

What is it? Find out where this small fragment comes from on page 9



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POTI FRAGMENTS

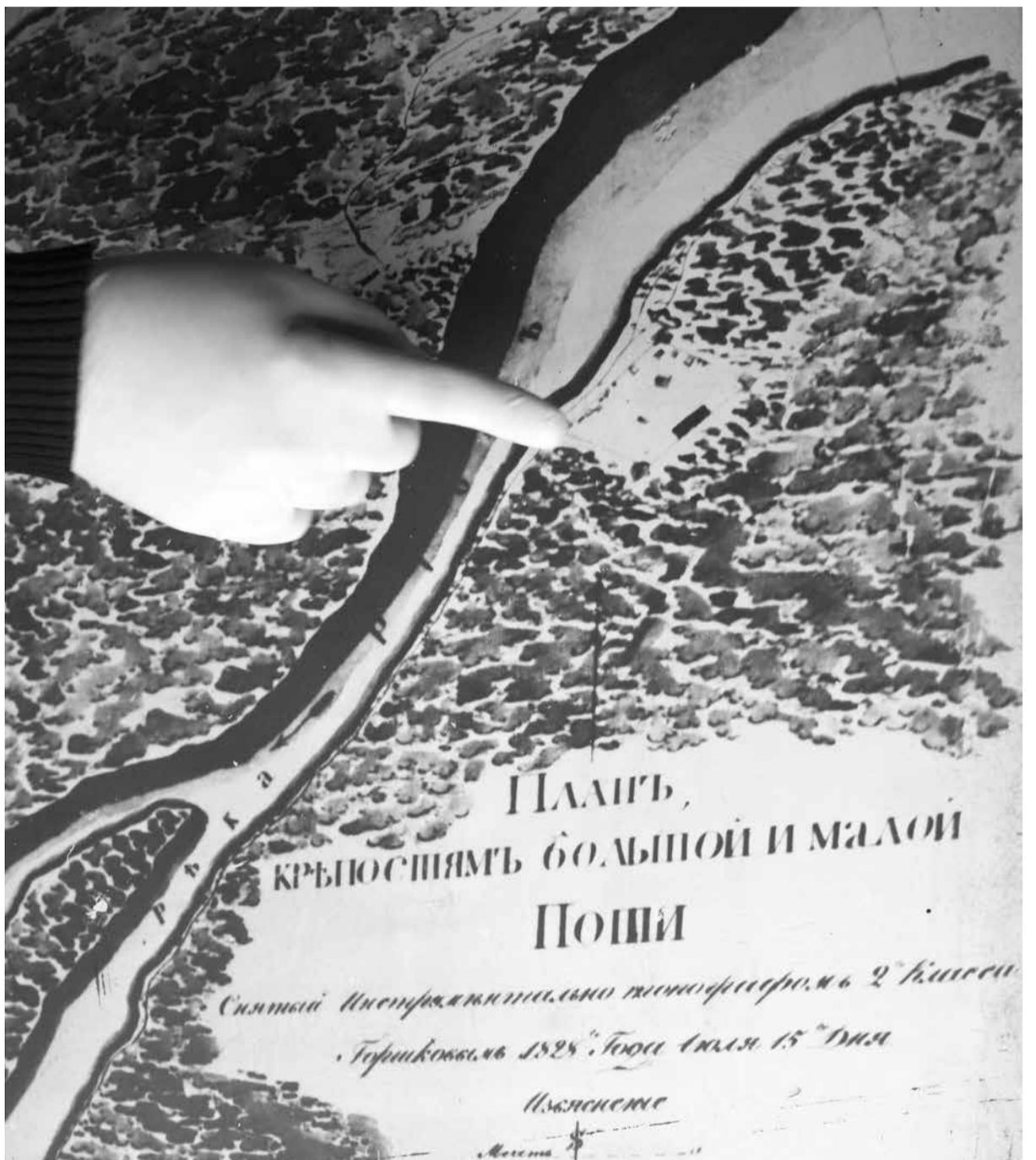
Project newspaper produced by Brendan Jackson, November 2015, with the Museum of Colchian Culture and Valerian Gunia Poti State Theatre



See more of our port pictures on page 5 and find out about the famous lighthouse.



The first port on this territory was built by Nikoladze. It was the prime source of employment over the last century. The port is the largest on the Black Sea, the largest dry cargo handler in the Caucasus. The port has 15 berths, handling general, liquid, bulk and roll on roll off container cargoes, and rail ferries. With 600,000 20 foot container capacity and 9 million tonnes of cargo a year, there are over 1100 employees working here.



“This is the earliest map of the area, showing the location of the Turkish fort, the 16th century remains of which are the base of the clock tower. This place was the gathering point of slaves, young women and young boys, who were sent on ships to Istanbul, and that was the departing point, so it had a very bad connotation. After the Russians came in, Poti was an important border town, as the Turks were still in Batumi. Poti had a strategic meaning the Russians. They put a wooden construction on top of the foundations. When Niko Nikoladze started to revive the city, he took it away and built a Georgian style balcony around it and added a clock at the top of the tower and this became the first city hall. He tried to give it a new positive meaning. He lived there as well when as he was the Mayor. For me, it’s a symbol of a victory of the Turks, a victory over the Russians, and the glorification of Poti as a self governing city and the brief period of Georgian independence.”

Poti has never been a favourite place with travellers, who have always hurried from it by the first train or post-cart. A guide book says that it is very dangerous to pass even one night in Poti, owing to its malaria, at which extreme criticism the inhabitants are very indignant, affirming that even if fever is prevalent at Poti, it is a better fever to catch than the fever at Soukhum Kale or Batoum, because the victim recovers from it sooner.

Charles Marvin, 1883

There is a wonderful harvest awaiting the archaeologist here, and the labourers are still few. With this curious sense of a complex and almost unexplored past, the traveller has a still stranger feeling of perplexity as to the future... Having at last, then, reached a conclusion, and seeing that there was nothing for British energy to do, we thought of Mark Tapley in the swamps of Eden, which must have been rather like Poti, only pleasanter, and set ourselves to see the sights of the place. Sights, however, there were none.

James Bryce, 1876



Bronze adornments, 7th-6th century B.C.

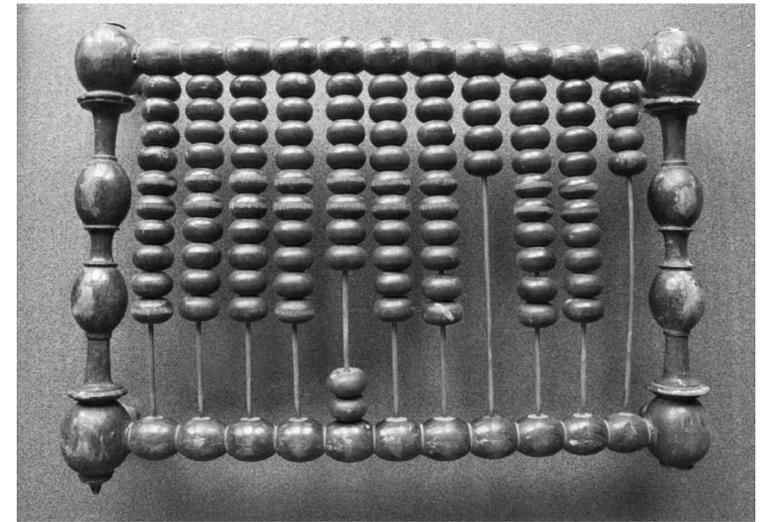
He agreed with the other members of the Alpine Club: the spoilt traveller of to-day is moved to some anger when he finds that a city exists principally for the people who live in it, and that there has not been sufficient consideration to provide picturesque streets or great sights for his amusement... we found ourselves, sooner than we expected, abreast of the mouth of the river and close to Poti, where the water was to be quitted for what could hardly be called dry land, since Poti stands in a charming morass.

F.C. Groves, 1874

There is no reason why Georgia should not become as popular a resort as Norway or Switzerland. It is not so far away as people imagine: you can go from London to Tiflis, overland in a week; it is at least as beautiful as either of the countries just named; it has the great advantage of being almost unknown to tourists; there is none of the impudent extortion which ruffles our tempers nearer home, and it is, after all, a cheaper place to travel in than Scotland. All of these circumstances ought to have an influence on the holiday-maker in search of health and recreation.

James Oliver Wardrop, 1888

Niko Nikoladze (1843-1928) was responsible for a number of social and economic projects, including the expansion of railway systems in Georgia and the construction of the Grozny-Poti pipeline. From 1894 to 1912, he was elected a mayor of Poti. During his tenure, he made this small port town on the Black Sea coast an important maritime city and trading centre. This is the abacus he used during his term in office.

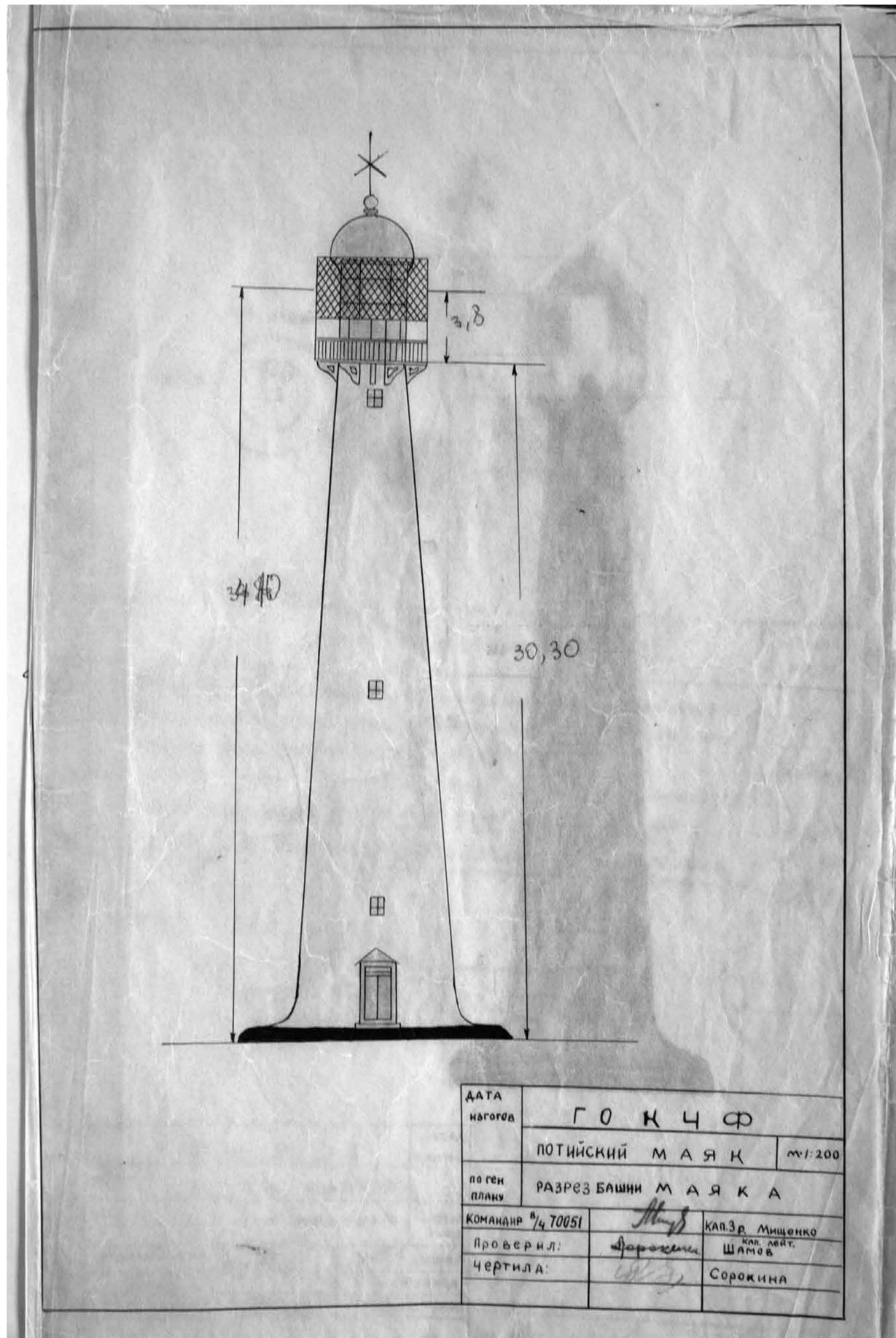


“Niko said this is the city of the future. Since my childhood, I hear that Poti is the city of the future, but you don’t really feel that. When is this future going to come? I’m quite far from politics but I don’t think the previous government or this government has done anything for the city. People do business here and send the money elsewhere. When is something going to be given back to the city?”



“After the Mayor of Paris saw him here, everyone was surprised such a clever man was actually working in this place and the Paris Mayor sent him a table object, a lamp in the form of a frog and he made this little joke that this gift was for ‘the Mayor of Frogenburg’. We don’t have the original object, only this photograph of it.”





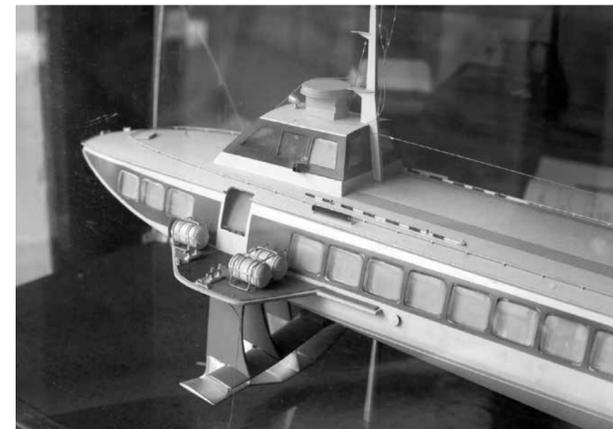
To the north the Russian armies have destroyed en masse or exiled the last of the Circassians. The Turks have been pushed back. The Tsar is confident enough to order a lighthouse for the port of Poti. The lighthouse here is one of the oldest navigation facilities on the coast of the Black Sea. Made of cast iron, it was constructed in England at Easton & Amos, Southwark, London, and transported in parts by steamship to Georgia in 1864. It was likely to have been designed by a protege of Thomas Telford, Alexander Gordon, who specialised in the construction of this type of lighthouse.

It is held together with hundreds of bolts. It stands at 36.9 metres, the highest point in the city. The tallest iron light in the world is at Gibbs Hill, Bermuda, standing at 40.8 metres, also made by Gordon. Some of his other iron lighthouses can be found at Morant Bay, Jamaica, Barbados, Australia, Newfoundland, Cape of Good Hope, Ceylon.



A similar light at Lobos Cay cost £19,000 in 1860, exclusive of the lantern and illuminating apparatus (the modern equivalent would be £815,000). The Fresnel lens came from a manufacturer in Paris, who were at the time the pre-eminent manufacturers of this kind of glass.

The Poti lighthouse is used as the main symbol on the flag of the State Hydrographic Service. The key to the lighthouse is substantial, and there is only one.



“Over 80 people work at the Hydrologic Service here, working around safe navigation, meteorology and cartography. We study the sea, the bathymetry, the depths, the movements and the currents. A lot of data was lost with the collapse of the Soviet Union, information got lost or destroyed, and we look for it paper by paper, book by book and try and recollect the data.”

Left: Model of ‘Comet’ ship that was built in Poti at Ordjonikidze shipyard.



“The river, right here in our back garden, is one of the most powerful rivers in Georgia. It brings a lot of sediment down from the Gurian mountains and affects the whole sea in this region very much. It gets very angry and powerful and over five years will change the whole coastline if you allow it. So we try to control that and keep the data in correct form. Poti port requires dredging after every storm. The river has its own way and is a big force we are always fighting with. The deepest water at the entrance road to the port is only 10 metres, which doesn’t allow bigger ships, and constant dredging is required.”

Dressing room door at the old theatre.



Only a few years after the founding of the famous Rustaveli Theatre in Tbilisi, the first plays to be performed in Poti in 1882 were 'Butiaoba' by Akaki Tsereteli and 'Sophie' by Alexander Tutaev. In this same year, Tchaikovsky's 1812 Overture debuted in Moscow. Theatrical performances were originally held in a social club 'Comet', which had a stage and also was used later as a cinema. By 1925 it had become a professional theatre, which was variously known as the Workers Theatre and the Beria Theatre, revolutionary committees often dictating content which glorified workers and peasants. In 1936, as the first permanent troupe was established, the cathedral building was given them to use as a theatre. In 1963 the theatre was renamed after the notable actor and director Valerian Gunia (1862-1938), who was born in the nearby village of Eki. It was only in 2005 that the cathedral was returned to its original religious purpose, the theatre then operating in the Folk Art Cultural Centre. A new theatre was planned and constructed, which opened in 2014. Today, apart from their local season of productions, the theatre tours around Georgia as well as abroad, participating in international festivals and meetings.



“My memories of Poti from my childhood – a big green square, a garden in the city centre, with castle and beautiful small theatre, the theatre completely reconstructed now. The church and square every year seems to become smaller...”

Adaptation of Slawomir Mrozek's 'Emigrants' directed by Dariusz Jeziernski, reimaged in collaboration with actors Giorgi Surmava and Ramaz Ioseliani, performed in the basement of the theatre.

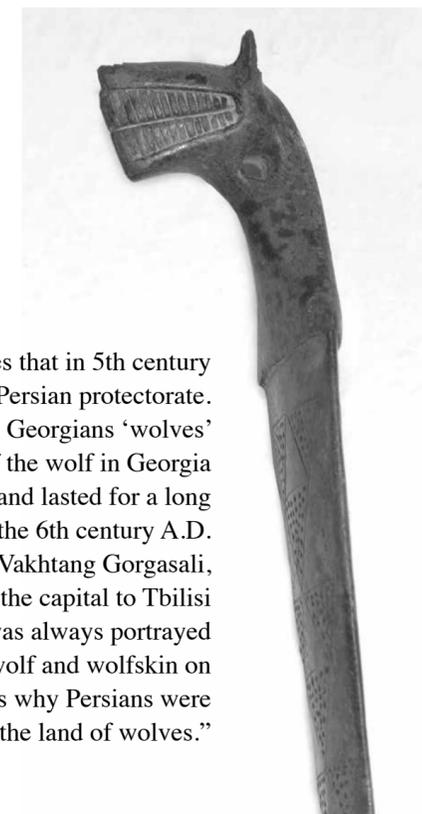


“These stones were hung on the person. It is the stone of sin – or wrongdoing. One stone, one sin, two stones, two sins. If someone was doing something wrong these stones were hung on his or her neck, one two, three, four, five. The bigger sin, the bigger the stone. I wonder if I lived in this period, how many stones would I be carrying? These are from 700 years B.C. I can't say exactly when. Some customs like this would be found in other places, like in Svaneti, the mountains.”

“This is a Colchis axe, made of bronze. Weapons like that were found in Hittite culture. It proves that Colchis was a part of a great civilisation of the East. However, this axe is modified, adorned with local ornaments, so it also proves that our people back then were not only able to adopt developed technologies, but also they could transform them into their own culture. Eventually, when they stopped to use bronze axes as weapons and changed them with iron blades, these bronze axes became ritual objects. Unfortunately every historian is poor, but we are also so rich because we have this very old history. This country has a relationship with all the ancient east, as well as Greece, Rome, Arabian, and the Byzantine empires.”



“This is a fragment of the porcelain plate from Dadiani Castle in Zugdidi. In the 1850's, during the Turkish - Russian war, the Turks raided and looted the castle, taking a lot of precious things from there. The portrait is the head of the family, David Dadiani. The plate was among things the Turks looted; it probably broke on the way, so they threw it away and this is how it was found. Of all the wealth of the Dadiani estate there were just a few pieces left.”



“Herodotus writes that in 5th century B.C. Colchis was a Persian protectorate. Persians were calling Georgians ‘wolves’ as there was a cult of the wolf in Georgia that was very strong and lasted for a long period of time. In the 6th century A.D. there was a King, Vakhtang Gorgasali, the one who brought the capital to Tbilisi from Mtskheta, he was always portrayed with the head of a wolf and wolfskin on his shoulders. This is why Persians were calling Georgia the land of wolves.”



“This figure comes from the the 6th century B.C. and gives us proof about pre-Christian beliefs of the people of Colchis. This is a figure of a goddess of fertility. She was called The Great Mother of All Gods. We have also figures of birds, most probably pigeons - symbols of peace and prosperity. All these figures were related to cults and used in rituals. The Great Mother of All Gods was a goddess of fertility related to agriculture. There is another figure of the goddess presented seated on a horse. These are unique objects in our museum and they were found near place called Ergeti.”

“The city was built with its back turned to the sea. It was never the idea to be a touristic region. It was very much industrial, boats and ships and steel and metal and smoke and it’s changed after the Soviet Union. I think this area has the potential to be an energetic and sporty area, rather than just be for a holiday and chill out. It had the tradition of water sports, canoeing on the river, and horse riding. But we need stability in the country and a bit of luck.”



At Maltakva there is the Okros Tba (Golden Lake) water sports complex, used in 1991 for the European water sports championships. It was here that young Guralia Genadi made the final of the European Championships, jumping in 50.4 metres, only the third person in the history of the water ski sports in the USSR to overcome the 50 metre barrier. When he began his career in 1984, he was one of the first children coached by Kobyalko Vyatcheslav Konstaninovich from Belarus. At the time they only had one pair of wooden skis and an aluminium boat with outboard motor.

A model of ship, donated to museum in 1945, one of several such objects from their collection.



“You need to know the description Alexandre Dumas gave about Poti when he was travelling around the region in 1859: Poti is a bunch of wooden houses and when the cows, that roam freely about, go to scratch themselves against the houses the houses are shaking.”

However, as a French gourmand, Dumas was sufficiently impressed by the menu for the recent inauguration dinner (when Poti was granted status as a port city) to note it in his diary, while he awaited a ship to finally take him away.

POTAGE Julienne

RELEVÉ DE POTAGE Chou au porc frais

ENTRÉES Schislik, avec amélioration

Rognons de porc sautés au vin Poulets à la provençale

RÔTI Deux canards et douze merles

ENTREMETS Flageolets à l’anglaise

Oeufs brouillés au jus de rognons

SALADE Haricots verts

DESSERT Noix sèches, thé, café, vodka

Premier service : Vin de Mingrèlie

Deuxième service : Vin de Kakétie

Troisième service : Vin de Gouriel



Cleaning detail at the port of Poti, 1960's.

Poti dance ensemble and choir, 1953



Fragments

Photographs/ short fictions/ newsprint.

A project inspired by the Museum of Colchian Culture, Poti.

Exhibition on show at Valerian Gunia Poti State Theatre, Poti, Georgia, November 1st - 30th, 2015

Brendan Jackson is a UK based artist who works with archive materials and heritage collections. His projects explore the relationships between people and place, looking at the connection between historical objects and the modern era.

As an artist he is motivated to engage with themes that question and explore everyday life through individual and community experience - bringing together different voices and perspectives.

Online @ www.brendanjackson.co.uk/poti

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