

Trends of the toponyms for ‘East Sea / Sea of Japan,’ past and present

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The East Sea, also known as Sea of Japan, has a very important signification for Korean people who live in the border of this sea, as far as Japanese people or Russian people, in the viewpoint of national identity, history, culture, human geography, fishing, and every day life.

Our sea in question comprise Korean territorial waters, Korean EEZ and Korean islands like Ulleungdo (Dagelet, 37°14'-37°33' N / 130° 48'-130°52') inhabited by 10 150 persons and Dokdo (Rochers Liancourt / Liancourt Rocks, Take-shima in Japanese). Dokdo (37°14' N / 131°52' E) is composed of two barren islets and 89 rocks. The surface cover a area of 187 453 m² or a square of 433 meters. Dokdo, belonging to the district of Ulleungdo, is located at 87 km from it's mother island. This Korean territory is guarded permanently since 1953 by 40 coastguards (maritime police), living in the barrack on the top of the Eastern islet. There are also a light inhabited by 4 persons, a wharf for ships. Koreans can go round the Dokdo island freely since March 23rd 2005.[1]

The Sea of Japan, defined by the IHO (International Hydrographic Organisation) in 1929, comprise the South Sea of Korea, the Strait of Korea and the sea located between Korea, Japan and Russia. It means that Korean peninsula is surrounded, for two sides, by Sea of Japan which has a connotation of ‘Sea belonging to Japan’ or ‘Sea under Japanese possession’, and the Koreans don't accept this fact. This is the reason for that Koreans claim recognition of the double name ‘East Sea / Sea of Japan’ by international communities.

The trends of the toponyms of our sea prove the historical and geographical legitimacy of Korean claim in favor of Donghae (East Sea).

Donghae (East Sea) and Nihon-kai (Sea of Japan)

The 'East Sea' is a toponym adopted by Koreans as translation of the Korean appellation 'Donghae'. 'Donghae' can be also translated in 'Eastern Sea' or 'Oriental Sea', but 'East Sea' is the most appropriate and largely used in Korea and abroad.

The name 'Donghae' (East Sea) is used constantly by Koreans since Antiquity. There are many irrefutable proofs of use of this name in ancient documents such as texts and maps. We can meet the term 'Donghae' in the *Samguk Sagi* (History of Three Kingdoms) written by Kim Bu-sik in 1145, in the *Goryeo-sa* (History of Goryeo, 918-1392) published in 1454, and in the *Wangjo Sillok* (Official recordings of Joseon dynasty, 1392-1910), etc.

The most ancient Korean map which mentioned the name "Donghae" is dated 1530. We can cite other maps : *Gyeongsang Chongdo* (General map of Gyeongsang province) in *Yeojido* [Department of Oriental Manuscripts, National Library of France, coréen 74] which date the end of the 18th century, *Aguk Chongdo* (General map of Korea) around 1780, etc.

Koreans use the name 'Donghae' or 'East Sea' continuously since the Antiquity, and are unaware of the name 'Niho-kai' or 'Sea of Japan'. It's only common sense that international communities (foreigners) use equally 'East Sea' beside of 'Sea of Japan' so that Koreans can understand the location concerned by multiple purposes : navigation, maritime accident, fishing, natural resources (gas and methane-hydrate), environment, meteorology, etc.

In contrast to Donghae or East Sea which is an endonym, Nihon-kai or Sea of Japan is an exonym, given by Westerners and established primarily in Occident, before Japanese adopted this name when they introduced the Occidental civilization in the mid-19th century. Until that time, Japanese supposed to have used vaguely the name 'North Sea' (Hokkai), but this name didn't be mentioned on any map.

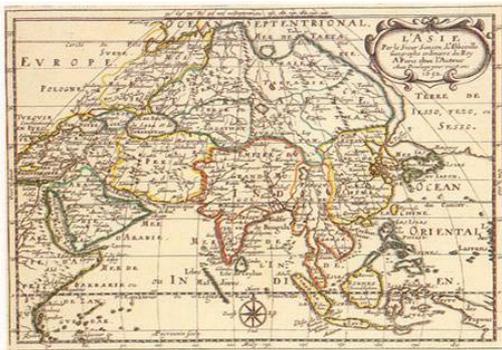
In general, in Asia, geographers didn't give a name to the seas. The toponyms are the fact of Westerners. For this reason, in Occident, our sea have known different appellations in the course of history to end in 'Sea of Japan' at the beginning of the 19th century.

I. Past

A. 17th century

We can account nearly fifty maps that give a name on the oriental part of the globe in the 17th century. The name used in the majority of these maps was ‘Oriental Ocean / Oriental Sea’ which cover a vast area at the East of Indian Ocean, comprising actual Pacific Ocean, East China Sea, Yellow Sea and East Sea / Sea of Japan. In any case, the geographical outlines remained still very vague in view of the fact that knowledge of geography were insufficient.

As the progress go along in geographical knowledge, the contour of planet Earth became clearer gradually, and the denomination of oceans and seas was subdivided. According to that, the surface area that designated the Oriental Sea ended in confining to actual East Sea / Sea of Japan during last decades of the 17th century. At that time, the name mostly used was Oriental Sea, followed by Sea of Japan and Sea of Korea (Corea). [2]



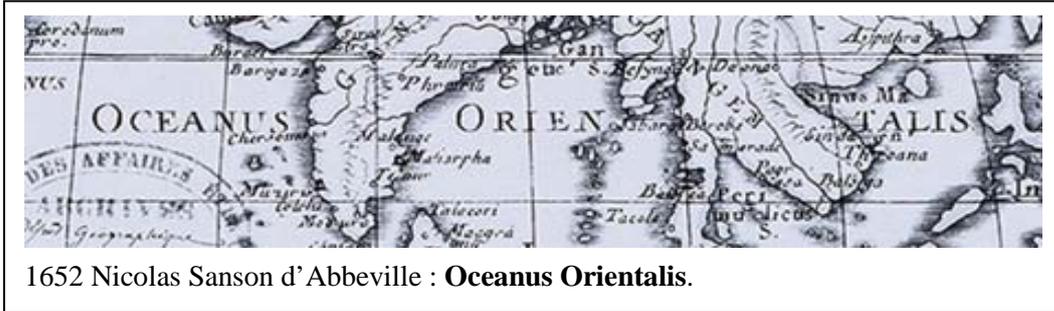
1650 Nicolas Sanson d'Abbeville.



1650 Nicolas Sanson d'Abbeville :
Ocean Oriental.



1652 Nicolas Sanson d'Abbeville.



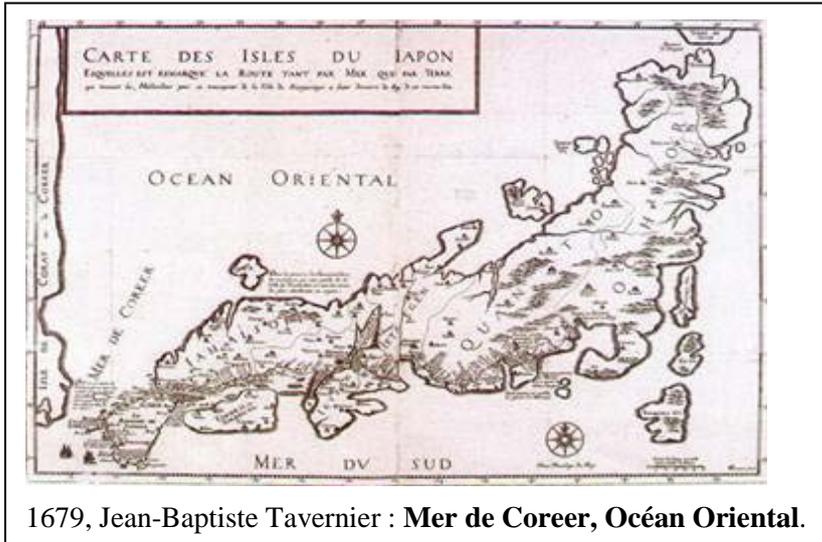
The Sea of Korea was a name rarely adopted by geographers of the 17th century. It had a spectacular apparition on the maps inserted in three books on Japan, written by the Dutch Arnoldus Montanus in 1669, by the French adventurer Jean-Baptiste Tavernier in 1679 and by the German Engelbert Kaempfer in 1770.

Except Dudley, any geographer had not used this name until the publication of the book of the Dutch Arnoldus **Montanus** (1625-1683) in 1669, entitled *Being remarkable addresses by way of Embassy from the East India Company of the United Provinces to the Emperor of Japan*. [3] Montanus' book exercised a great influence in Occident, concerning Japan during the second half of the 17th century and in the 18th century.

Ten years after the publication of Arnoldus Montanus' book, the French adventurer Jean-Baptiste **Tavernier** (1605-1689, baron d'Aubonne) assembled and published stories of journey in one volume, entitled *Collection of several singular tales and treaties that hadn't been in his six first journeys*, in Paris in 1679. [4] Tavernier's book had known less notoriety than Montanus', but it was read by a great number of persons interested in exotic things. The first tale concerned the reason of persecution toward Christians in Japan.

The third book, as much remarkable as that of Montanus, is Engelbert **Kaempfer's** (1651-1716) *History of Japan*, published in 1700 in German, translated into French in 1729, on the base of English version of 1727.

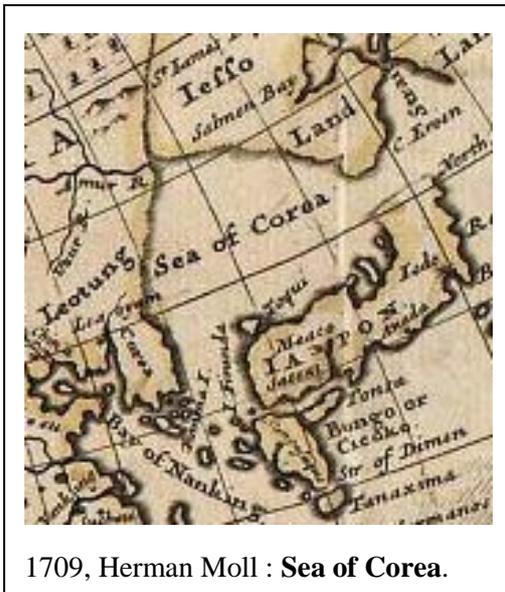
Maps describing the itinerary of the first visitors to Japan are inserted in these three books. In the maps, 'Sea of Korea' was marked for the sea located at the West of Kyushu Island, at the place of actual Korea Strait. But, these three books were read by geographers and historians of that time as fundamental sources on Japan. The maps inserted in these books should have been on the base of the toponym 'Sea of Korea' adopted by most of Europeans, especially French geographers at the beginning of the 18th century.



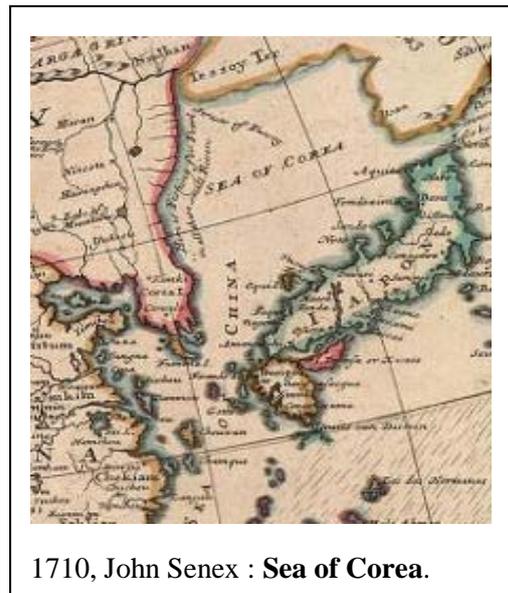
1679, Jean-Baptiste Tavernier : **Mer de Coreer, Océan Oriental.**

B. 18th Century [5]

The location of ‘Sea of Korea (Corea)’ moved to the North to occupy the centre of actual East Sea / Sea of Japan since the maps of Herman Moll in 1709 and John Senex in 1710.



1709, Herman Moll : **Sea of Corea.**

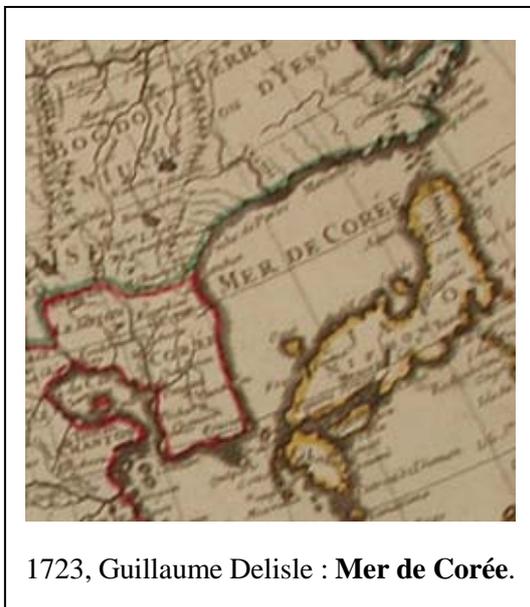
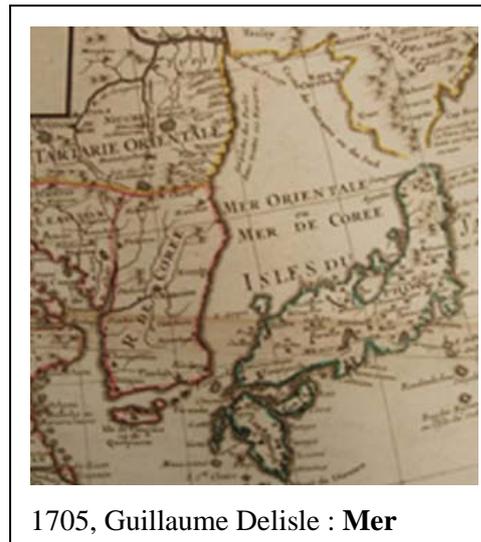
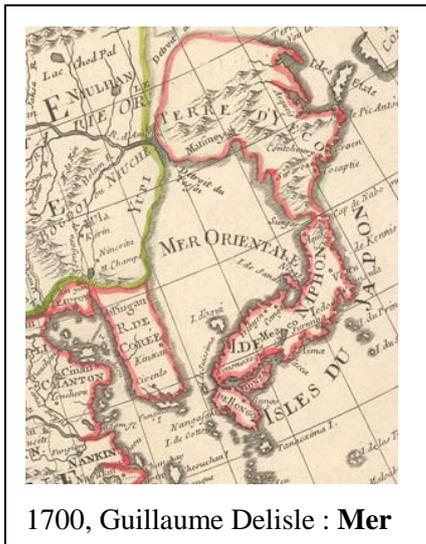


1710, John Senex : **Sea of Corea.**

‘Oriental Sea’ coexisted with ‘Sea of Korea’ on the maps of the French geographer Guillaume Delisle until 1723. He adopted ‘Mer Orientale’ (Oriental Sea) at first in 1700, ‘Mer Orientale ou Mer de Corée’ (Oriental Sea or Sea of Korea) afterwards in 1705, and finally ‘Mer de Corée’ (Sea of Korea) in 1723.

After Guillaume Delisle, the majority of French geographers adopted the name ‘Sea of Korea’ throughout the 18th century. They were Jacques and Nicolas Bellin, Robert and

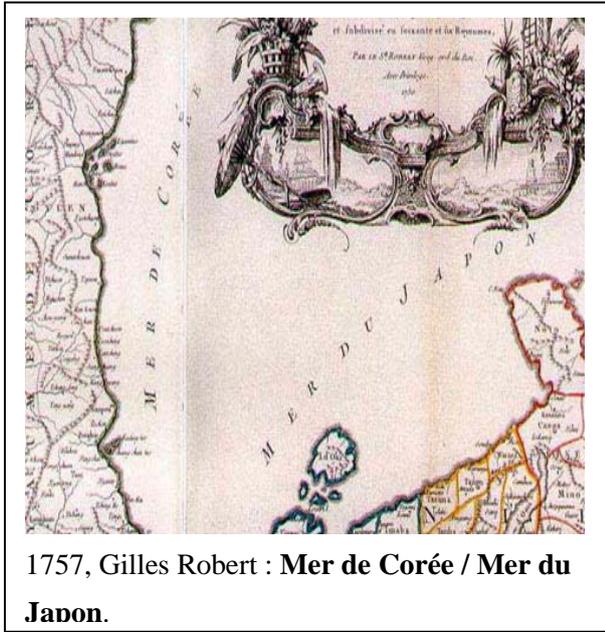
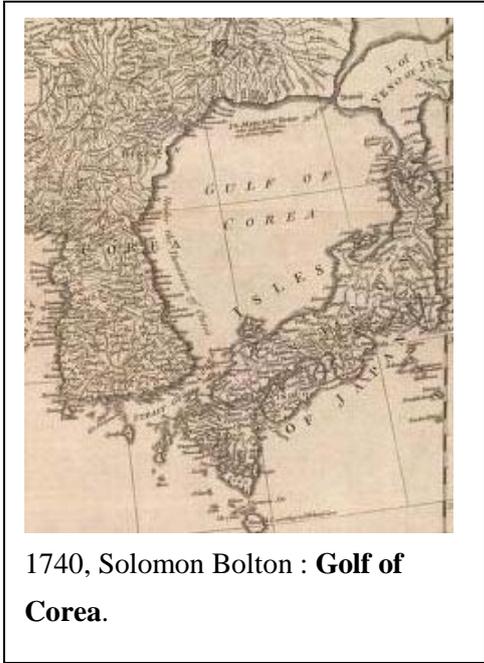
Didier de Vaugondy, Philippe Buache, Emmanuel Bowen, etc. Many English, Dutch and Russian geographers also used ‘Sea of Korea’ on their maps. This kind of maps was particularly numerous for the second half of the 18th century. According to results of the census carried by South Korean authorities, and our proper researches, we can account about 250 different kinds of maps drawn in the 18th century in Europe, of which two third of them carry the name ‘Sea of Korea’.



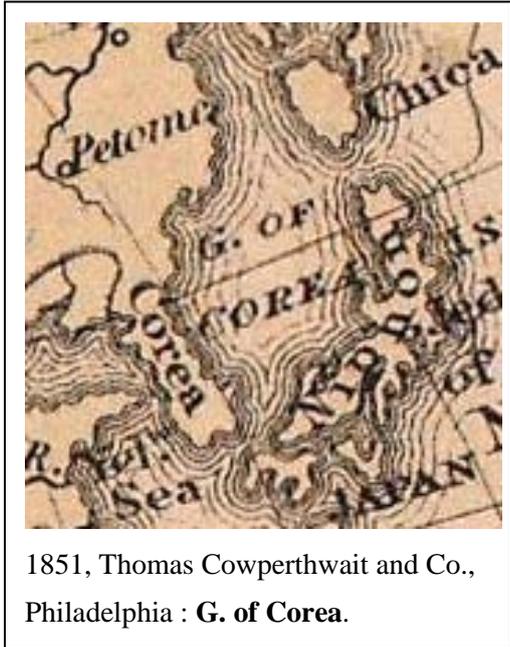
The French author Pierre-François Xavier de Charlevoix (1682-1761) wrote a book entitled *History and general description of Japan* (2 vol., 1736), that contains a ‘Map of Japanese Empire’, drawn by Jacques-Nicolas Bellin (1703-1772). Bellin’s map was drawn in 1735 to be inserted in the book of Charlevoix. On this map, we can read the

name ‘Mer de Corée’ (Sea of Korea), written twice, in the left and above the Japanese archipelago. ‘Sea of Japan’ is placed under the Japanese islands. Charlevoix’s book was also very well known.

The name ‘Gulf of Korea’ was also used on many maps drawn by English geographers since 1740 and during the second half of the 18th century.

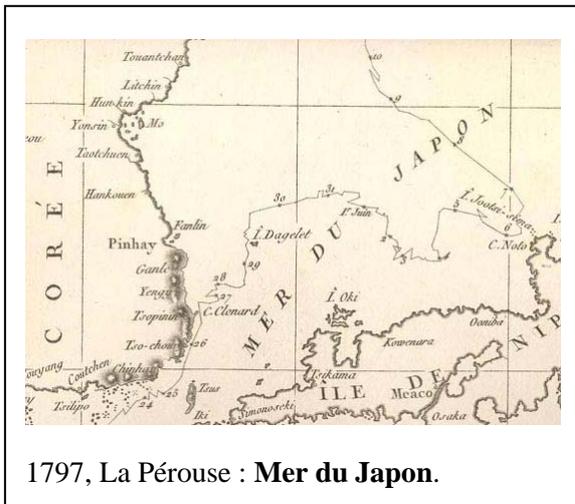


Maps which mention ‘Sea of Japan’ don’t exceed the third of the maps bearing a name on our sea in the 18th century. There are also some maps that give a double name ‘Sea of Korea / Sea of Japan’.



C. 19th and 20th centuries

The beginning of the 19th century is an important turning point for the toponym ‘Sea of Japan’. It’s most probably due to publication of the book of the French explorer Jean-François de Galaup (Count) de La Pérouse (1741-1788) : *Voyage de La Pérouse autour du monde* (Voyage of La Pérouse around the world) in 4 tomes, and *Atlas*. La Pérouse used the name ‘Sea of Japan’. His example was followed by other explorers or historians such as Adam Johann known as Ivan Federovitch Krusenstern (1770-1846), and Philipp Franz von Siebold (1796-1866), German doctor and scholar.



The name ‘Sea of Korea’ continued to be used on some European maps until 1830s. In contrast, the use of ‘Sea of Korea’ and ‘Gulf of Korea’ was sizeable until 1850s in the United States where the introduction of European maps should have been late.

The name ‘Sea of Japan’ became fixed and widespread since the beginning of the 19th century all around the world, except in Korea, the country the mostly concerned, where this denomination remained and remain unknown.

‘Sea of Japan’ was adopted as an official name of our sea in the first fascicule of the IHO (International Hydrographic Organisation) / OHI, entitled *Limits of Oceans and Seas* (S-23), published in 1928, while Korea was a colony of Japan. The second edition of this fascicule was published in 1937, and the third in 1953. Publication of the fourth edition is delayed many times, and expected in 2007.

South Korea applied for IHO membership in 1953, was admitted in 1957, and sent a delegation to Monaco in 1962 for the first time. Since 1996, Korea claims the use of ‘East Sea’ also on the publications of the IHO.

II. Present

‘East Sea’, a name, unknown until now among Westerners, did its appearance on international scene, following the claiming of Korean authorities in 1992 for the first time at the occasion of the 6th Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names of the United Nations. Until that time, Koreans had not occasion of claiming ‘East Sea’ because two Koreas had been admitted as members of UN only in September 1991.

It means that Koreans are aware of importance of the toponyms in recent days for Dokdo (Take-shima, Liancourt Rocks) and East Sea / Sea of Japan, especially, as far as the toponyms bear symbols of national identity and pride. Korean government, scientific communities as like The East Sea Society (created in 1994), medias, researchers, internet surfers and simple citizens were very sensible to that matter, and lead campaign in favor of Dokdo and East Sea on foreign maps of all kinds, published in various forms : atlases, wall maps, school manuals, medias, internet sites.

Their efforts begin to bear fruit. We can observe some significant changes in matter of toponym of our sea. It’s the adoption of the name ‘ East Sea’ by some important Western cartographers on their atlases and maps since the beginning of 2000s. But the way of use of ‘East Sea’ beside of ‘Sea of Japan’ varies according to maps.

Below, we can analyze the types of use of ‘East Sea’ on the maps published in recent years. This list is far from being exhaustive.

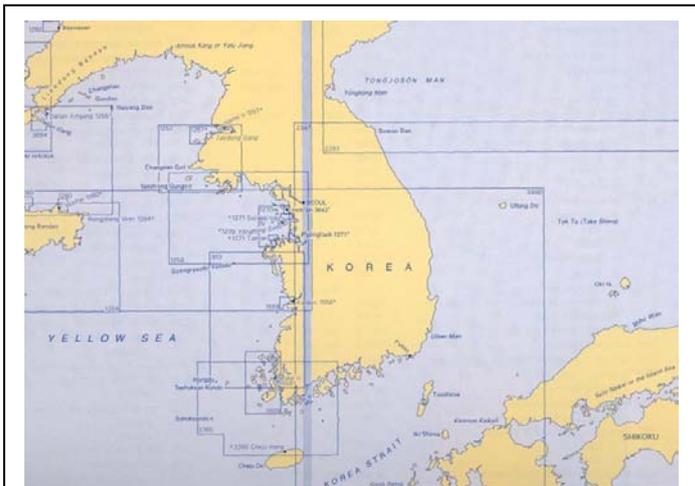
A. ‘Sea of Japan’ type, use of a single name

Still, a great majority of cartographers in the world use this kind of inscription, out of habit or practice dating from the beginning of the 19th century.

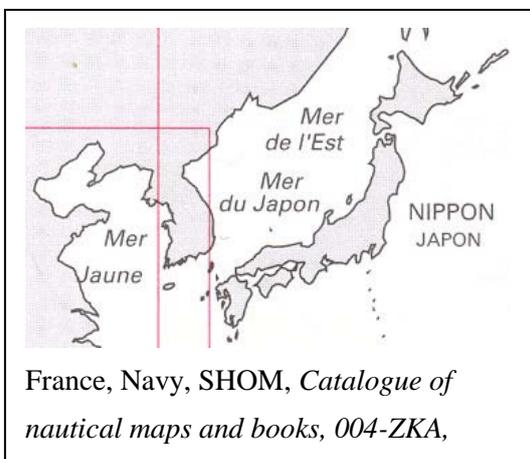
All the hydrographic maps and sailing directions (pilot) in the world bear this kind of name for our sea, meanwhile the publication of the 4th version of the fascicule *Limits of Oceans and Seas (S-23)* by the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO/OHI) in 2007 probably. The draft of this book, bearing a blank on our sea (no name), proposed by the IHO, was avoided in course of vote of its member countries in September 2002 because of strong protest of Japanese authorities.

But we can remark a shy tentative to change, taken by the Hydrographic Office of UK

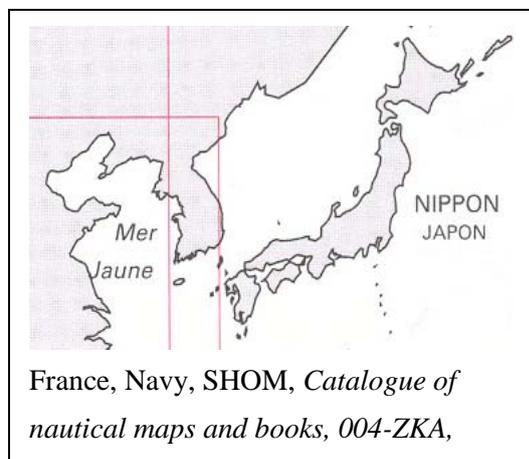
Navy, not mentioning any name on our sea since 1997 in it's *Catalogue of Admiralty Charts and Other Hydrographic Publications, NP 131*. On the other side, the SHOM (Hydrographic and Oceanographic Service of the French Navy) used, one time, a double name 'Mer de l'Est / Mer du Japon' (East Sea / Sea of Japan) in it's *Catalogue des cartes marines et des ouvrages nautiques (004-ZKA)* (Catalogue of nautical maps and books), published in 2003. But French authorities have gone to back to the toponym 'Sea of Japan' in next year, after the intervention of Japan.



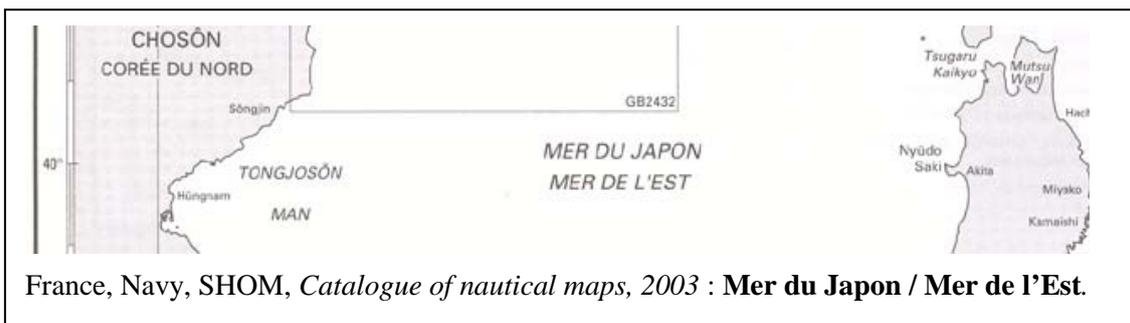
UK Navy, Hydrographic Office, *Catalogue of Admiralty Charts, NP 131, 2005 : (no name)*.



France, Navy, SHOM, *Catalogue of nautical maps and books, 004-ZKA,*



France, Navy, SHOM, *Catalogue of nautical maps and books, 004-ZKA,*



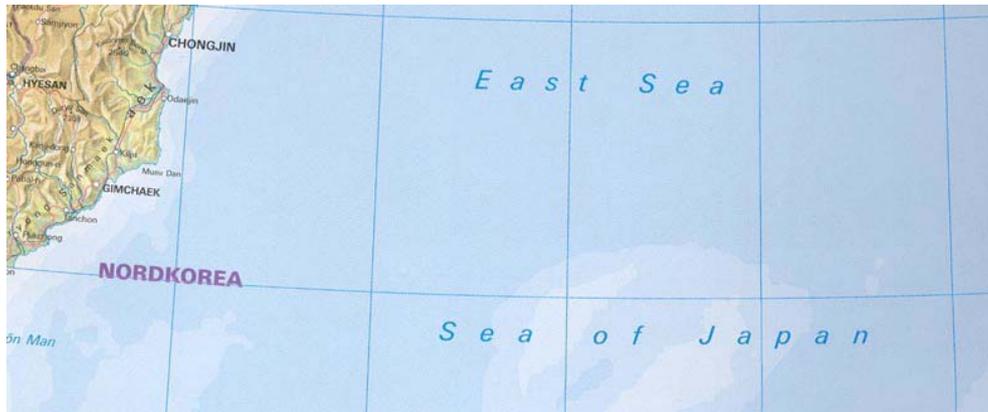
France, Navy, SHOM, *Catalogue of nautical maps, 2003 : Mer du Japon / Mer de l'Est.*



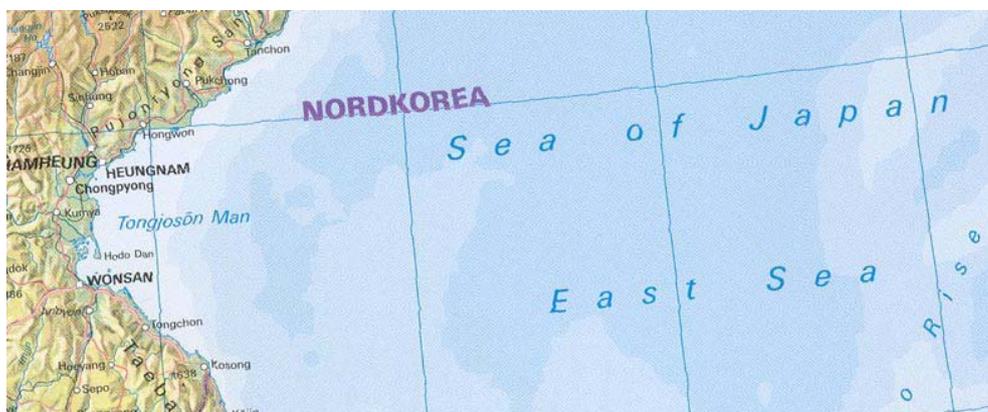
Kümmerly+Frey (Ge), 2004 : Ostmeer / Japanisches Meer.



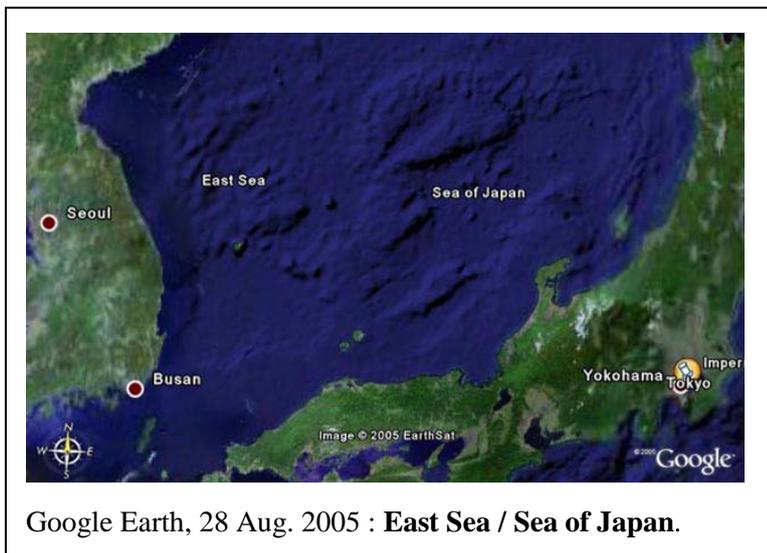
Bertelsmann Universal Atlas (Ge), 2005 : Japanisches Meer / Sea of Japan / Ostmeer.



Bertelsmann Universal Atlas (Ge), 2005 : East Sea / Sea of Japan.



Bertelsmann Universal Atlas (Ge), 2005 : Sea of Japan / East Sea.



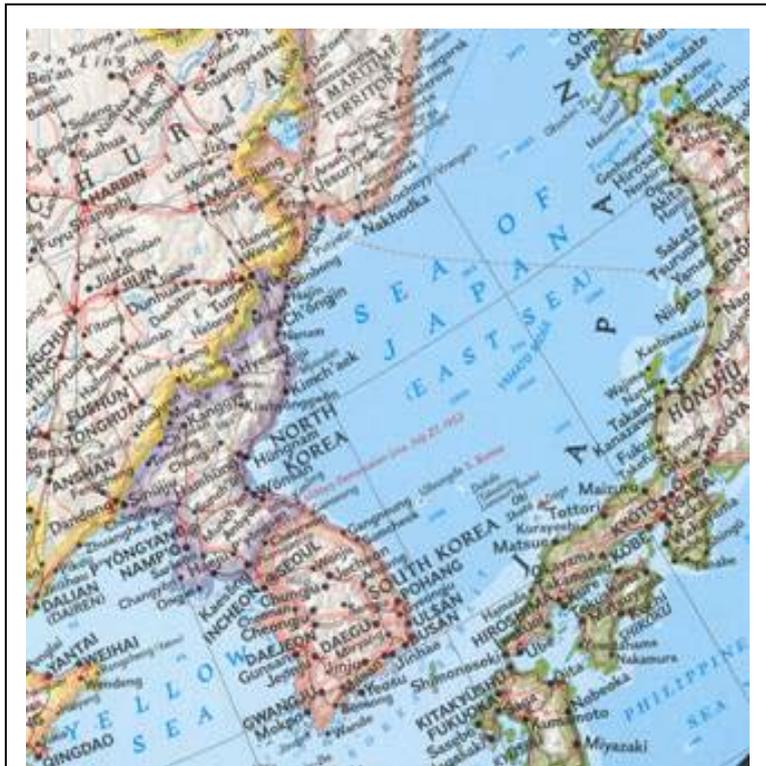
At first (August 18th 2005), Google used the name ‘East Sea (Sea of Japan)’, but met protests from Japanese netizens. Ten days later (August 28th 2005), Google changed the name in ‘East Sea / Sea of Japan’. It proves that information on web site can be spread widely and rapidly, but it remains instable, and then changeable at any time.

D. ‘Sea of Japan (East Sea)’ type, ‘Sea of Japan’ as major name and ‘East Sea’ as minor or nick name [6].

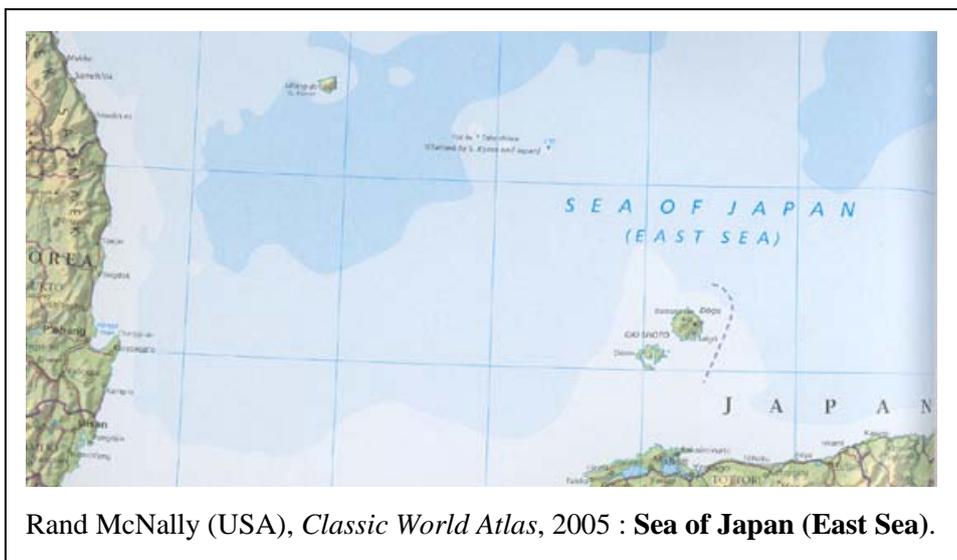
Most of cartographers who began to adopt ‘East Sea’ recently practice this type of toponym. The cartographic publishers who use this type of denomination are Rand McNally (since 1997), National Geographic (1999), Microsoft (Encarta, Expedia Com,

MSN Virtual Map) (2000), Graphic Maps (USA) ; The Times (2002), Collins 2002), (UK) ; Geo Gallimard, Nathan (2000) (Fr) ; Hema (2000) (Australia) ; Hallwag (2001) (Ge) ; ITBM (2002) (Canada).

National Geographic, Rand McNally and The Times apply this type of toponym on all kinds of individual maps, wall maps, and atlas' maps as a systematic rule.



National Geographic (USA), *Atlas of the World*, 8th Edition, 2005 : **Sea of Japan (East Sea)**.

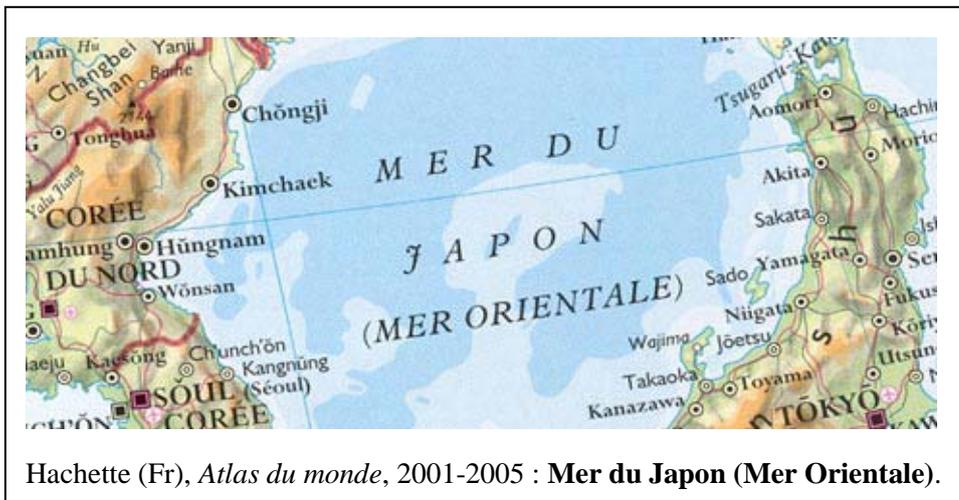


Rand McNally (USA), *Classic World Atlas*, 2005 : **Sea of Japan (East Sea)**.

In general, publishers of tourist maps or guidebooks, and editors of magazines or different kinds of yearbooks use this type of denomination on individual country maps, i.e. ‘East Sea ‘ on the map of Korea (North and South) and ‘Sea of Japan’ on the map of Japan, owing to their prudent and diplomatic attitude.

F. ‘Sea of Japan (Oriental Sea)’ type

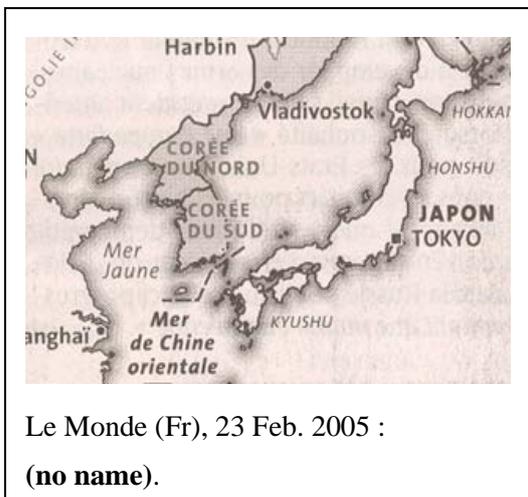
Some French cartographers like as Hachette or Microsoft Encarta France adopt the name ‘Mer du Japon (Mer Orientale)’ [Sea of Japan (Oriental Sea)] since 2001.



Hachette (Fr), *Atlas du monde*, 2001-2005 : **Mer du Japon (Mer Orientale)**.

G. ‘No name’ type

This type is used mainly by medias, newspapers, TVs, news agencies after the practice of different types of appellation for our sea. Whatever the name, there are protestations from Koreans or Japanese. For this reason, medias tend towards avoiding any mention of name on our sea to be quiet.



Le Monde (Fr), 23 Feb. 2005 :
(no name).



BBC (GB), 21 Oct. 2004 : (no name).

Conclusion

The toponym of our sea have changed in the past, and is going to change on world maps, nowadays also, particularly since the beginning of 2000s.

From the analyse of the elements that we have seen above, we can schematise the trends of toponyms used on the majority of Western maps drawn during last four centuries, as the following :

-- **Oriental Ocean** (first half of the 17th century for an wide area of oceans and seas in the Eastern part of the Earth)

→ **Oriental Sea** (transformation from Oriental Ocean for a narrowed area in the second half of the 17th century)

→ **Sea of Korea** (18th century for actual East Sea / Sea of Japan)

→ **Sea of Japan** (19th and 20th centuries)

→ **Sea of Japan (East Sea)** → **East Sea / Sea of Japan** in the 21st century probably.

We should be aware that **East Sea**, translation in English of the Korean name **Donghae**, is the only **autochthonous toponym** for our sea, in relation to other **Western toponyms** such as **Oriental Sea**, **Sea of Korea** and **Sea of Japan**. That is to say, the **East Sea** is an **endonym** while the other names are **exonyms**. The UNCSGN recommend to standardize the toponyms in favour of endonyms.

At present, among world atlases, it seems that German cartographers Bertelsmann and Kümmerly+Freya, and Google use the equal and perfect double name **East Sea / Sea of Japan** or **Sea of Japan / East Sea**.

East Sea only or **East Sea (Sea of Japan)** types are practiced on the maps of Korea (North and South), for example, tourist maps, maps in tourist guidebooks and yearbooks, maps on web site.

The name commonly adopted by influent cartographers such as National Geographic, Rand McNally, Graphic Maps, The Times, Collins, Geo Gallimard, Nathan, Hallwag, Hema, ITBM, Microsoft, etc., without much troubles with Korea and Japan, is **Sea of Japan (East Sea)** type of double name with a major and a minor name [8], on all sorts of maps of world or Asia they produce.

Finally it means that the trend of standardization of our sea name is actually going

toward **Sea of Japan (East Sea)** type of toponym.

Notes :

[1] Cf, Li, Jin-Mieung : *Dokdo, jiri-sang-ui jae-balgyeon* [Rediscovery of the Dokdo islets (Take-shima, Liancourt), from historical and geographical viewpoint], revised and extended edition, Seoul, Samin Books, 2005, 342 p.

[2] Cf. Li, Jin-Mieung : “Origins of the toponyms ‘Oriental Sea – Sea of Korea – Sea of Japan (exonyms) / East Sea (endonym)’” [Les origines des toponymes ‘mer Orientale – mer de Corée – mer du Japon (exonymes) / mer de l’Est (endonyme)], *Proceedings of the 10th Seminar on the Naming of Seas*, Society for East Sea, Paris, 2005, p. 35-67.

-Li, Jin-Mieung : « Mer de l’Est / Mer du Japon » pour rectifier une injustice de l’Histoire ? », in *Actes du 1^{er} congrès du Réseau Asie* (24-25 sept. 2003 au Centre des conférences internationales), Réseau Asie internet site or on CD-Rom (juin 2004).

-Li, Jin-Mieung : « *Seoyang, teukhi Peurangseu-eseo-ui Donghae pyogi-e gwanhan choegeun byeonhwa* » (Recent evolution on the use of the name East Sea in Western countries, particularly in France) », in *Proceedings of the 9th Seminar on the Naming of Seas*, Society for East Sea, Shanghai, Oct. 2003, p. 63-109.

-Li, Jin-Mieung : "Mer de l'Est ou Mer du Japon, une dénomination controversée", in *Culture Coréenne*, n° 59, décembre 2001, texte et 7 cartes, p. 21-25.

-Han, Sang-Bok : *Haeyanghak-eseo bon hangukhak* (Korean studies from the viewpoint of the oceanography), Ed. Haejosa, Seoul, 1988, 538 p.

-Museum of the University of Yeongnam : *Hanguk-ui yet jido* (Old maps of Korea), 2 vol., 1998, 27x37 cm, 2 vol., 199 p. and 222 p.

-Cf, *Proceedings of the Seminars on the Naming of Seas* on internet site of the Society for East Sea : www.geoedu.snu.ac.kr/eastsea/eastsea.htm.

[3] Extract from Li, “Origins ...”, mentioned in note [2] : Montanus’ book was published at first in Amsterdam in 1669. It was translated in German in the same year and in the same city. The English version was edited in next year in London, and the French version was published in Paris in 1680. This book was the first important non ecclesiastical works on Japan, written by a Dutch protestant, that served as source of inspiration of authors and philosophers of the Enlightenment such as Bayle, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Diderot and d’Alembert.

A map of 54 x 42 cm is inserted at the beginning of Dutch, German and French versions of Montanus’ book. The map describes the itinerary of Dutch embassy with great precision. It is divided in two parts. The upper part have a legend, “From Osacca (Osaka) to Iedo (Edo, actual Tokyo) by land”, and the bottom part “From Nangasacqui (Nagasaki) to Osacca (Osaka) by sea”. On the bottom part of the map, we can see the inscription « **Mer de Corée / De Coreer Zee** »

(**Sea of Korea**), written in French and Dutch in the west of Kyushu island. The actual Pacific Ocean is indicated as South Sea on two parts.

[4] Extract from Li, “Origins ...”, mentioned in note [2] : On the beginning of this book, just after the title and the table of contents, is inserted a *Map of Japanese islands, on which is marked the route by land and by sea used by Dutches to go from Nangasaqui (Nagasaki) to Iedo (Edo, Tokyo), residence of the king of the same islands*. On this map of 52 x 77 cm, is reproduced the route used by Dutch representatives to go to Edo (Tokyo), this time on a general map of Japan. Such as the map of Montanus’ book, ‘**Mer de Corée (Sea of Korea)**’ is inscribed between Korea and Japan on the map in this book. There, we can see also “**Oriental Ocean**” in capital letters in the north of Japan, and “South Sea” in the south. Korea is shown like an island.

[5] Cf. Western ancient maps reproduced in *East Sea in World Maps*, Seoul, The Society for East Sea, 2002, p. 15 ; *East Sea in old Western maps, with emphasis on the 17-18th Centuries*, Seoul, The Society for East Sea, The Korean Overseas Information Service, 2004, p. 57 ; on the internet site of the University of California, USA, East Asian Library, Korean Heritage Library or Maps (David Lee Collection), View Maps in Chronological Order, Sea of Korea Digital Archives : www.usc.edu/isd/archives/libraries/eastasian/maps.

[6] and [7] List of cartographers who adopted a double name ‘East Sea / Sea of Japan’ or ‘Sea of Japan (East Sea)’ :

Atlases

- Bertelsmann Universal Atlas (Ge) : (2005) Sea of Japan / East Sea, East Sea / Sea of Japan.
- Fischer Weltatmanach (Der) Länderatlas (Ge) : (2004) Ostmeer (Japanisches Meer) [East Sea (Sea of Japan)].
- Geo Gallimard (Fr), *Grand Atlas Geo Gallimard* : (2003) Sea of Japan (East Sea).
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[8] The double name 'East Sea / Sea of Japan' or 'Sea of Japan (East Sea)' is in accordance with the spirit of **the section A 4.2.6 of the 1974 Resolution of the IHO** that reads as follows : "It is recommended that where two or more countries share a given geographical feature under different names, they should endeavour agreement on a single name for the feature concerned. If they have different official languages and cannot agree on a common name form, it is recommended that the name forms of each of the languages in question should be accepted for charts and publications unless technical reasons prevent this practice on small scale charts; e.g., English channel / La Manche". (*East Sea in World Maps*, Seoul, The Society for East Sea, 2002, p. 15.)

UN Resolution on geographical names : III/20, Names of features beyond a single sovereignty in 1977 :

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The Conference,

Considering the need for international standardization of names of geographical features that are divided among two or more countries,

Recommends that countries sharing a given geographical feature under different names should endeavour, as far as possible, to reach agreement on fixing a single name for the feature concerned;

2. Further recommends that when countries sharing a given geographical feature do not succeed in agreeing on a common name, it should be a general rule of international cartography

that the name used by each of the countries concerned will be accepted. A policy of accepting only one or some of such names while excluding the rest would be inconsistent in principle as well as inexpedient in practice. Only technical reasons may sometimes make it necessary, especially in the case of small-scale maps, to dispense with the use of certain names belonging to one language or another. (*East Sea in old Western maps, with emphasis on the 17-18th Centuries*, Seoul, The Society for East Sea, The Korean Overseas Information Service, 2004, p. 57.)