

## Tablighi Movement in the Context of Reislamization in Kyrgyzstan: Local Practices and Contested Discourses

The Translocal Tablighi Jamaat(TJ) Network that emerged in India and Pakistan in the early twentieth century began to expand its missionary activities in Central Asia in the 1990s. Its aim was to bring post-Soviet Muslim society back to Islam through a revival of religious practice by travelling lay missionary groups with a “davat” program, a local term for “daw’a” ( Call, Invitation). Although the Tablighi Jama’at is currently banned in all Central Asian countries and Russia, with the exception of Kyrgyzstan, the movement has gradually increased its impact on the region and significantly contributed to what is called “alternate globalities”.

The paper aims at examination of Translocal Tablighi Jamaat Network (TJ) as a channel for creation, deconstruction and reconstruction of both “old” and “new,, customs as a source of authority. By traditions and customs we mean traditional cultural and religious practices of Kyrgyz Muslims that are contested and reconsidered in a new way in Tablighi practices and discourses. By “new customs” we refer to those customs that are introduced by “davatchys” ( preachers) through such Tablighi practices as “Davat” (preaching tour), “Taalim”( teaching) and “Bayan” according to six point principles ( 6 syfat) of TJ.

The paper explores the dynamic process of Networking of Tablighi Jama’at and looks on how Tablighis follow preexisting kinship (social) ties in the first step, and later extend its networking by the creation of new symbolic ties. Focusing mostly on two groups- young male preachers (“davatchy”) and female preachers (“masturat”) and analyzing their narratives and stories we will discuss customs related to behavior, clothing, communication style and gender relations . The field data collected by the author in different regions of Kyrgyzstan and New Dehli , at Nizamudin mosque suggests that the processes of recovering or rejecting previous customs and, inventing new ones as a source of authority in religious field are important for understanding Re-Islamisation context in Kyrgyzstan.

### Introduction

“There are 6 people: two young Kyrgyz men and two young women, a 5 years old girl and me in the car, which drives us from Karakol, small town in Issyk Kul region of Kyrgyzstan, to one of villages in Jeti Oguz. Two women who are seating on the back seats are clothed in long black dress, wore *hijab* on the head and covered their face with black curtain (*purdah*), a

girl also is in white dress and white hijab, which covers her head and neck. To my surprise, Fatima (names are changed), one of the women in the car, whom I met yesterday in Karakol, where I came to do field work on Tablighi Jamaat, and who invited me to join this trip, completely ignored my attempts to communicate with her, turning her face away from me and looking straight ahead. Both women look straight; keep a silence, that is rarely broken by a girl, that asked something from her mother for which a woman whispered her answers to the daughter not letting others to hear her voice.

Men are also clothed in an unusual way, first of them, Abdullah, who drives a car, is in grey long Pakistani style clothing (*shalwar kameez*), and skullcap is on his head. Another man, Suleiman, is clothed in the same way but in white color. Both of them wear a long beard. Suleiman is listening inspirational religious talk (“*bayan*”) record from his mobile, from which a speaker talks about how the Prophet suffered in the struggle for faith. We all are listening to that talk, and every time when the Prophet’s name is mentioned, everyone except me and the small girl, repeat ritualistic phrase – *Sallallahu aleihu wa sallam*. These two families, who are known in Kyrgyzstan as *davatchys* (local name for Tablighi activists) are going on a *ziyarat*<sup>1</sup> (welcoming) tour to one of the villages of the Jeti Oguz province of Issyl Kul where a group of Dungan *davatchys* from Tokmok is conducting preaching tour (*masturat davat*<sup>2</sup>). I was suggested to join Tablighi journeys by one of *davatchys*, when I met him at the mosque the day before and introduced my research goals. I was expected to learn about their experience by observing the preaching tours and to get a “realistic” picture about Tablighi activities, as he proposed, because he was unhappy how the local media misinterpret their practices, connecting them with extremist groups.

When we approached one of bazaars on the way Abdullah asked his wife what foods they like to buy for women preachers, turning his face to another direction, to avoid eye contact with women, a ritual known among Tablighi Jamaat activists as downcast the eyes in front of women (*kozdu saktoo*). Fatima wrote her suggestions on the piece of the paper and gave it to husband. Then two men left the car to buy foods for *the preachers (davatchys)* from Tokmok.

After they left Fatima looked at me asking, if I am ok with such long trip. It was the first time when she looked at me and started talking. I asked why they were silent on the way. “This is a rule (*tartip*),- she said, women is not allowed to talk in the presence of another man, except

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<sup>1</sup> Ziyarat (ar.) refers to pilgrimage to holy sites, but in TJ practice in Kyrgyzstan the term refers to visiting preachers (*davtchys*)

<sup>2</sup> Masturat davat –preaching tour conducted by male and female preachers together

her husband, and her close male relatives-brother, father, son. Women's voice is also "*aurat*"<sup>3</sup> (what should be hidden), because women's voice is soft, beautiful and that's why can attract a man, leading him to bad thoughts and actions. For instance, only 4 men could talk and see our Fatima ene (she referred to Prophet's daughter Fatima as a mother, kyrgyz style of reference to respected women) : father, husband and her two sons. Men also follow the *tartip* (rules of behavior) avoiding eye contact and face to face communication with other women. These rules help them to deal with *nafs* (ego), that can lead men to bad actions, instead man should concentrate his thoughts on *kalima*, repeating it, or listen to  *bayan* and focus on the content of  *bayan*, this is the way to control the nafs for men, they also should avoid - worldly talks (dunionun sozu) - which attracts people's attention to worldly matters- material side of life, disturbing them from faith. That's why on the way our husbands didn't talk very much, and concentrated on  *bayan*" - , she said.

When men came back from bazar with bread, melon, vegetables, we continued our way".<sup>4</sup>

People like Abdulla and Suleiman, are well known as Muslim preachers (*davatchys* - local name for TJ activists,) in Kyrgyzstan. Everyone can see them near the mosque, while after Friday prayer they are leaving the Central Mosque in the small groups for their preaching tours (*davat*), which is local name for *haruj* ( ar.), or when they come to one's house knocking the door and asking to renew *kalima*, and inviting adult male Muslim fellows to the mosque to listen an inspirational religious talk ( *bayan*).

According to the report of the Davat department of Spiritual Administration of Muslims (*Muftiyat*) in 2011 8813 *davatchys* conducted 40 days preaching tours in Kyrgyzstan. The numbers of tablighi activists can be increased sharply if we include into this list *davatchys* who did international tours to other countries, to annual congregations (*markazes*) in India, Bangladesh, Pakistan, also those who did 3 days , 15 days, 4 months preaching tours, welcoming tours (ziarats) and if include numbers of female Tablighi activists, known by name *masturat*, who are significant part of TJ Network in Kyrgyzstan. Female Tablighis (*masturat*) are actively involved in preaching activities of TJN through weekly female teaching sessions (*taalim*) and preaching tour conducted by women in the companion of the husband or male relatives (*masturat davat*) , that lasts usually, 3 , 15 or 40 days.

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<sup>3</sup> Aurat ( ar.)- parts of the body to be closed

<sup>4</sup> Field notes of the author , Karakol,2012.June

Davatchys in Kyrgyzstan represent Global Tablighi Jama'at Network which reached Central Asia, including Kyrgyzstan in 1990s, after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Transnational Tablighi Jama'at Network plays a big role in recovering religious practices among Kyrgyzstani "post-Soviet Muslims, who were distanced from Islam as result of the influence of "scientific atheism" under soviets (Shahrani ,1994 ) and contributes very much to "re - Islamization "process, in which different local and international actors and the state are involved. By the term " re -Islamization", I refer to recovering religious practices among Muslims in Kyrgyzstan by different local and international actors, including Transnational Tablighi Jamaat missionary movement , that introduces to the society new practices and teach new ways of leading pious life, which were named by scholars ( Metcalf, Reetz ) as "sunnaization" of Islamic practices. Learning and focusing on Prophet's sunnahs Tablighi activists in Kyrgyzstan contribute to the shift from "traditional", meaning here soviet type mixture of Islamic and cultural traditional customs to orthodox Islam, which is the main tendency of Re-islamization process in Kyrgyzstan.

Using the term "re-Islamization", I am also aware of problematic aspects of the term, that may misleadingly suggest that in the Soviet Union Islam was lost, or what we had there was not Islam. By "re -Islamization" I refer to both directions of recovering Islamic practices among Muslims in the country - previous familiar Islamic practices that were "domesticated" and new practices introduced by global Islamic movements without labeling them "correct /not correct" or "Islamic/unislamic". Instead the paper discusses the localization of TJN in Kyrgyzstan, meaning how universal features of global TJ Network are adapted to local socio-cultural and political context.

Localization is always very significant part of any type of globalization. In our case even "alternative globalization" (Reetz,2010.b) which already signifies its distinctive features in opposition to western globalization also requires another level of adaptation in every new context modifying its universal features to local demands. The need for localization is dictated by big socio-cultural, religious and historical differences between local culture and what global TJ activists bring to that culture. The differences between these two sides create difficulties in the integration of local Muslims into global network. "Alien look", "alien style of communication", "alien behavior or practice" became central issue debated in the discourses around TJ in Kyrgyzstan. To overcome those difficulties TJ activists develop linguistic, socio- cultural, religious adaptive strategies that enable TJ global movement to be localized in Kyrgyzstan. In

the paper I will discuss both what makes Tablighi activists “alien” and how do they modify universal features of TJN to respond to local demands.

Ethnographic materials collected in Kyrgyzstan by the author will be presented in the paper to provide the reader with detailed picture of global and local features of Tablighi practices in Kyrgyzstan, including *haruj, davat, bayan, ziyarat, taalim*. Other type of sources, collected in the field, presents personal stories, Tablighi narratives, metaphors and symbols to provide insight into the reflexivity of Tablighi actors, that show personalization of the religious practice among Kyrgyzstani Muslims. The paper will present female Tablighin practices, that was not covered in recent papers on TJ in Kyrgyzstan, Balchi (2010), Nasurdinov and Ismailbekova (2012), but which is significant part of TJN and plays a key role in networking processes of Tablighi Jama'at in Kyrgyzstan, where tablighi women (*masturat*) contribute very much to bringing religion to families and society, by preaching Islam among female part of the society and for children. The paper also discusses the relationship between State and Tablighi Jamaa't in Kyrgyzstan, which shows complex interconnectedness of globalization, politics, socio-economic, cultural aspects.

Before moving to the analysis of adaptive strategies we will briefly discuss the history of the movement and its universal faith principles, which are followed by TJN activists in Kyrgyzstan.

### **The history of Tablighi Jama'at and its universal principles**

TJ originated as a missionary movement India in 1926 under the leadership of the Islamic scholar Maulana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlavi (1885-1944) “as a response to the rise of Hindu proselytizing movement” (Reetz (2009)). Under the influence of British colonization Muslims in India stopped to observe the obligatory Islamic rituals, many of them even changed their religion, converting to Hinduism. When mosques and Islamic teachers were unable to change the situation, Maulana Ilyas Kandhlavi called Muslims to create small groups and recover religion through “door to door” preaching. He called Muslims not to wait when the Muslims come to the mosque to learn Islam, but go to their houses, and carry the faith to them asking to renew kalima, and inviting to the prayer in the local mosque. The main goal of the movement was to revive religious practices among Muslims in order to make them better Muslims.

Now Tablighi Jama'at became one of the wide spread global Muslim movements, which are claimed to have followers numbering between 12 and 15 million ( Reetz , 2009 ) . Annual congregations (*ijtimai*) in Dehli, Daka and Raiwind gather millions of Muslims from different countries. Now TJ as a part of Muslim mainstream has developed more bureaucratic and hierarchical administration (Reetz, 2008, 2009), presented by council (*mashvara*) on local, regional, country, global levels ,which is named as “*vertical*” structure by Nasirdinov and Ismailbekova ( 2012), through which Tablighi Networks from different countries are connected globally.

The Tablighi Movement aims at achieving its mission based on its main Six principles that lead to “sunnaization of Islam” ( Metcalf, 1996), bringing Prophet’s Sunnah - Prophet’s saying and deeds- to Muslim’s everyday life. First of them is *Shahada*, every Muslim must be able to recite correctly *shahada* - “ There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his Messenger”. The first thing Tablighi preachers ask to do while meeting fellow Muslims is to recite or to “renew” the *kalima* . The second is to learn to pray correctly (*Salat*). Third is *dhikr*, remembrance of God, every Muslim must to perform *dhikr* regularly. And improve his religious knowledge (*ilm*) . Forth is *ikrom* Muslim, showing respect to fellow Muslims. Fifth is *niyat*, sincere intention. Tablighis must be sincere to perform their religious duties. The sixth is *daw’a*, *davat* in local version, call to Islam and to consider *daw’a* as one of 40 duties of Islam.

The preaching tour (*haruj*), named “*davat*” by Kyrgyzstani Tablighi activists, plays a major role in implementation of these 6 principles, referred as “*6 syfat*” by *davatchys* in Kyrgyzstan . Kyrgyzstani TJ actors do preaching tours (*haruj*) both moving internationally and within the country, following all rules concerning the length of the travel, the organizational structure and expected outcomes of the tour. Leaving for 3, 15, 40 days and four months tours, lay Muslims are instructed to do 4 thing to rise their faith – preaching (*daw’a*), *dhikr*, teaching session (*taalim*), service (*khydmat*) , and learn to control ego (*nafs*) avoiding worldly things by less eating, less sleeping, less talking worldly talks, less making unnecessary expenses. Following above mentioned 6 principles Tablighi activists are expected to achieve self-reformation, and to strengthen their faith.

### **The localization of the Transnational Tabligi Jama’at Network in Kyrgyzstan**

#### **1. “ Our grandfathers never wore T-shirts”: appearance and clothing style of *davatchys***

“Reislamization” in Post-soviet Kyrgyzstan occurred in the context of nation building, where the revival of ethnic history, ethnic symbols and ethnic language became the leading tendency of that process. Such revivalist context increased visibility of Tablighi’s “alien” features. Majority of *davatchys* wear long Pakistani style clothing, extensively use Urdu, Arabic words, Islamic greeting style and Quranic terminology. Also many *davatchys* change their Kyrgyz names to “Islamic” names – from Almaz to Abdullo, Suiun –Suleiman, -Ruslan- to Abdurahim. etc .

These changes in the cultures of Tablighis are seen by ultra-nationalists as the results of the new form of colonization of the region which was named by as “arabization”, or “pakistanization. From their view, *davatchys* as the main actors of that process don’t simply change their appearance and clothing style, but introduce new ways of practicing Islam, which has a deep destructive influence on traditional culture of Kyrgyz people. Involving ordinary Muslims in preaching tour and teaching them to reconstruct their live ways according to Prophet’s sunnahs, tablighi’s reformist activities are directed against the folk customs and traditions which Kyrgyz people have observed for a long time. For example, some traditional cultural elements of funeral tradition are suggested to be removed. Kyrgyz funeral tradition contains a mixture of Islamic ceremonies with traditional cultural customs. One of the required elements of the Kyrgyz funeral is lamentation by women (*koshok*) and lamentation by men (*okuruk*). Today even *koshok* is widely criticized by *davatchys*. Tablighis interpret *koshok* as an action against the power of Allah. “One is supposed to accept the will of God, and so he or she should not grieve deeply and strongly” - , say tablighis interpreting the the meaning of *koshok*, which contradicts to Islam. According to ultranationalists tablighi’s ideas of being “good muslim” requires complete ignorance and destruction of Kyrgyz customs and traditions that lead to the death of Kyrgyz culture.

But another direction of the same discourse shows how religious revival with the promotion of religious rituals, symbols are seen as the complimentary components of nation building . In this context Islamic Identity marker as one of markers of ethnic identity was also intensified. As a result Islamic intellectuals and different international and local religious actors started to interpret Islamic practices as a part of ethnic symbols.

In the newspaper of Spiritual Administration of Muslims ( *muftiyat*) “Islam madaniyat” hijab was discussed several times in relation to ethno-national features. Hijab was compared with Kyrgyz ethnic head dress (*elechek*) for women and religious meaning of the hijab that refers to piety, modesty was reinterpreted in relation to such concepts as Independence, Ethnic Nationalism and Cultural Tradition. This way of reinterpretation of the meaning of the hijab by

the Spiritual Administration of Muslims stresses the “similarities” between traditional ethnic and Islamic clothing style.

As the continuation and the part of this discourse, Tablighi Jamaat discuss its “imported” clothing style and appearance as the “restoration” of the cultural tradition of Kyrgyz people that was broken by soviets.

“Our grandparents never wore T-shirts, western style shirts and ties, our ethnic clothing for men was long, and all our *baatyr*s (ethnic heroes), including Manas (epic hero) wore a long beard and long coat (*chapan*). Can you find at least a picture of one *baatyr*, who wore a short dress? No. Our tribal rulers and aksakals (respected old people) wore a long beard that shows high moral behavior of those people. The meaning of beard is the same in our Tablighi practice, when I wore beard I can’t do bad things, for instance, to steal something or go to disco (*discoteka*) it protects me from immoral behavior”,- said one of *davatchys* in the interview with the author.<sup>5</sup>

Here *davatchy*’s long dress and beard are reinterpreted as a tradition. References to Manas, tribal leaders and respected old people (*aksakals*) are used in opposition to disco which is associated with western life style. *Davatchys* in response to critiques about their “alien” image search for similarities between their sunna clothing and Kyrgyz traditional clothing to legitimize own practices.

In *tablighi bayans*, delivered for women in one of learning sessions (*Taalim*) observed by the author, the meaning of the *hijab* and its similarity to traditional head dress was discussed in relation to the image of one of female key figures in the history of Kyrgyzstan – Kurmanjan datka.

“Our Kurmanjan ene<sup>6</sup> was a modest woman. She was a leader of the Nation and pious women, who obeyed her husband, prayed 5 times, who wore *elechek* (ethnic head dress), covering her head in the same style as *hijab*.”- said the male speaker who came to female *taalim* session to perform a monthly *bayan* behind the curtain.

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<sup>5</sup> Interview of the author. 2012. August. Osh.

<sup>6</sup> Female tribal leader in the History of Kyrgyzstan in 19 c, who is considered as a hero and mother of the Nation

During that inspirational talk Kurmanjan's name appeared several times in the same line as Khadija, Fatima, Aisha as an exemplary modest Muslim women, who led pious life and all of them are referred as *ene* - *Kyrgyz reference term for old and respected women*. In the bayan *Kurmanjan ene* was seen a Mother of the Nation, who had very strong faith. And two oppositional binaries created where on the one side lay "ethnic", "Muslim", "traditional", "heroic" and on another side - "western", "Russian", "soviet", "atheistic". It is the way how "sunnaization" is presented by *davatchys* in opposition to western globalization which destructively influences on traditional life of Kyrgyz people, where tablighi's innovative practices are interpreted as the restoration of the tradition.

Fear of alien appearance of *davatchys* with long beards is expressed in nick names used to refer to *davatchys*. Frequently used reference "Sakalchandar" which can be translated as "one who wear long beard" has a negative connotation. Not many people deeply reflect and analyze the negative consequences of reformist ideas of *davatchys* like ultranationalists do, no they found something in *davatchys* activities which make them dangerous for the society, but doubts and fear remain strong because of their new, unusual, unfamiliar features. Reflections of people on unfamiliar, unusual features depict the soviet discourse on "traditional Islam" which is still alive in the society and impact on the perceptions and attitudes of soviet generation to Islamic global movements.

One of veteran Tablighi activists, Abjapar, who was the first chair of the Davat department in Spiritual Administration of Muslims (*Muftiyat*) in Kyrgyzstan, in the interview with the author described how one of first jama'ats from Pakistan visited Bishkek in 1990s.

"We met a jama'at from Pakistan in 1992, during the Friday Prayer (*namaz*) in the Central Mosque, where they joined a prayer with us. After prayer they introduced themselves as preachers on *haruj* from Pakistan and asked the imam to help them to find a place to do *daw'a*. Nobody couldn't get their idea about "*haruj*", "*daw'a*" and led them to the Muftiat to ask consultations from mufti Kimsanabay aji, but he also couldn't understand them. Then we found young Muslim practitioner who graduated a madrasa in Pakistan to help with the translation, and he was only person who understood the meaning of *haruj* and explained it for us, saying that *haruj* is widely practiced missionary tour in Pakistan, where he spent several years being a student in one of madrasas and where he used to join such preaching tours. That guy was from Balykchy, northern Issyk Kul region of Kyrgyzstan, and took them to his village to conduct *davat* there. Two-three young people joined them, others stayed in Bishkek expressing suspicions about Pakistani jama'at's visit to Kyrgyzstan and worrying about our

decisions to allow foreigners to preach Islam in our country. Later we learned from that Kyrgyz guy, who hosted Pakistani Tablighis in Balykchy that local people were very hostile toward them, that's why it was impossible to conduct *gasht*,<sup>7</sup> instead they stayed in the house and delivered inspirational religious talk (*bayan*) for small group of young people invited by hosting person.”<sup>8</sup>

Now Abjapar laughs saying how they were afraid of those Pakistani Tablighis only because they were from another Muslim country, whose Islam in their understanding was different, their appearance- long beards and long dress made them look dangerous. He explains what great fear had they about “Pakistani Islam”, that didn't fit “soviet traditional islam”. Even witnessing their sincere behavior they couldn't stop own worries and suspicions. But, according to Abjapar, those young people who joined Pakistani jamat's tour to Balykchy were impressed by those Tablighi's sincere behavior and their level of religious knowledge. It was first time when they listened inspirational speech about religion and saw how a man cries asking God to send faith (*yman*) to his Kyrgyz Muslim brothers who were drunk and entering a single mosque in Balykchy which was empty during Friday prayer time. Nothing dangerous they found in “Pakistani” way of preaching, they didn't call for Caliphate, but concentrated on individual spiritual experience. The story shows that young generation was more open to Tablighis and interested in the way Islam is practiced while older generation was not focused very much on the content of preaching, on the level of their knowledge but on “foreign” features of preachers.

Author heard this story from many *davatchys* in Yssyk Kul, they told this story to stress the changes that took place because of Tablighi's “positive” influence on Balykchy, comparing how that was a town with high criminal rate, and with a single mosque, which always was locked and with young guys addicted to alcohol before and “imagining” Balykchy now in a new mode with decreased criminal rate, with young guys stopped to drink alcohol and involved in *davat*, regularly attending the mosque. More than 20 mosques were built in Balykchy and all of them are full on Friday Prayer now. Some tablighis told that story and were proud that their town Balykchy was a birth place of Tablighi Jamaat, at least in the northern part of Kyrgyzstan.

The ways and the context of retelling the same story by different *davatchys* also depicts the complexities of the perceptions of first Tablighi jamaats by local people, their fear of “alien”, “foreign” Islam, that didn't fit to what was called “traditional islam” in soviet time,

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<sup>7</sup> Tablighi practice that refers to the visit of *davatchys* to the neighborhood knocking each door and inviting muslims to the mosque to join a prayer

<sup>8</sup> Interview of the author with Abjapar, Bishkek, September, 2012.

also their doubts, questions about the consequences of changes in religious practices introduced by global movements.

Abjapar is now one of Tablighi veterans, who was eager to share with us benefits he gained from joining TJN, even wrote a poetic verses, in which calls people to join this movement. As active *davatchy* he performed 40 days *davat* to Pakistan together with his wife Aisha and regularly make his monthly, and annual *davat* within the country. But not all people in Kyrgyzstan shares Abjapar's vision on TJ.

About 20 years passed from that time when Pakistani missionaries first time came to introduce Tablighi practices in Kyrgyzstan and made great efforts to overcome suspicious and hostile attitudes of local Muslims toward early Tablighi Jamaats. In 90s *davat* was presented mostly by foreign jama'ats from Pakistan, but now main actors of Tablighi Networks in Kyrgyzstan are Kyrgyzstani Tablighis and they are connected to Transnational TJ networks not only through *markez* in Raiwind, and Tablighi madarasas in Pakistan but through other two big *markezes* in Indai, and Bangladesh. Nasirdinov and Ismailbekova (2012) reported in their paper that doors to Markezes in those countries for Kyrgyzstani tablighis were opened not on the same time, and every new door depicted the phases of evolution of TJ movement in Kyrgyzstan and its characteristics coincided with specific characters of TJ movement in those 3 places.

Despite of all these active developments of Tablighi Jama'at Networks and its practices perceptions and attitudes toward Tablighi missionaries and discourses around it remain contested.

## **2. 2. Introducing Tablighi Concepts: linguistic and socio- cultural adaptation**

Linguistic tools play significant role in introducing Transnational Tablighi Network's main concepts to Kyrgyzstani Muslims. Translation, interpretation, phonetic adaptation and borrowing different Arabic, Urdu terms are used by *davatchys* to express the meaning of faith concepts and core Tablighi practices. Metaphorical language with extensive use of Kyrgyz reference terms, rifmical style of phrases shape Tablighi narratives close to the style of Kyrgyz oral traditions.

The meaning of the core Tablighi concept- *Haruj* which refers to preaching tour as a condition for the isolation of the *davatchy* from worldly matters expressed by translation of the metaphor "breaking with worldly matters" into Kyrgyz as "*dunuiodon uzuluu*" and creation of

other new metaphors with the word “Dunio” to intensify the same meaning. Detachment from worldly matters expressed in Kyrgyz ( *dunuiodon uzuluu*) refers not only to physical isolation but also means spiritual isolation, increasing one’s spiritual reflections and make him to immerse deeply into spiritual experience to achieve a self-reformation. There are other metaphors used by Tabligis to refer to worldly matters. “Break with worldly duties” ( *dunuionun ishinen uzul*) or avoid worldly talks ( *dunuionun sozun suilobo*) they suggest for preachers, who are on *haruj* or to female tablighi activists involved in *Taalim* session to get in depth spiritual experience. *Dunuo* is a worldly life where people very much attached to material values, leading “westernized” life style and in opposite to this on *haruj* people are detached physically from those worldly life and have to develop skills to gain spiritual isolation from worldly matters.

All rules on *haruj* make *davatchys* to distance from worldly matters . The cell phone is not allowed to be used, when doing the *gasht*, it is suggested to walk on the left side of the street, not to look at women. Also, when knocking at the doors of houses, preachers should not look through the holes and gates in order to avoid jealousy and greed by comparing the wealth of people living in the house. In addition to this, the members of *davat* should seat in the mosque and not leave it without unnecessary reasons.

According to Tablighi activist, who experienced 3 days *davat* for the first time:

“... one’s thoughts, reflections really turn towards spiritual side, and one starts to look on his life differently. Now I see how much people’s life attached to material values, which made people blind to see spiritual side in their everyday competition for material wealth”.<sup>9</sup>

Tablighis avoid these worldly things and talks not only during the preaching tour to fully immerse into the spiritual learning, but also in their everyday life. One of female informants, 35 years old Bermet (name is changed), who did *masturat davat* six times for three days , in the interview with the author, said how a such avoidance helps her to keep clean her spirit (*ruh*) in everyday life. She works as an electricity engineer in the airport, where she shares an office with other female colleagues who talk a lot about fashion, furniture, cosmetics, money. In order not to be involved in the conversation she repeats *kalima*, does inner *dhikr* silently. Because she knows such worldly things lead people to bad actions (to be jealous, to get involved in corruption, to consumerism) and completely fulfill one’s thoughts, remaining no room for moral and spiritual values. Personal stories of Tablighis author heard during interviews were deeply reflexive and structured with clear boundaries of two lines in their own life: between material and spiritual,

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<sup>9</sup> Author’s interview , September .Bishkek.2012.

pious and ignorant, moral and immoral etc. Such reflexive experience became a primary condition for tablighis to reconsider critically their previous life style and to reform it according to TJN principles, that is named by Metcalf.(1996) as “sunnaization”

In Bermet’s case “sunnaization” is seen as reflexive reconsideration of her own life and reconstruction of it in a new way. She removed modern furniture from her flat- sofa, table and chairs, instead added Islamic decoration – putting the picture of Mecca and verses of Quran on the wall. Besides of observing her obligatory religious rituals - 5 times prayer, fasting etc, she finds time to attend weekly lectures delivered by former mufti Chubak aji, weekly *taalims* and *bayan* organized for women by tablighis in Bishkek , listen recorded *bayans* at home from CD, read Fazail Amal’ for her 5 years old son and 12 years old daughter .

Modernity is not completely ignored by many tablighis, instead some harmless modern achievements are used. Bermet selectively watches some TV shows –news, scientific popular programs. She understands the importance of modern education and sent her daughter to expensive private school “Dawha”, where scientific subjects are taught very well, and also basics of Islam are covered. She wishes her daughter got both types of knowledge - religious and secular, not to make her “educated satan” ( *bilimduu shaitan*) a metaphor used by many Tablighis to refer to Muslims who are educated but don’t practice Islam. Bermet always tries to balance both sides of her daughter’s life – she wears hijab, prays, reads Fazail Amal’ with her mother and attends Arabic language course.

The concept of “*Dunuio*” in Tablighi practices broad but doesn’t reject worldly life completely, instead teach to lead worldly life appropriately. Only through experiencing the break with worldly life (*dunuiodon uzuluu*) one can see how worldly life is constructed and how that worldly life must be re - constructed. In Tablighi case Tablighi’s *haruj* life in between make them to be detached from worldly life then to come back to this worldly life and lead it following Prohpet’s exemplary life ways. Our field data shows that breaking with worldly life make a person to learn very practical worldly things, teaching, even training *davatchys* through *haruj* activities, how and what to talk, how to spend money, how to treat husband or wife, parents, and family members etc. in this life.

Another term used to interpret the meaning of the haruj for Kyrgyzstani muslims is *meenet* meaning hard woking . According to TJ activists, life is given to build faith (*yiman*) which requires a hard woking (“*meenet*”) in overcoming inner ( one’s *nafs*) and external difficulties ( attacks from the society). One should have a strong faith to overcome those difficulties. The *meenet* (hard working) is understood by them as global. “*Meenet* ( hard work

for rising faith) is going in every part of the world now”( *meenet but dunuiodo jurup jatat*) - say tablighi in bayan, referring to tablighi activities as forms of *meenet*. In Kyrgyzstan all those difficulties which requires *meenet* is discussed by Tablighis in relation to their hard working against western influence, Soviet atheistic influence and in relation to difficulties created by nationalists against Tablighi’s attempts at “purification of Islam”.

Not always translation of the term into Kyrgyz language is encouraged. In some cases it is important for tablighis to keep original Urdu or Arabic terms or names. During the *davat* except leader (*amir*) group members have to be in role of different positions that changes every day according to council’s (*mashvara*) decision, conducted every day in the morning after the first prayer. Even when Kyrgyz equivalent is available, *davatchys* prefer to use such foreign terms to name the role performed on preaching tour: *elon* (announcer); *mutacalim* ( speaker) during the *gasht* ; *taalim* , one who leads the reading of Fazail amal’; *dalil*-usually recruited from the locals, who guide the group during the *gasht*; *Khidmat*- service performed by the person (s) who cooks and cleans. Keeping Arabic , Urdu words in original form among *davatchys* show not only how Urdu became a lingua franca of the movement, but also how this linguistic style important for their belonging to Transnational Network manifesting their connections to global Muslim network and expressing their religious identity. Despite of the Republican council’s (*mashvara*) suggestion and “Davat” department’s attempt to kyrgyzize tablighi terminologies *davatchys* in Kyrgyzstan extensively use tablighis terminologies in Arabic and Urdu to express their connections to global network.

In some cases Tablighis invent local metaphors from local language that convey the meaning of tablighi concepts and activities. In these cases not translation but those similarly sounding metaphors in native language are used. For instance *ijhtimai* which refers to Tablighi gatherings , used without translation, referring to Kyrgyz metaphor *ishtin maijy* where *ish* means job and *mai* means buttermilk and together creating metaphorical meaning as *outcomes of the job*. Such linguistic adaptation fits well the style of Tablighi language, discussed above.

Linguistic adaptive strategies of Tablighis in Kyrgyzstan creatively reproduce metaphorical language of TTJN as the main tool of introduction of tablighi’s faith concepts and practices using linguistic sources of native language with the combination of Arabic , Urdu words. To some extent, we can say that rich narrative practices of TJN in Kyrgyzstan shapes “faith language” in Kyrgyz which has very distinctive linguistic and performative style.

#### 4. Woman is a madrasa in the house: learning a new role by Tablighi women in Kyrgyzstan

Female Tablighi activists, known in Kyrgyzstan by the name *masturat*, which is interpreted by tablighis as covered women, play a significant role in the localization of the Transnational TJ practices and networking of its activists. Female tablighis are recognized by their unusual appearance, wearing long dress in dark colors and *hijab*. Some of them fully cover their face strictly following *pardah*<sup>10</sup> rule, to achieve “yakin”, full devotion to faith as tablighis explained for the author.

Muslim women in Kyrgyzstan as other Central Asian female Muslims were traditionally involved in house based religious cultural rituals conducting healing, mazar worship and life circle rituals remaining far from preaching Islam. Fathi (1997), who studied religious practices among Central Asian Muslim women and Tett (1994), who highlighted the importance of house based ritualistic female practices in preserving Islam in Soviet Central Asia, noted the deep mixture of cultural traditional and Islamic elements in those practices. But now through involvement of in global TJ N Muslim women in Kyrgyzstan are learning to perform new roles – preaching and teaching Islam. Scrupulous learning of Tablighi textbooks makes Tablighi women more oriented on orthodox Islam and create a discourse on what does it mean “good Muslim” in tablighi way, which make tablighi women to distance themselves from mazar worship, healing and life circle rituals.

Acquiring and presenting those new roles by female tablighis are achieved by attending weekly learning session (*Taalim*), joining a husband or male relatives in the preaching tours (*masturat davat*) or *ziarat tour* (welcoming tour), teaching basics of Islam at home and reading *Fazail amal* every day for the children,

Weekly *taalim* session is an open event, that lasts only an hour, focused on reading *Fazail amal*<sup>11</sup> (Virtues of Good Deeds) and led by experienced female *tablighi* who opens and closes the *taalim* with *duva*. *Taalim* attended by the author in different neighborhoods in Bishkek, Karakol, At Bashy gathered from 6 to 32 women.

In all houses or flats where *taalim* was conducted author saw *duva* written in arabic on the piece of the paper and put on the entrance door, and some Islamic objects: picture of the Mecca, rosary, *Fazail Amal* textbooks on the shelf, CD with *bayan* recordings etc. Usually in

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<sup>10</sup> *Purdah* ( ar.) -curtain

<sup>11</sup> *Fada'il-I A'mal*. The book covers virtues of salat, dhikr, charity, hajj, ritual salutation to the Prophet, and the Quran. See for more information Reetz(2008,2009). In Kyrgyzstan Kyrgyz and Russian translations are used in *Taalim* sessions.

towns *taalim* conducted in the guest rooms of the flats, which were refurnished according to Muslim life style, removing western style furniture - sofa, chairs, tables, sometimes TVset, which is associated with western life style by *davatchys*. One can see “*toshoks*”( mattresses ) put on the floor carpets, around the room where women can seat and female Tablighi leader leads the session sitting in the middle, together with an appointed reader of *Fazail Amal'*, to whom other attendees listen, repeating ritualistic phrases. The chapters of the *Fazail Amal'* for every *taalim* are assigned by *tablighi jamaat* in the mosque, and usually covers a piece from each chapters. After reading they make *duva* and go home.

Once within the month *taalim* is accompanied with *bayan* that is performed by man from the neighborhood mosque who is an experienced *tablighi* activist. In the house the room is usually divided into two parts covering by curtain the corner where a man delivered *bayan*. The content of the *bayan* discussed the importance of the role of *masturat*, in building faith (“*yimandy kuruu*”) in the society.

“Because of *masturat*'s strong adherence to faith *yiman* was raised in the time of the Prophet. His main supporters were our *Kadicha ene*, *Fatima ene*, *Aisha ene*. Many *masturats* suffered in the struggle for the faith, but never gave up their faith. Women is a *madarsa* in the house, they inspire their husbands to make *davat* ( preaching tour), they teach Islam for their children and for other female Muslim fellows. They found full happiness in the faith....”,

- began his *bayan* in one of *taalim* sessions a *bayan* teller, that lasted 30 minutes and was concluded in calling *masturat* to keep their faith strongly, and carry this information to other fellow Muslims-family members, relatives, friends. After *taalim* was finished women were suggested to repeat in pairs what they learned. Then did *tashkil*( invitation for preaching tour for their husbands), make a list of *nak*( being ready to go to *davat*) or *niyat* ( intention to go for *davat*) for their husbands, leave their contacts and send the list to *bayan* teller by 6 years old daughter of the host family, and that list was taken by *bayan* teller to the mosque.

There are some requirements for hosting the *taalim*, which moves from one house to another house every month according to the decision of the mosques of the town, village or neighborhood. In the mosque local *jamaat* make a list of families who want to host *taalim* . If they fulfill hosting requirements, they will be scheduled to meet a *taalim* for whole month. The hosting couple have to be pious practicing Muslims, who observe obligatory religious rituals, it is better if husband is a part of *Tablighi Network*. House should be clean, with a big room to conduct teaching. It is believed by *tablighis* that a house or flat that host *taalim*, will be covered

by light (noor) as a sign of blessing , including 20 neighboring houses from all four sides. One of informants, who was eager to host *taalim* invited her brother in law for a month to live in her house, to meet one of hosting requirements according to which a man should be present in the family while *taalim* is hosted. Her husband died several years ago and she has 3 daughters, but no son.

According to Tablighi rules, women should be accompanied by the husband or male relatives to attend *taalim*, which is named *mahram*. But in Kyrgyzstan's case, women come alone to *taalim* or together with female friends. Another requirement is that women after *taalim* should go directly to their home, bringing light (noor) to their houses from *taalim*, keeping in their heart all inspirations they received from the session. On the way back to home they shouldn't be involved in worldly conversations, or visit their friends or involved in other worldly things that will disturb a person from the faith (*din*). They are not allowed to discuss even the content of the *taalim*. If woman has questions she should send it to the imam of the mosque through her husband, and husband bring an answer for his wife from the imam. Women have no right to ask and answer questions directly. Another central requirement for women to attend *taalim* is coming with great sincere intention (*niyat*) to learn Islam. Women are recommended to leave everything associated with worldly life in the house, including feelings, thoughts about worldly duties. In one of *taalims*, author attended in Uchkun, one of Bishkek micro districts, Bayan teller said that it is not good to bring small children to *taalim*, because they may interrupt women from learning, getting her attention divided between these two sides. To meet this requirement male tablighis have to look after children when women go to *taalim*, encouraging her in seeking knowledge.

Beside of giving religious interpretations for its distinctive moral values, Tablighi practices also respond to local needs. In Kyrgyzstan many families are separated because of migration. In the context of separation of spouses, parents and children, Tablighi's idea of "cooperative family" (Metcalf, 1996) can be seen as an alternative, where spouses and children live harmoniously, maintaining common goal of leading pious life through the involvement of Tablighi practices of recovering a religion, where a man is a spiritual leader, women is his supporter and children are followers of parents. In *ziarats*, *bayans* all family members can be seen together, where children take participation as mediators between men and women who are not allowed to talk face to face. Man and women are mutually dependent from each other, tablighi woman can make a decision for man, when writing a *nak* ( *being ready to join next davat group*) or *niet* ( having an intention to go to davat) for their husbands in *tashkil*, circulating the paper in the *masturat* group to make a list of mail Tablighis with *nak* and *niet* , and leaving

husband's contacts to be invited for the next *davat*. Also man's *davat* is nothing if his wife is not involved in TJN practices. TJ networking is based significantly on such cooperative families, in which some traditional gender roles are "reconfigured", using Metcalf's term, and challenge some aspects of hierarchical family structures, introducing duties of opposite gender to both sides.

Some Tablighi's personal stories show reflexive and critical views of female practitioners on traditional cultural customs of Kyrgyz people that affect not only the relationship between spouses but also all family members. The case of Bermet, key informant, who found a new meaning joining TJN illustrates how she made a distance from some cultural customs, related to daughter in law's position in the society.

"As a daughter in law (*kelin*) I experienced on my own skin all unjust attitudes toward daughter in law in Kyrgyz traditional customs. I was a servant for all my in laws, cleaning, cooking for whole family. I had to treat my father and mother in laws as they were God, bowing to them every day in the morning; I had no rights in my husband's family. Islam gives me equal rights. Islam teaches "A wife is amanat (a special gift that requires a strong responsibility from the receiver) of God for man, he has a great responsibility for her." Women is not servant for people, but she is a servant for God as well as man. We have to make bowing only to God",- Bermet said.<sup>12</sup>

In this example she reflects on those cultural customs, that hierarchizes daughter in law's relations with husband's family members. She, as in Indian case described by Metcalf (1996) "finds less hierarchical familial structure and means resisting to social hierarchies" in Islam through Tablighi practices.

During the *taalim*, where author was an observer, *Taalim* leader made a comment on the greeting style of local women, who came to listen to *bayan*, and greeted others by bowing to show her respect in a traditional way by bowing.

"Bowling should be made for God only, we create a *shirk*, another God from people, when bow for them. We are just human beings, so we have to greet each other saying Assolomu alekum (ritualized greeting style for tablighi women), - she explained.

In both examples traditional cultural customs are seen as unjust rules causing inequality.

However, according to tablighis they are not rejecting but "restoring" traditional position of Muslim women, recommending for women to stay private, in the house, upbringing children

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<sup>12</sup> Author's interview with Tablighi women. Bishkek. May. 2012.

according to Islam, and treating husband as a leader in everyday and religious spheres, and inspiring, supporting, encouraging them in gaining Islamic knowledge and in performing Tablighi duties. Masturat are allowed to perform public duties through taalim, ziarat, dawat following strictly the principle of purdah (covering) and Mahram (accompanied by male relatives) . But these rules don't always work for many Tablighi women in Kyrgyzstan, they combine their professional work in diverse secular settings and tablighi duties, attend Taalim without mahram, majority wear hijab, not nikab( full covering).

### **1. “Tablighi Jama’at’ is incorrect name”: stressing universal revivalist goals**

TJ is prohibited in All Central Asian Republics and Russia. Only in Kyrgyzstan they remain unbanned, but it doesn't mean that the state in Kyrgyzstan trust them providing them with full freedom. The relationship between the State and TJ is more complex and ambiguous in reality, ranging from freedom to manipulation and from cooperation to attempts to prohibit it, following neighboring countries. TJN in Kyrgyzstan is institutionalized to some extent, representing *Dawat Department of Spirtual Administartion of Muslims (Muftiat)*.

According to Jumabaev, head of State Comission on Religious Affairs under the President of Kyrgyz Republic, “

TJN is sitting now on the shoulders of *Muftiat*”, because the main function of the *Muftiat* is fulfilled by TJN. *Muftiat* had to lead religious propagation, explaining to the society main principles of Islam and the ways how to practice it, but they are very passive, that's why, religious propagation is conducted by tablighis, according to Tablighi Jamaat's prinsiples”<sup>13</sup>

*Dawat* department in the *Muftiat* is called *Dawat and Propogation Department ( dawat jana ugut nasyiat bolumu)*, and led by Eratov, who graduated a madarasa in Raiwind, Pakistan, who also a director of the Tablighi madrasa in Archa beshik settlement, in Bishkek, students of which are involved in Tablighi practices. Eratov stresses always very universalistic functions of his department, saying that *Dawat* is not specific for TJ and started from the Prophet Muhammad, and the aim of the department is not to build TJN but to contribute to recovering religious practices, where state and many different groups participate. The same statements made by Tablighi actors in the interview with the author, where *davatchys* hide their sectarian features and express more universalistic goals shared with other groups in reviving islam in Kyrgyzstan.

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<sup>13</sup> Author's Interview with Jumabaev. Bishkek. 2012. September.

The Davat Department became a mediator between State and TJN in Kyrgyzstan. On the one hand the head of the department reports to the Government and Commission on Religious Affairs under the President, collecting statistical data on Tablighi preaching tours within and outside of the country, conducting meetings with tablighi activists in the regions and preparing reports on those meetings, issuing regulative papers, rules, to respond to local complains concerning tablighi's "alien" practices and developing Requirements for preaching tours etc, to adapt and make TJ practices acceptable for Muslims in Kyrgyzstan. Doing so he plays a key role in regulation of TJN practices and assisting to the State to have a control on TJ activities. On the other hand he as the Head of Davat Department and as the Tablighi practitioner actively involved in fulfilling TJ's mission, translating its main book *Fazail Amal'* into Kyrgyz, establishing the first Tablighi madarasa in Bishkek, participating in tablighi activities. He made a contribution, to adapt Tablighi practices to local context, issuing rules in the name of the Muftiat, concerning Tablighi clothing style, that suggested to shorten Tablighis clothes and adding Kyrgyz ornaments to make it not "alien" for Kyrgyzstany people, or to develop requirements for Tablighi preaching tour, making mandatory to have an official paper from the local mosque, from police and permission from the family to go to *davat*. It was a response to hostile attitudes of people to *davatchys*. But not always *davatchys* accept new requirements for doing *davat*.

"Davat is not selective with people (*davat adamdy tandabait*)", - said one of *davatchys* in the interview,- if person, who was involved in criminal before, expresses his will to join *davat*, we must allow him to do it. His intention to change his life style is very positive, and why we create an obstacle to him in his motivation to learn a faith". Usually revisionist commission (called by *davatchys* as "kavaib jamaat") discusses conditions of every person who plan to do *davat*, where not only family, financial conditions, but also his intentions to learn faith is assessed individually.

Eratov also stressed in the interview with the author, that Tablighi jamaat is not correct term to refer to actors who are involved in TJN. According to him ordinary people invented this term, but founder of the TJN, Maulana Muhammad Ilyas, didn't like this term, saying "I would name it "Recovering faith or Raising faith"(Kyrg.: *Yimandy janadandyruu, kotoruu*)". Eratov is eager to show more universalistic features of TJN avoiding to talk openly about its sectarian characteristics, in opposite to Jumabaev, who pointed out that "Davat department of the *Muftiat* makes a Call (*Dawa*) to Islam in very specific tablighi way, involving Muslims in preaching tours. For Jumabaev it is not good to let to get dominant one group in the context of re-islamization process.

“A such official structure as Spiritual Board of Muslims (Muftiat) , and Board of Ulama” (*Ulamalar Keneshi*) should be free of any groups’ influence. But now Spiritual Board of Muslims (*Muftiat*) is under the great influence of TJ. Tablighi leaders say that they are not interested in politics, in official positions, but now they are entering such structures as Spiritual Board of Muslims (Muftiat), Board of Ulama (*Ulamalar Keneshi*), gaining high positions for their members, which contradicts their declared apolitical orientation”, said Jumabaev<sup>14</sup>.

Jumabaev at the end of interview stressed that his commission doesn’t work with unregistered religious organizations: “TJ is not officially registered, that’s why we don’t collect information about them. Without registration our State can’t prohibit it”,- he says. It is not clear from his interview that how other CA countries did it, because he mentioned about agreement between ODKB ( Organization of the member Countries on the Agreement of Collective Security) member countries, from 2010 where all member countries’ Security Committee Heads, including Kyrgyzstan signed an Agreement , where TJ was included into the list of terrorist organizations.

After Kazakhstan prohibited TJ on February 29, 2013 it was raised a question about TJ in Kyrgyzstan by some deputies and some local activists, suggesting prohibiting it in Kyrgyzstan too. Responding to those initiations Tablighi Jama’at activists also expressed its views on those issues, including the use of media sources. One active TJ activist wrote 3 papers on local newspapers, where he pointed out that instead of prohibiting this apolitical movement it would be beneficial for the society to involve Tablighi in solving such problems, as ethnic conflicts, political protests, that are frequent in Kyrgyzstan. According to him, Tablighi’s main idea to call Muslims to take a distance from politics and to unite Muslims, rejecting discrimination based on ethnic belonging could be used by the government.

Tablighi activists presence in official structures reflects new discourses on the meaning, role of still existing structures such as Spiritual Administration of Muslims and The State Commission for Religious Affairs which were established by soviets to control Islam, and to present, to propagate so called “traditional Islam” to make Muslims homogenous. Previous forms and functions of those structures are challenged with the entrance of activists of global movements to these structures, through which they contribute to shifting from traditional to orthodox Islam.

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<sup>14</sup> Author’s Interview with Jumabaev. Bishkek. 2012. September.

## Conclusion

TJn in Kyrgyzstan has been developed as a part of Transnational Network resulted from the involvement of Kyrgyzstani Tablighis in global religious movement which are seen by scholars as the contribution of the religion to globalization. Roy in his book “Globalized Islam: The Search for a New Ummah”(2004) pointed out that in modern globalized world “religions live beyond the cultures”. “Mobility” paradigm (Sheller, Urry.2006) suggests looking on global movements together with its “mobile actors”, who cross geographical, socio-cultural, national, ethnic boundaries, bringing with them new objects, sources, ideas, practices and creating networks based on existing social and new symbolic ties. Stressing the connections between mobility, actors and networking structures in understanding of religious global movements “mobility” paradigm addresses not only what global practices, ideas, structures emerge in different multilocalities, but also how local cultures are influenced by global mobilities. Reetz (2010.b) in his paper “ ‘Alternate Globalities?’ On the Cultures and Formats of Transnational Muslim Networks from South Asia” claims that religious globalization has different forms, and one of them emerged by the mobilities of Muslim preachers, particularly by Tablighi Jama’at Network, creates “alternative globalities” in opposition to western globalization. The impact of that alternative globalization on local societies, - continues Reetz ( 2013 ,p.1) “multifaceted and shaped by social, cultural experiences of local society and driven by its needs, rather than by a transnational agenda”.

This paper addressed the localization of Transnational Tablighi Jama’at Network in Kyrgyzstan that is going on not through the rejection of local traditional –cultural practices, but through adaptation of its faith principles and practices to local context. The presented field data didn’t confirm the break of religion with culture, allowing “religions to live beyond the cultures” using Roy’s statement, but the localization of global movement TJN in Kyrgyzstan, mobile actors of which introduce movement’s global faith principles, concepts, structures creatively adapting to local context and reinterpreting them by using local socio-historical, cultural, linguistic sources. Tablighi activists in Kyrgyzstan are “not passive receivers of alternative globalization” but active actors who creatively change some TJ principles in response to religious and socio-cultural, political- economic challenges in the society and “far from being objects or victims of globalization , they form “alternate globalities” in their own right who self-consciously shape it (Reetz. 2013,p.14)

The localization of Tablighi Jama’at has also another direction, TJ’s “purist” ideas, its adherent’s new images and practices challenge local culture and society, causing debates among different groups, where religious actors , state and ordinary people are involved. Those debates

show how under the influence of transnational religious movement local cultures are reconsidered in a new way, in accordance to universalistic Islamic values. Muslims in Kyrgyzstan , rethinking both local cultural traditions and Islamic practices under the influence of Tablighis, find the ways to shift from “traditional” to orthodox Islam. In that context some groups, for instance female muslims learn new roles being involved in preaching and teaching Islam.

As the collected field data shows TJ, as recently emerged global movement does not consist a shift of the traditional Islam (Hanafi Islam) towards fundamentalist Islam (salafism). Instead Tablighi Jama’at Network contributes to personalization, individualization of Islamic practice among Muslims that causes diversification of Islamic practices not only in the society (Akiner. 2003), but also within the family (Borbieva, 2009 ).

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