

Adigha Xhabza and Public Behavior

Ask for Help

It is interesting that Adigha ethics is very sensitive even to such things as the way to ask for something.

According to Adigha norms, if one wants to find out right hour or way from a stranger he/she should wait till he/she meet some younger person. It wasn't good to bother older people with one's trifles.

Also it is not good to ask older person to come closer to tell him/her something. Therefore, there are simply no words in Adighe ethics for those situations.

Here is what one should do when there is a necessity to ask an older person for something:

Go to this person and greet him and ask about his well-being. If he/she was sitting and now tries to get up, you should softly keep him/her from doing it. After the greeting you should tell the reason of your coming.

If the older person is not sitting but going somewhere, you shouldn't call him from afar but try to catch him, walk along with him on the left side of his. Only after he pays attention to you, tell him what you need.

Older people are very sensitive to the respect younger generations pay to them. Showing respect, younger people should also show their sincerity. If elders notice that one's attention is a mere observance of the accepted norms they will not accept your help or attention as they should.

Referrals

In Adigha language there are no referrals such as Lady, Mister, Miss. There are references according to people's age and sex.

For example, talking to the stranger girls and boys we say "Si sh'ale" Si H'ijebz tsiq" , "Si dahe" ("My boy", "My girl", "My beauty").

Referring to old people (strangers or not related) Adigha people could use "Di ade" and "Di ane" ("Our father" and "Our mother").

With real grandfathers and grandmothers we could use such forms as "Si nane" , "Si dade" or even "Si nane dahe" (My good nana), "Si nane dishe" (My golden nana), "Si nane Gupse" (My nana, who is the soul of my heart")

The reason why Adighe people put so much tenderness in these referrals is to get the positive reaction from the other person.

This often may help the situation.

For example, imagine one little boy, who had just fought with other guys on the street using inappropriate language. A strange woman, unaware of what has just happened calls him by saying: " Mide qakuwot, si sh'ale tsiq, wi tzer qiz-zheat." ("Come hear my little boy, tell me your name.") Sure enough, this little boy is going to feel the pangs of conscious for his previous behavior...

This is how Adigha people used kind words to nurture the best qualities and limit the negative ones.

Guests

Adighas along with a house for a family would build a smaller one called Hashash, which means- a house for a guest. Thus, anyone who needs a shelter for a night would be welcome at any time, without any significant discomfort to the family as well.

Guests have been differentiated and welcomed accordingly to their category.

Common Guest-the unknown person.

Dear Guest-a known person, a dear friend.

Close Guest-any relative and ALL females regardless of acquaintance, which means they would stay in the house of the family, not in Hashash.

Circassian host does not ask the guest for how long he is intended to stay, apparently not to make him think he is unwelcome. Yet these things are need to be known and there were several others way to find it out without asking directly. In the past this is one of the ways how it used to be done: the guest entering the house should hang his whip. If the loose end of the whip is hanging down long, his staying is going to be long (but usually, no more than three days) and thus welcome preparations can be more time-consuming. If the loose end of the whip is hanging short, the hostess should hurry up and pick the less time consuming recipes for meal preparation.

Leading the guest inside, the host should go first.

The guest should not be treated alone. If there are any other members of the family or neighbors of his gender and age, they should join him in his meal.

If there is a group of guests, the host should not assign their seats himself but leave this right to the oldest guest because he is better aware of the status of each group member. The seats are assigned strictly according to the status and the age of each guest. (the same with family members). Oldest guests and nobles (regardless of age) are assigned seats in the head of the table or in the middle. (See Adigha Habza and a Place Assignments)

At the times Adighas traveled on horseback, if the guest were pleased with the way he was given a welcome, mounting his horse he would turn its head in direction of the house. If he was not pleased and wanted to make it clear, he would turn the horse in the opposite direction. To demonstrate hunger was inappropriate, Adigha man would not be misunderstood if he prefers to prove the absence of it (in proper occasions) by not touching something of what he was offered.

Not to disturb guests with plates changing process, Adighas used to change tables (ane- small tables). Nobody should leave the table until the oldest guest (or the one who was assigned the privileged seat) stands up or without his permission.

Guest members are assigned a right to speak to the group at the table by the oldest guest (thamada) according to the age and the origin of each member.

Place Assignment

By the way (order) Adighas sit, stand or walk together, it was possible to tell the age or the position of each group member.

Of the two people, the older one (or a noble, a guest) is supposed to be on the right from the younger one.

Of the three people, the oldest one is in the middle, the younger is on the left, and the youngest takes the right side of the oldest one.

If the one of the three had been a female, she was entitled to stand in the middle regardless of her age (today, mostly, Adighas do pay attention to the age of the female; she is the middle if her age allows her that).

If the one of the three is a male, he is in the middle, the females take places according to their age (look above).

If a female stands on the left side from a male, that means nobody (even a noble or a guest, though there are many exceptions for them in other cases) is entitled to approach her to laugh and talk (usually it is a place of a wife).

If the female is on the right side of a male, that means she is a sister, a daughter, or in any other relationship with a man that does not ban other males approach and freely talk to her.

Married female, regardless of her age is of a higher position than an unmarried