Compare and contrast
Japanese and Chinese culture

Japan and China are two countries of South East Asia. As the geography suggested, they have influence each other culturally, in which there are three characteristics that are obvious the most. Both Japanese and Chinese are collectivist, family oriented and highly concern about saving face.

Collectivism is shown especially when a group of people go shopping together. For American, they usually split up to look for what they need personally. Japanese and Chinese people on the other hand stick together. They wait for each other to finish before moving on. This is why it takes longer to go shopping in Japan or China. Collectivism is also shown in how quickly people become friends. In America, it takes a long time to build up a relationship and call someone a friend. Someone you only talk to once or twice is called acquaintance. In Japan and China though, one or two gatherings is what it takes to make a new friend. It can be observed that even though they don’t hug like American, their personal space is smaller. Girls often latch arms to each other even with a new friend, which is also a sign of collectivism.

As a result of collectivist culture, Japanese and Chinese are also known as family oriented. In China children keep living with their parents after getting married to support them. Similarly in Japan, most student choose to live at home and commute to school for one or even two hours everyday. For this reason, most Japanese schools don’t have dormitory. On the contrary, as in the US, if the student lives about forty minutes away from school, he/she often choose to live at school or move out to somewhere closer.

Another similarity between Japanese and Chinese culture is that they hate to lose face. One of
the obvious results of this phenomena is they expect, sometime force, their children to study hard and do well at school. Getting into college is not only a choice of students, but also their responsibility to save face the families.

Even though Japan and China have similarity culture, yet they could be very different. One impression that one can easily have moving from China to Japan is that Chinese are loud, Japanese are a lot more quiet for silence is valued as good manner in their culture. Chinese people talk and laugh out loud in public. In Japan on the other hand, people keep their voice down in public. Especially on public transprtation, it’s considered good manner not to talk, especially on cell phone. If anyone pay attention, they can notice that on our bus to school everyday, the only people talking to each other are students from our group. Other Japanese students often keep silent during the bus ride.

Other difference I observed that surprised me before was public affection is display more freely in China but not in Japan. Since China is a communist country with thousands years of feudalism, I expected them to be quiet conservative on public affection but the fact turned out to be opposite. Chinese were often caught hugging or kissing on the street as if no body was around them. It’s not hard to recognize a couple because they often hold hands or latch on each other as they walk. In Japan, I almost see no couples. The they do standing or walking closely side by side and absolutly no kissing in public. Japan seems to be a lot more consevative than China on public affection.

On general observation, Chinese people are as direct as American and agressive as oppse to Japanese, who are reserved and indirect, tend to watch out for upsetting others. When denying an invitation, Japanese often don’t give a direct answer such as “I can’t make it”, “I will be busy” or “it doesn’t work for me”, but rather they say “it’s a little inconvienint”. This characterisitc is also shown through their business or public service. Chinese serve their customer casually, they don’t change much
the way they act daily. Japanese however, try to keep it professional at all time. They constantly bow and say thank you to customers.

As Japan becomes more and more industrialized, they also become more and more westernized, I wonder if that’s the path China is also heading to.