Encyclopædia Iranica

BREAD
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Published: December 15, 1989
Last Updated: December 8, 2016

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BREAD, Persian *nān* (for etymology, see Bailey, *Dictionary*, p. 179, s.v. *nāṃji*).

In the Iranian languages the words for "bread" inherited from old Iranian seem to reflect two different early methods of baking (Harmatta). Harmatta suggests that the practice of baking bread "covered," that is, in ashes, is reflected in the word *nayan*, found especially in the eastern Iranian languages (Sogdian, Baluchi, Pashto, etc.) and Armenian *nkan*, a loanword from Iranian (Parthian), which must be derived from Old Iranian **nikana*– (lit., that which is buried or covered), as well as in the form **bakand* found in Choresmian, probably from Old Iranian **upakanta*– "covered, buried" (for the Choresmian forms, see Benzing, pp. 170f. s.vv. *bkn*– "to fill," *bknd* "bread," p. 521 s.v. *pknd*). On the other hand, the practice of baking bread "uncovered," in an oven, seems to be reflected in the common Persian word *nān* (Mid., NPers., and western Iranian dialects), probably derived from Old Iranian **nayna*– "naked." Modern Iranian languages and dialects possess a large variety of names for "bread," both inherited from earlier Iranian languages and borrowed.

Bread is mentioned in both the Sasanian inscriptions of the 3rd-4th centuries and in the 9th-century Pahlavi texts. Šāpūr I (a.d. 240-70) ordered that one lamb, one *grīw* and five *hōfan* of bread, and four *pās* of wine should be sacrificed daily at the fire temples for his own soul, the souls of the close family, and the members of his court (Back, pp. 337, 344, 367); bread was also given the souls of the righteous to eat in paradise (inscriptions of Kirdēr, ed. Back, p. 468). In the *Draxt āsōrīg* (The Babylonian tree), a poem about a contest between a date palm and a goat over precedence (see, e.g., Boyce, "Middle

Persian Literature," p. 55), the date palm maintains that those who do not have wine and bread can satiate themselves with dates instead (ed. Nawwābī, pp. 52-53). In the *Bundahišn* we are told that garden herbs such as rue, parsley, coriander, and leek are suitable for eating with bread (TD_2, p. 117.14; tr. Anklesaria, 16.17, pp. 148-49). In the *Ardā Wirāz-nāmag* it is said that those who throw bread to dogs will themselves be torn by devils looking like dogs (Gignoux, pp. 94, 188), and finally Ahriman himself taunts the evil that they accomplished his works though they ate the bread of Ohrmazd (Gignoux, pp. 136, 214).

In both Middle and New Persian the expression *nān xwardan/ḵᵛordan* also signifies "to eat, have a meal" in general. In Middle Persian it is found in the inscription of Šāpūr Sakānšāh at Persepolis from the reign of Šāpūr II (Back, p. 493), in Manichean texts (see Boyce, *Reader*, p. 44 text *n* 1; Sundermann, p. 497), and in Pahlavi. For instance, in the *Bundahišn* it is said regarding the resurrection and the "final body" that just as Mašyē and Mašyānē, when they grew up from the earth, first drank water and then gradually added food, milk, and so on to their diet, men, when they die, will reverse the process, ceasing first to eat meat, then to drink milk, and then to eat at all (*nān xwardan-iz*) and will end by drinking only water.

In modern Iran bread is the dietary staple food for the population and accounts, on the average, for 70% of the daily caloric intake. Several studies conducted in rural and urban environments have shown variations in the proportion of proteins supplied by bread, from 60% among farmers to 34% among landowners (Bahadori and Klodian; Olszyna-Marzys; Hedayat and Sen Gupta).

In most of Iran bread consists of flat, thin cakes made from wheat flour. Only in the Caspian provinces is there a different tradition, baking bread from rice flour, *nān-e berenjī*, already mentioned by medieval writers (Ebn Ḥawqal, p. 381, tr. Kramers, p. 371; Moqaddasī, p. 354; Ebn Esfandīār, p. 76; see berenj); this type is, however, meeting increasing competition from commercially baked wheat bread (Bazin and Bromberger, p. 79). Rice bread is generally baked on a metal tray (*sāj*) or on the bottom of an inverted pottery bowl placed on a tripod. Among certain groups of pastoral nomads (e.g., Baḵtīārī and Boir-Aḥmad) varying proportions of acorn flour (*balūṭ*) are occasionally mixed with wheat flour, especially during periods of famine. The bread made this way is called *kalg* (Digard, pp. 191-92).

Several types of bread can be distinguished, depending on whether they are produced commercially or domestically and, particularly, on the baking method: oven or tray. In the towns the quality of the flour seems to be a determining element in distinguishing types of bread. Such distinctions are more vague in rural areas, where the flour is often ground without sifting and, thus, generally has a high percentage of extraction (90-95%).

Similar baking techniques are used throughout the country (Wulff, pp. 292-95), and utensils and ovens are perfectly adapted to the type of bread produced. The most common kind of oven (*tanūr*), used both in bakeries and village houses, where it constitutes one of the built-in features (Bromberger, 1974, p. 34; Martin, p. 28; Desmet-Grégoire; Bazin and Bromberger, p. 81), is a truncated cone made from dried or baked earth, with or without a flue, standing on the floor or sunk below it. The fire is in the bottom, so that bread may be pressed against the inner walls for baking. Among pastoral nomads, on the other hand, after the dough has been kneaded in a metal pan (*mazama*, *majama*), which is used because of its firmness, it is transferred to a tray or an iron baking sheet (*sāj*) placed over the fire, for baking. Many pastoral nomads, such as in the regions of Ṭāleš, Gāleš and Šāhsevan (Bazin and Bromberger, p. 80), also use a more rudimentary technique: the raw dough is baked on ashes (*nān-e ātaš*) or pressed against a hot stone.

In urban settings, where most of the bread is purchased from bakeries equipped with a *tanūr*, four main types of bread are found: *tāftūn* (*taftān*), *lavāš* (*nān-e tīrī*), *nān-e sangak*, and *nān-e barbarī*. The first two types are very similar, differentiated only by the types of flour used and the relative thickness of a slab. *Tāftūn*, probably the most popular bread in Iran, is made from a mixture of white and whole-wheat flours, *lavāš* (very similar to *tāftūn*) from white flour forming a more or less leavened dough. In the bakeries, after flour, water, and salt have been poured together in a trough (*ṭaḡār*, *taštak*) and leavening (*ḵamīr-māya*, *āb-e torš*, *ājī ḵamīra*) has been added (for *lavāš*), the dough is kneaded (*varz dādan*) by the dough maker (*ḵamīrgīr*, *ḵalīfa*) and an assistant (*vardast*), who usually does most of the work; it is then left to rise (*var āmadan*). A dough insufficiently kneaded or baked prematurely gives a kind of tough bread called *nān-e čeḡer*. When the dough is ready one person (*čānagīr*) rolls out pieces (*čāna*) with a rolling pin (*vardana*, *čūba*) on a board of wooden strips (*ḵūna*) or an inverted pottery basin, while another (*šāṭer*) places the rolled pieces on a cushion (*nānband*, *nāvand*, *bāleštak*, *rafīda*) stuffed with straw and covered with cotton, by means of which he can press

them against the oven walls without burning his hands. After baking for a minute or so, the bread is picked off the oven wall by an assistant (*nānvāssūn*, i.e., *nān-vā-estān*) who uses a skewer or double-pronged fork (*nāṇčīn*, *sīḵ*, *došāḵa*) with a wooden handle. To make especially crisp bread (*nān-e berešta*, *nān-e danda'ī*) bakers often make holes in the bread with a kind of comb (*danda zadan*) just before placing it in the oven. *Lavāš*, no more than 2 or 3 mm thick, is the thinnest bread found in Iran.

Nān-e sangak is a flat, thin bread 3 to 5 mm thick and about 70 cm long; the leavened dough is made from especially milled flour. It is baked in an oven (*tanūr-e sangakī*, *kūra*) consisting of a sloping brick shelf covered with red-hot pebbles (*sangak*, hence the name), which leave their imprints on the bread, and traditionally heated by dry shrubs (*ḵār*) or firewood (*hīzom*). In recent years oil has become the major fuel used by urban bakers. At least two men, the *ḵamīrgīr* and *šāṭer*, are required to make *sangak*. The *šāṭer* stands in front of the oven and flattens the dough by hand on a slightly convex wooden slab (*sarak*) attached to a very long wooden handle (*pārū*); he then quickly thrusts the *sarak* into the oven, sliding the dough onto the pebbles. After a couple of minutes the *šāṭer* or the *nūnvāssūn* (also called *ātašandāz*) removes it with a skewer or double-prong fork. The *sarak* rests in a cleft stick, which permits the *šāṭer* to slide it back and forth more easily; the broad end is set on a ledge next to the oven while the dough is being applied. *Nān-e sangak*, often sprinkled with poppy seeds (*ḵašḵāš*) or black caraway seeds (*sīāhdāna*; *Nigella sativa*), is the bread commonly served with *āb-gūšt*: it is usually torn in pieces (*tarīd*, *telīd*), soaked in the *āb-gūšt*, and eaten with a spoon as an integral part of the dish. It is also the bread that usually accompanies *gūšt-e kūbīda*, the solid ingredients of *āb-gūšt* mashed and eaten separately from the liquid.

Nān-e barbarī (named after a "Barbar" community that settled south of Tehran during the Qajar period; see Dehḵodā s.v.) is a flat, oval bread 3 to 4 cm thick and about 70 cm long; it is made from pieces of leavened dough weighing about 900 grams each. The flour used has a rate of extraction of 70 to 75 %, and *nān-e barbarī* thus resembles European breads, though it is baked by the same method as *nān-e sangak*. It is more expensive than other breads but, where available, is commonly eaten for breakfast (often with cheese) by those who can afford it.

In rural areas, where bread is made at home, the making of bread is a strictly womanly task, and the frequency of baking (daily, weekly, etc.) varies according to the seasonal activities. *Lavāš* seems the most common. Since the

primary ingredient (wheat) and the method of preparation are not standardized, the product can vary in thickness and in the amount of leavening added. It can be kept for several weeks wrapped in a napkin (*sofra*) and placed in a basket (*sabad*) or in a cupboard of dried earth (*nāndān*); for that reason it is very common in western Iran, especially in winter, when daily baking is difficult and the bread keeps longer because of the cold.

Another kind of bread, thicker than *lavāš*, is also made in the villages; the dough, made from a flour with high rates of extraction, salt, water, and leaven, is left to stand for a rather long time, or else it rises during baking. A single cook can flatten the pieces of dough by hand and press several at a time against the oven walls with a cushion; baking time is about 30 minutes. The name of this bread varies from region to region: It is called *gerda* around Hamadān, *panjakeš* around Ṭāleš, *kūlas* or *kūlūs* east of the Safīdrūd. It is a tasty bread made for special occasions, or when little time is available, for example when the women take part in the agricultural activities in summer (Desmet-Grégoire, pp. 271-73). Compared to the bread more common in villages or the bread specific to pastoral nomads, it seems to be an intermediate type of bread, which can be baked, for ten minutes, either on a tray (Digard, pp. 190-91) or in a *tanūr*. It keeps for no more than a day or two and thus is usually made every day.

Aside from breads baked for normal consumption, there are special kinds for the holidays; because the dough is enriched with milk, sugar, honey, eggs, shortening, or yogurt these breads (*nān-e šīrī*, *faṭīr*, *nān-e šīrīn*, *nān-e šīrmāl*) are actually closer to pastry. Bread of European type (*nān-e tōst*, *nān-e māšīnī*) can also be found in Tehran and other large cities (Olszyna-Marzys: Tual, p. 10).

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