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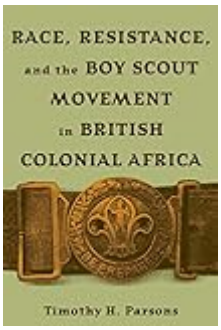

Timothy H. Parsons. *Race, Resistance, and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa.* Athens: Ohio University Press, 2004. Social History/African Studies Series. $26.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8214-1596-2; $59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8214-1595-5.

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Scouting in Colonial Africa

As a former Scout himself, the author of this finely produced book "stumbled" upon its subject while conducting his dissertation research in Kenya during the early 1990s. His interest in the topic was further kindled by the discovery that his African research assistant, almost his own age-mate, had also been a Scout. The importance of Scouting as a theme in modern African history seems to have been underlined by the February 2001 gathering in Nyeri, Kenya, of thousands of Scouts from all over the world to pay homage to Lord Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of the movement. The work on the book took Parsons to "three countries on two continents" (p. xvii). He does not directly identify the countries in question, but one must presume that these were Kenya, South Africa, and Britain as they seem to feature prominently throughout the discussion. At the heart of this study is the argument that the British "colonial regime sponsored Scouting to promote social stability and loyalty to the British Empire"(p. 4). Crucially, however, the author further contends that Africans saw Scouting–and sought to use it–as an instrument of anti-colonial resistance to challenge British imperial control in Africa. Parsons claims, with some justification, that Scouting failed to become "an effective instrument of social control" precisely because the Africans who embraced it had their own agenda. Apparently "very few of them gave their unqualified allegiance to the British Crown" (p. 6). In Anglophone Africa, the author maintains, "Scouting was ... an instrument of colonial authority and a subversive challenge to the legitimacy of the empire" (p. 6). This theme–the somewhat contradictory role played by Scouting in British colonial Africa–runs throughout the entire book.

The work is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1, the introduction, sums up the book's scope and purpose. It further provides a brief but insightful discussion of "Scouting as an analytical tool" in which Parsons elaborates on the argument identified above–that Scouting was not only itself ambivalent, but that it also highlighted the internal contradictions of colonialism by challenging the racial discrimination practiced in certain parts of the Empire. The chapter then describes the way colonialism worked and attempts to show how and why Africans interpreted scouting in their own way and how they tried to "turn the mechanisms of colonialism to their own ends"

(p. 12). In this chapter Parsons also briefly explores the nature of masculinity in African colonial society in the "making of the African boy"(pp. 17-21). Finally, in presenting the "shape of the study" in the last few pages of this chapter, Parsons claims that his work also touches on other areas–Anglophone West Africa, British India, the Belgian Congo, etc.–even though the rather limited material on these territories does not seem to fully support the assertion. (The author insists on writing "Anglophone" with a small "a" throughout).

In chapter 2, the author discusses "Scouting and Schools as Colonial Institutions." Here the reader is treated to what is more an extension of British "imperial history" than internal African history, concerned as Parsons is with issues such as the aims and workings of the Empire, the origins and operation of colonial education in an African context, etc. This section is rounded off with a look at the origins and organization of Scouting, first in Britain in the first two decades of the twentieth century, then in the colonies. The author concludes that colonial administrators hoped that Scouting would help reduce the contradictions between the British colonial project and the doctrine of colonial African education. The examples that Parsons uses here come from Southern and East Africa. While making Scouting available to other Europeans was, in Baden-Powell's view, relatively easy, the same could not be said for doing so with Asians and Africans in a colonial setting. For all this would ensure that the question of race and race relations would arise, as it did eventually, in Southern Africa. Scouting would therefore have to face up to a serious debate about its place in a system where the notion of racial domination had become the ruling group's ideology. Clearly, this was very much the case in South Africa in particular. How would the Scouting movement deal with the contradiction between such an ideology and its own Fourth Scout Law: "A Scout is a friend to all, and a brother to every other Scout, no matter to what country, class or creed, the other may belong"?

This theme is carried over into the third chapter of the book, "Pathfinding in Southern Africa, 1908-45." Here Parsons considers the relevance of what he describes as "adapted Scouting," a modified form of the movement designed for Africans in order to further help "reduce the contradictions in African schooling and limit African activism" (p. 72). Adapted Scouting was also preferred in the British High Commission Territories of Basutoland, Bechuanaland Protectorate, and Swaziland as a more useful evangelical tool than conventional Scouting. Pathfinding became a compromise solution in the face of growing racial segregation in the Union of South Africa itself. It was viewed as an answer to the increasing school crises and cases of juvenile delinquency (including gangsterism), both of which had become very serious problems for South Africa in the 1930s and 1940s. The application of this "solution" was further extended when Baden-Powell proposed the establishment of "parallel" self-governing Scout associations for the European, African, and Asian communities (p. 98). Experimentation with adapted Scouting included the case of Swaziland's King Sobhuza's use of the reconstituted traditional age regimental system, the *emabutfo*, in the 1930s to strengthen his own claim to authority in the colonial period and the introduction of the Natal Pathfinders among the Zulu.

The next two chapters are devoted to East Africa. Chapter 4, "Scouting and the School in East Africa," continues with the discussion of adapted Scouting as well as "adapted education." Though never really explicitly defined, the latter seems to have meant a modified school curriculum tailored specifically to African students; though, again, Parsons never clarifies this. He draws our attention to some of the contrasts between Southern and East Africa but points out that "adapted Scouting was no more palatable to East African students than Pathfinding was to their southern African counterparts" (p. 115). While in South Africa and the Rhodesias, the whites had "forced [the] Scout leaders to keep their territorial associations segregated by race, the Kenyan settlers were not strong enough to influence colonial social policy on a grand scale" (p. 145). In East Africa, therefore, Africans could be admitted into full membership in the Scout movement without compromising the Scout leaders' relationship with the colonial regime.

As the title "Scouting and Independency in East Africa, 1946-64" suggests, chapter 5 focuses on the relationship between Scouting and the phenomenon of "independency"–roughly defined as the emergence of independent schools, especially in Kenya, mainly as a result of the African studentsâ and parents' loss of faith in the colonial school system. In neighboring Uganda, Scouting's role as a tool for social welfare and development gave it added advantages. Furthermore, in Kenya during the emergency following the outbreak of the Mau Mau Revolt, the colonial government attempted to use Scouting as an instrument to counter it. Indeed, Scouting became an integral part of Wamunu, the leading Kenyan Reform School in the rehabilitation of the young ex-Mau Mau detainees between the ages of eight and eighteen. The academic and Scouting success of the reform school

gave it such an outstanding reputation and impressive record that, according to Parsons, some African parents recognized that "the right kind of juvenile delinquency could be the ticket to free high quality education for their children" (p. 174). Not surprisingly, in this period there were several documented cases of the abuse of the Scout credentials by charlatans who tried to use the Scout uniform illegally to collect money from–and sell bogus raffle books to–the public.

In the book's penultimate chapter, the author returns to an examination of Scouting under apartheid in Southern Africa 1945-80. To some extent, this jump from one region to another and back again sometimes causes a rather uncomfortable disruption in the flow of Parsons' narrative. However, he succeeds in maintaining our interest here by highlighting once again not only the contrasts between the two regions but also, in particular, stressing the enormous difficulties that South African Scouting faced as it was caught up in the struggle over apartheid. For, as is well known, the South African Nationalist Party's segregationist policies came under increasing international criticism over the years. As the author rightly argues, however, the Fourth Scout Law was completely at variance with the apartheid philosophy. Clearly, "Scouting's egalitarianism remained a powerful challenge to the legitimacy of white minority rule"(p. 194). The Scouting movement's imperial ties became a big liability for itself especially after the Nationalist Party's rise to power in 1948. How could the movement possibly continue to link itself to "institutions of political authority and social legitimacy" as it had done in the past (p. 197)? The situation was compounded even further by South Africa's increasing ostracization from the 1960s onwards. Her status as a pariah state, dating from the Sharpeville massacre of March 1960 and further complicated by her decision to become a republic and quit the British Commonwealth the following year, created some difficulties for the liberal supporters of African scouting.

The final chapter reviews what happened to Scouting in East Africa in the post-independence years. It also carries the story as close to the present time as possible with respect to Central Africa (Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe) as well as South Africa. Here the author further considers the place of Scouting in the run-up to independence and the final transfer of power, and the impact of independence on Scouting in East Africa. There is a brief discussion of the roles played by the respective leaders of Kenya, Tanganyika, and Uganda–Kenyatta, Nyerere, and Obote–in their policies towards youth in general and Scout associations in particular.

All in all, Parsons has succeeded in showing in this book that although Scouting in Africa began as "an extension of colonial authority" which, it was hoped, would help the colonial administrators, educators and missionaries in their work, the final outcome was not quite what had been expected. It had been anticipated, for example, that Scouting would lead to young African males having "a tacit stake in the British Empire" and that they would therefore support its operation (p. 256). However, the movement's stress on egalitarianism did not always help the colonial endeavor. Independency emerged in opposition to colonial education and there was much disquiet amongst the Africans with Scouting itself.

On the role of race and race relations in shaping Scouting in the areas of Africa he has studied, the author makes a very important contribution to our understanding of how Scouting helped highlight the complexity of the race problem in Southern Africa. He admits that the bulk of the available data on African Scouting under apartheid comes from official sources, but he does show, nevertheless, that it is possible to paint a picture of life for the African Scout under a racist regime. The book also raises important historiographical issues about race and scouting (see especially pp. 231-236). Scattered in various parts of the book there are also references to what the author puts forward as evidence of "resistance" to colonialism. He mentions, for example, instances of protest by African Scouts against the Central African Federation in 1953 and the Scouts' boycotting of Queen Elizabeth's coronation in 1952. Some readers may find that somewhat difficult to accept as evidence of "resistance." By the end of the book, this reviewer was not entirely convinced that the inclusion of the theme of "resistance" in its title had been sufficiently justified. Was Scouting really "a means of contesting colonial and political authority" in pre-independence Africa as Parsons argues? This seems quite debatable. The work shows a very strong command of the literature on British scouting and the bibliography certainly confirms this. However, one would have wished to see the "resistance" aspect of the book's content being linked a little more to the very impressive work of Professor Ranger and others that emerged in the late 1960s and 1970s.

A few minor typographical and factual slip-ups occur in the book: Mfundza Sukati of Swaziland is wrongly written as "Mfudza Sukati" (p. 107), James Stewart is identified as "James Steward," and the Kenyan historian Atieno Odhiambo has become "Otieno Odhiambo"(p.

311). Should the Batawana of Botswana not be written as such rather than "Batwana" (p. 101)? It was also rather strange to see a group called "Teso aristocrats" listed in the company of Ganda, Nyoro, and Nkole [sic] of Uganda when we know that Teso was one of the non-kingdom areas of the country (p. 126).

These small errors do not, however, detract from the book's great value as a most interesting, informative, and welcome study of a subject that has not received much attention from historians of colonial Africa.

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