

# Misogi – a Shinto Purification Ritual of Standing Under a Waterfall in Winter



Spectators standing before Shiratama waterfall

On January 13, 2011, I attended a traditional local ceremony at Shiratama waterfall in Niigata Prefecture. I've been to this waterfall several times in the summer to escape the heat, but this is the first time to see it in the snowy mid winter, and the very first time to see people stand under it! It's actually a religious ceremony called *misogi*.



Six men and two women standing under the Shiratama Waterfall in mid winter.

Misogi (禊) is a Japanese mountain ascetic practice of ritual purification. This may be undertaken through exhaustive activities such as extended periods without sleep, breath training, standing under waterfalls, or other methods. Water-misogi may be likened to dousing practices.

(Taken from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Misogi>)

Any of the photos will enlarge when clicked upon.

