

Dědictví montánní krajiny Jáchymovska The Heritage of the Mining Landscape of Jáchymovsko

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The Jáchymovsko area in the Krušné hory (Ore Mountains) area is one of the most significant post-mining locations in Czechia, not only thanks to its 500-year-long history of mineral mining, but also due to its preserved heritage. Since the early 16th century, when the area was colonized, it has been a significant center not only for the mining of silver ore, but also of education. Jáchymov itself, famous for its minting of silver tolars, was the second largest city in the Kingdom of Bohemia. Today, one can visit tunnels from the 16th century that are a testament to the skill and technical maturity of the ancestors. In the 18th and 19th century, when the supply of silver was depleted, the region turned to the mining of cobalt, tin, nickel, and bismuth. In 1898, Marie Skłodowska Curie discovered a new element – radium – in the waste from a Jáchymov factory that manufactured uranium dye, and the town became the capital city of its production. After the end of the WWII, uranium ore was intensively mined in the area, primarily for the Soviet Union's weapons industry, and many new mines were opened as well as labor camps for prisoners, who were forced to mine and process raw radioactive material. The period of totalitarian power is still visible in the local landscape today. Slag heaps or other objects are noticeable at practically every step. Remembering this era is one of the tasks of the Jáchymovsko area's heritage management. Since 1964, mining activities have ceased completely. The only exception is the Svornost mine, where water that contains radon is being drawn for the local healing spa.

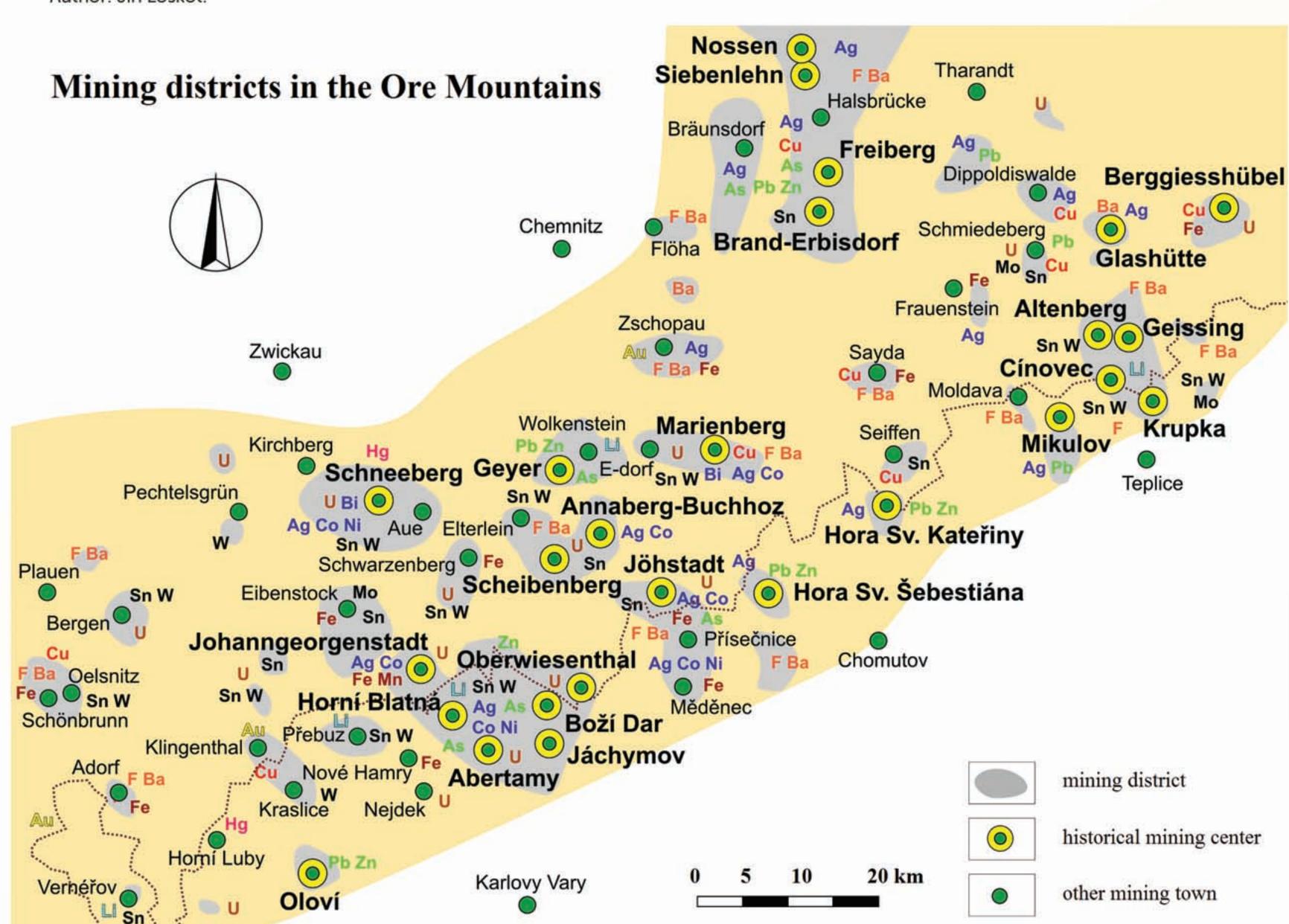
Many mining, industrial, and architectural monuments related to mining and processing materials have been preserved in the area around Jáchymov and in the Ore Mountains as a whole. Due to its extraordinary significance, the Erzgebirge/Krušnohoří mining cultural landscape is in the process of being registered as a UNESCO world heritage site.

Jáchymovsko v oblasti Krušných hor lze bezesporu řadit mezi nejvýznamnější montánní lokality na území Česka, a to nejen s ohledem na 500 let trvající těžbu nerostných surovin, ale také na množství dochovaného montánního dědictví. Již na počátku 16. století, kdy byla oblast v souvislosti s výskytem stříbra kolonizována, se stala významným centrem nejen těžby rud, ale také vzdělanosti. Samotný Jáchymov, proslulý ražbou stříbrných tolarů, byl druhým nejlidnatějším městem Českého království. Dodnes lze navštívit chodby z 16. století, jejichž provedení dokumentuje zručnost a technickou vyspělost předků. Po vyčerpání zásob stříbra následovalo v regionu během 18. a 19. století dobývání kobaltu, cínu, niklu nebo bizmutu. Roku 1898 Marie Curie-Skłodowská objevila v odpadu z jáchymovské továrny na výrobu uranových barev nový prvek – radium – a město získalo světový monopol na jeho výrobu. Po konci 2. světové války v celé oblasti probíhala intenzivní těžba uranové rudy, hlavně pro zbrojní průmysl Sovětského svazu, vzniklo mnoho nových dolů i pracovních táborů pro vězně těžící a zpracovávající radioaktivní surovinu. Odraz období totalitní moci je v dnešní krajině znatelný nejvíce. Rozsáhlé výsypky nebo jiné provozní objekty jsou viditelné téměř na každém kroku. Připomínání i této doby patří k jednomu z úkolů péče o dědictví Jáchymovska. Od roku 1964 se již v oblasti suroviny netěží. Dodnes se však v jáchymovském dole Svornost čerpá voda s obsahem radonu pro potřeby zdejších léčebných lázní.

V souvislosti s těžbou a zpracováním surovin na Jáchymovsku i v celých Krušných horách vzniklo a dodnes se dochovalo množství báňských, průmyslových a architektonických památek hmotného i nehmotného charakteru. Důkazem jejich mimořádného významu je probíhající proces nominace zápisu Hornické kulturní krajiny Erzgebirge/Krušnohoří na seznam světového dědictví UNESCO.

Map of the Krušnohoří mining district. There is a large number of ore deposits on the Czech and German side of the Ore Mountains. In the Jáchymovsko and other mining districts (Potůčky, Annaberg) there is the so-called five-elemental association of important metal elements (Ag, Bi, Co, Ni and U), which are also mined together. These ores are typical for the Ore Mountains, but there are also curiosities, such as deposits of gold, mercury, or the currently much sought after lithium, the future mining of which is under consideration. Jáchymov itself is also the most diverse geological deposit in the world.

Author: Jiří Loskot.









Newly reconstructed fragments of the Svornost labor camp. A labor camp called Svornost (Unity) was built for prisoners working in the Svornost mine. The camp was entered through a gate that greeted arrivers with the phrase "To freedom through labor", which documented the cynicism of the totalitarian ideology. The entire compound was surrounded by a corridor with a double barbed-wire fence with watchtowers in certain places. The camp, like all the others in the area, was an independent unit and had facilities for guards and prisoners (security equipment, warehouses, kitchens, a sty, camp buildings, or camp prisons). Today, at the location of the former labor camp, a new fence has been erected, and the entry gate and other camp fragments are marked.

Photo: Jakub Jelen.



Slag heap. During the mining of uranium, a large amount of slag has to be hauled away. One ton of material contains only roughly 1 kg of uranium, so the amount of slag produced was enormous. Slag heaps dozens of meters high and dozens of hectares wide were formed right next to the mines. Today, they are part of the landscape's memory.

Photo: Jakub Jelen.



National cultural monument Red Tower of Death. The seven-story tower is located in Vykmanov, near the town of Ostrov, and was used as the final phase in the processing of uranium ore from the entire Czechoslovakia. The prisoners dragged the ore all the way up to its highest level and then poured it onto nets, through which it fell all the way to the bottom. This was how it was crushed. Then it was loaded into iron barrels and shipped to the Soviet Union. This work created a lot of dust, which the unprotected prisoners inhaled and swallowed. Most of the prisoners working in the Tower of Death died due to the crushingly hard work and exposure to high levels of radioactivity.

Photo: Zdeněk Kučera.



Ruin of the central compressor. Jáchymov's industrial heritage includes the ruins of terminated ore mines. The remnants of the central compressor of the Eliás mine in Jáchymovsko, which pumped air into mines.

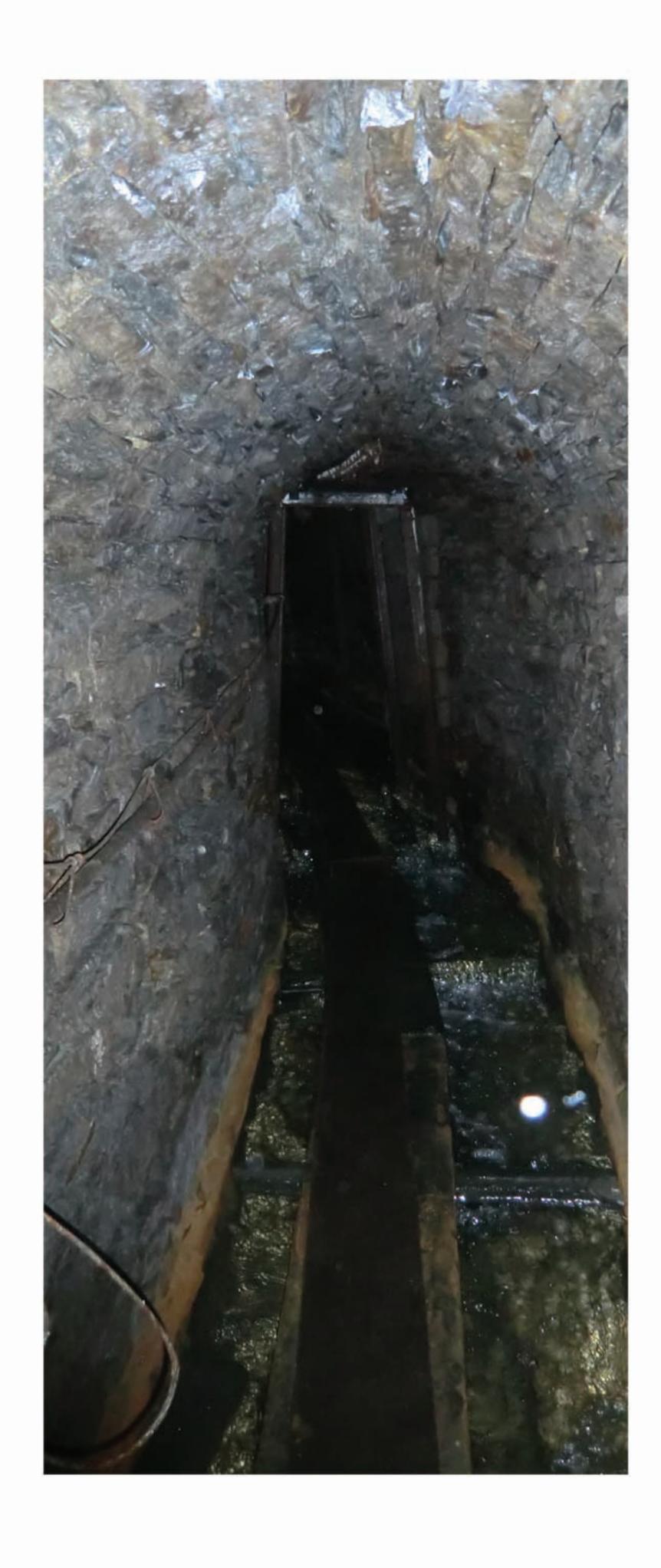
Photo: Jakub Jelen.

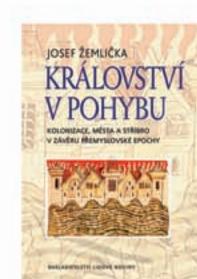


Period illustration of silver mining in Jáchymov. Woodcut by Hans Ruthardt. Illustration from Jáchymov's oldest book dated 1523, the epic "Das Joachimsthaler Bergbüchlein", which depicts activities connected to silver mining.



Silver tunnel. Hundreds of kilometers of underground tunnels were built in the Jáchymovsko area to serve the mining of silver in the 16th century. One of these is the tunnel of St. Barbara, part of the Svornost mine. This mine has been in operation since 1525 with only a few breaks until today. The level of St. Barbara lies at a depth of 106 m under the mouth of the mining shaft and the total length of the hallway at this level is 8,55 km. The tunnel is still accessible and its original reinforcement is still functional. Photo: Jakub Jelen.





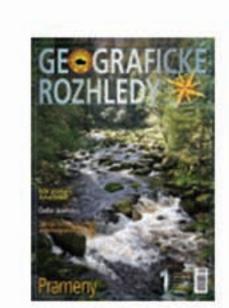
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