When they were in Abydos, Xerxes wanted to see his whole army. Indeed, a throne of white stone had already been prepared for him on a hilltop in advance (the men of Abydos had constructed it at the king's command beforehand), and as he sat down, he looked down towards the shore and he gazed at his army and his ships, and when he saw them he desired to see them engaged in a contest. When this had taken place and the Phoenicians of Sidon had won, he took equal delight in the contest and the army. But when he saw the whole of the Hellespont covered with his ships, and all of the headlands and plains of Abydos full of his men, Xerxes congratulated himself, but immediately afterwards he began to weep. His uncle Artabanus, who at first had freely demonstrated his point of view, advising Xerxes not to march against Greece, caught sight of Xerxes and, addressing him as he wept, he said, "King, you have done things that are so contradictory to each other now and a little beforehand: for before you congratulated yourself and now you weep." Xerxes replied, "As I was reflecting, suddenly it occurred to me how short a human's life is, since not one of this vast crowd of men will still be alive in one hundred years."

[Translation by Rowena Hewes]