

Second Half of the Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

folio 109

Shāpur Before the King of Rum (?)

Events from the reign of Shāpur I (244-272 A.D.), the son of Ardashir, and Shāpur II (309-379 A.D.), known as Shāpur Zū'l Aktāf, are confused in the *Shāhnāmeḥ*, as are the names of Roman emperors. In the epic, Shāpur II is credited with travelling to Rum, where disguised as a merchant, gained access to the caesar. But his identity was discovered; he was sewn into an ass skin and incarcerated.

The accompanying text is insufficient to confidently identify the miniature, but it seems to be at the point when Shāpur II appeared in disguise before the caesar. The distinguished figure on the far right, sporting a neatly groomed beard, long brocaded robe, and tall Ottoman headdress, is the caesar of Rum. He is seated on an elevated hexagonal throne in front of an arched panel delicately painted with foliage, with an attendant standing behind him ceremonially holding his sword. Seated before the caesar, is an equally distinguished personage with a white beard, yellow-orange robe, light blue coat, and turban, who might be identified as Shāpur in the disguise of a merchant. Further to the left, five figures attired in robes of orange and maroon stand with hands clasped or gesturing in conversation, are probably advisors to the caesar.

The format of the miniature is in the form of a reverse L, the text written above the horizontal portion, and the vertical portion of the painting existing entirely in the right margin. Within this vertical section is the enthroned caesar, and above his head the additional stories of his palace that includes two balconies, a roof-top pavilion, an open doorway, and two trees on the balcony. There are four columns of text above the horizontal portion of the miniature consisting of, from right to left, seventeen, seventeen, sixteen, and sixteen lines of text respectively. A chapter title is captivated near the top of the two center columns, and an additional line of two column text is written at the bottom left. A rectangular frame encloses the text on the top and both sides, and the miniature on the left side and halfway across the bottom. The frame is omitted on the remainder of the bottom and on the right side below the text, allowing the painting to continue freely into the right margin where it is extended vertically to the top of the text. The miniature is signed in the lower margin, in miniscule characters in Mo'in's hand: *ze towfiq ṣān'e raqam zad mo'in*. (Drawn with the grace of the Maker by Mo'in). Not dated.

Location:

Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms. no. 270, folio 109

Miniature references:

Unpublished.

Text references:

Warner, VI, p.337; Mohl, V, pp.351-52.

