

“We are All Children of Abraham”: Chrislam’s Interfaith Message in Lagos

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By means of a case study of Chrislam (*Oke Tude*) – a religious movement mixing Christian and Islamic beliefs and practices that emerged in Lagos (Nigeria) about two decades ago – this paper explores the religious education provided by the movement’s leader, Prophet Dr. Samsindeen Saka, with the aim of bringing about not only mutual understanding, but also a synthesis between the two world religions. Chrislam’s educational role is studied against the background of the crisis the Nigerian post-colonial state finds itself in. Since the state has cut back on or stopped providing certain services, religious organizations like Chrislam have stepped in to offer services in the areas of education, social welfare, health and security. Nigeria’s former capital Lagos, a megacity characterized by eroding socio-economic structures and increasing violence between Christians and Muslims, forms a challenging avenue to investigate this development. In addition to socio-economic and political factors, this paper argues that the rapid rise and spread of Pentecostalism in Nigeria and its increased presence in the public sphere contributed to Samsindeen Saka’s engagement with religious schooling. Parallel to the new trend in Pentecostalism toward a higher level of intellectualization, Saka opened a Healing School, published religious books and pamphlets and converted his weekly sermons into “lectures”. At a time when Pentecostal Christianity and reformist Islam are among the world’s fastest growing religious traditions, this paper assumes that the expansion of Chrislam has to be seen as a part of a wider move toward what has been designated “Islamic Pentecostalism” in some of the recent social science literature on religion.