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Conversion to Orthodox Christianity in Uganda: A Hundred Years of Spiritual Encounter with Modernity, 1919–2019

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Abstract: In 1919, three Ugandan Anglicans converted to Orthodox Christianity, as they became sure that this was Christianity's original and only true form. In 1946, Ugandan Orthodox Christians aligned with the Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria. Since the 1990s, new trends in conversion to Orthodox Christianity in Uganda can be observed: one is some growth in the number of new converts to the canonical Orthodox Church, while another is the appearance of new Orthodox Churches, including parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and the Russian Orthodox Old-Rite Church. The questions we raise in this article are: Why did some Ugandans switch from other religions to Orthodox Christianity in the first half of the 20th century and in more recent years? Were there common reasons for these two developments? We argue that both processes should be understood as attempts by some Ugandans to find their own way in the modern world. Trying to escape spiritually from the impact of colonialism, post-coloniality, and globalization, they viewed Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Islam as part of the legacy they rejected. These people did not turn to African traditional beliefs either. They already firmly saw their own tradition as Christian, but were (and are) seeking its "true", "original" form. We emphasize that by rejecting post-colonial globalist modernity and embracing Orthodox Christianity as the basis of their own "alternative" modernity, these Ugandans themselves turn out to be modern products, and this speaks volumes about the nature of conversion in contemporary Africa. The article is based on field evidence collected in 2017–2019 as well as on print sources.

Keywords: Orthodox Christianity; conversion; ritualism; religiosity; Uganda; modernity; post-coloniality; globalism; anti-globalism

1. Introduction

This article focuses on encounters between Ugandan Orthodox Christian communities and processes of globalization and modernization in the 20th–21st centuries. We perceive these processes through the lens of conversion to different Orthodox Christian denominations. At first glance, it seems that the very act of becoming a Christian is a sign of globalization on the African continent and that Christianity itself is a part of the global culture. However, for Ugandans several consequential conversions from one Christian denomination to another are acts of the free will that put them on their own path in the global world. They perceive different Christian denominations as either more Western or more African. Thus, the act of choosing the "right" denomination means finding a more appropriate way for Africans to assert their cultural independence. For Africans, conversion to a

specific Christian denomination may paradoxically mean returning to their roots and rejecting global culture. By trying to escape the modernity associated with colonialism, post-coloniality and globalization, Africans are seeking to construct their own "alternative" modernity.

The field evidence for this article was collected in 2017–2019 by the present authors and their associates among Orthodox Christians of two Churches—the Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria and the Russian Orthodox Old-Rite Church. The work was done in different parts of the country: in the capital city of Kampala, in towns and villages in the central, eastern, and western parts of the country, predominantly populated by different ethnic groups—the Ganda, Soga, Nyankole, and others. The fieldwork was conducted partly in English and partly in Luganda with the help of translators, all Orthodox Christians themselves. The methods used were questionnaires, interviews (structured, semi-structured, and non-structured), and intensive observation (participant when possible). Among Christians of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria, 40 questionnaires were filled out by, and 19 interviews done with men and women of different age groups in three parishes in the vicinities of the town of Fort Portal in the west of the state. As for adherents of the Russian Orthodox Old-Rite Church, 125 questionnaires were received in all the four settlements in which they are present. This means that the questionnaires were filled out by about five-sixths of Ugandan Old Believers' total number. A total of 60 interviews with men and women aged 19 to 90 years were recorded. More than 1500 original photos and about 20 video records documented the variety of events in the religious life of Ugandan Orthodox Christians (services, the rite of baptism, classes in Sunday school, a wedding ceremony, etc.), as well as in their daily life at homes and working places. Fieldwork was complemented by examining Ugandan museum collections, memorials, and 'memory spaces' related to religious history of the country, studying written sources on it, visiting many non-Orthodox religious communities and their places of worship, as well as social institutions like schools and universities in different parts of Uganda, in order to better understand the country's landscape—religious and socio-cultural in general. We believe that the evidence at our disposal allows us to effectively approach the research problems we raise in this article.

2. The Facets of Modernity

It is necessary to clarify some aspects of "modernity", a term which is central to this article. The term emerged in the middle of the 19th century, when Karl Marx and Auguste Compte were elaborating their understanding of changes in culture and society, especially the decline of feudal society and the awakening of revolutionary tendencies (Larrain 2000, p. 13). Max Weber offered a sociological treatment of modernity in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber designated rationality and a special "modern economic order" as the main traits of modernity, which he contrasted to the "old order" and tradition (Weber 1953, p. 181). Since then, modernity has generally been associated with "Western societies" as opposed to "non-Western societies". Furthermore, the notions of modernity and modernization have become crucial for understanding changes in the 20th century, especially in colonial and post-colonial countries.

A reexamination of the notion of modernity began at the turn of the 20th century (see, e.g., Appadurai 1996; Gaonkar 2001; Wagner 2001, 2008; Therborn 2003). For the purposes of this article, we found its reinterpretation by the sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt most appropriate. Importantly for the discussion that follows, Eisenstadt noted that modernity was not a set of once and forever fixed patterns of structural changes. Even Weber and Marx implicitly spoke about different way of accessing the "new order". Eisenstadt granted the status of modernity not only to European (Western) Modernity, which he called "original", but also to "later modernities"—Eastern European, Japanese, Chinese, and others (Eisenstadt 2000, 2002, 2003; see also Ben-Rafael and Sternberg 2005; Preyer and Sussmann 2015). Advocating for "multiple modernities", Shmuel Eisenstadt rightly pointed out that "the best way to understand the contemporary world—indeed to explain the history of modernity—is to see it as a story of continual constitution and reconstitution of a multiplicity of cultural programs" (Eisenstadt 2000, p. 2). We fully agree with this argument and believe as firmly as Eisenstadt did that "modernity and Westernization are not identical" (Eisenstadt 2000, p. 2). Yet, we also agree with him that "Western patterns of modernity... enjoy historical precedence and

continue to be a basic reference point for others" (Eisenstadt 2000, pp. 2–3). The introduction of this view led to a reevaluation of relations between the Western and (post)colonial cultures.

In particular, it inspired Joel Robbins (1998, 2001) to introduce the concept of "Melanesian Christianity" as a manifestation of "local modernity". Departing from the notion of "cargo-cult", he argued that Melanesian Christianity was something more than that. It was not a false or distorted expression of European religion, but rather a Melanesian form deeply rooted in the Melanesian peoples' pre-Christian beliefs. For Robbins, to be modern means to be able to create new assumptions about human beings, their rights and agency, and in this sense "local moderns" are not "alternative" or "vernacular" moderns, but literally "local moderns", equal to "Western" moderns.

The idea that everyone can be modern in their own way has begun to spread in academic texts. In 2006, Volker Schmidt published an article in which he came to the same conclusions as Robbins. He criticized Eisenstadt's ideas for being empirically dubious. Schmidt wrote that within the concept of "multiple modernities" Eisenstadt actually considered the societies he ascribed the status of 'modern' as higher than those that were not offspring of the Axial Age civilizations. However, all societies in the contemporary world tend to be modern in this or that way and thus it would be better to talk about different "varieties-of-modernity" (Schmidt 2006, p. 88).

An important recent contribution to the discussion of modernity and its regional dimensions has been made by Nikolai Ssorin-Chaikov (2016). Analyzing the practices of building modernity in the small Siberian town of Katonga, Ssorin-Chaikov argues that modernity is comprised of many parts or 'projects' that sometimes destroy some of the previous projects. From this perspective, there is no homogeneous 'Russian modernity'. In every region, modernity is a specific set of projects, such as buildings, infrastructure, values, and senses. All these components are aimed at forming a more rational way of living, based on human rights and individualism, which may always remain unfinished.

In African studies, on the one hand, there are recent publications in which African realities are approached as a clash of 'the tradition' and 'the modernity'—authentically African and Western, respectively (e.g., Mami 2011; Caldeira 2016; Bitrus 2017). However, the look at colonial and postcolonial Africa as a specifically modern part of the world rather than an arena of 'struggle' between the tradition and the only possible Western modernity has quite a long history by now, too. Probably, the Comaroffs were the first Africanists to declare: "There are, in short, many modernities" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1993, p. xi). This line of reasoning was continued in their own and others' publications, including those in which colonial and post-colonial Africa (in general or at the level of individual states) is discussed directly in the context of the "multiple modernities" conception (e.g., Comaroff and Comaroff 1997; Ferguson 1999; Deutsch et al. 2002; Nkwi 2015; Wagner 2015; Palmer 2018a, 2018b; Imafidon 2020). Importantly for our discussion in this article, the multiple modernities conception is very well compatible with the theories that consider colonial and post-colonial societies as specific socio-cultural forms whose uniqueness is predetermined historically, by the unprecedented way of their appearance (e.g., Wallerstein 1966; Balandier 1970; Mbembe 2005; Bhambra 2007; Osterhammel 2010; Mamdani 2018).

According to Robbins, Ssorin-Chaikov, and the Comaroffs, among other abovementioned authors, "modernity" in Melanesia, Siberia, or Africa is not about being modern in the "Western sense" but about the creation of new elements of everyday life and ways of its organizing based on individualism, self-sufficiency, human rights. We showcase that in Uganda, conversion to Orthodox Christianity is a spiritual pathway to a socially acceptable and psychologically comfortable position in contemporary African socio-cultural milieu and the wider globalized world. So, we believe that the frame of modernity allows to understand the phenomenon of conversion to Orthodox Christianity in present-day Uganda.

A significant contribution to the study of encounters with modernity in Uganda was made by Mikael Karlström (2004). He approached the Ganda (the most numerous ethnic group in Uganda that inhabits the Kingdom of Buganda—the core of the British protectorate and then independent republic of Uganda) as a kind of "moral community" reproducing itself in the situation of African modernity, characterized by a moral crisis that has been lasting since colonial times. Karlström showed that the

Ganda sustain an aspirational engagement with their changing world against considerable odds by recourse to kingship and rituals of social reproduction. He emphasized that the Ganda's sense of "a collective future" was modern yet distinctly Ganda, as it was rooted in their belief in indestructible power of the *Kabaka* (the King of Buganda) and inextricable mystical connection between him and his people (see also Karlström 1999). Our own fieldwork gives all grounds to argue that these trends have become even stronger since the time of their study by Karlström. In many Ganda Orthodox with whom we communicated, the belief in God coexisted with what can be called "Ganda nationalism" (or "Ganda ethnic patriotism", as Derek Peterson (2012) would prefer to call it) and even with the idea of Ganda exceptionalism manifested, particularly in veneration of the *Kabaka* and based on the assumption of the Buganda Kingdom's political and cultural domination in the region in the past.

However, Ugandan Orthodox communities are not limited to the Ganda to no lesser degree than Uganda herself (Bondarenko 2019, p. 133), while Ugandans' encounters with modernity are far from being inspired exclusively by 'ethnic patriotism'. Religion is another powerful inspiration for them, with its own attractors, and their religious communities as specific parishes, "moral communities" (Babst 2011) or "invented communities" (Anderson 2006), are multi-ethnic. The intricate interplay of the ethnic, religious, and political is what was studied so deeply by Peterson by the evidence on late colonial and early post-colonial Uganda (Peterson 2012, pp. 50–104, 249–80). Our aim in this article is different. We do not intend to describe what being modern might mean in Uganda objectively, in reality, or rather, in fact, from our, academics and outsiders', point of view. Instead, we are going to look at how Ugandan Orthodox communities are trying to cope spiritually with contemporary socio-cultural reality. We treat these attempts as a specific modernity project, or cultural program, as Eisenstadt would have said. These people may not talk about modernity in the categories scholars do, but they understand very clearly that what motivates them for spiritual community building is the desire to find a place in the modern world, or rather to create their own 'small world' within it. Orthodox Ugandans are trying to construct their own traditionalist modernity—strictly Christian but not post-colonial and globalistic. We suggest that, for Ugandans, being Orthodox means not only being 'like Europeans' but also keeping their own traditions, and even improving them in some senses. The act of conversion in this sequence of encounters with modernity constitutes the application of Ugandan agency and thus the re-actualization of themselves as "modern".

3. A Brief History of the Orthodox Communities in Uganda

The history of Orthodox Church in Uganda begins in 1919 when Islam, Anglicanism, and Catholicism had already firmly established themselves in the country. According to a contemporary account, that year three Anglican priests—Obadiah Basajjakitalo, Rebuen Mukasa Sebbanja, and Arthur Gatuna—bothered by conflicts and rivalry between Catholics and Anglicans, tried to find out the "truth and reality". In the English lexicon they found the word "Orthodoxy" and formed the "Anoonya group" ("Eureka group"—*D.B.*, *A.T.*). This group started to write letters to different Orthodox institutions. At first "the Greeks [Greek priests from Alexandria Patriarchy—*D.B.*, *A.T.*] doubted if the native Ugandans would be able to preserve and conserve the Orthodox Faith according to renowned strict tradition and ethos of the Eastern Orthodox Church" (Kato 2014, p. i). The 'Patriarch' of the American Orthodox Church, George Alexander McGuire, provided the priests with basic information about the Orthodox tradition. The American Orthodox Church was an offspring of the Pan-African movement. McGuire was an advocate of the idea of a single Black Church. He was ordained a bishop by Rene Joseph Vilatte, whose episcopal orders were declared null and void soon after that (Hayes 1996).

Importantly for the discussion presented below, from the very beginning, Orthodox Christianity was perceived by its adepts in not only purely spiritual but also socio-political context: like many other African Christian ideologists of the late 19th–mid-20th century, the founding fathers of Orthodox Christianity in Uganda

> were attracted to Christianity but felt that the colonial authorities, in cooperation with missionaries, were using religion as a means to control 'native' populations. Breaking away from these restraints, these African Christians sought a form of Christianity that was true

> to what the Bible revealed about the early church but which was free from colonial manipulation (Lee and Seifemichael 2017, p. 273).

This means that, despite the non-African origin of Christianity, they deeply felt it as their religion, their, Africans', spiritual tradition but at the same time, did not want to belong to its part associated with colonial exploitation. As it will become clear from the subsequent analysis of the evidence in this article, this tension between intrinsic relation of Christianity in Africa to the European cultural and political strengthening on the continent on one hand, and perception of Christianity as their, Africans', religion on the other, remains a fundamental moving force of conversion to Orthodox Christianity in Uganda up to now.

In the early 1930s, Daniel Alexander, a priest of African Orthodox Church from South Africa, came to East Africa. He put a lot of effort into organizing churches in both Kenya and Uganda. In 1932, he ordained Rubuen Mukasa as Father Spartas. Since then, the church has officially been named "Orthodox". However, that was just the first act of conversion. It is important to stress that in the beginning the African Orthodox Church in Uganda bore no relationship to mainstream Orthodoxy, apart from sharing the same name.

"Suspicious of these initial schismatic associations, the Patriarchate of Alexandria did not accept the Ugandan and Kenyan churches as fully Orthodox until after World War II" (Lee and Seifemichael 2017, p. 275). Nevertheless, in 1946, the second act of conversion took place, but the chain of events that led to it began in 1933 following the visit of Daniel Alexander. According to an account, that year a Greek came to the Orthodox people of Uganda to baptize a child and told Father Spartas that the ritual they had performed was not Orthodox. After that, the Ugandan Orthodox priests eventually began to turn to the genuine Orthodox Church.

In 1933, the Anoonya group also approached archimandrite Nicodemus Sarikas, who was traveling through Africa to serve the spiritual needs of Greeks. They gave archimandrite Sarikas a letter for the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Alexandria. Patriarch Nikolas V proved to be very cautious. It was not until 1939, however, that his successor Christopheros II called for two Ugandan youths, Ermolaos Seddimbu and Irineos Magimbi, who were in Arusha, Tanganyika, to go to Alexandria to learn Greek and Orthodoxy (Kato 2014, p. ii).

In 1945, four young men from Kampala were sent to Egypt to learn the Greek language and the foundations of Orthodox belief. Their names were Theodoros Nankyama, Dimitrios Mumbale, George Lubulwa, and Elias Katumba. After studying in Greek high schools in Egypt, they studied theology at the University of Athens. In 1946, "Rev. Father Reuben Spartas was invited by the Greek Patriarchate of Alexandria to visit Egypt. The African Orthodox Church was officially recognized by the Patriarchate of Alexandria under the name 'African Greek Orthodox Church'" (Kato 2014, p. ii).

Since that time, the Ugandan Orthodox Church has been a part of Alexandria Patriarchate—the Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria. This church was not linked to colonial powers and has never been associated with racism, colonialism, or religious imperialism. However, the Alexandria Patriarchate focused first of all on the needs of the Greek Orthodox community. That is why the center of the new African Metropolis was fixed in Dar es Salaam (Irrinoupolis in Greek) in Tanganyika, where more Greeks lived. However, in 1995, the Holy Metropolis of Irinoupolis was divided into three metropoles, of Irinoupolis, All Kenya, and Kampala and All Uganda.

Since 1997, the Metropolitan of Kampala and All Uganda is Jonah (Lwanga), a grandson of Obadiah Basajjakitalo, one of the three first Ugandan Orthodox Christians. His residence is in Namungoona, a suburb of Kampala, the headquarters and spiritual center of Ugandan Orthodox Christians, as their Cathedral is situated there, too. According to the National Census 2014, Orthodox Christians count for 48,421 persons or 0.1% of the country's population; ¾ of them reside in rural areas and ¼ are city-dwellers (Uganda Bureau of Statistics 2016, pp. 19, 73). The website of Uganda Orthodox Church (2019) reports that "[t]he clergy consists of a team of 76 priests and 5 deacons. There are over 100 communities, 41 brick and mortars churches, 17 medical clinics and one Holy Cross Orthodox Hospital."

It is worth noting that the Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria was on good terms with the Ugandan state throughout its whole history. In particular, when in 1977 the dictator Idi Amin banned

27 religious organizations, the Orthodox Church was granted freedom of worship alongside only Muslims, the Anglican, and Roman Catholic Churches (Anonymous 1977; Kivengere 1977, p. 28). Today, the Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria is a member of the state-established Inter-Religious Council of Uganda. Membership in this body gives a religious organization a kind of state protection, serves as a sign of its recognition by the state. It is not by chance that since 2016, when the government announced its intention to enact a policy about regulating religions and faith-based organizations, the Inter-Religious Council member religious organizations, including the Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria, have supported the state's proposal, while non-member religious organizations have not (Alava and Ssentongo 2016; Isiko 2019). Among many photos on the walls of the office of the Metropolitan of Kampala and All Uganda Jonah, the photo of the President Yoweri Kaguta Museveni occupies an especially prominent place (while the Metropolitan considers himself a devoted subject of the *Kabaka* of Buganda Ronald Edward Frederick Kimera Muwenda Mutebi II, too).

Also, the canonic Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia (ROCOR, or Russian Orthdox Church Abroad—ROCA) in Uganda has the only parish of about one hundred parishioners of the Annunciation Church. It was founded in 1983 on the remote Bukasa Island on Lake Victoria. The parish is under the spiritual Omophore of Metropolitan Hilarion of ROCOR. Since 2007, ROCOR has been semi-autonomous from Russian Patriarchy, though before that it was completely isolated from Moscow. This geographically enclosed parish earns a living selling chickens, charcoal, and oranges on the mainland. Metropolitan Vitaly ordained the priest, Father Christopher Walusimbi, in 1988 in Montreal, Canada. Father Christopher is the first African priest of ROCOR and the only one in Uganda. Despite the remoteness of the ROCOR parish, he is known to and respected by adherents of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria, and several of them recalled him in our talks.

In the 1990s, communities of Orthodox Old Believers appeared in Uganda. Old Believers is a name for Orthodox Christians whose ancestors resisted the reforms of Patriarch Nikon of Moscow, implemented in 1652–1666, which introduced contemporary forms of Greek Orthodox worship to Russia. Today, there are about 150–200 Old Believers in Uganda, who reside in Kampala, mainly in the neighborhood of Mpererwe, and in the villages of Nakabaale, Kisojjo, and Kapeke. Except the youngest members of the communities, all these people have converted to Old Believers from Catholicism, Protestantism (mainly Anglicanism), Greek Orthodox Christianity, or Islam in conscious age (Bondarenko 2019, pp. 137–38).

In 1991, the priest of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria Father Joachim Kiyimba separated from the canonical Church and joined the Greek Old-Rite Holy Synod in Resistance. He had known about Old Believers since the 1970s when he studied at the Leningrad Theological Seminary in the USSR. Father Joachim, a charismatic person endowed with the gift of persuasion and known for his vigorous preaching, gathered a circle of followers. Already in 1991, he founded the communities in Mpererwe, in which he resided and in Nakabaale, in which he grew up. But in 1998, his parish in the name of SS. Joachim and Anna joined the Uniate Syriac-Greek Antiochian Orthodox Catholic Church. The following year, however, Father Joachim came in touch with the Holy Orthodox Church of North America (Boston Synod). The Boston Synod accepted him into prayerful communion in 2000, and he became a cleric of the Orthodox Church in Africa/Uganda. This relationship did not last long. In 2004, Father Joachim returned to the Holy Synod in Resistance, where remained until 2007, when he joined the True Orthodox Church of America.

In 2012, Father Joachim sent a letter to Metropolitan of Moscow and All Rus, Primate of the Russian Orthodox Old-Rite Church Korniliy in which he wrote about his desire to join this Church. His application was accepted by the Metropolitan Council, which invited Father Joachim to Moscow and ordained him as a priest of the Russian Orthodox Old-Rite Church on 22 May 2013. After coming back to Uganda, he tried his best to expand the size of the flock and organize community life according to the traditions of the Old Believers. However, on 9 January 2015 he died of an incurable disease.

The Metropolitan Council selected the new priest, Father Joachim Walusimbi, from two candidates and ordained him in Moscow on 20 September 2015. Born to a Catholic family, Walusimbi

changed affiliation for Orthodoxy in 1998 and became a priest of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria. In 2012, influenced by Father Joachim Kiyimba, he left this church and joined Old Believers. Under Father Joachim Walusimbi, some residents of his native village of Kepeke became Old Believers. Moscow Metropolis continues to support the fellow believers in Uganda, though its financial contribution remains very limited.

A farmer named Alex Chakka, who passed away in 2018, founded the community in Kisojjo in 1999. Alex was not in touch with Father Joachim Kiyimba at that time and was inspired to become an Old Believer by his uncle, who had already been converted by Father Joachim Kiyimba. Since 2013, the Russian Orthodox Old-Rite Church has patronized the community in Kisojjo (Anonymous 2015, 2017; Urushev 2016, pp. 334–36; Bobkov 2017, pp. 28–34; Bondarenko 2019, pp. 131–33).

Father Joachim Walusimbi is the only Old-Believer priest in Uganda. The church of SS. Joachim and Anna, built on funds of the Russian Orthodox Old-Rite Church, is the only functioning Old-Believer church in the country. The church in the name of St. Mary of Egypt in Nakabaale remains unfinished due to a lack of funds. The financial position of all the communities is poor and the ties between are weak (Bondarenko 2019, p. 134).

4. Conversion to Orthodox Christianity in the Socio-Cultural Landscape of Post-Colonial Modernity

Before proceeding to the topic of conversion in Uganda and discussing the particular features of this phenomenon, we want to discuss the broader context of cultural events, economic links, and Ugandan everyday life where all of these processes of religious change are taking place. These are typical features, or aspects of the socio-cultural landscape of Ugandan post-colonial modernity.

It is important to stress that most Ugandan villages and towns are multiethnic, multicultural, and multi-denominational. Greek Orthodox Christians as well as Old Believers constitute minorities in religiously diversified settlements. It is impossible for them to separate themselves from co-villagers of other religions. For example, the dwellers of the village of Ngombe are Orthodox Christians, Catholics, Anglicans, and Muslims. Although the Orthodox Church is the largest Christian community and the Chair of the Village Council is its parishioner, Orthodox residents do not constitute the majority of the population. The village of Nakabaale and its vicinities is home to Anglican, Greek Orthodox, Old-rite Orthodox (Old Believers), and Catholic churches, as well as a mosque. Most inhabitants in Kisojjo are Catholics, Anglicans, or Pentecostals.

All Orthodox Christians and Old Believers have relatives who do not belong to their religious group, and most of their friends and business partners are also not Orthodox Christians or Old Believers. The believers of both denominations have nothing against other believers visiting and even participating in their services. In Ngombe, the yard-keeper of the church is an old Muslim woman who is raising two little boys who have been baptized in Orthodox tradition. She cleans the plot around the church and from time to time (about once in three months) comes to the service. Not a single parishioner has anything against her. In Kisojjo, we saw several Catholics attending the service and praying together with Old Believers. In Mpererwe, the widow of Father Joachim Kiyimba, who was a vice principal at a school, invited her students of all Christian denominations to give a concert of religious hymns after the Old-Believer Divine liturgy which they attended. The story of a woman from Ngombe is instructive in this respect. In the years 2014–2016, the roof of her house burned five or six times. She was frightened and asked an Orthodox priest to pray for her and to pray near her house, but these prayers did not help. She then asked a Catholic priest to do the same, and, finally, an Anglican pastor. After the last prayer the fires stopped. Every Sunday, this woman now goes to an Anglican church five kilometers from Ngombe, but she comes to the Orthodox church every year for the Easter service.

The second important feature of the religious landscape in Uganda is interdenominational marriages. Here, one can observe an interesting difference between Old Believers and Canonic Orthodox Believers. The former are more tolerant of their relatives belonging to other Christian traditions and do not actively try to make them join the Old Believers. However, the Old Believers do try to keep away from Muslims. The Canonic Orthodox Believers have close relationships with

Muslims, but they try persistently to convert their non-Orthodox (not only Muslim) relatives to their faith.

Most Ugandan Old Believers were baptized into the faith after they were married, and not all of them have been able to persuade their spouses to follow them. Intermarriages with non-Old Believers are very frequent. Many Old-Believer parents admit that their children may marry someone from another Christian denomination (but not a Muslim). Young single Old Believers also see such a prospect for themselves. This observation contradicts the Old-Believer tradition that an Old Believer can only marry another Old Believer. We only encountered one Old Believer during fieldwork who insisted that his bride convert from her faith (Anglicanism) to his. The children of Old Believers are also free to choose to join another denomination. Since Alex Chakka baptized his six children as Old Believers at birth, three converted to Catholicism and Pentecostalism when they grew up.

Greek Orthodox believers insist on the parishioners' spouses coming to the Orthodox Church. One of our Orthodox interlocutors, for example, had a Muslim wife. An Orthodox-Muslim marriage was not regarded as bad or even strange, but from time to time the priest nevertheless told our interlocutor that it was necessary to encourage his wife to join the Church. The Orthodox priest of the Ngombe church converted his Anglican wife to Orthodoxy after the birth of their first child. This difference is reflected in our statistical evidence. Only 16% of Old Believers we questioned indicated that their family members had influenced their decision to convert, while 65% of Canonic Orthodox Christians we questioned in Ngombe said that their family members played a role in their decision to join the church. Most of these people converted as children or adolescents while under the influence of their parents, but some were also influenced by spouses, siblings, nephews, uncles, or aunts.

These two aspects of the Ugandan religious landscape show that people of all denominations live together closely, and religious identities do not raise barriers that divide people, but rather create diversity that helps people see life from different points of view. Our friend Nicolas put it this way: "The Church of Uganda have more churches and schools, Catholics have a lot of money, Muslims always help each other, but Orthodoxy is the best because this is our belief." It is important to stress that each religion has its specific economic and social traits from Ugandans' point of view. For a Ugandan choosing a religion is not just about dogma, it is also about everyday life.

Everyday life has an economic dimension which is also related to the church. The third important point is that being a parishioner of a church enables the parishioner to increase their income. People often talk openly about it. As an Old Believer confessed, "This Church [the Russian Orthodox Old-Rite Church—*D.B.*, *A.T.*] made me happy, but I expected more help and more access to free doctors." Old Believers frequently seek out opportunities to launch businesses that could financially support the Church. By now, their most successful project is a small poultry farm in the village of Kapeke. However, support from Russian and occasionally Australian and American coreligionists in money and in kind (icons, liturgical utensils, as well as, for example, clothes and toys for kids) remains the main source of both income for the Ugandan Old-Believer Church and also hope for the future for its members.

The economic life of the Greek Orthodox Church in Ngombe is more vibrant and includes a lot of economic activities. Importantly, it includes land ownership. The traditional king of Tooro, on whose territory Ngombe is situated, donated huge plots of land on the tops of several hills to the Orthodox Church. The activities of the Orthodox Church rely on the rents the church collects from these plots. For example, the church gave one of the plots to a Catholic school, and the school administration both pays the rent to the Orthodox Church and gives the Orthodox students a tuition discount at the Catholic school. A small medical center occupies another plot of land. The doctor is Orthodox and she offers her co-parishioners a 10% discount for her services.

The village women council, which is run by an Orthodox woman, also uses the public space of this medical center. The women council provides opportunities for women to produce and sell their handicrafts to a German businessman living in the nearby city of Fort Portal. All the women in Ngombe can become members of the council, but the Orthodox Christian members pay smaller fees.

Economic activities are not the main activities of the church. They are nevertheless very important for the parishioners, who view them as a central part of what constitutes 'good' or 'true' belief.

The fourth aspect is a steady connection between religious acts and everyday life. Our interlocutors told us that "God will grant wealth and good health to those who have enough faith" almost unanimously (96.6% of Old Believers and 94.9% of Greek Orthodox Christians). Mundane reasons for being a believer do not seem to be the only or even most important ones. Rather, the informants preferred moralistic and "social" explanations of religion's importance. One informant stated that "Religion helped me to understand what is good and what is not. It has changed my life—I do not have bad habits, I live a humble life." Another indicated that "Religion has done something tremendous in my life—it gave me good friends and allows to live a happy life." Another informant also told us: "If I don't fast who will protect me?"

The attitude of adherents to fasting is important for the present discussion. One of our interlocutors, a fifty-year-old Greek Orthodox woman told us: "If I have little money, I start sleeping on the floor." The priest of Ngombe church, Father Romanos, told us a very similar story: "If I have a lot of problems and I can't solve them, I fast. I like milk very much, so I desist drinking it. I also like bananas. If milk doesn't help, I stop eating bananas." The approaches to fasting represented in these stories are different: in the first one the woman makes herself enjoy inconvenience, and in the second a person refuses his favorite meals. The former is closer to Russian Orthodox practices and the latter is closer to Western European practices. It is difficult to explain this difference because Father Romanos was trained at a Russian seminary. Despite the difference in their approaches to fasting, the main point of the two stories is the same: people attempt to solve everyday problems through religious means. Thus, the economic life of a certain parish or denomination is not just about ownership, investments and rents, it is also about faith, fasting, and performing 'true' and 'original' rituals.

The last aspect of the landscape of conversion in Uganda we want to single out is the co-existence of monotheistic and non-monotheistic African religions. Our interlocutors from the Old-Rite Russian Orthodox Church were extremely critical of those people who showed tolerance towards non-monotheistic African religions. Of those who filled out our questionnaire, 7.4% stated their aversion to Catholics and Protestants, 9% to non-Old-Believer Orthodox Christians, 24.2% to Muslims, and 78.9% to the believers of non-monotheistic African religions. Many respondents noted that there were people in their settlements who performed "pagan rites". What made our old-believers respondents especially wary of the "pagans" is that all of them were what they called "double believers"—people of multiple religious belonging who perform rites of non-Christian religions but also go to church. In the words of the Catholic Chairperson of the Village Council in Kisojjo, "They try to derail people from God, they make confusion. They do it indirectly, because most often they want to make money, so they persuade Christians not to go to church. When a Christian falls ill, they call him or her to treat by sorcery methods for money, cattle or poultry." For our common Greek Orthodox interlocutors, this problem did not seem serious at all. An old woman told us: "We don't have pagans here. But if they had been here, we would definitely live in peace with them." However, the Metropolitan of Kampala and All Uganda under the Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria Jonah told us passionately that "double believers" are a serious problem for Ugandan society at large from his, a Christian hierarch's, point of view.

5. Conversion to Orthodox Christianity as Spiritual Encounter with Modernity

Conversion is an act that can manifest the agency of contemporary individuals. To demonstrate their agency, a Ugandan can apply for a job, launch a business, or pursue education, but all of these actions presuppose the hierarchical relations of the post-colonial globalized world. All of the long chains of relationships in companies, universities, or enterprises lead to the West, to China, or to elsewhere outside of Africa. Thus, to effectively express their agency and activity in these domains, Ugandans must depart from their 'Africanness' and embrace their 'globalness', which, in the minds of Africans, is usually rooted in the slave trade and colonialism, and, more recently, associated with neocolonialism (e.g., Olurode 2003; Msellemu 2004; Ogundowole 2004, pp. 186–210; Offiong 2013;

Kanu et al. 2018). On the contrary, for conversion, the approval of peers and the religious community is enough. Conversion presents a rare opportunity for Ugandans to manifest agency without embracing their 'globalness'. At the same time, becoming a parishioner can also be the first step to the big world. For example, in 2017, a member of the Orthodox Church Council in Ngombe became a member of the national Parliament.

The act of conversion is a manifestation of an individual's agency, while showing respect to traditions and people of your native land at the same time. In fact, conversion has both an individual and a communal dimension. Three ex-Anglican priests began the conversion movement to Orthodox Christianity in 1919, because they were motivated by the idea of finding the one true religion, not only for themselves, but also for their parishioners. The spiritual journey of Father Joachim Kiyimba from 1991 until his death in 2015 was a fascinating odyssey in which all his parishioners partook. In 2018, one of the authors of this article had a meeting with two deacons from St. Sophia Orthodox Church in Kampala who were thinking of joining the Russian Church outside Russia or the Russian Orthodox Old-Rite Church. This was more than a search for personal spirituality or career: those deacons were discussing the possibility of changing the affiliation of the church together and carrying along a part of parishioners with them. More importantly, in the still communalist Ugandan society, even most individual actions unavoidably become known to, discussed, and approved or disapproved by the whole community, be it a village, a town ward, or a parish. Individual behavior, even in most vivid manifestations of personality, is to be approved in society with its unwritten but clear norms, and that is why in such cultures individual agency is always immersed in collective.

Yet, the conversion movement to Orthodox Christianity has important specific features. Although the history of Old Believers in Uganda is brief, all of the members of the Old-Believer community (except children) were not born into the faith but rather converted to it from other religious traditions—Protestantism of different denominations (mainly Anglicanism), Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity of the Patriarchate of Alexandria, and Islam. Some adult Ugandans from other Christian denominations and Islam are also attracted to the Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria (Bondarenko 2019, pp. 137–39). Why did these people decide to change their religious affiliation? What did they find so attractive in this or that brand of Orthodox Christianity compared to their previous religious allegiances? Why did they consider the new faith better than their old ones? Some interlocutors said that they hoped for better support from their new church in everyday life. However, for many more the main reason for conversion was spiritual. They said that they had realized that just the Orthodox faith is the "true religion". Those born into the Orthodox faith strongly believe in it, too. But why do they think so? And what does the "true religion" for them consist of?

The explanation for why the Old Believers is the true religion that Father Joachim Kiyimba gave the people while persuading them to accept the new faith, as they eagerly recalled in interviews, was that Old Believers strictly observe wholly and unchanged the most ancient complex of prayer rites. Most people who apply to join the Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria, as Metropolitan Jonah told, are also motivated by the desire to find the original and true religion. They apply because, as he said, "they find somewhere in books that the Orthodox Church is the Mother Church." As an elderly Old Believer woman said, "I changed religion because I learned that this religion observes the most original canon of worship." Another respondent indicated that they converted "because previous rites were not correct". This logic infers that Orthodox Christians practice the most correct way of praying, of glorifying and addressing God. In fact, this is what attracts people willing to "turn to tradition" to different brands of Eastern Christianity, not only in Africa but also in the West (Slagle 2011; Herbel 2014).

Father Joachim Walusimbi himself changed from Greek Orthodox Christianity to Russian Orthodoxy because, as he said, Father Joachim Kiyimba had explained to him that "Russian Orthodoxy is closer to original Christianity than Greek". On the same grounds, some of our interlocutors preferred the Old-Believer Church to Evangelical Pentecostal Churches: "This is the church where you can find original teaching, original message from God, not like at commercialized Evangelical preachers"; "Pentecostal churches attract people by songs, the way they present themselves but they don't follow the original Christian tradition, so everything [they do] is

meaningless". The antiquity and hence presumed invariableness of the ritual were represented as the sign and pledge of the truth of religion. The ritual was valuable for the interviewees in itself, beyond semantics. Even more so, the splendor and colorfulness of the Orthodox ritual (no matter Old or New Rite) had a psychological impact on the prospective converts. Many of them, especially those who were Protestants, were impressed by it and became convinced that Orthodox Christians are "stronger believers".

Most Ugandan Orthodox Christians seem uninformed about, and not concerned about, the dogmatic differences between their "true religion" and other religions (with respect to Old Believers, see: Bondarenko 2019, pp. 139–41). What really matters for them is the ritual. If someone observes the true complex of rites, this person is practicing the true religion. One of the oldest persons in Ngombe, a Catholic, said "there is no difference between Catholics and Greek Orthodox believers except the way they cross themselves. Formers do it with two fingers and latters with three fingers. And that's all." This man was baptized in Catholicism in the early 1930s. His first wife was Catholic and the second is Orthodox. The children from the first marriage were baptised in Catholicism and the children from the second in Orthodoxy. His second wedding took place in an Orthodox church. So, this man is quite sophisticated in the rituals of the two denominations and his opinion is not based on poor information. This vague knowledge of the outlines of Orthodox Christianity manifests itself in the filled-out questionnaires: 33.1% of Old Believers and 40.6% of Greek Orthodox thought that blessing with, respectively, two or three fingers means Jesus's second coming, while in reality blessing with two fingers symbolizes Jesus's two natures—divine and human, and blessing with three fingers signifies confession of the Holy Trinity.

The overwhelming majority of our respondents argued that religion played a very important role in their lives. Asked why this is the case, many of them answered that religion was very important because it provided knowledge of and guidance by God. Informants stated: "To be Christian means to believe in Jesus Christ as one God." Without religion they "couldn't be sure about afterlife", as a respondent put it. For them, "to be Christian means to believe in afterlife," and a good afterlife is attainable through practicing the true religion. As an Old Believer explained, "Religion gives us hope for eternal life—life after death, and belief that we are created for a purpose. That is why we should be responsible for the quality of our lives—the way we live as Christians: ask for forgiveness, pray, read the Bible, and follow the commandments." Many respondents used the word "hope" describing what the faith meant for them. So, it is vitally important to practice the true religion, understood as strict observance of the rituals, for having a better life now and the prospects of an afterlife in the future.

Thus, for our respondents, the way of life is dictated by religion. Faith is about hope, moral guidance, relationships, and protection from sin. That is a lot more than the ritual, but at the same time, the ritual is more than a small part of religion. In a sense, the ritual is what religion is all about for them, and even what life is all about, because religion is seen as the ritual first and foremost—the ritual is definitely more essential for these people than a dogmatic doctrine. Louis Brenner (1989) made this argument with regards to African religiosity in general, and our evidence on Ugandan Orthodox Christians confirms it. Presumably the most ancient, original, and unchanged way of performing rituals is the most correct one for them. The most correct way of performing rituals is what distinguishes the true religion in their view, and the true religion is the most effective religion—the one which practicing can actually help achieve the best results in this life (e.g., strong health or financial prosperity, or on concrete occasions: an abundant harvest this year, a child's quick recovery from a disease) and make you sure of getting a blissful eternal afterlife in paradise. These Ugandans changed their faith because they became convinced that Orthodox Christians (Old Believers or canonic) most completely and accurately observed the original Christian rite, and thus practice the true faith, which is most effective in the aforementioned sense.

The conversion of some Ugandans to Orthodox Christianity—canonic of the Eastern Orthodox Church of Alexandria and the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia or old-believer of the Russian Orthodox Old-Rite Church—can be instructive for developing a clearer understanding of the important phenomenon of contemporary African religiosity as a way of encountering modernity.

Religiosity is understood here not as a belief but rather a type of spirituality, rooted in the feeling of existence and constant presence in the world and human life of the supernatural, that is, a religious feeling regardless of particular religions in which it manifests itself. This feeling shapes people's worldviews and social behaviors. "Religiosity" is used here in opposition to "secularism", and it should be noted at this point that the extent of secularization in Africa is low (e.g., Martin 2009; Lugo and Cooperman 2010, pp. 1, 20). As van den Toren and de Wit have argued: "Africa provides examples that modernity does not automatically lead to secularization" (van den Toren and de Wit 2015, p. 153), at least in its version known to the West. Rather, as Lugo and Cooperman have observed: "Indeed, sub-Saharan Africa is clearly among the most religious places in the world" (Lugo and Cooperman 2010, p. 3). So, religiosity forms a fundamental aspect of individual and mass consciousness in present-day Africa.

Today, many Ugandans, as well as other Africans, are engaged in religious practices that are not particularly based around ritual. However, the religions typical of the past—the so-called African traditional religions—like religions of that kind elsewhere, were not doctrinal, they did not have theology and a complex of clearly formulated and unquestionable dogmas. They were, rather, based on conviction in the effectiveness of a ritual act. In the words of the historian of religion Wilfred Smith: "what theology is to the Christian Church, a ritual dance may be to an African tribe" (Smith 1979, p. 15). More than a century ago, one of the most prominent anthropologists of the time, Robert Marett, made the same argument: "savage religion is something not so much thought out as danced out" (Marett 1914, p. XXXI). In his days, the expression "savage religion" or "savage religions" referred to what more or less coincides with, for example, such a contemporary academic term as "archaic religions" as opposed to "religions of the Book". Catherine Bell explains:

> The logic of this is not hard to see. In tribal or local societies, which tend to be relatively closed and homogeneous, religion is not something separate from community identity, ethnic customs, political institutions, and social traditions. Beliefs are rarely formulated and spelled out in these circumstances, and they do not need to be. It is the formal and informal customs and obligations—namely, ritual responsibilities like attending to the ancestors, arranging the marriage of one's children, and participating in communal festivities—that define one as a civilized member of this type of community (Bell 1997, p. 191).

This is what people of such cultures, in Africa and beyond, believe in—the effectiveness of the ritual. Catherine Bell's discussion of this is extremely relevant again. She wrote:

> In approaching issues of ritual density, it has been customary to distinguish the degree to which religious traditions put an emphasis either on correct belief in theological doctrines or on correct performance of behavioral responsibilities. The first style of religion is known as 'orthodoxic', from the Greek words *orthos* (correct, right, straight) and *doxa* (belief, thought, opinion). The second style is called 'orthopraxic', from the Greek *praxis*, meaning 'correct action'. As a result of the dominance of Christianity in much of the West, which has tended to stress matters of doctrinal and theological orthodoxy, people may take it for granted that religion is primarily a matter of what one believes. Yet in many religious traditions, concerns for what a person believes are often subsumed within more embracing concerns to live according to a code of behavior, a code that usually includes multiple ritual responsibilities (Bell 1997, p. 191).

This belief in the effectiveness of the ritual for achieving practical goals is directly related to the view that there is no sharp division of the universe into "this world"—the terrestrial world where there is "life"—and "that world"—the radically different transcendent world where there is "afterlife". The world is one and inhabited first of all by people and spirits of their ancestors. Despite the differences between and the variability of African cultures and their authentic religious systems, even where deities and lesser spirits play an important role, as in many cultures of West Africa, the ancestor cult retained its fundamental role. By means of the ritual, people ask their ancestors' spirits to bestow them good. The ancestor cult dictates that what is most important is to constantly keep proper relations with the ancestors, the most powerful of which can either bless their descendants

with all the good or ruin the whole Universe (e.g., Fortes 1965; Grinker et al. 2010, pp. 283–322). Thus, the patterns of behavior in any sphere of life that have already proved their safety in terms of the ancestors' reaction, that is, those followed from generation to generation, are always more preferable than any new ones; the novelty, as such, is seen as something risky, and hence, a priori undesirable. To remain effective, the ritual must be unchanged from the very moment it was approved by higher powers for the first time. Otherwise, if the ritual is not observed strictly in the initial form, it will not be effective any longer. Even more so: the higher powers can bring trouble on the people. In this context, not only the unchangeable ritual, as such, is important—in fact, the whole human life becomes a chain of ritualized behavioral acts. It clearly resonates with the abovementioned Orthodox's vision of the rite as a way of life.

Contrary to their will, the ritual, so important for Orthodox, acquires new social dimensions and inevitably changes its social meaning, being caught between its essential "ritual intimacy" and "ritual publicity" that are changing their forms and scale (Robbins and Sumiala 2016). However, despite this, perception of the ritual as the backbone of religion remains unchanged and shows the continuity of its adherents' views from African pre-Christian (and pre-Muslim) perceptions. Fundamental for Orthodox Christians, including Ugandan Orthodox Christians, rejection of ecumenism as not just tolerance to other religions but as an idea and practical steps towards the organic unity of different Christian denominations (see: Bondarenko 2019, pp. 138–39, 144) is not in line with the worldview related to the ancestor cult. This cult avoids postulating one and only religious truth: people of every village, tribe, or any other unit are protected by the spirits of their ancestors. The spirits of our ancestors are no more real, true, or effective than those of our neighbors' ancestors. The difference is that our ancestors' spirits influence our lives and their ancestors' spirits influence their lives. So, the rejection of ecumenism is a reflection of the aspects of Africans' consciousness brought by monotheism. At the same time, their ritualistic perception of Christianity does demonstrate an important aspect of its continuity from the original worldview. Thus, as the results of fieldwork suggest, continuity from and rupture with the original mentality intertwine in the Ugandan Orthodox Christians' minds.

6. Conclusions

An examination of the phenomenon of Ugandan Orthodox Christianity, in the light of modernity that combines colonial legacy, post-coloniality, and globalization, demonstrates the complexity of the process of conversion. The Orthodox do not welcome the increased religious diversity in the country due to the growth in the number and influence of Evangelical, especially Charismatic, denominations, and they see globalization as the path towards cultural degradation. They reject colonialism, post-colonialism, and globalism for facilitating cultural syncretism, and they advocate for strictly adhering to traditions. At the same time, the Orthodox believe that Christianity, which developed outside of Africa and came to Uganda only a century and a half ago, is the most essential part of their own cultural tradition. They spiritually renounce the colonial legacy, post-coloniality, and globalization, but the source of what has become the "tradition" for them—Christianity—in Africa is intrinsically related to these phenomena. By rejecting the post-colonial globalist modernity and embracing Orthodox Christianity, they seek to build up an "alternative" modernity. In the process, these Ugandans become a product of modernity. This is a continuation of the endeavor started by the first Ugandan Orthodox a century ago, who saw the 'moral community' they wanted to build up as fundamentally different from those of other Christian converts in pre-colonial Buganda and early colonial Uganda—"fervent aspirants to modernity" who "enthusiastically embraced the modernist conception of progress" (Karlström 2004, p. 600).

A belief in one God has established itself in the souls and minds of most Africans, including Ugandan Orthodox Christians. By trying to escape spiritually from what was imposed on them by colonialism, post-coloniality, and globalization, they see the religions brought to the country earlier (Catholicism, Anglicanism, Islam) as part of the legacy they want to reject. However, these people did not turn to African traditional beliefs. At the same time, some Ugandans are dissatisfied with the forms of Christianity associated with colonialists, particularly with Anglicanism and Catholicism.

Many Ugandans may also perceive these 'older' forms of Christianity to be ordinary and no longer appealing, emotionally exciting, and spiritually inspiring enough. Orthodox Christianity can be a good option for such people. While most of those dissatisfied with 'older' Christian denominations convert to 'ultramodernist' Pentecostal Churches, some, like Ugandan Orthodox, turn to a conservative 'original', 'uncorrupted' faith (e.g., Carpenedo 2017; Premawardhana 2018).

More and more scholars working on contemporary Christianity write about its "pentecostalization".

> The term pentecostalization refers to the exceptionally fast rise in the number of Pentecostal communities, and the gradual transformation of many other Christian churches and congregations into a single, universal type of charismatic Christianity around the globe… As a result of this process, particularly in Africa, Asia, and South America, new charismatic and Pentecostal communities are developing, and this process is also taking place within traditional Christian churches. Understood this way, pentecostalization today concerns the Catholic Church worldwide, as well as a great majority of Protestant denominations (Kobyliński 2016, p. 100; see also, e.g., Anderson 2019; Gooren 2010).

Pentecostalization can push some Ugandans away from not only Pentecostalism, as such, but also from Anglicanism and Catholicism, and make them think about Orthodox Christianity as a spiritual way out or shelter. Besides, they can feel similarity and connection between pentecostalization of the most 'traditional' for Uganda forms of Christianity and their movement towards ecumenism as unification of Christian denominations, rejected so emphatically by Orthodox (furthermore, ecumenical trends have presented in Ugandan Anglican and Catholic Churches for quite a long time (Carney 2017)).

However, it becomes clear that paradoxically, the Orthodox's anti-globalist encounter with modernity has the same roots and background as the better studied Pentecostal "ultramodernism". Both of these phenomena can be read as different outcomes of the search for proper expressions of spirituality that is central to African cultures—an immanent religious feeling regardless of a person's particular religion that forms an integral part of the African system of socio-cultural values, as observers of different African cultures note (e.g., Mbiti 2001; Kanu 2010, pp. 152, 157–58; Olasunkanmi 2015, p. 9). This feeling does not simply imply a belief in the 'supernatural'. It entails the conduct of a way of life based on and directed by the feeling of a constant presence of the higher powers in the world. What also seemingly unexpectedly brings together in the African context such different religions as Orthodox Christianity and Pentecostalism is that they both emphasize and actualize non-dogmatic aspects of Christian faith. However, the aspects they underscore are significantly different. While Pentecostalism, as well as other forms of Charismatic Christianity, emphasizes the emotional side, Orthodox in Uganda concentrates on the ritual.

Pentecostalism and the Orthodox tradition show different faces of the spiritual turn observable in present-day Africa (see also: Bondarenko 2019, pp. 151–53). In particular, the example of Ugandan canonic and old-rite Orthodox Christians demonstrates how religiosity can acquire clearly marked anti-globalist directionality in a post-colonial setting, if globalization is seen as destroying traditional home-born cultures by mixing them with others, especially Western cultures. This kind of anti-globalism has nothing to do with world politics and economics, as most Ugandan Orthodox are not educated and enlightened enough to be versed in international and transnational affairs. This is a kind of spiritual anti-globalism. By emphasizing in interviews how important it is uphold traditions, they see both globalization and ecumenism as chaotic and destructive for the 'true faith' and by combining 'traditions' that should never be fused. The stories of conversion to Orthodox Christianity in Uganda speak volumes about the tension between religion, post-colonial modernity, and cultures in present-day sub-Saharan Africa.

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