



*Serby – Serbja
Sorbs / Wends*

Serby

The Sorbs

are the smallest minority of Slavonic people. They are descendants of the Slavonic tribes who settled the country more than 1,400 years ago between Oder and Elbe/Saale, which is between the Baltic Sea and the German lower mountain ranges. After the loss of their political independence in the 10th century, their settled areas were reduced through assimilation and by a deliberate Germanisation. Only the descendants of the Upper Lusatian Milceny and the Lower Lusatian Luticy succeeded in maintaining their Sorbian/Wendish language and culture. The Sorbs/Wends do not have other groups in bordering countries.

sedleński rum

The settlement area of the Sorbs

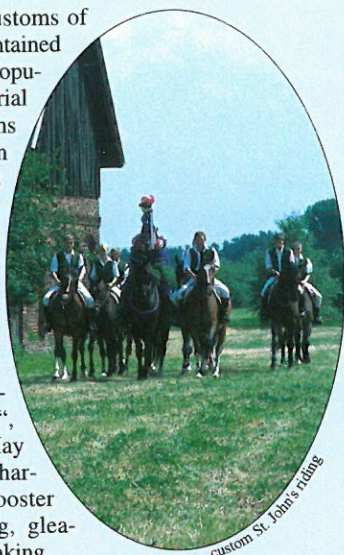
has been shrinking for 1.000 years. The increasing dominance of the German language and culture in all areas of life, frequently strengthened by suppression of the Sorbian/Wendish in churches, schools and public sector led to a considerable loss of the Sorbian language and culture.



Sorbian settlement area today

serbske nałogi The Sorbian customs

are like many Slavonic customs of pagan origin. They are maintained in modified form and are popular even today, with territorial differences. Many customs and traditions happen around Christian holidays (at Christmas and Easter) or one can find them in the course of the farming year in rural areas. There are common winter and spring customs like the „Birds' Wedding“, Wendish carnival, Easter bonfires and „witch burnings“, May tree erection and May tree throwing, as well as harvest customs such as rooster plucking, rooster striking, gleaning, riding and wreath making. Young girls often wear national costumes at these occasions.



serbska konfesija The Religion of the Sorbs/Wends

The *catholic* Sorbian Lusatia is a relatively closed area between Bautzen, Kamenz and Hoyerswerda, where more than 15.000 Sorbian catholics live in nine communities. The daily colloquial language in families, schools, kindergartens and in the public life is predominantly Sorbian.

There are no more *Lutheran* communities, in Middle and Lower Lusatia, with a majority of Sorbian members. However there are still native speakers of Sorbian in almost all Lutheran communities and since the end of the 80's there has been a revival of Wendish services at church. Not all Sorbs belong to a particular religion.



The Wendish Church in Cottbus

DOMOWINA - Zwězk Łužyskich Serbow z.t.

DOMOWINA - Federation of Lusatian Sorbs



The DOMOWINA - Federation of Lusatian Sorbs was created in Hoyerswerda on the 13th of October 1912 as the parent federation of Sorbian associations. It was forbidden in 1937 by the National Socialist regime, but it was founded again after World War II and restructured after German reunification. Its goal today

is to represent the democratic and national interests of all Sorbs/Wends in the Free State of Saxony, State of Brandenburg and outside Lusatia as well as to support and to develop the Sorbian/Wendish language and culture. The Federal Administration of the DOMOWINA is elected democratically and represents all groups and interests of the Sorbian/Wendish people.

Założba za serbski lud

The foundation for the Sorbian people



was founded on the 19th of October 1991 in Lohsa near Hoyerswerda in the Free State of Saxony, the State of Brandenburg and the Federal Government of Germany.

It is a foundation based on public law aiming at the conservation and development of the Sorbian language and culture. Thus the material basis for the promotion of important Sorbian institutions as well as for the promotion of projects and individual measures has been created.

On the 1st of January 1999 the state contract between Saxony and Brandenburg was signed and the foundation became a fully liable foundation in public law.

was created on the 1st of January 2001 in Bautzen.

Its major task is the revitalization of the Sorbian/Wendish language starting from the infant age with the goal of learning and using the language as means of communication.

The Sorbian School Association which was founded in 1990 started to create WITAJ - kindergartens and - groups in Lusatia in 1998, in which the Sorbian/Wendish language is learned by an immersion method. The WITAJ language center continues these initiatives, trains educators in language courses and produces Sorbian school books and additional materials for the WITAJ Project and the Sorbian classes at schools.

The range of language projects extends from the development of computer learning games to meetings with young people and families.

Call to the WITAJ Project

The DOMOWINA Federal Administration calls all associations, members of the Domowina and the Sorbian/Wendish population in all parts of the Lausitz to support the WITAJ Project with donations. The number of those who speak Wendish and/or Sorbian, should not be decreased further. With the financial means from this WITAJ fund the aim is to increase the number of Wendish -speaking children in kindergartens and to stabilize and extend the net of Sorbian/Wendish schools. Contributions demonstrate the firm will of all Sorbian/Wendish groups who are ready to help financially to retain our language and culture. We are also grateful for other forms of support, which we receive from our fellow German citizens.



serbska kultura

The Sorbian culture

started to develop as a bourgeois culture in the middle of the 19th century. With the Young Sorbian Movement national consciousness had a break-through. It was the period of the Sorbian national reincarnation.

There are few other cultures of comparable size, who achieved such considerable achievements (approximately 60.000) in art, culture and science.

serbske drastwy

The National Costumes' Region

in the Sorbian Lusatia forms the largest National Costumes' Region in Germany.



variations of national costumes

From the 10 original national costume variations there are still 4 alive in the regions around Bautzen, Schleife, Hoyerswerda and Cottbus. Here the national costume is still worn in public life, particularly by the older generation. Many women and girls have the colorful, festive costumes and wear them for specific occasions. National costume heritage clubs have developed in many places. The national costume is an important factor of national identity for the Sorbs/Wends as a symbol of national culture.



Lower Lusatian festive costume



Dance costume from Hoyerswerdaer



Costume of catholic Sorbs

serbska rěc

The Sorbian/Wendish language

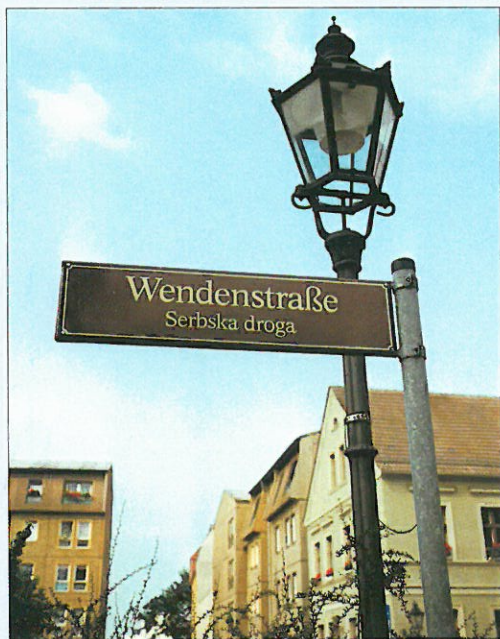
retained many Ancient Slavonic characteristics. After the Lutherisation several written forms of Sorbian developed based on different dialects. In the middle of the 19th century two languages were generally accepted: the Upper Sorbian written language based on the dialect around Bautzen which was the obligatory Sorbian public standard in Upper Lusatia and the Lower Sorbian language based on the dialect around Cottbus in Lower Lusatia.

In the border areas of both regions a transition dialect has developed, which unites elements of both languages.

Sorbs and Wends

are equivalent terms. Roman writers called all Slavonic tribes which settled in Central and Eastern Germany as well as in the Alps region (Austria) „Veneti“. For many centuries the name „Wends“ or „Winds“ was used in the German language.

The term „Sorbs“ is derived from the Sorbian terms „Serbja“ and „Serby“. The delegates of the 1st General Meeting of DOMOWINA`s Lower Lusatian Association voted for the German use of the term Sorben/Wenden on the 31st of May 1991.



Everywhere in the Sorbian Lusatia you will find bilingual signposts

Serbski narod
(*Mina Witkojc*)

Su wot něga ší zabijali
a starcali ší do rowa.
Su smjertny kjarliž pšespiwali
ší do końca a wotnowa.

Pšez tysac lětow zasušony
sy k smjerši był - a njezginjoš.
Sy wobkusany, rozdrobjony,
wšak žywy hyšći zdychujoš.

Pšez tysac lětow w srjejži ludu
su wušoby se gorili,
a za tebjje se goriš budu,
až měra raz se dopočni.

Wše do žěła! Jo trjeba šćitaš!
Jo trjeba zagnaš smjertnu seň!
Juž tam a tudy chapja switaš.
Nam jan ze žěła skwišo žeň!

For further information about Sorbian history, language and culture in the Lower - and Upper Lusatia please visit our website: www.sorben.com

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