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Is *exonym* an appropriate term for names of features beyond any sovereignty?

*Peter Jordan**

1. *The endonym/exonym divide: still many open questions*

Although the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN) has since its foundation made remarkable progress in resolving many problems of standardization and in establishing a practicable terminology, and although exonyms have from the very beginning been in the focus of its discussions, the contents of the terms *edonym* and *exonym* and thus the endonym/exonym divide are/is still not clearly defined and there are still many open questions related to them (Jordan, Orožen Adamič and Woodman, 2007; Jordan, Bergmann, Burgess and Cheetham, 2011; Woodman, 2012a). One of them is, whether the term *exonym* covers also features beyond any sovereignty such as international waters.

Naftali Kadmon, at that time the convenor of the UNGEGN Working Group on Toponymic Terminology and the editor of the UNGEGN Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNGEGN, 2002, UNGEGN, 2007), has raised this question in his Working Paper submitted to the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, New York, 21-30 August 2007 (Kadmon, 2007).

As with many other questions, the new UNGEGN definitions of the *edonym* and the *exonym* as they have been passed by the Ninth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, New York, 21-30 August 2007¹, do not provide any answer. They have by purpose been formulated in a way that makes them open for various interpretations

* Vienna, UNGEGN Working Group on Exonyms, Austrian Academy of Sciences, Institute of Urban and Regional Studies, Austria.

¹ *Edonym*: name of a geographical feature in an official or well-established language occurring in that area where the feature is situated. *Examples*: Vārānāsī (not Benares); Aachen (not Aix-la-Chapelle); Krung Thep (not Bangkok); Al-Uqşur (not Luxor).

Exonym: name used in a specific language for a geographical feature situated outside the area where that language is widely spoken, and differing in its form from the respective endonym(s) in the area where the geographical feature is situated. *Examples*: Warsaw is the English exonym for Warszawa (Polish); Mailand is German for Milano; Londres is French for London; Kūlūniyā is Arabic for Köln. The officially romanized endonym Moskva for Москва is not an exonym, nor is the Pinyin form Beijing, while Peking is an exonym. The United Nations recommends minimizing the use of exonyms in international usage (UNGEGN, 2007, p. 2).

and have – compared to their predecessors – just the advantage of not being overlapping.

As a starting point and basis for further discussion it is nevertheless necessary to recall the concepts of the *endonym* and the *exonym* as well as of the *transboundary feature* in their most basic versions, which are perhaps acceptable for everybody irrespective of all divergent opinions.

The *endonym* can in a very simplified and basic manner be defined as the place name used by the (local) human community, while its counterpart, the *exonym* is the place name used by non-locals.

A *transboundary (geographical) feature* is a feature exceeding the limits of a community and shared between different communities.

Human *communities* can have all sizes, from a family to the community of global citizens, and kinds, from a cohesion group like a family via an identity group like a nation.

The name for a transboundary feature is an *endonym*, if the community using the name is part of the feature (the World, a continent, a mountain range, a country inhabited by various communities using different names for it) or is an *endonym* at least for a section of the feature, if the community resides along the feature (a river, lake or sea).

Thus, the name for the World is an *endonym* in all languages on Earth; and the names used by coastal dwellers of the Pacific Ocean are *endonyms* at least for their respective territorial waters of this sea.

What was said represents very likely the smallest common denominator of all opinions currently on the table of UNGEGN and more specifically its Working Group on Exonyms.

Names for transboundary features are certainly the most salient point as regards the endonym/exonym divide and the topic on which opinions diverge most. This refers even more to the subcategory of sea names, which will be in the focus of my further elaborations

2. *Two contrasting views as regards status of sea names related to the endonym/exonym divide*

Naftali Kadmon argues in his paper quoted above (Kadmon, 2007), that maritime names in a certain language were *endonyms* in these parts of a sea, over which a country in which this language is official or well-established exerts some kind of jurisdiction, i.e. its territorial waters. Names in languages not corresponding to the requirements of being official or well-established in this country will be termed *exonyms*.

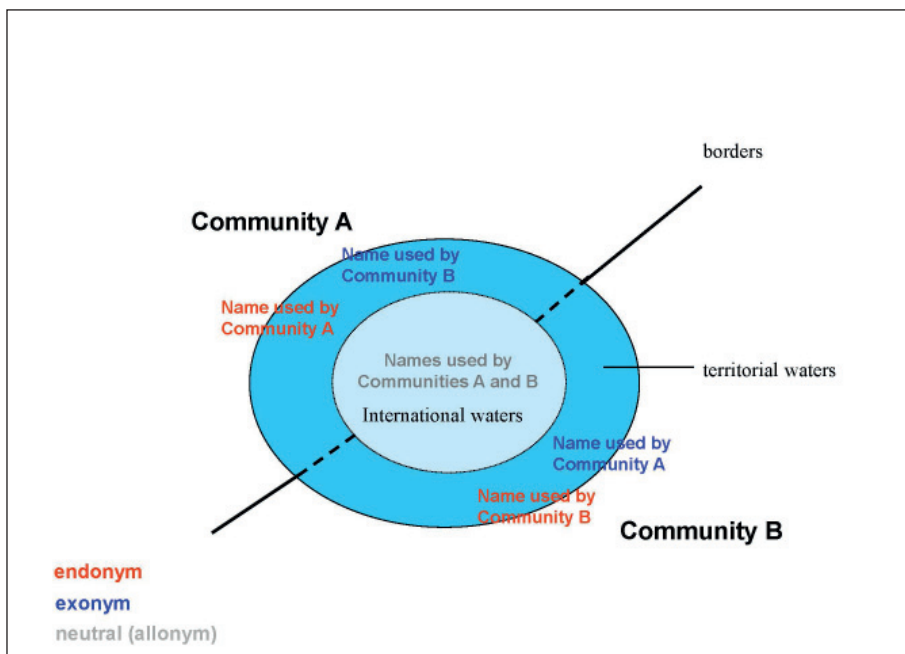


Fig. 1 – The Kadmon's view.

Translated into the terminology presented before (Fig. 1) this means that the name used for a sea by Community A has the terminological status of an *endonym* in the territorial waters of Community A and acquires the status of an *exonym* in the territorial waters of Community B, while the name used by Community B has the terminological status of an *endonym* in the territorial waters of Community B and turns into an *exonym* in the territorial waters of Community A. Outside territorial waters, according to Kadmon, both names have neither the terminological status of an *endonym* nor of an *exonym*, they are just *allonyms*. For Kadmon it «follows that there is a need for a new term to be added to the Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names, namely the status of a toponym for a maritime feature in international waters» (Kadmon, 2007, p. 4).

In my opinion, this is a premature conclusion and it is also not sufficiently explained. Why can the name used by Community A acquire *exonym* status only in the territorial waters of another community? Why not also in international waters? Does the acquisition of *exonym* status require the existence of an *endonym* as a counterpart?

While I am fully in line with Kadmon's view that a geographical name for a transboundary feature can change its terminological status according to the portion of the feature to which it is applied, I would – in contrast to him – express the opinion that a name can also have *exonym* status, where the counterpart, the *endonym*, is missing, e.g., in international waters. I will

explain this argument in more detail later.

Paul Woodman has in several papers (among others Woodman, 2009a, b) expressed a view quite different from Kadmon's. His basic consideration is that one name in one language for one feature cannot change in terminological status, cannot simultaneously be an *endonym* and an *exonym*. According to him (Fig. 2) the name used by the coastal dweller Community A is an *endonym* all over the feature, i.e. in the territorial waters of Community A as well as of Community B, but also in international waters. The same is, of course, true *vice versa*: The name used by coastal dweller Community B has *endonym* status all over the sea, no matter, whether and where it exerts jurisdiction.

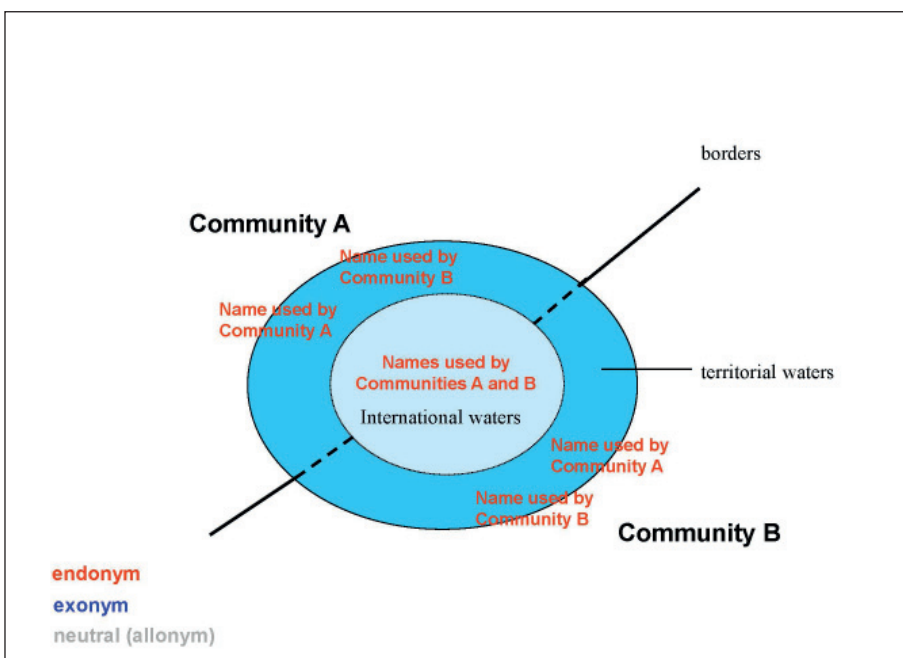


Fig. 2 – The Woodman's view.

This resolves our problem (Is there a need for a third term besides *endonym* and *exonym* for international waters?) in a most comfortable way: There is no need for a third term, since all names used by coastal dweller communities are *endonyms* all over the feature. Just names used by communities not residing along the coasts of a certain sea are not *endonyms*. But they meet everywhere their counterpart, the *endonym*, even in international waters, in areas beyond any national sovereignty. So they can without any problem be called *exonyms*.

Exemplified by the Pacific Ocean this means that the English name as a name used by a coastal dweller community is an *endonym* for the entire

ocean, while just names used by communities residing offside the Ocean, like *Pazifischer Ozean* in German, have *exonym* status.

Woodman's strongest argument for his opinion, that a name remains an *endonym* also outside the territorial waters of a certain community (country), is, that a feature is indivisible in emotional terms. The emotional affection of a certain community to the feature, e.g., a sea, cannot be divided into zones (territorial waters, international waters, territorial waters of another country), but refers to the feature in its entirety and to all its parts.

My twofold first argument against Woodman's view (see also Jordan, 2009a, b, 2011, 2012) is that:

- attributing a new name² to a feature is an expression of ownership or at least of a feel of responsibility – often supported by emotional ties between a community and a feature;
- people develop emotional ties rather to places in the sense of Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) than to the entirety of geographical features, which are always constructs and rather abstract spatial entities. This is especially true for large natural features like oceans and seas, mountain ranges or long rivers. For many of them names have been introduced rather late, since they were not perceived as spatial entities before the emergence of modern maps and the expansion of modern communication networks.

But it is, of course, rather difficult to say where exactly a community's attitude of feeling responsible and emotionally attached ends, where *place* turns into *space*. This is difficult enough with features on land, but even more so related to seas.

It corresponds to a frequent experience that coastal dwellers have a profound emotional relation to their coastal waters – coastal waters not in the juridical sense of territorial waters, but in the sense of waters in visible distance from the coast, where fisherboats and vessels are cruising. They are as much part of their living space as land is. They are resources of food, serve as transportation routes, assume in some cases also functions in tourism. It is justified to say that the coastal dweller community regards its coastal waters as its property.

But it is certainly different with the high sea – the sea beyond the horizon from the coast. Here it is necessary to differentiate between the cognitive and the emotional level. Emotionally the high sea is conceived as endless (Fig. 3). This is, e.g., expressed by folk or also pop songs, which frequently use *sea* as a metaphor for the unlimited, the indefinite, the unconceivable, as, e.g., Charles Trenet in his famous song *La mer*:

² "New name" in the sense of the primary name attributed by the local community to a feature. Also exonyms express relations between a community and a feature, but – if they are not historical endonyms – they are just translations or adaptations of names attributed by other communities – they are the primary names of other communities.

La mer
 Au ciel d'ete confond
 Ses blancs moutons
 Avec les anges si purs
 La mer bergere d'azur
 Infinie

The Sea
 In the summer sky merge
 Its white sheep
 With such pure angels
 The sea, shepherdess of azure
 Infinite

or Gianna Nannini in her song *Alla fine*

Davanti a me si perde il mare
 io sto con te senza lacrime
 tu come fai a darti pace
 in questa immensità in questa solitudine.

In front of me the sea gets lost
 I stay with you without tears
 How can peace be added
 To this immensity, to this solitude?

Endlessness is also expressed by special words for the high sea, e.g., *pučina* instead of *more* in Croatian, which means something like 'wilderness, where the winds blow', etc.

It can be concluded from this attitude that, emotionally, coastal dwellers recognize no opposite coast, no counterpart beyond the horizon and would consequently also not draw a strict line between "one's own" and "the other's" somewhere out in the sea, would also not feel the necessity to confine the *endonym* status of their own name to some part of the sea, would possibly extend it to the sea in its entirety – because they feel that this status is not contested by anybody else.

But it is also very likely so that the intensity of this feeling fades away more or less as a function of distance, that the feeling of being the owner of the sea is relative insofar as it is combined with the other feeling that the sea is endless and unconceivable (It is in the nature of the endless and the unconceivable that it can never be completely owned, that it is impossible to achieve full command of it).

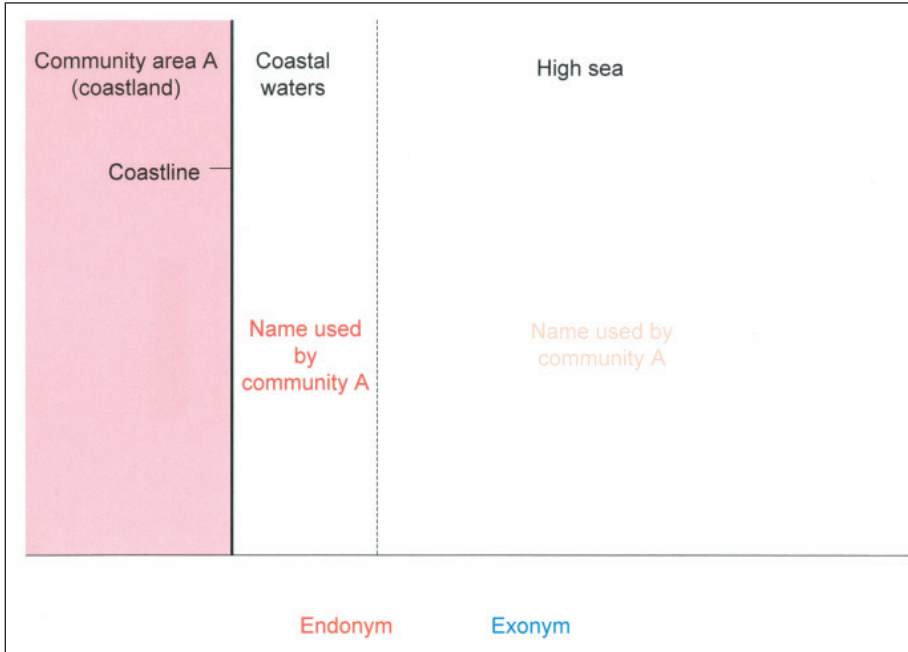


Fig. 3 – Emotional level.

At the cognitive level they are anyway aware of the fact that the sea ends somewhere, that there is an opposite coast, inhabited by other people, who speak a different language and have another name for the same feature. They have learned this in schools, from maps and charts and from the media. Based on this knowledge, they would usually (with the only exception of a politically aggressive and expansive attitude) be ready to acknowledge and accept that their own name loses its *endonym* status somewhere in between this opposite coast and their own coast, have no problem with accepting regulations ruling that there is some “artificial” line between where their name has *endonym* status and where the name of the others is valid as *endonym* (Fig. 4). They will usually – as in many other fields of social interaction – accept that their right ends where the right of others begins, if this avoids dispute and conflict.

This brings me to my second argument against Woodman’s view. When he says that the name of a coastal dweller community has *endonym* status all over the sea, i.e. also in parts of the sea far away from it, perhaps even at the opposite coast of an ocean, he takes too little account of the fact that in other coastal sections of a sea or ocean another community is in place using a different name; and that this community is closer to this portion of the feature, conceiving this portion of the feature as its “place” in the sense of Yi-Fu Tuan and feeling an emotional relationship to it as it was highlighted before. It is therefore the name of this community, which has

exclusive *endonym* status there and not the name washed to this coast “from across the sea”.

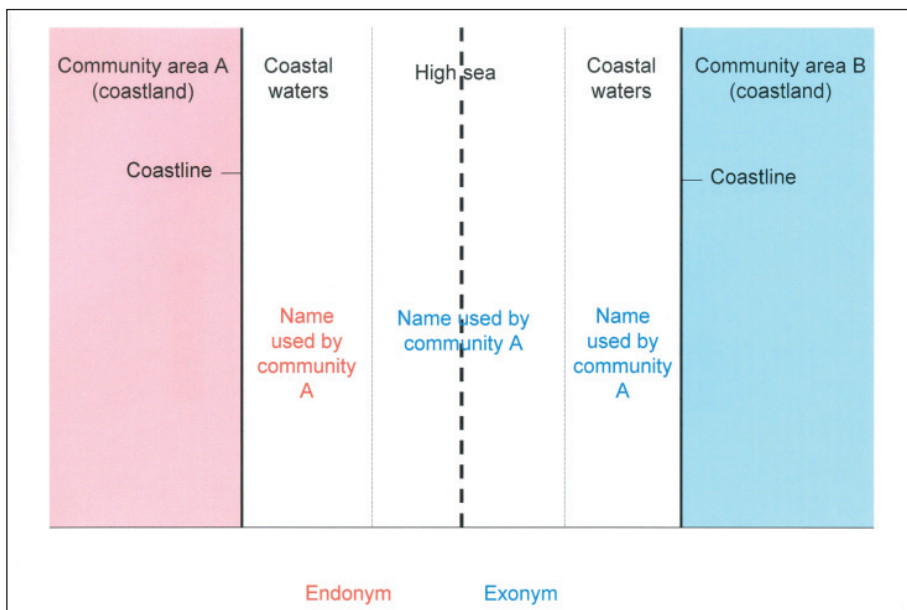


Fig. 4 – Cognitive level.

With reference to the Pacific Ocean and the relation between the English name *Pacific Ocean* and the coastal waters of Japan this would mean that in contrast to Woodman just the Japanese name for the Pacific Ocean has *endonym* status within the coastal waters of Japan, while the English name is an *exonym*, although it is an *endonym* along some other (English speaking) sections of the Pacific coasts.

The linguist Philip W. Matthews (Matthews, 2012, pp. 37ff) has recently contested my statement on emotional ties between coastal dwellers and the sea by arguing that it was not justified postulating in general that coastal dweller communities had emotional relations to coastal waters or felt some responsibility for them. Such a position would not take into account the various views of individuals and subgroups, which could differ (e.g. between fishermen and farmers on the coast), as well as the fact that a relation to coastal waters may already be absent in the immediate hinterland of the coast, perhaps behind a first mountain range, but well within the same community. So a statement of this kind could not be made without comprehensive investigation and asking every individual.

His opinion, however, disregards that place names are always part of a language and achieve their function just by communication, i.e. when they are not only known by an individual, but used by a community. So place

names are a matter of communities and not of individuals. And so it is not relevant what individuals, but what the community as such or at least the prevailing/dominating part of it thinks and feels about a name and its relation to a feature. If the community has the administrative status of a state or country, its relation to territorial waters is anyway defined by international law, i.e. territorial waters are subjected to its jurisdiction. If the community is of a subnational nature and not in this way supported by law, its relation to the sea can be derived from cultural traditions such as songs, tales and other literature, customs or religious practices expressing a common or at least prevailing attitude.

3. *Proposing a synthesis*

While I share Paul Woodman's opinion that there should be nothing besides the endonym/exonym divide and I would strongly support Naftali Kadmon's view that the *endonym* status of a name for a transboundary feature is to be confined to places, in which the community using the name is the closest (including of course the territorial waters of a country), I cannot follow him, when he concludes that the term *exonym* cannot apply to names for international waters, since they lack the counterpart of an endonym.

Must there be a counterpart? Does even the definition of the exonym as it was passed in 2007 require a counterpart? Yes, perhaps. It says that an exonym is a name «differing in its form from the respective endonym(s) in the area where the geographical feature is situated» (UNGEEN, 2007, p. 3). This may indeed be interpreted as supposing an endonym as a prerequisite for an exonym. But it may also be interpreted in the opposite way: if there is an endonym, the exonym must differ in its form.

Visualized, this synthesis would result in what is represented by Fig. 5: the names used by Communities A and B, resp., have *endonym* status in the waters under their jurisdiction or to which they feel emotionally attached and where they are not contested in this respect by another community in closer relation to them. Outside, also in international waters, they assume the status of *exonyms*.

International waters are, by the way, not the only features without a corresponding endonym. There are lots of historical features lacking an adequate current endonym: Byzantine Empire, Ottoman Empire, Habsburg Empire, Moesia, Tauria, Noricum, Troy, etc.³ Do they all escape the endonym/exonym divide? Must we find even a fourth term for them?

I do not think so, since they all coincide very well with the basic concept of the *exonym*, i.e. to be a name from without, a name used by a community

³ They mostly had a historical contemporary endonym. In some cases the current exonym was the historical endonym (Noricum, Moesia).

not inhabiting the place in question. Whether the place is inhabited by an endonym community or under the jurisdiction of an endonym community is a different question, which does not matter in our context. It only matters, when it comes to define, whether a name is an *endonym*.

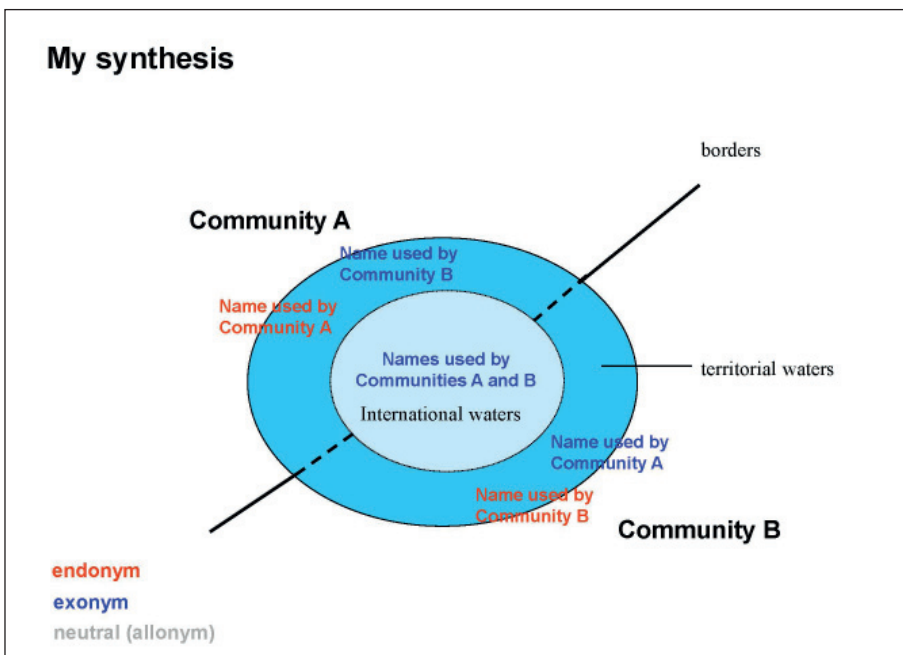


Fig. 5 – The Jordan's synthetic view.

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Riassunto - Esonimo è un termine appropriato per i toponimi utilizzati in contesti extraterritoriali?

Questo contributo riflette sull'estensione del termine *esonimo* a luoghi che non rientrano in una sovranità nazionale, come ad esempio le "acque internazionali".

Dopo aver fornito la definizione di alcuni termini di base, si analizza inizialmente il punto di vista di Naftali Kadmon (Kadmon, 2007), il quale sostiene che i nomi marittimi in una certa lingua possono essere considerati endonimi all'interno delle acque territoriali di uno Stato, ma si trasformano in esonimi nelle acque territoriali di altri Paesi. Nelle acque internazionali non possono quindi esistere degli endonimi. In assenza di un endonimo non si può quindi definire neanche un esonimo. Per Kadmon ne "consegue che vi è la necessità di un nuovo termine da aggiungere al Glossario dei termini per la normalizzazione dei nomi geografici, vale a dire un termine che tenga conto dell'uso fatto del toponimo in un contesto di acque internazionali" (Kadmon, 2007, p. 4).

L'articolo si concentra poi sulle idee di Paul Woodman (Woodman, 2009a) secondo il quale lo "stato terminologico" di un nome in una lingua non può cambiare per una particolare caratterizzazione, non può essere cioè contemporaneamente un endonimo e un esonimo, il che significa che per tutte le lingue ufficiali o ben consolidate di paesi costieri, un endonimo di mare è tale sia nelle acque territoriali sia in quelle internazionali. Analogamente, nelle lingue non ufficiali o non ben consolidate di paesi costieri i nomi di mare saranno tutti esonimi proprio per la mancanza di un endonimo da "contrapporre". L'Autore propone finalmente una sintesi di queste due visioni contrastanti.

Résumé - Exonyme est-il un terme approprié pour les noms des caractéristiques au-delà de toute souveraineté?

Ces papiers traitent avec la question, si le terme *exonym* des couvertures objets aussi au-delà d'une souveraineté comme des eaux internationales.

Après les définitions de quelques termes principaux il discute à l'avis de premier Naftali Kadmon (Kadmon, 2007), qui soutient que des noms maritimes dans une certaine langue étaient endonyms dans ces parties d'une mer, sur laquelle un pays dans lequel cette langue est officielle ou bien établi exerce une sorte de juridiction, c'est-à-dire ses eaux territoriales, et la tournure dans exonyms dans les eaux territoriales d'autres pays. Dans des zones de mer au-delà de n'importe quelle juridiction nationale, c'est-à-dire des eaux internationales, le nom pour la mer ne respecte aucun

endonym. Cela signifie pour lui que le nom ne peut pas être nommé *exonym*. Pour Kadmon il "le suit il y a un besoin d'un nouveau terme à être ajouté au Glossaire de Termes pour la Standardisation de Noms Géographiques, à savoir le statut d'un toponyme pour un objet maritime dans des eaux internationales" (Kadmon, 2007, p. 4).

Le papier se réfère alors à l'avis de Paul Woodman (Woodman, 2009a) qu'un nom dans une langue pour un objet ne peut pas changer du statut terminologique, ne peut pas simultanément être un endonym et un exonym, ce qui signifie que tout l'officiel de langues ou bien établi dans les pays côtiers d'une mer est endonyms pour l'objet entière, c'est-à-dire pour la mer en entier, aussi pour des eaux internationales. Les noms dans des langues pas l'officiel ou non bien établi dans des pays côtiers ont selon lui le statut d'*exonyms* partout la mer, aussi dans des eaux internationaux. Des noms dans des langues pas l'officiel ou non bien établi dans des pays côtiers n'a selon lui le statut d'*exonyms* partout la mer, aussi dans des eaux internationales, depuis nulle part la contrepartie d'un endonym manque.

Le papier finit avec une synthèse de ces deux vues contrastantes postulant que tandis qu'il ne devrait en effet y avoir rien en plus du fossé d'endonym/exonym (après Woodman), le statut *endonym* d'un nom pour une mer est limité ces parties, pour lesquelles la communauté utilisant le nom se sent responsable ou avec émotion affectée – qui est près de l'avis de Kadmon. Cela laisse les parties d'une mer, c'est-à-dire des eaux plus ou moins internationales, pour lesquelles aucun nom n'est un endonym. Mais ceci ne cause pas de problème pour le statut *exonym* de noms de dehors, puisqu'un exonym n'exige pas la contrepartie d'un endonym.