

becoming lost over ceaseless jungle in the aircraft of the times. Neither can words convey the power of a 1,000-pound bomb-line exploding down a dirt airfield. Combine these factors with disease, malnutrition and fatigue, and it is difficult to understand how JAAF aircrews persisted as they did.

Today the former airfields around Wewak remain heavily cratered. One can still grapple through thick kunai grass to search these areas, raising the question of how a foreign air army staged warfare from such a remote and hazardous location. Had Shelley penned his classic poem *Ozymandias* in more modern times, he might have dedicated his verse to the shattered aircraft wreckage which still litters these former airfields.

This history is written from the Japanese perspective, resulting in a dissimilar New Guinea air war to the one presented in Allied accounts. This alternative viewpoint gives reason to assess that both sides fought essentially two separate campaigns, with differing objectives, technologies and strategies. This often led to intriguing consequences and irony as you will see.

Two wartime Japanese films help understand the JAAF mindset. Released in 1942, *Tsubasa no Gaika* ("Triumph of Wings"), platforms the agility of the *Hayabusa* fighter. Sponsored by JAAF Headquarters, the film centres on a Nakajima test pilot for the *Hayabusa*. All aircraft filmed were real *Hayabusa* incorporating special effects for crashes, combat and cockpit scenes, including historically priceless operational sequences in flight and on the ground. Then, the later 1944 film *Kato Hayabusa Sento-tai* ("Kato's *Hayabusa* Squadron") showcases JAAF discipline, culture and doctrine. Several pilots who flew in New Guinea previously served in this unit. The film portrays the early Southeast Asia campaign with special effects by Tsuburaya Eiji, later renown for the postwar *Godzilla* film series.

Note that in the text "Wewak" often refers to the wider area from Hansa Bay to Dagua. This first volume only covers the activities of what the JAAF termed eastern New Guinea. Western or Dutch New Guinea effectively commenced at Hollandia, and that sector will be briefly covered in the second volume.

The reader must also bear in mind that all around the described air activity in this volume, IJN and Allied air activity was also omnipresent. Their movements are recounted only as necessary, otherwise an incomprehensible compendium would have blurred the focus on JAAF activity. Finally, the text changes between Japanese and English terminology to facilitate understanding the complex command structures within the air divisions and 4th Air Army itself.

Note this volume covers JAAF operations in New Guinea from October 1942 through to the end of September 1943 except for the Finschhafen campaign. That began on 22 September 1943 and lasted for a month. It will be covered in the second volume.

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