

Çubuklu—İstanbul: Seyirve Hidrografi Dairesi, (1935)

# Piri Reis Map

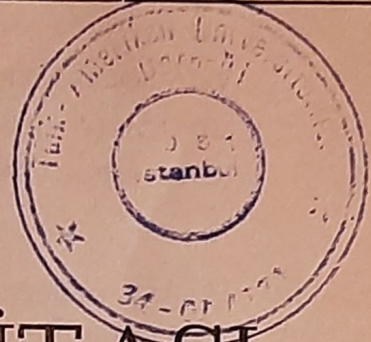
Yusuf Akçura



MALİYE MALIDIR

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DENİZ KUVVETLERİ KOMUTANLIĞI HİDROGRAFI NEŞRİYATI



# PİRİ REİS HARİTASI

LA CARTA MARINA DI PİRİ REİS

DIE KARTE DES PIRI REIS

CARTE DE PIRI REIS

PIRI REIS MAP



İSTANBUL—ÇUBUKLU

1966



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# PIRI REIS' MAP (1)

Piri Reis' map was discovered by B. Halil Etem Eldem, Director of National Museums, in 1929, when the Palace of Topkapu was being turned into a museum of antiquities. B. Halil examined this map together with Professor Kahle, the German orientalist, then on visit in Istanbul, and the result of these investigations was made known by Professor Kahle at the XVIII th Congress of Orientalists, which convened in September 1931 at Leyden, Holland. The discovery of the noted Turkish and German scholars roused a great deal of interest, and Professor Kahle's report was translated into Italian and Spanish and published in these languages. In December 1931, Dr. Oberhummer, professor of geography at the University of Vienna, also gave an account of this discovery.

Certain Turkish and foreign newspapers entered into discussion about the above-mentioned map, to which they gave the name of "map of Christopher Columbus," and about which they brought forth views that were both erroneous and misleading. With the purpose of correcting these mistakes, the Society for Turkish Historical Research (Türk Tarihi Tetkik Cemiyeti) sent an article to *the Illustrated London News*, together with photographs of the map and of sketches from Piri Reis' work on navigation, "Bahriye,..". This article and the accompanying photographs appeared in the July 23, 1932 issue.

Professor Kahle published an article on this subject in the July 1932 number of "Forschungen und Fortschritte,..". Likewise Professor A. Deissmann discussed Piri Reis' map in a treatise, "Forschungen und Funde im Serai,..", which was published in Berlin in 1933.

Finally Professor Kahle published in 1933 a pamphlet entitled "Die verschollene

[1] *This article is not the result of my personal study alone; I have also profited from the investigations of Bay Halil Etem Eldem vice-president of the Society for Turkish Historical Research and ex-director of National Museums, Dr. Reşid Galip, general secretary of the Society for Turkish Historical Research and ex-minister of Public Instruction, Professor M. Fuad Köprülü of the İstanbul University, Bay Hasan Fehmi, librarian of the Ministry of Public Instruction, Bay Osman Ferid, director of the Museum of Ethnography in Ankara, and from the articles published by Professor Paul Kahle, of the University of Bonn. Bay Hikmet, one of our agricultural specialists, and Dr. Wittek have been of great assistance, the former in translating Professor Kahle's last article on this subject into Turkish, and the latter in giving help in the correct translation of this article and the deciphering of the marginal notes of Piri Reis' map. By writing the first article for the general public in his newspaper, Bay İbrahim Hakki, correspondent of the Son Posta, drew everyone's attention to Piri Reis' map. This time again he has helped our Society in the deciphering of the marginal notes.*



Columbus-Karte von 1498 in einer Türkischen Weltkarte von 1513.,. This pamphlet contains a great deal of information regarding this map, as well as two photographs of it [1].

The brief bibliography given here shows that Piri Reis' map has interested the geographers and that much work has been expended on it in a short time.

Kemal Atatürk, President of the Turkish Republic, who, as is well known, attached great importance to questions of national history and was deeply versed in these questions, asked Piri Reis' map to be brought to Ankara where after personally studying it ordered its reproduction in facsimile to be made by the Devlet Basımevi. The Devlet Basımevi which, thanks to the efforts of the Republican government, had reached the level of the most perfected printing presses, was successful in reproducing the map in a manner almost indistinguishable from the original.

\* \*

The author of the map, Piri Reis, was a nephew of the famous Kemal Reis one of the Turkish admirals in the Mediterranean during the last quarter of the fifteenth century. History records Piri Reis' last official post to have been that of admiral in the Red and Arabian Seas.

While acting in the capacity of admiral of the fleet, Piri Reis also occupied himself with the science of navigation as known in his time. The map in question and his book "Bahriye," testify to his capacity and achievement in theoretic navigation. The "Bahriye," contains not only descriptions and drawings of the Mediterranean and of the cities and countries then found on its shores, but also valuable information on the subject of navigation (2).

Piri Reis prepared and drew his map in the city of Gallipoli, in the year 1513, and four years later, in 1517, while in Egypt, personally presented it to Selim I., the Conqueror of Egypt.

The map, which is polychrome is drawn on a gazelle hide with the greatest care.

The fragment in our possession is part of a large-scale map of the world. Careful examination of the map reveals that the marginal notes on its eastern edge have been torn in two. It is believed that the complete map showed the then known portions of

[1] This work was published by Walter de Gruyter and Co., in Berlin and Leipzig.

\* \*

(2) Piri Reis wrote the first version of his "Bahriye" in Gallipoli, eight years after having drawn his map, and seven years later presented to Süleyman the Magnificent in Istanbul with a revised copy. Numerous manuscript copies of this work exist in the libraries of Istanbul as well as in certain European libraries. Of the Istanbul libraries, the following possess one or two, even three copies, abridged or complete: Santa Sophia, Topkapu Palace, Nuru Osmaniye, Köprülüzade Fazıl Ahmet Pasha and Ali Emiri Efendi; also the libraries of the Arsenal and of the University.

We also know of the existence of copies of this work at the Dresden Library, the library of the University of Bologna, and the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. A facsimile edition of the oldest complete manuscript in Istanbul, which is at the same time the best of the copies in existence, (ms. number 2612 in the Library of Santa Sophia) is to be published in the near future.



the world, i.e. Europe, Asia Africa, and such parts of America as had been discovered.

The author gives in one of his marginal notes a detailed account of the maps and charts which he consulted in drawing his own. In the marginal note describing the shores of the Antilles he states that for these shores and islands he has made use of the map of Christopher Columbus. He quotes the narrative of a Spaniard, made prisoner by his uncle, who claimed that he had been to America three times with Columbus. In another marginal note concerning South America he also states that he saw the newly-drawn map of four Portuguese explorers. The lines referring to his use of Columbus' map are as follows (1):

*"The names which mark the places on the said islands and coasts were given by Columbus, that these places may be known by them. The coast and islands on this map are taken from Colonbo's map., (2)*

His work being essentially a large world-map, Piri Reis also studied a number of maps of the old world. In particular, so he informs us, he carefully examined and studied the maps drawn at the time of Alexander the Great, the "Mappae Mundi,, and eight maps drawn by the Mussulmans (3).

Piri Reis personally explains in one of his marginal notes the exact manner in which his map came into existence:

*"This section shows in what way this map was drawn. In this century there is no other map like this map in anyone's possession. The hand of this poor man has drawn it and now it is completed. From about twenty charts and Mappae Mundi—these are maps drawn in the days of Alexander, Lord of the Two Horns, which show the inhabited quarter of the world; the Arabs name these charts Jaferiye—from eight Jaferiyes of that kind and one Arabic map of Hind, and from the maps just drawn by four Portuguese which show the countries of Sind, Hind and China geometrically drawn and also from a map drawn by Columbus in the western region, I have extracted it. By reducing these maps to one scale this final form was arrived at. So that the present map is as correct and reliable for the Seven Seas as the maps of our countries are considered correct and reliable by Seamen.,*

In a special chapter of the "Bahriye,, Piri Reis explains that in drawing the map

(1) *In the introduction to his "Bahriye,, where he speaks of cartography, Piri Reis refers to his own map in the following manner:*

*"This poor man had previously constructed a map which displayed many more details of different kinds than maps hitherto in existence and even included recent maps from Hindu and Chinese works on navigation which were up to then unknown in the country of Rum; and presented this map to the late Sultan Selim Han in Cairo, who graciously accepted it."*

(2) *We have underlined the above words.*

(3) *As later orientalist have correctly remarked, it is wrong to speak of Arab civilization; the term Islamic civilization would be more exact, for those who have created this civilization, while using the Arabic language, were not all Arabs. There were, in fact, more Persians and Turks among them than Arabs.*



he followed the cartographical traditions considered international in his time. Cities and citadels are indicated by red lines, uninhabited places by black lines, rugged and rocky places by black dots, shallows and beaches by red dots, submerged rocks by crosses.

One of the remarkable points about Piri Reis' map is that the positions on the Atlantic coast of Africa bear Turkish names such as: Babadağ (Father Mt.), Akburun (White Cape), Yeşilburun (Green Cape), Kızılburun (Red Cape), Kozluburun (Walnut Cape), Altınrmak (Golden River), Güzelkörfez (Beautiful Gulf).

A second point of interest is that the map is not a copy but an original work based on various maps and on the personal experience of the admiral and of his friends.

It is to be regretted that the very important map in our possession is only a fragment; had not the remaining parts been torn away and lost, we would have in our possession an excellent Turkish map of both the old and the new worlds drawn as far back as 1513. Considering that Columbus' voyages were made during the last years of the fifteenth and the early years of the sixteenth centuries (Columbus returned from his fourth voyage in 1504) a map drawn so short a time after the new discoveries may be said to be one of the first to show all the continents together. In summary, this map drawn in the early sixteenth century is from various points of view a very valuable Turkish work.

. . .

We have seen that Piri Reis states in his marginal notes that he has made use of the maps of Columbus and of Portuguese explorers. His claim to have used Columbus' map, which until now has not been found, may be thus validated: during a naval battle in the western basin of the Mediterranean in 1501, the Turkish sailors captured Spanish ships and in one of them found objects that came from America. As is known, Columbus returned from his third trip in 1500. It is therefore very likely that his map was among the objects found by Kemal Reis on board the Spanish ships.

The map which Columbus is known to have drawn shortly after his great discovery not having been located hitherto, Piri Reis' map constitutes a very important source of information in regard to it. Did the Turkish admiral, who was recognized scholar and cartographer, really have Columbus' map in his possession and did he make use of it in drawing his own map as he claims? After long and serious investigation of the question, Professor Kahle arrived at the conclusion that Piri Reis claim was correct. (1.)

From the point of view of the civilization of the Turks this map is also of great importance. The fact that the discovery of a new world towards the end of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries although not directly related to the interests of the Ottoman Empire, was given direct and close attention by Turkish scholars, and that these scholars showed extraordinary ability in the sciences of geography and cartography (2) proves that the Turks of the time were within the great European

(1) Paul Kahle, "Die verschollene Columbus-Karte von 1498,,. Einleitung, pp. 9-10.

. . .

(2) "This map was drawn by an extremely capable Turkish geographer, of whom we know that he has written an important work on the Mediterranean, the information and the maps in it are very reliable. Minute investigations made on the spot show that the information given is to up to date." *Ibid*, p. 9.



movements of thought. Another proof of this is given in Piri Reis' "Bahriye," of which we have spoken above, and which is one of the best works on the Mediterranean written at that time.

A number of the marginal notes on Piri Reis' map are not easy to decipher. To facilitate the task of those who wish to study this map, we have asked Bay Hasan Fehmi Turgal, a member of our Society who is a specialist in deciphering manuscripts, to make a transcription of the marginal notes. Bay Hasan Fehmi Turgal was able to read most of the notes. He has also indicated the indecipherable words.

The notes have been numbered beginning with the north-western corner of the map, coming down and around southward in a spiral towards the centre. The notes are given below, in the indicated order:

I. — Illegible.

II. — This country is inhabited. The entire population goes naked.

III. — This region is known as the territory of Antilia. It is on the side where the sun sets. They say that there are four kinds of parrots, white, red, green and black. The people eat the flesh of parrots and their headdress is made entirely of parrots' feathers. There is a stone here. It looks like a black touchstone. The people use it instead of the ax. That it is very hard (illegible). We saw that stone.

Note: Piri Reis writes in the "Bahriye,": "On the enemy ships which we captured in the Mediterranean, we found a headdress made of these parrot feathers, and also a stone resembling a touchstone...")

IV. — This map was drawn by Piri Ibn Haji Mehmed, known as the nephew of Kemal Reis in Gallipoli, in the month of Muharrem of the year 919 (that is, between the 9th of March and the 7th of April of the year 1513).

V. — This section tells how these shores and also these islands were found.

These coasts are named the shores of Antilia. They were discovered in the year 896 of the Arabian calendar. But it is reported that a Genoese infidel, his name was Colombo, discovered these places. For instance, a book fell into the hands of the said Colombo, and he found said in this book that at the end of the Western Sea (Atlantic) i.e. on its western side, there were coasts and islands and all kinds of metals and also precious stones. This man, having studied this book thoroughly, explained these matters one by one to the grandees of Genoa and said: "Come, give me two ships, let me go and find these places... They said: "O foolish man, can an end or a limit be found to the Western Sea? Its vapour is full of darkness". The above mentioned Colombo saw that no help was forthcoming from the Genoese, he sped forth, went to the Bey of Spain (king), and told his story in detail. He too answered like the Genoese. In brief, Colombo talked the king for a long time, and finally the Bey of Spain gave him two ships, saw that they were well equipped, and said:

"O Colombo, if it happens as you say, let us make you kapudan (admiral) to that country." Having said this he sent the said Colombo to the Western Sea. The late Gazi Kemal had a Spanish slave. This slave said to Kemal Reis, that he had been three times to that land with Colombo. He said: "First we reached the Strait of Gibraltar, then from there straight south and west between the two... (illegible). Having advanced straight four thousand miles, we saw an island facing us, but gradually the



waves of the sea became foamless, that is, the sea was becalmed and the North Star—the seamen on their compasses still say star—little by little became veiled and invisible, and he also said that the stars in that region are not arranged as here. They are seen in a different arrangement. They anchored at the island which they had seen earlier across the way. The population of that island came, shot arrows at them and did not allow them to land and get information. The males and the females shot hand arrows. The tips of these arrows were made of fishbones, and the whole population went naked and also very... (illegible). Seeing that they could not land on that island they sailed to the other side of the island, where they saw a boat. On seeing them the boat fled and they (the people in the boat) dashed out on land. They (the Spaniards) took the boat. They saw that inside of it there was human flesh. It happened that these people were of that nation which went from island to island hunting men and eating them. The said Colombo saw yet another island, they neared it, they saw that on that island there were great snakes. They avoided landing on this island and remained on anchor for seventeen days. The people of this island saw that no harm came to them from this ship so, they caught fish and brought them in their small canoes. These (Spaniards) were pleased and gave them glass beads. It appears that he (Colombus) had read it in a book that in that region glass beads were prized. Seeing the beads, they brought still more fish. These (Spaniards) always gave them glass beads. One day they saw gold around the arm of a woman, they took the gold and gave her beads. They told her: bring more gold, we will give you more beads. They (the natives) went and brought them much gold. It appears that in their mountains there were gold mines. One day, also, they saw pearls in the hands of a person. They saw that when they gave beads many more pearls were brought to them. Pearls were found on the shore of this island, in a spot one or two fathoms deep. And also loading their ship with many logwood trees and taking two natives along, they took them within that year to the Bey of Spain. But the said Colombo not knowing the language of these people, they traded by signs, and after this trip the Bey of Spain sent priests and barley. The Spaniards taught the natives how to sow and reap and converted them to their own religion. The natives had no religion of any sort. They walked naked and lay there like animals. Now these regions have been opened to all and have become famous. The names which mark the places on the said islands and coasts were given by Colombo, that these places may be known by them. And also Colombo was a great astronomer. The coasts and islands on this map are taken from Colombo's map.

VI. — This section shows in what way this map was drawn. In this century there is no map like this map in anyone's possession. The hand of this poor man has drawn it and now it is completed. From about twenty charts and Mappae Mundi—these are charts drawn in the days of Alexander, Lord of the Two Horns, which show the inhabited quarter of the world; the Arabs name these charts Jafariye—from eight Jafariyes of that kind and one Arabic map of Hind, and from the maps just drawn by four Portuguese which show the countries of Hind, Sind and China geometrically drawn, and also from a map drawn by Colombo in the western region I have extracted it. By reducing all these maps to one scale this final form was arrived at. So that the present map is as correct and reliable for the Seven Seas as the map of our countries is considered correct and reliable by seamen,

VII. — It is related by the Portuguese infidel that on this spot night and day are, at their shortest period, of two hour duration, and at their longest phase, of twenty two hours. But the day is very warm and in the night there is much dew.



VIII. — On the way to the shire of Hind a Portuguese ship encountered a contrary wind (blowing) from the shore. The wind from the shore... (illegible) it (the ship). After being driven by a storm in a southernly direction they saw a shore facing them. They advanced towards it (illegible). They saw that these places were good anchorages. They threw anchor and went to the shore in boats. They saw people walking, all of them naked. But they shot arrows, their tips made of fish-bone. They stayed there eight days. They traded with these people by signs. That barka saw these lands and wrote about them which... The said barka without going to Hind, returned to Portugal, where, upon arrival they gave information... They described these shores in detail.. They have discovered them.

IX. — And in this country it seems that there are white-haired monsters in this shape, and also six-horned oxen. The Portuguese infidels have written it on their maps..

X. — This country is barren. Everything is in ruins and, it is said that large snakes are found here. For this reason the Portuguese infidels did not land on these shores and these are also said to be very hot.

XI. — And these four ships are Portuguese ships. Their shape is written down. They travelled from the western land to the point of Abyssinia in order to reach India. They sailed towards Shuluk. The distance across this gulf is 4200 miles.

XII. — ..... on this shore a tower  
..... is however  
..... in this climate gold  
..... taking a rope  
..... is said they measured

(Not: The fact that half of each of these lines is missing proves clearly that the map was torn in two.)

XIII. — And a Genoese brig coming from Flanders was caught in a storm. Impelled by the storm it came upon these islands, and in this way these islands became known,

XIV. — It is said that in ancient times a priest by the name of Sanvolrandan (Santo Brandan) travelled on the Seven Seas, and landed on this fish. They thought it were dry land and lit a fire on this fish. When the back of the fish began to burn it plunged into the sea, they reembarked in their boats and fled to the ship. This event is not mentioned by the Portuguese infidels. It is taken from the ancient Mappae Mundi.

XV. — To these small islands they have given the name of Undizi Vergine. That is to say the Eleven Virgins.

XVI. — And this island they call the Island of Antilia. There are many monsters and parrots and much logwood. It is not inhabited.

XVII. — This barka was driven upon these shores by a storm and remained where it fell... Its name was Nicola Giuvan. On his map it is written that these rivers which can be seen have for the most part gold (in their beds). When the water had gone they collected much gold (dust) from the sand. On their map..

XVIII. — This is the barka from Portugal which encountered a storm and came to this land. The details are written on the edge of this map.



(Note: see VIII.)

XIX. — The Portuguese infidels do not go west of here. All that side belongs entirely to Spain. They have made an agreement that a line drawn two thousand miles to the western side of the Strait of Ceuta (Gibraltar) should be taken as a boundary. The Portuguese do not cross to that side but the Hind side and the southern side belong to the Portuguese.

XX. — And this caravel having encountered a storm was driven upon this island. Its name was Nicola Giuvan. And on this island there are many oxen with one horn. For this reason they call this island Isola de Vacca, which means, Ox Island.

XXI. — The master of this caravel is called Messire Anton the Genoese, but he was brought up in Portugal. One day this caravel encountered a storm, and was driven upon this island. He (he master) found much ginger here and wrote about these islands.

XXII. — This sea is called the Western Sea, but Frank sailors call it the Mare d'España, which means the Sea of Spain. Up to now it was known by these names, but Colombo, who opened up this sea and made these islands known, and also the Portuguese infidels who have opened up the region of Hind have agreed together to give this sea a new name. They have given it the name of Ovo Sano (Oceano) that is to say, sound egg. Before this, it was believed that the sea had no end or limit, that at its other extremity darkness prevailed. Now they have seen that this sea is girded by a coast, and because it is like a lake, they called it Ovo Sano.

XXIII. — In this spot there are oxen with one horn, and also monsters of this shape.

XXIV. — These monsters are seven spans long. Between thier eyes there is a distance of one span. But they are harmless souls (1).

. . .

In conclusion, I present the thanks and the gratitude of the Society for Turkish Historical Research to its honorary president, the Great Kemal Atatürk, for ordering the facsimile reproduction of this map, which is a document definitely illustrating the contribution of the sixteenth century Turks to science.

*Yusuf AKÇURA*

President of the Society for  
Turkish Historical Research (2)

(1) For notes XXIII. and XXIV. we give the translation from the reading made by Colonel H. Abdurrahman, Assistant General Director, General Staff Cartographic Department, in his yet unpublished work "History of World Cartography,,,"

. . .

(2) This introduction was written by the late Yusuf Akçura in 1935.





I

II

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IV

V

XIV

XV

XVI

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VII

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IX

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XXII

XXI

XIX

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XVII

XXIII

XVIII

XII

XI

X

Arabic script text is scattered throughout the map, often accompanying illustrations or marking specific locations. Notable sections include a large block of text in the lower-left quadrant and smaller inscriptions near various ships and animals.