
History of Shāh Esmā‘il

In 916/1510 Shāh Esmā‘il decided that there could be no peace with Shāhibeg Khān and the Uzbegs. He mobilized his forces and marched on Khorasan, where the Uzbeg governors abandoned their seats and fell back to Herat. When Esmā‘il’s forces reached Mashhad, Shāhibeg decided he had not sufficient strength to withstand the Safavid forces and he withdrew to Marv, leaving his nephew Jān Vafā Mirzā to defend Herat. But he, too, soon abandoned his post and fled to Marv with Esmā‘il in pursuit. When the Safavid van neared the walls of the citadel, Jan Vafā Mirzā came out with a strong force to engage them. Hard fighting took place and Dāneh Moḥammad Solṭān, the commander of the Safavid advanced guard, was killed by Juli Bahādor, commonly known as Juli the Uzbeg. Among the *qezelbāsh* was Dāneh Moḥammad’s son, ‘Akhi Solṭān by name, who, upon seeing his father slain immediately rode forward to challenge the Uzbeg. His challenge was obviously successful and Juli was killed in the confrontation. The Safavids went on to route the force led by Jān Vafā Mirzā which retreated in disorder behind the confines of the city walls.

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folio 199v

'Akhi Solṭān Killing Juli the Uzbek in Combat

The two combatants and their horses boldly stretch across the bottom. 'Akhi Solṭān, in purple with a red and white *tāj* and red *kolāh*, charges from the right. Leaning forward in the saddle of his chestnut horse, he thrusts, his right arm extended with sword in hand. Juli, in yellow with a gray turban, advances from the left on a black mount. He has obviously been caught off-guard by the swiftness and ferocity of his adversary's attack, for he is still holding his sword and shield at his waist. But 'Akhi Solṭān's sword has already found its mark, and Juli, in the words of the text, has been cut up like a fresh cucumber. Behind 'Akhi Solṭān is another Safavid, in vermillion, his bow drawn taught aiming at an Uzbek on the opposite of the miniature who rides out of the picture with his arms raised in despair. Another *qezelbāsh* in maroon, in the lower right, calmly sits on a white horse observing the battle. He is balanced compositionally by an Uzbek in green in the left corner, who calmly rides out of the picture carrying a standard while casting a glance over his shoulder. The upper ground of the miniature is again near-symmetrically disposed. Shāh Esmā'il sits in the upper right on a blue-gray horse observing the event below. An aide riding behind him holds the vermillion, gray, and gold ceremonial umbrella of kingship over his head. In the upper left, balancing the shāh group, is an Uzbek dignitary and a standard bearer. This dignitary, who may be identified as Jān Vafā Mirzā, wears a white turban and a long gray robe over a maroon dress, and gestures astonishment with his finger to his lip. The backdrop is simply handled: a pale mauve hillside that rises to a craggy rock formation at the top, beyond which is a gold sky.

Some spatial problems are readily apparent in the miniature. The head of the figure in the lower left corner, who is supposed to be in the immediate foreground, is overlapped by the rear legs of Juli Bahādor's horse. The Uzbek behind Juli, according to the pictorial conception used, would be higher in the miniature, but to the contrary is portrayed substantially lower. And thirdly, the umbrella of state that is held aloft is supposed to be over Esmā'il's head, yet the feathers on his hat overlap it.

Miniature: 19.5 x 13.0 cm. One line of text above and below the miniature. Some light smearing in the lower left corner, but no other signs of damage or retouching. No marginal inscription.

Miniature references:

Mahboubian Cat., #923 folio 199v (not illustrated).

Text references:

Muntazar, p.355; Savory, SA, pp.60-61.

