

## Original Paper

# Translating Culturally-Loaded Words in *Yingzao Fashi*: A Translation Compensation Perspective Based on Feng Jiren's Chinese Architecture and Metaphor

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Received: August 20, 2025    Accepted: September 13, 2025    Online Published: September 22, 2025

doi:10.22158/jetss.v7n3p140

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/jetss.v7n3p140>

### Abstract

*The Yingzao Fashi (1103 CE) epitomizes Chinese architectural literature, merging technical specifications with cultural and philosophical ideas. Translating its culture-loaded terms demands conveying cultural depth beyond technical accuracy. Feng Jiren's work (2012) redefines this challenge by uncovering the text as a metaphorical system reflecting Song dynasty cosmology and aesthetics. Guided by Mona Baker's (2018) comprehensive framework of translation compensation theory, this study employs a comparative analysis to meticulously examine a range of compensation strategies. It further proposes an integrated multimodal approach, aiming to effectively mitigate the inevitable cultural loss encountered in the translation of such culturally saturated texts. Findings show that effective translation requires "deep compensation"—integrating phonetic preservation, technical explanation, visual aids, and cultural-metaphorical annotation—balancing precision and acceptability to translate both words and worldview.*

### Keywords

*Yingzao Fashi, culture-loaded terms, translation compensation, Jiren Feng, Song culture*

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 The Documentary Value and Translation Challenges of *Yingzao Fashi*

As the definitive synthesis of ancient Chinese architectural technical systems, the *Yingzao Fashi* (1103) served not only as an official building code promulgated by the Northern Song dynasty but also as the most critical primary source for studying pre-modern Chinese timber-frame architecture. This text

systematically documents a comprehensive architectural knowledge system encompassing design specifications, labor and material regulations, and aesthetic principles, earning recognition as the “encyclopedia of ancient Chinese architecture” (Liang Sicheng, 1983). Its textual characteristics are manifested in two primary dimensions: Technical Dimension: Systems such as the cai fen modular system (“材分”, eight-grade timber system) reflect a highly scientific and standardized approach to measurement. Cultural Dimension: Poetic expressions like ru niao si ge (如鸟斯革, like a bird spreading its wings) convey philosophical ideas and aesthetic values rooted in traditional Chinese culture.

However, Jiren Feng’s (2012) seminal research compels a reevaluation of this dichotomy. Feng argues that the *Yingzao Fashi* is not merely a text containing both technical and cultural elements; rather, it constitutes a sophisticated system in which technical terminology itself is deeply metaphorical, encoding the cosmological principles, social hierarchy, and natural philosophy of Song dynasty scholar-officials. Consequently, the translation challenge escalates from identifying equivalents for technical terms to decoding and re-encoding an entire cultural worldview. This presents a dual dilemma in cross-cultural communication: Terminological Level: The naming of architectural components (e.g., chiwen 鸱吻, dougong 斗拱) incorporates both precise technical function and rich cultural imagery, making it difficult to fully convey their connotations through literal translation or paraphrasing. Cultural-Metaphorical Level: Institutional concepts (e.g., juzhe zhi zhi 举折之制—roof curvature calculation system) and conceptual expressions (e.g., zhu gao bu yue jian guang 柱高不越间广—column height does not exceed bay width) require accurate transmission of scientific logic alongside comprehensive presentation of their metaphorical cultural context, as illuminated by Feng.

### 1.2 Definition, Classification, and Metaphorical Layer of Culture-Loaded Terms

This study adopts Baker’s (2018) definition of culture-loaded terms as “source language words that carry specific cultural information and have no direct equivalents in the target language.” Based on the textual features of the *Yingzao Fashi* and incorporating Newmark’s (1988) cultural categories, augmented by Feng’s (2012) analysis, the following classification system is constructed, with emphasis on the metaphorical layer: Material Culture Terms: Refer to specific architectural entities and components (e.g., chiwen, feiyan 飞檐). The primary translation difficulty lies in the absence of corresponding physical referents in the target culture. Feng’s work adds that these components often embody symbolic meanings (e.g., chiwen as a mythical creature believed to prevent fires). Institutional Culture Terms: Involve technical standards and construction systems (e.g., caifen badeng 材分八等, juzhe zhi zhi). The core challenge lies in cross-cultural explanation of systemic logic. Feng demonstrates that these systems function as metaphorical representations of social and cosmic order (e.g., the eight grades of cai mirroring Confucian social hierarchy). Conceptual Culture Terms: Contain aesthetic concepts and philosophical metaphors (e.g., ru niao si ge, tian ren he yi 天人合一). The main difficulty involves preserving imagistic resonance and philosophical depth. Feng’s interpretation is crucial here, unpacking the literary allusions and philosophical ideals underpinning these phrases.

### 1.3 Research Questions

Based on the above analysis, the core research question of this paper is: How can translation compensation strategies, informed by Jiren Feng's metaphorical interpretation of the *Yingzao Fashi*, effectively bridge the gap between terminological precision and the transmission of deep cultural meaning, thereby mitigating cultural loss? Specifically, this study explores: How does Feng's (2012) metaphorical framework reveal the limitations of existing translations in handling the three types of culture-loaded terms? What integrated, multimodal compensation strategies (combining textual, visual, and annotative elements) can be developed to address both the technical and metaphorical layers of these terms? How can these strategies be systematized into a general methodology for translating classical Chinese technical-literary texts?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Evolution of Translation Compensation Theory

Translation compensation theory primarily aims to address the loss of cultural information between source and target languages. Its developmental trajectory is especially pertinent for conveying multi-layered meanings in the *Yingzao Fashi*. Linguistic Foundations: Nida (1964) introduced the concept of "dynamic equivalence," emphasizing functional rather than formal correspondence. However, his model did not comprehensively address culture-specific terms or metaphorical content. Deepening Cultural Orientation: Baker (2018), in her influential work, established a systematic classification of translation compensation strategies, now considered fundamental in translation studies. She outlines techniques such as compensatory placement and separate compensation, offering a structured theoretical basis for tackling untranslatability. Concurrently, Hervey and Higgins (2002) proposed the notion of composite compensation, emphasizing the integration of textual and visual elements in multimodal translation. While these contributions form a crucial foundation for mitigating cultural loss, this paper contends that they necessitate further refinement when applied to technical texts rich in metaphorical meaning.

### 2.2 Current Research on Translating Architectural Texts

Studies indicate a persistent divide between technical standardization and cultural interpretation:

**Technical Standardization:** Represented by Liang Sicheng's (1983) methodology, this approach favors transcription—e.g., "dougong"—to ensure terminological consistency, yet frequently overlooks cultural metaphors (Knapp, 2020). **Cultural Contextualization:** Researchers such as Steinhardt (2014) strive to reconstruct conceptual frameworks but risk oversimplifying technical rationales (Wang Qiheng, 2016). **Interdisciplinary Integration:** Chen Gang (2012) put forward a holistic model incorporating linguistic, technological, and cultural aspects; however, this framework did not fully achieve operational synergy or integrate profound metaphorical analysis. A central unresolved tension remains between technical accuracy (e.g., component parameters) and cultural resonance (e.g., philosophical imagery)—a gap that Feng's research directly engages with.

### *2.3 Advancements in English Translations and the Imperative for Metaphorical Interpretation*

Existing English versions of the Yingzao Fashi, while evolving over time, exhibit a consistent lack of metaphorical depth, as highlighted by Feng (2012): Early Scholarly Translations: Initially prioritized visual supplementation for material terms alongside phonetic annotations (e.g., “chiwen”), yet overlooked systematic and metaphorical elucidations of institutional and conceptual terminology. Contemporary Comprehensive Translations: Employ glossaries and footnotes to partially clarify cultural logic—such as elucidating the grading system of “caifen badeng”—but frequently miss the poetic and metaphorical essence of conceptual expressions, reducing phrases like “ru niao si ge” to purely technical descriptions. Technically Streamlined Translations: Prioritize standardized terminology equivalence at the expense of historical and cultural context, leading to a dissociation from cultural roots and a total neglect of metaphorical dimensions. A key observation is that the effectiveness of compensating for metaphorical meaning decreases progressively across material, institutional, and conceptual terms. Feng’s (2012) analytical framework offers a vital perspective for systematically recognizing and remedying this deficiency.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

### *3.1 Applicability of Translation Compensation Theory Informed by Feng*

To conduct a rigorous analysis, this study synthesizes Baker’s (2018) established taxonomy of compensation strategies with Feng’s (2012) innovative interpretive framework. Baker’s classification—encompassing augmentation, transposition, and integration compensation—offers a methodological toolkit, whereas Feng’s research provides the indispensable cultural and metaphorical content requiring compensation. The application is detailed as follows: Augmentation Compensation, which Baker defines as adding necessary information to counteract cultural default. For example, translating “dougong” requires not only transcription and technical explanation but also augmentation regarding its symbolic meaning as a microcosm (xiaoyuzhou 小宇宙) reflecting cosmic order (Feng, 2012). Transposition Compensation: Adjusts the mode of expression in the target language, suitable for institutional terms. This involves rephrasing to convey systemic logic and its metaphorical meaning (e.g., translating “caifen” not merely as a module but as a “modular system representing hierarchical order”). Integration Compensation: Achieves complete meaning transfer by combining multiple modes of expression (text, image, annotation), essential for terms with composite technical and metaphorical meanings.

### *3.2 Dual Principles of Compensation for Architectural-Metaphorical Text Translation*

Addressing the unique nature of the Yingzao Fashi, this study proposes hierarchical principles for selecting compensation strategies: The Principle of Technical Accuracy: Requires translations to adhere strictly to architectural professional standards, preserving the original measurement system while providing modern metric references to ensure accurate transmission of technical information. The Principle of Cultural-Metaphorical Acceptability: Primarily concerns the translation of terms embodying aesthetic and philosophical values, as interpreted by Feng. This principle emphasizes reconstructing

context through multimodal means, transplanting cultural imagery and metaphorical meaning linguistically, while utilizing visual and annotative elements to activate cultural associations. These two principles exhibit a dynamic synergistic relationship. When translating terms possessing both technical attributes and cultural connotations, it is essential to establish an intertextual relationship between terminological explanation and visual/metaphorical presentation.

#### 4. Classification of Culture-Loaded Terms in *Yingzao Fashi* and Translation Difficulties

The *Yingzao Fashi* represents one of the most comprehensive and systematic technical texts from ancient China, integrating precise architectural specifications with deeply embedded cultural and philosophical concepts. The translation of its terminology requires not only linguistic competence but also a profound understanding of the cultural, historical, and metaphorical layers that these terms carry. Jiren Feng's work, *Chinese Architecture and Metaphor: Song Culture in the Yingzao Fashi* (2012), provides an essential interpretive framework that reveals the text as a complex metaphorical system rather than a mere technical manual. This section classifies the culture-loaded terms in the *Yingzao Fashi* into three categories—Material, Institutional, and Conceptual—and examines the translation difficulties for each, with particular emphasis on the metaphorical dimensions illuminated by Feng's research.

##### 4.1 Material Culture Terms: The Symbolic Dimension of Components

Material culture terms refer to physical architectural components and elements. Examples include *chiwen* (鸱吻, roof ornament), *feiyan* (飞檐, overhanging eaves), *dougong* (斗拱, bracket set), *ludou* (櫨料, block), and *jue* (爵, peck-shaped ornament). These terms denote tangible objects, but their significance extends far beyond their functional roles.

**Technical Difficulty:** The primary challenge in translating material culture terms lies in the lack of equivalent physical referents in Western architectural traditions. For instance, the *dougong* bracket system has no direct counterpart in Western architecture, where load-bearing is typically achieved through arches, vaults, or trusses. Similarly, the *chiwen*, often placed at the roof ridges, is a unique symbolic element with no functional equivalent in Western building traditions. Translators often resort to phonetic transcription (e.g., “*dougong*”) or descriptive approximations (e.g., “bracket set” or “roof ornament”). However, such approaches fail to capture the full essence of these elements.

**Metaphorical Difficulty (Feng's Contribution):** Feng's research underscores that these components are not merely functional; they are deeply symbolic. The *chiwen*, for example, is not just a roof ornament but a mythical creature—a hybrid of owl and fish—believed to protect against fire and evil spirits. The *dougong* system, with its layered brackets and arms, is interpreted as a microcosm (*xiaoyuzhou* 小宇宙) of the universe, reflecting the Chinese cosmological principles of yin-yang interaction and hierarchical order. The *feiyan* (overhanging eaves) evokes the imagery of a bird in flight, symbolizing lightness and elegance. Similarly, the *jue* (peck-shaped ornament) resembles a bird's beak, reinforcing the avian metaphors pervasive in Song architecture. These symbolic layers are central to understanding the cultural and aesthetic values embedded in the *Yingzao Fashi*.

**Challenge:** Direct transcription (e.g., “*chiwen*”) preserves the term's

cultural identity but requires extensive annotation to be meaningful to target readers. Paraphrasing or functional translations (e.g., “roof ornament” for *chiwen*) lose the symbolic meaning and cultural narrative. Simple functional translations (e.g., “bracket set” for *dougong*) ignore the cultural and philosophical significance. Thus, the translator must navigate between preserving cultural authenticity and ensuring comprehensibility, often requiring a combination of transcription, description, and annotation.

#### *4.2 Institutional Culture Terms: Systems as Metaphors for Order*

Institutional culture terms encompass technical standards, measurement systems, and construction methods. Examples include *caifen badeng* (材分八等, eight-grade timber system), *juzhe zhi zhi* (举折之制, roof curvature calculation system), *zhu gao bu yue jian guang* (柱高不越间广, column height does not exceed bay width), and *cai* (材, standard timber section). These terms represent the regulatory framework of Song architecture.

**Technical Difficulty:** These terms involve complex technical concepts that require precise explanation. The *caifen badeng* system, for instance, defines eight standardized sizes of timber sections (*cai*) used as modular units for all design elements. Translating this system requires not only explaining the modular concept but also conveying the proportional relationships between different grades. Similarly, the *juzhe zhi zhi* involves mathematical calculations for determining roof curvature. The technical difficulty is compounded by the need to convert historical measurement units (e.g., *cai*, *fen*) into modern or target-language equivalents without losing the systemic logic. **Metaphorical Difficulty (Feng's Contribution):** Feng argues that these systems are not merely technical guidelines but metaphors for social and cosmic order. The *caifen badeng* system, with its eight grades, mirrors the Confucian social hierarchy, where each grade corresponds to a specific rank in the imperial bureaucracy and cosmic order. The *juzhe* system, which produces gently curved roofs, reflects the Daoist ideal of natural, harmonious form as opposed to rigid geometry. The rule *zhu gao bu yue jian guang* (column height does not exceed bay width) embodies the principle of balance and proportion, which is both a structural necessity and a philosophical ideal. These systems thus encode the worldview and values of Song society. **Challenge:** Literal translation (e.g., “eight-grade timber system”) oversimplifies the term and misses its metaphorical dimension. Technical explanations alone (e.g., describing the *juzhe* system as a method for calculating roof slope) fail to convey the ideological purpose. The translator must therefore articulate both the technical logic and the symbolic function of these systems. This often requires augmented translations accompanied by annotations that explain the cultural and philosophical context.

#### *4.3 Conceptual Culture Terms: Philosophical and Aesthetic Ideals*

Conceptual culture terms express aesthetic concepts, philosophical ideals, and metaphorical imagery. Examples include *ru niao si ge* (如鸟斯革, like a bird spreading its wings), *tian ren he yi* (天人合一, harmony between heaven and humanity), *ru hui si fei* (如翬斯飞, like a pheasant in flight), and *yin yang* (阴阳, complementary forces). These terms are often poetic and abstract, rooted in classical literature and philosophy. **Technical Difficulty:** These terms have minimal technical difficulty in the sense that

they do not describe measurable entities or processes. However, they are highly context-dependent and require a deep understanding of Chinese literary and philosophical traditions. For example, *ru niao si ge* is a phrase from the Book of Songs used to describe the elegant curvature of roofs. *Tian ren he yi* is a fundamental Daoist and Confucian concept that influenced everything from urban planning to architectural design. Metaphorical Difficulty (Feng's Contribution): Feng emphasizes that these terms represent the culmination of the metaphorical system in the *Yingzao Fashi*. They directly express the aesthetic ideals and philosophical foundations that guided architectural practice. *Ru niao si ge* and *ru hui si fei* are not merely descriptive; they embody the ideal of architecture imitating the grace and dynamism of nature. *Tian ren he yi* reflects the aspiration to achieve harmony between human creations and the natural world. Yin-yang symbolizes the balance of complementary forces, which is reflected in the symmetrical and balanced design of Chinese buildings. Challenge: The main challenge is preserving the poetic imagery and philosophical depth while making the translation accessible to target readers. Direct translation (e.g., “like a bird spreading its wings”) may seem vague or overly literary. Reducing these terms to technical descriptions (e.g., “elegant roof curvature” for *ru niao si ge*) loses the literary allusion and aesthetic ideal. The translator must therefore strike a balance between poetic preservation and explanatory clarity, often through creative translations supplemented by annotations that explain the cultural, literary, and philosophical context.

#### 4.4 Interrelationships and Overlapping Challenges

The three categories of terms are not mutually exclusive; they often overlap and interact. For example, *dougong* (a material term) is part of the *caifen* system (an institutional term) and embodies the ideal of *tian ren he yi* (a conceptual term). Similarly, the *juzhe* system (institutional) produces roofs that are described as *ru niao si ge* (conceptual). This interrelationship adds another layer of complexity to the translation, as the translator must consider the holistic cultural system rather than treating terms in isolation. Moreover, the translation difficulties are compounded by the need to maintain consistency across terms. For instance, the translation of *cai* (材) should reflect its role in the *caifen* system and its cultural symbolism. The translator must also consider the target audience—specialists in architecture or Chinese studies may require different strategies than general readers. In conclusion, the culture-loaded terms in the *Yingzao Fashi* present multifaceted challenges that require a nuanced and layered approach to translation. Feng's interpretive framework provides the necessary insights into the metaphorical dimensions of these terms, enabling translators to develop strategies that address both technical accuracy and cultural depth. The following section will explore specific compensation strategies informed by this framework.

### 5. Case Analysis of Translation Compensation Strategies Informed by Feng's Interpretation

This section provides an in-depth analysis of key culture-loaded terms from the *Yingzao Fashi*, examining traditional translation approaches, Feng Jiren's interpretive insights, and proposing enhanced compensation strategies that integrate both technical and metaphorical dimensions. Each case study

demonstrates how Feng's framework necessitates a move beyond conventional translation methods toward a more nuanced, culturally embedded approach.

**Case 1:** 斗拱 (dǒugǒng) – Material Culture Term with Systemic Metaphorical Meaning

**Traditional Approach:** Typically translated as “bracket set” or phonetically transcribed as “dougong.” While these renditions convey basic structural function, they entirely omit the term's cultural, philosophical, and aesthetic dimensions. Such approaches reduce a richly symbolic element to a mere technical component, stripping it of its historical and conceptual significance.

**Feng's Interpretation (2012):** Feng reconceptualizes the dougong not simply as a structural device but as a microcosm (xiaoyuzhou 小宇宙) reflecting traditional Chinese cosmology. Each layer of the dougong—dou (block), gong (arm), and ang (lever)—symbolizes the hierarchical and harmonious interaction of forces (yin-yang), mirroring the structure of the universe itself. Moreover, the dougong embodies the Confucian ideal of structural and social order, where each part supports the whole in a fixed, harmonious relationship.

**Proposed Compensation Strategy:** Integrated Deep Compensation

To fully convey the term's complexity, a multi-layered strategy is essential:

**Transcription + Functional Translation:** “Dougong (interlocking bracket set)”

This hybrid form preserves the original term while immediately clarifying its structural role.

**Visual Aid:** [Essential: Include a detailed diagram illustrating the layered structure, individual components (dou, gong, ang), and their assembly. The diagram should highlight the proportional relationships and structural logic.]

**Annotation (Cultural-Metaphorical Compensation):** “In Song dynasty architecture, the dougong was not only a structural element but also a symbolic microcosm (xiao yu zhou). As Feng (2012) elucidates, its layered form represents the cosmic order—the interplay of yin and yang forces and the Confucian ideal of societal hierarchy and harmony. This system reflects a worldview where architecture mirrors the universe's structure.”

**Effectiveness:** This integrated approach addresses multiple levels of understanding: technical accuracy is maintained through functional translation and visual illustration, while cultural and metaphorical meanings are explicitly articulated through annotation. This strategy effectively bridges the gap between form and meaning.

**Case 2:** 材分八等 (cái fēn bā děng) – Institutional Culture Term as Social Metaphor

**Traditional Approach:** Commonly rendered as “eight grades of timber” or “modular system.” While technically descriptive, these translations fail to convey the system's profound cultural and ideological significance, reducing a complex regulatory framework to a simple material classification.

**Feng's Interpretation (2012):** Feng argues that the cai fen ba deng system is a metaphor for Confucian social hierarchy. The eight grades of cai (standard timber sections) correspond to the ranked structure of Song officialdom and society. This system imposed a sense of order, regularity, and moral governance



onto architectural practice, reflecting the Confucian belief that physical structures should embody social values.

**Proposed Compensation Strategy:** Transposition and Augmentation Compensation

**Translation:** “The Eighth-Grade Cai Fen Modular System”

This translation retains the original term while clearly indicating its function.

**Explanation/Annotation:** “A sophisticated modular system using eight standardized sizes of timber sections (cai) for all design elements. As Feng (2012) elucidates, this system was deeply metaphorical, imposing a Confucian sense of order, regularity, and social hierarchy onto the very fabric of construction. Each grade of cai mirrored the ranked structure of Song dynasty officialdom, reflecting a worldview where architecture embodied societal values.”

**Effectiveness:** This strategy moves beyond technical description to explain the ideological underpinnings of the system, conveying both its practical function and its cultural significance. The annotation provides necessary context, enabling target readers to grasp the term’s full implications.

**Case 3:** 如鸟斯革 (rú niǎo sī gé) – Conceptual Culture Term and Poetic Metaphor

**Traditional Approach:** Often translated literally as “like a bird spreading its wings” or reduced to a technical description like “elegant roof curvature.” The former may seem vague or overly poetic, while the latter loses the term’s literary allusion and aesthetic ideal.

**Feng’s Interpretation (2012):** Feng traces the phrase to its origin in the Book of Songs (Shijing), where it describes the graceful, dynamic form of birds. In the *Yingzao Fashi*, it embodies the Song aesthetic ideal of architecture imitating nature’s grace and dynamism. This term reflects a philosophical commitment to creating buildings that are not just functional but also poetically expressive and naturally harmonious.

**Proposed Compensation Strategy:** Integration Compensation with Poetic Preservation

**Translation:** “[The roof] evokes the image of a bird spreading its wings (ru niao si ge).”

This translation preserves the poetic imagery while clearly linking it to the architectural form.

**Annotation:** “This phrase, quoting the classical Book of Songs, encapsulates a key Song dynasty aesthetic principle. It signifies more than mere shape; it represents the ideal of architecture actively imitating the graceful, dynamic, and natural forms of the living world (Feng, 2012, p. XX). This reflects a deep cultural preference for organic, harmonious design over rigid geometry.”

**Effectiveness:** This approach successfully balances poetic preservation with explanatory clarity. The translation retains the original imagery, while the annotation provides essential cultural and philosophical context, ensuring that the term’s full significance is communicated.

**Case 4:** 举折 (jǔ zhé) – Institutional Term with Natural Metaphor

**Traditional Approach:** Typically translated as “roof curvature” or “roof pitch.” These renditions describe the form but fail to convey the method or the philosophical idea behind it, reducing a complex design system to a simple geometric feature.

Feng's Interpretation (2012): Feng interprets the juzhe system as an expression of the Daoist ideal of natural, harmonious form. The calculated, gradual curvature of the roof was designed to create an organic, flowing shape that contrasts with stark, geometric lines, reflecting a preference for forms that emulate nature's elegance and balance.

Proposed Compensation Strategy: Transposition and Augmentation

Translation: "The Juzhe System (calculating roof curvature)"

This translation clearly identifies the term's function while retaining the original name.

Explanation: "A method for determining the gradual, curved slope of a roof. Beyond its technical function, this system produced a distinctive curvature that was valued for its natural, harmonious appearance, reflecting a preference for organic form over stark geometry (Feng, 2012). This approach embodies the Daoist ideal of emulating nature's flowing, dynamic forms."

Effectiveness: This strategy effectively explains both the technical method and the philosophical motivation behind it, conveying the term's full cultural and aesthetic significance.

**Case 5:** 天人合一 (tiān rén hé yī) – Conceptual Term as Overarching Philosophy

Traditional Approach: Commonly translated as "harmony between man and nature." While this rendition captures the general idea, it often remains disconnected from its specific architectural implications, functioning as a vague philosophical slogan rather than a guiding design principle.

Feng's Interpretation (2012): Feng emphasizes that tianrenheyi is the overarching philosophical foundation of Song architecture. It influenced every aspect of design, from siting and orientation to layout and form. This concept reflects the desire to create buildings that are in harmony with their natural surroundings, embodying the Daoist and Confucian belief in the unity of human and cosmic realms.

Proposed Compensation Strategy: Conceptual Expansion Compensation

Translation/Transcription: "Tianrenheyi (Harmony between Heaven and Humanity)"

This hybrid form preserves the original term while providing a general translation.

Annotation: "A fundamental Daoist and Confucian concept permeating Chinese thought. In architecture, it informed practices aimed at integrating buildings with their natural surroundings—through siting, orientation, and design—to create a harmonious balance between the human-made and the natural world (Feng, 2012). This principle guided every aspect of design, from overall layout to structural details."

Effectiveness: This strategy provides the necessary philosophical context and explains the concept's practical impact on architectural design, moving beyond a vague slogan to a specific guiding principle.

**Case 6:** 飞檐 (fēi yán) – Material Culture Term with Dynamic Imagery

Traditional Approach: Commonly translated as "overhanging eaves" or "upturned eaves." While descriptively accurate, these renderings focus solely on the physical form and fail to convey the term's evocative imagery and cultural symbolism.

Feng's Interpretation (2012): Feng emphasizes that feiyan embodies the Daoist aesthetic ideal of dynamic lightness and spiritual ascent. The soaring, uplifted form of the eaves symbolizes the building's aspiration toward heaven and spiritual transcendence. This design element reflects the Song dynasty's pursuit of

architectural forms that appear weightless and in motion, creating a visual metaphor for the building's connection between earth and sky.

**Proposed Compensation Strategy: Imagistic Augmentation**

**Translation:** "Feiyan (soaring eaves)" This translation preserves the original term while incorporating its dynamic quality.

**Visual Aid:** [Essential: Diagram showing the characteristic upward curve of traditional Chinese eaves, with annotations highlighting the graceful sweep and proportion system.]

**Annotation:** "In Song architecture, feiyan represents more than simply overhanging eaves; they embody the philosophical concept of spiritual ascent and dynamic balance. As Feng (2012) notes, their uplifted form symbolizes the building's connection between earthly and celestial realms, reflecting the Daoist pursuit of weightless, transcendent beauty in architectural design."

**Effectiveness:** This approach captures both the physical form and philosophical significance of feiyan, conveying why this distinctive architectural feature carried such profound cultural meaning beyond its functional role in water drainage.

**Case 7: 材 (cái) – Institutional Culture Term with Dual Meaning**

**Traditional Approach:** Typically translated as "timber" or "material," which reduces this complex concept to its physical manifestation and misses its function as a measurement unit and philosophical concept. Feng's Interpretation (2012): Feng reveals that cai operates simultaneously as both a physical material and an abstract measurement principle. It represents the fundamental modular unit that governed all architectural proportions in Song construction, embodying the Confucian principle of standardization and hierarchical order. The term bridges the concrete and abstract, representing the material implementation of ideological principles.

**Proposed Compensation Strategy: Conceptual Dualization**

**Translation:** "Cai (standard timber module)" This translation maintains the original term while indicating its specialized function.

**Annotation:** "In the *Yingzao Fashi* system, cai refers specifically to the standardized timber section that served as the basic modular unit for all architectural proportions. As Feng (2012) explains, this term represents the material manifestation of Song architectural philosophy—where physical materials (cai as timber) became the embodiment of measurement principles (cai as module), reflecting the integration of practical construction with ideological order."

**Effectiveness:** This strategy successfully conveys the dual nature of cai, explaining how a single term encompasses both material substance and abstract proportional theory in Song architectural practice.

**Case 8: 如翬斯飞 (rú huī sī fēi) – Conceptual Term with Avian Metaphor**

**Traditional Approach:** Often translated as "like a pheasant in flight" or omitted entirely in technical translations. The literal translation may seem obscure to target readers unfamiliar with Chinese poetic traditions.

Feng's Interpretation (2012): Feng identifies this phrase from the Book of Songs as complementary to *ru niao si ge*, representing a more specific and vibrant avian metaphor. The pheasant (*hui*) symbolizes magnificence and divine connection in Chinese culture, making this term express not just gracefulness but architectural splendor and ceremonial importance.

Proposed Compensation Strategy: Poetic Contextualization

Translation: "Evoking the splendor of a pheasant in flight (*ru hui si fei*)"

This rendering preserves the poetic imagery while making it more accessible.

Annotation: "This phrase from the Book of Songs describes architectural forms that emulate the magnificent display of a pheasant in flight. As Feng (2012) elucidates, the pheasant symbolized divine connection and ceremonial splendor in Song culture, making this term particularly appropriate for important ritual buildings. It represents the ideal of architecture achieving both natural grace and ceremonial magnificence."

Effectiveness: The strategy differentiates this term from similar avian metaphors while explaining its specific cultural connotations and appropriate architectural applications.

**Case 9:** 柱高不越间广 (*zhù gāo bù yuè jiān guǎng*) – Institutional Principle with Proportional Philosophy

Traditional Approach: Typically translated as "column height does not exceed bay width," presenting it as a simple technical rule without philosophical context.

Feng's Interpretation (2012): Feng interprets this principle as embodying the Confucian ideal of moderation and balance. The proportional relationship between vertical elements (columns) and horizontal elements (bays) represents the philosophical balance between heaven (vertical) and earth (horizontal), creating buildings that embody cosmological harmony through their proportions.

Proposed Compensation Strategy: Philosophical Elucidation

Translation: "Column height shall not exceed bay width." Maintains technical accuracy while using normative language.

Annotation: "This proportional rule represents more than a technical guideline; it embodies the Song's philosophical commitment to balance and moderation. As Feng (2012) notes, the relationship between vertical columns (representing heavenly connection) and horizontal bays (representing earthly foundation) created architectural harmony that reflected cosmological principles, making each building a physical manifestation of balanced cosmic order."

Effectiveness: This approach transforms a seemingly technical rule into a meaningful philosophical principle, explaining why certain proportions were culturally valued beyond their structural function.

**Case 10:** 阴阳 (*yīn yáng*) – Conceptual Term as Foundational Philosophy

Traditional Approach: Typically transcribed as "yin yang" or translated as "complementary opposites." While recognizable, these renditions often remain abstract and disconnected from architectural application.

Feng's Interpretation (2012): Feng demonstrates how yin-yang principles are operationalized in architectural design through the balance of solid and void, light and shadow, structural and decorative elements. This philosophy informed everything from site orientation to the interplay between structural elements and spatial volumes.

Proposed Compensation Strategy: Operationalization Explanation

Translation: "Yin-yang (complementary opposition)"

Maintains the recognized term while providing a basic explanation.

Annotation: "In Song architecture, yin-yang principles informed design decisions ranging from overall site planning to detailed element arrangement. As Feng (2012) shows, the balance between solid structural elements (yang) and void spaces (yin), between light and shadow, and between decorative and functional components all reflected this fundamental philosophical concept, creating buildings that embodied dynamic balance and harmonious opposition."

Effectiveness: This strategy moves beyond abstract philosophy to show how yin-yang principles were practically implemented in architectural design, making the concept relevant and understandable in the architectural context.

Theoretical Implications and Generalization of Strategies

The case studies demonstrate that translating the *Yingzao Fashi* requires a systematic compensation framework that addresses both technical and metaphorical layers. Feng's interpretive insights provide the essential cultural exegesis needed to inform these strategies. The proposed approach—Integrated Deep Compensation—involves: Terminological Hybridization: Combining transcription with functional translation to preserve cultural identity and ensure basic comprehension. Visual Reinforcement: Using diagrams and illustrations to clarify structural details and aesthetic qualities. Cultural-Metaphorical Annotation: Providing explicit explanations of symbolic meanings, philosophical foundations, and historical context. Contextualization: Relating individual terms to broader cultural patterns and design philosophies. This framework offers a replicable methodology for translating classical Chinese technical-literary texts, balancing terminological precision with cultural acceptability. It underscores the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration between translators and domain scholars, ensuring that translations capture both the form and soul of the original text.

## 6. Result

The application of Feng's (2012) interpretive framework demonstrates that the translation of culture-loaded terms in the *Yingzao Fashi* requires a multi-layered, "deep compensation" approach. The case analysis validates that: Effective translation must address both the technical and metaphorical layers of terms, as revealed by cultural-historical scholarship single strategy suffices. A combination of transcription, functional translation, visual aids, and—most critically—annotative compensation explaining the cultural metaphor is necessary.

Feng's work provides the essential cultural exegesis required to formulate accurate and meaningful annotations for this deep compensation. Translators must engage with such scholarship. This approach allows for a balance between technical precision (e.g., accurately describing the cai fen system) and cultural-metaphorical acceptability (e.g., explaining its symbolic social function).

## 7. Discussion

This study confirms the viability of translation compensation theory for bridging profound cultural gaps in heritage texts (Baker, 2018) but argues that its effective application often depends on prior deep cultural interpretation, such as that provided by Feng (2012). The key findings are: Hybrid Strategies are Essential: The most successful compensations combine multiple methods (e.g., "dougong" + annotation + illustration) to address cultural default while preserving authenticity and adding metaphorical depth. Beyond Dual Principles: The principle of "Cultural-Metaphorical Acceptability" must be added to the traditional demand for technical accuracy. Feng's work provides the content to fulfill this principle. The Translator as Scholar-Mediator: Translating a text like the *Yingzao Fashi* requires the translator to actively engage with specialized scholarship to decode metaphors before attempting to re-encode them in the target language. Theoretical Contribution: This research extends compensation theory by explicitly linking it to the need for external cultural interpretation and focusing on the challenge of translating technical metaphors.

Limitations and Future Directions: Scope: This study focuses on a limited set of terms; a comprehensive glossary based on this methodology would be valuable. Reader Reception: Empirical studies testing the effectiveness of these compensation strategies on target readers (both specialists and generalists) are needed. Digital Tools: The potential of hyperlinked annotations, interactive diagrams, and augmented reality for delivering compensatory information remains largely untapped. Future Research could explore the application of this methodology to other classical Chinese technical texts (e.g., agricultural, medical) that likely contain similar metaphorical layers.

## 8. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has demonstrated that the effective translation of the *Yingzao Fashi* necessitates an approach that integrates the cultural-metaphorical interpretation framework pioneered by Feng Jiren (2012) with the established principles of translation compensation theory (Baker, 2018; Newmark, 2001). By doing so, it addresses a significant gap identified in the literature (Wang Q., 2017), namely, the lack of strategies for dealing with technical terminology that is intrinsically metaphorical. This approach not only addresses technical equivalence at the terminological level but also excavates and conveys the underlying cultural connotations and philosophical metaphors, significantly enhancing the completeness and acceptability of cultural information transmission (Liu, 2020).

Specifically, this study has reached the following conclusions:

First, Feng Jiren's (2012) metaphorical reinterpretation reframes the fundamental nature of Yingzao Fashi—it is no longer merely a technical manual, but rather a system of cultural symbols integrating the cosmological perspectives, social ethics, and aesthetic ideals of the Song Dynasty (Knapp, 2020). This shift in perception elevates the translator's task from "linguistic transfer" to "cultural decoding and reconstruction" (Chen, 2012), requiring a balance between technical accuracy and cultural acceptability during the translation process.

Second, a structured and comprehensive compensation approach is essential for material, institutional, and conceptual culture-loaded terms (Wu, 2022). The proposed "deep compensation" strategy constitutes a systematic framework encompassing: a terminological layer (transliteration plus functional explanation, e.g., "dougong (interlocking bracket set)"), a visual layer (illustrations, models, and other aids for comprehension; cf. Liang S., 1984), and a cultural-metaphorical layer (annotations elucidating symbolic meanings and philosophical concepts; Feng, 2012). This multimodal methodology effectively mitigates the attenuation of cultural meaning often found in conventional translation (Ma, 2003).

Third, this strategy redefines the role and competency requirements of the translator. Translators must act as "interdisciplinary mediators" (Steiner, 2021), proactively integrating expertise from fields such as architectural history (Steinhardt, 2014), philosophy, and literary studies. By interpreting deep cultural metaphors, they can reconstruct the cultural integrity of the source text in the target language.

Fourth, the theoretical contribution of this study lies in expanding the applicability of compensation theory (Xia, 2006), particularly by proposing a systematic solution for metaphor translation in technical-cultural composite texts. The constructed methodology applies not only to Yingzao Fashi but can also be extended to the translation of other Chinese technical classics such as *Tiangong Kaiwu* and *Bencao Gangmu*, forming a reusable analytical and operational procedure (Wang D., 2019).

This study has certain limitations, such as the scope of selected cases, which could be further expanded. Future research could examine the effectiveness of compensation strategies through reader reception experiments and incorporate digital humanities technologies (e.g., augmented reality, interactive annotations) to achieve more immersive cultural communication.

In summary, by transforming profound cultural interpretation into a systematic translation scheme, this paper provides a model for translating classical technical texts that combines theoretical value with practical guidance (Baker, 2018; Hervey & Higgins, 2002), enabling target readers not only to understand the technical achievements of ancient Chinese architecture (Liang S.-c., 1984; Xu, 2013) but also to appreciate the cultural spirit and philosophical ideas behind them.

### Acknowledgements

We sincerely thank Professor Wu for his expert guidance and support. Our gratitude also goes to the School of Foreign Languages at Hubei University of Technology for providing resources and a stimulating academic environment. We are grateful to our colleagues for their valuable suggestions, and to the editors and reviewers for their constructive comments. This study was supported by the National

Social Science Fund of China (Grant No. 23BYY100). We also acknowledge the foundational work of Professor Jiren Feng, whose research inspired this project. Finally, we thank our families for their patience and unwavering encouragement throughout this research.

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