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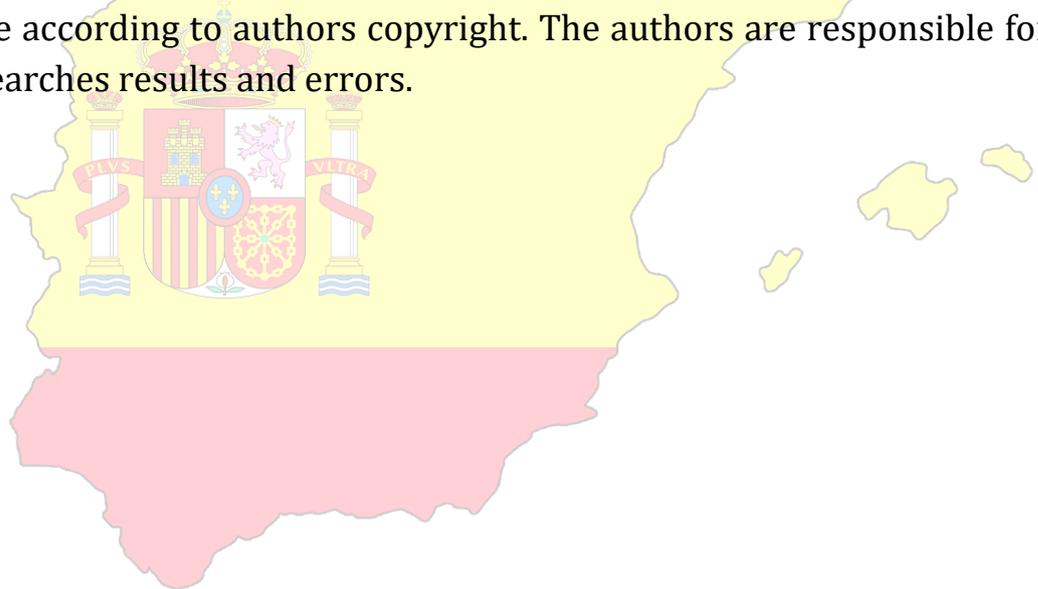


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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE KOKAND INTERNATIONAL HANDICRAFTS FESTIVAL

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Abstract: This article provides information about a major international festival in the field of handicrafts and Uzbekistan's participation in these processes, specifically about the Kokand International Handicrafts Festival. The analysis also covers the festival's potential to turn Kokand into one of the world's handicraft centers and discusses local skilled artisans.

Keywords: festival, handicrafts, Kokand, fair, UNESCO, export, pottery, embroidery, carpet and silk products

After gaining independence, Uzbekistan focused on developing handicrafts and expanding international cooperation. The state "Hunarmand" Association and the Ministry of Culture are engaged in supporting artisans, exporting their products, and creating opportunities for participation in festivals and fairs. The following timeline shows the most important dates of Uzbekistan's participation in major international festivals:

September 10-15, 2019 – The first edition of the Kokand International Handicrafts Festival. Held under the patronage of UNESCO, the festival was attended by 370 guests from 78 countries and over 1,200 local artisans. An international scientific-practical conference with 28 foreign scholars was held as part of the festival.

2020 – Surajkund Mela, India. Uzbekistan was invited as the partner country for the 33rd edition of the Surajkund International Crafts Mela; a festival that attracts over 1 million visitors and more than 30 countries annually, where Uzbek pottery, embroidery, carpet, and silk products were displayed.

March 19 – April 4, 2022 – Surajkund Mela, India. The festival resumed after pandemic restrictions; Uzbekistan again participated as the partner country. According to Uzdaily, the festival was attended by over 1 million visitors, representatives from more than 30 foreign states, and all Indian states.

September 8-12, 2022 – The second edition of the Kokand International Handicrafts Festival. This time, representatives from nearly 50 countries, over 400 foreign artisans, and thousands of local masters participated. The event, held in collaboration with the "Silk and Spices" festival, strengthened Uzbekistan's international image after the pandemic.

September 19-21, 2025 – The third edition of the Kokand International Handicrafts Festival. According to WCC information, the festival expects 250 international participants from over 70 countries and 400 local masters. The

program includes interactive masterclasses, concerts, and scientific-practical conferences.

The city of Kokand is famous as a handicraft center due to its location at the crossroads of the ancient Silk Road. In 2019, on the initiative of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the first edition of the International Handicrafts Festival was held in Kokand. Organized under UNESCO patronage, the festival's goal is to unite masters from around the world, preserve traditional crafts, and enhance innovative design and tourism potential. The festival program includes international exhibitions and competitions, interactive masterclasses, theater-concerts, and scientific-practical conferences on handicrafts.

The 2019 festival was attended by 370 guests from 78 countries and 1,200 local masters. The scientific conference involved 28 foreign scholars who discussed prospects for the development of handicrafts. The 2022 edition was held after the pandemic, attracting representatives from nearly 50 countries, over 400 foreign masters, and thousands of local artisans. The 2025 festival expects participation from over 70 countries and 250 international participants. As part of the festival, the "Master-Apprentice" school, performances by folk groups, fashion shows, and national food competitions will be held.

Within the framework of the festival, awards are presented in nominations such as "Best Artisan of the Year," "Innovative Design," and "Best Young Master." In 2019, Tajik potter Adkham Rakhmonov, Uzbek embroiderer Zulfiya Kholdorova, and a Japanese mosaic master were among the winners. The festival logo and brand depict the minarets of Kokand and the hands of masters, promoting the slogan "Ancient Craft – New Breath." The brand is promoted not only through the sale of finished products but also through academic publications and souvenirs.

According to the Embassy of Uzbekistan in France, there are over 4,000 workshops in Kokand, managed by more than 400 skilled masters. During the festival, the local economy experiences a significant boost; hotels, transport, and commercial enterprises receive additional income. During the 2019 festival, hundreds of foreign tourists also traveled to the Fergana Valley and Tashkent, contributing to the development of regional tourism. For artisans, the festival opens up new markets and export contracts. It is reported that during the 2022 edition, trade deals exceeding \$5 million were concluded (requires verification).

In general, handicraft festivals have been a source of trade and cultural exchange since the Silk Road era. In the 20th century, global cooperation was systematized by the WCC and other organizations, while in the 21st century, modern biennales and fairs emerged. Starting from 2019, the Kokand International Handicrafts Festival became a major national brand;

participation as a partner country at the Surajkund Mela laid the groundwork for the international recognition of Uzbek handicrafts. Over 70 countries participated in the 2025 festival.

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