

# Territory and Ancient Maps



**Paldo chongdo 八道總圖**  
General Map of Eight Provinces, 18th century, woodblock print, 28.5x34.0 cm, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at Seoul National University



**Amnokgang byeongyedo 鴨綠江邊界圖**  
Map of Amnokgang [Yalu river] frontier, 18th century, color manuscript copy, 68.0x106.0 cm, National Museum of Korea

The Korean territory is represented on old maps created in the pre-modern era. Although the boundaries of the territory on those maps are not as clear as on maps made in the modern era, these antique maps reflect various and unique aspects of the historic Korean territory and serve as cartographic documentations or evidence for such. Collectively, they represent the territorial perceptions and ownership held by the Korean people that had been shaped over time. These territorial documentations are found not only on maps of prefectures, military maps, and general maps of Korea, but also on world maps made by cartographers both in Korea and from around the world.

Although mapmaking in Korea dates back to before the Three Kingdoms Period, only the maps made in Joseon Dynasty now survive. The oldest existing Korean map today is the *Honil gangni yeokdae gukdo jido* (Map of Integrated Lands and Regions of Historical Countries and Capitals) made in 1402. This map is commonly referred to in western literature on the history of cartography as the *kangnido*, and it is recognized as one of the best world maps among those in both Eastern and Western civilizations at the time. On the *kangnido*, Joseon territory is bigger than the African continent to the west, which reflects the Joseon Dynasty's pride in itself as a civilized state that is next

to China.

The Korean territory is most precisely delineated in a series of maps entitled *Joseon jeondo's* (The Complete Maps of Joseon). In the 15th century, cartographic efforts at making world maps and general maps of Joseon were largely based on land surveys. Under the reign of King Sejong, the 4th king of Joseon Dynasty, the distances between counties and prefectures were measured and the latitudes of Baekdusan, Manisan, and Hallasan were determined which prepared the scientific foundation for the efforts of the Joseon Dynasty cartographers. Jeong Cheok completed a map of the two border regions (currently Hamgyeong Province and Pyeongan Province) in 1451 and made the *Dongkuk jido* (Map of Korea) with Yang Sungji in 1463 (the 9th year of King Sejo). The extant *Joseon bangyeok jido* (Map of the Korean Territory) is a great example of the *Joseon jeondo* series made in the 15th century. This map features the Korean peninsula, Manchuria to the north of the Amnokgang and the Dumangang. It represents the view of the national territory held by Korean elites and scholars like Yang Sungji who believed the Korean territory extended beyond the peninsula to include Manchuria.

The *Paldo chongdo* (General Map of Eight Provinces) included in *Sinjeung dongguk yeoji seungnam* (Complete Conspectus of the Territory of

the Eastern Country), which was made in 1530, is one of the most representative maps of the Korean territory produced in the early Joseon Dynasty. This map takes the form of an appended chart to complement geographical description, but its description of the land is rather crude. The purpose of the map is not to delineate the country's territory in detail, but to express the establishment of the royal authority and the Confucian ideas for governance by means of commemorative rites for the national land. The map indicates noted mountains, large rivers and seas that are included in the ritual codes. It also features some islands in the East Sea and the West Sea such as Ulleungdo, Usando (currently Dokdo) and Heuksando, which highlights the fact that they belonged to the Joseon Dynasty as long ago as the 16th century.

In the late Joseon Dynasty, after the two devastating wars with Japan and Manchuria, various types of maps were made with the specific intention of defining the boundaries of the Joseon territory. The increased awareness of border regions such as the northern part of the peninsula and the coastal and insular areas was reflected in these maps. Military maps like *Yogye gwambang jido* (Map of the Yogye Borderland) and *Seobuk pia yanggye mali illam jido* (Comprehensive Map for Defense of West and North Border) identified the borderlands near the Amnokgang and

the Dumangang. Sea path maps that were needed to defend the territorial boundaries and coastal lines were also made. These maps prove that the specified borderlands belonged to Joseon.

In the mid-18th Century, the *Dongkuk jido* (Map of Korea), made by Jeong Sangki, defined a watershed moment in the history of mapmaking in the late Joseon Dynasty. Unlike the maps of the early Joseon period, the scale of this map is large at 1:420,000. It contains the channels of the Amnokgang and the Dumangang, and it describes the coastlines as precisely as their portrayals on contemporary maps.

The *Dongkuk jido* was hailed as the first map to truly describe the Korean territory. It was widely copied and used by government offices and civilians, later becoming the basis for block-printed maps of Korea, such as the *Haejwa jeondo* (The Complete Map of Haejwa). The territorial boundaries of the Joseon Dynasty were completely and firmly established when Kim Jeongho made the *Daedong yeojido* (The Territorial Map of the Great East). Kim Jeongho also compiled an atlas entitled the *Cheonggudo* (Map of Korea) in 1834 based on previously accumulated cartographic knowledge and accomplishments. The *Cheonggudo* is comprised of two books: Volume 1 includes odd-numbered sections and Volume 2 even-numbered sections; when the two volumes are



**Dongguk daejeondo 東國大全圖**  
Great Map of an Eastern Country [Korea], Jeong Sangki, mid-18th century, color manuscript copy, 272.7x147.5 cm, National Museum of Korea

unfolded side by side the sections combine to form a comprehensive view. In 1861, Kim Jeongho completed the *Daedong yeojido* in wood-blocks, a splendid cartographic masterpiece of the Joseon Dynasty.

Complementing the *Cheonggudo*, the *Daedong yeojido* was an innovation in terms of its form and content. While the *Cheonggudo* was presented in the form of a book, the Korean territory is divided into 22 sections in the *Daedong yeojido*, and each section is assembled into a foldable booklet. Each booklet is easily carried and unfolded, and several booklets can be pieced together for an overall view. Mountains and rivers are shown in a realistic perspective and various symbols are also used on the map. The pathways are marked at every 10-ri (approximately 5 km) for easy understanding of geographic distances between locations. The map skillfully delineates unique aspects of the Joseon territory from inland mountains and waters to coastal and insular regions.

Korea's cartographic tradition initiated another watershed change in 1876 when Joseon opened its

ports. Joseon cartographers at that point adopted modern survey techniques from Japan by practicing cartography with a scientifically-based method of triangulation to create accurate cadastral maps (large scale carefully surveyed maps). Triangulation was first conducted in Seoul. Cadastral maps were also made in other areas through surveying. Such modern cartographic techniques were in use since the 1870s. *Daehan jiji* (Geography of Korea) and *Daehan shinjiji* (New Geography of Korea), which were both created for textbooks, included complete territorial maps of Korea based on a coordinate system with lines of longitude and latitude. *Daehan jeondo* by Jang Jiyeon, in particular, shows North Gando, a major settlement of ethnic Koreans, and includes it as part of the Korean territory. In 1910, when Japan occupied Korea, the long tradition of Korean cartography devoted to the delineation the national territory on maps was interrupted for the duration of the colonial era.

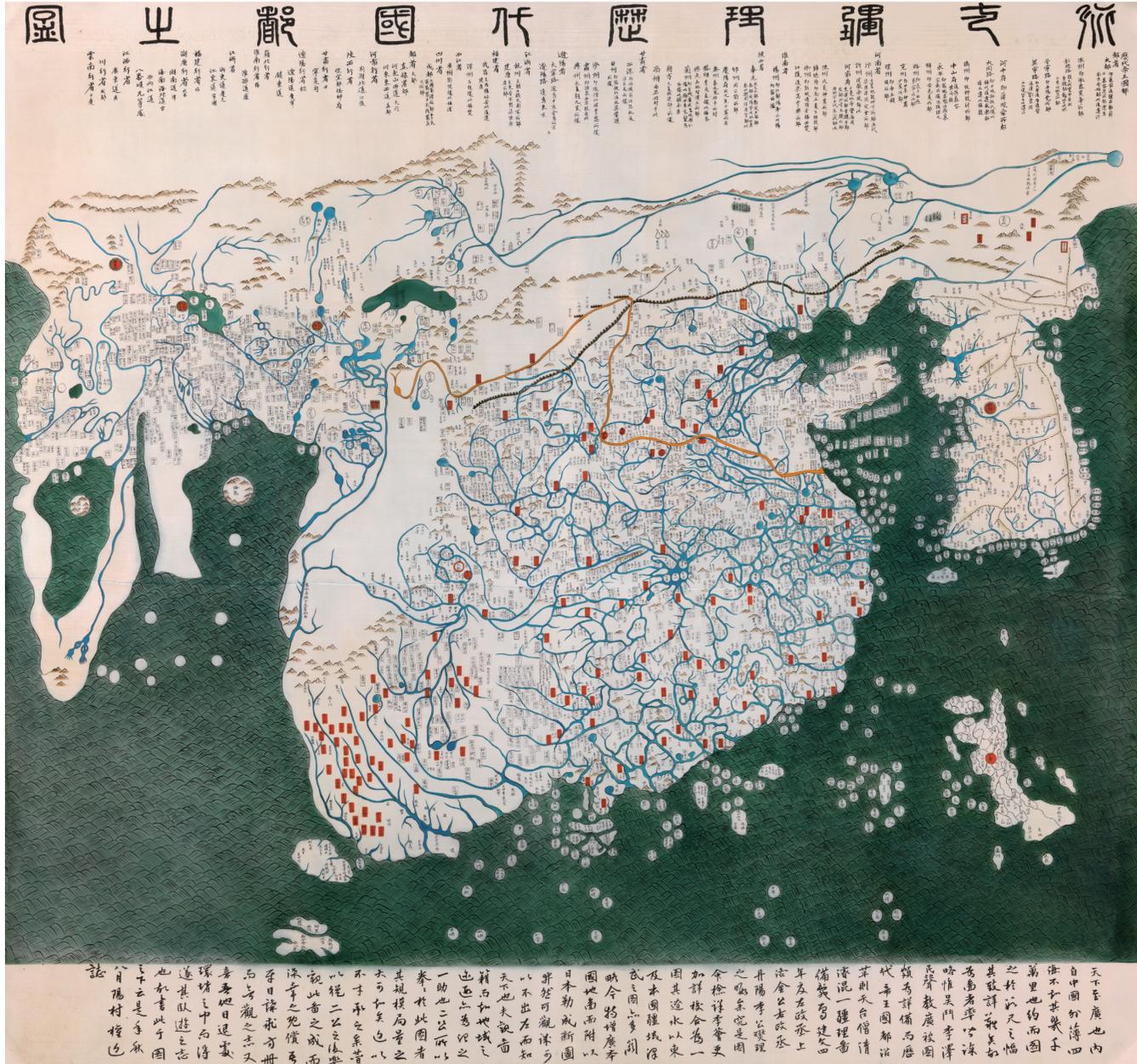


**Haejwa jeondo 海左全圖**  
General Map of Eastern Sea [Korea], 1850s, woodblock print, 105.9x61.2 cm, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at Seoul National University



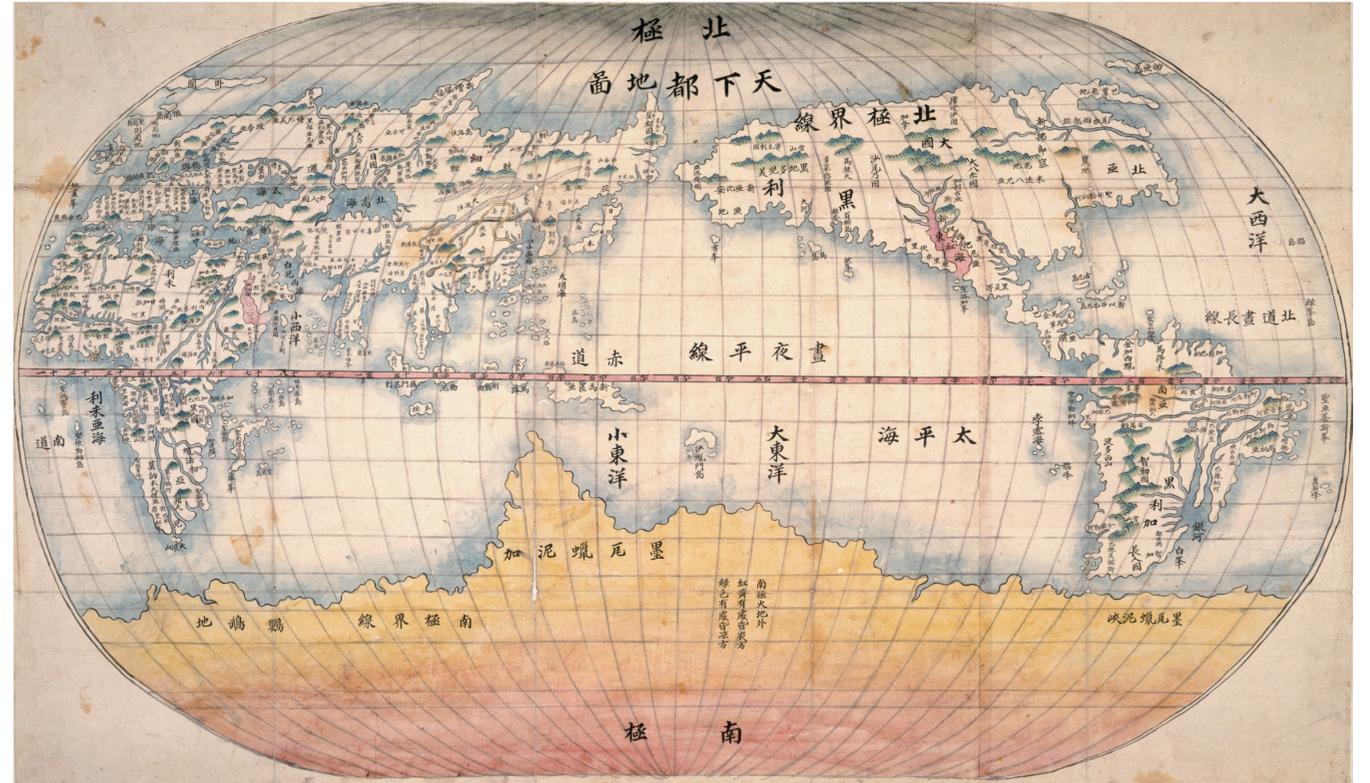
**Woodblock of Daedong yeojido 大東輿地圖 木板**  
Kim Jeongho, 1861, 32.0x43.0 cm, National Museum of Korea

The World Maps



**Honil gangni yeokdae gukdo jido** 混一疆理歷代國都之圖  
Map of an Integrated Territory of Historic Countries and Their Capitals, Kwon Keun and Lee Hoe, 1402, color manuscript copy of an original now kept in Ryukoku University, Japan, 158.0x168.0 cm, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at SNU

This map is a manuscript copy of a world map made by Kwon Keun, Kim Sahyung, Lee Mu, and Lee Hoe in 1402 (the 2nd year of King Taejong). With China at the center of the map, it depicts the general form of the Old World, from Africa and Europe in the west to Joseon and Japan in the east. The western part of Arabia is also drawn on the map as it had been known to Joseon cartographers thanks to the diffusion of Islamic cartography imported through Mongol influence during China's Yuan Dynasty. The map shows that Joseon cartographers were aware of and interested in different parts of the world. According to the preface at the bottom, the map was constructed from sources based on two Chinese maps, Shengjiao Guangbei Tu and Hunyi Jiangli Tu, a map of Joseon, and a map of Japan. The map is recognized as one of the best world maps among those produced in the early 15th century. It shows cultural exchanges between East and West and people's perception of the world at that time.



**Cheonha dojido** 天下地圖  
Map of the World, late 18th century, color manuscript copy, 60.0x102 cm, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at SNU

The *Cheonha dojido* is a western style world map drawn in Joseon based on Wanguo Quantu (Complete Map of All the Countries) in *Zhifang wai ji*, a book-length geographical description of the whole world authored by Giulio Aleni, a Christian missionary. Like the *Kunyu Wanguo Quantu* (A Map of the Myriad Countries of the World) made by Matteo Ricci, a Jesuit priest, this map placed China and East Asia at the center of a world map projection with the central meridian placed in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. This was an intentional arrangement promoting Sino-centrism as Ricci had to gain the trust of the imperial Chinese court. Southern continents were marked as a mystery land, reflecting that the southern hemisphere including Oceania was not known to the cartographer. The *Cheonha dojido* clearly labeled the "Small East Sea" and the "Small West Sea," referring to the East Sea and the West Sea, which did not appear on Aleni's map, Wanguo Quantu.



**Cheonhado** 天下圖  
Map of the World, late 18th century, color manuscript copy, 85.6x61.9 cm, Yeungnam University Museum

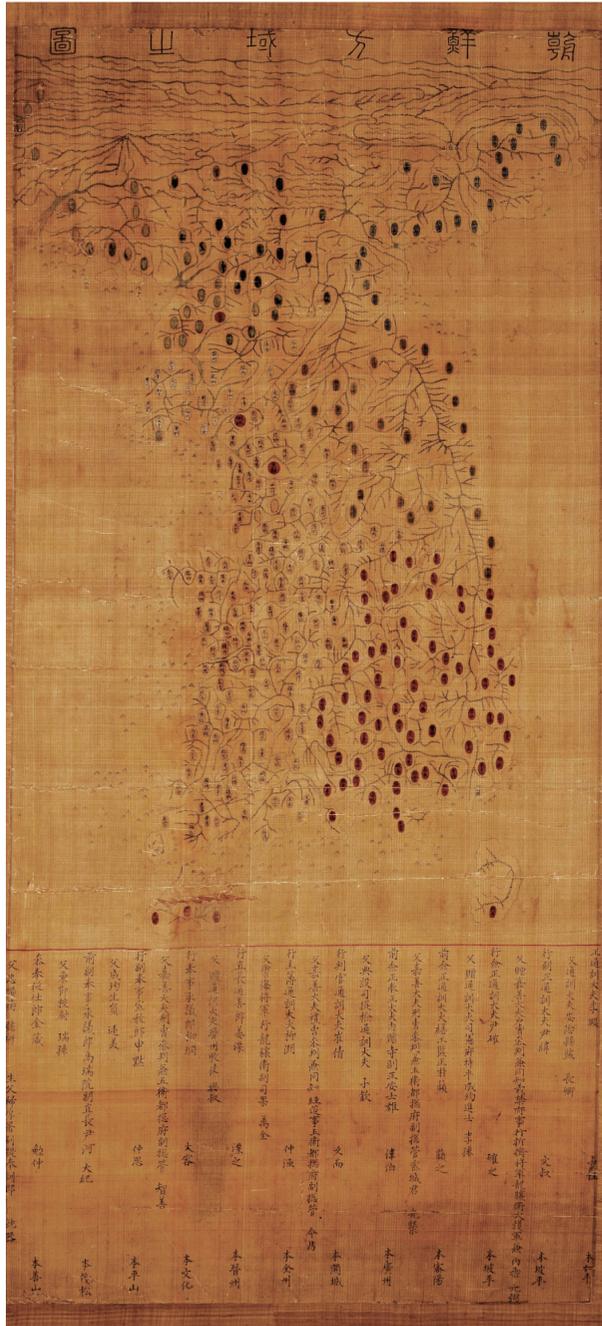
The *Cheonhado* is a circular world map highly popular among literati-scholars of the late Joseon Dynasty. The map was drawn within a circle. The structure of the map consists of an internal continent at the center surrounded by an internal sea, an external continent, and an external sea. The internal continent contains actual countries like China, Joseon, Annam, and India. The internal sea includes both real island countries like Japan and the Ryukyu Kingdom as well as imaginary states like Ilmok Kingdom, Daein Kingdom, and Samsu Kingdom that appeared in the Chinese "Classic of Mountains and Seas" or "Shanhaijing." The external continent is mostly filled with mythological kingdoms. This circular map is unique, reflecting the traditional ideas of "Tian Yuan Di Fang" (round heaven and square earth), Sino-centrism, and Taoism.



**Jigu jeonhudo** 地球前後圖  
Map of the World, Choi Hanki, 1834, woodblock print, 37.0x37.5 cm, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at SNU

The *Jigu jeonhudo*, made by Choi Hanki in 1834, is a wood-block atlas of hemispheres based on Zhang Tingfu's world map. The bottom left of the *Jigu hudo* is marked with the time of mapmaking and the nom de plume (pseudonym) of the cartographer, Tae Yeonjae. This map is different from the *Kunyu quantu* (Map of the World), an earlier map of the east and west hemispheres made by Ferdinand Verbiest, a Western missionary. While the *Kunyu quantu* has gaps between lines of longitude that widened toward the edges, the *Jigu jeonhudo* has even gaps between lines of longitude; also, the 24 seasonal divisions were labeled, something which did not appear in other contemporary maps of hemispheres; the equator, ecliptic latitude, and the tropics were highlighted. Unlike on the *Kunyu quantu*, Oceania and Antarctica are drawn separately, implying that Choi Hanki had knowledge of the discovery of those regions.

The National Maps



**Joseon bangyeok jido 朝鮮方域之圖**  
Map of a Territory of Joseon Dynasty, *Jeyonggam* (Tribute Management Office), 1557, color manuscript copy, 131.8x61.0 cm, National History Compilation Committee of Korea, National Treasure 248

This is a complete map, which contains both a clear identification of its cartographer and the year of its making. It was created by *Jeyonggam* (the Tribute Management Office), which was in charge of the supply of royal garments and food. Scientific mapmaking projects were initiated in the early Joseon Dynasty under the reign of King Sejong, resulting in the publication of the cumulative geographic knowledge portrayed in the *Dongkuk jido* (Map of Korea) by Jeong Cheok and Yang Sungji. The *Joseon bangyeok jido* is supposedly a copy of the *Dongkuk jido*. The name of the map appears at the top, the map itself at the center, and the list of participating officials at the bottom. The geographic features of the mid and southern parts of Korea are relatively precise, but those of the northern part are rather distorted. The drainage pattern is quite accurate except for the Amnokgang and the Dumangang; mountain ranges are expressed in the form of mountain chains based on the traditional geomantic understanding of the land.

**Aguk chongdo 我國總圖**  
General Map of Our Country (Joseon), late 18th century, color manuscript copy, 152.5x82.0 cm, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at SNU

Resembling the style and design of the *Dongkuk jido* made by Jeong Sangki, the *Aguk chongdo* presents the beauty of the Korean territory in an exquisite manner. This map is notable for its use of vivid color: green for mountain ranges, blue for rivers, and five distinctive colors for different counties and prefectures. Provincial offices and barracks in eight provinces were circled and marked with respective place names to make them distinguishable. In addition, islands off the coasts of Joseon were drawn in detail, implying the growing national interest in the coastal and insular regions. Dokdo in the East Sea is expressed to the east of Ulleungdo, and Tsushima is also portrayed on the map. The marginal spaces were filled with the frontier territory, respective lengths of east to west and south to north, distances to Seoul from the end points of four directions, and the number of counties and prefectures of each province.



**Daedong yeojido 大東輿地圖**  
The Territorial map of the Great East (Korea), Kim Jeongho, 1861, woodblock print, each section measured at 30.5x171.5 cm (22 sections in total), Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at SNU

The *Daedong yeojido*, made by Kim Jeongho, is a splendid achievement which built upon previous cartographic developments during the Joseon Dynasty. Its scale is approximately 1:160,000. Kim divided the territory from north to south by 120-ri into 22 sections. Each section is folded at every 80-ri and collapses into a folding booklet. The 22 booklets can be unfolded and pieced together to form a complete map of Korea that measures 410 cm in width and 660 cm in length. The method of description reflected the principle of partition and unity of the mountains and the streams which recognizes unitedly the mountains and the streams. Various legends were used and the pathways were marked for every 10-ri. Above all, the map is an impeccable masterpiece with the most prominent artistic beauty of any map ever produced in the Joseon Dynasty.



Local Map of Joseon Dynasty



**Doseongdo 都城圖**

Map of National Capital [Seoul], the late 18th century, color manuscript copy, 67x92 cm, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at SNU

With Dobongsan and Bukhansan in the background, this map depicts the beautiful natural environment of Seoul in the form of a landscape painting along with the mountains of Baekaksan, Inwangsan, Mokmyeoksan (present-day Namsan), Taraksan (present-day Naksan), which are collectively called Naesasan. In-town landscapes were drawn vertically and marked with place names. The planar description is intentional so as to contrast with the surrounding mountain terrain. Written on the margin are descriptions of administrative districts, the size of the city, roads, and streets with Donhwamun, the main gate of the Changdeokgung Palace, in the center to highlight the Changdeokgung Palace as the main working palace of the country. The map was featured with a south-up orientation to reflect the royal standpoint of a king who would have sat facing south when he took care of state affairs.

**Seobuk pia yanggyeo malli illam jido**  
西北我兩界萬里一覽之圖

Comprehensive Map for Defense of West and North Border, mid 18th century, color manuscript copy, 142x192 cm, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at SNU

This Korean frontier map focuses on the northwestern region of Korea and Manchuria during the Joseon Dynasty. The word "pia" in "Seobukpia" of the map title refers to both the Chinese Qing and Korean Joseon Dynasties respectively. It was designed to defend the country from China's invasion. The map covers a wide area with Baekdusan at the center and from River Heilongjiang (Black Dragon River) in Manchuria to Shanhai Pass in the West, delineating post towns and military bases established along the extensive fortress walls and roads. Its map orientation is unique. Instead of aligning the map with a north-south direction, "haejwa sahyang" was used as the country faces the sa (south-southeast) direction with the direction hae (north-northwest) in the back. Places like Jilin and Ningguta, where the Qing Dynasty was founded, were marked in red.



**Giseong jeondo 箕城全圖**

Map of Giseong [Pyeongyang], late 19th century, color manuscript copy, 167x96 cm, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at SNU

This is a panoramic map portraying Pyeongyang in a picturesque style as a boat on the Daedonggang. Giseong is a nickname of Pyeongyang, which originated from a legend in which Gija took care of a field in Pyeongyang. With Yongaksan identified as a guardian mountain in the background, the map displays government offices, roads, place names, and residential areas of the city in detail. Even the streets that sell cold noodles in small towns and villages are labeled. The white stone walls of the internal fortress and the north fortress, various types of boats docked in Daedonggang, the long forest spreading 10-ri long, the pine forest of Ulmildae, fields outside the Jungseong fortress, which were earthen ramparts, were all skillfully portrayed. The map vividly shows the panoramic view of Pyeongyang of 100 years ago.



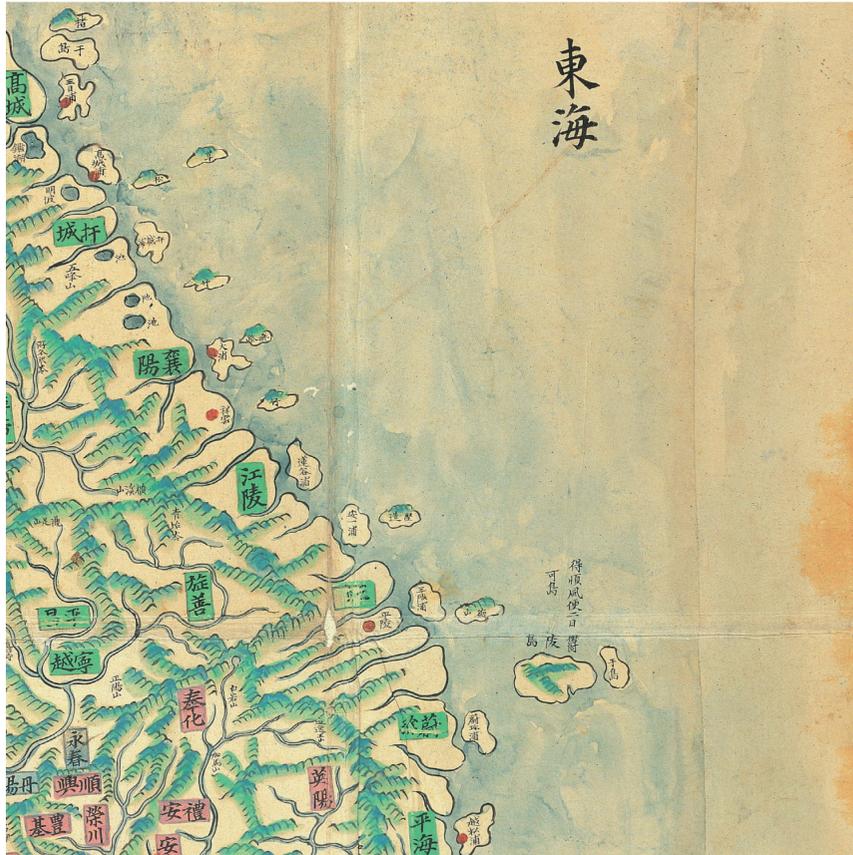
**Cheorongseong jeondo 鐵瓮城全圖**

Complete Map of Unconquerable Fortress, late 18th century, color manuscript copy, 79x120 cm, Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at SNU

The map describes a wall surrounding Yeongbyeon, which was called an unconquerable fortress. It was the final line of defense in the Gwanseo area. Surrounded by rugged mountains on all sides, the area was located in a natural fortress. Even during the Manchu War of 1636, the castle never fell to the Qing army. The castle is comprised of the main fortress, north fortress, new fortress, and west fortress. The south gate was an important gateway that connects Anju and Pyeongyang. The west fortress was also known for Yaksan, a famously scenic place. Beautiful Yaksan dongdae is well known for "Yaksan Azaleas," which are mentioned in the poem "Azaleas" by Kim Sowol.



The East Sea and Dokdo



East Sea on Aguk chongdo

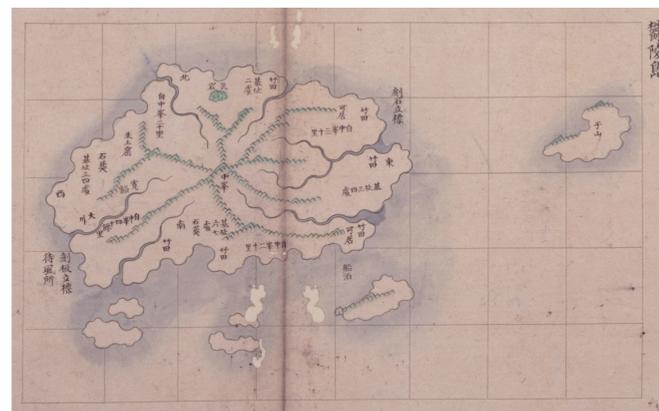
The name East Sea refers to the sea to the east of the Korean Peninsula, and Dokdo is found there on a number of ancient maps. The name East Sea appears in various references such as the monument of King Gwanggaeto, *Sinjeung dongguk yeoji seungnam*, and old maps. The name East Sea is clearly labeled on the late 18th century *Aguk chongdo*. In addition, this map displays the names of Korean Seas: the East Sea, the West Sea, and the South Sea.

The name East Sea also appears on a Western-style world map entitled *Cheonhado jido*, which is now preserved in the Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies at Seoul National University. It was made in the Joseon Dynasty and was based on the *Wanguo Quantu* by Giulio Aleni. On this map, the East Sea is referred to as the “Small East Sea,” and the West Sea as the “Small West Sea.” These names were added in the *Cheonha DOJIDO* by the Joseon Dynasty as they did not appear in Aleni’s *Wanguo Quantu*.

Dokdo appeared on various ancient Korean maps. It was called “Usando” in the Joseon period. The island was marked as part of Korean territory on various Joseon jeondos (Maps of Korea) as well as on the Ulleungdo maps included within the maps of counties and prefectures. Dokdo, or Usando, was erroneously marked to the west of Ulleungdo on the maps made in the early Joseon period. However, in the late Joseon period, the location was corrected and the island was placed to the east of Ulleungdo as a result of the famous Ahn Yongbok incident, which facilitated communication of new information about Dokdo. The *Dongkuk jido* by Jeong Sangki placed Dokdo very close to its actual location. Close-to-accurate

placement is also found in the *Haejwa jeondo*.

The *Haejwa jeondo* is assumed to have been made in the middle of the 19th century. “Haejwa” refers to Joseon, which sits to the east of China from the Chinese perspective. Its format and content are similar to the *Dongkuk jido* made by Jeong Sangki; the mountain chain, the hydrographic pattern, and the transportation network were drawn in the same manner as on the *Dongkuk jido*. On this map, Jungbong Peak on Ulleungdo was described as a mountain and Usando was drawn as a small islet with a mountain peak as part of Ulleungdo’s insular area. In addition, a sea route starting from Uljin appeared on the map. In the margin is a short statement about the history of



Ulleungdo on Joseon jido



Joseon on Cheonha DOJIDO

Ulleungdo and its geographic background, which is the same as the one included in the *Sinjeung dongguk yeoji seungnam*, a geography book. The *Joseon jido* of the 18th century is an atlas of counties and prefectures, including those that included Dokdo. The *Joseon jido* was a product of the national mapmaking project that sought to produce complete maps of Korea that became active under the reigns of King Youngjo and King Jeongjo. This map was drawn with the checkerboard system and each cell was 4.1 cm. Its accuracy in distance measurement and direction was much more improved than pictorial maps of counties and prefectures. Given the overall structure and content, its description of Ulleungdo seems to

have been based on a separate Ulleungdo map that was compiled from previous cumulative research efforts on Ulleungdo. On this map Usando is located farther away from Ulleungdo than on other previous pictorial maps. Since one cell covers 20-ri, the distance between Usando and Ulleungdo is measured to be approximately 40-ri. And because Usando is totally detached from Ulleungdo, it confirms that the Usando portrayed on that map is in fact the present-day Dokdo.



Ulleungdo and Dokdo on Haejwa jeondo

The names of the East Sea and Dokdo are also found on early maps produced by western cartographers. Joseon first appeared on a European map produced after the 16th century. Initially, the country was described as an island on those maps, and only over time did it take the shape of a peninsula. The name East Sea or Sea of Korea appeared on maps to refer to the present-day East Sea. A good case in point is a map of Asia made in 1720 by an English cartographer, John Senex. It is an English translation of a map made in 1705 by Delisle, a French mapmaker. Senex’s map shows a Korea scaled horizontally wider than its actual width. The country name is marked as “K(ingdom) of Core.” The East Sea is marked as “The Eastern Sea” or “Corea Sea.”

Joseon had not been mapped in great detail on European maps prior to the early 17th century, and this omission meant that Ulleungdo and Dokdo rarely appeared. Later, in 1735, Joseon was described in detail on *Royaume de Corée* (Complete map of the Kingdom of Joseon) by Jean Baptiste Bourguignon d’Anville, a French cartographer. D’Anville drew Ulleungdo and Dokdo in the East Sea. *Royaume de Corée*, which was included in *Atlas de la Chine*, showed two islands labeled as “Tchian-chan-tao,” referring to Usando (Dokdo), and “Fan-ling-tao,” referring to Ulleungdo. This map was greatly influential to successive maps so that many subsequent maps in France, the United Kingdom, and Germany were produced with Ulleungdo and Dokdo properly labeled.



Ulleungdo and Dokdo of Royaume de Corée by d’Anville

The inclusion of Dokdo in Korean territory is also found on maps published in Japan. *Shinsen chosenkoku zenzu* (Newly Edited Whole Map of Joseon Dynasty) by Tanaka Akiyosi in 1894 labeled Ulleungdo and Dokdo as “Jukdo (Takeshima)” and “Songdo (Matsushima)” in the same color scheme of Korean peninsula, which shows that Japan acknowledged Dokdo as Korean Territory.

The name East Sea also appears on Japanese maps. A good case in point is the *Nihon Henkai Ryakuzu* (A Simplified Map of Japan’s Periphery) executed by Takahashi Kageyasu in 1809. This map was the first Japanese official map on which the Japanese archipelago is placed in the center of Asia. Latitude and longitude lines were included on the map and Japan was described and presented with surveyed measurements by Ino Tadataka, a Japanese cartographer. Maps of Qing Dynasty China, the map of Joseon in *Huangyu quan lan tu* (Atlas of the Chinese Empire) as well as other Chinese maps were assumed to have referenced Takahashi’s *Nihon Henkai Ryakuzu*; again, the East Sea was labeled as Sea of Joseon, and Ulleungdo and Usando were labeled as Ulleungdo and Cheonsando respectively, indicating that they belonged to Joseon.



East Sea of Nihon Henkai Ryakuzu (A Simplified Map of Japan’s Periphery)



Korea on John Senex’s Map of Asia



Shinsen Chosenkoku Zenzu (Newly Edited Whole Map of Joseon Dynasty)