

The Dual Naming of English Channel/ La Manche and Sea of Japan/East Sea: Differences and Similarities

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Ever since the debate started in the international scene in the early 1970s on the naming of the sea area bordered by Japan, North and South Korea and Russia, there have been a great number of arguments on the question of naming this feature.

The present paper attempts to raise some ideas on the differences and similarities of the naming practice of two marine features: the Sea of Japan/East Sea and the English Channel/La Manche (further: the Channel and the Sea).

1. Position

1.1. Both features are at the extreme end of the Eurasian landmass: the Channel is at its western reaches, while the Sea is at its eastern perimeter. The coincidence of being east of both the Korean Peninsula and of the largest of the earth's landmasses were already noted before.

The Sea: at a strategic position for China, Russia, North and South Korea and Japan.

The Channel: at a position of heavy transit cargo traffic to and from Europe.



1.2. Area: while the Channel covers only about 75,000 square kilometres, the Sea has a surface of almost a million sq.km (978,000). Thus the latter is somewhat larger than the North Sea (750,000 sq.km)

2. 1. Names: English Channel/La Manche

The current English name English Channel (in general use since the early 18th century) allegedly derives from the designation “*Engelse Kanaal*” in Dutch sea maps of the late 16th

century. Earlier names had included Oceanus Britannicus and British Sea. A very early example of its map use is given in David Forrest's paper presented to the ICA Conference Santiago, 2009 titled *Names for Sea Areas of International Extent on British Maps*. Robert Morden's map of 1680 reads The English C^hannel



A New map of England Scotland and Ireland. Morden, 1680 (From Potter, 1988).

(see: http://icaci.org/documents/ICC_proceedings/ICC2009/html/nonref/12_5.pdf)

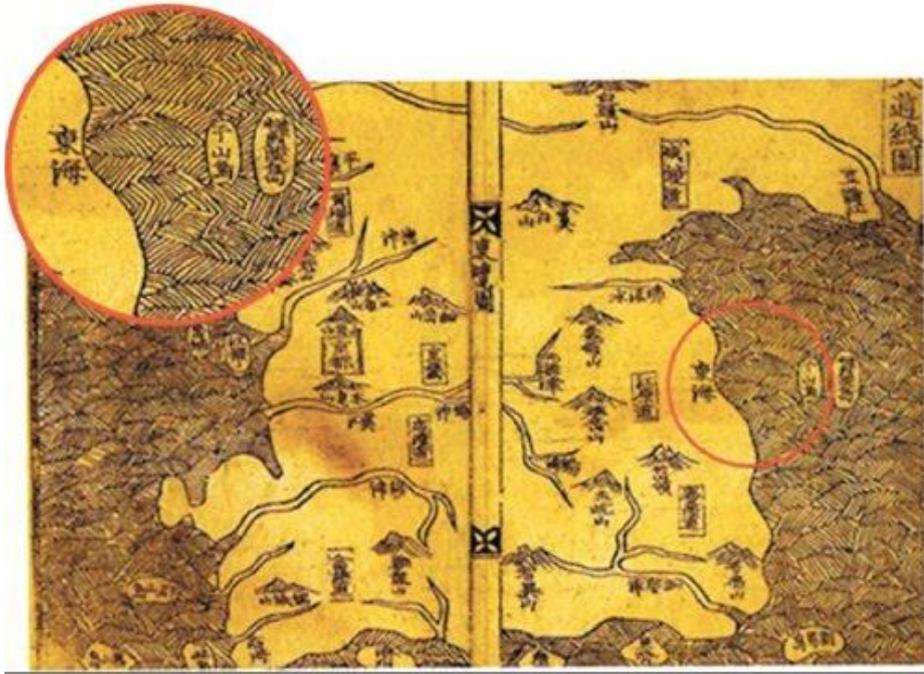
The French have been using the name La Manche (in reference to the sleeve-like coastal outline) since the early 17th century. It is also the basis of German Ärmelkanal and Italian La Manica through translation, and Spanish El canal de la Mancha and Portuguese Canal da Mancha through linguistic adjustment.

Some scholars believe that it rather derives from the Celtic word meaning "channel" that are also found in the Scottish names *The Minch* or *North Minch* and *The Little Minch*.

Used on maps since the 17th century, an early example of cartographic use is given in Pierre Duval's map *Europe Revue et augmentée*, 1670:



Detail from Pierre Duval's map of 1670



Paldo-Chongdo (1530), a general map of eight provinces, depicts the “Donghae” in the eastern coast.

2.3. In both features therefore one of the variant names is composed of a specific element referring to a country (English Channel – Sea of Japan). This is not uncommon (Irish Sea, Norwegian Sea, Arabian Sea), though this practice was more widespread in historical times (Mare Germanicum, Mare Ibericum, Mare Gallicum etc.).

3. International use

3.1.1. The name English Channel is used in all English-language publications.

3.1.2. The term La Manche is the accepted form in all French-language publications, plus in a number of other languages (Arabic, Polish, Russian, Turkish, Czech, Hungarian etc.). Together with its alternative translations and variants (German, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, Greek and others) make this alternative also globally widespread.



Wikipedia

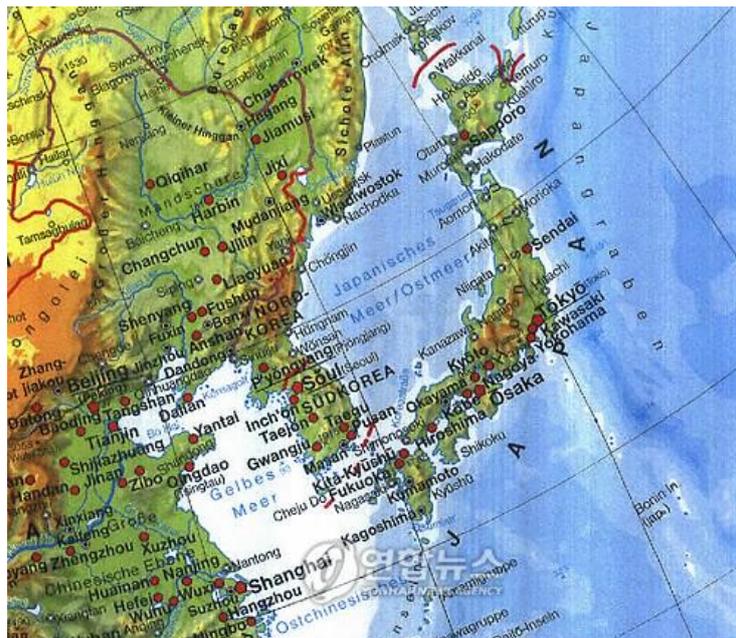
The English Channel on a German-language map shown as "Ärmelkanal". Note that in many other German maps the name "Der Kanal" is used instead.

3.1.3. Dual naming is rare, mostly limited to very much international publications (e.g. the International World Map); it is understood that even languages of non-Roman scripts use one or the other basic version (Chinese/Pinyin: Yīngjīli Hǎixiá).

3.2.1. Sea of Japan – traditionally used in most foreign countries, with appropriate translation (French mer du Japon, Polish Morze Japońskie, Arabic بحر اليابان /bahr al-yābān/, Malay Laut Jepun etc.)

3.2.2. East Sea – the name used for the Sea exclusively is found on English-language maps and publications of South Korean origin or in some publications dealing with South Korea. Publications in English originating in North Korea use the term East Sea of Korea.

3.2.3. Dual naming is a development of the past few decades and is applied by several private cartographic enterprises (National Geographic/Washington; Rand McNally etc.) with the general solution of giving the Sea of Japan at first place and the East Sea in brackets. More recent examples include a Map of the World /Dünya Sirasi Haritasi/ 1:30 000 000 by the Turkish General Command of Mapping, 2007 displaying Japon Denizi/Dogu Denizi, as well as a 2009 geography textbook by Freytag and Berndt of Austria showing Japanisches Meer/Ostmeer. (source: http://eastsea.nori.go.kr/eng/open_content/news/index.asp?boardNo=18)



An illustration from Freytag and Berndt' textbook of 2009

4. International status

4.1. English Channel: endonym used in IHO (*Limits of Oceans and Seas* S-23,1953); used at UN in English-language publications;

4.2. La Manche: endonym used in IHO (*Limits of Oceans and Seas* S-23,1953); used at UN in French-language publications

4.3. Sea of Japan: exonym used in IHO (*Limits of Oceans and Seas* S-23,1953); used at UN as “the most wide-spread and generally recognized denomination” for the feature.

4.4. East Sea: exonym not used in IHO materials, in national boards on toponymy usually not advised for official use. At the UN the term is not used

Conclusion

The comparison of the alternative naming of the English Channel/La Manche and Sea of Japan/East Sea offers some similarities, but also quite a few differences.

Situated at the opposite ends of the Eurasian continent both the Channel and the Sea has immense importance as to international marine traffic and strategy respectively. In both features one of the variant names is composed of a specific element referring to a country (English Channel – Sea of Japan). While the Channel, with both its well-established English and French endonymic forms are used globally and officially, the Sea is more familiar as yet in its exonym form of Sea of Japan. In the past few decades international cartography has become increasingly aware of the need to use both the widespread variant Sea of Japan and the arguably older local name in its exonymic form: East Sea.