

The Wives of Alexander and the role they played in his Empire

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Abstract

Alexander the Great is known to have had a number of significant relationships with women throughout his lifetime. The romantic aspects of these attachments have been emphasized in the sources and modern scholarship. This study aims to investigate the idea that these were not romantic relationships but rather deliberate strategies to further Alexander's political aims. The writing in the ancient sources on the wives, Roxanne, Stateris and Parysatis and the unofficial wife Barsine are limited but provide evidence that they were useful to Alexander in consolidating power, making alliances and providing heirs.

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Contents

Introduction	4
Literary review	11
Roxanne.....	15
Roxanne Background and context.....	15
Furthering Alexander's goals	16
Ancient Views of the Marriage	20
Barsine.....	23
Barsine Background and context.....	23
Furthering Alexander's goals	24
Ancient Views of the Relationship.....	26
Parysatis and Stateria	31
Stateria and Parysatis Background and context.....	31
Furthering Alexander's goals	32
Ancient Views of the Marriages.....	35
Conclusion	40

Introduction

Alexander the Great is undoubtedly one of the most incredible characters of the ancient world and much is known of his life and exploits. The women in his life however feature less prominently in the sources and are the subject of less scrutiny in the scholarship¹. The early life and character of Alexander provide a context for these significant relationships. Alexander was born in 356BC to Philip II and Olympias in Macedonia and died in 323.² Alexander had one sister and one brother who was believed to be disabled, because of this Alexander was always chosen as Philip's heir.³ Alexander was closer to his mother than his father with whom he had a complex relationship.⁴ When Philip bought a difficult horse called Bucephalus, he challenged Alexander to tame the horse suggesting that Philip did not believe that he could but Philip was proud of Alexander when he was successful.⁵ Philip also remarried a Macedonian woman who produced an heir, this threatened Alexander's claim to the throne. The bride's family, who were prominent Macedonians, insulted Alexander and caused Alexander and Philip to argue.⁶ In the last years of Philip's life there were tensions between the two of them due to Philip's newest wife and her family trying to challenge Alexander's legitimacy.⁷ Alexander is known to have been closer to his mother as she chose Alexander's education, something that was typically done by the father. He left Macedonia with his mother following the argument Alexander had with his father.⁸ Due to the distant nature of the relationship of Alexander and Philip there

¹ Carney 2010a: 196.

² Badian 2018a; Bosworth. 2018a.

³ Nawotka 2010: 36; Badian 2018b. Worthington 2008: 175.

⁴ Nawotka 2010: 36.

⁵ Plut. Alex. 6.

⁶ Nawotka 2010: 74/75; Hammond 1989: 9, 39; Plut. Alex. 9.

⁷ Badian 2018a.

⁸ Nawotka 2010: 36. Hamilton 1965: 120.

were suspicions and rumors that Alexander, with the help from his mother, had an involvement in the murder of his father.⁹ The main motivation behind the murder was believed to be connected to succession. Alexander could claim the throne instead of the child of Philip's newest wife.¹⁰ Philip died in 336BC at the wedding of his daughter.¹¹ Alexander killed those who insulted him after his father dies.¹² Alexander was believed to have fathered Alexander IV with his wife Roxanne and Heracles with his unofficial wife Barsine.¹³

Alexander the Great became the leader of Macedonia at the age of twenty after his father, Philip, died.¹⁴ Alexander was already heavily involved in the running of Macedonia and had experience in leading the army. Plutarch says 'Philip was excessively fond of his son, so that he even rejoiced to hear the Macedonians call Alexander their king, but Philip their general.'¹⁵ This suggests that Alexander was heavily involved within the running of the nation and was very popular. Philip may have been so pleased at this news because this meant that Alexander would be a successful successor. Alexander led Macedonia on a campaign to expand his empire to include large parts of Asia as far as India.¹⁶ Alexander was even referred to as the King of Asia.¹⁷ Alexander has become a literary hero as well as being the subject of extensive academic research. In his own times his success was much admired and he inspired many leaders in the years to come who modelled themselves on Alexander. Julius

⁹ Badian 2018a; Hammond 1989: 11.

¹⁰ Hamilton 1965: 120.

¹¹ Worthington 2008: xviii, 181.

¹² Hammond 1989: 39.

¹³ Badian 2018a.

¹⁴ Plut. Alex. 11.

¹⁵ Plut. Alex. 9.

¹⁶ Badian 2018a.

¹⁷ Roisman 1995: 203.3

Caesar, a powerful Roman leader, considered Alexander to be an inspiration and hoped to be as good of a leader and conqueror as Alexander.¹⁸

During his short lifetime Alexander had four important relationship that included three wives; Roxanne, Stateria and Parysatis as well as one unofficial wife who was referred to as Barsine. Each one of these women came from different parts of his empire. It was acceptable at the time for influential men to take multiple wives and practice polygamy to show their power and to use the women for political advantages.¹⁹ This is shown by Philip who married seven women in his twenty two years as king, this suggests that he thought carefully on the women he married and married them for political reasons.²⁰ It is not certain when he married his first wife or in which order the marriages occurred. When comparing this to Alexander's marriages, it becomes clear that he married three women in around five years.²¹ This suggests that he was marrying the women for political reasons and not for love.

Roxanne was Alexander's first wife, she was Bactrian born to a prominent family there. Alexander captured Roxanne and her mother during the Bactrian revolt.²² There is no other information about her family or if she had any brothers or sisters. Her father was useful to Alexander in stopping the Bactrian revolts.²³ Roxanne gave birth to Alexander IV in 323.²⁴ After Alexander died, Roxanne killed the other wives to ensure her son's succession.²⁵ Alexander IV and Roxanne were both murdered in 311BC by Cassander²⁶

¹⁸ Suet. Caesar. 7.1.

¹⁹ Worthington 2008: 173.

²⁰ Green 2013: 82; Badian 2018f; Worthington 2008: 172.

²¹ Heckel and Tritttle 2011. XI-XII.

²² Arr. Anab. 4.19.

²³ Bosworth 2012a: 117; Arr. Anab. 4.21.

²⁴ Tarn 1948: 335; Bosworth 2018b.

²⁵ Plut. Alex. 77.4; Wiesehofer 2018.

²⁶ Bosworth 2018f; Badian 2018a.

Barsine was the unofficial wife of Alexander the Great. She came from a prominent family with her father a prominent member of the Macedonian army.²⁷ Barsine had several brothers and sisters but there is not much more information. Barsine was not a wife of Alexander but had more status and respect than a mistress.²⁸ Barsine was widowed twice and had five children.²⁹ Barsine was rumored to have given birth to Alexander's son, Heracles.³⁰ Barsine and Heracles were killed at the hands of Polyperchon.³¹ This is believed to be before the death of Roxanne and Alexander IV, Ogden disagrees and believes that Heracles was killed after Alexander IV.³²

Stateris and Parysatis were cousins from both lines of the Persian royal family. Stateris was the daughter of Darius and had one sister.³³ Parysatis was the daughter of Artaxerxes III who was the son of the previous ruler before Darius.³⁴ Alexander captured these women after the battle of Issus and refused to return them to Darius.³⁵ Both of the women were killed by Roxanne after the death of Alexander.³⁶

Much has been made to place emphasis and exaggerate the romantic aspects of these relationships. However there are differences in the way that each of these women are portrayed in the sources and each played an important role in furthering his political goals and helped to promote his leadership. Even though Alexander succeeded the throne at twenty, he avoided marrying until he was twenty seven.³⁷ This suggests that he was reluctant to marry, and only did so to solve political situations. The different

²⁷ Plut. Alex. 21.

²⁸ Carney 1996: 574, 575.

²⁹ Badian 2018d; Ogden 2011: 140.

³⁰ Diod. Sic. 20.20; Badian. 2018e.

³¹ Diod. Sic. 20.28.

³² Wheatley and Heckel 2011: 15; Ogden 2011: 140.

³³ Wiesehöfer 2018c; Ogden 2011: 134.

³⁴ Wiesehöfer 2018b.

³⁵ Bosworth 2001: 76; Diod Sic. 17.54.

³⁶ Lane Fox 1948: 418; Wiesehöfer 2018a.

³⁷ Heckel and Tritle 2011: IX-X.

ways that Alexander uses his association and relationship with these women results in their different depictions and portrayals in the ancient sources.³⁸ Although Roxanne is foreign and that is disliked by the sources who are generally Greek, she is the most talked about wife.³⁹ More is known about Roxanne than Barsine, Parysatis and Stateris and this has resulted in scholarly debate due to the lack of information given by the sources surrounding their lives. Roxanne is portrayed as the stereotypical ideal wife to Alexander by providing him with an heir and travelling with him on campaign.⁴⁰ Alexander is shown to be in control of the relationship and Roxanne appears to be submissive.

There are many issues with the ancient sources and because of this there are controversies in the modern scholarship.⁴¹ Many of the Contemporary sources of Alexander are fragmentary and only survive in other later ancient works.⁴² This poses the question of if there were passages about these women that were misplaced or altered in any way. The ancient sources have hindsight, writing as they were several hundred years after the events they describe.⁴³ They know what happened to Alexander and the tragic ends of these women and their writing reflects that. The sources suggest that Roxanne is the most dominant of Alexander's wives because she murdered his other wives.⁴⁴ The sources also choose not to include the demise of Barsine or to explain it in detail perhaps because she does not have any power in the succession battle after Alexander dies.⁴⁵

³⁸ Carney 2010b: 43.

³⁹ Ogden 2011: 124, 133.

⁴⁰ Tarn 1948: 335; Ogden 2011: 124; Curt. 10.6.9; Lane Fox 1973: 320.

⁴¹ Carney 1996: 368; Tarn 1948: 325.

⁴² Hammond 1989: 9.

⁴³ Pelling 2018; Bosworth 2018c.

⁴⁴ Wiesehöfer 2018a.

⁴⁵ Ogden 2011: 140.

One of the most prominent questions surrounding the relationships of Alexander is how important were these women? Their importance was often downplayed and they are not well discussed in the sources. The deaths of some of these women are brushed over and not fully detailed suggesting that they were not important.⁴⁶ The ancient sources and much of the early scholarship is written by men. This changes the way that they are portrayed. Alexander's mother tries to take control of her own life by leaving Philip and going back to her home nation and because of this she is depicted as a manipulative woman.⁴⁷ This is different to the way that Roxanne is shown as the perfect, submissive wife, who tries to provide Alexander with an heir and lived a private and quiet life.⁴⁸

Women in the ancient world had very little control over their lives and the way to better their lives was to associate themselves with powerful men. Carney remarks that the women are not mentioned as much as men in the sources as it could have been thought that women did not have a considerable role in politics.⁴⁹ Hammond also shares a similar opinion and believes that women were not as influential compared to the men in the political sphere.⁵⁰ However in the marriages of Alexander there are many political reasons and advantages to these marriages and it can be argued that these women, or just the relationship with these women, were important to Alexander's goals. The wives of the Argead rulers had no special title and were often referred to by their personal names.⁵¹ This suggests that women were not considered to be on the same level as men and were not held in the same regard. One of the ways that women could further their own lives was to promote their son's succession in order to have a secure and a more

⁴⁶ Wheatley and Heckle 2011: 235.

⁴⁷ Bosworth 2018e.

⁴⁸ Ogden 2011: 124.

⁴⁹ Carney 2010c: 409.

⁵⁰ Hammond 1989: 16.

⁵¹ Carney 2010c: 415.

prominent position. One of the most prominent women in the court may have been the mother of the king rather than one of his wives.⁵²

The wives of Alexander were used to further his goals and aims and each of his marriages presented unique political advantages. The attachments to Alexander cannot be considered as love matches as suggested by some scholars.⁵³ The way in which Alexander uses these women results in them being depicted differently by the sources.

⁵² Carney 2010c: 415.

⁵³ Hammond 1989: 265.

Literary review

There are three main ancient sources, Arrian, Curtius Rufus and Plutarch, write about the romantic aspects of the relationships of Alexander. Although this is not the purpose of the writing of these sources they still provide details of the important women in Alexander's life.

One of the main ancient sources that writes about the life of Alexander is Plutarch. Plutarch was alive between AD45 and AD125. He was a wealthy Greek who was given Roman citizenship.⁵⁴ He details the life and relationships of Alexander in his work titled *Alexander*. This work belongs in the series called 'Parallel Lives' that discusses the lives of some important figures in the ancient world such as Caesar and Alexander.⁵⁵ The series 'Parallel Lives' is the most famous of Plutarch's work and provides much of the detail of some of these ancient figures, however only six of the works from this volume survive.⁵⁶ Plutarch writes the works so he can provide the details of the extraordinary lives of great men.⁵⁷ The work provides details from the lineage and birth of Alexander through to the aftermath of his death. Plutarch is writing around three hundred years after the death of Alexander.⁵⁸ The accuracy of Plutarch's work can be questioned as he is writing such a long time after the events have occurred. However Plutarch is believed to have travelled to Alexandria, where many of the documents and texts of Alexander are believed to have been kept.⁵⁹ This could suggest that Plutarch had used works that detailed Alexander's life but now have been lost.

⁵⁴ Pelling 2018.

⁵⁵ Russell 2018.

⁵⁶ Russell 2018.

⁵⁷ Plut. Alex. 1.3.

⁵⁸ Pelling 2018.

⁵⁹ Pelling 2018

Arrian is also another main source for the life of Alexander. Arrian is believed to have been alive between 86AD and 160AD and was from a prominent family.⁶⁰ Arrian was from Asia Minor and worked for the emperor, Hadrian. Arrian wrote a famous work on the life of Alexander called the 'Anabasis of Alexander' that was seven books long and has a similar coverage to Plutarch in that he covers from the birth to the death of Alexander.⁶¹ Arrian writes not from a historical perspective but from a literary perspective that was designed to be a dedication to Alexander.⁶² If this was the idea then the work of Arrian may well be less historically correct and miss out vital details. However the work of Arrian is still important because it provides a very in-depth and detailed account about Alexander that can be compared with other ancient works. Arrian tried to be historically accurate when he tried to use the contemporary texts of Alexander such as those by Ptolemy and Artistobulus. Arrian was also considered to be a philosopher which is helpful as he questions some of the decisions Alexander makes and also questions information.⁶³

Curtius Rufus is the other more important ancient source and is used in conjunction with Plutarch and Arrian. There is an uncertainty as to when he is writing but it is thought to have been around the first or second century AD.⁶⁴ He wrote a ten book volume on Alexander the Great, but the first two volumes have been lost so the work is incomplete.⁶⁵ Curtius Rufus uses the contemporary works on Alexander that no longer survive today.⁶⁶ However Curtius is noted for having a very confusing style of writing that blends together sources and stories as well as having little consistency. This

⁶⁰ Bosworth 2012c; Badian. 2018c.

⁶¹ Bosworth 2012c; Badian. 2018c.

⁶² Bosworth 2012c.

⁶³ Badian. 2018c.

⁶⁴ Bosworth 2012d; Heckel 2001: 1

⁶⁵ Bosworth 2012d.

⁶⁶ Heckel 2001: 5.

is possibly due to his rhetorical writing style.⁶⁷ However he is generally regarded as being a good source despite these problems as he provides full accounts that only come in fragments elsewhere.⁶⁸

There is a vast amount of scholarship for the life and battles of Alexander, but there are very few scholars who talk about the sexuality and the relationships of Alexander. One of the earliest scholars to discuss the relationships of Alexander is Tarn. Tarn mentions the relationships briefly and does not make it the focus of his work. Tarn tries to present an Alexander that was heterosexual and monogamous, as this was a more conventional belief at the time that Tarn was writing in 1948. Tarn appears to be ignorant to the idea that Alexander may have had homosexual relationships and is reluctant to address that Alexander had polygamous relationships with women possibly due to trying to appeal to his audience. Tarn's work is seen as a little outdated but it provides a good basic idea of the relationships of Alexander. Tarn's work is highly referenced by other scholars and debated by Green and Carney.

Carney is one of the main scholars for the relationship and romantic aspects of Alexander the Great's relationships. Carney is considered to be one of the leading scholars in this field as she has written multiple articles and books on the important women in Alexander's life and her work spans almost forty years. Carney's work presents a detailed modern, feminist perspective on the relationships of Alexander. Carney takes a strong viewpoint that the relationships Alexander formed with these women were political and there was no romantic aspect involved. In taking this viewpoint she strongly disagrees with Lane Fox who believes the attachment of

⁶⁷ Bosworth 2018d.

⁶⁸ Bosworth 2018d.

Roxanne was romantic.⁶⁹ She strongly opposes the viewpoints of Tarn, who is impressed by Alexander's treatment of women and is surprised that he did not rape any of the women he captured.

Ogden is another modern scholar who is at the forefront of the research on the romantic relationships of Alexander the Great. He writes about the main women that Alexander was involved with as well as some rumoured 'dalliances'. Ogden compiles the evidence from the ancient sources to analyse it in detail. He agrees with Carney in that he does not believe that the relationships of Alexander were romantic as believes that this detail was added by the ancient sources who were writing in the imperial period.⁷⁰ Ogden uses the works of Arrian, Curtius Rufus and Plutarch who are considered to be the three most important ancient sources.

⁶⁹ Lane Fox 1973: 317

⁷⁰ Ogden 2011: 131

Roxanne

Roxanne Background and context

Roxanne is the first wife of Alexander and is the one most talked about by the ancient sources. Roxanne is Sogdian born to Oxyartes, a Bactrian nobleman, and was captured by Alexander before he married her.⁷¹ Roxanne had the nickname of ‘little star’ as she was considered to be one of the most beautiful women in Asia.⁷² Arrian writes that Roxanne was thought to be the ‘loveliest woman they had seen in Asia, with the one exception of Darius’ wife’.⁷³ Roxanne came from an important family although Carney does not consider her family to be as distinguished as Barsine’s.⁷⁴ Roxanne’s father Oxyartes was a good friend of Alexander’s enemy Bessus who had been rebelling against Alexander for two years.⁷⁵ Alexander married Roxanne in 327BC.⁷⁶

There are some controversies surrounding the relationship as it has been given a romantic spin by many scholars such as Hammond and Lane Fox.⁷⁷ Lane Fox remarks that Alexander could have married any of the Iranian women and it would have had the same effect.⁷⁸ He uses this argument to suggest that Alexander was in love with Roxanne. Arrian also notes that ‘Alexander fell in love with her at sight’.⁷⁹ However, it is more likely that Alexander married Roxanne because she was from a very prominent family and to get the influence of her father. Ogden addresses the romancing of the

⁷¹ Arr. Anab. 4.19.

⁷² Lane Fox 1973: 316.

⁷³ Arr. Anab. 4.19.

⁷⁴ Carney 1996: 575.

⁷⁵ Lane Fox 1973: 317.

⁷⁶ Ogden 2009: 206; Plut. Alex. 47.4; Curt. 8.4.21-30.

⁷⁷ Lane Fox 1973: 317; Hammond 1989: 265.

⁷⁸ Lane Fox 1973: 317.

⁷⁹ Arr. Anab. 4.19.

relationships when he says that the relationship between Alexander and Roxanne was the 'most celebrated and romanticized'.⁸⁰

Furthering Alexander's goals

Roxanne helped to further Alexander's goals as her father Oxyartes was considered to be very useful to Alexander. At the time that Alexander married Roxanne there were Bactrian and Sogdian revolts which had lasted around two years and would have required many men to quash the revolts. This would have lost Alexander men that could have been better used elsewhere on his campaign. Alexander was hoping that by marrying Roxanne these revolts would end, he was right, after the wedding of Alexander and Roxanne the revolts stopped.⁸¹ Carney believes that stopping the Bactrian revolts was a short term advantage and considers it to be 'improvisation'.⁸² However, Alexander may have been looking at the overall effect, as Oxyartes was a very useful aid to Alexander, not just in the Bactrian revolts but also whilst on campaign. At Hindu Kush there was a rebellion from the 'mountain tribesman' and Oxyartes took control.⁸³ This shows that Oxyartes was a strong leader and Alexander trusted him to take control and diffuse the situation successfully. Oxyartes is also said to have tricked a fortress into surrendering to Alexander.⁸⁴ Roxanne's father accompanied Alexander on his campaigns and is described as 'influential' and 'reliable' in dealing with Alexander's opposition.⁸⁵ Roxanne's father may have been a pivotal figure in helping to gain more local support for Alexander and helping to further his campaigns.

⁸⁰ Ogden 2009: 206.

⁸¹ Bosworth 2001: 117; Arr. Anab. 4.21.

⁸² Carney 1996: 576.

⁸³ Lane fox 1973: 404.

⁸⁴ Green 1991: 370.

⁸⁵ Green 1991: 370.

Roxanne helped to further the goals of Alexander as she gave him access to her father who was useful in Alexander's campaigns.

Roxanne's father even uses her to align with his own ambitions. Oxyartes is reluctant to surrender to Alexander until he hears that Alexander is interested in marrying Roxanne. Arrian writes it is then that Oxyartes presents himself to Alexander and Alexander has much respect for him.⁸⁶ This suggests that the marriage of Roxanne and Alexander did not just benefit Alexander but also benefited Roxanne's family.

The marriage to Roxanne may have served to be a way to unite multiple groups of people. If Alexander is family with Oxyartes the revolts will stop in Bactria.⁸⁷ Alexander gained himself more 'local' support by marrying Roxanne.⁸⁸ Diodorus writes about Alexander convincing his friends to marry Iranian women from influential families.⁸⁹ This suggests that Alexander was hoping that by marrying Roxanne he would have the support of the Bactrians, but convinced his friends to marry Bactrian women as well to cement the friendly relationship between the two groups of people. This would help to contribute to the power of Alexander. Roxanne here is portrayed as a pawn who can be married for political advantage. This is the only mention of her in Diodorus' work.

Questions have been raised about whether Roxanne accompanied Alexander on his campaigns. If she did this would have helped Alexander to further his goals, Alexander would have been more likely to produce an heir if Roxanne was with him. It is generally believed by scholars that Roxanne did accompany Alexander which was

⁸⁶ Arr. Anab. 4.21.

⁸⁷ Arr. Anab. 4.21.

⁸⁸ Green 1991: 370.

⁸⁹ Diod. Sic. 17. Contents.

remarked as a 'Persian tradition'.⁹⁰ Although Roxanne may have been travelling with Alexander on campaign, it is not known how much interaction there was between the two of them. This topic is identified by Carney who asks the question of whether women were 'physically accessible to males'?⁹¹ Roxanne is rumored to have had an unsuccessful pregnancy in 326.⁹² As Roxanne became pregnant whilst on campaign it could be suggested that she joined Alexander on his conquest and there was a lot of contact time between the two of them. This would have furthered the goals of Alexander as it would have given him an heir and one that would have been more likely to be successful as the child would have been older when Alexander died and would have had more chance of taking the crown.

However there is evidence that many people were unhappy with Alexander's marriage to Roxanne. There was an issue and controversy with Alexander's relationship with a woman who was 'foreign'. This could be as there were Iranian customs at the wedding such as sharing a loaf between them.⁹³ This could have shown Alexander as being more eastern than Macedonian. The marriage to Roxanne may have contributed to these feelings of hostility.⁹⁴ However there have been remarks that the wedding was altogether in a Macedonian style.⁹⁵ This could suggest that Alexander was aware that marrying a foreign bride would create hostilities amongst the Macedonians and he tried to make the wedding as Macedonian as possible. The unhappy feelings about the wedding could have come from Barsine's family as Artabazus, Barsine's father, would have been disappointed that there was no marriage to Barsine, who was pregnant.⁹⁶ This

⁹⁰ Lane Fox 1973: 320; Carney 2010b: 51;

⁹¹ Carney 2010b: 50.

⁹² Ogden 2009: 206.

⁹³ Lane Fox 1973: 317.

⁹⁴ Carney 1996: 576; Green 1991: 370; Bosworth 2001: 117; Curt. 8.4.29-30.

⁹⁵ Bosworth 2001:117. Curt. 8. 4. 27.

⁹⁶ Lane Fox 1973: 318.

may be seen as disrespectful to her family, and could have upset them, which if they were influential in the Macedonian court, may have upset others. There was an issue with Alexander marrying a woman who was not from Macedonia and instead marrying a foreign woman who was not from a prominent family.

Alexander marrying a woman from a conquered territory was similar to his father's strategy to keep conquered people loyal. This would cement Alexander's rule over the foreign people.⁹⁷ It is strange that there were feelings of hostility when this was a method used by Alexander's predecessors. Perhaps it was Roxanne herself that the Macedonians were unhappy with and they would have preferred that Alexander married a different foreign woman such as one of the daughters of Darius who were of higher status than Roxanne.⁹⁸

Roxanne would have helped to further the goals of Alexander by providing him with an heir. Roxanne gave birth to Alexander's son, Alexander the IV in July 323.⁹⁹ Previous to giving birth to Alexander IV, Roxanne is also believed to have travelled to India with Alexander where she had a miscarriage.¹⁰⁰ If a child had been born this would have been more helpful to Alexander as the child would have been older when Alexander died and would have had more chance of being a successful heir. This would have kept the conquered territory in his immediate family. Roxanne's son, Alexander IV was nominated to take over the throne from Alexander the Great.¹⁰¹ Bosworth remarks that Alexander IV was a 'puppet' of his 'protector' but does not explain who the 'protector' was. This suggests that others took control of his power for their own personal gain. If Alexander IV had been of a higher age he might have more success in

⁹⁷ Bosworth 2001: 117.

⁹⁸ Carney 1996: 576.

⁹⁹ Tarn 1948: 335; Ogden 2011: 124; Curt. 10.6.9.

¹⁰⁰ Lane Fox 1973: 320, 375.

¹⁰¹ Bosworth 2001:157; Curt. 10.6.9- 16; Just. 13. 2.9-10.

succeeding Alexander.¹⁰² When Alexander died, Alexander IV had not yet been born and Roxanne was in the later stage of the pregnancy.¹⁰³ Roxanne providing Alexander with heirs would mean that Alexander would have a successor to take over as king.

Ancient Views of the Marriage

Some scholars believe that the attachment between Roxanne and Alexander was for romantic reasons. Lane fox strongly tries to suggest this throughout his work. He believes that Alexander fell in love with Roxanne because of her beauty, she was called 'little star' and thought to be the most beautiful woman in Asia, after Darius' wife.¹⁰⁴ Hamilton agrees with Lane Fox and believes that Alexander married Roxanne for romantic reasons, however he believes that the other attachments were for political reasons.¹⁰⁵ However this is strongly contested by Green who believes that romance clouds and 'distorts' the specifics.¹⁰⁶ There is a delay in Alexander marrying Roxanne of around a year from when he captured her in 328BC, suggesting that it was more of a strategic wedding than a romantic one.¹⁰⁷ It could be possible to suggest that Alexander fell in love with Roxanne during this year, it was more than likely that because of the revolts and political situation it was not ideal for them to marry. Arrian believes that there was a delay in Alexander marrying Roxanne because he did not want to force her to marry her and wanted to romance her.¹⁰⁸ This could be the romancing of the

¹⁰² Bosworth 2001: 174.

¹⁰³ Ogden 2009: 206; Just. 13.2.5; Curt. 10.6.9.

¹⁰⁴ Lane fox 1973: 316-137.

¹⁰⁵ Hammond 1989: 265.

¹⁰⁶ Green 1991: 370.

¹⁰⁷ Bosworth 2001: 117; Arr. Anab.4. 19.5; Curt. 8.4.21;

¹⁰⁸ Arr. Anab. 4.19-20.

relationship as Arrian is writing a long time after the event he is aware that Roxanne and Alexander are married until his death.

In the scholarship and sources Roxanne is presented as Alexander's most dominant wife. She is the most discussed wife and there is more information on her. Carney believes that there was no 'chief wife'.¹⁰⁹ There is evidence that there was a rivalry between Alexander's wives for control. Roxanne kills Alexander's other wives and does everything in her power to promote her son's succession, gaining the support of Alexander's mother Olympias in order to ensure there was no competition for the throne.¹¹⁰ Carney remarks that 'Being the mother of the heir... was the primary source of status and dominance but other factors like family and ethnicity could affect a woman's place at court.'¹¹¹ This could explain why Roxanne was the most discussed wife as her family were given prominent positions in Alexander's court and her family was less Persian than the families of Parysatis and Stateris, who were related to the Persian royal family.¹¹² Ogden contradicts Carney's statement of there being no lead wife as he believes that Roxanne was the most prominent wife of Alexander as she tended to him whilst he was dying.¹¹³ This suggests that Roxanne was more trusted and important than his other wives and relationships. However this information comes three hundred years after the death of Alexander and the information may not be reliable.

However the sources are seen to oppose and disapprove of the marriage of Alexander and Roxanne. Carney believes that this is due to Barsine's father Artabazus,

¹⁰⁹ Carney 2010c: 415.

¹¹⁰ Ogden 2011:126.

¹¹¹ Carney 2010c: 415.

¹¹² Bosworth 2012f; Wiesehöfer 2018c; Wiesehöfer 2018b.

¹¹³ Ogden 2009: 206.

who was unhappy that Alexander had married Roxanne instead of his daughter Barsine who at the time was rumored to be pregnant.¹¹⁴ It is also suggested that many followers of Alexander were unsettled by his support for the culture of Asia and Persia and his marriage to Roxanne would have contributed to this.¹¹⁵ Roisman argues that there was breakdown between Alexander and his people due to his 'relationship between conqueror and conquered'.¹¹⁶ Alexander encountered conflict in growing his empire and his personal decisions.

Roxanne is Alexander's first wife and the most talked about in the sources. There are many reasons as to why the relationship with Roxanne benefited Alexander, so because of this it is less likely that the marriage had romantic attachments to it and instead was for Alexander's political gain. Roxanne's father, Oxyartes was useful to Alexander and helped to further the goals of Alexander. The marriage gave Alexander more local support and stopped the revolt in Bactria which would have been difficult to stop with military force. Roxanne may have also accompanied Alexander on one of his campaigns which would have helped to further the goals of Alexander as it would have provided an heir. Alexander is believed to have used his father's strategy of marrying women from conquered territory to further his ambitions. Roxanne provides Alexander with an heir, Alexander IV which should have secured his family on the throne.¹¹⁷ Roxanne is the most dominant wife of Alexander the great as she ensures there is no competition for the throne when Alexander dies.¹¹⁸ Many of the Macedonian people were not happy about Alexander's marriage to Roxanne, particularly Barsine's family.

¹¹⁴ Carney 1996. 575-576.

¹¹⁵ Curt. 8.4.30; Carney 1996: 576.

¹¹⁶ Roisman 1995: 203.

¹¹⁷ Bosworth. 2012b

¹¹⁸ Wiesehöfer. 2018a.

Barsine

Barsine Background and context

Barsine was the unofficial wife of Alexander the Great. She was the daughter of Artabazus who managed a satrap as he was a loyal Persian as well as a close friend of the Macedonian royal family.¹¹⁹ It is pointed out that Plutarch writes about Barsine having royal relatives, but Tarn disagrees as it is not mentioned frequently in the sources.¹²⁰ Barsine was educated in Greek and was believed to be one of the most beautiful women at the time.¹²¹ Barsine was from a very aristocratic family.¹²² She was married twice to Mentor and Memnon, who were believed to be uncles, and she was widowed both times. Barsine is rumored to have had five children from both marriages.¹²³ She is referred to as ‘Andromache’ by some scholars as she is an unofficial wife of Alexander the Great, who was the enemy of her deceased husbands.¹²⁴ Barsine is also supposed to have given birth to Alexander the Great’s son, Heracles.¹²⁵ Alexander captured Barsine, although the timing is unsure when their relationship started and if it ended.¹²⁶ However, there are some scholars who doubt Barsine’s relationship with Alexander existed.¹²⁷

Barsine is often referred to as the unofficial wife of Alexander the Great. This title is proposed by Carney, who suggests that Barsine is not an official wife of

¹¹⁹ Lane Fox 1973: 298; Carney 1996: 572.

¹²⁰ Tarn 1948: 334; Bosworth 2001: 64.

¹²¹ Bosworth 2001: 64.

¹²² Green 1991: 245.

¹²³ Tarn 1948: 330; Ogden 2011: 140.

¹²⁴ Carney 1996: 572.

¹²⁵ Diod. Sic. 20.20; Badian 2018e.

¹²⁶ Ogden 2009: 206; Carney 1996: 572.

¹²⁷ Tarn 1948: 323.

Alexander's like Roxanne, who could produce legitimate children. However Barsine, as an unofficial wife, is noted to be more 'respectable' than a mistress but not as much as Alexander's wives. Carney believes that motivation behind the attachment of Barsine and Alexander was to please the Macedonian elite as well as the noble Persians.¹²⁸ Carney argues that there was a difference in the women who married Alexander, and the women who were associated with him as a mistress.¹²⁹ Although it can be argued that Roxanne was the more dominant wife of Alexander, Barsine was still an important woman in Alexander's life. Carney proposes the theory that if Parmenio encouraged the relationship between Barsine and Alexander, it would mean that there would be no reason to question their relationship.¹³⁰

Furthering Alexander's goals

One of the ways in which Barsine could have helped to further Alexander's goals was to provide an heir for Alexander. Barsine was noted to be a very fertile woman, as she was from a large family and had five children herself.¹³¹ Parmenion is believed to have encouraged Alexander to have an heir to take over the throne, when he died. Tarn believes that he ignored this advice. Barsine is believed to have been around thirty or forty years old.¹³² However, both Carney and Ogden believe that Barsine had given birth to an heir, named Heracles, and both agree that the year was 327BC, the same year that Alexander and Roxanne were married.¹³³ Heracles was believed to have been raised in Pergamon.¹³⁴ Barsine could help to further Alexander's goals by having an heir to take over the throne when Alexander died. Carney believes that Heracles was predicted

¹²⁸ Carney 1996: 574-575.

¹²⁹ Carney 1996: 574-575.

¹³⁰ Carney 1996: 574.

¹³¹ Ogden 2011: 140.

¹³² Diod. 17.16.2; Tarn 1948; Green 1991: 245.

¹³³ Carney 1996: 575; 206 Ogden 2009: 206.

¹³⁴ Tarn 1948: 330.

to be important as the name of Heracles was linked to the heritage of the dynasty and this shows Heracles' importance.¹³⁵ However, the heir was too young and only three years old when Alexander died which may explain why he was not taken 'seriously' as a future king.¹³⁶

Barsine would have helped to further Alexander's goals as her family held prominent positions in the army and Macedonian court and were influential in the court. Barsine's family was fiercely loyal to those that they supported. This is seen where Barsine's father was attached to Darius until Darius died in 330.¹³⁷ Perhaps Alexander becoming involved with Barsine ensured the loyalty of her prominent family. Her family including her father and other important members, once they became devoted to Alexander, were given positions from Alexander.¹³⁸ Their loyalty is supposed to have impressed Alexander as they were 'treated with every mark of respect'.¹³⁹ Barsine's father, Artabazus must have been a trusted and loyal officer as Alexander sent him and Andronicus fifteen thousand Greek prisoners who had fought for Persia.¹⁴⁰ Artabazus was also sent on campaigns by Alexander and then put in charge of Bactria.¹⁴¹

Carney remarks that women could not create status quickly and often relied upon the reputation of their father or husband.¹⁴² However, Alexander makes marriages for Barsine's sisters and significantly, they are referred to as Barsine's sisters rather than Artabazus' daughters. This could suggest that the association with Alexander gave many benefits and women associated with Alexander gained prominent status. Being

¹³⁵ Carney 1996: 572.

¹³⁶ Lane Fox 1973: 473.

¹³⁷ Carney 1996: 572; Arr. Anab. 3.23; Curt. 5. 9.1.

¹³⁸ Carney 1996: 574.

¹³⁹ Arr. Anab. 3.23.

¹⁴⁰ Arr. Anab. 3. 24.

¹⁴¹ Arr. Anab. 3.28; 4.16.

¹⁴² Carney 1996: 564.

involved with Alexander brought about a change in the status of Barsine and also suggests that she was a very important character in Alexander's life. Barsine helped to contribute to the aims of Alexander as her family were very important in court and in the army.

Alexander's relationship with Barsine would help to maintain loyalty of her people to Alexander. If Barsine's family was very important in the social and working sphere of Macedonia, this would mean the involvement of Barsine with Alexander would please the Macedonian people. However, if Barsine's father was loyal to Darius and the Persian Empire, the relationship of Alexander and Barsine might please them too. Carney proposes a similar theory and suggests that Alexander was trying to 'win over' Persian nobility.¹⁴³ Alexander's involvement with Barsine was seen as 'respectable' by her family and by other people.¹⁴⁴ This suggests that Barsine was not just a mistress but something in between that and a wife. However Alexander trying to please multiple people may not have worked as many may have found it 'insulting' that Alexander did not marry Barsine, whose family was influential and popular and instead married an Asian woman and a foreigner.¹⁴⁵ Alexander was trying to please several different groups of people in order to cement their loyalty.

Ancient Views of the Relationship

Barsine's mention in the ancient sources and modern scholarship is both conflicting and confusing. Alexander's sexual life had been subjected to 'wild speculation'.¹⁴⁶ Some

¹⁴³ Carney 1996: 572.

¹⁴⁴ Carney 1996: 575.

¹⁴⁵ Carney 1996: 575.

¹⁴⁶ Hammond 1989: 269.

scholars such as Tarn doubt her existence, whilst others such as Carney believe that she was an important person in Alexander's life. Tarn believes that 'Alexander, with the world at his feet, never had a mistress'.¹⁴⁷ This view is universally dismissed by every other scholar discussed.¹⁴⁸ Arrian, does not mention Barsine, her father Artabazus is discussed, as well as her brothers and sisters but she herself is not mentioned.¹⁴⁹

One of the main debates surrounding Alexander and Barsine's relationship is that according to sources and much of the scholarship, Alexander was not interested in having sex. It is rumoured that Olympias was concerned with Alexander's lack of interest in women. Nawotka disagrees that this was because of the extreme amount of alcohol Alexander consumed and writes that Macedonian aristocrats drank large amounts but 'lack of libido' was uncommon.¹⁵⁰ Olympias was concerned enough about Alexander's lack of interest in sex and so bought an expensive prostitute for him which he refused.¹⁵¹ Accounts of Alexander not being interested in sex has prompted the question of whether Alexander was interested in women at all? Using the example of Alexander marrying Roxanne for political reasons such as to be accepted into Iranian aristocracy and create a peaceful solution, it can be suggested that Alexander was not really interested in women. Hamilton points out that there are others who think that Alexander slept with a different prostitute every night and there are others who think that Alexander had a homosexual relationship with Hephaestion, a close advisor and friend.¹⁵² Alexander and Hephaestion are believed to be very close and even have been gay lovers.¹⁵³ Alexander is also believed to have grieved outwardly when Hephaestion

¹⁴⁷ Tarn 1948: 323.

¹⁴⁸ Carney 1996: 575; Green 1991: 245.

¹⁴⁹ Arr. Anab. 3.23.

¹⁵⁰ Nawotka 2010: 46.

¹⁵¹ Lane Fox 1973: 57.

¹⁵² Hammond 1989: 269.

¹⁵³ Plut. Alex. 47.5.

died, which was considered to be unusual for close friends.¹⁵⁴ Justin remarks that Alexander slept with Darius' concubines, all 360 of them whilst Curtius believes that Alexander kept them at Susa.¹⁵⁵ The Persian King had around 360 concubines, this excluded his 'official wives'.¹⁵⁶ Compared to this figure Alexander would seem very tame. However Alexander 'is associated with more women in this tradition than is any other Macedonian king'.¹⁵⁷

Another conflict in the sources is the dating of the relationship. There is no consistent date of when the relationship started and when or if it ever ended. There are many theories about the time of the relationship. Carney discusses Lane Fox's theory that Alexander and Barsine grew up together which she believes could be true, because children, both male and female, often 'played together'.¹⁵⁸ This could possibly be because of Barsine's father going into exile at the Macedonian royal palace due to a failed rebellion of his Satrap to Artaxerxes III.¹⁵⁹ This would provide Alexander and Barsine with the opportunity to have grown up together and have had contact before their romantic relationship started. Athenaeus complains about the stay of Artabazus and his family in the Macedonian court under the reign of Philip II. He believes that their stay 'corrupted' Alexander and his family with their expensive lifestyle.¹⁶⁰ However, Carney believes that the Macedonians had a love of 'luxury' before Alexander.¹⁶¹ This shows that Alexander and Barsine had contact from a young age. Lane Fox and Carney both believe that Barsine was captured at the battle of Issus and

¹⁵⁴ Arr. Anab. 7. 14.

¹⁵⁵ Tarn 1948: 323.

¹⁵⁶ Nawotka 2010: 59.

¹⁵⁷ Ogden 2009: 208.

¹⁵⁸ Carney 1996: 572.

¹⁵⁹ Diod. Sic 16.52.3; Curt. 6.5.2-3). Carney 1996: 572.

¹⁶⁰ Carney 1996: 366.

¹⁶¹ Carney 1996: 366.

Alexander and she started an intimate relationship soon after.¹⁶² This is contradicted by Bosworth who believes the relationship began when Alexander left the Persian princesses at Susa.¹⁶³ Alexander began the relationship with Barsine before Darius died, and her father began to be loyal to Alexander. Perhaps this is a similar situation to the one with Roxanne, and Alexander had 'possession' of Barsine before Artabazus changed his loyalty.¹⁶⁴ Ogden argues that the relationship of Alexander and Barsine lasted for around five years, but this is challenged by Carney who believes the relationship lasted a considerable amount of time.¹⁶⁵

There are also contradictions and confusions about what happened to Heracles and Barsine. They appear to disappear from sources and they become mentioned briefly and not spoken of. It is most likely that Barsine and Heracles were murdered, possibly by Roxanne to prevent any succession problems. Justin writes that Heracles is fourteen years old when he is killed by Cassander, but Tarn dismisses it as Justin in his work refers to Heracles as the child of Roxanne.¹⁶⁶ However, Tarn is very sceptical that there ever was a Heracles, son of Alexander, therefore he is unlikely to talk in detail or examine the evidence too closely about what happened to Heracles.¹⁶⁷ Green also agrees with the theory of Tarn that Heracles was not real and created for furthering the goals of those who wished to take the throne.¹⁶⁸ Tarn remarks that due to the succession wars it is impossible that an heir of Alexander's would have grown up in secret and not been 'used as a pawn'.¹⁶⁹ However, this is just the phrase that Bosworth uses to describe

¹⁶² Plut. Alex. 21.4; Carney 1996: 572; Lane Fox 1973: 298.

¹⁶³ Bosworth 2001: 64.

¹⁶⁴ Carney 1996: 572.

¹⁶⁵ Ogden 2009: 206; Carney 1996: 572.

¹⁶⁶ Tarn 1948: 334-335.

¹⁶⁷ Tarn 1948: 337.

¹⁶⁸ Green 1991: 245.

¹⁶⁹ Tarn 1948: 331.

Heracles and refers to him as a 'pawn' without any real chance of gaining Alexander's throne.¹⁷⁰ Due to the conflicting nature of the statements that Tarn makes it can be argued that his work is outdated. More recent scholars such as Carney and Bosworth tend to take a different stance on the arguments.

Barsine was the unofficial wife of Alexander the Great. One of the main political reasons for the relationship of Barsine and Alexander would be to provide an heir. Barsine's family held prominent positions in the Macedonian court and army which would benefit Alexander. As Barsine's family were so prominent they would have been influential and the relationship of Barsine and Alexander would have kept people loyal. Barsine and her family had elevated status from her relationship with Alexander. However there are some doubts that Barsine existed and that Alexander was uninterested in sex. There are uncertainties as to when Alexander and Barsine started their relationship and if it ever finished. There are controversies about the deaths of Barsine and Heracles as the sources are not clear on what happened to them.

¹⁷⁰ Bosworth 2001: 64.

Parysatis and Stateria

Stateria and Parysatis Background and context

Stateria was the oldest daughter of Darius and Parysatis was the youngest daughter of Artaxerxes III. Alexander married them in the mass weddings at Susa.¹⁷¹ As Alexander married both of these women, he married into both branches of the Persian royal family.¹⁷² Darius' daughter was believed to have inherited the good looks of her parents.¹⁷³

Stateria and Parysatis as well as many other members in Darius' family such as his wife, Stateris, and mother, Sisygambis, were captured by Alexander after the battle of Issus, supposedly at the same time that Barsine was captured along with the three hundred and sixty concubines of Darius. There were also three thousand talents taken.¹⁷⁴ Alexander is noted to be very respectful to these women that he had captured and treated them with care.¹⁷⁵ Alexander may have been respectful and caring towards the women because of his close relationship with his mother. Another explanation for Alexander being kind to the captured women may have been to gain their trust and to keep them from running away. Carney remarks that the scholars from the twentieth century that talk about Alexander not raping any of the women with much 'enthusiasm' and should be approached with hesitation.¹⁷⁶ This is seen with Lane Fox and Hamilton who comment on the subject enthusiastically. Lane Fox suggests that Alexander was very respectful of these women and Hamilton suggests that Alexander was celibate due to his close relationship with his mother, Olympias, and this is why he did not rape the

¹⁷¹ Bosworth 2001: 156; Green 1991: 448.

¹⁷² Ogden. 2009: 206.

¹⁷³ Tarn 1948: 336.

¹⁷⁴ Green 1991: 244; Bosworth 2001: 63; Arr. Anab. 2. 12.

¹⁷⁵ Plut. Alex. 21.4; Diod. 17.38.4-7.

¹⁷⁶ Carney 1996: 368.

women.¹⁷⁷ Tarn is also surprised by Alexander's respectful treatment of these women.¹⁷⁸ However, Alexander was even respectful of his enemy, Darius, and gives him a proper burial. Arrian says that Alexander buried him in 'Persepolis, to be buried in the royal tombs, like the king's before him'.¹⁷⁹ Alexander is said to try and treat the women like family, Darius' mother and daughters were treated like his own.¹⁸⁰ However this is a strange way to compare Darius' daughters when he later goes on to marry one of them. Alexander was 'careful' to not be too familiar with the wife of Darius.¹⁸¹ Can this suggest that Alexander was engaged in a relationship with Darius' wife? Even though Alexander was very caring towards these women 'the line between a hostage and a pawn in a marriage alliance was ... non-existent' according to Carney.¹⁸²

Furthering Alexander's goals

These women helped to further the goals of Alexander through a mass wedding. The weddings happened at Susa in 324BC and Alexander married Stateris and Parysatis.¹⁸³ The marriage ceremony was expensive and involved mixed-race couples.¹⁸⁴ Alexander and eighty of his men married Bactrian, Median and Persian nobles. Hephaestion also married one of Darius' daughters. At Susa Alexander also encouraged 10,000 of his men to marry Asian women and gave them gifts.¹⁸⁵ The wedding festivities carried on for five days and were in a Persian style rather than a

¹⁷⁷ Lane Fox 1973:57; Hammond. 1989: 269.

¹⁷⁸ Tarn 1948: 325.

¹⁷⁹ Arr. Anab. 3.22.

¹⁸⁰ Arr. Anab. 3.23.

¹⁸¹ Carney 1996: 570; Plut. Alex. 22.3.

¹⁸² Carney 1996: 568.

¹⁸³ Lane Fox 1973: 418; Roisman 1995: 203.

¹⁸⁴ Bosworth 2001: 156; Plut. Alex. 70.2 Diod. Sic. 17. 107.

¹⁸⁵ Hammond 1989: 265.

Macedonian style.¹⁸⁶ There were between eighty and one hundred weddings at Susa.¹⁸⁷ This upset some of Alexander's men, as they did not like the idea of foreign brides and were loyal to Macedonian culture and beliefs. Marrying those that had been conquered was seen as degrading, and after Alexander's death most of the marriages did not last, and the women were married to other men.¹⁸⁸ However, at the time of Alexander trying to rule Persia, marrying Persians to Macedonians could prevent Persians from revolting as they would see themselves as racially integrated and see this as a reward.¹⁸⁹ Green believes that Alexander took 'limited' steps towards 'racial integration' and they only served his own goals.¹⁹⁰ Roisman has a similar belief and argues that the marriages were intended to unite the Macedonian people and the conquered.¹⁹¹ However if there was to be a fusion of races, why did Alexander not have Macedonian women marry Persian men, this would have been just as effective.

Stateris and Parysatis helped to further Alexander's goals as they cemented him as the central power and king of the Persian Empire easily and in an uncontested way. It was common to marry the conquered kings' wife or daughter in order to marry into the family and make it difficult for another person to try and take the throne.¹⁹² Alexander married into both sides of the Persian royal family in order to be able to give 'continuity to the regime'.¹⁹³ This allowed Alexander to heighten his hold on the Achaemenid throne.¹⁹⁴ Carney describes the Persian women as a 'potent set of symbols of victory which he could manipulate to his own ends in the varying contexts of

¹⁸⁶ Green 1991: 447-448.

¹⁸⁷ Green 1991: 447.

¹⁸⁸ Bosworth 2001: 157; Arr. 7. 6.2; Green 1991: 448.

¹⁸⁹ Lane Fox 1973: 418.

¹⁹⁰ Green 1991: 446.

¹⁹¹ Roisman 1995: 209.

¹⁹² Tarn 1948: 336.

¹⁹³ Bosworth 2001: 157.

¹⁹⁴ Green 1991: 448.

Macedonian, Greek and Persian audiences'.¹⁹⁵ This would be helpful as Alexander had an important 'political' goal to vanquish and possess Persia 'while his most obvious and long-term propaganda aim was to appear as the legitimate ruler of that empire, without losing loyalty and support of his European empire'.¹⁹⁶

The two Persian princesses could serve to help Alexander's goals as marrying these women would present Macedonia as rich and powerful. This would be intimidating as well as impressive to other nations. Carney remarks that wealth and luxury were so closely identified with women because of the women wearing jewellery and being able to display it proudly.¹⁹⁷ Women would often be used to show off wealth through the garments that they wore. Perhaps women were also seen as displays of wealth in themselves. Even though the women wore veils, they wore expensive gold and purple garments and jewellery and this showed that the 'monarchy' was very wealthy.¹⁹⁸ Since Alexander had these women in his possession it would show that he not only possessed these women but large amounts of wealth and power. Alexander allows the women to keep their royal titles, which enhances their value.¹⁹⁹ This would serve to help Alexander as he could then declare himself as king of Asia. Carney declares that the 'sexual possession of these bearers of status... was a particularly powerful symbol of victory'.²⁰⁰ The Persian women are seen to have an extravagant lifestyle that had ruined them.²⁰¹ This can be seen where Alexander asks the women to make garments for the funeral of Darius's wife, Stateria and the women are horrified

¹⁹⁵ Carney 1996: 564.

¹⁹⁶ Carney 1996: 568.

¹⁹⁷ Carney 1996: 567.

¹⁹⁸ Carney 2010b: 49.

¹⁹⁹ Diod Sic. 17.38; Curt. 3.12.12; Bosworth. 2001: 64

²⁰⁰ Carney 1996: 564.

²⁰¹ Carney 1996: 564.

and shocked. Yet weaving and making garments was a common daily task for Macedonian women.²⁰² This shows that these women led very different lives to Macedonian women and were very privileged. Alexander was willing to let the women keep some Persian traditions, which suggests that he was trying not to upset the women and keep them happy as they were important.

One of the theories on why Alexander married the Persian princess was so that he could be closer to Hephaestion, a close advisor that Alexander was rumoured to have a homosexual relationship with. Darius' youngest daughter married Hephaestion, this would mean that their children would be Alexander's nieces and nephews.²⁰³ However, one of the scholars, Tarn, is horrified at calling Alexander homosexual. This could be due to the prejudice against being homosexual at Tarn's time of writing. Tarn believes that there was a familiar practice to label other people that were disliked with homosexual allegations with the desire that these slurs would stick.²⁰⁴

Ancient Views of the Marriages

One of the questions surrounding Alexander marrying the Persian princess is whether Alexander was engaged in an intimate relationship with Darius' wife, Stateria. Stateria is rumored to have had an affair with Alexander. If Alexander was in a close relationship with her, he could have been planning to marry her instead of Darius' daughters. Alexander is rumored to have never seen, Darius's wife as she was the most beautiful woman in the world, but was distraught with grief when she passed away.²⁰⁵

²⁰² Curt. 5.2.18-21; Carney 1996: 366.

²⁰³ Lane Fox 1973: 418; Green 1991: 448.

²⁰⁴ Tarn 1948: 323.

²⁰⁵ Plut. Alex. 22.3; Diod. 17.54.6-7; Plut. Alex. 30.1-3.

This is a very odd reaction for him to have if he had never seen Stateria and because of this never spent much time with her. Although Green says that Alexander described the women as an 'irritation' and could not bear to look at them. Darius' wife was the most beautiful woman at the time and Alexander would not allow others to talk about her good looks, suggesting that Alexander was protective over Stateria.²⁰⁶ Darius is even noted by Arrian to be worried about Stateria if she and Alexander were engaged in a romantic relationship.²⁰⁷ Another oddity that occurs is that Plutarch and Justin write that Darius' wife died in childbirth, however it is remarked that she had not seen Darius in around two years.²⁰⁸ If Stateria was pregnant it could suggest that she and Alexander were in an intimate relationship. Evidence of her death is limited and Curtius suggests that she died from exhaustion, which is very vague and Diodorus does not say why she died, he only records that she passed away.²⁰⁹ Alexander gave the women their titles and let them maintain their accustomed lifestyle whilst with him and did not want to 'ransom' the women but have them stay with him. Bosworth remarks that Alexander adopted Darius' mother as his own and wanted to give 'dowries' for the young princesses.²¹⁰ This suggests that Alexander did not have any intentions to marry the daughters and wanted to marry Darius' wife.

One of the complications with Stateria, Darius' daughter, is that there are mentions of a name change and that her name was previously Barsine.²¹¹ Lane Fox also suggests that she changed her name to Stateria.²¹² Ogden refers to Stateria as Barsine-Stateria, suggesting the name change.²¹³ If Stateria did have a name change it may

²⁰⁶ Green 1991: 245.

²⁰⁷ Arr. Anab. 4.20.

²⁰⁸ Plut. Alex. 30.1; Just. 11.12.6) Carney 1996: 570.

²⁰⁹ Curtius 4.10.18; Diodorus (17.54.7)

²¹⁰ Bosworth 2001: 64.

²¹¹ Arrian (VII, 4.4); Tarn 1948: 334.

²¹² Lane Fox 1973: 418; Wiesehöfer. 2018c.

²¹³ Ogden 2009: 206; Arr. Anab. 7.4.

suggest why some scholars mix up the names of Stateria and Parysatis with the name Barsine.

Stateria and Parysatis are rumoured to have been murdered through poison by Roxanne with the help of Perdiccas.²¹⁴ However, there are some versions that neglect to mention Parysatis and instead call one of the Persian Princesses Barsine. If Roxanne did kill these women, it begs the question why? Was there going to be a succession problem, if one of the women were pregnant or did Roxanne want to stop them from taking back Persian land and breaking up the territory that would be passed on to her newborn son?

One of the questions that can be asked is whether Alexander had always planned to marry these women, possibly even before he captured them. Carney claims that these women were 'critical' to his 'political and propaganda aims'.²¹⁵ This could suggest that Alexander was manipulating and planning ahead to his victory. His plans to marry the Persian princesses were not quick or improvised ideas. Darius offered considerable ransoms for his family, offering large amounts of territory, thirty thousand talents as well as the marriage to his eldest daughter Stateria. Bosworth remarks that Philip would have accepted the deal and Alexander was pushed to do so by his advisors but refused. Many of the Macedonians wanted Alexander to accept.²¹⁶ Alexander claimed that he did not need the permission of Darius to marry one of his daughters.²¹⁷ This shows the high levels of power that Alexander had by not accepting the large ransom from Darius and

²¹⁴ Lane Fox 1973: 474.

²¹⁵ Carney 1996: 568.

²¹⁶ Bosworth. 2012: 76; Diod. 17. 54.

²¹⁷ Arr. 2*.25.-26; Carney 1996: 568.

also that he did not need the father's permission to marry the daughters. It also shows that Alexander used the women as 'bargaining chips' and to promote the claim to the Persian throne.²¹⁸ When Darius' wife Stateria died in 331BC, Alexander left the rest of the royal family in Susa at around 330BC, to be taught Greek and given a Greek education. It shows the movement of 'royal power' into the hands of Alexander from Darius. Bosworth and Tarn believe that at this point Alexander was planning on marrying them.²¹⁹ Alexander promised to find the women good husbands. Was he planning on just marrying one of Darius' daughters? Perhaps he was looking for husbands for the rest of the Persian women that had been captured.²²⁰ Alexander teaches these women Greek before he conquers Persia and this suggests that Alexander was always planning on marrying the two Persian princesses, or at the least marrying one of the women in the royal family. Bosworth believes that it was a smart idea to marry these women because if they were married into a noble Persian family, there might be an uprising. There was a recent execution of a group of Persians who believed that Persia had not been conquered yet and did not want to accept Alexander as king.²²¹ Alexander could also face a backlash from the Macedonian court who were already unhappy with Alexander marrying foreign women.

Stateria and Parysatis were cousins who came from two lines of the Persian royal family.²²² Alexander captures these and other women who were important to Darius. By marrying Stateria and Parysatis, Alexander was able to have a mass wedding at Susa that united both Persians and Macedonians. The marriages would stop the

²¹⁸ Carney 1996: 568-570.

²¹⁹ Bosworth 2001: 64; Diod. Sic. 17.67.1; Curt.5.2.17; Tarn 1948: 336; Carney 1996: 569.

²²⁰ Bosworth 2001: 156; Diod. 17. 38.1

²²¹ Bosworth 2001: 156

²²² Wiesehöfer. 2018b; Wiesehöfer. 2018c.

Persians from revolting under the new leadership and cement Alexander as the King of the Persian Empire. Alexander marrying Stateris and Parysatis would show Macedonia as rich and powerful. One of the theories behind the reason of the marriage is so that Alexander could be closer to Hephaestion. It is possible to speculate that Alexander had been involved in an affair with Darius' wife. This raises questions about whether Alexander planned to marry these two women from the outset. Stateris and Parysatis were murdered by Alexander's other wife, Roxanne.²²³

²²³ Wiesehöfer. 2018a

Conclusion

The women in Alexander's life were extremely useful in furthering the goals of Alexander. Marriage was a significant political and economic tool in ancient times and is likely to have been used throughout all sections of society to create alliances, to consolidate wealth and to strengthen connections within the community. Heirs would ensure the continuance of family lines and secure the wealth of the family. For Alexander marriages and attachments were not primarily romantic relationships but provided a way to expand and consolidate his empire, to secure and maintain loyalty and to bring peace and stability in parts of his empire. Alexander enthusiastically adopted the practice of Polygamy initiated by his father with an awareness of the benefits that such alliances could bring. Through marriage enemies and strangers become family and this new relationship required loyalty from the newest family members. This is the perfect way for Alexander to cement his ties with conquered nations and stop any problems that could arise from having a new leader.

Creating an heir was clearly an important aspect of a marriage and would secure Alexander's line and provide continuity of leadership. An heir would help to ensure the succession of his dynasty and keep the conquered territory in the immediate family. Roxanne and Barsine both provided Alexander with children however the purpose of providing an heir may have been a secondary more long term goal of the relationships. The more immediate political and economic advantages appear as more important. Creating alliances was more significant to Alexander as it often provided a peaceful solution to a difficult problem. The positive effects could be seen immediately on his campaign. Whereas, having an heir to take the throne when Alexander died was a distant goal and the positive effects would not be felt for many years.

Alexander had some problems with marrying these women despite the political advantages. Alexander had to manage the often contradictory opinions of the varied communities that he was attempting to unite in marriage. Issues of ethnicity and status were occasionally problematic for Alexander. There were also tensions between the wives which ultimately were unhelpful to his agenda. The tensions were particularly noticeable when Alexander died and there was a power struggle to secure an heir. The women had limited authority and autonomy in Alexander's time and their position was very much linked to the status of the men with whom they were associated; fathers, husbands, brothers and sons. Alexander's polygamy inevitably resulted in conflict as the wives struggled to promote their own agendas after his death.

Overall Alexander was successful in using these women to further his own aims as many new alliances were made after Alexander married or entered into a relationship with these women. Alexander also gained different types of local support from each woman. This allowed him to conquer more territory and to expand the Macedonian empire. Alexander was also provided with two heirs with the ambition of one taking the throne when he died.

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