

Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

Miniature 12

Bahrām Chubineh Defeats and Kills Sāveh

The two protagonists are portrayed in the foreground. Bahrām Chubineh, charging from the right on a brown mount, has just released an arrow. He wears a brown coat and a pointed steel helmet with a white feather; a vermillion bowcase hangs from his waist. The arrow has found its mark and is visible protruding from the chest of Shāh Sāveh, who reels backward in the saddle, his arms hanging limply at his side, shield and sword in hand. Sāveh wears a pointed steel helmet and vermillion coat. His horse is black. Three soldiers are portrayed in the foreground, their lower extremities cropped by the frame. One, dressed in blue in the lower left corner, is a Turkman archer taking aim at an advancing Iranian in the opposite corner, who moves toward the left, a sword in one hand, a shield in the other. Between the two is a third soldier, clad in vermillion, who may be a retreating Turkman. In the far background are six more warriors who peer over the ridge at the combat below. They are dressed identically; only their garment colors vary - vermillion, yellow, purple. The setting is a barren, off-white hillside that rises to the left. The ground is not modulated, and interrupted only at even intervals by peculiar groupings of three mauve colored stones and squiggly lines that represent vegetation. Two-thirds of the way up the page is a ridge, and beyond it a craggy hill rendered in mauve with orange edging. In the far background is a variegated blue sky.

Welch's dimensions of 25.4 x 15.0 cm. appear to be correct for the miniature and text. There are four columns of text above and below the miniature. The two outer columns at the top are each comprised of seven lines, and the center columns of six lines each. Below the miniature the two outer columns have three lines each, and the center columns two lines each. A rectangular frame encloses miniature and text. The digits 91 in Arabic numerals are written in the right margin. Another inscription, on the painting, identifies *Sāveh*. Both inscriptions are probably not contemporary with the painting. There are no indications of damage or retouching. The miniature is signed, in the lower margin, in miniscule characters that seem to be in Mo'in's hand: *ʿaqam-e kamineh mo'in-e moṣavver*. Despite Mo'in's signature, seven of the faces - the six warriors in the background, and the figure in the right foreground - are less accomplished, perhaps suggesting the collaboration of an assistant. Not dated.

Miniature references:

Welch, AK2, Ir.M.43/B (not ill.), where the subject is erroneously identified as "Rostam Killing Ashkabus".

Text references:

Warner, VIII, pp.121-27; Mohl, VI, pp.491-98.

