

Reconstruction of the Elements of the Holy World of the Old Trypillians through the Prisms of the Ukrainian Ethnocultural Heritage (On the Example of the Archetype “Home”)

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Abstract

The publication, based on the developments of various fields of scientific knowledge (history, archaeology, ethnography, religious studies, philosophy), considers one of the alternative approaches to the reconstruction of elements of the sacred world of the ancient Trypillians. This approach, which is based on the interpretation of archaeological findings, expands the possibilities of classical reconstruction. Comparative analysis of ethnographic materials, philosophical analysis of archetypes with contextual consideration of patterns of developing and transforming the religious phenomenon are added. The author proves the existence of historical parallels and connections between certain elements of the religious beliefs of the ancient Trypillians and the preserved manifestations of the ethnocultural tradition of the Ukrainians on the example of the archetype “Home”. This is the reason for asserting the continuity of the Ukrainian spiritual and cultural tradition. The foundations of this tradition were laid during the existence of the Trypillian proto-civilization.

Keywords

Trypillia Culture, Ukraine, Prehistoric Religion, Ritual, Ukrainian Tradition

1. Introduction

As early as 1897, the discoverer of the Trypillia culture, V. Khvoyka, hypothetically drew a direct ethnogenetic line from the ancient Trypillians to the Slavs and their historical descendants, the autochthonous population of the territory

of modern Ukraine (*Khvoyka Vikentii*). Later, the Soviet academician V. Rybakov states: “The world view of the Trypillian tribes is extremely important for the study of Slavic paganism” (*Rybakov, 1986: p. 221*). He saw in the myths, rituals and art of the Slavic people’s echoes of the Eneolithic period of the ancient peasants who lived in Ukraine, and drew special attention to the considerable depth of folk memory.

Of course, from a modern point of view, since many tribes and peoples joined the ethnogenesis of modern Ukrainians over such a long period, it is fair to say that the population that replaced the Trypillians over the next four millennia was not anthropologically identical to their predecessors. In other words, Trypillian ethnoses cannot be called the direct ancestors of the Ukrainian people from the ethnological point of view. Paradoxically, however, the situation in the sphere of spirituality and culture is a completely different one. The results of scientific researches carried out in various disciplines allow us to assert the existence of the phenomenon of continuity of the Ukrainian spiritual and cultural tradition, the foundations of which were laid during the existence of the Trypillian proto-civilization.

Here are some of the conclusions reached by Ukrainian scientists. In particular, the archaeologist I. Vynokur and the ethnographer S. Trubchaninov come to a common conclusion: “The Trypillian tribes left a significant mark on the ancient history of Ukraine. The influence of their culture can be traced back for many centuries, and even in the ethnographic materials of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries there is evidence of this influence” (*Vinokur & Trubchaninov, 1996: p. 35*). The following is confirmed by the academician P. Tolochko: “It is possible to say that some elements of Trypillian culture—farming, painting ceramics, and houses, making ornamental motifs, etc.—became an organic part of Ukrainian ethnographic culture” (*Berezanska, Gladylin, & Gladkikh, 1997: p. 8*). These statements are in accordance with the conclusions of the Ukrainian historian D. Pavliv, who states: “The founders of Ukrainian folk art can be considered the painters of Trypillia. Many of the leading motifs of Trypillian ornamentation have been preserved in Ukrainian folk embroidery, carpets, folk pottery, and especially in Ukrainian Easter eggs, including double spirals resembling the Latin letter S, spirals around vessels, schematic representations of plants and animals, and various crosses in a circle. The high talent and desire for the beauty of the ancient inhabitants of the territory of Ukraine is proved by the skill of painting the Trypillian ceramics” (*Pavliv, 1998: p. 10*). The Ukrainian philologist S. Hubernachuk comes to similar conclusions in his studies. He notes that: “Careful analysis of individual signs and blocks of signs used to decorate Trypillian dishes and comparing them with the images and plots of Ukrainian ritual songs allows us to conclude that everything the Trypillians painted on their dishes is lovingly sung in Ukrainian ritual songs, especially prehistoric sun worship songs” (*Gubernachuk, 2008: p. 17*).

Of course, the list of similar quotations of scientists’ conclusions can be continued. However, we believe that the above list is convincing enough to justify

the possibility of reconstructing elements of the sacred world of the ancient Trypillians not only on the basis of the interpretation of archaeological findings but also through the study of ethnographic materials, which record the remnants of the spiritual heritage of the ancient population of Ukraine. This, however, raises the following question: “What is the most appropriate methodological approach for the conduct of a scientific study of this kind?”

2. Methodological Approach

In order to summarize and present the developments of heterogeneous scientific fields, we consider it necessary to turn to a philosophical methodological approach, since the research question of this publication is interdisciplinary in nature and integrates the methodological achievements of various fields of scientific knowledge (history, archaeology, ethnography, religious studies, etc.). In particular, we will use the method of analysis of individual archetypes not in the classical sense, which is described in detail in the works of K. Yung, but proposed by the Ukrainian philosopher S. Krymsky. According to the scientist: “The analysis of archetypes is a quite adequate method of the study of national culture, national mentality and the prehistory of ethnic formations that is in accordance with the conditions of scientific rationality” (Krymskyi, 2006: p. 288).

The postulate that human presence in the world is manifested in certain archetypal existences, forms of conscious existence that are manifested in the interweaving of the material and the spiritual, is the basis of this methodological approach. These existentials are determined by sacred spirituality (dimensions of human communication with heaven and earth), cultural values (as a way of translating things into sentences) and characteristics of national existence (as a solidarity identification of a certain human community on the basis of specific signs of individualization of peoples). They are revealed through the vital content of archetypes as structural concepts of symbolic and thematic series, according to S. Krymsky: “Home”-“Field”-“Temple”.

In this publication, we’ll examine the reconstruction of elements of the sacred world of the ancient Trypillians in the context of the Ukrainian ethno-cultural tradition. The archetype “Home” will be used as an example.

3. Archetype “Home”

Philosophically speaking, in the broadest sense, the symbolism of the archetype “Home” denotes the sacred environment of human existence in which he (as the owner of the house) can occupy a prominent place. “Home” is a niche for the human being in the universe. It acquired a sacred status for the ancient Trypillians. Let us consider in the context of the ontological level (specific existential dimensions) of the Ukrainian ethno-cultural tradition the peculiarities of the reconstruction of this archetype of the spiritual world of the ancient Trypillians.

In the Ukrainian culture, “House”/“Ukrainian hut” is a common name for a residential building, a type of folk dwelling in the Ukraine. For Ukrainians,

“House” has become an ethnographic feature of the people (Peretokin, 2013: pp. 63-68) and a stable symbol of national ethos (Pashkova, 2016). The richness of folk traditions, symbols, customs and rituals is reflected in the architecture of the Ukrainian cottage. The Ukrainian cottage/“House” has typical features of all regions of Ukraine. It is the result of the common ethnic composition of the people.

From the point of view of comparative historical studies, it is worth paying attention to the sacred theme of Ukrainian housing, which to a certain extent resembled Trypillian housing until the first half of the twentieth century. It re-translates certain concepts of Trypillian temple building, which gives grounds for asserting the ancient traditions of rural housing in Ukraine (Trypillia Civilization, 2004: p. 285). In particular, I. Muliarchuk quite rightly compares the reconstruction of the Trypillian dwelling with a Ukrainian village cottage of the twentieth century and notes that: “The appearance of the Trypillian settlement and the type of residential and household buildings do not differ much from the appearance of a later Ukrainian village” (Mulyarchuk, 2016: p. 168). Yu. Mosenkis testifies that: “Ukrainian ornamentation (especially the patterns of Easter eggs) inherits the ornaments of the Trypillian culture, not to mention its agrarian traditions. In this context, it is not surprising that the traditional Ukrainian house in its main features goes back to the time of the Trypillians” (Mosenkis, 2001: p. 48).

A whitewashed building with a thatched roof was the main type of traditional dwelling in Ukraine. This type of Ukrainian house was the most characteristic ethnographic feature of the Ukrainian people (Bulletin of the Dnipro, 2013: p. 68). The place for the building was preferably chosen with access to the river, according to the points of the compass, where no trees grow, preferably with an entrance from the east. Choosing the time for building the house was also revered. This was considered one of the most important for building a successful house. In spring and summer, it was customary to lay the foundation for a new house. Tradition forbade the start of construction during leap years, fasting periods, certain phases of the moon, and “difficult” days of the week (“God’s”, “odd”, “lean”, “women’s”). Only before noon was the foundation of a new house to be laid. It was forbidden to do any work on the construction site after the sun had set (Encyclopedia).

The Ukrainians, as well as the Trypillians, also made bookmarks on the foundation and walls: herbs, sheep’s wool, lamps, icons, incense, holy water, bread, grain, etc. As a rule, bookmarks were placed on all four corners of the house. Sometimes only on the so-called red corner, which was usually located in the east. Folk dwellings were usually rectangular in shape. They were reminiscent of Trypillian dwellings. When the construction was finished, the craftsmen would leave a part of the roof above the storage room uncovered for a certain period of time, believing that the newly built house would be purified through this opening.

The spiritual closeness to the beliefs of the ancient Trypillians is emphasized by the rituals in the Ukrainian house itself. This is especially evident in the cult of the house fire. It is worth mentioning: that almost every house of the Trypil-

lians had altars for ritual needs. For example, altars were found in almost every house (Rassamakin, 2012: p. 195) in one of the proto-giant cities of the Trypillian world, Talianky. A thorough study of the fire in the Ukrainian folklore was carried out by the researcher V. Kravchenko in his work "Fire. Material collected on the right bank" (Kravchenko, 1927: pp. 147-181). In connection with the spread of the Trypillian culture on the right bank of Ukraine, his research is important. Thus, offerings (grain from the new harvest, drinks, dough before baking bread) were brought from the oven to the hearth. The hearth was worshipped as a protector against evil spirits and as a protector from misfortune. The sacred fire from the oven was moved from the father's house to the son's house after the construction of a new building. This was done with archaic rituals.

A popular prohibition against lying on the stove while baking bread was also associated with the sacred fire. This taboo can be explained by a deep spiritual tradition. It is linked to the ritual of baking sacred bread. For ancient peasants, bread was sacred. So was the fire in which, according to archaic beliefs, it was "born". Therefore, both in the Trypillian period and in the Ukrainian ethno-cultural tradition, baking bread was considered a sacred act. At the same time, it was considered an offense against the sanctuary to violate this sacred process.

Thus, the sacred act of baking bread is associated with the archetype of "Home" in both the Trypillian and Ukrainian traditions. Such a respectful attitude towards bread is closely related to the cult of fertility, from the point of view of religious studies. After all, according to the ancient Trypillians, their lives depended on a good harvest. This led them to sacralize the attributes of the fertility of the land on which their lives depended. In both the Trypillian and Ukrainian spiritual traditions, bread was one of these attributes. It's not a coincidence that in the pictures of the Trypillian ornaments one often finds the symbolism of grain. It can also be found in the traditional Ukrainian embroideries.

The consecration of the dwellings of the Trypillians was closely connected with the cult of ancestors, according to the Ukrainian researcher H. Lozko. She suggests that the well-known clay "model dwellings" had their own cultic purpose. They were a kind of residence for ancestors, guardians of the family. The commemorative customs of feeding the dead may be indicated by the presence of an altar and miniature cult objects in them (Lozko, 2015: p. 76). Drawing parallels with Ukrainian customary rituals in this context, it is worth mentioning the call of Father Christmas to "eat kutia" (to consume traditional Ukrainian ritual food) or to leave food at cemeteries on the days commemorating deceased relatives. By the way, this tradition has been preserved to the present day in a number of villages in Ukraine.

It's also interesting to note a unique religious phenomenon: The ancient Trypillians ritually burned their houses after a certain period of time. Before burning, the whole house was organized according to the real life. It is likely that this "final ritual" of the Trypillians had a symbolic meaning, similar to that of a funeral ritual, but in the context of a living space. In the process of researching the forms of ritual relics in the Ukrainian tradition related to the sacralization of

dwellings, i.e., their abandonment, important evidence was found. This evidence generally coincides with Trypillian rituals. For example, peasants cleaned and organized their houses before resettlement during the flooding of Ukrainian picturesque villages and the resettlement of people to other places of residence for the purpose of commissioning the Dniproges in 1931-1932 (Interview, 2012). It is significant that within the flood zone, there were areas with a direct connection to the Trypillian culture (Shumova & Ryzhov, 2010: p. 16). A number of Trypillian sites have been discovered in this flood zone. These include the settlements of Novi Petrovtsi, Domatnove, Zazymie, Novosilky I, II, and the Zavalivka cemetery (O. Terenozhkin, D. Telehin, V. Kruts) (Have a Rest, 2003: p. 49). The phenomenon is that ancient sacred ritual actions seem to be preserved in the subconscious of the carriers of their own ethnic culture. And under certain conditions (probably crises) the sacred archetypes of distant ancestors are reproduced. In particular, there are cases when during various epidemics (cholera, dysentery) in Ukrainian villages a “live fire” (made by friction) was made on the doorstep of the churches, and later the holy fire was carried to all the houses of the village (Ukrainians, 1991: pp. 551-552). This is quite reminiscent of the ancient Trypillian temple ritual of the “first fire” or “new fire”. This fire could be carried to the home altars of the proto-city of Nebelivka (Ukraine) after the festive service. This is yet another indication of the kinship between the archetypal images of the Trypillian sacred world and the Ukrainian ethno-cultural tradition.

4. Archaeological Data on the Example of the Archetype “House” Confirming the Connection between the Trypillia Culture and the Ukrainian Ethno-Culture

One of the most widespread sacred signs of the Trypillian culture is the “Horns of the Tur” or “Dvorogy” (Zavalii, 2022: p. 14). They were often used as the top of Trypillian temples and houses. Such “Horns” are almost always present on ceramic copies of structures. They reflect the general appearance of the structure. The “Horns” cross at the top of the building. They form a kind of compositional accent. This iconographic manifestation has been well studied in the ceramic copies of the Trypillian temples that have been preserved thanks to archaeological science “Figure 1”, “Figure 2”.

This element is considered to be a decoration with an obvious symbolic meaning (Shevtsova, 2013: pp. 338-350) by researchers of the Trypillia culture. There is little doubt among the researchers that such an obligatory element of the ceramic copies records a real element of the construction of the temple (Cucuteni, 2016: p. 6).

The ceramic models presented are important for the reconstruction of the main concepts of temple and house construction in the Trypillian culture. They are especially important for the reconstruction of elements made of wood. The symbolic “Horns” were obviously made of wood. Wood is not an archaeological material in Trypillian research. However, ritual objects, such as ceramic replicas of temples and houses, are good replicas of the main concepts of sacred



Figure 1. Ceramic models of Trypillian temples with tops in the form of “Dvorogy” or “Horns of the Heavenly Tur”.



Figure 2. Ceramic model of a two-storey Trypillian dwelling crowned with the sacred symbol “Dvorogy”.

construction. This is because such ritual objects are known to preserve established traditions and to be created according to worldview canons.

Some detailed Trypillian ceramic models show that the “Horns” were formed by two crossed wooden elements that were attached to each other with a rubbing and to the facade of the temple and the house with wooden paving stones that ran longitudinally along the main frame of the building and were cut into the elements of the wooden “Horns”. Such a construction, which reveals the Eneolithic technology of nail-less construction, is well studied by detailed ceramic models of temples from the Antiquities Collection of the PLATAR Museum (Ukraine, 2008: p. 30, 41, 94). Here we can also study the wood carvings used by the Trypillians for the decoration of structural elements, including the “Horns” “Figure 3”.

Drawing parallels with the Ukrainian ethno-culture and the ethno-symbol “House”/“Ukrainian hut”, we find the repetition of the symbol “Horns”-“Dvozuby” on the oldest preserved rural houses on the territory of Ukraine. In the village of Samary in Volyn (Ukraine) an old wooden house was found. The house was built in 1587 (What Does the Oldest Village House, 2021). This rare example of ancient Ukrainian housing is today the oldest wooden example of traditional housing construction. At the same time, it conveys symbolic concepts

of construction. Similar to the Trypillian huts, the Ukrainian hut had wooden horns in the same places as its ancient Trypillian antecedent “**Figure 4**”.

The symbolic “Horns of the Tur” of a Ukrainian hut, raised to the heavens, can also be found in the examples of the National Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Life of Ukraine (Pyrogovo village) in the Kyiv region (Ukraine). Here are exhibited ancient Ukrainian cottages that have been preserved and preserved for posterity (**Old Wooden House**) “**Figure 5**”.

The material presented here traces the conceptual link between the two agrarian



Figure 3. A detailed ceramic model of the Trypillian temple with the existing temple interior.



Figure 4. The oldest village hut in Ukraine (built in 1587).



Figure 5. Ukrainian hut from the National Museum of Folk Architecture and Rural Life of Ukraine (Pyrogovo village).

cultures in the archetypal and fundamental symbol of settled life, the “House”. B. Rebinder rightly observed that there should be a certain “nationality by virtue of the land”. A nation that remains on its own land and continues to cultivate it preserves its nationality more easily than one that invades (*History of Religion in Ukraine*). It should also be added here that, according to historical experience, in the process of evolution, the religions of agricultural tribes and peoples usually turn out to be dominant when they are combined with the religions of nomadic pastoral tribes-conquerors (Lozko, 2015: p. 126). Thus, in its own housing construction, the Ukrainian nation was able to carry and reproduce an ancient symbol of the agrarian type. Thus, the connection between the culture of Trypillia and the archetype of the “House” can be confirmed by the traditions of building a Ukrainian hut.

In conclusion, the authors of the article note that the Trypillian cultural traditions of the agricultural type probably had an influence not only on the Ukrainian world. In Belarusian ethno-culture we find “Horned huts”, taking into account the archetypal “House”, which we study according to archaeological and ethnocultural materials (*Belarusian Village*, 2021) “Figure 6”.

Probably such archaic traditions spread from the Trypillians through the Indo-European backgammon to the world of the Eastern Slavs. Now, in the light of recent archaeological discoveries, modern peoples—descendants of the Slavs and distant descendants of the Trypillians—who have managed to preserve relics of their own cultural roots, can be proud of the depth of their folk memory without exaggerating.

5. Conclusion

The analysis of the archetype of “Home” shows that in the religious beliefs of the



Figure 6. The traditional Belarusian house is decorated with wooden horns.

ancient Trypillians, as well as in elements of the ethno-cultural tradition of the Ukrainians, the dwelling acquired a sacred status. In the archaic religious consciousness, it was closely connected with the concept of the “sacred”. In other words, it can be argued that the archetype of “Home” was an ontological level where the sacrament of fusion/merger of the everyday dimension of existence with the sacred space took place. For representatives of indigenous societies, the latter seemed to permeate all aspects of existential (forms of conscious existence). In particular, sacred significance was attached to the time of construction of a house, the choice of the season for the start of construction, and the location of its orientation in relation to the points of the compass according to the cardinal points and used specific sacred symbols to decorate the house.

All this has been complemented by some ritual prohibitions (taboos), rules of ritual purification (consecration), etc.

From the point of view of religious interpretation of the materials presented in the publication, which reveal the essential characteristics of the archetype “Home”, it can be stated that there is a combination of a number of structural components of the religious cults of the ancient Trypillians for interaction with the sphere of the “sacred” world. These components fully correspond to the general patterns of development of religious beliefs. Among them are the following ones:

- *the cult of fire*. Fire was not only honored as a sacred element in itself. It was also understood as “one of the ways to the sphere of the sacred” since offerings were made to it. It was also endowed with protective (protecting from evil spirits) and purifying functions (the ability to destroy the outdated, polluted, and obsolete to make way for the fresh, clean, and new);
- *the cult of fertility*, characteristic of both the Trypillian religion and the surviving Ukrainian ethnocultural tradition, which emphasized the worship of

bread and the process of its preparation, was supplemented by images of sacred symbols of grain. This was fully consistent with the agricultural way of life. The cultivation of grain was one of the most important products for the life of the human community;

- *the cult of ancestors*, integral to any religion of the archaic traditional community, was expressed in the belief that the ancestors belong directly to the realm of the “other”, the “sacred”, which was feared, honored, entrusted with the functions of protection, help in difficult life situations, and of course, their attributes (models of the inhabitants, clay figures of ancestors, deities, etc.) were placed in some of the most important parts of the house;
- *astral cults*, which were manifested in worshipping the celestial bodies (Sun, Moon, stars and constellations), believing in their influence on the home as a project of human existence, depending on a given position in the firmament. As an example of the archetype “House”, the astral symbol of the “Dvorogy” or “Horns of the Heavenly Tur” on the tops of Trypillian and Ukrainian buildings revealed in the work can testify to the continuity and influence of ancient culture on modernity;
- *a system of taboos*, the existence of which indicates, on the one hand, a belief in the possibility of certain sanctions for violating the prohibitions of supernatural/worldly powers. On the other hand, it demonstrates a reverent attitude toward the sphere of the “sacred”, which, according to archaic ideas, permeated the vital space of human existence.

Modern scholars still do not have a clear explanation for the unique phenomenon mentioned at the end of the publication—the rituals of burning Trypillian dwellings (as well as temples and entire proto-cities) after a certain period of time. The “archaic logic” of the Trypillians’ interaction with the sphere of the “sacred” can only be guessed at. For an adequate explanation of this religious phenomenon, we will not go into various hypotheses. Nevertheless, in our publication, we note the existence of a similar stereotype of ritual behavior in the traditional Ukrainian environment and its structural similarity to ritual actions of the Trypillian era.

In general, it can be said that the ethno-cultural tradition on the territory of Ukraine, in spite of a number of ethnic and cultural changes in the course of millennia, has preserved certain elements of the sacred world of the ancient Trypillians. This can be explained by the fact that traditional religious symbolism and cultic practice of interacting with the sacred sphere are rather conservative phenomena and have the ability to persist and penetrate, so to speak, “through the ages”, despite ethnic changes and significant religious transformations in the course of time.

It should also be noted that the complexity of reconstructing the authentic religious beliefs of the ancient Trypillians and the original, primary meanings embedded in them lies in the fact that the sacred meanings of later successors, and even more so of contemporaries of similar ritual practices, may be somewhat different. They may be forgotten over time, modified, and acquire new essential

loads and meaningful values. The accuracy and authenticity of the reconstruction are significantly influenced by this factor. However, we can sketch the Trypillian ritual practices on a hypothetical level concerning the methods of modern philosophical reflection, including the philosophical methodological approach proposed in the publication.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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