Languages of Islam and Christianity in Post-Soviet Russia: institutional discourses, community strategies and missionary rhetoric

Sibgatullina, G.

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis combines approaches of sociolinguistics with methods of political and religious studies in order to study how language relates to social and political identities.[1] In a broad perspective, this study investigates how various actors and organizations – including the state – use, shape, translate, invent and interpret linguistic religious repertoires for certain goals, and how these linguistic strategies interact in a competitive struggle for religious authority and political hegemony.

The field that I map and analyse concerns the relationship between Islam and Orthodoxy in Russia. Conventionally, Russian Orthodoxy is linked to the Russian language, which in turn is associated with ideas about Russian national, ethnic and cultural identities. Islam does not have one single vernacular that is used for the communication and religious needs (including preaching) of all Russia's Muslims; there are as many Islamic languages as there are minorities in Russia that see Islam as their identity marker. The Tatar language, which will be a subject of this study, in addition to Russian, is one such Islamic language. In a more narrow perspective, my thesis examines the power inequality between Russian and Tatar – the former being Russia's hegemonic language and the latter being the language of Russia's largest national Muslim minority. However, the examination of this sociolinguistic hierarchy between majority/minority languages also has broader implications, as the relation between languages is mirrored in the interaction between religions, viz. between the Russian Orthodox Church (ROC) and Russia's Islamic authorities (the Muftiates), and between Christian communities and Muslim groups.

The chapters of this thesis are about competing discourses. I use the term "discourse" as a convenient designation for pools of spoken and written statements that centre around a particular issue and have a certain span of life, and thus a continuity in which actors react to statements of other actors. I will concentrate on the discourse on

[1] For a comparison of language and religion as politically consequential domains of cultural difference, see R. Brubaker, "Language, Religion and the Politics of Difference," *Nations and Nationalism* 19:1 (2013), 1-20; also W. Safran, "Language, Ethnicity and Religion: a Complex and Persistent Linkage," *Nations and Nationalism* 14:1 (2008), 171-90.

religion in Russia; this umbrella discourse covers a huge number of specific discourses that are defined by a given topic, such as the discourse on Islam, on Islam in Russia, on the relation between Islam and Christianity, or on the relation between the ROC and Muftiates, or between the ROC establishment and grassroots missionary movements. Discourses can also be defined by their speakers and writers: there is a discourse of spokespeople of the ROC, or of the Christian Tatar community, or of a certain missionary group. These can be linked to discourses developed in other countries, such as the discourse of Jehovah's Witnesses or the Catholic Church. Defined in this way, discourses always overlap: both Muslim and Christian representatives participate in and contribute to the state discourse on religious identities, national identities and languages.[2]

Discourses by necessity come in the form of particular languages. These must be analysed with the repertoire of linguistics. For instance, in the field of lexicon and semantics, specific concepts and terms can be inherited, coined, borrowed or translated, and in each case the linguist will try to identify the history of the word form as well as the semantic changes that may come over time. In this thesis, the question of situational lexical and semantic change is a recurring topic. The situational aspect revolves around the translation (in terms of different ways of transplantation) of concepts and terms from Tatar into Russian, and from Russian into Tatar. This also involves the spread of terms from Orthodoxy to Islam and, conversely, from Islam to Christianity. Translation is not only about finding the best equivalent of a given concept or term of one language in the lexical stock of another language; it is also about translating the meaning of the term into a new religious, social and political context.

Broadly speaking, my thesis stands in the tradition of Soviet/post-Soviet nationality studies – the field that examines the relation between Russians and non-Russians. I will concentrate on the last twenty years, during which national interests have increasingly been connected to religious identities. This change from the focus on nation to a focus on religion does not mean that national identities are a thing of the

[2] See, e.g., A. Agadjanian, "Revising Pandora's Gifts: Religious and National Identity in the Post-Soviet Societal Fabric," *Europe-Asia Studies* 53:3 (2001), 473-88; A. Agadjanian and K. Rousselet, "Globalization and identity discourse in Russian Orthodoxy", in *Eastern Orthodoxy in a Global Age: Tradition Faces the Twenty-first Century*, ed. V. Roudometof et al. (New York, Toronto: AltaMira Press, 2005), 29-57; J. Johnson et al., *Religion and Identity in Modern Russia: The Revival of Orthodoxy and Islam* (Aldershot, Hants: Routledge, 2005); J. Gerlach, "Religion and State Identity-Building in the New Russia", in *The Role of Religion in Eastern Europe Today*, ed. J. Gerlach and J. Töpfer (Wiesbaden: Springer VS, 2014), 103-43; A. Agadjanian, "Tradition, Morality and Community: Elaborating Orthodox Identity in Putin's Russia," *Religion, State and Society* 45:1 (2017), 39-60.

past; it just means that in the current context of Russia's re-centralization policies and the Kremlin's promotion of conservative values, national interests are expressed in discourses that include religion among their topics, and religious authorities and bureaucrats among their actors.

At the same time, my work stands in a tradition that goes beyond Russia; the focus on the importance of language has shaped scholarship on colonialism and post-colonialism globally.[3] By applying this linguistic approach to contemporary discourses on religion in Russia, my work is intended to open a new field in which the relevance of linguistic research becomes fruitful for understanding hegemonic power relations in Russia, and for defining the opportunities and limits that govern what can be said about religion in Russia. From this perspective, I combine a study of the "form" – the concepts and terms, their meanings and applications – with the study of the "formers", that is, the actors/shapers of language practices, and of their political and social relevance. The power of the form comes in subtle ways; it needs to be revealed in a painstaking procedure that asks about the genesis of a term, its use in former times and in the present, and the impact a form is assumed to have. Oftentimes, this impact cannot be measured; we can only make assumptions about why a specific author, community or organization decides to employ this or that term, or decides to borrow or create a new form. Our assumptions about the meanings of a given form, and its supposed impact, can be enhanced by studying larger pools of terms and texts, or several auctorial, communal or topical discourses; and they can be further augmented by studying discourses (and their protagonists) in interaction. The latter requires that the identity of the major players/shapers and their biographies are taken into account; linguistic change in the writings and statements of an actor over time goes hand in hand with the change in that actor's opinions and interpretations regarding language, religion and political power. In some cases, the actors demonstrate that the development of their linguistic repertoire is done consciously; this is most visible in cases where actors translate many religious texts from one language into another, or when they translate a language from one religion to another.

1.1 Languages across faith communities

The use of religious vocabulary and allusions to sacred texts outside any specific religious context has increased drastically since the start of President Vladimir Putin's

[3] See, e.g., S. Bassnett, "Postcolonialism and/as Translation", in *The Oxford Handbook of Postcolonial Studies*, ed. G. Huggan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 340-58; D. Robinson, *Translation and Empire: Postcolonial Theories Explained* (London: Routledge, 2014).

first presidential term in 2000. This means that narratives that are constructed and presented as religious also frequently dominate contexts that in the past were exclusively secular, such as domestic and international politics, popular culture, or even court hearings. Many lexical items in Russian that are marked as part of the Orthodox Christian religious vocabulary, and during the Soviet period were avoided and rejected for ideological reasons, have "returned with vengeance".[4] Words, such as *altar'* 'altar', *pop* 'priest', *dukhovnik* 'confessor' have not only been reinstated with their religious connotations but have also entered non-religious settings. Journalists who appeal to "the sacred right to vote", or politicians who publicly ask the president for his "blessing" before they launch any project, crucially contribute to the variety of meanings attached to religious vocabulary.[5] As a result, religious concepts receive new connotations not so much within a religious context, for instance during a sermon or a prayer, but increasingly outside of it.

This mobility of religious vocabulary beyond religious settings is inherently connected to the rise of religious nationalism, where nationalist elites mobilize strong religious identities to provide an additional layer of national cohesion. Religiosity, in such cases, is intertwined with the current interpretations of national history – moments of national glory and remembrance. As we will see in the analysis that follows, in the post-Soviet period the two biggest "traditional" religions – Orthodox Christianity and Islam – have notably fallen back on national identities.

Yet in some communities, religion is going through the opposite process, that of "deculturation", where the bonds between national secular identities and religious identities become looser.[6] These religious trends and movements manifest themselves as propagators of "purer" or universalist forms of traditional religions that can function in any cultural context. This transformation is not unique for Russia, but a consequence of the global shift from a traditional form of religious practice – Ḥanafī Islam, Catholicism, classic Protestant denominations – toward more fundamentalist and charismatic forms of religiosity, such as evangelicalism, Salafism, Pentecostalism and neo-Sufism.[7]

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[4] B.P. Bennett, *Religion and Language in Post-Soviet Russia* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 31.

[5] G. Sibgatullina and J. Schaeken, "Hoe staat, orthodoxie en islam elkaars taal spreken in Rusland", *Raam op Rusland*, 17 March 2017 <https://www.raamoprusland.nl/component/content/article?id=501:hoe-staat-orthodoxie-en-islam-elkaars-taal-spreken-in-rusland> (Accessed on 10 January 2018).

[6] On the notion of "deculturation", see O. Roy, *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[7] Ibid., p. 4.

When religions are "mobile" within contexts and cultures, it also often happens that a language that has historically served one specific religion ceases to be exclusive. Languages such as Arabic and Hindi, which are conventionally used in multi-ethnic and multi-religious areas, have been utilized by several distinct religious communities – pagans, Muslims and Christians – for many centuries. However, for some languages that previously used to be associated with just *one* religious system, the accommodation to other religious systems, with other ethnicities as carriers, can be a daunting process. This thesis examines such transformations by juxtaposing two languages: Russian, which has traditionally been the language of the ROC, and Tatar – one of Russia's Islamic vernaculars.

1.1.1 The Russian language of Islam

Within a religious context, Russian primarily functions as a language of communication and preaching of Orthodox Christians, not only throughout the Russian Federation but also in the post-Soviet states and countries with a large Russian diaspora. The religious variant of Russian has been a marker of Orthodox Christian identity: Orthodox Christians use it to identify themselves in relation to the world around them and describe their religious experience or what they wish to imply by such experience. Russian linguist Irina Bugaeva argues that there is a distinct religious sociolect of Russian, the so-called "Orthodox Christian religiolect", where specific vocabulary, morphological and syntactic features work as indicators of an assumed Orthodox Christian religious mentality.[8] For instance, a speaker of this "religiolect" would say *zhelaiu mnogaia i blagaia leta*, meaning 'I wish you many and happy years'. Here the lexicon (*blag-* for 'happy'), semantics (*leta* for 'years') and grammar (*-aia* as the ending for neuter plurals in the accusative case) are marked as archaic; an ordinary speaker of Russian would nowadays say something like *zhelaiu mnogo schastlivykh let* 'I wish you many happy years'.

Such archaic forms are usually rooted in Russian Church Slavonic, which in its Synodal recension is the official liturgical language of the ROC. Although the idea of one sacred language is inherently alien to Christianity, and "any sacred-profane

[8] I.V. Bugaeva, "Pravoslavnyi sotsiolekt: problemy opisaniia," *Vestnik SibGAU* 6:13 (2006), 258-62; I.V. Bugaeva, "Pravoslavnyi sotsiolekt: Grammaticheskie osobennosti sovremennykh tekstov religioznoi sfery," *Izvestiia Volgogradskogo gos. ped. universiteta* 2:36 (2009), 80-85. In some sources, religious Russian is also referred to as a "spiritual jargon" (*dukhovnyi zhargon*), see S. Panich, "'Zato slova: tsvetok, rebenok, zver': razmyshleniia o religioznom iazyke v 'Dnevnikakh' o. Aleksandra Shmemana", *Russkii Put'*, 2009 <http://www.rp-net.ru/book/discussion/novgorod/panich.php> (Accessed on 20 June 2017).

schematism is an artificial imposition", the traditionalists within the ROC regard Church Slavonic as a sacred language.[9] Used exclusively in a liturgical context, Church Slavonic has become largely incomprehensible for ordinary native speakers of contemporary Russian, whether they are Christians or not. With its archaic vocabulary and script, and deviating grammatical forms and pronunciation rules, it is nowadays regarded as a "verbal icon" (*slovesnaia ikona*) – a mystical and sacred language of Orthodox Christianity.[10]

Recently, however, Russia's Muslims have increasingly contested the exclusiveness of Russian as the language of Orthodox Christianity. They are adapting Russian as their new *lingua franca* to engage in Islamic communication and to produce Islamic literature. Russian, rather than Arabic or any of the Turkic languages, seems to be gradually becoming the language that all Muslims across the vast territories of the former Soviet Union have in common today. The first to analyse this phenomenon in scholarly literature were Alfrid Bustanov and Michael Kemper, who distinguished three variants of this emerging "Islamic Russian": (1) *Russianism*, where Arabic-Islamic terminology is fully translated into Russian; (2) *Arabism*, which conversely is characterized by an excessive use of Arabic loanwords (often without Russian translation); and finally (3) *Academism*, which originates from the language of scholarly works on Islam in Russian.[11] In their research, Bustanov and Kemper focused on the groups that tend to use one of these variants. Russianism, in their opinion, is the variant that dominates the writings and speeches of Russia's Islamic officials, who are trying to reach out not only to Muslims but increasingly to Russian mainstream society and political elites. In doing so, they often use borrowings from Church Slavonic to translate and explain Islamic terminology. The opposite version of Islamic Russian, Arabism, is defined by Bustanov and Kemper as a variant that "leads to the production of insider texts that can hardly be understood by non-Muslims";[12] it is therefore popular in writings of Sufi and Salafī groups in various parts of the Russian Federation, who produce discourse for consumption by in-group members. The third variant, Academism, as the very term suggests, can be found in academic discourse, where Islamic terminology acquires secular meanings; religious concepts are "taken out of the

[9] Bennett, *Religion and Language in Post-Soviet Russia*, p. 75.
[10] See, e.g., G. Trubitsyna, "Razmyshlenie nad tserkovnoslavianskim iazykom", *Pravoslavie.ru*, 15 December 2010 <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/43505.html> (Accessed on 6 February 2017).
[11] A.K. Bustanov and M. Kemper, "The Russian Orthodox and Islamic Languages in the Russian Federation," *Slavica Tergestina* 15 (2013), 259-77.
[12] Ibid., p. 269.

original religious and ritualistic frameworks and thereby [obtain] general humanistic connotations".[13]

This thesis focuses on the first variant – Russianism – and offers several case studies, which in Part I (Chapters 3-6) elaborate on and also challenge some of the arguments put forward by Bustanov and Kemper. I follow and provide evidence to support their hypothesis that Russianism is a language variant specific to Russia's institutionalized Islamic authorities. The research will also show that Russianism is not simply about borrowing Orthodox Church religious vocabulary and transplanting it into an Islamic context; the resemblance in speech styles between Islamic and Orthodox Christian leaders goes beyond words and forms and also involves an amalgamation at the semantic level and in rhetorical strategies. For Islam, which Russia's mainstream society sees as the religion of "the Other", this means adjusting to the dominant ideology of Russian nationalism and accepting the hegemonic role of the ROC. Islamic authorities, however, are not the only users of Russianism. I argue that ethnic Russian converts to Islam may also switch to this variant, although they pursue different goals and address different audiences than the official Muftis.

It is important to note that for both groups – institutionalized and grassroots users – Russianism is just *one* variant in the toolbox of available registers to choose from; depending on the context, leaders, elites and ordinary members of Muslim communities can switch between different variants of Russian. That is, there is not a single distinct social group or community that uses only the Russianism variant as its religious language. Thus, this work challenges Bustanov and Kemper's hypothesis that we should study the religious Islamic variants of the Russian language as separate religiolects – i.e. clearly distinguishable religious sociolects that can be associated with a particular religious group. As Kemper already pointed out elsewhere, actors often switch between various codes and variants, depending on their different target audiences.[14] At the same time, I follow Bustanov and Kemper's methodology by examining the meanings and identities that speakers assign to specific variants, and the goals that they try to achieve by using them.

It is also important to note that the various users of Russianism all offer their own definitions of Russia's (*rossiiskii*) and Russian (*russkii*) Islam. The meanings attached to these concepts can be exclusive and may include ultra-nationalist standpoints, with ethnic Russianness being placed above minority identities. These

[13] Ibid., p. 270.

[14] M. Kemper, "Russkii iazyk islama: fenomen perekliucheniia koda," *Islam v sovremennom mire* 11:1 (2015), 65-74.

actors celebrate the "nobility" and cultural superiority of the "Russian Islam" in comparison with the forms practised by Muslim ethnic minorities (Chapter 4). Other definitions, namely of "Russia's Islam", which I discuss in this thesis, do not address Russia's Muslim community, *umma*, or any of its parts directly; instead, they target the Russian state as the ultimate consumer of its ideologies. In particular, the official Islamic establishments (Chapter 3) as well as individual political actors (Chapter 5) aim to formulate a state-supported ideology of Russia's Islam that will be "both inclusive (acceptable to state, Muslims, and society) and exclusive (opposing what is perceived as radical, dangerous and, from a theological position, as erroneous and unscientific)".[15] The state already indicated the need for such an ideology in the early 2000s, when political technologist Sergei Gradirovskii suggested "an Islam of Russian culture" (*russkokul'turnyi islam*); this project was enthusiastically endorsed by high-ranking politicians, but it caused much controversy among Islamic elites and was later abandoned.[16] Despite this lack of success, Gradirovskii's project identified a niche that many societal actors with various degrees of authority are still trying to fill.

Finally, the dominance of Russian within Islamic settings obviously also influences ethnic vernaculars spoken by Russia's Muslim minorities in the Volga-Ural region, the Caucasus and Siberia. For several centuries these languages have functioned as the primary means to communicate and write about Islam within Russia and beyond. With Russian taking over these functions, Islamic vernaculars are also undergoing change, which I will demonstrate in Part II of this thesis, offering case studies on Orthodox Christian use of the Tatar language.

1.1.2 The Tatar language of Christianity

Today Tatar counts as Russia's second most spoken language;[17] it is also one of the two official languages of the Republic of Tatarstan – Russia's largest "Muslim"

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[15] M. Kemper, "Islamic Theology or Religious Political Technology? Damir Mukhetdinov's 'Russian Islam'", *Religion, State and Society* (Forthcoming).

[16] For a detailed analysis of Gradirovskii's project, see K. Graney, "'Russian Islam' and the Politics of Religious Multiculturalism in Russia", in *Rebounding Identities: The Politics of Identity in Russia and Ukraine*, ed. D. Arel and B.A. Ruble (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2006), 89-115. Here pp. 103-06.

[17] As of 2010, nearly 4.3m people reported that they speak Tatar, see Census, "Vladenie iazykami", *All-Russian Population Census 2010*, 2010 <http://www.gks.ru/free_doc/new_site/perepis2010/croc/Documents/Vol4/pub-04-07.pdf> (Accessed on 4 February 2018). On Tatar language proficiency in the republic's population, see E. Khodzhaeva, "Postsovetskaia iazykovaia politika v obrazovatel'noi sisteme respubliki Tatarstan", in *Nastroika iazyka: upravlenie kommunikatsiami na postsovetskom prostranstve*, ed. E. Lapina-Karasiuk et al. (Moscow: Novoe Literaturnoe Obozrenie, 2016), 282-306.

republic, situated in the Volga-Ural region, with a Muslim population of up to 54 percent (according to the 2002 population census).[18] Up until the nineteenth century, the written Tatar language, the so-called *Törki tel*, was "a more or less tatarized version of the Chaghatay language, that is to say an eastern-Turkic idiom, whose origins were in Central Asia".[19] The Tatar literary language was a highly composite language that contained many elements and vocabulary items from three different stocks: Arabic, Persian and Turkic.[20] Classical Arabic was also taught in Tatar *madrasas* – religious schools and colleges – to enable students to read and comprehend the Qurʾān, although only a small group of the best educated could write and converse in it. Similarly, Persian – another important language of Islamic scholarship – was available to only a few.[21]

By the mid-nineteenth century, Volga Tatars were embarking on language vernacularization: that is, developing a standard literary language from a local vernacular; this language reform was part of the Muslim reformist movement that attempted to face the challenges presented by modernization, and to confront the subordinate position of Muslim minorities in the Russian empire.[22] The aims of the language reform included simplification (liberation from Persian and Arabic elements to develop an intelligible style) and purification (return to what was perceived as genuine Turkic terms). The reformists believed that the new literary form of Tatar would prove to be more comprehensible to even semi-literate Tatars and would provide broader groups with access to education, including secular subjects such as geography and history, and enhance social mobility.[23] Importantly, vernacularization was also coupled with the development of Tatar national consciousness.[24]

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[18] Polit.Ru, "Kolichestvo musul'man v Rossii uvelichilos'", *Polit.Ru*, 17 December 2012 <http://polit.ru/news/2012/12/17/religon/> (Accessed on 18 July 2018). On religious identity and practice of Muslims in Tatarstan, see also FBK, "Musul'mane Rossii. Sotsopros FBK v Tatarstane i Dagestane", *FBK*, 24 December 2015 <https://navalny.com/p/4647/> (Accessed on 18 July 2018).

[19] J. Strauss, "Language modernization: The case of Tatar and modern Turkish," *Central Asian Survey* 12:4 (1993), 565-76. Here p. 565.

[20] Ibid., p. 566.

[21] S. Akiner, *Islamic Peoples of the Soviet Union: A Historical and Statistical Handbook* (London: KPI, 1986), p. 3.

[22] On the Muslim question in the Russian empire, see, e.g., R. Geraci, *Window on the East: National and Imperial Identities in Late Tsarist Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001); E.I. Campbell, *The Muslim Question and Russian Imperial Governance* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2015).

[23] On Tatar language reforms, see Strauss, "Language modernization"; S. Wertheim, *Linguistic purism, language shift, and contact-induced change in Tatar* (PhD thesis, University of California, 2003); also E.F. Lazzerini, "Crimean Tatar: The Fate of a Severed Tongue", in *Sociolinguistic Perspectives on Soviet National Languages: Their Past, Present and Future*, ed. I. Kreindler (Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 1985), 109-24.

[24] See Campbell, *The Muslim Question and Russian Imperial Governance*, pp. 73-74.

Throughout the Soviet period, Arabic remained the sacred language of worship but, together with Persian, it disappeared almost completely from Islamic literature written by Tatar Islamic scholars. In 1927, the Arabic script used for written Tatar was replaced by the Latin alphabet; in 1939, Latin was again replaced by a modified version of Cyrillic. Despite Soviet secularization policies and repression of Islam, literary Tatar had strengthened its position in terms of usage for Islamic communication and discussion, and by 1935 the Kazan dialect of Tatar had become one of the languages of Soviet Islam. In the years that followed, however, Tatar rapidly lost its prestige; after the Second World War, Russian increasingly became the instrument of socialization and integration in Soviet society, and was regarded as superior to all other languages.[25]

The status of the Tatar language in the post-Soviet period was secured by bilateral agreements (1994, 2007) between Tatarstan and Moscow that granted the republic exceptional rights and freedoms.[26] In terms of education, the agreement allowed compulsory hours of Tatar language study in local schools in Tatarstan. But neither the agreements between Kazan and Moscow nor educational reforms in Tatarstan were successful in protecting Tatar from losing its symbolic prestige and practical application. Even in Tatarstan, let alone in the Russian Federation as a whole, the Tatar language is overshadowed by Russian and has little to no role in business, higher education and administration.[27] The situation has grown even more complex since 2017, when Tatarstan lost its special status after Moscow refused to extend the bilateral treaty; this made the republic, in fact, a regular subject of the Russian

[25] T. Wigglesworth-Baker, *Language Policy and Russian-Titular Bilingualism in Post-Soviet Tatarstan* (PhD thesis, University of Sheffield, 2015), 52. On Soviet language policies regarding the Tatar language, see L.A. Grenoble, *Language policy in the Soviet Union* (Dordrecht: Springer 2003), pp. 35-62; also T. Wigglesworth-Baker, "Language Policy and Power Politics in Post-Soviet Tatarstan", in *Language Planning in the Post-Communist Era: The Struggles for Language Control in the New Order in Eastern Europe, Eurasia and China*, ed. E. Andrews (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), 119-44; S. Wertheim, "Reclamation, revalorization, and re-Tatarization via changing Tatar orthographies", in *Orthography as Social Action*, ed. A.M. Jaffe et al. (Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2012), 71-108.

[26] The successor of the initial 1994 agreement is "The Treaty on Delimitation of Jurisdictional Subjects and Powers between Bodies of Public Authority of the Russian Federation and Bodies of Public Authority of the Republic of Tatarstan", which was signed on 26 June 2007. This treaty was valid for 10 years and expired in 2017. Available at <http://portal.tatarstan.ru/eng/documents/polnomochia.htm> (Accessed on 23 January 2018).

[27] See D. Gorenburg, "The Failure of Tatar Language Revival," *Policy* 379 (2005), 77-82; D. Gorenburg, "Tatar Language Policies in Comparative Perspective: Why Some Revivals Fail and Some Succeed," *Ab Imperio* 1 (2005), 1-28; T. Wigglesworth-Baker, "Language policy and post-Soviet identities in Tatarstan," *Nationalities Papers* 44:1 (2016), 20-37; G. Sibgatullina, "The role of religious institutions in Tatar language education and maintenance", in *Language Policy or the Politics of Language: Re-imagining the Role of Language in a Neoliberal Society*, ed. M. Djuraeva and F.V. Tochon (Blue Mounds: Deep University Press, 2018), 75-98.

Federation. In July of the same year, President Putin stated that it was "impermissible" for regions to compel students to learn languages other than Russian, which flared the controversy in Tatarstan over mandatory Tatar language classes. By the end of 2017, Tatarstani officials had to accommodate the legislation: according to the new rules, Tatar language classes are offered as electives and children can only study it for two hours a week, instead of six, as previously.[28]

With Tatarstan losing its special status and, consequently, its privileges, the use of Tatar is becoming even more associated with a nationalist agenda. The abolishment of the compulsory classes makes it seem that Tatars are losing this battle for their native language, which feeds the anxieties of being merged with Russian mainstream society. Language, together with the "traditional" religion of Tatars – Sunnī Ḥanafī Islam – are depicted as inherent and inseparable components of Tatar ethnic identity; and the struggle for the official status of the Tatar language often goes hand in hand with efforts against "non-traditional" forms of Islam spreading among the republic's population. In Tatarstan, Islamic religious settings are becoming a vehicle for language maintenance,[29] and the use of Tatar in religious contexts works as a litmus test to distinguish between "good" and "bad" Muslims; the latter, so the argument goes, show a strong preference for Russian. That is to say, if Russian takes over as the new *lingua franca* of Russia's Muslims, Tatarstani religious authorities will interpret it as a deviation from home-grown forms of Islam. This is a prime example of how ethnic/national agendas are being transformed into religious antagonisms. To prevent any further Russification of the Islamic discourse, Tatarstan has designed policies that strengthen the link between Tatar and Islam: in August 2016, Tatarstani Mufti Kamil' Samigullin issued a decree prescribing that all Friday sermons (*khuṭba*) in the republic are to be delivered exclusively in Tatar. A year later, the Tatarstani Mufti's first deputy, Rustam Batrov, even went so far as to suggest that Tatar Muslims should also be able to conduct their regular prayers (*namāz*) in Tatar, which means that any "foreign" language – whether it be Russian or Arabic – must be removed from the mosque space.[30] As Bustanov points

[28] Radio Liberty, "Tatar Language Classes Now Optional In Tatarstan, Prosecutor Says", *Radio Liberty*, 29 November 2017 <https://www.rferl.org/a/russia-tatar-language-classes-optional-putin/2888-6468.html> (Accessed on 22 January 2018). There are still primary schools where education is offered completely in Tatar, but their number seems to be decreasing. See A. Faizrakhmanov, "'Shkola s tatarskim iazykom obucheniia, ne okrepnuv, prakticheski ischezla'", *Business-Online*, 13 January 2018 <https://www.business-gazeta.ru/blog/369357> (Accessed on 31 July 2018).

[29] Sibgatullina, "The role of religious institutions".

[30] L. Kharrasova, "Namazny nindi teldä ukïrga: tatarchamï, garäpchäme?", *Azatlïq radiosï*, 3 March 2017 <https://www.azatliq.org/a/28345106.html> (Accessed on 30 June 2017).

out, delivering Friday sermons in Tatar can, on the one hand, be a positive step in combatting radicalism, which is supposedly being spread by Russian-speaking Salafīs; but on the other hand, it also threatens to isolate Tatar Muslims from Russia's multi-ethnic and multi-lingual *umma*, where Russian, and no longer Tatar, is the language of communication and Islamic education. [31]

We must conclude that the Tatar language today is strongly linked to Tatar nationalism and the Tatar "traditional" forms of Islam. At the same time, Tatar has also been increasingly used in non-typical religious contexts: for instance, evangelical movements that entered Russia's religious market after the relaxation of state policies in the late 1980s have significantly contributed to the Islamic variant of Tatar being used in Christian religious settings. These movements bring with them centuries-long experience, as well as substantial financial means to produce Tatar translations of Christian Scriptures and prayers for the growing Tatar Christian communities. These translations undoubtedly contribute to reviving and enriching the linguistic repertoires of the religious Tatar language, but they also challenge the long-maintained Islamic meanings and cause Islamic symbolic power to become disassociated from Tatar. Today both Muslims *and* Christians in Tatarstan use words such as *Alla(h)* or *Xoda(y)* to refer to the Supreme Being, but this gives little evidence of ecumenical considerations or an attempt to foster Christian-Muslim dialogue. To the contrary, using Islamic terminology in the New Testament translations and preaching is often a powerful instrument in a missionary's toolkit, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 8 of this thesis.

As already argued in the case of Islamic Russian (see Section 1.1.1), there is usually no single, homogeneous community that uses one particular religious language. A similar situation can be observed when we zoom in on the use of Tatar for purposes of spreading the Christian message. In addition to evangelical communities introducing Tatar as their language of worship and communication, a group of Orthodox Christian Tatars claim to have been using Christian Tatar as their native language for several centuries. These are the so-called Kräshens – a community of Tatars baptized in imperial Russia. Their dialect underwent a first process of standardization in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Orthodox Christian missionaries began to use it for prayer books and Bible translations, to furnish the Kräshens with religious literature and to avoid the imminent danger that they might "lapse back" into Islam. While some Tatar linguists regard the Kräshen language as

[31] A.K. Bustanov, "The Language of Moderate Salafism in Eastern Tatarstan," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 28:2 (2017), 183-201. Here p. 185.

merely a dialect of Tatar,[32] for Kräshens their language is a distinctive feature of what they see as their national identity, which legitimizes their separation as an ethnic group from the majority of Muslim Tatars (as will be analysed in Chapter 7).

Case studies such as the one on Christian Tatars reveal that Soviet approaches to non-Russian ethnic groups, with their systematic (over-)attention to folkloric traditions, resulted in what Sebastien Peyrouse and Matthijs Pelkmans call the "folklorization" of religion. [33] While religion was central in establishing national identities, the understanding of religious affiliation is increasingly framed around ideas of cultural heritage. On the one hand, this means that many Tatars will claim to be Muslims even if they do not actually profess Islam, simply because Tatars as an ethno-national group are automatically associated with the specific "Tatar" Islamic tradition. On the other hand, any definition of Tatarness through religion, which in the Soviet Union was primarily based on constructed cultural meanings rather than actual theological/moral contents,[34] invites Christian denominations to offer new definitions of what it means to be a Tatar believer. By using the Tatar language in religious rituals and drawing on traditional folklore (including songs, arts and clothing), Christian denominations offer new, attractive content to redefine the concept of the "Tatar" religion. Orthodox as well as various Protestant communities engage their members by promising direct access to the Holy Scriptures (as no knowledge of Arabic is required), and offer them alternative institutional and communal affiliations; as the religious authority of official Islamic institutions in Russia is generally limited, and with Islamophobia in Russian society on the rise, such alternative religious projects that integrate ethnic components become particularly appealing.

1.2 Research questions

To summarize, what we are observing today is that both the Russian and the Tatar languages are moving toward accommodating two separate religious systems –

[32] See, e.g., F.S. Baiazitova, *Govory tatar-kriashen v sravnitel'nom osveshchenii* (Moscow: Nauka, 1986); F.S. Baiazitova, *Keräshennär: tel üzenchälekläre häm yola ijatï* (Kazan: Mattbugat yortï, 1997).

[33] S. Peyrouse, "Christianity and nationality in Soviet and post-Soviet Central Asia: mutual intrusions and instrumentalizations," *Nationalities Papers* 32:3 (2004), 651-74; M. Pelkmans, "Introduction: Post-Soviet space and the unexpected turns of religious life", in *Conversion After Socialism: Disruptions, Modernisms and Technologies of Faith in the Former Soviet Union*, ed. M. Pelkmans (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), 1-16.

[34] As Peyrouse argues, Islam was "inserted into a framework imposed and fully controlled by the Soviet state that aimed to exclude their dogmatic content and to preserve some of their components and ritual practices necessary to their existence. Thus, it enabled the political power to display and to instrumentalize an image of religious tolerance while excluding several religious components viewed as dangerous". See Peyrouse, "Christianity and nationality", p. 661.

both Islam and Christianity – and are thereby serving the needs of several distinctive religious communities. This is the main topic of my thesis.

My first set of research questions, which I will investigate in Parts I and II, includes the following issues: What new meanings are acquired by the vocabularies of these languages when they are used within non-typical religious settings? How do these changes affect the identities that users assign to these languages? And what is the authority that sanctions and conventionalizes these changes? The theoretical framework used to research these questions will be outlined in the next section.

Throughout my thesis, I will further apply the research results gained from this sociolinguistic analysis to study a second set of questions relating to the complex relationship between Islam, Orthodox Christianity and the state in Russia. In the context of unequal power relations between these two religions and their communities, what goals are Islam and Orthodoxy pursuing when they use each other's languages? What are the challenges they face? And finally, are Russia's Islam and Orthodox Christianity transformed when they trespass across linguistic boundaries and, if so, in what sense?

1.3 Religious language

To answer these questions, this thesis examines Islamic Russian and Christian Tatar using the same three-step approach for both. At the first level I analyse changes in the form of these languages, which involves focusing on characteristics such as vocabulary and writing system (script) that distinguish a given religious variant of a language from its non-religious counterparts. The second step is to study the meanings assigned to religious vocabulary, encompassing, for instance, the variety of connotations that the word *Allāh* has in Islamic, Orthodox Christian and Protestant contexts. Finally, the third step involves identifying the authority that sanctions the use of a specific vocabulary (or even language), leading to the analysis of the strategies used by this authority to promote and conventionalize new meanings associated with newly constructed religious vocabulary.

1.3.1 Form

From a sociolinguistic point of view, religious language (also sometimes referred to as "language of religion") is a functional variety, which can be distinguished from its non-religious counterparts by marked linguistic features at the lexical, syntactic,

phonological and stylistic levels.[35] In this thesis, I will mainly focus on the lexical level, although several case studies will also touch upon the adoption of specific scripts and orthographies. I will further concentrate on case studies where religious concepts are *fully translated* into the existing religious vocabulary. As mentioned above (Section 1.1.1), the variant of Islamic Russian to which this applies is Russianism, which mostly translates Arabic-origin Islamic terminology into Russian using Orthodox Christian vocabulary. For instance, *ḥajj* (Arabic, referring to the pilgrimage to Mecca) and *namāz* (of Persian origin, denoting the daily prayer) are rendered as *palomnichestvo* ('pilgrimage', which in Church Slavonic texts, of course, has nothing to do with Mecca) and *molitva* ('prayer', which in the Christian understanding is obviously different from the Islamic concept of five mandatory daily prayers). At the same time, however, the Islamic (Arabic/Persian) terms are also frequently used and widely known, even by non-Muslim speakers of Russian. When we analyse "Christian Tatar", the situation is the other way around: speakers use Islamic terminology within Christian contexts. Here, a telling example is the Tatar word *fatixa,* derived from the title of the first chapter of the Qurʾān (*sūrat al-Fātiḥa*), which in the new Christian context refers to 'divine blessing' (see the discussion in Section 8.3.2 Use of Arabic and Persian terms). My predominant interest is in the strategies that actors use when translating Islamic and Christian holy books, prayers, greeting formulae and standard expressions, and I examine the lexical choices made to express key religious concepts. In this respect my thesis draws on the scholarship in translation studies, which emphasizes the "cultural turn" and specifically addresses the ideological significance of the act of translation.[36] As rightly summarized by Hephzibah Israel, translation is never "ideologically neutral or transparent, but circumscribed and regulated by various forces at a given historical moment",[37] and it can challenge or reinforce the existing ideologies and power relations.

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[35] For a discussion of religious language as a functional variety, see R. Holt, "A Socio-Linguistic Approach to Religious Language," *Australian eJournal of Theology* 6 (February) (2006), 1-14; B. Hary and M.J. Wein, "Religiolinguistics: On Jewish-, Christian- and Muslim-defined languages," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 2013:220 (2013), 85-108; A. Lasch and W.-A. Liebert, "Sprache und Religion", in *Handbuch Sprache und Wissen*, ed. E. Felder and A. Gardt (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2015), 475-92.

[36] S. Bassnett and A. Lefevere, *Translation, History & Culture* (London: Pinter Publishers, 1990); Bassnett, "Postcolonialism and/as Translation"; also V.L. Rafael, *Contracting Colonialism: Translation and Christian Conversion in Tagalog Society under Early Spanish Rule* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988); T. Niranjana, *Siting Translation: History, Post-Structuralism, and the Colonial Context* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1992); Robinson, *Translation and Empire*.

[37] H. Israel, *Religious Transactions in Colonial South India. Language, Translation, and the Making of Protestant Identity* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 4.

It is important to note that Islamic Russian and Christian Tatar are developing as we study them, and there are no standardized forms of these languages. It might be some time before the Islamic connotations of Christian concepts, or the Christian meanings of Islamic terms, enter the regular Russian or Tatar dictionary. Moreover, neither of these languages is used in just one religious context or specific community, as already argued above (Section 1.1 Languages across faith communities). Contradicting scholars who argue that religious language is "the language spoken in the religious field",[38] what we are witnessing in present-day Russia is that religious language also operates in secular contexts. And as they are used by a variety of speakers – often with competing agendas and different target audiences – it is problematic to apply terms such as "religious sociolect" and "religiolect" to one of these religious variants of a language. As examples in the following chapters will show, in the cases of Islamic Russian and Christian Tatar the religious communities that use them are extremely heterogeneous: from Islamic elites to converts to Islam, from Tatar Jehovah's Witnesses to Kräshen Orthodox churchgoers – they all claim exclusive rights to these religious languages and mark them as their identity symbols. Moreover, each speech community has its own arsenal of languages and registers, and the choices made are dependent on communication goals and audiences to be addressed.

1.3.2 Meaning

When a language accommodates two or more religious systems, a given term starts to carry multiple meanings. Consider Tatar *uraza*, a Persian loanword that in the Islamic context refers specifically to fasting in the ninth month of the Muslim calendar Ramaḍān; the same word is then also used by non-Muslims to characterize Jesus's abstention from food and water in Mt 4:2 (see Section 8.3.2 Use of Arabic and Persian terms).[39] In her work on the language of Hinduism in the United States, Rajeshwari Pandharipande points out that in such instances the multiple meanings are not mixed but are contextually determined.[40] Various sociolinguistic triggers help to structure a

[38] H. Knoblauch, "Transzendenzerfahrung und symbolische Kommunikation. Die phänomenologisch orientierte Soziologie und die kommunikative Konstruktion der Religion", in *Religion als Kommunikation*, ed. T. Hartmann et al. (Würzburg: Ergon, 1998), 147-86. Here pp. 175-78. Also F.J.S. Wijsen, *Religious Discourse, Social Cohesion and Conflict: Studying Muslim-Christian Relations* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2013), p. 144.

[39] This verse reads: "And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he [Jesus] was hungry". For the Tatar translation, see *Injil. Novyi Zavet na tatarskom iazyke* (Moscow: Institut Perevoda Biblii, 2001).

[40] R.V. Pandharipande, "Ideology, Authority, and Language Choice", in *Explorations in Sociology of Language and Religion*, ed. T. Omoniyi and J.A. Fishman (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing

given discourse as, in our cases, entirely Islamic or Christian. These triggers can be hidden in the context of the discourse (e.g., a sermon in a mosque), in neighbouring lexicon (that is, in the terminology accompanying a word that can carry both Islamic and Christian meanings) or in inclusions from other religion-specific languages (e.g., Arabic greeting formulae), which have a "radiation effect"[41] and help to separate multiple meanings. For instance, when the Russian word *Bog* 'God' appears in the context of Qurʾān interpretation, it changes from being an Orthodox Christian term into a synonym of the word *Allāh*. As both Islamic Russian and Christian Tatar are in the process of development, speakers are continuing to search for "adequate" translation equivalents. In some instances, however, they may rely unduly on the sociolinguistic triggers and overstretch the discursive boundaries of semantic fields: in Chapter 3, I discuss an example where the Arabic word *mawlid,* which refers to the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad, was recently translated into Russian as *Rozhdestvo Proroka*, literally meaning 'Christmas of the Prophet'; this translation variant has provoked much controversy in both Russia's Muslim and Orthodox Christian communities.

Beyond semantics, religious vocabulary and language also symbolize a variety of identities: religious, national and even political. These identities are not stable but are constantly in flux. Speakers can adjust the hierarchy of their identities according to the context and/or their target audience.[42] In the case of Islamic elites, the use of Russianism primarily marks their compliance with the state policies and the embeddedness of their interpretations of Islam in the mainstream discourse on religion (Chapter 3), while in the case of ethnic Russian converts to Islam, the same variant helps to legitimize their conversion and construct a distinctly "Russian Islam" (as will be seen in Chapter 4). Likewise, the Christian Tatar language can serve not only to manifest opposition to the mainstream Muslim Tatar community but also to reinforce a non-Russian (Turkic, Finno-Ugric) identity (Chapter 7); in other instances, however, the same language serves as a tool for Orthodox Christian proselytism and is embedded in practices of Russification, that is, helping to cultivate Russian national identity (Chapter 6).

Company, 2006), 141-64; R.V. Pandharipande, "Authenticating a Tradition in Transition: Language of Hinduism in the USA", in *The Sociology of Language and Religion: Change, Conflict and Accommodation*, ed. T. Omoniyi (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 58-83.

[41] The term was originally coined by J. Barr, "The Language of Religion", in *Science of Religion (Proceedings of the Study of the Conference of the International Association for the History of Religions)*, ed. L. Honko (The Hague: Mouton Publishers, 1979), 429-41.

[42] On hierarchy of identities, see also the discussion in Pandharipande, "Ideology, Authority, and Language Choice".

1.3.3 Authority

In order to understand these transformations in form and meaning, we also need to look at the authority that has the power to introduce and sanction these changes, and the mechanisms through which the transformations are authenticated. Mainly, it is the authority with power to shape a language for a religious setting, and to label translation equivalents as "adequate" and "acceptable", or as "wrong" and "inadequate". Through the use of languages, vocabularies and expressions, new forms and meanings are established and conventionalized. This takes place in a broader political discourse on religions in Russia, which will be mapped in Chapter 2.

The source of authority varies across religions: it can be embedded in persons and institutions, in sacred writings and traditions (oral and written), and in personal experiences.[43] Although the traditional authority – of religious leaders, mystics, missionaries – continues to play an important role in authenticating the choice of a religious code, the advent of new forms of media (audio recordings, video blogs, social web platforms) contributes to the diversification of religious authority; the new forms of authority gain respect and win audiences sometimes by the very fact of being the first to use new forms of media. Video sermons, theological consultations via Skype, discussions in Facebook communities – these new means and strategies, more than traditional religious practices, are helping to construct, promote and conventionalize new religious languages.

In this thesis I elaborate on three types of authority: (1) official religious institutions and their leaders, (2) communities, and (3) individual religious entrepreneurs. The three can overlap or stand in opposition to each other. At the institutional level, the state has distinguished four religions – Orthodox Christianity, Islam, Judaism and Buddhism – that it nominally considers to be equal in their right to state protection and support, and that deserve preferential treatment. For this to happen, institutions that represent these religions need to shape their agendas and identities according to "a one-size-fits-all definition that applies to all religions".[44] This definition is today encapsulated in the "traditionalism" paradigm, which differentiates between Russia's "traditional" religions – including the ROC and Islam – and their

[43] See Pandharipande, "Authenticating a Tradition in Transition: Language of Hinduism in the USA", pp. 72-73; M. Waida, "Authority", in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. M. Eliade (New York: Collier Macmillan, 1987), 1-7.

[44] Roy, *Holy Ignorance: When Religion and Culture Part Ways*, p. 9.

"non-traditional" competitors.[45] As many observers note, this differentiation is an artificial enterprise; in the post-Soviet reality it is used to restrict religious freedom and exercise control over religious communities.[46]

In the post-Soviet period, the ROC has gained considerable political influence and it is currently the most powerful religious institution. The ROC implicitly serves as the model in terms of hierarchies, bureaucracy and alignment with the state that the other religions are supposed to emulate. As the state demands a disciplined, reliable and loyal dialogue partner, the other religious institutions follow the example of the ROC and become equally highly bureaucratic – both in their rhetoric and in terms of organizational structure, by expanding their apparatus.

The more the established religious institutions identify the state as their primary communication partner, the more they become ineffective in reaching out to religious communities and in promoting a common religious identity. This creates a fertile ground for the revival of parishes as independent communities that build new churches and provide services according to the needs of their members. This tension will be outlined in Chapter 7.

Discontent with official religious structures also reinforces the attractiveness of decentralized religious networks that challenge the links between national and religious identities. Nationality politics in the Soviet Union established close connections between religious and ethno-national categories: by and large, Orthodoxy signifies the religion of the Russians, Ukrainians and Belarusians, but also of the Chuvashes and Mordvins, whereas Islam is part of the ethnic identity of Tatars and also Bashkirs, Chechens and Avars, to mention but a few of the "Muslim" nationalities of post-Soviet Russia. My chapters on communities of ethnic Russian converts to Islam (Chapter 4) and Krāshens (Chapter 7) reveal that any alternative, non-traditional ethnicity-religion set bears in itself a protest energy; by identifying themselves as Russian Muslims or Christian Tatars, individuals willingly or unwillingly engage in a political protest against the dominant discourse on religion.

On several occasions this thesis will zoom in on individuals who establish a niche for themselves as religious authorities or opinion leaders, especially in contexts where religious leadership has so far been either absent or weak; these case studies explore the

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[45] K. Kovalskaya, "The Traditional and the Non-Traditional in the Religious Life of the Russian Federation," *Mundo Eslavo* 12 (2013), 69-78. See also the discussion in the next chapter.

[46] E.g., A.K. Bustanov and M. Kemper, "Russia's Islam and Orthodoxy beyond the Institutions: Languages of Conversion, Competition and Convergence," *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations* 28:2 (2017), 129-39; S.E. Merati, *Muslims in Putin's Russia: Discourse on Identity, Politics, and Security* (Cham: Springer, 2017).

life paths and strategies of such religious entrepreneurs. They still operate within the official religious institutions, which gives them a certain protection from immediate prosecution, or provides them with financial backing; at the same time, however, these individuals – whether missionaries, *mullā*s or clergymen – are thinkers who operate in the margins of their respective institutions and test the limits of the mainstream discourse.

1.4 Methodological framework

Each step – the examination of the form and meaning, and of the authority that introduces and conventionalizes changes – roughly corresponds to the three levels of discourse analysis, as outlined by Norman Fairclough. These are (1) textual analysis, (2) analysis of discourse practice, and (3) analysis of social practice.[47]

Textual analysis involves studying lexical features of a text;[48] from the practical point of view, in all the case studies the term "text" is broadly defined and includes printed materials such as newspaper texts, blog posts, published speeches, and 'manufactured' data, such as interviews and video transcripts.

The second level is the examination of discourse practices: "how authors of texts draw on already existing discourses and genres to create a text", and "how receivers of texts also apply available discourses and genres in the consumption and interpretation of the texts".[49] In this stage, the focus lies primarily on studying the links to other texts (intertextuality) and other discourses (interdiscursivity), which enables us to define the meanings assigned to religious vocabulary. It is by invoking topics, events and actors that religious vocabulary acquires new connotations and becomes associated with particular identities.[50] At this level, I examine various rhetorical and translation strategies of discourse actors and their references to dominant discourses and important texts in the respective religious communities and in Russian society in general.

Finally, the third level comprises the analysis of social practice. As argued by Nile Green and Mary Searle-Chatterjee, religious discourse can be described as "the

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[47] N. Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p. 73.; also R. Wodak and M. Meyer, *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis* (London: SAGE, 2009).

[48] Fairclough, *Discourse and Social Change*, pp. 76–77, 185–94.

[49] M. Jørgensen and L. Phillips, *Discourse Analysis as Theory and Method* (London: Sage Publications, 2002), p. 69.

[50] S. Naggar, "Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity in the Discourse of Muslim Televangelists: The Case Study of Hamza Yusuf," *Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis Across Disciplines* 6:1 (2012), 76-95. Here p. 81; T. Hjelm, "Religion, Discourse and Power: A Contribution towards a Critical Sociology of Religion," *Critical Sociology* 40:6 (2013), 855-72. Here p. 863; Wodak and Meyer, *Methods for Critical Discourse Analysis*, p. 90.

rhetorical corollary of struggles for authority".[51] Here the analysis focuses on the social context in which this "corollary" takes place – historical, political and economic circumstances as well as profiles of actors and groups that participate in the discourse and compete for power. All three steps of analysis will be applied in each chapter, with varying focus points.

1.5 Data

In two chapters the analysis draws on two separate linguistic corpora. The corpus for Chapter 3 consists of speeches, interviews and publications by a key figure of Russia's Islamic scene, Mufti Ravil' Gainutdin; these documents are available on the official websites of Islamic organizations represented by the Mufti. Chapter 4 analyses a set of fifty conversion narratives published online by Russian converts to Islam. More detailed information on the collection and analysis of the data is given in the respective chapters. Information about the content of these corpora can be found in the two Appendices at the end of the thesis.

Chapter 8 compares lexical choices made in the New Testament translations in Tatar. Two of the three analysed books are available in digital form on the websites of the organizations that produced these translations. The third book was provided by the head of the Kräshen translation team during my field trip to Tatarstan in 2016.

Broadly defined, the focus of this thesis is discourse on religion, which is in constant change and transformation. In addition to the traditional scholarly literature available in books and articles, the Internet is an indispensable tool and a valuable source of information, recording ongoing developments and new actors that enter this discourse. Fast accessibility of information and the possibility of interaction with social actors allow researchers to conduct what Jannis Androutsopoulos refers to as "discourse-centred online ethnography". This approach combines "the systematic observation of selected sites of online discourse with direct contact with its […] actors".[52] During data collection and analysis I have frequently consulted online media sources – both mainstream outlets (websites of information agencies and newspapers, such as *Interfax*, *Novaia Gazeta*) and less prominent ones (sites that target specific audiences, e.g. the ultra-conservative Orthodox platform *Russkaia narodnaia liniia*).

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[51] N. Green and M. Searle-Chatterjee, "Religion, Language, and Power: an Introductory Essay", in *Religion, Language, and Power*, ed. N. Green and M. Searle-Chatterjee (New York: Routledge, 2008). Here pp. 11-12.

[52] J. Androutsopoulos, "Potentials and Limitations of Discourse-Centred Online Ethnography," *Language @ Internet* 5 (2008). Available at <http://www.languageatinternet.org/articles/2008/1610> (Accessed on 18 July 2018).

Additionally, blogging platforms, such as *LiveJournal*, the social networking services *Facebook* and its Russian alternative *Vkontakte*, and video hosting sites, such as *YouTube*, not only served as data sources but also allowed me to establish contacts with my research participants.

I also gathered a large amount of data during periods of fieldwork in Russia in 2015-2017, where I conducted interviews with members of Christian and Muslim communities, with religious leaders, scholars and translators. I gained further valuable insights from participant observation in religious rituals of communities studied in this thesis.

1.6 Outline of chapters

After this first, introductory chapter, Chapter 2, which is of a general nature, explores the variety and limits of the discourse on religions in contemporary Russia, and thus establishes the field in which the current work is situated. The goal is to give a broad overview of the various contributors to that discourse. The chapter introduces the major Orthodox and Islamic establishments, and also the respective fringes and those operating beyond the large confessional bureaucracies. Here I denote the "mainstream" discourse on religions in Russia, and reveal the tensions inherent in this concept. Any such enterprise must by definition reduce the complexity of the issue, and my reason for taking the risk is that this approach offers an explanatory matrix-shaped paradigm for situating various trends, within both Orthodoxy and Islam. The discussion in this chapter is therefore a kind of propedeuticum for readers who are interested in the political relevance of the sociolinguistic case studies that follow.

While Chapter 2 thus covers both Islam and Christian Orthodoxy from a political discourse perspective, with the state as a major bridge between the two confessions, the subsequent six chapters focus on case studies from either Islam or Orthodoxy. These chapters are organized in two parts: Part I (Chapters 3-5) studies the Russian language of Islam, while Part II (Chapters 6-8) presents case studies on the Christian use of the Tatar language.

Part I

The first chapter of Part I (Chapter 3) explores linguistic and rhetorical strategies of an Islamic official who operates at the federal level and claims the leadership of Russia's entire Muslim community: Mufti Ravil' Gainutdin, chair of the Moscow-based Spiritual Directorate of Muslims of the Russian Federation (DUM RF) and also chair of the Council of Muftis of Russia (SMR). I focus on the sociolinguistic practices of the

Moscow Muftiate, and analyse strategies of "borrowing" Christian terms. The analysis reveals a close resemblance between the lexical choices and argumentation of Gainutdin and those of the ROC Patriarch; the use of Russianism here signals the Mufti's embeddedness in Russia's mainstream discourse on religion and his attempt to comply with the state's domestic and foreign politics. I will demonstrate that the DUM RF leadership offers an interpretation of Russia's Islam, which they themselves define as *Rossiiskoe Musul'manstvo* (lit. 'Russia's Islam/Muslimness').

Chapter 4 shows that the Russianism variant is not only used and standardized from the official top, by the Tatar Islamic elites of Russia's Muftiates: I examine conversion narratives of ethnic Russian Muslims, and argue that converts use vocabulary that is similar to Mufti Gainutdin's, although carrying different meanings. These "new" Muslims employ the Russian language to nationalize Islam; that is, by using Russian that is free of Arabic and Persian loanwords, the converts construct the new *russkii* Islam – more "rational", "pure" and "noble" than the "Islams" of ethnic minorities and Muslim labour migrants living in Russia.

The last chapter of Part I (Chapter 5) is on Viacheslav Polosin, a former Orthodox priest who, after converting to Islam, attempted to occupy an alternative niche of theologically educated and non-systemic Islamic authority. In this chapter I trace the evolution of his interpretation of Russia's/Russian Islam and his use of the Russian language to endorse his projects. Polosin became popular among Russia's Muslims in the early 2000s, initially as an outspoken critic of the Church and the state; within a decade, however, he made his way into Russia's institutionalized Islam and became a mediator between the political elites and major Islamic officials in Russia's regions. This indicates how Polosin's initially marginal views – a definition of Russian Islam that combines elements from both DUM RF and the ethnic Russian converts' rhetoric – gradually became mainstream, in competition with but also closely following the increasingly conservative Church and state agenda.

Part II

The second part of the thesis also consists of three chapters, which present case studies on the Tatar language as used for Christianity.

Chapter 6 analyses texts and speeches by another religious entrepreneur, Orthodox Christian missionary Daniil Sysoev. Reproducing strategies of Orthodox missionaries from the imperial period of Russian history, Sysoev primarily targeted Muslim minorities in the Volga-Ural region, whom he tried to convert to Orthodoxy, but also Muslim migrants in Russia's big cities: together with his disciples, Sysoev

translated religious literature, proselytized on the streets and organized trips to Muslims villages. Like Viacheslav Polosin, Sysoev operated on the fringe of the religious institution, in his case, the ROC. Sysoev was truly the ROC's *enfant terrible*, whose aggressive proselytism strategies ran counter to the rather weak missionary policies of the ROC, although the Church did not in fact denounce him. After the priest was assassinated (arguably by a Muslim extremist) in 2009, the ROC came to adopt some of Sysoev's standpoints and even suggested that he should be canonized. As I will show in this chapter, Sysoev envisioned and pushed the boundaries of the ROC toward a more assertive, and even aggressive modus operandi.

Chapter 7 puts a spotlight on the Orthodox Christian community of Kräshens in Tatarstan, who use a variant of Tatar standardized by the imperial missionaries whose tactics Sysoev tried to reintroduce. Today Kräshen nationalists present this language as a marker of a distinct Kräshen ethnic identity, and as evidence of their own historical and cultural path, which parted from that of Muslim Tatars. This struggle for recognition as an ethnic minority takes place against the background of Tatarstan's attempt to maintain a favourable relationship with Moscow: in this power game, the "Kräshen issue" has become an element of Moscow's political leverage on the (predominantly "Muslim") Tatarstani authorities. This places the Kräshens in a difficult political and historical situation, because for Tatar ("Muslim") elites, the common Tatar community is cherished against a historically uneasy relationship with the dominant Russian state. At the same time, the majority of Kräshens see the revival of their language primarily as an attempt to resist amalgamation into either Muslim Tatar or Russian Christian national communities, and thus as an expression of their emancipation from both.

Chapter 8 compares three recently completed translations of the New Testament into Tatar and traces denomination-specific lexical choices: one of the translations explicitly targets Orthodox Christian Tatar readers, while another addresses Tatar-speaking Jehovah's Witnesses; the third translation was presented as a denomination-neutral translation, made in cooperation with an international organization, the United Bible Societies. In all three cases, I focus on new Christian meanings assigned to Arabic vocabulary that in Tatar often has strong Islamic connotations. This strategy, I argue, helps to produce more natural and easily understood texts; and whereas some translation teams describe their goal as to merely introduce Tatar readers to the Bible – as an important "part of the world's literary heritage" – in the hands of Orthodox and evangelical Christian missionaries, these texts become a tool of successful proselytism.

The religion that these missionaries promote is thus Christian in content, but Tatar in form, which makes the "non-standard" religious affiliation more palatable.

All the case studies therefore have a common linguistic axis: they are grouped into Part I, which analyses Islamic Russian, and Part II, which discusses Christian Tatar. The two parts also have another common thread, related to the preceding discussion of the general religious discourse (Chapter 2) and concerning types of authority that sanction linguistic change. That is, each part looks at how official religious elites and organizations (Chapters 3 and 8), in-between communities (Chapters 4 and 7) and, finally, charismatic individuals (Chapters 5 and 6) exercise their influence to introduce new forms and meanings into religious language. Part I studies these phenomena by starting with the official elites and going down to the grassroots; Part II takes the opposite direction by beginning with a fringe movement and then moving up to the translation projects of major organizations.

At the conceptual level, the focus of this thesis is on translation. In the narrow sense, this means that throughout the chapters I look at how the translation of religious concepts and terms from one language into another serves as a tool to claim and exert religious and political authority by emphasizing or concealing cultural "foreignness", and challenging or reinforcing existing power hierarchies. In a broader sense, I examine how not only terms but also religious knowledge, identities and narratives are "translated" and moved across religions. This point of view entails that most chapters raise questions of mission and religious conversion from and to Orthodoxy, Islam, Protestantism and other faiths. These transitions affect the present-day relationship between spiritual communities as well as the interaction with the state and the construction of ethnic and national identities.

By and large, the chapters of this thesis scrutinize the variety of voices in the two biggest and most influential religious communities in present-day Russia. Muslim and Orthodox Christian voices may challenge and jeopardize, or conversely strengthen and contribute to Russia's mainstream discourse on religion. How do we define this mainstream discourse? Who are its key gatekeepers that try to protect it from re-interpretation? And how strong are those who offer alternative meanings and strive to change the current state of affairs? These issues will be raised in the next chapter.