

# Nationalist Entrepreneurs and Territorial Disputes in Northeast Asia

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Sustaining Public Interest

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First published 2026

ISBN: 978-1-041-09849-2 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-041-10542-8 (pbk)

ISBN: 978-1-003-65561-9 (ebk)

## Chapter 4

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### **The curious case of trademarks**

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DOI: 10.4324/9781003655619-5

## 4 The curious case of trademarks

So far, empirical evidence has been mustered to show how commodification sustains public interest, which represents one part of the overall argument. The other half is the positive feedback effect that redirects that interest to increased efforts at commodification. This second half is just as critical for reinforcing the importance of non-linearity. Though this book is mainly concerned with the activities of local merchants (and the government to the extent that they feature in the paths of the merchants), there are other actors such as the media and NGOs from the previous chapter that populate the nationalist ecosystem; within this larger system, it is best to view the interactions as occurring within a network rather than in an independent manner. As far as networks go, the Dokdo ecosystem was an ideal type that showcased a dense web of interrelations that work to sustain the Korean publics' resonance surrounding Dokdo. Yet, even with a dynamic case like Dokdo, there are feedback effects so that activities of commodification also become the result of interest and not simply the cause. In fact, this directionality from interest to commodification is probably the more intuitive one, since it is easier to grasp how nationalism might precede entrepreneurship than the other way around.

To establish the feedback effect in a relatively systematic fashion, this chapter utilizes a novel proxy for commodification efforts: *trademarks*, or the number of applications by individuals to have the name of a disputed territory incorporated into their product or service. The data on trademarks accomplishes two tasks: reaffirms the findings of the previous chapters so that we do see the greatest number of trademarks for territory in order of highest to lowest public interest and illustrates how the applications for trademarks do align with interest over time. Before providing the data on trademarks, I will briefly discuss just how informative trademarks can be despite their relatively light footprint in the Security Studies discourse.

### The utility of trademarks

It is probably helpful to start with definitions. According to the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a trademark “is a sign capable of distinguishing the goods or services of one enterprise from those of other enterprises” and is “protected by intellectual property rights” (WIPO n.d.). A trademark could be composed of a combination of words, letters, numbers, and any artwork such as drawings and

symbols; a trademark typically lasts for a period of 10 years, although this may vary from country to country.

Of course, this relatively straightforward definition belies the immense informative quality of trademarks. Unlike sensitive information (e.g. military spending) trademarks force some level of transparency. Trademarks, after all, are key to a functioning market, so like it or not, it is in a government's best interest to disclose information regarding trademarks and maintain an infrastructure for its public. China is no exception, based on the wealth of data that I was able to gather regarding its trademarks. In fact, each bureaucratic form detailing an application for a trademark contains a host of markers that can then serve as the source for fascinating analysis: *is the applicant an individual or a company? When was the application submitted? Where is the applicant located? Which trademarks have been approved? How fast or slow is the process? What category does the trademark fall under?* The 'category' here refers to the universal international classification of goods and services that most countries have signed up to, called the Nice Classification (NCL), which was established by the Nice Agreement in 1957.

On the one hand, the data on trademarks cannot be exhaustive, especially if one considers that individuals or companies may simply opt to use trademarks illegally without applying for them through official channels; this may be amplified in a country that has relatively weak enforcement regarding intellectual property rights. On the other hand, this only means that I am most likely *under*-reporting the extent of commodification through trademarks rather than over-inflating those instances.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, I can assume that the official trademarks data from each country is essentially weeding out those that are appropriating the nationalist rhetoric for more self-interested or sporadic marketing purposes, from those that are committed enough to the cause to dedicate actual resources to go through the steps associated with a trademark (which again makes trademarks a good marker to capture when nationalism or interest may precede entrepreneurialism). With this in mind, I pursued all such avenues in exploring the database for trademarks that capitalized on territorial sovereignty from 2000 to 2019—both in English and the native language—for China, South Korea, and Japan. The respective databases included platforms operated by the Chinese Trademark Office of National Intellectual Property Administration, the Korea Intellectual Property Rights Information Service (KIPRIS), the Japan Patent Office (JPO), and the National Center for Industrial Property Information and Training (INPIT).

### *China*

The somewhat crude axiom that China is a big country with an equally big market applies to trademarks. Table 4.1 shows the total count of trademarks that contain any of China's disputed territory in its name as collated from the website operated by the Chinese Trademark Office of National Intellectual Property Administration at <https://wcjs.sbj.cnipa.gov.cn/home>.

First, Table 4.1 reaffirms the findings so far about the differing levels of public interest in China for each territory and how that aligns with the scope of

Table 4.1 Number of territorial-themed trademarks in China (2000–2019)

<i>Territorial claim</i>	<i>Total applications</i>	<i>Live as of 2019 (acceptance rate %)</i>	<i>Total applications by Sansha Yongxing Affairs Authority</i>
Jiandao <sup>2</sup>	0	0 (0%)	0
Suyan Jiao	1	1 (100%)	0
Diaoyu Islands	523	9 (1.72%)	0
Features in the Paracel Chain (South China Sea) <sup>3</sup>	1,210	1,170 (96.69%)	1,071
Features in the Spratly Chain (South China Sea) <sup>4</sup>	1,148	986 (85.89%)	991
Total	2,882	2,166	2,062

commodification. Both Jiandao and Suyan Jiao are minor bleeps,<sup>5</sup> which tracks with the low level of public interest; trademark applications for the Diaoyu Islands and South China Sea are quite robust. From the raw count alone, it may seem like the large number of trademarks for the South China Sea contradicts the finding about the Diaoyu Islands as the dominant dispute for the Chinese public. This is where the acceptance rate comes in: there is an astonishing disparity between the high acceptance rate of trademarks under the South China Sea<sup>6</sup> and the Diaoyu Islands, which is what prompted the separate column in Table 4.1 that identifies the applicant. The Sansha Yongxing Affairs Authority or SYAA (三沙市永兴事务管理局) is a prime applicant for the trademarks in the South China Sea, which is what is driving up the overall acceptance rate. To give some context behind the SYAA, in July 2012, there was a ceremony on Yonxing (Woody) Island—the largest of the Paracel Islands—where the Chinese Vice Minister of Civil Affairs at the time announced the establishment of Sansha City, which prior to this move had been considered a county-level unit.<sup>7</sup> Comparatively speaking, this legislative and administrative action of elevating Sansha to a prefectural-level city under Hainan province has not attracted the kind of media frenzy that installations and fortifications have tended to create. Fortunately, this dynamic regarding the SYAA aligns with the findings concerning active state commodification of the South China Sea in Chapter 3.

To elaborate on this state-driven aspect from the angle of trademarks, there are a whopping 2,675 trademarks that have been filed (and mostly approved) by SYAA.<sup>8</sup> Out of those 2,675, the SYAA has *zero* Diaoyu Islands trademarks, while it is responsible for most of the total issued and live trademarks for the Paracel and Spratly chain.<sup>9</sup> There is a systematic pattern to most of these trademarks by SYAA: almost all of these trademarks were filed on the same date of July 23, 2014, most were approved sometime in 2015, and each island or feature typically results in an average of 45 trademarks each. So *why 45*? This would seem odd if not for the fact that the NICE classification has exactly 45 categories (1–34 for goods and 35–45 for services), which signals that perhaps the SYAA is covering all its bases by

applying a trademark for every NICE category for the particular feature. The timing of what could only be called a ‘blitzkrieg’ of applications by SYAA is also telling: as I already mentioned in Chapter 2, the Philippines submitted its substantial Memorial to the Hague Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) on arbitral proceedings it had instituted back in January 2013 against China for its illegal claims in the South China Sea. (Subsequently, the PCA fixed December 14, 2014, as the date for China’s submission of its counter-Memorial.<sup>10</sup>) Moreover, just two months prior to SYAA’s applications, China was involved in a standoff with Vietnam after an oil rig owned by the China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) entered the disputed waters of the Paracels, which escalated to the point of China evacuating some of its citizens due to major anti-China protests (including those involving violence) in Vietnam (Whiteman 2014). With all this in mind, the trademarks by SYAA reflect the purposeful, systematic, and expansive efforts at commodification on the part of the Chinese government to reinforce its territorial sovereignty in the South China Sea amidst heightened interest by disputants to the South China Sea.

Conversely, the applicants driving the trademarks for the Diaoyu Islands take on a different identity: out of the 523 total trademarks, 163 are listed under individuals while 360 are companies. This reinforces the findings from Chapter 2 about interest and how the Diaoyu Islands exhibit street-level momentum. Taking another cue from Chapter 2 about longitudinal interest, the data on Figures 4.1 and 4.2 for Diaoyu Islands trademarks over time seem to mirror the pattern of the fluctuations regarding the annual donation amount to the World Chinese Alliance in Defense of the Diaoyu Islands or WCADDI: 2012 clearly standing out in public interest and trademarks, with some residual interest and applications in 2013, and both tapering off by 2019. (Figure 4.2 is the same graph as 4.1 but on a logged scale to account for the extreme value that skews the scale and inhibits comparisons across years.)

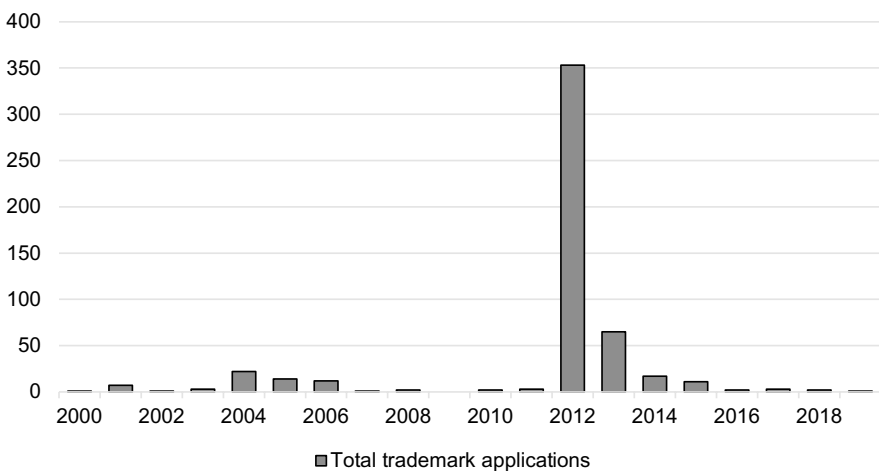


Figure 4.1 Annual number of Diaoyu Islands trademark applications in China (2000–2019)

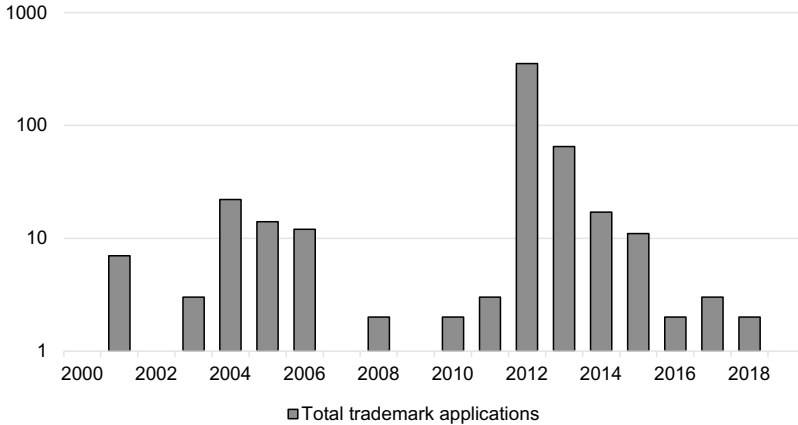


Figure 4.2 Annual number of Diaoyu Islands trademark applications in China (2000–2019) (logged scale)

The unmistakable uptick in both interest (as captured by donations) and trademark applications for 2012 is not surprising given that there were major incidents involving the Diaoyu Islands: as I already mentioned, the Japanese government made the decision in September 2012 to nationalize three of the five islands that make up the Senkaku chain, which, in turn, sparked a flood of anti-Japanese protests on mainland China including in major cities such as Beijing and Shanghai.<sup>11</sup> The nationalization came right after another major incident in August 2012, where a fishing boat filled with activists from Hong Kong successfully disembarked on one of the islands in the Diaoyu/Senkaku chain, before being arrested and deported by Japanese authorities. That the majority of trademark applications for Diaoyu Islands in 2012 occurred in the four months from September to December ultimately supports the argument regarding feedback that public interest led to greater commodification.

While it was difficult to systematically assess public interest for the Diaoyu Islands prior to 2012 due to the lack of both survey and donations data, it is possible to hypothesize a similar feedback effect based on the patterns from the trademark applications. For instance, there is a small peak in 2004 for Diaoyu Islands trademarks, which eventually whittles down to zero in 2007. Incidentally, 2004 was an important year for Diaoyu Islands and public resonance within China, as seven activists from mainland China had disembarked on Uotsuri Island, thereafter being arrested by Japanese police and forcibly repatriated. The landing was the first for activists from mainland China following multiple failed attempts, thereby attracting even more attention. The four years—2000, 2002, 2007, and 2009—with no recorded trademark applications is telling, as they correspond well to the grooves of the Sino-Japanese political relations. First, the absence of applications in 2000 may be attributed to the pool of goodwill following the 1998 state visit by Chinese president Jiang Zemin to Japan (the first by a Chinese head of

state). Second, the sudden spike in 2001 overlaps with the Japanese prime minister Koizumi Junichiro taking office in April, who starts making tribute to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine, amidst protests from neighboring countries including China. Third, 2007 comes at the heels of Japanese prime minister Abe Shinzo and his ‘fence-mending trip’ to Beijing during his first two weeks in office in October 2006 (Japan Times 2006). Finally, 2009 also follows the renewed focus on invigorating the Sino-Japanese relationship, with a May meeting in Japan between Prime Minister Yasuo Fukuda and Chinese president Hu Jintao that resulted in the release of a joint statement toward a ‘Comprehensive Promotion of a Mutually Beneficial Relationship Based on Common Strategic Interests.’ If one were to map out a nationalist ecosystem within China for the Diaoyu Islands, it would probably start out at its embryonic stage in 2004, with a clear tipping point in 2012.

Before presenting the data for Japan, there is one additional insight that is worth highlighting as it contributes to the overall argument and how the process of the political becoming personal might work so seamlessly in the first place. The previous chapter had introduced, among other things, an item called Diaoyudao beer. It turns out that this is quite a representative item of commodification. In examining the top 10 categories for commodification based on the classification of items and services as noted on the initial applications for trademarks, what stands out is that the number one item for commodification is *alcohol*, including beer (Table 4.2). This category (NICE codes 33 & 32) takes up almost 20 percent of all applications for Diaoyu Island trademarks.<sup>12</sup> It is no surprise then that even a cursory online search returns multiple Diaoyu Islands spirits for sale.<sup>13</sup> It makes sense that from the perspective of local merchants the referent for commodification is something that is readily accessible and highly embedded in the everyday.

### *Japan*

It should be clear by now that activities of commodification tend to be much sparser and more sporadic for Japan; this is also reflected in the trademarks data (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3 is based on the search of all trademarks related to disputed territories on the Japan Platform for Patent Information (J-PlatPat) of the National Center for Industrial Property Information and Training (INPIT) at <https://www.j-platpat.inpit.go.jp/>. As was the case for the Paracel and Spratly chain, the Northern Territories consist of several subcomponents—the four main islands of Etorofu, Kunashiri, Shikotan, and Habomai. Unlike the Chinese case, however, the addition of multiple features did not expand the trademark pool by much. The pool was whittled down further after filtering each trademark for whether it really was a territorial-themed application or it happened to coincide with something else (hence the parenthetical addition to the table). For instance, trademarks for Tsushima Island were eliminated as the applications were clearly adopting the name to indicate the source/origin of the product, rather than make a stand on the dispute with South Korea. (This is not unexpected, as Tsushima Island is administered by Japan and is home to a Japanese population of over 40,000 people.) In addition, two of the three trademarks for

Table 4.2 Top 10 categories of commodification for Diaoyu Islands (2000–2019)

<i>NICE code</i>	<i>Total number of applications</i>	<i>Explanatory note</i>
33	75	Alcoholic beverages, essences, and extracts.
9	31	Mainly apparatus and instruments for scientific or research purposes, audiovisual and information technology equipment, as well as safety and life-saving equipment.
25	31	Clothing, footwear, and headwear for human beings.
32	26	Non-alcoholic beverages as well as beer.
19	24	Mainly materials, not of metal, for building and construction.
11	22	Apparatus and installations for lighting, heating, cooling, steam generating, cooking, drying, ventilating, water supply, and sanitary purposes.
30	22	Foodstuffs of plant origin, except fruits and vegetables, prepared or preserved for consumption, as well as auxiliaries intended for the improvement of the flavor of food.
1	18	Mainly chemical products for use in industry, science, and agriculture, including those which go to the making of products belonging to other classes.
7	16	Mainly machines and machine tools, motors, and engines.
6	15	Common metals and their alloys, ores; metal materials for building and construction; transportable buildings of metal; non-electric cables and wires of common metal; small items of metal hardware; metal containers for storage or transport; safes.

Table 4.3 Number of territorial-themed trademarks in Japan (2000–2019)

<i>Territorial claim</i>	<i>Total applications</i>	<i>Live (as of 2018)</i>
Tsushima	12 (0)	12
Takeshima	3 (1)	3
Senkaku Islands	5 (5)	5
Northern Territories	25 (25)	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>45 (31)</b>	<b>45</b>

*Note:* Numbers in brackets ( ) show the final count after excluding non-relevant cases.

Takeshima are named after a place in Gamagori City in Aichi prefecture, which happens to also be called Takeshima: again, cause for elimination.

Even with a clean dataset, it is difficult to examine whether the trademarks align with public interest over time due to fewer data points; as a further complication, recall from Chapter 2 that the Northern Territories is a dispute where the Japanese government does not allow for any room for public disinterest. Still, the order of trademarks from highest for Northern Territories and then the Senkaku Islands do tend to align with findings so far about the scope of commodification and public

interest for Japan. Looking at the 25 trademarks for the Northern Territories, all 25 are submitted by the same applicant—the Habomai Fishermen’s Cooperative Association—and are mostly trademarks for food products such as Habomai kelp and seafood. Based on what is available on the cooperative’s website at <https://www.jf-habomai.jp/index.html>, the Habomai label is generally being applied to local specialty items in hopes of promoting and stimulating the economy of Habomai. Sounds innocuous. Yet, according to the same website, the cooperative operates cruises “with panoramic views and a close up of the most easterly points of the Northern Territories” (Habomai Fishermen’s Cooperative Association n.d.), and it is not entirely divorced from the ongoing dispute with Russia: as recently as January 2020, the cooperative was quoted on an incident where Russian authorities had seized a Japanese cod fishing boat and its six-member crew and taken them to a port at Kunashiri island (South China Morning Post 2020). In this case, while the products themselves are not explicitly political, there is an implicit extension to the political cause of territorial sovereignty protection.

In contrast to the Diaoyu Islands in China, the timing of applications for the Northern Territories trademarks does not reveal any immediate connection to times of heightened public interest. In fact, the Habomai Fishermen’s Cooperative Association has been relatively consistent in submitting its applications in the years of 2006, 2008, 2009, 2014, 2016, 2017, and 2019. While there were a higher proportion of trademarks that were submitted in 2006, which coincide with a high visibility incident involving the shooting of a Japanese fisherman off the waters of the Habomai chain by Russian coastguards (McCurry 2006), the actual date of trademark applications all predates the incident that occurred in August. If anything, it is more probable that for the Northern Territories, the directionality goes from commodification to public interest, with indeterminate evidence of strong feedback effects.

A granular examination of the Senkaku Islands trademarks also highlights a slightly different dynamic to that of China. The first Senkaku-related trademark was submitted in April 2011 (and registered in February 2012) by the Senkaku Corporation, an actor I had previously mentioned in Chapter 3. A mere 17 days after the trademark was approved, Yaeyama Fisheries Cooperative Association submitted its own trademark for Senkaku Tuna, which eventually led to three more trademarks thereafter for Senkaku Bonito, Senkaku Grouper, and Senkaku Machi (Fish) (all filed in March 2013 and registered in August the same year). As bits and pieces of the story slowly trickled into mainstream media (Asahi Shimbun 2012),<sup>14</sup> it became clear that Watanabe Eiki, who happens to be on the board of the Association for the Protection of Senkaku Islands had transferred the rights to the Senkaku trademark to the Senkaku Corporation, at which point, the Yaeyama Fisheries Cooperative Association filed an objection against the registration with the Japan Patent Office, contending that the rights to the trademark would be best served under the management of the association (Nakama 2012b). The fisheries cooperative had the support of the Ishigaki municipal government, and it was reported that it had received a subsidy of 200,000 yen (or USD20,000) from Ishigaki City to file for its own trademarks (Suzuki 2012). On the J-PlatPat

platform, both Senkaku Corporation and Yaeyama Fisheries hold Senkaku trademarks; yet, the latter might have ended up with greater media coverage, with an announcement in 2023 that Ishigaki City was offering ‘Senkaku akamachi (尖閣アカマチ)’ or ‘Senkaku ruby snapper’ as one of its furusato nozei (hometown tax) gift (Yaeyama Nippo 2023a). Based on the arrangement, even if orders are sluggish (which was indeed the case), the fisher will be able to receive a subsidy from Ishigaki City (Yaeyama Nippo 2023a). The online response seemed to be mostly positive, with one particular view expressing the feeling that while it was not ideal to capitalize on an issue with high political contention, it would be meaningful if it provided the opportunity to re-evaluate the worth of Yaeyama fish (Yaima News 2023a). In fact, the same individual goes on to add that:

How can we pool our wisdom and ingenuity to create added value from the region’s natural bounty? We need to reduce waste, make full use of everything that is thrown away, and strategize about natural resources effectively. If we can create an example with this business model, it can be adopted by all industries. If we only bolster the tourism industry and allow wasteful investment in a real estate bubble that destroys the island’s natural environment, we will go the same way as the ruins that are currently being seen in China, where many abandoned apartment buildings are popping up.

(Yaima News 2023a)

Perhaps with this added momentum from the branding of Senkaku fish, there were news stories in November 2023 about a restaurant that opened up called ‘Senkaku Cafeteria’ (尖閣食堂) in a bustling area of Ishigaki City, which specializes in serving full-course meals using Senkaku ruby snapper (Yaeyama Nippo 2023b). Though the evidence of commodification is comparatively low for Japan, there are still signs that commodification is too treated as a business strategy that can lead to public interest.

In line with the emphasis so far on fish, the most common category of commodification for both the relevant and non-relevant cases of Japanese trademarks were ‘meat, fish, poultry and game’ (code 29) and ‘land and sea products not having been subjected to any form of preparation for consumption’ (code 31). In short, both the type of trademark applicants and the category of products point to a strong emphasis on promoting the fishing industry and its related outputs. The focus on seafood indicates that perhaps commodification of nationalism in Japan still often occurs in an *incidental* fashion, as an organic outgrowth of already established platforms for commercial activity, rather than highly or deeply *intentional* efforts that build businesses of nationalism from the ground-up. To summarize, the trademarks data tracks with the generally low level of commodification leading to public interest for the Senkaku Islands, Takeshima, and Tsushima. Even for the Northern Territories, there is little evidence of any robust feedback effect from public interest trickling back into commodification, which might also explain why the percentage of the Japanese population that do not know about the dispute with Russia has increased over time from 2008 to 2018.

**South Korea**

If there is, indeed, a variance between incidental and intentional commodification, South Korea would represent utmost intentionality in the way that commodification occurs for Dokdo: in pace, scope, and resilience. I had used the term, ‘Dokdofication’ in Chapter 3 to describe the vibrant nationalist ecosystem that undergirds the maintenance of public interest for Dokdo. The data on trademarks tends to confirm this. The Korea Intellectual Property Rights Information Service or KIPRIS has been operating since 1996 and is a systematic platform offered by the Korean Intellectual Property Office (KIPO) that allows users to search anything from patents, designs, and trademarks. Table 4.4 shows the results of searches for Jeodo, Gando, Daemado, and Dokdo (all in both Korean and English) with a time filter of 2000 to 2019 from the KIPRIS platform at <http://www.kipris.or.kr/>.

The results in Table 4.4 support Chapter 2 and the level of public interest in the order of highest to lowest within South Korea for Dokdo, Jeodo, Gando, and Daemado, respectively. To place the predominance of Dokdo in some context, that there is actually comparability between Dokdo with 459 trademark applications and Diaoyu Islands with 523 despite the huge population differential and market size of South Korea and China is quite extraordinary. Where the two diverge is on applicant composition: with individuals outnumbering companies/organizations by 3:1 and governments by an exceedingly large margin (since governments only account for 12 trademarks). In contrast to China and the SYAA, the two official actors in Korea’s Dokdo trademark database are North Gyeongsang province and the Northeast Asian History Foundation, the latter of which is under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. From 2000 to 2018, North Gyeongsang province applied for 11 applications while the Northeast Asian History Foundation applied for one—all of which have been approved. Whether the trademarks were expedited in their approval is less relevant than China’s case since the Korean bureaucracy of adjudicating trademarks is much faster overall, but the fact remains: there has been more than double the number of rejections to approvals of Dokdo-related trademarks, so the 100 percent success rate of government actors is worth noting.

As was the case with the Diaoyu Islands, it is possible to explore feedback effects upon closer look at the timeline of applications for Dokdo trademarks (Figure 4.3).

At first glance, the peak in 2005 harks back to Chapter 3 where I described the birth of the Dokdo nationalist ecosystem and 2005 as its genesis, due to key events such as the designation of ‘*Takeshima Day*’ and the passing of the Dokdo

*Table 4.4* Number of territorial-themed trademarks in South Korea (2000–2019)

<i>Territorial claim</i>	<i>Total applications</i>	<i>Live (as of 2019)</i>
Daemado	8	2
Gando	14	5
Jeodo	18	9
Dokdo	459	140
<b>Total</b>	<b>499</b>	<b>156</b>

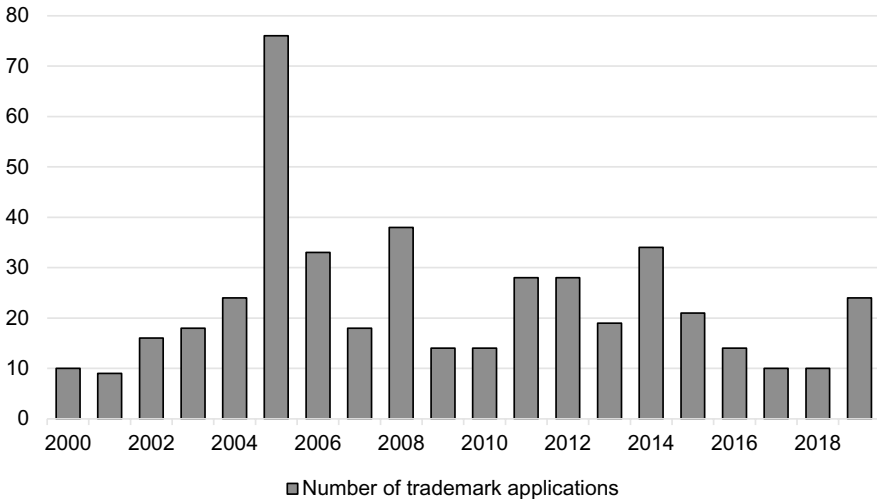


Figure 4.3 Annual number of Dokdo trademark applications in South Korea (2000–2019)

Sustainable Use Act or DSUA. The trademark applications for Dokdo in 2005 occur fairly consistently throughout the year with the exception of the very early months, which suggests that it would be difficult to totally discern the directionality of public interest and commodification with the two being most likely tightly woven together via feedback effects. The next three highest years for trademark applications were 2008 and 2014, closely followed by 2006. In May 2008, the Dokdo Research Institute was inaugurated. Meanwhile, 2014 was heavily dominated by talks of whether the territorial dispute should (or not) be referred to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), especially after remarks in January by Japan's Prime Minister Abe that Japan was considering taking the dispute to the court (on a related note, the debate over the title of 'East Sea' versus 'Sea of Japan' was in high contention, undoubtedly adding fuel to the fire) (Kang and Bang 2014). The conspicuous downward slope in trademark applications specifically from 2016 onwards is particularly instructive and matches the relative lull in donations to Dokdo organizations from Chapter 2. To elaborate, it is true that the Japan-Korea dyad was relatively preoccupied with several other 'big ticket items' that drove the two away from expending energy on the territorial dispute—Japan had domestic tasks including its House of Councillors election in 2016, followed by a (snap) general election in 2017, while South Korea was very much engrossed in both internal and external debate involving China and the U.S. over U.S. deployment of the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) on its soil. [Additionally, both countries were acutely watchful of North Korea's provocations, with Pyongyang having claimed its successful hydrogen bomb test in January 2016 along with a nuclear warhead explosion test in September, and its sixth nuclear test of a hydrogen bomb in September 2017.] With that in mind, the Dokdo/Takeshima agenda

was largely overshadowed by either immediate domestic or macro-geopolitical issues of the day, which dampened the public interest and hence, efforts at commodification.

Finally, there are parallels between China and South Korea on the popular targets for commodification. In addition to the familiar category of alcohol from China's sample also represented in South Korea's top 10,<sup>15</sup> a notably high number of trademark applications are for category 43, within the sphere of the service industry, particularly in the food and drinks space (table 4.5). The example from chapter 3 of 'Izakaya Dokdo' would be a representative instance of what this may look like.

That restaurants are the most populous vehicle for commodifying Dokdo suggests that the commodification in South Korea often occurs through whole businesses rather than sporadic merchandise, which really captures the sentiment of nationalist entrepreneurialism. Moreover, since restaurants are a permanent feature of the modern economy and they provide relative accessibility to the public despite their private quality, there is ample room for normalization of nationalism to occur—for nationalism to truly camouflage itself into the bustling landscape of everyday life.

*Table 4.5* Top 10 categories of commodification for Dokdo (2000–2019)

<i>NICE code</i>	<i>Total number of applications</i>	<i>Explanatory note</i>
43	114	Services for providing food and drink; temporary accommodation.
25	42	Clothing, footwear, and headwear for human beings.
42	41	Services provided by persons in relation to the theoretical and practical aspects of complex fields of activities, for example, scientific laboratory services, engineering, computer programming, architectural services, or interior design.
29	41	Meat, fish, poultry, and game; meat extracts; preserved, frozen, dried, and cooked fruits and vegetables; jellies, jams, compotes; eggs; milk, cheese, butter, yogurt, and other milk products; oils and fats for food.
16	36	Paper, cardboard, and certain goods made of those materials, as well as office requisites.
30	35	Foodstuffs of plant origin, except fruits and vegetables, prepared or preserved for consumption, as well as auxiliaries intended for the improvement of the flavor of food.
32	30	Non-alcoholic beverages, as well as beer.
41	29	Education; providing of training; entertainment; sporting and cultural activities.
35	19	Advertising; business management; business administration; office functions.
33	18	Alcoholic beverages, essences, and extracts.

## Summary

This chapter provided findings on trademark applications—those that directly incorporate the name of contentious territory in its products and services within the three markets of China, Japan, and South Korea. By doing so, it was first possible to compare the raw number of applications with the findings from Chapters 2 and 3 to establish how the volume of trademarks do correspond to their level of public interest. Second, establishing a timeline of the applications for some of the dominant disputes such as the Diaoyu Islands and Dokdo made it possible to examine the presence of feedback effects so that commodification informs public interest and vice versa, thereby reinforcing the overall entanglement or co-constitution between commodification and public interest. While the task was complicated by Japan and its relative lack of trademarks data, this does not fundamentally contradict the general findings from Chapter 2 of the increase in territorial *disinterest* or the more sporadic quality to nationalist entrepreneurialism from Chapter 3. The closest that Japan has come to erecting a robust nationalist ecosystem would be for the Northern Territories (though Senkaku Islands are increasingly becoming more popular), but that dispute has been marked by bilateral negotiations (albeit intermittent) that have dampening effects for commodification—a quality that is missing from other disputes like the Diaoyu Islands or Dokdo.

On areas of cross-country convergence, there were certain categories that became popular targets of commodification: *food* (processed or raw and as a commodity or service establishment) and *drinks* (alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages). The ability to identify in somewhat of a systemic manner which vehicles serve as common vessels for sustaining nationalism is valuable because it adds to the overarching argument about just how commodification can appeal to the public so as to sustain interest. For instance, it would be reasonable to assume that the everyday accessibility of something like Diaoyudao beer would be much higher than pre-manufactured kelp off the waters of the Northern Territories. This also explains why Senkaku ruby snapper is not just delivered to your home as part of a hometown tax gift from Ishigaki City, but there is a restaurant that specializes in processing that raw fish into a cuisine for accessible consumption. At a more basic level, I would argue that since food is the very sustenance of human life, infusing food with nationalism makes the latter also symbolically indispensable.

On areas of cross-country divergence, in contrast to the visible role of official actors in China (e.g. the Sansha Yongxing Affairs Authority in the Parcel and Spratly chain), the trademarks are prompted by a mix of individuals and small companies in South Korea and accompanied by a minimal footprint by the sub-national government. And yet, in all three, the story would be woefully incomplete without the presence of the government, which gets to the critical dialectic between the ‘state’ and the ‘people.’ After all, regardless of the applicant’s intent, the trademark applications are given life through the actions of a central government and its internal process of evaluation; sometimes, that action can seem quite discriminating, e.g. an acceptance rate of below 2 percent for the Diaoyu Islands, versus an almost 100 percent acceptance rate for SYAA-driven trademarks for features

in the Paracel chain. While the gatekeeping that the central government does in evaluating and eventually accepting or rejecting a trademark application may seem unilateral or one-sided—and hence, akin to more of a monologue than a dialectic—individuals do practice agency. The next chapter will explore this very element of government gatekeeping as one key implication of studying nationalism and territorial disputes through the prism of commodification.

## Notes

- 1 I actually limit my search/scope to trademarks rather than patent and utility models or designs, which are considered to be separate categories. So again, though trademarks are the most common forms, there is likelihood of under-reporting.
- 2 There are over 300 trademarks listed, but they all pertain to the generic definition, as *jiǎndāo* or 剪刀 also means scissors in Chinese, thereby producing many non-territorial-related trademarks such as Mr. Scissors, Rock Paper Scissors, etc.
- 3 Although the trademarks here were in Chinese, I will offer their English equivalents since the media often adopts the Anglicized names for these features: Paracel Island, Paracel Continent, Woody Island, Triton Island, Tree Island, Qilian Island, Robert Island, Yagong Island, Money Island, Xuande Islands, Yongle Islands, Bombay Reef, Guangjin Island/Palm Island, Lincoln Island, South shoal/sand, North reef, Antelope reef, Quanfu Island, Drummond Island, Panshi Island, Duncan Island, Pattle Island, Yuzhuo reef, and Discovery reef.
- 4 Although the trademarks here were in Chinese, I will offer their English equivalents since the media often adopts the Anglicized names for these features: Spratly Island, Subi reef, Hughes reef, Johnson South reef, Fiery Cross reef, Cuarteron Reef, Mischief Reef, Second Thomas reef, Sin Cowe Island, Loaita Island, Mahuan Island/Nanshan Island, Nanzi Island/Southwest Cay, Beizi Island/Northeast Cay, Taiping Island/Itu Aba, Zhongye Island/Thitu Island, Scarborough reef, Scarborough shoal, Swallow reef, Flat Island, Reed Bank, Vanguard Bank, Tizard Bank, Cornwallis reef, James shoal, and Gaven reef.
- 5 The singular trademark for Suyan Jiao was submitted on January 15, 2014, by an individual in the eastern coastal province of Jiangsu. A certificate of issuance was processed by April 2015.
- 6 Collating the information for the Paracel and Spratly chain was a much more complex process in relation to the Diaoyu Islands, because both chains contain over 100 features each (e.g. reefs, banks, etc.), unlike the Diaoyu Islands that remain relatively ‘monolithic’ in quality. Additionally, having so many subcomponents meant that the names for some of the features were more generic and hence appropriated for non-territorial businesses. For instance, *Jīnyīn Dǎo* (金银岛) or ‘money island’ located in the Paracel chain had 106 applications, though many of those applications were clearly capturing the generic sense of the word rather than its disputed territoriality. Luckily, for the most part, the names of the features were specific enough that it would not cause too much of a conflation.
- 7 For context surrounding Sansha City and also the PRC’s approach to territoriality, see Ming (2016).
- 8 The SYAA also has 32 trademarks under ‘Sansha (三沙).’
- 9 There are few exceptions (less than ten) where some of SYAA’s applications were rejected, or initially approved and then rejected. These tend to represent anomalies.
- 10 The PCA also noted that “as of 16 December 2014, China had not filed a Counter-Memorial,” and that the Chinese Government has reiterated that “it will neither accept nor participate in the arbitration unilaterally initiated by the Philippines” (Permanent Court of Arbitration 2014). The Arbitral Tribunal further noted that although its mem-

bers had been furnished with copies of the December 2014 “Position Paper of the Government of the People’s Republic of China on the Matter of Jurisdiction in the South China Sea Arbitration Initiated by the Republic of the Philippines,” the Chinese Government had via communications to the Registry made it “clear that the forwarding of the aforementioned Position Paper shall not be regarded as China’s acceptance of or its participation in the arbitration” (Permanent Court of Arbitration 2014).

- 11 There were reports that the Chinese government was neither endorsing nor suppressing the protests, see Johnson and Shanker (2012). I explore the role of the government and this kind of ‘ambivalence’ via the role as gatekeeper rather than instigator in the next chapter.
- 12 China’s long history with liquor and its consumption thereof has already been well documented. For instance, see Yue and Tang (2013). As a quick and interesting side note, as of January 2023, there are over 41,000 trademarks on the Chinese trademark platform that contain the Chinese character for *jiu* or liquor (酒).
- 13 There are also Diaoyu Islands spirits available for purchase in the gift store at the September 18 History Museum (沈阳9.18历史博物馆) in Shenyang. (The museum features the Mukden/Manchurian incident and Japan’s subsequent invasion and creation of Manchukuo.) I thank Todd Hall for sending me the photos.
- 14 For a response by Assemblyman Nakama Hitoshi (the acting head of the Association for the Protection of Senkaku Islands) on the dispute, see his blogpost (Nakama 2012a).
- 15 This popularity of alcohol does raise an important question regarding the gendered aspect of nationalism and territoriality. In fact, the Japanese Cabinet-level surveys consistently found more interest from males than females on disputed territory, as did the surveys in China. It is possible for nationalism to get reproduced through cultures of heterosexual masculinity, thereby establishing varying boundaries for inclusive versus exclusive nationalism. In quickly scanning the trademark applicants for Dokdo in South Korea, there were about 42 out of 340 (individual) applicants that had female-identifying names, representing only 12 percent of all trademark applicants. If the reality is that the narrative surrounding nationalism surrounding territoriality is somewhat monopolized—implicitly or explicitly—there must be ramifications for the inclusive versus exclusive nature of nationalism even within one nation and the effects of gendering. I thank Kathy Moon for highlighting the value of gender and gendering here.

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