

Naming of the *Japan Sea* in Japan until the end of 19th Century

Masataka YAJI (Prof. Emeritus, Yokohama National University)

Kohei WATANABE (Teikyo University)

Abstract

In Japan there was no habitude to give a proper name to a wide area of sea. Usually seas were called just as “the sea” or “the great sea” without any indication. But the Japanese endonym for the *Japan Sea*, “Hokkai” (meaning “north sea”) has a long history as all such names have in Chinese cultured countries. “Hokkai” survived in the mind of people until the beginning of the 20th century.

From 1790, Japan began to introduce the European names of seas, translate them into Japanese, and put them in the maps. Chosenkai (Korean Sea) and Nihonkai (Japan Sea) were the names for the marginal sea. As Japan kept its “sakoku” policy until 1854, the shift from Korean Sea to Japan Sea in Japanese maps was delayed for about 40 years compared to the European shift from Korean Sea to Japan Sea.

In Japan, the existence of the endonym, “Hokkai” and the custom not giving any sea names to a vast area of sea delayed the domestic fixation of the sea name “Nihonkai”, until the end of 19th century.

Introduction

For the sea between the Korean Peninsula, Tartary Land and the Japanese Archipelago, the name 日本海 (Japan Sea) was first used in the third edition of Mateo Ricci's World Map, 1602. This map had great influence in East Asia, but “Japan Sea” for the name of the sea was not immediately accepted anywhere.

We would like to show how Japan named *Japan Sea* from rather common maps and books in Japan.

Lack of name in Japan for wide sea area and Japanese traditional name for the Japan Sea; Hokkai (north sea)

In *Nihonshoki* and *Man'yoshu*, the word “Koshi no umi” appears 4 times. “Koshi no umi” is the sea name for the southern central part of Japan Sea and is not a name for the whole Japan Sea.

In Japan, as a usual underdeveloped country in those days, there was no habitude to give a proper name to a vast area of sea. Seas were called just as “the sea” or “the great sea”, without any proper noun.

The name “Hokkai” (meaning “north sea”) seems to have a very long history, but historical records of “Hokkai” are not so numerous. In *Izumo Hudoki* (733?), water bodies are distinguished as great sea, bay, lake and so on. In the description of each Shimane gun, Aika gun, Tatenui gun, Izumo gun and Kando gun, the word “Hokkai” is introduced to show their marine products respectively. “Hokkai” appears also in *Hokkoku Kiko* (1485) by Gyo-e Hoshi.

In *Nippo Jisho* (Vocabulario da Lingua do Japão, 1503, 1504), “Foccai” appears with “Nankai” (south sea), “Saikai” (west sea) and “Tokai” (east sea) as an index word.

In *Inshu sicho goki* (1667), the first sentence of the text is “隱州在北海中” (the province of Oki situates in the sea of Hokkai). Matsuo Basho, a well-known *Haiku* poet also used the term Hokkai in his writings.

In *Ou Kaiunki*, Arai Hakuseki used the word “Hokkai” 7 times in the small book with a little more than 5,000 characters. The slide is an example; 2nd double pages of “*Ou Kaiunki*” with 3 words of Hokkai.

We could not find any map of Japan made in the country with the name Hokkai, but here is a map of Japan in the book by Xue Jun in China, "日本考略" (General Concept of Japan), 1523. On the map of Japan at the beginning of the book, north is downward in the map, and we see "Hokkai" in Japan Sea. We recognize "Tokai", "Nankai" and "Saikai", also.

In *Echigo Koku Saikenzu*, published in Kyoto in 1832, in which north is also downward, "Hokkai" is marked at the bottom. But in Japan, there is no map showing the whole area of Japan Sea with the name "Hokkai". The main reason for the lack of "Hokkai" in Japanese maps is that there was no custom in Japan to indicate names of large seas on maps. On the contrary, "Hokkai" was often used in the text of books, and the term "Hokkai" for Japan Sea survived in the minds of people in Japan until the beginning of 20th century.

We would like to show some examples of Japanese maps without sea names. Map of Japan by Ishikawa Moronobu, 1691 was the most popular map of Japan in the early Edo period. Four cardinal points are marked in the sea within a circle and each waterway is traced with a distance, but there is no sea name in the map. The next figure is an enlargement of the north-western part of the map.

Genroku Nippon Sozu, 1702 is the second official map compiled by the Tokugawa Shogunate. The figure is accurate except for Ezo, and the distance over the sea is exaggerated. There is no name over the sea.

Nagakubo Sekisui (1717-1801) was a popular cartographer. He created *Nippon Yochi Rotei Zenzu* in 1774 and published *Kaisei Nippon Yochi Rotei Zenzu* in 1779, which was a best-seller Japan map in the second half of Edo period with eight editions. This is the second map in Japan with latitude and longitude coordinates. In the map, Takeshima (Ulleungdo) and Matsushima (now, Takeshima or Dokdo) are marked in their right position with their Japanese names at that time. There are some names of small sea area, for example, Genkai Nada, Hibiki Nada, Suo Nada, Mizushima Nada and Harima Nada. For Japan Sea, Pacific Ocean and East China Sea, no name is given on the map.

Nihonkai (Japan Sea) and Chosenkai (Korean Sea) introduced from European maps into Japan

The first map giving the name, "Nihonkai" in Japan is Kimura Kenko's *Kai Ichiranzu*, 1790. The author was a merchant of sake and a man of Dutch studies (rangaku). On the map, we see "Nihonkai" and "Shinakai" (China Sea) and we see "Daitoyo" (Great East Ocean) in the Pacific.

Shiba Kokan was a painter and also mastered Dutch studies. He published *Chikyu Zenzu*, two hemispheric global maps by the first copperplate printing in Japan, in 1792. On the map, Japan Sea is "Nippon Naikai" (Inner Sea of Japan), and on the South coast of Japan, "Nippon Tokai" (East Sea of Japan) is inscribed. Farther north-east in the Pacific, "Daitoyo" (Great East Ocean) is inscribed, and farther south we see "Dai Nankai" (Great South Sea).

Katsuragawa Hoshu made 10 maps with *Hokusa Bunryaku* in 1794, after the interview with Daikokuya Kodayu, captain of a drifted ship who came back from Russia to Japan. In *Azia Zenzu* (Map of Asia) he put "Chosenkai" (Korea Sea) in the western part of Japan Sea. As Professor Lee Sang Tae (2010) pointed out, this is the first map in Japan, which gave the name Korea Sea. But this is a translated map from a Russian one. In *Kocho Yochi Zenzu* (map of Japan), Katsuragawa copied 'Korea Sea' in Russian in mid Japan Sea

and copied 'South Sea' in Russian in the Pacific Ocean. He printed "Nihonkai" in his map. The gores for a globe is an example of using "Nihonkai", instead of Korea Sea. This map of Japan is copied from an original map of 1679. Daikokuya Kodayu himself created maps of Japan, and three of them are now in Goettingen University Library and two are in Moscow. They are different from *Kocho Yochi Zenzu* in shape and they don't have any sea name.

Yamamura Saisuke created *Teisei Zoyaku Sairan Igen* in 1802, a map of East Asia, in which "Nihonkai" is printed in the centre of Japan Sea. To the east of Japan, there is "Toyo" (East Ocean), and the sea between mainland China, Korean Peninsula and Ryukyu Islands is "Shinakai" (China Sea).

Takahashi Kageyasu made *Nihon Henkai Ryakuzu* by the order of Tokugawa Shogunate, in which the sea east of Korean Peninsula is named "Chosenkai" (Korea Sea).

Philipp Franz B. von Siebold got four copies of this map before coming back to the Netherlands and used them in his book *Nippon*. He changed the name of the sea between Asian Continent and Japan into "Japansche Zee" (Japan Sea). In Europe, Sea of Japan became more common than Sea of Korea, after the publication of *Voyage autour du monde de Laperouse, 1797* (Voyage round the world by the Boussole and Astrolabe under the command of Laperouse, 1799). In the map of *Japan mit seinen Neben und Schutzlaendern*, Siebold balanced "Kanaal van Korai" (Strait of Korea) and "Japansche Zee" (Sea of Japan), just as in the first sheet's "Detroit de Coree" and the second sheet's "Mer du Japon" in *Carte des decouvertes faites en 1787 dans les mers de Chine et de Tartarie*. Siebold put two islands which were not printed originally in Takahashi's map. He might have introduced the two islands, Takeshima and Matsushima, from another map of Japan by Nagakubo Sekisui. But at that time in Europe, Matsushima (now Takeshima or Dokdo) is not known yet, and Ulleungdo was known as two islands due to an error in astronomical measurement. Siebold named the northern island Takeshima, and the southern island Matsushima. In Japan, Ulleungdo was traditionally known as Takeshima, and Matsushima was the name for Liancourt Rocks, which was discovered by a French whaling ship in 1849. The confusion of island names between Matsushima and Takeshima began in the Meiji period in Japan, by Siebold's naming of the two islands.

Takahashi Kageyasu's *Shintei Bankoku Zenzu*, 1810 is an excellent two hemispheric world map with the stereographic projection. In the west side of Japan Sea, the name "Chosenkai" is inscribed and "Dai nihonkai" is inscribed along the Pacific side of Japan Islands. Takahashi referred many maps from abroad and maps made by Japanese. A. Arrowsmith's *Asia* 1801 is an important map, in which "Sea of Japan" is adopted for the name of the sea between the Asian continent and the Japanese Archipelago. In the *Chart of the world on Mercator's Projection* by A. Arrowsmith, 1790 and revised between 1797 and 1804, the right wing name of the sea is "Gulf of Corea" with the old figure of Japanese Archipelago, and the left wing name of the sea is "Sea of Japan" with the figure of Laperouse-type islands. The map of *the World from the Discoveries & Observations made in the Latest Voyages & Travels* 1808 by R. Wilkinson would be the latest map referred by Takahashi. In this map, "Gulf of Korea" is used. Why Takahashi chose the name Korea Sea for the name between the Asian continent and Japanese archipelago is not certain, but he had two choices at that time. In the world, the name of the sea was changing from Korea Sea to Sea of Japan in the beginning of 19th century. In Japan at that time, when Korea Sea is used for the marginal sea, Sea of Japan is placed in the Pacific Coast.

This practice had also been introduced from European cartography. In this case, the prefix "Dai" (great) is often added to "Nihonkai". In *Shintei Bankoku Zenzu*, "Dainihonkai", "Daitoyo" and "Kitataiheikai" (North Pacific Sea) are inscribed in the North Pacific Ocean.

The influence of Takahashi's *Shintei Bankoku Zenzu* on the naming of seas in Japan has been big for the following 45 years until 1855, but there were maps in which Japan Sea was situated in the sea between Japan and Korea. Yamada Ren's *Chikyu Yochi Zenzu* 1810 placed "Nihonkai" (Japan Sea) and "Shinakai" (China Sea) in each marginal sea, and placed "Shotoyo" (Little East Ocean) in the Pacific Ocean.

Abe Yoshito is a medical botanist in the late Edo period. He created *Kaei Kotei Tozai Chikyu Bankoku Zenzu* in 1838, and Kurihara Nobuaki published it. The global map is based on a French map published in 1835, but the names of the seas around Japan are the same as in Takahashi's *Shintei Bankoku Zenzu*. In the late Edo Period, the Tokugawa Shogunate used the term "Nihonkai" for the Pacific coast of the main islands of Japan.

Yamaji Yukitaka revised *Shintei Bankoku Zenzu* of Takahashi Kageyasu by the order of Tokugawa Shogunate and published *Jutei Bankoku zenzu* in 1855. "Nihonkai" was moved to the sea between the Asian continent and the Japanese Archipelago and "Chosenkai" was deleted. In the Pacific Coast side of Japan, "Dai Nihonkai" was deleted and the term "Dai Nihonryo" (Great Japanese territory) was introduced in the place. This map was made 45 years later than Takahashi's one, and just after the opening Japan to the world (abolishment of *Sakoku* isolationist policy). The confusion of the names of the islands in Japan Sea by von Siebold became more apparent in the map of Yamaji. Argonaut Island on this map is a phantom island created by a mistake in astronomical measurements. This island is situated on the map further north of Ulleungdo, what Argonaut actually meant to be. A Japanese name "Takeshima" is indicated together with the European name "Argonaut", and now the Japanese name "Matsushima" appears together with "Dagelet", in the location of the real Ulleungdo.

Predominance of the term "Nihonkai" over "Chosenkai" after the *kaikoku* of 1854 on maps in Japan

In Europe, Sea of Japan predominates over Korean Sea from 1810's. In Japan, information from Europe increased rapidly after the *kaikoku*, the opening Japan to the world, and the predominance of "Nihonkai" over "Chosenkai" began in the 1850's, about 40 years later than in Europe.

A Russian frigate Diana was made shipwreck at Shimoda by the tsunami of Ansei-Tokai big earthquake. Takeda Kango restored a British World Chart 1845, which the frigate provided, and translated it into Japanese and published it as *Yochi Kokaizu* in 1858. In it, the sea between the Asian continent and Japan is "Nihonkai" and Yellow Sea had two names; "Kokai" (Yellow Sea) and "Chosenkai". East China Sea is "Tokai" (East Sea). In this chart, another "Tokai" (East Sea) exists in the Baltic Sea, with "Hokkai" (North Sea) further west of it.

On the map, the name "Nihonkai" became well established for Japan Sea from 1860's. But this name became familiar among Japanese, only on maps. The traditional name "Hokkai" (North Sea) and the custom not to give any specific name for the wide sea area remained strong until the end of 19th century.

Fukuzawa Yukichi published *Sekai Kuni Zukushi* (all the world countries) in 1869. He inscribed the term "Nihonkai" in the map of Asia in the book, but he never used the term in the text.

His student Nagamikawa Hikojiro published in 1873 *Nihon Chizu Soshi* (Story of Japan maps). In the map of Japan, both Japan Sea and Pacific Ocean are inscribed in Japanese words. In the map of east Japan, there are only "Enshu Nada" and "Matsumae no Seto" (Tsugaru Strait), and in the map of west Japan, there is only "Suo Nada" as a sea name. But he used the term "Nihonkai" in the text.

The following chart is a part of *Yochi Zenzu* 1875, translated from the Mercator World Map by Hermann Berghaus. "Nihonkai", "Chosen Kaikyo" (Korean Strait) and "Kokai" (Yellow Sea) are inscribed in the right position, but "Chosen Wan" was enlarged out of the right position by an error of the translator.

Outline of World map 1875 is translated from German textbook and map. An example of a page with ocean and sea names is indicated. Among the 10 occurrences of sea names in this gazetteer, there are "Hokkai" and "Tokai". "Hokkai" is North Sea in the east of Britain, and "Tokai" is explained as the sea west of Russia. Japan Sea, Yellow Sea and Okhotsk Sea are also included among them. Among the straits, Korean Strait is enumerated.

Until the end of 19th century, "East Sea" as a translation of "Donghae" is not at all recognised in the Western world nor even in Japan. The use of "East Sea" in the world will cause the confusion with East China Sea, South China Sea (Vietnamese Bien Dong) and Baltic Sea. We agree with the local use of "Donghae", but we cannot approve the global use of the translated term "East Sea".

Conclusion

In Japanese culture, usually most large seas remained unnamed, and any given sea was referred only as "umi" or "o-umi" which means big sea. In the Chinese culture, the term North, East, South and West are frequently used as sea names, as these also are in Korea and Japan.

In the 8th century, in *Izumo Hudoki*, the term meaning north sea was used for Japan Sea. In the beginning of the 17th century, "Foccai" (north sea) was an entry in the Japanese-Portuguese Dictionary, just like east sea, south sea and west sea. These terms appeared often in books until the beginning of the 20th century but very seldom in Japanese maps.

The first specific name given to Japan Sea in Japanese maps is "Nihonkai" (Japan Sea). This term appeared on Kimura Kenkado's *Kai Ichiranzu* (Map of China and surroundings). This term is continued to Yamamura Saisuke's Asian map in 1802 and Inagaki Sisen's reduction map of Mateo Ricci's World map. Takahashi Kageyasu published two maps by the order of Tokugawa Government. In his *Nippon Henkai Ryakuzu*, 1809, and in his *Shintei Bankoku Zenzu*, 1810, "Chosenkai" (Korean Sea) was introduced in the west side of Japan Sea, and in the latter map "Dainihonkai" (Great Japan Sea) was used for the Japanese side of the Pacific Ocean. This tendency continued during the first half of the 19th century.

The general use of "Nihonkai" for Japan Sea began only in the 1850's in Japanese maps, after the opening of Japan to the World, with the broad introduction of Western Civilization, where the use of "Sea of Japan" for the marginal sea began in the 1810's after the expeditions of Japan Sea by Laperouse, Broughton, and Krusenstern.

Even after the Meiji Restoration, in geography textbooks, and in general books the usage of the term "Nihonkai" is limited and is mixed with the use of "Hokkai" or simply "umi" (sea), giving no specific name of the

sea. The fixed use of "Nihonkai" in Japan was established after the beginning of the construction of the Siberian Railway in the end of 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century. It was 40 years later than the general usage of "Nihonkai" on Japanese maps and about 90 years later than the general acceptance of "Sea of Japan" in the Western World.

In the world, the fixation of the sea name "Sea of Japan" happened in the beginning of 19th century, and this is much earlier than the start of Japanese imperialism and colonialism. Japan has only adopted the western custom of naming the seas after the 1790s, and has been using translated forms of western names since then.

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