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**Aaron Beck-Schachter: *The Circulation of Belief: Mobile Cult Icons in Archaic and Classical Greece***

ABSTRACT

At certain festivals in the Greek world, the gods themselves (in the form of their statues) would travel alongside their worshippers. These portable cult statues were both representations of divinities and physical objects. The processions featuring these statues thus embodied not only the movement of the individual divinity, but also the circumstances of a material exchange between humans. This paper will argue that in traditions which reenacted a theft, it was this human exchange, not the movement of the god that was the primary focus. For example, the removal of the Palladion from Troy in the *Iliupersis* focuses the action not on the movement of Athena, but on the relationship between the two concerned parties: Greeks and Trojans. Similarly, the theft of the *bretas* of Artemis by Orestes in Euripides' *Iphigenia among the Taurians* was concerned primarily with dramatizing the status and rights of non-citizen groups. At Athens, there is evidence for a fourth-century, ephebic procession that carried an image of Athena down to the sea. Traditionally, this procession has been assigned to Athena Polias and the Plynteria (Parker and Sourvinou-Inwood) or to an unnamed festival dealing with the theft of the Palladion, its installation in Athens, and the inauguration of an associated law-court (Burkert). The position argued in this paper that processions involving cult statues necessarily dramatized an exchange, will help contextualize this debate.