

Yoged is the only village in Darvoz district of GBAO of Tajikistan, where the most residents profess Ismaili Shia Islam, unlike their neighbors who are Sunnis. While the differences in religious madhabs lead to discrimination, conflict and violence around the world, the experience of Yoged residents can be considered unique.

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Yoged village resembles a 'religious island' around which Sunni Muslims live. It is not known when its residents became Ismaili, and their neighbors are not interested in this either. Another thing is important: today, the residents of this village are peacefully coexisting with other Darvoz residents, apart from religious conflicts and violence.

Yoged residents have much in common with other Darvoz residents: nationality, race, language and ethnicity, common culture and traditions. The only thing that distinguishes them from others is their religious identity. This is what brought us here: strive to study their experience and the reasons for what shaped and preserved this phenomenon.

Yoged village is located 280 km east of Dushanbe and 270 km north of Khorog, on the border with Afghanistan. The distance to the district center - Qalai Khumb is 28 km. The village has a secondary school, a cultural center, two libraries, a cinema, a healthcare center, two shops, a gym, a small power plant and a border post. This village is known in Darvoz for its sportsmen - wrestlers, famous artisans, singers, scientists, and special traditions, in particular, preserved rituals of Navruz celebration. In addition, Yoged is one of Darvoz villages where most girls have higher education. This is a rare case for the rural Tajikistan.

Yoged residents are Ismaili Shia Muslims. However, they retained the elements of the pre-Islamic Tajik culture in their beliefs and traditions, especially some of the Zoroastrianism traditions and some from the period before and after it. This combination of culture and religion is very common among the residents of this village today. In particular, Navruz celebration in Yoged is especially unique and not similar to the celebration in other regions of Tajikistan.

The number of Ismailis in Darvoz reaches 1200 people. Besides Yoged, they live in Shrgovad and Dashtak villages, in the regional center and Qalai Khussein, and all of them are natives

of Yoged and moved to these places in different times.

In this village, we spoke with ordinary people, caliphs, teachers and elders to study their phenomenon. We asked them about the relations with Sunnis in Darvoz. People told us they never had any problems on religious grounds.

Experts and scientists state there is ample evidence of such peaceful coexistence. Perhaps, the very fact that a small religious minority, surrounded by a large Sunni group, actively interacts in all the big and small problems of Yoged and Darvoz, keeps them from religious strife. In addition, family relations and marriages appeared which strengthened the relationships between people. Any religious differences are easily resolved at the simple level.

For more details, watch CABAR.asia video:



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