

Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

folio 331v

Bahrām Gur Hunts in the Company of Āzādeh

Bahrām Gur is depicted in the foreground of the miniature astride a white horse with bow in hand. Two gazelles that he is chasing appear in the right foreground; one of them already has its ear, hoof, and head pinned together with a single arrow. It is evident that the artist was not totally familiar with the text, where it is stated that Bahrām was riding a camel, not a horse. Further evidence of unfamiliarity can be seen in the second pair of gazelles, that are fleeing on the left just beyond the ridge line. At this juncture in the episode, their gender should have already been converted by Bahrām's sharpshooting, yet they run unscathed. In the upper right, beyond the second ridge, Āzādeh sits on a dark colored horse playing her lyre. The two figures, Bahrām and Āzādeh, are drawn in large scale, and except for a wandering shepherd with his dog in the left background, are the only humans in the scene. The landscape is composed of a double row of craggy ridges, one behind the other, with a depression in between, and a few small shrubs dispersed along their crests. In the foreground is a stream with vegetation and fish; in the upper left is a single tree, and in the far background a sky with clouds that forms a backdrop for Āzādeh.

Miniature dimensions: 23.5 x 16.5 cm. The text is written in four columns above and below the miniature, with a rectangular frame enclosing miniature and text. There is a fine horizontal tear across the center of the miniature and a number of other, smaller, irregular tears at various places, most noticeably in the lower right corner. *There has also been some minor damage to the faces of the two main figures, but no retouching is evident. The only signature on the page, raqam-e kamīneh faẓl 'alī,* is inscribed at the top of the miniature just above the head of Āzādeh. The miniature is attributed by Jackson and Yohannan to Faẓl 'Alī, by Stchoukine to Mo'in, and by Robinson to Mo'in with the assistance of Faẓl 'Alī. Although the painting is not signed by Mo'in, it is in excellent Mo'in style, and except for the sky which appears at variance with the master's work, no other details are distinguishable from Mo'in's hand.

Location:

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

Miniature references:

J&Y, PM, p.38, no.38 (not ill.).

Robinson, PP, pl.23.

Stchoukine, SA, p.70 (not ill.)

Robinson, PD, p.26 and pl.65.

Robinson, Islamic Art, p.79, no.38 and p.85, fig.22.

Text references:

Warner, VI, pp.382-83; Mohl, V, pp.405-6;

Levy, p.299-301.

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