

Second Half of the Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

folio 80

Eskandar Meets Kheẓr and Elyās in the Land of Darkness

The miniature is confined to the limits of the text on top and bottom and the frame on the right, but extends unhindered and irregularly into the left margin. The land of darkness is shown as a cavernous tunnel depicted in cross-section, from which the front has been removed, permitting the viewer to observe the events inside. Conforming to what one might expect in the land of darkness, the inside of the tunnel is entirely black. A procession is moving through it in a leftward direction. The dominant personage in the group, near the center of the composition, is Eskandar, who sits astride a white horse that vividly contrasts with the stark black background. Eskandar wears a yellow coat and a crown adorned with feathers. Accompanying him are four other mounted personage, three of whom carry lances and can be identified as soldiers, while the fourth, a distinguished looking bearded man of uncertain identification, wears the high headdress of Ottoman type. Preceding Eskandar and his entourage, on the left, are two mounted torch bearers, leading the way through the darkness. Further to the left, in the marginal area, two turbaned men are seated conversing, with some stones and verdure before them. Their flaming haloes identify them as prophets, presumably Kheẓr and Elyās. Above the cutaway section of the cavern the land is comprised of an undulating rock formation rendered in black, blue, and white, with a gold sky in the distance. The rock forms a fantastic outcropping into the left margin where several small bushes grow from the pinnacles.

There are four columns of text above and below the miniature. Above each column is comprised of either seven or eight lines of text, and below either three or four lines, but juxtaposed so that overall top and bottom each column consists of a total of eleven lines. A rectangular frame encloses miniature and text except on the left side where the frame is omitted between the upper and lower text blocks, permitting the miniature to continue unhindered into the margin. The miniature is signed in the lower margin in miniscule characters in Mo'in's handwriting *ze toufīq šān'e raqam zad mo'in* (Drawn with the grace of the Maker by Mo'in). Not dated.

For another variant of this same episode, see Ms.G, f.299.

Location:

Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms. no. 270, folio 80

Miniature references:

Kühnel, Survey, pl. 923; Kühnel, Pantheon, fig.4.
Stchoukine, SA, p.65 (not ill.).

Text references:

Warner, VI, pp.158-59; Mohl, V, pp.172-73.

