

Japan's Territorial Disputes and Conflicts over Relevant Names -With Special Reference to the Diaoyudao Issue-

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1. Introduction

There are several islands which have been caught up in territorial issues between the coastal states in Northeast Asia. For instance, Dokdo between Korea and Japan, the Southern Kuril Islands between Russia and Japan, and Diaoyudao (釣魚島) between China and Japan are such islands. In the case of Dokdo, Korean territory obviously, from the standpoint of Korea, it can be said that there is no territorial dispute. Nevertheless considering that Japan has persistently insisted its territoriality over Dokdo, we cannot deny that Dokdo is currently recognized by the international society as an island under territorial dispute. The reason why all of these islands are currently involved in territorial disputes is because the boundaries were not clearly delimited, when the islands were retroceded to their former countries by Japan after its defeat in World War II.

Today each nation involved, Korea, China, Russia, and Japan stick to their respective opinions that the territoriality of its own country over these islands is unquestionable from historical point of view or under international law. It is very interesting to note that each state places great emphasis on the names of these islands, referring to their own histories. However, merely using the name of its own country as a source of proof is not necessarily consistent with historical backgrounds. Nevertheless, each state emphasizes the name of the island taking into consideration political aspects, such as nationalism. Regardless, the propriety of territorial disputes around these islands does not look to be resolved in the near future. This study surveys the issue of Diaoyudao out of Japan's territorial disputes, placing stress on names and boundaries.

Diaoyudao consists of a group of small islands located at a distance of about 170km from the northeast coast of Taiwan, 330km away from the Chinese mainland, 170km away from the north of Ishigaki Island (石垣島), and 410km away from the west coast of Okinawa (沖縄). Diaoyudao is known as Senkakushoto (尖閣諸島) or Senkakuretto (尖閣列島) in Japanese and consists of the five uninhabited islands of Uotsurijima (魚釣島), Kitakojima (北小島), Minamikojima (南小島), Kubajima (久場島), and Taishojima (大正島) and several unknown rocks named Okinokitaiwa (沖ノ北岩), Okinominamiwa (沖ノ南岩), Tobise (飛瀬), etc. Uotsurijima, the largest island, covers an area of approximately 4km², Kubajima's area is approximately 1km², and each area of the remaining three uninhabited islands are less than 1km², respectively¹.

¹ Charn-kiu KIM, "Islands Disputes in the East Asia and Dokdo", "Diplomatic Issue", 1998.3, pp.17-18

Each island described above is expressed using the Japanese names for them. The Chinese refer to them in the following ways : Uotsurijima is called Diaoyudao (釣魚島), Kubajima is Huangweiyu (黃尾嶼), and Taishojima is Chiweiyu (赤尾嶼), and Kitakojima (北小島) and Minamikojima (南小島) are called Beixaodao and Nanxaodao, leaving the Chinese characters as they stand. There is no Chinese name for the remaining three unknown rocks.

It was not until the late 1960s that Diaoyudao drew considerable attention from the coastal states in Northeast Asia. In 1968, an announcement that there was a high possibility of hydrocarbon resources being located in the East China Sea was made by a research team under the leadership of ECAFE (Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East). It was the result of a joint investigation by experts from Japan, Taiwan, and Korea. Predictably, this caused disputes surrounding the territoriality over the islands between Japan, China, and Taiwan².

2. Confusing Names

The people of Ryukyu called the islands of Diaoyudao Yokon or Kuba for ages. As Ryukyu had a different history and culture than Japan, it is natural that the names of the islands were in the Ryukyu language. These islands have been called "Senkaku Islands" since 1900. That is to say, Hisashi Kuroiwa, a Japanese scholar, used the name of Senkaku Islands for the first time in 1900 on the basis of the name used by Westerners for a section of the archipelago.

It is not clear when the West first recognized the existence of Diaoyudao. However, there emerged a Western map recording Diaoyudao to Hoapinsan (Hoapinsu) and Huangweiyu to Tiausiu in the mid-19th century. On the map, the unknown reefs on the east side of Diaoyudao were recorded as the Pinnacle Groups or Pinnacle Islands.

In 1845, the British warship Samarang surveyed these islands in earnest. The Captain, Sir Edward Balcher, stated in his logbook as follows: "on 14th day, this warship having finished the measurement of Yonaguni Island in Yaeyama Islands returned to Ishigaki Island. On the evening of that day, the course was laid for Hoapinsan on the marine chart." Here Hoapinsan means Diaoyudao. The next day, the Samarang surveyed the Pinnacle Islands, and on the 16th day, surveyed Tiausiu. The results of these surveys were published as a marine chart in 1855. The marine chart and the descriptions in the logbook of Captain Balcher may be the basis of Hoapinsu and Tiausiu being described in the British Navy's marine chart and Sailing Directions³.

After the Meiji Restoration, early "Sailing Directions (Journal of Hydrography)" of

² In 1967, Professor Niino Hiroshi at Tokai University (東海大學) predicted that the sea around Diaoyudao may very well have petroleum resources, which was what led to the beginning of the ECAFE joint investigation(明石 康, 吹浦忠正, コンスタンチン・サルキンフ, pp.84-85).

³ 井上 清, 尖閣列島(東京 : 第三書館, 1996), pp.69-71

the Japanese Navy described these islands mainly based on the British Navy's Sailing Directions. Namely, according to the "Kanei Sailing Directions" that were compiled and published by the Navy's Bureau of Hydrography on March 1886, Uotsurijima was recorded as "Hoapinsan Sima (和平山島)" in kanji (Japanese writing system using characters derived from Chinese ideographs) adding the English name on the back; Huangweiyu was "Tiausiu Sima(低牙吾蘇島)", and Chiweiyu was "Raleri Iwa (爾勒里 岩)". These mean the islands of various sizes called Hoapinsan, Tiausiu, and Raleigh Rock which were written in the logbook of the Samarang. Thus, the 1884 edition of the "British Navy Sailing Directions" can be attributed to it.

After that, the Sailing Directions of the Japanese Navy described the islands as follows: Vol. II of "the Japanese Sailing Directions" published on July 1894 described these islands as Hoapinsu Sima, Chiyawoosu Sima, and Ralei Iwa in Katakana, respectively. In the first revision of Vol. II of "the Japanese Sailing Directions" published on October 1908, the islands were described as "Uotsurijima (Hoapinsu)", "Huangweiyu (Tiausiu)", and "Chiweiyu (Raleigh Rock)" respectively. That is to say, the largest island in Diaoyudao was described as Uotsurijima, as used then by the Department of Domestic Affairs, but in the cases of Huangweiyu and Chiweiyu, instead of the names being Ryukyu style, such as Kubajima or Kumeakajima, the names were written in Chinese characters as used in China and added the English name on the back⁴.

In Vol. VI of the *Japanese Navy Sailing Directions* published on July 1919, "Uotsurijima (魚釣島)", "Huangweiyu (黃尾嶼)" and "Chiweiyu (赤尾嶼)" were the only names written. All English names were deleted. In the *Taiwan South Islands Sailing Directions* published on March 1941, the expressions of "Uotsurijima (魚釣島)", "Huangweiyu (黃尾嶼)" and "Chiweiyu (赤尾嶼)" had been continued.

We can see that Diaoyudao, which had been known in Japan since ancient times, was not recorded in Chinese or Ryukyu names but in British names initially. That is to say, the initial description of Diaoyudao by the *Japanese Navy Sailing Directions* had mainly depended on the British description. The description notably resembles the description and sentences of the Samarang logbook which was the model of the British Navy's Sailing Directions.

The name of Senkakuretto originated from the translation by the Japanese Navy of the Pinnacle Islands used by the British Navy into "Senkakugunto (尖閣群島) or "Sentoshosho (尖頭諸嶼)". "Kanei Sailing Directions" in 1886 identified the Pinnacle Islands as "Senkakugunto" in kanji and added "Pinnacle Gurusu" in Katakana. The "Gurusu" is the transformed Japanese pronunciation as 'p' out of Groups is eliminated. This became "Pinnacle Shosho (諸嶼)" at Vol. II of the Japanese Navy Sailing Directions published in 1894 and became "Sentoshosho" in the *Sailing Directions* published in 1908. "Pinnacle" means the steeple shaped roof of a Christian church. As the shape of an unknown reef out of a series of reefs to the east of Diaoyudao formed

⁴ *ibid.*, pp.70-71

the shape of pinnacle, the British may have called them the Pinnacle Islands and the Japanese Navy then translated it into Senkakugunto or Sentoshosho⁵.

As mentioned above, Uotsurijima, Senkakugunto (Sentoshosho) and Huangweiyu were collectively called “Senkakuretto” by Hisashi Kuroiwa in 1900. He wrote the following in his report, "Senkaku Islands Exploration" in 1990:

“Here Senkaku Islands designate a series of small islands located in the center between the Okinawa Islands and Fuzhou of the Qing Dynasty, and is at the distance of about 90-ri (ri=0.4km) north of Iriomote Island of the Yaeyama Islands. The distance between the islands and the Okinawa Islands is about 230-ri, and the distance to Fuzhou is similar. The distance to Jilong of Taiwan is about 220-ri. According to the hydrographic chart published by the Department of Navy of Japan in 1897, these islands consisted of Uotsurijima, Senkakushoto, and Huangweiyu as a small part of the ocean. These islands have no formal name, and are inconveniently situated, so we give the name of Senkaku Islands to them unofficially.”⁶

While the name “Senkaku Islands” was to be widely known to the geographic academic world through his paper in *Journal of Geography*, there were no past names for the islands. And the name Senkaku Islands in Kuroiwa’s report was not officially recognized by the Japanese Government⁷.

Moreover, the declaration of the Ryukyu Government, “For the Territoriality over Senkaku Islands” stated that the Senkaku Islands were described without the name of Islands in the “Great Japanese District Partition Map” published by the Geography Bureau of the Department of the Interior in 1881. The map of the Okinawa prefecture in the “Great Japanese District Partition Map” did not show “Senkakuretto” but rather “Senkakugunto”⁸.

Like this, the name of Diaoyudao had also been used vaguely. However, both China and Japan insist that they have used their own names of the Islands from a historical point of view. For instance, the negotiation related to Ryukyu held in 1879 between China and Japan showed a remarkable opposing position from the two countries. Then China sided with the territoriality over Ryukyu acceding to the request of the King of Ryukyu. The Chinese minister to Japan, He Ruzhang (何如璋), insisted that Ryukyu was historically Chinese territory. In response, Higashionna Kanjun (東恩納 寛惇), the representative of Japan, answered back by claiming that the names of the islands were indigenous to Japan. However, Takahashi Shogoro (高橋庄五郎) insisted that the islands were Chinese territory since Huangweiyu, Chiweiyu, and Diaoyudao were

⁵ *ibid.*, pp.73-74

⁶ *ibid.*, pp.74-75

⁷ 高橋庄五郎, 『尖閣列島ノート』, (東京 : 青年出版社, 1979), pp.49-50

⁸ 井上 清, 尖閣列島(東京 : 第三書館, 1996), pp.75-76

named in the same Chinese style as Huapingyu (花瓶嶼), Mianhuayu (綿花嶼), and Pengjiayu (彭佳嶼)⁹.

3. Obscure Boundaries

The Senkaku Islands where Kuroiwa granted the name initiating the dispute included Uotsurijima, the Pinnacle Islands and Huangweiyu geographically but did not include Chiweiyu, because it was 48-ri from Huangweiyu, so it did not form a group. Kuroiwa did not mention the islands in his report.

“Opinion on the territoriality over the Senkaku Islands and the exploitation rights of continental shelf resources” announced by the Ryukyu Government on September 10, 1970 described the Senkaku Islands as scattered between latitude 25°40’N and latitude 26°N and longitude 123°20’E and longitude 123°45’E. The extent was the same to that of Kuroiwa’s Senkaku Islands, and did not include Chiweiyu (latitude 25°55’N and longitude 124°24’E). However, in the declaration of “for the territoriality over Senkaku Islands” which was announced by the Ryukyu Government one week later, Chiweiyu was included¹⁰.

The Navy’s Bureau of Hydrography report was not much different from the Ryukyu Government’s report. Until 1908, there had been no name designating Uotsurijima and Huangweiyu, or the Pinnacle Islands between Uotsurijima and Huangweiyu in the Sailing Directions, and even more there had been no comprehensive name including Chiweiyu. But according to the 1919 version of the Sailing Directions, “Sentoshosho is located in the center between the Okinawa Islands and Fuzhou of China and consists of Huangweiyu, Uotsurijima, Kitakojima, Minamikojima, Okinokitaiwa, and Okinominamiwa. Uotsurijima is the biggest island out of them.” That is to say, even if Chiweiyu was not originally included in the 1919 Sailing Directions, the remarkable point is that the name of Sentoshosho and several reefs were used together¹¹.

The unknown reefs from Kitakojima to Okinominamiwa originally belonged to the Pinnacle Islands. As mentioned before, this was changed to Senkakugunto (Pinnacle Gurusu), Pinnacle Shosho, and Sentoshosho (Pinnacle Islands) in 1886, 1894, and 1908, respectively. It was the same region that Hisashi Kuroiwa designated as Senkakuretto in 1900.

In connection with this, Sailing Directions gave the explanation that “These islands have been known to the people of Ryukyu since early times owing to their geographical location and have several names, such as Sentoshosho, Senkakuretto or Pinnacle Islands.” The Taiwanese Southwest Islands Sailing Directions in 1914 described “Sentoshosho” in the same way as the Sailing Directions in 1919 and its boundary was

⁹ 高橋庄五郎, 『尖閣列島ノート』, (東京 : 青年出版社, 1979), pp.51-59

¹⁰ 井上 清, 『尖閣列島』 (東京 : 第三書館, 1996), pp.76-77

¹¹ 高橋庄五郎, 『尖閣列島ノート』 (東京 : 青年出版社, 1979), pp.51-59

the same as the 1919 edition. In a word, the name of Diaoyudao has been used obscurely in connection with its extent or sphere, such as Senkakuretto which was named by Kuroiwa, the Pinnacle Islands as called by the British Navy, and Sentoshosho that was used initially by the Japanese Navy's Bureau of Hydrography.

Through "The Uniform Opinion on the Territoriality over the Senkaku Islands," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan declared, "the Senkaku Islands were incorporated into the territory of Japan under the Cabinet Decision made on January 14, 1895 that would erect a marker." But, the Cabinet Decision in 1895 only concerned Uotsurijima and Kubajima. Even the Pinnacle Islands were omitted from it. Even if it may be insisted that the Pinnacle Islands should be included in Senkakuretto automatically, as it is located between Uotsurijima and Kubajima, Chiweiyu shall not be insisted in the same way. But, the Japanese Government insists that it has the territoriality over Chiweiyu, as it is included in Senkakuretto.

Also, the geographic name of Senkakuretto referred to by Kuroiwa has never gained official approval by Japan. Therefore, even the Navy's Sailing Directions which required strict practice of using precise names for geographic description due to military needs, used the name of Sentoshosho, the translated name, indicating only the Pinnacle Islands. The Japan Navy mistook the name of Senkakuretto for an old name of the islands. That is to say, the islands in the East China Sea called Senkakuretto by the Japanese Government have no constant extent or sphere in an historical aspect.

The Japanese Government and the Press insist that "the fact that Senkakuretto has been the territory of Japan historically is beyond dispute." However, the boundary and name of Senkakuretto are not clear. Furthermore, the individual names of islands except Uotsurijima are different from each other even between the Japanese Government agencies. Huangweiyu was called Kubajima at one time and called Uotsurijima at another time. Chiweiyu was called Kumeakasima (久米赤島) or Taishojima (大正島). The Japan Navy used Huangweiyu and Chiweiyu in Kanji as they were and read them in Japanese pronunciation, such as Kobisho and Sekibisho or recorded their names in English only. There may not be other islands that have such diverse names or unclear boundaries as these.

4. Conclusion

The name of an island has a significant meaning in order to settle a territorial dispute in connection with the island. However, the name itself does not become a decisive ground to determine the title of such island. For instance, at the dispute surrounding the territoriality over Clipperton Island between France and Mexico, the arbitration award was on the side of France, but the name did not have an influence on the awarding. That is to say, the name of Clipperton, which seemed to be named after a British adventurer who fled there for safety early in the 18th century, has only a historical meaning.

In connection with the case surrounding the Palmas Island between the Netherlands and the United States, the Portuguese name had been used that was independent of a

Spaniard discoverer, but the name did not influence the determination of the territoriality either. Apparently the name of the islands connected to the case of Minquiers and Ecrehos between the United Kingdom and France was from a French language family. But that fact did not have an effect on the judgment.

Most disputes surrounding islands are not much different. Thus, though each island of Diaoyudao uses the name from a Chinese family, such as Huangweiyu or Chiweiyu, the name itself will not have an effect on the settlement of territorial dispute. However, provided that the name of islands proved to be favorable to a state party together with historical aspects, the name may have an indirect effect.

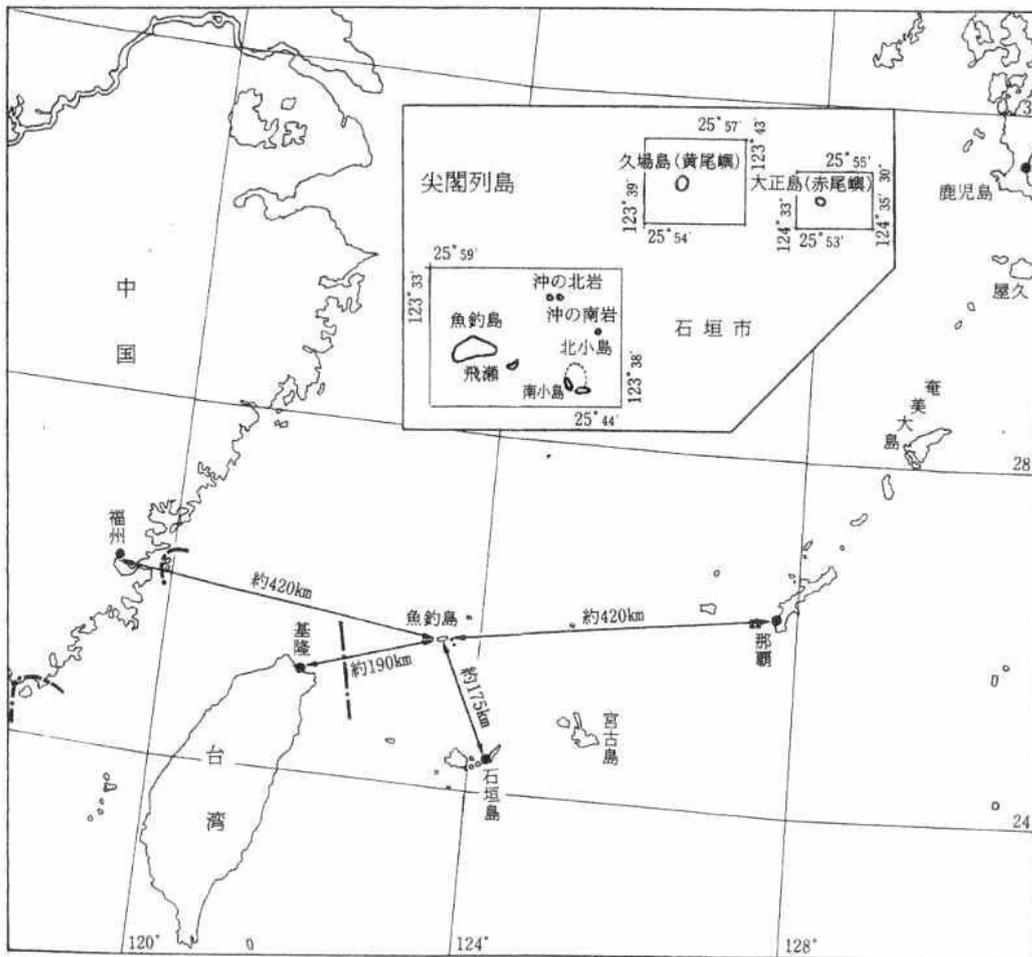
Today both China and Japan continue to have a variety of opposing opinions in connection with the territoriality over Diaoyudao. From the perspective of a third party, it may not be easy to regard the opinion of a state party as appropriate. However, provided that one considers the historical aspects only, it seems hard to deny that the Chinese opinion is more persuasive. Additionally, in opinions based on such historical grounds, we should note that the name of an island does play an important role. Thus, obscure Japanese names and boundaries of Diaoyudao may be connected with the indication that Japan has poor reasoning regarding historical grounds on this territoriality issue.

Diaoyudao/Senkakushoto

Chinese name	Japanese name	Latitude(N)	Longitude(E)	Size(km ²)
Diaoyudao (釣魚島)	Uotsurijima (魚釣島)	25°45'	123°29'	4.319
Huangweiyu (黃尾嶼)	Kubajima (久場島)	25°58'	123°41'	1.08
Nanxaodao (南小島)	Minamikojima (南小島)	25°44'	123°34'	0.463
Beixaodao (北小島)	Kitakojima (北小島)	25°45'	123°33'	0.302
Chiweiyu (赤尾嶼)	Taishojima (大正島)	25°55'	124°33'	0.154

Dioyudao/Senkakushoto

尖閣列島位置図



<국문초록>

동북아시아 지역에는 국가 간에 영유권 문제가 걸려 있는 몇몇 도서들이 존재한다. 독도, 띠아오위따오 및 남부쿠릴열도 등이 그러한 도서들인데, 이는 모두 일본이 태평양전쟁의 패전 후 침략했던 영토를 반환하면서 그 범위를 분명히 하지 않았기 때문에 문제가 된 것이다. 따라서 일본이 이러한 도서와 관련된 영유권 문제의 일방 당사국이라는 점이 특징이다.

현재, 일본을 비롯한 한국, 중국, 러시아는 이러한 섬들에 대한 자국의 영유권이 국제법적으로나 역사적으로 분명하다고 주장하고 있다. 각국의 입장 차이가 너무 현저하기 때문에 이러한 도서의 영유권 문제에 대한 시비는 가까운 시일 내에 쉽게 해결되지 않을 것이다.

그런데, 각국이 이러한 섬들에 대한 역사적인 근거를 내세우면서 자국의 명칭을 강조하는 점은 매우 흥미롭다. 섬의 명칭은 영유권 분쟁이 있는 그 섬의 소속을 정하기 위해서 중요한 의미를 갖는다. 그러나 그 명칭이 섬의 귀속을 결정하는 직접적인 근거는 되지 못한다. 또한, 자국 명칭의 사용에 대한 입증은 역사적인 근거와 반드시 일치하는 것도 아니다. 다만, 도서의 명칭이 역사적 근거와 함께 일방 당사국에게 유리한 것으로 확인된다면, 간접적인 영향력을 가질 수는 있을 것이다. 어쨌든, 각국은 민족주의와 같은 정치적 측면을 고려하여 도서의 명칭을 강조하고 있다.

본 연구는, 일본의 영토 문제 중, 특히 띠아오위따오에 대한 문제를 역사와 명칭 및 범위를 중심으로 살펴보기 위한 것이다. 현재, 중일 양국은 띠아오위따오의 영유권과 관련하여 여러 가지로 대립되는 주장을 하고 있다. 제삼자의 입장에서 어느 쪽 주장이 타당한지 쉽게 평가할 수는 없을 것이다. 다만, 양국이 주장하는 사항 중, 적어도 역사적인 측면에 관한 한, 중국의 주장이 더 설득력이 있다는 것은 부인하기 힘들 것 같다. 그리고 그러한 역사적 근거의 주장에 도서의 명칭도 중요한 역할을 하고 있다는 것을 주목할 수 있다.

<Abstrct>

There are several islands which have been caught up in territorial issues between the coastal states in Northeast Asia. For instance, Dokdo, the Southern Kuril Islands, and Diaoyudao are such islands. The reason why all of these islands are currently involved in territorial disputes is because the boundaries were not clearly delimited, when the islands were retroceded to their former countries by Japan after its defeat in World War II. So, Japan is involved as a state party to all of these islands.

Today each nation involved, Korea, China, Russia, and Japan stick to their respective opinions that the territoriality of its own country over these islands is unquestionable from historical point of view or under international law. As there is a great difference of opinions between those states, the propriety of territorial disputes around these islands does not look to be resolved in the near future.

It is very interesting to note that each state places great emphasis on the names of these islands, referring to their own histories. The name of an island has a significant meaning in order to settle a territorial dispute in connection with the island. However, the name itself does not become a decisive ground to determine the title of such island. Merely using the name of its own country as a source of proof is not necessarily consistent with historical backgrounds. However, provided that the name of islands proved to be favorable to a state party together with historical aspects, the name may have an indirect effect. Anyway, each state emphasizes the name of the island taking into consideration political aspects, such as nationalism.

This study surveys the issue of Diaoyudao out of Japan's territorial disputes, placing stress on history, names and boundaries. Today, both China and Japan continue to have a variety of opposing opinions in connection with the territoriality over Diaoyudao. From the perspective of a third party, it may not be easy to regard the opinion of a state party as appropriate. Provided that, however, one considers the historical aspects only, it seems hard to deny that the Chinese opinion is more persuasive. Additionally, in opinions based on such historical grounds, we should note that the name of an island does play an important role.