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WHAT HISTORY SAYS VERSUS WHAT ARCHAEOLOGY SHOWS: SOURCES AND METHODS IN THE STUDY OF RUSSIAN CULTURE IN SIBERIA*

Over the last two decades, archaeological study of Russian sites in Siberia has expanded not only in scale and geography, but also in its scope. As a result, the archaeology of Russian towns in Siberia has turned into a separate field of Siberian studies. Excavations of sites from the last third of the 16th century to the 19th century have had a positive impact on the public perception of historical Russian towns as an integral part of Russian historical and cultural heritage, and on the perception of historical archaeology as an invaluable source of historical knowledge. It is extremely important that this transformation in perception is gradually being acknowledged by historians, who until recently tended to monopolize historical reconstructions of Muscovy and the Russian Empire, and to consider the written sources to be self-sufficient. Today archaeology sets up a broader framework for research into this pivotal period. This article outlines the findings of archaeological excavations at old Russian sites in Siberia, juxtaposing them with the written evidence. The comparison is based on the examples of (1) localizing historical sites and providing attribution for excavated sites; (2) creating spatial models of archaeological wooden structures; and (3) reconstructing the composition of livestock through faunal remains.

Keywords: *Historical archaeology, sources, methods, reconstructions, Siberia, Russian culture.*

Introduction

The chronological range for archaeological research on the Russian culture of Siberia, which was defined by the process of colonization, covers the period from the last third of the 16th century to the 19th century inclusively, that is, from the last rise of the Middle Ages–Post Medieval period to modernity. In the history of Russian archaeology, the study of this period has received the name “historical” (or “late”) archaeology.

Having come a long way from an accidental, occasional, and nearly marginal pursuit, in the last 15–20 years historical archaeology has acquired the status of a fully legitimate field and has received a permanent “residence” at a number of regional conferences and workshops, as well as representation at the forum of the highest level—the Archaeological Congress. Not only the extent and geography of excavations have been expanding, but also the scope of research problems addressed by the field. Only a few years ago, the principles underlying the new field of Siberian Studies (the archaeology of Russian towns of Siberia) were first formulated (Chernaya, 2008). Today, a number of subdivisions have appeared, such as the archaeology of churches and cemeteries;

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the archaeology of war and everyday life, as well as rural archaeology. The extent of our knowledge of these subfields of historical archaeology varies, but with each year they are growing and attracting new researchers, including young scholars who are just beginning their academic life.

The study of late sites contributes to a positive attitude towards them as an integral and important part of the national historical and cultural heritage and to historical archaeology in general as an indispensable and increasingly attractive component in the study and knowledge of the national heritage. It is extremely important that this process of transformation in scholarly views has in fact crossed the borders of the archaeological community and has begun to spread among historians, who until recently considered historical reconstruction of the period of Muscovy and the Russian Empire to be their inalienable and indivisible right, and the written sources to be self-sufficient for the task. A landmark was the large conference, “From the Time of Troubles to the Empire. New Discoveries in Archaeology and the History of Russia of the 16th–18th Centuries” (Moscow, November 2013) (Ot Smuty..., 2013), in which archaeologists and historians worked as equal partners. At the conference, the experience of archaeologists in historical reconstructions, based on the methodology of source study and criticism (and not just archaeological sources!) was recognized as exemplary. The inclusion of the Siberian topic into the range of problems discussed at the conference was also significant, since it showed the understanding on the part of the conference organizers and participants of how important Siberia is for Russia. Over all of Russia, archaeology (mostly urban) has started to create its own picture of historical development, offering its own, in many ways more reliable view, rather than adding to the current view which was formed on the basis of written sources. The importance of historical archaeology in the study of relatively recent events also results from the fact that it is an instrument for shaping historical consciousness, as well as personal and national identity (Belyaev, 2014; Belyaev, Veksler, 1996: 128, 130). The informational and methodological capacity of historical archaeology fosters the growth of its importance, credibility, and prospects for further development.

The experience gained by archaeology in studying historical events and processes, was summed up in one of this author’s works using the example of the Russian colonization of Siberia (Chernaya, 2011). This article will focus on the methodological aspects which should be taken into account in scholarly interpretation and reconstruction of historical realities of the 17th–18th centuries, which are reflected in various sources, with archaeological evidence being of primary importance. From a wide range of problems of the archaeological urban studies of Siberia, the following issues will be

addressed: criteria for typological differentiation of settlements in the historical and archaeological practice; localization and attribution of historical sites; restoration of the architectural appearance of ruined buildings, and reconstruction of paleo-economies using the example of urban animal husbandry. The analysis of these problems will make it possible, on the one hand, to elucidate some important aspects of urban life and on the other hand to show the capacities for archaeology to reconstruct the Russian culture of Siberia.

Sources and methods for interpreting and reconstructing some aspects of Russian culture in Siberia

Archaeologists use a group of various sources for studying late periods. Each source reflects reality in its own way, and this influences the perception of reality and constructing of a historical picture by the scholar, defining the specialization of the archaeologist and the historian. Figuratively speaking, when an archaeologist “sees” the excavated object, he has a question “what is it?”, while a historian who “listens” to a documented narration, very often does not have an opportunity to translate the extracted information into visible images. The problem of visualizing historical realities for the historian and their deciphering by the archaeologist may emerge with respect to virtually any aspect of even comparatively recent history.

Let us consider the methodological capacities for reading the information which was refracted in various sources, and for reconstructing some aspects of historical reality by means of academic criticism and cross-sectional analysis of materials. We should start with the problem of identifying archaeological sites with a certain type of settlement—a town or fort (as a historical form of a small town). The complexity of differentiating fortified settlements in Siberia results from the specific nature and dynamics of the historical situation of settlement in the region. Towns and forts were settlements of an urbanized type; they were the centers of their neighboring territories and carried out a number of functions. In their analysis, not a simple sum of functions is important, but their structural and hierarchical combination.

Specific historical objectives set by the development of the region determined the administrative status of a settlement, its role, and place in the general system of settlements. From the very beginning, population centers located in the strategic areas of colonization, the most important transfer points, and trade routes were assigned the rank of towns, which is well known from the documents. This was the case with Tyumen, Tobolsk, Verkhoturye, Surgut, Tomsk and other centers of various regions of Siberia. The division of towns and

forts according to the number of functions (the former had more, and the latter had less) is not very consistent with historical reality. Forts were distinguished not so much by their array and quantity of functions (they included both single- and multifunctional settlements) but by their subordination to a town which was on a higher level in the administrative hierarchy of settlements. Naming some settlements in official and everyday terminology equally as being towns or forts (Narymsky, Ketsky, Kuznetsky, Yeniseisky, Ilimsky, etc.) implied the urban type of these settlements, while their subordination to an *Uyezd* or *Razryad* center was clearly recognized. The absence of rigid criteria which distinguished towns and forts in historical practice, makes it difficult to identify the administrative status of the settlement in retrospect; moreover, this status might change with time.

It is therefore clear that there are no definitive archaeological criteria for the typological differentiation of settlements. Neither the significant amount of materials, nor large-scale excavations, even if they cover the entire site as is the case with the Sayansky Ostrog (Skobelev, 2001), do not remove the problem. In determining the administrative status of the settlement, archaeologists cannot rely on the type of walls around it, which was of secondary importance: the fort might have logwork fortifications, as for example, did the Urtamsky Ostrog, but at the same time a stockade fence might protect the town, as in Tobolsk which was the capital town of the province. We learn about the status of the site, which we are studying, not from archaeological data, but from the written sources. In this respect, we should note the incorrectness of attempts to introduce the term “ostrog” (fort) into academic use as a designation of a particular type of archaeological site, which was undertaken during the study of Umrevinsky fort (Gorokhov, 2011: 28–29). This designation was applied for all types of settlements in Siberia of the 16th–18th centuries regardless of their real differences, which were easily recognized by the people living at the time. The substitution of the genuine historical diversity of Siberian settlements for an artificial construct in the form of a specific archaeological site of the “ostrog” type cannot be accepted.

An important scholarly and methodological task is localizing historic sites with often unknown exact location and identifying archaeological sites with available written and pictorial evidence (Chernaya, 2013). Owing to incomplete and vague descriptions and low geometric accuracy of the maps produced in the 17th–18th centuries, written and cartographic data have limited capacities for locating historical objects on the terrain, including such large objects as settlements. Thus, Narymsky, Ketsky, Urtamsky, and other forts were not discovered on the basis of written evidence. An example illustrating the difficulty of determining the location of an object or historical event from the written records and old maps, which were

neither accurate nor consistent, is an attempt to localize the site of Ermakova Perekop as the supposed place where Ataman Ermak died (Matveyev, 2011; Matveyev, Anoshko, 2012). At the same time, archaeological objects which were located on the terrain are in need of attribution which should answer the following questions: what it was, when and how it functioned, what the social and economic status of the owner of the structure or house was, what its place in the general layout of the settlement was, etc.*

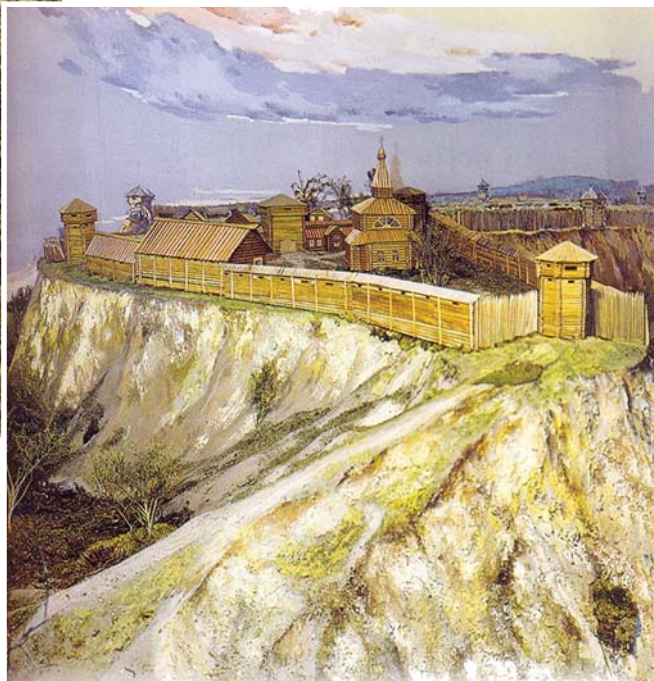
One of the main methodological requirements for historical interpretations and reconstructions is a representative combination of diverse sources which complement each other and are correlated with each other. As applied to the problem of localizing historical objects, this means the inadmissibility of constructing a hypothesis about the location of an object on the basis of a single written or cartographic source, as is was done, for example, in determining the place where the town of Tomsk was founded. Underestimating the absence of important spatial cues in a document may lead to an incomplete or erroneous vision of historical realities and consequently to their inadequate reconstruction. First, we should view the consequences of violating the proper methodology in an attempt to locate an object relying on a single written source. Such a source for the historians was the “Description of the Town and Fortress of Tomsk” of 1627. Such “descriptions” were always supplied with drawings, but in this case the drawing has not survived. The model of the town, which was made according to an inaccurate and ambiguous text of the document, did not correspond to the shape of the southern cape of Voskresenskaya Mountain, and a part of the cape turned out to be empty and outside the city walls (Petrov, 1956). Since it was not possible to leave the area as a foothold for capturing the town, on the model it was fenced by a stockade, contrary to the “Description”. Yet, the artificial nature of the reconstruction was too conspicuous, and therefore, later the “extra” part of the cape on the model was removed to avoid any “inconvenient” questions (Fig. 1).

The same methodological error of building up hypotheses using a single source, this time cartographical

*An example is the attribution of the octagonal log structure in Tara (joint excavations by the Omsk Division of the Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography SB RAS represented by S.F. Tataurov and S.S. Tikhonov, and Tomsk State University represented by M.P. Chernaya). The object was interpreted as Knyazhya tower (Tataurov 2011: 245, fig. 6). However, the fact that the excavated object was not built into the walls, makes it possible to tentatively identify it as a “buttress” for cannon fire, moved forward with its tower for increasing the zone of fire. Such wooden or wooden-earthen structures (“byki”, “vyvody”, “raskaty”, or “bastei”), upon which cannons were rolled out, appeared in Siberia as the newest trend in Russian defense architecture as early as the mid-17th century (Chernaya, 2002: 151–153).



a



b

Fig. 1. Models of the Town of Tomsk in the early 17th century according to the “Description” of 1627. Tomsk Regional Museum of Local History, 1950s.

Authors: N.M. Petrov, N.I. Zalessky, and K.I. Vinter.

a – the “extra” part of the cape which is not mentioned in the “Description”, was fenced by the stockade (after (Ocherki..., 1954: 8)); *b* – the “extra” part of the cape was removed from the model (after (Tomsk..., 2004: 19)).

(the plan of Tomsk of 1767), was the cause of the unfounded idea concerning the original placement of Tomsk on the south-eastern spur of Voskresenskaya Mountain (Popov, 1959: 10–11; Volkov, 2005; Dmitrienko, 2010). The attempts to put the town onto a more “appropriate” plan, when other plans with a difference of only 5–20 years were available but their topography did not correspond to the preconceived idea, is in fact an example of forcing reality to fit a certain hypothesis. At present, it must be stated that the problem of where exactly Tomsk was originally founded remains an open question owing to the clear scarcity of sources. It is necessary to expand the area of the archaeological search to the areas where the original town was likely to have been located, and to conduct evidence-based identification of the excavated objects with the town buildings of the first half of the 17th century.

A solution to the problem of localization and determination of the time when a site functioned, provide a basis for the reconstruction of archaeological objects. Archaeologists should not limit themselves to discovering and describing the ruins; they should try to reconstruct the appearance of the destroyed buildings to the fullest possible extent. The unity of construction techniques, architectural and compositional forms, as well as functional and ideological content, which shaped the appearance of the building, should be reflected in

its model, since the creation of the model is the goal of the archaeological study of the architectural monument, giving meaning to the archaeological quest (Voronin, 1934: 42, 76; Rappoport, 2013). Such formulation of the scholarly task receives a positive response from present-day society which tends to perceive the world of the present and past through visual imagery. Accordingly, it is not enough to read or hear how the monument, destroyed by the time, might have looked like; it is necessary to see its recreated appearance. Creating three-dimensional models of archaeological objects, which mostly preserve only their lower part, is a highly complicated task that requires additional sources in the form of surviving architectural monuments with relic features, as well as specific methodology. We may consider the opportunities provided by archaeological reconstruction using the example of reconstructing wooden structures which had more than one floor (level).

Methodological grounds for creating spatial models of archaeological wooden buildings should include, firstly, identification of features which were typical of houses with additional floors, and secondly, the presence of these features in the archaeological context. The occurrence of such elements as foundations, which carried out not so much a supporting function but leveled down the terrain and provided heat and moisture insulation, cut-in partitions for reinforcing the structure,



Fig. 2. High house on the basement with a porch and gallery—the house of Ponomarev from the village of Manshino in Medvezhyegorsky District of Karelia, second half of the 19th century. Kizhi State Open-Air Museum of History, Architecture, and Ethnography (http://kizhi.karelia.ru/media/thumbs/architecture/b0/e2/17_dom_pon_2_3.jpg).

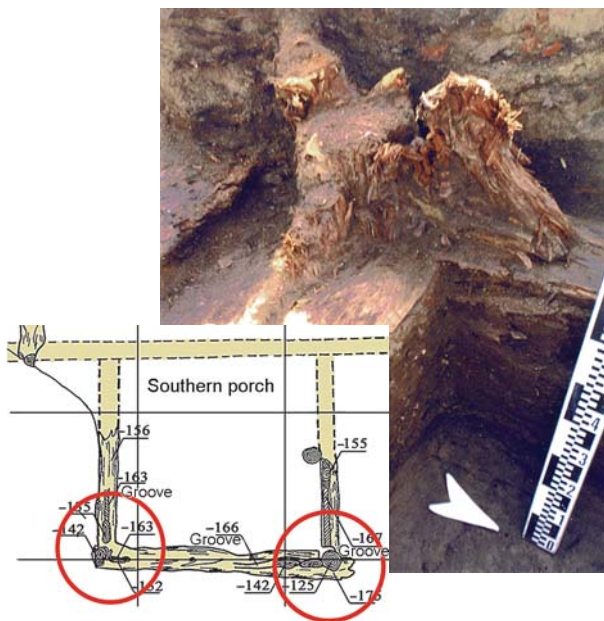


Fig. 3. Remains of a porch with vertical sheeting (excavations of the voivode's house in Tomsk).

which were not mandatory for the building, is not yet direct proof of the height of the building. An essential feature of two- or three-storey buildings were high porches, stairs, and also supporting pillars of galleries and balconies (Fig. 2). Unfortunately, these elements do not always survive. The design of the porch in the technique of vertical sheeting, which we may find, for

example, in Tomsk (Chernaya, 2014) (Fig. 3, 4), may serve as proof of multi-storey building. The weakness of archaeological arguments, caused by the destruction of objects and by the structural features of the elements typically found in multi-storey houses, limits the possibilities for reconstruction: not every building can be reconstructed to a full degree.

If written notes are available for the archaeologist, contemporaneous with the site which he is exploring, for example, references to existing structures with basements, they require a critical comparison of data, since such structures were not always high or at the very least not necessarily two-storey; although the tendency for basements' growth from the ground and increase in height, which led to the emergence of houses with two or three levels, can be archaeologically confirmed.

The basement which constituted the lower level of residential, utility, or service buildings, had many synonymous names, such as “podyzbitsa” (“that which is under the *izba*”), “podsen” (“that which is under the *seni* anteroom”), “vzmostye”, “nutr”, “shcherbet”, “omshank”, “dereben”, “golbets”, “podpolye” (“that which is under the floor”), or “pogreb” (“cellar”) (Blomkvist, Gantskaya, 1967: 133; Rabinovich, 1975: 217, 223; Aleksandrov, Lipinskaya, Safiyanova, 1981: 121, 123; Chizhikova, 1987: 228; Vlasova, 2001: 204, 206; and others). This was caused not only by the time and place of their use, but also by their structural features and purpose. Three basement types, which differed in purpose and structure (pillar, logwork, or composite technique), emerged during the long evolutionary process. Incidentally, this is known not from scarce written remarks, but primarily from archaeological data. Basements could have been made under the ground and above the ground, and might have different heights (Fig. 5).

Another element which points to a multi-storey structure is the so-called *kazenka*. It was a room behind the stove, and also extensions on the side of the stove of different heights. The passageway down to the basement (the synonym “golbets”) was made inside the *kazenka*, and people would sit or sleep on top of it. If the basement was a pit dug in the ground, *kazenka* should not be regarded as an indirect sign of a multi-leveled structure. But if a passageway inside the *kazenka* led to a basement which was not buried into the ground, this testified to a greater amount of levels in the house.

The features that distinguished structures with various basements, with or without *kazenka*, existed from the very beginning. The contemporaries (both those who built the houses and those who lived in them) knew perfectly well the types of design and general appearance of such structures. For scholars, the problem of recreating the appearance of the objects is complicated by the fact that functional and structural features of buildings were not always spelled out in a historical context and are not always discernable in an archaeological context. For improving reliability of the model, the reconstruction of a specific structure should involve all types of available sources.

The importance of archaeology can be demonstrated in the analysis of such an important industry in the

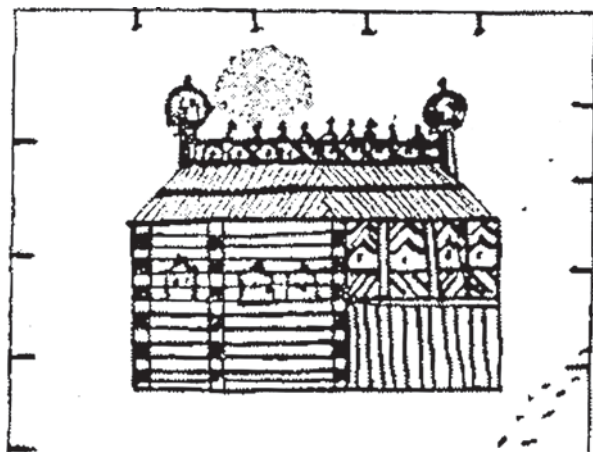


Fig. 4. Two-storey house with a porch and a gallery, made in the technique of vertical sheeting, on the drawing of the 17th century (after (Miloslavsky, 1956: 95, fig. 21)).

economy of Russian towns of European Russia and Siberia as cattle breeding. Animal bones represent a large-scale type of finds, at the very least in the urban strata, which makes it possible to reconstruct the composition of the herd. Archaeozoological remains fundamentally change our knowledge concerning domestic animals, whose appearance prior to the 19th century was markedly different from the way they look today, and also livestock keeping and breeding.

In the attempts to reconstruct the composition of the herd, scholars face a major challenge—the objective incompleteness of osteological remains, which results in the relative nature of the final estimates even when large-scale data (thousands and tens of thousands of bones) are used. Thus, the outcome of the analysis is not the number of individual animals at the site, but relative composition of species or volumes of meat consumption. The analysis of sex and age characteristics of the slaughtered animals makes it possible to uncover the forms of exploitation, such as meat breed, meat and dairy breed, or “technical” breed (for getting wool) (Antipina, 2006).

The comparison of archaeozoological materials with the standards of animal bones from the 20th century gives reason to conclude that cows in Russian towns were of small size. The reasons for the short stature of cattle in Siberia were the same as in the forest zone of European Russia. Since the days of Old Rus and until the second half of the 19th century, the short stature of cattle was caused by long periods of cold weather, the lack of forage, and also by unfavorable conditions for intrauterine development and the first months of life of the animals. Foreigners, who visited Muscovy in the 17th century, noted that “cows are very small in this country... they do not have power for plowing” (Tsalkin, 1956: 48). The average shoulder height of cows was 95–115 cm, and, for example, a cow 83 cm high looked natural among

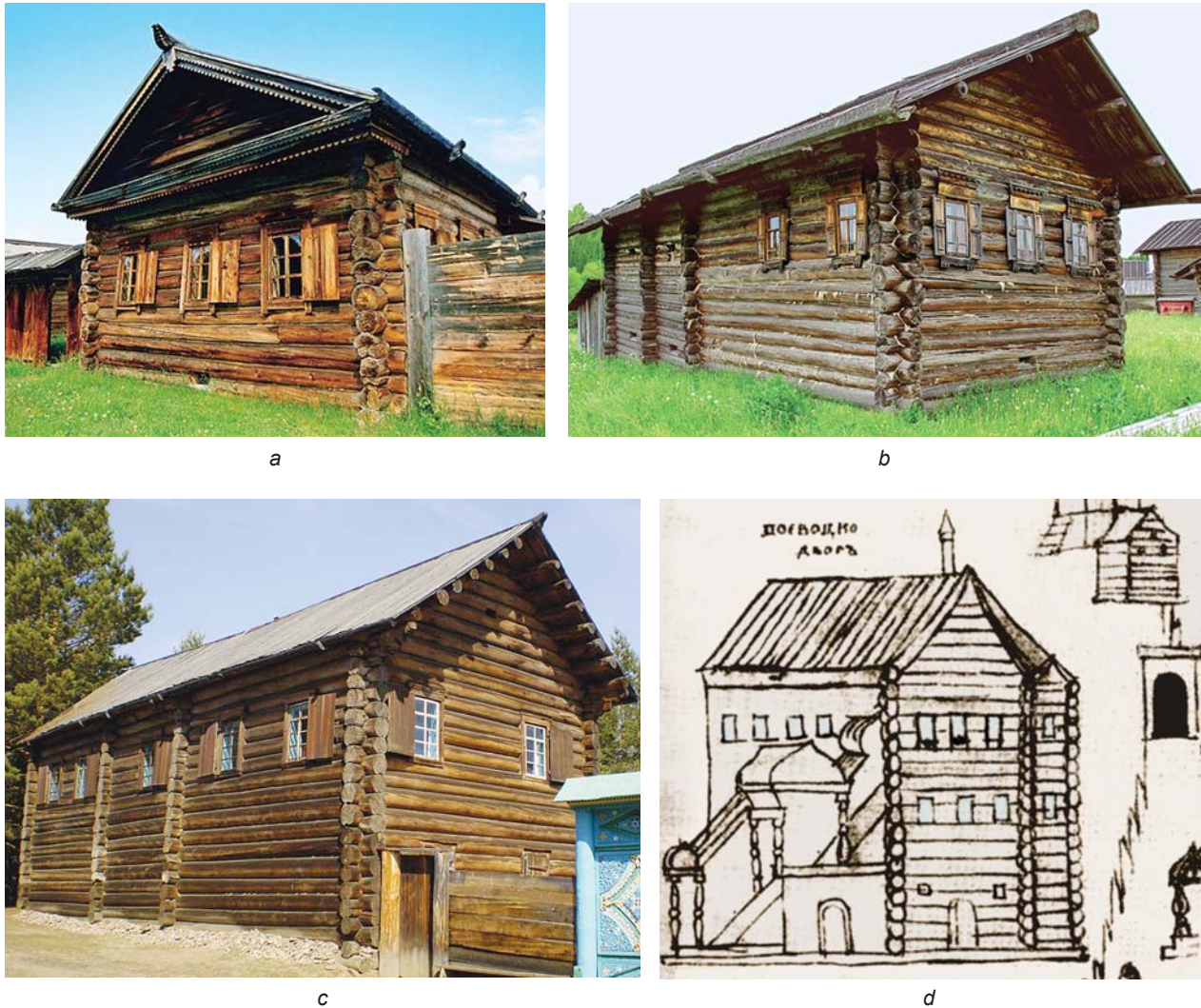


Fig. 5. Houses on the basements of different heights.

a – house on a low basement from the village of Dubynina, Nizhneilimsky District of the Irkutsk Region, mid-19th century. The Irkutsk Taltsy Museum of Architecture and Ethnography (<http://gdehorosho.ru/upload/photos3/arhitekturno-etnograficheskiy-muzey-tal-cy-8da9.JPG>); *b* – house on a medium-sized basement from the village of Podlipnoye, Totemsky District of the Vologda Region, late 19th century. The Vologda Open Air Museum of Architecture and Ethnography (Semenkovo) (http://img-fotki.yandex.ru/get/4120/29878574.f5/0_8cb6e_416a1b21_XL.jpeg.jpg); *c* – two-storey house on a high basement from the village of Kuitun, Buryatia, second half of the 19th century. Photo by V. Kuznetsov (http://lh3.ggpht.com/_MLIXZ2dAnKI/SAttohqFUdi/AAAAAAAAAAm4/2sHiRqOnkbo/s800/P3170248.jpg); *d* – three-storey house of the Olonets Voivode on a high basement, 1671 (after (Milchik, Ushakov, 1981: 117–118)).

very small cows in Yaroslavl. Slaughtering of the bulk of the cattle at the age of sexual maturity depended on late maturing, when animals reached the highest weight only in the third year of life, and reflected the meat and dairy purpose of the livestock. It should be emphasized that the weight of mature animals was only 160–190 kg, and milk production reached about 4 liters per day, which implied low productivity (Ibid.: 48–50; Arkheologiya..., 2012: 202; Koledinsky, 2012: 445–446). Even in the 19th century, the peasant households of Tomsk Governorate mostly kept the cattle of “Russian breed”, resistant to frosts and undemanding with relation to forage, but underproductive. After slaughtering, it yielded

not more than 8 puds (128 kg) of meat from the carcass and 1–1.5 puds (16–24 kg) of fat; milk yield from the best cows did not exceed half a bucket, a quarter bucket from a mediocre cow, and in the winter not more than a glass (Kuzmina, 1974: 8).

According to the archaeological data of the 17th–18th centuries, very small pigs permanently ranked second in the animal stock, although with a considerable lag from the cows. This was the case with medieval Tomsk, as well as Verkhoturys, Tobolsk, and other towns (Devyashin, Plasteyeva, 2010; Bachura, Lobanova, Bobkovskaya, 2011). The written sources may, however, give an incomplete and inaccurate picture of the composition

of species in household livestock. For example, the statistical records of the early 1880s do not contain information that Russian old dwellers in the Tom region (the descendants of the settlers of the 17th–18th centuries) kept pigs. Instead, it is believed that pig breeding proliferated in the region only together with the settlers of the 19th–20th centuries (Skryabina, 1997: 37).

As with other domestic animals, horses were also undersized and low powered. According to archaeozoological data, the height of mature stallions was 120–130 cm, and the height of mares was about 120 cm. The present-day standard of height for ponies is 140 cm (Tsalkin, 1956: 152, 153; Arkheologi..., 2012: 215, 216; Istoricheskaya ekologiya..., 2013: 225, 226). It becomes clear that “people used teams of six horses not out of luxury, not out of arrogance, but because horses were weak!” (Pikul, 1991: 169). The writer Pikul thus formulated the reason which caused Count A.G. Orlov-Chesmensky to engage in breeding a new type of horse in the 1770s.

Conclusions

With a variety of sources and their representative synthesis needed for the adequate interpretation of the past, the introduction of large scale archaeological materials into research may help scholars to increase the precision and chronological depth of reflecting historical reality and move to comprehensive reconstructions. The increased demands of modern society for total visualization, including the visualization of historical processes, make historical archaeology increasingly relevant. This not only enhances the prospects for the development of historical archaeology, but also increases the responsibility of archaeologists for modeling the realities of the recent past, which is necessary for the development of personal and national identity, which would be sufficient for the cultural wealth of the nation and its historical memory.

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