

Katja Atanasov/Alfred Roggan/Simon Alfred Roggan: Lower Sorbian/Wendish public signs in Lower Lusatia from the 19th to the middle of the 20th Century. A documentation

It can be demonstrated that Lower Sorbian has been used in the public sphere for 165 years. However, up to 1945 (or 1937) the language did not go beyond the religious or ritual sphere. The use of Lower Sorbian on street signs and buildings was rare. There were two exceptions: the land survey of Drebkau in 1846 by the Prussian state and the signs on the branch of the Wendish Volksbank AG in Cottbus (1928–1933).

As a result the work of committed priests in Cottbus and the surrounding area was of decisive importance. Lower Sorbian inscriptions, mostly biblical sayings, can be found on galleries, bells and confirmation certificates. In addition, there are Lower Sorbian words on gravestones; however, only a few of these are preserved due to the length of time the graves have existed. The term “Wendish Regional Church” can contribute to an understanding of the historical and artistic particularities of Lower Lusatia and to a comparison with other regions of Germany.

Peter Schurmann: Sorbian/Wendish institutions in the Weimar Republic. On the history of the Cottbus branch of the Wendish Volksbank

The only work so far on the history of the Wendish Volksbank by Alfred Simon appeared almost 50 years ago. The author only concentrated however on the causes of its “collapse”. The achievements of the banking enterprise with its headquarters in Bautzen for the Sorbian population in general and the particular events at its most important branch in Cottbus were hardly mentioned. New findings on these matters have been assembled in this contribution. In addition, the attempt by the employees of the bank to restructure the “joint-stock company in liquidation” as a cooperative is described. There is however need for further research to provide answers to particular political-economic questions, e.g. as to whether the plan, which was pursued for several years, failed because the Nazi authorities refused to give support to the Lausitzer Wirtschaftsbank as the successor to the Volksbank.

Alfred Roggan: Sorbian (Wendish) Lieberose/Luboraz

In this illustrated study the author investigates the sources which provide evidence of the many centuries in which Sorbs and Germans have lived alongside each other in the Lower Lusatian town of Lieberose/Luboraz (currently around 2,000 inhabitants). He uses historical facts to illustrate this (the castle ramparts, early settlement), typical social conflicts from the feudal period, as well as elements specific to the literary, religious and cultural life of the town (e.g. the civic oath, church decrees, songs and traditional costumes).

In conclusion, he demonstrates that this small town, which was ceded in 1815 by Saxony to the kingdom of Prussia, is still marked today by Sorbian (Wendish) influences, which were active from the middle ages into the nineteenth century. In the succeeding 200 years this part of its culture and way of life has frequently been suppressed in the public awareness of the region.

Steffen Groß: Why a well-understood national consciousness and nationalism are two totally different things

When you read Jan Skala's programmatic work "Wo serbskich prašenjach" (1922) almost ninety years later, its incredible topicality is almost immediately apparent. It is very striking that current discussions often revolve around the question of the "protection" or the "preservation" of traditions etc. On the other hand the development or statement of aims are seldom discussed. As a result there is hardly any justification to talk of Sorbian nationalism, as Sorbs already lack a sufficiently broad national consciousness and a well-understood self interest in their own nationality. But if their national consciousness is underdeveloped, then their nationalism cannot be excessive, nor can it be too intense. It is more the case that the Sorbian people and many Sorbs (still) have a problematic tendency to question their own identity and to be at odds with it. Sorbs would do well to to have a somewhat more self confident, patriotic attitude based on an insight into their own origins, and to be conscious of the fact that cultural diversity is something of high value, which needs to be developed dynamically.

Katja Brankačec: Some remarks on the relationship between aspect and the iterative in Sorbian

This article summarises the situation of research on aspect in Sorbian with particular reference to Upper Sorbian. For this purpose results achieved from research into Sorbian are set against more recent general Slavonic studies on aspect. Both the description in older Sorbian grammars is dealt with as well all the important contributions on aspect in modern Upper Sorbian. A comparison of these results with comparative Slavonic examinations of aspect, as well as with statements on the origins of Slavonic aspect highlights the fact that aspect in Sorbian with regard to the iterative behaves differently from Russian, but also from other West Slavonic languages. The specific role of the iterative is often only mentioned in passing in the works on aspect in Sorbian, and therefore is highlighted in this article.

Walter Wenzel: Social differentiation of Lower Sorbs in the late middle ages and in the early modern period, as reflected in their surnames. Based on sources from the 14th to the 18th Century

Using Lower Sorbian surnames based on political-institutional, socio-economic and class-specific terms this article attempts to describe in greater detail the development of the social structure of the Lower Sorbian rural population in the centuries after the German conquest in the late middle ages and the early modern period. The names in question are not only recorded statistically, and the oldest references listed and explained etymologically, but are also presented on ten maps, so that an exact idea of their geographical spread can be conveyed. The investigation, which is also based on the relevant findings of historical research, is extended to include a larger number of Lower Sorbian professional names in order to obtain a deeper insight into the social, economic and social differentiation caused by the growing division of labour.