

Position to Sakdrisi Gold Mining Complex

16/08/2013

As President of the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation) and at the same time as President of the Deutscher Verband für Archäologie (German Association of Archaeology) I am very concerned to hear that the archaeological monument of Sakdrisi gold mine is in great danger to be destroyed in the near future by the extension of modern gold mining to the site. If this plans are going to be implemented not just Georgia, also Europe, will loose one of its most important prehistoric mining sites forever. I can't imagine that these plans will be realized in Georgia, a country where protection and preservation of cultural heritage has a high value.

The Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz, which I am heading, is the largest cultural institution in Germany and one of the most important and most prestigious worldwide. Our institution has a strong link and deep respect to Georgia and its culture. From 2010 to 2012 we were the European partner in the exceptional successful EU funded Twinning Project "Support to the Institutional Development of the Georgian National Museum" in which we supported the Georgian museums on their way of transition and modernization.

This project stands in a long and intense tradition of German-Georgian relations in culture and different scientific fields since the 19th century. Even the founder of the Caucasian Museum in Tbilisi, Gustav Radde, had German origins. In the 1960ies and 70ies partnerships between universities in Tbilisi and the German cities Jena and Saarbrücken were established. Since the independence of Georgia 21 years ago the relations between both countries have been further deepened and many fruitful co-operations have been established. Our joint efforts in common scientific and cultural projects shall be further enlarged in the future and strengthen our common efforts in preservation and development of Georgian culture and heritage.

This is one major reason why I, as the head of the major cultural institution in Germany, have to write my concern about the current development in Sakdrisi. To our knowledge the site was protected by Georgian Heritage laws since 2006; it is incomprehensible and shameful that this status was removed from this important site. The commissions' report decree (Nº03/08. 2013.28.05) did not regard the recent scientific results in proper manner nor did they ask the actually engaged scientific team for their analytical and scientific documents. This is against any good scientific practice! Georgia has ratified the Valetta Convention to save its immobile and mobile cultural heritage, therefore state

interests should include the careful handling of the natural and cultural property of a country.

Sakdrisi is the oldest gold mine worldwide and therefore a unique heritage site not only of Georgia, but of mankind. It should not be sacrificed to pure economic interests. Georgia is known basically for its amazing nature and its outstanding cultural heritage. Don't risk this potential which can so strongly help in constructing a new future of your country! The reputation of Georgia would extremely suffer by such an act of destruction of an internationally known prehistoric site which lies on important archaeological path between the Neolithic site of Arukhlo and the outstanding Paleolithic site of Dmanisi. Together with Sakdrisi there is a potential in development of cultural tourism in the economically poor region of Southern Lower Kartli.

Therefore I want to ask you to reestablish the Immobile Heritage Status of the Sakdrisi mine. I also want to propose to introduce an independent commission of experts, who could give recommendations how to continue scientifically and economically at this site. This could allow at least the detailed documentation of the site at least.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Hermann Parzinger', written in a cursive style.

Prof. Dr. Hermann Parzinger