

Songs and Dances of the Ainu (Aynu) : Heritage and Practice in Akan, Hokkaido, Japan

Convenor: Reiko SAITO (National Museum of Ethnology)

Speaker: Nobuhiko CHIBA (Musicologist / Musician)

Performer: The Akan Industrial Arts Association / Akan Ainu Culture Preservation Society

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◆Sponsored by National Museum of Ethnology (*Minpaku*)

The Ainu people of Japan have many songs and dances. During the Meiji period (1868~1912), their living conditions changed drastically and their traditional culture declined as a result of the assimilation policy of the Japanese government. Opportunities to sing and dance became fewer. Nevertheless, their performing arts could be transmitted from generation to generation through labor songs, for pleasure in daily life, and for certain ceremonies. In the case of Akan people of eastern Hokkaido, performing arts have been partly reproduced through display for tourists. Traditional Ainu culture preservation associations are also active in Akan and various regions of Hokkaido, to transmit and practice the heritage of songs and dances. "Traditional Ainu dance" was designated an important intangible folk-cultural property by the Japanese government in 1984 and 1994, and was listed as intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO in 2009.

In this panel we will first review the current situation of Ainu culture and then demonstrate several Ainu songs and dances with explanations by an Ainu music researcher. We will also discuss how research can help in cultural transmission and practice.

《Program》

Greeting in Ainu Language

utare opunpare wa (The First Dance of Feast)



No flash, please



ku rimse (Bow Dance)

A hunter spots a bird, but is so distracted by its beauty that he forgets to shoot it

sarorun rimse (Crane Dance)

Imitation of calls and movements of crane



Playing *mukkur* (mouth harp)

Traditional instrument
played only by women

huttare cuy (Dance of

Competition for Heart, Dance of
Fir Tree, Dance of Black Hair)

A playful but vigorous dance
performed by women with long
black hair

