) أَمَكِنَعِ وَدُودٍ * أَسْوُونَ مَيْهُودٍ * كُونَ وَنَعْلَمَزِدٍ * وَتُ وَنَعِ سِ مَمِي

mmoya si wangi waṭu * wangalimzidi kwani * mayahūdi asiōne * wadūdi amkinga

[207] (209) amemkinga Wadudi * asione mayahudi²⁷⁷ * kwani wangalimzidi²⁷⁸ * watu wangi si mmoya²⁷⁹

The Loving One protected him so that he met no unbelievers, for they would have overwhelmed him -- one against many.

(٢١٠) فَتَمَّ أَكُ كِئِن * أَكْمُؤِيكُ أَمِين * كُو مَكْنُ كَبِين * نَ نَدِنِ كَمَامُكُو

kamuamkuwa ndani na * kabaini mkono kwa * amīni akamwepuka * kiṭini uko fatuma

[208] (210) Fatuma uko kitini * akamwepuka Amini * kwa mkono kabaini²⁸⁰ * na ndani kamuamkuwa²⁸¹

Fatima had been sitting down. She moved back from the Trustworthy One and made a sign with her hand and beckoned [Ali] into the inner [room].

(٢١١) مَكْنُ كِؤُتَزَم * عَلِي أَكْفَهَم * أَكْمُؤَمِي هَشِم * نَدِنِ مَر مِي

moya mara ndani nenda * hashima akamwambiya * akafahama ‘alii * kiutizama mkono

[209] (211) mkono kiutizama * Aliyi akafahama * akamwambia Hashima * nenda ndani mara moya

When he saw her hand [sign] Ali understood [what it meant]. He told the Hashimite: I am just now going to the inner [room].

(٢١٢) كُو نَدِنِ أَلِيْفِك * فَتَمَّ أَكْتَمَك * جَكَلِ نِمَكِيك * هَيْتَسِ كُونَدِيكُو

kwandikiwa hayatasa * nimekipika chakula * akatamka fatuma * alipofika ndani kwa

[210] (212) kwa ndani alipofika * Fatuma akatamka * chakula nimekipika * hayatasa kwandikiwa

When he entered the inner [room] Fatima spoke: I have cooked some food is it not time for it to be served?

(٢١٣) كُونَدِ سِكْمَكِينِك * خَبِرِ أَكْتَمَك * مِي هُمُيْطِيك * كُو أَثْقَلِ وَ نَدِي

ndiya wa uthaqili kwa * humpapaṭika moyo * akatamka khabari * sikumakinika kwanda

[211] (213) kwanda ṇi kuṃaḳiṇiḳa * habari akatamka²⁸² * moyo humpapatika * kwa uthaqili wa ndiya²⁸³

[Ali said:] First he must relax and tell his news -- his heart is fluttering because of the hardships of the journey.

(٢١٤) نَ زِءُ أَلِزُتَك * أَمَزِيُو هَكِك * نَ سِسِ هُمُيْلِك * مَنِي هُؤُمِي

huṭwambiya manenoye * humpulika sisi na * hakika umeziyuwa * alizotoka zeo na

[212] (214) na zeo²⁸⁴ alizotoka * umeziyuwa hakika * na sisi humpulika * manenoye hutwambiya

²⁷⁷ Although the literal meaning is “Jews”, this word has a much wider meaning of unbelievers in general, *makafiri*, because the Jewish Arabic tribes at the time of the Prophet threw in their lot with the pagans. At the time of the *hijra* (622 CE), all the Arabic tribes of Yathrib (Medina) made treaties with the Muslims. The three tribes who followed Judaism (the Qaynuqa, the Nadir and the Qurayza) each in turn broke these treaties by conspiring with the Quraysh of Mecca against the Muslims. On the first two occasions, the Qaynuqa and Nadir were allowed to leave Medina, taking the bulk of their property with them, but they continued fomenting opposition to the Muslims from outside Medina. The last Jewish tribe in Medina, the Qurayza, opened negotiations with the Meccan army for a “fifth column” attack during the Battle of the Trench (627 CE), and after the Meccan defeat the Qurayza were charged with treachery before an arbitrator: a leader of the Qurayza’s allied tribe, the Aws. He sentenced them in accordance with the Torah (Deuteronomy 20:10-14) – the men were executed, and the women and children sold into slavery.

²⁷⁸ i.e. “they would have been too much for him” – *-zidi* here = *shinda*.

²⁷⁹ *mtu mmoya si sawasawa na watu wengi*, one person is no match for many.

²⁸⁰ *kumwambia siri*, to tell him a secret.

²⁸¹ *kumwita ndani*, to call him into the private quarters.

²⁸² It looks as if Ali is trying to postpone the point at which Fatima will hear that Ja’far is his son, but in fact the Prophet has already told her this (255), so Ali may be more concerned about whether Fatima will see her ring on Ja’far’s finger as she serves the food. This happens in 296, and upsets Fatima.

²⁸³ i.e. *taabu ya ndiani*.

²⁸⁴ *Amu zeo* = *Mvita wakati*, *Mu njeo*.

And the time he took [to get here], you know it well, and we are listening to him as he tells us his story.

(٢١٥) عَلِيٌّ أَكْبَيْنَ * هُمْصِيرِ حُسَيْنٍ * نِمْمَتُمْ حَسَنِ * إِنْ دُ كُمْوَمُكُو

kumuamkuwa ende * ḥasani nimemṭuma * ḥusayni humṣubiri * akabaini ʿalii

[213] (215) Aliyi akabaini * humsubiri²⁸⁵ Huseni * nimemṭuma Hasani * ende kumuamkuwa²⁸⁶

Ali said: we are [still] waiting for Husayn -- I have sent Hasan to go and fetch him.

(٢١٦) عَلِيٌّ كُتِكَ نَدَنِ * أَلِيْكَتِ كِتْنِي * أَمْسِيْ حَسَنِ * سَلَامٌ هُوَ يَسِي

huwapisiya salāmu * ḥasani amsikiye * kiṭini alipoketi * ndani kutoka ʿalii

[214] (216) Aliyi kutoka ndani * alipoketi kitini * amsikie Hasani * salamu huwapisiya²⁸⁷

Ali came back from the inner [room] and sat down on a chair. He heard Hasan greeting them.

(٢١٧) حَسَنِ أَكْنُظُمْ * كُوَيْسِرَ سَلَامٌ * أَمْرُدِشَ كَلِيمٌ * جَعْفَرَ كَمَوْمَبِي

kamwambiya jaʿfari * kalimu amrudishe * salāmu kuwapisiya * akanuḥumu ḥasani

[215] (217) Hasani akanuḥumu * kuwapisiya salamu * wamrudishe kalimu * Jaafari kamwambiya

Hasan spoke and greeted them so that they could return the greeting. He spoke to Jaʿfar.

(٢١٨) كُوْ أُنْدَنِ كَوْمٍ * كَمُوْلَزِ سَلَامٌ * وَلَوْ بَ وَكَسِمَ * وَتَ وَكَمْبِي

wakampokeya wote * wakasima waliopo * salāma kamuuliza * kwima undani kwa

[216] (218) kwa undani²⁸⁸ kwima * kamuuliza salama * waliopo waḳasema * wote wakampokeya²⁸⁹

With politeness (?) he asked how [Jaʿfar] was. Those present spoke and all returned his greeting.

(٢١٩) كَمَوْمَبِي مَتَمَكٌ * نِ سَلَامَ نِتَكَكٌ * سِيُو مَبِي نِنْدَاكٌ * أَيُوْ نِ جَلِي

jaliya ni ayuwae * nendako mbee siyuwi * nitokako salāma ni * matamko kamwambiya

[217] (219) kamwambia matamko * ni salama nitokako²⁹⁰ * siyui mbee nendako * ayuaye ni Jaliya

[jaʿfar] spoke [these] words to him: All is well where I come from; I do not know about where I am going -- the one who knows is the Almighty.

(٢٢٠) أَكْتَمَكَ أَمِينٍ * كَوْمَبِي كُوْ هَرِنِ * عَلِيٌّ أَكْبَيْنَ * مَبْنِ هُتَاكَ نَبِي

nabiya hutoka mbona * akabaini ʿalii * herini kwa kawambiya * amini akatamka

[218] (220) akatamka Amini * kawambia kwa herini * Aliyi akabaini * mbona hutoka Nabiya

The Trustworthy One spoke and bade them goodbye. Ali spoke: Surely you are not leaving, Prophet?

(٢٢١) مَتْمُ أَكْتَمَكَ * زُوْ زِمَاخْرِكَ * سَاءَ تِسِي هَكَاكَ * نِيْمَبِنِ سِيْرَجِي

siyarejeya nyumbani * hakika tisiya saa * zimeakhirika zeo * akatamka mṭume

[219] (221) Mṭume akatamka * zeo zimeahirika * saa tisia hakika * nyumbani siyarejeya

The Prophet spoke: the time is late -- it is now the ninth hour for certain, and I have not yet returned home.

²⁸⁵-subiri = -ngoja.

²⁸⁶This is another attempt to put off the moment of truth – they cannot eat until the boys return.

²⁸⁷Hasan has obviously not left yet in spite of Ali's comment in 281 (assuming Ali has even told him to fetch Husayn), because he is still greeting the visitors.

²⁸⁸ = kwa taratibu. (?)

²⁸⁹i.e. answered wa alekum as-salaam.

²⁹⁰This is an echo of 196b, but neatly turns it to refer to time instead of space.

(٢٢٢) كَمَبَ صُبِرَ بَشِيرٍ * تُمْلِشَ جَعْفَرٍ * چَكَلُ كِكُ تَيْرٍ * هَبْ كَكَتِ نَبِيِّ

nabiya kaketi hapo * tayari kiko chakula * ja'fari tumlishe * bashiri şubiri kamba

[220] (222) kamba subiri Bashiri * tumlishe Jaafari²⁹¹ * chakula kiko tayari * hapo kaketi Nabiya

[Ali] said: Wait, Bringer of Good Tidings, until we have given Ja'far something to eat. The food is ready. So the Prophet sat down.

(٢٢٣) فَتَمَّ أَكْنُكُ * كَوَّ أُپْسِ نَ هَرَكَ * تَمَشَ أَكْنُوكُ * نَ مَاءِ كَوَّپَكِي

kawapekeya mai na * akaiweka tamasha * haraka na upesi kwa * akainuka fatuma

[221] (223) Fatuma akainuka * kwa upesi na haraka²⁹² * tamasha²⁹³ akaiweka * na mai²⁹⁴ kawapekeya

Fatima got up quickly, in a hurry, and placed delicacies [before them] and brought them water.

(٢٢٤) وَكَكَتِ كَوَّ مَفْنُ * وَكَتَنَغْنِي مَكْنُ * جُمْلَ وَطُ وَ تَنُ * وَ لَ أَسِلَ نَبِيِّ

nabiya asile wala * tano wa waṭu jumla * mikono wakatanganya * mfano kwa wakaketi

[222] (224) wakaketi kwa mfano²⁹⁵ * wakatanganya mikono²⁹⁶ * jumla watu wa tano * wala asile Nabiya

They sat equally, sharing the same dish, all five of them, though the Prophet did not eat [much].

(٢٢٥) مَرَّ ثَاثُ كَوَّ هَكِيكَ * مَكْنُ أَلُؤْيَكُ * أَكِيشَ أَكْنُكُ * وَءَ أَكَوَّيِي

akawatiya wao * akainuka akisha * aliupeka mkono * hakika kwa ṭaṭu mara

[223] (225) mara tatu kwa hakika * mkono aliupeka * akisha akainuka * wao akawatiya²⁹⁷

Three times indeed he put his hand [into the dish] and then he got up and left [the food] to them.

(٢٢٦) أَكْنُكُ كِيْنِ * كِيْوَ مَاءِ أَمِينِ * نَ يِ كُنُو كِيْكَمِينِ * نَاءِ أَكْسُكُتُو

akasukutuwa nae * kikombeni kunwa ya na * amini mai kapowa * kiṭini akainuka

[224] (226) akainuka²⁹⁸ kitini * kapoa mai Amini * na ya kunwa kikombeni * naye akasukutuwa²⁹⁹

He rose from his chair and accepted water, the Trustworthy One, in a cup to drink, and rinsed his mouth.

(٢٢٧) تَمْبُوِي كُخْتَرِي * هَبْ كِيْوَ بَشِيرِي * أَكُوَاغَ كُو هَرِي * تُمُو أَكْتِيكِي

akaitokeya tumwa * heri kwa akawaāga * bashiri kapowa hapo * kukhitari ya tambuu

[225] (227) tambuu³⁰⁰ ya kuhitari³⁰¹ * hapo kapoa Bashiri * akawaaga kwa heri * Tumwa akaitokeya

Choice tambuu he was then given, the Bearer of Good Tidings, and he bade them farewell -- the Prophet went off.

(٢٢٨) تُمُو أَكِيشَ كُتُكَ * نَاءُ كُلِّ وَمَكُوْشَ * فَتَمَّ أَكْنُكُ * مَاءِ أَكُوْپَكِي

akawapekeya mai * akainuka fatuma * wamekwisha kula nao * kutoka akisha tumwa

[226] (228) Tumwa akisha kutoka * nao kula wamekwisha * Fatuma akainuka * mai akawapekeya

²⁹¹ i.e. *tule naye*, so that we may share a meal with him. Sharing a meal with someone shows respect.

²⁹² After being told not to serve the food yet (279-81), she now has to do it in a hurry.

²⁹³ *vitu vizuri vizuri*.

²⁹⁴ This could either be *ya kunawa*, to wash with, or *ya kunwa*, to drink. The Swahili custom is not to eat food without water.

²⁹⁵ i.e. *kwa sawasawa*.

²⁹⁶ i.e. they eat together, *kula pamoja*, which brings *baraka*, blessings.

²⁹⁷ In other words, the Prophet stays for a little while for politeness' sake, but leaves as soon as he can.

²⁹⁸ This and the previous stanza are very vivid depictions of Swahili customs.

²⁹⁹ After eating, you rinse your mouth with water and spit it out.

³⁰⁰ *tambuu* is lime wrapped in a betel leaf, used like chewing tobacco. Protracted use stains the teeth red. Offering *tambuu* is a particular feature of northern Swahili culture. However, it is very unlikely that *tambuu* would have been offered in the original Arabian setting of the story, and it is even less likely that the Prophet would have accepted it even if it was.

³⁰¹ *ya kuteua nzuri*.

When the Prophet had left and they had finished eating Fatima got up and offered them water.

(٢٢٩) أَكْتَيْنَ فْتَمَ * پٲَ أَكْتِزَمَ * يَيسِي يَ نِيْمَ * يَتَ يَكْمُرْدِيَا

yakamrudīya yote * nyuma ya yapisiyo * akaitizama pte * fatuma akaiyona

[227] (229) akaiona Fatuma * peṭe akaitizama * yapisiyo ya nyuma * yote yakamrudīya
And Fatima saw it -- she caught sight of the ring. What had happened in the past all came back to her.

(٢٣٠) عَلِيَّ أَكْتَمَكَ * مَبْنِ أُمْبَدَلِكَ * كَمَ أَمْزُودِكَ * يُوْ نِكِوَنْغَالِيَا

nikikwangaliya yeo * umezoudhika kama * umebadilika mbona * akatamka 'alii

[228] (230) Aliyi akatamka * mbona umebadilika * kama umezoudhika³⁰² * yeo³⁰³ nikikwangaliya
Ali spoke: Why has [your mood] changed, as if you are angry, now as I look at you?

(٢٣١) فْتَمَ كَرْدِدِ * وُوْ هُنْدِ بَعِيدِ * نَلْنَلُ سِنِ بُدِ * إِلا نَاوِ كُكُومْبِيَا

kukwambiya nāwe illā * budi sina nilonalo * ba'īdi hunendi wewe * akaradidi fatuma

[229] (231) Fatuma akaradidi * wewe hunendi baidi³⁰⁴ * nilonalo sina budi * ila nawe kukwambiya
Fatima replied: You are not leaving yet. [the thing] I have [in my heart], I have no choice but to tell you.

(٢٣٢) أَكْسِيَا حَسَنِ * كَتَاكَ كُلِّ نِيْمَبِنِ * أَكْنَدَ كُوْ أَمِينِ * حَبِرَ أَكْمُومْبِيَا

akamwambiya ḥbr * amīni kwa akanenda * nyumbani kule katoka * ḥasani akisikiya

[230] (232) akisikia Hasani * katoka kule nyumbani * akanenda kwa Amini * ḥaḥaḥi akamwambiya
When Hasan heard this he left the house and went to the Trustworthy One and told him the news.

(٢٣٣) حَسَنِ كِشَ كُفِكَ * كُوْ مْتُمْ كَتَمَكَ * مِمَ أَمَكْسِرِكَ * بَبِ يَنْغُ نَكُومْبِيَا

nakwambiya yangu bibi * amekasirika mimi * katamka mtume kwa * kufika kisha ḥasani

[231] (233) Hasani kisha kufika * kwa Mtume katamka * mimi amekasirika * bibi³⁰⁵ yangu nakwambiya
When Hassan got there he told the Prophet: she is angry, my mother - I'm telling you.

(٢٣٤) أَكْمُوزَ أَمِينِ * مَكْسِرِكِيَا نِنِ * مُونِيُوْ هَكُبَيْنِ * مَيِ سِكُفَهَمِيَا

sikufahamiya moya * hakubaini mwenyewe * nini mekasirikiya * amīni akamuua

[232] (234) akamuua Amini * mekasirikiya nini * mwenyewe ṣikuḥaiṇi * moya sikufahamiya³⁰⁶
The Trustworthy One asked him: Why has she got angry? [Hasan said:] Myself I don't know -- I don't understand [a thing about it].

(٢٣٥) كُرْدِ كُوكِ نَدِينِ * أَكْمُونِ حُسَيْنِ * آتِ مَكِيَا مَعْنِ * هُكُ كُوتِ نَسِكِيَا

nasikiya kwetu huku * mgeni mekuya āṭi * ḥusayni akamuona * ndiyani kwake kurudi

[233] (235) kurudi kwake ndiani * akamuona Husayni * ati mekuya mgeni * huku kwetu nasikiya
As [Hasan] went back along the road he saw Husayn [who said:] So, a visitor has come to our house, I hear.

³⁰² Like ambaye mekasirika, someone who is angry.

³⁰³ In this case, yeo / leo, today, means “now”.

³⁰⁴ baidi = mbali, far, but here it has the meaning “yet”. i.e. Ali is going to be there for a while, so she will tell him now.

³⁰⁵ bibi is a more polite way of saying mama.

³⁰⁶ Some stanzas may be lost here, because the story of Hasan telling the Prophet about the upset at home (299-301) goes nowhere (for instance, the Prophet does not return to the house, even though he has done something similar several times before in the ballad). Alternatively, these stanzas may be just a lead-in to the (somewhat jumbled) episode of Hasan and Husayn (i.e. Hasan tells the Prophet in passing as he looks for Husayn).

(٢٣٦) أَكْمَجِبُ حَسَنَ * مُونِي خَبَرَ مُنِي * إِنَّ بِي تَمَكِينِ * هِيَ أَمْرُومِي

amezowambiya hoyo * tamkini yeye ina * muini khabari mwenye * hasani akamjibu

[234] (236) akamjibu Hasani * mwenye habari muini³⁰⁷ * ina yeye³⁰⁸ tamkini³⁰⁹ * hoyo amezowambiya
Hasan answered him: the gossip-monger in the town, [ja'far's] name, certainly, [it is] this person who has told [people] that.

(٢٣٧) أَكَيْتَ مَلْنَعْنِ * أَكْرَدِدِ حُسَيْنِ * آسَ وَتَمَكِينِ * بِنِ الْوَيْتِي

aliwapoteya penu * wamtakiyani āsa * ḥusayni akaradidi * mlangoni akapiṭa

[235] (237) akapita mlangoni * akaradidi Huseni * baṣi wamtakia-ni³¹⁰ * penu³¹¹ aliwapoteya³¹²
He came to the door [of Ali's house] and told Husayn: So, why are you bothering me? Has he left our house [and gone wandering about]?

(٢٣٨) أَكْمُوْزَ بَيْكَ * أَنْ هُنَّ هُنَّ يَوْمَ * أَكْمَبِ خَيْرِ نَتِكَ * خَبَرَ زِمْنِي

zimeeneya khabari * nitoke khēri akamba * pweke hunena unani * babake akamuuzā

[236] (238) akamuuzā babake * una-ni³¹³ hunena pweke * akamba heri nitoke³¹⁴ * habari zimeeneya³¹⁵
His father asked him: What's the matter? You are speaking amongst yourselves. Then [Ali] said: It is best I go out. The news has spread.

(٢٣٩) كَمَيْنَ خَبَرَ * جَمِيعَ يَ أَنْصَارِ * أَمَكِي جَعْفَرِ * وَ مَوْلَانَا عَلِي

‘aliya mawlānā wa * ja‘fari amekuya * anṣāri ya jamī‘i * khabari kumepanana

[237] (239) kumepanana habari * jamii ya Ansari³¹⁶ * amekuya Jaafari * wa Maulana Aliya
The news is being passed about among all the Helpers: Ja'far has arrived, [the son] of Lord Ali.

(٢٤٠) هَبْ عَلِي حَيْدَرَ * نَنْ أَلْفَسِرِ * أَوْنَعُ أَنْ خَطَرَ * مَمَبْ يَكْتُمَلِي

yakitumiliya mambo * khaṭari una uwinga * alilofasiri neno * ḥaydari ‘alii hapo

[238] (240) hapo Aliyi Haidari * neno alilofasiri³¹⁷ * uwinga³¹⁸ una hatari * mambo yakitokweleya
Then Ali the Lionlike, the words that he said [were]: Foolishness is dangerous, if someone does not understand how things are.

(٢٤١) كُونُ كُنِي مَعْنِ * هَلْ هُكُوْدِيْنِ * تَمُوكَ هُكَ نِيْمَبِنِ * مِّنْ هَتْتَمْبِي

hatotembeya muini * nyumbani huku tamuweka * hukuudhiyani hilo * mgeni kuiye kwenu

[239] (241) kwenu kuiye mgeni³¹⁹ * hilo hukuudhia-ni * tamuweka huku nyumbani * muini hatotembeya³²⁰

³⁰⁷Hasan is annoyed because someone is spreading gossip about the fact that Ali has a hitherto-unknown son. To avoid confirming the rumours he does a typically Swahili thing – if someone asks you if such-and-such a rumour is true, you say: “The one who told you is the one who knows – go back and ask him”.

³⁰⁸i.e. Ja'far's name.

³⁰⁹ = *hakika*, certainly.

³¹⁰-m- here = -ni-. i.e. it is no-one else's business. See also 112a and 155a (R).

³¹¹We understand *pahali*.

³¹²The meaning seems to be that there is no justification for any gossip, because it is not as if Ja'far has gone wandering around the town like a child or a pet, giving people cause to talk about it.

³¹³ = *una nini?*. See 244a, 263b.

³¹⁴We have to assume that Hasan and Husayn have told Ali what they were talking about.

³¹⁵In other words, Ali thinks it would be better to give the word officially, instead of having people gossip about it as a scandal.

³¹⁶The *Ansari* are the tribes of Medina who gave sanctuary to the Prophet after the *hijra*, when he was forced to flee from Mecca in 622 CE.

³¹⁷*Ali anamlaumu mtoto wake*, *Ali is criticising his son [Hasan]*. i.e. Ali is telling them they should not be upset by gossip.

³¹⁸Cognate with *jinga* in 202a.

³¹⁹Ali is asking Hasan: *kwa nini umekasirika?*, *why are you angry?*. You must know that I have a duty of care to Ja'far – I cannot disown him and leave him to wander around the town by himself.

³²⁰This is a rhetorical question: Ali is saying that trying to keep Ja'far's existence secret by locking him in the house would be just as bad as disowning him and leaving him to wander about like a beggar.

A visitor has come to your house -- why does this disturb you? Should I keep him here in the house so that he will not wander around the town?

(٢٤٢) فَتَمَّ أَكْنُطُمْ * كَوْنِ سِ مَوْنَ حَرْمُ * مَوْنَ هَنْ تَبَسْمُ * عَلِي كِمُونْعَلِي

kimwngaliya ‘alii * tabasamu hana mwana * haramu mwana si kwani * akanuṭumu fatuma

[240] (242) Fatuma akanudhumu³²¹ * kwani si mwana haramu * mwana hana tabasamu³²² * Aliyi kimwngaliya³²³

Fatima spoke [to the boys]: Why [do you want to hide him]? He is not an illegitimate child. [But] the Lady [Fatima] appeared sad when Ali looked at her.

(٢٤٣) عَلِي هَبْ كَسِمَ * هَلْ نَدُو فَطْمَ * أَكِنَّكَ كُو هَمَ * مَكَو كَمُنْدِي

kamuendeya mkewe * hima kwa akainuka * faṭuma ndoo hela * kasema hapo ‘alii

[241] (243) Aliyi hapo kasema * hela³²⁴ ndoo Fatuma * akainuka kwa hima³²⁵ * mkewe kamuendeya So Ali said: Come now, Fatima. He got up carefully and went to his wife.

(٢٤٤) أَكْمُوَزْ أُنْ * مَبِنَ أَنْ كِسِرَنِ * فَتَمَّ أَكَمَبَ كُنْ * يَ مَتُنْغُ هُكُومَبِي

hukwambiya matungu ya * kuni akamba fatuma * kisirani una mbona * unani akamuuz

[242] (244) akamuuz una-ni³²⁶ * mbona una kisirani³²⁷ * Fatuma akamba kwani³²⁸ * ya matungu³²⁹ hukwambiya

He asked her: What is the matter? Why are you frowning? Fatima said: What is the point of telling you bitter things.

(٢٤٥) أَكَمَجِبُ تَمَكُ * هِي سِ طَبِي يَكُ * مِم سِ كِجَنَ چَاكُ * أَمَبَ هِي هُنَمَبِي

hunambiya hayo amba * chako kijana si mimi * yako ṭabiya si hiyo * tamko akamjibu

[243] (245) akamjibu tamko * hiyo si tabiya yako * mimi si kijana chako³³⁰ * amba hayo hunambiya [Ali] answered her with the words: This is not like you. I am not your child, say what it is, and tell me.

(٢٤٦) فَتَمَّ أَكَبَيْنِ * سِ إِلِ پَطِ چَنْدَنِ * يَلْنُغِي كِسِمَنِ * آتِ زِيْبُ هُطِي

hutiya ziyapo āṭi * kisimani yalongiya * chandani peṭe ile si * akabaini fatuma

[244] (246) Fatuma akabaini * si ile peṭe chandani * yalongia kisimani * ati³³¹ ziapo³³² hutiya Fatima spoke: That ring on his finger, is it not [the one] which "fell into the well", as you swore?

³²¹Fatima supports the point Ali is making to his children.

³²²Since *mwana* in the previous line meant *child*, it would make sense to continue that meaning here, with the implication that Ja'far *amehuzunika*, has become sad, because everyone seems to be against him. However, this makes the transition to the next stanza somewhat abrupt, so it may be better to assume that *mwana* in this line is used as a respectful title, *lady, mistress*, and refers to Fatima.

³²³In spite of supporting Ali's comments, Fatima is still upset about her discovery.

³²⁴ = hebu.

³²⁵ = taratibu.

³²⁶ = una nini?. See 305b, 330b.

³²⁷haṭeki, she is not laughing. If someone is in a bad mood, you might say: *ameamka na kisirani*, he got out of the wrong side of the bed. A *siku wa kisirani* is a "bad hair day", a day on which nothing goes right.

³²⁸kwani, why?.

³²⁹bitterness.

³³⁰It is said: *mtu mzima, huwezi kumdanganya*, you cannot hoodwink a mature person. Ali is telling Fatima: *usinihadae, mimi si mtoto*, don't try to fool me, I am not a child. He knows something is troubling her, and wants her to say what it is.

³³¹ati here implies that what was said is a lie.

³³²oaths.

(٢٤٧) عَلِيٌّ أَكْمَبَ هَكَكَ * نَدِبُ أَكَّسِرِكَ * پَلْ أَنْغَلُوذِكْ * كَمَ كِلْ نَكْوَمِي

nakwambiya kile kama * ungliudhika pale * ukakasirika ndipo * hakika akamba 'alii

[245] (247) Aliyi akamba hakika * ndipo³³³ ukakasirika * pale ungliudhika * kama kile³³⁴ nakwambiya³³⁵
Ali said: Indeed, so that's why you are angry -- you would have got angry at that time [as well], if I had told you the truth.

(٢٤٨) نَ سَسَ نَنْغَكُوذِ * نَدُغُ يَنْغُ وَتَ غَرَضِ * مُيْ وَكْ أَوْ رَضِ * نَ أَتَكَلُ نَمِي

nambiya utakalo na * radi uwe wake moyo * gharadi wata yangu ndugu * nengekuudhi sasa na

[246] (248) na sasa nengekuudhi * ndugu yangu wata gharadi³³⁶ * moyo wake uwe radi * na utakalo
nambiya³³⁷

And now, even if I have hurt you, stop being angry, my dear. Let your heart be forgiving and tell me what you want.

(٢٤٩) فَتَمَ كَطَ قَوْلِ * كِطُ سِ يَ كَلْ دَلِيلِ * أَوْپَ أَمَكْبَلِ * رَضِ نِمَكْوَلِي

nimekweleya radi * umekubali uwapo * dalili kula ya si kitu * qawli keta fatuma

[247] (249) Fatuma keta qawli * kitu si ya kula dalili³³⁸ * uwapo³³⁹ umekubali * radi nimekweleya³⁴⁰
Fatima spoke these words: the matter is of little importance. Since you have now agreed [you were wrong], I forgive you.

(٢٥٠) وَكَكَّتِ كَوَ لِسَنِ * بِي نَ مَوْنَ نِيْمَبِنِ * نَوَ نَنْدَبُ زَيْتَنِ * وَجَنْدَ وَتَ پَمِي

pamoya wote wachenda * zitani nendapo nawe * nyumbani mwana na yeye * lisani kwa wakaketi

[248] (250) wakaketi kwa hisani³⁴¹ * yeye na mwana nyumbani * naye wendapo zitani * wachenda wote
pamoya³⁴²

They lived happily, [Ali] and the boy, in the house. When [Ali] went to war they both went together.

(٢٥١) جَعْفَرِ نِ مَغْنِ * هَيْزَوِي زَيْتَنِ * مَهَلِ پَ مَيْتِنِ * عَلِيٌّ أَكِمُونَدَلِي

akimwendeleya 'alii * maytini pa mahala * zitani hayazoweya * mgeni ni ja'fari

[249] (251) jafari ni mgeni * hayazoweya zitani * mahala pa miyateni * Aliyi akimwendeleya³⁴³
Ja'far was a stranger [to war], he was not yet accustomed to battle -- where there were 200 [opponents] Ali would go to him
[to help].

(٢٥٢) هَتَ أَكَيْتُمُ مَوْكَ * زَيْتَنِ أَمِصْفِكَ * سَبَا مِي هَكَكَ * هَتْنَدَ أَسِيْوُو

asipoyuwa hutinda * hakika miya sabā * amesifika zitani * mwaka akitimu hata

[250] (252) hata akitimu mwaka * zitani amesifika * saba miya hakika * hutinda asipoyuwa³⁴⁴
Until at the end of one year he was renowned in battle. Indeed, 700 [opponents] he would cut down with no effort.

³³³ that is why.

³³⁴ Amend translation.

³³⁵ In other words, "You would have got angry if I had not told you lies".

³³⁶ gharadhi = hasira.

³³⁷ Ali is trying to mollify his wife.

³³⁸ The meaning of this line is not entirely clear. dalili is usually translated as "sign", but it is also a term for "proof", as used in logic. So the line might be paraphrased as: "between us, the issue (kitu) does not need to be proved on every point, because we love each other".

³³⁹ = ukiwa.

³⁴⁰ = nimekusamehe, I have forgiven you. The mollification works – Fatima forgives him.

³⁴¹ hisani, kindness, goodness.

³⁴² i.e. Ali took Ja'far with him on his campaigns.

³⁴³ Unlike Ali, Ja'far cannot yet fight 200 opponents alone!

³⁴⁴ i.e. he could do it without realising.

(٢٥٣) هَتَ مَوَكْ أَكْرِدِ * هَبْ أَكَنْدَ جَهْدِ * لَكِ مِي مِيَهْدِ * هَكُنْ هَتَ مُمِي

mmoya hata hakuna * mayahudi moya laki * jihadi akenda hapo * ukizidi mwaka hata
[251] (253) hata mwaka³⁴⁵ ukizidi * hapo akenda jihadi * laki³⁴⁶ moya mayahudi³⁴⁷ * hakuna hata mmoya
Until, as time went by, when he went on a crusade, of 100,000 unbelievers there was not one [left alive].

(٢٥٤) أَلَيْكِي مُنِن * عَلِي أَكْبَيْن * أَكْمَوْمِي أَمِن * نِن يَمْبُ تَكْوَمِي

takwambiya yambo nina * amini akamwambiya * akabaini 'alii * muini alipokuya
[252] (254) alipokuya muini * Aliyi akabaini * akamwambia Amini * nina yambo takwambiya
When he came back to the town [after one campaign] Ali spoke and told the Trustworthy One: I have something to tell you.

(٢٥٥) نَبْنَدَ سَسَ بَشِيرِ * إِنْ دِ پَوَكْ جَعْفَرِ * أَكَبِجِ مَكْفَرِ * هُتَشَ كِمَوْنَعَلِي

kimwngaliya hutosha * makufari akapije * ja'fari pweke ende * bashiri sasa napenda
[253] (255) napenda sasa Bashiri * ende pweke Jaafari * akapije makufari * hutosha³⁴⁸ kimwngaliya³⁴⁹
I would now like, Bringer of Good Tidings, for Ja'far to go on his own to fight the unbelievers. He is fully able, in my opinion.

(٢٥٦) أَكْشُكَ جَبْرِيْلِ * أَكْمَوْمِي رَسُوْلِ * هَوَكِ سَمْبَ وَوَلِ * أَكْسَلِمُ نَبِي

nabiya akusalimu * wawili simba haweki * rasūli akamwambiya * jibrīli akashuka
[254] (256) akashuka Jiburili * akamwambiya Rasuli * haweki³⁵⁰ simba³⁵¹ wawili * akusalimu Nabiya
Gabriel descended and told the Prophet: [God] cannot have two Lions, and he greets you, Prophet.

(٢٥٧) أَكْتَمَكَ أَمِينِ * عَلِي تُونْدَ نِيْمَنِ * مَوْنُ هِي يَقِينِ * هُتْفَرِكِ دُنِي

duniya huifariki * yaqīni huyo mwano * nyumbani twende 'alii * amīni akatamka
[255] (257) akatamka Amini³⁵² * Aliyi twende nyumbani * mwano³⁵³ huyo yaqini * huifariki duniya
The Trustworthy One spoke: Ali, let us go to your house -- this son of yours, it seems, is departing this world.

(٢٥٨) چَمَبَوَ هِي قَوْلِ * هَبْ أَسِيْمَهَلِ * كَيْنُكَ نَ رَسُوْلِ * هَبْ وَكَنْدَمَ نَدِي

ndiya wakandama hapo * rasūli na kainuka * asiyamuhali hapo * qawli hiyo chambiwa
[256] (258) chambiwa hiyo qawli * hapo asiyamuhali³⁵⁴ * kainuka na Rasuli * hapo³⁵⁵ wakandama ndia
When he was told these words [Ali] did not linger there -- he got up with the Prophet and then they set out on the road.

(٢٥٩) أَكِيْطَ مَلَنْغَنِ * فَتَمَ أَكْبَيْنِ * أَلِهْتِكَ حَسَنِ * أَيَاءُ كُكُوْنَدَمِي

kukwandamiya uyao * ḥasani alihutoka * akabaini fatuma * mlangoni akipata
[257] (259) akipata mlangoni³⁵⁶ * Fatuma³⁵⁷ akabaini * alihutoka Hasani * uyao kukwandamiya

³⁴⁵mwaka, year, is used here to mean “time” in general. Compare saa in 267d.

³⁴⁶laki < لَكْ, 100,000.

³⁴⁷See 275b. This word can be used for anyone who is bad or evil.

³⁴⁸i.e. he is capable of achieving something.

³⁴⁹Compare: kila kimwngaliya, naona ana mambo yule, every time I look at him, I see that guy has something going on.

³⁵⁰We understand Mungu, God.

³⁵¹Ali is known as simba wa Mungu, or haidari – see note to 22a.

³⁵²Unlike Ali, the Prophet immediately understands the implications of the angel's message.

³⁵³= mwanayo, mwana wako, mtoto wako.

³⁵⁴i.e. he did not delay.

³⁵⁵i.e. pale pale, then and there.

³⁵⁶i.e. hajangia ndani – he has not gone into the house yet.

³⁵⁷In a fairytale we would immediately conclude that mama wa kambo anamduru, his stepmother is doing him harm, but nothing could be further from the truth in this case – it is God who has determined Ja'far's fate.

When he got to the door Fatima spoke: Hasan has [just] left to go and fetch you.

(٢٦٠) مَوْنُ أَلِپْ كِئِن * نَ حَسَنِ نَ حُسَيْنِ * غَفْلَ أَكَبَيْنِ * بَيْنُغُ نَمَكُلِي

namkuliya babangu * akabaini ghafula * ḥusayni na ḥasani na * kiṭini alipo mwano

[258] (260) mwano alipo kitini * na Hasani na Huseni * ghafula akabaini * babangu namkuliya³⁵⁸

Your son was sitting there with Hasan and Husayn and all of a sudden he said: I need to call my father.

(٢٦١) أَمِينُكَ كِئِن * أَمِينَدَ فِرَشَنِ * نَاءِ مَوْنَعَلِينَ * يَمْبُ لَلْمَزِدِي

lalomzidiya yambo * mwangaliyini nae * firashani amepanda * kiṭini ameinuka

[259] (261) ameinuka kitini * amepanda firashani * naye mwangaliyeni * yambo lalomzidiya³⁵⁹

He got up from the chair and climbed onto the bed. Go and look at him -- what has happened to him?

(٢٦٢) هَبْ أَكِنْدَ بَشِيرِ * نَ عَلِيَّ حَنْدَرِ * كِمُونِ جَعْفَرِ * هَبْ بِيكَ كَلِي

kaliya babake hapo * ja'fari kimwona * ḥaydari 'ali na * bashiri akenda hapo

[260] (262) hapo akenda Bashiri * na Aliyi Haidari * kimwona Jaafari * hapo babake kaliya

So the Bringer of Good Tidings went in with Ali the Lion-like. and when he saw Ja'far his father wept.

(٢٦٣) أَكَلِي كِئِن * إِي مَوْنَعُ أَنْ * أُيْتُونِ يَمْبُ غَنِ * كَيْكَ كَوْنَدَمِ نَدِي

ndiya kwandam kaṭika * gani yambo ni upetwe * unani mwanangu ewe * kibani akaliya

[261] (263) akalia kiḥaiṇi * ewe mwanangu una-ni³⁶⁰ * upetwe ni yambo gani * katika kwanḍama ndiya

He wept, saying: Oh, my son, what is the matter with you? What misfortune has stricken you as you went on your way?

(٢٦٤) أَكِسِكِي كَلِمَ * جَعْفَرِ كَفَهَمَ * كَو ضَرْبُ كَيْزَمَ * مَتْ أَكَمُونَعَلِي

akamwangaliya mato * kaṭizama ḍarubu kwa * kafahama ja'fari * kalima akisikiya

[262] (264) akisikia kalima * Jaafari kafahama * kwa dharubu³⁶¹ katizama * mato kamwangaliya

When he heard these words Ja'far regained consciousness and looked about with difficulty and focussed his eyes on him.

(٢٦٥) كِمُونَعَلِي أَمِينِ * أَكَمَبِ نِپِ يَسَنِ * أَكِكَمِ كُبَيْنِ * أَمَكُوشِ كُفِي

kuyifiya amekwisha * kubaini akikoma * yasini nipa akamba * amini kimwangaliya

[263] (265) kimwangalia Amini * akamba nipa³⁶² Ya Sini³⁶³ * akikoma kubaini * amekwisha kuyifiya

When he saw the Trustworthy One he said: Read me [the chapter] Ya Sin. By the time he had finished speaking, [Ja'far] was already dead.

³⁵⁸lit. "call my father for me".

³⁵⁹Or: "what misfortune has overwhelmed him?". Compare kumezidi nini?, what has happened? for something disastrous or catastrophic.

³⁶⁰= una nini?. See 305b, 311a.

³⁶¹dharubu = taabu, mashaka

³⁶²lit. "give me", as a favour. The sick person will also be offered water.

³⁶³See note to 201d. Chapter 36, Ya Sin, of the Qur'an is read over the sick or dying. It is considered unfortunate to die without having it read over you.

(٢٦٦) هَبْ عَلِيَّ حَيْدَرَ * يُتِ اسِيْفِكِر * اَكْسِمَمَ بَشِير * مَصْحَبَ كَوْمِي

kawambiya maṣaḥaba * bashiri akasimama * asiyafikiri yote * ḥaydari ‘alii hapo

[264] (266) hapo Aliyi Haidari * yote asiyafikiri³⁶⁴ * akasimama³⁶⁵ Bashiri * Masahaba kawambiya
Then Ali the Lion-like became insensible to anything. The Bringer of Good Tidings had to do the needful, and spoke to the Companions.

(٢٦٧) كَوْمِي كَيْلِكَ * نَ جَمِيْعَ وَكْتَاكَ * هَيَّ وَكَشَرَ كُرِكَ * عَلِيَّ اَسِيْوُو

asipoyuwa ‘alii * kuzika wakisha haya * wakatoka jamī‘i na * kipulika kawambiya

[265] (267) kawambia kipulika * na jamii wakatoka³⁶⁶ * haya wakisha kuzika * Aliyi asipoyuwa
He spoke to them and they listened, and they all went out and they completed the burial ceremony, Ali still insensible.

(٢٦٨) اَلْپِكُوْشَ كُرِكَ * مُمْمِ اَكْمُوْكَ * مَنَنْ اَكْتَمَكَ * عَلِيَّ اَكْمُوْمِي

akamwambiya ‘alii * akatamka maneno * akamuweka mṭumi * kuzika alipokwisha

[266] (268) alipokwisha kuzika * Mtumi akamuweka³⁶⁷ * maneno akatamka * Aliyi akamwambiya
When he had completed the burial the Prophet sat [Ali] down and spoke [these] words and addressed Ali.

(٢٦٩) كَمُوْمِي كَيْلِكَ * صَبِرِ كُوْكَ رُبُكَ * مَتْ هَنْغَلِكُپِكَ * نَوِ اَكْمُوْنُغَلِي

ukamwangiya nawe * hangalikupoka mṭu * rabuk kwake ṣubiri * kipulika kamwambiya

[267] (269) kamwambia kipulika * subiri³⁶⁸ kwake Raḥūka * mtu hangalikupoka³⁶⁹ * nawe ukamwangiya
He told him as [Ali] listened: Have trust in Him, your Lord -- a person may be seized [by death] even if you were to stand watch over him.

(٢٧٠) وَ اَمَّا نِ مَتْ غِنِ * اَدْمُوْ دُنِيْنِ * اِسِيْكَوْ مَنَّانِ * نَوِ وَيْفَهَمِي

wayafahamiya nawe * mannāni isipokuwa * duniyani adumuwo * gani mṭu ni ammā wa

[268] (270) wa ama ni mtu gani * adumuwo³⁷⁰ duniyani * isipokuwa Manani³⁷¹ * nawe wayafahamiya
And indeed, what kind of person is it who remains in existence, unless it is God alone, and you know that well.

(٢٧١) عَلِيَّ سِنَنْدِ مَنْ * مَمْبُ هُپَجُوْ مَفَنْ * كِيْوْ هَيَّ مَنَنْ * عَقِلِ اِكْمَنْغِي

ikamngiya ‘aqili * maneno hayo kapewa * mfano hupijwa mambo * mno senende ‘alii

[269] (271) Aliyi senende mno³⁷² * mambo hupijwa mfano * kapewa³⁷³ hayo maneno * akili ikamngiya³⁷⁴
Ali, don't go on about this too much -- things have turned out like this. And when he was given this advice [Ali] regained his senses.

³⁶⁴ hajui mambo. Usually only women are in this state after someone has died – the men try to concentrate on making the funeral arrangements. In this case, the Prophet steps in to organise the funeral.

³⁶⁵ -simama does not mean just “stand up”; it also means “do anything that needs to be done”, i.e. in this case, step into the breach as regards the aftermath of Ja’far’s death.

³⁶⁶ With Ja’far’s corpse.

³⁶⁷ i.e. in a chair.

³⁶⁸ The Prophet tells Ali thing like: “You have to endure whatever God sends you. If someone wanted to take your child, you would not just stand there and look at him, but what else can you do in this case?”

³⁶⁹ Amu -poka = Mvita -pokonya, seize.

³⁷⁰ -dumu < دَامَ, endure, cognate of daima, always.

³⁷¹ ela Manani tu. Manani < المَنَّانِ, the Benevolent One, < مَنْ, bestow favours.

³⁷² usizidi huzuni sana, do not wallow in sadness.

³⁷³ The passive of -pa, give is pawa in Amu, -pawa in Mvita, and -pewa in Zanzibar.

³⁷⁴ He realised the truth – to be sorrowful is a mistake, and the Prophet has said. This sort of bereavement has always happened – it is the same for everyone, and you cannot help it. The Swahili practice is to console people by saying things like this – if the bereaved family thought that they were the only ones to whom this was happening, they would become very distraught.

(٢٧٢) هَبْ أَكِشَ كُتُو * زُبَيْرِ كَمَوْمَكُو * تَكُپَ زَنْعُ بَرُو * أُپِطَ كُنِپَكِي

kunipekeya upate * baruwa zangu takupa * kamwamkuwa zubayri * kutowa akisha hapo

[270] (272) hapo akisha kũtũ * Zuberi kamwamkuwa * takupa zangu barua * upate kunipekeya

So when he had calmed down He summoned Zubayr [and said:] I will give you my letters so that you may deliver them for me.

(٢٧٣) هِي مِي نَدَ مَمَك * مِي نَدَ مَوْلِمُ وَك * نَ أُجِنَدَ سِتَمَك * نُنْ مِي كَوْمِي

kuwambiya moya neno * sitamke uchenda na * wake mwalimu nda moya * mamake nda moya hii

[271] (273) hii moya nda mamake * moya nda mwalimu wake * na uchenda sitamke * neno moya kuwambiya

This one is for his mother and this one for his teacher, and when you go there do not say one word to tell them [what has happened].

(٢٧٤) زُبَيْرِ أُسْجِلِسِ * كِپَكِي كَرَتَسِ * كَنَدَ نَزْ أُپِسِ * كَمِپَكِي عَطِي

‘atiya kampekeya * upesi nazo kanenda * karatasi kapokeya * asijilisi zubayri

[272] (274) Zuberi asijilisi³⁷⁵ * kapokea karatasi * kanenda nazo upesi * kampekeya Atiya³⁷⁶

Zubayr did not delay -- he took the papers and went quickly with them. He delivered one to Atika [Ja'far's mother].

(٢٧٥) بَرُو كُمْپَ كُوك * كِشَ زُبَيْرِ أَتَك * اِلَ يَ مَوْلِمُ وَك * كَنَدَ كُمْپَكِي

kumpekeya kenenda * wake mwalimu ya ile * atoke zubēri kisha * kwake kumpa baruwa

[273] (275) barua kumpa kwake * kisha Zuberi atoke * ile ya mwalimu wake * kenenda kumpekeya

When he had given her the letter then Zubayr left, and the one for [Ja'far's] teacher he went on to deliver [it] to him.

(٢٧٦) زُبَيْرِ كُتِكَ كُوك * بِي اَسْمَ مَمَك * اَكْتَاكَ پُوكَ يَك * مَتْ اَسِپَزَنْغِي

asipozengeya mtu * yake pweke akatoka * mamake asome yeye * kwake kutoka zubayri

[274] (276) Zuberi kutoka kwake³⁷⁷ * yeye asome mamake * akatoka pweke yake³⁷⁸ * mtu asipozengeya

When Zubayr had left [Ja'far's] mother read [the letter], and she left home on her own without telling anyone.

(٢٧٧) نَاءِ اَكِينْظُم * يُو لِمُ هُسَلِم * وَلَ اَسِپَفَاهُم * اَسِكُ هُمَنْغِيلِي

humngiliya usiku * asipofahamu wala * husalimu limo yuwa * akiyanuzumu nae

[275] (277) naye akiyanudhumu * yua limo husalimu³⁷⁹ * wala asipofahamu * usiku humngiliya

And as she repeated [the contents] the sun was going down, but she did not realise that night was drawing on.

(٢٧٨) نَ هُكُ نِيْمَ زُبَيْرِ * اَسِپِطَ تَقْصِيرِ * كِلَ نِيْمَ كَعِيرِ * كِمَزَنْغِي عَطِي

‘atiya kimzengeya * ki‘abiri nyuma kila * taqširi asipaṭe * zubēri nyuma huko na

[276] (278) na huko nyuma Zuberi * ašifaṇye taqširi³⁸⁰ * kila ṇyumbā kiabiri³⁸¹ * kimzengeya³⁸² Atiya

And meanwhile Zubayr was doing his best [to find the teacher's house], calling at every house while Atika was looking for him.

³⁷⁵i.e. Zubayr did not sit and wait.

³⁷⁶“Atika” is changed to “Atiya” at the end of the line for the sake of the rhyme. See also 278d, 293d, and 304d

³⁷⁷i.e. immediately he left.

³⁷⁸Usually if a mother is going somewhere and she has a small child she will take the child with her, but in this case Atika is so distraught that she rushes out immediately, forgetting about Nasir.

³⁷⁹It is dangerous for a woman to be out alone at night, but she is grief-stricken.

³⁸⁰-fanya taksiri, put in the effort, do the needful. Note that the Swahili negative here corresponds to a positive in English.

³⁸¹i.e. going to every house and calling hodi! Zubayr is trying to find the mwalimu's house, to deliver his second letter (273b, 275). He could not simply ask Atika where it was, because he was told by Ali not to speak to the recipients (273c/d).

³⁸²anamtafuta.

(٢٨٦) بِي يُبِّ مَلْتَعْنِ * هُلِي اَكْبَيْنِ * قَبْرِنِ نِيكَنِ * نَبْدَ كَيْغَلِي

kuyangaliya napenda * nipekani qaburini * akibaini huliya * mlangoni yupo yeye
[284] (286) yeye yupo mlangoni * hulua akibaini * qaburini nipekani * napenda kuyangaliya
[Atika] was at the door, weeping and saying: Take me to his grave -- I want to see it.

(٢٨٧) هَبِّ عَلِي كَتَا * مَتْرَ يَكْمَشُكَ * هَتَ نَدِ كَتَمَكَ * مَنَنْ اَكْمَوْمِي

akamwambiya maneno * katamka nde hata * yakimshuka matozi * katoka 'alii hapo
[285] (287) hapo Aliyi katoka * matozi yakimshuka * hata nde katamka * maneno akamwambiya
Then Ali went out, his tears flowing, and outside he spoke, telling her these words.

(٢٨٨) كَمَوْمِي كِنُظْمُ * سِنْدَلِي اِسْلَامُ * صَبِرِ كَوَكِ كَرِيْمُ * اَمْبِي اَكْلِي

akuleteya ambayo * karimu kwake şubiri * isilamu sendeleo * kinuzumu kamwambiya
[286] (288) kamwambia kinudhumu * sendeleo³⁹⁰ isilamu * subiri³⁹¹ kwake Karimu * ambayo akuleteya
He spoke, saying: don't go on so -- submit to God's will, trust in Providence who has brought you here.

(٢٨٩) مِمِ هِي نِ مَمَكِ * نَدِي مَوْنِي كِتِ چَكِ * نُونِي قَبْرِي يَكِ * نَتَا كَيْغَلِي

kuyangaliya nataka * yake qaburi nionya * chake kişi mweni ndiye * mamake ni huyu mimi
[287] (289) mimi huyu ni mamake * ndiye mwenye kite³⁹² chake * nionya qaburi yake * nataka kuyangaliya
[Atika said:] I am his mother! I bore his birthpangs! Show me his grave -- I want to see it.

(٢٩٠) يُو مَوْنِي مَمَلَكَه * لَكِ هُنْدَوِ كَوَكِ * وَلِ مِمِ سِكُتَا * اَنْفَرِكِ دُنِي

duniya aifariki * sikutaka mimi wala * kiweka hondowa lake * mamlakah mwenye yowa
[288] (290) yuwa Mwenye Mamlaka * lake hondowa³⁹³ kiweka³⁹⁴ * wala mimi sikutaka * aifariki duniya
[Ali said:] Know that the Almighty [his way] is to take people away and bring [them into existence], and I did not want
[ja'far] to pass away.

(٢٩١) نَوِ صَبِرِ نَدِينُغُ * اُسَيْبِي كَوِ مَنُغُ * وَلِ هُتُكُسَ فُنُغُ * لَ اَخْرَنَ دُنِي

duniya na akhera la * fungu hutokosa wala * mngu kwa usipotee * nduyangu şubiri nawe
[289] (291) nawe subiri nduyangu * usipotee kwa Mngu * wala hutokosa³⁹⁵ fungu * la akhera³⁹⁶ na duniya
And have trust [in God], my dear, so that you do not go astray from God's [path]. or you will not receive your share in the next
world and this one.

³⁹⁰i.e. usifanye sana. If you get carried away by grief, you may say something that is *kufuru*, i.e. something an unbeliever might say. So a wife at the death of her husband may say that he was her lion, or her pillar in the world, or that she depended on him, and she will be told: don't say that, or you will become a *kafiri*. On the contrary, you have to be loyal to God even in a time of grief, and endure whatever he sends you. Debate on the "problem of evil" (why does a good God allow bad things to happen) is unknown in Islam – God knows best, and we cannot begin to fathom His motives.

³⁹¹Compare 336b, where the Prophet says much the same to Ali.

³⁹²*kite*, birth pangs. These give a mother a special love (*huruma*) for her child – she will willingly sacrifice herself for the child. We see this even in animals.

³⁹³We understand *watu*, human beings.

³⁹⁴God has the power to do whatever he likes – he sustains people or brings their life to an end, and we are not in a position to understand his motives.

³⁹⁵If you *subiri*, you will receive a reward from God: *hutakosa maneno kwa Mungu*, you will not fail [to receive] comfort from God.

³⁹⁶It is said: *ukisema mambo mabaya, utapata madhambi kwa Mungu; ukisubiri, utapata malipo mazuri*, if you say irreligious things, God will judge you as having sinned; on the other hand, if you trust [in him], you will be well-rewarded.

(٢٩٢) هُمُؤُ كَيْلِكَ * مَتْرَ يَكْمَشُكَ * هَبْ كَشُكَ عَطِكَ * أَكْتَمَكَ عَلِي

‘aliya akatamka * ‘aṭika kashuka hapo * yakimshuka matozi * kipulika humuowa
[292] (292) humuoa³⁹⁷ kipulika * matozi yakimshuka * hapo ḳaḳḳoḳa Atika * akatamka Aliya
[Atika] looked at him, listening, tears falling. Then Atika stopped [crying] and Ali spoke.

(٢٩٣) هَبْ عَلِي حَيْدَرٍ * بَسِ نَاءِ كَفَسِرٍ * مَبِنَ هَكْيِ زُبَيْرٍ * أَيُّ يُوْكَ عَلِي

‘aliya pweke uyiye * zubēri hakuya mbona * kafasiri nae basi * ḥaydari ‘alii hapo
[291] (293) hapo Aliyi Haidari * basi naye kafasiri * mbona hakuya Zuberi * uyiye pweke Ḥṭiya
So Ali the Lion-like spoke to her then: Why did Zubayr not come [with you]? Did you come by yourself, Atika?

(٢٩٤) أَنْتَبِي بَرُو * كَتِكَ كُفُنْعُو * أَلِپْ سِكْمُيُو * وَلَ سِكْمَزَنْغِي

sikumzengeya wala * sikumuyuwa alipo * kuifungua kaṭika * baruwa unietee
[292] (294) unietee barua * katika kuifungua * alipo sikumuyua * wala sikumzengeya
[Atika said:] He brought me a letter, and when I opened it I took no heed of where he was, and I did not look for him.

(٢٩٥) بَرُو كَيْفَسِرٍ * نَدِي نَلَيْعِيرٍ * هَنْدَ سَسَ كُفِكِرٍ * تَنْبِهَ كُنْغِي

kuningiya tanabuhi * kufikiri sasa handa * nalii‘abiri ndiya * kiifasiri baruwa
[293] (295) barua kiifasiri * ndia naliiabiri * handa³⁹⁸ sasa kufikiri * tanabuhi³⁹⁹ kuningiya
When I realised what was in the letter I set out on the road -- I am beginning now to realise I put myself in danger.

(٢٩٦) فَطِمَ كَمْكَلِمٍ * أَكْمَپْ مَجِ تَم * دُعَ سَبَا تِمَم * نَدَنِ أَلَيْسَمِي

aliyasomeya ndani * timamu sabā du‘a * tamu maji akampa * kamkalimu faṭima
[294] (296) Fatima kamkalimu * akampa maji tamu * dua saba timamu * ndani aliyasomeya⁴⁰⁰
Fatima spoke to her, and gave her sweet water -- seven whole prayers she had read into it.

(٢٩٧) أَكْمَجِبُ كَلِمَ * سِيَوِرِي فَتَم * مِي نِنَ هَلِمَم * رُوْحَ يَتَكَ كَلِي

kuliya yataka rūḥu * halimama nina moyo * fatuma ya siyawezi * kalima akamjibu
[295] (297) akamjibu kalima * siyawezi⁴⁰¹ ya Fatuma * moyo nina halimama * ruhu⁴⁰² yataka kuliya
[Atika] answered her with the words: I cannot [take it], oh Fatima -- my heart is in confusion, and my soul wants to cry out.

(٢٩٨) صَبِرْ كَوِ بَوْنَ وَتْ * عَطِكَ مَاءِ سِ كِتْ * پَجِ مَطَمَ مَطْتْ * يَبِكِيُو تَوُ

taṭuwa yabakiyeo * maṭaṭu maṭama pija * kiṭu si mai ‘aṭika * weṭu bwana kwa ṣubiri
[296] (298) subiri kwa Bwana Wetu⁴⁰³ * Atika mai si kitu⁴⁰⁴ * pija matama⁴⁰⁵ matatu * yabakieyo taṭwaa
[Fatima replied:] Trust in our Lord, Atika, the water is not something [to eat] -- take three sips, and whatever is left I will take.

³⁹⁷ anamtizama.

³⁹⁸ Amu for naanza.

³⁹⁹ = hatari.

⁴⁰⁰ This is anachronistic, in that this would not have been done at the time the story is supposed to take place. The reference is to the practice of reading the Qur’an and then breathing into the water – the efficacy of the verses is piously considered to transfer into the water.

⁴⁰¹ She means *chakula hakinishuki*, I have no heart for eating. If someone dies, he is buried the next day, and the women keen and lament all day and night. They may not eat at all until after the burial. People who are not close relatives of the deceased may make food and bring it secretly, encouraging the bereaved to eat, as if they were sick.

⁴⁰² ruhu = roho.

⁴⁰³ i.e. Mungu.

⁴⁰⁴ i.e. it is not food, so if she is fasting because of the bereavement it is reasonable to take it.

⁴⁰⁵ -piga tama or -shika tama, take a drink, fill your mouth with liquid.

(٢٩٩) مَاءِ أَسِيَّتِكَ * مِيْمِن كَيْيِكَ * أَكْتُمُونَ عَطِكَ * فَتَم كَمِيْكَ

kampokeya fatuma * 'atika na akaatumwa * kayapeka miyomoni * asipoyataka mai

[297] (299) mai asipoyataka * miyomoni kayapeka * akatumwa na Atika * Fatuma kampokeya

Although [Atika] did not really want the water, she took some into her mouth. [The cup] was given back by Atika, and Fatima took it. (?)

(٣٠٠) هَبْ كَمَكَلِفِش * وَعَظِ كُمُونِش * مَاءِ أَلِيْشِش * مُنْعُ أَكْمُونِي

akamuombeya mungu * alipoyashusha mai * kumuonesha wa'azi * kamkalifisha hapo

[298] (300) hapo kamkalifisha⁴⁰⁶ * waadhi kumuonyesha * mai alipoyashusha * Mungu akamuombeya

So Fatima persuaded her and showed her [what to do] by exhortation. When [Atika] had swallowed the water [Fatima] interceded to God for her.

(٣٠١) بَسِ هَبْ أَمُوْز * زَ مَوْنُو خَبِرِز * نَ عَلِيْ أَمُوْلِز * كِشَ أَكَلِي

akiliya kisha * amweleze 'alii na * khabarize mwanawe za * amuuze hapo basi

[299] (301) basi hapo amuuze * za mwanawe habarize * na Aliyi amweleze * kisha akiliya

Then [Atika] asked for news of her son, and Ali explained [everything] to her, weeping at the end.

(٣٠٢) هَتَ كُكِيْمَبُوْكَ * فَتَمَ أَكَيْنُكَ * كَمِيْكَ عَطِكَ * وَكَلَّ وَتَ پَمِي

pamoya wote wakala * 'atika kampikiya * akainuka fatuma * kukipambauka hata

[300] (302) hata kukipambauka * Fatuma akainuka * kampikiya Atika * wakala wote pamoya

Until, when dawn came, Fatima got up and cooked [food] for Atika and they all ate together.

(٣٠٣) عَطِكَ أَكْبِيْن * سَسَ نَمَ كُوْ خِرِن * مَوْنَعُ أَكْ مُيْن * مَتُّ سِيْكُمُوْتِي

sikumuwatiya mtu * muini uko mwanangu * kherini kwa nami sasa * akabaini 'atika

[301] (303) Atika akabaini * sasa nami kwa herini * mwanangu uko muini * mtu sikumuwatiya

Atika said: Now I [bid you] farewell. My son is [back] at home and I left no-one with him.

(٣٠٤) نَ فَتَمَ أَتَمَك * أَمُوْمِيْ مُمَ وَك * نَاوْ نِنْدَ كَمِيْكَ * أَسِنْدِ پُوْكَ عَطِي

'atiya pweke asende * kampeke nenda nāwe * wake mume amwambiye * atamke fatuma na

[302] (304) na Fatuma atamke * amwambie mume wake * nawe nenda kampeke * asende pweke Atiya

And Fatima spoke and said to her husband: And you go and accompany her so that Atika [need] not go on her own.

(٣٠٥) عَلِيْ كَنْغِيْ نَدَن * كُوْ مَكْنُ كَبِيْن * أَكَيْنُكَ كِيْن * فَتَمَ أَكْمُونْدِي

akamwendeya fatuma * kiṭini akainuka * kabaini mkono kwa * ndani kangiya 'alii

[303] (305) Aliyi kangiya ndani * kwa mkono kabaini⁴⁰⁷ * akainuka kitini * Fatuma akamwendeya

Ali went into the inner [room] and signalled [Fatima] with his hand. She rose from her chair, Fatima, and went to him.

(٣٠٦) كَمَبَ چِنْدَ كَمِيْكَ * فَتَمَ هُتُوْدِيْكَ * كُوْمَبَ وَطْ هُتَمَكَ * كَمَ هِيْ كُنْمِي

kunambiya hayo kama * hutamka waṭu kwamba * hutoudhika fatuma * kimpeka chenda kamba

[304] (306) kamba chenda kimpeka * Fatuma hutoudhika * kwamba watu hutamka * kama hayo kunambiya

He said: If I go and accompany her, Fatima, will you not be angry if people talk [about it] and gossip about me?

⁴⁰⁶-kalifisha = -lazimisha.

⁴⁰⁷He does not want Atika to hear.

(٣٠٧) كَنَنْ شَهِدِ مَنْعٌ * هَيْمٌ مُيِّنٌ مَوْنَعٌ * سَسَنْ نِ كَمَ نَدِينُغٌ * نَ قَاسِمٌ نِ مَمِي

mamoya ni qasimu na * nduyangu kama ni sasa * mwangu moyoni hayamo * mngu shahidi kanena
[305] (307) kanena shahidi Mngu * hayamo moyoni mwangu⁴⁰⁸ * sasa ni kama nduyangu * na Qasimu⁴⁰⁹ ni
mmoya.

She said: I swear to God, [such things] are not in my heart. [Atika] is like a sister to me -- exactly the same as Qasim.

(٣٠٨) هَبْ عَلِي كَتَا * كَنَدَمَنْ نَ عَطَا * أَكَنَدَا أَكَمِيَا * هَتَا كَوَا أَكَنِيَا

akangiya kwao hata * akampeka akenda * atika na kandamana * katoka alii hapo
[306] (308) hapo Aliyi katoka * kandamana na Atika * akenda akampeka * hata kwao akangiya
So Ali went out and went along with Atika. He went and accompanied her until he reached her home.

(٣٠٩) هَبْ عَلِي حَيْدَرِ * أَكَصَلِ أَظْهَرِ * كَنَدَمَنْ نَ زُبَيْرِ * مُيِّنِ أَكْرَجِي

akarejeja muini * zuberi na kandamana * azuhuri akasali * haydari alii hapo
[307] (309) hapo Aliyi Haidari * akasali adhuhuri * kandamana na Zuberi * muini akarejeja
Then Ali the Lion-like said the midday prayers and walked along with Zubayr and returned to the town.

(٣١٠) نَ هَبْ أَلِيْرُدِ * نَدِيْ أَلِيْرُدِي * مَنِي كِيْجَاهِي * مَصْحَبِ كَوَمِيِي

kiwambiya masaḥaba * kijitahidi maneno * aliporadidi ndipo * aliporudi hapo na
[308] (310) na hapo aliporudi * ndipo aliporadidi * maneno kijitahidi * Masahaba kiwambiya
And when he returned, it was then that he told [the story], striving for [exact] words, telling the Companions.

(٣١١) هَبْ نِيْمَتِيَا تَمَ * يَيْتِ زَنْعِ هُكَمَ * نَ أَمْبُوْ وَتَسَمَ * كَوَزَتِ زَكُوْلِيَا

zikaweleya zote kwa * watasoma ambao na * hukoma zangu bayti * tama nimeṭiya hapa
[309] (311) hapa nimeṭia tama * baiti zangu hukoma * na ambao watasoma * kwa zote zikaweleya
Here I have finished, my verses have come to an end, and whoever reads [them] will be made aware of everything [that happened].

(٣١٢) يَيْتِيْ زِيُونِ * مَتِي أَكْزِيُونِ * أَصْبَحِ نَ جِيُونِ * مِي أُسْبِيْغِيَا

usopunguliya moyo * jiyoni na aṣubuḥi * akazibaini mṭu * ziyuweni baytize
[304] (312) baitize ziyuveni * mtu akazibaini * asubuhi na jioni * moyo usopunguliya
Learn [the poem's] verses, so that a person may say them morning and evening, not omitting one.

(٣١٣) كَوْنَدَا هَتَدَلِيْلِكَ * مِطِي هَتَسْمِيْك * نَ أَتَكَلْتَمَك * مَلْ هُمُوْفَقِيَا

humuwafiqiya mola * atakalotamka na * hatosumbuka mṭuye * hatodhalilika kwanda
[305] (313) kwanda hatodhalilika⁴¹⁰ * mtuye hatosumbuka * na atakalotamka * Mola humuwafiqiya⁴¹¹
First, he will never be brought low, that person, he will not be troubled, and whatever he asks for the Lord will bring to him.

⁴⁰⁸Fatima, in contrast to her behaviour at the beginning of the ballad, has learnt to be magnanimous.

⁴⁰⁹Qasim was Fatima's brother, and died in infancy. The Prophet had 7 children (3 boys and 4 girls), but they all pre-deceased him except Fatima.

⁴¹⁰-dhalilika, be humble, be humiliated, no agent specified.

⁴¹¹These claims are somewhat overblown – this is not a religious text.

(٣١٤) أَوْ مُبَلِّغٌ كَوْ وَهَابٌ * أَتَجِبُ جَوْبٌ * أَوْ مَتُّ نَجْرِبُ * أَدَلِّشِ وَصِيَّ

waṣīya adalilishē * najaribu mṭu aw * jawabu atajibiwa * wahābu kwa aombalo

[306] (314) aombalo kwa Wahabu * atajibiwa jawabu * au mtu ajaribu * adalilishē wasiya⁴¹²

Whatever he prays for from the Generous One, he will be vouchsafed an answer, and let the person try [it], that he may demonstrate its wisdom.

(٣١٥) نَمِپِنْدَ كُكَّرِرِ * نَنِّي سَمَنِ صَمِيرِ * أُتْنِدِ وَ جَعْفَرِ * وَ مَوْلَانَا عَلِيَّ

‘aliya mawlānā wa * ja‘fari wa utendi * ḍamīri somanī nanyi * kukariri nimependa

[307] (315) nimependa kukariri * nanyi somani dhamiri * utendi wa Jaafari * wa Maulana Aliya

I have been pleased to recite it, and you, read it inwardly -- the Ballad of Ja'far and Lord Ali.

⁴¹²In other words, if the hearer is doubtful that this is true, let him just try it. See also the note to 208d.