

The First Boy Scouts in Hong Kong, 1910-1912 (1)

香港最早期的童子軍, 1910-1912 (1)

Public Appeals for Scouting 本港報章呼籲成立童子軍團

The earliest specific reference to Boy Scouts for Hong Kong that could be located in the local press was an item in the *South China Morning Post* in March 1910, entitled "Boy Scouts: Corps Wanted in Hong Kong." The correspondent pointed out that "Baden-Powell's scoutey [sic] boys are all the 'go' with the younger generation at home," and then made the first public appeal for Scouting in Hong Kong:



Figure 1. Rev. Spink (R), with Governor Lugard 史賓克牧師(右)及港督盧押

Could not some enthusiast take up the matter here?...The idea should include every eligible boy in the colony, and the Government might induce the schools to take up the scheme...The opportunity appears to be going abegging in Hongkong

In another article in the same month, the paper lamented that "[n]o response has yet been made to the idea mooted in the 'South China Morning Post' of starting a corps of Boys Scouts in Hongkong." It then went on to describe Baden-Powell's claim that well-trained Boy Scouts could make very good Colonists.

These two articles did attract the attention of Rev. H.O. Spink (**Figure 1**), a new comer to Hong Kong, having just arrived from England in 1909 to become the chaplain of the St. Andrew's Church in Kowloon. He responded to the newspaper's appeal for a troop of Boy Scouts, and proposed that one could do better and establish "a really efficient company of the Boys' Brigade." As rationale, he claimed that "the Boys' Brigade, being a Christian Movement, includes in its programme all that is attempted by the boy scouts," in addition to training aimed at helping "the moral and spiritual life of a boy." Spink admitted that there was insufficient number of British boys in Kowloon, as most of them lived on the Island side, especially on the Peak. Nevertheless, he ventured that a Company could be started next autumn, and called for others to help.

Boys' Brigade and Early Scouting 基督少年軍與早期童軍之關係

Before going further, it would be helpful to digress a bit on the Boys' Brigade and its relationship with Scouting. Evidence suggests that the Boys' Brigade both inspired and facilitated early development of Scouting. The Brigade, founded by Sir William Smith in 1884, had become an international movement by 1900, with presence in the UK, Canada, Australia, USA, New Zealand, South Africa, West Indies, India and Ceylon. In 1903, Baden-Powell was invited by Smith to be the guest of honor in the Brigade's annual demonstration. After this, the two spoke at length on "the B[oy's] B[r]igade], the Boy, the Boy-messengers of Mafeking and much

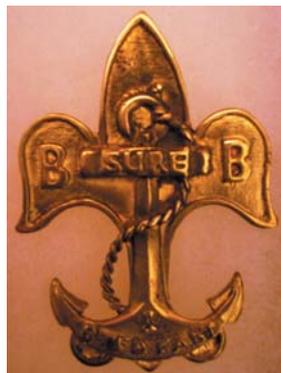


Figure 2. A Boys' Brigade Boy Scout Badge 早期基督少年軍之童軍章

else." BP was soon made an honorary Vice-President of the Brigade. In 1904, he again inspected a large gathering. Smith indicated proudly that there were around 54,000 boys in the Movement. BP recorded in his diary this conversation:

I suggested that if the work really appealed to the boys they should have ten times that number. He asked me how it could be made to appeal. I suggested scouting, which had proved so popular with recruits in the army. He asked me if I would not rewrite the army scouting book to suit boys.

In June, 1906, the *Boys Brigade Gazette* published an edited version of BP's scheme and introduced a Scout Badge, featuring the fleur-de-lis (**Figure 2**). Even the famous Brownsea Island camp in 1907 owed a few debts to Smith: out of the twenty-two boys chosen to participate, nine were from two Brigade Companies; and Henry Robson, a Brigade captain, secured all the tents and equipment required. It could be said, therefore, that Scouting started as a training program for the boys of the Brigade.

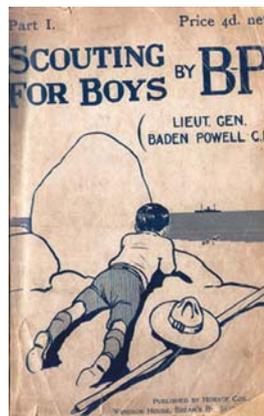


Figure 3. B-P's *Scouting for Boys*, Part I, issued in January, 1908

貝登堡先生於1908年1月出版的童子警探術(卷一)

Part I of BP's *Scouting for Boys* came out in January, 1908 (**Figure 3**). Though BP had originally intended to have his Boy Scout scheme implemented by existing youth organizations such as the Brigade and the YMCA, many boys decided that they wanted only to be Boy Scouts, and nothing else. By 1908, independent Boy Scout troops mushroomed throughout Britain. In September, BP was forced to introduce a measure of order by setting up local committees to register troops, appoint leaders, conduct tests, and award badges. By 1909, a National Council for the Boy Scouts was formed. Smith was invited to join, but refused because of the secular nature of Scouting, even though he admitted that it was "an excellent thing as taken up within the Boys' Brigade...., as an interesting and helpful adjunct to its regular work." From this point on, Boy

Scout Movement and Boys' Brigade went their separate paths, and the former grew rapidly, often drawing both leaders and boys from the latter.

Shanghai was among the earlier cities in Asia to form a Boys' Brigade Company, based at the Shanghai Union Church, in 1903. In early 1910, just months before the Brigade was being advocated by Rev. Spink in Hong Kong, this Shanghai Company had over one hundred British, American, Dutch, German, French, Norwegian, Portuguese, Parsee, Swedish, Russian and Eurasian boys. This ethnic composition, as shall be seen later, contrasted with that of the Hong Kong Company to be founded.

Therefore, in a sense, Spink's claim that the Boys' Brigade was better than the Boy Scouts, if somewhat self-serving given his association with the Church, was not totally unfounded. At this time, the former was certainly older, had earlier presence in Shanghai and other parts of Asia, and did have "more" to offer, at least in terms of Christian or spiritual training.

(Part 1 of 4)