

Namahage Museum: The Story of the Foreign Castaways

One theory about the origin of the Namahage speculates that their fearsome appearance may be derived from the reddish faces and long hair of a band of uncouth foreigners. According to this story, a foreign ship sank off the coast of Oga, and the surviving crew who washed ashore took up residence in the mountains nearby. In winter, these sailors would come down to the villages to beg or steal food. Another part of this legend tells how the stone staircase from the foot of the mountains up to Akagami Shrine, one of Oga's ancient Shinto sanctuaries, was built using ropes and pulleys provided by the sailors.