

The Issue on the Naming of "the East Sea of Korea" and National Isolation of Japan

Dr. Sagong Jun

(Lecturer, Physical Geography, Korea University. Tokyo. Japan)

Abstract

Japan insists that it was not Japan but the West that first called the East Sea area of Korea "the Sea of Japan" and the naming was generalized in the West by the map published by Phillip Franz Balthasar van Siebold(1796~1866).

Moreover, Japan says it claims that it has no responsibility for the authentic of the name because it closed the country in those days.

The contention of Japan is fiction (itis the West; it is not Japan that first called "the East Sea of Korea", "the Sea of Japan").

Because through Japan closed the country, Edo-Shogunate (Japan's feudal government the shogunate "government"), Japanesecentral government was for from a closing country but big marine transportation power.

Edo-Shogunate carried out not only domestic marine transportation but also foreign trade grandly. Thus Japan's map spread throughout the West and the issue of naming of "the Sea of Japan" spread out in the West.

In this paper, I shall try to clarify Japan was not national isolation situation in those days but it was rather a big marine transportation country.

Introduction

In my previous presentation, "Historical Circumstances of "Korea Sea" and "East Sea" and Consideration of International Custom, October 15-17, 2003: The Ninth International Seminar on the Naming of Seas: Special Emphasis Concerning the Sea Names in Far East Asia", I concluded as follows: It was around the Japan's compulsive possession of Chosun dynasty in the early 20th century when the name of "the Sea of Korea"was substantially changed into the name of "the Sea of Japan". Until then, Japan had used the name of "the Sea of Japan" or "the Sea of Great Japan" for designating the

Pacific in the east of the Japanese Islands. In those maps published in the same period, the sea in the west of the Japanese Islands was named as the Sea of Korea. However, because the name of the sea in the east of the Japanese Islands had become fixed as the Pacific Ocean, Japan changed the name of the sea in the west of the Japanese Islands from the Sea of Korea into the Sea of Japan

Especially, Japan used the map drawn by Phillip Franz Balthasar van Siebold(1796~1866), who mistakenly named the Sea of Korea as the Sea of Japan in the map, and strived for permanently fixing the name of the Sea of Japan. In this way, Japan succeeded in eliminating the name of the Sea of Korea or the East Sea and, instead, inserting the name of the Sea of Japan in the Limits of Oceans and Seas published by the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO)'s in 1929.

By referring to the map drawn by P.F.B. van Siebold, Japan insists that it was not Japan but the West that firstly used the name of the Sea of Japan. Also, Japan argues that they have no responsibility for using the term of "the Sea of Japan" because Japan maintained seclusion policy at that time. The purpose of this paper is to illuminate that Japan did not substantially execute seclusion policy at that time, but in reality, it was one of the maritime powers in those days.

1. the P.F.B. van Siebold Event

P.F.B. van Siebold was a medical doctor dispatched from Germany and worked for the East Netherland Company in the late Edo era of the late 19th century. He collected a range of information on Japan. In the spring of 1826, he kept a close relationship with Takahasi Kageyasu(1785~1829, cartographer) and Habu Gen(1762~1848, obstetrician) at Edo. The so-called "P.F.B van Siebold Event" occurred in 1828 and he was banished from Japan in 1829. After returning to Netherland, he published 'Japan', a booklet based on his data during his stay in Japan(1832~1852), and also presented papers including 'Zoology of Japan' and 'Botany of Japan'. But, he revisited Japan from 1852 to 1862 when the Japan-Netherland Treaty was signed.

The P.F.B. van Siebold Event was a violent oppression on Dutch scholars occurred in the late-Edo era. P.F.B. van Siebold acquired a wide range of information on Japan from Takahasi Kageyasu in exchange for I.F. Krusenstern's(1770~1846) "Reise um die Welt in den Jahren""iWorld Circumnavigation Record"j. He also requested and obtained the Route Map of Japan and the Ezo Map based on a scaled-down map of Ino Tadayoshi's Atlas of Japan and Nearby Sea as well as Mamiya Rinzo's(1775~1844) Eastward Travel Story. Meanwhile, instead of giving Medical Skills for Eyeball Surgery to Habu Kenseki, van Siebold acquired Aoi Munbok(Mark), a formal costume for

higher-class government official. When he traveled to Netherland in 1828, the ship he boarded broke down near Nagasaki. Because of this accident, Japanese found a map from his baggage, which was forbidden to bring outside of Japan. The map was a scaled-down map of Ino Tadayoshi's Atlas of Japan and Nearby Sea, which contained geographic information on the east sea of Sakhalin. After with this event, Takahashi died in prison, his men were forfeited, and Takahashi's other relatives, friends, and close foreign scholars were punished.

2. The Inside Story of P.F.B. van Siebold Event

Currently, the map that was forfeited near Nagasaki is in the National Library of Japan. But, the map used in P.F.B.van Siebold's book "Japan" exists separately. This map is more detailed than the forfeited one. It is now in the hand of P.F.B.van Siebold's eldest son living in Germany (Asahi, Hata-Shinji). In other words, it means that the map which is more detailed than the map confiscated in Nagasaki exists in Germany and P.F.B.van Siebold wrote his book based on it. Of course, in the map, the Sea of Korea was designated as the Sea of Japan.

Then, although more detailed map had been outside of Japan, why did the P.F.B.van Siebold Event happen? Hata Shinji analyzed the reason as follows: Battle of Spy Meiji's 11 rule year. P.F.B.van Siebold and Mamiya Rinzo were in close relationship and exchanged information each other. And P.F.B.van Siebold kept an especially close relationship with Simazu Sigehide. Simazu Sigehide was the father-in-law of Tokugawa Ienari, the general during the Edo government. Using his military power, he interfered in domestic politics and trades with Netherland. He was also involved in smuggling with China. In this way, he stored up huge wealth and strengthened military power. Tokugawa Ienari could no longer tolerate Simazu Sigehide's behaviors, and ordered Minister Muragaki Sadayuki to eliminate him. Muragaki Sadayuki decided to fabricate a plot when Simazu Sigehide had a meeting with P.F.B.van Siebold. P.F.B.van Siebold enjoyed friendship with not only Simazu Sigehide but also with Mogami Tokunai. Some scholars in Japan insist that Mamiya Rinzo didn't care the relationship between P.F.B.van Siebold and Mogami Dokunai and intentionally fabricated a case. In other words, they view Mamiya Rinzo as a spy.

3. Japan's Seclusion Policy and Designation of "the Sea of Japan" through Distribution of Japanese Maps

Japan insists that the Western countries have first begun to use the name of the Sea of Japan because Japan implemented seclusion policy and thus couldn't distribute Japanese maps abroad. However, contrary to its argument, Japan was one of the strongest maritime powers in the world in those days. The following section examines this aspect.

First of all, how should we understand Japan's seclusion policy? In general, Tokugawa Shogunate was founded after 80 years from 1600. In this period, the government implemented the *Makban* System to control rural communities and closed its door to foreign countries. It is already known that Japan's industry and culture began to flourish based on this organizational system.

During the Tokugawa *Ienari* rule, the government officially announced its close-door policy to foreign countries. But, the policy was neither to prohibit international trades nor to deny foreign cultures. The only objective of the seclusion policy was for the Shogunate power to dominate the control over international trades in Japan. In other words, for the Tokugawa Shogunate, the policy was a tool through which to manage commercial trades in its own hands.

At that time, local powers in Japan enlarged their influence and arrived at the level to threaten the central government of the Edo Shogunate. The central government couldn't endure such changes any more. It had to prohibit local powers from accumulating wealth by trades and importing new military arms from foreign countries. Therefore, the Shogunate prohibited Japanese people to go to or come from foreign countries.

In thus words, the Edo Shogunate conducted its close-door policy for disempowering local powers in Japan. And in order to empower the central government's influence, it reinforced its financial and military power through international trades. In this way, Japan became one of the powerful maritime countries during the rule of the Edo Shogunate.

As we have examined above, such argument that Japan conducted seclusion policy and therefore the usage of the name of 'the Sea of Japan' had nothing to do with Japan in the first place is wrong. Japan's seclusion policy was only to prohibit local powers in Japan from international trade and weaken their domestic influence. The close-door policy has no relationship to central government's international trades and other activities.

4. Japan was One of the Largest Maritime Powers during the Edo Era.

Until now, Japanese scholars in history have maintained view that Japan's shipbuilding skills were underdeveloped because of its close-door policy. However, such argument is absolutely wrong. Ishii Kenji, a scholar in history of shipbuilding, conducted a systematic research on Japan's shipbuilding skills, had found that it was Japan's large-scale fleet that enabled economic success in Edo Shogunate. The following section summarizes his arguments.

The Edo Shogunate of Japan publicly announced the decree that prohibited building large-size ships in 1609, but the decree was only limited to the Antaku-type ships, which are local power-owned military vessels containing over 500 seats (75 tons). The goal of the decree was also to disempower local governments in Japan and close out their military vessels from the sea, so that Tokugawa Ieyasu could land on Osaka without danger. In other words, the decree didn't prohibit large-size non-military vessels and was not aimed at implementing the close-door policy in general. It had nothing to do with Japan's overseas interactions and trades. In other words, the decree didn't prevent Japan from building foreign trade-aimed ships such as Shogunate-controlled commercial vessels. Furthermore, the Shogunate needed large vessels whose size were over 500 seats (75 tons) in order to transport nation-wide commercial goods to various domestic destinations. At that time, Japan's overland transport was underdeveloped, and without large-size vessels Japanese economy must have come to a rupture. Also, the conflagration in Edo (currently Tokyo) in 1657 stimulated the government to develop further sea route transport in order to supply timber to Edo for reconstruction purpose. The number of the population in Edo was the second largest in the world then.

The Kanbun Era from 1666 to 1673 was the period when the Edo Shogunate reinforced its national policy for sea route transport. The growth of Japanese economy after announcing its close-door policy was owing to vigorous sea route transport in the late 17th century. Also the transport sustained the Shogunate's political power. After all, Japan's shipbuilding and navigation skill came up to a considerably high level.

For example, the number of Higaki Kaisens (sailing ships), which were vessels connecting between Edo and Osaka, amounted to 1,300 per year in Tokyo Bay, and 260 contained around 300~500 seats (45~75 tons). Although most of these commercial vessels were sailing ships, their navigation skills were astonishingly developed at that time.

In this way Japan's maritime transport came to the higher level in both quality and in quantity from the late 17th century to 19th century. For example, the time of navigation from Osaka to Edo was around thirty days in the late 17th century, but it

took only fifteen days in the 19th century. Also, the number of Higaki Kaisen's roundtrip between these two cities had increased from four to eight times (over 10,000 km). Simultaneously, the overall size of vessels became larger and larger. According to a record in those days, some vessels were able to navigate 24 hours per day.

Technological progress in navigation skills and the magnification of vessels contributed to expand Japan's economic scale during the Edo Shogunate. In terms of commercial ships such as Higaki Kaisen, their size had increased from 500 seats (75 tons) in the mid 17th century to 1,000 seats(150 tons) in the mid 18th century and 1,900 seats(210 tons) in the late 19th century.

In other words, the magnification of vessel size for 200 years amounted four times. Such trend was not just limited to commercial vessels. Ships in general had expanded their size over three times. Progress in navigation skills and magnification of vessel size sharply developed Japan's economic power. During the time when P.F.B. van Siebold event had occurred, Japan had already large-size trade ships over 300 tons in its maritime territory.

Under the central government's close-door policy, Japan significantly developed its maritime transport, and formed a nation-wide market system beyond Edo, which had over 1 million populations. Also, the Edo Shogunate had been developing its trade relations with Netherland and China.

After all, those maps in which Japan put the name of the Sea of Korea as the Sea of Japan were widely distributed beyond the country's territory and well known to the Western countries. In come lousing, the argument that the West used the name of the Sea of Japan in the first place because of Japan's close-door policy and Japan accepted such designation ,later, was absolutely wrong.

5. Examination of the name of the Sea of Japan in Maps

Currently, a large number of encyclopedias published in Japan explain that the person who firstly renamed the Sea of Korea into the Sea of Japan was I.F. Krusenstern (1770~1846). I.F. Krusenstern (1803~1806)was a person who firstly made a round-the-world navigation, passing through the Sea of Korea. After the navigation, he designated the Sea of Korea as the Mer du Japan on his map(1815). But, I.F. Krusenstern's map was actually based on La Perpouse's maps including the Japan.And Vicinity(1787) and the Pacific Map(1799). Naturally,in both maps, the Sea of Korea is named as the Sea of Japan.

The oldest record that firstly used the name of "the Sea of Japan" is Italian missionary Matteo Ricci's World Map(1602), which is currently in the custody of Miyagi-Hyun

Library. Matteo Ricci had once stayed in China, and translated Western maps into Chinese. Matteo Ricci mistakenly named the current Sea of Korea as the Sea of Japan, which at that time had no name or was called the Sea of Chin (In the late 16th century, the West used the northern names like Chin for designating seas around China). In other words, Matteo Ricci made a mistake in translation.

Then, why such a mistake did happen? Matteo Ricci stayed at Macau from January to September in 1583. During the same period, Ignacio Lopez de Loyola (1491~1556) stayed at Macau from January to December in 1583. I.L. de Loyola did once take charge of writing the section of the Sea of Japan for a literature called the Great Kingdom of China. He called the sea in the north of Japan as the Sea of Habon. In other words, Matteo Ricci and I.L. de Loyola obtained information on the Sea of Japan in Macau from January to September of 1583.

Matteo Ricci also kept close relationship with Moreila, a missionary of Societas Jesu. Moreila stayed at Japan from 1590 to 1592, and conducted geographic fieldwork and produced maps on Japan. He obtained surprising information from Kagisaki Yoshihiro, the governor of Ezoryong Province at that time, that in the north of the Japanese Islands was located a continent. Based on this epochal geographic knowledge, he drew and published a world atlas called *Kon-Yeoh-Man-kuk-Jun-Do* in 1602. Even though place names in the north of the Japanese Islands are designated without accuracy, the northern continent exists in the map and the East Sea is expressed as a closed water body. Matteo Ricci's map was later sent to Rome.

As I already addressed in the earlier section of this paper, Japan was one of the strongest maritime powers during the rule of the Edo Shogunate and Matteo Ricci's map drawn in Macau was significantly affected by Japan. This situation led a wide circulation of the name of the Sea of Japan in the West. Therefore, Societas Jesu's map produced from 1615 to 1622 designates the name of the East Sea as the *Mer de Japon*.

Consequently, the first map (at Rome Publication) in which the name of the Sea of Japan was used is the *Map of Japan* (1617), which is currently in the custody of the Oriental Cultural Research Association of Germany.

In the world atlas that Takahasi Kageyasu (1785~1829) made in 1816, the Sea of Japan designates the Pacific in the east of Japan and the Sea of Korea designates the ocean in the east of Korean peninsula. However, during the age of Meiji, Japan (Yamaji Yukitaka's map in 1855) used the name of the Sea of Japan for designating the sea in the west of Japan, which is currently the Sea of Korea.

Conclusion

The argument that it was not Japan but the West which firstly began to use the name of the Sea of Japan is a complete fabrication. Despite Japan's close-door policy in the Edo Shogunate, Japan's trades with foreign countries were not affected and, contrarily, Japan became one of the great maritime powers in the same period. The Edo Shogunate strongly developed not only domestic sea route transport but also overseas transport. In the process of this Japanese maps which used the name of the Sea of Japan were widely distributed to the Western countries.