



RHOXANE II. ALEXANDER'S WIFE

The most famous bearer of the name Rhoxane (Gk. *Rhōxánē*) was Alexander's wife, whose father, Oxyartes (q.v.), is called a Bactrian in all the sources (e.g., Arrian, *Anab.*, 4.18.4, 7.4.4). His name, which occurs in various forms, usually is found applied to Persians, such as Ox(y)athres, brother of Darius III, and Oxyartes/Oxarthes, the son of Abulites (q.v.; father and son were killed by Alexander in 324, nominally for maladministration; Arrian, *Anab.*, 7.4.1; Plutarch, *Alex.* 6 8.4). The Bactrian Oxyartes originally served under Bessus (q.v.), the satrap of Bactria-Sogdiana under Darius III (q.v.). He was probably involved in the murder of Darius, and he fled with Bessus and Satibarzanes to Nautaca in Sogdiana (Arrian, *Anab.* 3.28.9). After the capture of Bessus, he continued the resistance; along with his own family and those of other notables, he entrenched himself in a supposedly impregnable mountain fortress in Sogdiana, which was taken early in 327 by Alexander (Arrian, *Anab.* 3.28.10, 4.18.4-19.4). Oxyartes' army surrendered, and he himself was confirmed as satrap (Curt., 8.4.21).

Oxyartes' daughter Rhoxane at this time was just ready for marriage (i.e., born ca. 340) and was exceedingly beautiful (Arr., *Anab.* 4.19.5; Curt., 8.4.23). The sources agree that Alexander fell passionately in love with her; but it should also be remembered that he had had considerable difficulty in occupying and controlling Sogdiana, and his decision to marry her may also have been motivated by the advantages of a politic alliance (see Badian, 1981, p. 456; for



the wedding, see Arr., *Anab.* 4.19.5; embroidered by Curtius, 8.4.21-30; for Alexander on cultural assimilation through intermarriage, see also Curt., 4.8.25 and Plut., *Alex.* 47.7-8).

Alexander's campaign into India followed; while in the Panjāb, he made Oxyartes satrap of the adjoining Hindu Kush region, the Paropamisadae (Arr., *Anab.* 6.15.3). An unreliable source (the late historical *Metz Epitome*, on which see, e.g., Baynham) relates that subsequently Rhoxane bore Alexander a son in India, who died soon after birth. It is more likely that she was left behind during the Indian campaign in a safe location, perhaps at Susa, as Darius had done with his children and his mother (Diod., 17.67.1; Curt., 5.2.18). After Alexander's return to Susa, a son of Oxyartes and brother of Rhoxane, Histanes, was one of the *barbaroi* who were promoted to the elite cavalry (Arr., *Anab.*, 7.6.4).

At Susa Alexander married Stateira, Darius III's daughter, as a second wife, in order to strengthen his claim to Persian legitimacy. At the time of his death (June 323), Rhoxane was close to bearing a child with him. It was a son, who was named Alexander; after a short civil war, he was declared joint king with a mentally incompetent son of Philip II, who assumed the name of Philip (III). (See Diod., 18 2-4; Arr., *De rebus successorum Alexandri [Succ. Al.]* 9. Badian, 1981, pp. 493 ff. gives a brief survey of these events and those immediately following). Perdikkas was made administrator of the kingdom.

Soon after his death, Rhoxane, with Perdikkas's support, had Stateira and her young sister, Drypetis (q.v.), killed (Plut., *Alex.* 77.4). But this only made her and her son the playthings of successive administrators, as the marshals fought among themselves for power. After the death of Perdikkas and then of Antipater, they both passed into the ineffective protection of Polyperchon, who was soon challenged by Cassander, Antipater's son. Philip's wife fanned the flames. In 317 Alexander was deprived of the royal title, and Rhoxane seems to have fled with him, engaging the support of Alexander the Great's mother, Olympias, who now prepared to return to Macedonia. Rhoxane is not mentioned in what follows, but she and her child must have been with Olympias when the army went over to her and she captured Philip and his wife, then had them tortured and killed (Diod., 19.11).

Cassander now invaded Macedonia, where Olympias's cruelty had antagonized the army. He gained control of the country, and Olympias, with Rhoxane and the boy king and some friends, took refuge in strongly fortified



Pydna. Polyperchon was abandoned by his army, and Pydna was starved into surrender. Olympias surrendered on being assured of safety, but she was assassinated at Cassander's order (Diod., 19.9-51, with graphic detail; Justin, 14.6). Roxane and her son were imprisoned at Amphipolis (Diod., 19.52.4) and finally killed in 310 (Just., 15.2.5; Diod., 19.105), after Cassander had undertaken to return the kingship to Alexander when he came of age. Alexander the Great's name was no longer enough to protect them.

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