

One of the most important valuable things in our culture is traditional Pamiri house, locally known as 'Chid'. It embodies elements of ancient Aryan philosophy mainly Zoroastrism, and after spreading Islam these elements and symbolic were transformed to Pamiri Ismaili tradition. At a first glance the structure of Pamiri **čīd** looks like a very simple, primitive - structure, but for us this house is like a temple, which is rich in religious and philosophical meaning and where a Pamirian Ismaili practices his faith . The symbolism of specific structural features of the Pamiri house goes back over two and a half thousand years.

The house itself is the symbol of the universe and also the place of private prayer and worship for Pamiri Ismaili people. We do not have and never had mosques in Pamir. So that **Pamiri čīd** is a mosque for us, where we live every day, pray, give birth and grow up our children. The Pamiri house is normally built of stones and plaster, with a flat roof on which we dry hay, apricots, mulberries and other fruits. Or before and may be in some places still women during warm weather in the flat roof of **Pamiri čīd** do different kinds of works; like spinning wool, knitting pamiri socks (*jirīb*) and even during summer period people slept on this roof.

For the word house in Shughni Language exist three words: *-čīd* > **kata* “house” ; *xūnā* > fr., tj. *xona* “house” and *mālā* > arab. *mahalla* “quarters”. For traditional Pamirian house we use just the word *čīd*, not *xūnā* or *mālā*. The last two are used for apartments, but the word *čīd* as well could be used for denomination not traditional houses.

To the main part *čīd* could be joined different separated places:

Pěxwoz // Pěxoz – front part of house with elevated places and pillars. The denomination of this part comes from fr., tj. *pešvoz* “meeting”, “to meet” and it based on the fact that owner of house meets in this place guests in order to say welcome words to them.

Dālǰ - “hall”, “entrance-room”; an elongated hall, which goes to the main part - *čīd* and also to a separate room *qūšxūnā*. The first part of this word in sg. *qūš* “join”, “add”; *qūš čīdow* “to add”, “to join”, in Vakhani Language, which is also one of the Pamirian Languages *quš* means “guest”, so that “added added to *čīd* a separate room” or “separate room for guests”. This room mainly used for receiving guests.

Dupěčā - a compound noun of two parts: fr., tj. *du*, sg. *đu* “two” and *pěč* comes from *pečida* “wrapped” and suf. *-ā*, so that wrapped between two elevated places.

When you enter **čīd**, you’ll notice five supporting the roof pillars. But there are also nine pillars, which are not visible and they are inside the walls. These five and nine pillars together supporting the roof of **Pamiri čīd**. This construction of house is very suitable for Pamir relief. Because annually in Pamir could be registered a lot of weak and strong earthquakes and if during an earthquake the walls of **čīd** will damage these five visible and nine inside walls pillars will keep the roof of house.

Five supporting pillars according to Zoroastrian symbolism correspond to the major Gods/Goddesses (Yazata/Eyzads) and according to the Ismaili tradition they personifies the five holy members of Hazraty Muhammad’s (s) family – they are the prophet of Islam Hazraty Muhammad (s), his son-in-law and our first Imam Hazraty Aly (a), the daughter of Hazraty

Muhammad (a) and the wife of Hazrati Aly (a) Bibi Fotimayi Zahro (a) and their sons Imam Hasan (a) and Imam Huseyn (a).

Āsitan – personifies Surush and according to Ismaili tradition it personifies Hazrati Muhammad (a) it is a pillar which protects the house from malicious spirits. This pillar is a symbol of faith, symbol of man's power, symbol of eternal life and blessedness of house. According to Zoroastrian thoughts this pillar also was a symbol of very valuable human being characteristics - discipline and obedience and the angle of discipline and obedience which was Surush was sent to earth by God in order to keep in order the usage of four first creations of God (earth, wind, water and fire) and God wants to be used these creations just for good intentions (добрые намерения) by people.

In old times Aryan hanged argali horns on this pillar and called it horned pillar. Zoroastrian believed that argali are holy animals, because in them was taken place eighth and ninth incarnation of a *Victory angel Bahram*. So that in these animals incarnates angel which brings victory, because of that their horns were hanged on this pillar. But nowadays hanging argali horns in some traditional houses in Pamir you can notes in crossbar between and nowadays we also thing that argali are holy animals and I remember from childhood that when we had in our house argali meat and when we had a food with this meat my mother after having meal collected all the bones and said that they shouldn't be thrown in dirty place. Not too far ago it was common tradition, that a person who enters the chid and even owner of house every time said welcome words to Xasitan. Before, the main pillar of Pomeri chid was made of juniper (арча, можжевельник). This tree according to Zoroastrian religion was the symbol of eternal life. The wood and branches of this tree contain a large amount of antibacterial properties and small good. Because of that we still make candles of this tree for religion holidays and funeral rites in the hope that the house will be cleaned of malicious spirits. Near this pillar take place different types of traditional pamirian rites. Such as first putting to cradle new born child, dressing the bridegroom during wedding ceremony.

Vožnêxitan - personifies one of the Zoroastrian Goddesses Mehr, which was the God of love. The word *mehr* still exists in fr., tj with meaning "love", and in Sg. L. we also use for word love *mêr*. This pillar also symbols of one of the first creations of God - wind, according to Ismaili tradition it personifies our first Imam Ali (a). So, for us this pillar is a symbol of love, devotion and loyalty. This pillar is a symbol of welfare and prosperity of our house. Near this pillar take place some traditional wedding ceremonies; so that when a bridegroom brings the bride to his house they sit together near this pillar, in the hope of being blessed with good fortune and happiness.

Kicōrsitan – personifies the ancient Persian water goddess Anahita, it's a fertility goddess, and patroness of women, as well as a goddess of war. The meaning of the word Anahita is "the immaculate one" (безукоризненно чистый). So, as an element of God creature this pillar symbolizes **water**. According to Zoroastrian myth this pillar symbolizes an angle – keeper of fire and cordiality and warmth of house. So, this pillar situated very close to fireplace in traditional Pamiri *čīd*. It is the place of honour for the woman at her engagement ceremony. (in Pamir if there is a wedding in house and if there is a bride, she will be dressed near this pillar and during wedding ceremony at her father's house sits and goes through nikoh ceremony near kicorsitan.) The area all around this pillar is a place of women. Here they have kicor - fireplace for cooking, here they nurse the child and could be busy with needlework. According to Ismaili tradition this

pillar personifies the daughter of Prophet Muhammad and the wife of Imam Aly (a) - Bibi Fotimai Zahro (a).

The fourth, Poiga-sitan, and fifth, Barnekh-sitan, pillars are joined together with a crossbar, to show the closeness of the relationship between Zamyod - earth and Azar –fire the resource of heat.

Poiga-sitan personifies Zamyad who was the goddess of Earth and according to Ismali thoughts it personifies Hazrati Hasan (a). The word Zamyad refers to the earth and it comes from Av. *zam* earth + *yad* that which earth has begot. In Shughni Language we use the word *zimāđ* for earth, which comes from this word. This pillar symbolizes earth, which is the main source of life and because of that this pillar is the longest one and you can notice the connection of it with poyga, the floor of *čīd*. Actually all pillars are based on earth, but it just visible in the case of *poygāsitan*, because this one is the symbol of earth. Also for Ariyan it was the symbol of daybreak and sunset and ray of light.

Azar – personifies the Zoroastrian goddess of fire and according to Ismaili thoughts it personifies Hazrati Husayn (a). The word azar still in Farsi and Tajik languages means fire, but mainly they use changed version of this word *otas*. (**Atar** (*ātar*, [Avestan](#)) is the [Zoroastrian](#) concept for "burning and unburning fire" and "visible and invisible fire" (Mirza, 1987:389)).

This pillar is a symbol of heat and fire and together with Anahita they are patronesses of fire at Pamirian house. Near this pillar carried out different traditional rites, such as mourning ceremonies- with a ritual lamp or candle lit for three days, it is a place for private prayer and is considered the place of honour for the religious leader (Khalifa) or a chief guest. The chief guest will normally leave a small symbolic space next to him against the pillar showing that it is reserved for Khalifa.

In an unrestricted sense, *atar* is heat - that is, thermal energy, manifest as fire or other luminous source when visible. In this sense, *atar* is an attribute of sources of heat and light, an adjectival form of nominative singular *atarsh* (*ātarš*). In later Zoroastrianism, *atar* (in [middle Persian](#): *ādar* or *ādur*) is iconographically conflated with fire itself, which in middle Persian is *ataksh*, one of the primary objects of Zoroastrian symbolism. The etymology of *atar* is unknown (Boyce, 2002:1). The [yazata](#) Atar is not of Indo-Iranian origin (Dhalla 1938:174).

Bučki vřj - a crossbar between Zamyad and Azar pillars is carved with Zoroastrian era symbols, frequently including a central depiction of the sun, and is sometimes decorated with the horns of argali.

Kicor -the place to make a fire, as thousand-year Zoroastrian traditions of the Pamiris say, is an especially sacred place, a kind of altar. The hearth heats the house, is used in cooking, especially for baking flat cakes. There are also special cases when sacrificial incenses are kindled in it.

Zidun- “pantry” *zi* - *živ* “hole”; suf. *-dun*, which has the meaning “container”. All over the walls of zidun before pamiri people made grain-bins, holes for keeping there different kinds of bins, wheat and other products. So, we think that the first part of this word *zi* comes from *živ* “hole”.

Čalak - fr., tj. *čah* “well”-ak a noun for denomination an elevated place near fire place, which has a small hole for keeping wood, in order to make fire in *kicor*.

Rûz /3 - skylight in the main room is built with four concentric square box-type layers representing earth, water, wind and fire, the latter being the highest, is first touched by the sun's rays and the lowest one represents earth, so it is closest to earth. The skylight is the source of natural light and it is a path which connects the human beings with heaven. Before Pamirian people used the skylight for telling time. The face of Pamirian house normally directed to the south, so that they could tell by the usage of sunlight through skylight the exact time.

The pillars support two main supporting beams representing the **material** and **spiritual** worlds and according to Ismaily tradition this two beams represent **Universal Reason** (Aqli Kull) and **Universal Soul** (Nafsi Kull). The first beam runs across the Surush and Mehr pillars and the second across the remaining three pillars.

The main beams support thirteen intermediary beams, six over the fireplace representing the six directions: east, west, north, south, upper and lower, and another seven representing the seven Amesha Spentas. According to Ismaily religion this beams represent six prophets revered in Islam: Hazrati Adam, Hazrati Noah, Hazrati Abraham, Hazrati Moses, Hazrati Jesus, and Hazrati Muhammad and seven representing the first seven Imams. The Ismailis are 'sevener' Muslims: for them Ismail was the seventh Imam.

In the Zoroastrian religion, the number seven is of symbolic importance. God created seven heavenly bodies: Sun, Moon, Saturn, Jupiter, Mars, Venus and Mercury.

The total number of beams including the subsidiary beams varies between 49 and 72 according to the size of the house and local tradition.

A poem about Pamirian House and the values of Pamiri people:

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Murd mu Watan Vid

Murd Biyiġt aċaΘ nist bakor murd mu Watan vid,
Pomēr kūyenata chaġmayen, Pomēr chaman vid.
Murd na qasri amiren bakor, na taxti ŝoyen,
Murd mu Pomēri ċīd vidat mu pīnġ sitan vid.

Wuz xābat mēΘ yorab pi Xuđoyum,
Mu xalq sēr vidat, puġyā wi tan vid.
Lak maš dilandīr vid mēri Mawlo,
Fukwaxt mašqati māš Panj Tan vid.

Lak māš išq tar Ali tar Muhammad,
Tar Fotima, Husaynat Hasan vid.

Lidūšand vi diland mēri Mawlo,
Mund lak mu Xuđoyat mu suxan vid.

Some links to Pamiry culture:

http://www.guide.kz/en/badakh_st4.shtml;

<http://www.pamirs.org/pamiri%20house.htm>;

<http://blogs.mail.ru/community/sarez/>;

<http://www.heritageinstitute.com/zoroastrianism/tajikistan/page4.htm>;

<http://books.google.com/books?id=MCacfWlXWjIC&pg=PA75&lpg=PA75&dq=Pamir+and+Zoroastrian+symbolic&source=bl&ots=M->

http://books.google.com/books?id=MCacfWlXWjIC&pg=PA75&lpg=PA75&dq=Pamir+and+Zoroastrian+symbolic&source=bl&ots=M5_Za2_2C&sig=CIOs3sqWfPQkMFukqp3H7W6uVEg&hl=en&ei=d7HbSe7GBoOoM4vfycII&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=6#PPA68.M1