Uncertain divides : religion, ethnicity, and politics in the Georgian borderlands

Pelkmans, M.

Citation for published version (APA):

General rights
It is not permitted to download or to forward/distribute the text or part of it without the consent of the author(s) and/or copyright holder(s), other than for strictly personal, individual use, unless the work is under an open content license (like Creative Commons).

Disclaimer/Complaints regulations
If you believe that digital publication of certain material infringes any of your rights or (privacy) interests, please let the Library know, stating your reasons. In case of a legitimate complaint, the Library will make the material inaccessible and/or remove it from the website. Please Ask the Library: https://uba.uva.nl/en/contact, or a letter to: Library of the University of Amsterdam, Secretariat, Singel 425, 1012 WP Amsterdam, The Netherlands. You will be contacted as soon as possible.
Acknowledgments

In the course of the project that resulted in this dissertation I have accumulated many debts of gratitude. There is a certain discomfort in writing about these, because many people who made important contributions to this dissertation – inhabitants of Khulo, Sarpi and Batumi – cannot be mentioned by name. I am particularly indebted to my two research assistants in the field and my host families. Without their hospitality, practical help and willingness to share their experiences and thoughts with me, this dissertation would never have been written. Although for reasons of privacy their identity needs to be obscured, I hope that they will accept these impersonal words of gratitude.

I would also like to thank the staff of the Berdzenishvili Research Institute of Batumi for their assistance in overcoming many of the difficulties I encountered during my research stays. In particular I thank Iuri Bibileishvili, Omar Memishishi, Nugzar Mgeladze and Teimuraz Tunadze for the valuable feedback they provided on numerous occasions. It needs to be stressed that the conclusions, opinions and other statements in this book are the full responsibility of the author and will sometimes be contradictory to the convictions of the persons mentioned above.

I also enjoyed and valued the conversations with other ‘outsiders,’ who lived in Batumi for varying periods. Judith Hin and Laurence Broers were sources of lively discussion concerning life and society in Ajaria. Christina Nichol was a master of observing and conveying the beauty and hardship of life in contemporary Batumi. I fondly remember our shared ‘pizza-nights’ on the M. Abashidze street. My life-long friend Harm van Atteveld astonished villagers and upset the local police force by deciding to visit me on his bicycle in a remote village in Upper Ajaria. The commotion that ensued gave me a better understanding of how conspicuous my own presence in Ajaria was.

In the Netherlands I am foremost indebted to my two supervisors Anton Blok and Henk Driessen. Anton Blok not only offered invaluable advice and criticism over the years, he also continued to insist that I stick to the main theme and develop the general argument. Henk Driessen was always a prompt and critical reader of drafts that did not yet deserve the name chapter. Moreover, they both continued their support and confidence at times when I myself was not so certain about how this project might end. I am also thankful to Chris Hann who became my external adviser and offered important insights and criticisms on my research plans and on early research-papers.

I want to thank the Amsterdam School for Social science Research (ASSR) and the Netherlands Foundation for Scientific Research (NWO) for financing important parts of the research. At the ASSR I enjoyed the academic atmosphere, the informal contact between professors and PhD-students, and the commitment of executive director Hans Sonneveld. Particularly valuable to me were the regular discussions, informal talks and frequenting of café ‘de Engelbewaarder’ with members of the Amsterdam Anthropology
Club. In particular I wish to mention Baz Lecocq, Marina de Regt, Josien de Klerk, Rachel Spronk, Ze d’Abreu, and Melanie van der Hoorn. They, as well as Peter Geschiere, Jojada Verrips, Bonno Thoden van Velzen, and Ruediger Benninghaus critically read drafts of chapters and provided much valued comments. Thanks also to Erin Stowell for editing and Gerd Mueller for making the maps and cover.

My parents have been very important in this project. They encouraged me to proceed with my plans and supported me at every turn. Thanks also to Simone and Remko and to Lucas and Doris for showing their interest in my work. It may be said that my two daughters Sophie and Emma are the indirect ‘products’ of this research project. At the same time it could be said that if it was not for them, I would still be struggling to complete this dissertation. They forced me to concentrate on finishing and they provided much needed distraction from the somewhat ‘mystic’ process of writing a dissertation. Finally I want to thank my wife and colleague Julie McBrien for her continuing support. She has been my most important critic during various stages of writing. I am also grateful to her for enduring my chronic absent mindedness during the last two years and for accompanying me to the field at a time when it was – due to her pregnancy – not always easy to adjust to the realities of life in rural Ajaria.