

The love life of Alexander the Great is debated and studied among historians; at the time of his death Alexander had three wives, among them being Roxanne, the daughter of Oxyartes of Sogdia.

Plutarch views Alexander's relationship with Roxanne in a positive light, stating how the marriage between Alexander and Roxanne was encouraged and saw favourably by the "Barbarians", as it was a showcase of the partnership between the Macedonian conquerors and the natives of the country. While opinion differs to the extent, there are different accounts of Alexander being entranced by the beauty of Roxanne and falling in love with her. Alexander married late in age, by the customs of the period and when comparing to the age in which he died, so the fact he was noted as being so quickly in love and entranced by Roxanne is an interesting insight into the relationship and how he viewed her. This follows differing accounts of the interest in which Alexander had in women, with some believing he engaged in a long term homosexual relationship from his teens until the death of Hephaestion; Roxanne is often called the only woman in which Alexander loved, to varying extents. Plutarch states that Roxanne was the "only woman who ever mastered his affections"¹, as well as Robin Lane Fox writing "he was agreed to have chosen the only girl who fired his heart"².

However, the political aspect to the marriage cannot be ignored. Alexander conquered many areas throughout his campaign through Persian and into India, with an empire of that magnitude being ruled singularly, there needed to be a true alliance between Alexander and those rulers who he took land from. The threat of rebellion in the satrapies was a real risk to the empire, but with Alexander taking a Sogdian princess, someone classed as a "barbarian" by typical Greek opinion, it showed and gave a form of respect and unity between them. Since his teen years, Alexander had been pushed to take a Macedonian wife, by taking a "barbarian" as his first wife, and then going on to marry two Persian princesses (Stateira and Parysatis), it ensured that the future heir of Alexander (Alexander IV, the only legitimate child of Alexander, born to Roxanne) was born of both sides of the Empire, Macedonian and Persian. Plutarch states of how Alexander needed the "sanction of law"³ before he would be linked to Roxanne, this serves as another show of respect that Alexander was giving both to Roxanne herself and to her status and family; to have been with Roxanne outside of marriage would have, as was period customary, taken away a level of marriageability for her, due to the risk of a loss of virginity. Alexander's primary success when it came to marrying Roxanne was the alliance she formed and brought him with the rulers of Persian satrapies, it ensured a degree of loyalty from them. And while the accounts of the possible feelings Alexander felt towards Roxanne, the political gains would have been more of a primary thought process for the men involved in setting up the marriage.

Bibliography

Plutarch, *Alex.* 47. 4

Fox, R.L, 2004. "Alexander the Great", Penguin Books

¹ Plutarch *Alex.* 47.4

² Fox, Robin. L, 2004, "Alexander the Great", Penguin Books, pg317

³ Plutarch *Alex.* 47.4