To rescue his sisters, Isladviyar goes by the third and quickest of three roads to the Brazen Hold; on the way he accomplishes Seven Feats. The fortress appears impregnable. To effect an entrance, Isladviyar dresses some of his men as merchants, and has others put into chests; the main army is to await a signal by fire. Arjasp allows the merchants to enter his citadel and to begin to trade. The sisters of Isladviyar, who have been forced to carry water, come upon their disguised brother and ask for news of Iran; when he speaks, Humay recognizes his voice. Under the pretext of giving thanks for deliverance from an earlier peril, Isladviyar acquires Arjasp's permission to hold a celebration on the ramparts, lighting a fire there. Isladviyar's feast makes the defenders drunk. As night falls the fiery signal is seen by the Iranians, under Pashian, and they sound their trumpets. This is heard inside, and Arjasp sends his son Kuhram out to fight. Kuhram takes Pashian to be Isladviyar and flies back to the fort with the news that the latter is outside. Isladviyar puts aside his disguise, releases his concealed men, and makes for the palace. He meets Humay and his other sister, Bih Afred, and tells them to wait by the merchandise. Isladviyar finds Arjasp asleep. Arjasp runs out of his palace, they fight, and Arjasp succumbs to Isladviyar's blows:

'The mighty hero failed and fell down dead, Isladviyar severing body from head.'

Isladviyar sets fire to the palace, captures Arjasp's women, seizes the treasury, and with his sisters and his men rides out on horses from the stables. Kuhram attacks the army of Iran, but is slain. Gushasp's daughters are restored to him, and he holds a feast.

Bayon well says that we are lifted as by an eagle's flight, and then 'The abolition of the foreground adds enormously to the sense of altitude and remoteness.' The purplish rock with its turquoise cresting—which recalls the tragic setting of 'Suhiraz slum by Rustam'—lifts the fortress above the sphere of everyday events, and the surrounding walls form another barrier. The critical action takes place against the light ground of an inner courtyard, and it is a variation on the group of two figures that has marked slaying in several previous pictures. Isladviyar has yanked back the head of Arjasp, whose terror is clearly expressed in his features. Having reached the centre, we are likely to return to the encircling buildings to study the detail of their architecture, the diversity of their decoration, and the nuances of different hues of brick. Robinson notes the similarity to the representation of Gang Dzhuk and attributes both pictures to the same artist, but differences in treatment of the brickwork argue against this. In addition, in the second picture the drawing is even finer; the action is more focused; the female figures are more essential to the narrative. The partly dispossessed warriors, who again man the walls, have here a certain irony, since the threat to them is within. The general conception of this composition does not, in fact, originate with this painter, since the treatment in Baysunghur's Shāh-nāma (pl. 23) also gives us a high view into the stronghold, but one which, though rather vertiginous in its varying perspectives, is firmly attached to its foreground. The earlier picture also places the ancillary structures on the left and the main action on the right, indeed the extreme upper right. The later picture, in addition to calming the architecture and distanc ing the scene, isolates the main action. The death scene is moved down from the royal ayaan to the courtyard, and, whereas before Isladviyar was surrounded by his men, here subsidiary persons are actively leaving the scene to the right. In Baysunghur's picture two female figures may be understood as the sisters of Isladviyar, under guard and awaiting their fate; in that for Muhammad Juki two women are watching from semi-concealment and they appear about to break out in mourning.

Robinson notes the name of Muhammad Juki in the white kufic inscription over the gate in the outer wall. It reads: Muhammad Juki bahādur, the last word equivalent to 'warrior.' Robinson finds 'strange, and perhaps a trifling sinister the application of the name of the patron, who was shortly to die, to the dwelling of a prince who is having his throat cut. There is perhaps a deliberate ambiguity as to whether we should see Muhammad Juki as the victorious or the defeated combatant.

The arresting effect of this picture is due in no small part to the convincingly architectonic...
effect of the buildings and their slightly smaller scale in relation to previous scenes which supports the illusion of a bird's eye view.

A feeling for the three dimensional and the occasional introduction of miniature buildings and figures are features of the painting of western Iran, from a fourteenth-century picture of the Prophet offered a city (pl. 8) to the early sixteenth century. The sense of structure is apparent in 'Khusrav comes to Shārīn's castle' in the Khusrav va Shārin of the Freer Gallery (pl. 11); small-scale buildings appear in portrayals of the Ka'bah in Iskandar Sultan’s Anthology Add. 27261 (pl. 13). It thus seems probable that the painter is from the former Jalayirid area. It would also appear that he painted Majmun at Ka'bah (pl. 67) in the Nizāmī for Ismā il Dūnī, as will be discussed further in the following chapter.

Later in the century, as Bahari observes, the influence of the wall and rock of the Brazen Hold can be seen in 'Iskandar and the hermit' in the British Library’s Khamshāh of Nizāmī of 900/1494–95 (Or. 6810)—the picture bears an attribution to Qāsim ‘Alī.

24. Rustam in combat with Isfandiyār (291b)

Isfandiyār asks Gushṭāp for the promised throne, but Gushṭāp adds the further condition that, since Rustam refuses to declare himself a subject, the prince should bring him bound to court. Isfandiyār travels to Zābulistān and sends his son Baha’ī rāh to convey to Rustam that if he will submit, Isfandiyār will seek to mitigate Gushṭāp’s ire against him. Baha’ī rāh sees Rustam cooking a wild ass over a fire, and to preserve his father from danger he tries to kill Rustam with a boulder; Rustam deflects this with a kick. Baha’ī rāh then delivers his message in due form. Isfandiyār and Rustam meet and embrace. Rustam invites Isfandiyār to his house. Isfandiyār says that he may not accept this invitation, but instead he invites Rustam to his camp. Isfandiyār returns to his camp but regrets his invitation, which now seems to him too conciliatory; he neglects to inform Rustam when the meal has been prepared. Rustam eats in his own home, and then rides to Isfandiyār’s camp to vent his anger. Isfandiyār invites Rustam to drink wine but taunts him concerning Zal and the Sinurgh; each vaunts his lineage and his deeds. Rustam will not consent to be taken bound before the king; Isfandiyār will accept no less and insists that they must fight on the following day. Rustam returns home; in the morning he dons his tigerskin and goes forth reluctantly. Single combat is agreed. They fight with lances and then with swords:

'The heroes' hearts were kindled to the fight,
On charging steeds they feinted left and right.'

At length they struggle with their hands Fighting breaks out among their kinsmen, and two sons of Isfandiyār are slain.

The composition is of the same simple type as that of Gustaham facing Lahāk (No. 17): a rocky landscape background, confronted riders, a foreground with the evidence of previous combat and more rocks. Notably similar are the left-hand horse, barded in gold, and the left-hand cypress with its spade-shaped segments. The effect of the later picture is, however, more forceful. The figures are larger, and their faces are clearly seen, with bright eyes and flaring moustaches; the horses have pronged chumfrons. The lively red on either side, in surcoat or scabbard and quiver, stands out in contrast to the greenish ground. The detail of Rustam’s tigerskin is treated with great zest. Since this is an element of strong pattern, the present painter eschews the chequered parision of Gustaham’s horse in the earlier picture, and chooses instead the blue of the loose horse in its lower left. Similarly, Rustam’s shield must be a plain colour, in fact gold. Whereas the earlier picture had two shield shields of the bound wicker variety in the foreground, here there is a single bicoloured shield, central in the picture and defending Rustam’s target. Given this array of similarities and changes, it seems that the present painter is making a deliberate critique of the earlier picture.

The parallel upright weapons of the combatants may owe something to ‘Combat of Rustam and Barzīn’ in the Barzināmah of Baysunghur’s Shāhādān, with the sides reversed and subsidiary figures eliminated. They show that a resolution has not yet been reached and suggest that the pair are evenly matched. This is again implied by the horizon, where the tree on the left balances a pinnacle on the right, while a more rounded, central peak imposes equilibrium. The greenish rocks with very slight texture markings somewhat recall the style of the Galtān made for Baysunghur in 1427.
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25. Isandiyar slain by Rustam (296a)

Isandiyar reviles Rustam for the loss of his sons, but at nightfall permits him to leave the field wounded. Zal summons the Simurgh by burning one of her feathers, and she heals Rustam. She warns Rustam that if he should succeed in killing Isandiyar he will be pursued by misfortune: Rustam is ready to accept this fate. The Simurgh shows Rustam a tamarisk tree and instructs him to make from it an arrow with a double head, which will be fatal to Isandiyar. In the morning Rustam comes to Isandiyar, who is surprised to find that his adversary is still alive. Rustam declares that he has come, not from the desire to fight, but to defend his honour: Isandiyar may take him before the king, but not in bonds. Isandiyar is not persuaded. Rustam sets the tamarisk arrow to his bow and utters a prayer. As Isandiyar taunts him again, Rustam looses the arrow and shoots him in the eyes. Isandiyar drops his own bow:

'He clutched his black horse by chest and mane
As his blood spread red on the dusty plain'.

Isandiyar falls from his horse and draws the arrow from his eye; he is embraced by Bahman and Pashštan. Rustam approaches; he acknowledges the valour of Isandiyar and says that it is only through fate that his arrow has struck home. Isandiyar blames his end on his father's desire to reduce Sistan; he forgives Rustam, and asks him to care for Bahman. He then charges Pashštan with a message of reproach for Gushčasp and dies. Rustam sends the body of Isandiyar back to Gushčasp. Bahman is instructed in Zabulistan, and then reconciled with Gushčasp. Shortly afterwards, Rustam dies through the treachery of his half-brother, Shaghād.

The composition for the basic unit of the combatants evidently descends from that used for this subject in the Great Mongol Shāhnāmah (pl. 5), but the more general lines approximate in the present manuscript to those of 'Rustam shoots Ashkabās' (No. 12). Behind an irregular horizon, the two armies watch from either side, the army on the left under a prominent banner; these forces appear to be separated from the central action by a valley. Differences in the present picture, apart from those naturally required by the narrative, are the fan-like form of the rock behind Rustam, which seems to propel him forward at a trot, and the brighter rocky barrier in the foreground that channels his shot to its target. In contrast to the previous picture in which the combatants are, at least in a theoretical sense, evenly matched, we see here the inexorable hand of fate working through the tamarisk arrow. This is not a combat that Isandiyar could win. The arrow has struck and dangles hideously before Isandiyar as, with blood gathering in his eyes, he tries to retain his seat on his rearing horse. Rustam's forward movement is reflected in the upper left by the banner over the clustered army. Two segments of the four-part banner are in green and orange-red, the colours that Rustam wears under his tigerskin coat, and almost identical to those of his horse armour. A third segment has a golden dragon on a blue ground, and a fourth a golden inscription on a black ground. The latter reads: al-sultān al-ʿaṣam muḥammad jiūkī, 'the most mighty sultan Muhammad Jiūkī'. The status claimed for the patron is thus yet greater than that on the gate of Arjāśp's castle, and it is here clearly associated with a victorious champion, but this second introduction of his name into a picture may suggest an anxiety lest it should not come to be recorded in a final colophon.

Gushčasp yields the throne of Irān to Bahman.
Bahman is succeeded by his daughter-wife,