

Naming of Seas in the Far East in Some Recent Maps and Atlases

Pokoly Béla

(Senior Adviser, Committee on Geographical Names, Ministry of
Agriculture and Regional Development, Hungary)

Seas are first of all features beyond a single sovereignty. Although sea areas within 12 miles of the coast are territorial waters, the largest part of the world's seas are high seas where rules of international conventions apply.

In international practice, the names of seas evolve through time, reflecting a lot of criteria, coincidence, even premature judgements or observations. Let us just consider the name of the largest body of water on Earth, with the most severe storms: **Pacific Ocean**.

For official documents concerning maritime practice, the documents regularly published by the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) serves as the best guidance. However, in practice, many of the seas are referred to by names different from that given in this document.

The names of seas applied by peoples living on the shores of these bodies of water reflect the culture, geographic position, language and some other criteria. These names often differ – as with names of other features – and the generally accepted name may change with time. For example the European sea nowadays called North Sea (German Nordsee) used to be called German Ocean (Oceanus Germanicus, Mare Germanicum etc.) a few hundred years ago.

As is well known both in Europe and in global shipping, the portion of the sea arm between Britain and France is called both English Channel and La Manche. Navigators are also familiar with the differing names of the wide bay of the Atlantic Ocean between Spain and France: the Spanish Golfo de Vizcaya and the English Bay of Biscay both received their specific elements from the traditional name of the Basque Province of Spain. On the other hand the French name this bay as Golfe de Gascogne after a region in southern France.

Looking briefly at the names given to some of the seas of Asia's Far East we see even more multiple names.

The Sea of Okhotsk, whose name comes from the Russian town of Okhotsk, had been known as Hokkai (north sea) by the Japanese, and as Pila gerk (great sea) by the Nivkh people of Sakhalin Island and the Amur estuary area. There must have been a similar name in the past used by the Ainu, certainly different from Ohotsuku-kai, the name the Japanese took into their vocabulary after World War II. The town Okhotsk borrowed its name from the River Okhota (meaning "hunting"), at whose estuary the fishing and fur-trading settlement was established in 1647.



The Yellow Sea (Huáng Hǎi in Chinese) whose long-standing name refers to the silt of the Yellow River (Huang He) emptied into the sea, is usually named Hwang Hae in Korean, but is also sometimes called Seo Hae (west sea), referring to its location relative to the Korean Peninsula.

Its two major protrusions:

Po Hai or better known by the Pinyin Bó Hǎi, with its NE portion of Liaodong Wan (Bay), and West Korea Bay (Korean Seojoseon-man or Seohan-man, Chinese Xi Chaoxian Wan).

Up to the mid-20th century Bo Hai was sometimes called Gulf of Chihli, the Gulf of Pechihli. Chihli (Zhǐlì) and Chihli (Běizhǐlì) are historic names for today's province of Hebei in China.

The **East China Sea**, lying to the east of the Chinese mainland, carries an obvious name in western languages. Its Chinese name is however more often Dōng Hǎi (east sea), less frequently Zhōngguó Dōng Hǎi (China east sea). In Korea the name is Dong Jungguk Hae, or sometimes Nam Hae (south sea). The Japanese name is understood to be Higashi Shina Kai (east China sea).

The **Sea of Japan/ East Sea**

The sea area between the Korean Peninsula, the Japanese Archipelago and

Russia's Far East is most often identified in international cartographic publications by the name Sea of Japan. Without going to precise percentages, the name was practically predominant until the late 1960s. Since that time a change is gradually occurring in naming the sea in maps and atlases of various publishers. Unfortunately I am not able to give a global overview, but I try to give examples of the tendency of change.

„Early in 1999, the National Geographic Society recognized the fact that the term Sea of Japan was legitimately disputed by the South Koreans. In keeping with the Society's standard place-name convention, we recognize that where a geographical feature is shared by more than one nation, and its name is disputed, we use the most commonly recognized form of the name first and label the disputed name in parentheses. Thus, on our maps, the Sea of Japan appears as the primary label for this feature while the East Sea appears below in parentheses.” Quoted from the website:

<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/maps/updates/seaofjapan.html>



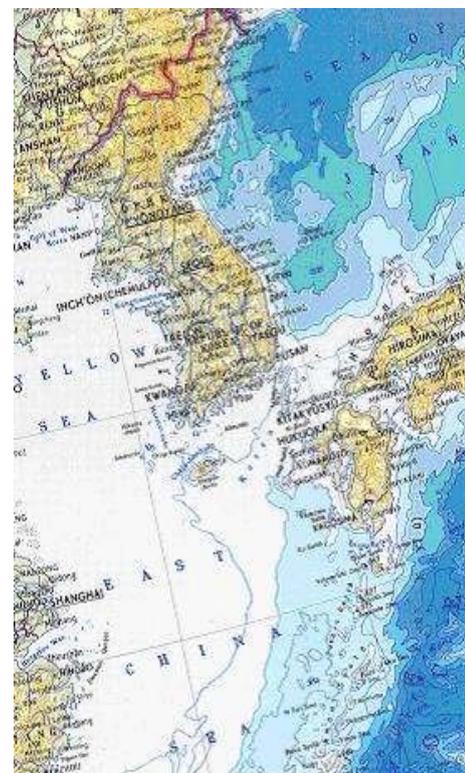
National Geographic Family Reference Atlas, 2002

The facts: The sea is named *Nihonkai (Japan Sea)* in Japanese and *Tonghae (East Sea)* by South Koreans. North Korea is understood to back the name *Joseon Donghae (Korea East Sea)*. The Chinese name is *Rìběn Hǎi (Japan sea)*. IHO in its last approved edition of 1953 of the document *Limits of Oceans and Seas, Special Publication 23*, gives the name for this sea as *Sea of Japan (Japan sea)*. Historical arguments and examples are beyond the scope of this paper, as it only tries to hint at the present tendencies in international mapping.

Most maps and atlases published in Europe carry the name *Sea of Japan* or its translations.

The *World Atlas* (the English version of *Atlas Mira*), published by the Federal Service of Geodesy and Cartography of Russia in Moscow 1999, gives this name. Some other examples:

- *Atlas Mondiale*, Larousse, Paris 1995/96: *Mer du Japon*,
- *Atlante geografico mondiale*, TCI Milano 2002: *Mar del Giappone*,
- *Illustrierter Weltatlas*, Falk Ostfildern 2003: *Japanisches Meer*



The *World Atlas*, Moscow 1999, p. 129

One early example of displaying the name *East Sea* – although in brackets and below the name *Sea of Japan* – was given in a map illustration of the magazine of the National Geographic Society (NGS, Washington) in Vol. 135, No. 3. (March 1969) on page 309. The author of the article “South Korea: Success Story in Asia” Howard Sochurek wrote “My room at the year-old eight-story Keuk dong Hotel (in Pusan) looked out onto the Sea of Japan, which Koreans call the East Sea.”

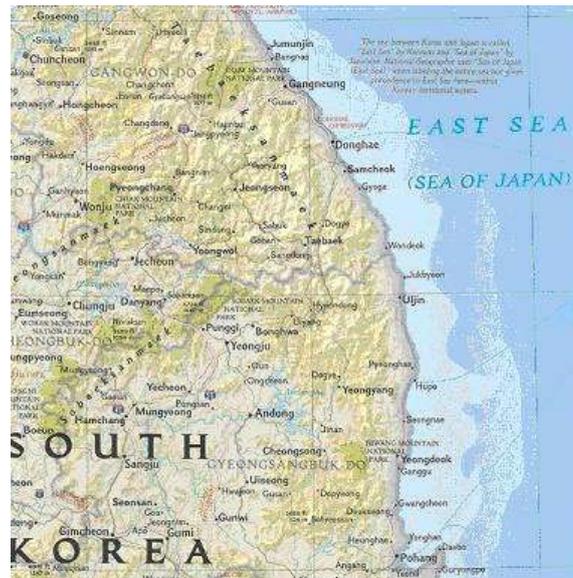


National Geographic Vol. 135, No. 3. (March 1969) p. 309

Several other examples may be cited, where the name East Sea, or its variant is displayed on maps and atlases.

- A map in the International Cartographic Association’s international map exhibition in A Coruna, Spain in the summer of 2005, a wall map of Asia, titled „Asien“, scale 1: 8 000 000, published by Kartencentrum, Vallingby (Sweden) 2005, was also displayed. (website: www.lantmateriet.se) The map gave as name for the sea Österhavet (English: East Sea) in first place and Japanska havet below it in brackets.

In its map supplement *The Two Koreas*, published in July 2003, NGS stated *“The sea between Korea and Japan is called “East Sea” by Koreans and “Sea of Japan” by Japanese. National Geographic uses Sea of Japan (East Sea) when labelling the entire sea, but gives precedence to East Sea here within Korean territorial waters.”*



National Geographic: *The Two Koreas*, July 2003

A Slovenian version of the World Map of National Geographic was published in 2004. The map was presented by Mr Milan Orožen Adamič in 19-21 May 2005 in Ljubljana, at the meeting of the UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms.



Various examples may be cited on maps on the Internet displaying the name of East Sea or its translations.

They include Microsoft' Encarta webmap:

encarta.msn.com/encnet/features/mapcenter/map.aspx?refid=701516652

Or, as a French example:

Part of an illustration for the article « Japon, la puissance chancelante » (Japan, the hesitant power)

▪ Another notable publication is the celebrated Times Comprehensive Atlas of the World (Times Books Group Ltd. London). An excerpt shows the sea named *Sea of Japan*, with *East Sea* in brackets below. (11th edition, 2003).



In 1997 Rand McNally, one of the largest mapmakers in the United States, adopted a policy of concurrent use of both names, "East Sea" and "Sea of Japan". Many other publishers have responded similarly, such as The Times (of London), Financial Times, Encyclopedia Britannica etc. (source: Wikipedia: Sea of Japan naming dispute)

Times Comprehensive Atlas of the World, 11th edition, 2003

A recent atlas published in Hungary brings East Sea at first place, with Sea of Japan placed below it. Its title is National Geographic Világtasz (World Atlas), Geographia Publisher, Budapest 2005. Cartography was based on: Atlantica – Der neue Grosse Satelliten-Weltatlas, Wissen Media Verlag GmbH, Munich, 2004)



National Geographic Világtasz, Budapest 2005

But one may also quote Wikipedia's article Sea of Japan (East Sea)
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_of_Japan



http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_of_Japan



Selected literature:

Peeter Päll: *Maailma Kohanimed* (Geographical Names of the World), Tallinn 1999; Bela Pokoly: *On the History of Naming the North Sea* (In: *Nytt om namn*, Oslo 2004, pp. 47-53).

Milan Orožen Adamič: *The Use of Exonyms In Slovene Language With Special Attention On Sea Names* (in: *Exonyms and the International Standardization of Geographical Names*, ed. P. Jordan et al, Vienna 2007, pp. 139-145);

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sea_of_Japan_naming_dispute

http://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/mav/atlas/IMG/pdf/atlas_japon.pdf