

## **Activities of Takata & Co. during the Sino-Japanese War period: Its transporting of ‘contraband of war’ from Britain**

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This article clarifies the activities of Takata & Co. during the Sino-Japanese War by investigating its transporting of ‘contraband of war’ from Britain to Japan.

While the first ship was transporting this contraband, the war broke out. The British government commanded the ship’s captain to land war materials and explosives at a Singapore port. The Imperial Japanese Navy (IJN) ordered Takata & Co. to send a representative to Singapore. At the time, a second ship transporting contraband of war was on its way to Japan, so the IJN ordered Takata & Co. to take on the war materials and explosives landed by the first ship.

Various plans were tried. For example, the ship did not sail on the China Sea but took the South Seas, and the ship was camouflaged to appear as another ship. Takata & Co. carried out more than just the role of a simple contractor transporting war materials and explosives. For instance, it made a secret agreement that it would offer a prize to the ship’s captain when the vessel reached Japan safely. It was important that Takata & Co. was entrusted by the IJN with shipping war materials and explosives. Moreover, Takata & Co. was a significant intermediary between the Japanese government (IJN and the Foreign Office) and the ship’s owner.

When the IJN imported war materials and explosives from Britain, most were made by Sir W.G. Armstrong Whitworth & Co. Ltd. (Armstrong Co.), but the order pretended to come from Jardine Matheson & Co., or Takata & Co. Also, Yamanouchi Masuji, the central figure from the beginning of the Kure Arsenal’s construction, was close with Andrew Noble (Armstrong Co. Chairman), and this worked well when dealing with war materials and explosives made by Armstrong Co.

Thus, Takata & Co. played an important role in transporting contraband of war from Britain to Japan, as the IJN negotiator intended. As a result of its activities, Takata & Co. became an agent of the Armstrong Co. soon after the Sino-Japanese War.