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Globalization and Orthodox Christianity: A Glocal Perspective

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Abstract: This article analyses the topic of Globalization and Orthodox Christianity. Starting with Victor Roudometof's work (2014b) dedicated to this subject, the author's views are compared with some of the main research of social scientists on the subject of sociological theory and Eastern Orthodoxy. The article essentially has a twofold aim. Our intention will be to explore this new area of research and to examine its value in the study of this religion and, secondly, to further investigate the theory of religious glocalization and to advocate the fertility of Roudometof's model of four glocalizations in current social scientific debate on Orthodox Christianity.

Starting in the second half of the nineteen-nineties, the principal social scientific studies that have investigated the relationship between Orthodox Christianity and democracy have adopted the well-known paradigm of the 'clash of civilizations' (Huntington 1996). Other sociological research projects concerning religion, on the other hand, have focused on changes occurring in this religious tradition in modernity, mainly adopting the paradigm of secularization (in this regard see Fokas 2012). Finally, another path of research, which has attempted to develop a non-Eurocentric vision, has used the paradigm of multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 2000). In his work *Globalization and Orthodox Christianity* (2014b), Victor Roudometof moves away from these perspectives. He prefers to adopt the concept of globalization as a theoretical framework to investigate the historical trajectories of Christian Orthodoxy and its recent transformations. In this article, our aim is to sociologically develop this paradigm, following a path that analyses the main points of the aforementioned work (Roudometof 2014b) and connecting them to various sociological theories and major research regarding this religion.

This paradigm of globalization arises from the theories which the sociologist Roland Robertson began to develop in the nineteen-eighties. Robertson defines globalization as "the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole" (Robertson 1992, p. 8). With the term 'compression', he refers to the accelerated pace of contact among cultures, peoples, and civilisations or conveys the sense that the world is a single place. The confrontation of different world views means that globalization involves the "comparative interaction of different forms of life" (Robertson 1992, p. 27). As a process that both connects and stimulates the awareness of connection, globalization dissolves the autonomy of actors and practices in contemporary world order. In this process, all units engaged in globalization are constrained to assume a position and define an identity relative to this interdependence (Robertson 1992, p. 29). Moreover, global interdependence and consciousness of the world as a whole precede the advent of capitalist modernity through a process continuing over various centuries.

According to Roudometof (2014b, chp. 1, pp. 1–17) this theoretical frame appears to be an appropriate choice for the purpose of investigating Eastern Orthodoxy: it retains perspectives less focused on the West and presents multiple definitions. It interprets globalization not as a consequence

of Western-European modernity or as the result of a 'second' modernity that developed after the Second World War. On the contrary, it places modernity in Western Europe and North America within the historical panorama of globalization. As mentioned above, this vision manages to free the study of Orthodox Christianity from the narrative of Western modernity and the conventions of the debate on secularization. Following this vision, Peter Beyer (2006) argues that the idea of 'religion' itself, as it is commonly construed, is the product of a long-term process of intercultural interaction subject to debate within the context of globalization. Beyer claims that the social scientific study of religion must be founded within a perspective of 'global society': "far from remaining more or less constant during these transformations and thereby suffering or at least being challenged to reassert itself, religion has actually been a critical carrier and example of the entire process. Religion, like capitalism, the nation-state or modern science, has been a carrier of modernization and globalization, not a barrier or a victim" (2006, p. 300).

Roudometof thus investigates with a historical and sociological approach the public role of Orthodoxy and the forms it has assumed in different contexts within the historical framework of globalization. This view seems unprecedented with respect to the main narrative in sociological literature on Orthodoxy and globalization (in this regard see, for example, Payne 2003). It does not interpret globalization as a phenomenon of the modern world which may be seen as an 'external' dimension with respect to the Orthodox world, and a 'modern enemy' of a religion which places great importance on traditions and the past. On the contrary, it proposes a long-term view of globalization which will analyse its interaction with this religion, starting from its constitution. It moreover identifies in the processes of negotiation and in the adaptation of Orthodox Christianity or, in other words, its many *transformations*, its religious responses to the evolution and socio-cultural changes occurring in the world.

Analysing Eastern Orthodoxy from both the historical and sociological points of view, Roudometof hypothesized a model of four distinct types of glocalization (Roudometof 2013; 2014a; 2014b). These glocalizations offer concrete examples that involve a fusion between religious universalism and local particularism: *vernacularization*, *indigenization*, *nationalization*, and *transnationalization*. Each of the above presents a specific form of 'blending' with respect to universal religion and particular human settings (e.g., empire, ethnicity, nation-states, and transnational migration). These forms are not distinct merely on account of their historical specificity; they are distinct because each form offers a discrete analytical concept to analyse the combination of global and local dimensions. In our opinion, these four forms of religious glocalization are the main theoretical legacy of Roudometof in the study of glocal religions. However, Roudometof's model fits better for some case studies about religions than others, and it does not fit for an analysis of all churches of the Orthodox world. For instance, it holds some limits for a study of the Russian case, i.e., the largest Orthodox jurisdiction. Starting from this awareness, in this article, we will stress the fertility of each form of religious glocalization in the current social scientific debate on Orthodoxy[1].

The first part of the work (Roudometof 2014b, chp. 2, 3 and 4, pp. 18–79) analyses the initial development of Orthodoxy, and investigates the historical period from the ninth century to the final siege of Constantinople (1453). This historical perspective offers an interpretation of the *crystallization* of Orthodoxy in a religious tradition, focusing on the pre-modern era of globalization and the ways in which it accentuates the differences between Eastern Orthodoxy and Western Christianity. In this long historical period, it is possible to outline the foundations of glocalization's beginning of this religious tradition. This article has mainly sociological aims, and for this reason, we do not focus on the historical trajectories of this period. We would solely like to stress that in this stage, there are several glocal processes and cultural encounters both among religious elites (for instance in the 'Third Rome'

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[1] These forms of glocalization are used to analyse the historical phases and the socio-religious and political processes of Orthodox Christianity through the entire research. In our article, we focus on one of these paths of hybridisation in each chapter (or theoretical section) of the work.

idea rise in Russia from 1510) and among the lower classes within the aforementioned diversification processes. In particular, these last processes are shown through two key processes or forms of religious glocalization: the *vernacularization* of Christianity (the fusion of religious universalism with specific languages) and the *indigenization* of Orthodoxy (the fusion of religious universalism with a particular ethnicity). These socio-cultural processes facilitate the polarization of these two traditions of Christianity and especially in their interaction, ranging from the first crusade to the second fall of Constantinople. Moreover, these two forms of glocalization allow for an investigation of the different historical trajectories that distinguish the Russian Empire and the Ottoman Empire in their transition towards modernity. The divergences identified in the historical experiences of these two territories are relevant, in particular in the constitution of the Church-state relations and, as mentioned, in the creation of a link between faith and ethnic roots, religion, and language in the life of a community and in liturgy.

This perspective appears to provide an adequate approach to address the debate on the question of the 'unsolved' relationship of Orthodox Christianity with modernity. This religion has a strong link with tradition and with the past. For example, we may reflect on the importance attached to the first ecumenical councils or the teachings of the Fathers of the Church. It has succeeded in developing processes of modernization and in facilitating important historical changes, while maintaining nonetheless a set of reservations with respect to some typical demands (or basic elements) of the contemporary world. A multidisciplinary perspective focusing on the historical trajectories of this religion is therefore suitable in an analysis of the current tensions of this religion with respect to some modern phenomena (for example, we may think of the contribution of religious studies (Makrides 2012a, 2012b; Agadjanian 2003)). This vision 'from the past' sheds light on the current patterns of settlement, on the models of action of this religion, and on its attitude towards some contemporary challenges. As stated by Makrides (2012b), the solid reference towards the past of this religion favored the establishment of an Orthodox traditionalism that influences Orthodoxy's interactions with the socio-cultural reality and contemporary challenges:

> The purpose of this continuous quoting was to justify traditionalist policies and orientations and to condemn various attempted changes or innovations. Characteristically enough, we are not talking here about religious and theological contexts alone. The same holds true for secular contexts as well, which were equally influenced by this kind of Orthodox traditionalism. The question is whether there is an intrinsic connection between the Orthodox and the social traditionalism or if these are simply parallel and coincidental phenomena. The Orthodox usually try to find pertinent answers or solutions with reference to a normative and binding past, which is somehow regarded as a panacea beyond time and space. It appears, however, that there was indeed a strong interplay between Orthodox and social traditionalism in certain historical periods, although always in relation to the overall conditions of the time and numerous other factors (2012b, p. 21).

Regarding the current socio-cultural trajectories of this Orthodox traditionalism, in a recent study, Djankov and Nikolova (2018) show how deep-rooted theological differences between Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Protestantism, affect life satisfaction and other attitudes of those with a Christian faith in Europe. Comparing these three different Christian traditions, they find that those that are faithful belonging to Eastern Orthodoxy have less social capital and prefer old ideas and safe jobs. In addition, those that are Orthodox faithful approve of left-leaning political preferences and stronger support for government involvement in the economy. Firstly, this study suggests how the study of religion relates to a comprehensive analysis of the socio-cultural reality, even of its components that do not belong to the religious sphere. In fact, if on one hand communist elites attempted to eradicate Orthodox churches in Eastern Europe, on the other hand, it seems that communists maintained many points of Orthodox theology which were suitable for the progress of the government's doctrine. Secondly, this study indicates the reach and temporal continuity of religious beliefs in contemporary

societies, even in those that are largely secularized. These results seem to suggest overcoming the views of conflict/severance among religion and globalization, and religious sphere and modern phenomena. They attempt, instead, to define cultural hybrids regarding attitudes and values raised within the social environment.

Moreover, the analysis of the history and doctrine of the Orthodox Church, and also the culture of the society in which it developed and evolved, allows for a greater understanding of the actual conflicts and changes, and avoids a 'limited' social-scientific approach which focuses solely on rational choice theory (for an assessment with this view, see Hamilton 2011). This is especially pertinent in a controversial issue such as Orthodoxy and democracy, in which the constituent elements—for example, the phenomenon of nationalism—are incomprehensible when detached from their historical and theological trajectories. The approach of religious glocalization points out both that religion involves active agency and that religious traditions at the local/global level may contain socio-cultural elements that do not follow a perspective of religious provision and consumption (also in their interaction within a condition of transnational religion).

Moving within this ambivalence of Eastern Orthodoxy, which alternates an open attitude and closure with respect to socio-cultural reality, Roudometof addresses the *nationalization* of this religion (the fusion of religious universalism with a particular nation). This author argues that the joining of a faith and a nation is a sort of *modern synthesis* that has characterised the relationship between church and nation in the Orthodox states to the present day (Roudometof 2014b, chp. 5, pp. 79–101). The principal difference between *nationalization* and the previous forms discussed is that the nation serves as a foundation for the religious institutions' claim to legitimacy. It operates through the use of religion as a potential source for the formation of nations or the intertwining of religious and national markers. Typically, *nationalization* operates through the construction and reproduction of a close relationship between confessional membership and modern national identities.

In fact, Roudometof claims that this form of religious glocalization is a recent historical process and identifies it in the historical developments of Orthodox Christianity during the advent of modern nationalism from the nineteenth century onwards. The Orthodox churches had to adopt elements of the past indigenization in the processes of formation of modern states. These political and religious dynamics define this *synthesis*, and "for the majority of these newfound Orthodox national churches, the continuing cultivation of the church-nation link remains either an incomplete or a recently completed process" (Roudometof 2014b, pp. 166–67). This vision allows for an investigation of the conflicts of the Orthodox churches in the processes of European integration in the countries of Eastern Europe. Moreover, it clarifies the genesis of the Church-state relations model of countries with an Orthodox majority founded on the concept of *symphony* or the symphonic model deriving from the Byzantine tradition. This means that church and state collaborate in a harmonious manner in a sort of alliance to pursue the common good of the people and to promote their spiritual and political interests, assigning a key national role to the church. In the current debate, social scientists and theologians raise questions concerning what political forms and expressions this model may assume within the European framework and in liberal democracies (Hovorun 2017a).

Also in social-scientific and theological literature on nationalism in Orthodoxy, the relationship of this religion with modernity appears to be a key issue, and its ambivalence and ambiguities with respect to phenomena and events of the modern world are emphasized (Demacopoulos and Papanikolaou 2016; Leustean 2014). For example, Daniel Payne (2007) suggests that it is the actual concept of a 'local church', which originally disavowed nationalism and affirmed the legitimate presence of a single church in a territory, that assumed another meaning from the nineteenth century onwards. On the one hand, the Orthodox churches accepted its new nationalist nuances, using them in a strategic way in the definition of the identity and role of the (local) church within the nation-state relationship; on the other hand, they insisted on the legitimacy of its original meaning, using it, as we shall see later, in conflicts for the defence of canonical territories against other churches. Moreover, according to some social scientists, once again considering the present-day situation, it is

precisely in this synthesis and in this model of Church-state relations that the "burden of Eastern Orthodoxy" resides (Radu 1998). From the historical point of view, they would have tended to favour the phenomenon of nationalism and compromised the civil and democratic development of countries with an Orthodox majority (Pollis 1993), and they make it difficult for Orthodoxy to incorporate modern phenomena such as human rights (Giordan and Guglielmi 2017; Agadjanian 2010). Regarding this latest issue, the concept of religious glocalization is an interesting choice for an examination of the position of religions towards human rights. When deemed to be useful, it is possible to adopt a perspective that may be defined as 'religious glocalization and human rights' which addresses this issue in a glocal key[2]. As mentioned briefly before, these analyses concerning human rights should not be interpreted as a set of processes disconnected from the settlement of churches in their societies, nor from their relationship with certain modernity issues. These are issues relating to the topic (a classic one in the field of sociology of religion) of the (glocal) relationship between religion and modernity.

The third form of religious glocalization is that of the *transnationalization* of Orthodoxy, because the global construction of nation-states has necessarily created the 'transnational' category. In this sense, *transnationalization* represents the other aspect of global nationalization and is seen as a form of hybridisation. In the context of migration, transnational people reconstitute their ties to both host and home countries, and they engage in a creative process of blending elements from both points of reference. As shown in many studies (Levitt 2001; Katzenstein and Byrnes 2006), transnational religiosity is a means of describing solutions to newfound situations that people face as a result of migration, and it presents as two quite distinct blends of religious universalism and local particularism.

In his work, Roudometof analyses the situation of the Orthodox diaspora in the United States. He analyses the de-ethnicisation or Americanisation of the Russian diaspora, the Orthodox Church in America (OCA), recognised as autocephalous since 1970, and focuses on the conflicts occurring within the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America (Roudometof 2014b, chp. 7, pp. 119–36). We will not dwell on a description of these case studies; however, an analysis of the same reveals some important indications that describe the tensions arising between the opposing positions of a church in diaspora and a local church. These elements make it possible to comprehend these two conditions and the relative processes of institutionalisation: use of the language of the host country as the liturgical language; the request for greater autonomy or autocephaly with respect to the church of origin; the presence of a collective identity that reproduces the national and ethnic identity of immigrants, or of a hybridized (also comprising various identities) or indigenized identity in the host country; and acceptance on the part of the diaspora religion of the cultural norms of the host country, such as its religious pluralism and religious economy[3].

This form of glocalization allows us to focus on two recent topics in the debate on Orthodoxy. The first concerns the now consolidated extension of the global trajectories of this religion. As stated by Roudometof (2015, pp. 223–24), it seems that Orthodox Christianity has assumed the traits of a transnational religion, and that through the migratory flows and its transnational ties, some of its paths may deviate from the historical experiences of Orthodoxy. In this scenario, in the main Orthodox jurisdictions, it is possible to identify institutional forms of transnationalism among the parishes of the diaspora and the church in the motherland, and forms of transnational religious practices among the followers of the Orthodox faith that relate to their religious sphere (Levitt 2007). The second topic, however, concerns the establishment of an authentic Orthodox dimension in Western Europe. It has been formed in the global spread of Orthodox Christianity over the last thirty years, and now has its

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[2]　In this case, we do not intend to define a theory, but to apply a specific investigative perspective to a subject of research.

[3]　With regard to this last point, an in-depth analysis would have been interesting. Perhaps defining the sociological concepts of cultural norms and religious pluralism used in the theoretical frame, and indicating some forms or paths of their acceptance by Orthodox diasporas in a host country. There seems to be an increasing focus on this point in sociological research concerning Orthodoxy in the West, also with a path of qualitative studies on conversions to the Orthodox faith on the part of believers in Western countries (in the USA: Slagle 2011; Herbel 2014; Winchester 2015, Kravchenko 2018; in Europe: Giordan 2009; Kapalò 2014; Thorbjørnsrud 2015).

own role and interests in international Orthodox affairs. Roudometof could have probably further investigated this point. It is a social-scientific path which identifies in some Orthodox diasporas in this European region important forms of adaptation in the host context (Hämmerli and Mayer 2014; Giordan and Guglielmi 2018). In these diaspora religions, processes of hybridization with the new socio-cultural reality appear to be identifiable, in addition to a change in the Orthodox tradition whereby certain specific elements of the European context are acquired[4].

In this regard, the question of ethnophyletism deserves our attention as currently, it relates not only to the phenomenon of nationalism in Orthodoxy—mentioned earlier, but also to Orthodox diaspora's issue (Hämmerli 2010). This idea means the principle of nationalities applied in the ecclesiastical field, i.e., the idea that a local autocephalous Church should be based not on a local ecclesial criterion, but on a national one. It was condemned as a modern ecclesial heresy, such as religious nationalism, by the Pan-Orthodox Synod in Constantinople on 10 September 1872. This concept is often used in the conflict between Orthodox jurisdictions to denounce the condition of Orthodox diasporas (in Western Europe and North America) and parallel jurisdictions in some Orthodox countries (such as Moldova and Estonia). With respect to its original theological meaning, this concept is often exploited in political and religious conflict. As suggested by Hovorun (2017b), a clarification of this concept in its theological declinations can favor an understanding of some dynamics of international Orthodox affairs and of the religious positions and orientations of the Orthodox churches in the current socio-religious contentions (such as the next mentioned ones occurring within *deterritorialization/reterritorialization* processes).

Indeed, another perspective examined in Roudometof's work and which allows us to comprehend the historical developments of Orthodoxy is that of the dialectic occurring between *deterritorialization* and *reterritorialization* (Roudometof 2014b, chp. 8, pp. 137–54). Globalization functions through this dialectic: on the one hand, it increases cross-cultural contact, and on the other, it facilitates the possibility of reconstructing or creating 'locality', by modifying the religious panorama. During the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, this dialectic was expressed through the gradual fragmentation of the Ottoman Empire and the reterritorialization of authority within the South-eastern European nation-states. It undergoes further change in the *global* condition of the current historical period, in which there is a simultaneous and/or synchronous experience of events and relationships on the part of people which generates hybridization. This dialectic is more evident in the recent attempts of Orthodox jurisdictions to become established outside their national borders and to assume a role in the fragmented international scenario. Orthodox ecclesiastic institutions must therefore devise forms of religious response to address these changes that favour migratory flows and cultural and religious pluralism. In this regard, Roudometof focuses on defining the international activity of the Ecumenical Patriarchate. It operates both as a *transnational* institution that maintains ties with the Greek communities in the diaspora and as a *global* institution focused on its traditional status as *primus inter pares*, which intervenes in the processes of *deterritorialization* and as an impartial referee in the 'affairs' of the Orthodox world.

This last vision appears to shed new light on the role of the Orthodox churches as stakeholders in the international arena and in Western countries marked by an increasing religious differentiation, as well as in the exercise of 'soft power' in the geopolitical interests of their countries. If in the case of the Russian Orthodox Church the so-called *Russkii Mir*—the religious policy pursued by the Russian Patriarchate in spreading the 'Orthodox World' outside the national borders—has been examined by

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4   In this regard, Chapter 6 (Roudometof 2014b, pp. 102–18) focuses on the case of Cyprus, and 'enters into conflict' with the more general view adopted in the research. This examination of the encounter between colonialism, the 'dark side' of Western modernity, and the history of the Orthodox Church of Cyprus, allows us to tackle an important issue in the study of the Orthodox diaspora. The study analyses the cultural hybrid that develops in an Eastern socio-cultural context 'entangled' in Western and European trajectories and patterns. In a somewhat different light, but still relating this religion to colonialism and the Western world, Demacopoulos (2017) reinterprets and clarifies 'traditional Orthodoxy' as a post-colonial movement: a "more loosely organized but similarly aimed subgroup within the Orthodox Church whose animating spirit is resistance to the perceived threats of a Western and/or modern contamination of Orthodox teaching and practice" (2017, p. 476).

social scientists (in this regard see Sidorov 2006; Suslov 2014; Payne 2010), little attention seems to have been paid to international policies involving the other churches of the Orthodox Communion. However, events related to the Pan-Orthodox Council held in Crete in June 2016, which, following considerable tension and controversy, was attended by 10 of the 14 Orthodox jurisdictions, recently revealed to the entire world the geopolitical significance of this religion. The Council appears to have drawn attention to the role exercised by the individual jurisdictions in the diplomatic world and in international relations and to the complex geopolitical framework created around this particular event, and to the extent that it is possible to identify an analytical category in geopolitics, permitting a more in-depth examination of this religion (Giordan 2016; Ladouceur 2016; Leustean 2018).

The foregoing elements and topics are eventually summed up in the description of the concept of glocalization (Roudometof 2014b, chp. 9, pp. 155–72; or Roudometof 2016a). This concept provides a theoretical framework suitable for the study of the relationship of this religion with globalization, and a fertile point of view in the study of religion. As we have tried to show in the analysis of the work, the glocal stance expresses the dual nature of globalization, focusing on both the global and local levels. Within the processes of the four forms of glocalization (*vernacularization*, *indigenization*, *nationalization*, and *transnationalization*), the glocal view studies the formation of cultural hybrids that merge religious universalism with the forms of local particularism. This perspective of *multiple glocalizations* allows us to examine the religion beyond the dimension of the 'Western imagination'; indeed, as a religious tradition marked by a rich and varied cultural and historical past, a *religious panorama* composed of societies, identities, and cultures on which globalization has an effect.

Since the late 1980s and the early 1990s, the concept of *glocalization* has been referred to in various fields[5]. The concept of *glocal religion* in fact abandons the narrative of secularization and focuses on a meeting of cultures and a valorization of the interaction occurring between local and global dimensions (Beyer 2007). Rather than considering cultural units as fixed elements or as exclusive units, it is possible to concentrate on the various processes referred to as *hybridization* or *glocalization* (Beyer 2007). Instead of underestimating the scope and influence of traditional local cultures, structures, and settings, it assumes that global processes interact with them. Robertson's goal in introducing this concept is to make the duality of global processes visible. They do not oppose or occur outside local forces; on the contrary, both global and local processes are established on a reciprocal basis. This concept shows how the global world cannot be conceived as existing in opposition to or as isolated from local reality, and that both form part of contemporary society.

As Robertson suggests, glocalizations offer a means to interpret and acquire a more profound comprehension of the *hybridity* and *fragmentation* of the cultural context within the framework of global-local relations. Within this framework, in their localization, religions form new *cultural hybrids* that blend religious universalism with forms of local particularism. The processes of globalization in fact promote multiple glocalizations (Beyer 2007), i.e., universal religion, thematized alongside local particularity. These multiple glocalizations should not be seen as mechanically linked to specific historical periods, but as synchronously interacting in the various historical periods and influenced by the political and cultural conditions of each age. Such a perspective allows us to comprehend the historical discontinuities or continuities and changes in the religious phenomenon, focusing on the hybrid nature generated by local and global processes in the geographical regions considered. For example, the model of "multiple glocalizations of Christianity in Europe suggests that this model offers a conceptual map that accounts for religious change and fragmentations both in Western and Eastern Europe" (Roudometof 2014c, p. 76).

To conclude, this research perspective may be appropriate for researchers of all disciplines involved in the study of Orthodox Christianity thanks to its unprecedented vision with respect to

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5   For an in-depth examination of the concept of glocalization with respect to its various interpretations, its tense relations with other fields of interest, and its influence in various areas, see (Roudometof 2016b).

historical and sociological changes in this religious tradition. Furthermore, it examines the relationship of Orthodoxy with global processes through a framework that is not merely conflictual, depicting a theoretical turn not only in the literature on this religion, but in the entire theme of the relationship between religion and globalization. In fact, for scholars engaged in this field, it may provide some suggestions by elaborating in a meaningful way the conceptual framework of this relationship and by proposing an original application of the concept of glocalization in the study of a religious tradition.

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