

## **Reducing Exonyms Created by the Japanese Imperialism and Restoring the Name *East Sea*\***

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### **Abstract**

This paper posits that the name of the sea between the Korean peninsula and Japanese archipelago was settled down as 'Sea of Japan' as an extension of the Japanese imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries. The name Sea of Japan, firstly used by foreign map-makers and explorers, was widely diffused in the western world as the Japanese power prospered, and even adopted as an endonym by Japanese people. Therefore, the name Sea of Japan used for the whole body of water is definitely as an exonym and an object to be reduced to use according to the UNGEGN recommendations. As the sea was called as 'East Sea' by Korean people for more than two millennia, there is strong ground to restore the name to its original form, at least for the Korean territorial water. The high sea between Korea and Japan can also be called as East Sea, which means the sea located east of the Eurasian Continent, *or* as Sea of Japan as it has been called so far. This leads to a possible solution to call the sea with dual names, East Sea and Sea of Japan. As the argument that a common sea surrounded by a few countries should be called by each of the names is supported by many professionals and international organizations, it is required that more persuasive complementary logics should be developed.

### **The Japanese Colonial Reign over Korea and Creating Exonyms**

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The Korean Peninsula and the Japanese archipelago has retained very distinct geo- political relationship for a long time of history. Korea continuously delivered its cultural assets to Japan with diverse forms, and Japan continued to identify Korea as an overland bridge linking to the continent. In the period of Japanese reign over Korea, 1910 to 1945, Japan continuously tried to unite the Korean spirit into Japanese.

Geographical names in Korea, as in other countries, have been created as reflections of people's perception on the geographical entity. Most of geographical names including physical geographical names, e.g. rivers, mountains, plains, rocks, islands, lakes and bays, and names of human settlements ranging from the gamut of small villages to large cities, were created basically with meanings of Chinese characters. Major usages include direction(東-east, 西-west, 南-south, 北-north, 中-center), animals(龍-dragon, 虎-tiger, 鳥-bird, 鷄-chicken, 牛-cow), plants(花-flower, 松-pine tree, 蘭-orchid), natural topological entity(水-water, 海-sea, 川-river, 谷-valley, 峰-peak), etc.

The Japanese colonial reign over Korea made lots of endogenous names changed into Japanese exonyms. Several geographical names in the official paperworks and maps were changed with the Japanese-style Chinese letters. Even the colonial administration forced Korean people to change their own names into Japanese style ones. This is called the policy of "creating surnames and changing names(創氏改名)"

Changing geographical names into Japanese exonyms can be typified into some cases:

- changing into Japanese-style Chinese characters to make them easy for Japanese people to understand and pronounce,
- deleting words meaning Korean national spirit and replacing with words meaning admiration of Japanese King,
- replacing purely Korean names with those spelled by Chinese characters, and
- giving new names to some burgeoning cities under the Japanese colonial economy.

With these changes Japan tried to eliminate Korean's own historical traces, spirit and emotions melted in their geographical names, and to control even the Korean language and culture. Many of these Japanese exonyms were restored to their original names on two occasions, in 1987 and 1995 with on-the-spot surveys by local governments. Table 1 shows some examples of Japanese exonyms.

**Table 1. Examples of exonyms created in the Japanese colonial period**

Region	Original name	Japanese exonym	geographical entity
Seoul City	Mancho-cheon(蔓草川)	Uk-cheon(旭川)	stream
Busan City	Eomgwang-san(嚴光山)	Goweongyeon-san (高遠見山)	mountain
Uijeongbu City	Bal-usuri	Bal-gok(鉢谷)	village
Uijeongbu City	Beom-gul	Ho-dong(虎洞)	village
Gwangmyeong City	Jagyeong-ri(自警里)	Jagyeong-ri(自京里)	village
Namyangju City	Baek-bong(柏峰)	Baek-bong(白峰)	peak
Shiheung City	Jin-mal	Yeongheung(永興)	village
Shiheung City	Beombae-san	Gasami-san(可使美山)	mountain
Hanam City	Keunbaemi-gol	Daesa-gol(大蛇)	village
Pocheon County	Muran(茂蘭)	Sunae(水內)	village
Yangpyeong County	Chueub-san(趨揖山)	Jueub-san(注邑山)	mountain
Yongin Country	Jwachan-gogae(座贊)	Jwajeon-hyeon(左田峴)	hill
Yongin Country	Gomae-gok(古梅谷)	Jungchon(中村)	village

*Dok-do*(獨島), an island located in East Sea, is one of the examples which were given a Japanese exonym. It is located 217km east of the eastern coast of the Korean Peninsula and 90km east of *Ullung-do*(island). In 1905, Japan declared Dokdo as Japanese territory and began to call it *Takeshima*. Even after Korea's restoration of its sovereignty in 1945, Japan has continuously argued for territorial claims of the island. As Dokdo is now under the legal occupation by the Korean administrative system, it is not appropriate to call it with an exonym, Takeshima, or even give it any form of dual naming of Dokdo and Takeshima.

### **The Problem of *East Sea***

The case of naming the body of water between the Korean Peninsula and Japanese archipelago can also be understood with Japan's expansion of exonyms in the period of the Japanese reign over Korea. It should be noted that it was during the Japanese reign over Korea, when Korea could not dispatch its delegates, that the name was standardized as *Sea of Japan* in the first conference of IHO in 1928 and its subsequent publication of the first edition of *Limits of Oceans and Seas* in 1929.

Korean people have long history of calling the water as *East Sea*. With its first appearance in the historical literature dated back to the year 59 B.C., East Sea has been an object of national worship or a guardian spirit of the state. It is shown in novels, legend, folk songs, and even in the national anthem of Korea.

On the other hand, there is very little evidence that Japanese people called it as *Sea of Japan* for a long time in their history. The name *Sea of Japan* first appeared in an old map made by an Italian missionary Matteo Ricci. Many of the old maps of authority published in Japan after the 18th century marked the sea as *Sea of Joseon* (an old name of Korea), not as *Sea of Japan*. It was after the mid-19th century that the name *Sea of Japan* was extensively spread over by foreigners. Active publication of books on Japan accompanied by the growth of Japan's trade with foreign countries made the name *Sea of Japan* spread more widely to even Japanese themselves as well as to foreigners. This historical situation shows that *Sea of Japan* was in its original usage an exonym, a name used by foreigners for a geographical entity in the foreign territory. The name was adopted by Japanese to be an endonym.

Exonyms for the sea used by old maps published in the western countries include *Sea of Korea*(or *Corea*), *Oriental Sea*, *Sea of Japan*, *Sea of China*, and so on. Although Korea and Japan produce different statistics of its usage, mainly due to the sampling from unknown population, they show the similar trend of increasing usage of *Sea of Japan* after the 19th century(Table 2). This would be related to the expansion of imperial Japanese power in the world as described above.

Two points can be made with regard to the exonym issue for the case of *East Sea/ Sea of Japan*, each focusing on official language and territoriality, respectively.

First, the definition of an exonym emphasizes the officiality of the language, such that a name should be regarded as an exonym when it is used in a different form from the name used in the official language where the geographical feature is situated (Kadmon, 1997, 305; Adamic, 2004, 24). But Kadmon's definition has the flexibility to regard a romanized name spelled from a non-roman alphabetic language as an endonym. According to this definition, the name *East Sea* is also an exonym, for it expressed in English, not an official language of Korea. ‘동해(東海)’ or *Tonghae*, a romanization of its Korean name, would be an endonym. For the Japanese side, ‘にほんかい(日本海)’ or *Nihonkai* is an endonym while *Sea of Japan* is an exonym.

**Table 2. Statistics of names of the sea between Korea and Japan as shown in old maps**

	Statistics by Korea <sup>1)</sup>						Statistics by Japan <sup>2)</sup>					
	16C	17C	18C	19C	20C	total	16C	17C	18C	19C	20C	total
Sea of Korea(Corea)							-	2	10	1	-	13
East Sea	-	39	341	60	-	440	-	-	-	-	4	4
Oriental Sea							-	7	-	-	-	4
Sea of Japan	-	17	36	69	1	123		5	3	18	42	68
Sea of China	16	28	10	-	-	54	4	10	2	-	-	16
Others <sup>3)</sup>	13	41	80	12	-	146	21	37	33	2	-	93
Total	29	125	467	141	1	763	25	61	48	21	46	201

- Notes: 1) These statistics were produced by surveys to old maps in the libraries in the U.K., U.S.A., Russia, France, etc. Adopted from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Korea, *et al.*, 2004, *East Sea: The Name East Sea Used for Two Millennia* (booklet)
- 2) These statistics were cited from a study by Hishyama and Nagaoka(1994). Adopted from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2002, *Sea of Japan* (booklet).
- 3) Others include those with no name on the sea.

It is inappropriate, however, to regard *East Sea* or *Sea of Japan* as an exonym to be reduced in its usage because it is not to recognize the distinct feature of oriental languages. Names in roman alphabets, even though they are spelled in different languages, share common meanings with the same derivation of words. On the other hand, in the oriental languages which have entirely different system of words, there should be inevitable translation of names into languages with roman alphabets to deliver their meanings. Therefore, *East Sea* or *Sea of Japan* should be regarded as an endonym or as a new category called *translation of endonym*. When this suggestion is endorsed, then it can give a strong logic to use *East Sea* as an endonym used in the long history. This is to follow a recommendation of UNGEGN to reduce the usage of exonyms.

Second, the definition of an exonym also emphasizes the territoriality of the geographical feature to be called; a name for an object within the territorial limit called in the official language of the territory is an endonym while that for an object out of the territorial limit called in different languages from the official language of the territory is an exonym. This definition leads to an understanding that there can be no argument in using a country's own endonym or its translated form for a geographical entity within its territory. Equally, every country has the right to call its territorial water with its own endonym even when the water is surrounded by some countries.

But the problem lies in the naming of the high sea beyond the limits of territorial waters. There seems to be common consensus that it is not appropriate to use an exclusive name, and moreover to use just one country's name, for the entire sea beyond each party's territorial limit. In this context, there could be no debate to call the body of water within the limit of Korean territorial water as

*East Sea* and to call that within the limit of Korean territorial water as *Sea of Japan*. In spite of the ambiguity incurred for bodies of water, we can endow separate names to each territory. But we still need an exonym for the high sea between two territorial waters or an agreed name between Korea and Japan as both an endonym and exonym.

It is possible to give a new meaning to the name *East Sea* as an exonym for the high sea between Korea and Japan. The name *East Sea* reflects the perception of the sea located east of the Eurasian continent or of Far East Asia, not just east of the Korean Peninsula. The name *Oriental Sea* often used for this sea by Europeans and Americans reflects their perception of the Orient, an unknown world in the east. This has much in common with the name *East Sea*.

### **Towards a Solution of the Problem: Dual Naming as *East Sea/ Sea of Japan***

It is theoretically possible to give separate names for the body of water between Korea and Japan, divided into Korean territorial water, Japanese territorial water and high sea between them. Practically, however, it is very difficult to solve the problem this way. There is strong willingness from Japan to maintain the name *Sea of Japan* as standardized for more than seventy years. Japan argues that the name is already internationally accepted and established and tries even to avoid discussing the problem in the international conferences.

There could be confusion in communicating over the sea in the navigation system and referencing in both academic and commercial field. It is difficult to expect map makers or cartographers to use separate names for the sea, especially in some small scale maps. Moreover, there is very little possibility for the time being to agree on a common name between Korea and Japan.

All these difficulties implies that it is necessary to use dual names *East Sea/ Sea of Japan* for the entire body of waters between Korea and Japan while the two countries continuously try to draw an agreement on a single name. This is to follow *the United Nations Resolutions on the Standardization of Geographical Names*, chapter II/25 of the item *features beyond a single sovereignty*, which says,

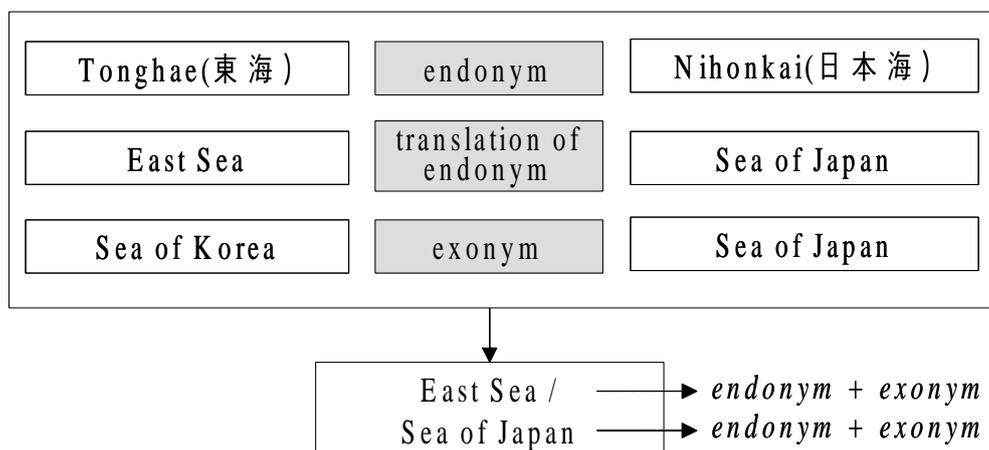
“The Conference recommends that countries sharing a given geographical feature under a different name form should endeavour to reach agreement on fixing a single name for the feature concerned; the Conference further recommends that when countries sharing a given geographical feature and having different official languages do not succeed in agreeing on a common name form, it should be a general rule of international cartography that the name forms of each of the languages in question should be accepted.”

One of the good examples of agreeing to use dual names for a body of water is the strait between France and the United Kingdom. The two countries attempted to settle the dispute over the name and drew an agreement to use the names *English Channel* and *la Manche* together.

## Concluding Remarks

This paper posits that the name of the sea between the Korean peninsula and Japanese archipelago was settled down as 'Sea of Japan' as an extension of the Japanese imperialism in the 19th and 20th centuries. The name Sea of Japan, firstly used by foreign map-makers and explorers, was widely diffused in the western world as the Japanese power prospered, and even adopted as an endonym by Japanese people.

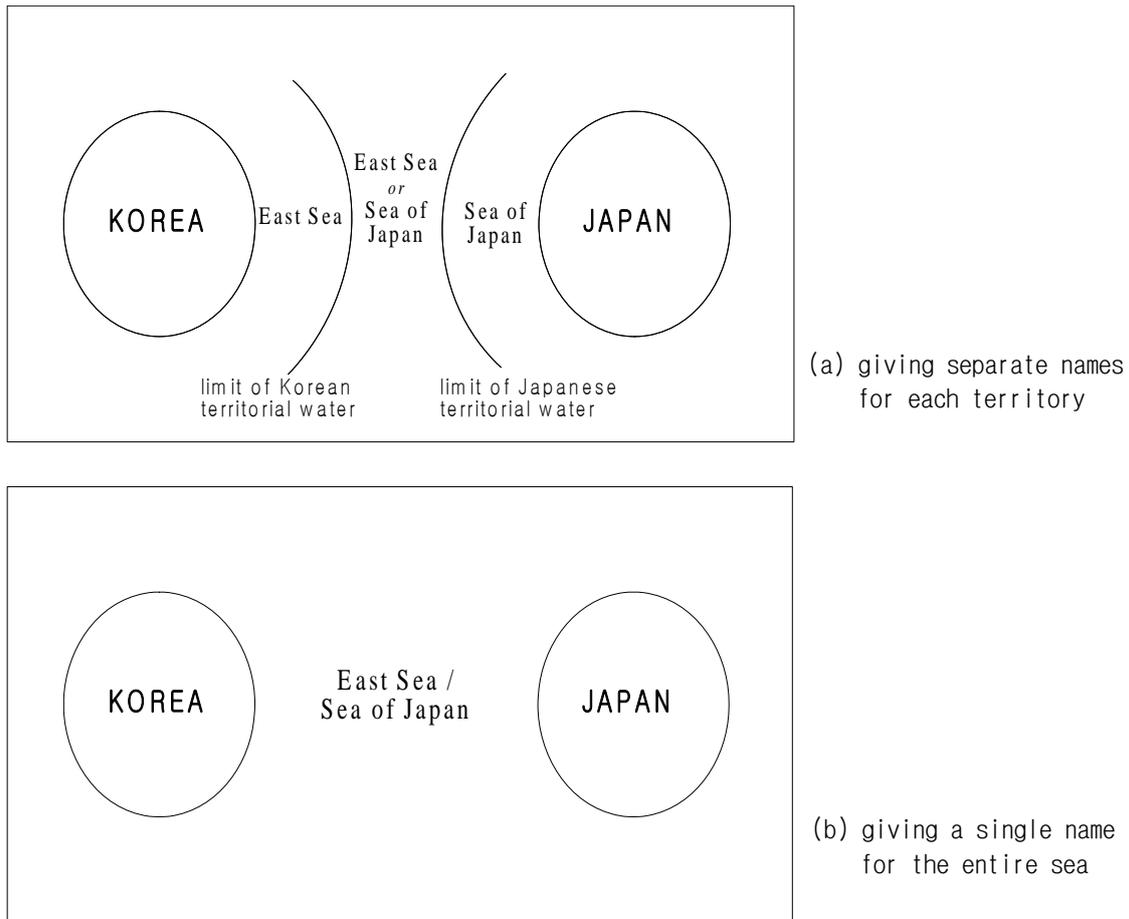
The use of exonyms should be reduced in the international standardization of geographical names. This is even so when the names were changed by illegitimate forces. Exonyms created in Korea during the Japanese colonial period should be eliminated and restored to the original names. Even though there are complicated elements regarding territoriality, the name East Sea can be broadly understood in this context. There should be continuous endeavour to discuss this problem open-minded between Korea and Japan and to settle the problem. Until an agreement is reached, at least, it is reasonable to use both names together as UNCSGN and IHO recommend.



*East Sea* = the sea located east of the Eurasian Continent

*Sea of Japan* = the sea located west of the Japanese Archipelago

**Figure 1. Understanding the Name *East Sea/ Sea of Japan* from a Discussion of the Endonym and Exonym Issue**



**Figure 2. Two Methods of Giving Names to East Sea/ Sea of Japan in view of the Exonym Issue**

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