

I can explain, but first I'll need to give an explanation about the origin of "canon" itself. In religions from old times there are a lot of statements, stories and concepts that are only passed on in the books that we don't know of their origin. We have contradictory statements or just things that make no sense, therefore in order to be sure that the holy books are "consistent" or at least "faithful to the word" there was research to know about the books and the ones considered to be valid for their respective doctrine are the "canonical books".

Each doctrine has their own view of canon, like considering both the old and new testaments as canon, or just the old one for example. The meaning of "canon" here is to show which book are considered valid to discuss the doctrine, the ones that not exactly "happened" (As the nature of all the biblical stories itself being literal is also a topic of discussion), but at least they are the ones that really represent the "word of god".

The concept of canon with fictional works is based on that. We have multiple works that takes place in the same "world" made by different people that sometimes contradict each other, therefore the concept of fictional canon was created by fans themselves to try to put order on this and standards such as saying that the source material, or what is written by the original author, is the only canon with spin-offs being the non-canon.

Since this was a concept created by fans themselves, not every creator uses that, although sometimes they do.

In relation to some "Japanese" products, we have more problems. First the word "Seitō" (正統 /Orthodox), that is the word to use for correct/legitimate statements or use of a certain doctrine, that of course includes the "Orthodox rulings" of Religions for example. And since that is basically the root of the word "canon", the word "Seitō" is used in Japanese texts to describe something that follows the "legitimate rules" or that is a "legitimate work", that is basically our concept of canon most of the times. And of course, there's a lot of focus on the work of the original author being the "legitimate" and that is reflected with sequel/prequel series, sometimes made by the author or not, to have the "Seitō" description in order to say "this is the true story that continues/preceded the story that you like".

So, "Seitō" is simply the word that has its roots in basically the same as "canon" and is used in similar context, therefore I said that is the closest word in Japanese that has the same meaning as "canon", already considering that "canon" itself is a multilayered word that has different uses in different works.

But the problem is that there are a lot of work that aren't created under the "there's a main author who do the work" standard and we have franchises that not only are very decentralized, but there's nearly never an attempt to really explain what is the "Seitō" of the series, at best sometimes this happens when the fans themselves ask a lot.

At best the concepts that are really used when creating a franchise are "Sekaikan" (世界観 /Worldview) and "Settei" (設定/Settings). Those concepts also have their roots, but they are used for works that are similar to the "Bibles' ' for fictional works. This includes the overall lore of the series, its rules, the history of the characters and so on. Having this "Sekaikan " and "Settei" as the basis, you can see various works that are stated to be in the same "Sekaikan", but that have some differences in the story. So we have a new problem.

The very origin of the use of canon for the fans was to know for sure what is "true" for a series that has a lot of derivative works that seems to have the same basis, but tends to have some contradictory elements. So sometimes those different works that share worldviews are asked by fans how they are related, and the reason tends to change depending on the context.

There'll be some works that are completely unrelated, although they share that same Sekaikan, there are works that explain different Sekaikan as different universes and there are also cases where the differences in the story are meaningless and you should only pay attention that the Sekaikan is the same and it's simply that one work can show that Sekaikan in a way and another medium will have a different way to show it.