

Awardee: David Lordkipanidze
Paleoanthropologist and museum director, Georgia

The director of the Georgian National Museum, David Lordkipanidze is considered one of the most prestigious paleoanthropologists and archaeologists worldwide. His research findings on the excavation of 1.8 million-year-old skeletal remains of early hominids in Dmanisi, Georgia revolutionized existing knowledge about early human development and migration. Under his influence, Georgian museology has lastingly internationalized and modernized. As a museum director and scientist, David Lordkipanidze is networked worldwide and has been working closely for years alongside the Goethe-Institut with renowned German partners in culture and education such as the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation and the Senckenberg Museum in Frankfurt.

David Lordkipanidze was born in Tbilisi in 1963 and studied geology and geography at Tbilisi State University and at the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow. Following his doctorate, he worked for the Georgian Academy of Sciences, at the Universität Göttingen and the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) in Lisbon and Madrid. In 2002 he qualified as professor in the fields of archaeology, geography and paleobiology at Tbilisi State University. David Lordkipanidze's scientific focuses are Paleolithic research and paleoanthropology, with a focus on early human evolution, the reconstruction of early hominids, their natural environment and researching their material remains. For more than 20 years he has led the excavations of Dmanisi in Georgia. He became famous mainly by the finds there of 1.8 million-year-old skeletal remains of early hominids. This discovery and its scientific evaluation revolutionized existing knowledge about early human development and migration. For example, David Lordkipanidze and his staff discovered the oldest known evidence of social altruism in human evolutionary history. Their findings also proved that the migrations of hominid species from Africa occurred far earlier than had been presumed.

His museum career began in the mid-1990s. He was the director of the department of geology and paleontology at Simon Janashia State Museum, the predecessor of the Georgian National Museum, from 1997 until 2001 and from 2002 until 2004 deputy director before being appointed director-general in 2005. David Lordkipanidze is extensively and diversely committed to cultural and educational policy in Georgia and the post-Soviet regions. Under his influence, Georgian museology has lastingly internationalized and modernized. In 2008 he initiated a 27-month EU twinning programme between the Georgian National Museum and the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation. The project Development of Georgian National Museum as an Institution realized in the scope of the twinning programme together with the Goethe-Institut Tbilisi also aimed at introducing general museum standards. In it, the internationally networked museum director relied in particular on cooperation with German cultural and educational institutions, which were accompanied by both a lively exchange of scientists and museum experts as well as of exhibits. His initiative for the Berlin exhibition of prehistoric Georgian gold discoveries *Medea's Gold* in 2007 at the Altes Museum made a decisive contribution to German-Georgian cultural relations. David Lordkipanidze has published over 150 articles in internationally renowned professional media. His great presence on the radio,

television and documentary films such as on National Geographic, Discovery Channel and the BBC, moreover shows how important conveying research to the broad public and cultural education are to him. He has received numerous international orders and awards including the Georgian Order of Honour (2001) and Presidential Order of Excellence (2011), the French Palmes Académiques (2002) and L'ordre national du Mérite (2006) for his outstanding service to education and scholarship as well as the German 2014 Humboldt Research Award granted in recognition of a foreign researcher's entire achievements to date. David Lordkipanidze is a member of the Georgian Academy of Science, the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America, the Academia Europea and the World Academy of Art and Science, among others.

Quotes by David Lordkipanidze

"For me, Europe is a family of states unified around common values and interests. Our goal should be to create transdisciplinary, pan-European networks at different levels. These alliances well adapted to today's realities could create a foundation for diffusing new and progressive European values wherever they intersect with principles throughout the world." (David Lordkipanidze, "Georgia and the region's European aspirations: building the future on a vibrant past," *Council of Europe Debates on European Identity*, Strasbourg, 2013)

"We are building a narrative not just of Georgian history but of Georgia's history in the world. Down the ages we have been part of a global continuum, which in recent years is something that the Georgian state has been especially pushing for – integration to Europe, to a wider horizon. That is part of our heritage from earliest times. We don't want to be isolated again. The mission in our historical exhibitions is to illustrate those many times when we had a role in the wider world." (David Lordkipanidze in "The Museum as Mirror" by Melik Kaylan, *Wall Street Journal*, 2012)

Quotes about David Lordkipanidze

"Under his leadership, the museum is continuously transforming from a typical Soviet-institution into a vibrant centre for culture, education and science." (From an appraisal by the Senckenberg Gesellschaft für Naturforschung, 2015)

"David Lordkipanidze is distinguished by an extremely rare talent: he is a specialist and a generalist in one with great sensitivity for the guiding cultural and scientific policy principles that can be derived from this. In the entire world of science and culture, he is one of the most internationally capable and influential personalities." (Günther Schauerte, vice president of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, in his laudatory speech for the conferment of the Giwi-Margwelaschwili-Preis, 2015)

"The director of the National Museum, David Lordkipanidze, a globally networked, highly respected paleoanthropologist, explains confidently that the institution of the museum must

be a switching point of social change: decentralization, hands-on science, interdisciplinary discussions are the keywords of his program of 'public education,' which he understands as decidedly 'anti-fundamentalist.' Presumably you can translate this to mean a national pedagogy in opposition to the reactionary clergy of the influential Orthodox Church." (Ina Hartwig, "Die Amazonen von Tiflis brechen zum Westflug auf," *Süddeutsche Zeitung* of 27.5.2015)

Publications (selection)

2005 *Del Turkana al Caucazo* (with Jordi Agusti), National Geographic edition.

2007 "Postcranial evidence from early Homo from Dmanisi, Georgia," *Nature* 449, 305-310.

2013 "Complete skull from Dmanisi, Georgia, reveals evolutionary biology of early Homo," *Science Magazine* Vol. 342, 326-331.

2013 "Georgia and the region's European aspirations: building the future on a vibrant past," *Council of Europe Debates on European Identity*, Strasbourg.

2015 "Die ersten Europäer – die Fundstelle Dmanisi," *Expanding Worlds – Originale Urmenschen-Funde aus fünf Weltebenen*, Darmstadt, 45-55.

Exhibitions (selection)

2007 - 2012 Touring exhibition of the treasury of the Georgian National Museum, Germany, France, USA, UK, Greece, Sweden, the Netherlands, Spain, Italy

2011 *Deutsche Maler in Georgien* (in cooperation with the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation), Tbilisi

2012 *Deutsche und Georgier. Vom Mittelalter bis heute* (in cooperation with the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation), Tbilisi

2014 *Wein-Kultur*, Berlin (part of the Georgian culture days at the Museum Europäischer Kulturen)

2016 *The First Humans out of Africa - The Journey of Mankind*, Manila, Philippines

Awards (selection)

2001 Georgian Order of Honour

2001 Award of the Prince of Monaco

2002 Palmes Académiques

2004 Georgian National Prize for Science and Technology

2004 Rolex Award for Enterprise

2006 Ordre du Mérite

2008 Award of the Accademia Nazionale dei Lincei “Fabio Frassetto” International Prize

2011 The Presidential Order of Excellence, Georgia

2014 Humboldt Research Award from the Alexander von Humboldt-Stiftung

2015 Giwi-Margwelaschwili-Preis from the Goethe-Institut Georgia and dvv-international for services in the advancement of German-Georgian cultural dialogue