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The Black Sea coastal border between Turkey and what was until recently the Soviet Republic of Georgia, like most state boundaries, was imposed without regard to cultural factors. In the village of Sarp, only a short drive from the modern socialist city of Batumi, a small stream kept even close kin separated for more than half a century. When we began fieldwork in this corner of Turkey in 1983, local cross-border contacts were zero. In 1988 the main road along the coast was reopened to permit bilateral contacts. It is still not open to general international traffic, and with continuing visa requirements, even for Soviets and Turks, the consequences of this initiative were not clear to us at the time. By the time of our third stay in 1992 the political and economic collapse of the Soviet Union, in combination with free market policies in Turkey, had generated a pattern of interaction which came as a surprise. In particular, though previously familiar with the upsurge of petty trading throughout Eastern Europe in the wake of the disintegration of centrally planned economies, we found several aspects of this phenomenon very interesting in this corner of the Black Sea.

The 'Russian market' (*Rus pazari*) can now be found in every town in the region along a strip of several hundred miles (and there are no doubt further offshoots into the Anatolian interior which we have not been able to investigate).[1] Local authorities exercise virtually no control over these markets; the vendors pay no local taxes, nor even the small entry fee that one expects to pay at a car-boot sale in England. Most of the participants in what the Turks call 'suitcase trade' (*bavul ticareti*) are not Russians at all, but Georgian citizens with homes in the border region. However, there are also substantial numbers of Slavs from the Ukraine and White Russia, together with many Azeris and smaller numbers of Turkic speakers from more remote regions (e.g. Üzbeks) who come to Batumi by plane, train or bus in order to take advantage of this gateway to the West. Ethnic diversity among these traders is matched by their socio-economic diversity and the range of goods they display. A few leather-clad dealers are bringing across cameras and colour televisions by privately owned Mercedes, and it seems that even they are not seriously inconvenienced by customs formalities. Others step off the coach service from Batumi with literally just one holdall, typically containing a few second-hand clothes and whatever they could find the previous day in their local shops (perhaps just toothpaste and matches). Most fall between these extremes, arriving in convoys of Ladas or on specially chartered buses, with substantial quantities of goods such as drapery materials, small machine tools, plastic tanks intended for young Pioneers, and other assorted debris and memorabilia from a socialist culture which is now dead.

The most important economic characteristic of these markets is the cheapness of all this merchandise for the Turkish buyers. Their lira is a convertible currency. Given continuing monetary chaos in the ex-Soviet Union, even minute amounts of American dollars can take one a long way. Prices on the *Rus pazari* are regularly quoted in dollars, but the Turkish Lira is normally fully acceptable at a rate of 5,000 TL to the dollar.

Given this basic structural condition, there is much in these new economic practices which can be predicted from general economic theory. For example, two years ago when the *Rus pazari* began to assume its present form, all participants had very poor information. Gradually the buyers learned that certain goods were more readily available than others, they became more confident in their bargaining techniques, and some prices began to show a measure of consistency. As for the sellers, like petty traders elsewhere in Eurasia, they have shown that generations of socialist rule have hardly impaired their ability to act and react like optimizing entrepreneurs. Thus they soon learned when towns held their regular markets, in order to set out their own stalls in front of the largest possible crowds. To some extent they have also acquired more knowledge about what goods to bring, if they can only overcome supply constraints. Yet if the price is low enough, even the most unlikely items find a purchaser. Christian images and blonde, semi-nude sylphs have found a way into Muslim homes, whilst there also appears to be a growing taste for sweet champagne, Georgian brandy and Russian vodka (though we have also observed that some of this drink is purchased not by Turks but by thirsty fellow-traders).

In comparison with most Western markets, the flow of information remains very imperfect, and one can never be sure what goods one's local *Rus pazari* will be offering from one week to the next. In such conditions it can be predicted that those with sufficient resources at their disposal will attempt to monitor the ebbs and flows, and to buy cheaply when appropriate. This is indeed happening, and these markets are easily infiltrated by local Turkish traders. It is likely that similar developments will intensify among the sellers in due course, and residents of Batumi are already complaining about more powerful operators from Tiflis. Many persons on both sides express the view that in time these marketplaces will fade, as more and more goods are passed both ways across the border and price differentials lose their present force. In the meantime, unequal power relations – rather than inadequate information – are also evident in the continued adherence to a 1 : 5000 exchange rate for the dollar. Long after the effective prevailing rates in Istanbul have risen above 1 : 6000, the visiting traders seem obliged to respect the lower rate.

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It is hardly surprising, in conditions so favourable to them, that checking out these markets has become an extremely popular activity among local Turks – an

Batumi, April 1992.

amusing distraction for some and a near obsession for others. For some the *Rus pazari* offers cheap access to goods which they badly need but can ill afford, particularly kitchenware and cloth. For those not short of money to spend, the market is simply fun, to be inspected on the off-chance of finding an attractive samovar or some unusual silk. One man we know is building up a collection of gaudy blonde dolls, to no apparent purpose (he has no daughters or grandchildren). For the majority of people in the region, those who are neither very rich nor very poor, the *Rus pazari* has added spice to their daily lives. It gives everyone something to talk about, the men in the teahouses just as much as the women at home in their kitchens and in more formal social gatherings. People commonly disparage the quality of the Soviet goods, whilst simultaneously boasting of their skills in haggling to secure lower prices. A few, who go along essentially as spectators, can articulate the feelings of superiority which are perhaps felt more widely among the buyers. Although the Turkish currency is hardly a strong and stable one by international standards, their access to it gives local residents power over all these newly appearing foreigners.

This is not to claim that everyone on the Turkish side has welcomed the *Rus pazari*. Many local businessmen have suffered, their own shops and market stalls left unpatronized as customers flock to the new traders. As noted, a few locals have begun to buy from the visitors themselves, in the hope of selling at a profit later. Some have benefited in other ways: for example, tailors had been experiencing a long-term decline as more and more Turks bought ready-made clothes, but there is a new heavy demand for their skills as customers bring along cloth purchased from the *Rus*. But others are angry, and there is some irony in their present fate. The policies which led to the opening of the border and the toleration – even stimulation – of this cross-border trade were those of the Motherland Party, which was the governing party between 1983 and late 1991. The founder of this party (which to many critics was not so much a democratic political party as a continuation of military rule behind a flimsy facade) is still in 1992 the President of the Republic. In this capacity he makes frequent speeches extolling the virtues of 'free market economies'. More recently, he has proclaimed 'the end of the social state' and promoted Turkey as a model for the new independent states of the ex-USSR. A buoyant climate for small businesses in the 1980s, fostered in part through state credits and tax exemptions, helped to win this party many votes. It quickly became the major political force in the Black Sea region. However, as in many others parts of Turkey, small traders, artisans and shopkeepers are coming under more and more pressure from institutions best described as monopoly capitalist. To find themselves simultaneously squeezed at the other end by a new influx of petty traders, their presence legitimized through new slogans such as 'Black Sea economic cooperation', has left many small businessmen feeling vulnerable and bitter. There have been occasional scuffles on pavements when peddlers have blocked off the entrances to shops or concealed window displays.

Contrasting responses can be found among those with 'leftwards' political leanings, whose mass political strength was effectively smashed following the military intervention of September 1980. At least some of these people, among whom teachers and civil servants are well represented, had clung to the belief that behind their local iron curtain lay a prosperous and harmonious socialist civilization, free of all the gross inequalities of capitalist Turkey. Some are still keen to point out that the traders can hardly be considered typical of the wider society across the border; but there is no doubt that the *Rus pazari* has contributed significantly to a rude awakening throughout this group. Their ideas about the accomplishments of the socialist superpower have been shown to be largely illusory; but the eventual consequences of this realization in terms of their political reorientation are no clearer here than for many comparable groups in other parts of the world.

* * *

Beyond all these economic and political factors there is a more specific local cultural dimension which deserves attention. The visitors are often described (with a qualification sometimes entered in the case of fellow-Muslims and Turkic speakers) as *pis*. This means literally 'dirty', and indeed this comment was occasionally followed by attempts to blame the foreign traders for all the dreadful insanitary conditions of many of these marketplaces, and even the lamentable littered and polluted state of the whole coastal strip. But *pis* in relation to foreigners is usually intended to carry wider connotations, easily elicited in questions, and the key in this case lies in sex.

The Eastern Black Sea coast of Turkey has long been seen, both by those who live there and by Turks elsewhere, as an exceptionally 'honourable' (*namuslu*) society.[2] Anthropologists familiar with the themes of 'honour and shame' in the Mediterranean region may still be surprised by the fierceness with which female chastity is protected here, and the easy recourse to violence among men. The worlds of men and women are still very distinct; for example, very few economic activities are carried out jointly, nor do men and women eat together in restaurants, except in specially secluded 'family rooms'.

The recent opening of the frontier has proved to be a threat to this culture. Although their numbers are small in comparison with the middle-aged women who predominate among the market sellers, a cohort of

An old Moslem praying among the hawkers, Batumi, May 1992.

somewhat younger women, with their hair dyed blonde, Western-style clothes and lavish make-up, causes much more public comment from both men and women. It seems sometimes that every local resident has an urgent moral message they must convey, or just a saucy story to relate. Some tales may be told more to amuse, like the one we heard about the middle-aged Georgian women who filed a complaint with the local magistrates, alleging they had not received full payment for services rendered to some local teenage boys. Sex has in any case become much more prominent in everyday conversation, particularly among women, owing to the application of 'free market' policies in the media and the proliferation of commercial television channels operating under criteria which would surprise audiences in Britain. Behind the gossip and the rumours it is likely that many a tragedy is being played out: we heard of at least one foreign prostitute being murdered in a small town close to ours. We have also been invited to sympathize with the village wife who has no choice but to put up with her husband's consorting with prostitutes, since in this society she is unlikely to be welcomed back by her father or brothers. It has been impossible for us to separate fact from fiction in most of the stories we have heard. But local doctors have assured us that media reports of a sharp rise in the incidence of sexually transmitted diseases in this region are entirely accurate.

These activities too can be interpreted in the language of the marketplace. Sometimes the spheres are explicitly linked, as when a 20 year old woman said to be Georgian, taken to court in Trebizond for prostitution, insisted that she had come to Turkey as a genuine petty trader, but was forced to turn to selling sex when her funds ran low.[3] Local Turks frequently proffered the insight that a smart Georgian girl can earn more dollars in a single night than ex-President Gorbachev receives as his annual pension! It seems to us that villagers are more likely to show some sympathetic understanding of the economic factors which lie behind the prostitution, and to point out that at least some of the blame for such evident immorality should be laid at the door of the local men who seek them out. Expressions of moral outrage tend to be most vehement in the towns, particularly from youngish women with pious inclinations, who attach all the blame to the foreigners.
We would like to be able to devote equal space to exploring all these questions on the traders' side but have been limited by a number of practical considerations, including our own linguistic expertise (few visitors have much command of Turkish, and we, like most of the buyers, have no Georgian). Those traders we have talked to (usually using very limited Russian) tend to emphasize their economic predicament, and we have been surprised to encounter among them many teachers and professional people, who find themselves struggling to survive on low salaries in the new capitalist Georgia. 4 And some at least are prepared to admit their nostalgia for the socialist period (the Brezhnev years in particular), when they did not have to endure the discomforts of winter nights in unheated vehicles, or at best a shabby hotel, in order to raise the cash needed to pay a hospital bill (to cite one extreme example we were given).

Although the economic motivation dominates, for some traders there are probably other factors at work as well. One woman, an English teacher at home in Batumi, was hoping to visit Georgian churches in Turkey. Like many others she was making her first visit to a 'Western' country, and she was embarrassed, even ashamed, to be spending her school holiday peddling teaspoons, black and white film and a roll of chiffon. She condemned the prostitution as vigorously as any local Turk, but argued that local Georgians were not responsible. Those women (she said) came from distant (multi-ethnic) Tiflis and their trade was organized by the same sinister rackets which controlled so much else in post-socialist Georgia. Like most of those we spoke to, this lady was reluctant to endorse any stereotypes of the Turks, let alone hazard any complaints (though ten dollars extracted by local police at a roadside checkpoint had clearly been a major blow). But some other women did not conceal their anger at being regularly molested at the market by local men, who in their eyes were 'animal-like' and 'uncultured'.

If the traders came carrying images of capitalist plenty, these too have had to be modified. This has been for several decades one of the most prosperous regions of Turkey, but there is still plenty of all too visible poverty (particularly when beggars take up their positions on market days). One trader (a Ukrainian whose operations ranged between Minsk and the Chinese border, to whom we could speak in Polish!) expressed his surprise at finding strong demand for goods which would be regarded as shoddy and below standard on the other side of the border. Many aspects of Turkish society are

1. Our work has all been carried out east of Rize, and the descriptions in this article refer primarily to observations in this region in the first quarter of 1992. We know from press coverage that similar patterns have emerged in Trebizond, Samsun and all the smaller towns in between.
For general introductions to the region see Meeker 1971, Hann 1990.
2. This aspect of Black Sea Turkish society has been thoroughly explored by Michael Meeker; unfortunately, his dissertation remains unpublished (Michael E. Meeker: 'The Black Sea Turks: a study of Honor, Descent and Marriage', U. of Chicago, 1970).
3. *Hürriyet*, 7 March 1992; the woman in this case was deported.
4. In the Czarist period and the early Soviet years, before the closure of the border, many inhabitants of what is now Turkey's East Black Sea region (formerly Ottoman

subjects and in those days probably not identifying themselves primarily as Turks) used to seek temporary work in Russia. The city of Batumi was one of their most favoured destinations. The details differed, but then as today the main factor promoting cross-border movement was severe economic hardship.

Hann, C.M. 1990. *Tea and the Domestication of the Turkish State* (SOAS Occasional Papers in Modern Turkish Studies No. 1. Huntingdon: Eothen P.).

Meeker, Michael E. 1971. 'The Black Sea Turks: Some aspects of their ethnic and cultural background', *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 2, 4, pp.318-45.

obviously attractive to the visitors; above all, in their view their property is safer in Turkey than in almost any part of the ex-USSR. More speculatively, it is possible that some other features of this region command respect, even though they are an inconvenience to traders – for example, almost complete observance by adults of the Ramazan fast. On the other hand, some visitors may notice, for example, in Turkey's secular rituals and the ubiquitous cult of Atatürk, hints of what has been so dramatically swept away in their own countries.

Images and myths form a rich and ever-changing backcloth to these marketplace exchanges. The myth of the wealthy socialist superpower has been exposed, while myths concerning blonde women live on for the time being. On both sides one may expect more realistic pictures to emerge, with poverty, corruption and civil conflict among the most frequently recurring themes. In this way a border that was sealed for two generations has been truly opened. Alongside the highlighting of cultural differences, new affinities are starting to emerge, and it is possible that some old ones will be renewed. Already some people we know are expanding a cross-border relationship from its original economic base into a more meaningful friendship, with regular visiting on both sides. The full implications of all these increased contacts, particularly in view of ethnic complexities on both sides of the border, are too complex to analyze in a short article.

As a postscript, we must acknowledge that these market developments have affected our main research plans and altered the way we are perceived in the region. In 1983 and 1988 we were not ourselves mistaken for *Rus*, as we frequently are this year, and not without some discomfort. Nor do we recall having in earlier years to fend off quite so many questions about our own material circumstances, about who is paying us to live in Turkey, and how much money can various types of worker expect to receive in England today (after stoppages). We too have been caught up willy nilly in this ever-increasing dissemination of the language of the market. As it happens, economic themes figure prominently on our research agenda here. We hope to complete a study of the small business sector, to complement earlier rural work. Like other anthropologists elsewhere we had expected to make many useful contacts in the course of satisfying routine wants by patronizing local establishments. But we too are finding the lure of the *Rus pazari* impossible to resist. □

Anthropology and the study of refugees

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Throughout this century, scholars scattered around the world and from a wide range of disciplines have engaged in refugee-related research, with publications relating to legal issues dominating the field. Of all the disciplines involved in the study of human behaviour, we contend that anthropology has the most to contribute to the study of refugees. The relation runs in the other direction as well; anthropology can also gain by recognizing refugees as falling within its disciplinary concerns.

During the 1980s the study of forced migration has gained greater recognition as a legitimate academic *field* for research and instruction. A significant number of new publications have appeared, including the multidisciplinary *Journal of Refugee Studies* and the *Journal of International Refugee Law* – the latter sponsored by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). A few university-based research centres specifically devoted to this field have been established.[1] However, when the Association of Social Anthropologists and the *Journal of Refugee Studies* co-sponsored a prize essay in this field, none could be offered the first year and, in the second, there were still insufficient contributions to justify its continuation. More generally too, although forced displacement, uprootings and other refugee-related phenomena – including the events which give rise to them – are a standard feature of human social experience, relatively little attention has been paid to it by the academic establishment. In 1982, at a conference on the psychological problems faced by refugees, Ron Baker, a professor of social work, criticized academia in general for its neglect of the subject:

> It has been estimated that up to 140 million people have been forcibly uprooted in this century alone! In view of this it is remarkable that social scientists have generally neglected refugee studies and research. Further, no 'Department for Refugee Studies' exists in any university or other higher education institution. It is pertinent to ask why...? May it be that in many minds...refugees are seen as immigrants with little distinction drawn between them? Or could it be too difficult an area to research, involving a multidisciplinary approach which academics tend to dislike? Or maybe it has little kudos attached to it and attracts few research grants, hence ...not useful for promotion purposes? Perhaps it is also too painful a subject for social scientists to get close to? (1983)

Three related issues may be singled out. The first is the conceptual confusion surrounding our perceptions of displacement, and the lack of rigorous classification for the different conditions, causes and patterns of refugee movements in time and space. The second is the limitations of our institutional arrangements, the 'culture' of academia, which does not get beyond rendering lip service to the need for an inter- or multi-disciplinary understanding of human society. The third is the need for reconsideration of the very expertise and subject-matter which are regarded as defining anthropology.

Who are refugees?

The history of refugees in this century began with the replacement of the old multi-ethnic European empires by the new world order of sovereign nation states. Hundreds of thousands of people were forced to flee their homes because they did not 'belong', they did not fit the nationalist principle of 'one state, one culture'