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Pole san Pole kun Pole sama

Japanese people address me in various ways, such as Pole san, Pole sama or James kun. But how come san does not correspond to Mr., Mrs. or Ms. even though my dictionary says that san means Mr. or Mrs.? And another question: Japanese people usually write their family name, then their given name, right? But why do they write their names the other way round when using romanized letters?

san is a respectful way to call or address people.

When you are speaking to Japanese people, even in English, it is best to say san after their first name or last name. Japanese people often feel uncomfortable if their names are used without san. That is why most people say san after your name when talking to you, even in English.

- e.g., Ms. Yukiko Suzuki (given name) (family name) ▶ I met Suzuki san yesterday. I met Yukiko san yesterday.
- Company name + san In business, san is added after the name of a company.
e.g., Tokyo Mitsubishi Bank ▶ Tokyo Mitsubishi san / sama
- There are some situations where you should not use **san**. When you are speaking to a third person, it is best not to refer to members of your own group using **san**. (group members = yourself / your family members / staff of your company etc.)

- Introducing your staff members to a client :
e.g., (your company staff to client) This is Ms. Suzuki. 鈴木です。 Suzuki desu
- Introducing your family members to your friend:
e.g., This is my wife Susan. 妻のスーザンです。 tsuma no Susan desu

First name (given name) / last name (family name) for daily conversation. Friends since childhood or school days usually address each other by their first names or nicknames. Those who meet later in life usually call each other by their last names.

	Female	Male
Child	first name + chan	first name + kun or chan
Adult	daily conversation	last name + san

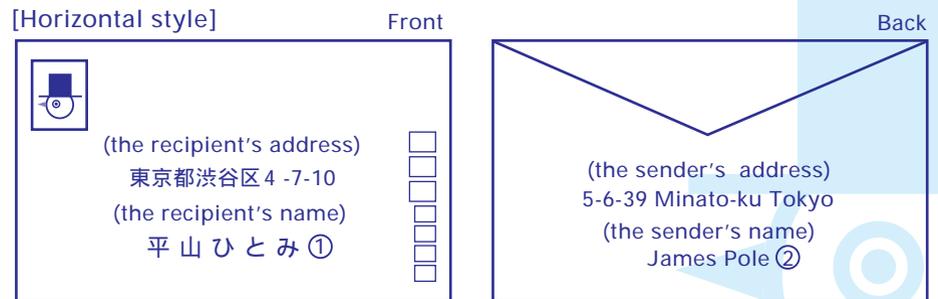
Applications of san sama (様) / shi (氏) / dono (殿) / onchū (御中)

- e.g., Mr. / Mrs. / Ms. Takada (高田)
- 高田様 (Takada sama) • A written form used in letters, documents, etc.
 - 高田氏 (Takada shi) • A written form used in the media.
 - 高田殿 (Takada dono) • This form is applied only to someone of the same status as yourself or lower. It is hardly used nowadays, but occasionally occurs in documents.
 - company name / The name of organization 行 御中 • This form is used instead of 様 (sama) onchū when a letter is sent to a company or organization. On a self-addressed envelope, 行 (yuki or "To:") is written after the sender's name. It is good manners to cross out this word, customarily with two slashes, and write 御中 (onchu) when returning it.

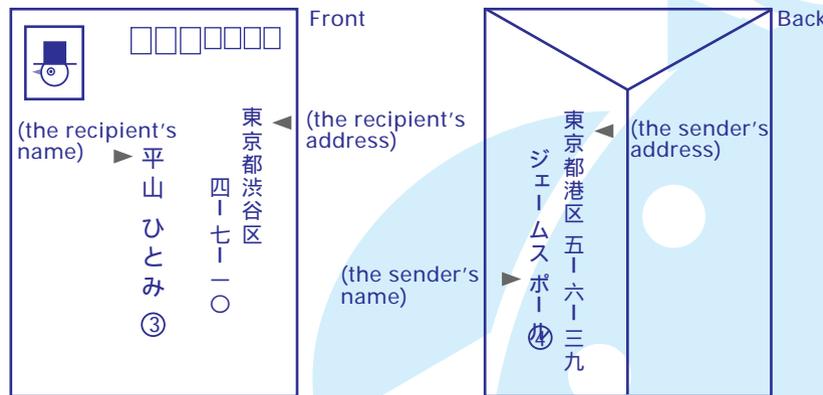
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5 minute Japanese Class by Hitomi Hirayama Vol. 21

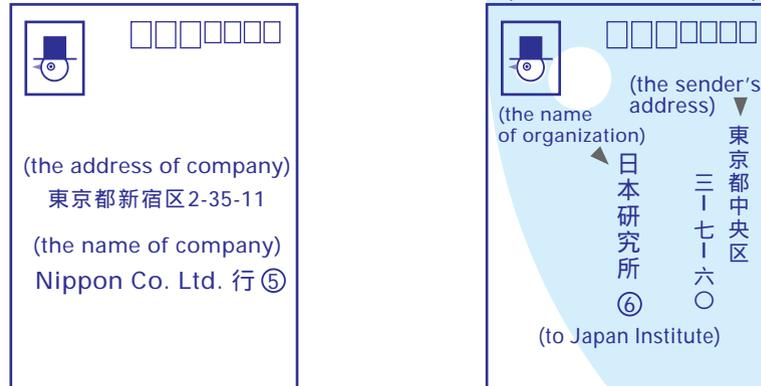
san does not correspond exactly to Mr., Mrs. or Ms. because people are addressed in different ways according to the situation. To answer your second question, it is said that in 1888, when diplomat Munemitsu Mutsu signed his name on a treaty, he became the first Japanese to write his name in the given name-family name order. Presumably, he imitated the Western way in order to show Japan's eagerness to learn from other countries after its period of isolation.



[Vertical style] Numbers used for vertical style, or kansūji (kanji for numbers) 1...一 2...二 3...三 4...四 5...五 6...六 7...七 8...八 9...九 10...十、〇



[Business style] (a letter to companies or organizations) (in case of a self-addressed card) (in case of a blank card)



Answers ① 様 ② none ③ 様 ④ none ⑤ 様 ⑥ none ⑦ 御中 ⑧ 御中 ⑨ none ⑩ 御中



さん
san

様
sama
polite form / to customer

The interviewer calls an applicant for a job interview.

interviewer : Mr. Kobayashi !

小林 Kobayashi ①

Kobayashi : Yes, I'm Kobayashi.

はい、小林 Kobayashi ② です。

Mr. Oda comes back to his hotel after sight-seeing and finds there is a message at the front desk.

receptionist : Mr. Oda ! Mr. Miki is waiting for you in the lobby.

尾田 Oda ③ 三木 Miki ④ がロビーでお待ちでございます。(honorable form of "waiting")

Talking to a receptionist at a company.

Inoue : My name is Inoue. I'm from Shibuya Bank.

渋谷銀行の井上 Shibuya Ginkō no Inoue ⑤ ですが desu ga

I have an appointment to see Mr. Yokota at 9 a.m. today.

9時に横田 Yokota ⑥ とお約束しています。(honorable form of "have an appointment")

receptionist : Yes, Sir. We do have your appointment today. (Calling Yokota's desk)

Mr. Yokota! You have a visitor from Shibuya Bank.

横田 Yokota ⑦ 渋谷銀行 Shibuya Ginkō ⑧ がお見えです。(honorable form of "come")

A nurse calls a patient at a hospital.

Inoue : Mr. Taro Fujita! Please go to Room 5!

藤田太郎 Fujita Tarō ⑨ 5番にお入り下さい。(honorable form of "come in")

A bank teller calls a customer at a bank.

teller : Japanese Lunch Co., Ltd. ! ジャパニーズランチ株式会社 Japanese Lunch kabushiki-gaisha ⑩

At a restaurant.

Hayashi : My name is Hayashi, I have a reservation for 7 p.m.

7時に予約をした林 shichi-ji ni yoyaku o shita Hayashi ⑪ です。at 7 p.m. have reserved

waitress : Yes, Mr. Hayashi! Please come this way.

林 Hayashi ⑫ どうぞこちらに。dōzo kochira ni please come this way

Answers

1. san	2. none	3. sama	4. sama	5. none	6. sama	7. san
8. sama	9. san	10. sama	11. none	12. sama		

With cooperation from Yasuhiro Koga