

The Origin of the Name Iskandar (Alexander the Great) According to the *Šāhnāma*

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According to the “story of Alexander’s birth” in the *Šāhnāma*, the name of Alexander the Great (Iskandar) is derived from the name of a medical herb, which was used to heal the bad smell from the mouth of his mother, *Nāhīd*. The paper is an attempt to explain the reason for such strange naming. The study examines this origin story and situates it within the broader context of Iranian folk etymology, symbolic naming practices, and Greco-Iranian linguistic interactions. Special attention is given to the semantics of the term “Iskandar” and its possible derivation from words related to *Allium* (a genus that includes garlic and onion), exploring parallels with classical and Iranian sources. The article analyzes linguistic structures, botanical symbolism, and textual transmission to propose that the narrative reflects a culturally embedded effort to rationalize names through metaphorical association with healing and purification.

Keywords: Proper Names in *Šāhnāma*, Alexander the Great (*Iskandar*), *Allium*