



Recruitment, Resistance and Memories of the First World War among the Terik of Kenya

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Abstract

While the First World War was, from the Terik point of view, an unpopular and painful event, it inaugurated a deeper interaction between the British colonial government and the Terik. Terik memories of the war are complicated and ambivalent. Informants recall the war not only as a contest between the British and the Germans, but also as a time of widespread famine and forced recruitment. Driven by British anti-German propaganda, political anxieties and forced recruitment, Terik carriers and *askari* endured disease, suffering and death in the battlefields of East Africa between 1914 and 1918. These tragedies are deeply seared into Terik memories, but so are those of their bravery, heroism and being part of the victorious side. While they brought some economic and social benefits to the veterans, they also deepened British colonial cooptation of the *Gapjepkoi* ruling elite as well as its unpopularity among the Terik.

Résumé

Si la Première Guerre mondiale a été, du point de vue des Terik, un événement impopulaire et douloureux, elle a inauguré une ère de plus grande interaction entre le gouvernement colonial britannique et les Terik. Les souvenirs de la guerre des Terik sont compliqués et ambivalents. Les informateurs se rappellent la guerre non seulement comme une lutte entre les Britanniques et les Allemands, mais aussi comme une période de famine généralisée et de recrutement forcé. Animés par la propagande anti-allemande des britanniques, les inquiétudes politiques et le recrutement forcé, les porteurs et « askari » Terik ont enduré maladies, souffrances et morts sur les champs de bataille de l'Afrique de l'Est entre 1914 et 1918. Ces tragédies sont profondément gravées dans la mémoire des Terik, de même que les victoires, la bravoure, l'héroïsme et l'appartenance à la partie victorieuse. Tout en apportant des avantages économiques et sociaux aux anciens combattants, la guerre a également renforcé la cooptation coloniale britannique de l'élite dirigeante des *Gapjepkoi*, et leur impopularité auprès des Terik.

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Introduction

The experiences of the Terik people in the First World War cannot necessarily represent those of other Kenyan African groups. Nevertheless, some comparisons can be made between the experiences of the Terik and those of the other Kalenjin sub-ethnic groups in the First World War, as documented by Lewis Greenstein (1975). The Terik, a small sub-group of the larger Kalenjin network of ethnic groups, contributed hundreds of men to the British First World War effort. The exact number of Terik people who participated in the war is unknown; but from field interviews with fourteen Terik informants, they supplied an inordinately large number of youths towards the war effort. The Terik population at this time was approximately 8,000 (see Table 2). From 1914 to 1917, the entire Kisumu district mobilised approximately 27,000 carriers alone (see Table 1) out of a total of 179,000 for the entire British East African Protectorate (Hodges 1986: 207).¹

This article is based mainly on archival data and oral testimonies of a fast-disappearing set of second-hand informants who are descendants (children and grandchildren) and associates of Terik recruits into First World War. Despite their limitations, the testimonies paint a vivid account of the war experiences of Terik recruits and their communities in Nyang'ori, western Kenya. Recounted to the researcher mainly in the Terik language between May and June 2015, the testimonies reflect their perspectives of their own society and experiences during the war.

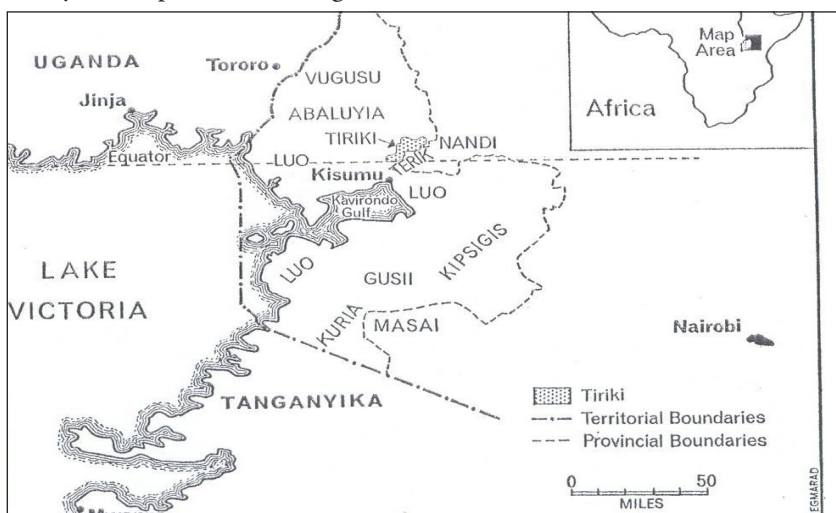


Figure 1: Map showing the area of study (Nyang'ori Location, part of the present day Terik area)

Source: Sangree, W.H. (1966: XXVI)

Terik informants have three descriptions for the First World War. The two most common are *Boriethab Jerumaan ak Ingeresa* and *boriethab rubeeth*. *Boriethab Jerumaan ak Ingeresa*² means, literally, 'the war of the Germans and the English (British)', and refers to the main protagonists in the war. *Boriethab rubeeth* means the 'war of hunger' and refers to the famine of 1918 to 1919 which ravaged the Terik area and virtually the entire then British East Africa Protectorate.³ In Terik-lore, the famine is also frequently referred to as *masiemui* or *jemuiya*⁴ because food was so scarce. People had to cut, boil and eat *muiywek* (dry skins and hides) in order to fend off hunger during the prolonged drought. Terik elders generally hold that *masiemui* (meaning 'the ones who wouldn't lie on the hides' possibly because they had eaten it out of hunger) was occasioned by the 'atrocities' that had been committed by the community's *murenik*⁵ recruited into the war. They also contend that the ritual of *ng'aanyetab met*,⁶ (the 'opening of the head' rituals) were not properly conducted on the returning First World War veterans to cleanse them and the community. This was born out of the belief that the *murenik* coming from the war were 'unclean', having engaged in and touched 'evil' things or people. Kipruto Araab Kapkuot, a Terik informant, asserts that no returnee should have been allowed to enter into a house or bring the things used in a war into the compound before the cleansing rituals.⁷ Kapkuot added: 'There were some things I personally saw like a spring rest bed, a gun that I held and we used to play with, metallic objects, military uniform, and utensils like cooking pans and mugs. Terik people by tradition do not possess or keep things of *Kapchemuswo*.'⁸ They regard them as unclean and as a source of bad omen. Some returnees are thought to have come back to their homes before undergoing proper cleansing rituals. The third phrase used by the Terik in the description of the war is *boriethab lazima*.⁹ All the informants recalled in great details episodes of how the recruits were snared and captured. A significant number of informants vividly recall these episodes of forced recruitment.

The period just before the start of the First World War recruitment was rife with propaganda. The British officers presented the Terik with terrifying consequences of German victory in the war, including the German occupation of their area. Solomon Araab Jebren, an informant, explained: 'the British told us that the Germans were bad people who would turn us into slaves; that if we allowed the Germans to come and live in our land they would prevent us from getting children, they would prick our eyes with sharp needles, they would cut off the hands of those who steal (cattle), and they would crush our testicles and make us sterile. As much as we disliked the British, we preferred them to the unknown enemies, the Jerumaan.'¹⁰ Richard Kiblagat Araab

Jepkoi, another informant, also explained some propaganda on the war as was narrated to him by his grandfather and First World War veteran, Abaa Araab Tumo: 'The British told us that the Germans were after our cattle and grazing lands, so we were to join hands and fight them lest we lose all these things. We also feared that the Germans would enslave us and bring the Arabs (sic) to our Terik lands.'¹¹ Kapkuot emphasised the motivation by the Terik to protect their land: 'The Terik were told that they had to fight the Germans so that they would not intrude into their land.'¹² While many Terik remained reluctant to participate in the war, this intense anti-German war propaganda convinced a larger section of the Terik to support their British colonisers in the war. First World War scholars have documented similar recruitment tactics elsewhere in German East Africa, Nyasaland and French West Africa (Moyd 2016; Forgy 2008; Lunn 1999).

In addition to the anti-German propaganda, the British also offered inducements to Terik recruits. Jemunai Jemathin explained: 'They were informed that those who would prove to be brave and fight on until their allies, the British, defeat the Germans, would enjoy privileges including payments and more importantly, jobs in the colonial government upon their return home'.¹³ These promises proved attractive to Terik youth. A large section of the Terik eventually threw their lot in with the British. More importantly, the traditional political and initiation rituals leaders (*Giruogindet* and *Jeptuminik*)¹⁴ of the *Gapjekoi*¹⁵ clan mobilized for the Terik's support of the British in the war. Charles Kiptarus Araab Tanui, an informant, noted: 'The British had long established themselves here and they are the ones on whose side our people were recruited to fight in the war. The Germans were aliens and unknown to us.'¹⁶ Despite garnering support from Terik youth and leaders, many were still sceptical about the war and the recruitment exercise was fraught with tension and violence. The tensions and violence became evident during the recruitment drive by the colonial officials assisted by Terik colonial Chief(s) Headman, Jepsirgoi. The Kisumu District Annual Report for the year 1916–17 captured this contradictory situation: 'the heavy demands made upon them for military labour and for stock have been met without any disturbance ... almost all have an intense fear and hatred of service with Carrier Corps.'¹⁷

'Raiders of the dawn': Terik recruitment and resistance in Nyang'ori Location

The British recruitment of *askari* (soldiers) in British East Africa for the First World War began in the late 1914. Writing in the Provincial Annual Report of 31 March 1914 – 1 April 1915, Nyanza Provincial Commissioner (PC)

John Ainsworth stated: 'for practically eight months of the period under review, the general condition of all the Districts have undoubtedly been considerably affected by the present war.'¹⁸ The District Commissioner's annual report for Kisumu District for the same period is more specific about the labour situation occasioned by the war: 'Owing to the war, the labour question has been rather abnormal ... there has been considerably small demand from settlers and farmers who presumably for reasons of the war have not been able to undertake as much cultivation as formerly, while there has been a considerable demand for labour from military and other government purposes.'¹⁹ The unease in the entire province was aggravated in no small measure by the fact that South Kavirondo District had been attacked and occupied by the German forces for several weeks in September 1914.²⁰

Among the Nandi, a traditional enemy of the British colonial government (Matson 1994), the mobilisation of settlers and farmers in Nandi District was treated with alarm. PC John Ainsworth noted: 'Some anxiety arose in connection with reported unrest among the Nandi shortly after the outbreak of the war. There is no doubt that the Nandi became extremely nervous owing to the mobilization of the Uasin Gishu settlers and in the Muhoroni and Tinderet. This was also the cause of further suspicion of both white and black, and it became necessary to institute frequent patrol – Native and European – along the border, resulting ultimately in peace.'²¹ The Terik (closely ethnically related and neighbours to the Nandi to the East) keenly shared in this suspicion of British intentions as related by informants to the present study.²² Ainsworth took some measures in this early period to calm nerves among Africans with some success. He writes: 'in the early period of the war, a feeling akin to astonishment and suspicion seemed to possess the natives of various districts. The people generally were informed of the state of affairs and the reasons for the participation of the British Government were explained to numerous meetings eventually resulting in a feeling of confidence and understanding coupled with an apparent desire amongst the Chiefs and Elders to help where possible ... Chief and Elders of Kisumu and North Kavirondo districts made spontaneous gifts of livestock as meat for troops, and assisted materially in sending out their men to join the carrier corps.' Indeed, some of the so-called 'warrior tribes' like the Nandi (and related ethnic groups) hitherto considered hostile to the British, were to provide the highest number of soldiers in the Kings African Rifles (KAR).

British officers tended to favour the so-called 'warrior communities' as *askari* in the KAR (Greenstein 1975: 72). In the British conquest of communities in Kenya, they had encountered the longest and bloodiest resistance from the Nandi ethnic group (Matson 1994). Hence, they

considered the so-called ‘Nandi-speaking’ groups as war-like and thus good material for recruitment into the First World War. So, British colonial recruiters for the First World War drew mainly from the so-called ‘warrior’ communities like the Nandi and the Maasai. Jebren argued: ‘Recruitment for *askaris* was mainly done in the warrior communities of the Nandi, Kipsigis, Maasai and Turkana. Few Luo and Maragoli were recruited as *askari*.’²³ Kapkuot agreed with this sentiment: ‘Unlike the Germans, the British recruited very capable Africans from the African communities that had *murenik* [military or war-skilled youth] system.’²⁴ Even though the British may have preferred pastoral communities with established ‘warrior’ culture to serve as *askari*, records show that they also recruited massively across all other ethnic communities to serve in the British East African campaign of the war (Hodges 1986: 207–8). While it is not possible to state who served in what capacity and the numbers for each ethnic group, those recruited from Nyanza province (where the Terik and the Nandi belonged) suggest that the British also recruited massively among the other ethnic groups in the area.

Table 1: Kisumu District carrier recruitment, hut and poll tax supplied, 1913–19

Year	1913/14	1914–15	1915–16	1916–17	1917/18	1918/19
Carrier corps		4,572	8,888	5,604	8,922	
Hut & poll tax (rupees)	270,939	303,354	308,556	501,460	548,920	565,835

Source: KNA. DC/CN/1/5/2. Kisumu District Annual Report, 1916–1918

Table 2: Nyang’ori Location population census, hut and poll taxes, 1911–19

Year	1911–12	1912–13	1914–15	1915–16	1916–17	1917–18	1918–19
Population	7553	7199					6,779
Hut & poll tax (rupees)	6,480	6,123	6,705	2469	12,635	14,040	13,620

Source: KNA. DC/CN/1/5/2. Kisumu District Annual Report, 1911–1919

Terik informants remember distinctly the age groups and sets from which the British recruited. They included the *Kipthoithoi* (the youngest sub-set) of Gimnyigei, and *Jongin* and *Kipthoru* (the two oldest subsets) of Nyongi age groups. These were the active warrior age groups during the period of the First World War. These age groups were initiated into warriorhood in the Terik traditional circumcision rituals from the 1890s to early 1910s (Biegon

2016). At this stage of their life, they would have been expected to be actively involved in cattle raiding to find stock as bride price for their impending marriages and also to gain notoriety in community folklore. They would also be the first to respond to the frequent skirmishes with their kinsmen and occasionally arch-foe, the Nandi, and to a lesser extent their Luo and Maragoli neighbours. Ondiek Araab Jepkoi was the *Giruoindet* of the Terik at the time. The ageing Jepsirgoi was gradually ceding his responsibility to his younger kinsmen within the *Gapjepkoi* clan. The *Gapjepkoi* clan had for several years provided political leadership (*Giruoignot*) and also traditional initiation leadership (*Jeptuminik*) in the highly regarded circumcision rituals (*Tumwek*) for the Terik ethnic group (*ibid*).

In 1900, the Terik, under the leadership of Jepsirgoi, had been defeated by British colonial forces (Matson 1994: 55–6). The British had also put down a second Terik anti-colonial insurrection in 1902 (*ibid.*: 56). What finally convinced the Terik of the superiority of the British colonial forces was the defeat of their militarily superior neighbours and kinsmen, the Nandi, and the assassination of the Nandi *Orgoiyot* (prophet-seer leader), Koitalel Araab Samoei, in 1905 (Meinertzhagen 1957: 256). After his appointment as the Chief of Nyang'ori Location in 1902, Jepsirgoi, the Terik and the British colonial officers reached a tentative detente. Jepsirgoi and his clansmen were to become important allies and recruitment agents for the First World War *askari* among the Terik. This amity between Jepsirgoi and the British was not necessarily widely shared among his people. Recruitment for the war is recalled by most Terik informants as being fraught with tension, with the youths deserting and fleeing into the neighbouring Nandi forests.

These recruitment exercises of the *murenik* to serve in the First World War, to significant lengths, involved use of force. Despite the propaganda efforts by British authorities, the recruits were apprehensive about participating in a war that they did not know much about. While uncertain about the numbers of recruits, informants like Charles Kiptarus Araab Tanui were clear about the type of men desired by the British. Tanui said: 'highly muscular, healthy and strong men were the much sought-after recruits into the war.'²⁵ The *Giruoindet* and his aides identified the potential recruits and then rounded them up in their farms and houses. Solomon Jebren Araab Gorko was told in greater detail by his father Kipkoech Araab Ndune, and aunt, Jepketer Jebo Ndune, how the recruitment took place. He recounted: 'No one wanted to be recruited. I understand that the potential recruits were secretly identified after which *askaris* would visit their homes and take them by force.'²⁶ With time, potential recruits found ways of escaping recruitment and a game of hide-and-seek would ensue. Jemunai Jemathin

was told by her father Okwach Kimasan Araab Sawe, who was a First World War veteran, about the recruitment: 'They were recruited by force. In fact, the war is commonly referred to as *boriethab lazima*. At first, people were recruited even during the day while in their daily errands in the farms, grazing fields and so on, but potential recruits became wary and would run away and hide in the forests and return home at night.'²⁷

The local Terik leadership (*Giruogik*) actively collaborated in British recruitment exercises and, in addition, the British hired mercenaries from other 'warrior' communities, especially the Maasai, to capture the recruits (Greenstein 1975: 99–104). Raiding parties of recruiters were made up of British officers and their African collaborators like the Maasai and the influential Terik *Giruogik*. Informants paint a picture of intense fear and paranoia in Terik at this time. Potential recruits fled into the Nandi forests during the day. Richard Kiblagat Araab Jepkoi substantiated Jemathin's recollections of fleeing potential recruits: 'Some recruits fled, claiming that they were afraid that they were going to be eaten by the white men.'²⁸ When the recruiters observed that the young men disappeared during the day, they devised new strategies. According to Jebren, 'the *askari* started to abduct the potential recruits at night by surrounding their *siroinoisiek* [boys' sleeping quarters]²⁹ before storming into them for the person they had identified. Potential recruits somehow got wind of this plot and ran away from their homes. The *askari* were always willing to pursue these youths wherever they went.'³⁰

These activities earned these recruitment officers the name 'Raiders of the dawn' which became part of Terik folklore. These night and dawn swoops were not a preserve of the Terik. Maxon (1980) notes that 'it was difficult to obtain enough recruits without resort to various kinds of forceful measures.' In South Kavirondo, the seizure of young men from their homes at night was undertaken.³¹ The Maasai *morans* involved in the recruitment drive are remembered as being particularly cruel. Jebren noted: 'The Maasai were bad people because whenever they visited the *siroinoisiek* and found out that the young men had already escaped, they burnt the *siroinisiek* and drove away their herds of cattle.'³² It is evident that The Maasai took advantage of these recruitment drives to raid stock from the Terik and the Nandi. The proclivity of the Maasai *morans* to drive away cattle from communities they raided as part of the British colonial conquest forces is a well-established feature in Kenya's colonial literature (Macdonald 1899; Meinertzhagen 1957; Spear and Waller 1993; Matson 1994).

The role of the Terik *Giruogik* in these recruitment exercises had important long-term consequences for their society. Henry Kipruto Araab Kapkuot noted that: '*Giruogindet* Ondiek Araab Jepsirgoi worked well

to recruit people into the war. I am not sure whether he was paid but he assisted the British officers in obtaining recruits among his people.³³ Jamin Jepkitui Araab Kijo agreed: 'My father informed me that the British officers sought the assistance of the *Giruogik* who were able to identify homes with young men who had the desired characteristics.' Kijo explained further the actual kind of assistance given to the British recruiters by Terik *Giruogik*: 'The *Giruogik* were able to identify homes with young men who had the desired characteristics. The *Giruogik* gave the names and the white officers invaded the homes for forceful recruitment. They recruited tall, strong, muscular youth.'³⁴ The *Giruogindet* was able to identify the men who were suitable for the war in terms of age-set (*morans*) and physical attributes as well as location.

It is conceivable that without the assistance of the *Giruogik*, the colonial officers may have had to identify and to forcefully recruit *Ng'etiek* (uncircumcised youth) and junior elders (slightly older, married men), and this, in all likelihood, would have caused a general outcry from the community. These sections of men were not customarily allowed to go to war (Hollis 1909; Pilgrim 1961; Huntingford 1944; Langley 1979). Jepsirgoi helped the British colonial officers to identify young men of the 'warrior age group' at that time. As mentioned above, these were mostly from the *Jongin* and the *Kipthoru* sets of the *Nyongi* who were the *murenik* proper at the time. Fewer of the *Kipthoithoi* of the *Gimnyigiei*, who were then 'junior elders' and who had just married, were recruited. These *murenik* were at an age where they had been traditionally prepared and sanctioned to go to war against enemy communities. Jepsirgoi also organised to help the British in tracing these young recruits whenever they had disappeared run away from recruitment.

The *Giruogik* have been indicted by informants as being overly aggressive and vindictive in their recruitment efforts on behalf of British colonial officers. Loice Jemunai Jemathin, an informant whose father, Okwach Kimasan Araab Sawe, was a FWW veteran, recounted:

My father was one of those whose capture at dawn was recommended by *Giruogindet* Sonono ... He was recruited soon after the death of his older and only brother Okoro. He recalled how when they arrived at the colonial government's labour and training camp at Kibos near Kisumu, one of his tribesmen pleaded with the recruitment officers there to let Okwach stay behind because he was now the only son in the family and that he was newly married and had a young baby boy and there was no one left to take care of his wife and the child Sonono strongly insisted to the recruiting officers to ensure that Okwach had gets recruited. The community elders led by Sonono assisted the government in coordinating the recruitment of men in Terik.³⁵

This tension and disaffection engendered among the Terik by the British recruitment exercise is evident in Jemunai's narrative. Beyond mobilising Terik youth for the British war effort, recruitment seemed to be an instrument for disciplining those perceived as errant and socially disruptive. Jemunai adds: 'Sonono perceived Okwach as a rude trouble maker who always caused chaos and fights especially in the drinking sprees and other social events in Terik villages, and was happy to send him away to war.'³⁶ The social tensions generated by forced recruitment grew after First World War and contributed considerably to the growing unpopularity of the *Gapjepkoi* leadership.



Figure 2: Loice Jemunai Jemathin Jebo Okwach, an elderly Terik informant

The late Loice Jemunai Jemathin Jebo Okwach, daughter to First World War veteran, Okwach Kimsan Araab Sawe, she spent a long time with her father and heard numerous narrations on the First World War from him which she kindly shared for the present study. This photo was taken on 11 December 2015 at Kapko village in Terik location, South Nandi. Photo: Published courtesy of Emmanuel Kipkemboi Koech and Albert Kipkemboi Tiony.

Jepsirgoi and Sonono may have had varied motives for their enthusiastic cooperation with the British colonial officers during the recruitment exercise. Nonetheless, a variety of events in the recent past may have convinced the

Gapjepkoi clansmen of the superior power of the British colonial government. The brutal British conquests of the Terik in 1900 and 1902, the defeat of the 'truculent' Nandi³⁷ and killing of their *Orgoiyot* Koitalel Araab Samoei in 1905 (Meinertzhagen 1957) must have cast an ever-looming shadow on the political leaders of the Terik community. It was reasonable to expect, therefore, that the Terik *Giruogik* would seek to protect 'their regime' by acquiescing to the clearly more superior British forces. Jamin Kijo's explanation for the rationale behind the actions of the actions of the *Gapjepkoi* clansmen, led by Jepsirgoi during the recruitment, therefore, bears some credibility: 'To me, the reasons for Jepsirgoi's decision to collaborate with the British were two: to create peace with the colonial government and, to safeguard his leadership position.'³⁸ Kijo's explanation broadly does justice to the spirit of the time. The consequences of the recruitment efforts of the Terik *Giruogik* are an important subtext to this story of the Terik in the First World War and will be looked at in further detail.

Recruits were mainly taken from their homes in Nyang'ori Location to the nearby Kibos Quarantine Camp.³⁹ Their names and health status were verified and they also engaged in light training. The British allowed fiancées of the recruits to visit and view their training, and they were informed to encourage them. Jepketer Jebo Ndune explained to Solomon Jebren Araab Gorko her visit to see her lover, Okwaro: 'While at Kibos training, these young men's girlfriends and wives were allowed into the camp so that they would encourage and motivate them ... with the hope that they would stay brave and come back home after the end of the war so that they can get married ... they went there daily in the morning and came back in the evening. Jepketer Jebo Ndune said Okwaro had promised to marry her and even tried to request if she could accompany him to the war but that was not accepted.'⁴⁰ After successful tests in Kisumu and Kibos, the recruits were dispatched to different war zones, including Voi and Taveta on the Kenyan coast and Mwanza and Tabora in Tanzania. Those dispatched to the Kenyan coast were transported by train⁴¹ while those who were taken to Mwanza went across Lake Victoria by ship.⁴² Once in these areas, they would wait to be transported to the actual battlefields.

We were brave! Memories of Terik battlefield encounters

Out of the twenty-two First World War Terik recruits who provided information to the informants for the present study, only five can be confirmed to have been soldiers, namely Okwach Kimasan Araab Sawe, Aba Araab Tumo, Daniel Ajon Araab Osenwo, Ondiek Araab Baiya and Araab Mase (see 'World War One veterans who came from the Terik ethnic

community following the References section in this article for full details). The memories of the war experiences of these veterans had been acquired mainly through reenactments and narrations to other Terik people during *Mabwai* and irregular community sessions of performances. *Mabwai* were evening fireside storytelling sessions from the elderly to the young in Terik homesteads. Sometimes, war veterans spontaneously regaled the Terik villages with performances of their experiences for the young. Kiptarus Araab Tanui, for example, described how some of the veterans visited schools and dramatised their war experiences for the young school children. He explained:

While in School, Araab Mase and Okwach who were then old men would come when drunk and then tell us these stories. They would say: 'Who else can compare to us? We went into Tanzania, we fiercely fought the *Jerumaan*, killed many until they surrendered.' Holding their walking staff as though it was a gun, they would dramatize their experiences in the battle fields proudly bragging: 'Who amongst you has ever held a gun? Guns were like toys to us, we shot the *Jerumaan*, Twa! Twa! Twa! We were brave! Some of our *Ingeresa* compatriots were killed but we survived!'⁴³

These replays, conveyed dramatically by the narrators even in the present day, afford us a glimpse into the kinds of First World War experiences and memories valued by Terik recruits and their descendants. They include the high number of deaths caused by diseases, hunger, thirst, exhaustion and battle casualties. War manoeuvres, forms of transport (and equipment) and fierce battles like the one at Tabora are also an indelible part of these experiences and memories.

As noted above, the leading causes of the deaths of these African recruits were disease, hunger, thirst, exhaustion and injuries from the war. Archival reports show that as early as December 1914, the Medical Officer in Kisumu was expressing concern about the condition of the African First World War returnees: 'A number of porters were returned from Nairobi as being medically unfit. When the medical officer at Kisumu conducted an examination of the men, he reported that eighteen were suffering from starvation and three from dysentery.'⁴⁴ The anxiety the condition of these men caused to the administration in Nyanza can be noted in a letter sent by the Assistant to Provincial Commissioner, Mr H.H. Horne: 'Nothing but war would justify us in returning porters in such a pitiable condition. Many can barely walk and deaths are frequent.'⁴⁵ Two kinds of diseases were frequently mentioned as causing a high number of deaths among African service men in the war. First was a disease the Terik referred to as *Jelole* which was characterised by severe stomach ache, diarrhoea and vomiting and which the informants believed was caused by the foods which the African service men ate in the First World War.

The second disease was characterised by swelling throughout the body and was referred to as *nundut* by the informants; this also killed numerous African recruits. Solomon Jebren Araab Gorko explained:

They [Terik recruits] talked of *tende* [dates] a kind of food made of flour which looked like and tasted like *sukari nguru* [beet sugar]. The food was a health hazard to many people and it caused chronic diarrhoea that killed many people. I understand whenever someone contracted the bloody diarrhoea disease, it took a very short time before he died. Several died at night while asleep. The disease was called *Jelole*. The disease later came to be known as *bortab nyongiik* [the disease of the *Nyongi* age group] because it almost wiped out all the *Nyongi* age group who went for the war.⁴⁶

Naming the disease *bortab nyongiik* (the disease of the *Nyongi* age group) conformed to the Terik practice of 'immortalising' an age group by naming a major event that occurred during the 'reign' of that age group. The naming of *bortab nyongiik* also demonstrates that the disease claimed a large number of casualties and caused enough serious alarm to the community to warrant its identification with the *Nyongi* age group of 1910s. Jemunai Jemathin had a similar story from her father: 'There was an outbreak of different diseases at the camp but the most spoken about was a disease that caused excessive diarrhoea and vomiting and another one, *nundut*, which caused big growths and rashes, especially on the face and cheeks. Many people died as a result of these diseases and he told us that Ajon Araab Osenwo experienced extreme diarrhoea and he became totally weak and unable to be actively engaged in the war.'⁴⁷

Many other informants spoke about these diseases and that they claimed a high number of casualties. Jemunai Jemathin explained an interesting episode involving his father and the disease:

My father recalled how one day, he saw his fellow *askari* getting his stomach operated on Afterwards, the doctors brought him greenish, fat-like medicine in a small bottle and explained that the medicine would treat his stomach problems. He believed that the medicine was extracted from the intestines of the man he had seen being operated on earlier and he was reluctant to take the medicine. My father said that he accepted the medicine, placed it under his pillow and waited until nightfall then he quietly went out, poured out the medicine and threw the bottle away. He thought that the 'medicine' would harm him rather than heal him. In the same night, he got a vision in his sleep. In the vision, he saw spirits that instructed him to wake up early the following day, go into the forest and gather roots and leaves of specific plants revealed in the vision. He was instructed in the vision to make a concoction by crushing the roots and the leaves, and then add water and then drink it and that this will heal him. He woke up and carried out the instructions in the vision and

after taking the medication, he felt better again. He said everyone suffered bloody diarrhoea. The diseases affected only the Africans.⁴⁸

The disease evoked fear, suspicion and anxiety among African recruits. The informants explained that diarrhoea was commonly experienced by Africans and not their European colleagues, leading them to believe that it was caused by the food rations provided at the African camps. Africans service men mostly lived and prepared their foods in their own camps, separately from their Europeans counterparts, during these campaigns.

The stories around the food recruits ate during the war and which they suspected caused diseases have become almost mythical. It is understood that as soon as the recruits ate this food, they lapsed into unexplained illnesses and many died. Kiblagat Araab Jepkoi explained other examples from the experiences of another First World War veteran, Araab Tumo: 'Araab Tumo said that sometimes there was total lack of water and many African soldiers would collapse and die because of thirst. Others died from snake bites. Many however died from a disease they called *Jelolet* and *nundur*.'⁴⁹ Kiplangat Araab Saina agreed: 'Many people died in the war from the harsh climate and diseases.'⁵⁰ The stories of the growing death toll in the wars reached home and caused unrest in the Terik community. Jebren Araab Gorko's comment reflects the growing frustrations with the war as the number of casualties grew: 'I think the war had negative consequences because these people were forced to work as slaves and many were killed by getting involved in a war they had no idea about.'⁵¹

Scholars agree that human and pack animals provided the more common means of moving cargo and war equipment across the vast plains of Tanzania where most of the war took place (Maxon 1980). Details of the high number of carriers used in this war and the high death rates among this category of service men on the East African war front have been documented (Maxon 1980; Moyd 2016; Farwell 1987; Gillispie 2018; Page 1987; Rosberg and Nottingham 1966). Terik informants assert that people, donkeys, horses and mules were used for transport and that there were no aircrafts; vehicles were limited.⁵² A significant number of the recruits from Terik may also have been carriers, which goes counter to the belief that so-called 'warrior' communities were mostly recruited as *askari* in the First World War. This fact is sometimes mentioned directly but can also be discerned from the vivid explanation by the Terik informants of the kind of suffering that the carriers went through. Kiptarus Araab Tanui remarked: 'The highly muscular, healthy and strong men were potential recruits perhaps because of the heavy and physically demanding work that they were going to be engaged in. I understand many of the recruits from this area became carriers of the items used in the battles.'⁵³

Jamin Araab Kijo elaborated on the kind of items that they carried: 'The recruits carried foodstuffs, ammunition, clothing, tents, medical equipment and so on. Others were cooks.'⁵⁴ The informants of Jebren Araab Gorko painted a bleak picture of the fate of the carriers:

I understand the bags and boxes were extremely heavy but the carriers were forced to carry them. Those who showed any kind of weakness were beaten ... and even killed by people from *Ithopia* (sic) [perhaps referring to the lighter-skinned people who would most likely be coastal Swahilis] and *Marabuk* (sic) [Arabs] who were the commanders employed by the *Ingeresiek* [the British] to supervise them. These people really mistreated the carriers by even hitting their backs using guns Those who were overwhelmed by the heavy goods and items they carried were pushed and beaten with guns. He said they were beaten like cattle. Some were beaten to death. As proof that these people were dead, their clothes were handed over to their families.⁵⁵

The plight of the carriers is hardly surprising, considering the vastness of the land they traversed with goods on their heads and backs. The supply lines were extremely long. People from Terik trekking or fighting in Taveta, Voi, Tabora and Mwanza would have found themselves in a completely new geographical setting and with unfamiliar weather and foods (Page 1987). Hodges shows that the so-called 'carrier corps' was a crucial element of the First World War in East Africa, yet they were maltreated by a combination of factors like poor planning (preferential treatment being given to the fighting units), poor food, poor clothing, overwork (long walks), excessive loads, and lack of proper coordination of the lines among others (Hodges 1986: 205–6). The high number of deaths among the carriers alarmed the British colonial officers and prompted the formation of the Military Labour Corps in 1915 to administer this vital section of the British First World War campaign in East Africa (Hodges 1986).

Except for the big and decisive skirmishes at Tabora, most of the warfare in East Africa that the Terik participated in consisted of guerrilla attacks. As in Europe, German and British forces made extensive use of trenches during their attacks and retreats. Kipruto Araab Kapkuot explained: 'Ajon informed me how they used to dig trenches which were used to plan for the attacks especially in Tabora.'⁵⁶ Jemathin agreed: 'The war was intermittent and there was little or no open field battle. They undertook the attacks together with British forces. They established temporary green tents and dug out trenches that they used to plan and execute their attacks ... whenever there was an attack, they would leave all their belongings and run for battle.'⁵⁷ Tanui recalls from his informants: 'there were no open field battles, we dug trenches, there was use of spies and intelligence.'⁵⁸ They all concurred that the recruits could sometimes go for weeks or months in the camps without any battle.

The Battle of Tabora in September 1916 was the fiercest and bloodiest war in which the Terik participated. Though it was Belgian forces that eventually captured Tabora, the Terik recalled it as a victory for the British forces that claimed a lot of casualties. The fierceness of the battle in Tabora is attested to by other studies (Moyd 2016; Samson 2012; Strachan 2004). Jepkoi remembered his grand uncle, Abaa Araab Tumo, manned a machine gun. Tumo relayed to him:

Tabora was the major battle field ... a railway line passed near the place. This was the place where many people were killed and the Germans surrendered. He recalled that while they were at Tabora, the Arabs and Swahilis who had survived denied the British forces water to quench their thirst and deliberately poured all stored water onto the ground. The Arabs and the Swahilis did this out of frustration because many of their people had been killed.⁵⁹

The Tabora battle was an open combat with fierce exchange of gunfire as opposed to the 'hide-and-seek' (guerrilla) tactics that they were used to.⁶⁰ Jemunai Jemathin also remembered her father's narrations about the battles at Tabora and Mwanza: 'My father said that they defeated the Germans during their time at Tabora and Mwanza. Their military camps were also established at these places.'⁶¹ The role of the Indian army was also recalled by Kiblagat Araab Jepkoi: 'The war to Tabeta (sic) [Taveta]. The Indian army came by train and fought the Germans, killing several of their number.'⁶² The combatants also suffered snake attacks.⁶³ Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck is certainly well remembered by some Terik informants as an outstanding soldier: 'Aba Araab Tumo was full of praise for the German Commander 'Bainitu Bobeek' (sic) [Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck]. He said "Bobeek" was a strong, very capable soldier'. He used to joke about this name, as *Bobeek* in Terik language means 'of the water'.⁶⁴

'Agents of progress' or 'bringers of tragedies'? The ambivalent legacy of Terik war veterans

Terik informants explain the end of the First World War in terms of victory to the side that they supported and therefore as a happy occasion for them. Those Terik that returned were greeted as heroes Terik survivors of the war were crowned community heroes. Kiptarus Araab Tanui explained: 'the war ended when the German commander surrendered and left for his own country'.⁶⁵ Kipruto Araab Kapkuot said: 'The Germans were defeated. Some Teriks managed to return and they told us that they had won the war and that their opponents, the Germans, opted for retreat and surrender.'⁶⁶ And so, the end of the war is remembered as having been a victory for the British

forces whom the Terik supported during the war. The war veterans are also generally regarded as having been the agents of some kind of 'progress' among the Terik. Araab Saina claimed that: 'the war veterans came back happy. They were highly respected.'⁶⁷ Others are known to have become successful entrepreneurs: 'Kabunja Araab Jebogo was able to accumulate a lot of cows after the war. He came to be known as rich a man owning a lot of cows.'⁶⁸ They brought home new 'objects' to the community that were seen in a positive light as the case of Abaa Araab Tumo illustrates: 'Abaa Araab Tumo brought home clothes, blankets and shoes and they also got some pay.'⁶⁹

These new items like utensils, metal bars and spring beds which were brought into the Kalenjin economy began to push the boundaries of imagination of new 'economic materials' in the local economy, albeit gradually. Kiptarus Araab Tanui argued: 'Those who had gone to the war were seen to be living a life that was considered "better" [quote marks are mine]. This was especially true in the construction of buildings and agriculture. Their families were seen to have become generally well off. They came and settled in their families' lands. They used the money paid to them to support their children to start businesses and they also engaged in new cattle keeping techniques, like keeping quality breeds and spraying.'⁷⁰ Kipruto Araab Kapkuot gave an even more elaborate explanation of the Terik First World War returnees:

These people must have been very strong because after such a strenuous exercise, some who came back, established homes and families and led normal lives. They found a new place in the society. They were highly respected and consulted on government issues as they were seen as having the experience of working with the colonial government. They were considered "modern" [quotation marks are mine] gentlemen even in their old age. Some of them were disciplined and raised their children well. These men built new types of houses never seen before in the area. They were the ones who introduced new crops into our lands, e.g. tobacco and peas.⁷¹

Undoubtedly, First World War Terik veterans earned some money from the war. War experiences introduced them to the idea of money, wider networks of trade and consciousness of distant places. In Terik villages, these veterans were among the few people who held any amount of cash at all. Witnessing the importance of literacy during the war motivated them to send their children to take advantage of the schooling system in the early colonial period. These veterans had worked with the colonial army officers and were able to see them at their most vulnerable, as well as their strongest conditions. In addition, these veterans provided the early lines of contact (and communication) between the local colonial officials and their local community.

Some Terik ex-combatants returned to deserted homes. Their wives had left their homes to marry someone else or had gone back to their parents.⁷² The war also depleted the Terik of their able-bodied youths. Kipruto Araab Kapkuot explained: 'Surviving the war was not guaranteed and families with able-bodied men suffered the most.'⁷³ Other informants recall that 'plenty' of the recruits died in the war, while some returned but were in poor health and many others died even after returning home. Kapkuot argued: 'I understand they were very weak. Some who had gone as youth were now mature young men. They were received with joy. People organised *ng'aany'etab met* [opening of the head] ceremonies that involved slaughtering a sheep to cleanse and bless them. It was believed that they were unclean, having engaged in and touched "evil/unclean" things and people.'⁷⁴ The famine of *Masiemui*, which came soon after the First World War and during which Terik people remember boiling and eating dry cattle hide out of desperation, caused much anguish in the community. They associated this famine with possible crimes that their sons had committed against other people in the war.⁷⁵

As the death toll became unbearably high, informants recount that the *Giruogindet*, Sonono, was blamed for the ills that were befalling them. The *Giruogindet* and his long-reigning clan of *Gapjepkoi* became unpopular. The tragedies that accompanied recruitment for the First World War formed the initial roots of the unpopularity of this ruling clan. These early causes of unpopularity would reach fruition, in combination with a host of other factors, during the period of British colonial rule over the Terik people (in Nyang'ori Location of the then Nyanza province of British East Africa) in the post-war period. The *Gapjepkoi* clansmen's reign over the Terik was extended into the colonial period when the leaders from the clan were coopted into 'British indirect rule over in Nyang'ori Location.' After Sonono, however, there was an interlude of a non-Terik Chief who presided over Nyang'ori Location from 1924 to 1939 with important consequences, chiefly in-migration of massive numbers of Maragoli and Tirikis into what the Terik considered to be their land, subjugation of Terik pastoral practices and associated customs (for example, female circumcision), and the forceful removal of the Terik from parts of their land and into the Nandi's among others. After Chweya, the *Gapjepkoi* came back to power through Mosson Araab Berek (1939 to 1945) and Antonio Kipketter Araab Jepkoi (1945 – 1961). But the accumulation of all the complaints that the Terik had in the entire colonial era was blamed mostly on the *Gapjepkoi* ruling elite. A 'new elite' group that consisted of clergy, educated elites, businessmen and former soldiers in the Second World War (e.g. Henry Kipruto Araab Kapkuot)

successfully championed the dethronement of the *Gapjepkoi* clansmen from political leadership over the Terik people in a messy campaign that became part of the decolonisation rhetoric in Nyang'ori Location.

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Notes

1. KNA/ KNA. DC/CN/1/5/2. Kisumu District Annual Report, 1916–1917: 5.
2. *Jerumaan* is the Terik reference for the Germans; *Ingeresa* is the Terik name for the British. *Borieth ab rubeeth* means 'the war of hunger'. Terik people remember the First World War by this name because of the famine that was experienced in the area at the end of the war.
3. KNA. DC/CN/1/5/2. Kisumu District Annual Report, 1918–1919: 1.
4. A famine that is widely narrated by Terik elders, which came after the war and during which people boiled and ate *muiywek*. *Muiywek* is dried cattle skin that is mostly used as sleeping mats.
5. The name for Terik warriors who usually are circumcised young men regarded as the 'reigning warrior age group'.
6. Literally refers to the ritual of 'the opening of the head'.
7. Kipruto Araab Kapkuot, 2015.
8. Items considered ritually unclean, especially those recovered from wars where people had been killed.
9. Literally 'the war that we were forced into'. *Lazima* is a Swahili term for 'being forced' or 'being compelled'.
10. Solomon Araab Jebren, 2015.
11. Richard Kiblagat Araab Jepkoi, 2015.
12. Kapkuot, 2015.
13. Jemunai Jemathin, 2015.
14. *Giruogindet* (pl. *Giruogik*) is the title for a Chief Elder of the Terik. This is not necessarily an office but a titular chair at the 'Council of Elders' (*Boisiekab kok*) deliberations. *Jeptuminik* (sing. *Jeptumion*) refers to ritual elders during the circumcision ceremonies.

15. *Gapjepkoi* clansmen supplied most of the *Jeptuminik* in the immediate pre-colonial Terik society.
16. Charles Kiptarus Araab Tanui, 2015.
17. KNA/ KNA. DC/CN/1/5/2. Kisumu District Annual Report, 1916–1917: 1.
18. KNA. PC/NZA 1/10. Nyanza Province Annual Report, 1915: 1.
19. KNA. DC/CN 1/5/1. Kisumu District Quarterly and Annual Report, 1909–1918: 29.
20. KNA. PC/NZA 1/10. Nyanza Province Annual Report, 1915: 1.
21. KNA. PC/NZA 1/10. Nyanza Province Annual Report, 1915: 2.
22. Jepkoi, 2015; Kapkuot 2015.
23. Jebren, 2015.
24. Kapkuot, 2015.
25. Corroborated by Daniel Saina, 2015; Jebren, 2015; Jemunai, 2015; Jepkoi, 2015; Kiplangat Saina, 2015; Loice Jemunai Jemathin Jebo Okwach, 2015; Tanui, 2015.
26. Jebren, 2015.
27. Jemunai, 2015.
28. Jepkoi, 2015.
29. *Siroinoisiek* mean huts built for the young post-circumcision as their living quarters.
30. Jebren, 2015.
31. KNA. DC/KSI/1/2.
32. Jebren, 2015.
33. Kapkuot, 2015.
34. Jamin Jepkitui Araab Kijo, 2015.
35. Jemunai, 2015.
36. *ibid.*
37. Charles Hopley, 'Report on Wanyanguori expedition', April 1900, Entebbe Secretariat Archives, A4/28: 12.
38. Kijo, 2015.
39. KNA. DC/CN/1/5/2. Kisumu District Annual Report, 1918–1919: 1.
40. Jebren, 2015.
41. *ibid.*; Kapkuot, 2015.
42. Jepkoi, 2015.
43. Tanui, 2015.
44. KNA. Ministry of Health M.D. 38/968. 1914.
45. KNA. Ministry of Health M.D. 38/968. 17 December 1914.
46. Jebren, 2015.
47. Jemunai, 2015.
48. *ibid.*
49. Jepkoi, 2015.
50. Kiplangat Saina, 2015.
51. Jebren, 2015.
52. Kapkuot, 2015; Kijo, 2015; Tanui, 2015.

53. Tanui, 2015.
54. Kijo, 2015.
55. Jebren, 2015.
56. Kapkuot, 2015.
57. *ibid.*
58. Tanui, 2015.
59. Jepkoi, 2015.
60. *ibid.*
61. Jemunai, 2015.
62. Jepkoi, 2015.
63. Jemunai, 2015,
64. Jepkoi, 2015.
65. Tanui, 2015.
66. Kapkuot, 2015.
67. Saina, 2015.
68. Ajoro Araab Anwana, 2015.
69. Jepkoi, 2015.
70. Tanui, 2015.
71. Kapkuot, 2015.
72. Jepkoi, 2015.
73. Kapkuot, 2015.
74. *ibid.*
75. *ibid*

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Interviews with informants on the First World War from the Terik ethnic community

Name	Date	Place of interview	Age	Age-group	Age-grade	Clan
Ajoro Araab Anwana	5 May 2015	Nandi/Chepkumia Location/ Koibem	1950/65	Korongoro	Kipthoru	Kapkenda
Charles Kiptarus Araab Tanui	22 April 2015	Soi	1950/65	Korongoro	Jongin	Kapko
Daniel Ajon Araab Saina	22 April 2015	Terik, Kapko	1953/62	Korongoro	Thethagaath	Kapko
Henry Kipruato Araab Kapkuot	21 April 2015	Vihiga/Nyang'oti/Musawa	1920/95	Jumo	Jongin (1938)	Kaboroch
Jamin Jepkitui Araab Kijo	2 April 2015	Vihiga/Kapchemung'	1916/99	Maina	Thethagaath (1931)	Kapkenda
Kipkoros Nyango Araab Okwach Kimasan	24 April 2015	Terik/Kapko/Kapkemen	1938/77	Sawe		Kabiny
Loice Jemunai Jemathin Jebo Okwach	30 April 2015	Lessos, Centre Kwanza, Mogoona	1920/95 (Approx.)	Maina	Kipthothoi	Kabiny
Josiah Kibiegon Araab Saina	4 April 2015	Mosop/Kipkarren Selia/ Kapserton village	1936/79	Sawe	Jongin	Kapko
Richard Kiplagat Araab Jepkoi	6 May 2015	Nandi/Kapsabet town/ Kapng'etuny village	1947/68	Korongoro	Jongin	Gapjekoi
Samson Kibitok Araab Keny	5 May 2015	Nandi/Yala Trading Centre/ Chepkumia	1940/75	Sawe	Kipthoru	Kapkenda
Solomon Jebren Araab Gorko	9 May 2015	Nandi/Kombe Location/ Chepkok village	1920/95	Jumo	Jongin	Kabiny
Wesley Elisha Kiplangat Araab Saina	4 May 2015	Nandi/Kapsabet town/police station canteen	1947/68	Sawe	Kithothoi	Kapko

World War One veterans who came from the Terik ethnic community

Name	Ethnic group	Clan	Sub-clan	Totem	Age group	Age grade
Aba Araab Tumo	Terik	Kaboroch	Gapiepkoi	Lelwat (fox)	Nyongi	Jongin
Ajon Araab Nunei	Terik					
Araab Bwanga	Terik					
Araab KapAnando	Terik					
Araab Mase	Terik	Kipkoigei	Kapombeje		Nyongi	Jongin
Cheseret Araab Okech	Terik					
Daniel Ajon Araab Osenwo	Terik	Kapko	Kapojooro	Genda/Segemiat (Bee)	Nyongi	Jongin
Gimundus Araab Jonjet	Terik	Kapko	Kapojooro	Genda/Segemiat (Bee)	Kimnyigei	
Gonen Araab Ochieng'	Terik				Gimnyigei	
Goren Araab Nunei	Terik					
Jebui Araab Jepkitui	Terik	Kapkenda	Kapchemoje	Robtha/Toiyoi (Sun)	Nyongi	Jongin
Jepkitwai Araab Jepterit	Terik				Kimnyigei	Kipthothoi
Jesanga Araab Amono	Terik				Nyongi	
Kimonu Araab Kimerin	Terik	Kapkenda	Gopkogono			
Odera Araab Kipsang'	Terik					
Okwach Kimasan Araab Sawe	Terik	Kabiny	Kapmoeth		Kimnyigei	Kipthothoi
Okwaro Araab Beiyie	Terik				Kapkooyo	

Ondiek Araab Baiya	Terik						
Ondiek Araab Sagas	Terik					Kimnyigei	
Orege Araab Jepkijo	Terik					Nyongi	
Owuor Kabunja Araab Jebogo	Terik	Kapkenda	Kapkooyo	Koiyo/Asis (the sun)		Nyongi	Jongin
Segero Araab Kipsombo	Terik		Kapomooro				

