Circassian Customs & Traditions

АДЫГЭ ХАБЗЭ
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[compiler, editor, translator]

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Жэмыхъуэ Амджээ (Амыщ)

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Introduction

Circassian customs and social norms are enshrined in an orally-transmitted code called ‘Adige Xabze’—‘Circassian Etiquette’ [«адыгэ хабээ»]. 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 It was reformed and developed at some points in Circassian history, when two factors obtained: preponderance of outdated practices and the appearance of a charismatic personage to effect the transformation.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’ («ПцІапцИ»; ‘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

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¹ Beislhen son of Zhanx’wet (son of Tabile son of Yinal; Жанхъуэт и къуэ Беспьэн), nicknamed ‘Pts’apts’e’ (‘The Obese’; «Беспьэней ПцІапцИ») 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.

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 Kwrgwoqwe Het’ox’wschiqwe (ХьэтIхъущыкъуэ 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 Жэбагъы]). 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 Kwrgwoqwe the Great (son of Het’ox’wschiqwe; ХьэтIхъущыкъуэ 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 rite 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?!’ [Уадыгэкъэ 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’idanzerume (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 (гвсчэкъу), or x’iriyne xwsch’esch’en (хъыринэ хущІэщІэн) = strapping of a son to his cradle; literally: to harness to the cradle). Soft straps (гвсчепс; гущэп) were used to prevent the infant from falling off the cradle (гвсчэ хъиринэ, гвсчэхъиринэ [гушэ хъыринэ, гушэхъыринэ] =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 къэрыщіэ»), or ‘hel’ame ch’erisch’e’ («хьэламэ къэрыщіэ»), 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 хъэламашщэщ, дадэ къэрыщшэнщ»). 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 (*mezhaje*), 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!’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Уэ, нажджэн, нажджэн!</td>
<td><strong>Oh, nazhjen, nazhjen!</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. (Уора, уарирэра,) дэнэ унэра!</td>
<td>Chorus: (Wora, wariyrera,) which home and hearth!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Нажджэн,) лъэгупс!</td>
<td>(Nazhjen,) braids!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. (Уора, уо уэрирэра,) дэнэ унэра!</td>
<td>Chorus: (Wora, wo weriyra,) which home and hearth!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ЩакПэ Іпс дыкьын!</td>
<td>Silverine felt-cloak laces!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. (Уора, уо уэрира,) дэнэ унэра!</td>
<td>Chorus: (Wora, wo weriyra,) which home and hearth!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Nazhjen’ is a word of uncertain meaning. It has the variant ‘wezjen’ (‘уэзджэн») in other songs.*
| Дыжынышхуэр къегъаджэ! | Summon the silver bridle! |
| Ежъу. (Уора, уо уэрира,) дэнэ унэра! | Chorus: (Wora, wo wериyra,) which home and hearth! |
| Уэркъ щауэр зоджэ! | The young noblemen are calling one another! |
| Ежъу. (Уора, уо уэрира,) дэнэ унэра! | Chorus: (Wora, wo wериyra,) which home and hearth! |
| Щхьэнтэ бгъурыбгъуищ! | May thou have pillows thrice in nines! |
| Ежъу. (Уора, уо уэрира,) дэнэ унэра! | Chorus: (Wora, wo wериyra,) which home and hearth! |
| Уэншоку църыкIуэгъуэ!⁵ | May thou have three changes of mattress! |
| Ежъу. (Уора, уо уэрира,) дэнэ унэра! | Chorus: (Wora, wo wериyra,) which home and hearth! |

⁵ In literary Kabardian-Cherkess, ‘mattress’ is rendered ‘уэншэку’.
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 [цЭф’эщджанэ].

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

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. 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).


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 Gwascheney (or Gwaschene; Гуашчэнэй, е Гуашчэнэ) 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 Темряковна; 1544-1569), as was Gwascheney 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, пIур).

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Гущэ уэрэд: Нану махуэ!</th>
<th>Circassian Lullaby: ‘Auspicious Child!’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ла, лай, а нану!</td>
<td>Hush, little baby!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Лай, нахуэ, си нахуэ,</td>
<td>Hush-a-by, resplendent one,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Си нитлум яэзу, си махуэ!</td>
<td>Precious as my eye, sweet godsend!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Нану согъэджей, ныэ,</td>
<td>I'm lulling the little one to sleep,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Нану джеигъуафIэ, нынэ.</td>
<td>Sweet dreams, my dear!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ла, лай, си нану!</td>
<td>Lullaby, hush-a-by, tiny tot!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Лай, нахуэ, си нахуэ,</td>
<td>Rock-a-by, my splendid lot,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Си махуамз, си насып!</td>
<td>My great fortune, my good luck!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Нанур согъэджей, нынэ,</td>
<td>I'm singing my baby to sleep,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Нанур джеигъуафIэ, нынэ.</td>
<td>Sleep well, cherished one!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ла, лай, а нану!</td>
<td>Hush-a-by, shush, little babe!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Нану цыкIур ин къэкхун,</td>
<td>The tiny one will grow one day,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ин къэкхумэ къезгъешэн,</td>
<td>Then I shall marry him off,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>КъыщичахэкIэ си ункъуэщ.</td>
<td>Though it be to one of my kin.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Лай, махуэ, си кIалэ цыкIу!</td>
<td>Rock-a-by, my sweet young child!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>КIалэ цыкIур согъэджей,</td>
<td>The little kid I soothe to sleep,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ДжеигъуафIэ, си маухай!</td>
<td>Sweet slumber, auspicious one!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following is an elaborate (Kabardian) berceuse representative of this song genre (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P’. Qardenghwsch’, 1980, pp 168-9):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Гушэ уёрэд:APPER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Лэлэу ешʻрэ си ХъэмытIэ...(^{10})</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[\text{Перевод:} \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cradle Song:APPX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Hush-a-bye, my Hemit’e is falling asleep...’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Перевод:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| 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! |

| 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! |

| 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. |

| 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! |

| 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 lullabaying my baby, |
| I am singing my Hemit’e to sleep! |

\(^{10}\) ‘ХъэмытIэ’, ‘хъэматIэ’, ‘хъэматIэжь’, etc, are terms of endearment for ‘тхъмадэ’ 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):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Гущэ уэрэд:</th>
<th>Lullaby:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ужейркъэ, къэзакъым и щэлэ!</td>
<td>‘Won’t you go to sleep, progeny of a Cossack!’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Болилейхэ, болилей,</td>
<td>Hush-a-bye, rock-a-bye,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Лълейхээр ызогъэжэе.</td>
<td>I am lulling my sweetie to sleep.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ужейркъэ, къэзакъым и щэлэ!</td>
<td>Won’t you go to sleep, progeny of a Cossack!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ужейркъэ, къэзакъым и щэлэ!</td>
<td>Won’t you fall asleep, Cossack child!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Болилейхэ, болилей,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Лълейхээр ызогъэжэе.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Мы цъыкъур ынхъумбэ плащэц,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Мы цъыкъур шэ плащэрыуэщ,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Зэумэ щремыуэхъухэ,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Зытехуэр ѯремыхъужээ!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Болилейхэ, болилей,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Си щэлээр ызогъэжэе.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Сабий зегъакїуэ:</th>
<th>Song exhorting child to walk:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>А си лъабэ, лъабэ!</td>
<td>‘Oh, my “little legs”, “little legs”!’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>А си лъабэ дахэ!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>А си лъабэ дахэ!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Сабий зегъаклюз: Мимэ къэрэмыщэ!</td>
<td>Song exhorting child to walk: ‘Miyme qeremische!’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Мимэ, Мимэ, Мимэ къэрэмыщэ!</td>
<td>Miyme, Miyme, Miyme qeremische!^{13}</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Мимэ къэрэщауэ!</td>
<td>Miyme, swarthy champion!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Щауэ цъяклюхэр мэцыпэ,</td>
<td>The little lads are gathering berries,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>И чы пыэри къегъанэ,</td>
<td>He leaves his little switch-cap,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Янэ макъуэри мэльъыхуэ,</td>
<td>Mum goes looking for it,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ядэ макъуэри къехьыжыр.</td>
<td>Papa goes and brings it back.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Мимэ, Мимэ, Мимэ къэрэмыщэ!</td>
<td>Miyme, Miyme, Miyme qeremische!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Мимэ къэрэщауэ!</td>
<td>Miyme, darksome hero!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Мимэ энэр мэлъалуэз,</td>
<td>Miyme, mum is begging,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ар шьэльалуэз джэд анэц.</td>
<td>She is begging Mama Hen.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Джэд анэжъыр мэъуальъхъэ,</td>
<td>Old Mama Hen is brooding,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Вагьуэм хуэду къерешыр,</td>
<td>She hatches as many chicks as the stars in the sky,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Удзым пэбжу ирешажэ!</td>
<td>She leads out as many as the blades of grass!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Мимэ, Мимэ!</td>
<td>Miyme, Miyme!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

^{13} ‘Miyme qeremische’ («Мимэ къэрэмыщэ») 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 ‘lheteiwivemэжахэ’ («лъэтеувэмэжаджэ»). National sweetmeats (хэлыуэ; 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 Ataliqate Institution

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 ṭ’ur (пIyp), 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.
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 petrifaction:

An old Nartkhuj 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.  

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

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14 Text translated from an article in the Kabardian journal ‘Waschhemaxwe (Иуашхъэмахуэ).”
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, lai\(^{15}\)
Pupil of my eye!
Today helpless thou lie,
But on the morrow,
As valour earns thou rich spoil,
Forget not thy decrepit guardian!

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 (пщащаплъэ), 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 (псэлъыхъу), 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 шыс, шыс. ‘Yemidezh the fool is still seated.
Имыклыжри шыс, шыс. He does not leave.
Си делэшхуэр шыс, шыс», 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, winyidzihe (унэидзыхьэ) or k’wese (к’уэсэ), 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 (дагэ-дапшэ) 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 were 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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Тхьэмадэм:</th>
<th>Toastmaster:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Нобэ мы нысашэ джэгур зей унагъэум сохъуэхъу.</td>
<td>I shall direct my toast to the household holding these wedding festivities on this blessed day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tabla-Toast</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Уэ ди тхьэ,</em></td>
<td>Our God,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Тхьеэшхуэ,</td>
<td>The Supreme Lord,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Анэдолэ,</td>
<td>Anadola,16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Дыщэ къуэладжэ,</td>
<td>Golden ravine,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Мы унагъуэр —</td>
<td>This household —</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Уардэ унэжьу,</td>
<td>Majestic and grandiose abode,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Выжь укьыпээу,</td>
<td>Where great oxen are sacrificed,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Нарт ефапээу,</td>
<td>The drinking place of the Narts,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
УнапИ махуэу,
Пхъэм и махуэр я бжаблэу,
Я бланэлри зэтету,
Гуфэ зэтетхэри къыдашэу,
Пхъэхьэ-псыхъэри щауибъуу,
Фызибъум къадэр зэлащэу,
Фызипшъым джэд ягъэхъуу,
Зэпымычыжыр я хъуэхъуу,
Къызэгуэзычри я фадэу,
Гъэ мин гъашэкэ гъэпээу!

Манорийский дом счастья,
Двери из благословенного дерева,
Олень на трофеевой доске,
Крепко подвезенной,
Сено, перевезенное в сараяхных,
Дерево и вода, перевезенные девятью ладами,
Ведро, вращенное девятью женщинами,
Птицы, пасущиеся десятью девами,
Их пляцко никогда не кончается,
Их напиток наполняется до краев,
Могу ли он быть непоколебимым за тысячу лет!

* * *

…

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* (лэпстепхъэ), small pieces of dough. In addition, pasties, desserts, and the ubiquitous *makhsima* (махъсымэ), the national beverage, were served.
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* (дэпы€э; 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 (дэжъые 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’ [«дэжъые 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 weddings dates, all this being done in jest. A clown, *azheghafe* (ажэъафэ; 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.](image)

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 girl-friends 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, *getejipsch’e* (къэтэджыпщЭ). 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 (*гъуэгубжэ*), 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’. Qardenghwsh’, 1980, p132-5; listen to it on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1fTBGoRNYRU):

| Нысашэ уэрэд: | ‘Nisashe’ Song: |
| Уэрэдэ махуэй, | ‘Wereide, bestow happiness |
| ди нысэ! | on our bride!’¹⁷ |

¹⁷ ‘Wereide’ (Уэрэдэ), ‘Wereidede’ (Уэрэдэдэ), ‘Weriydade’ (Уэридадэ), etc, are variations on the name of ‘the cultic’ Dade (Дадэ).
Уэредэ махуэй, ди нысэ!
Ежьу. Уойра!
Данэмрэ дыщэмрэ и гушъэ...
Ежьу. Уойра!
(Ра,) и гублащхьитри дыжъынкъэ!
Ежьу. (Уореда,) бэри махуэ!

Уэредэ махуэй, ди нысэ!
Ежьу. Уойра!
И дыжъын щыльур альтескъэ...
Ежьу. Уойра!
Альтес гуузжырыр, (рэ,) и гъуапэщ!
Ежьу. (Уореда,) бэри махуэ!

Уэредэ махуэй, ди нысэ!
Ежьу. Уойра!
Уэгум ит мазэр и напэ...
Ежьу. Уойра!
Напэху дахэм зегъазэ!
Ежьу. (Уореда,) бэри махуэ!

Уэредэ махуэй, ди нысэ!
Ежьу. Уойра!
Бгъащхъуэм дэхуарзэм укъешэ!
Ежьу. Уойра!
Укъэзыша щауэми уэ удэжъкъэ!
Ежьу. (Уореда,) бэри махуэ!

Уэредэ махуэй, ди нысэ!
Ежьу. Уойра!
Жыр лэныстэшхуэр уогъабзэ...
Ежьу. Уойра!
Жыр мастэ цышкъуми уэ уродэ!

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!

Wereidede, bestow happiness on our bride!
Chorus: Woyra!
Her silverine shirtfront is aglitter with satin…
Chorus: Woyra!
Of yellow satin, (рэ,) are her sleeves!
Chorus: (Woreida,) may this be a long affair!

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!

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!

Wereidede, bestow happiness on our bride!
Chorus: Woyra!
Thou cuttest with great steel scissors…
Chorus: Woyra!
And thou sewest with a small steel needle!

18 ‘Щылы’ or ‘бъэ jul’ (‘Бъэ къылы’ or ‘къылы’ 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.
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):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Русская</th>
<th>Закавказская</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ежьу. (Уореда,) бэри махуэ!</td>
<td>Chorus: (Woreida,) may this festival last for long!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Уэредэдэ махуэй, ди ныээ!</td>
<td>Wereidede, bestow happiness on our bride!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. Уойра!</td>
<td>Chorus: Woyra!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Щхъэнтэм утесьым — тхъэръыкъуэ...</td>
<td>Seated on the pillow, thou art a dove…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. Уойра!</td>
<td>Chorus: Woyra!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Уай,) зыбукъуэдиймэ аслъэнкъэ!</td>
<td>(Way,) as thou draw thyself up — a lioness!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. (Уореда,) бэри махуэ!</td>
<td>Chorus: (Woreida,) may our bliss last for long!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Нысэ махуэ идошэ...</td>
<td>We are escorting the blessed bride…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. Уойра!</td>
<td>Chorus: Woyra!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Щауз махуэ идошэжыр...</td>
<td>We are taking the groom back home…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. Уойра!</td>
<td>Chorus: Woyra!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Зыхъэтшэжыр Ёщхъэхукъэ!</td>
<td>We are taking him to the white-sleeved one!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. (Уореда,) бэри махуэ!</td>
<td>Chorus: (Woreida,) may both of them have good luck!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Зыхъэтшэжыр Ёщхъэхукъэ...</td>
<td>We are escorting him to the bright-sleeved one!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. Уойра!</td>
<td>Chorus: Woyra!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ёщхъэху дахэр мэтэджи...</td>
<td>The bright-sleeved beauty is arising…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. Уойра!</td>
<td>Chorus: Woyra!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ар ёстрэджыр ди щауэрщ!</td>
<td>She rises for our groom!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. (Уореда,) бэри махуэ!</td>
<td>Chorus: (Woreida,) may both of them be blessed!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ежьу. Уайра уей, уей, уей, уей, уай рира!
(Ей, ей, ей-я, ай,) нысашэ къэхъуащ...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
(Ай,) шы бэджэндыр къигтуащтэ...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
(Ай,) шы бэджэндыр шхуээум йогъу...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
Я фэ леейри зылъакъуэ...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
Я пыэжъыр къракъухри...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
(Ай,) чuum ээрыдэхыр...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
Я къехуэхыр нээъыбэщ...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
Уанэ къуапи трагъэз...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
Сом зырыээ япшыныж...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!

(Ей, ей, ей-я, ай,) нысэу къэтшахэр...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
Фыцэ пэрикъи...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
(Уэ,) къэрэ пэтини...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
Шабийхъуэ шхээдээ...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
(Уи,) шхээд бэрибкъэ...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
Быныр зэегъэхэри...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
Къихъэм хуоалъэр ...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!
Лъэдакъэ пъашээц...
Ежьу. Уайрарэ, уайра, уай рира!

Chorus: Wayra wey, wey, wey, wey, way riyra!
(Yey, yey, yey-ya, ay,) the wedding is upon us…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
(Ay,) they get us horses for hire…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
(Ay,) the hired horses are gnawing at their bits…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
They pull on their hide high boots…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
They pull their caps down over their eyes…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
(Ай,) as they dart out of the courtyard…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
Many fall off their horses…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
They knock down the saddle pommels…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
They are compensated with one rouble each…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!

(Ей, ей, ей-я, ай,) the bride that we have brought…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
Is black and with a turned-up nose…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
(We,) swarthy and snub-nosed…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
Her hair is like stiff grass…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
(Ви,) and dishevelled…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
She brings about discord in the family…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
She intimidates those who come (to the house)…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!
Her heels are rough…
Chorus: Wayrare, wayra, way riyra!

19 ‘Шабий’ is the Tor grass (Brachypodium pinnatum), a big and tough grass.
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 (хътиякъуэ; hetiyyak‘we) took out his dagger and with its tip lifted the veil or screen (made of decorated cloth) of the bride’s head-cover (щхъетепхъуэ; [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 (hetiyyak ‘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 (урыцэлъ), a mixture of honey and butter used as refreshment at weddings. (V. Vorokov, 1987, p192)

Адыгэ хьэгъуэллыгъуэ. Хъэтияк’уем къамэ къылъэццалъэри, къамэпэмкэ нъысащээм и цхьэтепхъуэ къаp тырех.
After the ceremonial removal of the bride’s head-cover, and the application of a mixture of honey and butter (を行い、 ’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 кыффхуитша нысэм ээ фыкъытхуыпъы, дахэу фытъуэхъуээхъу, ди нанэ дышээ!»

‘Our gilded gramma, 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 ‘Nisashe’ ceremony in praise of the new bride. Part of the toast is reproduced here:20

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Нысашэ хъуэхъуэхъ</th>
<th>‘Nisashe’ Toasts:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>«Ди нысэ фо!»*</td>
<td>‘Our Sweet Daughter-in-law!’*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>...</td>
<td>...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* * *</td>
<td>* * *</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Нысэ цыкъу къатшэр: The young daughter-in-law we are escorting:

20 The whole text of the toast (in Kabardian) is available in Z. Qardenghwisch’, 1985, pp 94-104.
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.

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 (пщыкъуэцIэ; pschiqwets’e) to refer to them, for example «ДыгъэцIыкIу» (‘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 «ПщыкъуэцIэ мыхъуамэ, къыджIэ ышхуэу!» (‘Pschiqwets’e mix’wame, gidzhei’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.

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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. Before entering the house, and according to the ‘Nise Teipx’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:

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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.
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). The following ‘Niseyish’ Song is drawn from the Shapsugh repertoire (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P’. Qardenghwsch’, 1980, pp 155-8):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Нысэиш орэд:</th>
<th>‘Niseyish’ Song:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Идэ, идэ тыжъыния...</td>
<td>‘Sew, sew, a silverine…’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Идэ, идэ тыжъыния... Жъыу. Уэрэда!</td>
<td>Sew, sew a silverine… Chorus: Wereda!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Идэ тыжъыныбъэклыуя...</td>
<td>Sew a silverine shirtfront…</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

23 It is thought that the Bzhedug and Shapsugh had almost a monopoly on this genre (‘Niseyish’) of melodies. The Cherkess would dance their own ‘P’et’eley’ («Пётлылей») on that occasion.

24 ‘Бъэклыуя’ or ‘кыуя’ (‘бъэулъ’ or ‘щлыу’ in Kabardian) is part of a Circassian woman’s national costume. It consists of a false shirtfront of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Жъыу. Уэрида! А гъэминъыз зыгъашэя! Жъыу. Уэрида!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Гошэ хъагъу-фэгъуя... Жъыу. Уэрира!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Гугъуми тхэмылъа... Жъыу. Уэрира!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Лъымык укъыдакъора! Жъыу. Уэрида!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Укъыздакъора... Жъыу. Уэрида!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>О шъу цэрыло... Жъыу. Уэрира!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Лъэкъы ура мафэра. Жъыу. Уэрира!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>О непээр мафэр... Жъыу. Уэрира!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Тихъазынъица... Жъыу. Уэрида!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Тышырыщызакъу... Жъыу. Уэрида!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ащи тэгъэуащэя! Жъыу. Уэрида!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Тэ танахъ гуашэри... Жъыу. Уэрида!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>КИЭТЪУКМЭ КИТЫРА!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus: Weriyda! May she live to be a thousand!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus: Weriya!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rivalling her mother-in-law in her merits…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus: Weriya!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May we not lose heart in our day of trial…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus: Weriya!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To the youthful knight thou hast been betrothed!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus: Wereda!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thou hast been betrothed…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus: Wereda!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To a glorious horseman…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus: Weriya!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Favoured by the heavens. 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus: Weriya!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oh, this day today…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus: Weriya!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is triple lucky…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus: Wereda!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thrice upon us…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus: Wereda!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It hath bestowed its largesse!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus: Wereda!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More worthy than us all gwashe…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chorus: Wereda!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standing in the corner! 26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.
In the selfsame 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’ («нысэгъашо») 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 ‘Weriydede, bestow happiness on my daughter-in-law!’ («Уэридэдэ мафэр, синыса!») (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P’. Qardenghwsc’h, 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Нысэгъашо орэд:</th>
<th>Song in Praise of the Bride:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ашъаемэ...*</td>
<td>The Aschay family...*28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Нысэгъэш воорэд:</td>
<td>(Weredew! Weredew!) The Aschay family...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ашъаемэ...</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>The great house of the Aschays is cast of gold!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ашъаемэ я унэшхор дышъэчы!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>She twirls like a golden whirligig!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Дышъэчынэлъакъор гъэужьа!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>She is so quick at sewing, my daughter-in-law!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Дынэр зыгъэужъырэр синыса!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

27 ‘Aschayeme…’ is in the repertoire of the Adigean State Folk Song Ensemble ‘Yislhamiy’. A recording of the song is available on this website.

28 ‘Aschay’ is the name of a Shapsugh family.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Translation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Синысэ зэрэштыэр осІона!</td>
<td>Let me tell thee about my daughter-in-law!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Мэзэнъюо-мээняъюор и тхэллэ!</td>
<td>Her ornaments are like semi-lunes!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Дышэ пэсэхэлэшъюор нкъыуя!</td>
<td>Of pure gold is her shirtfront!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>А сэрээ улугъер эънаца!</td>
<td>Whetted with dye are her eyebrows!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Бынэнъшкитлор пшэшъуанк!</td>
<td>The tips of her eyebrows are like the tail of a swallow!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Пшэшъюорм дэээрээм эъъеш!</td>
<td>Soaring with the swallows, they take thee as a wife!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Укъээъщо калэм эджъа!</td>
<td>May thou live to ripe old age with thy betrothed youth!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Унгошэ нэкъэр огъашло!</td>
<td>May thy reverend mother-in-law honour thee!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
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<tr>
<td>Пшэнъююм инъшъуагъъ бэкэда!</td>
<td>May thy sister-in-law be overly attentive to thee!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Бэкэда цышфий къекъуалэ!</td>
<td>May many people come to thy wedding!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Къекъэлэъуэ истэр гъэшъытъуа!</td>
<td>May all those who come leave pronouncing thy praises!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Неп эумэшъыхъор тэ къэпха!</td>
<td>Today we shall all sing thy praises!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Къэкъожэ алуи дарныъшъор теубъуа!</td>
<td>‘Come back home, bridegroom,’ they said, she laid brocade for him!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Синысэ ицыпхъуанти мытІэкІа!</td>
<td>My daughter-in-law has not touched her woollen trunk yet!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Синысэ етІэкЫн сэїун сэуджа!</td>
<td>I am impatient for my daughter-in-law to undress!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Сызыфэуджырэр иджана!</td>
<td>What I covet is her dress!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Жъыу. Орэдэу! Орэдэу! Орэдэу!</td>
<td>Chorus: Weredew! Weredew! Weredew!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### ‘Niseyepch’ Song:

**‘Weriydede, bestow happiness on my daughter-in-law!’**

| Уохыр уэридэдэ, уэрэдэ, | Wiwexir weriydede, werede, |
| Уэридэдэ мафэр, синыса! | Weriydede, bestow happiness on my daughter-in-law! |

Of my daughter-in-law I shall tell thee:

- **Her shirtfront is of delicate silk.**
- **They take thee as a wife hovering with the swallows.**
- **May thou live to ripe old age with thy betrothed youth!**
- **And may thy mother-in-law and the old ladies honour thee!**
- **And may thy sister-in-law sing thy praises to the sky!**

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.
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 (*техьэпщ*; *teihepsch’e*) and then led to her room with much song and dance.\(^\text{30}\) Her ceremonious placement on the conjugal bed signalled her becoming a full member of the household.

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\(^{30}\) 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 (щауэишэж)

In this ceremony the groom is conducted back to his father’s house. The groom (щау; schawe) chose his best man (щауэъу; schaweghw) and an assistant (щауэкъуэдзэ; 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 (щаяпІэ), where young people would gather and celebrate by holding banquets, Schaweyefe (щауэфэ), in which toasts, schawebzche (щауэбжьэ), were pronounced in honour of the bridegroom. One wish went like this: «Уи пыэ 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 (щауэхэс), 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 (щауэишэж), 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 The whole text of the toast (in Kabardian) is available in Z. Qardenghwsch’, 1985, pp 105-16.
Щауэишэж хъуэхъуээр

...  
* * *

Уей, ди шынэхъыщІэу —
ЛІшЫгъуээр зей,
Бажэ уешэм —
Щыхъ къэбукЫу,
Ҳъыкіэ уешэм —
Дышэ къыхъуэ,
Уи ныбжъымрэ
Уи бжьыгъуээр къыхъ ухъу!
Мыр лъэпкъ лъузъым къадежъа лъэгъуц,
Уи жъы хъугъуэдамъгъу дэгъызц.
* * *
...

‘Schaweyishezh’ Toasts

...  
* * *

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.
* * *
...

ЖыІэпхъэщ мыдей мы хъуэхъу теухуаэ адъэээм шауэр
«лъэпкъ къежъапІэ» зэрылытаэ Ѵытаеэт, «ЛІыр лъэпкъц»
жыІэгъуэм къыхэкІыу.

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32 In Circassian folklore, and in accordance with the saying ‘ЛІыр лъэпкъц’, 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»; ‘Schaweyishezh’) (V. H. Bereghwn and Z. P’. Qardenghwsch’, 1980, p159 and p160, respectively):

### Шауэишэж уэрэд:

Дотэ нэху

Джатэр зыгъэхуахуэурэ,
Хуарэр зи Ёдэжым къытхуишар —
Дёнэкэ щыИэ, дотэ нэху?

А Ёпхъуамэ пашэу,
А шэ пашэрыум къытхуишар —
Дёнэкэ щыИэ, дотэ нэху?

Си дотэ нэхуу,
Данэхур зи лъэпэдым къытхуишар —
Дёнэкэ щыИэ, дотэ нэху?

### Song of the Groom’s Home-coming:

‘Your Highness’

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

The one with big fingers,
Shooter of large arrows that thou hast brought us —
Where is he, Your Highness?

My lord,
The one with bright silk socks that thou hast brought us —
Where is he, Your Highness?

---

### Щауэишэж

Ерэдэ, рауэ, рэдэ, уора, уорэ, радэ, ра!
Ерэра, радэ, рауэ, радэ, уэрэда, радэ, ай!
Ауэ, радэ, рауэ, радэ, уэрэра, радэ, ай!

### ‘Schaweyishezh’ Chorus

Yerede, rawe, rede, wora, wore, rade, ra!
Yerera, rade, rawe, rada, wereda, rade, ay!
Awe, rade, rawe, rade, werera, rade, ay!

---

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).
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 effemeness 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* (унэхэщэ).

At the onset of puberty, girls were required to wear corsets (Kabardian: қуэншыбэ, 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 (щхъентэтес), 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. 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.

In Circassian (and in general North Caucasian) cosmology everything was held in place by the universal chain. The hearth-chain (жьэгу лъахъш; zhchegw 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 hedrixe (хьэдрыхэ; the world beyond) after death. The patrons of the domestic hearth were the deities Sozeresh and Zchegwpate (Жьэгупатхьэ; literally: God of the Hearth). A new bride was ‘unchain’ 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 (Meretiqwe), ‘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.

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 patriarchism, the formidable Nart Nesrenzhach’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 Teiwezh 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 (малъхъэишэ). A banquet, malhx’eyefe (малъхъэефэ), 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!’ («Малъхъэрэ 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 (щапщэ) or sch’epsche (щепщэ) ritual (капщ [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. 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’ (щопщаклыэ)). 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: Капщэм ырэщыдэшэжэхэрэ шхэнджэгукI. Пхъэ къыхкым ыщпакIэ къанэ ищэгэу пчэгум дэжк къэбгыкъум пашIэ. Ащ шым фэзэу зыгорэ тетIыыхэ, бэш цъыкъу ылыгъэу, ар ыкIыкъыкъоэ зыкъырыгиэфэхэрэ. Ащ «Гъоу мафэ уежъ апщ!» — атомэ дэгушыIэкэээ, пхъэр агъэсы, ежк шури къадэгушыIжээ ныкъокъефэх мэхъу е къефэхыпэ. Капщэм пхъэышыкIэ шэджэгух.]
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 miasmic realm of disease and injury was lorded over by Sozeresh. Black Death (тэлэу [telew], емьнэ [yemine]; the latter term is more generic of disease, for it could comprehend ‘cholera’, as well as ‘plague’, and is more folklorically charged), malaria (теиегъев [teiheghwe]; the term is also used generically for fever), smallpox (фэрэч; ferech’), chicken-pox (бэшентепч’; bzhenteipch’e), consumption (жэн уз; zchen wiz), measles (фэгъазэ; feghaze), cholera (тало; talo), green-sickness (фэншэуэз; fenshewiz), influenza and catarrh (пыхусыхуз [pixwsixw], пск’эпкъэпкъ уз [ps-che’epqlhepq wiz]), typhus (хуабэуэз; xwabewiz), leprosy (уэшэн; weshin), diarrhoea (ныбажэ; nibazhe), stomach-ache
smallpox (ferech’; фэрэкI), 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ФэрэкI уэрэд:</th>
<th>Smallpox Song:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Уо Истэ, Истауэ!</td>
<td>‘Oh, Yiste, Yistawe!’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. Уо уэрида!</td>
<td>Chorus: Wo weriyda!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Истэ, Истауаш!</td>
<td>Yiste, Lord-Yiste!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. Уо уэрида!</td>
<td>Chorus: Wo weriyda!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Я нэхъыпшыр зымыдэ!</td>
<td>Who acknowledges no greater lord!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. Уо уэрида!</td>
<td>Chorus: Wo weriyda!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Зи джэмыдэ тхъэръыкъуэ!</td>
<td>Whose dove is light chestnut!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ежъу. Уо уэрида!</td>
<td>Chorus: Wo weriyda!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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’ («Цэымъыэ»; ‘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.
**Smallpox Song:**
**Swift White Horse...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ШьорэкI орэд:</th>
<th>Smallpox Song:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Тэпырагъошъы пкІэгъуала...</td>
<td>The swift white horse,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Бланэуи чъэрэмэ дэльохъуа.</td>
<td>Tears along fleeter than the deer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Лъыхъухэр копкъыджэ ефызы,</td>
<td>The brave ones are squeezing its thighs,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Дэнэгъу бзыери дельэщуа.</td>
<td>Itsself in gilded silk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Дэнэгъо бзыери дельэщуа,</td>
<td>Itsself in gilded silk,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ошьогъуанэми шахъэхъуа.</td>
<td>They pasture it at the edge of the heavens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ошьогъуанэми шахъэхъуа,</td>
<td>They put it to pasture at the edge of the heavens,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Зыусхьаным ишыгъэхъуа.</td>
<td>Where the Master’s horse pasture lies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Зыусхьаным ишыгъэхъуапІэ,</td>
<td>The Master’s horse pasture is,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Алахъэ, гъэхъунэ даха.</td>
<td>By Allah, a lush meadow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Алахъ гъэхъунэ даэу,</td>
<td>By Allah, a lush meadow.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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


44 The horse’s thighs are squeezed so as to subdue it.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Чъыгэе дахэри къырокта</th>
<th>Where splendid oak-trees grow.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Чъыгэе дахэри къырокта, Зибэ гущъ къыккы съылышъхъ.</td>
<td>Fine oak grows there, As well as more clover than anywhere else.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Зибэ къыккы къылышъхъа, Яунашъхъэри дышъабгъа.</td>
<td>More clover grows there than anywhere else, His ethereal abode is roofed with gold.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Яунашъхъэри дышъабгъа, Бгъэнэуи тельери къуриыша.</td>
<td>His roof is covered with gold, The roofing on it – three blades of grass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Бгъэнэуи тельери къуриыша, Чэмищэу дафыри мыщыхъуа.</td>
<td>The roofing on top is of three blades of grass, Three of his bovines are perennial milk-cows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Чэмищэу дафыри мыщыхъуа, Зыдафырэ къалэшъы хъурая.</td>
<td>Three of his cows are permanent milkers, His cow-house is a magnificent palace.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Зыдафырэ къалэшъы хъурая, Тыъьяны хъураери щагъэчъа.</td>
<td>His cow-house a resplendent palace, Where silver ingots are cast.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Тыъьяны хъураери щагъэчъа, Зыпчъэ нахъыджэ имыла.</td>
<td>Silver bullion is founded there, Where there is but one entrance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Зыпчъэ нахъыджэ имыла, Зыпсынэ яэшъы мыжъуака.</td>
<td>It has but one door, The bottom of its spring – shingle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Зыпсынэ яэшъы мыжъуака, Рацы къыккэчъырэр шъоупса.</td>
<td>The bed of its spring is of pebbles, The welling water is mead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Рацы къыккэчъырэр шъоупса, Типсэ-купэри уихъакта.</td>
<td>The welling water is honey-sweet, Our souls are guests in thy realm.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Типсэ-купэри уихъакта, Хъаккы нари махэшъы къытфакуа.</td>
<td>Our souls are thy guests, The auspicious guest is coming to us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Хъаккы нари махэшъы къытфакуа, Къызыфакъырэ щыгъища.</td>
<td>The propitious guest is coming to us, Issuing forth from three beads.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

45 Therefore, our souls ought to be inviolable.
Къызыфакъори шыгъища, Щыгъыфицыри зырыза. | He hails from three beads,  
The three beads issuing forth disjointed brightness.  

Щыгъыфицыри зырыза,  
Зэрызицышыы мэтъыгъуа.  
| The three beads issuing their light in disconcert,  
They ripen separately.  

Зэрызицышыы мэтъыгъуа,  
Ятыъыакъэри гуахъыуа.  
| The three beads ripen separately,  
Their ripening is such a joy.  

Ятыъыакъэри гуахъыуа,  
Гум хээзъахъори зиуза.  
| Their ripening is a great joy,  
A delightful bliss for the one with disease.  

Гум хээзъахъори зиуза,  
Зиузыгъори фэпсынкла!  
| A delightful bliss for the ill,  
May his disease ease up!  

Зиузыгъори фэпсынкла,  
Псынкэ охъушъы охъужъa!  
| May his illness be mitigated,  
May thee get better, may thee recover!  

Псынкэ охъушъы охъужъa,  
Ухъужъынэуи тхъа элъa!  
| May thee get well, may thee recover,  
May God predestine it for thee to heal!  

Ухъужъынэуи тхъа элъa,  
Тхъам ылуагъэри нахъышъuа!  
| May God will it for thee to recover,  
What God ordains is so much better!  

Тхъам ылуагъэри нахъышъuа,  
Тхъам ишушъэри Іэшъэха.  
| God’s will cannot be surpassed,  
God is so swift in his beneficence.  

Тхъам ишушъэри Іэшъэха,  
Тхъам идахъэри хъопсагъuа.  
| God is swift in his beneficence,  
God is lavish in his mercy.  

Тхъам идахъэри хъопсагъuа,  
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):

Song of vigil over the wounded: ‘Hammer, little hammer…’

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]!

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.
Central to the cult of death was the belief in *hedrixe* (хьэдрыхэ) 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).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Бжэ:</th>
<th>Dirge:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ай, Лъэбыцэ мыгъуэ!</td>
<td>‘Alas, hapless Lhebitse!’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Уи кӏуэцӏыцӏышӏэм жиЭр уи жъэм жегъЭв</td>
<td>Alas, hapless Lhebitse!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.
And relieve thine soul, *(wewew, i-i)!*
*Wa, wa, wa, wa, wew!*
*Wa, wa, wew!*
*Wa, a, a, a!*

---

**Бжэ:**

Уэ, сыту йей
мыгъуэр къытхузэтраЪа
ун нитI мыгъуэр!

(A ды-ды-ды-дыд,) мыгъуэ!
Уэ, сыту йей мыгъуэр къытхузэтраЪа ун нитI мыгъуэр!
(Eй-ей), си Мурат!

A, си нэжан цыкIу мыгъуэ!
A, си нэжан цыкIу мыгъуэ, (ей-ей)!
Уэ, си мыгъуэр сусыну, (уэуэу)!
A, ай!
(A, уэу, уэу, уэу, уэу, уэу,) мыгъуэ!
(A ды-ды-ды-дыд,) мыгъуэ!

**Dirge:**

‘Oh, how thou have shut
your pitiful eyes to us
for ever and ay!’

(A di-di-di-did,) alas!
Oh, how thou have shut your pitiful eyes for ever and ay!
(Ey-ey), my Murat!

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!

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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* (къаблэ). A monument, *q’aschhedese* (къащхъэдэсэ), was erected by the head of grave, usually adorned with the family emblem (*дамыгъэ*; *damighe*). A slab, *hedepx’ebghw* (хъэдэпхъэбгъу), was used to shut the niche in the grave. Special guards, *q’ex ’wme* (къэхъумэ), ensured the upkeep and sanctity of burial grounds.

![Photo of grave](image_url)

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]
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.\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{51}

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

\textsuperscript{51} For Interiano’s work, see Ramusio, G. B., \textit{Giorgio Interiano, Genovese a
M. Aldo Manutio Romano, Della vita de Zychi chiamati Circassi}, Raccolta
di Viaggi, t. 2, Venetia, 1583.
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’ («хьэдэйус»; ‘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 ‘hedepeizche’ («хьэдэпежьэ»; ‘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.²²

The Narts had a special council of doom, Zchiwich’ Xase (жъыукъ 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 (Алыджэ 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 Yinzhij Gorge. The height from which the doomed ones were pushed to their death was called ‘Zchigheyibg’ («Жьыгъэибг») [‘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. 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.

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

“Hill of Old Age” [«Жыйгъэиби», 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.
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 «Фэхъусхэр; f’ex’wsxhr» 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 апщий!» ‘Psherih apschiy!’], the answer to which being «Упсэу апщий!» ['Wipsew apschiy!'; ‘Thank you!'], or «Хьэкъужь апщий!» ['Heqwzch apschiy!'], the answer to which being «Си хьэм къузжар тхьэм къуит апщий!» ['Siy hem qwezhar them qwiyt apschiy!'; ‘May what my hound has fetched be your lot!’]. Herdsmen wished each other increased cattle size [«Бохъу апший!»; ‘Box’w apschiy!’].

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

55 Other related sayings include: «Фэхъусыр псом япэц» ['Saluting comes first'], «Фэхъусыр сытми и щыпэц» [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: ‘Gwpmaxwe apschiy!’ [«Гупмахуэ апщий!»; ‘May this be a blessed gathering!’]. The toastmaster wassailed the newcomer «Упсэу апщий, щауэ 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 cozy lodgings, not only for the night, but for a full week.

Some Circassian proverbs and sayings related to greetings & salutes:

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

Псальэ гуапэм пщЭ шЭпткъым (Psalhe gwapem psch’e sch’emptqim): Nice words are priceless.

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

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

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

ИтИк’э уи Ёэр зыубыдыр уи щЫд шопсэлъэ (’Iyt’ch’e wiy ’er ziwbidir wiy sch’ib schopselhezh): He who greets you with both hands talks about you behind your back.

ИтИк’э Ёз зыубыдыр фызыц (’Iyt’ch’e ’e ziwbidir fizsch): Only women shake hands with both hands.

Иуэхум яэр фЭхъусц (’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; qanlı) 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 пшыналъэ»), 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.

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* [щак’уэзэпыдэзэ], 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. 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. A central concept in the institution of hospitality was the need to ensure the well-being of the guest, which was believed to reflect on the host.

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-хъэщшэ; literally: host-guest) institution. 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 (бысымгуащэ; *bisimgwasche*), 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


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 Сультан), and Teimbot Ch’erashe (Къэрашэ Тембот), Beresbiy Bghezchnoqwe (Bgazhnokov; Бгъэжьнокъуэ Бэрэсбий), Serebiy Me’edz (Mafedzev; МэфIэдз Сэрэбий), Ziramikw Qardenghwsch’ (Kardangushev; КъардэнгъущI Зырамъу), Hezeishe Schojen (Shogenov; Щоджэй Хъээшэ), Helim Mambet (Mambetov; Мамбэт Хъэлим), Miuxayil Mizhey (Мыжей Михайил), E. L. Kodzhesau (Qojeschaw; Къоджэшъау), V. K. Gardanov, A. I. Musukaev (Misiqwe; Мысыкъуэ), S. Chirzhin (Kirzhinov; Чыржын), K. Kh. Unezhev (Winezh; Унээк), M. A. Meretukov (Meretiqwe; Мэрэтыкъо), Kh. S. Kushkhov (Qwschhe; Къущхьэ), Raye A. Mamxegh (Mamkhegova; Мамхэгъ Рэе), and A. M. Tlupov (Л’уп; Лъуп).
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 жэщищ исмэ, быным ящыщ 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** (*bzilhxwghe 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’.

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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). 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!

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. If during

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A famous anecdote illustrates this point. Whilst a man was working in his yard, a 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.

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.
цыхүгэ хуэдэхэм ек̄уал̄эти, къуажэр къаклюхьурэ шхээк хуэдэхэм къыкхэж эмкъэ, зыдагъээн эпжэ элэ къуажэр къаклюхьурэ шхээк хуэдэхэм уэк̄уал̄эти.

15. Бий хъэцэ: Адыгэ хабзэм къызэриубыдымкэ, уи бийри хъэцэ эм къоклюлламэ э гутъу умыщм у эцэхьукъут, мылъку гуэр яутъуинжэт. Апхуэдэ хъэцэ эм уэк̄уал̄эти эдэкэт.

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 нэхъ мыгъуэми шыгъурэ пIастэрэ къыпхуещтэ; ‘Adigem ya nekh mighwemiy shighwre p'astere qipxweischte’), 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 (хъэцэ и Ыыхэ; hesch’e yi ‘ihe; the guest’s share). The old sayings, still current today, ‘The host is his guest’s servant’ («Высымыр хъэцэ эм и ѣэхуэхъэбзащэтэ»; ‘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’ («ХьэщIэр Тхъэм и ЬыкIуэщ»; ‘Hesch’er Them yi l’ik‘wesch’), and ‘A guest is the beloved of the Circassian’ («Адыгэ[m] хьэщэ и шласэщ»; ‘Adige[m] hesch’e yi sch’asesch’), are indicative of the reverence in which visitors were held.

The host, qweinaq (къуенаq; konak) or bisim (бысым), was not only responsible for the culinary needs of his guest, also called konak or hesch’e (хьэщэ), but was also his protector and guide. 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.

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.

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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’ («благъэ»), 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.\(^\text{64}\) 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.\(^\text{65}\)

**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 фыщыхэ?» (‘Dawe fischitxe?’), ‘How are you (pl.)?’ A common greeting formula was «Фэкъус ащий, еблаъэ!’ (‘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 (мэкъумылэ; meqwmile) whilst tethered to the post (шыф’едзап’э; 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.\(^\text{66}\) 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 (жьантэ;)

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\(^\text{64}\) 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.

\(^\text{65}\) Iliade, chant no. IX, p165.

\(^\text{66}\) The Circassians said of a derelict honorary guest-companion, ‘Xegherey xwemixwm he qiweighedzaqe’ («Хэгъэрей хуэмыхум хэ къыуегъэдзакъэ»), ‘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 (щакъы; 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. 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.

67 Sch’ak’we (щакъы), 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’ (жьагъэ), ‘melzchaghe’ (мэлжьагъэ), ‘nish’ (ныш), or ‘hesch’enish’ (хьэщэныш). 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. 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 'jegwak'we' («джэгуаклыу»), 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 (хэтияклы; 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 псэУух»], 'The songwriter is the terror of the prince.') Of his oratorial 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. 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 (jegw’we). 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 къэрэбгъэр зы палъэкэ хахуэ, Хэкум и хъумакъэ сощыф, Лыхъужым бгъэм и дамэ къытызэгъакэ, дыгуэм и къэлъэ эхызэогъээн. Си пашхэ къинуэфынуукэцэ цыхуэ бзэджэр, ээ цыхуэгъэшагъэм, икагъэм 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.


71 Older traditional musical instruments included the Circassian bowed violin (пышэ; pshine) and a clapping percussion instrument (пхъэц’ыч; 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 ‘hetiyak’we’ (‘хэтияк’уэ’), 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 (хэтияк’уэ баш; hetiyak’we bash).72

A dance party was started with the stately slow dance «къафэ» (qafe),73 and ended with the solemn round dance «удж» (wij), in accordance with the saying, ‘Джэгур къафэк’е къыщ э къыщадзэри, уджк’э яух’ (‘Jegwr qafech’e qisch’adzeriy, wijch’e yawix’) ['A dance party is started with «къафэ» (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 markworthy 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 «Къафэ» (‘Qafe’) is both a generic term for ‘dance’ and the name of a kind of dance.

74 In accordance with the saying, ‘Зэхуэмыдэ къыэздэфэж’ым, зэмифэж’у къыэздэуджк’ым’ (‘Zexwemide qizedefeqim, zemifeghw qizedewijqim’) ['Those dissimilar in their social rank do not dance the «къафэ» (qafe) and «удж» (wij) together’].
For distinguished guests, more elaborate entertainment activities were staged, including holding horse-races, equestrian shows, target shooting competitions (псагъэео; psaghe-yewe; Adigean), wrestling matches, and, sometimes, even hunting expeditions were mounted.\textsuperscript{75}

\textbf{Respect for guests}

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

\textsuperscript{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’eбix; 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’exexe, 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. 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 gashe 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 (цыхъутеуд; 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-ешхэ; 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

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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’ («хьэщIэш жьантIэ») is used.
close friend of the family). 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. 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. 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 апщийй!» [‘Gwpmaxwe apschiy!’; ‘May this be a blessed gathering!’]. The toastmaster wassailed the newcomer thus: «Упсэу апщийй, щауэ махуэ ухъу апщийй!» [‘Wipsew apschiy, schawe maxwe wix’w apschiy!’; ‘Thank you. May you be a lucky

77 The term themade (тхьэмадэ), 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 тьысын яухмэ, щысын яухауэ плъытэ хъунущ» (‘Adige gwpim 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 (gwpmawebzche). The acknowledgement was reminiscent of the medieval English drink-hail (a toast to health or good luck).
Toast-making

The cup-bearer (бережец; bghwesch’es) would present the toast goblet to the themade,\textsuperscript{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.\textsuperscript{81} A person received the goblet only upon hearing the word «Нок!» (‘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):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ыэ ди тхьэ,</th>
<th>Table-Toast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our God,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{80} In earlier times, the Circassians used large wooden bowls with circular handles (пхэ шынакъышхэхэ; 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 ‘къефэк’ (‘къефэк’).

\textsuperscript{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.
The Supreme Lord, Anadola,\textsuperscript{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, Their toast-making never ending,
The hens herded by ten women, 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!

\textsuperscript{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. 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 тхъэкъыр убагъуэр Тхъэм къыхъ ищ!»; ‘Divghetx’ezhasch, fiy tx’ezhighwerThem ch’ih yisch!’), and ‘May your provisions multiply, and may the victuals you offer never become halved!’ («Фи ерыскъыр убагъуэ, къызыхэфхар 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 упэрэсыху гъашӀэм хьъэкъым!»; '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’ («ъэщщэщ ўэрэдхэр»). 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; 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 (блатькъ; blathe), the pelvic region (шхужъ гъуанэ; shxwzch ghwane), the brisket (дзажэ дакъэ; dzazhe daqe), the thigh (куэпкъ; kwepq), and the lumbar and sacral vertebrae (тхъзэй; txibziy). Less ‘prestigious’ parts, served to the juniors, included the cervical and pectoral vertebrae (тхы хъурей; 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 (Ілэбдз; 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. 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 млым нэхъэр нэхъ 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

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85 The Circassians said, ‘Don’t send your fool on a visit as a guest!’ («Уи делэ хьэщІапІэ умыгъакІэ!»; ‘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, «Фыкӏэ зывыхэ, угъурды фхухъу, нэхъыфыжкӏэ зэвухъуэхӏ, Тхӏэм фыцӏигӏэтӏыншӏыхӏ!» ‘Ф’ич’e зивиу, виғхӏрӏли фыцӏw, нэкс’ичӏэ зевӏӏ wеч’, Them fisch ’и’гӏ’и’ншӏ!’, ‘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 зыхӏе жӏым чыцӏыхӏ хуаукӏ» (‘Зи бысым зихӏе жӏым чыцӏыхӏ хуаукӏ’; ‘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 (бысымхӏуэж; bisимхӏуэж; 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-мышкъ 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, «Фыкӏэ дыээхуэзэ!» (‘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. 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. In this respect,

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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.\(^{43}\)

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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 псальжъхэри псальяфэхэри

Абы бгым ыыщидзыжэ, уэ вийкэн уэнэ? (Умыфыгъуэ, умынжэ, жыхуинэц. Вий=вей=dung. Do not envy): If he throws himself down the mountain, does that mean you have to stand in dung.

Адыгэм хъэщэ и щласэн: The guest is very dear to a Circassian.

Адыгэм мыгъуэ, шигъурэ пястэрэ (Adige mighwe, shighwre p’astere): Even the most indigent of Circassians will prepare food (literally: salt and boiled millet dumplings) for you.

Адыгэм япэ жыщэнур нужкэн игу къок (Adigem yape zhiy’enur yiwizchch’e igw 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.

Адыгэм нэмзы, урыс насып: Circassian decorum and Russian luck.

Адыгэм хабэр ац щэныжэш: Circassian customs and traditions are the ancient legacy of the father.

Адрыщым ушёдзумэ, мыдрыщыр къылырэнэшш.

Акъыл зыэм шымэ пэнэц (Шыэнэ=patience, perseverance): Good sense and patience go together.

Акъыл зыэр си щыб ису къезухээк: He who has sense I would gladly carry on my back.

Акъылым уасэ иэкъым, гъээнэжыэм гъунэ иэкъым: Intellect is priceless, education has no limit.

Акъылыр ландыщэш, гъээнэжыэр дыщэ жыщ (Ландыщэ – дыщэ зэрылэ=that which gilds): Intellect gilds and education is a golden tree.
(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.

Do not hanker after something that has been put in your trust.

The tree planted by the clumsy person dies.

Even with his tail in your hand the fox might get away.

A rash man is soon captured A rash man is an easy prey.

A rash man is taken unawares.

Patience is a plaster for all sores.

The animated eagle fell into the beak of the owl and was eaten.
Бъэр куэдрэ уэмэ, и дамэр мэкъутэ: (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).

Бъям куэдрэ укІэльымыгъыж.

Бъуэ (блэ) егъапщи зэ пыунщ: (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.

Бжэцъэлюм нымыс хэдрыхэ ноІуэ (Бжэцъэлю=threshold; хэдрыхэ=the life after): Do not utter bad words.

Бжэзэлоэ, сипэхъу, эээщыкІ, эи нысэ: I am telling you, daughter, hear me out, daughter-in-law.

Бжым ээпІбуамэ «къызэохъэльэкІ» жумыэж (Bzchim zisch’ebwame ‘qizohelhech’ ’zhumi’ezh): In for a penny, in for a pound.

Бжыхъэм унэмысу уи джэджей 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 къэзылъху и гуэн Ыбамэ ѣщетэж.

Бзаджэм уи кІэ нубыдмэ, пыунщІн блэклІ: (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 (e e, e лей, e Ыей) пщІауэ (пщІэуэ)(,) фы ѣщымыгъугъ: 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 пэшэгуумэ, уи анэ мыъуэ хъунщ: If you befriend an evil person, woe unto your mother!
Бэгум къушчэ хэлькъым (Bzegwm qwpschhe xelhqim): The unruly member.

Бэгур джатэм иэърэ нэхъ 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.

Бэушухээм бэу цъыкъур пэкъыцыну щыхуежъэм—ээъытхъащ. Бэъылъхъэ пэърыъхъ хушаанэ (Пэърыъхъ=hunter’s bag).

Бинжъ умыъэблагъи, уи адэ и благъэжъ умъыбъэнэ (Biyyizch wimigheblaghlyi, wiy ade yi blaghezch wimigbine): Do not invite your old enemy (to your house) and do not desert your father’s old relative.

Бийм юъысъымэ, уъэъъ юъынъунэ (Biym wischis-hme, wi’eghe wix’wnusch): If you spare your enemy, you will get injured.

Бэ эгъапши ээъыпшч (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.

Бэкъам къыгъээж нэхъым: 1. Things past cannot be recalled; 2. Lost time is never found again; 3. What’s lost is lost.

Бэкъар эфъэлъащ: 1. Let the dead bury the dead; 2. Lost time is never found again; 3. What’s lost is lost.

Бэкъа хабээжъым (хъыбарыжъым) укъемыджэж (укъемыкъуж) (Blech’a xabbezchim [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.

Бээр «пъыцщэ» жыынэу уи гуфъакъэм думыъэтъысыээ: Do not say, ‘The snake is frozen,” and place it in your bosom.

Быдэ и анэ гъыркъым (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.

Бысыырык хъышчэ и йуъыйтхъэбъашчээ (Bisimir hesch’em yi ’wexwthebzasch’esch): The host is his guest’s servant.

Вым уанэ трелькъэ: (He is saddling the ox) He’s such a nitwit.
Вырэ жёмрэ хузээгъэкъыркъым: (He couldn’t tell an ox from a cow) 1. He knows nothing at all; 2. He is so ignorant.

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

Гуашэр гъэрмэ, мэжабэ, хъыджэбээр дэсмэ, мэутхъуэ: If the house mistress is captive, the liquid clears, and if the girl is at home, the liquid dims.

Губгъуэм ушымыкъэрабгъэ, унэм ушымылыхъужьъжь: If you are not a coward in the field, you won’t be a hero at home.

Гутэ нъыцыр щъырзэнлэжщж: False hope is self-delusive.  

ГужьенгъуафІэш – унэхъугъуафІэш: (He who easily succumbs to panic, gets ruined easily) 1. Do not panic; 2. Keep a stiff upper lip.

Гузвэхъыр щъэ жыы мыхъу: (An anxious person soon gets old) 1. Relax; 2. Take it easy.

Гукъыдэж уи’емэ, пхуэмыщ’эн шы’экъым (Gwqidezh wiy’eme, pxwemisch’en schi’eqim): Nothing is impossible to a willing heart.

Гуэс ямыщІ саугъэт умыщІ.

Гуэси нэлъэ, зыплъыгъы т’ыс (Gwpsisiy psalhe, ziplhihiy 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 к’уэдмэ, лъер ш’эдкъыркъым.

Гур к’уэдмэ, шыр жэркъым: If you lose heart, your horse won’t run.

Гуэгъуэ Тхъэшхъуэ и жагъуэш
(Guexhe=daring/courageous/inspirited fellow).

Гъэузи гъэхъуж: Hurt and heal.

Гъуэгу благъэ гъуэгу жыжэ эхъэрэ, гъуэгу жыжэ гъоэгу блағъэ (Ghwewg blaghew ghwewg zhizche nex’re, ghwewg
zhizche ghwegw blaghe): (Better a short long way than a long short way) The furthest way about is the nearest way home.

Гъумыллэпэм елээ, гъумыллэкээм эзау (Гъумыллэ=provisions for a journey).

Гъунэгъунэпым бий ящыркым: 1. Don’t make an enemy out of your neighbour; 2. Love thy neighbour.

Гъусэ ямышыркым бэлкэрэ пэт йоджэ.

Гъущыр пэлэ шыкэ эуэ (Ghwsch’ir plha sch’ich’e yewe): 1. Strike while the iron is hot; 2. Make hay while the sun shines.

Дахэ и щайгь дышэ шыэлш: 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.

Даъылкэйм дэгу уышри, плэлкэйм нэф уэшып: A bad listener makes you deaf, a bad looker makes you blind.

Дэтхэнэ эу ыуэхутъэбэз эм бэлкэя эрэшып (Гъусэ ямышыркым бэлкэрэ пэт йоджэ.

Дэлэ дысыфок, губзыгъэр кэ ёр къысфок: I extricate myself from the fool; the wise extricates himself from me.

Дапыр эхуэхуэдар эрэхрэхэр эрэхрэхэр (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.

Дыгъум ипээр мафэнэм ичэ: Theft is followed by misfortune.

Дыгъум и пыяэр мафэнэм гэ (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 мэлэхъуэ ящирэ?: Do they make a shepherd out of a wolf?!

Джэд наээр бэйнаээр: An early hen is like an early child.

Джэдджъей зёуалэ пэывэ хоунэ: A lounging chick ends up being boiled alive.

Джэду шыкем шыпсэм умылуатэ: Don’t tell a tall tale while the cat is seated.

Дзэй хуэшыфыышхэ хэлькым (Дзэй=workmate, partner [especially in tilling]).
Дзы зыфіэнц дзы кыыфіешык: 1. If you ascribe a defect to someone, he/she will ascribe a defect to you in return; 2. Do not calumniate others.

Дзыхымыщыр дзыхышыгъуэдэыш: A distrustful person is dangerous.

Егъелей делагъыш: It is stupid to go to excess.
Ем е и хышъуэкым (Yem ye yi xwschx’weqim): (Evil is not the medicine for evil) Two wrongs don’t make a right.
Емрэ фымърэ зымыщымн имыцъ эцымыжэ кыыфіощ: Even the person who cannot differentiate between good and evil thinks there is nothing that he/she doesn’t know.

Ем цышъыр фым пӧуджэ (Yem schis-hir f’im po’wje): He that spares the bad injures the good.

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

Е пышау эф уцымыгъытъ, фым пышами уцымыфыгъуж: 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 улъын, е улъэн: (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.

Еущий (еущы) зы махуэщ(и), хабзэхьыкІэр (хабзэ къээху) тхэмахуэщ (макахиш): (Instruction takes one day, its implementation takes a week [three days]) It is easier to give an advice than to follow one.

Еущы зы махуэци, хабзэхьыкІэр тхэмахуэщ (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.

Жэмэрэ выры ээхуэдэж: The cow and ox stand for one another.
Жейрэ пярэ ээхуэдэш: He who is asleep is like the dead.
Жыжэу бгэтилымэ, (нэхъ) гьунэгуу кьэншэжынщ (къэбгъутьынщ) (Zhizchew bghet’ilhme, [nex’] ghwneghnu qepschezhinsch [qebghwetizhinsch]): Fast (safe, sure) bind, fast (safe, sure) find.
Жыжэу бгэтилымэр благээу кьощэдэж: Fast (safe, sure) bind, fast (safe, sure) find.
Жыэргъуафэ щъэктэ, щээгъуэйщ: Easier said than done.
Жъантээм уэрыдашэр щыгъынырыш (Zchant’em wizeridashery schighinirsh): Fine feathers make fine birds.
Жъэ пышкээ нэхъэр щъэ лыклюэ: Better the head mediator than the mouth intermediary.
Жъэшхуэ тьээшхуэ и жагъуэщ: A big mouth offends the supreme god.
Жъым шытхуи щэр къаштэ (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 ухуэмэйме, уи джатээр жану щыгъэль (Zawe wixwemeyme, wiy jater zhanu schighelh): If you wish for peace, be prepared for war.
Зэ иэхъэр эзгуэр (Zeyi nex’re zegwer): Better late than never.
Зэрыпщу мыхъумэ, эрыпщу щыы: If things don’t happen the way you want, do what can be done.
Зэса (есэ) сээгъейщ: 1. Old (bad) habits die hard; 2. Habit is second nature.
Зэухуэяфэ ээфэлкъуэд къыхокъ.
Зэцыгъуэ мунээйу: (He who relies on other people gets ruined) Rely on yourself.
Зэцыгъуэ хужыгъэшхэш (Zeschigwgh xwzhgleshxsch): (He who relies on other people ends up eating husked millet) Everybody’s business is nobody’s business.
A bad campaign makes you limp, bad laughter makes your mouth crooked.

Soft fire makes sweet malt.

A sweet talker lures the snake out of the hole) Soft fire makes sweet malt.

Do in Rome as the Romans do.

Mind your own business; Don’t poke your nose into other people’s affairs; Every tub must stand on its own bottom.

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.

Better to have in the head than in the penfold.
It is better to give than to take.

A fault confessed is half redressed.

A sullen one does not get his share.

When two know it, it’s no longer a secret.

When three know it, all know it.

Don’t betroth the one they compliment, take the one that they censure.

Save for a rainy day.

A clean fast is better than a dirty breakfast.

Do not play with a gun—it might be loaded.

Good sense is better at the beginning than at the end.

The more you see, the more you know.

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.
It is good if the rope is long; it is even better if there are less words. Silence is golden.

He who doesn’t take care of his pennies is not worth a penny.

It is the elder that calles.

Don’t turn out he who comes to you, and don’t hold back he who wants to leave.

He who overcomes you is strong.

What overwhelms you is difficult.

Fool’s haste is no speed; 2. 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.

He who scrubs every pig he sees will not long be clean himself.

Grief never grows old.

(A hasty foot jumps in the dung) 1. Hasty climbers have sudden falls; 2. More haste, less speed.
Лъапэкъэ хыф Избээр дзапэкъэ къоштэж: What you flippantly discard with the tip of your foot, you will redeem with the tips of your teeth.
Лъепкъыр ээкъуэтмэ – лъэщ (Lhepqir zeqmetme – lheschsch): There is strength in union.

Лъэпкъыр зээкъуэтмэ – лъэщ: There is courage in death.
Лъы эланэ шэуншээркъым: A man does not ask where he is being taken.
Лъы и пэлэ эпчыжыркъым: A man keeps his word.
Лъы пхам лъы суэркъым (L’i pxam l’i yewerqim): Never strike a tethered man.
Лъы псори лъыкъымы фыз псори фызкъым: Not all men are men, and not all women are women.
Лъы хахуэр утыкум щоощабэ, лъы шабэр утыкум шоокий (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.
Лъым зигъэгусэркъым.
Лъыгъэр Ыыхəмымгэушш: Courage is a lot that is not shared.
Лъыкъуэ яукдыркъым (L’ik’we yawk’irqim): Don’t kill the messenger.
Лъыфыр бэ дыээнэ, лъыф дыээр зэрыэш: There is no counting good men, but very good men are very rare indeed.
Лъыхуэр и лъэуэр къуэдыркъым (И цэр, игъэхаэр къоэнэж, жыхуинэ): (A hero’s trail is never lost) Heroes live forever.
Лъыхъур фыз дэубэээнэ, Лъыбэыр фыз дээуйш: A real man pays compliments to his wife, whereas an effeminate man beats up his wife.

Мафлэ нэхур «благъэщ» жыпїэу умыкїуэ, хээ бэнэ мацњыр «жыжъэщ» жыпїэу къуумыгъанэ.
Мащэ зыллэ йохуээж (Maschel(r) (qe)zit’(ir) yoxwezh): (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.
He who falls once in the hole is short-sighted, he who falls twice is blind.

He who falls once in the hole is blind, he who falls twice has no vision.

Like teaching an old dog new tricks; 2. Old (bad) habits die hard.

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.

Don’t force an open door.

Let sleeping dogs lie; 2. It is ill to waken sleeping dogs; 3. Don't trouble trouble until trouble troubles you.

Eyes shall see, and ears shall hear.

Do not cackle if someone else gets the food.

Do not become conceited by compliments directed at somebody else.
Нэмыс здэщымыЭм насьпи щыыЭкым: 1. Where there is no decency, there is no fortune; 2. Decency and good luck go hand in hand.

Нэмыс щыыЭм уи щыыЭш зыхуэншыжыр: The decent things you do do to maintain your own honour.

Нэмысыншэр насьпыншэщ: He who lacks decency is unfortunate indeed.

Нэпсейр насьпыншэщ: A greedy man is unfortunate indeed.

Нэрылъагъу щытхъур щыгъуэщ: The decent things you do you do to maintain your own honour.

Нэпсейр насьпыншэщ: He who lacks decency is unfortunate indeed.

НэфэгуфЭ и из дыщ їуэнТа щылыщ: The eyes of the cheerful one are full of twisted gold.

Нэхъыжь телуцуыкыпшэщ (Телуцыкыпшэщ = place to trim, square): It is to the old that we go for trimming.

Нэхъыжьым жы эг, нэхъыщээм гьуэгэ эг: The old has the right of speech, the young has the right of way.

Нэхъыкытлым яхэди я нэхъыфыр къыхэх: Of two bad things, choose the lesser evil.

Ныбэ йеи щыыЭш мыхъумэ, щыхы йеи щыыЭкым (Nibem 'ey schi’em, shxin 'ey schi’eqim): There is no such thing as bad food, but there are bad paunches.

Ныбэм <уи адэ и жъакИ къынъыпышI къыльхэ> жеI (Nibem 'Wiy ade yi zchach’e qipiwiensch’i yiqilhe’ 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 уедалышэ, емыхэ къынъыпышэ, жыхунIыш]

Ныбэр фэ цыыЭ-лы цынэнэ цэлойкI (Къуэд ипльхэ хъуну шхэкI, нымылыкхэ, жыхунIыш): 1. Do not gluttonize; 2. Do not be a glutton.

Ныбэрдыдэ нэхъырэ шхэ адэдээых (Г’этлылыгъэ щы, жыхунIыш): Save for a rainy day.

Ныкъуэндыкъу нэхъырэ уэдэдэых: It is better to be emaciated than to be disabled.

Нысэ мыхъунур жъантIажэ мэхъури, мaffэ мыхъунур ишъэм щольд.

Пагэ и блыкь-блашхэ къутэгъуафЭщ.
Пашыэллыэку джэгу элькэым.
Перокэ тэ эхъэр, аъылкэ тэ: It is the mind that writes, not the pen.
Песэльэ бэдэжэ губэдэжэшцэш, гурыынэшэ щыныр жээкэшэш.
Песэльэ ёушээкэ хэшцэ ёрагэкэыжээкэшем (Psalhe ghwschech’е hesch’е yiraghech’izhirqm): Fine (kind, or soft) words butter no parsnips.
Песэльэ дахэкэ куэд пхузэфэкэнунуц (Psalhe daxech’е kwed pxwzef’ech’inusch): Soft fire makes sweet malt.
Песэльэ щабэкэ гушабэшцэш: Gentle words make the heart grow softer.
Песэльэ Ёфыр эмжэшцэри, песэльэ дыджыр мэшцэгэш: Nice words dry up, bitter words get wet.
Песапэ куэд хъуркэкым: There is no such thing as too much charity.
Пеэр яшэри напэ къашэху: They sell their souls to buy consciences.
Псы икэшэнэм (иклыытум) унэмысу, уи кэпр думыхэй (умыят) (Psi yich’ip’em (yich’ighwem) winemisu, wiy ч’ер dumihеy (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.
Пэльэшэшум Къуреий икэркым (Пылыэ=flask; Къурей—Кавказ лъапэшм щылэ губэшэшэш элэр и щэц; ‘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.
Пфэкэздэм шъэкэ ўмыыгэ, къэбгээтам шъэкэшем умэгоуфэш: Do not cry over what you have lost, and do not be happy over what you find.
Пхээыэшд пэшэгъум мыйгу уохьулэ: The unworthy companion leads you to misfortune.
Пхуэмыфащэ пэшэгъу пщымэ, уи анэ мыйгуэ пщынш: If you make a companion out of an unworthy person, woe unto your mother!

Пхуэмыфащэ шауэгъу умышш: Be careful whom you choose as a best man.

Пхуэмыхьын хъэльэ къыумышты (Pxwemihin helhe qiumischte): Zeal without knowledge (is like a runaway horse).

Пшымым эхърэ зы пэж: One truth is better than a hundred lies.

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

Пыл худиз эннэпэ эннэын эннэлыкъымэ энгъузудаш: The hare burst to smithereens pumping itself to elephant’s size.

Пшашэрэ пшыщарэ (’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 хъуркъым (Selam ley x’wrqim): It is always opportune to pronounce greetings.

Судым шыфэ пэгу пышхэмэ, вакъанхэ къышхыжиркъым.

Сымылъагъуу си фэщ хъунукъым (Similhaghwu siy f’esch x’wnuqim): Seeing is believing.

Т’акъуэр закъуэ пальщ, закъуэр л’э пэльыгэц (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 блэк’ам ш’акъуэ къэльумышштэ(ж) (Weshx blech’am sch’ak’we ch’elhumischte(zh)): (After the storm, don't put on the felt cloak) 1. After death the doctor; 2. After dinner, mustard.

Удафэ и аъыл ирэфыж: The unruly one drinks up his own mind.

Удын гуаэр мэлъышыри, пэльэ гуаэр гъушыжкъым: The grief caused by a blow dries up, but an offensive word grieves forever.
A stumble may prevent a fall.

Look before you leap.

If you are old, behave like an elder; if you are young, behave like the young.

Do not put on airs.

As they see you they make their minds about you, and they accord you consideration accordingly.

1. What you come across (first) is good food; 2. Hunger is the best spice.

Do not condemn a host to whose guest-house you have never been.

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.

If you can’t find somebody to talk things over with, take off your hat and consult it.

It is better to donate something than sell it very cheap

He who offers you a seat shall not calumniate you.
The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence.

Who falls for you is better than whom you fall for.

If you cannot have the best, make the best of what you have.

Do in Rome as the Romans do.

Respect your parents and your children shall respect you.

Your elders shall say it, and your young shall retell it.
(Don’t draw your dagger twice and don’t say you words two times) Be decisive.

Do not make a companion out of someone who is not your best man.

Do not put on airs.

Do not put on airs.

Do not put on airs.

Measure for measure.

Tame your words, and enhance your decency.

Wash your dirty linen at home.

Cut your coat according to the cloth.

You must know where your horse will run.

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.

Укъыээрашэ уи шьыбэщ, уээральыгъу уи гъуэгъуш (Япэ ээрээбгъээлягъуэщ, жыхуинэщ).

Укъынчэльхум пэори гуфиящ, уышылээкэ зыхуэбгъээлынъыфмэ.

Умышэгъыль кээншэгъыркъым: Fast (safe, sure) bind, fast (safe, sure) find.

Умышээм уышэуышэнэыр емээкъукъым: It’s not a shame to ask (when you don’t know).

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

Упашээм, уогуэ: (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.

Упашэкээр эпышэрэ: (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.

Упышэ шээнэхъуркъым, шээнэхъу шээнэркъым.

Упышэ Ыупышэ ээлькъым.

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

Учэнджашэм уышыуэркъым (Wichenjaschem wischierqim): (If you take counsel, you won’t err) Good counsel does no harm.

Ущакъуэ нэхъэр этаэкъуэ (Имываскээ пэдэ нэхъэр, пэнээм нэхъыфшэ, жыхуинэщ): It is better to donate something than sell it very cheap.

Уышыкэм нкэ уыхууц (see also Щыкъыр икэ мээбэ): The conceited person becomes the worst.

Уышымытхъуээ – пухуэбдынкъым.

Фадээм текэыа шыээкъым: No one has ever prevailed upon drink.

Фээхъус лэй хъуркъым (F’ex’ws ley x’wrqim): It is always opportune to pronounce greetings.
Фій зезыхъэр фій мэхъу (F’ey zeiziher f’ey mex’w): He who scrubs every pig he sees will not long be clean himself.
Фіы зыщэ уищэжрэ?: If someone does you a good turn, do you ask him why?
Фіы къышхэээщэ фіы хуышэж: Repay kindness with kindness.
Фіыр умышыхумэ, нэхъ лъанэр къыхэх: If you can’t choose according to quality, pick the more expensive.

Хабээ лъэукъыми, Іумахээ Иээхутъэбээкъым: Etiquette is not begging, and gentle talking is not servility.
Хабэм къемызэгъыр и бийщ: He who cannot get accustomed to the etiquette, fights it.
Хабэммышэ эмъкъухъы: He/She who is ignorant of customs and traditions perpetrates improprieties.
Хабэммышэ щыкълэйщ: He/She who is ignorant of etiquette finds it difficult to to do things properly.
Хабэтр убээ эыфэщээм хэпщэнэум и ныкъуэр къегъанээ: Leave off half of what you would do for someone who thinks that etiquette is servile attention.
Хабэтр убээнкъым, къалныр Іульхээнкъым: Etiquette is not servile attention, and duty is not bribery.
Хэдэ мэдэкъуэри хэпхъуэ Іыхэфэщ. Хэдэ мэдакъуэри хэпъэ мэшлакъуэ. Хэдэ мэдэхъуэ.
Хэпъээъ ыыхээнээщ: 1. Scornful dogs will eat dirty puddings; 2. To mistake shadow for the substance.

Хузму укІуэмэ, нэхъыбэ пкІунщ (Xwemu wik’weme, nex’ibe pk’wensch): Make haste slowly.
Хужыгъе матэр гэклъуди, хужыгъе гуэн зыІрыгъээ (Xwzchghе mater ghek’wediy, xwzchghе 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.

Хэдээыгъуюанээщэ къуашэкъэ ухэмыуэ (Hedzighwaneghwem qwatsech’e wixemiwe): Let sleeping dogs lie.
If you keep a corpse for long, it will smell; if you drag a business too long, matters will become complicated.

(Хьэджафэ=borzoi, Siberian wolf-hound; лъхукъуэщо= serf; slave; хъуэнэн=to use foul language; to curse).

Evil begets evil.

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.

Don’t kill an innocent dog, and don’t divorce a blameless woman.

What is hired is not for hire.

It is easier to hire out something than to give it back.

The best fish smell when they are three days old.

1. It is in bad taste to overstay one’s welcome; 2. The best fish smell when they are three days old.

A guest from far away is dearer than a guest from nearby.

Guests come easily, but do not as easily go.

1. A guest is never in excess (unwanted); 2. No guest should be regarded as a burden; 3. All guests are welcome.

The unworthy guest heads for the place of honour (away from door, near hearth).
Хьэш'емыхъ жьант'ак'иуэш (Hesch’emix’w zchant’ak’wesch): The unworthy guest heads for the place of honour (away from door, near hearth).

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

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

Хьэш'э шалэ шьэкъым (Hesch’e sch’ale sch’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]

Хьуэхъук’э уэхыхьэу, хьуэйкэ уэхэмьык’ыж: To start with a toast and end up with a curse.

Ц’у псори дьщэкъым (Ts’u psoriy discheqim): All is not gold that glitters.

Ц’ыхум и шэр езем зыфИещым (Ц’ыхум и дуней тетык’эм хуэдафэ кърапль, жыхун’энщ): Man makes his own name.

Ц’ыхуф’ и тхьэк’умэ дэгуш: (The ear of the good person is deaf) Hear no evil.

Ц’ыхуф’ и ыэнэ хьэзырыщ: (The table of a good person is always ready) Keep your table always ready (for guests).

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

Шэрэ льырэ эхак’ыркъым: They don’t pour milk and blood into one another.

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

Шу хьэш’эр ягъэшсыж, лъэс хьэш’эр пш’ант’эм дапыж (Shu hesch’er yaghsheshizh, 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.

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

Шыгъупластэм уемыльэнауэ (Шыгъупласт=bread-and-salt): Do not scoff at meager food.

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

Шым еуи дыхъэ, елъэдъьауи къыдэлъыж: Whip the horse and approach, spur the horse and leave.

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

Шыуаным ильыр зымышкъыжынур гуным ильым тогъжёнк: He who will not eat up what’s in the cauldron shall worry about what’s in the granary.

Шифым къамышы хуйкъым (Shif'im qamishi xweyqim): (A good horse is in no need of a whip) A good horse should be seldom spurred.

Шыцуэ къесу узэрэым уимык (Шыщуэ=light snow): Stay put where you are, if light snow is falling.

Щакъ узэ къуэгъуэм хьэв япъыркъым, гуэзвэгъээм къан къахъыркъым: 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 attaligate, 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 (атәлъыкъ), was expected to teach his ward, qan (къан) or p’ur (п’ур), many social and martial skills.

Щауэр зыгъэщауэр гуащэции, гуащэр эрэгуащэр и щэнщ (Щэн=manners; disposition, character).

Щауэ укшырх хъыджэбзхэ йэшцэ (Schawe wich’itex x’ijebzexch’izhshch): Faint heart never won fair lady.

Щхэкъыуэ зышш шхъэшхывъуэ йохуэ (щхэкъыуэ=offence, injury, wrong; resentment, grudge).

Щхъэр къаъ, жалямэ, пыээр къаъ.

Щхъэр неумэ, пыэ щыщдэркъым: If the head is alive, it will not lack a cap.

Щыыннебгъу нэхърэ тэбгъуэн (Щыын къэд уиэ нэхърэ тэпъэншэльын, жыхуинэщ): To have your bedding is better than nine complements of clothes.

Щыжаэм щыпаушыркъым: It is rude to interrupt while someone is talking.

Щыкъыр икъэ мэхъу (see also Ущыкъимэ икъэ ухъунэ): The conceited person becomes the worst.

Щымыуэ и щыуагъэ яшхыркъым: To err is human.

Щыхъуккёй нэхъэр убыкъафъэ: A good calumny is better than a bad compliment.

Щыщдэ нэхъэр мащэшх (Schisch’e nex’re masch’eshx): A little is better than nothing.

Щакъыуэ нэхъэр уэшш нэхъ благъэш: 1. Rain is nearer than the great coat; 2. Always be prepared.

Щалэгъуэр шхъэгъэртшц (Ущалэху улэхутъэбзащэщ, жыхуинэц): While you are young, you are a servant. [One or two young men schhegherit (щхьэгъэрт) 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 (тхъэмащэ). 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.

Щі ягьэлуш щхьэкІэ, жьы яушинжэр?: Do not teach an old dog new tricks.

ЩІм дежъи жыым дышэ (Sch’em deizchiy zchim deshxe): Travel with the young and eat with the elders.

ЩЭныгъэ зимыІэр нэым хуэдэш: He who lacks knowledge is like a blind man.

Ямьыгъэпсэльэп яукІыркыым.

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

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

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

Іэщми пэ Іутщ (ГушЭгъу хуэш, жьхунІэш): Even cattle have souls (treat them kindly).

Іэй пщІауэ фІы ущымыгутъ (‘Ey [e bzaie, e e] psch’awe f’i wishimigwgh): 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.

Іуэхыдуэ ядьыркым, лыкІуэ яукІыркым: 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).

Іуэхутхъэбээри шІыхуэш: Even a service is a debt.
Appendix 2

Sayings & Expressions
Associated with Hospitality Traditions

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** (Адыгэм хьэщэ и щлассэ): A guest is the beloved of the Circassian. [In Adigean: Адыгэм эхъакэр яккэ; or Унэгъуакэ эхъакэр яккэ]
- **Adige mighwe, shighwre p’astere** (Адыгэ мыгъэ, шыгъурэ пластэрэ): 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 qipxweischte** (Адыгэм я нэхъ мыгъуэми шыгъурэ пластэрэ къыпхуещтэ): 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’eriy) bisimsch!** (Адыгэм я нэхъ мыгъуэри [тхъэмышкэри] бысымэй): Even the most indigent of Circassians will be more than ready to play the host. [In Adigean: Адыгэм анахь тхъамышкэри бысым]
- **Adige yi hesch’e bidap’e yissch** (Адыгэ эхъ эщэ быдапэ 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 эхъакэр пытапэ исщ]
- **Hach’er pstewme** (or **pstewmiy** ap) (Хьакэр пстэумэ [е пстэуми] ап): The guest always comes first. [Adigean]
- **Hesch’e ley sch’eqim** (Хьэщэ лей щыэкъым): 1. A guest is never in excess (unwanted); 2. No guest should be regarded as a burden; 3. All guests are welcome. [In Adigean: Хьэкэл лье щыэп]
- **Hesch’em nasip qidok’we** (Хьэщэл насып къьдокъуэ): With the guest arrives good fortune. [In Adigean: Хьакэ къакомэ, насып кььдэкъо]
- **Hesch’er Them yi l’ik’wesch** (Хьэщэл Тхэ дьыкъуэ): A guest is a messenger from God.
- **Hesch’e sch’ale sch’eqim** (Хьэщэл щалэ щыэкъым): 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: ХъэкIэ къалæ хъурэп

- **Hesch’eschizch nesch’ir wetersch** (ХьэщIэщыжь нэщIир уэтэрц): An unused old guest-house is like winter quarters for cattle.

- **Hesch’ew qipxwek’wame, wiy zhaghweghwriy (wiy) nibzcheghwsch** (ХъэщIэу къыпхуэкIуамэ, уи жагъуэгъури [уи] ныбжъэгъуц): If he comes to you as a guest, even the sworn enemy is your friend. [In Adigean: ХьакIэ къыпфакIомэ, уиджэгъури ныбдъэгъу]

- **Pf’emasch’er hesch’e ’wssch** (ПфIэмащIэр хьэщIэ Iусщ): The food you spare is victuals for your guests. [Шхымым ущысъхъэмэ, хъэщIэ шхым мъхъя, жыхунIэнц]

- **Psalhe ghwschech’e hesch’e yiraghech’izhirqim** (Псалъэ гъущэкIэ хьэщIэ ирагъэкIыжыркъым; гъущэ=dry, ‘empty’): Fine (kind, or soft) words butter no parsnips.

- **Qak’wexe ya winesch** (КъакIуэхэ я унэц): 1. It is a house for all comers; 2. All are welcome in this house.

- **Ts’ifisch’w hach’e shimich’** (ЦIыфышIу хьакIэ щымыкI): A good person will always have guests (visiting him). [Adigean]

- **Ts’ixwf’ yi ’ene hezirsch** (ЦIыхуфI 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 ныш нахъи нэщIо-гъуIу): Better a cheerful reception than an ox slaughtered in your honour. [Adigean. «Цу къыпфаукIын нахъи къыпфэчэфхэу къыпзэтокIымэ нахышIу» зыфIу]

- **’Wexwm yaper f’ex’wssch** (Iуэхум япэр фIэхъусц): Greeting precedes conversation.

- **Yeblaghe ziy bem yi bin mezhal’erqim** (Еблагъэ зи бэм и биз мэжалэркъым): The children of the person who receives many guests never go hungry. [In Adigean: Еблагъэр зибэм ибын мэлакэрэп]

- **Yerisqinshem yi duneyr ch’if’sch** (Ерыскыншем и дунейр къыфIщ): His world is truly bleak he who has no victuals in his house.

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Zhile(r) zighashxe(r) shxin schhech’e mal’e (Жылэ(р) зыгъашхэ(р) шхын шхьэк’э 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 пшаПIэрщ; i.e. the cook]

Ziywine wiyherer qipfchefme, qiotaghem fed (Зиунэ уихъэрэр къыпфэчэфмэ, къыотагъэм фэд): If the host gives you a hearty welcome, it is as good as a gift. [Адигэан]

Ziywine wiyherer qipfchefme, qipfashterer ‘esch’w (Зиунэ уихъэрэр къыпфэчэфмэ, къыпфаштэрэр Ыэшъу): If the host receives you cordially, then whatever they serve you would taste good. [Адигэан]

Host-guest relationship

‘Aner bisimim yi’of, teilhir hach’em yi’ofoch’en (Ианэр бысыымым иоф, тельыр хъакIэм иофшIэн): The table is the business of the host (to prepare and set); what is on it is the business of the guest. [Адигэан]

Bisimir ghwaz, hach’er ghozaj [Бысыымыр гъуаз, хъакIэр гъозадж]: The host is the leader (guide); the guest is the object of splendour. [Адигэан]

Bisimir hach’em yi’oftabg [Бысыымыр хъакIэм иофтабг]: The host is his guest’s messenger. [Адигэан]

Bisimir hesch’em yi ‘wexwthebzasch’esch (Бысыымыр хъэщIэм и ЫэхъутхъэбзашIэщ): The host is his guest’s servant.

Bisim negw yixigh (Бысыым нэгу ихыгъ): Said of a hospitable, friendly host (with respect to guest). [Адигэан]

Biyiyizch wimigheblaghiy, wiy ade yi blaghezch wimibgine (Биийъэ умыгъэблагъы, уи адэ и билъээкъ уымъыбъынэ): 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’or er ghasch’o (ХъакIакIо укIо пшIоигъомэ, хъакIэу къыпфакIорэр
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** (ХьакІэм къэкІоныр ежь ил оф, къожьыныр бысыым ил оф): 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** (ХьакІэм къэкІоныр—ил оф, къожьыныр—бысыым ил оф): *See preceding entry.* [Adigean]

- **Hach’em yishire yimasc’ore** (ХьакІэм иышыр эмасІорэ): (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 lhite** (ХьакІэр гъашіо, ціфыщъур лъыгэ): Indulge your guests, and honour good men. [Adigean]

- **Hesch’ef’ yi bisimibzhe ze’wxasch** (ХьэщІэфІ и бысыымйычэ зэІухащ): The (door of the) host’s guest-room is open for a good guest. [In Adigean: ХьэкІэфІ ибысыымйычэ зэІухыг]

- **Hesch’e ghwneghw nex’re hesch’e zhizche nex’ lhap’esch’** (ХьэщІэ гъунэгъу нэхърэ хьэкІэ жыжьэр нэхъ лъапІэщ): 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: ХьэкІэ гъунэгъу нахы хьэкІэ чыжъэр нахъ лъап]

- **Hesch’em yi yerisqir qidok’we** (ХьэщІэм и ерысыыр къыдокІуэ): The guest’s victuals arrive with him. [In Adigean: ХьэкІэм рьызыыыр къыдэкІо]

- **Hesch’e qak’weme (qek’wensch) zhi’iy ghet’ilh, kwedre schilhasch zhip’ew wimishx(izh)** (ХьэщІэ къакІуэмэ [къэкІуэнщ] жыйі гэтІылъ, куэдрэ щылъащ жыпІэу умышых[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: ХьакІэ къэкІощт Іори гъэылы, бэрэ щылыыыр пІоу умышыхыжь]
• Hesch’er bisimim yi ghersch (ҲьэщIэр бысыымын и гъэрщ): The guest is his host’s captive. [In Adigean: ҲьакIэр бысыымын итъэр]

• Hesch’er zheshchiysch yisme, binim yaschisch mex’wzh (ҲьэщIэр жэщищ исмэ, быным ящыщ мэхъуж): If the guest stays for three nights, he becomes part of the family. [In Adigean: ҲьакIэр эщищ хъумэ, бысыымын ышыщ мэхъужы; or ҲьакIэр эщищ эшысымэ унагъом (е быным) ышыщ мэхъу]

• Pschedjizch hesch’e ghehesch’eghwaf’esch (Пщэдджыжь хьэщIэ гъэхьэщIэгъуафIэщ): A morning guest is easy to host. [In Adigean: Пчэдыжь хьакIэр хьакIэрьышIу; or Пчэдыжь хьакIэр хьакIэр къурэп]

• Qak’orem yi’ah xemi’w (КъакIорэм иIахь хэмIыIу): Do not pierce (touch, consume) the visitor’s share (of food). [Adigean]

• Qak’we psoriy blaghesch (КъакIуэ псорIы 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’esch (УнагъашIэ хьэщIэхуэфIщ): The household of newly-weds is most amenable to receiving guests. [In Adigean: УнэгъыакIэр хьэкIэфIщIу]

• Wineqwesch hesch’e ghef’eghweysch (Унэкъуэщ хьэщIэ гъэфIэгъуэйщ): It is hard to spoil a guest who is a kindred relative (bearing the same surname). [In Adigean: Унэкъоць хьакIэр гъэшIоIуайй]

• Wiy hesch’eriy ghafe’, wiy qweshriy f’iwe lhaghw (Уи хьэщIэри гъафIэ, уи къуэшри фIыуэ лъагъу): Indulge your guest but love thy brother. [In Adigean: УихьакIэ гъашIо, пкъош шIу лъэгъу]

• Wizigheblagherer ghebleghezh, wizighepiyirer ghepiyizh (Узыгъэблагъэрэр гъэблэгъэжь, узыгъэпIыирэр гъэпIыIжь): He who welcomes you, welcome him back; he who shows you enmity, be his enemy in return. [Adigean]

• Yawibir bisim sch’i (Яубыр бысыым шIы): Choose as your host the person whom the people say spiteful things about. [In Adigean: Аубырээр бысыым шIы]
• Zi hesch’em zi hesch’e yi zhaghweschiy hesch’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 дэкIoтэ кIахь): A lazy host spells a long seeing off. [Adigean. ДэкIoтэн=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’enewiy zeghasch’e (ХьакIэр къэпщэнэу зыпшIэкIэ пхьакIэнэун эзъашIэ): If you bring guests (to your house), you must (first) learn how to play the host. [Adigean]
• Hesch’e qashe schi’eschiy, hesch’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: ХьэкIэр къакIo щыIэ шьыхакIэ, хьэкIэ гъэкIoжъ щыIэп; or Ебгъэжьэжьын нахьи ебгъэблэгъэныр нахь рэхьат]
• Hesch’er hezir schhech’e, bisimir hezir? (ХьэщIэр хьэзыр шхьэкIэ, бысымымр хьэзыр?): The guest is always ready, but is the host also ready? [ХьэщIэр сэйт щытъун хьэзыр шхьэкIэ, бысымымр шьымыхьээыри мэхьу. In Adigean: ХьакIэр хьэзыр шхьхаяэ (e шьыхакIэ), высымымр хьэзырэп]
• Hesch’er neschx’eyme, bisimim yi yaghesch (ХьэщIэр нэщьэймэ, бысымым и ягъэш): If the guest is upset, it is a grave concern for the host. [In Adigean: ХьакIэр нэщьэймэ, бысымым нягъ]
• Hesch’er zeyr gwawezhirihsch (ХьэщIэр зейр гуауэжырыхьщ): He who hosts a guest bears a great woe.
• Shu hesch’er yagheshesizh, lhes hesch’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 агъэшэсыжьы, лъэс хьакIэр агъэкIотэжьы]
• Ziyqelapche wiqiblezimishzhirem yiwine wimik’w (Зикъэлапчъэ укъыблэзымыщыжьырэм иунэ умьыкIу): 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 къихьэмэ [къакIуэмэ], хэгъэрейр 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 хэгъэрей шыIэш): Where there is a guest there is an honorary guest-companion. [In Adigean: ХьакIэ зыдэщыIэм хэгъырэй шыI]
• Xegherey bzaje dek’wate ch’ilsch (Хэгъэрей бзаджэ дэкIутэ къыхьщ): A bad honorary guest-companion spells a long seeing off. [ДэкIутэ=to see off; according to host-guest customs, it was incumbent to see off a guest in a proper fashion. In Adigean: Хэгъырэй бзаджэ дэкIутэкIыхь]
• Xegherey bzaje shu wizchsch (Хэгъэрей бзаджэ шу ужьщ): A bad honorary guest-companion trails the rider. [In Adigean: Хэгъырэй бзаджэр шыуж]
• **Xegherey xwemixwm he qiweighedaqe** (Хэгъэрей хуэмыхум хээ къыуегъэцакъэ): 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: Хэгъырэй фэмыфым хээ къыуегъэцакъэ]

• **Xeghereyif' lhix’wiy, bilimlihix’we k’we** (Хэгъэрэйфл лыхъун, бьылымлыхъуэ къуэ): Seek a good honorary guest-companion while looking for cattle (for your guests). [Хэгъырэишъу лыхъун, бьылым лыхъо къо]

**On table attendants**

• **Sch’aleghwer schhegheritsch** (Щалэгъуэр 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. [Ущалэху улэхухъэбзащэщ, жыхунэщ]

• **Schhegherit schhegherit yi zhaghwesch** (Щхьэгъэрыт 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 хьакИэр къэнагъ): The host was taken away, whilst the guest stayed on. [Adigean]

• **Ghesenigher hach’e, aqilir xeghirey** (Гъэсээнгъэр хьакИэ, акъылыр хэгъырэй): The guest must be well brought up, and the guest-companion must have a sharp mind. [Adigean]

• **Hesch’ap’e k’wewe qiynemzham xwedew** (ХьешIапIэ къуээ экъинэжам хуэдэу): The best fish smell when they are three days old.
• **Hesch’ap’eriner yemik’wsch** (ХьэщІапІэръынэр емыкІущ): 1. It is unseemly to overstay one’s welcome; 2. The best fish smell when they are three days old. [In Adigean: ХьэкІэнІэръынэр емыкІу]  
• **Hesch’ap’e wischi’eme, qipxwasch’ wiy winafesch** (ХьэщІапІэ уцыІэмэ, къыпхуащІ уи унафэщ): While you are on a visit as a guest, what they tell you is law. [In Adigean: ХьакІакІо уцыІэмэ, къыпфашІыръэр унунашъо]  
• **Hesch’e hesch’e teipsixe [hesch’eteipsixe] yi zhaghwesch** (ХьэщІэ хьэщІэ тепсыхэ [хьэщІэтепсыхэ] и жагъуэщ): A guest resents the arrival of another (guest). [In Adigean: Зы хьакІэм зы хьакІэр тепсыхэжьырэп]  
• **Hesch’e kwedre schisme, bisimir yozesh** (ХьэщІэ куэдрэ цысымэ, бысыымър йозэщ): If the guest stays for too long, he becomes very weary. [In Adigean: ХьакІэр бэр цысымэ, бысыымър эээнэ]  
• **Hesch’er kwedre yisme, shxwe dighw mex’w** (ХьэщІэр куэдрэ исмэ, шхуз 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** (ХьэщІэр мэлым нэхърэ нэхъ Іэсэщ): The guest is quieter than a sheep. [In Adigean: ХьакІэр мэлым нахъ Іас]  
• **Hesch’er schinem xwedey ’wschabew** (ХьэщІэр цынэм хуэдэу Іушацэу): The guest is as soft-spoken as a lamb.  
• **Hesch’er shxem—bzhem yoplh** (ХьэщІэр шхэм—бжэм йопль): After eating, the guest looks towards the door. [In Adigean: ХьакІэр шхэмэ (е шхахэмэ) пчъэм еплъы]  
• **Hesch’er shxeme, bzhem yoplh** (ХьэщІэр шхэмэ, бжэм йопль): After eating, the guest looks towards the door. [In Adigean: ХьакІэр шхэмэ (е шхахэмэ) пчъэм еплъы]  
• **Wiy deile hesch’ap’e wimighak’we!** (Уи дэлэ хьэщІапІэ уымъыгъакІуэ!): Don’t send your fool on a visit (to another person’s house)!  
• **Wizerimisa bisim wimiwib** (Узэрымыса бысымъ умыу): Do not condemn a host to whose guest-house you have never been.
• Ziyʼane zeteitim yihach’ (Зианэ зэтетым ихъак): (He lodges with wealthy hosts) Said of sycophants and myrmidons.
• Ziy bisim zixʼwezhim chitsʼixʼw xwawich’ (Зи бысым зыхъужым чыцъыхъу хуак): They slaughter a mere male-kid for him who changes his original host. [In Adigean: Зибысым зыхъожъырэм чэцъыхъу фаукы; or Бысым хъожь зышъырэм, чыцъыхъу фаукы алытъ]

Inhospitable & stingy hosts

• Bisim femifir—dekʼote chʼih (Бысым фэмыфыр—дэкІотэ къыхь): Lazy host – long seeing off. [Adigean; дэкІотэн=to see off; according to host-guest customs, it was incumbent upon a host to see off his guest in a proper fashion]
• Bisim pechʼe lanl (Бысым пэкІэ ланл; ланл=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, pxʼebghwzchsch (Іэнэм шхын темылъмэ, пхъэбгъужьщ): A table without food is but an old wood-board. [In Adigean: Іанэм темылъмэ, пхъэмбгъу джашъу]
• Ghomilapxʼe zixemit zexaher zeshigho (Гъомылапхъэ зыхэмыт зэхахъэр зэщыгъо): Where there are no foodstuffs is a boring place indeed.
• Heschʼemighashxe tsʼeriʼwesch (ХьэщІэмыгъашхэ цІэрыІуэш): He who doesn’t offer food to his guest becomes notorious. [In Adigean: ХьэкІэ мыгъашхэ цІэрыІу]
• Neghweiyipsch nexʼey, yi zaqwe meshxezh (Нэгъуеипщ нэхъей, и закъуэ мэшхэж): He eats on his own, like a Nogai prince.
• ’Ws machʼer hachʼem yijaghw (Іус макІэр хакІэм иджагъу): The guest resents it if the (host’s) victuals run low. [Adigean]
• Yadezh wikʼome pechʼe lanl, wadezh qiylheme pechʼe zand (Ядэжь укІомэ пэкІэ ланл, уадэжь къылъэмэ пэкІэ 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** (Бысымгощэш’ум чэт-къызэр иъой): A good woman also herds poultry. [Adigean]
- **Fiz bide yil’ helelsch** (Фыз быдэ ил’ хъэлэлщ): A mean wife and a kind husband. [In Adigean: Шъуз пэтэм ил’ хъалэл]
- **Fiz bzaje hesch’emighashxesch** (Фыз бзаджэ хъэш’емыгъашхэш): Said of a wicked woman who does not offer food to guests. [In Adigean: Шъуз бзаджэр хъэк’эмьыгъашх]
- **Fiz bzaje ziy’em yi wine wimik’we** (Фыз бзаджэ зи’эм и уэн умъык’уэ): Don’t visit the house of a man with a wicked wife. [In Adigean: Шъуз бзадж эз’эн мунэ умъык’уэ]
- **Fizif’ ghet’ilhighenshe x’wrqim** (Фызыф’ гъэт’ыльыгъэншэ хъурк’ым): A good woman is never without a store of victuals. [In Adigean: Шъузыш’ум Иэнэч’эгъанэ щык’эрг]  
- **Fizif’im l’i ’eyr dobzchif’eriy, fiz ’eyr l’if’ir dobzchigwe** (Фызыф’ым лы иэр добжьыф’эри, фыз иэр йыф’ыр добж’ыгуэ): 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: Шъузыш’ум лы дэир дэгъу ехъул’э, шъуз дэим лы дэгъур дэи ехъул’э]
- **Fizif’ir wineschiy, fiz ’eyr sch’iwinesch** (Фызыф’ыр уэнэш, фыз иэр йыф’ыр): A good woman is a household; a bad woman is a cellar. [In Adigean: Шъузыш’у уэнэ, шъуз дэир йыун]
- **Fizif’ yi ’ene zeteitsch** (Фызыф’ и Ыэнэ зэтетш): The table of a good wife has many layers, or is always ready. [In Adigean: Шъузыш’у иланэ зэтет]
- **Fizif’ yi hekw yat’e hezirsch** (Фызыф’ и хъэку ят’э хъэрыщ): The oven (literally: the clay of the oven) of a good woman is always ready. [In Adigean: Шъузыш’у ихьаку ят’э щык’эрг]
• Fizif' yil' ghwemilenshe x'wraqim (ФызыфI илI гъуэмылэнжэ хъуркъым; гъуэмыэ=traveller’s fare): The husband of a good woman does not go without his road fare. [In Adigean: ШъузышIу илI гъомылэнчэхъэ хъурэп]
• Fizif' yil' nek'wschheplhsch (ФызыфI илI нэкущхэплъщ): The husband of a good woman is red-cheeked (happy, jovial). [In Adigean: ШъузышIу илI нэкущхэплъ]
• Fizif' yil' ts'eri'wesch (ФызыфI илI цэрыщэч): The husband of a good woman enjoys a good name. [In Adigean: ШъузышIу илI цэрыщэ]
• Fizif' ziy'em x'wex'w yi wine yilhsch (ФызыфI зиэм хьуэхъу и унэ илъщ): Toasts are said in the house of he who has a good wife.
• Fiz xwemixw ziy'er nasipinshesch (Фыз хуэымху зиэр насыпиншэщ): A man with a lazy spouse is unfortunate indeed. [In Adigean: Шьуэфэмыф зиэр — насыпинчъ]
• Ghabler bisimgwash (Гъаблэр бысымгуащ): Hunger is (caused by) the lady of the house. [Adigean. In Kabardian: Мэфэ мащэ мъгъэбэщ, бын мащэ шьцалальный, гъаблэр бысым гаашщ]
• Schwzisch'w yi'ane shighe [ШъузышIу ияэнэ шыгъэ]: Measure the table of the good woman. [Adigean]
• Winer yigwsch, zchegwr yi psesch (Унэр игущ, жьэгур и псэщ): The house is her heart, the hearth is her soul.
• Winer zighewineriy blagher zigheblagheriy fizsch (Унэр зыгъэунэри благъэри зыгъэблагъэри фызщ): 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 благъэри зыгъэблагъэри шъуз]

Horrible guests
• Hech’e bzajer—bisim nepeteix (ХьэкIэ бзаджэр—бысм нэпэтех): A wicked guest brings shame to his host. [Adigean]
- Hesch’e mix’w [Hesch’emix’w] zchant’ak’wesch (Хьэщӏэ мыхъу [Хьэщӏэмыхъу] жьантӏакӏуэщ): The unworthy guest heads for the seat of honour (away from door, near hearth).
- Hesch’e zhaghwe psi ch’esch’ach’e (Хьэщӏэ жагъуэ пэы кӏэщӏакӏэн): They splash water under the unwelcome visitor.
- Hesch’e ziy zhaghwem lixwe xweighazche (Хьэщӏэ зи жагъуэм лыхуэ хуегъажьэ): For the obnoxious guest sinewy meat is prepared. [This is an inferior kind of meat. In Adigean: Хьакӏэн зиджагъом łyфэ фегъажьэ]

Table manners & etiquette

- Adige gwpim t’isin yawixme, schisin yawixawe plhite x’wnusch!’ (Адыгэ гупым тIысын яухмэ, шысын яухауэ плъытэ хъунущ): (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 (Іанэр зищыхьазырым псэльэ кӏыхьэ ищыкӏагъэп): When the table is ready it is inappropriate to deliver long speeches. [Adigean]
- ’Enem wiperisixw ghasch’em xiheqim! (Іэнэм упэрысыху гъащӏэм 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’eriy x’wex’wsch (Іэнэм и пэри и кӏэри хъуэхъущ): (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: Іанэм ыпэри ыкӏэри хъохьу]
- Fader gwak’werafesch, ziygw yiriymihim yiriyfqim (Фадэр гуакӏуэрафэщ, зигу ириымыхьым ирийфьым): 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 Ёф дъыдэщ—зигу иримыхэм ишхэрыкъым; фо=蜂蜜): (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: Щьоур Иаш Иу, ау зыгу иримыхъирэм ишхэрып]

- Hach’e deiler bghelibeshx (Щъакэ делэр бгъэлыбэшх): The foolish guest eats the (fowl) brisket. [Adigean]

- Hefem fo yiz x’wme, zegwotx’ (Хьэфэм фо из хъумэ, зэгуотхъ): If rubber is stuffed full of honey, it would burst. [Ныбэзыгъэктэ цьыкъа цъыхум хужалэ. Eat moderately]

- Heferiy fo yizme, zegweitx’ (Хьэферэ фо измэ, зэгуетхъ): Even rubber would burst if it is stuffed full of honey. [Eat moderately]

- Hesch’er xwschherey x’wme, ghashxiy gheg hwelhizh (Хъешээр хъушхэрей хъумэ, гъашхи гъэгъуэльыж): If your guest starts to yawn, feed him and then let him sleep. [In Adigean: Щакэкэн йъжэ экЦэкъы хъумэ, гъашхи гъэгъолъыжь]

- Qabzagher wizinshaghesch (Къабзагъэр узыншагъэщ): Cleanliness is next to godliness.

- Sch’em deizchiy zchim deshxe (Щэм дежъы жъым дэшэхэ): Travel with the young and eat with the elders.

- X’wex’wr ch’ihme, x’ibar mex’wzh (Хъуэхъур къыхъымэ, хъыбар мэхъу): If the toast is long, it turns into a story.

- X’wex’wr ch’ih psch’ime, psalhe mex’w (Хъуэхъур къыхъ пшъыымэ, п sala мэхъу): If you prolong your toast, it becomes a speech.

- (Yape) wizriyhel’er shxinif’sch [(Япэ) узрихъэлэр шхыньфщц]: 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 узэрихъэлэрэп — шхыньшлэ]
Zchim schhe yadeshx, sch’em lhaqe yadeshx (Жьым шхьэ ядэшх, шхэм льякъуэ 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 насыпьнчъ): Greedy guts never had good luck. [Adigean]
- **Bzchin sch’eghwem ’epe shinsch, bzchin shxighwem zhumerensch** (Бжъын шъэгъуэм Иэпэ шынчъ, бжъын шхьыгъуэм жумэрэнчъ): 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 етхьэлэ): The greedy mouse drowns in the milk.
- **’Enem witeifisch’ihu wimik’we** (Иэпэ утефыщыхьукъ умикъуэ): Do not go (on a visit) and clean out the table.
- **Jedim fend ch’erisch’asch** (Джэдым фэнд къэрыщаш; фэнд= water-skin with a shape reminiscent of a hen): (He hanged up a water-skin on the chicken) Said of a glutton. [Зэрышэрейм шхьэкъэ жайэ]
- **Meqwmiler masch’eme, shch’asch’er shxerey mex’w** (Мэкъумылэр мащ’эмэ, шхышэр шхэрэй мэхъуэ): When the forage runs low, the little calf becomes voracious.
- **Nibe ’eym shxin yi psch’ihsch** (Ныбэ лейм шхын и пышъыхъук): A bad paunch hankers for (literally: dreams of) food.
- **Nibe ’ey schi’e mix’wme, shxin ’ey schi’eqim** (Ныбэ лей шылэ мыхъумэ, шхын лей шылэкъым): 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: «ун адэ(жь) и жьакъэ къыпыушщи къыльхьэ!» — жэлэ): [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 уедалуэмэ, эмкъыу къыунгъэхьынщу, жыхуиэкъыщ. In Adigean: Ныбэм «уятэ ыжакъэ
Niber xwiyt psch’ime, napeteixsch (Ныбэр хуит пшымэ, напетехш): Give the belly enough rope and it will bring shame on you.

Schisch’e nex’re masch’eshx (ЩыщІэ нэхъэ машІэх): 1. To eat a little is better than not to have at all; 2. A little is better than nothing. [In Adigean: ЩыкІэ нахьи мэкІэх]

Shaszher teixin (Шащхъэр теъин; шащхъэ=the skin on boiled milk; техьн=to skim off): Cat the ginger (amer.).

Shaszher teizishxich’a xwedew (ziywschexwasch) (Шащхъэр тээышхыкІа хуэдэу (знущэхуац): To look like the cat who swallowed the canary.

Shxeghwem dighwzschsch, lazcheghwem zchindusch (Шхэгъуэм дыгъужьщ, лажьэгъуэм жъындуц): When it’s time to eat he’s a wolf; when it’s time to work he’s an owl.

Shxeni’e ch’ihsch (ШхэныІэ кIыхьщ): The hand that takes the food at the table is long.

Shxerey yi wizinshaghemch’e thewsixereysch (Шхэре й и узыншагъэкIэ тхьэусыхэрейщ): A glutton complains all the time about his health.

Shxen sch’ebdzeme, shxinir pschok’we (Шхэн щIэбдзэмэ, шхыныр пшокIуэ): Eating and scratching wants just a beginning (Scottish).

Shxinim ya nex’i lir sch’ef’ir sch’eschighwemesch (Шхымым я нэхъыфІри щыІфІыр щIэщыгъуэмэкIэ): Even the best of foods are tasty only when they are novel.

Ts’ifim inibe yipiy (Цыфым йынъэ испій): One’s belly is one’s enemy. [Adigean]

Yishxir f’emasch’esch, yisch’er f’ekwedsch (Ишхыр фIэмащІэц, ишIэр фIэкуэдц): What he eats he considers to be too little, what he does he thinks is too much.

Yiz zishxinum niqwe shxich’е yisch’erqim (Из зышхынум ныкъуэ шыкІэ ишIэркIым): He who will eat his fill does not know how to eat the half of it.
- **Ziy 'ihe zif'emasch’em hem ʻeishx** (Зи Ьыхъ зыфІмащІэм ҳьэм флешӏ): 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 ещІэ, ящІамэ ешӏ): 1. He is a(n) lazybones/idler/loafer; 2. He is good for nothing. [Мылажьэу шхэм ауанышӏу хужаіэ. Milazchew shxem awanisch’у xwzha’e. Said sarcastically of a person who eats without doing any work]
- **Lezchench’e washxeschiy, shxench’e l’ix’wzchsch** (ЛэжьэнкІэ уашхэщи, шхэнкІэ лыхъужьщ): (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** (ЛэжьэнкІэ уашхэщ, шхэнкІэ дыгъужьщ): He works like a badger but eats like a wolf.
- **Mastech’e ’eshesch, shatech’e bzajesch** (МастэкІэ Іэшэщ, шатэкІэ бзджэщ): (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** (ПщылІ хуэдэу, лажьи, пщы хуэдэу, ушхэнщ): Work like a slave, and you shall eat like a lord.
- **Qezighech’riy zishxizhriy wersch** (КъэзыгъэкІри зышхыжри уэрӏ): (What you sow is what you eat) You reap what you sow.
- **Qezih zishxizh bey mex’w** (Къэзыхь зышхыж бей мэхъу): He who eats from what he earns becomes wealthy. [Лажьэу шхэжъ флыуэ мэпээу, жыхунІэш]  
- **Sch’aq’we ’ihe qwdey qizisch’ech’in qemilezchin** (Щакхъуэ Ьыхъ къудей къызыщІкӏын къымылэжьын): Not to earn salt for one’s porridge. [Ziriy qemilezchin zhixwiy’esch]
- **Weiweme—meqwsch, weimiweme, qwresch** (Уеуэмэ—мэкьюсъ, уемьүумэ, кьурэш): If you reap – it’s hay; if you don’t, it’s dry stalks. [In Adigean: УупкІэмэ мэкъу, умыупкІэмэ—кьурэ]
• 'Wexw ziy 'wexw 'wexw 'wosch’eriy, shxin ziy 'wexw shxin 'wosch’e (Иуэху зи Иуэху Иуэху ЙуошЭри, шхын зи Иуэху шхын ЙуошЭз): He who seeks work finds work; he who seeks food finds food.
• Wilazcheme, lizch pshxinsch, wimilazcheme, lazche bghwetinsch (Улажьэмэ, лажь пшхынц, умышажьамэ, лажь бгъуэтынц): If you work, you’ll eat dried (salted) meat; if you don’t, you’ll get into trouble. [In Adigean: Улажьэмэ, лажь пшхын]
• Wilazchew wishxezhin nex’if’ schi’eqim (Улажьэу упхэжын нэхъыф йылЭкъым): There is nothing better than to eat from your own sweat.
• Wiy sch’aq’we iher psch’enshew mishxin (Уи щакхъуэ Йыхъэр пщэншэу мышхын): To earn one’s salt.
• Zedepsch’e sch’exschiy, zedeshxe ’ef’sch (Зэдэпщ эхщи, зэдэшхэ Ёфщ): What is done collectively is finished quickly; what is had with others is tasty. [In Adigean: Зэдашхэ Ёфэлъу, зэдэлажьэ тхъагъо]

Other expressions
• Apsisch’ir aps niqoch’e mashxe (Апсышъир апс ныкъокЭ машхэ; aps=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 (Бэлагъыкэр зылыгъым хэ къэрибгъу шэгъуты): (The nine black dogs have their hope pinned on the holder of the trowel) Everybody pins his hope on the cook. [Adigean. «ПщэрыхьакИом экІЭ шэгъутъы» зыфийу]
• Bisim sch’igho x’wghe (Бысым шыгъо хъугъэ): Evening came. [Adigean; шыгъо=time for doing (smth.)]
• Ch’eqiyner ’ef’sch (КІэкъинэр Ёфщ): The nearer the bone, the sweeter the flesh.
• **Dekwm xwedew qeghepts’en** (Дэкум хуэдэу къэгъэпцэн; 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 къэгъэпцэн): See preceding entry.

• **Dzech’e masch’ew, hesch’ech’e kwedu** (Дээк’э маш’эу, хъэҩщ’эк’э къэду): Little victuals and many guests.

• **’Eshri’er zighévam yiirïefizh** (ІэшрыІэр зыгъэмам 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 wiywìne fede x’wrep** (Х’акІапІэр дэгъуми уиунэ фэдэ къурэнэ): (Even if the guest-house is fine, it won’t be as good as your home) East or west, home is best. [Adigean]

• **Haziriyyir piyim pay, yabghwanerer shiwim pay** (Хьазырыир пийим пай, ябгъуанэрэр шым 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** (Х’эліамэ къак’уэмэ, к’эфий нэх’уэнущ; к’эфий=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** (Джэдык’э шк’умп’ и уасэкъым): (Not worth a rotten egg) Not worth a bean (or button, curse, damn).

• **L’i hesch’e nek’re fiz hesch’e** (Лы хъэҩщ’энэхъэрэ фыз хъэҩщ’э): 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 йопщэ): (He who was burnt by the milk blows on the yoghurt) 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 хунудэн): (To pound hot red pepper for somebody) To cast salt on somebody’s tail.

• **Shighwp’aste** (Шыгъупластэ): Bread-and-salt.

• **Shighw six’wa se sitk’wnu** (Шыгъу сыхъуа сэ сыткIуну): 1. I am not made of salt; 2. I am neither sugar nor salt.

• **Wiy ’wexw zixemilhim wiy belagh xomi’w [xiwimi’w]** (Уи Iуэху зыхэмылъым уи бэлагъ хомыIу [хыумыIу]): (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: УйIоф зыхэмылъым уибэлагъэ хэмывIу]

• **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 къызэдэфэкъым, зэмыфэгъу къызэдэуджкъым): Those dissimilar in their social rank do not dance together.
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