

## Transitional Original Configuration Variation Type 14

By Dan Larkin

This article will identify a very rare sub-variation of the "Original Configuration" (OC) Type 14 Nambu pistol. But, before that sub-variation can be discussed, the OC variation itself needs explanation, and pertinent OC features need identification.

Many collectors are unaware of the rare and valuable Type 14 Nambu Original Configuration variation. The variation is composed of those Type 14 pistols which were not returned to a factory in a mandatory recall of all previously-produced pistols for modification of the striker and associated parts and for the installation of the new magazine safety block. Although OC examples are relatively easy to identify, most collectors just do not know how to recognize them. Essentially, OC pistols retain the original 86mm striker, 35mm striker spring guide, associated unmodified bolt and locking block, and will not have the new magazine safety block installed in the frame with the modified trigger and trigger housing. The original pistol parts and the replacement design parts and changes are all detailed in the accompanying explanations and images.

Based on collector observation records, the Tokyo Factory incorporated the two changes into normal production in Showa 6.8/6.9 (August/September 1931). Collector observations also suggest the Chigusa Factory may have begun implementing the changes later in early Showa 7 (1932) and may not have completed the change process until around Showa 7.5/7.6 (May/June 1932). The reason for the implementation delay by the Chigusa Factory is unknown.

Beginning in late Showa 6 (1931) and lasting several years, a massive recall of all previously-produced Type 14 Nambu pistols for implementation of the two design changes significantly impacted the normal production line at the Tokyo Factory. Observation reports show that monthly production totals of new pistols dropped sharply. In some months, no new production occurred as all effort was put toward modifying recalled and already produced in-stock pistols. At the Chigusa Factory, a production impact has not been noted as that factory was in the process of being shut-down and monthly production numbers already were dwindling. (That shut-down process itself may be a reason for the change implementation delay at Chigusa.) Later, in late Showa 8 (1933), the new Nambu Rifle Manufacturing Company (Kokubunji Factory) also began remanufacturing Type 14 pistols. Recalled pistols were being modified at least into the later 1930s as is evidenced by Kokura Factory inspection marked change parts and pistols. In all, approximately 29,7xx Type 14 pistols needed modification -- 22,3xx from the Tokyo Factory, and 7,4xx from the Chigusa Factory.

It is impossible to know how many Type 14s were not returned for retrofitting, but, the number is probably very small. Since so few of them have been reported, Original Configuration Type 14

examples are highly-prized by collectors. Their original feature-parts are different and seldom seen, and an example will add an authenticity measure to any Type 14 collection. Regardless of how many additional OC examples are found, they will remain scarce and sought-after examples with a significant value premium.

Advanced collectors have identified and reported only 45 Original Configuration examples. Undoubtedly, more OC examples exist and are waiting to be found -- they just have not been identified. Listed below are the OC examples reported by collectors:

Chigusa Factory (22):

2,1	135	2,6	709	2,12	1643	3,4	2558	6,3	6633
2,5	522	2,6	720	3,3	2211	4,12	5084	6,7	6830
2,5	523	2,7	788	3,3	2278	5,3	5365	6,8	6847
2,5	591	2,11	1575	3,4	2351	5,5	5501	6,8	6856
2,6	702	2,11	1576						

Tokyo Factory (23):

3.9	1308	4.2	2421	4.12	8422	4.12	9027	5.3	11646
4.1	2208	4.2	2442	4.12	8465	4.12	9046	5.3	11703
4.1	2260	4.9	6510	4.12	8756	5.1	9087	5.3	11811
4.1	2393	4.10	7570	4.12	8852	5.1	9566	5.5	12692
4.1	2395	4.11	8222	4.12	9024				

A new "transitional" Original Configuration sub-variation has been identified over the past several years as collectors shared information about an anomaly feature in some Tokyo Factory pistols dated Showa 6.8 and 6.9 (August and September 1931). By observation, those dates are the recognized change point for the Tokyo Factory's implementation of the mandated changes. The anomaly identified is that some pistols with those date codes have one change implemented but not the other. Five pistols are confirmed in the Showa 6.8 #22352 to Showa 6.9 #22573 serial range to have the first mandated change (striker and associated parts), but, they do not have the second mandated change (new magazine safety block installation). No other reported examples within this range of 222 pistols have both changes, and all later reported pistols do incorporate both changes. So, from example observations, the Tokyo Factory implemented only the first mandated striker and parts change in Showa 6.8 (1931.Aug). Then, shortly thereafter in Showa 6.9 (1931.Sep), the Tokyo Factory implemented the second mandated magazine safety block change. This newly-recognized Tokyo Factory OC sub-variation is being called the "Transitional Original Configuration." It has the modified striker and associated parts, and, it retains the original production frame without the new magazine safety block installation. Listed below are the Transitional OC examples reported by collectors:

Tokyo Factory (5):

6.8	22352	6.8	22411	6.8	22443	6.9	22480	6.9	22573
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Please note that no Transitional Original Configuration examples have been identified from the Chigusa Factory. None are expected, as, by observation, the Chigusa Factory instituted the two mandated changes much later in mid-Showa 7 (1932) and probably did so concurrently. The factory was also in the process of stopping its Type 14 production line which ended in Showa 7.11 (1931.Nov).

The following pistol modifications were included in the mandated Type 14 retrofit:

- (frame) – machined for magazine safety block and cross-pin and new block installed
- (trigger housing) – machined for magazine safety block extension clearance
- (trigger) – new trigger installed with more back edge material on right side
- (bolt) – striker tail slot extended by machining from 14mm to 27mm (in many cases, the original bolts were replaced with bolts of the new design)
- (striker) – new 73mm striker replaced old 86mm striker
- (locking block) – block slotted for striker tail clearance
- (striker spring guide) – new 47mm guide replaced old 35mm guide

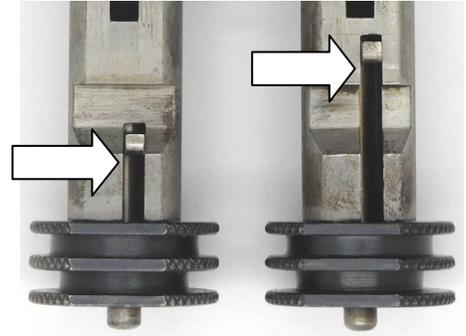
With the three very simple and quick observations described below, any Japanese militaria collector can identify an unmodified Original Configuration example. Once a collector learns the differences between original and modified parts, recognizing an OC example is easy.

The below external observations will determine if a Tokyo Factory Showa 6.9 (1931.Sep) or earlier-date and Chigusa Factory Showa 7.6 (1932.Jun) or earlier-date Type 14 was modified:

- When viewing a pistol's right side, look at the right side of the trigger and at the trigger guard just behind the trigger. Original trigger back edges carry the trigger curve to the top. Modified triggers have more back edge material to contact the installed magazine safety block extension. Modified trigger guards are machined to accommodate the installed magazine safety block. If it is an original trigger style, the pistol may be an Original Configuration example.
- When viewing a pistol's left side, look for the absence of a "B" position inspection mark (left side frame flat near grips). Modified pistols were stamped in the B position with the mark of the modifying factory. If there is no B position mark, the pistol may be Original Configuration.



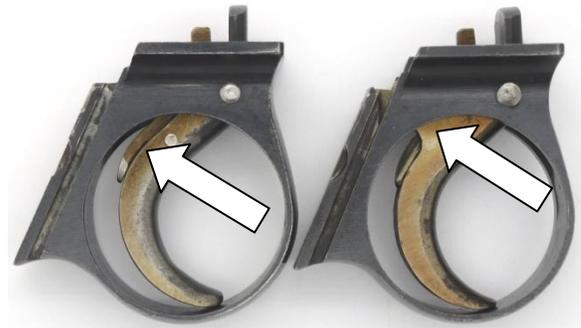
- If both of the two previous observations are positive, look at the underside of the bolt after pulling back on the cocking knob. Original bolts have a very short slot for the striker tail (around ½" + or 14mm), while modified bolts have a longer slot (around 1" + or 27mm). If the slot is the short version, the pistol is an Original Configuration example.



The following images compare an unmodified Tokyo Factory example and its original parts along with modified parts from another Tokyo Factory example to show the differences. In all images, the Original Configuration example is on the left.

- Bolt underside: See the above image and explanation. The bolt slot length is the definitive way to externally tell if the pistol has the original design internal parts.

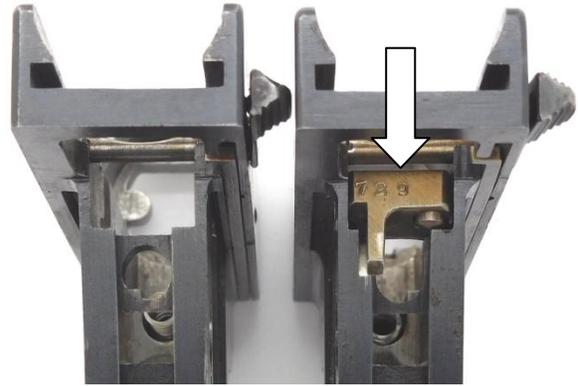
- Trigger right side: original on left; modified on right with extra metal to contact the magazine safety block extension. Note: An original trigger looks exactly the same on the right side and on the left side. The sides on modified triggers are different.



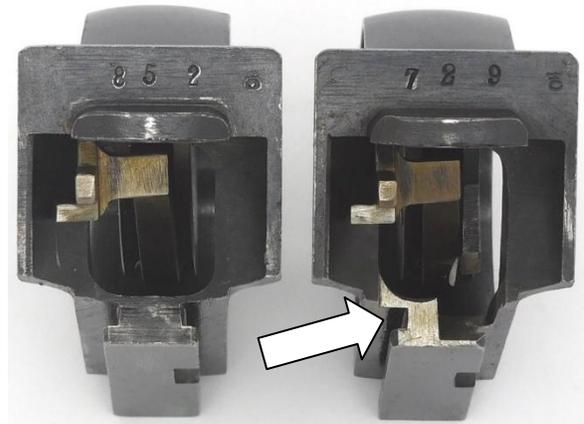
- Internal parts -- Bolt, striker, striker spring guide, locking block comparisons: left side parts are original un-slotted locking block, short slotted bolt, long 86mm striker, and short 35mm striker spring guide; right side parts are modified shorter 73mm striker, longer 47mm striker spring guide, long slotted bolt, and slotted locking block. Again, the bolt slot lengths are easily checked by looking at the underside of the bolt.



- Magazine safety block installation: original on left; modified on right with machined frame and installed block.



- Trigger guard machining to accept magazine safety block: original on left without machining; modified on right with machining.



It is not difficult to identify one of these rare Original Configuration pistols. All it takes is a quick glance at the right side trigger, at the left side frame flat, and at the underside of the bolt. If you see the original trigger curve or no “B” position marking or the short firing pin tail slot in the bolt, you should inspect the pistol closely to verify its features. If the pistol is truly a rare Original Configuration example, you will have found a valuable prize. And, with this new information, you will be able to recognize the even rarer Showa 6.8- and Showa 6.9-date Transitional Original Configuration variation. Please use this information to inspect all Type 14 Tokyo Factory Showa 6.9-date or earlier and Chigusa Factory Showa 7.6-date or earlier examples you encounter. More of these scarce and very interesting pistols will be found.

I catalog information on Original Configuration examples. So, if you have or find an unmodified example, please contact me ([danlarkin@suddenlink.net](mailto:danlarkin@suddenlink.net)). Also, and in support of the effort to quantify this new Transitional OC sub-variation, if you own or find any Tokyo Factory Showa 6.8- or Showa 6.9-date example, whether it is a Transitional OC or not, please contact me to provide specific information about your pistol.

(Thank you to Russ Cipolla and Dale Crabtree for their comments improving this article.)