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*Updating the issue of the Geographical Sea Name:
East Sea or Sea of Japan**

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Abstract

This paper outlines an historical background to the name given to the sea that lies between the Korean peninsula, Russia, and the Japanese archipelago based on a series of contributions presented at the International Sea Name Seminars hosted by The Society for East Sea in Korea since 1995. In addition, the review includes recent progress of the campaign by Korea to have the name changed, and the reactions of the related international communities as well as the United Nations and the International Hydrographic Organization (IHO).

Historical reviews on the usage of the sea name in old maps have been done extensively by Chinese, Russians, Japanese, Korean and other scholars. The sea area has been referred to variably as the Sea of Korea, the Gulf of Corea, the Eastern Sea, the Oriental Sea, and the Sea of Japan until 19th Century.

It is urged that, in order to avoid international confusion regarding the use of the sea name, the international community should rapidly resolve this matter based on the existing resolutions passed by United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names and IHO. As an interim alternative, the international community

is encouraged to follow the general format adopted by most cartographers and other map users, which is the adoption of the two names, 'East Sea' and Sea of Japan, simultaneously.

* This paper slightly modified "New Trends in Identification of the East Sea" presented in The Eighth International Seminar on the Naming of Seas" Vladivostok, Russia, July 24-26, 2002.

1. The Historical Precedent for the Geographical Name of East Sea

The first record of the name 'East Sea' can be traced back to a description of King Dongmyeong of the Goguryeo Kingdom in "The History of the Three Kingdoms." The period corresponds to 59 B.C.

The content reads a new nation Goguryeo will be established in the place of North Buyeo so it says to North Buyeo to move to Gaseopwon at the East Sea shoreline. This record shows that the name 'East Sea' had been in use even before the appearance of the three nations, and that Korea has used the name perpetually for about 2,000 years.

The name 'East Sea' also appears on the epigraph of a monument built in memory of King Gwanggaeto in A.D. 414 in Jian, on the north side of mid-Amnokgang (Yalu River), northeast of China.

On most of Korea's old maps produced after the 17th century, 99% of those that mention sea names carry the name 'East Sea'. The name is indicated at the shore, not on the sea on 「Paldo chongdo; map of eight provinces of Korea」 in 『*Sinjung tongkuk yojisungnam* the augmented survey of the geography of Korea』 published in 1531.

The reason why the name 'East Sea' was recorded on the shore is because it marked the location of the Donghae shinmyo (east sea gods shrine) where a religious service to the east sea gods was performed. This also reflects to the fact that the characters on maps included in '*Sinjung tongkuk yojisungnam* (the augmented survey of the geography of Korea)' marked the locations on the land where the country held various ceremonies. Hence this has important meaning; the country officially named the sea 'East Sea', and it serves as valuable evidence.

After the 18th century, Korean maps provide increasing evidence of markings of 'East Sea' both amount in number and type. In fact, when looking at maps that record 'East Sea' there are more government compiled maps than privately-made maps coming down from that era. Others also exist: one or two types of maps that use other names such as 'Changhae; blue sea', 'Tongmyong Taeyang; East Sea great ocean' or 'Tongyanghae; oriental sea'.

Compared with this, the name 'Sea of Japan' or the name of the country 'Japan' comes into existence only in the 8th century. In fact, these names do not appear in the oldest documents in Japan 『*Nihon shoki*』 or 『*Kojiki*』 but recorded only in China's 『*New History of Tang China*』 or Korea's 『*History of the Three Nations*』 . King Moonmu(670) parts in 『*History of the Three Nations*』 states that "Japan changed its name to 'Nippon', calling itself so because it is situated close to the place of sunrise."

It means that the name 'Japan', not 'Sea of Japan' appeared 700 years after Korea had been using the name 'East Sea' since 59 B.C., while the name 'Sea of Japan'

came 1,000 years later appearing in 「Complete Map of the World」 made in China by an Italian priest Matteo Ricci in 1602 for the first time. Hence the name 'Sea of Japan' only came into use 1650 years after we began using the name 'East Sea'.

The sea area didn't appear on maps of the world until the exploration by the West to the East began extensively in the 16th century. From the 17th to the 19th century, Westerners used various names for this sea area, including 'the Sea of Korea', 'the Sea of Joseon (the name of the last Korean royal dynasty)', 'the Oriental Sea', 'the Sea of Japan', and 'the Sea of China'. However among the various names, the names used most frequently were related to Korea such as 'the Sea of Korea', 'the Sea of Joseon' and the 'East Sea'. In particular, it's the typical case that the name 'Mar Coria' indicated on the map of the world by a Portuguese Manoel Godinho De Eredia(1563-1623) in 1615.

The Korea Society for East Sea recently examined more than 120 papers presented at international seminars over the past 10 years, as well as 762 maps produced mostly in Europe between the 16th and 19th centuries and preserved in major libraries around the world. This study revealed that 440 of the maps, representing 58% of the total, contained references to Korea in naming the sea area in question, while only 122 maps (16%) referred to Japan. The result clearly shows that until the 19th century, references to Korea in naming this specific sea area enjoyed far wider international acceptance than any reference to Japan.

2. International Conferences on Standardization

Two international agencies deal directly with standardization issues concerning the names of seas: the U.N. Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (UNCSGN) and the United Nations Group of Experts of Geographical Names (UNGEGN). The UNGEGN meets every two years, and the UNCSGN convenes on a five-year cycle. Berlin hosted its latest assembly in August of 2002.

The primary goal of these agencies is to ensure that the world is using the standardized names of geographical features appropriately and correctly. These organizations believe that accurate use of standardized geographic names is a crucial factor in improving communication between nations as well as socio-economic conditions among individual nations in disputes and the world in general. Since 1991 when it became a member of the United Nations, Korea has dispatched representatives to these international organizations and positively participated in their activities.

The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) is also required to take action to effect the change of the name of the sea.

3. Efforts to Restore the Proper Name

From the mid-1960s, as Koreans began to move into the international arena, they became concerned about the fact that the East Sea had been erroneously identified as the Sea of Japan on foreign maps. Korean students and media correspondents abroad brought the matter to national attention. As some old maps were discovered, public interest in the East Sea controversy further increased. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, the effort to rectify the name of the Sea of Japan did not gain wide public participation.

In the 1990s, the Korean government, along with civic organizations, began to launch a more concerted campaign to restore the proper name of the East Sea. In 1992, the government brought the matter to the attention of the 6th U.N. Conference on the Standardization of Geographic Names (UNCSGN), requesting that the incorrect name "Sea of Japan" be replaced with East Sea.

In 1997, the efforts resulted in Resolution III/20 at the Conference. The resolution called for consultations among concerned parties to resolve the dispute. Despite this UNCSGN resolution, Japan refused to address the issue and has failed to engage in any serious talks with Korea to date.

Even though Japan has refused to cooperate, the Korean government nevertheless kept raising the matter at international forums, voicing its position again at the 7th UNCSGN conference in January of 1998, held in New York City. The Korean government argued that the use of "Sea of Japan" for East Sea was never justified and that the situation must be resolved as soon as possible. It also sought to build new awareness about the East Sea question among the members of the conference and eventually established it as a legitimate issue in dispute. Subsequently, the Korean government's "Proposal for the Names of Geographical Features Beyond a Single Sovereignty" gained new momentum as a working committee of the UNCSGN began to draft a resolution for debate at the main assembly of the conference.

However, the Japanese persistently opposed these efforts and refused to take part in a debate over the East Sea dispute at the UNCSGN main conference. Japan alone opposed the discussion, arguing that the working committee failed to apply all related basic principles during the drafting process.

Despite the Japanese opposition, the main conference went ahead and adopted a Chairman's Summing-Up statement supporting the position of the Korean government. Toward the end of the conference, this statement was accompanied by a decision, directing that both the names East Sea and Sea of Japan should be used simultaneously until the dispute is resolved, and that all issues concerning names of features beyond a single sovereign nation's borders be dealt with at subsequent UNCSGN conferences. For Korea, the adoption of these decisions at the conference meant that the dispute over the East Sea had taken on new significance worthy of full international attention and that there would be passage of more resolutions to

this effect at future UNCSGN conferences.

In January 2000, the Korean government presented three working papers to the 20th assembly of the UNGEGN in New York City.

One of the papers, the WP-24 (Working Group on Evaluation and Implementation), prepared jointly by Korea and South Africa, called for an assessment of implementation efforts over all resolutions that the UNGEGN assemblies have passed in the past. The paper was later adopted, providing an important opportunity to review the status of the resolutions.

The Korean government, then, presented another proposal to the United Nations, the WP-96 (Implementation of Resolution III/20 on Geographical Features Beyond a Single Sovereignty), officially questioning the legal validity of Sea of Japan. The United Nations is currently reviewing the Korean proposition. The UNCSGN (2002 in New York) and the UNGEGN (2004 in New York and 2006 in Vienna) noted the disputes on the name of the concerned area and encouraged bilateral or multilateral efforts to find a solution acceptable to all.

The 8th UNCSGN Committee (2002 in Berlin) encouraged the three countries to continue their efforts to find a solution acceptable to all of them, taking into account relevant resolutions, or else to agree to differ, and to report the outcome of their discussions to the next Conference (2007). The Chairman stated in his summary that individual countries could not impose specific names on the international community and standardization could be promoted only when a consensus existed.

In 1994, the Korean government continued its work with the IHO, requesting the organization that the erroneous use of Sea of Japan be rectified. Since then, the government has renewed the request each year, urging IHO member nations to start using East Sea, and not Sea of Japan or Japan Sea. In 1997, the Korean government took the issue to the 15th IHO meeting held in Monaco. In a booklet the government distributed there, entitled "The Limits of Oceans and Seas," Korea reiterated that the use of the term Sea of Japan was wrong and argued for the restoration of the name, East Sea. The organization plans to make public its final decision in 2007. The member nations will then state their official positions on the dispute in accordance with the decision.

With regard to the names of geographical features, the IHO has in place a 1974 resolution (described as A 4.2.6), which requires that the name of a given geographical feature should specify all the names being used by the parties concerned until the dispute is settled and an agreement on a single name is reached.

Section A 4.2.6 of the 1974 Resolution reads as follows:

"It is recommended that where two or more countries share a given geographical feature (such as a bay, a strait, channel or archipelago) under different names,

they should endeavor to reach agreement on a single name for the feature concerned. If they have different official languages and cannot agree on a common name form, it is recommended that the name forms of each of the languages in question should be accepted for charts and publications unless technical reasons prevent this practice on small scale charts; e.g., English Channel/La Manche."

The guideline above carries the same language as Resolution II/25, the Names of Features Beyond a Single Sovereignty, adopted at the 2nd conference of the UNCSGN held in London in 1972. Five years later, at the 3rd UNCSGN conference hosted by Athens in 1977, the United Nations adopted a revised resolution, labeled III/20. Under this revision, the Korean government issued a statement of request that East Sea/Japan Sea be accepted as the standard name of the sea. To this day, Japan rejects this proposition.

4. Current Trends in Identifying East Sea

The efforts of the Korean government and civic organizations have begun to yield encouraging results in the campaign to restore the name East Sea to official international use. Organizations and map-makers are beginning to use the name East Sea, some using parenthesis to include one or the other name, others adopting a new method of concurrent use of both names, East Sea and Japan Sea (or Sea of Japan).

Rand McNally, one of the largest map-makers in the United States, used Sea of Japan (East Sea) in its 1997 world atlas (Rand McNally and Company, 28-31). The Most Comprehensive World Atlas Ever Created posted at (www.encarta.com/Microsoft/2000) also included East Sea in its description of the sea, naming it Sea of Japan (East Sea). The Humanitarian Response Planning Map, a 1988 publication by the United Nations Environment Programme Global Resources, also named the geographic feature the Sea of Japan (East Sea).

Along the same lines, the map posted at www.reliefweb.int/map.nsf/wLatestMaps in 1998 by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) went so far as to use the Korean word "Tonghae" for East Sea and named it as the Sea of Japan (Tonghae).

It should be noted that using parenthesis around East Sea is not exactly in compliance with the concurrent use requirement. But, it is a sign of progress, which takes the issue a step in the right direction.

There are more encouraging examples. The Cartographic Satellite Atlas of the World, which the Canadian Warwick Publishing Inc. published in 1997, complied with the standardized practice and used the generic terms, Tong-Hae/Nippon-Kai (Japan Sea).

Encyclopedia Britannica in its 1998 CD-ROM named the sea as "East Sea (Sea of Japan)" in Korea-related sections, while using "Sea of Japan (East Sea)" in the sections on Japan. This method appears to have been adopted in due consideration of the sovereign control of waters contiguous to the concerned countries. Both the New York Times and the Merriam-Webster Atlas 2001 are currently following the same format.

Also seen is an increasing tendency among map-makers around the world to accept the legitimacy of East Sea, and the number of maps favoring the use of East Sea over Japan Sea is growing.

The map, Democratic People's Republic of Korea Crop Use Intensity, published by the U.S. Agency for International Development in 1997, was the first example of this noticeable change, using East Sea only with no reference to Sea of Japan.

In 1999, another case appeared when The Bulletin 49(2) (Orographic Map of Korea, p.135), published by the International Geographical Union, identified the geographic feature as EAST SEA (Sea of Japan), giving East Sea priority. A year later (2000), "Geography: Realms, Regions and Concepts" by H.J. de Blij and Peter O. Muller (John Wiley & Sons, Inc.) replaced all its old names of the sea with East Sea (Sea of Japan) throughout the book. A 1998 seminar of the U.S. National Council for Geographic Education, held in Indianapolis, Indiana, apparently convinced the authors of the book of the validity of using East Sea. An earlier version of the book (1997) offered no reference to East Sea, only identifying the geographic feature as Sea of Japan.

The website, (http://darkwing.uoregon.edu/~felsing/kstuff/korean_Peninsula.GIF), of the University of Oregon followed suit, using only East Sea on its Korea maps. The university substituted Sea of Japan with East Sea when taking over the maps from their original publisher, the Central Intelligence Agency, to post them on the website. The maps bear Code Number, 802191 (R00141) 7-93.

Meanwhile, the National Geographic Society (NGS) relied on a quite different method of identifying the sea, adopting East Sea (Sea of Japan) for the use of its Korea maps while inscribing Sea of Japan (East Sea) elsewhere on its atlas. The new practice came as a result of years of persuasion by the Korean government. Until 1996, the NGS had cited regulations of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names, rejecting Korea's request for the restoration of East Sea. That policy was modified in January of 2000, when the first Korean-language edition of National Geographic magazine was published in Korea. The society announced at the time that it would simultaneously use East Sea and Sea of Japan on all the maps in the magazine. The announcement was carried out a year later, in 2001.

A similarly encouraging sign of change is taking place in Japan itself, where many tourism maps on Korea and other materials published there began to identify the sea as East Sea. Some of them are using the names East Sea and Japan Sea simultaneously, and others are putting East Sea in parenthesis next to Japan Sea.

There were more cases in 1998 and 2005 that followed the rule of concurrent use of both names. The Internet maps at (www.atlapedia.com/online/maps/political/Korea), produced by the Latimer Clarke Corp. Pty. Ltd in 1998, marked the sea in question as EAST SEA/SEA OF JAPAN. And, a 1998 German atlas identified the geographic feature as Japanisches Meer (Japan Sea) and Ostmeer (East Sea) in compliance with the concurrent use principle. And most of maps in the report of TRANSBOUNDARY DIAGNOSTIC ANALYSIS(RAS/98/G31 - UNDP/Global Environment Facility - Tumen River Strategic Action Program, 2002) used both names. Canadian ITMB(International Travel Maps & Books, 2002) map publisher follows the rule of IHO resolution. The publisher uses both 'East Sea(Sea of Japan)' and 'East Sea' only in some pages.

Further examples:

'East Sea/ Sea of Japan' by Webster's Concise World Atlas, New York, Barnes & Noble Books (2002).

'East Sea/Sea of Japan' by Bertelsmann Universal Atlas mit Landerlexikon, Munchen, Bertelsmann Lexikon Institut (2005).

'East Sea (Sea of Japan)' by The Times Complete History of the World, Sixed Edition, New York, Barnes & Noble Books (2004).

'Japanisches Meer/Ostsee(Tong Hae)' by Schweizer Weltatlas, Herausgeber, Konferenz der Kantonalen Erziehungsdirektoren (EDK) (2002).

'Sea of Japan (East Sea)' by Philip's Concise Canadian World Atlas in Association with The Royal Geographical Society with the Institute of British Geographers (2004).

'Sea of Japan (East Sea)' by National Geographic Atlas of the Ocean, Washington D.C., National Geographic Society (2001).

5. A Sea without a Name

The use of East Sea has begun to win greater international recognition and more organizations have come to accept the usage. International news media and map-makers have gradually agreed that the description of Sea of Japan is not justified. In the process, however, a new practice is emerging: not identifying the sea at all, out of political consideration or due to a lack of space.

For example, since January 2001, CNN abandoned its use of Sea of Japan, airing maps of Korea and Japan with no particular name in reference to the sea. The move, apparently meant to strike a balance between Korea and Japan, is nevertheless significant because it suggests that the company finally has recognized the invalidity

of using Sea of Japan.

A similar example has appeared in Japan. The Economic Research Institute for Northeast Asia (ERINA) in Niigata, Japan, is an institute that pays keen attention to issues concerning the geographic feature in question. It has recently dropped its old policy of using Sea of Japan and stopped identifying the sea in its publications.

For whatever the reasons, not identifying the sea at all is not acceptable. The Catalogue of Admiralty Charts and Publication, put out in 2001 by the British Hydrographic Office, identified all the seas in the region except for the East Sea. Given the importance of well-documented sea maps for navigational safety, this new trend of not identifying the sea should be reconsidered.

One more practice worthy of note involves the maps recently published by UN organizations. The Beijing office of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has been working on a project known as the Tumen River Economic Development Project since 1991. It has published three maps in 2000. These maps, all published in China and distributed a year later, bear no identification of the sea, even though they identified all other seas in the region. The maps were entitled Tumen River Economic Development Area and Northeast Asia, Economic Centers of Northeast Asia, and Economic Map of the Tumen River Economic Development Area. The North Korean map (Map No.4163), published in 2001 by the U.N. Department of Public Information Cartographic Section, followed suit, carrying no name for the sea area.

In most recent case, ironically FIFA did not produce the official map for World Cup 2002 even it's event hold in both Korea and Japan. The related web pages also carried a very brief sketched map without sea names. At the same time, one of map company, Sohagkwan(小學館), distributed guide map for World Cup 2002 without any sea names.

In addition to this new trend, the International Hydrographic Organization has once sought to designate geographic features being disputed as undefined areas. However, its matter is now pending situation for further consultation between concerning countries.

To be sure, these new phenomena have come about as a result of the recent growing recognition that the use of Japan Sea would no longer go unchallenged. But, it should be clear to all concerned that navigational safety must never be compromised on account of a dispute over the name of a sea area.

6. For Solution

It was upon the publication of the Limits of Oceans and Seas in 1929, eight years after the formation of the International Hydrographic Organization, that Korea's East Sea was formally replaced with Japan Sea. The restoration of the name East Sea is,

in fact, part of Korean efforts to put an end to the painful legacy of its colonization by Japan.

It seems that the time has come for Japan to join in the debate about the East Sea and to play an active role in the solution of the East Sea problem. Furthermore, it should show a positive attitude toward establishing the simultaneous use of East Sea and Japan Sea as a fully accepted international practice. U.N. and IHO resolutions have already called for such a cooperative settlement of the issue. And, when need arises in the future, the parties concerned could convene a new round of discussions to decide on an entirely new name for the geographical feature in question.

For over last 15 years, the Korean government has exerted consistent efforts to restore the proper name to the East Sea. It worked closely with various international organizations, such as the U.N. and the International Hydrographic Organization, requesting that the unjustifiable use of "Japan Sea" be duly rectified. It has hosted international seminars, encouraging scholars and institutions to conduct research on the East Sea. At the 11th International Seminar held in Washington D.C., USA, 2005, a respected participant thoughtfully pointed out that "Geographical Names from one's own language region are a treasure-trove of knowledge about a given nation's past, of former settlement relations, expressed values and of material and spiritual culture." He also emphasized that maps and geographical information play an increasingly special role in shaping the way people understand the world, and hence, the world should embrace the use of multiple names when standardization is undesirable or impossible.

In conclusion, Korea's concerted endeavors have finally brought about a significant change of perception in the international community with many maps adopting the simultaneous use of East Sea and Japan Sea. Further efforts should be made by international organizations along with Korea and Japan to agree on a single name for the body of water lying between the two countries.

(Reference)

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