

Walter Wenzel: The Land of the *Besunzane* and *Milzane* – the Original Homeland of the Upper Sorbs

The oldest settlement area of the ancestors of the today's Upper Sorbs, which stretched from the Neißة valley in the east to the upper reaches of the Schwarzer Elster and its tributaries in the west, is regarded as the original homeland of Upper Sorbs. Using the typology, geography and the stratigraphy of place names, along with soil science, this is an attempt to discover the oldest settlement centres, from which further land development ensued. This investigation also takes into account Slav archaeological finds, forms of settlement as well as proper names, in order to reconstruct the conditions of the oldest Slav settlements, which are illustrated by six maps. I also discuss the names of the tribes and territories, *Besunzane*, *Milzane*, *Milsca* and *Zagôst*, which are the subject of controversy for researchers.

Lubina Mahling: Pietism and the Sorbs. Modernisation through Belief

Pietism in the 18th Century fundamentally changed Sorbian, Protestant society. The most decisive influence was the pietism of Herrnhut, which was characterised by the heavy involvement of the laity. Extensive educational processes were instituted under its influence; the written word gained ground in Sorbian society, which up until then had been based to a large extent on oral traditions. The increasing use of the written word enabled and accelerated pluralisation and social differentiation amongst the Protestant Sorbs. Competing groups emerged within the Protestant community, which had an invigorating effect on the Sorbian book market.

The Upper Lusatian aristocracy played a large part in these modernisation processes, led by the chief administrative official, Holy Roman Imperial Count Friedrich Caspar von Gersdorf, a distant cousin of Nikolaus Ludwig of Zinzendorf. Gersdorf supported the religious lay movement, encouraged the printing of numerous religious books and founded a number of schools. The Klix seminary and the Uhyst institutes, two institutions, which were founded particularly with Sorbian students in mind, offering an in-depth academic and vocational education, are particularly important from a cultural and historical point of view.

Trudla Malinkowa: On Uncertainty concerning the Oldest Sorbian Inscriptions

Assumptions that there might be Sorbian inscriptions from the late Middle Ages or the time of the Reformation have proved to be incorrect. The first mentions of Sorbian inscriptions are found in the second half of the 17th Century in contexts linked to both Wendish churches in Bautzen, in German at the Lutheran Church of St. Michael (1666) and in Latin at the Catholic Parish Church of Our Dear Lady (1669, 1691, 1694). A further Latin inscription with a Sorbian connection originated a century later from the Wendish Church in Muskau (1781).

Inscriptions in the Sorbian language can be identified from the first half of the 18th Century, firstly in private contexts in Göda (1735), then on the tombs of an inhabitant of Seidau near Bautzen (1775), as well as of Lutheran pastors in Gaußig (1780) and Malschwitz (1785, 1798) and of a Catholic priest in Radibor (1794). The first Sorbian and bilingual inscriptions on public monuments originate from the end of the 18th Cen-

ture. These include the steles of Auritz (circa 1790), and plaques with a Latin-Sorbian inscription in Malschwitz (1788), with a Sorbian inscription in Bautzen (1802) and a German-Sorbian inscription in Oßling (1805). According to the latest research the earliest Sorbian inscriptions originate in the Upper Sorbian area in and around Bautzen, mostly in the Protestant region, in one case in the Catholic region. Almost all can be traced back to Lutheran pastors who had been influenced by Luther's principle of using the mother tongue. The inscriptions are an indicator of longer-term developments in the Bautzen region, where the basis for the cultural awakening at the time of the so-called national renaissance in the middle of the 19th Century was laid.

Walter Koschmal: Beyond a 'Homeland' at Home: On Sorbian Transnationality

The themes of 'homeland' and homeland discourse play a central role in Sorbian culture. That which is specific to and foreign to its culture is often strictly separated, for example by Jan Skala in the journal *Kulturwille* (1925). This article discusses the reasons – using amongst others the example of the polemical debate between Johannes Urzidil and Skala – for the emphasis on exclusion, as opposed to transitional processes. An ambivalent and variable concept of homeland is developed as a modern, regionally influenced one. This has already been formulated in Sorbian lyric poetry in the 20th Century. The transnational concept of homeland is associated with a pluralistic Sorbian identity. It no longer needs to set itself apart from other European regional identities and 'homelands'.

Dietrich Scholze: Assimilation as a threat to Sorbian ethnic identity

In this context assimilation means a process in which ethnic groups gradually adapt to other mostly larger communities by assimilation or fusion. This process of adaptation is expressed above all in the adoption of markers such as language, culture and identity. In relation to the Lusatian Sorbs this assimilation means as a rule complete absorption into the German nation; corresponding tendencies can be observed – with differing intensity – over the last approximately thousand years.

In sociological research a distinction is made between voluntary, 'natural' and forced, essentially violent assimilation. Natural assimilation includes mostly structural assimilation to demographic, political or cultural conditions in a certain historical period. After the defeat of Germany in the Second World War the period of forced Germanisation of the Sorbs by the state ended. Despite state support the ending of the assimilation of the Lusatian Sorbs was also not achieved in the GDR. The influence of social, political, economic and cultural factors carried on in Lower Lusatia and in the Protestant part of Upper Lusatia, and this also applies to the 25 years after the political turning point of 1989/90. By contrast the fact that amongst the approximately 12-15,000 Catholic Upper Sorbs of today only a low level of assimilation by the German majority has occurred since 1800, as a result of their double demarcation by nationality and religion, can be regarded as an ethnic-cultural phenomenon.

Maria Mirtschin: Photographs of Sorbs in the Context of the Exhibition of Saxon Art and Craft Work in Dresden in 1896

While photography had already become an established part of everyday experience and practice in the second half of the 19th Century, as a medium for preserving family memories, a paradigmatic shift occurred at the end of the century. It achieved more and more importance as a part of public memory. The key event, which has continued to have an impact in the present day, was the intensive use of photography by the Sorbian Museum at the exhibition of Saxon art and craft work in Dresden in 1896. The everyday world of Sorbian life was able in this context to gain respect and recognition beyond an inner circle of people. The specific nature of Sorbian folk culture was brought home to a wide public through the use of photography. The fact that this sounding-board was created, on which the effect of photographs of Sorbian folk costumes could unfold, could be ascribed to the fact that the middle classes, in their search for a new sense of meaning at the end of the 19th Century, turned to their cultural traditions, which were supposedly to be found in their rural, peasant backgrounds. At the same time the visual quality of this medium broke through the cultural isolation, which had clung to Sorbian culture up until then, as a result of the linguistic exclusivity of its creations. The article also considers the consequences of this development for the ethnic and cultural self awareness of the Sorbs, as well as for its impact on the outside world.

Hans-Werner Goetz: The Slavs as Perceived by Thietmar von Merseburg at the Beginning of the 11th Century

The complex chronicle of Thietmar of Merseburg is an inestimable source not only for Ottonian history, but also for the ideas and conceptions of its author. Concerning his perception of the Slavs, Thietmar sets himself apart from the Slavs as a linguistic as well as an ethnic community. Concerning his terminology, the Slavic language includes Bohemia and Poland, whereas the “people” of the Slavs seem to be restricted to the region between the rivers Elbe and Oder. These Slavs are not a political unity, but divided into numerous peoples. After the great rebellion of the *Liutici* in 983, political delimitation corresponds to a religious perception that is central to Thietmar’s mindset: he regards the Slavs primarily as pagans. Although he offers detailed prescriptions of the pagan cults and admits the existence of different customs of every small region, these cults are not specifically Slavic, but testify to the stereotyped, characteristic features of a traditional image of paganism, with the worship of idols, sacred groves, sacrifices and oracles. Thietmar includes the superstitions of the (semi-Christian) population of his diocese into this picture. The close association of a Slavic population with paganism leads Thietmar almost throughout to a negative assessment, which, however, is not exclusively motivated by religious motifs and reveals his prejudices against both the ethnic and religious “Other”.

Edmund Pech: Milceni, Luzici and Glomaci-Daleminci. Controversies concerning the early History of the Sorbs

In 631 the Sorbian tribes were mentioned for the first time in written form in the chronicle of Fredegar. Their Prince Dervan, according to the chronicler, deserted the Frankish

King Dagobert I and with his followers joined Samo's Empire, which had come into being in Bohemia and Moravia. As evidence of this early presence of the Sorbs in the Elbe-Saale area archaeologists found a number of early Slav settlements, which were dated to the 6th or 7th Century.

This dating of the Slav migration is, however, disputed by recent research evidence. Archaeological remains can be dated more exactly than previously by using dendrochronology. Archaeologists have examined a large amount of wooden building material in the last two decades, which could be assigned to the 8th Century. On the other hand, evidence from the 6th and 7th Century is completely missing. The researchers conclude from this that no comprehensive Slav settlement east of the Elbe and Saale occurred before the year 700. Further controversies concerning the early history of the Sorbs are considered together with the question of migration.

Friedrich Pollack: The Citizen's Oath and the Wend Clause – Sorbs in the Medieval and Early Modern Town. New Perspectives on an old Research Problem (with an Edited Version of two Kamenz Citizen's Oaths from the 18th Century)

The motive for this article was the re-discovery by the author of an eighteenth-Century Sorbian citizen's oath from Kamenz, which had been thought to be lost. To this day two very different sources of evidence have dominated the discussion about whether there were or could possibly have been Sorbian town populations in Lusatia in the Middle Ages and the early modern period. On the one hand citizen's oaths in Sorbian appear to provide absolute proof of this possibility. On the other hand we know of discriminatory regulations (the so-called 'Wend clause'), intended to make access for Sorbs to civic rights or entry into guilds extremely difficult or impossible.

Despite constant attention being paid by Sorbian and German historians to this question, a systematic, critical examination and contextualisation of these contradictory phenomena has to this day not been developed. For this reason a series of generalisations and prejudices about the situation of the Sorbs in the towns of the pre-modern period have persisted. Using the Kamenz example as a basis, several errors in earlier historical writing are corrected in this article. At the same time several questions and problems are presented as guidance for further research. In conclusion the newly discovered Sorbian and the German citizen's oath from Kamenz are presented in a critical edition.