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To understand the trend towards abstraction we have to advance a general theory applicable also to African art. The degree of abstraction is connected with an intense fervor, usually religious, in pre- and early historic times, in most of the non-literate cultures, at the time of the emergence of Christianity, which produced a selfforgetting passion in abstract ideas about the spirit, the gods, etc. Elie Faure formulated it in this manner: when a new and exciting idea comes into being, it is *expressed* in artworks of abstracted forms; when the idea has lost its exciting newness, artists concentrate their efforts on *perfecting* the previously invented forms. A good example can be taken from the late neolithic (6000 B.C.) when at Halicar, Anatolia, maternity statues were made which still had the exaggerated breasts, belly, buttocks, and small head without mouth, but showing a marked departure from the pure abstraction of the early neolithic towards a degree of naturalism.

b. *Early historic fertility figures.* A different style and very strong abstract tendency can be noted in this period which can be dated between 3000 and 2000 B. C. Here the figures, mostly in clay and marble, have a flat frontal aspect; many are without limbs, some without head, in contrast to the strong three-dimensional form of the earlier periods. These female goddesses come from Mesopotamia, the near East and the Aegean civilizations.

It is evident that these statues are not in phallic form; their specific concern was about female fertility, but nevertheless they illustrate the fact that *abstract concepts* are put into *abstracted forms* with main emphasis on that *part of the human body* which aims to suggest symbolically the very function for which they stand. The