

Circassian Customs & Traditions

АДЫГЭ ХАБЗЭ



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Introduction

CIRCASSIAN customs and social norms are enshrined in an orally-transmitted code called ‘*Adige Xabze*’—‘Circassian Etiquette’ [«адыгэ хабзэ»]. This rigid and complex system of morals had evolved to ensure that strict militaristic discipline was maintained at all times to defend the country against the many invaders who coveted Circassian lands. In addition, social niceties and graces greased the wheels of social interaction, and a person’s good conduct ensured his survival and prosperity.

The Xabze served as the law for *ad hoc* courts and councils set up to resolve contentious cases and other moot issues, and pronounce binding judgements. Administration of justice in this way was indispensable in the absence of independent full-time judiciary. Blood-revenge, the Caucasian version of ‘eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth,’ had a bearing on keeping the peace and made sure that human life was respected, some say revered. However, at times things went out of control and feuds led to internecine wars.

Traditionally, the roots of the Etiquette are referred to the golden age of the Narts, when its core rules were prescribed. The mores and mannerisms of the Narts, as depicted in the rich oral tradition, were paragons that Circassians through the ages worked diligently to emulate. The collective and individual attributes of these legendary heroes have shaped the code of behaviour of Circassian society since time immemorial and moulded the knightly characters of its nobility. These qualities included love of the fatherland and its defense to the last, idolization of honour, bravery and concomitant abhorrence of cowardice, observance of the code of chivalry, loathing for

oppression, loyalty to clan and kin, fealty to bonds of camaraderie, care of and fidelity to one's horse.

This code did not remain static throughout the ages. It was reformed and developed at some points in Circassian history, when two factors obtained: preponderance of outdated practices and the appearance of a charismatic personage to effect the transformation. The first instance of this kind in recorded history was in the 16th century, when Prince Beslan (Beislhen) Zhanx'wetoqwe, nicknamed 'Pts'apts'e' («ПцIапцIэ»; 'The Obese'), modified the structure of the peerage system and updated the Xabze.¹

Two centuries later, the legendary Zhebaghi Qezenoqwe (1684-1750) played a pivotal role in modernizing the code and removing outdated customs and practices, though he is sometimes erroneously accredited with originating it.² He was an accomplished statesman by the standards of the time, being responsible for formulating Kabardian policies with respect to the Crimean Khans and their overlords, the Ottomans. One of his notable achievements was his counsel to Prince Aslenbek Qeitiqwe and manoeuvres to avert a war with the Crimean Khan Saadat-Girey IV (Saadat Giray; ruled the Crimea in the period

¹ Beislhen son of Zhanx'wet (son of Tabile son of Yinal; Жанхъуэт и къуэ Беслъэн), nicknamed 'Pts'apts'e' ('The Obese'; «Беслъэней ПцIапцIэ») ruled over Kabarda in the period 1498-1525. He was the younger brother of Prince Talhosten (son of Zhanx'wet), who became the potentate of all Kabarda towards the end of the 15th century upon the demise of his uncle Prince Yinarmes (son of Tabile son of Yinal). Yinarmes succeeded his brother Zhanx'wet as ruler of Kabarda. Talhosten was the progenitor of the Talhosteney Dynasty. Prince Qaniqwe son of Beislhen (son of Zhanx'wet) left Kabarda to establish the Beslanay tribe to the north in the land of the Five Mountains (Бгитху; Bgiytxw; Pyatigorsk) during a period of civil conflict.

² See A. T. Shorten (Shortanov) (1956, 1984) for a biography (in Circassian) of Zhebaghi Qezenoqwe.

1717-1724), who attacked Kabarda in 1720 to avenge the destruction of the Tatar army in 1708 at Qenzhalischhe.³

Stories of Zhebaghi's wisdom and sagacity are still very much alive in national memory. In one anecdote, he was asked about the difference between truth and falsehood. He enigmatically replied that only four

³ In August 1708, Khan Qaplan-Girey I (Kaplan Giray; ruled the Crimea in the period 1707-1708, 1713-1715, and 1730-1736), at the head of 100,000 Crimean Tatars, marched against the Circassians of the Five Mountains (the Beslanay). The potentate of Kabarda Prince Kwrghwoqwe Het'ox'wschiqwe (ХьэтIохъушыкъуэ и къуэ Кургъуокъуэ; ruled Kabarda in the period 1695-1708), sensing the inferiority of his forces, decided to invoke ruse (upon the counsel of his principal statesman and strategist Zhebaghi Qezenoqwe [Къэзэнокъуэ Жэбагы]). They retreated into Qenzhalischhe (Къэнжалыщхьэ), or Qenzhal Mountain (on the right bank of the Malka [Balhq] River), and built stone fortifications across the forbidding passes. Remains of these ramparts, called the 'Walls of the Crimea', can still be come across. In the absence of any resistance, the Tatars went into a rampage. The Circassians sent deputies to offer their submission to the Khan, who imposed stiff conditions. He demanded, among other things, 4,000 maids and boys as hostages. The Adiga pretended to accept the terms and sent provisions, including intoxicating liquors. The Tatars revelled in their 'victory'. One night, while they were in deep slumber induced by the strong drink, the Circassians rolled heavy stones on the tents below, and fell on the Khan's camp, massacring a great number of his men and putting the rest to flight. The Khan lost a brother and son. Thenceforth, the Kabardians were rid of the Tatars forever. The leader of the Kabardians was Prince Kwrghwoqwe the Great (son of Het'ox'wschiqwe; ХьэтIохъушыкъуэ и къуэ Кургъуокъуэ). A monument commemorating the decisive battle was erected on top of the Qenzhal Mountain in 1998 (later vandalized). In 2008, the Kabardians marked the 300th anniversary of the battle. The Balkars, denying that such a battle had ever taken place and claiming that Qenzhal Mountain is within Balkar territory, blocked the route of a group of Kabardian horsemen who were heading to the battle scene from Nalchik, as part of the celebrations. However, good sense prevailed in the end, and the horsemen were able to reach their destination.

fingers separated them. He lifted up his hand and placed four fingers between his eye and ear, and said, 'Everything your eye sees is true, and all that you hear is false, for no one tells the truth the way he sees it.' The most recent reform was made in 1807, when a group of Circassian judges and scholars, with the blessing of the nobility, amended and updated some articles of the law.

Celebrations and festivals, which occupied central stage in Circassian social life, had uncanny similarities regardless of the occasion. Nuptial festivals, burials, memorials, religious rites, homecomings of foster-children, Circassian New Year, harvest fests, all had points of commonality: dancing, singing, feasting, and games. These activities blended with particular rites associated with each affair. In the section on marriage, a complete celebration is portrayed, which may be considered as generic.

During the Soviet period, central authorities understood early on that the tenacity with which the Circassians clung to their customs and traditions had to be loosened, if their ideal of the 'Soviet Man' was to be realized. Propaganda campaigns concentrated more on discrediting these practices, which incorporated some old religious rites, than on extirpating loosely adhered to monotheistic beliefs. Thus, religious persecution in the NW Caucasus was not as severe as it was in the Northeast Caucasus, or in other Muslim regions of the Soviet Union. Circassian writers and intellectuals were deployed to poke literary fun at the national code of behaviour.

Collectivization and the propaganda onslaught on the age-old heritage undermined some traditional social structures and aspects of the Etiquette. Despite the disintegration at the edges, the core system of morals managed to survive the period. In the post-Soviet period, interest by people in their roots revived, and they began to give their children traditional Circassian names, and collectively and consciously decided to return to the practice of traditions, including the upholding of the ancient etiquette. Since the beginning of the 1990s, there has been an increased interest in recording the oral

traditions and customs. Several seminal works have been published, unadulterated by communist creed.

Nowadays, most people respect the outer manifestations and the symbolisms of Adige Xabze, especially at major events, such as weddings, funerals, bride elopement, at least in the towns and cities, for urbanization does not allow the strict observance of traditions. In the rural areas, on the other hand, the majority of people still adhere to, and observe, the customs and traditions in both form and substance.

Another important concept that is closely associated, and often overlapping with Xabze, is Adigaghe (адыгагъэ), which is roughly rendered as Adiga ethics, or Circassianness—the quality of being Circassian. The main tenets of this code of ethics were nobleness, good breeding and hospitality. To this day, if someone is deemed to have committed a shameful or pitiless act, he is scolded thus: ‘Aren’t you Adiga?!’ [«Уадыгэжкъэ уэ?!»].

Adet (адэт), from Arabic, meaning custom or habit, has come to signify customary law as it prevailed in the Caucasus. Its main tenets were hospitality, respect for elders and blood-revenge—the North Caucasian code of chivalry. It is sometimes used for, and confused with Xabze. In general, *Adet* referred to the law that regulated relations between the different peoples of the North Caucasus, whereas Xabze was a specifically Circassian affair.

1 Birth

Pregnant women took minor precautions as time of delivery approached. To prevent pre-mature births, they were spared arduous chores like lifting up heavy objects. In addition, all efforts were made not to cause them to be startled at thunderstorms and lightning. It was strictly forbidden to unsheathe daggers or sabres in their presence, as it was considered an evil omen. Women gave birth lying on a bedding of stalks and straw, the first bed of the first creature.

If delivery was preceded by a dangerous illness, a ceremony was held consisting of libation over a sabre that was once used to spill blood. The blade was then placed under the head of the bed, and the sanctified potation given to the woman. Other rites were also performed to ease the suffering of child-birth and hasten delivery. Under no circumstances were men allowed to enter the delivery room (S. Khan-Girey, 1978, pp 274-5).

Muslimized Circassians followed Mohammedan traditions. During a difficult birth, a mullah was summoned who pronounced prayers over the woman, blew on her face, and gave her a drink of water in which an invocation manuscript was immersed. After safe delivery, he offered thanksgiving to Allah, the creator of the universe and life-giver.

Upon delivery, the baby was immediately taken to the river, whence it was bathed, even in freezing weather.⁴ It was believed that cold water tempered the body. There were also some instances of cleaning infants in snow. A martial society could not afford an inordinate number of weaklings in its midst, and, as such, if the apparently cruel

⁴ Ancient Germanic tribes also tempered their new-born babies in snow or cold water.

treatment led to death, this was considered as a sacrifice for the common good.

In accordance with a curious custom, the Circassians tugged at the ears of young relatives of a new-born baby, but this was not obligatory and was done more in jest. The Circassians were in the habit of wrapping their babies in restrictive swaddling clothes, *x'idanzherume* (хъыданжэрумэ; literally: 'rag-sausage'), which word was also used to refer to the infant thus muffled.

The Circassians solemnly celebrated the birth of children, particularly male offspring, as they were considered a continuation of the lineage. These festivals were usually arranged by the (paternal) grandparents or (paternal) uncles and aunts. All relatives were informed of the date of the ceremony, once it had been set, and the household started in good time to prepare for the occasion, stocking on and preparing the foodstuffs and beverages associated with it, in this case *makhsima* (махъсымэ; national beverage), *lakum* (лэкъум=puffs, buns), chicken and meat, and *heliwe* (хъэлыуэ=national sweetmeat).

There was no definite date for performing the ceremonies, for it could be set in the few days after the birth, or the ceremonies could be conjoined with those celebrating the strapping of the infant to the cradle (*gwscheqw* [гущэжъу], or *x'iryne xwsch'esch'en* (хъыринэ хущIэщIэн) = strapping of a son to his cradle; literally: to harness to the cradle). Soft straps (*gwscheps*; гущэпс) were used to prevent the infant from falling off the cradle (*gwsche x'iryne, gwschex'iryne* [гущэ хъыринэ, гущэхъыринэ] =suspended cradle; literally: cradle-swing).



Traditional Circassian cradle with soft straps.
North Caucasian cradles had a unique toilet 'drainage' mechanism consisting of a shaft of cored thigh-bone (usually of sheep) ending in a clay container.

In one rite, called '*mezhaJe ch'erisch'e*' («мэжаджэ кIэрыщIэ»), or '*hel'ame ch'erisch'e*' («хьэлIамэ кIэрыщIэ»), special corn cakes were prepared (by the grandmother) and hanged up (by the grandfather) in honour of the new-born child ('*Nane hel'amasch'esch, dade ch'erisch'ensch*'; «Нанэ хьэлIамашIэщ, дадэ кIэрыщIэнш»). The relatives brought baskets of *lakum*, live rams, and live and slaughtered chickens. In the ritual of sacrifice, the person entrusted with slaughtering the ram or bull also pronounced a supplication entreating the gods to bestow strength and longevity upon the child. Young teens played the game of climbing the pole, in which contestants tried to climb long thin spars dug in the yard and daubed with animal fat. A prize awaited the winner.



Corn cakes (*mezhahe*), used in the celebration of a new-born child, amongst other festivals.

A (Cherkess) song from the repertoire chanted in honour of first-born (male) child is presented (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P'. Qardenghwsch', 1980, p163):

Уэ, нажджэн, нажджэн!	Song in honour of first-born child: 'Oh, nazhjen, nazhjen!' ⁶
Уэ, нажджэн, нажджэн! Ежью. (Уора, уарирэра,) дэнэ унэра!	Oh, nazhjen, nazhjen! Chorus: (Wora, wariyrera,) which home and hearth!
(Нажджэн,) льэгупс! Ежью. (Уора, уо уэрирэра,) дэнэ унэра!	(Nazhjen,) braids! Chorus: (Wora, wo weryrera,) which home and hearth!
ЩIакIуэ Iупс дыжбын! Ежью. (Уора, уо уэрира,) дэнэ унэра!	Silverine felt-cloak laces! Chorus: (Wora, wo weryra,) which home and hearth!

⁶ 'Nazhjen' is a word of uncertain meaning. It has the variant 'wezjen' («уэзджэн») in other songs.

<p>Дыжбынышхуэр кьегъаджэ! Ежью. (Уора, уо уэрира,) дэнэ унэра!</p>	<p>Summon the silver bridle! Chorus: (Wora, wo weriуra,) which home and hearth!</p>
<p>Уэркъ шауэр зоджэж! Ежью. (Уора, уо уэрира,) дэнэ унэра!</p>	<p>The young noblemen are calling one another! Chorus: (Wora, wo weriуra,) which home and hearth!</p>
<p>Щхьэнтэ бгъурыбгъуиш! Ежью. (Уора, уо уэрира,) дэнэ унэра!</p>	<p>May thou have pillows thrice in nines! Chorus: (Wora, wo weriуra,) which home and hearth!</p>
<p>Уэншоку щэрыкIуэгъуэ!⁵ Ежью. (Уора, уо уэрира,) дэнэ унэра!</p>	<p>May thou have three changes of mattress! Chorus: (Wora, wo weriуra,) which home and hearth!</p>

⁵ In literary Kabardian-Cherkess, ‘mattress’ is rendered ‘уэншэку’.

2 Christening

Baptism was performed either shortly after birth, or, more commonly, at early youth. The ceremony had an old woman measuring off 40 cups of pure water, and then giving it to the adolescent who poured it over himself. She was then treated to a sparing meal. The youngster thus baptized thereafter referred to this woman as ‘mother.’ This rite was performed only now and then, and not by all people. It was a relic of the Christian era.

According to custom, a new-born child was named in an arbitrary manner, more often by strangers, seldom by the parents. In some instances, the infant was given the name of the first stranger who entered the house after the birth. Among the upper classes, the person who gave the infant his name was presented with an arrow, preferably with white feathers. Sometimes the infant was given the name of a kindred personage of high standing. Among the lower classes, the namer was given a shirt cloth, or baptismal shirt, *ts’ef’eschjane* [цІэфІэщджанэ].

Foreboding circumstances surrounding the birth influenced the naming process. For example, if a tempest had been raging during delivery, the infant was given the name ‘Tempest’ or ‘Blizzard’. If the father or a close relative of the new-born had been killed without his blood being avenged, then the infant was often christened ‘Avenger,’ a gainsay, in the hope of his redressing the tort (S. Khan-Girey, 1978, p276).⁷

⁷ The most comprehensive list of (almost exclusively) original Circassian names is found in A. Sherjes, 2007. For lists of masculine and feminine first names used by the Kabardians and Cherkess in the Caucasus, refer to J.

The oldest instances of Circassian names go back to the ‘Age of Narts.’ Other sources include the ancient traditional tales. Names from the Middle Ages have been preserved in some sources.⁸ These included Ezgbold, Anzarouk, Kaitouk, Sountchelei, Klytch. Though the Circassians were nominally Christian at the time, they rarely used Christian names, instead preserving their ancient appellations. After the betrothal of Ivan the Terrible to Princess Maria of Kabarda, many of her kin were lured to the tsarist court, in which they served with distinction, but not before converting to Christianity and assuming Russian names, like Mikhail (Михаил) and Aleksandr (Александр).⁹

N. Kokov, 1983, pp 239-54. See also <http://jaimoukha.synthasite.com/circassian-names.php>.

⁸ Mediaeval Kabardian names are found in B. Nolde, 1952-3, scattered throughout Part 4 ‘L’Expansion vers le Caucase’, Chapter 13 ‘Les approches.’

⁹ Gwaschenev (or Gwaschene; Гуащэней, *e* Гуащэне) was daughter of Temryuk Idar (Teimriqwe Yidar; Идар и къуэ Темрыкъуэ). She was betrothed to Ivan IV (1530-1584) on 21 August 1561 AD, to cement the treaty between Temryuk, Prince of Princes of Kabarda, and Ivan the Terrible, ‘Tsar of All Russia’. Tsarina Maria Temryukovna (Мария Темрюковна; 1544-1569), as was Gwaschenev baptised upon marriage, was married to Ivan for eight years until her early death at the age of 25 on 1 September 1569. Maria’s kin who served Ivan and his successors were collectively referred to as ‘the Cherkasskys’.

3 Upbringing

Lullabies & Rituals

The Circassians had a broad repertoire of lullabies. Although the majority were sung by the mother, a number of songs were composed by the foster-parents (*ataliq*) to be addressed to their wards (*qan, p'ur*; къан, п'ур).

This old lullaby is from the Beslanay repertoire (listen to a recording by Zchiw on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGDhd9WNasA>):

Гушэ уэрэд: Нану махуэ!	Circassian Lullaby: 'Auspicious Child!'
Ла, лай, а нану! Лай, нахуэ, си нахуэ, Си нитIум язэу, си махуэ! Нану согъэджей, нынэ, Нану джеигъуафIэ, нынэ.	Hush, little baby! Hush-a-bye, resplendent one, Precious as my eye, sweet godsend! I'm lulling the little one to sleep, Sweet dreams, my dear!
Ла, лай, си нану! Лай, нахуэ, си нахуэ, Си махуамэ, си насып! Нанур согъэджей, нынэ, Нанур джеигъуафIэ, нынэ.	Lullaby, hush-a-bye, tiny tot! Rock-a-bye, my splendid lot, My great fortune, my good luck! I'm singing my baby to sleep, Sleep well, cherished one!
Ла, лай, а нану! Нану цIыкIур ин къэхъун, Ин къэхъумэ къезгъэшэн, КъыщичахэкIэ си унэкъуэщ. Лай, махуэ, си кIалэ цIыкIу! КIалэ цIыкIур согъэджей, ДжеигъуафIэ, си махуай!	Hush-a-bye, shush, little babe! The tiny one will grow one day, Then I shall marry him off, Though it be to one of my kin. Rock-a-bye, my sweet young child! The little kid I soothe to sleep, Sweet slumber, auspicious one!

The following is an elaborate (Kabardian) berceuse representative of this song genre (V. N. Bereghwn and Z. P'. Qardenghwsch', 1980, pp 168-9):

Гүшэ уэрэд: Лэлэу ещІри си ХьэмытІэ...¹⁰	Cradle Song: 'Hush-a-bye, my Hemit'e is falling asleep...'
<p>Тӕлей, тӕлей, тӕлей, тӕу, Лэлэу ещІри си ХьэмытІэ, Лэлэу ещІри сӕ си тӕлӕ. Тӕлӕ дахӕри Іӕпхуамбӕ пӕщӕ, Шӕ пӕщӕрыуӕри, зӕуӕмӕ щремыуӕхъу! Зытехуӕри иремыхъуж!</p> <p>Дунейм хуэижурӕ, жьы дыдж кьемыпщӕу, Жьыхӕр кьыщепщӕкІӕ щӕопщӕр хуӕжанурӕ, Си ХьэмытІӕмӕ и лыщІыгъуӕхӕр кьрехъу!</p> <p>Уӕлӕлӕу, уӕлӕлӕу, уӕлӕлӕу, лӕу, лӕу, Уӕлӕлӕу, лейри, уӕлӕлӕу лӕй. Лӕлӕй ищІурӕ си ХьэмытІӕ, Си ХьэмытІӕурӕ си щӕлӕри согъӕжейри.</p> <p>А бийжӕхӕри уи льӕныкъуӕ егъӕз, А бийжӕхӕри уи льӕрыщІыкІти! Уи льӕр дахӕурӕ иреув. КьӕууалІӕмкІӕ жӕуапыншӕу уремыхъу! Іуӕхуу хьуахӕри уӕ тхьӕм кьыуит!</p> <p>Фыгъуӕ уӕ кьыуитынурӕ Си тхьӕм сӕ солъӕури! Уӕлӕлӕу, уӕлӕлӕу, уӕлӕлӕу, лӕу, лӕу, Уӕлӕлӕу, лӕури изогъӕщІ, Си ХьэмытІӕри согъӕжей!</p>	<p>Little one, little one, little one, little baby, Lullaby, my Hemit'e is going to sleep, Lullaby, my little one is falling asleep. My sweet baby with big fingers, Shoots large arrows; may they find their mark! Whome'er are smitten, may they not survive!</p> <p>That his life may be successful, free of bitter winds, When evil winds blow, let his lash prove biting. May my Hemit'e have such good fortune through the ages!</p> <p>Hush-a-bye, hush-a-bye, hush-a-bye, hush, hush, Hush-a-bye, lullaby, hush-a-bye shush. Rock-a-bye, my Hemit'e is going to sleep, I am lulling my Hemit'e, my child, to sleep.</p> <p>Vanquish those sworn enemies, Overthrow thy foes! Be firm and resolute in the course of thy life. Do not be indifferent to those who appeal to thee! May God pronounce success upon all thy undertakings!</p> <p>That blessings be bestowed upon thee I pray my Lord! Hush-a-bye, hush-a-bye, hush-a-bye, hush, hush, Hush-a-bye, I am lullabying my baby, I am singing my Hemit'e to sleep!</p>

¹⁰ 'ХьэмытІӕ', 'хьӕматІӕ', 'хьӕматІӕжъ', etc, are terms of endearment for 'тхьӕмӕдӕ' addressed to the small ones.

‘Charming’ cradle numbers were called upon when the baby displayed resistance to the usual repertoire. In the following (Mozdok Kabardian) cradle song the impatient ‘luller’ imputes the child’s contrarious character to the Cossacks, the mortal enemies of the Circassians (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P’. Qardenghwsch’, 1980, p170):

Гушэ уэрэд: Ужейркъэ, къэзакъым и щІалэ!	Lullaby: ‘Won’t you go to sleep, progeny of a Cossack!’
Болилейхэ, болилей, Лылейхэр хызогъэжае. Ужейркъэ, къэзакъым и щІалэ! Ужейркъэ, къэзакъым и щІалэ!	Hush-a-bye, rock-a-bye, I am lulling my sweetie to sleep. Won’t you go to sleep, progeny of a Cossack! Won’t you fall asleep, Cossack child!
Болилейхэ, болилей, Лылейхэр хызогъэжае. Мы цыкІур Іэпхъуамбэ пІащэщ, Мы цыкІур шэ пІащэрыуэщ, Зэуэмэ щремыуэхъухэ, Зытехуэр иремыхъужхэ!	Hush-a-bye, rock-a-bye, I am lulling my sweetie to sleep. This little one has big fingers, The little one shoots large arrows, May the shot arrows never miss their mark, Whome’er are smitten, let them not survive!
Болилейхэ, болилей, Си щІалэр хызогъэжае.	Hush-a-bye, rock-a-bye, I am lulling my child to sleep.

When babies were being taught how to walk, they were encouraged to do so by singing songs to them. For baby-boys, the main theme was their exhortation to achieve feats of glory. Two Kabardian ditties are presented as examples of this song genre (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P’. Qardenghwsch’, 1980, p179; p180-1):

Сабий зегъакІуэ: А си лъабэ, лъабэ!	Song exhorting child to walk: ‘Oh, my “little legs”, “little legs”!’
А си лъабэ, лъабэ! А си лъабэ дахэ!	Oh, my ‘little legs’, ‘little legs’! Oh, my handsome ‘little legs’!

<p>Хуарэм шэси ежьэжи, Бжей мэзыжьыр къэкӀухьы, Щыхь къэукӀи къэкӀуэж! Щыхь къэукӀи къэкӀуэж!</p>	<p>Mount the ‘Xware’ steed and set off,¹¹ Travel all over the dense beech forest,¹² Kill a deer and come back! Kill a deer and come back!</p>
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<p>Сабий зегъакӀуэ: Мимэ къэрэмышцэ!</p>	<p>Song exhorting child to walk: ‘Miyme qeremische!’</p>
<p>Мимэ, Мимэ, Мимэ къэрэмышцэ! Мимэ къэрэщауэ! Щауэ цыкӀухэр мэщыпэ, И чы пыӀэри къегъанэ, Янэ макӀуэри мэлъыхъуэ, Ядэ макӀуэри къехъыжьыр.</p>	<p>Miyme, Miyme, Miyme qeremische!¹³ Miyme, swarthy champion! The little lads are gathering berries, He leaves his little switch-cap, Mum goes looking for it, Papa goes and brings it back.</p>
<p>Мимэ, Мимэ, Мимэ къэрэмышцэ! Мимэ къэрэщауэ! Мимэ янэр мэлъаӀуэ, Ар щӀэӀаӀуэр джэд анэщ. Джэд анэжьыр мэгъуальхъэ, Вагъуэм хуэдэу кърешыр, Удзым пэбжу ирешажьэ!</p>	<p>Miyme, Miyme, Miyme qeremische! Miyme, darksome hero! Miyme, mum is begging, She is begging Mama Hen. Old Mama Hen is brooding, She hatches as many chicks as the stars in the sky, She leads out as many as the blades of grass!</p>
<p>Мимэ, Мимэ!</p>	<p>Miyme, Miyme!</p>

¹¹ ‘Xware’ is one of the ten established Kabardian breeds of horses.

¹² ‘Бжей’ is rendered here as ‘(oriental) beech’, in accordance with В. Неқwn (1992, p39), and not as ‘platan’ or ‘plane’, as in the Russian translation of the text and in В. М. Kardanov (1957, p28). В. Неқwn (1992, p155) gives ‘тхушэ’ for ‘platan’.

¹³ ‘Miyme qeremische’ («Мимэ къэрэмышцэ») is an endearing address to an infant. ‘Miyme’ is stressed on the second syllable (‘iy’), ‘qeremische’ on the third.

The Circassians celebrated a toddler's first steps (ЛЪЭТЕУВЭ; *lheteiwive*) by preparing corn cakes especially for the occasion called 'lheteiwivemezhaje' («ЛЪЭТЕУВЭМЭЖАДЖЭ»). National sweetmeats (ХЪЭЛЫЭ; *heliwe*) were also prepared. Neighbours and relatives were invited to take part in the ceremony, and they brought along *lakum* and chickens. Women and children also attended the ceremonies. Songs were sung in celebration. According to custom, various articles were placed on the corn cakes: a whip, dagger, blacksmith's and jeweller's instruments, etc, and the (boy) toddler was allowed to pick out the article of his choice, to foretell his future occupation or vocation. For example, if the lash, it presaged a glorious career as an intrepid horseman; the dagger – a fearless warrior; etc. For girls, articles symbolic of female occupations were used.



Modern-day celebration of a girl's first steps (*lheteiwive*). Many Circassians are consciously harking back to the ancient customs and traditions as a means to revive the national spirit. [Psine Magazine, Issue 4, 2008]

The Ataligate Institution

According to a peculiar custom, the *ataligate*, children of princes and nobles were entrusted at an early age to vassals to be raised and trained in a military fashion. This institution played a major role in strengthening relationships between the princes and their nobles and among nobles themselves. The separation also served to lessen emotional attachment between parents and their children. This Spartan upbringing was necessary, as death in battle was only a heartbeat away. In ancient times, this institution was more strictly adhered to and it was not confined to any particular caste. Later it came to be associated only with the upper classes.

When it was time to entrust the charge, which was between the ages 6-10, a boy was mounted on a horse, a girl in a carriage, and taken to the foster-home, together with ample supplies of fabrics and produce.

The foster-father, *ataliq* (атэлыкь), was expected to teach his ward, *qan* (къан) or *p'ur* (пур), many social and martial skills. Horsemanship, not very easy to master, was high on the agenda. The cadet had to go through rigorous training schedules and endless trials of his fortitude and character, including accompanying his foster-father on military campaigns [although he was not expected to engage directly in the fray and was properly protected]. These culminated in a rite of passage in which the aspirant had to undertake an arduous journey. This baptism of fire earned the successful cadet the title knight-rider and, of course, catapulted him into manhood. The training regimen was also intended to keep the apprentices from bad habits by investing their unbound energy in useful pursuits.



A nobleman on an expedition, accompanying his ward.
Martial skills were at a premium in Circassia.

During the long stay, the parents of foster-children were not supposed to visit them, or even inquire about their health. Anecdotes abound of mothers having to be restrained when overwhelmed with motherly emotions. In contrast, fathers were more adept at suffering the separation. The following anecdote, recounted by M. O. Kosven (1961), has become a classic, some would say hackneyed, example of emotional petrification:

An old Nartkhuaj never saw his child. Upon his orders, an expedition was mounted to fight another clan. His son, a

handsome specimen, fell in battle on the side of the foe. Afterwards, as the bodies were being laid near a tree under which the old man was resting, he noticed the cadaver of the lad. 'He is your son,' came the answer to his inquiry about his identity. The old man ordered that the corpse be taken to another place, far away from him. 'I have never suffered his closeness to me,' he said.¹⁴

The bond that developed between cadet and mentor became almost as strong as, and most certainly more intimate than that between parent and child, and it lasted forever. Children of foster-parents and their charges were considered foster-siblings; therefore, they could not intermarry. In the code of blood-revenge, if a prince killed a person of a lower caste, the kin of the deceased did not wreak their vengeance on the prince himself, but on his lower-ranked foster-father. Fostering was not devoid of baleful risks.

Foster-girls were taught the skills that would enhance their social position and reputation. Sewing, embroidery and weaving, and plaiting of straw mats and baskets were considered useful pastimes. Finding suitable marriage partners for their male and female charges was one of the principal responsibilities of foster-parents. Some sources claim that failure to secure an appropriate match was severely punished by the father. The dowry was the foster-father's lot to enjoy.

The foster term for boys ended when they were deemed ready to engage in battle, usually in the mid to late teens. The mentor took his ward back to his parents in a triumphal procession. When it reached the outlying districts of the parents' village, the local horsemen engaged in mock battle with the knights of the cavalcade, symbolizing the father's reluctance to receive his child. Upon reaching the house, the foster-father was presented with cattle and money, and sumptuous

¹⁴ Text translated from an article in the Kabardian journal *'Waschhemaxwe* (Иуащхьэмахуэ).

feasts were held in his honour and that of the foster-child for ten to fifteen days.

Siblings of the 'unfortunate' classes were not subject to exotic nurturing regimes. They were raised within the family and taught the vocations associated with it. Thus serfs were grounded in tilling, artisans in their disciplines and so on, but none received rigorous martial training, just enough to chip in, in defending the lord's manor. This was one way of perpetuating social differentiation.

Another custom similar to the *ataliqate* was milk-brotherhood. Children of different families nursed at the same breast were considered foster-siblings, and as such all ties of brotherhood and sisterhood applied, proscription of inter-marriage included. In this case, the foster-mother was also called *ataliq*.



Young Circassian [Ubykh] prince and his foster-father.
[G. Gagarin]

Rigorous though the formative years were, they were not totally lacking in endearing moments. According to the 19th century Circassian writer Shora Nogmov (1861), a guardian had interest riding on gaining his foster-son's good favour, and he sometimes indulged him in spoiling sprees, as when he sang him lullabies:

Lai, lai, lai¹⁵
Pupil of my eye!
Today helpless thou lie,
But on the morrow,
As valour earns thou rich spoil,
Forget not thy decrepit guardian!

¹⁵ This is an ancient berceuse. '*Lai*' (also '*lei*', '*lelei*', '*leyriy*', '*lew*', '*lelew*', '*lewriy*', '*welelew*', '*bolilyey*', etc.) corresponds to the English expressions 'hush', 'hushaby', 'lullaby', 'rockaby'.

4 Courtship & Marriage

Courtship

Circassian society allowed association between the sexes under controlled circumstances and proper supervision. The dances that were held at festivals played the important role of introducing young men to the opposite sex according to strict rules of conduct. The two groups stood facing one another, with a leader for each group. A male participant had the right to dance with any girl when his turn came. This direct contact enabled the two groups to appraise one another. Many a marriage partner was ‘picked’ at gala dances. In the olden days, bride-shows, *x’ijebzaplhe* (хъыджэбзаплъэ) or *pschaschaplhe* (пщашаплъэ), decidedly patriarchal affairs, were held.

A young man was at liberty to visit the house of a young woman in order to get to know her better. The suitor was called *pselhix’w* (псэльыхъу), or soul-searcher. He had to be accompanied by a male friend. Girls were allowed to receive male guests in the company of other females. The parents were completely out of the scene. Rules of good taste were strictly adhered to, the breaking of any of which leading to prohibition of future visits. There is an anecdote about a suitor who overstayed his welcome, which prompted his ‘fiancée’ to fetch her accordion and intone a sarcastic song [in Beslanay Kabardian]:

«Емыдэж делэр щыс, щыс.
Имыкыжри щыс, щыс.
Си делэшхуэр щыс, щыс»,

‘Yemidezh the fool is still seated.
He does not leave.
My great fool is seated still’,

which caused the hapless young man to bolt off to cut his losses. A suitor was allowed several visits before he was expected to make up his mind. Excessive rendezvous were disapproved of and dating more than one lass was considered unseemly.

Betrothal was effected in two distinct manners. The usual way was for a suitor, upon agreement with the maid, to send a delegate, usually a venerable elder, but never a kin of the suitor, to the father asking for her hand. The answer was given in the following manner. If positive, it was made known a short time after, the wedding ceremonies ensuing without much delay. Silence gave reluctance or refusal. In this case, the couple could have recourse to an age-old institution, *wineyidzihe* (УНЭИДЗЫХЬЭ) or *k'wese* (КӀУЭСЭ), according to which the suitor, with a group of trusted friends, abducted his beloved from her parent's house on a set date and time. This custom, which exists to this day, corresponded to the old Western custom of elopement.

The young woman was conducted safely to the house of one of the suitor's friends. She stayed there with associates to keep her company, the fiancé being marooned in the house of another acquaintance. The head of the household to whom the girl was entrusted had the duty of going to the maid's father to exhort him to change his mind. If things went well, the two parties agreed on details. In case of rejection, things could have got nasty, with bloodshed a real prospect, if the two parties stuck to their guns.

Marriage

Marriage and the associated traditions and festivities (дауэ-дапцэ) were the most intricate and enjoyable social affairs. A large corpus of rites, ceremonies, songs and dances had evolved to make this a microcosm of the Circassian way of life. Some aspects of this elaborate affair have been preserved, but the pomp and ceremony have diminished considerably.

Celebrations and festivals, which occupied central stage in Circassian social life, had uncanny similarities regardless of the occasion. Nuptial festivals, burials, memorials, religious rites, homecomings of foster-children, Circassian New Year, harvest fests, all had points of commonality: dancing, singing, feasting, and games. These activities blended with particular rites associated with each affair.



Circassian wedding in the village of Tugurgoy in 1909.
Tugurgoy is presently located in the Tewchezh District of Adigea.

The following is a scenario depicting a typical Circassian wedding party. There were three places at which the ceremonies were held: the house of the bride's father, the house of the bridegroom's father, and at the house where the bridegroom is lodged until the wedding night. The bridegroom was interdicted from attending the ceremonies held at the first two places, and the family of the bride did not attend the main ceremonies held at the bridegroom's father's house. Conversely, the parents of the bridegroom did not attend the ceremonies at the house of the bride's father. Some of the chants sung and toasts pronounced during the various rituals are highlighted.

At the bridegroom's father's house. Guests arrive at the main wedding arena. The hosts welcome the guests and seat them appropriately at the wedding tables.

<p>Тхьэмадэм:</p> <p>Нобэ мы нысашэ джэгур зей унагъэум сохъуэхъу.</p> <p>Іэнэгъу хъуэхъу*</p> <p>Уэ ди тхьэ, Тхьэшхуэ, Анэдолэ, Дыщэ къуэладжэ, Мы унагъуэр — Уардэ унэжъу, Выжъ укыпІэу, Нарт ефапІэу,</p>	<p>Toastmaster:</p> <p>I shall direct my toast to the household holding these wedding festivities on this blessed day.</p> <p>Table-Toast*</p> <p>Our God, The Supreme Lord, Anadola,¹⁶ Golden ravine, This household — Majestic and grandiose abode, Where great oxen are sacrificed, The drinking place of the Narts,</p>
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¹⁶ Epithet of the Supreme God? Anatolia is a region in the Asian portion of modern-day Turkey. People ancestral (or akin) to the Circassians and Abkhazians (e.g. the Hattians) inhabited this region and established seminal civilizations starting in the third millennium BC. For more details, see A. Jaimoukha, *The Circassians: A Handbook*, London and New York: Routledge, 2001, pp 41-2.

УнапIэ махуэу,
Пхъэм и махуэр я бжаблэу,
Я бланэпри зэтету,
Гуфэ зэтетхэри кыдашэу,
Пхъэхэ-псыхъэри щаубгъуу,
Фызибгъум кIадэр зэIашIэу,
ФызипщIым джэд ягъэхуу,
Зэпымычыжыр я хъуэхуу,
Къызэгүэзычри я фадэу,
Гъэ мин гъащIэкIэ гъэпсэу!

Вы нышыр яукIыу,
Уэрэд жызыIэр я хъыджэбзу,
Мызу къэзыкIухъыр я нысащIэу,
Я IусыщIыр дарий кIэпхыну,
Тепщэчхэр зэрыту сырэм кыдахыу,
Къум ахышэр пхъуантэм дэу,
Уэзий усальэ щымыщIэу,
Гъэ мин гъащIэкIэ гъэпсэу!

* * *

...

Manorial seat of happiness,
The door-posts of propitious wood,
The venison multi-layered,
The crops brought in in cartloadfuls,
The wood and water carried by nine lads,
The vat stirred by nine women,
The hens herded by ten women,
Their toast-making never ending,
Their beverage filled to bursting,
May it remain intact for a thousand years!

Oxen slaughtered in honour of guests,
The daughters singing the airs,
The bride going round not on her own,
The cooks donning satin aprons,
The plate stacks drawn from the sideboard,
The chest brimful with money,
You whose quiver of verses never go short,
May it keep safe for a thousand years!

* * *

...

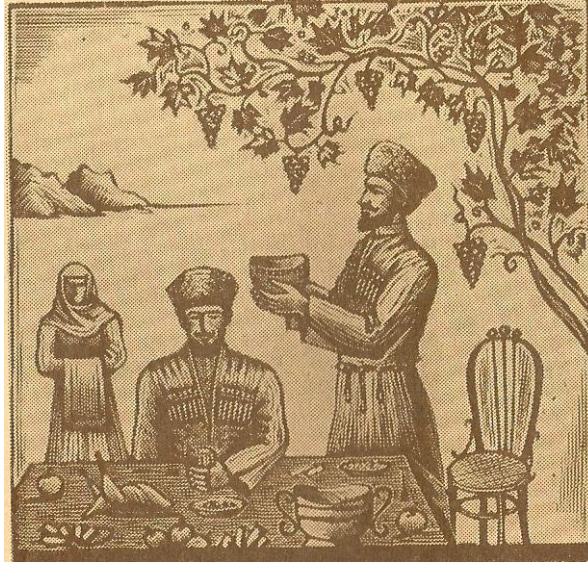
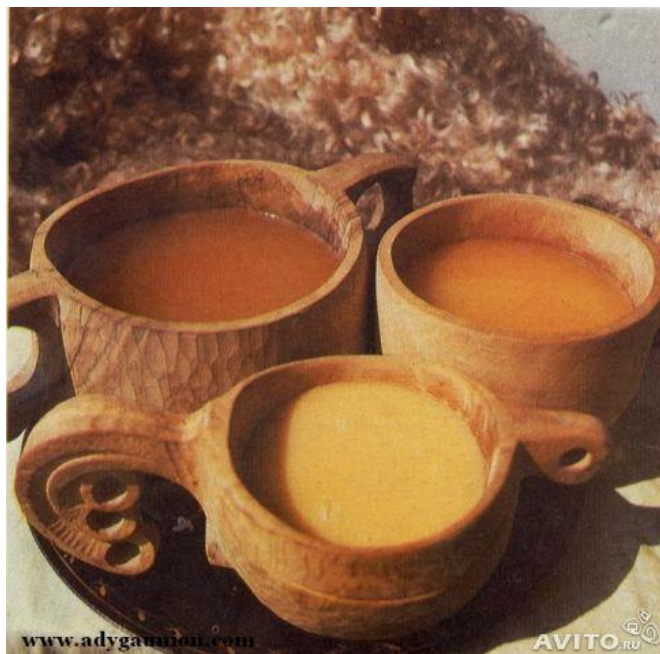


Table-toasts are still important components in Circassian household festivals. These were highly elaborate and ritualistic, and could last for hours.

Nisashe (нысашэ)

When the wedding procession arrived to the house of the bride's parents to convey her to the new abode, a feast was held in honour of the guests. Sheep or calves were slaughtered and cooked with *lepsteipx'e* (лэпстепхэ), small pieces of dough. In addition, pasties, desserts, and the ubiquitous *makhsima* (махъсымэ), the national beverage, were served.



Traditional *makhsima* bowls.

When the carcasses were flayed, horsemen from all over the area used the skin in a game of steeplechase, each rider trying to carry it away. It was considered as a test of strength and horsemanship and as a grand diversion for hot-blooded youth. Another similar contest had a peculiar kind of cap, *depi'e* (дэпыІэ; literally: 'nut-cap'), made by the women of the household by sticking together a variety of nuts on a framework, carried by a rider who galloped along, with other horsemen close on his heels trying to snatch it away. The winner was the person who crossed the finish line with the trophy.



Depi'e [*dezchiye pa'w* (дэжьые паIу), in Adigean] displayed in the corner, Sochi Ethnographic Museum in Lazarev.

It is presented as a prize by a fair maiden to the winner of a horse race during festivals.

Also on display are 'dezchiye biraq' [«дэжьые быракъ», in Adigean], literally: 'hazelnut flag', used during wedding festivals as a prize and to ornament rooms, and

'hatiyyak'we besh' [«хъатиякIуэ бэщ», in Adigean], decorated staff of the master of ceremonies in a dance party.

The ceremonies were not without an ample infusion of humour. A pole called 'qweragh' (къуэрагъ) was used to measure the height of youngest brother of bridegroom, or youngest sister of bride so as to

divine their wedding dates, all this being done in jest. A clown, *azheghafe* (ажэгъафэ; literally: ‘donning a billy-goat skin’), took part in the festivities to inject a dose of good cheer.



Circassian wedding festival in Kabarda in the early years of the 20th century.

The *azheghafe* is shown on the left playing ‘the fool’.

Besides his clownish antics, he was a central figure in the cult of the death and resurrection of Sozeresh, the god of fertility in the Circassian Pantheon, such that the ‘resurrection’ of *azheghafe* [standing for the deity] symbolized the growth of cereals from the seeds strewn in the earth.

In the olden times, the ceremony of ‘disengaging the bride from the hearth chain’ was conducted. The best man (in later times, the bride’s maid) led the veiled bride thrice around the lit hearth while her girlfriends chanted hymns wishing felicity and fertility. Then the best man took the bride in one hand and the chain in the other and shook it as a symbol of severance of the connection between the bride and her father’s household.

Before the bride was taken away, one of her family members, e.g. a younger unmarried sister, would go through the motion of refusing to

give her away without a price, *qetejipsch'e* (къэтэджыпщIэ). This was different from the bride-price or dowry (*x'ijebzwase* [хъыджэбзуасэ] or *chelimet* [чэлымэт]), which was payable upon registration of marriage. The bride's mother might be abducted and ransomed.

The bride, donning her wedding dress, was then taken outside by one of the bridegroom's friends; an unenviable task, as he was subjected to swearing and curses and was the target of physical abuse by the bride's kin, in symbolism of their reluctance to let go of one of their own. The family of the bride kept displaying their 'displeasure' at being deprived of a member of their clan all the way to the edge of their clan's territory, threatening to block the way of the procession. According to an old custom, a goblet or horn (гъуэгубжьэ), was presented to the person who blocked the way.

With the money paid and the charades over, the bride was taken in a procession, *nisashe* (нысашэ), to the house of her husband's parents, the site of the main festivities, with ritual songs and dances performed along the route.

In the 'Nisashe' («нысашэ») (also called 'Schwzish' in Adigean; 'Pschescheshe' in Shapsugh) ceremony, whereby the bride was taken from her parental home to her father-in-law's homestead (which comprehended her future abode with the bridegroom) in a procession, the ancient song «УЭРИДАДЭ» ('Weriydade') (which had a number of variations) was chanted along the way by her escorts (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P'. Qardenghwsch', 1980, p132-5; listen to it on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fTBGoRNYRU>):

<p>Нысашэ уэрэд: Уэредэ махуэй, ди нысэ!</p>	<p>'Nisashe' Song: 'Wereide, bestow happiness on our bride!'¹⁷</p>
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¹⁷ 'Wereide' (Уэредэ), 'Wereidede' (Уэредэдэ), 'Weriydade' (Уэридадэ), etc, are variations on the name of 'the cultic' Dade (Дадэ).

<p>Уэредэ махуэй, ди нысэ! Ежбу. Уойра! Данэмрэ дыщэмрэ и гущхьэ... Ежбу. Уойра! (Ра,) и гублащхьитІри дыжбынкъэ! Ежбу. (Уоредэ,) бэри махуэ!</p>	<p>Wereide, bestow happiness on our bride! Chorus: Woyra! The top of her carriage is silk and gold... Chorus: Woyra! (Ra,) the two dickeys silverine! Chorus: (Woreida,) may this be a long festival!</p>
<p>Уэредэдэ махуэй, ди нысэ! Ежбу. Уойра! И дыжбын щЫІур альтескъэ... Ежбу. Уойра! Альтес гъуэжбыр, (рэ,) и гъуапэщ! Ежбу. (Уоредэ,) бэри махуэ!</p>	<p>Wereidede, bestow happiness on our bride! Chorus: Woyra! Her silverine shirtfront is aglitter with satin...¹⁸ Chorus: Woyra! Of yellow satin, (re,) are her sleeves! Chorus: (Woreida,) may this be a long affair!</p>
<p>Уэредэдэ махуэй, ди нысэ! Ежбу. Уойра! Уэгум ит мазэр и напэ... Ежбу. Уойра! Напэху дахэм зегъазэ! Ежбу. (Уоредэ,) бэри махуэ!</p>	<p>Wereidede, bestow happiness on our bride! Chorus: Woyra! The moon in the heavens [turns] its face... Chorus: Woyra! Turns it majestically towards the white-faced beauty! Chorus: (Woreida,) may the festivities last!</p>
<p>Уэредэдэ махуэй, ди нысэ! Ежбу. Уойра! Бгъащхъуэм дэхуарзэм укъешэ! Ежбу. Уойра! Укъэзыша щауэми уэ удэжкъэ! Ежбу. (Уоредэ,) бэри махуэ!</p>	<p>Wereidede, bestow happiness on our bride! Chorus: Woyra! Like the soaring steppe eagle thou art escorted! Chorus: Woyra! May thou live to ripe old age with thy betrothed bridegroom! Chorus: (Woreida,) may good fortune last!</p>
<p>Уэредэдэ махуэй, ди нысэ! Ежбу. Уойра! Жыр лэныстэшхуэр уогъабзэ... Ежбу. Уойра! Жыр мастэ цЫкІуми уэ уродэ!</p>	<p>Wereidede, bestow happiness on our bride! Chorus: Woyra! Thou cuttest with great steel scissors... Chorus: Woyra! And thou sewest with a small steel needle!</p>

¹⁸ ‘ЩЫІу’ or ‘бгъэІуль’ (‘БгъэкІыІу’ or ‘кІыІу’ in Adigean) is part of a Circassian woman’s national costume. It consists of a false shirtfront of velvet or silk with (up to) 12 silver or gilt pairs of plate-like buckles, which when seen from a distance impart a beautiful lustre, and other ornaments.

<p>Ежью. (Уоредэ,) бэри махуэ!</p> <p>Уэредэдэ махуэй, ди нысэ! Ежью. Уойра!</p> <p>Щхэнтэм утесым — тхьэрыкъуэ... Ежью. Уойра!</p> <p>(Уай,) зыбукьуэдиймэ аслъэнкьэ! Ежью. (Уоредэ,) бэри махуэ!</p> <p>Нысэ махуэ идошэ... Ежью. Уойра!</p> <p>Щауэ махуэ идошэжыр... Ежью. Уойра!</p> <p>Зыхуэтшэжыр Iэщхьэхукьэ! Ежью. (Уоредэ,) бэри махуэ!</p> <p>Зыхуэтшэжыр Iэщхьэхукьэ... Ежью. Уойра!</p> <p>Iэщхьэху дахэр мэтэджи... Ежью. Уойра!</p> <p>Ар щIэтэджыр ди щауэрщ! Ежью. (Уоредэ,) бэри махуэ!</p>	<p>Chorus: (Woreida,) may this festival last for long!</p> <p>Wereidede, bestow happiness on our bride! Chorus: Woyra!</p> <p>Seated on the pillow, thou art a dove... Chorus: Woyra!</p> <p>(Way,) as thou draw thyself up — a lioness! Chorus: (Woreida,) may our bliss last for long!</p> <p>We are escorting the blessed bride... Chorus: Woyra!</p> <p>We are taking the groom back home... Chorus: Woyra!</p> <p>We are taking him to the white-sleeved one! Chorus: (Woreida,) may both of them have good luck!</p> <p>We are escorting him to the bright-sleeved one! Chorus: Woyra!</p> <p>The bright-sleeved beauty is arising... Chorus: Woyra!</p> <p>She rises for our groom! Chorus: (Woreida,) may both of them be blessed!</p>
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At first, this ancient anthem, together with other songs and toasts associated with the wedding ceremonies, had deep religious significance, but later they were reduced to a collection of toasts sung and pronounced in honour and to the happiness of the newly-weds.

In the meantime, songs, such as the following comic composition from the Cherkess, were sung at the house of the bridegroom's father in anticipation of the arrival of the bride (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P'. Qardenghwsch', 1980, p125-7; listen to it on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fhbn2nsYMDg>):

«Нысашэ къэхьуащ...»*	‘The wedding is upon us...’*
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<p>Ежью. Уайра уей, уей, уей, уей, уай рира! (Ей, ей, ей-я, ай,) нысашэ къэхъуашц... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! (Ай,) шы бэджэндыр къытхуаштэ... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! (Ай,) шы бэджэндыр шхуэГум йогъу... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! Я фэ лъейри зыльакъуэ... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! Я пыГэжбыр къракъухри... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! (Ай,) чэум зэрыдохыр... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! Я къехуэхыр нэхъыбэщ... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! Уанэ къуапи трагъэз... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! Сом зырызкГэ япшыныж... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!</p> <p>(Ей, ей, ей-я, ай,) нысэу къэтшахэр... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! ФЫщГэ пэрикъи... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! (Уэ,) къэрэ пэтГини... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! Шабиихъуэ щхъэцкъэ... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! (Уи,) щхъэц бырыбкъэ... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра уай рира! Быныр зэГегъэхъэри... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! Къихъэм хуодалгэр... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! Лъэдакъэ пхъашэщ... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!</p>	<p>Chorus: Wayra wey, wey, wey, wey, way riya! (Yey, yey, yey-ya, ay,) the wedding is upon us... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! (Ay,) they get us horses for hire... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! (Ay,) the hired horses are gnawing at their bits... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! They pull on their hide high boots... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! They pull their caps down over their eyes... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! (Ay,) as they dart out of the courtyard... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! Many fall off their horses... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! They knock down the saddle pommels... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! They are compensated with one rouble each... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya!</p> <p>(Yey, yey, yey-ya, ay,) the bride that we have brought... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! Is black and with a turned-up nose... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! (We,) swarthy and snub-nosed... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! Her hair is like stiff grass...¹⁹ Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! (Wiy,) and dishevelled... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! She brings about discord in the family... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! She intimidates those who come (to the house)... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! Her heels are rough... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya!</p>
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¹⁹ ‘Шабий’ is the Tor grass (*Brachypodium pinnatum*), a big and tough grass.

<p>(Ей, ей, ей-я, ай,) нысэу кьэтшахэр... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! Дэным хуэишэщ... Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира! ХьэрэшэкIэ бзаджи. Ежью. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!</p>	<p>(Yey, yey, yey-ya, ay,) the bride that we have brought... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! She is a clumsy seamstress... Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya! But she has a weakness for buffalo milk. Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riya!</p>
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When the wedding procession arrived at the gate of the house of the bridegroom's father, songs were sung signalling her blessed arrival to her new home and toasting her and the bridegroom. The recording of the stately «НЫСЭ КЪЫДОШЭ» ('Nise qidoshe') ['We are escorting the daughter-in-law'], sung by Vladimir Bereghwn, can be heard on YouTube [<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqBicADgLOA>]. It is representative of this genre of connubial chants.

Once inside the yard, the new bride was ceremoniously posed surrounded by her attendants. The ceremony of 'removing the veil' was then conducted. One of the masters of ceremonies (хьэтиякIуэ; *hetiyak'we*) took out his dagger and with its tip lifted the veil or screen (made of decorated cloth) of the bride's head-cover ([щхьэ]тепхьуэ; [*schhe*]teipx'we).

The bride's head-cover (as opposed to the veil) was not taken off until after a fixed period after the ceremonies by a special person named 'Cover-remover,' a confidant of the bride's father. The veil was removed in a swift movement with a sharp arrow. Another version had a newly-wedded woman wearing her cap until after the first birth, when a man, usually the bridegroom's uncle, took it off in the same manner. This person then offered her new-born his best cattle and horses. The woman thereafter wore a silk kerchief.



Circassian wedding.

The ceremony of 'removing the veil'
is symbolized for modern convenience.

The master of ceremonies (*hetiyak'we*) lifts
the veil of the bride's head-cover using
the tip of his dagger.

The lips of the bride are then ceremoniously
daubed with '*writs'elh* (ИурыцIэль),
a mixture of honey and butter
used as refreshment at weddings.

(V. Vorokov, 1987, p192)

Адыгэ хьэгъуэллыгъуэ.

ХьэтиякIуэм къамэ кыIэщIалъхьэри,
къамэпэмкIэ нысащIэм и щхьэтепхьуэ хьар тырех.

After the ceremonial removal of the bride’s head-cover, and the application of a mixture of honey and butter (ГурьцІэль; *writs’elh*) to her lips by her female attendants, the master of ceremony addresses the elder females of the bridegroom’s father’s household:

«Мы фи унэ кыфхуитша нысэм зэ фыкытхуГуплы, дахэу фытхуехъуэхъу, ди нанэ дыщэхэ!»

‘Our gilded grammas, look at the daughter-in-law that we have brought to your household and sing her praises for us!’

The elaborate and very popular toast «ДИ НЫСЭ ФО!» (‘Diy Nise Fo!’) [‘Our Sweet Daughter-in-law!’] was pronounced during the ‘Nis Ashe’ ceremony in praise of the new bride. Part of the toast is reproduced here:²⁰

<p>Нысашэ хъуэхъухэр: «Ди нысэ фо!»*</p> <p>...</p> <p>* * *</p> <p>Нысэ цыкгу кьатшэр:</p>	<p>‘Nis Ashe’ Toasts: ‘Our Sweet Daughter-in-law!’*</p> <p>...</p> <p>* * *</p> <p>The young daughter-in-law we are escorting:</p>
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²⁰ The whole text of the toast (in Kabardian) is available in Z. Qardenghwsch’, 1985, pp 94-104.

<p>Фадэм хуэдэу Гушашэу, Мэлым хуэдэу Гушабэу, Джэдым хуэдэу быныфIэу, ХьэфIым хуэдэу Гумахуэу, ШыфIым хуэдэу цIэрыIуэу, Жыхапхьэр ильэфу, Унафэм едаIуэу, ГуащэкIэ Iэсэу, ПшыкьуэкIэ гумащIэу, Унэр игуу, ЛШыр и псэу, Ди нысэмрэ ди шауэмрэ Фомрэ цымрэ хуэдэу зэкIэрыгьяпщIэ, Я льякьуэ зэхэгьуащэм, ПхьэидзэкIэ ягуэшыжу, Дунейм фIыгьуэкIэ тегьэт!</p> <p>* * *</p> <p>...</p>	<p>May she whisper like smooth liquor, Be soft-spoken as an ewe, Have many offspring like a hen, Be velvet-mouthed like a pedigree hound, Be as famous as a thoroughbred, Dragging the besom through the floor, Obeying instructions, Be on good terms with her mother-in-law, Be kind-hearted to her brother-in-law,²¹ The homestead her heart, Her husband her soul, May our bride and bridegroom Be glued together like hair in honey, If their feet should lose their bearing, They are re-allotted by drawing lots, May they find prosperity in this world!</p> <p>* * *</p> <p>...</p>
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The celebrations at the bridegroom’s father’s house usually started with a show of equestrian dexterity. A steeplechase with the added risk of riders snatching a cap from one another at full tilt and evading manoeuvres would set the indomitable young men in the right mood.

²¹ A Circassian woman never called her parents-in-law, husband, or her brothers-in-law by their names. In the last case, she used pet names (пшыкьуэцIэ; *pschiqwets’e*) to refer to them, for example «ДыгьэцIыкIу» (*Dighets’ik’w’*) [‘Little Sun’]. It was a secretive appellation that she never divulged outside the family circle. A saying prevalent in the olden times was «ПшыкьуэцIэ мыхьуамэ, кьыджелэ шэхур!» (*Pschiqwets’e mix’wame, qidzhei’e schexwr!*)—‘Tell us your secret, if it isn’t the pet name of your brother-in-law!’ Among the upper classes, it was considered a mark of courtesy that when the names of a woman’s husband, father, or elder brothers were mentioned, she stood up.

When the first round of games had been played out, the serious business of ritual was set upon.

In an intimate marriage of dance, song and religion, a sacred ceremony was held called 'Table *Wij* and Song'. A three-legged table full of victuals was placed in the middle of the village square and dancers encircled it while chanting. The rite was essentially a supplication for plenty and for blessing of the new household. Dance groups would then be formed for more amusing purposes. Married women did not take part in the dances, but enjoyed watching them all the same perched on vantage points (шордакъ; *shordaq*) especially reserved for them, and certainly amused themselves exchanging a tale or two.

Wineyishe (унэишэ)

The *Wineyishe* ceremony was conducted at the house of the bridegroom's father, where the main festivities are held. Some time towards the end of the main connubial festivities, the ceremony of 'Wineyishe' («унэишэ») (referred to as 'Niseyish' in Adigean) was held in which the new bride was accompanied to be introduced to her mother-in-law and other female elders.²² Before entering the house, and according to the 'Nise Теирх'е' («нысэ тепхъэ») ceremony (also called 'Qeipx'ix' [«къепхъых»]), she was showered with pastries, bon-bons, nuts and small articles (later also small change). This was an especial treat for the children.

The bride stepped with her right foot on a sheepskin mat spread on the threshold of the house with the woolly side turned upwards. As she stood on the mat, the old ladies of the household toasted her thus:

²² It should be mentioned that a week or two after the wedding, another 'Wineyishe' («унэишэ») ceremony (dubbed 'Little Wineyishe') took place in which the bride was led from her quarters to be introduced (again) to her mother-in-law and other female elders.

<p>Унэишэ хьуэхьу</p> <p>Я ди Тхьэ, Лъапэ махуэ кыщIеггэшиэ, угьурлыггэкIэ! Мы зытеувэм цы нальэу тетым хуэдиз Нэмыс, насып узыншаггэ кьет!</p> <p>Я ди Тхьэ, Къуэбын-щэбыну тхуэггэщэцэ, Лъэпкь тхуэщI!</p>	<p>‘Wineyishe’ Toast</p> <p>Our Lord, Bless her step and let it bode well! As much as the number of filaments on the rug she stands on Bestow honour, good fortune and health upon her!</p> <p>Our Lord, Strew upon us a hundred male offspring, Make us a clan!</p>
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In the Western Circassian traditions, when the bride was led inside the house of the parents of the bridegroom, her escorts chanted the ritual ‘Niseyish’ Song and special melodies were played, to which the escorts danced (the ‘Niseyish’ Dance).²³ The following ‘Niseyish’ Song is drawn from the Shapsugh repertoire (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P’. Qardenghwsch’, 1980, pp 155-8):

<p>Нысэищ оред: Идэ, идэ тыжыния...</p> <p>Идэ, идэ тыжыния... Жьыу. Уэрэда! Идэ тыжыныбггэкIыуя...</p>	<p>‘Niseyish’ Song: ‘Sew, sew, a silverine...’</p> <p>Sew, sew a silverine... Chorus: Wereda! Sew a silverine shirtfront...²⁴</p>
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²³ It is thought that the Bzhedugh and Shapsugh had almost a monopoly on this genre (‘Niseyish’) of melodies. The Cherkess would dance their own ‘P’et’eley’ («пIэтIэлей») on that occasion.

²⁴ ‘БггэкIыу’ or ‘кIыу’ (‘бггэIуль’ or ‘щIыу’ in Kabardian) is part of a Circassian woman’s national costume. It consists of a false shirtfront of

<p>Жъыу. Уэрида! А гъэминыр зыгъашIэя! Жъыу. Уэрида!</p>	<p>Chorus: Weriya! May she live to be a thousand! Chorus: Weriya!</p>
<p>Гоцэ хъагъу-фэгъуа... Жъыу. Уэрира! Гугъуми тхэмыла... Жъыу. Уэрира! ЛыимыкI укыдакIора! Жъыу. Уэрэда!</p>	<p>Rivalling her mother-in-law in her merits... Chorus: Weriya! May we not lose heart in our day of trial... Chorus: Weriya! To the youthful knight thou hast been betrothed! Chorus: Wereda!</p>
<p>УкызыдакIори... Жъыу. Уэрэда! О шыу цIэрыIo... Жъыу. Уэрира! ЛъэкIыIу мафэра. Жъыу. Уэрира!</p>	<p>Thou hast been betrothed... Chorus: Wereda! To a glorious horseman... Chorus: Weriya! Favoured by the heavens.²⁵ Chorus: Weriya!</p>
<p>О непэрэ мафэр... Жъыу. Уэрира! Тихъазынишиа... Жъыу. Уэрэда! ТышырыщызакIэу... Жъыу. Уэрэда! Ащи тегъэгуащэя! Жъыу. Уэрэда!</p>	<p>Oh, this day today... Chorus: Weriya! Is triple lucky... Chorus: Wereda! Thrice upon us... Chorus: Wereda! It hath bestowed its largesse! Chorus: Wereda!</p>
<p>Тэ танахъ гуащэри... Жъыу. Уэрэда! КIэтыкумэ кIэтыра!</p>	<p>More worthy than us all gwashe... Chorus: Wereda! Standing in the corner!²⁶</p>

velvet or silk with (up to) 12 silver or gilt pairs of plate-like buckles, which when seen from a distance impart a beautiful lustre, and other ornaments.

²⁵ Literally: with a lucky step.

²⁶ According to Circassian rites, on the wedding day the bride stood in the corner of the room of the newly-weds in the company of the bridegroom's young female kinsfolk.

Жъыу. Уэрида! А кыкIэзгэкIотыу... Жъыу. Уэрида! IаплIи ещэкIыныя! Жъыу. Уэрира!	Chorus: Weryda! I lead her out of the nook... Chorus: Weryda! And embrace her! Chorus: Weryra!
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In the self-same traditions, instead of the ‘Wineyishe’ toast, the mother-in-law (or a designated older lady) would sing the bride’s praises in the ‘Niseghasch’we’ («нысэгъашIо») or ‘Niseyepch’ («Нысэепчъ») songs. The following two songs provide nice examples of the genre. The first is the Shapsugh ‘Niseghasch’we’ song ‘The Aschay family...’* («Ашъаемэ...»), the second the Temirgoi ‘Niseyepch’ song ‘Werydede, bestow happiness on my daughter-in-law!’ («Уэридэдэ мафэр, синыса!») (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P’. Qardenghwsch’, 1980, pp 147-9 and pp 144-6, respectively; listen to the [song on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBktl6yy5xY](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OBktl6yy5xY)):²⁷

НысэгъашIо ордэ: Ашъаемэ...* (Орэдэу! Орэдэу!) Ашъаемэ... Жъыу. Орэдэу! Ашъаемэ я унэшхор дышъэчы! Жъыу. Орэдэу! Дышъэчынэлъакъор гъэужъа! Жъыу. Орэдэу! Дынэр зыгъэужъырэр синыса! Жъыу. Орэдэу!	Song in Praise of the Bride: The Aschay family...*²⁸ (Weredew! Weredew!) The Aschay family... Chorus: Weredew! The great house of the Aschays is cast of gold! Chorus: Weredew! She twirls like a golden whirligig! Chorus: Weredew! She is so quick at sewing, my daughter-in-law! Chorus: Weredew!
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²⁷ ‘Aschayeme...’ is in the repertoire of the Adigean State Folk Song Ensemble ‘Yislahamiy’. A recording of the song is available on this website.

²⁸ ‘Aschay’ is the name of a Shapsugh family.

Синысэ зэрэщытэр оІона! Жъуу. Орэдэу!	Let me tell thee about my daughter-in-law! Chorus: Weredew!
Мэээныкьоу-мэээныкьор и тхыльэ! Жъуу. Орэдэу!	Her ornaments are like semi-lunes! Chorus: Weredew!
Дышьэ псыхэлъэшъор икЫІуа! Жъуу. Орэдэу!	Of pure gold is her shirtfront! Chorus: Weredew!
А сэрмэ уІугъэхэр ынаща! Жъуу. Орэдэу!	Whetted with dye are her eyebrows! Chorus: Weredew!
ЫнэпцэкІитІор пцІэшхъуанкІа! Жъуу. Орэдэу!	The tips of her eyebrows are like the tail of a swallow! Chorus: Weredew!
ПцІашхъом дэчэрэзырэм укъещэ! Жъуу. Орэдэу!	Soaring with the swallows, they take thee as a wife! Chorus: Weredew!
Укъэзыщэ кІалэм удэжъа! Жъуу. Орэдэу!	May thou live to ripe old age with thy betrothed youth! Chorus: Weredew!
Уигощэ ныожъэр огъашІо! Жъуу. Орэдэу!	May thy reverend mother-in-law honour thee! Chorus: Weredew!
Пщыпхъум игъэшІуагъи бэдэда! Жъуу. Орэдэу!	May thy sister-in-law be overly attentive to thee! Chorus: Weredew!
Бэдэдэ цыфи кьекІуалІэ! Жъуу. Орэдэу!	May many people come to thy wedding! Chorus: Weredew!
КьекІолІэгъуэ истэор гъэщытхъуа! Жъуу. Орэдэу!	May all those who come leave pronouncing thy praises! Chorus: Weredew!
Непэ уимыщытхъор тэ кьэпха! Жъуу. Орэдэу!	Today we shall all sing thy praises! Chorus: Weredew!
КьэкІожъ аІуи дарыешхор теубгъуа! Жъуу. Орэдэу!	'Come back home, bridegroom,' they said, she laid brocade for him! Chorus: Weredew!

<p>Синысэ ицыпхъуанти мытІэкІа! Жъуу. Орэдэу!</p> <p>Синысэ етІэкІын сэуи сэуджа! Жъуу. Орэдэу!</p> <p>Сызыфэуджырэр иджана! Жъуу. Орэдэу! Орэдэу! Орэдэу!</p>	<p>My daughter-in-law has not touched her woollen trunk yet! Chorus: Weredew!</p> <p>I am impatient for my daughter-in-law to undress!²⁹ Chorus: Weredew!</p> <p>What I covet is her dress! Chorus: Weredew! Weredew! Weredew!</p>
<p>Нысэепчъ орэд: Уэридэдэ мафэр, синыса!</p> <p>Уохыр уэридэдэ, уэрэдэ, Уэридэдэ мафэр, синыса! Синысэ зэрэщытыхэри осІони: Дэнэ псыхэлыафэхэри ыкылуа.</p> <p>Дэнэу псыхэлыафэри ыкылуи, (Ра,) сэрмэ уІугъэхэр ынитлуа, (Ра,) зынэпцэкІитІухэри пцІэшхъуакІа, ПцІашхъом дэчэрэзырэм укъеши.</p> <p>ПцІашхъом дэчэрэзырэм укъеши, Укъэзыщэ кІалэми удэжъа! Укъэзыщэ кІалэм удэжъи, Уигощэ нyoжъыхэри огъашлуи!</p> <p>Уигощэ нyoжъхэри огъашлуи, Пщыпхъум игъэшІонхэр бэдэди!</p> <p>(Ра,) бэдэдэ хъакІэри кыдахаы, Непэ уимыщытхъухэри тэ кыкІи! Непэ уимыщытхъухэр тэ кыкІи,</p>	<p>‘Niseyepch’ Song: ‘Werydede, bestow happiness on my daughter-in-law!’</p> <p>Wiwexir werydede, werede, Werydede, bestow happiness on my daughter-in-law! Of my daughter-in-law I shall tell thee: Her shirtfront is of delicate silk.</p> <p>Her shirtfront is of delicate silk, (Ra,) her eyebrows are glossed with dye, (Ra,) the tips of her eyebrows are like the tail of a swallow, They take thee as a wife soaring with the swallows.</p> <p>They take thee as a wife hovering with the swallows, May thou live to ripe old age with thy betrothed youth! May thou live to ripe old age with thy betrothed youth, And may thy mother-in-law and the old ladies honour thee!</p> <p>May thy mother-in-law and old ladies honour thee, And may thy sister-in-law sing thy praises to the sky!</p> <p>(Ra,) may guests come in droves, Today we shall all sing thy praises! Today we praise thee deservedly,</p>

²⁹ In accordance with the ‘Nisetin’ («нысэтын») ceremony, the bride undressed, gave away her clothes to her in-laws, and put on brand new ones prepared by the kinsfolk of the bridegroom.

УкьызтекIы уянэми тхьар ети!	May the Lord reward thine mother who gave birth to thee!
(Ра,) ордэ унэжьыми укьикIи, (Ра,) цужьыукIыпIэми укьихьи, Уэхэр уэридада, уэрадэ, Уэридэдэ мафэти, синыса!	(Ra,) thou comest from a mighty and ancient house, (Ra,) and now livest where great oxen are sacrificed, Wexer weriydada, werade, May Weriydede bestow happiness on my daughter-in-law!

At the expiry of the song of praise, the ‘Nisetin’ ceremony took place whereby the bride gave away the clothes she had on and put on brand new ones instead. She also gave out presents to the members of the family of the bridegroom.

Niseteihe (нысэтехьэ)

The *niseteihe* ceremony was conducted at the house of the bridegroom’s father. In the Eastern Circassian traditions, the mother-in-law would sing the ‘Niseteihe’ («нысэтехьэ») song in praise of the new bride as she was presented to her, and then she embraced her into her new home.

The bride was presented with gifts (техьэпщIэ; *teihesch’e*) and then led to her room with much song and dance.³⁰ Her ceremonious placement on the conjugal bed signalled her becoming a full member of the household.

³⁰ In the olden days, the bride’s cover was removed with a sword or dagger wielded by a man. Later, this function was taken over by the womenfolk using an arrow, and eventually a stick.

SchaweyishezH (щӕуэишэж)

In this ceremony the groom is conducted back to his father's house. The groom (щӕуэ; *schawe*) chose his best man (щӕуэгъу; *schaweghw*) and an assistant (щӕуэкъуэдзэ; *schaweqwedze*) from among his close friends to act as his agents and as masters of wedding ceremonies, since he was strictly forbidden to make an appearance during the festivities. He stayed at a friend's or relative's house, *schawap'e* (щӕауапӕ), where young people would gather and celebrate by holding banquets, *Schaweyefe* (щӕуэфэ), in which toasts, *schawebzche* (щӕуэбжъэ), were pronounced in honour of the bridegroom. One wish went like this: «Уи пыӕ угъурлы ухъу!» ('*Wiy pi'e wighwrli wix'w!*') ['Bless your cap!']. These celebrations were held in isolation of the main festival. Another curious aspect of the wedding rituals was that the bride's family was proscribed from attending the principal festivity.

On the eve of the wedding, an evening-party, *schawexes* (щӕуэхэс), was held at the house at which the bridegroom was residing, attended by his friends and relatives.

When the principal ceremonies were finished, the bridegroom was taken stealthily to his wife's room in a procession, *SchaweyishezH* (щӕуэишэж), late at night, when all celebrants had gone home. Along the way, before the matrimonial seat was reached, toasts were pronounced and songs were sung in the bridegroom's honour. A snippet from a traditional toast is presented:³¹

³¹ The whole text of the toast (in Kabardian) is available in Z. Qardenghwsch', 1985, pp 105-16.

Щауэишэж хьуэхьухэр	'Schaweyishezh' Toasts
...	...
* * *	* * *
<p>Уей, ди шынэхьыщІэу — ЛэщІыгьуэр зей, Бажэ уещэм — Щыхь кьэбукІыу, ХьыкІэ уещэм — Дьщэ кьихьуэу, Уи ныбжьымрэ Уи бжьыгьуэмрэ кІыхь ухьу! Мыр льэпкь льэужьым кьадежьа льэгьуц, Уи жьы хьугьуэм дамэгьу дэгызэщ.</p>	<p>Hey, our younger brother — Master of the centuries, When thou huntest foxes — Thou shootest deer, When thou fishest with a net — Thou fetchest gold, Long may thou live, And may thy good fortune last forever! This is the path we have paved for this clan,³² In thine old age the nanny is thy ally.</p>
* * *	* * *
...	...

ЖыІэпхьэщ мыдей мы хьуэхьу теухуауэ адыгэхэм щауэр «льэпкь кьэжьапІэ» зэрылытауэ щытахэт, «Лыр льэпкьщ» жыІэгьуэм кьыхэкІыу.

³² In Circassian folklore, and in accordance with the saying 'Лыр льэпкьщ', a (newly married) man was considered (or hoped to be) the initiator of a new clan.

The groom's companions would sing songs and vocalize refrains, the most famous of which were 'Your Highness' ('Dotenexw' [«дотэнэху»], or 'Dote Nexw' [«дотэ нэху»]) and 'The Groom's Home-coming' («щауэишэж»; 'Schaweyishez'') (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P'. Qardenghwsch', 1980, p159 and p160, respectively):

<p>Щауэишэж уэрэд: Дотэ нэху</p> <p>Джатэр зыгъэхуахуэрэ, Хуарэр зи Іэдэжым кытхуишар — ДэнэкІэ шыІэ, дотэ нэху?</p> <p>А Іэпхъуамбэ Іашэу, А шэ Іашэрыуэм кытхуишар — ДэнэкІэ шыІэ, дотэ нэху?</p> <p>Си дотэ нэхуу, Данэхур зи Іьэпэдым кытхуишар — ДэнэкІэ шыІэ, дотэ нэху?</p>	<p>Song of the Groom's Home-coming: 'Your Highness'</p> <p>He who brandishes the sword, And leads the 'Xware' steed by the bridle that thou hast brought us —³³ Where is he, Your Highness?³⁴</p> <p>The one with big fingers, Shooter of large arrows that thou hast brought us — Where is he, Your Highness?</p> <p>My lord, The one with bright silk socks that thou hast brought us — Where is he, Your Highness?</p>
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<p>Щауэишэж</p> <p>Ерэдэ, рауэ, рэдэ, уора, уорэ, радэ, ра! Ерэра, радэ, рауэ, рада, уэрэда, радэ, ай! Ауэ, радэ, рауэ, радэ, уэрэра, радэ, ай!</p>	<p>'Schaweyishez' Chorus</p> <p>Yerede, rawe, rede, wora, wore, rade, ra! Yerera, rade, rawe, rada, wereda, rade, ay! Awe, rade, rawe, rade, werera, rade, ay!</p>
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³³ 'Xware' [«хуарэ»] is one of the ten established Kabardian breeds of horses.

³⁴ During the feudal era, 'дотэнэху', or 'дотэ нэху', was the proper form of address to the local prince by the inhabitants of his estate (his subjects).

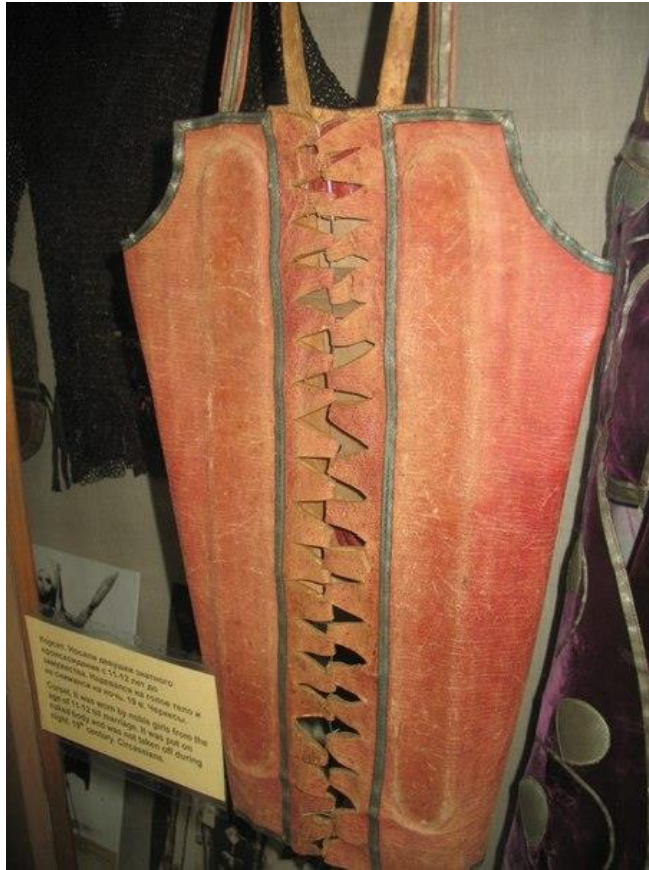
Ерэдэ, рауэ, радэ, уо радэ, уорэ, радэ, ра!	Yerede, rawe, rade, wo rade, wore, rade, ra!
Арэра, радэ, рауэ, радэ, уэрэра, радэ, ай!	Arera, rade, rawe, rade, werera, rade, ay!
Ерэра, радэ, рауэ, радэ, уэрэра, радэ, ай!	Yerera, rade, rawe, rade, werera, rade, ay!

It was considered very unseemly to be seen entering one's new bride's bedroom. Thus, the bridegroom had to devise methods to sneak in and consummate the marriage. He either waited until the small hours of the morning, when everybody had gone to bed, or surreptitiously climbed through the bedroom window. In Circassian society, abstinence and frugality were cherished attributes, and indulgence in the pleasures of the body was a stigma of effeteness and lack of discipline.

Consummation of marriage

The new couple was assigned a room, *leghwne* (лэгъунэ), in the house of the groom's father, which unfailingly had a separate entrance. According to an old custom, *leghwnaplhe* (лэгъунаплъэ), the relatives of the bride visited the bedroom in order to determine the merits and demerits of the furniture. If the couple were to live in a separate house, the custom was called 'winaplhe' («унаплъэ»; 'house inspection'). The newly-weds were presented with household items, in accordance with a custom called *winexesch'e* (унэхэщІэ).

At the onset of puberty, girls were required to wear corsets (Kabardian: куэншыбэ, *kwenshibe*; Adigean: шъохътан, *schwex'tan*) in the form of short tight-fitting sleeveless vests made from red-morocco, leather or cloth and worn under the chemise. The corset was fastened tight with silk laces and covered the chest right down to the belt. Besides giving support to the body, it served to limit the development of the bosom area, as was demanded by the strict norms of beauty, among which physical symmetry was of paramount importance. Corsets kept being worn (day and night; when worn out, they were replaced by others of equal tightness) until the girl's wedding night.



Circassian corset.

This device was used to arrest the development of the breasts and the mid-section.

When eventually the newly-weds were left alone in their quarters, the bridegroom initiated the consummation of the bond by cutting the laces of the corset with his sharp dagger. This required high skill, and the infliction of any scratch on the bride's body, no matter how small, brought a great shame upon the groom. The operation was complicated by the fact that it was interdicted for the bridegroom to see his bride in full glory in her birthday suit. It seems that even in conjugal relations restraint was a cultivated trait amongst the Circassians.

Post-nuptial ceremonies

When a new bride crossed the threshold of her father-in-law's house for the first time, a fire was lit in her quarters called 'start of bride's room fire'. The bridegroom's mother, who usually lit the fire, toasted her daughter-in-law thus:

May thy fire never be extinguished!
May thy hearth never go cold!
May it forever remain warm and bright!
May thou never lack crops,
Nor meal to cook, my little one!

The bride there and then took a vow never to allow her hearth to grow cold. The quality of a housewife was assessed by the upkeep of her hearth fire. A woman was complimented in this manner: 'That woman's fire never went out all her life. Is there a housewife like her?!' In contrast, about a lazy housewife it was said: 'Isn't she a slothful hag, letting her hearth grow cold!'

In ancient times, when the bride was taken to her husband's house, her father had to send with her a trustworthy person to keep an eye on her. This person, called 'All Year,' was supposed to accompany the bride for a whole year, hence the name. After the expiration of this period, he went back to the house of the bride's father where he was presented with proper gifts.

The new bride was allowed a period of grace, *schhenteteis* (ЩХЪЭНТЭТЕС), during which she was exempt from doing household chores. This could extend to half a year or more, after which the daughter-in-law was ceremoniously taken to the kitchen and inducted to housework. Afterwards, she was introduced to the hearth, an especially sacred corner of the house, and made to go round the lit fire

while the women of the house chanted religious hymns.³⁵ This ceremony signified ‘initiation’ of the new member into the realm of the father-in-law, and was considered a vow of obedience to him.³⁶

³⁵ In Circassian (and in general North Caucasian) cosmology everything was held in place by the universal chain. The hearth-chain (ЖЪЭГУ ЛЪАХЪШ; *zchegw lhax'sh*) was the household's link to the cosmos – the coupling to the universal scheme of things. Every home had a permanently lit hearth with a wrought iron chain hanging down the chimney. All native North Caucasian religions regard the family hearth with special reverence and it was the principal place at which family rituals were conducted, principally offerings and sacrifices and the rites associated with the cult of Dade (Weriydade; Дадэ; Уэридадэ), the clan hero, the head of the household, whose immortal soul transmigrated to *hedrixé* (ХЪЭДРЫХЭ; the world beyond) after death. The patrons of the domestic hearth were the deities Sozeresh and Zchegwpathe (ЖЪЭГУПАТХЪЭ; literally: God of the Hearth). A new bride was ‘un-chained’ from her father's hearth and then ‘joined’ to that of her father-in-law in special circum-ambulatory ceremonies. Vestiges of the cult of Dade are come upon in the corpus of ceremonial songs collectively referred to as ‘Weriydade’, the most famous of which being the one chanted during the bridal homecoming. The hearth chain still retains symbolic functions and significance. For further information on the cult of the hearth of the Circassians, refer to M. A. Meretukov (Meretiḡwe), ‘Kult ochaga u adigov [The Cult of the Hearth of the Circassians]’, in *Scientific Transactions of the Adigean Science and Research Institute, Ethnography*, Maikop, vol. 8, 1968. See A. Jaimoukha's *The Circassians: A Handbook* (Routledge, 2001, pp 179-80, p182, and p228), and *Circassian Culture and Folklore* (Bennett and Bloom, 2009), for yet more information on cultic practices of the Circassians associated with the hearth and fire-worship.

³⁶ The bride would become a new member of the fraternity in Kovalevsky's construct. See ‘Historical familial structures’ in A. Jaimoukha, 2001, p 164-6, and M. Kovalevsky, 1893. Classical Circassian society went through two phases of gender domination. There is some evidence that the society was initially matriarchal, later transforming to patriarchy when the physically more powerful males sought to overturn the tables. According to Maxime Kovalevsky, there were some aspects of the customs and traditions of the Circassians that could only be explained by assuming an antecedent matriarchal society. He constructed a model of Circassian society in which confraternities were the basic units of social structure. These prescribed

exogamous marriage, and the ‘bought’ bride became a communal possession. Circassian custom had it that a widow was obliged to remarry one of the brothers of her deceased husband. In Kovalevsky’s model, the widow was only able to remarry outside the group if she could redeem her price. Otherwise, any member of the confraternity could claim her. The offspring of the union were considered those of the deceased.

In the seminal tale ‘The Council of the Matriarchs’ of the Nart Epic, we learn that:

... in the olden times, there was the Council of Matriarchs, which was made up of wise and far-sighted mature ladies. The Council discussed the day-to-day issues of the young Narts, and legislated laws and customs by which the youth had to abide in their mundane life. The Council members relied on their long experience and perspicacity in formulating relevant edicts.

In other tales, marking the transformation to patriarchy, the formidable Nart Nesrenzchach’e expressed his refusal to obey and swear allegiance to Lady Satanay, imploring the Narts to appoint a male leader.

Kovalevsky cited the legend of the Amazons in Circassian oral tradition as the record of transition to patriarchy. The Amazons and Circassians had been engaged in continual war. One day, the former resolved to enter into parleys with the latter. The queen of the Amazons spent a few hours in Prince Toulmey’s tent, and came out intent on putting an end to the futile conflict. She declared that war was over and she announced her betrothal to her erstwhile adversary. She advised her followers to follow suit and pair with Circassian warriors. They took her counsel—and there an end to matriarchal rule. In Kovalevsky’s estimation, the temporary union between groups of men and women of different societies preceded the patriarchal custom of life-long marriage consecrated by vows of fidelity. He considered male domination as a later development in Circassian society.



Circassian hearth.

This was the place where most household ceremonies and rituals were held.

[Drawing by Teiwvezh Qat,
People's Artist of the Russian Federation]

A son-in-law was only presented to his in-laws a long time after the wedding in a special ceremony. Upon invitation from his wife's parents, he was taken to their house in a procession called *malhx'eyishe* (мальхъэишэ). A banquet, *malhx'eyefe* (мальхъэфэ), was then held in his honour. Despite the hospitality, the son-in-law was not keen on repaying them an inordinate number of courtesy calls, in accordance with the saying, '*Malhx'ere shidre!*' («Мальхъэрэ шыдрэ!»)—'The son-in-law is a jackass!'—a half-jocular adage that also bore a snippet of ancient wisdom.

License to sew

Once the main ceremonies were over, the new bride was inaugurated into the sewing and cutting functions in her new home (the sutorian theme is recurrent in the nuptial chants presented above). A ceremony was held in which a needle was threaded with golden thread and three

stitches were run through a piece of cloth, following which the bride was free to engage in sutorial affairs.

5 Divorce & Bigamy

Divorce was rare in Circassian society. A strict code of morality reduced the number of adultery cases. A woman deemed to have committed a sexual offence had her hair shorn, sleeves removed and sent back on horseback to her father by the cuckolded husband. Crimes of honour were rare on account of the stiff blood-price that had to be paid to the kin of the adulterous pair. In exceptional cases, a husband mutilated his sinful wife and tore off her clothes before sending her packing to her folks riding a horse.

The taking of second and more wives was uncommon among Circassians. The structure of society was firmly based on monogamy. Even in the diaspora, where the practice was more common, cases of bigamy were the exception. Circassian women would have rather undone the bond than become second-best.

6 ‘In sickness and in health’

Vigil over the sick

In the *sch'apsche* (щӀапщӀэ) or *sch'epsche* (щӀэпщӀэ) ritual (кӀапщ [ch'apsh] in Adigean), the friends and relatives of a person with a bone fracture or an illness kept a vigil over him to keep him company and prevent him from falling asleep by making loud clamour, chanting songs, and engaging in games by his bedside.³⁷ On these evenings, in contrast to others, many witty and lively pranks and jests were played to amuse the patient and keep him alert.

³⁷ The collective term for the games played at a vigil is ‘*sch'opschak'we*’ («щӀопщӀакӀуэ»). In the game hobby-horse (*px'esh* [пхъэш]; Adigean), a long wooden stick was hung by ropes from the (roof) beam in the middle of the room. A player would sit astride the wooden ‘horse’ with a small stick in hand. Upon hearing “May you have a safe journey!”, the other players, in jest, would shake the stick to cause him to fall off, and the player astride the ‘horse’ would try his best to stay up. [Пхъэш: КӀапщӀэм зэрӀщӀыджӀэгухэрэ щӀхэнджӀэгукӀ. Пхъэ кӀыхъэм ыӀэпакӀэ кӀапсэ ишӀагъэу пчӀэгум дӀжӀ кӀӀбгыкъум пашӀэ. Ащ шым фӀэдэу зыгорэ тетӀысхъэ, бӀэщ цӀыкӀу ыӀыгъэу, ар зыкӀигъакъозэ зыкӀыригъӀфӀхрӀп. Ащ «Гъогу мафӀэ уежӀ апщӀ!» — аӀомӀ дӀгушыӀэхӀзӀ, пхъэр агъӀсысы, ежӀ шыури къадӀгушыӀэжӀзӀ ныкъокъефӀэх мӀхъу е къефӀхыпӀэ. КӀапщӀэм пхъэшыкӀэ щӀэджӀэгух.]



Sick and wounded people were never left alone at any time in order not to allow him to fall asleep, for it was believed that evil spirits would visit the body and take over in the state of sleep. Friends and relatives took turn to keep vigil.

The serious side of the *sch'apsche* ritual consisted of reciting songs and chants of supplication to the lord of the disease in question to cure the affliction and exorcise the disease. It was taboo to address the dreaded lords of disease with their proper names, so replacement epithets were used instead.³⁸ Two typical song-charms to alleviate

³⁸ The miasmatic realm of disease and injury was lorded over by Sozeresh. Black Death (тэлэу [*telew*], емьинэ [*yemine*]; the latter term is more generic of disease, for it could comprehend 'cholera', as well as 'plague', and is more folklorically charged), malaria (техьэгъуэ [*teiheghwe*]; the term is also used generically for fever), smallpox (фэрэки; *ferech*'), chicken-pox (бжэнтэпкIэ; *bzhenteipch'e*), consumption (жъэн уз; *zchen wiz*), measles (фэгъазз; *feghaze*), cholera (талo; *talo*), green-sickness (фэншэуз; *fenshewiz*), influenza and catarrh (пыхусыху [*pixwsixw*], пскIэIэпкълъэпкъ уз [*ps-che'epqlhepq wiz*]), typhus (хуабэуз; *xwabewiz*), leprosy (уэшыи; *weshin*), diarrhoea (ныбажэ; *nibazhe*), stomach-ache

smallpox (*ferech*; фэрэчI), namely ‘Oh, Yiste, Yistawe!’ and ‘Swift White Horse...’*, from the Eastern and Western Circassians (Cherkess and Bzchedighw, respectively), and which were sung by the bed of the sick, ran as follows (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P’. Qardenghwsch’, 1980, p105 and pp 102-3, respectively):³⁹

ФэрэчI уэрэд: Уо Истэ, Истауэ!⁴⁰	Smallpox Song: ‘Oh, Yiste, Yistawe!’⁴¹
Уо Истэ, Истауэ! Ежью. Уо уэрида!	Oh, Yiste, Yistawe! Chorus: Wo weryyda!
Истэ, Истаушц! Ежью. Уо уэрида!	Yiste, Lord-Yiste! Chorus: Wo weryyda!
Я нэхьыпщыр зымыдэ! Ежью. Уо уэрида!	Who acknowledges no greater lord! Chorus: Wo weryyda!
Зи джэмыдэ тхэрыкьюэ! Ежью. Уо уэрида!	Whose dove is light chestnut! Chorus: Wo weryyda!

(ныбэуз; *nibewiz*), and mutilation (фэбжь; *febzch*) were some of its sinister residents.

³⁹ It was considered taboo to utter the word ‘*ferech*’ (‘*schwerech*’, in Adigean). Instead, it was referred to with substitute designations, such as ‘The Nameless One’ («ЦэимыIуэ»; ‘*Ts’eyimi’ew*’), ‘The Guest Sent by Sozeresh’, or simply ‘Sozeresh’.

⁴⁰ This is a Cherkess hymn.

⁴¹ ‘Yiste’, ‘Yistawe’ are epithets of the Lord of Smallpox. The Christian Mozdok Kabardians use the name of the god Sozeresh (Sozeresch [Созэрэш] in their dialect) as a euphemism for the disease.

ШьорэКI оред: Тэпырагъошъы пкIэгъуала... ^{*42}	Smallpox Song: Swift White Horse...
Тэпырагъошъы пкIэгъуала, ⁴³ Бланэуи чъэрэмэ дэльохъуа.	The swift white horse, Tears along fleeter than the deer.
Лыхъухэр копкъыджэ ефызы, Дэнэгъу бзыери дельэшъуа.	The brave ones are squeezing its thighs, ⁴⁴ Itself in gilded silk.
Дэнэгъо бзыери дельэшъуа, Ошьогъуанэми шагъэхъуа.	Itself in gilded silk, They pasture it at the edge of the heavens.
Ошьогъуанэми шагъэхъуа, Зыусхъаным ишыгъэхъупIа.	They put it to pasture at the edge of the heavens, Where the Master's horse pasture lies.
Зиусхъаным ишыгъэхъупIэр, Алахъэ, гъэхъунэ даха.	The Master's horse pasture is, By Allah, a lush meadow.
Алахъ гъэхъунэ дахэу,	By Allah, a lush meadow,

⁴² This is a Bzhedighw hymn. The hymn is in the repertory of the Adigean State Folk Song Ensemble 'YisIhamiy'. A recoding of the song can be heard on YouTube [first song in: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aHTIIuxfiYg>].

⁴³ 'ПкIэгъуал' is 'white horse' in Adigean. In Kabardian, 'пщIэгъуалэ' is '(name of) grey horse'. Some colour designations in Circassian seem to be context-dependent. For example, 'щхъуантIэ' in Kabardian means both 'green' and '(electric) blue'. In Adigean, 'шхъуантIэ' designates 'green', 'sky-blue', and 'grey'. 'Плъы' (also 'плъыжь') in Kabardian designates 'red', 'vermilion', 'crimson', 'scarlet', and 'cherry-red', whereas 'плъыжьы' in Adigean means 'red'. In Kabardian, 'морэ' has two designations: 'brown' and 'yellowish violet'; and 'морэфэ' has three: 'beige', 'brownish', and 'violet'. 'Гъуабжэ' in Kabardian means 'dark-grey', 'brownish', and 'yellowish'. The corresponding term in Adigean, 'гъуапчэ', designates 'yellowish', 'yellowy'. Perhaps regional variations have a bearing on this issue.

⁴⁴ The horse's thighs are squeezed so as to subdue it.

Чыгыгэ дахэри кыырокIа.	Where splendid oak-trees grow.
Чыгыгэ дахэри кыырокIа, Зибэ гуцэ кыкIэри кыальошъхъэ.	Fine oak grows there, As well as more clover than anywhere else.
Зибэ кыкIэри кыальошъхъа, Яунашъхъэри дышъабгъа.	More clover grows there than anywhere else, His ethereal abode is roofed with gold.
Яунашъхъэри дышъабгъа, Бгъэнэуи тельэри кзурища.	His roof is covered with gold, The roofing on it – three blades of grass.
Бгъэнэуи тельэри кзурища, Чэмищэу дафыри мышыхъуа.	The roofing on top is of three blades of grass, Three of his bovines are perennial milch-cows.
Чэмищэу дафыри мышыхъуа, Зыдафырэ кыалэшгы хъурая.	Three of his cows are permanent milkers, His cow-house is a magnificent palace.
Зыдафырэ кыалэшгы хъурая, Тыжыны хъураери шагъэчъа.	His cow-house a resplendent palace, Where silver ingots are cast.
Тыжыны хъураери шагъэчъа, Зыпчъэ нахъыджэ имыIа.	Silver bullion is founded there, Where there is but one entrance.
Зыпчъэ нахъыджэ имыIи, Зыпсынэ яIэшгы мыжъуакIэ.	It has but one door, The bottom of its spring – shingle.
Зыпсынэ яIэшгы мыжъуакIа, Ращы кыкIэчъырэр шъоупса.	The bed of its spring is of pebbles, The welling water is mead.
Ращы кыкIэчъырэр шъоупса, Типсэ-купсэри уихъакIа.	The welling water is honey-sweet, Our souls are guests in thy realm. ⁴⁵
Типсэ-купсэри уихъакIа, ХъакIэри мафэшгы кыытфакIуа.	Our souls are thy guests, The auspicious guest is coming to us.
ХъакIэри мафэшгы кыытфакIуа, КызыфакIори цыгъища.	The propitious guest is coming to us, Issuing forth from three beads.

⁴⁵ Therefore, our souls ought to be inviolable.

КъызыфакIори щыгъища, Щыгъыфищыри зырыза.	He hails from three beads, The three beads issuing forth disjointed brightness.
Щыгъыфищыри зырыза, Зэрызищышгъы мэтIыгъуа.	The three beads issuing their light in disconcert, They ripen separately.
Зэрызищышгъы мэтIыгъуа, ЯтIыгъуакIэри гухахъуа.	The three beads ripen separately, Their ripening is such a joy.
ЯтIыгъуакIэри гухахъуа, Гум хэзгъахъори зиуза.	Their ripening is a great joy, A delightful bliss for the one with disease.
Гум хэзгъахъори зиуза, Зиузыгъори фэпсынкIа!	A delightful bliss for the ill, May his disease ease up!
Зиузыгъори фэпсынкIа, ПсынкIэ охъушгъы охъужъа!	May his illness be mitigated, May thee get better, may thee recover!
ПсынкIэ охъушгъы охъужъа, Ухъужьынэуи тхъа еIуа!	May thee get well, may thee recover, May God predestine it for thee to heal!
Ухъужьынэуи тхъа еIю, Тхъам ыIуагъэри нахъышIуа!	May God will it for thee to recover, What God ordains is so much better!
Тхъам ыIуагъэри нахъышIуа, Тхъам ишIушIэри IэшIэха.	God's will cannot be surpassed, God is so swift in his beneficence.
Тхъам ишIушIэри IэшIэха, Тхъам идахэри хъопсагъуа.	God is swift in his beneficence, God is lavish in his mercy.
Тхъам идахэри хъопсагъуа, Чылэ хъопсагъоуи тыкъана!	God is so lavish in his beneficence and mercy, That our village shall remain an object of envy!

Lhepsch, lord of the smithy and patron of the smiths, possessed magical healing powers. An ‘exorcism’ to heal a wound is drawn from the Shapsugh musical store (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P’. Qardenghwsch’, 1980, p118):

<p>КІэпшэ орэд: Уатэ, уэтэжыеу...</p>	<p>Song of vigil over the wounded: ‘Hammer, little hammer...’</p>
<p>Уатэ, уэтэжыеу, уэтэжые псынкІа! Уэ Лъэпшъэуэ зиуатэмэ уатэр егъэпсынкІа! Уэ Лъэпшъэуэ зиуатэмэ псынкІэу егъэхъужьа!</p>	<p>Hammer, little hammer, fast little hammer! Lhepsch, lord of the hammer, knocks quickly with the hammer! Lhepsch, lord of the hammer, swiftly heals [the wound]!</p>

This curious custom (of keeping vigil over the sick) was a relic of animist times, when evil spirits were believed to be lying in wait for the patient to fall asleep to take possession of his body. The friends and relatives took turns to bring along all that is necessary for the wake. The fare consisted of boiled chicken, loaves of cake and bread, fruits, vegetables, etc. A practical benefit of this practice was to ensure that the break did not get worse by the injured flinching or assuming a wrong position in his sleep.

It is worthy of notice that the Circassians, despite their firm belief in the might and glory of their deities, also took practical steps to guard themselves against the ravages of some of the diseases that afflicted their country. According to Voltaire (1734), ‘The Circassian women have, from time immemorial, communicated the smallpox to their children when not above six months old by making an incision in the arm, and by putting into this incision a pustule, taken carefully from the body of another child. This pustule produces the same effect in the arm it is laid in as yeast in a piece of dough; it ferments, and diffuses through the whole mass of blood the qualities with which it is impregnated. The pustules of the child in whom the artificial smallpox has been thus inoculated are employed to communicate the same distemper to others. There is an almost perpetual circulation of it in Circassia; and when unhappily the smallpox has quite left the country,

the inhabitants of it are in as great trouble and perplexity as other nations when their harvest has fallen short.' The Ottomans adopted inoculation from the Circassians, which practice was transmitted to England through the open-minded Lady Wortley Montague.

7 Death & Obsequies

Central to the cult of death was the belief in *hedrixе* (хьэдрихэ) or the afterlife, and in the immortality of the soul. The Circassians venerated their ancestors, and took good care of the ancient burial grounds and sepulchres, *q'ezch* (кхъэжь). Elaborate ceremonies of death were developed, which sometimes touched on the bizarre.

A wife mourned her husband in a wild manner, scratching her face and body until they were bloodied. A husband struck his face with a whip until it turned black and blue. The corpse underwent ceremonious washing, *hedegheps-ch'* (хьэдэгъэпскI), on a special slab, *hedegheps-ch'-px'ebghw* (хьэдэгъэпскI-пхъэбгъу).

Dirges were chanted by the corpse of the deceased, and special prayers were said. The collective of laments over the dead was called '*bzhe*' («бжэ»; literally: 'door'). A couple of examples are presented (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P'. Qardenghwsch', 1980, p201; p202).

<p>Бжэ: Ай, Лъэбыцэ мыгъуэ!⁴⁶</p>	<p>Dirge: 'Alas, hapless Lhebitse!'⁴⁷</p>
<p>Ай, Лъэбыцэ мыгъуэ! Уи кIуэцIыкIыщIэм жиIэр уи жьэм жегъэИи</p>	<p>Alas, hapless Lhebitse! What grieves thy heart, let thy mouth relate,</p>

⁴⁶ This is a Kabardian elegy.

⁴⁷ 'Lhebitse' (literally: 'Shaggy-legged'; 'Covered with long fluffy hair about the ankles') is the name of the (male) person whose death is being lamented.

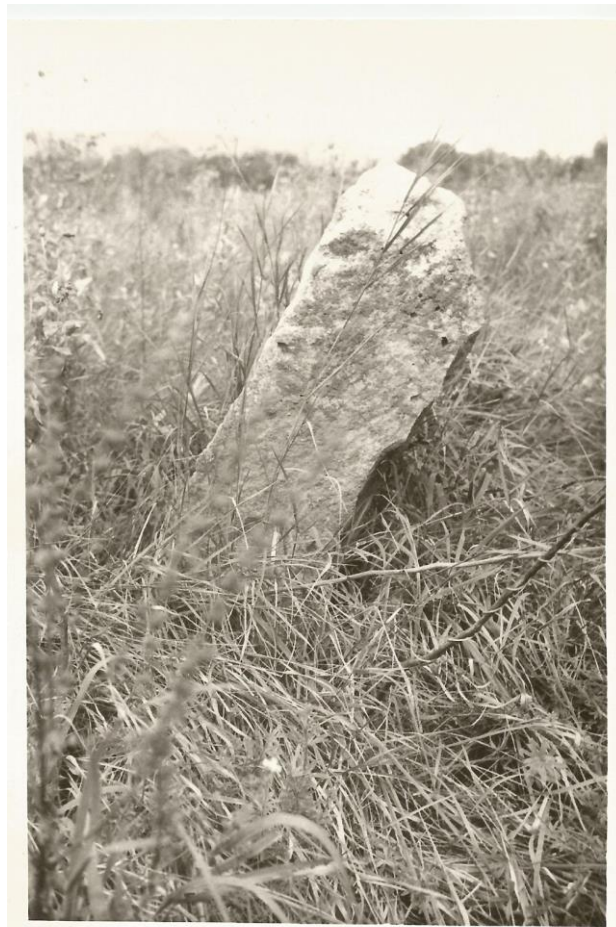
Уи гур гъэзагъэ, (уэуэу, ы-ы)! Уа, уа, уа, уа, уэу! Уа, уа, уэу! Уа, а, а, а, а!	And relieve thine soul, (wewew, i-i)! Wa, wa, wa, wa, wew! Wa, wa, wew! Wa, a, a, a, a!
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Бжэ: Уэ, сыту Iей мыгъуэрэ къытхузэтрапIа уи нитI мыгъуэр!⁴⁸	Dirge: ‘Oh, how thou have shut your pitiful eyes to us for ever and ay!’
(А ды-ды-ды-дыд,) мыгъуэ! Уэ, сыту Iей мыгъуэрэ къытхузэтрапIа уи нитI мыгъуэр! (Ей-ей), си Мурат!	(A di-di-di-did,) alas! ⁴⁹ Oh, how thou have shut your pitiful eyes for ever and ay! (Ey-ey), my Murat!
А, си нэжан цIыкIу мыгъуэ! А, си нэжан цIыкIу мыгъуэ, (ей-ей)! Уэ, сыт мыгъуэр сусыну, (уэуэу)! А, ай! (А, уэу, уэу, уэу, уэу, уэу,) мыгъуэ! (А ды-ды-ды-ды-дыд,) мыгъуэ!	Ah, my poor bright-eyed little one! Alas, my clear-eyed lad! Oh, I am lost for words for my grief, woe is me! A, ay! (A, wew, wew, wew, wew, wew,) woe unto me! (A di-di-di-di-did,) alas!

⁴⁸ This is a Kabardian elegy.

⁴⁹ ‘A di-di-di-did’ is an interjection expressing woe and sorrow.

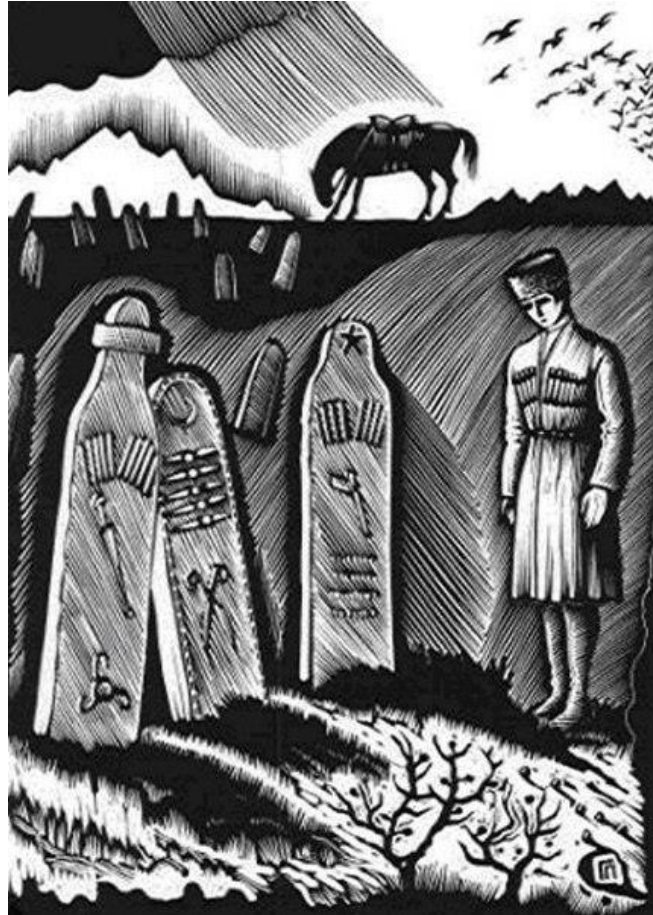
The deceased was carried off to the cemetery on a stretcher, *q'able* (кхъаблэ). A monument, *q'aschedese* (кхъашхъэдэсэ), was erected by the head of grave, usually adorned with the family emblem (дамьгъэ; *damighe*). A slab, *hedex'ebghw* (хъэдэпхъэбгъу), was used to shut the niche in the grave. Special guards, *q'ex'wme* (кхъэхъумэ), ensured the upkeep and sanctity of burial grounds.



The grave of Aslhenbek Jaimoukha (c. 1810- c. 1870) in the village of North Het'ox'wschiqwey, Kabarda.

The grave-stone is adorned with the family emblem (*damighe*).

[Photo by Mahmoud Jaimoukha, 1967]



Depiction of grave monuments, *q'aschhedese* (кхъашхьэдэсэ).

The deceased was buried with full panoply of his arms and accoutrements, and an ample supply of food, to serve him well on his journey and in the afterlife. In the 16th century, upon the decease of a nobleman, a high platform was constructed in the open, on which the corpse, with the innards removed, was placed in a sitting posture for eight days. The kin and companions of the dead visited him every day, offering cups of silver, bows, fans and so on. The two eldest relatives stood guard at each side of the exposed body, supporting themselves against the estrade and propping themselves with staffs. On the left

hand, a young girl holding a fan was posted to drive away the flies. In front of the estrade sat the wife with her eyes transfixed on the corpse, but she never cried, as this was considered shameful. At the expiry of the wake, the body and the gifts were placed on a cross formed by sowing a tree trunk in half, and taken in a procession to the sepulchre. A mound was piled over the sarcophagus, which contained the favourite weapons and costumes of the dead. The mightier the deceased, the greater was the tumulus.

With the body inhumed, an attendant was instructed before dinner to saddle the steed of the deceased and take it by hand to the new tomb. He was to call thrice upon the departed to come out and take a meal with his family and friends. Having done that, the attendant returned with the steed, needless to say, with his entreaties unheeded. Dinner was then had—the partakers content that they have done their duty towards their dead kin. This charade was repeated for many days.⁵⁰ In later times, priests officiated burial ceremonies.

Some aspects of these curious ceremonies were confirmed by archaeology. Finds that go back to the Circassian Belorechenskaya culture (Belorechenskaya is situated to the northwest of Maikop), which existed from the 13th to the 16th centuries, revealed the remains of barrows belonging to Adiga (Circassian) nobility. Objects found included exquisite sabres, pieces of armour, helmets, and other objects of foreign origin. Some food vessels were also found in old burial grounds. This is one happy occasion when accounts by a foreign traveller (Giorgio Interiano, who wrote in the middle of the 16th century) and archaeology coincided.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Details of ancient burial rites are found in S. Khan-Girey, 1978, pp 315-22.

⁵¹ For Interiano's work, see Ramusio, G. B., *Giorgio Interiano, Genovese a M. Aldo Manutio Romano, Della vita de Zychi chiamati Circassi*, Raccolta di Viaggi, t. 2, Venetia, 1583.



Weapons of the mediæval Belorechenskaya Culture of the Circassians.

It would seem that the custom of burying personal implements, especially arms, gave way to more pragmatic considerations, as the exigency of defending the land against a determined foe gained ascendancy in the 19th century. John A. Longworth, in his usual mock-serious style, commented on the discarded practice: ‘In former times it was the custom to bury the dead with their arms and accoutrements; but the modern Circassians, wiser in their generation, seem to think the defunct will be equally satisfied by being decorated with them previously, and then buried without them.’ (1840, vol. 2, p17).

After the funeral rites had been completed, a sumptuous feast was held in honour of the deceased in the sacred grove, under the trees. Games were played and dance galas took place as festal rites. For the poorer families, the celebration was postponed until the necessary victuals have been accumulated. During the first week of the death of

a member of a family, the household was spared any culinary chores. The friends of the deceased took turns in providing catering for and wait upon the mourners and condolers.

The traditional period of mourning was forty days during which the closest members of the family visited the grave daily. At the end of this term, a memorial festival took place and alms were handed out. A year later, a ceremony was held in full mourning garb in which the steed and the rest of the weapons of the deceased were displayed and sacrifices made. A procession with lit torches and bare-foot partakers was made to the house of the deceased bringing cattle and victuals. The next morning the men of the village gathered to engage in sport competitions. Commemoration ceremonies called '*hede'ws*' («ХЪЭДЭІУС»; 'pottage for the cadaver') were held annually in winter.

Those killed in battle were collected at cessation of fighting at sundown and taken back home to be received in a macabre ceremony called '*hedepizche*' («ХЪЭДЭПЕЖЪЭ»; 'corpse-reception'). If a corpse was seized by the enemy, a price was paid to ransom it. During the last and desperate phase of Circassian resistance against Russian advance, an edict was issued to keep the bodies of the dead at the front, so as not to give shirkers the chance to keep away from battle. Similar ceremonies were held for those killed while travelling.

At one stage of their social development, the Circassians used to practise geronticide, or the ritual killing of old people when they reach a certain age. This might have been an ancient form of mercy killing, euthanasia, which allowed the old and feeble to die in dignity. Some societies in Eastern Europe kept this tradition until the 1930s.⁵²

⁵² See for example T. P. Vukanović, 'Killing of Old People among Gypsies on the Balkan Peninsula', in *VI Congrès International des Sciences Anthropologiques et Ethnologiques*, Paris, 30 July-6 August 1960, vol. 2, Paris: Musée de l'Homme, 1964.

The Narts had a special council of doom, *Zchiwich' Xase* (жъыукI хасэ), whose duty was to summon people whose time had come on the eve of their execution, and to inform them of the council's verdict. The Nart Tribunal of Doom used to be held at the mighty house of the Alij (Алыджхэ я унэ), where the Nart Council usually held its sessions. At the end of the meeting, the doomed one was presented with a glass of wine as a toast. He was allowed to spend the eve with his loved ones. On the day of execution, the condemned was thrown down the Yinzhiј Gorge.⁵³ The height from which the doomed ones were pushed to their death was called '*Zchigheyibg*' («Жыгыъибг») ['Mount of Old Age'].

Legend has it that one elder on death row managed to save the people from a number of impending disasters and, in gratitude for the feat, the custom was scrapped, and the wisdom of the old started to be appreciated. Subsequently, Circassian society held its elders in great esteem, and appreciated their wisdom and perspicacity.⁵⁴ According to another version, a young Nart forcefully saved his doomed father and the custom consequently fell into disuse, as the council lost some of its prestige.

⁵³ Yinzhiј (Инжыдж) is the Zelenchuk River, a left tributary of the Kuban (Псыжъ; Psizch). Located in the Karachai-Cherkess Republic, the Yinzhiј River has its source in the Caucasus Mountains.

⁵⁴ See «НАРТХЭ ЗЫХАНА ХАБЗЭ» ['The Custom Renounced by the Narts'], in *The Hearth Tree: Circassian Cultural Miscellany*, vol. 1, issue 1, January 2009, pp 23-30. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-journal.php>> (accessed 14 January 2014). [In Circassian and English]



“Hill of Old Age” [«Жьыгъэибг», in Adigean],
on the right bank of the Ashe, opposite Qalezch, Sochi Region.
According to legend, old people used to be thrown down from here,
until the worth of their wisdom was realized,
and the custom was abandoned.

8 Greetings & Salutes

Circassian Etiquette was so pervasive that even the minutest social niceties were regulated. It was most important that nothing was left to chance. Graces were intended to smooth social intercourse and foster good working relations and respect in the community. In this regard, rituals associated with greetings «ФІэхъусхэр; *f'ex'wsxer*» were prescribed to the finest detail, and meticulously adhered to. There were more than a hundred ways of greeting, depending on the situation. Although these have been mainly kept in the collective memory of the people, after the collapse of the Soviet Union they were recorded down, together with other aspects of traditional culture, to be preserved for posterity. A corpus of proverbs and sayings associated with greetings and salutes has been handed down to us.

Particular groups had special greetings. For example, hunters on meeting saluted one another thus: ‘May you have a good bag!’ [«Пшэрыхь апщій!» ‘*Psherih apschiy!*’], the answer to which being «Упсэу апщій!» [‘*Wipsew apschiy!*’; ‘Thank you!’], or «Хьэкъужь апщій!» [‘*Heqwezch apschiy!*’], the answer to which being «Си хьэм къуэжар тхьэм къуит апщій!» [‘*Siy hem qwezhar them qwiyt apschiy!*’; ‘May what my hound has fetched be your lot!’]. Herdsmen wished each other increased cattle size [«Бохъу апщій!»; ‘*Box'w apschiy!*’].

It was considered very rude not to greet somebody on meeting—‘Greeting precedes conversation’ [Іуэхум япэр фІэхъусщ; ‘*Wexum yaper f'ex'wssch*’], as the saying goes.⁵⁵ A salute, apart from being a

⁵⁵ Other related sayings include: «Фэхъусыр псом япэщ» [‘Saluting comes first’], «ФІэхъусыр сытми и щыпэщ» [Greetings precede all].

courtesy and a token of peace, implied welcome and an invitation to one's house. Visitors and strangers would have considered the salutatory words as a godsend, since they entailed plentiful food and cozy lodgings, not only for the night, but for a full week.

Hand-shaking, a seemingly mundane gesture, was a ritual fraught with meaning. Both parties to the event had to perform the rite in standing postures. The hand was not extended at once, but rather raised first to the level of the waist, and then fully extended for the grasp. Only one hand was used, the engagement of both hands being considered unseemly for men, fully acceptable for women. The full palm had to be applied; otherwise, a sign of indifference would be implied and a slight taken.

Embracing was not very common. Men rarely hugged, then only if they were of the same household, or close relatives, and they had not seen each other for a long time. The rite involved one embrace, with no exchange of kisses. It was always incumbent upon a man to make the first gesture when greeting a woman. The lady of the house was greeted first upon visiting a household. This code of chivalry was a watered down legacy from the golden age of feudalism.

It was deemed inappropriate to greet people while seated at a table, as this would cause them the inconvenience of standing to return the salute. Hailing an elderly man from afar was a mark of disrespect. Good conduct dictated that a person first went up to him and then uttered his greeting. It was deemed impolite to break into a private conversation between two elderly people. Good etiquette dictated that one first signalled one's presence by standing at a distance from the person with whom one wanted to speak, waited for the colloquy to finish, then the approach made when summoned. If the matter at hand was of some urgency, then the dialogue could be interrupted with an appropriate apology.

When joining a group, a person hailed thus: '*Гурмахуэ апсчий!*' [«Гурмахуэ апсчий!»; 'May this be a blessed gathering!']. The toastmaster wassailed the newcomer «Упсэу апсчий, шауэ махуэ

ухъу апщий!» [‘Thank you. May you be a lucky chap!’], and offered him a goblet of *makhsima* (махъсымэ). The acknowledgement was reminiscent of the medieval English drink-hail (a toast to health or good luck).

Greetings and hospitality were causally connected; for to be greeted implied an offer of cosy lodgings. A salute, apart from being a courtesy and a token of peace, implied welcome and an invitation to one’s house. Visitors and strangers would have considered the salutatory words as a godsend, since they entailed plentiful food and cosy lodgings, not only for the night, but for a full week.

Some Circassian proverbs and sayings related to greetings & salutes:

Бзэджэр убзэмэ, зыгуэр хуейщ (Bzajer wibzeme, zigwer xweysch): When the wicked starts to suck up, know that he is after something.

Псальэ гуапэм пщлэ щлэпткъым (Psalhe gwapem psch’e sch’eptqim): Nice words are priceless.

Уи бзэр гъэбыдэ, уи жьэр гъэдахэ (Wiy bzer ghebide, wiy zcher ghedaxe): Hold your tongue and adorn your mouth.

Флэхъус лей хъуркъым (F’ex’ws ley x’wrqim): It is always opportune to pronounce greetings.

Цыхум и нэгум и гум ильым ухуеузэщл (Ts’ixwm yi negwm yi gwm yilhim wixweiwzesch’): A person’s facial expression ameliorates for you what lurks inside of him.

Итлклэ уи лэр зыубыдыр уи щлэб щопсэлъэж (’Iyt’ch’e wiy ’er ziwbidir wiy sch’ib schopselhez): He who greets you with both hands talks about you behind your back.

Итлклэ лэ зыубыдыр фызщ (’Iyt’ch’e ’e ziwbidir fyszsch): Only women shake hands with both hands.

Луэхум япэр флэхъусщ (’Wexwm yaper f’ex’wssch): Greeting precedes any other business; greeting precedes conversation.

9 The Circassian Code of Chivalry

An elaborate code of honour was set in place, which was not very unlike the ancient Greek, nor the Medieval European codes of chivalry. One difference was that modesty was not a trait the Adiga nobility sympathized with. The three tenets of this law were respect for women and elders, hospitality, and blood-revenge. This strict law helped to keep the young noblemen in check, for their might and ferocity could easily have engulfed the country in complete chaos, as they did at times.

As the case in Europe, the code of chivalry has left a deep impression on modern Circassian society inside and outside the Caucasus. Two canons, namely respect for the fair sex and elders and hospitality, have more or less been preserved. Blood-revenge, on the other hand, has almost disappeared, its role being superseded by the tenets of civil society.

Respect for Women & Elders

The passage of time furnished an aura of veneration on both men and women. Elders were treated with the greatest deference. When an older person entered a room or approached a gathering, the young ones arose in respect. No one was allowed to sit unless permission was granted by the entrant.



In the presence of an elder, all must stand.

Women, especially of the upper classes, were treated with esteem bordering on reverence. If a man on horseback passed in front of a woman outside her house, he was either obliged to dismount and walk past or, at the very least, show his respect by raising himself a little. In more recent times, a driver in a village had to slow in a similar situation. Furthermore, if a woman passed a group of men, all stood up in deference, the elderly making slight gestures of arising.

Despite the relative dominance of the male sex, women in Circassian society in general enjoyed a relatively good position, perhaps unparalleled by any other 'Eastern' people. Girls were not secluded,

but enjoyed most of the pastimes of the boys. They were neither shy nor ill at ease in other people's company, and they served guests and strangers. A woman was free to choose her marriage partner. Coercion was rare. The father did not usually interfere in the matter, the mother making the proper arrangements with her daughter. There were exceptions as there always is. A suitor was allowed to visit a maid's house so that the couple would have the chance to get to know one another before making the binding decision. Divorce was rare and the eastern habit of taking second and more wives was frowned upon.

The newspaper *Segodnya* published results of research on the lives and problems of Russian women in a special supplement in 1994. It was found that the position of women in Kabardino-Balkaria and the Karachai-Cherkess Republic was significantly better in many respects than the Russian average.

Nowadays, smoking in the presence of an elder is unheard of. Women in traditional settings do not smoke when men are around. This explains the findings of a study that the least number of tobacco smokers, especially among women, in the Russian Federation is to be found in Kabarda (S. Shalnova et al, 1996).

Blood-revenge

The code of blood-revenge (къанлы; *qanli*) among the Circassians was analogous to the ancient *lex talionis*—an eye for an eye. Many first-hand accounts tell of the strict adherence to the law and severity of its application. Blood for blood was the main tenet. Nothing could assuage the rage of the relatives of the slain but the spilling of blood—well, almost nothing. For in certain cases the vengeance seekers could be appeased by being paid blood-price, *lhiwase* [лъыуасэ], by the slayer's kin. The amount payable was agreed upon by arbitration. Another loophole in the law, which put an end to many a raging vendetta, was the arrangement of a marriage between two members of the feuding parties. In addition, a murderer could atone for his crime by fostering a child belonging to his foe or a member of his clan.

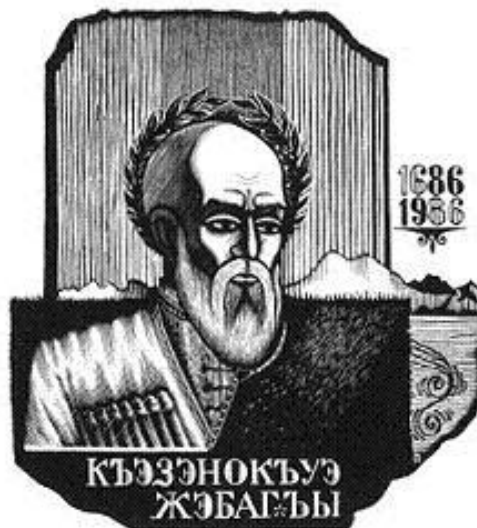
Although Circassian jurisdiction sanctioned blood-revenge, it also devised methods of escaping the vicious circle. However, princes and noblemen were inimical to such solutions. For them blood spilling was punishable by death, and there an end. It is quite eerie how similar the Circassian and ancient Greek codes of honour were. It was not infrequent for a Grecian to pardon the murderer of a brother or a son for a price. Having forsaken a considerable segment of his wealth, the killer lived in the village of the kin of the deceased.⁵⁶

Circassian mythology abounds with tales of revenge. Among these is the story of Ashemez («Ашэмэз и пшыналъ»), one of the heroes of the Nart Epos. Taunted by a playmate, young Ashemez was about to smite him for the insult when the quick-witted lad interjected that he would do better avenge his father's spilled blood. The indomitable Nart rushed back home and wrenched the name of his father's slayer from his mother first by ruse and then by threatening to burn her hand.

Zhebaghi Qezenoqwe tried to ameliorate the severity of this custom. In one anecdote, he officiated the ceremony of death of a prince who

⁵⁶ *Iliade*, chant no. 6, p107.

had resolved to wreak his vengeance upon another potentate for slighting him by cutting off the tongue of one of his shepherds. In amazement, the 'dead' prince inquired of the wise man the reason for the bizarre behaviour. Zhebaghi replied that, as far as the prince's subjects were concerned, he was dead because he turned a deaf ear to their wishes to bury the hatchet. The prince was then torn between the overwhelming urge to redeem his 'honour' and the sobering words of the sage. In the end, reason prevailed and the prince issued his instructions to scrap the revenge campaign, to the rapturous cheers of his followers.



Zhebaghi Qezenoqwe,
the quintessential sage in Circassian folklore.

A fugitive could find sanctuary in a household by merely touching the breast of the lady of the house. Not only his life was spared, but also he was treated with the utmost deference as long as he remained within. The presence of women in general had mollifying influences even on the bitterest of feuds. A woman had only to drop her handkerchief in the midst of two warring parties to effect an immediate cessation of hostilities.

Insults and slights of serious nature were resolved by duels. Circassians were swift in redressing an insult. A person demanded satisfaction by challenging his adversary to a duel, *sch'ak'wezepidze* [щ[ак]уэзэпыдзэ], hurling his cloak in front of him. This corresponded to the medieval European custom of throwing down a gauntlet on giving somebody a challenge. In classical times, duels were fought on top of Mount Hereme.

It is curious that although J. Longworth spent a year among the Circassians, he wrote the following contradictory statement: 'The Circassians, I should add, are not a vindictive race; and this, as I have before observed, is in great measure owing to the nature of their customs, which do not even exact blood for blood, unless other compensation has been held.' (1840, vol. 2, p288).

Hospitality & Feasts

Hospitality has always been one of the distinguishing traits and features of the Caucasian highlanders and their way of life and social relations. It also had a sacred character, the sacredness being mostly associated with the guest. Respect for guests was a source of pride for all Caucasian peoples. Many legends and sayings have come down to us depicting the high status and the fine details of the institution of hospitality. Hospitality was certainly an important and interesting aspect of the social life of the Caucasian nations.

Like other traditional social institutions, hospitality was deeply rooted in history and it had always played a central role in cementing inter-ethnic relations and strengthening contacts with other peoples and nations.¹ The Circassians were usually very well disposed towards foreign visitors, welcoming them unconditionally to their guest-houses and showing due concern for their welfare and safety. Hospitality traditions also set the stage for the transfer of culture, including customs and traditions, through the generations, and also facilitated cultural exchange among the nations of the Caucasus, and even beyond.

It was the duty of every Circassian to invite to his house all those in need of food and shelter. If not through good will, which was generally found in abundance all over Circassia, then the binding prescriptions of *Adige Xabze* (адыгэ хабзэ = Circassian Etiquette), the collection of customs and traditions, ensured the best deal for a guest or visitor to the North Caucasus.⁵⁷ A central concept in the institution

⁵⁷ John Augustus Longworth (1840), who resided with the Circassians for a year in the late 1830s, wrote that fame and glory in Circassian was achieved through three means: extraordinary feats of courage and heroism, the power of oratory, and playing the good host. Other Western travellers who journeyed in Circassia and published accounts on Circassian cuisine and hospitality include Archangel Lamberti (see G. da Lucca, 1727), Édouard Taitbout de Marigny (1824), Edmund Spencer (1837), James Stanislaus Bell (1840), George Leighton Ditson (1850), and Favell Lee Mortimer (1852).

of hospitality was virtue and charity (псапэ; *psape*), where good turns and deeds, such as putting up and regaling guests, were done to appease the gods. The antipode of *psape* was *gwenih* (гуэныхь), in this context sinfulness emanating from the contravention of the tenets of hospitality. Specifically, declining to receive a visitor, even if a fugitive or inveterate criminal, was a stigma that stuck for life.

The special relationship between host and guest was encapsulated in the (binding) tenets of the *bisim-hesch'e* (бысым-хьэшIэ; literally: host-guest) institution.⁵⁸ According to Kevin Tuite (2005), 'For the peoples of the Caucasus, whether from the north or the south, Christian or Muslim, hospitality is a central component of their self-image.'

The lady of the house, the wife of the host (бысымгуашэ; *bisimwasche*), played a central role, albeit in the background, in this institution, for it was she who made the guests feel welcome through the serving of ample and tasty dishes. A hospitable woman boosted her husband's stature and good name throughout the land. A stingy or

'Like all true Orientals, the Circassians are extremely hospitable.' – Lucy Mary Jane Garnett and John Stuart Stuart-Glennie, *The Women of Turkey and Their Folk-Lore*, London: D. Nutt, 1891, p193.

⁵⁸ Circassian writers, folklorists, and researchers who published works on customs and traditions associated with hospitality include the 19th century enlighteners Shora B. Nogmov (Negwme; Нэгумэ Шорэ) and Sulht'an Khan-Girey (Хъанджэрий Султ'ан), and Teimbot Ch'erashe (КIэрашэ Тембот), Beresbiy Bghezchnoqwe (Bgazhnokov; Бгъэжьнокъуэ Бэрэсбий), Serebiy Mef'edz (Mafedzev; МэфIэдз Сэрэбий), Ziramikw Qardenghwsch' (Kardangushev; КъардэнгъушI Зырамыку), Hezeishe Schojen (Shogenov; Щоджэн Хьэзэшэ), Helim Mambet (Mambetov; Мамбэт Хьэлим), Miuxayil Mizhey (Мыжей Михаил), Ё. L. Kodzhesau (Qojeschaw; Къоджэшъау), V. K. Gardanov, A. I. Musukaev (Misiqwe; Мысыкъуэ), S. Chirzhin (Kirzhinov; Чыржын), K. Kh. Unezhev (Winezh; Унэж), M. A. Meretukov (Meretiqlwe; Мэрэтыкъо), Kh. S. Kushkhov (Qwschhe; Къушхьэ), Raye A. Mamkhegh (Mamkhegova; Мамхэгъ Рае), and A. M. Tlurov (L'ur; ЛIур).

wicked wife, on the other hand, spelled inhospitality, notoriety and social ostracism.

The Circassians were known to go to extremes to ensure that a guest or wayfarer was properly regaled, and diligently ensure that he was put up in comfort. The saying, '*Hesch'er zheschiysch yisme, binim ya schisch mex'wzh*' («ХьэщIэр жэщIищ исмэ, быным ящIыщ мэхъуж»; 'If the guest stays for three nights, he becomes part of the family'), indicates both reverence for the guest and that after the expiry of the third day the guest was expected to help out in the household chores (just like any other member of the household).⁵⁹ On the other hand, travellers in Circassia with no bona fide hosts were considered as hostile and were usually taken as prisoners or slaves.

Kinds of guests

1. **Distinguished guest** (*hesch'e lhap'e*)—The whole village (or a quarter) could be involved in the hosting functions. The quality and number of served dishes were commensurate with the status and influence of the guest. In feudal times princes and noblemen of the higher ranks were accorded the full hosting treatment.
2. **Familiar guest** (*hesch'e qizerik'we*)—One who is a regular visitor.
3. **Male guest** (*ts'ixwx'w hesch'e*).
4. **Female guest** (*bzilhxwge hesch'e*)—Lodged in the main quarters without fail. This is interpreted as a sign of the great (institutionalized) respect with which women were treated.
5. **Guest-room guest** (*hesch'esch hesch'e*)—Only men were received here; all female guests were received in the house proper and were considered 'bedroom guests'.

⁵⁹ This is also attested to by Adolf Dirr, 1925, p35.

6. **Bedroom guest** (*leghwne hesch'e*)—Near relative or close neighbour. Received in the main quarters of the homestead, as opposed to being lodged in the guest-house.
7. **Known guest** (*hesch'e naxwe*)—One whose identity is known to the host.
8. **Anonymous guest** (*hesch'e schexw*)—It was considered very unseemly to ask a guest his name, if he himself chooses not to divulge it. Non-divulgence of one's identity to one's host in no way detracted from the pomp and ceremony of the hosting affair.
9. **Intimate guest** (*hesch'e blaghe*)—This category also embraced members of the master's fraternity or union (*kwey*).⁶ Guests in this category were received in the main household quarters, as opposed to the guest-house.
10. **Foreign guest** (*hesch'e xame*)—A guest from another country or region. In accordance with the saying, '*Hesch'e ghwneghw nex're hesch'e zhizche nex' lhap'esch*', 'A guest from far away is dearer than a guest from nearby', a foreign guest was accorded extra attention and shown great deference in appreciation of the hardship borne by him to make the visit.
11. **Invited guest** (*zeja hesch'e*).
12. **Uninvited guest** (*zemija hesch'e*).
13. **Guest with a request** (*hesch'e lha'we*)—Arose in feudal times, when less well-off people sought presents by lodging with wealthy nobility.
14. **Guest in need** (*hesch'e weqwle*)—Put up following a personal tragedy or disaster, in accordance with the Caucasian traditions of mutual help – a very tight social security net indeed!⁷
15. **Enemy guest** (*biy hesch'e*)—Welcomed and received exactly as any other guest, even if the blood of a member of the household or close relative was on his hands.⁶⁰ If during

A famous anecdote illustrates this point. Whilst a man was working in his yard, a ⁶⁰ strange young man entered the yard pleading for asylum. The man duly hid the youth in his house. After a while, a posse of horsemen from the same village asked

his sojourn he succeeded in touching the breast of the lady of the house with his lips, he would have immediately become her foster-child or milk-son. His transgressions vis-à-vis the household would be instantly forgiven and he would be considered as a member of the household.

Хэт кьэблэгъами, адыгэхэм ягъэхьэщIэт, ауэ хьэщIэ псори зэхуэдэу ягъэхьэщIэу шытауэ жыIэгъуейщ. Абы елбытауэ хьэщIэхэр мыпхуэдэу зэщхьэщыхуат:

1. ХьэщIэ лъапIэ,
2. ХьэщIэ кьызэрыкIуэ,
3. ЦIыхухъу хьэщIэ,
4. Бзыльхугъэ хьэщIэ,
5. ХьэщIэщ хьэщIэ,
6. Лэгъунэ хьэщIэ (я Iыхьлы дьдэ е и гъунэгъу дьдэ ныбжьэгъу кьакIуэмэ),
7. ХьэщIэ нахуэ,
8. ХьэщIэ щэху (зи цIэ кьизымыIуэххэу шытахэр. Апхуэдэхэм еупщIтэкъым),
9. ХьэщIэ благъэ,
10. ХьэщIэ хамэ,
11. Зэджа хьэщIэ,
12. Зэмыджа хьэщIэ,
13. ХьэщIэ лъаIуэ,
14. ХьэщIэ уэкълэ: МылькукIэ зэтехуа, мафIэс е зэрыпхъуэ кьызылгыса цIыхур хамэ кьуажэхэм щалэ ныбжьэгъу,

the man if he had seen a fugitive youth, telling him that the youth had killed his son and that they were seeking to kill him in revenge. The man replied that he had seen no one, and the men rode away to continue their search. The man received the youth and hosted him in accordance with proper etiquette for a few days without betraying any emotion or sign that he knew what had happened. One night, when the blood of the village horsemen had cooled down, the man saddled a horse for the youth, gave him provisions and led him to a safe distance outside the village and sent him on his way. Thus, the man protected the murderer of his son and did not allow his hurt to interfere with his duties as a host.

цыхугъэ хуэдэхэм екӀуалӀэти, къуажэр къакӀухьурэ щхьэж хузэфӀэкӀымкӀэ зыдагъӀэпыкъут, мылъку гуэр яугъуеижт. Апхуэдэ хьэщӀэм уэкӀулэкӀэ еджэт.

15. Бий хьэщӀэ: Адыгэ хабзэм къызэриубыдымкӀэ, уи бийри хьэщӀэу къокӀуэлӀамэ и гугъу умыщӀу хьэщӀагъэ епхын хуейт. Ар къагъэсэбэпти, лъы зытелъхэр (зытелъыр) зей ӀэщӀэукӀам деж хьэщӀэу екӀуалӀэт, зэкӀуэхуауэ зыхуигъазэу унагъуэм я гуащэм и бгъэм ӀупэкӀэ еӀусэн папщӀэ. Ар къехьулӀэмэ, гуащэм и бын хуэдэ хьути, зыми абы и гугъу ищӀын хуитыжтэкъым. А зи гугъу тщӀа Ӏуэхум хуэдэ хэмытми, я бий хьэщӀэу къеблэгъар хьэщӀэти, абы хабзэкӀэ хуащӀапхьэр хуащӀэт, я унагъуэ исыху зыри еӀэбын хуиттэкъыми, уи хьэщӀэ и жагъуэ щӀыныр икӀагъэу къалбытэти.

Burdens of a host

Shora Nogmov (Negwme; 1794-1844, or 1801-1844) indicated in his book *History of the Circassian Nation* (1861) the special status that hospitality enjoyed among the Adiga in the early 1840s. Despite the wretchedness of those times, engendered by political upheavals and war, this custom had experienced no degradation in the least. All Circassians, rich and poor, were equal in holding this institution in the greatest esteem. ‘Even the most indigent of Circassians will prepare food for you’ («Адыгэм я нэхь мыгъуэми шыгъурэ пӀастэрэ къыпхуещтэ»; ‘*Adigem ya nekh mighwemiy shighwre p’astere qipxweische*’), goes the old saying. A Circassian was always prepared to receive guests. A goodly part of the stored victuals in a household were designated for guests (хьэщӀэ и Ӏыхьэ; *hesch’e yi ’ihe*; the guest’s share).⁶¹ The old sayings, still current today, ‘The host is his guest’s servant’ («Бысымыр хьэщӀэм и ӀуэхутхьэбзащӀэш»; ‘*Bisimir hesch’em yi ’wexwthebzasch’esch*’), ‘A guest is a messenger

⁶¹ It was considered wholly appropriate to ‘borrow’ victuals from the neighbours if a distinguished guest of the whole village (quarter) showed up.

from God’ («ХъэщІэр Тхъэм и лЫкІуэщ»; ‘*Hesch’er Them yi l’ik’wesch*’), and ‘A guest is the beloved of the Circassian’ («АдЫгэ[м] хъэщІэ и щІасэщ»; ‘*Adige[m] hesch’e yi sch’asesch*’), are indicative of the reverence in which visitors were held.

The host, *qweinaq* (къуенакъ; *konak*) or *bisim* (бысым), was not only responsible for the culinary needs of his guest, also called *konak* or *hesch’e* (хъэщІэ), but was also his protector and guide.⁶² Any injury or offense inflicted on the guest was considered as directed towards the host or one of his family members – to be avenged in the extreme, according to the strict laws of blood-revenge. In addition, the host made sure that his guest reached his next destination safe and sound until he was delivered to the next *konak*. Only then was the host relieved of his onerous duties.⁶³

Failure on the part of the host to fulfil his moral and legal duties and responsibilities towards his guest brought shame and ignominy not only upon himself and family, but also upon his village and clan. Therefore, the penalties for violations of the essential principles of hospitality were indeed severe. Sometimes cases were submitted to arbitration by special councils.

⁶² *Bisim* is from Ossetian *fisim* or *fusun*, which can be traced back to the Old Persian *pasumant*- (proprietor of cattle). *Konak* is of Turkic origin. It is rendered ‘*kunak*’ («кунак») in Russian. The native noun ‘*blaghe*’ («благъ»), which usually denotes ‘(distant) relative’ or ‘relative by marriage’, can in certain contexts be used for ‘guest’.

⁶³ Russian literature immortalized the institution of hospitality of the North Caucasians in a number of works. In Tolstoy’s *Hadji Murad*, old man Sado received the protagonist in his house despite ‘a proclamation to all the inhabitants of Chechnya forbidding them to receive Hadji Murad on pain of death’, issued by Shamil after falling out with him. Sado reiterated to his honoured guest, ‘Whilst thou are in my house and my head is on my shoulders no one shall harm thee.’ Another classic portrayal is found in Mikhail Lermontov’s ‘Izmael-Bey’.

Undoubtedly, the difficult terrain and the hostile environment had something to do with the sanctity of this institution.⁶⁴ Entrusting oneself to the care of a *konak* was one's surest (and cheapest) method of getting about in Circassia. This strict adherence to the code of hospitality is reminiscent of the heroic times of ancient Greece, when the bonds of hospitality were considered sacred.⁶⁵

Receiving guests

A horseman signalled his approach to the house of his host by whipping his horse. The host and his household received him with jubilation. The guest saluted and exclaimed, «Дауэ фыщытхэ?» (*'Dawe fischitxe?*'), 'How are you (pl.)?' A common greeting formula was «ФІэхъус апщій, еблагъэ!» (*'F'ex'ws apschiy, yeblaghe!*') ('Welcome!'). He was assisted in dismounting, with the horse being held by the bridle. The horse was attended to in a proper fashion and was given the best forage (мэжъумылэ; *meqwmile*) whilst tethered to the post (шыфІэдзапІэ; *shif'edzap'e*). The honorary companion of the guest (хэгъэрей; *xegherey*; usually a venerable older person) walked right behind the guest from the yard-gate (outermost gate) up to the guest-room to protect him from stalking enemies and dogs that might creep up from behind and bite the guest.⁶⁶ For these very same reasons, the companion walked in front of the guest from the guest-room to the yard-gate.

Inside the guest-room, the guest was given a hand removing his coat and weapons and was seated in the place of honour (жъантІэ;

⁶⁴ High mountains, deep gorges, torrential rivers, thick forests, treacherous fens, and immense tracts of steppe lands were some of the challenges posed by the Northwest Caucasian terrain to the wayfarer.

⁶⁵ Iiade, chant no. IX, p165.

⁶⁶ The Circassians said of a derelict honorary guest-companion, 'Хегherey хwemixwm he qiweighedzaqe' («Хэгъэрей хуэмышум хьэ кьыуегъэдзакъ»), 'A lazy honorary guest-companion causes you to be bitten by the dog.'

zchant'e). If his outer clothes needed cleaning, they were washed and pressed by the young ones, to be ready for him the next morning. The receiving party would not sit down simultaneously with the guest. Only after insistent requests did they obey, but only those close to the age and status of the guest sat down, whilst the others remained standing as a mark of respect. Inquiries were made about the state of health of the guest, and, after some time, about any news he might have. The guest was never left alone in the guest-room. An ancient custom, which went into obsolescence in the 19th century, had one of the daughters of the host help the guest take off his boots and wash his feet before retiring to bed.

Notwithstanding the hosting period of seven days and seven nights in more classical eras, the practicalities of everyday life dictated that this period might be contracted or extended beyond this magic number. Even then the intent of the guest with regard to the period of his stay in the host's house was indicated using subtle signals. For example, if the guest left his felt cloak (шIакIэ; *sch'ak'we*) tied to his horse's croup, it meant that he was in a hurry and had no intention of staying for long.⁶⁷ Again, if the guest hanged up his whip (*qamishi*) in the special place behind the door of the guest-room in such a way that the lash hung in full length, it displayed that the guest was in no hurry and that he intended to stay for the night (at least). If hung in a contrarious manner, it meant that he would rest for a while, slake his hunger, and then get on his way. In this case, a sheep is not slaughtered in honour of the guest, and only readily available dishes are presented, such as chicken stew, fried cheese in sour cream sauce, and Kalmyk tea.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ *Sch'ak'we* (шIакIэ), or *burka* in Turkic, is a sleeveless felt cloak which hung from the shoulders and draped the whole body. It was an indispensable part of the traditional Circassian male costume. It afforded warmth in winter and protection from the burning sun in summer. In clement weather the coat was rolled up and fastened by long leather rheims behind the saddle.

⁶⁸ A ram slaughtered in honour of a guest, or given as a present, was called '*zchaghe*' («ЖЪАГЪ»), '*melzchaghe*' (МЭЛЖАГЪ), '*nish*' («НЫШ»), or '*hesch'enish*' («ХЪЭЦІЭНЫШ»). The last two terms also referred to other animals that served the same purposes, e.g. a fattened calf.

Entertaining guests

The guest-room doubled as a village club-house, where the local and itinerant minstrels and story-tellers displayed their wares, entertained the guests, and where the younger generation learnt about the history and culture of their nation.⁶⁹ It is argued that the guest-room was the

⁶⁹ Musical and literary traditions were upheld by a professional class of roving minstrels whose members were collectively and singly known as 'jəgwak'we' («джэгъуак'уэ»), or player(s). Some of the more accomplished of these were lured by, and became attached to the aristocratic classes, shedding their itinerant character. In origin, the bards were usually commoners, and they did not receive any special education or training, relying on their inborn talents. They engaged in the art of poetry and song. These bards singly or in bands roamed the land; their instruments affording them not only safe conduct, but also rapturous welcome. They played music and performed songs and recited heroic poems at festivals, banquets and evening-parties, and for the pleasure of the upper classes, which received them in their exclusive guest-houses. Their exquisite music talents and social skills afforded them to play the role of masters of ceremonies (хьэтияк'уэ; *hetiyak'we*) at dance parties and their entrancing eloquence made them premium toastmasters at banquets and festivals. They were improvisators *par excellence*, delighting (or slighting) in airing satirical songs extempore. They also played the jesters, donning the cap and bells in settings of lighter nature. They composed songs commemorating sanguinary events, national and glorious deeds and feats of distinction in battle, composed biographies of celebrated men and sang ancient songs, including gems from the Nart Epos. They also took part in military campaigns, singing war chants that instilled courage and fortitude in the warriors. These minstrels found in this occupation not only subsistence but also wealth. Every prince retained a few of these singers in his court, bestowing opulent gifts upon them. Apart from their high status as entertainers, they composed songs in praise of their patron. A potentate had high stakes riding on keeping his bards happy to escape their virulent tongues, which could perpetuate airs of malediction for ages—a sound case of the tongue being sharper than the sword. (An old saying goes, 'Weredwis — *pschi pse'wx'* [«Уэрэдус — пщы псэ'лух»), 'The songwriter is the terror of the prince.'). Of his oratorical powers, a great bard once boasted: 'With but one word, I could turn a coward into the brave protector of the homeland; I could cause

most important stage on which the inter-generational transmission of the oral history, culture, literature and mythology was played out. In this manner it was possible to preserve all these aspects of Circassian culture up until the 19th century, when Circassian writers and cultural workers started the process of recording and documentation.

Dance parties were held in honour of guests, either in the guest-room itself or in the village square (утыку; *witikw*) for important guests.⁷⁰ Partakers in a dance ceremony (джэгу; *jegw*) divided into two groups on the edge of the dance-floor, males on one side, females on the other. Music and song were supplied by the bards (*jegwak'we*).⁷¹ No one was allowed to sit while the dance was in progress, no matter how long it lasted. The two groups provided background and choral singing, but only the members of the male group clapped their hands in rhythm with the music. In the olden days, a bowl of *makhsima* was

eagle's wings to grow on the brave and compel the thief to abandon his wicked ways. In my presence, the wicked dare not stand, for I am the mortal enemy of dishonesty and meanness...' («Сэ къэрабгъэр зы псалъэкIэ хахуэ, Хэкум и хъумакуэ сощIыф, лIыхъужьым бгъэм и дамэ къытызогъакIэ, дыгъум и хъэлыр зыхызогъэн. Си пащхъэ къиувэфынукъым цIыху бзаджэр, сэ цIыхугъэншагъэм, икIагъэм срабийщ...») In general, oratory (particularly the delivery of toasts) had a great effect on the Circassians, who would become literally spellbound and mesmerized by the invocation of the magic words. When a folk poet composed a song and it was approved for release, singers from neighbouring regions were summoned to listen to the song for as many times as it took for all the audience to learn it by heart. Then these went back to their villages and sang it, thus spreading it by word of mouth.

⁷⁰ For a short account on Circassian traditional dance, refer to <<http://iccs.synthasite.com/circassian-dance.php>>.

⁷¹ Older traditional musical instruments included the Circassian bowed violin (пшыне; *pshine*) and a clapping percussion instrument (пхъэцIыч; *px'ets'ich*). In the second half of the 19th century, the accordion (also named *pshine*) supplanted the violin as the principal musical instrument, and the baraban (бэрэбан; *bereban*), a drum of foreign origin, replaced the *px'ets'ich* as the major percussion instrument.

passed round. The management of each group was assigned to a specialized class of individuals called '*hetiyyak'we*' («хьэтиякIуэ»), masters of (the dance) ceremonies, who were given presents for their work. If present at the guest quarters, professional bards took up the role of masters of ceremonies. Among the tasks of the master of ceremonies was to pick and match the dancers by pointing his decorated staff (хьэтиякIуэ баш; *hetiyyak'we bash*).⁷²

A dance party was started with the stately slow dance «кѡафэ» (*qafe*),⁷³ and ended with the solemn round dance «удж» (*wij*), in accordance with the saying, «Джэгур кѡафэжIэ кыщIадзэри, уджкIэ яух» ('*Jegwr qafech'e qisch'adzeriy, wijch'e yawix*') ['A dance party is started with «кѡафэ» (*qafe*), and ended with «удж» (*wij*)']. Male dancers had to follow the moves of their female partners and harmonize with them. A female dancer always stayed on the right of her partner, and never associated with dancers of lesser social rank.⁷⁴ When a prince joined a dance party and took the floor, the bards paid deference to his noble demeanour by playing songs associated with his family and lineage, clapping and chorus assuming more sober and measured rhythms.

⁷² The staffs (almost sceptre-like in appearance and splendour) were about a metre long and were made from the twigs of small (forest) hazel-nut trees and were decorated with threads and golden threads, passed through equidistant openings perforated along the staff. On the staff itself, and on each of the threads, seven hazel-nuts were pinned and tied. The ends of the threads were fringed. It is noteworthy that the number seven had special significance in Circassian culture. The staff served several functions, including as a baton for the master of ceremonies to conduct the orchestra.

⁷³ «Кѡафэ» ('*Qafe*') is both a generic term for 'dance' and the name of a kind of dance.

⁷⁴ In accordance with the saying, «Зэхуэмыдэ кыызэдэфжкым, зэмыфэгъу кыызэдэуджкым» ('*Zexwemide qizedefeqim, zemifeghw qizedewijqim*') ['Those dissimilar in their social rank do not dance the «кѡафэ» (*qafe*) and «удж» (*wij*) together'].

For distinguished guests, more elaborate entertainment activities were staged, including holding horse-races, equestrian shows, target shooting competitions (псагъэо; *psaghe-yewe*; Adigean), wrestling matches, and, sometimes, even hunting expeditions were mounted.⁷⁵

Respect for guests

It was incumbent upon the host to seat his visitor in the honorary seat in the guest-house (жъантIэ; *zchant'e*), which was located facing the

⁷⁵ Equestrian competitions (*shiwjegw*; Adigean) were occasions for the village heroes to show off their riding skills. Intrepid horsemen (*shuwey*) rode their mounts in all positions: upright or clinging to the horse's side, in simulation of battle manoeuvres. They had the uncanny ability to crawl under the belly of the mount, at full gallop, a manoeuvre called '*shinibech'epsh*' (Adigean), to confound the enemy. They performed daredevil feats, picking up whips and other articles (*shiwye'ebix*; Adigean) and hitting eggs (*jedich'eyewe*) placed on the ground at breakneck speed. A special kind of trick riding, *shurelhes* (literally: mounting-dismounting), in which a horseman, at full tilt, leapt off and then back on his horse, was also part of their repertoire. In *pi'ezef'eh*, an equestrian game that required considerable strength and high skill, a group of horsemen snatched away a cap (*pi'e*) from one another, the object of the game being to carry it away. There were many versions of this sport, which is still played to this day. North Caucasian *dzhigits*, or horse-born warriors, are still known for these equestrian skills. Two special forms of dressage, *shiqafe* (literally: horse-dance) and *shighejegw* (literally: making the horse dance), were, and still are, crowd favourites. For an account of the role of horsemanship in the social life of the Circassians, see A. T. Kerashev (1988). Wrestling had been a very developed sport in classical Circassia. Many techniques and manoeuvres, such as *lhaqwepts'erawe*, were devised and perfected. Masters of the art coached cadets to perpetuate the age-old skills and secrets. One kind of competition, *xet'exese*, had two opponents trying to pin each other to the ground. Circassian aristocracy donned masks on their hunting expeditions, apparently to confound the prey, and together with the esoteric cant (*schak'webze*=language of the chase), render the objects of the hunt unaware of the true purpose of the chevy.

entrance door.⁷⁶ The other partakers were seated according to seniority of age. The task of seating a group of guests was left to the senior member of the group, as he would have been better placed to divine the age and status of each of the other members. It was considered indecorous for members of the hosting family to hold a conversation among themselves in the presence of the guest. In accordance with the saying, «ХьэщIэ къашэ щыIэщи, хьэщIэ ишыж щыIэкъым» (*Hesch'e qashe schi'eschiy, hesch'e yishizh schi'eqim*), it was absolutely unthinkable for the host or any member of his household even to drop a hint that the guest had stayed too long or had overstayed his welcome and that it was time for him to leave.

It was not the custom to keep the guest waiting for long to have his food. If the banquet needed a long time to prepare, ready foodstuffs (цыхьутеуд; *tsix'wteiwid*) were first presented to the guest to ease his hunger. In the old days, the young children of the house used to bring in a wash-basin and water-jug (collectively called '*tas-qwbghan*' [«тас-къубгъан]), a cup and towel and help the guest wash up. This was done right before the meal was presented. The same cleansing ritual was performed after the end of the meal. In both instances, the guest did not have to leave the guest-room or even rise up from his place.

Feasting guests

When the feast (ефэ-ешихэ; *yefe-yeshxe*) was ready, the food was brought in on three-legged tables. If the feast was held in the guest-house, then the partakers remained in their assumed positions. However, the generic seating arrangement at a banquet was made according to the following rules: the (most senior) guest was seated to the right of the *themade*, toastmaster and head of the table (not the head of the household, but a respected older relative, neighbour, or

⁷⁶ *Zchant'e* also refers to the place of honour at the table, which is reserved for guests. To qualify the guest-house seat of honour the term '*hesch'esch zchant'e*' («хьэщIэщ жъантIэ») is used.

close friend of the family).⁷⁷ To the left of the *themade* sat the assigned honorary companion of the guest, *xegherey*, who was not chosen from the members of the household, but from close relatives, the village quarter, or the host's best friends.⁷⁸ The other people were seated in accordance with their status and age. If there were more than one guest, they were not seated adjacently. It should be noted that once the partakers had been seated, the seating arrangement was maintained until the end of the session, no matter the status of late-comers.⁷⁹ If a late-comer joined the group, those younger than him stood up in respect. However, the toastmaster rose for no one.

No one was allowed to leave the table before the eldest person partaking. If for any reason someone had to leave, he had to take permission from the elder. Otherwise, he was not allowed to rejoin the group. It was considered an insult to the partakers for a person to leave with his back to the table. When rejoining a group, a person hailed thus: «Гупмахуэ апций!» [*Gwpmawwe apschiy!*]; 'May this be a blessed gathering!'. The toastmaster wassailed the newcomer thus: «Упсэу апций, щауэ махуэ ухъу апций!» [*Wipsew apschiy, schawe maxwe wix'w apschiy!*]; 'Thank you. May you be a lucky

⁷⁷ The term *themade* (тхъэмадэ), in the form '*tamada*' («тамада»), and much of the hospitality traditions, particularly the host-guest relationship, and feasting customs of the Circassians, including the elaborate toasting rituals, were adopted by the other peoples of the Caucasus, and indeed by the Russians and some Central Asian peoples.

⁷⁸ It was the duty of the guest-companion to ensure that his charge ate in comfort. This meant, amongst other things, that the guest-companion kept having food with the guest until the latter had his fill. If he stopped eating or finished his portion before the guest, it was a signal to the guest (and other partakers) that food-taking was over.

⁷⁹ This is in accordance with the saying, «Адыгэ гупым тысын яухмэ, щысын яухауэ плъытэ хъунуш» (*Adige gwpm t'isin yawixme, schisin yawixawe plhite x'wnusch!*) ('Once a group of Circassians have taken their seats [at a table], you can consider that they would finish their session in this [self-same] seating arrangement!').

chap!'], and offered him a goblet of *makhsima* (*gwpmaxwebzche*). The acknowledgement was reminiscent of the medieval English drink-hail (a toast to health or good luck).

Toast-making

The cup-bearer (бгъуэшIэс; *bghwesch'es*) would present the toast goblet to the *themade*,⁸⁰ who would initiate the toast-making ritual by pronouncing a toast to the health and well-being of the guest and the host's household, and the toast goblet would then be passed round the table in a right-handed direction.⁸¹ A person received the goblet only upon hearing the word «НокIуэ!» ('*Nok'we!*'; roughly: Here goes!). If the person passing the goblet should fail to say this, the receiver would not accept it, saying, 'You have not called me!' After having a drink, one would wipe the goblet with the back of his hand and then pass it to the next person (on the right). It was not the custom to force anyone to drink. A section of a famous traditional table-toast is presented (Z. Qardenghwsch', 1985, pp 67-8; for the whole text of the toast, see pp 67-93):

Інэгү хьүэхьү	Table-Toast
Уэ ди тхьэ,	Our God,

⁸⁰ In earlier times, the Circassians used large wooden bowls with circular handles (пхьэ шынакъышхуэ; *px'e shinaqishxwe*) and large reed goblets (къамыл шыплъэ; *qamil shiplhe*) as their drinking vessels. This manner of passing the drinking bowl round the table was called '*qeifech*' («къефэки»).

⁸¹ See Z. Qardenghwsch' (1985; available on line) for a collection of Circassian toasts. Toasts were first uttered as magic invocations and incantations to unlock hidden powers or to appease the gods. Important occasions and undertakings were preceded, accompanied, and concluded by complex rituals of toast-making. A feast could only start with a toast by the toastmaster, then by the guests, and the affair could last for hours. All young boys were introduced into the art of toast-making, and it is said that no Circassian was ever at a loss for pithy words befitting all occasions. Long toasts were not considered in good taste. Throughout history, there have been masters in the art of toast-making. Memorable pronouncements were readily associated with their originators and were learnt by heart by literary connoisseurs. Toastmasters were like magicians, literally spelling their incantations and charming the listeners into ecstatic trances.

<p>Тхьэшхуэ, Анэдолэ, Дыщэ кьуэладжэ, Мы унагьуэр — Уардэ унэжьу, Выжь укыпIэу, Нарт ефапIэу, УнапIэ махуэу, Пхьэм и махуэр я бжаблэу, Я бланэлри зэтету, Гуфэ зэтетхэри кьыдашэу, Пхьэхьэ-псыхьэри щауибгьуу, Фызибгьум кладэр зэIашIэу, ФызипщIым джэд ягьэхьуу, Зэпымычыжыр я хьуэхьуу, Кьызэгүэзычри я фадэу, Гьэ мин гьащIэкIэ гьэпсэу!</p> <p>Вы нышыр яукIыу, Уэрэд жызыIэр я хьыджэбзу, Мызу кьэзыкIухьыр я нысашIэу, Я IусыщIыр дарий кIэпхыну, Тепщэчхэр зэрыту сырэм кьыдахыу, Кьум ахьшэр пхьуантэм дэзу, Уэзий усальэ щымыщIэу, Гьэ мин гьащIэкIэ гьэпсэу!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>...</p>	<p>The Supreme Lord, Anadola,⁸² Golden ravine, This household — Majestic and grandiose abode, Where great oxen are sacrificed, The drinking place of the Narts, Manorial seat of happiness, The door-posts of propitious wood, The venison multi-layered, The crops brought in in cartloadfuls, The wood and water carried by nine lads, The vat stirred by nine women, The hens herded by ten women, Their toast-making never ending, Their beverage filled to bursting, May it remain intact for a thousand years!</p> <p>Oxen slaughtered in honour of guests, The daughters singing the airs, The bride going round not on her own, The cooks donning satin aprons, The plate stacks drawn from the sideboard, The chest brimful with money, You whose quiver of verses never go short, May it keep safe for a thousand years!</p> <p style="text-align: center;">* * *</p> <p>...</p>
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A toast to one's honour had to be reciprocated, and the guest and head of the household were compelled to make toasts. It was incumbent

⁸² Epithet of the Supreme God? Anatolia is a region in the Asian portion of modern-day Turkey. People ancestral (or akin) to the Circassians and Abkhazians (e.g. the Hattians) inhabited this region and established seminal civilizations starting in the third millennium BC. For more details, see A. Jaimoukha, 2001, pp 41-2.

upon the guest to express his gratitude to his host upon finishing his fare.⁸³ The *themade* concluded the ceremony as he had started it by elocution of the final toast.

⁸³ Used expressions included ‘You have regaled us to satiety. May God prolong the spell of your prosperity!’ («Дывгъэтхъэжащ, фи тхъэжыгъуэр Тхъэм кыхъ ищI!»; ‘*Divghetx’ezhasch, fiy tx’ezhighwer Them ch’ih yisch’!*’), and ‘May your provisions multiply, and may the victuals you offer never become halved!’ («Фи ерыскъыр убагъуэ, кызыхэфхар ныкъуэ иремыхъу!»; ‘*Fiy yerisqir wibaghwe, qizixefxar niqwe yireimix’w’!*’).



Enactment of toast-making festival
in the Qweinaq Café in Nalchik.

Making merry

Everyone conducted himself in a polite and respectful manner, and interactions were blithesome and most civil. The time spent at the table was not considered part of the normal run of life («ІЭНЭМ УПЭРЫСЫХУ ГЬАЦІЭМ ХЫХЬЭКЪЫМ!»; *'Enem wiperisixw ghasch'em xiheqim!*), for it was time for merriment and enjoyment of life and its blessings to the full. It was also a protracted affair devoid of worries and worldly concerns. The partakers would chat, joke, play, and sing songs.⁸⁴ A typical scenario went as follows. The table elder would start a song and then another person would take it up, and it would be bandied about to its end. Before the song was sung, it was incumbent upon the initiator to inform the others about the origin of the song, why it was written, for whom, and by whom. It was improper for one person to sing a whole song, unless he was a designated singer. In the latter case, the partakers' role was limited to singing the chorus lines. After singing, a bout of story-telling would start, and so on. In some settings, minstrels with their musical wares would offer entertainment during the feast.

Serving the feast

One or two young men *schhegherit* were assigned to wait on the table, being usually the youngest of the attendants. Young though they might have been, they were supposed to be fully conversant with table etiquette, and they got their cues from (the subtle gestures of) the *themade*. They were also expected to divine the wishes and requirements of the guests with minimal conversation. It was the custom to present them with goblets and to pronounce a toast in their honour.

⁸⁴ The corpus of songs sung in the guest-house was termed '*hesch'esch weredxer*' («хьэщІэщ уэрэдхэр»). For a scholarly study of (ancient and traditional) Circassian songs and folk-tunes (including musical notations and words to the songs, with Russian translations), see V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P'. Qardenghwsch' (1980, 1981, 1986, 1990).

It had always been a strict custom to serve the guest with various tasty dishes, which were prepared from the finest victuals in the house. Dishes were served in succession: when one was finished, the next was presented, and so on until broth was offered. The allotment of the fare followed strict rules, especially with regard to meat and poultry dishes. Honorary dishes were served to the most senior partakers. For example, the right side of the head (щхьэлъэныкъуэ ижъ; щхьэщыльэныкъуэ ижъ; *schhelheniqwe yizch*, *schhesch'ilheniqwe yizch*) of the slaughtered animal was considered the prime share, followed by the shoulder-blade (блэгъу; *bleghw*) or shoulder-blade with leg (блатхьэ; *blathe*), the pelvic region (шхужь гъуанэ; *shxwzch ghwane*), the brisket (джажэ дакъэ; *dzazhe daqe*), the thigh (куэпкъ; *kwepq*), and the lumbar and sacral vertebrae (тхыбзий; *txibziy*). Less 'prestigious' parts, served to the juniors, included the cervical and pectoral vertebrae (тхы хьурей; *txi x'wrey*), the shoulder-joint (блыпкъ; *blipq*), the lower part of the foreleg (ІэфракІэ; *'efrach'e*), and the lower part of the hind-leg (кІэбдз; *ch'ebdz*).

Burdens of a guest

Although the onus of responsibility lay on the host, the guest was also expected to follow the dictates of good taste and to be fully conversant with the intricacies of customs and traditions.⁸⁵ As long as the guest remained under the host's roof, he surrendered himself wholly to the authority of the host. This precept of the host-guest institution was enshrined in a number of aphorisms, e.g. «ХьэщІапІэ ущыІэмэ, къыпхуащІ уи унафэщ» ('*Hesch'ap'e wischi'eme, qipxwasch' wiy winafesch*'); 'While you are on a visit as a guest, what they tell you is law'), and «ХьэщІэр мэлым нэхьрэ нэхь Іэсэщ» ('*Hesch'er melim nex're nex' 'esesch*'); 'The guest is tamer than a sheep').

The guest was prohibited from making the slightest interference in the family affairs of his host. He had to eat and drink in moderation. To

⁸⁵ The Circassians said, 'Don't send your fool on a visit as a guest!' («Уи делэ хьэщІапІэ умыгъакІуэ!»; '*Wiy deile hesch'ap'e wimighak'we!*').

be finicking about the food or scoff at it was considered a grave insult to the host and his household. In fact, it was incumbent upon the guest to praise the food served to him, for this would have been a source of joy for the host and hostess. It was considered tactless for the guest to move from his seat for no reason, go out into the yard, or have a peep in the kitchen, while food is being prepared. Under the roof of the host, the guest conducted himself with decorum with regard to everybody. It was deemed sacrilege to bring up old accounts and quarrels. The stage for settling old scores was certainly somewhere else. It was an affront to the dignity of all members of the family for the guest to flirt with the wife or daughters of the host. The guest had to refrain from praising items in the possession of the host, for the host would then feel duty-bound to offer him any openly admired object. Instead of overt expression of admiration for the object, the guest pronounced his blessings thus, «ФЫКІЭ ЗЫВЫХЪЭ, УГЪУРЛЫ ФХУХЪУ, НӘХЪЫФЫЖКІЭ ЗЭВУХЪУЭКІ, ТХЪЭМ ФЫЦІИГЪЭТЫНШЫХЪ!» ‘*F’ich’e zivihe, wighwrlı fxwx’w, nex’if’izhch’e zevux’wech*’, *Them fisch’iyghetinshih!*’, ‘May you enjoy having it, may it prove a blessing for you, may you change it for something that is even better, and may God bless you with prosperity and ease!’

Human nature being what it is, the unquestioning generosity offered by the Caucasian institution of hospitality was open to abuse by unscrupulous parasites. In line with the saying, «Зи бысым зыхъуэжым чыцыхъу хуаукІ» (‘*Ziy bisim zix’wezhim chits’ix’w xwawıch*’; ‘They slaughter a mere male-kid for him who changes his original host’), a guest was bound to knock at the door of the person who received him on his first visit. Seeking another host (бысымхъуэж; *bisimx’wezh*; literally: host-change) was considered a flagrant contravention of customary law. The new host was bound to receive the errant visitor, but he indicated his displeasure by slaughtering a mere male-kid for him. Although this meat is in no way inferior to other kinds of flesh, it is the symbolism that is important in this regard. The bleating of the male-kid before being slaughtered was the signal to the villagers that the behaviour of the house-guest was in contravention of protocol. There was a redemption price for such a ‘misdemeanour’ decided by a special village council and payable to the injured party, namely the

first host. The saying, «АДЭ-МЫДЭ КЪУЕНАКЪ» (*'Ade-mide qweinaq'*; 'The guest of hither and thither') is said of a person who runs with the hare and hunts with the hounds.

If a visitor encountered another guest in his host's guest-room whom he disliked or was at enmity with, dictates of good behaviour compelled him not only to put up with the situation, but also to go out of his way and be extra civil with him, for the sake of the host. Self-control was a mark of good breeding in Circassian society.

Seeing off a guest

Upon expressing his intention to leave, the guest was earnestly begged to stay on for several more days, or at least for the night. It was usual to give guests of honour gifts. Before taking his leave, the guest ought to express his gratitude to his host for the hospitality he was shown and the high esteem in which he was held during his stay, and to wish him and his household all the best. The host wished him a safe and happy journey, offered him his blessings, and asked him persistently to visit again.

On leaving, the guest was helped put his outer clothes and coat on, and then he was assisted in mounting his horse by holding the horse by the bridle and clutching the left stirrup for him. Upon mounting his horse, the guest took his leave saying, «ФЫКІЭ ДЫЗЭХУЭЗЭ!» (*'F'ich'e dizexweze!*'; 'May we meet again in propitious circumstances!'). He was sometimes offered a farewell goblet of wine or *makhsima* (ШЭСЫЖЫБЖЪЭ; *shesizhibzche*; literally: remounting toast). The guest was accompanied to the gates of the homestead, and often to the edge of the village. The host waited for the guest to move off some distance before turning back. It was considered highly indecorous to be seen turning back straight away. Guests from far away, especially foreigners, were escorted to their next destination, or even accompanied throughout their journey in the country or district.

In the olden days, a mounted guest on leaving indicated his pleasure, or otherwise, towards his host by the orientation of the head of his

horse as he mounted.⁸⁶ If turned towards the house, it was a chalk-up of a full mark on the hospitality scale. If turned in the direction of the outer gate, it was an unmistakable sign of his absolute displeasure, causing all members of the household of the host to fall into a state of abysmal grief and mortal shame. This was one good reason why a host would bend over backwards to ensure that his guest was properly treated and regaled, and then some.

Hospitality and the Circassian code of chivalry

Hospitality was one prong of the trinity of Circassian chivalry, at the base of which was an elaborate code of honour, which was not very unlike those of the ancient Greeks, nor the Mediaeval European knights. It was the principal component of the Circassian Etiquette. This strict law controlled the life of the feudal knights and demarcated their rights and duties. The other two tenets of this law were respect for women and elders and blood-revenge. Generosity was organically associated with hospitality and was an important principle of the chivalric ethos. To be conceived of as a miser was considered anathema by a Circassian nobleman, spelling, as it did, personal and familial shame and social ostracism.

In feudal Circassia hospitality served as a means for the protection of fugitives and the poor. Those seeking protection, whether short-term or permanent, would present their appeal to a powerful prince or nobleman. It was the sacred duty of the potentate to offer refuge for the required period of time. The lord of the manor may also elect to render the fugitives voluntarily as his subjects, offering them also employment or means of subsistence in the deal.⁸⁷ In this respect,

⁸⁶ Men invariably travelled on horseback, even when moving from one quarter of a village to another. Women used horse carriages (two-wheeled, roofed) to move around, driven by a boy and accompanied by horsemen.

⁸⁷ An episode from the familial history (legends) of the author may serve to illustrate the connection between hospitality and patronage in the Circassian feudal system. In 18th century Abzakhia (the land of the Abzakh in Western

hospitality was tightly bound with another social institution, namely patronage.

As the case in Europe, the code of chivalry has left a deep impression on modern Circassian society inside and outside the Caucasus. Two canons, namely respect for the fair sex and elders and hospitality, have more or less been preserved.

Hospitality in our day

The present state of the institution of hospitality is succinctly summarized by the Kabardian scholar and sociologist B. Kh. Bgazhnokov (1978, pp 50-1):

Hospitality has lost some of its former social significance and has abdicated some of its functions to other modern institutions, such as the school, university, club, and cinema. It also has become less refined and has shed some of its former glory and splendour. It has become more flexible and abstract. Yet, for all that, the fundamental principles of Circassian hospitality firmly hold their position in the system of elements of the traditional social culture of the ethnos.⁴³

Circassia), there lived a well-off extended family of the Yedij clan. A son of the head of the family died leaving behind a wife and two sons. The lord of the manor decreed that a younger son of his should marry his deceased brother's wife, in accordance with old custom, to keep the woman in the family. The woman defied the wishes of her father-in-law and refused to wed her brother-in-law. The fuming patriarch ordered his son to fulfil his duties. Forcing himself upon his widowed sister-in-law, she stabbed the hapless man to death. She immediately took off with her two sons and sought refuge with Prince Het'ox'wschoqwe, whose village was located on the River Bax'sen (Bakhsan) in Kabarda. The prince offered the woman and her two children asylum, and he tasked the boys with tending his herd of cows. They are the progenitors of a branch of the Zhemix'we (Cowherd) clan in Kabarda.

Appendix 1

Proverbs and Sayings on Circassian Customs & Traditions

Хабзэм епха псалъэжъхэри псалъафэхэри

Абы бгым зышидзыжмэ, уэ вийкІэ увэну? (Умыфыгъуэ, умыижэ, жыхуиІэщ. Вий=вей=dung. *Do not envy*): If he throws himself down the mountain, does that mean you have to stand in dung.

Адыгэм хъэшІэ и щІасэщ: The guest is very dear to a Circassian.

Адыгэ мыгъуэ, шыгъурэ пІастэрэ (Adige mighwe, shighwre p'astere): Even the most indigent of Circassians will prepare food (literally: salt and boiled millet dumplings) for you.

Адыгэм япэ жиІэнур иужькІэ игу къокІ (Adigem yape zhiy'enur yiwizchch'e yigw qoch'): 1. To prophesy after the event; 2. Wise after the event; 3. If things were to be done twice all would be wise; 4. One's tongue runs before one's wit; 5. Wise behind.

Адыгэ нэмыс, урыс насып: Circassian decorum and Russian luck.

Адыгэ хабзэр адэ щІэиныжъщ: Circassian customs and traditions are the ancient legacy of the father.

АдрыщІым ущІэдэумэ, мыдрыщІыр къыплъысынщ.

Акыыл зиІэм шыІэ иІэщ (ШыІэ=patience, perseverance): Good sense and patience go together.

Акыыл зиІэр си щІыб ису къезухъэкІ: He who has sense I would gladly carry on my back.

Акылым уасэ иІэкъым, гъэсэныгъэм гъунэ иІэкъым: Intellect is priceless, education has no limit.

Акылыр ландыщэщ, гъэсэныгъэр дыщэ жыгщ (Ландыщэ – дыщэ зэрылэ=that which gilds): Intellect gilds and education is a golden tree.

Анэм «сипхъу закъуэ и псэ» щыжиIэм, пхъуми «си псэ» жиIэу хуежъащ: (When the mother said, “The soul of my only daughter”, the daughter started to say, “My soul”) To have too much of her mother’s blessing.

Анэмэтым хъейрэт ухуэмыхъу (Анэмэт=hostage; хъейрэт=епщIыжыныгъэ, енэцIыжыныгъэ; betrayal. Дзыхъ кыыхуашIу кышIэщIалъхъэм уемынэцIыж, жыхуиIэщ. *Do not hanker after something that has been put in your trust*).

А псор пщIэмэ, уи дээр щIэхыу Iухунщ (A psor psch’eme, wiу dzer sch’exiu ’wxwnsch): 1. Curiosity killed the cat; 2. Too much knowledge makes the head bald.

Армум хиса жыгыр мэгуу (Armum xiysa zhigir meghw): The tree planted by the clumsy person dies.

Ахъшэр щэ бжыгуэщ.

Бажэм и кIэр пIыгъуу тепыхъэ (И кIэр зэрпIыгъуу пIэщIэкIыжынкIэ хъунуш, жыхуиIэщ. *Even with his tail in your hand the fox might get away*).

Бажэм сишх нэхърэ дыгъужьым срешх: Better be fed to the wolf than to be eaten by the fox.

**Банэ хуэдэ зэхэплъхъэр
данэ хуэдэу зэхэпхыжынщи,
данэ хуэдэ зэхэплъхъэр
банэ хуэдэу зэхэпхыжынщ.**

**Банэ хуэдэу къэщтэж,
данэ хуэдэу гъэтIылыж.**

Бэдж пэтрэ Iэужь трах.

Бэлэрыгъ гъэр мэхъу (Belerigh gher mex’w): (A rash man is soon captured) A rash man is an easy prey.

Бэлэрыгыр бэлэрыгъауэ хуозэ: A rash man is taken unawares.

Бэшэчыныгъэр зытемыкIуэн щыIэкъым (Beshechinigher ziteimik’wen schi’eqim): Patience is a plaster for all sores.

Бгъащхъуэ гушхуар, жьындум жьэхэхуэри ишхащ (Бгъащхъуэ=steppe eagle; гушхуа=daring; animated; жьынду=owl): The animated eagle fell into the beak of the owl and was eaten.

Бгээр куэдрэ уэмэ, и дамэр мэкьутэ: (If the eagle beats his wings very often, they will break) 1. The pot goes so often to the water that it is broken at last; 2. The pitcher goes often to the well (but is broken at last).

Бгъеям куэдрэ укѳльымыгъыж.

Бгъуэ (блэ) егъапци зэ пыупщѳ: (Measure nine [seven] times and cut once) 1. Measure thrice and cut once; 2. Score twice before you cut once; 3. Look before you leap; 4. Second thoughts are best.

Бжэщхьэѳум нэмыс хьэдрихэ ноѳус (Бжэщхьэѳу=threshold; хьэдрихэ=the life after): Do not utter bad words.

Бжызоѳэ, сипхьу, зэхэщѳыкѳ, си нысэ: I am telling you, daughter, hear me out, daughter-in-law.

Бжыым зыщѳэбуамэ «кьызохьэльэжѳ» жумыѳэж (Bzchim zisch'ebwame 'qizohelhech' ' zhumi'ezh): In for a penny, in for a pound.

Бжыыхьэм унэмысу уи джэджьей умыбж (Bzchihem winemisu wiy jedzchey wimibzh): 1. Don't count your chickens before they (are) hatch(ed); 2. Catch the bear before you sell his skin; 3. Never fry a fish till it's caught; 4. First catch your hare then cook him; 5. To cook a hare before catching him; 6. To run before one's horse to market; 7. Don't eat the calf in the cow's belly; 8. Gut no fish till you get them (Scottish).

Бзаджэ кьэзыльху и гуэн лъапэ щѳетѳэж.

Бзаджэм уи кѳэ иубыдмэ, пыупщѳи блэкѳ: (If the bad man grabs your tail, cut it off and go on your way) Extricate yourself from an evil person at any price.

Бзаджэ (е е, е лей, е ѳей,) пщѳауэ (пщѳэуэ)(,) фѳы ущымыгугъ: 1. Reap as you have sown; 2. As you sow you shall mow; 3. As the man sows, so he shall reap; 4. As you make your bed, so you must lie on it; 5. To lie (sleep) in (on) the bed one has made; 6. To make one's bed, and have to lie in (on) it; 7. A bad beginning makes a bad ending; 8. As the call, so the echo; 9. Every bullet has its billet; 10. Curses like chickens come home to roost.

Бзаджэр уи пэшэгъумэ, уи анэ мыгъуэ хьунщ: If you befriend an evil person, woe unto your mother!

Бзэгум кьушхьэ хэлькьым (Bzegwm qwpschhe xelhqim): The unruly member.

Бзэгур джатэм нэхрэ нэхь жанщ (Bzegwr jatem nex're nex'zhansch): 1. The tongue is sharper than the sword; 2. The tongue is not steel, yet it cuts; 3. Many words cut (or hurt) more than swords.

Бзуушхуэм бзу цыкIур пэкIэцIыну щыхуежьэм—зэIытхьащ.

Бзыльхугьэ пшэрыхь хушанэ (Пшэрыхь=hunter's bag).

Биижь умыгьэблагьи, уи адэ и благьэжь умыбгынэ (Biyyizch wimigheblaghiy, wiy ade yi blaghezch wimibgine): Do not invite your old enemy (to your house) and do not desert your father's old relative.

Бийм ушысхьмэ, уIэгьэ ухьунуш (Biym wischis-hme, wi'eghe wix'wnusch): If you spare your enemy, you will get injured.

Блэ егъапщи зэ пыупщI (Ble yeghapschiy ze piwipsch'): (Measure seven times and cut once) 1. Measure thrice and cut once; 2. Score twice before you cut once; 3. Look before you leap; 4. Second thoughts are best.

БлэкIам кьэгьээж иIэкьым: 1. Things past cannot be recalled; 2. Lost time is never found again; 3. What's lost is lost.

БлэкIар зэфIэкIащ: 1. Let the dead bury the dead; 2. Lost time is never found again; 3. What's lost is lost.

БлэкIа хабзэжьым (хьыбарыжьым) укьемыджэж (укьемыкьуж) (Blech'a xabzezchim [x'ibarizchim] wiqeimijezh (wiqeimiqwzh)): (Do not recall the old custom, or the old story) 1. Things past cannot be recalled; 2. Let the dead bury the dead; 3. What's lost is lost; 4. Let bygones be bygones.

Блэр «пIыщIащ» жыпIэу уи гуфIакIэм думыгьэтIысхьэ: Do not say, 'The snake is frozen,' and place it in your bosom.

Быдэ и анэ гьыркьым (Bide yi ane ghirqim): (The mother of the hardy does not cry) 1. Fast (safe, sure) bind, fast (safe, sure) find; 2. Caution is the parent of safety.

Бысымыр хьэщIэм и IуэхутхьэбзашIэщ (Bisimir hesch'em yi 'wexwthebzasch'esch): The host is his guest's servant.

Вым уанэ трельхьэ: (He is saddling the ox) He's such a nitwit.

Вырэ жэмрэ хузэхэгъэкІыркъым: (He couldn't tell an ox from a cow) 1. He knows nothing at all; 2. He is so ignorant.

Гуашэ мыхъу жъантІакІуэщ: The unworthy mistress heads for the place of honour (away from door, near hearth).

Гуашэр гьэрмэ, мэжабзэ, хьыджэбзыр дэсмэ, мэутхьуэ: If the house mistress is captive, the liquid clears, and if the girl is at home, the liquid dims.

Губгъуэм ущымыкьэрабгъэ, унэм ущымылІыхъужь: If you are not a coward in the field, you won't be a hero at home.

Гугъэ нэщІыр щхьэгъэщІэжщ: False hope is self-delusive.

ГужьейгъуафІэщ – унэхъугъуафІэщ: (He who easily succumbs to panick, gets ruined easily) 1. Do not panick; 2. Keep a stiff upper lip.

Гузэвэхыр щІэх жьы мэхъу: (An anxious person soon gets old) 1. Relax; 2. Take it easy.

Гукъыдэж уиІэмэ, пхуэмыщІэн шыІэкъым (Gwqidezh wiy'eme, pxwemisch'en schi'eqim): Nothing is impossible to a willing heart.

Гунэс ямышІ саугъэт умыщІ.

Гупсыси псалъэ, зыплъыхьы тІыс (Gwpsisiy psalhe, ziphihiy t'is): (Think before you speak, look around before you sit down) 1. First think, then speak; 2. Think today and speak tomorrow; 3. Second thoughts are best; 4. Look before you leap; 5. Draw not your bow till your arrow is fixed; 6. Better the foot slip than the tongue trip.

Гур кІуэдмэ, лъэр щІэкІыркъым.

Гур кІуэдмэ, шыр жэркъым: If you lose heart, your horse won't run.

Гушхуэ Тхьэшхуэ и жагъуэщ
(Гушхуэ=daring/courageous/inspired fellow).

Гъэузи гъэхъуж: Hurt and heal.

Гъуэгу благъэ гъуэгу жыжьэ нэхьрэ, гъуэгу жыжьэ гъуэгу благъэ (Ghwegw blaghe ghwegw zhizche nex're, ghwegw

zhizche ghwegw blaghe): (Better a short long way than a long short way) The furthest way about is the nearest way home.

Гъуэмылэпэм еІээ, гъуэмылэкІэм езауэ (Гъуэмылэ=provisions for a journey).

Гъунэгъу бий ящІыркъым: 1. Don't make an enemy out of your neighbour; 2. Love thy neighbour.

Гъусэ ямышІыным блэкІрэ пэт йоджэ.

ГъущІыр плъа щІыкІэ еуэ (Ghwsch'ir plha sch'ich'e yewe): 1. Strike while the iron is hot; 2. Make hay while the sun shines.

Дахэ и щІагъ дыщэ щІэльщ: There is gold under the beautiful.

Дахэр пагэмэ, пуд мэхъу: 1. If the beautiful woman puts on airs, she becomes cheap; 2. Don't put on airs.

ДаІуэкІейм дэгъу уещІри, плъэкІейм нэф уещІ: A bad listener makes you deaf, a bad looker makes you blind.

Дэтхэнэ зы Іуэхутхъэбзэми бзыпхъэ иІэщ (Іуэхутхъэбзэ=service; бзыпхъэ=pattern for cutting).

Делэм сэ сыфІокІ, губзыгъэр езыр къысфІокІ: I extricate myself from the fool; the wise extricates himself from me.

Делэ(м) хабзэ жыхуаІэр ищІэркъым (Deile[m] xabze zhixwa'er yisch'erqim): (A fool is ignorant of Circassian Etiquette) 1. As the fool thinks, so the bell clinks; 2. Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.

Дыгъуэм икІэр мыгъуэ мэхъу: Theft is followed by misfortune.

Дыгъум и пыІэр мафІэм ес (Dighwm yi pi'er maf'em yes): (The thief's cap is on fire) 1. If the cap fits, wear it; 2. The cap fits.

Дыгъужь мэлыхъуэ ящІрэ?: Do they make a shepherd out of a wolf?!

Джэд пасэрэ бын пасэрэ: An early hen is like an early child.

Джэджьей зеуалэ псывэ хоупІэ: A lounging chick ends up being boiled alive.

Джэду щысу шыпсэ умыІуатэ: Don't tell a tall tale while the cat is seated.

Дзей хуэщІэ фІыщІэ хэлькъым (Дзей=workmate, partner [especially in tilling]).

Дзы зыфIэпщ дзы кыпфIещыж: 1. If you ascribe a defect to someone, he/she will ascribe a defect to you in return; 2. Do not calumniate others.

ДзыхьмыщIыр дзыхьщIыгъуэджэщ: A distrustful person is dangerous.

Егъэлей делагъэщ: It is stupid to go to excess.

Ем е и хушхъуэкъым (Yem ye yi xwschx'weqim): (Evil is not the medicine for evil) Two wrongs don't make a right.

Емрэ фIымрэ зымыщIэми имыщIэ щымыIэу кыфIошI: Even the person who cannot differentiate between good and evil thinks there is nothing that he/she doesn't know.

Ем шысхьыр фIым поIуджэ (Yem schis-hir f'im po'wje): He that spares the bad injures the good.

Емыш и уанэ ехь: (The indefatigable person wins the saddle) Perseverance is the key to success.

Е пщIауэ фIы ущымыгугъ, фIы пщIами ущIэмыфыгъуж: 1. Reap as you have sown; 2. As you sow you shall mow; 3. As the man sows, so he shall reap; 4. As you make your bed, so you must lie on it; 5. To lie (sleep) in (on) the bed one has made; 6. To make one's bed, and have to lie in (on) it; 7. A bad beginning makes a bad ending; 8. As the call, so the echo; 9. Every bullet has its billet; 10. Curses like chickens come home to roost.

Есэр сэгъейщ: 1. Old (bad) habits die hard; 2. Habit is second nature.

Е улIын, е улIэн: (Either be a man, or die) 1. A man or a mouse; 2. Neck or nothing; 3. Either win the horse or lose the saddle; 4. (I will) Either win the saddle or lose the horse; 5. Make or break; 6. Sink or swim; 7. To burn one's boats.

Еуший (еушые) зы махуэщ(и), хабзэхьыкIэр (хабзэ хьэху) тхьэмахуэщ (махуищщ): (Instruction takes one day, its implementation takes a week [three days]) It is easier to give an advice than to follow one.

Еушые зы махуэщи, хабзэхьыкIэр тхьэмахуэщ (Yewschiye zi maxweschiy, xabzehich'er themaxwesch): (Instruction takes one day, its implementation takes a week) It is easier to give an advice than to follow one.

Ефэ—умыудафэ: 1. Drink moderately; 2. Drink in measure.

Жэмрэ вырэ зэхуотэдж: The cow and ox stand for one another.

Жейрэ ларэ зэхуэдэц: He who is asleep is like the dead.

Жыжьэу бгьэтЫльмэ, (нэхь) гьунэгьуу кьэпштэжынщ (кьэбгьуэтыжынщ) (Zhizchew bghet'ilhme, [nex'] ghwneghwu qepschtezhinsch [qebghwetizhinsch]): Fast (safe, sure) bind, fast (safe, sure) find.

Жыжьэу бгьэтЫльыр благьэу кьощтэж: Fast (safe, sure) bind, fast (safe, sure) find.

ЖыІэгьуафІэ щхьэкІэ, щІэгьуейщ: Easier said than done.

ЖьантІэм узэрыдашэр щыгьынырщ (Zchant'em wizeridasher schighinirsch): Fine feathers make fine birds.

Жьэ лыкІуэ нэхьрэ щхьэ лыкІуэ: Better the head mediator than the mouth intermediary.

Жьэшхуэ тхьэшхуэ и жагьуэщ: A big mouth offends the supreme god.

Жьым щытхьуи щІэр кьаштэ (Zchim schitx'wiy sch'er qaschte): (Praise the old and take the new) 1. Cast not out the foul water till you bring in the clean; 2. Don't throw out your dirty water before you get in fresh.

Зауэ ухуэмеймэ, уи джатэр жану щыгьэль (Zawe wixwemeyme, wiy jater zhanu schighelh): If you wish for peace, be prepared for war.

Зэи нэхьрэ зэгуэр (Zeyi nex're zegwer): Better late than never.

ЗэрыпщІу мыхьумэ, зэрыхьуу щІы: If things don't happen the way you want, do what can be done.

Зэса (есэ) сэгьейщ: 1. Old (bad) habits die hard; 2. Habit is second nature.

ЗэхуэгьафІэ зэфІэкІуэд кьыхокІ.

Зэщыгугь мэунэхьу: (He who relies on other people gets ruined) Rely on yourself.

Зэщыгугь хужьгьэшхщ (Zeschigwgh xwzchgheshxsch): (He who relies on other people ends up eating husked millet) Everybody's business is nobody's business.

- ЗекІуэкІейм лъашэ уещІри, дыхъэшхыкІейм Іушэ уещІ:** A bad campaign makes you limp, bad laughter makes your mouth crooked.
- Зи бзэ ІэфІ щынэр анитІ (мэлитІ) ящІоф** (Ziy bze 'ef' schiner aniyt' (meliyt') yasch'of; щІэфын=to suck [of cubs kittens, etc.]): Soft fire makes sweet malt.
- Зи бзэ ІэфІым блэр гъуэмбым къреш:** (A sweet talker lures the snake out of the hole) Soft fire makes sweet malt.
- Зи гупкІэ уисым и уэрэд жыІэ (ежъу)** (Ziy gwpch'e wiysim yi wered zhi'e [yezchu]): (Sing the air of the person in whose cart you ride) Do in Rome as the Romans do.
- Зи мыІуэху зезыхуэм и щхъэм баш техуэнщ** (Ziy mi'wexw zeizixwem yi schhem bash teixwensch): (He who interferes in other people's affairs will have a stick falling on his head) 1. Mind your own business; 2. Don't poke your nose into other people's affairs; 3. Every tub must stand on its own bottom.
- Зи бысым зыхъуэжым чыщІыхъу хуаукІ** (Ziy bisim zix'wezhim chits'ix'w xwawich'): (A mere male-kid is slaughtered for him who changes his original host) A guest was bound to knock at the door of the person who received him on his first visit. Seeking another lodging was considered a flagrant contravention of customary law. The new host was bound to receive the errant visitor, but he indicated his displeasure by slaughtering a mere goat for him. Although goat meat is in no way inferior to other kinds of flesh, it is the symbolism that is important in this regard. There was a redemption price imposed on the guest for such a 'misdemeanor' decided by a special village council and payable to the insulted party, i.e. the original host.
- Зи жъэ зэІумыщІэм я гухэль зэрыщІэркъым:** If you don't open your mouth, no one will know what goes on in your heart.
- Зи щхъэ мыузым уи щхъэуз хуумыІуатэ:** Don't relate news of your headache to someone who doesn't have a headache.
- Зи Іыхъэ зыфІэмащІэм хъэм фІешх** (Ziy 'ihe zif'emasch'em hem f'eishx): The lot of the person who thinks it is too little gets eaten by the dog. Don't be greedy!
- Зи Іуэ ит нэхърэ зи щхъэ ит:** Better to have in the head than in the penfold.

Зрат нэхьрэ зыт (Zrat nex're zit): It is better to give than to take.

Зы жьэм жьэдыхьэр жьищэм жьэдохьэ.

Зы махуаем зумыгьэлI,

зы махуэлIым зумыгьашэ,

зы дзэшхуэм зумыгьэхь.

Зыумысым и щхьэр сэм пиупщIыркьым (Zizumisim yi schher sem piywipsch'irqim): A fault confessed is half redressed.

Зызыгьэгусэ Iыхьэншэщ: A sulker does not get his share (see associated saying *Уи Iыхьэ зыIэрыгьыхьы, итIанэ зыгьэгусэ*).

Зым и щэхур щэхуши, тIум я щэхур нахуэщ: (When two know it, it's no longer a secret) When three know it, all know it.

Зым ищIэр щэхуши, тIум ящIэр нахуэщ: (When two know it, it's no longer a secret) When three know it, all know it.

Зыщытхьур кьэгьани яубыр кьашэ: Don't betroth the one they compliment, take the one that they censure.

ЗыщIэпхьым кьыпщIехьыж (ПщIэ зыхуэпщIым кьыпхуешIыж, жыхуиIэщ): Honour him that honours thee.

ЗыIурыдзэ нэхьрэ зыдэдзых (Бгьуэтыр зэуэ зыIурыбдзэ нэхьрэ гьэтIыльыгьэ щIы, жыхуиIэщ): Save for a rainy day.

И ныбэ нэщI и Iэ телъыжын (Yi nibe nesch' yi 'e teilhizhin): A clean fast is better than a dirty breakfast.

Имыль кьольэт (Фочыр нэщIщ жыпIэу уримыджэгу, узэдауэ кьыщIэкIыу щIэщхьу кьызэрыпщыщIын пщIэнукьым, жыхуиIэщ. Do not play with a gun—it might be loaded).

Ин жыIэ цIыкIу Iуатэщ.

Иужь акьыл нэхьрэ ипэ акьыл: Good sense is better at the beginning than at the end.

Куэд зыльэгьуам, куэд ещIэ: The more you see, the more you know.

Куэд кьыубжмэ, уи тхьэмадэжь и цIэри кьыхэхуэнщ: If you chatter a lot, even the name of your father-in-law will fall off. [According to Circassian customs a woman never called her parents-in-law, husband, or her brothers-in-law by their names. Instead, she used pet names, which were secretive appellations that she never divulged outside the family circle]

КІапсэр кІыхьмэ, фІыши, псалъэр кІэщІмэ, нэхьыфІыжщ: It is good if the rope is long; it is even better if there are less words. Silence is golden

КІэпІейкІэр зымылътэр кІэпІейкІэ и уасэкьым (КІэпІейкІэ=copeck (one hundredth of a rouble)): He who doesn't take care of his pennies is not worth a penny.

КьакІуэ и Іыхьэ ІыхьэхэмыІуэщ.

Кьан хуэщІэ фІыщІэ иІэкьым.

Кьэмыс-нэмыс тІысыпІэщІэкьуш.

Кьоджэ нэхьыжьщ: It is the elder that calles.

Кьоуэм уемыуэжмэ, Іэ пфІэту укьищІэркьым: If you don't hit back he who hits you, he will think that you don't have a hand.

Кьыдыхьэр думыхуж, дэкІыжыр умыубыд: Don't turn out he who comes to you, and don't hold back he who wants to leave.

КьыпкІэльымыкІуэм узыкІэльыгьэкІуэнукьым.

КьыптекІуэ льэщщ: He who overcomes you is strong.

КьыптекІуэр гугьуш: What overwhelms you is difficult.

КьуэфІми кьуэ бзаджэми адэ щІэин ухуэмылльыхьуэ.

Кьуэшрокьуэр пІащІэри унакьым: 1. More haste, less speed; 2. Fool's haste is no speed; 3. Hasty climbers have sudden falls; 4. Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow; 5. Slow and steady wins the race; 6. Slow and sure.

Кхьуэ етІэхьу кхьуэци кьыкІэропщІэ (Q'we yet'ex'w q'wetsiy qich'eropsch'e): He who scrubs every pig he sees will not long be clean himself.

Лажьэ жьы хьуркьым (Лажьэ – гукьеуэ, нэщхьеягьуэ) (Lazche zchi x'wrqim): Grief never grows old.

Льякьуэ псынщІэ вей хэпкІэщ (Lhaqwe psinsch'e vey xepch'esch): (A hasty foot jumps in the dung) 1. Hasty climbers have sudden falls; 2. More haste, less speed.

ЛьапэкIэ хыфIэбдээр дзапэкIэ кьощтэж: What you flippantly discard with the tip of your foot, you will redeem with the tips of your teeth.

Льэпкьыр зэкьуэтмэ – льэщц (Lhepqir zeqwetme – lheschs): There is strength in union.

Лэным лыгэ хэлыщ: There is courage in death.

Лы здашэ щIэупщIэркьым: A man does not ask where he is being taken.

Лы и псалэ епцIыжыркьым: A man keeps his word.

Лы пхам лы еуэркьым (L'i pхам l'i yewerqim): Never strike a tethered man.

Лы псори лыкьыми фыз псори фызкьым: Not all men are men, and not all women are women.

Лы хахуэр утыкум шошабэ, лы шабэр утыкум шокIий (Утыку=square in village where games are played, performances take place, dances are held, etc.): The brave man turns gentle in the village square; the soft man turns to screams in the square.

Лым зиггэгусэркьым.

Лыгээр Iыхэмыгуэщц: Courage is a lot that is not shared.

ЛыкIуэ яукIыркьым (L'ik'we yawk'irqim): Don't kill the messenger.

ЛыфIыр бэ дьдэщи, лыфI дьдэр зырызщ: There is no counting good men, but very good men are very rare indeed.

Лыхужь и лэужь кIуэдыркьым (И цIэр, иггэхьахэр кьонэж, жыхуиIэщ): (A hero's trail is never lost) Heroes live forever.

Лыхур фыз дэубзэщи, лыбзыр фыз дэуейщ: A real man pays compliments to his wife, whereas an effeminate man beats up his wife.

МафIэ нэхур «благгэщ» жыпIэу умыкIуэ, хэ банэ макьыр «жыжгэщ» жыпIэу кьыумыгганэ.

Мащэ зытI йохуэж (Masche(r) (qe)zit'(ir) yoxwez): (He who digs a (the) hole falls in it) 1. Curses like chickens come home to roost; 2. A dose of one's own medicine; 3. He that mischief hatches, mischief catches.

Мащэм зэ ихуэр набгъэщи, тIэу ихуэр нэфш: He who falls once in the hole is short-sighted, he who falls twice is blind.

Мащэм зэ ихуэр нэфши, тIэу ихуэр гуншэщ: He who falls once in the hole is blind, he who falls twice has no vision.

МащIэм зытезыгъэгусэм, куэдри фIыщIэ ищIынкъым.

Мэзрэ мазэххэрэ уи щэху шумьIуатэ.

Мэкъу мащIи кыумышь, мэкъу бэхьи умышьу.

МыхъумыщIэу ирагъэджар ебгъэджэжыну гугъуц: 1. Like teaching an old dog new tricks; 2. Old (bad) habits die hard.

Мыщэфэ Iэрымыльхэм гуащэр шумьIэгугъ, гъусэ мыхъунум ущыгугъыу мыщэм уемыбэн (Mischafe 'erimilhem gwascher schumighegwgh, ghwse mix'wnum wischigwghu mischem weimiben): (Don't promise the lady the bear skin that you don't have) 1. Catch the bear before you sell his skin; 2. Don't count your chickens before they (are) hatch(ed); 3. Never fry a fish till it's caught; 4. First catch your hare then cook him; 5. To cook a hare before catching him; 6. Don't eat the calf in the cow's belly; 7. Gut no fish till you get them (Scottish); 8. Don't eat the calf in the cow's belly; 9. To run before one's horse to market.

Мыщашхэ пльагъуу мыщэ лъэужь зумыхуэ (умыльыхуэ) (Mischaschhe plhaghwu mische lhewizch zumixwe (wimilhix'we)): Don't force an open door.

Мыщэ жея кыумышьгъэуш, лIы мышынэ умышьгъэгубжь (Mische zheiya qiumighewish, l'i mishine wimighegwzbzch): (Don't wake up a sleeping bear, don't annoy a fearless man) 1. Let sleeping dogs lie; 2. It is ill to waken sleeping dogs; 3. Don't trouble trouble until trouble troubles you.

Нэ зыдэщымыплъэрэ тхэкIумэ зыщымыдаIуэрэ, бэн зэвыр мыхъумэ, щыIэкъым: Eyes shall see, and ears shall hear.

НэгъуэщIым ишхамкIэ уэ укъэмыкъей: Do not cackle if someone else gets the food.

НэгъуэщIым и щытхъум уэ уримыкъей (Уримыкъей – уримыпагэ): Do not become conceited by compliments directed at somebody else.

Нэмыс здэщымылэм насыпи шылэкъым: 1. Where there is no decency, there is no fortune; 2. Decency and good luck go hand in hand.

Нэмыс пщымы уи щхьэщ зыхуэпщыжыр: The decent things you do you do to maintain your own honour.

Нэмысыншэр насыпыншэщ: He who lacks decency is unfortunate indeed.

Нэпсейр насыпыншэщ: A greedy man is unfortunate indeed.

Нэрылгагьу шытхьур щыбагырыубщ: He who sings your praises in your presence calumniates you behind your back.

Нэфлэгүфлэ и нэ дышэ йуэнтла щлэьщ: The eyes of the cheerful one are full of twisted gold.

Нэхьыжь телушлыкыплэщ (Телушлыкыплэ=place to trim, square): It is to the old that we go for trimming.

Нэхьыжьым жьэ ет, нэхьыщлэм гьуэгу ет: The old has the right of speech, the young has the right of way.

Нэхьыклитым яхэди я нэхьыфлыр кьыхэх: Of two bad things, choose the lesser evil.

Ныбэ лей шылэ мыхьумэ, шхын лей шылэкъым (Nibe 'ey schi'e mix'wme, shxin 'ey schi'eqim): There is no such thing as bad food, but there are bad paunches.

Ныбэм «уи адэ и жьаклэ кьыпыпщли кьилъхьэ» жефэ (Nibem 'Wiy ade yi zchach'e qiriwipsch'iy qiylhhe' zhei'e): (The paunch says: 'Cut off your father's beard and wear it.') If you make your paunch your master, it will lead you to impropriety. [Ныбэм уедафэмэ, емыкфу кьыуигъэхьынущ, жыхуилэщ]

Ныбэр фэ цынэ–лы цынэши зэлуокл (Куэд иплъхьэ хьуну щхьэклэ, иумылхьэ, жыхуилэщ): 1. Do not gluttonize; 2. Do not be a glutton.

Ныбэрыдзэ нэхьрэ щхьэдэдзых (Гьэтфылъыгъэ щфы, жыхуилэщ): Save for a rainy day.

Ныкьуэдыкьуэ нэхьрэ уэдыкьуа: It is better to be emaciated than to be disabled.

Нысэ мыхьунур жьантлажэ мэхьури, мафлэ мыхьунур ищхьэм щолыд.

Пагэм и блыпкь-блащхьэ кьутэгьуафлэщ.

ПашІэгъэлыгъуэ джэгу хэлькъым.

ПерокІэ тхэ нэхърэ, акъылкІэ тхэ: It is the mind that writes, not the pen.

Псалъэ бзаджэ губзаджэщІщ, гурыщхъуэ щІыныр хуэмышугъэщ.

Псалъэ гъуцкІэ хъэщІэ ирагъэкІыжыркъым (Psalhe ghwschech'e hesch'e yiraghech'izhirqim): Fine (kind, or soft) words butter no parsnips.

Псалъэ дахэкІэ куэд пхузэфІэкІынущ (Psalhe daxech'e kwed pxwzef'ech'inusch): Soft fire makes sweet malt.

Псалъэ шабэ гуцабэщІщ: Gentle words make the heart grow softer.

Псалъэ ІэфІыр мэгуцІэри, псалъэ дыджыр мэщІытэ: Nice words dry up, bitter words get wet.

Псапэ куэд хъуркъым: There is no such thing as too much charity.

Псэр ящэри напэ къашэху: They sell their souls to buy consciences.

Псы икІыпІэм (икІыгъуэм) унэмысу, уи кІэр думыхъей (умыІэт) (Psi yich'ip'em (yich'ighwem) winemisu, wiy ch'er dumihey (wimi'et)): 1. Laugh before breakfast you'll cry before supper; 2. Between (the) cup and (the) lip a morsel may slip; 3. There's many a slip ('twixt cup and lip); 4. Never cackle till your egg is laid; 5. Never fry a fish till it's caught; 6. Look before you leap; 7. Don't halloo till you are out of the wood; 8. It's not safe wading in an unknown water.

Псылъэншэу Къурей ихъэркъым (Псылъэ=flask; Къурей—Кавказ лъапэм щыІэ губгъуэшхуэ гуэрым и цІэщ; 'Qwrey' is the name of a large and dry steppe at the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains): Do not enter the Qwrey Steppe without water-flasks.

ПфІэкІуэдам щхъэкІэ умыгъ, къэбгъуэтам щхъэкІи умыгуфІэ: Do not cry over what you have lost, and do not be happy over what you find.

Пхуэмьдэ пэшэгъум мыгъуэ уохъулІэ: The unworthy companion leads you to misfortune.

Пхуэмыфашэ пэшэгъу ищымэ, уи анэ мыгъуэ ищынц: If you make a companion out of an unworthy person, woe unto your mother!

Пхуэмыфашэ шауэгъу умыщI: Be careful whom you choose as a best man.

Пхуэмыхьын хьэлэ кьыумыштэ (Pхwemihin helhe qiumische): Zeal without knowledge (is like a runaway horse).

Ищицэ нэхрэ зы пэж: One truth is better than a hundred lies.

Ищашэр пагэмэ, ябгынэж: If the young woman puts on airs, she will be avoided by all.

Пыл хуэдиз зищыну зигъэшри тхэкIумэкIыхьыр зэгуэдац: The hare burst to smithereens pumping itself to elephant's size.

ИщIэрэ пIыщIарэ (P'asch'ere p'isch'are): (Making haste is like freezing) 1. More haste, less speed; 2. Fool's haste is no speed; 3. Hasty climbers have sudden falls; 4. Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow; 5. Slow and steady wins the race; 6. Slow and sure.

Сэлам лей хьуркьым (Selam ley х'wraqim): It is always opportune to pronounce greetings.

Судым шыфэ пэу иплхьэмэ, вакъапхэ кьипхыжыркьым.

Сымыльагъуу си фIэщ хьунукьым (Similhaghwu siy f'esch х'wnuqim): Seeing is believing.

Такъуэр закъуэ пальэщ, закъуэр лIа пэлытэщ (T'aqwer zaqwe palhesch(iy), zaqwer l'a (schimi'e) pelhitesch): (Two men are like one man, and a single man is like a dead man) 1. One man, no man; 2. The voice of one man is the voice of no one.

Уэшх блэкIам щIакIуэ кIэлыумыштэ(ж) (Weshx blech'am sch'ak'we ch'elhumische(zh)): (After the storm, don't put on the felt cloak) 1. After death the doctor; 2. After dinner, mustard.

Удафэ и акьыл ирефыж: The unruly one drinks up his own mind.

Удын гуауэр мэгушри, псальэ гуауэр гьушыжкьым: The grief caused by a blow dries up, but an offensive word grieves forever.

- Уджалэ нэхьрэ ульэпэрапэмэ нэхьыфIщ** (Wijale nex're wilheperapeme nex'if'sch): A stumble may prevent a fall.
- Уемыгупсысу Iуэху бублэнц—ушыуэнц:** Look before you leap.
- Ужьмэ, жьы хуэдэ шыти, ушIэмэ, шIэ хуэдэ шыт:** If you are old, behave like an elder; if you are young, behave like the young.
- УзэпэгэжIыр кьопэгэжIыж:** Do not put on airs.
- Узэральягьуу уафIощI, узэрафIэщIу уалытэ:** As they see you they make their minds about you, and they accord you consideration accordingly.
- УзрихьэлIэ шхыныфIщ** (Wizriyhel'er shxinif'sch): 1. What you come across (first) is good food; 2. Hunger is the best spice.
- Узэрымыса бысым умыуб** (Wizerimisa bisim wimiwib): Do not condemn a host to whose guest-house you have never been.
- Узэрымытым зумыгьэфIыкI.**
- Узэфэну псым ухэмыубжьытхэ:** (Don't spit in the water from which you need to drink) 1. Don't foul the well, you may need its waters; 2. Never cast dirt into that fountain, of which thou hast sometime drunk; 3. Let every man praise the bridge he goes over.
- Узэфэну псым хьэ хыумыукI** (Wizefenu psim he xiwimiwich'e): (Don't kill the dog in the water from which you need to drink) 1. Don't foul the well, you may need its waters; 2. Never cast dirt into that fountain, of which thou hast sometime drunk; 3. Let every man praise the bridge he goes over.
- Узэчэнджэщын умыгьуэтым, уи пыIэр гьэтIылы ечэнджэщ** (Wizechenjeschin wimighwetim, wiy pi'er ghet'ilhiy yechenjesch): If you can't find somebody to talk things over with, take off your hat and consult it.
- Узэчэнджэщын умыгьуэтмэ, уи пыIэ гьэтIыси ечэнджэщыж:** If you can't find somebody to talk things over with, take off your hat and consult it.
- Узэщэ нэхьрэ узэтэ** (Wizesche nex're wizete): It is better to donate something than sell it very cheap
- Узигьусэм и фэ кьыуапль.**
- УзыгьэтIыс уиубыжыркьым:** He who offers you a seat shall not calumniate you.

УзыдэмыкІуэжын ущыщымыуэ (А зэм узэралъэгъуам хуэдэу ущыту уафІэщынущ, жыхуиІэщ).

Узыдэмыхъэ къуэладжэ лы дэщ: The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.

УзытекІуэм пэкІум уахегъэн (Фащэм, щыгъыным щысхъын хуейщ, иужькІи цІыхум уарихыхъэн щхъэкІэ, жыхуиІэщ).

УзытелІэ нэхрэ къыптелІэ: Who falls for you is better than whom you fall for.

Узыхэдэн щымыІэмэ, щыІэр кыхэх: If you cannot have the best, make the best of what you have.

Узыхэтым захэгъэгъуащэ (Wizixetim zaxegheghwasche): Do in Rome as the Romans do.

Узыхэтым уаймыкІумэ, уи унэ умыкІуэж.

Узыхэфыжыну псым ухэмыубжытхэ: (Don't spit in the water from which you need to drink) 1. Don't foul the well, you may need its waters; 2. Never cast dirt into that fountain, of which thou hast sometime drunk; 3. Let every man praise the bridge he goes over.

Узыщымыгугъын ушыгугъмэ, пхъашэ гъуэгу урижэнщ (Гугъу уехынщ, жыхуиІэщ): If you pin your hopes where you shouldn't, you shall run through a path of woe.

Узыщымысхъри уимыІэххэри зэхуэдэщ: 1. Nothing saved, nothing gained; 2. Waste not, want not.

Уи адэ-анэ яхуэпщІ нэмысыр уи бынми къыпхуащІыжынщ: Respect your parents and your children shall respect you.

Уи анэ зыуб уи щхъэ дэгъэсыс (Пэж жызыІэм дыжыІэ, жыхуиІэщ).

Уи анэ къобэнми зромыгъэуд.

Уи гуащІэ еплъи уи лъэ гъэбакъуэ: (First consider your capability, then take your step) Cut your coat according to the cloth.

Уи гуащІэ еплъи уи лъэ укъуэдий: (First consider your capability, then stretch your legs) Cut your coat according to the cloth.

Уи гур зыхуеІэм уи Іэр лъоІэс.

Уи гъунэгъур бзаджэмэ, щІы хущынэ.

Уи ин жиІэнщ, уи цІыкІу иІуэтэжынщ: Your elders shall say it, and your young shall retell it.

- Уи кѡамэ тІэу кѡуумых, уи псалъэ тІэу жумыІэ:** (Don't draw your dagger twice and don't say you words two times) Be decisive.
- Уи мыгъусэ уи лъатэпс нумыгъапхэ.**
- Уи мыщауэгъу гъусэ умыщІ:** Do not make a companion out of someone who is not your best man.
- Уи напщІэ темыль тумыльхъэ:** Do not put on airs.
- Уи нэ гъапльи уи лъэ гъэуу:** Let your eyes see, and let your legs stand.
- Уи нэ кѡеІэм и псэ еІэж** (Wiy ne qei'em yi pse ye'ezh): Measure for measure.
- Уи псалъэ гъэІэси, уи нэмыс гъэбъдэ:** Tame your words, and enhance your decency.
- Уи пхъэнкІийр уи бжэкъуагъ къуэгъэлыж** (Wiy px'ench'iyр wiy bzheqwagh qweghelhizh): Wash your dirty linen at home.
- Уи тепІэн епльи, уи лъэ укъуэдий:** (Stretch your legs according to the cover) Cut your coat according to the cloth.
- Уи фІым нумытыр мафІэм уфІес.**
- Уи шхын нэхърэ уи нэщхъ.**
- Уи шым ижынур пщІэжын хуейщ:** You must know where your horse will run.
- Уи щхъэ и пІалъэ зэгъэщІэж** (Wiy schhe yi p'alhe zeghesch'ezh): Those who live in glass houses should not throw stones.
- Уи щхъэм пщІэ хуумыщІыжмэ, зыми къыпхуищІынкъым** (Wiy schhem psch'e xwumisch'izhme, zimiy qipxwiysch'inqim): 1. If you don't respect yourself, nobody will respect you; 2. Respect yourself, or no one else will respect you.
- Уи щхъэ(р) мызу боз нумышэкІ (йомышэкІ):** (Don't wind a coarse calico round your head) Don't run after vain pursuits.
- Уи щхъэ хуэпщІыжыр уи нэмыщ.**
- Уи щхъэ хъумэ, си хъыджэбз.**
- Уи Іыхъэ зыІэрыгъыхъи, итІанэ зыгъэгусэ:** First get your share, then sulk (see associated saying 'Зызыгъэгусэ Іыхъэншэщ').
- Уи Іуэху зыхэмылым уи бэлагъ хомыІу (хыумыІу)** (Wiy 'wexw zixemilhim wiy belagh xomi'w [xiwimi'w]): (Do not poke your [flat wooden cooking] trowel into other people's affairs) 1. Mind your own business!; 2. Go about your business!;

3. The cobbler must stick to his last; 4. Don't poke your nose into other people's affairs.

Укьызэрашэ уи шыбэш, узэралъагъу уи гьуэгуш (Япэ зэрызыбгъэлягъуэш, жыхуиІэш).

Укьышалъхум псори гуфІаш, ущылІэжкІэ зыхуэбгъагъыжыфмэ.

УмыгъэтІыль къэпштэжыркъым: Fast (safe, sure) bind, fast (safe, sure) find.

УмышІэм ушІэупшІэныр емькІукъым: It's not a shame to ask (when you don't know).

Унэм зышыгъаси хасэм яыхьэ: First get proper upbringing and education at home and then start joining gatherings.

УпІашІэмэ, уогувэ: (If you make haste you'll be late) 1. More haste, less speed; 2. Fool's haste is no speed; 3. Hasty climbers have sudden falls; 4. Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow; 5. Slow and steady wins the race; 6. Slow and sure.

УпІашІэрэ упІышІарэ: (Making haste is like freezing) 1. More haste, less speed; 2. Fool's haste is no speed; 3. Hasty climbers have sudden falls; 4. Too swift arrives as tardy as too slow; 5. Slow and steady wins the race; 6. Slow and sure.

УпшІэ шІэшхуркъым, шІэшху шІэнэркъым.

УпшІэ ІупшІэ хэлькъым.

Ухеймэ улъэшш (Wixeyme wilheschsch): (If you are innocent, you are strong) A clear conscience laughs at false accusations.

Учэнджащэм ушыуэркъым (Wichenjaschem wischiwerqim): (If you take counsel, you won't err) Good counsel does no harm.

Ушакъуэ нэхьрэ утакъуэ (ИмыуасэкІэ пуду пшэ нэхьрэ, птымэ нэхьыфІш, жыхуиІэш): It is better to donate something than sell it very cheap.

УщыкІмэ икІэ ухьунш (see also *ШчыкІыр икІэ мэхьу*): The conceited person becomes the worst.

Ущымытхьушэ – пхуэубыжынкъым.

Фадэм текІуа щыІэкъым: No one has ever prevailed upon drink.

ФІэхьус лей хьуркъым (F'ex'ws ley х'wrqim): It is always opportune to pronounce greetings.

Фей зезыхьэр фей мэху (F'ey zeiziher f'ey mex'w): He who scrubs every pig he sees will not long be clean himself.

Фиы зыщIэ унщIэжрэ?: If someone does you a good turn, do you ask him why?

Фиы кьыпхуэзыщIэ фиы хуэщIэж: Repay kindness with kindness.

Фиыр умыщIыхумэ, нэхь льяпIэр кьыхэх: If you can't choose according to quality, pick the more expensive.

Хабзэ льялукьыми, Iумахуэ Iуэхутхьэбзэжкьым: Etiquette is not begging, and gentle talking is not servility.

Хабзэм кьемызэгьыр и бийщ: He who cannot get accustomed to the etiquette, fights it.

ХабзэмышIэ емькIухьщ: He/She who is ignorant of customs and traditions perpetrates improprieties.

ХабзэмышIэ щIыкIейщ: He/She who is ignorant of etiquette finds it difficult to do things properly.

Хабзэр убзэ зыфIэщIым хуэщIэнуи ныкьуэр кьегьанэ: Leave off half of what you would do for someone who thinks that etiquette is servile attention.

Хабзэр убзэнкьым, кьалэныр Iульхьэнкьым: Etiquette is not servile attention, and duty is not bribery.

Хэдэ мэдакьуэри хэпхуэ IыхьэфIэщ.

Хэдэ мэдакьуэри хэплэ мэпльакьуэ.

Хэдэ мэдэху.

Хэпльыхь Iыхьэншэщ: 1. Scornful dogs will eat dirty puddings; 2. To mistake shadow for the substance.

Хуэму укIуэмэ, нэхьыбэ пкIунщ (Xwemu wik'weme, nex'ibe pk'wansch): Make haste slowly.

Хужьгэ матэр гьэкIуэди, хужьгэ гуэн зыIэрыгьэхьэ (Xwzchghe mater ghek'wediy, xwzchghe gwen zi'erighehe): (Lose the husked millet basket, but not before getting the husked millet granary) 1. Throw out a minnow to catch a whale; 2. Sometimes the best gain is to lose.

Хьэдзыгьуанэгьуэм кьуацэжIэ ухэмыуэ (Hedzighwaneghwem qwatsech'e wixemiwe): Let sleeping dogs lie.

- Хьэдэр куэдрэ зепхьэмэ, мэ цоу, Луэхур куэдрэ зепхьэмэ, мэляхьэ:** If you keep a corpse for long, it will smell; if you drag a business too long, matters will become complicated.
- Хьэджафэ банэркьым, лхукьуэшо хьуанэркьым** (Хьэджафэ=borzoi, Siberian wolf-hound; лхукьуэшо= serf; slave; хьуэнэн=to use foul language; to curse).
- Хьэрэмым хьэрэм кьешэ:** Evil begets evil.
- ХьэфI дэпльейр хьэфI мэхьури, шыфI дэпльейр шыфI мэхьу:** He who looks up to a good dog becomes a good dog, and he who looks up to a good horse becomes a good horse.
- Хьэ хей умыкI, фьз хей иумыгьэкIыж:** Don't kill an innocent dog, and don't divorce a blameless woman.
- Хьэху хьэху тыж умыщI:** What is hired is not for hire.
- Хьэху яхь шыIэщи, хьэху хьыж шыIэкьым:** It is easier to hire out something than to give it back.
- Хьэхурэ щIыхуэрэ зэIахыу хабзэжьщ:** Hiring and borrowing are ancient customs.
- ХьэщIапIэ кIуэуэ кьинэжам хуэдэу** (Hesch'ap'e k'wewe qiynesham xwedew): The best fish smell when they are three days old.
- ХьэщIапIэрынэр емыкIуш** (Hesch'ap'eriner yemik'wsch): 1. It is in bad taste to overstay one's welcome; 2. The best fish smell when they are three days old.
- ХьэщIэ гьунэгьу нэхрэ хьэщIэ жыжьэ нэхь льяпIэщ** (Hesch'e ghwneghw nex're hesch'e zhizche nex' lhap'esch'): A guest from far away is dearer than a guest from nearby.
- ХьэщIэ кьашэ шыIэщи, хьэщIэ ишыж шыIэкьым** (Hesch'e qashe schi'eschiy, hesch'e yishizh schi'eqim): Guests come easily, but do not as easily go.
- ХьэщIэ лей шыIэкьым** (Hesch'e ley schi'eqim): 1. A guest is never in excess (unwanted); 2. No guest should be regarded as a burden; 3. All guests are welcome.
- ХьэщIэ мыхьу жьантIакIуэщ** (Hesch'e mix'w zchant'ak'wesch): The unworthy guest heads for the place of honour (away from door, near hearth).

ХьэщIэмыхьу жьантIакIуэщ (Hesch'emix'w zchant'ak'wesch):
The unworthy guest heads for the place of honour (away from door, near hearth).

ХьэщIэр шхэм—бжэм йопль (Hesch'er shxem—bzhem yoplh):
After eating the guest looks at the door.

ХьэщIэр шхэмэ, бжэм йопль (Hesch'er shxeme, bzhem yoplh):
After eating the guest looks at the door.

ХьэщIэ щIалэ щыIэкъым (Hesch'e sch'ale schi'eqim): 1. There is no such thing as a young guest; 2. A guest is a guest. [All guests must be respected, no matter how young]

ХьуэхьукIэ узэхыхьэу, хьуэнкIэ узэхэмыкIыж: To start with a toast and end up with a curse.

Цу псори дыщэкъым (Ts'u psoriy discheqim): All is not gold that glitters.

Цыхум и цIэр езым зыфIещыж (Цыхум и дуней тетыкIэм хуэдафэ кьраплъ, жыхуиIэш): Man makes his own name.

ЦыхуфI и тхьэкIумэ дэгущ: (The ear of the good person is deaf) Hear no evil.

ЦыхуфI и Iэнэ хьэзырщ: (The table of a good person is always ready) Keep your table always ready (for guests).

Чэнджашэ щыуэркъым: 1. He who takes counsel errs not; 2. Good counsel does no harm.

Шэрэ льырэ зэхакIэркъым: They don't pour milk and blood into one another.

Шэхур хуабэу яхуз, фызыр щIалэу ягъасэ: Wax is compressed while hot, a woman is educated when she is young.

Шу хьэщIэр ягъэшэсыж, лъэс хьэщIэр пщIантIэм дашыж (Shu hesch'er yagheshesizh, lhes hesch'er psch'ant'em dashizh): They see to it that a guest on horseback mounts his horse on

leaving, and they accompany the unmounted guest across the yard.

Шхын нэхэрэ шхальэ (Шхальэ=feeding-trough; manger): Mind the feeding-trough before food.

ШыгъупIастэм уемьльэпауэ (ШыгъупIастэ=bread-and-salt): Do not scoff at meager food.

Шыдыр удафэмэ, тало мэхьу (Удэфэн=to misbehave; to conduct oneself in an unruly manner; тало=cholera): If the jack-ass misbehaves, it is struck with cholera.

Шым еуи дыхьэ, ельэдэкьауи кьыдэкIыж: Whip the horse and approach, spur the horse and leave.

Шыр птымэ, шхуэри дэщIыгьу: If you give the horse, include the bridle.

Шыуаным ильыр зымышхыжынур гуэным ильым тогужьейкI: He who will not eat up what's in the cauldron shall worry about what's in the granary.

ШыфIым кьамышы хуейкьым (Shif'im qamishi xweyqim): (A good horse is in no need of a whip) A good horse should be seldom spurred.

Шыцуэс кьесу узэрысым уимыкI (Шыцуэс=light snow): Stay put where you are, if light snow is falling.

ЩакIуэ кIуэгьуэм хьэв япIыркьым, гузэвэгьуэм кьан кьахьыркьым: They don't raise the puppy when it's time to go out for the hunt, and they don't bring in a ward in time of trouble. [According to a peculiar custom, the *ataliqate*, children of princes and nobles were entrusted at an early age to vassals to be raised and trained in a military fashion. This institution played a major role in strengthening relationships between the princes and their nobles and among nobles themselves. The separation also served to lessen emotional attachment between parents and their children. This Spartan upbringing was necessary, as death in battle was only a heartbeat away. In ancient times, this institution was more strictly adhered to and it was not confined to any particular caste. Later it came to be associated only with the upper classes. When it was time to entrust the charge, which was between the ages 6-10, a boy was

mounted on a horse, a girl in a carriage, and taken to the foster-home, together with ample supplies of fabrics and produce. The foster-father, *ataliq* (атэлыкъ), was expected to teach his ward, *qan* (къан) or *p'ur* (пIур), many social and martial skills.]

Щауэр зыгъэшауэр гуащэщи, гуащэр зэрыгуащэр и щэнш (Щэн=manners; disposition, character).

Щауэ укIытэх хьыджэбзхэкIыжщ (Schawe wich'itex x'ijebzhexh'izhsch): Faint heart never won fair lady.

ЩхьэкIуэ зышх щхьэшхыгъуэ йохуэ (ЩхьэкIуэ=offence, injury, wrong; resentment, grudge).

Щхьэр къэхь, жаIэмэ, пыIэр къахь.

Щхьэр псэумэ, пыIэ шыщIэркъым: If the head is alive, it will not lack a cap.

Щыгъынибгъуэ нэхрэ теубгъуэн (Щыгъын куэд уиIэ нэхрэ тепIэнщIэлъын, жыхуиIэщ): To have your bedding is better than nine complements of clothes.

ЩыжаIэм шыпаупщIыркъым: It is rude to interrupt while someone is talking.

ЩыкIыр икIэ мэхьу (see also *УщыкIмэ икIэ ухьуниц*): The conceited person becomes the worst.

Щымыуэ и шыуагъэ яшхыркъым: To err is human.

ЩытхьукIей нэхрэ убыкIафIэ: A good calumny is better than a bad compliment.

ЩыщIэ нэхрэ мащIэшх (Schisch'e nex're masch'eshx): A little is better than nothing.

ЩIакIуэ нэхрэ уэшх нэхь благъэщ: 1. Rain is nearer than the great coat; 2. Always be prepared.

ЩIалэгъуэр щхьэгъэрытщ (УщIалэху уIуэхутхьэбзащIэщ, жыхуиIэщ): While you are young, you are a servant. [One or two young men *schhegherit* (щхьэгъэрыт) were assigned to wait on the table at a Circassian feast, being usually the youngest of the attendants. Young though they might have been, they were supposed to be fully conversant with table etiquette, and they got their cues from (the subtle gestures of) the *themade* (тхьэмадэ). They were also expected to divine the wishes and requirements of the guests with minimal conversation. It was the custom to

present them with goblets and to pronounce a toast in their honour]

ЩЭ ягээЮщ щхэкЭ, жьы яущийжрэ?: Do not teach an old dog new tricks.

ЩЭм дежи жьым дэшэ (Sch'em deizchiy zchim deshxe): Travel with the young and eat with the elders.

ЩЭныгээ зимыЭр нэфым хуэдэщ: He who lacks knowledge is like a blind man.

ЯмыгээпсэлъэлI яукIыркъым.

Япэ джэлам ущЭмынакЭ: Do not poke fun at him who falls first.

Япэ лIар япэ ирах: First to die, first to be removed.

Япэ лЭм джэбыныр ейщ: The shroud belongs to him who dies first.

Эщми псэ Ютщ (ГущIэгъу хуэщI, жыхуиIэщ): Even cattle have souls (treat them kindly).

Ией пщIауэ фIы ущымыгугъ ('Eу [e bzaje, e e] psch'awe f'i wischimigwgh): 1. Reap as you have sown; 2. As you sow you shall mow; 3. As the man sows, so he shall reap; 4. As you make your bed, so you must lie on it; 5. To lie (sleep) in (on) the bed one has made; 6. To make one's bed, and have to lie in (on) it; 7. A bad beginning makes a bad ending; 8. As the call, so the echo; 9. Every bullet has its billet; 10. Curses like chickens come home to roost.

Юэхухутэ ялIыркъым, лIыкIуэ яукIыркъым: 1. He who reveals a matter is not slain, and a messenger is not killed; 2. Don't kill the messenger (if you don't like the message).

Юэхутхьэбзэри щIыхуэщ: Even a service is a debt.

Appendix 2

Sayings & Expressions Associated with Hospitality Traditions

Хьэщлагъэ Iуэхум епха псалъэжъхэри псалъафэхэри

The sayings and expressions associated with a particular aspect of the folklore of a people shed a bright light on its details and intricacies, and citing them in profusion gives credence to the account and bestows authenticity upon it. The relevant customs and traditions associated with hospitality and food-taking are also encapsulated and preserved in these vessels of etiquette and good behaviour. The collection of sayings and expressions could be used as an instructions manual or handbook on proper conduct and good manners. For foreign visitors (and indeed for Circassians unaware of the intricacies of the elaborate institution of hospitality) wishing to enjoy Caucasian hospitality to the full without unpleasant hitches, it is a convenient reference on do's and dont's.

The experiences of a nation are the fertile ground from which wisdom and sagacity are reaped. It is hoped that the sayings and expressions (in Kabardian and Adigean) offered here would prove tasty pickings of that rich harvest.

Hospitality & respect for guests

- **Adige(m) hesch'e yi sch'asesch** (Адыгэ[м] хьэщIэ и щIасэщ): A guest is the beloved of the Circassian. [In Adigean: Адыгэмэ хьакIэр якIас; *or* УнэгъуакIэ хьакIэ икIас]
- **Adige mighwe, shighwre p'astere** (Адыгэ мыгъуэ, шыгъурэ пIастэрэ):¹ Even the most indigent of Circassians will prepare food (of sorts) (literally: salt and boiled millet dumplings) for you. [See next entry]
- **Adigem ya nekh mighwemiy shighwre p'astere qipxweische** (Адыгэм я нэхъ мыгъуэми шыгъурэ пIастэрэ кыпхуещтэ): Even the most indigent of Circassians will prepare food (of sorts) (literally: salt and boiled millet dumplings) for you. [See preceding entry]
- **Adigem ya nekh mighweriy (themischch'eri) bisimsch!** (Адыгэм я нэхъ мыгъуэри [тхьэмыщкIэри] бысымщ!): Even the most indigent of Circassians will be more than ready to play the host. [In Adigean: Адыгэмэ анахъ тхьамыкIэри бысым]
- **Adige yi hesch'e bidap'e yissch** (Адыгэ и хьэщIэ быдапIэ исщ): The guest of the Circassian is safe as if protected by a fortress. [It was the sacred duty of the host to ensure the safety of his guest and to uphold his honour, with weapon in hand, and to the death, if need be. In Adigean: Адыгэ хьакIэ(р) пытапIэ ис]
- **Hach'er pstewme (or pstewmiy) ap** (ХьакIэр пстэумэ [*e* пстэуми] ап): The guest always comes first. [Adigean]
- **Hesch'e ley schi'eqim** (ХьэщIэ лей щыIэкъым): 1. A guest is never in excess (unwanted); 2. No guest should be regarded as a burden; 3. All guests are welcome. [In Adigean: ХьэкIэ лые щыIэп]
- **Hesch'em nasip qidok'we** (ХьэщIэм насып кыдокIуэ): With the guest arrives good fortune. [In Adigean: ХьакIэ кьакIомэ, насып кыдэкIо]
- **Hesch'er Them yi l'ik'wesch** (ХьэщIэр Тхьэм и лыкIуэщ): A guest is a messenger from God.
- **Hesch'e sch'ale schi'eqim** (ХьэщIэ щIалэ щыIэкъым): 1. There is no such thing as a young guest; 2. A guest is a guest. [All guests

must be respected, no matter how young. In Adigean: ХьэкIэ кIалэ хьурэп]

- **Hesch'eschizch nesch'ir wetersch** (ХьэщIэщыжь нэщIыр уэтэрщ): An unused old guest-house is like winter quarters for cattle.
- **Hesch'ew qipxwek'wame, wiy zhaghweghwriy (wiy) nibzcheghwsch** (ХьэщIэу кыпхуэкIуамэ, уи жагьуэгьури [уи] ныбжьэгьуш): If he comes to you as a guest, even the sworn enemy is your friend. [In Adigean: ХьакIэ кыпфакIомэ, уиджэгьогьури ныбджэгьу]
- **Pf'emasch'er hesch'e 'wssch** (ПфIэмащIэр хьэщIэ Iусщ): The food you spare is victuals for your guests. [Шхыным ущысхьмэ, хьэщIэ шхын мэхьу, жыхуиIэщ]
- **Psalhe ghwsch'ech'e hesch'e yiraghech'izhirqim** (Псалъэ гьушэкIэ хьэщIэ ирагьэкIыжыркьым; гьушэ=dry, 'empty'): Fine (kind, or soft) words butter no parsnips.
- **Qak'wexe ya winesch** (КьакIуэхэ я унэщ): 1. It is a house for all comers; 2. All are welcome in this house.
- **Ts'ifisch'w hach'e shimich'** (ЦыфышIу хьакIэ щымыкI): A good person will always have guests (visiting him). [Adigean]
- **Ts'ixwf' yi 'ene hezirsch** (ЦыхуфI и Iэнэ хьэзырщ): (The table of a good person is always ready) Keep your table always ready (for guests).
- **Tsw nish nahiy nesch'o-gwsch'w** (Цу ныщ нахьы нэшIо-гушIу): Better a cheerful reception than an ox slaughtered in your honour. [Adigean. «Цу кыпфаукIын нахьы кыпфэчэфхэу кыппэгьокIыхэмэ нахьышIу» зыфиIу]
- **'Wexwm yaper f'ex'wssch** (Iуэхум япэр фIэхьусщ): Greeting precedes conversation.
- **Yeblaghe ziy bem yi bin mezh'al'erqim** (Еблаггэ зи бэм и бын мэжалIэркьым): The children of the person who receives many guests never go hungry. [In Adigean: Еблаггэр зибэм ибын мэлакIэрэп]
- **Yerisqinshem yi duneyr ch'if'sch** (Ерыскьыншэм и дунейр кIыфIш): His world is truly bleak he who has no victuals in his house.

- **Zhile(r) zighashxe(r) shxin schhech'e mal'e** (Жылэ(р) зыгъашхэ(р) шхын щхъэкIэ малIэ): (He who feeds the villagers, i.e. the cook, is himself dying of hunger) 1. The cobbler's wife is the worst shod; 2. Wilful waste makes woeful want; 3. Waste not want not. [Зи гугъу ищIыр пщафIэрщ; i.e. the cook]
- **Ziywine wiyherer qipfechefme, qiotaghem fed** (Зиунэ уихьэрэр кыпфэчэфмэ, кыютаггэм фэд): If the host gives you a hearty welcome, it is as good as a gift. [Adigean]
- **Ziywine wiyherer qipfechefme, qipfashterer 'esch'w** (Зиунэ уихьэрэр кыпфэчэфмэ, кыпфаштэрэр IэшIу): If the host receives you cordially, then whatever they serve you would taste good. [Adigean]

Host-guest relationship

- **'Aner bisimim yi'of, teilhir hach'em yi'ofsch'en** (Iанэр бысымым иIоф, телъыр хъакIэм иIофшIэн): The table is the business of the host (to prepare and set); what is on it is the business of the guest. [Adigean]
- **Bisimir ghwaz, hach'er ghozaj** [Бысымыр гъуаз, хъакIэр гъозадж]: The host is the leader (guide); the guest is the object of splendour. [Adigean]
- **Bisimir hach'em yi'oftabg** [Бысымыр хъакIэм иIофтабг]: The host is his guest's messenger. [Adigean]
- **Bisimir hesch'em yi 'wexwthebzasch'esch** (Бысымыр хъэщIэм и IуэхутхьэбзашIэш): The host is his guest's servant.
- **Bisim negw yixigh** (Бысым нэгу ихыгъ): Said of a hospitable, friendly host (with respect to guest). [Adigean]
- **Biyyizch wimigheblaghiy, wiy ade yi blaghezch wimibgine** (Бийжь умыгъэблагъи, уи адэ и благъэжь умыбгынэ): Do not invite your old enemy (to your house), and do not desert your father's old relative.
- **Hach'ak'o wik'o psch'oyighome, hach'ew qipfak'orer ghasch'o** (ХъакIакIо укIо пшIоигг'омэ, хъакIэу кыпфакIорэр

гъашIo): If you like to go on visits (as a guest), you must also be prepared to indulge your guests. [Adigean]

- **Hach'em qek'onir yezh yi'of, k'ozhinir bisimim yi'of** (ХъакIэм къэкIoныр ежъ иIoф, кIoжъыныр бысымым иIoф): It is the business of the guest to decide when he comes; but his leaving is the business of the host. [Adigean]
- **Hach'em qek'onir—yi'of, k'ozhinir—bisim yi'of** (ХъакIэм къэкIoныр—иIoф, кIoжъыныр—бысым иIoф): *See preceding entry.* [Adigean]
- **Hach'em yishire yimasch'ore** (ХъакIэм ишырэ имашIoрэ): (Literally: The guest's horse and fire) Take care of your guest's horse, and make sure that he is kept warm. [Adigean]
- **Hach'er ghasch'o, ts'ifisch'wr Ihite** (ХъакIэр гъашIo, цIыфышIур лыгтэ): Indulge your guests, and honour good men. [Adigean]
- **Hesch'ef' yi bisimibzhe ze'wxasch** (ХъэщIэфI и бысымыбжэ зэIухаш): The (door of the) host's guest-room is open for a good guest. [In Adigean: ХъэкIэшIу ибысымыпчъэ зэIухыгъ]
- **Hesch'e ghwneghw nex're hesch'e zhizche nex' Ihap'esch'** (ХъэщIэ гъунэгъу нэхърэ хъэщIэ жыжъэ нэхъ лъапIэщ): A guest from far away is dearer than a guest from nearby. [This is in appreciation of the hardship borne by a foreign guest to make the visit. In Adigean: ХъэкIэ гъунэгъу нахъи хъэкIэ чыжъэр нахъ лъапI]
- **Hesch'em yi yerisqir qidok'we** (ХъэщIэм и ерыскъыр къыдокIуэ): The guest's victuals arrive with him. [In Adigean: ХъакIэм рызыкъыр къыдэкIo]
- **Hesch'e qak'weme (qek'wensch) zhi'iy ghet'ilh, kwedre schilhasch zhip'ew wimishx(izh)** (ХъэщIэ къакIуэмэ [къэкIуэнщ] жыи гъэтIыль, куэдрэ щыльащ жыпIэу умышх[ыж]): Say 'What if we have a guest?' ('We will have a guest,') and store (the guest's share), but do not consume it, saying: 'It has been lying there for so long'. [Always be prepared to receive guests. In Adigean: ХъакIэ къэкIoшт Iори гъэIыль, бэрэ щыльыгъ пIoу умышхыжъ]

- **Hesch'er bisimim yi ghersch** (ХьэщIэр бысымым и гьэрщ): The guest is his host's captive. [In Adigean: ХьакIэр бысымым игьэр]
- **Hesch'er zheschiysch yisme, binim yaschisch mex'wzh** (ХьэщIэр жэщиц исмэ, быным ящыц мэхъуж): If the guest stays for three nights, he becomes part of the family. [In Adigean: ХьакIэр чэщиц хьумэ, бысымым щыц мэхъужьы; *or* ХьакIэр чэщицэ щысымэ унагъом (*e* быным) щыц мэхъу]
- **Pschedjizch hesch'e ghehesch'eghwaf'esch** (Пщэдджыжь хьэщIэ гьэхьэщIэгъуафIэщ): A morning guest is easy to host. [In Adigean: Пчэдыжь хьакIэр хьакIэгъошIу; *or* Пчэдыжь хьакIэр хьакIэ хьурэп]
- **Qak'orem yi'ah xemi'w** (КьакIорэм иIахь хэмыIу): Do not pierce (touch, consume) the visitor's share (of food). [Adigean]
- **Qak'we psoriy blaghesch** (КьакIуэ псори благъэщ): All those who visit are considered relatives.
- **Qeiblagher t'u mex'w** (Къеблагъэр тIу мэхъу): 'Welcome' is said twice. [Adigean]
- **Winaghasch'e hesch'exwef'sch** (УнагъащIэ хьэщIэхуэфIщ): The household of newly-weds is most amenable to receiving guests. [In Adigean: УнэгъуакIэр хьэкIэфэшIу]
- **Wineqwesch hesch'e ghef'eghweysch** (Унэкъуэщ хьэщIэ гьэфIэгъуейщ): It is hard to spoil a guest who is a kindred relative (bearing the same surname). [In Adigean: Унэкъош хьакIэр гьэшIогъуай]
- **Wiy hesch'eriy ghaf'e, wiy qweshriy f'iwe lhaghw** (Уи хьэщIэри гьафIэ, уи къуэшири фIуэ льягъу): Indulge your guest but love thy brother. [In Adigean: УихьакIэ гьашIо, пкъош шIу льягъу]
- **Wizigheblagherer ghebleghezh, wizighepiyirer ghepiyizh** (Узыгъэблагъэрэр гьэблэгъэжь, узыгъэпыирэр гьэпыижь): He who welcomes you, welcome him back; he who shows you enmity, be his enemy in return. [Adigean]
- **Yawibir bisim sch'i** (Яубыр бысым шIы): Choose as your host the person whom the people say spiteful things about. [In Adigean: Аубырэр бысым шIы]

- **Zi hesh' em zi hesh' e yi zhaghweschiy hesh' iyt' ir bisimim yi zhaghwesch** (Зы хьэщIэм зы хьэщIэ и жагъуэщи хьэщIитIыр бысымым и жагъуэщ): One guest resents the other, whilst the host is weary of both. [In Adigean: Зы хьакIэр зы хьакIэм иджагъу, хьакIитIур бысымым иджагъу]

Host's burdens & woes

- **Bisim femifir dek'ote ch'ah** (Бысым фэмыфыр дэкIотэ кIахь): A lazy host spells a long seeing off. [Adigean. ДэкIотэн=to see off; according to host-guest customs, it was incumbent to see off a guest in a proper fashion]
- **Bisim bzajer shiw wizh** (Бысым бзаджэр шыу уж): A bad host trails the rider. [Adigean]
- **Hach'er qepshenew zipsch'ech'e phach'ewiy zeghasch'e** (ХьакIэр къэпщэнэу зыпшIэкIэ пхьакIэнэуи зэгъашIэ): If you bring guests (to your house), you must (first) learn how to play the host. [Adigean]
- **Hesh'e qashe schi'eschiy, hesh'e yishizh schi'eqim** (ХьэщIэ къашэ щыIэщи, хьэщIэ ишыж щыIэкъым): 1. Guests come easily, but do not as easily leave; 2. There is such a thing as inviting a guest, but there is no such thing as showing the guest the door. [In Adigean: ХьэкIэ къакIо щыIэ шъхьакIэ, хьэкIэ гъэкIожь щыIэп; *or* Ебгъэжьэжьын нахь и ебгъэблэгъэныр нахь рэхьат]
- **Hesh'er hezir schhech'e, bisimir hezir?** (ХьэщIэр хьэзыр щхьэкIэ, бысымыр хьэзыр?): The guest is always ready, but is the host also ready? [ХьэщIэр сыт щыгъуи хьэзыр щхьэкIэ, бысымыр щымыхьэзыри мэхъу. In Adigean: ХьакIэр хьэзыр шъхьае (*e* шъхьакIэ,) высымыр хьэзырэп]
- **Hesh'er nesch'eyme, bisimim yi yaghesch** (ХьэщIэр нэщхьеймэ, бысымым и ягъэщ): If the guest is upset, it is a grave concern for the host. [In Adigean: ХьакIэр нэщхьэимэ, бысымым иягъ]

- **Hesch'er zeyr gwawezhirihsch** (ХьэщIэр зейр гуауэжырыхьщ): He who hosts a guest bears a great woe.
- **Shu heshch'er yagheshesizh, lhes heshch'er psch'ant'em dashizh** (Шу хьэщIэр ягъэшэсыж, лъэс хьэщIэр пщIантIэм дашыж): They see to it that a guest on horseback is assisted in mounting his horse on leaving, and they accompany the unmounted guest across the yard. [In Adigean: Шыу хьакIэр агъэшэсыжбы, лъэс хьакIэр агъэкIотэжбы]
- **Ziyqelapche wiqiblezimishizhirem yiwine wimik'w** (Зикъэлапчъэ укъыблэзымыщыжбырэм иунэ умыкIу): He who does not see you off to the gate of his homestead is not worthy of being visited. [Adigean]

Duties and character of honorary guest-companion

- **Ghesenigher hach'e, aqilir xeghirey** (Гъэсэныгъэр хьакIэ, акъылыр хэгъырэй): The guest must be well brought up, and the guest-companion must have a sharp mind. [Adigean]
- **Hesch'e qiyheme [qak'weme], xeghereyr megwf'e** (ХьэщIэ къыхьэмэ [къакIуэмэ], хэгъэрэйр мэгуфIэ): When the guest comes on a visit, the honorary guest-companion is delighted. [In Adigean: ХьакIэ къакIомэ, хэгъырэйр мэгушIо]
- **Hesch'e zdeschi'em xegherey schi'esch** (ХьэщIэ здэщыIэм хэгъэрэй щыIэш): Where there is a guest there is an honorary guest-companion. [In Adigean: ХьакIэ зыдэщыIэм хэгъырэй щыI]
- **Xegherey bzaje dek'wate ch'ihsch** (Хэгъэрэй бзаджэ дэкIуатэ кIыхьщ): A bad honorary guest-companion spells a long seeing off. [ДэкIуэтэн=to see off; according to host-guest customs, it was incumbent to see off a guest in a proper fashion. In Adigean: Хэгъырэй бзаджэр дэкIотэкIыхь]
- **Xegherey bzaje shu wizchs** (Хэгъэрэй бзаджэ шу ужыщ): A bad honorary guest-companion trails the rider. [In Adigean: Хэгъырэй бзаджэр шыуж]

- **Xegherey xwemixwm he qiweighedzaqe** (Хэгээрэй хуэмышум хьэ кьыуегъэдзакъэ): A lazy honorary guest-companion causes you to be bitten by the dog. [The honorary guest-companion was duty-bound to protect his charge by walking behind him across the yard to the guest-room, and from the guest-room back across the yard. In Adigean: Хэгьырэй фэмыфым хьэ кьыуегъэцакъэ]
- **Xeghereyif' lhix'wiy, bilimlhix'we k'we** (ХэгээрэйфI льыхьуи, былымльыхьуэ кIуэ): Seek a good honorary guest-companion while looking for cattle (for your guests). [ХэгьырэйшIу льыхьуи, былым льыхьо кIо]

On table attendants

- **Sch'aleghwer schhegheritsch** (ЩIалэгъуэр щхьэгъэрытщ; щхьэгъэрыт=young man assigned to wait on a table prepared for guests, being usually the youngest of the attendants): While you are young, you are a servant. [УщIалэху уIуэхутхьэбзащIэш, жыхуиIэш]
- **Schhegherit schhegherit yi zhaghwesch** (Щхьэгъэрыт и жагъуэщ; щхьэгъэрыт=young man assigned to wait on a table prepared for guests, being usually the youngest of the attendants): One guest attendant resents the other.

Guest's burdens & etiquette

- **Bisimir ahiy hach'er qenagh** (Бысымыр ахьи хьакIэр къэнагъ): The host was taken away, whilst the guest stayed on. [Adigean]
- **Ghesenigher hach'e, aqilir xeghirey** (Гъэсэныгъэр хьакIэ, акьылыр хэгьырэй): The guest must be well brought up, and the guest-companion must have a sharp mind. [Adigean]
- **Hesch'ap'e k'wewe qiynesham xwedew** (ХьэщIапIэ кIуэуэ кьинэжам хуэдэу): The best fish smell when they are three days old.

- **Hesch’ap’eriner yemik’wsch** (ХьэщIапIэрынэр емыкIуш): 1. It is unseemly to overstay one’s welcome; 2. The best fish smell when they are three days old. [In Adigean: ХьэкIэпIэрынэр емыкIу]
- **Hesch’ap’e wischi’eme, qipxwasch’ wiy winafesch** (ХьэщIапIэ ушыIэмэ, кьыпхуашI уи унафэщ): While you are on a visit as a guest, what they tell you is law. [In Adigean: ХьакIакIо ушыIэмэ, кьыпфашIырэр уиунашьо]
- **Hesch’e hesch’e teipsixe [hesch’eteipsixe] yi zhaghwesch** (ХьэщIэ хьэщIэ тепсыхэ [хьэщIэтепсыхэ] и жагъуэщ): A guest resents the arrival of another (guest). [In Adigean: Зы хьакIэм зы хьакIэр тепсыхэжьырэп]
- **Hesch’e kwedre schisme, bisimir yozesh** (ХьэщIэ куэдрэ щысмэ, бысымыр йозэш): If the guest stays for too long, the host becomes very weary. [In Adigean: ХьакIэр бэрэ щысымэ, бысымыр езэщы]
- **Hesch’er kwedre yisme, shxwe dighw mex’w** (ХьэщIэр куэдрэ исмэ, шхуэ дыгъу мэхъу): If the guest stays for too long, he becomes a bridle thief. [The master of the house was obliged to stay with the guest all the time]
- **Hesch’er melim nex’re nex’ ’esesch** (ХьэщIэр мэлым нэхрэ нэхь Iэсэщ): The guest is quieter than a sheep. [In Adigean: ХьакIэр мэлым нахь Iас]
- **Hesch’er schinem xwedey ’wschabew** (ХьэщIэр щынэм хуэдэу Iуцабэу): The guest is as soft-spoken as a lamb.
- **Hesch’er shxem—bzhem yoplh** (ХьэщIэр шхэм—бжэм йопль): After eating, the guest looks towards the door. [In Adigean: ХьакIэр шхэмэ (е шхахэмэ) пчъэм еплъы]
- **Hesch’er shxeme, bzhem yoplh** (ХьэщIэр шхэмэ, бжэм йопль): After eating, the guest looks towards the door. [In Adigean: ХьакIэр шхэмэ (е шхахэмэ) пчъэм еплъы]
- **Wiy deile hesch’ap’e wimighak’we!** (Уи делэ хьэщIапIэ умыгъакIуэ!): Don’t send your fool on a visit (to another person’s house)!
- **Wizerimisa bisim wimiwib** (Узэрымыса бысым умыуб): Do not condemn a host to whose guest-house you have never been.

- **Ziy'ane zeteitim yihach'** (Зианэ зэтетым ихьакI): (He lodges with wealthy hosts) Said of sycophants and myrmidons.
- **Ziy bisim zix'wezhim chits'ix'w xwawich'** (Зи бысым зыхъуэжым чыцIыхъу хуаукI): They slaughter a mere male-kid for him who changes his original host. [In Adigean: Зибысым зыхъожьырэм чэцIыхъу фаукIы; *or* Бысым хъожь зышырэм, чыцIыхъу фаукIы аIуагъ]

Inhospitable & stingy hosts

- **Bisim femifir—dek'ote ch'ih** (Бысым фэмыфыр—дэкIотэ кIыхъ): Lazy host – long seeing off. [Adigean; дэкIотэн=to see off; according to host-guest customs, it was incumbent upon a host to see off his guest in a proper fashion]
- **Bisim pech'e lanl** (Бысым пэкIэ ланл; пэ=nose; ланлэ=droopy, feeble): Said of a host who doesn't like to receive guests. [Adigean]
- **Bisim neghwtsw** (Бысым нэгъуцу): Inhospitable, sullen host (with respect to guests). [Adigean]
- **'Enem shxin teimilhme, px'ebghwzsch** (Iэнэм шхын темыльмэ, пхъэбгъужьщ): A table without food is but an old wood-board. [In Adigean: Iанэм темыльмэ, пхъэмбгъу джашъу]
- **Ghomilapx'e zixemit zexaher zeshigho** (Гъомылапхъэ зыхэмыт зэхахъэр зэщыгъо): Where there are no foodstuffs is a boring place indeed.
- **Hesch'emighashxe ts'eri'wesch** (ХъэщIэмыгъашхэ цIэрыIуэщ): He who doesn't offer food to his guest becomes notorious. [In Adigean: ХъэкIэ мыгъашхэ цIэрыIу]
- **Neghweiyipsch nex'ey, yi zaqwe meshxezh** (Нэгъуеипщ нэхъей, и закъуэ мэшхэж): He eats on his own, like a Nogai prince.
- **'Ws mach'er hach'em yijaghw** (Iус макIэр хъакIэм иджагъу): The guest resents it if the (host's) victuals run low. [Adigean]
- **Yadezh wik'ome pech'e lanl, wadezh qiyheme pech'e zand** (Ядэжь уклэмэ пэкIэ ланл, уадэжь къыхъэмэ пэкIэ занд): If you

go to his house he is sullen, if he comes to your house his face brightens up. [Adigean; ланлэ=droopy, loose, feeble; зандэ=steep, upright]

Good wives & bad wives

- **Bisimgoshesch'wm chet-qazir yix'oy** (БысымгощэшIум чэт-къазыр ихъой): A good woman also herds poultry. [Adigean]
- **Fiz bide yil' helesch** (Фыз быдэ илI хьэлэлщ): A mean wife and a kind husband. [In Adigean: Шъуз пытэм илI хьалэл]
- **Fiz bzaje hesch'emighashesch** (Фыз бзаджэ хьэщIэмыгъашхэщ): Said of a wicked woman who does not offer food to guests. [In Adigean: Шъуз бзаджэр хьэкIэмыгъашх]
- **Fiz bzaje ziy'em yi wine wimik'we** (Фыз бзаджэ зиIэм и унэ умыкIуэ): Don't visit the house of a man with a wicked wife. [In Adigean: Шъуз бзаджэ зиIэм иунэ умыкIу]
- **Fizif' ghet'ilhighenshe х'wrqim** (ФызыфI гьэтIылыгыгъэншэ хьуркъым): A good woman is never without a store of victuals. [In Adigean: ШъузышIур IэпэчIэгъанэ щыкIэрэп]
- **Fizif'im I'i 'eyr dobzchif'eri, fiz 'eyr I'if'ir dobzchigwe** (ФызыфIым лIы Iейр добжьыфIэри, фыз Iейр лIыфIыр добжьыгуэ): A good wife boosts the stature of even the worst of men; a bad wife diminishes the status of even the best of men. [In Adigean: ШъузышIум лIы дэир дэгъу ехьулIэ, шъуз дэим лIы дэгъур дэи ехьулIэ]
- **Fizif'ir wineschiy, fiz 'eyr sch'iwinesch** (ФызыфIыр унэщи, фыз Iейр щIыгунэщ): A good woman is a household; a bad woman is a cellar. [In Adigean: ШъузышIу унэ, шъуз дэир чIыун]
- **Fizif' yi 'ene zeteitsch** (ФызыфI и Iэнэ зэтетщ): The table of a good wife has many layers, *or* is always ready. [In Adigean: ШъузышIу иIанэ зэтет]
- **Fizif' yi hekw yat'e hezirsch** (ФызыфI и хьэку ятIэ хьэзырщ): The oven (literally: the clay of the oven) of a good wife is always ready. [In Adigean: ШъузышIу ихьэку ятIэ щыкIэрэп]

- **Fizif' yil' ghwemilenshe x'wrqim** (ФызыфI илI гъуэмылэншэ хъуркъым; гъуэмылэ=traveller's fare): The husband of a good woman does not go without his road fare. [In Adigean: Шъузышыу илI гъомылэнчъэ хъурэп]
- **Fizif' yil' nek'wschheplhsch** (ФызыфI илI нэкIушхъэплъщ): The husband of a good woman is red-cheeked (happy, jovial). [In Adigean: Шъузышыу илI нэкIушхъаплъ]
- **Fizif' yil' ts'eri'wesch** (ФызыфI илI цIэрыIуэш): The husband of a good woman enjoys a good name. [In Adigean: Шъузышыу илI цIэрыIу]
- **Fizif' ziy'em x'wex'w yi wine yilhsch** (ФызыфI зиIэм хъуэхъу и унэ илъщ): Toasts are said in the house of he who has a good wife.
- **Fiz xwemixw ziy'er nasipinshesch** (Фыз хуэмыху зиIэр насыпыншэш): A man with a lazy spouse is unfortunate indeed. [In Adigean: Шъуз фэмыф зиIэр — насыпынчъ]
- **Ghabler bisimgwash** (Гъаблэр бысымгуащ): Hunger is (caused by) the lady of the house. [Adigean. In Kabardian: МафIэ мащIэ Iугъуэбэш, бын мащIэ цIэцIалэш, гъаблэ бысым гуащэш]
- **Schwzisch'w yi'ane shighe** [Шъузышыу иIанэ шыгъэ]: Measure the table of the good woman. [Adigean]
- **Winer yigwsch, zchegwr yi psesch** (Унэр игуш, жьэгур и псэш): The house is her heart, the hearth is her soul.
- **Winer zighewineriy blagher zigheblagheriy fyszch** (Унэр зыгъэунэри благъэр зыгъэблагъэри фышц): It is the lady of the house who makes the household prosper, and it is she who makes the visitors welcome. [In Adigean: Унэр зыгъэунэри благъэр зыгъэблагъэри шъуз]

Horrible guests

- **Hech'e bzajer—bisim nepeteix** (ХьэкIэ бзаджэр—бысым нэпэтэх): A wicked guest brings shame to his host. [Adigean]

- **Hesch'e mix'w [Hesch'emix'w] zchant'ak'wesch** (ХьэщIэ мыхьу [ХьэщIэмыхьу] жьантIакIуэщ): The unworthy guest heads for the seat of honour (away from door, near hearth).
- **Hesch'e zhaghwe psi ch'esch'ach'e** (ХьэщIэ жагьуэ псы кIэщIакIэ): They splash water under the unwelcome visitor.
- **Hesch'e ziy zhaghwem lixwe xweighazche** (ХьэщIэ зи жагьуэм лыхуэ хуегъажьэ): For the obnoxious guest sinewy meat is prepared. [This is an inferior kind of meat. In Adigean: ХьакIэ зиджагьом лыфэ фегъажьэ]

Table manners & etiquette

- **Adige gwipim t'isin yawixme, schisin yawixawe plhite x'wnusch!** (Адыгэ гупым тIысын яухмэ, щысын яухауэ плытэ хьунуш): (After a group of Circassians take their seats (at a table), you can consider that they have finished their session!) Once the seating arrangement has been determined at the start of a feasting table, it is maintained throughout the session. Late-comers, notwithstanding their status, found their places in available empty seats.
- **'Aner zishihazirim pselhe ch'ihe yishich'aghep** (Iанэр зыщыхъазырым псэлъэ кIыхьэ ищыкIагьэп): When the table is ready it is inappropriate to deliver long speeches. [Adigean]
- **'Enem wiperisixw ghasch'em xiheqim!** (Iэнэм упэрысыху гьащIэм хыхьэкъым!): (The time you spend at the table is not considered part of the usual run of life) Feasting is time out of this world.
- **'Enem yi periy yi ch'eri y x'wex'wsch** (Iэнэм и пэри и кIэри хьуэхьуш): (A toast starts and ends a “table”) A feast could only start with a toast by the eldest participant, then by the guests, and the affair could last throughout the session, which at times lasted for hours on end. [In Adigean: Iанэм ыпэри ыкIэри хьохьу]
- **Fader gwak'werafesch, ziygw yiryimihim yiryifqim** (Фадэр гуакIуэрафэщ, зигу иримыхьым ирифкъым): Though (intoxicating) drinks are pleasant to take, he who does not have a

taste for them does not drink. [A guest is never forced to partake in drinking; different people, different tastes; there is no accounting for tastes]

- **For 'ef' didesch—ziygw yiriymihim yishxirqim** (Фор IэфI дыдэщ—зигу иримыхьым ишхыркьым; фо=honey): (Honey is very tasty, but he who does not like it does not eat it) 1. Different people, different tastes; 2. There is no accounting for tastes; 3. Many men, many minds. [In Adigean: Шъоур IашIу, ау зыгу римыхьырэм ышхырэп]
- **Hach'e deiler bghelibeshx** (ХьакIэ делэр бгъэлыбэшх): The foolish guest eats the (fowl) brisket. [Adigean]
- **Hefem fo yiz x'wme, zegwotx'** (Хьэфэм фо из хьумэ, зэгуотхь): If rubber is stuffed full of honey, it would burst. [НыбэизыгъэкIэ щыкIа цIыхум хужаIэ. Eat moderately]
- **Heferiy fo yizme, zegweitx'** (Хьэфэри фо измэ, зэгуетхь): Even rubber would burst if it is stuffed full of honey. [Eat moderately]
- **Hesch'er xwschherey x'wme, ghashxiy gheghwelhizh** (ХьэщIэр хушхьэрей хьумэ, гъаши гъэгъуэлььж): If your guest starts to yawn, feed him and then let him sleep. [In Adigean: ХьакIэм ыжэ зэкIэкIы хьумэ, гъаши гъэгъолььж]
- **Qabzagher wizinshagesch** (Къабзагъэр узыншагъэщ): Cleanliness is next to godliness.
- **Sch'em deizchiy zchim deshxe** (ЩIэм дежьи жьым дэшхэ): Travel with the young and eat with the elders.
- **X'wex'wr ch'ihme, x'ibar mex'wzh** (Хьуэхьур кIыхьмэ, хьыбар мэхьуж): If the toast is long, it turns into a story.
- **X'wex'wr ch'ih psch'ime, psalhe mex'w** (Хьуэхьур кIыхь пщIымэ, псалъэ мэхьу): If you prolong your toast, it becomes a speech.
- **(Yape) wizriyhel'er shxinif'sch** [(Япэ) узрихьэлIэр шхыныфIщ]: 1. What you come across (first) is good food; 2. Hunger is the best spice. [The guest should be presented with ready food, *tsix'wteiwid*, shortly upon arrival if the banquet, or main meal, is deemed to require a long time to prepare. In Adigean: Апэ узэрихьылIэрэр — шхынышIу]

- **Zchim schhe yadeshx, sch'em lhaqwe yadeshx** (ЖЪЫМ ЦХЪЭ ЯДЭШХ, ЩІЭМ ЛЪАКЪУЭ ЯДЭШХ): Eat the head (of the sheep) with the elders, and have the leg (of the sheep) with the young ones.

Gluttony, greed, temperance & sloth

- **Beshxir nasipinch** (БЭШХЫР НАСЫПЫНЧЪ): Greedy guts never had good luck. [Adigean]
- **Bzchin sch'eghwem 'epe shinsch, bzchin shxighwem zhumersch** (БЖЪЫН ЩІЭГЪУЭМ ІЭПЭ ШЫНЩ, БЖЪЫН ШХЫГЪУЭМ ЖУМЭРЭНЩ): When it's time to do the onions, the fingers are blistered; when it's time to eat the onions, he's a gopher.
- **Dzighwe nepseyr shem yethele** (ДЗЫГЪУЭ НЭПСЕЙР ШЭМ ЕТХЪЭЛЭ): The greedy mouse drowns in the milk.
- **'Enem witeifisch'ihu wimik'we** (ІЭНЭМ УТЕФЫЩІХЪУ УМЫКІУЭ): Do not go (on a visit) and clean out the table.
- **Jedim fend ch'erisch'asch** (ДЖЭДЫМ ФЭНД КІЭРЫЩІАЩ; ФЭНД= water-skin with a shape reminiscent of a hen): (He hanged up a water-skin on the chicken) Said of a glutton. [Зэрышхэрейм щхъэкІэ жаІэ]
- **Meqwmiler masch'eme, shch'asch'er shxerey mex'w** (МЭКЪУМЫЛЭР МАЩІЭМЭ, ШКІАЩІЭР ШХЭРЕЙ МЭХЪУ): When the forage runs low, the little calf becomes voracious.
- **Nibe 'eym shxin yi psch'ihsch** (НЫБЭ ІЕЙМ ШХЫН И ПЩІХЪЩ): A bad paunch hankers for (literally: dreams of) food.
- **Nibe 'ey schi'e mix'wme, shxin 'ey schi'eqim** (НЫБЭ ІЕЙ ШЫІЭ МЫХЪУМЭ, ШХЫН ІЕЙ ШЫІЭКЪЫМ): There is no such thing as bad food, but there are bad paunches.
- **Nibem: 'Wiy ade(zch) yi zchach'e qipiwipsch'iy qiylhhe!' — zhei'e** (НЫБЭМ: «УИ АДЭ(ЖЪ) И ЖЪАКІЭ КЪЫПЫУПЩІИ КЪИЛЪХЪЭ!» — жеІэ): [The paunch says: 'Cut off your father's (grandfather's) beard and wear it!'] If you make your paunch your master, it will lead you to impropriety. [НЫБЭМ УЕДАІУЭМЭ, ЕМЫКІУ КЪЫУИГЪЭХЪЫНУЩ, ЖЫХУИІЭЩ. In Adigean: НЫБЭМ «УЯТЭ ЫЖАКІЭ

кышыгупкИ кыдз» еЮ. «Ныбэм уедэлумэ, емыкЮ кыуигъахын» зыфиЮ]

- **Niber xwiyt psch'ime, napeteixsch** (Ныбэр хуит пщымэ, напэтехщ): Give the belly enough rope and it will bring shame on you.
- **Schisch'e nex're masch'eshx** (Щыщлэ нэхрэ машлэшх): 1. To eat a little is better than not to have at all; 2. A little is better than nothing. [In Adigean: Щыклэ нахы мэклэшх]
- **Shaschher teixin** (Шащхэр техын; шащхэ=the skin on boiled milk; техын=to skim off): Cat the ginger (amer.).
- **Shaschher teizishxich'a xwedew** (ziywschexwasch) (Шащхэр тезышхыкла хуэдэу (зиуцэхуащ): To look like the cat who swallowed the canary.
- **Shxeghwem dighwzschsch, lazcheghwem zchindusch** (Шхэгъуэм дыгъужьщ, лажьэгъуэм жьындущ): When it's time to eat he's a wolf; when it's time to work he's an owl.
- **Shxeni'e ch'ihsch** (Шхэнылэ кыхьщ): The hand that takes the food at the table is long.
- **Shxerey yi wizinshagemch'e thewsixereysch** (Шхэрей и узыншагэмклэ тхэусыхэрейщ): A glutton complains all the time about his health.
- **Shxen sch'ebdzeme, shxinir pschok'we** (Шхэн щлэбдзэмэ, шхыныр пщоклэуэ): Eating and scratching wants just a beginning (Scottish).
- **Shxinim ya nex'if'riy schi'ef'ir sch'eschighwemesch** (Шхыным я нэхыфлри щылэфлр щлэщыгъуэмэщ): Even the best of foods are tasty only when they are novel.
- **Ts'ifim inibe yipy** (Цыфым ыныбэ ипый): One's belly is one's enemy. [Adigean]
- **Yishxir f'emasch'esch, yisch'er f'ekwedsch** (Ишхыр флэмащлэщ, ищлэр флэкуэдщ): What he eats he considers to be too little, what he does he thinks is too much.
- **Yiz zishxinum niqwe shxich'e yisch'erqim** (Из зышхыным ныкбуэ шхыклэ ищлэркъым): He who will eat his fill does not know how to eat the half of it.

- **Ziy 'ihe zif'emasch'em hem f'eishx** (Зи ЫХЬЭ зыфIэмащIэм хьэм фIешх): The lot of the person who thinks it is too little gets eaten by the dog.

Fruits of labour

- **Alihir yesch'e, yasch''ame, yeshx** (АЛЫХЬЫР ещIэ, ящIамэ ешх): 1. He is a(n) lazybones/idler/loafer; 2. He is good for nothing. [Мылажьэу шхэм ауаныщIу хужаIэ. Milazchew shxem awanisch'u xwzha'e. Said sarcastically of a person who eats without doing any work]
- **Lezchench'e washxeschiy, shxench'e l'ix'wzchsch** (ЛэжьэнкIэ уашхэщи, шхэнкIэ лыхьужьщ): (He works like a badger but eats like a hero) He works like a badger but eats like a wolf.
- **Lezchench'e washxesch, shxench'e dighwzchsch** (ЛэжьэнкIэ уашхэщ, шхэнкIэ дыгьужьщ): He works like a badger but eats like a wolf.
- **Mastech'e 'eshesch, shatech'e bzajesch** (МастэкIэ Iэшэщ, шатэкIэ бзаджэщ): (Clumsy with the needle, but voracious with the cream) He works like a badger but eats like a wolf.
- **Pschil' xwedew, lazchiy, pschi xwedew, wishxensch** (ПщылI хуэдэу, лажьы, пщы хуэдэу, ушхэнщ): Work like a slave, and you shall eat like a lord.
- **Qezighech'riy zishxizhriy wersch** (КъэзыгьэкIри зышхьжри уэрщ): (What you sow is what you eat) You reap what you sow.
- **Qezih zishxizh bey mex'w** (Къэзыхь зышхьж бей мэхьу): He who eats from what he earns becomes wealthy. [Лажьэу шхэжыр фIыуэ мэпсэу, жыхуиIэщ]
- **Sch'aq'we 'ihe qwdey qizisch'ech'in qemilezchin** (ЩIакхьуэ ЫХЬЭ къудей къызыщIэкIын къэмылэжьын): Not to earn salt for one's porridge. [Ziriy qemilezchin zhixwiy'esch]
- **Weiweme—meqwsch, weimiweme, qwresch** (Уеуэмэ—мэкьущ, уемыуэмэ, къурэщ): If you reap – it's hay; if you don't, it's dry stalks. [In Adigean: УупкIэмэ мэкьу, умыуупкIэмэ—къурэ]

- **'Wexw ziy 'wexw 'wexw 'wosch'eri, shxin ziy 'wexw shxin 'wosch'e** (Иуэху зи Иуэху Иуэху ИуощIэри, шхын зи Иуэху шхын ИуощIэ): He who seeks work finds work; he who seeks food finds food.
- **Wilazcheme, lizch pshxinsch, wimilazcheme, lazche bghwetinsch** (Улажьэмэ, лыжь пшхынщ, умылажьамэ, лажьэ бгъуэтынщ): If you work, you'll eat dried (salted) meat; if you don't, you'll get into trouble. [In Adigean: Улажьэмэ, лыжь пшхын]
- **Wilazchew wishxezhin nex'if' schi'eqim** (Улажьэу ушхэжын нэхьыфI щыIэкьым): There is nothing better than to eat from your own sweat.
- **Wiy sch'aq'we 'iher psch'enshew mishxin** (Уи щIакхъуэ Iыхьэр пщIэншэу мышхын): To earn one's salt.
- **Zedepsch'e sch'exschiy, zedeshxe 'ef'sch** (ЗэдэпщIэ щIэхщи, зэдэшхэ IэфIщ): What is done collectively is finished quickly; what is had with others is tasty. [In Adigean: Зэдашхэ IашIу, зэдэлажьэ тхьагъо]

Other expressions

- **Apsisch'ir aps niqoch'e mashxe** (АпсышIыр апс ныкъокIэ машхэ; апс=wooden bowl): (The bowl-maker eats from an inferior bowl) The cobbler's wife is the worst shod.
- **Belaghich'er zi'ighim he qeriybghw shegwghi** (БэлагьыкIэр зыIыгъым хьэ къэрибгъу щэгугъы): (The nine black dogs have their hope pinned on the holder of the trowel) Everybody pins his hope on the cook. [Adigean. «ПщэрыхьаКIом зэкIэ щэгугъы» зыфиIу]
- **Bisim sch'igho x'wghe** (Бысым шIыгъо хьугъэ): Evening came. [Adigean; шIыгъо=time for doing (smth.)]
- **Ch'eqiyner 'ef'sch** (КIэкьинэр IэфIщ): The nearer the bone, the sweeter the flesh.

- **Dekwm xwedew qeghepts'en** (Дэкум хуэдэу кьэгъэщIэн; дэку=kernel of nut): 1. To turn somebody round one's finger; 2. To catch with chaff; 3. To swindle, dupe; 4. To humbug.
- **Dekwu qeghepts'en** (Дэкуу кьэгъэщIэн): See preceding entry.
- **Dzech'e masch'ew, hesch'ech'e kwedu** (ДзэкIэ машIэу, хьэщIэкIэ куэду): Little victuals and many guests.
- **'Eshri'er zighevam yirireifizh** (IэшрыIэр зыгъэвам ирырефыж): 1. You make your bed, now lie in it; 2. Who breaks, pays; 3. As you brew, so must you drink.
- **Hach'ap'er deghwmiy wiywine fede х'wrep** (ХьакIапIэр дэгъуми уиунэ фэдэ хьурэп): (Even if the guest-house is fine, it won't be as good as your home) East or west, home is best. [Adigean]
- **Haziriyir piyim pay, yabghwanerer shiwim pay** (Хьазыриир пьим пай, ябгъуанэрэр шыум пай): The eight cartridge cases are for the enemy, the ninth for the horseman. [Adigean. The cherkesska (*tsey*), the distinctive long-waisted, tight-fitting circassian tunic, was – and still is – a potent folkloric symbol donned by almost all peoples of the Caucasus. It was adorned by a row of (usually white) capped cartridge cases (*hezir*) made of nielloed silver, or wood, inserted into flaps sewn on each side of the breast. These cartridge cases were usually used to store gunpowder and leadshot for personal light muskets. However, one of the cases was filled with flour, to be used in extreme situations to satisfy one's hunger]
- **Hel'ame qak'weme, ch'efiy nek'wen(u)sch** (ХьэлIамэ кьакIуэмэ, кIэфий нэкIуэнуш; кIэфий=whistle): 1. (You) Roll my log and I'll roll yours; 2. (You) Scratch my back and I'll scratch yours; 3. Claw me and I will claw thee; 4. Ka me, ka thee; 5. Nothing for nothing.
- **Jedich'e shk'wmp' yi waseqim** (ДжэдыкIэ шкIумпI и уасэкъым): (Not worth a rotten egg) Not worth a bean (or button, curse, damn).
- **L'i hesch'e nex're fiz hesch'e** (ЛIы хьэщIэ нэхьрэ физ хьэщIэ): Better a female guest than a male guest.

- **Shemiy seys, shxwmiy seys** (Шэми сес, шхуми сес): 1. To have mixed feelings; 2. Between the upper and nether millstone; 3. Between Scylla and Charybdis.
- **Shem yisar shxwm yopsche** (Шэм исар шхум йопшэ): (He who was burnt by the milk blows on the yoghourt) 1. Once bit(ten), twice shy; 2. The scalded cat (or dog) fears cold water; 3. A burnt child dreads the fire; 4. Burnt bairns dread the fire (Scottish).
- **Shibzhiy xwiywden** (Шыбжий хуиудэн): (To pound hot red pepper for somebody) To cast salt on somebody's tail.
- **Shighwp'aste** (Шыгъупастэ): Bread-and-salt.
- **Shighw six'wa se sitk'wnu** (Шыгъу сыхъуа сэ сыткуну): 1. I am not made of salt; 2. I am neither sugar nor salt.
- **Wiy 'wexw zixemilhim wiy belagh xomi'w [xiwimi'w]** (Уи йуэху зыхэмылтым уи бэлагъ хомыу [хыумыу]): (Do not poke your [flat wooden cooking] trowel into other people's affairs) 1. Mind your own business!; 2. Go about your business!; 3. The cobbler must stick to his last; 4. Don't poke your nose into other people's affairs. [In Adigean: УиIoф зыхэмылтым уибэлагъэ хэмыу]
- **Yefe-yeshxe nex're jegw** (Ефэ-ешхэ нэхърэ джэгу): Better a dance party than a feast.
- **Yeshxe-yefe nex're jegw** (Ешхэ-ефэ нэхърэ джэгу): Better a dance party than a feast.
- **Zexwemide qizedefeqim, zemifeghw qizedewijqim** (Зэхуэмыдэ кыызэдэфэктым, зэмыфэгъу кыызэдэуджктым): Those dissimilar in their social rank do not dance together.

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