

**Interview with Ambassador of the Republic of  
Uzbekistan to Japan  
Mr. FAZILOV Gayrat Ganiyevich**



**<Culture> <Traditional crafts>**

① *Please tell us about the features of fascinating buildings and culture of Samarkand known as “the City of Blue”, and tell us about embroidery (Suzani), which is one of Uzbekistan's traditional crafts.*

- Over the centuries, Uzbek cities had been among major commercial and cultural centers of the Great Silk Road. And one city stood out as "the Heart of Great Silk Road" – Samarkand.

“The Pearl of Orient” and “The Jewel of Islamic Architecture” are titles bestowed upon Samarkand from earliest times. A coeval of Rome, Athens, and Babylon, Samarkand celebrated its 2750th anniversary. The golden age in the history of Samarkand was during the reign of the Temurid dynasty. The founder of the dynasty Tamerlane (1336-1405), the greatest warlord and ruler of the Central Asia, made the city the capital of his powerful empire.

Today the monuments of Samarkand are majestic and wonderful. In this town one can feel the breath of history itself. It can be traced in the ancient ruins as well as in the madrassahs, mausoleums, and minarets.

The legendary Samarkand square of Registan ranks amongst the key architectural sights in Central Asia. Three grandiose madrassahs - Ulughbek Madrassah, Sher Dor and Tillya Kari Madrassahs - proudly dominate the square.



Gur-Emir Mausoleum - is another gem of Samarkand. From a distance the dome of Gur Emir Mausoleum looks like a blue tulip, with gently folded turquoise petals.

Suzani is a type of embroidered and decorative textile made in Uzbekistan. Suzani in Persian means “needle”. Suzanis usually have a cotton (sometimes silk) fabric base, which is embroidered in silk or cotton thread. Chain, satin, and buttonhole stitches are the primary stitches used. There is also extensive use of couching, in which decorative thread laid on the fabric



is stitched with another thread.

Popular design motifs include pictures of sun and moon, flowers (especially tulips, carnations, and irises), leaves, fruits (especially pomegranates), and sometimes fish and birds.

Major types of Suzani embroidery: Bukhara Suzani, Samarkand Suzani, Shakhrisabz Suzani, Tashkent Suzani and others.

## <Food>

② *There is a shop in Suginami City where you can buy Uzbek bread. Typical Uzbek dishes include "Shashlik " and " Palov ". Please tell us the menus and typical ingredients that are eaten at home on a daily basis in Uzbekistan.*

- Uzbek national cuisine is rather delicious. Rich traditions and ancient culture of Uzbeks' cooking have a deep history. A wide assortment of products is used and each dish reflects the lifestyle and culture of the Uzbek people.

Uzbekistan's most famous dish is palov (plov or osh or "pilaf"), a main course typically made of rice, meat, carrots and onions. It is usually cooked in a kazan over an open fire; chickpeas, raisins, barberries, or fruit may be added for variation. Although often prepared at home for family and guests by the head of household or the housewife, palov is made on special occasions by the oshpaz, or the osh master chef, who cooks the national dish over an open flame, sometimes serving up to 1,000 people on holidays or weddings.



Talking about shashlik one immediately imagines sappy flavoured meat on the skewer. The traditional Uzbek shashlik is cooked from lamb, but it also can be prepared from beef, poultry, chicken and fish.

Lagman is a kind of cooking that can be attributed to both the first and second dishes. Lagman consists of meat, vegetables, and noodles. Noodles in lagman play the role of the main distinguishing feature. Some Japanese people calls lagman as "uzbek udon", because of similarity of products, used in chef cooking this dish.



Uzbek samsa is baked from flavour with different



kinds of meat. Samsa is cooked in tandyr (stove). But there is also a kind of samsa, which is prepared in the electric and gas ovens.

Manty - traditional dish for Uzbek people. It is the pieces of meat wrapped in thin dough. The main feature of manty is that the dish is steamed. Manty is eaten by hands. The dish is often served with sour milk or fried onion.



## <Interaction>

③ *What is the attraction of Japanese culture to the people of Uzbekistan?*

- Despite its geographical distance, Japan is a very close for Uzbekistan in terms of culture, mentality. The history of Uzbek-Japanese relations goes back to ancient times when our people participated in the grandiose exchanges within the

Great Silk Road.

After World War II, there were about 25 thousand interned Japanese citizens in Uzbekistan, who took part in the construction of a number of industrial enterprises, agricultural facilities and residential buildings in Andijan, Bukhara, Tashkent and Fergana regions, the construction of the State Academic Bolshoi Theater named after Alisher Navoi in Tashkent.



Though it was difficult times for Uzbekistan the Japanese felt the understanding, compassion and nobility of the Uzbek people. The graves of the Japanese who were buried in Muslim cemeteries have been well preserved to this day.

In 2001 in the center of Tashkent, a Japanese garden has been created on an area of 10 hectares, in which sakura seedlings were planted, as a memory of the Japanese and the symbol of friendship and mutual understanding between our peoples.

One of the visual demonstrations of the hard work and dedication of the Japanese people is the life of the heroine of the beloved Uzbekistan TV series "Oshin". This series deeply touched the hearts of Uzbek peoples and further strengthened respect for the Japanese people.

In our country, there is a growing interest in the study of the history and culture of Japan. Japanese language is studied at universities, schools and lyceums.

We have several bright examples of cultural dialogue between our people, including the construction of monument to the great Uzbek poet and thinker Alisher Navoi in the Soka University Tokyo and the creation of the Japanese Garden and "Caravanserai of Culture" named after Ikuo Hirayama in Tashkent.

Uzbek and Japanese peoples are united by the closeness of mentality, traditions and customs of our peoples, special respect for the older generation, love for the land, hard work, as well as resilience in the face of difficulties, cordiality and hospitality.

**④ *What is the attraction of Uzbekistan that the Ambassador wants to convey to the residents of Suginami City?***

- It is well known that land of Uzbekistan was one of key centers of the ancient Great Silk Road and played a major role in economic, cultural, and religious exchanges between civilizations of Europe, Asia, and the Middle East.

Uzbekistan has a several ancient Buddhist temples which are found to be very attractive for Japanese people. Some monuments and archaeological findings testify that Buddhism came to Japan through the territory of Uzbekistan via the Great Silk Road. This connection is renewed by famous Japanese persons, such as artist Ikuo Hirayama, writer Yasushi Inoue and archeologist Kyuzo Kato. Their contribution to study of history and culture of the Central Asia and Great Silk Road receives well-deserved significance and appreciation.

There are other ancient and famous cities in Uzbekistan, such as:

**Bukhara**, the famous trading post on the Silk Road, stirs the romantic in many travelers. It has more than 140 monuments of ancient architecture located in a compact area.

**Khiva**, "the museum in the open air", is the only town along the Great Silk Road, which has remained intact through centuries and has the exotic flavour of a

medieval town. Today Ichan Kala, the nucleus of ancient Khiva, offers the most stunning examples of architecture of the late 18th century - the first half of the 19th century.

The southernmost city of **Termez**, on the right bank of the Amu Darya and at the crossroads of Silk Road caravan routes, has a more than 2,500 year-old history. At the beginning of our era, Termez became the main center of Buddhism in Central Asia. It was the starting point from which Buddhist spread to China and Japan. Around Termez are Kara-Tepe rock-hewn Buddhist cave monastery, Fayaz-Tepe Buddhist temple, 16-meter-high Zurmala Tower (a large brick Buddhist stupa) that are very popular among tourists and Buddhist pilgrims.

There is an Uzbek proverb which says "It is better to see once than hear hundred times". This closely corresponds to the Japanese saying of "Hyakubun wa ikken ni shikazu". Accordingly, I invite all of you to visit Uzbekistan where you can witness by yourself the similarities of culture and mentality of Uzbek people to that of Japanese.

*Suginami City will continue to interact with Uzbekistan as the Host town. In what fields are you thinking of collaborating and interacting? For example, education and so on.*

- Currently, mutually beneficial cooperation between Uzbekistan and Japan is reaching a new, qualitatively high level. This was facilitated by the negotiations and agreements reached during the first official visit to Japan in December 2019 of His Excellency Mr. Sh. Mirziyoyev, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Our cooperation covers a wide range of areas, including political dialogue, trade and economic, investment and cultural and humanitarian ties.

Two countries are significantly developing cultural and sports exchanges at the threshold of Olympic and Paralympic Games. I hope that cooperation with the city of Suginami in the fields of culture and sports will not be limited to the Olympics and find its continuation in fruitful and mutually beneficial relations in other areas. I believe that this will help strengthen the ties of friendship and mutual understanding between the peoples of our countries.

**Tourism** is one of the priority spheres of cooperation. If about 11 thousand Japanese visited Uzbekistan in 2018, this number increased to more than 25 thousand at the end of 2019. I am sure that after the pandemic, this figure will continue to grow. Since Uzbekistan has a huge historical and cultural heritage - more than 7000 unique architectural and archaeological monuments with some of them being included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. The Uzbek citizens warmly welcome the Japanese people in our country with a special feeling of sympathy and hospitality. As you know, Uzbekistan established visa-free regime for Japanese citizens.

Another very important area of cooperation is **trade and economy**. Today, we are pleased to see the growing interest among Japanese business circles in developing economic activity in Uzbekistan. 22 joint ventures, including 8 ones with a 100% Japanese capital were established in Uzbekistan. Besides, 15 representatives of Japanese companies were accredited in Uzbekistan. In 2019 bilateral trade amounted to \$413.6 million. In recent years, Uzbekistan received more than \$4.1 billion worth of financial and technical assistance from Japan. Several dozen organizations, such as JOGMEC, Mitsubishi, Itochu, Sumitomo, Marubeni, Isuzu and others, operate in

Uzbekistan.

During the Uzbek-Japan Summit in 2019 both sides concluded a solid package of business agreements of \$6.5 billion in the field of energy, industrial and agricultural modernization, infrastructure, ecology, healthcare and other industries.

Today, the **education sector** is one of the priorities of Uzbek-Japanese cooperation. The Japanese Government is providing allocating scholarships and grants for the young citizens of Uzbekistan to study in Japanese universities. We highly appreciate it and take it as a valuable contribution of the Japanese government to the process of training qualified personnel for the economy of Uzbekistan.

So, we will be very interested to extend our contacts with Sugunami city to all above mentioned areas of cooperation.

#### <About the Olympics>

*⑤ Sugunami will accept the Uzbekistan boxing team at the Pre-Games Training Camp for the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. Please tell us about the sports that the people in Uzbekistan enjoy.*

*Please give us a few words for the Tokyo Olympics.*

Today Uzbekistan is a sports country. In the republic consecutive measures for promoting of physical culture and sport, promotion of healthy lifestyle among the population, to creation of necessary conditions for physical rehabilitation of persons physically challenged and to providing worthy performance of the country on the international sports scene are performed in recent years.

The results of our athletes at the 2016 Olympic Games in Brazil demonstrated Uzbekistan's potential as a one of the most promising sports country in the world.

Uzbek athletes won at Rio de Janeiro a total of 13 medals (4 gold, 2 silver, and 7 bronze), signifying the nation's most successful outcome in Olympic history. Seven of these medals won by the Uzbeks came from boxing, including three golds.

Traditionally Uzbekistan fosters equestrians and wrestlers. Our wrestling called "Kurash" refers to a number of folk wrestling styles that have been practiced in Central Asia for centuries. The wrestlers compete inside a big circle and try to throw each other off the feet hold their opponents' belts.

Many sports are practiced in Uzbekistan and the most popular are boxing, football, gymnastics, tennis, wrestling, kurash, judo, cycling.

In the summer of 2021, we are waiting for the opening of the Tokyo Olympics and arriving of a large group of athletes, official delegates and fans from Uzbekistan.

I would like to express best wishes to Japanese friends for the successful holding of the Tokyo Olympics this year, which will demonstrate the victory of humanity over coronavirus.