

Abkhat

"From the roots of creation stems eternal beauty"

The people of the Abkhat region have been content tending to their gardens and fields for years, slowly expanding their reach where more space is needed. A hardened set of core beliefs guide their well established settlements, yet leave them mostly unaware 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 southeast of the Kordi Nation. Aside from the copses of trees that dot the landscape, one can see for miles across the open grasslands, ready for planting. The plains give way to tropical forests scattered across the southern border along the ocean. Great rivers line the northern and eastern borders, providing their own variety of flora as well as water to the expansive grasslands through small tributaries and aqueducts. Abkhati farms can be found across all biomes, each cultivating their own variety of fruits

and vegetables. A small volcano (Mt. Cyris) rests in south-central Abkhat, but none choose to gamble with the Brown God, and so sits several miles in all directions from civilization.

In the summer, southern Abkhat grows hot and humid, with storms often moving 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.

SOCIAL STRUCTURE

The Abkhati people share a similar culture, but lack a central government. Each settlement's varied views of how to organize and govern rebuffs thoughts of unification, but a general desire to work together in desperate times has allowed each settlement to support one another. Each settlement is ruled by a dominant family, known as the *Raval*, which is typically the one with the

most land and/or the one of the oldest in the area. The Raval dictates crop rotations, tracks surplus food storage, and oversees 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 will be sold or redistributed to families who can support them, and the next family with the most land will take charge. Alternatively, if a Raval neglects their duties or shows gross incompetence, a vote of no confidence with 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 and attacking nation or relief from natural disasters. It is a job unwanted by most, but appreciated by all.

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 farms 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 will only have one or two farms, or have a small plot of land and work for one of the larger families. Small families commonly share excess food with each other, and are quicker to help each other during planting and harvest as needed.

The border of Abkhati influence is marked by the two rivers that run along the north and east, as there is no central organization who can track other borders and protect them. Only a handful of farms stretch past the opposite side of the rivers, and are slower to receive support the further they stretch from other settlements.

NAMING CONVENTIONS

Abkhati names are loosely inspired by Arabic and Egyptian names. Given names are chosen to represent an individual's personality or physical traits, while surnames are based upon their place of birth. As Abkhat has several distinct regions, surnames commonly include geographical features of the area, produce relevant to the family's occupation, or both. If an Abkhati does decide to move, it is a personal choice to keep their surname for recognition and a symbol of the choice to move, or change it to reflect their new home and dedication to their environment.

Example: Jabari (meaning brave one) Riverfern (lives by a swath of climbing fern along the river)

RELIGION

The Abkhati believe that humanity should be grateful and care for the realm provided to them by the Gods. They focus primarily on the Brown and White Gods, knowing that in order to best take care of the world around them, they must also take care of themselves. They thank Brown for the rain to grow their crops, and White for the strength to till the soil. This stewardship of the land resulted in their advanced agriculture, and the Abkhati are eager to share their knowledge with others.

They also believe the Ephemeral realm is immortalized in the Eternal realm. Most Abkhati try to stay in one place and cultivate their surrounding environment so that when they pass on, their home and surroundings are as serene as possible for eternity. Disorderly homes and gardens are seen as disregard for the Gods, and a token of bad luck. An Abkhat family may move once if the surrounding area becomes too crowded, but it is a seldom occurrence. All households have personal gardens, and liven up the home with colorful tapestries and other furnishings. They especially value the work from other nations, taking great interest in what others have done with the Gods' gifts.

CLOTHING

- The Abkhat dress to stay cool while working in the sun and fields. Most people tend to wear a plain colored and loose-fitting linen or cotton tunic as their base layer, with sleeves that can easily be rolled up or tied at the elbow. Some choose to wear long-fitting robes as their base layer, but either piece is typically accompanied loose, billowy pants. The layers are typically belted, and can easily add or subtract layers to match the temperature. In the winter, Abkhat don lined caftans or similar thigh-length coats, with or without sleeves.
- The most identifiable piece of 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 trait. Some will make their own, while other Abkhati will commission a hatter.
- Most Abkhati wear some form of jewelry, and include one or two pieces from other nations if it can be afforded. Wealthier families can afford brightly colored linens and complex patterns, and more jewelry if it could be afforded.

CUSTOMS

- The Abkhati value diligence and reverence above all else, and the two are closely tied. Maintaining one's crops and surrounding environment shows appreciation to the Gods, and is a year-round task. Those with fields will plant winter crops, and rotate fields to improve

soil quality. Willful negligence is not tolerated, as it may welcome disease, harm the environment, and treats the Gods with disregard.

- Most Abkhati have their own personal garden they tend to in their spare time, usually filled with local flowers and a few from outside their area. Even at an early age, children are given a bonsai tree to care for by their bedside.
- As Abkhat settlements tend to be near bodies of water for irrigation, most consume fish as their main source of meat. Further inland, farms may have some livestock in addition to their crops. The Abkhati have plenty of space for ingredients to make a wide range of alcohol, and typically enjoy some fruit wine with dinner.
- Different geographical sections of Abkhat focus on different products. Southern Abkhat focuses on citrus, while central specializes in other fruits and vegetables, and the river regions in herbalism products.
- Throughout the farms, orchards, and even amongst gardens, Abkhati erect tents for breaks from the midday sun. They bring food, water, and sometimes alcohol with them in the morning to store in the tent for lunch or breaks. If the skies are clear, the tents can be left up, and keep rugs or cushions under them.
- Many Abkhati do not farm year-round as their profession, but all are called together at planting and harvest times. Abkhat has its own share of smiths, hunters, tinkers, and other crafters, but all will set aside their trade for a few weeks during these peak seasons.
- With an abundance of papyrus grown along the rivers, the Abkhat have taken to keeping records of their trade, as well as a deep appreciation for art. They also enjoy a wide variety of card games, which are easily picked up during work breaks.
- Through similar landholding ideals as the Kordi, some Abkhati families have earned landed status within the Kordi nation. While an Abkhati family may slowly garner lands and influence amongst the Kordi, they stay out of the blood feuds and the destruction it brings. Some Kordi have mixed opinions towards these families for trying to avoid their politics, while others look to the Abkhati as mediators before starting a blood feud.

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): 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.