

ARMENIAN PUNCTUALITY: OUR SHAME

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✘ Keghart.com Editorial Board, 24 July 2012

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Why then so many Armenians are invariably late for Armenian community events and even to Holy Mass? Why do we shamelessly chuckle and snigger when we refer to our tardiness as good old Armenian Punctuality. Some of us don't think twice about stepping out of the church for a quick smoke before returning to Holy Mass. We also don't mind sashaying into the community hall long after the program or meeting has begun.

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ALITALIA: Always Late in Take-offs /Always Late in Arrival.

DELTA: Departing Even Later Than Anticipated.

JAL: Journey Always Late.


JAT: Joke About Time.

LOT: Last One There.

MEA: Might Even Arrive.

PAL: Plane Always Late.

Why is it that when unhappy flyers want to mock an airline their first target is the airline's supposed tardiness? The answer is plain: on time departure and arrival are a priority passengers, just as they are in business and social encounters.

 Far too many Armenians are “fashionably late” for community events. After all, arriving on time or slightly before the announced starting time might betray earnestness by these laggards or suggest they lead such boring, socially deprived and empty lives that they are desperate for an outing. “Fashionably late” in their small minds is a status message to everyone: we lead such super-exciting lives that it is difficult for us to wrest from our fabulous lives to attend a mere Armenian function. Perhaps we should be grateful for their noblesse oblige sacrifice.

Some Armenians say they come in late because they know that if they are on time no one will be there. Meanwhile, event organizers start the function later than the announced time because they expect attendees to be late. A vicious circle. Unfortunately, both assumptions are correct.

We don't want to delve into the obvious damages Armenian Punctuality inflicts on our national and social fabric, commitment, enthusiasm, our projects, plans and goals. It wouldn't be too risky to speculate that some frustrated Armenians, put off by the cavalier Armenian “tradition”, stay away from community gatherings

Management course students are taught that punctuality indicates commitment, consistency, promptness, interest, self-esteem, enthusiasm, determination, seriousness, conscientiousness, reliability... it's a highly-valued hallmark of the professional. Armenian Punctuality signals the absence of the attributes listed at the beginning of this paragraph.

To be redundant, we have to point that time is the building block of life. Minutes multiplied by billions add up to our lives. People who adhere to Armenian Punctuality steal countless hours from the lives of Armenians who arrive at community events on time. In extremes, the stragglers, the tardy, the laggards, the “fashionably late” steal slices off the life of the punctual and conscientious Armenian.

Shame on the misguided, complacent Armenians who perpetuate this embarrassing Armenian Punctuality “tradition”. They have blithely transformed the myth into fact. 

Punctuality is about respect for others and about self-respect.

Any book you pick about the Armenians, written by odars (not Turks) would mention that Armenians are historically renowned for their patriotism, industriousness, intelligence, business acumen, tight-knit communities and families, and belief in education.

Let's mend our ways before the word gets out that we have a casual relationship with time, that when it comes to time we are “relativists” but not the way Einstein meant. Armenian Punctuality doesn't jibe with most of the positive national attributes by which odars define us.

