

# Historical Geography of Dokdo

# 2

Yang Bokyung

## Dokdo, An Island in the East Sea

The East Sea is located at the eastern edge of the Eurasian continent, bordered by Korea to the west, Japan and the Pacific Ocean to the southeast, and Russia to the northeast. Dokdo is located in this vast East Sea.

Ulleungdo and Dokdo have a long history of settlement from about the first century BCE; and Dokdo received permanent residents in 1981. Dokdo first appeared in the official Korean historical document as Usan-guk (Usan kingdom) as early as 512 CE, demonstrating Korea's recognition of this territory.

The poem of the famous Silhak (Practical Learning) scholar Jeong Yagyong (1762–1836) shed light on the lives of the residents of Gangjin, where he was forced to live in political exile. In “*Tamjin-eoga*” he portrays the livelihood of the fishermen who travelled all the way to Ulleungdo in the East Sea from Gangjin, located in the southwestern coast of the Korean Peninsula:

“In a fishing village octopus soup was enjoyed by all, but not the red shrimp nor green scallop. To catch mussels larger than lotus leaves, we will host our sails and travel east to Ulleungdo.”

The poem reveals that Gangjin residents frequently fished with their sailboats around Ulleungdo. If Gangjin residents from as far away as the southwestern part of Korea often visited Ulleungdo, where there were no permanent residents because of the Government's vacant island policy, it makes sense that residents from closer locations such as Gyeongsang Province and Gangwon Province would have fished more frequently around the Ulleungdo area. The fishing ground near Ulleungdo and Dokdo is the place where cold and warm currents converge, and there is an abundance of diverse species of fish at this location. Ulleungdo was important not only for fishing but also for providing various herbal medicines and lumber to the Koreans in nearby regions of the mainland.

As one can see in Figure 2-2 and Figure 2-3, Ulleungdo and Dokdo are so



**Figure 2-1** The locations of Dokdo and Ulleungdo

Source: Korea Hydrographic and Oceanographic Administration, 1998



**Figure 2-2** Ulleungdo seen from Dokdo

Source: The Northeast Asian History Foundation, 2009

closely located, they are visible to each other (Jeong Taeman, 2008). Any visitor to Ulleungdo can see Dokdo and vice versa on a clear day. Such visibility and



**Figure 2-3**  
Dokdo seen from  
Ulleungdo

Source: The Northeast  
Asian History Foundation,  
2009

geographic proximity provides important evidence that Ulleungdo residents have naturally recognized the location of Dokdo and its significance in their lives.

## Ulleungdo and Dokdo in History

### Ulleungdo and Dokdo in Ancient Korea

Ulleungdo is the main island closest to Dokdo and the history of Ulleungdo can be examined to fully understand the history of Dokdo. It is estimated that people began to live on Ulleungdo during the Bronze Age (1,000–300 BCE), or in the early Iron Age (300-1 BCE). Artifacts such as dolmen burial sites, plain pottery, grinding stones and stone pestles testify the ages (Ulleung County).

Some scholars argue that Ulleungdo, as an island in the East Sea, was first noted in an article printed in 246 CE (the 20<sup>th</sup> year of the reign of King Dongcheon of the Goguryeo Kingdom) in the “Record of the Eastern People

(東夷傳) in the “History of the Wei Kingdom,” in *Samgukji* (三國志, a Chinese historical document of the three ancient Chinese kingdoms) (Kim Wonyong, 1963).

Dokdo was first mentioned in a historical document of Korea, *Samguk sagi* (三國史記, History of the Three Kingdoms, 1145). The *Samguk sagi* recorded that Usan-guk (the State of Usan) became part of Silla. *Samguk yusa* (三國遺事, Historical Facts of the Three Kingdoms) also recorded the same contents as follows:

“In the summer of the 13<sup>th</sup> year of King Jijeung (i.e. 512), Usan-guk submitted to Silla by agreeing to bring local specialty items annually as tribute. Usan-guk, located due east of Myeongju, is sometimes called Ulleungdo. Relying on their rocky natural fortress, the people of Usan-guk resisted Silla’s invasion. So a general from the Silla kingdom decided to trick them by decorating their battle ships with wooden lion replicas and arrived at the coast of Usan-guk. The general then threatened them that if they did not surrender, he would release the lions to kill them. The residents of Usan-guk believed him and were scared of the lions and surrendered.”

According to the *Samguk sagi*, the oldest extant history book compile on the instruction of the king, the term Usan-guk must have included the main island of Ulleungdo and the surrounding islands because the term Usan-guk refers to a state with its hinterland, not a particular island. Prior to the sixth century, Usan-guk might not have belonged to mainland Korea and existed as an independent small political state; however, after Silla occupied Usan-guk, Ulleungdo and other islands belonging to Usan-guk, including Dokdo, came under the control of mainland Korea (Silla Kingdom). The fact that Silla had to use military power and threaten Usan-guk’s residents by tricking them indicates that the state of Usan-guk had a strong naval power of its own.

There are some archeological indications that Ulleungdo was inhabited long before the written historical documents of the sixth century. Especially in the early Three Kingdoms Period of the second century, Ulleungdo might have

been an inhabited island and played a significant role in the cultural exchanges occurring between the northern continent and the southern region of the Korean Peninsula (History and Culture of Gaya, <http://gayasa.net/gaya/history/documents/hesang.php>).

Today, the most visible evidence of early cultural habitation is the tombs on Ulleungdo. Since there was not much topsoil available on this rocky island, the tombs were usually made of stones. The archeological studies of Ulleungdo were conducted in 1957 and in 1963 by a survey conducted by the National Museum of Korea. However, many of the ancient tombs were destroyed during the farm settlement and road construction of the 1880s. Additionally, during the Japanese occupation (1910–1945) many of the remaining tombs was destructed and stolen. According to the museum survey, there are only 87 tombs remaining on Ulleungdo today, most of which were from the Unified Silla period of Korea: 38 tombs in Hyeonpo-ri, seven in Cheonbu-ri, 37 in Namseo-ri, two in Namyang-ri, two in Taeha-ri and one in Sadong-ri (Kim Wonyong, 1963; National Museum of Korea, 2008).

Tombs on Ulleungdo are quite similar to the Silla's stone-type found in the Gyeongju, once the capital of Silla, however, they have some unique characteristics. Although both styles have stone chambers, Silla tombs are covered with earthen mounds, while Ulleungdo tombs have stone mounds, due to the lack of soil on the island. Interestingly all the entrances of the tombs on Ulleungdo faced the ocean (Figure 2-4). The usual length of the tomb is 4 to 7 meters and the height is 1 meter to 1.6 meters. The chamber is rectangular in shape; however, the central portion is slightly domed.

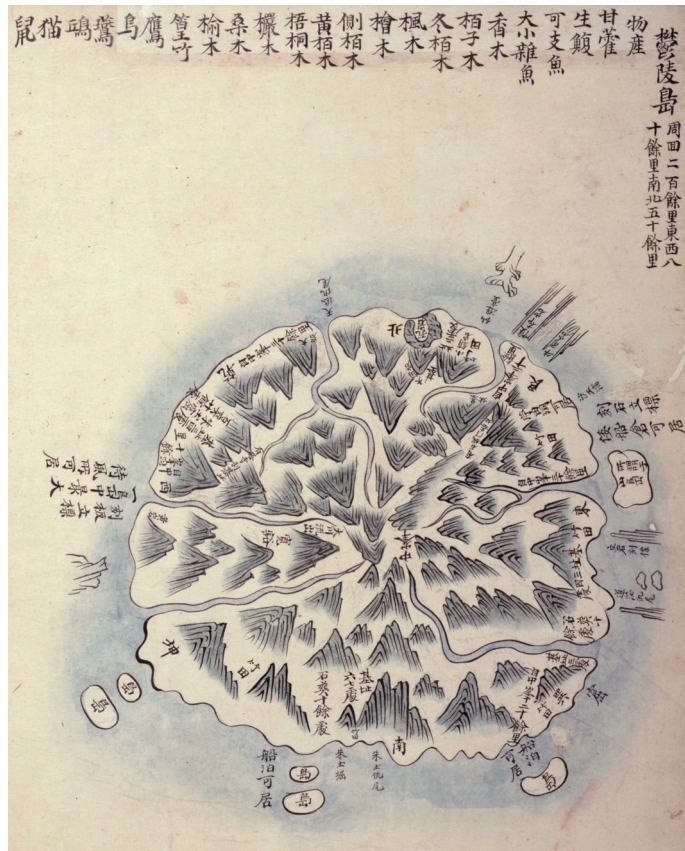
Tombs on Ulleungdo have been the object of attention historically because the piled rocks above ground are easily noticeable. Maps published during the late Joseon Kingdom identified those stone mounds and labeled them “*seokjang* (stone tomb).” For instance, *Haedong jido* (Map of the Country in the East), published during the mid-eighteenth century, showed over ten stone mounds located west of *Jutogul* (Red Soil Cave) on Ulleungdo (Figure 2-5).

Although the shapes of the excavated earthenware were similar to other



**Figure 2-4**  
Ancient tomb (no. 15-11)  
on the southeast of  
Ulleungdo

Source: Yang Bokyoung



**Figure 2-5**  
The Ulleungdo part of  
*Haedong jido* showing  
Seokjang

Source: Kyujanggak  
Institute for Korean  
Studies

Silla products from Gyeongju, the color and the clay material were different from those of Gyeongju; therefore, the earthenware were either made locally in Ulleungdo, or in places other than Gyeongju and brought to the island. The oldest artifacts from Ulleungdo were pottery similar to the plain pottery from Hyeonpo-ri, and the origin of this pottery goes back to the early Iron Age, or the beginning of the Common Era. Hence, the beginning of settlement on Ulleungdo could be close to the beginning of the Common Era (Seoul National University Museum, 1997; Ulleung-gun, 2007).

Legends and relics prove that ancient Ulleungdo was culturally tied to mainland Korea and some legends are particularly pertinent to Usan-guk. For instance, Sajabawi (Lion Rock), Tugubong (Helmet Peak) and Napalbong (Trumpet Peak) are all relevant to the history of Silla's conquest of Usan-guk. With regard to Helmet Peak, it is said that Usan-guk's King Uhae took off his helmet as a sign of his submission to Silla, and it transformed itself into a peak. The legend of Sajabawi says that Silla made the replica lion out of wood and sent it to Usan-guk, and it changed into a rock.

### **Ulleungdo and Dokdo in Medieval Korea**

During the Goryeo Kingdom(918–1392) that followed Unified Silla, Ulleungdo and Dokdo kept consistent relations with the central Government of Goryeo. *Goryeosa* (高麗史, History of Goryeo), compiled in 1451, contained a number of records on Usan-guk or Ulleungdo. It stated that in 930, King Taejo (the first king of the Goryeo Kingdom) granted official positions to Baekgil and Todu, delegates from the island, who had come to bring tribute, which demonstrated Goryeo's rule over Ulleungdo.

In 1018, it was recorded that the Jurchens, the people of one of the nations along the lower Duman-gang (Tumen River) located to the northeast of Goryeo, invaded Ulleungdo and caused serious damage to their agricultural activities. Goryeo sent farming tools to aid residents on Ulleungdo. The *Goryeosa* also indicated that Goryeo continued to rule Usan-guk (meaning Ulleungdo and Dokdo) at the time and that there was such a significant number of residents on Ulleungdo that the Jurchens were interested in invading

the place.

The next year, when the Jurchens retreated to their homeland, the Goryeo Government allowed the refugees from Usan-guk to return to their homes. This means that the Goryeo central Government had administrative control over the refugees from Usan-guk. In 1022, the historic record indicated that some refugees who preferred to stay on mainland Korea were allowed to stay in Yeju, and the local officials provided food and shelter for them.

In 1032, *Goryeosa* noted, “Bueoingdarang (夫於仍多郎), the son of the chief of Ureung (Ulleungdo) presented local products of Ulleungdo as tribute to the King of Goryeo.” This record indicates that Goryeo allowed the chief of Ulleungdo to rule Usan-guk and that Goryeo had tributary relations with Usan-guk.

There were scant records of Ulleungdo or Dokdo in *Goryeosa* until 1141, which could be related to the continuous raids from the Jurchens during the time. These raids may have devastated the region. In 1141, the *Goryeosa* noted that Yi Yangsil, the administrator of Myeongju (present day Gangneung), sent a delegate to Ulleungdo to obtain leaves and seeds of local fruits. In 1157, Goryeo tried to more aggressively develop Ulleungdo.

The historical documents of *Goryeosa* indicated that in 1273, Yuan China used timber from Ulleungdo to build ships, and some residents of Ulleungdo worked in the court of Goryeo. These facts prove that Ulleungdo was ruled by Goryeo.

The most detailed description of Ulleungdo in *Goryeosa* can be found in the geography section, on Uljin-hyeon, Gangwon-do:

Uljin-hyeon (Uljin County) was originally called Ujinya County during the Goguryeo Kingdom. After the Unified Silla, it became Uljin-gun (Uljin County), and during Goryeo it was again called Uljin-hyeon. Due east of Uljin-hyeon was Ulleungdo, located in the middle of the East Sea. It was called Usan-guk during Silla, and at times it was called Mureung or Ureung. Its width was 100 ri, and it submitted to Silla in 511 CE. In 930, a resident of the island, Baekgiltodu (白吉土豆) paid tribute to the Goryeo Government.

In 1156, the king heard that Ulleungdo was spacious and its soils were fertile and that the island had at times been county and it was habitable, so he sent Kim Yurip, the administrator of Myeongju, to investigate Ulleungdo. He reported, “In the center of the island is a huge mountain and the distance between the summit of it and the sea to the east is approximately 10,000 bo (步)(about 18.2 km), that between the summit and the sea to the west about 13,000 bo (about 23.7 km), that between the summit and the sea to the south about 15,000 bo (about 27.3 km) and that between the summit and the sea to the north approximately 8,000 bo (about 14.6 km). Seven places show that there once were villages, and there are a stone Buddhist image, an iron bell and a stone pagoda. There are lots of Bupleurum (*Bupleurum falcatum*, 柴胡), ligusticum sinense oliver (蒿本) and heath grass (石南草). However, the island is too rocky to be habitable.” Finally the Goryeo Government suspended the inquiry. And he also reported, “People say that Usan and Mureung are close enough to see one from the other on a clear day.”

The geography section in *Goryeosa* also recorded the size and specialty of Ulleungdo based on the 1157 report by Kim Yurip. The closing part of it recorded that “Another opinion says that Usan and Mureung are originally two separate islands, and the distance between them is short, therefore, they can see one from the other on a clear day.” This shows that there were two opinions about ‘Usan’ and ‘Ulleung’: one viewed them as the same island and another saw them as two different islands during the compilation of the book.

There are numerous documents from the following Joseon Kingdom (1392–1910), from the time of its founding. The *Joseon wangjo sillok* (朝鮮王朝實錄, The Annals of the Joseon Kingdom) contains a number of records concerning Ulleungdo and Dokdo, which reveal that the two islands were part of Joseon territory. In the late 14<sup>th</sup> century, when the Joseon Kingdom was first established, Japanese pirates raided the southeastern coastal region of the Joseon Kingdom, and Koreans residing in those areas suffered. Worrying that Japanese pirates might invade Ulleungdo, the Joseon Government implemented the

policy of relocating its residents to mainland Korea.

Historic records say in 1403, “Mureungdo residents were asked to move to the mainland by the provincial decree.” Vacating the island was a way to preserve the lives and livelihood of its people.

In 1407, the seventh year of King Taejong’s reign, the lord of Tsushima (Daemado) sent local products to the court and returned to Joseon some Korean hostages taken by Japanese invaders. In return, he asked King Taejong to allow the residents of Tsushima to live on Ulleungdo. This incident proves that the lord of Tsushima recognized that Ulleungdo was Joseon territory and that he should get permission from the king of Joseon to send the Japanese to the island even though there were few Korean inhabitants there. King Taejong rejected the request from the lord of Tsushima. He declared that any Japanese entry to Ulleungdo was a violation of the border between Joseon and Japan because “Ulleungdo is within Joseon territory and outside of Japanese territory.”

In 1416, King Taejong called upon Kim Inwoo for his opinion on Ulleungdo, and he replied, “Often people who escaped from the military draft hide on Ulleungdo; however, if the population of Ulleungdo increased, the Japanese pirates (倭寇, Waegu) would invade more frequently, and eventually the Japanese invaders would encroach on Gangwon Province.” Because of this report, King Taejong appointed Kim as constable of Mureung (Ulleungdo) and neighboring places and provided two battleships to protect the islands, which presumably included Jukdo, Gwaneumdo and Dokdo, located within direct sight of Mureung.

When Constable Kim Inwoo returned to the Government on February 5, 1417, Taejong called upon ministers for consultation on the policy that the residents of Ulleungdo should be relocated to mainland. In this state council, a majority favored the opinion against the relocation policy but some insisted a program of urgent relocation. Taejong adopted the relocation policy. After this ‘relocation policy’, several instances of relocating the residents of Ulleungdo can be found in the *Joseon wangjo sillok*. However, vacating the island does not imply that Joseon relinquished Ulleungdo as its territory or decided to exclude the island from its jurisdiction.

*Sejong sillok jiriji* (世宗實錄地理志, The Geographical Appendix to the Annals of King Sejong), based on an in-depth survey of all regions within Joseon territory, includes a record of Ulleungdo and Dokdo.

Two islands, Usan and Mureung, are at the sea to the east of this county. The part of Uljin-hyeon of the *jiriji* writes both islands are close enough to see one from the other on a clear day.

*Sejong sillok jiriji* that was published as a geographic appendix to *Sejong sillok* in 1454 supplemented *Sinchan paldo jiriji* (新撰八道地理志, New Compilation of the Geography of the Eight Provinces) printed in 1432. *Sejong sillok jiriji* was to memorize the geographic achievements and the administration of the state under the reign of King Sejong. It marked Ulleungdo and Dokdo in the East Sea and recognized them as Joseon territory. It also included the newly expanded territory in the northeastern areas. It took eight years to compile all the territories of Joseon for the Geographic Appendix to the Annals. The geography section included two islands which were Usando and Mureungdo and recorded that the two islands belonged to Usan-guk during the period of Silla.

During the period of Goryeo, Ulleungdo was mainly referred to as Mureungdo, and another island on the historical records, was Usando that is now Dokdo (Shin Yongha, 1996). Especially a passage in a note saying, ‘The distance between the two islands is short enough that on a clear day they are visible to each other,’ presents a perfect bibliographic evidence that Usando is Dokdo, because of the fact that the island referred to as visible only on a clear day is Dokdo and the other nearby islands, Jukdo and Gwaneumdo are close enough to be visible from Ulleungdo in any weather condition all the year round. Therefore, in the mid-15<sup>th</sup> century, Joseon recognized Ulleungdo and Usando(Dokdo) and recorded them. Furthermore, according to *Sejo sillok* (世祖實錄, Annals of King Sejo in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century), Joseon considered establishing prefectures and counties on Ulleungdo.

In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, *Seongjong sillok* (成宗實錄, Annals of King

Seongjong) recorded the existence of Sambongdo(三峯島) and the repatriation policy for people who evaded public labor or tax and escaped to this secluded island were at issue. The Government sent inspectors to investigate Mureungdo. In this investigation, the shape of Sambongdo that the residents of Hamgyeong-do described in the report by the provincial governor of Yeongan-do (later Hamgyeong-do) is now estimated to be Dokdo. The residents of Hamgyeong-do at the time who lived to the north of Ulleungdo and Dokdo certainly were connected to Ulleungdo and recognized Dokdo.

The oldest existing maps marking Dokdo in the Joseon period are *Paldo chongdo* (Map of the Eight Provinces) and the map of Gangwon-do. Both maps are included in *Sinjeung dongguk yeoji seungnam* (新增東國輿地勝覽, Revised Edition of the Augmented Survey of the Geography of Korea) of 1530. The two maps marked Usando lying to the west of Ulleungdo (Figure 2-6), which reveals that Joseon distinguished Usando from Ulleungdo.

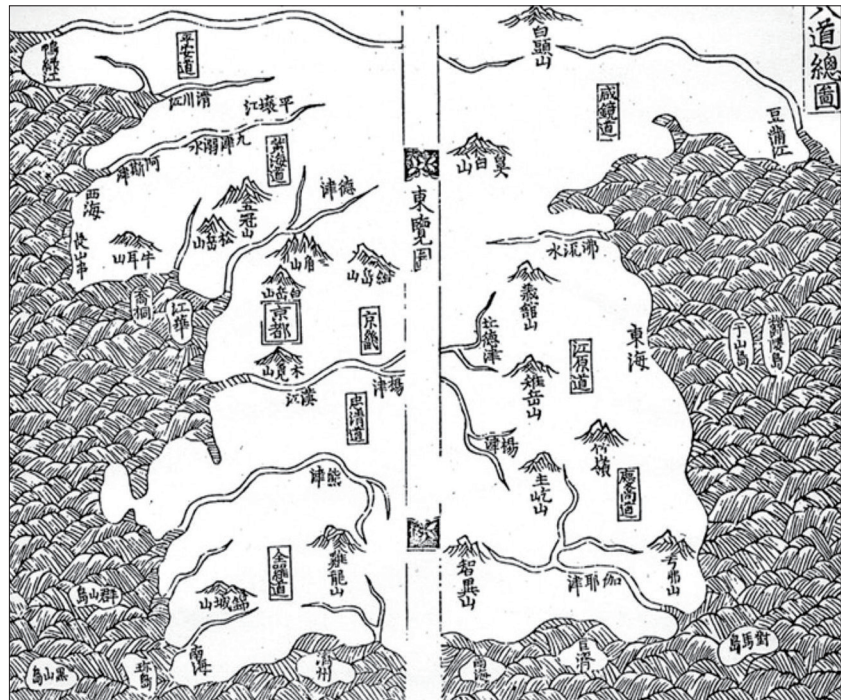


Figure 2-6 *Paldo chongdo* in *Sinjeung dongguk yeoji seungnam*

Source: Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies

According to *Dongnamdo* (an atlas that includes a map of all of Korea and individual maps of the eight provinces) in the *Sinjeung dongguk yeoji seungnam*, Usando is closer to mainland Korea than Ulleungdo. At the time, people who started traveling from the southern Korean Peninsula had to stop by Dokdo to reach Ulleungdo due to the influence of ocean currents. Therefore, they might have been under the impression that Dokdo was located closer to the mainland than Ulleungdo.

*Dongnamdo* were wood block prints, which enabled them to be more widely distributed than other maps. There were many similar versions of *Dongnamdo*, so they were called *Dongnamdo* style or *Dongnamdo* version maps. In these *Dongnamdo* versions, often Usando is marked as lying to the west of Ulleungdo. Some maps indicate that Usando is located south (Figures 2-7 and 2-9) or north of Ulleungdo (*Joseon paldo gogeum chongnamdo*, Comprehensive Ancient and Modern Map of Eight Provinces; in Figure 2-10). It appears that cartographers did not have room to draw Dokdo to the east or west of Ulleungdo. Instead, they might have marked the location of Dokdo to the south or north of Ulleungdo where there was more space available to draw.

Various copies of the *Dongnamdo* are almost consistent in naming Ulleungdo, while they adopted different names when referring to Usando. Such mistakes seemed to occur when cartographers reproduced the map. Besides the commonly used Usando, other names such as Cheonsando(千山島), Bangsando(方山島), Jasando(子山島) and Gansando(干山島) were also used (Figures 2-8 and 2-9). Confusion may have originated in the mistranscribing of the Chinese character for “U” of Usan(于山). Although there has been misrepresentation of names and the location of Dokdo in many old maps, it is obvious that the Joseon Government clearly recognized that there were two separate islands, Ulleungdo and Usando.

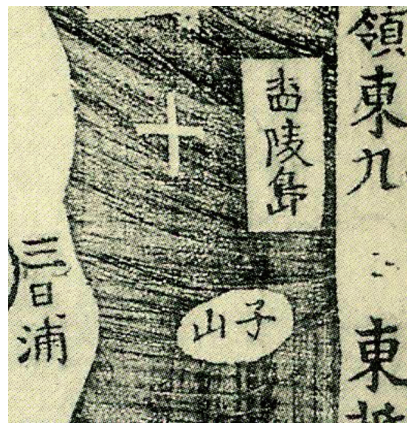
In early pre-modern times, the most important incident occurring between Korea and Japan in relation to Ulleungdo and Dokdo was the abduction of a Korean fisherman named Ahn Yongbok by the Oya family of Tottori, Japan, in 1693. Ahn Yongbok clashed with the Oya family when he warned them that they were trespassing while fishing on the Joseon territory of Ulleungdo



**Figure 2-7** Gangwon Province in *Cheonha jido* Source: Yeungnam University Museum



**Figure 2-8** Joseon chongdo in *Cheonha jido* Source: Yeungnam University Museum



**Figure 2-9** Gangwon Province in *Yeojido* Source: Seoul Museum of History



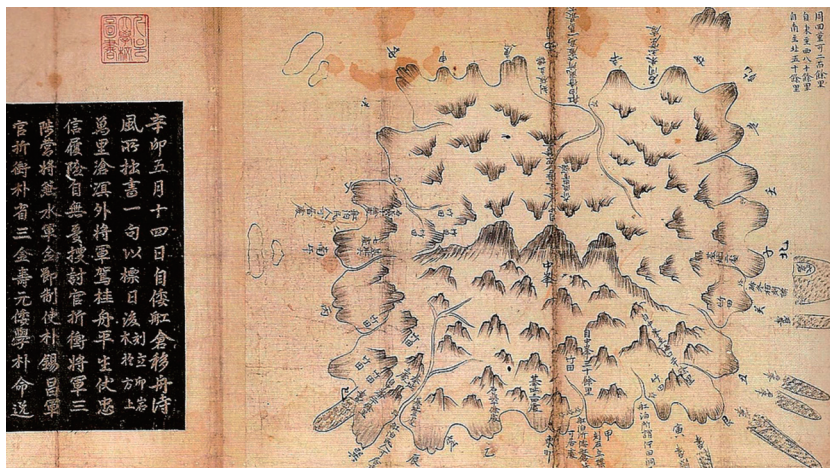
**Figure 2-10** Joseon paldo gogeum chongnamdo Source: Seoul Museum of History

without permission. In Japan, Ahn succeeded in getting a letter from the Tokugawa Shogunate that stated that Ulleungdo was Joseon territory. However, on Ahn's trip home, the Lord of Tsushima took away the letter and repatriated him to Joseon, treating him like a trespasser on Japanese territory. Upon his return to Joseon, the Joseon Government reasserted that Ulleungdo was Joseon territory, and the Joseon Ministry of Rites sent a letter to Japan that criticized its violation of the border. In September 1693, Jang Hansang, a garrison officer of

Samcheok, was sent to Ulleungdo to perform a survey. In 1696, Ahn Yongbok went to Japan, identifying himself as a tax officer of Ulleungdo and Usando and carrying a *Joseon paldo jido* (Map of the Eight Provinces of Joseon) and he made a point that the two islands were Joseon territory based on the map and filed a suit against Japan (Park Byungsub, 2007).

In December 1695, the Tokugawa Shogunate sent a letter to Tottori, asking if Takeshima (Ulleungdo) was attached to Inaba and Hoki and if there were any islands attached to Inaba and Hoki other than Takeshima. Soon Tottori replied that Takeshima (Ulleungdo) and Matsushima (Dokdo) were not part of Inaba and Hoki. In the next year, the Tokugawa Shogunate prohibited Japanese nationals living in Tsushima and Tottori from sailing to Takeshima (Ulleungdo). With this order from the Tokugawa Shogunate, disputes over Ulleungdo between Joseon and Japan were settled.

In 1697, Joseon introduced the Government Patrol and Investigation System and sent troops to Ulleungdo with an interval of three years in order to patrol the island and investigate the situation there. The patrol officers were required to make and submit maps of the areas surrounding Ulleungdo after completing their duty. According to *Sukjong sillok* (肅宗實錄, Annals of King Sukjong), in 1699, Jeon Hoeil, the Garrison Commander of Weolsong in Gangwon Province, patrolled Ulleungdo, drew a map of the island, and

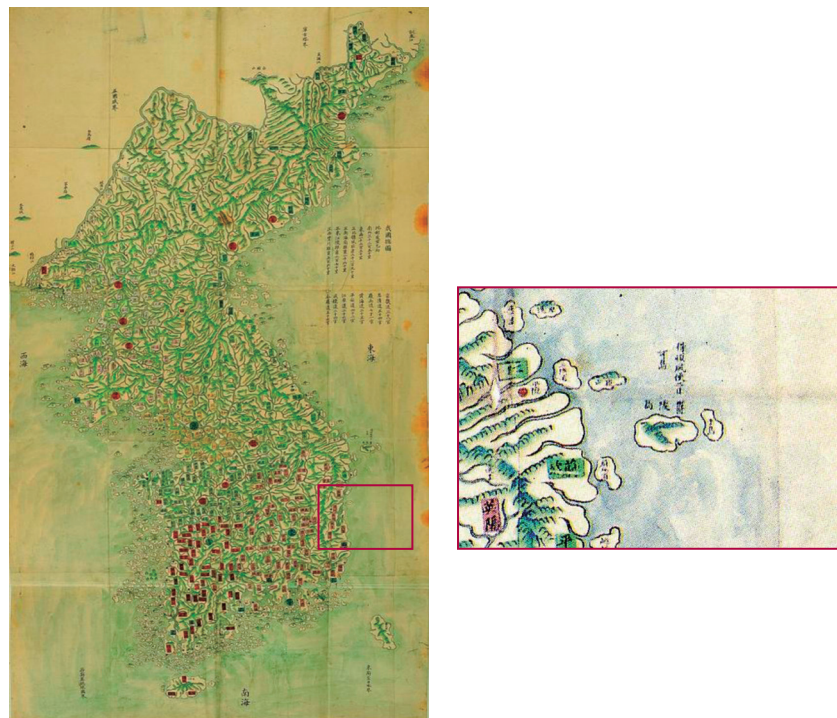


**Figure 2-11**  
*Ulleungdo dohyeong*  
by Park Seokchang  
in 1711

Source: Kyujanggak  
Institute for Korean  
Studies

presented its local products to the court. Also, Yi Junmyeong, the Divisional Commander of Samcheok also in Gangwon Province, and his Japanese translator Choi Jaehong presented a map and a local specialty product to the court in 1702. Figure 2-11 shows the map that Park Seokchang, the Divisional Commander of Samcheok, submitted to the Court after his expedition to Ulleungdo as a patrol officer in 1711. These are some of the documents demonstrating that the Joseon Government maintained Ulleungdo in the early modern period.

The maps made in the late Joseon period reflected the government's consistent interest in Ulleungdo and areas around the island (Yang Bokyung, 2005; Lee Sangtae, 2007). The maps made after the 18<sup>th</sup> century situated Ulleungdo and Dokdo properly and accurately. Maps such as *Dongguk jido* (Map of Korea), which demonstrated innovative map-making for the 18<sup>th</sup>



**Figure 2-12** *Aguk chongdo* in *Yeo jido* in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century

Source: Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies

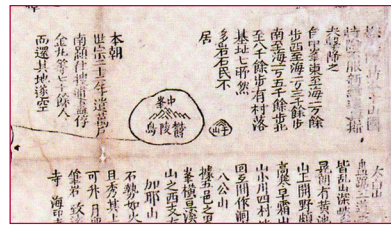
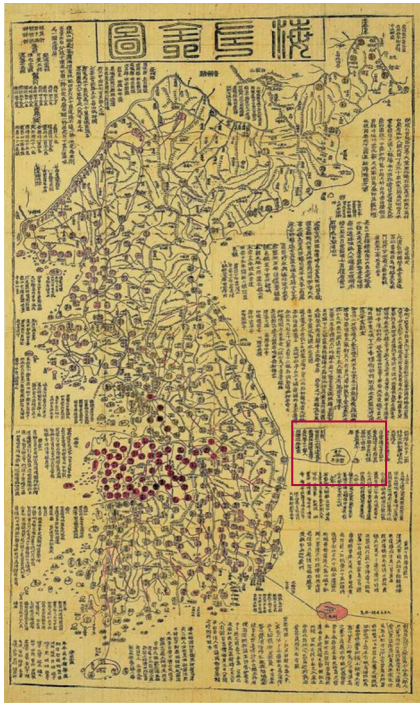


Figure 2-13 Haejwa jeondo in the mid-19th century

Source: Seoul Museum of History

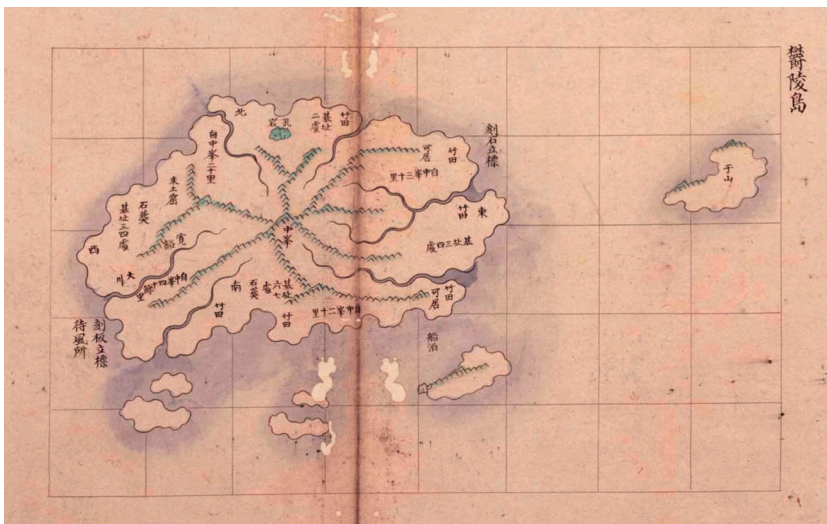


Figure 2-14 Ulleungdo in Joseon jido in the late 18th century

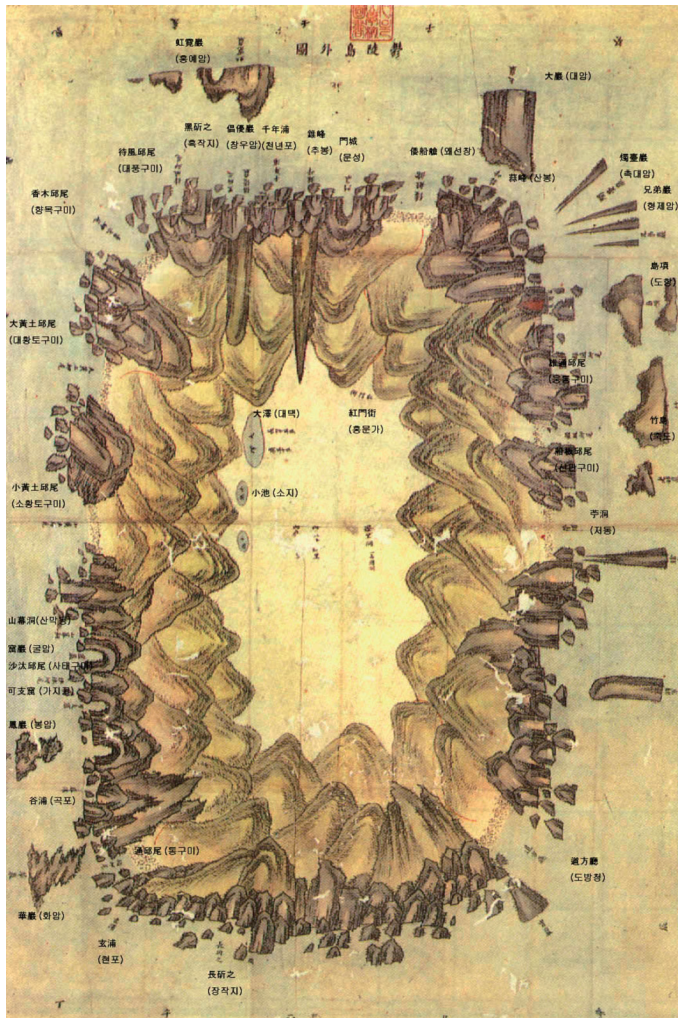
Source: Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies

century, showed Usando consistently east of Ulleungdo, ranging from due east to southeast or northeast.

Those maps also accurately described the shape of Ulleungdo and Dokdo (Figures 2-12 and 2-13). The atlases of prefectures and counties had a separate section for Ulleungdo (Figure 2-14). Due to the major changes in mapmaking techniques in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, more detailed information about Ulleungdo was included in maps, and Usando was marked as being located to the east of Ulleungdo. Even though Ulleungdo was not officially an administrative unit, atlases of Korea made in the 18<sup>th</sup> century treated it with a separate map. Governmental and public interest in Ulleungdo, Dokdo and coastal regions increased due to the abduction of Ahn Yongbok by the Japanese. It is important to note that maps compiled by the Government began to assemble relatively accurate information on the location, size, and shape of Ulleungdo and Dokdo during this period (Yang Bokyung, 2005).

### **Ulleungdo and Dokdo in Modern Korea**

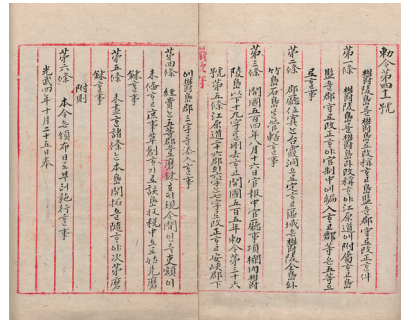
In 1881, patrol officers found that quite a few Japanese nationals had trespassed on Ulleungdo, stolen lumber and caught fish. The Joseon Government immediately alerted the Japanese Government, and requested that Japan prohibit its nationals from trespassing. Subsequently, the Japanese Foreign Ministry admitted to the problems that the Japanese created on Ulleungdo and apologized to the Joseon Government because Japan had already confirmed in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century that Ulleungdo belonged to Joseon. However, Japanese residents continued to arrive on Ulleungdo because the Japanese Government did not implement any specific measures to prohibit them. The Joseon Government continued protesting to Japan. Finally, in March 1883, out of concern for another potential diplomatic dispute over Ulleungdo, the Japanese Ministry of Home Affairs and Ministry of Justice issued an instruction that prohibited the Japanese from sailing to Ulleungdo. In September, the Japanese Government dispatched ships and ordered an official of the Home Affairs Ministry to bring Japanese nationals back to Japan from Ulleungdo. Some 254 Japanese were forced to return to Japan (Hori, 2003).



**Figure 2-15**  
*Ulleungdo oedo in 1882*

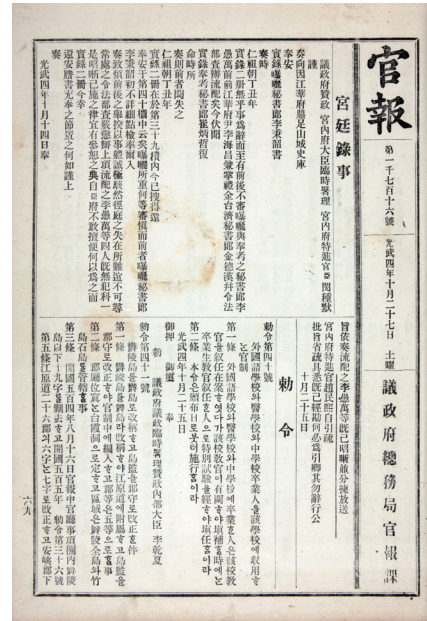
Source: Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies

According to *Seungejongwon ilgi* (承政院日記, The Diaries of the Royal Secretariat) and in 1882, King Gojong dispatched Yi Gyuwon as the Royal Inspector of Ulleungdo to investigate Ulleungdo and its adjacent islands. Yi and his men met 132 Koreans and eight Japanese on Ulleungdo (Rii and Lee, 2006). After a thorough survey, they submitted two detailed maps of Ulleungdo to the Court (Figure 2-15). Among the Koreans, the majority came from the Jeolla Provinces for ship building or gathering seaweed and abalone. Koreans from the other provinces were there primarily as collectors of plants for herbal



**Figure 2-16**  
**'Imperial Edict No. 41' of the Great Han Empire in 1900**

Source: Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies



medicine or other purposes. Discovering that the Japanese were still illegally coming over to Ulleungdo for logging and fishing, the Joseon Government decided to encourage more Koreans to move to Ulleungdo beginning in April 1883.

In 1894, the Joseon Government abolished the Government Patrol and Investigation System on Ulleungdo. In the following year, the Joseon Government appointed a county magistrate to administer the island. The population of Ulleungdo was about 1,000 in 1896 and doubled to about 2,000 by 1899 (Hur Youngran, 2006), when Joseon declared itself to be the Great Han Empire. The Great Han Government ordered Bae Gyeju, the County Magistrate of Ulleungdo, and E. La Porte, a tax accountant, to investigate the island in 1899. In the following year, in June 1900, the Government sent Woo Yongjeong to inspect and report on island affairs.

On October 25, 1900, the Great Han Empire issued Imperial Edict No. 41, which promoted the status of Ulleungdo to Uldo-gun (Uldo County) and established legal policies with regard to Ulleungdo (Figure 2-16). Uldo-gun administered Ulleungdo and the adjacent island of Jukdo together with Seokdo,

the present-day Dokdo. The Edict was published in the Government Gazette (No. 1716 on October 27, 1900) to carry the force of law.

In 1876, the Geography Section of the Japanese Ministry of Home Affairs consulted Shimane Prefecture in order to determine whether Takeshima and Matsushima belonged to Japan. Shimane Prefecture sent a report on the history of the Oya and Murakawa families' expedition to Jukdo (Ulleungdo) in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The report also included a brief map of Jukdo (Ulleungdo) and Songdo (Dokdo). The Japanese Ministry of Home Affairs concluded that the two islands belonged to Joseon, not Japan. However, it requested that the Dajokan (the Great Council of State) make a final decision on the matter in 1877. The Dajokan agreed with the opinion of Shimane Prefecture and the Ministry of Home Affairs and officially announced that it excluded Jukdo and Songdo from the Japanese territory, and it did not see Jukdo and Songdo as separable. On April 9, 1877, the Ministry of Home Affairs notified Shimane Prefecture of the Dajokan's decision.

The Japanese Navy shared the same recognition. From March 1880, the Hydrographic Office of the Japanese Navy started to compile the *Territorial Hydrograph Chronicles*. The second volume of this series was about Russia and Korea. The fourth part, titled "Joseon's East Coast" in the second edition of the second volume (1886), mentioned Liancourt Rocks (Dokdo) along with Ulleungdo. The part that covered Joseon in the 1894 and 1899 editions of the *Chronicles* mentioned Ulleungdo and Liancourt Rocks, while the *Territorial Hydrograph Chronicles* did not mention the two islands in its section on Japan and its sea. Therefore, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Hydrographic Office of the Japanese Navy did not question that Dokdo belonged to Joseon. After the Meiji Restoration, Japan never showed a specific interest in Dokdo. While they differed to some extent, all Japanese Government institutions agreed that Dokdo and Ulleungdo belonged to Joseon (Hori, 2003).

However, Japan realized the significance of Ulleungdo and Dokdo in the East Sea during the Russo-Japanese War. On January 28, 1905, a Japanese Cabinet meeting decided to incorporate Dokdo into its territory. On February 22, 1905, Shimane Prefecture issued Shimane Prefecture Public Notice No.40,

which named Liancourt Rocks as Jukdo and put it under the jurisdiction of the Administrator of Okinoshima. However, the Japanese Government did not publish this notice in the Official Gazette. It neither consulted with nor informed the Great Han Empire of the decision.

The Great Han Empire was not aware that Japan had decided to include Dokdo in its territory. On March 28, 1906, Japanese inspectors from Shimane Prefecture visited Sim Heungtaek, the County Magistrate of Uldo. They informed him that Dokdo was incorporated into Japanese territory. The next day, Sim submitted an urgent report, which started with the phrase “Dokdo, which belongs to this county, .....” to Yi Myeongnae, the Magistrate of Chuncheon County who served as the acting Governor of Gangwon Province.

Around this time, Japan secured the acquiescence of the world powers in its rule of the Korean Peninsula and stripped the Great Han Empire of its sovereignty. In July 1905, Japan and the United States agreed on the Taft-Katsura Memorandum. According to the agreement, the United States recognized Japan's colonization of Joseon, and Japan recognized the United States' annexation of the Philippines. The United States and the United Kingdom also agreed that they would cooperate in implementing Japan's plan of bringing stability to East Asia. Japan secured a similar agreement from the United Kingdom and Russia in August and September, respectively. In November 1905, Japan forced Joseon to sign the Convention between Japan and Korea Providing for Control of Korean Foreign Relations by Japan better known as the Protectorate Treaty. On January 17, 1906, Japan eliminated the Foreign Ministry of the Great Han Empire. On February 1, 1906, Japan established the office of the Resident General, and on March 2, Ito Hirobumi became the first Resident General.

On April 29, 1906, when Sim Heungtaek, the magistrate of Uldo-gun, submitted his report confirming that Dokdo belonged to his jurisdiction, the Korean Government ordered an examination of this case. The Korean Government tried to protest Japan's aggression toward the island. Deprived of its right to foreign policy and lacking its own foreign ministry, however, the Korean Government could not make an official protest to Japan or to the

international community.

Japan's claim of Dokdo as its territory infuriated Korean intellectuals and major newspapers. The *Hwangseong sinmun* (Capital Gazette) and *Daehan maeil sinbo* (Korea Daily News) reported that Sim Heungtaek had heard from the Japanese inspectors that Dokdo had become Japanese territory. They also reported that the Government had given an instruction to examine this incident. Hwang Hyeon (1855–1910), one of the most famous intellectuals of the time, wrote in his book, *Ohagimun* (Miscellany), “I heard that the Japanese came to an island 100 ri (about 40 kilometers) from Ulleungdo, which is called Dokdo and claimed that now it was theirs.” He also wrote in his memoirs, *Maecheon yarok*, “There is an island called Dokdo which is 100 ri east of Ulleungdo. It has belonged to Ulleungdo for centuries. A few Japanese people recently came to the island, saying that now Japan has a claim to it.” These kinds of responses to Japan's claim to Dokdo from journalists and intellectuals represented Koreans' indignation toward Japan's creeping colonial rule over Korea.

In 1908, two years before Japan's complete annexation of Korea, the Great Han Empire finished the compilation of *Jeungbo munheon bigo* (Revised and Enlarged Edition of the Reference Compilation of Documents on Korea). By stating that “Ulleungdo and Dokdo belonged to Usan-guk and have long been Korean territory,” the *Jeungbo munheon bigo* emphasized Korea's historical ownership of Dokdo.

## Historic Geographical Controversy over Different Names referring to Dokdo

One of the most controversial topics surrounding Dokdo is related to its nomenclature. The name Dokdo appears in the official Korean document that dates back to 1906. The report created by Sim Heungtaek (Ulleungdo County

Magistrate) in 1906, which includes the expression “*Bongun sosok Dokdo...*” (“Dokdo, which belongs to this county...”), is the first document to use the name “dokdo” that has been verified as of now.

Dokdo was given various names, such as “Usando,” “Jasando,” “Sambongdo,” “Cheonsando” and “Gansando” in Korean documents and old maps up until the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Among them, “Usando” was the most commonly used name, and the others were variations. Therefore, the main point of contention in the controversy around Dokdo is whether the present-day Dokdo is the Usando found in old documents and maps or not.

The Korean Government today presents the Imperial Edict No. 41 announced in October 1900 by the Great Han Empire as the official proof that Dokdo was Korean territory, in terms of modern legal interpretation. The Usando that is recorded in numerous old Korean documents and maps is what is known today as Dokdo.

### **Usan-guk, Usando and Dokdo**

As mentioned above, the *Samguk sagi* has the first record of Usan-guk, dating it back to 512 CE. During the Goryeo period (936–1392), various names were used to represent Ulleungdo and Dokdo: Ureungdo (recorded in print in 930), Usan-guk (recorded in 1018, 1019 and 1022), Ureung (1032) and Ulleungdo (1141, 1157 and 1273).

In the Joseon period (1391–1910), Ulleungdo and Dokdo were called Mureungdo (1416), Usando (1417), Usando and Mureungdo (1454), Sambongdo (1476), and Mureungdo and Sambongdo (1511).

Park Sedang (1629–1703) included an essay titled “Ulleungdo” in his memoirs, *Seogye jammok* (Miscellaneous Essays of Seogye) printed in 1659. He wrote, “The altitude of Usando is not high enough to see it from Ulleungdo, except that one can see it on a clear day or from the summit (of Ulleungdo) (Yoo Mirim, 2008a).” Dokdo is the only island one can see on a clear day from a high point on Ulleungdo. Therefore, the island referred to as Usando is Dokdo today.

Between September 19 and October 3, 1694, soon after Ahn Yongbok was

taken by the Japanese, Jang Hansang, a garrison officer of Samcheok, patrolled Ulleungdo and wrote a report titled “Record of the Survey of Ulleungdo.” This report states, “On the west side of Ulleungdo, one can see the winding Daegwallyeong (the Daegwall Pass). Looking toward the east, less than 300 ri (125 kilometers) southeast of Ulleungdo there is an island visible to the naked eye. The size of the island is less than one third of the size of Ulleungdo.” The island Jang Hansang described is obviously identical to the one Park Sedang mentioned in his memoirs. Although there is a discrepancy regarding the size of Dokdo, the location of the island southeast from Ulleungdo clearly indicates Dokdo (Yoo Mirim, 2008a).

Before Ahn Yongbok was taken by the Japanese in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, historical documents confused the location and name of Ulleungdo and/or Dokdo. Due to the abduction of Ahn, public and private interest in Ulleungdo significantly increased. Not surprisingly, historical records on both islands after the late 17<sup>th</sup> century correctly located and named them.

Sin Gyeongjun (1712–1781), one of the representative geographers of the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Yang Bokyung, 1992, 2001; Park Inho, 1996), clarified the evidence regarding Usan and Ulleung islands in his book, *Ganggyeogo* (Historical Geographies of Korea). He quoted *Dongguk yeoji* (Geography of Korea, 1656):

“Some say that Usan and Ulleung are one and the same but various maps of Korea show that there are two separate islands, one of which is what the Japanese call Songdo. Both islands make up Usan-guk.”

Sin agreed with and clarified *Dongguk yeoji*'s conclusions that Usando and Ulleungdo were different, and that both islands had belonged to the ancient Usan-guk, with Usando being the one the Japanese called Songdo (Matsushima).

In the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Joseon Government and high government officials elucidated their understanding about issues related to Usando and Ulleungdo in contemporary books on the historical geography of Korea. *Dongguk munheon bigo* (東國文獻備考, Reference Compilation of

Documents on Korea, 1770), which was compiled on order of King Yeongjo, also clarified the relationship between Ulleungdo and Usando: “Ulleung and Usan belonged to Usan-guk and the latter is what the Japanese call Songdo.” Some books on the historical geography of Korea compiled by the order of the Government in the 19<sup>th</sup> century had the same opinion about the relationship between Ulleungdo and Usando. One of them is *Haedong yeoksasok* (海東繹史續, Sequel to the History of Korea, also known as *Haedong yeoksa jirigo*, Historical Geographies of Korea, 1823) by Han Jinseo. This is one of the most significant books on the historical geography of Korea published in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. *Mangi yoram* (萬機要覽, Manual of State Affairs for the Monarch, 1808), compiled by the order of King Sunjo, is another example of such publications. These publications documented the opinions and the perceptions of the government officials and intellectuals at the time as well as outlining the official government positions of late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century Korea.

In 1908, two years before Korea was annexed to Japan, *Jeungbo munheon bigo* (增補文獻備考, Revised and Enlarged Edition of the Reference Compilation of Documents on Korea), which was compiled by order of Emperor Gojong, confirmed the previous opinion of the Joseon Government that Ulleungdo and Usando were two different islands, both belonging to the ancient Usan-guk, and Usando was what Wae (倭, the Japanese) called Songdo.

*Jeungbo munheon bigo* referred to *Dongguk yeoji* (東國輿地志, Cultural Geography of Korea) which “says that both Ulleung and Usan belonged to Usan-guk, and Usan is what the Japanese call Songdo.”

### Seokdo and Dokdo

Another important issue related to Dokdo and its name is whether Seokdo is the present-day Dokdo. In order to stop the Japanese from entering Ulleungdo illegally, the Great Han Empire (Korea) took countermeasures by reorganizing the administrative district in Imperial Edict No. 41 of October 1900. With the Edict, Ulleungdo became Uldo-gun (Uldo County), and the officer of Ulleungdo was called the magistrate of Uldo-gun. Uldo-gun covered Ulleungdo, Jukdo and Seokdo (Dokdo). The issue is that the Edict used the

term “Seokdo” instead of “Usando” or “Dokdo.” The Great Han Empire announced this change in the Official Gazette so that it would be officially recognized by the international community.

Problems often arise when expressing Korean words in Chinese characters. This is believed to be the explanation for the two names Seokdo and Dokdo, both meaning Stone Island, referring to the same island. The logic that the origin of the word Seokdo is likely due to the regional dialect can already be found in the exchange of documents between Korea and Japan in 1953. The Korean scholars, including Choi Namseon, Lee Byungdo, and Shin Seokho, among others, mentioned that the names Seokdo and Dokdo are closely related to the words Dalseom and Dokseom. According to the “Korean Dialect Study” by the Japanese scholar Okura Shinpei in 1944, “dol” is called “dok” in Jeolla Provincial dialect. Furthermore, “dol” is translated as “seok” in the *Bibliography of Korean Geographical Designations*. This is the basis of the “Seokdo-equals-Dokdo” theory today (Shin Yongha, 1996; Yoo Mirim, 2008b).

When one considers the ways in which Koreans used the Korean language and Korean alphabet, the identification of Seokdo with Dokdo makes sense. Koreans visiting Ulleungdo at the time were fishermen or merchants interested in local herbs. Unaware of various names in Chinese characters referring to Dokdo in official documents, they referred to Dokdo in the vernacular that commoners used. Thus, Koreans living in the south called the island Dokdo Dalseom or Dokseom. The translation of Dalseom into Chinese is “Seokdo.” “Dol” means a stone in Korean, and its Chinese equivalent is “seok (石).” In a similar way, “seom” means an island in Korean while “do (島)” is Chinese for island. “Dokdo (獨島)” is the result of a phonetic rendering of the first syllable “dok” in Dokseom into a Chinese letter and translating “seom” into a Chinese character meaning an island. Therefore, “Seokdo” and “Dokdo” are one and the same. Still, the residents of Ulleungdo call Dokdo Dokseom or Dalseom.

It has been quite common in Korea for locals to refer to their places in Korean while official documents render Korean names for places into Chinese characters. In 1900, Woo Yongjeong, who visited Ulleungdo as an inspector, might have heard locals call the small island near Ulleungdo Dokseom or

Dolseom. In his report, he tried to reflect this knowledge and translated the Korean name of the island, Dolseom, into Chinese: Seokdo (Song Byonggi, 2007).

The first appearance of the present day's widely used name, Dokdo, in official Korean documents was in an Uldo-gun report by Sim Heungtaek in 1906. However, there is a Japanese record that points out the fact that the name Dokdo was used by the locals. One of the records that the Japanese vessel *Niitaka* left in 1904 noted, "People say that Koreans speak and write of Liancourt Rocks as Dokdo (Yoo Mirim, 2008b; Hori, 1987)." The Korean name Dokseom or Dolseom was so widely used as to be known to the foreigners who explored the island. In conclusion, names such as Seokdo and Dokdo derived from the process of transcribing Korean names such as Dokseom or Dolseom into Chinese.