



KOZÍ HRÁDEK

You are standing on the site of the most important historical monument in the Tábor region called Kozí hrádek (Goat Castle). No documents have been preserved to say when it was built. The oldest mention dates back to the year 1377, when the castle was owned by Vlček of Kozí. Later, Kozí Hrádek was owned by the Hardek family and by Jindřich of Hradec. In 1406 Vilém of Újezd obtained the ownership of the castle. However, he died two years later and the possession of the castle passed to his two sons, Ctibor and Jan, who would later give sanctuary to the famous Czech religious reformer, Jan Hus.

In November 1412 the Church declared anathema (excommunication) against the heretic and Jan Hus had to leave Prague. Most probably, he went into hiding somewhere in the Žatec region. There are no existing notes about the precise places where he was in hiding. However, he is likely to have chosen a remote castle near Prague to avoid an interdiction against all divine services (funerals, christenings, etc.) being imposed on the place where Hus was at that time.

At the beginning of the summer of 1413, Jan Hus took shelter in Kozí Hrádek at the invitation of Jan of Ústí. He came to the region, which already had a revolutionary tradition of its own, intending only to write. Here he finished his important work „Postilla“, as well as others such as „On Simony“, „On the Church“, and „On Six Heresies“.

Nevertheless, as Hus said, people wanted him and needed him so he returned to his work as a preacher. He resumed his teachings that he had begun at the Bethlehem Chapel in Prague. His preachings „Under the Lime Tree“ are very well-known.

People used to come and listen to the powerful and brave cleric not only from the nearby town of Ústí, but also from far around.

In the spring of 1414, Jan Hus visited Prague but shortly after that he returned to this region, this time not to Kozí Hrádek but to Sezimovo Ústí. On 15 July 1414 he left. It is not certain why, but some say that the reason was the death of Jan of Ústí, his host. Others think that the main reason was a strong outbreak of plague, which originated in the region of Mladá Vožice and Chýnov. What is certain is that Hus journeyed to the Krakovec Castle near the town of Rakovník. Later on, he began his final journey to Constance (Konstanz) from there.

In 1438 Kozí hrádek was destroyed by fire. Experts disagree about the cause of the fire. The most probable explanation is that the castle was plundered and burned by mercenary troops of Albrecht II. of Habsburg who laid siege to Tábor while camped at Měšice. Albrecht was probably lured to this location by the prospect of easy prey. As you may be able to see, Kozí Hrádek was not built at a particularly safe location. It is not protected by any high cliffs or a wide river on any side, which was something that typically would increase the defensive capacity. Kozí Hrádek could resist groups of bandits or a smaller aggressive neighbor but not the attacks of a hugely superior force.

After the end of the Hussite wars, the town of Tábor became the owner of Kozí Hrádek although in the contemporary sources it is referred to as „the deserted Kozí Hrádek.“ It seemed that the castle would share the fate of tens of similar castles and fortifications and slowly and without much trace fade into the surrounding landscape. In the 16th and 17th centuries people used material from the castle's walls for small buildings in Měšice. It wasn't until 1886 that some work began at the ruin at the request of a grammar school teacher named August Sedláček (the author of „Castles, chateaus and fortified settlements of the Czech Kingdom“) and it was then that the rest of the residential tower was discovered.

Later, an ordinary metal sign was installed giving general information to visitors. Seven years after that, an academic association called „Štítný“ wanted to erect a monument on the site. However, Austrian authorities were afraid of reviving the Hussite's revolutionary traditions and therefore did not allow the building of the monument. Money already collected was used for the reconstruction of the castle. This work was done very unprofessionally though and without any plan, therefore more archeological artifacts were destroyed than saved.

An important turn for the better occurred in 1899 when Josef Švehla, a headmaster in Sezimovo Ústí, started to take an interest in the restoration work. Archeology was his hobby and thanks to his enthusiasm and 15 years of untiring labor we have an image of the contemporary hiding place of Jan Hus.

All exhibits collected during the work supervised by Josef Švehla (more than 250 ranging from primitive children's toys and vessels of coins to spear and ceramics) are on display in the Tábor museum. On 30 March 1962, Kozí Hrádek was declared to be a

national cultural site. The last restoration work was done during 1975–77.

Kozí Hrádek was built on a narrow headland in an irregular oval form close to a pond called Jezero. It was the best place for the building of a castle because the headland was narrowest at this place. A moat was placed around the castle, as much as 20 meters wide in front of the castle. A wooden bridge crossed a deep ravine in front of the castle and a drawbridge led into the castle itself. Through it people would go to the first courtyard. Here you can see a small kitchen on the left and a big guardroom. On the left side there is a well, which is sunk into rock to a depth of 13.5 meters. When you go down the stairs behind the well, you come to the cellar. This was the place where the castle laborers lived. Through the little gate in the inner stone wall people used to enter the second courtyard on which the square-shaped stone residential tower of perhaps two floors was built. Here all the lords lived together with their retinue. A two-room outbuilding was separated from the tower by a narrow street. The smaller room was a granary. There was a space between the inner wall and the outer wall on the south, west and north with a walkway along the outer wall. There was a small gate in the outer wall leading to the moat. Fortification of the castle was complemented by an earthen mound or berm in front of the moat and huge wooden palisades which were located approximately at the place where now you can see a wooden fence.

If you walk in front of the castle, you can still see the remains of a former brewery cellar. A piece of a kettle and burned malt were found there. Apart from the brewery building, which was made from wood and then later burned, there were two other buildings, one of which was probably a stable for horses.



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