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The Enigma of Japanese Callsign System

- Parts updated on 22-Feb-00 are in red italics -

(1) Prefixes **JA-JS**, **7J-7N** and **8J-8N** have been allocated to us.

(2) JA callsigns have been assigned in the following order post war. (x=number=call area)

- JAAx-AA-ZZ (2-letter suffix) -- means very old timers
- **JA**xAAA-XZZ, **JH**xAAA-XZZ, **JR**xAAA-XZZ -- 'H' for 'ham', 'R' for 'radio'?
- **JEx**AAA-XZZ, **JF**, **JG**, **JJ**, **JK**, **JL**, **JM**, **JN**, **JO**, **JP**, **JQ**, **JS**

(3) [Call areas, population and major cities](#) for those interested.

(4) Prefix **JD** is reserved for Ogasawara Is. (including Minami-torishima). Only **JD1** exists, no other numbers. **JB** and **JC** have never been used. I don't know for what these prefixes are reserved.

(5) [Special rules for Okinawa \(JR6, JS6\)](#). Formerly known as Ryukyu islands (KR6), Okinawa is a semi-tropical island group located in the south-west of Japan. It is now one of 47 prefectures of Japan. Callsigns have been assigned in the following order. US hams in military bases may use KA6 prefix but we are not allowed to communicate with them.

- JR6AA-NZ (fairly old timers)
- JR6QUA-XZZ
- JS6AAA-XZZ

One confusing fact. JR6AAA-QQZ are not Okinawa. They had been assigned for other JA6 (Kyushu mainland) area. In contrast, all JS6 callsigns are Okinawa. In other callareas except JA6, JSx prefixes have no special geographical meaning. As JS is the last prefix to be assigned in J-series, we only have JS1, JS2 and JS3 callsigns at this moment.

(6) Suffixes YAA-ZZZ are reserved for club stations. Therefore, any club stations in JA should have a six-letter callsign. This may be a disadvantage in contests. JA authority have not provided shorter callsigns for this purpose. JR6YAA-ZZZ for club stations in Okinawa, JD1YAA-ZZZ for those in Ogasawara.

(7) 2-letter suffixes were assigned only for JAx prefixes (very old timers). No JHxAA, JExAA, , JSxAA stations. However, there is an exception for JR (repeater stations).

(8) [Repeater stations](#). We have hundreds of 70cm and 23cm repeaters throughout the country, as well as some 13cm repeaters and two 10m repeaters. We have NO 6m and 2m repeaters. Callsigns are assigned in the following order. JRxWA-WZ, JRxVA-VZ, JPxYCA-YCZ, JPxYDA-YDZ, JPxYEA-YEZ,

(9) Prefix **7Jx** is for foreign amateurs who reside in JA under reciprocal permit. Normally it is issued sequentially from 7JxAxx series, while 7J6Cxx means 7J's in Okinawa (normally US military). 7J1RL was exceptionally used for Okino-torishima DXpedition. *In 1999, JA authority has announced that, for non-Japanese, they will start to use the same callsign series as Japanese. (no discriminations any more ... but maybe 7J's sound better ...)*

(10) Prefix **8Jx** is normally used for special event stations. 8J3 stations had been used for emergency communications during the aftermath of Kobe earthquake. Prefixes 8K and 8L have never been used as far as I know. Prefix **8Nx** has recently been used for special event stations which allow guest operation by foreign amateurs without reciprocal permit (eg. 8N0WOG for Winter Olympic Games in Nagano).

(11) Callsigns have nothing to do with the holder's license class. We have the following 4 classes of license.

- 4th class: no CW allowed, no QRV on 160m, 30m, 20m and 17m, output no more than 20W (no code exam)
- 3rd class: any mode, no QRV on 30m and 20m, output no more than 50W
- 2nd class: any mode, any bands, output no more than 200W
- 1st class: any mode, any bands, any output (usually no more than 1kW)

(12) Callsign shortage of JA was due to the increasing number of amateurs. This first occurred in JA1 (Tokyo, Yokohama) area about thirteen years ago, followed by JA3 (Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe) and JA2 (Nagoya) areas.

- **FIRST STAGE:** At first, the authority 'recycled' callsigns which had been expired and unused. The JA license is due for renewal after 5 years, but in reality, quite a few licensees quit radio at that moment and don't renew it (or just forget to renew).
- 'Recycling' was done in the following order: JE, JF, JG, JH, JI, JJ, JK, JL, JM, JN, JO, JP, JQ, JR, JS.
- Expired JAx prefix callsigns (2- and 3-letter suffixes) have never been reused (probably in respect for old timers), while JH and JR have been recycled. *In 1999, this has been changed. The authority has started to reissue JA series as well as others. Currently, newbie JA's are only heard in JA6 area.*
- **SECOND STAGE:** Something more serious shortage occurred soon in JA1 callarea. They've got no callsigns to reuse! As it is impossible to use 4-letter suffixes, they decided to use other prefixes.
- They started to assign 7K1, 7L1, 7M1 and 7N1 prefixes, in this order, for JA1 area. Less than two years was necessary for these four prefixes to have gone. So they made an extraordinary decision. Followingly they start to use 7K2, 7L2, 7M2 and 7N2, then 7K3, 7L3, 7M3, 7N3, 7K4, 7L4, 7M4 and 7N4 for JA1 area.
- PLEASE NOTE that 7K2-7N2, 7K3-7N3 and 7K4-7N4 are **not** for JA2, JA3 and JA4 areas, but they are all for JA1 (Kanto-district including Tokyo and Yokohama) area.
- **THIRD STAGE?:** 7K-7N series will run out in the near future. I don't know how they deal with this problem as the next step!

(13) Portable and mobile operation. Some JA stations may use suffix /(callarea) like JG1VGX/3. This may have two meanings.

- The holder used to live in JA1 area had now moved to JA3 area and he wants to keep the original JA1 callsign rather than getting a new JA3 callsign. In this case, the station is not portable or mobile in reality but a home station.
- JA1 licensee in his holiday in JA3. In this case, he is portable or mobile. Someone in a holiday in Okinawa may use JG1VGX/6 or JG1VGX/JR6.

If someone uses suffix /(one's own call area), like JG1VGX/1, this only means the latter case; i.e. he is portable or mobile within his own call area.

- We never use /P for portable operation.
- Portable with permanent power supply - we use /(call area)
- Portable with batteries, generators - we use /(call area)

- Mobile on bicycle, walking with hand-held - we tend to use /(call area) rather than /M
- Mobile in a car - some may use /M or /CM, others may use /(call area)

Confusing fact about portable operations by 7K-7N series licensee.

- 7L3BVB/1 - he is in portable operation within his own call area (JA1).
- 7L3BVB/3 - he may be away for his holiday in JA3 call area.

(14) Currently we cannot reserve any 'wished' callsign (vanity) for individual station, although it had been allowed in some cases in the past (very early years). However, special callsigns (normally **8Jx**) for special event stations are available on request. (ex. 8J1HAM for the event station at Tokyo Ham Fair)

on 3-Dec-98 written by rin JG1VGX, Rimmei Fukuda; *updated on 22-Feb-00*

**** DISCLAIMER ****

I wrote this for the convenience of foreign amateurs who may want to know Japanese callsign system. Although I tried to provide correct information as far as I know, some of those may be outdated or incorrect. Readers should accept that I will not take any responsibility for any incorrect information.

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