

A Study on the Name of Tonghae(East Sea): Pushed aside by Japan Sea

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< Abstract >

Natural features such as mountains, seas and rivers were named only since after people began cultivating their environment. In order to cultivate, it was almost inevitable for them to give appropriate names to their surroundings. And in the process of such a naming practice, it is natural that one's cultural mentality had a great influence. The name 'Tonghae(East Sea)' given to the East Sea of Korea in B.C. 59 for the first time has been used until today for almost 2000 years, which is also a product and expression of one's culture and mentality.

In cultural context, Japan, China and Korea share a lot together. For instance, all of the three used five directions, East, West, South, North and finally Center based on the theory of the Five Elements. This proves that these three countries have the same mentality. Each of these countries call their sea that is situated on the East 'Sea of East'. Though, a point should be made here: whereas Korea did not change the name for their East Sea, Japan changed the name for their 'West sea', which is the East sea for Korea, to 'Sea of Japan' and 'East sea of Japan' to 'Sea of Pacific'.

A look at old Japanese maps made during the 16th and 17th centuries proves the use of the term 'Sea of East' by Japanese. The 'Complete map of Great Japan, Korea and China' made in the year 1882 also shows that the terms 'East Sea of Great Japan', 'West Sea of Great Japan' and 'South Sea of Great Japan' were used respectively. And there are also several places in Japan these days where the term 'East Sea' is still in use. In this respect, it is very natural that Koreans name their East Sea 'Sea of East' and not 'Sea of Japan'.

Japan and Korea used to be on very close relations and also on friendly terms. Though, with the rise of Japanese Imperialism, the friendship broke up. As for the invasion of Japan on the Continent, which was embellished as a mere expansion of territory, a lot of information about countries such as China

and Korea was required. This led Japan to produce a lot of maps on Korea. Today, the Parliamentary Museum of Japan reserves almost 4000 maps on Korea, most of which were produced since after the 19th century.

Some of those reserved and produced before the Yim-o Army Rebellion (壬午軍亂) in 1882 show that the term 'Sea of Japan' was marked right close to the coast of Japan. Map of Chōsun (map 1) and Map of Chōsun (map 2) are good examples for this. And for the East Sea of Korea, two different terms 'Sea of Korea' and 'Sea of Chōsun' were used in 'A revised Chōsun Map (改訂新朝鮮全圖)' (map 3) and 'Three Countries Map: Japan-Korea-China (大日本朝鮮支那三國圖)' (map 4) respectively. And in another map 'Three Countries Map: Japan-Korea-China (大日本朝鮮支那三國全圖)' made in the year 1882, the East Sea of Korea which is today claimed by Japanese as to be 'Sea of Japan' was divided into two parts, one of which was marked with 'Sea of Chōsun' and the other with 'West Sea of Japan'. This is a remarking point to be made since Japanese used the terms 'East Sea of Japan', 'South Sea of Japan' and 'West Sea of Japan' only to indicate some parts of the sea, i.e. the sea that goes along the coast of Japan and not the entire sea that lies between Korea and Japan.

However, since Japan acquired stepping stone to the continent by gaining the victory in the Sino-Japanese War in 1894, 'the Sea of Japan' proceeded from the coast of the mainland toward the east of Korea and took the place of 'East Sea', which instead started to mean East China Sea. From that time 'East Sea' started to be forced out by 'the Sea of Japan'. In Japan-Korea Surveyed Map (日韓實測精圖) (1894), Far East Map of Japan-Russia-Korea (日清露韓極東地圖) (1903) and Manchuria-Korea Map (時事申報滿韓地圖) (1904), the name 'East Sea' was inscribed on East China Sea, which was a nonsense because East China Sea surely was East China Sea.

Moreover, there were maps on which 'East Sea' was inscribed even on the south of Cheju island, not to mention of the sea around the east part of Korea or East China Sea. They are Central Japan and Korea (日本中部及朝鮮) (map 6, 1907) and Map of Chōsun (秘5193, 1944) which were produced by Hydrographic Office (水測部), Japan. Naturally, by the fact that the producer of two maps was Hydrographic Office (水測部), Japan, the maps are considered official. In those maps, 'East Sea' lost her place by 'the Sea of Japan' and retracted to the southern part of *Che-ju* Island.

Other maps described 'the Sea of Japan', used to be near the coast of Japan, in the place of 'East Sea', and not even did they inscribe the 'East Sea'.

Besides this, the term Sea of East was replaced by Sea of Japan, which used to indicate only the districts along the coast of Japan. This is a clear evidence for the fact that the term 'East Sea' has now given away to the term 'Sea of Japan'. Since the year 1910, with the beginning of Japanese Colonialism, the term 'Sea of East' could no longer manifest itself. In addition, the absence of Korean representatives but the presence of Japanese representatives at the 'Sea-Naming Conference' in 1928 even more contributed to an unequal naming practice.

Thus, it is imperative for Koreans take back the term 'East Sea' which had to be eradicated by the Japanese Imperialism.