28. Escape of Qubād (394a)

The third successor to Bahram Gūr is Pirūz, who resumes warfare with the Hayātānās, whom his grandfather had defeated, and with whom he had established peace. The Hayātānās defeat the army of Iran, Pirūz is killed and his eldest son, Qubād, is taken prisoner. There follows the regency of Sīqarāy, on behalf of a younger son, Balāsh, Sīqarāy is able to defeat the Hayātānās and win the freedom of prisoners, amongst whom is Qubād. Sīqarāy prevails upon Balāsh to abdicate in favour of Qubād. When Sīqarāy has retired from the regency to Shirāz, rumours of his disloyalty are brought to Qubād, who has him put to death. Learning of this, the people raise a younger brother, Janāsp, to the throne and make Qubād captive. He is handed into the custody of Zarmīhr, son of Sīqarāy. Zarmīhr refuses to take vengeance for his father, whose guilt he acknowledges. Qubād is overjoyed and tells him of a plan to escape with the support of five companions.

"This Zarmīhr heard and—man of judgement—
He swiftly broke the shackles from his feet."

By night the seven ride towards the land of the Hayātānās.

The subject is rare or unique, so the fact that the land of the Hayātānās, to which Qubād escapes, is Muhammad Jūkī's province of Khurātān is clearly significant.

For the same reason it is very probable that the artist designs his composition expressly for this manuscript. The space left in the text is smaller than for the majority of illustrations, but the painter contrives to exploit that fact, making us feel that we are getting a glimpse of an action carried out in secret. The upper text partly obscures the roofs of the city; the lower is only just below the hoofs of the mounts of the principal figures, and it partly screens the rock that extends into the left-hand margin, lending a sense of confinement. The rock itself wraps round the five companions, half concealing them in a discreet waiting place, but on its left-hand side, where it breaks into the margin, it promises enlargement and the freedom of a wider world. Zarmīhr and Qubād pass through the doorway; the former turns in the saddle with a gesture of reassurance that conveys his loyalty. His hand also serves to direct the viewer's attention to the prince, who is framed by a soaring archway, which contradicts the constriction of the general view, and implies that Qubād retains his royal dignity even when still almost a captive.

It seems very probable that this is by the painter of 'Iftā'īyīr slays Arjus at the 'brazen Hold' (No. 23). This is suggested not only by the treatment of the buildings in general, but also by points of detail. The colour and use of the rock are also significant. Above all, the complex subtlety of the picture as illustration bespeaks the hand of that artist.

It appears that a seal on the lower text area has been obliterated.

In Hayāl Qubād catches sight of the daughter of a dīhqān, and asks for her in marriage, pledging to give her father the government of the city of Ahrār; this agreed, Qubād gives her a ring. Qubād proceeds to the king of the Hayātānās, who is willing to supply him with warriors on condition that he is granted the right to rule in Chaqān. Qubād returns to Ahrār to find that his wife has given birth to a son, whom they name Kīsā. The dīhqān reveals that his lineage is from Fāsidūn. Qubād is welcomed back in Iran.

Spaced text l. 395. Restored to the throne, Qubād pardons Jamāsp and gives authority to Zarmīhr; he comes under the influence of Mardak. In a time of famine Mardak induces the king to open his grain-areas. Kīsā disapproves Mardak's egalitarianism. Zoroastrian sages are summoned to give their opinion, and Mardak is condemned. Kīsā has the followers of Mardak buried upside down, and he has Mardak hanged head downwards to be shot to death. Qubād reigns the throne to his son, who is henceforth known as Nūshrūnān.

Lacuna between 425 and 426

During the reign of Kīsā Nūshrūnān, the game of chess is introduced from India in the form of a diplomatic puzzle: if Nūshrūnān can find out how it is played, India will pay tribute. Bīzūrjīmhr, a wise counsellor, discovers the mystery. Further to this, Bīzūrjīmhr invents the game of backgammon and is sent with it to India, where he explains its rules. India agrees to pay tribute. There may have been an illustration at this point (hypothetical n4).