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# ABOUT LAVASH

When I hear the words lavash – yukha, I am immediately overwhelmed by childhood memories. I remember women living next door kneading dough together with my mother, aunt and grandmother. They put the dough to mature, and then divided it into round pieces “kunda”. One or two of the women prepared the tandir or saj (concave circular iron plate). The saj was plastered with shira (a mixture of ash, clay and manure) on the underside. While the women were engaged in all this, we, the kids, prepared firewood in order to heat the tandir or light the fire under the saj.

And here begins the solemn performance: Women rolled paper-thin lavash with the “okhlov”, a thin and pointed rolling pin, on a round wooden yayga. The okhlov also helped to turn the lavash on the saj and make holes in the bubbles. If it was prepared on the saj - it was called “lavash”, “yukha salmag” – to spread the yukha and lavash on the saj, and if it was prepared in the tandir - “yavash yapmag” – to attach the lavash. The thing is that the lavash had to be attached to the hot inner walls of the tandir. To do this, it was first rolled out on a special tool called rafata (rəfətə). The rəfətə is elongated and resembles the raf (rəf) – a shelf on which something is put, and the word ata means throwing (at - throw). After that, the lavash was wetted with water from above, otherwise, it would not stick to the hot wall of the tandir. Interestingly, the first lavash often fell on the ashes. This formed a folk idiom. İlk lavash kut gələr (İlk lavaş küt gələr) - “the first lavash is always a blob”. Interestingly, a similar event and culinary thinking exists in Russian cuisine “The first pancake is always a blob”, which once again proves the psychological closeness of our peoples.

And now the first hot lavash is ready. As long as it is hot, kids crumbled it into the flour with butter – they



prepared “doymaj” (döyməc); This simple dish was so tasty that it is difficult to describe it. Some gourmets crumbled (motal) cheese or cottage cheese into the doymaj.

Here kids did their best to help and behaved politely. Everyone knew a story about how “The moon was a small child. When his mom was preparing a lavash, he mercifully fooled around. Mom could not stand it, slapped the moon across the face and said: “Get out of my sight.” And God heard the words of his mother and raised the moon to the sky. But traces of the slap still remain on the face of the moon. So he secretly glances longingly at his mother at night. He may ask her to caress him.” You cannot misbehave when lavash is being prepared. Nor is it impossible to fight in the presence of lavash as the popular proverb says “Galdi lavash - bitdi savash” (“When



lavash comes, fighting ends"). There are a lot of people's ideological statements about lavash "Yavash-yavash-pendir-yavash" ("Quietly (slowly) - cheese and lavash") or "Khamrali hash - bagrina bas" ("Khamrali (kind of bread) is clean – stick it to your breast i.e. lavash - eat slowly"). Lavash is used to make popular sandwiches in the form of a roll - durmek. In villages, children were supplied with such sandwiches when they ran out to play or went to school. Inside durmeks – rolls, they put butter and jam, cheese, cottage cheese and butter, cheese with herbs, potatoes, boiled eggs, etc.

And at funerals, they always serve flour halva wrapped in lavash. And no wedding is complete without lavash.

Lavash has formed the habit of eating with hands. We break the lavash with clean hands, put it on a piece of meat and then place it in our mouth. Or we keep the meat by the bones and then eat it, and in the end, we send it into our mouth. To eat soups, we wrap pieces of lavash as a spoon, scoop the soup and instead of the spoon, we place this spoon in the mouth. For centuries people have crumbled lavash in liquid dishes, milled dry

lavash into flour and taken it for a long journey. And in the journey, putting it in milk, diluted gatig (sour milk) and something else, they quickly prepared tura. Such flour is used in Gabala to prepare stuffing for Gabala baklava.

The basic book "Armenian cuisine", published in 1960, on which several dozen doctors, academics (historians, biologists, engineers, etc.) of Armenian origin worked, which was approved by the board of the Academy of Sciences of the Armenian SSR and the Culinary Council of the Ministry of Trade of the Armenian SSR and which is still copied by all Armenian authors, mentions the "Armenian" lavash and matnakash for the first time. (1)

Let's look at historical sources. Adam Oleary (17th century) wrote about Azerbaijani bread: "There are different kinds of bread made of wheat such as komach (komatsch) - biscuits as thick as three fingers and as long as half an elbow; lavash (lawasch) – round bread half an inch in thickness; peasekeshe (peasekesche) – as long as the elbow, they attach it to the house furnace or tenur and make furrows of five fingers on it; sengek (sengek) – whisked on round cobbles that are used to





make furnaces, which is why this bread is humpy; yukha (jucha) - thin biscuits, almost like paper, with a length of the elbow and almost with the same width." (2)

"The Tartars also prepare lavash (lyavyash) and bak lavash." (3)

N. A. Kislyakova and A. I. Pershita note that in Turkey "they also bake flat cake lavashes in the villages." (4) I. A. Agranovich said in 1876: "In Azerbaijan in Lankaran district, they bake lavashes from it" (5). Fine dried fruit marshmallow sticks are called "lavashana" in Azerbaijani, which entered old Slavonic cuisine. Domostroi (14th century) calls it "Levashniki" and gives a precise technology of its preparation, which is no different from the present one. (6)

The cooking of different thinly rolled breads that have no great thickness is characteristic of Azerbaijani cuisine. For example, yukha (in Turkish - yufka), lavash, sangak (or shatir), takhtag and others. Different travelers who visited Azerbaijan write about these thin breads. For example,

Baron Fyodor Korf: "Servants came in, carrying a plurality of bread-like pancakes on their shoulders and giving a portion to each person." (7);

L. F. Bogdanov: "A slice of very thin white bread is a little thicker than our pancakes and is called stone bread because it is baked on small hot stones. The bread also serves as a tissue substituting a soup spoon to a certain extent." (8);



Gaspard Drouville: "The servants first bring bread consisting of large foot-wide cakes as long as two or as thick as three lines called tegeyrag." (9);

Tkeshelov: "He gets a bite of bread (chorak) ... bread called yukhla, thin tissue-shaped bread" (10);

Muscovite Kavkaz: "Kebab... wrapping it in pieces of thin lavash pancakes ... they prepare every minute fresh lavashes exterminated by the crowd in large amounts" (11);

Adam Oleary: "In Shamakhi at the khan's place, the stolnik was followed by a royal carver with a wooden dish full of cakes or pancakes, which were the size of half a cubit and as thin as parchment. These cakes are called yukha (Juche)" (2);

Tekodander (1602): "(In Lankaran) ... and then they put

a big, round thin cake made of rice, replacing bread, and a plate in front of each of us." (12);

G. N. Kozbek says in the book "Three months in Turkish Georgia" (1876): "In Ardebil there are 12 bakeries ... In the villages, people eat bread (lavash and churek made from wheat flour mixed with barley)" (13).

The fact that thin breads were invented by Turks is proven by the American explorer Charles Perru. (14)

Some Azerbaijani dishes, especially national sandwiches "durmek", are prepared only with this kind of bread. Azerbaijanis remove kebab from the rod (ram-rod), and again with the help of these breads, as if wrapping the "kebab" in the meat, and they serve "lula-kebab" mostly in the form of "durmeks".

The word "durmek" retains the form of "durma" in the Lak language as one of the names for dolma in leaves and is explained as a Turkism, which means "wrapping". Vladimir Dal also gives the words "dulma" and "durma" together in one context. In Azerbaijan and Turkey, the famous "shah pilaf" and "parda pilaf", etc. are made in lavash. (15)

Thus, the people who created this bread also created appropriate products and methods of using these breads in their cuisine.

Thin sheet bread was mentioned in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by Mahmud Qashgari in his "Dictionary of the Turks" ("Lugat-it Turk"), calling it "kevrək" (16); as a synonym of the word meaning gentle, fragile, Turkic peoples use the words "yukha", "yufka" and "lavash".

At the same time, in the 11<sup>th</sup> century, Yusif of Balasagun mentions lavash in the book "Gutadgu Bilik" (Fertile Knowledge). (17)

In the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the great Azerbaijani poet Nizami Ganjavi wrote the following lines in the poem "Seven Beauties":

"He set a good table when he was hungry.

He ate white lavash and yellow gogal" (word-for-word translation T. A.) (18)

In the 15<sup>th</sup> century Iranian poet Bushagi Etim writes about lavash in the cookbook "Kenzul Ishtiha", (19), which is indicated by the translator of "Kenzul Ishtiha" (from Persian into Turkish), Ahmad Javad, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. (23)

G. A. Dubovis, who was in love with Armenia, writes in the dictionary "Armenian Cuisine": "White lavash is flat bread made from unleavened dough (Turkish flat bread lavash)" (20).

Renowned Armenian scientist Sevan Nishanyan writes in his Etymological Dictionary of Turkish (Türkçə Etimoloji sözlük): "Lavaş - fars. Lavaş, yassı əkmək, yufka."



(Lavash - Pers. Lavash is flat bread, yufka). (21) That's to say he attributes the word "lavash" to Persian, identifying lavash breads with Turkish yufka bread ("yukha" in Azeri).

And the Armenian scholar and linguist E. V. Sevartyan write in the book published by the Russian Academy of Sciences, "The Etymological Dictionary of Turkic Languages. Common and Inter-Turkic bases on the letters l, m, n, s" (22):

"L

**I. LAVASH** Turk. Tur. Tur. DIAL. Ko.Yem. 310 az., Az.dial. DSAz. 287, kim., kaz., uz. Dial. HSHL 167 RIII 741 (OSM., Al., Chag.), Bud. II 192 (kazan., az); lav'ash R III 741 (kazan., ktat.); la:vash uz.dial.ShL 95; Ləvəş tat., P III 751 (kazan.);

**II. LAVASHA** az., az.dial. DSAz.287, RIII 741 (Osm.).

Only uz.dial. the long a is indicated: - in Oguz dialects of Khorezm, the reference to length in the Turkic language here seems wrong;

al. 1. Lavash is bread of thin rolled dough, a kind of cake - Turk., az., tur., tur.dial.tat., kum., kaz., uz.dial. HSHL, SHL; Round thin bread in the form of pancakes and cakes, also serving as a tablecloth - R III 741 (Az.), Bud.;

2. Round flat cakes with raisins, marshmallow sticks or jam baked in oil - tat., Bud., R III 751 (kazan.;

3. Puff puns- tat. Dial. (TRS 354);

4. Thin cake from wheat - R III 741 (osm., chag.); a kind of pastry - R III 741 (kazan., ktat.);

5. Jam of acidic fruits (plum, etc.), dried cakes - az.dial. DSAz.; marshmallow sticks -az.dial.DSAz.;

**II 1. Sour marshmallow sticks**, dried jam of sour fruit with thin layers - plum, dogwood and other. - az., az.dial., DSAz.;

2. A thin, flat piece of silver- R III 741 (Osm.).

In semantics, it is necessary to emphasize an important component that is present in almost all usages - that the small thickness of the product and the rounded shape (flat cake, pancake) are mandatory. In a number





of languages, it is a sweet product or with sweet filling belonging apparently to delicacies. In the Azerbaijani language and its dialects, the form of the product served as the basis for the name of dried fruit jam, if, of course, lavasha is regarded as a variant of lavash.

The concept of thin and flat is preserved in Turkish lavasha, compared with silver.

There is no recognized etymology here. The initial I-gives reason to see a borrowing here, at least of the first element of lav-ash. M. Resenen indicates that TT VII 14 mentions a pair word liv-i as-y "his (sacrificial) food". "The possibility of rapprochement between the pair words liv as and lavash was first noted by R. Arat during the publication of this text. He suggested that "liv should be synonymous to as - 'sacrificial food'" (See. TT VII 67). The combination of liv as is noted in "Kutadgu bilig": liv as tergi – a set table; table laden with refreshments (DTS 333). The word liv is used separately here (DTS 333- QBK 140). In the DTS, liv is close to Armenian 'food, pudding', which is possible, but not definite. J. Clawson sees a borrowing from Chinese word li - grain <medieval Chinese liip, and in combination with as it acts as the determinant of the form (sacrificial) food - 'made from cereals (rice, wheat, etc.) (Cl.763). In principle, the origin of the word from East Turkestan - given the first reflection of other Uighur texts and QB – is very likely. Meanwhile, the Chinese word for grain is unlikely to be a full definition, as liv as behaves like a typical pair word.

As for the second element ash, one of the oldest of its meanings is recognized as "food" ("ESTYA [1974] 210-211), and there is also the meaning "feast". Thus, we can assume that the pair word or composite \* liv+as, which means originally the type of food from cereal grains (flour?), later became the name for a round baked product. E.

V. Sevortyan interprets the form of Azerbaijani lavash as a diminutive of lavash formed by the indicator -a (Sev. AI 168).

The word lavash as a borrowing from Turkic, noted by dictionaries, entered into many Caucasian languages: for example, Ossetian Lawyz/lauz/lawsi - a thin flat cake, pancake (Ab.II 15.49). About lavash in Russian, see Ship.218, about levash and levakha 'cake', see Fas.II 412, which, referring to F. Mikloshich, speaks about the Turkic origin of the word.

As we can see, Sevortyan, referring to famous linguists and dictionaries and the opinion of scientists at the Russian Academy of Sciences, claims that "the word lavash, as a borrowing from Turkic, entered into many languages of the Caucasus".

From the work of Sevortyan it is necessary to emphasize several points.

1. Lavash is used in many Turkic dialects. Turkish, Azeri, Kumyk, Kazakh, Uzbek, Ottoman, Karachay, Tatar, Kazan-Tartar, Oguz and ancient Uighur.

2. Lavash in its semantic meaning includes the idea of a "thin sheet".

So the author people must have several grain products like such a thin sheet, which is not observed in the culinary culture of the Armenians. As we noted above, thin bread like lavash and products made of them are common among the Turkic peoples.

3. The word "lavash" is found in the "Kutadgu bilig" as Liv aş tergi – a set table; table set with refreshments.

It must be noted "Kutadgu bilig" is recognized as a historical monument of Turkic peoples and was written in the 11<sup>th</sup> century by Yusif Balasagunlu. (17)

In addition, the round low table on which a thin sheet is rolled out for lavash also served as domestic item and a table, which can be seen from a variety of miniatures, and is still used in many homes and ethnographic restaurants by almost all Turkic peoples.

4. Sevortyan, citing sources, suggests that the word lavash is formed from the Chinese word Liv - grain and ash (food in general Turkic) and rightly believes that lavash is a pair word.

Indeed, the word lavash is a pair word and is derived from a combination of the words "alov" and "ash" ("fire" and "meal"). Both words "alov" and "ash" have common Turkic roots. Alovash, with the further loss of the first vowel "A", became "lavash". The loss of the first vowel is typical of our language, for example, the word "Rossiya" sounds like Rusiya or Rusiet in Azerbaijani, and before, and even now, in many areas it is pronounced as Ərəsey,

Urset. Also, Russians used to be called "Urus" not "Rus" as today, or the word "stakan" sounds like "istakan" in Azerbaijani, "Ravan" - "Irvan", the word "Ulduz" (star) - "yulduz", the word "rafiqa" (girlfriend) - "irafiga" and so on.

The formation of the word "alovash - lavash" corresponds to rules of forming culinary terminology in the Azerbaijani language. For example, bread baked in burning ashes (köz - in Azeri) is called kozlamach (sh), and bread baked in the ashes (kul) is called kullamash (ch). That is to say the names of these breads are linked with the name of the environment. This is what we are seeing in Persian. Thin shatir bread baked on stones is called "sangah" - "stone" (from Persian). Bread baked on the walls of the tandir comes into direct contact with "alov" (fire). Hence the name of the bread alovash, lavash.

In some Turkic dialects, for example, in Turkey, the word "alov" sounds like "yalov" and the word "lavash" could initially sound like "yalovash" followed by the loss of the letter "y" and then the letter "a". We have seen this in the formation of the word "ulduz" (star), which earlier sounded and still sounds like "yulduz" or "yildiz" in Turkish.

Hence, the Azerbaijani idiom "aj-yalavaj" - hungry, without lavash. The name of the Azerbaijani villages "Yalavash" is probably also connected with lavash. ❀

*To be continued*

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