



## KATĀYUN

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**KATĀYUN**, a mythological figure in the *Šāh-nāma* of Ferdowsi and in the *Bundahišn*. In the *Šāh-nāma* (pp. 19-24), Katāyun is the daughter of the emperor of Rum, who marries **Goštāsp** while he is in exile. In the *Bundahišn* it is mentioned as the name of **Ferēdun**'s brother (TD<sub>1</sub>, fol. 98r; Anklesaria, 35.10, p. 294). In the *Bahman-nāma* of Irānšāh, Katāyun/Kasāyun is the daughter of the king of **Kashmir** and the wife of Bahman (q.v.; Irānšāh, p. 29; Justi, p. 159); and in *Mojmal al-tawāriḵ* (pp. 30, 53), Katāyun is the daughter of the emperor of Rum and Kasāyun, the daughter of the king of Kashmir.

According to Daqiqi's part of the *Šāh-nāma* (p. 78, vv. 30-31), the princess's name was Nāhid, but Goštāsp called her Katāyun. Theodor Nöldeke suggests that "Katāyun" may be related to the name of Komito, the sister of Justinian's wife, Theodora. Komito was married to Sittas, who defeated a Persian offensive against Armenia in 530 (Nöldeke, p. 133, sec. 4, n. 8; Prokopios, pp. XVIII, 41).

According to the *Šāh-nāma*, Goštāsp, having left his father's court in protest, goes to Rum and lives there incognito. Because of his royal presence and heroic strength, he cannot find any employment and is almost starving, when he meets a nobleman and lives for a while as his honored guest (*Šāh-nāma*, pp. 12-19). He convinces Goštāsp to attend the banquet at the emperor's court, where Katāyun, the emperor's daughter, was to choose a husband. Katāyun, who had fallen in love with Goštāsp in a dream, makes her choice with a garland of flowers; but the emperor, angry at her daughter's choice of a stranger, turns her away, and she and Goštāsp go to the nobleman's house and



live on his hospitality and the sale of Katāyun's jewels (*Šāh-nāma*, pp. 20-23; Ta'ālebi, p. 248). Later on, when the emperor notices Goštāsp's bravery, his kindness towards his daughter, and his masterful ability at polo and archery, he accepts him as a worthy son-in-law and honors him (*Šāh-nāma*, pp. 47-51). Eventually, Goštāsp's brother, Zarēr, persuades him to return to Balkh, and Katāyun follows him.

A similar story is told by Ta'ālebi (pp. 245-55), and another short version of it appears in Mirḳvānd's *Rawzat al-ṣafā*, where there is no trace of the dream and Katāyun marks her choice by throwing a citron (*toranj*) towards him (Mirḳvānd, I, pp. 597-99; tr., pp. 266-71).

This is an old legend, and the whole sequence appears to have been redesigned from the legend of Zariadres and Odatis, preserved by Athenaeus (13.35) on the authority of Chares of Mytilene (Jacoby, *Fragmente* IIB, pp. 600-601, no. 125, frag. 5; Christensen, p. 117; Boyce, pp. 463-65; Yarshater, p. 591).

Friedrich Spiegel (I, p. 665, n. 1) was the first one to notice the similarity between the *Šāh-nāma*'s story and the story of Zariadres and Odatis. The latter is narrated among the Greek texts related to Persian customs and beliefs in which Hystaspes and his younger brother Zariadres were said by the people of their land to have been born of Aphrodite and Adonis. Hystaspes ruled Media and the lands below it, Zariadres the region above the Caspian Gates up to the Tanaïs. Beyond the Tanaïs live the Marthi, ruled by Omartes, whose daughter Odatis was the most beautiful woman in Asia. Odatis dreamt of Zariadres and loved him; and he too loved Odatis through dreams. He sought her vainly in marriage, for her father did not wish to give her to a stranger. Soon after, Omartes held a marriage feast attended by his own kinsmen and nobles and bade Odatis to give a cup of wine to the man she wished to marry. Zariadres, forewarned by Odatis, came in full haste across the Tanaïs, accompanied only by his charioteer, and entered the hall in Scythian dress as, weeping, Odatis slowly filled the cup. She recognized him with joy, and he, having received the cup, carried her off (Yarshater, 1983, pp. 467-68).

Mary Boyce (p. 470) argues that this story was a Median legend and connected with a cult of a god of love, probably Anāhitā (see [ANĀHID](#)), which later became part of the Kayanian (q.v.) cycle in the *Šāh-nāma*.

On the basis of the story of the *Šāh-nāma*, Katāyun is also the mother of



Esfandiār, the eldest son of Goštāsp and a grandson of Lohrāsp (*Šāh-nāma*, p. 293, v. 19). But in the Avesta (e.g., *Yašts* 9.26, 15.35) Esfandiār's mother is Hutaosā- (Pah. Hutōs).

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