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### Character Standardization: Japan's Influence on China

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# Character Standardization: Japan's Influence on China

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Japanese and Chinese are both incredibly complicated languages from the perspective of an English speaker. Unlike English, both languages incorporate symbols rather than just an alphabet. To be sure, Japanese does have a phonetic alphabet, two in fact. It also uses Chinese characters called *kanji*. *Kanji*, as well as Japan's two phonetic alphabets (*hiragana* and *katakana*) were derived from Chinese characters. A unique characteristic of Chinese characters is that they represent a meaning rather than just a sound. In Japanese, every *kanji* has more than one way of being pronounced. Because these characters are so unlike a set alphabet, they are constantly being created, or written in different ways. In order to make the language understandable for the hundreds of millions of people who use them, the governments of Japan and China have each made their own lists of official characters. The most recent updates of these lists are the New List of Chinese Characters for General Use in Japan (新常用漢字表 [*shin jouyou kanji hyou*]) and the General Purpose Normalized Chinese Character List (通用规范汉字表 [*tongyong guifan hanzi biao*]) in China. The goal of this thesis is to show that although China has had a continuing influence on the Japanese language for thousands of years, Japan has reversed this trend. Using the recent character list updates as primary sources, this thesis will show how tourism, technology, and food culture contribute to the ways in which Japan is influencing China's language policies.

Japan added 196 new characters to the 2010 List of Chinese Characters for General Use (新常用漢字表 [*shin jouyou kanji hyou*]). Of those 196, 159 characters were not on China's 1988 Modern List of Chinese Characters for General Use (现代汉语通用字表 [*xiandai hanyu tongyong zi biao*]), but did appear on the 2013 (通用规范汉字表 [*tongyong guifan hanzi biao*]). There are a few possible reasons for this: China and Japan by pure coincidence began using over 150 of the same characters more commonly; or China looked at Japan's list when creating their own; or some combination of the two. In order to determine which of these three possibilities is most likely, there are a couple things to consider. The first thing to look at is the composition of the characters that were added. This is done through examining how they were simplified, what the characters mean, and how they are used in each language. Another aspect to consider is to take a look at the bigger picture and compare how these lists came into being and the history behind them in each country.

Any book about Chinese or Japanese language will tell you that Japan created their writing system based on Chinese. In fact, for a while, written Japanese was closer to Chinese than spoken Japanese. Giving a background on the origin and spread of the characters is important in understanding how policies regarding character use is created in the present day. The earliest trace of Chinese script was unsurprisingly found in China from around 1000-2000BC. These characters were from the Shang Dynasty and were found carved into ox shoulder

blades and tortoise shells for religious divination purposes. A couple of millennia later in around AD 400, the writing system worked its way to Japan via scholars traveling through Korea (*History of Writing in Japan* 6). In the following centuries, Japan and China both created many more characters, as well as different ways of writing existing characters. In addition to this, Japan developed two phonetic alphabets (*hiragana* and *katakana*) based on the existing *kanji*. *Hiragana* is the normal alphabet, whereas *katakana* is for loanwords, or words that are borrowed from other languages such as コピー (*kopii*, copy). In the past, foreign words were written in *kanji* that had similar pronunciation to the borrowed word. This practice was known as 当て字 (*ateji*). An example is America which is now written in *katakana* アメリカ (*amerika*), but used to be written in *kanji* as 亜米利加 (*a me ri ka*). Recently, it has become a trend to write some words in *katakana* when they are not a loanword just to give it a stylized look or for emphasis, such as メガネ (*megane*, glasses) which can also be written 眼鏡 in *kanji* or めがね in *hiragana*.

The desire to regulate and deal with the increase and confusion of characters had been talked about seriously since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But it was not until the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that both countries had reached the tipping point and decided to simplify officially. The amount of characters had reached such a level beyond what any one person was capable of learning, and certain characters were being written in too many different ways. The

timing was very similar for both countries, as the lists (the List of Chinese Characters for Current Use in Japan and Table of Simplified Characters in China) appeared after World War II. Japan was the first to create their list, and China followed closely after. These lists came out in 1946 in Japan and 1956 in China. It is important to note that while Japan's war ended in 1945, it was not until nearly 1950 that Mao Zedong's Chinese Communist Party rose to power and drove Chiang Kai-Shek's Nationalist party to Taiwan. Keeping history in perspective is also important here. The creation of lists and policies chosen do not occur in isolation, therefore one needs to consider that historical events throughout the world and in each country have been crucial to the implementation of these changes.

These initial lists were very different from the lists we have today. Leading up to the creation of the Table of Simplified Characters in the 1950s, China had a very large population with a low literacy rate. Though they have an even larger population now, their literacy rate has risen from 20 percent in 1950 to over 96 percent in 2018 (World Bank and NYTimes). China needed to create a system that would allow them to quickly educate the masses. For this reason, a big goal was simplifying characters. The list was not an inclusive one; rather, it was more of a guide. It was called the Table of Simplified Characters and was actually composed of three sub-lists which will be referred to as tables in order to avoid confusion with the larger lists. The first table has 230 simplified characters. What makes this table special is that these characters were

already being used in their simplified form by the general public, but now their traditional and variant forms were officially “banned”, except when reproducing classical works.

One of the more difficult areas of a pictographic language like Chinese is that many variant ways of writing characters are able to gain popularity. For instance, when writing a note quickly to a friend, one might abbreviate a character or misplace a stroke. A couple of examples of this in Chinese are 凡 (*fan*, ordinary/all) which is a variant form of 凡 and 匯 (*hui*, collection/gather) with its variant form of 匯. Another possibility is that a character is thought to be written with a different radical so many times that it becomes as popular as the original character. One example of this that is 歲 (jp:*sai*; cn:*sui*, years old) whose variant form is 歲. While the first character is used in traditional Chinese and modern Japanese, the variant form’s top part is much more reminiscent of simplified Chinese: 岁. Alongside these cases of specific characters having variant forms, an entire script came into being that simplified nearly all the characters. This script is called Grass Script (草书 [*caoshu*]). It is the equivalent to cursive in English. As Kei Imafuku mentions in his thesis, this script was mostly used in art and informal settings, not in official publications (*Contrasting Approaches to Chinese Character Reform*, 21). When the Chinese government was creating its initial list of simplified characters, it borrowed from the grass script extensively. This is what is meant by saying that many of the simplified forms that appear in the first list were already in existence.

The second table of China's 1956 list contains 285 characters whose simplified forms would become used; these forms were specifically created by the Chinese Communist Party as new simplifications. The last table contains 54 simplified radicals. Radicals are the smaller parts of which each character is composed. For instance, the word "speak" is written "说 (*shuo*)" in Chinese. The left hand side radical is 讠 which means to speak and is the simplified version of 言. By simplifying "言" many other characters can be simplified such as "读 (*du*, to read)", "记 (*ji*, to record)", and "语 (*yu*, language)". Any characters not in the previous two lists that contain any of these 54 radicals should thus be simplified accordingly when written. (*China's Language Reforms*, 2).

The simplification of radicals (which can then simplify a number of additional characters) caused a major expansion of the amount of characters that could be simplified. In addition to radical simplification, China took characters that had identical pronunciation and combined them into one character. This process ties in with the major theme of Japan's influence on Chinese language policies on which this thesis will expand in the last section.

Japan's 1946 list also created many simplifications and was called the List of Chinese Characters for Current Use (当用汉字表 [*touyou kanji hyou*]). This list contains every character used in the new Constitution of Japan as well as characters deemed to be necessary for schooling based on earlier surveys. At the same time as the writing was being simplified, Japan



standardized their phonetic alphabets and the pronunciation of *kanji* (*History of Writing in Japan*, 154-156). Although the List of Chinese Characters for Current Use had many simplified characters, they released another list in 1949 that further simplified additional characters.

The immediate problem that these two lists were trying to solve was the fact that there was an overabundance and redundancy of characters. China had a largely illiterate population, and it needed to not only limit the scope of characters used, but also drastically simplify the way characters were written. Since Japan had a higher literacy rate and a phonetic alphabet, they were more concerned with limiting how many characters were in use and their simplification could be more focused on specific characters rather than sweeping changes to radicals. With increasing exposure to foreign countries, changes in technology, and changes in how language is used in everyday life, both countries understand that these lists need to be updated. Thus, they continue to make changes and updates to the lists. China's literacy has increased drastically, and both countries have begun using computers which allow for the easier input of characters. Because of the changing times, the focus of the lists also changes. Whereas before, the countries needed to simplify, they can now expand. Making sure certain vocabulary that has gained popularity is included, and words that are no longer in use are taken out. In China's case, they had tried to simplify even further at one point in 1977, but the changes never gained ground and did not last.

In Japan, many characters that were commonly written out in *hiragana* began to be written with *kanji*, showing a reverse of this idea of simplification.

The simplification process of both countries resulted in two forms of characters. In China the older, more complex forms are called traditional (繁体字 [*fan tizi*]) and the newer, simpler forms are called simplified (简体字 [*jian tizi*]). In Chinese, this is a common distinction as traditional is still used in places like Taiwan and Hong Kong, while simplified is used in Mainland China and Singapore. In Japan, rather than use “traditional” and “simplified,” they use the terms old characters (旧字体 [*kyuu jitai*]) and new characters (新字体 [*shin jitai*]). Because traditional characters are still widely used, whereas 旧字体 are not, the Japanese names are less commonly known or talked about. Ironically, the character “旧 (*kyuu*, old)” from “旧字体 (*kyuu jitai*, old characters)” was simplified from “舊” while the “新 (*shin*, new)” in “新字体 (*shin jitai*, new characters)” was not simplified.

In 1981 Japan was the first to genuinely standardize the Chinese characters. This means that previously both countries had begun to regulate the characters used, but in a very widespread, temporary, and general way. After this temporary solution was created in the 40s/50s, both countries began developing and researching a more permanent solution, with Japan completing their list first. This list was called 常用漢字表 (*jouyou kanji hyou*) or the List of Chinese Characters for General Use, and gathered the most commonly used *kanji*, as well as

those believed to be necessary for daily life. It totaled 1,945 characters. All government documents are required to follow this list for *kanji* use and this list is also the guide for what is taught in schools (*Kanji Politics*, p. 15). Newspapers generally follow this list as well but because it lacks many specialized characters, scientists and the general public tend to need additional characters when talking about specialized topics.

China followed suit shortly after in 1988 by creating their own set of 7000 characters called 现代汉语通用字表 (*xiandai hanyu tongyong zi biao*) or Modern List of Chinese Characters for General Use. This list is very similar to Japan's in that it is a standardized list for use by the government and strongly suggested use for the public. Due to the timing of everything, if China wasn't directly copying Japan's policies, they were at the very least taking notes and being influenced by it. One of the major differences between the languages that affects language policies is that Chinese does not have a phonetic alphabet, they have to rely entirely on Chinese characters. Because of this, the Chinese list has characters that represent a wider range than the Japanese one. For example, the Chinese list includes certain specialized characters for scientific terms that the Japanese list does not such as 钷 (*po*) which is the element promethium.

Both lists were subsequently updated more recently (New List of Chinese Characters for General Use in Japan and the General Purpose Normalized Chinese Character List [通用规范汉字表 {*tongyong guifan hanzi biao*}] in China) by using these previously mentioned lists as

bases. Japan once again updated first in 2010, and China followed suit in 2013. Japan added an additional 196 characters (up to 2,136), and China increased the character total to 8,100. As mentioned previously, the nature of Chinese necessitates a larger list and wider range and thus resulted in more characters added.

Now that the history of the lists has been established, it is helpful to look at specific character examples to get some more specific evidence of how each country is influencing the other's language. As China was the progenitor of the language, it makes sense to start with their influence. We can see China's influences through simple, basic characters. These characters have few strokes and contain very basic meanings rather than complex terms. The examples listed below are all from the 37 characters that were added to Japan's 2010 New List of Chinese Characters for General Use but were already on the 1988 Chinese list. One has to keep in mind that these characters make up a small percentage of the additions compared to the characters that China added after Japan.

When looking at this list of 37 characters, there are three in particular that stand out as exemplar: 旦 (jp/cn:*dan*), 夂 (jp:*sou*; cn:*zhao/zhua*), and 巾 (jp:*kin*; cn:*jin*). Each of these characters is written with five or less strokes. Not only do they have a low stroke count, but also none of them have been simplified, and thus are written the same way in both languages.

The first character is 旦 (jp/cn:*dan*) and is a wonderful example of a character that is still pronounced the same way in Chinese and Japanese. Its meaning (daybreak, morning, dawn) is also the same in both Japanese and Chinese. The most common use of this word is 元旦 (jp:*gantān*; cn:*yuāndan*) which refers to the first day of the new year or the New Year's morning. 元 means origin, or in this case the beginning of the new year, and 旦 is day or morning so this meaning is easily understood. This word is not complex nor new since both countries have been celebrating the passing of years for millennia.

The second character, 爪 (jp:*sou*; cn:*zhāo/zhua*) means claw, talon, or foot. In Japanese it also means nail, like fingernail and is used in the word nail clipper (爪切り [*tsume kiri*]). Everyone has nails, and humans have a relatively long history of interacting with animals that have claws and talons. For this reason, the idea of a claw or talon is not new, and the word has been in use for an incredibly long time. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that this word has a meaning that would appear during the foundations of language.

The next character has a similar early appearance in history. 巾 (jp:*kin*; cn:*jin*) which means towel, or simply a piece of cloth. It is also a common radical. Like the previous character, this one has a very foundational meaning because it represents an object that has been talked about and used for thousands of years.

Each of these characters came into existence long ago, but they carry a meaning that has been able to last through the centuries and stay in use until today. They are perfect examples of how China has not only been influencing Japan for a long time, but is also able to keep influencing Japanese language policy since these characters appeared on the Chinese list before the Japanese list.

Whereas China has this sort of foundational and base influence on Japanese language policy, Japan has been increasing the diverse ways that it influences Chinese policy. The main areas that will be evidenced are standardization, food culture, tourism, and technology.

While standardization was already discussed with the history of the lists, an essential part of the standardization process that can be expanded upon further is simplification. Both languages have simplified their characters, and the techniques used have their similarities and differences. By examining a select few characters, it is possible to not only get a good grasp of how these techniques were implemented, but also to see some of the diverse ways that Japan is influencing Chinese. In 2010, when Japan released the New List of Chinese Characters for General Use, there were five characters in particular that perfectly model the differences between Japanese and Chinese simplification methodology. These five characters are 弥 (jp:*ya*; cn:*mi*)、麵/面 (jp:*men*; cn:*mian*)、餅/饼 (jp:*mochi*; cn:*bing*)、瘦/瘦 (jp:*sou*; cn:*shou*)、 and 曾/曾 (jp:*sou*; cn:*ceng/zeng*). Throughout the many centuries of language development in Japan and

China, the speakers of both languages have come up with different ways of writing characters.

Each character above showcases a particular method that was used, which can show how the countries are unique, but also how they work together in some areas.

弥 (jp:*ya*; cn:*mi*) is a word that means “to fill/overflowing” in Chinese and “all the more/increasingly” in Japanese. What makes this character unique is that it was simplified the same way in both Chinese and Japanese. Considering all the differences between the simplifications of the characters in both languages, it can be somewhat rare to find a character like this. The traditional/old form is 彌/瀰, though there are other variant forms as well. In both languages, this right-hand radical was simplified from 爾 to 尔. This simplification of a single radical that applies across the board is more common in Chinese than Japanese. Japanese tended to simplify character by character rather than in large swathes.

This character is used in multiple words such as “Mass (弥撒 [cn/jp:*misa*])”, “Amitabha (弥陀 [cn:*mituo*; jp:*mida*])”, and “suffuse (弥漫 [cn:*miman*; jp:*biman*])”, as well as by itself (esp. Chinese). Its most recognizable usage, however, comes from one of the major eras of Japan: the Yayoi (弥生) period (Though it was named after a neighborhood in Tokyo where the pottery was discovered in the late 1800s). This was one of the first eras in Japanese history, and the type of pottery made during that time shares the name as well. For usage outside of 弥生, the character 弥 is a good example of how Japan’s multiple writing systems come into play.

For many of the words that formerly used 弥, current Japanese usage only uses the phonetic *hiragana* or *katakana* or uses a different *kanji* with the same pronunciation. One example is 弥々 (*iyo iyo*) which is more commonly written in *hiragana* (いよいよ).

As shown by the examples, this character seems to have a variety of uses that do not exclusively apply to Japan and can be used in China commonly. Despite this, the character did not show up in China's 1988 list. It only showed up later, after it had already appeared in Japan's 2010 list. This exemplifies China's diverse interest in Japan. As Japan focuses more on its history and geography, China, through tourism, focuses on those areas more as well, leading to the presence of characters like 弥 on both lists. Looking deeper into this, a major aspect of tourism is visiting different areas of a country and appreciating the history around them. With the focus on era names and smaller location names, one can see that China is diversifying its focus on Japan as opposed to only caring about the main attractions.

The next example of simplification shows Japan's influence through food culture. 麵 (*jp:men; cn:mian*) means noodles and 餅 (*jp:mochi; cn:bing*) means mochi which is a type of rice cake that is very popular in Japan. 餅 is also used in the words for some other types of cakes. Both characters show how Chinese often simplifies characters more than Japan does. They are also both about food, showing that this area of life is becoming more commonly talked about than it had previously.



餅 (jp:*mochi*; cn:*bing*) has a very unique simplification history. Not only are the traditional Chinese and old Japanese forms different, but the modern forms are different as well. The current traditional form of 餅 is 餅, but the old form for Japanese is 餅 which is a variant form for the Chinese. It is a very subtle difference that may not be clear at first glance. The difference lies in the right-hand radical. The old form has the two “丶” facing the same direction. In addition, “开” is actually two separate characters instead of one “并”. For the modern forms, China simplified the left-hand radical, whereas the current Japanese form is identical to the traditional Chinese form.

When looking at 麵 (jp:*men*; cn:*mian*), the traditional form for the Chinese is 麵 which is the same as the old form for Japanese. Because Chinese characters came to Japan so long ago, one would expect that the traditional Chinese characters would be most similar to the old form Japanese characters. Currently the simplified Chinese version is 面. In China, the left-hand radical was completely removed, whereas Japan merely simplified it, resulting in 麵.

麵 (jp:*men*; cn:*mian*) also incorporates an additional method of simplification. This method is where multiple characters with the same radical are taken and combined into one character with multiple meanings. For instance, the simplified way of writing 麵 is 面. At the same time, 面 is an already existing character that means face in Japanese. In this case, Chinese

uses one character to mean both noodles and face, whereas Japanese uses two separate characters, 麵 and 面.

Japan was able to do something similar to this method of condensing meanings into one character because it has a phonetic alphabet. Multiple characters are pronounced the same way and can thus be “simplified” into their phonetic spellings. Because Chinese lacks this, it has to look to other ways to simplify homonyms. On the surface, this can be easy because the characters were already pronounced the same way, and oftentimes have a similar radical. However, it can also be confusing at times, and readers must rely on sentence context to understand the true meaning.

Both of these characters show the importance of food in both cultures. Two of the most well-known Japanese foodstuffs are mochi and ramen. What makes the case of ramen so interesting, and parallels what shift in languages, is its origin. While the dish was created in Japan, it is made with Chinese wheat noodles. Both the noodles and the dish are called 拉面/拉麵 (jp: *raamen*; cn: *lamian*). Another way of saying this is that Japan took the base from China (noodles) and made it their own (ramen) which was then adapted back by China. The character 拉 (jp: *raa*; cn: *la*) was also part of the 159 characters that were first added by Japan in 2010. Here is the evidence for the influence of food culture. As Japan has expanded its focus on food, so has China and it is reflected on the two lists. Having increased the presence of place names

and Japanese history in its lists, China has also looked to other areas of Japanese culture such as food when choosing the characters it needs in government, education, and everyday life.

Thus far, the characters show instances where Japan simplifies more, China simplifies more, or both simplify the same amount. The next and final two characters show a slightly different distinction. 瘦 (jp:*sou*) / 瘦 (cn:*shou*) means thin in both Japanese and Chinese. 曾 (jp:*sou*) / 曾 (cn:*ceng/zeng*) is an adverb indicating something happened in the past. The old Japanese forms of both of these characters are identical to the current Chinese versions. It is difficult to call them truly simplified since it is the reduction of a stroke or two. While the current Japanese forms may not be simplified, they are clearly different. If anything, one might compare the differences to the case of 餅 or the case of 凡 where a stroke is connected or placed differently. For 瘦 the Japanese version connects all the lines, whereas the Chinese version has some spacings on the inside radical. This is identical to the case of 餅. 曾 is also a good example of this where the inside part of the top radical is one line in Japanese, but two separate dots in Chinese.

When Japan was creating their 2010 list, they wanted to make sure all of the characters used in administrative region names were included (*Language Policy in Japan*, 118). This is because government agencies are required to only use the characters in the list for official documents. Four of these characters illustrate how Japan's influence on China has been

diversified: 阪 (jp:*saka*; cn:*ban*), 熊 (jp:*kuma*; cn:*xiong*), 埼 (jp:*sai*; cn:*qi*), and 鎌 (jp:*kama*; cn:*lian*). Each of these characters was added to the Japanese list in 2010 and only after that did China add them to its own list in 2013.

阪 (jp:*saka*; cn:*ban*) technically means slope, but in practice is only used in the word Osaka (大阪 [jp:*oosaka*; cn:*daban*]) the name of both the major city and prefecture in Japan. Because the city is so well known, it is not as surprising that China would include this word in their list. However, it still shows that Japan's influence is such that a non-capital city is important enough or used commonly enough that China included it in their official list of characters.

The next character is 熊 (jp:*kuma*; cn:*xiong*) which means bear. While bear is a common word, this character had not previously appeared on either list. In Japan's case this can be explained by the fact that bear is more commonly written in *hiragana* or *katakana* (くま/クマ [kuma/kuma]). So then why was it not included in China's list until 2013? Besides having the meaning of "bear" this character is also used in the Japanese prefecture of Kumamoto (熊本県 [kumamotoken]). Kumamoto is not one of the largest Japanese cities, nor is it the capital, or a former capital. This shows that areas that don't necessarily have a strong political influence in Japan were becoming more influential. The city does have a well-known mascot "Kumamon" who was created in 2010, a large volcano, and a castle, thus making it a good travel destination. This increase in advertising and branding likely coincided with increases of tourism. According

to a Nikkei Asian Review article using numbers from Japan's Ministry of Justice, tourism to the island of Kyushu where Kumamoto is located rose by over 30 percent between 2014 and 2015.

While those numbers are more recent than the lists themselves, they certainly reflect the increasing rate of Chinese tourism in Japan. The Japanese government's tourism bureau also releases tourism statistics that show Chinese tourism increasing 40 percent between 2009 and 2010. Through this increase in tourism to lesser known areas of Japan by Chinese citizens, one can see China's increasing interest in Japan. The influence of these lesser known cities and areas increased which resulted in their names being needed for the character list in China.

Another example of this is with 埼 (*jp:sai; cn:qi*) which means headland/promontory/cape. Similar to Osaka's 阪 this character, 埼, is only used in the Japanese prefecture/city of Saitama (埼玉 [*saitama*]). Much like the relative insignificance of Kumamoto, Saitama presents a nice example of how Japan's influence can be seen through the influence of characters used in its cities and prefectures.

The last character, 鎌 (*jp:kama; cn:lian*) means sickle, but more importantly, it is used in the name of a city in Kanagawa Prefecture. The basic meaning of 鎌 is sickle and is a fairly common farm tool. In addition, it also has the symbolism of the working class from the USSR. Despite this, it was introduced first in the Japanese list rather than the Chinese list. One reason is that this character is used in the word 鎌倉 (*kamakura* [鎌倉 {*lian cang*} in Chinese]) which is

one of the major eras of Japanese history, very similar in usage to 弥 from earlier. It is also a city which is the namesake of the era because of the archeological discoveries that happened there. Therefore, this character exemplifies the influence of Japan's tourism industry as well as its history. Although the character is simplified in Chinese to 镰, it is still quite a complicated character with 18 strokes. This makes it another example of how Japan's influence also tends to be with more complicated characters, contrasting the low stroke-count of the characters taken from the Chinese lists.

The final area of influence that this thesis will discuss is through technology. Japan has been especially vocal in looking to the internet as its source of collection. Because Japan's original List of Chinese Characters for General Use came out in 1981, Japan had yet to move over into the technological age. In fact, they were still writing nearly everything by hand. This changed extremely quickly when the word-processor and then the computer came to Japan in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Practically overnight everyone was using computers. Nanette Gottlieb writes that the word processor was accessible to consumers starting in the early 1980s and by 1986 "90% of business were using word processing" and "by 1991...(more than) one in four people possessed a word processor" (*Word-Processing*, page 3). Because people now used computers instead of handwriting, it was easier to use more complicated characters. This resulted in Japanese writing using more complicated *kanji* instead of writing the word with *hiragana* or

*katakana*. With the changing times came changing vocabulary as well, and characters fell out of use. Due to these changing circumstances, Japan felt the need to reassess their list. In their official announcements, the government heavily stressed the need to stay abreast of the rapidly changing situation since “the number of *kanji* people were seeing had greatly increased because of the widespread and rapid dissemination of information technology such as computers” (*Language Policy in Japan*, 116).

China has also been trying to keep pace with technology, but it faces different challenges than Japan. For one, Japan and China have different contexts in regard to character usage. Japan has begun using more complex characters precisely because they have phonetic alphabets which allowed for substitutions when writing by hand. Chinese does not. This means that in Japanese, a word can be written either phonetically using *hiragana/katakana* or with *kanji*. Therefore, rather than simplifying characters, oftentimes Japan could just substitute the character for its phonetic spelling. In China, the phonetic system *pinyin* is not mixed with *hanzi* in the same way that Japanese mixes their alphabets. Thus, China had to simplify a greater number of characters. It also means that in Japan, when computers began gaining popularity, people started to use *kanji* for words that had been written in *hiragana/katakana* because the *kanji* was difficult. In China, this phenomenon cannot take place because the characters are combined like in the case of 面 or simplified, rather than replaced by the phonetic spelling.

Another problem arose early on in the adaption of computers because Chinese deals with many more characters. Due to the lack of a finite phonetic alphabet, the computer systems need to display and store much more information when working with Chinese as opposed to Japanese.

As of 2020, this is no longer a problem since the storage capabilities have increased exponentially. Although computers are now capable of storing and displaying as many characters as can be written, they do still have to be added to a system. One such system is Unicode, which also happens to be the most popular and widely used system. Since computers at their very base deal with numbers, everything seen on a computer screen is associated with a certain number or grouping. As Unicode's website states, without a standard for every computer and program to know how to display words, there would be errors and computers may not be able to support every different encoding system (Unicode). As recently as 2017, characters were still being added to Unicode and modified (*Proposal China Horizontal Extension*).

As Japan increasingly used computers, they incorporated more and more difficult characters that had fallen out of use in the era of handwriting. As these characters gained popularity, they appeared on Japan's 2010 update of their character list. Soon after, they also appeared on China's list, but in simplified forms. This shows how Japan's usage of characters can influence China even though the mechanisms behind their appearance are different. For example, because they are simplified in China, and China had no phonetic alphabet to rely on,



the increase in usage of characters would not be attributed to the increase of relative ease of writing. Each of these characters also represents a more complicated, nuanced, or modern meaning. This shows a contrast to the relatively simple definitions of the characters that appeared in the Chinese character list first.

The first and perhaps most popular example is 鬱 (jp:*utsu*; cn:*yu*) which means luxuriant, or melancholy. As Nanette Gottlieb points out, this character is found in the word for depression (憂鬱 [jp:*yuuutsu*]) and was formerly written out with *hiragana* “憂うつ” but with use of a computer the *kanji* became more popular (*Language Policy in Japan*, 119). In Chinese, this character was simplified and combined with another character that means fragrance 郁 that has the same reading of “*yu*”. While this character with the meaning of fragrance does exist in Japanese, it never made it onto the official lists. Even though this character had been combined and thus had more ways of being used in China, it was also only added to the Chinese list after it had gained popularity in Japan with the melancholy usage.

The next character was never simplified in either country, but it is still quite complicated, and its meaning is related to a more complicated emotion. The character is 傲 (jp:*gou*; cn:*ao*) and means pride or arrogance. In Japan, to convey the meaning of pride or arrogance it is more common to use the compound word 傲慢 (jp:*gouman*; cn: *aoman*). Much like 鬱, 傲 was commonly written with *hiragana*, so the word arrogant looked like ごう慢 in

Japanese. The more common word in Chinese to express pride is 骄傲 (*jiao ao*). The first character is simplified only in China, and its Japanese equivalent is 驕傲 (*kyou gou*). When translating the English word pride, Japanese and Chinese use different words more commonly, but both versions are acceptable and currently used. Not only that, but both words have that same base character 傲, which was first added to the lists by Japan. Although China is the only country to have 骄 on its list, this makes sense, since it is part of the word more commonly used in China and China has a larger number of characters in its list. On the flipside, the 慢 from the word for arrogance used more commonly in Japanese appears on both lists and was added to the Japanese list first.

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. The increase in technology and early adaption has especially facilitated these changes. This was brought about due to the history of the two countries that allowed Japan to gain the lead in terms of influence on language policies. Japan increasingly used more complex characters which China also adapted into its own list. Furthermore, Japan's inclusion of geographic names is reflected on China's list. None of this is to disregard China's influence on the Japanese language, but it shows how Japan has been able to influence China's language policy in return. It is not possible to predict the future, but this thesis

shows that Japan's influence on China in recent history has been significant. Due to these variance factors discussed, 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.

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