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MINIATURE FROM A COPY OF FIRDAWSI'S SHAHNAME. 'SHAH ANUSHIRVAN CAPTURES THE FORTRESS OF SAQILA'

IRAN, SHIRAZ; MID-16TH CENTURY

LEAF: 28.7 × 23.4 CM

Horsemen and foot soldiers armed with swords, bows, and axes attack the fortress of Saqila. Firdawsi's text also mentions the use of catapults, but none are shown on this miniature. What it does depict, in contrast – and probably very precisely – is the weapons and armor of its day (the 16th century).

The bows are fairly light and painted, while the swords are long and curved. All the soldiers bear helmets with spikes – some with plumes or pennants attached – and most wear leg and arm guards. Many of the foot soldiers and a few of the horsemen carry round shields, and some of the horses are protected with chanfrons and colorful caparisons.

Published in:

Kjeld von Folsach, Torben Lundbæk and Peder Mortensen (eds.):
Sultan, Shah and Great Mughal: the history and culture of the Islamic world, The National Museum, Copenhagen 1996, cat.no. 179;
<http://shahnama.caret.cam.ac.uk/new/jnama/card/cemanuscript:1085430942>;
<http://www.islamicpaintedpage.com/search/by/item?collection-search=David+Collection&reference-search=45p%2F1982&folio-search=>;