

Scouting: Training the “New Man” in Post-liberation Ethiopia

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ABSTRACTS

Obgleich in Äthiopien Pfadfindereinheiten bereits 1919 entstanden, gewann die Bewegung erst nach dem Ende der italienischen Okkupation (1935–1941) an Bedeutung. Die Eingliederung der Pfadfinderorganisation in die Abteilung für Sporterziehung im Ministerium für Bildung und Kunst demonstriert seine Position als Teil des staatlichen Schulwesens. In diesem Zusammenhang lassen sich Wandern und Camping als spezielle Praxen untersuchen, mit denen die Pfadfinder (nationales) Territorium körperlich erfahren und mit Techniken des Überlebens und Führens verbinden konnten. In diesem Zusammenhang organisierte Begegnungen der Scouts mit hochrangigen Vertretern von Militär, Polizei und Regierung zeigen, dass der „Neue Mensch“ wesentlich über eine demographisch verstandene Kategorie „Jugend“ hinausgeht.

Although Boy Scouting emerged in Ethiopia as early as 1919, it was after the end of the Italian occupation (1935–41) that the movement gained momentum as an important part of youth training. The re-organization of the Boy Scouts under the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts as well as its coupling with Sports and Physical Education hints at the fact that Boy Scouting and, later, Girl Guiding were considered an integral part of education. The article looks at hiking and camping as a specific practice to link the youth to the (national) soil, to train survival and to instill leadership. It further shows that the “New Man” is not restricted to the demographic category of youth, but can include Ethiopian officials up to the highest ranks as well as local and foreign experts who re-organized the movement in Ethiopia.

1 This article is the result of an ongoing research project, “Progressive Citizen Bodies: Sports and Modernity in Ethiopia 1920–1974,” at Leibniz-Zentrum Moderner Orient, Berlin. I am grateful to Bahru Zewde and Franziska Roy for their critical comments on an earlier version of the article. I am deeply indebted to my Amharic teacher Seyoum Mulugeta, who carefully checked and discussed my translations.

1. Introduction

On 6 August 1949, a group of 85 Boy Scouts from Addis Ababa travelled by train to Dire Dawa, the most important town on the railway line between the Ethiopian capital and Djibouti. There and in the neighbouring town of Harar, they would undergo various trainings, examinations, and competitions, as well as have meetings with top officials from the Ethiopian Government, before returning to the capital. When the patrols of Scouts got back to Addis Ababa in the early afternoon of 3 September, they had already spent more than three hours singing and marching along the way from the town of Bishoftu. The boys seemed to be proud and overwhelmed by their experiences during the first camp organized by the not yet officially recognized Boy Scouts Association of Ethiopia. This article argues that such hiking within the Scout Movement was a cornerstone in tying together a number of practices that led to the creation of “New (Ethiopian) Men” – equipped with practical and theoretical knowledge, disciplined, loyal, and fit for leadership.

The first section explains the socio-political context, in which Scouting in Ethiopia emerged as a number of specific and interrelated practices of shaping “New Men.” Ideas about modernization and Westernization of the Ethiopian Empire had gained substantial ground in the first half of the twentieth century. They conceptualized the “New Man” in terms of “modern civilization” (*zāmānawi-sələttane*).² Modern schools, established from 1908 onwards, became the main sites for forming young males into “modern men.” During the Italian fascist occupation (1936–1941), the first generation of these “civilized” and highly educated “modern men” had been nearly completely wiped out. Thus, the post-liberation era, which Emperor Haile Selassie I declared as “New Time” (*addis zāmān*),³ again needed “New Men.” This section will reveal the multiple actors who facilitated the reorganization of the Scout Movement after Ethiopia’s liberation from Italian occupation in 1941.

Zooming in on the well-documented hiking event mentioned above, the next section analyses the training in physical as well as mental practices that the organizers identified as important for shaping a specific version of the “New Man,” namely a militarized one. The section shows the close relations of the movement to the military, in this specific example, but also more generally to the Ethiopian Air Force.

The third section reflects on the meaning of hiking beyond the physical activity of moving between places. Arguably, hiking was one of the most efficient practices in binding the Scouting “New Man” to the soil, facilitating his interaction with the “common peo-

2 “[T]he image of the new political order was drawn in terms of a new ideology: *Zamanawi seletane* (modernity), which meant modern institutions, modern schooling, and modern thinking [...] the Amharic word *Zamanawi-seletane* has an anti-clerical connotation. Emperor Tewodros first introduced *Zamanawi-seletane* to Ethiopia but the word did not come into general use until the reign of Emperor Haile Selassie.” (P. Milkias, *Haile Selassie, Western Education, and Political Revolution in Ethiopia*, London, Amherst, New York 2006, pp. 54–55).

3 “This day is for Ethiopia the beginning of a new time [...] where things begin which we will all finish,” Haile Selassie, *Yäaddis zāmān gazeta mägāmār* (The “New Times” Newspaper Started), in: *Addis Zāmān* 30 Gänbot 1933 E.C. (7 June 1941), p. 1.

ple” and, thus, fostering a sense of national belonging. It offered a possibility to showcase and boost morale, to volunteer, and to socialize. The article further argues that Scouting is an ideal lens through which to observe that although practices of shaping the “New Man” targeted youth, the category had a considerable reach beyond this demographic and included teachers as well as ministerial officials.⁴

2. How Scouting Arrived in Ethiopia

Scouting in Ethiopia started at a particular juncture in history, when fears and discourses about urbanity, degeneracy, and decline, and a growing sense of nationalism were proliferating on a global scale and resulted in a variety of attempts to discipline and militarize the male youth. From the mid-nineteenth century onwards, institutionalized measures of correcting and disciplining young people mushroomed globally and found forceful expressions in cadet schools and (militarized) volunteer movements. The growing body of literature on Muscular Christianity and Scouting beyond Europe and North America has drawn academic attention to the globality of this process.

During the first decades of the twentieth century, the Ethiopian modern intelligentsia raised the issue of backwardness in their society.⁵ They expressed the need for reform from above in order to turn Ethiopia into a modern empire, preferably emulating the Japanese example. Although modernization started earlier, it was under Ras Taferi, later Haile Selassie I, that this reform process gained momentum.

The armed forces and the educational system became important sites of modernizing the Ethiopian Empire.⁶ Therefore, it makes sense to see early Scouting as part of this process of reform. Looking back at his accomplishments as an emperor, Haile Selassie I emphasized that he had stood behind the establishment of the Scout Movement in the country as early as 1919, while he was still Governor of Harar and, later, *Balemulu 'Inderase* (Regent Plenipotentiary). Ras Taferi, as he was called before his coronation in 1930, was very much attracted by Sir Robert Baden-Powell's ideas of instilling values such as patriotism, discipline, loyalty, self-help, and self-defence into male youth. The Emperor later interpreted the movement as site of moulding youth into potential cadets for Holeta military college [est. 1935].⁷

It is still unclear when and to what extent Boy Scout activities became part of the school curriculum. A clear step in this direction was taken in 1934: with the consent of the Emperor, a so-called Boy Scout School was established in Gulele (the north-western outskirts

4 The article makes extensive use of the Robert N. Thompson Papers, which are located in the archives of the Trinity Western University in Langley, Canada (further referred to RNT TWU), and documents at Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES), Addis Ababa University.

5 For this process, see Bahru Zewde, *Pioneers of Change in Ethiopia: The Reformist Intellectuals of the Early Twentieth Century*, Oxford 2002.

6 Modern schools had started already under Menelik II in 1905.

7 Haile Selassie I, *My Life and Ethiopia's Progress, 1892-1937*. Translated and annotated by Edward Ullendorff, New York, London: Oxford University Press 1976, p. 12.

of Addis Ababa), which later became Medhane Alem School.⁸ According to the popular narrative, the founding director was a Lebanese, Frederick Kamal; the language used was French and “typical Boy Scout activities” were a fixed part of the curriculum.⁹ Financial support came from Mr Moraiatas,¹⁰ an influential businessman in Addis Ababa’s large Greek community, who established the first Scout headquarters opposite the school, which accommodated 375 boys.¹¹ The Greek community in Ethiopia already had its own Scout division. Interestingly, Scouting also became a selling point for a “modern” Ethiopia as part of the German propaganda campaign to highlight Ethiopia’s march to modernity in the early 1930s; the illustrated book *Das ist Abessinien* [This is Abyssinia] published numerous images of well-equipped Boy Scouts being trained in the bush.¹² These early Scouting activities came to an abrupt end when fascist Italy occupied Ethiopia in 1935. Existing modern educational institutions were closed and, instead, schools were set up by the fascist administration for children of the local nobility. These schools resembled the Italian template, the *Balilla*. Ironically, Baden-Powell himself had described the *Balillas* as a great example of successfully integrating general education and Boy Scouting.¹³ Here, paramilitary units of the fascist youth movement Wolves of Ethiopia trained in uniforms that resembled the dress of the Scouts. The plethora of paramilitary activities in schools during the occupation produced a negative attitude among the Ethiopian population towards any Scouting activity in the post-occupation period. In 1957, the Emperor still felt the need to stress in public that the Ethiopian Scouts had actively resisted the Italian occupation.¹⁴ The negative popular perception of the Scouts was the main reason that, in contrast to other volunteer organizations such as the Ethiopian Red Cross (est. 1935) or the YMCA (est. 1947), the process of (re-)establishing an Ethiopian Boy Scout Movement did not occur until 1948 – seven years after the liberation.¹⁵

8 Bädaredawa yä’äskawtočč yä’ägər kwas čäwata (Football Competition of the Scouts in Dire Dawa), in: Addis Zämän 12 Təqəmt 1941 E.C. (23 October 1949).

9 R. Pankhurst, Educational Developments of the 1930s, in: Link Ethiopia, <https://www.linkethiopia.org/blog/article/educational-developments-of-the-1930s> (accessed 6 February 2019). According to Pankhurst, Frederick Kamal had taught at the School of the Redeemer for Orphans (est. 1932). It is still unclear how he came to Ethiopia. Kamal might have been connected to the Greek Orthodox community in Lebanon and came to Ethiopia via translocal business relations. He might have got his training in one of the schools run by the Mission laïque, which cooperated very closely with the Greek Orthodox community from the early twentieth century onwards. Since the mission was active in Egypt, too, it might not be impossible that he belonged to the Egyptian educational mission to Ethiopia, which included three Lebanese teachers, who taught at Teferi Mekonnen School (est. 1925); H. Erlikh, The Egyptian Teachers of Ethiopia – Identities and Education along the Nile, in: Walter Raunig, Asfa-Wossen Aserate (eds.): Äthiopien zwischen Orient und Okzident, Berlin 2004, p. 129.

10 After the liberation, when he was employed in the Agricultural Bank of Ethiopia, Moraiatas was one of the most active persons in reorganizing the Scout Movement in Ethiopia (R.N. Thompson to Col. J.S. Wilson (Director, Boy Scouts International Bureau, London) 5 December 1949).

11 It later became Madhane Alem School. Bäfäqadä Selase Fantaye, Salä boy eskowt agälgəlot (Boy Scout Service) Addis Ababa 1955, p. 3.

12 *Das ist Abessinien*, Leipzig 1935, pp. 40–42.

13 T. Jeal, *Baden-Powell: Founder of the Boy Scouts*, New Haven 1989, p. 545.

14 H. Selassie I, Address to the Boy Scout Movement on 6 June 1959, in: *The Imperial Ethiopian Ministry of Information* (ed.). *Selected Speeches of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie First, 1918 to 1967*, Addis Ababa 1967, p. 648.

15 R.N. Thompson to Col. J.S. Wilson, Director, Boy Scouts International Bureau, London 5 Dec 1949, p. 1 RNT TWU.

Initial attempts to bring Scouting back to Ethiopia coincided with the establishment of physical education as an integral part of the educational system. Since Scouting emphasized physical fitness, it seemed more than logical to form a Department of Physical Education *and* Boy Scouting within the Ministry of Education and Fine Arts (MoE). Emperor Haile Selassie I later recalled this step as follows:

*Even in the future, the development of the physical and spiritual strength of Our nation is dependent on her youth obtaining scout and military training along with their academic studies, thus combining in themselves the heroism and spirit of determination of their fathers with military training and modern scientific knowledge; and it is for this reason that We have commanded Our Vice-Minister of Education to establish facilities for military training in all Our educational institutions.*¹⁶

In 1948, work started to reorganize the Boy Scouts of Ethiopia. This meant that all the necessary structures and committees, such as a National Council and an Executive Board, had to be built, a charter drafted, and Scoutmaster courses started. Some Scouting activities had already commenced in various schools in the capital through private initiatives; they had to be identified, institutionalized, and standardized.¹⁷ Although the first patrols had been formed by Mignon Innes Ford, headmistress of Princess Zenebe Worq School, who had come to Ethiopia in the 1930s as part of the Pan-African movement,¹⁸ plans for establishing the Girl Scout Association of Ethiopia were not officially considered prior to 1950.¹⁹ Existing Girl Scout patrols were integrated into the structures and activities of the Boy Scouts.

Within the MoE, the Canadian Dr Robert N. Thompson was identified as the ideal person to facilitate the reorganization process. Having served as an instructor in the Commonwealth Air Training Plan during World War II, Thompson and his family were relocated to Ethiopia through the offices of the Sudan Interior Mission in 1943. He served in the Ethiopian Air Force and later became secondary school teacher and headmaster of Haile Selassie I Secondary School.²⁰ In 1948, Thompson was seconded to the MoE, where he acted as Director of Provincial Schools until 1952. His personal connections to the armed forces as well as to various decision-makers and potential allies within the Ethiopian educational system were as important for the job as his experience as a Scout. Thus, Haile Selassie's most favourite son Prince Mekonnen, Chief Scout and Patron of the Movement in Ethiopia, assigned Thompson to act as commissioner in the absence of

16 H. Selassie I, Address to the Boy Scout Movement on 6 June 1959, in: The Imperial Ethiopian Ministry of Information (Hg.), Selected Speeches of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie First, 1918 to 1967, Addis Ababa 1967, p. 649.

17 Regulations for the Establishment of Boy Scout Troops, RNT TWU.

18 G. Bonacci, Back to Ethiopia: African-American and West-Indian Returnees in Ethiopia (1896–2010), in: Kwesi Kwaa Prah (ed.), Back to Africa Volume II, The Ideology and Practice of the African Returnee Phenomenon from the Caribbean and North America to Africa, Cape Town 2012, pp. 360–361.

19 Documents located in Thompson Papers (RNT TWU) complain about the extremely slow process of establishing the Ethiopian Girl Guides.

20 R.N. Thompson, Down a Memory Lane from Ethiopia, in: World Scouting, 4 (1965) 1, p. 10.

a National Council. He gave the Canadian free reign in choosing the right personnel to re-establish the Ethiopian Scout Movement.²¹

Thompson first and foremost based his choice on the candidates' previous experience as Scouts and on their political influence. Thus, the first boards and committees consisted of Ethiopians (mostly high-ranking individuals from diverse ministries as well as the armed forces), members of the so-called foreign communities (mostly Indian and Greek), and expatriates from Canada, Sweden, North America, Egypt, France, Britain, and Sudan who served in various capacities in the educational sector.²² Furthermore, the main drivers of the re-establishment such as Oni Niskanen, Aberra Jembere or Michael Wassef were not only experienced Scouts.²³ They were also active in the Red Cross Society or the YMCA of Ethiopia and, thus, facilitated cooperation between these organizations.

In 1949, Aberra Jembere had been appointed as General Secretary, Akalework Haptewold (Vice-Minister of Education) acted as Chairman and Thompson became Deputy Commissioner.²⁴ In late 1950, a National Council, which 99 per cent consisted of high-ranking Ethiopian officials, and an Executive Council with multinational members was established, and a charter and constitution drafted, approved, and published. The Ethiopian Government officially recognized the Boy Scout Association of Ethiopia in 1950.²⁵ After a delay of almost 20 years, Ethiopia finally became a recognized member of the World Organization of the Scout Movement in 1969.

Notwithstanding administrative and structural issues, a six-week Scoutmaster's training course (combined with a physical training master's course) was held on the premises of Tafari Makonnen School in July 1949.²⁶ Three months later, the Scoutmasters had their first regular meeting held in Addis Ababa and apparently received regular training thereafter.

The search for permanent headquarters as well as financial issues had also to be solved.²⁷ The Emperor had gifted \$47,000 Eth., with the intention that the Boy Scouts should be

21 Crown Prince to R.N. Thompson, 10 January 1948, RNT TWU.

22 R.N. Thompson to Col. J.S. Wilson (Director, Boy Scouts International Bureau, London) 5 December 1949, p. 2 RNT TWU.

23 The Egyptian Michell Wassef, formerly physical training instructor at Teferi Makonnen School and later supervisor of physical training for Addis Ababa Schools became the first General Secretary of the YMCA in Ethiopia. Aberra Jembere, the first General Secretary of the Ethiopian Boy Scout Association, was an active board member of the Ethiopian YMCA. Oni Niskanen, who gained fame as the Abebe Bikila's coach, was Finnish by birth and came to Ethiopia as part of a Swedish military mission in 1946. He served as sports officer at the cadet school of the Imperial Body Guard and on the Air Force Base in Debre Zeit. In 1948, he was appointed physical education instructor at Haile Selassie I Secondary School in Kotebe, before he changed into the MoE and became the first Director of the newly established Department of Physical Education (later Department of Physical Education and Boy Scouting) in 1950. He remained in this capacity until 1954 and, again, from 1956 until 1959.

24 R.N. Thompson to Aberra Jembere, 27 July 1949, RNT TWU.

25 R.N. Thompson to H. Pratten, New York 22 November 1950, p. 1, RNT TWU.

26 Minutes Meeting of Executive Board, 28 July 1949, RNT TWU.

27 Various documents in the Thompson papers reveal that ideas circulated around a room at the Ethiopian Red Cross Society or the American Institute, a building at liberty square that was under the disposal of the YMCA, a house offered by the Duke of Harar, which needed a lot of repair, or Ejeressa Cinema.

financially independent like the Red Cross and the YMCA.²⁸ Thompson's relation to the North American Scout Movement facilitated the provision of badges, books, and caps.²⁹ Who actually were these Boy and Girl Scouts and how did they become members? Organized through the education system, Scouting became most prominent among young educated strata of the population. Children were not forced to become Scouts and, often, the expensive accoutrements (uniforms, badges, etc.) might have prevented them from joining the movement.³⁰ However, when the first national jamboree took place at Jan Meda race ground on 13–14 May 1950, the Boy Scouts Association of Ethiopia had grown from 8 to 18 officially approved patrols, mostly located in modern schools in the capital, within two years.³¹ The Boy and Girl Scouts who performed in this major event before the Emperor Haile Selassie I and other high-ranking officials, came exclusively from Addis Ababa schools.³²

The next part of this article will focus on perhaps the most important event that took place during this period – the already mentioned Boy Scout camp in Dire Dawa and Harar during August 1949. It relies on three sources that describe the event from three different perspectives, with different aims and audiences in mind. First, there is the report by the camp leader, Capt. Oni Niskanen,³³ which he filed by mid-September 1949 prior to a meeting of the Executive Committee. Second, a newspaper report by the Quartermaster and General Secretary, Aberra Jembere, which was published by *Addis Zāmān* – the official Amharic government newspaper – in October 1949.³⁴ Third, a letter by Niskanen published in the annual magazine of the Swedish sports club Duvbo in 1951.³⁵

3. Leaving for Dire Dawa

On the train that left the capital on 6 August 1949, 81 boys from seven schools in Addis Ababa were looking forward to a two-week camp in Dire Dawa and its surroundings.³⁶ A budget of \$5,946 Eth. was set aside from funds provided by the Ministry of Education, the participating schools, and private patrons (including the Emperor).³⁷ The boys were accompanied by the camp leader, Oni Niskanen, assistant camp leader Harry James,

28 Minutes, Executive Board Meeting, 5 October 1949, RNT TWU.

29 Minutes, Executive Board Meeting, 20 June 1949, RNT TWU.

30 I am grateful to Seyoum Mulugeta for this information.

31 No author, The History of Scouting in Ethiopia, typescript, RNT TWU.

32 R.N. Thompson to Col. J.S. Wilson (Director, Boy Scouts International Bureau, London GB) 14 March 1950; R.N. Thompson to H. Patten, Director World Friendship Fund (Boy Scouts, USA), 15 March 1950, RNT TWU.

33 O. Niskanen, The Boy Scout Camp in Dire*Dawa [sic] and Harar during August 1949, 15 September 1949. RNT TWU.

34 Bädäredawa yä'ä skawtočč yä'ägär kwas čäwata (Football Competition of the Scouts in Dire Dawa), in: *Addis Zāmān* 12 Təqəmt 1941 E.C. (23 October 1949).

35 O. Niskanen, The Scout Movement on the March, Letter from Oni Niskanen, in: *Duvbo IK's Annual Magazine 1951*, http://onniniskanen.se/eng/scout_eng.php (accessed 18 February 2019).

36 Haile Selassie I Secondary School, Menelik II School, Commercial School, Medhane Alem School, Technical School, Princess Zenebe-Worq School, and Beyene Merid School (Niskanen, Boy Scout Camp), p. 7.

37 Niskanen, Boy Scout Camp, p. 6.

programme master T.R. Mahalingham,³⁸ and quartermaster Aberra Jembere. When the party reached the capital of the homonymous sub-province, which lies 346 km east of Addis Ababa, the next day, the weather was good. They took their equipment and marched to a campsite described as “an acacia scrub jungle south of the Dire Dawa cement factory.”³⁹ Before they reached the campsite, it started to rain heavily. They crossed a stream that had turned into a river, encumbered by all their equipment. Two years later, Oni Niskanen remembered this moment:

*While we were lugging our things across a dried up river channel, we suddenly saw a wave rushing along the previously bone-dry riverbed, which was around 20 metres wide. Before we knew it, the swirling water masses had separated us, where we stood on opposite sides of the river [...] The water rose higher and higher. I sent out scouts in both directions to see if there was a place to cross, but it looked hopeless. The darkness was falling and something had to be done. After searching for a short while, I found a place where the river did not seem so deep. I tied a stone at the end of a rope and after a few misses I managed to throw it across to the boys on the other side. We fixed the rope level with the water line on both sides and I made an attempt to cross over. It was not easy. At the deepest part, the water reached up to my chest. The gushing water masses knocked my legs away and I had great difficulty getting across. We threw over two more ropes, making three in total, before I dared to let the boys cross. After a few hours of work, all of us had crossed, properly beaten black and blue by logs and stones that were dragged along by the water masses.*⁴⁰

It was *keremt*, the rainy season, which lasts from July to September and turns even places such as Dire Dawa with its high average temperature of 31.7 Celsius (1962–1964) and very scanty rainfall of 606.6 mm (1955–1965) into demanding terrain.⁴¹

Despite the heavy rainfall and the discomfort it entailed, the Scouts followed a programme that combined technical and physical training as well as exercise in spectacles of public performance. The camp was not only aimed at passing tests, receiving badges, and acquiring the next rank in the Scout hierarchy. It also served to instil pride and to convey a sense of what Scouting means for a potential future (military) career. Thus, the boys practised training the senses, games, signalling, pioneering, and participated in exercises that combined treasure hunts and tracking. They also received swimming lessons in the pool of the nearby Dire Dawa cement factory, so that nearly half of them passed the swimming exam. A competition with a focus on topography served as training for patrol leaders – i.e., leadership training. During a hiking tour to Harar and Aremaya, the boys were tested on their skills in areas as diverse as tracking, cooking, and estimating distances to receive their first- and second-class or tenderfoot badges. The most de-

38 Harry James (American) and T.R. Mahalingham (of Indian origin) were teachers and very active members of the association's first Executive Board.

39 Niskanen, Boy Scout Camp, p. 1.

40 O. Niskanen, Scout Movement on the March.

41 Imperial Ethiopian Government: Ministry of Interior. Municipalities Department. General Analysis and the Report on the Master Plan for Dire Dawa. Consultants: Barucci – Di Gaddo – Sacco, 1967, IES 71.1.4 INT.

manding part, however, was the 35 km hike back to Dire Dawa during the rainy season. Having covered the distance within five hours, the 84 participants were congratulated on their accomplishment, which was declared an “elite hike.”⁴² Apart from technical training, endurance seems to have been an essential part of most of the exercises. The “real” test turned out to be the return journey to Addis Ababa, however, when due to a railway strike most of the Scouts travelled by lorry or on foot through a difficult terrain. They had to repair bad roads, which were not passable, before continuing their journey. The bridges between Dire Dawa and Awash were so fragile that other passages had to be found and prepared to cross the 135 rivers and streams which lay between them and their destination. Above all, the area through which they travelled was not considered safe.

At the time when we were ready to leave, everyone came around to warn us of travelling. The route we had to travel went through difficult country and the rainy season was still on in higher grounds. There were also some disturbances between a few of the tribes along the way and Government troops had been sent out to try to sort things out. After conferring with the boys, we decided to go in spite of all warnings.⁴³

The railway strike not only caused the camp to run on for another week, it also triggered further competitions such as running and football matches. Dire Dawa was a nodal point on the railway line and had developed into an important industrial town with a cotton mill, a cement factory, and diverse workshops for the railway. The labour union (Railroad Workers Syndicate) that was founded in 1947 might have encouraged sports as a welfare amenity. The enthusiasm and lavish financial support from the Italian owners of the cement and cotton factories had led to football teams being established early on. By 1947, Dire Dawa had its own league and the Tafari team, which represented the province, entered the Ethiopian Championship series the same year.⁴⁴ Thus, when the Boy Scouts competed against local athletes and cadets from the Air Force training centre in Debre Zeit, who spent their holidays in Dire Dawa, people congregated and cheered on the teams in the Asfa Wossen football ground and on the streets.⁴⁵ Since Niskanen had served as sports officer in Debre Zeit before he entered the educational sector, he could use his personal contacts to motivate the Swedish officers and the cadets to participate in the competition. What is more, these relations facilitated extraordinary rewards for the victorious Boy Scouts: aeroplane rides over the town. The close contact between the Air Force and Boy Scouts also served to arouse interest in a military career. Recent studies on “New Man” ideologies in interwar Europe argue that “ideologues of all persuasions looked at the airman as a prototype, as the embodiment of new dawn that

42 Niskanen, *Boy Scout Camp*, p. 3.

43 Niskanen, *Scout Movement on the March*.

44 Nordic Africa Institute, http://www.nai.uu.se/library/resources/dossiers/local_history_of_ethiopia (accessed 11 March 2019).

45 Football Competition, Addis Zämän, 23 October 1949.

they were aiming to induce.”⁴⁶ In fascist Italy, for example, aviation became a “metaphor for Fascism itself” with Mussolini as top aviator.⁴⁷ Ethiopia experienced the Italian occupation especially through air attacks and fascist propaganda in the Amharic press as well as in open-air film shows in Addis Ababa which celebrated Italian and Nazi-German aviators.⁴⁸ The photographs of Haile Selassie I manning an anti-aircraft gun at Battle of Maychew (31 March 1936) or in defence of Dessie were widely distributed, portraying him as an active defender of his country. Furthermore, the Emperor’s fascination with aviation was displayed whenever possible. Thus, the cooperation between Scouts and the Air Force came as no surprise.

The main purpose of the competitions, however, was neither entertainment nor physical fitness training. As Niskanen revealed later, they were in fact a pragmatic way to generate money for food.⁴⁹ What Niskanen omitted from his letter was the help by the director of the Dire Dawa cement factory, Negatu Woldegeorgis, who provided meat (three goats) for the boys. Aberra Jembere’s newspaper article not only mentioned this aspect, but highlighted the local participation and assistance in a broader sense. He stressed, for example, that the Scouts got free access to local cinemas in order to “re-generate their minds” (*mānfäsačewn lämadädäs*).⁵⁰

Besides practising self-help or passing tests to move up to the next rank, Scout training also included spectacles of public performance. Apart from marching on several occasions, the Boy Scouts acquired knowledge about how to perform during official visits so as to convey an image of preparedness and alertness. On 11 August 1949, a short visit by the Emperor, the Crown Prince, the Prime Minister, and other high-ranking officials provided an excellent opportunity to display their presentation skills. It started with a Guard of Honour, which is a global military practice. Although performance of semaphore signalling, first aid, and tying knots presented Scouts-related practices, the official guests were not expected to understand these things – as Niskanen commented in his letter to Duvbo, it sufficed to be impressed. The performance of readiness was also meant to show attentiveness. Patrol cries⁵¹ at the flagstaff signalled that the boys were ready to listen to the Emperor’s address. One of the Scouts would answer with a message of thanks and conveyed Scouting paraphernalia as presents to the Emperor. The spectacle ended with three cheers to the Emperor. When Prince Mekonnen, the Duke of Harar and Chief Scout, visited the camp for the Scout investiture ceremony a week later, the

46 F. Esposito, The Aviator as New Man, in: J. Dagnino, M. Feldman and P. Stocker (eds.), *The “New Man” in Radical Right Ideology and Practice, 1919–45*, London et al. 2018, p. 65.

47 M. Isnenghi, *L’Italia del Fascio*, Florence 1996, p. 233; cited in F. Esposito, *The Aviator as New Man*, in: J. Dagnino, M. Feldman and P. Stocker (eds.), *The “New Man” in Radical Right Ideology and Practice, 1919–45*, London, Oxford, New York, New Delhi, Sidney 2018, p. 65.

48 The film advertisements in *Yäqesar Mängäst Mäläkteñña* (Announcer of the Imperial Government) reveal that the open-air screenings in particular, which took place twice a week (Tuesdays and Saturdays) in the market area were propaganda films, especially celebrating the effectiveness of airborne battles.

49 Niskanen, *Scout Movement on the March*.

50 Football Competition, Addis Zämän, 23 October 1949.

51 Patrols are usually named after an animal and the patrol cry imitates the sound made by the animal.

protocol was absolute identical. Beyond the formalities, the Prince invited the boys to a party at the palace.

The Scout camp in Dire Dawa provides an opportunity to discuss what kind of “New Man” these practices might have shaped in the Ethiopian context more generally. Could we say that those who organized the camp and implemented the programme were also “New Men?” And one could ask whether the Emperor and his son, Prince Mekonnen, also conformed to the ideal of “New Men.” The following section offers some thoughts about these issues by linking them to the concrete practices of hiking.

4. Be Prepared! The Scouting Way of Life

Hiking and camping became part and parcel and sometimes even the epitome of the “Scouting way of life.” They offered the possibility to test theoretical and practical knowledge such as orienteering or building necessary items out of what could be found in nature. Hiking firmly tied the human body to the soil in general, and to the national soil in particular. The Dire Dawa Scout Camp experience demonstrates this quite well. As a group of boys belonging to a certain school and patrol, equipped with uniforms and specific skills, sworn to serve God, Emperor, and nation, the national soil superseded the local, ethnically defined terrain. Although we can assume that most hikes explored the immediate surroundings, there were some documented round trips. Whereas the former served to integrate the city and the rural hinterland, round trips worked towards instilling nationalism. Under Ras Tafari, Ethiopia began its transformation from an Empire into an imperial nation state. Immediately following the liberation and his return from exile in Britain in 1941, Haile Selassie I started to centralize power. Furthermore, through a UN mandate of 1952, Eritrea was federated with Ethiopia and annexed in 1961. Among his attempts to forge the nation anew, the Emperor personally urged volunteer organizations such as the YMCA to give priority to the establishment of branches in Eritrea (Asmara, Keren, and Massawa).⁵² By the mid-1960s, the Scouts Association of Ethiopia seems to have been well established along the lines of the educational system. Scout hikes to the north included Eritrea and could rely on schools all over the country. Due to the shortage of sources from the post-liberation period, a later example will demonstrate this mechanism.

In 1966, a group of 17 older Scouts (Rovers) and their leader from Tafari Mekonnen School in Addis Ababa went on a round trip to the northern part of the Empire. They left Addis by lorry, took the road to the northeast (via Dessie, Mekelle, and Adigrat), visited the Eritrean cities of Asmara, Massawa, and Keren, and returned to the capital via Axum, Gondar, Bahr Dar, and Debre Markos. A detailed description of the trip and, especially, the people they encountered can be found in a booklet that was later published by the

52 Report Dalton McClelland to Herbert P. Lansdale about his visit to Ethiopia, 13 November 1952, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Minneapolis.

Ministry of Education.⁵³ The Scouts were not only tasked to keep a diary, they also had to carry out a “social survey” by interviewing people from various social strata on issues such as history, labour, or the composition of the population in the six provinces they passed through.⁵⁴ As the Scouts repeatedly emphasized in the booklet, the aim of the trip was not “tourism.” Knowing the country through hiking meant something completely different to them: “training.”

This Rover Scouts contingent acquired the organizational skills necessary to prepare an event of this size nearly a year beforehand. It included drawing maps and carefully selecting campsites. During the trip, the group appointed on a daily basis a new leader to gain experience in leadership, “which was not always easy” as they commented.⁵⁵ A Boy Scout show, which included first aid and tying knots, was performed at all the places they stayed overnight in order to spread the ideas and principles of the movement.⁵⁶ Meeting other Scouts based in the places they passed through was not a priority; only in Gondar did the Rovers sit down with local Scouts around a campfire.⁵⁷ Instead, they tended to meet with government officials. As Rovers, these Scouts were about to leave secondary school and begin higher education or enter a profession. They therefore visited institutions of higher education such as Gondar Health College or military institutions such as Kagnew – a US military radio outpost near Asmara – and the Naval Base of Massawa. Rather than sleeping in schools, they were often offered facilities next to police stations. Thus, it does not come as a surprise that at least half the officials they met or who assisted them in some capacity were from the armed forces. It would be to miss the point, though, to assume that the whole journey was a way to draw these young men into military service. The armed forces had their own channels for recruitment.⁵⁸ Yet, the facilities they availed themselves of during the hiking trip relied to a large extent on a network of people belonging to the police and the army.

In contrast to the booklet about the Rovers’ hiking trip to the north, other documents stressed hiking as part of survival training necessary to defend the nation. In order to better understand what survival entailed and what position hiking took in this kind of training, let us look at the first book in Amharic on Scouting in Ethiopia.⁵⁹ Published in 1955, it aimed to explain the Scout Movement to a wider Amharic-speaking audience. Tests for the second Scout rank explicitly demanded participation in at least three hiking and camping events. The requirements for the first rank further specified that applicants needed to be physically capable of completing a hike of at least 25 km, as well as to accurately render the route as a hand-drawn map – thus demanding both physical and

53 Scouts Summer Vacation 1966, Teferi Makonnen School Addis Ababa, published by Ministry of Education and Fine Arts 1967, IES PER 69.43 ADD TF.

54 Scouts Summer vacation 1966, pp. 25–31.

55 Ibid., p. 39.

56 The Scouts were not always welcome and even occasionally were considered spies, *ibid.*, p. 25.

57 Ibid., p. 17.

58 I am grateful to Bahru Zewde for this observation.

59 Bäfäqadä Selase Fantaye, *Salä boy eskowt agälgalot. Ačar mägläča (On the Boy Scout Service. A Short Explanation)*, Addis Ababa 1955, p. 11.

cognitive abilities. Rescue skills and first aid knowledge could be applied during training or in order to survive during hiking and camping trips. Especially during the first years of reorganized Scouting in the country, there was very close cooperation between the Red Cross and the Boy Scout Association of Ethiopia due to shared personnel. These close links were particularly visible during performances such as the annual Orange Day (January), when Scouts sold oranges to raise funds, as well as at national jamborees (usually in May). Red Cross units were systematically included, indicating the joint interest in first aid. All these techniques were necessary to meet the basic requirements of being a Scout, namely to be a patriot (*arbäñña*).⁶⁰

Swimming was another of the important bodily techniques a Scout had to master. Since large parts of Ethiopia are rich in lakes and rivers, swimming has a long history in the country, including the development of local styles as shown in certain pieces of art.⁶¹ In Addis Ababa, natural pools served as locations to learn swimming.⁶² With the proliferation of hotels, modern schools, and armed forces institutions in the 1950s and 1960s, the number of swimming pools increased along with the number of swimming clubs. We therefore know that more swimming facilities were available from the 1950s onwards, but we do not know exactly how widespread the practice was among the Scouts, or how many of the boys actually learnt to swim. This is partially due to the skewed nature of the source corpus, which is predominantly occupied with Scouting in the capital.

Survival also meant the provision of food. This included activities such as collecting firewood and cooking skills. We can assume that this did not occur seamlessly in Ethiopia, because these activities were strongly associated with women's work. In general, it would be interesting to know how (young) people reacted when the notions of a (universal) curriculum were translated into their particular context.

Above all, hiking proved an excellent way simultaneously to pursue other aims that were part of the "Scouting way of life," such as carrying out welfare work and, thus, moulding young people into being active citizens of their country. So as to expand the choice of food in their canteen, Scouts at the Teacher Training School in Debre Berhan reared local varieties fish in a pool which they had constructed.⁶³ As a prerequisite to participate in the already-mentioned round trip through the northern part of the Empire, the Rovers had to do one year of extracurricular teaching of 500 children from second to eighth grade, who were attending their school as part of the National Literacy Campaign. Apart from teaching reading and writing, the Rovers (who were still students themselves) had the additional assignment to inculcate discipline and morale in their pupils and advertise Scouting as useful recreation.⁶⁴ Yearbooks from schools in the capital and other towns around the country portray Scouting as the most efficient way to imbue morals and

60 Ibid., p. 3.

61 Such as Neber Hailu, *Alltag im Dorf* (Everyday life in a village), Frobenius Institut Frankfurt/M., Reg. 34.

62 In his memoirs *Yäpīasa läḅ* (Piazza Child) Addis Ababa 2009, p. 31, Fiqru Kidan mentions a smaller (topolino) and a bigger and deeper pool (trenta quatro) in Addis Ababa.

63 Bulletin Teacher Training Institute, Debre Berhan 1970, p. 31, IES 371.805 DAB TEA.

64 Scouts Summer Vacation 1966, p. 4.

discipline among youth by keeping them off the streets and away from “undesirable” things, such as bars, brothels, or gangs. After all, the youth were not only perceived as the malleable future, but also as a potential danger to the social order. Thus, Scouts were supposed to be a good example to their schoolmates as well as to the surrounding community. The yearbook of the Haile Mariam Mamo Secondary School emphasized that “[t]hrough this association is not able to help others with money, it is always assisting the community through labor and morale.”⁶⁵ The description of leisure activities at the Technical School in Addis Ababa foregrounded “hiking, helping people, [and] group work” as major activities of Scouting.⁶⁶

The “Scouting way of life” was considered a healthy way of life. Thus, the physical education teachers who were supposed to further the development of the movement were expected to combine both aspects in their teaching. Since the early 1960s, a two-year diploma course at Haile Selassie I University, with a major in physical education and a minor in health education, offered “a complete course for leaders in scouting with special emphasis on organization, objectives and scout activities.”⁶⁷ These physical education teachers, who gradually replaced the foreign teaching personnel as well as the retired Ethiopian sergeants who taught a kind of military drill in place of sports at public schools, were “New Men,” too. As argued in the introduction, teachers served as good examples and as translators and multipliers of “New Man” ideas. School yearbooks praise them for their engagement in both physical education and Scouting.

Hiking not only involved survival, engagement with nature, and acquiring knowledge about regional or national territory. As both the example of the camp in Dire Dawa as well as the tour to the northern part of the Empire reveals, hiking included the acquisition of knowledge about official “protocol.” This refers to both the personalities of high rank (including the Emperor and the Prince) and the Scouts. Semi-formal meetings, such as the abovementioned party at Dire Dawa palace, would be interesting cases to consider. Since all reports are silent about this event, another example from this early period will serve the purpose.

In May 1953, *Addis Zämän* reported extensively on the occasion of the Emperor receiving 35 Boy Scouts from Ras Abate School in Kämbata (in southern Ethiopia) in the MoE. Haile Selassie I not only asked about the development of the school, but also expressed his expectations regarding the Scouts’ unconditional loyalty in accordance with the Scouting Oath, and ordered a pair of shoes for each of them as an imperial gift. He also allowed himself to be photographed with the boys, portraying himself as the “Emperor of the Youth” as he stood among them, quite within their reach. The same is true for the meeting with Prince Makonnen, who had invited the Scouts into his home. *Addis Zämän* highlighted the talks with individual Scouts while tea and cookies were

65 Yearbook of the Haile Mariam Mamo Secondary School 1958 EC (1964), p. 11, IES 371.805 DAB HAI.

66 Student Publications Technical School Addis Ababa, 1964–65, p. 70, IES 371.805 ADD TEC.

67 Department of Health and Physical Education, Haile Selassie I University Catalogue, May 1965, p. 196, IES 378.006 GEN.

served. Such media coverage was an attempt to convey the image of the Emperor and his favourite son as “New Men” at the top – approachable to those parts of the youth who promised to become the vanguard in modernizing and strengthening the Ethiopian nation.⁶⁸ These close encounters have to be set apart from the annual reception during the Orthodox Christmas celebrations, when Scouts and other schoolchildren marched through the capital in order to receive small gifts from the Emperor. If any link to established rituals could be drawn at all, these big occasions might come close to the *geber*, the courtly banquet organized by the ruler for his people in accordance with their position on the social ladder. *Geber* was a show by the ruling classes of their generosity and, at the same time, a demonstration of loyalty and re-enactment of social order.⁶⁹ The invitation of the 35 Scouts from Kāmbata might rather be understood as part of a new media strategy to portray the Emperor (and Prince Makonnen) as modern heads of state.

5. Conclusion

What kinds of “New Man” and ways of shaping him do we see through the lens of Scouting in post-liberation Ethiopia and the study of hiking as way of tying together a number of practices towards creating this new sort of Ethiopian? First, we see young boys (and girls) with access to modern education. They receive training that aims at survival in natural surroundings through gaining skills in physical fitness, first aid, and topographical knowledge as well as the ability to use available resources. We identified attempts to instil in them a sense of national belonging and patriotism through walking or travelling through the national territory, especially after the annexation of Eritrea. These hiking trips offered the possibility to have close contact with the armed forces, but did not automatically lead to a military career. We also see voluntary work as a prerequisite for the participation in hiking. Official visits along the way served the purpose of displaying Scouting skills and to internalize the rules of the spectacle of power.

Such official visits bring to the fore a second kind of “New Man” – namely, the high-ranking Ethiopian officials and, most important, the Emperor and Prince Makonnen. Combining the symbols and legitimation of traditional rulers with that of a modern head of state, they constructed themselves as “new” by being supportive of and reachable to the Scouts. These (close) encounters served to convey the message and expectation that a young patriotic and well-educated generation should bring about the Empire’s progress and development, but all through imperial guidance.

A third kind of “New Man” to appear, if we look at the establishment of the Boy Scout Association in Ethiopia before and after the liberation in 1941, is the “expert.” Serving as teachers or advisors in the MoE, these men and women had different social and

68 Yāras abate tāmhart bet boy askawtočč kākāmbata wädä Addis Ababa (Boy Scouts of Ras Abate School from Kāmbata to Addis Ababa), in: Addis Zāmān, 28 Miyazia 1945 (6 May 1953), p. 2.

69 For a change of *geber* under Haile Selassie, see: I. Orłowska, Feasting and Political Change: Tafari’s Ascent to Power and Early 20th Century *geber*, in: *Annales d’Ethiopie*, 28 (2013), pp. 45–67.

geographical backgrounds. Most of them had come to Ethiopia through one of the numerous (aid) missions. Some of them were active in other volunteer movements, too, and could use their networks for combined aims, such as training first aid among the Scouts and the Red Cross volunteers. Access to school compounds facilitated the training of Scoutmasters, and individuals’ careers enabled close relations to the armed forces. Personal contacts in the MoE facilitated the exchange of knowledge about and facilities for hiking and camping across the volunteer movements. These “experts” of the post-liberation period, who mostly came from Europe and North America, were gradually replaced by Ethiopians and training of Scoutmasters was increasingly provided by African Scouting “experts” from the East Africa Division of the World Organization of the Scout Movement, located in Nairobi.⁷⁰ In 1971, two years after the official recognition of the Boy Scouts Movement of Ethiopia, the World Organization of the Scout Movement made Emperor Haile Selassie I its “Honorary Patron.”⁷¹ Three years later, a revolution removed him from the throne and dissolved the organization. Obviously, its philosophy and loyalty to God, the Emperor, and the Imperial nation were incompatible with the ideas of the “New Man” of the socialist Ethiopia.

70 Kəftāña yāskawt kors təkəfātä (Higher scout course started), in: Addis Zämān 5 Gənbət 1955 (13 May 1963).

71 Honorary Membership H.S.I, Ethiopian National Archives 1.2.52.03.