

# **Recent Evolution on the Use of the Name East Sea in Western Countries, particularly in France**

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## **Summary**

At the beginning of the 1990s, Koreans became aware of importance of the toponym of sea, in particular such that located between the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago. We can understand that the reason of this late reclamation by Koreans is due to vicissitudes of the History : closure of Korea until 1876, takeover and colonization of the country by Japan, division in two of the nation in 1945, terrible Korean war in 1950-1953 and poverty. Thus, Koreans had any respites to take an interest in the secondary question such as sea name.

After that, South Korea realized his remarkable economic development and political democratization, and arrived to act an important role on the international scene : elevation of standard of living, liberty of tour in abroad, organization of the Olympic Games in 1988, entry in the OECD (Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development), organization of the World Cup in 2002, etc.

In finitely, two Koreas joined the UN in 1991. It's in 1992 that South Korea participated at first time at the UN CSGN (Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names). In this occasion, the Korean delegation claimed the name East Sea, used since the Antiquity in Korea, for the sea known as Sea of Japan which have a connotation of 'Sea belonging to Japan'. Such a name is a matter that Koreans can not accept easily because of souvenirs of the recent colonization of their country by Japan. In this case of sea name, Koreans consider that their dignity, honor and pride are concerned. It's also a question of affirmation of their national identity among the international community.

In this sense, Koreans see, in the denomination of Sea of Japan, an injustice of the History because the toponym had been confirmed by the IHO (International Hydrographic Organization) in 1929 when Korea was a colony of Japan. South Korea deposed his demand for adhesion at this organization in 1953, became a member in 1957, and sent it's delegation at first time in 1962. It is the IHO which establish the document entitled « Limits of the Oceans & Seas » (S-23), an international reference as regards hydrographie. The 3<sup>rd</sup> version of S-23 is under revision. South Korea claimed in 1994 the inscription of the East Sea beside the Sea of Japan in this document. 15<sup>th</sup> August 2002, the IHO sent his proposal of S-23 for the vote of his 72 member countries. In the draft, any name was mentioned on the sea in question. South Korea expressed relative satisfaction, while Japan was surprised. Japan acted rapidly and succeeded to drop down the draft by IHO.

Since a decade, Koreans, as well as government, medias, scholars, especially the Society for East Sea, and Internet surfers, campaign so that their East Sea will be used by foreigners around the world. It's, for them, a matter of redress for an error of the History.

To justify the validity of their claim, Koreans drove researches in field of history and geography, and investigated at the greatest library in France (Bibliothèque Nationale de France), in UK (British Library, Cambridge University Library), in USA (Library of Congress, Library of the University of South California) in search of ancient European maps. According to the results of the investigations, more than two third of the maps drawn up at 18<sup>th</sup> century had used the name Sea of Korea (Corea) for our sea. The toponym Sea of Japan is essentially due to the *Atlas of voyage* of the French explorer Jean-François Galaup de Lapérouse, published in 1797. Japanese had to content themselves with the name established in Europe, at the time of their modernization in the years 1870s, introducing Western civilizations.

While Koreans campaigned in favor of East Sea in the 1990s, Japanese maintained an expectative attitude, considering that the toponym established firmly since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century all over the world shouldn't change so easily.

Surprised by the draft of "Limits of the Oceans & Seas" (S-23) that suggested the suppression of the name Sea of Japan, the Japanese government, in particular the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

and the Japan Coast Guard, came out of silence, adopted an aggressive attitude and reacted, case by case, toward international institutions, hydrographic authorities of some countries, foreign medias, publishers who began to indicate a single name East Sea or a double name Sea of Japan / East Sea on their maps. We can quote some institutions which began to change the naming of the sea concerned : Hydrographic Office of UK Navy, Service Hydrographique et Oceanographique de la Marine (SHOM) of France ; BBC, CNN, USA Today, Los Angeles Times, AFP, Le Monde, Le Figaro, Liberation, Le Monde Diplomatique ; National Geographic, Rand McNally, Microsoft Encarta, Quid, Geo, Hachette, Nathan, Hallwag, Collins, Nelles Maps, RV Verlag, ITMB, Britannica Enclopaedia, Le Petit Fute country guide, Lonely Planet, etc. After the interventions of Japan, the foreign institutions are awaked of the problem concerning to the appellation. Some ones keep clear of using the map, and the others hesitate.

Thus, the toponym East Sea / Sea of Japan become a subject of direct confrontation between South Korea and Japan toward the third international community. South Korea hope that the History do justice by admitting it's claiming, in favour of the double name East Sea / Sea of Japan.