

## Type 14 Nambu “Double Zero” Features

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The Nagoya Arsenal Toriimatsu Factory produced “Double Zero” pistol variation is very sought-after by Japanese Type 14 Nambu collectors. The variation is identified by the pistol serial number having two zeros placed directly over the first two numbers [see image of #50032]. Double Zero examples are only found at the inception of Toriimatsu Factory production between 16.10 and 17.2 (1941.October and 1942.February)<sup>i</sup>. As the pistol markings were obviously different from normal production and were only found in a narrow production range, early collectors identified the variation as one of significance.



As early as 1971,<sup>ii</sup> Type 14 collectors speculated that the two zeros were placed over the first two serial numbers to denote the actual start of the Toriimatsu Factory production (which began at #50000.)<sup>iii</sup> Using that supposition, the two zeros were placed above #50032 to signify its actual number of #00032 or just #32. However, it has always been commonly noted that Double Zero pistols have a different design firing pin tail which will not interchange with Type 14s produced elsewhere (the fact that many other associated parts are also modified has not been previously published until this article). For many years, no association was made between the part modifications and the two zeros placed over the serial number. Now, it is believed that the whole reason for the zero placements is the use of many non-standard parts in these pistols. The current collector consensus is that the two zeros denote these pistols as being “second class status” and removed/rejected from regular military use.<sup>iv</sup> The Double Zero series can be likened to a production experiment which did not work, and they were subsequently marked with two zeros to indicate their non-conformity to standard production practices. The reason for the deviation from standard production is not known. But, one possibility is that the Japanese were not fully satisfied with the reliability of previous striker design revisions, and a new design was being tested to mitigate unwanted misfires. The striker design was eventually modified to its final configuration only six months later in 17.7 (1942.July).

The following points support the “second class status” theory. There is precedence for the meaning of the marks, as some Arisaka rifles have two or more zeros placed before the serial number to show they were pulled from active military use and provided to schools. The two zeros were added after the final surfacing of the pistols, as they have “cratered” edges [see image]. (Type 14 pistol serial numbers were



resurfaced to remove the edge ridges caused in the stamping process.) Most all observed Double Zero examples are found in very nice condition indicating they not have seen much use. And, most importantly for this theory, the modified parts are not found in pistols without the Double Zero markings.

The individual part modifications on Double Zero pistols are not found on any other Type 14 Nambus. The many non-standard design parts include the firing pin, guide, cocking knob, locking block, barrel, bolt, sear, and frame. Each of the modified parts is compared to Standard Production parts in the following images (the Double Zero part is on the left in all images):

\* The Double Zero 73mm firing pin has a tail center-mounted instead of the normal offset tail.



\* The Double Zero 47mm firing pin guide's alignment lug is much wider.



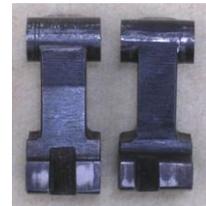
\* The Double Zero cocking knob recess is centered instead of offset to better accommodate the center-tailed firing pin.



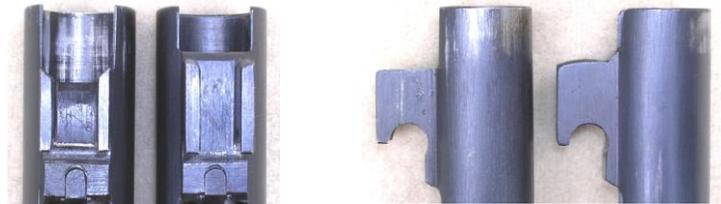
\* The Double Zero locking block is wider in thickness and has a slightly different shape.



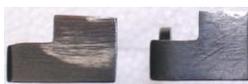
\* The slot in the locking block is centered for the center-mounted firing pin tail.



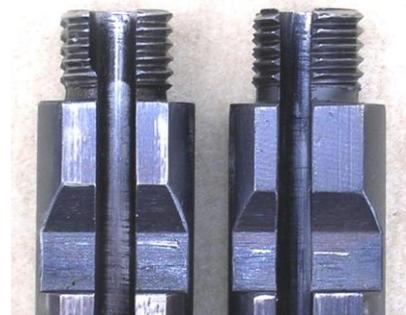
\* The Double Zero barrel lug is modified in width, length, and shape to accept the wider and different-shaped locking block



\* The Double Zero sear end is wider with more material to contact the center-tailed firing pin, and the Double Zero rear frame is modified to accept the wider sear.



\* The Double Zero bolt is center-slotted to accept the center-tailed firing pin.



The Double Zero cocking knob is the only modified part which will individually fit and function in standard production pistols. One other very minor anomaly noted during the Double Zero production period and slightly beyond is that a few pistols have one or both matching grips with 25 grooves instead of the standard 24 grooves. However, the grip grooves difference is not confined to Double Zero production like the other modified parts. Grips with 25 grooves have been reported on several examples in early 17-date Toriimatsu Factory Standard Production.

For this article, the authors conducted a detailed examination of five Double Zero examples: 50032, 50044, 50060, 50104, and 50121. All five pistols exhibited the same part modifications. The only differences observed among the five Double Zeros examples were in individual part serialization (in a few part instances, two numbers were used instead of three) and in the serialization location and lug dimensions of the striker guides. The Double Zero part modifications were compared to parts in the very early Standard Production example 17.2 #50244 and in several random later examples. The Standard Production parts shown for comparison in all images are from pistol #50244.

As is evidenced in the below table listing reported examples, very few pistols with the Double Zero markings were produced in the first four months of manufacture – at least 185 with a maximum of 188 (assuming no overlap). Production in the first two months was very low with less than 20 possible examples. The low production amount is consistent with the normal slow start-up of production at a new factory. Only 37 Double Zero examples have been reported.

Listing of 37 Reported Double Zero Examples	
Date Code	Serial Number (* = date code not confirmed)
16.10	50001, 50002, 50003, 50006
16.11	50007
16.12	50004*, 50020, 50022, 50025, 50031, 50032, 50035, 50036, 50037, 50039, 50044, 50060, 50061, 50062, 50067, 50069, 50080
17.1	50082, 80088, 50089, 50091, 50099, 50101, 50104, 50118, 50121, 50126, 50146, 50153, 50159, 50185
17.2	50154*

The Two Double Zero examples marked with an asterisk were reported with date codes that are out-of-sequence compared to the expected serialization. Both reports were made in the early days of collectors recording and comparing Nambu serial number information, and neither example has been re-reported since. The two date codes have not been confirmed and could possibly be in error.

The Double Zero variation is very rare. However, their known survival rate is quite high at 20% of production. This high rate may also be partly due to their probable non-regular use. As a “second-class” weapon, they may have been kept in storage until late in the war. Or, they may not have been used at all and found as souvenirs by U. S. servicemen. Regardless of reason, their survivability rate is much higher than most other reported Type 14 examples.

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 Double Zero variation into two production years – the 16-date (22 reported) and the 17-date (15 reported). Collectors also seek the Type 14 Nambu by marking variation. So, over the first four or five months of Toriimatsu Factory production, there are three marking variations to be found: 16-Date Double Zero, 17-Date Double Zero, and 17-Date Standard Production.

Both Double Zero manufacture yearly date codes are hard to find. The yearly date code collecting strategy also makes the 16-Date Double Zero examples a little more desirable based on the extremely low yearly production of either 80 or 81 examples. For a comparison, Taisho Era Type 14 production is between 104 and 111, and the 8-Date Kokubunji production is between 183 and 208. So, based on reported probable annual production alone, fewer 16-date Double Zero examples are available to find than for any other Type 14 arsenal, series, and year combination – Toriimatsu Factory 16-date pistols thus rank #1 on the list of 35 possible Type 14 collecting combinations. Because all Double Zero examples are a rare marking variation, they are highly-prized by Nambu pistol collectors and carry a significant value premium. Any Double Zero example should be considered a significant addition to any collection.

If you possess a Double Zero example, even if it is listed in the above reported serial list, and you are willing to provide specific information about your pistol for the database, please send an email to Dan Larkin to report those differences. (danlarkin@suddenlink.net)

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

<sup>ii</sup> “Large Trigger Guard T-14 Variations,” The Japanese Military Collector Quarterly, Vol. I, Issue 4 (1971), p. 3.

<sup>iii</sup> The current collector consensus is that serialization in any Kana-marked series began at “0” instead of “1”. This is because the first Kana series mark used denoted actual serialization between 100,000 and 199,999. So, the first serialized example with a Kana series mark is #0, and the last is #99999 to keep the numbers at five digits. Using this analogy, for Double Zero pistols with the Kana “First Series” mark, the assigned second 50,000 block of serial numbers began at #50000.

<sup>iv</sup> Harry L. Derby, III and James D. Brown, Japanese Military Cartridge Handguns 1893-1945 (Atglen, PA: Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 2003), p. 146.