

During the reign of Henry the Lion Saxony was divided into number of "principalities". Holders (bishops, earls etc.) of these domains didn't stay under the command of the duke. They didn't grant his authority. Henry the Lion reigned only over his own principality. His power and support of Emperor Frederick Barbarossa gave him factual dominance over the other princes of Saxony, but not the rule over them. Consequently his primary interest was not the rule over the entire duchy, but the enlargement of his own property. He ruled in his own principality like a superior suzerain. The problem of his principality was inner "disunion". The domain was put together from allods and fiefs. Because of his fiefs was Henry in fact only one part in a network of feudal relationships - on one hand the suzerain, on the other the fief. His suzerain position meant not that he could rule over his vassals like an absolute monarch. His extreme requirements on his vassals activated their opposition. This inner conflict culminated in the time of clash with the emperor and caused animosity of his own vassals.

The struggle with princes and the emperor has shown the limits of his power and also the incompact structure of his principality. Even his vassals came over the emperor. His duke's honour was taken from him. The duchy was divided and invested in other princes. But the emperor in conjunction with princes could withdraw also his fiefs. Not only the duchy, but also the part of his own principality was for Henry and his heirs lost.

In contrast to Henry's duchy and principality was Bohemia compact. The prince of Bohemia ruled over the whole land. There were no rights not even part of the land, which would the prince receive like a fief. All other "keepers of political power" were under his rule and they granted his authority. The prince could be only a member of one dynasty: Přemyslovci. The succession was not inheritable from father to son.