Invisible labourers: Cape Bedford (Hopevale) Mission and the 'paradox' of Aboriginal labour in the Second World War

Download

Invisible labourers: Cape Bedford (Hopevale) Mission and the 'paradox' of Aboriginal labour in the Second World War (3.801Mb)

Citations

Author
Close, Kirstie Louise

Date
2009

Affiliation
Arts - School of Historical Studies

Metadata
Show full item record

Document Type
Masters Coursework thesis

Citations

Access Status
Open Access

URI
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/35181

Linked Resource URL
http://cat.lib.unimelb.edu.au/record=b3280296

Description
© 2009 Kirstie Louise Close
Abstract
This thesis examines the role of labour in the history of the Cape Bedford Aboriginal community, from its establishment in 1886 to 1950. It focuses on period around the Second World War when the community was evacuated south to the government reserve at Woorabinda. This community’s history offers a lens through which to view the application of Queensland’s protectionist and wartime legislations. The Cape Bedford community’s absorption into the Manpower Directorate during the Second World War, after they were removed to Woorabinda, was among the most extreme examples of government control over Indigenous labour. This study is the first work to clearly outline the extent of collaboration between the Queensland state government and Aboriginal settlements with the Manpower Directorate.

More broadly, the true extent of the Aboriginal workforce – large and well organised – is being revealed. This thesis thus adds significantly to the growing literature demonstrating the significant contribution of Aboriginal workers to Queensland’s economy. Furthermore, it argues that ‘work’ was integral to the relationships formed between Aboriginal people and the white community. This is done through examination of labour conditions, and work as a site of exchange and contact. In doing so, the social tensions both within and outside this community regarding land and labour are exposed, along with the importance of work to the everyday experience of community members.

Missions and reserves were not just sites of segregation or ‘protection’; they were places where Aboriginal people were put to work – even if the labour they performed remained largely invisible. Focusing on labour is essential both to understanding the history of these institutions and the experiences of those who resided within them. By providing a new and detailed case study, this thesis offers a fresh perspective on the history of Cape Bedford Mission, as well as the history of government Aboriginal reserves. It demonstrates particularly the centrality of Aboriginal labour to this history, and to Aboriginal experiences. While Aboriginal labour may have been ‘invisible’ to much of white society, it was in fact central to the relationship established between the colonisers and the colonised, even as it changed over time. By revealing the extent and nature of the work undertaken by Aboriginal people in these institutions, it will highlight the ‘paradox’ of the invisibility of Aboriginal workers.

Keywords
Hopevale; Cape Bedford; Guugu Yimidhirr; Schwarz; Poland; Flierl; Woorabinda; Queensland; missions; reserves; evacuation

Collections
- School of Historical and Philosophical Studies - Theses [1553]