

Shāhnāmeḥ of Ferdowsi

folio 347

Bahrām Gur Kills the Dragon that Devoured a Youth

The large serpentine dragon is portrayed diagonally in the foreground with its tail extended well into the right margin. It has a snake-like head with an open mouth that reveals large canine teeth and a slithering tongue tipped with fire. Its spotted body is long and undulating with flame-like appendages flickering from its side and feet. The animal is standing in a shallow ravine, bounded on the sides by craggy rock formations. To the right, on one of these ridges, Bahrām Gur stands with bow in hand, having just let loose an arrow. The arrow has found its mark and can be seen protruding from the dragon's chest. Bahrām wears a knee-length coat, arm and leg guards, and a jeweled crown with a feather and black aigrette of sovereignty; bowcase, quivers, sword, and dagger hang from his belt. Emerging from the center of the crown is a tapered point with a small fluttering pendant, as if helmet and crown were merged into a single piece of headgear. The forequarters of the shāh's white horse, and a groom shown in profile, appear behind the ridge in the upper right. This diverges somewhat from the text which states that Bahrām was mounted when he shot the dragon, and dismounted only to slit its body open. In the left background, also behind the ridge, are the heads of six warriors holding standards, who keenly observe the confrontation. One places his forefinger to his lip in astonishment.

Miniature dimensions (without extensions): 23.75 x 16.5 cm. The text is written in four columns above and below the miniature, with a rectangular frame enclosing miniature and text, except on the right side where the dragon's tail protrudes into the margin. The painting has suffered some minor abrasion, and a patch has been placed over a damaged section of Bahrām's back. The only signature on the page, *raqam-e kamineh faẓl 'ali*, is inscribed at the top of the miniature on the sky. The miniature is attributed by Jackson and Yohannan to Faẓl 'Ali, by Stchoukine to Mo'in, and by Robinson to Mo'in with the assistance of Faẓl 'Ali. Although the painting is not signed by Mo'in, it is in excellent Mo'in style, and except for the sky which appears to be Faẓl 'Ali's work, no other details are distinguishable from Mo'in's style.

For other paintings by Mo'in illustrating Bahrām Gur killing dragons, see folio 354 and Ms. E, no.10.

Location:

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

Miniature references:

J&Y, PM, p.38, no.40 (not ill.).

Robinson, *Islamic Art*, p.79, no.40 (not ill.).

Text references:

Warner, VII, p.43; Mohl, V, p.488; Levy, p.309.

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Robert Eng

