

Panel discussion

Toponymic skirmishes and maritime encounters

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The ongoing sea names seminar series offers an excellent possibility for academics, scholars, journalists, and individuals involved in North Asian politics to make intellectual and practical inroads into framing, reframing, and managing the *East Sea/Sea of Japan* naming issue. In addition to this more practical and administrative question, the potential continuing role of the meetings in expanding academic debate in critical political geographies, marine toponomastics, and island studies is vast. I believe the subheading I used in a recently published evaluative review of this Jeju Island seminar summarises succinctly where the scholarly–governmental crossover may lie: *toponymic skirmishes and marine encounters*.

While some at the assembly posited that they felt wearied by the quarrel between (South) Korea and Japan on this sea naming matter, the current academic forum and presence of contemporary ideas is latent with promise. Topics such as geographical names as cultural heritage, the human-human interface in sea name research, economic roles of the sea and its names, and intra- and extra-linguistic aspects of names are all welcome in this eclectic forum. Where a politico-legal perspective may be focused primarily on solution-based outcomes, conflicts and disputes provide fertile environments for intellectual maturation. Geographically diverse excursions into Mediterranean, Nordic, North African, Northeastern Asian, and South Pacific sea naming examples, all with differing spatial and scale considerations and linguistic complexities, make for a ripe academic milieu to harness apparently disparate opinions into a more cogent interdisciplinary nucleus.

Ways forward for using the lens of the *East Sea/Sea of Japan* naming dispute and this seminar series might involve assessing the effectiveness and understandability of the dual naming context, the establishment of equitable naming and social justice possibilities, addressing the benefits to (South) Korea and Japan of a dual name, as well as considering Chinese and Russian claims, understanding the possibility of a win–win outcome, and predicting the reality of using maps in education to spread knowledge about politicized and dynamic processes of and in toponymy. In conjunction with these what appear to be perennial discussions in any future formats of this seminar series, new

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blood and novel perspectives would benefit the now well established section of bedrock and its bearing on maritime and territorial studies. Upcoming semblances of this series will likely attend to attracting these hopeful, new, and energetic members to the fold so that (Northeast Asian) sea naming and its home within critical political toponymy can remain agreeable bedfellows.

What became clear over the two days of presentations and discussions is that any nomenclature-based reconciliation would concurrently have to involve academic, politico-legal, and ultimately human representation. While any one perspective may be directed toward finalizing such matters, I believe the academic power of these dialogues lies in the acknowledgment of the fuzziness of boundaries and the observance that perhaps people do not necessarily want results or even to listen to others. Furthermore, although these naming issues emphasize the role of emotion and attachment to sea (place) and naming with the hopeful possibility of attaining a peaceful reconciliation particularly from the South Korean side, some delegates, who argued that the Japanese media is not concerned with this matter at all, warned that such concerns could result in creating more and escalating already-present problems between these two countries.

It is here I take a polemical position on the nature of critical sea naming studies, its crossover into practical political disputes, the relationship between size and scale, and the role of emotional in potentially settling these complex affairs. As Professor Peter Jordan narrated during questions in one of the sessions, names of the sea and fishing grounds and areas for coastal dwellers depict an expansive sense of *toponymic self* made real in the world. This self-in-names extends much further than the edge of a people's coastlines and their islands or even the incident sea. The actual boundaries are often augmented across the sea as far as their eyes or horizon will take them. And within this bounding comes emotional attachment and congruence between the nature of a name as a manifestation of linguistic and delimiting consequence. Even at small scale, as my presentation about the history and location of fishing ground names around Pitcairn Island, a small island in the South Pacific, demonstrates, these lesser names can speak greatly. Placenames history and practices on and around islands portray people's interaction with environments and the world through ideas of insularity, isolation, and the sea-as-place.

Where in my presentation I asserted that interaction involving small-scale sea names and names as folk capital is a possible mandate for creating a peaceful resolution between naming sea and land, I additionally implied that micro sea naming issues from Oceania and the South Pacific could be applied with value to the Northeast Asian matter, which the sea naming seminar series hopes to address. It is surely here that the subjects and findings of research into delimiting sea name boundaries, establishing the contexts of naming and the possible drivers of name changes, and understanding the characteristics of what can and might be construed as mislabeled geographies can be taken from Northeast Asia into contemporary, future, and international sea naming concerns. And along with the requisite geographically pointed and potentially heated disposition of the *East Sea/Sea of Japan* naming circumstance and its practicalities, any academic and theoretical advances must inculcate the reality of emotion, nostalgia, and naming history into any consideration of the human based realities of sea naming and marine toponomastics.