17. Gustaham, having slain Farshidvard, dispatches Lakhak (206b)

Warfare continues. Gudarz and Piran agree to a series of single combats between chosen warriors. In the eleventh Iranian victory Gudarz claims the life of Piran. Lakhak and Farshidvard, brothers of Piran, understand that he is dead. Leaving the main army to surrender, they make their own way towards Turan, taking a desert road where they encounter and overcome Iranian outriders. Learning of this, Gudarz orders pursuit. Gustaham, who has recently been in charge of the camp, embraces this chance of glory and sets out. Bizhan is concerned for Gustaham and obtains permission from Gudarz to follow him and render assistance; Giv tries in vain to dissuade his son. Lakhak and Farshidvard have paused by a stream to eat and rest, when Gustaham’s steed and their horses alert their owners of their enemies’ positions. Gustaham reaches the brothers and strikes down Farshidvard, Gustaham and Lakhak fight, wounding each other. At length Lakhak is struck on the neck:

‘His head was trampled like a polo ball,
That same stroke final to his life’s games all’.
Gustaham dismounts at a stream, and prays that Bizhan will come to find him. Bizhan is led to the place by the sight of Gustaham’s horse; he obliges a Turanian straggler to help him bring back Gustaham and the heads of the two brothers.

The picture is a classic rendering of a single combat, derived from old symmetrical types, but with sufficient variation to animate it. The combatants have rushed together. The vital energy of Gustaham is implied by the brightly chequered caparison of his horse; the decapitated body of Lakhak remains poised upright, the blood spouting from his neck the central focus of the scene. In the background, greenish rock in the upper right—on Gustaham’s side—looms as though it were a crowd of spectators following his movement; to the left, a tree bent in the opposing direction suggests the impetus of Lakhak. Low in the picture, Farshidvard and his horse are clearly secondary to the principal action. Above this line, the debris of battle, including the head of Lakhak and a wicker shield sliced in two, is depicted with neat clarity.

Kay Khwaju receives Gudarz and the ten champions. He treats the bodies of Piran and his champions with honour, and has Garay executed. Bizhan returns with Gustaham. Afrasyab resolves to avenge Piran; he arrays his army under his son, Shidah and Chahan.

Spaced text A. 216. Kay Khwaju slays Shidah in single combat.
18. The fortress of Gang Dizh attacked with mines (223) 46

The army of Tirizan suffers a defeat; Afrasiyab retreats over the Jayhum and takes refuge in his stronghold of Gang Dizh (or Gang Bilisht). 47 When Kay Khusraw approaches, Afrasiyab issues from his stronghold, gives battle again, and is again worsted. Both sides hear of the approach of Rustam. Afrasiyab retreats into Gang Dizh; he writes to the Faghfir of Chin for assistance, and prepares catapults and weaponry. Kay Khusraw reaches Gang Dizh; Chahan brings overtures of peace, which Kay Khusraw spurns. Kay Khusraw disposes his forces round the castle—Rustam, Gusho (Gusham), Gudarz and he himself each to attack a side—and he disposes siege engines worked by men of Rumi. He directs that a mine should be dug under the fortifications, its wooden props daubed with naphtha.

'Attacks at every junction of the wall:
Such was the plan to make the castle fall.'
Kay Khusraw prays for aid and launches his attack. Missiles are hurled; the naphtha is set on fire and the walls are breached. Rustam enters the fortress and takes Chahan and Garsivaz prisoner; women and children are also killed and captured. When Afrasiyab sees that his position is hopeless, he flees by a secret passage. Kay Khusraw spares the family of Afrasiyab.

The complexity of the palace city of Gang Dizh is evoked by small, densely clustered buildings, with women looking anxiously from roof and window, while men—their faces almost extinguished by their armour—hurl rocks from the battlements. On the right a man looks from a doorway, since he is drawn rather larger than the soldiery and wears a crown this must be Afrasiyab. His posture, leaning forward with one arm braced on the door jamb, distinctly suggests that he may soon leave the scene. The small buildings and rather small figures will be found again in illustration No. 23; they may indicate an influence from western Iran. 48 The brickwork of the outer wall has vertical striations that appear to result from the pigment's failure to lodge over previously ruled lines. Below this, what are presumably stone blocks of a light turquoise colour are strongly shaded on the left.

At the foot of the wall a rim of rock marks the edge of a trench; the naphtha burns darkly from behind this. In the centre, Rustam in tiger-skin coat brandishes a wicker shield. In the lower left a mangonel (manjaniq) 49 is made ready; it has a sling and fixed counterweight. A similar engine is prepared by the defenders. Comparable engines had been portrayed since Sogdian times, but a nearer forerunner to the composition as a whole is a fourteenth-century 'Capture of Baghdad' in the Diet Albums (pl. 7). The Shahnameh painter is careful to show that the mangonel is operated by a man in civilian dress, presumably a Rumi.

Afrasiyab's forces are reinforced by the Faghfir of Chin and further battles ensue. Defeated, Afrasiyab crosses the Sea of Zarah (or Zirih) towards Gang Dizh. Kay Khusraw sends his prisoners and the treasure of Tirizan to Kay K'a'us and proceeds towards Chin, visiting his father's city, Siyavushird. He sends ambassadors to the Faghfir of Cain and the King of Makri. The latter offers resistance.

Spaced text B. 230. Kay Khusraw defeats the King of Makriin; he takes ship to cross the Sea of Zarah. 50

Hearing that Kay Khusraw has returned to Gang Dizh, Afrasiyab abandons his army and flees. Kay Khusraw spends a year in Gang Dizh. He goes again to Siyavushird and establishes rule in Makriin and relations with Chin; he then returns to Iran. Afrasiyab wanders for a period until he is discovered when Hnum, a hermit of the goals of Faridun, hears him lamenting his lot in a cave; eventually Afrasiyab is captured.

Spaced text C. 235. Afrasiyab and Garsivaz are executed by Kay Khusraw.