

Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

Miniature 11

The Cremation of Ṭalḥand

The expression of grief at a funerary event, quite evident in this miniature, is one of those rare occasions in which emotion is depicted in Persian painting. The miniature is essentially a single horizontal register, one story in height, with a vertical appendage in the left margin that extends upward to a second floor. In the right foreground, from within a domed chamber, the golden flames of the funerary fire leap out in all directions, virtually touching the text above. Between the flames the black casket containing the body of Ṭalḥand can be seen. Ṭalḥand's mother stands, in a blue dress, to the left of the chamber, her hair undone, her hands outstretched in grief, her eyes streaked from tears. Gow stands behind her, his arms clasped about her waist, restraining her from the pyre. The head of a groom, shown in profile, and the forequarters of a black horse, presumably Gow's, appear on the far left in front of a beige tiled wall. Four other female mourners are represented in the scene, all with their hair undone and their eyes streaked with tears. One appears in the far right foreground, another in the center foreground, and two inside a small room on the second floor.

Welch's dimensions of 25.4 cm. high x 19.1 cm. appear to be correct measurements for miniature and text. There are four columns of text above the miniature. The two outer columns are each comprised of seventeen lines of text, and the center columns of sixteen lines each. In addition, two columns of a single line each are written below the miniature in vertical alignment with the outside columns above. A ruled frame, which juts out on the left side to encompass the painting that has been continued into the margin, encloses miniature and text. The digits 88 in Arabic numerals are written in the left margin, but they probably derive from a later date. One of the faces in the upper left may be damaged; otherwise, the miniature appears to be in a good state of preservation, and there are no indications of retouching. The miniature is signed, in the center of the lower margin, in miniscule characters that seem to be in Mo'in's hand: *raqam-e kamineh mo'in-e mošavver*. No date is indicated.

Miniature references:

Welch, AK2, Ir.M 43/G and p.211 (not illustrated).

Text references:

Warner, VII, pp.422-23.

Mohl, VI, p.355.

Levy, p.331.

