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978-1-108-00800-6 - Discovery of the Large, Rich, and Beautiful Empire of Guiana

Walter Raleigh

Excerpt

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## THE DISCOVERIE

OF

## GVIANA.

**O**N Thursday the 6 of Februarie in the yeare 1595, we departed *England*, and the sunday following had sight of the North cape of *Spainye*, the winde for the most part continuig prosperous; wee passed in sight of the *Burlings* and the rocke<sup>1</sup>, and so onwarde for the *Canaries*, and fell with *Fuerte ventura* the 17 of the same moneth, where we spent two or three daies, and relieued our companies with some fresh meate. From thence wee coasted by the *Gran Canaria*, and so to *Tenerife*, and staid there for the Lyons whelp your Lordships ship, and for Captaine *Amys Preston* and the rest; but when after 7 or 8 daies we found them not, wee departed and directed our course for *Trinidado* with mine owne shippe, and a small barke of Captaine *Crosses* onely (for we had before lost sight of a small Gallego on the coast of *Spainye*, which came with vs from *Plymmouth*): wee arriued at *Trinidado* the 22 of March, casting ancour at Point *Curiapan*, which the Spanyards call *Punto de Gallo*<sup>2</sup>, which is

<sup>1</sup> The isles of Berlengas, Burlings or Biorlings, and Cape Roca or the rock of Lisbon, on the coast of Portugal.

<sup>2</sup> Curiapan is the south-western point of Trinidad, now called Hicacos or Icacos; it forms with Punta Foletto, or Foletto, the Serpent's Mouth. Christopher Columbus cast anchor here on the 3rd of August, 1498, and

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[More information](#)

situate in 8 degrees or thereabouts: we abode there 4 or 5 daies, and in all that time we came not to the speach of anie Indian or Spaniard: on the coast we saw a fire, as we sailed from the point *Carao*<sup>1</sup> towards *Curiapan*, but for feare of the Spaniards, none durst come to speake with vs. I my selfe coasted it in my barge close aboard the shore and landed in euery Coue, the better to know the iland, while the ships kept the chanell. From *Curiapan* after a fewe daies we turned vp Northeast to recouer that place which the Spaniards cal *Puerto de los Hispanioles*, and the inhabitants *Conquerabia*<sup>2</sup>, and as before (re-uctualing my barge) I left the shippes and kept by the shore, the better to come to speach with some of the inhabitantes, and also to vnderstand the riuers, watring places and portes of the iland which (as it is rudely done) my purpose is to send your lordship after a few daies. From *Curiapan* I came to a port and seat of Indians called *Parico*, where we found a fresh-water riuier<sup>3</sup>, but sawe no people. From thence I rowed to another port, called by the naturals *Piche*, and by the Spaniardes *Tierra de Brea*<sup>4</sup>. In the way betweene both were diuers little brooks

called it Punta del Arenal. A sand-bank, situated round the point to the north-west, bears to this day the name of "los Gallos." Sir Robert Dudley, who anchored at Point Curiapan on the 1st of February 1595, called the bay under the point Pelican's Bay, from the abundance of these birds there. (Hakluyt, vol. iii. p. 574.) The geographical position of Point Icaos is 10° 2' 30" north latitude, and 61° 57' west longitude from Greenwich. It will be observed that Raleigh considers himself two degrees further south than he was in reality, and this refers to his whole Orinoco journey.

<sup>1</sup> The point Carao is now called Negra Point: in some of the Spanish charts this point and the small river to the windward of it are named Punta y rio Curao.

<sup>2</sup> Puerto d'España, or Port of Spain, the capital of Trinidad.

<sup>3</sup> Punta del Cedro, or Cedar Point, forms the northern point of this bay. It is no longer known by the name of Parico.

<sup>4</sup> The celebrated pitch-lake of Trinidad near Punta la Brea is situated on the leeward side of the island, on a small peninsula: it is nearly circular, and about a mile and a half in diameter. The usual appearance of the pitch or asphaltum is that of pit-coal, but in hot weather it is liquid. When mixed with grease, oil, or common pitch, to acquire fluidity, it is well-

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[More information](#)

of fresh water, and one salt riuer that had store of oysters vpon the branches of the trees<sup>1</sup>, and were very salt and wel tasted. Al their oysters grow vpon those boughs and spraiies, and not on the ground: the like is commonlie seene in the West Indies and else where. This tree is described by *Andrewe Theuet* in his French *Antartique*, and the forme figured in his booke as a plante verye straunge, and by *Plinie* in his XII. booke of his naturall historie. But in this ilande, as also in *Guiana*, there are verie manie of them.

At this point called *Tierra de Brea* or *Piche* there is that abundance of stone pitch, that all the ships of the world may be therewith loden from thence, and wee made triall of it in

adapted for preserving the bottoms of ships against the destructive worm, the *Teredo navalis*. Admiral Cochrane made several experiments to use it for nautical purposes, which failed, as it was requisite to mix such a large quantity of oil with it to render it pliable, that it far surpassed the price of common pitch.

<sup>1</sup> The first accounts brought to Europe of oysters growing on trees raised as great astonishment as the relation of El Dorado itself; and to those who were unacquainted with the fact that these molluscous animals select the branches of the tree, on which they fix themselves during high water, when they are immersed, it may certainly sound strange and wonderful that shells, which as we know live in Europe on banks in the depths of the sea, should be found in the West Indies on the branches of trees. They attach themselves chiefly to the mangrove tree (*Rhizophora Mangle*, Linn.), which grows along the shore of the sea and rivers with brackish water, and covers immense tracts of coast, rooting and vegetating in a manner very peculiar to that tree, even as far as low-water mark. Sir Walter Raleigh, in his History of the World (book i. chap. iv. section 2), compares it erroneously with the Indian fig-tree (*Ficus indica*), which Becanus considered to be the tree of knowledge, or of life. Raleigh observes in his description that he had seen five hundred oysters hanging on one of the branches (which he calls cords) of a mangrove tree. The water flowing off during ebb leaves the branches with the oysters attached to them high and dry. Three species of mollusca are chiefly found on the mangrove trees, namely *Ostrea Rhizophoræ* (Auct.?), *O. folium*, and a species of *Mytilus*. The *O. Rhizophoræ* is eaten, and in Porto Rico the price of a barrel of these mangrove oysters is a piaster. We differ with Raleigh respecting their superior taste; they are at the best mere substitutes for an European oyster, very small, and not so delicate.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

trimming our ships to be most excellent good, and melteth not with the sunne as the pitch of *Norway*, and therefore for ships trading the south partes very profitable. From thence we went to the mountaine foote called *Annaperima*<sup>1</sup>, and so passing the riuier *Carone*, on which the Spanish Citie was seated, we met with our ships at *Puerto de los Hispanioles* or *Conquerabia*.

This iland of *Trinidad* hath the forme of a sheep-hook, and is but narrow; the north part is very mounteynous, the soile is very excellent and wil beare sugar, ginger, or any other commodity that the Indies yeeld. It hath store of deare, wyld porks, fruits, fish and fowle. It hath also for bread sufficient *Mais*, *Cassaui*<sup>2</sup>, and of those roots and fruits which are common euery where in the West *Indies*. It hath diuers beasts, which the *Indies* haue not: the Spaniards confessed that they found grains of gold in some of the riuers, but they hauing a purpose to enter *Guiana* (the *Magazin* of all rich mettels) cared not to spend time in the search thereof any farther. This iland is called by the people therof *Cairi*, and in it are diuers nations: those about *Parico* are called *Iaio*; those at *Punto Carao* are of the *Arwacas*, and betweene *Carao* and *Curiapan* they are called *Saluaios*; betweene *Carao* and *Punto Galera*<sup>3</sup> are the *Nepoios*, and those about the Spanish Citie tearme themselues *Carinepagotos*<sup>4</sup>. Of the rest of the nations, and of other portes and

<sup>1</sup> This hill, in the neighbourhood of San Fernando, is now called *Naparima*, and has given its name to the whole district.

<sup>2</sup> These two plants supply the most useful food of the Indian tribes; they form their staff of life. The grains of the first (*Zea Mays*, Linn.) furnish the Indian corn or maize, and from the roots of the second (*Manihot utilissima*, Pohl), although itself a strong poison in its natural state, the Indians prepare a nutritious substitute for bread.

<sup>3</sup> The north-eastern point of Trinidad is called at present *Punta de la Galera*; but Columbus designated the south-eastern point of the island under that name, on account of a rock which has the appearance of a vessel under sail. It is now known as *Punta Galeota*.

<sup>4</sup> The number of Indians, the remnant of those numerous tribes who inhabited Trinidad at the period when Raleigh visited it, amounted in 1831 to seven hundred and sixty-two.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

riuers I leaue to speake heere, beeing impertinent to my purpose, and meane to describe them as they are situate in the particular plot and description of the iland, three partes whereof I coasted with my barge, that I might the better discribe it.

Meeting with the ships at *Puerto de los Hispanioles*, we found at the landing place a company of Spanyardes who kept a guard at the descent, and they offering a signe of peace I sent Capitaine *Whiddon* to speake with them, whome afterward to my great grieft I left buried in the said iland after my returne from *Guiana*, beeing a man most honest and valiant. The Spanyards semed to be desirous to trade with vs, and to enter into tearms of peace, more for doubt of their own strength then for ought else, and in the end vpon pledge, some of them came aboard: the same cuening there stale also aboard vs in a small *Canoa* two Indians, the one of them being a *Casique* or Lord of people called *Cantyman*, who had the yeare before beene with Capitaine *Whiddon*, and was of his acquaintance. By this *Cantyman* wee vnderstood what strength the Spaniardes had, how farre it was to their Citie, and of *Don Anthonio de Berreo*<sup>1</sup> the gouernour, who was said to be slaine in his second attempt of *Guiana*, but was not.

While we remained at *Puerto de los Hispanioles* some Spaniardes came aboard vs to buy lynnens of the company, and such other thinges as they wanted, and also to view our shippes and company, all which I entertained kindly and feasted after our manner: by meanes whereof I learned of one and another as much of the estate of *Guiana* as I could, or as they knew, for those poore souldiers hauing beene many yeares without wine, a fewe draughtes made them merry, in which moode they vaunted of *Guiana* and of the riches therof, and all what they knew of

<sup>1</sup> Don Antonio de Berreo y Oruña, who figures so conspicuously in Raleigh's voyage, was governor of Trinidad, and married to a daughter of the great Adelantado Gonzalo Ximenes de Quesada, the founder of "Nuevo reyno de Granada," from whom he had inherited his treasures, and the desire to discover the boundless riches of Guiana.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

the waies and passages, my selfe seeming to purpose nothing lesse then the enterance or discouerie thereof, but bred in them an opinion that I was bound onely for the reliefe of those english, which I had planted in *Virginia*<sup>1</sup>, whereof the brute was come among them, which I had performed in my returne if extremity of weather had not forst me from the said coast.

I found occasions of staying in this place for two causes: the one was to be reuenged of *Berre*, who the yeare before betraied 8 of Captaine *Whiddons* men, and toke them while he departed from them to seeke the *E. Bonaventure*, which arriued at *Trinidad* the day before from the East *Indies*: in whose absence *Berre* sent a *Canoa* aboard the pinnace onely with *Indians* and dogs inuiting the company to goe with them into the wods to kil a deare, who like wise men in the absence of their Captaine followed the *Indians*, but were no sooner one harquebush shot from the shore, but *Berre*s souldiers lying in ambush had them all, notwithstanding that he had giuen his worde to Captaine *Whiddon* that they should take water and wood safelie: the other cause of my stay was, for that by discourse with the *Spaniards* I daily learned more and more of *Guiana*, of the riuers and passages, and of the enterprize of *Berre*, by what meanes or fault he failed, and how he meant to prosecute the same.

While we thus spent the time I was assured by another *Casique* of the north side of the iland, that *Berre* had sent to *Marguerita* and to *Cumana* for souldiers, meaning to have giuen me a *Cassado* at parting, if it had bin possible. For although he had giuen order through all the iland that no *Indian* should come aborde to trade with me vpon paine of hanging and quartering, (hauing executed two of them for the same which I afterwarde founde) yet euery night there came some with most

<sup>1</sup> The conduct of Raleigh, who was charged with a callous abandonment of the poor settlers in Virginia, has been much censured. This passage is one proof among many which we possess, that although he had given up his patent to a company of merchants, he continued to take a strong interest in the fate of the first adventurers in Virginia.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

lamentable complaints of his cruelty, how he had devided the iland and giuen to euery soldier a part, that he made the ancient *Casiqui* which were Lordes of the country to be their slaues, that he kept them in chains, and dropped their naked bodies with burning bacon, and such other torments, which I found afterwards to be true: for in the city after I entred the same, there were 5 of the Lords or litle kings (which they cal *Casiqui* in the west Indies) in one chaine almost dead of famine, and wasted with torments: these are called in their own language *Acarewana*<sup>1</sup>, and now of late since English, French, and Spanish are come among them, they cal themselues *Capitaynes*, because they perceiue that the chiefest of euery ship is called by that name. Those fiue *Capitaynes* in the chaine were called *Wannawanare*, *Carroaori*, *Maguarima*, *Tarroopanama*, and

<sup>1</sup> Humboldt considers that *Acarewana* signifies, in one of the different Carib or Caribisi dialects, a chief or any person in command. This supposition is correct; more accurately it refers to the commander or head of the tribe to which he who speaks and makes use of the word belongs. The name of a chief or commander in the general sense of the word is *Tepotori* \* in the Macusi language, but if the speaker alludes to the chief of his own tribe or horde, he would say *Epotoriwana*; that is, our headman or chieftain. As Raleigh observes, these petty chieftains call themselves now *capitan* or *captain*. *Esakamapung* in the Caribisi, or *Tepotorokung* in the Macusi dialect, signifies a great captain or chief who has command over a number of inferior chiefs; it is perhaps analogous to ‘king’ in the English language.

The metaphorical application of the word *tepotori* in the Macusi language deserves a passing observation, as it affords an instance of the similarity of the metaphors employed in the infancy of languages in general. The largest of a number of apples, oranges or any other objects would be called by a Macusi *tepotori*, the chieftain or captain. This application reminds us of our own expression in childhood for the largest apple or orange among a number, which playfully would be called “the captain;” and if we follow the idea suggested by this application, it will lead us to the most striking qualifications required for a leader.

\* The editor begs here to observe, that in the orthography which he has adopted for Indian words he has used the sound of the vowels which they possess in the Italian, and for the consonants that which they have in the English language.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

*Aterima*. So as both to be reuenged of the former wrong, as also considering that to enter *Guiana* by small boats, to depart 400 or 500 miles from my ships, and to leaue a garison in my backe interested in the same enterprize, who also daily expected supplies out of Spaine, I should haue sauoured very much of the Asse: and therefore taking a time of most aduantage, I set vpon the *Corp du guard* in the euening, and hauing put them to the sword, sente Captaine *Calfeild* onwards with 60 soldiers, and my self followed with 40 more and so toke their new city which they called *S. Ioseph*<sup>1</sup>, by breake of day: they abode not any fight after a few shot, and al being dismissed but onely *Berre* and his companion, I brought them with me aboard, and at the instance of the Indians I set their new city of *S. Iosephs* on fire.

The same day arriued Captaine *George Gifford* with your Lordships ship, and Captaine *Keymis* whom I lost on the coast of Spaine, with the *Gallego*, and in them diuers Gent. and others, which to our little army was a great comfort and supply.

We then hastened away towards our purposed discouery, and first I called all the Captaines of the iland together that were enemies to the Spaniards, for there were some which *Berre* had brought out of other countries, and planted there to eat out and wast those that were natural of the place, and by my Indian interpreter, which I caried out of England, I made them vnderstand that I was the seruant of a Queene, who was the great *Casique* of the north, and a virgin, and had more *Casiqui* vnder her then there were trees in their iland: that she was an enemy to the *Castellani*<sup>2</sup> in respect of their tyrannie and oppression,

<sup>1</sup> St. Joseph is now almost abandoned since Port of Spain became the capital. The number of inhabitants amounted in 1831 to six hundred and four.

<sup>2</sup> Among the Indian tribes of the Upper Orinoco and its northern tributaries, the Ventuari, Padamo, &c., the descendants of the Spaniards are still called Castilianos. When the Macusis speak of the Spanish inhabitants of the Lower Orinoco about Angostura, they call them sometimes Carra-kinio (perhaps from Caracas?), but more frequently Españolos. The descendants of the Portuguese or Brazilians are called in the Carib dialects



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Excerpt

[More information](#)

and that she deliuered all such nations about her, as were by them oppressed, and hauing freed all the coast of the northern world from their seruitude had sent me to free them also, and withal to defend the countrey of *Guiana* from their inuasion and conquest. I shewed them her maiesties picture which they so admired and honored, as it had beene easie to haue brought them idolatrous thereof<sup>1</sup>.

The like and a more large discourse I made to the rest of the nations both in my passing to *Guiana*, and to those of the borders, so as in that part of the world her maiesty is very famous and admirable, whom they now call *Ezrabeta Cassipuna Aque-rewana*, which is as much as *Elizabeth*, the great princesse or greatest commaunder. This done wee left *Puerto de los Hispanioles*, and returned to *Curiapan*, and hauing *Berre* my prisouner I gathered from him as much of *Guiana* as he knewe.

This *Berre* is a gent. well descended, and had long serued the Spanish king in *Millain*, *Naples*, the lowe Countries and else where, very valiant and liberall, and a Gent. of great assurednes, and of a great heart: I vsed him according to his estate and worth in all things I could, according to the small meanes I had.

and by the Guianians in general *Caraiwa*; those of the Teutonic races, as the English, German and Dutch, *Parana-ghiri*, signifying Sea-people. *Caraiwa* is a foreign word, and has been introduced from the *Tapuyas*; it signifies 'white man.'

<sup>1</sup> Raleigh possessed the indispensable accomplishment of a courtier of Queen Elizabeth's reign, namely the art of flattery, in a high degree. We refer to his poetry and his letters of adulation written to the Queen during the period he was for the first time confined in the Tower; nay, even the romantic incident of the cloak, which, as Fuller tells us, led to his favour with the Queen, proves him the accomplished courtier. The adulation which pervades the account of his discovery, from the commencement to the end, does not astonish us therefore; but we venture to say, from the knowledge we possess of the character and taste of the Indian, that a representation of Zuccaro's portrait of her Majesty, now at Hampton Court, in which she is presented in a fantastic dress, and which, we must confess, does not convey to our imagination the idea of beauty, would have had many more attractions for the assembled multitude of admiring Indians than the portrait which Raleigh showed to them.

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Walter Raleigh

Excerpt

[More information](#)

I sent Captaine *Whiddon* the yeare before to get what knowledge he could of *Guiana*, and the end of my iorney at this time was to discover and enter the same, but my intelligence was farre from trueth, for the country is situate about 600 English miles further from the sea, then I was made beleeeue it had beene, which afterward vnderstanding to be true by *Berreio*, I kept it from the knowledge of my companie, who else woulde neuer haue beene brought to attempt the same: of which 600 miles I passed 400<sup>1</sup> leauing my shippes so farre from me at ancor in the sea, which was more of desire to performe that discovery, then of reason, especially hauing such poore and weake vessels to transport our selues in; for in the bottom of an old *Gallego* which I caused to be fashioned like a Galley, and in one barge, two wherries, and a ship bote of the Lyons whelpe, we caried 100 persons and their victuals for a moneth in the same, being al driuen to lie in the raine and wether, in the open aire, in the burning sunne, and vpon the hard bords, and to dresse our meat, and to carry al manner of furniture in them, where-with they were so pestred and vnsauery, that what with victuals being most fish, with the weete clothes of so many men thrust together and the heate of the sunne, I will vndertake there was neuer any prison in England, that coulde be founde more vnsauory and lothsome, especially to my selfe, who had for many yeares before beene dieted and cared for in a sort farre differing.

If Captaine *Preston* had not beene perswaded that he should haue come too late to *Trinidado* to haue found vs there (for the moneth was expired which I promised to tarry for him there ere he could recouer the coast of Spaine) but that it had pleased God he might haue ioyned with vs, and that wee had entred the country but some ten daies sooner ere the riuers were ouer-

<sup>1</sup> The farthest point which Raleigh reached on his Orinoco journey was the mouth of the river Caroni, one hundred and twenty-five miles distant in a direct line from Punta Curiapan or Punta de Gallo, or at the utmost about two hundred and fifty miles, according to the windings of the Caños and Brazos.