Nihon Kai and Tong Hae – Sea of Japan and East Sea: Are they Exonyms or Allonyms, and is there a Missing Term?

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Can different parts of a maritime geographical feature carry names of different terminological status? The following remarks attempt to supply an answer to this question, in particular with reference to the two toponyms in the heading.

History

The sea between the Japanese archipelago and the Peninsula of Korea is, today, named in most western maps and atlases Sea of Japan, a translation of the Japanese name Nihon Kai. Some 15 years ago the Republic of Korea, at the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names, requested that the toponymy of this sea be changed, so that the Korean name, Tong Hae, i.e. East Sea, could be embodied in it. The reasons cited by the Republic of Korea were, among others, that the prevalent name points to a sort of possession, and since this sea does not "belong" to the country of the rising sun, a Korean name should also be given to it. Japan resisted this proposal, and has been doing so ever since. The Sixth and the Seventh Conferences asked the two sides to consult together in order to find a solution acceptable to both – as yet without results.

The sea concerned, and certainly its central and major part, lies outside the territorial waters of any one country. The Republic of Korea has been organizing 13 international seminars, chiefly devoted to the naming of seas and in particular to the name Tong Hae, East Sea. These seminars were attended by experts from different countries, among them representatives from Japan which, however, did not represent any governmental or other executive authority. At first, in order to replace the name Sea of Japan by a single unbiased or non-aligned name

acceptable to both sides, several neutral names were proposed such as Blue Sea, Sea of Peace, etc. This would have been in line with the principle of "one place – one name" applied e.g. by the U.S. Board on Geographic Names to its domestic toponymy. For a discussion of this principle see e.g. Kadmon (2000)[1] and UNGEGN (2006)[2]. Later, when none of these names was accepted by Japan, Korea's drive was directed towards a bilingual solution – namely, having this sea carry two names side-by-side, one Japanese and one Korean (or vice versa). There are, of course, many maritime areas around the world carrying two or more allonyms without any of the sides objecting to the other's. While Japan claimed that the name Sea of Japan is the preferred name worldwide, the Republic of Korea stated – and graphically demonstrated in a number of special publications – that the name Sea of Korea or East Sea enjoyed great antiquity. Japan later countered with similar graphic examples showing the wide distribution of the name Sea of Japan especially in the last two centuries. As mentioned above, with Japan demanding the exclusive application of its preferred name because any other solution would lead to confusion and disorientation, no solution to the problem has as yet been found. The Republic of Korea then turned to cartographic institutions worldwide, and this resulted in some bilingual cases where the name East Sea appears in maps alongside the name Sea of Japan. Korea strives to increase the number of these cases.

<p style="text-align:center">Terminology and Cartography</p>

The question now arises: what is – or would be – the terminological status of the two toponyms under consideration? Do they conform to the definitions in the Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names[3]? Following are the reflections of the undersigned (who serves as editor of the Glossary), from a purely toponymic-terminological and cartographic viewpoint.

(i)   According to the Law of the Sea (1982, 1994) "….jurisdiction refers to the power of a state to affect persons, property and circumstances within its territory", which includes its maritime zones. Over those parts of the sea which

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1) "Why standardization? Who benefits from it?" in N. Kadmon,*Toponymy –the lore, laws and language of Geographical Names*(ISBN 0-533-13531-1), pp. 187-189, and "One place – one name", p. 190.

2) United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN),*Manual for the National Standardization of Geographical Name* (ISBN 92-1-161490-2), pp. 36 and 83.

3) United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names,*Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Name*. United Nations, New York, 2002 (ISBN 92-1-061192-6).

come under the definition of territorial waters, the respective states have authority of conferring maritime names – which comes under the term "circumstances" mentioned above. These names are then endonyms – and if ratified by a national authority, even official endonyms.

(ii)   Areas lying outside territorial waters (and not covered by any national jurisdiction) can carry any name applied to them by different linguistic or political communities such as different countries. By "carrying" a name is meant its being used on the one hand in written verbal documents, such as in literature and particularly in geographical gazetteers and indexes, and on the other hand in maps and maritime charts. None of these names can be regarded as an endonym, an endonym being defined by the Glossary of terms for the standardization of geographical names (term No. 076) as "name of a geographical feature in one of the languages occurring in that area where the feature is situated". No language can be said to "occur" in the high seas. However, after defining what they are not, the different names applied by different countries are allonyms (term No. 005): alternative (and taxonomically undefined) names for a single geographical entity.

(iii)   Any country can apply its own preferred names even on geographical items (in the present case – maritime features) which are covered by the jurisdiction of another country, e.g. in that country's territorial waters. Such a name will then be defined as an exonym. In the Glossary of Terms for the Standardization of Geographical Names this was defined by term No. 081. In a joint session of the UNGEGN Working Groups on Terminology and Exonyms in 2006, it was decided to amend the definition as follows (and this will be submitted to the 9th United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names): name used in a specific language for a geographical feature situated outside the area where that language is spoken, and differing in its form from the name used in an official or well-established language of the area where the geographical feature is situated. Examples: Mailand is the German exonym for Milano (Italian); Jerusalen is the Spanish exonym for Yerushalayim (Hebrew); Lake Constance is the English exonym for Bodensee (German); and Tong Hae (East Sea) would be a Korean exonym for the territorial waters of Japan, as would be the name Sea of Japan for Korean territorial waters.

<u>Definitions</u>

The two names which are the subject of the present paper can thus be classified and defined as follows.

1.1   The name Nihon Kai or Sea of Japan is an (official?) maritime name within those waters that are regarded by the international community as coming under Japan's jurisdiction.

1.2 The terminological status of the toponym Sea of Japan as applied to the international parts of this body of water (the "high sea") is still undefined (see below). But no objection on formal grounds can be validly raised against this name.

1.3   The use of the name Sea of Japan in respect of the territorial waters of the Republic of Korea generates a Japanese exonym.

Now, to the opposite , western side of this sea:

2.1   The name Tong Hae or East Sea is an (official?) maritime name in respect of the territorial waters of the Republic of Korea.

2.2   The terminological status of the toponym East Sea as applied to the international parts of this sea (the "high sea"), is still undefined. But here, too, no valid objection on formal grounds can be raised against the use of this name.

2.3   The use of the name East Sea if referring to the territorial waters of Japan constitutes a Korean exonym.

It should be pointed out that it is common practice, by any particular country or map producer, to cover in its small-scale maps the territorial waters of any other country or countries under its general allonym for the sea of which these territorial waters are a part, and thus in theory generating exonyms. One example out of many would be the Swedish name Östersjön for the different names of the Baltic Sea applied by the countries bordering it, whose territorial-waters endonyms then become Swedish exonyms.

<u>Summing up:</u>

(a)   Concerning the international waters or "high sea", both names Sea of Japan and East Sea are neither endonyms nor exonyms. They are allonyms undefined from a terminological point of view, and they have equal status.

(b) The names Sea of Japan and East Sea, if applied to or covering the territorial waters of the opposite side, constitute exonyms. This can also be expressed in a different form: if and where these names cover (for example in charts and maps) the entire sea, they constitute exonyms where they cover territorial waters of the opposing side. Because of map scale, they will usually not be separately indicated.

In conclusion: Any country and any cartographic institution can employ either, and preferably both names, to the "high" or international areas of the sea under discussion.

Finally, from the above discussion it follows that there is a need for a new term to be added to the Glossary of terms for the standardization of geographical names, namely the status of a toponym for a maritime feature in international waters. It also seems that the term univocity used in the UNGEGN Manual (see above) for the "one place – one name" principle is a misnomer, univocity (from Latin vox, voice) meaning "having only one meaning"[4] . Suitable proposals for amendments to the Glossary of Terms will be presented to UNGEGN's Working Group on Toponymic Terminology at its next session.

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4) See e.g.*Webster's New International Dictionar*, "univocal" and "univocity".