

# 1/72 scale Tamiya “Silver Plate” KI-61 Tony

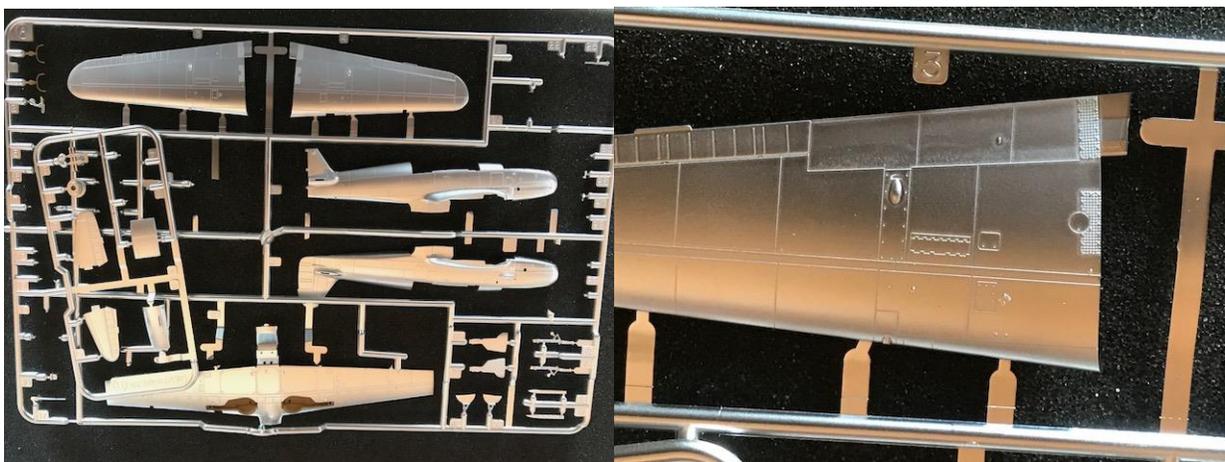
Tamiya has come out with several excellent 1/48 scale kits lately, but just last month, they released the new 1/72 scale KI-61 Tony Japanese Army fighter. Along with the regular KI-61 kit, they also released a special edition of this new kit with silver plating and special camouflaged decals with markings representing the aircraft of fighter ace Lt. Shinzo Takashima of the 244 Air Group in Japan, 1945.



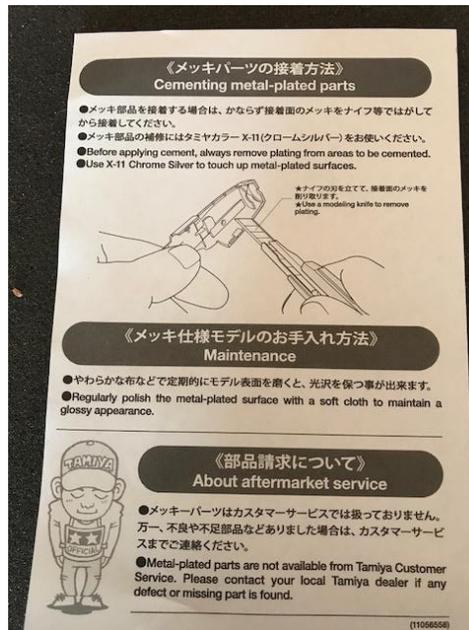
Many of the Japanese army (IJA) aircraft had a natural metal finish with field applied camouflaged of wavy lines or blotches of various colors of green paint.

The silver plating and camo decals represent something new for model kits, at least for an aircraft model, and the quality of the plating and decals in this kit is very high.

It comes with 2 silver plated sprues and one clear sprue, two sheets of decals and a special instruction sheet for the assembly of the “silver plate” edition.



One document in the kit is a special instruction sheet for “cementing the metal plated parts” they also say if you are missing any plated parts – your out of luck. I guess there may not be many of these plated kits available?



Tamiya’s newer kits are known for their excellent fit and detail and this new KI-61 is no different. The cockpit interior is a detailed gem with over 10 individual parts that make up the cockpit tub. The assembly slides right into the bottom of the fuselage. The alignment of all the parts is perfect so that no seam filler is needed.

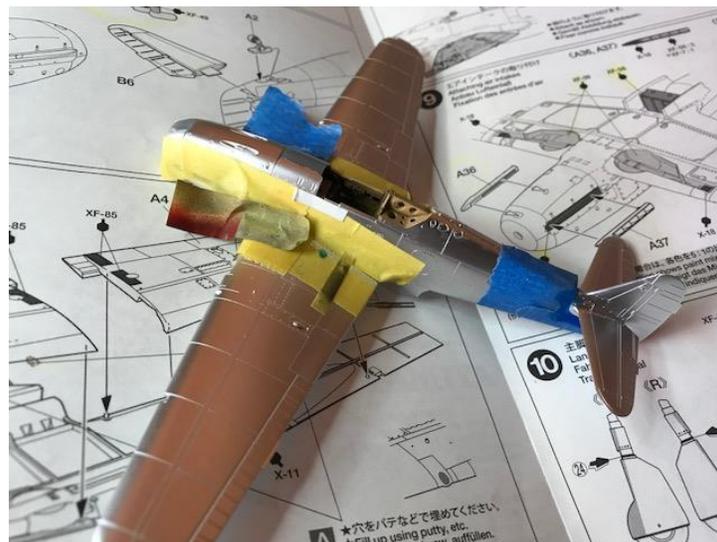


The silver plating is very durable and holds up to handling, cleaners, glue, and solvents. In fact, you need to scrape off the plating on the mating surfaces before you can glue them together.

The plating also creates a few challenges to the build process. Despite the unique alignment of the fuselage halves, the seams on the top and bottom of the model require sanding and removal of the plating. This requires repainting of these areas – I used AlClad polished aluminum, and the match was very good.



The decals are excellent and cover all the camouflaged upper surfaces. The only areas that need painting are the black anti-glare panel, propeller, and the red tail (along with various small parts and the interior). The instructions seem to say you need to use enamel paint to cover the silver plating, however, I used acrylic paint and had no issues and the durability was good after coating with a layer of clear coat.

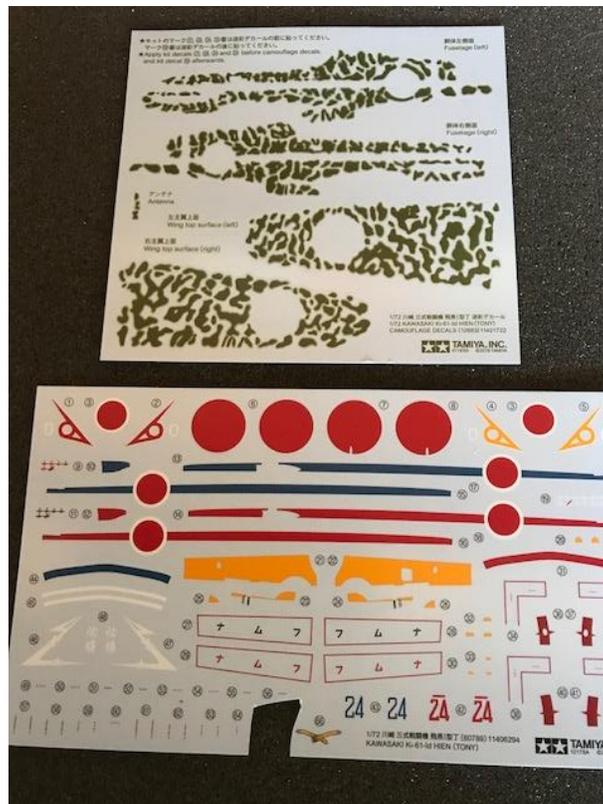


Masking over the plating was no problem and caused no issues with damaging the coating. I decided to paint the hinomarus thinking that the two layers of decals would be too thick especially with the experience I have had in the past with Tamiya decals. However, this was not necessary as the decals are thin and laid over each other very well (there are several decals that overlay the camo decals – making two layers of decals).



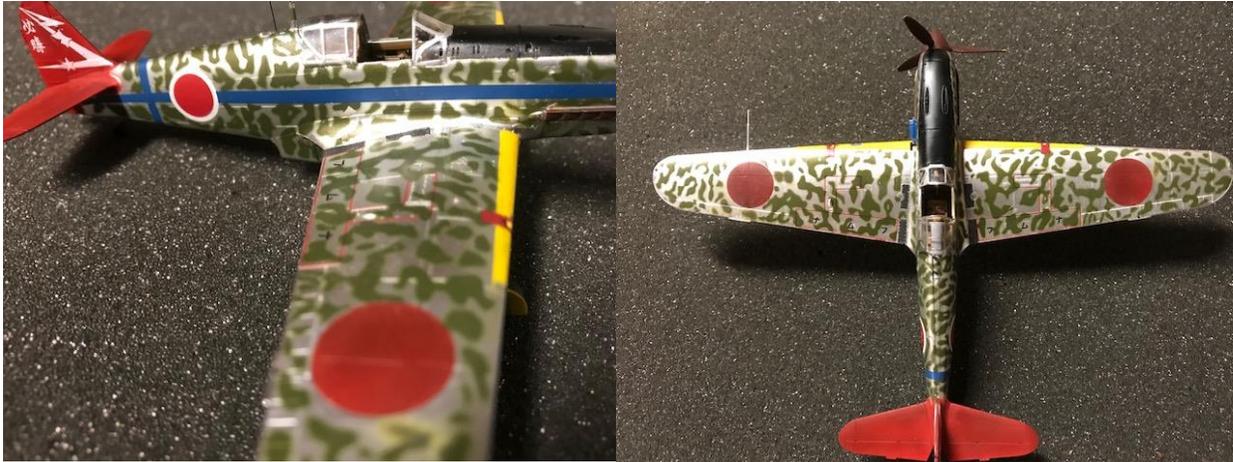
Painted areas completed – ready for decals

As I said, the camouflaged decals are something new for me, but painting the field applied type Japanese camo is hard to do in 1/72 scale, so the decals are a nice alternative.



Camo decals on top, aircraft markings below

I was concerned that the decals would look strange when applied as they cover the entire wing and fuselage and the clear carrier film covers most of the good looking silver plating. However, they look good and I was surprised that the carrier film is invisible after drying. The camo decals are a little hard to apply because they are so big. You must be very careful to get them in the right place before they set up (working time is not long and alignment is critical as the green patches overlap on the sides, top and wing root). They are very accurate, and the fit is good. The decals are a little delicate so be careful with masking tape or rough handling (Yes, I ripped off a small part of the decal on the left wing and I had to paint the missing green patches).



Conclusion: This kit is a pleasure to build, but you must plan your assembly and painting carefully to minimize damage the silver plating. The decals are great, but also require a lot of care when applying them. One drawback is the closed canopy that hides the detail of the cockpit (I cut mine open and Vac-U-Formed a new center section). The overall effect is impressive in this small scale – I highly recommend this kit.

