

Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

Miniature 5

Rostam Rescues Bizhan from the Pit

The pit is shown in the center foreground as a hollowed out rock mound from which the front section has been removed, thereby permitting the viewer to see inside the pit simultaneously with the events outside. The walls are formed of coral-like rock, mauve in color, which slope inward leaving only a narrow opening at the top. The interior is black except for the solitary figure of Bizhan crouching at the bottom with a gold goblet and a wine pitcher at his side; bareheaded and clothed entirely in white, his arms are shackled in long chains to his neck. He looks upward toward the narrow orifice, through which Rostam, dressed in his familiar tiger skin coat and leopard skin headdress, has lowered a lasso. Bizhan has grasped the end of the lasso in anticipation of being hoisted upward and freed. Only three of the seven warriors that accompanied Rostam are portrayed, in the upper right at the top of the rock formation, waiting for the rescue to be completed. Manizheh stands on the left side, also near the top of the rock formation, dressed entirely in a full length white *chador* that leaves only her face uncovered. The signal fire burns brightly in the upper left next to the pit opening. In the far background is the sky executed in a blue wash, and in the right margin near the bottom is the boulder which Rostam has singlehandedly removed from the mouth of the pit.

Grube's dimensions appear to be correct. Page: 36.2 x 22.6 cm.; miniature: 17.5 x 14.1 cm.; miniature with extensions into the margin: 25.0 x 18.0 cm. There are four columns of text above and below the miniature. At the top the two outside columns are each comprised of six lines, and the center columns of four lines each. Below the pattern is repeated, but the outside columns comprise seven lines each, and the center columns five lines. A rectangular ruled frame encloses miniature and text except in the lower right where the boulder violates the frame and exists almost entirely in the right margin. The digits 43 in Arabic numerals are written in the right margin, but they probably derive from later date. The painting is in an excellent state of preservation, and there is no evidence of damage or retouching. It is signed in the center of the lower margin in miniscule characters in Mo'in's hand: *raqam-e kamineh mo'in-e moṣavver*. No date is indicated.

Two other Mo'in paintings of this subject are extant, one earlier, the other later. Cf. Ms.C, f.176v, and Ms.G, f.184.

Miniature references:

Grube, MMP, #115 (ill.); Welch, AK2, Ir.M 43/C (not ill.).

Text references:

Warner, III, p.346; Mohl, III, p.312; Levy, p.170.

