

Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

Miniature 3

While Battling Rostam, the King of Māzandarān Changes Himself into a Rock

In the battle Rostam finally broke through Māzandarān lines and confronted the king, who being possessed of magical powers, turned himself into a rock. Rostam, with his mighty strength, picked up the boulder and brought it before Shāh Kāvos. This is the moment in the narrative that is here depicted. The composition is symmetrically organized with Rostam on the right, Shāh Kāvos on the left, and on the central axis, a black rock that is the transformed King of Māzandarān –his face barely perceptible in white outline at the top of the rock. The rigid symmetry of the composition is only broken by the addition of two soldiers on the left side that accompany the shāh. Rostam, shown in his traditional garb of tiger-skin coat and leopard-skin headdress, and the shāh with the umbrella of state held aloft over his head, are both on horseback, discussing what course of action to take. The backdrop in the lower portion of the miniature is innocuous so as not to conflict with the main action taking place. The upper half of the miniature, however, is more exuberant, coral-like rock formations, diminutive shrubs, and a stormy sky.

Miniature with text and frame: 25.0 x 14.1 cm. There are four columns of text above and below the miniature. At the top the two outside columns are each comprised of fifteen lines, and the center columns of twelve lines. Below the pattern is repeated, but the outside columns comprise four lines each, and the center columns two lines. A rectangular ruled frame encloses miniature and text except on the left side where a standard protrudes into the left margin. The digits 20 in Arabic numerals are written in the left margin, but they probably derive from later date. It is signed in the center of the lower margin in miniscule characters: *raqam-e kamineh mo'in-e mošavver*. No date is indicated.

Miniature reference:

Sotheby's London 24 April 1996, Lot 59 (ill.).

Text references:

Warner, II, p.74. Mohl, II, p.445. Levy, p.57.

