

**Project "Cognitive and linguistic consequences of translation. Comparative approaches"**  
International workshops

Conference

**"Language contact and translation in religious context.**

**Comparative approaches"**

**May 24-26, 2018**



Annunciation. Jan Henryk Rosen, Armenian Cathedral of the Assumption of Mary, Lviv, Ukraine

24-25 May: INaLCO, Salons d'honneur, 2 rue de Lille, Paris

26 May: 178, boulevard Vincent Auriol (Timhotel)

Organization:

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## **Language contact and translation in religious context. Comparative approaches**

Conference, 24-26 May, Paris, France

The conference “Language contact and translation in religious context. Comparative approaches” brings together anthropologists and linguists working on conversion, cultural transmission and translation theory, as well as on various case studies, whose geography comprises Oceania, Amazonia, Yucatan, Sub-Saharan Africa, Middle East, Europe, Alaska and Chukotka (Russia), and whose temporal frame spreads from the Hellenistic era to the Spanish colonization of the Americas and to the present time.

The main focus of the conference are the linguistic, cognitive, and broader cultural consequences of ethnolinguistic contact which religious conversion typically presupposes. Indeed, religious conversion often brings in the issues of language contact and multilingualism: the original authoritative documents representing the doctrine are typically written in a language different from the commonly spoken vernacular; another dimension of the multilingual situation is the presence of missionaries or other ecclesiastic authority; finally, religious conversion usually goes hand in hand with the process of commensuration and translation – of the doctrine, of some minimal set of religious texts. The main questions of the conference are the modalities of the ethnolinguistic encounter and translation accompanying religious conversion, whether, and how, the language gets altered as a result of these processes, and what are the broader cognitive and sociocultural consequences that accompany the linguistic transformation.

The religious register is often different from the commonly spoken vernacular. The differences may be due to the fact that the religious register is shaped by a translation process which is especially favorable for interference phenomena, such as borrowing and calquing, lexical and grammatical, but also modification of semantic value or introduction of neologisms. Appeared in translated texts, some of these interference phenomena come to index the religious register in general. Further on, those language contact phenomena that primarily appeared in the religious context may spread to other areas of language use, potentially becoming a default variant. The total missionization projects, such as those that were deployed in Central America by Catholic missionaries, aimed at a coordinated transformation of all areas of social life, so the transformation of language was also total. But even in the absence of an external coercive power religious language is often endowed with high social prestige and may become influential beyond the church: typically, in the process of development of secular literature. However, language change in religious context may be slow, may have various scopes, and is not guaranteed, as different internal and external factors may intervene in this process.

The conference takes language in the broadest sense possible, including gestures, iconography, mental schemas, pragmatics, language ideology, but also, obviously, spoken and written language. The conference participants will address the questions of the modalities of missionary encounter, practice and process of negotiation of meaning in religious translation, missionary language prescription and some of its linguistic and sociocultural consequences, interference phenomena in translation and their consequent spreading (or lack thereof) into other types of texts; and pragmatic consequences of the ethnolinguistic encounter.

The first two days of the conference will take place at the Salons of INaLCO, 2 rue de Lille, metro station Saint-Germain-des-Prés, 75007, Paris. The general discussion on the third day will take place at 178, boulevard Vincent Auriol (Timhotel), metro station Place d’Italie, 75013, Paris.

The conference is supported by a grant from the Fyssen Foundation, France, and by the hosting research unit, LLACAN, CNRS.

## Day 1. May 24. The Salons of INaLCO, 2 rue de Lille

- 9:30—10:00 Welcome coffee
- 10:00—10:30 KHACHATURYAN, Maria. University of Helsinki / LLACAN, CNRS  
**Introduction**
- 10:30—12:00 **Pragmatic consequences of conversion and translation**
- KALLINEN, Timo. University of Eastern Finland  
*Pagan, Secular, and Christian: modern transformations of a Ghanaian libation ritual*
- MENTA, Cyril. UC Berkeley  
*Transmitting is translating. Pankararu and Pankararé Indians ways of transmitting/translating ritual chants*
- BRIGNON, Thomas. University of Toulouse Jean Jaurès  
*Converting Birds. Pragmatic Consequences of Translating an Animal Exemplum into Guarani (Jesuit Missions of Paraguay, 1724)*
- 12:00—13:30 Lunch
- 13:30—14:30 **Plenary**
- SELEZNEV, Mikhail. National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow  
*Metaphors they lived by: the metaphors of the Hebrew Bible in the Old Greek and modern Russian translations*
- 14:30—15:00 Coffee Break
- 15:00—16:00 **Semitic translations**
- CASSUTO, Philippe. University of Aix-Marseille  
*Targum de l'Ancien Testament, version, traduction ou interprétation*
- SKAF, Roula. SEDYL, CNRS  
*Peshitta, Syriac Bible, a translated version*
- 16:00—16:30 Coffee break
- 16:30—18:00 **Ecclesiastic translation and literary languages**
- PORKHOMOVSKY, Victor. Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences / Lomonosov Moscow State University  
*Bible translations and language standardization*
- PANOV, Vladimir. Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences / University of Vilnius  
*Buddhism and literary Buryat language*
- SITCHINA, Dmitri. National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow  
*Church Slavonic elements in Ukrainian and Belarusian: between markers of "culture" and "Russianness"*
- 18:00—18:30 Discussion

## Day 2. May 25. The Salons of INaLCO, 2 rue de Lille

9:30–10:00 Coffee, breakfast

### 10:00–12:00 **Language contact in the ecclesiastic context. New World**

VYDRIN, Valentin. INaLCO / LLACAN, CNRS

*Some religious terms in translations of Bible and Coran in Manding*

VAPNARSKY, Valentina. Centre EREA du Laboratoire d'Ethnologie et de Sociologie Comparative, CNRS

*The conversion of the future: of how the missionaries translated their future into Yucatec Maya and what happened next*

ZNAMENSKI, Andrei. University of Memphis

*"In the Beginning There Was No Word": Spiritual Dialogues between Athabaskan and Russian Missionaries, 1840s-1920s"*

KIBRIK, Andrej A. Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences / Moscow State University

*Russian cultural and linguistic influence upon Upper Kuskokwim*

12:00–13:30 Lunch

### 13:30–14:30 **Language contact in the ecclesiastic context. Europe**

PARINA, Elena. Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences / University of Marburg

*Translations of religious texts from Latin into Middle Welsh: a specific language? a specific genre?*

DRINKA, Bridget. University of Texas at San Antonio

*Language contact on the Iberian peninsula*

14:30–15:00 Coffee break

### 15:00–16:30 **Texts, images, orality**

BARON, Jacopo. EHESS

*Continuities and discontinuities. A reflection over a hundred years of documented sand drawing practice on Ambrym island (Vanuatu)*

KHACHATURYAN, Maria. University of Helsinki / LLACAN, CNRS

*Linguistic consequences of mediated conversions: the case of Mano and Kpelle (Guinea)*

16:30–17:00 Discussion

## Day 3. May 26. 178, boulevard Vincent Auriol (Timhotel)

9:30–10:00 Coffee, breakfast

### 10:00–12:00 **General discussion**

Discussants: William F. HANKS (UC Berkeley), Carlo SEVERI (EHESS / LAS; to be confirmed)