

CHAPTER 1
PERDICCAS, EUMENES,
CASSANDER, 323–316

When Alexander lay dying in Babylon, in June 323 B.C., Perdiccas, now his senior commander,¹ spent much time at his bedside. The question of the succession was in everyone's mind. It was to Perdiccas, reportedly, that Alexander gave his ring, its seal the symbol of imperial authority; but the ultimate source of that report must have been Perdiccas himself, a fact that does not inspire confidence. And what, even if true, did the gesture signify? Was Perdiccas to be the king's heir, his regent, or nothing more than the supervisor of what he hoped would be a peaceful succession? Perdiccas himself claimed that he was to be *epimelētēs tēs basileias*,² a nicely ambiguous phrase that could be—and has been—translated as either “regent of the kingdom” or “guardian of the monarchy,” thus ensuring its bearer's position whether or not the predominantly royalist Macedonians actually put a king on the throne. Perdiccas may well have invented the title; in any case, his interpretation of Alexander's dying gesture left him in an unchallengeable position of authority.³

It was probably to Perdiccas—again, if Perdiccas did not invent both statements on his own behalf—that Alexander uttered his two last famous apothegms. He was asked to whom he left his kingdom. Since he had no obvious heir, this was an urgent question. “To the strongest,” he replied.⁴ He also declared—his last recorded words—that “all his foremost friends would hold a great funeral contest over him.”⁵ True or invented, that was a shrewd assessment. Waiting in Babylon was a group of tough, battle-scarred, ambitious commanders. Their eyes were fixed on the glittering prizes of empire, and their ideals were a good deal more mundane than Alexander's own. Not for them, in any form, the fusion of East and West. When Alexander was dead they repudiated, almost to a man, the Iranian wives wished on them in that bizarre mass-marriage ceremony at Susa.⁶ Not for them Persian court protocol or high-flown plans to change the shape of the world.

Indeed, the very fact of their Macedonian background—with all that this implied—was to prove a major determining factor in all that followed. Macedonia had always been, and to a great extent remained, an ambiguous frontier element of the Balkans. Despite the assertions of *parti pris* advocates, there is insufficient linguistic



Fig. 1. Babylon: the Ishtar Gate. Painting by Elizabeth Andrae of the 1914 excavation. Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin

Fig. 2. Alexander the Great, wearing ram's horn and elephant-scalp headdress. Silver tetradrachm minted at Alexandria by Ptolemy I ca. 305 B.C. British Museum, London. Photo: Leonard von Matt.



evidence to identify what the Macedonian language, and, hence, Macedonian ethnicity, really was. Macedonia formed, as it were, a buffer enclave between the Thessalians (whose Hellenism was never in doubt) and a range of variously hostile and dubiously civilized tribes such as the Epirotes, the Illyrians, and the Paeonians. At least since the early fifth century the lowland royal house of the Argeads had been at some pains to establish its Greek identity, in a cultural no less than an ethnic sense. Alexander I, at the time of the Persian Wars, was held eligible to compete in the Olympic Games on the basis of a family tree (almost certainly fictitious) deriving the Argeads from Argos. By the time of Archelaus (413–399), the Argead court at Pella had acquired a considerable veneer of Attic sophistication, and some distinguished resident Athenians, including Euripides. Yet Macedonian society remained, in essence, sub-Homeric and anti-Greek, a rough and vigorous monarchy ruling, by main force, over ambitious barons (many of them former princes in their own highland cantons) whose chief interests in life were fighting and drinking. Southern Greeks never lost an opportunity of sneering at Macedonian barbarism, nor Macedonians at Greek effeteism; and though it would be unwise to take all Demosthenes' insults at face value, there can be no doubt that Alexander's marshals, all of whom sprang from Macedonian baronial families, were a breed apart.

Xenophobic (Peucestas was the exception that proved the rule) and grasping imperialists, these old soldiers had no intention of sharing real power with the locals—Persian officials advanced under Alexander were to get short shrift in the years ahead, doing most of the bureaucratic donkey-work and getting few of the plum jobs—or of learning native ways, or even of speaking the languages, much less studying the literature. It was the last Lagid monarch, Cleopatra VII, who was also the first to learn Egyptian (see below, p. 663). Insofar as they cultivated the local population at all, the Macedonian generals set their sights on the wealthy, the conservative, the influential elite (both civil and religious), those who were most likely to support their rule in return for special concessions, speciously disguised as *eunoia*, good will, *euergetiai*, benefactions, or *philanthrōpia*. What these marshals wanted was colonial power, and the enormous fringe benefits that such power gave. Under their charismatic leader they had done what generations of panhellenists had advocated: they had conquered the Achaemenid empire of Persia. It had been a long, fierce, eleven-year struggle, and for all that time they had played subordinate roles to a new Achilles in pursuit of his heroic destiny. Now they wanted something more. Most of the gold and other loot had already been shared out, to flood the Mediterranean markets and provide the ostentatious brand of conspicuous consumption that the Hellenistic monarchs made peculiarly their own. What these Macedonian commanders now sought was to get their hands on the empire itself.

They did not, to begin with, all have the same ideas about how this gigantic prize should be handled. Some wanted to maintain a unified kingdom on behalf of the legitimate royal heirs. Others made no bones about wanting to win control of it on their own account. Others, again, greed limited by cautious pragmatism, hoped to carve up the cake to their measure, to settle for lesser but still profitable fiefs—

surely this vast imperial mass could accommodate them all? The real, central contest was between the unitarians and the separatists, those who wanted to preserve the monarchy and those eager to go it alone. This was the main result of Alexander's death—inevitable when the entire empire had been won, and held together, by one man's unique and irreplaceable personality. The crisis was the more intense for the lack of an obvious successor: uncertainty spurred ambition; ambition bred paranoia.

Roxane, Alexander's Bactrian wife, was pregnant, but even if she bore a son, that would mean a long regency—ideal for ambitious would-be usurpers. What was worse, the child would be half-Bactrian, a point heavily exploited by Ptolemy.⁷ The only other possible blood-successor was Arrhidaios, Philip II's son by a Thessalian dancing girl. Arrhidaios was reputedly weak-minded and epileptic;⁸ certainly Alexander had not entrusted him with any responsible command, civil or military. For traditional royalists the choice was uninspiring.⁹ While many of the future contenders for empire must have foreseen, from the start, that no one could hold Alexander's conquests together *en bloc*—and indeed that even Alexander himself might have found the task beyond him when the momentum of his quest finally slackened—there were others who feared anarchy, bloodshed, and chaos if the direct succession were lost, and others, again, who simply could not envisage a continuation of Macedonian power except through Alexander's descendants.

The true conflict, in other words, would come between the rival Macedonian commanders, with little influence from outside, and heavy reliance on the loyalty, or purchasability, of private, professionalized, quasi-mercenary armies. Persian and Iranian allegiance, if "allegiance" is the right word, would go to whoever came out on top in the struggle to be Lord of Asia: it is significant that only two native risings occurred on the news of Alexander's death,¹⁰ and both of these, as we shall see in a moment, involved Greeks; there were otherwise no indigenous revolts against the colonial government. As for the sixty thousand—odd mercenaries, of various nation-

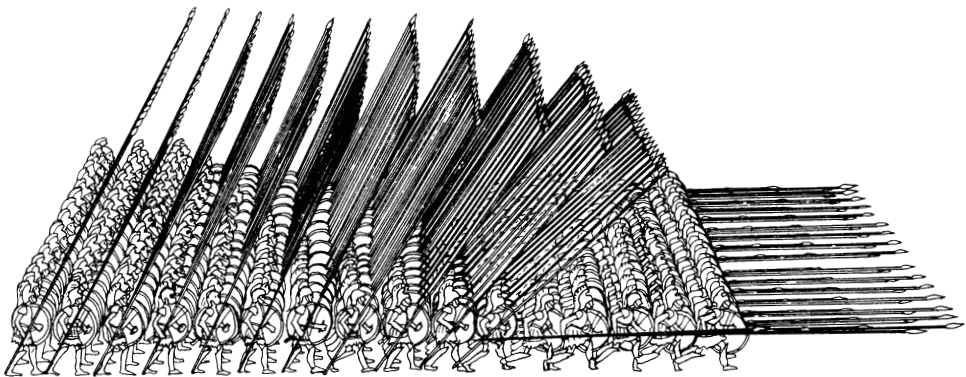


Fig. 3. Reconstruction of the Macedonian phalanx, armed with the famous sarissa, a heavy lance resembling the medieval Swiss pike.

Drawn after P. Levi, *Atlas of the Greek World*, 1980.

alities, who had been serving under both Alexander and Darius, they would throw their support to whoever paid them most generously and promptly. If the Macedonian barons wanted power, the mercenaries would settle for cash; and below the top echelons Macedonian veterans also had loot as their prime concern. The soldiers of Alexander's old Guards' Brigade (*Hypaspistai*), now renamed the Silver Shields (*Argyraspides*), many with over forty years' continuous service, not only enforced what amounted to employment contracts on their general, Eumenes,¹¹ but were quite capable, even in the moment of victory, of selling him off to the other side, for inevitable execution (below, p. 20), in order to ransom their camp, baggage, loot, and women, captured by a diversionary action (316/5 B.C.). But then, Eumenes was a Greek, and Macedonian troops, especially the old sweats who had served under Philip II, were never really comfortable being led by non-Macedonians. ("That pest from the Chersonese" was how the Silver Shields dismissed Eumenes when he was pleading for his life as a prisoner.)¹² The Greek cities invoked the name of freedom and fought wars and revolts in the name of self-determination and autonomy. Yet even here the motives were seldom as simple as they sometimes look; the autonomy motif was soon cynically exploited by the Successors (*Diadochoi*) for propaganda and divide-and-rule purposes, as it would be again later by Rome.

Even at the initial conference in Babylon after Alexander's death, the debate concerning the succession sparked off a confrontation, nearly a civil war, between the Macedonian cavalry and infantry. The elite cavalry commanders, including Perdiccas himself, wanted to wait for the birth of Roxane's child, and, if it proved to be a boy, to acclaim him king under a regency.¹³ The bid of the fleet commander, Nearchus, to have Heracles, Alexander's son by Barsine, acclaimed as the heir apparent got nowhere:¹⁴ why choose a bastard over legitimate offspring? In any case, despite his seniority under Alexander, Nearchus never came to much among the Successors; but then he, like Eumenes, was a Greek; worse still, he was a Cretan, and thus a proverbial liar.¹⁵ Ptolemy's quintessentially Macedonian proposal for a ruling council of the King's Friends was killed by the supporters of Perdiccas, whose ambition was held in check only by the consideration of Roxane's unborn child. Even so, a proposal to make Perdiccas king was actually advanced at the meeting (not, one supposes, without his prior knowledge), and made some impression:¹⁶ this was what most provoked the representatives of the infantry phalanx. Their spokesman, Meleager, urged the acceptance of Arrhidaios as a candidate¹⁷—an act that must, even if Arrhidaios lacked the drive or personality ever to achieve true independence of action, make one wonder just how mentally incapable he really was. Xenophobia also played its part here: the Macedonian rank and file did not relish the prospect of kowtowing to a half-Oriental monarch.

Arrhidaios, who had clearly been waiting in the wings, was now brought in by Meleager, and the infantry acclaimed him vociferously.¹⁸ They then stormed the palace, and the Bodyguard, including Perdiccas, barely escaped a lynching and withdrew, taking the cavalry with them.¹⁹ Meleager now briefly held the key to the succession, but lost his nerve when the cavalry cut off food supplies to the city. In the end

Eumenes, still acting as Alexander's chief secretary, managed to talk Meleager's troops into a less belligerent attitude, and proposed a compromise by which Arrhidaios should be made king, and Roxane's son, if son the child proved, should be made joint king with him. This proposal was accepted. Arrhidaios was given the title of Philip III, while Alexander's child by Roxane—who was indeed a boy—became Alexander IV.

Perdiccas, bent on reasserting his somewhat shaken authority, announced a "purification" of the army after Alexander's death. At the public parade to perform this ritual, the ringleaders of the infantry revolt were rounded up, without effective protest, for immediate execution—in one account by being trampled to death by war elephants.²⁰ Meleager was, diplomatically, spared, and was even appointed Perdiccas's deputy (*hyparchos*); but as soon as the crisis died down, and the situation was once more under control, he was murdered while seeking sanctuary in a temple.²¹ So, for the time being at least, the unity of the empire was preserved. But the omens were not good. Arrhidaios, at best, was no forceful ruler: it is symptomatic of the realities of power that Perdiccas, though officially now acting in the name of the new kings, nevertheless retained all the authority of a regent. It would, too, be fifteen or sixteen years at least before Roxane's child—even if a boy who took after his father—became a force to reckon with. Whatever happened, and despite any traditional Macedonian loyalties to the throne, the empire was going to be dependent, for the crucial next decade or so, on regents and advisers who had their own ambitions to satisfy.

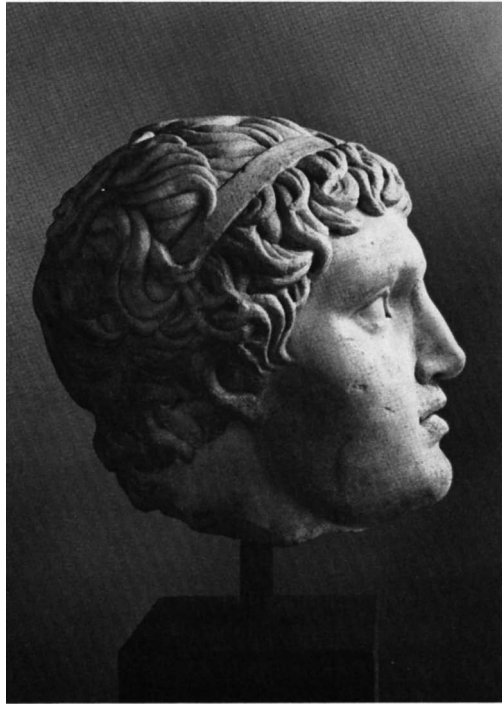
This was at once clear when Perdiccas—in his new capacity as *epimelētēs*, either guardian or regent, or, when convenient, both,²² and with the authority of Alexander's seal ring as further support—summoned a council in Babylon to announce the various key commands that had been agreed on.²³ Here we find almost all the great marshals. Three, however, were absent. Antipater, who during Alexander's expedition had held the key post of regent or viceroy in Macedonia, was still at Pella. A few months before his death Alexander had summoned him to Babylon; but Antipater, sensing that if he obeyed he was a dead man, had remained at home, sending out his son Cassander to negotiate on his behalf.²⁴ It proved a wise decision. Craterus, whom Alexander had appointed to replace Antipater, was on his way back to Europe with Polyperchon, his second-in-command, leading ten thousand of the veterans:²⁵ he had got as far as Cilicia, and sensibly stayed there until the situation clarified itself. A genial bear of a man, in his broad-brimmed Macedonian slouch hat, he was popular with the troops; but he lacked that fine edge of ruthlessness necessary for supreme rule. A third key figure, Antigonus One-Eye (*Monophthalmos*), who almost from the beginning of the Persian expedition had held the appointment of commander in central Phrygia, responsible for keeping Alexander's lines of communication open, also, for the time being, remained where he was, in his fortress at the crossroads city of Celaenae.²⁶ He too, like Craterus, was larger than life: a towering, corpulent figure, with a harsh parade-ground voice and a shatteringly hearty laugh²⁷—not to mention the physical deformity for which he was nicknamed.

When the appointments were announced, they were revealing. Antipater was

reconfirmed as Macedonian viceroy: this could be construed as a direct blow at Craterus, thus robbed of the post for which he had Alexander's own authority.²⁸ Perdiccas was well aware of Craterus's popularity with the infantry; he may now have given him his problematic, and in any case largely honorary, guardianship (*pro-stasia*, as opposed to *epimelēteia*) of the monarchy, as a sop to this not-so-dangerous military Cerberus.²⁹ Meleager's appointment as *hyparchos* can be viewed in much the same light. Even if Craterus was technically guardian (*prostatēs*) of one or both kings, he never stood in a position to exercise that office;³⁰ whereas Perdiccas retained both Alexander and Arrhidaios in Asia, where he could keep a watchful eye on them.³¹ Among the other appointments, the most important were those of Ptolemy, Lysimachus, Antigonus One-Eye, and the Greek, Eumenes. Ptolemy was one of the few to realize that limiting his ambitions would actually get him farther in the long run. He asked for Egypt, and got it. He had no cause to regret his choice. Lysimachus was given Thrace, while Antigonus was confirmed in his existing command of Pamphylia, Lycia, and Greater Phrygia.³² Whether this was "really a political setback" for Antigonus is debatable, but certainly he and Perdiccas had never cared for each other, and renewed conflict between them was, in these circumstances, a foregone conclusion.³³ Eumenes, who was resented by the Macedonian old guard, but like all shrewd administrators knew far too much about his colleagues to be discounted, got Cappadocia and Paphlagonia. This could not be described as generous, since neither area had yet been conquered; they were held by a local monarch called Ariarathes, and the appointment was contingent on Eumenes' ousting him. Alexander's old friend Leonnatus was allotted Hellespontine Phrygia. All these men were either Macedonian or Greek: the era of Persian equality had died with Alexander. The dead king's other projects, as costly as they were grandiose, also now met their demise, voted down by the army assembly.³⁴ They had included a fleet of a thousand large warships for a North African campaign, the encouragement of racial fusion by mass transfers of populations, and the construction of transcontinental highways, numerous temples, and a tomb for Alexander's father, Philip, "to equal the biggest of the Egyptian pyramids."

When all the appointments had been made, the new satraps at once took off for their fiefs and dug themselves in, removing all the cash and troops they could from Babylon. Perdiccas was left with the two kings, the remnants of the imperial army, and a rather shaky control of things. He had won the first round, but his power base was still uncertain. As Arrian says, "everyone was suspicious of him, and he of them."³⁵ The first thing he had to do was look for allies. The likeliest candidates were Craterus, Ptolemy, and Antipater. He was also forced to dispatch one of his Eastern satraps, Peithon, to put down a huge mutiny and revolution of the Greek military settlers in Bactria. Peithon, an ambitious man, played with the idea of joining the rising himself, but dropped it when he found his troops obstinately loyal to the Macedonian throne. The rebellion was crushed, violently, for the moment;³⁶ but Bactria remained difficult territory, and later broke away from Seleucid control altogether (see p. 332). It was now, too, that Rhodes expelled its Macedonian garrison and regained its independence.³⁷

Fig. 4. Lysimachus of Thrace(?). Roman copy of a Hellenistic bust, tentatively identified through similarity to a coin portrait, itself uncertain. Musée d'Art et d'Histoire, Geneva.



Most serious of all, Craterus, Antipater, and Leonnatus were almost at once (? Sept. 323) caught up in a revolt of some mainland Greek states, precipitated by Alexander's death, and culminating in the so-called Lamian or Hellenic War. The leading rebel was, once again, Athens. Here Alexander's decree enforcing the recall of exiles (324), all removed on political grounds and thus hostile to the democratic government, had caused violent resentment; and his death without viable heirs, by seeming to place Macedonian control over Greece in jeopardy, provided the Athenians with an irresistible opportunity to make one more bid for freedom. Sparta, still smarting from her defeat by Antipater in 331, held aloof.³⁸ Funds—including the treasure of Alexander's absconding paymaster Harpalus, who had fled to Athens—were spent on hiring mercenaries, now easily available from the mass of unemployed soldiers of fortune (mostly paid off and sent home after the winding-up of the Persian expedition) gathered in the southern Peloponnese, near Cape Tainaron.³⁹ A brilliant Athenian general, Leosthenes, took charge of operations.⁴⁰ The Aetolians and Thessalians joined Athens as allies. In the winter of 323–322 Leosthenes occupied Thermopylae, Corinth and Argos joined the revolt, and Antipater found himself blockaded in the Thessalian town of Lamia. Demosthenes came home from exile in triumph; hopes ran high. But then things began to go wrong. Leosthenes was killed during the siege of Lamia by a sling stone from the walls. Antipater sent out emergency appeals for help, and some of them were answered.

Lysimachus was tied up by a local insurgence in Thrace, and Craterus, in Cilicia, preferred for the moment to play a waiting game. However, in the spring of 322 Leonnatus brought his army across the Hellespont, with ambitions of his own in mind, since Alexander's sister, Cleopatra, had written him with an offer of marriage, and he planned to "lay claim to Macedonia."⁴¹ At the same time Cleitus, one of Craterus's commanders, was sent to take charge of the Macedonian fleet in the Aegean—a sensible move, since control of the sea was essential for victory in this campaign. Leonnatus was killed in a hard-fought cavalry engagement against the Thessalians,⁴² the first of many Macedonian marshals to be eliminated from the power struggle; but Cleitus annihilated an Athenian fleet of over two hundred vessels off the island of Amorgos,⁴³ and Craterus himself—now free to cross the Aegean unimpeded, and perhaps sensing that the tide was on the turn—arrived in time to help defeat the allied Greek land forces at Crannon, in Thessaly (August 322). Athens, rather than stand siege, surrendered unconditionally to Antipater.⁴⁴

Amorgos and Crannon marked the end of Athens as a serious political or military force in Greece. Her cry of "Freedom for the Greeks" had failed.⁴⁵ It is significant that the propertied classes, as a whole, had been against the war and in favor of Macedonian collaboration; it was the common people, the *plēthos*, who forced what they proudly called a Hellenic war. The division was symptomatic, and a foretaste of things to come.⁴⁶ The orator Demades, characteristically, had been angling, in secret, for an intervention by Perdiccas; Antipater found out about this only when Perdiccas's papers became available after his death. It has been suggested that Perdiccas must have already had wide secret contacts in Greece among the opponents of Craterus and Antipater.⁴⁷ Antipater, conscious of where his best support lay, went easy on wealthy Athenians in the terms he dictated: they kept their lands and possessions; he limited the franchise by making citizenship conditional on the possession of a minimum fortune of two thousand drachmas, thus slashing the voting population to a mere nine thousand. So much for freedom and democracy. He also shipped out twelve thousand impoverished Athenians to Thrace, and installed a Macedonian garrison in Piraeus.⁴⁸ Hypereides, who had been a passionate advocate of armed resistance, was hunted down and killed; Demosthenes escaped execution only by committing suicide.⁴⁹ An oligarchic government was imposed, led by Demades and the aged conservative Phocion (below, p. 40).

The Aetolians continued to resist in their mountain retreat, and Olympias, Alexander's mother, watching events from her homeland in Epirus, now (322/1) made them an offer of support—probably because Antipater and Craterus had taken the field against them.⁵⁰ Olympias cordially detested Antipater, who as viceroy had continually thwarted her during Alexander's lifetime. She also had every intention of seeing that young Alexander IV succeeded to the throne. Her best ally for this purpose was Perdiccas, who at least claimed to be maintaining the monarchy, and who certainly, at this point, was in charge of the kings. She therefore sent her daughter, Cleopatra, to Perdiccas in Sardis. The death of Alexander of Epirus had left Cleopatra an eligible widow (330); the death of Leonnatus, to whom she had made a written offer of marriage in return for aid against Antipater,⁵¹ meant that she had no

prior commitments. Dynastic marriages play a large part in this story: a union between Perdiccas and Cleopatra would have suited Olympias very well. Cleopatra, as Alexander's sister, was a prize worth winning, and in fact at one time or other was courted by most of the Successors; it is one of history's more piquant ironies that in the end she married none of them.⁵²

Eumenes, for whatever motive, encouraged Perdiccas in this new matrimonial venture, and served him as a diplomatic go-between. The risks were high. Perdiccas, in the course of his rise to power, had courted and married Antipater's daughter Nicaea.⁵³ (Antipater, a true dynastic power-broker, disposed of his two other daughters, Phila and Eurydice, to Craterus and Ptolemy: a shrewd hedging of bets.)⁵⁴ But the offer of Cleopatra came as a fatal temptation. Perdiccas was convinced that "through her he could work on the Macedonians to help him gain supreme power."⁵⁵ At the same time he was anxious, for obvious reasons, to keep this new intrigue from Antipater's ears.

Enter now, on the Sardis scene, that redoubtable lady Cynane (also sometimes referred to as Cynna), Alexander's half-sister and the widow of Philip II's nephew Amyntas IV, with her hoydenish, ambitious daughter Adea in tow, whom she planned to marry off—as very much the dominant partner—to Philip Arrhidaios. Perdiccas took fright: this was a challenge to his own control of the kings. His adviser and friend Alcetas, who had sensibly steered him into marrying Nicaea, and was already in a highly nervous state over the Cleopatra affair, now lost his head completely and had Cynane assassinated.⁵⁶ At this point the Macedonian troops, who retained a strong and loyal affection for Philip II's kin, mutinied. Perdiccas was forced to let Cynane's daughter marry Philip Arrhidaios after all, adopting the traditional Macedonian royal name Eurydice when she did so. Still, Perdiccas's position in Asia, at least, was now greatly strengthened. After military victories in Pisidia and Cappadocia, where he won Eumenes' firm support by conquering his satrapy for him,⁵⁷ Perdiccas turned his attention to Antigonus One-Eye in central Phrygia. He knew—and Antigonus knew he knew—that Antigonus had, unforgivably, informed Antipater in advance of his son-in-law's plans to marry Cleopatra. Thus when Perdiccas called on Antigonus for an administrative and financial accounting of his stewardship, and followed this with a barrage of (probably trumped-up) charges, Antigonus, in alarm, left for Europe to join Antipater (Nov./Dec. 321). The news he brought of Perdiccas's activities—not least the threat that, on marrying Cleopatra, he would march on Macedonia as king, and rob Antipater of his office there—had immediate results.⁵⁸ Craterus and Antipater patched up a truce with the Aetolians, and at once set out for Asia. They also sent envoys to Ptolemy asking for his support. Antigonus seems to have crossed separately to Halicarnassus, perhaps as a diversionary tactic.⁵⁹ Eumenes, dispatched by Perdiccas to hold the Hellespont against Antipater and Craterus, made a great show of raising troops, but was mysteriously elsewhere when the invading armies arrived—for part of the time, at least, dancing attendance on Cleopatra at Sardis, and bringing her Perdiccas's gifts.⁶⁰ The crossing went off flawlessly: most of Perdiccas's supporting troops and allies, including Neoptolemus, another of Alexander's old marshals, now governor of Armenia,

seem to have gone over *en masse* to the invaders.⁶¹ Eumenes remained loyal, but he had showed a remarkable talent for not being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Perdiccas at this point had every reason to feel paranoid suspicion, since it was clear to everyone, not least because of his marital intrigues, that he was planning a bid for the throne, and they reacted accordingly. By early 320 he had Antipater, Craterus, Lysimachus, and Antigonus One-Eye all lined up against him. This is a pattern that recurs several times during the initial struggles of the Successors: a bid for power by one leading marshal; a coalition of the rest to stop him. However, this coalition was not Perdiccas's only problem: he found it urgently necessary to deal with Ptolemy as well.⁶² Ptolemy had not been idle since reaching Alexandria: he had already, without authorization, annexed the rich North African state of Cyrenaica, on his western marches.⁶³ He had also, very neatly, foreseen, and spiked, Perdiccas's ambitions. Macedonian custom decreed that to be king meant, *inter alia*, burying your predecessor. Ptolemy may have bribed the commander of the funeral cortege; we do not know. But in the end Alexander's body was neither taken home to be buried in the royal tombs at Aigai (mod. Vergina), nor was it conveyed—despite Alexander's own supposed last wish⁶⁴—to the Siwah oasis. Ptolemy got it (? late summer 321), and kept it: first at Memphis, for a pharaoh's burial, and latterly in Alexandria, where it was kept on permanent display in a gold coffin, a quasi-magical good-luck charm and legitimizer of power.⁶⁵ Now, with impeccable timing, Ptolemy

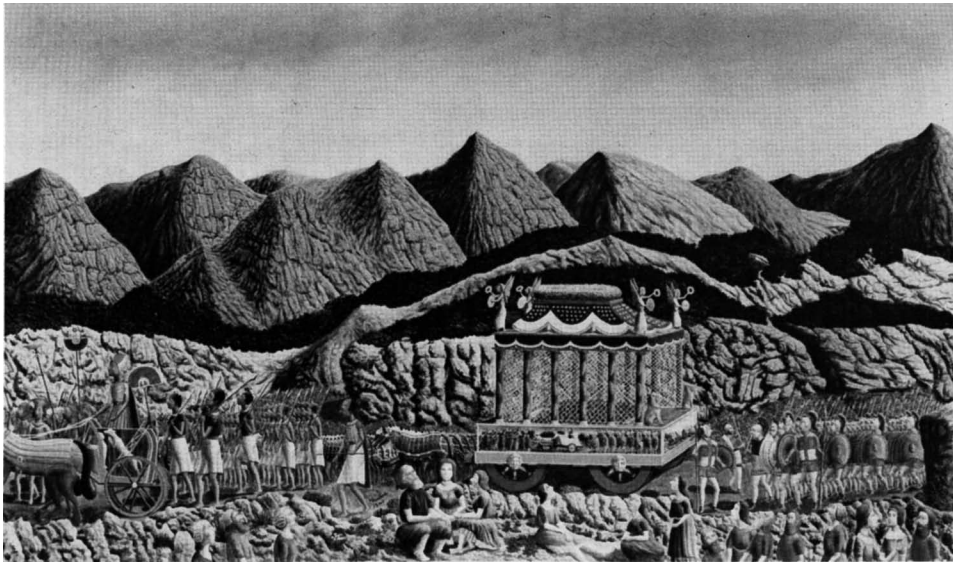


Fig. 5. *Alexander's Funeral Cortege* by André Bauchant (1874–1958), an imaginative reconstruction painted in 1940, and loosely based on the ancient descriptive evidence (DS 18.26–28 *passim*).

Tate Gallery, London.

also threw his very considerable support behind the anti-Perdiccan coalition. Perdiccas, wrongly, suspected Ptolemy of aiming for sole control of the empire himself, a potential rival who had to be dealt with at once.

First, Perdiccas tried to get the army to condemn Ptolemy,⁶⁶ but this time-honored gambit failed. Ptolemy, too, was married to one of Antipater's three daughters. More important, he possessed vast reserves of treasure, taken over from his predecessor as satrap of Egypt, the Greek Cleomenes, who on Ptolemy's arrival had been demoted to the position of deputy.⁶⁷ Cleomenes, in the hope of getting his lucrative post back, had offered his services to Perdiccas as a secret agent. Ptolemy found this out, and thus had a nice excuse (if he needed one) for eliminating the mole in his entourage—not to mention for taking charge of the more than eight thousand talents of gold and silver (the talent being roughly 57 lbs. in weight) that Cleomenes had accumulated.⁶⁸

So Perdiccas, in the spring of 320, left the government and defense of Asia in Eumenes' hands and marched south on Egypt, his confidence in the Greek apparently still unshaken after the fiasco at the Hellespont.⁶⁹ It seems likely that Ptolemy maintained an effective fifth column among his rival's troops.⁷⁰ In any case two thousand soldiers of the invading force were drowned in an attempted crossing of the Nile Delta, many more fell prey to crocodiles, and as a result Perdiccas, never the most personally popular of men, was murdered in his tent by a group of his own officers while Ptolemy and his army sat across the river and waited.⁷¹ The incident can be dated sometime between 21 May and 19 June.⁷²

The day after Perdiccas's murder, Ptolemy (who may well have been privy to the plot from the beginning) came over, provided the hungry Macedonians with fresh supplies, and in return was offered Perdiccas's position as guardian of the kingdom.⁷³ Being a canny survivor, he turned this tempting offer down; two of those responsible for Perdiccas's assassination, including Peithon, the satrap of Media (see above, p. 9), were appointed *pro tempore* to the supreme command instead.⁷⁴ Ptolemy's luck, as always, had held: only two days later news came through that on the borders of Cappadocia Eumenes had fought a great battle with Craterus and Neoptolemus, the renegade governor of Armenia, and had not only defeated them but had left them both dead on the battlefield, having himself slain Neoptolemus in single combat.⁷⁵ As Diodorus says, "if this news had broken two days before Perdiccas's end, no one would have dared raise a hand against Perdiccas, because of his great success."⁷⁶ So Leonnatus, Perdiccas, Craterus, and Neoptolemus were all gone now: the field was narrowing. The Macedonian army assembly in Egypt formally condemned Eumenes and fifty of his chief supporters to death—a neat piece of propaganda, since it meant that not only Eumenes himself, but all supporters of the Perdiccan faction, could henceforth be treated as rebels.⁷⁷ The condemnation also gave the other marshals, in particular Antigonus One-Eye, a quasi-judicial right of execution against Eumenes, though it took no less than five years to carry the sentence out.

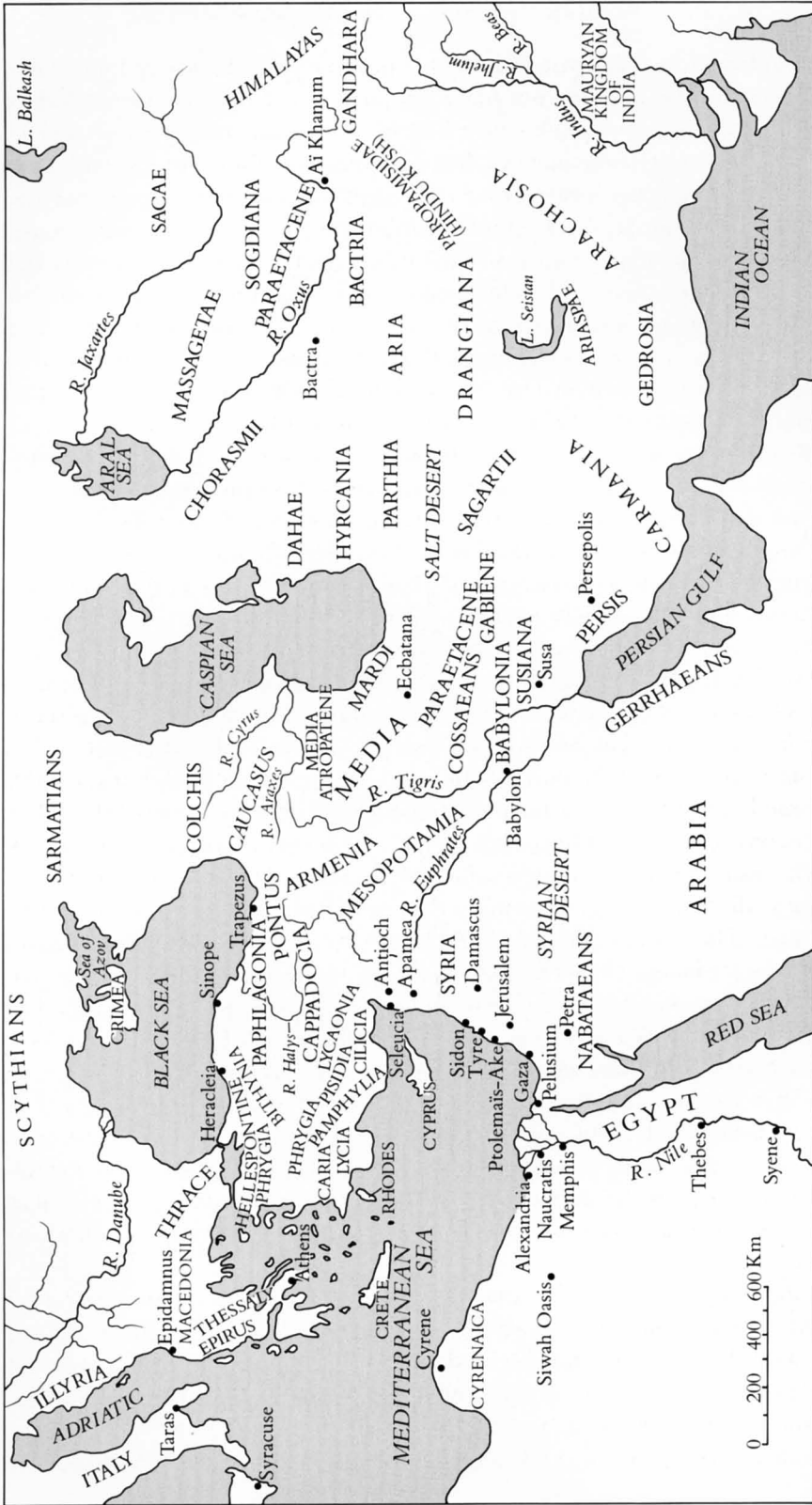
The deaths of Perdiccas and, to a lesser extent, Craterus left a gap in the power structure, and in July 320 another meeting of the Successors was held, this time at Triparadeisos ("Three Parks"), in Syria.⁷⁸ The Macedonian army was in an awkward

mood, apparently having marched north from Egypt without pay. Philip Arrhidaios's ambitious young wife, Eurydice, stirred them up to demand immediate cash payments. Peithon and Arrhidaios, the temporary supreme commanders, wisely resigned, and Antipater—the obvious, logical choice—was appointed guardian of the kings “with full powers” even before his arrival.⁷⁹ When he did appear, despite his great age he took prompt and vigorous action. He could not work miracles: there were no immediate funds available to pay Perdiccas's former troops, and Eurydice lost no time in exploiting the fact. But—after a near-lynching of the new *epimelētēs*—order was restored by Antigonos and Seleucus, using a mixture of firmness and conciliation; Eurydice was got under control, and Antipater worked out his settlement. The main plums he had to dispose of were, of course, the satrapal commands.⁸⁰

Ptolemy he left where he was, “for it was impossible to shift him, because he appeared to be holding Egypt through his own prowess, as though it were land won by the spear.”⁸¹ Since Eumenes had been condemned by the army, and was in any case Perdiccas's sole surviving supporter of the first rank (some other Perdiccans now retreated to Tyre),⁸² Antipater stripped him of his command in Cappadocia. At the same time he made Antigonos One-Eye commander-in-chief of the Macedonian army in Asia, with the specific assignment of winding up the war against Eumenes.⁸³ It may also have been now that, as an extra safeguard, Antipater married off his daughter Phila, Craterus's widow, to Antigonos's son Demetrius, the future Besieger (*Poliorkētēs*),⁸⁴ though without any great optimism about how long this would ensure Antigonos's support. Antipater was suspicious—rightly, as things turned out—of Antigonos's own ambitions: during the recent campaign he had shown himself disturbingly independent. In the end, however, Cassander persuaded his father of Antigonos's loyalty, and Antipater left him most of his existing army in Asia Minor—with Cassander himself attached to the staff as cavalry chiliarch and watchdog, “to prevent Antigonos from pursuing his private interests undetected.”⁸⁵ Antipater then set off back to Macedonia “to return the kings to their homeland.” His outlook had always been European, indeed Macedonian: he had stayed at home during Alexander's Eastern expedition; at heart he wanted no truck with Asia. Superficially, the fiction of a single royal empire had been maintained. But in reality this balance-of-power deal already foreshadowed the triangular breakup of the empire, with Macedonia, Egypt, and Asia at the three points of the triangle. Ptolemy, Lysimachus, Cassander, and Antigonos One-Eye—not to mention Seleucus, the ex-cavalry commander (*hipparchos*) now allotted the satrapy of Babylon (which appointment under Alexander would have meant demotion, but was now, in the new, less centralized climate, a distinct step up)—were none of them men to sit still and carry out orders for long, if at all.

Antigonos, to begin with, was quite happy in his allotted task of eliminating Eumenes, not least since this gave him ample opportunity to establish himself firmly in the Anatolian and eastern satrapies. One less rival, especially this slightly built, clever, elegant Greek,⁸⁶ who was regarded with something less than enthusiasm by Alexander's old guard, would be all to the good.

Eumenes is a fascinating and ambivalent figure. Our knowledge of him derives,



Map 1. Alexander's empire: the inheritance of the Successors.

ultimately, from his ultrapartisan friend (and possible kinsman) the historian Hieronymus of Cardia, who never loses an opportunity of singing his praises, highlighting his exploits, or denigrating his enemies.⁸⁷ Much of this material may well be true; even so, the overall record suggests that Eumenes, for all his virtues, was a more devious and self-seeking character than Hieronymus is disposed to admit. But then, the ambitious patriot, venal yet honorable, is no rare phenomenon in Greek history: Themistocles offers only the most striking example of the breed, while students of modern Greek politics have a whole range of candidates from which to choose. As chief secretary Eumenes had files on everyone, kept Alexander's correspondence, and probably knew more of his master's plans—not to mention his colleagues' weaknesses—than anyone else, now that the king himself was dead. He was married to a sister of Barsine, the Persian by whom Alexander had Heracles (see p. 7). He worked with genuine loyalty to preserve the royal succession, but this by no means precluded his advancing his own position in the process. Indeed, he seems even to have used his Greekness to some advantage.⁸⁸ Earlier, in 323, when Leonnatus had talked loosely to him about seizing power in Macedonia,⁸⁹ Eumenes had lost no time in informing on him to Perdiccas. His allegiances do sometimes have an air of *ad hoc* opportunism about them: when he backed Perdiccas in 322, did he really believe the *epimelētēs* in his protestations of loyalty to the kings?

Nevertheless, the modern fashion for discrediting all ancient testimony that supports his honorable intentions can be overdone.⁹⁰ At the lowest level of self-seeking *Machtpolitik* it is clear that Eumenes, as a Greek, had to throw in his lot with the kings, since unlike a blue-blooded Macedonian baron he could not, short of emulating Alexander, usurp the throne himself. However, some men are loyalists and royalists by conviction, and all the evidence at our disposal suggests that Eumenes was just such a man. What was more, despite jibes from the Macedonians about his campaigning with stylus and writing tablet,⁹¹ he turned out a more than competent field commander. He was destroyed in the end only by repeated betrayals (the price of reliance on over-independent and quasi-mercenary commanders), and by the fundamental greed-*cum*-xenophobia of Macedonian troops, who at heart resented being led by a smooth Greek intellectual, especially one who failed to bring them loot as well as victories. They may on one occasion have greeted him in Macedonian, as a kind of backhanded compliment, but they let him down badly during their first campaign against Antigonus in Cappadocia.⁹² Left with no more than six hundred faithful followers, Eumenes was forced to flee to the impregnable hill fortress of Nora (spring 319), in the northern Taurus range, where he could hold out indefinitely.⁹³ Antigonus at once took over both his troops and his satrapy, and laid siege to Nora.

Further successes against Eumenes' colleagues Alcetas and Attalus (summer 319) now put Antigonus into so strong a position that he began seriously to envisage taking over the whole empire.⁹⁴ His dream was given powerful encouragement when, late in 319, he learned that the septuagenarian Antipater had finally died. On his deathbed he had arbitrarily bequeathed his office as *epimelētēs* to a loyal old Macedonian officer, Polyperchon, a man of no great intelligence or achievement. (His in-

telligence may be judged by the fact that he promptly invited Olympias, of all people, back to Macedonia from Epirus as royal guardian of the young Alexander—a move he soon had cause to regret.)⁹⁵ Antipater's son Cassander, who had expected the appointment himself, and was not prepared to settle for the secondary post of chiliarch,⁹⁶ at once formed a coalition against Polyperchon. Its members included Ptolemy, who made a habit of opposing all strong, ambitious rivals, and now saw a chance to shore up his always-disputed frontier in Coele-Syria; Antigonus, who regarded himself as Alexander's destined successor; and Lysimachus, who quite simply wanted a bigger slice of the imperial pie than Thrace.⁹⁷

Antigonus's first task, before any more ambitious undertaking, was to settle, one way or the other, with Eumenes. The Greek could be a very useful lieutenant, so Antigonus offered him alliance (318). Eumenes had already been making strenuous efforts to negotiate some sort of deal with Antipater: despite his difficult relations with the old viceroy, he clearly found Antigonus a far more threatening figure. Even before sending the historian Hieronymus to negotiate terms with Antipater in Macedonia, he had hinted broadly at his willingness to surrender to the right person.⁹⁸ But with Antipater's death and the defeat of the other Perdiccans, Eumenes was no longer in any position to bargain. Antigonus's offer of alliance, then, dictated by personal ambition though it clearly was, must have come as a godsend—just as Cassander's approach had to Antigonus himself.⁹⁹ Eumenes swore allegiance to Antigonus, and the siege of Nora was lifted (early summer 318). Clearly the army-imposed death sentence could be invoked or ignored as circumstances might dictate. Two or three months later, however, the Greek received letters in Cappadocia from Polyperchon and Olympias, offering him high office in the royalist forces being mustered against Antigonus and Cassander. Eumenes, whose natural sympathies (and best advantage) lay with the kings—or perhaps, more specifically, with Alexander's son—accepted.¹⁰⁰ The coalition patched up at Triparadeisos had now, to all intents and purposes, been abandoned: a new round in the struggle was beginning.

Despite a counteroffer from Antigonus, Eumenes finally made up his mind to throw in his lot with Polyperchon and play for the high stakes. Among the incentives offered him were a five-hundred-talent *douceur*, the title “general of Asia,” which Antipater had bestowed on Antigonus in 321, and the command of the veteran Macedonian Silver Shields—the latter, as things turned out, a poisoned gift.¹⁰¹ Eumenes and Antigonus fought a duel for the next two years (318–316/5): Eumenes had obviously calculated that if he could raise the Macedonian barons against Antigonus—and, incidentally, build up a record of victories sufficient to overcome the handicap of his being a mere Greek—he might well succeed to the substance, as well as the title, of Antigonus's command.

The campaign was a divided one, with Polyperchon operating in Greece, Eumenes in Asia. Polyperchon tried to whip up Greek support against Antipater's son Cassander by having the kings proclaim the restoration of the constitutions that Antipater had abolished after his victory at Crannon,¹⁰² and thereby offer the prospect of peace for Hellas. The Greeks rightly interpreted this move as pure propaganda, since it ignored the key question of autonomy, and in effect reverted to the *status quo* of 323 rather than that prevailing before Chaeronea.¹⁰³ They therefore sided

with Cassander, who rewarded their trust by returning Athens to a plutocracy nine months after its brief reversion to democratic rule in 318/7, notable chiefly for a series of vengeful purges (see p. 41). At least, as so often, the propertied classes benefited. Polyperchon, meanwhile, having lost his fleet to Antigonos and Cassander, campaigned in the Peloponnese. Eumenes won the good opinions of Macedonian troops in Asia by insisting that he, as a mere foreigner, had no claim to royal power himself, but was rather defending the kingdom in the name of the deified Alexander (claiming to have had dreams in which Alexander was alive and presiding over his council). Yet even so his position was a balancing act, and could not be sustained for ever. He even resorted to the trick—borrowed from Perdiccas, who had already played it at Babylon—of meeting with his commanders in the presence of Alexander's empty throne and regalia, as though the dead king were indeed still in command.¹⁰⁴ At the same time Polyperchon's fumbling campaign in Greece made little headway, and Antigonos realized that the quickest way to finish off both Polyperchon and Eumenes was to cut their communications by sea. This he accomplished with a crushing victory over Cleitus, in a naval battle off Byzantium (summer 317).¹⁰⁵ After this severance their final defeat was merely a matter of time.

Polyperchon, who now had physical control of young Alexander IV, was not helped by the intervention of that dreadful, and still dangerous, matriarch Olympias, hell-bent on seeing her grandson safely on the throne.¹⁰⁶ Unfortunately Philip Arrhidaios's wife, the too-ambitious Eurydice, had declared (early 317) for Cassander as regent, thereby provoking Olympias to invade Macedonia. Eurydice came out in full armor at the head of her troops to meet Olympias at the Macedonian-Epirot frontier. This was no masquerade: like her mother before her, Eurydice had been, most unusually, trained as a warrior.¹⁰⁷ But at the sight of Alexander's mother, backed by her Epirot levies and some of Polyperchon's troops as well, the Macedonians with Eurydice laid down their arms. Olympias, now unstoppable, lost no time in executing Philip Arrhidaios and forcing Eurydice to commit suicide (Oct.



Fig. 6. Olympias, mother of Alexander the Great. Gold medallion from Aboukir, Egypt (third century A.D.?). British Museum, London.

317), stating as her justification that she was avenging the supposed murder by poison of her son, Alexander. Antipater's son Iolaus (who had, it was rumored, given Alexander the poison as his cupbearer) was exhumed from his grave, and his ashes were scattered.¹⁰⁸ Using the same excuse, Olympias also executed about a hundred of Philip Arrhidaios and Eurydice's supporters.

This was horrible publicity: Polyperchon must have cursed himself for ever letting the dowager queen return from retirement in Epirus. Cassander, too, who had been campaigning in the Peloponnese, and had earlier that year (317) negotiated a settlement with Athens,¹⁰⁹ was now spurred into action. He invaded Macedonia, got a sentence of death pronounced by the Macedonian army on Olympias, drove her back into the city of Pydna, and there starved her into surrender (spring 315). His promise, made during the negotiations, to spare her life he ignored, and she was executed, perhaps by stoning.¹¹⁰ Of Alexander's direct line only the young Alexander IV survived, and he was now in Cassander's custody. This in itself was a kind of long-term death sentence, since Cassander, however informally, had begun to act as king of Macedonia, and had no intention whatsoever of stepping down. He underlined his position by giving Philip Arrhidaios and Eurydice royal burial at Aigai, marrying Philip II's morganatic daughter, Thessalonike, and restoring Thebes, the city Alexander had destroyed in 335 *pour décourager les autres*.¹¹¹

Meanwhile in Asia Antigonus had devoted two years (318–316) to hunting down Eumenes. Both rivals claimed to be "supreme commander in Asia," a nice instance of the emptiness of such titles during a power struggle unless backed up by superior force.¹¹² Despite the Greek's skill as a general and diplomat, Polyperchon's setback left him dangerously isolated. He was driven into the eastern satrapies, where despite other military support the Macedonian help he hoped for from Bactria-Sogdiana failed to materialize. The battle of Paraetacene (fall 316) proved indecisive. Finally (see above, p. 7), though still undefeated in the field, Eumenes was betrayed by his own men to Antigonus at Gabiene, and—after some hesitation on Antigonus's part—executed (316/5).¹¹³ With his death, and that of Philip Arrhidaios, the struggle for the succession entered on a new phase, as Antigonus One-Eye made his final bid for supreme power, and the fiction of the unified empire was exploded once and for all.