

# Integrating YanZhao Cultural Elements in Hebei Garden Expo Park Wayfinding Signage Design: A Conceptual Framework

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**Abstract:** *This paper proposes a conceptual framework for integrating YanZhao cultural elements into the wayfinding signage design of Hebei Garden Expo Park. By examining the cultural significance of YanZhao elements and the fundamentals of efficient wayfinding signage design, the objective is to improve the visual representation and navigational effectiveness of the park's signage system. The framework integrates semiotics and urban form theory to systematically incorporate regional cultural symbols into wayfinding designs within public spaces. The study explores the principles of wayfinding, Environmental Graphic Design (EGD), Kevin Lynch's Theory, and semiotics Theory, combined with YanZhao cultural symbols to create an innovative and culturally enriched signage system.*

**Keywords:** YanZhao Culture, Wayfinding Signage, Visual Symbols, Hebei Garden Expo Park

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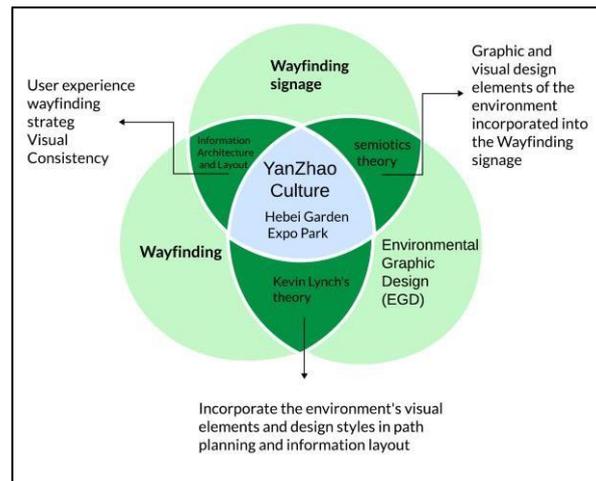
## 1. Introduction

Wayfinding is essential, particularly when journeying to picturesque locations. Significantly, wayfinding pertains to the necessity towards understanding the destination and the method to arrive a certain arrival point (Shayestefar et al., 2022). Furthermore, wayfinding signs is capable to assist pedestrians find safe routes and enhances safety and reduces anxiety by improving route awareness (Ryan & Hill, 2022).

In navigating and exploring tourist attractions, outdoor heritage sites and scenic locations are not exempted from being visited by tourists, both local and international. Hebei Garden Expo Park, situated in Zhengding New District, Shijiazhuang City is no exception. According to Ge (2013), Expo Park emerges as the most concentrated and significant public green space within the entire region. Hebei Garden Expo Park adopts a front lake and back mountain pattern, offering a breath taking experience by presenting the rich culture and outstanding garden landscapes of Hebei Province.

Despite the breath taking and scenic attraction, Zong (2013) claimed the garden was hastily completed under a tight schedule to meet the first Garden Expo in April 2012. The overall design of the park needs to be improved, and the design of its internal environmental facilities cannot become the representative of the garden in the Shijiazhuang area and even Hebei Province. The integration of regional cultural elements in public spaces is essential for preserving cultural heritage and enhancing user experience (Ma et al., 2021).

Yuan (2023) further claimed that YanZhao culture holds significant historical and cultural value in Hebei Province, China. This culture, originating from the historical Yan and Zhao states, is renowned for its rich heritage, including spiritual connotations, historical anecdotes, folk arts, architecture, patterns, and symbolic icons. These elements collectively represent the essence of YanZhao culture. The Hebei government has undertaken various initiatives to protect and promote YanZhao culture, recognizing its importance in preserving cultural identity (Wu & Yu, 2023). The integration of these cultural elements can improve the aesthetic and functional quality of wayfinding signage, making it more engaging and informative for visitors, promoting regional cultural development. The integration of this significant areas of study is illustrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1: Integration of Significant Area Venn Diagram**  
 (Source: Created by the author, Fan Zhuxiao, 2024)

## 2. YanZhao Cultural Elements

YanZhao culture originated from farming and plain culture, creating the typical characteristics of farming civilization in the YanZhao area and the spirit of Confucianism and Taoism to express humanistic thoughts (Ma, 2013). YanZhao culture, rich in history and artistic traditions, includes various forms of folk arts (An, 2021). Typical YanZhao residential buildings are rectangular courtyard houses with a central axis layout, reflecting hierarchical social structures. Decorative techniques include stone, wood, brick, and painting (Wang, 2010).

An (2021) stated that YanZhao Folk Arts includes Wuqiao acrobatics, Tangshan shadow puppetry, Weixian papercut, and Wuqiang New Year Pictures, each with distinct visual and symbolic characteristics. Objects and animals from different eras and regions coexist, with exaggeration and displacement techniques integrating space into two-dimensional forms. Traditional colours such as red, yellow, blue, white, and black represent the five elements (Tian, 2023).

Decorative patterns, rich in Hebei, are extracted from ceramic artworks and totems. The ceramic decoration pattern of the Ding Kiln as an example; The Ding Kiln presents ornamental designs inherited from the Tang Dynasty to the current era. Typical botanical designs encompass peonies, chrysanthemums, and pomegranates, whereas creature motifs frequently portray phoenixes, mandarin ducks, and peacocks. These patterns articulate individuals' yearning for an exquisite and flourishing existence (Wang & Li, 2024).

### **3. Wayfinding Design**

In his influential publication 'The Image of the Metropolis', Lynch (1960) introduced cognitive maps and identified five key components for human wayfinding: routes, boundaries, zones, intersections, and prominent features. He emphasized the importance of "legibility," characterizing it as the characteristic of a tangible setting that renders it distinct, identifiable, and enduring (Lynch, 1984). In addition, Arthur & Passini's 1992 study explored cognitive mechanisms in navigation and pragmatic implementation of wayfinding principles in architectural design, linking architecture, signage, and human conduct, proposing efficient systems as intermediaries. They further emphasized the importance of unambiguous, uniform signage and the creation of instinctive spatial arrangements to facilitate navigation in intricate environments.

Wayfinding technology with ecological information is essential for a user-friendly experience. Yesiltepe and colleagues (2020) highlighted the significant role of size, color, and structural saliency in determining the perceived importance of landmarks, particularly those in easily accessible areas (Yesiltepe et al., 2021). In addition, Hegarty et al. (2023) demonstrated that individuals use various navigation tactics, with males preferring location tactics and females favoring reaction tactics. Personal characteristics, cognitive ability, and initiative influence navigation abilities. Hence, wayfinding, a process involving cognitive and environmental cues, is viewed from a visual design perspective as a combination of various influencing factors.

### **4. Semiotics in Effective Wayfinding**

Visual symbols convey cultural meanings and information within culture and society. It helps analyze how designs embed cultural components into signs, revealing how they communicate information and significance in different settings (Eco, 1979). The application of critical inquiry utilizing visual and social frameworks, such as semiotics, to comprehend and enhance landscape design methodologies as deliberated by Raaphorst et al. (2017) represents landscape architecture visually and their socio-political ramifications. The combination of text and visual imagery is crucial for effective communication, as they elicit emotions and engage the intellect, enhancing the overall message conveyed (Panzaru, 2012). Significantly, the study of signs and symbols is crucial for designing effective wayfinding systems. Employing a social semiotic approach enhances user experience and cultural representation by creating intuitive, adaptable, and culturally resonant signage.

### **5. Theoretical and Practical Implications**

Kevin Lynch's seminal work, "The Image of the City" (1960), introduced crucial concepts for understanding and designing urban environments. He identified five essential elements for creating a coherent and legible city image: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. Lynch delineates five fundamental components within the urban setting that shape its imageability: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks. This set of elements plays a crucial role in constructing a cognitive map of the urban landscape, improving its legibility, facilitating individuals in orienting themselves, and establishing affective bonds with their surroundings (Damayanti, 2015). Lynch's theory emphasizes the importance of these elements in creating a highly imageable city, which is easily navigable and memorable for both residents and visitors. Effective wayfinding signage should be legible, consistent, and use universally recognizable symbols. The integration of cultural elements must balance these principles with aesthetic and

symbolic representation. Scholars has identified the classification of wayfinding signs in the following table (Schroder et al., 2011; Su et al., 2022).

**Table 1: Types of Wayfinding Signage established by scholars**

No	Category	Description
1	Identification Signs (Destination Signs)	Identify entrances, street addresses, buildings, rooms, facilities, places, and spaces. (Location, Distance, Direction)
2	Information Signs	Provide detailed information about the features, facilities, and services within a space. (Directories, maps, building identification signs, notices, and interpretative signs. Spatial Characteristics, Directional Signs, Landmarks)
3	Orientation Maps	Show the layout of a building or space with current location, landmarks, features, routes, and amenities. (Directory Boards, Guide visitors to specific, destinations., Interpretative Signs Offer detailed information about the surroundings)
4	Directional Signs	Typically wall-mounted or overhead signs with directional arrows to guide users. (Directional Arrows, Paths, Areas, Boundaries)
5	Safety, Regulatory, Prohibition, and Advisory Signs	Control movement and activities for safety, comfort, and site management. Provide information about known dangers and warnings against unsafe behaviours. (Fire exits, disability car parks, and clearway areas. Safety Information, Regulatory Information, Prohibition Information, Advisory Information)

(Source: Created by the author, Fan Zhuxiao, 2024)

## 6. A Conceptual Framework for integrating YanZhao Cultural Elements in Hebei Garden Expo Park Wayfinding Signage Design.

A proposed framework is developed from grounded in semiotics, which studies signs and symbols as elements of communicative behavior, and urban form theory, which examines the spatial arrangement and design of urban environments. The conceptual framework is designed to integrate YanZhao cultural elements into wayfinding signage design, focusing on three key areas. This was followed by defining and selecting YanZhao cultural symbols that are representative and easily recognizable. It also involves identifying and documenting the visual symbols and motifs unique to YanZhao culture. The researcher further includes examining the visual characteristics of YanZhao cultural symbols to determine their suitability for incorporation into signage design, considering factors such as color, form, and symbolism. Below is a simplified summary that can determine the characteristics of visual symbols.

**Table 2: Characteristics of Visual Symbols Innovative Display of Regional Culture in wayfinding signage**

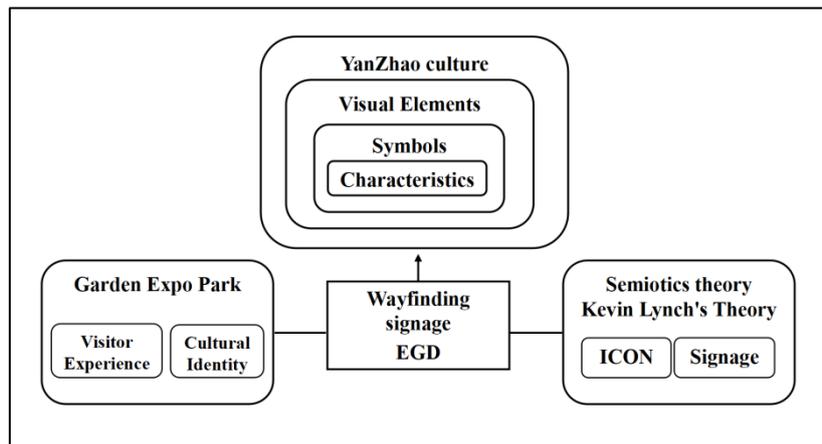
Features	Feature Description	Example
Color	Types of colors used, color combinations, symbolic meanings of colors	Red represents celebration, black represents solemnity
Shape	Basic types of shapes, complexity, symmetry	Circle symbolizes reunion, square symbolizes stability
Pattern	Types of patterns, repetition methods, complexity	Continuous wave patterns, geometric patterns
Cultural Symbolism	Symbolic meanings and historical background of symbols in culture	Dragon symbolizes authority, phoenix symbolizes auspiciousness
Application	Forms of symbols in different contexts and uses	Application in architectural decoration, application in festival decorations

(Source: Created by the author, Fan Zhuxiao, 2024)

Accordingly, the conceptual framework shows in figure 2 explains the primary components of garden expo park and semiotic theory where both elements play a role in the process of developing the wayfinding signage design. The appropriate and effective signage design through the integration of YanZhao Cultural elements determined the intended semiotics image in reflecting the design. This includes the characteristics of symbols and visual elements of YanZhao Culture.

Essentially, critical exploration should take place on the semiotic representations of the symbol and visual elements elements of YanZhao Culture, ensuring the right message of cultural representation for the visitors' experience. It is recommended to apply appropriate design principles to incorporate YanZhao culture symbols into wayfinding signage, ensuring legibility and navigational efficiency. Recommendations will be made on how to integrate these cultural elements effectively. Research includes innovative design approaches that enhance both functionality and aesthetic appeal.

Applying the framework, the Hebei Garden Expo Park will incorporate YanZhao cultural elements into its wayfinding signage. The collaboration will include experts, designers, and visitors in the research.



**Figure 2: A Conceptual Framework for integrating YanZhao Cultural Elements in Hebei Garden Expo Park Wayfinding Signage Design.**

(Source: Created by the author, Fan Zhuxiao, 2024)

Figure 2 above illustrates the primary components of an effective wayfinding system, focusing on integrating YanZhao cultural elements. This framework highlights the roles of cultural symbols, visual characteristics, and elements in creating a cohesive wayfinding experience. Effective wayfinding in this context involves the application of semiotic and urban form principles to the design of icons and signage within Garden Expo Park and other scenic spots. It is crucial to analyse how these cultural and visual elements can be effectively incorporated into wayfinding signage to enhance navigability and cultural representation.

## 7. Conclusion

Integrating YanZhao cultural elements into the wayfinding signage of Hebei Garden Expo Park presents an opportunity to enhance both the park's navigational efficiency and cultural identity. The proposed conceptual framework provides a structured approach to achieving this integration, grounded in theoretical principles and practical application. Future research will focus on implementing and evaluating this framework, contributing to the broader field of cultural heritage preservation and scenic area Wayfinding signage design.

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