

Second Half of the Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

folio 26

Esfandiyār's Fourth Exploit: He Slays the Sorceress

The witch is portrayed in the miniature in her true and final form, haggard, with gray skin, white hair, wearing a brocaded maroon dress loosely knotted at the waist, in the left foreground. She has already fallen to her knees and braces herself with one arm, while with the other she grasps the chain that is pulled taught about her neck by Esfandiyār, who stands over her, on the right. Esfandiyār is dressed in a yellow-orange coat, pointed steel helmet, and full combat regalia. While pulling the chain taught, he has simultaneously cleaved her on the head with his sword, and blood gushes forth. A narrow stream, originally silver but now tarnished black, winds its way through the picture and between the two central characters. The stream is vegetated on each side by numerous small leafy plants and flowers, and near the top, by two pairs of slender cypress trees and a deciduous tree that intertwines two of them. Between the cypresses is spread a small carpet, on which is placed two long necked flacons, a lute, a goblet, and a platter of food. In the extreme right background are the forequarters of Esfandiyār's black horse and a groom shown in profile.

There are four columns of text above the miniature of which two columns are comprised of a single line of text each, and the remaining columns of two lines of text each. In the bottom left hand corner is a single column comprising two lines of text. A rectangular ruled frame encloses miniature and text, except for the tops of the four cypress trees that violate the frame and protrude into the upper margin. The miniature is signed in the lower margin, to the right of center, in miniscule characters that seem to be in Mo'in's hand: *ze towfiq šān'e raqam zad mo'in* (Drawn with the grace of the Maker by the most humble Mo'in). No date is indicated.

Location:

Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms. no. 270, folio 26

Miniature references:

Unpublished.

Text references:

Warner, V, pp.130-31.

Mohl, IV, p.407.

