

## Boys to Men: Robert Baden-Powell and the Boy Scout Movement

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When Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell was born in February 1857, the British Empire was in its heyday. In May of that same year, the British imperial fist crushed an uprising of Indian troops in the service of the British East India Company, in what was known as the Sepoy Mutiny, epitomizing the harsh nature of colonial rule. Being a patriot in this era, although uncontroversial at the time, has taken on new meaning over the years, since being patriotic as a citizen of empire demanded the support and celebration of the colonialist ideals that are, today, widely condemned. In creating a movement that appeared to perpetuate this very brand of nationalism, Baden-Powell, the founder of the Boy Scouts, fashioned a sort of historical bull's eye on his back. Not surprisingly, those like Baden-Powell who stood out as heroes in imperialist Britain came to be seen as standard bearers for the Empire and its sins. The Scout Movement and Baden-Powell have therefore lent themselves to somewhat polarized interpretations, primarily due to Baden-Powell's own past and the evolving historical context of those evaluating him. Seen in his own time as an exponent of moral virtue and altruism, his legacy has been deeply tarnished by post-colonial attitudes that regard him as the ultimate champion of classist, racist, and subordinating propaganda. A modern consideration of the man and the movement, however, demonstrates that neither extreme is warranted, but that he was most likely a well-intentioned product of his society and his movement was essentially a benign effort at community building and democratization, albeit in a militaristic discourse.

By joining the army in 1876, Robert Baden-Powell was set on a course that would shape his life, career, and legacy.<sup>1</sup> While his military career took him across continents to various edges of the Empire, it peaked at a "... small British military outpost ..." called Mafeking in North Western South Africa.<sup>2</sup> Sent by the commanding officer to lead a seemingly misguided show of British force near Pretoria, Baden-Powell found himself situated at "... Ramathlabama in Bechuanaland conveniently close to the town of Mafeking,

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Jeal, *Baden-Powell*, (London: Hutchinson, 1989), 44.

<sup>2</sup> "Mafikeng," *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. (Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2015), Web. 28 Apr. 2015

<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/356368/Mafikeng>>.

which he already feared would be attacked as soon as war was declared” in mid-August.<sup>3</sup> Shortly thereafter, he “... received warnings ... that the Boers were planning an incendiary attack on his stores at Mafeking”.<sup>4</sup> This catalyzed a cycle of Baden-Powell sending more troops to guard the ever-increasing store of supplies, the supplies attracting more Boer troops, and Baden-Powell ordering a further increased guard of the stores. This escalating chain of events culminated on October 14, 1899,<sup>5</sup> when the Boers officially laid siege to the outpost and the British soldiers within. Over the course of the seven-month siege, it was Baden-Powell’s capacity as commanding officer to keep morale high, through “... performances and [his admirable] organizing abilities ...” that would earn him the respect of Britons at home and the title of hero when, at long last, the siege was broken.<sup>6</sup> The military victory was, in itself, significant and was compounded, argues historian Tim Jeal, by the fact “... that [Baden-Powell] was also a talented and unusual man.”<sup>7</sup> His presence at Mafeking cast Baden-Powell as a hero in the national consciousness for the rest of his days.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, the victory at Mafeking conferred an immense amount of influence upon Baden-Powell, influence that he would redirect to the nascent Boy Scout Movement.

Indeed, it was the renown garnered by his leadership at Mafeking that led Baden-Powell to first become involved with youth organizations and to eventually start his own. In 1900, Baden-Powell was approached by a group of Cheshire choirboys who “... asked him to be the patron of their non-smoking association.” He communicated with the boys somewhat regularly through letters urging them to do “... one good turn ...” each day.<sup>9</sup> Although his role in the choirboys’ association was not nearly as active as the one he came to hold in the coming years, it made him realize, Jeal claims, “... how effectively his name could be exploited to promote an organization...”<sup>10</sup> In the couple of years that followed, Baden-Powell gave numerous speeches to schoolteachers and schoolchildren alike, in South Africa as well as in Britain.<sup>11</sup> As time went on, his speaking engagements became more numerous, his message more finely-tuned. Then, on January 15, 1908, the first installment of *Scouting for Boys* appeared on British bookshelves.<sup>12</sup> In the eyes of its author,

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<sup>3</sup> Jeal, 218.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 219.

<sup>5</sup> "The Siege of Mafeking," *British Battles*, Web. 28 Apr. 2015.  
<<http://www.britishbattles.com/great-boer-war/mafeking.htm>>.

<sup>6</sup> Jeal, 286.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 303.

<sup>8</sup> Robert H. MacDonald, *Sons of the Empire: The Frontier and the Boy Scout Movement, 1890-1918* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press Incorporated, 1993), 95.

<sup>9</sup> Jeal, 362-363. It is worth noting that this phrase evolved into a key piece of the Scouting ethic, the Scout Slogan “Do a good turn daily.”

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> Jeal, 390.

historian Michael Rosenthal asserts, *Scouting for Boys* was not merely one of many elements that, together, comprised a movement. Rather, he clarifies, "... it was very decidedly the sacred text of the brotherhood ... the handbook *is* the movement, defining the total universe of the Scouts, its priorities, practices, and principles."<sup>13</sup> In fact, it was the only aspect of the movement that could compete with Baden-Powell himself in importance, since he was woven into the very fabric of the Boy Scouts. The motto of the Boy Scouts, "be prepared," was, said Baden-Powell outright, "... founded on my initials..."<sup>14</sup> In this example it is hard to avoid seeing how centrally embedded Baden-Powell was in the culture of the organization. He did not merely lead the movement; he *was* the movement.

Baden-Powell, then, wielded an astonishing amount of personal influence at a time when the prevailing social values were incongruent with ours today. Thus, the movement's influence has led to a thorough evaluation by historians. In the process, both the man and the movement have received their fair share of unforgiving criticism. Most common is the claim that the Boy Scout Movement was merely a propagandist tool, working to promote the agenda of an immoral empire. The most often cited evidence supporting this claim stems from Baden-Powell's military history. Having served in both India and South Africa, he was at the very heart of British Imperialism, where colonial jingoism and the values it promoted were strongest.<sup>15</sup> Jeal recounts, "... within days of his arrival [to Lucknow, India,] Baden-Powell was thoroughly reassured by his brother officers' habitual condescension towards all Indians."<sup>16</sup> A young, impressionable man himself at the time, Baden-Powell's alleged characterization of the subjugation of the colonized as "reassuring," worries the contemporary historian when examining the agenda he later passed on to other young, impressionable men. In fact, Rosenthal argues, not only was Baden-Powell comforted by the military mores of his day, he also prioritized them as his own values. "For Baden-Powell," he writes, "the soldier, more than any other human type, embodied the fullest range of essential virtues."<sup>17</sup> Thus, it might be argued that, even if the movement only intended to shape a new generation of good citizens, those citizens would be inherently militaristic if their model of a virtuous citizen was a soldier.

Perhaps more incriminating were the links to particular individuals within military organizations that were nurtured by Baden-Powell when the movement was in its nascent stages. Over the course of 1905 and 1906,

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<sup>13</sup> Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement*, (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 161.

<sup>14</sup> Rosenthal, 163.

<sup>15</sup> Lord Rowallan, "Baden-Powell and the Boy Scouts." *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* (106.5017 1957), 28.

<sup>16</sup> Jeal, 47.

<sup>17</sup> Rosenthal, 196.

Baden-Powell met and developed a close relationship with R. B. Haldane, the new Secretary of State for War.<sup>18</sup> Beyond his friendship with the Boy Scout's founder, it was well known that Haldane "... believed that the future of his Territorials would depend upon the quantity and the patriotism of the boys now joining cadet corps or religious brigades."<sup>19</sup> It is hard not to imagine that in their meetings Haldane sought to point Baden-Powell towards a similar larger purpose for his budding organization. The extent to which Haldane achieved this goal remains matter of speculation, but his involvement in the early stages has fueled much skepticism in historians who portray Baden-Powell as an imperialist indoctrinator. Haldane's later actions do not help his cause, as he was also in close contact with the board of the Boys' Empire League, an organization centered on the bulletin *Boys of the Empire*, "... arguably the most jingoistic of all the juvenile periodicals ..." around the turn of the century.<sup>20</sup> He even toyed with the idea of altering the organization's name from "Boy Scouts" to "the Imperial Scouts."<sup>21</sup> Unsurprisingly, historians favor these final details when arguing the militaristic nature and purpose of the Boy Scout Movement.

Since, as Rosenthal claims, *Scouting for Boys* is not merely a handbook but the soul of the Boy Scout Movement, much of the evidence offered to support Baden-Powell's imperialist motives can be derived from the book itself. Those sections of *Scouting for Boys* that deal with patriotism and preparedness are most laden with details that hint at the inculcation of its readers with military and imperialist ideals. Part I, Scoutcraft, instructs the scout leader to start his scouts' training by recounting "Camp Fire Yarn No. 1: Mafeking Boy Scouts," which, Baden-Powell writes, is "... an example of how useful Boy Scouts can be on active service ... [and] shows you how you must be prepared for what is *possible*, not only what is *probable* in war ..."<sup>22</sup> In short, *Scouting for Boys* opens with the explicit assumption of war as the setting for its implementation. A new scout's first impression of Boy Scouts would be one of boys engaged in "active service," prepared, not for the possibility of war, but for what is possible *in* war. War itself is a given. In the same anecdote, Baden-Powell goes on to equate preparedness with being "... accustomed to obey orders ...," demonstrating his equation of the epitome of virtue with the attributes of a soldier.<sup>23</sup> Most famously, Baden-Powell begins his section on "Scout's Work" with the following:

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<sup>18</sup> Jeal, 372.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 373.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 367.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 368.

<sup>22</sup> Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys: A Handbook for Instruction in Good Citizenship*, Ed. Elleke Boehmer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 10.

<sup>23</sup> Baden-Powell, *Scouting for Boys*, 12.

I suppose every British boy wants to help his country in some way or other. There is a way, by which he can do so easily, and that is by becoming a scout.<sup>24</sup>

In using “suppose,” Baden-Powell implies that all *truly* British boys ought to want to help their country. Furthermore, he implies that the only effective way to help one’s country is through military service. He goes on to acknowledge and explicate the militaristic origins of his terminology: “A scout, as you know, is generally a soldier who is chosen for his cleverness and pluck to go out in front of an army in war to find out where the enemy are, and report to the commander all about them.”<sup>25</sup> From this association, it is clear that Baden-Powell’s definition of patriotism – “help[ing] one’s country” -- is deeply entwined with ideas of military service.

In addition, it quickly becomes clear that, at the time, there was a deep-seated fear of the possible repercussions of a lack of British patriotism. As Baden-Powell highlights patriotism as one of the key attributes of a Scout,<sup>26</sup> he notes also that “... people say that we have no patriotism nowadays, and that therefore our empire will fall to pieces like the great Roman Empire...”<sup>27</sup> He goes on to almost threaten that, if boys do not “... keep the good of [their] country in [their] eyes above everything else ... there is a very great danger, because we have many enemies abroad ...”<sup>28</sup> Once again, Baden-Powell’s concept of patriotism is based almost completely on one’s willingness to participate in the active defense of, or fight for, their nation. He reaffirms this association in “Chapter IX: Patriotism” blaming the fall of Rome on Romans’ lack of patriotism and love of country which, in turn, destined them to fail militarily and, ultimately, fall.<sup>29</sup> Rosenthal focuses Baden-Powell’s equation of patriotism, moral worth, and action in the face of threat to home soil. Scouts are defined, he claims, by “... their usefulness in times of war ... the notion of the Scout as a serviceable citizen trained to follow orders in wartime is at the heart of Scouting.”<sup>30</sup> He goes one step further, tying the Scout’s motto, “be prepared,” to the presumption of war. Peacetime, he argues, would not merit such a motto. Rather, it is “... in a world of threats and ambushes ... with enemies hovering everywhere ready to attack...” where a motto of “be prepared” would be appropriate.<sup>31</sup> Thus, Robert MacDonald

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 278.

<sup>30</sup> Rosenthal, 162.

<sup>31</sup> Rosenthal, 193.

contends, "... [the] handbook was correctly understood ... to be the work of a general who was worried about the next war."<sup>32</sup>

It is not hard, then, to read militaristic meaning into Baden-Powell's seemingly simple call to be an upstanding citizen. This controversial equation of military readiness with civic virtue is compounded by claims that the Movement garnered support from and promoted those privileged social structures and institutions that played a key role in perpetuating imperialism. Arguably Baden-Powell's most explicit attempt to tap into entrenched privilege was the appeal that he made by letter to the editor of the Eton College *Chronicle* on December 19, 1906. Eton College, a secondary school, historically educates the sons of "... England's wealthiest and most prestigious families ..."<sup>33</sup> It is, in short, the institutional heart of class privilege. In his letter, he urges each Etonian to "... get together ... a squad of (say) ten boys in his village or town, just as the Knights of old used to get together their ... retainers and [train] them to patriotism and use of arms."<sup>34</sup> With this, Baden-Powell appeals to the elite as just that, urging them to help him train those in the lower strata of society. Born to lead, they were tasked with training those who were, just as certainly, born to dutifully follow. Furthermore, the purpose of these modern-day knights gathering their "clumps of retainers" was, clearly "... to help defend the country by force of arms against the threat of invasion."<sup>35</sup> Baden-Powell's appeal to Eton College is, then, offered as proof of both the movement's alleged militarism as well as its classism. In turn, Rosenthal points out, in appealing to the most privileged of boys to be troop leaders, Baden-Powell's character mold, in the form of the Boy Scout Movement, "... took as its model the finely tuned artifact of ... the public school, which supplied England with its norms of gentility and its necessary complement of leaders and statesmen."<sup>36</sup> Unsurprisingly, the values of the public school boy, namely "... a narrow patriotism [and] ... discipline ...," echo the heralded virtues of the soldier, and of empire.<sup>37</sup> Therefore, Baden-Powell's appeal to and perpetuation of classism can be seen as an appeal to and reciprocal perpetuation of imperialism.

Perhaps the least discussed but most significant influence in the depiction of Baden-Powell and the Boy Scout Movement as propagandist is the examining historians' position in time. That is to say, those endorsing this

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<sup>32</sup> MacDonald, 8

<sup>33</sup> "Eton College". *Encyclopedia Britannica Online*. (Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2015), Web. 28 Apr. 2015  
<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/194547/Eton-College>>.

<sup>34</sup> Eton College *Chronicle* (22 December, 1904), quoted in Michael Rosenthal, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement*. (New York: Pantheon, 1986), 54.

<sup>35</sup> Rosenthal, 57.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

argument appear to have been influenced by the central historical events of their own lifetimes, or even in the years before they were born. For example, Michael Rosenthal, perhaps the most uncompromisingly accusatory voice in the canon of work on Baden-Powell, wrote his book, *The Character Factory: Baden-Powell and the Origins of the Boy Scout Movement*, in 1986. It is reasonable to surmise that the tumultuous events of the first half of the Twentieth Century, perhaps most notably World War II, affected his consideration of the movement. In his Eton Appeal, Baden-Powell lauds Japan for its recent military successes (namely a victory in the Russo-Japanese War), and cites the "... soldierly spirit and self-sacrificing patriotism of the whole people" as the secret behind Japan's achievement.<sup>38</sup> To a historian of the post-war period like Rosenthal, this could sound like Baden-Powell lauding the societal indoctrination and exaltation of militarism that, in only a matter of decades, would yield fervent fascism. Although the comparison is never made outright, in considering an organization led by one charismatic figure, seemingly intent on the training and inculcation of a nation's youths, it is doubtful that the example of the Hitler Youth does not come to mind. Perhaps the most famous instance of youth indoctrination and its devastating results, the Hitler Youth Movement of the 1930's and 1940's served as an extreme to which compare all other youth movements, as well as earning such associations a timeless instinctual suspicion on the part of historians.<sup>39</sup> While scholarly works written on Baden-Powell and his movement, almost all of which were composed after World War II, usually fail to acknowledge their own historical biases, the international events in the decades between the appearance of *Scouting for Boys* and their publication almost certainly had a role in shaping historians' consideration of Boy Scouts, pushing them towards a more skeptical, suspicious posture.

It is through this lens of skepticism and misgiving, constructed by events perhaps not fairly attributable to Baden-Powell and his movement, that we see the allegations of imperialism, classism, and propaganda of *Scouting for Boys*. Even if his critics might argue that Baden-Powell contributed to these events by influencing British politicians to see that the response to Hitler and Hirohito had to be military rather than diplomatic, they surely cannot contend that he or the Scouting Movement is responsible. Examining the Boy Scout Movement through a more modern lens, however, it becomes clear that

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<sup>38</sup> Rosenthal, 54.

<sup>39</sup> "From the 1920s onwards, the Nazi Party targeted German youth as a special audience for its propaganda messages. These messages emphasized that the Party was a movement of youth: dynamic, resilient, forward-looking, and hopeful. Millions of German young people were won over to Nazism in the classroom and through extracurricular activities." United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. "Introduction to the Holocaust." Holocaust Encyclopedia. <http://www.ushmm.org/wlc/en/article.php?ModuleId=10005143>. Apr 28, 2015.

Baden-Powell's agenda was essentially a benign, even democratizing, effort at community organization, even if it was framed by militaristic terminology and organizational structure. While it is easy to get caught up in the army-like configuration of the Boy "Scouts," -- "troops" that "patrol," -- its usage can be simply attributed to its being the system of organization with which Baden-Powell, a military man, was most familiar.<sup>40</sup> The Mafeking Cadet Corps, for example, weighed heavily on the creation of the Scout model because it was within this model that Baden-Powell experienced the greatest success.<sup>41</sup> The fact of this chosen system of organization, then, ought fairly to be extricated from the values and intentions that were promoted by those doing the organizing.

Similarly, the evidence of classism in Baden-Powell's initial outreach to the boys of Eton College is misconstrued as having sinister, subordinating intentions. The letter to the Eton *Chronicle*, Jeal argues, is often misconstrued in order to villainize Baden-Powell. Yet rather than being the earliest version of the Boy Scout Scheme,<sup>42</sup> the letter was simply an effort "... he was beginning to make to interest young men in rifle shooting."<sup>43</sup> While it can be challenging to pinpoint the exact beginning of a movement, it is important to give all documents full consideration to ensure that individual works are not viewed in isolation as speaking for the movement; rather, they carry no greater weight than others.

Finally, Baden-Powell's own writings demonstrate a self-awareness that does much to refute the inferences drawn by historians about his intentions. In his description of what a Scout is, Baden-Powell acknowledges the group's associations with military organization, but makes clear that he intends a non-militaristic role for the Scout. "But, besides war scouts," he clarifies, "there are also peace scouts, *i.e.*, men who in peace time carry out work which requires the same kind of abilities. These are the frontiersmen of all parts of our Empire ... peace scouts [are] real *men* in every sense of the word..."<sup>44</sup> With this, Baden-Powell nods to the system from which the organization of his movement is derived, and simultaneously separates his movement from it in all but structure.

Once the military infrastructure of the movement is set aside, and more attention is paid to Baden-Powell's voice, the benevolent, even democratizing, nature of the Boy Scout Movement becomes undeniable. Two "articles of faith in the Boy Scout creed," traceable to speeches he gave on scouting as early as 1901, were:

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<sup>40</sup> Baden-Powell, 5.

<sup>41</sup> Rosenthal, 33.

<sup>42</sup> Michael Rosenthal, "Knights and Retainers: The Earliest Version of Baden-Powell's Boy Scout Scheme," *Journal of Contemporary History* (15.4, 1980), 607.

<sup>43</sup> Jeal, 369.

<sup>44</sup> Baden-Powell, 13.

First, that “children should be brought up as cheerfully and as happily as possible,” and second, that “in life one ought to take as much pleasure as one possibly can ... because if one is happy, one has it in one’s power to make all those around happy.”<sup>45</sup>

A sort of Peter Pan figure, Baden-Powell was known for his love of games, humor, and lightheartedness, often putting on plays for his regiment when the ugliest side of colonial occupation reared its head.<sup>46</sup> The happiness and cheerfulness of Scouts aided the Movement’s larger intention: the production of good citizens.<sup>47</sup> While historians often argue Baden-Powell’s idea of a good citizen to be synonymous with a soldier, he explicitly states the contrary: “I do not mean by good citizens merely fighting men.”<sup>48</sup> Interpretation is, undoubtedly, an important part of understanding any piece of history, but equal attention should be given to the plain words of those that are the object of that interpretation. Here, giving Baden-Powell’s own words more weight, and noting the self-awareness with which he uses and defuses the language of war and militarism, the benignity of his intentions becomes harder to refute.

Upon closer inspection, not only was the Boy Scout Movement not a propagandist tool, but it aimed, to some extent, to eliminate class divisions rather than to promote them. The Scout Leader was from “... an ordinary middle-class family ...,” that was sometimes economically limited.<sup>49</sup> Having had to forgo an education opportunity himself due to financial constraints, Baden-Powell hoped “... to provide for the working and lower-middle classes the character training that privileged classes were able to receive in the public schools.”<sup>50</sup> While this point corroborates Rosenthal’s argument that Baden-Powell held up the public school boy as the model for his “character factory,” it debunks the claim that he sought to reinforce the existing class system. Rather, it is clear, he hoped to provide the training to others that had produced a character he saw as virtuous, in the hopes of forming a nation of youths that shared the same righteous character, no matter the education opportunities available to them. This intention is also well-defined in the structure of *Scouting for Boys* itself. The manual-like organization of the handbook, which includes instructions, diagrams, and anecdotes, makes it accessible to all readers, no matter their previous experience in the field. “[O]ne of the main reasons for the Boy Scouts training,” Baden-Powell stated with an unusually

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<sup>45</sup> Jeal, 365.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 63-67.

<sup>47</sup> Allen Warren, “Sir Robert Baden-Powell, the Scout Movement and Citizen Training in Great Britain, 1900-1920.” *The English Historical Review* (101.399, 1986): 376-398.

<sup>48</sup> Jeal, 371.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 27; Rosenthal, 59.

candid recognition of a truth often left unspoken, “[is] to take the place of the public school life which is only open to the comparatively few whose parents can afford it ...”<sup>51</sup> In 1910 he went one step further, saying that “... the most important work that the Scout Movement can do lies in getting hold of the vast hordes of slum boys in the great industrial centres of the North Midlands ...”<sup>52</sup> Two years after the initial distribution of *Scouting for Boys*, not only was Baden-Powell cognizant of the influence his nascent movement wielded, but he also sought to use it for the democratization of a society traditionally defined by its stark, unyielding class divisions. His insistence, throughout *Scouting for Boys*, in words and in structure, that “... men could be trained ...” to be Scouts, makes Baden-Powell’s intention to provide *all* boys with the tools with which to become good citizens incontestable.<sup>53</sup>

It is necessary to apply a similar understanding of the climate in which Baden-Powell was writing when examining his use of, and seeming fixation on, Rudyard Kipling’s *Kim*. Considered an iconic imperialist text, references to *Kim* in *Scouting for Boys* and throughout the Boy Scout Movement understandably lent fuel to the criticism of Baden-Powell as a promoter of militaristic values. Baden-Powell’s focus on the story, however, speaks more to his wild imagination and fascination with adventure than to Kipling’s imperialist agenda. For Baden-Powell, “... there was a strong romantic appeal in imagining himself as a scout in enemy territory, surviving by stealth and deception. That most of his actual scouting exploits would involve little danger would not stop him from writing them up as if they had done.”<sup>54</sup> As a man who tended towards adventure and intrigue, Baden-Powell was drawn to Kipling’s *Kim*, who “... loved ... the stealthy prowling through dark gullies and lanes, the crawl up a water-pipe, [and] the sights and sounds of the women’s world on the flat roofs ...” that he observed while “... executing commissions by night ... for sleek and shiny young men of fashion ...”<sup>55</sup> Baden-Powell was not the only British boy captivated by *Kim*’s tale. “In 1908,” Jeal says, “no other fictional character was such a dream hero for boys.”<sup>56</sup> It is clear then, that, while *Kim* was a projection of Baden-Powell’s own imagining of boyhood, he served this role for most of his contemporaries. Therefore, Baden-Powell’s incorporation of *Kim* as an exemplary figure in *Scouting for Boys* serves as further evidence that his movement was a product of the time in which it emerged. In the nearly five-page summary of *Kim* that Baden-Powell offers at the beginning of *Scouting for Boys*, he seems more focused on *Kim*’s adventures themselves than he is on the boy’s service to his

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<sup>51</sup> Rosenthal, 90.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.

<sup>53</sup> Jeal, 72.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>55</sup> Rudyard Kipling, *Kim*, 1st ed. (London: Macmillan and Co, 1901), 4.

<sup>56</sup> Jeal, 391.

nation.<sup>57</sup> He recounts all in great detail, remarking only at the end of the passage that the "... adventures of Kim ... show what valuable work a boy scout could do for his country if he were sufficiently trained ..."<sup>58</sup> The attention given to the exploits themselves, however, reveals that, much like any boy at the time, Baden-Powell's true fascination with Kim lay not in his service to Empire, but rather the resourcefulness and bravery he demonstrated in his missions.

Finally, Baden-Powell proved himself much more receptive to changing times and attitudes than he is given credit for. In emphasizing his allegedly imperialist agenda, historians imply that Baden-Powell and the Boy Scout movement were, like the militaristic values they purportedly propagated, stagnant and unchanging. On the contrary, writes Elleke Boehmer:

In the fifteen years following the first publication of *Scouting for Boys*, up to 1922, Baden-Powell would repeatedly modify and remould the text to reflect the changing emphases of the Scout Movement: in particular, towards a greater pacificism after 1914-1918, and away from British imperialism.<sup>59</sup>

This point simultaneously acknowledges and refutes the claim that Baden-Powell was simply a tool of imperialist propaganda. Admittedly, Boehmer says, the Movement had traces of imperialist undertones. That was, however, a product of the time in which it was written, and was not singlehandedly due to the malicious agenda of one man. The fact that Baden-Powell altered the work he considered to be the heart of his movement in the face of a changing world and political climate indicates that both the leader and the intentions of the Boy Scout Movement sought to remain current. The original imperialist currents, then, were a result of the movement being born at the peak of Britain's Imperial Age.

Today, Baden-Powell and the Boy Scout Movement often garner criticism, for the man and the movement have come, somewhat unjustly, to symbolize the Empire and its sins. Due to its emergence during the height of British imperialist and jingoist attitudes, and its subsequent popularity and success, historians are understandably tempted to charge the Boy Scout Movement with intentionally propagating imperialist sin. The failure to consider Baden-Powell and *Scouting for Boys* as products of their time, and the desire to find a culprit and to express condemnation for the attitudes and actions of that era, renders some unable to view the Movement for what it really was: a benign, democratizing effort to create a nation of good citizens.

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<sup>57</sup> Baden-Powell, 14-18.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>59</sup> Robert Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell "Introduction," xl.

Admittedly, Baden-Powell utilized a traditionally military structure and nomenclature for his organization. This was, however, a product of his background and experience, rather than a subversive effort at inculcating a martial agenda. Well-founded suspicion of certain types of organizations, and of societies that equate militarism with patriotism, fueled by painful historical examples, render it difficult to take Baden-Powell at his word. However, having given the man and his message, as presented in *Scouting for Boys*, a thorough analysis and contemporary consideration, it is hard to see Baden-Powell as anything other than a youthful, well-intentioned if naive spirit trapped in an adult's body.