Hamza receives the good news that his forces have been victorious in one city after another. The joy of this moment is clouded, however, by the uncertain fate of some of his champions who are still being held prisoner by the sorcerers. Hamza orders Umar to find out what he can about them so that they can be freed. Umar dutifully sets out for Antali with a band of eighty. He meets a lonely traveler heading that way and engages him in conversation. The traveler identifies himself as Mazmahil the surgeon, and tells Umar that he has been away from his home in Antali for three years.

"Umar, put your hand into his breast and give Khwaja Mazmahil the surgeon a handkerchief full of raisins. I had gone to the village to buy fruit," he said. 'I left my men there to bring [what I bought]. I myself set out for home.'

Mazmahil took the raisins, ate them, and fell unconscious. Umar hid him in a place that was not generally trafficked and where the army and servants would be safe. He took on his form, and Yakub, one of the eighty, disguised himself as a rei-holder. Umar set out. The rest of the eighty went to the villages, bought loads of fruit, hired pack animals, loaded them up, and entered the city of Antali."

Playing upon the appeal of another ruse by Umar, that master of disguise, Shrivana features Umar as the ersatz doctor, and shows him trotting toward the gates of the city of Antali preceded by a single bulky eighty. There is no sign of the waylaid Mazmahil. Instead, Shrivana fills the remainder of the foreground with a screen of rocks whose contours rise and fall to frame Umar's head and mount and to open a sightline to the gate. Shrivana gives these rocks the same internal rectangular facets as his outcrops in cat. 51, but he forgoes the heavy shading around them so that the entire area reads as thin and light, and moves ready into the pinkish ramparts of the city. By contrast, he impounds physical access to the portal with a large tree, one he makes dense enough to function as a visual obstacle by overlaying a blackened patch with dark green leaves rimmed in white, a type of tree he uses to similar effect in cat. 47 and 65.

There are many indications that Shrivana also designed and painted the architecture. He sets the fort's entrance at an acute angle, as he does in cat. 47, and accentuates the zigzagging rhythm of the ramparts and roofs with strong decorative bands, a trait also seen in cat. 67. More particularly, those bands are adorned not only with a delicate floral design, but also with one consisting of solid blue star alternating with a triple-starred cartouche, a feature occurring only in his work (cat. 67). And throughout the city, the patterns of the masonry courses and tilework exhibit all the crispness that one has come to expect in Shrivana's architecture.

His collaborator is Mahesa, an artist to whom the painting had previously been attributed. Mahesa was charged with peopling the city that will soon be ravaged by Umar's sneaky remedies. He responds to this assignment with a number of figures who tower over the city they inhabit. Many are occupied with unusual activities—a goatherd surveying his world from a rock, a wife flailing her sleeping husband, an old man carrying his grandchild, and a sorcerer and sorceress wearing cobras coiled about their necks. Despite this kind of inventiveness, Mahesa never really manages to breathe life into his figures. Their gestures are invariably stiff, their faces haughtily flat, and their expressions rarely more animated than a pair of knitted eyebrows. While this muted quality was becoming a conservative trait as early as 1570, it was certainly an acceptable manner for long after that, as Mahesa's prolific career attests.
When Umair, disguised as Mazmahil the Surgeon, reaches Antali, he fully expects that he will have to use his wits, for he has no idea where he is going; luck is with him. Some merchants catch sight of Khwaja Mazmahil, and quickly spread the news of his return, much to the delight of those who missed him during his long sojourn in Akhtam. His friends complain that they have suffered because the God-worshippers have broken all their spells, and now they dread the attack of Umair, who will surely try to free some of the champions imprisoned by Zumurrud Shah. "Khwaja Mazmahil" commiserates with them, and bemoans what sort of person this Umair is. He declines all food and drink, claiming that he is observing a fast. Then he is ushered to his house, where his servants, his family, and his "wife" greet him with open arms. To the woman's alarm, "Mazmahil" again turns down all refreshment, viewing stomach problems, but that night beds her anyway.

The next day Umair asks his ogress, whom he calls Kulbad Iskaj, to take to market the goods brought by the real Mazmahil's caravan, and prevails upon his family and friends for further cash advances. Kulbad plays along with this, and abscinds with a sizable sum.

"[Next, Khwaja Mazmahil] had it heralded that anyone who had a pain should come to be treated. People flocked to him because in Antali all were sorcerers, and toothaches, headaches, sores, eyes and feet were common. There was not a single skilled physician. When they heard that Mazmahil the surgeon had come, all gathered around him.

In short, everyone who had a pain told him about it. He gave them medicine out of his ogress's satchel, and two days later they all died. The Khwaja left Mazmahil's house in the middle of the night, woke [the real] Khwaja Mazmahil up, and gave him his horse. The man went home, but he was attacked by the people, who were shouting, 'He gave our relatives medicine and killed them.'"

"Friends," he yelled, "I have no knowledge of this. I have just come home after an absence of three years."

But they dragged him to the house of Malik Zardahusht and cried out against him. Zumurrud Shah heard their cries and said to Bahktai, "Summon Khwaja Mazmahil." When he came in, he was asked about what was happening, and he explained. They realized that it was Umair. The merchants also cried out, 'He borrowed a lot of money from us.' It did no good. The news spread throughout Antali."

This painting obviously builds upon the previous illustration. The walls of Antali again trace a zigzag path across the composition, this time commencing at a much lower point so as to open up more space in the courtyard. The towers flanking the gate are battered as before, and the two smaller towers are replicated in every detail. Even the golden monochrome decoration are repeated. Together with the precisely rendered patterns found in the carpets, screens, and tiles of the courtyard, these features are a sure sign that Shavana has reconstructed its architectural setting.

He is joined by a pair of artists. Dasavanta probably designed all the figures, some of whom are brought by anguish and agitation to a level of expression rarely seen in Mughal painting. A painted old woman being comforted by her daughter, a screaming younger woman cradling one child and restraining another, and Umair himself, checking that the frail turbanned man before him still has a pulse—"all these exceptionally inventive figures spring from Dasavanta's fervent imagination. In other cases, he draws figures from his own idiosyncratic repertoire: the round-faced onlooker—a European-inspired figure on his way to becoming a minor stock character, a dodging greybeard, a rudely clad laborer before the city gate, and a diminutive goatherd mind- ing his flock. Surprisingly, Dasavanta actually completes few of these figures, turning that task over to an infrequent collaborator. Mahesa. Mahesa rises to the occasion, and exaggerates facial features for expressive effect. Thus, it appears that Mahesa executed at least the face of every figure in the courtyard. But Umair, the two sandy-haired (and thus European-inspired) children, and the frontal onlooker. The others have the angular noses, crinkled brows, and sketchy ears that Mahesa habitually imposes on many of his figures. In this example, Mahesa renders folds in cloth with a harsh convention. The contrast between Mahesa and Dasavanta becomes evident in a comparison of the seated patient's turbanned with the screaming woman's two-tiered purple dress, or in one of the dirtily striped white cloths draped around the turbanned patient with the wether, more subtly streaked white shawl of Umair. That Dasavanta would bother to add strikingly painterly garments to the three figures seated behind Umair even though he left the faces to Mahesa underscores the very odd nature of collaboration in this manuscript.
ZAROHANG KHATNI BRINGS A RING TO MALTA THE PRISON KEEPER

Like many modern adventure stories, the Hamzanama makes for a gripping tale by repeatedly putting its heroes in harm's way. Sometimes the heroes prove their innate superiority by overcoming their formidable adversaries by sheer strength or daring-do, but many other times they are rescued from imprisonment and apparently certain death when their dull-witted captors are tricked or manipulated by a resourceful aygar.

This painting has lost its accompanying text, and its caption is now obscured by a modern border. An old photograph in the possession of the Brooklyn Museum of Art, however, documents both the caption and the painting number. The caption identifies the scene as Zardhang Khatri and his aygar as seen in Cat. 8 and Cat. 84, giving a ring to Malta the prison keeper, presumably as a kind of distraction or bribe to help secure the release of the two prisoners depicted in the upper left. The painting number (86) enables us to refine this identification. The text following a painting numbered 84 (Cat. 76) concludes with a passage indicating that all Hamza's champions are being locked up in Zardhang's black pit from which no escape is possible. Thus, allowing for the story to develop a bit in the intervening (and now missing) folio, we can reasonably conclude that this painting belongs to volume 11 and illustrates the rescue of Hamza's champions.

The focus of this lively painting is the corpulent Malta, complacently awaiting with open palm in the tribute to which he has grown accustomed. Zardhang understands the meaning of this common gesture of desire and greed, and prepares to press a small golden ring into the prison keeper's outstretched hand. The beneficiaries of this transaction are two prisoners who are having their shackles and bindings undone by two guards. Other guards rush about in obvious agitation, a state contrasted with the placid demeanor of the courtiers' huddled together below Malta. Lounging outside the compound's gateway is one last guard, his sword and shield hanging from the doorframe, a sure sign of his infrequent use.

The overall design of the painting can be attributed to Shrawana, whose penchant for dense and finely rendered architectural patterns is seen throughout the composition. This includes even the outer towers, an area where architectural details are not normally developed to such a degree. As might be expected, some specific forms and patterns are repeated from earlier works by this artist; among these are the golden merlions to the right of the prisoners, the red dado tilework depicted in Cat. 76, and the flattened cushion domes featured in Cat. 68. Shrawana also enlivens the area outside the walls with a pair of vigorous trees.

Nearly all the figures were supplied by Mithra. His oval-headed, large-eyed figures are familiar to many who work not much earlier in this volume (Cat. 54 and 68); indeed, one guard holding a sword and shield in the upper center is identical to a courtier in the lower right of Cat. 88. A few figures, notably the guard behind Zardhang wearing an apprehensive expression on his stubbled face, go well beyond type. Still other faces display the flat surface, dainty features, and vacuous expressions that are the hallmark of later re-painting.

By far the most compelling figure is Malta. While the primary figure of a scene often fell to the designer of the painting, in this case the illustrious prison keeper was assigned to Madhava Khud. This portrait specialist makes Malta ample in every respect, from his thickset neck to his generously overhanging belly and lumpish feet. Rather than emphasizing mass by strengthening the contours of the body, as he usually does, Madhava accentuates Malta's rotund form by giving the rolling expanses of dark skin on the torso and arms with tautly stretched gauzy white cloth, and then bunching that same material elsewhere so that it becomes thick and opaque. Shrawana does, in fact, paint a similarly bulging dark-skinned figure in white in the Akbarnama manuscript in the Victoria and Albert Museum, but one looks at the more dryly drawn clothing and less sensitively rendered face in that later painting suggests that he is merely redepolying a figure his colleague had invented in this painting.