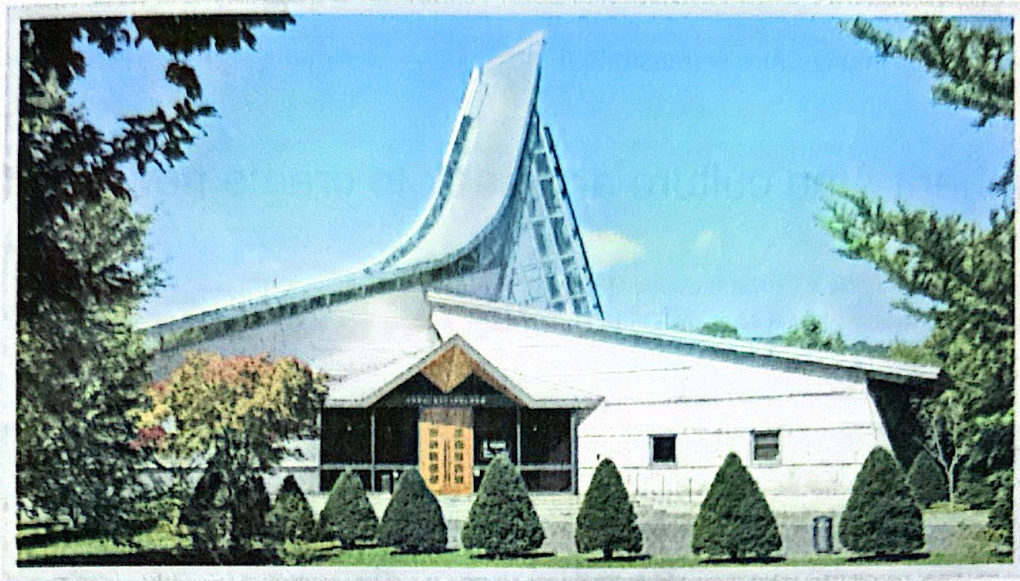
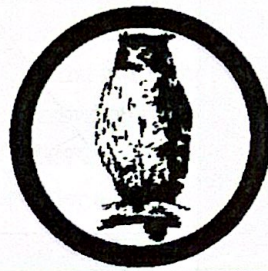


NB-01



NIBUTANI

Biratori Town

Nibutani AINU Culture Museum

How traditional Ainu Culture is transmitted today

We inherit Ainu culture and seek to create new traditions.

This is a museum where we must preserve Hokkaido's true history and culture, treasures found nowhere else on Earth. We must enrich this heritage as we pass it down.

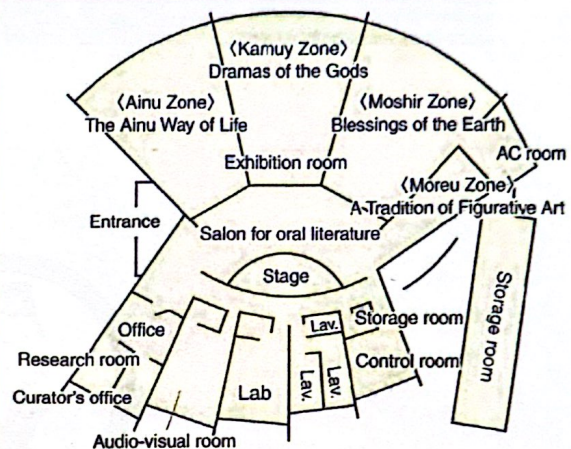


The entrance of the hall · Structural motif: a cavern at the roots of a massive tree

Salon for oral literature

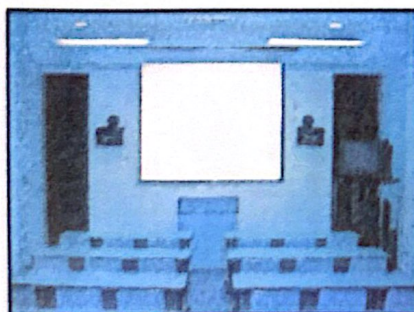
The salon is used by guides and for lectures and dancing lessons. It is also used for discussion by visitors who have seen the exhibits.

Map of the Hall



Hall Construction

- Structure: 988.5 m², 1-story building of reinforced concrete
- Construction cost: Approx. 360 million yen (including exhibition construction)
- Construction period: Oct. 1, 1990 to Oct. 20, 1991
- Architect: Atelier Bnk Co., Ltd.
- Construction company: Taisei Construction Corporation, Hatta Construction Corporation
- Exhibition construction company: Nomura Co., Ltd.
- Additional storage: 259 m² (Part of the 2nd floor, completed in 1998)



Audio-visual room

Various audio-visual materials can be used freely. This is a multi-purpose room you can use for seminars and the like.



Lab

It can be used for practical seminars in traditional arts, cooking classes for ethnic cuisine, and for reference reading.



Front desk



Lounge

A Exhibition Description A



Ainu

The *Ainu* way of life

The museum's permanent exhibition is presented in three zones: the *Ainu* Zone, *Kamuy* Zone and *Moshir* Zone.

The first zone, the *Ainu* Zone, introduces everyday items used in child rearing, recreation, woodcarving, clothing making, eating, and other aspects of life.

Wonder at the splendid traditional technique and sense of beauty that is particularly evident in carvings and embroidered patterns.

In this zone, you can try your hand at drawing a pattern, looking through examples of woodcarving and embroidery. Have a great time!

Biratori Town
Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum



The voice of *kotankor-kamuy* 1

Kotankor-kamuy (Blakiston's fish owl, the village deity) will be guiding you through the exhibition. You'll hear recorded descriptions of panels, starting with those in the *Ainu* Zone.



Kotankor-kamuy

The village deity

I'm a Blakiston's fish owl. The villagers call me *kotankor-kamuy*, "the village deity".

The land here has seen many generations of *Ainu*. I'd like to take you back to bygone days to tell you about how the *Ainu* lived. This is a story that was old before your great-grandmother was young.

Oh, I forgot to mention: The word "*Ainu*" means "human" in the *Ainu* language. Keep this in mind as you walk the exhibition.

Ikarkar

Embroidered patterns

One thing a girl must master before becoming a woman is needlework. When accepting a marriage proposal, she sends embroidered wrist covers and leggings to her suitor, to prove she has mastered basic work skills and is ready to become a good wife.

It's not certain when *Ainu* patterns originated. Not even I know, so it must've been quite some time ago. The belief is that the pattern endows the wearer with strength and wards off danger. There is also the wish to clothe the beloved in finery. It is these desires that have made it possible for this tradition to be passed down for so long.

Sinta

Cradle

Like ethnic peoples everywhere, the *Ainu* rear their children with great care. Cradles and other items related to children are usually made by someone who is spiritually accomplished or who is blessed with many children.

This infant's pacifier is made of alder, which is sometimes used as a curative to promote blood supply. Children grow through play. Through experience, they eventually gain the wisdom and skills required of adults.

Attush

Attush weaving

The *Ainu* have intimate knowledge of wild plants including trees, and they use these skillfully. *Attush* is made using Japanese elm bark. Late spring and early summer, especially from May to June, is considered the best season to strip off the bark.

Some *Ainu* travel all the way to the upper reaches of the *Saru* River to find trees of the best quality. When stripping off the bark, they make sure to strip off only one-quarter of it. When they are done, the tree is wrapped with rope to keep it from withering. This is the *Ainu* way.

Ramram-noka

Scaly carving

It is important for a man to use knives skillfully. Otherwise, he can't make bows and arrows, or traps for hunting.

Skill in woodworking also shows that you can hunt well and live without worrying about food.

A man who falls in love carves a wooden accessory and sends it to his beloved. If she uses it, it tells him, "I love you, too."

Utomnukar and *cise-a=kar*

Marriage and building a new house

At an *Ainu* wedding, the bride and groom share a full bowl of rice, each eating half. Did you know that the word *utomnukar* (marriage) originally meant "to look at each other"? After the wedding, a new house is usually built close to groom's parents' house.

The *Ainu* word for house is *cise*, and building a new house is called *cise-a=kar*.

It only takes a day to build the whole house, because all the villagers pitch in, quickly gathering materials and raising the frame.



A Exhibition Description K

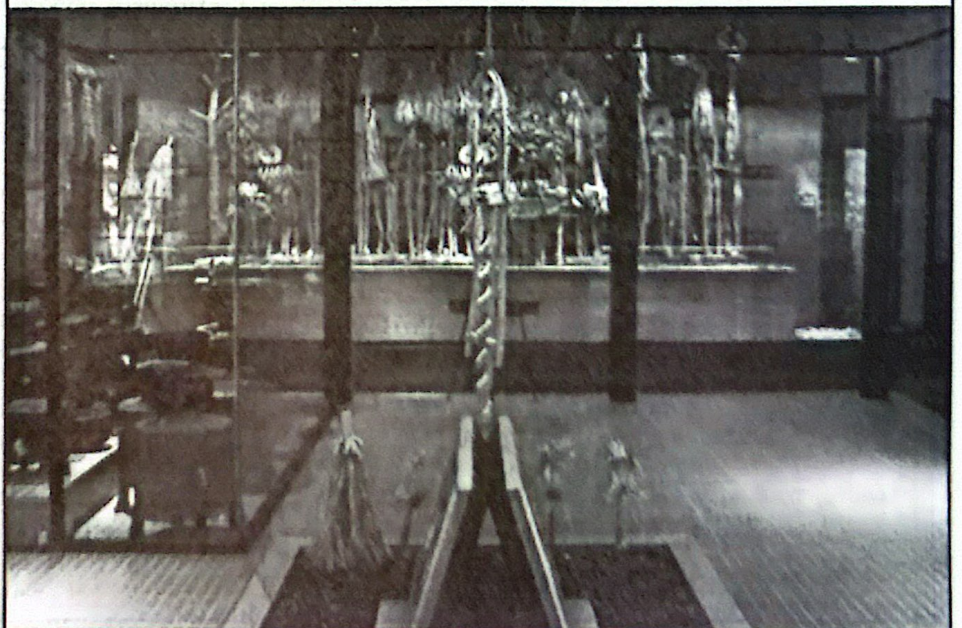
Kamuy

Drama of the gods

The *Kamuy* Zone focuses on *Ainu* spiritual life, from religion and prayer to legends and folktales.

The video area is in a room designed with columns that recall an *Ainu cise* (dwelling). Enjoy videos of various *yukar* (heroic epics), *kamuy yukar* (myths), and *uwepeker* (folktales). In this rare collection of traditional stories, there are some you can hear only at this museum.

Inside the booths are video recordings of the *iomante* ceremony, and of ancient *Ainu* dance that has been designated as a national significant intangible cultural asset. These are there for your viewing.



Biratori Town
Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum

The voice of *kotankor-kamuy* 2

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Sisirmuka

Saru River

The *Ainu* call the *Saru* River *Sisirmuka*, "the river whose mouth is blocked off." From this wide river, tons of sand washes out to sea. Since the river is blessed with a rich natural environment, the *Ainu* have long lived on its banks. Many legends have been passed down by the people living on various streams in this river basin.

It is here that *okikurmi kamuy*, the god who bestowed wisdom on humans, is said to have descended from the realm of the gods.

Upopo

Traditional song and dance

Men and women both dress up at festival time. Women wearing shining earrings and necklaces gather at the fireplace. As they sing the *upopo* canon, the festival gets into full swing.

Through dance, they portray cranes flying high and cavorting in the wild. Another dance suggests the crisscrossing of needle-tailed swifts in flight. Women hop around the fireplace again and again. The dance often goes until dawn.

Traditional *Ainu* folk dance was recently designated as a national significant intangible cultural asset.

Kamuy mintar

Festive site of the gods

Fire and water deities rank high among the deities. In the realm of the gods, deities exist in human form. Bear and raccoon deities disguise themselves as animals. Clad in pelts and furs, they come for revels with humans. The *Ainu* have long seen the world this way.

The place you're standing is not a cise where people live.

The land becomes a festive realm of the gods. Here, all the deities gather and have fun. Look! Many offerings have been left for them. You can listen to people singing, dancing and telling stories to show their hospitality to the deities.

Tukipasuy

Libation stick

When praying, devotees place this *pasuy* on sacred saké and offer it up to the deities.

Ainu don't think of these sticks as tools. They regard them as eloquent creatures that can convey human wishes to the gods.

When boys argue, elders rap them on the head with a *pasuy*. This quiets them right down. The tool is extremely important to *Ainu*, and we see various kinds *pasuy*, each skillfully fashioned.

Yukar

Heroic epics

You may have heard the word *yukar*. It refers to the story about a young orphan boy called *Ponyaunpe*. In its full version, the story is told on several consecutive nights. It's not read, of course. It's recited from memory. When people recite a *kamuy yukar*, the lively refrain of "*Sakehe*" is interjected.

Uwepeker means "folktales." The stories usually convey wisdom and moral instruction.

Why not stay and have a listen?

Iomante

Sending back the spirit of the bear to the realm of the gods

In the *iomante* ceremony, humans send back the bear's spirit to the realm of the gods.

Animals considered important by the *Ainu* and disused daily necessities are sent to the realm of the gods (*kamuy moshir*) with words of encouragement and appreciation.

When sending back one- or two-year-old bear cubs captured in their dens, there is a splendid feast.

The villagers invite guests from *kotan* (villages) near and far. Preparations are intensive. For example, saké is made for guests. In this major festival, everyone listens to *yukar*, and sings and dances into the night.



A Exhibition Description M

Moshir

Blessings of the earth

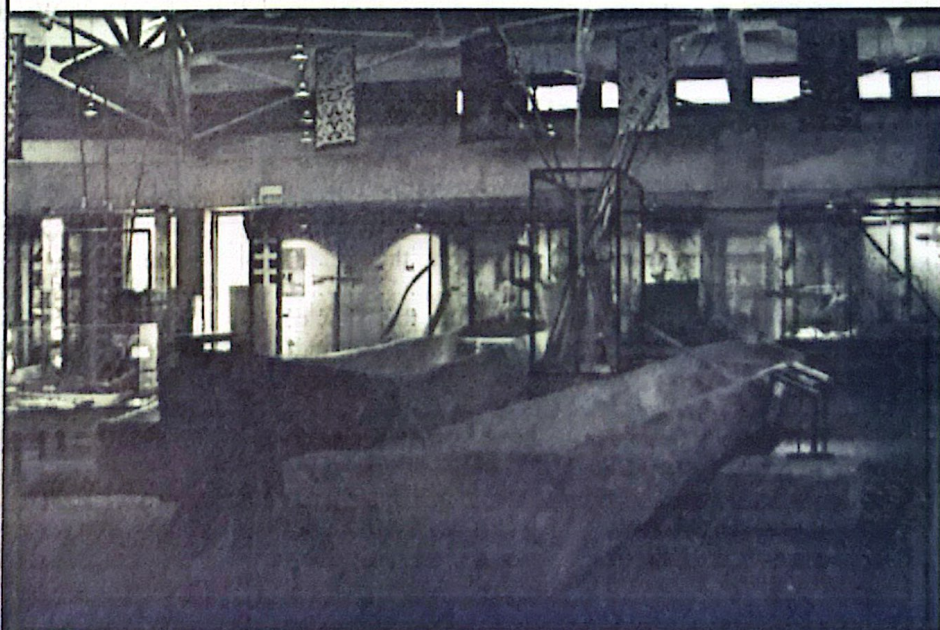
The third zone, the *Moshir* Zone, exhibits implements related to agriculture, hunting, transport and funeral ceremonies.

A canoe made from a massive katsura tree is the largest dugout in Japan. Be sure to check out the tripwire bow and arrow, used for bear hunting. It's quite amazing.

A question and answer session with *kotankor-kamuy* will help you learn more about the *Ainu*.

We also introduce contemporary folk crafts made using traditional techniques.

There are many works by talented craftsmen living in Nibutani, the cradle of *Ainu* culture. Don't miss them!



Biratori Town
Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum

The voice of *kotankor-kamuy* 3

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Haru-kor

Abundant harvest

In spring, people burn the fields and sow barnyard grass, foxtail millet, Japanese millet and beans.

They also gather wild vegetables. In fall, harvested cereals and dried wild vegetables are put in the *pu* (storehouse).

Women usually do these chores. Men are in charge of fishing in rivers and hunting in mountains.

The best seasons for hunting bear are fall and early spring. The hunters take dogs and hunt for days.

Sometimes, tripwire bows and arrows are used. Deer are usually caught very easily. There are so many it's almost like finding cows on a ranch.

Kamuy-kar-onne

Natural death

Elderly who have died of natural causes are honored in a funeral at which a *yukar* is told.

Rather than being told from the start, it is told from the climax to the conclusion. This is meant to prevent the soul from returning to hear the end of the story, so that the soul can rest in peace.

The dead are buried reverently. A white gown, cup, pan, flint, small knife, and favorite belongings are left with the body so that the departed will feel no inconvenience in the realm of the gods. In addition, the *i-o-itak-kote* farewell is spoken for the dead.

Cep-koyki

River fishing

The *Saru* River flows. Salmon, large and small, fight their way upstream. Salmon at the surface have backs burnt by the sun. Salmon at the bottom graze their bellies..." This description is from a *kamuy yukar* (heroic epic).

Salmon are an *Ainu* staple. But they make sure never to catch more than needed. To conserve salmon, only those that have spawned are caught. After fishing, parts are left for foxes and crows.

Upaskuma

Oral history

The *Ainu* do not have a written language. A history of various events, the stories of ancestors and the like, have been transmitted orally. In addition, elders have been deeply respected for their knowledge.

The *Ainu* have lived in this land for a long time. They blissfully enjoyed freedom and life. However, after invasion by ethnic Japanese, many tragedies befell the *Ainu*. We should never forget history, both good and bad. We must pass down the truth for future generations.

Cip-sanke

Boat launching ceremony

It's obvious that *Ainu* today don't live as they did in the past. They now live modern lifestyles.

Nevertheless, the *Ainu* bear in mind that they should maintain the *Ainu* way of thinking (*Ainu-puri*) and remember the words and wisdom that have been handed down from their ancestors.

The *cip-sanke* festival is held on August 20 each year, to hand down traditional *Ainu* customs and ways of thinking to the younger generation. Celebrants canoe down the *Saru* River in dugouts, and enjoy other recreation. When this festival comes, why not visit again?

Ainu-moshir

The realm of humans

Ainu means "human," *mo* is "peace and quiet," and *shir* is "earth."

The phrase "*Ainu-moshir*" describes the magnificent land on which humans live. Here, various peoples live together in various ways. We wish to live in a peace, helping one another.

Listen, all you who live in this world! No matter how much life changes, do not forget to remain compassionate. *Ainu neon an Ainu*: "Live as a human should live!"

Thus do I leave you.

Suy u-nukar an=ro: "May we meet again!"

Craft and spirit, technique and beauty, man and nature

Handmade crafts tell stories that transcend their times.

Hunting, gathering, cultivating, weaving, sewing, dressing, carving, praying, dedicating, singing and telling stories...

This is a museum where we live in harmony with nature, take pride in our humanity, and study wisdom and ways of life.



Exhibition Zone 1:

Ainu Zone

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Kamuy Zone

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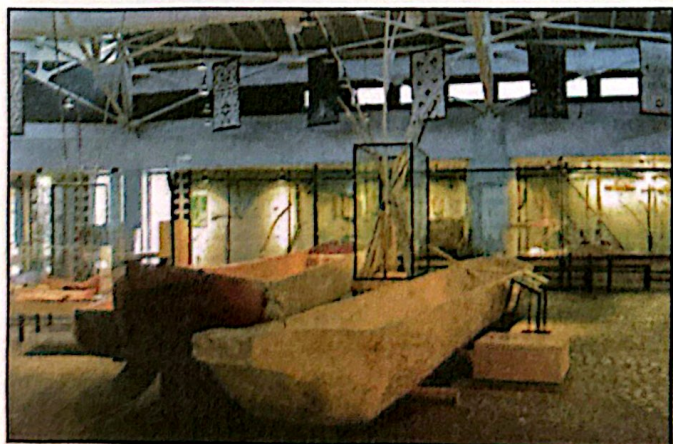
Exhibition Zone 3:

Moshir Zone

The *Moshir* Zone exhibits implements related to agriculture, hunting, transport and funeral ceremonies.

The dugout canoe here is the largest in Japan.

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Nibutani Ainu Culture Museum



Biratori Town

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