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Eight-membered ornament structures on Trypillia bowls and pots

Abstract. The origin of ornaments and their semantics is a problem that has not been sufficiently examined in modern science. The purpose of the study is to clarify the semantics of Trypillia ceramic ornaments using the structural method. The structures of bowl ornaments that are formed from eight symbols are examined. There are two types (A and B) of symbols in the structure. It is established that four characters A are interspersed with four characters B. The characteristic features of symbol A and symbol B are determined. It is hypothesised that the symbol A stands for gods, and the symbol B – goddesses. Eight-membered structures of ornaments on pots are examined. It is shown that they are also formed from four symbols of gods and four symbols of goddesses. The specifics of the formation of symbols of goddesses are traced. It is presented that in the ornament behind the symbols of the goddesses, in one case, one goddess is hidden in another – the three goddesses. It is believed that one goddess symbolises the Cosmos as a whole or the Moon, and the three goddesses embody the three main spheres of the Cosmos – the underworld, the sphere of life, and the sky or the three phases of the Moon. The study helped to establish the patterns of the formation of ornaments and form a hypothesis, according to which the symbols of ornaments hide the four gods and the four goddesses of Trypillia. Identification of the patterns of formation of Trypillian ornaments can serve as a key for delving into the semantics of ornaments of other archaic cultures and the semantics of traditional folk ornaments, in which the cult of the goddess can be traced

Keywords: semantics of archaic ornaments; structural method of studying ornaments; ornaments of Trypillian ceramics

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INTRODUCTION

Trypillian culture belongs to cultures that have not created their own writing. However, after it, a number of artefacts (mainly ceramic products) remained, which contain symbols and images, often in the form of ornaments. Researchers believe that they encode the spiritual world of ancient people and make great effort to understand this world. Today, no key can be used to get into the meaning of Trypillian symbols, images, and ornaments.

A number of fundamental papers of archaeologists are devoted to the examination of symbols and ornaments of

primitive communities, which include the Trypillian communities. Ukrainian archaeologist T. Tkachuk (2005), who made a substantial contribution to the examination of this symbolism, identified two stages in the history of its research, which differ in the methods used by researchers. In his opinion, during the first stage, the method of retrospective analysis prevailed when researchers moved from "ethnographic and mythological sources to archaeological material". The second stage is characterised by the transition to a semiotic method – the analysis of the symbols themselves.

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The first stage includes the studies of archaeologist M. Gimbutas (2001) and the researcher A. Golan (1994). Despite the shortcomings inherent in the retrospective method, it has achievements that cannot be ignored. The authors argue that archaic symbolism originated in the Paleolithic and flourished in the Neolithic periods. It is believed to reflect the main functions of the goddess, the cult of which prevailed in primitive communities. The researchers emphasise the stability of the original symbolism, its minor transformations during the transition from the Paleolithic to the Neolithic periods. The transition to a sedentary lifestyle was not accompanied by major changes in the structure of the original symbols: "Indeed, what is striking is not the metamorphosis of the symbols over the millennia but rather the continuity from Palaeolithic times on" (Gimbutas, 2001).

A. Golan (1994), as well as M. Gimbutas, believes that the process of forming a complex of archaic symbols took place in ancient Europe and anterior Asia and covered the period from the Upper Paleolithic to the Copper Age. The similarity and stability of archaic symbolism are also emphasised. Unlike M. Gimbutas, the researcher highlights the important role of the male and female gods in this symbolism of dualism. Researchers who have made a substantial contribution to the examination of archaic symbolism through retrospective analysis can be considered the historian B. Ryibakov (1981) and the Ukrainian archaeologist V. Danilenko (1997).

The second stage of the examination of Trypillian symbolism, which is characterised by the use of the semiotic method, includes the studies by T. Tkachuk (2004; 2005) and some of his disciples – D. Pefits (2021), O. Hodenko-Nakonechna (2017). The early stages of the formation of ornaments, based on this method, were examined by Yu.I. Nikishenko and S.Zh. Pustovalov (2012). The method of semiotic analysis overcomes the subjectivism inherent in the retrospective method since it works only with the available empirical material (symbols), which is analysed in various ways, and in this regard, meets all the requirements of scientific knowledge. T. Tkachuk traced some rules for grouping and structuring symbols and analysed statistics on their use. This method identified "several stable ornamental motifs" in Trypillian ornamentation (Hodenko-Nakonechna, 2012). This is its undoubted advantage. However, it also has certain disadvantages. This, in particular, includes the establishment of semantics of symbols. Thus, for example, T. Tkachuk considers the symbol of the crescent moon as the designation of this celestial body and nothing more. It does not follow from the empirical approach that any deity can be hidden behind it. Therefore, the conclusion of O. Hodenko-Nakonechna (2012) is not surprising, according to which, "it is impossible to decipher Trypillian ornaments as specific texts (at least, today). We must perceive them as certain cultural texts that contain certain mythologems – mythological scenarios". It is really impossible to "extract" from the symbols themselves the myth that they denote, without relying on knowledge of the myths of different peoples. Therefore, the retrospective and semiotic analysis methods should be considered not as two stages but as complementary approaches. T. Tkachuk (2004) quite rightly notes that the study using one method does not contradict, but

is supplemented by the study using another method, that "the structural-semiotic method does not contradict other studies on this subject".

A substantial contribution to the examination of the spiritual world of the Trypillian communities, which ultimately influenced the interpretation of symbols, was made by Ukrainian archaeologists M. Videyko (2004), N. Burdo (2008), V. Markevich (1989), in the papers of which, the semantics of individual symbols are traced. The eight-membered structure, which is the subject of the study, was identified by the author on the basis of the achievements of researchers based on the retrospective method and the studies of researchers of folk ornaments. Selivachov (2005) and L. Butkevich (2008). The considered papers largely clarified the spiritual world of Trypillians and helped to explore the semantics of some symbols. However, a number of problems remain unexplored, which predetermined the purpose of this study. In particular, this refers to the semantics of ornaments applied to ceramic products of Trypillians. Ornaments are interesting because they demonstrate a certain structure and order of symbols. Having a structure can serve as a key to understanding their meaning.

Eight-membered structures of bowl ornaments

The subject of the analysis is structures formed from eight elements (symbols) placed on bowls and pots of Trypillia. First, eight-membered ornaments on bowls are analysed, as they are simpler, and after that, more complex ornaments on pots. On a number of ornaments of Trypillia bowls, there are eight elements (symbols) placed in a circular pattern. An example is the bowl ornament in Figure 1, which shows four double wavy lines interspersed with four crescent-shaped arcs.



Figure 1. Bowl from the Maidanetske village
Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

It is necessary to consider the grounds on which a certain set of elements of an ornament can be seen as a structure, and not a random coincidence of elements. The structure, firstly, provides for a *certain amount* of elements, (i.e., the repeatability of a certain number of elements), which is not guaranteed by their random set. In this case, it is referring to ornaments in which eight symbols are repeated. Secondly, the structure must include elements of different quality that are ordered in a certain way. Elements (symbols) of structures from Trypillian bowls are divided into two classes – A and B, with four elements in each class, which are placed in such a way that elements of Class A alternate with elements of Class B. There are simple and complex versions of this structure.

In the first version (Fig. 1) there are four elements A and four B. This is the ABABABAB structure. This option also includes an ornament (Fig. 2). Here, the rays of an oblique cross formed from a group of lines alternate with ovals in which crescent moons are placed in the form of birds. Ornaments of a simple version, which are presented in Figures 1 and 2, are quite rare.



Figure 2. Bowl from Koshelivka village, the second half of 4th millennium BC

Source: V. Mytsyk (2006)

A complex version of an eight-membered structure is characterised by the fact that one of the classes (for example, Class B) is divided into two subclasses – B' and B". It is presented in the ornament of this bowl (Fig. 3). It shows two large deformed ovals with double wavy lines and two small circles with symbols that give the circles a kind of face. Between them are placed four elements of the same size (crescent moons), located near the whisk of the bowl. In this study, we will assymbol these four elements to Class A, the other four to Class B, and assuming that the latter is divided into subclasses – B' and B", each of which has two elements. This structure has the following form: AB'AB"AB'AB".



Figure 3. Bowl from the settlement of Cherkassiv Sad II
Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

The fact that this is referring to dividing one class into two subclasses is evidenced by the ornament of shells (Fig. 4). Here, the eight-membered structure is formed from four small semi-ovals with a dot inside, located near the whisk of the bowl (Class A) and four ovals (Class B), which depict oblique crosses with symbols between the rays. In class B, there is a difference: one pair of oppositely arranged ovals is larger than the other two ovals, and the symbols placed in them are somewhat different. It is important that this structure clearly shows the division of Class B into two subclasses (B' and B"). The fact that these four ovals belong to the same class is indicated by their desymbolation with the same symbols – an oblique cross.



Figure 4. Bowl from Rakovtsi village
Source: V. Mytsyk (2006)

In addition to the established number of elements, the structure assumes a certain order in their arrangement. This order manifests itself in the fact that elements of Class A are interspersed with elements of Class B. If Class B is not divided into subclasses, the order has the form – ABABAB, but when Class B is divided into subclasses, the structure has the form – AB'AB"AB;AB". Another feature of an eight-membered structure is that its elements (symbols) are arranged in a circular pattern, that is, it has a closed character.

It is also important that it was applied to products of the same type (bowls and pots) to determine the totality of these eight elements as a structure, and that the latter belong to the same culture. These factors reduce to zero the possibility of random convergence of elements into such ordered populations. They show that this is a well-established order of elements, that is, a structure. In nature, the structure is based on the law, when it comes to cultural phenomena, which are Trypillian ornaments, an important ideological idea is hidden behind the structure, which stimulated the creators of ornaments to a certain order of elements and the repetition of this order in various manifestations.

Before proceeding to guesses about the idea hidden behind this structure, more variants of the eight-membered structure on the Trypillia bowls will be considered. On the ornament in Figure 5, the main place is occupied by two large ovals, which are crossed by two wavy lines. These wavy lines are one of the essential features of large ovals of this structure. Ovals are marked with concentric arcs at the top and bottom. Between the concentric arches near the whiskers of the bowl, three-membered structures are depicted, consisting of two small ovals adjacent to the whisk and a slightly larger vertical oval between them.

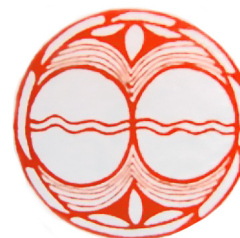


Figure 5. Bowl from Tomashivske village, excavations by P. Kurinny
Source: V. Mytsyk (2006)

Based on the fact that small ovals are the same (class A), it can be assumed that the medium, slightly larger ovals

of these three-membered structures belong to Class B. In this case, this ornament is an eight-membered structure in which ovals are placed according to the AB"AB"AB'AB" variant. The following points are notable: some symbols (elements) of Class B are characterised by the concentricity of arcs of ovals and often double-wavy lines in ovals. The symbol structure shown on the bowl is similar to the one considered (Fig. 6). There are also two large ovals, although the arcs that form them are not closed. In the end, and in Figure 5, they are essentially not closed. It is important that in both cases conditional ovals formed from concentric arcs.



Figure 6. Bowl from Talyankovo, Trypillya stage CI, Cherkasy Regional Museum

Source: V. Mytsyk (2006)

Between them, at the top and bottom, near the whiskers of the bowl, three semi-ovals are depicted. The middle semi-oval is much larger than the other two. Evidently, large ovals and these larger semi-ovals form one four (Class B), and identical smaller semi-ovals – another four (Class A), while Class B is divided into two subclasses. In the bowl ornament (Fig. 7) two large irregular ovals are separated by two slightly smaller ovals. There is also concentricity (it is inherent in half of each of the four ovals) and a double wavy line, like a snake, crossing two large ovals. Somewhat unusual are the four symbols (Class A) that distinguish these four ovals. They are something like a hand with four “fingers”.



Figure 7. A large painted bowl. Tripoli CI. Diameter 29.5 cm. Collection “Platar”

Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

The structure of the bowl ornament is also eight-membered (Fig. 8). Here, Class A is also represented by symbols similar to crescent moons, which are interspersed with two larger and two smaller ovals. Two large ovals are marked with three wavy lines. Slightly different symbols are placed on smaller ovals. They are formed from three lines that have the form of arcs. Apart from this difference, the basic rules of the eight-membered structure are observed.



Figure 8. Conical bowl, height 17 cm. Petrena settlement. Tripoli CI

Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

The repeatability of the structure and the fact that it is reproduced with the help of various elements indicates that it played an important role in the life of Trypillian communities. General assumptions should be made to understand the semantics of this structure. The first assumption is that the symbols of the structure, according to the author, represent deities. The second thing that follows from the first is that two classes of symbols can denote the gender of deities. From the research on the religious worldview of primitive people, it is known that the opposite of the male and female sexes played an important role in the ordering of the world around people. Two types of symbols and their definite opposite (some larger, others smaller) give reason to believe that they denote goddesses and gods, and the structure as a whole conveys two four deities.

It follows from the above that in complex ornaments, belonging to Class A is determined by the relatively smaller size of the symbols, their uniformity, and their location near the whiskers of the bowl. Belonging to Class B is characterised by a larger size of characters, they are usually divided into two subclasses and marked with wavy and concentric lines. This guess is reinforced by the ornaments of these two bowls in Figure 9 (A) and Figure 9 (B). The bowl ornament in Figure 9 (A) is an eight-membered structure. It consists of two large slightly deformed ovals, which are given the appearance of conditional “faces”, one with two “eyes”, the second – with three. These ovals are marked with wavy lines, which are often present on larger ovals. Large ovals are separated by two smaller ones, marked with a straight cross. Between these four ovals, four semi-ovals are placed near the whisk of the bowl. The latter belong to Class A (they are located near the whisk of the bowl, smaller, and identical), and the two larger and two smaller ovals belong to Class B.

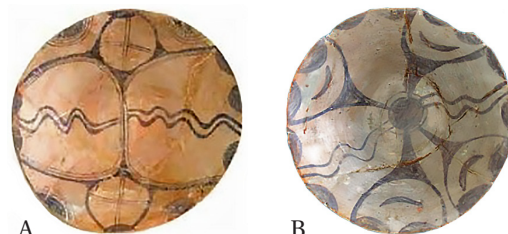


Figure 9. A – Conical bowl, diameter 25.5 cm. Tripoli CI and CII. Collection “Platar”; B – Painted conical bowl, diameter 17 cm. Collection “Platar”

Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

In the bowl ornament displayed on Figure 9 (B), four identical figures have the likeness of a human face with eyes and a mouth resembling a crescent moon. The other three figures are similar to the larger symbols in the ornament of Figure 9 (A). They resemble faces: they have eyes, but no mouths. Two of them also show wavy lines. The fourth figure, according to the author, is a somewhat elongated rhombus. This is indicated by the fact that this figure is marked with the same colour as the others. Since this ornament has a lot in common with eight-membered structures, there is reason to consider it as a variant of this structure with the peculiarity that one of the eight figures is different from the accepted rule. This ornament is interesting because it can be a key to understanding the semantics of the symbolism of an eight-membered structure. The image of “faces” in place of symbols suggests that deities are hidden behind this structure.

This study defines class A and Class B of these figures and their semantics. Class A includes four identical slightly smaller figures located closer to the whisk. This class can be considered male deities. This is evidenced by the crescent moon depicted in place of the mouth. The crescent moon in archaic symbolism appeared as a symbol of god. Ancient people often depicted it as a horn of a bull, which researchers interpret as one of the incarnations of god. This semantics of the crescent moon is also evidenced by the ornament (Fig. 1), in which wavy lines – symbols of goddesses – alternate with crescent-shaped figures, clearly denoting the moon. In Figure 2, the concentric lines of the oblique cross, symbolising Class B, alternate with birds that look like crescent moons – Class A. This reinforces the idea that the figure with the sickle mouth denoted Class A.

Class B includes four rhombus shapes. The rhombus, according to most researchers (Gimbutas, 2001), symbolises the goddess and, consequently, three figures with eyes and no mouths, also symbolise goddesses. An important argument in favour of the proposed identification is also the size of symbols denoting a particular gender. In the era of the dominance of the cult of the goddess, the symbols used to denote goddesses were supposed to be larger than the symbols of the gods. In all the drawings considered with complex ornaments, Class A symbols are substantially smaller than Class B symbols. Despite all the hypotheticalism of this interpretation of symbols, notably, it is based on certain patterns and is open to both confirmations and objections in further research. The eight-membered structures under consideration can serve as a key to analysing the somewhat unusual ornament on the bowl in Figure 10.



Figure 10. A bowl from the village Kryvi Kolina (Talmivshchyna). Excavations of M. Shmaglii

Source: V. Mytsyk (2006)

This ornament is also an eight-membered structure. Four identical elements that were identified as symbols of the male gods are absent here. However, there is repetition and differentiation of elements, there is a difference between larger and smaller ones. It is these factors that allow assymboling four larger elements (two conventional “half-suns” with rays and two curls with concentric lines) to Class B, and four smaller ones (two dark half-suns adjacent to the whisks and two balls connected by a shape similar to the letter S) to Class A, that is, symbols of male gods. (Class A is also divided into two subclasses here, which is rare.) This ornament is important because it gives a reason to identify swirls with concentric lines as symbols of goddesses. The fact is that the ornament with two curls (Fig. 11) often present on Trypillia bowls. Now there is reason to consider it as an image of two goddesses. This example shows the fruitfulness of the method for determining the semantics of symbols through structures. With its help, it is determined that the symbols of two curls denote female deities.



Figure 11. Painted conical bowl, diameter 6 cm.

Settlements Kolomiyschyna I. Trypillya CII

Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

Four- and six-membered structures of ornaments on bowls

In addition to the eight-membered structures in the ornaments in Trypillian bowls, there are also four-membered structures that were formed from eight-membered structures due to the release of symbols of the male gods. An example of such a structure can be considered an ornament from the bowl of Figure 12.



Figure 12. Large bowl, diameter 32 cm.

Collection “Platar”

Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

Here, two large ovals with wavy lines are interspersed with two small ovals depicting small trees. Both ovals are formed from concentric arcs. They are quite similar to Class B symbols from eight-membered structures. However, there are no characters between them that can be

assymboled to Class A. Therefore, it can be assumed that the four-membered structure originated from the eight-membered structure as a result of the release of symbols of the male gods. It can also serve as an argument in favour of identifying Class B symbols as denomination for goddesses. In the era of the domination of the cult of the Goddess, it is quite natural to form an ornament from the symbols of some goddesses. The four-membered structure is also this ornament on the bowl from Maydanetske (Fig. 13).



Figure 13. Bowl, Maydanetske village

Source: V. Mytsyk (2006)

Here, each of the four symbols is formed from three wavy lines. These wavy lines are similar to those in Class B figures. The four goddesses are also indicated by these four trees from the bowl of Figure 14 (A). In turn, on this spinning wheel (Fig. 14 (B)), the four trees symbolise goddesses, and the four little animals symbolise gods. This is an eight-membered structure. The definition of trees as symbols of goddesses is enhanced by the fact that the bowl (Fig. 14 (A)) only trees are depicted.

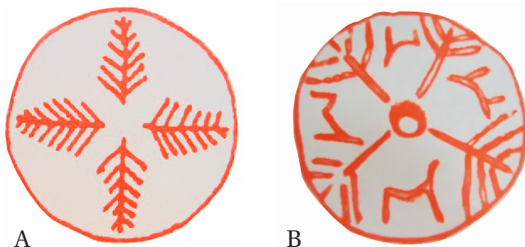


Figure 14. A – Bowl, Chichirkozivka village;
B – Spindle, Pavoloch village

Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

The four goddesses can also be seen on the bowl ornament in Figure 15. Two goddesses are represented by ovals, and the other two are represented by eight stripes each. (The figure eight is a symbol of the Goddess. This can be seen in Figure 4, which shows figure eight in large ovals – symbols of goddesses – four rays of an oblique cross – symbols of goddesses and four symbols between them – symbols of gods).

In Figure 15, stripes with multiple lines (symbols of the goddess) are interspersed with hollow stripes (symbols of the gods). From the fact that the eight is a symbol of the goddess, it also follows that the bowl itself, which depicts an eight-membered structure, according to the beliefs of the Trypillians, embodied the goddess, was a kind of image of the goddess. Ornaments with a sixteen-membered structure also originate from the eight-membered structure (Fig. 16).



Figure 15. Conical bowl, height 7 cm. Tripoli Cl.
Collection “Platar”

Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)



Figure 16. Bowl with a painted composition of ovals
Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

Thus, in this bowl, the ornament consists of four large ovals with wavy lines and four smaller ovals. They are located closer to the centre. Near the whisk there are eight small half-ovals, which are interspersed with eight ovals. Thus, two goddesses are transmitted, each of which is represented by eight symbols. A structure of two goddesses, often present in archaic symbolism. It is, in particular, shown in Figure 12. Most often, the two goddesses, as will be shown later, could be the goddess of the Cosmos (the goddess who embodied the world as a whole) and her daughter – the goddess of the sphere of life.

“Combination” of deities and an eight-membered structure

The considered ornaments, in which two classes of deities are distinguished, can help to understand ornaments in which there is a grouping of pairs of male and female deities. This “combination” can be seen on the bowl ornament of Figure 17.



Figure 17. Bowl, height 9 cm. Collection “Platar”
Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

Here, oblique arcs divide the ornament into four segments, each of which shows two ovals: one with a wavy line

is larger (a symbol of the goddess), and the second (closer to the whisk) is smaller. This is the same eight-membered structure, only in it pairs of deities of different sexes are separated by arcs.



Figure 18. Bowl, Grebenyukiv yar. Stage A.
Excavation of M. Shmaglii

Source: V. Mytsyk (2006)

The “combination” motif is also present on the bowl ornament (Fig. 18.) a four-membered structure in the form of a swastika is depicted around the bottom. Its four curls (volute) are directed upwards to the whisk of the bowl. From the whisk, similar curls are directed downwards, which are interspersed with swastika curls. thus, an eight-membered structure was formed. The fact that this structure symbolises deities is evidenced by small ovals depicted at the base of each curl. It is the ovals at the base of the curls that give reason to see deities in them. Ovals and circles played a substantial role in the Trypillia symbol system. Analysing the early symbol systems of this culture, M. Videyko (2004) notes that “the circle symbol...is one of two to four nodal elements on pots, vases, fruit bowls, and pear-shaped vessels”. Based on previous ornaments, in which the upper ovals were male (this is evidenced by the following Fig. 19), it is possible to identify swastika ovals as female and whisk ovals as male symbols.



Figure 19. Pots, Grenivka. Stage A

Source: V. Mytsyk (2006)

A similar ornament is present on a pot from the same area (Fig. 19). Unlike the previous one, here, the swirls from the swastika and from the crown of the pot are intertwined and form joint circles. The curls extending from the bottom symbolise goddesses. They are based on three symbols that convey the cycle of the Moon – two months-sickles and a circle. This three symbols, as will be shown later, denotes the goddess Moon. Evidently, that the upper curls, which are based on a circle and one crescent moon, symbolise the gods. Notably, the curls of god and goddess form a common circle. It probably symbolises a “married” couple.

Eight-membered structures of pot ornaments

Eight-membered ornamental structures are also present on Trypillia pots. Based on the results of the analysis of structures on bowls, similar ornaments on pots will be considered. Symbols of ornaments with an eight-membered structure are arranged on pots in a circle, which is related to the ornaments of bowls. However, the ornaments of pots are somewhat different from those of bowls. In them, one of the subclasses of goddesses (subclass B') is passed by one character, the other (subclass B'') – by a group of three characters (less often – seven).

These three (or seven) characters were placed vertically on the pot. They, according to the author's hypothesis, transmitted three or seven spheres of the cosmos. Trypillians considered pots to be models of the cosmos and often conveyed their spheres with ornaments. According to the author's hypothesis, the Trypillians identified the Goddess and the cosmos like most Paleolithic and Neolithic peoples. Just as the cosmos was later modelled on a tree, the Trypillians and their predecessors modelled it on the body of a goddess. They divided the Cosmos and the body of the Goddess into seven spheres (hereinafter sph – sphere): 1 sph – underground waters (feet of the Goddess); 2 sph – underworlds (buttocks and vulva); 3 sph – surface of the Earth, mountains (belt of the Goddess); 4 sph – sphere of life (belly and chest of the Goddess); 5 sph – sky (neck of the Goddess); 6 sph – sphere of the seven planets (head and eyes of the Goddess); 7 sph – starry sky (skull and braids of the Goddess). The paired spheres (underworlds, the sphere of life, and the heavens, or the planet seven) were female (basic), while the other spheres were male gods (non-basic). The latter could be released and the cosmos and the Goddess took the form of three-membered spheres. The seven spheres of the cosmos are recorded by ethnographers among pre-civilised peoples. Thus, M. Eliade (2000), analysing the world structure of the Siberian peoples, who, in his opinion, preserved the oldest ideas about the world, notes: “Among the Siberian Tatars, the World Mountain has seven tiers, the Yakut shaman in his mystical journey climbs a seven-tiered mountain”. The convergence of the Cosmos and the Goddess also explains the anthropologism of a number of Trypillian pots, which is marked by V. Markevich (1989). The pot symbolised both the Cosmos and the Goddess.

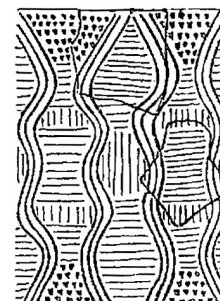


Figure 20. Ornamental composition on a clay vessel of Bugo-Dniester culture

Source: V. Danilenko (1997)

The vertical three -and seven-membered structure can be seen on the ornament of this pot from the

Bugo-Dniester culture (Fig. 20), which preceded the Trypillian culture. Horizontally, there are four conventional female figures interspersed with four threes of wavy lines. This is a typical eight-membered structure. The logic of this structure suggests that these four figures represent goddesses, and the wavy lines represent male deities. Vertically, the shapes are marked with groups of symbols. Two are marked with seven groups of symbols, and three are shown as groups of horizontal lines. These seven groups clearly convey a seven-membered Cosmos in which three female spheres (the underworld, the sphere of life, and the heavens) are marked with horizontal lines. The other two goddesses are marked with three groups of symbols: the upper and lower (conditional heavens and underworlds) are marked with horizontal lines, and the middle (sphere of life) is marked with vertical lines. Thus, vertically, goddesses could be transmitted by both seven-membered and three-membered structures. Notably, the symbols of the Bugo-Dniester culture are quite different from the Trypillian one, but the structures by which the groups of symbols are ordered are the same.

An example of seven-membered modelling of Cosmos by Trypillians is this ornament on a pot from Maydanetske (Fig. 21). Here, the lower narrow empty band is 1 sph; the wider one above is 2 sph; the narrow one, in the form of a horizontal “ladder”, is 3 sph. The tree stripe (sphere of life) is 4 sph; the “ladder” above is 5 sph; the wide empty stripe is 6 sph; and the black line above is 7 sph (Prychepii, 2018).

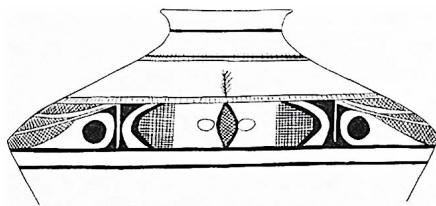


Figure 21. Pot, Maydanetske

Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

Thus, the Goddess representing the Cosmos could be divided into three vertically arranged spheres, behind which the three goddesses were hidden, and it can be assumed that this particular Trinity is hidden behind three vertical symbols of one of the subclasses of goddesses on eight-membered circular ornaments of pots. Based on this hypothesis, the consideration of these ornaments will be continued. In the schematic image of the pot ornament from Tomashivka (Fig. 22), four symbols (“ladders”) are interspersed with four “pictures”, two of which show trees, and the other two show three arcs.

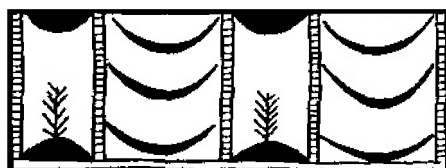


Figure 22. Pot ornament, Tomashivka

Source: Eneolit SSSR (1982)

Symbols are placed according to the rules of an eight-membered structure. The external analysis suggests that the “ladders” belong to Class A: they are the same, and in size they are substantially inferior to the “pictures”. “Pictures” symbolise Class B – they are larger than “ladders” and two of them differ from the other two, which also corresponds to the characteristics of symbols of Class B. (An additional argument that increases confidence in the correctness of such identification of “ladders” as symbols of male gods is that in the seven-membered structure of the spheres of the cosmos (Fig. 22) two narrow spheres (3 and 5 sph) identified as male are marked with “ladders”. In addition, the tree depicted in two “pictures” is usually identified as a symbol of the goddess. The second “picture” shows three arcs, assumably symbolising the three spheres of the Cosmos (the underworld, the sphere of life, and the heavens) and their goddesses. In general, there is every reason to consider this ornament as an eight-membered structure, similar to the structures on the bowls. In it, some four elements (symbols) convey male gods, and the other four – goddesses. The structure of the pot is also eight-membered (Fig. 23). Here, the “picture”, which shows an ornament in the form of a grid, alternates with the metope in which the head is placed.



Figure 23. Spherical vessel with handles in the form of disc-shaped heads, height 13 cm. Settlement Zwicklivka. Tripoli CII

Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

The metope and grid are separated by three vertical lines, which are similar to the “ladders” of the previous ornament. By analogy with the previous drawing, the grid and metope with the head can be interpreted as symbols of goddesses, and the three lines can be interpreted as symbols of gods. An additional argument for this interpretation is that the grid is considered to be a symbol of the goddess by researchers, in particular M. Gimbutas (2001). The meaning of the three vertical lines as symbols of the Gods is rather situational. This is not a common symbol, this meaning follows from their place in the structure. The division of goddesses into two subclasses is presented quite clearly. One subclass is symbolised by two grids, the other – by two heads (the head is a symbol of the goddess).

The structure of this ornament of the vessel from Vladimirovka can also be interpreted as eight-membered (Fig. 24). Here, “pictures” with a multiplicity of vertical lines (the multiplicity of lines and the concentricity of arcs in an oval is a symbol of the goddess) alternate with

“pictures” that depict a vertical three-membered structure. In the latter, two conditional “eyes” are interspersed with a set of lines.



Figure 24. Painted cup, height 12.5 cm.
Settlement Vladimirovka. Tripoli BII

Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

These “images” are delimited by a black vertical line. Evidently, these four single lines symbolise the gods (the situational meaning that follows from the place in the structure), and the images themselves symbolise the goddesses. The subclass of goddesses formed from a three-membered vertical structure is considered in more detailed below. It symbolises the goddess since it takes its place in a circular eight-membered structure. This three-membered structure conveys the goddess, who is divided into three female spheres of the cosmos – 2 sph (underworld), 4 sph (sphere of life), and 6 sph (heaven, seven planets). Since the heavens correlate with the eyes of the Goddess, they could be referred to as the “eye”. The correlation between the spheres of Cosmos and the body of the Goddess is manifested in the fact that the corresponding spheres of Cosmos could be indicated on the body of the Goddess and, conversely, on models of Cosmos (pots and other objects) could depict the vulva and eyes – parts of the body of the Goddess.

The fact that the underworld is also marked with the “eye” is due to the symmetry of these spheres. In a reduced structure in bowls (Fig. 3-8), the goddesses of the heavens and the underworlds were located opposite each other and were depicted with the same symbols. The other pair was formed by the Great Goddess (in Fig. 26 she is represented by a set of lines forming a separate picture) and the goddess of the sphere of life, depicted by a set of lines between conventional “eyes”. Their characters are also the same. A similar ornament from the same area is shown on the vessel (Fig. 25) also clearly traces four symbols of goddesses: two three-membered structures and two conditional “faces” (they are in an oval – the symbol of goddesses). The symbols of the gods are clearly released.

Three-term structures are formed from two identical symbols, which, according to the hypothesis of the three-term Cosmos, are depicted in the spheres of the underworld (below) and the sky (above). Their semantics are difficult to establish. The advantage of the structural method is that without knowing what exactly a particular symbol

means, predicting what it might mean in general is possible. In this case, this refers to symbols that relate to the underworld and the heavens of the cosmos and the buttocks (vulva) and head (eyes) of the Goddess. As for the middle symbol – the multiplicity of lines depicted between them, it is the same as in the ornament of Figure 24.



Figure 25. Amphora, height 7 cm. Settlement Vladimirovka. Tripoli BII

Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

It is possible that the symbols in the oval also form a three. Here, conditional eyes (the symbol of heaven), a bundle of horizontal lines, and an empty space below are placed vertically. Since the two higher symbols are clearly identified as the heavens and the sphere of life, it should be assumed that the corresponding meaning was attached to empty space. The ornament of a pot from Tomashivka, (Fig. 26) as on the pot (Fig. 25) shows two “faces” and two “pictures” with a three-membered structure. The symbols of the gods are clearly released. In the “pictures”, the idea of the identity of the Goddess and the Cosmos can be traced.



Figure 26. Biconic amphora, height 17 cm.
Tomashivka settlement. Tripoli CI

Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

Here at the top (in place of the conventional sky), two eyes are depicted, and something similar to the nose or beak of a bird between them, which gives reason to identify them as the head of the goddess, that is, the sky. The bundle of slanting lines below symbolises the sphere of life, and the drawing below clearly conveys the

underworld. It, as already noted, correlated with the seven celestial spheres-planets. Therefore, there should have been seven spheres of the underworld. It should be assumed that the arcs at the bottom symbolise the spheres of the underworld. Notably, here the heavens and underworlds are depicted with different symbols.

Of particular interest in this ornament is the symbolism, which was conventionally called “face”. On the previous ornament the probable three symbols “face” are located vertically (they convey three female spheres of Cosmos), here the three symbols are located horizontally. These symbols are the conditional nose and eyes, which are placed in the centre, and two semicircles shaded by a grid, which are placed on both sides of the periphery. Shaded semi-ovals deserve special attention. There is reason to believe that they transmit two crescents – half of the new moon and half of the waning one. These crescents in the symbolism of the Trypillians appeared as symbols of goddesses. They divided the moon’s cycle into seven phases, which were represented by the four gods and the three goddesses. They can be seen on the ornament of a pot from Maidanetske (Fig. 21). Here, on the 2nd sph (wide band, second from the bottom), a symmetrical seven-membered structure formed from two crescent moons (at the edges at both ends of the structure) is shown in the metope. These are the new moon and the old moon – symbols of the gods. Closer to the middle, both sides of the contained semicircles are marked with a grid (the grid is a symbol of the Goddess). They convey the halves of the young and waning moons, symbolising the goddesses. Even closer to the centre, two small circles are shown on a white background. The circle symbolises the gods, its small size and place in the structure indicate that it is a desymbolation of male gods. They alternate between the full moon goddess and the crescent goddesses. The “lens” in the center, marked with a grid, symbolises the Goddess of the full moon. (The moon cycle was placed in 2 sph because it was the sphere of the Goddess’ vulva, whose cycle coincided with that of the Moon).

It can be concluded that the lattice semicircles of the ornament of Figure 27 symbolise goddesses. The goddess is also symbolised by the central Figure of the “face” – an ear on a pot. The ear in this and other ornaments can be identified as a goddess on the grounds that the Cosmos between the ear and the pot has the appearance of an oval – the most common symbol used to denote deities. These three on the ornament – an oval in the centre and two semicircles on the sides can be considered a desymbolation of the lunar cycle. This is the seven of the month without the four symbols of the gods. The fact that the Moon is transmitted this way is also indicated by rays directed from the “face” (Moon) to the bottom. In this ornament, the three horizontally placed goddesses, symbolising the phases of the Moon, replace the three vertically placed goddesses, which in other ornaments symbolised the spheres of the Cosmos. This clearly indicates the special closeness of the Cosmos goddess and the Moon Goddess. The latter could be a hypostasis of the former, or it could be the same Goddess. Since the physiological cycle of a woman coincided with the cycle of the moon, this luminary could appear as the main incarnation of the Goddess.



Figure 27. Painted vessel, height 7.5 cm.

Maydanetske settlement. Tripoli CI

Source: Encyclopaedia of Trypillian civilisation (2004)

The interpretation of the previous ornament is enhanced by the ornament of the Maydanetske vessel (Fig. 21). The ornament is formed from a four-membered structure, the symbols of the gods are released. Here, as in the ornament, in Figure 26, the three symbols (grids) denoting the Moon Goddess are arranged horizontally. Notably, a separate Goddess is depicted in the form of a grid. The ornament symbolises that the Cosmos Goddess (a separate grid) is identical to the Moon Goddess.

From the interpretation of Trypillian ornaments on bowls and pots, it follows that the eight deities occupied a special place in their worldview. Figures from sanctuary models also testify to the eight deities in Neolithic cultures. Thus, in the model of the sanctuary from Zarkou (Neolithic, Thessaly, Greece), eight figures were placed. M. Gimbutas (2001) notes that the model consisted of two rooms that housed eight figurines. In this regard, the author writes: “The largest figurine occupied the left room together with a smaller schematised figurine, six were placed in the second room around the oven. The sizes and placement of the figurines suggest a hierarchical order”.

Some idea of these figures is also given by the symbols that are placed on them. The author notes that “the largest figurine in the left room of the shrine (probably the main Goddess) was carefully marked with three lines between the breasts and over the cheeks and with a chevron on the back. Three other, somewhat smaller, figurines (lower in hierarchy?) were similarly marked. The remaining were poorly preserved but clearly belong to the same category” (Gimbutas, 2001). It is clear that the four poorly preserved figures embodied male deities. The reason for this preservation of the figures of the gods was evidently their less thorough formation, which reflected their status in comparison with the goddesses. It should be assumed that the larger figure represented the Great Goddess, The Mother Goddess (The Goddess of the Cosmos or the Moon), without which the eight became the seven – three goddesses and the four gods.

CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis of the symbols of the eight-membered structures of ornaments of Trypillian bowls and pots, it can be concluded that they hide the four Goddesses, which are divided into two classes (B’ and B”) and the four gods (Class A). The latter were indicated by the same symbols. On the bowls, the symbols of the goddesses were much larger in size and placed closer to the bottom of the bowls,

while the symbols of the gods were smaller and placed closer to the whisks. An eight-membered structure could transform into a four-membered structure when symbols of the male gods were released with it. It could also become hexadecimal when the eight deities were doubled. The eight-membered structure is also present on Trypillia pots. In this case, the symbols of the goddesses (B' and B") were often divided into a three-membered structure, which could hide the three "female" spheres of the Cosmos (underworlds, sphere of life, and heaven) or the three "female" phases of the Moon Goddess. From the study, it follows that the eight deities formed the main pantheon of Trypillian communities.

The proposed structural method is interesting because it allows considering symbols and ornaments as

an integral system (a kind of language), built according to certain rules. It allowed getting into the semantics of a number of symbols, which the authors could not achieve using other methods. The author is aware that the arguments expressed here are hypothetical in nature. In addition, using the structural method, the author managed to delve into the semantics of only some ornaments. Despite such limitations, this method can be fruitful in further research on archaic symbolism and ornaments.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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Восьмичленні структури орнаментів на мисках та горщиках Трипілля

Анотація. Походження орнаментів і їх семантика є проблемою, що недостатньо досліджена в сучасній науці. Метою статті є з'ясування семантики орнаментів кераміки Трипілля за допомогою структурного методу. Досліджено структури орнаментів мисок які сформовані з восьми символів. Виділено два типи (А і В) символів у структурі. Встановлено, що чотири символи А перемежуються чотирма символами В. Визначено характерні риси символу А і символу В. Висловлено гіпотезу, згідно з якою символ А позначає богів, а символ В – богинь. Досліджено восьмичленні структури орнаментів на горщиках. Показано, що вони також утворені з чотирьох символів богів і чотирьох символів богинь. Простежено специфіку утворення символів богинь. Показано, що в орнаменті за символами богинь в одному випадку приховується одна богиня в іншому – трійка богинь. Висловлено гадку, що одна богиня символізує Космос в цілому або Місяць, а трійка богинь втілює три основні сфери Космосу – підземелля, сферу життя і небеса або три фази Місяця. Дослідження допомогло встановити закономірності формування орнаментів і сформувати гіпотезу, згідно з якою за символами орнаментів приховується четвірка богів і четвірка богинь трипільців. Розкриття закономірностей формування трипільських орнаментів може служити ключем для проникнення в семантику орнаментів інших архаїчних культур, а також в семантику традиційних народних орнаментів, у яких простежується культ богині

Ключові слова: семантика архаїчних орнаментів; структурний метод дослідження орнаментів; орнаменти трипільської кераміки