CHAPTER 3

The Margrave

Although Vladislaus Henry and Přemysl Otakar had agreed on joint government as well as on the new arrangement of the domestic situation, the transformation of ducal Moravia into a margraviate was not simple and certainly not predictable, because the shaky and frequently interrupted tradition of the title of Margrave did not go further back than to 1 July 1179. On that day, Duke of Bohemia Frederick appeared at the gate of the imperial palace in Cheb in order to settle, with the advice and help of Emperor Barbarossa, a protracted dispute with the duke of Austria. To everyone’s relief, it was possible to find an acceptable compromise, the conditions of which were recorded in an imperial charter. The document says that Frederick was surrounded by a large retinue and that also his brother Přemysl arrived in Cheb as a margrave of Moravia (Primezla margravius de Moravia).1 Barbarossa’s privilege has only been preserved in copies made between the end of the 13th century and the middle of the next century. The sloppy notaries offered different versions of Přemysl’s title.2 In addition, the imperial office did not seal the charter immediately, only several days later in Magdeburg.3 Therefore, it is possible that not even the actual autograph reflected reality. Nevertheless, it became widely accepted that Přemysl really was in Cheb and that he used a title unknown in the Czech lands.4

It seems that the ‘margrave’ gained some insight into the world of the Přemyslid dukes in the middle of 1178, when Frederick took control of Prague Castle and, in order to secure influence in Moravia, placed a strong garrison led by his brother Přemysl in Olomouc. He was probably granted special powers, whose extent as well as exclusive subordination to the duke of Bohemia were determined by the new title, which made it possible for Frederick to refer to himself as the ruler of Bohemia and Moravia and thus reminded Duke of Znojmo Conrad Otto who held the most power in hereditary Přemyslid possessions. Although it is not known for how long Přemysl’s ‘margraviate’ lasted, the year 1179 and the meeting in Cheb ask for a careful reading of two notes by

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1 MGH DF I (X/3), 341–343, No. 782.
2 MGH DF I, (X/3), 341–342, the copy ‘D’, made sometime after 1333, does not even mention ‘margravius’ but includes the name ‘Marquardus’ in the respective place.
3 Opl 1978, 74.
the abbot of Milevsko Gerlach, to which particular importance was attached in the past. The first of them ends with a commentary on the rebellion among Czech leaders in 1182, who had been ordered by the emperor at a Hoftag in Regensburg to accept the banished Frederick as their lord, whereas Conrad Otto, whom they had selected as their new lord in the meantime, was to satisfy himself with Moravia (illum vero Morauia contentum esse precepit). The second note comments on the invasion of the Bohemian forces into the Znojmo region three years later (1185), to which Frederick had been forced by the alienation of Moravia (alienatio Moraviae), because Conrad Otto had allegedly acted as if he had held the land by the grace of the emperor and not the Prague court (quam non ab eo, sed de manu imperatoris tenere gestiebat).

The abbot of Milevsko certainly could not have had any idea that his celebration of the wise emperor and the innocent postscript in the form of ‘the alienation of Moravia’ would at some point be discussed in terms of the state law and that the emperor Barbarossa would be blamed for the malicious separation of the Czech ‘state’ into two parts, for the elevation of Moravia to a margraviate and its subordination directly to the Empire. Nevertheless, Gerlach did not write anything like that, nor was the mythical transformation of Moravia into an imperial fief captured by any contemporary scriptorium. Moreover, the year 1179 proves that the objections raised do not fit chronologically, because the title of Margrave seems to have been placed in the domestic coordinates not by Emperor Frederick Barbarossa but by Duke of Bohemia Frederick. Nevertheless, more careful considerations are provoked by the protocol of the foundation charter of the Louka monastery from 25 October 1190, in which Conrad Otto mentioned that before he had assumed the ducal sceptre, he had been endowed with the title of Margrave (dei gratia Boemorum dux, quondam marchio Moraviae). How should Conrad’s margraviate be dated, though? The end of the 12th century does not abound in reliable information; however, local tradition draws attention to the fact that Conrad Otto laid claims to the sovereign rights over all Moravia. After the death of Bishop of Olomouc Pilgrim in March 1184, he appointed his own candidate to the vacated throne, although the right of investiture belonged to the duke of Bohemia. Frederick therefore blocked further proceedings and did not yield until the summer of 1186, when he approved the candidacy of the Strahov monk Kaim. Could this be the trace that might shed light on the character of the margraviatual title?

5 Annales Gerlacii, FRB II, 481.
6 Annales Gerlacii, FRB II, 506.
7 CDB I, 299–301, No. 326.
8 Granum catalogi praesulum Moraviae, ÅöG 78/1892, 75–76.