

History of Shāh Esmā‘il

There are considerable differences between the event depicted in this miniature, the account of the same event in the text, and the testimony given by Eskandar Monshi in the *‘Ālam ārā-ye ‘Abbāsi*. According to Monshi, in the winter of the year 913/1507-8, ‘Alā al-dowleh Zū‘l-Qadar (see folio 42v) sent an army of 2000 men (this figure seems too small) under the command of his two sons, Qāsem Beg, known as Sāru Qaplān (the yellow panther), and Orduvāneh Beg, to Diār Bakr against the *qezelbāsh* commanded by Khān Moḥammad ‘Ostājlu. Sāru Qaplān, his brother Orduvāneh Beg, and a considerable number of Zū‘l-Qadars were captured and put to death. Dismayed by the fate of his sons, ‘Alā al-Dowleh again mobilized his forces and sent 15,000 men under the command of two of his other sons, Kur Shāhrok and Aḥmad Beg, to engage Khān Moḥammad. The two opposing forces fought at Āmedeh, also known as Qarā Ḥamid (see Manuscript L, folio 137), and the two sons of ‘Alā al-Dowleh were slain on the battlefield.

The text of this manuscript states that in the first engagement the Zū‘l-Qadar forces were commanded by Sāru Qaplān and his brother Sāru Aslān, not Orduvāneh Beg as suggested by Monshi. And in the battle it was Qarā Khān, the brother of Khān Moḥammad ‘Ostājlu, who actually killed both of these sons of ‘Alā al-Dowleh in battle. No mention is made of having taken them prisoner beforehand. The text agrees that the second engagement took place at Qarā Ḥamid, but that the Zū‘l-Qadar forces numbered 30,000 men, twice as many as stated by Monshi, and they were under the command of Orduvāneh Beg and Kur Shāhrokh. Khān Moḥammad ‘Ostājlu was not present at this battle, but his brother Qarā Khān, who had been left in charge, walled himself up inside the fortress of Qarā Ḥamid with the outnumbered *qezelbāsh* contingent. By dropping flaming oil and various missiles from atop the walls they were able to burn or kill 15,000 of the attackers. Orduvāneh Beg was burned, and the remaining son Kur Shāhrokh sent a request to his father ‘Alā al-Dowleh for additional help. This arrived in the form of 20,000 reinforcements under the command of a fifth son, Khān Moḥammad, not to be confused with Khān Moḥammad ‘Ostājlu. The arrival of these Zū‘l-Qadar reinforcements was synonymous with the return of Khān Moḥammad ‘Ostājlu and the main force of Safavids. An account of this battle, the third engagement between *qezelbāsh* and Zū‘l-Qadars is related with manuscript L, folio 137.

With respect to one point, both this text and Eskandar Monshi agree: Shāh Esmā‘il was not personally present at any of these battles between the Safavids and Zū‘l-Qadars. Yet the marginal inscription on the miniature on folio 87, and the inscription on the dominant Safavid personage, identify him as Shāh Esmā‘il, and the Zū‘l-Qadar being killed as Sāru Qaplān. These inscriptions are presumably of later date, and in this instance appear to be erroneous, for they are with the text that clearly states that it was Qarā Khān, brother of Khān Moḥammad ‘Ostājlu, that killed Sāru Qaplān. It is also uncertain whether the artist here intended to represent Shāh Esmā‘il or Qarā Khān, for there are some inconclusive

elements that favor each alternative. The personage is portrayed wearing the black aigrette on the front of his hat, which elsewhere indicates a person of royal stature. The only Safavid entitled to wear this emblem would be Shāh Esmā‘il. On the other hand, the personage is portrayed in a purple cloak, while elsewhere in this manuscript (except in one instance, folio 94v, where the identification also seems questionable) Esmā‘il is universally portrayed wearing a white knee-length coat with gold trim. Another point favoring a Qarā Khān identification is that the facial features here portrayed are distinctly different from those in other miniatures showing Esmā‘il (cf, ff. 210, 280, 298v, 332v, 339v) where a certain consistency of representation is apparent. Thus, all considered, it seems most likely that the artist here, in accordance with the text, was portraying Qarā Khān and not Shāh Esmā‘il, but inadvertently affixed the black aigrette to his *tāj*.

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folio 87

Battle Scene Between Safavids and Zu'l-Qadars in which Sāru Qaplān is Killed

All total in the miniature thirteen personage (six Safavids and seven Zu'l-Qadars) and eight horses are represented. Qarā Khān (identified in the inscription as Shāh Esmā'il), wearing a purple tunic and seated on a light gray charger, occupies central position in the miniature. He turns to the rear, and with both hands thrusts a sword through Sāru Qaplān, who, his sword already broken, begins to slump off his horse. Except for another individual combat behind them, in which a *qezelbāsh* horseman spears an opponent, the remaining personage seem content to either observe the proceedings, or quietly leave the scene lance in hand. The entire battle is set against a hill of light mauve, with small patches of blue sky and suggestions of foliage at the top. Horses and clothing provide spots of color: vermillion, maroon, purple, brown, black, white, and light orange.

Miniature: 24.1 x 16.8 cm. One line of text above and below the miniature. Frame encloses miniature and text; four standards protrude beyond the frame into the upper and left margins. Sāru Qaplān's face is missing entirely as the result of damage; no other signs of damage or retouching. A marginal inscription in red, presumably of later date, describes the event depicted. Inscriptions are also written on two of the figures, incorrectly identifying one of them as Shāh Esmā'il and the other as Sāru Qaplān.

Miniature references:

Mahboubian Cat., #923, folio 87 (not illustrated)

Text references:

Muntazar, p.219.

Savory, SA, p.52.

