## THE WORD GAT'A IN THE ARMENIAN LANGUAGE\*

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#### Abstract<sup>1</sup>

Գաթայ gat'ay (pronounced gat'a in the modern Eastern Armenian) is an ancient tradition-al festive cake, which was baked during various Armenian celebrations. Its baking processwas sometimes itself accompanied by special traditions. However, it should be noted thatthe word gat'a used today, which means 'cake in the form of balarĵ (traditional Armenianfestive bread) containing abundant fat and sugar'[4: 214] is not found in ancient Armeniansources [3: 499-500]. Gat'ay is met for the first time in Vardan Aygektsi's fable 'The Pigand Gata' in the following passage: «Uuug 'h unulug, թէ hunqù qupeuj úh quntulnuntp. huŋ hunphuù 'h duŋn hun puuhtp ta duuù uupnuùnghù úhuptpnniptuù qhuhqù ng uuptp 2tntl. np qqinihuù 'h dtp uuiunin. jujùduu ptpnùghp'h dtp uuiuuug, pt qunp yth unqù qpninniphiù untquuluù usop st untutui:ta unjùduu uuug, pt qnn sth dtphp, dtpnuj ta qhùs sth untutui, untuui. qh unjns quipeuj tp utphp ta ns untquulu untutin fat nghus sth untutui, untuui.

"It is said in a fable that a pig was eating gat'ay it had found, the pig was dropping xoriz as it was not able to move its neck as it was attached to its head. As soon as it raised its head in order to raise its mouth it saw the sun. The pig had never seen the entire sun disk. And then it said I ate what I have never eaten and I saw what I have never seen. If it had not eaten gat'ay, it would have never seen the sun<sup>2</sup>'.

The word quipuj (gat'ay) is encountered often in Middle Armenian including medieval lyric poetry [11: 131].

Keywords: gatay, Armenian, Hittite, NINDA gatai/katai-, pastry, bread, wedding, etymology.

#### The word *gat* 'ay in the Armenian language

Despite being widespread in the Armenian festive and ritual system and daily life, the word *gat* 'ay has no clear etymology in the Armenian language [3: 499-500]. According to the prominent Armenian linguist Hrachya Acharyan, this word is found in more than two dozen Armenian dialects in the form *qupuy-lyupuy gat* 'ay-kat 'ay, which is a type of pastry, prepared differently in various parts of historical Armenia with the use of sugar, oil, *xoriz* (filler), or nuts and honey, without sugar, salt, etc [2:214]. The word is also present in Turkish - *kete*, in

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Translation by the author of the article.

Kurdish - kade, kadik [2:214], in Georgian Jsos (k'ada) [36: 575], etc., the origin of which is unknown [2: 214-215]. In recent years in Georgia, however, it has been referred to as brodby for 35005 ('Armenian gata') [37].

Gevorg Jahukyan considers the similarity of the Armenian word *gat'ay* and the French *gâteau* 'pie' to be accidental [21:144]. *Gâteau*, originally, *gastel* derives from German *wastel* [8: 179].

*Gat'ay* is considered a part of words qup uqniqni gat'agugu - 'a small gat'a' and <math>qup up up up un h u (gat'axatik), sent as an invitation to wedding, found in Armenian dialects [15:227-228].

Sahak Vardapet Amatuni in his *Hayoc' bar' u ban* pointed out to the word *gat'ay* used in works of the Armenian publicist Mesrop Taghiadyan (1803-1585) and famous Armenian writer Perch Proshian (1837-1907) and others [5:123].

According to Stepan Malkhasiants, gat'ay is a pastry in the form of  $balar\hat{j}$  made differently and different places, e.g. gat'ay of Yerevan, gat'ay of Akhaltskha, etc. The word  $gat'anax\tilde{s}$ , which is a round wooden tool used to make patterns on gat'a is derived from the word gat'a [28:403].

#### *Gat'a* in the Armenian festive system

*Gat* '*a* is an integral part of the most important Armenian festivals and wedding ceremonies [30:183]. For example, *gat* '*a* would be taken as a gift to the bride's house on the wedding day or a few days before by the groom's relatives; they would place an odd number of *gat* '*a* over a tray with *pakhlava*. For example, in New Nakhichevan, where the Armenian traditions were very well respected, a couple of days before a wedding, the groom's parents would gather to bake *t* '*el-gat* '*a*<sup>3</sup> with their female relatives and aged women of the neighborhood. Several bags of flour, oil and sugar were prepared beforehand. The aged women would come with their *oxlawus* to roll out layers of *gat* '*a*, preparing filler (*xoriz*), cut *gat* '*a* and then bring pieces to bake in an oven. On the eve of the wedding, the groom's young relatives, riding two or three horses with their *khurjins* (Armenian traditional shoulder bag) stuffed with *gata*, visited their relatives' houses, distributing one *gat* '*a* to each of them, thus inviting them to the wedding [31:24].

*Gat'a* was very popular among the Armenians of Dersim, where a number of *gat'a* types were baked: *čaš gat'a, khorisov gat'a, lollik gat'a, which was used by* the mother-in-law to invite the groom when the latter would visit her to kiss her hand. It was noteworthy that young wives from the groom's side would put *kar'ev gat'a* in the pockets of young husbands; there was even a folk saying: "I wish to be a new groom to receive a *gata* from new brides." The next type was moon-shaped

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> *T'el-gat'a* was popular among the residents of Nor Nakhijevan: it was prepared from thin layers of oiled dough, stuffed with *xoriz*, it was pressed with a thin wooden roller (*okhlava*) which made patterns on it [23:85].

gat'a baked for children, called *lusnak*. There are other types of gat'a such as *tapaki gat'a, khoris, pokel*, etc [14: 235:236].

There were many interesting customs related to gat a in Arčak, but in Arčak it was not called gat a', but sweet  $balar\hat{j}$ , which replaced gat a'. There was an interesting custom in Arčak, when on the way to the bride's house, the bridesmen (azapbasi) would pick up the groom on a horse and would go to the bride's house while dancing. Two persons would follow them while carrying a sieve on their heads or under their arms, one filled with 20-30 pieces of sweet  $balar\hat{j}$ , which, as mentioned, was the equivalent of gat a, and the other with two trays of halva. Balar $\hat{j}$  and halva would be brought with similar sieves from godfather's house, also accompanied by the music of the zur na and dhol [6: 69].

In Javakhk, the baking of *gat*'a was very important during wedding preparations accompanied by a number of preparatory ceremonies. On the Friday preceding the wedding, a woman whose flour sieve was full of raisins would hold a bottle of *oli* (vodka), would walk around the whole village visiting the godfather's and other villagers' houses saying: "Let's go to this person's house for *gat*'at'ux (baking of *gat*'a), let a similar celebration be in your house" and would invite the people with a cup of *oli* each and would give the close relatives of bride and groom a pair of candles. Then those invited would take butter, eggs, milk, etc. with them and go to groom's mother's house to congratulate her.

After the celebration dinner in the groom's house, a large bowl was placed in the middle of the house and the wife of the village priest would light two candles in front of the bowl accompanied by the music of *zur* '*na* and *dhol* in order that the groom be luminous (a similar custom existed in Van). She would cover her face with red veil, so the future wife would be shy and sift flour in silence and the groom would be tacit. Then six women would give coins to the priest's wife and cover their heads with red veils while sifting flour one by one.

According to traditional beliefs, if the priest's wife did not sift flour, the bride would 'go crazy'. After sifting flour, the guests would have supper and leave, and then only the godmother and a few relatives would stay at the groom's house. They would bake about 100 pairs of *gat* 'a, would have dinner again, and leave for their own homes taking one *gat* 'a each.

At the same time, several young people would throw a rope onto *ert 'ik* (a light opening in traditional Armenian house) from the yard shouting: "Let the bride live in happiness, let her hands be skillful" and the family members would tie *gat 'a* to the end of the rope. The boys would pull it out and leave [26: 248-249].

In Varanda, *gat 'a* was considered an obligatory part of the gifts brought by the co-parents-in-laws on a tray (xonča) [27: 158].

Gat'a also was a part of rituals performed in the *Miĵink* (the middle, or the 24<sup>th</sup> day of Great Lent), during which *balarĵ gat'a* of *Mijink* was baked. The *balarĵ* or *gat'a* was given to family members, domestic animals, and it was also offered to the earth. *Gat'a* was baked by aged women, and in some places dough was

kneaded by men, which had a ritual meaning, while a bead, a ring and a coin were put in it for fortune telling [1: 219-220].

Round *gat'a* were moulded and patterned with tool called *gat'anaxš*, a moulder hand pressure applied for round shaping. They were used not only for moulding and patterning *gat'a*, but also for making patterns on ceremonial breads which traces back to ancient tradition in the Armenian Highlands. Samples of ancient *gat'anaxš* have been found in different regions of Armenia, made of wood or clay around 16-50 cm in diameter, containing deep counter relief patterns in rose and star shapes [29: 131-133]. The earliest samples of similar clay pressures can be found in the Neolithic VI-II layers of Çatal-Hüyük, which date back to the VII-VI millennia BC, thus testifying the presence of such moulders in Asia Minor [29: 133-134].

A number of examples brought from the above ethnographic material is a proof of presence of ancient traditions related to gat 'a in various parts of historical Armenia, which may indicate that gat 'a has long been an integral part of daily life of Armenians and their ritual system. However, as it was already mentioned, surprisingly the word gat ' ay/gat 'a was not recorded in ancient Armenian sources, and it does not have a clear etymology.

## An Attempt of Etymology of the Word *qupuj gat'ay*

The names of various meals and bread types related to them have been preserved in Hittite texts. The ritual texts give an abundance of details about each part of the sacrificial procedure and the meal that follows it [10: 77].

For example, <sup>NINDA</sup>*aladdari*- [34:13] is one of the famous Hittite breads, considered to be Hurrian in origin. Grigor Kapantsyan compared this with the Armenian word *unuuntip alander* ('dessert') [24:333], though this interpretation is considered wrong [32: 32]. It is known that the Hittites paid special attention to many different sacrifices offered to the gods, in particular various bread types [12: 43]. In general, by special rites, the gods ''received daily bread and beverage offerings'' every day, according to their hierarchy and importance [9: 43-44]. One of the most famous sacred breads is the Hittite storm-god's bread loaf <sup>NINDA</sup>*harsi*-[33: 190]. It is often encountered in Hittite texts. We also come across to  $L^{U}harsiyala$ -, probably a special servant serving the bread [33: 194]. It appears even in the Hittite law 164-165. "If anyone goes (to someone's house) to impress (something), starts a quarrel, and opens \* 3 5 either the (homeowner's) sacrificial bread or libation wine, he shall give one sheep, 10 loaves of bread, and one jug of ... beer, and reconsecrate his [20: 132]."

Next type of bread is <sup>NINDA</sup>*hazizi*-, is falling within our focus of interest, which probably means 'ear-bread' and which was once compared with the Armenian word *hac* ' bread' by Gevorg Jahukyan, who, however, considered it [21: 453] a possible loanword in Hittite from Armenian, as the scholar supposed this word to be of Armenian origin, but in our opinion, the Armenian origin of this word needs further examination.

The following Hittite bread types are of great interest: NINDA.LÀL ŠA ZÍZ (wheat honey bread/pastry), barley, e.g. NINDA ZÍD.DA.ŠE (barley bread), beans, e.g. NINDA.LÀL GÚ.GAL.GAL (bean honey bread/ pastry), lentils, e.g. NINDA.LÀL GÚ.TUR (lentil honey bread/pastry) and porridge, e.g. NINDA BA.BA.ZA (porridge pap/flour bread) [12: 44]. NINDA.ÉRIN - soldiers' bread and BAPPIR beer bread [12:47].

And one of these many bread types is the above-mentioned <sup>*NINDA*</sup> gatai/kataifound in Hittite sources, the composition of which, unfortunately, is unknown. It is found with the following writing: ka-a-ta-i (KUB XXXV 82 i 1) and ga-ta-a-i (XXXII 129 + 814 / b, i 21; 1262 / v rev 9 '), ga-ta-[a-i] (KBo XIII 248 i 22') [19: 168].

In our opinion, the Armenian word *quipuij gat 'ay* can be traced to the abovementioned <sup>NINDA</sup>*gatai-* 'a kind of cake' found in Hittite cuneiform texts, which so far has no clear etymology in the Hittite language [34: 76; 35:542].

## Conclusion

The significant role of *gat 'ay/gat 'a* in the Armenian festive system is evidence that it was common in Armenian cuisine from ancient times; the fact that this word is not recorded in the ancient Armenian sources does not mean that it was not used in the Armenian language especially as the word is present in various Armenian dialects. In addition, numerous *gat 'anaxš* discovered during archaeological excavations serve as a proof that this pastry was common in the Armenian Highlands.

In our opinion, the word *gat* '*ay*, which has no clear etymology in Armenian, may be etymologically related to the word *gatai/katai* of the Hittite cuneiform texts meaning 'a type of baked bread' which does not have an exact etymology in Hittite.

As known, already from mid-1920s such scholars as N. Martirosyan, G. Kapancyan, Hr. Acharyan, I. Dyakonoff, T. Schultheiss, A. Kammenhuber, G. Jahukyan, N. Mkrtchyan, A. Kosyan and others contributed to the study of interactions of the Hittite-Luwian languages and the Armenian language. A significant number of the list of Hittite-Luwian loanwords in Armenian comprise household and culture words [13: 65-72; 22:313-315; 25: 63-65; 16; 17:201-202; 18]. If our point of view is correct, this word can be added to the above list.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AAL - Annual of Armenian Linguistics (Cleveland).

AJNES - Aramazd. Armenian Journal of Near Eastern Studies.

PBH - Patma-banasirakan handes (Historical-Philological Journal), Yerevan.

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# Հասմիկ Հմայակյան

**Բանալի բառեր՝** գաթայ, գաթա, գաթանախշ, խեթերեն, հայերեն, ստուգաբանություն, <sup>NINDA</sup>gatai/katai, թխվածք, տոնածիսական, մշակութային:

Գաթան հնագույն ավանդական տոնածիսական թխվածք է, որը թխվել է հայկական ամենատարբեր տոների ժամանակ, և անգամ նրա թխման գործընթացը ևս երբեմն ուղեկցվել է հատուկ ավանդույթներով։ Սակայն հարկ է նշել, որ արդի հայերենում այսօր գործածվող «գաթա» բառը, որը նշանակում է «բաղարջի ձևով թխվածք՝ առատ յուղով, շաքարով» հին մատենագրության մեջ վկայված չէ, դրա առաջին հիշատակությունը Այգեկցու առակում է։

«Գաթայ» ձևով այն բազմիցս հանդիպում է միջին հայերենում և ուշ միջնադարյան քնարերգության մեջ։ Չնայած այս խմորեղենի խիստ տարածվածությանը հայկական տոնածիսական համակարգում և կենցաղում, «գաթայ» բառը ստույգ ստուգաբանություն չունի հայերենում։ Ըստ Հր. Աճառյանի այն հանդիպում է երկու տասնյակից ավելի բարբառներում «գաթայ-կաթայ» ձևով։

«Գաթայ»-ից կազմված են համարվում բարբառներում հանդիպող «գաթագուգու»- փոքրիկ գաթա և «գաթախատիկ»՝ հարսանիքն հրավիրելու նպատակով ուղարկված գաթա բառերը։

Ըստ Ստ. Մալխասեանցի, «գաթայ»-ն խմորեղեն է՝ բաղարջի ձևով, որ պատրաստվում է տարբեր ձևերով և տարբեր վայրերում, հայտնի է, օրինակ, Երևանի գաթայ, Ախալցխայի գաթայ և այլն։

«Գաթայ» բառից է կազմված «գաթանախշը», որը կլոր փայտյա գործիք է, որով գաթայի վրա նախշեր են անում։ Գաթանախշերը կիրառվում էին ոչ միայն գաթայի, այլև ծիսական հացերի վրա ևս դաջվածքներ անելու համար և ունեին հնամենի ավանդույթ Հայկական լեռնաշխարհում։

Հոդվածում հանգամանալից քննարկվում են գաթայի հետ կապված տարբեր ավանդույթները։ Օրինակ, Նոր Նախիջևանում հարսանիքից մի երկու օր առաջ փեսայի ծնողները հավաքում էին իրենց ազգական և հարևան ծեր կանանց «թել-գաթա» թխելու համար, և հարսանիքի նախօրեին փեսայի երիտասարդ ազգականները ձիեր հեծած, խուրջինները լցրած «թել-գաթայով»՝ շրջում էին ազգականների տներով, բաժանում նրանց մի-մի գաթա՝ հրավիրելով հարսանիքի:

Գաթան շատ տարածված էր Դերսիմի հայերի շրջանում, որտեղ թխում էին մի շարք տարատեսակներ՝ «ճաշ գաթա», «խորիսով գաթա», «լողլիկ գաթա», «կառև գաթա» և այլն։

Ջավախքում հարսանեկան պատրաստություններում խիստ կարևոր տեղ էր տրվում գաթայի թխմանը, որն ուղեկցվում էր մի շարք նախապատրաստական արարողություններով. տան կենտրոնում դնում էին տաշտը և դհոլ-զուռնայի ուղեկցությամբ երեցկինը ծնկաչոք տաշտի առաջ դրա երկու ծայրերին մոմ էր վառում, որ հարսը պայծառ ու լուսավոր լինի, (նման սովորույթ եղել է նաև Վանում) և կարմիր քողը գցելով երեսին, որ ապագա հարսը ամոթխած լինի, լուռ մաղում էր ալյուրը, որ հարսը լռակյաց լինի, հետո վեց կանայք կոպեկներ էին տալիս երեցկնոջը և հերթով կարմիր գլխաշորը գցելով գլխներին՝ մաղում էին ալյուրը։

Ըստ հավատալիքների, եթե գաթաթուխի ալյուրը երեցկինը չմաղեր, հարսը կխելագարվեր։ Նրանք շուրջ 100 զույգ գաթա էին թխում և մի-մի գաթա վերցրած գնում իրենց տները։ Մի քանի երիտասարդներ էլ երդիկից պարանը գցելով բղավում էին. «Բագդաւոր հարս ըլլի, ձեռքն ու ոտքը ուղուբով ըլլի», և պարանի ծայրին տնեցիք գաթա էին կապում, որը տղաները քաշում ու հեռանում էին։

Վերոնշյալ ազգագրական նյութերից բերված մի շարք օրինակները վկայում են գաթայի հետ կապված հնամենի ավանդույթների տարածվածության մասին պատմական Հայաստանի տարբեր վայրերում, ինչը կարող է վկայել այն մասին, որ գաթան հնուց ի վեր եղել է հայոց կենցաղի ու ծիսապաշտամունքային համակարգի անբաժանելի մասը։

Մեր կարծիքով հնարավոր է, որ վերջինս ստուգաբանորեն կապված է խեթերեն սեպագիր տեքստերում հանդիպող <sup>NINDA</sup>gatai/katai- «մի տեսակ թխվածքի կամ հացի տեսակ» ստույգ ստուգաբանություն չունեցող բառի հետ։ Հայտնի է, որ խեթերենից հայերենին են անցել մի քանի տասնյակ բառեր, որոնցում զգալի թիվ են կազմում նաև կենցաղային ու մշակութային բառերը, և մեր առաջադրած տեսակետի ճշմարտացիության դեպքում, այս բառը կարող է համալրել վերջիններիս շարքը։