

Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

Miniature 6

Esfandiyār's Fifth Exploit: He Kills the Simorgh

The miniature is enclosed by the text blocks on the top and bottom, and the ruled frame on the left, but the frame on the right side is omitted permitting the painting to continue uninterrupted into the right margin, where it also extends upward to parallel the text columns. Esfandiyār's war chariot with two harnessed horses stands in the lower right. The chariot is constructed of a carriage frame with four large wheels, on which is mounted a large black box containing the hidden Esfandiyār. Daggers with their points outward had been affixed to all surfaces of the box. A small stream, with plants and flowers growing on its banks, meanders down from the mountains in the upper left to the base of the carriage. Flying above the carriage, its long wavy tail extending into the right margin, is the giant *simorgh*, about to gobble up as a morsel the box with Esfandiyār inside. In the upper right, clustered among the rocks, is the *simorgh*'s nest with two chicks inside.

There are four columns of text above and below the miniature. At the top, the outer columns are comprised of eleven lines each, and the two center columns nine lines each plus a chapter title. Below the miniature, the outer columns each consist of five lines of text, and the center columns four each. A rectangular ruled frame encloses miniature and text except on the right side where it is omitted between the upper and lower text blocks. Welch's reproduction does not show the bottom margin, thus making it uncertain if there is any inscription. Nevertheless, the miniature is consistent in style and quality with the other signed miniatures in this manuscript to warrant an attribution to Mo'in. The number 63 written in Arabic numerals, presumably of later date, appears in the lower right margin, probably indicating that it was the sixty-third miniature in the manuscript.

Another miniature of this subject, reportedly painted by Mo'in, is mentioned by Robinson (see Ms. B); compare also Ms. D, folio 25 for a similar conception of a related subject, "Esfandiyār Battles the Dragon", also painted by Mo'in.

Miniature references:

Welch, SA, no. 56 (illustrated)

Text references:

Warner, V, p.133.

Mohl, IV, p.410.

