CHAPTER 2

From Cardia to Babylon

Eumenes, the son of Hieronymus (Arr. Ind. 18. 7), was born in 361 BC, in Cardia in the Thracian Chersonese.1 Beyond this, little is known of his life prior to the death of Alexander the Great. Our major source for this later period, Hieronymus, was not writing biography, but a history of post-Alexandrine events,2 and this is reflected in our sources, where little of Eumenes’ activities before 323 is mentioned. The information that does survive is found principally in Plutarch’s Life of Eumenes. Nepos (Eum. 1. 4–6) only notes that Eumenes became secretary to both Alexander and his father Philip, and late in Alexander’s reign he commanded one of the two corps of the elite Macedonian Companion Cavalry.

Plutarch presents two accounts of the origin of Eumenes’ association with the Macedonian court, one which comes from Duris of Samos and relates that Eumenes was the son of a poor carter whose athletic prowess so impressed the Macedonian king that he was immediately taken into Philip’s entourage (Plut. Eum. 1. 1–2). There was even a tradition that Eumenes was the son of an impoverished funeral-musician (Ael. VH 12. 43). Ptolemy, also, is described as having risen from the ranks of the infantry (Just. 13. 4. 10); Antigonus, born of a farmer (Ael. VH 12. 43), and Lysimachus, the son of a Thessalian (FGrH 260 F-3.8).3 Certainly in the case of Ptolemy the evidence is clear that he came from the

---

1 Eumenes died in January 315 (see Chapter 6), having served the Macedonian royal house since he was 19; he served Alexander for 13 years (Nepos Eum. 1. 6, 13. 1); Philip for seven (Nepos Eum. 1. 6, 13. 1). He died in his 45th year (Nepos Eum. 13. 1).
2 See chapter 1.
3 Certain modern historians have combined a number of sources to urge that the description of Lysimachus as a Thessalian is correct, even though both Pausanias (1. 9. 5) and Justin (15. 3. 1) describe him as Macedonian by birth, and Plutarch implies the same (cf. Plut. Demetr. 44. 6) (see Lund 1992: 2). Theopompus (FGrH 115 F-81=Athen. 6. 259F-261A) in a general account of the depravity of Philip II’s “friends” states that a certain Agathocles who commanded troops under Philip was formerly a Thessalian slave. Lysimachus’ father’s and one of his son’s names were Agathocles (Arr. Anab. 6. 28. 4; Ind. 18. 3; Plut. Demetr. 31. 4. 46. 9). However, neither Theopompus, nor any other author, makes a connection between the former Thessalian slave and Agathocles, the father of Lysimachus. Further, Lysimachus in his struggle against Pyrrhus described the latter as a “foreigner, whose ancestors had always been subject to Macedonia” (Plut. Pyrrh. 12. 6). On the correctness of identifying Lysimachus’ ancestors as noble Macedonians, see I.L. Merker 1979: 31–5.
upper echelons of Macedonian society (Curt. 9. 8. 22; Paus. 1. 6. 2; Heckel 2006: 235 [#6]). These rags-to-riches metamorphoses were a motif popular in the Hellenistic Age. Plutarch, however, to his credit, rejects Duris’ fanciful anecdote regarding Eumenes for the more reasonable report that the connection was the result of a tie of guest-friendship (xenia kai philia)⁴ between Eumenes’ father, Hieronymus, a prominent Cardian, and Philip (Plut. Eum. 1. 3; cf. Nepos Eum. 1. 4).⁵

Other information concerning Eumenes’ background must come from an analysis of the history of his home city, Cardia, in the fourth century. The friendship between Philip and Eumenes’ father probably indicates that the latter was one who early came to see the Macedonian king as the ascendant force in the north. Such attachments to the Macedonian monarch were predicated on Cardian fear of Athenian power in the region. While Cardia’s early history was closely linked to Athens, since the Peloponnesian War it had been an independent state. Cardia, established originally in the seventh century, jointly by Miletus and Clazomenae (Str. 7. 51), was refounded in 560 by Miltiades and the Athenians (Hdts. 6. 34–36), with the addition of many Thracian settlers (Hdts. 6. 36, cf. 41). In 493, the city became tributary to the Persians (Hdts. 9. 115; cf. Hdts. 6. 41), but fell back under Athenian domination in 466 (Plut. Cim. 14. 1). Cardia gained its complete independence with the collapse of the Athenian Empire at the conclusion of the Peloponnesian War (Xen. Hell. 2. 2. 2; 3. 2. 8–10; Andoc. 3. 15), and, even though the Chersonese was granted to the Athenians in the King’s Peace of 371 (Dem. 9. 16), this was done in name only. Cardia maintained her independence against Athenian encroachment primarily by establishing alliances with various Thracian dynasts, perhaps, even coming under the control of Cotys, the king of the Odrysian Thracians, in 365 (Tzvetkova 2007: 660). But in 353, Cotys’ son Cersobleptes formed an alliance with the Athenians, ceding the Chersonese to them, however, without Cardia (Dem. 9. 16; Diod. 16. 34. 4; see Ryder 1965: 128), which remained his ally either under his patronage (Archibald 1998: 233), or under his direct control (Tzvetkova 2007: 665–7). Athenian cleruchs were dispatched to the region, resulting in border disputes between the Cardians and the Athenian settlers (Diod. 16. 34. 4; Dem. 23. 181–2, cf. 168, 175; cf. 8. 6; [Dem.] 7. 41–4). The Athenian alliance with Cersobleptes brought a rapid response from Philip.

---

⁴ Hieronymus may also have been a proxenos, the visible representative of a foreign power, who retained local citizenship and domicile. The individual retained not only his citizenship, but in spite of his recognized agency retained primary loyalty to his home state (see Perlman 1958: 185–91; Walbank 2008: 132–9).

⁵ Nepos (Eum. 1. 2–3) states that Eumenes “was of the highest birth” in his native Cardia.