



Race Resistance and the Boy Scout Movement In British Colonial Africa: In British Colonial Africa

Timothy H. Parsons

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Conceived by General Sir Robert Baden-Powell as a way to reduce class tensions in Edwardian Britain, scouting evolved into an international youth movement. It offered a vision of romantic outdoor life as a cure for disruption caused by industrialization and urbanization. Scouting's global spread was due to its success in attaching itself to institutions of authority. As a result, scouting has become embroiled in controversies in the civil rights struggle in the American South, in nationalist resistance movements in India, and in the contemporary American debate over gay rights.

In Race, Resistance, and the Boy Scout Movement in British Colonial Africa, Timothy Parsons uses scouting as an analytical tool to explore the tensions in colonial society. Introduced by British officials to strengthen their rule, the movement targeted the students, juvenile delinquents, and urban migrants who threatened the social stability of the regime. Yet Africans themselves used scouting to claim the rights of full imperial citizenship. They invoked the Fourth Scout Law, which declared that a scout was a brother to every other scout, to challenge racial discrimination.

Parsons shows that African scouting was both an instrument of colonial authority and a subversive challenge to the legitimacy of the British Empire. His study of African scouting demonstrates the implications and far-reaching consequences of colonial authority in all its guises.

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