

Despatch from Acting Administrator on visit to eastern and north-eastern districts, 1899

Trip up to the Mambare & then back via Phillips Harbour

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"After leaving the Opi we went to Phillip's Harbour in Collingwood Bay. Your Excellency will remember the village of Maisina in that bay, the one we visited on the 6th of May last just at dusk. A few months ago Wanigela, the chief of Maisina, and fifteen men of the village, whilst working in their gardens, were killed by a war party from some inland tribe. According to the Collingwood Bay people, this tribe or collection of tribes are known as the Dori, and live on the Musa River, some distance from its mouth. From the direction they pointed to, it seemed to me that the river in question might be the main eastern affluent of the Musa. These same people are alleged to have completely destroyed several of the bay villages in detail at different times. Apparently the inhabitants of the sea coast have never ventured to retaliate by invading the enemies' country. The Collingwood Bay people in general, and the Maisina people in particular, have up to the present shown a disposition to distrust and to be unfriendly to Europeans. There have been exceptions to this, the most notable one being that of the late chief Wanigela. They are still great thieves. I think that this unsatisfactory spirit has been due, partly to some confidence in their own numbers and partly to fear and mistrust. As yet there are really no competent interpreters for this district, and it is difficult, therefore, to make them understand us. Although I doubted whether the Maisina people really knew where their enemies' villages were, and even if they did whether, with the limited time at our disposal, we could get to them, it seemed to me desirable to take a trip inland. The fact that we were not afraid to meet the tribes they feared, would impress them, as would also the fact that we could travel about inland. Natives of new district apparently have an idea that we are afraid to go far from our vessels. Our taking up the matter might induce them to believe that the Government was a friendly power, and also might enable them to realise more completely than they have yet done their independence is at an end.