

Panel Discussion Guidelines

Sea naming issues: What have we discussed and achieved so far, and what shall we do further?

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The International Seminar on Sea Names, which has successfully continued for the past twenty-three years, witnessed the diversity incurred in the processes of naming, standardizing, changing, and in some instances evoking conflicts between different identities and searching for solutions. All the naming cases in the world were valid in providing implications for ways forward to the long-standing issue of the name East Sea/Sea of Japan.

What has been achieved through all these seminars? It is suggested that we agree with the following points:

- There are diverse, sometimes contrasting, perspectives in naming the same geographical feature, originating from different perceptions and identities and from different linguistic backgrounds.
- Every perspective should be respected in whatever form. It would be a way to achieving peace and justice between communities, language groups, nations, and countries.
- It is good to resolve naming conflicts not just for the parties concerned, but also for observing entities. It is valuable to search for solutions, or at least try to find solutions.
- The East Sea/Sea of Japan naming is one of the major sea naming conflicts for which efforts should be continued to resolve it.

Upon agreeing on these points, this 23rd Seminar has been an opportunity to add confirmation to the achievements and find a way forward to the future, both in progressing the issue and in structuring the seminar. Presentations and discussion in the seminar has led us to raising the following five questions:

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1. In this seminar, we met a series of naming problems in the border areas (Wendt, Gammeltoft, Kerfoot, Jordan). For the cases of Poland-Germany and Austria-Slovenia, the bilingual naming functions as a solution. In what respects are these cases similar to and different from sea naming problems? (QUESTION 1)
2. There are evidently different perceptions and/or interpretations on sea names, as manifested in such topics as trace of imperialism (Dormels), possessive or non-possessive feeling (Chi, Woodman), and directional names (Tanabe & Watanabe) versus holistic view (Chi). How should we understand this difference? Resulting from cultural background? Difference in positions? (QUESTION 2)
3. Do we agree that resolving the naming conflict gives benefits to each party concerned? For the case of the East Sea/Sea of Japan, what benefits would go to Japan and Korea, respectively, by agreeing on the method of naming the sea? (Stoltman, Hausner) (QUESTION 3)
4. What method would be more feasible, dual naming or adopting a new name? Does dual naming mean to use both names all the time, or does it allow to “pick and choose”? (Woodman, Gammeltoft, Dormels) (QUESTION 4)
5. In what respects can each user/shareholder of toponymy contribute to moving this issue forward? Academics of each party concerned? Academics of third party? Civil society (Stoltman)? (QUESTION 5)

Panel discussants are asked to answer these questions or to make general comments on the topics of the seminar. This part of the proceedings contains discussion points of those panels who submitted their written comments afterwards.

The seminar has confirmed again that there are different and sometimes contrasting views on looking at geographical names and the naming process. For the case of the name of the sea between Korea and Japan, different perspectives are exposed, with regard to the influence of imperialism, feeling of possession, interpretation of directional names, etc. Extending discussion on this line of points will be validated in future seminars, but with the hope that the variation is to be reduced.

It was fortunate that there was elaboration of the benefits that Japan and Korea will receive from the solution of the issue, as suggested in the 22nd seminar in Jeju. Stoltman lists three benefits to Japan; being viewed in the eyes of the world as having taken the necessary step to harmony; renewing strong regional international relations with Korea; and advancing Japan’s ethical recovery from the colonialization history. Hausner argues that ‘Sea of Japan’ could be regarded as historical abiding memory. I would say that even a step toward the solution could save energy and opportunity costs for every party concerned. This topic will deserve further discussion in the future.

The method of naming also matters. Woodman effectively shows that dual naming itself will not be a simple matter by separating non-cartographic from cartographic and contexts and by considering languages used, sequencing and positioning of dual names, and scale of the map. Methods of dual naming should be scrutinized with the effect and validity of each method. Also included is his wishful idea to allow each user to make the preferred toponymic choice.

I believe the East Sea/Sea of Japan issue still requires much input from the academia and even from civil societies, even though there are views that the choice of names no longer remains in the domain of cartographers or academicians. This is the reason why we have continued this seminar for more than two decades with the same object. It is expected that more practical and more visible outcomes will be drawn in future seminars by focusing a few specified topics.