CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: BIOGRAPHY OF THE POEM

I. The Manuscript

The text of the present work is taken from an Arabic MS, preserved in the library of the department of Semitic studies at the University of Leeds. It is among the remaining uncatalogued MSS of this collection and has been provisionally allocated the number Arab 347. It was acquired for the University of Leeds, together with a large number of other oriental MSS, in the 1950's as stated by Professor J. Macdonald in (1958-62).

The MS possibly dates from the thirteen or fourteenth century, but this is uncertain. The leaves are badly worn at the edges, but the broad margins have preserved the text intact on each leaf. The last leaf bears the name of an earlier owner, Umar a-Naquib, both on the recto and the verso, on the recto we read the following:

Mulk al - Faqir Umar a-Naqib Sint alf watiscat watisin 'the owner Umar a-Naqib (Poor man) the year one thousand ninety nine'.

From a note in a different hand on the verso of the leaf, we learn that the MS subsequently passed into the possession of Al-Amir Qasim Jalabi, son of Shahin Kashif. It reads as follows:


'The owner of this book was Umar-Naqib. After his death, the book was owned by Qasim Jalabi, son of Shahin Kashif. May God have mercy on him'.

This is preceded by a short "Mawal" (a short song) in the same hand which begins

Massek Bilkhar Yalli Mitlafit
"Good evening to you" (who you look back)

The remainder is unfortunately illegible Rol. 31V and Rol. 32V bear the illegible impression of a seal. The first two verses of the poem are missing, but have been restored in a different hand, at the top of what is now the first folio.

The place where the MS was written is not certain although several textual features of the poem, discussed below, indicate an Egyptian province.

II. The Text

The MS has preserved 469 verses of what must have been originally, a somewhat longer composition. It is impossible to say how many verses have been lost, but judging from the number of lacunae (6), and the fact that each folio contains its lines, the number of missing lines is at least 90. The lacunae
are marked, where they occur in the present edition, by five asterisks (** ****).
The text in general is unambiguous.

The place of composition of the work would seem from the internal evidence, to have been Egypt. This is indicated by the occasional use of a colloquial Egyptian Word, for example gowwa (inside) (gowwā) and ndif (clean) (n‘īf) for nazif (n‘īf) (line 357) i.e. for Z.ـض (zād) is voiced emphatic dental stop for voiced inter-dental fricative Z.ـض.

It is obvious that the poet takes pleasure in his allusion to the 'blessed Nile', as for example (lines 299, 335), which is frequently mentioned.

III. The Language, Style and Metre of the Poem

The language of the poem is classical Arabic, but, there are occasional grammatical anomalies which suggest Middle Arabic influence, for example Kamustabshiran (kāmunštahīrān) (a harbinger, or one who brings good tidings) (line 24) Maqalata ma‘dhuran (maqālatu ma‘dhūrān) (the narration of one who deserves forgiveness) in (line 157) perhaps the old phrase (line 257) might also be mentioned here. i.e. tilka-l-Kitab for tilka-ayatu-l-Ktiab (the verses of clear book). Qur'an verse 1.

Somewhat more frequent than these occasional divergence from classical grammar and syntax, are divergences in the orthography of certain words, a feature, that once again suggests a Middle Arabic influence. We find, for
example, Ta'maftuha (open ta') for ta' marbuta (closed ta') in (line 243), for example Kathrat (ταθρα) for Kathra (καθρα) (depth or lot of) also dal (δαλ) for dhal, (δαλ) hadar (χαδρ) (caution) for hadhar (χαδρ) and tar (ταρ) (avenge) for Θ'ar (ταρ) in (line 374) and the occasional slight irregularities in spelling for wa' anbuhu (ουανβοχ) (told him) for wa' anba'uhu (ουανβοχ) in (line 272). Among other variants one also finds alif maqsourah (οιολομοχοχ) for alif tawilah (οιοτωνοχοχ).

Other variations can, in most cases, be construed as normal poetic licenses. The use of two slightly different forms of the name of Potiphar's wife (Zulaykha) and (Zulaykhah) can perhaps be included here. The style of the poem is of a pleasing simplicity, with little use of the rhetorical devices of Jinas (χονασ) (homographs) tibaq (τιβακ) (antithesis) where homograph: means two words identical in pronunciation, different in meaning and tibaq means: two words each having exactly the opposite meaning.

There are occasional exceptions to this, for example, the (line 323) is an example of Jinas between two words ʿibrani (μηρανι) (a Hebrew Youth) and ʿabar (μερα) (incarcerated) and a final occasional instance of synonyms, for example, (line 70) and (line 144) in (line 70), we find hamm, (μαμ) ghamm, (μαμ) fikar (φακ) (melancholy, worry, care) (line 144) tabaddada (ταμπακα) (dispersed) and indaΘar (ιντακα) (disappear).
The poet employs a number of striking similies. For example, he compares a fast-riding Caravan, to a herd of ostriches, stampeded by horses (line 434), a defiant manservant, is compared to a refractory colt, whose bridle has been lost (line 216); the honeyed words of Zulayhah to the king, are compared to strings of pearls (line 213). A notable feature of this use of simile, is the poet's fondness for comparing things of beauty, or even abstract notions, such as, good fortune, with the moon (cf. lines 162, 192, 195, 207, 302, 349, 417).

Striking metaphors are somewhat fewer in number, but we may notice the soothsayers describing their perplexity, as a sea, whose shore we cannot discern, (line 314), the description of Joseph's reuniting of the members of his family, as the restringing of a necklace, which has been scattered, (line 441) and the poet's allusion to his composition as a robe 'with variegated hems' (line 466).

Much of the action of the story, related in the poem, proceeds by means of direct speech of protagonists, which lends vividness to the various episodes. The poet employs a very considerable vocabulary, this is sufficiently established by the fact that, nearly 500 verses are made to rhyme with the same letter and that this has not been achieved by undue padding, with superfluous lines.
The primary interest of the poet, in the story of Joseph and his Brethren, is throughout, a religious and a moralising one, and the prophethood of Jacob and Joseph is constantly emphasized, together with the ever-present providence of God. The metre of the poem is 'tawil' (\(\text{طويل}\)) (long) and the rhyme throughout is ra' (\(\text{را}\)) (the recurrence of the finishing sound in the lines of poetry).

IV. Contents of the Poem

The poem begins with an invocation for God's help, by the poet. His narrative proper then commences, with a short description of Joseph and his family, and then, after mentioning the brothers' jealousy, proceeds to tell the story of Joseph's dream.

The brothers' plotting is recounted, through the vivid use of direct speech. In reply to their attempt to persuade Jacob to let Joseph go with them, Jacob relates a dream which suggests that Joseph is in a great danger of being killed by a wolf. Joseph, at length persuades his father to let him go with his brothers, but as soon as they are out of sight of Jacob, the brothers begin to tease and torment him.

At this point, the first of the six lacunae referred to above (see p.2.), occurs. The text as we have it, resumes with the word of the archangel Gabriel, spoken to Joseph, in the well. This shows that the missing verses must have
described Joseph's being cast down the well and the brothers' return to their father.

The scene of the story then returns to Jacob's house, and the false report of Joseph's death by the brothers. When Jacob refuses to believe the story that a wolf had devoured Joseph, Simon advises the brothers to make their story more convincing, by catching a wolf, and presenting it as the slayer. Accordingly, they capture a wolf, and bring it to their father, but they have not reckoned with the fact that Jacob, as a prophet, can understand the speech of animals, and the wolf explains to him that he is entirely innocent of any slaying, and had, in fact been engaged in a search for his long - lost brother.

At (line 154), the narrative returns to Joseph in the well and the episode of his rescue by a passing Caravan. At this point, the brothers appear on the scene again, although their departure from Jacob's house is not described. They start to negotiate the sale of Joseph to the members of the Caravan, but the story of this transaction is interrupted by the second lacuna.

The text resumes with the discovery, in the house of Joseph's master in Egypt, that his shirt had been torn from behind. It becomes clear that the verses missing from the second lacuna, must have described Joseph's being taken to Egypt, his sale there as a slave, and the attempt of seduction by Zulaykha. Potiphar, her husband, is nowhere mentioned by name (in Arabic Qitfir),
although allusion is made to him, and his title 'Aziz' is mentioned later (line 358). It is probable, that the name Qitfir occurred in the missing lines.

The episode of Zulaykha's attempted justification of herself, before the women of the town, is dwelt upon at some length, and after a mention of Joseph's committal to prison (line 208) the narrative takes us back to give details of how Zulaykha secured Joseph's imprisonment by going to the Pharaoh al-Rayyan (the name by which he was known to Muslims) and mispresenting the facts of the case.

The poem then describes Joseph's life in prison and introduces at this point a long episode in which Joseph communicates by a letter with his father in Cana'an. The dream of the baker and the butler are then described and subsequently the vision of the Pharaoh.

The bafflement of the Egyptian soothsayers to interpret the dream of the king is vividly recounted and this leads to Joseph's release from prison when Zulaykha admits her fault together with the women of the town who also admit Joseph's innocence.

Then follow two (lines 361 and 362) which appear to have no connection with the preceding ones but the reference of which might have been explicable through the lines which are missing at this point (third lacunae). Between this
third lacuna and the fourth lacuna there are thirty verses which contain the incomplete narrative of an episode of which both the beginning and the end are unfortunately missing. This refers to Joseph's praying at the tomb of his mother when there is an unprovoked attack on him by a mean slave' and the dire signs of divine wrath follow this. In the midst of the terror the slave is forced to confess his mistake. When he does so, the terrifying token of God's anger is subsided.

After the fourth lacuna comes the episode of the goblet hidden in the brother's baggage but the lines at the end of this episode are missing (fifth lacuna).

The text resumes with the story of how Joseph's shirt was brought to Jacob in Canaan and how the latter's sight was restored by its being laid on his eyes. Then follows the forgiveness of the erring brothers and the journey of the whole family to Egypt. Joseph is represented as going out to meet them when they are still a day's journey away, and the sixth and the last lacuna occurs at this point. The context shows that only a small number of verses are missing here. The narrative ends with the arrival of Jacob and his sons in Egypt and the happy remainder of his days.

The poem concludes with an eloquent prayer which invokes the prophets of God in general and Muhammad in particular.
V. Sources of the Poem

The general arrangement of the story narrated in the poem, as retold in section IV, is that of the Quranic story of Joseph and his brethren in Surah XII. At some points the Quranic text is quoted directly see (lines 30, 71, 81) etc. while many other phrases used by the poet are adaptations of Quranic phraseology. For example, Jacob's admonition to Joseph in the Qur'an appears in the poem as:

\[ \text{Wala taqsus al ru'ya `ala ahad} \]
\[ \text{`do not relate the vision to anyone'} \]

The same idea appears in Qur'an verse (5) as follows:

\[ \text{la taqsus ru'yaka `ala ixwatika} \]
\[ \text{`oh my son, relate not your dream to your brethren’}. \]

or more general reminiscence of the text for example, as it appears in the Qur'an.

\[ \text{Waqatta'na `ydiyhunna waqulna hasha} \]
\[ \text{lillahi mahadha basharun in hadha illa} \]
\[ \text{malakun Karim} \]

"and cut their hands\(^3\) in amazement and said Holy Allah! This is not a mortal This is but a noble angel". (cite)

becomes in poetry

\[ \text{Wa 'akbarnahu hatta zananna biannahu} \]
\[ \text{Saghiran minal-amlaki lam yaku bashar} \text{ (in line 197)}. \]

\(^3\) *Cut their hands:

Hands: Here not to mean that they have cut their hands, but it refers to their fingers as they are parts of hands as a whole.
‘They admired him so much as though they thought of him as a young angel’.

In all, one sixth of the 469 surviving lines of the poem contain direct quotations or reminiscence of the text of Surah XII of the Quran.

There are occasional allusions to Surah other than XII, for example, (line 378), which contains a reference to Surah XI. The Pharaoh is nowhere mentioned in the poem; the reference is always to ‘the King’, just as in Surah XII, although the term ‘pharaoh’ does occur elsewhere in the Quran.

Attention has been drawn to Qur'anic quotations and near quotations in the notes to the translation presented here. The poet appears to have in mind the contribution of the Qur'anic Commentators at a number of points.

The episodes of the poem which are not to be found in the Qur'an are taken from the Muslim legendary material which grew up around the original Qur'anic narrative with the purpose of elaborating and explaining it. This includes the episode of the innocent wolf (lines 130 to 148), the eclipse of the sun (lines 375 to 393) and the youngman on the camel who carries Joseph's message.
On account of the length of the poem, concentration is mainly on the episodes that are similar to the original (that is the Qur'an). As there are a lot of missing lines in the poem, Qur'an will be quoted to compensate for them. These episodes can be summed up in the form of a systemic division of episodes as given below.

**Episode One: Joseph's Vision:**

As Joseph slept in the lap of his father, he smiled and Jacob, the prophet, wondered at his smiling and a matter of great importance came in to his mind. Jacob said to him: "Your face is smiling and giving glad tidings of the Divine; what has happened, O Joseph?" Joseph replied. "It is a vision I have seen; it tells of something which must be proclaimed and spread abroad". Jacob said: "What have you seen? Relate the vision to me truthfully". Then Joseph narrated his vision.

Jacob said to Joseph, "Your vision contains a prophecy", and asked him to conceal it from his brothers, to tell them nothing about it, and never reveal it to man or womam.

**Episode 2: Brothers' Plot**

After the incident of Joseph's vision, his brothers took counsel that they should get rid of Joseph. To them Joseph was a conceited person, and Jacob
their father loved him more dearly. First they came to convince Joseph to go out with them. Then they went to their father.

When he was alone they said: “Dear father, it is spring time and the season of the flowering of herbs and trees, and Joseph came and begged us to take him out with us to see the beauty of the wilderness and enjoy its scenes and so we don't want to disappoint him”. Jacob expressed his fears and asked them by God not to afflict him. By that time Joseph appeared and he, knowing nothing of their plan, asked his father to let him go. Jacob gave him a farewell embrace, for God's decree may not be resisted. He asked them to be kind to him and they replied, “We will look after him with our hearing and sight”. When they had borne him away from their father's sight and disappeared among the hills and trees, they told him: “Your time has come”. They threw him down on his face. They came to murder him but at last they took counsel to throw him in a pit and that they did.

**Episode 3: Brother's False Story**

When they came back and Joseph was not with them, Jacob boiled with passion and the signs of death appeared on his face in every respect.

They tried to calm him, and told him to listen to them and to be convinced that Joseph had been devoured by a wolf while they were distracted.
with their shepherding. "Here is his shirt, the colour of trefoil, from redness". Jacob looked at the shirt, there was no rent in it and the smell was not Joseph's. He said: "Your souls have induced you to do something, but one must be patient under the blows of fate".

**Episode 4: Joseph's Rescue**

Now we return to the truthful Joseph. For three days, he stayed in the pit. The trusty Gabriel was his companion when the gloom and darkness of night approached. By God's grace, a caravan dismounted near Joseph's pit. "There is a youth", one called out delightedly, and they pulled him away. His brethren witnessing the scene, approached and they said: "This is a runaway servant concealing himself from us in the pit; if you wish to buy him we will sell him".

**Episode 5: Zulaykha's attempt to seduce Joseph**

They wrote a contract. Joseph was sold in Egypt. The buyer was Al-Aziz, the Chief Guard of the Pharaoh. He said to his wife Zulaykha: "take care of this youth; he might avail us in the future". Joseph was so handsome, with a face like a full moon, that Zulaykha was enchanted by her servant and tried to seduce him. She was beautiful and powerful. Joseph repelled her
She ran after him. At the door her husband appeared and she said: “he tried to seduce me”. One of Zulaykha's relatives bore witness and said:

“If his shirt is torn from behind she is a liar, if it is torn from the front he is a liar”. But they saw that his shirt was torn from behind and the truth shone plain like the morning.

**Episode 6: Zulaykha Justifies Herself:**

Women in the city blamed her for that. Zulaykha heard of their deceit; she sent for them for a supposed little celebration. She brought citrons to each of the women and knives to them too. When Joseph appeared like a full moon over the horizon of heaven, they admired him so much, it was as though they thought of him as a young angel, not as a human being, and they cut their hands in awed astonishment; whereby Zulaykha laughed at their action. Later Zulaykha convinced the Pharaoh to put her slave in prison for his disobedience and Joseph was imprisoned.

**Episode 7: Prison mates' dream**

Two young men entered the prison where Joseph was; they were the baker and the butler. The butler saw in his vision that he was pressing grapes.
Joseph said: “you will stay in your prison three days and then go forth happy to serve your lord drink wherever he goes”.

The baker saw that he was carrying some bread on his head and the birds of the air descended upon it. Joseph said: “you will be crucified after 3 days”.

Joseph told the one who was saved to mention him to his lord (the King) but that one did not remember Joseph and Joseph stayed for more years in prison.

**Episode 8: The King's (Pharaoh's) Vision**

The King said, “I have seen seven fat cows eaten by seven lean ones and seven green ears of corn and seven dry ears twisted around them. Counsellors, interpret this to me; if you do not I will show no mercy to anyone of you”. The counsellors said to one another, “Surely we have been thrown into a sea in which we discern no shore”. Here the butler remembered Joseph and said: “In the prison, there is a youth who can interpret this as no one else can, even if you search for the whole of your life”. The King said: “Fetch him without delay”.

The butler came to the prison and knocked on Joseph's cell. Joseph smiled and said a hearty welcome to one who had come to ask me about the King's vision. He interpreted it to the king.

The butler came back and told the King, who was much relieved at what he heard. The King said: “Should such a man be imprisoned? Arise quickly
and bring him to me. I shall give him a choice between being a prince and a minister”. (Later according to his wish, Joseph was appointed the Minister of Finance).

Episode 9: Joseph's Release

When the butler came to tell Joseph, Joseph asked him to go back to his lord (the King) to investigate the women.

The king sent for the women and said: “What is your concern with Joseph”? They said: “God forbid! By God, he is innocent of disgrace”. Zulaykha also said: “The clear truth has become evident. Indeed I tried to seduce him, he was sincere and truthful”.

The poem then shifts back to his brothers coming to Egypt in a caravan for their supply of wheat. He knew them but they did not. After a while he let them know him and they asked for forgiveness for their transgression. He sent his shirt to be thrown on his father's face and the sight of the prophet Jacob returned. They all joined Joseph in Egypt. The truthful Joseph went to meet them as the head of a powerful army. Jacob, the prophet of God, lived afterwards most pleasantly, untroubled by sorrow, a life of grace for twenty years, at the end of which he died at his allotted term.
The Translation

To translate Joseph's story in Arabic poetry and in the Qu'ran into English both Eugene Nida's and J.C. Catford's principles and methods will be used to reproduce in the receptor language the closest natural meaning and the style. This will also allow for a discussion of the two methods of translation so as to come up with similar English translation in which style and meaning of the original language (Arabic) is maintained as far as possible.

Two Types of Translation Methods

Both Eugene Nida and J.C. Catford agree on what is a translation; however, they both use different methods. Catford defines translation as "the replacement of textual material in one language (source Language) by equivalent text material in another (target language)". Nida says almost the same thing, "translating consists of reproducing in the Receptor Language the closest natural equivalent of the Source Language message; first in terms of meaning and second in terms of style". Dostert agrees with Nida that translation is a form of "transference of meaning from one set of patterned symbols into another set of patterned symbols." Both Nida and Catford have their own system, each resulting in the same end. Nida bases his system on the

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6 J.C. Catford, p. 35.
kernel sentence with a five step process. Nida uses equivalence also as his basis for translation transfer; however, instead of using a linguistic hierarchy, he identifies and groups relations among lexical items according to their similar semantic classes.

Nida breaks down the translation process into five steps based on what he calls basic structural elements; object, event, abstract, and relation, and the kernel sentence. Nida defines the kernel sentence or 'kernels' as "the basic structural element out of which the language builds its elaborate surface structures. The process by which the kernels are produced is called back-transformation. In order to form kernels one must first identify the structural elements. Object is a semantic class which designates things or entities which normally participate in events. Event is a semantic class which designates action, process or happening. Abstract is a semantic class of expressions, referents of quality, quantity and degrees of object, event, and other abstracts. Relations are expressions of meaningful connections between other kind of terms. Identifying O,A,E,R is the first step in the five step process of translation.

The second step is making explicit the implicit structural elements; the third step is determining the kernels; the fourth step is grouping kernels into related sets; and the fifth step is stating the relationships in a form, optimal for transfer into receptor language.
Nida's system is an easier structural system in the sense that one is able to transfer language from kernel to kernel, than from word to word to group to phrase to clause to sentence. The following will be a breakdown of the Joseph's story in poetry and the Quran, according to these two methods discussed above.

**Phonetic Transcription and Application of Nida's and Catford's Theory of Translation**

A sample from poetry and Qur'an of Joseph story which can be applied to the whole poem and Sura 12 in Qur'an.

Nida Step I Identifying O,A,E,R.

Nida Step II Making explicit, implicit structural elements.

Nida Step III Determining Kernels.

Nida Step IV Grouping Kernels into Groups.

Nida Step V Free form of translation (i.e.) in this step a relationship can be stated in a form optimal to transfer into receptor language which will lead to free form of translation.

Nida's Steps

Step I, II, III.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step 1</th>
<th>First Kernel</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Poetry:</td>
<td>Inni ra'aytu Kawakiban Drari</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I saw stars glittering</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Step 2</th>
<th>Second Kernel</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>wa-qad `addaytuha ihda'ashar</td>
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<tr>
<td>and</td>
<td>I counted them eleven</td>
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</tbody>
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Step IV

(Inni ra'aytu) (Kawakiban Drari)
I saw stars glittering

(wa-qad 'addaytuha) (ihda cashar)
and I counted them eleven

(Ra'aytuhum) (Sajidina Jami'ahum)
I saw them prostrating all

(wa-wafaqahum) (fi dhalika) (ashshamsu wal-qamar)
and joined them in this the sun and the moon.

Step V: Free form of translation.

1. I saw glittering stars
2. and I counted them eleven
3. I saw them prostrating all
4. and joined them in this, the sun and the moon.

Now I shift to Catford's theory of translation who has based his theory on what he calls a rank to rank translation, first; a word for word transference; second, morpheme for morpheme; third, group or clause for group or clause, and finally lexical item for lexical item. Each set of words, morphemes, etc., must be equivalent. 

"Equivalence in the Target L2 Language occurs when the source L1 language and the Target Language text or item are relatable to at least some of

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6 J.C. Catford, p. 25.
the same features of substance (situation).\(^7\) Catford talks about text and item. A text is "any stretch of language spoken or written which is under discussion".\(^8\) An item is a unit of meaning. When selecting a target language item, it should be "not of the same meaning but with the greatest possible overlap of situational range".\(^9\)

Situation is the most important feature for Catford in translating. Situational features are arrival; prior event; or linked to the present.\(^10\) In transference, items are equivalent in their situational range. A total translation is "the replacement of Source L1 Language grammar and lexis by equivalent Target L2 Language grammar and lexis with consequent replacement of Source Language phonology/graphemes with Target Language phonology/graphemes".\(^11\) (Catford steps (1), (2) & (3) word for word translation and morpheme for morpheme in group form.

1) I saw stars glittering (Group I) 1 + 2
2) and I counted them eleven
3) I saw them prostrating all (Group II) 3 + 4
4) and joined them in this the sun and the moon.

\(^7\) Ibid., p. 50.
\(^8\) Ibid., p. 21.
\(^9\) Ibid., p. 49.
\(^10\) op. cit.
\(^11\) Ibid., p. 22.
Catford Step 4 Lexical Items with the specific mention its correct form.

1) I saw stars glittering
   I saw glittering stars

2) and I counted them eleven
   I counted them eleven

3) I saw them prostrating all
   I saw them all prostrating

4) and joined them in this the sun and the moon
   the sun and the moon joined them in this.

Finally Catford's step 4 appears as follows:

1) I saw glittering stars
2) I counted them eleven
3) I saw them all prostrating
4) The sun and the moon joined them in this.