Waldstätte

Waldstätte (German: [ˈvaltʃtɛtə], "forested sites") is a term which has been used since the early thirteenth century to refer to the *Stätte* (singular: *Statt*, "sites"), or later *Ort* (plural: *Orte*, "place") or *Stand* (plural: *Stände*, "estate") of the early confederate allies of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden in today's Central Switzerland.[1]

From the 13th to 19th centuries, the term *Waldstätte* also synoptically referred to the nucleus of the Swiss Confederacy of Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden; later, the term was gradually replaced by the term *Urschweiz*.[2]

The term *Wald* ("forest; woods") is to be understood in contrast to *Forst*, the former in Middle High German terminology referring to cultivated land of alternating pastures, fields and woods, while the latter referred to deep, uncultivated forests (*silva invia et inculta*).[3]

History

The Middle High German terms *Waldstette* or *Stette* (in the sense of "forested site/settlement") is also used alongside *Stett* (modern *Stadt*, or "town, city", in the sense of a powerful, possibly protected settlement with special rights) and *Lender* (modern *Länder*, in the sense of rural countrysides) in reference to the individual confederate allies into the first half of 15th century and became gradually replaced by the term *Ort* ("point; lieu") or *Stand* ("state"), which stayed prominent in German-speaking Switzerland until the Helvetic Republic; the term *canton* (in German: *Kanton*), in origin a Romance translation of German *Ort*, was unknown for the German-speaking allies until around 1650.[4]

The first recorded use of the term specifically as referring to the wooded valleys of Central Switzerland is in a document dated 1289, mentioning *ze Swiz in der waltstat* (i.e. "in Schwyz, in the wooded site").

In 1323, Glarus is named a *Waldstatt* alongside Schwyz. The application to the allies of the early Swiss Confederacy dates to 1309. In 1310, Duke Frederick the Fair complains about the king impeding his rights to the *civitatibus Silvanis*.

With the establishment of the Confederacy in the 1310s, the term is adopted as an exonym, and in the pacts which expanded the Confederacy, with Lucerne in 1332 and with Berne in 1353.

The inclusion of Lucerne as a "fourth" *Waldstätte* is first mentioned in an addition dated to the 1450s in the *Silver Book* of Egloff Etterlin.

In the protocols of the Swiss Diet in the second half of the 15th century, under the presidency of Lucerne, the term *vier waltstette* sees frequent use. Albrecht von Bonstetten in his *Superioris Germaniae Confoederationis descriptio* (1479) suggests that the term *vier Waldstett* (latinized *quatuor Loca Silvarum*) was in common use.

Lake Lucerne is given the new name of *Vierwaldstättersee* (aka Lake of Four Forested Sites) in the 16th century.[1]

See also

- Formation of the Old Swiss Confederacy
- Federal Charter of 1291
- *Eidgenossenschaft*
- *Reichsvogt*
- *Talschaft*

- Canton of Waldstätten

References

1. Josef Wiget: *Waldstätte* in German (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D7465.php), French (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/f/F7465.php) and Italian (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/i/I7465.php) in the online *Historical Dictionary of Switzerland*, 27 December 2014.
2. Georg Kreis: *Urschweiz* in German (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D7465.php), French (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/f/F7465.php) and Italian (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/i/I7465.php) in the online *Historical Dictionary of Switzerland*, 13 November 2013.
3. Per Wiget (2014); but Konrad von Würzburg has the Middle High German term as a common noun referring to a forest wilderness in *Der trojanische Krieg* v. 5902 (ed. Keller 1858): *ez was ein wildiu clûse / und ein vil tiefiu schrunde [...] zuo dirre wüesten waltstete / kam Thetis gerüeret* (cited after Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*).
4. Andreas Kley: *Kantone* in German (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D26414.php), French (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/f/F26414.php) and Italian (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/i/I26414.php) in the online *Historical Dictionary of Switzerland*, 13 April 2016.

- Josef Wiget: *Waldstätte* in German (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D7465.php), French (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/f/F7465.php) and Italian (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/i/I7465.php) in the online *Historical Dictionary of Switzerland*, 2014.
- Hans Stadler: *Vierwaldstättersee* in German (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/d/D8666.php), French (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/f/F8666.php) and Italian (http://www.hls-dhs-dss.ch/textes/i/I8666.php) in the online *Historical Dictionary of Switzerland*, 2013.