

**Nomination form  
International Memory of the World Register**

**Turkey-The Piri Reis World Map (1513) in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library**

ID Code [2016-34]

**1.0 Summary (max 200 words)**

The Piri Reis World Map of 1513 was discovered in the Topkapı Palace Library in 1929. Ever since then it has been valued as a precious treasure of the library, a work of art and science, and unique for being based on both western and eastern sources. Piri Reis's portolan-style world map stands out with distinction among the maps of the Age of Discoveries. In a time when positioning recently discovered places was almost technically impossible, Piri Reis succeeded in producing a detailed and considerably accurate depiction of the coastline and islands of the newly discovered regions of the world and formed a circular map designed on a hypothetical center. The significance of the Piri Reis map in world cartographic history derives from the fact that it represents the earliest cartographic record of Columbus's oceanic voyages. It is, in other words, the earliest cartographic records of the New World discoveries. Piri Reis's map is among the earliest works showing Terra Australis and the first map to depict legendary and mythical creatures on the Southern Continent. The map is also unmatched in the abundance and diversity of its illustrations of humans, beasts, mythological or semi-mythological figures, ships, and edifices. More than merely a map, Piri Reis's manuscript is a beautiful work of art and cultural icon built upon the latest geographical and cartographic information from the Turks, Portuguese, Spanish, Italians, and Arabs. The Piri Reis map is an important historical artifact, and one of the world's notable multicultural and intercultural unions of art and science. The map stands as an exceptional work straddling the geographical and cultural borderlands between East and West, the Medieval and the Renaissance, and the Old and the New. Reflecting the periodic changes, the World Map 1513 combines geographic and cultural properties of the early sixteenth century with a scientific and objective way. The map provides insights into how a World map was compiled in the sixteenth century from multiple sources, and what these sources tell us about the world Piri Reis lived in. It was Piri Reis at this crossroads of history in the early sixteenth century who blended geography, ancient and medieval legends, and renaissance nautical science to create the world map of 1513, an enduring symbol of the integration of the great civilizations.

**2.1 Name of nominator (person or organization)**

The nomination is a joint decision of,  
The General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums, Ministry of Culture and Tourism,  
Republic of Turkey,  
The Turkish National Commission for UNESCO.

**2.2 Relationship to the nominated documentary heritage**

The General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums is in charge of the administration of museums within the domain of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in Turkey. The Topkapı Palace Museum as an important part of the cultural heritage of Turkey is also under the administration of the General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums.

The relation of the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO for the nomination process is through the National Memory of the World Committee. The National Memory of the World Committee works within the Turkish National Commission for UNESCO.

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## 2.3 Contact person(s) (to provide information on nomination)

As the nomination is a joint decision of the parties mentioned above, the contact persons are:  
Mr Abdullah Kocapınar - The General Director of Cultural Heritage and Museums, The Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Mrs. Ayşe Erdoğan - The Director of Topkapı Palace Museum, The Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Prof. Dr. Mustafa Safran - The Head of the Memory of the World Committee, Turkish National Commission for UNESCO.

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## 2.4 Contact details

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## 3.0 Identity and description of the documentary heritage

### 3.1 Name and identification details of the items being nominated

**Name and Identification:** *The Piri Reis World Map of 1513 is preserved in the Revan Köşkü Collection under no. 1633 in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library.*

**Owner:** *The General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, The Republic of Turkey.*

**Address:** *T.B.M.M. II Ulus 06543/Ankara*

**Custodian:** *The Directorate of the Topkapı Palace Museum*

**Address:** *Sultanahmet Fatih 34122-İstanbul/TURKEY*

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### 3.4 History/provenance

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The World Map of 1513 was found in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library in 1929, only six years after the official end of the Ottoman Empire. In the Arabic inscription engraved on the map, Piri Reis (d.1554) explicitly introduces himself as the mapmaker. Soon after its discovery the map gained worldwide fame and scholars from across the world penned a great amount of related literature. The map first came in to light in 1924 at a time when Halil Edhem [Eldem] (d. 1938) sought to overcome the formalities of uniting various libraries within the Topkapı Palace. Prof. Gustav A. Deissmann (d. 1937) had been studying manuscripts and maps in the Palace in 1929 among which was the renowned World Map of 1513. Prof. Deismann appreciated the importance of the Piri Reis World Map of 1513 and invited Prof. Paul Kahle (d.1964) to make a detailed study of the map under special permission from the palace and administration. Kahle had already published a German translation of the Kitab-ı Bahriyye (Book of the Sea) and was aware of the fact that Piri Reis had drawn a world map in his time. He published a copy of the map in 1931 and announced his latest findings two years later in a detailed booklet and article. Following the publications made by Kahle and Prof Eugen Oberhummer (d. 1944) in 1931, Yusuf Akçura published articles in 1932 on behalf of the Turkish Historical Society in The Illustrated London News and contributed in the reputation of the Piri Reis map in Europe.

#### 4.0 Legal information

##### 4.1 Owner of the documentary heritage (name and contact details)

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Name	Address:	
Owner: The General Directorate of Cultural Heritage And Museums	T.B.M.M. II Ulus 06543/Ankara/TURKEY	
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##### 4.2 Custodian of the documentary heritage (name and contact details if different from the owner)

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Name:	Adress:	
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### 4.3 Legal status

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The Directorate of Topkapı Palace Museum is a public institution. It is under the administration of The General Directorate of Cultural Heritage and Museums, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Republic of Turkey.

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### 4.4 Accessibility

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The original item is unique and vulnerable; it is sensitive to light and is, therefore, not on permanent display. However, it is exhibited on special occasions such as the celebrations for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its creation. The researchers can use just the visual documentation of the map for their researches. The digital images of the map can be given to the researchers with the permission of The Directorate of the Topkapı Palace Museum.

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### 4.5 Copyright status

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Copyright of this object belongs to the Topkapı Palace Museum. It is the subject of the terms of the The Copyright Law no: 4110 and dated 1995 and the directive about: Copying and Photo Shooting of the Objects that Exists in the Museums and Entities Related to the Museums and the Historical Sites. of 1995 no: 4110.

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## 5.0 Assessment against the selection criteria

### 5.1 Authenticity

The World Map of 1513 was found in the Topkapı Palace Museum Library in 1929. In the Arabic inscription engraved on the map, Piri Reis explicitly introduces himself as the mapmaker. Soon after its discovery the map gained worldwide fame and scholars from across the world penned a great amount of related literature. Prof. Paul Kahle who had already published a German translation of the Piri Reis's *Kitab-ı Bahriyye* (Book of the Sea) was aware of the fact that he had drawn a world map in his time. Kahle made a detailed study of the map then he published a copy of the map in 1931 announcing its authenticity. There has not been any opposition to the authenticity of the work among the researchers.

The world map of 1513 bears all the typical characteristics of small distance scale navigational maps such as portolan standards, rhumb lines etc. Piri Reis's work bears the signs of the many technical peculiarities characteristic of the transition period from portolan charts to the more global works of *mappa mundi*.

The world map of 1513 includes two thirty-two pointed compass roses (wind roses) in the north and south sections supplemented by three minor ones. The points in black on the bigger compass roses face north as was the established cartographic custom of the period. Rhumb lines in red and black, marking the principal and intermediate winds, cover the entire surface of the map. The number of compass roses on the surviving fragment points to a total of seventeen, which is the number of compass roses found on a characteristic portolan

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depicting the globe. Supposing that the compass roses on the Piri Reis map were placed in their approximate coordinates the hypothetical center of the map would be somewhere in Northeast Africa. Compass roses, like rhumb lines on portolans, used alongside a compass helped mariners set navigational courses.

Piri Reis's map includes slope length scales around both tropic of Cancer and Capricorn. The legend explaining the map's unit of measurement most probably was on the missing fragments. However, it is evident that a larger unit corresponds to thirty nautical miles while a smaller one is calculated at six nautical miles. Although Piri Reis's unit of distance is unknown a presumptive attempt based on the Italian mile leads to the conclusion that the map would have been scaled at 1: 12 000 00. Due to the fact that latitude was not indicated in early portolan charts, compasses, wind roses, scale units, and the like were instrumental in calculating distance. Piri Reis also observed the form used in portolan drawings and presented the place-names close to the land in vertical position.

The world is enriched with several portraits of rulers, floating vessels, and mythical beasts. Piri Reis, in his *Kitab-ı Bahriyye*, explained the meanings of legendary markings used in portolan charts and incorporated them into his map design. He exposed the rocky fields beneath the water surface with a cross; marked shallow waters with red and ledges with black dots.

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## 5.2 World significance

Piri Reis's portolan-style world map stands out with distinction among the maps of the Age of Discoveries. One can observe the basic characteristics of portolan maps and the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century developments in mapmaking in the Piri Reis map. In a time when positioning recently discovered places was almost technically impossible, Piri Reis succeeded in producing a detailed and considerably accurate depiction of the coastline and islands of the newly discovered regions of the world and formed a circular map designed on a hypothetical center. This, in itself, was a great achievement.

The significance of the Piri Reis map in world cartographic history comes from the fact that it represents the earliest cartographic record of Columbus's oceanic voyages. It is, in other words, the oldest cartographic record of the New World discoveries. The fact that the Piri Reis map conveys place-names in the New World as given by Columbus increases its historical value. The map, depicting Cuba, Hispaniola, and the Bahamas directly from Columbus's first hand experiences, outranks the *La Cosa* map which is regarded as the earliest visual record of the discoveries. The world map of 1513 presents the earliest cartographic records of the New World discoveries.

The Piri Reis map is the earliest map giving information on Brazil and depicting mythological or semi-mythological creatures on the Southern Continent. No other surviving map provides more information than Piri Reis's inscriptions on Cabral's voyage to Brazil.

The world map of 1513 also had a pivotal role in informing the Islamic and Ottoman worlds of the latest Spanish and Portuguese territorial explorations.

Piri Reis refers to a number of locations on the Atlantic coast of Africa with Turkish names. The Piri Reis map, in this sense, contributed to the adoption of many African and New World place-names by the Ottoman cultural elite and, at a later date, by Turkish authors.

The large groups of Atlantic islands such as the Azores, the Canary Islands, and the Cape Verde Islands are positioned considerably close to their actual coordinates. Piri Reis seems to have had a strong grasp of his source maps and of the European discoveries which he reflected proficiently. His map is among the earliest works showing *Terra Australis* and the first map to depict legendary and mythological creatures on the Southern Continent.

The world map of 1513 had a pivotal role in announcing the latest Spanish and Portuguese territorial explorations to the Islamic and Ottoman worlds. The Piri Reis map, in this sense, contributed to the adoption of many African and New World place-names by the Ottoman cultural elite and, at a later date, by Turkish authors.

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The world map of 1513, in compliance with contemporary cartographic practices, includes fifty-eight illustrations and portraits. It is unmatched in the abundance and diversity of its illustrations of humans, beasts, mythological or semi-mythological figures, ships and edifices. There are eleven illustrations of sea vessels, ten ships, one boat, and eight human figures. Three sultan/king portraits appear dressed in local/national outfits. The Piri Reis map includes a total of eighteen illustrations of fortresses or fortified cities. There are also twelve parrot illustrations in color and of various sizes, fourteen animals and mythological/semi-mythological creatures.

Piri Reis, according to his own testimony, consulted thirty-four old maps. The use of the Columbus map as a source is the most distinguishing quality of the 1513 world map.

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### **5.3 Comparative criteria:**

***Does the heritage meet any of the following tests? (It must meet at least one of them.)***

#### **1 Time**

The Piri Reis world map of 1513 is one of the most important maps to have survived from one of the most important periods of maritime discovery, geographical exploration, and mapmaking. The world map of 1513 presents the earliest cartographic records of the New World discoveries.

Piri Reis undoubtedly appreciated the indispensable place and unparalleled importance of maps in naval affairs and displayed remarkable cartographic skills both in his world maps and in his book of navigation, the *Kitab-ı Bahriyye*. At a time when positioning the recently discovered places was almost technically impossible, he successfully produced a detailed and considerably accurate depiction of the coastline and islands of the newly discovered world and managed to form a circular map designed on a hypothetical center.

In the inscriptions Piri Reis offers a detailed description of events that occurred during the discovery of the Americas. He claims that he learnt about Columbus' voyages from a slave/servant of his uncle Kemal Reis who sailed in the company of the Spanish captain three times. Piri Reis listed his sources and explained his methodology in the inscription, thus distinguishing his work from most of those produced around the same time.

#### **3 People**

Piri Reis undoubtedly appreciated the indispensable place and unparalleled importance of maps in naval affairs and displayed remarkable cartographic skills both in his world maps and in his book of navigation *Kitab-ı Bahriyye*. There were several Ottoman cartographers and mariners deeply influenced by Piri Reis and the works accomplished under his legacy could easily form a Piri Reis school.

#### **4 Subject and theme**

Piri Reis's portolan-style world map stands out with distinction among the maps of the Age of Discoveries. One can observe the basic characteristics of portolan maps and the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> century developments in mapmaking in the Piri Reis map. The map also bears the signs of the many technical peculiarities characteristic of the transition period from portolan charts to the more global works of *mappae mundi*.

#### **5 Form and style**

The Piri Reis World Map 1513 is drawn on parchment and measures 87 cm in length, 63 cm in width at the top, and 41 cm at the bottom. It is beyond dispute that the map remained intact in the western and southern parts. The map was painted in eight colours and a close survey of the margins would undoubtedly reveal that the eastern part of the map is completely missing

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while there are partial distortions in the southern fragment. Prolonged exposure to moisture seems to be responsible for the map's missing parts. The remaining fragments most probably depict the Old World: the larger parts of Africa, Europe, and Asia in its entirety. The proportion of the surviving fragment to the whole is a debatable topic. It is commonly held that the surviving part of the map corresponds to one third of the original. A recent study suggests that the original map should measure 140 cm in length and 165 cm in width. The world map of 1513 bears all the typical characteristics of small distance scale navigational maps such as portolan standards, rhumb lines etc. Piri Reis's work bears the signs of the many technical peculiarities characteristic of the transition period from portolan charts to the more global works of *mappae mundi*. The Piri Reis World Map of 1513, even though only partially survived, it is among the most valuable and well-accomplished works of the Age of Discovery. It depicts the area surrounding the Atlantic Ocean, the western shores of the Old World and the eastern shores of the New World. The map's eastern part depicts a rather vast piece of land from the city of Brest in Northwest France to Guinea, the Iberian Peninsula, the Strait of Gibraltar, North and West Africa and the Liberian coastline. Piri Reis marked the islands of Azure, Canaries, and Cape Verde in the Atlantic Ocean with their names. The western part of the map includes beyond doubt the most intriguing information on the newly discovered eastern shores of the Middle and South Americas. In this section Piri Reis depicted the Caribbean, Hispaniola, Cuba, the Lesser Antilles, the Bahamas, and Puerto Rico. He adjoined the Brazilian land to a landmass to the south, seemingly the hypothetical *Terra Australis* which appeared on early modern maps. The pioneering information on the New World that Piri Reis used for the production of his world map reflects the early outcomes of Portuguese discovery expeditions. A closer examination of the map in conjunction with contemporary and modern nautical works suggests that Piri Reis was very accurate in placing and depicting the islands of Azure, Canaries, and Cape Verde. The world map of 1513, is also unmatched in the abundance and diversity of its illustrations of humans, beasts, mythological or semi-mythological figures, ships, and edifices.

## **6.0 Contextual information**

### **6.1 Rarity**

The Piri Reis world map of 1513 is unique and irreplaceable. Piri Reis heavily annotated his map with inscriptions on the margins and explanatory notes attached to the place-names marked on the map. One can trace correlations between different inscriptions which refer back to particular place-names. It would be an essential contribution to the understanding of the map to group text on the map with inscriptions and place-names. Inasmuch as the map of 1513 forms a single entity, all its inscriptions should be considered as a single unit.

### **6.2 Integrity**

The surviving fragment of the map is maintained securely.

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