

Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

folio 184

Rostam Rescues Bizhan from the Pit

The miniature depicts a subsequent scene from the same episode illustrated on folio 176v, in which Bizhan, imprisoned in the pit, was being fed by Manizheh.

The setting is basically the same as depicted on folio 176v, but the vantage point is further away, thus reducing the scale and allowing for the inclusion of Rostam and his seven companions. The pit is accordingly reduced in proportions, and inside the same Bizhan encountered on folio 176v is squatting, having raised his shackled hands upward to grasp Rostam's lasso, which has been lowered from above. The boulder has already been cast away from the opening on top, and the mighty Rostam, clad in his identifiable tiger and leopard skin cuirass, braces himself as he is about to pull Bizhan up from the pit on the end of his lasso. Manizheh, her features covered by the sleeve of her *chador*, stands to the left of the opening, awaiting the emergence of her lover. The beacon fire still burns brightly before her. In the upper right, the seven warriors that accompanied Rostam on the expedition - Gorgin, Zangheh, Gostaham, Gorāzeh, Rakhām, Farhād, and Ashkāsh - are portrayed tightly grouped together. The tree, now with more foliage visible because of the reduced scale, appears behind them. Near the top is a ridge, and behind it a thin strip of sky.

Miniature dimensions: 26.5 x 16.5 cm. The text is written in four columns above and below the miniature, with a rectangular frame enclosing miniature and text. The miniscule signature *raqam-e kamineh faẓl 'ali* appears just above the calligraphy at the bottom center. In the lower margin, written in Mo'in's hand, is the signature *raqam-e kamineh mo'in-e moṣavver*. The miniature is attributed by Jackson and Yohannan to Faẓl 'Ali, and by Robinson to Mo'in with the assistance of Faẓl 'Ali. The painting is executed in excellent Mo'in style, and the detailing indistinguishable from the master's work. Yet the signature of Faẓl 'Ali suggests that Mo'in had assistance in the preparation of this miniature. However, the role of the lesser artist must have been utilized in such a manner that his contribution is inseparable from his master's.

For two earlier versions of this same scene also executed by Mo'in, see Ms. C f. 176v, and Ms. E miniature 5.

Location:

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Acq. 13.228.17 (Cochran 4)

Miniature references:

Guest, *Ars Islamica* X (1943), p.152, fig.21.

J&Y, PM, p.37, no.28 (not ill.).

Robinson, *Islamic Art*, p.79, no.28 and p.83, fig. 18.

Text references:

Warner, III, pp.346; Mohl, III, pp.312; Levy, pp.170.

