The Queensland Native Police and strategies for recruitment on the frontier, 1849-1901

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‘No. 26 Dispersing usual way. Some good shooting’

Recruitment: another euphemism?

Forcible recruitment
Desertions from the NMP. Data on named troopers who deserted are much rarer than on anonymous desertions from camps. Data are more complete for the 1850s, 60s and 70s than for other decades.

**Desertion**

“I entered the native police about two years and a half ago, and continued a trooper until about December last, when the camp sergeant, a white man, having taken from me my gin, and, on my speaking to him about it, having cruelly ill-treated me, I left the force without leave of my officer … I ran away because I knew that the Native Police had shot Boys who left the force without leave and I knew a Boy had been shot in the Camp under arrest for desertion and that I was threatened to be shot too.”

**The tyranny of distance**

“I do not wish to remain in the native police any longer, and I would have left the force when my officer asked me if I wanted to leave, whilst in the Rockhampton district, but I was afraid of being turned into the bush naked amongst blacks who hated my people, and so far from my own tribe.”

**Inducements**

“The gay dress – the constant itinerancy – the lazy life – the independence of the elders of the tribe – and last tho’ not least, the ability to make love to a choice of lubras in every tribe they visit, with perfect impunity.” (JP Wilkie to Henry Hughes, 25 October 1852)

**Death or enlistment**
Voluntary Enlistment or “Colonised Labour”

“... there is a very nice lad in this neighbourhood who is extremely ambitious of joining the N.P. He is a well knit, well set up, smart & very intelligent boy; his age about seventeen. He speaks English well, and has applied four or five times to be enlisted. He is at present with Coxon, who gives him a good character. He has a good open countenance, which is a great thing, & I have no doubt, would make a very active policeman.”

Men or Boys?

Qld Police Museum #PM0189

Destruction of traditional lifeways and societies

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