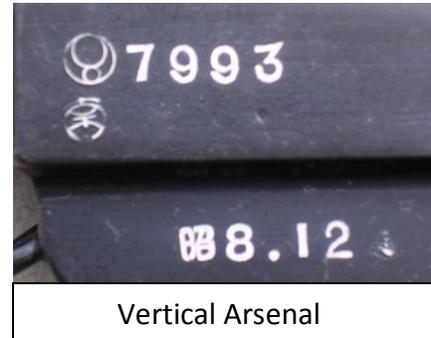


## Early Kokubunji Factory Type 14 Nambu Arsenal Mark Changes: The Rare “8-Date Nagoya Only” and “Vertical Arsenal” Variations

By Dan Larkin

One of the most recognizable Type 14 Nambu arsenal mark variations is the rare and highly-prized “Vertical Arsenal” produced at the private Kokubunji Factory. They are easily identified by the vertical placement of the two arsenal symbols preceding the serial number (see image to right). Vertical Arsenal variation examples are only found in the 8.12- to 9.2-date code range (1933.December to 1934.February) over a span of approximately 600 numbers.<sup>i</sup> A total of 22 Vertical Arsenal specimens have been reported by collectors. Vertical Arsenal guns all carry a high value premium based on their scarcity and desirability.

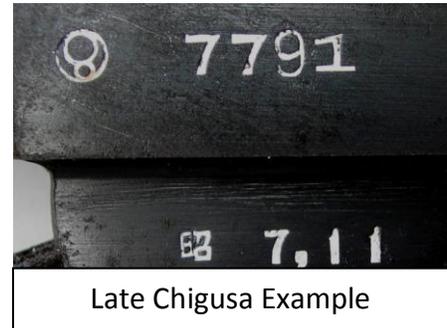


There is another little known and even rarer Kokubunji Factory arsenal mark variation which precedes the Vertical Arsenal variation. It is termed by collectors as the “8-Date Nagoya Only” due to the single arsenal mark preceding the serial number (see image to right). These examples are only dated 8.12 (1933.December) and have a known span of 61 numbers (assuming no overlap). This very low production amount makes them possibly the rarest arsenal mark variation to be found in all of Type 14 Nambu production. Only five 8-Date Nagoya Only specimens have been reported by collectors. The value premium for these very rare guns is significant.



The 8-Date Nagoya Only variation carries the earlier symbol of the Nagoya Army Arsenal, Chigusa Factory. Serialization of the Kokubunji Factory also follows the Chigusa Factory numbering sequence. The high reported Chigusa Factory-produced Type 14 is 7824 dated 7,11 (1932,November), and the low reported Kokubunji Factory-produced Type 14 is 7835. It is theorized that, when General Kijiro Nambu’s Nambu Rifle Manufacturing Company (renamed Chuo Kogyo Co., Ltd. in 1936) obtained a manufacturing contract for the Type 14 pistol, the Chigusa Factory numbering sequence was ordered to be continued at the company’s Kokubunji Factory, and manufacturing equipment and possibly gun parts from the Chigusa Factory were transferred to Kokubunji.<sup>ii</sup>

For unknown reasons, the initial pistols produced by the Kokubunji Factory were marked with the Nagoya Army Arsenal symbol alone (⊙). These factors initially confused collectors as to the 8-Date Nagoya Only variation's actual production heritage – The first reported specimens were originally thought to be Chigusa production. It took several years of collectors comparing notes when these rare examples surfaced to determine their origin. Compare this image of a very late Chigusa Factory example to the markings from the 8-Date Nagoya Only example to see the differences. The almost one year date lag, number die size and style differences, redesigned parts, and differing part inspection marks prove their separate origins.



Late Chigusa Example

The collector-reported 8-Date Nagoya Only variation serialization range is 7835 to 7895. In that span of 61 numbers, the five known examples are 7835, 7843, 7844, 7864, and 7895. With the high reported Chigusa Factory 7,11-date example, 7824, and the low reported Vertical Arsenal-marked example, 7910, there could possibly be 85 guns produced with the 8-Date Nagoya Only variation mark (assuming no overlap). Again, the 8-Date Nagoya Only variation is very rare.

The collector-termed “Vertical Arsenal” variation was created in 8.12 (1933.December) when a second arsenal mark (⊙) symbolizing the Nambu Rifle Manufacturing Company's Kokubunji Factory was added directly below the initial mark. The Vertical Arsenal variation's collector-reported serialization is 7910 (8.12-date) to 8479 (9.2-date). That span of 570 numbers and 22 reported examples also spans three monthly date codes: (8.12-date) 7910, 7993, 8000, 8017; (9.1-date) 8035, 8068, 8104, 8121, 8152, 8179, 8194, 8258, 8289, 8291, 8296, 8305; (9.2-date) 8367, 8414, 8415, 8420, 8478, 8479. The low observed gun with the finalized horizontal markings is 8528 (9.2-date). So, using the high 8-Date Nagoya Only example, there could be up to 632 guns in the Vertical Arsenal sequence (assuming no overlap). Only one example with confirmed horizontal markings has been reported within the Vertical Arsenal serial range.

Two months after the introduction of the mark symbolizing the Nambu Rifle Manufacturing Company, the mark positioning was again changed in 9.2 (1934.February) from below the original mark to its right side preceding the serial number. This horizontal positioning was retained throughout the remainder of Kokubunji Factory production. The image to the right is of the earliest reported example with the horizontal Kokubunji Factory mark. Kokubunji Factory production with the horizontal arsenal mark during the balance of 1934 (9-date) was minimal with between 1384 and 1476 pistols made. The 9-Date Standard Production mark pistols are also hard to find.



Early Horizontal Marks

Type 14 Nambu collectors commonly seek pistols by their arsenal mark and yearly date code. (There are 35 possible Type 14 arsenal, series, and year date code combinations for collectors to find.) This collecting strategy sub-classifies the Vertical Arsenal variation into two production years – the 8-date (four reported) and the 9-date (18 reported). So, over the first three months of Kokubunji Factory production, there are four arsenal mark variations to be found: 8-Date Nagoya Only, 8-Date Vertical Arsenal, 9-Date Vertical Arsenal, and 9-Date Standard Production.

This table illustrates the early Kokubunji Factory variations’ production range and compares the collector reported amounts to the rare Taisho and Double Zero variations amounts.

Variation Example	Largest Possible Serial Range	Known Example Serial Range	Reported Examples	Reported Examples Percent of Production
8-Date Nagoya Only	85	61	5	8.2%
8-Date Vertical Arsenal	137	108	4	3.7%
(total 8-Date production)	(208)	(183)	(9)	(4.9%)
9-Date Vertical Arsenal	510	445	18	4.0%
9-Date Standard Production	1476	1384	54	3.9%
(total 9-Date production)	(1938)	(1878)	(76)	(4.0%)
Taisho	111	104	15	14.2%
16-Date Double Zero	81	80	19	23.7%

With the extremely low total Kokubunji Factory production amount for 1933 (between 183 and 208), the yearly date code collecting strategy makes any 8-date Kokubunji Factory example extremely difficult to find – There are only nine guns reported (five 8-Date Nagoya Only and four Vertical Arsenal). For a comparison, Taisho Era Type 14 production is between 104 and 111, and the 16-Date Double Zero production is either 80 or 81. But, 15 Taishos have been reported, and there are 19 Double Zeros reported with 16-dates. These facts help illustrate why an 8-date Kokubunji Factory example is the most difficult arsenal yearly date code to find and acquire and, consequently, is the most valuable of the early Kokubunji Factory variations.

(Thank you to Russ Cipolla, Dale Crabtree, and Takehito Jimbo for their insightful comments in the preparation of this article.)

<sup>i</sup> Source of all data and summarized production notes in article: Daniel M. Larkin, “The Larkin List #23”, 2010.

<sup>ii</sup> Harry L. Derby, III and James D. Brown, Japanese Military Cartridge Handguns 1893-1945 (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2003), p. 106.