

Beer and World War: Reflections on Consumption by Troops in Nairobi, Kenya:1939-1945

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Abstract: *This article examines the question of beer consumption by second world war troops in Nairobi, Kenya between 1939 and 1945. World War II was one of the most destructive conflicts in African history with regard to the human costs, the numbers of people mobilized, the scale of violence and destruction experienced. Archival sources indicate that recruitment of manpower for combat and war related labour was the most important contribution of Kenya colony to the Allied cause. In this regard, 98,240 Kenyans were recruited as askaris (soldiers) into the King's African Rifles, representing 30% of the unit's total strength during the war. Substantial debate surrounded the question of access to beer by servicemen in Africa and Europe. Some historians claim that alcohol consumption was ubiquitous during the war among servicemen of all races and ranks. The article demonstrates that beer was a vital part of the experience for the soldiers. The article examines Kenya's central role as the home of the East African force, the Eastern Fleet, and also as a war front with Italy and seeks to unravel how this impacted beer consumption in Nairobi. An equally important theme in the article is access to beer by white military men in Kenya during the turbulent war years. Analyzing the archival data and existing research on the role of Africans in the world war, this article reveals important points about war, military recruitment, beer consumption and alcoholism among combatants in the second world war. The study made extensive use of archival materials and oral interviews as primary sources. Secondary sources used to fill gaps in primary sources were books, unpublished thesis and relevant articles in journals.*

Key words: World War II, askaris, drunkenness, illicit consumption, municipal brewery, indigenous beer.

INTRODUCTION

The world war entailed extensive use of African soldiers and supporting military labourers to conquer or defend colonies on the continent, and the export of African combat troops and laborers overseas. Archival documents indicate brisk preparation for by colonial government in Kenya war by mid-1939. Among other things, this entailed establishment of military units and mobilization of manpower. Troops were enlisted to counter the threat immediate challenges Italy could pose to the security of the colony. 320, 000 *askaris* were recruited from central and East Africa. Of that, Kenyans comprised 98, 000 (Owino, 2003 Pg 155). Throughout the war, the number of African *askaris* serving with various colonial military units at any given time was always around 76, 000 (KNA, GH/2/5/13, Speech by the Governor, Sir Henry Monck-Mason Moore, October, 1944). African soldiers served in the successful East African campaign against the Italians, as well as the invasion of Vichy-held Madagascar and the Burma Campaign against the Japanese, alongside troops from west Africa.

Italy appeared reluctant to join the Axis powers when war erupted in 1939 but eventually did so in 1940 when a German victory seemed imminent. This immediately brought Kenya colony to war with Italy. A governor's proclamation dated 3rd set 1939 declared 'the KAR, the Kenya Police, Kings African Rifles Reserve force (KARRO) to be under condition of service (KNA, PC/NZA/2/3/56, African Manpower). The declaration placed KAR, Kenya police, KAR Reserve officers and the KAR (Kenya) reserve force into war footing. Kenya *askaris* comprised 30% of Africans conscripted by the British for the war (Shiroya, 1985). They participated in the East African campaign revolving around northern Kenya and Northeastern Kenya, Italian Somaliland, Ethiopia and Eritrea before moving on to Madagascar, north Africa and middle east. The main brunt of the East African campaigns was borne by the African troops, with a handful of white officers (Moyse-Bartlett, 1956). Lastly, African conscripts fought in South East Asia particularly Burma. The troops made a useful contribution to the Allied victory in the Second World War in various fields of conflict - in Abyssinia, North Africa and the Middle East, and in Madagascar and Burma (Warner, 1985, pp. 22-23).

Some researchers assert that the World War II was the beginning of unprecedented beer use among the troops (Glover, 2023). Beer played a significant role again during World War II (1939-1945) and alcohol consumption remained a topic of significant debate throughout World War II. Some historical accounts of the war suggest that for many officers and enlisted man, alcohol helped get them through the war, whether coping with combat or with boredom to get temporary release from the tensions and the exhaustions of combat (Virden, 2014, pp. 85-89). In contrast to the First World

War, when stringent government efforts were made to reduce drink consumption and drunkenness (41), the Second World War saw beer supplies viewed as an essential contribution to morale and beer production was not curtailed (Burnett, 1999).

The war had both direct and indirect influence on brewing. Direct influence was attributed to the actions of the government. For example, the British government enforced regulations that limited the strength and quantity of beer that could be brewed (Siebel, 1943, p. 67). This regulation was implemented in part to reduce the amount of grain and sugars that brewers used, since these ingredients could be used to help aid the war effort. In addition, efforts to reduce the amount of alcohol being consumed by the public were implemented in hope of increasing the productivity of the workforce, bearing in mind that due to the food crisis in Europe, there was not enough grain for brewing (Casey, 2020, pp. 150-151). The government also placed a cap on the price of beer, restricting brewers from raising the price, even as the cost of ingredients was increasing. This made it difficult for brewers to make a profit and contributed to a steep decline in the production of beer during the war (Burnett, 1999, p. 93).

One of the most significant indirect influences came from the increased demand for munitions and other materials used in the war effort. This created the need to conserve shipping capacity. Which in turn translated to a reduced availability of ingredients used to brew beer, leading to liquor and beer shortages in many countries (Jacobson, 2015). Nonetheless, beer was included in the rations of British and American soldiers during the Second World War. Britain saw rum and beer as a key requirement in getting soldiers to keep calm and carry on (Burnett, 1999). The French offered their troops wine, the Soviets vodka (Jacobson, 2015, p. 82). Despite protests from abolitionists, President Franklin D. Roosevelt made sure the American troops got beer. Alcohol consumption was high among both enlisted men and officers in the US and European armies and many stakeholders worried about the impact that alcohol would have on the men's morality during and after the war (Langhamer, 2003, Virden, 2014, p. 71). For the servicemen, the availability of alcohol varied greatly depending on where they were stationed.

Nairobi was made the British war headquarters in East Africa. It became the nerve centre of the Allied Command and the main station for East African armed forces for military operations in Ethiopia, the Middle East and Asia (Ngesa, 1996, p. 111). There was therefore a large military presence in Kenya comprising of three Royal Air Force bases; Royal Engineers at Thika, Eldoret, and Nairobi; twenty thousand Italian Prisoners of War (POWs); four camps in and around Nairobi housing King's African Rifles in training programs and in transit to and from combat in South-east Asia; and a total of nine thousand troops of the Gold Coast Regiment (GCR) of the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) (White, 1990, p. 148). It is evident that by the end of December

1940, there were several thousand African and European troops in British East Africa, the plurality of which were based in Kenya. Many thousands of these soldiers were garrisoned in and around Nairobi.

The presence of many migrants from rural areas and troops from diverse nations and racial backgrounds caused a number of challenges with regard to beer, which is evident from analysis of archival documents. The War Council rationed beer to soldiers and civilians, limiting consumption to two bottles per day (Rodwell, 1973, p. 63). Demand for beer remained high throughout the war even after the rationing, and the dominant brewer at the time, East African Breweries Limited (EABL), organized to have staff work in shifts. Wines and spirits were imported to serve the needs of whites and Asians. According to Robertson (1997, p. 100), the military presence coupled with heightened population of migrant men and women from rural areas provided a highly expanded market for illicit brews and sexual services (White, 1990, p. 172). Municipal authorities were tasked with provision of African soldiers with beer for relaxation, but this turned out to be insufficient. The *askaris* adopted the consumption of new types of brews and took to new consumption habits, visiting places where women-produced illicit brews were sold (O. I., Ogolla Achoda at Eastleigh on 12/10/2023). This had devastating consequences on the *askaris* while serving in Kenya and abroad. Archival sources indicate illicit consumption remained one of the most troubling issues for authorities in various nations participating in the war.

Mobilization and the making of a war headquarters

The British government had displayed little interest in the East African territories during the 1930s and had accepted the Italian conquest of Abyssinia in the Hoare-Laval pact of 1936 when Italian Fascist dictator Benito Mussolini's European and colonial forces invaded and conquered Ethiopia with the intention of reversing the humiliating defeat that Italian forces had suffered at the hands of the Ethiopians at Adowa in 1896 (Borries, 1989). Chamberlain's appeasement policy had gone to such lengths that colonials in East Africa even feared that Tanganyika might be returned to Germany as Hitler demand (Westcott, 1982). Britain abandoned this policy when war broke out in September 1939. The shift meant the colonies were expected to make a substantial contribution to the Empire's war effort. There were three areas where African contribution was needed: in the armed forces, in food production on their own farms and as a labour force and by the military authorities to do vital back-up work for the troops (Warner, 1985, p. 24).

Prior to the outbreak of the war, preparations kicked off for mobilization, with a governors' conference in June 1939 deciding that in the event of war, the Northern Brigade of the KAR should become the 1st East African Infantry Brigade and the Southern Brigade should become the 2nd East African Infantry Brigade (Morris, 2009). These would be ready to mobilize within a month

of the outbreak of war. It was agreed that there should be cross-posting of battalions within the brigades and that a central headquarters for East African forces should be established (Warner, 1985, p. 29). When the war broke out in September 1939, control of British forces in East Africa was transferred from the Colonial Office to the War Office for more efficient coordination (Warner 1985, p. 26). As the men on the spot, the Governors of the East African territories were granted the power to recruit Africans and form new units as they deemed appropriate. The Governors were also empowered to delegate their recruiting powers as they saw fit. Thus, the major policy decisions were made in London but their detailed implementation was left to the authorities in Africa (Warner 1985, p. 27).

Kings' African Rifles (KAR), the British colonial regiment active since 1902, had 2900 men when World War II began (KNA, PC/NZA/2/3/6:1). The immediate threat posed by a possible Italian invasion, and the entry of Japan into the war in 1941, drove the need for rapid mobilization. The Italian invasion was launched in 1940 from Mussolini's empire in the Horn of Africa against neighboring British colonies (Borries, 1989, p. 315). The British responded by mobilizing white South African troops and black African soldiers from the West African Frontier Force and the King's African Rifles in East Africa to thwart the Italians (Parsons, 1999). Conscript regulations were enacted by the colonial Legco on 3rd sept 1939. These were used not just to enlist men into military units but also to provide labour for various government undertakings including civil works duties.

There were three major phases of recruitment in East Africa and West Africa. They took place simultaneously but for strategic reasons were designed to meet slightly different needs. The first phase was from 1939 to 1941 to recruit both groups for the initial expansion of both regiments, the defence of Kenya and for the East African campaign. During this phase, the most rapid expansion took place in early months of 1940. In October 1939, plans were laid for the creation of a Colonial Division by Brigadier D. P. Dickinson, Inspector General of the KAR. It was envisaged that the KAR and RWAFF would contribute units to the Division, a formation which would serve both within and outside the African continent (Morris, 2009). Those units selected as components of the Division were 1KAR, 14KAR, 5KAR and a machine gun company of 3KAR (Warner, 1985, p. 35). Other ancillary units legalized by Military Ordinance during the last months of 1939 comprised; the 1st Field Survey Company of East African Engineers, 1st Field Company of East African Engineers, the East Africa Army Service Corps, the East Africa Medical Corps, the East Africa Pay Corps, a Military Audit Unit, the 1st Donkey Company of East Africa, Pack Transport Corps, the 1st Battalion East African Pioneers and the 2nd Battalion East African Pioneers. (Warner, 1985, pp. 34, 103). These units recruited men for military service from all over East and Central Africa. Recruits from Kenya were the big majority.

The second phase of recruiting lasted through 1941 to 1942 in West Africa and through 1941 to 1943, in East Africa. Towards the end of that East African campaign, less West Africans were stationed in East Africa because a second phase of recruiting had begun in West Africa to meet the threat that the Vichy French West African territories posed to British territories in West Africa (Warner, 1985, p.28). Furthermore, it was necessary to introduce conscription for non-combatants (labourers) and intensify recruiting in East Africa to make up for the lack of West Africans. These conscripts largely comprised the East African Military Labour Service (EAMLS) and the African Auxiliary Pioneer Corps (AAPC), basically units of African labourers who worked as a backup team for the KAR infantry, digging fortifications and building roads (Owino, 2003, p. 79). The AAPC was slightly different and had a much wider range of duties.

While the East African campaign was still underway, the Middle East Command looked to East Africa to supply ‘trained and disciplined labour’ for building railways and bridges, unloading stores, mending roads and other similar duties in North Africa. The AAPC was formed to meet this need (Warner, 1985, p. 34). A monthly quota system was enforced in 1941 with regard to the two units, in line with the Defence (Native Personnel) Regulations of 1940 that gave the governors of the East African territories the right to enforce quotas through the District Commissioners (Morris, 2009). In practice the quota system left the task of choosing ‘conscripts’ to the chiefs who made up the quotas and the British could fend off any accusations of ‘unlimited conscription’ on their part. Enforced quotas for the EAMLS and AAPC did not contravene the International Forced Labour Convention because of the military nature of the work (Warner, 1985, p. 90). By the end of 1941, the official returns for these two units were as follows;

Table 1: Recruitment for EAMLS and AAPC in East Africa, 1941

	Kenya	Uganda	Tanganyika
EAMLS	4700	3800	2900
AAPC	1200	300	1700
Total	5900	4100	4600

Source: KNA, AG/29/16, World War General Correspondence.

Once the Vichy threat was lifted and the Allies had secured victory in North Africa, both East and West Africans were freed to fight in Burma (Westcott,1982). However, garrisons were still needed in the Middle East and West Africans continued to be stationed there. The third phase of recruiting began in 1943 and continued to the end of the war. In West Africa, the phase of recruitment began

slightly later and lasted in 1944 when it was apparent that West Africa was quite safe from Vichy. The third major recruiting campaign was intended to meet the specific needs of the Madagascar campaign and the Burma war (Hamilton, 2001). Fortunately, East Africa was in a better position to divert its supply of men in this direction following the surrender of the Italians in 1943. By May 1945, there were 46,050 East African troops in Asia (Owino, 2003, p. 126). The Middle East was described as a 'drain' on East African manpower by the East African Governors' conference, which was again hoping for a respite from military recruitment in order to concentrate African energies on food production.

The British sent recruitment teams into thousands of villages, posters were put up and pamphlets circulated which stressed the food, order, and cleanliness of army life. In East Africa, a mobile propaganda unit explained the life and training of soldiers and demonstrated modern weapons (Owino, 2015). Propaganda was one recruitment tactic; another was highlighting the social status and economic opportunities that military employment could provide. But by far the most controversial and clandestine method was force (Whitehead, 2015). Recruitment propaganda promoted service in the 'modern' colonial forces as a means of remaking and advancing 'savage tribesmen'. Recruitment pamphlets and posters not only showed uniformed Africans marching smartly but Africans driving trucks and operating sewing machines. The hope of learning a trade must have been a much larger inducement to enlist than it would have been in developed Western societies because ambitious Africans had few alternative sources of occupational education (Morris, 2009). The quantity of the recruits depended very much on the power of a chief to compel men to come forward. The official line was that enlistment would be voluntary. But colonial officials often pressured local chiefs to find them men, and turned a blind eye to how they filled their quotas. Shiroya (1985) asserts that more than half the KAR soldiers from Kenya were 'volunteered' into the army by their chiefs, schoolteachers, or European employers, thus calling into question the British assertion that their African armies were composed almost totally of volunteers.

The recruiting safari 'team' usually included a white recruiting officer and sergeant and often an African N. C. O. from the area where recruitment was to take place (Warner, 1985, p. 36). Recruits were then taken to holding depots where they were subjected to medical examination and then sorted out and transported to specialized military training camps where they trained in their areas of specialization (O.I. Mutonyi Musyoki at Pumwani on 10/11/2023). These included Ruiru, Mbagathi, among others. The Mbagathi depot was a large holding depot for East Africa Army Service Corps, the East Africa Base Transit Camp, Nairobi was for infantry and the Ruiru depot was for the East Africa Military Labour Service (Owino, 2003, p. 151). Nanyuki served as a training depot for members of AAPC, signals and engineers. Dressers and stretch bearers went to

East Africa Medical Depot at Kabete for training. By the end of 1940, there were several thousand African and European troops in British East Africa, the plurality of which were based in Kenya. These included Gold Coast Regiment (GCR) and the Royal West African Frontier Force (RWAFF) (White, 1990, p. 148). Many of these soldiers were garrisoned in and around Nairobi in training programs and in transit to and from combat in South-east Asia (White, 1990, p. 172).

During the course of the war, 98,240 Kenyans were recruited as *askaris* into the King's African Rifles (KAR), representing 30% of the unit's total strength. In some quarters, it was felt that Kenya had supplied more than its fair share of recruits for the armed services. Several articles in the East African Standard pointed out that Kenya had already provided more than equitable share of the recruits (Warner, 1985, p. 99). The articles urged the Kenyan government to put pressure on the military authorities to expand their recruiting in Uganda and Tanganyika.

African troops in the theatres of war

Kenya colony officially joined the war on 3rd September, 1939. Governor Broke-Popham declared 'a state of war exists between Britain and Germany as from 11 o'clock (East African Standard Sept. 3 1939). Major General Dickinson, the colonial officer commanding the East African forces immediately began organizing the various Kenyan military contingents for war (Owino, 2003, p. 337). However, fighting did not erupt in East Africa as Italy initially stayed out of the war. There was even hope Italy would join the Allied side. Mussolini eventually joined the war on the side of the Axis. The British realized the Italian troops were many, stronger, and more equipped. Italian equipment was contained in all British East Africa, including British Somaliland and the Sudan. The British abandoned the fight and retreated to Nairobi. The Italians easily captured British Somaliland and one border town in Kenya (Borries, 1989).

Between August and December 1940, the British switched from the defense to the offense against the Italians. Troops from East, West, South, and Central Africa took part as well as British, French, Belgian, and Indian soldiers (Shiroya, 1985). The Gold Coast Brigade and the Nigerian Brigade were the first to enter Italian territory followed by many separate penetrations of Ethiopia, Eritrea, and British and Italian Somaliland (Hamilton, 2001, p. 340). Africans not only fought well but surpassed expectations as technicians and combatants. After the transfer of Ethiopia from Italy (a colony of) to Britain (a protectorate), large numbers of Africans were stationed in North Africa and in the Middle East. In the Mediterranean theater, Africans served solely in Pioneer Companies. They helped clear sunken ships, worked as firefighters, guarded ammunition dumps and POWs, rebuilt hospitals, assembled trucks, and dug trenches, especially during the Italian campaign. Among the many laborers were soldiers from Bechuanaland, Swaziland and Basutoland who were not trained for combat (Killingray, 1989, pp. 490-491)

The soldiers of the West African Frontier Force formed the 81st and 82nd (West African) Divisions, and the soldiers of the King's African Rifles formed the 11th (East Africa) Division. At the suggestion of Sir George Giffard, inspector general of African forces, the three divisions were destined for service in the 14th Army of British Imperial Forces in December 1942 in the Middle East (Warner, 1985, p. 143). The Japanese advance in the Indian Ocean had many implications in East Africa, emanating from the threat of Japanese submarines to the East coast. Demands for Africans to serve in North Africa coincided with an increased need to fortify and defend the coastline (Warner, 1985, p. 96). By May 1942 Mombasa had been partially evacuated (East African Standard, 15 May, 1942). Civil defence plans became more important with the imminent danger of Japanese planes from aircraft carriers in the Indian Ocean. In Kenya, it was decided to widen the scope of the Defence Forces to incorporate both 'native and non-native personnel'. Provision for non-whites was made in the 1st and 2nd Auxiliary Defence Force Battalions which would be called upon to defend Nairobi in an emergency. This allowed a kind of African Home Guard to be attached to the Kenya Defence Force (Warner, 1985, p. 97).

In the middle of 1943, the Africans embarked for Burma. The Burma campaign involved 120,000 Africans (Owino, 2015, p. 508). Combat troops fought mainly in Western Burma, an underdeveloped but strategically vital region which controlled major supply routes. Most of the soldiers were infantry men but many also built roads (Owino, 2015 p. 509). In areas where motor transport was impossible, Africans worked in carrier groups, transporting up to eighty-five pounds of supplies on their heads along a 300-mile jungle path (Hamilton, 2001).

Quenching the thirst of the troops

During the time of the Second World War, alcohol was nothing short of a strategic commodity. The British kept their soldiers and sailors well supplied with beer, and some British breweries donated free beer to the RAF to transport to the front (Burnett, 1999). In 1942, British brewers created the 'Beer for the Troops' committee. They organized supplies for soldiers even to the most remote areas of the Middle East and North Africa (Glover, 2023). The main alcoholic drink in France was wine. The government reserved a third of the country's rail tanks to transport wine to the front lines. During the early stages of the war, over 3,500 trucks were mobilized for the daily delivery of more than 900,000 bottles of wine to the soldiers at the front. Early on, soldiers rations included 250 milliliters of wine per day, which was doubled within six months (Jacobson, 2015).

At first, German soldiers were encouraged to drink alcohol as a morale booster. Alcohol was however excluded from soldiers' rations after the capture of France. Hitler, who rarely drank himself, outlawed drinking by soldiers. The government raised taxes on alcohol and significantly limited its production and sale. Crimes committed while intoxicated became punishable by death.

Soviet soldiers were encouraged to drink before an attack, ‘to relax and relieve stress’ (Casey, 2020). Once the United States entered the war, the ongoing debate over alcohol consumption shifted to a discussion of the effect alcohol consumption would have on the ability of the nation to fight and win the war. President Franklin Roosevelt, who abolished Prohibition, along with his military advisers, decided that alcohol would be good for morale not only at home but also at the front (Viriden, 2014). Then, much like in manufacturing and food production, the government instructed the brewing industry to allocate 15 percent of its products for the military to ensure that beer could be provided to troops. The only concession that Roosevelt made to the abolitionists was that the volume of alcohol in beer supplied to soldiers should not exceed 3.2% (Casey, 2021). Thus, the 3.2 percent American lager became the main beer of the US Army, and the government declared brewing an important wartime industry. The leadership of the US Armed Forces tried to provide soldiers with beer rations not only on the fronts of Europe but also in the most remote corners of the Pacific Ocean (Glover, 2023).

As the war expanded, US breweries began shipping more canned beer to troops overseas. more than 20,000,000 gallons of Canadian beer was shipped to the troops overseas (Nugey, 1945). At first, the breweries used cans with the same labels as the pre-war cans. Cans were lighter, more compact and didn’t break as easily as the bottles; while both glass and metal were rationed, bottles were somewhat easier to replace than cans, so both were used. American servicemen who served in Europe were able to frequent pubs in the United Kingdom or purchase (or at least have access to) wine or alcohol throughout their sweep across Europe in Italy, France and even Germany (Siebel, 1943). For servicemen in the Pacific, access to alcoholic beverages was far more restricted and mostly relied on the supply sent by the US government, which was often available on an irregular basis (Glover, 2023). A survey conducted by the War Information in late 1942 suggested ‘on their Saturday nights in town one soldier in ten drinks some liquor, three drink beer. When off duty on other nights of the year, one in five drinks beer. The survey reported that found troops were engaged in substantial drinking (Rotskoff, 2002). Table 2 illustrates the change in per capita consumption during the world war

Table 2: Per capita consumption of beer produced in the United States (in gallons) from 1939 to 1945

Year	Per capita consumption
1939	12.76
1940	12.83
1941	12.88
1942	14.65
1943	16.10
1944	18.31
1945	19.19

Source: Brewers Almanac, 1957, p. 115

In the case of Kenya, beer was so scarce that the War Council had to convene an emergency committee to decide how much beer to allocate. The War Council introduced rationing of beer and limiting a soldier to two bottles a day, but there still wasn't enough drink for thousands of consumers, both soldiers and civilians (KNA, OP/1/1575; Imports Controller for Kenya and Uganda to Controller of Importation and Distribution of Intoxicating Liquor dated 3/3/1943). As food historians have shown, wartime food controls and rationing have often become intertwined with moral crusades to control other forms of 'untrustworthy consumption,' especially the consumption of alcoholic beverages. The dominant brewer then, East African Breweries Limited, instructed its staff to work in shifts but the demand was too much. Traders resorted to increased beer importation. The government noted that there was much shipping space taken up with the shipping of alcohol and drastically curtailed hours during which alcohol could be sold and consumed in bars (KNA, CS/8/10/36 min. 452 Executive Council meeting of 26th July 1940). This followed the failure of 'no treating' regulations that prohibited buying beer to females and guests of a club, for consumption in the premises. The government had hoped this would naturally reduce consumption. All this was in an endeavour to save shipping space on the importation of liquor, and to divert, if possible, some of the money spent in this direction towards war projects (KNA, OP/1/1586, SoS to the Governor, 13th February 1940). This was vital in ensuring adequate supplies of medical requirements, ammunition, and vital equipment were shipped without disruption.

Limited shipping space and an increased demand for beer meant that overall imports of whisky and other beverages from Europe dropped and the amount of whisky getting through to settlers dropped dramatically (KNA, AG/1/369, Crown Counsel to Tisdall, DC Nairobi, 4 Nov. 1941.). Prices rose drastically, mostly because of increased taxation, but demand stayed high. British

distilling companies hoped to start production in East Africa in order to cash in on the expanded market, but could not do so under the terms of the Brussels Act (1890) and the Convention of St. Germain- en- Laye of 1919 (Willis, 2002, p.160). The Brussels Act laid down obligations of European powers in relation to alcohol trade and consumption by the 'natives' (Pan, 1975, pp. 31-63; Smedt, 2011, pp. 148). The Convention of St. Germain- en- Laye of 1919 banned spirits production on African territories (outside South Africa and North Africa), and forbade the introduction of spirits into areas where trade was not yet established (East and Central and Muslim West Africa) (Willis, 2002; Smedt, 2011, p. 148).

A special war duty was also imposed which doubled the price of imported alcohol, resulting in a kind of switch in alcohol policy and drinking habits of the Whites, both soldiers and civilians (Willis, 2002, p.160). It should be noted that up to 1940, whisky had held sway as the drink of the non-African population in Kenya. Although there is substantial evidence of Asian drinking, much of the whisky was drunk by European troops and civilians who were not only legally permitted to drink them but could also afford them. Import of brandy and wine from South Africa soared during the war, encouraged by the introduction of preferential import duties owing to their plentiful supply in the country (KNA, OP/1/1587: letter to the governor by Imports Controller dated 27/2/1941). By 1942, drinking of spirits and wines, by the Whites began to attract the attention of the Salvation Army, which wrote as follows:

May we of the Salvation Army call attention to the question of the use of intoxicating liquor in the colony. It is understood that some restraint in the times this is served has been placed on the Hotels and Bars, but there appears to be much excessive drinking in spite of this. If some way could be found by which the amount of intoxicating liquor entering the colony could be restricted and the amount supplied to any customer also sufficiently limited, there might be some improvement. May we respectfully suggest it is difficult to understand why there is so much need of food control and so little control of intoxicants. (KNA, OP/1/1587: letter to the governor by Imports Controller dated 27/2/1943)

In view of the concerns raised by the Salvation Army, the Imports Controller outlined the complications caused by heavy importation of spirits by the Navy, Army and Air Force Institutes (N.A.A.F.I) for soldiers' consumption. This was noted to be a key contributing factor to widespread drunkenness.

He explained that:

Service Personnel were in habit of buying whisky, brandy and gin from N.A.A.F.I. and a certain amount of this would find its way into bars in Nairobi and Mombasa, for sale not

only to soldiers but to civilians. (KNA, OP/1/1587; Imports Controller to Salvation Army, dated 21/3/1943)

The Governor on the other hand indicated he had already taken steps to restrict the importation of whisky into the Colony. An extract from his statement read as follows;

Import licenses for whisky are now being issued on a basis of 40% only of 1941 imports; stocks are, however, virtually exhausted, and, it is not improbable that imports will cease entirely. As regards brandy and gin, importations from South Africa, the only source of supply, are on a much reduced scale, and it has been learnt that several of the larger firms are unable to supply any further stocks for export to Kenya. (KNA, OP/1/1587; Governor to Salvation Army, dated 25/3/1943)

The governor further assured that;

The consumption of spirits is likely therefore further to decline. It will be appreciated no doubt that much of the liquor consumed by members of the Fighting Services is specially imported by the N.A.A.F.I. The Government of Kenya has considerably curtailed the hours of sale of liquor in Kenya under the Defense (Hours of Sale of Liquor) Regulations, 1941, and by the Defense (Hours of Sale of Liquor) Regulations, 1942, which replaced them. In the light of the above information, it may be said that the control exercised in Kenya compares favourable with that imposed elsewhere. (KNA, OP/1/1587; Governor to Salvation Army, dated 25/3/1943)

Consumption needs of white soldiers continued being catered for by imported wines and spirits as well as products of KBL.

Municipal brewery and intensified demand.

Drinking of spirits and bottled beer by Africans, both troops and civilians, remained prohibited. Africans could only legally drink indigenous brewed beer which was provided by the municipal brewery. The Municipal brewery scheme appears to have emanated from correspondence between Secretary of State and the governors of East African territories regarding the Durban Municipal beerhall, a monopoly enterprise which sold indigenous beer to Africans in South Africa (KNA, AP/1/1203; Secretary of State to Governor, 11 May 1921). In effect, the plan entailed the colonial state carving out an exclusive vertical monopoly in the cities and areas of employed labor, stretching from factory production down to retailing drinks in state beer halls (Hausse, 1984; Richard, 1992; Rogerson, 2019). The system was regarded as a kind of safety valve, to deter

Africans from consuming of Nubian gin and other indigenous ferments, products considered more dangerous for the African imbibers (Gewald, 2002, p. 41).

The model, it should be noted, was not solely a colonial one since at the height of the First World War, the town of Carlisle had introduced a public monopoly in beer sale. This is after alcohol abuse and drunken disorder became common in the city and led to absenteeism and poor productivity at the munitions factory. To counter this, the government took the drastic step of nationalizing public houses. The Carlisle-Gretna district was one of several areas where state ownership and control of the drinks trade was introduced, known as 'the Carlisle Experiment' (Seabury, 2007). The alcohol content of the drink on sale was reduced and prices were increased. New pub managers, effectively civil servants, replaced landlords and were paid a salary with no extra profits available from increasing sales. The Secretary of State had noted that such a scheme generated considerable amount of revenue from beer trade, imploring that 'I would ask if something of this kind might not be tried at Mombasa and Nairobi to furnish the funds which are so badly needed' (KNA, BY/11/48; Milner, Secretary of State to Governor, 18 Oct. 1920). The setting up of a Municipal beerhall in Pumwani in January 1922 appears to have been the immediate outcome of this correspondence.

The Municipal beerhall was granted monopoly rights as 'sole providers of beer to the urban African males over the age of 18' on condition that profits were to go to local authorities - rather than National Treasury (KNA, Report of Working Party on the Manufacture and sale of Liquor, 1961: 68). As in the Durban system, profits from the beer were to be dedicated to the provision of basic amenities in African residential areas. In effect, what this meant was that beer hall proceeds would foot the bill for maintaining a strict system of residential segregation.

The municipal brewery was not able to serve the whole African population residing in Nairobi. Many Africans still lived in Pangani, and Kileleshwa while others lived in their employers' residential areas, where their movement was restricted (Smedt, 2011, p. 63). Much of the illegal brewing took place in Pumwani. This finding is corroborated by the Provincial Commissioner of Ukamba Province who stated in 1926 that 'there is an excess amount of illegal brewing taking place in this settlement' (KNA, PC/CP/4/2/3, Central Province annual Report, 1926: 21). It was not always easy for Africans in other locations to travel to Pumwani for a drink as they would also risk losing their jobs. The illegal women beer sellers took beer to them (Bujra, 1975; Ngesa, 1996, p. 65). On the contrary, it was prohibited to carry beer from municipal beer halls and consumption had to take place within the municipal premises (KNA, PC/NZA/3/15/142; DC Kisumu letter to PC Central dated 25/11/1926). On the other hand, the inconducive environment of the beer halls is illustrated by a statement written by Willis (2002). He posited that 'in the 1930's, the clubs of

Nairobi and Mombasa, with their brick and wire-mesh walls, turnstiles and stalwart attendants, the cheerless colonial vision of urban drinking as a physiological function came closest to realization' (Willis, 2002, p. 139).

The Municipal brewery which was expected to supply alcohol needs of African civilians and troops found itself increasingly overwhelmed by the rising demand for beer during the world war. Intensive correspondence involving the DC Nairobi, the PC Central, the Chief Secretary, the Attorney General, and the MNAO helps us to decipher the eight placed on this matter by the authorities.

In January 1940, the DC Nairobi wrote;

I am informed by the Municipal Native Affairs Officer that the Municipal Brewery could continue to supply the existing units within the Municipality and the ASC at Dagoretti Corner with the quantities of native liquor hitherto required by them but it would not be possible to supply additional units. It is so impossible to anticipate troop movements either within Nairobi Municipality or Nairobi District that I do not feel the present system could be permitted to continue indefinitely with any guarantee that requirements would be met. At the same time, soldiering is a thirsty business to the native as well as to the European, and I should like every facility to be provided for a reasonable supply of liquor to all ranks in accordance with ancient acceptable principles. (KNA, AG/1/404; letter by DC Nairobi to PC Central dated 31/1/1940)

It is evident that the Municipal brewery, as the DC had anticipated, was incapable of coping with the demand. It was noted there was crowding out of municipal beer shops in the African locations accompanied by uncontrollable drunkenness, which was responsible for creating friction between the troops and the permanent inhabitants of the Locations (KNA, AG/1/404, letter by PC Central Province to the Chief Secretary dated 26/02/1940). It was also reported that the Italian Prisoners of War (POWs) and Gold Coast regiments had a big reputation for violence (White, 1990: 167). They tended to drink heavily and quite often got involved in fistfights with African soldiers in Pumwani during the early years of the World war (White, 1990: 172). In view of the limited capacity of the Municipal Brewery, the PC Central underscored the need to secure sufficient beer for the troops. He wrote;

The requirements of the troops in Nairobi appear to be just adequately met by the Municipal Brewery; the resources being limited, it is desirable to ensure that they do not break down if increased demands are made upon it by other units. I support the proposal by the District Commissioner Nairobi that Emergency legislation be passed to enable units, where

appropriate, to obtain permits to brew and sell in native canteens such quantities of native beer as may legitimately be required by that unit, and to devote the profits to purposes beneficial to the native members of such unit. (KNA, AG/1/404, letter by PC Central Province to the Chief Secretary dated 26/02/1940)

Such a move, it was anticipated, would take the strain off the Municipal brewery so that it would be in a position to supply at short notice such emergency liquor as might be required either for units passing through Nairobi or merely staying in the Municipality for a short time. It was further anticipated the permits would be granted to permanent or semi-permanent units and the profits generated devoted to the welfare of native troops attached to the specific units (KNA, AG/1/404, Letter DC Nairobi to PC Central dated 28/02/1940). Arguably, this was intended to quell the unease of those who still argued that the sale of alcohol to Africans was fundamentally improper.

Towards the end of 1941, a shortage of liquor for African troops stationed in other parts of the colony was also being intensely experienced. The camp Commander at Londiani wrote on 17th December 1940 that;

The problem at the camp is a difficult one. Enquiries instituted by the Camp Commandant, Major Moore, have shown that a supply of red cape wine to which- together with native brew- these troops are accustomed, cannot be secured. They cannot afford the local bottled beer or spirits and, in any case, spirits are not considered suitable for them. My local experience in the last two months satisfies me that a properly regularized supply of liquor to these coloured troops is most desirable, and I am assured by officers of the Dominion troops that 'kaffir beer' is regularly drunk in South Africa by Cape Indian and Cape 'coloured' troops. (KNA, AG/1/404, Letter Camp Commander Londiani to PC Nyanza dated 17/12/1941)

To mitigate the situation, it was recommended that an emergency legislation be drafted. This was to especially procure adequate Christmas supplies for the Indian and Cape troops at Londiani (KNA, PC/NZA/3/15/144; letter by A.G to Chief Secretary, 1940). During festivities like Christmas, celebrations and entertainment went into high gear (Owino, 2003, p. 456). By the end of the year, the situation was so dire that the governor issued a proclamation allowing any licensing board to 'issue a licence to any person whom it may deem to be suitable to supply native intoxicating liquor wholesale to the officer commanding any military unit in such quantities and at such times as the said officer may require and for the consumption of such ranks, other than European, under his command as he may deem fit' (KNA, PC/NZA/3/15/144; letter by A.G to Chief Secretary, 1940).

As a way of ensuring uninterrupted supply of indigenous liquor and discouraging the consumption of illegal brews, the government made good arrangement to secure adequate grains for municipal breweries across Nairobi in face of a series of droughts that hit Central Kenya between 1942 and 1945. This famine was caused by intensified cultivation to take advantage of the expanded market for agricultural produce, which had accelerated the physical deterioration of the reserves (O.I Njunu Ndigire at Pumwani on 05/10/2023). The famine led the government to begin rationing wheat, bread, rice, and maize beginning March 1943. A series of correspondence involving the Chief Secretary, the Produce Controller and the MNAO reveals the government concern over possible repercussions of grain shortage essential to the municipal brewery in view of the heightened demand for indigenous beer.

The Chief Secretary wrote:

The provision of beer for native (troops) in urban areas is most desirable, both from the point of view of health and morale. Adequate grain should be availed in Nairobi for this. It is understood that supplies of grain have not been adequate for one Municipal beer shop in Nairobi this week and in consequence, it will have to close down next week. I am requesting that supplies be secured immediately. We have previously indicated that if supplies of beer for the Municipal beer shops are cut off, the result will be a considerable increase in illicit beer trade and it may also affect the efficiency of the troops. (KNA, MAA/7/378, Chief secretary to Produce Controller, 20 May, 1943)

Adequate supply continued to be a big challenge. Many troops resorted to consumption of illicit brews prepared and sold by women entrepreneurs in Nairobi and the places.

Illicit consumption and its effect

Robertson (1997:105) also states that many African women flocked to Nairobi with the heightened demands of the military presence offering diverse opportunities especially in trading. For example, the troops and migrants from rural areas offered a booming market for agricultural produce. African migration to Nairobi is demonstrated by the following table. It has been shown that between 1941 and 1945, Nairobi's population grew by 17% each year (Ngesa, 1996: 111). It should be noted that the population influx in Nairobi resulted in overcrowding, which was blamed for the 1941 plague outbreak (Kiruthu, 2006:132).

Table 3: Nairobi Population Figures, 1939-1944

	1939	1941	1944
Africans	41,000	70,000	66,590
Asians	17,700	22,000	31,877
Europeans	6,800	8,000	10,431

Source: Clayton & Savage (1974: 244); Zeleza (1989:153)

Touring and travelling were popular past-time among *askaris* in Nairobi and other towns. It was during such walkabouts and tours that the *askaris* indulged in beer drinking. This was particularly so in areas where the soldiers' main weapon was the shovel, and at home in units waiting interminably for orders to go overseas (O.I., Matu wa Njiru interviewed at Majengo on 19/11/2023). The war therefore greatly increased the demand for the home-made beer in Nairobi (Ngesa, 1996, p. 110). Women brewers intensified their production to take advantage of the widened market as the sale of these traditional brews became rampant in all African locations (Kiruthu, 2006, p. 133). The units based at Buller Camp and the new barracks in Lang'ata obtained distilled beer from Kibera (Smedt, 2011, p. 164). The drinking of the home-made brew by African troops caught the attention of the colonial administrators, regarding the safety of such products (KNA, PC/NZA/3/15/144; minutes of the meeting of municipal administrators and the DC Nairobi, October 10, 1946). Furthermore, the Municipal Native Affairs Officer reported in a meeting about some Ethiopians who were extensively engaged in the manufacture and sale of Nubian gin to the troops and civilians (Kiruthu, 2006: 133).

People from different tribes within the colony and beyond met each other and Africans were forced to change their cultural ways. Less tribal control resulted in a deterioration of morals and an increased indulgence in alcohol. Their food and beer were different and drinking beer in many cases involved breaking tribal taboos and consuming beer varieties that were outside ethnic norms (O.I., Matu wa Njiru interviewed at Majengo on 19/11/2023). Some unscrupulous African and Indian traders were for instance noted to be selling methylated spirits to the *askaris* and civilians. Those found culpable were heavily fined by the courts. A case in point is where an offender, an Indian man was slapped with a fine of Ksh. 3000, which he considered extreme and unjustified and appealed against in the Supreme Court. The appeal was thrown out by the Supreme Court which noted the seriousness of the offense and the need to tame the practice through severe penalties (KNA, AP/1/1947, Supreme Court registrar circular to all magistrates, 1945).

Many medical cases among the *askaris* were related to injuries and war related psychological and mental trauma which often led to mental breakdown, drunkenness, brawling and rowdy behaviour (Owino, 2003, p. 440). Drunkenness often resulted in tough disciplinary measures such as dismissal. Dedan Kimathi, the de-facto leader of the Mau Mau, was only a soldier for a month in 1940 before he was dishonourably discharged for drunkenness and violence (O.I., Matu wa Njiru interviewed at Majengo on 19/11/2023). Despite attempts at health education by British Medical Officer and its team of African Medical Orderlies attached to each battalion, many *askaris* were victims of overdrinking resulting in mugging, murder and suicide. Abdi Mohamed was murdered on 10/3/1941 and his genitals mutilated (KNA, ACW/28/116, Pensions and Gratuities, to Chief Secretary 18/5/1941). An inquest found that an European officer noticed a distinct smell of alcohol when he examined the body of the late *askari*. Similarly, an autopsy on bodies of Mutoko Mwendando, Wambua Landu, Kinyore Ndambuki reported each died of alcohol poisoning (KNA/ACW/28/119, Pensions and Gratuities Letter to the Chief Secretary, 18/5/1942).

Drunkenness was also associated with sexual liaisons with brewers and rampant sexually transmitted diseases, which caused serious disagreement between military authorities and civil administrators, with each blaming the other of not doing enough to control infections. Venereal disease greatly threatened the efficiency of the KAR during the Abyssinian campaign (Parsons, 1999). Outside Nairobi, in other municipalities and in rural areas, the desire by *askaris* to 'quench the thirst' sustained and propelled women's brewing business during the world war. During the period of drought and biting grain shortage in early 1940's as already alluded to, restrictions on movement of maize, potatoes, bananas, sugarcane, millet and sorghum, made women brewers resort to sugar and jaggery (KNA, MAA/7/378; letter Chief Secretary to PC Rift Valley dated 18th Sep. 1943). Majority of the women brewers in Mathare, a key centre of brewing at this time, obtained black market grains in Ruaraka from hawkers who came from Kiambu and Thika, which was used for brewing (White, 1990, p.153). During the aforementioned famine, severe restrictions were also imposed on liquor brewing in the reserves. The authorities ordered that dramatic reduction be made in the use of grains for brewing, limiting the issuing of permits by DC's strictly for ceremonies and curtailing the quantities a licensed person was allowed to brew. In the towns, an order was issued strictly prohibiting the possession of sprouted grain which would henceforth be regarded same as brewing. The same applied to possession of implements or utensils for distilling. It is worth noting that the same circular reiterated the ban on sale of native intoxicating liquor to women (KNA, MAA/7/378; C.M Mullins for Chief Secretary to the Produce Controller dated 18th January 1944).

Brewing went on unabated in the peri-urban settlements such as Kabete, Dagoretti and Kawangware where migrants to the town continued to settle in 1943-1944. In multiple cases, illicit

consumption had disastrous outcome for civilians and soldiers (O.I., Maritha Murugi interviewed at Mathare on 09/09/2023). Many *askaris* were reported to have died of alcohol poisoning during the North Africa campaign. Yosamu Gwaza of EAA pioneers in died on 2nd November 1943 in Beirut, Lebanon from alcohol and brawling died. Similarly, Sawe Kipkoia, a mess servant with KAR, died on 1st October, 1943. An inquiry into the death reported that ‘after securing a shot pass and proceeding to Jigiga (Ethiopia), he had come back to the camp drunk. He was reportedly so drunk that he was swearing and making himself unpleasant in a boastful manner in the presence of a white officer. The officer lost temper and slapped him in the face and he began bleeding badly. He was attended to by the medical officer and later taken to hospital where he died (Owino, 2003, p. 376).

In Colombo (Cylon), *askaris* discovered the *arrack*, a local brew made from fermented juice of coconut to which toddy spirit from the flowers of the palm had been added. This was a potent and ‘enlivening’ drink (East African Standard, June 17, 1944). Many *askaris* in Colombo would organize parties to drink *arrack* and listen to music (Owino, 2003, p. 412). Soldiers in Madagascar campaign also spent much of their free time looking for places of entertainment and drinking, resulting in some deaths. Ochar Oranga a private with KAR, was found dead in Mahajanga, Madagascar on 16 September 1942, with multiple wounds associated with drunken brawl. Private Mutoka Kore serving with EAAMC was reportedly under influence when he asked for a lift from a passing military lorry in Mbagathi, Nairobi on 11th June 1943. He fell off and died in hospital later (KNA, ACW/28/119 War Pensions Office to the Chief Secretary). Table 4 illustrates the casualties among East African soldiers in the war. A substantial number of Africans who died from sickness and accidents were reported to have been victims of illicit beer consumption (KNA, ACW/28/119, Pensions and Gratuities, 1942-1944; KNA, AH/ 22/55, Personnel Affairs and African Soldiers, 1941-1945)

Table 4: number of deaths among East African soldiers in World War II

	Europeans	Africans	Asians
Died in combat	79	1388	0
Died from wounds	2	128	0
Died as Prisoner of war	1	20	4
Died from sickness	86	6872	12
Died from accidents	64	1232	34

Source: Owino, 2003, p. 412

Conscripts on leave were frequently accused of squandering money on beer (Owino, 2003, p. 482). The civil authorities responsible for conscripts on leave adopted the practice of spreading an *askari's* ration money over the period of leave rather than giving it to him in advance, to avoid encouraging him to squander it on beer. It was reported that in Mombasa and Dar es Salaam, all the bars were closed while the conscripts were in town awaiting embarkation (Warner, 1985, p. 112). Some were also frequently found guilty of selling articles of uniform, including stolen ones, to obtain money for beer (Owino, 2003, p. 112). In sentencing an illegal brewer, a magistrate observed that 'the Nubian gin situation, to judge from my court records, is appalling, and drunkenness with serious brawling is rife: moreover, the obnoxious liquor is peddled to soldiers as well as to civilians'. 'A further deplorable effect of the trade', observed the magistrate, 'is that soldiers exchange their kit for the liquor; this of course gives rise to prosecutions under the Defense (HMS) Forces Regulations (1941) as well as affecting military discipline' (KNA, PC/NZA/4/12/3; Resident Magistrate Kisumu to Registrar of Supreme Court dated 10/10/1944).

Apparently, illicit drinking and drunkenness was not confined to the *askaris*. When European soldiers were off duty, they apparently had more options and fewer limitations on drinking. The consequences of beer were palpable on the battlefield, with instances of alcohol-related disciplinary issues among whites rising significantly. Despite efforts to regulate and ration, the allure of vodka persisted among the soviet troops, 'becoming deeply ingrained in the fabric of the soldiers' daily lives, both as a coping mechanism and a form of camaraderie amidst the harsh realities of war' (Davis, 1985, p. 406). By 1943, the Soviet Union was consuming a staggering amount of vodka annually. Reports indicate that the per capita alcohol consumption in the USSR reached a peak of approximately 7.5 liters of pure alcohol, a testament to the widespread availability and illicit consumption of this potent spirit (Erofeyev, 2002; Military History Matters, July 2012).

Many commentators and veterans noted the numerous substitutes that the servicemen came up with when alcohol was not readily available. These amateur-distilled beverages varied enormously depending upon the available local ingredients. These makeshift beverages were not without risk, however. It was reported that on Eleanor Roosevelt's trip to the Pacific theatre in 1943 ... 'she sadly reported 'last night four men died from drinking distilled shellac' (Sparrow, 2016). This was not an isolated incident, with the most toxic substitute being methyl (wood) alcohol. In 1945, the US Army disclosed several hundred deaths in France and Germany between January and July 1945 from consuming bootleg methyl alcohol (Viriden, 2014, p. 86). Some observers raised concerns about the impact of alcohol on the ability of both the enlisted men and the civilians to participate in war-related activities. Overindulgence in alcohol, it was argued, could harm efforts to win in this seemingly very delicate struggle for the survival of nations (Viriden, 2014).

By the end of the war in 1945, there were nearly 100,000 Kenyan *askaris* in the military either as members of the Kings African Rifles or the Pioneer Corps who were shipped back to Keya (Lonsdale, 1986, p. 13). These *ex-askaris* had greatly changed their way of life with regard to many issues. They had not only seen the perils of war but they had also been exposed to a new lifestyle and developed a taste for beer. Some colonial administrators were apprehensive that accumulated savings and new technical skills acquired with attendant potential for earning higher incomes could result in major problems of alcoholism among the ex-soldiers (Doig, 1946, p. 177). Though the problem would turn out to be less in magnitude as had been anticipated, there was a substantial number of the *ex-askaris* who ‘spent their accumulated pay on new wives or squandered it on beer’ (Wamuthoni, OI, 2023).

CONCLUSION

This article has illustrated how thousands of Africans were recruited, trained, armed, and deployed to fight for the British in Northern Kenya, North Africa and Asia in the Second World War between 1939 and 1945. During this period, alcohol appears to have emerged as an important commodity for the soldiers. The article examined how brewing gained a privileged status in the War. It examined how the war disrupted many established conventions surrounding drinking and access to beer among both Africans and Whites. It has been shown that the economic mobilization of Kenya during the war led to an intensified level of urbanization in the country, swelling the population of Nairobi as troops were stationed there for war or on transit to other zones of fighting. This resulted in a tremendous increase in the demand for beer in Nairobi. As the article illustrated, a number of *askaris* in Nairobi and other war zones were reported dead from drunkenness and its associated risks. On the other hand, some of the *ex-askaris* who returned to Kenya squandered their savings on beer as a result of having acquired taste for new types of beer during the war. This article’s focus on beer consumption during World War II makes an important contribution to the alcohol debate in contemporary scholarship.

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