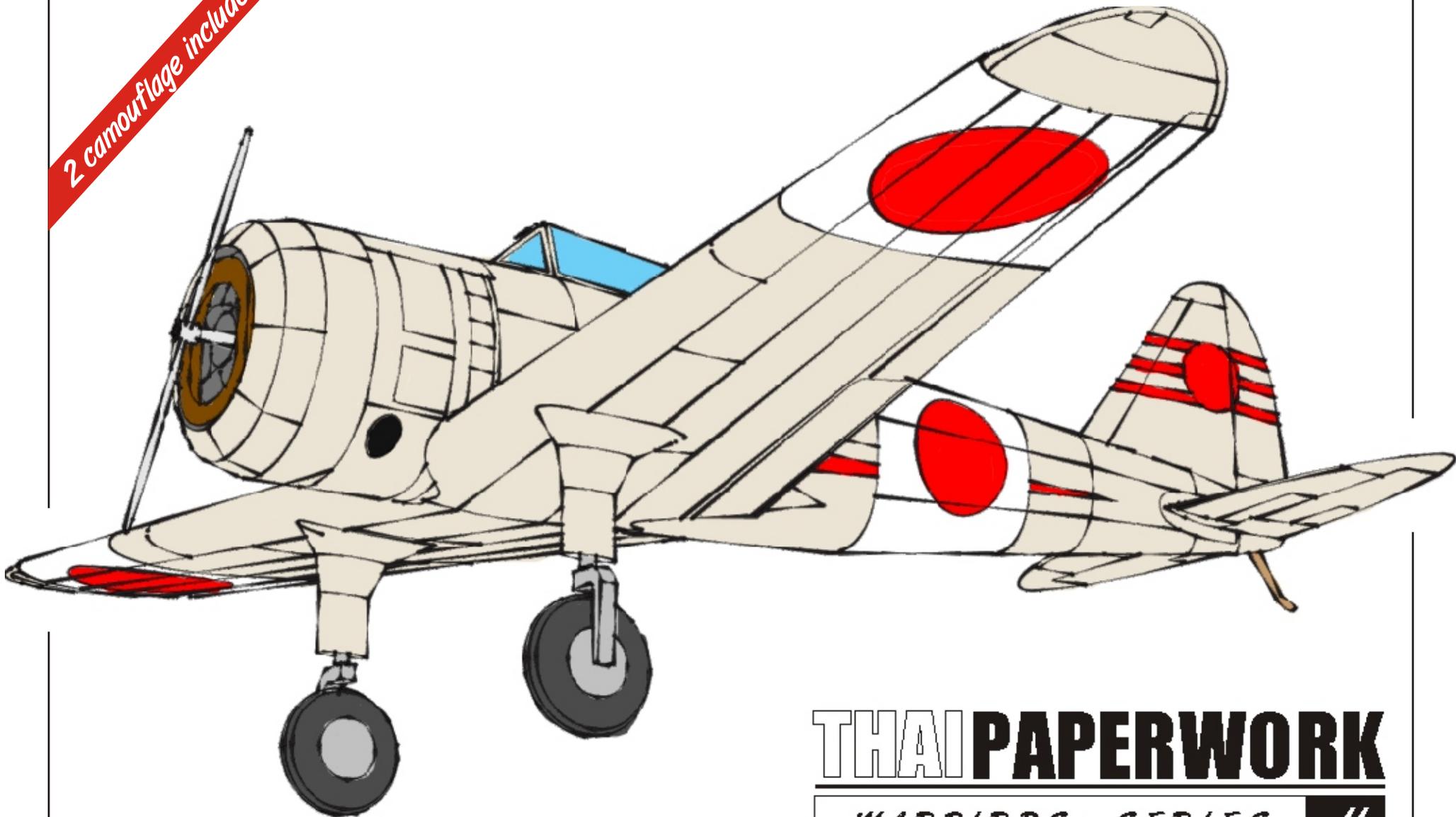


NAKAJIMA KI-27 "Nate"

2 camouflage include



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While the Japanese Aviation industry had acquired a reputation for copying rather than designing, by the mid 1930s they were in fact one of the leaders in moving away from the fabric skinned wire braced biplane. However, certain pilot requirements remained: agility and the ability to perform close in high-g maneuvering combat was of supreme importance to Army pilots, who also had a reluctance to give up their open cockpit.

Fortunately for the Imperial Army Air Force, the newest army fighter, the Nakajima Type 97 was one of the most maneuverable monoplane fighters to reach front line status. The Nakajima Ki 27 type 97 Nate raised Japanese aviation to and in many respects surpassed world standards. A fact that seemed to have been lost on Western aviation experts.

Designed and flown for the first time in 1936 ten service evaluation examples of the Nate were built through December of 1937. Delighted with their new fighter, in March of 1938 three of the initial production aircraft, Ki 27 Kō's, powered by the improved Ha-I-Otsu engine rated at 710 hp at take off and 780 hp at 780 hp at 9,515 feet, were sent to China with the 1st Chutai of the 2nd Hiko-Daitai (Air Battalion) which had been in continuous service in China for almost a year.

The first recorded mission of the Ki 27 Nate in China was on 10 April when Capt Tateo Kato, CO of the 1st Chutai shot down three Chinese piloted Russian built I-15s. Lack of both training and aircraft aerial warfare against the Chinese did little to test the Army's new fighter. However, on 11 May 1939 a force of Mongolian cavalry crossed the Khalkhin River into Mongolia, precipitating what the Japanese would call the "Nomonhan Incident", a full scale war between the Japanese Army and the Soviet Union.

The war in the air between the Soviet Air Force and the Japanese Army Air Force was a decided victory for the Japanese. Because of superior training, superior aircraft, and certainly because of the battle experience gained during their months of combat in China, Japanese fighters shot down Russian I-16s, I-152s and I-153s by the droves. However, the war on the ground was a disaster for the Japanese Army. Soviet tanks and infantry stopped the Japanese invasion force cold, and then proceeded to roll them up.

While the Ki-27 proved itself to be far superior to Soviet aircraft a number of serious problems were brought to light. Because of its superior level speed and diving ability the Russian I-16 had been able to break off combat at will, and the heavier larger caliber weapons equipping the Russian aircraft had been very effective while the Japanese 7.7 mm machine guns had become less effective as pilot armor was introduced on Russian aircraft.

Data for Ki-27a

Crew: 1, engine: 1 x Nakajima Ha-1b, 529kW, wingspan: 11.31m, length: 7.53m, height: 3.25m, wing area: 18.55m², start mass: 1790kg, empty mass: 1110kg, max speed: 470kph, ceiling: 12250m, range w/max.fuel: 625km, armament: 2 x 7.7mm Mgs



