

THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
OF JAPAN

The One
and Only *Name* Familiar to
the International Community

SEA  OF JAPAN

1 Sea of Japan is the only internationally established name for the sea area concerned. This has been verified by a survey of historical maps from around the world conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.



World Map, Matteo Ricci, 1602, Beijing
In the Kano Collection,
Tohoku University Library, Japan

The term Sea of Japan appears
in the center.

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1) The term Sea of Japan was first used in the early 17th century in the world map created by the Italian Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci. Research by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has confirmed that while Western maps used a variety of names for the sea through the 18th century, including “Sea of Korea,” “Oriental Sea” and “Sea of China” in addition to Sea of Japan, from the early 19th century Sea of Japan overwhelmingly became the preferred term. Based on this fact, it can be concluded that use of the name Sea of Japan was established in the West by the early 19th century.

2) The Republic of Korea (ROK) has also conducted a survey of historical maps, but the results lack credibility.

a. Japan’s survey is more comprehensive than the ROK survey of the same collections.

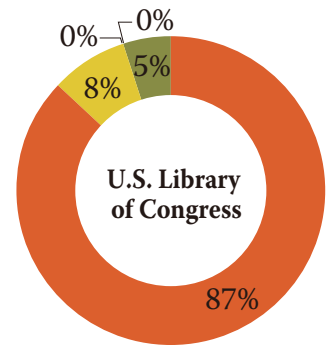
Japan’s survey of historical maps in France’s national libraries included 1,495 maps. The ROK’s survey of the same institutions, on the other hand, consists of only 515, or approximately one-third of the Japanese survey’s total, therefore yielding completely different results. It is evident that Japan’s survey is more comprehensive.

b. The ROK survey counts “Oriental Sea” and “Sea of Korea” as “East Sea.”

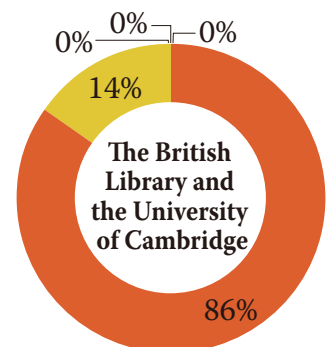
The survey of historical maps conducted by the ROK that asserts “East Sea” as its official name counts the terms “Oriental Sea” and “Sea of Korea” (or “Korea Sea”) as “East Sea,” and compares the number of maps that use one of these terms to the number of maps that use Sea of Japan. It is apparent that “Sea of Korea” and “East Sea” are different names. Moreover, the names “Oriental Sea” and “East Sea” have completely different origins and meanings. “Oriental Sea” refers to *the sea of the Orient from the perspective of the Occident*, while “East Sea” means the sea on *the eastern side of the Korean peninsula*.

■ Results of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ Survey of Historical Maps

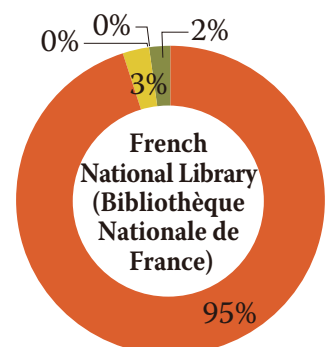
(Percentages indicate the ratio of use of the various names for the sea area concerned)



Survey Period: December 2004–March 2005
Maps Surveyed: 1,213 maps



Survey Period: December 2002–June 2003
Maps Surveyed: 58 maps



Survey Period: October 2003–January 2004
Maps Surveyed: 215 maps

- Sea of Japan
- Sea of Korea
- Oriental Sea
- East Sea
- Other

Note: Maps included in the survey indicated a name for the Sea of Japan area.



2 The United Nations and the governments of major nations such as the United States recognize Sea of Japan as the official name.

1) United Nations' Policy

The United Nations (UN) recognized Sea of Japan as the standard geographical term in March 2004, and UN policy states that the standard geographical term be used in official UN publications. The UN Secretariat has further clarified its stance on the issue by affirming the need to observe prevailing practice to ensure fairness and neutrality, stating that “without taking sides on the issue, the simultaneous use of both [Sea of Japan and ‘East Sea’] infringes on the neutrality of the United Nations.”

2) Policy of the United States and Other Major Countries

The U.S. Board on Geographic Names, an agency of the government of the United States, has formally recognized and acknowledged Sea of Japan as the sole official name for the sea area concerned. All federal agencies of the United States are required to use the name Sea of Japan. Other agencies within the United States are strongly encouraged to use the term as well. The governments of other major countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany and China, officially use the name Sea of Japan.



Map from the UN Secretariat

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3 In recent years, a few countries have suddenly begun to challenge the sole use of Sea of Japan without solid foundation.

1) Objections to the name Sea of Japan were first raised by the ROK and North Korea at the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, held in 1992. Although there had been no prior objections made to the term, either during bilateral talks or at international fora, the ROK suddenly began insisting that the name of the Sea of Japan be changed to “East Sea,” or that both names be used together.

2) Rebuttal to the ROK’s assertions

a. ROK assertion: “The name Sea of Japan became widespread as a result of Japanese expansionism and colonial rule.”

The Japanese government’s survey of historical maps confirms that the name Sea of Japan was already prevalent in the early 19th century. Japan during the Edo Period (1603–1867) had an isolationist policy, and was unable to exercise any influence to establish the name Sea of Japan. Consequently, the ROK’s assertion that the name Sea of Japan became widespread as a result of “expansionism and colonial rule” in the latter half of the 19th century is wholly invalid.

Further, as shown in Part 4 (on page 7), the government of the ROK has recently published a survey that can be interpreted as recognizing that the name Sea of Japan did not become widespread as a result of Japanese expansionism and colonial rule.

b. ROK assertion: “The UN and IHO have issued resolutions that urge the use of the name ‘East Sea’ together with Sea of Japan.”

The ROK contends that the United Nations (UN) and the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) have issued resolutions that advocate the name “East Sea” be used together with Sea of Japan. However, neither UNCISGN Resolution III/20¹ nor IHO Technical Resolution A.4.2.6.² includes any specific recommendation to use “East Sea” alongside Sea of Japan. Further, these resolutions presume that the geographical feature concerned is under the sovereignty of two or more countries, such as in the case of a bay or

Notes:

1. United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCISGN) Resolution III/20 “Names of Features beyond a Single Sovereignty” (1977):

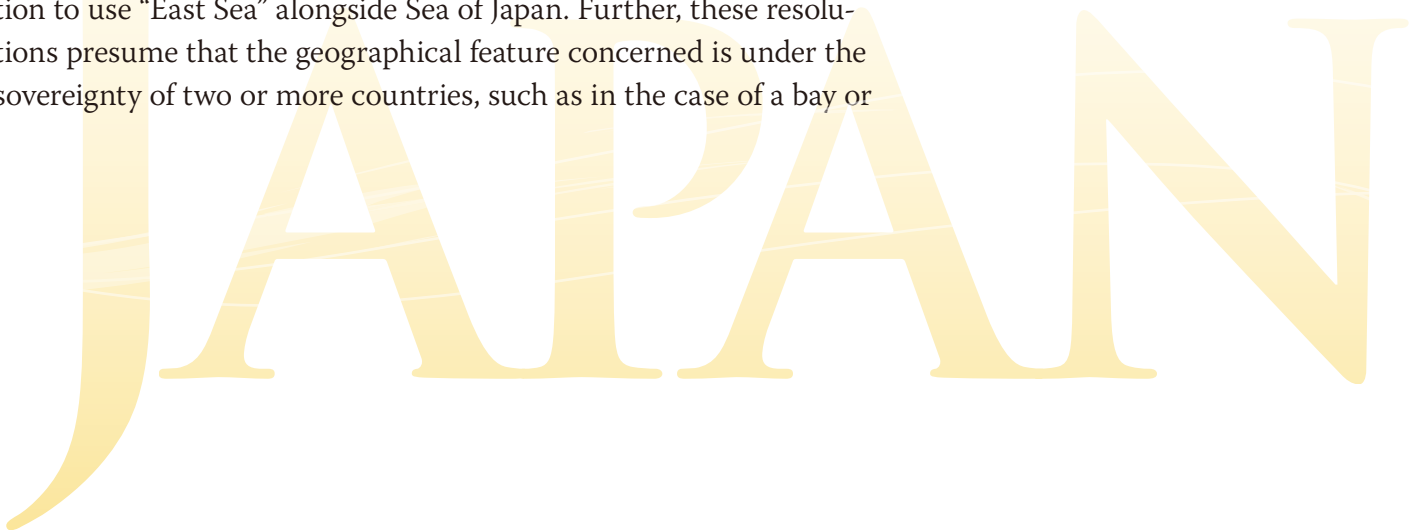
The Conference,

1. *Recommends that countries sharing a given geographical feature under different names should endeavour, as far as feasible, 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.*

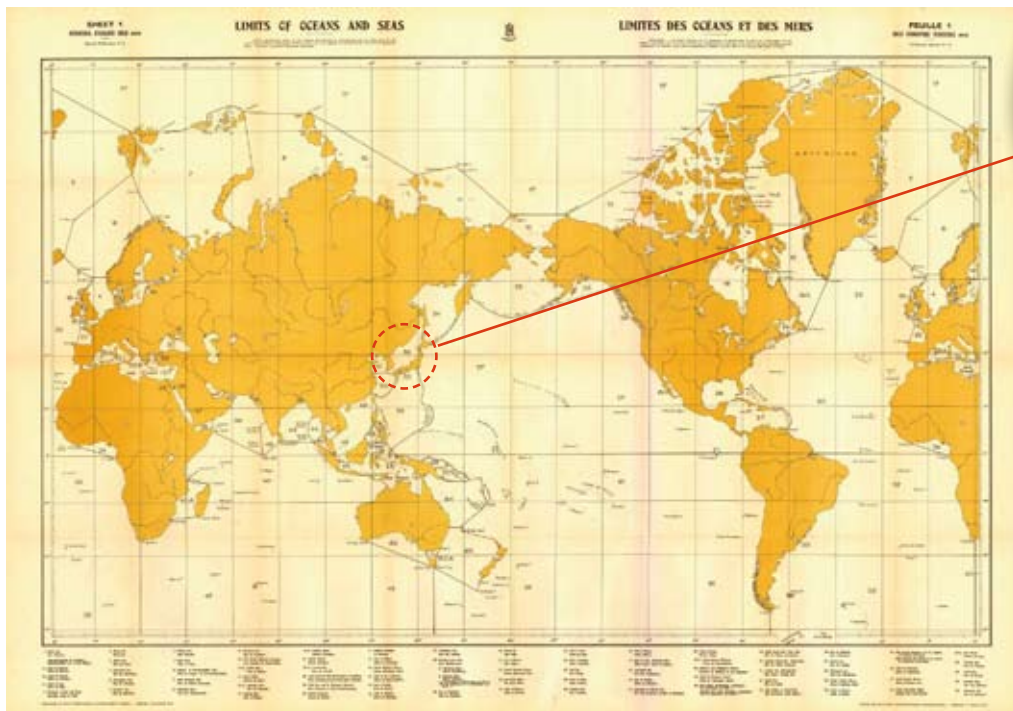
2. IHO Technical Resolution A.4.2.6. (1974):

It is recommended that where two or more countries share a given geographical feature (such as a bay, a strait, channel or archipelago) under different names, they should endeavor to reach 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.



strait, and do not apply to the high seas such as the Sea of Japan. Following the ROK's assertion, if even one of the countries bordering the Atlantic or the Pacific were to raise an objection to the name of the ocean, it would lead to the use of multiple names, which would clearly be unmanageable. The international community cannot accept such an argument.

Further, as stated previously the UN has already officially confirmed its policy requiring the use of Sea of Japan as the standard geographical term in all official UN publications. The IHO publication "Limits of Oceans and Seas" (S-23) also uses only the name Japan Sea for the sea area concerned. This demonstrates that there is no UN or IHO resolution recommending the use of "East Sea" together with Sea of Japan.



52.—Japan Sea.

The IHO publication "Limits of Oceans and Seas" uses only the name Japan Sea for the sea area concerned.

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3) Some maps in use within the ROK show “East Sea” for the sea on the east side, “West Sea” for the sea on the west side, and “South Sea” for the sea on the south side of the Korean peninsula. Japan does not presume to challenge the use of the name “East Sea” by the ROK in its domestic publications or media.

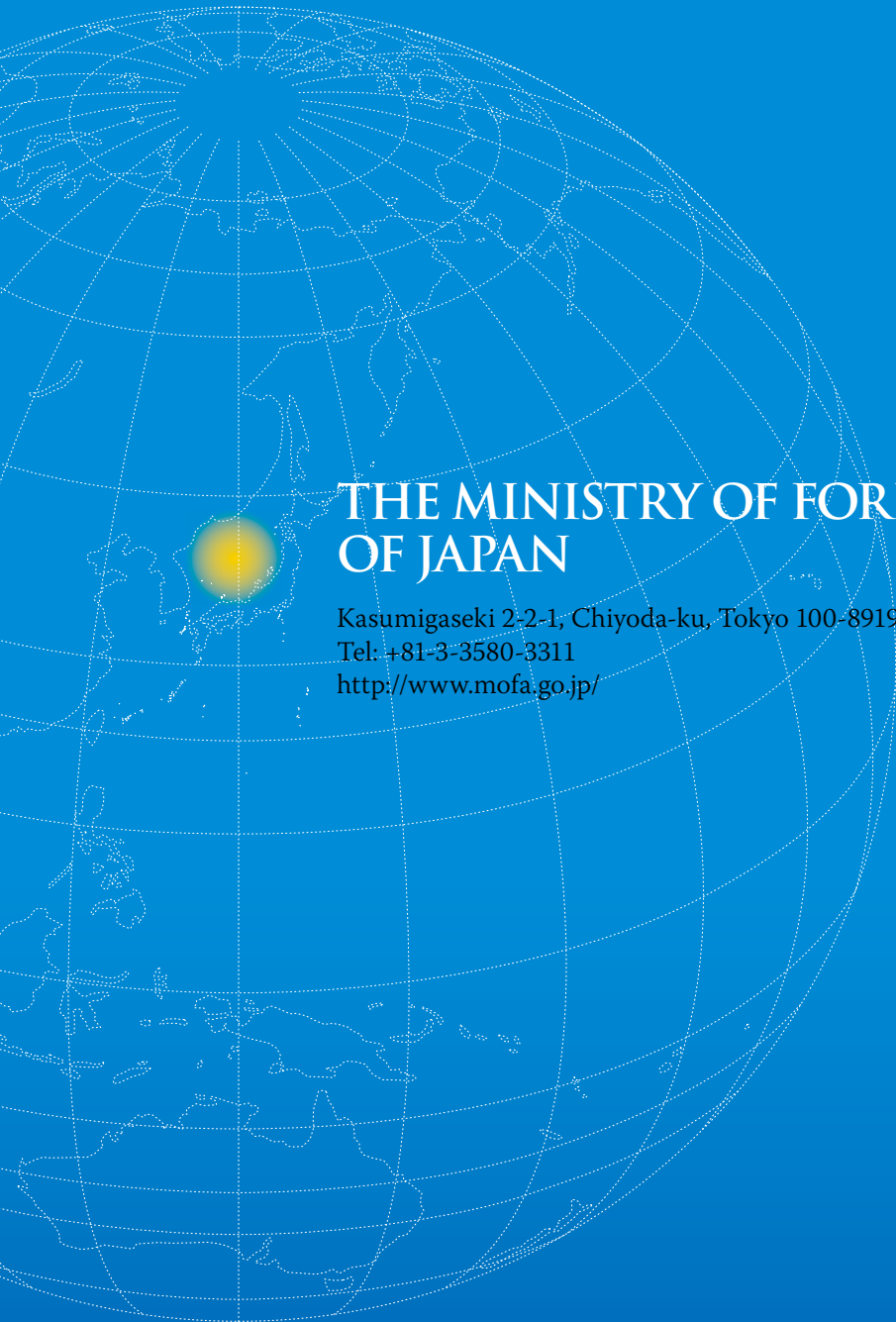
However, Japan cannot accept the assertion to change the name of the Sea of Japan—the name actually used in the international community—to the purely domestic ROK term “East Sea” and to make this an international standard, as the confusion would necessarily have an adverse effect on the safety of international maritime traffic. Sea of Japan is the only internationally established name, a fact for which there is no room for debate. Japan emphatically refutes the assertions of the ROK and North Korea made at the UNCSTGN, IHO and other international conferences.

4 The ROK government has recently published a survey that can be interpreted as withdrawing a part of its own assertion.

In November 2007, the ROK’s National Geographic Information Institute (NGII), an agency of the Ministry of Construction and Transportation (currently the Ministry of Land, Transport and Maritime Affairs), published a survey of historical maps. Although the NGII’s survey contains the same flaws (outlined above in Section 3.2.b.), what is notable is that the report states that “there was a rapid increase in the use of the name Sea of Japan *from the 19th century (1830 onward)*” (italics added).

This clearly shows the fallacy of the ROK’s assertion that the name Sea of Japan was the result of the Japanese policy of expansionism and colonial rule (Section 3.2.a.), and can be interpreted as affirming that the name Sea of Japan was in widespread use well before Japan’s colonial rule over the Korean peninsula.

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