

Namahage Museum: Summary

In the absence of written records, it may never become entirely clear how, when, or why the Namahage came into being. Regardless of the specifics, it can be said that they are unique to Oga, and embody a tradition that is rooted in the local people's respect for and gratitude to the nearby mountains. Mt. Shinzan and Mt. Honzan appear, in some shape or form, in all four of the Namahage origin stories, demonstrating the central role the peaks play in the lives of Oga residents. The mountains provide water, food, and other necessities of life, serve as landmarks, and perhaps function as symbols of certainty in an uncertain world. The food and sake that each household offers to the Namahage on the last day of the year signify appreciation for the mountains and hopes for a bountiful harvest in the year to come.