Sakdrisi fate still unclear
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The problem of the Sakdrisi-Kachagian gold mine still remains unsolved. An initiative group consisting of students, NGO representatives and environmental activists are camping nearby the mine, stressing that the company RMG gold has started excavation work on a section of the mine that is historical heritage of the country. The initiative group states that they have footage proving the illegal action and claim that they will deliver the evidence to law-enforcers. Caves and mining tools discovered at the site during a 2004 excavation by the National Museum of Georgia and the German Mining Museum are believed to date to the third millennium, BC.

But in its March 14, 2014 decision, the Ministry of Culture cited a supposed lack of proof that Sakdrisi had ever functioned as a gold mine as a reason for lifting the site’s protected status as a “cultural monument.” For the past eight years, Sakdrisi had enjoyed protection, a designation that prevented mining at the site, located near the village of Kazreti, where a vast copper mine owned by RMG Gold’s sibling, RMG Copper, is located.

The Georgian-German archeological team, headed by German Professor Doctor Thomas Stollner thinks that the object represents an ancient goldmine and, hence, it should be granted the status of monument. However, there are quite strong scientific opinions, stating that the existence of the gold mine in Sakdrisi 5,400 years ago is not proved. Stollner states that an international commission should be formed without Georgian and German experts that will study whether the site is of such a huge archeological importance, as German specialists state, or not. Despite the fact that the Georgian Government does not believe the mine to be archeologically important, they stated that foreign specialists would be invited.

“They have done this before (RMG gold), but they said it was for roads and we didn’t raise the alarm, but today we got up on another hill and took footage of them destroying the heritage area,” Nato Vatsadze, one of the rally participants stated, noting that the initiative group will not remove their camps until the process is stopped. They also demanded the Georgian Public Broadcaster to film the area and Sakdrisi to be returned the status of a cultural heritage.

Nikoloz Antidze, head of the Cultural Heritage Protection National Agency, claims that no working activity is taking place in the area, which is interesting for scientists.

“ As for the rest area, the company has the legal right to carry out activities,” Antidze states.

However, the Ministry of Culture should make a final decision. According to the Minister, Guram Odisharia, he is waiting for the conclusion made by foreign experts in future. But, he thinks that the best outcome would be moving the interesting section of Sakdrisi to the museum, which will be located in Bolnisi.

RMG gold representative Soso Tsabadze states that Sakdrisi was given the archeological status illegally in 2004. However, he admits that the company is ready to finance moving the arch types of the mine to the museum.

Archeologist Gogi Mindorashvili states that all the experiments made in the mine reveal that Georgians had a special method for the mining of gold, and that Sakdrisi is of very important historical heritage for the country. However, archeologist Guram Lortkipanidze believes that such large-scaled activities would not have been fulfilled in a narrow mine without much water resources. He also states that no gold items have been found in an adjacent area. Commenting on the argument Stollen states that the fact of absence of gold things does not necessarily indicate the absence of the mine.

Analyst Levan Kalandadze states that the current Georgian Government lacks timely decisions, inter -ministry coordination and taking responsibility which creates problems.

Irakli Matcharashvili, program coordinator at Green Alternative, states that the Ministry plan makes no sense. “If it is a myth that the site has no archeological importance why do they need a commission of experts? It’s just words,” Macharashvili states. The Georgian Young Lawyers’ Association states that the company RMG gold has no right to undertake mine works on the archeological area of Sakdrisi since the Ministry March 14, 2014 decision has been appealed.

“When there is an appeal, a decision is automatically suspended until completion of the process,” GYLA states and appeals to the ministry to display the legal act on its web page.

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http://www.georgianjournal.ge/arts-a-culture/27008-sakdrisi-fate-still-unclear.html

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