

# Prominent Inspection Stamps on Type 14 Nambu Pistols

Dan Larkin, Francis C. Allan, and Takehito Jimbo

For many years and working independently of each other, the authors have each been delving into the identification and meaning of the inspection marks stamped in various locations on Type 14 Nambu pistols. Since the 1980s, Dan Larkin has recorded features and markings of individual Type 14 pistols. That database currently has specific information on over 12,200 Type 14s which is over 4.3% of total production. The emphasis of Dan's work was to identify production and marking changes to generate predictive data such as "How many of this or that were made?" and "Are the features on this or that example correct for its period of production?" As a natural progression of that effort, the focus of Dan's effort in the past few years has been concentrated in the recording and identification of inspection marks. The production numbers and inspection mark correlation tables included in this article are gleaned from that record. Also, for many years, Frank Allan and Takehito Jimbo have each been investigating the various inspection marks found on all manner of Japanese arms in an effort to identify their origins, meanings, and even the identification of some of the Japanese inspectors.

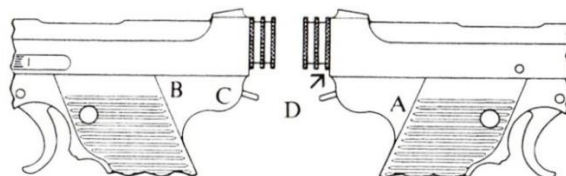
Recently, the authors compared their different, but related, efforts and discovered many congruent findings. At the same time, inconsistencies in mark identification and periods of use were also identified. For help in resolving many of those issues, the authors consulted several prominent Japanese pistol and rifle collectors – Teri Jane Bryant, Jim Brown, and Russ Cipolla. Their constructive criticism modified and improved the authors' findings which are summarized in this article.

In the following text and charts, the convention of presenting *KANJI* characters as italicized upper case letters and *katakana* characters as italicized lower case letters is followed. This form of presentation has consistently been followed in several publications covering Japanese firearms.

The primary inspection stamps which appear on Type 14 Nambu pistols in the "A Position" and "C Position" (see drawing for location) are shown in the following charts by factory and manufacture date code. Since Type 14 pistols are dated by both year and month of manufacture, this observation information goes a long way in establishing when the

stamps may have been used throughout the arsenal system. This information may help date when other weapons were manufactured.

## Inspection Stamp Locations



(Drawing courtesy of Harry L. Derby & James D. Brown)

With the help of the aforementioned collector experts, we are able to present the primary inspection stamps which appear on Type 14 Nambu pistols. Several interesting points have emerged in our exchanges of information, and they require the following explanations:

- Of particular relevance is that the usual explanation of the character 平, normally translated as *HEI* when it stands alone, may not be correct. Keeping in mind that the early character stamps are indicative of part of particular inspector's names, it is far more likely that this character, when used as an inspection stamp, should be *HIRA*, as used in names such as Hirai, Hirayama, Hirakawa, Hiramoto, etc. A related point is that *HIRA/HEI* - 平 appears in three different versions as inspection stamps: the normal *KANJI* of 平, the stylized version of 平, and the Tensho style of 平. These different versions may indicate three different inspectors.

- In approximately late 1934, the criteria for selecting inspection stamps changed from indicating individual inspectors to indicating physical locations. For example, 條 - *JYO* represents the Jujyo District of Tokyo where Nambu Rifle Manufacturing Co. factory was located. Other obvious examples are: 小 - *KO* signifying *Kokura*, 名 - *NA* denoting *Nagoya*, 千 - *chi* representing *Chigusa*, etc.

- Other inspection stamps are not as easily understood. For example 幡 - *HATA* was once used by the Army Weapons Administration Headquarters, Yawata Branch Inspection Office, as the Yawata inspector's stamp. ("ha" is pronounced "wa" when preceded by "ya"). However, the same character

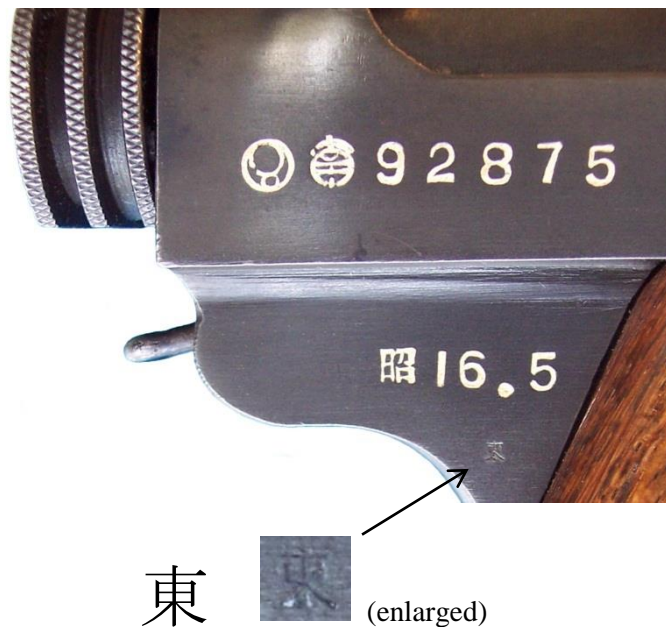
appears on Kokura Type 14 pistols manufactured in very late 1934.

The “Holy Grail” for researchers would be a list of the inspectors assigned each – or any – of the arsenal factories. Search efforts of the Japanese National Archives have not yet uncovered such a list. But, we can hope that a document along these lines will surface sometime in the future. In the mean-

time, observation and investigative efforts such as this will continue as collectors try to unravel the mysteries of Japanese arms’ inspection markings.

If any of our *BANZAI* readers can add to these schedules, please contact us at the following e-mail addresses: danlarkin@suddenlink.net and/or fcallan4647@yahoo.com

Example of typical “A” Position location: Type 14 manufactured in May 1941 by the Nambu Rifle Manufacturing Company (Chuo Kogyo Kabushiki-Kaisha), serial number 92875 from the original series.



### Type 14 Nambu Kokubunji Factory Reported Inspection Mark Ranges

#### “A” Position Inspection Mark

8.12	7843	Low	東	<i>TO</i>
10.6	11571	High	東	<i>TO</i>
10.6	11693	Low	條	<i>JYO</i>
11.3	22218	High	條	<i>JYO</i>
11.9	22267	Low	東	<i>TO</i> (Original Series)
19.8	20265	High	東	<i>TO</i> (First Series)

## Type 14 Nambu Tokyo / Kokura Factory Reported Inspection Mark Ranges

### “A” Position Inspection Mark

3.5	1	Low	永	NAGA (Tensho style of 永)
3.9	959	High	永	NAGA (Tensho style of 永)
3.9	1045	Low	貞	SADA (stylized form of 貞)
4.7	5272	High	貞	SADA (stylized form of 貞)
4.7	5299	Low	貞	SADA
5.6	13492	High	貞	SADA
5.6	13524	Low	本	HON (Tensho style of 本)
5.10	15902	High	本	HON (Tensho style of 本)
5.10	15985	Low	平	HIRA (Variation of Tensho 平 for – HEI - 平)*
6.5	20639	High	平	HIRA (Variation of Tensho 平 for – HEI - 平)*
6.5	20735	Low	河	KAWA (Variation of Tensho 河)
6.8	22411	High	河	KAWA (Variation of Tensho 河)
6.9	22443	Low	長	NAGAI (Stylized form of 長)
7.2	24156	High	長	NAGAI (Stylized form of 長 - overlap report)
7.2	24145	Low	東	TO (overlap report)
9.11	29571	High	東	TO
9.11	29624	Low	幡	HATA
9.12	30631	High	幡	HATA
9.12	30654	Low	小	KO
11.6	35417	High	小	KO

### “C” Position Inspection Mark

3.5	1	Low	(none)	
3.6	211	High	(none)	
3.6	281	Low	三	MI
3.11	1751	High	三	MI
3.11	1811	Low	吉	YOSHI
5.5	12598	High	吉	YOSHI
5.5	12669	Low	内	UCHI (Stylized 内)
7.5	24688	High	内	UCHI (Stylized 内)
7.8	24699	Low	大	DAI
7.8	24975	High	大	DAI
7.6	25197	Low	セ	se
11.6	35417	High	セ	se

\* Refer to text for a more complete explanation of the use of this character.

## Type 14 Nambu Chigusa Factory Reported Inspection Mark Ranges

### “A” Position Upper (Left 7.4 and later) Inspection Mark

15.8	6	Low	門	<i>MON</i>
3.3	2297	High	門	<i>MON</i>
3.4	2344	Low	筒	<i>TSUTSU</i>
4.8	4671	High	筒	<i>TSUTSU</i>
4.9	4769	Low	河	<i>KAWA</i> (Variation of Tensho 河)
5.4	5382	High	河	<i>KAWA</i> (Variation of Tensho 河)
5.6	5727	Low	達	<i>TATSU</i>
6.7	6805	High	達	<i>TATSU</i>
6.10	6975	Low	平	<i>HIRA</i> (Stylized form of <i>HEI</i> – 平)*
7.4	7333	High	平	<i>HIRA</i> (Stylized form of <i>HEI</i> – 平)*
7.5	7385	Low	安	<i>AN</i> (stylized form of 安)
7.6	7537	High	安	<i>AN</i> (stylized form of 安)
7.7	7551	Low	千	<i>chi</i>
7.11	7824	High	千	<i>chi</i>

### “A” Position Lower (Right 7.4 and later) Inspection Mark

15.8	6	Low	田	<i>TA</i>
4.3	4251	High	田	<i>TA</i>
4.4	4378	Low	冫	<i>SHIMO</i> (Tensho style of 下)
4.5	4464	High	冫	<i>SHIMO</i> (Tensho style of 下)
4.6	4528	Low	平	<i>HIRA</i> (Stylized form of <i>HEI</i> – 平)*
6.7	6830	High	平	<i>HIRA</i> (Stylized form of <i>HEI</i> – 平)*
6.9	6886	Low	山	<i>YAMA</i> (Tensho style of 山)
7.5	7439	High	山	<i>YAMA</i> (Tensho style of 山)
7.6	7485	Low	名	<i>NA</i>
7.11	7824	High	名	<i>NA</i>

\* Refer to text for a more complete explanation of the use of this character.

For further reading see:

*Japanese Military Cartridge Handguns 1893-1945*, by Harry L. Derby III and James D. Brown. Contact Jim Brown: [nambujenju@hotmail.com](mailto:nambujenju@hotmail.com)

