

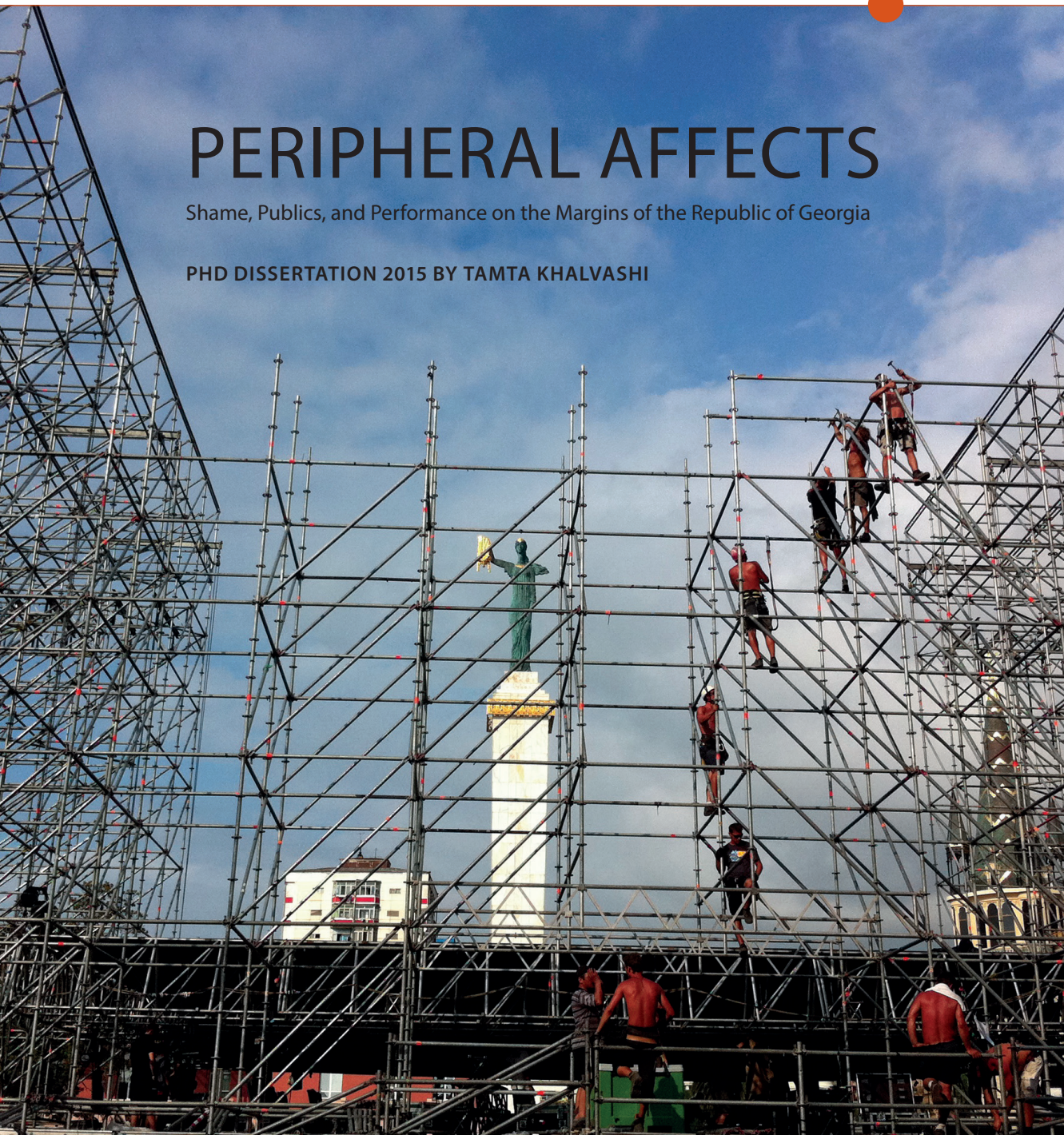
UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN
FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES



PERIPHERAL AFFECTS

Shame, Publics, and Performance on the Margins of the Republic of Georgia

PHD DISSERTATION 2015 BY TAMTA KHALVASHI



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**Shame, Publics, and Performance on the Margins of the
Republic of Georgia**

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To my grandfather,

Pridon Khalvashi

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First of all I am particularly indebted to people in Ajara who generously shared their lives and opinions with me throughout my fieldwork in 2012-2013. As a native Ajaran, I felt benevolently embraced by my informants, although often we came to entertain very different points of view on such slippery subjects in Georgia as the nation, modernity, Islam, Christianity, and socialism –the general topics of my research interests in Ajara. At times it was these differences that frustrated me the most, but they also triggered my critical engagement with the place that was so intimately bound up with my own biography. I therefore deliberately protect the privacies of my informants, whose views and social lives are not always legal or compatible with current political imaginaries or the national visions at issue.

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Finally, I dedicate this work to my deceased grandfather, Pridon Khalvashi, with whom I grew up in Ajara until I was eight years old. He is the reason I engaged with Ajara in the first place, and his voice is heard in varying degrees in this thesis.

English Resume

Peripheral Affects: Shame, Publics and Performance on the Margins of the Republic of Georgia

Peripheral Affects represents one of the first ethnographic attempts to explore borders, peripheries or edges of the post-Soviet state as an affective form of experience. The thesis thus demonstrates an iconic example of this on the western extremity of Georgia in Ajara, located on the Black Sea along the border with Turkey. Drawing on richly detailed ethnographic research in the Ajaran borderlands, the thesis focuses on Muslim and Christianized Ajarans and the ambivalences of their never quite resolved feelings of shame. For some Ajarans in this border area, one of the reasons for this shame is connected to the place and history of Ajara, which are saturated by a distinct Muslim-Ottoman heritage, as well as the emerging cross-border flow of ideas, debts, goods, and prostitution in these Ajaran-Turkish borderlands. Peripheral Affect therefore refers both to the physical geography of Ajara and to the bodies and minds of the people who inhabit this place. It captures how, in contrast to conventional understanding, marginality is not a matter of social, political, economic, or temporal differentiation only, but a circulation of spectres of affects, such as shame as well as cynicism, optimism, fear and sympathy, which represent distinctly peripheral affects. I thus argue that, far from representing borders through pre-conceived notions of nation, ethnicity or the state, peripheral affects make such notions deeply problematic. Political violence, modernizing cityscapes and the nationalizing techniques so closely associated with Ajara since Russian colonialism can in this way be seen as part of a continual process of creating clarity out of ambivalence of Ajara within Georgia. Yet, while these efforts have failed constantly, the place proliferates and intensifies recurring feelings of shame.

Dansk Resumé

Perifære Affekter: Skam, Offentligheder og Forestillinger i Udkanten af Georgien

Perifære Affekter repræsenterer et af de første etnografiske forsøg på at udforske grænseland, periferier eller udkanter af den post-sovjetiske stat som en affektiv form for erfaring. Ph.d. afhandlingen viser et ikonisk eksempel på denne vestlige ekstremitet i det georgiske område Ajara, som ligger ved Sortehavet og grænser op til Tyrkiet. Afhandlingen bygger på detaljeret etnografisk forskning i Ajaras grænseland og fokuserer på muslimske og kristne folk fra Ajara og ambivalensen af deres stadige følelser af skam. For nogle folk i grænselandet Ajara er en af årsagerne til deres skam forbundet med Ajaras sted og historie, som er gennemsyret af en særlig muslimsk-ottomansk arv, såvel som det spirende flow af idéer, gæld, varer og prostitution, som flyder på tværs af grænser i dette ajara-tyrkiske grænseland. Titlen *Perifære Affekter* referer derfor både til den fysiske geografi i Ajara og til befolkningens kroppe og sind. Den indfanger hvordan, i kontrast til den konventionelle forestilling, at marginalitet ikke kun er et spørgsmål om social, politisk, økonomisk eller temporal differentiering, men en cirkulation af affekters spektre såsom skam og kynisme, optimisme, frygt og sympati. Disse repræsenterer alle særlige perifære affekter. Derfor argumenterer jeg for, at præforestillede begreber om nation, etnicitet eller staten problematiseres af begrebet om perifære affekter. Politisk vold, modernisering af bylandskaber og de nationaliserende teknikker, som har været tæt forbundne med Ajara siden den russiske kolonialisme, kan på denne vis anskues som værende en del af en kontinuerlig proces med at skabe klarhed ud af ambivalens vedrørende Ajara i Georgien. Imens disse indsatser konstant mislykkedes, formeres stedet og hermed intensiveres de tilbagevendende følelser af skam.