Tahmurasli, the second legendary king of Iran associated in dehshat-avawen, the symbol of evil in ancient Iranian mythology, and the demons or divs who were his servants. However, he spared their lives because it was from them that he learned the secret of the alchemical process and hence the art of writing. This image shows the young prince about to land a blow with a club on a demon's head. Another demon has already been attacked by the prince, and another crouches in fear while some demons who have been taken prisoner are about to be led away. The whole event takes place in a kind of theatrical arena surrounded by a chorus contemplating the scene and chatting among themselves; there are two pairs of elegant horsemen taking little interest in events, multicolored rocks surround the scene, the vegetation consists of dry trees and others that are in bloom, and there are two pairs of animals unconcerned by what is happening in the main scene. The painter has almost transformed what could have been a savage and brutal event into comedy, with grotesque aperçets demons, one of whom is having his tail pulled by a bear cub. Considered from another more aesthetic viewpoint, we have a circle of blistering colors highlighting the many activities taking place around the vast, pale space, deserted but for three demons and a prince on horseback (detail fig. 53 p. 155).
At first sight, this charming, peaceful image simply shows two lovers entwined in each other’s arms, their slippers placed idly at the foot of the bed, while the nervous sleep. In fact, this represents the timeless adventure of Sultana, the favorite of King Ardashir, and the young Ardashir who would later run off with her and found the Sassanian dynasty. This very important aspect of the story is not present in the image. However, the inscriptions on the walls come from a mystical poem that compares the eyes of the beloved with the Creator’s heaven. “Prize open for us the secret passage that leads to the well-protected space of the hearth. For we are pilgrims of love, lost in the devotion that surrounds the Kaaba of our health.” As often, the viewer can decide his own interpretation.