

Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

folio 299

Eskandar and the Sage Kheẓr Seek the Fountain of Life

The artist's portrayal of the land of darkness is analogous to his representation of the well into which Bizhan was cast (cf. ff. 176v and 184), only turned laterally. It is as if Kheẓr and Eskandar were travelling in a dark cavern under a mountain, from which the front surface was removed to permit the observers, within and outside the picture, to follow the events in the cavern. The party moves from right to left through a dark tunnel, led by the Prophet Kheẓr mounted on a mule, and portrayed with a white veil over his face and a flaming halo, as is typical for representations of prophets in Persian painting. He is followed in the darkness by Eskandar astride a large white mare, a mounted torch bearer, and a bearded flag bearer, also mounted. A very diminutive foal keeps pace alongside Eskandar's mount. The top half of the miniature, the area above the "tunnel", is composed of craggy rock terrain with a single tree and a few wisps of shrubbery, behind which is a sky with clouds. Tucked away among the rocks are two groups of Eskandar's troops, five on the left and four on the right, who seem to be peering down into the "tunnel" below.

Miniature dimensions: 24 x 16.5 cm. The text is written in four columns above and below the painting, with a rectangular frame enclosing miniature and text. There is no significant damage and no sign of retouching. The minuscule signature, *raqam-e kamīneh faẓl 'alī*, is inscribed in the top left corner of the miniature. In the center of the lower margin, written in Mo'in's hand, is the signature *raqam zad kamīneh mo'in-e moṣavver*. The miniature is attributed by Jackson and Yohannan to Faẓl 'Alī, and by Robinson to Mo'in with the assistance of Faẓl 'Alī. The painting is in excellent Mo'in style, and except for the sky and possibly the faces in the upper left which appears at variance with the master's work, no other details are distinguishable from Mo'in's hand.

For another painting by Mo'in from the same sequel, see Ms. D, folio 80.

Location:

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

Miniature references:

J&Y, PM, pp.37-38, no.37 (not ill.).

Robinson, *Islamic Art*, p.79, no.37 and p.85, fig.21.

Text references:

Warner, VI, pp.159ff.

Mohl, V, pp.173ff.

Levy, pp.245-46.

Last updated 14 July 1997

Robert Eng

