

## “Bezkonachnyk – A Trypillian Wave”

Our story begins nearly four thousand years ago when the people of the Trypillia culture lived in what we know today as modern-day Central Ukraine.

Four thousand years ago.

Imagine a time when there were no cars, no cell telephones, no computers and no television.

Imagine a time when people got their food from the land, by farming vegetables, fruit and grains, and by raising animals for milk and meat.

Imagine a time when people lived in villages, and knew each other; baked bread together and helped each other survive.

Four thousand years ago.

A long time ago, a little girl named Lada lived with her mother and father in a wooden house in a small Trypillian village. Her parents farmed rich black soil close to their home.

Lada was a lucky girl. Her days were filled with special games with her friends and visiting her many relatives around the village. Lada and her friends swam at the nearby stream and played “hide-and –seek” in a little forest, but most of the time they spent playing in the village and doing little chores for their parents. Girls liked making necklaces (“namysto”) from pieces of bone and beads they got from their grandmothers. They dressed their rag dolls and sang lullabies to them. The boys rode horses (“konyky”) made of wood sticks and fought battles in the yard. There were sometimes arguments between the girls and the boys...

Lada's favourite place to visit was her uncle's pottery workshop.

Her uncle, Ivan, was a potter (“honchar”) who made clay pots (“horshchyky”) and plates (“tarilky”) for people in the village. Lada loved to sit near him as he spun his big potter's wheel and sang his special songs. These magical songs often had many verses and told stories - he learned to sing them from his own grandmother.

She was always amazed how a lump of wet clay (“hlyna”) sitting in the middle of the wheel slowly changed into a tall vase (“zbanok”) or chubby pot under her Uncle Ivan’s graceful hands.

Lada would watch how he carefully lifted his creations off the wheel and left them to slowly dry in a shady spot. Uncle Ivan taught Lada that pots that dry too fast often crack.

Lada would come back to visit Uncle Ivan after a day or two to always find some ceramic

pieces ready for decorating. This was the most amazing miracle – a transformation by painting with pigments (“krasky”) and firing in a special oven.

Only special ceramic would be decorated. Lada’s Aunt Kvitka and older cousins drew mysterious patterns on the plates and vases in thick black and white liquid. Lada watched as curved lines surrounded the rims of the vessels. Sleek deer (“oleni”) and birds (“ptakhy”) flying through air emerged from under the brushes as the women drew. Then, the women let the ceramic dry again.

Lada knew that once the pieces were ready, Uncle Ivan would ready a stubby oven (“pich”) behind the house and load the pottery in for firing. Firing (or baking) the ceramics took a long time. So, instead of waiting, Lada would run off and play with her friends to return again later.

When she returned, Lada was amazed to see the finished pots all lined up on a shelf. Each had a story to tell – with their pretty black, rust, brown and white designs.

As she traced the design with her finger all around one pot - it looked like a wave (“khvylya”) from the river near her village. The wave travelled back and forth, up and down meandering along. It had no beginning and no end.

“This is a Bezkoniecznyk (“meander”)” said Uncle Ivan. “It has no beginning or end - it just goes on and on.”

“But why?”, asked Lada.

“It must remind us of nature”, he responded.

Aunt Kvitka added, “Think, Lado, of the cycle of seasons. Spring comes after winter, summer after spring, fall after summer and so on. The cycle connects us to the past and to the future.”

It reminds me of my Grandmother (“baba”) and of my little brother (“bratchyk”), decided Lada. It reminds me of my connection to the past and my link to our future.

As Lada watched, Uncle Ivan knocked on each of the pots with his knuckles. This was a trick. A good pot sounds like a bell, but a cracked one sounds dull. A dull sound meant that the pot was made into ceramic chips and put into a pile. Lada was sad every time a Bezkoniecznyk pot end up in the pile of ceramic chips (“cherepky”).

As she left the workshop, Lada took a large painted shard with a bold fragment of the Bezkoniecznyk wave with a special symbol her Uncle Ivan put on every pot he made. It was the sign of a sunflower (“sonyashnyk”).

“It will remind you that some day you will be a Babusya to a little girl, too. And it will remind you of the earth and the sun and the land”, said Uncle Ivan with a smile.

Lada ran home with her treasure (“skarb”) and put it in her secret hiding spot.

A lot of time passed since then when people moved on and off that ancient land.

Nearly four thousand years passed.

And in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, when people searched for clues to their past, foundations of Uncle Ivan's pottery shop were found.

Archeologists, detectives of our past, found many broken painted shards of ceramic pots there and carefully put them back together. They discovered the black meandering lines, and the rust brown and white designs.

Curiously, they found a large painted ceramic shard quite far from the potter's house along with some stone beads and a bone hairpin. The ceramic shard had a meander pattern on it...

And we know why that was, don't we? Treasures from Lada's secret hiding spot connect us now to the times and people that lived so long ago. Just like the bezkonachnyk...