

R(h)oxane sources

NB Alexander marries Rhoxane/Roxane 327 BC

Quintus Curtius Rufus:

8.4.21-26

“From there he came into the province governed by Oxyartes, an illustrious satrap, who submitted himself to the power and good faith of the king. Alexander restored his dominion to him, and made no further requirement than that two of the satrap’s [22] three sons should serve as his soldiers. Oxyartes delivered to him also the son who was left with him, and prepared a banquet of oriental magnificence, at [23] which he entertained Alexander; while this was being celebrated with great friendliness, the satrap ordered thirty high-born maidens to be brought in. Among these was his own daughter, Roxane by name, a maiden of remarkable beauty of person, and of a dignity of bearing uncommon among barbarians. [24] She, although she had entered among an elite group, yet drew the eyes of all to her, especially of the king, who by now had less mastery over his passions amid the constant indulgence of Fortune, against whom [25] mortal man is not sufficiently on his guard. And so he, who had looked upon the wife of Darius and his two maiden daughters, to whom none save Roxane could be compared in beauty, with no other feeling than that of a father, was then so transported with love for this little maiden, of obscure birth in comparison with royal stock, that he said that it was important for establishing his empire that Persians and Macedonians be joined in wedlock; that only in that way could shame be taken from the conquered and [26] haughtiness from the victors. Achilles also, he said, from whom he traced his ancestry, had united with a captive maiden; lest the vanquished should think that a wrong was being done to them, he wished to be joined with Roxanê in lawful wedlock.

[27] The father was elated with unexpected joy on hearing the king’s words and Alexander, in the full tide of his ardent passion, ordered a loaf of bread to be brought in according to his country’s custom—this among the Macedonians was the most sacred pledge of those contracting marriage—which was cut in two [28] with a sword and tasted by each. I suppose that those who established the customs of the race wished by a frugal and common food to show to those who were about to unite their resources with how little [29] they ought to be contented. In this way the king of Asia and of Europe took to himself in wedlock a woman who had been brought in among the entertainments of a banquet, intending to beget from a captive [30] a son who should rule over victors. His friends were ashamed that a father-in-law had been chosen from among the surrendered amid wine and feasting, but since after the murder of Clitus freedom of speech had been banned, they pretended assent by expression of their faces, which most readily play the slave.”

NB QC 10.3.11 “It is for this reason that I myself united in marriage with me Roxanê, daughter of the Persian Oxyartes, not disdaining to rear children from a captive.”

NB QC 10.6.9 “It is five months from the time when Roxanê became with child; we pray that she may bear a son, who shall rule over us with the gods’ approval, when he comes of age. Determine by what men you wish to be ruled in the meantime.” Thus spoke Perdiccas. [10]

Then Nearchus said that no one could deny that only the blood and stock of Alexander was suited to [11] royal majesty, but that to wait for a king who was not yet born, and to pass over one who was already living, suited neither the desires of the Macedonians nor their exigencies; that the king had a son by Barsinê; he ought to be presented with the crown. [12] His speech was approved by no one; and so, clashing their shields with their spears after their custom, they persisted in uproar. And already, as Nearchus maintained his opinion too persistently, they had almost reached the point of mutiny, when Ptolemy [13] said: “Truly a most worthy stock to rule the race of the Macedonians is the son of Roxanê or Barsinê, whose very name Europe will be ashamed to hear, since it is that of one who is in greater part a captive. [14] Is that why we have conquered the Persians, that we may serve their stock, a thing which those legitimate kings, Darius and Xerxes, sought in vain with armies of so many thousands and such great fleets?”

Arrian 4.19.5-6 “The wives and children of many important men were there captured, including those of Oxyartes. This chief had a daughter, a maiden of marriageable age, named Roxana, who was asserted by the men who served in Alexander's army to have been the most beautiful of all Asiatic women, with the single exception of the wife of Darius. They also say that no sooner did Alexander see her than he fell in love with her; but though he was in love with her, he refused to offer violence to her as a captive, and did not think it derogatory to his dignity to marry her. This conduct of Alexander I think worthy rather of praise than blame. Moreover, in regard to the wife of Darius, who was said to be the most beautiful woman in Asia, he either did not entertain a passion for her, or else he exercised control over himself, though he was young, and in the very meridian of success, when men usually act with insolence and violence. On the contrary, he acted with modesty and spared her honour, exercising a great amount of chastity, and at the same time exhibiting a very proper desire to obtain a good reputation.”

Plutarch Alex. 47.4. “Under these circumstances, too, he adapted his own mode of life still more to the customs of the country, and tried to bring these into closer agreement with Macedonian customs, thinking that by a mixture and community of practice which produced good will, rather than by force, his authority would be kept secure while he was far away. For this reason, too, he chose out thirty thousand boys and gave orders that they should learn the Greek language and be trained to use Macedonian weapons, appointing many instructors for this work. His marriage to Roxana, whom he saw in her youthful beauty taking part in a dance at a banquet, was a love affair, and yet it was thought to harmonise well with the matters which he had in hand. For the Barbarians were encouraged by the partnership into which the marriage brought them, and they were beyond measure fond of Alexander, because, most temperate of all men that he was in these matters, he would not consent to approach even the only woman who ever mastered his affections, without the sanction of law.”