

## No More English than the Postal System: The Kenya Boy Scout Movement and the Transfer of Power

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Decolonization in Kenya meant more than the transfer of political power: the end of colonial rule was part of a larger social transformation, where Africans struggled to master and adapt the political and social institutions they inherited from Britain. The attempt by the Kenya Boy Scout movement to successfully navigate the period from 1959 to 1964, when colonial officials, nationalist political leaders, and the common people alike negotiated the meaning of independence, exposes the social tensions inherent in this process. The "Africanization" of Kenyan scouting embodied larger debates—over political economy, education, race relations, and juvenile delinquency—that made this a particularly turbulent period in Kenyan history.

Some people seem to think that Scouting is something which is purely English, but there are actually far more Scouts outside the British Commonwealth than in it. It is true that Scouting was first "invented" in England, but so was the postal system . . . and so were railways. Even your most violently anti-British politician still sends his letter by post, and travels by train. So do not let any silly person try to argue with you against Scouting for this reason. (Batian 1961)

In the years leading up to Kenyan independence, on 12 December 1963, government officials and private members of the European settler community sought to convince African politicians and their constituents to retain key British political and social institutions. Their goal was to preserve British influence. The Boy Scout movement was one of these institutions. In 1960, there were 468 registered Scout troops in Kenya, with approximately ten thousand formally enrolled members (Kenya Boy Scout Association 1960). A small percentage of these scouts were Europeans and Indians, and probably several thousand more belonged to unauthorized and unofficial African-run

troops who went uncounted in the census. As African self-rule drew near, British officials hoped that scouting would survive the transfer of power by retaining, and perhaps even expanding, its ability to mold the "moral development" of African boys and adolescents. This was a semiofficial endeavor, with European teachers, missionaries, businessmen, and settlers taking the lead in trying to preserve the movement. By promoting social stability and teaching British middle-class values, scouting had the potential to bolster their efforts to ensure that the new Kenyan government adopted pro-Western political and economic policies. The European promoters of youth movements like the Boy Scouts and the Girl Guides also sought to retain their informal social and economic influence in postcolonial Kenya by continuing to have a role in defining its moral character.

Created by General Sir Robert Baden-Powell in 1908 to promote social harmony and national fitness in Britain, scouting grew into an international youth movement on the success of its romanticized celebration of outdoor life and woodcraft. Baden-Powell, a celebrated army officer, who became a national hero during the South African War, launched the movement after discovering that his manual on military scouting had a wide readership among British boys. The difficulty defeating the Afrikaners in South Africa exposed a deep national anxiety in Britain, as politicians and military leaders worried that industrialization, urbanization, class tensions, and weakening morals had left British boys unfit to defend the empire (Jeal 1990:400-408; MacDonald 1993:3-4). Along with a series of religiously inspired uniformed youth organizations, known as the Boy's Brigades, which included a Jewish Lad's Brigade, scouting employed military methods in the cause of creating a more capable and patriotic generation of British youth (Springall and Fraser 1983:20-25; Kadish 1995:38-39). Baden-Powell additionally sought to smooth over class divisions in industrial Britain by declaring that although all scouts were brothers, each boy should support the social status quo by being a "brick": "We are very much like bricks in a wall, we have each our place, though it may seem a small one in so big a wall. But if one brick gets rotten, or slips out of place, it begins to throw undue strain on others, cracks appear, and the wall totters" (Powell 1957:267-268). Baden-Powell initially paid no attention to girls, but eventually created the Girl Guides to play a similar "bricklike" role by preparing them to be better wives and citizens (Warren 1990:96-97). With the exception of the semiofficial school-based Cadet Corps, the male movements assured parents that they were teaching morality and self-discipline, rather than training their sons for military service; nevertheless, the question of whether Baden-Powell secretly intended early scouting to produce future soldiers has generated considerable scholarly debate (Rosenthal 1984; Springall 1971, 1987; Warren 1986b).

Questions of the original scout movement's martial dimensions have little relevance for Kenyan scouting because Baden-Powell formally denounced militarism after the horrors of the First World War and explicitly recast his movement as an organization promoting international

brotherhood. Where most of the various rival Boy's Brigades gradually died out during the interwar era, scouting thrived around the world by attaching itself to the institutions of political legitimacy and by promoting conservative social values. In the United States, the movement reinforced conceptions of manliness and masculinity that middle-class men feared were threatened by the women's-rights movement and women's entry into supposedly male professions (Hantover 1978; MacLeod 1982). The British scout leadership began to promote scouting as an international movement in the 1920s and established the International Scout Bureau to register and sanction the emerging national scout associations.

Baden-Powell was particularly interested in exporting scouting to the self-governing dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa, where he hoped to promote unity between Britons, French Canadians, Afrikaners, and the other "white races" of the Empire. In India, however, the British administration opposed opening the movement to Indian boys, on the grounds that Indian nationalist groups might use its organization, respectability, and physical training for political purposes. The government of the Raj granted only grudging sanction to Indian scouting, when British liberals and Indian nationalists threatened to create their own informal troops that would be beyond the control of the British Scout Association (Warren 1986a; Watt 1999).

European colonial officials and missionaries in Africa proved far less ambivalent about the movement. In the 1920s, Baptist missionaries at Yakusu in the Belgian Congo tried to substitute scouting for secret male initiation ceremonies, which they considered morally unacceptable, while Roman Catholic missionary educators sought to use the movement to train "Christian knights," who would assist them in converting the wider African population in the colony (Hunt 1999; van Rompaey 1995). Across the Congo River in Brazzaville, French authorities similarly expected scouting to train a moral African elite that would exert a positive influence on the rest of colonial society. A military doctor and a Roman Catholic youth worker founded the first troop in Brazzaville in 1929, but the colonial military assumed responsibility for organizing scouting in French Equatorial Africa as the Second World War drew closer: young Congolese scouts, however, were largely unmoved by exhortations of French patriotism; most became scouts because they wanted to wear the scout uniform and travel in Europe (Martin 1995).

Baden-Powell never intended scouting to fall under military authority, and his influence in British imperial circles ensured that the movement remained truer to his original vision in Anglophone colonial Africa. Although he was willing to allow Africans to become scouts, in the 1920s his primary goal was for scouting in Africa to smooth over lingering tensions between Britons and Afrikaners in South Africa. Similarly, the governor of Northern Rhodesia viewed scouting exclusively as a means of toughening the sons of European settlers who had become dangerously "soft" by relying on African servants (Ranger 1980).

With Baden-Powell and colonial officials largely indifferent to African scouting, it fell primarily to missionaries and teachers to found the first African scout troops. These authorities, fearing that Western culture and schooling "detribalized" Africans by breaking the bonds of "traditional" discipline and respect for authority, made scouting part of a broader interwar social-welfare initiative to improve the effectiveness of the British system of indirect rule, which theoretically governed the African majority through local institutions of authority. The promoters of scouting sought to preserve and strengthen the integrity of these "tribal societies," which were threatened by the corrosive forces of industrialization, urbanization, and materialism. Missions, education departments, and a growing number of colonial officials viewed the movement as a "retribalizing" force, which would teach young African males to be "tribal" by preserving what they deemed useful and wholesome in local beliefs and customs. They also hoped that scouting would teach young African males to be sexually continent and play their roles as proper husbands within the framework of monogamous Christian marriage. The promoters of scouting focused their efforts primarily on students and urbanized Africans, who were most inclined to challenge their "native authorities" and push the racial and cultural boundaries of colonial society. As a result, mission stations, schools, and social-welfare groups sponsored most of the early African troops. Throughout the colonial era, the movement never acquired a mass following, and remained largely an elite institution. African boys were largely indifferent to the formal agenda of scouting. Most became scouts to acquire the social prestige that came from wearing the uniform, and to enhance their social status by demonstrating their respectability, resourcefulness, and sophistication (Parsons 2004).

It was relatively unproblematic to introduce scouting into most of Britain's African territories, but white officials in South Africa, to ensure that the movement did not run afoul of the South African government's laws on strict racial segregation, insisted that African boys could belong only to a separate scout-type organization, known as the Pathfinders. African boys and their communities bitterly resented this disregard for the Fourth Scout Law, which declared all scouts to be brothers; nevertheless, the Pathfinders and their female counterparts, known as the Wayfarers, attracted roughly twenty thousand members in the interwar era, as South African liberals and missionaries enthusiastically promoted the two movements as a means of providing social services and wholesome recreation to urban youths. Pathfinding may have been a demeaning deviation from the prestige of "official" scouting, but it was still appealing to African boys who saw the movement as means of bridging the racial divide in South Africa and were attracted by its international commitment to universal brotherhood (Gaitskell 1984; Glaser 2000; Parsons 2004; Proctor 2000).

Although colonial Kenya practiced racial discrimination through a semiformal "color bar," scouting in Kenya did not follow the South African segregated model. Scouting in the colony initially lagged well behind the Boy's Brigade, which founded an influential and well-organized company

at the Church of Scotland's Kikuyu mission in 1909 (Kikuyu News 1910). At St. John's Church in Nairobi one year later, the Anglican Men's Society sponsored a European scout troop. As an overseas branch of the British Scout Association, the Kenyan Boy Scout Association (KBSA) was under the authority of Baden-Powell's Imperial Scout Headquarters and entirely in the hands of European teachers, missionaries, and settlers. Initially, Kenyan scout leaders considered that Africans were not sophisticated enough to grasp the ideals of the movement, and it took twenty more years for Alliance High School (AHS) to found Kenya's first recognized African troop. African Guiding in the colony did not begin until the mid-1930s. The AHS troop, known as the 6th Nairobi, initially consisted of forty boys in eight patrols. They progressed in rank much faster than most European scouts, and invariably emerged as one of Kenya's top ranked scout troops in intertroop competitions and rallies (*Batian* 1954, 1957; Alliance High School 1932, 1934; Kenya Girl Guide Association n.d.).

The 6th Nairobi's success reflected that Alliance High School was an elite institution, which drew highly motivated students eager to advance in colonial society by demonstrating their mastery of Western education and culture. Several other kinds of African Scout troops emerged in Kenya during the 1930s. The Jeanes School, which followed a curriculum based on the African-American industrial education of the segregated American South, sponsored several "native" troops, which tried to blend formal scouting with "tribal custom." The Kikuyu independent-school movement, which sought to break the European monopoly on Western schooling and rejected the Jeanes School model, founded its own unauthorized troops without the sanction of the KBSA. Finally, numerous informal troops were begun by enterprising African teachers, churchmen, and community leaders, who took it upon themselves to adapt Baden-Powell's movement to local Kenyan circumstances. On the whole, well-established primary and secondary schools ran the most viable African troops because these were the only institutions with the infrastructure and funding to sponsor a troop. It is impossible to know how many boys belonged to the unsanctioned troops, but in 1938, the KBSA's official census listed 1,636 scouts and rovers in the colony. The vast majority of the scouts were African (Director of Education 1938; Kenya Scout Association 1934, 1936, 1939; Kiambu School Inspector 1938).

Formal Kenyan scouting fell into serious decline during the Second World War, as scout leaders of all races joined the armed forces, but the movement received an enormous boost from the British government's postwar social-welfare initiatives. Seeking to support the reconstruction of Britain and compensate for the pending Indian independence, colonial officials hoped to spur economic growth in their African territories; yet the "native authorities" who played the central role in systems of indirect rule proved to be poor partners in these development initiatives. British administrators and social welfare experts therefore sought to create a new form of modernizing trusteeship, which would build African support for

the colonial regime by improving living conditions while promoting imperial citizenship. In doing so, they emphasized broad community-education initiatives to compensate for the reality that most colonial schools were woefully ill-equipped to produce the new civically-minded progressive Africans. The Colonial Office's 1948 report on "Education for Citizenship" mentioned the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides as nongovernment-organizations that could play central roles in the new social-welfare initiatives (Great Britain, Colonial Office 1948; Lewis 2000).

This official sanction for scouting proved a windfall for colonial African scout associations. For the first time, most received direct government subsidies to expand their reach into rural African communities. In Kenya, the scout authorities used their increased resources to hire full-time professional commissioners to promote and supervise the movement in African communities. By 1949, there were more than three thousand African scouts in recognized troops—a number that would double in just four years (Kenya Colony and Protectorate 1949; Kenya Boy Scout Association 1954). These figures did not include boys in unauthorized troops, and probably several thousand more scouts were in troops run by the Kikuyu independent schools by the close of the 1940s. These scouts would prove to be both a threat and an opportunity for the Kenya Boy Scout Association.

In the early 1950s, simmering tensions over landlessness and social stratification in the Kikuyu community erupted into the violent uprising that the British termed the Mau Mau Emergency. Kikuyu chiefs and other government allies made the European settlers' appropriation of arable land in the central highlands worse by using their wealth and influence to claim most of the remaining land in the already overcrowded Kikuyu reserves. By the end of the Second World War, hundreds of thousands of landless Kikuyu had migrated to Nairobi in search of work, or had become laborers on settler farms. Most slum dwellers and squatters blamed the British for their poverty, but they attacked the Kikuyu chiefs, businessmen, and mission converts who had benefited from the colonial system. Fortifying and unifying themselves with compelling oaths, they created a powerful but loosely structured resistance movement, which fought for social justice in Kikuyuland by lashing out against the Kikuyu allies of the colonial regime. Although the Mau Mau Emergency had elements of a nationalist anticolonial movement, it was ultimately a civil war sparked by social differentiation in the Kikuyu reserves (Lonsdale 1990; Peterson 2004; Throup 1988).

Kikuyu members of formal scout troops, which were mostly sponsored by mission schools, were attacked and murdered by the Mau Mau fighters; conversely, the Kikuyu independent schools and their attached unauthorized scout troops were often active supporters of the rebellion. In 1953, the government took over the independent schools, either to shut them down or to transfer them to the control of local missions and District Education Boards (District Commissioner Kiambu 1952; Kiambu District Education Board 1952); yet by this time, it had become increasingly

obvious that many recognized Kikuyu scouts had taken a Mau Mau oath. Profoundly embarrassed by these "defections," the KBSA held a special rally at Nairobi's well-guarded Rowallan scout camp where 1,500 Kikuyu scouts swore their loyalty to the Kenyan government and the British Empire (*East Africa Standard* 1953).

The Kenyan scout authorities sought primarily to reclaim control of the movement and to demonstrate their usefulness to the Kenyan government. Ironically, the emergency helped expand the institutional and bureaucratic reach of Kenyan scouting by bringing the movement much greater financial and institutional support. Promising to promote imperial loyalty among young Kikuyu, the KBSA won substantial government funding to expand its activities in rural communities. Scout officials established new troops in Mau Mau youth-detention camps to assist in the "rehabilitation" of Kikuyu boys and in eastern Nairobi's community centers to discipline young migrants in the African locations. By 1955, the movement had largely recovered from the shock of the emergency, and counted more than seven thousand African boys as registered scouts (Baring 1955; City Council Kenya 1955; Kenya Scout Association 1952; Nairobi City Council Department of Social Services and Housing 1958; Wamumu Approved School & Youth Camp 1956).

As the decade drew to a close, Kenyan scouting deepened its ties to the colonial regime. The KBSA provided scout training for African teachers and community-development officers, and made plans to help the government defuse labor unrest in Mombasa by creating troops for young dockworkers. For African soldiers' children, it ran a scouting program in the barracks of the King's African Rifles. Finally, scout authorities tried to build support for the colonial regime's multiracial constitutional strategy, which accorded disproportional communal political representation to the settler community on the basis of its greater "civilization," under the guise of its "civics" badge (*Batian* 1960; Dahl 1955; East African Land Forces Standing Orders I/XIII 1957; Kenya Scout Association 1958).

For the most part, the European scout leadership, which came almost exclusively from the settler community, was unaware that Britain was making plans to withdraw from Africa. In the late 1950s, rising African nationalism and international criticism of colonialism as an institution made an African empire an increasing liability. Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's Conservative government therefore calculated that Britain could best realize its strategic and economic goals in Africa by coming to terms with the African nationalists (Cooper 1996). British administrators in Kenya hoped that the new multiracial Lennox-Boyd Constitution of 1958 would buy them time by giving a new generation of African political leaders an increased role in governing the colony; however, the eight elected African members of the Kenyan Legislative Council refused to accept the new constitution's provision for a reconfigured communal representational formula that still guaranteed Europeans a parliamentary majority. The scout

authorities and the settler community at large did not realize it, but the demise of multiracialism as a viable constitutional strategy made African majority rule in Kenya virtually inevitable.

Britain's diminishing strategic interests in Asia, coupled with the expense and bloodshed of the Mau Mau Emergency, convinced the metropolitan British government that it was fruitless to try to restrain African nationalist aspirations by force. Its primary goals in Kenya focused on preserving access to strategic military bases and ports, reassuring foreign investors, and protecting the wealth and safety of the forty-five thousand British citizens who would remain in the former colony after independence. It was therefore vital to ensure that a sympathetic African political elite would inherit the reigns of power in Kenya (Aspin 1964; Chief of Staff Committee 1961; Foreign Office 1962; Throup and Hornsby 1998).

As colonial officials shifted their attention to ensuring an orderly transfer of power to a friendly African-led Kenyan government, they no longer had much use for the scouts' program of imperial citizenship. They therefore cut their aid to the movement, and the KBSA's annual government subsidy dropped from ten thousand to four thousand pounds between 1957 and 1962 (District Commissioner Kakamega 1957; Ministry of Social Services 1962). Alarmed by this loss of official support, the scout leadership scrambled to adapt to the shifting political terrain. They muted their commitment to imperial civics, and offered scouting as a partial solution to the failure of the colonial school system and the problem of the rootless younger generation of Africans who could not support themselves through agriculture or paid employment.

During this period, there were essentially three main categories of young males between the approximate ages of ten and twenty: full-time students, farmers and herdsmen, and those who had minimal access to land or schooling. The last troop included former Mau Mau detainees, urban delinquents ("spivs"), and wanderers who lacked the means or inclination to seek their fortunes in the countryside. A postwar baby boom, land-consolidation programs that awarded Kikuyu "loyalists" the land of Mau Mau fighters and oathtakers, and the increasing commercialization of agriculture, severely restricted the carrying capacity of rural economies (Ogot 1995). The colony had an explosive population growth rate of 2.5 percent per year, and African schools could accommodate only about one-quarter of the roughly four million children under the age of twenty-one in 1962. Only 3,415 of these enrolled students reached the first year of secondary school (Griffin 1963; Stabler 1969); many boys and young men, regardless of their educational qualifications, rejected agricultural labor in favor of well-paying jobs they expected to find in the cities of post-colonial Kenya.

By the early 1960s, the colonial regime faced a serious "youth problem," which threatened to undermine British plans for an orderly transfer of power. The Kenyan economy could not begin to absorb the growing numbers of young people who hoped to survive outside the agricultural sector. In the late 1950s, Nairobi experienced a crime wave that local officials blamed on youth gangs and the thousands of young people who visited the city from nearby African reserves each evening. In 1957 alone, the municipal government forcibly returned five thousand "child vagrants" to the neighboring Kiambu District. Government studies warned ominously that with one hundred thousand Mau Mau detainees scheduled for release in 1960 and approximately 150,000 men in Nairobi already unemployed, there was little chance of finding work for the one hundred thousand students expected to leave school each year in the runup to independence. The Nairobi Stock Exchange dropped rapidly with the release of Mau Mau detainees, and more than fifty companies left the colony between 1960 and 1961. By 1963, labor experts calculated that they could find paying jobs for only 7 percent of the population (*Africa Digest* 1962; Colonial Office 1957a, 1957b, 1960; Minister for Labour and Social Services 1963; Rennison 1960; Youth Organization 1960a).

Although the movement's official standing was on the wane, British authorities still hoped to use scouting to assist in an orderly transfer of power by occupying and disciplining these dangerously rootless young males. The Boy Scouts still had a place in a strategy that sought to use the Girl Guides and state-sponsored coeducational youth clubs to buy the government time to deal with the youth problem. Agricultural, labor, and youth experts in the colony hoped that land-consolidation schemes intended to create a class of prosperous African commercial farmers would eventually produce enough agricultural jobs to keep greater numbers of young people in the countryside (Development of Youth Clubs 1957).

Scout authorities were in no position to make good on their promise to help solve the colony's youth problem. The movement remained almost entirely school-based, as the troops for juvenile delinquents, dockworkers, urban migrants, and other marginalized young people failed to hold the interest of nonschool boys. Some needy scouts had no choice but to buy food with the money they had raised for scout activities. Poor boys could not afford the KBSA's annual fifty-cent subscription fee, much less the basic uniform, consisting of a shirt, shorts, belt, scarf, and badges, which cost more than thirty shillings (Kenya Boy Scout Association 1955a; Kiambu Local Association 1955). Denied access to formal schooling and the promise of viable social mobility, they saw little point in accepting the movements' demanding code of conduct.

European scout leaders made matters worse by failing to uphold the spirit of the Fourth Scout Law. Brigadier General Sir Geoffrey Rhodes, the Chief Scout Commissioner, defended Kenyan scouting's all-European leadership on the grounds that African scouts had not yet acquired the discipline and "efficiency" to hold senior positions of authority. Although the KBSA held carefully orchestrated "interracial" rallies and jamborees, Kenyan scouting remained strictly segregated at the local level. Former African scouts from this period recall that they rarely interacted with their fellow European scouts, beyond a quick handshake on a parade ground. Many European scout leaders continued to cling stubbornly to the failing

political doctrine of multiracialism, and rejected the efforts of a few scoutmasters to apply the Fourth Scout Law to individual troops (District Commissioner Kakamega 1955; Megson 1956; Nyaga 1998; Nyagah 1998).

Furthermore, the European scout authorities lacked the financial resources, manpower, and linguistic proficiency to supervise rural African scouting. As a result, African teachers and community leaders seeking to appropriate the privileges and respectability associated with the movement continued to form unauthorized troops, which often escaped the notice of the KBSA. The scout leadership's efforts to be as vigilant as possible to prevent Mau Mau from "reinfecting" Kikuyu scouting meant that it was relatively easy to begin an informal scout troop in other parts of Kenya. Sometimes con men used illegally acquired uniforms and membership cards to collect money from an unsuspecting public in the name of scout fundraising; in other cases, imposters claimed to be scouts to get jobs or to circumvent post–Mau Mau travel restrictions that made it difficult for young Africans to move about the colony in search of employment (District Commissioner Kakamega 1959; Kenya Scout Association 1957; Kiambu Local Association 1958; Rhodes 1955).

The movement's limitations therefore convinced government officials to shift their social-welfare resources to programs that seemed better equipped to address the youth problem. Geoffrey Griffin, the Colony Youth Organiser, won official support for an ambitious plan to create rural youth clubs throughout central and western Kenya. He was the founder and director of the Mau Mau youth rehabilitation camp at Wamumu and an active scoutmaster, but he recognized that scouting was too schoolbound and limited in membership to reach sufficient numbers of rural children. Griffin's clubs followed a scout-type curriculum, with simple uniforms and badges, but included boys and girls in a program that stressed useful agricultural and handicraft skills. Some clubs paid a small stipend to ensure consistent attendance—which, by the end of 1958, enabled Griffin to draw more than eleven thousand members, half of them paid (Griffin 1958, 2000; Kenya Colony and Protectorate 1959; Youth Organization 1960b). Scout officials recognized that money for the youth clubs would most certainly cut into their funding, but had little success in derailing Griffin's plan.

Although this official support for the youth clubs was troubling, Kenyan scouting faced its greatest challenge in 1961, when the government released Jomo Kenyatta from detention. With the demise of multiracialism, the Colonial Office set Kenya on the path to independence by holding elections for a transitional African-led government. In 1963, Kenyatta's Kenya African National Union (KANU) bested the British-backed Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU). Local British officials accepted the reality of the situation and worked to insulate Kenyatta from left-leaning politicians within KANU—men like Oginga Odinga and Paul Ngei, who demanded the reallocation of land and property and favored an autonomous nonaligned foreign policy. Security officers were certain that Odinga received communist funding, and were particularly worried that landless squatters and

angry unemployed young people might provide him with the backing he needed to displace Kenyatta (Colonial Office 1963a; Director of Internal Security 1962; Foreign Office 1962).

Seeking to ensure that the new Kenyan state would be pro-Western, British officials worked to strengthen Kenyatta and address the youth problem. KANU politicians, however, were profoundly suspicious of colonial-era institutions that appeared to preserve elements of the color bar and threatened to nationalize European schools that tried to remain segregated. Scouting and Guiding were therefore under considerable pressure as British rule in Kenya drew to a close. Kenyan scout leaders had spent the 1950s strengthening their alliance with the colonial regime, and Britain's seemingly sudden decision to withdraw from Africa caught them by surprise. The political terrain shifted under their feet, and scouting's intimate connection with British colonialism now became a distinct liability. The movement's ties to political legitimacy and social respectability that had made it so appealing in colonial Africa were now uncertain.

These new realities had a direct impact on membership levels. African boys who had formerly embraced the movement to demand full access to civil society by establishing their mastery of Western values now openly questioned the value of such an overtly imperial institution. Many dropped out or transferred their loyalty to the youth wings of political parties that promised their members jobs and positions of authority. By 1963, KANU youth wingers began acting as self-appointed policemen and judges while collecting money for their "services." More ominously, intelligence officers reported that the Kikuyu leaders of a section of the KANU Youth Wing in Kiambu were planning to form a new military organization to replace the Kenyan Army under the leadership of former Mau Mau generals (Colonial Office 1963a, 1963b; Subversive Activity Among the Kikuyu 1963). The youth wingers disdained rival groups, and often attacked uniformed scouts as government stooges. Although precise enrollment figures are not available, it appears that formal African membership in the KBSA dropped from ten to three thousand between 1959 and 1963 (District Commissioner Kakamega 1960; Kenya Scout Association 1960; Rhodes 1961b).

The blurred lines of political authority in the waning days of the colonial era produced a growing uncertainty over what to make of the Boy Scout movement in many local African communities. Rural scoutmasters found that many African parents now refused to let their boys join the movement because they considered it too expensive and impractical. In a case that troubled the scout authorities even more, one W. L. Mwavua had to quit scouting when he was on the verge of earning his Queen's Scout Badge, the highest rank in scouting, because his family no longer saw any value in the movement. Some parents believed that the scouts were a government department, an exploitative labor service, or a military institution that trained future soldiers. Leftist KANU politicians like Odinga gave credence to these suspicions by openly criticizing the movement as imperialistic (Area Commissioner 1962; Kenya Scout Association 1962; Mwavua 1962).

These incidents did not mean that scouting was no longer appealing to young Kenyans: rather, they demonstrate that the movement had lost its monopoly on political legitimacy.

In fact, many African boys continued to embrace scouting based on unrealistically positive misconceptions of the movement. Some believed that the KBSA was indeed a government department and bombarded Scout officials with desperate requests for jobs and scholarships. Typical Scouts like Stephan Tomasi Muliro asked to study scouting as a correspondence course, while Eliphaz Mputhia Manene, another average Scout, applied for a vacancy in the "Scout business." Even registered scouts seemed willfully ignorant of the voluntary nature of the movement; Peter Leo Omurunga recruited new members for his 58th Kakamega troop with the promise that they could keep most of the money they collected while fundraising: "It is good for the more you bring in, the more you receive. So you see how selfsupporting you can be in this movement." Given these misconceptions, it is not surprising that con men continued to masquerade as scouts, and the Kenya Police arrested scores of uniformed imposters for illegally collecting money from unsuspecting members of the public, who continued to view the movement as a charitable institution (Kenya Scout Association 1964a; Manene 1959; Muliro 1961; Omurunga 1963-1964; Rhodes 1955).

These charlatans were successful because scouting continued to command a large measure of respect, despite its treatment by KANU politicians and youth wingers. In some localities, the movement became embroiled in politics, as ambitious politicians tried to trade on its respectability. Less radical candidates played up their scout credentials in their campaigns because in many rural communities, which had never even seen European scouts, people did not see scouting as an explicitly British institution. Although the KBSA's origins were unquestionably imperial, many people who were impressed by uniformed scouts and their "good turns" in the community equated the movement with local conceptions of respectability, self-discipline, and service that were independent of colonial interpretations of scouting. In other words, scouting could be detached from its imperial roots. This flexibility would help the Scouts survive in the postcolonial era.

In the short term, African scouts and scoutmasters ignored the KBSA's strict ban on political activity by wearing their uniforms to campaign rallies. The details of these incidents are sketchy, but it is likely that many were KADU supporters who saw the movement as a valuable counterweight to KANU's more radical platform. The KBSA tried to extricate scouting from these potentially damaging political entanglements by declaring that while scouts were loyal to "legally constituted authority," it was "necessary to distinguish between [the] country's leaders in their official positions and in their capacity as leaders of political parties. In this latter capacity[,] . . . we cannot, as Scouts, give any support to any one particular Party, in opposition to another, whether it happens to be in power or not" (Kenya Boy Scout Association 1963a).

The leaders of the metropolitan British Scout Association (BSA), which oversaw the KBSA, being aware of these developments, concluded that the best way to deal with these political tensions and local misconceptions of the movement was to "Africanize" the colonial scout associations as quickly as possible. John Thurman, the BSA's Gilwell Camp Chief, invoked Macmillan's winds-of-change speech, declaring Britain's intention to withdraw from Africa with his own warning: "The 'Wind of Change' is reaching gale force in Africa as a whole[,] and somehow we must make sure that Scouting is not blown off the continent" (Thurman 1960). The British scout authorities therefore formed a "Committee on Africa" to devise a plan for convincing the new generation of African political leaders to retain scouting as an institution without modifying its core values. The committee, which first met in July 1962, issued a set of guidelines that allowed the new African scout associations to create their own nationalistic badges, regulations, and symbols of political legitimacy, but sharply prohibited any tinkering with the "basic aims and principles of Scouting" (British Scout Association 1962).

European scout leaders in Kenya initially resisted the BSA's directives on Africanization and independence. Brigadier General Rhodes, the Kenyan Chief Scout Commissioner, openly opposed the shift to African majority rule in Kenya: "Democracy only works in England. How could it work here?" Claiming that Kenyan scouting was "colour blind," Rhodes argued that Africanization meant lowering scout standards; he insisted that Europeans dominated the KBSA simply because of their "education and character" (Rhodes 1961a; Thurman 1960). Taking their lead from Rhodes, many European scouters continued to cling to the KBSA's version of multiracialism. They turned Africans away from troops at European schools, and some extremist settler scoutmasters threatened to register their troops as independent "British Groups Abroad" if Africans took over the Kenya association. More progressive European scouters warned that these sentiments would either provoke Africans into forming their own breakaway movement or convince Kenyatta to replace scouting with a national youth movement when he came to power. Metropolitan British scout leaders were equally unsympathetic to Rhodes' protestations, and the BSA's traveling commissioner frankly declared: "If after 50 years of Scouting in Kenya we still haven't produced people of the right calibre, there is something wrong somewhere" (Colchester 1961; Kenya Boy Scout Association 1961; Lemon 1962; Ramsay 1960).

The BSA's prodding, coupled with KANU political pressure, forced the Kenyan scout leaders to confront the realities of decolonization. In 1961, they created a "Forward Planning Committee," consisting of sympathetic African Legislative Council members, Nairobi aldermen, church leaders, and scout commissioners, to plan for a new national Kenyan scout association. They drew up a new set of rules and regulations, which dropped references to the queen and tested scouts on the new nation's flag and anthem. In 1963, the KBSA began a concerted public relations campaign to convince Africans that scouting was a national institution that trained young men to "be useful citizens in the Kenya of the future" (Kenya Scout Association 1963a, 1963b). European scout leaders even swallowed their pride and asked Kenyatta to serve as their ceremonial Chief Scout after independence. The irony of this request was not lost on Kenyatta. In the span of a few years, settler scouters had gone from demonizing him as the sinister anti-Christian leader of the Mau Mau to pleading with him to give the movement a measure of national legitimacy. He politely rebuffed the scouts, and eventually passed the post to his vice president, Daniel arap Moi (District Commissioner 1963; Kenya Boy Scout Association 1963b).

Kenya became an independent nation on 11 December 1963. The KBSA dissolved itself as a branch of the British Scout Association at midnight, and emerged reborn as the national Kenya Scout Association (KSA). At a rally presided over by Kenyatta and the Duke of Edinburgh at Nairobi's Uhuru Stadium, a European and an Asian Scout escorted a "colour-party" of African Scouts and Girl Guides to receive their new national and scout flags. The scouts presented a play demonstrating the meaning of the Scout Law. To some degree, these changes were cosmetic. Africans now formally led the KSA, but Europeans still ran the association. Although it is tempting to view the continued European administration of Kenyan scouting in the short term as a form of neocolonialism, Africans did acquire real control of the KSA by taking over the important senior positions in the movement. These were men like Jeremiah Nyaga and Musa Amalemba, who had once been members of Alliance High School's 6th Nairobi troop, and now held high positions in the new government. They relied on Europeans to run the KSA's daily operations because they did not have the time or personal wealth to become fulltime scouters.

Although Kenyatta kept the movement at arm's length, like most new African rulers he recognized that scouting was part of the formal trapping of a sovereign national state; however, he was unwilling to give the scouts a share of his social-welfare resources. The KSA therefore faced a sharp decline in government funding and remained a largely schoolbound movement. Although the new African scout leadership recast the movement as an instrument of nation-building and economic development, it was still in no position to make a significant contribution to solving the youth problem that Kenyatta and KANU had inherited from their colonial predecessors.

In the short term, independence exacerbated Kenya's problem of occupying the tens of thousands of children and adolescents, who still remained outside the school system. Democratically elected national leaders could not retain colonial-era controls on residence and movement, and the electoral promises of social betterment that Kenyatta and his allies had made raised popular expectations for an immediate and tangible increase in the national standard of living, yet Kenya's export-based neomercantile economy was entirely unequipped to provide the revenues needed to make good on these expectations. The hopes that most young Kenyans entertained for better

jobs and schooling were bound to be dashed, and the youth crisis posed an immediate political threat to Kenyatta's new government. KANU's youth wingers were a particular problem. Although they had proved useful in intimidating the KADU opposition, they became a dangerous liability after independence by demanding jobs and privileges as compensation for their service in the anticolonial struggle (Coe 1973).

Scouting, as a de-facto scholastic voluntary movement, could do little to alleviate this problem. Bypassing the senior scout leadership, Kenyatta tapped Geoffrey Griffin, the ex-Colony Youth Organiser, to lead the Kenya National Youth Service (NYS). Like scouting, the NYS was a uniformed movement, but it was a paramilitary organization that used military-style discipline to give three thousand young men and women paid training in agriculture and other development skills, and it fed suitable recruits into the new Kenyan armed forces. Griffin contracted with the scouts to run leadership training courses for NYS section commanders, but scouting had little to contribute to the overall enterprise (Griffin 2000; Kenya Scout Association 1964a; Tanganyika Standard 1964).

Thus in 1964, it might have appeared that the movement was becoming increasingly irrelevant, yet the Kenya Scout Association's official membership numbers soon surpassed the high-water mark set by its colonial predecessor in the 1950s. In 1966, Kenyan Scouting counted 13,365 registered scouts and cubs. These were poor boys, and the KSA received 70 percent of its funding from public sources and donations (Gathu 1967; Kenya Scout Association 1966a). Scouting survived for several reasons. Kenyatta eventually gave it a measure of official support because he recognized that it could play a useful role in teaching loyalty to his regime. At the local level, schoolboys returned to the movement because it adapted successfully to new political and social realities. This was the genius of Baden-Powell's original vision for the movement. He declared that a scout was loyal and obedient to those in authority, but he intentionally avoided linking scouting to a particular political ideology or regime. In colonial times, the movement fostered imperial citizenship, but after independence, it could just as easily promote loyalty to the nationalist Kenyan state. The new Kenyan scouting still taught the integrity, sophistication, and self-respect that made it popular under the colonial regime, but now these values promoted national, rather than imperial, loyalties. The Kenyan Scout Association made only a small direct contribution to solving independent Kenya's youth problems, but it has successfully reinvented itself as a force for national and economic development by offering programs in literacy, good hygiene, and vocational training.

To young Kenyans, decolonization meant more than the simple transfer of political power. The end of colonial rule was part of a larger social transformation, in which African youths and their elders struggled to master and adapt the political and social institutions they had inherited from Britain. The Kenyan Boy Scout movement's attempt to navigate the transfer of power took place against the backdrop of a much larger struggle by colonial officials, nationalist political leaders, and common people, to negotiate the meaning of independence. Central to these debates was the "youth problem," which exposed the inherent tensions arising from high expectations for postcolonial prosperity and competing conceptions of the new Kenyan nation. Questions of how to "Africanize" Kenyan scouting thus embodied broader debates—over political economy, education, race relations, and juvenile delinquency—that made this a particularly turbulent period in Kenyan history.

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