

A Unified Conception of Herodotus' *Histories* 7.8-18
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In Herodotus' *Histories* 7.8-18, Xerxes becomes persuaded to wage war against Greece. He calls a council to announce his intention of a campaign, appealing to the previous custom of Persians to expand the empire. When his uncle Artabanus urges him against this invasion, Xerxes rebukes him. That night, however, he decides against the campaign, recalling approvingly his uncle's words. A dream then visits him ordering him to attack Greece, even threatening and placing necessity (τὸ χρέον γενέσθαι) on him.

These two events, the council and the dream, are largely seen as two separate causes for Xerxes' decision to attack Greece. Hignett (1963) and Solmsen (1974) both think that the dream is the ultimate cause of the campaign, that Xerxes was convinced by force. Lateiner (1989) sees the council as the determining factor in Xerxes' decision and views the council scene and dream as "two versions of the 'causes' of Xerxes' decision."

To realize a unified conception of Herodotus' narrative, we must look at the text itself. Herodotus makes the dream point back to the council, "as you decided in the day to do, go by that way" (7.12). The dream's threat of destruction if Xerxes disobeys is mirrored by Xerxes' own words in the council, "The struggle is either to act or to suffer" (7.11.3). Also, Herodotus does not elsewhere so divide necessity and human decisions (Munson, 2001), that the dream's threat and talk of necessity should rule out human choice in this case (Immerwahr, 1956). In fact, when viewed outside the context of the council scene, the dream fails to give any reason for Xerxes to go to war beyond brute compulsion. But Herodotus uses the dream to reinforce Xerxes' opinion on excessive expansion as a necessary custom of the Persians. So the council and dream complement each other.