81 THE WITCH ANQARUT TIES MALIK IRAJ TO A TREE, TRANSFORMS HERSELF INTO A YOUNG MAIDEN, AND TRIES TO SEDUCE HIM

Beauty, which so often opens marvellous possibilities to those graced by it, sometimes has unforeseen negative consequences as well. Thus it is with Malik Iraj, a young king of legendary beauty who has the misfortune of being snatched up by a witch named Anqarut. Iraj and deposited on an island. When she beholds this handsome creature up close, Anqarut is overcome with lust, and devises a plot to satisfy her desires. Using sorcery, she binds the fair youth to a tree, and then disappears. When she returns, it is in the guise of a beautiful fourteen-year-old maiden. She begins to sweet-talk him, floating ever more dazzling blandishments in his direction. Iraj asks one simple question: 'What is your name?' Anqarut says it, and Iraj realizes that she is truly being bewitched and turns firmly away. Such spine-tingling enrages the eager suitor, and she hurls curses at him, finally hissing that Iraj may be more receptive once he has languished in captivity for a while.

The hours go by slowly. At nightfall, Anqarut comes to make another pass at Iraj. Now it is Iraj whose leg is up. He vows to rid himself of this witch once and for all, and with a spell consisting of one unmentionable word, he does.

'When it was night she lit many candles and lamps and bedecked herself in extraordinary clothes and went to Iraj. She began to wail and said, 'Defiant one, look into my face and gaze upon me with kindness. I am thirsty, you are the water of life. What would it cost you to sprinkle one drop on me?'

Iraj cursed. He became angry and said, 'O sun-worshipper, I will do something to you that will be spoken of ever afterward.' He spoke a name. Dust arose. When Iraj opened his eyes he found himself floating on a raft in the middle of an endless sea. He was dumbfounded.'

Basavana envisions the first of these tortured exchanges occurring at treethrusts. Iraj is perched high in a large alond tree, his hands and neck lashed to its spreading branches. Anqarut takes up a position in a smaller tree nearby, and makes her appurtenances from a luxuriously all-encompassing strata of her own fabrication. Her heavy scarlet and gold golden ornaments are the first of her many by this time she talks with her tongue hanging out! Iraj is rather bland by comparison.

Still so young that he lacks facial hair, and dressed in rather drab clothing and a low-slung, undetailed turban, he is remarkable only for his exceptionally bulky physique. Nonetheless, his bright spot in the thick forest, and Anqarut cannot keep her eyes off him.

Basavna investigates this isolated place with so many expressive forms that it effectively functions as a character in the scene. The two trees, for example, are set up as a complementary pair: a lightly colored, twisted trunk for her, and a rich brown, straight one for him. The silvery green foliage, too, is alternately compact and expansive, spare and dense. The rocks are irregular, mottled, and worn rather than the strong, smooth shapes preferred by Kesava Dasa. Even such an inconsequential passage as the decaying ground cover in the lower right becomes an opportunity to experiment with the effects of paint, and Basavna contrasts random daubs of the brush with the brighter and more controlled flowers nearby. In this respect, this work by Basavna surpasses even his other efforts in this vein (cat. 66 and 80).
ASAD KARB Launches a Night Attack on the Camp of Malik Iraj

Combat sometimes occasions a special kind of frenzy; when men can no longer remember why or against whom they must fight, but are compelled by some unspeakable primal rage to lash out blindly against everyone and everything around them. Such morally ambivalent violence is relatively rare in the Hamzanama, in which rather clear distinctions between the righteous and the depraved are the norm.

The text that describes the circumstances of his scene of carnage is now missing, but both the caption and the text that follows mention a night raid carried out by Fahlavan in Asad against Malik Iraj’s camp. Asad leads the attack against Iraj, a sun-worshipper, albeit one with persistent sympathy for Hamza’s cause. But the darkness that ostensibly provides cover for Asad’s men also causes them to lose sight of reason, and the raid soon degenerates into a bloodbath:

‘...when the belligerent infidels opened their eyes and recognized each other, they saw that strangers in their midst were as rare as God’s love was among them. They had killed so many of their own that it was beyond reckoning.’

Asad himself leaves the scene and does not return to his fortress that night, and thus is spared Iraj’s wrath the next morning.

For a scene purportedly depicting wanton violence, this illustration has a curiously placid quality. Soldiers—including two only semi-dressed to indicate that they have been roused from their beds—fight in close quarters amid clusters of tents, but their numbers are quite modest, and there is no sign whatsoever of rampant bloodletting. For the most part, the warfare seems routine, as soldiers inside and outside the fortress exchange volleys of arrows and musket fire. Indeed, some actions—a man winding his turban in the lower left or another grasping the reins of a donkey in the center of the painting—are remarkably mundane. The setting contributes to the paradoxical sense of order; counteracting hints of rough-and-tumble combat with stabilizing tents and fortress walls. And occupying the center of the composition is the mounted Asad, who, despite his raised sword and the approach of an enemy soldier, is the very picture of aloof composure.

The handsome Asad represents a youthful, princely type found throughout the Hamzanama manuscript, his closest counterparts are the orange-clad figure of Qasim/Hamza in cat.48 and the mounted Farrukh-Nizhad in another illustration attributed here to Basavana. Like the aforementioned Farrukh-Nizhad, this figure of Asad is dressed in a sensitively modeled orange jama, has a long sword suspended from his belt by a golden chain, and tapers the reins of his horse at chest height. The two faces are exceedingly similar, the only difference being that Asad’s features appear more delicate, an impression conveyed by his tightly rendered eyes and wispy hair, and possibly accentuated by the considerable surface abrasion in the area. A better-preserved example of this same figure type, the spear-holder dressed in green at lower left, corroborates Basavana’s involvement in this painting. The artist probably supplied the following rocks and the tree at the right, the latter graced by two superb herons.

The familiar designs of the tents and trappings of Iraj’s camp are strong indications that they are the work of Shrivana, an artist who collaborated with Basavana on two other camp scenes. Most of the figures, however, can be attributed to a third artist, Tara, whose style at this time is documented in an ascribed painting in the Tuhfana, and who later collaborated with Basavana on two paintings in the Akbarnama manuscript in the Victoria and Albert Museum (fig.28). Tara relies figures with ample and often unruly mustaches and beards, he also uses large, glaring eyes and bare teeth to create an impressive range of explicit and energetic expressions.
HAMZA'S HEROES FIGHT IN SUPPORT OF QASIM AND BADI'UZZAMAN

For reasons unknown, a brawl has broken out, suddenly pitting Radī'uzzaman, Hamza's son, against Malik Qasim, the king of the west. Qasim is normally a loyal ally, and elsewhere (cat. 42) risks everything to rescue—or perhaps to outdo—Badī'uzzaman. But Qasim can never hold his fury under completely in check, and regularly succumbs to hot-headed outbursts, a habit that earns him the epithet, "the quick-tempered bloodshedder." The text that follows refers to this episode only in the most tangential way. As Qasim emerges from this place of unexpected strife, he gazes upon a magnificent fortress opposite it is a tree with a wondrous throne at its base. Sitting on the throne and basking in its splendor, he reflects ruefully upon the day's events, the stinging words of Hamza and Badī'uzzaman resounding in his ears, and mutters morosely, 'You see that in the end this Arab took the part of his own son.'

In the painting, the two rivals grapple with each other in a tiled courtyard swarming with feisty participants and alarmed onlookers. The composition is organized by standard means: an elevated throne rests at the center of a hexagonal platform covered by an elaborate canopy. Six poles mark the perimeter of the platform on two sides. This arrangement has the virtue of neatly framing Badī'uzzaman and Qasim, but also causes the designer to skew the hexagonal platform quite radically. This distortion is tempered on the right by another throneback and several encroaching figures, and ultimately weighs little in a composition of such pervasive architectural symmetry and figural balance.

Unlike cat. 82, this illustration really does convey a sense of fury. Badī'uzzaman and Qasim lunge at each other, each wielding a dagger with deadly intent. To their left, two equally oversized opponents carry on in the same manner, one trying to slash his assailant with a huge dagger while the other viciously grabs hold of his ears. In the lower right, three more pairs of foes attempt to tit for tat or impale each other. The centermost figure, identified as Lūmar Maḍīkārī by his shergīth, has relinquished his mace to tear at his enemy's hair; Lūmar, standing at the lower left, uncharacteristically stays out of the fray.

Many decorative features of the scene, including the canopies, throne, carpet, and tilework, can be attributed to Shavānā; he even repeats elements as distinctive as the steel-grey coloring of the platform, a color also used exceptionally in the flaps of tent cat. 82. Dāsvānt's hand is evident in the dramatically posed figures, particularly the two huge combatants on the left, Lūmar Maḍīkārī and Lūmar. Although the faces of the two princes in the center have been lost to abrasion, the color of their turbans and the modeling of the orange jama also point to Dāsvānt. The remaining figures have equally interesting expressions and hair, but most have smaller pupils, coarser eyebrows and facial hair, and more flatly rendered clothes than Dāsvānt's types. These figures thus appear again to be the work of Tāra. The row of cypress trees arrayed against a flat green ground is featured so often in Dāsvānt's paintings that this passage must be credited to him as well.