

Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

folio 129v

Kay Khosrow Reviews His Troops

Kay Khosrow is seated on a canopied throne aboard the back of a large gray elephant advancing toward the left. In accordance with the text, Kay Khosrow wears a jewel encrusted crown, collar, and girdle, but there is no evidence of the bull-headed mace supposed to be on his shoulder. A diminutive dark-skinned Indian driver, about one-third the size of the shāh, rides on the neck of the elephant, and a fly-chaser of the same size is seated behind the throne. The elephant is adorned with a large bell around its neck, and rings of jingles on its head and feet. Two mounted warriors with pointed helmets flank the elephant, and would appear to be Khosrow's guards. Advancing in the same direction from the right foreground are two mounted trumpeters, wearing turbans, who herald the shāh's advance. The shāh's troops represented by five warriors are clustered in a group on the left side. The only identifiable personage in this group is Rostam, who is seated motionless on his horse Rakhsh clad in his familiar tiger and leopard skin cuirass. Three other figures are represented in the upper left, one a turbanned trumpeter, the other two clamoring with small batons from behind the ridge. The setting is a barren sloping hillside that reaches a summit behind Kay Khosrow in the upper right. Small bushes grow near the summit, and beyond them on the left is a sky with clouds.

Miniature dimensions: 27 x 16 cm. There are three lines of four column text above the miniature, and two lines below. A rectangular frame encloses miniature and text, except on the left side where a single standard protrudes into the margin. Two of the warrior's faces have been repainted, and there is a tear, on the left side. The only signature is that of Faẓl 'Ali, which appears in miniscule characters in the lower right corner. The miniature is attributed by Jackson and Yohannan to Faẓl 'Ali, and by Robinson to Mo'in with the assistance of Faẓl 'Ali. While the general style is that of Mo'in Moṣavver, a close scrutiny of the details reveals another hand. The heads of the horses, the features of Rostam, and many of the other faces are distinctly different from Mo'in's detailing. Thus, it appears that the miniature was largely executed by an artist in Mo'in's entourage, most probably the otherwise unknown Faẓl 'Ali. Accordingly, Mo'in's role in this instance, may have been limited to the design and supervision of the painting, and perhaps the execution of selected details.

Location:

New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Acq. 13.228.17 (Cochran 4)

Miniature references:

J&Y, PM, p.36, no.22 (not ill.).

Robinson, *Islamic Art*, p.78, no.22 (not ill.).

Text references:

Warner, III, pp.31-32; Mohl, II, pp.465-66; Levy, p.109.

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