

Ancient Books of China Records and Narrate about East Sea/Japanese Sea

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In terms of the history of Chinese dynasty, there had been a series of changes in naming the Sea of Japan/East Sea. Before Sui dynasty, people in China named the sea as just 'Sea'. During the era of Sui and Tang dynasties the sea was named as the 'Great Sea'. It was in 1884 that the sea was firstly named as the Sea of Japan. Since the time, the name of the Sea of Japan had a little more wider usage in China, but it had never used at a large scale. The origin of the naming of the Sea of Japan has a deep relations to the politics and national relations in East Asia.

1. There had been no naming for the current Sea of Japan/East Sea

The Sea of Japan/East Sea, covering the sea area in the east of the Far Eastern Russia, had a long history of Chinese control. Also, such ethnic groups as Suksin and Eupru peoples, who are currently regarded as Chinese, have lived near the Sea of Japan/East Sea for a long time. Many historical documents in China prove that the Sea of Japan/East Sea was partly under the control of Chinese dynasties.

In the era of Han and Jin dynasties, Suksin people called as 'Eupru' whose territory is assumed to be around the east of the Sea of Japan/East Sea. Even the Tale of Three Kingdoms records that Eupru is bordered to the Great Sea, meaning the contemporary the Sea of Japan/East Sea, in the east. Based on these records, I argue that 'Eupru' means the area covering the Killim Province and the Far Eastern part of the Russian territory.

In the era of Southern-Northern Cho dynasties, Eupru was renamed as the Mulkil. Old Chinese documents stipulate that Mulkil was located in the northern part of the Goguryo dynasty. After the period, people in Sui and Tang dynasties called Mulkil as 'Malgal'. But, historical records prove that the naming of the Sea of Japan had never happened in terms of long Chinese history. The Great Sea or the Sea was common name for the contemporary Sea of Japan/East Sea.

2. Changes in the naming the Sea of Japan/East Sea after Yeoh and Song Dynasties.

In 926, Keoran people conquered the Bal-Hae, the descendant dynasty of Goguryo in Korea. Documents in China suggest that Keoran's territory is bordered with the Sea to the east and the Goryo Dynasty to the south. Here, again, the Sea meant the Sea of Japan/East Sea. What is important here is that Chinese officially began to use the term 'East Sea' for naming the Sea of Japan/East Sea. One of such records is from the Atlas of Chinese Historical Information. For the same reason, Keoran people later called as Eastern Yeoh-Jin by Chinese dynasty.

Geum Dynasty, established by Yeoh-Jin, used the name of the East Sea widely. For example, the History of King Dongpyong Family records that an ethnic group called Posunmanno resided near the East Sea and named themselves as Dong-Ha. Aftern Geum Dynasty, Weon and Myong Dynasty also employed the term East Sea for designating the eastern portion of its imperial territory. During the last years of Myong Dynasty, Yeoh-Jin formed a wide and powerful range of military villages, and one of them was the so-called 'East Sea Province' including Ok-Jip, Waulka, Huala and Szchan. After Myong Dynasty, people in Jin Dynasty also employed the term 'East Sea'for designating contemporary Sea of Japan/East Sea. The Record of Three Families addresses that their territory is bordered with the Songwha River which is led to the East Sea to the east.

In conclusion, historical documents in China named current Sea of Japan/East sea as the East Sea. The naming of the Sea of Japan was practiced by the Western colonial power, which denied the local, historical context surrounding the East Sea and arbitrarily renamed it.

3. Final suggestions for renaming the Sea of Japan/East Sea

Our investigation proves that China and its neighborhood countries have named current Sea of Japan as the East Sea for over a thousand years. It is only about a hundred years ago that the name of the Sea of Japan began to be widely circulated in the world. Therefore, the name of the Sea of Japan must be renamed as the East Sea, because we should understand and respect historical and local geographic context of the sea.

In terms of the international standards in naming seas, it is absolutely wrong to use the name of a specific country in naming seas between countries. There are no exceptions for using any country's name in designating the open seas. It is still not too late to rename the Sea of Japan to the East Sea.