



## QAYDĀFA

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**QAYDĀFA**, a female character in various Islamic versions of the Alexander Romance. She is Candace of the Greek Pseudo-Callisthenes (bk III, secs. 18-23; see Hanaway). In the Persian tradition the forms of the name include Qaydāfa/Qaydāfa (*Mojmal al-tawāriḵ*, ed., p. 57; MS, fol. 22r) and Fandāqa Ṭarsusi, II, p. 517, n. 1).

The three most elaborate accounts of the Qaydāfa tale are given in the chapter on Alexander/Eskandar in Ferdowsi's *Šāh-nāma* (pp. 51-74, vv. 671-1055), in Neẓāmi's *Šaraf-nāma* (pp. 290-320, 430-35, 442-95) and in the anonymous *Eskandar-nāma* (pp. 192-98; see Hanaway). The version appearing in the *Šāh-nāma* is as follows: having heard the account of the powerful queen of Andalus, given to him by Qayṭun, ruler of Egypt (Meṣr), Eskandar writes a letter to Qaydāfa demanding tribute from her, which Qaydāfa refuses to pay (pp. 51-54). In the meantime Qaydāfa's son, Qaydaruš, is captured and rescued by Eskandar, who assumes for this purpose the persona of his own minister Biṭaḡun (pp. 54-57). Eskandar/Biṭaḡun then goes as an envoy to Qaydāfa and is cordially received by the queen as her son's savior. At the next morning's audience she recognizes the disguised Eskandar due to his portrait, which had been secretly painted on her orders. Qaydāfa shows the painting to the pretended messenger. Eskandar finds himself mentored by the wise queen on the value of humbleness. She keeps his identity secret, making him swear not to do harm to her kin and her kingdom. She further warns him of her other son Ṭaynuš, who is after Eskandar to avenge his killing of the Indian king Fur, Ṭaynuš's father-in-law (pp. 57-64). The account ends with Eskandar's



outwitting ʿaynuš with the help of a ruse (pp. 66 ff.). Except for minor details, such as the idiosyncratic location of Qaydāfa’s kingdom in Andalus (for a possible explanation see Monchi-zadeh, p. 172, note 2; on the fluctuation of geography characteristic of the Islamic versions of the tale, see Rubanovich, 2015), Ferdowsi’s version follows the account as it appears in the extant Syriac recension of the Greek Alexander Romance (Budge, pp. 118-26). Its significance is, however, different: while in the Syriac recension the emphasis is on Alexander being subdued by a woman whose wisdom and resplendence are equal to his, in the *Šāh-nāma* Qaydāfa exemplifies the ideal sovereign, and her gender is of no significance. Ferdowsi concentrates on the essence of royal power, making Qaydāfa explicate the didactic tenets that embody the model of an ideal ruler (see Kappler, 1993; idem, 1996; idem, 2000).

Neẓāmi Ganjavi’s account differs considerably from that of Ferdowsi. Neẓāmi re-names the queen as Nušāba (rough translation: The Water of Life), a “telling” name in the context of Eskandar’s futile search for immortality. He places her domain in the historical locality of Barda’ (i.e., Barda’a), a town situated not far from his native Ganja. He inserts the episode of Nušāba’s abduction by Rus and her rescue by Eskandar into the story (*Šaraf-nāma*, pp. 430-35, 442-95), as well as her marriage to the king of Abk̄āz (p. 494, vv. 47-77). The above local motifs may echo real historical events, such as the sporadic incursions and forays of the Scandinavian-Slavic Rus in the course of the 10th century in the region of Barda’a (see BARDA’A; cf. Şafawi, pp. 200-2). Among further differences is the fusion of the Nušāba tale with that of the Amazons (cf. *Šāh-nāma*, pp. 85-89, vv. 1233-304): Nušāba is a virgin, a God-knowing soul “in no need of seeing men” (*Šaraf-nāma*, p. 292, v. 29), and the inclusion of the feast episode. Two cloths are laid in the banqueting hall, one for Nušāba and her damsels, the other for Eskandar. That of Nušāba carries food “beyond limit”; that of Eskandar is a cloth of gold, and on it is a tray bearing four cups of pure crystal: “one full of gold, and the other of ruby; the third full of cornelian, and the fourth of pearl” (p. 306, v. 254). On Eskandar’s request as to how he can partake of the inedible, Nušāba explains the true meaning of her actions: one should not accumulate wealth and acquire conquests on this path of life, which ends with the stone (i.e., the grave). The singular features of the Nušāba episode appear to be due to Neẓāmi’s familiarity with the tales of the Amazons and of the “bread of gold” originating in Talmudic and rabbinical literature unfavorable towards Alexander, notably in the legend of Alexander and King Kaẓia (for a detailed examination see Rubanovich, 2015).

The anonymous *Eskandar-nāma* (see Hanaway) follows the outlines of Ferdowsi's version, re-working the episode in accordance with the misogynist touch characteristic of this text (Rubanovich, 2004, pp. 356-64). Qaydāfa is compliant with Eskandar's request to provide his army with supplies; at night she comes alone to Eskandar's chamber dressed as a concubine and, after having concluded a kind of matrimonial union, she makes Eskandar promise that upon his return to Rum (i.e., Greece), he will send for her and she will come to live with him, leaving her kingdom to her son.

Nušāba of Barda' is briefly mentioned in Amir Ƙosrow Dehlavi's *Ā'ina-ye Sekandari* (p. 45, v. 659). The Qaydāfa episode was once included in Ʀarsusi's *Dārāb-nāma* (II, p. 517); it was later omitted, plausibly through the vagaries of transmission. The episode occurs with significant modifications also in religious works, mostly of a mystical nature, either in the form of an allusion or as a parable (e.g., Abu Eshāq Nišāburi, pp. 325-26; Maybodi, IV, p. 371; 'Aṭṭār, p. 232; on the deployment of the episode in Persian mystical literature, see Rubanovich, 2015). The character of Qaydāfa is sometimes alluded to in panegyric and lyric poetry as well (e.g., Ƙāqāni, p. 177).

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