

# Preliminary Study on the Name of Sea of Japan

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The oceanic area between Korean peninsular and the islands of Japan is nowadays widely recognized by China and most of the countries in the world as the Sea of Japan. However,

A. It is revealed that the name for the area appeared in early-version western-edited map is different, for example:

a. The name for the area was left blank in A New and Accurate Map of the World(1626 version).

b. The name of the area in A New and Accurate Map of the Empire of Japan published by the Sr. Bellin at Paris was referred by then as the Sea of Korea. While the Sea of Japan in this edition was referred to the oceanic area south of Japan.

c. The L. Empire Du Japon, Sr. Robert(1750 version) refers the oceanic area near Korean peninsular as Mer Ku Coree, while as for the area near islands of Japan as Mer Du Japon.

B. The name of the area appeared in historical records of China at different times were also different, for example:

a. Most of the maps carried on the Historical Atlas of China 《中國歷史地圖集》 (edited by Prof. Tan Qi xiang, published by China Cartography Publishing House, 1982, eight volumes) give no specific names to the area. However,

- The page 3-4 of volume six indicates that the name of the area in the Map of Liao and North Song Dynasty (遼, 北宋 1111 A.D.) was known as the East Sea "東海"

- The page 3-4 of volume seven showing the Map of Yuan Dynasty(元代 1280), the page 40-41 and page 42-43 showing the Map of Ming Dynasty(明代 1433 and 1852), referred the oceanic area north part as Jing Hai "鯨海"

- The page 3-4 of volume eight refers the area north part as the East Sea(東海) in the Map of Qing Dynasty(清代 1908). The page 5-6 refers the area as the Sea of Japan(日本海) in the Map of Qing Dynasty(清代 1908).

b. In the volume 28B of Hanshu 《漢書》 edited by Bangu 班固(32-92 A.D.) has the following description which reads: Wo(倭) people split into over 100 countries live in the Sea of Lelang 樂浪海(means peaceful sea). Wo refers here as Japan of today and Lelang was the name of a county in the Korean peninsular at that time. It is obvious that the area by the time was named as the Sea of Lelang.

c. In 1602, Matteo Ricci edited the World Atlas, Chinese version, in which the Sea of Japan was firstly used.

d. Atlas of Qing Dynasty 《清乾隆內府輿圖》 published in 1760 has no name for the area.

e. The World Atlas, Chinese version, published in 1875 named the area as the Sea of Japan "日本海"

f. Mr. Yu Youren(于右任) wrote an English article carried on the Geography Journal, second edition, volume 14 in 1947, entitled South China Peninsular and Taiping Sea - A Study in Geographical Nomenclature, in which he strongly against the idea of using the name of the Sea of Japan for the area and proposed to name it as the Taiping Sea "太平海" instead.

g. The Dictionary of the Latest Geographical Names of China and Overseas 《最新中外地名辭典》 edited by Mr. Ge Suicheng 葛綏成 and published by Zhonghua Books Publishing House(中華書局) in 1948 pointed out on page 161 when referring to the Sea of Japan that the name had been modified as the Taiping Sea.

h. To my personal memory and notice, the adoption of the Sea of Japan can be dated back to the Second Opium War of 1860 and the name is widely used in most latest publications of maps and atlas of China. However, I agree that the specific disagreement related to the name should be further discussed.

C. At the 6th UN Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names held in 1992, representatives from both Republic of Korea and D.P.R.Korea raised the issue concerning the name of Sea of Japan. They argued that the name was imposed under the colonial times, and their view is in line with that of Mr. Yu Youren

mentioned earlier in the article. Regarding to the modification, R.O.Korea proposed to change the name to East Sea, while Prof. Ge Suicheng of China suggested for Taiping Sea. Which is better, to my opinion, all of these proposals should be taken into further discussion. Generally speaking, the name for public sea should exert no direct influence to the priorities and benefits entitled to any individual country up to the relevant international treaties and regulations. And the nature of the public oceanic areas, such as the Indian Sea, Bay of Bangladesh, Mexican Bay does not and will not change because of the same names they have with any specific country. As language commands and historical and cultural records, geographical names should take consideration to the following aspects:

- traditional way of naming in history from centuries
- customed way of naming of surrounding countries
- to avoid repetition of the names used by neighbouring oceanic areas. For example, the oceanic area south of Huang Hai has been renamed as East Sea. Principally speaking, under the current circumstance, the rename of Sea of Japan will encounter great difficulties, especially when the name is widely recognized by most of the countries in the world. However, I believe the submission of comprehensive reasons and provision of sufficient documents concerning the name of East Sea which is traditionally notified by R.O.Korea will definitely give supports to facilitate the change and will be of great help for further discussion of the issue at the 7th UN Conference on Standardization of Geographical Names which will be held next year.

#### Appendix:

1. Maps abstracted from Atlas of Chinese History
2. Hanshu, 28B Volume
3. Geography Journal with article written by Prof. Yu Youren
4. Dictionary of Latest Toponymy of China and Overseas, Japanese item