

**Olha Konovalova**

# Formation of Female Deity Archetype in Arts and Crafts of Ukraine

*The article investigates the origins and analyses the semantics of the sacred female figure of a woman-goddess in the context of arts and crafts of archaic cultures in Ukraine. The connection between the religious beliefs and images of stylized female figures on the pottery of the Cucuteni-Trypillian culture and in the toreutics of Scythia.*

**Key words:** arts and crafts, Cucuteni-Trypillia, Scythia, ornaments, archetype, image of woman.

**Кошовалова О.В.**

**Формування архетипу жіночого божества у декоративно-прикладному мистецтві України**

*У статті з'ясовуються витоки та аналізується семантика сакральної фігури жінки-богині у декоративно-прикладному мистецтві архайчних культур на теренах України. Досліджується зв'язок релігійних вірувань із зображеннями стилізованих жіночих фігур на керамічних виробках культури Трипілля-Кукутені та у торевтиці Скіфії.*

**Ключові слова:** декоративно-прикладне мистецтво, Трипілля-Кукутені, Скіфія, орнамента, архетип, образ жінки.

**Кошовалова О.В.**

**Формирование архетипа женского божества в декоративно-прикладном искусстве Украины**

*В статье определяются истоки и анализируется семантика сакральной фигуры женщины-богини в декоративно-прикладном искусстве архаических культур на территории Украины. Исследуется связь религиозных верований с изображениями стилизованных женских фигур на керамических изделиях культуры Триполья-Кукутени и в торевтике Скифии.*

**Ключевые слова:** декоративно-прикладное искусство, Триполье-Кукутень, Скифия, орнамента, архетип, образ женщины.

For thousands of years the culture of the peoples that inhabited the territory of Ukraine, have been giving the dominant position to the image of a woman. Female figure in the decoration of sacred artifacts is an important proof of the existence of religious consciousness and philosophical principles that continue to exist in the modern national spiritual space. Euculation of the sacred feminine deity image origins gives the opportunity not only to identify the particular worldview of the archaic societies on the territory of Ukraine, but also to identify the importance of a woman image in the process of shaping the national consciousness in modern times.

Domestic and foreign scientists have thoroughly examined the iconography and semantics of anthropomorphic feminine images in the arts and crafts [1; 4; 5; 6].

According to the conclusions of the Ukrainian researcher T. Movsha, the oldest images of stylized

female figures come from ornamentation of Trypillian pottery from Romanian settlements in Moldova (about 3300 BC). Those innovations were spread on the territory of Ukraine around 2700 BC [9, 46]. Gimbutas M. marked the emergence of female figure ornament on the pottery in 3500 BC [5, 118]. In the study of the Chalcolithic monuments on the territory of Ukraine the spreading of anthropomorphic images is dated to 3000–2500 BC [11, 250].

Currently there is no study that investigates a woman's image in time and space as a single process that reflects the changes in the worldview of archaic cultures of Ukraine. Consideration of this issue will give the opportunity to come closer to solving the urgent problem of our time — the connection of contemporary folk ornaments with ancient motifs. Often, some researchers associate the anthropomorphic images in embroidery of the nineteenth and twentieth

centuries with the goddesses of the Scythian pantheon, or Trypillian ornaments. Therefore, I. Kodlubay believes that the image of the Scythian goddess of fertility Arhimpasa still exists in folk art: “such motive is still remained in Ukrainian embroidery — the stylized figure of a woman with a pair of deer or horses on both sides” [8, 115]. Kytova S. claims that the Middle Dnieper embroidery of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries “copies the Upper Paleolithic cave drawings of ‘conifer trees’. These ‘trees’ on the embroideries are often decorated with cruciform shapes, similar to solar Trypillia signs” [7, 93]. Unreasonable analogies give the real impetus to the young researchers to easily manipulate the epochs and create new mythologies.

The main **objective** of the article is to identify the continuity of semantic characteristics of the female deity archetype in arts and crafts of Trypillian and Scythian cultures in Ukraine.

The above-mentioned objective requires the solution of the following tasks, including the clarification of the female figure appearance in the decoration of ceramics and toreutics of the aforementioned cultures and the identification of their common semantic sense.

The relief images of nude female figures that turned their faces to the surface of the dishes and seem to be holding them appear on the Trypillian crockery of the early third millennium BC (Trusheshty, Moldova). Another variant is stylized figures that support the cup's bottom (Luka-Vrublevetska, Ukraine). However, the figures painted on the surface of the pottery, with few exceptions, are all dressed up. The figures created with two triangles are perceived by researchers as women in loose bell-shaped skirts. This styling can be explained by the properties of materials and technology features: the size of ceramic products did not allow detailing the elements of ornaments. Bitriangle figures are found in the ornamentation of Trypillian pottery on the territory of the Middle Dnieper — Kyiv and Cherkasy regions (Trypillia, Hrebieni, Maydanetske), on the Upper Dniester and Popruttyi — Chernivtsi region (Koshylovtsi-Oboz), Khmelnytskyi region (Zhvanets), Ternopil region (Biltshe Zolote). The main idea of the researchers on female image semantics interpretation is surely based on the dominance of fertility cult in Trypillian community and its expression in various ritual practices [3; 5; 6].

After the disappearance of Trypillian community the image of a woman in the ornamentation of applied art products appear almost in two millennia in Scythian era. Such a long pause is associated with the long ethnic processes on the territory of Ukrainian forest-steppe. Ethnic groups that moved across the southern part

of Ukraine left no artifacts with anthropomorphic images for their descendants. This indicates a lack of stable state structures and relevant worldviews. Pagan pantheon of Scythia, independent and powerful state in VII–III centuries BC, found its reflection in the arts and crafts, particularly in toreutics and plastics of the late 5–4 centuries BC.

The researcher of Scythian culture M. Artamonov assumed that the female deities of the Scythian pantheon (Tabiti, Api and Arhimpasa) reflected the incarnations of the ancient goddess that embodied the “cult of ancestors and the heartside as well as the idea of life and fertility” [2, 7].

Tabiti is regarded by researchers as a female deity of the heartside. In researches of D. Rajewsky Tabiti acquires the broader interpretation — as a deity of fire in all forms: domestic and sacred [10, 123]. The image of the goddess is also associated with the institute of imperial power, as reflected in the scenes of “the transfer of power”, “sacred marriage”, which depict the goddess with a man holding the rhyton in his hands. The said composition is found on gold plaques from Melitopol Mound (4<sup>th</sup> century BC), Chortomlyk Mound (4<sup>th</sup> century BC) and Kul-Oba Mound near Kerch (4<sup>th</sup> century BC).

The goddess Arhimpasa is associated with the middle zone of the space and reflects the richness of the material world. The image of fertility goddess appeared in Scythian toreutics surrounded by two sphinxes, like on both gold earrings from the mound in Velyka Znamyanka village (4<sup>th</sup> century BC).

The most difficult, according to the semantics, is the image of the goddess Api, half-woman and half-snake (the name “Api” comes from the Iranian root meaning “water”). The researchers suggest that the Scythian goddess represented three vertical zones of the world by her forms: heavenly — wings, earth — the human body and underground — vegetable shoots, snake or fish tails. This image was found on a golden horse headband from the mound of Velyka Tsybalka (4<sup>th</sup> century BC) and on a silver platter from the mound Chortomlyk (4<sup>th</sup> century BC). Scythian mythical creature has certain similarities with the Trypillian “mermaid”, but there is a great temporal distance between the images — about two thousand years, these are different worldview systems and artistic languages. However, the overall idea of the deity of the lower world, associated with the waters, as Borisfen (Dniipro) has been a powerful source of life of all ancient civilizations, is the same.

The **findings** of the investigation are the following:

Femine images appear in the ornamentation of ceramics of Cucuteni-Trypillia in Ukraine

in the Upper Dniester and Pobuzhia in the early third millennium BC. The symbolism of these images reflects the traditional understanding of the neolithic goddess of fertility.

The culture of Trypillian community ceased to exist due to the complex processes of ethnic assimilation. The Chalcolithic community with the cult of the Great Goddess was forced out of this territory by warlike tribes from the east with the Indo-European pantheon of deities. Artistic features of the ornamentation remained in a cultural layer and found no further development. But generalized image of a woman — the Great

Goddess was the new embodiment of the Scythian era dated to 5–4 centuries BC. The local, autochthonous notions of a power and authority of the Trypillian community were united with the idea of the Scythian pantheon of goddesses, who in a female incarnations of the snake, the goddess of fertility and sacred fire, formed the idea of a complex three-dimensional worldcommunity with the great pause in time.

Thus, the analysis of the female images in the ornamentation of archaic cultures of Ukraine suggests the lack of the iconographic continuity in shaping the archetype of the female divinity.

## REFERENCES

1. Ambroz A.K. O simvolike russkoi krestianskoi vyshivki arkhaicheskogo tipa / A.K. Ambroz // *Sovetskaia arkhologia*. — 1966. — № 1. — S. 61–77.
2. Artamonov M.I. Antropomorfnye bozhestva v religii skifov / M.I. Artamonov // *Arkheologicheskii sbornik Gosudarstvennogo Ermitazha*. — 1961. — Vyp. 2. — S. 57–87.
3. Burdo N. Sakralnyi svit trypils'koi tsyvilizatsii / Nataliia Burdo. — K. : Nash chas, 2008. — 296 s.
4. Gorodtsov V.A. Dako-sarmatskie religioznye ehlementy v russkom narodnom tvorchestve / V.A. Gorodtsov // *Trudy Gos. Istor. Muzeia*. — M., 1926. — Vyp. 1. — S. 7–36.
5. Gimbutas M. Tsivilizatsiia Velikoi Bogini: Mir Drevnei Evropy / Mariia Gimbutas. — M. : ROSSPEN, 2006. — 483 s.
6. Gimbutas M. The Language of the Goddess / M. Gimbutas. — San Francisco, 1991. — 529 p.
7. Kytova S.A. Polotnianyi litopys Ukrainy / S.A. Kytova. — Cherkasy : Brama, 1999. — 190 s.
8. Kodlubai I. Vidobrazhennia skifskoho svitohliadu u mystetstvi VII–VIII st. do n.e. na terytorii Ukrainy / I. Kodlubai // *Narodoznavchi zoshyty*. — Lviv : Instytut narodoznavstva NANU, 2005. — № 1–2. — S. 112–125.
9. Movsha T.G. Antropomorfnye siuzhety na keramike kultur tripolsko-kukutenskoi obshchnosti / T.G. Movsha // *Duhovnaia kultura drevnikh obshchestv na territorii Ukrainy : [sb. nauchn. trudov / In-t arkhologii an USSR ; otv. red. F. Gening]*. — K. : Nauk. dumka, 1991. — S. 34–47.
10. Raievskii D.S. Model mira skifskoi kultury / D.S. Raievskii. — M. : Nauka, 1985. — 256 s.
11. Eneolit / [red. V.M. Masson, N.Ya. Merpet]. — M. : Nauka, 1982. — 359 s.