

sinre

Shown below are places where the songs and dances introduced in this leaflet have been handed down. There are various other aspects of Ainu culture in addition to those introduced during the performance.

Note: The place names in this leaflet are those that were used when the songs or dances were recorded. They may differ from those currently used.

Place names



Pasenopo iyayraykere

Cultural practitioners serving as program instructors

They provide guidance to cultural practitioners in various parts of Hokkaido.

Kazuyuki Yamamaru (Shiraoi)	Shihoko Takahashi (Shiraoi)	Chieko Oshino (Mukawa)
Nanako Sakai (Obihiro)	Mari Sakai (Obihiro)	Kana Yoshine (Obihiro)
Hideo Akibe (Akan)	Eiko Yamamoto (Akan)	Kayo Watanabe (Akan)
Tomoko Taira (Akan)		

Traditional Ainu Dance is designated as an Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property of Japan and is inscribed on the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritages.

Preservation societies designated as important intangible folk cultural properties of Japan

Akan Ainu Culture Preservation Society	Chitose Ainu Culture Transmission and Preservation Society
Asahikawa Chikappuni Ainu Folk Culture Preservation Society	Teshikaga Town-Kussharo Kotan Ainu Culture Preservation Society
Urakawa Ainu Culture Preservation Society	Niikappu Ethnic Culture Preservation Society
Obihiro Kamutou-Uopo Preservation Society	Mukawa Ainu Culture Transmission and Preservation Society
Sapporo Upopo Preservation Society	Kushiro Rimse Preservation Society of Harutori Ainu Old-Style Dancing
Samani Folk Culture Preservation Society	Biratori Ainu Culture Preservation Society
Shizunai Folk Culture Preservation Society	Mitsuishi Folk Culture Preservation Society
Shiraoi Folk Performing Arts Preservation Society	Mombetsu Utari Culture Preservation Society
Shiranuka Ainu Culture Preservation Society	

UPOPOY

Traditional
Performing Arts

UPOPOY

Cultural Exchange Hall



Cultural Exchange Hall

uekari cise

Upopoy (National Ainu Museum and Park) is working to revive and transmit diverse aspects of indigenous Ainu culture handed down in Hokkaido, Sakhalin and elsewhere.

Traditional performing arts have played a central role in the daily life of Ainu people, having been performed at various rituals and in everyday situations. They are diverse and include lyrical songs that reflect the feelings of the moment, dances that mimic the movements of animals or plants, dances to ward off evil spirits, work dances that accompany tasks such as pounding grain, and entertaining dramatic dances. The terminology used to describe songs and dances varies by region, such as *rimse*, *horippa*, *upopo*, and *heciri*. They have been passed down along with their local characteristics. Today, Ainu people are actively engaged in an array of activities, including music and stage dramas, while promoting their traditional performing arts to the rest of the world.

At Uekari Cise (Cultural Exchange Hall), Ainu and Sisam* from across Japan work together to revive, transmit and promote traditional Ainu performing arts dating from various periods with the help of local cultural practitioners.

Pirkano nukar yan (Take a look and have fun.)

*"Sisam" means "neighbor" and denotes ethnic Japanese.

Sinot

Forms of Tradition

We present performances that have been directly passed down to us by local cultural practitioners. Traditional Ainu performing arts frequently incorporate improvisation, meaning that Ainu traditions live on in line with the times. Please enjoy songs, dances, instrumental performances, and various other traditional performing arts that have been passed down in various regions against the spectacular natural backdrop of Hokkaido.



In “*Sinot*,” five performances chosen from among those below will be presented per session. Find out which one you’ll be seeing!

Upopo

(seated song): Shiraoi

This is sung in a round, known as an *ukouku* in Ainu, with a rhythm created by beating the lid of a lacquered container called a *shintoko*, which was obtained through trade. The singers combine several techniques, such as singing falsetto and making breathy sounds.

In some regions, *upopo* are also called different names, such as *rok upopo* and *heciri*.

Sarorun rimse

(crane dance): Obihiro

The crane dance, which has been passed down in various parts of Hokkaido, features parent cranes showing their young how to beat their wings before taking to the skies together.

Huttare cuy

(Sakhalin fir dance): Obihiro

This dance portrays Sakhalin firs swaying in the wind on a stormy day. The vigorous dance is considered an endurance competition or dance competition. More recently, it’s been called the dance of black hair, because the female dancers tend to have long black hair.

Sicocoy

(bountiful harvest dance): Honbetsu

This dance features a series of farm tasks, including sowing, covering seeds with soil and harvesting, as well as making dumplings from the crops. It conveys the joys of the harvest and the hopes for a bountiful crop.

Hussa hero

(purification dance): Mukawa

This dance has been handed down as one that has warded off the epidemics that would break out in *kotan* (villages). The dancers breathe on those who play the role of the sick and stamp the ground to drive off the epidemic.

Emus rimse

(sword dance): Akan/Akan and Shiraoi

Known as a dance to ward off evil spirits immediately, this dance has been performed in eastern Hokkaido. Today, it’s popular among males.

Ku rimse

(bow dance): Akan/Akan and Shiraoi

This dance describes how a hunter was so captivated by the beauty of a bird he’d spotted that he was distracted from shooting it. The dance is said to have been performed during rituals and on other occasions to expel evil spirits.

Iyomante rimse

(bear spirit-sending ceremony dance): Shiraoi

This dance is performed at the *iyomante*, a ceremony for returning the spirit of a hunted animal to the realm of *kamuy*, or at celebratory events. People dance while singing a succession of songs. The dance changes depending on the song.

The dance also features chants and a vocal accompaniment with a trill, known as a *hororse*.



Uwerankarap

(formal greetings): all regions

Ainu offer *uwerankarap* ceremoniously. The speakers use formal expressions delivered in their distinctive pitches.

Yukar/sakorpe

(heroic epics): Shiraoui, Biratori, Asahikawa, Obihiro, or Shiranuka

Yukar, also known as *sakorpe*, are entertaining stories that have been narrated at rituals and in everyday life. In many stories, the hero has superhuman powers, flying in the sky and seeing great distances. *Yukar* and *sakorpe* include special expressions that differ from colloquial ones, and pitches and rhythms are used in the narration. In some regions, they're also called by other names, such as *yairap* or *hawki*.

Mukkuri

(mouth harp): all regions

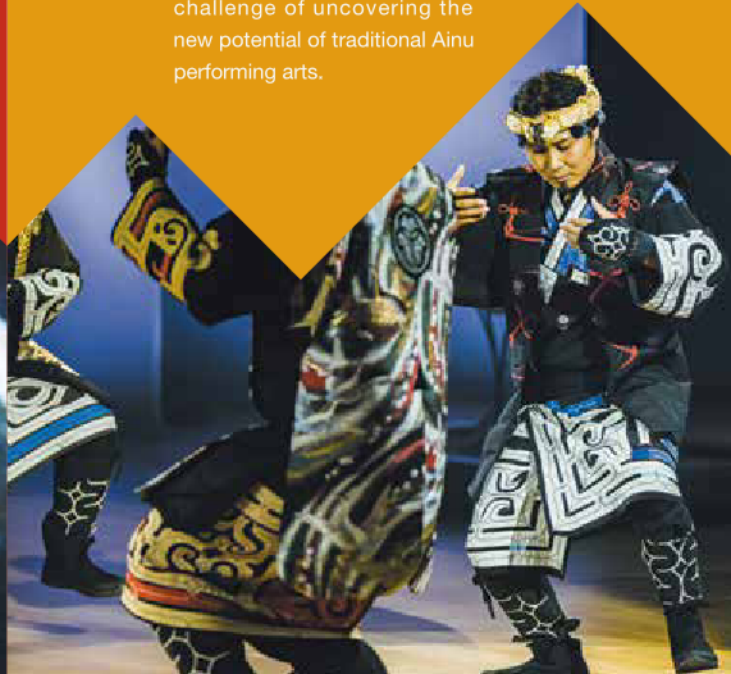
Various musical instruments called mouth harps can be found in many places across Eurasia. They produce a sound when the reed vibrates in the player's mouth. The *mukkuri*, a mouth harp indigenous to the Ainu, is made of metal or bamboo. In playing the *mukkuri*, the player mimics the sounds of nature, such as wind and rain, imitates animal calls, or sometimes shares personal emotions through sound. In some regions, the *mukkuri* is also called the *mukkur*, *mukku*, *muhkun*, or *muhkuna*.



Imeru

Forms of Revival

Many traditional Ainu performing arts have become less likely to be witnessed with the passage of time. The valuable audio and video recordings of these performances that have been preserved in various parts of the world are rich in irreplaceable charm. *Imeru* ("lightning") shines a light on the next generation of performers who are reviving songs and dances that were obscured in the course of history and who are taking on the challenge of uncovering the new potential of traditional Ainu performing arts.





Tapkar

(stomping dance): all regions

At the beginning of a feast, a male performs the *tapkar* to entertain guests and *kamuy* with forceful movements and vocalizations from his throat. The voice and movements of the dancer show his individuality.

Upopo

(seated song): all regions

This is sung by seated singers in a round, known as an *ukouku* in Ainu, with a rhythm created by beating the lid of a lacquered container called a *shintoko*, which was obtained through trade. The singers combine several techniques, such as singing in falsetto and making breathy sounds.

In some regions, *upopo* are also called different names, such as *rok upopo* or *heciri*.

Mukkuri

(mouth harp): all regions

Various musical instruments called mouth harps can be found in many places across Eurasia. They produce a sound when the reed vibrates in the player's mouth. The *mukkuri*, a mouth harp indigenous to the Ainu, is made of metal or bamboo. In playing the *mukkuri*, the player mimics the sounds of nature, such as wind and rain, imitates animal calls, or sometimes shares personal emotions through sound. In some regions, the *mukkuri* is also called the *mukkur*, *mukku*, *muhkun*, or *muhkuna*.

Sarurunkamuy rimse

(crane dance): Shiraoui and Akan

The crane dance, which has been passed down in various parts of Hokkaido, features parent cranes showing their young how to beat their wings before taking to the skies together. The *sarurunkamuy rimse* originated in exchanges between Ainu of Shiraoui and Akan.





Emus rimse

(sword dance): Kushiro or Akan

Known as a dance to ward off evil spirits immediately, this dance has been performed in eastern Hokkaido. Today, it's popular among males.

Iyomante rimse

(bear spirit-sending ceremony dance): Shiraoi

This dance is performed at the *iyomante*, a ceremony for returning the spirit of a hunted animal to the realm of *kamuy*, or at celebratory events. People dance while singing a succession of songs. The dance changes depending on the song.

The dance also features chants and a vocal accompaniment with a trill, known as a *hororse*.



Inomi

Forms of Creation

The *iyomante* (bear spirit-sending ceremony), which represents the spiritual culture of the Ainu people, includes various songs and dances to entertain the *kamuy* (the bear spirit). The limited opportunity for this ceremony to be held today has led to the development of *Inomi*, so that we can learn about and pass on the sensibilities of our ancestors to future generations. The program showcases the essence of prayer, which is considered the origin of dance.





Rimse (dance) in the Shiraai Kotan:
Taisho period – early Showa period (ca. 1912–1941)

Ainu believe that everything in this world has a spirit. We call all powerful living beings and phenomena *kamuy*. When in their own realm, *kamuy* look and live like humans. When they visit the realm of humans, they manifest themselves in various other forms.

We have called bears *kimunkamuy* and have considered their meat and fur as gifts bestowed by *kimunkamuy*. The *iyomante* is an important traditional ceremony in which the *kamuy* is offered prayers of appreciation and is entertained with sake, song and dance. The spirit of the *kamuy* is returned to the realm of *kamuy* with lots of gifts.

Roughly two weeks of preparation precede an *iyomante* ceremony, and prayers are offered for several days to celebrate the departure of the spirit of a hunted bear in its return to the realm of *kamuy*. “*Inomi*” presents the ethos of *iyomante*, as it recreates how the ceremony was performed.



Preparations

Iyuta upopo

(pounding song): Biratori

We sing this song while threshing and milling rice, barnyard millet, foxtail millet and other grains in a mortar and pestle. The song allows us to work in time with one another. It’s performed in 2 beats or 3 beats, depending on the number of people involved.

Sakekar upopo

(sake-making song): Akan

Women were tasked with preparing sake for rituals. They would mix rice, barnyard millet, foxtail millet and other grains with a rice mold starter (*koji*) and strain the sake while singing and dancing around the cask.

Takusa rimse

(purification dance): Akan

Takusa refers to a clump of bamboo grass, mugwort or other herbaceous plants. People drive away evil spirits by hitting the ground, walls and floors of the house or elsewhere with *takusa* held in both hands while chanting “*Hussa*.” This dance originated in Akan, and it’s performed at the beginning of rituals and festivals.



Kamuynomi

At large-scale rituals such as *iyomante*, prayers are offered to many important *kamuy*, which vary depending on the region and family. All rituals begin with prayers to the fire *kamuy*, because this *kamuy* is believed to help deliver prayers to other *kamuy* effectively.

In *kamuynomi* (the offering of prayers to *kamuy*), celebrants hold a sake cup and offer sake to *kamuy* using an *ikupasuy* (libation stick). After they offer prayers, sake is served to the celebrants themselves, who use the same sake cup to share sake with *kamuy*. Adding luster to the interactions between *kamuy* and Ainu are special foods, tobacco and performances of various performing arts.

Tapkar

(stomping dance): all regions

At the beginning of a feast, a male performs the *tapkar* to entertain guests and *kamuy* with forceful movements and vocalizations from his throat. The voice and movements of the dancer show his individuality.

Upopo

(seated song): Shiraoi

This is sung by seated singers in a round, known as an *ukouku* in Ainu, with a rhythm created by beating the lid of a lacquered container called a *shintoko*, which was obtained through trade. The singers combine several techniques, such as singing in falsetto and making breathy sounds. In some regions, *upopo* are also called different names, such as *rok upopo* or *heciri*.



Hancikap rimse

(waterfowl dance): Shiraoi

People in two files mimic the movements of waterfowl floating on the water. They move their hands and feet elegantly as if competing with each other.

Emus rimse (sword dance): Akan

Known as a dance to ward off evil spirits immediately, this dance has been performed in eastern Hokkaido. Today, it's popular among males.

Iyomante rimse

(bear spirit-sending ceremony dance): Shiraoi

When a feast reaches its climax, people begin to dance the *iyomante rimse* in a circle. Singing a series of songs, the dance changes depending on the song. The dance also features chants and a vocal accompaniment with a trill, known as a *hororse*.

Ietokocasnureay

(an arrow that purifies the path)

This arrow is shot into the sky during an *iyomante* ceremony to indicate and purify the path to the realm of *kamuy* for the spirit of the *kimunkamuy*.

