

History of Shāh Esmā'il

folio 241v

Najm Sāni Hangs Shaykham Mirzā at the Gate of Qarshi

In the year 918/1512, Emir Najm-e Sāni, the *vakil-e divān-e a'lā*, whose power and influence at the court was considerable, was appointed by Esmā'il to set in order the affairs of Khorasan and to deal with the Uzbek menace. Without specific orders or instructions from the shāh, Najm-e Sāni resolved on the subjugation of Transoxiana, and together with the governor of Herat and the great emirs of Khorasan, crossed the Oxus. At Qarshi, Emir Najm gave the orders for a general massacre, in which Shaykham Mirzā and a large number of the population were put to death. Eskandar Monshi records the number at 15,000 people, but this text states it to be 4,000 to 5,000.

The scene depicted is at the walls of the city of Qarshi. On the upper level of the wall Shaykham Mirzā (or Shaykh Mirzā-ye Özbeg as he is called by Monshi) can be seen bound with a rope and held captive at knife point by two *qezelbāsh* troops in preparation for hanging. Below is a mass of heads, horses, and weapons, which portray not so much a battle as an onslaught of Safavid troops. A total of nine *qezelbāsh* can be singled out advancing from right to left, wielding swords, shields, and bows. Two others with sword in hand are scaling a ladder to the upper level, while another appears in a multi-lobed arched doorway. Three Uzbek soldiers fire arrows at the advancing Safavids from the upper parapet on the right, while two mounted Uzbeks casually ride out of the picture in the lower left. Najm-e Sāni can be identified near the center of the miniature at the head of a mass of troops. He is astride a black horse, dressed in purple, sports a white mustache, and brandishes a sword and shield over his head. It is not clear who the other prominent figure, dressed in a fur-trimmed gray robe and multi-colored turban, directly behind him is. The Qarshi city walls are executed in various light tones of orange, mauve, pink and white. The horses are black, gray and brown. The clothing is predominantly of warm colors: vermillion, purple, yellow-orange, maroon, and some blue-white and a deep green.

Miniature: 15.6 x 13.0 cm. One line of text above and below the miniature. Frame encloses miniature and text; no signs of damage or retouching. A marginal inscription in red, presumably of later date, describes the event depicted. An inscription in black is written on one of the figures, identifying him as Shaykham Mirzā.

Miniature references:

Mahboubian catalog, #923 folio 241v (not illustrated)

Text references:

Muntazar, p.424; Savory, SA, p.65-66.

