CULTURAL FOUNDATION MEININGEN-EISENACH

21 June 2023

PRESS RELEASE

Meiningen shaman's drum goes back to Norway -

Foundation board gives green light for return

The Board of Trustees of the Meiningen-Eisenach Cultural Foundation today decided that the shaman drum from the collections of the Meiningen museums should be returned to its place of origin in northern Norway. The board of the foundation was instructed to conclude negotiations on this matter quickly.

This was preceded by unofficial talks between representatives of the Norwegian side (museums, the Sami Regional Parliament, the Ministry of Culture and the Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway) and the Meiningen museums. The object in question is a ritual object of great cultural and historical significance.

The Chairwoman of the Board of Trustees of the Meiningen-Eisenach Cultural Foundation, State Secretary for Culture Tina Beer:

"I am very happy about the outcome of the talks and thank all those involved as well as the Norwegian partners for their pragmatic and constructive approach. A ritual object that is important for the cultural identity of the long-persecuted Sámi people is now returning exactly 300 years after it was confiscated. It is good and important that even long-ago processes of transferring cultural property are brought to meaningful solutions. This return is an act of respect and recognition towards the northern Norwegian communities and their cultural identity. We are committed to acknowledging past injustices and ushering in a new era of intercultural dialogue and cooperation."

Dr Philipp Adlung, Director of the Meiningen Museums and Chairman of the Foundation:

"The shaman drum is less of a focus of our collections and work at the Meiningen Museums, although it has been well researched. For the Sámi people, however, who were oppressed for centuries, it is an excellently preserved piece of cultural identity, which we fully acknowledge with its return."

Background:

The "Meiningen seed drum" is a ritual object of northern European shamanism. It was confiscated from the area north of Trondheim (Nordtrøndelag) in 1723 during a missionary journey led by priest Thomas von Westen. The piece first went to the Danish Kunstkammer in Copenhagen, then as a guest gift from the Danish king to the collections of the Duke of Saxe-Hildburghausen. Since 1837, the drum has been part of the Meiningen collections and is now exhibited in the historical musical instruments section.

The "Meiningen Drum" is the first to be restituted in this form.

Further information:

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