After all the Homamana episodes featuring admirable heroism, marvelous rescues, and clever ruses, the quotidian and outright cornish quality of this scene of unabashed drunkenness comes as something of a relief. Neither caption nor preceding text has survived to identify the scene, and the illustration appears only tangentially related to the following text, whose opening lines mention three figures, Kulbad, Zardhang, and Farid. The first two are later identified as djmyn, who are typically slender in build and armed with a battle-axe. One of these djmyn is probably the half-naked, discreetly armed figure standing just inside the entrance to this well-appointed building; the other is still negotiating admission with the door guardian. By this reckoning, Farid, the geomancer, is the stalwart, plumed figure gesturing toward a servant filling a vat with liquid sustenance. Farid's luck in gaining an entrance to the wealthy Bibi Dilgusha's house prompts Zardhang to propose the following scheme. While Farid diverts the dev guards, Zardhang will steal the jewel box from the woman's house. Zardhang's goal is the wealth itself, but Farid has something longer lasting in mind. When all the local geomancers are summoned to use their powers of divination to locate the missing jewel box, Farid alone is successful. Farid asks the grateful Bibi Dilgusha for no reward, only the opportunity to serve her again.

If we do not know what initially brought the trio to this place, which may be a tavern or possibly the house of Bibi Dilgusha, we certainly cannot fail to notice the unseemly activities that go on here. Although many Homamana illustrations have touches of genre, these are normally set unobtrusively in one corner or another. Not so here. Near the very center of the painting, one agitated man bowls over another, no small feat given the latter's gluttonous girth. Another reveler hunches over, facing away from us; his stupefied expression and loosened jama and pants indicate that he is so inebriated that he is oblivious to everything around him, and now can muster only enough concentration to relieve himself, or, as he probably sees it, to water the flowers of the carpet underfoot. Nearby, a woman minds what must be a local still, huddled up to two medium-sized jars. The jars, flasks, and cups around her suggest that there is a ready supply of and demand for the intoxicating home-brew. Some men on the balcony set out to prove both. Turbans undone and faces buried in deep drinking cups, two figures huddle together in glee of intimate. One companion slakes his thirst in earnest, while another, evidently more unconventional spirit, dances uninhibitedly as a servant delivers another round.

Such ribald goings-on must have amused contemporary audiences, which by all accounts were more abstemious than most modern ones. They clearly delighted the artist, Shrivana, who indulges in buffoonery in several of his other works (cat. 57 and 69). Shrivana shows his hand in many other ways. Here he gives his figures the same astonishing range of expression as he did in the aforementioned works, but models their clothes with noticeable restraint, limiting darkened folds mostly to gatherings at the waist or hem. Above all, he brings an unmistakable crispness to all kinds of pattern, whether on clothes, carpets, or architecture. This quality pervades most of the painting, particularly the center. It fails, however, in those peripheral portions that Shrivana turned over to his collaborator, Mah Muhammad. The vertical mortar lines of the compound's front wall, for example, lapse into wavering rows, and the back wall of the balcony suddenly slips from the horizontal of the compositional grid. Walls are left stark white, as in cat. 55 and 60, an effective choice in some passages, but certainly not in others, such as the adjoining courtyard at the upper right or the plain gateway surrounding. Add to this the misshapen central dome and the flat blue sky, and we appreciate Shrivana's inspiration and technical mastery all the more.
MALIK IRAJ CAPTURES UMAR AND PLACES HIM BOUND ON A TALL PILLAR; UMAYYA DECEIVES IRAJ, AND FREES UMAR AT NIGHT

As the text that follows this illustration relates, Umar has been caught sneaking around the camp of Malik Iraj. Knowing the uygar's resourcefulness and having no escape-proof dungeon at hand, Iraj orders his men to bind Umar tightly and place him on a small platform atop a tall pillar, where his every movement can be observed. Meanwhile, the allies notice that Umar is missing, and dispatch Umeya to look for him. Umeya discovers Umar's whereabouts, and passes himself off as one with only Iraq's best interests at heart:

"When Malik Iraj paid homage to the Amir, Umeya said, 'Malik Iraj, why are you heedless of the fact that the enemy are pressuring you from left and right? You should be arraying your troops because it will not be long before Hamza the Arab and all his champions and sons will be upon you, and now that you have captured Umar Ayyar, take heed that you not allow him to escape, for he is the mainstay of Hamza's army. If you command me, I will go and keep watch over that thief and hold him upstairs.'"

Iraq is swayed by the ostensible prudence and generosity of this offer and agrees. Once Umeya has mounted the tower, he interrogates Umar and, the uygar, recognizing a friendly face, responds with delight. Under veil of darkness, Umeya releases Umar from his bonds, and the two descend the tower by lasso, whereupon they make their way back to the court of Malik Qasim. At daybreak, the men guarding Umar realize that their prisoner has somehow vanished from his roost, and alert the dismayed Iraj.

In the absence of the caption and preceding text, it is difficult to gauge just how much imagery the artist has invented. The illustration shows the bearded Iraj, bareheaded and hands raised in prayer, venerating the sun from a mountain summit. Behind him sun-worshipper stands a handsome youth—presumably Umeya—still wearing his plumed turban but having shed his shoes in deference to the sanctity of the site and ritual. Iwo tonsured and barefoot monks, their earlobes distended as signs of renunciation of material life, make the long trek up the mountain, all the time sweeping the ground and air before them with a flywhisk and fan lest they trample or inhale even the tiniest of living creatures. An agitated throng of soldiers and onlookers stare at Malik Iraj, many mimicking their master's gesture of devotion. Above and apart from all this is Umar, hands crossed and bound, perched on a minuscule platform atop a tower so tall that its base lies beyond the edge of the composition.

Kesava, who probably designed the illustration, certainly painted the three key figures, the pair of monks, and some of the landscape and sky. The most telling figure of all is Iraj, whose facial features and tousled hair appear in Kesava's other works, notably cat. 55. And though the resplendent solar designs on Iraj's robe are surely its most dazzling feature, the garment's green blue color and blackish contour modeling are unmistakable signs of Kesava's hand. Likewise, Umeya's noticeably darker eyes and hair and the rippling but weighty hem of his jama are all similar elements in many of this artist's figures. Other familiar effects are the painterly surface and contours of the monks' cloaks and Imar's tunic and shorts, the loosely rendered tufts lining the pathway and mountain top, the decided columnar treatment of three tree trunks, and the richly scumbled sky.

The figures below are clearly by a secondary artist. The lone woman in the lower right is nearly identical to one in an ascribed Darabhamo painting, and the excited men save the same hairy faces, bulging eyes, and schematically modeled clothes as Tara's ascribed painting in the Téhána.
In Islamic culture, few encounters become the stuff of legend more readily than the battle of a solitary hero against a dragon. Is there a sternier test of valor than to confront the most fearsome creature to spring from the dark recesses of the human imagination? Persian literature offers rich and varied descriptions of dragons, likening them to gigantic worms, amphialikans, or serpents, and attributing to them slender wings, fiery breath,noxious venom, and hair as long and deadly as lassos. Persian and Mughal painters draw upon all these literary embellishments and invent yet more. They depict dragons in nearly every color of the rainbow, scaling some, stripping others, and dappling the rest. They embellish them with colorful muzzles, flaming eye-rims, antler-like horns, menacing hackles, and lionine legs and claws. Like most nightmarish creatures, dragons make their lairs in dank, foreboding places, and lurk in mountainous ravines, caves, and wells.

So it is with this magnificent beast, one of the finest dragons in all of Islamic art. He dwells in an utterly desolate place, a terrain packed with deep circular pits, its barrenness relieved only by a few tree stumps whitened by searing blasts and poisonous vapors. Into this land stumble Umar and his men. They are on yet another mission, this time to deliver two letters, one from Qitanush Shah’s own daughter, the other from Hamza to Qitanush urging him to convert to Islam and to yield to Umar. Before they can reach Qitanush’s capital, however, they must pass through this hellish environment and neutralize its terrifying guardian. As usual, Umar’s wiles are his greatest asset. From his oyxar’s fury bag of tricks Umar whips out a vial of naphtha and hurls it at the dragon, incinerating it on the spot. Then Umar presses on to Bedadahsh:

“The people took Umar inside, where Qitanush was seated on the throne, and there was an idol of gold placed on a bejeweled throne. A voice came from the idol, saying, ‘Umar, where have you come from?’ Umar gave Qitanush’s daughter’s letter, and it was read out. In it was written: ‘He rescued me from the clutches of the demon Hamza the Arab. This oyxar has expressed his love for me. I have sent him to you that you may not leave me alive.’”

The oyxar is spared only when Balibek, Qitanush’s ally, convinces him to keep Umar alive long enough to lure Hamza, too, to his death. Thus Umar learns that human treachery is more dangerous than the even the most formidable of creatures.

Dasavanta, the designer of this sensational painting, dramatizes the situation by giving over almost all the composition to Umar and the dragon. On the right looms the snarling dragon, its gleaming white skin studded with irregular blue spots, its wings and wattle streaming behind it, and its mouth thrown open ferociously wide. Opposite a tiny Umar stands knee-deep in a pit, armed with only a woefully small battle-axe and vial. Suddenly, the dragon is engulfed by fire. Golden flames rise from its forelegs, snout, and crest, simultaneously contrasting the creature’s resplendence with the blackish gloom all about, and blurring the transition between its precise contours and the roughly painted surface of the landscape.

The confrontation is witnessed by a throng of soldiers taking cover beyond a very dark ridge. Their sheer numbers, minute scale, and joyous acclaim transform the scene from a solitary act of bravery to a righteous spectacle. They are clearly the work of another artist, Tara, who also contributed to cat.85. Tara’s figures are lively enough, but their faces are noticeably awkward, an impression conveyed primarily by the very large and narrow-set whites of their eyes. Dasavanta, on the other hand, repeats his figure of Umar almost exactly from cat.36, an illustration that also features rocks painted with the same breathtaking freedom seen here in the boulders and stumps.