

Japan Sea on the Old Maps of Russia

N.N Komedchikov

**(The Head of Laboratory of Cartography, Institute of Geography,
Russian Academy of Sciences, Moscow, Russia)**

The sea situated between the Eurasian continent and its Korean Peninsula, the Japanese islands, and the island of Sakhalin has changed its name several times on old maps of Russia. This was typical of most seas, bays, and straits adjacent to the eastern frontiers of Russia due to various causes and factors, such as lack of knowledge of this sea in Europe up to the mid-18th century, information sources used by European and Russian cartographers for map compilation; biases of European and Russian seafarers and explorers for using certain names; the right of discoverers to give names to untitled geographical objects (or to objects whose names were unknown to Europeans); political motives; as well as the traditions historically established in Europe in relation of geographical names. Nevertheless, one can trace a certain general regularity in terms of the names of the Far East seas. Through the ages, since the 16th century, the names of these seas derived, as a rule, from geographical names of the Eurasian continent: countries names (China, Korea) ? the China Sea, the Korea Sea; largest rivers (the Amur, the Okhota) ? the Amur Sea, the Sea of Okhotsk; peninsulas (Kamchatka, Chukchi) ? the Kamchatka Sea, the Chukchi Sea. In more recent times, since the mid-19th century, the sea names derived from large islands (Sakhalin, Japanese) emerged on maps ? the Sakhalin Sea, the Sea of Japan. The Sea of Japan remained untitled on maps up to the early 18th century because of scanty store of European knowledge on the sea and wrong depiction of its

shorelines. It should be noted, however, that some sea charts of the first half of the 17th century depicted the outlines of the Sea of Japan rather exactly without giving its name. The entire western part of the Pacific, or Eastern, Ocean was referred to on maps as the China Sea, or Ocean (Mare Sinicvm, Mare Cjn, Mare Cin, Cathaycvm Mare, Sinesee Zee, the Chinian Ocean, etc.), or the Silk Sea (Sericvm Mare). Thanks to the expeditions of European and Russian seafarers the Sea of Japan acquired exact outlines on maps as well as its proper name. On Russian maps it began to be named the Korea Sea, or the Eastern Sea, and later, since the mid-19th century, the Sea of Japan in accordance with the European hydrographical tradition.