

ABKHAT CULTURE GUIDE

The people of the Abkhat region have been content tending to their gardens and fields for centuries, slowly expanding their reach where more space is needed. A hardened set of core beliefs guide their well-established settlements, yet has left them, until recently, largely uninformed of the lands and people that exist beyond their carefully cultivated fields and gardens. Although long-standing trade relationships with their neighbors have protected the Abkhati in the past, the people have fiercely protected their lands throughout the decades of conflict, and have emerged stronger and more intent than ever to perfect their visions of a beautiful life and afterlife. Uprooted by the war and the complete destruction of much of their arable farming land, many are torn between attempting to re-establish their traditions and adopting a modernized identity.

LANDSCAPE & CLIMATE

The land of the Abkhat lies amidst the vast plains south of the Kordiso River. One can see for miles across the wide, open grasslands. The fertile plains give way to harder soil near Mt. Cyrus, an active volcano located towards the center of the region. Even the nearest settlements are located miles away from the volcano, as none choose to gamble with the Brown God and the ever-present threat of eruptions,

Tropical forests line the southern coast, giving life to a variety of flora and fauna that has never been seen anywhere else in the Known World. The rivers lining the northern and eastern borders provide their own variety of flora as well as fresh water to the expansive grasslands through small tributaries and aqueducts. Farms can be found across all biomes, each cultivating its own variety of fruits and vegetables.

In the summer, the south grows hot and humid, with storms often in from the ocean. Further inland, the grasslands tend to be just as hot, but much drier. When it turns to winter, all of Abkhat benefits from mild weather and occasional frigid nights in the north.



NAMING CONVENTIONS

Abkhati names are inspired by those of Arabic and Egyptian origin. Given names are chosen to represent an individual's personality or physical traits, while surnames are based upon their place of birth. They commonly include

local geographical features, produce relevant to their occupation, or both. It is a personal choice for a relocating Abkhati to either keep their surname or change it to reflect their new home and dedication to it.

For example: Jabari (*brave one*) Riverfern (*lives by a swath of climbing fern along the river*)

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The Abkhati people share a similar culture, but the patchwork of independent settlements often differ in their particular views and traditions. Each settlement opinions of how to organize and govern rebuff thoughts of unification, but a general desire to work together in desperate times has allowed the Abkhati to support one another for mutual benefit.

Each settlement is ruled by a dominant family, known as the Raval, which is typically the one with the most land or the oldest in the area. They dictate crop rotations, track surplus food storage and oversee land disputes between smaller families. If a farm wants to trade with another settlement or nation, the Raval offers assistance in correspondence and setting the terms. If the ruling family cannot sustain their lands or dies out, their excess land is sold or redistributed to families who can support it, and the next family with the most land will take charge. If a Raval neglects their duties or shows gross incompetence, a vote of no confidence with a supermajority amongst the families in the settlement can unseat them. Their authority and half of their lands will be seized and redistributed, and the next largest land-holding family will assume authority.

Together, the Ravals of each settlement maintain a courier network and trade routes. As most Abkhati tend to stay within their own village, couriers are the prime source of news across the nation. In times of need, they are the first to rush for aid from neighboring settlements, whether for defense from an attacking nation or relief from natural disasters.

The Abkhati respect all natural things that grow. Rather than building massive cities and roadways, the focus has always been on enhancing the existing beauty of their homeland. This mentality, which produces sprawling homesteads and boundless fields, is not conducive to extreme population growth. So, when the land around a settlement becomes too crowded, a group of families may decide to move to a new area and start their own village. There, one of the original families will take up the responsibilities of the ruling family. New villages typically require assistance from an established city to

build and get on their feet, and most who strike out on their own tend to fail. If a village grows unruly, the ruling families from surrounding settlements may gather in a central location to discuss courses of action, but such gatherings are extremely rare.

There is no distinguished hierarchy in a community outside of the ruling family, but more successful families are revered and hold the responsibility of organizing holiday celebrations. Wealthier families may oversee a collection of farms and collaborate with the ruling family. Smaller families may only have one or two fields, or possess a small courtyard garden and work for one of the larger families. These families commonly share excess food with each other and are quick to help each other during planting and harvest as needed.

BELIEFS & RELIGION

The Abkhati believe that humanity should be grateful and care for the world provided to them. They focus primarily on the Brown and White Gods, knowing that in order to best take care of their home, they must also take care of themselves. They thank Brown for the rain to nourish and White for the strength to work. Stewardship of the land has resulted in their advanced agriculture, and also the creation of tried and true products and crafts that they carry with them into the afterlife.

The Ephemeral Realm is immortalized in the Eternal. Most Abkhati spend their life in one place, improving on their surroundings, be they fields or possessions. When they pass on, their home is a serene and balanced reward for eternity. Disorderly homes and gardens are seen as a display of disregard for the Gods, and a token of bad luck, for if an one were to pass with their home in such a state, it would remain that way in their afterlife. Many families adorn their homes with large oil paintings or mosaic murals of the surrounding world. For those maintaining homesteads, the ultimate punishment to the spoiling of their home is an afterlife locked in disrepair, with an untouchable view of its former glory that only the ancestors may enjoy.

COMMON CUSTOMS

- Diligence and reverence are valued above all else. Maintaining the beauty of nature, both wild and cultivated, shows appreciation to the Gods, and is a constant task. This view extends beyond the fields to each aspect of the Abkhati life: diligent labor, be it manual, creative, or intellectual, is viewed as the key to beauty and plenty.
- Even those with crafting or other non-agrarian professions value the beauty of their homeland, and many maintain at least a small courtyard garden to tend to in their spare time. Even at an early age, children are given a miniature tree to care for by their bedside.
- Abkhati craftsmanship is in many ways equally keyed towards the afterlife. The average Abkhati acquires items for use in both the now, and the after, and thus values things that will last. Time-tested methods and value in product longevity have led to sturdy and beautiful, if not always flashy, items, built for the eternal.
- Regions produce different products. The south specializes in citrus, the central region in other fruits and vegetables, and the river regions in herbal products. As settlements are often near water for irrigation, fish is a main source of meat. Further inland, farms may have livestock in addition to their crops. The Abkhati make a wide range of alcohols and typically enjoy fruit wine with dinner.
- Throughout the farms, orchards, and even amongst the markets, the Abkhati erect tents for shelter from the midday sun. They bring many refreshments for lunch or breaks.
- With an abundance of papyrus grown along the rivers, the people have taken to keeping records of their trade and developed a deep appreciation for art. They also enjoy a wide variety of card games, which are easily picked up during work breaks.
- Through similar values in land stewardship, some families have earned landed status within the Kordi Nation. While an family may garner lands and influence amongst the Kordi, they stay out of blood feuds and harsher politics.

ATTIRE

- The Abkhat dress to stay cool while working in the sun. Most wear a plain colored and loose-fitting linen or cotton tunic as their base layer, while others choose long-fitting robes. Sleeves are typically wide so that they can easily be rolled up or tied at the elbow, and pants are loose-fitting and billowy. Layers are cinched, and easily added or subtracted to match the temperature.
- Most people also don lined caftans or similar thigh-length coats, with or without sleeves, in a variety of rich colors. Wealthier families might wear brightly colored linens and complex patterns.
- Belts of fabric and leather tend to be most popular in the northern settlements, while the coastal and tropical settlements often favor the addition of an ornamental belt of braided rope, complete with tassels.
- The most widely identifiable piece of Abkhati clothing owned is a wide-brimmed hat for protection from the sun. Each hat is unique and fashioned with a variety of materials, colors, and patterns. Many families have a recognizable pattern that members build upon, and others may choose to share some other defining traits. Some make their own, while others will commission a hatter.
- Most Abkhati wear some form of jewelry and include one or two pieces from other cultures, especially Cavachs. Earrings are commonly worn by people of all ages and professions.
- Landed Abkhat living in the Kordi Nation follow the local tradition of wearing circlets. Those of Ard Laird rank and above wear ornamental metal circlets, with the intricacy and adornment creasing with their prestige. Lairds often fashion their own circlets of tooled or braided leather, with the wealthier occasionally choosing plain, woven wire or a thin metal band.

HOLIDAYS

Creation Day (2nd Weekend of Thawing)

The Abkhati hold a festival after planting crops in the spring in order to celebrate the creation of the Ephemeral Realm and its many wonders. There are cooking and crafting competitions, as well as the giving of small gifts to friends and family.

The Endless Bounty (3rd Week of Reaping)

In the Fall, a festival is also held after the harvest to celebrate the continued support of the Gods. This festival focuses more on the body and includes physical contests and large feasts utilizing the crops that cannot be stored for the winter.

Adom's Sedgesi (1st Weekend of Silencing)

The Abkhati celebrate the triumphs of Adom Highsteppe, who united the settlements to stop the Great Fire. It is said that during a dry winter, lava from Mt. Cyris set the plains of Abkhat ablaze. Adom's village could not contain the fire and it quickly began to spread across Abkhat. Adom was blessed by the White God, and ran to all 23 settlements across Abkhat in 3 days, warning them of the fire. All settlements rose to his call and came together to put out the fire before it could ravage the northern half of Abkhat. The settlements realized that one person could not perform such a feat again, and started the courier network seen today. In remembrance of Adom's feats, a runner each year starts from one village and runs to the next, carrying a small gift of luck for the next village. When they arrive, a runner from that settlement takes off and repeats until a runner returns to the starting village. Each village performs its own celebration at night with the previous runner.