

Namahage Performance, Part 10: Closing Remarks

Thank you for your attention. Before you go, please consider a few pertinent points about the Namahage. First, the reason they make loud noises and bang on doors and walls is to scare away evil and impurity from the house, thereby ridding it of bad influences that could affect the family in the coming year. The straws that fall off their costumes are also seen as symbols of this purifying power. Feel free to take some with you when you leave.

As mentioned earlier, the Namahage tradition is practiced in some 90 settlements in the Oga region, with Shinzan being one of them. While Shinzan has about 60 homes, each pair of Namahage visits only about 10 houses, because they are served sake at every stop.

Finally, though the Namahage's focus on discipline and diligence may seem a little strange these days, in traditional agricultural communities like early nineteenth-century Oga, where conditions were often harsh, having everyone contribute could be the difference between life and death. In our time, the Namahage also seem to remind us not to lose sight of the importance of self-discipline.