

History of the Sorbs / Wends in Germany from the brochure "Sorbs/Wends in Germany"

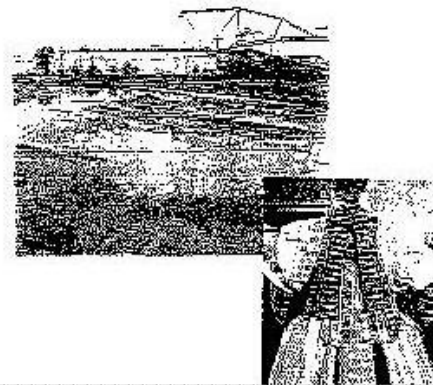
by Dr. Hilza Elina, House for Sorbian Folk Culture Bautzen

Cover of the original booklet, Sorbian language region today

- WENDEN: 1. historische Fremdbezeichnung für Sorben (srb.), heute zunehmend wieder im Sprachgebrauch
2. im Mittelalter: Bezeichnung für verschiedene slawische Stämme und Völkerschaften

Herausgeber: Haus für sorbische Volkskultur, Bautzen
Zusammenstellung/Redaktion: Dr. Hilza Elina, wissenschaftliche Mitarbeiterin

DIE SORBEN/WENDEN IN DEUTSCHLAND SERBJA W NĚMSKEJ



SUMMARISED HISTORY OF THE SORBES

around 600 Slavonic tribes settle in the area between Elbe/Saale and Oder/Queiss

631 First historical record of the Sorbs in Fredegar's Chronicle

990 The Milzeners in Upper Lausitz are the last Sorbian tribe to lose their political independence; Christianization of the Slav territories accompanied by policy of military conquest

by the German state

1000 - 1100 Cultivation of land by Sorbian peasants

1104 Beginning of Franconian settlement by Wiprecht von Groitzsch

1150 - 1300 Immigration of Franconian, Flemish, Thuringian and Saxon peasants

1264 Marienstern Monastery founded in Upper Lausitz. Sorbs account for over 90% of the population between Saale and Bober/Queis at the beginning of the 13th century

-Ruling class (margraves, bishops, abbots, knights and vassals) recruited exclusively from among German conquerors

-Conquered Sorbian territory divided into margravates

1293 / 1327 Sorbian language banned in Bernburg/S., Altenburg, Zwickau and Leipzig

Around 1500 Sorbian civic oath from Bautzen/Budysin, oldest known historical Sorbian document

1543 Translation of "Wendish Baptismal Liturgy", oldest example of Sorbian church literature

1548 First translation of the New Testament into the Sorbian language by Miklawa Jakubica

1574 First printed Sorbian book - a hymnbook with catechism by Albin Moller in the Lower Sorbian language

1618 - 1648 Almost half of the Sorbian population lost in the Thirty Years' War; reduction in size of the Sorbian-speaking area

1706 / 1709 Translation of the New Testament into Upper Sorbian by Michal Frencl and into Lower Sorbian by Bogumil Fabricius; birth of Sorbian as a written language

1716 Foundation of the Wendish Preachers Society "Sorabia", which is the oldest student association in Germany today.

After 1750, beginnings of nationalistic consciousness among bourgeois Sorbs under the influence of strong support from their Slavic neighbours; German and Sorbian philosophers of the Enlightenment take up an academic interest in the Sorbian language and culture

1767 The translation of Kloppstock's "Messias" into Sorbian by Jurij Mjen signals the beginning of Sorbian secular literature

1790 Publication of "Mesacne pismo k rozwucenju a k wokrewjenju", monthly journal for instruction and edification, by two Sorbian students; (banned after first issue)

1790 - 1794 Peasants' revolts in Lausitz under the influence of the French Revolution

1809 - 1812 Publication of the journal "Serbski powedar a kurer" (Sorbian Reporter and Courier) in Bautzen by the carpenter Jan Bohuchwar Dejka

1815 Reorganisation of the area of Sorbian settlement by the Congress of Vienna Administrative splitting causes the Sorbs to become a minority group in almost all districts

1818 Decree to further restrict the Sorbian language issued in Prussia

-More liberal political situation in Saxony creates more favourable conditions for the development of the Sorbian culture and a renaissance of the Sorbian nation

1841- 184~ Jan Arnost Smoler and Leopold Haupt publish the two-volume work, "Folk songs of the Wends in Upper and Lower Lausitz"

1842 Handrij Zejler and Jan Arnost Smoler establish the newspaper "Tydzenska Nowina"; precursor of the "Serbske Nowiny" which is published today

1845 First Sorbian song festival in Lausitz directed by Korla August Kocor - Development of Sorbian national music culture

1847 Scientific society "Macicar Serbska" founded

1848 "Bramborski serbski Casnik" appears as the first newspaper in the Lower Sorbian language,

a forerunner of today's "Nowy Casnik"

1848/1849 Sorbian peasants' societies formed in Upper Lausitz, demanding among other things social and national rights

"Sorbian Peasants' Petition" intelligentsia calls for equal rights for the Sorbian language and culture in schools, churches and courts ("Great Petition of the Sorbs" signed by 5000 heads of households)

1851 Saxon government makes concessions regarding educational policy

1854 First great wave [Sorb emigration to Texas](#) and Australia, where Sorbian settlements are established

1862 First Sorbian theater performance in Bautzen

Around 1875 National suppression of the Sorbs in the German Empire leads to intensified efforts to assert Sorbian culture; founding of the "Young Sorbs' Movement" under the leadership of Arnost Muka and Jakub Bart-Cisinski;

1875 General ban on the Sorbian language in the schools of Prussian Upper Lausitz

1877 The apex of Classical Sorbian literature in the 19th century is the national epic "Nawozenja" ("The Bridegroom"), by Jakub Bart-Cisinski

1904 Wendish House opened in Bautzen

1912-31 Sorbian associations participate in the founding meeting of "Domowina" in Hoyerswerda/Wojerecy, founded as the umbrella organisation for Sorbian associations

1919-1932 The Weimar constitution enables a more active cultural and political life, while on the other hand the Sorbian popular movement is kept under surveillance by the "Wend Division".

After 1933 National Socialist dictatorship/Attempted physical and psychological destruction of the Sorbian people; Sorbian teachers and priests are banished from Lausitz; Sorbian anti-fascists murdered, including Alojs Andricki (1943) and Marja Grolmusec (1944)

1937 Domowina is banned (following its rejection of Nazi synchronisation), as are all forms of public Sorbian life;

1937 Confiscation of the Wend House by the fascists; burnt to the ground in 1944 by the SS

1939 The last publication in the Sorbian language is liquidated with the banning of the "Katolski Posol"

1941 The last Sorbian divine services are banned by the Brandenburg Consistory

1945 (10th May) re-establishment of the Domowina as the first post-war democratic organisation in Germany

1947 Publication of the Upper Sorbian newspaper "Nowa doba", today "Serbske nowiny"

1947 Founding of the Sorbian secondary school (later Sorbian extended secondary school Kleinwelka, today Sorbian Grammar School Bautzen)

1948 Saxon State parliament passes "Law to preserve the rights of the Sorbian population"

1949 Late admission of the Domowina into the Lower Lausitz (Brandenburg)

up to 1958 Numerous Sorbian state institutions to promote the cultural life of the nation are established:

Sorbian Institute for Teacher Training, 1946

Research Institute for the Sorbian Nation
(Academy of Sciences of the GDR), 1951

Institute of Sorbian Studies at the University of Leipzig, 1952

Sorbian National Arts Ensemble, 1952

Sorbian Department of the GDR

Broadcasting Authority, 1953

Institute of Sorbian National Art, 1956

Sorbian Museum, 1957 (continuation of the "Wendish Museum" which was established in 1904 and confiscated by the Fascists in 1941)

Domowina publishing company, 1958

1956 Inauguration of the Sorbian House which was rebuilt in 1947

1956 Sorbian intellectuals and farmers protest against the increasing industrialisation of Lausitz and call for the preservation of the unique scenery and culture of the area of Sorbian settlement; extensive coal mining destroys Sorbian villages and their surrounding areas (in particular the district of Hoyerswerda, the Schleife region in the district of Weißwasser and the district of Cottbus Land)

1964 Reorganisation of Sorbian school teaching leads to drastic reduction in the number of pupils attending Sorbian language lessons

1966-1989 Seven Festivals of Sorbian Culture were on the one hand a factor in the development of Sorbian professional and national culture, while on the other hand the ruling SED party used them to demonstrate their "successful nationalities policy" and the Sorbs' allegiance to the GDR; by so doing, it attempted to conceal the drastic reduction in the national substance of the Sorbs

1989 (11th November) "Sorbian National Assembly", which stands in opposition to the "socialist" Domowina, calls for national dialogue and demands fundamental change in the Domowina organisation

-Sorbian Round Table formulates the standpoints of the Sorbs' representatives and prepares the transformation process for the Domowina organisation

1990 (17th March) Extraordinary national congress of the Domowina, delegates elect a new leadership for the organisation and declare their support for German unification in a resolution Memorandum in the records of the Unification Treaty stipulates protection and promotion of the Sorbian language and culture

1991 Reconstitution of Domowina as the umbrella organisation for Sorbian associations - Establishment of the Foundation for the Sorbian People to support the national and cultural development of the Sorbs

1992 (19th April) First Sorbian television production - a monthly half-hourly magazine programme - is broadcast by Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Brandenburg

SORBIAN NATIONAL CULTURE TODAY

Today's Sorbian national culture is based on the traditional Sorbian national culture of Upper and Lower Lausitz. Sorbs and Germans are particularly dedicated to preserving Sorbian national culture in the genres of music, dance, literature and the fine arts, and Sorbian and German amateur artists have worked closely together to develop this culture.

- Choirs and choral societies,
- traditional costume societies,
- dance groups,
- ensembles (vocal, dance and instrumental groups),
- amateur theatrical societies,
- an amateur writers' association,
- textiles, painting and ceramics associations, competitions and workshops, continual

commissions by the Institute for Sorbian National Culture and a supporting role by the Sorbian National Ensemble continue to preserve and promote Sorbian national Culture. The results of these efforts are outstanding achievements such as the competition organised each year by the Institute for Sorbian National Culture for the most beautiful Sorbian Easter egg, or the diverse range of works by individual artists in the field of national art, which bear comparison with the works of professional artists. An important vehicle for preserving Sorbian national culture for subsequent generations is provided by the festival of Sorbian children's theatre and young reciters and the festival of Sorbian children's songs and Sorbian music, which are traditionally organised by the Institute for Sorbian National Culture each year on an alternating basis. Dance performances, amateur theatrical productions, choral concerts, exhibitions of Sorbian national art and presentation of the customs and traditions of Sorbian ethnic regions by village communities provide groups and individuals alike with excellent opportunities to present their ethnic work.

SORBIAN ASSOCIATIONS AND INSTITUTIONS TODAY

(Selected list)

Cyrill-Methodius-Verein e.V.

is the association of Sorbian Catholics Headquarters: Bautzen/Budysin

Domowina Bund Lausitzer Sorben e.V.

The Domowina organisation is a politically independent and autonomous umbrella organisation for the Sorbs and Sorbian associations;

Headquarters: Bautzen/Budysin, members include:

Lower Lausitz Regional Association

District Association of Weißwasser/Niesky

"Michal Hornik" District Association, Kamenz

"Handrij Zejler" District Association, Hoyerswerda

"Jan Arnost Smoler" District Association, Bautzen

Cyrill and Methodius Association

Association of Sorbian Schools

Association of Sorbian Students

Association of Sorbian Artists

Association of Sorbian Choral Societies

Macica Serbska - scientific association

Förderkreis für sorbische Volkskultur e.V.

("Association for the promotion of Sorbian national culture")

Public organisation with the sole aim of preserving and maintaining traditional and present-day Sorbian national culture.

Headquarters: Bautzen/Budysin

Macica Serbska

Registered scientific association - established in 1847.

Headquarters: Bautzen/Budysin

Sorbisches Institut e.V. Bautzen/Budysin

(previously Research Institute for the Sorbian Nation)

Special areas of research:

- * Sorbian social and cultural history
- * Development of the language
- * Folklore
- * Cultural studies and aesthetics houses:
 - * the Sorbian cultural archives
 - * the Sorbian Library

Sorbischer Schulverein e.V.

("Sorbian schools association")

Sorbischer Künstlerbund e.V.

("Association of Sorbian artists")

Works in four groups covering the areas of work carried out by Sorbian artists to date (Sorbian painters' group, Sorbian writers' group, Sorbian music group, Sorbian film group)

Stiftung für das sorbische Volk

("Foundation for the Sorbian people")

Non-independent public charity foundation in the Free State of Saxony, based in Bautzen

Verband sorbischer Gesangsvereine e.V.

("Association of Sorbian choral societies")

Institute of Sorbian studies at the University of Leipzig

Lower Sorbian high school, Cottbus/Chosebuz

Sorbian high school, Bautzen/Budysin

Sorbische Fachschule für Sozialpädagogik, Bautzen/Budysin

("Sorbian college of social education")

This college is affiliated to the Sorbian Centre for Education and Development.

"Dr. J. Cyz" Sorbian language school, Milkel/Minakal

Sorbian National Ensemble, Bautzen/Budysin

Sorabia Film Studio, Bautzen/Budysin

Haus für sorbische Volkskultur, Bautzen/Budysin

("Institute for Sorbian national culture")

Active in the areas of music, dance, literature, fine arts and at the Sorbian folldore centre.

Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk broadcasting company/

Sorbian studio Bautzen/Budysin

Ostdeutscher Rundfunk Brandenburg
broadcasting company Brandenburg

Lower Sorbian editorial office Cottbus/Chosebuz

Deutsch-Sorbisches Volkstheater, Bautzen/Budysin
("German Sorbian national theatre"),

Domowina-Verlag GmbH, Bautzen/Budysin
(publishing company)

SERVIsound - Sorbian music publishing company, Fredersdorf
ENA - Music publishing company, Litschen

THE REGION OF THE CATHOLIC SORBS

The region of the Catholic Sorbs comprises 85 parishes and districts in the areas of Bautzen/Budysin, Kamenz/Kamjenc and Hoyerswerda/Wojerecy.

The dominions of Marienstern monastery near Kamenz and the cathedral chapter of St. Petri in Bautzen have been the mainstays for the survival of Catholicism in the region beyond the age of the Reformation and up to the present day. The Sorbs account for well over half the current population of the region. Originally, they lived primarily from agriculture and, to a lesser extent, from pond fish farming. In the small town of Wittichenau/Kulow, which was populated by townsmen who farmed smallholdings, the manufacturing sector then started to intensify, alongside handicrafts. Today, the population lives from agriculture, the surrounding industry and the service sector.

Special ethnic features include:

- Upper Sorbian language region with Sorbian schools,
- independent traditional costume (varies for different purposes), still worn by some children and young people today; apart from preserving customs, the traditional costumes are also worn above all for church festivals and events such as first communion, confirmation, Corpus Christi and pilgrimages; this is the only Sorbian costume region in which mamages still take place in traditional costume, observing the appropriate customs; typical features of the Catholic Sorbs' costume are beadwork for festive costumes and flat stitch embroidery,
- customs throughout the year (still practised today):
Marriage of the birds / Vogelhochzeit (25th January),
[Children's custom depicting the birds' thank-you for having been fed through the winter months];

Easter rinding on Easter Sunday,
witch burning (30th April),
maypole dancing and hurling,
singing on St. Martin's and St. Nicholas' Day,
fairs or procession around the "Borborka" (Sollschwitz/SulSecy near Wittichenau/Kulow) and
the "Miklaws" at Christmas time.

THE SORBS IN THE SCHLEIFE/SLEPO REGION

The Schleife/Slepo region is comprised of 7 towns and villages, with Sorbs accounting for around one third of the population. Formerly part of the mediatised principedom of Muskau/Muzakow, the Schleife/Slepo area, which is situated to the north-west of Weisswasser/Bela Woda, is similar to Lower Lausitz in terms of language, customs, and indeed the overall character of its national culture. The people of this region traditionally lived from forestry and agricultural work, but today's main employer is the coal mining industry, which has made considerable inroads into the Schleife/Slepo folklore region, and remnants of the glass industry.

Special ethnic features include:

- special ethnic architecture (log construction, clinker construction)
- independent Schleife dialect
- independent traditional costume region (diverse variations for different purposes and from village to village, still worn by some older women); the embroidery on the Schleife costumes largely preserves the character of traditional ethnic work, and is to be found primarily in the form of hemstitching, white eyelet embroidery and black cross-stitch work on tuckers, headscarves and chin straps,
- traditional ethnic music with the Sorbian bagpipes, the small and large Sorbian fiddle (e.g. in the Schleife Sorbian folklore ensemble)
- customs throughout the year (some still practised) include: Zampern [a traditional Carnival custom depicting the driving out of winter];
Easter fire, Easter singing, Easter egg decoration according to family tradition,
maypole dancing,
cock-beating, cock-plucking,
Spinte (the "Spinte", or spinning room, was an important place of singing for the Sorbian people) or procession around the "dzecetko" in the season of Advent (present-giving ceremony; vanes from village to village).

THE SORBS IN THE HOYERSWERDA/WOJERECY REGION

The Hoyerswerda/Wojerecy region today comprises 25 towns and villages, of which Sorbs

account for around one quarter of the population. In 1880 the region was still populated almost exclusively by Sorbian villagers. The Kingdom of Saxony lost the region to Prussia at the Congress of Vienna, and today it belongs to the north-eastern part of the Free State of Saxony. The special features of this region characterise Sorbian middle Lausitz. In former times, the population lived from agriculture and village handicrafts. Today, life in the region around Hoyerswerda/Wojerecy is dominated by coal mining.

Special ethnic features include:

- Intermediate dialect between Upper and Lower Lausitz,
- independent traditional costume region (varies for different purposes and from village to village, still worn by some old women today); embroidery work on the traditional Hoyerswerder costumes worn by the Sorbian peasant population primarily takes the form of cross-stitch work, eyelet embroidery, embroidered tulle and flat stitch embroidery,
- village traditions have been preserved (for decades, by the most diverse generations, e.g. in Bröthen/Michalken-Bretnjo/Michalki),
- customs throughout the year (some still practised) include:
fasting night (to drive out the winter),
Good Friday and Easter singing, decoration of Easter eggs,
maypole dancing and hurling,
harvest-time customs, such as, stollen riding stubble riding or potato ball,
"Spinte"/"Spinteball",
procession around the dzecatko (present-giving) at Christmas time or Christmas singing.

THE SORBS IN LOWER LAUSITZ / DOLNA LUZYCA

The Lower Sorbian region is comprised of over 60 towns and villages, and only a minority of the Sorbs/Wends living in this area are able to speak the Sorbian language. The Lower Sorbian population originally lived primarily from agriculture and fish farming. In Spreewald, part of Lower Lausitz, tourism continues to be an important source of income to this day. Concentrated coal mining operations are today destroying the Lower Sorbians' village communities.

Special ethnic features include:

- Lower Sorbian language region (now spoken almost exclusively by the older generation), a Lower Sorbian high school and Lower Sorbian language school serve to preserve the traditional language
- independent traditional costume area (varies for different purposes and from village to village, still worn by some older people, and by the young generation to preserve old customs, traditional costumes are decorated with flat stitch embroidery, which is to be found primarily on skirt ribbons, aprons, neck scarves and parts of the large head scarves; white embroidery is also to be

found in charming motifs; a characteristic feature of the Lower Sorbs' traditional costume is the "lapa"

(hood or tucked-in head scarf), which varies in size and shape from village to village,

- customs throughout the year (some still practised) include:

Zapust [traditional fasting night when traditional costume is worn];

Easter fire,

harvest-time customs, such as cock-beating, cock-plucking, stubble riding

and frog-carting or at Christmas time, "Jansojki bog" visits the children in Jänschwalde/Jansojce near Cottbus/Chosebuz.

EXCERPT FROM THE CONSTITUTION OF THE FREE STATE OF SAXONY CONCERNING THE SORBIAN PEOPLE

Article 2 (State capital and state symbols)

(1) The capital city of the Free State is Dresden.

(2) The state colours are white and green.

(3) The state coat of arms shows a field divided nine times into black on gold with a green diagonal lozenge to the right. The further details are stipulated by a law.

(4) In the area of Sorbian settlement, the Sorbian state colours and coat of arms, enjoy equal status to the State flag and the State coat of arms; in the Silesian part of the State, the colours and coat of arms of Lower Silesia enjoy equal status to the State flag and the State coat of arms.

Article 5

The population of the Free State of Saxony is comprised of citizens of German, Sorbian and other nationalities. The state recognises the right to live in ones native country.

(2) The State guarantees and protects the rights of national and ethnic minorities of German nationality to preserve their identity, language, religion, culture and customs.

(3) The State respects the interests of foreign minorities legally resident in the State.

Article 6

(1) The citizens of Sorbian nationality who live in the State constitute an inherent part of the people of the State and enjoy equal rights with the remaining people of the State. The State guarantees and protects their right to preserve their identity and to preserve and develop their traditional language, culture and customs, in particular by way of schools, pre-school and cultural establishments.

(2) The necessities of the Sorbian people are to be taken into consideration in regional and local planning. The German-Sorbian character of the Sorbian ethnic group's area of settlement is to be maintained.

(3) The cooperation between Sorbs beyond the State boundaries, particularly in Upper and Lower Lausitz, is in the interests of the State.

EXCERPT FROM THE CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF BRANDENBURG

Section 4: Rights of the Sorbs (Wends)

Article 25 (Rights of the Sorbs/Wends)

(1) The right of the Sorbian people to protect, preserve and maintain their national identity and their traditional area of settlement is guaranteed. The State, the local government authorities and municipal bodies shall promote the implementation of this right, in particular supporting cultural independence and contributing towards effective political organisation of the Sorbian people.

(2) The State shall work towards securing cultural autonomy for the Sorbs beyond the State boundaries.

(3) The Sorbs possess the right to preserve and promote the Sorbian language and culture in public life and to teach the language at schools and nurseries.

(4) In the area of Sorbian settlement the Sorbian language is to be incorporated into official headings. The Sorbian flag has the colours blue, red and white.

(5) The organisation of the Sorbs' rights is regulated by a law. This law is to ensure that Sorbian representatives are involved in matters concerning the Sorbs, in particular legislation.

Accessed September 2, 2012 at <http://www.rastko.rs/rastko-lu/istorija/historie.htm>