

Mitsui Bunko

Mitsui Bunko Initiatives

Mitsui Bunko is a non-profit research institution consisting of the Archive (Mitsui Bunko Main Building), which preserves, displays, and conducts research on socio-economic historical materials; and the Mitsui Memorial Museum, which preserves, displays, and conducts research on art.

The origins of this archive can be traced back to the early 20th century. After World War II, under orders from GHQ, the Mitsui head office was dissolved, and the Mitsui Bunko was forced to cease its activities. However, talks about reconstructing the Mitsui Bunko arose within the Group, and with approval from the Ministry of Education, Mitsui Bunko was established in May 1965 at its current location in Nakano-ku, Tokyo. With the resumption of operations, the Mitsui family documents, which had been kept out of the public eye, were made available for academic research.

At Mitsui Bunko, research on modern commerce, finance, and corporate management was also conducted. The results were published in the Mitsui Bunko Essay Collection (published annually), and the History of the Mitsui Business (Main: 3 volumes/5 books; Archive: 4 volumes/5 books) was published, with publishing of all volumes being completed in March 2001. In addition, in October 2022, we began publishing the Mitsui Bunko Historical Materials Database on the web. As of December of that year, over 92,000 historical materials are available for searching and viewing.



Former Mitsui Bunko exterior (property of Mitsui Bunko)



Current Mitsui Bunko exterior

In 1985, a cultural history research department (annex) was established. Multiple donations were made from the Mitsui family's art and stamp collections, and donations from other corporations and individuals were also accepted for research and public display. In October 2005, we moved to Nihonbashi, which has deep ties with the Mitsui family and the Group, to open the Mitsui Memorial Museum for public exhibitions of the art collection.

During the era of Mitsui Takatoshi's children, the Mitsui family divided into nine branches, with the eldest son, Takahira, establishing the Kita House; the third son, Takaharu, forming the Shinmachi House; the fourth son, Takatomo, founding the Muromachi House; and the ninth son, Takahisa, creating the Minami House. Later, two more branches were added, resulting in a total of eleven Mitsui houses. While there were various fluctuations in their management, each Mitsui family engaged in art collection. Particularly during the period from the Kyoho era to the Genbun era, when business revenues soared, they were making active efforts to collect famous artifacts, which were primarily used in tea ceremonies. The Mitsui Memorial Museum houses around 4,000 pieces of art donated by the Kita House, Shinmachi House, Muromachi House, Minami House, Isariko House, and Motomura-cho House, as well as by the Takatsukasa family, who are relatives of the Mitsui family. The museum showcases numerous treasures, including National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties, which were donated by various Mitsui houses. Along with preserving these cultural properties, the museum is committed to conducting research and promoting arts and culture.



Mitsui Memorial Museum