

Second Half of the Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

folio 31v

Esfandiār Kills Arjāsp and Rescues His Sisters

The miniature has an irregular shape, in the form of a reverse L, which is not confined within the frame that encloses the text, but continues into the right margin and upward in that margin paralleling the text. The attackers, Esfandiār and the Iranians, are moving in a left to right direction, the opposite of other battle scenes that follow a right-left flow. Esfandiār leads the attack in the right foreground clad in the same apparel as folio 26, a yellow-orange tunic and pointed steel helmet. But here his black horse is depicted covered in protective armor. Esfandiār has seized his opponent Arjāsp by the belt and lifted him aloft from the saddle where his arm waivers uselessly, shield in hand. The Brazen Fort, depicted part in plan, and part in elevation, serves as a backdrop for that portion of the miniature that extends into the right margin. Noticeable is a crenelated tower, a rampart with embattlements, and several cannons protruding through narrow openings in the walls. In addition to Esfandiār, Arjāsp, and their mounts, seven other combatants and three horses are portrayed in the scene. Six of the protagonists can be seen in the left foreground in the midst of a fierce battle. Amongst them, four, all wearing turbans, seem to represent Esfandiār's forces. One Iranian, wearing yellow-orange apparel of the same hue as Esfandiār is, by virtue of his size and relative isolation, more prominent than the others. He has brought his sword down on the head of a Turānian who has sought to take cover under his shield. But it has been of no avail for the sword has split shield and helmet. The backdrop for this portion of the miniature is a non-descript hill of pinkish-mauve color, on the far side of which one can see the head and shoulders of an additional Turānian soldier.

The four columns of text above the miniature consist of, from right to left, sixteen, thirteen, thirteen, and sixteen lines of text respectively. Below the columns include one or two lines of additional text. A rectangular frame encloses the text but is omitted on the sides in the miniature area, allowing the painting to spill freely into the right margin. In addition, two standards, one at the top and another on the left, protrude into their respective margins. The miniature is signed in the lower margin in miniscule characters 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 31v

Miniature references:

Unpublished.

Text references:

Warner, V, pp.153-54; Mohl, IV, p.437.

