With curious redundancy, the text preceding this illustration devotes nearly half a page to a more elaborate retelling of Qasim’s arrival at the barrier. There, Qasim sees Malik Surkhab seated on a throne and boldly makes his presence known to him. A brawny bodyguard intervenes, but Qasim collars him and dashes his brains out. Another guard rushes forward, Qasim wards off his blow and slices him in half. Now that he has Surkhab’s attention, he exclaims, ‘What say you of that God who brought me to this barrier and of the victory I have achieved?’ A duly impressed Surkhab professes his belief in that God.

After fetting Qasim for days on end, Surkhab greets Amir Hamza himself. Hamza grants him a robe of honor, and Surkhab reciprocates with the key to the barrier. The remainder of the text relates how Umar Malikdhir and his mercenaries triumphantly pass through the long-contested garrison, instal themselves on the territory it guarded, and are joined by a host of illustrious kings and princes, including the world-conquering Amir.

‘The next day the champions and heroes of the army of Islam set forth with thirty thousand of their relatives. When the overseer of the court had crossed, the next day the sultan of the western throne and Mundhir Shah of the Yemen crossed with two hundred thousand men. Behind them came Prince Nuruddin and Malik Qasim’s men. After them the kings of the east, like Jamshid Golden-Quiver and Khwarsim Golden-Quiver crossed with two hundred thousand men. The next day Prince Badruzzaman’s men and the princes of Mazandaran like Shah Shams and Shah Badr crossed with eighty thousand men. The next day Khwaja Umar’s auxiliaries crossed with their treasury and camp. The next day the Amir’s ministers crossed with the ladies of the harems, and the next day Alexander’s drum and the instruments of the royal band all crossed. The world-conquering Amir crossed with his renowned sons and army and camped on the other side of the barrier.’

Despite the fact that the text describes Surkhab’s submission to the Amir in the most summary manner, the artist chooses this episode as the subject of his illustration. He certainly does so because it both epitomizes and personalizes the conquest of the Noshad Fort and reinforces Hamza’s status as vanquisher of infidels. A role set aside during the many episodes in which Badruzzaman and Qasim occupied the limelight. With such general considerations in mind, the painter pays little heed to the specific details of the submission. Forgoing the exchange of the robe of honor and the key to the garrison, he expresses the idea of welcoming supplication with one novel feature and one standard gesture. As Surkhab is ushered before the bearded Hamza, he stands in the middle of a long red cloth unfurled by one of his retainers. The action, of course, is the medieval equivalent of the red carpet treatment, and it is intended to grace Hamza’s entry into the Fort. Hamza magnanimously shares the cloth with his new subject, and permits him to touch his head to his foot; a servile gesture long a sign of respect in the Indian subcontinent.

Once more the key action transpires at the very center of the composition. Location, however, is not everything in this case, for nearly every other element in the painting contributes to the compositional focus on Surkhab and Hamza. Surkhab, for example, is dressed in a gleaming all-white jama, a color that contrasts sharply with the black of his turban and cape even as it adjoins Hamza’s equally brilliant leggings. Onlookers also do their part, with a few in the foreground glancing and gesticulating toward the Amir and his humbled subject. On the whole, even the landscape cooperates. Its primary ridges converging in a V-shaped configuration directly behind Surkhab’s adjutant.

Some details are less obliging and draw attention only to themselves. The most notable of these are the puffy outcrops that billow up on either side of the barrier, the conspicuously shaded clustered colonnettes of the portal, and the regularly spaced, fuzzy tufts in the foreground. Another aspect of the collaboration involved in this project is revealed in the treatment of the various faces. Two members of the garrison rendered in three-quarter view are shown with their further eye projecting slightly beyond the shape of the face. This discreet feature is a holdover from pre-Mughal traditions, and dies out almost completely by the end of the Hamzanama project; most of the other soldiers have wide-set almond-shaped eyes, a facial type associated with Banavari (see Cat.48). By contrast, the faces of Surkhab and Hamza are far more finely painted, and are almost certainly the work of Dasavanta, the master who designed the painting. Dasavanta favors large, dark facial features, particularly pupils, and is practically alone in his use of white as a real color.
Aided by Umar, who uses trickery to enter the enemy fortress of Salija, Hamzah's army defeats and converts to Islam all its inhabitants. Next, Hamzah prepares to challenge the might of the Indian giant Tahmasp Anqul. One champion, Marzban, engages the giant in single combat but is overwhelmed by his opponent's size and strength. He has to be rescued from certain death by Umar, who once more puts to use the sling that he carries with him wherever he goes. The stone he flings hits Tahmasp on the temple, allowing Marzban to escape and fight another day. Tahmasp rebounds to terrorize the allies until Hamzah himself takes the field.

Having inflicted serious wounds on Hamzah and devastation among his champions, Tahmasp Anqul begins a new round of battle with the Amil's army. One champion after another falls before him. As the carnage mounts, the inhabitants of Mecca pray for deliverance from the Indian scourge. A champion named Satur launches a two-hundred-pound club at the giant, but the demon thwarts the attack by catching hold of the mace. More battles follow, and the number of martyrs reaches four hundred. Finally, Qasam al-Abbas rides out from Mecca. As he takes the field, he offers prayers to the Prophet and then snatches Tahmasp's weapon. The alarmed giant tries to ward off the coming blow with his shield, but Qasam al-Abbas lands it with such force that it smashes Tahmasp's head and shatters every bone in his body. The believers let out a great shout, the armies withdraw, and Hamzah showers praise on Qasam al-Abbas.
45 UMAR SLINGS A STONE AT THE GIANT TAHMASP, AND SAVES ONE OF HAMZA'S HEROES FROM HIS CLUTCHES

With Hamza's permission, Umar sets out for Sali Fortress, where he hopes to free the kidnapped Kayhan b. Rustam. On the way, he meets an old woodcutter. Umar extracts some information from him, incapacitates him with some drugged fruit, and uses his identity to enter the fortress. That night, he creeps up on the sleeping guards, blinds a knock-out drug up their noses, and rescues Prince Kayhan—all in a day's work. Thereupon Hamza's forces convert the entire garrison, and prepare for the coming showdown with Tahmasp Anguilli. This event is forestalled, however, by the arrival of Ta'us Shah and his four hundred thousand men. Hamza dispatches some princes to intercept Ta'us Shah, but pointedly excludes Malik Qasim, known to have an impulsive nature, sending him instead to look for some chests of Hamza's armor that have accidentally fallen into the sea (see cat. 48).

The end of this story coincides with a missing folio. The text on the reverse of this illustration introduces a new series of skirmishes. The most colorful of these involves the miraculous arrival of Ibrahim, Hamza's love-child with the princess of the fairies, from the heavens on a throne borne by demons. Hamza happily greets his offspring and enlists him in his cause.

This illustration now stands without benefit of its accompanying text. Nevertheless, its subject is easily understood both from the pity caption and the straightforward action. Apparently Tahmasp is on the loose again, this time bearing down on a champion, Marzban by name, who has a little hope of contesting the giant with either strength or guile. So overmatched is this hero, in fact, that Tahmasp has dispensed with his armor, weapons, and mount. Barefoot, he rushes off hastily after Marzban, catching hold of his steed's tail with one hand and wrenching the champion's shoulder with the other. Two horsemen—one with his own shoulder turned inside out—join in the chase, but do nothing to abet either hunter or prey. Many more soldiers gape from the safety of a nearby ridge. Into this fray springs Umar, like David before Goliath, he wields his sling with unerring accuracy. His projectile smites Tahmasp on the temple, causing the brute's head to recoil and his hair to stand on end.

Even before one parses this painting, there is a sense of dramatic excess that points unmistakably to Dasavanta. Tahmasp is not centered and static; he lunges from the side of the painting and paws the air. He is huge, of course, but this figure is far more dominant than his counterpart in the following illustration (cat. 46) because he is modeled so marvelously and colored so extravagantly. Despite his wound, Tahmasp's face is stony and impassive, a metaphor Dasavanta encouragés by placing a rock of equivalent size and shape almost directly before the giant's head. Yet his thick hair flies wildly, and his yamo has burst open. Umar, his netted opponent, stands resolutely in the opposite corner, wearing the same brilliant and streaked colors, albeit on a much reduced scale.

Dasavanta gives all three central characters his trademark features: large black pupils, a prominent nose, and a rosebud mouth. He displays an acute awareness of texture in objects ranging from the fluffy yarbad pompons on Marzban's horse to the prickly stumps beside Umar. And he seems to revel in high color contrast, most obviously between the acidic yellow of Tahmasp's pants and the blackish-green ground, but also within individual forms, notably the flame-like foliage in the left foreground. The intensity of the painting abates only slightly in the passages contributed by Shravana, who provides the peripheral figures and ornate tents.
QASAM AL-ABBAS ARRIVES FROM MECCA AND CRUSHES TAHMASP WITH A MACE

In a new round of battle, Tahmasp decimates Hamza’s champions. When the earth is stained with the blood of four hundred martyrs, the hero Qasam al-Abbas rides out. He snatches Tahmasp’s weapon and strikes him dead.

This illustration shows a youthful Qasam al-Abbas pitted against the titanic Tahmasp. Tahmasp is no stranger to the pictorial stage; he is, in fact, featured in no less than four of nine consecutive illustrations, a run finally brought to an end by his demise in this scene. In his three earlier appearances—nearly all resulting in victory—Tahmasp thunders in from the right, twice riding across a composition with onlookers taking cover behind a similarly sloping horizon. Once Tahmasp simply seizes his opponent by the arm, but on the other two occasions he brandishes an enormous cleaverlike broadsword. Here, he has lost the advantage of direction, and pitches forward from the left. His vanquisher, Qasam al-Abbas, advances on a camel, an unusual mount which, together with the white cloth looped about his face, is meant to indicate his Arab origins. For once Tahmasp’s opponent is able to counter his fearsome sword with a donsday weapon of his own. With the colossal mace described in the text, Qasam al-Abbas smashes Tahmasp—not on the head, as is specified, but on the leg. This change was probably occasioned not because the artist was unaware of the textual account, which, after all, is very short and direct, but because he preferred to embed the huge mace within the form of Tahmasp’s body and horse and thereby leave the giant’s face intact. To set off the mace from Tahmasp’s armor and his mount’s caparison and to accentuate their physical collision, the artist runs one big golden stripe across its silver surface, a directional contrast strengthened accidentally by the blackened appearance that the silver has assumed over time.

This painting can be attributed to Mahesa. The most obvious connection is Tahmasp’s face. This youthful facial type is large and smooth in shape, its flattened pursed mouth and rounded eyes combining to form a somewhat vacant expression. It appears in a number of works ascribed to Mahesa, and recurs in the figure of Tahmasp in at least one other illustration in this series, thus suggesting that Mahesa designed and painted much of these other works as well. Other elements are equally distinctive. Mahesa habitually uses an oversize polka-dot pattern for his studded tunics, as he does here on Tahmasp and previously on the figure of Malik ibn as-Sayyid; even the markings of the two figures’ helmets are identical. He renders many forms as large, flattened shapes, a tendency exemplified most clearly here in the discrete shapes of the two tunics and the caparison of Tahmasp’s horse. Mahesa’s landscape typically consists of puffy rock forms organized into large, broadly conceived areas. The onlookers, with their boxy faces and thin features, represent some of his most typical figure types.

Attributed to Mahesa

Volume II, painting number 56, text number 37
India, Mughal dynasty, c. 1550–70
Painting: 68 x 52 cm
folio: 18.3 x 64.8 cm
Caption: Qasam Al-Abbas arrives on the battlefield and defeats Tahmasp with a mace blow.
Philadelphia Museum of Art, Gift (by exchange) of the Mr. and Mrs. John R. Hayman, 1993-44-1
Published: Omanatana, 17, no. 2 (February 1986), p. 53;
Kramer, 1986, no. 8; Dim and 1986, p. 6, fig. 1.
1. MAK, Vienna, n. i. 8770/49
2. Amsori, 1973, no. 1970/8 and this work. Five of these illustrations have not been located.
In the other painting (8770/8), Tahmasp’s face has been entirely repainted.