

Sea of Japan - Her Three Pasts and the Problem of Naming

Tadao Furumaya

(Professor, Niigata University, Japan)

Professor Lee Ki-Suk and the organizers, thank you very much for inviting me to this symposium.

Among many leaders in the world who visited Japan last year, the most impressive was the President 金大中 I believe. His speech about new Japan-Korean relations in the 21th century moved the people in Japan, and developed deep affinity for Korea unprecedentedly. It may be called "the sun-policy for Japan". Listening to his speech, I also thought we should reward his advocacy with our best efforts at solving historical problems. Today's report is one of them.

About two years ago, Korean KBS-TV staff members came to Japan, and interviewed me about the name of "Sea of Japan". I expressed my opinion as follows.

concerning how to call this sea in our own language, we should consider and decide it for ourselves. But as for the English name "Sea of Japan" as an international name, I think we had better rename it.

This name appeared for the first time on the map 「坤與萬國全圖」 by Matteo Ricci. His method of naming places at that point in history was to call it "Sea of Japan" if the sea is in the direction of Japan, and from the Japanese side it was sometimes called "the Korean Sea" in the mutual nations, boundary lines have been drawn even on the sea itself.

As Japan began to invade all over the opposite side of this sea, there appeared the movement of making "Sea of Japan" Japan's territorial waters. So I can understand invaded countries wouldn't approve this name.

My opinion has not been changed since that time. But the KBS TV program reported only the underlined part to the public. So today I'll talk about my view a little more precisely.

I am now observing Japanese political situation for example the Guideline Law, the Law about the national anthem and flag and began to believe more heavily than before that it is very important to learn from the

history, So I would like to discuss the "three pasts" which were involved with "Sea of Japan", and based on this discussion, I will consider the matter of the name of "Sea of Japan".

The first past is the past which existed before modern times. This period extended for 2000 years. This period was characterized by Hideyoshi Toyotomi or Mongolian Invasion, and also characterized by the CE-FENG(冊封) suzerainty system, and although massacres occurred within each country, the international relationships around "Sea of Japan" Rim Regeon generally developed in an amicable manner(Compare with Europe in this period. You can recall the Thirty Years' War, the Hundred Year's War and so on).

The typical pattern of the CE-FENG-suzerainty system model can be seen in the 7th and 8th centuries. This was a prosperous period for ancient nations, with the Tang Dynasty flourishing. On the Korean Peninsula, the Shilla Kingdom existed and to the North was Bohai. All of these had entered into suzerainty relationships in which they contributed to the coffers of the head Kingdom. Japan, with the advent of 7th century, also began to dispatch envoys to Sui and Tang dynasties. This suzerainty system as an international order is characterized as "Pax Chinica". This framework incorporates the surrounding countries into an orderly relationships with Chinese Empire. They are not equal, but under this "soft control" system, disturbances were avoided, and stable international relationships in Northeast Asia were maintained.

Dr. 池明觀 highly estimated this era and said "Each country respected and cooperated with each other, ... from the second half of 7th century, cultures continued to flourish for over 2000 years."

I would like to make special note of the fact that in the background of this framework existed confrontational clashes between nations, but international relationships were capable of handling them diplomatically without resulting in armed clashes.

Let us refer to this as CE-FENG suzerainty system model. "Sea of Japan" also flourishes in eras where international relationships are stable. An illustration of this is the history of Bohai embassies. Ships departing from the mouth of the 豆滿江 in North Korea which is currently undergoing development, with the current and the westerly wind, arrived at some place in Japan, sometimes at Tsuruga and sometimes at Sado Island. However they believed that if they rode the current and prevailing westerly wind they would always end up arriving in Japan. In contrast to the endless Pacific Ocean, "Sea of Japan" is a semi-isolated body of water, which gave sailors the peace of mind,

that is, they felt they would always arrive somewhere.

This means that an envoy dispatched every 20 years or so. In this era of stable international relationships, it is possible to infer that the avenue of "Sea of Japan" played an important role in the importation of culture from the Asian continent.

The second era of the past is the that of the modern nation states. Midway through the 19th century, the countries of East Asia were all forced to take measures to deal with the strong impact of the West.

Countries coped with this pressure and sought ways to enrich national property and military strength, increase production, and promote industry. Japan has achieved this purpose by invading countries, none other than those in "Sea of Japan" Regeon-the Korean Peninsula, Siberia and "Manchuria". In this process, the it came to be asserted commonly within Japan "The Japan Sea has become actually Japanese waters". At this stage the prosperity of "Sea of Japan" was a prosperity under Japan's control, under "Pax Japonica". Today, We have still to expiate and heal the scars of the era of the "Imperialism Model", and it is necessary for us to learn from the lessons of history.

The third past is the era of the "East-West Cold War Framework" or "Pax Russo-Americana" which overshadowed "Sea of Japan" Rim Regeon for more than forty years after the end of the war. In this era, the "trench" of "Sea of Japan" was hard to cross. The Berlin Wall was pulled down in 1989, but the chasm of "Sea of Japan" still remains. While the Cold War Structures broke down throughout the world, "Sea of Japan" Rim Regeon remains an area where the ice has yet to melt. This is why, despite the fact that the era of "Sea of Japan" Rim Regeon was heralded 10 years ago, its development in the subsequent years has not been rapid.

We must recognize the asserts and liabilities of these three models of our past- the Suzerainty system model, Imperialism model and Cold War model-in creating the new fourth "Sea of Japan" Rim model based on peace, fairness and equality.

I said it's proper to think about a new international English name. But I feel that it should not be the best way to change the name due to a dispute between nations. Looking back at the three models of the past, one feels that when nations were serving selfinterest and when those inherent prosperity. I think the best approach would be to decide on an international new name based on the consensus of residents surrounding the Sea, a process suitable in this era when we are trying to overcome the era of confrontation among nations.

Just ten years ago, professor 金泳鎬 proposed a new name "the Blue Sea" I felt sympathy with his way of thought, but also felt "the Green Sea" is the best, for in China there is the same name "the blue sea province" and green is symbolical of environment. Thus we should hold international symposiums like this and discuss it a lot each other. The surrounding this sea, can promote our mutual understanding.

Lastly I would like to ask you to be generous in allowing Japanese people to call this sea with a customary name in their own language. I have once investigated school songs in Niigata City. 1/3 middle schools use the word "Nihonkai" in their school songs. We can understand how this word is loved by the residents along the sea. Many of them were written after the Japanese militarism was destroyed and Japanese people swore to keep peace. It never means Japanese waters. It has the same meaning as the natives sky from childhood does. We have a legend "Urashima Taro" who went to Ryugujo-a paradise believed to be in the Nihonkai and we believe there is happiness over the rumbling of the sea.

So many people in Japan hope to use this name at present. And it is important to remember how the Korean people think about this name.

Niigata university 環日本海研究會, in which I'm now the president, is looking for coexistence and cooperation in this semi-isolated body of Mediterranean Ocean and Baltic Sea, where people established many to use the name including the name of this sea. In English we used "Sea of Japan" Rim, but from now on, we will begin to use "North-east Asia" temporarily till the new English name is decided on.

Thank you.