

Surveyor of the Year 2020 - Piri Reis (Captain Piri)

Piri Reis, in fact his real name was Muhiddin Piri, was born between 1465 and 1470 in Gelibolu (Gallipoli) Turkey, but even this basic information is somewhat uncertain. He was trained in maritime affairs by his uncle Kemal Reis, one of the most famous seamen of that period. Besides his maritime interests, Piri Reis played an important role in the development of mapping and was the author of several important cartographic works.

In 1486, following the massacre of Muslims across Spain the city of Granada, which was the last city under Muslim domination in Andalusia, asked for assistance from the Ottomans. The Ottoman Empire which had no appropriate fleet for overseas expeditions sent Kemal Reis to Spain under the Ottoman flag. Piri Reis and Kemal Reis participated in this expedition and jointly transported Muslims from Spain to North Africa. Later they were involved in piracy on West Mediterranean shores and in various islands. They stayed at the ports of Tunis in Tunisia and Bona (Annaba) in Algeria. Piri Reis, took detailed notes about the physical geography of the places where they stayed and whom these places belonged to and used this information in his future works.

In 1494, Piri Reis and his uncle joined the Ottoman Navy and Piri Reis acted as the vessel master in the struggle against the Venetian navy where he became battle Captain for the first time. Between 1495 and 1510, he took charge of various maritime expeditions such as İnebahtı (Lepanto) Starboard, Moton, Koron (Coron), Navarin (Navarino or Pylos), Midilli (Mitilini or Lesbos), Rodos (Rhodes). He later recorded all the places he visited during these expeditions together with his experiences in his book entitled 'Kitab-ı Bahriye' or 'Book of Navigation', which is accepted as a primary world maritime guide book of its time.

In 1511, Piri Reis was deeply affected from losing his uncle in an accident at sea and he returned to Gelibolu and began to prepare the 'World Map' a one third part of which covers the Atlantic Ocean, Iberian Peninsula and West Africa. The east coast of the new world of America also forms part of this map. What makes this map dated 1513 significant worldwide is that it contains relevant information in the map of America which could not yet have been discovered by Christopher Columbus.

Taking charge of the Ottoman Navy in Yavuz Sultan Selim's Egypt expedition, Reis had the opportunity to draw the map of Nile River coasts and provided historical and geographical information about these places on the map.

Due to his achievements in the Siege of Alexandria he found the opportunity to meet personally with Yavuz Sultan Selim and submitted his world map to the Sultan. It is rumored that the Sultan looked at the world map and said, '*how small is the world*', afterwards he divided the map into two and said; '*we will keep the right side in our hand*'. The other half of the map which the Sultan had thrown away was found again in 1929.

After the Egypt expedition, Reis returned to Gelibolu and gathered his maritime notes in his 'Book of Navigation'. Being under the service of the Government as Kanuni Sultan Süleyman ascended the throne, Piri Reis accompanied Grand Vizier Pargalı İbrahim Pasha during his Egypt expedition and provided information about his 'Book of Navigation' to the Grand Vizier, this Book was later submitted to Kanuni in 1526 through the Grand Vizier.

In 1528, Reis drew a more detailed world map compared to his first one, today the North America map which we keep is a part of this map. This map is held within the collection of Topkapı Palace Library - Treasury Library in Istanbul.

In 1552, during his second Egypt expedition, he left the Naval fleet in Basra, which was the last stop of the expedition, for maintenance and repairs and returned to Egypt with three vessels which were full of booty, thus he was imprisoned there. On leaving the Navy in Basra, he did not give the tribute, which the Basra Governor wanted from him. Due to these actions and because of Egyptian Governor Mehmet Pasha's political ambition, Piri Reis was accused of negligence in service in 1554 and he was beheaded at an age of over 80 years old.

The most important feature of Piri Reis's Map, of which the 500th anniversary was celebrated in 2013, is that this map was prepared by Piri Reis's rigorous analysis of the maps which were collected by him from the places of battle as tribute to the wars. Piri Reis, also used Columbus's famous lost map dated 1498 in his studies. This lost map was found following the victory of the maritime battle against Spanish in 1501 off the coast of Valencia under the command of Piri Reis's uncle Kemal Reis. The map was a war tribute to a Captain named Rodrigo who was one of the most experienced vessel masters to have participated in Christopher Columbus's two or three American expeditions. It is one of the known historical inaccuracies to state that that Piri Reis had drawn the world map alone. Piri Reis converted the maps with various scales into a single scale, corrected and completed the deficiencies and conflicts between the maps.

Besides the figures in the map, another important detail of Piri Reis' map is that he also added the features of the places drawn on the map, when it was discovered, by whom and from whom he benefited.

Piri Reis, besides his works in the field of maritime endeavours, became famous for his important studies in the field of cartography. To mark this great achievement, the year 2013 was declared as 'The Year of Piri Reis' by UNESCO to mark the 500th year anniversary of his world map. In 2020, Piri Reis was chosen as the Surveyor of the Year in Europe by CLGE. During 2020, Piri Reis is referred to as the Surveyor of the Year in the events to be held in Europe by CLGE and affiliated professional organisations.

[Please click here to watch an online film about the life of Piri Reis on YouTube.](#)