2015

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Introduciton

As the Kenya colony began preparations for World War II, a crisis engulfed the newly formed Pioneer Corps at their various bases at Ahero, and Nairobi, Kenya. The main problem was the government's refusal to issue African members of the Pioneer Corps with rifles for military service, among other grievances. Indignant at what they perceived as an affront to their masculinity, the pioneers in Nairobi demanded to know why the government was refusing to arm them with rifles as promised during recruitment. On 18 September, 1939, they confronted their officers, and reminded them that: "you told us that we are just as much *askaris*[1] as the KAR [King's African Rifles] because the KAR cannot fight unless they have roads for lorries to take their supplies to them. Surely then, if we have to make the roads, we shall be in front of the troops and be slaughtered like women unless we are armed."[2] The situation deteriorated, and the pioneers, according to the government, went on "strike" over the lack of rifles.[3] Initially, the government responded to the striking pioneers intransigently, and dismissed "a few malcontents."[4] The pioneers were not cowed, however; the protests continued. Eventually, the government succumbed and the pioneers were assured by the government that their grievances would be looked into.[5] The pioneers scored a major victory in their struggle for a respectable and dignified status in the military when the government specifically promised to arm 25 percent of them with rifles during combat. The pioneers were also promised by the government that all of them would be trained and taught how to use firearms during military service.

There are critical lessons in African history that can be gleaned from the pioneers and their protests and campaigns in Nairobi and other places in colonial Kenya during World War II. For one, the pioneers and their campaigns and protests during military service provide us with important insights into the agency and initiative of ordinary Africans in the making of their history in colonial and postcolonial Africa. By fearlessly confronting the powerful colonial citadel over their right to bear arms, among other rights and actually earning some of those rights, the pioneers provide us with a powerful reminder that ordinary Africans have the power to bring change in their societies. Ordinary Africans need not be fearful, passive, and submissive in the face of of injustice, intolerance, or unfairness; like the pioneers during the colonial period, ordinary Africans too can take matters into their hands and confront acts of injustice, intolerance, and unfairness and bring about meaningful change in their societies.

This article therefore helps us to understand and appreciate the power, agency, and initiative of the ordinary people of African to change their lives and societies for the better. When we look at the system under which the pioneers were expected to serve during World War II, we see a system in which the colonial government was expected to give orders and lay down the law while the colonial subjects such as the pioneers automatically followed the orders and obeyed the laws without question. We see a system where the colonial government sought to treat the African pioneers as mere instruments towards its own ends. But, as we see in this article, when the colonial government started recruiting the Africans into the newly formed Pioneer Corps, it found itself increasingly coming under pressure from its recruits questioning its policies in the Pioneer Corps. Instead of being obeyed, it was being questioned. While the colonial government seemed intent on treating the pioneers as mere automatons in the service of the colony, the pioneers, on the other hand, appeared intent on ensuring that their service was dignified, meaningful, and above all else, humane. While colonial government wanted the pioneers to serve without questioning their service, the pioneers on the other hand were determined to challenge policies that undermined their dignity and humanity. Thus, the article shows that the pioneers were not passive spectators offering their military service uncritically; instead, they were constantly involved in asking questions, protesting, and organizing strikes to demand better terms of service during World War II. The pioneers were very actively involved in defining their roles and welfare in the Pioneer Corps during the war. Their protests and campaigns generated change that made their service tolerable, dignified, and meaningful, and, eventually influenced the evolution of the Pioneer Corps during the World War II.

An equally important theme in this article is the social experience of the pioneers in the World War II. Scholars have published a number of important studies on African soldiers in warfare during the colonial period. Many of these studies largely tend to focus on African wars of resistance to colonialism,[6] the formation of colonial armies and African experience in them,[7] and the role of African soldiers in World War I,[8] and World War II.[9] Other studies deal with military laborers in Africa.[10] However, only a few of these studies actually touch on the Pioneer Corps in World War II. Among such studies is Timothy H. Parsons' book on the role of African soldiers in the King's African Rifles [KAR].[11] Following the footsteps of studies that deal with the social experiences of common soldiers,[12] Parsons' book examines the agency and experience of ordinary soldiers in the KAR. Since Parsons' work is on the King's African Rifles, he understandably touches on the pioneers briefly, and concentrates mainly on the African soldiers serving in the King's African Rifles. Michael Blundell, the Commander of a battalion of the 1st Pioneer Company during World War, also wrote a memoir that briefly touches on the Pioneer Corps in World War II.[13] However, while Blundell's memoir is very important for our understanding of some of the experiences of the pioneers in World War II, it largely focuses on his own personal experiences in colonial Kenya, and largely ignores the rank-and-file African view of the Pioneer Corps. This article therefore hopes to build on these studies that deal with the social experience of African soldiers during the colonial period by focusing on what Timothy Parsons calls "the rank-and-file African soldiers"—the African laborers who served in the Pioneer Corps during the World War II. Since the pioneers served in a labor unit during the war, it is important for them to be studied in their own right and their story told because they served just as much as soldiers in other units during the war, soldiers whose stories have already been told. Indeed, an examination of the pioneers is particularly urgent given that the few who survive are elderly and ailing, and are on the verge of disappearing with their knowledge of the Pioneer Corps, endangering our effort to tell their side of the story for the historical record. In 2001, Cpl. Thomas Alfred Oluoch Odawa expressed the hope that the memory, honor, and sacrifice of the pioneers during the war were not in vain and would not be forgotten by historians.[14]

The Origin of the Pioneer Corps

As Europe moved inexorably towards war in 1939, government officials in Kenya started becoming anxious about the potential impact of the war on African labor in colonial Kenya. They were worried that the advent of

war could disrupt labor supply in colonial Kenya because it could spark off flights of young men afraid of forced labor as happened during World War I when young men were summoned to *barazas* [meetings] with colonial officials and were virtually kidnapped when they came to those meetings. European settlers, who were very influential in colonial Kenya, were also worried about military officials taking over the management of African labor and channeling it into the army at the expense of settler farms.[15] Government officials and European settlers believed that if young men started running away from their homes out of fear of forced recruitment, and the military took over control of the remaining African labor, shortage of labor would ensue and conflicts between civilian and military authorities would follow, endangering the interests of the colonial government and the powerful settler class in colonial Kenya, and jeopardizing the ability of the government to prosecute the war. Hoping to forestall such problems, colonial government officials decided to move in very fast with a plan that could enable them to maintain control over the flow and direction of African labor during the war. They decided to form a labor unit that they could use to manage the movement African labor—be it to settler farms, government projects, or the military during the war. Thus, in March 1939, the Chairman of the Manpower Committee of Kenya[16] circulated a communiqué to various heads of Kenya's provinces soliciting suggestions on the formation of what he called a "Labor Corps" that would channel African labor into the Kenya military in the event that there was a war that involved Kenya. The chairman's communiqué identified Nyanza province as one of the regions that would be required to provide most of the labor for the proposed military labor corps because it was at that time deemed within the colonial administration as an inexhaustible reservoir of labor, and therefore capable of sustaining the labor demands of the military corps. The communiqué thus suggested that Nyanza province would initially contribute 3,000 men and provide more during the war.[17] Sydney H. Fazan, who became the Provincial Commissioner of Nyanza in February 1936, and who was intimately involved in the establishment of the labor corps, recalled that the "personal request [was for] me to write a memorandum on the above subject ... in *my capacity* as a Provincial Commissioner of a Province with a million and a quarter natives which in the war of 1914-18 in East Africa bore the brunt of the military and civil labor requirements."[18] Fazan revealed that the Chairman of the Manpower Committee personally requested him to make special recommendations on the modalities for creating the labor force since his province was expected to contribute the highest number of laborers to the unit. He also observed that Nyanza province was expected to host the unit during the initial stages of preparations for the war, and was required to provide it with facilities and logistics during its formative stages in the province. He recalled that after receiving the Chairman of Manpower's directive, he and his District

Commissioners discussed how the unit would be created, and men recruited into it. They formed a committee called the Nyanza Manpower Sub-Committee to work on the proposal.

Fazan and most of his District Commissioners, under the aegis of the Nyanza Manpower Subcommittee, enthusiastically supported the establishment of the military labor unit in Nyanza, and claimed that the populous Nyanza province would have no difficulty raising manpower for the unit. They framed their arguments within a long-standing colonial discourse that often perceived Nyanza Province in Western Kenya as a labor reserve teeming with an inexhaustible supply of labor. They argued that Nyanza was inhabited by people who were suitable for this kind of labor unit. They identified the Luo as the most suitable communal group in Nyanza Province for the unit.[19] Their arguments were not unusual.

From the beginning of colonialism in Africa, colonial military and civilian authorities had long partitioned African communities into two main categories for military purposes: "warlike" and "non-warlike tribes [sic]."[20] The "war-like tribes," according to this colonial discourse, were suitable for "fighting" and were, as result, recruited into "fighting units" like the KAR, while the non-warlike "tribes" were enlisted into non-fighting units like Kariokor [Carrier Corps] during World War I, and East African Military Labor Service Corps during World War II. In Kenya, the "warlike tribes" had long been identified as the Maasai, Samburu, Nandi, and the Marakwet – these were usually recruited into the KAR. The "non-warlike tribes" were believed to include the "Kavirondo [sic], the Kamba and Meru, and some of the coast tribes [sic]"[21] and were considered suitable for non-combat units such as labor corps. It was therefore not surprising when Fazan observed that, in terms of quality, "the Kavirondo [sic] are certainly among the best of the tribes [sic]"[22] for the proposed unit. He singled out the Luo among the Nyanza people for recruitment because "the Luo, no doubt, would yield with a fairly good grace to conscription; the Bantu would come in not readily and there would probably be some degree of disaffection in some of the more political location."[23] In singling out the Luo for recruitment into the proposed labor unit, Fazan and his colleagues, like most previous colonialists, were therefore falling into a familiar colonial trap of using ethnicity as a determinant for service in various categories of colonial and military institutions.

Fazan and his commissioners therefore believed that Nyanza was endowed with enough manpower and the right kind of men for the proposed military labor unit. He in particular argued that Nyanza province would not have any problem sustaining the unit because even "in normal times ... [Nyanza Province provided] ... about half of the colony's native labor ... [and]

... they also provide a large proportion of the police force and a considerable proportion of the KAR."[24] He observed that Nyanza's population by 1940 was "almost exactly 40% that of Kenya."[25] He pointed out that the population of Nyanza province, including, at that time, the Kipsigis areas, and some parts of the present day western Kenya, was 1.25 million. As a result of his belief that Nyanza population could sustain the unit, Fazan advised that the unit should be established as soon as possible in readiness for the war.[26]

What remained now was the creation of the unit, and that was exactly where the assumptions of the colonial administration officials began to clash with the demands and expectations of African recruits who were required to serve in it. It was at that point that colonial officials found themselves making changes to their original plans for the proposed labor unit, accommodating, in the process, the interests of the eligible African recruits, and, in the end, influencing the evolution of the proposed labor unit.

How African Concerns Influenced the Creation of the Pioneer Corps

When the colonial officials in the Manpower Committee started planning how to create the military labor unit, they found out that African soldiers' objectives and concerns while enlisting for military service in World War II were not always in tandem with their own. While the major interest of colonial authorities and their settler allies in establishing the military labor unit was to maintain control over the flow and direction of African labor into civilian government projects, settler farms, and the army during the war, many African recruits were primarily keen on joining the military for reasons that were not necessarily in synch with those of the colonial authorities and their European allies in the empire. Colonial officials expected African members of the proposed unit to identify with their cause and uncritically provide their labor to European settlers, the army, and other areas where they were needed. Many Africa soldiers on the other hand joined the military purely for economic reasons, that is, for wages and material rewards they expected to earn from the military for their service.[27] Okola Omolo, for example, joined the military because certain retired soldiers in his village owned beautiful things like beds, blankets, and curtains in their homes. He admired them so much that he decided to join the military to be like them.[28] Since the military offered the best wages to men without formal training and education in the colony,[29] these soldiers believed that military service provided them with the best opportunity to save money with which to buy land, clothes, blankets, bicycles, and livestock to offer as dowry to families of their brides. Other men joined the military for social reasons. Such men saw military service as a good opportunity to demonstrate how courageous and masculine they were to their peers. Their aim

was to earn a high status among people in their societies by proving that they were brave and manly. Johannes Ochanda Ameny, for instance, abandoned school at grade six and joined the army because "my father told me that that is what real men are doing. I was not scared when I enlisted for military service. My father told me that I would come back from the war alive ... so I was happy when I joined the military."[30] Alex Ochieng' Onyango joined the military on 8 August, 1939 because his father told him that that was what "real men" did.[31] Alfred Juma Bunde also joined the military to prove that he was a man. He reportedly tried to join the military several times and was turned back every time he did so because he was too young. He was turned back in Kisumu, and finally succeeded in joining the military when he tried his luck at another recruitment center at Onjiko, a few miles from Kisumu, on 20 November, 1939.[32] Cpl. Alfred Thomas Oluoch Odawa joined the military for many reasons. First, he wanted to win respect. In a patriarchal society such as that of the Luo, men like Cpl. Odawa volunteered for military service to avoid the embarrassment of forced recruitment. He did not want to be recruited by force because he did not want women to laugh at him. He said that women often laughed at any man who was forced to join the military. In the words of Cpl. Odawa, "if women saw you being forced to join the army, they would laugh at you. They would say you were a coward, and you would be ashamed. Many men joined the army to avoid the embarrassment of forced recruitment. They wanted to prove that they were brave."[33] Second, he said that he joined the army because he admired how veteran soldiers in his village were respected. "In those days," said Cpl. Odawa, "a soldier was not like today's soldiers. They were not a joke. They were real men, and even whites respected us because of our courage and manlines."[34] Cpl. Odawa also claimed that many soldiers joined the military voluntarily believing that voluntary enlistment as opposed to forced recruitment would bring them luck and enable them to survive the war. He said that he knew of many men who volunteered for military service because they believed it would give them a better chance of surviving the war. People believed that joining the military voluntarily "gave you good luck, but reluctance to join the military was a sign that your spirit knew you were going to die ... that is why your spirit made you reluctant to join the war. So, some people joined the military voluntarily to increase their chances of surviving the war"[35] Other men on the other hand enlisted for military service due to military propaganda. Such men expressed their desire to serve in the army in terms of sympathy for the British whose motherland was under attack. All they wanted, such men said, was to help a locally based kind British man or woman—a British teacher, a British missionary, or a British settler – who had told them that their motherland needed help because it was under attack from the

Germans.[36] Others joined the military under duress, enlisting when their chiefs or government agents forcibly recruited them or misled them into service.[37] Maura Oyiro, for example, said that he was forced to join the military on 3rd November, 1939.[38]

Regardless of why and how they joined military service and served in World War II, however, all the recruits interviewed for this paper, and who ended up serving in the Pioneer Corps, expected their service to be as respectable and honorable as possible. They wanted to be treated with dignity in terms of wages paid to them, and in the nature of responsibilities and duties allocated to them. They expected to be treated like "real soldiers," meaning that they expected to be issued with the basic accoutrements of a soldier serving in a war—uniforms, boots, and above all else, rifles. When Lance Cpl. Rambalo Hanyore joined the military, he hoped to join "KEYA" [a corruption of the term "KAR" where African soldiers were issued with rifles rather than a labor unit where they were required to carry loads on their heads "like women."[39] . Cpl. Alfred Thomas Oluoch Odawa expected to be given a rifle to demonstrate his manliness and "soldierliness." These expectations clashed with colonial authorities' predisposition towards treating them like ordinary laborers. They expected to be treated like real soldiers while colonial authorities and their settler allies only appeared intent on using them to manage and control the flow of their labor into civilian government projects, settler farms, and the army during World War II.

Evidence of the clashes between Africans' expectations and government plans can be gleaned from oral interviews with the soldiers who served in the Pioneer Corps, and various confidential letters, reports, and other pieces of documents that circulated between S.H. Fazan and the local District Commissioners in Nyanza, and between Nyanza and the colonial headquarters in Nairobi about the Pioneer Corps. The clashes actually began right from the beginning of the Pioneer Corps. For example, when Fazan and his District Commissioners in Nyanza started discussing the actual modalities of creating the labor corps, they immediately realized that they would encounter serious challenges that would hamper the creation of the proposed military labor unit. From conversations with administrators who no doubt got their information from regular interactions with Africans in the province—men like Cpl. Rambula Hanyore, Cpl. Alfred Thomas Alfred Oluoch, Raphael Obara Makang'ienda, and Maura Oyiro, the Nyanza Provincial Commissioner realized that one of the issues that potential recruits often complained about, and which could jeopardize the establishment of the labor unit would be the military's refusal to issue the laborers with rifles or grant them the right to bear arms during military service. Fazan learned, during discussions with local administrators on the establishment of the labor unit, that potential African recruits such as Maura Oyiro were already aware that African military laborers

were not soldiers in the real sense of the word because they were not allowed to bear arms. Such men had already been told by veterans from previous military expeditions in East Africa that they would be the butt of jokes and insults from civilians and fellow soldiers if they did not have rifles. Explaining why he was reluctant to join the military, for example, Maura Oyiro said that it was because he had heard that African veterans who served in labor units during World War I were not issued with rifles. According to Oyiro, such soldiers were not considered in the village as "real soldiers" doing "real and serious military work" because they were not allowed to serve with rifles and participate in actual fighting.[40] As a result of such sentiments, members of the Nyanza Manpower Subcommittee came to realize that the lack of rifles was a very serous concern among Africans, and could easily derail the proposed project. Fazan remarked that, "the great complaint among the men, who are otherwise keen and proud of themselves ... is that their women will mock them if they are not armed.[41]

During conversations with African elders and potential recruits, members of the Nyanza Manpower Subcommittee also identified and singled out the low wages and general poor terms of service that labor units (compared to regular military units like KAR) were notorious for as potential bottlenecks to the recruitment of men for the proposed unit. Although Kenya African recruits have generally been characterized as always ready to serve in the military, this was not always the case. Their willingness to join the military was not always guaranteed; rather, it was contingent upon the terms and conditions of service in the military. Where salaries were high, relations between officers and ordinary soldiers good and life generally pleasant, Africans generally enlisted in large numbers. Where terms of service were poor, however, Africans tended to evade military service. In this connection, regular military units such as the East Africa Army Medical Corps, and the East Africa Army Service Corps were generally attractive to recruits because they provided better terms of service than most other units during the war.[42] The KAR was particularly popular among African recruits because its members were issued with rifles during military service—a fact that reinforced the masculinity and prestige of the recruits in their villages. On the other hand, military labor units did not provide their men with good wages, rifles were not issued at all at the beginning of the war, and service was generally brutal, grinding, and inhumane. Labor units were loathed by Africans.

Noting that labor units had an extremely bad reputation among Africans, the Nyanza Manpower Subcommittee warned the government that the proposed labor unit would not take off unless eligible recruits were given assurances that they would be treated differently from labor recruits who served

in previous military campaigns. Members of the subcommittee reminded the colonial administration of the horrible experiences of African soldiers who served in the military during early colonial military expeditions and World War I. They observed that Africans in Nyanza were still talking about their suffering in the Carrier Corps, a particularly notorious labor unit in which more than 100,000 African men [nearly 10% of the total number of men serving in British military forces in East Africa] perished while serving in World War I. In fact, African soldiers equated service in military labor units such as the Carrier Corps—*Kariokor* [as it was known locally]—with death.[43] They noted that African complaints about hunger, malnutrition, starvation, diseases, and corporal punishment from insensitive white colonial military leaders during previous military service were rampant in the villages, and would interfere with the establishment of the proposed labor unit. It was therefore not surprising when members of the subcommittee warned the government that unless measures were put in place to accommodate the interests of men eligible for service in the proposed labor corps, they would not join it."[44] They asserted that the high casualty rate among African members of labor units in previous expeditions, the lack of rifles, and the poor terms of service could deter eligible men from joining the labor corps. They revealed that many Africans had "not forgotten" that African military laborers in World War I died from starvation, malnutrition, and exhaustion from long and tedious work in large numbers, and that their families were never compensated."[45] Anytime the word labor was mentioned, Africans remembered the ill-fated "Carrier Corps of the First World War and everything connected with it"[46] because they knew "that the Carrier Corps was alternatively known as the Labor Corps and the head of it as Director of Military Labor."[47]

The reality of African expectations and attitudes to military labor, therefore, forced the Nyanza Manpower Subcommittee to advice the government to devise new strategies and approaches to establishing the proposed labor corps. Members of the committee realized that the envisaged labor unit would not be able to take off and function properly until appropriate and judicious attention and redress to African concerns were instituted. They realized that the government would not be able to get the unit off the ground unless these challenges were confronted and resolved to the African recruits' satisfaction. They began advising the colonial administration to tread carefully with the proposal. Fazan, a leading member of the committee, counseled the government to avoid using terms such as "labor" and "labor corps" while creating the unit, otherwise they would remind potential recruits of tasks associated "with the carrying of loads and all their hardships in the last war and they will not engage in it voluntarily."[48] He pointed out that the word "labor" could be a major handicap to the recruitment of men for the unit because it induced images of suffering, brutality and death, and warned the Manpower

Committee to steer away from it. In a letter to the Manpower Committee, Fazan proposed a way of getting around the term "labor" in order to facilitate the establishment of the military unit. He proposed removing the word "labor" and replacing it with a less frightening term. He recorded his recommendation to the government as follows: "upon receiving the communiqué from the Chairman of the Manpower Committee proposing to establish a labor corps, we immediately headed him off the term 'Labor Corps' and chose 'Pioneer Corps' as likely to be more popular."[49]

In this sense, therefore, African concerns were forcing colonial authorities to change tact in their plans to create a labor unit for the war. Their anxieties compelled the administration to devise a way around the problem by rechristening the unit as the "Pioneer Corps." According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term "Pioneers" was first used in eighteenth-century warfare to refer to "one of an advance party of soldiers," whose task in western armies was "clearing and making roads." Such European military units built and cleared roads and bridges for advancing armies in battles. They traveled ahead of the main body of the army preparing the way for it to move smoothly. In the context of Kenya, the name "Pioneers" was well chosen because it accurately described the work that the proposed unit would engage in during the war without provoking trepidation among potential recruits, or alerting them to the real intention of the government in forming the military unit.

African fears and concerns also compelled members of the Nyanza Manpower Subcommittee to propose to the governmentto create a small labor unit that would be expanded gradually as the number of recruits increased, and the conditions within the colony demanded. They called this unit the "nucleus unit," a corps, or CADRE. They advised the government to attach the unit to the government's Public Works Department as a temporary measure; during peacetime, the African members of the unit would be deployed into labor-related work within the province; during wartime, they would be fully mobilized and deployed into the war-front. They pointed out the numerous advantages and possibilities in starting off the project with a smaller labor corps. First, a small labor corps would be manageable and sustainable financially during peacetime. Second, attached to the Public Works Department, the unit would enable the government to develop much needed infrastructure while awaiting further orders. Third, geared and ready for deployment, the unit would enable the colony to deploy men into the army efficiently and effectively on a short notice.[50] In short, such a labor unit would enable the colonial administration to maintain control over the recruitment, supply, and deployment of the allegedly abundant labor supply where it was

needed within the empire without jeopardizing the needs of the government and European settlers in the Kenya colony.

Apart from advising the government to respond to African concerns and fears by changing the name of the proposed labor unit to "Pioneer Corps," and starting it off by creating a small nucleus unit, , the Nyanza Manpower Subcommittee also counseled the government to offer attractive terms of service to those willing to join the proposed Pioneer Corps. They advised the government to eligible recruits, first, a basic pay equivalent to that of Public Works Department; second, a pay increase of Kshs. 2 upon deployment outside the province; and third, and, most importantly, an assurance that they would not be forced to work as "porters, donkey boys or cattle drivers as part of their ordinary duties."[51] As part of the assurances that the pioneers would not be used as porters during military service, the committee also suggested to the government to form a non-mechanized transport corps whose primary duty would be carrying "military loads" during the war. In fact, the committee even felt that the government should just go ahead and start arming the pioneers as part of its effort at assuring them that it was serious about protecting them from the humiliation of serving as porters during military service. In a letter dated March, 1939, Fazan, for example, asked the colonial administration to assure the recruits that "the Pioneer Corps will not carry loads as part of their regular duties and that they will in fact be auxiliary troops who would receive some training and at least some proportion of whom would be armed."[52] The committee believed that if the government promised African labor recruits that they would not be used as porters, and that they would be issued with rifles in the Pioneer Corps, "they would come forward for that readily enough."[53]

In March 1939, the Nyanza Manpower Subcommittee submitted its report on the establishment of the Pioneers, and the non-mechanized transport corps to the Chairman of the Kenya Manpower Committee, and the Defence Committee.[54] The report captured and addressed most of the issues that the committee believed could affect African enlistment into the proposed labor unit. It shows how African worries and concerns were actually influencing the trajectory of the labor unit even before it came off the ground. On 14/15 April, 1939, the Manpower Committee and the Defence Council unanimously resolved to establish a rudimentary nucleus of the Pioneer Corps in Nyanza. During peace time, the nucleus unit of the Pioneers was to consist of 1,000 men (down from the proposed 3,000 men); during wartime, it was expected to expand to a force of 5,000 men in Nyanza, and 10,000 in Kenya as a whole.[55] Other populous provinces such as Central Province were therefore required to establish "peace time nuclei in similar proportion to the quota required from them in wartime."[56] After its formation, the nucleus labor unit of the Pioneers camped about three and a half miles beyond Ahero near Kisumu in Nyanza Province. Constructing roads, while training and preparing for military service,

the labor unit continued to undergo change as it waited for deployment into military service. Largely reliant on the Luo of Nyanza for its manpower, this is the labor unit that came to be known as "The Pioneer Corps"[57] or locally as *Panyako*.

How African Concerns Influenced the Evolution of the Pioneer Corps

As colonial authorities laid down the structures of the Pioneer Corps, they found themselves continuing to address and alleviate African anxieties and fears towards the Pioneer Corps, leading to its further evolution. When, for example, the Nyanza provincial administration officials launched recruitment drives for the Pioneer Corps by drawing up a list of names of potential recruits and organizing agents to go to the villages to look for them, they quickly realized that their plan could backfire in the face of African concerns and anxieties. They nervously rescinded the plan because:

> if we make a provisional list of names and warn the persons listed we shall simply start a pack of rumors and nervousness all over the reserve. Whatever we may say everybody will think he is down for the carrier corps and many of the persons listed would immediately seek the shelter of other work as far away from the reserve as possible.[58]

Thus, instead of drawing up a list of the potential recruits and asking them to report for duty, the administration changed tactics by sending out "old and trustworthy Africans" to the rural villages to convince them to join the proposed Pioneer Corps unit. These recruitment agents were well-known and respectable old men who could be trusted to convince youngsters in the villages to join the new unit.[59]

Yet, in spite of all these preparations, the enlistment of men into the Pioneer Corps generally remained sluggish. Part of the reason for this lethargic enlistment of Africans into the nucleus Pioneer Corps was the way some of the local recruiters treated those joining the Corps. Some of the colonial administrators and African recruiters did not seem to follow the recommendations of the Nyanza Manpower Subcommittee on the handling of the recruits' concerns and problems, and therefore tended to treat them like laborers of the old Carrier Corps of World War I. In fact, some European colonial officials treated the recruits as if they would be permanent members

"of the Public Works Department ... with officers, foremen, and gangers."[60] Some officials even referred to the recruits as "gangs" rather than recruits. Consequently, potential African recruits remained suspicious of the nucleus Pioneer Corps even as the colonial administration in general went to great lengths to allay their anxieties and concerns. When recruiting agents went to the villages on recruitment mission in June 1939, for example, they found potential recruits wary of the exercise. Although they managed to convince some 180 men to join the Pioneer Corps, their effort amounted to very little in the end because the majority of the recruits fled "when they heard the terms"[61] of their recruitment. Out of 180 men, only about 70 elected to remain. The government reacted to these African anxieties by introducing new and better terms of service in the Pioneer Corps. It introduced new terms to address African concerns, and entice them to join the labor corps—this again shows how Africans were influencing the evolution of the Pioneer Corps.

One of the new terms that the government introduced to boost African enlistment into the nucleus Pioneer Corps was in the form of a pledge that eligible members of the Pioneer Corps would not be prevented from changing military units and joining reputable units such as the KAR during military service. In fact, the government promised the pioneers that they would be given first preference whenever opportunities opened up in the more popular KAR. The administration promised the pioneers that joining the Pioneer Corps would be temporary and would "not spoil their chances of getting into the KAR."[62] They urged the pioneers to consider their service in the Pioneer Corps as a mere stepping stone into the KAR and other better units. Under these improved terms of service, the Pioneer Corps continued to grow. Recruits started feeling secure under government assurances that the Pioneer Corps was going to be different from the much-feared labor corps of previous military expeditions. By the end of the first week of June 1939, the number of recruits at Ahero increased from 70 to 80, and by 31 July 1939, the number of recruits stood at 350. As the government continued to address African fears during recruitment, and engaged in vigorous recruitment drives in response to the deteriorating international relations, the Ahero camp gradually expanded and the number of recruits increased.

In fact, local people started turning out for recruitment into the Pioneer Corps in large numbers, many of them believing that the Pioneer Corps would be a stepping stone into reputable units such as the KAR where they would earn better pay, carry rifles, fight like "real soldiers," and enjoy high status back at home. They therefore started responding enthusiastically to government call for duty in the Pioneer Corps. When Major. E. H. Tapson of the 2nd Battalion went on a recruitment drive on 26 August, 1939, local people heeded his call and "join[ed] in large numbers."[63] When the recruiters went out on recruitment missions, they found that "volunteers had already begun to

arrive in numbers."[64] "The response of the natives," according to the colonial administration, was "truly amazing."[65] According to some reports, the large turnout even overwhelmed available accommodation at Ahero and the government resorted to provisional measures to deal with a large number of recruits. Temporary corrugated iron tents were constructed to accommodate the recruits."[66] A ginnery at Kibos was transformed into a "forward depot for recruits who had passed the doctor, keeping the Kisumu Labor Camp as a depot for recruits still awaiting examination."[67]

Due to spirited government recruitment drives in response to the presence of Italians in Ethiopia and the deteriorating geo-political climate in Europe, the number of pioneer recruits at the Ahero Camp rose from 350 on 31 July, 1939 to 1,900 by 1 September, 1939. Some of these men were immediately sent to Nairobi, while others were retained at Ahero where they continued to receive training while awaiting orders for deployment into the war. It was around this time that they went on strike.

The Pioneers Go on Strike at Ahero, and Nairobi

Admittedly, it is no longer easy to reconstruct with any precision the events that led to disturbances among the pioneers at Ahero, and Nairobi. Apart from the amount of time that has elapsed since the strikes, many of the soldiers who served in the Pioneer Corps and, perhaps, participated in the strikes, have died. The best currently available sources are archival documents that largely consist of colonial accounts of the strike. But while on the surface these accounts may appear biased towards the colonial perception of the events around the pioneer strike, on a closer inspection, they reveal a surprising wealth of information that seem to agree to a great extent with the few extant oral accounts of the strike. The reports by the Nyanza Provincial Commissioner are particularly useful in helping to reconstruct the events surrounding the strike.

What emerges from these accounts is that by August 1939, tension had escalated between European countries, and the World War II was about to begin. In response to the worsening international political climate, the colonial government in Nairobi appealed for recruits to come out in large numbers to help it in the looming war. More relevantly for this paper, the colonial government appealed to military and civilian officials in Nyanza to urgently increase the number of its Ahero pioneer recruits to 2,350 by September, 1939. The government also directed that 150 of those Ahero recruits should be sent to Nairobi immediately to help create a nucleus of a new pioneer corps for men from Central Province, and other parts of Kenya.

Within a short time of receiving this directive, military and civilian authorities in Nyanza vigorously swung into action and, as we have already seen, the number of recruits at Ahero Camp quickly rose from 350 at the end of July, 1939 to 1900 by the beginning of September, 1939. The robust recruitment drives however came at a huge cost to the length and quality of training of recruits. As the officials quickly recruited and transported their recruits from Ahero to Nairobi in readiness for the war, they failed to give them proper training. In fact, the officials considerably reduced the duration and amount of training of the Ahero recruits from the regular six [6] weeks to three [3] weeks, and sometimes even less. With such a short period of training, the pioneers arrived in Nairobi to a very cold reception by the military because they struck the military headquarters as "poorly trained." In the words of Fazan, when the first batch of Pioneer recruits from Ahero arrived in Nairobi for urgent duty in the first few days of the war, they were "not very satisfactory."[68] Their training disjointed and lower than the level required, some of the pioneers were ordered back to Ahero, where, in due course, they arrived in a state that officers who received them described as "crestfallen."[69]

The "poor status" of the hastily recruited pioneers appeared to put the whole project of deploying the Pioneer Corps into the war in jeopardy. Doubts about the Pioneer Corps' future were exacerbated when the Italians failed to join the war on the Axis side at the beginning of the World War II as had been expected. Government officials who just a few days earlier were feverishly begging for men for military service no longer considered their service such a high priority. Their indifference, and, in some cases, cold attitude towards the pioneers eventually set the stage for the pioneers to go on strike at Ahero, and Nairobi. For example, when the returning, poorly trained pioneers arrived at Ahero, the government went ahead and re-attached them to the Public Works Department where they were expected to continue constructing roads and bridges. This was a huge shock to the pioneers who expected to be treated differently from ordinary laborers. Having been taken to Nairobi and then back to Ahero in Nyanza, it is not surprising that the pioneers reportedly became "unfriendly." They complained about being treated like an ordinary labor force attached to the Public Works Department. Cpl. Rambalo Hanyore who joined the 2nd Pioneer Corps at Ukwala, Siaya District, in September 1939, remembers the problems at Ahero very distinctly. According to him, the pioneers at Ahero went on strike because "*ne wadagi ni ok wanyal payo ndara ... man ok en tij waskar ... mano tij jo-apida* [we refused to build roads anymore because that it is not the work of a soldier; that is the work of the Public Works Department]."[70] Apart from refusing to construct roads and carry loads, the pioneers also demanded a higher pay than that of Public Works Department. When they heard, for example, that 300 recruits who had been rejected on medical grounds and had instead been transported to work for the Public

Works Department in Mombasa at a higher wage of Kshs. 16/- and Kshs. 4/- for posho [maize meal], terms that were better than theirs, "the incident rankled" them[71] The complaints among the pioneers quickly degenerated into a strike, and, according to Raphael Obare Makang'ienda, the disgruntled pioneers started chanting "Kisumo," "Kisumo," as they marched to present their grievances to government officials based in Kisumu, the headquarter of the provincial administration in Nyanza Province.[72]

The government response to the pioneer strike at Ahero was very brutal. Raphael Obare Makangienda remembers that during the strike, "Bwana Pero" [W.A. Perreau, the District Commissioner of Central Kavirondo in Kisumu] led government officials in ferrying the strikers back to Ahero Camp where they gave them several lashes.[73] Cpl. Rambalo Hanyore also remembers military officials subjecting the pioneers to constant corporal punishment:

> *Kane itimo makosa, del e pieri. Ka imiel marach ... del e pieri. Gimoro amora matin, del a pieri* [if you made any mistake you would be caned on the butt. If you marched badly, you would be caned on the butt. Any little wrong thing would lead to a can on the butt].[74]

Indeed, strict military discipline at the Ahero camp became too much, and recruits like Okumu Aulo and Oyaga Ogola would later flee the Pioneer Corps Camp.[75]

Meanwhile, the pioneers who were transferred to Nairobi in September, 1939 did not fare any better than those who were at Ahero. Since their services no longer seemed to be urgently needed by the military, their interest and welfare were also not being taken seriously by government officials in Nairobi. They were not treated like real soldiers, and were not even placed under the direct command of military officers. They were not given the additional Kshs. 2 they expected to receive per month in their salaries upon deployment outside Nyanza. They were not provided with rifles as promised during recruitment. Compounding their humiliation, their camp was built right next to the Public Works Department labor camp in Nairobi, an act that suggested to them that they were not any different from the ordinary African laborers working for the Public Works Department. In the words of Fazan, "when they [the pioneers] arrived [in Nairobi], they were not used for the purpose specified, were not put under a Pioneer Officer or any N.C.O. [Non-Commissioned Officer] except an African Corporal, were not given any drill, were accommodated in a camp opposite the P.W.D [Public Works Department] and used in no way differently from P.W. D. laborers."[76]

The discontent, tumult, and commotion among the pioneers in Nairobi worried many colonial officials particularly in Nyanza province because they could easily disrupt government plans of using the Pioneer Corps to manage movement of African labor in colonial Kenya during the war, and even jeopardize the colonial officials' personal and professional careers in the civil service. Evidence of this can be gleaned from several correspondences that Fazan engaged in with other colonial officials in a bid to address the pioneers' grievances during the first weeks of September 1939. When Fazan, for example, heard that the government was refusing to arm the pioneers based in Nairobi he immediately wrote to Lt. Col. Bishop at Military Headquarters in Nairobi, and urged him to impress upon the army to issue the pioneers with rifles because the "Pioneer Corps elsewhere are armed."[77] He argued in another letter, this time to the Chief Secretary of Kenya, that steps needed to be taken to prevent the Pioneer Corps from becoming just another Carrier Corps.[78] When Fazan heard that the government was deploying the pioneers into labor chores like carrying loads, and refusing to arm them, he urged it to stop the move, pointing out that "that there was no suggestion by me that the labor [sic] would be used as carriers but I agreed that in the event of a road being bad, the labor [sic] would be required to push the lorries through or if necessary unload and carry the contents of the lorries for a short distance—this only in an emergency."[79] While the reasons for Fazan' campaign on behalf of the pioneers may not necessarily be clear, it is highly doubtful that it was not provoked at least in part by the pioneers' strikes and protests. After all, the majority of the pioneers came from a province he headed since 1936. They were recruited into the Pioneer Corps and given many promises by him and his fellow colonial administrators, and their complaints during the strike appear to have genuinely touched him. Moreover, it appears also that Fazan may have realized that if the pioneers' constant and continuous complaints and protests were not attended to urgently, they could easily derailed his own reputation and career in the colonial service since he was one of the officials involved in the creation of the Pioneer Corps. Put differently, the pioneers' complaints and protests had, for different reasons, compelled Fazan and other colonial officials like him to come out and begin attending to their grievances. Through complaints and protests, they had forced Fazan to give voice to their demands and complaints during their military service.

Indeed, Fazan even started crusading for the transformation of the Pioneer Corps into a fully-fledged military unit and the pioneers into full-time combatants in the hope that this would earn them the right to bear arms, and protect them from being employed by the government as ordinary laborers, thereby addressing many of the key grievances of the pioneers. Hoping to prevent the pioneers' complaints in Nairobi from deteriorating further like it did at Ahero, Fazan campaigned incessantly with the Government, the War

Office, and local Military Administration for the adoption of the Pioneers as a military unit in equal ranks with the other units as the only way of protecting their status and welfare.[80]

Eventually, Fazan's campaign within the government and the military compelled other government officials to take up the campaign to transform the Pioneer Corps into a formal corps within the military. A letter from the Secretariat, for example, informed Fazan that there were people in the administration who sympathized with his effort. "I begged for the recognition of the Corps as a military unit," one writer informed Fazan, "and I think I have won as telegrams have at once been sent both by the G.O.C. [General Officer Commanding] and His Excellency."[81] Another letter alerted Fazan that the G.O.C. "appreciates the excellent work which you and the officers responsible for its formation have put in ... seeking recognition from the War Office of the formation of the Pioneers, and if this is obtained, their standing should be assured."[82] Even the Governor of the Colony, no less, "spoke warmly of your [Fazan's] zeal and enthusiasm which has brought the corps into being."[83] The pioneers were clearly on the verge of becoming "real soldiers," as most of them had wanted, and their labor corps was on the verge of becoming an official military unit. By 13 September, 1939, Fazan was informing Mr. C.O. Oates, the Senior Agricultural Officer in charge of Nyanza Province, that "I have strong hopes that formal recognition as a military unit will be accorded them shortly."[84] Five days later, on 18 September, 1939, Fazan sent a letter to the Officers Commanding, First and Second Battalions, the Pioneer Corps, congratulating them "on the occasion of the gazettement of the Pioneers corps as a military unit."[85] The Pioneers were henceforth classified as "combatants,"[86] and were grouped into battalions of 250 combatants by the military. Their unit joined other units that were being formed by the military to serve in World War II.

Yet, although the Pioneer Corps had now been converted into an official combat unit, and the pioneers into formal combatants, the pioneers did not feel that this resolved their immediate grievances in any tangible way. The pioneers did not get the Kshs. 2 per month increase in their pay as they demanded. Their camp was not transferred from its location adjacent to the Public Works Department Camp in Nairobi. More importantly, they were not issued with rifles, their key demand.

Consequently, on 18 September, 1939, the same day that Fazan was writing letters congratulating Officers Commanding the First and Second Battalions of the Pioneer Corps on the "occasion of the gazzettement of the Pioneer Corps into an official combat unit," the pioneers demanded an assurance from the government that they would be given a pay increase of

Kshs. 2 per month as promised during recruitment, and that they would not be treated like laborers working for the P.W.D. They also demanded to be issued with rifles as promised during recruitment. What followed next is not clear, but it appears that when the government stubbornly refused to budge to their demands, the pioneers became belligerent. They confronted their officers and pointed out to them that:

> you told us that we are just as much *askaris* as the KAR because the KAR cannot fight unless they have roads for lorries to take their supplies to them. Surely then, if we have to make the roads, we shall be in front of the troops and be slaughtered like women unless we are armed.[87]

The pioneers then went on strike immediately after this confrontation. In the words of Fazan, the men went on strike "on the 18th day saying they understood they would be armed"[88] when they enlisted for military service.

The military officials responded to the pioneer strike by dismissing what they called "a few malcontents"[89] from the Pioneer Corps, but their action did not intimidate the pioneers. The strike continued. After five days, the military officials climbed down, and made a major concession to the striking pioneers by promising them that if they went back to work, "their complaint would be referred [to the government]."[90] It was only then that the pioneers resumed work "in something like their old form and spirits."[91] A few days after going back to work, the pioneers achieved a significant victory in their campaign for a dignified service when the government promised to provide "one quarter of them"[92] with firearms during military service. Moreover, the pioneers also managed to earn another important concession that touched on their desire for respectable military service. They were promised by the government that all of them would be trained in the use of firearms so that when their turn to use them came, they would be able to use them without problems. The pioneers had therefore managed to wring out huge concession from the government in their bid for respect and prestige during military service. Although only 25% of the pioneers were going to be given firearms outright, all of them would be taught and trained how to use firearms by the government. These concessions seemed to convince the pioneers to believe that eventually all of them would enjoy the prestige and honor of carrying and using firearms during military service. Toward the end of 1939, the government also awarded the pioneers a pay increase.[93] Thus, through their own protests and strikes and support by colonial officials like S.H. Fazan, the Pioneer Corps earned a pay increase, the right to be trained in the use of firearms, the arming of 25 percent of them during military service, and the designation of their unit into an official military unit, ready for deployment into the war.

The Departure and Deployment of the Pioneer Corps Into Combat

Although the Italian government remained neutral at the beginning of the Second World War, the Kenyan colonial government decided not to take any chances with its security. It remained vigilant by deploying its military along its borders, especially its Northern Frontier District border with Italian Somali land and Ethiopia. Consequently, the newly classified combatants in the Pioneer Corps, along with soldiers from other military units, were deployed to the North Eastern Frontier District to monitor the movements and activities of the Italian government. By 11 November, 1939, the combatants left Nyanza for what S. H. Fazan described as "a more active field." Now officially considered as combatants, the pioneers joined other military units in the field with pride and knowledge that their status was not any different from other military units serving in the war. Their departure for "a more active field," Fazan later

confessed, made "me feel lonely without them.'[94] On 13 November, a company of the 2nd Battalion left for the field. On 29 November, the remainder of the two battalions left and "are now 'somewhere in Kenya,' taking with them the good wishes of the provinces."[95] The vigilance of the Kenya colony was vindicated when the Italians officially abandoned their neutrality and joined the war on the Axis side in June 1940. The entry of the Italians into the war officially brought the war into East Africa, and the Pioneer Corps were activated along with other units for military service in Italian Somali land and Ethiopia. The pioneers now began seeing active combat. Deployed against the Italian forces in Somaliland and Ethiopia, the pioneers' main responsibility was clearing paths and building roads and bridges for their soldiers to pass through. They provided support to the troops.

By all accounts, the pioneers deported themselves well during the East African campaign that lasted from June 1940 to June 1941. They did not consider themselves junior and their role inferior to other soldiers in the war. They conducted themselves with distinction because they believed that they were "just as much *askaris* as the KAR because the KAR cannot fight unless they have roads for lorries [trucks] to take their supplies to them."[96] They gave as much support as they could because they considered their role critical to the mission of the Allied forces in East Africa and other parts of the world. The next question, then, is this: what was the experience of the Pioneer Corps in combat? That is the question that will be explored in the next article.

Conclusion

This article examined the experience and role of ordinary African pioneers in making their military service in the Pioneer Corps during World War II tolerable, humane, and dignified. The article showed that, when the colonial government created the Pioneer Corps, it expected Africans to serve in it uncritically and without asking questions. But, as the article clearly demonstrates, that is not what happened. Instead of submitting and serving passively like automatons, the pioneers took on the colonial government, constantly asked questions about their military service, and organized strikes to demand better terms of service during World War II. The pioneers were very actively involved in defining their roles and welfare in the Pioneer Corps during the war. Their protests and campaigns generated change that made their service tolerable, dignified, and meaningful, and, eventually influenced the evolution of the Pioneer Corps during the World War II. Their experiences and activities during the war are a poignant reminder to scholars, policy makers, and the ordinary people themselves of the power of ordinary people to bring about change in their societies, and make their lives tolerable, dignified, and meaningful.

Notes

1. The term *askari* is Kiswahili for a "policeman" or a "soldier"
2. Complaints of the Pioneers as quoted by S. H. Fazan, Nyanza Provincial Commissioner, "The Pioneers: A Memorandum on Certain Points Outstanding, 25 September, 1939," Kenya National Archive, Nairobi (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
3. Fazan to Chief Secretary, Confidential Letter, 22 January, 1940 (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
4. Ibid.
5. S.H. Fazan, "The Pioneer Corps," 22 January 1940 (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
6. One of the most comprehensive books on African colonial resistance to date is: Adu A. Boahen (ed.), *General History of Africa: Vol. 7: Africa Under colonial Domination, 1880-1935* (London: UNESCO, 1985). Others are Gregory Maddox (ed.), *Colonialism and Nationalism in Africa: Conquest and Resistance in Africa* (New York: Garland, 1993); Michael Crowder, *West African Resistance: The Military Response to Colonial Occupation* (London: Hutchinson and Co. Ltd., 1971). On Kenya, there are studies such as: John Lamphear, *The Scattering Time: Turkana Response to Colonial Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); A.T. Matson, *Nandi Resistance to*

British Rule 1890-1906 (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1972); Cynthia Brantley, *The Giriama and Colonial Resistance in Kenya, 1800-1920* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981). With respect to Western Kenya, one can also look at: James R. Dealing, "Politics in Wanga Kingdom, c. 1650-1914," I-III (Unpublished PhD thesis, Northwestern University, 1974); Bethwell A. Ogot, *History of the Southern Luo: I: Migration and Settlement* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967); Gideon S. Were, *A History of the Abaluhya, 1500-1930* (Nairobi: East African Publishing House, 1967); Charles W. Hobley, *Kenya from Chartered Company to Crown Colony* (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1970); Bethwell A. Ogot, "British Administration in the Central Nyanza District of Kenya, 1900-1960," *Journal of African History*, 4, 2 (1963): 249-73; John M. Lonsdale, "A Political History of Nyanza,1883-1945" (Unpublished PhD thesis, Cambridge University, 1964). See also: John Lonsdale, , "The Politics of Conquest: The British in Western Kenya, 1894-1908," *Historical Journal*, 20, 4 (Dec. 1977): 841-70; and Cynthia Hoeller-Fatton, *Women of Fire and Spirit: History, Faith, and Gender in Roho Religion in Western Kenya* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

7. Myron Echenberg, *Colonial Conscripts: The Tirailleurs Senegalais in French West Africa, 1857-1960* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1991; Timothy H. Parsons, *The Rank-and-File: Social Implications of African Military Service in the King's African Rifles, 1902-1964* (Oxford: James Currey, 1999); Timothy H. Parsons, "'Wakamba Warriors were Soldiers of the Queen:' The Evolution of the Kamba as a Martial Race, 1890-1970," *Ethnohisory*, 46, 4 (1999): 671-701; Timothy H. Parsons, "'Kibra is our Blood:' The Sudanese Military Legacy in Nairobi's Kibera Location, 1902-1968," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 30, 1 (1997): 87-122; Timothy H. Parsons, "'Dangerous Education?' The Army as School in Colonial East Africa," *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 28, 1 (January, 2000): 112-34; David Killingray, "The Idea of a British Imperial Army," *Journal of African History*, 20, 3 (1979): 421-36; David Killingray,"'The Rod of the Empire:' The Debate over Corporal Punishment in the British African Colonial Forces, 1888-1946." *Journal of African History*, 35, 2 (1994): 201-16.

8. Joe Lunn, , *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War (*Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 1999); Hew Strachan, *The First World War in Africa* (Oxford: Oxford University

Press, 2004); Geoffrey Hodges,, *The Carrier Corps: Military Labor forces in the East African Campaigns, 1914-1918* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1986); Charles Miller, *Battle for the Bundu* (New York: MacMillan Publishing Company, 1974); Melvin E. Page, (ed.), *Africa and the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

9. David Anderson, and David Throup, "Africans and Agricultural Production in Colonial Kenya: The Myth of the War as a Watershed," *Journal of African History*, 26, 4 (1985): 327-45; Myron Echenberg, "Tragedy at Thiaroye: The Senegalese Soldiers' Uprising of 1944," in Peter C. W. Gutkind, Robin Cohen, and Jean Copans, (eds.) *African Labor History* (London: Sage Publications, 1978), pp. 109-128; Myron Echenberg,, "'Mouts pour la France:' The African Soldier in France during the Second World War," *Journal of African History*, 26, 4 (1985): 363-80; Frank Furedi, "The Demobilized African Soldier and the Blow to White Prestige," in David Killingray and David Omissi (eds.) *Guardians of the Empire: The Armed Forces of the Colonial Powers, c. 1700-1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 179-97; David Killingray and Richard Rathbone, (eds.), *Africa and the Second World War* (London: MacMillan, 1986); John Lonsdale, "The Depression and the Second World War in the Transformation of Kenya," in David Killingray and Richard Rathbone (eds.) *Africa and the Second World War* (London: MacMillan, 1986), pp. 97-142; Ian Spencer, "Settler dominance, Agricultural Production and the Second World War in Kenya," *Journal of African History*, 21, 4 (1980): 497-514; Paul T. Zeleza, "Kenya and the Second World War," in William R. Ochieng' (ed) *A Modern History of Kenya, 1895-1980* (Nairobi: Evans Brothers, 1989), pp. 144-72. See also: Ashley Jackson, *Botswana 1939-1945: An African Country at War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Nancy E. Lawler, *Soldiers of Misfortune: Ivoirien Tirailleurs* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio university Press, 1997); Kate Morris, *British Techniques of Public Relations and Propaganda for Mobilizing East and Central Africa During the World War II* (New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 2000); O. J. E. Shiroya, *Kenya and World War: African Soldiers in the European War* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1985); Lt. Col. H. Moyse-Bartlett, , *The Kings' African Rifles: A Study in the Military History of East and Central Africa, 1890-1945* (Aldershot: Gale and Polden Ltd., 1956).

10. See: David Killingray, "Labour Exploitation for Military Campaigns in British Colonial Africa, 1870-1945," *Journal of Contemporary History*, 24, 3 (July, 1989): 483-501; David Johnson, *World War II*

and the Scramble for Labor in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1939-1948 (Harare, Zimbabwe: University of Zimbabwe, 2000). See also: Geoffrey Hodges, *The Carrier Corps: Military Labor in the East African Campaign*; and Joe Lunn, *Memoirs of the Maelstrom: A Senegalese Oral History of the First World War*. These studies are not enough. More needs to be done. As one can see from their titles, the last two works deal with the First World War, rather than the Second World War. An examination of the experience of the pioneers in their Pioneer Corps is thus still needed.

11. See: Timothy H. Parsons, *The African Rank-and-File: Social Implications of African Military Service in the Kings' African Rifles, 1902-1964*, p. 70-91
12. This is an increasingly popular genre in scholarship. See, for example: Eric Remarque's work, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982) comes to mind among such works. Gerald Linderman's *Embattled Courage: The Experience of Combat in the American Civil War* (New York: Free Press, 1987) also blazed the trail for works dealing with the experience of ordinary soldiers in combat. The publication of these works have stimulated scholars to pay attention to the role of ordinary African soldiers in colonial armies and colonial wars, and works by scholars like Parsons are among the latest on the academic scene.
13. Michael Blundell, *A Love Affair with the Sun: A Memoir of Seventy Years in Kenya* (Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers, 1994).
14. Interview with Cpl. Thomas Alfred Oluoch Odawa, Siaya, 12 January 2001.
15. See: Ian Spencer "Settler dominance"
16. The Chairman of the Kenya Manpower Committee also doubled as the Chief Native Commissioner.
17. S. H. Fazan to the Chairman of Man Power Committee, 21 March, 1939, (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
18. S. H. Fazan, "A Memorandum on Military Recruitment, 5 May, 1941," (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/67 (Recruitment of Africans for the Military).
19. S. H. Fazan Memorandum entitled "Labor Corps," (KNA: PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
20. Timothy Parsons, *The African Rank-and-File: Social Implications of African Military Service in the Kings' African Rifles, 1902-1964*, p. 53-103. See also: Timothy Parsons, "'Wakamba Warriors."
21. S. H. Fazan, "East African Pioneer Corps: Memorandum on the cost

of Training a nucleus in Peace Time," (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42). The Kavirondo, a term originally coined for the Luo, meaning a people who sit or squat on their heels, was later appropriated by colonial authorities for administrative units within the Luo and Abaluhya areas of settlement. Hence: Central and South Kavirondo for the Luo, and North Kavirondo for the Abaluhya administrative areas.

22. S. H. Fazan Memorandum entitled "Labor Corps," (KNA: PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
23. Ibid.
24. "Memorandum on the War Effort by Natives of the Nyanza Province," (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/61 (History of War, 1939-48).
25. S. H. Fazan, "Supplementary Notes to Memorandum dated 11 May, 1941, on the Subject of Military Recruitment," (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/67 (Recruitment of Africans for the Military).
26. "The Pioneers: A Memorandum," 14 September, 1939, (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
27. Timothy Parsons, *The African Rank-and-File: Social Implications of African Military Service in the Kings' African Rifles, 1902-1964*, p. 56
28. Interview with Okola Omolo, Siaya, 5 December, 2000.
29. Timothy Parsons, *The African Rank-and-File: Social Implications of African Military Service in the Kings' African Rifles, 1902-1964*
30. Johannes Ochanda Ameny joined the Pioneer Corps on 2 September, 1939. After the disbandment of the Pioneer Corps, he was transferred to the East African Engineers Corps where he served until 31 August, 1945. I interviewed Johannes Ameny in Siaya on 29 November 2000.
31. Interview with Alex Ochieng' Onyango, Siaya , 24 January, 2001.
32. Interview with Alfred Juma Bunde, Siaya , 18 December, 2000.
33. Interview with Cpl. Thomas Alfred Oluoch Odawa.
34. *Ibid.*
35. *Ibid.*
36. R. H. Kakembo, *An African Soldier Speaks* (London: Edinburgh House Press, 1946), 7
37. O.J.E. Shiroya, *Kenya and World War II: Africans in European War* (Nairobi: Kenya Literature Bureau, 1985), 1
38. Interview with Maura Oyiro, Siaya, 5 December 2000.
39. Interview with Cpl. Rambalo Hanyore, 2 January, 2001.
40. Interview with Maura Oyiro.
41. "The Pioneers: A Memorandum," 14 September, 1939,(KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
42. Timothy Parsons, *The African Rank-and-File: Social Implications of*

African Military Service in the Kings' African Rifles, 1902-1964, p. 75

43. The misery of African veterans of the Carrier Corps was ably captured by Geoffrey Hodges in his book, *The Carrier Corps*. African service in the Carrier Corps during World War I was characterized by suffering and death from negligence, starvation, exhaustion, and diseases.
44. S. H. Fazan, "The Pioneers: A Memorandum on Certain Points Outstanding 25 September, 1939," (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
45. *Ibid.*
46. *Ibid.*
47. *Ibid.*
48. *Ibid.*
49. S. H. Fazan's letter, 6 July, 1939, (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
50. S.H. Fazan, Confidential Memorandum Regarding the Pioneers, 11 September 1939 (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42)
51. *Ibid.*
52. S. H. Fazan's letter, 6 July, 1939, (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
53. *Ibid.*
54. "The Pioneer Corps: Historical Record—Preliminary Recruitment and Training," 6 March, 1940, (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/61 (History of War, 1939-48).
55 S. H. Fazan, "East African Pioneer Corps: Memorandum on the Cost of Training a Nucleus in Peace Time," (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
56. *Ibid.*
57. S. H. Fazan to the Chairman of Man Power Committee, 21 March, 1939, (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
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61. S.H. Fazan's letter to the Chief Secretary, 22 January, 1940 (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (Pioneers, 1939-1942).
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64. Ibid.
65. S. H. Fazan, "The Pioneers: A Memorandum," 14 September, 1939, (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21(The Pioneers, 1939-42).
66. Report on History of the War, 9 March, 1940, (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/61 (History of War, 1939-48).
67. *Ibid.*
68. "The Pioneer Corps: Historical Record—Preliminary Recruitment and Training," 6 March, 1940, (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/61 (History of War, 1939-48).
69. *Ibid.*
70. Interview with Cpl. Rambalo Hanyore.
71. S. H. Fazan to the General Staff Officer, 7 November, 1939, (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42)
72. Interview with Raphael Obare Makang'ienda, Siaya, 2 January, 2001.
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74. Interview with Cpl. Rambalo Hanyore.
75. District Commissioner, Central Kavirondo to Chief Elija Bonyo, Sakwa, 15 November 1939 (KNA): DC/KSM/1/22/18 (Military Recruitment).
76. S. H. Fazan, "The Pioneers: A Memorandum on Certain Points Outstanding, 25 September, 1939" (KNA): PC/NZA/2/321 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
77. S. H. Fazan to Lt. Col. Bishop, Military Headquarters, 1 September, 1939 (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42),
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82. East African Force Headquarters to S. H. Fazan, 12 September, 1939 (KNA): PC/NZA/2/3/21 (The Pioneers, 1939-42).
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