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Japan and China both have official lists of Chinese characters that can be used in official gov't documents and for education.

Japan's latest list was released in 2010 and is called the New List of Chinese Characters for General Use

China's latest list was released in 2013 and is called the General Purpose Normalized Chinese Character List

The characters within these lists and the history of both lists show how Japan has influenced China's language policies through tourism, technology, and food culture



Chinese characters first appeared on oracle bones over 3000 years ago in China

These characters changed over time and were brought to Japan via scholars around AD 400

While keeping these characters in use, Japan also created two phonetic alphabets out of them

In both countries, the use of these characters was inconsistent. There were too many characters to learn and too many ways of writing the same character

Thus, standardized lists were created. Japan was first by creating the 1946 “List of Chinese Characters for Current Use” and China followed with its 1956 “Table of Simplified Characters”

- § Japan's latest standardized character list
- § Released in 2010
- § Incorporated 196 new characters, 159 of these characters had not appeared on any previous Chinese list either
- § Updates focused on the increasing usage of computers and word-processors

§ China's latest standardized character list

§ Released in 2013

§ Character count increased from approximately 7,000 to 8,000. The much larger number comes from the fact that Chinese does not have a phonetic alphabet, so more characters are needed. Also, the Chinese list includes specialized characters that the Japanese one does not.

- § The most prominent area of influence is the characters themselves, as they were initially invented in China
- § These characters are also simple in structure. They are written with few strokes
- § They also hold meanings that have been around since pre-modern times

China's Influence (Cont.)

§ 旦 (jp/cn:*dan*)

§ Meaning: daybreak, morning, dawn

§ 爪 (jp:*sou*; cn:*zhao/zhua*)

§ Meaning: claw, talon, foot

§ 巾 (jp:*kin*; cn:*jin*)

§ Meaning: towel, piece of cloth

Each of these characters has relatively few strokes. The meanings also pertain to things that have been in existence and talked about for millennia. They are examples of how China has been continually influencing Japan since long ago.

- § Standardization: Japan was the first to begin creating character lists, and was also the first to begin truly standardizing as opposed to just simplifying characters
- § Tourism: As China focused on more and varied parts of Japan through tourism, they needed to incorporate relevant characters into their lists
- § Technology: Japan led the charge in technological advancement, this was facilitated by its use of phonetic alphabets, but also led to Japan's increased usage of more complicated characters that bled over into China
- § Food Culture: Character used in Japanese food dishes can be seen used in both lists, but originating in the Japanese list

§ Standardization

- § Japan first began standardizing in 1981, with China following suite in 1988
- § The first lists before that were created as temporary, immediate solutions to the problem of too many Chinese characters being in use.
- § Rather than trying to reduce the use of characters to the minimum amount, standardization sought to create a list of characters that are needed and commonly used across the country. Thus, additions as well as subtractions can be made.

Japan's Influence (Cont.)

Tourism

Japan's newest list focused on including the characters used in its administrative regions.

China included the names of smaller cities, as well as characters used in Japanese era names

This indicates that through increased tourism to Japan, China has a greater interest in varied areas of Japanese geography and history.



阪 (jp:*saka*; cn:*ban*), from 大阪 (Osaka)
熊 (jp:*kuma*; cn:*xiong*), from 熊本 (Kumamoto)
埼 (jp:*sai*; cn:*qi*), from 埼玉 (Saitama)
鎌 (jp:*kama*; cn:*lian*), from 鎌倉 (Kamakura)
This is also the name of a Japanese Era

§ Technology

- § Japan was an earlier adapter of technology (Word-Processor, Computer)
- § Japan began using more complicated characters that were easy to input on a computer, but difficult to write. The popularity of these characters made them appear on the Japanese list, and from there the Chinese list.

§ 鬱 (jp:*utsu*; cn:*yu*) luxuriant, melancholy

§ 傲 (jp:*gou*; cn:*ao*) pride, arrogance.

§ Food Culture

§ 拉麵 (jp:*raamen*; cn:*lamian*)

§ Popular Japanese dish that uses Chinese noodles.

§ A parallel of how China exerts a base influence on Japan, but how Japan then expands and repurposes it to re-influence China

§ 餅 (jp:*mochi*; cn:*bing*)

§ Popular Japanese desert

§ The character is used for cakes in Chinese, but was added to the Japanese list before the Chinese list

- § Specific character examples from Japan's New List of Chinese Characters for General Use and China's General Purpose Normalized Chinese Character List show how Japan has become increasingly diversified in its influence on China.
- § As shown through technology, food culture, and tourism, China has been able to rely on and look to Japan for guidance in the creation of character lists. The concept of standardization that Japan brought to the forefront is also a major influence, since both countries seem to be especially focusing on that in their latest adaptations.