



German Decorations (Miners)

A miner's figure (German: Bergmannsfigur) is a traditional Christmas decoration from the Ore Mountains of central Europe. Miners' figures are turned out of wood, and often bear two candles. They are usually displayed together with an angelic figure also bearing a candle. This pair is intended to symbolise the relationship between man and woman or the worldly and spiritual aspects of life.

In the Ore Mountains, miners and angels, together with candle arches, smoking figures and nutcrackers, are all part of Christmas tradition.

It was one of the traditional "duties" of every Ore Mountain man, when he became a father, to carve a miner or an angel for his child. The miner for a son and the angel for a daughter. And at Christmas time, the "fifth season" in the Ore Mountains, these figures were placed in windows and so passers-by could see how many children there were in the house. The figures also had, however, another purpose and thus became a symbol for the region. When miners went to the pit early in the morning, it was still dark, especially in the winter months. Likewise, it was dark in the mine itself and their place of work was only dimly lit. When their long shift was over the moon was already in the sky. In order to light the way for their menfolk in the dark winter's night, the women placed the Light Miner (Lichterbergmann) and the Light Angel (Lichterengel), as the figures were called, in the windows. And so it is easy to see how the angel became a symbolic figure for the pious mining folk of the Ore Mountains. The angels acted as guardians and light-bearers on the dark and difficult road into the mine.

