

Issue at Naming of Korea Sea (East Sea/Dong Hae) or Japan Sea (Nihon Kai) in the Regional Cooperation Work in Northeast Asia

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The issue of naming of the sea between Korean peninsula and Japan has been an obstacle in the regional cooperation work in Northeast Asia especially in the cooperation between Korea and Japan. In Japan it is fixed that the sea is called as “Nihon Kai” in Japanese. But there have been various changes in an English name while they propel international cooperation. Especially there are many various changes in designating the regional Area of East Sea/Japan Sea Rim based on the name of “Nihon Kai” in English. It is due to the fact that this term determines considerably small scope in the respect of regional concept as well as the fact that Korean peninsula doesn't accept the term.

In this thesis, I'm going to suggest the solution while explaining the issue of naming that I myself experienced in Japan with the ongoing work of the regional cooperation in Northeast Asia.

Here I made it a principle to designate the concepts in this thesis as the following.

- 1) to designate the western coastal area of Japan in Japan; Japan Sea Coastal Provinces of Japan
- 2) to designate the eastern coastal area of Korea in Korea; East Sea Coastal Provinces of Korea
- 3) to designate East Sea/Japan Sea in general; both Korean and Japanese designation simultaneously as “East Sea/Japan Sea”

1. The emerging of the cooperation works of East Sea/Japan Sea Rim Region and the issue of naming

1.1 The emerging of the cooperation works of East Sea/Japan Sea Rim Region

Since the beginning of history Japan has concentrated its economic development around the Pacific coastal provinces of Japan and during the cold war era it was very clear. Japan Sea Coastal Provinces of Japan have lagged behind the Pacific coastal provinces of Japan in industries and trades and they suffered the population drain and the aging society. Therefore Japan has made unbalanced land development as we can see the expression of “Behind Japan” calling Japan Sea Coastal Provinces of Japan

However since the late 1980s so-called “Concept of Japan Sea Rim Economic Zone” has appeared around local autonomous entities, economic organizations and colleges in Japan Sea Coastal Provinces of Japan. That is to designate the Northeast Asia region surrounding East Sea/Japan Sea as “Japan Sea Rim Region” and to make great strides in this region with developing diversified exchanges through international cooperation.

Especially the Tuman (Tumen) River Area Development Plan that China suggested first in the beginning of 1990s and South Korea, North Korea, China, Russia, and Mongolia with UNDP as the central figure participated was considered as a main model of East Sea/Japan Sea Rim Region and it requested Japan an active participation. But Japanese government rejected to join the Tuman (Tumen) River Area Development Plan formally.

The main reason why the Japanese government refused formally to participate in the development of the Tuman (Tumen) River area was that it had no diplomatic relations with the DPRK. The USA’s lack of involvement in the programme is probably another factor in Japan’s reluctance to participate.

However, the local authorities on the Japan Sea Coastal Provinces of Japan have shown great interest in the development of the Tuman (Tumen) River area, with Niigata, Akita and Tottori prefectures actively taking the lead in interaction with the area.

Akita Prefecture has been active in its interaction with Yanbian Prefecture, establishing the Posiet – Akita sea route in August 1999 and signing a memorandum of understanding on economic exchange in 2001. In 2002, an economic study mission and delegation visited Hunchun and Yanji, and carried out a study of the investment environment.

Tottori Prefecture has promoted the establishment of regular marine services between Sakaiminato Port and ports in the Tuman(Tumen) River area, under its plan to make Sakaiminato Port a transit hub with links to Northeastern China via the ports of the

Tuman(Tumen) River area, thereby establishing it as one of Western Japan's main trade hubs.

In Niigata Prefecture, a regular container route between Niigata and Rajin was established in August 1999. In addition, Joetsu City signed a Joint Declaration of International Economic and Cultural Exchange with Hunchun City in 1996, and has continued to engage in exchange in various fields, accepting trainees to work at the city office and dispatching economic missions and citizens' groups to visit Hunchun. Moreover, ERINA has been engaged in various activities aimed at promoting economic cooperation in the Tuman(Tumen) River area.

The forms of the cooperation works of East Sea/Japan Sea Rim Region seen in Japan could be classified as the following.

1) Systematization of the cooperation works among local autonomous entities

The representative form of international cooperation among local autonomous entities in East Sea/Japan Sea Rim Region is the "Association of North East Asia Regional Governments" (NEAR) that launched in 1996 to propel exchanges of 34 local autonomous entities in Japan, China, South Korea, Mongolia and Russia with Tottori Prefecture and Toyama Prefecture as the central figures. The "Northeast Asia Economic Conference" sponsored by the ERINA (Economic Research Institute for Northeast Asia) in Niigata Prefecture also independently launched the "Northeast Asia Economic Conference Organizing Committee" with representatives of Northeast Asian local governments and intelligent people in February, 2000 and has developed it as the frame of regional cooperation in Northeast Asia.

Internally in Japan, in 1964 "Japan Sea Coastal Region Promotion Federation" composed of 12 Prefectures in Honshu launched, and in 1993 The "Association of West Japan Region for Japan Sea Rim Exchange" started.

2) Establishment of international research institutes in the local level

Since the early 1990s the activities to proceed research and exchange works on East Sea/Japan Sea Rim Region in the level of local autonomous entities have activated. To establish ERINA in Niigata city in 1993 was epochal as international economic institute in the local level. In 1995 the "Academy Forum for Northeast Asia" in Kyoto city and the "Tottori Research Center" in Tottori city were established.

3) Holding international symposium

The “Niigata International Forum on Japan Sea Rim” that Niigata Prefecture began to hold in 1990 is the typical form. Since 1996 it had been renamed as the “Northeast Asia Economic Conference in Niigata” and has been held every year sponsored by ERINA. Besides in almost every region of Japan Sea Coastal Provinces of Japan international conferences on economic exchanges and cooperation are held frequently.

4) The response of political parties

After ex-Japan Socialist Party held the “Japan Sea Rim Forum” in Niigata city in 1990, Democratic Party of Japan succeeded to it and organized the “Japan Sea Rim Parliamentary Forum”. This forum was renamed as “Northeast Asia Region Friendship Parliamentary Forum” in June, 2003 and has been working on analyzing and studying the issues of Northeast Asia.

5) The response of economic circles

In the central economic circles, Keidanren (Japan Federation of Economic Organizations) sent missions to China and Russian coastal areas. Especially “Japan-China Northeast Development Association” has held regular exhibitions with northeast provinces of China.

In the local economic circles, federations of economic organizations of each Prefecture propel exchanges with Northeast Asia. The “Tohoku Economic Federation” issued the report “The future of Northeast and Northeast Asia opened up through regional exchanges” in June, 2002.

As previously stated, in Japan local autonomous entities are very active while central government remains negative in this issue and Japan Sea Coastal Provinces of Japan are especially active. The background that the development of these areas dropped behind the others and the hope that the cooperation works in Northeast Asia region would contribute to these areas’ development causes it.

1.2 The issue of naming East Sea/ Japan Sea in Japan

The cooperation works of Northeast Asia region in Japan faced the issue of naming East Sea/Japan Sea. When so-called “Concept of Japan Sea Rim Economic Zone” idea first appeared in Japan in the late 1980s, there was no problem with naming East Sea/Japan Sea. The name, “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)” was a kind of identity in Japan Sea Coastal Provinces of Japan. It was the term to represent the wish of “National Axis of Japan Sea Coast” equal to “National Axis of Pacific Ocean Coast” and the desire of

non-mainstreamers that are based on the local level not central (Tokyo) mainstream.

Therefore in most cases when they organize various councils, research institutes, organizations or hold international conferences, they usually use the name “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)” in Japanese. However when they designate it in English, there were two different trends. One was to adhere to the term “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)” and the other was to designate special English name.

The following table is the list of organizations that uses the term “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)” or “Kan Nihon Kai (Japan Sea Rim)” in Japanese among all the East Sea/Japan Sea Rim Region cooperation organizations.

Table 1. The List of Organizations using the term “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)” in Japanese

Classification	Name	Headquarter	Establishment	Works
Councils	J: 日本海沿岸地帯振興連盟 E: Japan Sea Coastal Region Promotion Federation	Toyama	1964	Symposium
	J: 環日本海交流西日本協議會 E: Association of West Japan Region for Japan Sea Rim Exchange	Tottori	1993	Conference
	J: 秋田環日本海交流推進協議會 E: Japan Sea Rim Trade Base Akita	Akita	1999	Exchanges of Northeast Asia region
	J: 北陸環日本海經濟交流促進協議會 (北陸AJEC) E: Around Japan sea Economic exchange Conference	Kanazawa	1992	Information research, Study, Human exchanges, magazines
Research center, organizations	J: 環日本海經濟研究所 (ERINA) E: Economic Research Institute for Northeast Asia	Niigata	1993	Economy related with Northeast Asia study, Exchanges
	J: 環日本海經濟交流Center E: Northwest Pacific Region Economic Center	Toyama	1993	Information supply on trades and investment

	J: 環日本海Academy Forum E: The Academy Forum for Northeast Asia	Kyoto	1995	Industry, academy, government connection
	J: 環日本海総合研究機構 (INAS) E: Institute for Northeast Asia Study	Tokyo	1996	Research on Northeast Asia
	J: 環日本海環境協力Center (NPEC) E: Northwest Pacific Region Environmental Cooperation Center	Toyama	1997	Preservation of ocean environments
	J: 日本海學推進機構 E: Japan Seaology Promotion Organization	Toyama	2003	Academic assistance to the Toyama Prefecture
	J: 環日本海交流會館 E: Japan Sea Intercultural Center	Toyama	2004	International relations
	J: 日本海國際交流Center E: NIHONKAI International Exchange Center	Kanazawa		NPO organization, international relations
Academic society	J: 環日本海學會 E: Association for the Japan Sea Rim Studies		1994	Holding seminars every year
International conference	J: 環日本海圈地方政府國際交流/協力 Summit E: The Regional Exchange and Cooperation Summit of the Japan Sea Rim		1994	Tottori, Jirin Province, Kangwondo, Primorski Territory
	J: 環日本海松江國際交流會議 E: The International Exchange Conference of Neighboring Countries Around the Sea of Japan	Matsue	1986	Exchanges with Northeast Asia region

(sources) referred to sundry records

As we can see from the table, there are cases to use different names like Northeast Asia or Northeast Pacific in English while all of them use the term “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)” or “Kan Nihon Kai (Japan Sea Rim)” in Japanese. Those cases could be classified as the

following.

1) The case to adhere to “Nihon Kai” and “Japan Sea” in Japanese and in English

This trend could be found in the names of organizations established by the local governments. “Around Japan sea Economic exchange Conference” established by Kanazawa city and other local authorities, “The Regional Exchange and Cooperation Summit of the Japan Sea Rim” by Tottori Prefecture government, “Japan Sea Rim Trade Base Akita” in Akita city, and “Japan Seaology Promotion Organization” in Toyama city, etc are these. As the academic society with university professors as the central figures, “Association for the Japan Sea Rim Studies” comes under this trend. But the regulations of this academic society declares that “we respect different terms that each country names Japan Sea in its language” in Sub-section 2, Section 1 to prepare in the case of objection from Korean side.

2) The case to use the Japanese name “Nihon Kai” and separate English name

ERINA established in 1993 was the first organization for this case. This organization was registered as “Kan Nihon Kai (Japan Sea Rim) Keizai Kenkyusyo (Economic Research Institute)” in Japanese but when it registered its English name, it changed the name into ERINA (Economic Research Institute for Northeast Asia). Since then there have been increasing similar cases. In 1995 “The Academy Forum for Northeast Asia” in Kyoto and “Institute for Northeast Asia Study” in Tokyo used Northeast Asia as its English name instead of “Kan Nihon Kai (Japan Sea Rim)”. Besides Toyama Prefecture used the term “Northeast Pacific Region” for “Japan Sea Rim” in English names of some cooperation centers.

3) The case to change even the Japanese name using “Kan Nihon Kai (Japan Sea Rim)” into “Northeast Asia”

The name of “Niigata International Forum on Japan Sea Rim” that Niigata Prefecture etc started in 1990 changed into “Northeast Asia Economic Conference” from 1996. In Akita Prefecture, “Japan Sea Rim Exchange Symposium in Akita” sponsored by “Japan Sea Rim Trade Base Akita” renamed itself as “Northeast Asia Exchange Symposium in Akita” from September, 2002. Also “Japan Sea Rim Parliamentary Forum”, the national assembly forum changed its name into “Northeast Asia Region Friendship Parliamentary Forum” in June, 2003.

At the same time the changes of the name of “The International Exchange Conference of Neighboring Countries Around the Sea of Japan” that Matsue city has held every

year since 1986 are interesting. The official name of this conference changed into “Japan Sea/East Sea Series” from the 6th conference in 1992. The main feature of this naming was to co-name “Japan Sea” and “East Sea”. Then from 1994, it changed its official name into “Northeast Asia Series”.

From the above examination, we can see there are various forms to designate Japanese name “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)” in English even in Japan. Generally in Japan when they designate East Sea/Japan Sea to refer to a sea, they adhere to “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)” both in Japanese and English while when they refer to international regional concept like East Sea/Japan Sea Rim Region, they are likely to use separate English name (Northeast Asia or Northwest Pacific) as well as Japanese name “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)” or to erase “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)” even in Japanese name.

It reflects the atmosphere that Japanese local autonomous entities try to consider the positions of South Korea or North Korea when they proceed international cooperation.

2. Experiences on the issue of naming East Sea/ Japan Sea in ERINA

I have worked on research and cooperation works related with Northeast Asia in ERINA for total about 6 years from April, 1994 to March, 1996 and from May, 1999 to March, 2003. The name of the center registered was “Kan Nihon Kai Keizai Kenkyusyo” in Japanese and ERINA in English. I believe it was a kind of compromise considering both internal atmosphere and international relations. When I first joined the center in the early 1994, the name in Japanese was much more used in Japan than English name “ERINA” because it was still early days of the center. For I was a Korean, whenever I contact with Korea, I used a Korean translated name “East Sea Rim Economic Research Institute” or English name ERINA mostly.

But from when ERINA succeeded and began to sponsor the international conference that Niigata Prefecture etc had held every year since 1990, the real problem appeared. It was how to name the international conference. In February, 1994, we used the existing name “Niigata International Forum on Japan Sea Rim”. And in February, 1995, ERINA could avoid any conflicts related with the issue of naming “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)” by the way to co-hold the fifth conference of Northeast Asia Economy Forum that had been held since 1991 by the East-West Center in Hawaii, US. Then from 1996, ERINA changed the name of the conference itself into “Northeast Asia Economic Conference” and still it’s ongoing.

In 1996 and 1998, the representatives from North Korea and government personals of South Korea formally participated into this international conference together. Until 1999, government personals and government research centers' delegates from South Korea participated into this international conference. But in 2000 and 2001, South Korean government personals rejected the participation except private economic personals. The reason was that the host organization, ERINA had the term "Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)" in its Japanese name and the Chinese letter of "Japan Sea" was in common use in Northeast Asia and it was that the government of South Korea could never accept though the name of the international conference was "Northeast Asia Economic Conference".

It was "Northeast Asia Economic Conference" in February, 2002 that the delegates from Korean Embassy in Japan finally participated formally. ERINA had convertible attitudes to the issue of naming East Sea/Japan Sea and South Korea accepted those attitudes. It made South Korean participation possible. The attitudes that ERINA had as a principle to the issue of naming East Sea/Japan Sea were the following.

< Principle of naming East Sea/Japan Sea adopted by ERINA >

(1) International conference

- ERINA designates East Sea/Japan Sea Rim Region as Northeast Asia Region generally. It is the same in the case of written translations. But when the meaning is limited to the region only including East Sea Coastal Provinces of Korea, Primorsky Territory of Russia, and Japan Sea Coastal Provinces of Japan around the Sea, ERINA use both Korean and Japanese designation simultaneously as "East Sea/Japan Sea Rim Region".
- In the case of simultaneous interpretation for East Sea/Japan Sea Rim Region in international conferences, if a Japanese person uses the term "Kan Nihon Kai (Japan Sea Rim Region)" in Japanese, it should be interpreted into "Huan Dong Hae (East Sea Rim Region)" in Korean and "Northeast Asia Region" in other languages. And if a Korean person uses the term "Huan Dong Hae (East Sea Rim Region)" in Korean, it should be interpreted into "Kan Nihon Kai (Japan Sea Rim Region)" in Japanese, and "Northeast Asia Region" in other languages.
- In the case of that the Japanese script for the presentation of a Japanese person

contains the term “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)”, ERINA retains the term “Nihon Kai” in the original copy of the Japanese script, but translates it into as “East Sea/Japan Sea” in the English translation. (Respecting author’s script but in translation co-naming)

- In the case of that the foreign language scripts (Korean, Chinese, and Russian) of foreign participants contains the term “Dong Hae (East Sea)” or “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)”, ERINA translates it into as “East Sea/Japan Sea” in the Japanese and English translation script.
- In the case of the English script that foreigners or Japanese made in English, if it contains “East Sea” or “Japan Sea”, ERINA doesn’t change the expression. (Respecting author’s script)

(2) The works of ERINA

- ERINA uses the term “ERINA” in common in-and-out Japan rather than the term of Japanese name.
- ERINA answers the phone speaking “This is ERINA” in Japanese or in English.
- ERINA usually makes and uses the maps of Northeast Asia where the name of East Sea/Japan Sea is erased. When needed, ERINA co-writes both East Sea/Japan Sea.

South Korean government estimated that a Japanese research institute, ERINA admitted co-naming the sea when Japanese government didn’t accept the co-naming. After 2002, South Korean government personals have participated international conferences sponsored by ERINA, and also South Korean government based research institutes have proceeded active exchanges with ERINA like making joint-research contracts, dispatching guest researchers and so on.

3. The need to name the sea newly

From my experiences of participating regional cooperation works in Northeast Asia in Japan, I found out there are very complicated problems in the issue of naming East Sea/ Japan Sea. Japanese government brings up the real evidences that naming Japan Sea is not the result of 20th century’s imperialism but the name began to be in common use from 18th century after it first appeared on the map called "Kun Yu Wan Guo Di Tu"

made by an Italian Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) in 1602. On the other hand, in Japan Sea Coastal Provinces of Japan the name “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)” is not the mere name of the sea but is used as a kind of identity of lagged provinces and the motive of local development. But in the case of propelling international cooperation in the local level, they give some consideration to Korean peninsula so they changed the commonly used term “Kan Nihon Kai (Japan Sea Rim)” into “Northeast Asia Region” or co-named “East Sea/Japan Sea Rim Region”. I can say ERINA has the most convertible attitudes to this issue. The central government of Japan doesn’t allow even co-naming.

From this situation, there is almost no possibility that the movement to change “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)” into another name would arise in Japan independently. Maybe Japanese maximum concession would be to co-name “East Sea/Japan Sea” in international conferences.

Then what about Korea? In the respect of hard-line attitude to East Sea or Korea Sea, Korean position is about the same as that of Japanese government. But Korean government suggests co-naming East Sea/Japan Sea as the interim step of a single name. Right now the most possible agreement that both countries could make would be co-naming. But in the long run, both countries should collect their wisdom how to name the open sea located between Korean peninsula and Japan. In both countries, each has a long historical background internally for Korea to call its eastern sea as “Don Hae (East Sea)” and for Japan to call its western sea as “Nihon Kai (Japan Sea)”. Therefore it is not desirable to force one’s position to the other. It is after all the best way for both countries to agree with the new name of the open sea in the middle of the countries not the closed sea of each other. It would be the name of the nature without any political tincture. Otherwise, How about naming it as Korea-Japan Sea like the same method at the Festival of 2002 Korea-Japan World Cup?