

Kokura Arsenal Type-14 #1

by Dale Crabtree

Having been a collector of Japanese Militaria for many years, I thought I had seen enough that I wouldn't be surprised by much but every once in a while some thing will turn up that makes you want to just scratch your head and think "What the--?" Such is the case with Kokura arsenal Type-14 #1. Arsenal pistols were made for a number of reasons (worker familiarization, major change prototypes, or preproduction models made for review and testing) and finding one is a bit hard to do but they are out there. Most follow a pattern of being undated and only having a serial number that was used within the arsenal system. These pistols may or may not have supervisory inspection marks but generally are devoid of any final inspection marks, as they were not intended for release into the inventory system.

For the most part, this pistol falls within those guide lines, no supervisory or final inspection marks anywhere on the frame in any of the positions where we would normally expect to see them. However, all external markings (except inspections marks) are what one would expect to see on any standard issue Type-14 pistol: date, serial number and arsenal symbol on the right side of the frame and model designation along with the safe and fire markings on the left side of the frame. The only mark on the frame is on the right grip strap and it is the JYO (條) mark.



All parts except the striker and striker spring guide are marked with serial #1. All parts except the magazine safety block, magazine latch, cocking knob, firing pin guide, are marked with the "TO" (東) inspection mark. The magazine latch and cocking knob do not have inspection marks that I can see. The magazine safety block, while marked with #1, carries the "SHI" (志) mark. The striker spring guide carries the "to" (卜) mark. The sear bar retaining pin is the kind with a concentric circular bevel and does not carry either a serial number or inspection mark which is normal for production after Showa 9.9 (1934 September).





The size of the die stamp used for the serial number on the parts is approximately 2mm in height while the die stamp used on the frame for the serial number, date, era symbol, designation and safe and fire symbols are all 3mm in height. These features were normal for both Tokyo and Kokura arsenals. The use of the Arabic style numbers for #1 on the parts while the use of a solid (Roman style) #1 on the frame in the serial number and date are typical characteristics of Tokyo and Kokura arsenals as well.

The standard grooved knob with coarse knurling is used and has the small width groove milled into the face of the knob. The knob design is of the type introduced sometime after Showa 7.1 (1932.January). The Type-III magazine is stamped #1 and carries the “se” (セ) mark. Both of these features were common for Kokura. The Type III magazine with “se” (セ) proof was introduced by Kokura Arsenal around Showa 7.8 (1932.August).



The grips are 25 grooved with the “TO” (東) mark and one is very lightly marked with what appears to be #1 in pencil; all these characteristics were common for both the Tokyo and Kokura arsenals.



The use of parts such as the striker spring guide and magazine safety block from different arsenals (in this case Kokubunji) was a common practice for the arsenal system so that is correct. The use of a Kokubunji frame at Kokura is again correct as most frames used by Kokura were from the Kokubunji arsenal. The machining, style of lettering and markings, use of straw and polished parts are all correct for a Kokura pistol.

This is the only arsenal pistol that I have seen with a date and that is what really has me stumped. So why the date? And why 38 months after Type-14 production stopped at Kokura in 11.6 was a pistol produced there? Was Kokura attempting to get back into pistol production? Could this have been an attempt to get the work for the change over to the large trigger guard that started a month after this pistol was produced? Until some documentation turns up, any answer to these questions is purely speculation or conjecture. No matter what is the real answer, the last question has to be, if they produced serial #1 did they produce a serial #2?

I look forward to hearing from any member who may additional comments on this pistol. I can be contacted via email at crabtreeda@cox.net.

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