

Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

folio 203

Pirān and Gudarz Battle

Pirān is portrayed in the miniature as an old man with a long white beard, wounded and exhausted, lying at the top of the hill near the center of the composition. His shield is still strung on his back, his sword and bow encased, but in a final futile attempt to ward off the inevitable, he reaches for the dagger in his belt. Gudarz, his younger adversary, stalks the aged Turānian commander at the bottom of the hill in the left foreground. Full of confidence, Gudarz proceeds on foot with lance in hand up the hill in pursuit. The forequarters of a saddled horse, and a groom shown in profile crouching in the right foreground, are the only observers to the contest. The hillside is composed in two levels: in the front is a small rocky hill that peaks on the right just below the middle on which the two combatants are situated; a second darker hill with a rock outcropping is behind it in the upper left, with a deciduous tree on the right. A small stream with vegetation on its banks winds its way, over both hills, from the top to the bottom of the miniature, finally widening at the feet of Gudarz. In the far distance is a variegated sky.

Miniature dimensions: 22.75 x 16.5 cm. The text is written in four columns above and below the miniature, with a rectangular ruled frame enclosing miniature and text. The miniscule signature *raqam-e kamineh fażl 'ali* appears at the top of the painting, just to the left of the tree. In the center of the lower margin, written in Mo'in's hand, is the signature *raqam-e kamineh mo'in-e mošavver*. The miniature is attributed by Jackson and Yohannan to Fażl 'Ali, and by Robinson to Mo'in with the assistance of Fażl 'Ali. The painting is executed in excellent Mo'in style, and the detailing indistinguishable from the master's other work. Yet the signature of Fażl 'Ali suggests that Mo'in had assistance in the preparation of this miniature. However, the role of the lesser artist must have been such that his contribution is inseparable from his master's.

Location:

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

Miniature references:

J&Y, PM, p.37, no.30 (not ill.).

Robinson, Islamic Art, p.79, no.30 (not ill.).

Text references:

Warner, IV, p.107.

Mohl, III, pp.464-65.

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