

An analysis of differences of toilet culture between china and japan



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About culture, different people has different opinions, but one of the very famous sayings is that “ culture is everything about human beings”, so it can be a thought, a fashion, a style, what we eat and even where we go when we have a nature call, namely, toilets. Somehow, it’s hard to imagine that toilets can be different in different countries. Surely the way toilets are in my country is the way they must be everywhere? Well, a quick trip overseas will soon disabuse you of that notion. There are many different kinds of toilets, accordingly, there must be many different toilet cultures. This paper is to take out China and Japan, and to make an detailed analysis of the differences of toilet culture between them for although they are both typical Asian countries, their people yet hold different ideas about toilets and toileting.

PART ONE

DIFFERENT TOILETS AND TOILETING HABITS

1. Different Toilets China has both squat toilets and western style toilets. While the squat toilets are traditional and are a cultural difference. They are everywhere in China, and for most Chinese, are preferred to Western-style toilets. For many Chinese people, the sitting toilet is as odd and unfamiliar and as disgusting as the squat toilet is to most westerners. In the undeveloped parts of inland China, toilets are still pretty primitive. The toilets there are outside behind the main houses. They are simply a half-wall made of brick positioned at the top of a small man-made hill, and there is a hole under this wall where the refuse would flow through and down the hill. Because of the remoteness and poverty, no plumbing whatsoever, no

building structure to protect you from the weather or for privacy. Japan, which is famous for its advanced technology and inclination towards cleanliness, with hot springs and public baths all over the country, has also probably the most elevated toilet technology in the world.

There used to be also two styles of toilets in Japan. However, the modern western-type flush toilets and urinals have become common for a long time. The country has an enduring fascination with the toilet-replete with cutting-edge technology, Web sites, symposiums and museums. In Japan many toilets, especially in department stores and better restaurants are veritable “human washing machines”. The lid goes up and down automatically, the toilet seat is heated during colder seasons, and on the side there is a keyboard worthy of an advanced computer, full of buttons with different functions.

It is really amazing and impressive for those who are just used to one flush button, but as it is only explained with those tricky characters, it can be quite frustrating for it's hard to figure out which buttons you are supposed to push and when. The current state of the art for western-style toilets is the bidet toilet, which, as of March 2010, is installed in 72% of Japanese households. In Japan, these bidets are commonly called washlets, a brand name of Toto Ltd., and include many advanced features rarely seen outside of Asia. The feature set commonly found on washlets are anus washing, bidet washing, seat warming, and deodorization.

2. Different Toileting Habits Chinese toilets come in a variety of styles. Yes, the white porcelain throne is available, and can be installed in homes and

hotels. However, the Chinese people believe that if you sit on the toilet seat, you will come in contact with germs that could make you ill. So we prefer the squat style toilet, where skin does not come in contact with the toilet whatsoever. In addition, the Chinese people, from an early age, become accustomed to the squatting position. If there's no chairs around, we'd like to choose the squatting position and we can stay in that position for long periods of time and squatting for the Chinese toilet is quite easy for our body type. No doubt the Chinese toilets are not an easy thing to get use to. It constantly presented difficulty for an outsider in managing the balancing act and the stress on the knees.

However, it's quite an easy job for Chinese, and it could be either funny or shocking if ever they are told about the tough task for someone who tried to manage all the pulling down and squatting without tumbling over when using the squat toilet. You can buy toilet paper in China, however, it is not supplied free in public restroom facilities. You need to carry your own little packets of paper tissues wherever you go. At some tourist places, you may be able to purchase the toilet tissue at the door before you enter. The piping system to take away the sewage from toilets is not modernized, and so you will often find a wastebasket in the cubicle, along side the toilet in the floor. This wastebasket is for collecting all the paper tissue, as none can go down the toilet. In fact, as one of two defecation postures available to us, squatting is considered the most natural position for normal biological functioning. Its health benefits include easier and faster defecation, as well as prevention and relief of colon, prostate, bladder, and bowel disorders.

Squat toilets, known also by its less candid name, the “ natural-position” toilet can be found everywhere in China. While for most Japanese, they not only prefer the sitting toilets, but also developed an obsessive habit which is to make the most of the high-tech in making their toilets. Besides the seat-heating feature, the most basic feature is the integrated bidet, a nozzle the size of a pencil that comes out from underneath the toilet seat and squirts water. It has two settings: one for washing the anus and one for the bidet. The former is called posterior wash, general use, or family cleaning, and the latter is known as feminine cleaning, feminine wash or simply bidet. At no point does the nozzle actually touch the body of the user.

The nozzle is also self-cleaning and cleans itself before and after operation. The user can select to wash the anus or vulva by pressing the corresponding button on the control panel. Usually the same nozzle is used for both operations, but at a different position of the nozzle head, and using different openings in the nozzle to squirt water at a different angle to aim for the correct spot. Occasionally, two nozzles are used, each dedicated for one area. The control logic is also attached to a pressure switch or a proximity sensor in the toilet seat, and operates only when the seat is occupied. The very first models did not include this automatic switch-off.

A number of curious users pressed the button while watching the toilet to see its mode of operation, and promptly received a jet of warm water in their faces. The washlet can replace toilet paper completely, but many users opt to use both wash and paper in combination—although use of paper may be omitted for cleaning of the vulva. Some wipe before washing, some wash

before wiping, some wash only, and some wipe only—each according to his/her preference.

PART TWO

DIFFERENT TOILET CULTURES

1. Different Toilet Naming China's traditional culture especially highlights eating and drinking, and always exaggerates the eating and drinking places, at the same time contempts activities involving toilets. Hotels, teahouses, restaurants are always named delicately with rich cultural praises, such as, Quanjude which means everything has already been considered here, Bianyifang which means all things here are favorable, Tianranju which means people could feel the beauty of nature here, Ziyixuan which has the implication of joy and comforts. While toilets have always been lonely. However, during the recent decades of years, people's attitudes, especially the young generation's, toward toilets have changed greatly. Nowadays, many exquisite names have come into being, such as, " ", Tingyuxuan which refers to a lofty located carefully for listening to the rain, for women's room and " ", Guanputing which refers to a pavilion with a sighting for waterfall, for men's room; and also some restaurants named their restroom as "relaxing place" "liberated area".

There's an anecdote about the English name of toilet. Ironically, the most common English name of the restroom is very puzzling to English speaking people—WC (water closet). It's very interesting and strange why almost every Chinese is familiar with WC which is already too old for the native

people to use. But the fact is that if a foreigner needs to ask to use the <https://assignbuster.com/an-analysis-of-differences-of-toilet-culture-between-china-and-japan/>

washroom anywhere in China, don't try hard to use the words: ladies room, washroom, bathroom, or restroom, just ask where to find the WC, that would be shockingly useful. While in Japan, they don't have this kind of toilet naming culture, they use *toire* (トイレ) which is an abbreviated form of the English language word "toilet" and *otearai* (お手洗い), which means hand-washing, and *benjo* (便所, place of convenience or place of excrement). It is also common to see another loan translation, *keshōshitsu* (化粧室, powder room), on signs in department stores and supermarkets.

2. Toilet Training

Chinese Toilet training involves wearing special pants that are split open in the crotch area. This is to facilitate the act of toilet training. The same pants are available for both boys and girls. In China, you see little naked baby bums everywhere you look. The very early-age toilet training is definitely not sightly. It happens by a parent or grandparent sitting on a chair with their legs spread apart. The child is held between their legs (their hands under the child's knees – the child above the ground in a type of squat position but with their legs apart). The parent makes a gentle "ssss" sound to try to encourage the child to go – a type of conditioning that trains the child – when he hears the sound and squats – it's time to urinate. The two of them sit there and wait – until the child does his/her business. Japanese parents view toilet training as a social responsibility.

In an effort to minimize, as much as possible, any inconvenience their children might cause for others, parents in Japan begin toilet training at 3 or 4. When the parents start toilet training, parents purchase a toilet training

potty, called "omaru," for the child to use. The "omaru" is a child-sized, plastic toilet that can be placed anywhere in the house. The omaru is small

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enough for the child to sit on with her feet on the floor, and has two raised handles at the front for the child to hold on to. The purpose of the omaru is to accustom the child to using a toilet, but to also provide the child a sense of security, knowing the “toilet” is within easy access. After the child uses the omaru, the parents empty and clean its container. Training pants, diapers that can be slid on and off by the child, are available in almost any supermarket or drug store, and are used quite widely to develop a sense of independence and responsibility in the child.

As a matter of fact, toilet-training, as a combination of skills that the child will acquire with guidance and assistance from parents and teachers, is a challenge for many parents in maintain their cultural identities and passing it on to their children is not as easy as it seems to be. Therefore, it is an important issue which can make people learn more about and appreciate human diversity.

3. Chinese Toilet Sharing and Japanese Toilet-privacy Caring Chinese people are pretty unaffected by using the toilet together. There are some toilets that are unisex and may or may not have doors. The Chinese toilet sharing leads to the lack of privacy, which, for many outsiders, is not a pleasant thing to accept, however, as we can understand, that has a lot of things to do with living pattern—collectivism. The Chinese, in general, is a collective society that strives for harmony and group belonging, whether to family, friends, work, or country. [2] Chinese people grow up with the community and family so we do everything together, including using the toilet. So to us, because of the quantity of people, sharing a toilet is as common as any daily behaviour.

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While Japan is a country which values privacy so much that toilets have become a symbol of the Japanese fanatical about cleanliness and totally self-conscious. It can be easily proved by the fact that over two decades ago, the Otihome was already introduced. It's a device that is triggered when the bathroom door closes or the seat is being used that re-creates the sound of flowing water, therefore saving the embarrassment of your neighbor hearing the sound of your relieving yourself. Mostly used in public and work facilities for ladies, one can also buy battery-charged personal models so you're never caught making inappropriate sounds. Hence it's easy to see that Japanese's desire for total privacy and not disturbing has always been considered carefully.

PART THREE

TOILETING PROBLEMS

1. Chinese Public Restroom In China, especially in tourist attractions, very often we can people lining up outside public restroom. The scarcity of public toilets has prompted many to use washrooms at KFC and McDonald's, and in some place, women even start to use men's room already since they have no other choice when there's an emergency, just like last year, several female undergraduates from universities of Guangzhou City even launched a movement of "occupy men's toilets". Take the capital as an example, as the statistics shows, that Beijing has more than 12, 000 public latrines. Most of them are located along main roads, squares, residential communities, parks, tourist attractions and markets in the urban areas. But the number is obviously still not enough for women, as long queues are often seen outside

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the public latrines. Therefore, in order to make the public life more convenient for the public, the government should continue improving the public restrooms by building more public toilets and unisex toilets in places where there are large numbers of people, such as shopping malls, scenic spots and cinemas.

2. Japanese Washlet Syndrome

It's true that Japanese toilets have long – and famously – dominated the world of bathroom hygiene with their array of functions, from posterior shower jets to perfume bursts and noise-masking audio effects for the easily-embarrassed. However, with the increasing number of people who are enjoying the advanced high-tech toilets, something negative has also come into being, that is, the Japanese washlet syndrome. In Japan, the repetitive use of a “ type water jet on a high-pressure setting for an enema, can weaken the capability for self-evacuation of the Washlet user, which can lead to more serious constipation.”[5] If a Washlet high-pressure water jet is used on the anus repeatedly, it may cause excessive cleanliness, prompting other bacteria to adhere around the anus, causing skin disease (inflammation) around the anus. Some proctologists in Japan have named this “ Washlet Syndrome” or “ Warm-water toilet seat Syndrome”.

CONCLUSION

From the detailed analysis above, it's clear to see that although both China and Japan are typical Asian countries sharing a lot of familiar cultural values, they may value different aspects of the same thing for different reasons to different degrees by different ways. When it comes to toilet culture, Chinese <https://assignbuster.com/an-analysis-of-differences-of-toilet-culture-between-china-and-japan/>

people very much prefer the squatting position not only for conscious or unconscious hygiene's cause, but also because they are closely attached to the tradition. What's more, Chinese people have never been bothered by sometimes having to sharing a toilet with strangers since they already used to the community's life style which means living in groups since childhood. While the Japanese people are incredibly attracted by science and high-tech products. They never stop pursuing a better life with high quality.

Even if it's just a little toilet, they have a wish to satisfy the users as much as they can, and they are determined to advance it until it's perfect. Therefore, it's easy to see that the "toilet culture" of a country not only reflects the habits of the people in the country, but also serves as importantly as any other cultural elements, representing the deeply cultural structure of the society. Since culture is never static; it continues to evolve. When one culture rubs up against another, both are transformed (Gonzalez-Mena, 1997). Hopefully, during the much more frequent culture exchanges between China and Japan, when it comes to toilet culture, the positive power of it could be kept and advanced and the negative influence should be changed in order to make its contribution in smoothing and developing the relationship between two countries.