

Colonial/Postcolonial Namings and the East Sea/Sea of Japan

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In this paper I draw upon a previous paper (Short and Lee 2010) and from material in my forthcoming book *Korea: A Cartographic History* (University of Chicago Press).

Korea became a Japanese protectorate in 1905 and came under formal Japanese control in 1910. Japanese colonial domination took many forms. Mapping and naming are just two. The Japanese undertook a series of cartographic surveys of Korea. Some of them predated formal annexation in 1910. Japanese mapmakers surveyed Korea from 1894 to 1908. These secret maps then formed the basis of later maps made by the Japanese colonial government. Korea was mapped as a form of imperial control. The Japanese published maps of Korea at a variety of scales including 723 sheets at 1:50,000, 65 sheets at 1:200,000, 13 provincial maps at 1:500,000; 98 maps of Korean cities at 1:25,000; 41 urban maps at 1:10,000. Land use maps were also prepared at 1:500,000.

There was also a toponymic colonialism in the new Japanese mappings of Korea. This was part of broader suppression of the Korean language especially in name usage. In 1939 Koreans were encouraged to change their surnames to Japanese forms. This linguistic colonialism was also evident in maps. Japanese place names appeared in maps of Korea from 1900 onwards. New administrative place names were adopted after annexation that added Japanese generic names such as Tong, Jeong and Jeongmok or directly copied Japanese names such as Bonjeong, Gilyajeong, Hwang gumjeong and Taepyong Tong (Short and Lee 2010). Second, roads and natural features were renamed in Japanese style. Third, as well as Japanese inscriptions there were Korean erasures. In Seoul, for example, 661 administrative districts with Korean names were replaced by 186

districts with Japanese names. Fourth, there was also the renaming of larger regional features. The sea between Japan and Korea had multiple names through the centuries predominantly named by the Koreans as East Sea. After annexation as part of the new wider Japanese empire it was named Sea of Japan.

The Historical Background

Up until the sixteenth century the Japanese had few maps with names for the seas far from their immediate shoreline. Japanese cartography was almost entirely concerned with national representation. The Joseon in contrast had a large number of maps that employed the term *Dong Hae* (East Sea).

In the nineteenth century many Japanese maps used variants of ‘Sea of Joseon’, such as in the 1809 map of Japan by Takahashi Kageyasu, the 1810 *Shintei Bankoku Zenzu* by Takashasi Kageyasu, the 1870 *Bankoku chikyu bunzu* by Hashimoto Gyokyuransai and the 1885 globe by Horiuchi Naotada. While some maps just used ‘Sea of Japan’ such as in the 1858 *Yochi Kokai Zu* by Takeda Kango, many Japanese maps used both names, ‘Sea of Japan’ and ‘Sea of Joseon’, such as the 1838 map *Yochi Zenzu* by Kurihara Shincho and the 1870 *Dai Nihon Shishin Zenzu* by Hashimoto Gyokuransai. A common feature of many Japanese maps until the end of the nineteenth century was to name the larger sea area between the two countries as the ‘Sea of Joseon,’ while the name ‘Sea of Japan’ was used to refer to the area to the east of the Japanese coastline. The Japanese mapmaker Kurihara Nobuaki produced a double hemispheric map of the world in 1848 that designated the sea between the two countries as ‘Sea of Korea’. The name ‘Sea of

Great Japan' was used to refer to the Pacific Ocean. But by the end of the nineteenth century, when Japanese imperialism and militarism was in full stride, all Japanese maps and globes used the term 'Sea of Japan' to refer to the sea between Japan and Korea. After Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 Japanese maps initially displaced the term 'East Sea' to the East China Sea, eventually dropping the term altogether and only using the name 'Sea of Japan' to refer to the seas between Japan and Korea. The Korean name was erased and replaced by the 'Sea of Japan'. Japan's colonial annexation of Korea in 1910 solidified the new naming.

With the Japanese takeover of Korea, the sea was named after the colonial power. Korea was under Japanese colonial domination when the 1929 Monaco Conference of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) resulted in the publication of the first edition of the authoritative "Limits of Oceans and Seas," which employed the term "Sea of Japan." The Sea of Japan designation persisted after the end of Japanese colonial rule in 1945 because of the standardizing legacy that arose from the 1929 conference.

The Postwar World

The defeat of Japan by Allied Powers in World War II broke the chains of Japanese colonial domination in Korea. However, in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, the US drew upon Japanese maps of Korea. While the place names in Korea quickly reverted back to their Korean originals, the name of 'Sea of Japan' persisted, embodied in the 1929 international agreements and reinforced through the cartographic Japanese

legacy in US postwar maps of Korea. The US produced maps, both military and commercial, of Korea and the wider region and were produced in a Japanese saturated context including Japanese maps and Japanese names.

In summary, while the Koreans for centuries have called the sea the East Sea, it was only in the nineteenth century that the term Sea of Japan was used. It was not indigenous to the area but a European name later adopted by the Japanese, often used instead of and sometimes alongside of the name Sea of Korea. As the colonial power, in an act of colonial possession, Japan was able to rename it as the Sea of Japan. This was standardized by international agreements drawn up while Japan was the colonial power in Korea and reinforced by the American adoption of the Japanese cartographic naming of Korea.

In 1992 at the sixth conference on standardization of geographic names held in the UN headquarters in New York, Korean government officials raised the issue of the naming of the East Sea. South Korea only became a member of the UN in 1991. In 2007 the two Korean states made representation to the ninth UN Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names. North Korea requested that the name East Sea of Korea be used. North Korean maps use East Sea of Korea as well as the designation West Sea of Korea for the area generally known as the Yellow Sea. The South Korean request and official government position is for a dual naming East Sea/Sea of Japan.

References:

Short, John R. and Lee, Ki-suk (2010) Postcolonial namings in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. **Conference Presentation**. Annual Conference of Association of American Geographers. Washington DC. 15 April.