

## Introduction about Republic of Uzbekistan

I guess that Uzbekistan may be the most unknown country among all the countries that participate in this event. They say that most of the world take Uzbekistan for Pakistan or Afghanistan even if explaining exactly. For your reference, “Stan” is Persian language which means “country of”, so Uzbekistan means country of Uzbek.

This country is to the east of Caspian Sea and to the north of Afghanistan. The area of this country is 440 thousand Km<sup>2</sup> (1.2 times larger than Japan) and there is no sea (need to go over 2 countries to reach sea). The continental climate gives 40 degrees centigrade in summer and minus 20 degrees centigrade in winter.

The population is 30 million and the average age is 20 years level, which means this country is still young.

The industries are raw cotton, natural gas, coal, gold and uranium. Though the religion is Islam, their commandments are lax, so people drink alcohol, not all the people do fasting and few women hide their hair in scarf.

And this country is strong in football.



Until 22 years ago Uzbekistan had belonged to USSR and became independent thanks to collapse of Soviet Union.

Japan has supported Uzbekistan by way of ODA. By this ODA Uzbekistan & Japan Center was established where people learn Japanese language and culture such as Origami (an art of folding paper into various figures, Ikebana (flower arrangement) and Japanese tea ceremony. Business School was set up there and Fujiwara has been sent twice a year by JICA (an institution to execute ODA) as instructor of human resource management for the past 6 years.

A translator in the business school practiced Aikido (an art of self-defense similar to judo) and I was requested by him to introduce Kendo, so about 5 years ago I showed Kendo in front of around 50 people who love Aikido.

They said that a Japanese representative of JICA had taught Kendo before and so 3 people had tools of Kendo. I taught those 3 people elemental acts and basic training making them put on face, arm & chest protector.

When I stayed hotel, Mr. Shukrat whom I met at the above mentioned opportunity came to the hotel to request me to be instructor of Kendo. It was 3 years ago. He (police officer) will come to Japan this time. He told me that although he learned a basis of Kendo from Russian in order to promote a sound growth of youth, there isn't suitable instructor now, so we need you to come. I accepted it immediately and went to the gymnasium where I saw 10 and some guys.



To my surprise, they looked as if they had been beating ceiling, and instead of bamboo-stick they used logs looked like clothes-pole, and furthermore a few protectors were used by all the guys though getting wet by their sweat for lack of enough numbers of protectors. However their great strong passion for Kendo made them progress day by day by repeating seriously what they learned and they have been keeping up training 4 or 5 times a week.

I requested the members of Shiseikan Takizawa Dojou and Aikawa to subscribe tools of Kendo such as Kendo uniform and bamboo-stick, from the following year. I handed over them packed into 30 corrugated cardboards, so now around 40 Kenshis including children practice Kendo with the tools

of Kendo. By this contribution we came to be able to give lessons even in other distinct. Master Takizawa gave them his red-colored chest protector. I told them that Master Takizawa is fully respected as a God in Japan, then they came to bow politely to the red-colored chest protector displayed instead of the altar before and after training.

The people of this country are sympathizer for Japan (pro-Japanese). Although there are only about 500 Japanese there, the people of this country feel respect and long for Japan. Although there are some reasons of these feelings, such as that Japanese resemble Uzbek in appearance, achieved rapid civilization in Asia, won the war between Japan and Russia and revived the economy immediately after 2<sup>nd</sup> War, the important reason is the attitude showed in the concentration camp.

After 2<sup>nd</sup> War, the military of Soviet Union took Japanese soldier staying in the east-north area of China to Soviet as labor.

There were around 2,500 Japanese in Uzbekistan in those days. They say that Japanese worked very hard.

I heard that although two-thirds of the buildings in Tashkent (capital of Uzbekistan) fell down by the earthquake occurred 50 years ago, the theater and the bridges constructed by Japanese were not collapsed.

A man of around 70 years old told me as follows.

“When I was child, my parents expected me to be a man of Japanese like. At the connection camp I saw Japanese took a roll call, had meeting, went out in file and came back also in file. They worked overtime when appointed delivery day was delayed. One day I put some fruits on the border of the camp because I imagined that they must be hungry, then 3 days later I found wooden model of airplane there. I was deeply impressed how faithful Japanese are.”



Navoi theater did not collapse even M 8.0.

I can come across the scene in which those Japanese did high quality work with a sense of pride in spite of being prisoner because of the miserable defeat. One –third of Japanese prisoners (876people) died with burning desire to go back home under cold snow. Although during the cold war the relation between Japan and Soviet was not so good that people of Uzbekistan could not pray for the dead, I heard that local people raised small tombs for those Japanese

This pathetic story was televised a few time and Kyoko Nakayama wrote in detail in her book” A cherry tree in Uzbekistan”.

This time 3 Kenshis from Uzbekistan will come to Japan with lots of desire to visit Doujo, to meet Master the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, to meet Kenshi all over the world, to go to temples to have meditaion Zen, to take photos with Mount Fuji for the background, and etc. I hope they can have valuable experiences.

(Written by Fujiwara, Liaison Department Head of Atsugi Kendo Federation )