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THREE MINIATURES FROM BIJAN'S *TARIKH-I JAHANGUSHA-YI KHAQAN SAHIBQIRAN* (A HISTORY OF SHAH ISMAIL I)

IRAN, ISFAHAN; END OF THE 1680S

LEAFs: 35.9 × 23.5 CM; 35.8 × 23.4 CM; 35.9 × 23.3 CM

These three paintings were made by Muin Musawwir, Riza-i Abbasi's best-known pupil, who in the course of his long career illustrated at least six editions of the *Shahnama* – one of which is in the David Collection – along with two or three editions of Bijan's posthumous, historical text about the founder of the Safavid Dynasty, Shah Ismail. Only one of the paintings was signed by Muin, and it is possible that he had help on the work from his pupils.

The first and perhaps most charming shows the moment at which Ismail kills an enormous bear in 1500. The deadly situation loses some of its seriousness by being enacted in an almost rococo, pink landscape.

The next scene shows Shah Ismail at an audience receiving his faithful adherents, the *qizilbash* (red heads), after they have defeated his

opponent Shirvanshah Farrukhsiyar in 1500.

The last miniature illustrates the important battle at Chaldiran in August 1514. The Ottoman Turks under Selim I won a decisive victory over Shah Ismail and young Safavid Iran. It was a serious blow for Ismail, who had almost divine status among his Shiite followers. The battle was more or less won for Sultan Selim, seen at the top left corner, because of the Turks' superior artillery, and Muin Musawwir leaves us in no doubt that it was in fact Shah Ismail who was the bravest warrior.

“Shah Ismail Holds an Audience“

“Shah Ismail at the Battle of Chaldiran”

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*Art from the World of Islam. 8th-18th century*, Louisiana, Humlebæk 1987, cat.no. 242/3;

Kjeld von Folsach: *Islamic art. The David Collection*, Copenhagen 1990, cat.no. 37;

Kjeld von Folsach: *Art from the World of Islam in The David Collection*, Copenhagen 2001, cat.no. 48;

Kjeld von Folsach: *For the Privileged Few: Islamic Miniature Painting from The David Collection*, Louisiana, Humlebæk 2007, cat.no. 88;

Kjeld von Folsach, Joachim Meyer: *The Human Figure in Islamic Art – Holy Men, Princes, and Commoners*, The David Collection, Copenhagen 2017, fig. 43, p. 171;

Kjeld von Folsach, Joachim Meyer and Peter Wandel: *Fighting, Hunting, Impressing. Arms and Armour from the Islamic World 1500-1850*, The David Collection, Copenhagen 2021, cat.no. 83;

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Sotheby's, London, 22.-23/5-1986, lot 151;

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Copenhagen 2017, cat.no. 42, pp. 170-171;  
Kjeld von Folsach, Joachim Meyer and Peter Wandel: *Fighting,  
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