

The Legend of the Peacock

The shrine of the holy Liborius is often solemnly shown in connection with a peacock's fan.

What is the meaning of this peacock's fan?

Legend has it that the envoys transferring the shrine of the holy Liborius from Le Mans to Paderborn, followed a peacock which showed them the way. When the shrine arrived on Libori hill, before the city of Paderborn, the peacock stopped his flight until the festivity in the cathedral



began. Then it flew off again and landed on top of the cathedral. As soon as the clerics entered the cathedral, the peacock fell to earth and died. In later years, and in memory of the occasion, a peacock's fan has always been carried ahead of the Libori shrine.

According to Mertens, however, the real story must have been different. In 836, the envoys from Paderborn saw the peacock's fan during a service in Le Mans. They were amazed by the beauty of the feathers because at the time of Charlemagne, the peacock was still a rare



bird and probably completely unknown in Saxony. Thus, it was only natural for them to take this custom back to their home country. Perhaps the envoys even brought a peacock home with them to Paderborn. From then on, they constantly showed a peacock's fan in connection with their most precious treasure – the Libori shrine. Mertens asked the question, whether there is a more magnificent sight than the peacock's fan and the shrine reflecting the sunlight.

Over the years, the historical facts were lost but the memory of the legend lives on.

From: Conrad Mertens: "The holy Liborius, his life, his admiration and his shrine." Paderborn 1873