



三井広報委員会

SANKI ENGINEERING CO., LTD.
Shin Nippon Air Technologies CO., LTD.
SUMITOMO MITSUI CONSTRUCTION CO., LTD.
SAPPORO BREWERIES LTD.
Toray Industries, Inc.
Oji Holdings Corporation
Denka CO., LTD.
Mitsui Chemicals, Inc.
The Japan Steel Works, Ltd.
MITSUI MINING & SMELTING CO.,LTD.
Toyo Engineering Corporation
Mitsui E&S Holdings Co., Ltd.
Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, Ltd.
MITSUI & CO., LTD
Isetan Mitsukoshi Holdings Ltd.
Mitsui Sumitomo Insurance Company, Limited
Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation
Sumitomo Mitsui Finance and Leasing Company, Limited
J A MITSUI LEASING, LTD.
TAIJU LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY LIMITED
Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Holdings, Inc.
Mitsui Fudosan Co., Ltd.
MITSUI-SOKO HOLDINGS Co., Ltd.
AIM SERVICES CO., LTD.

江戸楽

e d o - g a k u

The Better
You Know Edo,
The More You'll
Enjoy Tokyo!

Revisiting the legacy of
Mitsui Takatoshi
on the 400th anniversary of his birth

Marking the 50th Anniversary
of the Mitsui Public Relations Committee

The Mitsui Public Relations Committee celebrates its 50th year!

The Mitsui Public Relations Committee hosts cultural and PR activities to join the companies of the Mitsui Group in contributing to international exchange and the revitalization of local communities, and to social well-being and prosperity.

Our main activities

三井ゴールデン・グラブ賞 The Mitsui Golden Glove Award

Recognizing the 'Best Nine' defense players in Japan's two professional baseball leagues



三井ゴールデン・グラブ野球教室 The Mitsui Golden Glove Baseball Class

Encouraging and training coaches of children's baseball through instruction by past Golden Glove Award winners



三井ゴールデン・タクミ賞 The Mitsui Golden Takumi Award

Recognizing artisans for their efforts to sustain and develop the proud legacy of Japan's traditional crafts

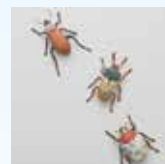
_____ The 4th Annual Mitsui Golden _____ Takumi Award winners



**Ujo Tsumugi
Preservation Society**
(Ujo-tsumugi pongee,
Okayama Prefecture)
Group award accepted by
Sumoto Masako



Sasaki Masahiro
(Lacquerware, Kagawa
Prefecture)



Matsuzaki Doll Co., Ltd.
(Edo-kimekomi dolls,
Tokyo)
Group award accepted
by Matsuzaki Mitsumasa



Matsuyama Yoshinari
(Iga-kumihimo braids,
Mie Prefecture)



Miyamoto Masao
(Kutani ware, Ishikawa
Prefecture)

目次

◆ Introduction

The Story of Mitsui Takatoshi,
told in documents

◆ Chapter 1 The Life of Mitsui Takatoshi

Matsusaka, Takatoshi's hometown
for almost 70 years

Business as pleasure: An exceptional life

Takatoshi's teachings

◆ Chapter 2 Takatoshi's Descendants

Passing on his legacy

Nurturing arts and culture

Riding the winds of change

◆ The Mitsui Public Relations Committee 50th Anniversary

A mission of celebration,
enrichment, and empowerment

Edogaku Editorial Department:
A.R.T., Inc. Gekkan 'Edogaku'
130 Bldg., 3F, 2-1 Nihombashi-kobunacho, Chuo-ku, Tokyo
Publ. date: December 2022



Marking the 50th Anniversary
of the Mitsui Public Relations Committee

Revisiting the legacy of Mitsui Takatoshi

on the 400th anniversary of his birth

References: Mitsui Bunko, ed., A History of Mitsui in Documents: From Echigoya to the Mitsui Zaibatsu (Mitsui Bunko, publ.)
Kagawa Takayuki (Mitsui Bunko), ed., Takayuki Kagawa (Mitsui Bunko) The Matsusaka Merchant: Wisdom is Wealth (Matsusaka Seinen Kaigisho, publ.)



Surugacho Echigoya shogatsu fukei zu [Surugacho Echigoya at the New Year] (artist unknown). Mitsui Bunko collection.

Mitsui Takatoshi was born in 1622, and though this was over two hundred years before the advent of Japanese capitalism, he transformed the business practices and the economy of the city of Edo and came to be revered as “the great-merchant ideal.” The Mitsui business that he founded survives to the present day as the Mitsui Group. He came into his prime just as the last traces of sixteenth-century war were receding. The culture of Edo’s townspeople was entering its heyday. Takatoshi read the current of

the times and with his new venture, Echigoya, captured people’s hearts with excitingly novel business practices. Takatoshi was already 52 years old when he opened Echigoya, but in the remaining twenty-odd years of his life, he revolutionized the social world of Edo. The following pages explore his remarkable life and the later developments of the Mitsui family and the Mitsui Group. Join us in exploring what we can learn today from Takatoshi’s enterprising spirit.

The story of Mitsui Takatoshi, told in documents

The Mitsui Bunko (Archive) is dedicated to preserving and researching a vast collection of historical materials related to Mitsui businesses.

We asked Senior Researcher Shimomukai Norihiko to talk about the innovative Takatoshi revealed in the historical record.

Portrait of Takatoshi and his wife



Takatoshi and his wife, Kane, are known as the founders of the Mitsui family. These portraits date to 1731 after Takatoshi's death. Note the gentleness of his expression. The portrait is said to have been created as an image of "the merchant ideal." (Mitsui Bunko collection)



Mitsui Bunko Senior Researcher
Shimomukai Norihiko

Born in Hiroshima Prefecture, 1983. Researches the economic history of distribution in early modern Japan, with a focus on Echigoya's purchasing, sales, and advertising, and the urban/provincial distribution operations revealed by Echigoya's purchasing activities.

The historical archive of a business A rarity anywhere in the world

Mitsui has for centuries stressed preserving business records to help the business survive and thrive through good times and bad. The Mitsui Family Records Office was established in 1903, 230 years after Echigoya's founding, to assemble the business's vast historical archive and compile a Mitsui history. Today, Mitsui Bunko preserves and researches the collection, which totals over 100,000 items, including documents from Echigoya's dry-goods and financial businesses and from post-1800s Mitsui-affiliates. The records reveal how these businesses survived and prospered through 400 years of change. So detailed a business archive, extending from early modern times to the present, is a true rarity anywhere in the world.

Make business your life's delight The foundations of the Mitsui business

Mitsui Takatoshi is regarded as the founder of the Mitsui house. His ancestry lay in the *samurai* class, but his father and mother established a pawnbroker's business and a *sake* and *miso* shop in the town of Matsusaka. Takatoshi was just 12 when his father died. His mother, Shuho, became sole manager of the businesses and a

very successful one, as documents in the archive attest. Takatoshi's later success may have been thanks to her tutelage.

We know about Takatoshi's views and management practices only from documents left by his sons. He is quoted in his third son's Record of Business, for example, as instructing: "Do not get drawn into artistic amusements; instead, regard business as your life's delight." After opening Echigoya at age 52, Takatoshi left the Edo and Kyoto shops in his sons' care while he himself traveled between Matsusaka and Kyoto, gathering valuable information and issuing precise instructions to his sons. The new business practices he introduced, such as "cash sales at fixed prices" (see page 14), were so groundbreaking that they overturned the prevailing customs of the Edo merchant world. His talented sons supported his innovations during his lifetime, and later banded together to carry on his legacy and further grow the Mitsui business.



In his later years, Takatoshi moved from Matsusaka to Kyoto. The graves of Takatoshi, his wife, and generations of their successors are located at Shin'nyodo Temple in Kyoto's Sakyo Ward, along with a memorial tower carved with the posthumous names of 2,321 Echigoya employees.

Matsusaka, Takatoshi's hometown for almost 70 years

Mitsui Takatoshi was born in Matsusaka and spent most of his 70 years there. Here we introduce Matsusaka's historical sites and what they tell us about his world and its culture.

A prosperous commercial city Energized by Ise Highway traffic

Matsusaka produced many wealthy merchants during the Edo period (1603-1868), including Mitsui Takatoshi. The foundations for its prosperity were laid by Gamou Ujisato who in 1588 became the governing lord of a sizable Ise-region territory he called Matsusaka. He brought in many Omi Merchants, an appellation associated with great wealth, business knowhow, and a business-centered value system. He also rout-

The Former Hasegawa Jirobe Residence
The Former Ozu Seizaemon Residence
The Former Residence of Harada Jiro

Director Matsumoto Yoshihiro



ed the Ise Highway through the center of the city where he promoted open guilds and free trade. Matsusaka later became the seat of the Kishu lord, part of the Tokugawa shogunate's inner circle. The Ise Highway was thronged with travelers, especially pilgrims to Ise Shrine, who famously numbered as many as five million over just a few months. Matsumoto Yoshihiro, director of the Former Hasegawa Jirobe Residence in Matsusaka, explains: "People, goods, money, and information gathered in Matsusaka. Lining the streets were the mansions of 50 wealthy merchants, who spared no expense as patrons of writers and artists. Leading painters such as Ikeno Taiga and Soga Shohaku stayed in Matsusaka and left many notable works here."

It took about a week to exchange letters between Edo and Matsusaka, but leading merchants obtained word in less than half that time by hiring couriers. "When big fires broke out in Edo or Mt. Asama erupted, the couriers all brought the latest information. Although the Mitsui residence has unfortunately not survived, the Hasegawa and Ozu family homes are still open for tours and convey the history of this capital of commerce."



Site of the Former Hasegawa Jirobe Residence, with a 49-meter frontage and featuring a large pond. The protruding roofed fire walls (udatsu) and black plastered storehouses bespeak the prosperity of these Matsusaka merchants. At about the time that Takatoshi launched Echigoya in Edo Nihonbashi, the Hasegawa family opened a Matsusaka-cotton business called Tanbaya in nearby Odenmachi.

Former Hasegawa Jirobe Residence
Matsusaka Uomachi 1653



A Birthplace of the Mitsui Family

The Mitsui family birthplace occupies a corner on Ote Dori, the road leading to the Ise Highway and Matsusaka Castle ruins. Surrounded by high walls, the site includes a monument (1), the well (2) from which Takatoshi's first bath was reportedly drawn, and memorials to Takatoshi's grandfather, father, and two older brothers. Landscape gardener Hamaguchi Naotsugu (3) manages the grounds. "Matsusaka locals have a strong love for their city. The story goes that back in the day, they served meals to travelers spending the night under the bridge. The town has treasured this Mitsui site and we continue to oversee the site, keep it clean, and preserve it for posterity."

2214 Honmachi, Matsusaka City



B Matsusaka Cotton Hand-weaving Center

Matsusaka cotton was prized under the name "Ise Cotton" in the 18th and 19th centuries. Its beautiful pattern is known as Matsusaka-jima, meaning "Matsusaka stripe." The Center offers a wide variety of textiles, accessories, and clothing items.

Matsusaka City Honmachi 2176 1F



C Mimeguri Inari Shrine

The Mimeguri Inari Shrine in Matsusaka is a branch of the Mimeguri Shrine of Tokyo's Sumida Ward. The Mitsui family revered it as the family deity and installed the branch shrine here in Matsusaka. It stands next to the main hall of Mikuriya Shrine which was relocated to Matsusaka Castle by Gamou Ujisato.

2304 Honmachi, Matsusaka City Mikuriya Shrine precincts

D Raigoji Temple

Founded in 1511. Family temple of Matsusaka's wealthy merchants, Raigoji was moved to its current location in 1588 after Gamou Ujisato's construction of Matsusaka Castle. The main hall is designated a National Important Cultural Property.

512 Oshiroimachi, Matsuzaka City



E Matsusaka Castle Ruins

The towering stone walls at the Matsusaka Castle ruins remind us of the solidity of the past. Spectacular views of the town from the Ninomaru zone, and beautiful spots for enjoying cherry blossoms and wisteria.

Tonomachi, Matsuzaka City



① / Matsusaka Castle ruins, popular spot for cherry-blossom viewing
② / Guard-houses line the Sannomaru zone. Twenty families for samurai guards once lived there.



F Sewage ditches

Vestiges of the occupational zones of the Warring States Period remain in Matsusaka's old castle-town district. The old *sewari haisui*, or sewage ditches built behind the townhouses fronting the main street, are currently used as channels for rainwater.



G Hinomachi Signpost

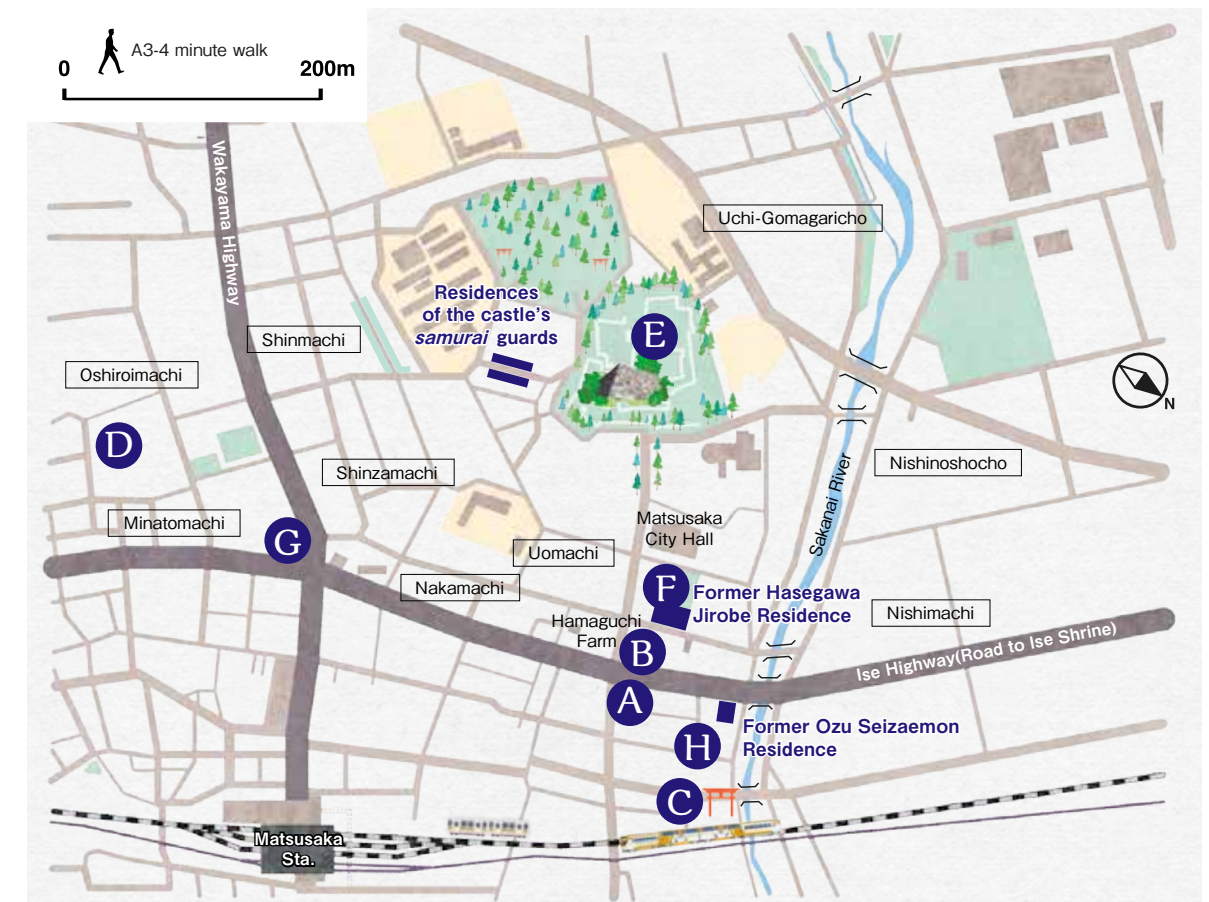
Marking the starting point of the Wakayama Highway is a stone monument inscribed "Left: Sangu Road" and "Right: Wakayama Road." It was an important fork in the road, leading either to Ise Highway (the road to Ise Shrine) or to the road to the headquarters of the Kishu Tokugawa family that ruled Matsusaka.

583 Hinomachi, Matsuzaka



H The zigzag streetscape

Zigzagging roads can be found everywhere in Matsusaka. They date from the Gamou Ujisato era. By making it hard to see the road ahead of the road, they were designed to protect the city from attack.

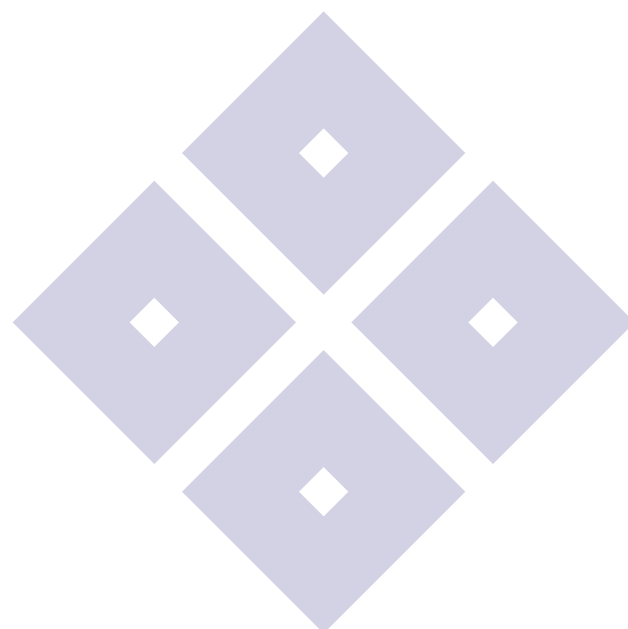


Business as pleasure An exceptional life

Let's take a look at the life of Mitsui Takatoshi.

The renowned author, Ihara Saikaku, a Takatoshi contemporary, praised Takatoshi as “a model for great merchants” and “a treasure of the world,” and carved his name in Japanese history. What was Takatoshi's story?

This family crest is called the *Yotsume Yui*. The Mitsui family has used it since the days of its *samurai* forebears. The Echigoya name was adopted by Takatoshi's father, who derived it from *Echigo no kami*, the *samurai* rank by which his father, Takayasu, was known.



Making his way to Edo at age 14

Refining his business sense with a wide array of customers

The youngest of four sons and four daughters, Takatoshi was trained by his mother, a skilled businesswoman. He made his first trip to Edo at age 14, a small load of cotton in tow. His eldest brother, Toshitsugu, who had already run three stores in the Nihonbashi district of Edo, including a *kimono* shop, was now a purchasing agent in Kyoto, so the Edo stores were entrusted to another brother, Shigetoshi. Under his supervision, Takatoshi soon displayed the diligence and innate business acumen he inherited from his mother. At age 20, he took over the stores and Shigetoshi returned home to help

their mother.

He tailored deposit and payment plans to his customers and keeping in mind the prices provincial markets could bear, was careful not to set prices too high for his rural buyers. His skills are said to have surpassed those of his brothers. When he first took over the business, the stores had 375kg in silver cash; in the next eight years, they had fifteen times that. He invested in a home in Edo and the business was running smoothly, but when Shigetoshi died, Takatoshi had to return to his hometown to help his mother. He'd built the small load of cotton he had brought with him to Edo years earlier into a fortune. The man he named to succeed him as manager was also hugely successful and under the name Echigoya Shobe'e helped support yet another brother's business.

Takatoshi's quiet middle years in Matsusaka

Twenty years' work anticipating his business launch in Edo

Takatoshi returned to Matsusaka in 1649, at age 28, where he married Kane, eldest daughter of the prominent Nakagawa family. With his Edo savings, he went into finance, steadily building up his capital and credit. The Ki-shu-Tokugawa domain lords were among his clients, as were local villages needing advances to cover the annual tax payments. He also formed networks of regional and kinship ties with wealthy merchants locally and in the areas where his sister and aunts were married. One telling episode of Takatoshi's business acumen occurred when he lent the sizable sum of 2,044 *ryo* in silver (equivalent to 3000 *koku* of rice) to the Ise *daimyō* lord, only to make twice the profit because the value of silver doubled

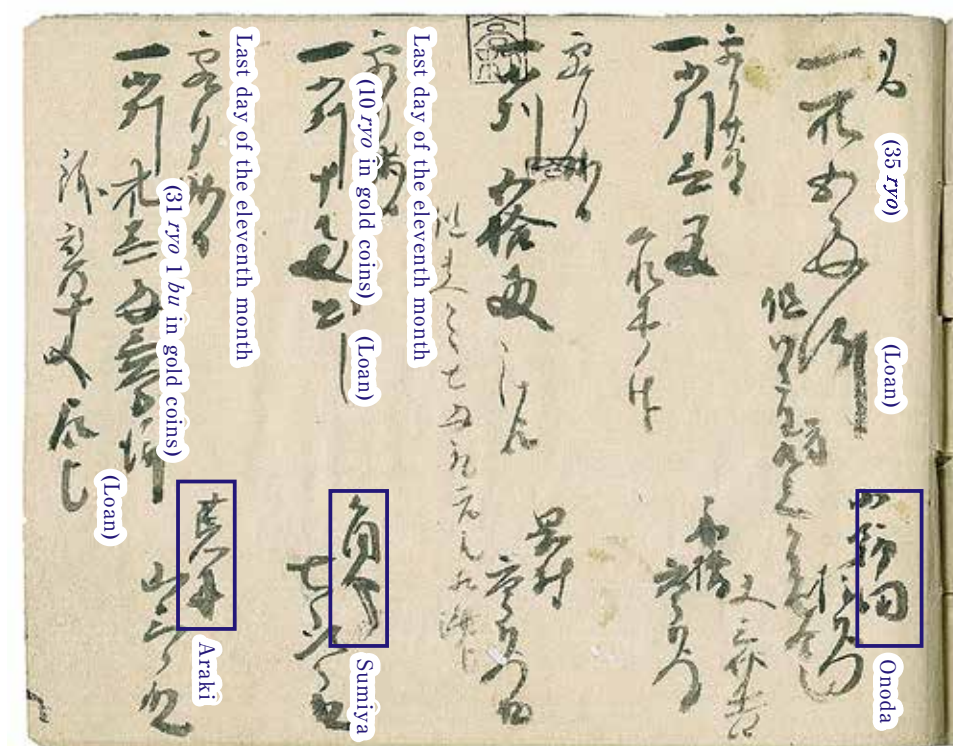
relative to rice in the next year. He anticipated the market trends in the price of rice, in other words, lending when rice was cheap and collecting when it was expensive. As his third son, Takaharu, said: “Such ingenuity was beyond the reach of ordinary people.”

Takatoshi meanwhile sent each of his three sons, Takahira, Takatomi, and Takaharu, as well as his clerks, to train with his brother in Edo when they turned 15. The city of Edo had been destroyed by fire in 1657 but reconstruction and the development of the Sumida River's east bank set off a huge expansion. He and his sons wrote each other regularly, so he was likely kept abreast of the latest news of Edo.

With his earnings from his finance business, his well-trained sons, and the information he gathered about Edo, Takatoshi was ready to set up shop in Edo. When his older brother, Toshitsugu, passed away in 1675, Takatoshi finally made his move.

Yorozu-kari-cho

Mitsui's oldest surviving business record, this 1699 transaction ledger was kept by Takatoshi himself and gives us a glimpse of his Matsusaka days. The trading partners who appear here were all wealthy area merchants, indicating that he himself was a powerful businessman. (Mitsui Bunko collection)



Excerpts from the Mitsui House Code

- Report every six months on employees who work diligently and with attention to detail. Those who maintain their performance for a year or two will be rewarded.
- Do not quarrel with one another. If a dispute should arise, the elder should there is a fight, the elder should hold back his anger and resolve the situation....
- Do not sell on credit to *samurai* households. If the person in charge of over-the-counter sales sells on credit, the amount will be deducted from his allowance....
- Do not spend more than your prescribed allowance. When you cannot avoid it, first consult with your manager and the spend the money only with his permission.



Mitsui Echigoya Edo Main Store model on display at the Edo-Tokyo Museum (closed for renovation through 2025). Echigoya started with 13 employees and a frontage of about 2.7 meters. At its peak in the mid-1700s, its frontage extended about 65 meters, and it had over 200 employees.

The long-awaited launch of Echigoya

“Cash sales at fixed prices” The Edo business world, transformed

In the year 1673, Takatoshi at last opened Echigoya in Edo's Honcho Itchome district, site of today's Bank of Japan, with his two younger sons in charge. He also opened a *kimono*-purchasing business in Kyoto under the care of Takahira, his eldest. He himself issued instruc-

tions as he journeyed back and forth between Matsusaka and Kyoto.

He had finally set up shop in Edo, but it was a small start, with only enough display merchandise to fill one-third of the shop's cabinets. He had to borrow items from relatives to fill the rest. Moreover, the brand new Echigoya did not yet have *samurai*-class customers but was limited to a clientele of retailers and traveling merchants.

Takatoshi compiled a family code on managing

the business and its apprentices and servants. It was particularly thorough on discipline, with prohibitions against selling on credit to *samurai* and even instructions on the use of pocket money by live-in servants. The code also addressed servant and apprentice well-being, instructing that they be rewarded for excellent work and that they be served familiar meals with products ordered from their hometowns whenever possible. This fairness and appreciation for all who served the business helped unite and sus-

tain the business even when it was sabotaged by rival merchants who were jealous of its success.

New business practices, the talk of the town. A daily battle with sabotage

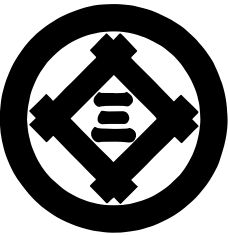
Kimono merchants customarily made purchases based on orders from clients, but Echigoya laid in large stocks of goods at low prices without waiting for orders and even bought up low-end products rejected by other merchants. The latter they sold cheaply to Edo townspeople, pawning any unsold remainders for cash. Kyoto merchants, as the suppliers, appreciated being able to sell in bulk, and Edo commoners liked being able to buy at low prices. Echigoya's reputation – and its sales—grew in both cities. Takatoshi was also able to purchase large quantities of the wildly popular Matsusaka striped cotton, which looks plain from a distance but



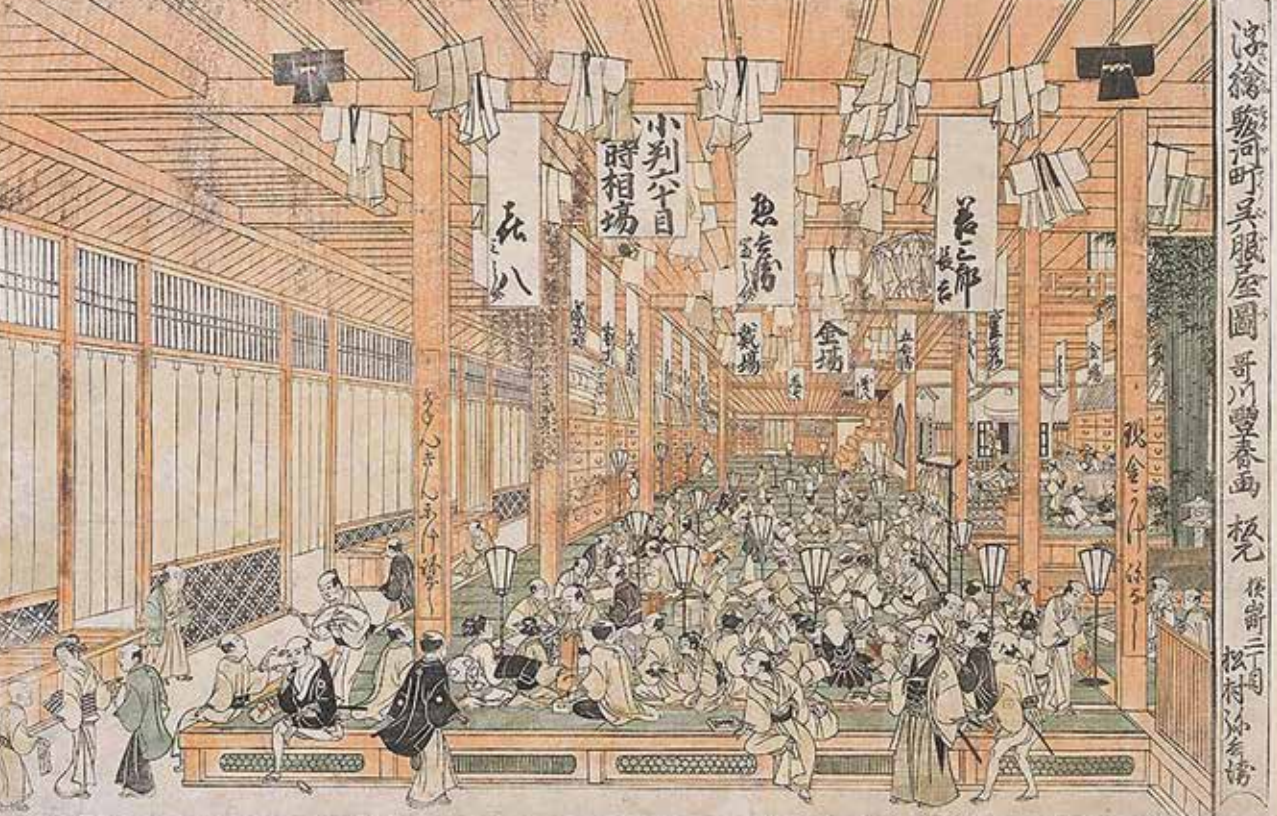
| Why “cash sales at fixed prices” was so revolutionary |

Conventional business methods	Echigoya's innovation
Merchants make door-to-door calls on customers, bringing cloth samples	In-store sales allow merchants to serve many customers at once
Sales staff can carry only so many bolts of cloth; customers can choose only from among them	Customers can pick up and look at any of the merchandise in the store
Suppliers receive orders only after customers have made their purchases; delivery therefore takes time.	Customers can buy cloth in any amount on the spot, and tailoring and processing can be handled immediately in-house.
Payments are made only made twice a year, in summer and at the end of the year. They cannot be made at the delivery stage.	Cash payments can be made on the spot. The store can use the receipts immediately to fund its next purchases.
Collecting money is labor intensive; as each collection date approaches, a lot of time and effort goes into checking the accounts receivable and then updating the records. Fees are added to cover this, raising prices all around.	By settling their bills on the spot, stores can dispense with these administrative tasks and thereby keep prices lower.

special up close. One key factor in Takatoshi's success was that the more prosperous the city became, the more its townspeople had to spend on their everyday clothing. Echigoya rode this trend, keenly aware of the needs of a new customer base, the commoner classes of Edo. In 1676, Echigoya opened a second store where it inaugurated a “cash sales at fixed prices” policy.* News of the groundbreaking practice spread instantly throughout Edo and customers thronged the store. However, Echigoya also experienced serious harassment by its rivals. It was expelled by the *kimono*-merchant association and merchants throughout the city cancelled their Echigoya transactions. Clerks made the rounds apologizing but were ignored. Kyoto suppliers suspended their deliveries as well, but some were fortunately more understanding and continued sending goods to Echigoya.



Above: A number of stores in Edo called themselves Echigoya. To differentiate his store from the others, Takatoshi adopted this unique crest. The companies of the Mitsui Group still use a logo based on this crest. Left/ A wooden signboard used in the Edo period. The words say, “cash sales at fixed prices”



Utagawa Toyoharu, Ukie Surugacho gofuku-ya zu, from the mid-Edo period when Echigoya was at its peak (Mie Prefectural Museum collection). The store's interior fills an area of more than 100 *tatami* mats (over 180 sq. meters). Hanging from the high ceiling are fabric samples and tags that appear to be the names of the sales floor staff.

Echigoya's clerks banded together and overcame the loss of their clients, but then toilets were set up directly outside the shop and the filth poured into Echigoya's kitchens. Echigoya thereupon decided to merge the two shops and relocate to a new storefront. Preparations for the move were reportedly carried out in absolute secrecy to avoid notice.

A new location in Surugacho
Commissions from the shogunate

The new store was designed to draw even more customers. Its energy was likened to that of “a tiger released in a boundless field” (*Sho-bai-ki*). The harassment intensified: Echigoya's rivals spread rumors of possible cannon explosions, hired shady-looking *ex-samurai* to loiter near the store, and told bad tales at the magis-

trate's office. But word of Echigoya's reputation finally reached the ruling Edo shogunate, and when Takahira was appointed shogunal procurement officer, the harassment ceased. Echigoya had endured it patiently for 14 years. The Surugacho move prompted Echigoya to establish a money-exchange business. Takahira and his fourth son, Takatomo, started taking money-exchange orders at Echigoya in 1690. *Kimono* sales and money exchange became the twin engines of Echigoya's success. When Takatoshi passed away in 1694 at age 74, Echigoya boasted three money-exchange businesses in the great cities of Edo, Kyoto, and Osaka, and eight *kimono* stores, including one selling relatively cheap cotton goods. Their total revenue came to six percent that of the entire shogunal budget. The Mitsui family had built a tremendous asset in just one generation.

Takatoshi's teachings

Takatoshi rarely wrote down his own thoughts, but they appear in *Shobai-ki*, a record of business left by his third son, Takaharu. Here we explore Takatoshi's views on business.

Be grateful for peace

Never forget your obligation to the *shogun*. Whatever your line of business, gold and silver will not work in turbulent times. The ground must be secure before a house can be built on it.



Mitsui Takaharu, *Shobai-ki* [Business Record], 1722 (Mitsui Bunko collection)

Stern on the outside, gentle within

It is best that people turn a stern face to the world but harbor mercy within, much like Buddhism's unshakeable guardian, Fudo Myo-o guard. Takatoshi held to this principle, often scolding his clerks and children until they understood what was needed. It is a waste of effort simply to explain things to those who cannot understand.

What are the “two Ways” of a merchant?

Without thrift, a merchant cannot excel, no matter how big his business. Like the samurai who fails to master both pen and sword, the merchant who lacks in either trade or thrift is like a bird missing one of its wings.

A merchant's spending shows his caliber

Great merchants spend without keeping accounts. Mid-caliber merchants record every outlay. Low-level merchants keep no records. Mid-caliber merchants spend according to their earnings, but the greatest spend only what is needful. Spending with an eye on earnings will never breed success.



Treasure the start of the year and the day

New Year's Day is the start of the year's business. 6:00 a.m. is the start of the day. The merchant knows the value of the start of the year and the day. Never forget for a moment the spirit of business.

Dealing with receivables

When customers buy on credit, you should either use every means to collect their payments or be courageous enough to take the loss from the outset. If you do, the customer will come back and will eventually become a regular.

Business tips

When suppliers offer you alcohol, do not drink it. But when they come to you to sell their goods, serve them *sake* and hear how their business is doing. A 10-penny reduction in spending is more certain than a 10-fold return.

Passing on his legacy

After Takatoshi died in 1674, his descendants continued to pass on his teachings. We begin with his sons who had first-hand knowledge of his work and words.

Takatoshi's teachings A record for posterity

Shortly before his death, Takatoshi created a will dividing his assets among his many children. His sons responded by presenting a written oath (*Issatsu*) to the eldest, Takahira, who assumed his father's place. They promised to share all the assets and the stores, rather than dividing them up, and to maintain the business as it had been. The joint ownership of the business later formed the core of the Mitsui family's cohesion.

It was Takatoshi's second and third sons, Takatomi and Takaharu, who recorded their father's teachings in their writings, *Takatomi Soan* and *Shobai-ki* (see p.16). *Sochiku isho* [Takatoshi's Testament], written by Takahira in his later years, added to these the *Shinjo itchi*,



Takafusa's record of Takatoshi's "testament," *Sochiku isho*, has been carefully preserved by the Mitsui family. Sochiku was the Buddhist name Takahira adopted late in life.

or "family code of brotherly union" which urged family cohesion, self-discipline, and harmony among all ranks serving the business. These commercial and ethical principles remained the Mitsui's family's credo until the compilation of the Mitsui Family Constitution in 1900. (※1) Edo suffered a severe recession in the 1720s, and great merchant houses failed one after another. Takatoshi's grandson, Takafusa, hoped that by writing about the causes of these failures, he could help educate future generations of merchants. His *Chonin koken-roku*, or "Some Observations on Merchants," gave accounts of some 50 merchants. The idea, suggested by a trusted clerk, Nakanishi Sosuke, (※2) enabled Takafusa to pass on his grandfather's wisdom and teach new Mitsui generations to face changing times with care and foresight.



Soju koji koyuigon, Takatoshi's will detailing the division of his property among his children (Mitsui Bunko collection)

※1 The Mitsui Family Constitution. Written in 1900, when a modern legal system was beginning to take hold, this new code stressed the importance of continued joint ownership of family assets. ※2 Nakanishi was an early officer in the Mitsui business. At the risk of his own position, he helped establish the Omotokata, which determined Mitsui policy through consultations among Mitsui family members and senior clerks.

Nurturing arts and culture

The Mitsui family supported many famous writers and artists. Mitsui Memorial Museum preserves and exhibits works related to the Mitsui family. We asked curator Shimizu Minoru to tell us about the Mitsui family's relationship with the art world.



Made by Do'nyu. Said to be a Takatoshi bequest.

Tea Bowl named Sairai
Red Raku Ware



National treasure. Made in the Momoyama period (latter half of the 16th century), and said to be the finest example of Shino-ware.

Tea Bowl named Unohana-gaki
Shino Ware



Mitsui Memorial Museum

Shimizu Minoru,
General Manager
Curatorial Department

Cultivating appreciation of the arts Supporting and nurturing artists

The museum has about 4,000 items (and 130 thousand stamps) collected by the Mitsui family since the Edo period, among them six designated National Treasures, including the Pine Trees in the Snow screen and the Shino-ware tea bowl named Unohana-gaki, 75 Important

Cultural Properties, and four Important Art Objects. With tea ceremony utensils, paintings, lacquerware, swords, and *Noh* masks and costumes, the collection speaks to the friendship and patronage given to artists by successive generations of the Mitsui family.

The artwork can be highly revealing. For example, Takatoshi Mitsui is said to have loved the Akaraku tea bowl (above) by Do'nyu,



Pine Trees in the Snow

third-generation Raku-house potter, meaning that though known to have devoted his life to business, Takatoshi also appreciated tea ceremony. Gamou Ujisato, founder of Takatoshi's hometown, was a leading disciple of renowned tea master Sen no Rikyu, and Matsusaka became a thriving center for tea. The local Kishu-Tokugawa domain lords, and therefore Mitsui family members, too, studied Omotesenke-style tea ceremony. This tea bowl is said to have been used to make thick tea for their annual dinner gatherings.

Takatoshi eventually moved from Matsusaka to Kyoto, and nine of the eleven Mitsui branch families have lived in Kyoto since then. The most esteemed merchants in those days were those based in Kyoto with outlets in Edo. Mitsui was one such, and tea ceremony was an important mode of communication with court nobles and domain lords alike.

In the 1700s, Takatoshi's son, Takahira, greatly expanded both the *kimono* and the finance business. He became patron to the ten artisan families favored by the Senke school of tea,* including the Raku family of tea-bowl makers, and to leading painters of panels, screens, and scrolls. Takaharu, the fourth head of the Kita-Mitsui family, also donated large sums to Kansai-re-

gion temples and shrines. Takakiyo and Takasuke (generations five and six), supported the renowned painter Maruyama Okyo, and though his patron, also became his apprentice, so deeply was he committed to painting.

Takasuke is said to have been the Mitsui family's greatest tea master. A tea bowl remains that was made by him and painted by Kishu lord Tokugawa Harutomi, Seventh-generation

Enjoying Plum Blossoms and Snowy Landscape



By Kawabata Gyokusho. The snowy landscape of winter paired with the plum blossoms of spring.

*Ten households that crafted tea bowls and other tea utensils and that were intimate with the three tea schools founded by Sen-no-Rikyu's descendants.



The only Maruyama Okyo painting to be designated a National Treasure. Believed to have been commissioned by the Mitsui family.

Takanari, was a brilliant painter though an amateur, and carried on exchanges with literary luminaries such as Rai Sanyo. "Patronizing the arts" meant not simply providing money but cultivating an understanding of art and commissioning new work, thereby encouraging artistic development. These stimulating exchanges nurtured a superlative culture of the arts.

In the late 1800s (Meiji era), Japanese culture declined in favor of Western culture. Eighth Mitsui-family head, Takayoshi, favored calligraphy, painting, and sword-making, and became patron to the Japanese *Nihonga*-style painter Kawabata Gyokusho, a former Mitsui apprentice. Gyokusho later became a professor at the Tokyo Academy of the Fine Arts (today's Tokyo University of the Arts) and established the Kawabata Painting Academy to train new generations of artists. The Mitsui family's continued support for the arts at the dawn of the modern period had a considerable impact on the subsequent development of Japanese culture.

A Major Renovation in Nihonbashi, heart of the city

The Mitsui Memorial Museum moved into the Mitsui Main Building in Nihonbashi in 2005.

"Having been involved with the museum since its inception, I find it extremely meaningful that people can now view Mitsui-related artworks at the Mitsui Main Building on the site of Takatoshi's original Echigoya," says Mr. Shimizu.

"After an eight-month renovation, the museum reopened in April 2022. We have updated the climate control and can now adjust the lighting to best suit each work on display. We are celebrating the 400th anniversary of Takatoshi's birth this year and hope you will visit our newly renovated museum and the artwork associated with the Mitsui family."



Mitsui Memorial Museum

2-1-1-7F Nihonbashi-muromachi,
Chuo-ku, Tokyo
TEL 050-5541-8600 (Hello Dial)
Open: 10:00-17:00
(Admission until 30 minutes before closing)
Closed Mondays
1 minute walk from Mitsukoshi-mae Station (G-12, Z-09), Exit A7



Riding the winds of change

Echigoya first opened in 1673.

The next 350 years brought the 1860s Boshin War, the 1940s Pacific War, and the post-WWII dissolution of *zaibatsu* conglomerates.

Mitsui's story is one of resilience.

Turbulent transition years, 1860s-70s the birth of banks and trading companies

Mitsui was unavoidably drawn into the turmoil of the transition from Edo to Meiji rule. *Kimono* sales dropped and the financial industry saw deficits. Mitsui's coffers suffered, too.

Mitsui asked Minomura Rizaemon, an intimate with the shogunal Commissioner of Accounts,



Surugacho Mitsui-gumi on the site of the former kimono shop, 1874. Mitsui Bank opened here in 1876.

to help stem government appropriations of cash from Mitsui. A brilliant success, he was put in charge of government-related accounts and then moved into major roles in Mitsui's financial business. Mitsui's far-sightedness is plain: mid-career outsiders were rarely hired in those days.

New forces battled the Edo shogunate in the 1860s. If Mitsui joined the losing side, it too would lose, so it maintained ties with both, helping the Satsuma domain procure provisions and military funds, and then supporting the new, financially strapped Meiji government. In 1873, Mitsui helped Shibusawa Eiichi and Inoue Kaoru set up Japan's first national bank. Three years later, it founded Mitsui Bank, Japan's first private bank, and the Mitsui Trading Company.* Minomura persuaded trading-company executive Masuda Takashi to head the venture, and he turned the 16-member firm into a trading company that spanned the globe.

Minomura Rizaemon (1821-1877)

Son of a *samurai* official from the north. His father left his post when Minomura was a child, and together they roamed the country. At 25, he married into an Edo sugar- and oil-merchant's family; later he invested in a money-exchange firm. Worked for the shogunate's last financial magistrate, Oguri Kozunekosuke, before joining Mitsui.



Masuda Takashi (1848-1938)

Born into a Sado Island family of a government official. Served on the 1863 shogunal mission to France, later joined the Ministry of Finance. With his mentor, Inoue Kaoru, founded Senshu Company, oversaw operations there. Later turned the Mitsui Trading Company into a global enterprise and helped lead the entire Mitsui conglomerate.



Inscribing the times with its name A "Mitsui of the People"

Further trials followed. The 1882 establishment of a central bank – the Bank of Japan – deprived Mitsui Bank of government funds, a key source of capital. Mitsui Bank faltered and bank runs followed. Nakamigawa Hikojiro joined Mitsui as a new director in 1891. President of the Sanyo Railway, he was nephew of Keio University founder Fukuzawa Yukichi and himself a Keio graduate. He disposed of non-performing loans, brought in capable new personnel, and closed the government-funds branch to eliminate collusion with the government. Oji Paper (now Oji Holdings, Nippon Paper), Shibaura Seisakusho (now Toshiba), Tomioka Silk Mill, and others also were added to the Mitsui group. Mitsui bought the government's Miike Mine in 1889 (later Mitsui Mine). Miike was Japan's largest producer of coal and a veritable "gold mine" for Mitsui. Mitsui also expanded into the coal-de-



1926. A meeting of Mitsui branch managers at the Kitake Mitsui-branch family home. The tenth-generation Kitake head-of-house is the teenager at center front.

Nakamigawa Hikojiro (1854-1901)

Nephew of leading westernizer Fukuzawa Yukichi. Graduated Keio University, entered the Ministry of Engineering before launching the Jiji Shinpo newspaper with Fukuzawa. Later an active leader of Mitsui Bank and a major investor in industrial firms.



Dan Takuma (1858-1932)

Selected at 14 by the Fukuoka domain to study in the United States. Graduated the Massachusetts Institute of Technology with a Mining degree, returned to Japan to teach, then entered the Ministry of Engineering. Worked as supervisor at Miike Coal Mine Co. from 1889, then as engineer, manager, and Chairman of Mitsui Co., Ltd.



Mitsui Main Building, completed in 1929, today a designated National Important Cultural Property. Then-Chairman Dan Takuma requested an earthquake- and fire-resistant design.

pendent chemical industry, establishing today's Mitsui Chemicals and Denka Co. Meanwhile, Dan Takuma (later Mitsui Chairman) joined the company and with 10th generation head of the Mitsui family's Kitake branch, raised the company to new heights. After Masuda retired, Mitsui continued to focus on industrial development, investing in many affiliates including Toyo Rayon (now Toray), Nippon Flour Mills (Nippon), Japan Steel Works, Sanki Engineering, Onoda Cement (Taiheiyo Cement), Mitsui Engineering & Shipbuilding (Mitsui E&S), and Mitsui Senpaku (Mitsui O.S.K. Lines). Mitsui became Japan's largest conglomerate, with a skilled employee base in banking, manufacturing, and mining. The Allied Occupation of Japan that followed World War II dismantled the Mitsui conglomerate, but its affiliated rebuilt their connections in various forms and retain them to this day. One such link among them is the Mitsui Public Relations Committee, introduced below.

*The original Mitsui Trading Company was disbanded under postwar Occupation rule, but its affiliates were recombined in 1959 to form today's Mitsui & Co.

A mission of celebration, enrichment, and empowerment

The Mitsui Public Relations Committee was launched by 24 Mitsui Group companies with the aim of contributing to society's prosperity and welfare through initiatives of a scale and content that cannot be achieved by individuals.

Read on for an introduction of its history and principal activities.

Fifty years dedicated to nurturing a rich and vibrant culture

The Mitsui Public Relations Committee was established in 1972 upon the dissolution of a joint advertising operation that had served eight Mitsui Group Companies since 1961. The same year saw the inauguration of the Diamond Glove Award for superlative baseball players who, as fielders, were rarely in the limelight. Mitsui took over the award in 1986, renaming it the "Mitsui Golden Glove Award."

Mitsui sponsored a long-running TV program, Kanetaka Kaoru's World Journey (TBS, 1959-1990), which introduced viewers to the history and culture of relatively unfamiliar parts of The world and promoted international culture. The Committee also showcased Japanese cul-



1998, recipient of the Foreign Minister's Commendation in recognition of its contribution to international cultural exchange.

ture overseas and inviting theater and performance groups from around the world to Japan. In 2015, it launched the "Mitsui Golden Takumi Award" to recognize efforts to develop traditional Japanese crafts. Commenting on the 50th anniversary, Committee Chairman Onozawa Yasuo said, "It was a challenge to sustain our activities through all the social and economic vicissitudes of these years, and I am honored to chair the Committee at this milestone. I remember watching the Kanetaka program on TV as a child and having my eyes opened to the world. We remain steadfastly committed to providing high-quality products and currently run projects like the Mitsui Golden Glove Award and the Mitsui Golden Takumi Award to that end. I have seen the esteem in which they are held by the recipients and by their colleagues in their fields, and I am dedicated to upholding our high standards."

Mr. Onozawa Yasuo, Executive Vice President of Mitsui Fudosan Co., Ltd., and chairman of the Mitsui Public Relations Committee



The Mitsui Golden Glove Award

Celebrating baseball And 50 years of its legends

The 50th Mitsui Golden Glove Award Ceremony was held in December 2021. Oh Sadaharu, Chairman of the Fukuoka SoftBank Hawks and nine-time award winner, said in his congratulatory address that, "This award changed the world of baseball in Japan by arousing athletes and teams to the importance of fielding." Six players attended the ceremony, including first-time award winners Yanagi Yuya (Chunichi Dragons) and Yamamoto Yoshinobu (Orix Buffaloes). The "Mitsui Golden Glove Legends" honors the strongest fielders of all time, selected through a vote by fans from among players who have won three or more awards in the past. The succession of names -- Chairman Oh, Ichiro, Kuwata Masumi, and others -- reminds us of the history of the award and of the story of baseball itself.



Top: Chairman Onozawa handing the trophy to pitcher Yamamoto
Bottom left: Special guest Chairman Oh
Above right: Glove-shaped trophy made of golden leather



Top: All the award winners who took the stage at the ceremony
Bottom: Winner of the "Most Popular" Award, Kutani-ware artisan Miyamoto Masao not only excels as a craftsman but is a leader in his production region

The Mitsui Golden Takumi Award

Prizing Japan's traditional crafts And connecting them with the future

The Mitsui Golden Takumi Award honors efforts to preserve Japanese craft traditions and carry them into the future. The fourth award ceremony was held in March 2022.

Among the record-breaking number of applicants were highly innovative examples of work that takes traditional crafts into new territory such as the development of sustainable materials or the creative use of the internet. Bringing the world's attention to the creativity and potential of Japan's traditional crafts will have great significance going forward.

Five Takumi Awards, two Judge's Special Awards, and two Encouragement Awards were presented at the ceremony. The "Most Popular" award was determined through online votes by the public and went to Miyamoto Masao, a craftsman of traditional Kutani ware.