

Zhandarbek's unfading stars

Zhandarbek Malibekuly is the author of state emblem of the Republic of Kazakhstan. He is the Honorary Architect of the Republic of Uzbekistan, director of Institute of Ethnic Architecture. It should be noted that he is not used to being in the focus of journalists' attention. Probably due to his innate modesty and good manners he does not seek for attention, so few people are aware of the fact that he is the author of Kazakhstan state emblem. It may seem strange that a specialist, who had lived in Uzbekistan for a long period of time, became the author of Kazakhstani emblem. It was not a coincidence or spontaneity, but great desire to work for his Motherland prosperity, which inspired this reputable man to take part in developing one of the state symbols in the far 1992.

- Zhandarbek, Kazakhstan people know only a few facts from your biography and twist and turns of your life...

- I was born in 1942 in the territory of Zhanakorgan district in Kyzylorda region, to a family of railroad worker Malibek Andabayev. In his young years my father took part in the Turkestan–Siberian railway construction; his later life was infinitely bound to railroad, as he proved his worth in capacity of a railwayman in a passing track called “Yekpindi” by the locals. He was recommended for a very significant decoration, i.e. the order of the Red Banner of labour. From what his colleagues have told me, he did not get the Order of Lenin because of sudden death in 1957. I lost my mother at the age of 4, but even today I remember her silhouette and beautiful image. Two of my brothers died at their early age, so there were four of us left. We survived thanks to a small railroad hospital (we were timely vaccinated).

To this day I am grateful to my father for not giving us up to orphanage despite advice and persuasions of his relatives and colleagues. By the way, from the very beginning of mass famine, Kazakhs started giving their children up to orphanages, which was an unusual practice for steppe life. Apparently, this practice was caused by despair and originated from Golodomor times. The father had been bringing us up by himself. By the standards of that time we were not rich, had two or three cows, a couple of sheep and a horse. Until the construction of boarding school, two years in a row I used to travel a 8 kilometres way, up to the nearest school.

-Have you made a conscious decision to leave for Tashkent to study there?

- Before his death my father told me, “Son, our life was hard, but when I pass away, it is going to become even harder. Stand firm.” Subsequent events just confirmed his words. In 1959 I graduated from school and decided to go to Tashkent to study there. In the “Pionerskaya Pravda” pages I read that there was Benkov Arts School which offered hostel, food and living allowance. I loved to paint and draw, so I decided to secretly leave for another republic. I was very worried, because I was afraid that in case I fail entrance exams, I would be very ashamed before fellow countrymen and relatives.... Then I found out that I had not had enough money to travel, so I applied for a temporary job: fabricated ten thousand sun-dried bricks for a wealthy woman; one rouble for a brick. Having dealt with that work, I bought a suit and left my homeland. Tashkent was waiting for me.

-How did Tashkent meet you?

- In a train I got acquainted with guys-applicants from Aral. Having arrived to the city I stayed with my brothers who were students at Tashkent institutes. We were living in a shed of a local Uzbek. There was straw instead of beds, and it was swarming with insects. Back then Tashkent was a small town of one-storeyed sloppy wattle houses almost sticking to each other.

To my dismay, the period of admission had already been over. My Kazakh ambition would not let me return back to aul; and then one of my older countrymen strongly recommended me to enter Tashkent polytechnic institute, which, at the time, was named Middle Asian polytechnic institute. After undergoing tutorials and preparations, I passed exams successfully and entered the only group of architects with Russian as the language of tuition. I faced real difficulties as I almost did not know Russian language. Sometimes I had to resort to cramming. Quite soon I ran out of money, and then I started working as a loader, earning money for daily bread...

- What was distinctive about studying at that time?

- The year we entered institute, Khrushchev issued a decree which stated that students who were studying full-time course of constructional specialities, had to work during the day and study in the evenings. On the one part it was the right decision as young men could gain working experience, essential for theoretical studies. I found myself in a crew of Greek builders deported to Middle Asia. They were great builders, architects with perfect knowledge of Greek architecture and masters in their field. Apparently since then I fell in love with Greek history, architecture and arts. Former colonel Sumilidi was our foreman, he was very responsible and strict, but at the same time very kind and humane.

There was some curious accident: once I fell down from scaffold and even lost consciousness because of constant undernourishment. Before that moment, for a month my only "food" was tea. When the crew learned my sad story, they gathered some money and gave them to me. My life returned to normal.

By the third year I had already had the 5th construction rank. During the fourth year together with other students we went to Kyiv for construction and repair of chemical faculty of the local institute. My grades improved. I was engaged in different sports. I was a photojournalist in institute newspaper called "Za industrialnyye kadry". Soon I was elected a senior student.

Our group was international. Many of my course mates do not live in the shadow. For example Arnold Polyansky lives and works in Moscow, Alla Gunko is in the Chersonese, Nymetzhan Sadykov is in Kokand, Bakir Galaudinov is in Almaty. By the way he was among the first people in Kazakhstan who defended doctoral thesis in architecture.

- What achievements did you have in the archaeological field?

- Our professors were not just good, they were true professionals, both local and those evicted to Middle Asia during the years of political repressions . V.V.Babishevsky, I.V.Lyssov, A.A.Karash, V.V.Arkhangel'sky... For developing town planning concept "Altyn tapkan" under the guidance of V.V.Arkhangel'sky I took the first place in Uzbekistan contest during my third year, and the first place in international contest which took place in Cuba.

- Was your labour front really laborious?

- Soon after graduation from the institute, GosStroy of KazSSR made an inquiry about me, but I had already been working for "UzGosstroy" starting from my fourth year at the institute. At the time you had to work at least for three years in this republic.

Before I knew it, I had worked in the same place for forty years exactly, although personnel size sometimes reached a thousand and five hundred men. I was in charge of constructions in Samarkand, Fergana, Tashkent region, etc. More than 100 objects, i.e. living quarters, hostels, shopping malls, and air terminal, have been built upon my projects. For example, a tower

building which could have survived an earthquake measured 9 on the Richter scale was among the first constructions in Samarkand. A magnificent Theatre of music and drama was built here as well. Together with the group of colleagues I participated in different contests. Town planning concepts developed for Kokand, Fergana, Samarkand, Nukus, Angren had been winning only first prizes. This is how I got the title of Honorary Architect of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

- How did you become a participant of the contest for best state emblem of the Republic of Kazakhstan?

- In the end of 1991 I was seriously occupied with preparation of materials for an International contest, announced by Aga Khan's fund for designing Emir Timur's citadel in Samarkand. At the moment someone gave me a commemorative edition of the newspaper "Leninshil zhas" with the list of contest requirements for participation in development of state symbols of the Republic of Kazakhstan. In a month, an idea of the future emblem was conceived, but before that I was thinking about it all the time, as well as reading archaeological books; for example I thoroughly studied Kimal Akishev's book about Issyk barrow excavations. The motive power of my work was patriotism, a fervent and violent desire to serve a useful purpose for my historical homeland, a place where I was born and spent my school years.

I wanted to be useful to independent Kazakhstan. I was analyzing existing emblems of other states. Once it dawned upon me that an emblem should reflect multi-millennial history and culture of Kazakh people and their far ancestors – Saka, Huns, Turks and Kypchaks.

All the time usual words-wishes which we utter quite often in our daily life were running around my head, "Shanyragyn biyk bolsyn, keregen ken bolsyn, bosagan berik bolsyn". These words, associated with hearth in yurt, are an integral part of nomads' world outlook. In the given case a hearth symbolizes revived Kazakh state, yurt as its embodiment have existed at least three thousand years. Its functionality, monumentality and architectonics make yurt one of the most unique phenomena and inventions during humankind existence; moreover, yurt is being used nowadays. Besides, there is a consonance of beautiful words "ot-oshak-otan", also directly related to each other. A straight road is lying between hearth and love for motherland.

Thus, in a process of pondering, I became sure that yurt elements should a priori be present on future emblem, i.e. shanyrak, uyk, kerege, bossaga, baskur, kuldureush, togan... every of them bears sense, or rather sacral load. By way of example, I should remind that uyks are representatives of polyethnic Kazakhstan, who took part in creation of new Kazakh state alongside with nation-forming Kazakhs, and all of them firmly hold this state in a form of... shanyrak.

Later I got another idea about presence of a five-point star as a symbol of guiding, fortunate path of our people. Extending good wishes, Kazakhs often say "Zhuldyzdyn zhansyn" (Let your star shine). Moreover, during long-distance migrations our ancestors used to orientate themselves by the stars.

It is only natural that the most spread ornamental motif, "koshkar muyiz" pattern should have been present in future emblem. Kazakhs always associated sheep with wealth, prosperity and wellbeing. The more light beasts nomad had, the more chances for better life he had. Light beasts gave and give us everything, i.e. clothes, meat, milk, fat, cheese, leather, soap, etc.

-The idea of extinct animal's ("zhylky kiyk") revival became another significant element of the emblem; long time ago our ancestors encountered horned horses; the number of horn rames amounted to seven on both sides. A figure "seven" is sacral for nomads.

-Good point. During pauses in my work in Tashkent, I managed to fabricate a model of future emblem in accordance with contest regulations; it was 50 cm in diameter. In the end of April 1992 I sent my work to the office of Supreme Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Every Tuesday in May I had to go from Tashkent to Almaty to take part in commission's work. Later I learned that there in total there were 293 applications for the contest. That was quite a heat! Fate of future state symbols of our country was being decided in here. A competent commission, comprised of deputies of the XIIth session, famous scientists, politicians, public figures, writers, poets, cabinet officers, and, of course the Head of State Nursultan Abishevich Nazarbayev, was examining our works.

By the way, by the end of April I have fabricated an emblem's original in Tashkent and brought it to Almaty in "KamAZ". I hired the car in Shymkent, as it was very hard to place almost 2 metres in diameter emblem either in wagon, or an airplane, or a car.

- How did the dispute itself go? What was going on in the Supreme Council on the day of state symbols approval?

- In the morning on June 4th 1992 a heated debate got started. The first hymn of independent Kazakhstan was approved almost without a serious dispute. Later, after a really heated discussion, a flag was chosen. Around 5 p.m. 10 emblems chosen out of 293 were being examined. My version of an emblem compelled general attention, and then I understood that I managed to meet not only commission members' wishes, but of millions of my countrymen as well. At the commission request I demonstrated two versions of the emblem on the screen, the first one was without a star and horn rames "koshkar muiyz", and the second one was with them. Members of the commission and deputies were intimidated by horns and star, some of them saw the first object as our retardation, and a star was considered as a link to the Soviet totalitarian regime.

- This is when our President stepped in...

- Nursultan Abishevich, who had been closely observing the course of that heated discussion, decided to take advantage of his indisputable authority and firmly declared that "the star does not have any relation to the Soviet "star", as we are searching for a guiding and unique star and independent state should have its own path of development! Our star is not related to any religion in the world"...

-Who else assisted you in the process of emblem's creation?

- No one. I made it by myself and besides, I fabricated it in the territory of other state on a patriotic impulse and out of deep respect for our independence, because of ambitious motivations that we – people, are worth of having the best emblem in the world!

Nevertheless, one more time I would like to emphasize that having persuaded some members of the commission to choose the emblem's current version, the Head of State N.A.Nazarbayev played the most decisive role in the process of approving a final version of the emblem.

- What was the process of making the emblem's model copy?

- Later I got an order to fabricate a bronze model of the emblem in Almaty. Members of the Supreme Council recommended one of the most talented artists of Kazakhstan Vladimir Kirillovich Ivanov, who could assist in solving some technical matters. This kind man, living in a small two-room apartment, suggested that I should live in his balcony for the convenience of

our mutual work, as a trip from rented apartment to the “base” took a lot of time, and we had to work till late evening. Our work lasted three months, and when the model was finally completed, Vladimir Kirillovich sincerely exclaimed, “In my whole life I have never seen such a perfect emblem, a real masterpiece of the architectural art!” His words will remain in my memory forever. I believe that his exclaim was the highest appraisal.

A funny story happened at that period of time, there was a bed in Vladimir Kirillovich balcony, where I used to rest after hours-long, exhausting work. A mongrel dog Santa used that bed as a shelter, but I could not imagine that she was about to pup. One morning I woke up feeling indescribable warmth in the armpits and hearing quiet snuffling noises. And then I found five puppies in my bed, they were either brought to bed by their agitated mother or they crawled there by themselves.

That is how it happened: late at night two creatures, me, Zhandarbek Malibekov and a little mongrel dog Santa went to bed, but when we woke up – there were seven of us. Five puppies have also acknowledged the author of a state emblem. That was great!

- Certainly you could not imagine yourself away from Kazakhstan after developing the state emblem...

- I enjoyed authority, was respected and achieved a certain status in Uzbek society; but after creation of the state emblem I could not imagine myself being away from Kazakhstan. It turned out that for the last forty years I have done enough for development of “architectural renaissance” in Uzbekistan, which, by the way, granted high-quality education to me and rendered assistance in my becoming as a specialist and professional. Nevertheless, I had filial, unpaid duty to my Fatherland, which urged me to do as much as possible for it. That is why in several years I moved to Kazakhstan; today I live in blessed Astana, whose architect is our President...

To this day I have designed more than 15 major objects. I carried out feasibility study for the Institute of Neurosurgery, took part in developing draft design of the “Nur Astana” mosque, participated in a contest for engineering Opera and Ballet theatre, and also suggested my own version of “EXPO - 2017”.

Feeling gratitude to the country which brought me up, nurtured and gave me “wings”, I fulfilled a promise given to myself: I worked out a conceptual design for mausoleum to famous Tole biy. In the past Uzbeks used to call him “Karlygash bi”, but we claimed unfading name of the famous biy, former ruler of Tashkent, Kazakh Tole biy. I am proud of that project, which had been realized in Uzbekistan. This monument is situated in the very centre of Tashkent in Sheihkhavandytakhur and Junus khana; this place is sacred not only for Kazakhs and Uzbeks, but for entire Turkic speaking world.

- What are you working at? What ideas and projects you are nurturing?

- I work in L.N.Gumilev Eurasian National University. The city administration allotted a three-room apartment to me. I lead an experimental students’ group, whom I want to educate in the spirit of ethnic culture and faithful service to their country and nation. We would like to proceed with the President’s idea of developing Kazakh ethnic culture on the basis of local archaeology study, of national history, myths and legends. Also I am writing a book about my architectural survey.

Today, alongside with specialists from other fields of science, I am working out a unique town planning concept, destined to overthrow traditional approaches aimed at strengthening peace and accord between the country's ethnoses.

This is especially significant in a year of the 20th anniversary of the Assembly of the Peoples of Kazakhstan. Together with leading lecturers I go out to different regions of our country, fostering love for their nation and state, in youth together with my colleagues – Yerlan Sydykov, Gadilbek Shalakhmetov, Garifolla Yessim, Serik Negimov, and others.

- Zhandarbek, could you please describe main functional role of the emblem you have created?

- By all means, state emblem serves the “Mangilik El” idea. Our successful and gradually developing state is to become one of the most authoritative states in the world. We were, we are and will be the eternal nation of the eternal country. Today we need to consolidate our forces and intensions around national leader Nursultan Abishevich Nazarbayev.

PS.: “MgE” team is sure that unfading stars of the state emblem author Zhandarbek Malibekuly have been illuminating paths of many novice and established architects, because their light bears love for his cause and Motherland, and unvarnished life without loud fanfare and false modesty.

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