

Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

folio 193v

Combat of Bizhan and Humān

The two protagonists are portrayed in hand-to-hand combat near the center of the composition. Bizhan has already attained the advantage, having been able to wrestle his opponent to the ground, where with one knee pressed into Humān's midsection, he grapples to finish him off with his dagger. Humān struggles to constrain Bizhan's arms, but the end is in sight. Both warriors are dressed nearly identical: pointed steel helmets adossed with feathers, leg guards, boots, and knee length coats bound at the waist with a belt from which is suspended a sword, bowcase, and quivers. Only the colors of the clothing and feathers vary, as well as the location of their shields: Bizhan's is strapped to his back, Humān's has fallen to the ground. The forequarters of two riderless horses and their respective grooms, each with a forefinger to the lips in a sign of astonishment, are juxtaposed, one in the upper left, the other in the lower right. Four other warriors, dressed in coats and pointed helmets, stand witnessing the event from the left foreground, their lower extremities cropped by the frame. It is not evident whether they are Iranian or Turānian. The setting is a barren hillside that rises to a craggy rock outcropping at the top. Several small bushes grow near the pinnacle, and a small stream trickles down on the far right. A wash sky of the Mo'in type appears in the far distance.

Miniature dimensions: 23.6 x 16.5 cm. The text is written in four columns above and below the painting, with a rectangular frame enclosing miniature and text. The miniscule signature, *raqam-e kamineh faẓl 'alī*, is inscribed on the sky at the top of the miniature, in addition to the signature of Mo'in, *raqam zad kamineh mo'in-e mošavver*, written in the center of the lower margin. The miniature is attributed by Jackson and Yohannan to Faẓl 'Alī, and by Robinson to Mo'in with the assistance of Faẓl 'Alī. The painting is executed in excellent Mo'in style, and the detailing indistinguishable from the master's other work. Yet the signature of Faẓl 'Alī suggests that Mo'in had assistance in the preparation of this miniature. However, the role of the lesser artist must have been such that his contribution is inseparable from his master's.

For another version of this subject painted by Mo'in, see Manuscript C, folio 188.

Location:

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

Miniature references:

J&Y, PM, p.37, no.29 (not ill.).

Robinson, Islamic Art, p.79, no.29 (not ill.).

Text references:

Warner, IV, p.50.

Mohl, III, p.383.

