



Index of the Mitsui Mi'ike Mine Archive

Raja Adal
University of Pittsburgh

The Mitsui Mi'ike Mine Archive Goals of the indexing Project

The Mitsui Mi'ike Mine archive consists of seventy bound volumes of documents housed at the Mitsui Archives near Tokyo. This is probably the most complete business archive for the study of modern Japan available today. Its uniqueness lies in its size, some 30,000 pages, and its chronological span, half a century ranging from 1889 to 1940. Perhaps equally important for the researcher is the institutional home of the Mi'ike Mine archive. The Mitsui Archives has four full time researchers with doctoral degrees, publishes a journal about research that relates to its holdings, features a wealth of reference materials useful for the researcher, and since 2015 has permitted virtually unlimited photographic reproduction of its collections. This not only allows researchers to easily reproduce the documents in which they are interested, but also provides them with an opportunity to connect their work to that of others and to ask questions. For an overview of the kind of research that has made use of the documents in the Mitsui Archives, in 2017 the 50th anniversary edition of its journal, *Mitsui bunko rongi*, features short pieces by more than one hundred researchers who have used its documents (my entry is also available at https://www.academia.edu/35788031/Adal_Taipuraita_ha_shintai_to_bunsho_wo_tsunageuruka).

Goals of the indexing Project History and Current State of the Project

The goal of this indexing project is to produce metadata of the entire Mitsui Mi'ike Mine Archive. The index consists of one line in an Excel spreadsheet for each document in the archives. Each line includes information which is not only useful for my research about the material history of writing, but could be useful to any number of researchers working on modern Japan. The information entered includes the date of each source, its type (letter, a telegram, a memo, a budget, a map, etc.), the number of pages, the color of the main text (which provides clues about the instrument of reproduction), the color of additional text (which provides clues about the instrument used for annotation and certification), the writing instrument used to produce the main text as well as any annotations and signatures, and the type of paper including any letterhead. In addition, letters include the location of the sender and receiver, the department of the sender and receiver in the company, and the position of the sender and receiver in the company. Many of the documents also include the names of the sender, receiver, or any other person who signed or stamped their name on it.

The Mitsui Mi'ike Mine Archive metadata can be used in two ways. At the very least, it provides an extensive and detailed table of contents of this archive, one which is not available anywhere else and which, to my knowledge, is not publicly available for any other Japanese archive of this size. The metadata can also be analyzed. At the simplest level, this could mean, for example, sorting all letters according to the date, which would instantly result in a list of the more than ten-thousand letters in this archive. At a more complex level, this metadata opens the door to a digital analysis. The geographic data, the location of the sender and receiver of letters, makes GIS mapping possible.

The dates on the documents make a time series analysis possible. The department and position of the sender and receiver of the letters makes a network analysis possible. In short, this metadata collection can be useful to a wide range of research objectives. I hope that it will considerably facilitate the work of almost anyone thinking of consulting the archive, but even separately from the documents that it refers to, it can serve as material for a large-scale digital analysis that can drive any number of analyses of the social, economic, and cultural history of modern Japan.

History and Current State of the Project

When I first visited the Mitsui Archive in 2011, I spent most of my time working on the Mitsui Bussan archives, the holding company at the center of the prewar Mitsui conglomerate. While looking for a larger archive that would lend itself to a large-scale analysis, and in consultation with Dr. Kikkawa Yō, the head researcher at the Mitsui Archives, I came upon the Mi'ike Mine archive. Taking advantage of the Mitsui Archive's recent policy change that allowed virtually unlimited reproduction of documents, in 2016 I photographed the documents in the Mi'ike Mine archive. The photographs are of high quality, taken with a 24 MP APS-C camera mounted on tripod and triggered via radio remote. This has resulted in 31,925 images in JPG format of 6000 x 4000 pixels each occupying a total of 363 GB of space.

With generous funding from the University of Pittsburgh Central Research Development, the Special Initiative to Promote Scholarly Activities in the Humanities, the Social Science Research Initiative, and most importantly the Asian Studies Center, I put together a team of research assistants to help me input the material in this archive. This has required developing a manual with instructions on how to input the data, an Excel spreadsheet with multiple drop-down lists and macros, and scheduling office hours during which assistants could come and consult about how to read and enter information from the sources. Managing the assistants is a team leader with extensive experience reading cursive handwriting (*kuzushiji*), who corresponds with the assistants, checks their work, and works on maintaining the accuracy and uniformity of the entries.

The Online Publication of the Index

The final product of this project will be a spreadsheet containing an estimated nineteen-thousand lines, each representing one document in the Mitsui Mi'ike Mine archive. An estimated 60 percent of these documents will be letters and the rest will be a variety of other documents, including telegrams, envelopes, memoranda, budgets, participant lists, and maps. The spreadsheet will be posted online in 2023, in an open data depository and in accordance with the FAIR data principles that will ensure that it is Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable. It will also be supplemented by a description, a data dictionary, and other notes that will contextualize it and facilitate its use.

The spreadsheet will be advertised on social media, including on my academia.edu site, <https://pitt.academia.edu/RajaAdal>. I very much hope that this project and the conscientious and systematic work of the research assistants who are working to complete it can be of use to researchers working on modern Japan.



New articles in this journal are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 United States License.



This journal is published by the University Library System, University of Pittsburgh as part of its D-Scribe Digital Publishing program and is cosponsored by the University of Pittsburgh Press.