Chapter 11

Everyday Religious Encounters and Inter-Faith Relations in Festac Town, Lagos (Southwest Nigeria)

Oluwafunminiyi Raheem
Centre for Black Culture and International Understanding, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

This chapter examines everyday religious encounters and inter-faith relations in Festac Town, Lagos, Southwest Nigeria. It explores the nature of these encounters and the factors facilitating its conduct. Globally, subjects dealing with inter-religious relations continue to elicit scholarly debates. A reason for this is linked to the intense rivalries or tensions among disparate religious groups over, for instance, the (re)affirmation of religious boundaries or the right to use the hijab in secular or missionary schools within a contentious locality. While these have often spurred serious confrontations in many areas, there are instances where this form of religious encounters manifests positively elsewhere. Festac Town, with a large mix of Muslims and Christians, satisfies the above position. Founded in 1977, religious interactions in the town have not only been fluid but exhibit a high level of tolerance. Based on extensive oral interviews and secondary sources, the chapter notes that inter-faith harmony is a key component that reinforces the town’s quest for good neighborliness.

INTRODUCTION

Across the world today, subjects dealing with inter-faith relations continue to elicit scholarly debates. This is linked to the intense rivalries or tensions among disparate religious groups over, for instance, the (re)affirmation of religious boundaries (Watson, Dong, & Lu, 2015), or the right to use (or not to use) the hijab in secular societies or missionary schools within a contentious spatiality (Weaver, 2018). While these have often spurred serious confrontations or conflicts in several parts of the world, there was one location where such religious encounters manifested differently. That place was FESTAC-Town, a federal housing estate in Lagos State, southwest Nigeria, which is home to a large mix of Muslims and Christians. Founded in 1977, religious interactions in the town have not only been fluid but tolerant as well. According to accounts, Muslim and Christian residents have lived side by side with no major recorded religious conflict. Although disagreements emerge—a common feature in a community composed of diverse religious groups or ethnic makeup—these were rarely noticeable within the realm of inter-faith relations in the town. What makes FESTAC-Town unique or different from other shared spaces where religious encounters might assume perilous forms? Some of the underlying factors influencing tolerance and mutual respect include the elitist makeup of the town, absence of indigene-settler rights, urbanisation, and adoption of conflict resolution mechanisms.

This chapter highlights everyday interactions between Muslims and Christians and explores how these interactions impact the promotion of tolerance and peaceful co-existence among residents of FESTAC-Town. Given its diverse ethnic makeup, the chapter shall examine areas of differences which could likely result in conflict or tensions and their implication on religious harmony. The analysis is based on extensive oral interviews and use of secondary sources. It focuses on the different modes of religious encounters in the town and the process through which residents have forged closer religious ties in their effort to resolve inter-faith tensions. It reveals that inter-faith harmony is a fundamental component reinforcing the town’s enduring quest for good neighbourliness.

FESTAC-Town: How It Came to Be

FESTAC-Town is a popular housing estate located along the Lagos-Badagry Expressway in Amuwo-Odofin Local Government Area (LGA) of Lagos State, southwest Nigeria. The town was constructed to accommodate about 16,000 participants and guests (which included artists, performers and writers from 60 different countries), all of whom were invited for the Second World Black and Festival Arts and Culture (FESTAC) between January 15 and February 12, 1977.
An Analysis of 100 Muslim Email Counseling Clients
Sheima Salam Sumer (2020). *Working With Muslim Clients in the Helping Professions* (pp. 221-241).
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/an-analysis-of-100-muslim-email-counseling-clients/234159?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/an-analysis-of-100-muslim-email-counseling-clients/234159?camid=4v1a)

He Kakano Ahau Framework: I Am a Seed Born of Greatness Descended From a Line of Chiefs
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/he-kakano-ahau-framework/221463?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/he-kakano-ahau-framework/221463?camid=4v1a)