

Oskar Kolberg's

Volume on

“Łużyce”[Lusatia] *



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*O. Kolberg, (1985). *Materiały do etnografii Słowian zachodnich i południowych. Łużyce* [Materials for the Ethnography of Western and Southern Slavs. Lusatia], *Dzieła wszystkie* [Complete Works], vol. 59/1. Wrocław-Poznań: IOK.

ABSTRACT

Oskar Kolberg never visited Lusatia, and did not come in direct contact with the Sorbs. Still, hoping to carry out his original project of a collection of melodies from all Slavic nations, Kolberg could not ignore Lusatian songs and dances. The volume *Materiały do etnografii Słowian Zachodnich i Południowych*, Part 1: *Łużyce* is made up of three sections. The first one contains Kolberg's translations to the Polish language and excerpts from Jan Arnošt Smoler's monumental work *Volkslieder der Sorben in der Ober- und Niederlausitz / Pěsnički hornich a delnich Łužiskich Serbow*. The second part includes Sorbian materials from the collection of Andrzej Kucharski, who in the years 1826–1827 studied the history, literature and language of Lusatians. The third part contains Kolberg's own rather scarce lexical and bibliographical notes. The aim of this article is to take note of a not-so-well-known volume of Kolberg's folk-musical collection and to discuss the meaning of this publication nowadays.

Keywords: Oskar Kolberg, Jan Arnošt Smoler, Andrzej Kucharski, Sorbs, Sorbian Music and Traditions, Lusatia

Oskar Kolberg not only collected the traditional music of the Polish ethnic area, but also studied the cultures of other Slavic peoples. At the very beginning of his research work (in the 1830s) he planned to bring together materials from all around the Slavic world, but he did not have sufficient means to undertake field studies in such a vast territory. This forced him to alter his initial plans and eventually specialise in the Polish linguistic area. His collections devoted to the West Slavs (Czechs, Slovaks and Lusatians – also known as Sorbs), South Slavs (Slovenians, Croatians) and East Slavs (Belarus-Polesie, Volhynia, Red Ruthenia, Podolia – except for Pokuttia) and Lithuanians were published after Kolberg's death¹, which may suggest that he did not treat this work as a priority.

Where did the materials on these regions, collected by Kolberg, come from? Apart from the Polish language area, Kolberg was most frequently active in the Eastern Slavic regions, which was facilitated by the possibility to use the hospitality of his friends – local landed gentry families². In the case of the Czech Republic, he used, above

all, the materials from the studies by Andrzej Kucharski, a philologist and researcher working in the Slavic lands, and Václav Dunder, a Czech translator and ethnographer. He could get acquainted with the music of Slovakia during his trips to the Tatra mountains, Podhale, Pieniny and Beskid mountain ranges. In Slovenia and Croatia Kolberg stayed for just a few weeks, which was much too short to conduct detailed research. During his trips he would stop in Vienna and supplement his collections with materials found in local libraries. He never visited Lusatia, and did not come in direct contact with the Sorbs. Still, hoping to carry out his original project of a collection of melodies from all Slavic nations, Kolberg could not ignore Lusatian songs and dances. His information about Lusatians was taken, above all, from Polish and foreign books and from people keenly interested in this smallest of Slavic ethnic groups. Kolberg was in close contact with Wacław Aleksander Maciejowski³, who knew Jan Arnošt Smoler⁴ personally. It is quite possible, although there is no firm evidence, that before taking up work on his series *Lud. Jego zwyczaję, sposób życia, mowa, podania, przysłowia, obrzędy, gusła, zabawy, pieśni, muzyka i tańce* [*The People, Its Customs, Lifestyle, Speech, Tales, Proverbs, Rituals, Superstitions, Games, Songs, Music and Dance*] Kolberg had become acquainted with Smoler's collection and probably this very book influenced the shape of his work⁵. While preparing the volume on Lusatia, Kolberg may also have been inspired by his good friend, Alfons Parczewski (1849–1933), a university professor in Warsaw and Vilnius, expert on the Lusatian culture and the publisher of a Lower Lusatian calendar *Pratytja*⁶. It is also important

3 Subscriber to the collection: *Pěsnički hornich a delnich Łužiskich Serbow* [Songs of the Upper and Lower Lusatian Sorbs] (1841/43); O. Kolberg, (1985). *Materiały do etnografii Słowian zachodnich i południowych*. Łużyce, p. IX.

4 Lusatian philologist, writer and publisher, one of the most important representatives of the Lusatian national revival of the 19th century.

5 O. Kolberg, (1985). *Materiały do etnografii Słowian zachodnich i południowych*. Łużyce, p. IX.

6 It is worth noting here that the relations between Lusatians and their Eastern neighbours have a long history. Czechs and Poles show a special interest in Lusatians. For example, already in 1706 in Prague a Lusatian Seminary was established. Also Poles were involved in the Lusatian cause, although initially these were just individual initiatives. Only after 1925 was the Association of Friends of the Lusatian Nation established in Warsaw; the Association later published a monthly entitled "Biuletyn Serbo-Łużycki" ["The Sorbian Bulletin"]. In Katowice,

1 *Dziela wszystkie Oskara Kolberga. Informator wydawniczy* [Oskar Kolberg's Complete Works: The Publisher's Guide] (1991). Poznań: Polskie Towarzystwo Ludoznawcze, pp. 10–11; Oskar Kolberg (1814–1890). *Przewodnik po wystawie biograficznej* [Guide to a Biographical Exhibition] (1997). Przysucha: Oskar Kolberg Museum in Przysucha, p. 16.

2 See: *Mapa zasięgów monografii regionalnych O. Kolberga* [The map of regions from O. Kolberg monographs]; <http://www.oskarkolberg.pl/page.php/1/show/7/> (20.09.2014).

to note that for five years – as Kolberg wrote in a sketch to his autobiography – he was taught music by “Vetter, a Lusatian Wend from Mużaków [Bad Muskau], who spoke broken Polish.”⁷ The contact with his teacher could also influence Kolberg. Similarly important for him was the contact with his nanny from the Sandomierz region.

What is the place of the *Łużyce* volume among publications related to the musical culture of Lusatians? The first Sorbian publication that included musical sources was a Lusatian songbook published in 1574 by a Lower Lusatian priest, Albinus Mollerus (1541–1618)⁸. Around 1700 the *Historia populi et rituum Lusatiae superioris* was written by a Sorbian clergyman, Abraham Frenzel (1656–1740). This manuscript, an irreplaceable source of knowledge about the life of the village folk of the time, initiated the study of Sorbian folklore, which stemmed from the budding interest in the language and culture of Lusatia at German universities. It is also impossible to ignore the manuscript collection of folk songs and dance melodies titled *Kralowy huslerski spěwnik* [Kral the Fiddler's Songbook]⁹ from around 1770. It includes 131 song melodies and 50 of the oldest Sorbian dance melodies. The next important work was the publication by Jan Hórčanski (1722–1799) *Von den Sitten und Gebräuchen der heutigen Wenden* (1782), based most probably on the author's own observation and containing detailed descriptions. However, it was only in the 19th century that more attention started to be paid to the music of Lusatians, and especially to their traditional songs. This was due to *Stimmen der Völker in Liedern* by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), called a true friend of the Slavs¹⁰. In the years 1841/1843 Jan Arnošt Smoler (1816–1884) published his monumental

work *Volkslieder der Sorben in der Ober- und Niederlausitz / Pěsnički hornich a delnich Łužiskich Serbow*, encouraging a numerous group of researchers to take up the study of Sorbian culture in the fields of ethnography and ethnomusicology. In the second half of the 19th century the songs and instrumental music of Lusatia were studied, among others, by Arnošt Muka (1854–1932) and two Czech researchers – Ludvik Kuba (1856–1954) and Adolf Černý (1864–1952). The results of these studies were published, among others, in the journal “Časopis Mačicy Serbskeje” [“Lusatian Motherland Journal”]¹¹.

Kolberg's volume on Lusatia is made up of three parts. The first one contains Kolberg's translations into the Polish language and excerpts from the collection of Smoler and Haupt, already mentioned above. Kolberg translated an extensive description of wedding rituals and copied the accompanying songs (with the lyrics left in the original Sorbian language¹²), and also translated fragments of other chapters on customs and rituals.

The second part includes Lusatian materials from the collection of Andrzej Kucharski, who in the years 1826–1827 studied the history, literature and language of Lusatians. From his manuscripts, today considered lost, Kolberg included in his publication 253 Sorbian songs (some of them with melodies), mostly from Lower Lusatia, as well as notes on the language. The third part contains his own scarce lexical and bibliographical notes, on which I will not concentrate further in this paper.

the Friends of Sorbs association was established in 1936. In the same period, there were two other pro-Sorbian associations in Poland: in Poznań and in Kraków. After the lifting of the official ban on supporting the Lusatian cause, which was in force during the World War II, new pro-Lusatian associations were established in various cities of Poland; Z. Gajewski, (2008). *Niektóre sprawy słowiańskie* [Some Slavic Issues]. Teresin: Perła Publishing House, pp. 104–106.

7 O. Kolberg, (1985). *Materiały do etnografii Słowian zachodnich i południowych. Łużyce*, p. V.

8 The same author also worked on the translation of the Bible into the Lusatian language.

9 *Das Kralische Geigenspielbuch. Kralowy huslerski spěwnik* (1983). Budyšin/Bautzen: LND.

10 Tomasz Nawka (former director of the Sorbian Museum in Bautzen), from unpublished presentation at the conference on the occasion of the 200th birth anniversary of Oskar Kolberg, Poznań, 23.05.2014.

11 The same journal later featured more texts on the topic, such as for example a series of monographs on the Lusatian traditional song by Bjarnat Krawc (1861–1948) or works by Michał Hórnik (1833–1894) and Matej Handrik-Slepjanski (1864–1946). In 1931 and 1953 Edmund Schneeweis (1886–1964) published his work *Feste und Volksbräuche der Sorben*, documenting the rituals and customs of the family and annual cycles of the Sorbs. Another publication, highly valuable due to its dimensions, the effort devoted to field studies and wealth of the previously untapped sources and information, is *Sorbische Volksmusikanten und Musikinstrumente* (1963) by Jan Rawp (1928–2007). A Czech author, Josef Režný (1924–2012), wrote a very significant publication titled *Der sorbische Dudelsack* (1993), which initiated the reintroduction of bagpipe playing among Lusatians. Režný was the first researcher to present the Lusatian bagpipe in the international context, comparing it, among others, to Polish and Czech bagpipes. Currently the annual *Lětopis* plays the role of the main promoter of contemporary research on the traditional music of the Sorbs, and among the most active musicologists and ethnomusicologists currently working on the musical culture of the Lusatians one should list, among others, Detlev Kobjely, Juro Měšk, Měrk Šofty, Rosemary Statelova and Theresa Jacobs.

12 Text deciphered from the manuscript by Frido Michalk, a Lusatian, researcher of Slavic and Sorbian cultures.

In the preface, three publishers attempt to define precisely the authorship of these sources, re-create the chronology of their appearance, and, in relation to the manuscripts from Kucharski's archives, also deal with the linguistic side of these writings.

Kolberg's collection of Sorbian melodies, comprising only 61 tunes, consist of copies from third-party sources and is rather haphazard. This is probably caused by the fact that Kolberg had no contact with the Lusatian people. Kolberg never did any research in Lusatia itself, so he did not document any of the local repertoire personally. Bogusław Linette claims in the introduction to the volume that it may be compared in character to Kolberg's monograph on Silesia, which he did not visit either, "and the musical materials obtained from third-party sources are strikingly limited in scope"¹³.

One could assume that the first part of the volume – the materials copied by Kolberg from Smoler's collection – would not make any substantial contribution to the pool of knowledge about Lusatian traditional music, as it is just a reissue of materials from an already existing, much more extensive work. However, Kolberg, unlike Smoler, presented the Lusatian wedding in a very detailed and vivid manner, combining the descriptions of wedding traditions and customs (although he unintentionally confused the sequence of segments) with musical examples (in accordance with Smoler's footnotes and his own resources). Moreover, Kolberg merged the description of Upper Lusatian and Lower Lusatian weddings, commenting that Slavic tribes in their customs and traditions "show great conformity. Therefore, the more such conformity must be observed between the wedding rituals of North and South Lusatia."¹⁴ A completely new way of ordering material by Kolberg allows the reader to look at the collection from a different perspective. Apart from the reconstruction of the typological model of a Lusatian wedding, Kolberg managed to distinguish those moments of the wedding which differ according to the Northern and Southern traditions. Under the title "Other Fragments", the publishers of the volume included excerpts from Kolberg which are not related to the wedding. The description of the Sorbian dance, included there, is interesting from today's point of view. Smoler claims that Lusatians have only one "national" dance, which is danced to all melodies published in his volume and

marked as "tempo di menuetto, polacca i serbski"¹⁵. The same is claimed by Kolberg¹⁶. However, this is nearly impossible, taking into account the difference of character of dances written down by Smoler and other collectors¹⁷. Probably in Smoler's times the described dance had the most distinguishable choreography or was danced at the most important moment of the Sorbian family cycle, which would explain why this individual dance was described¹⁸.

The second part of the volume contains materials collected personally by Kucharski among Sorbs in the years 1826–27. Some of the sources are probably older – this concerns materials presented to the Kucharski by Lusatian academicians or musicians. The repertoire is therefore several years older than the one collected by Smoler. Kucharski studied the Sorbian language for half a year in Prague, after which he finally arrived in Dresden in 1826. For a time, he also stayed in Bautzen, Zgorzelec (Görlitz), Bad Muskau, Spremberg, Cottbus, Lubin, Berlin and Leipzig. He was primarily interested in the history, writings and language of the Lusatians and devoted most of his time to these issues, perusing written sources in libraries, establishing contacts with local intelligentsia and honing his language skills. Only then did he concentrate on the oral, also musical, tradition, which he introduced in the following way:

However, the most beautiful monument of the language, literature and ancient history of the Sorbs are the songs of the people. I found a very small number of them collected by the locals; I compiled an incomparably bigger collection myself, seeing that the time to record them may soon be gone; writing them down with melodies of various regions of this Sorbian land – and I do not regret the time devoted to this activity. Almost all of them are erotic in nature. The prettier of them will soon be printed in the 4th volume of the Slavic songs collection by Czelakowski, published in Prague¹⁹.

¹³ O. Kolberg, (1985). *Materiały do etnografii Słowian zachodnich i południowych. Łużyce*, p. XXXV.

¹⁴ Ibidem, p. 3.

¹⁵ Haupt, L., Smoler, J.A. (1996). *Pěsnički hornich a delnich Łužiskich Serbow. Volkslieder der Sorben in der Ober- und Niederlausitz* (3rd ed.). Budyšin: LND, p. 218.

¹⁶ O. Kolberg, (1985). *Materiały do etnografii Słowian zachodnich i południowych. Łużyce*, pp. 220–221.

¹⁷ Měrko Šolta, from an unpublished presentation at the conference on the occasion of Oskar Kolberg's 200th birth anniversary, Poznań, 23.05.2014.

¹⁸ Šolta, M. (2003). *Łużyckie tańce ludowe i dzisiejsze problemy ich pielęgnowania* [Lusatian Folk Dances and the Problems of their Cultivation Today], *Pro Lusatia*. Vol. 2, p. 107.

¹⁹ A. Kucharski, *Szczegóły dotyczące się języka i literatury sławiańskiej* [Notes on Slavic Literature and Language] (A letter from Vienna, 4th July 1827), p. 129, quoted after: O. Kolberg, (1985). *Materiały do etnografii Słowian zachodnich i południowych. Łużyce*, p. XIV.

Unfortunately, the publication of the Sorbian songs and of Kucharski's work on the language mentioned in this passage – was never accomplished. Also the vast academic work planned by him as a result of his five-year trip around the Slavic lands, in which the Lusatian theme was to be a prominent one, was never published.

What he did publish was just a few minor articles, while his other research results remained in the form of notes, letters and a collection of works of art bought abroad. As Agata Skrukwa points out, the fate of Kucharski's archive is unknown. At some point it was deemed lost²⁰. Only in the 1980s were some parts of his collection found among the manuscripts left by Oskar Kolberg. Until now there is no information about any contacts between Kolberg and Kucharski. It is unknown whether Kolberg received or bought the materials from him or from his heirs. The material consists of 19 manuscripts. Only four of them are probably authored by Kucharski. The remaining ones are from an unknown source. Only in the case of two manuscripts, which were presented to Kucharski during his travels, we can be sure of their authorship. The first one consists of two sheets of paper with a text by a Lusatian writer and teacher, Dawid Boguwer Głowan (Dawid Kopf), while the second one is a single sheet of paper with the text of an Upper Lusatian song, signed by Jan Bohuchwała Dejka, the first Lusatian journalist.

We may safely assume that some of the materials are copies of manuscripts kept in the libraries or the archive of the Upper Sorbian Scientific Society, which Kucharski visited. An interesting case is the manuscript which once belonged to Karl Gottlob Anton, and was also used by Smoler several years later. The use of the same, older manuscripts would explain the fact that the majority of songs appear both in Kucharski's and Smoler's collections, the fact that was noted also by Kolberg, who supplemented Kucharski's materials with references to Smoler's collection. The comparison of Kucharski's texts with the texts of songs marked as "z Antona" [from Anton] in Smoler's collection does not allow to draw firm conclusions²¹. Some texts in Kucharski's work are not identical with the notes of Smoler; there are only more or less close variants, some of which overlap, although there are differences in orthography. Therefore it is quite possible that the convergence of texts from Kucharski's archive

with the collection of Anton, and with the later notes of Smoler, only confirms the ubiquity of the repertoire and its durability over the span of several decades.

The remaining legacy of Kucharski includes, above all, the texts of songs, only some of them accompanied by melodies (Kucharski most probably could not write staff notation²², the melodies could have been given to him in Lusatia or later sent to him from there); for this reason a very special manuscript, deserving a closer look, is the hitherto unknown record of seven Lusatian dances, titled "Wendische Tänzle". It uses an instrumental notation, probably meant for a violin. The autograph seems to be a fair copy and was most likely prepared by a professional musician. Stylistically, the dances belong to the 19th-century²³ Upper Lusatian repertoire that was performed in the area of Budziszyn (Bautzen) and Kamieniec (Sorb.: Kamjenc, Ger: Kamenz). Jan Rawp believes that these dances might be a fragment of the Spielbuch of some Lusatian folk musician, which would mean that the manuscript would represent the oldest traditions of the Sorbian music included in Kucharski's materials²⁴. Also further written records of songs seem to have originated from folk musician songbooks (for example Nos. 96, 105 and 106). These melodies end at the lower octave of the penultimate tone, pointing to the stylistic feature of the folk fiddle playing of the time in Lusatia. Also some ornaments in melodies point to instrumental notations (Nos. 100–104). Therefore, this manuscript does not reflect the practice of singing, which must have been much simpler, and this fact has to be taken into account while reconstructing the music²⁵.

Unfortunately, only a few Sorbian historians or musicologists to date have made use of Kucharski's collection. One of the exceptions is the text by Susanna Hose, who, thanks to Kucharski's collection, could – in her article 'Serbow dobyć' – *Der Disput über die 'Echtheit'*

22 Ibidem, pp. XXXVII–XXXVIII.

23 Měrko Šolta dates the dances to the 1st half of the 19th century. According to him, the melodies differ in character from the melodies provided in Kral the Fiddler's songbook and in Hóřčanski's collection. The melodies are closer to the later records of Ludvík Kuba.

24 O. Kolberg, (1985). *Materiały do etnografii Słowian zachodnich i południowych. Łużyce*, pp. XLII–XLIII.

25 Měrko Šolta, from an unpublished presentation at the conference on the occasion of Oskar Kolberg's 200th birth anniversary, Poznań, 23.05.2014.

20 Ibidem, p. XV.

21 Ibidem, p. XXII.

eines sorbischen Volkslieds – dismiss a claim that the song *Serbow dobyć*²⁶, included in the Smoler collection, is a result of the work of Lusatian intellectuals of the Romantic period and therefore a historical forgery²⁷ – as Kucharski's collection contains an older variant of the song (*Serbja so do Němcow hot'wachu*, no. 312).

The collection of Kucharski, published in Kolberg's volume, provides us with unknown and otherwise already inaccessible materials from the research of the Polish Slavic culture expert on the traditional music of Lusatia. A collection of high value – it is the second biggest collection and the third oldest in the sequence of the already known collections of Lusatian traditional music, after the songbook of Kral the Fiddler – *Kralowy huslerski spěwnik* (c. 1770) and the collection of J. Hórcanski, published several years later (1782). The collection allows us to look at the state of traditional musical culture of Smoler's time and is also a proof that already in those times there were many Sorbs interested in collecting folk materials. Apart from teachers and priests, the collection of Kucharski mentions also the first Lusatian journalist, Jan Bohuchwal Dejka. The songs collected by Kucharski are in large part identical or are variants of songs which had already been published earlier (predominantly by Smoler). Notated melodies differ partly from other known collections, but the archive of Kucharski also contains motifs not encountered earlier in any of the sources. Kucharski's collection is therefore a very valuable document, as it documents the status of Sorbian traditional song several years prior to Smoler's *Pěsnički* collection.

Finally coming back for a while to the first part of the volume, it may be said that from the point of view of Lusatian readers Kolberg "only" repeated the material once already published by Smoler, although, as I mentioned earlier, his treatment of the material was descriptive and syncretic. However, the importance of this volume to Polish readers is much more profound. Firstly, because it gives Poles access to Smoler's materials, which are scarcely available in libraries. Secondly, Kolberg translated a large part of descriptions of the wedding customs and traditions into the Polish language, which facilitates the study the Sorbian musical tradition by Polish readers.

²⁶ Haupt, L., Smoler, J.A. (1996). *Pěsnički hornich a delnich Łužiskich Serbow*, p. 32.

²⁷ Hose, S. (2012). 'Serbow dobyć' – Der Disput über die 'Echtheit' eines sorbischen Volkslieds, *Lětopis*. Vol. 59, No. 2, p. 32.

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