

Von der berühmten Seule der 4.Brüder in der
Fischhäusischen Heyde

paulskin, ChatGPT

April 30, 2025

First Page

Dissertation on National History

On the famous statue of the four brothers, or

On the famous column of the four brothers in the Fischhaus Heath,

Submitted for public and solemn discussion at the renowned Academy of
Königsberg

President:

M. Jo. Jac. Rohde,

Royal Alumnus and Inspector of the Common Convictorium,

And Respondent:

Jo. Christophorus Huhn,

Wel. Bor.,

In the Year of Our Lord 1717, on the 17th of March.

Ovid, Tristia, Book 2, Elegy 1:

"It is a pious labor to recount the deeds of the fatherland."

Königsberg, printed with Reusnerian type.

Second Page

To the most distinguished dignitaries of the most flourishing Republic of Leipzig, highly experienced and exceedingly skilled in civil affairs, to the immortal men who have rendered outstanding service to the state and who are born to adorn every kind of virtue and noble art, to the Lord Consul, the Lords Councillors, and the Lord Secretary – most highly esteemed patrons.

For the generous stipend bestowed, he acknowledges himself as most deeply obliged, and, wishing the most honourable Senate every happiness, he dedicates this dissertation as a monument of his grateful mind and veneration.

The perpetual admirer of so many most excellent men,
Johann Christoph Huhn,
Student of Sacred Theology and Philosophy.

(1)

Synopsis

- §. I. Those who have discussed statues, particularly the memorable matters of Prussia, are named.
- §. II. & §. III. This statue is described.
- §. IV. It is said that there are various opinions concerning this statue.
- §. V. It is inquired whether there were four robbers.
- §. VI. Whether they were four brothers departing to different and distant parts of the world.
- §. VII. Whether they were travelling gods.
- §. VIII. Whether they were boundary gods.
- §. IX. Whether they were four gods of the Prussians.
- §. X. Whether they were four princes of Gothic lineage who became rulers of the Prussians.
- §. XI., §. XII. & §. XIII. Whether the history of Widewuth is true and whether his sons erected this statue, or §. XIV. whether Albert or Albert Frederick had it built, is investigated.
- §. XV. The true opinion on this matter is summarised.

§. I.

Among the many admirable and memorable things that researchers of antiquity have illuminated with learned commentaries, I also include statues. For that various scholars have written about different types of statues is attested by the illustrious Jo. Alb. Fabricius (a); that others have recorded something specifically about this or that notable statue is well known (b). Therefore, I believe that I have undertaken nothing worthy of censure in now presenting this remarkable statue to your eyes, benevolent reader. It is found neither in Germany, England, France, nor Italy, nor in Rome, where there is a great abundance of illustrious and most ancient statues (c). Nevertheless, it seems to me to be all the more worthy of appreciation, since we behold this noble monument in this region, in our most beloved homeland.

And since until now, many among the ranks of the learned, ennobled by knowledge and adorned with the highest praise. . .

(2)

The most worthy men who have discussed the affairs of this splendid city and of all Prussia—remarkable and distinguished in appearance (d)—provide me with an example. From this, I conclude that it is most fitting for me also to describe, in a similar manner, the renowned Statue of the Four Brothers, as we commonly call it.

(a) *Bibliographia Antiquaria*, p. 635.

(b) On the sepulchral statue of Rachel: J.C. Wichmanshausen, P.P.O.L., Wittenberg, 1706.

On speaking statues: D.G. Moellerus, *Met. & Hist.*, Altdorf, 1701.

On the magical statues of the ancients (*Statuae teleoménae veterum*): M. Gotfr. Gotth. Freytag, Leipzig, 1715.

On the statue of the Saviour as a healer, erected by a woman cured in the city of Paneas, or the statue of the haemorrhaging woman: D. Joh. Schmidtius, Leipzig, 1689.

(c) Concerning this once most noble city, Alexander ab Alexandro writes in Book 4, Chapter 13, at the end:

"In Rome, there are so many statues that it seems as if there were another

stone people."

See also the collection of ancient and modern statues, published by Dominico de Rossi, with illustrations and explanations for each figure by Paulus Alexander Maffeo, Rome, 1704 (Folio).

(d) On the Column of Osterkollen, marking the boundary of Royal Prussia and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania: Dav. Bläsius, Math. P.P. Reg. Alumn. Insp. Prim. – with author Albr. Colombo, then Master of Philosophy and Co-Rector of the Catholic School, 1712.

Reg. M. Christ. Gabr. Fischer, Extraordinary Professor of Physics, on Stones in the Prussian Landscape (Reg., 1715).

His Foundations of a Detailed History of Underground Prussia, Königsberg, 1714.

Likewise, his Unprejudiced Hypothesis on the Rising Moon as it Appears in a Shell-Stone, Reg., 1717.

M. Mich. Lilienthal, Deacon of the Catholic Church and member of the Berlin Society, Outline of a Historical Colledge on the Antiquities and Other Curiosities of the Kingdom of Prussia, Königsberg, 1714.

His Historical Description of the Cathedral or the Cathedral Church of the City of Kneiphof-Königsberg, Königsberg, 1716.

On the aurochs, on the floating island Gerdawien—both erudite and worthy of study.

(3)

This has been written by the most reverend Christ. Masecovius, Doctor of Sacred Theology and Professor, &c. Concerning Hartmann and other distinguished men, I shall say nothing further here, for the most noble works they have brought into the public light preserve their renown from the oblivion of mankind.

§. II.

This statue, however, the image of which I also present here, is found in a vast forest, which we name Heyde von Fischhausen after the nearby town. Besides this, it occupies a position on a footpath or in the middle of the public road, not barren due to an abundance of sand, but covered in grass and pleasing in appearance.

In the manner of ancient statues, it is made of wood (e), specifically oak, yet finely carved and angular, taking the shape of a cone when viewed from the top.

As for its height, it slightly exceeds a measurement of 24 feet and bears nearly countless names engraved on all of its – eight, as I have counted – sides. It is now so decayed that anyone can easily remove small fragments from it.

However, whenever it deteriorates to the point where it is about to collapse, it has been customary, according to ancient tradition, to place a new statue in the place of the one that is soon to fall.

(e) See Jo. Sam. Strimesius, Professor of Elementary and Historical Studies, Dissertation on the Roman God Terminus, §. 6.

§. III.

Concerning the Hermen or sculpted images on this statue, it must now be stated specifically: they stand upon arched beams, each measuring approximately 12 feet in length and connected by iron fastenings, appearing to represent four brothers of differing ages.

One has a lively and handsome appearance, as young men do; another is marked by wrinkles and has a solemn, aged countenance, as grim and difficult old men often have. One is beardless, while another has a flowing beard. Thus, he who – to speak in common parlance – of these four brothers. . .

(4)

The eldest among them appears to gaze towards the prefecture of Fischhausen and the city. The second eldest, only slightly inferior to him, looks towards the village of Medenau. The third, nearly equal to the second, seems to contemplate this royal residence and the most celebrated emporium of Europe. The youngest, finally, looks towards the Great Lagoon (the Frisches Haff).

This distinction is perhaps not obscurely evident from the differences in their faces and features. Hence, in my opinion, it is not unreasonable to say that these Hermen were perhaps noble men and highly experienced warriors, for they are equipped with helmets made of metal plates, in the manner of warriors.

§. IV.

This, then, is the design and form of the statue, which many travellers, passing through the Fischhausen Forest, a vast woodland shaded by lofty and towering trees, have long marvelled at and often observed.

Now, to address the main question: What should be thought of this statue? What do its four figures signify? Since our countrymen strongly disagree on this matter, I shall first present the childish fables of the ignorant populace and afterwards the reasonable conjectures of scholars.

§. V.

Among the views held by the common folk, the first and perhaps the most prevalent is this:

The four figures that we see on this statue represent four robbers.

It is said that after a long period during which they lay in ambush for travellers in this once densely forested region, committing countless murders in secret, the prince finally issued an order for them to be brought to justice.

He commanded his soldiers and officers to hunt down these criminal men, who would immediately flee into hiding after committing their acts of slaughter—and so it was done.

Shortly afterwards, these most wretched villains were seized and subjected to a severe punishment. . .

(5)

At this place, they were executed. In order for future generations to know that these most infamous robbers had rightfully paid their penalty here, their corpses were fastened to wheels, and the four heads of the statue, on which four slender supports rested, were placed upon them. It is claimed that this is the same statue that we still see today.

But who would fail to understand that this notion is entirely fictitious and false? Surely, it is not credible that our forefathers would have erected statues in honour of robbers. Otherwise, the Schaken Prefecture, which has continued up to our time to replace the decaying statue with a new one, would not have done so if the column were merely meant to represent murderers.

For it is right to erase the memory of the most wicked men, not to preserve it.

§. VI.

Others among the common folk say that four brothers once met at this place, and after deliberating at length about undertaking a journey, they departed towards the four corners of the world.

Eventually, having returned from their distant travels, they saw one another here for the first time again.

To make the memory of this event eternal and enduring, they erected this statue.

However, this old tale irritates me, and since none of the wiser minds place any trust in this account, I find it unnecessary to refute this popular belief at length.

§. VII.

Now I shall recount some more reasonable conjectures of scholars, which seem more fitting to consider.

First, the question arises: Could the four figures of this statue represent travelling gods?

It is well known that the Greeks as well as the Romans (f) commonly erected square statues at various points along public roads, sometimes made of stone, sometimes of wood.

On their upper part, they often placed the heads of illustrious men wearing the toga or war cloak (g), but more frequently, the images of gods.

These shapeless Hermen or simple wooden pillars. . .

(6)

. . . which lacked feet and legs and were, moreover, formed without any craftsmanship or artistry (h), were called guardians of the roads and Lares Viales (i), or protectors of the highways (l).

That, however, the four figures of the statue in question do not represent travel gods is evident for the following reasons:

[1] The inscription that statues of travel gods always bore, indicating nearby cities (m), is entirely absent here.

Statues dedicated to travel gods were primarily placed at crossroads or junc-

tions (n) to indicate which roads led where. Yet, where our statue stands, there is hardly any need for such a function, as the broad main road, used by all, provides no alternative paths.

It is certain beyond doubt that many nations (o) worshipped travel gods, but whether our ancestors did the same is highly questionable—even more so as no trustworthy writer or sound argument confirms this.

References:

(f) See Nic. Bergierius, *Tractatus de publicis Romanorum viis*, Book 4, Chapter 43, included in Volume X of A. R. Grævius' collection, p. 522 ff.

(g) See Henr. Christ. Henninius, in his notes on Bergierius, *Tractatus de publicis viis*, Book 4, Chapter 4, §. 4.

(h) Bergierius, *ibid.*, §. 6.

(i) Plautus, *Mercator*, Act 5, Scene 2, Verse 24; also *Bacchides*, Act 1, Scene 1, Verse 3, with scholarly observations by Turnebus and Meursius on the various names of travel gods, pp. 435 & 757 in the edition with notes by J. F. Gronovius, Leiden, 1669.

(l) The Romans also worshipped urban Lares, who were protective deities against enemies. See Andr. Dacier, commentary on Festus concerning the Lares Hostilii.

(m) Bergierius, *loc. cit.*, §. 3.

(n) Bergierius, *loc. cit.*, §. 2.

(o) See Everardus Ottonis, *Liber de Diis Vialibus plerorumque populorum*, Halle, 1714, Chapters 3, 4 & 5.

§ VIII.

Now, one might—if I continue my inquiry—upon observing this statue, be led to the thought that its four figures might represent boundary gods. . .

(7)

These might, then, be the representations of boundary gods.

The Romans, who worshipped countless gods and goddesses more out of tradition than sincere reverence (p), called their guardian deity of fields and boundaries Terminus (q).

In its earliest form, this divine image had no shape, later it resembled a rough and unshaped wooden post (r), and eventually it took on the form of

a human face.

At times, it was depicted with a long beard, while at others, in a youthful, beardless form.

This god Terminus was venerated not only at the public borders of the empire but also on private estates, and his sanctity was so great that once placed, he was never dug up or moved, for he was regarded as an immovable deity (s).

Now, I do admit that some of what I have stated could, to some extent, apply to the statue under discussion. Nevertheless, I am fully convinced that these four figures do not represent the images of boundary gods.

For:

[1] It cannot be sufficiently proven by historical sources that the ancient Prussians, who were known as zealous worshippers of idols, also extended divine worship and honour to the god Terminus.

[2] No one among our people has ever observed a statue in the fields or uncultivated areas that was supposedly dedicated to boundary gods.

[3] Since no borders of different dominions converge near this statue, it is absurd to claim that the ancient Prussians dedicated this column to boundary gods.

References:

(p) See Jo. Sartorius, *Elementa Poetica*, Danzig, scholarly treatise on the hypocrisy of the Gentiles in their worship of the gods.

(q) See the previously mentioned dissertation by Jo. S. Strimesius.

(r) This is the common depiction of the god Terminus, though according to Welserus, Book 4 of the *History of Augsburg*, p. 72 ff., there were countless other forms and representations of this deity.

(s) The god Terminus and the travel gods are entirely distinct, as they differ both in location and function. Bergierius, who has borrowed much from Aleander, often confuses these two classes of deities.

(t) On the god Terminus refusing to yield to Jupiter, see Golizius, *Volume on Augustus*, Chapter 2, No. 20.

(8)

§. IX.

Others, who are well informed on the subject, firmly believe that the ancient Prussians worshipped their gods under the open sky and beneath trees (u)—a custom adopted by many other nations as well (x).

Thus, they are convinced that the place where we now see the Statue of the Four Brothers was once a sacred site of divine worship, and that a famous and holy oak once stood there.

Moreover, they assert that this immense tree was once the holiest temple of the gods, which eventually withered away, after which the descendants erected the statue in its place.

Yet this theory is far from the truth, for it is well researched and known among scholars that there were only four renowned sacred oaks in Prussia, namely those near the cities of Romowe (y), Heiligenbeil, Welau, and on the banks of the Vistula.

That there were other, less famous oaks or sacred trees dedicated to the worship of the gods, where the Prussians gathered, I do not deny (z).

However, that one stood at this location, or that this forest was ever called a sacred grove (aa) dedicated to the gods, I strongly and justly doubt.

References:

(u) Hartknoch, Dissertation 6 on Places of Divine Worship, §. I ff.

(x) See Jo. Meursius filius, *Arboretum Sacrum*, Leiden, 1642.

(y) On the Oak of Romowe, once sacred to the pagan Prussians, see M. Mart. Jeschke, *Reg.*, 1674.

(z) This claim is supported by Erasmus Stella, *Antiquitates Borussiae*, Book 2.

(aa) On this subject, the famous J. A. Fabricius in his *Bibliotheca Antiquaria*, p. 289 ff., cites numerous authors.

§. X.

Others hold that this statue was erected by four princes of Prussia, who were of Gothic lineage (bb).

These princes had formed a close alliance to wage war against the Teutonic Order, aiming to drive them out of the borders of this kingdom.

I would readily accept this interpretation, if I knew that trustworthy historians and annalists had reported it.

Yet until then, it is difficult to believe that our ancestors would have erected a statue out of veneration for these princes. . .

(9)

... those who were devoted to superstition and bitterly hostile to the Teutonic Order—a fact to which this statue bears the clearest testimony—have preserved their memory to this very day.

(bb)

According to Erasmus Stella, these Samlandic princes (properly: those previously mentioned) were not immigrants like the Lithuanian Prussians but were descended from the ancient Scandinavians or Goths.

This is stated by Hartknoch in his *Old and New Prussia*, p. 239, col. 2.

§. XI.

However, a greater number of scholars hold the opinion that the statue depicts the four sons of King Widewuth, who were born of the highest nobility. Yet, since the most renowned scholars regard the history of Widewuth as nothing but a fable (cc) and believe that no king of this name ever ruled in Prussia, I will first attempt to refute this claim.

After that, I will thoroughly examine the aforementioned theory concerning Widewuth's sons.

(cc)

This is the view of C. S. Schurtzfleisch, §. 5 & 13, note, in his *Dissertation on the Affairs of the Prussians*, an opinion to which Hartknoch also subscribes, as he considers all accounts of Widewuth to be mere old legends, commonly repeated but entirely unfounded.

§. XII.

It is a commonly accepted fact that the Goths or Getae (dd) originated from Scandinavia (ee), the cradle of many nations, first migrating to Ulmigeria or Ulmerugia (ff) and later to this region.

Moreover, historians agree that the Goths were ruled by certain kings, though the question of their exact number (hh) and names remains unresolved.

Among these Gothic rulers, I count Widewuth (ii) and firmly believe that he was the last ruler of this valiant people in these lands.

With his followers, he travelled to the Black Sea in order to conquer larger provinces. As a result, the inhabitants of this kingdom—perhaps having grown weary of royal authority—ceased to elect a new king...

References:

- (dd) The Goths or Getae.
 - (ee) Their origin from Scandinavia, the homeland of many nations.
 - (ff) Their first migration to Ulmigeria or Ulmerugia.
 - (gg) Historical agreement that the Goths were ruled by kings.
 - (hh) The number and names of these kings remain disputed.
 - (ii) Widewuth as the last ruler of the Goths in this region.
-

(10)

... rather, they submitted to Widewuth's sons, who divided among themselves certain regions of this land.

Others, however, raise the following objections:

[1] It is uncertain in which century Widewuth lived (ll).

Johannes Magnus, when listing the kings of the Goths, makes no mention of Widewuth.

The name Widewuth is fictitious, and if one considers the meaning of the words from which it appears to be derived, it signifies „Musagetes“, i.e., „protector of the sciences“ or „teacher“ (mm).

I refute these objections as follows:

(1) Although historians disagree on when Widewuth lived, it is absurd to conclude from this disagreement that he never existed.

(2) Johannes Magnus did, in fact, include Widewuth among the Gothic kings, for he was none other than Philmerus, surnamed Widewuth, who, being a prince with great love for learning, received a distinctive title (nn), as was common among rulers of all nations.

Thus:

(3) Even if the name Widewuth etymologically denotes „patron of learning“ or „scholar“, it does not follow that it was fabricated or never used.

Otherwise, the names of Constantine Copronymus („Dung-Name“) or

Constantine Caballinus („Horse-Name“) (oo), as well as Bolesław I Chrobry („the Brave“) of Poland, would also have to be dismissed as mere fabrications.

Yet no historian or scholar of world history would claim such a thing. Should further objections or doubts be raised, they can easily be refuted (pp).

References:

- (ll) The uncertainty regarding the century in which Widewuth lived.
- (mm) The name Widewuth as a title for a „protector of learning“.
- (nn) The practice of granting rulers distinctive epithets.
- (oo) Constantine Copronymus („Dung-Name“) or Constantine Caballinus („Horse-Name“) as well as Bolesław I Chrobry as analogous name attributions.
- (pp) Further possible objections that can be easily dismissed.

- (dd) The Goths and Getae are considered identical by Loccenius in *Antiquitates Sueo-Gothicae*, Book 1, Chapter 1. Similarly, M. Z. Boxhornius in his *Universal History* argues against Cluverius and Pontanus.
- (ee) Jordanes, *De rebus Gothicis*, p. 38, followed by Schurtzfleisch, *De rebus Sueo-Gothicis*, Chapter 3, with commentary.
- (ff) Schützius, *Chronicon Borussiae*, Fol. 2, also references Jordanes.

(11)

Jordanes, along with Hartknoch, who follows him, refers to the island of Rügen and the adjacent territory of Pomerania in his *Dissertation on the Origins of Pomerania* (gg).

Likewise, Aeneas Sylvius, Erasmus Stella, Johannes Magnus, Hugo Grotius, Johannes Loccenius, and many others report the same account in unison. Some authors, such as Jordanes, count five Gothic kings, while others, such as Johannes Magnus, list seven kings who ruled here. Those wishing to know their names may consult the *Chronicon Prussiae* by Duisburg, in the edition by Hartknoch (pp. 45 & 46) (hh).

Similarly, this view is supported by D. H. Kemmerich, in his 1704 Leipzig dissertation on the Crown of Prussia, which was given to Frederick by God (p. 15) (ii).

(ll) See Hartknoch, *Old and New Prussia*, p. 36.
(mm) This is the opinion of M. Matth. Praetorius, in his annotations on Hartknoch's dissertation on the idolatry of the Prussians.
(nn) See J. G. Becmann, *Frankfurt Polyhistor*, dissertation on the epithets of princes.
(oo) See Lucas Osiander, *Epitome Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, 8th century, p. 103.
(pp) Some believe that the entire history of Widewuth and the Gothic kings is mixed with fables, because Johannes Magnus lists seven, whereas Jordanes only mentions five Gothic rulers who held supreme royal power among the Goths.
Furthermore, they assert that the Goths migrated to the Black Sea under the fifth, not the seventh king.

Response: These two authors do not contradict each other, since one refers to kings who were elected by the general vote of the Goths, while the other adds two additional pseudo-princes, thus reaching a total of seven kings.

(2) Others claim that Widewuth did not leave Prussia when the Goths sought new settlements, but rather abdicated the throne to become the chief priest, as reported by historians.

However, in my judgment, it is more reasonable to believe that after Widewuth led the Goths to foreign lands and established order there, he returned to Prussia and, having renounced his royal office, assumed the role of supreme pontiff.

§. XIII. (New Inquiry into the Statue of the Four Brothers)
Since the long-standing error that Widewuth never ruled the Goths or even existed has now been removed (qq), it must now be investigated whether his sons might have erected this statue.

For some hold the opinion that Widewuth left behind four or even twelve sons, who, in order to divide Prussia equally among themselves, united. . .

(12)

... who then agreed to divide the land equally among themselves.

However, the eldest son, whose mother was of the Alanian people, was deeply despised by the Prussians and was thus unable to obtain any inheritance or share of the land, unlike his brothers.

Shortly thereafter, however, the original alliance among the brothers fell into oblivion, and a severe dispute arose, leading them to wage bitter war against each other (rr).

Yet in the most unexpected turn of events, the four eventually met at this place, reconciled, and erected this statue as an eternal memorial to their peace.

However, I cannot bring myself to believe that this very statue, built over seventeen centuries ago, was continually restored by the rulers of Prussia every time it decayed, with singular care and great expense (ss).

References:

(qq) I am even more astonished that Hartknoch and others deny that Widewuth ever lived or reigned, as their arguments are not sufficiently supported by ancient or later historians. If they assert this as fact, why should I not assert with equal certainty that the history of Widewuth is true?

(rr) See Waisselius, *Chronicon Prussiae*, p. 13, col. b & p. 14, col. a.

(ss) I consider this theory about Widewuth's four sons to be just as unlikely as the one about the four sons of Mestwin, Duke of Pomerania and Kashubia – namely Swantopolk, Wartislaw, Sambor, and Ratibor.

It would take only a little more for me to be convinced by those who claim that this statue actually represents Johann Sigismund, Elector of Brandenburg, and his three brothers.

§. XIV. (The Hypothesis Regarding Duke Albrecht of Prussia)

A different theory is held by those who believe that this statue was erected by order of Albrecht the Elder, the first Duke of Prussia.

Their account is as follows:

In the year 1552, the King of Poland, Sigismund August, visited Königsberg at the persistent and urgent request of Duke Albrecht.

After remaining there for a short time, the king began his return journey via Pillau to Danzig.

At this time, Duke Albrecht had organised a grand hunt in the Fischhausen Heath and had hosted the highly esteemed king in the most magnificent manner.

The four high-ranking figures present, namely:

King Sigismund August,
Duke Albrecht the Elder,
Joachim II, Elector of Brandenburg,
George Frederick, Margrave of Brandenburg-Ansbach,
spent several hours at this location in extraordinary enjoyment before finally parting ways.

(13)

This event led Duke Albrecht to erect this column in everlasting memory of this great gathering and the friendship that was established, which has not been allowed to decay to this day.

The same story, however, is told without any foundation (tt) about Albrecht Friedrich:

When he married Maria Eleonora, the daughter of the Duke of Cleves (whom her most illustrious father personally escorted to Albrecht Friedrich in Prussia as her principal travel companion), he hosted his father-in-law and the other princes who attended the wedding with a most magnificent and lavish banquet.

At the very site where the feast was held, these four princes – Albrecht Friedrich and three other rulers – are said to have erected this statue.

References:

(tt) Compare the treatise titled:

"Glorious and True Account of the Two Princely Homecomings, which took place with the Two Elder Daughters of the Most Serene and High-Born Prince and Lord, Lord Wilhelm, Duke of Cleves – namely, Duchess Maria Eleonora to the Land of Prussia and Duchess Anna to the Principality of Neuburg in the Upper Palatinate",
Frankfurt am Main, 1576.

§. XV. (Conclusion on the True Origin of the Statue)

Now that the various conjectures and scholarly opinions have been reviewed, I must honestly confess that I strongly favour and support the theory mentioned in §. XIII regarding Johann Sigismund, Elector of Brandenburg, and his three brothers.

For the most reliable and elderly men have uniformly reported this as the true origin of the statue and have declared that they would be willing to swear an oath to it.

However, I am greatly surprised that the chroniclers of Prussian history have made no mention of this statue whatsoever, even though they have recorded many other events of little significance, such as hailstorms, tempests, and rainfall.

Thus, let the benevolent reader consider all that I have presented in the best light, and believe that I would have spoken much more extensively and precisely on this matter had I been able to access the archives of the Fischhausen Prefecture or other preserved documents regarding the origin of this statue (uu).

What remains is this: If in the future someone proposes another or perhaps a more plausible theory, I shall immediately abandon my prior opinion.

References:

(uu) In the year 1627, the Swedes, who were wintering in the city and fortress of Fischhausen, recklessly burned a significant portion of the public records and annals.

End.

(14)

To the Most Promising Young Man
and Devoted Student of Higher Learning,
Johann Christoph Huhn.
With Deepest Esteem,
M. Johann Jacob Rohde.

I must admit that there are few young men in our time who devote themselves with their whole mind and full determination to the liberal arts; for

the most part, they either approach their studies sluggishly or abandon them altogether.

But you are entirely different, most noble young man—I know this full well and rejoice greatly in it.

For, as you strive eagerly towards every noble goal, you exercise your intellect upon this most challenging subject.

Moreover, you bring me great delight, as you dedicate this dissertation and the work which my modest ability has barely brought forth with utmost integrity to the wise and most prudent magistrates of Löbnitz.

They generously support the studies of the most honourable young men, and through this work, you demonstrate that you have invested your time well. How much I wish that you were as well known to the greatest patrons of the liberal arts as you are to me!

(For to me, who privately teaches the art of eloquence, you have always remained steadfast with the utmost zeal for learning and an unwavering dedication to study.)

They would assuredly hold you and your virtues in the highest esteem.

Nevertheless, this effort will not displease fair-minded judges, for, as I firmly believe, there will be no shortage of patrons in the future who will extend their support to you.

I therefore wish that this testament to your talent and diligence may bring great honour to your name and studies.

May the most gracious divine being grant you enduring intellectual vigour—this I pray again and again, from the depths of my heart.

Given in the Year of Our Lord 1717, on the fifth day before the Kalends of March.

Summary

This dissertation examines the origin and meaning of a mysterious statue with four figures, located near Fischhausen in Prussia.

The author evaluates several hypotheses, refuting many popular legends:

The Robbers' Theory:

A widespread folk tale suggests that the statue depicts four infamous robbers who ambushed travellers in the region and were eventually executed. However, this theory is dismissed as implausible, since no society would erect monuments to criminals.

The Travelling Brothers Theory:

Another story claims that four brothers met at this site after having travelled in four different directions. The author rejects this theory as mere folklore.

The Gods Theory:

It is considered whether the statue represents Roman or Germanic deities, such as travel gods (Dii Viales) or boundary gods (Dii Termini). However, due to the lack of typical religious inscriptions, this hypothesis is discarded.

The Sacred Oak Theory:

Some believe that a sacred oak of the pagan Prussians once stood here, and that after its decay, the statue was erected in its place. The author argues that only four sacred oaks are historically documented in Prussia, none of them at this site.

The Princes' Theory:

It is suggested that the statue was erected by four Gothic princes or the sons of Widewuth, who reconciled after a conflict. The author doubts this theory due to the lack of reliable historical sources.

The Electoral Theory:
The author considers the possibility that the statue represents Johann Sigismund, Elector of Brandenburg, and his three brothers. This is deemed the most probable theory, as elderly and respected witnesses have unanimously supported it.
The Duke Albrecht Theory:

Another theory claims that Duke Albrecht of Prussia erected the statue in 1552 to commemorate a hunting meeting with King Sigismund August of

Poland and two other princes.

An alternative version attributes the statue to Duke Albrecht Friedrich, following his marriage to Maria Eleonora of Cleves.

The author considers these accounts unsubstantiated.

Conclusion:

As no definitive historical evidence exists, the true origin of the statue remains uncertain.

The author favours the electoral theory (Johann Sigismund & brothers) but remains open to new findings.

Unfortunately, a large portion of historical documents was destroyed by the Swedes in Fischhausen in 1627, making further research difficult.

Dedication Letter:

The text concludes with a praise-filled dedication to the author of the dissertation, Johann Christoph Huhn, written by his teacher, M. Johann Jacob Rohde.

Rohde commends Huhn's passion for learning, diligence, and devotion to the sciences, wishing him future support from patrons.

Final Thoughts

The dissertation is a historical investigation into the mystery of the Four Brothers Statue, critically assessing popular beliefs, scholarly interpretations, and historical documentation.

The lack of conclusive records means that its true origin remains unresolved, yet the most credible hypothesis associates it with Johann Sigismund and his brothers.

The text ends with an honourable recognition of Johann Christoph Huhn's academic merit and dedication, reinforcing the scholarly importance of the study.