

White Book of Sarnen

The **White Book of Sarnen** is a manuscript in the state archive of the canton of Obwalden . The book contains a chronicle with the oldest tradition in Tell's history . Friedrich Schiller drew on them when he wrote his drama *Wilhelm Tell* in 1804.



The White Book

Table of contents

The manuscript and its content

shape and name

author

The narrative part

reception

"Discovery" of the White Book for research

assessment of the historical narrative

literature

web links

itemizations

The manuscript and its contents

The White Book of Sarnen is a cartulary for the everyday life of the Obwalden country clerk. It was customary for important chanceries to keep cartels, in which copies of important decisions were immediately accessible for chancery use. Because of the color of the cover, they were called silver, red, and white books. The first part of the White Book contains copies of important treaties and covenants. Such as the federal letters from 1315 to 1452 (Appenzeller Union). Copies of the Sempacherbrief, Pfaffenbrief follow and federal contracts with foreigners. A group of treaties with France follows the Unterwalden Freedom Letters. She is joined by a collection of armistices and peace treaties.

At the end of the White Book of Sarnen there is a chronicle with stories about the violent acts of the bailiffs, the story of Tell, the Rütli oath , the breaching of the castle and the liberation of the three countries from tyranny. They have been combined here for the first time into a unified whole with regard to the federal oath on the Rütli . The Rütli oath and the story of Tell appear in this chronicle for the first time.

Shape and Name

The original Weisses Buch contained 280 leaves (today 508 pages, some were cut out); the Chronicle, the narrative part of the White Book, comprises only 24 pages (in the original sheet 208-220r) and originally formed the end of the volume (pp. 441-465).

The old stock of the book consists of 21 regular layers of twelve and three times of fourteen leaves with two different watermarks (one watermark comes from the Zurich paper mill on the Sihl).

The book was written by the Obwalden country clerk Hans Schriber between 1470 and 1472 and supplemented in 1474 (by Schriber). There are only a few entries from a later period; after 1512 the Peace of Kappeler of 1531 and the oaths of the governor, bannerman and ensign of Obwalden (1607) were written into it.

The White Book was so called because of its white cover; the pigskin binding dates from the 17th century (probably from 1608). The inscription on the front cover: "The so-called oldest / white book/or/copies of the oldest alliances" was written by a hand in the late 18th century during an inventory before the French Revolution.

Author

The White Book was written around 1470 by the Obwalden country clerk Hans Schriber in the style of humanistic chronicling. As a talented chronicler, he wrote stories about the emergence of the Confederation, about the "beginning of the three countries", from the Obwaldner perspective of the 15th century. He relied on Konrad Justinger 's Chronicle of Bern (after 1420, which he expressly mentions in the text), on Felix Hemmerli's Zurich Book of Nobility (*De nobilitate et rusticitate dialogus* , around 1450) and on the Nordic tocosage of Saxo Grammaticus († 1204). In the passages about the Burgenbruch he takes on northern Italian influences: in the Bernese Tschachtlan Chronicles similar castle breaches are shown in the Eschentaler trains (Castle Mattarella and Trontano near Domodossola).

In this narratively written history of liberation, Hans Schriber has for the first time combined the various local liberation traditions into a coherent history of the origins of the mutual federal alliances and linked them to the Tokosage.

Until recently it has been assumed that the Obwalden country clerk Hans Schriber was only the copyist of an earlier chronicle. However, Anton Küchler already identified Hans Schriber as the writer and author of this chronicle in his *Sarnen Chronik* in 1895 , an assumption that the Nidwalden state archivist Robert Durrer also adopted in the Historical-Biographical Lexicon of Switzerland in 1928. The former Obwalden state archivist and philologist Angelo Garovi attempted to clarify the author's question in an article in the Obwaldner Geschichtsblatt based on a text analysis of both the legal and the chronical part. ^[1]

The narrative part

Hans Schriber begins with the Obwaldner story of the Vogt Landenberg, who has the oxen taken away from the farmer in Melchi. The son , who fought back and broke the bailiff's finger in two, had to flee and the father was imprisoned in the lower castle of Sarnen and blinded. In Altzellen (Nidwalden) the farmer Konrad Baumgarten killed the bailiff Wolfenschiessen with an ax because he wanted to force his wife to take a bath with him and "live" with him. Vogt Gessler asked Stauffacher in Schwyz who owns this pretty stone house. Stauffacher felt threatened after these words and, on the advice of his wife, decided to go to Uri and Unterwalden to consult with the leading people there, such as Fürst and Zer women. So Stauffacher, Fürst and the young farmer from Melchi got together. They took other people into their confidence, formed a secret bond and met each night on the Rütli (mentioned for the first time here).

This is followed by the world-famous story of Tell in Uri, who didn't want to salute his hat and had to shoot an apple off his son's head as punishment. After this deed, the Stauffacher company became more and more powerful and began to break down the castle towers of the bailiffs, Zwing Uri, Schwanau, Schwyz and Stans. The "strong" castle of Sarnen could only be taken with cunning. The subjects who had to bring gifts and New Year's gifts to the Vogt Landenberg at Christmas came to the castle in the "kitchen by the fire" and left the gate open so that the people hidden in the alder bushes nearby could take the castle at the sound of a horn. After that, the three countries made a league and "defended themselves against the lords".

In the second section of the chronicle follows a report on the accession of the towns of Lucerne, Zurich, Zug, Glarus and Bern. Events from the early 15th century then follow: the Werni trade between Bern and Lucerne, the Appenzell Wars , the conquest of the Livinental and Eschental valleys and the Rarner trade.

Reception

The Lucerne chronicler Petermann Etterlin adopted the liberation version of the Sarner country writer in his "Kronika von der loblichen Eidgenossenschaft" printed in Basel in 1507 and made it widely known at the time. It can also be found in a Jesuit library in Mexico.



Etterlin 1507

The Glarus historian Aegidius Tschudi , who consulted the archive with the White Book in Sarnen in 1569, gave the final form to the history of liberation in the Chronicon Helveticum . This (unfinished) chronicle of the 16th century was not printed in Basel until 1734-1736. Tschudi embellished the liberation tradition with new ingredients: he always gave the people their full names, some of which he borrowed from old documents. He dated the events to the last years of King Albrecht († 1308). Tschudi's account remained valid into the 19th century. This version of the liberation story was inspired by Friedrich Schiller's Wilhelm Tell and Gioachino Rossini's opera Guillaume Tell world famous. Schiller's Tell takes formulations from the original text of the White Book literally, so to speak. An example:

"You said Tall, I've been secured by hand/ so I want to tell you the truth/ and it was hit me by the shooter/ that I shot min's child, so I wanted to shoot the phyle in me or that of the vwren a han."

– White Book (around 1470); Transcription by Willi Studach

«Tell:

Well then, O Lord,

because you have secured my life -

I will tell you the truth thoroughly.

With this second arrow I shot through - you,

if I had hit my dear child,

and yours - truly! If I hadn't missed it."

– FRIEDRICH SCHILLER (1804)

«Discovery» of the White Book for research

The White Book of Sarnen was "discovered" in 1854 by the Zurich state archivist Gerold Meyer von Knonau during archival work in the Sarner witch tower for historical science. Georg von Wyss , professor of history at the University of Zurich , heard about this cartulary with the story of Tell; He had the book sent to him by Landammann Franz Wirz and wanted to be the first to publish the Tells story in the Archives for Swiss History . This was disputed by Meyer von Knonau, who published it in the history friend in 1857 ^[2] on behalf of the Obwalden government., the communications of the historical association of the five places, was allowed to print.



The White Book is kept in the witch tower in Sarnen.

However, Gerold Meyer von Knonau was only the "scientific discoverer" of the White Book of Sarnen. This was always known in the Sarner provincial chancellery and was kept together with the seal, the provincial banner and the letters (certificates) in the town hall or archive tower (witches' tower). It was also the country clerk Joseph Gasser who drew the Zurich archivist's attention to the fact

that the archive contained a valuable book on the beginning of the Confederation: the "oldest" white book from Sarnen. This was always listed in archive directories. There was also the "younger" Weisses Buch, a copy from 1608 by Jacob Kaiser.

Assessing the historical narrative

In 1835 , the Lucerne philologist and historian Joseph Eutyck Kopp compared the chronicles' report with the documented facts for the first time. Kopp's criticism of the sources was directed not only against the Tell story, ^[3] but also against the assumption of a tyrannical bailiff rule, which had become popular opinion and which came to a violent end shortly before King Albrecht's assassination on May 1, 1308. According to Kopp, the documents do not show that Gessler and Landenberg were bailiffs in the forest. ^[4]

Based on archaeological excavations at castle sites in central Switzerland, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, the Basel medieval archaeologist and historian Werner Meyer established that the breaching of the castle did not take place as a single event in the sense of the traditional liberation tradition . ^[5]

The Zurich literary scholar Max Wehrli wrote about the meaning of the stories in the White Book of Sarnen :

"Here (in the Weisses Buch) the later so famous stories of the heroic time appear for the first time, each for the individual places as evidence of the freedom struggle: the man from the Melchi, the Vogt who was killed in the bath, the Stauffacher in Schwyz, the Rütli oath, the story of Tell, the Burgenbruch - the whole, narratively brilliant saga of liberation with the constant presence of the familiar landscape.» ^[6]

The Zurich Germanist and cultural scientist Peter von Matt, who comes from Stans , says with regard to the land clerk Hans Schriber, the author of the chronicle in the White Book: ^[7]

"No Swiss author has ever written a work of greater impact."

Literature

- Gerold Meyer von Knonau : *The chronicle in the white book to Sarnen* . Zurich 1857.
- *Sources on the emergence of the Swiss Confederation* , Section 3: Chronicles, Volume 1, edited by Georg Wirz. Aarau 1947.
- Willi Studach: *The language of the white book of Sarnen* . Sarnen 1993 (text edition based on the original, with diacritics).
- Werner Meyer : *1291 - The story*. The beginnings of the Confederation. Silva-Verlag, Zurich 1990.
- Angelo Garovi : *Tell and Gessler in the White Book of Sarnen. Chronicle text with the first recorded story of Tell and Gessler*. 2018

Web Links

- Entry (<http://www.handschriftencensus.de/21030>) in the manuscript census
- Publications on the White Book (http://opac.regesta-imperii.de/lang_de/suche.php?qs=&ts=Buch+Sarnen&ps=&tags=&sprache=&objektart=alle&pagesize=20&sortierung=d&jahr=) in the Opac of the Regesta Imperii
- *The White Book of Sarnen. Wording and translation of the chronicle text by Bruno Meyer* (PDF, 2.2 MB) (http://www.ow.ch/dl.php/de/5409b89275813/Text_und_Uebersetzung_Chronik_Weisses_Buch.PDF) , extract from pages 30 to 83
- *The White Book of Sarnen* , complete digital copy (<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/list/one/staow/A02CHR0003>) in the *Virtual Manuscript Library of Switzerland* e-codices

- Description by Regula Schmid Keeling, 2012 (<http://www.e-codices.unifr.ch/de/description/staow/A02CHR0003>) in the *Virtual Manuscript Library of Switzerland* e-codices

Itemizations

1. Angelo Garovi: *Hans Schriber - country clerk and author of the chronicle of the white book of Sarnen*. In: *Obwaldner Geschichtsblätter* , issue 27/2013, pp. 9-31.
 2. *ETH – e-periodica*. (<https://www.e-periodica.ch/digbib/view?pid=gfr-001:1857:13#3>)Retrieved April 1, 2019 .
 3. *History sheets from Switzerland*, 2 volumes. Lucerne, 1854 and 1856.
 4. Kopp: *Documents on the history of the federal unions* , Volume 1: Lucerne 1835; Volume 2: Vienna 1851; *History of the Federal Confederations*. With certificates. 5 volumes. Leipzig, Lucerne, Bern and Basel 1845-1888.
 5. *Burgenbau and Burgenbruch in the Waldstätten*. In: *Swiss Contributions to the Cultural History and Archeology of the Middle Ages* , Volume 11 (1984), pp. 181–198. Werner Meyer, Jakob Obrecht, Hugo Schneider, *Die Bösen Türnli: Archaeological contributions to castle research in Urschweiz* (1984): "The excavation findings from Schwanau show that there actually was a violent castle breach in Central Switzerland, analogous to numerous other castle destructions in the Alpine region between the 12th and 16th centuries." (p. 194)
 6. *History of German Literature* , Volume 1. Stuttgart, 1980, p. 831.
 7. NZZ on Sunday, October 31, 2010.
-

Abgerufen von „https://de.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Weisses_Buch_von_Sarnen&oldid=232022852“

This page was last edited on March 21, 2023 at 10:15 am.

Text is available under a Creative Commons Attribution/Share Alike license; Information on the authors and the license status of integrated media files (e.g. images or videos) can usually be called up by clicking on them. Content may be subject to additional terms and conditions. By using this website, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy .
Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of Wikimedia Foundation Inc.