JAPANESE ARMOUR, and TANK CREW UNIFORM COLOURS & MARKINGS 1937 - 1945

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A Note on Colours

Colours quoted in this reference guide should be used with the following in mind:

1. IMHO colour matches are not a science in that it is impossible for one single mix (i.e., FS) to represent an original subject colour. Rather it is a range of colour mixes.

2. Thus colours are noted here as standards only.

3. Colours change as a result of
   a) inconsistent factory mixing & manufacturing limitations
   b) conflicting standards and orders
   c) expediency
   d) field application interpretation
   e) Weathering

4. Lighten colours with pure white for scale effect:
   a) 1/35 (5% - 10%)
   b) 1/48 (10% - 20%)
   c) 1/72 (20 % - 30%)
**TONE** - how light or dark a color is.

**HUE** - what the actual color is.

Some RULES
- lighter hues produce a smaller range of tones
- using black and white are not the only colours to change a hue
Camouflage Summary

Colors will be referred to in their common English terms (e.g., “Khaki”) followed by Japanese equivalent terms.

Early Period 1937-1942 (China, SE Asia, Home Islands, SW Pacific):
- Three tone scheme of base colour Khaki Drab (Tsuchi kusa-iro), Dark Brown (Tsuchi-iro), and Light Brown (Karekusa-iro). Pre-'37 base colour also a Reddish-Brown(?).
- Use of Grass Green (Kusa-iro) often substituted for Light brown, after 1941.
- Mostly hard-edged. Some use of yellow disruptive bands, with some black outlining.
- Surface ratio coverages are 50% Khaki (Tsuchi kusa-iro), 30% Dark Brown (Tsuchi-iro), and Karekusa-iro (20%).

Later Period 1942-1945 (SW Pacific):
- Three tone scheme of base colour Grass Green (Kusa-iro), Dark Brown (Tsuchi-iro), and Light Brown (Karekusa-iro). Mostly hard-edged but some soft towards end of war.
- Surface ratio coverages are 50% Grass green (Kusa-iro now base), 30% Dark Brown (Tsuchi-iro), and Karekusa-iro (20%).
- The 1942 regulations suspended the use of all black outlining, and Yellow bands.

Naval landing Force (SW Pacific):
- Amphibious tanks were an overall dark blue grey (Naval color?) as well as Dark and Olive Greens. This varied however by type of tank (e.g., Type 89’s were never grey(?)).
- Later war photos (1943 on) clearly show hard-edge two-tone disruptive colors (speculative as to actual colours).

Yellow bands painted between colors and starting at top of turret roof. Conjecture remains as to color: pale yellow vs. light beige (“Dry grass”).
<table>
<thead>
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<th>Color</th>
<th>Japanese Term</th>
<th>TAMIYA</th>
<th>GUNZE ACRYLIC</th>
<th>MIG</th>
<th>NOTES:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Khaki Drab (earth green,</td>
<td>Tsuchi kusa iro (or Tuchi/Tuti/Tochi kuka iro)</td>
<td>XF-49 Khaki</td>
<td>H81 Japanese Army Uniform</td>
<td>MIG-071 Khaki</td>
<td>Base Colour and Primer (early war)</td>
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<td>khaki drab, mustard)</td>
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<td>Dark Brown (dark earth,</td>
<td>Tsuchi iro (or Tuchi/Tuti/Tochi iro)</td>
<td>XF-9 Hull Red (45%) + XF-68 Nato Brown (45%) + XF-69 Nato Black (10%)</td>
<td>H84 Mahogany</td>
<td>MIG-070 Medium Brown</td>
<td>Alternate Darker Version: XF-64 Red Brown (50%) + X-6 Orange (40%) + XF-59 Desert Yellow (10%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>chocolate brown, dark</td>
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<td>red-brown)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Light Brown (dry parched</td>
<td>Karekusa iro</td>
<td>XF-49 Khaki (60%)+ XF-60 Dark Yellow (15%)+ XF-4 Yellow-Green (15%) + XF-67 Nato Green (10%)</td>
<td>H71 Middle Stone</td>
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<td>Alternate Version: XF-64 Red Brown (50%) + X-6 Orange (40%) + XF-59 Desert Yellow (10%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>grass, light earth, ochre,</td>
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<td>middle stone)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grass Green (two versions</td>
<td>Kusa iro</td>
<td>Dark Version: XF-13 IJA Green</td>
<td>H340 Field Green</td>
<td>MIG-069 Blue-Green</td>
<td>Base Colour and Primer (later war)</td>
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<td>- dark and olive green,</td>
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<td>blue-green, bright willow</td>
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<td>Post '42 Light Version: XF-67 Nato Green</td>
<td>H58 (Interior Green)</td>
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<td>Found on late war Naval Armour (e.g., Ka-mi and Ka Chi amphibious tanks)</td>
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<td>green)</td>
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<td>Blue-Grey (dark blue-grey,</td>
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<td>XF-75 IJN Gray Kure</td>
<td>H83 IJN Gray 2</td>
<td>MIG-048 Yellow</td>
<td>Naval Landing Force only</td>
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<td>medium grey)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pale Yellow (off-yellow,</td>
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<td>XF-4Yellow-Green (50%) + XF-59 Desert Yellow (50%)</td>
<td>MIG-048 Yellow</td>
<td></td>
<td>Bands between the colors (up to 1942/43)</td>
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<td>canary yellow)</td>
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Other Notes

- Often lower portions (barrels, wheel areas) were sometimes painted **Light Brown** (Karekusa-iro).
- No standardization of tank markings.
- Single Kana or kanji character, were found on hull and/or turret sides, almost always in white.
- This single character would signify vehicles belonging to the same group or “Chutai”.
- Numerals also found on hull sides, almost always in white (most prevalent up to 1941 and limited after that).
- License plates found on all tanks consisting of black colored plate with white markings. Army Star followed by two Kanji characters (“Sen” or “Shensa” meaning “tank” and Kanji numeric noting the Unit). This was then followed by a random number in Arabic numerals representing a specific tank. Naval tanks were noted with an Anchor and usually no Kanji Unit designation.
- Arm of service on front hull was brass, but mostly painted the same color as the camouflage as the war progressed. Unlike Germans, Japanese Air Force did not operate tanks or fighting vehicles of their own. Construction battalions (aka. Like Sea-Bees) had unique Badge of an Anchor with cross tools.
Historic photos from various websites including: Amorama, WW2incolor, worldoftanks, wikipedia, clubsnap, Collectors Guild, Missing-Linx and Akira Takizawa.
Note hard edge camouflage.
Note small Nippon Flags on front hull!

Significant track sag!
Note “License Plate” on rear upper hull position.
Hard edge camo on Type 2.
1/35 scratchbuilt model by Harvey Low
1/35 model by Harvey Low
Many tankers wore more comfortable forage caps as well, when not in combat.
YES Tankers carried swords!

Note name tag on uniform, even though Japanese used “dog tags”.
Note crewmen wear coveralls.
Japanese “Dog Tags”. String is not original.
Japanese Army Map Case

Harvey Low collection
Type 98 “Knee Mortar”. An infantry weapon, but sometimes carried by Tank Crew as Secondary weapon due to its portability.
SUMMER TANKER JACKET

WINTER TANKER JACKET
Note paint splatter on sleeve!
Useful References


