

Astoret, this goddess was fundamentally connected with the cult of the ancient Semitic religions of Arabia, Elam,* Chaldea, Assyria, and Asia Minor. These figures occur throughout these countries, and among Phenician colonies on the Mediterranean. She was worshiped also in Armenia and among the Hittites, whose racial affinities are still undetermined, and in II and III cities of Troy. Similar votives are found in the remains of neolithic and transitional cultures of southern Europe. Whether they all point back to a common Semitic origin or not, they are doubtless the expression of a very primitive idea of the All-mother, the giver of life and the nourisher, into whose care the dead are given. The expression of this fundamental character is common to the figurines wherever found; it is always shown in the realistically accentuated representation of the breasts, the navel, and the organs of generation. Beyond having these attributes in common, the treatment varies with different peoples. The next characteristic that is common to the greatest number of localities is that in which both hands are holding the breasts, as if to emphasize the nourishing function, or rest on the body below the breasts. Among the Phenicians the goddess, besides the characteristics just mentioned, is frequently accompanied by doves, or holds the lunar disk as an attribute of the Semitic moon-goddess, as in Chaldea she favors the crescent-shaped horn of the cow or bull. And these figurines are frequently accompanied by figures of the cow or bull, recalling the cow sacred to Hera. These representations are often reduced to the simplest form, as in Troy, where frequently only the eyes and nose with mere indications of the breasts and hands occur, made in the most rudimentary manner on vases. Again, in many of the neolithic sites of the Mediterranean a more or less developed steatopygous character is given, often comparable to the form of the "Hottentot Venus." Lastly, it is not unusual to find figures on which the arms are represented only as stumps, even associated with others in which the hands hold the breasts. This last-mentioned character attaches to our figurines of the South Kurgan. While the realistic treatment leaves no possible doubt of their cult affinities, the arms were not bent towards the breasts, but were merely indicated by stumps, which either projected outward or hung down.

While we can not speak positively in comparing or contrasting these figures with those found in different regions, we can say in general terms that in their general character, and especially in the delicate modeling of the one shown in plate 46, figs. 10a and 10b, they stand somewhat apart from those represented from other known localities. They seem distinct from the Chaldean and Phenician, and they are not accompanied by the "face-vases" of the II and III cities of Troy, on which the same cult idea is expressed. In looking for their derivation we must take into consideration the fact that they occur in the South Kurgan in intimate connection with the custom of burial of children under the house-floor. For this reason I think we must imagine this cult to have come from a point far enough to the

* In De Morgan's Susianan collection in the Louvre, a case marked "Epoque archaïque," contains figurines of this goddess, from Tepé Moussian, some of which resemble those from the South Kurgan at Anau. Also in De Morgan, *Délégation en Perse, Mémoires*, t. VII, p. 11, M. Jequier gives a drawing of a very primitive form of Beltis found in the lower strata of Susa, apparently before the occurrence of copper and 25 feet or more below the first traces of writing.