



Background – Battlecruiser par excellence:

Victory in 1905 over the Russians left the Japanese in possession of the only battle-tested steel-built navy in the world. Crucial to that victory had been the performance of the Japanese fleet in battle against the Russian fleets, particularly at the decisive Battle of Tsushima where the speed advantage of the Japanese battleships and armoured cruisers had given enormous tactical flexibility to the commander of the Japanese Navy, Admiral Togo.

The armoured cruisers were an integral part of the Japanese battle line, being as heavily gunned as the battleships, faster, and only slightly less well protected. They also possessed a large superiority in terms of armament, armour, and speed over contemporary armoured cruisers of the European navies. To maintain that superiority, Japan continued to build ever more powerful armoured cruisers, culminating in the *Kurama* class, laid down in 1905 with 4-12" guns and a speed of 22 knots.

This superiority over potential rivals received a rude shock in 1908 with the appearance of *HMS Invincible*, the world's first battlecruiser. Powered by the new steam turbine technology, she was armed with 8-12" guns and had a speed of 25 knots. All the world's armoured cruisers became obsolete overnight, even those still building in Japan.

The appearance in 1906 of the battleship *HMS Dreadnought* had done the same thing to all the world's battleships, making them obsolete in the face of her 10-12" guns and turbine power which enabled her to reach the unheard of speed for a battleship of 21 knots.

In company with other nations, Japan embarked on an ambitious program of new construction to bring its fleet back on an even footing with the British. The '8-8' program of 1910 was the result, the construction of eight battleships and eight battlecruisers that would restore Japan's battle fleet to a position of dominance in the Western Pacific.

Plans for the battlecruiser went ahead and resulted in a design based on the *Invincible*, carrying two more 12" guns. This design was abruptly shelved with the announcement of the British *Lion* class battlecruisers which would carry 8-13.5" guns and with a speed of 27 knots. Japan was allied with Britain at the time under the terms of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty and realizing the hopelessness of trying to keep pace with new British designs, it was decided to seek the technical co-operation of the British to transform the new battlecruiser into a ship that would be superior to the *Lion*.

Both Vickers and Armstrongs submitted designs with Vickers design being chosen and a contract signed on October 17, 1910 – the ship to be constructed at the Vickers Barrow yard in England. The basic design work was done by the Japanese Naval Construction Department using the Vickers plans as a starting point. The initial design called for 12" guns, but after reviewing Royal Navy ballistic information, it was decided to jump to the 14" gun then under development in the UK.

The *Lion* class carried four main turrets; two forward, one amidships, and one aft. The amidships turret was placed between the boiler rooms which meant that it was between the funnels, severely restricting the arcs of fire. The new Japanese battlecruiser would have the same layout of gun turrets, but the amidships turret was placed *aft* of the boiler rooms, so that it was behind the funnels. This resulted in greatly improved firing arcs. This turret arrangement was also used in *HMS Tiger*, the follow-on battlecruiser to the *Lion* class.

With the basic design complete, the new battlecruiser was laid down at Barrow on January 17, 1911. This would become the *Kongo*. Three sister ships would be built in Japan, using Vickers-supplied armament but with everything else manufactured in Japan. By coincidence or design, the battlecruiser *Princess Royal* of the *Lion* class was also under construction at Barrow and the design teams of each ship kept careful watch over the other, no doubt making notes about the good and bad points of each ship.

Kongo was launched on May 18, 1912 and lay for several months alongside *Princess Royal* while being fitted out. She completed on August 16, 1913 and sailed for Japan on August 28, arriving in Japan on November 5. She would touch 27.5 knots on trials.

Kongo and her three sisters were of an evolutionary design, not a revolutionary one. They did incorporate many improvements over the *Lion* in terms of turret layout, size of main armament and protection, but essentially remained battlecruisers with relatively thin armour plate, particularly on the main decks. It is often written that *Kongo* was the inspiration for *HMS Tiger*, but the reality is that both

ships were being designed at the same time and it is likely that the best features of each ship were incorporated in the other due to the high level of cooperation between Japan and the UK at that time.

Nonetheless, the *Kongo* was a superb ship, equal or superior to the *Lion* class and *HMS Tiger* in every way. In 1915, after the fourth of the *Kongo* class had been completed in Japan, the British Admiralty offered to lease the ships and use them as part of the Grand Fleet. This offer was turned down, reportedly due to the perception that the Japanese taxpayers would not want to see their ships being used for anything other than defence of the homeland. It thus remains one of the great 'What-if's of naval history, the sight of the four *Kongos* swinging into action against the German battlecruisers at Jutland.

Kongo would remain in her as-built configuration until 1917 when a Director Control Tower was mounted atop the foremast and a searchlight tower erected between the first 2 funnels. She would be reconstructed twice, once in the late 20's and again in the mid 30's. She would emerge from the last reconstruction as a fast battleship with upgraded engines and armour plate.

Heavily utilized in the Second World War as a screen for the Japanese fast carrier task forces, *Kongo* operated with the carriers throughout 1942: south of Java, during the Indian Ocean Raid, and at Midway. On the night of October 13-14, 1942, she and sister ship *Haruna* bombarded the US Marine positions on Guadalcanal. 'The Night the Battleships Shelled' has become legendary for its sheer terror and violence with 920 14" shells expended, leaving aircraft and shore installations wrecked or heavily damaged. *Kongo* was also at the Battles of Santa Cruz in October 1942, Philippine Sea in June 1944, and off Samar in October 1944 where she engaged the US escort carriers of Task Unit 77.4.3.

Returning home to Japan after the Battle off Samar, she was torpedoed and sunk in the Formosa Straits by the submarine *USS Sealion II* on 21 November 1944.

The Kit:

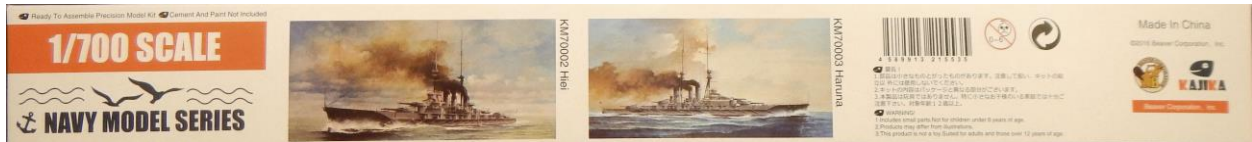
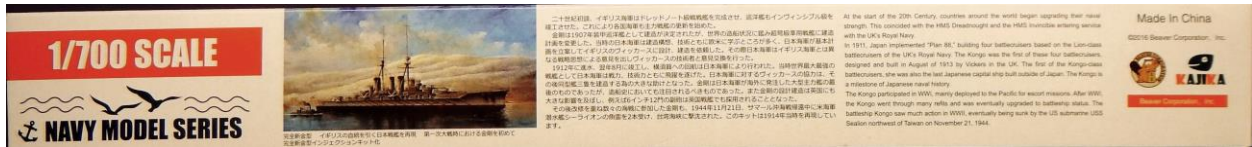
This features *Kongo* as built and how she appeared from 1914 to 1917.

Packaging:

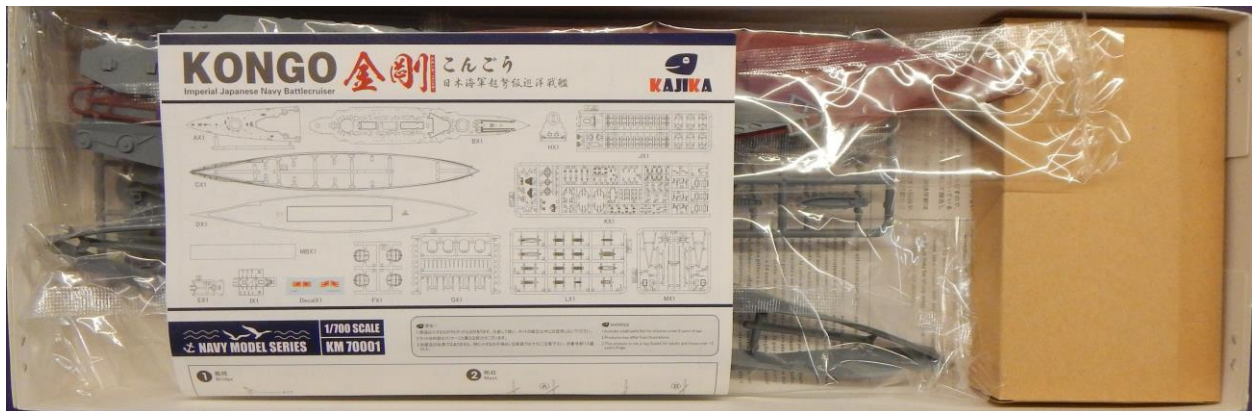
The kit comes in a well-constructed box featuring a quiet painting of *Kongo* lying motionless, perhaps in readiness to sail. Inside the main box is a smaller box containing the sprue for the masts, along with all the other kit components.

The sides of the box contain a condensed ship's history and previews of upcoming kits of *Hiei* and *Haruna*, also in their as-built configurations.

The kit comprises 276 parts on eight sprues with all parts moulded in medium grey and individually sealed in plastic bags. The hull, waterline plate, forecastle deck, quarterdeck, and waterline plate are single pieces not attached to any sprue. There is no photo-etch.



----- Box Art -----



----- Contents of box showing the internal box for the masts -----

Hull:

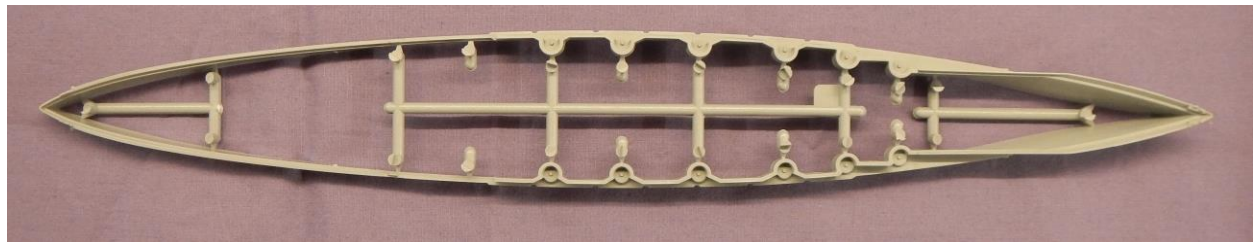
The starboard and port hull sides are in one piece and scale out just four feet short of the actual length of 705 feet. There is just a waterline plate – no lower hull is included.

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.



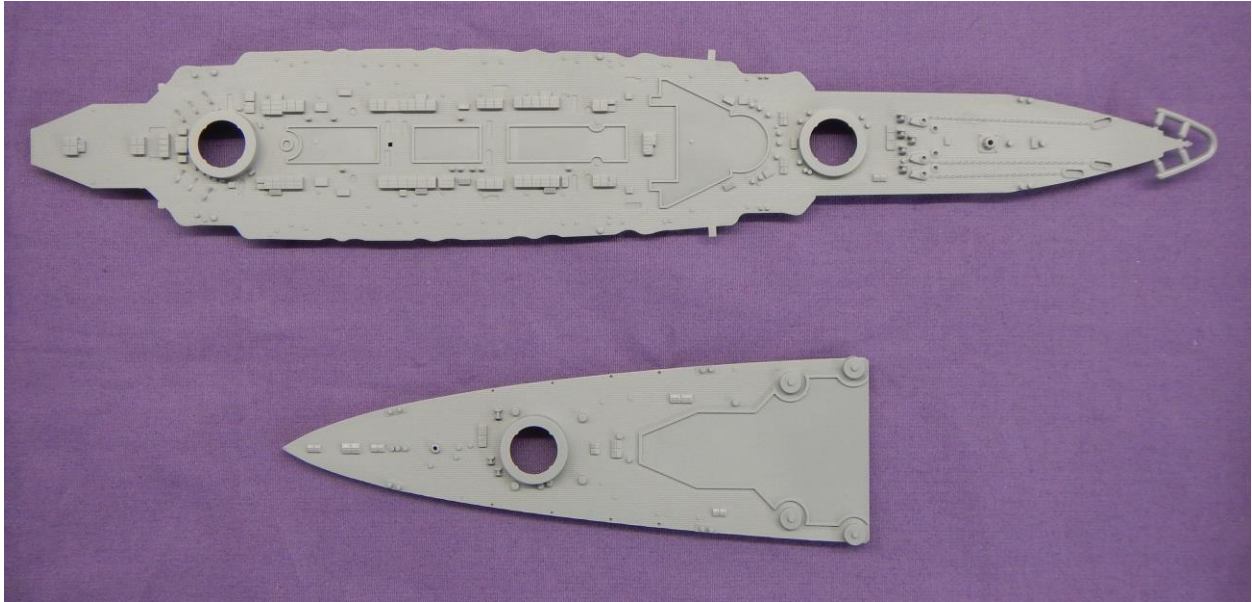
----- Hull and waterline plate -----



----- 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.

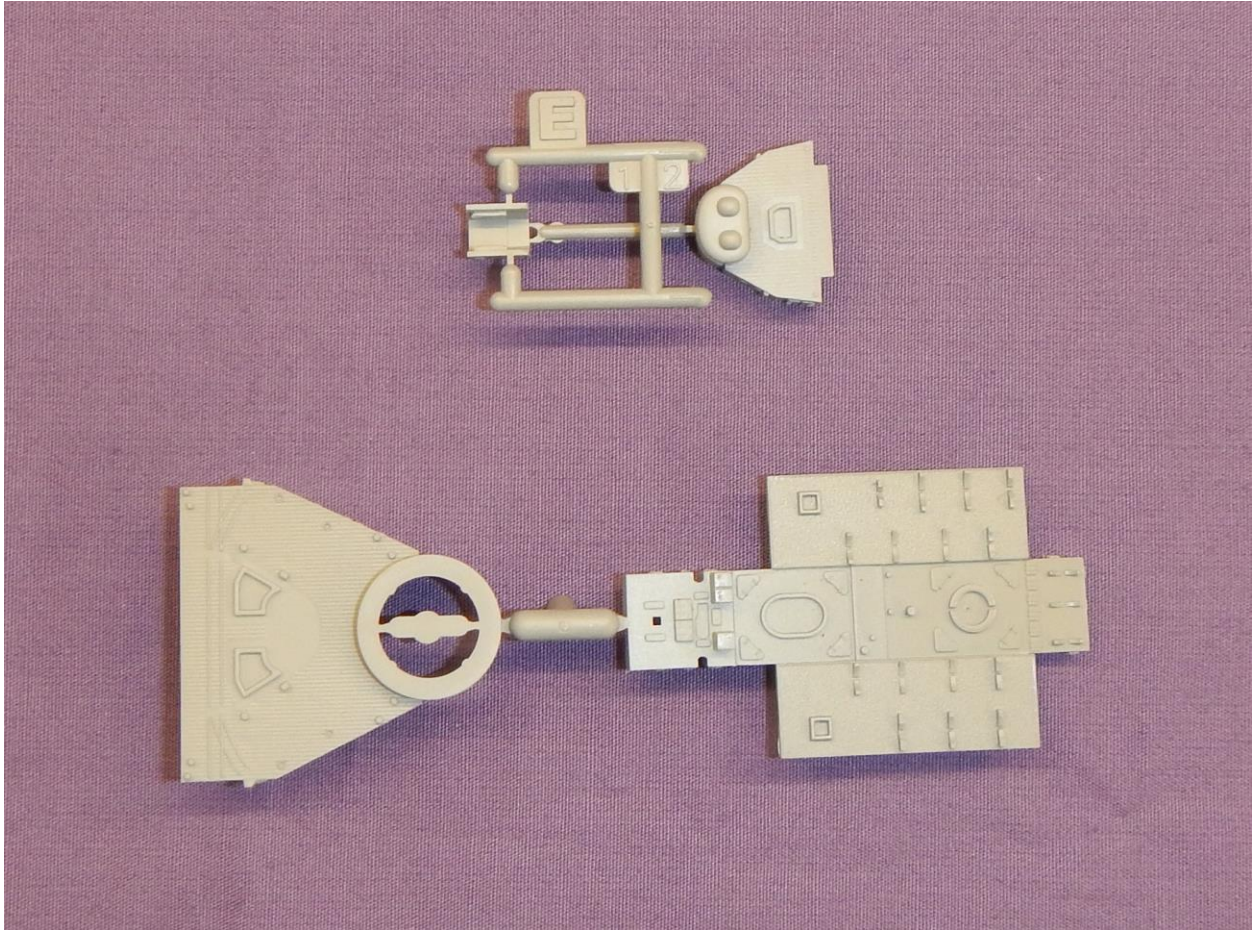


----- Forecastle deck (above) and quarterdeck (below) -----

Superstructure:

As might be expected with a World War One battlecruiser, there is minimal superstructure: bridge, amidships boat deck and funnel casings. The bridge is made up from five 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.



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

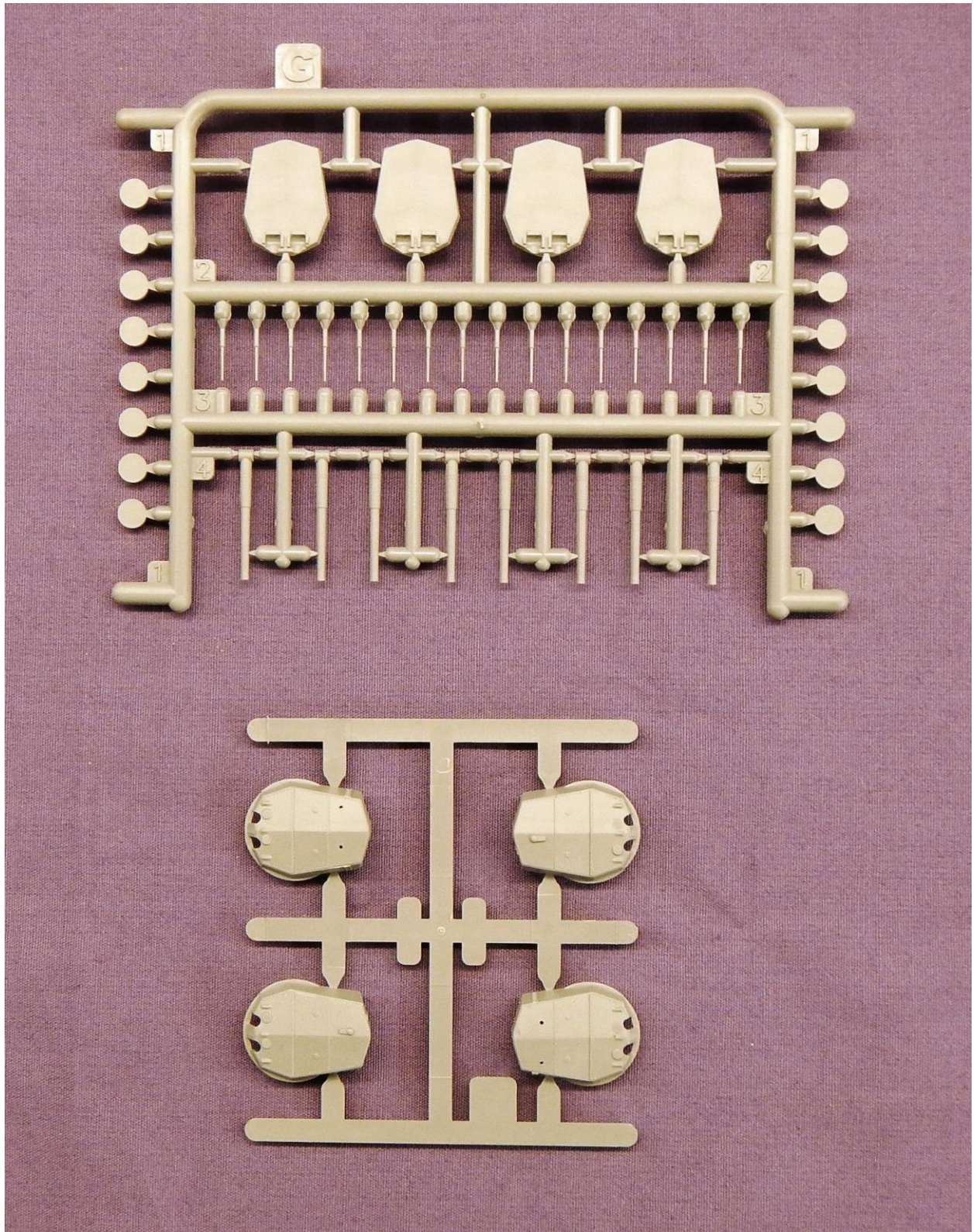
Weapons:

Kongo was fitted with 8-14"/45, 16-6"/50, 8-14pdr, 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 two types of smaller guns feature plenty of raised detail.

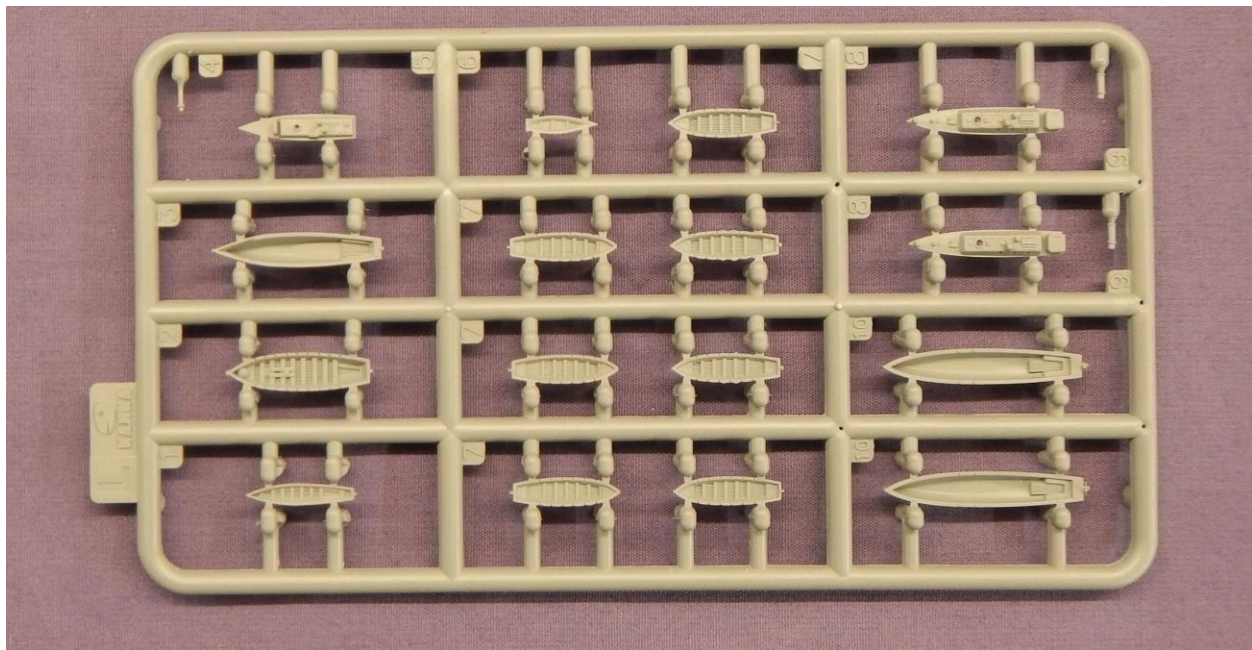


----- 14" and 6" gun turrets and barrels -----

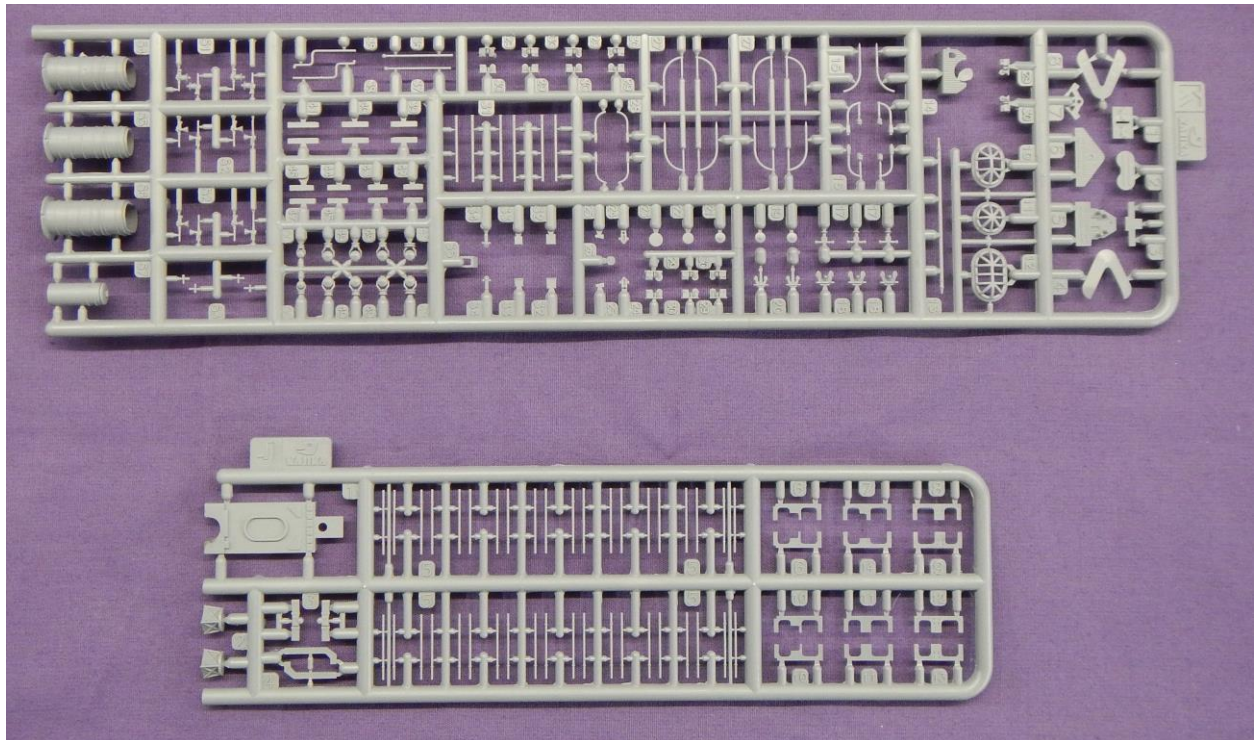
Boats and Fittings:

There are ten 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.



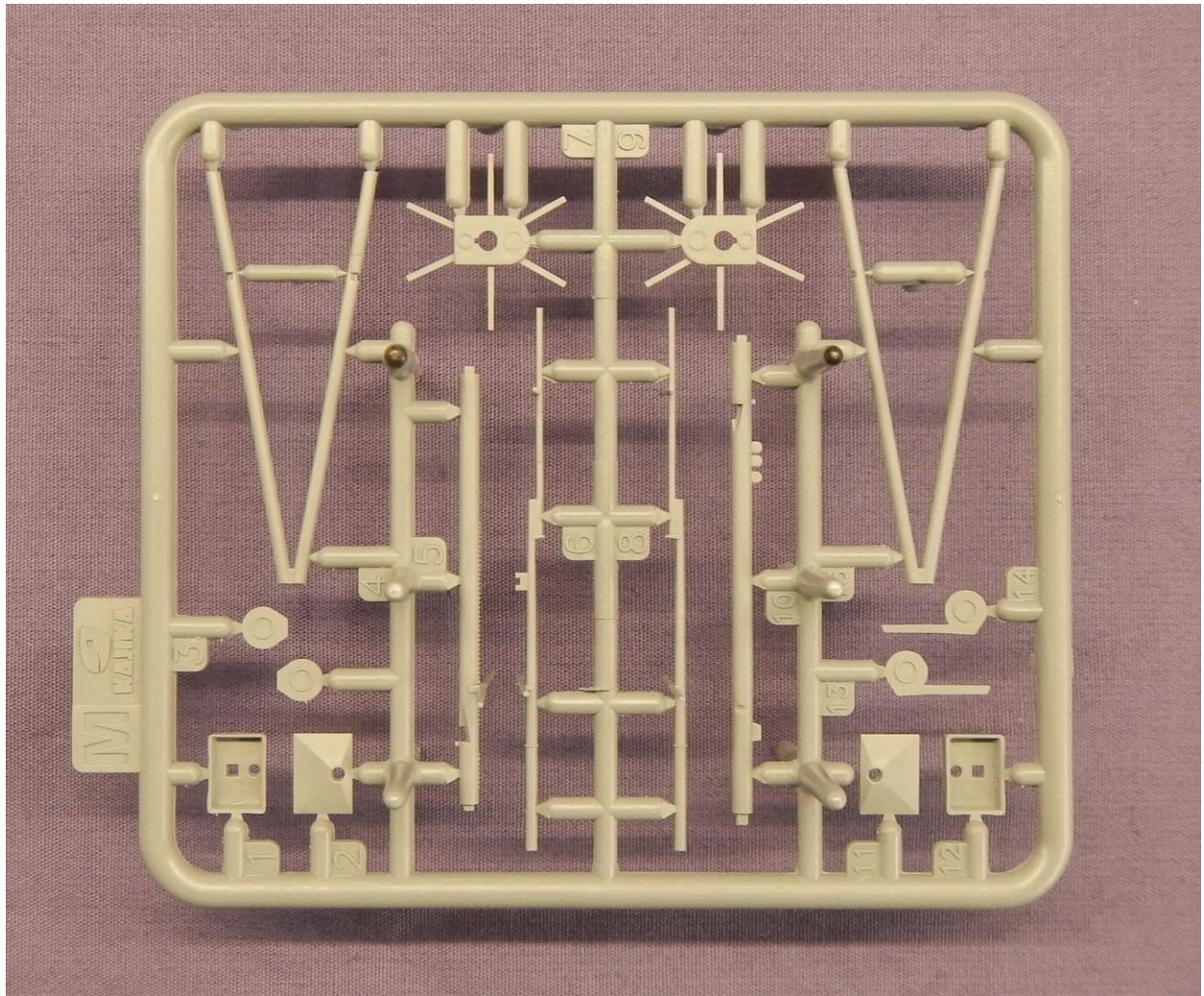
----- Boats -----



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

Masts:

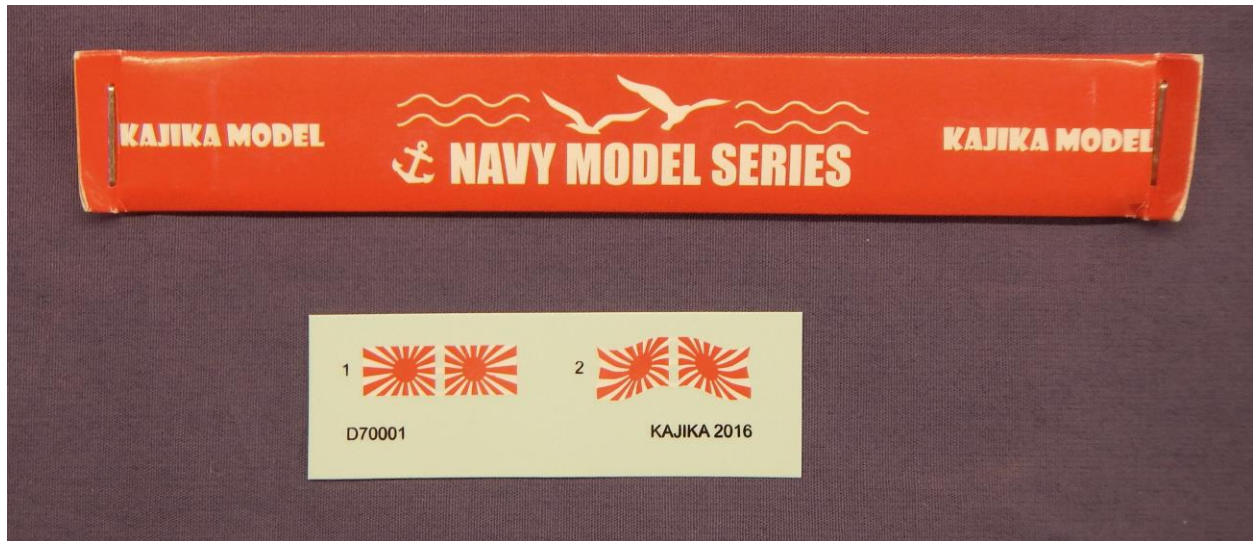
The masts and tripod supports come on their own sprue and are packaged separately in their own box. They are extremely thin and well detailed. The foremast has finely detailed rungs and the mainmast has attach points for the boom of the boat crane. The yards are already fitted to the topmasts. Each mast has a starfish and control position made up of separate parts.



----- *Masts* -----

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. My kit came with a revision slip for the fitting of the platform supports for the boat deck as some parts were misidentified on the instructions.

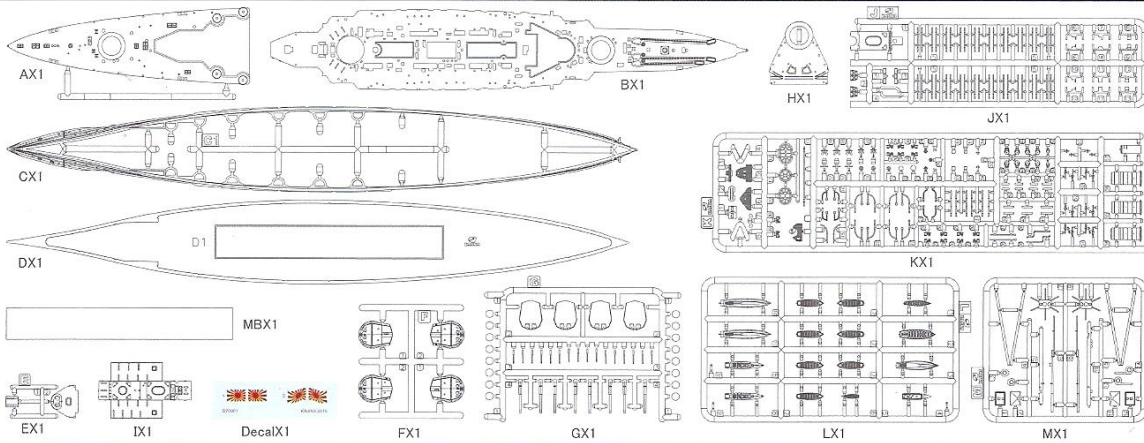
KONGO

Imperial Japanese Navy Battlecruiser

金剛

こんごり

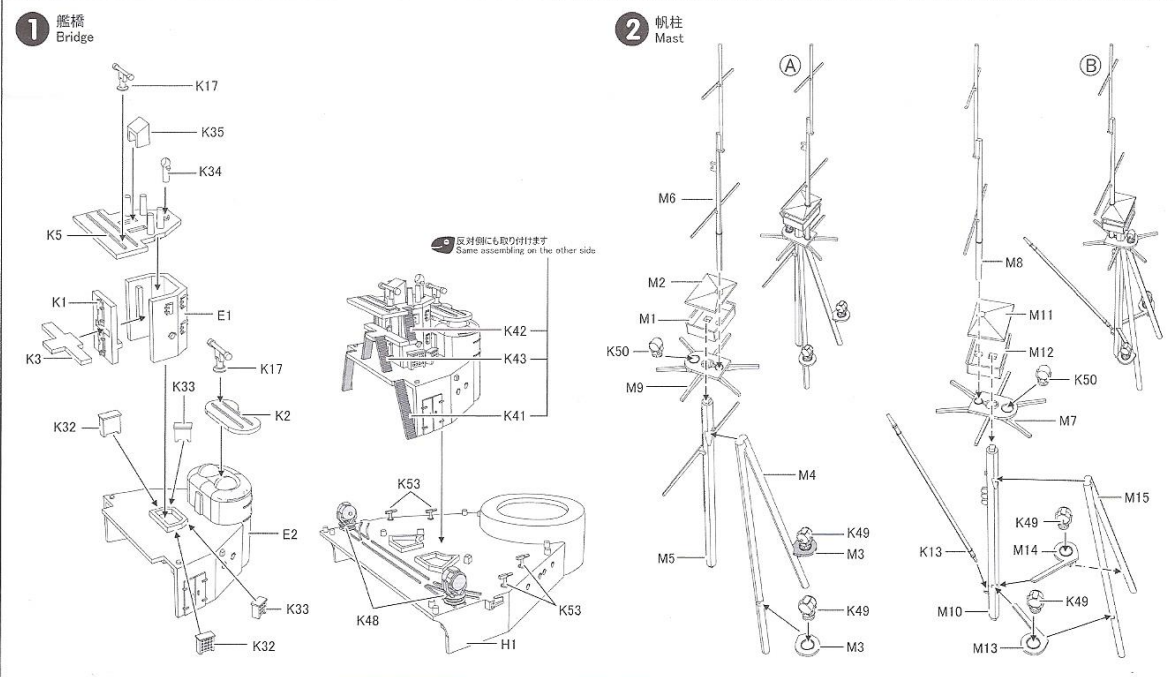
日本海軍超弩級巡洋戦艦



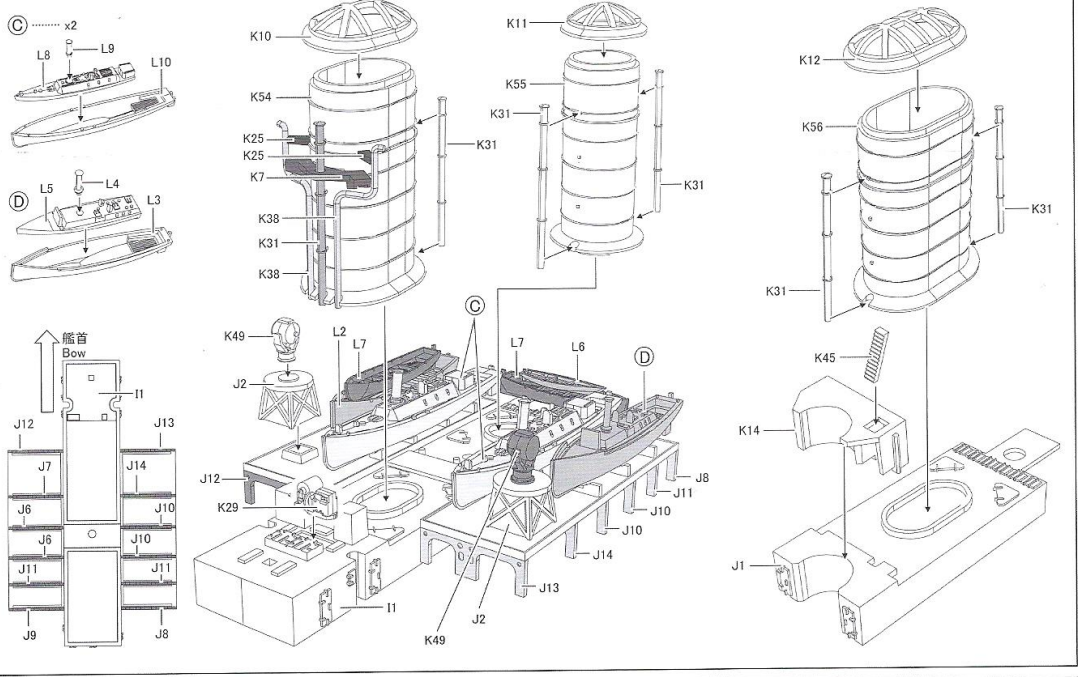
NAVY MODEL SERIES 1/700 SCALE KM 70001

警告!
 1. 部品は小さなものやとがたものがあります。注意して扱い、キットの組立以外には使用しないでください。
 2. キットの内容はパッケージと異なる部分がございます。
 3. 本製品は玩具ではありません。特に小さなお子様がいる家庭では十分ご注意ください。対象年齢12歳以上。

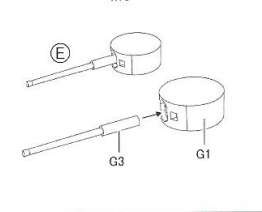
WARNING!
 1. Includes small parts. Not for children under 6 years of age.
 2. Products may differ from illustrations.
 3. This product is not a toy. Suited for adults and those over 12 years of age.



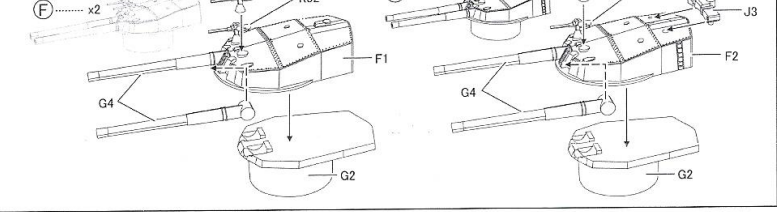
3 中央構造物と煙突
Center portion and Funnel



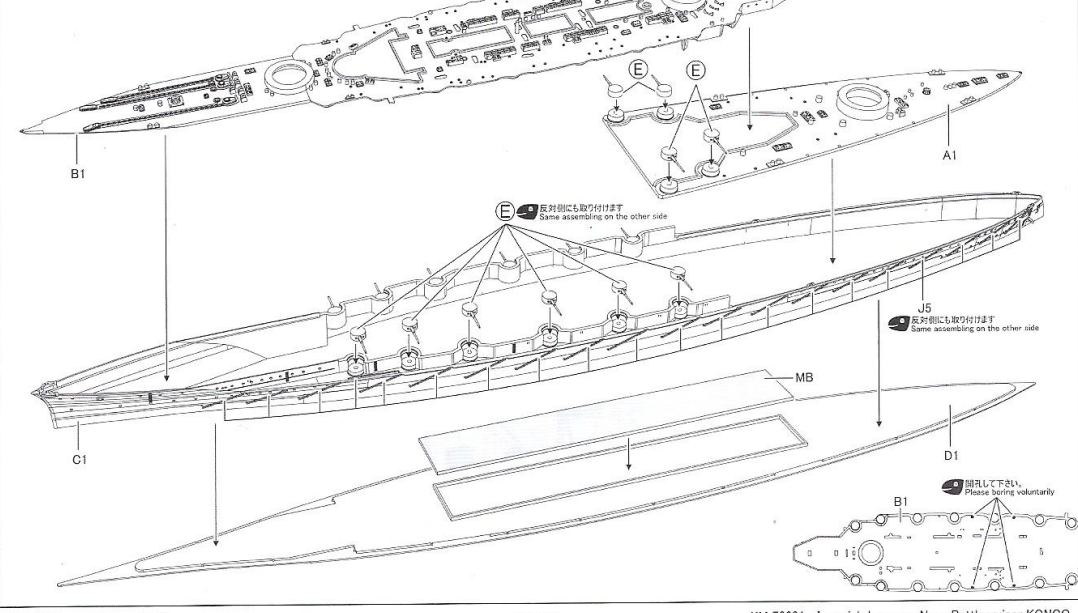
4 副砲
Secondary guns
..... x16

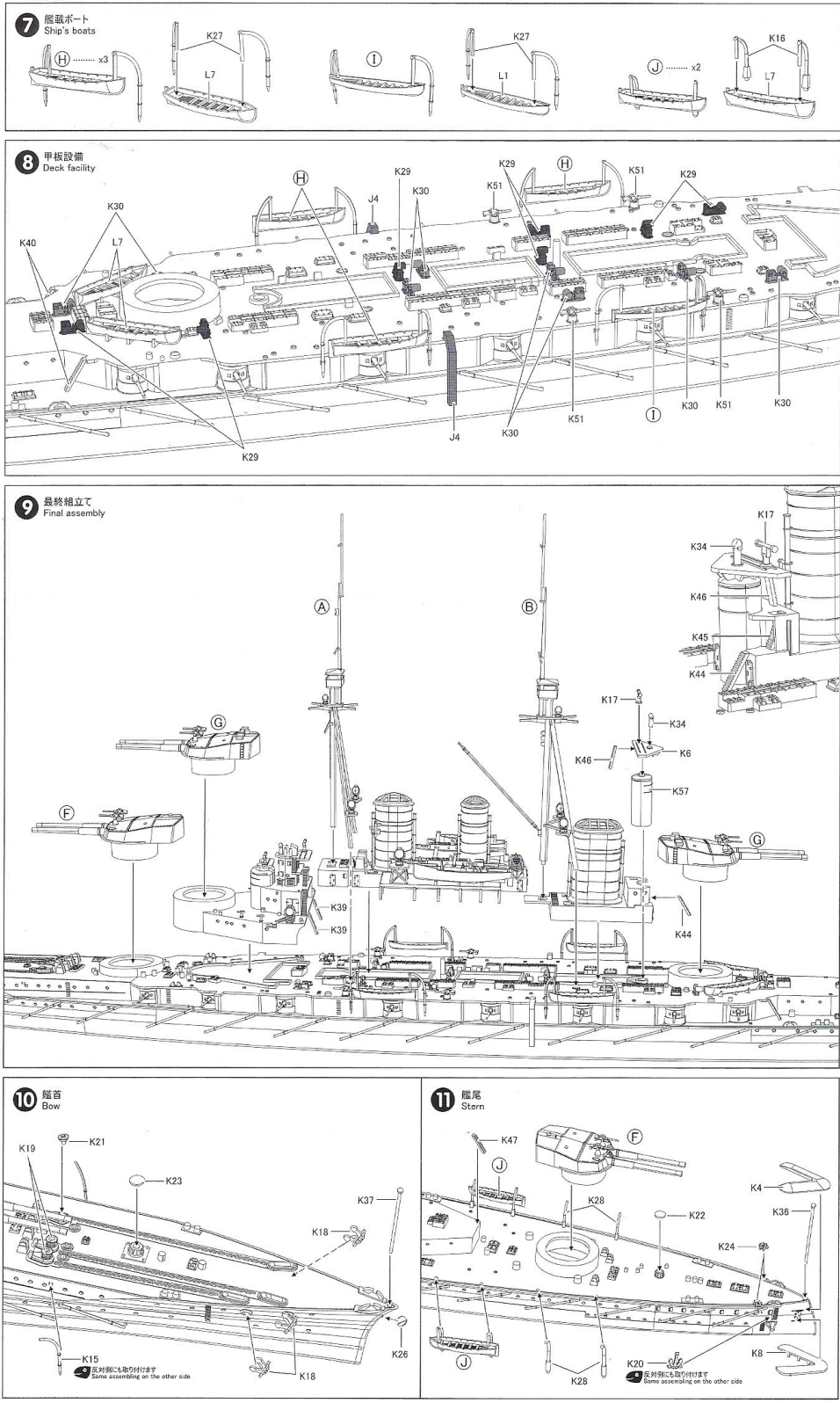


5 主砲
Main gun turrets
..... x2



6 艦体
Hull





----- Instructions -----

訂正 REVISE

ご迷惑をおかけ致しまして、誠に申し訳ございませんでした。
We sincerely apologize for everything that makes you feel inconvenient

KAJIKA
KM 70001

----- Revision Slip -----

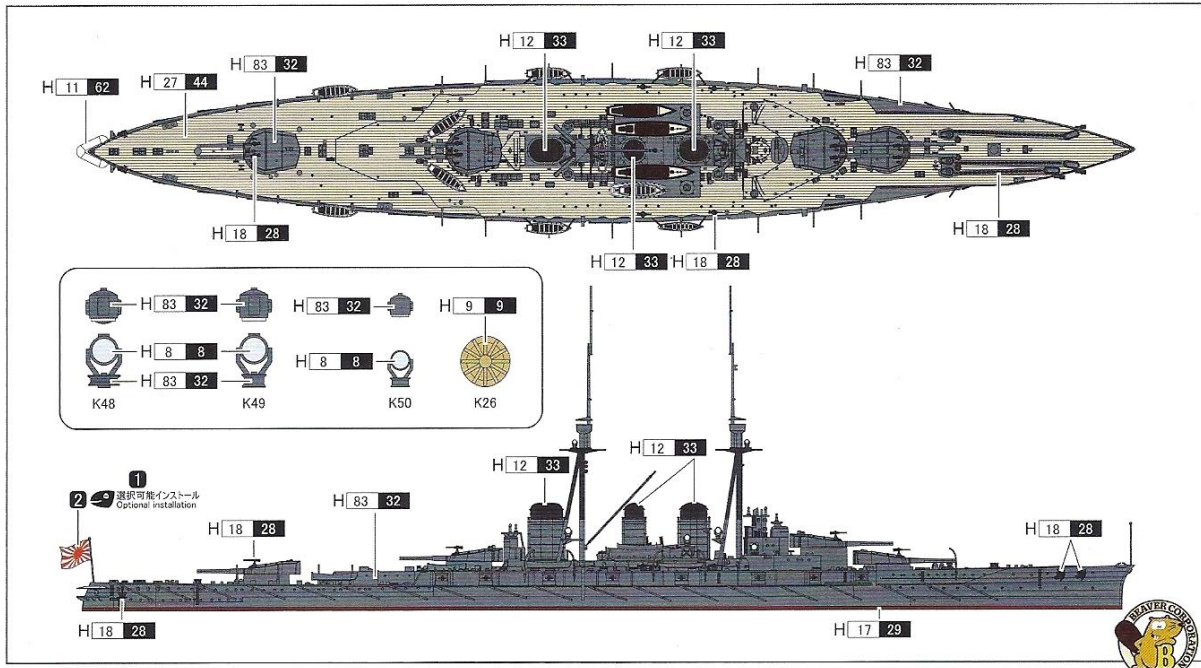
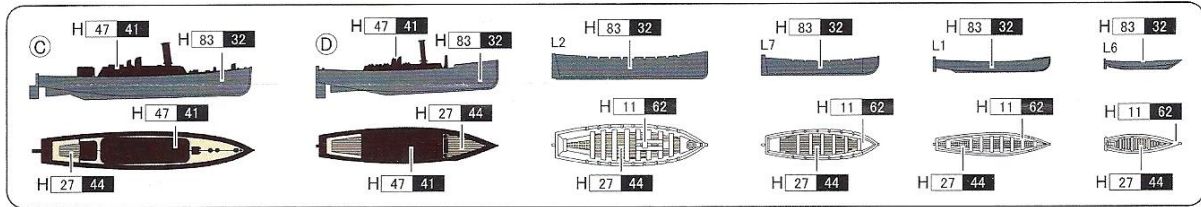
Colour scheme:

There is a full-colour diagram of the overall dark grey scheme worn by *Kongo* 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。

PAINTING & MARKING GUIDE
 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.



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KAJIKI

KM 70001 Imperial Japanese Navy Battlecruiser KONGO

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

Overall Impression:

This is a superb kit that accurately captures *Kongo* as she appeared when first built. It matches up very well with the drawings and photos in my various reference books. 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.

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

- Deck Mask
- Machined brass 14" gun barrels
- Machined brass 6" gun barrels
- Nameplate
- Photo-etch detail set
- Rigging
- Wood deck

This is a highly recommended kit and will make a unique addition to any collection. It will look great alongside a model of *Kongo* after one of her reconstructions, or beside one of her contemporary battlecruisers such as *HMS Tiger*, *HMS Princess Royal*, or *Derfflinger*.

Congratulations to Kajika for producing such an incredible kit of this very important ship for their first ship release.

References:

- *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
- *Japanese Battleships 1897-1945* by RA Burt. Seaforth Publishing 2015

Review kit courtesy of Flyhawk Models