

## Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

folio 278

### Rostam Feasts with Esfandiyār and Bahman

Prior to the actual combat between them, there was a meeting at Esfandiyār's encampment, during which the two protagonists consumed a meal and exchanged verbal abuses. The event depicted in this miniature is that meeting, and not as Jackson and Yohannan suggest, one that took place after the battle. The setting is outdoors in the tent encampment of Esfandiyār. The prince, clad in a pointed helmet, knee length coat, and leather guards on his forearms and legs, sits on an elevated hexagonal throne under a tent pavilion in the upper right. The artist has experienced some difficulty rendering the foreshortening of his legs, with the result that the lower portion of his body appears awkward and deformed. Esfandiyār offers a drink to Rostam, who sits defiantly before him, on the left side of the miniature. Rostam has his familiar attributes - leopard and tiger skin cuirass, and bull-headed mace. Standing behind each of the protagonists is a turbanned youth holding a flacon. In the lower right foreground two turbanned musicians are seated, one with a tambourine, the other with a lute. Seated opposite them, on the left, is an old man and a boy. The youth may be identified as Esfandiyār's son Bahman, but he is depicted much younger than one might visualize from the text, where he was employed by Esfandiyār as an emissary to Rostam. In the extreme foreground is a turbanned man with a large mustache, leaning on a walking stick. His lower extremities are cropped by the text, a device often utilized by Mo'in. Vessels containing fruit and drink are scattered about, and additional tents can be seen in the background. In the far background is a single tree and a patch of sky.

Miniature dimensions: 25 x 16.5 cm. The text is written in four columns above and below the miniature, with a rectangular frame enclosing miniature and text. There are numerous areas of abrasion or flaking, but no serious damage. The miniscule signature, *raqam-e kamīneh faẓl 'alī*, is inscribed on the sky at the top. On the face of the tambourine, written in Mo'in's hand, is the signature *raqam zad kamīneh mo'in-e moṣavver*. 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 in excellent Mo'in style, and except for the sky which appears at variance with the master's work, no other details are distinguishable from Mo'in's hand.

#### Location:

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

#### Miniature references:

J&Y, PM, p.37, no.34 (not ill.).

Robinson, Islamic Art, p.79, no.34 (not ill.).

#### Text references:

Warner, V, p.200 ff; Mohl, IV, p.492 ff; Levy, pp.202-3.

Last updated 14 July 1997

Robert Eng

