

A Thriving Town

Kushiro was a center of fishing, timber, coal, and shipping from the late Meiji era (1868–1912) on. As the economy boomed, the population grew, and Kushiro was designated a city in 1922. A newspaper was established, and more stores opened to cater to the influx of settlers.

Winter temperatures in Kushiro often stay below freezing. In the Meiji era, large woolen shawls called *kakumaki*, worn over a kimono, became popular for women. Men wore the *niju-mawashi*, a sleeveless woolen coat with a cape and fur collar. This was based on the Inverness coat from Scotland, and could easily be worn over both Japanese- and Western-style clothes.

Kushiro attracted enterprising individuals like Sasaki Yonetaro (1868–1951), who moved from a small town north of the city to open a store selling rice and other daily necessities in 1901. He became an influential figure in Kushiro, rising to president of the city council and writing the first history of the Kushiro area. His store's signboard, with the name of the shop in gold leaf, is on display at the museum.