

## Differing Korean and Japanese Perceptions of the East Sea / Sea of Japan in the Nineteenth Century

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## **Differing Korean and Japanese Perceptions of the East Sea/Sea of Japan in the Nineteenth Century**

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### **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to understand the historical and political contexts from which the names for the East Sea (Donghae, 東海) / Sea of Japan (Nihon-kai, 日本海) were traditionally construed and subsequently changed in the nineteenth century by examining historical documents used by Korean and Japanese fishermen, those in the fishing industries, the ruling class, and military. This work throws some light on the disparity between the nineteenth century shift in cartographic records and what the local people had traditionally called the sea. This paper first examines the concepts of territory, territorial waters, and borders that were used in traditional nomenclature and then discusses the shift to “modern” terminology that stems from the advent of colonial hegemony and incorporation of Western ideology. The focus is on the variety of historical processes in which East Asian perceptions of this marine space in the late nineteenth century were supplanted by modern colonial perceptions.

The sea between Korea and Japan is often written as the “Sea of Japan” instead of the “East Sea” on contemporary maps. However, it is a well-known fact that until as recently as the middle of the nineteenth century, the sea was most frequently known as the “East Sea,” the “Great Sea of the Lower East” (Dongjeodaehae, 東抵大海)” (Yeungnam University Museum 1998: 22) (Figure 1), the “Sea of Corea” (Lee, Jong-Hak ed. 2002: 77) (Figure 2), the “Sea of Joseon (Joseon-hae, 朝鮮海)” (Figure 3), and the “Korean Strait (Gaoli-huixia, 高麗海峽)” (Wang 1880; Howland 1996: 189 cited) (Figure 4); these names are found on maps from Korea, China, and Japan.

Maps of the world drawn by diplomats, scholars, soldiers, and explorers from the Netherlands, France, and Russia in the early eighteenth century often record the sea as the “Japan Sea,” with a frequency that increased remarkably at the end of the nineteenth century. However, commercial agreements, fisheries agreements, Japanese fishermen, and high-ranking officials in the fisheries associations called this same sea the “Sea of Joseon” in the late nineteenth century, contrary to this other trend. There are some old Japanese maps that called the sea between Korea and Japan the “West Sea of Japan” (Kim, Ho-Dong 2010: 35), but this was not the most common usage. The portion of the sea which Japan refers to as the “Sea of Japan” that sits adjacent to Korea is labeled as

the “Sea of Joseon,” while that which abuts the Japanese archipelago is referred to as the “West Sea of Japan” (Lee, Sang-Tae 2009: 140). While the notion of a “Sea of Japan” existed in the region prior to the twentieth century, it did not refer to the area in which it is currently applied; in particular, Japan appears to have started favoring the current usage of the “Sea of Japan” after it won the Russo–Japanese War in 1904 as a reflection of its colonial expansionist policy. At one point, this “Sea of Japan” extended all the way up to Taiwan.

The approach of many Korean and Japanese scholars to the issue of the name of this sea has been based on historical and linguistic origins and records on maps, cultural and political backgrounds, and differing interpretations of various international conventions on maritime and geographic names (e.g. the International Hydrographic Organization and United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names) (Park, Chan-Ho 2012). Specific examples include the research trend of Japanese scholars in relation to the “Sea of Japan” (Shim 2007) and the “East Sea” on ancient maps of the world (Oh 2004). Meanwhile, other research has surveyed the frequency of names as found on ancient maps from around the world (Jung 2010), attributed naming conventions to divergent geographic viewpoints (Jung 2011), and ascribed the variation to the advent of region-specific geographical knowledge in the West (Akioka 1955; Aoyama 1993; Kobayashi 2009). There has been discussion on the legitimacy of the name “East Sea” and how the names of world seas are formed (Choo 2007). These studies examine the



**Figure 1** Sixteenth-century map of Kangwon-do in Dongnam-do (東覽圖). The sea is called the “Great Sea of the Lower East” (Dongjeo-Daehae, 東抵大海) as seen at the edge of the right-hand side of the map (Yeungnam University Museum 1998: 22).



Figure 2 1754 accurate map of China.  
Here the sea is called the “Sea of Corea” (Lee, Jong-Hak ed. 2002: 77).

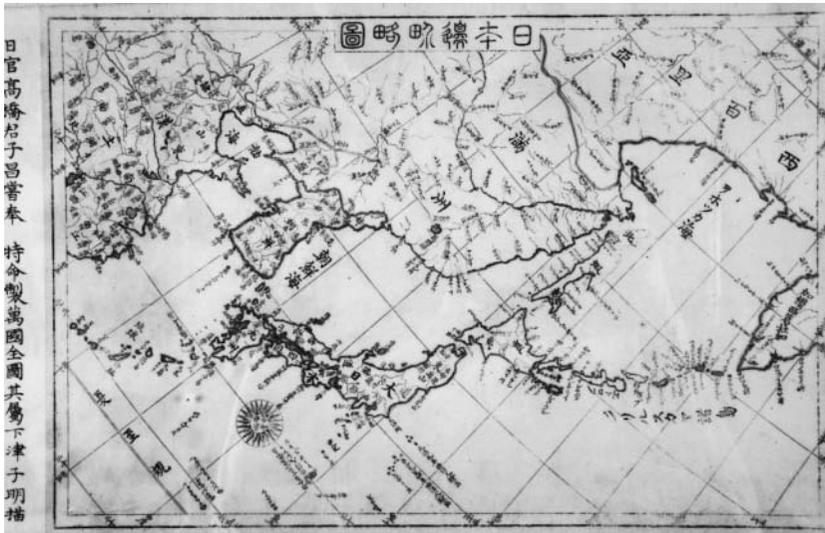


Figure 3 Sketch map of the limits of Japan (日本境界略圖 1809).  
Kageyasu Takahashi (高橋景保) called the sea the “Sea of Joscon” (Lee, Jong-Hak ed. 2002: 34).



Figure 4 Chinese scholar Wang Zhichun (王之春) called the sea between Korea and Japan the “Korean Strait” (高麗海峽) in 1880 (Howland 1996: 189).

processes that result in divergent names using a perspective of historical precedence based mainly on ancient maps. That is, previous studies have ignored the issue of how the area was construed locally, and the background of changes in naming conventions.

In the late nineteenth century, the frequency of using the name “Sea of Japan” increased as the Meiji Government expanded its military and diplomatic dominance over Korea after the Sino–Japanese War and tried to systemize the nomenclature of the marine space between Korea and Japan. However, this is but one process behind the discursive formation of divergent naming conventions and it prioritizes the territorial expansionist policies of Meiji-Era Japan with regard to nationalizing nearby territories, essentially ignoring other cultural and political factors at work behind the shift towards using “Sea of Japan.” Furthermore, it avoids examining what terms locals were using before that time and the perspectives those terms reflected.

It is important to address these limitations in previous discussions on the divergence of the “Sea of Japan” and the “East Sea.” This is because the trend towards favoring the former term (as opposed to the latter) in the mid- to late nineteenth century reflected a changing political and military climate in the region, which begs the question of how locals previously construed the maritime space between Korea and Japan, and what perspectives were reflected therein. In other words, how did East Asians view this space before the nineteenth century?

## 2. History of Sea Names in the Nineteenth Century

It was at the end of the nineteenth century that the name of this maritime space changed remarkably; many cases show that the name “the East Sea” was dropped in favor of the “Sea of Japan” as seen on Japanese and foreign maps. Therefore, it is crucial to examine the discursive formation of these different terms as it demonstrates changing traditional perceptions of territories in the region. The way the expansionist Meiji Government viewed surrounding spaces fundamentally differed from the traditional conceptualizations of space in East Asian societies.

First, we must review the cultural and political process of establishing identity claims and the history of differences between how Western colonial powers referred to the sea compared to the preexisting ideologies of East Asian societies. This involves considering different opinions arising from concepts established during the process of the Japanese government adopting modern Western definitions of regional maritime spaces in relationship to names that were previously based on how the locals themselves viewed the region.

Prior to the incorporation of Western perceptions of East Asian territory, a general local cultural view of spatial organization pervaded the region. This general East Asian spatial recognition categorized the heavens, the earth, the Sun, the Moon, constellations, mountains, seas, rivers, and other geographic features into a hierarchy with deities representing cardinal directions. The cardinal directions were associated with deities and colors, and annual ritual sacrifices were carried out as state-sponsored rites. This was true for the Joseon Dynasty prior to the nineteenth century.

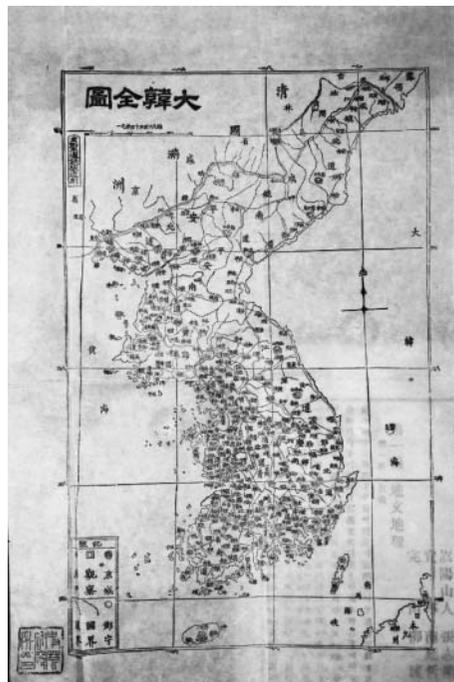
For example, the Joseon Dynasty practiced such rites for the South Sea at an altar south of Naju (羅州) in Jeolla Province (全羅道), the West Sea at an altar to the west of PungCheon (豐川) in Hwanghae Province (黃海道), while the rites for the North Sea had been discontinued (Lee, Young-Choon 2013: 132). The *Joseon Wangjo-Silrok* (朝鮮王朝實錄, *Annals of the Joseon Dynasty*) reports that in 1897 when noblemen in Korea paid tribute to the heavens and the earth in the Hwangudan (圜丘壇, an altar for ancestral rites), King Gojong (高宗) ordered them to also perform ancestral rites for deities on big mountains, seas, and great rivers in the “five directions” in 1903. At this time, the East Sea was the name of a maritime space whose reference was based on its directional location, as was also the case with the West Sea, the South Sea, and the North Sea; generally, it meant “the sea east of Eurasia,” “the east sea of Balhae (渤海),” or the sea east of the Korean peninsula.

In line with the Joseon Dynasty’s belief that deities existed in each direction, they named territories accordingly, often conflating the names of inland and maritime spaces—especially with regard to sites used for religious rituals. For example, East Asian peoples and Koreans believed that they had to perform ancestral rites to a dragon deity in the sea. Koreans used the term “East Sea” to refer to a location inland that was claimed by Yangyang (襄陽) for ancestral rites to the aforementioned dragon deity. Ergo, the “East Sea” could denote the maritime space east of the continent as well as the inland territory that contained the Donghae shrine (東海神廟) and ritually significant spaces (i.e. the East

Sea's sacred lands) seen as corresponding with the East Sea ancestral rites. As also found in the *Wangjo-Silrok (Annals of the Joseon Dynasty)*, in 1903 the king had designated the area of Yangyang in Gangwon Province (江原道) as Donghae (東海, East Sea) and ordered the performance of national rites for the dragon deity therein. In other words, Donghae referred to both a maritime space (i.e. the East Sea) and ritually significant inland space. Furthermore, because of the manner in which these terms are recorded, they reflect a sovereign view of both territory and policy.

The spatial perceptions of Koreans until the early 1890s were different from concepts that determined borders based on Western concepts of longitude and latitude, meaning that Korean people recognized borders using traditional or customary rules. This was no different in China and Japan at the time. Such views started to lose prominence from the end of the 1890s as each East Asian country developed national and public views that combined traditional concepts stemming from the past with new Western concepts based on discrete measurements.

The concept of the East Sea may be found in the *Joseon Wangjo-Silrok*, period maps, topographies, fisheries bulletins, and diplomatic documents in Korea. The end of the nineteenth century saw changes though, as differences developed between terms noting the sea in terms of being east of Korea as opposed to the “Sea of Japan.” The abovementioned historical records and references showed that Korea also employed terms



**Figure 5** 1907 general map of Greater Korea (Daehan-jeondo, 大韓全圖). Korean administrators called the sea “The Korean Sea” (Daehan-hae, 大韓海) (Lee, Jong-Hak ed. 2002: 40).

like the “Sea of Korea” or “Korean Sea.” Additionally, Korea used the term the “Sea of Joseon” when they signed the Commercial Trade Agreement for Japanese Residents in Joseon (朝日通商章程) between Korea and Japan in 1883. This was the official name of the sea between Korea and Japan in a period of early emergent national identities; it is found in the Fishery Bulletin published by the Japanese Fishery Association (Dainihon Suisankai 1890), the hydrography reports published by the Department of Waterways of the Japanese Navy (Dainihon Teikoku Kaigun Suirobu 1886, 1894), and various old maps at the end of the nineteenth century. Within a decade it would “...officially be called the Sea of Japan,” (Sekizawa 1893: 11–12), as noted in the Japanese Fishery Bulletin (日本水産誌) published in 1893. The name “Sea of Joseon” had started to be replaced even by Japanese fishermen less than a generation after being officially recognized.

The Joseon Dynasty ended in 1897 and the country was rechristened the Greater Korean Empire (Daehan-jeguk, 大韓帝國) prior to Japanese annexation. A map from 1907 (Figure 5) refers to the sea as the “Sea of Greater Korea” (Daehan-hae, 大韓海). In 1899 there also appears a reference to the “Sea of Korea” (Hanhae, 韓海), which seems to indicate an abbreviation based on the “Sea of Greater Korea”; this indicates that the two terms were likely concurrent and expressed a similar precolonial view of the maritime space among both Korean and Japanese fishermen and officials.

The ensuing preference for calling the space the “Sea of Japan” may be an outcome of the reification process of the imperial system in the late nineteenth century rather than something based on geographical, historical, or directional features or concepts in pre-expansionist Japan. The “Sea of Japan” in the 1890s sometimes meant the coastal waters between Korea and Kyushu, whereas the “Sea of Korea” meant the coastal waters of Korea or the seas nearest Korea. In addition, the local Japanese names for their coastal waters reflected locally situated geographic perspectives (i.e. seas east of Korea would be seen as being west of Japan) as the Japanese Fisheries Bulletin showed that both the “Sea of Korea” and the “Sea of Joseon” were used until 1910.

### 3. Names of Seas and Classification of Maritime Space

Until the end of the nineteenth century, Korea applied the term an “interior sea” or an “inland sea” to a wide stretch of maritime space which foreign battleships were not permitted to enter without approval from the national government, as found in the *Joseon Wangjo-Silrok* written in the nineteenth year of King Gojong (1876). The extent of this territorial sea was about 100 Korean *ri* (approximately 40 km) from the coast. This is a very specific technical definition promulgated in national policy. In 1895, the East Sea played an important role as a marine defense area in that the king frequently dispatched *sutogwan* (搜討官, investigative envoys) to prevent Japanese people from illegally fishing and logging around Ulleung Island (鬱陵島). This means that national authority was continuously exerted over the East Sea. The concept of the interior sea lasted from the end of the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century and is akin to the concept of the 24-nautical-mile sea zone recognized by countries around the world. This conception of interior seas may be seen as equivalent to the territorial and patrimonial seas of today.

It was defined as the breadth of sea that could be seen from the highest point on the coast, including nearby islands; at the time, Western societies typically referred to the inshore distance as the reach of a cannon-shot from coastal artillery used to designate territorial waters in accordance with maritime laws (also known as the “three-mile rule”) (Shaw 2008: 568).

Korean society conceptualized the names of seas and maritime spaces differently than Europe societies. Considering the sea as being categorized into coastal waters, interior seas, and exterior seas, Korea distinguished between them based on different comprehensive criteria that included the concept of passage.

Inshore areas and coastal waters documented in the *Joseon Wangjo-Silrok*, Hwangseong Sinmun (皇城新聞, Imperial Castle Newspaper), Dokrip Shinmun (獨立新聞, Independence Newspaper), and Hanseong Sunbo (漢城旬報) indicate inshore seas as the maritime spaces near land where fishermen usually carried out their fishing operations, as well as the areas where cargo was trafficked by foreign merchant ships. This is a marine space of approximately 10 Korean ri or around 4 km.

Interior seas, as first mentioned above, covered a broader range where foreign warships could not navigate without official clearance. An interior sea was the country’s “offshore” area and was part of the territorial waters for maritime defense. This interior sea would correspond to a distance of about 40 km from the shore and constituted the range of territorial waters at the time.

Although exterior seas did not have clear boundaries, they were the distant seas and ocean spaces where foreign ships conducted themselves without any official oversight; i.e. areas where the country could not feasibly enforce any maritime control. Outside the interior seas were the exterior seas, and beyond them were the deep seas. The distinctions between the inshore, interior, exterior, and deep seas are different from the definitions of waters based on the low-water lines and the straight baselines of today. In the past, the marine space off Korea continued to be regarded strongly from traditional cultural and administrative perspectives, and the issues of territorial seas and fishery rights were not treated separately, even though international laws were imported to the region and Korea–Japan fishery agreements were signed.

For Japan, the common law of the order from the daijyokan (太政官) was applied to inshore fishing until 1876, enacted depending on the shore districts, and there was no special law on fishing even after the Meiji Restoration (Kaneko 1894: 19–32). Inland sea fishing or inshore fishing was popular before the early nineteenth century in Japan and then fishermen engaged in a test phase of open sea fishing up to 20 km from shore (Hashimura 2009: 155). These facts show that modernized (i.e. then contemporary Western-style) fishing laws and the marine laws regarding the territorial seas were not consistently applied until the end of the nineteenth century.

The Joseon–Japan fishing agreement of 1899 stated that both countries could fish within a range of three Japanese ri (12 km) from their shores. This agreement stated that Koreans and Japanese freely caught fish in each other’s territorial seas as in “...the agreement signed between the US and the UK stating that the ocean along with the shore may be the common place for both countries to work in the fishing industry in

Newfoundland” (Kaneko 1894: 19–32). At the time, no one considered the possibility that the officials who signed the agreement might not share the same perceptions of each other’s territorial and inshore seas in a manner comparable to the case of Newfoundland.

#### 4. Constitutional Contexts of the Different Names of the Sea

The names “the East Sea” and the “Sea of Japan” were written in Korea and Japan until the end of the nineteenth century, but the former was more common in formal cases such as those noted previously. However, after the turn of the twentieth century, the “Sea of Japan” came to be used more frequently on maps created thereafter and the name stuck.

There were fundamental differences in how the name the “Sea of Japan” was used by explorers or mapmakers before the early nineteenth century and its use by the Japanese government at the end of the nineteenth century. The former case is an ad hoc choice based on the whims of individuals, but the latter is a record of colonial ideologies that came to be employed in official state documents. It can be said that the notions of the “Sea of Japan” after the early nineteenth century were formed through a Western point of view, itself discontinuous from the indigenous East Asian views of maritime spaces. The name was formed through a process of systematizing cultural and political differences to create a specific colonial historicity and territoriality.

This shows that replacing “Sea of Joseon” or “Sea of Korea” with “Sea of Japan” at the end of the nineteenth century marks a break with the use of traditional regional geocentric cultural views in favor of the systematic use of a modern, colonial notion of territory. That is, the notion of the “Sea of Japan” changed, expanded, and subsumed a previously unassociated territory. This was related to the process of expanding colonial hegemony into maritime space. The fact that Japan began to favor a view that developed from Western exploration of the region and externally imposed naming conventions is likely due to the way it favored the nation’s emergent hegemony. This can be seen in the interplay between three related domains at the end of the nineteenth century.

First is the domain of institutional practice. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Japanese army and navy conducted ordnance surveys and waterway surveys on the Korean Peninsula and its marine space; the General Staff Headquarters and the Black Dragon Society (黑龍會) made maps (Park, Hyon-Su 1998: 160), and fishery officials developed naming practices for the area (Figures 6–7). These military and political actions were not yet completely aligned with colonial ideology (such as a heightened sense of territorial waters), and resulted in the creation of incongruent references to the sea. The military favored using the “Sea of Japan” while the fishery officials still acknowledged the “Sea of Korea” (or “Coria Gulf”).

Second, the formal and informal organizations mentioned above carried out a deliberate and strategic practice of history-making by leveraging the Western trend of using the “Sea of Japan” in the publication of newer maps. The name “Sea of Japan” used by westerners resurfaced in this process and sidelined the traditional regional variations.



**Figure 6** 1894 general map of Joseon (朝鮮全圖). The general staff headquarters called the sea the “Sea of Japan” (Yeungnam University Museum 1998: 202).



**Figure 7** 1904 map of Manchuria and Coria (滿韓新圖). The black dragon society (黑龍會) ascribed dual names to the sea, calling it both the “Coria Gulf” and the “Sea of Nippon.” The Coria Gulf occupies the sea near the Korean peninsula, while the Sea of Nippon occupies the outskirts of the Coria Gulf (Yeungnam University Museum 1998: 207).

Third, the military and political situation was an important background influence on the choice of name for the sea. In a situation where the political arguments for invading and occupying Korea dominated in Japan, the implementation of a colonial system oriented toward uniting the nation and expanding jurisdiction in the area created a political environment that demanded the sea be renamed.

## 5. Creating a Colonial Image and “Making” History

The discursive trend of how both Western and regional maps came to favor using “Sea of Japan” in geographic nomenclature reflects how such terms can be leveraged in shows of political dominance. This is related to the historical process of drawing formerly culturally bound geocentric views of maritime space into the colonial and political spheres. Considering the documents related to military personnel, scholars, fishermen, and officials in the fishery associations, it is possible to see who played an important role in naming and popularizing the use of “Sea of Japan.” For the fishermen, the “Sea of

Joseon” was an area naturally abundant in fish, with many Japanese fishing boats working in the littoral space. This gave the fishermen the notion to territorialize it as a Japanese sea.

Japan signed agreements with Korea... and this made it possible for the Japanese to freely work in Hamgyeong, Gangwon, Gyeongsang, and Jeolla provinces with maritime advantages as if those were territorial seas ... (Iwata 1899: 42–44)

Every Japanese fisherman knows that Joseon is a country of underdevelopment and inferiority. Anyway, Japan is superior to Korea ... (Narita 1898: 42–44; Lee Jong-Hak 2000: 260 cited)

The records show that the coastal waters of Korea came to be based on an image of territorialized Japanese space, and this dominant representation of Japan was realized by its fishermen prior to the nation implementing systematic imperial dominance based on their hegemony in the late nineteenth century. In 1899, Japanese government officials and fishermen initiated a history-making process on the marine space between Korea and Japan over the issue of the name “Sea of Japan,” thus beginning the process of entrenching Japanese images of the area and territorializing the sea. In addition, the colonial descriptive discourses that separated “civilizations” from “savages” was expanded to include the sea. This shows that the use of the term “Sea of Japan” may have contributed to a cultural and political hegemony that justified the Japanese colonial ideology.

As is widely known, for both Korea and Japan, the late nineteenth century was a period of disruption in which territoriality and the historical characteristics of maritime space started to change. At that time, Europe was in a new phase of colonial expansion in Africa. In East Asia, the Western ideas of civilization started to affect colonial policies. Furthermore, as the whole of Asia began to adopt a colonial economy, areas devoted to this commerce extended across borders. The Western concept of civilization had an impact on colonial territoriality. For instance, Japan had embraced the Western theory of evolutionism and developed its own model of civilizational domination, based on which it had transformed traditional values, acquired new territories as a militant nation, and conceptualized these “successes” as being part of its rightful dominion.

During the late nineteenth century, some political philosophers combined Western evolutionary theory and an ideological structure of Japanese colonialism by reengineering traditional Asian notions including “shared civilization (同文)” and “a mere belt of water (一衣帶水)” to Japan’s advantage (Howland 1996). Based on the three major stages in evolution—from savagery through barbarism to civilization—the idea that Japan was culturally superior to China and Korea became firmly rooted. Simply put, Japan’s strategy was to employ various cultural and political strategies to topple the previous hierarchical framework, in stark contrast to what Asian societies had pursued up to that point.

Around that time, the concept of a civilization served not only as a standard used to

measure the evolutionary progress of a society, but also as a dominant political ideology employed to justify military action and subsequent territorial expansion. Fukuzawa Yukichi (福澤諭吉) viewed the central concept of “civilization” as an embracing political process that introduced European perspectives to Asia (Keio Gijuku 1958: 395–397). Based on this, Japanese intellectuals and colonialists justified territorial acquisition through the “Enlightenment” movement.

Furthermore, they rationalized the Japanese government’s military operations, claiming that the spirit of civilization differentiates the developed world from the underdeveloped world. They publicly claimed that it was legitimate for civilized nations to conquer and dominate barbarian countries and that the institutions of the civilized world could change uncivilized societies. They also argued that the entire country and the natural environment, as well as people, were subject to colonialism. Wild environments were classified as inhuman and undeveloped, reflecting a transition from natural determinism to cultural determinism. This was a colonialist logic of “binding the landscape and the indigenous people together, belittling the natives as inhuman beings, and considering them as the outcome of the determinism” (Sluyter 2002: 12). The unique natural environment of a nation was equated with its people. Where the infertility of a land symbolized underdevelopment, the people of the area were regarded as subhuman. In particular, this environmental determinism became a proxy for culture as found in Sekizawa’s (1893) statements. This is a typical example of a shift in paradigms from a “soft boundary” to a “hard boundary” (Prasenjit 1995: 63–65).

It can be concluded that Japan’s colonialist maritime territoriality was developed taking everything into consideration: from economic and political changes both inside and outside Japan, to the military and political landscape in the international community, to administrative organizations for the implementation of colonialist institutions, and cultural and political strategies to realize colonialist ideologies. Both maritime spaces and remote regions in Korea and Japan began to be used for military and commercial purposes. The extension of areas devoted to colonial commerce in Korea was inextricably linked to Japan’s enhancement of political and military control over the sea. All of these military, political, and economic changes laid a firm foundation of colonial territoriality and helped Japan justify its implementation of colonial institutions.

When colonized territories were brought under control and pacified, administrators and merchants could start to settle in (Bremen and Shimizu 1999: 6). For instance, Nakai Yōzaburo (中井養三郎), an entrepreneur who had engaged in the fishing industry near Ulleungdo since 1895 (Kim, Su-Hee 2010: 133), began fishing for sea lions in Dokdo in 1903 (Naito 2000: 215). The economic activities of small entrepreneurs were connected with the Japanese government’s attempts to create a history for its territory. In particular, the life histories of individual fishermen were adopted as an important part of the overall history of Japan’s territory, playing a critical role in turning waters into territorial space. That is, the nation could expand the concept of its territory by highlighting its citizens who had lived in those areas. Consequently, the economic activities of individual businessmen in a nation-state or its remote areas and waters were emphasized in the history of establishing territory and the individuals were rewarded with an honorable

status for their contribution.

Historical records on Nakai Yosaburo's fishing for sea lions near Dokdo became a significant part of the national history of the territory. Before the enforcement of institutional practices to turn areas and waters into its territories, Japan tried to justify its colonial rule by giving names to areas near border lines, recommending that the natives move to other areas, and creating an imperialistic culture. These efforts imply that the driving force behind Japan's attempts to absorb modern East Asian societies into its colonial territory was related to the process of incorporating individual histories into a national history. In modern times, the national, ethnic, administrative, and cultural boundaries of most colonial territories were shaped in such a way.

In the process of expanding maritime territory, colonialists wove the idealized histories about fishermen working and living on islands near Korea's sea borders into a national imperial history. By doing so, the Japanese imperial government sought to centralize power in East Asia and rule from the border of Korea up to China. In addition, Japan tried to cement its new national history by changing the names of colonial territories, such as the body of water under discussion in this paper.

## 6. Changes of Sea Names and Colonial Extension of Territorial Waters

It is true that "Sea of Japan" was used more than "Sea of Joseon" from the late nineteenth century (Oh 2004: 181–182). Here, researchers of old Japanese maps claim that the name "Sea of Japan" was borrowed and translated from Westerners based on Western geographical concepts, and was not coined by Japan itself. This is considered a part of the history of Japanese place names. In particular, the name "Sea of Japan" was shown on the maps of Japan made by Philipp Franz von Siebold in 1840, and P. A. Leupe in 1858, and was subsequently used on Japanese maps (as mentioned previously) (Akioka 1955: 168–174).

One thing to look back on is whether diplomats and general officials wrote and used "Sea of Japan," and how ordinary people referred to the space after the mid-nineteenth century when "Sea of Japan" began appearing on maps. The name "Sea of Joseon"/"East Sea of Joseon" was used among ordinary Japanese and the Japanese government from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century; since the evidence suggest the two terms are mutually exclusive within any given document or map, it appears that "Sea of Japan" was not normally used at that time. It may be claimed that the latter term started being used around 1893 based on the text below.

We already have the official name of "Sea of Japan," meaning that the sovereignty of the sea is Japan's. We should not feel self-conscious about this. Sovereignty shall be implemented based on whether the current fishery practices were established by custom. Therefore, we shall establish the custom that Japanese fishing boats shall be free to move in the sea and focus on fishery for profits, and we shall publicize the fact to the country and public. Otherwise, when debating the issue of sovereignty with other countries, the logic of expressing this fact will be weakened and it could leave Japan at a disadvantage.

Therefore, this shall be a top priority. (Sekizawa 1893: 11–12; Lee, Jong-Hak 2000: 12 cited)

This case suggests that replacing “Sea of Joseon” with the “Sea of Japan” written on the old maps was not an unconscious or natural development; rather, it emphasizes that intervention on a national level was required in order to change the name and justify economic and political dominion over the space. One thing to remember is that the sea between Korea and Japan played a crucial role in the colonial exploitation model. The records referenced above are publically available from high-ranking officials in the fisheries association at the time, and link control over the region to Japan’s economic stability and political sovereignty. It is reminiscent of the speech regarding sovereignty, economic, and political interests by Prime Minister Yamagata Aritomo (山縣有朋) in the First Imperial Parliament in December 1890. He said, “Generally, there is no country which does not obtain sovereignty economically... It is not enough for a country only to assure its sovereignty when it defends its independence. It must protect its profits as well” (Ooyama 1966: 203). The concepts of sovereignty and profits are rooted in the ideas of *Machtsphäre* and *Interessensphäre*. The term *Machtsphäre* is a nation’s sphere of influence, and *Interessensphäre* is its sphere of interest (Takii 2003: 174). A nation’s interests extend beyond its natural borders to all its areas of economic, political, and military activity.

The concept emerged from “...the Manchurian occupation which forcibly occupied the Korean peninsula, unified Korea and Japan against Manchuria, and the military strategies that exerted coercion when forming the defense line against Russia” (Sado 2008: 2). It is thought that replacing “East Sea” with “Sea of Japan” was related to Japan’s national policies of claiming sovereignty and economic control. Lee Jong-Hak (2000) showed that using “Sea of Japan” was related to marine sovereignty and national interests as a colonial policy. International terms of engagement became, “Japan’s new legal discourse of power. As aggrandizers of the Japanese empire described their policies in this discourse, they legitimated their nation’s imperialist expansion” (Dudden 2005: 2). The East Sea gained importance in Japan from the end of the nineteenth century as a place to implement its military strategies against invasion from the Russian fleets. Japan and other countries dubbed the naval battles between Russia and Japan in the East Sea in 1904 “the War of the Sea of Japan.”

Historical narratives were required to justify attaching the name of a specific country to the sea. In particular, the reason why ordinary people called it the “Sea of Japan” was related to the process of expanding the powers of Japan to the marine spaces of the East Asian region after the Sino–Japanese War.

Taiwan and the Penghuliedao (澎湖島) were included in Japan and this caused massive changes in the map of the world. Ryukyu Bay was located at the end of the Sea of Japan, but Japan took the Sea of China and expanded its territory to around the Penghuliedao reaching an area of 4,000 km<sup>2</sup>. (San’in Shinbun 1895.4.3; Lee, Jong-Hak 2002: 12 cited)

The description above shows that the territorial expansion process changed the names of the seas. Then, Japan annexed Ryukyu in 1879 and suggested that Ryukyu Bay be called the “Sea of Japan” as well. Japan won the victory in the Sino-Japanese War and annexed Taiwan, expanding the range of the “Sea of Japan” to the Sea of China. Japan continually expanded the range of the “Sea of Japan” each time it occupied an adjacent coastal area, a trend that started with renaming the East Sea.

## 7. Conclusion

In the nineteenth century in Korea, maritime sub-categories included coastal waters, interior seas, exterior seas, and deep seas. The “East Sea” is a name that came from the traditional East Asian classification system for mountains, rivers, and seas. This same space was also called the “East Sea,” “Sea of Joseon,” and “Sea of Korea” in both Korea and Japan until the end of the nineteenth century. The term “Sea of Japan” did not historically encompass the same area to the current extent and was gradually enlarged over time through imperial expansionist policies.

Starting around the end of this era (the 1880s), the East Sea was increasingly denoted as the “Sea of Japan” in maps. This stemmed from the process in Japan of using nomenclature (originally favored outside the region) to extend the shadow of its dominant hegemony and categorize peripheral spaces in the course of the colonial nationalization of East Asia.

Bringing about the use of the name “Sea of Japan” was not accomplished simply by the general public translating and following the name of the sea as marked on old maps from the past. It was due to the colonial discourse propagated by diplomats, the General Staff Headquarters, advocates for the invasion of Korea, supporting institutional practices, the strategic actions of fishery officials, and the military and political situations in East Asia at the time.

Considering that the sea was referred to as the “Sea of Joseon” or “East Sea of Joseon” in the diplomatic records of the Japanese Government and the general public from the end of the nineteenth century until the beginning of the twentieth century, the name “Sea of Japan” appears to have gained traction only after the Japanese government specifically changed its policies to justify the enlargement of their territory and national economic interests. The reason behind officially calling the maritime space between Korea and Japan the “Sea of Japan” is because it was important in strengthening sovereignty and national interests in the area. By nationalizing the area, Japan could further justify its economic and colonial dominion over the region.

The use of the name “Sea of Japan” shows how maritime sovereignty and national interests are mutually interrelated. By displacing indigenous or traditional terms for the sea in favor of one that invoked notions of national sovereignty, Japan created an opportunity to impose a new cultural and political order on maritime space. It extended this process throughout its colonial expansion into areas such as Ryukyu and Taiwan. This supplanted the traditional concepts of maritime spaces in Asian societies. Japanese territorial expansion policy at the time influenced the replacement of traditional concepts

in naming sea spaces, from which the “East Sea” originally derived, with the name of a national entity, which resulted in the “Sea of Japan.”

The East Sea had established territorial waters at the end of the nineteenth century, and this was achieved in an era prior to the institutional practice of determining the dominant authority in the region. Calling it the “Sea of Japan” can be viewed in the context of the popular ideology of Fukuzawa Yukichi’s *bunmeikaika* (文明開化) at the time, as well as the colonial political philosophy of Yamagata Aritomo, the mapping practices of the General Staff Headquarters, and the remarks of fishery officials.

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