

A Revaluation on the Name for the Eastern Sea of Korea Peninsula based on Chinese Historical Literature.

Han Maoli

(Professor, Department of Geography, Peking University, China)

The sea area to the east of Korean Peninsula, which is located in the west of Japan and the southwest of Ku Ye Island, is called "SEA OF JAPAN". The documents of ancient China indicate that the nomination of this sea area started from Tang Dynasty. At that time, the sea area was called "Xiao Sea", "Shao Sea" or "Southern Sea" by Chinese people. But the meaning of the name only referred to parts of the sea area to the east of Korean Peninsula, not the whole area of SEA OF JAPAN. We can confirm that the documents of Tang Dynasty did not contain the proper name referring to this whole sea area.

The name "East Sea", recorded by the documents of Liao and Jin Dynasty, was continued to be used by the local residents Nu Zhen and their descendant Manchurian. Some other names also appeared in that period, but it still cannot be used as the proper name referring to the whole sea area. Moreover, although the northern area of SEA OF JAPAN was named "Jing Sea" or "Jing Chuan Sea" in Yuan Dynasty and the name "East Sea" was not found in the documents of that time, we can say that the name "East Sea" was continually used from Liao and Jin Dynasty including Yuan Dynasty, for Manchurian of Ming and Qing Dynasty, the generation of Nu Zhen, was living in western coast of this sea area during Yuan Dynasty.

There are distinct records about the range of "East Sea" in the documents of Qing Dynasty, which includes the whole Dada Channel in the north and the whole sea area to the north of Korean Peninsula in the south. According to *Shuo Fang Bei Cheng* volume one, "Huntong River, the confluence of Songhua River and Hei River, runs through Ning Gu Ta and San Xing and flows into East Sea". Huntong River is the lower reach of Heilong River. Another document named *Dong Bei Bian Fang Ji Yao* said that some of the islands near Ku Ye Island are at the estuary of Huntong River, such as East Sea Island"(See volume one, *Ku*

Ye Dao Yan Ge Xing Sheng Kao). These records demonstrate that the sea area into which the Huntong River flows is called “East Sea”. In the book *Hai Guo Tu zhi* by Wei Yuan in Qing Dynasty, “East Sea” was marked beside the east coast of Korean Peninsula, at the northern latitude of 40.5°(See volume three, *Chao Xian Guo Bei Jing Tu*).This indicates that the “East Sea” in Chinese historical records means the same sea area as what the Western colonists called “Sea of Japan”.

In conclusion, all the documents and researches prove that the name ”East Sea”, which originally appeared in Liao and Jin Dynasty, had been continually used by Nu Zhen and their descendant Manchurian, who lived beside this sea area until the late of Qing Dynasty. During that period, although there were some other nominations of parts of the sea area, only “East Sea” was the persistent name of the whole sea area. The “Sea of Japan” by western colonists in modern history didn’t have any historical basis.

In order to determine the name of the sea area to the east of Korean Peninsula, we should follow the principle that the sea name comes from its owner and seriously consider the historical inheritance.