The Russian orthodox and Islamic languages in the Russian federation

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What happens to the Russian language if it is used by Muslims? Bustanov and Kemper (2012) analyzed the use of Islamic terminology in a variety of texts by contemporary Muslim authors from several regions of the Russian Federation. This led them to the hypothesis that one can speak of a new „Islamo-Russian" sociolect which comprises several variants (Arabism, Russianism, Academism). These findings are now discussed through comparison with Irina V. Bugaeva's research on an Christian Russian Orthodox „religiolect" of the Russian language.

Что происходит с русским языком, когда он используется мусульманами? В экспериментальном исследовании, Бустанов и Кемпер (2012) проанализировали использование исламской терминологии в различных текстах современных исламских авторов из нескольких регионов Российской Федерации. Это привело авторов к гипотезе о возможном существовании «исламского русского» социолекта. Этот социолект включает несколько вариантов (арабизация, русификация, академизм), каждый из которых имеет свои формы использования исламской терминологии. Эти находки обсуждаются здесь в связи с исследованиями И.В. Бугаевой православного христианского «религиолекта» русского языка.

In this contribution[1] we would like to draw attention to the Islamic discourse in contemporary Russia, and specifically to the relation between confessions and language. This is the focus of a new research project that will be carried out at the University of Amsterdam, with generous funding by the Dutch Scientific Organisation. This paper is based on a preliminary study that we conducted in 2012 (Bustanov and Kemper 2012).

Our point of departure is the observation of an emerging all-Russian Islamic discourse in Russia, in which the various "ethnic brackets" of the Russian Federation are gradually being broken up. While in the Soviet Union the Muslim populations were largely assigned to their ethno-national administrative units (e.g. the autonomous republics of Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Daghestan, Chechnya, Kabardino-Balkaria and so forth), internal migration as well as the immigration of Muslims from other areas to Russia has led to a very new picture. Today Tatars in Russia are almost everywhere in direct contact with Muslims from the Caucasus and Central Asia, and they all participate in the establishment of Islamic mosques and associations and in the booming field of Islamic literature and journalism, and of course in the "Islamic internet". As a result of migration processes in the Russian Federation, Islamic trends and movements that have their origins in particular regions of Russia are now spreading far beyond their old "ethnic homelands". While Tatars have always been present in most parts of Russia, today also Sufi brotherhoods from the North Caucasus (for example the Daghestani Naqshbandiyya and Shadhiliyya) are attracting local adherents who reside in Tatarstan, Moscow and Siberia, and who belong to many different ethnic groups and nationalities. At the same time not only Tatar Muslims but also Daghestani and Central Asian Muslims are

increasingly using the Russian language, as a means for inter-ethnic Islamic communication.

Against this background we argue that Russian is currently becoming the new major medium of the all-Russian (Federal) Islamic discourse; and that this leads to the development of a new "Russian language of Islam". After the end of the enforced isolation of Russia's Muslims in the Soviet period, today a wealth of Arabic Islamic loanwords is pouring into the Russian language, from both the national Muslim languages—like Tatar, Avar and Bashkir—and from abroad, through Arabic, Turkish and Persian. It will be a matter of time until these terms find their way into the codified Russian dictionaries.

This raises a huge number of questions that have so far not been studied at all. What happens to the Russian language if it is being used by Muslims, for Islamic purposes? Can we define the new idiom as a coherent "Russian Islamic sociolect", as a new variant of the Russian standard language for Islam in Russia? If yes, how does this sociolect look like, how can it be defined, what are its characteristic features, and where do they come from? For which purposes is Islamic Russian being used, and by whom? What is the relation between oral and written "Islamo-Russian"? And finally, how does the development of Islamic Russian relate to the establishment of religious sociolects pertaining to other confessions in Russia?

In what follows we will first have a look at the "Russian Orthodox Sociolect"; this term that has been coined by Irina Vladimirovna Bugaeva (Moscow), who has done comprehensive research on the Russian language of Orthodox Christians. In the second part of this paper we

will briefly present our own preliminary studies on what we have called (before we even got acquainted with Bugaeva's studies) the "Islamo-Russian sociolect". We will then describe the differences in our approaches, and we will use Bugaeva's path-breaking work to raise a number of new questions that we have not looked at so far.

THE RUSSIAN ORTHODOX SOCIOLECT

In her publications on various aspects of the Russian language of Orthodox Christians, Irina Bugaeva uses the term "Orthodox sociolect" for both the spoken language of Russian Orthodox persons and for the written language used by contemporary Orthodox authors. Bugaeva treats a sociolect as a variation of the literary (standard) language that is characterized by its pool of users. She distinguishes "Orthodox Russian" from the Russian standard language on all major levels, including the lexicon, pronunciation, grammar and syntax. The religious sociolect also has a specific phraseology and orthography, and characteristic is also its employment for specific religious genres. "Orthodox Russian", in Bugaeva's definition, is heavily influenced by Church Slavonic, but it also needs to be differentiated from the latter.

The use of Church-Slavonic vocabulary (lexicon) is certainly the most prominent feature of the new Orthodox sociolect. Bugaeva identifies specific terms of Church Slavonic origin as "confessionalisms". To these belong terms that have a different meaning than in the Russian standard language, like the verb *otchityvat'*, which in standard Russian means "to tell off, to scould" [equivalent to *rugat'*] but in the Orthodox sociolect stands for "driving out demons by special prayers". Similarly, *podvig*, which in the standard language has the meaning of a

(one-time) "heroic feat", has other meanings in the Christian sociolect, where it denotes the internal (and long-standing) personal effort to struggle for salvation.

Similarly, Bugaeva describes how a distinct Church Slavonic pronunciation enters the "Orthodox Russian" sociolect; examples would be *izbávitel'* (instead of the literary Russian *izbavítel'*), or *plotskíi* (instead of *plótskii*). Church Slavonic influences can also be identified with regard to word formation, for example with other affixes like in *zashchítitel'* (instead of *zashchítnik*). Also syntactical constructions can be different (2010, 18–19; 2009, 80–85).

With distinctive elements on all of these levels, Bugaeva argues that "Orthodox Russian" represents a distinctive linguistic system, which she calls the "Orthodox Russian sociolect". This sociolect (or social dialect) is understood as an expression of a specific religious mentality, of the religious world-view of Russian Orthodox Christians. It serves as a continuous testimony of the user's faith, and is also used also outside of direct Church contexts (2010, 14–15; 2006a, 119–129).

The emerging Russian Orthodox language is a result of the end of the ideological restrictions of the Soviet period, which made it possible for Orthodox Christians to develop their language in a booming field of Orthodox literature (with many genres) as well as in everyday speech.

Bugaeva describes the Orthodox sociolect as a rather homogenous phenomenon. The sociolect is broad enough to develop various functional styles, including an "official-business style", a "journalistic", a "scientific" and a "literature style", in addition to a style of spoken

language (*razgovornyi stil'*). This is a useful distinction; it suggests that users of the Orthodox sociolect can switch between functional styles while remaining within the boundaries of the religious sociolect. That is, an Orthodox priest will use a one style in his sermon and another when he is talking to individual believers in a private context; and a teacher of an Orthodox seminary will use a different style when writing a course book than a monk who produces spiritual texts. In addition, speakers/writers of "Orthodox Russian" are of course able to switch from the religious sociolect to the standard language (or to other variants of the latter), according to the situation.

Next to this differentiation into functional styles Bugaeva also suggests that the Orthodox sociolect has three different levels, which she in some of her publications calls styles or registers. She distinguishes between an "elevated" register (especially used in official and "celebratory" [or ritual]) contexts, often characterized not only by Church Slavonic forms but also by Greek, Hebrew or Latin loanwords, and a second, "neutral" register (used, for example, in communication between Church personnel and parish members). Thirdly, there is an "everyday lower style" (which she calls *obikhodno-snizhennyi stil'*, *snizhennaia razgovornaia rech'*, or *prostorechnyi stil'*) (2010, 13, 2007, 167–177). Examples for such distinctions would be the equivalents *evkharistiia* (elevated), *liturgiia* (neutral), *obednia* (colloquial) (2006b, 258–262).

At the same time Bugaeva argues that all of these three styles, including the "lower" level, have a positive connotation, in both written and oral use. Religious language is elevated per se, because it expresses divine contents even in everyday communication. And as she finds that the term "dialect" (and thus also "sociolect", as "social dialect") conveys

an attitude of being of a "lower" order by comparison to the standard language, she finds it preferable to speak not of an "Orthodox sociolect" but of a "religiolect" (2010, 13). This field of research is very new, and Bugaeva is a pioneer in thoroughly rethinking the religious aspects of the contemporary Russian language.

"ISLAMO-RUSSIAN" AS A SOCIOLECT

Let us now have a look at the Russian language of Islam, as the counterpart to what Bugaeva describes as the Orthodox religiolect. This field is so far completely unknown territory. In 2012, we conducted a test study in which we tried to map this territory by analyzing a set of Russian Islamic texts that had been produced by various Muslim authors from the whole range of the Islamic spectrum in the contemporary Russian Federation. Like Bugaeva (but independent of her work) we asked whether we can speak of the development of an "Islamo-Russian sociolect" (Kemper 2010, 403–416). We have to admit that we are still far from having a clear picture about this issue; our study comprised only about twenty Islamic texts from various contexts, so all of our findings are still preliminary and have to be seen as first hypotheses that still need to be supported by more material. While the picture is probably much more complex than any of us assumes at the moment, there are many similarities with Bugaeva's research, but also some differences. Let us now discuss our method, and our preliminary findings, in the light of Bugaeva's theory of the Orthodox sociolect.

It should be noted right from the start that we are not trained linguists; rather, we are historians of Islam in Russia, specifically in Tatarstan, Daghestan, Kazakhstan and Western Siberia, with a phil-

2
See e.g. Bustanov 2013a, Bustanov 2013b, Kemper 1998 [2008], Kemper 2005.

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E.g. Gainutdin 2011.

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E.g. Khakim 2007, Khakim 2010.

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 E.g. Sheikh Said-Afandi al'-Chirkavi 2002.

ological grounding in Arabic and Turkic/Tatar studies.[2] Accordingly, one of our major interests is to identify the breaks and continuities in the Islamic discourse in Russia since the 19th century; and this clearly influenced the way how we approached the issue of language. In our pre-study we analyzed contemporary Russian Islamic texts first of all from a historical perspective (how do today's authors link up to pre-revolutionary traditions? What is new?), and thus from the perspective of the user groups. We were therefore interested in how language use is connected to specific interpretations of Islam, and to the religious communities and groups that uphold these interpretations. Consequently in our selection of texts we tried to cover the whole breadth of the Islamic spectrum in contemporary Russia, from the writings of official (i.e., state-supported) Muftis (like the influential Mufti of the European part of Russia, Ravil Gainutdin in Moscow)[3] over individual Muslim intellectuals (like the historian Rafael' Khakim, the pioneer in the development of a secularist academic "Tatar Euro-Islam" in Kazan)[4] to Sufi shaykhs (like the late Said-Afandi [b. 1937, assassinated in 2012] from Daghestan)[5] and extreme Salafis and even Chechen underground radicals. Also, we confined ourselves largely to the study of published texts (including online), leaving aside the question of spoken religious language that has been central in Bugaeva's research on the Orthodox socio- or religiolect. Spoken "Islamo-Russian" is without doubt a most promising field of linguistic research as well, but we have to leave this field aside for the moment.

Furthermore, in our study of texts from Muslim thinkers and authorities we focused on the lexicon as the most important feature, paying less attention to phonetics, syntaxis, and grammar of "Islamic Russian". Accordingly, our study is so far less comprehensive and systematic.

Important to note is that Bugaeva's Orthodox sociolect feeds from only one other language that is external to standard literary and spoken Russian—namely Church Slavonic. By contrast, we argue that Islamo-Russian has several "provider languages". The most important of these is of course Arabic, as the language of the Islamic holy texts. Arabic terms can come directly into Islamo-Russian (by translations from the Arabic), but most probably Islamo-Russian has obtained most of its Arabic-origin terminology in an indirect way, namely through Russia's national languages like Tatar and Bashkir (from the Volga-Urals) or Avar, Kumyk and Chechen (from the North Caucasus), to name but a few of the possible entry gates. The picture is even more complicated when we take into account borrowings from Persian and Ottoman/Turkish, either directly or again via the national languages. The question of the origins of the Islamic terminology in Russian Muslim texts is thus a very tricky issue that needs historical analysis. The impact of these national languages, we can assume, must also be central in any study of *spoken* Islamo-Russian, perhaps leading to the identification of "ethnic dialects" of Islamo-Russian – for example a Tatar version and another that is characterized by native speakers of Avar or Kazakh, for example. This would be a major difference between the Islamic sociolect and the Orthodox one, for the latter is, in Bugaeva's conception, spread evenly all over Russia and also independent of the users' (first) native language (2010, 8). Still, also Bugaeva takes into consideration the transfer of Russian Orthodox linguistic features into other languages, specifically Finnish (2011, 56–61).

But also in written texts we could identify a certain amount of influences from national languages; this is often reflected in the phonology, especially in vocalization (with Avar Islamic terms remaining closer

to the Arabic original than Tatar terms, for instance), and also in con-sonantism (e.g. the typical Tatar [g] for the Arabic letter *'ayn*, as for instance in Arabic *bid'a* "unlawful innovation" becoming *bidgat'* in Tatar). At the same time many Muslim intellectuals tend to employ the Russian academic transcriptions of Arabic terms, thus following not any native languages but the scientific rendering of Islamic terms by Russian Orientalists like Ignatii Krachkovskii (1883–1951), whose Russian translation/paraphrase of the Qur'an is very popular also among believers in the Russian Federation; similarly, also the Arabic-Russian dictionary composed by Arabist Kharlampii Baranov (1892–1980) had a huge impact on the framework of Russian Islamic vocabulary. And finally, there is a growing group of ethnic Russian Muslims, converts to Islam, often with higher education, who have established their niche in the Islamic discourse; some of them are familiar with Western academic discourses of Islam and tend to employ not "autochthonous" national forms (since they try to isolate themselves from the historical Muslim communities of Russia) but derive their vocabulary from English or French text corpora, especially from social studies. The multiple trans-mittance paths and borrower languages make "Islamo-Russian" very different from the case of the Russian Orthodox sociolect, where only Church Slavonic is identified as the provider language.

With these limitations in mind, let us now briefly discuss our prelim-inary results.

Our major suggestion is that also "Islamic Russian" has several "vari-ants". Here we mean not functional styles (literary, official, scientific etc.), as Bugaeva does with regard to the Orthodox sociolect, but vari-ants that are connected to different Islamic interpretations. Accord-

ingly, these variants are characteristic for certain Islamic groups, and not freely interchangeable.

Furthermore, in our study of Islamic terminology in Russian we took the use of Arabic-origin loanwords as the major analytical category. This led us to the hypothesis that there are three variants of Islamic Russian:

The first of these three variants we called **"Arabism"**. We argue that "Arabism" is the variant of "Islamo-Russian" that is characterized by the use of an almost unlimited amount of Arabic terms, often without translation into Russian. Arabic nouns can easily become loanwords by subjecting them to the Russian inclination. This massive use of Arabic loanwords (borrowed from national languages or directly from the Arabic) leads to the production of insider texts that can hardly be understood by non-Muslims, or even by "born Muslims" who are not familiar with the specific ideological and dogmatic frameworks of the respective groups that use this vocabulary. We found that this variant, "Arabism", is most characteristic for Sufi and Salafi groups in various parts of the Russian Federation. The insider character of the style corresponds to the focus that these groups put on internal coherence, and on isolating the own group from others.

A second variant that we identified is **"Academism"**. This variant is mostly used by highly educated Muslim intellectuals, not by shaykhs and preachers. "Academism" combines a limited amount of Islamic terminology, often in academic word forms, in combination with the terminology of non-religious academic, cultural and ideological frameworks. Examples for this variant of "Academism" would be, in

Tatarstan, the language employed by Rafael' Khakim in his formulation of a liberal Tatar "Euro-Islam", and before him by Tatar historians of the 1970s like Iakh"ia Abdullin, the well-known father of the "Tatar Marxist enlightenment" thesis (1976). Also some prominent ethnic Russian converts to Islam use "Academism" in their political Islamic writings, albeit not in Marxist or liberal forms (which they detest) but in Western academic sociological slang forms. What is characteristic for "Academism" in all of its appearances is that Islamic terminology is often "secularized", that is, taken out of the original religious and ritualistic frameworks and thereby obtaining general humanistic connotations.

The third variant, finally, we call **"Russianism"**. Russianism is the opposite of "Arabism" because it avoids the use of Arabic loanwords and instead tries to fully translate Arabic-origin terms into Russian. This is probably the most interesting variant in so far as it skilfully adapts Russian words — of Church Slavonic origin! — to Islamic concepts. Thus *Allah* becomes *Bog*, as if the Islamic understanding of god was identical to the Orthodox one; and "piety" (Arabic, *taqwa*) is *bogoboiaznennost'*. Similarly, the Arabic *'aqida* often becomes *dogma*, and "consensus of the scholars" (*ijma'*) is rendered as "canonical", as if Islam had dogmas that are stipulated (canonized) by highest religious councils; and *imams* (community-appointed prayer leaders in the mosques) are rendered as "clergy", as if Islam had such an ordained category of functionaries appointed by a higher religious authority. (The use of such "Christianizing equivalents" for Muslim concepts of course goes back to the establishment, by Catherine the Great, of state-appointed Muftiates in Imperial Russia; and Soviet and post-Soviet Muftiates by and large inherited their functions of trying to control the Muslim communities). The obvious purpose of "Russianism", as one variant of

"Islamo-Russian", is therefore to reach out not only to Russian-speaking Muslims of all backgrounds who lack Arabic skills, or who are as of yet unfamiliar with Islam, but also to Russian Orthodox Christians, to the non-Muslim majority population, and to the Russian authorities. We found that this variant is mostly employed by the prominent Muftis in Russia, who are constantly in an official dialogue with Russian Church leaders and with the local and central governments (from which they obtain resources and recognition); the major task of the Muftis, and thus also of "Russianism" as their idiom, is to convince non-Muslims of the peaceful character of Islam. The Muftis therefore find themselves in a triangle with the Orthodox Church and the Russian state, and some leading Muftis clearly try to follow the strategies of the Church leaders for establishing Islam firmly as a state-recognized "traditional" religion of Russia; they thus benefit from the ongoing "re-traditionalization" in Russian society at large, and from the growing political role of the Orthodox Church for fostering a patriotic identity.[6]

The most striking result of our experiment was that each of these three variants is employed not by one ideological faction within the Islamic spectrum but by "enemy pairs", by opponents in the Islamic spectrum of interpretations: thus "Arabism" is used not only by Sufi brotherhood leaders but also by their enemies, the Salafis; similarly, "Academism" is used by both Marxist scholars and Western-minded secular liberals, and by ethnic Russian proponents of an Iranian political model as well as by Russian converts who represent arch-conservative Sunni trends in Russia. With other words, each of the three variants cuts across the overall Islamic discourse (and divides the Islamic Russian sociolect into interpretational segments). At the same time each variant also functions as a "bracket" that holds the whole discourse together, by

[6]
For the increasing role of the ROC see for instance Papkova 2011. See also Bennett 2011.

bridging ideological or dogmatic gaps between those interpretational segments. Furthermore, we found that the variants are not restricted to individual ethnic backgrounds —another factor that provides consistency to the overall discursive field of "*rossiiskii islam*".

We should emphasize that these three variants are archetypes; individual Muslim authors develop their own "styles", often mixing elements of all three variants, mostly depending on the occasion and the audience they wish to address. This means that there is an important element of code-switching in the Russian Islamic discourse. One master of code-switching, from "Arabism" over "Academism" to "Russianism", was the outstanding Tatar scholar and publicist Valiulla Iakupov (b. 1963, assassinated in Kazan in 2012). Valiulla Iakupov was also a very specific case because he wrote in both Tatar and Russian; and while he always emphasized the need to maintain Tatar as Russia's foremost Islamic language, he contributed greatly to the development of the Russian Islamic language. Finally, from Iakupov we also know that he was aware of the linguistic changes that have come into being through the agency of individual authors of various religious trends (Bustanov and Kemper 2013, 809–835). One of our project goals will be to delve deeper into the question in how far Muslim authors reflect on their contribution to the development of "Islamo-Russian" as a conscious and purposeful activity.

CONCLUSIONS

Our preliminary study on Islamic Russian thus led us to a different methodology than the one employed by Bugaeva in her work on the Orthodox Russian sociolect. There are still many unresolved problems

for both religious idioms, and scholars will have to continue developing new approaches and terminologies. As to the Orthodox sociolect, the question remains whether it is at its core not just a selective "renewal" (or "de-archization") of Church Slavonic; this problem does not occur with regard to the Russian Islamic language, for here we see no revitalization of an earlier religious language but the introduction of new and foreign elements into standard Russian (a process that of course started in the medieval period, but that has taken on new magnitudes in the last decades). With regard to the Islamic Russian language one major question is whether it can be described, like Orthodox Russian, as a full system that comprises not only the lexicon but also the levels of syntax, grammar and phonology. Much more work is necessary especially with regard to spoken language.

Comparing the different perspectives it is striking that Bugaeva describes the Orthodox language as one coherent whole, with *vertical* levels (high-neutral-lower styles), whereas we understand the Islamo-Russian language as highly fragmented *horizontally,* by the use of Arabic or Russian or academic terminology (in addition to influences from the various national languages spoken by Muslims in the Russian Federation). This of course reflects a more general difference between Orthodox Christianity and Islam in Russia, namely the highly fragmented Islamic spectrum, with many regional and local Muftiates, schools, movements, and splinter groups, and with very distinct ethnic traditions, compared to the clear hierarchy and more homogeneous structure of the Orthodox Church. The linguistic analysis of the Islamic discourse can therefore not be separated from the analysis of religious and ideological interpretations. ❧

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Резюме

Данная статья посвящена изучению русского религиозного социолекта, с особым вниманием к исламу. Что происходит с русским языком, когда он используется мусульманами? В экспериментальном исследовании, Бустанов и Кемпер (2012) проанализировали использование исламской терминологии в различных текстах современных исламских авторов из нескольких регионов Российской Федерации. Это привело авторов к гипотезе о возможном существовании «исламского русского» социолекта. Этот социолект включает несколько вариантов (арабизация, русификация, академизм), каждый из которых имеет свои формы использования исламской терминологии (соответственно: через прямые арабские заимствования, через хороший перевод на литературный русский язык с основой на православной христианской лексике, или же светские академические формы). Важно сказать, что частные варианты не являются специфическими для одной интерпретационной (социальной, догматической или политической) группы внутри российского исламского дискурса, а могут быть использованы разными акторами, зачастую взаимными врагами (салафиты и суфии, соперничающие муфтияты, конкурирующие светские авторы). Кроме того, отдельные авторы могут перескакивать с одного варианта на другой, иногда внутри одного текста, с тем чтобы обращаться к разной аудитории. В предлагаемой читателю статье эти находки обсуждаются в сравнении с исследованиями И.В. Бугаевой православного христианского «религиолекта» русского языка. Главным отличием концепции Бугаевой о русском православном религиолекте и работой Бустанова и Кемпера об

«исламском русском» является то, что православные «варианты» Бугаевой вертикальны (уровни статуса, от церковных церемоний до бытового разговорного языка) и имеют только один «язык-донор» (церковнославянский язык). Бустанов и Кемпер разбирают горизонтальные слои ислама в России (различные исламские организации из разных уголков РФ), и они фокусируют внимание на влияние разных языков-доноров, включая национальные языки (например татарский), а также иностранные языки (арабский) и современный церковнославянский язык. Дальнейшие исследования должны показать, может ли «исламский русский», так же как православный религиолект Бугаевой, быть описан как целостная система, или имеем ли мы дело с религиозным сленгом, характеризующимся только особой терминологией.

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