

## 48 A lady being prepared for bed

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Bundi sub-style, perhaps Uniara, c. 1770  
33.8 × 25 cm (folio), 25.5 × 17 cm (painting)

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A lady is seated on a terrace having her hair combed by an attendant while she drinks from a cup and is entertained by two female musicians playing the *vina* and the double-ended drum. They are seated under an awning attached to the lady's house – her prepared bed is visible behind her in front of the door to her house, while another is waiting on an elevated terrace above. Beyond the wall, we see the trees in her garden silhouetted against a fiery red evening sky. The house is richly decorated with colored dadoes and painted vessels in niches on the walls.

The increasingly precarious positions of the Rajput kingdoms under the Maratha dominance of Rajasthan in the second half of the 18th century resulted in various changes in their painting styles. In Bundi joyous genre scenes, erotic encounters and ladies at play as subjects for painting largely replaced the *ragamalas* and *Rasikapriyas* of earlier decades.<sup>1</sup> The present painting seems to embody just a gentle mood of relaxation of an evening, but the anticipated arrival of a lover is suggested by the prepared couches and beds and the unusually (for Bundi) violent sky. A very similar composition of a maiden being led reluctantly to the *nayaka's* bed with the ladies' veils and skirts raised by the wind is in the National Museum, New Delhi, while the painted architecture is also echoed in another Bundi painting of Varari *ragini* in the same collection.<sup>2</sup> Bundi painting, however, rarely has tumultuous skies such as these, although there are exceptions, such as a painting of Maharao Dip Singh hunting (c. 1750, now in the Israel Museum).<sup>3</sup> On the other hand tumultuous skies are a feature of the Bundi-influenced school of Uniara – there is a possibility that this painting might come from that little state, where Bundi artists such as Mira Bagas and Dhano worked in the middle of the 18th century.<sup>4</sup>

The clouds in scroll formation and the structure of the terrace balustrade in particular are features of the Bundi style of this period which influenced that of Jodhpur in the time of Maharaja Man Singh (r. 1803–1843), to which Rosemary Crill has drawn attention.<sup>5</sup> Bundi paintings of the late 18th century have the same type of balustrade delimiting the terrace.<sup>6</sup> The interest that the artist of this painting takes in three-dimensional architecture harks back to the earliest Bundi *ragamala* series of 1591 (see cat. no. 45), although here the perspective difficulties of the *Bangla* canopy over the upper terrace defeat him. | JL

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<sup>1</sup> Archer 1959, figs. 17–28.

<sup>2</sup> Sodhi 1999, pl. 89 and Sharma 1974, no. 44, pl. 43.

<sup>3</sup> Losty 2000, fig. 5.

<sup>4</sup> For Mira Bagas see Beach 1974, pp. 23–27 and for Dhano see Losty 2000, *passim*.

<sup>5</sup> Crill 2000, p. 118.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Archer 1959, nos. 24, 26–27; Bautze 1987b, no. 39 and Sodhi 1999, pl. 73.

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