

Wrap-up and conclusion

Joseph STOLTMAN*

The 23rd International Seminar on Sea Names: Achieving Peace and Social Justice through Geographical Naming was held in Berlin, Germany, from October 22-25, 2017. As with the prior twenty-two seminars, the Society for the *East Sea* and the Northeast Asian History Foundation assembled noted scholars and experts in the fields of toponymy, education, geography, history, law, cartography, international relations and journalism. The discussions were not restricted to the issue of international recognition of the *East Sea* toponym as the dual name, along with *Sea of Japan*, to identify the body of water between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago, although that is a major focus of each seminar. Examples of geographical naming during the seminar were from different case studies and international agreements, or in some cases the lack of agreement, regarding the toponym for specific geographical features. The influences national governments, decisions by the International Hydrographic Organization, circumstances of language and culture, and of the larger political and social contexts surrounding geographical names were revealed by the discussions in the seminar. Peace and social justice were guiding principles for the conference, with the two ideals having significant historical and contemporary meaning for the region of Northeast Asia. The major underlying question among the symposium participants was: What course of action can be taken to move South Korea and Japan closer to an agreement on dual naming of the sea that lies between the two countries?

While the topic for the seminar was the international status of sea naming, the content of the seminar enjoyed a discussion format that was somewhat broader. The intent was to discuss the naming of geographic features, principally seas, to examine the diplomacy that is applied to geographical naming issues, and propose the means for making progress with the dual naming issue proposed by South Korea for the *East Sea/Sea of Japan* dual name.

Two complementary modes of thought regarding the question of geographic naming were apparent among the participants to the conference. The first mode of thought was in response to the question: What are the alternatives to the impasse that is the current state of the geographical naming issue between South Korea and Japan regarding the

* Professor, Western Michigan University, U.S.A.

waterbody that lies between the two countries? Recognizing that peace and social justice were to be served by a dual naming decision, the discussion focused on approaches to the issue that were peaceful and socially just, but that accommodated the diplomatically strained relationship that has developed between the two countries over the naming question. Second, there was considerable discussion on ways to hone a better focus on the issue in terms of advantages and benefits to both countries for dual naming, or by agreeing upon a new single name for the waterbody. The need for a sharper focus was partially in response to the participation by only a few Japanese scholars and journalists for the current and in the prior seminars.

The seminar in general was organized to reflect several main strands of discussion. The current state of toponyms with special reference to the *East Sea/Sea of Japan* geographical naming issue was one strand. Another was the search for a means to move forward the discussion and implementation *East Sea/Sea of Japan* dual naming issue. Berlin proved to be an excellent location for the symposium. While the city does not border a sea, it is located in a geographical region where seas, the control of seas, and the assigning of maritime names have been common practices throughout its history. The sea names topic resonated very well with the participants to the seminar. Nearly all were experts on the topic of maritime toponyms. Other participants represented other scholarly fields of inquiry. In addition, Europe has experienced border changes, geographical name changes for land and water features, reintroduction of cultural names, and other toponymical issues throughout history. The experiences with geographical naming of land and maritime features is well documented by the paper presentations and discussion included in the current book.

INFORMATION

The seminar discussions reinforced the importance of information regarding initial and subsequent geographical names for a feature, cultural and linguistic variants of names, and the ways that geographical names varied through history. Europe is a prime example of records for boundary and changes in geographical names for both land and water features. Records are on old maps and in archives of written accounts ranging from governmental to church records. One especially strong component of recent research on toponyms is the cultural expression that accompanies a geographical name. What is the deepest meaning to the people, indigenous or later arrivals, of a geographical name? The information must be pieced together to tell the story of a name, how it evolved and the exposure of both hindrances and successes in naming a geographical feature. Examples are the newly exerted naming rights of indigenous peoples. Information reveals that sea naming has been largely a colonial process with little attention to the people being colonized. The toponym and naming environment is changing, based on the recovery of cartographic data and research into the cultural as well as the geopolitical influences on naming. The participants to the seminar noted that linguistic and cultural heritage may be the most important consideration when geographical naming is in question.

CARTOGRAPHY AND MAPS

Maps are among the most important sources for toponomic information. The seminar participants heard about and discussed the changes that have occurred in the mapping and map making processing during the past three decades. Cartography continues to

have the responsibility to display the features of Earth in a scholarly and visually acceptable manner. At the national cartographic level, the official maps and navigational charts for ships and airplanes are maintained as the formal depository of toponyms for national land and water features. International organizations generally function outside national territories to recommend, endorse, and mediate differences or changes in geographic names when applicable to their charter.

Historically, names on maps have represented ownership or control of territory. This is abundantly clear in the case of Europe. The seminar participants discussed the challenges of both ends of the geographical naming spectrum in cartography and mapping. First is the introduction and acceptance of the new geographical name. This process may take years to enact the new name. At the other end of the spectrum is realization that forgetting names deeply engrained in cartography, literature, and the minds of people is often a painstaking process. The “acceptance and forgetting” attributes of geographical names were discussed as a strong motivation for dual naming. The dual naming process retains the prior name so that forgetting is not necessary and introduces the new dual name for increased acceptance. In theory, the newly introduced dual name will increase with usage and acceptance over time. It was pointed out in the seminar that this is the idea underlying the dual naming for the *East Sea/Sea of Japan* and an increased acceptance with time.

While cartography and mapping have been crucial to geographical naming, the process of digital mapping has altered the traditional cartography process. It is possible for practically anyone to add to, remove from, change and repurpose maps. Geospatial data and digital mapping are at the root of accurate mapping, but they are subject to modification even after they are produced digitally. The impact is great. No longer do maps used by the public have their greatest presence on paper. Instead, maps are most commonly displayed on the screens of digital devices that are used in all walks of life – from navigating a car to playing a live action video game. The participants to the seminar identified this major transition in the presentation of toponomy and clearly discussed the potential for geographical naming to become less formalized for common usage. For example, software used by websites are frequently able to present a map with certain geographical names if the map user logs in from South Korea, and with different names if the user logs in from Japan. This can be considered a stealth approach to geographical naming. This stealth approach to dual naming can be avoided if both names are formalized and the dual names are accepted. Once dual naming is agreed upon, then the process for presenting the changes on both digital and print maps may be standardized.

The participants to the seminar expressed caution when comparing the geographical names of specific features with the confounding of geographical names based on cultural, national, or ethnic influences. The *East Sea/Sea of Japan* reflects the tension between the name of a feature without consideration for the cultural and ethnic heritage. The seminar participants discussed the possibility that language become a main criterion and two languages referring to the shared toponym and its feature, either cultural or physical, would provide a means to arrive at acceptable solutions to an issue.

The discussion during the seminar also addressed models for naming, renaming, and concurrent naming as a means to resolve issues, with special reference to the *East Sea/Sea of Japan* geographical naming issue. The model currently proposed to resolve

the issue is dual or concurrent naming of the waterbody. It was suggested that other models may be mutually acceptable to both South Korea and Japan. The discussion should be extended to models that have not been the main focus of the discussion regarding the dual naming of the waterbody. It was proposed in the chapter by Paul Woodman that the models to be considered are:

1. Different geographical names in the same language, which is the basis for the current dual naming of the *East Sea/Sea of Japan*;
2. The same name in different languages, such as Tōkai (東海) in Japanese and Donghae (東海) in Korean;
3. Different names in different languages: and

A fourth model discussed during the seminar would entail a newly proposed name for the waterbody that is agreeable to the countries geographically bordering the waters, with the possible retention of current names for adjacent off shore areas by each country.

The advantages of exploring other models in seeking a resolution to the issue is that they provide alternatives. A proposed resolution may not meet with full acceptance of a single party to a naming issue, but the acceptance of an alternative toponym or combination of toponyms that is agreeable to each country may be acceptable.

Dual naming has been the focus in the search for a resolution to the naming issue regarding the body of water between the Korean Peninsula and the Japanese Archipelago. Four countries share marine interests – South Korea, North Korea, Russia, and Japan – and a formal agreement by each of the four to adopt a dual name or an entirely new name would be necessary. The 23rd seminar did not have representation from Russia or North Korea, and one participant attended from Japan. South Korea and European countries were well represented. As the discussions on sea naming move forward, it will be necessary to bring the other countries into the process.

21ST CENTURY MAP AND GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION USERS

The seminar participants discussed the changes that have occurred in reliance on geographical names, especially for navigation. Whereas the geographical names were once major locational elements of navigation, that is no longer the case for modern ships and aircraft. Geographical positioning systems and satellite guided navigation are the common modern means of navigation for military and civilian fleets. Therefore, would two names for the same feature, such as a sea's dual names, result in a reduction of specificity regarding location? Probably not with modern navigation.

The seminar participants discussed several elements of geographic information and names on maps. One point discussed was the impression of power that a name on a map implies to the map user. Sea of Japan implies the sea is politically owned by Japan. This is not the case in reality, but the human perception that results from a particular geographical name may dominate one's thoughts and lasting impressions. What is the importance of a geographical name as a designation of power – both political and perceived? During the colonization period by European countries, the geographical names assigned to locations and places were often intended to denote expressions of culture and power. A second point discussed by participants at the seminar was the role of

geographic names as an attribute of cultural imperialism. When the name of a feature is directly associated with a country, for example, is it the cultural context of the name or the historical event that takes precedence in the naming issue. Sea of Japan, English Channel, Gulf of Finland, Persian Gulf, Arabian Gulf, and Gulf of Mexico are all examples where cultural and historical contexts enter into the geographical naming. What is the priority that should be applied to the 21st century name – cultural or historical? Or, is it a combination of both depending on the context? The third point discussed was the preservation of names that occur on maps. Are preservation decisions based on historical information, geographic information, or on Indigenous information? The accommodation of each of those considerations has been a component of geographical naming. A recent example was the name Salish Sea superimposed on the near coastal waterways and waterbodies of British Columbia, Canada, and Washington State, United States. Salish peoples, indigenous to the region, used those waterways prior to the arrival of Eurasian explorers and colonizers, and the many dialects of the Salish language identified the water and land features.

CHOICES IN ACQUIRING MAP INFORMATION

While the use of print maps in many societies has been altered by computer applications that provide flat screen digital maps and voice instructions to get from one location to another, the digital maps are also evidence that societies retain a major reliance on mapped information. The most widely used digital applications are nearly always at the local scale where wayfinding through unfamiliar streets is necessary. Once the scale becomes smaller (as indicated by the representative fraction of the surface of the screen to the surface of Earth), then visual or computer assisted location searches become necessary. This is when the name of a geographic feature becomes increasingly important. Geospatial information programming can be queried by the user of the map information. If a map user is searching for Athens, Georgia, USA (there are 15 Athens in the USA), or Athens, Greece, the software can place a marker on the location of the place. Google Earth has nearly perfected the search option for locating places by name. In the case of dual naming of a geographic feature, both names are digitally searched on the map as individual names or as dual names. *East Sea/Sea of Japan*, *Sea of Japan/East Sea*, or *East Sea*, or *Sea of Japan* would be located and displayed similarly on the map.

Print maps offer similar information, but the search is a mechanical process using visual clues and information on the map. The waterbody is currently represented by dual naming on a large proportion of the print maps used today, especially those used in textbooks, atlases, and other educational materials.

COMMON NAMES FOR A GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURE

The discussion among participants to the seminar regarding the language of geographical names addressed the vernacular of the local population. In short, it was derived from the question: What name has the local population attached a geographic feature? The seminar participants discussed the importance of learning the most widely used, as well as the complete list, of toponymical references to a geographic feature. The seminar participants described the linguistic connection as an indicator of the local preference for the name of a geographical feature. The importance of listening to the

local people when there are alterations to a name, dual naming, or a new geographical name must be widely recognized. Explorers and colonizers seldom relied on the indigenous population to provide existing geographical names.

ORGANIZATIONS AND POLICIES

Formal processes are dominant in the international approval of geographical name changes. Two organizations are the principal gatekeepers for the process. They are the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) and the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN). Both of those non-governmental organizations deal with the standardization of toponyms in international contexts, and national contexts in some instances. Many countries also have boards of geographic names that are responsible for standardization of national names, but may also have an influence on the decisions regarding international geographic names. At both the international and national levels there are legal agreements and policies that guide proposed changes. Historical and geographical reasons for making changes are based on research and field observations. Legal justification, argumentation and information presentation are components of the approval process, as is the informing of regional and national organizations regarding proposed changes applying to toponyms. The compendium of approved geographic names for water features, which is the most widely used document for sea names, is the IHO Publication S-23, entitled *Limits of Oceans and Seas* (Draft 4th Edition, 2002).

THE ROLE OF EDUCATION IN GEOGRAPHICAL NAMING

A second influence on the public dissemination of the sea names is education. That process entails the presentation of geographical names in cartographic and textual formats in educational materials in both formal and informal settings. The context most regularly associated with studying toponyms is in the formal educational communities, such as schools and colleges. Students in primary, secondary and collegiate education study history and geography using maps and other visual materials. National or local governments may exercise state control and mandate or make recommendations for publishers to follow in the geographical names used on the maps they print for educational use. At other times, publishers respond to the market for educational materials and adjust geographical names on maps and in atlases to accommodate the broadest market. In the latter case, if educational leaders or education constituencies (parents and students) recommend that dual naming be represented on maps, then publishers respond accordingly. This has been the means for introducing the dual naming of *East Sea/Sea of Japan* in educational materials.

Informal education is the second manner in which education has a role in raising the public's awareness of geographical naming issues. Digital media is a major means to inform the public regarding the *East Sea/Sea of Japan* naming issue through visual information. This process is well known in marketing and advertising. The participants to the seminar observed several examples of non-formal educational processes used with airline maps, television weather maps, and current events maps that displayed the dual naming for the *East Sea/Sea of Japan*.

The discussions during the seminar addressed both broad and narrow aspects of informing and educating about geographical names. What are effective means to inform the public of a geographical naming issue? That question continues to be a focus of the dissemination of the dual geographical name. The formal acceptance of the dual naming of the dual naming for the waterbody between Korea and Japan may occur once the name is widely used internationally in education and the media.

CONCLUSIONS

The participants to the seminar engaged in discussing the papers in the current book and hearing examples of geographic naming from different perspectives and contexts. The consensus that emerged from the 23rd symposium may be summarized in four points:

1. Toponyms reflect ownership and power and the political decision makers have the greatest say in changing a geographical name;
2. Cultural influence is important in determining a toponym and can result in pejorative decisions under majority/minority imbalances in a population;
3. Local people are not often involved or attended to in selecting or changing a toponym; and
4. Historical events and occupations, including those that are cultural, economic and military, greatly influence original toponyms and prove difficult to change.

The quest for social justice in toponyms is challenged by each of the four conditions expressed in the seminar discussion.

The 23rd International Seminar on Sea Names represented a wide philosophical and review of the naming in general, and the dual naming of the *East Sea/Sea of Japan* in particular. Critical analysis of the toponyms and what they represent beyond the name of a place or feature became more frequent as the participants discussed a range of naming issues. The model of dual naming which has been pursued for several years to resolve the *East Sea/Sea of Japan* naming issue was questioned, with the suggestion that other models be developed and applied in the search for a resolution. The seminar participants were curious regarding the position of the Japanese populace on the dual naming issue. Governmental policy positions are known, but what about the attitude towards dual naming by the general public in Japan. The discourse of the seminar addressed the topics delivered by the authors of papers, and then the discussions ranged outward to an “if then, then what” format that encouraged novel ideas to emerge. The nagging question that reoccurs is: What are the benefits for both Japan and South Korea of the dual naming of the waterbody? Any agreement to use the dual names, *East Sea/Sea of Japan*, would require a win-win scenario for both countries. There are benefits to both countries and they are not precisely the same benefits. Perhaps a future seminar will focus on articulating benefits with greater participation by Japanese scholars. The discussions in the 23rd Seminar suggest that the time has come to involve the public, media specialists, and scholars from both countries to study and discuss the issue. The 23rd Seminar has resulted in a sharper focus on the issue of dual naming and possible ways forward.