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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Miltiades the accursed: curses for moving sacred immovables in Greek religion

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Abstract

Herodotus' depiction of Miltiades' transgression in the sanctuary of Demeter Thesmophoros on Paros is marked by the intriguing phrase κινήσοντά τι τῶν ἀκινήτων (6.134.2). We examine this proverbial phrase, whose implications for Herodotus' portrayal of Miltiades' downfall have not yet been fully acknowledged. The article draws attention to the widespread concept of sacred immovables (ἀκίνητα) that were protected by imprecations, and suggests that Miltiades triggered a contingent curse protecting divine property. Herodotus configures the episode of Miltiades on Paros as a narrative of entrapment and steers his readers to view Miltiades' fate as the consequence of a curse at work.

Keywords: Herodotus; Miltiades; Demeter; curse; *akinēta*

I. Introduction

Soon after the victory at Marathon, perhaps in 489 BC, Miltiades, the hero of that battle, launched an expedition against Paros.[1] According to Herodotus, our oldest surviving account of the Parian episode (6.132–36), Miltiades was primarily motivated by a desire for personal revenge and the intent to extort large amounts of money, under the pretence of punishing the island's alleged medism.[2] The narrative depicts the siege of Paros as unsuccessful and, as a consequence of the Parian events, Miltiades as doomed.

Herodotus explicitly states that his account of the events leading to Miltiades' death derives from the reports of the Parians (6.134.1),[3] and scholars habitually note that the Parian version depicts Miltiades as impious.[4] In this article we analyse the precise character of Miltiades' 'divinely inflicted failure'.[5] Our key point is that in employing the

[1] A narrow selection of influential studies of Miltiades' Paros campaign: Kinzl (1976) questioned the historical accuracy of Herodotus' entire account (6.132–36); Develin (1977) argued for the veracity of the account, suggesting that the expedition aimed to pre-empt Persian control of the island; similarly, Link (2000) argues *contra* Kinzl for veracity, suggesting that the aim was to acquire booty. Scott (2005) 630–47 provides an overview and analysis of all extant sources; Hornblower and Pelling (2017) 287 see the Paros episode as the narrative prefiguration of later Athenian *pleonexia*.

[2] Hdt. 6.133.1 speaks of the pretext (πρόφασις, πρόσχημα). On these terms in Herodotus, see Pelling (2019) 8–10.

[3] On Herodotus' 'divided' sources, that is sections of a story in which part of the narrative is attributed to one group and the rest to another, see Hornblower (2002) 379–80.

[4] For example, Parker (1983) 179; Scott (2005) 640; Sierra Martín (2013) 258–60; Hornblower and Pelling (2017) 22–23.

[5] Hornblower and Pelling (2017) 23.

phrase κινήσοντά τι τῶν ἀκινήτων in 6.134.2, Herodotus portrays Miltiades as a patent religious transgressor, whose sacrilegious actions triggered a particular type of curse which led to immediate punishment. More specifically, we suggest that the description of the Parian report relies on the logic of Greek imprecations (ἀραί), particularly those protecting the integrity of sacred objects and spaces. This episode provides an early and rare emic depiction of a curse at work. To substantiate this point, we first analyse the salient features of the episode, drawing attention to the cultural implications of the curious and narratively marked, but little investigated, formulation κινήσοντά τι τῶν ἀκινήτων (section II). We then discuss Greek curses protecting τὰ ἀκίνητα (section III) to investigate the character of Miltiades' religious transgression and its consequences (section IV).

II. Tit for tat

In 6.133, Herodotus reports that the siege did not start well, and that the Parians were resolved to withstand it. He then relates the Parian version of events (134–35):

> ἐς μὲν δὴ τοσοῦτο τοῦ λόγου οἱ πάντες Ἕλληνες λέγουσι, τὸ ἐνθεῦτεν δὲ αὐτοὶ Πάριοι γενέσθαι ὧδε λέγουσι· Μιλτιάδῃ ἀπορέοντι ἐλθεῖν ἐς λόγους αἰχμάλωτον γυναῖκα, ἐοῦσαν μὲν Παρίην γένος, οὔνομα δέ οἱ εἶναι **Τιμοῦν**, εἶναι δὲ **ὑποζάκορον** τῶν χθονίων θεῶν. ταύτην ἐλθοῦσαν ἐς ὄψιν Μιλτιάδεω συμβουλεῦσαι, εἰ περὶ πολλοῦ ποιέεται Πάρον ἑλεῖν, τὰ ἂν αὐτὴ ὑποθῆται, ταῦτα ποιέειν. μετὰ δὲ τὴν μὲν ὑποθέσθαι, τὸν δὲ διερχόμενον ἐπὶ τὸν κολωνὸν τὸν πρὸ τῆς πόλιος ἐόντα <τὸ> ἕρκος Θεσμοφόρου Δήμητρος **ὑπερθορεῖν**, οὐ δυνάμενον τὰς θύρας ἀνοῖξαι, **ὑπερθορόντα** δὲ ἰέναι ἐπὶ τὸ μέγαρον ὅ τι δὴ ποιήσοντα ἐντός, εἴτε κινήσοντά τι τῶν ἀκινήτων εἴτε ὅ τι δή κοτε πρήξοντα· πρὸς τῇσι θύρῃσί τε γενέσθαι καὶ πρόκατε φρίκης αὐτὸν ὑπελθούσης ὀπίσω τὴν αὐτὴν ὁδὸν ἴεσθαι, **καταθρῴσκοντα** δὲ τὴν αἰμασιὴν τὸν μηρὸν σπασθῆναι. οἱ δὲ αὐτὸν τὸ γόνυ προσπταῖσαι λέγουσι.
> Μιλτιάδης μέν νυν φλαύρως ἔχων ἀπέπλεε ὀπίσω, οὔτε χρήματα Ἀθηναίοισι ἄγων οὔτε Πάρον προσκτησάμενος, ἀλλὰ πολιορκήσας τε ἓξ καὶ εἴκοσι ἡμέρας καὶ δηιώσας τὴν νῆσον. Πάριοι δὲ πυθόμενοι ὡς ἡ **ὑποζάκορος** τῶν θεῶν **Τιμὼ** Μιλτιάδῃ **κατηγήσατο**, βουλόμενοί μιν ἀντὶ τούτων **τιμωρήσασθαι** θεοπρόπους ἐς Δελφοὺς πέμπουσι, ὡς σφεας ἡσυχίη τῆς πολιορκίης ἔσχε· ἔπεμπον δὲ ἐπειρησομένους εἰ καταχρήσωνται τὴν **ὑποζάκορον** τῶν θεῶν ὡς **ἐξηγησαμένην** τοῖσι ἐχθροῖσι τῆς πατρίδος ἄλωσιν καὶ τὰ ἐς ἔρσενα γόνον ἄρρητα ἰρὰ ἐκφήνασαν Μιλτιάδῃ. ἡ δὲ Πυθίη οὐκ ἔα, φᾶσα οὐ **Τιμοῦν** εἶναι τὴν αἰτίην τούτων, ἀλλὰ δεῖν γὰρ Μιλτιάδεα τελευτᾶν μὴ εὖ, φανῆναί οἱ τῶν κακῶν **κατηγεμόνα**.[6]
>
> All Greeks agree on the story up until this point, but from here onwards the Parians themselves say that it happened in the following way: as Miltiades could find no way out of the situation, a captive woman came to talk to him, a Parian by birth whose name was **Timo**, who was an **assistant warden** of the goddesses of the underworld. Having come within sight of Miltiades she advised him that, if it was important to him to capture Paros, he should do as she instructed. And then she instructed him, and he went to the hill which was in front of the city and **jumped over** the barrier of the precinct of Demeter Thesmophoros because he was not able to open the gate and, after he **jumped over**, he went towards the *megaron* in order to do something inside, either to move some of the immovables, or to do some other thing; when he was at

[6] Text: Wilson (2015); at 134.2 we accept Schaefer's emendation. All translations are our own.

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> the door, suddenly a shudder came over him and he rushed back along the same way and, as he was **leaping down** the wall, he lacerated his thigh. Others say that he hit his knee.
> Miltiades sailed back feeling unwell, neither bringing money for the Athenians nor having acquired Paros but having besieged and ravaged the island for 26 days. When the Parians found out that **Timo**, the **assistant warden** of the goddesses, **had acted as** Miltiades' **guide**, wishing to **exact vengeance** on her for this, they sent an oracular embassy to Delphi once the siege was over; they sent it to enquire whether they should execute the **assistant warden** of the goddesses because she **had guided** the enemies in capturing her fatherland and had revealed to Miltiades the sacred things not to be spoken to any male. The Pythia, however, did not allow this, asserting that **Timo** was not accountable for this but, because it was fated for Miltiades to meet a bad end, a **guide** had appeared to lead him to ruin.

When Miltiades returned to Athens, he was accused of deceiving the people and was unable to defend himself because his thigh became infected (ἦν γὰρ ἀδύνατος ὥστε σηπομένου τοῦ μηροῦ, 136.2). He died of gangrene shortly afterwards (Μιλτιάδης μὲν μετὰ ταῦτα σφακελίσαντός τε τοῦ μηροῦ καὶ σαπέντος τελευτᾷ, 136.3).

Taking their cue from the verdict of the Delphic oracle, most scholars agree that Herodotus represents Timo as an instrument of the gods.[7] The question then arises whether Timo was a voluntary or involuntary instrument. In our view, Herodotus' narrative is one of entrapment: Timo intentionally aided Miltiades' sacrilege in full awareness of the consequences. She did not simply lead Miltiades to the sanctuary, she led him on. Herodotus' audience, we think, would have picked this up from the cue provided by the proverbial (as we will see) phrase (μὴ) κινεῖν ἀκίνητα. Furthermore, instances of significant repetition in the passage (in bold in our text) alert the audience to the salient elements of the narrative:[8] the name Τιμώ, repeated three times and juxtaposed with τιμωρήσασθαι, implies vengeance, τιμωρία.[9] Her role as Miltiades' leader is first narrated, and then stressed by repetitions: κατηγήσατο … ἐξηγησαμένην … κατηγεμόνα. Miltiades' jump is also repeated three times, ὑπερθορεῖν … ὑπερθορόντα … καταθρῴσκοντα, leading the audience to infer that a wound to the leg, whether thigh or knee, is the sort of

[7] How and Wells (1912) 2.121 *ad* 134.2 suggest that Miltiades was supposed to 'steal a sacred image, like the Palladium, on which the safety of the state depended' (see also Nenci (1998) 313), and they interpret the oracular response to mean that 'an apparition was sent to Miltiades in the shape of Timo' (*ad* 135.3); Hornblower and Pelling (2017) 292 point out that the phrasing φανῆναί οἱ τῶν κακῶν κατηγεμόνα may indicate that Timo was a phantasm, and they argue that the goal of Miltiades' mission in the sanctuary was the 'theft of a talisman which was sacred in some specially female way' (p. 22). Parke and Wormell (1956) 359 compare Timo with Euenios (9.93) and argue that both were 'involuntary agents of some special act of divine intervention'. Eidinow (2011) 102–03 argues that Timo was in some indeterminable way a part of the divine plan. Scott (2005) 639–40, however, takes divine agency out of the picture and argues that the Parians instructed Timo to send Miltiades to the temple to take the valuables, hoping that he was 'sufficiently desperate to commit sacrilege and steal treasure rather than return home empty-handed' (p. 640). Their goal was to incite the Athenians to prosecute Miltiades or compel him to return the items to Paros and reimburse the Athenians. But if this was their endgame, why would the Parians consult the oracle? According to Scott, the consultation of Delphi 'arose from internal political differences' on Paros (p. 644).

[8] As de Jong (2014) 179 points out, Herodotus 'often uses the repetition of a word to indicate a central theme'. Long (1987) 9–23, summarizing older scholarship, observes the importance of 'the repetition of certain "catchwords," words that carry a particularly important part of the thematics and motivation of the narrative' (p. 15). See also de Jong (2013).

[9] As noted by Hornblower and Pelling (2017) 291. On speaking names in Herodotus, see Harrison (2000) 263 and Dillery (2019) 53–55. On the prominence of vengeance as a motif in Herodotus, see de Romilly (1971), who (at p. 315) points out that Herodotus employs the verb τίνω and the noun τίσις 53 times and τιμωρέω and τιμωρία 60 times.

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poetic and overdetermined punishment that is naturally ascribed to divine agency.[10] By this point, Herodotus' readers have already encountered the story of the death of Cambyses through a gangrenous leg wound (3.64.3, 3.66), the classic example of *lex talionis* at work in Herodotus.[11] Preceding the story of Miltiades, at 6.75, Herodotus offers a triple religious explanation for Cleomenes' horrible death: he cut his own flesh either because he cut down the trees while invading Eleusis (Athenian version), because he treacherously killed the suppliants at Argos and burned the sacred grove (Argive version) or because he bribed the Pythia (the version of many Greeks, including Herodotus himself, *cf.* 6.84.3).[12] Katharina Wesselmann and Debbie Felton have pointed out the structural motif of *lex talionis* in Herodotus' stories about the deaths of the sacrilegious characters Cambyses, Cleomenes and Miltiades.[13] The punishment for Miltiades' transgressive jumping initially targets his leg but eventually deprives him of life.

That Miltiades was determined to do something outstandingly nefarious would have been clear to Herodotus' audience already from the description of his initial leap over the wall. ἕρκος Θεσμοφόρου Δήμητρος ὑπερθορεῖν evokes Solon's famed portrayal of the common evil, Lawlessness (Δυσνομίη), that leaps over tall walls and enters every house (West, *IEG* 4.28 ὑψηλὸν δ᾽ ὑπὲρ ἕρκος ὑπέρθορεν). Miltiades' action resembles Solon's depiction of Lawlessness, with one notable difference: whereas in Solon, Lawlessness leaps over the courtyard fence and enters a house, the *megaron* of Demeter the Lawgiver (for that was the common interpretation of 'Thesmophoros')[14] repels the lawless Miltiades.[15] Instead of κινεῖν ἀκίνητα, Miltiades becomes incapacitated, deprived of the use of his leg and ultimately ἀκίνητος himself.

Herodotus portrays Miltiades' plan as follows: ἰέναι ἐπὶ τὸ μέγαρον ὅ τι δὴ ποιήσοντα ἐντός, εἴτε κινήσοντά τι τῶν ἀκινήτων εἴτε ὅ τι δή κοτε πρήξοντα. Once in the precinct, he heads for the *megaron* (either a shrine or, as Eva Stehle argues, the pit of Demeter Thesmophoros crowned by a superstructure with a door).[16] By representing Miltiades'

[10] On *lex talionis* in general, see Watson (1991) 42–46. On divine punishment in Herodotus: Harrison (2000) 102–21; Mikalson (2002) 192–94; Desmond (2004); Gagné (2013) 275–343; Smolin (2018). While Herodotus intimates that the gods are at work in many acts of vengeance, the precise mechanism of their involvement is a matter of lively scholarly discussion. Smolin (2018) 24 points out that Herodotus often represents vengeance as having a double causation: 'human and divine action and motivation form two halves of a single causative whole'.

[11] On the death of Cambyses, see Wesselmann (2011) 80–90 and Felton (2014).

[12] On impiety as a prominent motif in book 6, see Hornblower and Pelling (2017) 17–24.

[13] On the Miltiades story as an illustration of the trope of 'impiety instantly punished', see Parker (1983) 178–79. Wesselmann (2011) 124–27 draws attention to the prominence of jumping in the Miltiades story and notes the *lex talionis* at work. Felton (2014) 58 observes that in Herodotus 'thigh wounds … are inflicted upon characters who have … transgressed'.

[14] The earliest attestation of this interpretation of Thesmophoros is Callimachus' *Hymn to Demeter* 18. See Pirenne-Delforge (2024) for a full assessment of the range of meanings of the epithet in the Archaic and Classical periods.

[15] *Cf.* West, *IEG* 4.26–27: οὕτω δημόσιον κακὸν ἔρχεται οἴκαδ᾽ ἑκάστῳ, | αὐλειοι δ᾽ ἔτ᾽ ἔχειν οὐκ ἐθέλουσι θύραι ('And so the common evil enters each household, the courtyard doors are no longer able to stop it'). The similarities are pervasive, since upon his return to Athens, Miltiades is perceived as a δημόσιον κακόν and is convicted for deceiving the people (see Hornblower and Pelling (2017) 292 *ad* 136.1). It has been noted that this episode recalls the programmatic role of Solon in Herodotus' narrative: the Pythia's words about Miltiades' destined 'bad end' (τελευτᾶν μὴ εὖ) recall Solon's admonition of Croesus to observe κῇ ἀποβήσεται. See Shapiro (1996) 357–62, who does not, however, discuss an allusion to Solon's poetry in the episode. Herodotus is familiar with Solon's poetry (*cf.* 5.113); on the Herodotean Solon's use of the historical Solon's poetry, see Chiasson (1986); for resonances of the historical Solon's poetry in Herodotus beyond the confines of the Solon episode, see Chiasson (2012).

[16] Stehle, *Beyond Sacrifice: Women's Rituals for Demeter and Dionysus as Models for New Practices* (in preparation), analyses the use of the word *megaron* for underground chambers in the cult of Demeter and notes that, at Priene, there was a stone-lined pit topped by a structure with a door. It is difficult to reconstruct the layout of the Parian sanctuary, since even its exact location is disputed. See Kourayos, Angliker et al. (2018) 152 and Kourayos, Sutton et al. (2018) for a general account of the archaeological record.

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intentions as a set of alternatives introduced by εἴτε … εἴτε, Herodotus signals his lack of absolute certainty regarding the character's inner motivation, while strongly indicating in the rest of the episode that ἀκίνητα κινεῖν was the more probable purpose.[17] The former alternative is also, unlike εἴτε ὅ τι δή κοτε πρήξοντα (perform a particular rite? destroy something?),[18] highly determined. Both κινεῖν and ἀκίνητα have meanings related to the sacred sphere; when combined, they constitute a proverbial expression clearly denoting a specific type of sacrilege.

The basic meaning of the verbal adjective ἀκίνητος is 'immobile' or 'unmoved'. In religious contexts, the predominating sense is not 'what *cannot* be moved' but 'what *should not* be moved', amounting to 'inviolable, sacrosanct'. Common 'taboo' words, such as ἄβατος, ἄρρητος, ἄδυτος, ἀκίνητος, are all derived from verbal adjectives construed with the suffix -τος and *alpha privativum*. When applied to secular matters, they express the lack of possibility; when applied to the sacred sphere, they denote a lack of possibility, not necessarily in absolute terms, but due to a prohibition. While ἀκίνητος has a wide range of applications in Greek, the substantivized neuter plural ἀκίνητα denotes sacred objects. The word is first attested in Hesiod's *Works and Days* (750–52 ed. West):

> μηδ' ἐπ' ἀκινήτοισι καθίζειν, οὐ γὰρ ἄμεινον,
> παῖδα δυωδεκαταῖον, ὅ τ' ἀνέρ' ἀνήνορα ποιεῖ,
> μηδὲ δυωδεκάμηνον· ἴσον καὶ τοῦτο τέτυκται.
>
> And do not place on the immovables, for that is not better,
> a 12-day-old child, since that unmans a man,
> nor a 12-month-old: the same (outcome) results.

Scholars agree that ἀκίνητα here denotes a specific class of sacred objects: tombs, altars or boundary stones.[19] Herodotus, too, uses the adjective ἀκίνητος to refer to the sanctity of the tomb of Nitocris which was violated by Darius.[20] The verb κινεῖν also has a specialized meaning in the context of religion, where it refers to sacrilegious change or removal.[21]

[17] εἴτε … εἴτε in Herodotus often signposts the narrator's own speculations regarding the characters' exact motivation: 1.19.8; 1.61.8; 1.86.8–9; 1.191.1–2; 2.103.8–10; 2.181.2–3; 3.121.5–6; 4.147.15–16; 4.164.20–21; 6.134.12–13; 7.239.8–9; 8.54.7–8; 9.5.6–7; 9.91.2–3. While the construction εἴτε … εἴτε introduces variant explanations, Herodotus is not above steering the reader towards a specific alternative, see Hornblower and Pelling (2017) 296. On alternative versions in Herodotus, see Lateiner (1989) 76–90 and Gray (2003), who understands κινήσοντά τι τῶν ἀκινήτων as depicting Miltiades as impious but also 'as a man who undertakes missions impossible' (p. 59).

[18] We thank the anonymous referee for this suggestion. Lateiner (1989) 88 proposes 'sexual adventure'. Gray (2003) 59 argues that the vagueness of the alternative 'makes him indescribably impious and ambitious, leaving this to the reader's imagination'.

[19] Already the scholia on Hesiod interpret it as tombs or altars. Tombs: West (1978) 342. In our view, Hesiod refers to the household altar of Hestia, the hearth. For a discussion, see Petrovic and Petrovic (2022) 219–21. Boundary stones: Canevaro (2015) 140–41. According to O'Mahoney (2019 [2024]), ἀκίνητα in Hesiod are primarily boundary stones serving as markers of ownership, which might also double as cenotaphs or altars. He sees their immobility, not sacredness, as the primary aspect of such ἀκίνητα: 'an object regarded as unmoveable can take on a sacred character—rather than an originally sacred character mandating that it must not be moved' (p. 11 n.8). We maintain, conversely, that sacred objects, even if actually physically movable, are regarded as ἀκίνητα primarily due to their perceived divine ownership.

[20] Hdt. 1.187.3: οὗτος ὁ τάφος ἦν **ἀκίνητος** μέχρις οὗ ἐς Δαρεῖον περιῆλθε ἡ βασιληίη ('this tomb remained undisturbed until the kingship fell to Darius'). See Dillery (1992) on this.

[21] *CGL s.v.* κινέω 16: 'interfere with sacred things; disturb, remove—sacred objects, temple funds, temple ruins, or sim.'; 17: 'desecrate'.

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Herodotus uses it six times to designate the disturbance of an item under divine protection, be it a physical one such as a dedication or an abstract one such as ancestral custom.[22]

The phrase κινεῖν ἀκίνητα refers to a specific type of religious transgression, an unauthorized intervention in the realm of the sacred, often the disturbance of sacred objects. We find an allusion to the phrase in Sophocles' characterization of Creon as a religious transgressor who 'moves what ought not be moved' (*Ant.* 1060–61):

> Τειρεσίας: ὅρσεις με τἀκίνητα διὰ φρενῶν φράσαι.
> Κρέων: κίνει, μόνον δὲ μὴ 'πὶ κέρδεσιν λέγων.
>
> Teiresias: You will incite me to reveal things that are immovable (ἀκίνητα).
> Creon: Move them (κίνει), unless you are speaking for personal gain.

While Teiresias describes his foreknowledge of Creon's fixed destiny as something that ought not be moved, Creon snaps at him to move what ought not and divulge it anyway. Similarly, in Euripides' *Iphigenia in Tauris*, Thoas expresses his bafflement and indignation at Iphigenia's removal of the sacred image of Artemis from the temple by referring to the statue's base as 'immovable'.[23]

Plato quotes the phrase as a well-established proverb several times.[24] The following passage from the *Laws* is worth considering in full (842e7–843a8):

> Διὸς ὁρίου μὲν πρῶτος νόμος ὅδε εἰρήσθω· μὴ κινείτω γῆς ὅρια μηδεὶς μήτε οἰκείου πολίτου γείτονος, μήτε ὁμοτέρμονος ἐπ' ἐσχατιᾶς κεκτημένος ἄλλῳ ξένῳ γειτονῶν, νομίσας τὸ **τάκίνητα κινεῖν** ἀληθῶς τοῦτο εἶναι· βουλέσθω δὲ πᾶς πέτρον ἐπιχειρῆσαι κινεῖν τὸν μέγιστον ἄλλον πλὴν ὅρον μᾶλλον ἢ σμικρὸν λίθον ὁρίζοντα φιλίαν τε καὶ ἔχθραν ἔνορκον παρὰ θεῶν. τοῦ μὲν γὰρ ὁμόφυλος Ζεὺς μάρτυς, τοῦ δὲ ξένιος, οἳ μετὰ πολέμων τῶν ἐχθίστων ἐγείρονται. καὶ ὁ μὲν πεισθεὶς τῷ νόμῳ ἀναίσθητος τῶν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ κακῶν γίγνοιτ' ἄν, καταφρονήσας δὲ δικαίας δίκαις ἔνοχος ἔστω, μιᾷ μὲν παρὰ θεῶν καὶ πρώτῃ, δευτέρᾳ δὲ ὑπὸ νόμου.[25]
>
> Let this be the formulation of the first law of Zeus of Boundaries: let no one move boundary markers of land, neither those of a neighbour who is a fellow citizen nor those of a neighbour who is a foreigner, in case someone owns property at the frontier and shares a border, understanding that this is truly that (saying) τάκίνητα κινεῖν ('to move the immoveable things'). Anyone should sooner try to move the

[22] Herodotus does not use the noun *hierosulia* or the related verb; on the earliest attestations, see Cohen (1983) 108. For κινεῖν in religious contexts, see Hdt. 1.183.3: Xerxes took the golden statue from the sanctuary in Babylon and killed the priest who forbade him to disturb it (Ξέρξης δὲ ὁ Δαρείου ἔλαβε καὶ τὸν ἱρέα ἀπέκτεινε ἀπαγορεύοντα μὴ **κινέειν τὸν ἀνδριάντα**); 2.138.2: the sanctuary of Boubastis in Egypt remained undisturbed since its foundation (τοῦ δ' ἱροῦ **οὐ κεκινημένου** ὡς ἀρχῆθεν ἐποιήθη); 6.98: Apollo's κινέειν of the island in the Delos episode (the verb is used twice with a religious connotation); 8.36.1: the Delphic Apollo prohibits the Delphians from evacuating the sacred property (ὁ δὲ θεός σφεας **οὐκ ἔα κινέειν**, φὰς αὐτὸς ἱκανὸς εἶναι τῶν ἐωυτοῦ προκατῆσθαι …). We discuss this episode below in this section. At 3.80.5 Herodotus employs the verb for a tyrant's overturning of ancestral customs (νόμαιά τε **κινέει** πάτρια). For custom or law as ἀκίνητα *cf.* Thuc. 1.71.3: τὰ ἀκίνητα νόμιμα ἄριστα (again of νόμοι: 3.37.3); Dion. Hal. 8.23.2.5; *IG* XII 1 155 Rhodes, second century BC: ἔνοχος ἔστω τῷ νόμῳ τῷ ἀκινήτῳ. Similarly, for κινεῖν ἀκίνητα ἔθη, see Dion. Hal. 6.61.1.7. We count six instances of the verb's use without a religious connotation in Herodotus (2.48.3; 2.68.3; 2.156.2; 5.96.1; 9.52; 9.54.2).

[23] Eur. *IT* 1157–58: τί τόδε μεταίρεις ἑξ **ἀκινήτων βάθρων**, | Ἀγαμέμνονος παῖ, θεᾶς ἄγαλμ' ἐν ὠλέναις; ('Daughter of Agamemnon, why are you lifting the statue of the goddess in your arms from its immovable base?').

[24] Pl. *Leg.* 684d8–e1, 842e7–843a8, 913b8–9; *Tht.* 181a8–b1. Rusten (2013) 140 with n.18 and O'Mahoney (2019 [2024]) acknowledge Plato's use of this proverb.

[25] Text: Burnet (1907).

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> largest rock that isn't a boundary rather than a small stone which separates friendship and hatred, consecrated by an oath invoking divinities. Of the one boundary stone the witness is the Homophylos Zeus, of the other Zeus Xenios, and they are stirred up with the worst wars. The person who abides by this law shall be unaffected by these evils, but whoever spurns it shall be subject to a double punishment, first and foremost by the gods, and second by the force of the law.

Plato clearly argues that boundary stones, too, are sacred objects under direct divine supervision.[26] His combination of a blessing for the law-abiding citizen and a curse for the transgressor has a direct parallel in lived Greek religion: many objects that belong to the category of ἀκίνητα were protected by a curse triggered in the case of unauthorized tampering (often expressed with the verb κινεῖν and its compounds), as we will see below.

In another passage from the *Laws*, Plato again refers to the curses for 'movers of immovables'. In this instance the proverb is applied to those who attempt to redistribute land (that is, move boundary stones) and abolish debts, thus disturbing the existing laws (684d8–e1):

> ὡς ἐπιχειροῦντι δὴ νομοθέτῃ κινεῖν τῶν τοιούτων τι πᾶς ἀπαντᾷ λέγων **μὴ κινεῖν τὰ ἀκίνητα**, καὶ ἐπαρᾶται.
>
> When the lawgiver attempts to change ('move') one of such things, everyone confronts him saying, 'Don't move the immovables', and curses him.

Plato quotes the proverb for the third time in the same book at 913b8–9, where he advises against tampering (κινεῖν) with buried treasure, should one accidentally discover some:

> ἐπὶ πολλοῖς γὰρ δὴ λεγόμενον εὖ τὸ **μὴ κινεῖν τὰ ἀκίνητα**.
>
> For in many situations the proverb 'do not move the immovables' is indeed well said.

The proverb had a long life in Greek literature, well into the Byzantine period, and often designated a religious transgression or a transgressor.[27] It was also preserved in the compendia of Greek proverbial wisdom:

> Diogenianus, *Paroemiae* 1.25 ed. von Leutsch (second century AD):

[26] One should bear in mind that in Plato's Magnesia, there are a fixed and finite number of inalienable plots (5,040), which would make the position of its boundary stones permanent and subject to no change. It is possibly due to Plato that Diogenianus includes boundary stones in the list of ἀκίνητα below.

[27] For the proverb applied to designate a religious transgression: Plut. *De Is. et Os.* 359f1; Plut. *Amat.* 756b2; Plut. *De gen.* 585f9; Euseb. *Praep. evang.* 4.1.3.7; Damascius [Olympiodorus], *In Platonis Philebum* 24.3; Symeon Metaphrastes, *Vita Stephani iunioris* 219. For the proverb paraphrased to designate a religious transgressor: Callim. *Aet. fr.* 64 Harder (on which see below, n.50); Philo, *De somniis* 2.119, where the expression is used to qualify Xerxes' 'war against the heavenly army'; in *Aeth.* 6.15.1 Heliodorus employs it in the context of necromancy: the dead son was tolerating his mother's sacrilegious disturbance of his corpse by means of magic out of filial piety (τὰ ἀκίνητα μαγγανείαις κινοῦσαν). In Marinus' *Vita Procli sive de felicitate* 30, it is used of Christians who removed Athena's cult statue from the Parthenon: ἡνίκα τὸ ἄγαλμα αὐτῆς τὸ ἐν Παρθενῶνι τέως ἱδρυμένον ὑπὸ τῶν καὶ τὰ ἀκίνητα κινούντων μετεφέρετο … ('When her statue, which was up until that time situated in the Parthenon, was being transferred by those who move even the immovables …'). For the proverb applied generally: Philo, *De somniis* 2.136–37 and the apocryphal *Acts of Andrew and Matthias in the City of the Cannibals* 14.7 (both of divine omnipotence); Porph. *Abst.* 1.4.2; Gregory of Nyssa, *De vita Gregorii Thaumaturgi* 46.920.3; Arethas, *Scripta minora* 69.79.6–7.

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Ἀκίνητα κινεῖς· καθ' ὑπερβολήν, ὅτι μὴ δεῖ κινεῖν μὴ βωμούς, μὴ τάφους, μὴ ὅρους.

You are moving the immovables: excessively, because one should not move altars, graves or boundary stones.

Zenobius Paroemiogr. 1.55 ed. Schneidewin and von Leutsch (second century AD):
Ἀκίνητα κινεῖν· καθ' ὑπερβολήν, ὅτι μὴ δεῖ κινεῖν μήτε βωμούς, μήτε τάφους ἢ ἡρῷα.

To move the immovables: excessively, because one should not move altars, graves or *hērōa*.

Suda, α 888 ed. Adler (tenth century AD):
Ἀκίνητα κινεῖν· ἐπὶ τῶν καθ' ὑπερβολήν. ὅτι μὴ δεῖ μηδὲ βωμοὺς κινεῖν, ἢ τάφους.

To move the immovables: about extreme measures, because one should not move altars or graves.

Suda, μ 905 ed. Adler = Timaeus Sophistes, *Lexicon Platonicum*, μ 995β.15 ed. Dübner (*ca.* fourth century AD):
Μὴ κινεῖν ἀκίνητα, μηδ' ἄκρῳ δακτύλῳ.

Do not move the immovables, not even with the tip of your finger.

As is evident from these glosses, the religious sphere is the chief domain of the proverb (altars, graves, *hērōa* and occasionally boundary stones), even if it could also be applied to extreme measures in general. By employing the proverb to cast light on Miltiades' motivation, Herodotus portrays him as a man with sacrilegious intentions.[28]

Two episodes in Herodotus show that only the gods have the power to move their immovables (or to authorize their priests to do so): when the Persian invasion was imminent, Delphic Apollo forbade his priests to evacuate the objects from his sanctuary (ὸ δὲ θεός σφεας οὐκ ἔα κινέειν, 8.36.1). The god said that he would take care of his sanctuary himself. The sacred arms, which no human being was allowed to touch without committing sacrilege, appeared in front of the temple, miraculously removed from the inner shrine.[29] The second episode involves another τέρας ('marvel') of Apollo: immediately after Datis' departure, there was an earthquake on Delos which was interpreted as a sign of impending catastrophe (καὶ τοῦτο μέν κου τέρας ἀνθρώποισι τῶν μελλόντων ἔσεσθαι κακῶν ἔφηνε ὸ θεός, 6.98.1). The Delians claimed that the earthquake was a unique event in the island's history, and Herodotus comments (6.98.3):

οὕτως οὐδὲν ἦν ἀεικὲς κινηθῆναι Δῆλον τὸ πρὶν ἑοῦσαν ἀκίνητον. ** καὶ ἐν χρησμῷ ἦν γεγραμμένον περὶ αὐτῆς ὧδε· "κινήσω καὶ Δῆλον ἀκίνητόν περ ἑοῦσαν".

[28] Shapiro (2000) provides an insightful discussion of Herodotus' engagement with folk wisdom and proverbs but does not discuss ἀκίνητα κινεῖν.

[29] Hdt. 8.37.1–2: ἐπεὶ δὲ ἀγχοῦ τε ἦσαν οἱ βάρβαροι ἐπιόντες καὶ ἀπώρων τὸ ἱρόν, ἐν τούτῳ ὸ προφήτης, τῷ οὔνομα ἦν Ἀκήρατος, ὁρᾷ πρὸ τοῦ νηοῦ ὅπλα προκείμενα ἔσωθεν ἑκ τοῦ μεγάρου ἐξενηνειγμένα ἱρά, τῶν οὐκ ὅσιον ἦν ἅπτεσθαι ἀνθρώπων οὐδενί. ὸ μὲν δὴ ἴιε Δελφῶν τοῖσι παρεοῦσι σημανέων τὸ τέρας … θῶμα μὲν γὰρ καὶ τοῦτο κάρτα ἐστί, ὅπλα ἀρήια αὐτόματα φανῆναι ἔξω προκείμενα τοῦ νηοῦ … ('and at the moment when the invading foreigners drew close and could see the temple, a prophet by the name Aceratus saw that the sacred arms, which to touch was sacrilegious for any human being, were brought out of the *megaron* and placed in front of the temple. And so he went to announce the marvel to the Delphians … for this, too, is a great wonder, that weapons of war spontaneously appeared outside, placed in front of the temple…').

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> And so, it was not inappropriate that Delos was moved, even though it was previously unmoved. Regarding the island, also in an oracle it had been written as follows: 'I will move even Delos, although it is ἀκίνητος'.

This passage has caused considerable controversy because Thucydides writes in very similar terms about an earthquake on Delos as a unique event, but dates it to 431 BC.[30] In addition, both Thucydides and Herodotus employ the verb κινεῖν, which is not typically used to designate an earthquake, and both gloss it with the usual verb for an earthquake, σείειν. The controversy was resolved by Jeffrey Rusten, who demonstrated that Delos was not subject to significant earthquakes at all, which means that both Herodotus and Thucydides relied on Delian reports which either significantly exaggerated a mild tremor or invented it wholesale. The hexametric oracle must have been in circulation for a while, giving rise to a story about an event presaging imminent danger. Rusten then wonders why Herodotus, who knows the proverb and uses the phrase ἀκίνητα κινεῖν in the sense 'to commit sacrilege' in the Miltiades episode, does not consider its meaning in the Delos episode and thinks that it means 'earthquake'.[31] In our view, Herodotus was well aware of the phrase's meaning in the Delos episode: the paradox at the root of ἀκίνητα κινεῖν is that when gods do it, it is a τέρας, but when humans do it without divine authorization, it is sacrilege. An earthquake on an island that was divine property is a marvel but not a sacrilege, for precisely the same reason that the moving of sacred arms at Delphi was not a sacrilege but a τέρας: when the god moves his own property, he is well within his rights to do so. In addition, the fact that the Delphic priests consult the oracle about the evacuation of the sacred arms illustrates that only the god can authorize the moving of his belongings.

Our analysis thus far suggests that Herodotus' adaptation of the proverb ἀκίνητα κινεῖν renders Miltiades an illicit intruder into the sacred space, one who intended to tamper with divine property without authorization. His hopes of turning his fortunes around were kindled by Timo, who, as we saw, was mentioned by name three times. She is also mentioned three times as Miltiades' guide. Thrice, too, does Herodotus mention her title ὑποζάκορος ('assistant warden'),[32] which highlights her religious expertise. Taken together, the relation of Timo's name to vengeance, her role as a guide and her religious service imply that Timo is using her expertise to punish Miltiades by luring him into a trap. By creating a scenario in which Miltiades offends Demeter, Timo invokes divine punishment upon the Athenian general. Demeter, incidentally, is a particularly vengeful divinity in Herodotus.[33]

Since she was a temple attendant of Demeter, Timo was arguably acquainted with the mechanics of cursing, including, we suppose, the way that curses protecting divine property worked. Priestly expertise in punitive cursing is well attested from Chryses' prayer to Apollo in *Iliad* 1.37–42 onwards. A famous historical case was the curse on Alcibiades performed by Athenian priests after his desecration of the mysteries.[34] But there were also preventive curses, known in scholarly shorthand as 'contingent' or 'conditional' curses, which came into effect following a specific transgression.[35] We now

[30] Thuc. 2.8.3: ἔτι δὲ Δῆλος ἐκινήθη ὀλίγον πρὸ τούτων, πρότερον οὔπω σεισθεῖσα ἀφ' οὗ Ἕλληνες μέμνηνται· ἐλέγετο δὲ καὶ ἐδόκει ἐπὶ τοῖς μέλλουσι γενήσεσθαι σημῆναι ('Furthermore, shortly before these events, Delos was moved, even though it had never experienced an earthquake in Greek memory. People were saying and thinking that this was a portent of future events').

[31] Rusten (2013) 141.

[32] On the term, see Hornblower and Pelling (2017) 290.

[33] Boedeker (1988) 46.

[34] See Plut. *Alc.* 22 and, on the manner of cursing, Lys. 6.51. On priestly expertise in cursing, see the overview with bibliography in Graf (2005) 257–58.

[35] Edmonds (2022) provides a general discussion with bibliography; he defines such curses as 'those that invoke retribution upon the target if a certain condition occurs' (p. 10).

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turn to contingent curses and argue that Miltiades' intention to meddle with the sacred objects was sufficient to trigger the curse protecting them.[36]

III. Curses protecting τὰ ἀκίνητα

We have seen above that Plato mentions cursing as a means of protection for ἀκίνητα in two passages. How widespread was the practice of relying on curses to protect property? As soon as the Greeks adopt the alphabet, they employ it for contingent curses protecting private property from theft.[37] The importance of protecting divine property from theft was even greater, since everything in a sanctuary nominally belonged to the divinity, and the community was expected to safeguard it.[38] Theft of sacred objects (*hierosulia*) was a crime of such magnitude that even the death penalty was perceived as too slight a punishment, so the perpetrators were generally denied burial by being thrown into the sea or off a cliff.[39] The harsh legal penalties were not the sole deterrent: the gods themselves might also be invoked to protect their own possessions through contingent curses.[40]

The tradition of relying on orally delivered contingent curses to ensure cooperation in a *polis* and curb various instances of anti-social behaviour more broadly is very old. For instance, the curses of the Athenian *genos* Bouzygai were famous (and proverbial),[41] while the Teian curses (*ca.* 480–450 BC) were both inscribed and orally delivered three times a year in a sacred context, during a festival.[42] Also of great antiquity must be the elaborate curse of the Delphic Amphictyons protecting the sacred plain of Cirrha.[43] A third-century Delian inscription attests to the existence of traditional oral curses performed by the priests against those who led slaves out from the sacred precinct or violated the ancestral customs of the Delians in any other way (*IG* XI 4 1296. A.1, ll. 1–13):

> [τ]άδε ἐπεύχονται ἱερεῖς τε καὶ ἱέρειαι κατὰ τὰ πάτρια· ὅστις ἐγ Δήλου ἀνδράποδον ἐξάγει εἴτε ἄκον εἴτε ἐκὸν ἢ ἐκ τῶν τεμενῶν τῶν ἱερῶν τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ ἐπὶ βλάβη τοῦ δεσπότου, ἐξώλη εἶναι καὶ αὐτὸν καὶ γένος καὶ οἰκησιν τὴν ἐκείνου· καὶ ὅστις συνειδὼς μὴ δηλώσει ἐν τοῖς ἀστυνόμοις, τοῖς αὐτοῖς ἔνοχος ἔστω· καὶ εἴ τίς τι ἄλλο ἐγ Δήλου βιάζ[οι]το παρὰ τὰ πάτρια τὰ Δηλίων, ἐξώλ[η] εἶναι αὐτὸν καὶ οἰκησιν τὴν ἐκείνο[υ].
>
> The priests and the priestesses curse (ἐπεύχονται) as follows, according to the ancestral customs: whoever leads a slave out from Delos, whether unwillingly or

[36] Herodotus' story about Glaucus (6.86) illustrates the idea that even thinking about sacrilege (breaking an oath) results in divine wrath and punishment. On this, see Harrison (2000) 117–20; Gagné (2013) 278–96; Hornblower and Pelling (2017) 203.

[37] Perhaps already *ca.* 700 BC, metrical curses targeting potential thieves were scratched on vases: *IG* XIV 865 is an example of a contingent curse against the theft of an object (Tataie's lekythos). A recently published skyphos from Methone bears a graffito in Euboean script, evidently in iambics, threatening blindness to whoever steals it (*SEG* 62.424 with discussions in Strauss Clay et al. (2017)). For a discussion of contingent curses in early Greek poetry see Faraone (1996) and Day (2019) 233–36.

[38] On the sanctity of sacred space and objects within it, Parker (1983) 160–76. Even the use of water for profane purposes was problematic: the Boeotians accuse the Athenians of 'disturbing' (that is, using for profane purposes) the water from Delium (Thuc. 4.98.5 ὕδωρ … κινῆσαι and 4.97.3). On this episode, see Trampedach (2005) 148–50.

[39] Parker (1983) 170–75. On *hierosulia* in Athenian law, see Cohen (1983) 93–130.

[40] For evidence of curses against *hierosuloi,* see Cohen (1983) 106–07, nos 5, 11, 15, 17. On curses as a supplementary legal instrument in the Archaic and Classical periods, see Rubinstein (2007) with bibliography. On written and oral public curses, see Lamont (2023) 224–47.

[41] See Parker (1996) 286–87. For further attestations of ancestral curses periodically announced by the highest magistrates, see Latte (1920) 70–71.

[42] *OR* 102. See now Adak and Thonemann (2022) 95–149.

[43] Aeschin. *In Ctes.* 110–12. See Edmonds (2022) 12–13, who points out that the text is read out to remind the Athenians that Demosthenes violated the oath and triggered the curse.

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> willingly, or from the sacred precincts of the god, to the detriment of the master, may he suffer utter destruction, he and his kin and his house. Anyone who knows and does not report this to the governing magistrates, let him be liable to the same (penalty), and if anyone on Delos, transgressing against the ancestral customs of the Delians, violates anything else, may he and his house suffer utter destruction.[44]

The fact that the priests and priestesses are cursing κατὰ τὰ πάτρια implies the antiquity of their cursing practices. It is difficult to assess the frequency of such orally publicized curses against tampering with sacred property, but judging by the ubiquity of curses in the Archaic and Classical periods, and the seriousness with which *hierosulia* was prosecuted, they must have been common.[45] Indeed, as Lene Rubinstein convincingly demonstrates, publicly pronounced *arai* protecting rituals, sacred property and precincts are of very ancient pedigree and remain well attested throughout the Classical and Hellenistic periods.[46] A particularly vivid illustration of the *lex talionis* underpinning a curse protecting divine property is found in an inscription of the first century BC from Smyrna:

> [ἰ]χθῦς ἱεροὺς μὴ ἀδικεῖν, μηδὲ σκεῦος τῶν τῆς θεοῦ λυμαίνεσθαι, μηδὲ [ἐ]κφέρειν ἐκ τοῦ ἱεροῦ ἐπ[ὶ] κλοπήν· ὸ τούτων τι ποιῶν κακὸς κακῇ ἐξωλείᾳ ἀπόλοιτο, ἰχθυόβρωτος γενόμενος …
>
> Do not wrong the sacred fish, do not damage any equipment of the goddess, nor carry anything out of the temple by theft. May the evildoer who does any of this perish in evil and utter destruction, having become fish food …[47]

Taking objects from the sanctuary is a clear instance of *hierosulia*, but damaging the sacred equipment and 'wronging' the sacred fish represent broader acts of sacrilege. All such acts of unauthorized removal or disturbance of sacred property fall under the broad rubric of κινεῖν ἀκίνητα.

Even objects outside of sanctuaries can become ἀκίνητα if they are dedicated to the gods or if gods are invoked to protect them. We have already seen that this was the case with boundary stones. Another early example is an imprecation from Rhodes, tentatively dated to 600–575 BC (*CEG* 459):

> σᾶμα τόζ' Ἰδαμενεὺς ποίησα hίνα κλέος εἴη·
> Ζεὺδέ νιν ὅστις πημαίνοι λειόλη θείη.
>
> I, Idameneus, made this monument to create fame.
> Whoever damages it, may Zeus utterly destroy him.

[44] *Cf.* the republication of the second century BC: *LSCG* Suppl. 51 with *SEG* 48.1037 and *NGSL* p. 23, with *fr.* B.

[45] Estimates about low levels of literacy suggest that texts such as *IG* IV 506 (on which, see Rigsby (2009)), a sixth-century BC contingent curse from the Argive Heraion against those who damage a law displayed in the sanctuary, were also orally pronounced.

[46] Note Rubinstein (2007) 273, regarding the application of *arai*: 'One area where continuity is especially noticeable is that of offences committed in relation to religious ritual, sanctuaries and sacred property.' For the period from the fourth century BC down to around 150 BC, Rubinstein draws attention to 13 relevant texts (Appendix D, pp. 281–82), some of which clearly indicate that the curses were orally proclaimed while the context of others suggests this. Particularly relevant for our discussion is *SEG* 27.942 = *CGRN* 93 (Xanthos, fourth century), regarding the altar and sacrifices to Basileus Kaunios (Zeus) and Arkesimas and containing imprecations for those who 'move' (μετακινεῖν) any of the regulations (ll. 32–35): ἂν δὲ τις μετακινήσῃ, ἀμαρτωλὸς <ἔ>στω τῶν θεῶν τούτων καὶ Λητοῦς καὶ ἐγγόνων καὶ Νυμφῶν.

[47] *CGRN* 245 = *LSAM* 17, ll. 1–8.

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The precise nature of the *sēma* Idameneus made and placed under Zeus' protection is disputed,[48] but unequivocally we are dealing with an early contingent curse protecting an object.

The practice of placing graves under the protection of divinities to safeguard them with written curses is not attested in the Greek mainland in the Archaic and Classical periods. It is first recorded in the early Hellenistic period in Asia Minor and becomes a widespread custom only in the Imperial period.[49] Despite the late appearance of written Greek grave curses, graves appear in every list of ἀκίνητα provided by lexicographers and paroemiographers. Herodotus, as we saw, also refers to a grave as ἀκίνητος (1.187.3). The Hellenistic scholia on Hesiod explain ἀκίνητα at *Op.* 750 as graves (or altars). At the beginning of the *Sepulchrum Simonidis*, Callimachus refers to the curse in store for anyone who disrupts (κινεῖν) a tomb.[50] The practice of inscribing curses on grave monuments may be late, but the notion of graves belonging to the category of sacred objects whose disturbance may be punished by divinities seems to have existed from early times. The absence of an unambiguous early written record for funeral curses on the Greek mainland might stem from the strength of, and widespread familiarity with, the taboo.[51]

Finally, we note the exploitation of the sacrosanct quality of ἀκίνητα in the domain of private curses: an ingenious strategy for invoking divine wrath on a thief was to dedicate a stolen object to a god.[52] The practice attests to the belief that gods monitor their possessions and punish thieves. *Arai*, as we can see from this overview, are well-attested instruments for the protection of divine property. In the final section, we examine the corollaries of the observations of sections II and III and then move to a more speculative part of this paper.

IV. What was the nature of Miltiades' sacrilege?

How exactly did Miltiades trigger the curse? Was merely entering the Parian Thesmophorion a sacrilegious act?[53] While some festivals of Demeter such as the Thesmophoria were restricted to women, a male presence is attested in the sanctuaries of Thesmophoros at other times.[54] The archaeological record confirms this: as Susan Guettel Cole points out, 'from votive dedications it is obvious that some precincts of Demeter, even some specifically labelled "Thesmophorion," could sometimes be open to

[48] In his commentary, Hansen (1983) 256 denies the funerary character of the inscription, because it would be a unique case of someone building his own funerary monument in the Archaic and Classical periods; Watson (1991) 17 and Edmonds (2022) 14 n.11 quote it as an *ara* against grave violators.

[49] On grave curses, see Strubbe (1991); for a collection of texts, Strubbe (1997). Strubbe (1991) 37–41 points out that the Greek funerary imprecations are based on two traditions, Greek and Anatolian: there was a long tradition of protecting the tombs with written curses in Asia Minor, which the local Greeks took over, but the rhetoric of grave curses corresponds to the old and well-established Greek cursing tradition. On the influence of public curses on grave imprecations and curse tablets, see also below, n.65.

[50] *Aet. fr.* 64.1–2: οὐδ' ἄ]ν τοι Καμάρινα τόσον κακὸν ὀκκόσον ἀ[ν]δρός | **κινη]θεὶς** ὁσίου **τύμβος** ἐπικρεμάσαι ('Not even Camarina would bring so much disaster on you as the tomb of a pious man if it is moved from its place'); text and translation Harder (2012). In this passage, Callimachus combines two proverbs, (μὴ) κινεῖν ἀκίνητα and μὴ κίνει Καμάριναν (on the latter, see Büchler (1982) 199–206).

[51] Once inscriptions recording curses against grave robbers appear, we do find expressions such as κινεῖν and μετακινεῖν used for tampering with the monument. See, for example, Strubbe (1997) 34, 97, 101, 113, 120, 122, 155, 393. In one, late, instance the grave speaks of itself as an ἀκίνητον and employs the proverb: *IGUR* II 294 (*IG* XIV 1339), ll. 8–10, Rome, undated: ἄνθρωπε, μὴ κινήσῃς τὰ {ακινησησ τα} ἀκίνητα.

[52] See Sánchez Natalías (2022) with bibliography.

[53] For this view, see Harrison (2000) 228; Wesselmann (2011) 124; Bremmer (2019) 52.

[54] Piette (2017) 30. On male participation in rituals other than the Thesmophoria performed in the sanctuaries of Demeter Thesmophoros, see Kozlowski (2009).

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men'.[55] Herodotus (6.91) also attests as much: in his narrative of the Aeginetan stasis, the male suppliant who found refuge by the vestibule of the sanctuary of Demeter Thesmophoros is accepted by the goddess, and her implacable *agos* befalls those who violated *asulia*, not the suppliant.[56] At Syracuse, the citizens swore their 'great oath' in the sanctuary of Demeter Thesmophoros.[57] Furthermore, a dedicatory inscription from Paros, difficult to date, mentions two men as dedicants in the cult of Kore and Demeter, likely Thesmophoros.[58] Male priests called κάβαρνοι were associated with the sanctuary of Demeter Thesmophoros at Paros.[59]

Therefore, the mere presence of a man in the Parian Thesmophorion need not represent a transgression. It is significant that Miltiades is gripped by a φρίκη at the entrance to the *megaron* and not as he was entering the precinct.[60] His goal is the *megaron*: 'he went towards the *megaron* in order to do something inside'. It follows then that Timo revealed to Miltiades both the nature of an object that could help him seize Paros, and the object's exact location. This accords with the accusations raised by the Parians against her ('she had guided the enemies in capturing her fatherland and had revealed (ἐκφήνασαν) to Miltiades the sacred things not to be spoken to any male (τὰ ἐς ἔρσενα γόνον ἄρρητα ἰρά)'). As often in Herodotus, here too ἐκφαίνω refers to telling rather than showing, and ἄρρητα points in the same direction. If any part of the Parian Thesmophorion was supposed to be inaccessible to males, it was the *megaron* with its objects. This is the reason why divine intervention in the form of φρίκη takes place at its entrance. Miltiades did not lay his hands on the objects deposited in the *megaron*, and quite likely he did not even see them. His malicious intention and motion towards them were enough.[61]

But what were ἀκίνητα and ἄρρητα ἰρά? Most scholars adduce a talisman such as a *palladion*.[62] A talismanic object is perhaps as far as we can reasonably go, albeit with two caveats: first, based on what we know about *megara*, an object such as a cult statue would seem to be out of place there; and, second, the Greek suggests that we are dealing with several objects in the *megaron*. Irrespective of the exact nature of these objects, another episode from Herodotus demonstrates that the ἰρά of Demeter and Persephone could be weaponized in the political arena in a situation of crisis. In book 7, Herodotus explains how the family of Telines at Gela acquired the priesthood of Demeter and Kore (ἱροφάνται τῶν χθονίων θεῶν, 7.153.2.2) in the early seventh century (7.153.2–4):

[55] Cole (2000) 137 n.13. Cole points to the inventories of the Delian Thesmophorion analysed by Bruneau (1970) 284; 12 female and six male names are listed among the dedicants of Demeter Thesmophoros, and a dedication was also made on behalf of the Athenian *dēmos*, which was always regarded as male in grammatical gender and sculpture (we owe this point to J.E. Lendon). On male presence in the sanctuaries of Demeter Thesmophoros, see also Burkert (1985) 245.

[56] On this Thesmophorion, see Polinskaya (2013) 284–88.

[57] Plut. *Dion* 56.5–6; Diod. Sic. 19.5.4–5. On the oath, see Martin (2018) 205–06.

[58] The inscription (*IG* XII 5 228) survived only in the record of Cyriacus of Ancona. Of the four personal names mentioned in the inscription, two are certainly male. Sonnabend in *DNP s.v.* Paros and Piette (2017) 34–36 associate the inscription with the Parian cult of Demeter Thesmophoros. Since the Thesmophorion is the only place of worship of Demeter attested on the island, this inference seems plausible.

[59] Antimachus *fr.* 67 West; Hsch. *s.v.* κάβαρνοι· οἱ τῆς Δήμητρος ἱερεῖς, ὡς Πάριοι; cf. *IG* XII 5 292. On the cult of Demeter on Paros, see Piette (2017) 13–45; for a discussion of κάβαρνοι, 27–31.

[60] According to another miracle reported by Herodotus (9.65.2), Demeter could prevent people from entering her precinct altogether.

[61] *Cf.* n.36 above on intention and punishment in Herodotus. Parker (1983) 189 on Miltiades: 'the goddess prevented the impiety, but punished the intent'.

[62] See above, n.7. Some see ἄρρητα ἰρά as a reference to rituals in general; we side with those who argue for objects.

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ἐς Μακτώριον πόλιν τὴν ὑπὲρ Γέλης οἰκημένην ἔφυγον ἄνδρες Γελῴων στάσι ἐσσωθέντες. τούτους ὦν ὁ Τηλίνης κατήγαγε ἐς Γέλην, ἔχων οὐδεμίαν ἀνδρῶν δύναμιν ἀλλὰ ἱρὰ τούτων τῶν θεῶν. ὅθεν δὲ αὐτὰ ἔλαβε ἢ <εἰ> αὐτὸς ἐκτήσατο, τοῦτο δὲ οὐκ ἔχω εἰπεῖν. τούτοισι δ' ὧν πίσυνος ἐὼν κατήγαγε, ἐπ' ᾧ τε οἱ ἀπόγονοι αὐτοῦ ἱροφάνται τῶν θεῶν ἔσονται. θῶμά μοι ὧν καὶ τοῦτο γέγονε πρὸς τὰ πυνθάνομαι, κατεργάσασθαι Τηλίνην ἔργον τοσοῦτον· τὰ τοιαῦτα γὰρ ἔργα οὐ πρὸς {τοῦ} ἅπαντος ἀνδρὸς νενόμικα γίνεσθαι, ἀλλὰ πρὸς ψυχῆς τε ἀγαθῆς καὶ ῥώμης ἀνδρηίης· ὁ δὲ λέγεται πρὸς τῆς Σικελίης τῶν οἰκητόρων τὰ ὑπεναντία τούτων πεφυκέναι θηλυδρίης τε καὶ μαλακώτερος ἀνήρ.

Men from Gela who were defeated in an uprising escaped to the city of Maktorion inland from Gela. Telines brought these men back to Gela, without a force of men, with only the sacred objects of those goddesses. I do not know where he took them from or whether he acquired them himself. He brought the men back, putting his faith in these very objects, on the condition that his descendants would be hierophants of the goddesses. In addition to what I learned, I really marvelled also at the fact that Telines accomplished such an undertaking. I do not think that such deeds are accomplished by just any man, but by an excellent spirit and manly strength. And yet the Sicilian colonists say that he was the opposite, effeminate in nature and a rather soft man.

The objects of Telines belong to the same divinities as the Parian ones and, what is more, they are handled by a man. If Miltiades knew the story (or was informed of it by Timo), an object conferring immense power on a single person would have been very attractive for a man in his position. The episode at Gela also provides a structural parallel to the Parian narrative. Both at Gela and on Paros a conflict results in a standstill, with the ousted faction entrenched in Maktorion and the Parians besieged in their city. To break the tie and end the conflict, weak Telines relied on the power of numinous objects that he probably displayed to both parties. But here is where the similarities end, since Telines used the power of the objects for civic reconciliation,[63] whereas Miltiades attempted to gain them by force and harm the community that considered them sacred. The Parian objects were also protected by an additional taboo: they were 'not to be spoken of to any male' (τὰ ἐς ἔρσενα γόνον ἄρρητα ἱρά). This detail, however, is disclosed only in the context of the charges against Timo.

Herodotus is so vague about the details of Timo's conversation with Miltiades and about the latter's intended actions in the *megaron* that it is not even clear at the outset whether Miltiades was aware that the objects were intended strictly for female use. If Timo's plan was to simply lure Miltiades into a trap to trigger a curse protecting the sacred objects, she could have told him all kinds of stories about their powers, hoping that his intrusion into the *megaron* would trigger a curse. This interpretation accords with the fact that the Parians felt the need to consult Delphi about Timo's punishment. Something about her defence must have been persuasive enough for them to hesitate about executing her summarily, for why else would the Parians be so lenient towards a minor cult official accused of high treason?

Miltiades' breach of the norms of piety leads first to φρίκη, an indication that the curse Herodotus intimated with κινήσοντά τι τῶν ἀκινήτων has been triggered. φρίκη is a numinous shudder experienced both in the anticipation of divine punishment and as an

[63] We thank the anonymous referee for pointing out the possible wordplay of Τηλίνης and τελετή. While these words have different roots (Τηλίνης stemming from *τηλε-), the similarity of sound could indicate that Telines was destined to preside over the rituals (τελετή) of Demeter. One should nevertheless bear in mind Herodotus' report that he was from the island Telos (7.153.1).

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integral part of that punishment.[64] In the extant epigraphic evidence, we find φρίκη as the consequence of curses triggered by religious offence, particularly in cases of tampering with ἀκίνητα.[65] We posit that at the doors of the *megaron* Miltiades becomes ἐναγής ('accursed, doomed'), and in the grip of the perilous power of Demeter. The leg injury he sustains in his attempt to run away is poetic justice of the kind frequently attested in cursing: an impious fish eater from Smyrna is doomed to become fish food, and Miltiades' leap leaves him lame. A puzzling detail in Herodotus' description of Miltiades' fall sheds more light on the remarkable appropriateness of divine vengeance. Referring to Miltiades' final leap, Herodotus uses the phrase καταθρῴσκοντα δὲ τὴν **αἰμασιήν**, switching from ἕρκος, the initial generic word he used for the barricade, to the more specific αἰμασιή, a wall of dry stones. This is all the more significant because Miltiades runs back the same way and jumps over the same wall that was earlier referred to as ἕρκος. The walls of the sanctuaries of Demeter Thesmophoros tended to be quite high, so as to shield from view the exclusively female festivals that took place within.[66] As we noted earlier, thieves of sacred property were hurled into the sea or off a cliff, and the latter (κατακρημνίζειν) was the standard punishment for *hierosulia* at Delphi.[67] In light of this fact, Herodotus' decision to employ **κατα**θρῴσκοντα and **αἰμασιήν** seems to be an allusion to the punishment of *hierosuloi.*

When describing the consequences of the wounding, Herodotus twice uses the verb σήπειν (6.136.2, 3), a common term for putrefaction and rotting,[68] but also remarkably fitting in the context of someone trying to gain access to the *megaron* of Demeter. According to our best source for the ritual actions at the Thesmophoria festival, the *aition* of the ritual was the fall of the swineherd Eubuleus together with his swine into the chasm along with Kore. The ritual actions consisted of throwing piglets into the pits (*megara*) where they would rot (σήπειν) and retrieving their rotten remains to be used as a kind of compost.[69] Miltiades experiences what it was really like to enter the *megaron* of Demeter in the most horrifying and ultimately lethal way.

[64] See Cairns (2013), with p. 89 on φρίκη as 'fear of divine power, anger, or punishment'.

[65] A sepulchral inscription from Attica (second century AD) contains a funerary imprecation listing φρίκη amongst the divine punishments for those who disturb (μετακινεῖν) the grave; Demeter and Persephone are listed among the divinities of the underworld who guard the tomb (*IG* II² 13209, ll. 4–14): παραδίδωμι τοῖς καταχθονίοις θεοῖς τοῦτο τὸ ἠρῷον φυλάσσειν, Πλούτωνι καὶ **Δήμητρι καὶ Περσεφόνῃ** καὶ Ἐριννύσιν καὶ πᾶσιν **τοῖς καταχθονίοις θεοῖς**· εἴ τις ἀποκοσμήσει τοῦτο τὸ ἠρῷον ἢ ἀποσκουτλώσει ἢ εἴ τι καὶ ἕτερον **μετακινήσει** ἢ αὐτὸς ἢ δι' ἄλλου, μὴ γῆ βατὴ μὴ θάλασσα πλωτή, ἀλλὰ ἐκριζωθήσεται παγγενεί· πᾶσι τοῖς κακοῖς πεῖραν δώσει, καὶ **φρίκῃ** καὶ πυρετῷ καὶ τεταρτέῳ καὶ ἐλέφαντι καὶ ὅσα κακὰ καὶ θηρίοις καὶ ἀνθρώποις γίγνετε, ταῦτα γιγνέσθω τῷ τολμήσαντι ἐκ τούτου τοῦ ἠρῴου **μετακινῆσαί τι** ('I hand over this *herōon* to the divinities of the underworld for guarding, to Plouto, Demeter, Persephone, the Erinyes and to all the gods of the underworld. If someone disfigures this *herōon*, or if someone deprives it of its paving, or disturbs any other thing either himself or through another, may the earth be impassable and may the sea not be navigable for him, but he will be destroyed with his entire family, root and branch. He will experience every kind of evil, shudder, fever, quartan fever, elephantiasis; all the evils that befall humans and animals, let them befall the one who has dared to disturb anything from this *herōon*'). The same text, including the reference to φρίκη, is found in *IG* II² 13210, also second century AD, from Attica. Almost identical phrasing is attested on a lead tablet found on Crete (*I.Cret.* II xvi 28, ll. 8–12). For φρίκη in private curses, see also Audollent, *DT* 74.6 and 75.10–11. Lamont (2023) 224–47 persuasively demonstrates that such inscriptions were influenced by traditional and formulaic public curses.

[66] Bremmer (2019) 52.

[67] Plut. *De sera* 557a; *Prae. ger. reip.* 825b; Scholia on Ar. *Vesp.* 1446. Herodotus is aware of the story about the (unjust) execution of Aesop at Delphi (2.134.4). Though Herodotus does not mention the exact manner of Aesop's execution, the abbreviated reference to his death conveys his familiarity with the story about the Delphians throwing Aesop off a cliff on a false accusation of *hierosulia.*

[68] The same expression is used for the wound of Cambyses at Hdt. 3.66.2.

[69] Scholion to Luc. *Dial. meret.* 2.1. For a discussion, see Parker (2005) 270–83 and Stehle, *Beyond Sacrifice: Women's Rituals for Demeter and Dionysus as Models for New Practices* (in preparation).

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Another remarkably fitting aspect of Miltiades' punishment is related to the specific taboo regarding the Parian sacred objects, the prohibition on speaking (τὰ ἐς ἕρσενα γόνον ἄρρητα ἱρά). Herodotus emphasizes with fine irony the fact that upon his return to Athens, Miltiades was much 'spoken of' (Ἀθηναῖοι δὲ ἐκ Πάρου Μιλτιάδεα ἀπονοστήσαντα εἶχον ἐν στόμασι, 6.136.1), obviously in a bad way, leading to the indictment and trial. When he was put on trial, Miltiades was so ill that he was unable to speak. Even the monetary fine the Athenians imposed on the dying Miltiades as a punishment (6.136.3) finds parallels in Greek inscriptional *arai* where a combination of (enormous) monetary fines and divine punishment is a well-attested deterrent.[70]

The *peripeteia* of Miltiades is even more impactful if we consider his previous boldness. After all, this was the man who led the army at Marathon, where the Greeks not only charged *running* towards the Persians, but, as Herodotus says, they were the first to 'endure the sight of Median clothing and men dressed in this clothing' where previously 'even to hear the name "Medes" was terrifying to the Greeks' (6.112.3). That a man who displayed such heroism would run away from the sanctuary in utter terror indicates that powerful and awesome gods were at work.

Curses protecting τὰ ἀκίνητα are regularly accompanied by blessings for those who display proper religious respect for the gods and their property. So, in a final twist, when she is put on trial, Timo's life is saved by the Delphic god while Miltiades is first deprived of his mobility, then tongue-tied and unable to defend himself in court, financially ruined and finally deprived of his life: as Herodotus said, he ended his life μὴ εὖ, or as a curse might have it, κακὸς ὢν κακῇ ἐξωλείᾳ ἀπώλεσε.

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Abbreviations of epigraphic corpora follow the *SEG*.

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[70] See Rubinstein (2007) 274–76. We owe this observation to Jessica Lamont.

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