

Research on Relationship between the Name of “EAST SEA” and the Local Non-Han Government of Northeast China after Tang Dynasty

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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. In history, hundreds of non-Han aborigines lived in the vast land of Northeast China, some of which built up their local governments and their own special administrative system. And even some of them moved into the central part of China and gained their reign over the whole country by the powerful cavalry. These cases were not rare after Tang Dynasty (618-907).

The northeast area of China is close to Sea of Japan. Compared with the citizens of other places, the aborigines of Northeast China or Korean Peninsula are much more familiar with this sea area east to them. It must be them (and only them) at the very beginning to call this sea area "EAST SEA".

Then we find a very interesting phenomenon that whenever the local non-Han governments from Northeast China were powerful enough to control the whole China or at least a great part of it, the name "EAST SEA" was recorded in the Chinese ancient literatures of the same period to call this sea area; that whenever the local non-Han government from Northeast China were weak and could not build up an empire of vast land, we could find many different names but "EAST SEA" to call this sea area in the temporal records.

In Tang Dynasty (618-907) built up by the Han nationality, Northeast China was occupied by the minority Mohe. Though Mohe had its own kingdom Bohai in the area, it actually was not among the powerful ones in the whole empire. Of course, their knowledge about this sea area did not spread all over China at that time. Different names

in the ancient literatures of this period showed that most of the Chinese knew little about this sea area or at least they could not have a unanimous name to call it. In *Tang Hui Yao*(*唐会要*), one of the most important literatures of Tang Dynasty, more than three names were recorded to call the same sea area, among which were “Xiao Sea” (Small Sea), ”Shao Sea” (Young Sea)and “Da Sea” (Great Sea). 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.

In the late of Tang Dynasty, the minority of Qidan from Northeast China became a great power. During the coming one hundred years, it built a great empire Liao and controlled most parts of North China, while the other part by Song government (960-1279). People of Qidan also knew much about the sea area and they left many documents talking about it. *History of Liao* (*辽史*)*Dynasty* was such a document. It was one of the twenty four documents certificated by the governments of past dynasties. It recorded for the first time “EAST SEA” as the name of this sea area. Obviously, with the help of military power, the people of Qidan made all Chinese accept their own knowledge and opinions about the sea area east to themselves. The people in the central part of China had no opportunities to contact with the sea area, so “EAST SEA” could only be the name given by the aborigines living along the western shore of the sea area: Northeast China or Korean Peninsula. And people of Qidan were such aborigines. It was their contribution that the name of “EAST SEA” was recorded in the formal documents of ancient China.

Yuan Government (1260-1368) by Mongol terminated the reign of Song Dynasty and reunified the country. But these people from steppe showed much more interests on horses rather than sea and boats. Their knowledge about East Sea was so little that they called it “Jing Sea” (Sea Full of Whales). Their successor, Ming Government (1368-1644), was not better either, though it was by the Han nationality. Apart from accepting the name of “Jing Sea” by Mongol, they also called the sea “Nan Sea” (South Sea). At this time, in Northeast China, people of Nvzhen (Ancestors of Qing Government) were developing their own kingdom. So it was reasonable that people of Ming Dynasty knew little geographical information outside their domain. The different names of this sea area came from the ignorance of Yuan and Ming Governments and they caused much more confusions.

These confusions could not be permitted once the aborigines who thoroughly knew the sea area came into power. These non-Han aborigines were the people of Nvzhen who built up Qing Government (1616-1911) and the name to sweep away the confusions was “EAST SEA”.

We can tell from the document whose name is *Stories of Building up the Country*(*开国龙兴记*) that before Qing Government was founded, people of Nvzhen had called the

sea area “EAST SEA” for a long time. The article *Ji Dong Hai Zhu Wen*(《祭东海祝文》) printed in the book *DA Jin Ji Li* (《大金集礼》) showed us some proofs that the name “East Sea” was given to this sea area by Nuzhen people, the aborigines living on the western coast. After Jin Dynasty, Manchurian, the descendant of Muzhen, accepted the name “East Sea” from their ancestors. Just because the relation between the northeast and the central part was not close enough to make the name popular, we seldom see the records about “East Sea” in the documents of that time. In 17th century, when the Manchurian grew up in the northeast to build Qing Government, the name East Sea was popular again and it reappeared in the books of that time frequently. In 1664, when Qing Government moved its capital city from Mukden to Peking, the name “EAST SEA” spread widely among China. Many documents recorded “EAST SEA” as the name of the sea area. For example, a documents about the old capital city of Qing Government *Shen Jing Tong Zhi*(《盛京通志》) said in its twelfth volume, ”The east boundary of the General Jilin is to EAST SEA ”.(General Jinlin was the administrator of Northeast China in late Qing Dynasty).All these proofs show that the non-Han Government of Qing Dynasty from Northeast China replaced the different names with “EAST SEA” again after Liao Dynasty by people of Qidan.

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*(《朔方备乘》卷一) volume one, “Huntong River(混同江), the confluence of Songhua River(松花江) and Hei River(黑水), runs through Ning Gu Ta (宁古塔)and San Xing(三姓) and flows into East Sea”. Huntong River is the lower reach of Heilong River(黑龙江). Another document named *Dong Bei Bian Fang Ji Yao*(《东北边防辑要》) 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*库页岛沿革形胜考). These records demonstrate that the sea area into which the Huntong River flows is called “East Sea”. In the book *Hai Guo Tu zhi* (《海国图志》) 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, *Map of North Korean boundary, Chao Xian Guo Bei Jing Tu*《朝鲜国北境图》). 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 modern time, a lot of lands along the shore of “EAST SEA” were ceded to Russia. But “EAST SEA” was still the name for the most Chinese till the late of 19th century. After the victory in the war with China in 1895, Japan occupied the Korean peninsula and parts of Northeast China. The name “Sea of Japan” became more popular instead of “EAST SEA”.

In a conclusion, we can see that after Tang Dynasty, there was a relationship between the name of “EAST SEA” and the local non-Han government of Northeast China. The relationship was that whenever the local non-Han governments from Northeast China were powerful enough to control the whole China like Qing Dynasty or at least a great part of it like Liao Dynasty, the name “EAST SEA” was recorded in the Chinese ancient literatures of the same period to call this sea area; and whenever the local non-Han government from Northeast China were weak and could not build up an empire of vast land like Mohe in Tang Dynasty and the aborigines ruled by Yuan & Ming Dynasty, we could find many different names but “EAST SEA” to call this sea area in the temporal records.

Reference :

- 1, *Tang Hui Yao*(*唐会要*)
- 2, *History of Liao* (*辽史*)
- 3, *Hisroty of Jin*(*金史*)
- 4, *Stories of Building up the Country*(*开国龙兴记*)
- 5, *Ji Dong Hai Zhu Wen*(《祭东海祝文》)printed in the book *DA Jin Ji Li* (《大金集礼》)
- 6, *Shen Jing Tong Zhi*(*盛京通志*)
- 7, *Shuo Fang Bei Cheng*(《朔方备乘》卷一)
- 8, *Dong Bei Bian Fang Ji Yao*(《东北边防辑要》)
- 9, *Hai Guo Tu zhi* (《海国图志》)