

Problems on Origin and Standardization of Name of "Japan Sea"

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It is important to standardize the name of the Japan Sea or the East Sea linking up countries in the East Asia. From ancient time China has set up close relations with the countries in the East Asia. The Japan Sea is between Japan islands and Korea peninsula and China, and has been a main road connecting the three countries since old days which was recorded in Chinese ancient books.

However, as ancient Chinese writers didn't emphasize on sea but more took care of land, in historical books written by both royal and private historians, from 'Annals of Han'(漢書) to 'Qing history'(清史稿), there were very few accounts of sea, instead, a lot of records of islands in the East Asia, in the few accounts they just mentioned 'sea' in general or 'south sea' and 'east sea' in particular in terms of their locations. Though the Japan Sea waters was indeed indicated in the books, they were not able to coin a definite name of it.

During 17-18 centuries western missionary workers, such as 利瑪竇, 艾?略, 畢方濟, brought modern geographical knowledge and maps into China, but there was still no name of the Japan Sea given in their reports.

When western powers intruded into East Asia, Chinese started to pay attention to outside world, the importance of sea was recognized. Even so, the earliest works and maps for the purpose of introducing the general trends of the modern world to Chinese people, as 'Records with atlas of the countries in seas and oceans'(海國圖志), and 'Brief annals of the countries in seas and oceans'(瀛環志略) also referred to nothing of the name of the Japan Sea.

In accordance with the collected materials, the earliest map with the name was in 'Complete Accounts of Geography' by 慕維廉(Englishman), published in 1859. But at beginning it was not accepted commonly, because all geographical works and maps edited by Chinese intellectuals by 1860s didn't use the name. For example, on the map 'Great Qing Map of China and World'(大清中外一統與圖) mapped by Chinese Yan She-sun(嚴樹森) were only the names of the 'Sea of Oceans'(大洋海), the Red Sea(紅海), the Indian Sea(印度海) and so on. The 'General Map of Five Continents on the Earth'(地球五大洲全圖) drawn by Chinese Kuang Qi-zhao(鄺?熙) copying westerners, was probably a first map which marked up the

Japan Sea in China. This meant the name had been accepted by that time. Since then, the name was more and more used in geographical works and maps in China.

In 1904 'the General Maps of China and Other Countries'(中外與地全圖) by Zou Dai-jun(鄒代鈞) was designated as the textbook for primary and secondary schools of China, it may be described as a token of that the name of the Japan Sea was recognized among Chinese scholars and administrations.

From the geographical books and maps written and edited by Japan writers and editors that are kept in libraries of China, we can draw a conclusion that the name of the Japan Sea is also a modern one in Japan which is much like that in China. Japanese didn't give a name to the sea until that the geographical work of the Englishman 慕維廉 above-mentioned was printed and published in Japan in 1850s. What deserves to be mentioned is that the "銅鑄大日本細圖", edited by Japanese and published in Japan in 1860s, used the term of 'Korea Sea'. If this means the water area of the Japan Sea at present, it gives a fact that the Japan Sea in history must have some different names in Japan.

So far as I know, in Japan, the earliest map with the name of the Japan Sea is 'Map of Korea' drawn by the Staff Bureau of the Ground Force of Japan in 1875. In the end of the last century, the usage of the Japan Sea was widespread in Japan.

The above fact shows that 1. the name was come and brought into China and Japan by westerners. As to the question who is the inventor or first borrower of the name, we need still to ratify further. 2. there were different names for the Japan Sea in history.

Since the second world war, the standardization problems of geographical names have been taken more and more seriously by international society, and often lead to debate. It is complicated to standardize the name of the Japan Sea, because it is related to peripheral countries' interests. To settle the problem well, some principles, I suppose, we should consider are as the follows:

✓ First, we must pay respect to history. The name of the Japan Sea was used commonly under the given historical background. It was at that time when West colonialism moved into East Asia, Japan became most important country in the Japan Sea even East Asia through Meiji Reform, but China and Korea were unable to be powerful and gradually annexed, basically lost speaking-right on the stage of international politics. ✓ Second, for all peripheral countries referring to the problem, the exclusive way to settle it down is friendly consultation. It seems to be inevitable to make some concession. Each side can not force their views on others. ✓ Third, the effect of the standardization should be enable to promote friendship and to give impetus to exchanges of politics, economics and culture between the countries concerned.