

Three months after Cairns was established, the *Queenslander* in 1877 published an article by Old Chum about the Native Police and their 'dispersing' of Indigenous people. Quite readily this reporter relates how the Native Police answered the question :

Do we shoot them? Of course we do. The popular idea is to disperse them by firing over their heads. Bah! only people who know nothing about wild myalls would imagine that they would be afraid of that sort of thing. One thing is certain. If you point a gun at a nigger (sic) to frighten him you had better let him have it straight, or you are very likely to find a spear sticking in your back as soon as soon as you turn away. *Queenslander* (27 January 1877)

This practice was observed, not, as Old Chum states before 1877, but as long as the Queensland Native Police existed (1859- c.1910). That is why the Danish editor, Carl Feiberg<sup>1</sup> after editing the *Cooktown Courier* went on to edit the *Queenslander* and in 1880 produced *The Way We Civilise* which unfortunately confirms what Old Chum openly declared. Yet the Native Police had been operating for 17 years (1842-59) as a part of the NSW government, before the establishment of the colony of Queensland in 1859, and continued under the Queensland government until approximately 1910. Henry Reynolds observed:

Harsh racist views were obviously convenient to a community engaged in dispossessing a native people and perhaps some such doctrine was psychologically necessary to the pioneer or to those aware of conditions on the frontier of settlement.<sup>2</sup>

No matter how you look at it, to *the Indigenous people* of Australia the arrival of Europeans was an invasion of their traditional lands. James Cook claimed the eastern side of the New Holland at Possession Island in the Torres Strait in 1770, but nobody informed Aboriginal Australia! Eighteen years later the actual act of possessing the land started after Governor Arthur Phillip and the First Fleet arrived in Botany Bay, on 27 January 1788. The diversity of languages spoken by Indigenous tribal groups meant that most Europeans had only a rudimentary (if that) knowledge of the nature of people whose lands they were invading. So their interpretation of Indigenous people was purely on supposition, based on what Europeans thought they were thinking. Similarly, the more gory aspects of the Bama's (rainforest Aboriginal peoples) mortuary practices were amplified and utilized to denigrate them. This was particularly noticeable with regard to cannibalism.<sup>3</sup>

William Kracke, who arrived on the Palmer Goldfields in 1882 as a would-be miner, and lived in the area for the next 22 years, stated that:

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<sup>1</sup> C. Feiberg, *The Way We Civilise; Black and White; The Native Police: A Series of Articles and letters Reprinted from the "Queenslander"*, G and J Black, 1880. See also R Ørsted-Jensen, *Frontier History Revisited*, Lux Mundi Publishing, 2011.

<sup>2</sup> H. Reynolds, "Racial Thought in Early Colonial Australia", *The Australian Journal of Politics and History* (12974), p.52.

<sup>3</sup> T. Bottoms, "Djarrugan, the Last of the Nesting", MA(Qual) JCU, 1990, p.82, pp.84-86.