



BĪŽAN

BĪŽAN, son of Gīv by Rostam's daughter Bānū Gošasp, figures prominently in the *Šāh-nāma* as a hero in Kay Kōsrow's reign. He played an important part in all the wars of the time. Among his chief exploits were the vanquishing and killing of Ferōd, a son of Sīāvoš (*Šāh-nāma*, Moscow, IV, pp. 57f.), the slaying of Hūmān and Rūyīn, Pīrān's brother and son (V, pp. 119f., 190f.), the capture of Espanōy, the beautiful slave-girl of Afrāsīāb's son-in-law Težāv (IV, pp. 75f.), and the carrying of the Kāvīānī banner into the Iranian ranks after the commander, Farīborz, had fled with it in the face of the enemy's onslaught and the Iranian troops had been disheartened and brought near to defeat through not seeing their banner (IV, pp. 96f.).

Bīžan's greatest adventure, however, was his romance with Afrāsīāb's daughter Manīža (V, pp. 6-85): Bīžan, accompanied by another warrior named Gorgīn, undertook the task of ridding villagers' fields of wild boars. Gorgīn then led him to a delightful glade where Manīža and the daughters of the Turanian nobles camped every spring, far from her palace. When the two men came into view, Manīža loved Bīžan at first sight. She sent her governess to bring him to her banquet, and they spent three days together, feasting and drinking wine. When the time for return home came, Manīža was unwilling to be parted from Bīžan. Knowing that he would not go into her palace on his own, she poured a sleeping potion into his wine and had him carried into the building, out of sight of the guards. Before long the chamberlain found out and told Afrāsīāb. Soldiers broke into Manīža's palace, caught Bīžan sitting blissfully beside her, and arrested him. Afrāsīāb at first intended to inflict the



death penalty but, on the advice of Pīrān and for fear of starting a war with Iran, he decided in the end to spare Bīžan's blood. Instead he ordered that Bīžan should be bound and thrown into a deep well, called the well of Aržang, and that a heavy stone, which Akvān (q.v.) the Dēv had flung out of the sea into the nearby forest, should be placed over the well. While Bīžan was in the well, Manīža spent the days begging for food and dropping it to Bīžan through a chink between the stone and the well wall. After a time news of Bīžan's misfortune reached Iran. Rostam then went to Tūrān in the disguise of a merchant and rescued Bīžan, who returned to Iran bringing Manīža with him.

Bīžan is one of the heroes who accompanied Kay Kōsrow on his journey to the other world. They went with him until he met the angel Sorūš and vanished. On their return journey they were all overwhelmed by snow and perished. A mountain pass called Molla-ye Bīžan in the Kohgīlūya area is believed by the local people to be the place where Bīžan and his companions perished (Fasā'ī, *Fārs-nāma* II, p. 266).

Bīžan appears also in other epic works, such as the *Farāmarz-nāma*. A work entitled *Bīžan-nāma* is little more than a rehash of Ferdowsī's romance of Bīžan and Manīža (J. Matīnī, "Dar bāra-ye Bīžan-nāma," *Āyanda*, 1360 Š./1981, 1, pp. 32-36, 4, pp. 257-61).

We know that the names of Bīžan, his father Gīv, his grandfather Gōdarz, his paternal uncle Bahrām, and certain other *Šāh-nāma* heroes are identical with those of some of the Parthian (Arsacid) kings. Vējan (Bīžan) appears in the list of the Parthians as the grandson of Gōtarz (Gōdarz) I (ca. 91-87 b.c.) and grandfather of Gōtarz II (ca. 38-51 a.d.; Th. Nöldeke, *Das iranische Nationalepos*, p. 7; *Grundriss* II, pp. 136-37; E. Yarshater, "Iranian National History," in *Camb. Hist. Iran* III/1, pp. 458f.). Nöldeke surmised that the Parthian families who were the guardians of the epic legends later attributed some of the exploits of the ancient heroes to their own ancestors. There are also several adventure tales which must be seen as reflections of events of the Parthian period. If we had more detailed knowledge of the Parthians, we might be better able to detect the historical origins of some of the stories.

Having regard to these considerations, the present writer holds that the story of Bīžan and Manīža, like that of Vīs and Rāmīn (see V. Minorsky, "Vīs u Rāmīn, A Parthian Romance," *BSOAS* 11, 1946, pp. 741-63; 12, 1947, pp. 20-35; 16, 1954, pp. 91-92), is probably a love romance from the literature of the Parthian aristocracy. Similarities in the characters of the protagonists make it



likely that both romances are products of the same period (e.g., the uninhibited boldness of both Bīžan and Rāmīn, the recklessness of both Manīža and Vīs in declaring their love and sacrificing everything for their loved one, the role of the governess and the scenes of illicit intimacy). Possibly the romance of Bīžan and Manīža in its original form was closer to the romance of Vīs and Rāmīn in this respect but had to lose many ingredients unsuited to the heroic world before it was admitted into the epic literature (cf. Manīkān, the name of the priest, a major character, in the romance of *Vīs o Rāmīn*, which, according to Minorsky [12, pp. 28, 31], is a variant of Manīža).

The *Šāh-nāma* episode of Bīžan and Manīža was published separately in a lavish edition by E. Pūr(-e) Dāvūd (Tehran, 1344 Š./1965).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Given in the text. See also M. Mokri, *La légende de Bīžan-u Manīža, version populaire du sud du Kurdistan* (Pers. title: *Dāstān-e Bīžan o Manīža be zabān-e gūrānī . . .*), Paris, 1966 (Kurd. text, translation, commentary, and glossary).