

## **Re-examination of 'East Sea' and Proposal of 'Sea of Korea': An analysis of map history and theoretical background.**

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### **I.**

The name of the body of sea between Korea and Japan has been an issue of academic, political, diplomatic and media circle since our proposal of 'East Sea' by developing our arguments at the international level in 1992. Japan also has prepared her argument since then. As the accumulation of interests, arguments, and conferences increases, the agreement and consent of both countries, which is an international demand on this issue, decreases. And it turns into a point in international dispute which has developed into 'argument for the sake of argument' that has no signs of solution.

### **II.**

As a private demander of 'Sea of Korea' as an international standard juxtaposed or dual name with 'Sea of Japan', which is against the policy of Korean governmental institutions on this issue, has found crucial aspects of difficulty that prevent from mutual respect and agreement in the arguments of Korea and Japan. The difficulty is that arguments of both countries don't create a common field to meet and provide a space to reach consent. The argument of Korea focuses on political reason (remnants of Japanese colonialism), detailed and local technical resolution (endonym) and local historicity and representativeness, meanwhile the Japanese, on historicity, representativeness and convention in international context that could meet with aims of the spirit of international name standardizing, avoiding of confusion and ambiguity in communication. The differences of level, Local vs. International, of arguments and the Japanese (or Korean) denial of Korean (or Japanese) political and historical proof have deepened mutual misunderstanding that it seems to be impossible to have a consent on this issue.

This paper for 'Sea of Korea' is a suggestion and proposal to find a new level of

argument based on the spirit of international standardizing name principals and aims, 'avoiding ambiguity and confusion in communication and avoiding political conflicts'. And for this paper, I have revised the arguments of both countries with objective neutrality. And I examined the Western, Japanese and Korean historical maps and their studies focusing on the function of communication. The importance of communication in contemporary cartography is one of the most important factors in definition of map along with unchangeable functions of representation and description of earth. I believe that the study of old maps could afford to clarify my argument and to correct misunderstanding of political and historical facts which are main themes of dispute between Korea and Japan.

### **III. Map history and Sea names**

I analyzed old western maps with using linguistic method. With the relationship between Sign (or representamen) as a Sea name, and referent(or object) as Sea boundary and limits, I reviewed old maps. And I intended to understand the formulation, development, historicity and representativeness of the Sea name in dispute with historical and diachronic point of view. And regardless historical aspect, I focused on synchronic aspect of the importance of communication and semiosis, a process that interprets signs, sign relations.

#### **1) Analysis of Western maps and Sea names.**

**A. A process of accumulation of geographic knowledge, mapmaking and standardization of name.**

**B. 16<sup>th</sup> 17<sup>th</sup> Century: Unclear Sea boundary and confusion of using Sea names.**

**i. 16<sup>th</sup> Century: Appearance of Korea in maps.**

The use of 'Oriental Sea' as 'Sea of China'

**ii. 17<sup>th</sup> Century: Appearance of 'Sea of Korea' and Sea names using names of Asian nations:**

A. Relationship between 'Oriental Ocean' and 'Sea of China'

B. Appearance of 'Sea of Korea' in the space of 'East Sea of Korea' and 'Korean Strait'. Primitive formulation of Sea boundary and limits.

C. Relationship between 'Oriental Ocean' and 'Sea of Japan'.

The concept of inner sea between Korea and Japan not formed, due to lack of

geographical knowledge.

**C. 1700-1790: Formulation of Sea boundary and limit and Firm settlement of 'Sea of Korea'.**

- i. 1700-1720: Questions on 'Eastern Sea' or 'Sea of Korea' by western cartographers.
- ii. 1720-1790: Firm Settlement of 'Sea of Korea'

**D. 1790-1890: Sea boundary and limit clear, but Confusion of Sea name**

- i. 1790-1830: Appearance of 'Sea of Japan' with a certain consistency
- ii. 1830-1860: Settlement of 'Sea of Japan' and Appearance of 'Sea of Korea' in the body of water of 'East China Sea'
- iii. 1840-1890: Firm Settlement of 'Sea of Japan' and Appearance of 'Sea of Korea' in the body of water of 'Yellow Sea'

**E. 20<sup>th</sup> century:**

- Standardization of Sea names begin to start.
- Western map are not only a product of westerners, but a product of the consensus of the world nations
- An intentional change of name of 'Korean Strait' by Japanese.

Historical review results say that:

- Sea names matching with Sea boundaries and limits were made by the tradition of Western Cartography.
- Conversion of western map as a standardized map with universal convention.
- The diffusion of geographical knowledge was done by consent of world nation's agreement.
- The notion of the name of the body of water between Korea and Japan was shared by Korea and Japan historically.

**2) Analysis of Japanese maps and Sea name**

- Tradition of denomination of Seas was not formed historically with consistency.
- Early adoption of Standardization convention made by international institutions.
- Sea boundary and Sea name of 'Sea of Japan' matches with Japanese arguments.
- Appearance of 'Sea of Japan' in Western maps was not made by a certain Japanese intentional political purposes, but by international geographical reasons.

- The changing of Sea names used in Korean map was done by political purposes. Sea names like 'Sea of Korea' and 'Korean Strait' was intentionally changed by result of Japanese colonization. And almost all the names of internal denominations were changed by Japanese administrative purpose in Korea.

### **3) Analysis of Korean maps and Sea name**

- Tradition of denomination of Seas was not formed historically with consistency.
- There was no chance to adopt an international standardization of names because of political reasons.
- Sea boundary and Sea name of 'East Sea' matching is not clear. The perception of Sea boundary of 'East Sea' is ambiguous and historical documentations don't define the Sea boundary clearly.
- The name we lost was not 'East Sea', but 'Sea of Korea' ('Taehan hae' or Chosun Hae')
- Revision of argument is needed to get more clear and logical argument.
- The importance of the official use of 'Sea of Korea' at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> century was overlooked that more investigation is needed for the future.

## **VI. Re-examination of 'East Sea'**

1. Misunderstanding of historical background of the appearance of 'Sea of Japan'
2. Distorted use of data of western maps.
3. Use of unclear and local technical resolution in international context.
4. Argument used for international context doesn't match with national context; Inconsistency of application of the argument and lacks of unity in its application
5. Sea boundary and Sea name matching is not clear that could cause confusion and ambiguity in international communication.
6. Use of 'East Sea' could create name collisions in international context.

## **V. Proposal of 'Sea of Korea'**

1. Use of 'East Sea (Dong Hai) as national standard name, and 'Sea of Korea' as international standard.  
Ex) The use Tung Hai, Nam Hai (national standard) as East China Sea, South China Sea (international standard) in China
2. Proposal of dual name or juxtaposed name of 'Sea of Korea' with 'Sea of Japan'
3. 'Sea of Korea' was almost official name just before Japanese colonization. And the restoration of 'Sea of Korea' is the continuation of historic identity.

4. Unfair use of 'Sea of Japan' in the body of shared water.
5. Importance of using 'Sea of Korea' as counterpart of 'Sea of Japan'.
6. Understanding of the spirit of international standardization of names in international context and the role of communication in the context of receiver country, not source country.

## **VI**

Brian Harley argued that the Power and Knowledge in mapmaking could make the maps used as an instrument of nationalism and imperialism.

I regard the mutual understanding and self-reflection of both countries is one way and the best to find the recommendable solution avoiding political stance.

Key Words:

Sea of Korea, East sea, Sea of Japan, Korea-Japan Sea Dispute, Exonym, Endonym, Cartography, International standardization of names, Map history, Korean Strait, Tong Hae.