



# The Relationship Between Regional and International Symbols

## Take the Iconic Redesign of Beijing Xuanwu Park as an Example

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**Abstract.** Symbols convey important information to people. International symbols are recognized internationally because of their simple and clear, while regional symbols derive from the influence of their local culture and have strong cultural characteristics. By investigating the existing problems of Xuanwu Park icons, this paper takes regional symbols as the research core, and explores the conversion methods between international symbols and regional symbols. The design integrates the traditional culture and the historical information of the Xuanwu park to create a icon system that conforms to the regional culture of the park. Two methods of icon design are summarized: one is based on the traditional symbol simplification generated icon, the other is a new icon created based on the existing international symbols combining regional culture. It is clear that international symbols and regional symbols should be a inclusive and interrelated relationship, which provides reference for design of regional symbols in future.

**Keywords:** regional symbols · icon design · park icon redesign

## 1 Introduction

The international symbol is a kind of universal symbol popular at home and abroad, with its simple expression, clear and understandable information, which is recognized internationally. People from different countries and cultures can get the meaning of the information intuitively and accurately. International symbols are often used in some crowded public places, such as airports and subways. The primary role of the iconic symbols is to guide people to where they want, so the basic standards of the symbols are formed, which are eye-catching, accurate and easy to know (Fig. 1).

Regional symbols are symbols with strong cultural characteristics derived from the influence of the regional culture in which they are located. It covers national identity, local characteristics, cultural history and other information, which play an active role in the protection and dissemination of the regional culture of this symbol. According to the time when the symbols are created, regional symbols can be divided into two categories. One is the application of old symbols, totems and patterns produced in history, which have been handed down for a long time and have been given deep and specific meanings, in addition to becoming the cultural and historical symbols of the region and even the



**Fig. 1.** Airport signage. Image source: Internet.

country. Such as the Chinese knot, it has conveyed the symbolic meaning of unity, happiness and peace since ancient times. Due to frequent international exchanges and cultural integration, the Chinese knot has become the image symbol of China in the world. The other category is the new symbols created by designers who learn the knowledge of regional culture, according to the needs of modern society and the aesthetic sense of modern people, and design series of symbols that contain the spirit of culture which have a unique modern image [1, 3].

International symbols and regional symbols are closely related, and the former expands the application field of the latter. Due to the rapid dissemination of modern information, people's interest in regional culture is growing, promoting the development of regional symbols, which are more recognized and accepted by more people for reflecting cultural characteristics and national colors.

## 2 Survey of Xuanwu Park

### 2.1 Current Situation

Beijing Xuanwu Park is located at No. 12, Huebashi Street, Xicheng District, Beijing, covering an area of about 73,700 square meters. The earliest original site was Shangguo Temple, rebuilt in the Ming Dynasty, and was the first resort in the capital until the Shunzhi Period of the Qing Dynasty. In 1983, the park was redesigned and converted into Xuanwu Park in the next year. Most of the people who visit the park are residents of the surrounding area.

### 2.2 Existing Landscape

According to the plan of the park, Xuanwu Park is divided into two areas by a main road. The eastern part is mainly for water landscape, decorated with rocks, ponds, gray walls, pavilions, bower and bridge, which make the area quiet and elegant. Among eastern scenic Jing Ya Yuan is the most representative and is known as "the garden of gardens". There are eight scenic spots in it, such as Yuanyang Pavilion, Furong Bridge and Ya Island. Except Jing Ya Yuan, there are activity areas such as chess square, which cover a large area and serve as the main activity area for the elderly in the park.

The western area is dominated by mountain and forest scenery, mainly with scenic spots such as forest plank road and bonsai gardens, where visitors can enjoy the deep, quiet and rugged mountain and bamboo grove. The western scenic area is set up with smaller areas for activities, such as the diabolo square (Fig. 2).

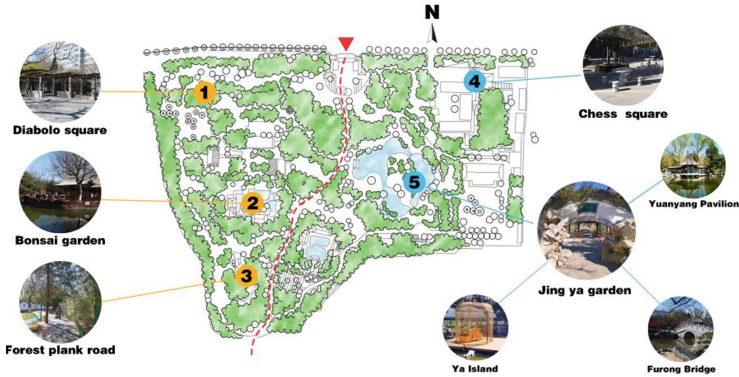


Fig. 2. Plan of Xuanwu Park. Image source: Drawn by the author.



Fig. 3. Present situation map of Xuanwu Park icon. Image source: Photo by the author.

### 2.3 Survey of Existing Icons in Xuanwu Park

Through the survey, the park icons are roughly divided into two types, the first type of attraction guidance category has diabolo square, bonsai garden, forest plank road, Jing Ya Garden, etc.; the second type of warning icons are several, mainly prohibiting littering, fishing, feeding fish, near the water, etc.

According to the survey, the existing icons in the park have two main problems: Firstly, some park icons are missing, and the existing icons are old, for the park guidance is mainly based on text guidance, the park guidance system is not well designed, the guidance is weak. Secondly, the placement of warning icon is not obvious, and with text warnings, the visual impact is too little lack of warning and the park landscape style does not match, damaging the park scenery. (Fig. 3).

## 3 Xuanwu Park Icon Redesign

### 3.1 Standard Setting of Icon

The architectural style of Xuanwu Park is biased towards the traditional architecture, and garden design prefers the garden style of Jiangnan. There is lush greenery in the whole

park, among which the bamboo grove is the most abundant, and then it is begonias, apricots, plum blossoms and other seasonal ornamental plants, so that the scenery of four seasons can be collected in one park. Therefore, in the design of the core is the traditional Chinese culture, which combined with modern aesthetic trends to redesign the park icon.

The outline of the icon is shaped from the traditional Chinese pattern of begonia, which means “beautiful woman” in the minds of Chinese literati and often expresses the sentiment of missing, cherishing and comforting. Firstly, “Tang (棠)” is homo phonic with “Tang (堂)”, begonia is often matched with Magnolia, Peony and plum blossom, which means “yu tang fu gui”(To be promoted to a higher position, rich and distinguished). This theme is often used to decorate furniture, window frames and other objects. The shape of begonia pattern is simple and elegant, which has the traditional culture of China and conforms to the modern aesthetics, and the symbols reflect the local regional characteristics of China. Secondly, the outline of begonia is combined with other symbols which are just like view windows. And the scenery of heaven and earth is incorporated, echoing the four seasons of Xuanwu Park [4, 5].

The color of the icon is chosen from the traditional Chinese color ochre (#862617), which is commonly used in Chinese painting. The color is dark brownish red like the red walls of ancient buildings, while it’s more introverted than crimson, and more elegant than bright red.

## 3.2 Park Icon Design

### 3.2.1 Landscape Guide Icon

For the landscape icon design, some scenic spots in the park are selected, namely Jing Ya Garden, forest plank road, bonsai garden, diabolo square and chess square. Among them, three scenic spots in Jing Ya Garden are selected for design, namely Furong Bridge, Yuanyang Pavilion and Ya island.

Jing Ya Garden and its three scenic spots are unique and elegant, with a strong Chinese charm. It is a landscape guide icon that provides convenience for tourists to find scenic spots, so the design contents are all taken from the architectural scenery of the park. Through on-the-spot investigation of the scenic spots, the icons are concisely summarized by geometric curve modeling.

The icon of “Jing Ya Garden” comes from its building Moon Gate, with rockery on both sides, and the overall icon is approximately axisymmetric (Fig. 4-a); Furong Bridge, the second scenic spot, the stone bridge and the lake reflect like a full moon, summarizing the shape of stone bridge with plant decoration (Fig. 4-b); Yuanyang Pavilion, one of the scenic spots in Jing Ya Garden, has a very clever architectural design. Two square pavilions, one corner of which is connected with each other, mean that they will never be separated (Fig. 4-c). The Chinese pronunciation of Ya Island is homo phonic Duck Island (Fig. 4-d). Wild duck often appears in Xuanwu Park Lake, and then there is an island in the lake of house wild duck. Therefore, this scene is called Ya Island. The golden silk cage and duck are selected as the main symbols of icon design to show the features and functions of Ya Island (Fig. 4).

The forest plank road is mainly for walking and viewing, both sides of the road are planted bamboo. In summer, the bamboo grove is lush, and the wind blows through the



**Fig. 4.** Jing ya Garden and three scenery icon design. Image source: Drawn by the author.



**Fig. 5.** Forest plank road icon and Bonsai garden icon design. Image source: Drawn by the author.

bamboo grove to match the plank road, showing the elegance and tranquility of the park to the fullest. Inspired by this, the scenery is selected.

As a large scenic spot in the west of the park, there are many pots of evergreen ornamental plants in Bonsai garden. Bonsai, one of the outstanding traditional art in China, places plants and rocks in the plant pot, expresses the profound artistic conception, just like a miniature landscape scenic spot. Therefore, bonsai is selected as the overall design objective for this landscape icon design. In the initial design, the icon pattern was determined by copying a variety of plants, and it was expressed by pure curves and monochromatic blocks. Through the icon evolution process, it can be seen that the icon representation with a small number of color blocks and tough lines is more suitable for the overall icon style of the park, and it can also better reflect the indomitable spirit of China people (Fig. 5).

The design inspiration of the diabolo square icon is taken from the name of the square, with the traditional diabolo shape as the design core, and the dynamic diabolo is reflected by inverted trapezoidal diabolo shape and smooth lines to reflect the active atmosphere of the square. Chess Square mainly provides a place for the elderly to play chess. The game of Go and Chinese chess, the popular game in China, are selected as materials for design. As traditional games in China, they contain rich connotations of Chinese culture (Fig. 6).



Fig. 6. Diabolo square icon and Chess square icon design. Image source: Drawn by the author.



Fig. 7. Xuanwu Park warning icon design. Image source: Drawn by the author.

### 3.2.2 Warning Icon

The warning icon in the park is used like international symbols, which often appear in a combination of red circles and slashes, like the deformation of the English word “NO”. While this design method doesn’t match the beautiful scenery.

The redesign figure of warning icon in the park are simple and elegant in Song Dynasty style, and the prohibition symbol is used to the bright red fork at the top right of the icon, which plays an eye-catching warning role without damaging the aesthetic feeling of the icon.

As for the design thinking of warning icons, this presentation idea is expressed in the form of action scenes, which will increase the interest and story of the icon, and visitors can clearly understand the meaning of the icon without the need for text annotation. This design selects six main warning icons of the park, such as “Water depth danger”, “No fishing”, “No feeding”, “No phone calls in thunderstorm weather”, “No trampling on the lawn” and “No littering” for design (Fig. 7).

Through the redesign of Xuanwu Park icon, it’s clarified that the method of how to transform international symbols and regional symbols. Firstly, the old symbols are highly refined, and this method is mainly used in the design of landscape guidance. Secondly, it combines international symbols with regional culture to create a new symbol system. Taking international warning symbols as the basis of graphic design, it is integrated into the figures of the regional culture to produce warning graphics that conform to the park environment.

## 4 Conclusion

In the future, it will focus on regional symbols which expressed cultural characteristics strongly. Regional symbols not only play the role of illustration, but also spread the traditional culture of the country and promote the inheritance and development of excellent culture. Icon design has never been accomplished overnight. How to develop international symbols and regional symbols together requires the efforts and attempts of more designers.

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