

DISCUSSIONS ON THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE EGERLAND AND ITS SETTLEMENT

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Until 1322 the Egerland, today the westernmost part of the land of Bohemia, was an integral part of the old German Empire. Already after the dissolution of the foundations of Hohenstaufen power in the 13th century, the tight organization of this border area within the Empire became looser, until it was pledged by Louis the Bavarian to King John of Bohemia. A formal incorporation into the Kingdom of Bohemia under constitutional law never took place, and the pledge status would thus actually continue to exist.

The present article intends to show how this Egerland, which in the Age of the Hohenstaufens as an imperial territory, still included also a large area of present-day Upper Franconia and of the Fichtelgebirge, emerged into the historical epoch, and which conceptions of the early historical settlement and its ethnic classification can be taken into consideration on the basis of the presently available research. The study thus deals only with the time up to the first documentary reference to Eger in the year 1061. Since points of departure for historical knowledge of the early period of this area have to be gained in spite of the fact that it cannot be grasped by means of documents, the auxiliary historical disciplines must be allowed to speak in these discussions. It is thus not irrelevant to review the theories of Germanic origins and of colonization for Bohemia and their consequences for the Egerland, and the problems of the Germanic or Slavic origin of the original population, furthermore the findings of German and Czech archaeology, as well as Settlement Geography. Conclusive evidence appears to be contributed here also by philology, especially as expressed in the numerous works of Ernst Schwarz. From the first mention of the Eger River in 805, there is an increase in the number of documentary reports on the area of the former Bavarian Nordgau, on the Sorb land, on the ecclesiastical affiliation of this region, on the sphere of influence of the Babenbergs and the first appearance here of Imperial bondmen clearing the land. If in conclusion the sum total is drawn from all the theories and historical findings, it must be observed that neither the continuity and colonization theory, nor prehistory and protohistory can produce conclusive evidence for the ethnic classification of the earliest population. Settlement Geography also brings no fundamental decision, since according to the field patterns, both peoples could have lived here. Philology and topo-

nymy can prove that at least since the 12th century, Germans settled here on a larger scale. In the historical epoch, in the real sense of the word, especially under Margrave Diepold III at the beginning of the 12th century, it becomes clear that the Egerland, the provincia Egrensis, was an Imperial land belonging directly to the Hohenstaufens.