HAMZA'S FRIENDS SEND YUNUS THE SAILOR FOR HELP; HE MEETS UMAR, AND DIRECTS HIM TO TAKAW

Three divergent narrative threads are woven together in the next installment of the text. The Iranian heroes vow to rescue Hamza from prison, but Khwaja Nu'man advises them to seek reinforcements first.

"Someone will have to be sent to the Amir's army," said he.

"Who's to go?" they asked. Yunus, the sailor agreed to go. Getting the boat out of the sand, he got in the boat and set sail in the direction of Sabayil.

As for Umar, Yaqut, and Sarraj, the sailor, they were lost for two months. One day Sarraj climbed up to the top of the mast and saw a ship with one man in it. When it got nearer, he saw that it was his own brother. The man recognized Yunus and came to Umar. Sarraj told his story, and Yunus recounted the story of the Amir. Umar rejoiced and sent him on his way while he himself proceeded until a huge mountain and fortress came into view. Umar rejoiced.

The artist illustrates the chance encounter of the two complementary rescue missions, an episode described briefly at the very end of the text in the preceding page. But rather than presenting a close-up view of the vessels and their inhabitants, as is done in the two embarkation scenes, he pulls back to depict the two boats on a vast sea. He sets Umar, the protagonist of the illustration, at the very edge of the composition, and aligns him with the two brothers, both of whom are labeled. Another sailor, perched on the makeshift crow's-nest of a mast so tall that he is only half the size of his shipmates, looks toward the huge mountain, the landmark mentioned in the text. Standing atop that mountain is an equally small figure gesturing toward a city in the far distance. Thus, the artist links in a great arc the separate actions of the episode—the two brothers meeting, Umar learning of Hamza's whereabouts and charting a new course, and the lookout spotting the mountain and fort.

The bulk of the composition is dedicated to topographical matters. The sea surges all around, often forming loose interlocking whirls but never falling into predictable patterns. The mountain rises up in great muscular lobes, its surface scumbled as if ground down by geological forces, its contours crevassed with broad, wet streaks of black paint. More striking still are the trees at the very center of the image. These are not the densely patterned, precisely painted trees seen in most of Mughal painting. They are expressionistic flurries—daubed with blue, flecked with yellow, shot through with early fractured branches. This painterly exuberance spreads across the straits, where a compact fortress is engulfed by a forest of equally splashy trees. This wild setting is the backdrop for a miniature and absolutely unrelated scene of a goatherd minding his goats. In this scene, too, the artist shows a lively touch: some goats amble about, one strains to reach the fresh grass above him, and two others near to butt heads. The goatherd, crook in hand and a heavily modeled cloak about his shoulders, strides out of the composition.

Such a boldly designed and executed painting comes along but rarely, and is a testament to an extraordinary creative vision. Only Dasavanta consistently designed paintings of such compositional originality, and only he and Basavanta ever used paint with the spontaneity seen here. A pair of paintings ascribed and attributed to Dasavanta in the Tutinama have both these qualities, as well as a matching set of figure types.
BABA JUNAYD IS RUDE TO UMAR AND TURNS HIM AWAY FROM THE CARAVANERSAI DESPITE NU'MAN'S ENTREATIES

Umar, disguised as a merchant, arrives at Takaw and asks for directions to the caravanserai of Baba Junayd; he is accompanied there by a customs officer. They find the innkeeper seated on a girthing platform outside his caravanserai. The officer makes the introductions:

"The customs man came and greeted him, saying, 'This is a good man. Give him a good place.'

'Yellow,' he cried out, 'am I a servant of the customs officer? How am I to find any room here?'

The customs servant said, 'Khwaaja, we have spoken and heard. The rest is up to you.' This he said and departed.

Umar came forward and said hello. Baba replied with a frown. Umar threw a handful of gold before Baba and said, 'We have come out of love for you.'

'Am I a beautiful youth that you would come to see me?' replied Baba. 'I can do nothing for you. Pick up your gold and go in peace, for there is no room.' Umar left the caravanserai, seeing that Baba Junayd was in a bad mood.

Nu'man saw a merchant standing there with many well-laden animals, and Baba Junayd was being rough with the merchant.

'Baba, what's wrong?' asked Nu'man.

'This man is looking for a place to stay,' he said, 'and I have no room. No matter how many times I tell him, it doesn't do any good.'

Umar stood up. Nu'man saw him and bowed. [Nu'man] was ashamed and said, 'There is no reason to be rude to people. Sigh, I will give you a room.'

The artist uses the occasion of an exchange of caustic banter to present two aspects of the caravanserai. On a low platform outside his establishment sits Baba Junayd, one shoe kicked off and leg drawn up, surveying with a jaundiced eye all that drifts by. He extends one hand, fingers splayed, near the face of a bearded man framed by a blackened door. The identity of this figure whose entreaties are being rebuffed so adamantly is uncertain. It may be Umar, the ostensible protagonist of the story, because he stands before a string of pack animals, a detail mentioned specifically in the text. It is, however, more probably Khwaaja Nu'man, whose bowed with Baba Junayd is recounted in the penultimate line of text, the most common occasion for the passage chosen for illustration. Indeed, the portly figure looks more the prosperous merchant than Umar ever could, even in his best disguise. In all likelihood Umar is actually the solicitous figure to the right, whose mustachioed face, lean body, and shield are more in keeping with the ogre's persona.

But these figures tell only part of the story. Camels and horses heavily laden with trunks, carpets, and bundles wait patiently opposite Baba Junayd, providing a sense of the caravanserai as a way station for all and sundry as well as some relief from its statically composed and starkly detailed façade. From a chamber above the gate, where not coincidentally Alamanshah and his friends reside, two figures look down on the altercation. At this level, demarcated by a densely decorated architectural band and a brightly colored balustrade, the interior world of the caravanserai comes into view. People go about their business—feeding animals, preparing food, bargaining for goods—without pretense or drama, an effect created largely by the even, unperiodic distribution of figures and the lack of a potent architectural frame.

This illustration has suffered much surface abrasion, primarily in the tilework of the courtyard and in the now thinly painted clothing, and the faces of the scene's most prominent figures have been repainted in a desiccated style. Nonetheless, it is clear that even in its original condition the work was much more bland in composition and execution than the earlier caravanserai scene (cat. 32). This is particularly surprising that the composition is repeated almost exactly in the very next illustration, in which Shahrashub comes to interrogate Baba Junayd about the Iranian troublemakers rumored to be staying in the caravanserai, and gets a taste of Baba Junayd's gruff manners.1
HAMZA AND UMAR EXCHANGE INSULTS WITH GHAZANFAR AND CHALLENGE HIM TO BATTLE OUTSIDE THE FORTRESS OF ARMANUS

This painting begins a sequence of eight consecutive illustrations that demonstrates the idiosyncratic nature of most narrative choices. Although the text of the preceding folio has not been located, it is clear that the scene depicted here is recounted in the second and third lines on the reverse of this painting. Ghazanfar, who presides over the fortress of Armanus, catches sight of Hamza and Umar as they reconnoiter the terrain around the bastion. Perched safely in a high tower and emboldened by wine, the insolent Ghazanfar begins to heap invective on the two strangers.

"Umar cursed him in return, but the Amir said, "If you are a man, come down and let us grapple to see who will win a match of courage." This displeased Ghazanfar, and he immediately went down from the tower, and as he approached the Sabsi-Quran he aimed a blow with his sword at the Amir’s head. As he struck down the Amir stretched out his champion’s hand and tightened his grip on the pommel of his sword, and as he attacked, he drew his sword and said, "Take this!" Ghazanfar raised his shield over his head. The Amir reached under the shield, grabbed his collar, and pulled him down to his knees. With his other hand in the Amir reached for the dagger in his belt, lifted Ghazanfar from the ground, lifted him up, and then hurled him to the ground so hard that his vile body lay flat. The Amir then tied his hands and neck. Still Ghazanfar refused to give up and cursed repeatedly."

The wily Umar cuts out Ghazanfar’s tongue and forces him to swap armor with Hamza. In this disguise, Hamza proceeds toward the fortress, loudly proclaiming that he, Ghazanfar, is returning with the defeated Hamza in tow. Once Ghazanfar’s compatriots open the gates, Hamza reveals his true identity with a great shout, whereupon his army rushes in to vanquish Ghazanfar’s allies, convert the city’s inhabitants, and erect a mosque. Hamza’s arch rival, the giant Zumurrud Shah, flies the scene to fight another day.

Mukhis, the designer of this painting, elects to depict the war of worlds rather than the ruse and its inevitable aftermath. Approaching from the right is Hamza, the very picture of valor as he sits astride a magnificently caparisoned horse, his spear raised proudly. Umar, ever Hamza’s advance man, scurries before him, brandishing a battle-axe in one hand and a sling in the other. These postures leave no doubt about the figures’ relative status. But Madhava, a portrait specialist asked to do these two figures, further reinforces Hamza’s pre-eminence by isolating his head and torso against the churning waters around the fortress; conversely, he works with Mukhis to relegate Umar to a subordinate role by placing him just within the confines of the strip of land before the moat. Both protagonists fix a cold stare on Ghazanfar, whose taunting demeanor is conveyed by his pointing finger and menacing sneer. All three figures have toiled-vividly, hardly the expression expected in a situation in which catcalls are being flung back and forth. But the Mughal penchant for visual description never really extended into the realm of nuanced facial expressions; instead, even the finest Mughal painters of this time were content to use the more easily visible and understandable language of gesture to establish the emotional complexion of their subjects. In this case, they could certainly rely on the narrator to stand in for the protagonists and regale the audience with a series of well-chosen insults.

The real excitement of this painting comes not from the three central figures, but from the fortress itself, which crackles with tension. The sense of instability begins at its base, which is staggered at an impossibly acute angle and seems to hover above the frothy moat and foliage. It continues with the stronghold’s ramparts, which, divided into abruptly dislocated sections and festooned with gaudily contrasting machicolations, are more like parts of a sliding puzzle than those of a defensive structure. And it culminates in the dizzying patchwork of brilliantly tiled pavilions and courtyards beyond the walls. The pavilion that frames Ghazanfar, for example, not only has a four-sided canopy rising incongruously from a six-sided base, it is also thrust forward so bizarrely by the kaleidoscopic patterns around it that Ghazanfar appears to levitate over the walls of his fortress. Mughal realism manifests itself sporadically; the drawbridge, for example, is rendered down to every detail of its hinges, chains, and hooks. For the most part, however, the fortress is the stuff of architectural fantasy. Resting atop the insignificant, masselike tiles of the central tower block is a large pavilion, its heavy eaves supported precariously by just three slender brackets. Mukhis further confounds the viewer’s understanding of pictorial space by aligning the eaves with niche-filled uprights of exactly the same color, thereby constructing a strong, visually closed form that has no conceivable counterpart in reality. Finally, the painter ensures that there is no relief from the shock-a-block design by filling in virtually all the remaining space with pairs of flags and crowds of onlookers. The result is a composition abuzz with giddy agitation, a fitting backdrop for the impending confrontation between Ghazanfar and Hamza.

Attributed to Mukhis and Madhava Khurd

Volume II: painting number 19, text number 20
India, Mughal dynasty, ca. 1570
Painting: 71.5 x 55.2 cm.
Folio 88.8 x 73.7 cm.
The Seattle Art Museum, Gift of Dr. and Mrs. Richard E. Fuller, 68.160
Published: Beal 1992: pl. c; Heeremans 1984, pl. 140; Seattle 1975, no. 36; Comstock 1925, p. 356; Philadelphia 1924, no. 81.

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39 ZUMURRUd SHAH REACHES THE FOOT OF A HUGE MOUNTAIN AND IS JOINED BY RA’IM BLOOD-DRINKER AND YAQUT SHINING-RUBY

The fast-paced and highly involved narrative described in the preceding text affords a raft of colorful and attractive illustrative choices: a young hero entombed alive, a romantic plot that leads to the seizure of a fort, a series of individual battles, and the confiscation of Zumurrud Shah’s treasury. This artist, Mahesa, bypasses all these to present instead the lamentable fate of Zumurrud Shah in the wake of this frenzied activity. Taking his cue from one short phrase in an episode described in the second and third lines of text on the reverse of this folio, he shows the giant resting in the shadow of a towering mountain, where he consoles a few key members of his distressed entourage and begins to plot his next course of action.

“When Zumurrud Shah the Lost came out alone from the battlefield and traveled until it was night, he was on the road that night. The next day too he was on the road. In brief, he traveled for eight days, and on the ninth day he came to the foot of a mountain that was so high it was level with the celestial sphere. He dismounted and spent that day beside a spring hunting meat. The next day Blood-Drinker and Shining Ruby arrived and joined Zumurrud Shah. On the third day the amirs all gathered, and nearly a hundred thousand men joined him…”

Although Zumurrud Shah and the mountain are featured very prominently, the actions of his band of followers are relatively ambiguous, so much so that even though the painting’s position in the manuscript was known, its subject was never identified properly. Recently, however, extensive conservation work has uncovered most of the original caption describing the scene, so that there can no longer be any doubt about the subject.

The giant dominates the painting by virtue of his central position, a bulging orange mass, and toothy grin. The guys of the canopy behind him frame four minarets, each expressing his discomfiture in a different way: one protrudes himself, another tears at his turban, a third shakes his head and science his sobs in a shawl, and a fourth buries his head in the long tresses of Zumurrud Shah’s beard. These male responses are complemented by the less ostentatious reactions of a gaggle of women huddled beneath the large canopy. its once pristine white surface and delicate pattern soiled and patched is a sign of the ignominy of defeat. Mahesa exploits the large canopy as an organizing compositional device, one simultaneously amplifying Zumurrud Shah’s massive face and crown and concealing the base of the mountain, thereby accentuating the latter’s bowing height. He subtly alters the mood of the scene with auxiliary features. Disregarding the surrounding passages of the text, which note the solitude of Zumurrud Shah’s first day beside the mountain and describe a resurgent, martial spirit thereafter, the artist nudges a stationary scene of solace into one of weary, ongoing retreat by filling the upper corners with villagers driving their livestock and a woman fleeing with her babe borne aloft in a basket.

Like many Ionianomino illustrations, this one was partially reprinted at some point. Zumurrud Shah has undergone the most significant repair. His forehead has been slathered with a new layer of paint, as have his heavy, jet-black beard, hands, and the thick cash about his waist. The figure paying homage to him has also received a new face. Most of this is not obvious from any distance over arm’s length, but it becomes clear under both magnification and ultra-violet light. Only three of the ancillary figures were retouched at all, but happily this was done with a careful hand, so that their faces are entirely consistent with original ones.