

# Map History of "Sea of Japan" and Perspective on Alternatives

Kushiya Keiji  
(Niigata University, Japan)

## 1. Naming of inland seas in the world

Inland seas surrounded by some countries sometimes have various names. In east Asia, we can see some examples that China, Korea and Japan use different names. Chinese and Korean in some cases simply use "(direction) + Sea" to call their surrounding seas, but Japanese do not use this kind of naming (see below).

Times Atlas(English)	Korean(English)	Chinese	Japanese
Mediterranean Sea	Mediterranean Sea	Mediterranean Sea	Mediterranean Sea
Baltic Sea	Baltic Sea	Baltic Sea	Baltic Sea
North Sea	North Sea	North Sea	North Sea
Red Sea	Red Sea	Red Sea	Red Sea
Persian Gulf	Persian Gulf	Persian Gulf	Persian Gulf
Arabian Sea	Arabian Sea	Arabian Sea	Arabian Sea
Gulf of Mexico	Gulf of Mexico	Gulf of Mexico	Gulf of Mexico
Yellow Sea	"West Sea"	Yellow Sea	Yellow Sea
East China Sea	"South Sea"	"East Sea"	East China Sea
South China Sea		"South Sea"	South China Sea
Sea of Japan	"East Sea"	Sea of Japan	Sea of Japan

## 2. "Sea of Japan" in old maps

Aoyama (1993) noted that in 1602 an Italian missionary Matteo Ricci at China made a famous map of east Asia, which probably was the first example with a print of "Sea of Japan."

Before this period we do not find any Eastern maps with a print of sea name, while in Western maps MARE DE MANGI and MARE CIN were

commonly used, both of which means "Sea of China." In 1615-22 a print of MAR CORIA (Sea of Korea) appeared in Western maps for the first time, and in the 17-18 century "Sea of China," "Sea of Korea" and "Sea of Japan" were intermingled in European maps.

### **3. Why "Sea of Japan" became popular in the world?**

In Edo era in Japan (1903-1868) people used both "Sea of Japan" and "Sea of Korea," but when "Korean Sea" was used, the Pacific Ocean was called "Sea of Japan" at the same time. In Meiji era (1868-1912) the government of Imperial Japan established modern school system and a naval force, when the name of the Sea was unified to "Sea of Japan." We can only find a description of "Sea of Japan" without any exceptions in voluminous publications on Japanese geography "Dai-Nippon Chishi (Topography of Japan, 1903-15)." The unification to "Sea of Japan" was completed up to the end of the 19 century. In the first half of the 20th century Japan colonized Korean Peninsula as a whole, and in this period "Sea of Korea" completely disappeared in Japanese maps.

After the middle of the 18th century the description of "Sea of Japan" increased on the Western maps, and was gradually generalized. Aoyama (1993) noted that this was the influence of missionaries who had the most detailed information about the Far East at that time.

They seemed to introduce the name of "Sea of Japan" to the West.

The period of diffusion of "Sea of Japan" in the Western world was also the period of diffusion of navigational charts. The use of chart became widespread rapidly after Captain Cook's ocean navigation and soundings in 1768-79. Before this time "Sea of Korea" was commonly found in the Western maps, but after this period it disappeared completely, and "Sea of Japan" took the place of it. I provisionally conclude that the calling of "Sea of Japan" was first brought and widespread into Europe by missionaries, and then the publication and diffusion of navigational charts formulized the use of "Sea of Japan."

### **4. How we can call "Sea of Japan" in the next century ?**

First, we must distinguish an international place name (in English in many cases) and domestic one (how Korean call in Korean language, how Japanese call in Japanese language). We should now discuss the former. The

latter is a theme of culture, which do not need international standardization. For example, when Japanese NGO or university organize a symposium in Japan, they can use "Sea of Japan" as seminar titles without any problems, if all the participants use Japanese as an official language. If there is a "Symposium on East Sea" in Korea, Japanese should not interfere it.

In UN specialists' meetings on place name (which held every two years), Korea often presented a problem of "Sea of Japan," but Japanese government do not agree with it, emphasize that "the name of "Sea of Japan" has already established over the world, so if we introduce other name it may cause confusion."

This Japan's point of view is to maintain the status quo, which might be a sound argument, but Korea claims that the affirmation of status quo is not valid. As I have mentioned, if "Sea of Korea" disappeared in the period of Korea's colonization by Japan, Korean people do not agree with the view that "Sea of Japan" is the only name of it.

Finally I would like to propose that some related countries begin to discuss a new international name (in English or other) of the Sea. My idea is to call "NEAR Sea," which is an abbreviation of Northeast Asian Region's Sea.