



The Trypillian Culture in Ukraine

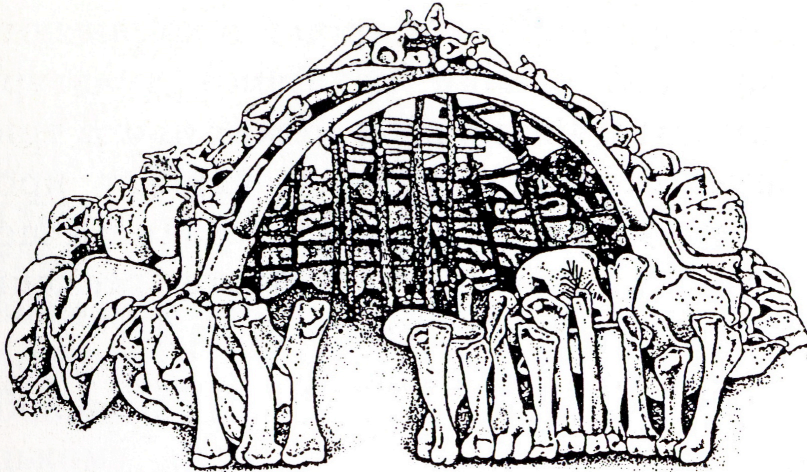
5250-2750 BC



The Trypillian Culture in Ukraine

Humans first inhabited the land that is now Ukraine 150,000 years ago. These first people were primitive early humans, the Neanderthals.

About 40,000 years ago, during the Ice Ages, they were replaced by Cro-Magnons, who hunted mammoths and other wild animals. They lived in caves and homes made of hides and bones, and made tools and weapons from stones like flint. They made clothes from leather and fibers, and gathered plants for food. These people moved often, following the animals they hunted.

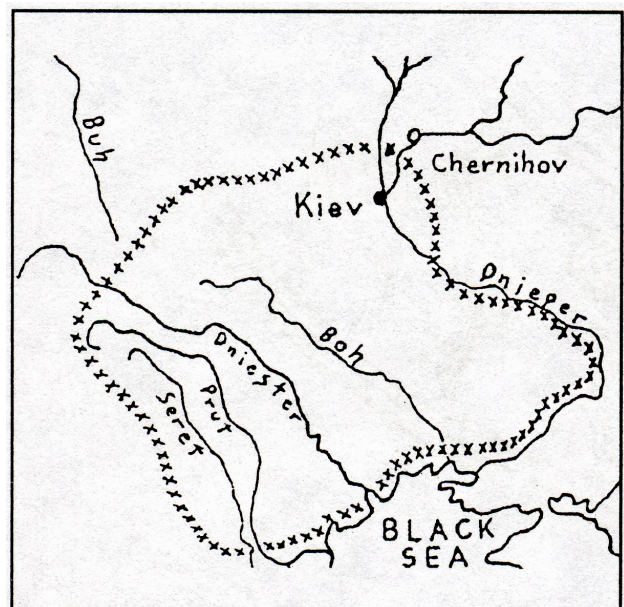


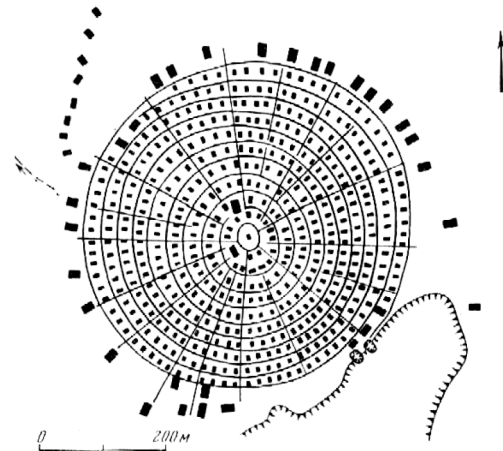
Everything began to change about 7000 years ago, when people began farming. They began settling down and forming small communities. Over time, these small settlements grew and became towns, the first civilization in Ukraine. It is known as the Trypillian culture, after the town where the first archeological excavations were made (Trypillia, near Kyiv.)

Settlements

The first settlements were in the area between the Buh and Dniester rivers, but, over the next three thousand years, spread to the Danube and Dnipro, over areas of modern Ukraine, Moldova and Rumania.

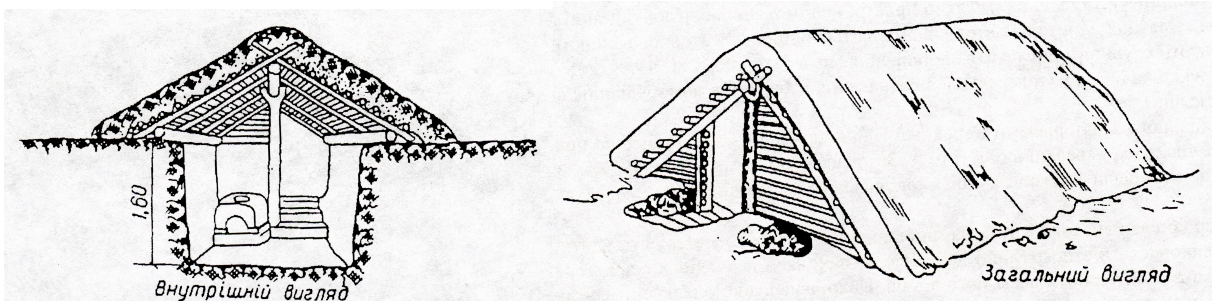
The settlements were usually along rivers in the forest and steppe region. In early Trypillian times, the settlements may have been a few dozen houses in a circle around the main square. Later, these early towns grew larger and larger: Talyanka, near modern Uman, was about 1100 acres (almost two square miles), with thousands of houses.





Examples of a small and large Trypillian town.

The earliest houses were very simple structures, and were sometimes built partially under ground:

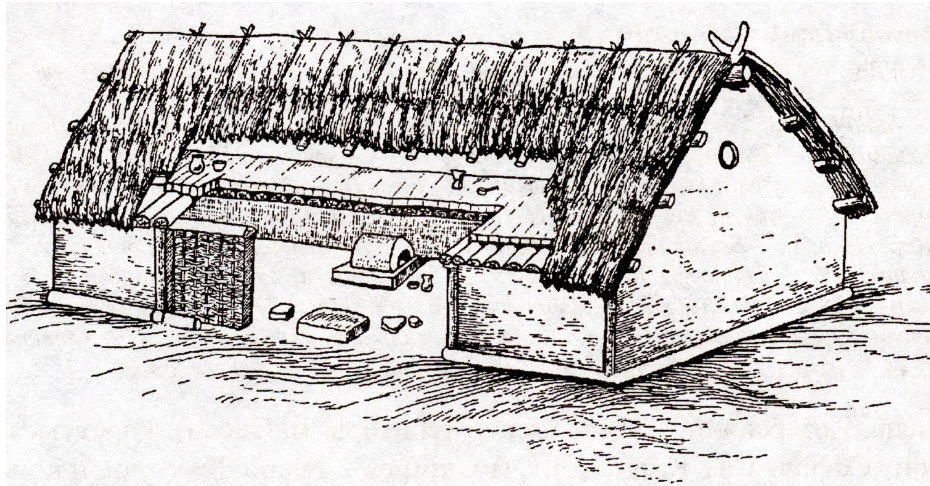


A hole would be dug, and the house built in the hole.

With time, the houses became larger and more complex, often with two floors and many rooms. They were made of timber posts and woven willow branches covered with a coating of clay with and chaff mixed in. The houses had windows, but no chimneys—the smoke from the hearths and sacrificial altars escaped from the windows and doors. (The houses of peasants in more recent times were made in a similar manner, but with chimneys.) The floor was made of clay which was exposed to fire to harden it. The inside walls were painted brown, white or red.

The lower story was a work area; the upper story was usually living space. There was often an altar to the Great Goddess at one end.

Some of the buildings in the late era were truly immense, from 300 to 600 meters long, with many rooms!



A two-story Trypillian house

Workshops were built separately from houses, set close to quarries or sources of ore.

In the later Trypillian period, when the towns had grown larger, and when invaders had begun to threaten them, there were sometimes fortifications – walls, stockades and moats.

One of the strangest aspects of the Trypillian culture is the abandonment and destruction of the settlements that occurred with regularity. Every fifty to seventy years the settlements were abandoned and the people moved, all together, elsewhere. The old settlement was burned to the ground, and a brand new one built. Archeologists note that the Trypillians left everything behind, including their pottery and tools. The cities of the living became cities of the dead.

Agriculture

The Trypillian women grew barley, wheat, millet and beans, and many vegetables. They had orchards, growing grapes, apricots, plums, apples, pears and cherries. They used plows (made of horn) to till the land.

The Trypillian men bred animals, including cattle, pigs, sheep and horses. They are thought to have had dogs as well (dogs are sometimes depicted on their ceramics), but no cats. Trypillians were also among the first to use draft animals, oxen in particular, to pull sledges and plows.

Technology

In addition to farming and animal husbandry, the Trypillians knew metalworking, weaving and pottery.

Tools: Trypillians had fairly advanced metallurgical skills, especially in the late period, creating all sorts of tools and other items from copper and silver, and having knowledge of alloys. They made a wide variety of implements from metal and flint (stone) — knives, axes, borers, scrapers, sickles and others. Tool-making was men's work.



Trypillian tools and weapons: metal (left) and stone (right)

Ceramics: the Trypillians had very advanced ceramic technology. They are thought to have invented both the potter's wheel and the two-level kiln (oven for baking their earthenware). Making pottery was women's work.

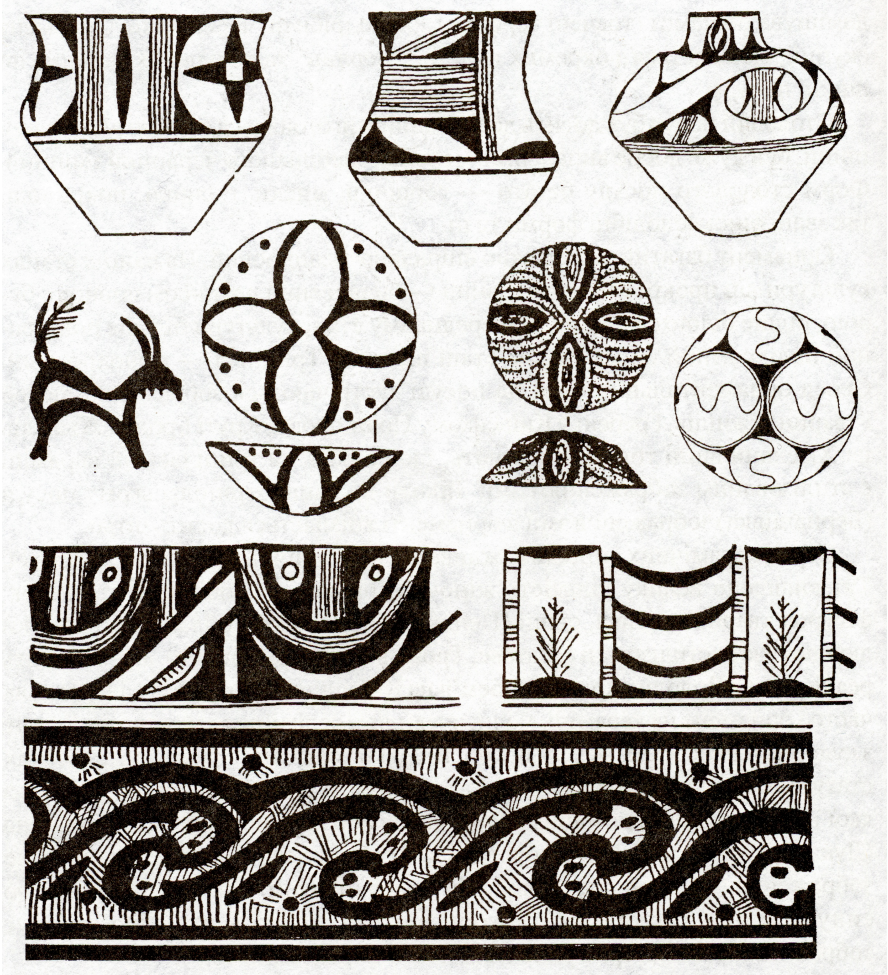
The pottery was of many types, but functional and ceremonial. Some may have been whimsical as well. Besides all sorts of pots, large and small, there were bowls, cups and plates. The pots were usually made from reddish clay, black, ochre (brick-colored) and white designs were painted on with mineral glazes, and then the pots were fired. Many of these pots have survived more than six thousand years, their colors still intact.



Thousands of small figurines of women have been found, realistic except for their faces, which are masks. We don't know why this is so, but it probably has a religious meaning.



Trypillian ceramics were painted and decorated with ornamental symbols. Spirals are particularly numerous, along with snakes (see bottom band below) and sun symbols.



Trypillian pottery designs



Examples of frog depictions





Some common Trypillian symbols

Weaving: the Trypillians had simple looms on which they wove woolen cloth to make clothing. They also knitted woolen yarn. Weaving, knitting and sewing were all women's work.



Clothing and costume:

Our knowledge of what sort of clothing the Trypillians wore is based solely on how they decorated their ceramic statuettes, as the clothing itself has not survived. Small male and female statuettes have been found, although most are female.

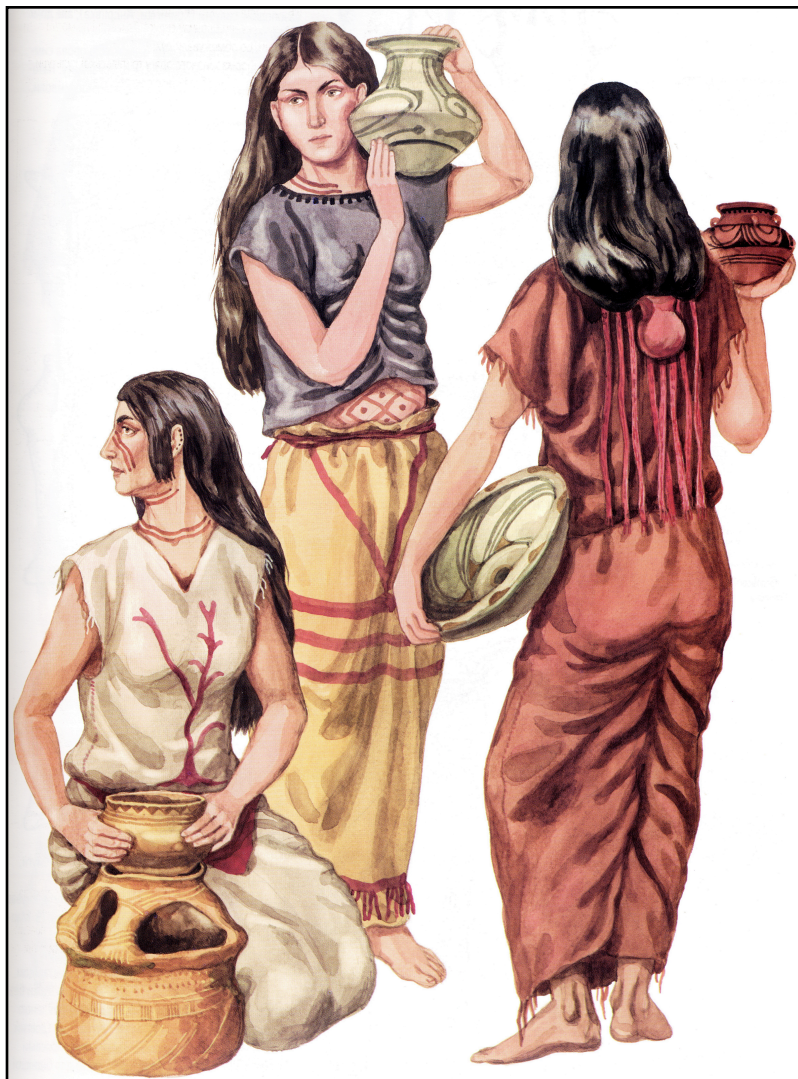
The clothes varied with the season and geographically. Men wore tunics or shirts with trousers, cloaks, and boots or sandals.

Women wore dresses or shirts with skirts (of various lengths), and cloaks. Their skirts often had fringes at the hem. Aprons were also worn. In the later period the style changed to one with more tightly fitting clothes, and even a variation on tight pants.

These garments were lavishly decorated with spirals and meanders. On their feet they wore sandals, as well as tall red boots.

Women's hair was worn in various styles. Most commonly, it seems to simply have been combed back, but the pinned up, bun style was popular, as well as two braids that were arranged as a crown on their heads (much like Yulia Tymoshenko wears even now.)

One particularly interesting aspect of Trypillian costume was **tattooing**. Statuettes show us that women were tattooed in several places, the stomach and back being the most covered, but tattoos were found on the face and limbs as well. The most popular designs were spirals, rhombs, meanders, and the *vazon* or "Tree of Life." The latter was a symbol of the Great Goddess.



What became of the Trypillians?

The Trypillians lasted for 2500 years in Ukraine, from the Neolithic Age (New Stone Age) to the Chalcolithic (Copper Age). They settled down in agricultural communities and established a civilized way of life.

Like all civilizations, it did not last forever. There were several reasons for the fall. Some archeologists feel it may have been an ecological collapse that caused the end. Historians think that it was the pressure from outside peoples, nomads who moved into Ukraine, that caused the end. In late Trypillian times we see the first evidence of fortifications in the towns.

It is possible that some of the Trypillians may have fled, either into the forest of the north or to the steppes or mountains, but, more likely, they stayed put, and lived and intermarried with the invaders — the Cimmerians, Sarmatians and others. And, in doing so, they became the ancestors of Ukrainians today..

