

Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

Miniature 4

Rostam Pulls the Khāqān of China
from His Elephant by Lasso

Cf. Ms.B miniature 2 for another depiction of this episode, with a composition that is similar in many respects. The Fogg miniature, however, is much more elaborate and accomplished than the miniature shown here. It has a total of twelve figures (here there are only eight), and the intricacies of the rock outcropping, the quantity of shrubbery, and the fabric patterns are elaborated in more detail.

Rostam, shown in his traditional garb of tiger-skin coat and leopard-skin headdress, is the dominant figure in the right foreground of both miniatures. Instead of charging from the right as he did in the Fogg miniature, here he is riding off to the right, with his back to the Khāqān. The Khāqān, ensnared in Rostam's lasso, is shown on the left side sliding headlong off his elephant, which unlike its counterpart in the Fogg miniature marches onward rather than collapsing under Rostam's power. Four soldiers, distinguishable by their pointed steel helmets, are casually observing the event. In all cases only their heads and shoulders are visible, the remainder of their bodies being cropped by the frame or hidden by the rock formation from behind which they peer. In the upper right are two turbaned trumpeters, whose upper torsos are visible as they appear from behind the rocks. One horn violates the frame and extends into the right margin. The backdrop in the lower portion of the miniature is innocuous so as not to conflict with the main action taking place. The upper half of the miniature, however, is more exuberant, coral-like rock formations, diminutive shrubs, and a stormy sky.

Miniature with text and frame: 25.0 x 14.3 cm. There are four columns of text above and below the miniature. At the top the two outside columns are each comprised of five lines, and the center columns of two lines each with a chapter title. Below the pattern is repeated, but the outside columns comprise five lines each, and the center columns three lines. A rectangular ruled frame encloses miniature and text except in the lower right where the forequarters of Rakhsh and a horn protrude into the right margin. The digits 37 in Arabic numerals are written in the right margin, but they probably derive from later date. It is signed in the center of the lower margin in miniscule characters. No date is indicated.

Miniature reference:

Sotheby's London 27 April 1994, Lot 93 (ill.).

Text references:

Warner, III, p.230. Mohl, III, pp.159-60. Levy, p.138.

