A CLAIM FOR THE DISCOVERY OF THE COAST OF GUIANA BY THE DUTCH.

BY

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The curious pretention, expressed in the title of this article, was made by a Dutchman, A. Cabeliau, "Commiss-Generaal", in a report, entitled "Verclaringe van de onbekende ende onbeseylde voiage van America beginnende van de riviere Amasonis tot het eylant van de Trinidad toe" (Explanation of the unknown and never sailed voyage of America, beginning with the river Amasonis, to the island of the Trinidad), presented to the "Staten-Generaal" in the beginning of the year 1599. The manuscript is at the Ryksarchief (Archives of the Kingdom) at the Hague, but Jhr. de Jonge D. C. L. published it in extenso in his work, "De opkomst van het Nederlandsche gezag in Oost-Indië" (The first development of the Netherland rule in the East-Indies), 1862.

The claim is the more curious as we see that, even the West-Indian voyages of Walter Raleigh and Lawrence Keymis, nearly about the same time, were quite known in Holland, as is proved by an "instruction", made in 1597 by the Dutch geograph Hondius, published also by the Jonge, Part. 1, pag. 179. Perhaps this may be the solution, that our Dutchman used the word "discovery" in the sense that he was the first of his countrymen who undertook a measuring the size of the land and its rivers-mouths, and bringing its form on a cart, as accurately as he thought was possible.

Starting from den Briel December 3rd, 1597, with the ship "de zeeridder" (The Sea-Knight), they saw the Wild Coast on February 9th, came in contact with Indians of the "nations": Geribus (Galibis, Caribs) and Jau near the river Caurora (Kourou) at the 15th, and also, at the 17th with the "nations" Hebaio and Arwaccus (Arowacks). At the river Cauwo (Kaw) they found the "nation" Iaio. They met with several Dutch ships, and visited the following rivers together...
with two of these ships: Wyapoco (Oyapock), Curassawini, Cunamamae (Counamama), Juraco (Iracoubo), Mavary, Amano (Mana or Amanibo), Marawini (Dutch Marowyne, formerly in French: Maroiynye, see Histoire Naturelle et Morale des Iles Antilles de l’Amérique, by L. D. P. 1658 pag. 351, presently called in French and by the negroes wrongly »Maroni«, also by Joest, Ethnographisches und Verwandtes aus Guiana Int. Archiv für Ethnographie, 1893), Carapi, Surinamo (Surinam), Saramo (Saramacca), Coupanama (Coppename), Waycara (Nickerie?), Curetini (Corenty), Worinoque. Between Oyapock and Kourou they had specially visited Cavowy (Kaw), Cayany (Cayenne-river) and Macuria (Macouria). Still several other river names are given, but these rivers were not visited by the three ships, because «the Indians said there was not much to barter there».

In the Orinoco they were (notwithstanding the Netherlands were in full war with Spain) most friendly received by the Spaniards.

The freely translated conclusion of the report is that they «have discovered, found and sailed more than twenty four rivers, on this voyage, many islands in the rivers and other ports, which were never known nor navigated by these countries, yes, what is more, were never before the date of their voyage described or discovered by any carts or cosmographs».

The History of the discoveries and settlements in these parts of Guiana is well treated in the excellent work of the now late General P. M. Netscher »Geschiedenis van de Koloniën Essequebo, Demerary en Berbice«, 1888.

The principal explorations in the second part of the past century in the colony of Surinam, discoveries this time in the general sense of the word, were the following:

1856. Dr. Voltz geological survey, most in the coast- and savanne-region.

1861. A Dutch-French commission, the Marowyne and Lawa (East frontier river), and the Tapanahony for a part;

1861—1879, parts from several rivers, and small parts of the land between them, indicated on the great chart (made however without triangulation) of the then known part of the colony by Mr. Cateau van Roosevelt and Mr. van Lansberge;

1877—1892, several lines cut through the wood and measured by the Government surveyor Mr. Loth, who discovered in 1902 the point of junction of the Wilhelmina and the Emma rivers (between Lawa and Tapanahony);
1885. Prof. Martin, geological survey, specially on a part of the Surinam, till the Bush-negro village Toledo (about 4° 34' N. B. and 55° 18' W. L. Greenwich).

Preceded by Mr. van Drimmelen in 1899, Dr. van Cappelle explored in 1900 a part of the Upper-Nickerie and made also a geological research in the land between Nickerie and Coppename.

With exception of the voyage of Prof. Martin all these explorations were made by aid of Government.

Geological explorations were made in 1898—1901, by Mr. Dubois, in relation to a private company, in the land between the Surinam and Marowyne rivers.

Since 1901 explorations and triangulations are made systematically by a Commission for Scientific research in Surinam, the Government paying one half or two third of the costs. In that way were explored:

in 1901 the Coppename, to its sources, when a point at about 3° 57' N. B. and 56° 49' W. L. was reached and the Wilhelmina mountains were discovered;

in 1903, the Upper Saramacca, to its sources.

In the year 1903 an expedition started for the Goniui, a branch of the Lawa and gauged several tops of the Tumucumaque mountains, from the Piton Vidal. The intention is to take in 1904 the Tapanahony and the Upper Surinam. Moreover a bill has been accepted by which the Government, in connexion with a project for a railway to the interior, has been authorized to spend one million (guilders) for an exploration of the land between Lawa and Tapanahony.