

Namahage Museum: The Origin of the Word “Namahage”

The roots of the word *namahage* are in *namomi*, a term in the Oga dialect that means “heat blisters”; spots or rashes on hands and feet caused by overexposure to heat. Lazy people who spent most of their time inside by the fireplace would develop these blisters. *Namomihagi*, meanwhile, was the word for the act of removing (more literally, “peeling off”) such signs of idleness. *Namomihagi* eventually became *namahage*, and the term came to refer to both the embodied deities themselves and the annual ritual of disciplining idlers, performed in Oga at least since the early nineteenth century.