

## INTRODUCTION

The colours and camouflage schemes provoked by this hostile theatre arguably produced the most diverse, yet haphazard, patterns in any air force of the Second World War. Some units, such as the 208<sup>th</sup> *Sentai*, chose to remove their tail heraldry in favour of more practical camouflage.

There were two types of markings which were ubiquitous across all types. A white combat band around the rear fuselage was applied to all JAAF airframes serving in combat zones. Described in *kanji* as the “*gaisei butai shikitai*”, this long-winded formal phrase translates essentially as the “Overseas Campaign Band”. Around mid-1942 it became general practice for propellers and spinners to be wholly painted in “red bean” with a satin finish. Propeller tips were changed from red to yellow and data squares were stencilled to each blade near the hub. In some units, spinners were painted in distinguishing *chutai* or even *shotai* colours, either the whole spinner of just the forward half, or even a narrow band in between. This practice was more common in fighter units, however.

On 27 June 1945, Flight Lieutenant L Green, an Air Technical Intelligence Unit inspector, forwarded a report to RAAF Command in Brisbane on the results of his survey trip to Wewak and surrounds. This was to specifically reconnoitre wrecked Japanese aircraft abandoned at the airfields of But, Dagua, Wewak and Boram. The collection of aircraft destroyed and abandoned was staggering and included: 21 x Ki-51s, one Tachikawa Ki-55 trainer, one Mansyu Ki-79 Advanced Trainer, 51 x Ki-46 Dinahs, 59 x Ki-48 *Sokei* light bombers, 28 x Ki-49 *Donryu* heavy bombers and three Ki-57 transports. After adding the fighters present the total wreck inventory was 480. Despite the indifferent reaction from his masters in Melbourne, Green was not to know how invaluable reports like his would become in later years to historians, alongside similar tomes of documentation.

I hope you enjoy understanding the colours and markings rationale of these mercurial Japanese incumbents which briefly appeared in New Guinea skies so many years ago.

Michael John Claringbould  
Canberra, Australia  
July 2020

### *Technical Note*

*All profiles and other artwork in this volume were created from 3D models built in Autodesk 3DS MAX and rendered with Vray. Post-production work was completed with Photoshop.*