

Hints of modeling on Henschel Hs123 A-1

Historical considerations for a correct execution of the assembly and coloring of the Henschel Hs123 A in service at the CAF during the second Sino-Japanese war.

§ Premise.

I believe that some preliminary observations are necessary because during my modeling research I have really encountered and seen a bit of everything on this Chinese version. Well executed models, but historically “wrong”, approximate and misleading descriptions, various unreliable profiles and drawings and inappropriate kits to make this model; but first it would be better to frame the historical moment that concerns us closely.

§ Historical framework.

The second Sino-Japanese war (7 July 1937 - 2 September 1945) was the greatest conflict between China and Japan; in fact, it ended with the surrender of Japan at the end of the Second World War, thus intertwining its events with the broader and more complex ones of the latter conflict. This must obviously be kept in mind, to explain some facts and behaviors of the actors in the field. In fact, we consider that given the intrinsic Chinese weakness due to the fragmented and complex political situation that has always characterized this region, it was necessary, in addition to the war support of the allies (we all remember the intervention of the famous "American Flying Tigers), also a strategic alliance between the various warlords who populated China following the breakup of the Celestial Empire aimed at fighting the common enemy; alliance that involved alongside Chiang Kai-shek's Nationalist China also the communist faction of Mao, usually in conflict with each other (alliance is said to be extraordinarily extorted after a kidnapping of Chiang-Kai-shek, held back until his acceptance of the same).

The ROCAF - Republic of China Air Force (more simply CAF - Chinese Air Force, since the forces remained formally under the command of Chang-Kai-shek that is Nationalist China based in Nanjing) was born in this way: with the merging of forces aircraft owned by the various warlords in a single air force and the same fate also suffered by the Henschel Hs123 held by nationalist China.

It may seem strange, from this point of view, that the Germans sold some of their devices to the Chinese, but we must consider that this sale took place before the Tripartite Treaty (Italian-German-Japanese Axis - September 1940) and shortly after the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese. Although German military supplies were suspended from October 1937, it seems that the supplies were granted by Hitler, as long as they took place without Japan's knowledge! (in “A History of Chinese Aviation” - Lennart Andersson - Published by AHS of ROC). Leaving a possible further study to another location, we suppose that, except for some political reservations that influenced the expedition period, the military cooperation agreements (mainly training) stipulated by Germany with Chiang Kai-shek remained in force for some time.

All this serves to better understand the technical parts that most interest us from a modeling point of view.

§ The sale.

We naturally find several sources, often conflicting, regarding the sale of aircraft to China; but I believe that the most reliable source in this regard is the magazine *Flugzeug Profile* n.42, extensively taken from the Monograph n.48 by Marek J. Murawski published by Kagero in 2012, where Henschel Hs123 is spoken more extensively than elsewhere in China. From here it can be deduced that the number of Hs123s sold in China by the representative of HAPRO (Handesgesellschaft für Industrielle Produkte - like a German Confindustria of the time) on November 3, 1937 was twelve. Some sources obtainable from Polish e-mails referring to the publication "Wydawniktwo Militaria n.4 by Janusz Ledwoch - Warszawa 1995", mention 10 or maybe 9 aircraft sold, also mentioned in "La machina Y la Historia" - "Profilos Aeronauticos Henschel Hs123" - Quiron Ediciones by Lucas Molina Franco – Illustrated by Luis Fresno Crespo, they seem to me rather confused and not well specified and I am therefore inclined not to consider them reliable. Most of the sources and citations then speak of 12 specimens.

The supply resulted from an agreement not concluded, due to unspecified and probably financial reasons, for the sale to Portugal. The Expedition should have taken place on November 22, 1937 but was postponed by about a month for the political reasons mentioned above. The disassembled airframes and packed in wooden crates were transported by sea and finally, starting from January 1938, the assembly began under the supervision of the German technicians of Henschel Werke AG who followed the load, also accompanied by the pilot instructor Winterfeld who took care training of Chinese pilots. The assembly was completed in April 1938.

I observe that to deduce, as in the Spanish monograph, that the aircraft were used and therefore disassembled for shipping, is not correct in my opinion. Based on the fact that they were originally intended for Portugal, that they were simply primed and that in 1937, practically series production was in its infancy, I am inclined to think that the aircraft were brand new and colored with the traditional primer, i.e. RLM 02.

What has been said is important, as we will see, to have correct modeling references in particular for the coloring and for the version.

§ The version.

All sources agree in indicating the version of the Hs123 sold and sent to China as the Hs123 A-1: so does the monograph "Flugzeug Profile n.42". What is not clear and which is misleading due, moreover, to the numerous designs and profiles produced in profusion and the models published on the web is that in this version the aircraft equipped with armored headrests are also included: which has led, in my opinion to considerable modeling misunderstandings. The classification is not easy due to the overlapping of various prototype versions abandoned and then resumed, also for the test of different types of engines. (apart from Junkers Jumo and Wright Cyclone, the various BMW 132s up to version

J). A help is given to us by the series of beautiful technical drawings, both in 1: 48 and 1:72, in the appendix of the aforementioned monograph by Murawski, ed. Kagero; where after the initial production version, the A-0, the presence of an A-1 "early" version without armored headrest and an A-1 version, obviously later, with armored headrest is highlighted. It is certain that the version supplied to the CAF is the A-1 and these observations will be useful to clarify some modeling details later on.

§ The numbering.

As for the department numbering, it is better to take a large part of the iconography that is poured onto the web with a grain of salt. Established that the specimens sold to China were 12, as is known, they were assigned to the 15th bombing squadron based in Hankou. Nine were used in service and three kept in reserve or as a source of spare parts. The aircraft were all numbered in white from 1501 to 1512 on the tail.



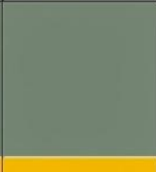



On this numbering we therefore have textual and iconographic certainties such as the two photos of the time on Hankou's airfield. On other numbers, such as those starting with 16-, I would be very cautious and would favor an exclusion, even if after the operational withdrawal, in 1940, the surviving Hs123s were assigned to the 6th Fighter Regiment as a training aircraft. From a modeling point of view, it is better to focus on 1509 or 1510 (which is the one in the picture).

§ The coloring.

Regarding the coloring of the Henschel Hs123 A-1 assigned to the 15th Squadron of Hankou, China, the available sources agree that they arrived for the assembly colored with the factory primer, the famous RLM02 and that after the assembly the Chinese pilots wanted apply an "additional camouflage coating" as specified in the monograph "Flugzeug Profile n.42". Other sources specify, as from photographic evidence, that this further mimetic was obtained by the Chinese by painting green "biscuits" ("small green snake-shaped lines painted on top and side surfaces of the airframe"; Marek J. Murawski, cit.).

First of all, we have several observations to make:

1 - on the shade of the color RLM02 - I leave this discussion open to your comments, which in itself would be infinite; complicated by the fact that the perception of color is subjective and that, for those looking on the web, it varies according to the screens and their definition. Furthermore, it can be trivially observed that there could be variations in shades between one producer and another of colors, variations even over the years of production and in addition the same scholars have proposed different "variations" in their different investigations, as reported, just to give an example, in this table from an American study:

RLM No.	Name	Ries (1963)	Smith et al. (1979)	Merrick & Hitchcock (1980)	Warnecke & Böhm (1998)	Merrick & Kiroff (2005)	Ullmann (2008)
02	Grau (Gray)						



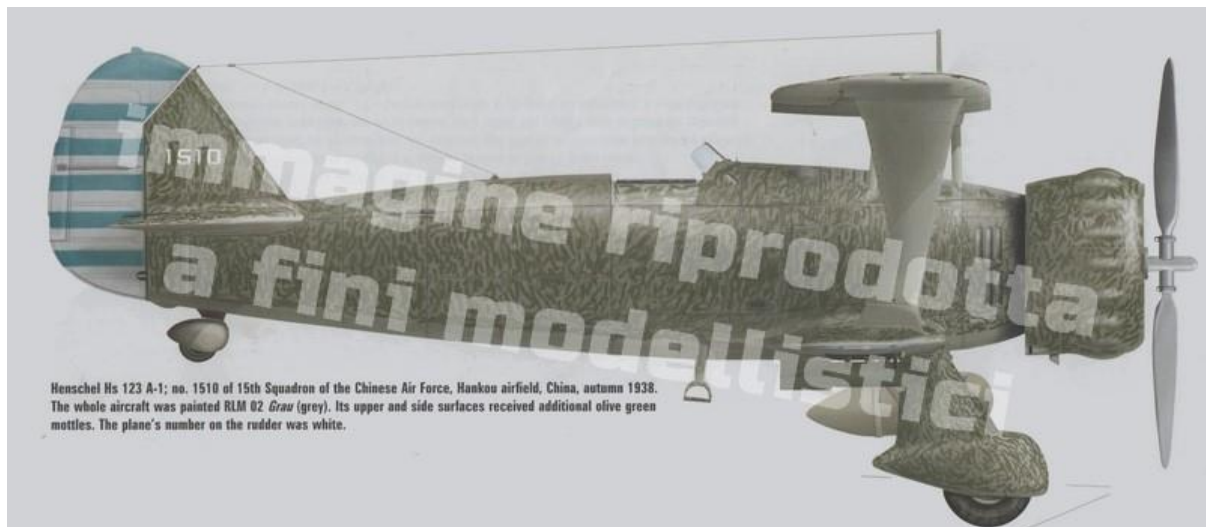
I have referred to the FS 36165, however, lightening it slightly with light gray: so it can be used as a reference Hobby Color Aqueous H-70. The important thing in my opinion is that the base is not excessively dark, since the sources speak of a "light" gray-green. In any case, the simple light gray, as mentioned by some, should be excluded: it must be an RLM 02!

2 - The color of the snake-shaped lines painted by the Chinese - Even the main sources are rather vague about the color of this additional camouflage: some do not name a specific color, others speak of a generic color green, or dark green, and others that some "Snake-shaped lines" may also vary to dark brown. On the other hand, the green could also be a dark olive green, as the liveries of most of the Chinese airplanes were colored in that period. Starting from the iconographic certainty (dark snake-shaped lines on a light background) and from the generic considerations made, I opted for a



generic Dark Green, such as Hobby Color Aqueous H-320, , that I tried to reproduce for the decals that I specially designed for the livery of this aircraft. (link to the site).

3 - The shape of the "snake-shaped lines" - I mention here only the fact to pay attention to the various designs and profiles proposed for this Chinese livery, in some cases even too schematized. I think the best approximation is the one proposed in the aforementioned publication by Murawski, ed. Kagero, in the appendix, profile of Mariusz Tarkawian.



4 - Other colors - You can find among the various sources and on the web other colors for the livery of the Henschel Hs123 A-1 CAF different profiles with different colors. In particular, it is often depicted with the classic livery of the aircraft in force to the Chinese at that time completely dark green. Personally I have considerable perplexity about this type of coloring in reference to the Henschel Hs123 A-1 of the CAF; perplexities due to the fact that these were the only examples of this aircraft sold to China (so there were no others under the Chinese aviation at that time) and that, as a first color, they had received the one described above.

The only information that could justify a re-coloring (of this it would be) in dark green of this model is the one that sees its assignment, as mentioned above, as a training aircraft to the 6th Fighter Regiment that some sources indicate to be based in a central region of China. Of this different "camouflage", however, I have not found any textual or photographic evidence.

Furthermore, this does not remove the fact that many of those designs and models with this livery are to be considered incorrect since they still bear the same markings of the 15th squadron or with dubious markings or even, with the armored headrest, which is exclude, as we will see better in the following paragraph.

§ The armored headrest and the upper wing.

As mentioned above in the series of beautiful technical drawings, both in 1:48 and 1:72, in the appendix of the aforementioned monograph by Murawski, ed. Kagero find useful confirmations on the Hs123 A-1 series sold to China in 1937. In particular, after the start of series production version, the A-0, without headrest, there is an A-1 "early" version without armored headrest and an A-1 version, obviously later, with armored headrest. In the absence of further clarifications, I assume that the armored headrest was introduced on this first series version of the Henschel Hs 123 during or after the first war experiences, such as the Spanish Civil War, and for the invasion of Poland that triggered the opening of the Second World War, (where the presence of both types is noted from the photographic documents).

This clarification also affects the structure of the upper wing which in the A-0 and A-1 "early" versions has parts in canvas wood while subsequently it has been reinforced and is entirely metal. So as far as the modeling aspect is concerned, the version we will have to reproduce is the one without armored headrest (to dispel any doubts, however, there remains the vintage photo, published by Flugzeug which portrays the row of Chinese Henschel Hs123 A-1s on the airfield. See also the article on this site) and with the partially metallic wing which is reflected, model-wise, in a

different paneling. Correctly, for example, the 1:72 kit of Fly models, also proposing the "Chinese" version, is equipped with two fuselages and two types of wing.

§ The rear wheel and final warnings.

One last particular attention must be paid to the rear wheel because it is not reproduced correctly in many kits. In this case, the modeller will have to take charge of reconstructing the aerodynamic hood that covers it.

Also pay attention to the white and blue stripes on the tail rudder; often the decals provided have 10, but in reality they must be 12 (like the points of the star) alternating starting from the blue at the top and in my opinion they must all be the same in height.

§ Conclusions.

As we have seen, the model of the Henschel Hs123 A-1 in service at the CAF (Chinese Air Force) in the early years of the Second Sino-Japanese War, is an interesting and intriguing model to reproduce, but which must be taken with a bit of a grain of salt, paying attention, if we want to be accurate, to those details that allow historical adherence as correct as possible based on the information available.

I hope that my little historical "excursion" can be of help to those interested in making it happen; and to use, if necessary, the decals for the livery; in this case, you can refer to the article on the website www.lanaantonmodel.it where you will find the necessary links.

Thanks and good modeling to all.

Anton