

History of Shāh Esmā'il

folio 298v

The Battle of Chalderān at which Shāh Esmā'il Defeats Malqoc-oghlu the Ottoman

Cf. manuscript L, folio 249, for another version of this miniature, and for a summary of the event depicted.

The date of the event is 2 Rajab 920/23 August 1514, the place is Chalderān, and the event is the battle between the Safavids and Ottomans. The principal combatants depicted in the miniature are Shāh Esmā'il on the right, and Malqoc-oghlu, called Ankoghli in the text, on the left. The two contestants occupy center stage and are portrayed the moment after Esmā'il's sword had struck. Lunging forward, the shāh has brought his heavy sword down cleaving Ankoghli from helmet tip to navel. he has been effectively split in two vertically and blood gushes out, yet the blow was delivered so instantaneously that Ankoghli still remains upright in the saddle, sword and shield raised high. Sultan Selim, in a sign of astonishment, and the Ottoman forces as represented by two standard bearers, observe the battle from behind a ridge in the upper left. The Safavid forces consist of four horsemen, two in the right foreground, and two others behind a ridge in the upper right. Only the two contestants, Shāh Esmā'il and Ankoghli, are involved in battle; the others seem content to observe.

Shāh Esmā'il wears the same gold trimmed white knee-length coat and red and white flat top *qezelbāsh tāj* encountered on previous folios. An encased bow and quiver case with arrows hangs from his belt, and he rides a blue-gray charger muddled up to its belly. Ankoghli (Malqoc-oghlu), atop a black horse, is dressed in vermillion and a pointed helmet, while Sultan Selim wears a purple robe decorated with gold, a gray topcoat, and tall white Ottoman headgear. only the head and neck of his brown horse are visible. The clothing of his accompanying standard bearer is bright yellow-orange. All four Safavids wear the flat top red and white *tāj* similar to Esmā'il's, and are dressed in vermillion, blue, yellow, and purple respectively.

The backdrop is austere: a flat neutral ground rises to a ridge tinted with brown about two-thirds of the way up from the bottom. Behind this is a secondary ridge executed in light mauve, and at the top a narrow band of variegated blue sky. Only the slightest suggestion of vegetation exists in the entire picture.

Compositionally this miniature has been simplified and portrays fewer figures than the British Library variant cited above. Otherwise the compositions are organized in essentially the same manner. From a draftsman's point of view, the linework in the British Library version is more fluid and suggestive of a sketch technique, while this miniature is more polished and finished. These qualities of composition and draftsman's point of view might suggest that the British Library version is the earlier of the two in date.



Miniature: 19.2 x 14.0 cm. One line of text above and below the miniature. Frame encloses miniature and text. only the tip of Ankoghli's sword protrudes beyond the frame into the margin. Some smearing below the belly of Ankoghli's horse, but no other signs of damage or retouching. A marginal inscription in red, presumably of later date, describes the event depicted. Inscriptions in black appear on three of the figures, identifying them as Shāh Esmā'il, Sultan Selim, and Ankoghli.

Miniature references:

Mahboubian Cat., #923 folio 298v (not illustrated).

Text references:

Muntazar, pp.521-22.

Savory, SA, p.69.

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