

Mitigation Efforts of the Seventh Day Adventist Church Teachings to the Borabu/Sotik Boarder 2007/8 Post Election Violence, Kenya

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Abstract:

This paper presents mitigation efforts of the Seventh-day Adventist Church teachings to the Borabu/Sotik boarder 2007/8 violence. The paper is an outcome of a study which was conducted whose major objective was to investigate the role of the Adventists in the mitigation efforts to the 2007/8 post election violence along the Borabu/Sotik boarder. The area of study was Borabu Sub county. The research is anchored on Aristotle's institutionalization theory of the natural law which states the importance of natural law in guiding the choices of the Christians. The study adopted descriptive survey study design. A sample size of 207 from a total population of 2070 was used. A questionnaire with a 5 point Likert type scale was used to collect data. The major findings of the study were; Seventh –day Adventists along Borabu / Sotik border failed to abide by their known law and they also participated in the 2007/8 post election violence. Mechanisms of validating God's law were found wanting as well. There were also challenges of security, social reform, historical injustices, and negation of both Christian and secular values. The findings will be useful to policy makers as a complimentary document to build a Kenya of love command and rule of law. The researchers recommend teaching of God's law which may lead to harmonious co-existence.

Key words: Mitigation, Adventist Church Teachings, Violence.

Introduction

The Borabu/Sotik border point has been experiencing periodic violence which becomes worse at every electioneering year. This has been witnessed as from 1992, 1997, 2002, and 2007. Even when it is not an election year still violence as a result of cattle rustling is the order of the day from both sides of the Kisii and Kipsigis communities living along the borderline. This has caused tangible insecurity along the Borabu border which may have been one of the causes for the slow rate of development at Borabu District. According to Ledarach (1995), religion and peace have been almost natural companions in the minds of humans in different periods of history and in different cultures of the world in maintaining harmony, a tangible reason which led the research to investigate the mitigation efforts of the seventy- day teachings to the borabu/ Sotik 2007/8 post election violence. Therefore the researchers' concern in this paper is to find out the

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possible mitigation efforts by the Seventh-day Adventist church in an attempt to normalize the volatile situation at Borabu/ Sotik borderline.

Area of study

The researcher's study area was Borabu Sub-county of Nyamira County in Kenya as shown in figure 1.1. The Sub County is one of the three districts that were carved out of the former Nyamira County, now Nyamira County. Borabu County is one of the smallest Districts in Kenya both in area coverage and total population. It was one of the worst hit by the 2007/8 PEV. It is sparsely populated as compared to its neighbors since much of it is in the settlement scheme formerly held by the white settlers. It borders with Bomet to the south, Buret to the east, Nyamira to the north, Masaba to the west and Transmara to the South west. It has three divisions of Kiangeni, Esise and Mekenene. This area borders Borabu and Sotik area which was one of the 2007/8 post election violence zones worst hit in Kenya and that is why the researcher deliberately chose it. The area lies on the border of the Kipsigis and the Kisii communities (Nyamira and Bomet counties).

Economically, the area is fertile for the production of both cash and food crops. Agriculture, lumbering, brick making, retail, and matatu business are the main economic activities. The government generates a lot of income from the three giant tea company estates identified as Kepkebe, Ng'oina and Sotik tea estates which were once occupied by the white settlers, a bone of contention of the two communities among others. On one hand the Gusii people living on this border are mixed farmers. They grow crops and at the same time domesticate animals, though, their major occupation is rearing of crops both cash crop and food crop. On the other hand, the Kalenjin people who are also living along this border are majorly cattle keepers. Cattle rustling are frequently practiced here by both communities and this has been for a long time a serious cause for violence between these two communities.



Figure 1.1 Location of the sampling size of the study

Research Population and sample design

Church members and victims/ perpetrators of post election violence formed the researcher's population. The researcher limited his study to the Churches of Matutu District of Nyamira conference of the Seventh Day Adventist Church in Nyamira County. Simple random sampling was used to select 10% of the church members and IDPs from the established records. However, the study area has ten churches with a total population of one thousand, seven hundred and fourth four (1744). Sampled at 10% this formed a sample size of one hundred and seventh four (174). At the time of this inquiry, there were three IDPs camps with a total population of 259, sampled to 26 respondents at 10%. All the 7 pastors were purposively selected for interview schedule. This formed the researcher's total sample size of two hundred and three (203) from a total population of 2003.

The specific objective of this paper is on the role of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in the possible mitigation efforts to the 2007/8 Borabu/Sotik post election violence in Kenya. The major question of the paper was: What were the mitigation efforts of the SDA church teachings to the Borabu/ Sotik 2007/8 border violence?

Methodology

Investigations were carried out at two sites of Borabu sub County with a total population of 2003 and a sample size of 200 respondents arrived at by systematic random sampling at 10%. Descriptive survey design was used. Instruments and techniques for data collected were interviews, questionnaires and observation.

Findings/ Results

The various mitigation efforts are suggested in this paper by careful analysis and interpretation of data obtained from the respondents and the literature reviewed. To identify the possible mitigation efforts to 2007/8 Borabu border violence, the respondents were asked to indicate by writing in a given cell the values that best captured their view in a scale of 1-5, where 1==strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3=don't know, 4=agree, 5= strongly agree. In one of the testing questions the respondents were asked to respond to this leading question whose results are recorded in table 1.1 below: the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist of non violence may reduce violence in Borabu; Strongly agree () Agree () Strongly disagree () Disagree () Don't know ()

The findings of the study were drawn from the data collected. In order to achieve the objective of the inquiry, the researchers analyzed and interpreted the findings as reported in table 1.1 and other subsequent tables:

Results

Table 1.1- Responses on whether Seventh-day Adventist church teachings on non violence may reduce violence at Borabu/Sotik border point

Scale	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
Strongly disagree	03	01	01
Disagree	10	06	07
Don't know	03	01	08
Agree	122	63	71
Strongly Agree	57	29	100
Total	195	100	

Source: Research data 2013

Majority of the respondents agreed that the teaching of the Seventh day Adventist church on non violence may help to reduce the historical Borabu border dispute to a large extent at 92%. Nevertheless 07% disagreed. The findings reveal that majority of the respondents are convinced that the teachings of the law of God of loving neighbor if blended with a strong constitution, violence would be reduced in Borabu, Kenya. The study is in agreement with Selengut ((2008), who characterizes the phrase "religion and violence" as "jarring", asserting that "religion is thought to be opposed to violence and a force for peace and reconciliation. He acknowledges, however, that "the history and scriptures of the world's religions tell stories of violence and war even as they speak of peace and love." On one hand this finding is also similar to the teachings of the Seventh day Adventist Church as argued out by Dabrowski (2005, 55), who says that the responsibility of the SDA church in the world is to reduce violence. On the other hand the study is also dissimilar to Bland (2003), who asserts that one of the most prominent reasons for the "rise of the secular in Western thought" was the reaction against the religious violence of the 16th and 17th centuries. He asserts that "the secular was a way of living with the religious differences that had produced so much horror. The current findings concurs with Chepkwony (2003), who claims that majority of African communities regarded God as the ultimate arbiter though other bodies like the council of elders existed. Majority of African communities regarded God as the ultimate arbiter though other bodies like the council of elders existed.

The other guiding question is: What is the purpose of God's law among the Seventh –day Adventist Christians in Kenya? Findings of the study showed that whereas the SDA church manual teaches about the social, civil and moral laws, the respondents largely are conversant with the moral law. This known law was broken during the 2007/8 post election violence. The results of the study disagreed with those of Mackay (2001), that the Seventh day Christians broke God's law during the 2007/8 post election violence not because they were not in Christ but because of the unfulfilled rights and violation of the national values. These national values include: national unity, devolution, human dignity, social justice, human rights, good governance, integrity and sustainable development. The study found out that these national values and principles of governance enshrined in the Kenyan constitutions are not implemented. The study also disagreed with the literature on the teaching of the Seventy –day Adventist teaching on the law. Whereas the said Church ought to teach her adherent on the purpose and role of God's law morning and evening as recorded in Deuteronomy (5: 6), the findings of this study reveals that this one is not done among the majority of the SDA members in Borabu Sub-County.

According to Dabrowski (2005), Seventh Adventist Church is a worldwide body operating in more than 200 nations who seek to respect, love and accept everyone. The church has twenty eight (28) fundamental teachings which guide them in enhancing her core values and responsibilities. The study pays maximum attention to fundamental teaching number thirteen (19) in the Church manual of the Seventh-day Adventist Church (2010) which is the law of God .These 28 fundamental teachings include: Holy spirit (Genesis Psalms 2:20), trinity (Genesis 1:1), father (Genesis 1:1), son (John 1:1), Holy Spirit , creation (Romans 1:19-20), nature of man (Genesis 1;26), the great controversy, the death and the resurrection (Romans 1:1), salvation (Galatians 1:4), growing in Christ (Psalms 1:1), Church (Mathew 28: 19-20), remnant and the mission (Revelation 12:17), Unity in the body of Christ, Baptism (Romans 1: 1-6), the Lord's supper (Icorinthians 10: 17), Unity of the body of Christ (Romans 12:4), spiritual gifts (Romans 12:4-12), Gifts of prophecy, Law, Sabbath, (Romans 12: 12), Sabbath (Exodus 20: 1-17),

Stewardship (Malachi, 3:8-12), Christian behavior, marriage and the family (Genesis 2:18), Christ’s ministry in the heavenly Sanctuary (Hebrew 8:1-5), second coming (Titus 2: 3), death and resurrection, millennium (Romans 6:23) and the new earth.

Dabrowski affirms that the Seventh – day Adventist subscribes to the principle of non violence (Luke 9: 56), (Mathew 26: 52) (, 2010) . The position of this Church is that the Seventy day Adventists and all people of good will are to cooperate in every legitimate means of reducing and eliminating where possible the root causes of violence and crime. On the same note, Dabrowski (2005), argues that it is the spirit of Christ to love, accept, seek affirm and build others up rather than to tear one another. According to Dadrowsk (ibid), the goal of the Seventh –day Adventist education is to produce graduates who are guided by the church’s education core values of bible, creativity, ethics, honesty, trust and equality .

Further still in investigating the possible mitigation efforts of the Seventh-day Adventist Church to the 2007/8 post election violence, the respondents were asked to indicate as to what extent the Kenyan constitution 2010 can contribute to the reduction of the Borabu / Sotik perennial violence. The leading question was; The Kenyan constitution 2010 when carefully observed in conjunction with the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist church may minimize the Borabu /Sotik border perennial violence; Strongly disagree (), Disagree (), Don’t know (), Agree (), Strongly agree (). The results of this question were recorded in table 1.2 below;

Table 1.2: Responses on whether the Kenyan constitution 2010 when carefully observed in conjunction with the teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist church may minimize the Borabu /Sotik border perennial violence;

Scale	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
Strongly disagree	52	12	12
Disagree	90	41	53
Don’t know	13	07	60
Agree	25	23	83
Strongly Agree	15	17	100
Total	195	100	

Source: Research data 2013

The results in table 1.2 reveal that only 40% respondents subscribe to the authority and supremacy of the constitution as one of the solutions to Kenya’s conflicts and violence including Borabu/ Sotik border violence. This % do not form the threshold required to conclude that the Kenyan constitution alone may reduce the borabu perennial violence. However, 53% disagreed with the question. This reveals that there is need for the creation and implementation of a very

strong constitution in Kenya other than the exiting one to address most of the problems the thesis identified above as major underlying causes of the 2007/8 post election violence along the Borabu/ Sotik border in Kenya. This may be so because the national values of unity, equity, good governance and sustainable development spelt out in the constitution are not addressed adequately. The findings are not in agreement with the teachings of the Seventh day Adventist Church which according to Debrowski (2005), calls for all churches and other institutions to revisit their own constitutions and align them with the aspirations reflected in the positive elements of the national law, while upholding biblical values, morality and total human dignity. This could be realized may be through the nationwide civic education aimed at enabling Kenyans to internalize the provisions of the 2010 constitution. It is probable that Kenyans will not enjoy or benefit from the 2010 constitution to hold their leaders to account effectively if they do not understand it fully. The findings of the study revealed that the Kenyan constitution may not have been the cause for the Borabu / Sotik 2007/8 post election violence.

In investigating further, the respondents were asked to indicate the place of the taboo systems in mitigating the Borabu/ sotik border 2007/ 8 violence. The leading question was; the blending of the law of God with the African taboo systems may minimize the Borabu/ Sotik border violence; Strongly disagree (), Disagree (), Don't know (), Agree, Strongly agree () The results were recorded in table 1.3 below;

Table 1.3: Responses on whether the blending of the law of God with the African taboo systems may minimize the Borabu/ Sotik border violence;

Scale	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
Strongly disagree	02	01	01
Disagree	07	04	05
Don't know	01	01	06
Agree	125	64	70
Strongly Agree	60	30	100
Total	195	100	

Source: Research data 2013

The findings in table 1.3 above recorded 94% respondents who asserted that the implementation of the taboo systems may to a large extent solve the problem under study. However, 05% disagreed to the question. This finding stands on its own as new information of this study which is not found in any of the works the researcher consulted. Mugambi (1991, notes that taboo systems were eroded by the introduction of Christianity to Africa. The study reveals a rethinking of the taboo systems as complimenting avenues to fight impunity which according to Kriegler (2009) is the problem to Kenya's situation under study. The findings of the study reveal that

taboo systems may be used to regulate the just governing systems as evidenced by one interviewee, “taboo systems establishes a sense of sharing what is permitted and what is prohibited” Another interviewee said “ taboos reveal what the society considers profane and what is sacred.” Still another respondent noted, “that although these taboo systems were used by the primitive society to regulate the justice system, they were effective to the purpose and people respected them”. It could be that the situation in Borabu/Sotik boarder in relation to occasional violence may be solved by the introduction and implementation of the taboo system by the good will of the people.

Furthermore, the findings are similar to the literature on God’s law reviewed in this paper which illustrated taboo systems in Israel. Thus white (1970),322-340, says that the law of God was given to God’s people for instruction, guidance and correction. White also notes that the whole law given to Moses contained a section of taboo systems as revealed in the book of Leviticus (10:11, 11: 46, 26: 46) and Deuteronomy (1:5) where she says that the law was to teach and legislate. These contained dos and the don’ts. Further still, the finding is similar to Seventh-day Adventist teachings which are anchored on the advice that Jethro, the father in-law to Moses gave “---choose wise leaders from among the Commonwealth of Israel to be in charge of tens, hundreds, thousands and ten thousands to settle disputes arising from among the people of Israel (Exodus 18:1... ff)”

The findings indicate that majority of the respondents revealed that African societies have eroded their moral values which were preserved in African traditional living in the form of strong taboo systems which was the rule of law and integrity. This erosion of moral values according to this category of the respondents who disagreed is what may have caused the 2007/8 PEV. Bonthuys (2002) rightly argues that the introduction of the colonial situation translates easily to cultural genocide for Africa with an attendant assumption that whatever is produced in the west is superior to its indigenous counterpart.

Concerning the devolved governments, the respondents were asked in their own opinion to indicate to what extent the devolved systems of government may reduce the Borabu/ Sotik perennial violence and the results were recorded in table 1.4 below. The leading question was; devolved systems of government in Kenya may help to minimize the Borabu/ Sotik violence; Strongly disagree (), Disagree (), Don’t know (), Agree (), Strongly agree ().

Table 1.4: Responses on whether devolved systems of government in Kenya may help to minimize the Borabu/ Sotik violence;

Scale	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
Strongly disagree	60	13	13
Disagree	70	31	44
Don't know	18	10	54
Agree	30	28	82
Strongly Agree	17	18	100
Total	195	100	

Source: Research data 2013

The results in table 1.4 above shows that, 46% respondents were of the opinion that positive devolution of power may contribute to the reduction of violence along the Borabu/ Sotik border. Nevertheless 44 respondents disagreed. This finding is in agreement with the Kenyan constitution (2010) which states that a national state organ shall avail services to the grassroots so as to decentralize. As the study reveals in table 1.4 above, majority of the respondents testified that prior to 2007 Kenyan election, politicians from both the divide presented to them the term devolution in distorted definition which could be the reason for a large respondent's disagreement with the question. Some of the politicians were giving their constituents feudalism for devolution and this led to displacements of people from their acquired settlements back to their ancestral homes.

Still in the process of investigating the mitigation efforts of the Seventh –day Adventist church teachings on the Borabu/Sotik 2007/8 violence the respondents were asked to indicate the role of the council of elders in violence prone areas. The leading question was; The traditional tribunal of the council of elders if called upon to implement the Seventh-day church teachings on violence, may help to minimize Borabu /Sotik border violence; Strongly disagree (), Disagree (), Don't know (), Agree (), Strongly agree ().

Table 1.5: Responses on whether the traditional tribunal of the council of elders if called upon to implement the Seventh-day church teachings on violence, may help to minimize Borabu /Sotik border violence

Scale	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
Strongly disagree	65	33	33
Disagree	68	34	68
Don't know	15	07	75
Agree	30	15	90
Strongly Agree	17	10	100
Total	195	100	

Source: Research data 2013

The findings recorded in table 1.5 reveal that 25% of the respondents agreed to the question against the 68 % who disagreed. The respondents who agreed do not meet the threshold required to conclude that the Seventh-day Church totally agrees to the question. Those who agreed are far much less than those who disagreed and so the findings under this item are dissimilar to Achebe's literature which says that the council of elders in Africa played a very crucial role in the administration of the society. This result is also dissimilar to the teachings of the SDA church which are anchored on the book of Genesis 18 where Jethro, is instructing Moses to make good use of the council of elders in the settlements of daily disputes amongst the nation of Israel. In his book, Achebe (1958, p 207), identifies the role of the council of elders in African communities with special reference to Umuofia clan when he says:

“...but the war that now threatened was a just war. Even the enemy clan knew that. And so when Okonkwo of umuofia arrived at Mbaino as the proud and imperious emissary of war, he was treated with great honor and respect, and two days later he returned home with a lad of fifteen, Ekemefuna whose sad story is still told in Umuofia unto this day and a young virgin. The elders or *indiche* met to hear a report of Okonkwo's mission. At the end they decided as everybody knew they would' that the girl should go to Ugbuefi Udo to replace his murdered wife. As for the boy he belonged to the clan as a whole and there was no hurry to decide his fate. Okonkwo was therefore asked on behalf of the clan to look after him in the interim. And so for three years Ekemefune lived in Okonkwo,s household.” (Ibid)

In view of the above tragedy, it is evident that every community in Africa had a council of elders which decided upon the weighty matters which affected the members. As for the case of Umuofia clan, their council of elders was called by the name *Indiche*. The study notes that the council of

elders has been of much instrumental in solving disputes in many societies in Kenya, and reveals a dislocation of the role of the council of elders in the current situation under investigation. An interviewee noted that the inclusion of the elders in the national cohesion and integration process was born out of the identification of a gap in the omission elders and other community leaders in conflict management, national cohesion and integration.

Table 1.6: Responses on whether land should be state owned in Kenya in conjunction with the Seventh-day church teachings may help to minimize Borabu /Sotik border violence

Scale	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative
Strongly agree	15	07	07
Agree	165	85	92
Don't know	01	0.5	92.5
Disagree	12	06	98.5
Strongly disagree	02	1.5	100
Total	195	100	

Source: Research data 2013

The results in table 1.6 indicate that 92% respondents agreed that land in Kenya should be state owned, may be in order to solve the uneven distribution of land which in most cases lead to Borabu/Sotik border violence. These findings are dissimilar to the constitution of Kenya (2010), where by land in Kenya is classified as public, community and private. The paper found out that the Kisii people of Borabu sub-County are encroaching their settlements towards the rift valley through buying consents of the private lands. This may have been one of the causes for the persistent Borabu/Sotik border disputes. However, this result is similar to the bible teachings about land ownership as noted in the book of Malachi 3:1, where land is said to be owned by God and not by individuals of this world.

Table 1.7 In-depth Interview on Proposed mitigation efforts to the Borabu 2007/8 Post Election Violence

Scale	Application of God's law		Constitution		Devolution		Taboo systems		Elders Council	
Strongly disagree	00	00%	02	09.1%	03	13.6%	02	0.9%	02	09%
Disagree	02	9.1%	07	32%	08	36.3%	09	41%	09	40.9%
Don't know	00	00%	02	09.1%	02	09.1%	00	00%	01	04.5%
Agree	14	64%	08	36.3%	04	18%	08	36.4%	07	32%
Strongly agree	06	27%	03	13.6%	05	28%	03	13.6%	03	13.6%
Total	22	100	22	100%	22	100	22	100	22	100

Source: Field data 2013

The findings recorded in table 1.6 above reveals that 91% of the in-depth interview respondents agreed that the application and obedience to God's love law may reduce the Borabu/Sotik border violence. According to this study, only 09% respondents disagreed to the question. In addition the study's findings showed that there are other causes at lower percentages which were also believed to trigger violence at Borabu border and these are recorded above table 2.3 as: constitution at 49.9%, devolution at 46%, taboo system at 50% and council of elders at 45.6%.

Conclusion

Based on the findings, the following conclusions were arrived at.

The Seventh –day Adventist Church teachings subscribe to the principle of non violence embedded in the spirit of Christ to love neighbors in building them up rather than tearing them down (Luke 9: 56), (Mathew 26: 52). The teachings of the Seventh-day Adventist are leaning towards the non violent. Secondly, from the results of the study, the teachings of the Seventh-day Church are not utilized by the adherents in order to bridge the gap between warring partners through organization structures and the cultural content of religious institutions and the movements set up by various religions. The study found out that this may happen through the continuing delivery of basic services such as health care and education. Thirdly, the paper found out that the Seventh-day Church should blend their teachings with those of the taboo systems and good governance of the council of elders as one of the suggested mechanisms of reducing the Boraby border perennial violence. As regards to poverty, the Seventh – day Adventist teaches that the fruits of sin are greed, war and ignorance and that acts of sin should be avoided by the legitimate means possible which the paper investigated. Provision of both the national and biblical values to the people of borabu/Sotik border is one of the mitigation efforts of the SDA church.

Recommendations

In relation to the findings of the study, the following recommendations were made to address the Chebilat/ Sotik border dispute in Kenya:

- i) The study observed that the challenge of the Seventh- day Church in Borabu / Sotik border point may not be solved by the teachings and constitution alone, but by blending it with the taboo systems and council of elders. Therefore the study recommended for the teaching of the roles of the taboo systems and council of elders to serve as local tribunals for settling community disputes

and rampant impunity. This will be achieved through teaching the people of the Seventh-day biblical teachings particularly on holistic education.

ii) Concerning violence and impunity the study recommended for the teaching of the roles of the community taboo systems, council of elders to serve as local tribunals for settling community disputes and rampant impunity.

iii) On land question, there is need for a strong implementation of land laws to address the emotive land factor in the Borabu /sotik border point. Specifically the paper here recommended for state land ownership in Kenya.

iv) On poverty, the study recommended for the establishment of cottage industries to provide for employment to County youths attainable through the provision of inclusive education.

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