

Shirayama-Hime Jinja

The Misogi Purification Ritual

Shirayama-Hime Shrine

Several *kami* (spirits or deities) are enshrined within Shirayama-Hime Shrine.

Shirayama-Hime Shrine was established over 2,100 years ago.

Today it is the head shrine for around 3,000 Hakusan and Shirayama shrines across Japan.

There are Hakusan shrines in all of Japan's prefectures except Okinawa.

Three main *kami* are enshrined here.

Shirayama-Hime, a female *kami*, also known as Kukuri Hime;

Izanagi (a male deity) and Izanami (a female deity), who are a married couple.

According to legend, one day Izanagi and Izanami quarreled and refused to make up.

Kukuri Hime appeared and spoke to Izanagi.

Although her words are lost in the mists of time, she successfully reconciled the two gods.

After Izanagi and Izanami were reconciled, Izanagi went to the river and performed the *misogi* ritual of purification.

As he washed himself with water, he created the three most important *kami* in Japan.

One was Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess.

Without Kukuri Hime's help, the most important deities in Japan could not have been born.

Kukuri Hime, or Shirayama-Hime, is thus an important goddess.

The word *kukuri* means to "tie" or "bind."

Hakusan shinko, the Hakusan faith practiced at this shrine, has always centered around water.

Kukuri Hime is a *kami* of purification, as well as one who can bind hearts together.

Kukuri Hime is therefore the deity of both water and marital happiness.

The *misogi* ritual of purification will allow you to cleanse yourself both physically and spiritually.

This Shinto ceremony is different from the "waterfall training" rituals one hears about.

Although there are a few sites for purification rituals across the country, this is the only one along the Sea of Japan.

During the *misogi* ritual at Shirayama-Hime Shrine, participants purify themselves and reconnect with the natural world.

Just like the water that flows down from the summit of Mt. Hakusan, nourishing the land on its way to the sea and then evaporating to once again fall on the mountain as rain or snow, we too are part of the cycles of nature.

The *misogi* rite allows us to experience the connection with water and nature, and to feel grateful for these blessings.

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Please follow these steps to complete the *misogi* ritual.

You can follow along on the sheet provided.

First, please stand up.

The first step is *furitama*, or “soul shaking.”

Place your right hand above your left and clasp them together.

Place your hands just above your navel, and gently shake them up and down.

Stand with your legs shoulder-width apart.

Close your eyes slightly, but do not shut them completely.

Keep moving your hands up and down.

As you do, repeat the words, “*Harae do no Okami.*”

By doing so you are summoning the god of purification.

Continue to repeat these words quietly.

Quiet your mind and control your breathing.

It’s important to breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth.

Be conscious of your breathing throughout the ritual.

The second step is *harae no kotoba*, the words of purification.

These are read when first entering the *misogi-ba*, the place where the ritual is held.

This paper is the *shinpai shi*, upon which are inscribed the words of purification.

According to legend, the gods Izanagi and Izanami quarreled.

Kukuri-Hime appeared and suggested that Izanagi do misogi to purify himself.

An ancient poem says he washed away his sins and impurities in a river.

We'll read out the *shinpai shi* first.

Near the *misogi-ba* there is a small shrine, the Misogi-sha.

Bow twice and clap twice in the direction of the shrine.

Then take out the *shinpai shi*.

When the priest finishes reading it, put the paper in your *yukata* or headband.

Clap twice and bow twice.

Repeat *furitama*.

Before moving on to the next action, the priest will shout, "Ee!"

This is your cue to move on to the next action.

The third step is *torifune*, or "rowing a boat."

There are three stages to this.

Imagine that you are on a large boat with a deity.

We are rowing the boat to carry this god to a higher place.

Each of the three stages of *torifune* has its own poem.

The first poem, which is written on the provided sheet, is:

Asa yu ni, kami no mimae ni misogi shite

Sumera ga miyo ni tsukae matsuran

Please repeat the poem.

When the priest says, "Asa yu ni," repeat back "Asa yu ni."

When the priest says, "Kami no mimae ni misogi shite," then repeat,

“Kami no mimae ni misogi shite.”

When the priest says, “Sumera ga miyo ni tsukae matsuran,” then repeat, “Sumera ga miyo ni tsukae matsuran.”

Repeat this poem twice.

The second and third stages will also have their own poems.

Now, put your left foot forward.

Make fists with your thumbs drawn inside.

Lean to your left side.

Straighten your arms out in front of your left leg.

Say “Ei!” as you pull your arms back.

Say “Ie!” when you straighten your arms.

Chant the poem as you do these actions.

We will practice this together slowly:

Ei! Ie! Ei! Ie! Ei! Ie!

Asa yu ni

Asa yu ni

Kami no mimae ni misogi shite

Kami no mimae ni misogi shite

Sumera ga miyo ni tsukae matsuran

Sumera ga miyo ni tsukae matsuran

Asa yu ni

Asa yu ni

Kami no mimae ni misogi shite

Kami no mimae ni misogi shite

Sumera ga miyo ni tsukae matsuran

Sumera ga miyo ni tsukae matsuran

Ei! Ie! Ei! Ie! Ei! Ie! Ei!

Repeat *furitama*.

The number of times you will say “Ei!” and “Ie!” depends on the leader.

Be sure to square your elbows.

Imagine that we are all holding oars and rowing a divine boat.

Everyone must do the same action at the same time.

Unifying our spirits by moving in tandem with everyone in the group is an important aspect of *misogi*.

Next, we will move on to the second poem.

Put your right foot forward.

Again, make fists with your thumbs drawn inside.

This time say “Ei” and “Ho.”

Ei, ho!

Ei, ho!

Ei, ho!

Ei, ho!

Then we will chant the poem while making the same motions.

We will practice it together now:

Ei, ho!

Ei, ho!

Ei, ho!

Ei, ho!

Ei, ho

Ei, ho!

Totsu kami

Totsu kami

Katame osameshi oyashima

Katame osameshi oyashima

Ametsuchi tomo ni towa ni sakaen

Ametsuchi tomo ni towa ni sakaen

Ei, ho!

Ei, ho!

Ei, ho!

Ei!

We'll do this twice.

Now for the third poem.

Put your left foot forward.

Straighten your arms, keeping your hands open.

The next step is to enter the water to purify ourselves.

Stretch out your fingers, making sure there is no space between them.

Next we will say "Ei, sa! Ei, sa!"

Say "ei" as you pull back.

Say "sa" as you straighten out your arms.

Ei, sa!

Ei, sa!

Ei, sa!

Ei, sa!

We will practice this together:

Ei, sa!

Ei, sa!

Ei, sa!

Ei, sa!

Ei, sa!

Ei, sa!

Amatsu kami

Amatsu kami

Kunitsu kamitachi misona wase

Kunitsu kamitachi misona wase

Omoi takebite waga nasu wazao

Omoi takebite waga nasu wazao

Ei, sa!

Ei, sa!

Ei, sa!

Ei, sa!

Ei!

Repeat *furitama*.

In the ritual, we will do this twice.

Now we will proceed to the fourth part: the shouting exercise, or *otakebi*.

Spread your legs shoulder-width apart

and place your hands on your waist.

During the *otakebi* we will say, “ikutama,” “taru tama,” and “taru tamaru tama.”

Repeat after me.

While you are saying the words in a clear voice,

look upwards and rise up on your toes.

Repeat after me.

Priest: Ikutama

You: Ikutama

Priest: Taru tama

You: Taru tama

Priest: Tama tamaru tama

You: Tama tamaru tama

That completes the *otakebi*.

The fifth step is *okorobi*.

Step back on your right leg.

Put your right hand on your forehead like this.

Put your index and middle fingers together like this.

Place your left hand on your waist.

The priest will say “Kuni no toko tachi no mikoto”

And you will repeat, “Kuni no toko tachi no mikoto”

Then we say “Ei” along with this gesture.

Then come back and repeat “Ei!”

And do it one more time: “Ei!”

This action represents cutting off sins and impurities with your pure fingers.

With the third swing, you cut them off completely.

Please keep this image in mind as you swing.

We will practice it together:

Kuni no toko tachi no mikoto

Kuni no toko tachi no mikoto

Ei, Ie!

Ei, Ie!

Ei, Ie!

Ei, Ie!

Move your right leg as you do this action.

The sixth step is *ibuki*, or “blowing away sins.”

First, stand with your legs apart.

Breathe in through your nose.

Then hold your breath.

Keep holding your breath as you move your hands down to your navel.

As you move down, breathe out from your mouth.

Repeat this series of actions three times.

Breathe in.

Hold it.

Let it out once.

One more time.

Now we can start the *misogi* ritual.

The previous steps were preparations before entering the water.

The priest will enter the water first saying “Ei!” while swinging his arm.

Follow him one by one into the water, repeating his gestures while saying “Ei!”

The water is about 75 centimeters deep.

In the water, sit down like this.

Or you can sit like this, with your hips higher.

Next, do *furitama*.

When the priest says “Ei!” take out the *shinpai shi* paper.

We will then read out the words of purification.

The priest will read the first part, “Takama no harani kamuzu marimasu.”

Then everyone will read from “Sumera ga mutsu” to the end of the page.

The next page is this section from the center, “Kaku no raba.”

Then you read from “Amatsu kami” to the end.

It's quite long, but we will read it slowly so it is easier to follow along.

Don't worry if you do not get all the words right. Just try your best!

Once we have finished reading the text, we will do *furitama* one more time.

The priest will say "Ei!" and we will slowly exit the water.

We will return to the previous spot and perform *torifune*, *otakebi*, *okorobi*, and *ibuki* again.

Then we will face straight ahead toward the small shrine and pay our respects to the *kami*.

Bow twice, clap twice, and bow once more.

Finally, we will clap once to signify that we have safely completed the *misogi* ritual.

Once the priest says "Yo!" we will clap once and say "Omedeto gozaimasu," which means "congratulations."

We will practice this once:

"Yo" (clap), "Omedeto gozaimasu!"

Then, when we have finished, we run back to the changing room, saying "E sa! E sa!"

That concludes the *misogi* ritual.