

Opening Speech by the Governor of Shimane
At the 7th International Symposium on Surface Science

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here today, to extend my welcome to the honorable members of the 7th International Symposium on Surface Science.

Surface Science research has a deep connection to cutting-edge technologies, such as green technology and nanotechnology, which have a possibility to establish a sustainable society in the future.

It is our great pleasure to welcome such an important international symposium to Shimane.

Shimane is close to the Asian continent, from which advanced cultures were introduced to Japan. As a result Shimane was one of the most advanced regions in ancient times.

Shimane, once called Izumo, is well-known as the place where ancient myths were handed down to today. Among the many gods in the Japanese myths, Susanoo is one of the most famous gods. Susanoo's behavior was reckless and disorderly, so he was banished from heaven and sent down to Izumo.

One of Susanoo's myths set in Izumo is that of Yamata-no-Orochi, the huge eight-headed and eight-tailed serpent.

The serpent lived near a big river in Izumo and often attacked people. In order to protect the people, Susanoo fought and killed the serpent and found a great sword in one of the tails.

The serpent is said to represent the river itself and the sword is said to symbolize Tataru, the traditional Japanese method of producing high-quality steel called Tamahagane, by using the iron sand found in the riverbeds. Tamahagane is the material for making genuine Japanese swords.

In Shimane we also have a very old shrine called Izumo Taisha, or Izumo Grand Shrine. The god Oukuninushi, a descendant of Susanoo is enshrined in this shrine. Oukuninushi is well-known as the deity of En-musubi.

“En-musubi” means the creation of a special connection force between people. En-musubi usually refers to bringing a man and a woman together to get married, but it also includes any kind of connection between friends, business partners and so on.

What is also interesting about Izumo Grand Shrine is that its original main hall is said to have been 96 meters high (or about 315 feet high), making it the highest building in ancient Japan.

We believe all of these stories refer to the fact that Shimane used to be the place where cutting-edge technologies were integrated and the spirits of its artisans have been passed over generations up to today.

Around this time of the year, tradition says that all gods throughout Japan gather at Izumo Taisha to discuss connections in the next year, and decide new ties between people.

Perhaps we should take this tradition as a good omen that will enhance the creation of meaningful ties among the participants of this symposium.

Concluding my speech, I sincerely hope this symposium will bring about great progress in Surface Science and connect the technologies of today and of the future.

Thank you.