**Namahage Museum: The Legend of the Mountain Gods**

The people of Oga have long worshiped Mt. Shinzan and Mt. Honzan as holy places where the protector deities of the villages reside. The Namahage are considered incarnations of these gods, and the fact that they “come down from the mountains” at the end of every year seems to further underline their connection with the divine peaks. In several settlements around Oga, including Shinzan, the masks worn by the Namahage are red, indicating the wearers’ status as embodiments of the “red gods.” Here, the color red refers to the mountains. It also appears in the names of places such as Oga’s Akagami Shrine, where *akagami* means “red gods.”