47 SANAWBAR BANU WELCOMES PRINCE QASIM AND THE CHAMPIONS OF IRAN AND TURAN

The story lurches ahead now, as if often does, but Hamzah continues to be done in by conniving spies and rescued just as often by his own resourcefulness. In his latest escape, Hamzah is sprung from Noshad Fort by his two ayes, Yarali and Bakhai Farangi, and together they exact bloody and material revenge on the victor who sanctioned Hamzah's imprisonment. Now comes one of the quiet interludes when Hamzah or one of his heroes periodically enjoys the pleasure of fairer company.

Such is the case in this illustration, as Hamzah's men are welcomed by Tahmam's sister, a beauty named Sanawbar Banu. The circumstances of this rendezvous are unclear. Two text pages earlier, Umar and Hamzah's men meet Sanawbar Banu in the aftermath of their looting of Noshad.

"She told him all about her love for the Amir, saying, 'Umar, that night, when I was struck by the arrow of love for the Sahib-Quan, I came to the city and converted nearly four hundred people to Islam. Then, when I heard that the ayes of Iran had come to this city, it occurred to me that they had come to rescue the prisoners. Of course there would be guards at the prison gate. I came and found you like this.'"

She offered Umar a place to stay."

Umar accepts her offer, and leads his ayes to the safety of her house. With this the story breaks off, and after a gap of one folio, resumes on the reverse of this painting, which has lost its caption. On this page of text Sanawbar Banu is mentioned twice: first, when she is described as being eager to capture the ayes who do Hamzah's bidding, again in lines 11-12, when she receives the champions at her house and gives them armor, and a third time when Hamzah sends her a note. That Sanawbar Banu greets Hamzah's champions more than midway through the text following the painting suggests that this is not the passage being illustrated. It is more likely that this action is merely congruent with the now-missing one, perhaps describing a return visit to her house. In any case, the somewhat contrary actions described above imply a certain opacity to her character, so that both Hamzah and his foes solicit her assistance.

The artist adds many flourishes to a standard scene of greeting. One hero, probably Malik Qasim, leads his men into the courtyard. The troupe rush through an ornate, oblong and set, three-dimensional gateway, a detail that simultaneously allows the heavily armed followers to mass and present their faces to the audience. One foot servant spreads a red cloth before the plumed figure, a gesture seen earlier in less domestic circumstances (cat. 43) and one about to be repeated here. The central group is completed by Sanawbar Banu herself, who extends both hands in welcome. An inexplicably huge fire bazes from a single candlestick hovering beside the low platform, and fans and fruit-laden bowls fill the niches of the pavilion wall.

But the feature that most sets this painting apart from other Huzurana illustrations is the assortment of females, all of whom are clearly derived in both face and body from indigenous Indian types (see cat. 1). Early Mughal paintings exhibit considerable variation in their adaptations of this square-headed, voluptuous type, particularly in the Tufi namas, where one painting firmly attributed to Shrivara provides an exact match to the woman holding a candle (see fig. 14). With this initial clue to the artist's identity, one can discern Shrivara's handwork throughout this painting. For example, the oblique arangement of the architecture, unusual in Mughal painting of this period, occurs in one of Shrivara's works in the British Library (cat. 2). This painting also features a narrow-eyed, bearded figure with a strong resemblance to the soldier holding the pinwheel shield, and several trowelwork patterns seen here. The male figures here have notably broad bodies dressed in flat jambas overlaid with large gold medallions; their faces, similarly wide and unmodeled, have thick eyes and wide mustaches. The recurrence of these same elements in a painting four folios (and two extant paintings) later—in the MAK-Austrian Museum of Applied Arts/Contemporary Art, Vienna, a. 1757—supports another attribution to Shrivara, and bolsters the idea that artists often worked on nearly consecutive series of paintings in the Huzurana.

Shrivara seems to have completed nearly all of this painting. He left to his collaborator, Dasavanta, the faces of the two primary characters, the lead champion and Sanawbar Banu. The former is extremely close to Dasavanta's figure of Umar in cat. 36, and the latter has a more elegant profile, a larger solid black pupil, and a more painterly surface than the other women in this scene. There is, in fact, physical evidence that Sanawbar Banu's face was inserted after the painting was virtually complete, for around the woman's brow and nose is a kind of painted corona that disrupts ever so slightly the carpet pattern behind the figure. This type of portrait-like insertion, commonplace in later Akbari painting, is not to be mistaken for repainting, which occurs here only on the right half of the central hero's face and on the entire face of the maidservant holding a double torch.
Having received armor from Sanawar Banu, the champions split up, some staying in Nashad and others setting out to join up with Hamza. The latter contingent, headed by Malik Qasim, reaches the edge of the sea. A casket containing Hamza’s armor had accidentally fallen into the water at that site, and Qasim, whose epithet is the quick-tempered blooded heeder, is now sent by Hamza to retrieve it.

“When the courageous Prince Malik Qasim reached the edge of the sea, he summoned all the sailors in the vicinity, gathered them together, and said, ‘Go into the sea and bring out the chest of armor.’ They entered the sea at Prince Malik Qasim’s command and swam all through the water, but they could not locate the chest. Finally, they emerged and said, ‘There is a demon called Affagh hereabouts. If you summon him, he will come and get your chest out.’

Malik Qasim went, invited the demon, and brought him back. The demon went into the sea and brought out the chest. Putting the chest on the demon’s head, Malik Qasim took it back to the Amir’s camp.”

This adventure, told in four lines at the end of the preceding text page, is summarized in one line at the beginning of the text on the reverse of this painting. This narrative pattern—once seen often in the manuscript—allows the narrator to remind the audience of where things stood at the conclusion of the previous session of recitation.

“When the king of the west, Malik Qasim the Quick-Tempered, placed the box of the Amir’s weapons on the demon’s head and brought it to the Sahib-Qiran, it was afterward when he reached the Amir, and all the warriors cheered the prince.”

This Mughal artist knows a good story when he sees one. He seizes upon the captivating image of a demon bearing a chest of weapons on its head, and makes it the largest, most central, and most extravagantly colored element in his painting. Such an arresting motif easily epitomizes both the illustration and the story, but it is how the artist fleshes out the scene that ultimately conveys something larger still, the very essence of visual storytelling in the Hamza nama. See this image and retell the story. Half-naked sailors drag out the submerged chest, a boat made available for the search, warriors with their weapons—arrows, a sword, and even a musket—prepared to press on to Hamza’s camp, an ogre agitated at the sight of the demon, and a figure prostrate in supplication to his master—all these elements are, or can be, part of the story. Physically conjoined but temporally incoherent, they embody a manner of visual storytelling known as the synoptic mode of narration. The sailors, for example, are seen here so that they can conduct the search; it makes no sense for them to remain bound after they have failed and the task has been assigned to the demon. Similarly, the demon does not arise from the sea with the chest on his head. Qasim puts it there, presumably after the demon had returned to dry land. Even the identity of the central figure in orange is in doubt. If he is Qasim, who is the figure prostrated before him? If he is the Amir, as the caption would have us believe, why is he shown young and beardless for the first time in the manuscript? These questions beg a logical and precise sequencing absent from this painting and from the Hamza legend generally. What matters more is the complementary pairing of prince and demon, dignified and unrestrained behavior, civilizes and uncouth men. What the audience is meant to take from this memorable and entertaining painting is the message of heroic and righteous action and its foil, no matter the order in which the imagery is considered or the story played out.

The artist responsible for much of the detailing of this compelling painting is Banavari, an artist known from his contributions to several contemporary manuscripts. As seen here in the three captive sailors and their fur-clad guard, Banavari’s faces have one exceedingly unusual feature: their almond-shaped eyes have heavily painted whites outlined completely in black, and, like goggles, project slightly beyond both the plane and contour of faces seen in three-quarter view. By contrast, the central figure has narrower and darker eyes, and much more ambitiously modeled clothing. In fact, in face, hands, and dress, he resembles the orange-clad figure on the mountaintop in cat. 81, one of several figures in that painting attributed to Kesava Dasa. This, in turn, suggests the prostrate figure is also the work of Kesava Dasa, who probably designed the painting as well. The abrupt division between the dark green ground and the purple area beyond, and the smooth, painterly tree trunk are also indications of Kesava Dasa’s handiwork.

Attributed to Kesava Dasa and Banavari

Volume 11, painting number 40, text number 41
India, Mughal dynasty, circa 1570
Painting: 62.5 x 32.5 cm.
Fol. 127 V, x 64.3 cm
Caption: ‘Arghan Dev brings the chest of armor to the Amir’
Brooklyn Museum of Art, Museum Collection Fund, 1927.19.11, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Lehman, 1927.19.12, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Lehman, 1927.19.13, Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Lehman, 1927.19.14
1. Another minor discrepancy is the name of the demon, which is specified as Affagh in the text, but given as Amghan in the caption.
2. See, for example, his associated work in the Tuhfama (730, fig. 15), and in the Jatup Rakhma (AD 1590, 1591, 1593, and 1594), these last four paintings are published in Hindley 1984, pl. 26, 27, 104, and 105.
THE BATTLE OF SHISAN PASS
CAT.49-51

Hamza is told that the winter snows will block his travel through Shisan Pass, a place near Noshad, where a vast dam was built long ago by demons working at the command of King Solomon. The dam holds back the waters of a mountain valley and is plugged at the bottom by a huge brass ball on a chain. To lift the heavy plug and release the water into the desert below, it takes hundreds of men to wind the chain on a wheel at the top of the dam. Kayhur Dev, a descendant of the demon builder, now controls the dam.

When they reach the pass in the spring, Hamza and his men are confronted by the army assembled by Zaminruud Shah. Kayhur Dev rides out to attack them mounted on a rhinoceros and unseats the first hero to challenge him. Now Qasim rides forth, sword in hand. Kayhur strikes Qasim with his sword; Qasim retaliates with his own, missing Kayhur but severing the head of his rhinoceros. Kayhur grabs Qasim's horse, causing it to rear up violently and Qasim to leap to safety. Kayhur then tears Qasim's horse to pieces and begins to devour it. Without their steeds, both warriors retire for the night.

The next day a foe named Tayhur kills and wounds many of Hamza's heroes. The following day, Hamza girds himself for battle and joins his men in their assault. Tayhur attacks. Quickly, and with no elaboration whatsoever, Hamza subdues him and has him bound. Hamza offers him a chance to convert, and Tayhur accepts. The next day, Tayhur asks and receives permission to enlist his brother, too; once alone, he climbs up to the Shisan Pass, apparently renounces his conversion, and seizes control of the pass. Hamza's princes lead a charge to regain the pass, but are beaten back by a barrage of stones, and retire for the evening. Now Tayhur resorts to insidious environmental warfare. With his demonic strength, he cranks the wheel to dislodge the brass ball from its place at the base of the dam. A great torrent sweeps downhill and completely inundates Hamza's camp, drowning many there, including one noted champion named Hardam Devana.

Kayhur breaks into Hamza's camp and beheads two champions as they sleep. When the murders are discovered in the morning, Hamza's army tries to track the killer but without success. That night, Kayhur decapitates Prince Umar Gorzarz. Umar continues the search with redoubled energy, and his scouting takes him to the Shisan dam, where he discovers a large band of infidel soldiers. Umar returns to camp and gets reinforcements, among them Qasim, Badruzzaman, Alamshah, Landhaur, and Tul Mast. Finally, a battle breaks out, and Alamshah, seeing Tayhur atop the dam, splits him asunder and cuts the chain holding up the huge ball.

Detail of cat.49

156 CATALOGUE
IN THE BATTLE FOR SHISAN PASS, PRINCE QASIM DUELS WITH THE GIANT KAYHUR, AND BEHEADS HIS RHINOCEROS

Here begins the story of a formidable place, the Shisan Pass, and the battle for control of the dam there, an engineering marvel that brings life or death. Hamza learns that in ancient times it was an inhospitable desert, but that it was joined by a mountainous valley watered by a large river. King Solomon, recognizing the possibilities of this terrain, ordered the host of demons at his command to build a dam in the valley so that water could be delivered to the desert below. One demon, Shisan Dev by name, took on this colossal task, and with the help of thousands of demons, completed it in five years. The dam is said to operate in this manner. At the bottom of the dam, half a league in breadth and four hundred cubits in height, is a hole dug by another demon, Aad Man-Eater. This hole is plugged by a huge brass ball fastened to a chain, and that chain is wound about a wheel at the top of the dam. So huge is that wheel and so heavy that ball that four hundred men are required to turn the crank to lift the plug. When they do, life-giving water pours from the reservoir onto the valley below. One of Shisan Dev’s descendants, Kayhur Dev, maintains control of the dam to this day.

In the spring, Hamza and his men set out for this fabled and strategic place. When they arrive at the dam, they see a vast army assembled there in the presence of Zumurrud Shah. The mighty Kayhur charges out on a war rhinoceros and unhorses the first champion sent to oppose him.

"Qasim came out. Both reached for their swords. Qasim took a blow from Kayhur and aimed a blow with his sword at him. Kayhur ducked, and the sword landed on the rhinoceros’s neck, severing its head. Kayhur grabbed the leg of Qasim’s horse, and anyone other than Qasim would have fallen from the horse. When Qasim saw this, he leapt from his horse. Kayhur tore the horse apart, put the horse’s leg in his mouth, and started to chew it. The men on both sides stood still. When night fell, they withdrew."

Now a war rhinoceros is no ordinary sight, even in the Homamane, and Mahesa takes full advantage of the beast’s uniquely menacing form and color. A large Kayhur rumbles in from the right, his shield sliced in two, presumably by the blow that beheads the rhinoceros. As the left half of the shield falls to the ground, Mahesa keeps it exactly aligned with its mate so that the pair of brilliant white shapes bracket the dark and bloody neck of the enraged rhinoceros, the highpoint of the scene. Once again, the artist deviates from the text as he substitutes weapons at will, giving the brutish Kayhur a mace. Unlike his former battle scene (cat. 4.6), this is dominated by a truly gargantuan figure, here Mahesa surrounds the featured combat with supporting warriors, some skimming in the foreground, and others sounding drums, trumpets, and cymbals in the rear. He uses a banan tree to separate the opposing forces in the background, but positions it so that its trunk and sinewy roots also reinforce the compositional axis that passes through the rhinoceros’s neck.

This painting fleshes out Mahesa’s personal style: his faces continue to be his most easily recognizable feature, the youthful type represented by Qasim complemented here by a grizzled Kayhur with a fuzzy handlebar mustache. His landscape repeats the pastel colors and rhythmically curved ridges of an earlier composition (cat. 39), the latter on a scale in keeping with the medium-sized combatants. There is some continuity in motifs, such as the parasol-like yaktai standards, seen also in cat. 4.6. Even the palette becomes familiar over time, as Mahesa consistently uses patches of red and yellow as visual accents.