

# **GOETHE MEDAL 2016**

## **ACCEPTANCE SPEECH BY DAVID LORDKIPANIDZE**

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Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a special honor for me to speak in front of you for this special occasion.

It is not easy to find right words to express my gratitude after such a recognition in this wonderful environment.

Thank you all for such an appraisal. I visited Germany for the first time in 1989 as a PhD student in the Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums in Mainz. Time spend there played an important role for the future formation of my scientific career.

At that time I would not even dream to receive the prize related to a person whose role is immeasurable in the development of human history. On the one hand it is very hard to say something new about Goethe, but on the other hand his phenomenon is still not fully researched and interpreted, and I believe it will still occupie many generations.

I would say that in the first place Goethe's thinking is the synthesis of art and science; he stands next to Leonardo da Vinci and Michelangelo – people who grounded the modern culture.

For me as a person who studies the nature and human history, Goethe's, as a scientist's vision, which is perfectly resembled in his paleontological studies, is exemplary. Objects that he collected are kept here in Weimar and represent an invaluable treasure for the researchers who study the history of nature. Darwin considered Goethe's thinking as predecessor of his evolution theory.

Goethe says: Knowing is not enough; we must apply. Willing is not enough; we must do.

Not alike many other thinkers he managed to realize his ideas and participated in creation of different institutions – Senckenberg Museum among them. Part of this leading institution is the world known Forschungsstation für Quartärpaläontologie in Weimar, founded by a prominent scientist Prof. Hans-Dietrich Kahlke whose tradition is successfully continued by Prof. Ralf-Dietrich Kahlke.

Allow me to say a few words about my personal story too. As many of us I was raised on the Greek mythology. In my case it was natural too, as my father was a scientist of classical era and I was spending the summers with him on archeological excavations in Vani, in western Georgia.

Vani discoveries prove the existence of the legendary land of Colchis and echo the myth about the Argonauts.

Dream of my father and his colleagues was to present the Colchian culture to the world and prove that the mythical land was not a myth at all – it existed really. Thanks to the big contribution of the Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts this fact became known to the scientific world. The process started in Berlin with the exhibition Medea's Gold where collections of the Georgian National Museum were presented. The exhibited communicated the story of Georgia as the Country of ancient culture whose statehood starts in Ancient Colchis and counts thousands of years. This exhibition travelled around the world's leading museums after this. As it happened many times before, Germany again became a bridge connecting Georgia to the Western World. The big input in this also lies on the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation and its former President Mr. Lehmann.

Thank you Mr. Lehmann for your immense support. This project is an example of converting the myth into reality.

This was the beginning of our close collaboration with the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation and the State Museums of Berlin. This institution now led by my colleague and friend, Hermann Parzinger is a model of a modern institution that echoes Goethe's wide vision too.

Deeds of Goethe's Institute in Georgia is not framed only with spreading of German language and culture, but this institution led by Dr. Stephan Wackwitz is really oriented in spreading scientific knowledge and creative thinking that is so principal for the development of our Country's new and strong society.

I already mentioned the Ancient Greece; modern Germany encourages humanism and fundamental sciences by bringing education and culture on the foreground like the Ancient Greece did. Today, looking on the development of the processes in the modern world Goethe's words are still actual: In nature we never see anything isolated, but everything in connection with something else which is before it, beside it, under it and over it.

My Country, Georgia is also part of these processes, using the science and culture in the first place to be connected to the rest of the world – to be part of the whole world.