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Text Übersetzung:

(Horace White / H.C. Hamilton, W. Falconer)

App. Syr. 57-58

[57] [...] He built cities throughout the entire length of his dominions and named sixteen of them Antioch after his father, five Laodicea after his mother, nine after himself, and four after his wives, that is, three Apamea and one Stratonicea. Of these the two most renowned at the present time are the two Seleucias, one on the sea and the other on the river Tigris, Laodicea in Phœnicia, Antioch under Mount Lebanon, and Apamea in Syria. To others he gave names from Greece or Macedonia, or from his own exploits, or in honor of Alexander; [...]

[58] [...] They say, also, that when the Magi were ordered to indicate the propitious day and hour for beginning the foundations of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris they falsified as to the hour because they did not want to have such a stronghold built against themselves. While the king was waiting in his tent for the appointed hour, and the army, in readiness to begin the work, stood quietly till Seleucus should give the signal, suddenly, at the true hour of destiny, they seemed to hear a voice ordering them on. So they sprang to their work with such alacrity that the heralds who tried to stop them were not able to do so. When the work was brought to an end Seleucus, being troubled in his mind, again made inquiry of the Magi concerning his city, and they, having first secured a promise of impunity, replied, "That which is fated, O King, whether it be for better or worse, neither man nor city can change, for there is a fate for cities as well as for men. It pleases the gods that this city shall endure for ages, because it was begun on the hour on which it was begun. We feared lest it should be a stronghold against ourselves, and falsified the appointed time. Destiny is stronger than crafty Magi or an unsuspecting king. For that reason the deity announced the more propitious hour to the army. It is permitted you to know these things so surely that you need not suspect us of deception still, for you were presiding over the army yourself, as king, and you had yourself ordered them to wait; but the army, ever obedient to you in facing danger and toil, could not now be restrained, even when you gave them the order to stop, but sprang to their work, not a part of them merely, but all together, and their officers with them, thinking that the order had been given. In fact it had been given. That was the reason why not even you could hold them back. What can be stronger in human affairs than a king, unless it

be a god, who overcame your intention and supplanted us in giving you directions about the city; for the god is in hostility to us and to all the people round about? What can our resources avail hereafter with a more powerful race settled along side of us? This city of yours has had a fortunate beginning, it will be great and enduring. We beg that you will confirm your pardon of our fault which we committed from fear of the loss of our own prosperity." The king was pleased with what the Magi said and pardoned them.

Strab. 16.1.5

[5] Babylon itself also is situated in a plain. The wall is 385 stadia in circumference, and 32 feet in thickness. The height of the space between the towers is 50, and of the towers 60 cubits. The roadway upon the walls will allow chariots with four horses when they meet to pass each other with ease. Whence, among the seven wonders of the world, are reckoned this wall and the hanging garden: the shape of the garden is a square, and each side of it measures four plethra. It consists of vaulted terraces, raised one above another, and resting upon cube-shaped pillars. These are hollow and filled with earth to allow trees of the largest size to be planted. The pillars, the vaults, and the terraces are constructed of baked brick and asphalt. [...] other works also were neglected, and the city was dilapidated, partly by the Persians, partly by time, and, through the indifference of the Macedonians to things of this kind, particularly after Seleucus Nicator had fortified Seleucia on the Tigris near Babylon, at the distance of about 300 stadia. Both this prince and all his successors directed their care to that city, and transferred to it the seat of empire. At present it is larger than Babylon; the other is in great part deserted, so that no one would hesitate to apply to it what one of the comic writers said of Megalopolitæ in Arcadia, "The great city is a great desert."