

## **Inscriptions of "East Sea-Korean Sea" based on the Collections of the British Library old Maps**

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Nothing is eternal in this world, and geographic names are not exception. Any changes to the present situation usually arouse opposition among parties concerned. When one says that a change of circumstances should lead to a change of names, the other would assert that any changes would provoke only confusion. And it is the case of "East Sea," known as "Sea of Japan."

If we are to examine the problem of naming an object, two principles are capable of explaining the relation between a name and an object designated by the name. The one, Naturalism, represented by Cratylus, claims that there is a natural relation between a name and the thing meant, while the other, Conventionalism, asserted by Hermogenes, both of them are the disciples of Socrates and Plato, discuss in their presence, assume that there is no direct relation between a name and the object, it is only the agreement of people and the convention which justifies the use of a name.

If we refer to Naturalism, "East" means etymologically the morning sun between branches of a tree, and the name of East Sea is naturally appropriate to the people of Korean peninsula, but apparently not for Japan. Japan, the semantic property in Chinese character being origins of the sun, shows obvious contradiction with the name of Sea of Japan, used by one or two countries involved, is not totally acceptable for Koreans.

Now, if we examine the name according to Conventionalism, we find immediately

that the name of the Sea of Japan is against it, because there was no agreement or convention for the inscription of Sea of Japan between the two parties involved.

Then, how the problem of inscription of this sea appears on the old maps? It is the subject of my paper which tries to make an account of the problem in the old maps collected by the British Library. The first survey was made by Information Service of the Korean Embassy in Great Britain. There were 90 maps out of 377 pieces of the old maps which were not included in another survey made in 1997 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at Cambridge University Library.

First, my account will be focusing on the collections of the British Library, but at the same time I will mention briefly about the result obtained at Cambridge in 1997 for a comparison.

The old maps surveyed at the British Library are published in different countries:

- 1) Great Britain: 48 maps
- 2) France : 13 maps
- 3) Netherland : 12maps
- 4) Germany : 5 maps
- 5) Japan : 5 maps
- 6) Ireland : 2 maps
- 7) Italy : 1 map
- 8) Belgium : 1 map
- 9) China :1 map
- 10) Korea : 1 map

Classification according to the centuries are as follows:

- 1) 16<sup>th</sup> C: 1 map
- 2) 17<sup>th</sup> C: 1 map
- 3) 18<sup>th</sup> C: 81 maps
- 4) 19<sup>th</sup> C: 7 maps

Classification along with the countries and the inscription of the maps are as follows:

- 1) Without any inscription: 4 maps
- 2) Inscriptions related to China: 4 maps
- 3) Inscriptions related to Japan: 10 maps
- 4) Inscriptions related to Korea: 72 maps.

There is no doubt, with 72 maps out of 90 maps, inscriptions related to Korea constitute the absolute majority. If we look into the names used in these maps, 62 maps for Sea of Korea, among them, some Gulf of Korea, 8 maps for Oriental Sea, 2 maps for co-inscription of Korea or Eastern Sea. In this respect, there could be some objections to put 'oriental' into the inscription related to Korea. Of course, etymologically, it means 'sun rise,' but it is used conventionally east as direction.

But, I am convinced that 'Oriental' in the 18<sup>th</sup> century old maps stands for 'east,' and it refers to East-Sea. I have the proof in the map published in 1703 by French geographer, N. De Fer (1646-1720). Having studied the written materials sent by European missionaries in China, he drew his Asian map before the completion of the famous map made by the order of Emperor Kangshi, shown later in the "*Novel Atlas de la Chine*" in 1737 by D'Anville. It is why exactitude of geographical figuration is to be desired in some way. But he has greatly contributed for the geographical knowledge of Far Eastern part of Asia adding useful explanation along with the geographical names. For instance, on the inscription of East Sea--

Sea of Japan, he explains: "Mer peu ou poin connue des Europeens, les Tartares l'appellent orientale," which means: "the Sea, little or not known to Europeans, the Tarars call it oriental." It is why I presume those maps with inscription 'Mer Orientale' or ' Oriental Sea' should be under his influence.

The next stage we have to understand is why the inscription with 'Oriental Sea' yielded to 'Sea of Korea' on 'Mer de Coree.' I presume that cartographers realized the fact that 'Oriental' was too a broad concept since it is divided into: Proche-Orient (Near East), Moyen Orient (Middle East) and Extreme-Orient (Far East.) Therefore, they seemed to change the inscription of the Sea with the name of the country it is related to.

Then a question can be raised, why Korea, traditionally closed to all foreigners, unknown to Europeans, and not Japan which was favorite destination for both missionaries and traders? I could have the possible answer from the rationalist way of reasoning of Europeans. First, European system of writing expands from left to right and what lays in the left influence what comes at the right, for example, in terms of verbal agreement. And this writing system places the importance to what is in the left. It leads the assumption that inscription of 'East Sea' or 'Mer Orientale' become 'Sea of Korea,' 'Mer de Coree' and not 'Sea of Japan.'

Second, writing and reading from the left to right, come downward and what is above and straight is more important, and what is below oblique. If one looks at the geographic features and situations of Korea and Japan, Korea is a pensinsula almost straight from north to south, while Japan is a country with islands laying from northeast to southwest direction. In such circumstances, it is the common sense which decides the naming of East Sea – Sea of Japan as Sea of Korea or Mer de Coree. It means that Korea satisfies with the criteria established by European standard for the naming of East Sea – Sea of Japan.

In this case, what are the reasons which made stream of a change for Sea of Japan in the 19th century? There could be two reasons at least. First, Japan began to intensify efforts for public relations with European countries especially in publishing in English maps featuring

northeastern part of Asia as well as world maps. At the initial stage, as it could be confirmed by the survey of the maps at the British Library. Japanese maps left blank, East Sea – Sea of Japan, without any inscription. But as the time elapsed, they put the inscription of Sea of Japan later. Another reason should come from the inscription of Sea of Japan by La Perouse in his “Atlas du Voyage de La Perouse” in 1797. The French navigator explored East Sea – Sea of Japan for the first time in European history.

The inevitable question we have to ask is what lead La Perouse to put such an uncommon inscription in the 18th century, instead of following majority of cartographers of his century? What we know about him is that he used cartographical materials which were prepared in Asia like D’Anvilles Atlas and he should have over credited Matteo Ricci’s map of 1606 which inscribed Sea of Japan for East Sea.

In fact, if we carefully look into his map, the inscription of Sea of Japan lies not in the middle of the sea, but rather little bit near to Japan. For the Korean side of the sea, he gave historic explanation about Korea. Therefore, if he did not fill Korean side space in this way he should have inscribed equally Sea of Korea. It is not a hypothetic assumption. I saw the same treatment in some Portuguese maps inscribing double names and put inscription of Sea of Korea near to Korea and Sea of Japan near Japan. And this is the subject of my research I am working on.