

Anna Lin

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Preserving the World's Truths: Letter to the United Nations' Secretary General

Dear Mr. Secretary General,

My name is Anna and I am a Chinese-Korean-American student from the US. I write to you today regarding the ongoing naming conflict of the East Sea, or also known as, the Sea of Japan. The sea, shared by the nations Korea, Japan, and Russia, has been in historical texts dating back over two thousand years, such as the *History of the Three Kingdoms* and the *Map of Eight Provinces of Korea* ("East Sea"). That being said, it has also been the topic of controversy between the nations for decades. Korea first raised the issue to the international community in 1992 after being under Japanese rule for over a generation ("East Sea"). Japan's colonization played a tremendous role in Korea's lack of global voice for generations, and in my letter's appeal, I represent years of the nation's advocacy and indomitable spirit.

Japan claims that the sea has been named 'Sea of Japan' since European explorer Mateo Ricci coined the name in the late eighteenth century and convinced the rest of Europe to use it as well (Choo 747). They also use the argument that the United Nations, the International Hydrographic Organization, commercial maps, and school textbooks refer to the sea as 'Sea of Japan' (Choo 747). However, Korea's evidence for 'East Sea' lies in texts that date back to the fourteen hundreds in the *History of the Three Kingdoms*, which predates Mateo Ricci by centuries. Additionally, Japan's argument using the United Nations is essentially baseless

because the organization uses the most-common public name to refer to the sea, as you stated in one of the conferences (“East Sea”).

The name ‘Sea of Japan’ rose to international popularity in 1929 after the International Hydrographic Organization published the first edition of *Limits of Oceans and Seas* using that name (“East Sea”). Japan also officially called for a name-change to ‘Sea of Japan’ in 1928 (Casino 2). At the time, the Korean people were oppressed under Japanese Imperial Rule and therefore could not openly object to the name publicly. The IHO published a second edition of *Limits of Oceans and Seas* in 1937 again during Japan’s colonization of Korea, then in 1953 during the Korean War (Kang 135). People have argued that Korea objected to the use of ‘Sea of Japan’ too late; however, just one year after the country gained UN membership in 1992, they brought up the issue at the United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names (“East Sea”). Korea did everything in their power to make their voice heard after a generation of cultural oppression by the Japanese and several years of internal war resulting in a weakening of the nation.

I care about this naming conflict because of my Korean heritage and natural pursuit of justice for the Korean people. I ask you and the world one question: Why should a millennial old name be changed now because a nation in global power decrees it using false truths? Consider the message it sends to future nations, where stronger nations could change narratives — from war, sea names, and hero legacies — as they please. In continuing to call the sea ‘Sea of Japan’ or officially renaming the sea, I beg you to consider the precedent that it sets for the rest of the world. As a global citizen, I do not want nations or individuals in a future position of power to think it acceptable to manipulate the world’s truth as Japan did during their colonization of

Korea.

Furthermore, I write this appeal not only because I care deeply about this conflict, but because I also innately treasure the integrity and preservation of the world's truths. Japan has advocated for years in favor of the 'Sea of Japan' and has taken advantage of Korea's weakness, in war and colonization, to advance their false narrative that I rebutted above. Not only has Japan set out to rewrite an entire ocean and country's narrative, but they have also not expressed remorse of the war crimes they committed during World War II and their colonization of Korea, from comfort women to the Rape of Nanjing. Their lack of sincere apology and continued manipulation of the truth speaks enough about the country's false argument for 'Sea of Japan.'

In calling the sea 'East Sea' in accordance with the historical documents, you not only embody the once-silenced voices of Korea, but the voice of truth. And as a fellow global citizen, I ask you to consider coining the name 'East Sea.' For the world, it might simply be considered as a sea that separates Russia, Korea, and Japan, however for the Korean people, it is a sacred place that symbolizes the resilience and strength of a nation that has withstood hundreds of attempts of Japanese attacks throughout its history. Korea is no longer silenced by Japan, and we will not hesitate to share the universally truthful narrative with the world. I have faith that the sea's correct name, 'East Sea,' will be restored one day, but not without the support and advocacy of the global community.

Sincerely,

Anna Lin

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