

Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

folio 170v

The Demon Akvān Flings Rostam into the Sea

The miniature depicts the precise moment in the story when Akvān had raised Rostam, still sleeping on the patch of earth, over his head and is about to cast him into the sea. In this respect the composition follows the traditional rendering of the scene. However, the artist's unfamiliarity with the text is betrayed by Rostam's leopard skin saddle cover, which still appears draped on the saddle, yet the passage in the text clearly states that before Rostam laid down to sleep he placed it under his head as a pillow. Typical for Mo'in compositions the background is a sloping hillside that reaches a craggy crest near the top of the painting, where grow a few green bushes. At the base of the hill in the foreground is a green expanse on which the action is taking place, and in the extreme foreground is a suggestion of the sea into which Rostam is about to be dispatched. The *div* Akvān, wearing only a skirt and bracers on its arms and legs, has humanoid characteristics of large and muscular proportions, combined with long floppy ears, horns, a tail, claws, and hooked appendages on its heels. Standing with its legs wide apart, the *div* raises the bewildered Rostam, still reclining on a chunk of earth, above its head and is about to cast him asunder. The reclining Rostam is clad in his familiar tiger and leopard skin cuirass, with a bull-headed mace at his side. His faithful horse Rakhsh, whose forequarters can be seen in the left foreground, whinnies an alarm, while in the upper right two jackals scamper along the ridge line.

Miniature dimensions: 26.75 x 16.5 cm. There are three lines of four column text above the miniature. Below there are three lines in the outer columns, and two lines in the central columns. A rectangular frame encloses miniature and text. The miniscule signature, *raqam-e kamineh faẓl 'alī*, appears in the upper left just to the right of the shrub. In the lower margin, written in Mo'in's hand, is the signature *raqam-e kamineh mo'in-e moṣavver* and the date 1104/1693. The miniature is attributed by Jackson and Yohannan to Faẓl 'Alī, and by Robinson to Mo'in with the assistance of Faẓl 'Alī. The overall style is very much that of Mo'in Moṣavver. Yet the signature of Faẓl 'Alī, and perhaps the routine treatment of the subject, suggests that Mo'in had assistance in the painting of the miniature, but the role of the lesser artist must have been diminished or utilized less conspicuously than on folios 129v and 162.

Location:

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

Miniature references:

J&Y, PM, p.37, no.26 (not ill.).

Robinson, *Islamic Art*, p.78, no.26 and p.83, fig.16.

Text references:

Warner, III, pp.277-78; Mohl, III, pp.222-23;

Levy, pp.148-49.

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