



To keep the loyalty of conquered people, Alexander the Great respected their customs and traditions. Showing that he meant what he said, he even married a Sogdian princess—called Roshanak (“Roxane”)—from Bactria (an area in today’s northern Afghanistan whose ancient religion was founded by Zarathustra).

Her name means “Little Star.”

Sixteen years old when Alexander captured a mountain fortress (the Sogdian Rock) which her father was defending, Roxane became a prisoner of war. After she married Alexander, in a ceremony employing her local customs, Roxane followed Alexander as he continued his conquests.

During Alexander’s India campaign, she gave birth to a child who died soon after. When Alexander finally agreed that his men could go home, to Macedonia, Roxane accompanied her husband.

She was with him in Babylon, where Alexander died on the 11th of June, 323 BC. Pregnant at the time, Roxane had a son whom she named Alexander.

After her husband’s death, the era of the Diadochi (a name given to Alexander’s successors) began. These were difficult times for Alexander’s widow and his son. For a time she lived in Macedonia, a place very foreign to her.

In 316 BC, Cassander captured Roxane and Alexander. Concluding a peace treaty with other Diadochi, Cassander and his potential rivals agreed they would run Alexander the Great’s empire until young Alexander - known as Alexander IV - came of age. Not unexpectedly, that action led to the end of Roxane and her child. Both were executed, circa 311 or 310 BC.

This image, depicting an ancient sculpture, is sometimes associated with Roxane, but there is no evidence that it even bears a likeness to her. It was found at the ruins of Persepolis, in today’s Iran. Scholars believe it depicts either a Persian woman or a clean-shaven young Persian prince.

Today, the original sculpture is maintained in Tehran, at the National Museum. Click on it for a better view.

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Image, described above, depicts a photo by Marco Prins taken at the National Museum in Tehran. It is online via Livius.org.

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Roxane - Wife of Alexander the Great

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