

Shi-Shi Lion Dog Type-14

By Dale Crabtree

Over the years many of us have seen Arisaka rifles and Nambu pistols with many personalized items done to them such as inlaying different materials in the stocks or engraving names, dates, and locations into the stock. We have also seen Plexiglas grips added to both pistols and bayonets. Every once in a while one will run across a Nambu pistol that has been nickel plated and one can even find a Nambu that has used for engraving practice by an inspiring gunsmith. Recently I acquired a Type-14 that I thought I would share with the membership that has been personalized some time during its life.

It started life as a Tokyo 5.11 date and is nothing to get real excited about as it has lost some of its bright blue and has some minor pitting on grip straps with more serious pitting under the grips. The grips themselves do not match by serial number but are proper for type and inspection marks so they have been replaced during its rework as it carries the "TO" (東) mark in the "B" position. It has a non-matching Type B magazine and the sear pin appears to be home made or armor made as it is not a machine made part, most likely a field made replacement after the original was lost.

The unique thing about this Nambu is that the barrel housing has been engraved with the figure of a running Shi-Shi Lion Dog and then this engraving has been inlaid with gold. The gold has been tested to be between 18 and 22 karats.

Having lived in Japan a number of years I recognized the Shi-Shi Lion Dog for what it is. In both Chinese and Japanese lore the Shi-Shi Lion Dog is known as a protector. Shi-Shi (or Jishi) is translated as "lion" but it can also refer to a deer or dog with magical properties and the power to repel evil spirits. In Japan, the Shi-Shi is a noble beast who protects the entrance to temples, shrines and in some cases, a tomb but it is also as a protector of boys or young men. One will find a pair of Shi-Shi Lion Dogs in the entrance ways or on roofs of homes and businesses alike though out Japan today.

When and who did this work is unknown to me for it could have been done for the original owner or the owner's family as a means to keep him safe while away from home and in harms way. Of course the work could have always been done in post war Japan by a local craftsman for a returning G.I. Readers comments are of course always welcome.

