



DARIALI HYDROPOWER PLANT PROJECT

*DARIALI HPP CONSTRUCTION IMPACT ON DARIALI GORGE AND TERGI
AESTHETIC WORTH*

Tbilisi 2014

Chapter 1. Dariali Gorge and Tergi in Georgian and World Literature and Art

Dariali Gorge, which was known as far back as in the ancient geography (Pliny (23-79) called it as PortaCaucasica or the Caucasian Gates and PortaHiberiae – the Iberian Gates, Ptolemy (90-160) –Fortes Sarmatics (the Sarmats' Gates), by its nature and the landscape has been a source of inspiration for centuries.

The steep cliffs raised to the sky and turbulent Tergi leave an indelible impression that has been recorded in the creative works of many poets and artists. In particular, in XIX century notable are Gr. Orbeliani's poem "Farewell Evening"- (1841); I. Chavchavadze's "The Spirit" (1859), "The Traveler's Letters"; A. Pushkin's "Caucasus" and "Avalanche"; M. Lermontov's "Demon", "Tamara", "Tergi Gifts", "The Temple on the Mount of Kazbek".

In XX century are remarkable G. Tabidze's poem "Dariali Narrow Cliffs" and T. Tabidze's poem "If Tergi Was Two of Such" (1939), G.Chokheli's "Tergi", O. Gudushauri's "Oh, Dariali", V. Gaphrindashvili's "Darianuli".

In XXI century is remarkable V. Javakhadze's poem "At Least Once"; an Albanian poet A. Chachi's poem about Tergi and other.

Dariali Gorge was impressive not only for poets, but also for artists. Dariali Gorge is portrayed in the canvases of such world famous artists as ArkhipKuinji, I. Aivazovski, Peter Vereshchagin, IlyaZankovski and others. The most noteworthy is Kuinji's canvas "Dariali Gorge – Moony Night" (1895). This painting is attributed to the world painting masterpieces. It has contributed much to the development of impressionism art in Russia.

Dariali HPP project impact area covers about 8 km section from the township Stepanstminda to the river Brolistskali confluence. The design section of the river valley extends to about 2 miles in length and on the right bank of the river it is represented with the landscape typical for the river plain. Thereafter the river Tergi enters a deep and narrow rocky canyon, on the

both sides of which the steep cliffs of the height up to 1000 meters are erecting giving a special visual effect to the valley.

After the design headwork the river Tergi is attached with several small and large tributaries, of which the river Devdoraki is important for its water abundance. This tributary flows in the river Tergi at the village Gveleti from the right.

Due to rocky slopes and significant anthropogenic load the vegetation in the valley is very sparse thus conditioning the lack of animal habitats.

The valley houses a number of cultural heritage monuments but it should be noted that none of them falls within the construction area and therefore the risk of negative impact on them is minimal.

Noteworthy is the fact that the Dariali Gorge has regularly experienced anthropogenic impact, which was associated with the construction and operation of various infrastructure facilities (the highway, two natural gas pipelines, 110 kV power transmission line, etc.). At present the Lars power plant headwork operates in the design section of the river Tergi and below the river Brolistskali confluence is located the Upper Lars border checkpoint infrastructure.

Despite some anthropogenic loading, the Dariali Gorge retains its original typical landscape, which is mainly conditioned with steep cliffs towering up to the sky and their ridges.

Chapter 2. Impact of Construction of Dariali Hydropower Plant on Aesthetic Worth of the Region

During Project consultation activities stakeholders have voiced concerns that as a result of the construction and subsequent operation of Dariali HPP the 8-kilometer section of the Dariali Gorge will be left without water that will drastically change its landscape; the gorge will lose its historically formed cultural-ethnographic worth. It has been stated that Dariali Gorge will not be able to attract travelers and tourists, the role of Tergi which has dominated in the description of the greatness of Dariali Gorge and inspired well-known public and culture figures will be diminished. They say, the construction of power plant will have negative impact on tourism and income of people employed in the field.

With this in mind the Project has completed an international standard impact assessment which includes an assessment of visual impacts and river flow conditions. According to the hydrological assessment, environmental recommendations and the action plan presented in the report of physical, biological and social environment impact assessment of the construction and operation of Dariali HPP, it is not expected to change the Dariali Gorge landscape so that it has a significant impact on the spectator's perception. Where visual impacts are noticeable the company has committed to mitigate these impacts through the planting of tree curtains and coving of project infrastructure. In some cases the measures taken by the project will improve visual amenities in the area, though, for example clean up of waste dumps along the river bank. As for the weakening of inspiration and emotional charge, it is very subjective issue and rather depends on personal needs, taste and personal view. At the same time, even the waterworks, combined with the landscape may have its charm. In addition, if a hydroelectric power plant construction and operation will be carried out taking into account the environmental constraints, it is not expected to change visual perception and quality of inspiration of the Dariali Gorge landscape.

Also, we cannot agree with the pessimistic prognosis of the opponents on the development of tourism related to the construction of hydropower plant. We have quite opposite opinion as we think that the construction will boost the development of the tourism in Dariali Gorge.

To assess the opportunities of tourism development and the region's cultural and ethnographic worth let's look through the brief history of the development of the Dariali Gorge given below.

The first information about the Dariali Gorge is dated back to the VI century BC. In the ancient geographic sources it is mentioned as the Caucasian Gates, Iberian Gates (Porta Caucasia, Porta Hiberiae, Pliny, 23-79 AD), Sarmatians Gates (Sarmatikai Pulai, Ptolemy,

90-160 AD). The very narrow and difficult path through the gorge had connected the North and South Caucasus since ancient times. The Dariali Gorge was of great strategic importance - Roman Empire, Byzantium, Arabs and great powers of the Western Asia tried to establish their influence in the region. Kings of Iberia (Mirian, II-III cc BC, Vakhtang Gorgasal, V century) built the defense for tresses of great significance here. In XII, this line was actively continued by the famous Georgian king David IV the Builder. The Mongol horde (Tamerlan , XIV century) passed through the Dariali Gorge with fire and sword, thus rebounded the national economic and historical development. Nevertheless, many our important historical - cultural monuments still survived and retain the interest of scientists, tourists and travelers.

The interest in the Dariali Gorge renewed in the late 18th century, when it became a highway connecting Russia and the South Caucasus and gained the strategic value. From that time until now, it has been known as the Georgian Military Highway. The political, diplomatic and military missions passed the Dariali Gorge, the troops moved through it. Many prominent people of art - Georgian, Russian and other ethnic writers, artists and musicians passed this way. Fascinated by the Dariali Gorge they expressed their disposition in the works of poetry and prose, graphic and colorful paintings. The literary and pictorial works have been created for centuries. There are a lot of cultural objects describing the old and new history of the region: sculptures, monuments along the route and near it are located monuments of old Georgian architecture of historic and cultural importance: the Fire Cross, Sioni, Garbani, Gergeti Trinity, Sioni Castle, Dariali Castle. All of this of course attracts the interest of researchers, tourists and travelers. In many cases, waterworks located in the same landscape setting becomes the object of tourist visits as it does in other countries around the world –the waterworks, combined with the landscape may have its charm. For example, we can bring Zahes, Ortachal HPP, Jinali HPP, Alazani HPP and more. These types of power plants become the objects of a new tourism sector - the industrial tourism. We should not forget the fact that there are many famous

paintings where the industrial landscape or object represents a prominent source of inspiration for artists.

Strange enough is the opinion of the critics that in case of construction of hydroelectric power plant at the river of Tergi, Ilia Chavchavadze and our famous ancestors will lose the source of their spirit and inspiration towards the Dariali Gorge.

It's hard to imagine that such progressive figures as Ilia Chavchavadze and his confederates would oppose construction of a hydroelectric power plant at the river Tergi. This issue, to say the least, is rhetorical and hard to understand, so it seems awkward to discuss.

Attention should be paid to the fact that for almost two centuries, Dariali Gorge has been under a heavy anthropogenic pressure. The construction of the highway and local roads, bridges, tunnels, pipelines, power lines, the infrastructure necessary for household and tourism development is underway, the area has also been neglected and household waste is disposed of on the banks of the river. Is all this need to be developed? We must consider the construction of hydroelectric power plant just from this aspect as well.

The answer is clear –all this is relevant, but must be carried out by the principles of sustainable development, high quality management and minimizing environmental impact.

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