

Recent Progress for Restoring the Name East Sea and Future Research Agenda

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Abstract

This paper reviews the gamut of logic currently developed for restoring the name East Sea from Sea of Japan and recent progress going on for activities for this purpose, especially focusing on international seminars on naming seas, and attempts to propose future research agenda for strengthening and enriching the logic. Confronting with a new phase of East Sea/ Sea of Japan issue and looking ahead in the future, some research topics are suggested, including how East Sea has been perceived and used in the Korean culture in comparison with Sea of Japan, how the name Sea of Japan diffused in the modern history, how world sea names are categorized with what characteristics of historical background, how exonym and endonym issue should be elaborated for the East Sea issue, how digital cartography can be utilized to solve the technical problem of dual naming, and how political and psychological studies on political culture should be involved.

New Phase of Debates on the Name East Sea versus Sea of Japan

The debates surrounding the name *East Sea* versus *Sea of Japan* are now confronting with a new phase. The Japanese government, turning from the position to ignore the dispute itself and respond passively to diverse activities arguing for the name *East Sea*, now sustains an offensive position to actively persuade the legitimacy of the name *Sea of Japan*. A series of production of booklets and movie pictures, as well as strong counter-arguments at the

international conferences, are utilized to publicize this position.

In spite of Japan's stronger activities, recent years have witnessed considerable accomplishments that *East Sea* is acknowledged as an appropriate name by major map-makers all over the world, and this fact is also recognized by Japan. According to a survey to 392 world maps of 60 countries, excluding Korea, North Korea and Japan, conducted by the Japanese government in October 2000, just 11 maps, 2.8% of the total, had both names of *East Sea* and *Sea of Japan*¹⁶⁾. But in the similar survey to 331 maps of 67 countries, conducted also by the Japanese government in October 2005, the number has increased to 34 and 10.3%¹⁷⁾. With just commercially available maps excluding textbooks and school atlases, the number reaches 60 and 18.1%.

A recent survey to 351 maps of 75 countries all over the world, conducted by the Korean government, shows that the number has even more increased 83 maps, 23.6% of the total, use *East Sea* and *Sea of Japan* together¹⁸⁾. Therefore, a series of surveys conducted by the two governments denote a consistent increase of acknowledging the name *East Sea* by world map-makers.

These recent accomplishments for restoring the name *East Sea*, it is evaluated, have been a result from continuous logical procedures developed for this name. As naming geographical features is a technical matter, not a political one, consistent logics would be of great help to persuade the world society. There have been several academic researches in the fields of old maps, history, geography, toponymy, international politics and organizations. This paper intends to make a brief review of these researches and provide some future research agenda in order to enrich the logic for the name *East Sea*.

Arguments and Counter-arguments

Arguments by the Japanese government are centered on the following three points:

- (i) **Sea of Japan with its long history is an established name.** Sea of Japan has such a long history to appear in 1602 in an old map by Mateo Ricci. In the 17th to 18th centuries, the sea was called with various names, but in the late 18th to early 19th centuries, the name Sea of Japan began to be established

16) Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2002, *Sea of Japan*, Table 1.

17) Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2006, *A Historical Overview of the Name "Sea of Japan"*, p.43.

18) Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Korea, 2007, mimeo.

by European explorers.

- (ii) **Sea of Japan is appropriate in terms of principles of naming seas.** The most frequently used method of naming sea areas separated from an ocean is to use the name of a major archipelagic arc or a peninsula that separates the sea area in question from the ocean. Examples include Sea of Japan, Andaman Sea, Gulf of California, and Irish Sea.
- (iii) **Sea of Japan is authorized by international organizations and used by most of world maps.** The United Nations confirms that Sea of Japan is the standard geographical term and it observes the prevailing practice of its single use. This single name has been continuously used by IHO and most of the textbooks, school atlases and commercially available maps.

In response to each of these arguments, the Korean party extends the following counter-arguments:

- (i) **Various names were used in foreign old maps, but none of them was established.** A series of surveys to old maps produced by foreign map-makers since the 16th century commonly show that such names as Sea of Korea, East Sea, Eastern Sea and Oriental Sea were more frequently used until the early 19th century, while the frequency of using Sea of Japan increased since the 1850s (See Table 1). The increase of using Sea of Japan, however, does not mean that it became an established name. It could have just happened due to practical purposes of foreign map-makers. But various names were still used and a considerable number of maps did not have determined names. The name *East Sea* has been used for more than 2000 years and it has appeared in Korean old maps since 1531. Moreover, even Japan officially used the name *Sea of Joseon*, which is the name of dynasty in Korea which existed from the late 14th to the early 20th century.
- (ii) **There are diverse cases of naming seas.** Methods of naming seas include using a direction from a continent or a country, naming after an adjacent geographical feature like a country or a city, naming after an explorer or a discoverer, and expressing color or ingredient of the sea. There are just some types of naming seas and no simple generalization. There are several cases which do not use the name of a major archipelagic arc or a peninsula that separates a sea area when naming the sea area separated from an ocean. Examples include Sea of Okhotsk, Bering Sea and North Sea. Experts point out that naming international bodies of water after nations or states is a

particularly problematic practice (Murphy, 2005).

(iii) **Sea of Japan is not an authorized name and East Sea is now being recognized by world map-makers.** It was critical for the widespread diffusion of the name Sea of Japan that IHO adopted the name in its first edition of *Limits of Oceans and Seas* in 1929. But IHO now recognizes the problem of its single use and recommends that Korea and Japan reach an agreement on a common name. The UN Secretariat admits that it is UN's internal practice to use the most frequently used name, but also clarifies that this practice does not support for a specific name. In addition, many major map-makers of the world have begun to use East Sea simultaneously with Sea of Japan.

To these counter-arguments, the logics for reducing exonyms and for using dual names are added, basically depending on the resolutions of UNCSGN and IHO. According to the UN Resolution II/29, *Sea of Japan* as an exonym to Korean people should be reduced while *East Sea* as an endonym should be adopted. UN Resolution III/20 and IHO Technical Resolution A.4.2.6 provide a basis for a logic that both names should be used when failing to agree on a common name.

Table 1. A Comparison of the Statistics of Sea Names in Old Maps

	Statistics by Korea ¹⁾					Statistics by Japan ²⁾				
	1500s	1600s	1700s	1800s	Total	1500s	1600s	1700s	1800s	Total
Sea of Korea(Corea)										
East(Eastern) Sea	-	39	341	60	440	5	29	165	107	306
Oriental Sea										
Sea of Japan	-	17	36	69	122	1	16	70	1,312	1,399
Others ³⁾	29	69	90	12	200	5	56	39	67	167
Total	29	125	467	141	762	11	101	274	1,486	1,872

Notes: 1) Result of the survey on old maps and atlases preserved at the British National Library, the Cambridge University Library, East Asian Map Collection of University of Southern California, Geography and Map Division of the Library of U. S. Congress, Russian State Library, French National Library.

2) Result of the survey on old maps and atlases preserved at the British Library, the library of the University of Cambridge, Bibliotheque Nationale de France, the United States Library of Congress.

3) Others include Sea of China, dual names, not determined names, etc.

(Sources: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Korea, et al., 2004, East Sea: The Name East Sea Used for Two Millennia Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, 2006, A Historical Overview of the Name "Sea of Japan".)

Accomplishments of the International Seminar on Naming Seas

It is evaluated that the annual international seminar on naming seas held by *The Society for East Sea* has provided a wide forum to discuss history and principles of naming seas as well as to introduce diverse cases of geographical naming all over the world. Beginning in 1995, the seminar has been held in major world political centers, including Washington D.C., Paris, Shanghai, Vladivostok, Seoul and Vienna (Table 2).

For the last twelve years, experts from twenty-two countries participated in this seminar and presented 138 papers. 38 papers, 27.5% of the total were presented by Korean experts, followed by Chinese (24 papers, 17.4%), Russian (22, 15.9%), Japanese (11, 8.0%), and French (8, 3.6%). In recent years, participants' countries are diversified, including Algeria, Hungary, Slovenia, Jordan, Bulgaria, Austria and Israel, which indicates that this seminar has succeeded in collecting interests on sea names from various countries (Table 3).

The subjects of the papers presented are also diverse, ranging from history, geography, old maps, toponymy to international politics and organizations. As many as 61 papers, 45.2% of the total, can be categorized under the title of historical geography and old maps, especially regarding the name *East Sea* or *Sea of Japan*. Based on historical literature and old maps from each country, these researches have mainly focused on searching for the trajectory of the name of the sea between Korea and Japan.

Of specific note is the fact that interests in toponymic principles and comparative case studies of naming geographical features are growing in recent years. Since the eighth seminar in 2002, this field has occupied the greatest part. This trend is very desirable in that it can provide capacity to establish logics for the legitimacy of the name *East Sea* in the context of international principles and experiences of naming seas.

The annual international seminar on naming seas has been successful means of attracting domestic and international interests from participating countries. The following points are recommended for this seminar to be sustainable as a forum of discussing naming geographical features:

- continuously search for historical literature and old maps showing the trace of the name *East Sea* and report them
- construct steady logics for the name *East Sea* which are faithful to the international principles of naming geographical features
- find out and establish new subjects of discussion which include ocean sciences and digital cartography as well as historical and toponymic matters
- sustain and expand networking with experts on geographical names all over the world

Table 2. Chronology of the International Seminar on Naming Seas

No.	period	venue	number of countries	number of participants
1	1995. 5. 24 ~ 25	Seoul, Korea	5	19
2	1996. 6. 5 ~ 7	Seoul, Korea	3	20
3	1997. 6. 11 ~ 12	Seoul, Korea	6	20
4	1998. 10.27 ~ 28	Seoul, Korea	6	19
5	1999. 10.26 ~ 27	Seoul, Korea	6	24
6	2000. 8. 16	Seoul, Korea	9	14
7	2001. 11. 1	Seoul, Korea	5	16
8	2002. 7. 24 ~ 26	Vladivostok, Russia	7	24
9	2003. 10. 15 ~ 17	Shanghai, China	7	27
10	2004. 11. 4 ~ 6	Paris, France	11	22
11	2005. 10. 6 ~ 8	Washington D.C., U.S.A.	9	30
12	2006. 10. 19 ~ 21	Seoul, Korea	8	27

Table 3. Participants by Country

No.	year	Korea	China	Russia	Japan	France	U.S.A.	DPRK	U.K.	others	Total
1	1995	3	3	2	1						9
2	1996	2	2	2							6
3	1997	4	2	1	1				1	3	12
4	1998	3	2	1						2	8
5	1999	3	2	2	2		1			2	12
6	2000	1		1		1	1			2	6
7	2001	2	1	1	1					1	6
8	2002	4	2	7	1	1		3	1		19
9	2003	4	4	2	1	1		2		2	16
10	2004	3	1	1	2	2			1	4	14
11	2005	5	3	1	1	3	2			1	16
12	2006	4	2	1	1		1			5	14
Total		38	24	22	11	8	5	5	3	22	138
%27.5		17.4	15.9	8.0	5.8	3.6	3.6	2.2	15.9	100.0	

Note: Others include the Netherlands(4), Israel(3), Hungary(2), Algeria(2), UN(2), Canada, Iran, South Africa, Mongolia, Norway, Slovenia, Jordan, Austria, Bulgaria.

Table 4. Papers by Subject

No.	Year	historical geography	old maps	toponymy /case study	international politics	international organization	others	Total
1	1995	4	5					9
2	1996	3	1		2			6
3	1997	3	1	2	4	2		12
4	1998	2	1	3	2			8
5	1999	5	2	1	3	1		12
6	2000	2	1		1	2		6
7	2001	2	1	1	1	1		6
8	2002	5	2	9	3			19
9	2003	3	4	7		1	1	16
10	2004	1	2	9	1	1		14
11	2005	4	3	7	2			16
12	2006	3	1	7	2	1		14
Total37		24	46	21	9	1	138	
%26.8		17.4	33.3	15.2	6.5	0.7	100.0	

Future Research Agenda

Many researches have been conducted to support for the legitimacy of the name East Sea. In order to enrich the logic, researches should be extended to the following subjects.

Perception on East Sea/ Sea of Japan and Use of the Name

For the purpose of extending the logic of historical legitimacy, one of the most frequently used methods has been to present some statistics of the names appearing in old maps. As shown in Table 1, however, statistics can be varied depending on what samples from what population are drawn. Therefore, the focus needs to turn from simple numbers to some qualitative measures.

One of the fields which require historical research is to categorize cases of using the name *East Sea* and reveal its essential meaning to Korean people. Although there are many arguments that East Sea has symbolic meaning for Koreans as a tutelary god or mother's breast, very few systematic research has been done to

explore its meanings and explain them. This kind of research can be carried out comparatively with Sea of Japan felt by Japanese people.

Perceptions on *East Sea* appearing in diverse legends, folk songs, or old stories would be one of the major subjects of research. An examination of the frequency of its usage in communication media would show how intimately East Sea exists to everyday life of ordinary people. The frequency of its use by ships or vessels navigating for fishery or transportation in East Sea would show how crucial is the name for business. In the same token, a revelation of how frequently the name has been used in ocean scientific researches would present its position in the academic society (Choo, 2006). All these explorations could provide steady background for the name *East Sea* as an endonym for Korean people.

Historical Process of the Diffusion of the Name Sea of Japan

It is often argued that *Sea of Japan* was diffused so widely since the 1850s due to its imperialist and colonial expansionism. This argument should be supported by historical evidence. It would be very hard to trace how map-makers of the western world came to adopt *Sea of Japan*. However, it would be possible to investigate how Japan's policy of expansionism had influenced their perception on East Asia. To be also revealed is the process of how IHO adopted the name *Japan Sea* in its first edition of *Limits of Oceans and Seas* in 1929 and how the Japanese government influenced it.

An extension of exploring traces of diffusing *Sea of Japan* is to examine how it was forced to be used and replace *East Sea* in the Korean administrative and school systems under the Japanese colonial reign from 1910 to 1945. This research can be done hand in hand with the research on how the Japanese reign forcefully changed endogenous Korean geographical names into Japanese exonyms (Choo, 2005b).

Historical Background of Sea Names in the World

Further researches are required for the diverse cases of naming seas with the historical and linguistic background of the names. In the third edition of *Limits of Oceans and Seas* published in 1953, 66 oceans and seas are listed. With sub-divisional waters, the number of names reaches 103. The fourth edition

circulated in 2002, which is not yet determined, lists 53 new limits and corresponding names. Each of these 156 seas in the world may have its own background of adopting the name. Each name is expected to reflect the history, culture, way of life and philosophy of its local people.

Researches on categorizing world sea names and examining their historical background should be accompanied by investigating their etymology. Some knowledge of local language would sometimes be necessary.

Exonym and Endonym Issue

The emphasis is often placed on the name *East Sea* as an endonym: It has been used for more than 2000 years by more than 75 million Koreans. This emphasis implicitly contains the argument that *Sea of Japan* was adopted from the one used by foreigners and therefore an exonym, which should be reduced according to the UNCSCN Resolution, and that calling the water at the Korean side as *Sea of Japan* would be to use an exonym.

Although this exonym and endonym issue has been elaborated elsewhere (Kadmon, 1997 Adamic, 2004 Choo, 2005a), three sub-issues are still left for the *East Sea* case to be studied by further research those of territoriality, language and time span. First, in the respect of territoriality, *East Sea* for the territorial water of Korea and *Sea of Japan* for that of Japan would be acceptable because these are endonyms. In other words, it would be problematic to call the whole water as *Sea of Japan* or even *East Sea* because this would produce exonyms for the opposite side territorial water. But the problem would become still complicated because there is a growing perspective that a county's sovereignty extends to exclusive economic zone (EEZ) and that no high sea exists between Korea and Japan.

Regarding language with official status, '동해(東海)' or its romanized form 'Donghae (or Tonghae)' and 'にほんかい(日本海)' or its romanized form 'Nihonkai' would be endonyms, while even *East Sea* and *Sea of Japan* would be exonyms because these are not in the languages with official status. But as argued before (Choo, 2005a), it should be recognized that it would be an inevitable translation of endonyms in order to convey the exact meaning of the names. I would say this is a specificity of oriental languages which do use

non-roman alphabets.

Time span also matters in the exonym and endonym issue: how long would it take for an exonym to be perceived as an endonym? When the name *Sea of Japan* was adopted in the 18th century, it was an exonym because it was called by foreigners. But should it still be regarded as an exonym after more than two centennial period? All these issues should be studied further in relation to *East Sea* or *Sea of Japan*.

Dual Naming and Digital Cartography

In response to the position of Korea that, before an agreement on a common name is reached, dual names of *East Sea* and *Sea of Japan* be used simultaneously, Japan argues that dual naming would cause confusion for navigating ships and airplanes. In order to adequately confront with this counter-argument, it is necessary to study what effect the labeling of dual names for one geographical feature would cause to map readers. This research can be done in the field of cartographic communication.

In addition, there should be research on how digital cartography can deal with the dual naming problem technically in the framework of modern electronic maps and charts. There seems to be some progress in automatic labeling techniques and this could be enlarged to encompassing the multiple naming issue.

Political and Psychological Studies on Political Culture

As Abler appropriately pointed out (2006), more explicit recognition should be given to the fundamentally political nature of the East Sea problem. Any major change in current naming practices would occur only as a result of political decisions by Japan, so it is necessary to investigate in detail what is going on in the Japanese politics, how political decisions are structured, and what would be possible forces to influence its political structure. As the international politics would be a place of give-and-take, it should also be studied what political menu could be provided for exchange between the two countries in order to solve the East Sea problem.

In this regard, I fully agree with Abler's suggestion (2006) that future research should be oriented towards embracing the insights of scholars and diplomats

knowledgeable about the history and politics of Northeast Asia, and the expertise of political scientists, social psychologists, and sociologists interested in national political cultures.

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