

The Korean Perspectives on the *East Sea* Through Old Maps

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The debate over the naming of the *East Sea* has been continuing since 1992. Korea argues that the exclusive naming 'Seas of Japan' is wrong because Korea has been using the *East Sea* for over 2000 years. On the other hand, Japan argues that the naming *Sea of Japan* has been settled in the international society in the 19th century. The Japanese perspectives that question the realistic need for changing the naming to *East Sea*, since the international society has been using the name *Sea of Japan* for 100 years in the 20th century. At the same time, there are some Korean perspectives that the naming of the *East Sea* should not be made a concurrent naming, but rather an exclusive *East Sea* naming. However, it is important to have logical and rational reasoning for any argument to gain credit in the international society. Therefore, this presentation looks at the past Korean historical texts in which the *East Sea* appeared and presented Korea's arguments, and furthermore analyses international organizations and international society's naming principles. First, Korea argues the need of concurrent naming based on the reasoning that the East Sea waters border with South Korea, North Korea, Japan, and Russia, and is consisted of EEZs and territorial seas. This means that the East Sea waters' sovereign rights are shared by several countries. Second, the International Hydrographic Organization(IHO) and United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names(UNCSSGN) offer guidelines for naming issues. According to these international organizations, in cases of territories that two or more countries share, the naming is decided through agreement among the related countries, and if a compromise is not made, concurrent naming is chosen. This basic principle is suggested in resolutions of the IHO and UNCSSGN.

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1. Preface

The well-known reality is that the Republic of Korea and Japan are, at present, each using different names for the body of water separating the two countries.

The body of waters which Koreans have called the *East Sea* for the past 2000 years, is commonly known as the *Sea of Japan* internationally. This is due to the fact that Korea could not participate in discussions during deprivation of sovereignty in the early 20th century. Also, Japan's international status affected Western countries' map makers.

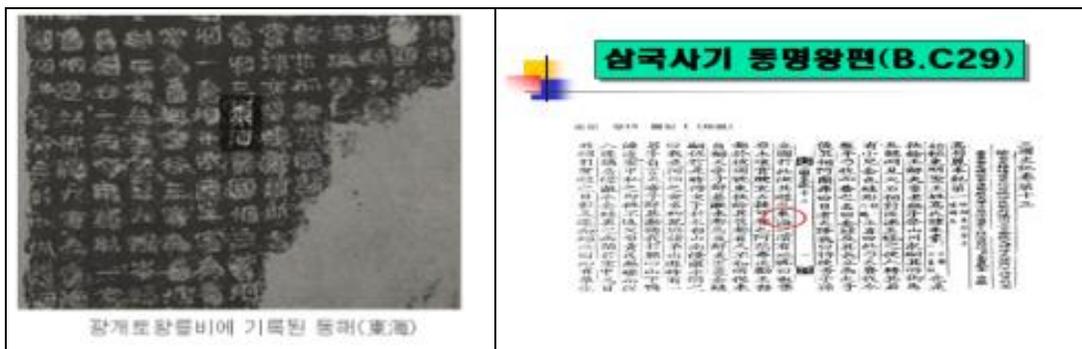
In Daily Newspaper 1976, there was an article pointing out that the name *Sea of Japan* is commonly used internationally to refer to the body of waters known as the *East Sea*. In 1992, both South and North Korea officially brought up the issue at the UNCISG.

Korea has been contacting international organizations to request correction of naming, and has been requesting the use of the name 'East Sea,' to international map makers.

2. The legitimacy of the name *East Sea*

1) The *East Sea* in Korean History

The name, *East Sea*, first appeared in the History of the Three Kingdoms, and has been used in many historical records such as the Tombstone of King Gwanggaeto, The Eight Provinces Map of Korea, and the 18th century Map of Korea.





2) Naming of water bodies in Japanese ancient maps

Japan is not presenting any evidence on the legitimacy of the name *Sea of Japan*, and even more, there are Japanese historical maps which state the related water bodies as Korean sea.

The Asian World Map in 1794, the Rough Map of the Japanese Border in 1794, the Newly Cartographed Map of Japanese in 1844, a Rough Map of the Northwest Japanese Border in 1850, are examples of Japanese maps which referred to the eastern waters as Choson Sea.

3) Naming of water bodies in Western ancient maps

Up to the 18th century, most of the names were the Korean Sea, *East Sea*, the Oriental Sea, but since the mid 19th century, the frequency of the Japanese naming increased. However, the *Sea of Japan* is not the only naming that spread in the 19th century.

Table 1. The names in Western ancient maps

name	Research by Korea					Research by Japan				
	16C	17C	18C	19C	total	16C	17C	18C	19C	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
Other	29	69	90	12	200	5	56	39	67	167
total	29	125	467	141	762	11	101	274	1,486	1,872

3. Korea's stance on the *East Sea* naming

1) The name *Sea of Japan* is a result of Japanese colonialism

The international society held the International Hydrographic Organization in 1919, and established the IHB in 1921, and through years of discussion, published the booklet [Limits of Oceans and Seas: S-23] in 1928.

During the colonial period, Japan participated in the IHO alone, and thus the related water bodies were named the *Sea of Japan*, and this was the start of the spread of the name *Sea of Japan*.

Later in 1937 and 1953, the second and third edition of the [Limits of Oceans and Seas: S-23] was published, and the *East Sea* region was kept on named as the *Sea of Japan*. During this period, Korea was going through the colonial period and Korean War, thus was not able to participate in the discussion of this naming issue.

Regarding this, Japan claims that the Western countries' maps show that the name *Sea of Japan* was already widely used in the 19th century. Also it claims that the spread of this name has nothing to do with colonialism.

2) Concurrent naming of the *East Sea* and *Sea of Japan*

The *East Sea* is a region where South Korea, North Korea, Russia, and Japan come together, thus referring to the region with one specific country's name is not reasonable.

Resolutions of the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the United Nations Conference of the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSSGN) recommend that if more than two countries cannot agree on a common name for a

geographical feature, both names should be used. The IHO Resolution 1/1972 and the UNCSCGN Resolution III/20, adopted respectively in 1974 and 1977, aim to prevent conflicts that may arise from situations where bordering or neighboring countries persist in using only the name each prefers. These resolutions also advise such countries to agree on a common name and, if they fail to do so, to use both names concurrently.

For the last ten years, our government and citizens have been publicizing the legitimacy of the name *East Sea*, and as a result, main map makers internationally, are now using both names on maps (2.8% in 2000, 10.8% in 2005, 23.8% in 2007, 28.07% in 2009, and 35% in 2012 etc.,).

We eventually hope that the name *East Sea* will reappear in all international maps, and we also look forward to turning the name *East Sea* into a common name for this region, just like the ‘North Sea’ in the Eurasia continent.

4. Conclusion

In all region names, a region’s unique history, culture, and identity is included. The name *East Sea*, includes a long history of Koreans’ lives and culture.

Koreans hope that the name *East Sea*, a name which has no implication of Japan’s sea and which was not used due to an unfortunate past, will be commonly used internationally, research and international publicizing should continue, so that we can argue the unreasonableness of the name *Sea of Japan* and suggest the usage of the name *East Sea*, based on evident historical facts and the principle of universality.