

## The Exploration of New Guinea

*(with panoramic sketch)*

The *Java-Bode* of November 3<sup>rd</sup> 11 gives the following concise and mainly correct sketch of the general results obtained through our exploration in New Guinea:

“Western New Guinea is upon closer investigation and acquaintance a success; the remaining part of our territory on that island is a disappointment.

The large peninsula to the north of the MacCluer Gulf – the impression of which becomes the longer the firmer – can be considered a valuable possession. In the northern half runs a mountain range from west to east; to the south of it there is a slowly sloping plain, which occupies about three quarters of the peninsula’s width. And this plain has – except for a strip of mangrove and marshes – a very fertile soil. Many things want to grow there. There is a land with a future. It is not unhealthy there, and one finds there a rather very dense population.

Unfortunately, the population, or at least a part of it, which can be found along the coasts of this part of the archipelago, has been roughly treated by predatory elements. The villages of a part – the eastern- of the interior have been visited repeatedly by such bandits who took the natives along to be sold as slaves. Now that our government of Western New Guinea has been properly established, these raids are being terminated; at present the land has the opportunity to be developed.

Earlier we have already been able to point out the expansion of trade and export in the surroundings of the MacCluer Gulf.

A layer of coal has been found which runs from the west straight through the peninsula to the east. At the west coast, close to the sea, the coal layer can be found open and bare. The coal must be very useful, and a ship of the government’s navy, which took in a supply, burned it with success during its return trip.

If Western New Guinea is a success, then not the same can be said about the remaining, the largest part of the island.

The discoveries, however important from a scientific point of view, have not been able to prove differently than that the explored regions are insignificant for colonization purposes.

The Mamberamo basin, to the north of the Snowy Mountains, as well as the basins of many rivers which flow from its southern slopes to the sea, is uninhabitable for Europeans and worthless for exploitation in every sense of the word.

One might speak of a land “in the making”. Maybe that in a few centuries favorable conditions will be created by natural influences and the land will obtain a meaning for humanity. Now it doesn’t have any. Only to some regions, along the northern coast, for example along Geelvinck Bay, some value can be granted.

What we now, after these findings, fruits of the forcibly and thoroughly undertaken explorations of the last few years, must do with New Guinea?

First: take care that the area, which has value, is done justice by exercising a good government, adapted to the special needs of the land, and by improving the means of transportation to truly “open” the land. Second: police surveillance along the coast, extensively applied, and in such a way that, without becoming too heavy on the treasury, the trade, which exists in those regions, is protected and the tribes living there are prevented of becoming a nuisance for our neighbors or our own settlements.

As for science, she isn’t done yet with New Guinea, and upon her rests a comprehensive task

referring to this island which still harbors so many secrets. May the Government for a long time take on the duty to forcefully support her in performing this task.”

By what has become known to us from the reports received since our previous communications, we can report the following about the most recent activities of the different exploration detachments.

*Northern New Guinea.* From 19<sup>th</sup> March – 19<sup>th</sup> May 1911 an expedition for further reconnaissance of the Sermowai (see for this river and what follows : Map 1 of this episode) was part of the here operating exploration detachment under Lieut. G.A. Scheffer. Named officer had the task to follow this river, which from the received reports must be important, as far as possible and then, if its course would seem favorable for this, to try to reach the plains of Northern New Guinea from the river. At the same time, another part of the detachment, under the commander, Capt. Sachse himself, would explore the suitable tributaries.

Because of heavy weather Lieut. Scheffer in the steamer “Pelikaan” couldn’t reach the mouth of the Sermowai so he was forced to land in the safer Demta Bay more to the east. The difficult and time consuming traffic of people and goods, however well the population was of assistance, and a serious bandjir (flood) in the river, because of which a lot of dangerously floating wood was adrift, made the actual journey upstream start only on 29<sup>th</sup> March. Dr. Gjellerup and Lieut. Staverman took part in that journey.

In the beginning the river was 40 to 50 m wide and very deep, the banks were flooded by the bandjir; the forest was thin with sheer undergrowth. The third day they reached, at about 10 km from the mouth, an important tributary of which the correct name is Sokoato, as Capt. Sachse learned during his later exploration from the local residents. Up there the Sermowai became gradually narrower (25 to 30 m) and higher up, in the now strongly meandering river, gravel and boulder patches were found while the edges became hills. Tough rapids forced them into bivouac, the so-called “Dajak bivouac”, and to continue the exploration on foot.

On a gravel patch close to the bivouac some ammonites were found. Although everywhere there was friendly contact with the Papuans living along the river, the journey over land was very difficult by lack of good guides and because of the accidented terrain. Usually the river was followed, often heavily overgrown hills of about 250 m were crossed to find a good view or to shorten the way and also to avoid the difficult walking through the boulder strewn river bed. After crossing a 400 m high hill upstream from a large waterfall there the river was again found as a quiet plain stream with a sandy or muddy bottom.

In this area a rattan suspension bridge over the river was found, the first crossing means of that kind to be seen in this region. Three day marches onwards, when the river bed could not be followed because of the high water level and while hacking a way through the bank vegetation, an old path was found which led over very high hills to an old settlement of the Taboe’s, a tribe that leads a nomadic life. The houses were simple sheds and there were no gardens. According to the guides these Taboe’s are in constant fear of attack, but they themselves also kill any Papuans from a different tribe they encounter.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> May further exploration was halted. From a hill was observed that the river valley continued some 5 to 6 km in southeasterly direction and, although it rained, low mountain ranges could be discerned in south-southeasterly and southwesterly directions.

“Very likely – as Lieut. Scheffer reports – the Sermowai springs south of Lake Sentani, flows with little slope between two parallel mountain ranges in west-northwesterly direction till about 140°

longitude, then breaks through the mountains with a steep grade in northerly direction and moves in a generally northerly course through the plains to the sea, taking along the Sokoato as a left tributary. The river width grows steadily from 6 to 8 m in the headwaters to about 50 m in the lower reaches. It is clear that the Keerom River, which is amply 80 m wide at 3° 26', and the Sermowai, which has only 6 to 8 m width at 2° 48', cannot be the same."

During the exploration a lot was collected in the botanic, zoological and ethnographic fields by Dr. Gjellerup and multiple astronomical positionings were performed by the two other participants, such as the mouth of the river.

The detachment under Capt. Sachse, including Lieut. Dalhuisen and the geologist Dr. Hubrecht, explored during that same period the Moaif, the Sokoato, the Pirowai (Borowai) and the Biri and several tributaries, and visited among others the large villages Abaisé and Grigriza, situated on high hills, further Loatam, Saweh, the large lagoon village Kaptiaoe, Tarwasi, Armopa and Tronta, all four at the north coast. In the report of this journey Capt. S. communicates many important particularities of the explored area and the population which was found in these regions. Lack of space urges us to postpone mention of this to a following episode. Only the following be communicated here.

Like Lieut. Scheffer at the Sermowai, due to the heavy weather Capt. Sachse with the small steamer "Pelikaan" was not able to land at the mouth of the Moaif, but was obliged to do this at Tarfia, situated further east, where a reef to the north acted as a protecting breakwater. A long barrier reef, stretching before the coast from Tarfia to a few kilometers from the mouth of the Moaif, allowed proas to be used for further transport of goods to the mouth.

In ascending the Moaif, not the right branch, the Wadijwai, earlier (June 1903) explored by the expedition Wichmann and wrongly named Moaif, but the true main channel was followed, which above the confluence at a width of about 15 m kept large depth. As a lot of trouble was experienced by tree obstructions, a large part of the detachment marched over the bank terrain, which was very soggy at first, then hilly. In the sea clay occurring in the river bed several marine fossils were found and brown coal was spread everywhere. The Moaif seemed not to come from the mountains but to spring in the southern hills at about 300 m height.

The Sokoato had a width of about 25 m and passed, just like the Moaif, rather suddenly from plain stream to mountain stream. At the transition the water was remarkably tepid, the bed contained mainly sandstone boulders, in which quartz veins occurred; further on slate clay was found. Also some pieces of sea coral and a piece of stone with fine prints of crinoids' stems were encountered. The river finally split into small branches which streamed from the northern hills.

The Pirowai (named Borowai on the maps, also on the July 1911 issue of Sea Map No. 157 : North Coast New Guinea), which was thought to be a large river which might lead far inland, was found at its mouth to be a 70 m wide lagoon arm, which stretched for some km from east to west along the beach and then, narrowing, passed into the small river Makafe, which arrives strongly meandering from the south and arises at the confluence of several rivulets. Kaptiaoe is located near and south of this lagoon arm.

It was also found that the mouth of the Biri River and the nearby village Ansoedoe (wrongly Wansoedoe) are erroneously indicated on the map of New Guinea and situated about 30 km further east. Called river, which kept a width of 50 to 60 m over a large distance, also passed quite suddenly into a mountain stream with large rocks, which made further navigation impossible. Among these rocks ammonites were found, apparently of the same species as found by Dr. Gjellerup in the Empress Augusta River.

It was learned that to the west of the Biri a large river flowed, which could be navigated for 4 to 5 days, even with large proas.

About a journey to the Cyclops Mountains in June 1911 the most important was communicated in an epilogue of the previous episode (p. 1035). We now received a couple of panorama sketches, made during that journey, of the area to the south. One of these, made at about 1700 m height, is reproduced on the following page. To the south of Lake Sentani three parallel mountain ranges were clearly marked, of which the height of the most distant was estimated at 1600 to 1700 m. Of the Central Range nothing could be detected.

Also needs to be mentioned that on 19<sup>th</sup> August 1911 at 9 am, while it was ebb, in the bivouac Hollandia was observed that the sea water suddenly invaded the river with a remarkable speed to revert within a few minutes. This phenomenon repeated itself a few times till 3 pm. In this case needs to be thought of tidal waves. On the 25<sup>th</sup> August at 2:30 pm there also took place a major earthquake accompanied by light rumbling. The direction seemed to be southeast – northwest, duration about 4 seconds. At 2:53 pm again a serious shake was determined; duration 3 seconds, direction like the previous one.

*Southern New Guinea.* During the month of July 1911 the new commander of the exploration detachment Capt. Le Cocq d'Armandville made a reconnaissance through the mountainous terrain to the northeast of the farthest, already explored part of the B. River, the known right tributary of the Eilanden River (see fig. 2 of Map No. XXII, year 1910). He wanted to try to reach the southern foot of the Houtman and by that mountain the surrounding mountain range, because the already received information had provided the conviction that the road to that mountain range was in no way to be found via the Goliath mountain, because this is not a spur of that mountain range, but divided from it by multiple, very high mountain chains, which would need to be crossed.

For that purpose the exploration hasn't provided favorable results yet. The accidented terrain caused extreme difficulties, which could not be overcome by the detachment with the means available and which caused repeated changes to the line of march. Eastward from the David they encountered a 25 m wide, very fast running and deep river, streaming from the northeast. Upon continuing the exploration in southern direction this river was reached again, which now had a width of about 60 m. Probably that river is the upper Eilanden River and to obtain certainty about this Lieut. Andreae was instructed to try to reconnoiter the course of the river by steam sloop and proa from the D. River. Because of striking a leak with the sloop and the very threatening attitude of the population near the place where the accident occurred, the sea officer was obliged to halt the reconnaissance.

Near and to the west of the above mentioned river the origin of another major river was discovered. This proved, when it was followed downstream, to be the Visch River, a right tributary of the B. River, before already merged to the southwest of the Goliath.

According to the report of the operations by the expedition detachment from 19 July till 9<sup>th</sup> August 1911 parts of the C., D. and Eilanden Rivers were explored by the detachment commander during that timeframe. At about half an hour's walk from the place where Lieut. Andreae was forced to retreat during his previous journey because of striking a leak with the steam sloop and the posture of the natives, the detachment commander debarked with Mr. Dumas, the brigade commander, and 11 indigenous lesser ranks; the rest stayed in the proas under the command of Lieut. Andreae. The patrol on shore marched along the western river bank, keeping in touch with the proas as much as possible. By 11 am the latter were observed by a Papua and soon the alarm signal resounded

(imitating animal sounds and blowing on a bamboo). Half an hour's walk further the patrol at the river's edge was surrounded by about 20 howling and dancing Papuans who, under threat of their weapons and approaching to within 20 steps distance, urged them to return. To prevent matters from escalating, they halted and tried to calm things down by offering some gifts. When this didn't work out, after 10 minutes they marched on; after passing the first houses without entering them, the excitement cooled down and some rapprochement was sought by a few.

Beyond the kampong (village) therefore they halted on a gravel bank and again tried to have some gifts accepted; these people however stayed very shy and didn't dare touch anything from us, while the negotiator upon coming too close got an arrow pointed at him. Then when the party started their lunch, curiosity took over and the bravest dared to come a bit closer and followed the patrol at a short distance when the march was continued. Some contact was only obtained during a break when the secrets of our clothing were revealed. From all of this resulted that they had the idea that it formed part of our bodies. When they understood that clothing only served as protection from thorns etc. friendship was made and they accompanied the troop to reassure Papuans living further on, while pointing out the way a couple of times in rough terrain. They seemed to have an aversion to our food. Attempts to trade some pigs or sago from them failed, because neither tobacco, red cloth, beads or any other goods brought along seemed to be of any value to them, so that they didn't even want to accept these articles for free.

The general impression obtained from these journeys is that the population is thinly spread and consists of nomads. Again and again areas were passed, some of which not long, but others on the other hand for several months had been abandoned by the population.

During the month of August, the detachment commander, accompanied by health officer De Kock and Mr. Dumas, made a journey on the A. River and the region to the west of it. It was decided to establish a bivouac – named Ruimzicht bivouac – at the farthest point to be reached with proas. From there a journey would be planned in northwestern direction to find a link with the measurements of the Lorentz and Mamberamo expeditions.

In the beginning of October in the "Anna" a tributary of the Eilanden River (at the northern fork) was navigated to find out if this river communicates with the Oetoemboewé. This indeed proved to be the case. On that tributary many natives were met, who showed no fear and with whom short but friendly contact was made.

*Western New Guinea.* About the journey undertaken at the end of July to the upper Sebjar and the Atinjoe and Amaroë Lakes no further messages have been received, nor from the earlier attempted passage from Lobo to the Wandammen Bay.

If an updated map of this part of New Guinea is not edited by the Topographic Bureau at Batavia soon, we shall compose an overview map by means of the many sketches made during the journeys of the detachment led by Capt. Koch, from which in a more complete and clear way than from our reports will be proven with how great a success in this western part has been explored, how many blanks and uncertainties of the previous maps have now already disappeared.