



Notes for this review:

Hiei is pronounced 'Hee-ay'. For the general background to the Kongo class, please see the review of the Kajika Kongo. As this kit is similar to the Kajika Kongo, much of this review will also be similar. The differences between the two kits are noted under each section. All the photos in this review are of the Hiei kit.

Background – Home built Battlecruiser:

One of the features of the Japanese '8-8' plan of 1910 which proposed the construction of 8 new battleships and 8 new battlecruisers was that only the lead ship was to be built overseas (*Kongo*); all the others were to be built in Japan.

This posed a problem for the Japanese shipbuilding industry, as none of the existing yards had the capacity, infrastructure, or skill levels required. Accordingly when the contract was signed with Vickers in Great Britain to build the *Kongo*, it contained provisions for working groups from Japanese industry to come to Vickers Barrow and work alongside their British counterparts in order to learn the latest British shipbuilding and armour production techniques, and to determine how best to outfit their yards.

This program was very successful and in November 1911 while *Kongo* was still on the stocks, Yokosuka Naval Arsenal laid the keel for *Hiei*, the second of the four *Kongo* class battlecruisers and the first large

dreadnought to be built in Japanese yards. Named for a mountain northeast of Kyoto, *Hiei* was launched on Nov 21, 1912 and accepted into service on Aug 4, 1914. Her 34 month completion time compares very favourably with *Kongo's* 32 months.

The 14" guns were all manufactured in Japan, four of them using components imported from Vickers. The plates for the main side armour belt were produced in Japan; the rest of the armour plate was imported from Vickers. The Parsons turbines were also imported, but the 36 boilers were manufactured by the Yokosuka Navy Arsenal. These were heavier than the corresponding units in *Kongo* and did not produce as much horsepower and as a consequence *Hiei* only managed 27 knots on trials, half a knot slower than *Kongo*.

As might be expected, *Hiei* was externally very similar to her sister ship. The most noticeable difference was that *Hiei's* forward funnel was higher and placed further aft than *Kongo's*, in an attempt to draw more of the exhaust gases away from the bridge. *Hiei's* lower bridge platform was also extended aft to the foremast. *Kongo* was fitted briefly with single 14 pdr guns on the 14" turret tops, *Hiei* never carried these weapons.

Hiei's service in World War One was limited to patrols off China and Korea. An offer from the Royal Navy in 1915 to lease the four *Kongo* class battlecruisers was turned down, denying posterity the sight of the four battlecruisers engaging the German High Seas fleet at Jutland.

Placed in reserve for a time in October 1920, *Hiei* saw routine service in the 1920's. In October 1929, she was de-militarized in order to prevent her scrapping under the terms of the Washington Naval Treaty. The after 14" turret was landed, the torpedo tubes, 6" guns, main armour belt, and 27 boilers were removed, leaving her with just one funnel and only capable of 18 knots.

She served in this state as a training ship until 1937 when she was taken in hand for a complete reconstruction, emerging in 1940 as a state of the art fast battleship. Her forward pagoda tower was the prototype of the structures that later appeared on the *Yamato* class battleships.

At the start of the Pacific War, *Hiei* and her sister *Kirishima* were the heavy escorts to the Japanese Carrier Striking Force that raided Pearl Harbour. She continued to screen the carriers during operations off Rabaul, the raid on Port Darwin, and operations south of Java. South of Java on March 1, 1942, the old 4 stack destroyer *USS Edsall* inadvertently stumbled across the Carrier Striking Force. In a stunning indictment of the quality of Japanese battleship gunnery, *Hiei* fired 210 14" and 70 6" shells at the *Edsall* in broad daylight and failed to score a single hit. *Edsall* was brought to a standstill by dive-bomber attack and then despatched via 5" gunfire from cruisers *Tone* and *Chikuma*.

Hiei stayed with the carriers and escorted them during the Indian Ocean raid in April 1942, the only time in World War II that the four *Kongo* class battleships operated together. *Hiei* also participated in the Battle of Midway as part of the Midway Invasion Force, but saw no combat as the operation was cancelled after the loss of four Japanese carriers. Back with the carriers, she saw service at Eastern Solomons and Santa Cruz.

On November 10, 1942, she departed Truk with her sister *Kirishima* as part of a large force to bombard Henderson Field on Guadalcanal. Off Guadalcanal on the night of November 12/13, she and her force tangled with a large US group of cruisers and destroyers. Dubbed 'The Barroom Brawl', the battle disintegrated into a confusing melee at very close range. *Hiei* was pounded by 5" gunfire from US destroyers, turning her superstructure into blazing wreckage. The destroyer *USS Laffey* raked *Hiei's* forward superstructure with machine gun fire, killing many before sinking after taking heavy fire from *Hiei* in return. *Hiei* dealt out heavy punishment to the cruiser *USS Atlanta*, but took several 8" shell hits from the *USS San Francisco*, one of which disabled her steering gear.

Crippled, *Hiei* staggered out of the battle and tried to escape northwards. The steering gear damage was beyond repair and daylight found her close to Guadalcanal and unable to maneuver. Pounded all day by US air attacks from Henderson Field and the *USS Enterprise*, she was scuttled early in the morning of November 14, the first Japanese battleship to be lost in World War II.

The Kit:

This features *Hiei* as built and how she appeared from 1914 to 1920. This is **not** a simple re-packaging of the Kongo kit; it accurately reflects the differences between the two ships.

Packaging:

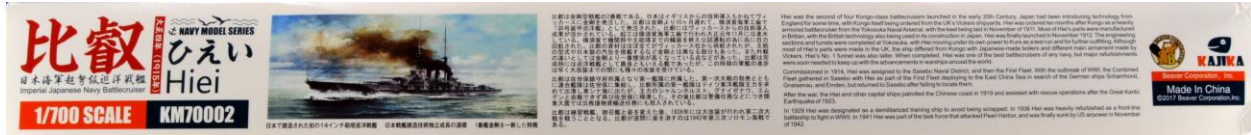
The kit comes in a well-constructed box featuring a painting of *Hiei* at speed with an impressive amount of smoke coming from the funnels. The box of my kit was squashed in the mail, but there was no damage to any of the internal components, and the box itself was still usable.

The sides of the box contain a condensed ship's history and pictures of the *Kongo* kit and the upcoming kit of *Haruna*.

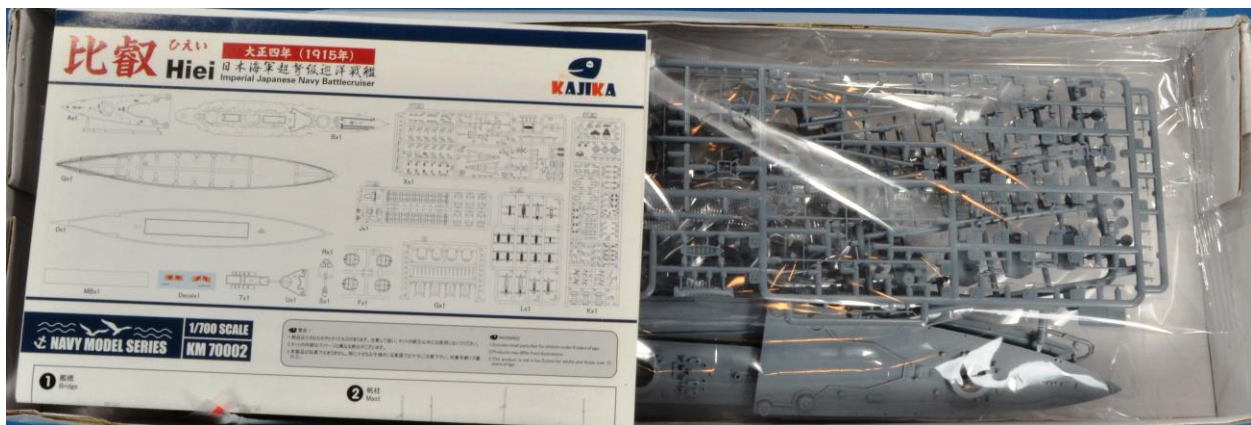
The kit comprises 339 parts on six sprues with all parts moulded in medium grey and individually sealed in plastic bags. The hull, waterline plate, forecastle deck, quarterdeck, and bridge parts are single pieces not attached to any sprue. There is no photo-etch.

Kongo's masts are on their own sprue and are in a small box; those for *Hiei* are on a new sprue with other parts.





---- Box Art ----



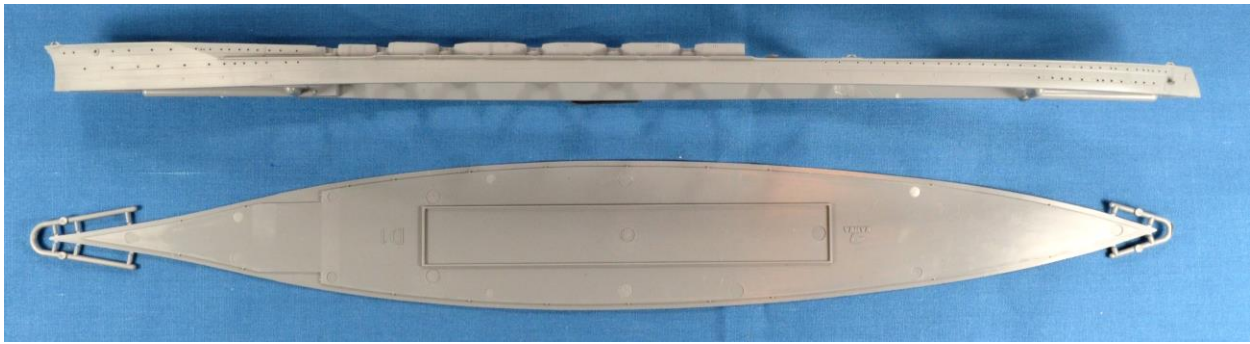
---- Contents of box ----

Hull:

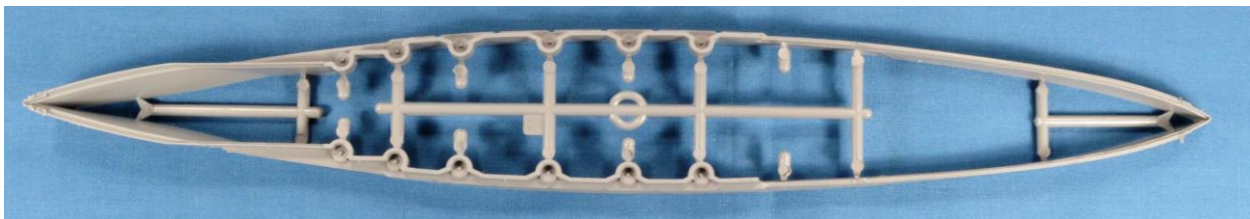
The starboard and port hull sides are in one piece and scale out just four feet short of the actual length of 705 feet. There is just a waterline plate – no lower hull is included.

The hull is loaded with exquisite detail: the many doors have hinges, the portholes have ‘eyebrows’, the armour belt amidships is well defined, there is clearly defined hull plating running fore and aft, the secondary casemates are crisply moulded, and there is a torpedo net shelf. Raised lugs run along the length of the hull for attaching the torpedo net booms.

Kongo’s hull has ladder rungs just aft of the anchors; these are not present on the Hiei hull. At the stern, Hiei has more portholes, while Kongo has doors for square ports which are not on Hiei. Kongo’s waterline plate is molded in red, Hiei’s in grey.



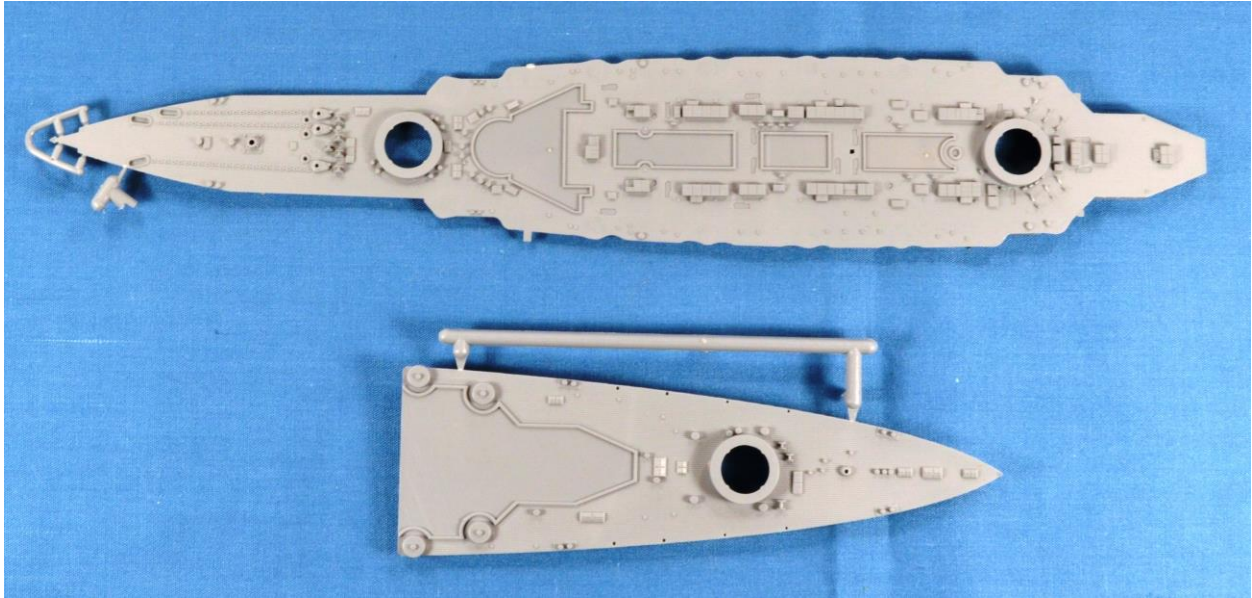
----- Hull and waterline plate -----



----- Hull from above -----

Decks:

The main decks are in two pieces. The forecastle deck has bulkheads already attached where it overlaps the quarterdeck and the level of detail is quite amazing. Individual deck planks, anchor chains, cable reels, ready-use ammo lockers, coaling ports, bollards, capstans, and boat chocks are all present in very precise detail. The fit between the two pieces is extremely precise; the bulkheads feature portholes and doors.



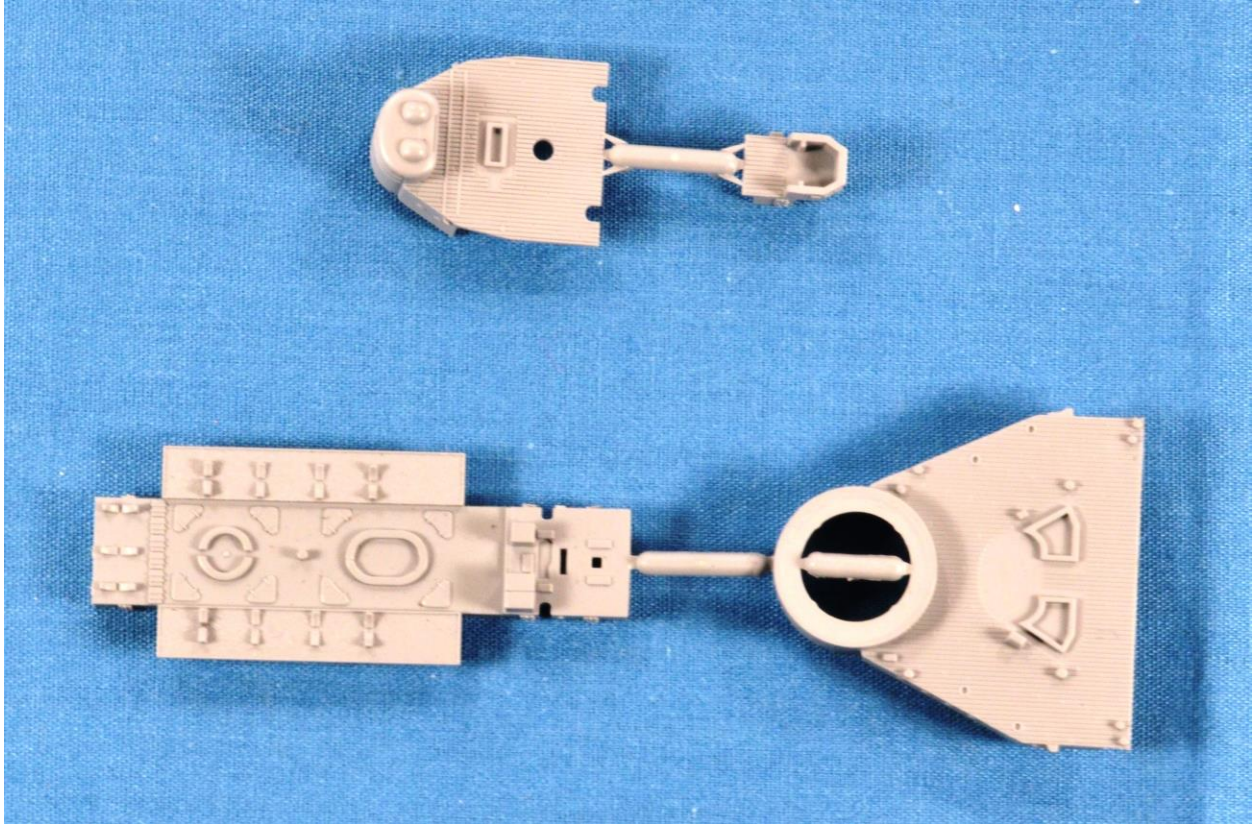
----- Forecastle deck (above) and quarterdeck (below) -----

Superstructure:

Like most World War I era ships, there is minimal superstructure: bridge, amidships boat deck and funnel casings. The bridge is made up from seven pieces, the boat deck has twelve supports to be fitted underneath, and the after funnel casing consists of two pieces.

All of these parts are detailed on every face: hatches with hinges, portholes with 'eyebrows', boat chocks, bollards, deck planks, and slots or raised edges for fitting other pieces. The funnels are hollow single pieces with engraved hand rails, separate caps with open grillwork, and separate steam pipes.

The navigation bridge is atop the conning tower, the searchlight platform extends aft to the foremast, and the boat deck is not as wide as Kongo's.



----- Bridge pieces and boat deck -----

Weapons:

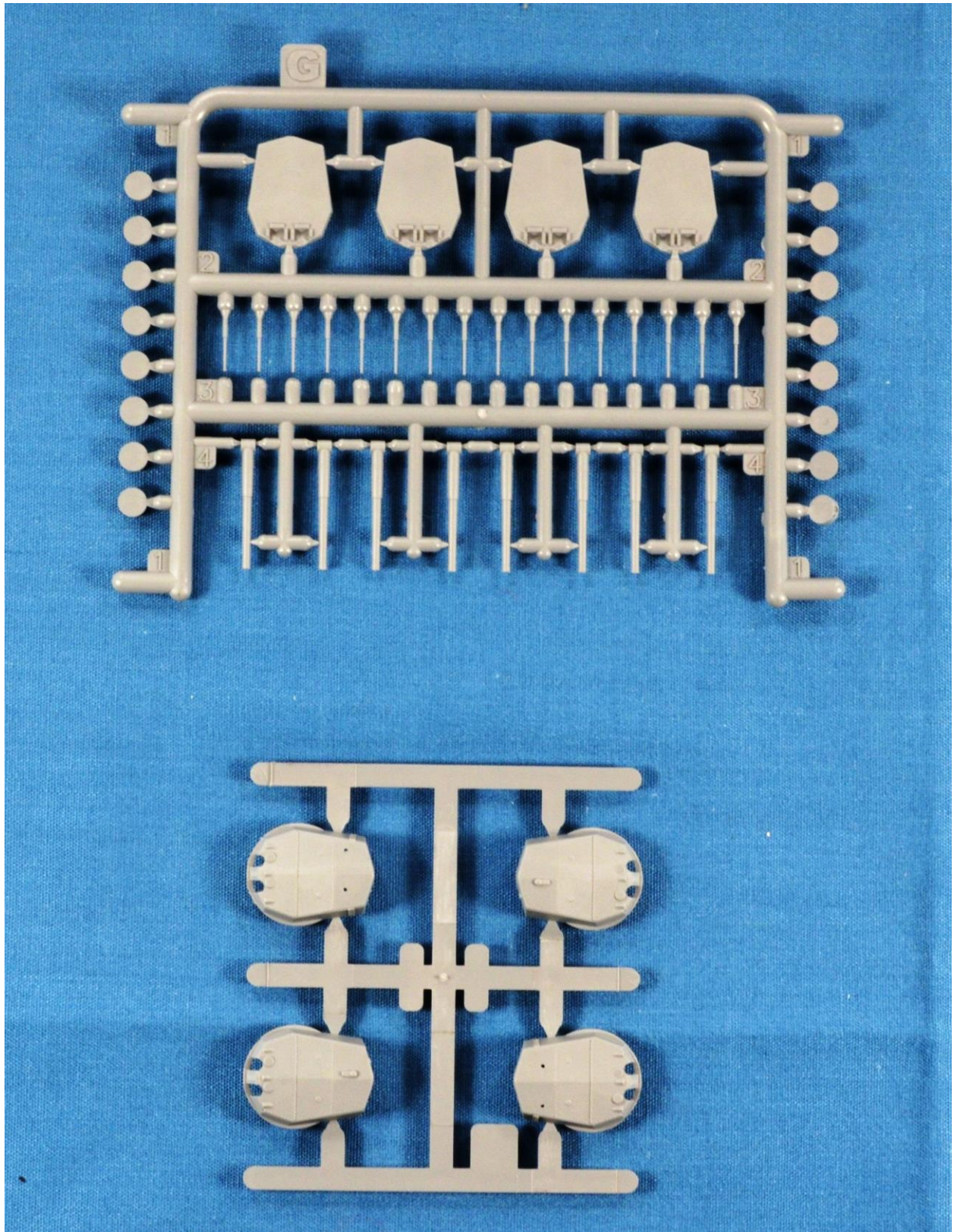
Hiei was fitted with 8-14"/45, 16-6"/50, and 4-3" guns when first completed. All these weapons are present in the kit.

The main 14" turrets are in two pieces and have separate barrels. There are two types of turret – the super firing ones have ladders at the sides and separate rangefinders, the lower turrets have no rangefinders and the ladders are at the rear. They all feature raised armour plates, rivet detail, and ladders at the front. The guns themselves are tapered, have a thicker section towards the breech and are hollowed out at the muzzle.

The 6" guns are in two pieces, a casemate mounting with detailed sighting ports, and separate barrels. The barrels are remarkably thin and have a very fine taper, equal to the best of the machined gun barrels commercially available.

The 3" guns feature plenty of raised detail.

The 14" turrets have the raised platforms for the 14 pdrs, the instructions note to cut them away. Hiei's 3" guns are in different positions on the forecastle deck than Kongo's.



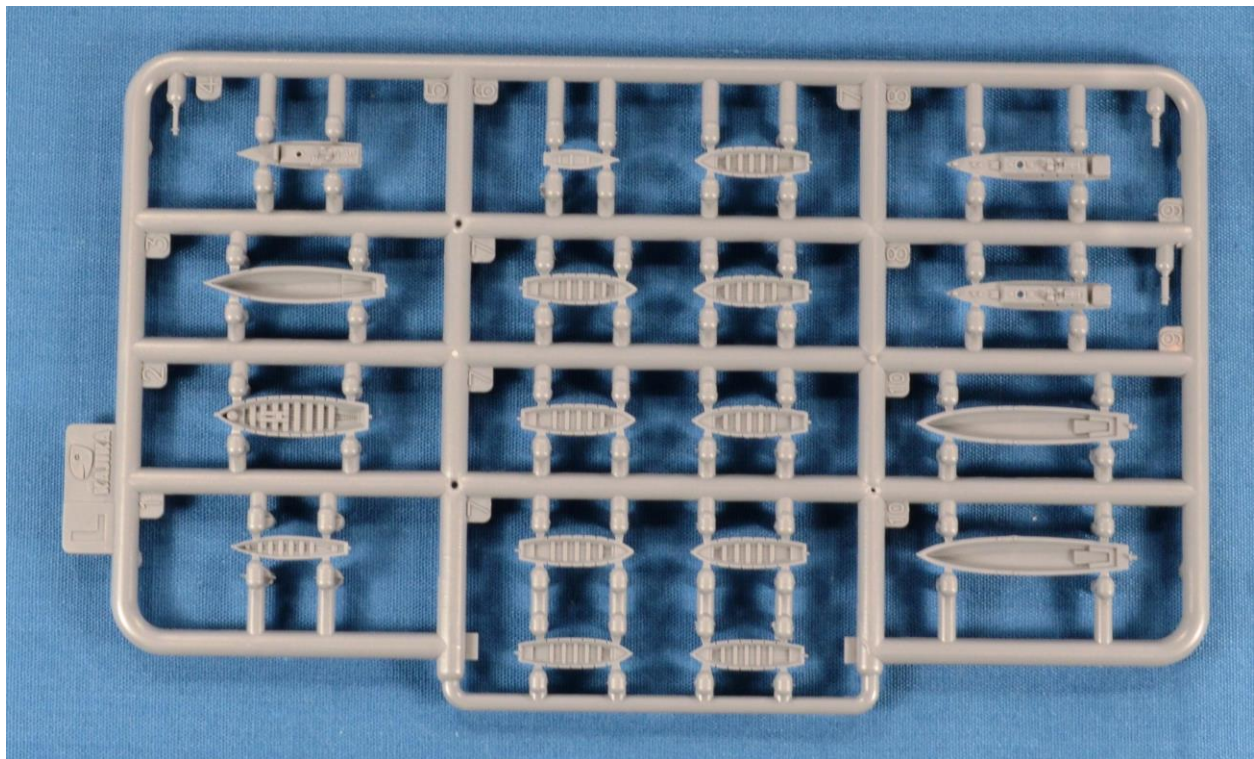
----- 14" and 6" gun turrets and barrels -----

Boats and Fittings:

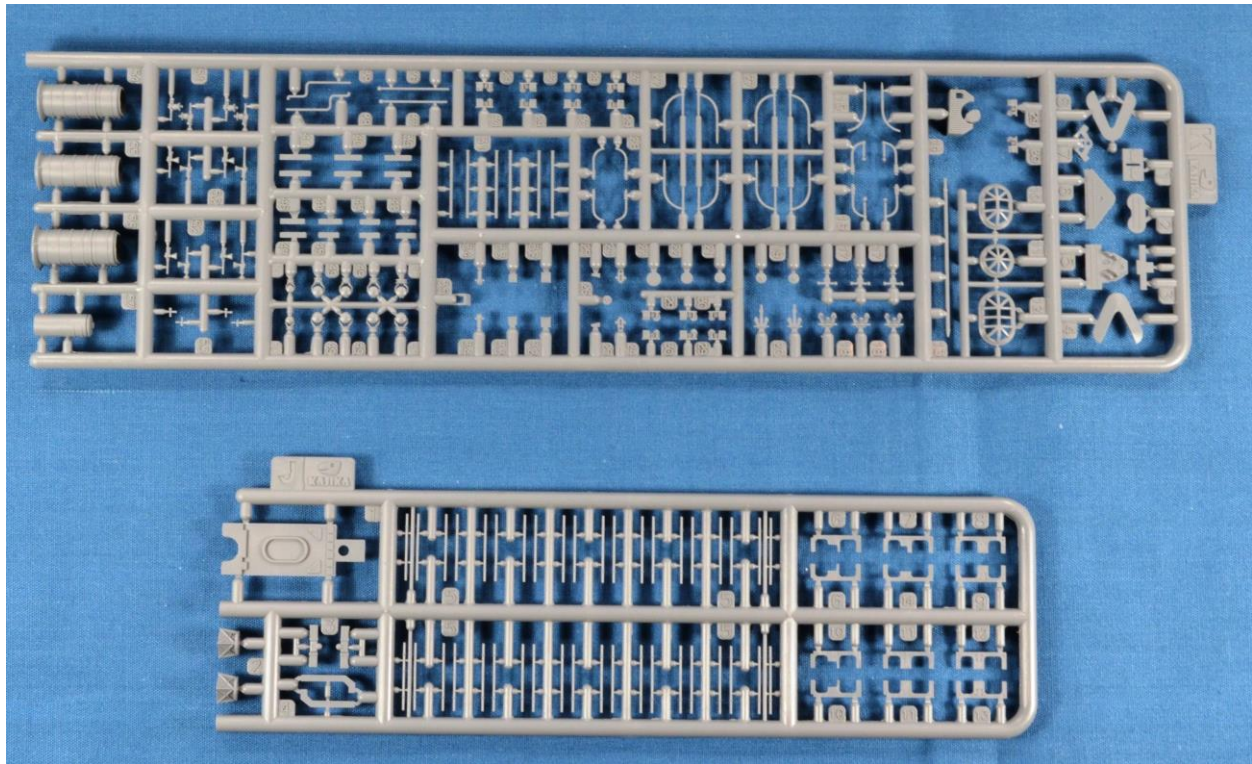
There are twelve open boats and three steam launches, each one featuring very precise deck planks. The open boats have cut-outs for the oars and the steam launches have detailed skylights, deck fittings, and separate funnels.

There are many smaller fittings, every piece of which is incredibly detailed. The many winches have detailed motors and components, the anchors have raised detail, range finders have caps on the ends, steam pipes have rings, the davits are extremely thin, searchlights have defined lenses, and the torpedo net booms have rings around them. There are two searchlight platforms with very well executed lattice work, despite being solid instead of hollow. There are even two gash chutes and a stern walk.

The smaller steam launch is not fitted, and the boat layout is slightly different from Kongo's.



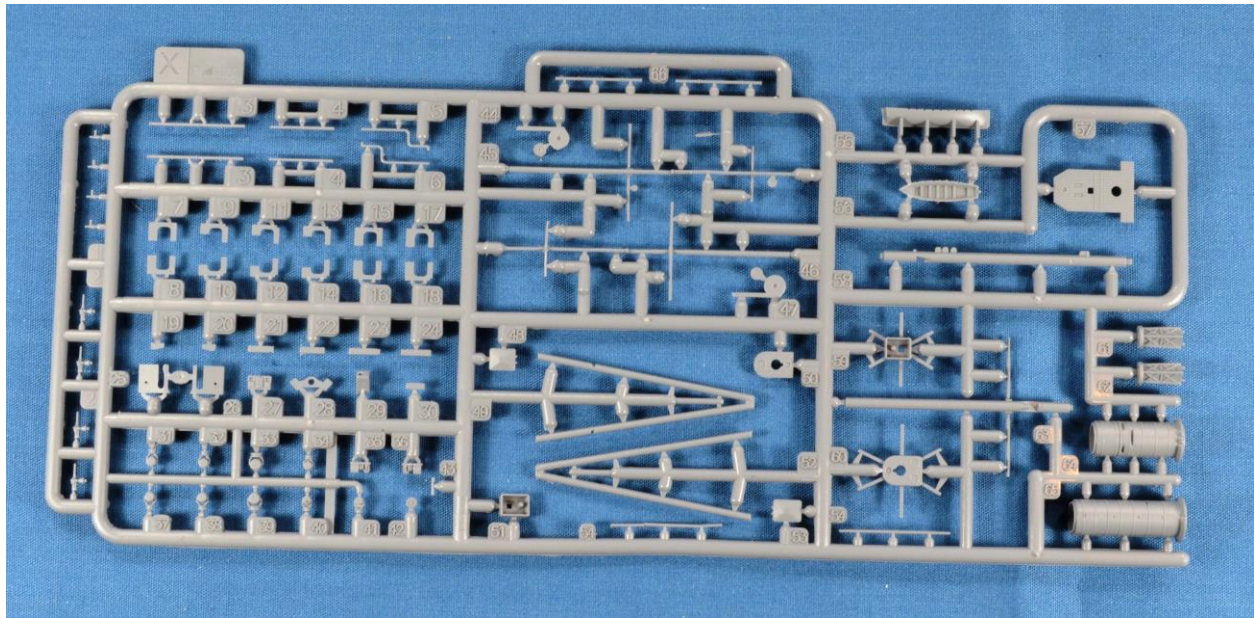
----- Boats -----



----- *Funnels and fittings* -----

Additional Fittings:

The masts and tripod supports are on a sprue specific to Hiei and are extremely thin and well detailed. The foremast has finely detailed rungs and the mainmast has attach points for the boom of the boat crane. The yards are already fitted to the topmasts. Each mast has a starfish and control position made up of separate parts. This sprue also features two additional open boats and the two forward funnels.



----- Additional Fittings -----

Decals:

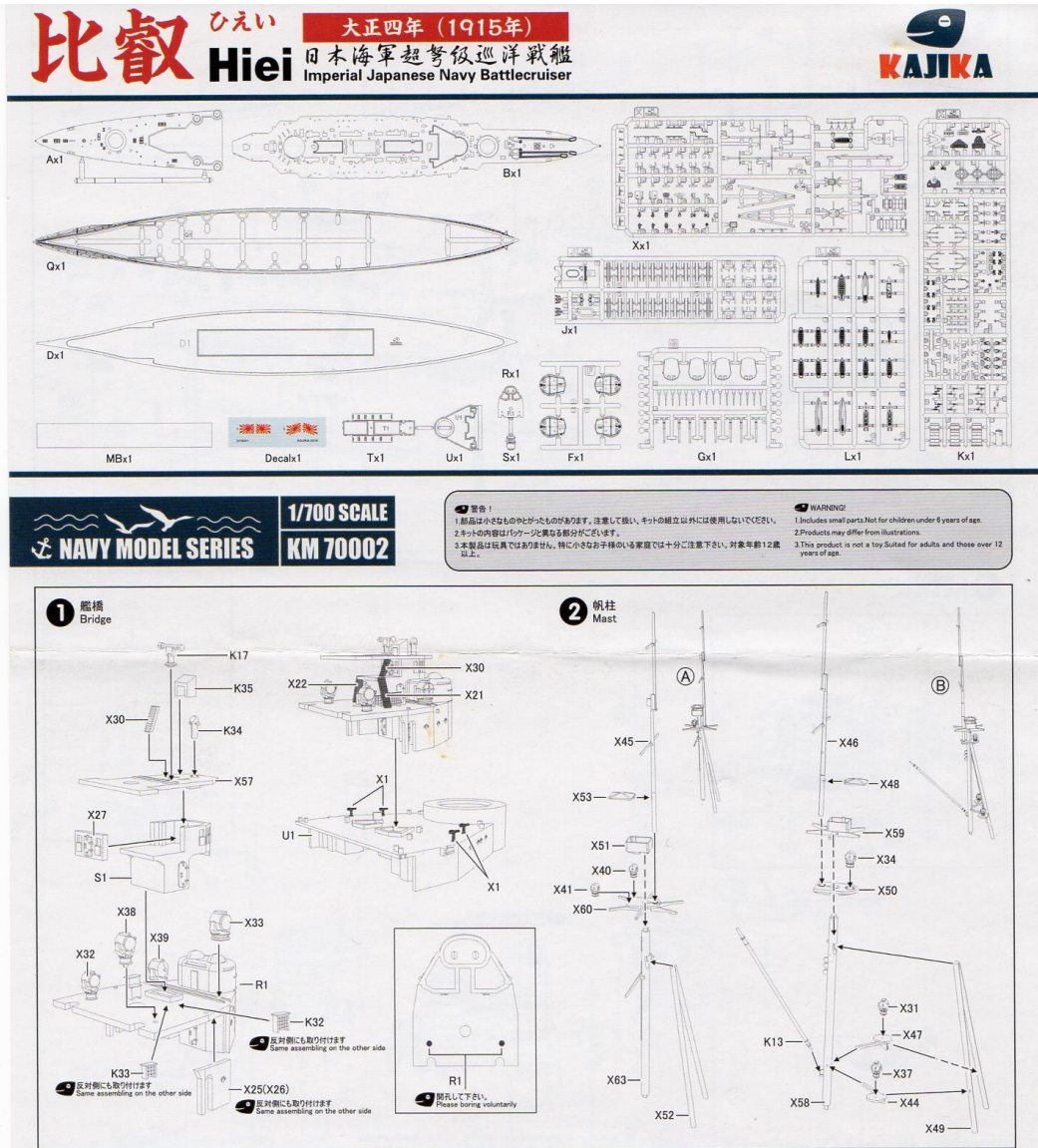
The decals consist of two Japanese naval jacks.

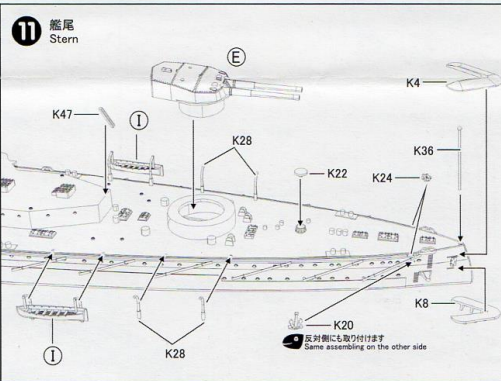
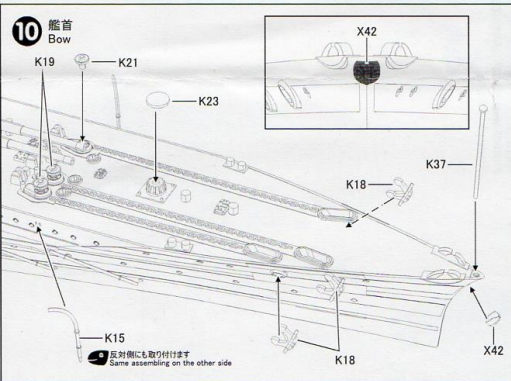
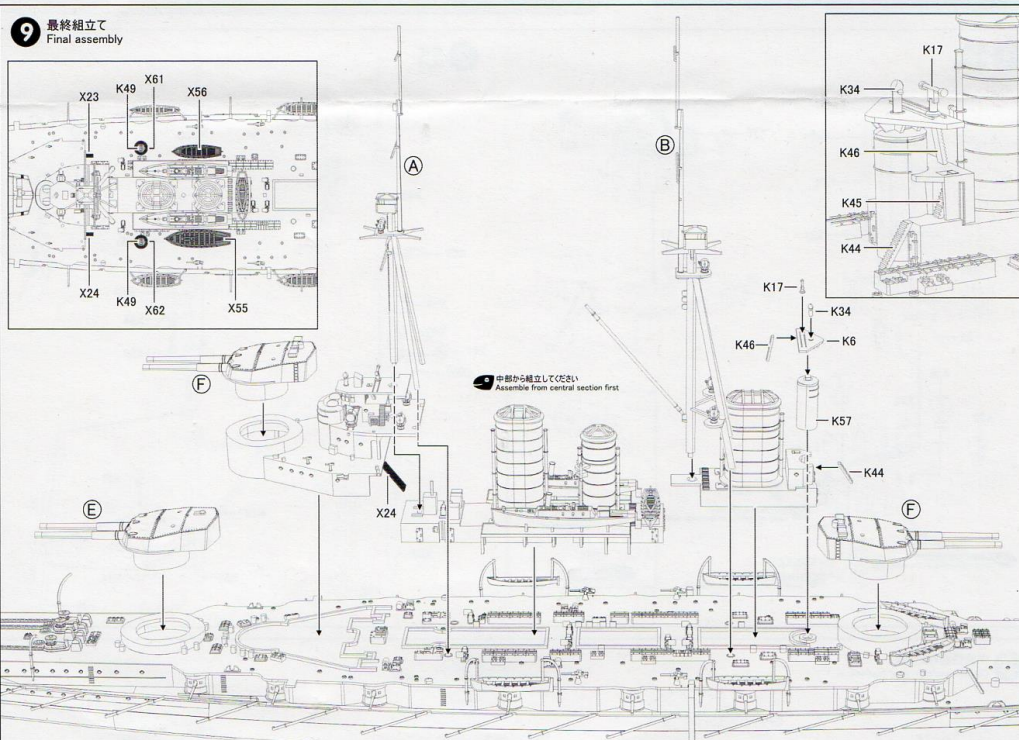
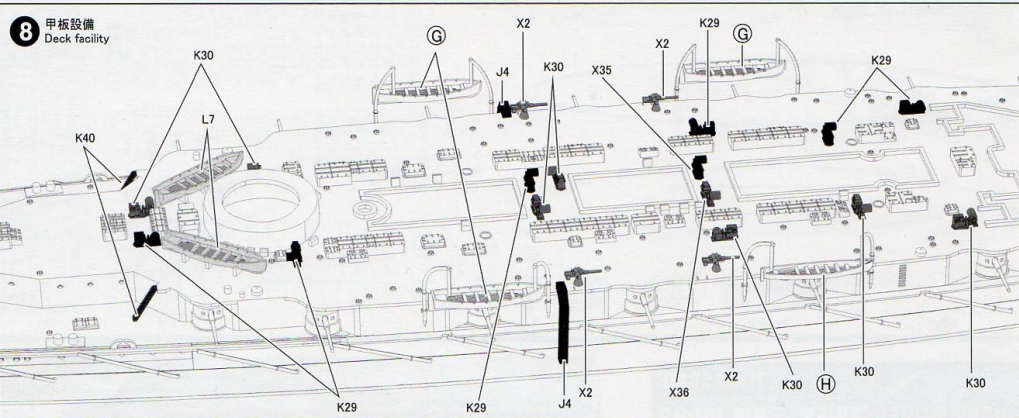
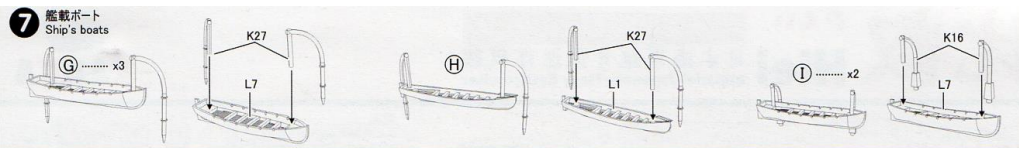


----- Weight and Decals -----

Instructions:

The instructions come on a single large, double-sided full-colour page. They are very clear and comprehensive and feature a drawing showing all the included sprues. Some colour coding is used to assist with the placement of smaller parts; this eliminates a lot of guess work.





----- Instructions -----

Colour scheme:

There is a full-colour diagram of the overall dark grey scheme worn by *Hiei* with references to the Mr. Hobby and Tamiya paint ranges.

	Color	色	Mr.Hobby	Tamiya
	Flat White	フラットホワイト	H 11 62	XF-2
	Hull Red	ハルレッド	H 17 29	XF-9
	Red Brown	レッドブラウン	H 47 41	XF-64
	Gold Leaf	ゴールドリーフ	H 9 9	X-12
	Wooden Tan	ウッドタン	H 27 44	XF-78
	Chrome Silver	クロムシルバー	H 8 8	X-11
	Dim Grey	暗い灰色	H 83 32	XF-53.2 XF-63.1
	Flat black	フラットブラック	H 12 33	XF-1
	Steel	スチール	H 18 28	X-10

塗装とデカールの指示

デカールの使用方法:

1. マークをはさみなどで切り取ります。
2. 切り取ったマークをぬるま湯に10秒ほどひたします。
3. マークは台紙ごと貼りたい位置に移動して、マーク部分のみをスライドさせて下さい。
4. 柔らかい布などでマークをおさえて気泡や水分をとってください。

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Decal Application:

1. Cut the pictures from sheet as needed.
2. Dip the pictures in warm water for about 10 seconds.
3. Hold the picture backing sheet edge and gently slide the picture onto the model.
4. Please move the picture to the proper position on model.
5. Please gently press picture down with a soft cloth until excess water's out and no air bubbles.

----- Colour scheme -----

Overall Impression:

There is not much to add to my impressions of the *Kongo 1914* kit; this is a superb kit that accurately captures *Hiei* as she appeared when first built. Kajika has taken great care to identify the subtle

differences in two ships and made the required changes to their moulds and instructions. The detailing on every part is extremely fine and precise. There are only a few small parts and most modellers will have no trouble with assembly. The build will be very straightforward, each step is well laid out and there are no complex superstructures, multiple anti-aircraft guns, or aircraft to assemble.

The technical level of manufacturing is quite amazing with an outstanding level of detailing. There is absolutely no flash on any of the pieces, no ejection pin markings, and none of those lines that result when two mould halves are used to make a single component. The plastic is quite durable; it stands up to very rough handling without any breakage.

This kit will build into a nice replica right out of the box. The only things that could be added to the kit would be a railing for the stern walk and a rolled up torpedo net for the net shelf, both very minor additions. The stern walk railing is available on the etch set produced by Kajika for this kit.

For those interested in super-detailing or in just making assembly a little easier, Kajika makes the following items specifically for this kit:

- Photo-etch detail set
- Wood Deck
- Deck Mask
- Name Plate
- Anchor chain
- Display base
- Machined brass 14" gun barrels
- Machined brass 6" gun barrels
- Rigging

This is a highly recommended kit and will make a unique addition to any collection. Placing it alongside a model of Hiei after reconstruction will show just how much the ship's appearance changed between her as built state and World War II.

Well done to Kajika for producing this kit of the second *Kongo* to such an incredible level of detail.

References:

- *The Battlecruisers of the Kongo Class* by Hans Lengerer Warship 2012 Conway 2012
- *Battleships of World War I* by Antony Preston. Galahad Books 1972
- *IJN Kongo Battleship 1912-1944 - Profile Warship 12* by Masataka Chihaya and Yasuo Abe. Profile Publications 1971
- *IJN Kongo Class Battleships* by Steve Wiper Classic Warships Publishing 2001
- *Japanese Battleships 1897-1945* by RA Burt. Seaforth Publishing 2015

Review kit courtesy of Flyhawk Models