

Original Paper

Translating Traditional Chinese *Jingbu* Terminology in Context An Analytical Framework Based on Knowledge Hierarchy, Textual Function, and Cultural Load

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Received: June 30, 2026

Accepted: July 12, 2026

Online Published: July 28, 2026

doi:10.22158/sll.v10n3p45

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/sll.v10n3p45>

Abstract

Terms belonging to the Jingbu branch serve as more than mere labels for classical texts and scholarly concepts. They also indicate hierarchical rank within bibliographical classification systems, distinguish textual genres, and embody concepts forged by the history of traditional Chinese scholarship. A translation relying solely on lexical equivalence may therefore appear linguistically natural, yet distort the structural relations between terms and narrow the semantic scope of the concept in question. This study selects twenty terms from the core categories and foundational concepts under the Jingbu section in the Siku Quanshu Zongmu (General Catalogue of the Complete Library of the Four Treasuries). It reads them through three connected questions: where a term sits in a knowledge hierarchy, what kind of work the relevant text performs, and what cultural assumptions are activated by an English equivalent. Two cases from each group are discussed in detail. The findings show that hierarchical terms call for coordinated choices within a classificatory system; text-bound terms need renderings that take genre and function seriously; culturally dense concepts often require an established translation to be supplemented by transliteration or brief explanation. Building on these observations, this article proposes three operational principles: prioritizing systematic identification of a term's positional relations, aligning with textual function where feasible, and explicating culture-specific meanings when lexical equivalence fails. The argument is not for unrestricted variation, but for a form of consistency grounded in context rather than in repeated word-for-word substitution. This study provides a systematic analytical approach and a basis for translation decisions concerning the English rendering of Chinese classical titles and

traditional scholarly concepts.

Keywords

Jingbu terminology, contextualized translation, knowledge hierarchy, textual function, cultural load

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background

Recent initiatives to translate Chinese classical texts and traditional scholarship have highlighted a longstanding translational challenge: an English rendering may read fluently, yet misrepresent the positional status and conceptual weight of the original Chinese term. The terminology of classical Chinese texts is embedded in longstanding bibliographical systems, exegetical traditions, educational institutions, and textual genres. Its meaning is therefore partly relational. A Chinese character that names a canonical category in one setting may serve a different function in another period or document. General dictionary equivalents are useful starting points, but they do not by themselves show rank, genre, or historical use. When applied without regard for these distinctions, such equivalents may obscure hierarchical differentiation, misrepresent the nature of a text, and narrow the cultural connotations of a concept.

Jingbu terminology makes these risks particularly visible. Terms such as *jing*, *zhuan*, *li*, and *yi* carry long histories of interpretation, while *bu*, *shu*, *xiaoxue*, and *xungu* also name ways in which traditional learning was arranged. Their apparent English counterparts—*canon*, *commentary*, *rites*, or *philology*—come with disciplinary habits of their own. The question is therefore not simply whether an English word is semantically close. It is whether that word places the term in the right system, suits the text in which it appears, and avoids a misleading cultural association. The analysis below approaches that question through knowledge hierarchy, textual function, and cultural load.

1.2 Research Object and Research Questions

1.2.1 Research Object

Twenty terms were chosen from the principal categories and basic concepts recorded in the *Jingbu* section of the *Siku Quanshu Zongmu*: *bu*, *jing*, *yi*, *shu*, *shi*, *li*, *yue*, *Chunqiu*, *zhuan*, *Xiaojing*, *Daxue*, *Zhongyong*, *Lunyu*, *Mengzi*, *yuwen*, *xiaoxue*, *wenzi*, *xungu*, *yinyun*, and *wenzhang*. Several require preliminary clarification. Here *yuwen* denotes traditional learning concerned with language and writing, not the modern school subject; *xiaoxue* refers to premodern Chinese philological studies, not primary education. The sample includes category labels, titles, textual types, and scholarly concepts. They are grouped in **Table 1** according to the problem that most directly affects translation.

Table 1. Classification of the Selected *Jingbu* Terms

Term Type	Primary Analytical Focus	Terms Included
Terms organised by knowledge hierarchy	Rank and relation within bibliographical, educational, or classificatory systems	<i>bu</i> (division); <i>jing</i> (canon/classic); <i>shu</i> (book/document); <i>Daxue</i> (The Great Learning); <i>xiaoxue</i> (traditional philological studies); <i>yuwen</i> (the study of language and writing)
Terms shaped by textual function	Genre, textual form, and the social work performed by a text	<i>shi</i> (poetry); <i>li</i> (rites/ritual order); <i>yue</i> (music); <i>Chunqiu</i> (Spring and Autumn Annals); <i>zhuan</i> (transmission or commentarial text); <i>Lunyu</i> (Analects); <i>Mengzi</i> ; <i>wenzhang</i> (writings)
Terms with marked cultural load	Partial equivalence in English and the risk of semantic shift or cultural misreading	<i>yi</i> (change); <i>Xiaojing</i> (Classic of Family Reverence); <i>Zhongyong</i> ; <i>wenzi</i> (written characters); <i>xungu</i> (traditional exegetical glossing); <i>yinyun</i> (phonological and rhyme studies)

These groupings serve a heuristic purpose and are not mutually exclusive. Many of the terms could be discussed under more than one heading; *li*, for example, has both textual and cultural dimensions. Each term is categorized under the dimension where its core translational challenge is most salient. The close analysis is limited to two cases in each group, while the other terms establish the larger field against which those cases are read.

1.2.2 Research Questions

Three questions organise the discussion:

RQ1. What recurring semantic and cultural challenges are most prominent in English translations of *Jingbu* terminology?

RQ2. How do classificatory position, textual usage, and cultural context shape the selection of appropriate translational renderings?

RQ3. When no direct lexical equivalent exists, what principles should govern the use of transliteration, semantic translation, conventional titles, and explanatory annotations?

These questions do not lead to a fixed bilingual glossary. They are meant to clarify why one rendering works in a particular setting and becomes misleading in another.

1.3 Significance of the Study

The significance of this approach lies in treating terms as parts of an intellectual arrangement rather than as detachable lexical units. A translation may be unobjectionable at dictionary level and still disturb the relations that give the term its place in Chinese learning. Reading hierarchical position, textual function,

and cultural load together makes that form of error easier to identify. It also transforms translational decision-making from an intuitive choice among synonyms into a justifiable process, grounded in clear judgments about which relations to preserve, which functions to signal, and which cultural information requires explicit articulation.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Research on the Translation of Chinese Cultural Terms

Translation studies has long treated cultural difference as a problem of both language and representation. Venuti's (1993, 1995) distinction between domestication and foreignization remains useful here because it draws attention to what fluent target-language prose may conceal. A translation that reads naturally can still make the source culture less visible, especially when the target expression carries categories that appear universal but are historically local.

Aixelá (1996) moved the discussion closer to individual translation decisions through his account of culture-specific items, distinguishing procedures that retain the source item from those that replace or adapt it. Baker (2011) approached a related problem as lexical non-equivalence: the target language may have no conventional word for a concept because the concept has not been lexicalized in the same way. Her proposal to combine a loan word with an explanation is particularly relevant to Chinese scholarly terminology, since it allows a culturally marked form to remain visible without leaving readers entirely unaided.

The later literature does not yield a single preferred strategy. Pedersen (2005), for example, places retention, direct translation, generalisation, substitution, and omission along a range of possible responses. Leppihalme (1997) is more concerned with the point at which an allusion fails because readers do not share the required background. Wang (1997) describes a comparable difficulty as cultural default: information obvious to source readers may simply be absent for target readers. Pym's (2005) discussion of explicitation adds a useful caution, suggesting that extra information can reduce uncertainty but also changes the texture of the translated text.

These studies clarify why cultural material cannot be handled by literalism alone. Their typical unit of analysis, however, is an isolated reference, allusion, or concept. The translational challenge addressed in the present study differs in key respects. Within *Jingbu*, a term often derives meaning from its relation to neighbouring categories and from the institutional history of the text it names. That relational dimension has received less sustained attention.

2.2 Research on Chinese Classics and Traditional Scholarly Terminology

2.2.1 English Translation of Chinese Classical Titles

Research on the English translation of Chinese classics has usually taken a single work as its centre. Nylan (2001) reconstructs the historical formation of the Five Classics, demonstrating that their canonical authority was constructed through educational practice, state institutionalization, and

exegetical traditions, rather than through textual content alone. Slingerland's (2003) *Analects* supplies traditional commentary and a glossary so that readers encounter the text within a history of interpretation. Van Norden (2008) chooses *Mengzi* rather than Mencius as the English title, while Ames and Hall (2001) translate *Zhongyong* as *Focusing the Familiar*, making an interpretive claim at the level of the title. Such choices show that a title already positions a work for its readers: it may foreground canonisation, philosophical argument, or continuity with earlier English usage. Yet this scholarship is largely organised book by book. The *Analects*, *Mengzi*, and *Zhongyong* have generated rich discussion, but the larger set of terms that structures the *Jingbu* branch has rarely been examined as a connected hierarchy.

2.2.2 English Translation of Traditional Scholarly Concepts

The same difficulty appears more sharply in studies of traditional concepts. Bodde (1955) cautions against translating Chinese philosophical vocabulary by surface meaning alone, because a term's force emerges from its use in a particular argument and tradition. Knapp (1995) questions the supposed transparency of *filial piety*, tracing changes in the social and political meanings of *xiao* in early China. Rosemont and Ames (2008), by entitling their translation *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence*, place relational ethics at the centre of their interpretation rather than relying on the inherited religious colouring of *piety*.

Ames (2015) extends this criticism to familiar equations such as *dao* with the Way, *tian* with Heaven, and *li* with ritual. His argument is not that these translations are invalid, but that their repeated, unreflective use can frame Western philosophical categories as natural, universal equivalents. The scholarship has therefore made substantial progress in treating context and conceptual history seriously. It has paid less attention, however, to terms such as *bu*, *jing*, *shu*, *xiaoxue*, and *xungu*, whose difficulty lies not only in cultural meaning but also in their place within a traditional organisation of learning.

2.3 Research Gaps and the Entry Point

Three areas invite further work. First, existing studies usually focus on a single cultural concept, one classical text, or one translation, leaving the *Jingbu* terminological field as a whole comparatively underexamined. Second, research often privileges semantic interpretation and cultural connotation, with less attention to a term's hierarchical placement in traditional bibliography and education. Third, the dominant mode of analysis is often static lexical comparison; the dynamic constraints imposed by textual function and documentary form have not yet been integrated into a sustained framework. The present study responds by classifying twenty terms along the dimensions of knowledge hierarchy, textual function, and cultural load, and then testing the framework through representative cases.

3. Theoretical Foundations and Analytical Framework

3.1 The Contextualization Principle in the Translation of Cultural Terms

The notion of contextualization adopted here draws on context-oriented approaches in translation theory. A cultural term is not treated as a fixed and isolated lexical unit; its fuller meaning is established by

considering its position within a knowledge system, the function of the text in which it appears, and the cultural setting of its use. The Chinese character *shu*, for instance, does not denote the same concept in the Four Books and in Sima Qian's *Letter to Ren An*. Nor do Chinese and English conceptual systems necessarily provide one-to-one correspondences: *li* is not exhausted by ritual, and *xiao* cannot be fully contained within piety.

A context-sensitive translation must therefore identify what the term denotes in the immediate setting before considering the gains and losses introduced by a target-language expression. Transliteration, semantic translation, and explanatory wording are not fixed alternatives. Their value depends on the cultural specificity of the term, the purpose of the text, and the reader's likely knowledge.

3.2 The Systemic Principle in Translating Traditional Chinese Terminology

Traditional Chinese scholarly terminology operates within interconnected conceptual systems. Bibliographical labels, canonical titles, and categories of learning gain part of their force from being above, below, or alongside other terms. Consider a three-level sequence headed by *bu*: the English choices have to distinguish the levels from one another, not merely resemble each Chinese item in isolation. A satisfactory solution is therefore a coordinated set of terms. In this setting, equivalence is better understood as the preservation of relations across two conceptual arrangements.

Function complicates the picture further. The *Zhouli*, *Yili*, and *Liji* all center on the concept of *li*, but they differ fundamentally in textual purpose and organizational structure. One maps offices and institutions, another specifies ritual procedures, and the third reflects on the meaning and normative force of ritual. Repeating rites in every title keeps a visible lexical thread, yet can also conceal these differences. The analysis therefore begins with two practical enquiries: where does the term stand in the relevant system, and what does the text do with it?

3.3 The Three-Dimensional Analytical Framework

Figure 1 synthesizes these considerations into a three-dimensional analytical framework. Knowledge hierarchy concerns rank and relation; textual function concerns genre and use; cultural load concerns the assumptions carried by an English expression. The three dimensions overlap, but one usually provides the clearest starting point for a given term. The representative cases are assigned on that basis.

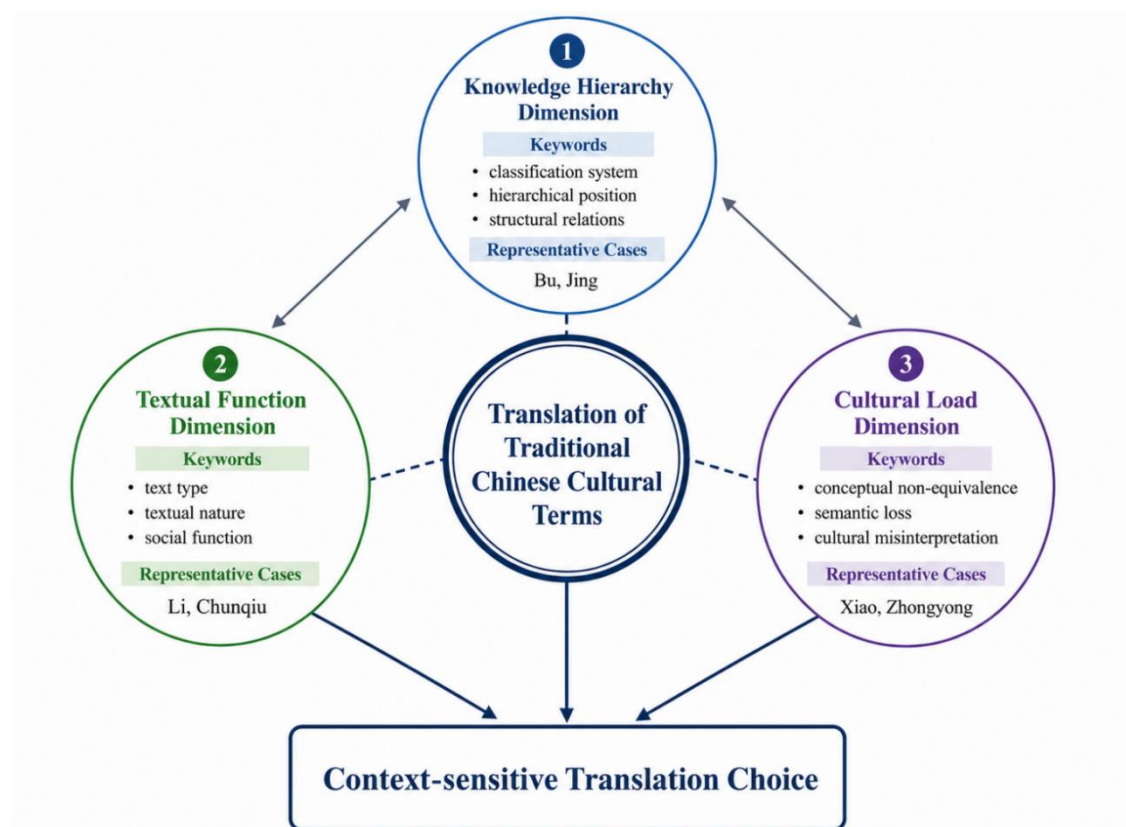


Figure 1. Three-Dimensional Analytical Framework for the Translation of Traditional Chinese Cultural Terms

3.3.1 Knowledge Hierarchy

The first dimension traces a term's place within bibliographical, educational, or classificatory orders. It is especially concerned with how upper and lower categories are marked. The discussion of *bu* and *jing* illustrates this problem.

3.3.2 Textual Function

The second dimension asks what kind of text is being named and what role it performs. Genre, institutional purpose, and social use may all affect the translation. The cases are *li* and *Chunqiu*.

3.3.3 Cultural Load

The third dimension addresses terms for which an English equivalent captures only part of the source concept or introduces a misleading association. *Xiao* and *Zhongyong* provide the two examples.

4. Representative Case Studies of *Jingbu* Terminology

The six close readings are intended to test rather than merely illustrate the framework. *Bu* and *jing* make hierarchy visible; *li* and *Chunqiu* show how textual form changes the demands placed on a title; *xiao* and *Zhongyong* expose the limits of apparent lexical equivalence. The aim is to identify why competing

renderings work differently, not to declare one permanent answer for every context.

4.1 Knowledge-Hierarchy Terms: Locating Translation within Classification Systems

In the first group, a term cannot be interpreted independently of the bibliographical or canonical order around it. The cases of *bu* and *jing* show that the same English word may be adequate at one level and misleading at another.

4.1.1 *Bu*: Bibliographical Rank and the Systemic Use of *Division*

In traditional bibliography, *bu* marks a major division, but its meaning is inseparable from the categories beneath and beside it. English offers several plausible-looking words—*category*, *class*, *type*, and *section* among them. None can be selected responsibly from dictionary meaning alone, because the translation also has to show how *bu* relates to the lower levels of the scheme.

When the hierarchy contains three levels, a sequence such as *division-class-section* provides one workable arrangement. Its usefulness lies in the contrast among the three English terms. If *class* or *category* is repeated at more than one level, the reader loses the distinction that the Chinese taxonomy is meant to preserve. *Division* is not a perfect synonym for *bu*; it is valuable because it can occupy the upper slot without forcing the other levels into the same label.

Historical variation makes that relative approach necessary. *Bu* did not hold an unchanging rank in every catalogue, and labels such as *lüe*, *zhi*, and *lu* could organise material differently. A borrowed scientific sequence such as family-genus-species would make the hierarchy obvious, but it would also suggest the logic of biological taxonomy. By contrast, division carries far fewer disciplinary connotations and can more readily accommodate historical shifts in hierarchical rank.

The point is not that *bu* always equals *division*. Rather, the chosen English word should preserve the contrast between *bu* and its neighbouring categories in the specific scheme under discussion. Here the unit of equivalence is the classificatory relation.

4.1.2 *Jing*: Canonical Authority and the Contextual Limits of *Canon*

Jing presents a different kind of hierarchical problem. English words such as canon, classic, and primer can each translate a title containing *jing*, but they imply different degrees of authority and different uses. The Chinese character remains the same; the institutional standing of the text does not.

Nylan (2001) shows that the Confucian classics became canonical through a history of teaching, political use, and commentary. Works such as the *Shi*, *Shu*, *Li*, and *Yi* were treated as foundational texts within that tradition. Where this recognised authority is central to the reference, *canon* is a defensible choice because it marks an established body of authoritative writing.

The *Sanzijing* (Three Character Classic) belongs to a very different textual and pedagogical context. Its title uses *jing*, but the work functioned for centuries as an elementary teaching text. Calling it a canon would invite an English reader to place it beside the major Confucian classics. Primer identifies its pedagogical role more accurately, while classic may be appropriate when the emphasis falls on enduring cultural status rather than formal canonisation.

Translation must therefore follow, not precede, an assessment of the work's authority and use. The relevant question is what kind of *jing* the title names in this context. A uniform English equivalent would erase precisely the distinction that needs to be communicated.

4.1.3 Prioritizing Systemic Position

These two cases suggest a simple order of work. The translator first identifies the domain, rank, and neighbouring categories of the Chinese term, then chooses an English expression that preserves those relations as far as possible. Consistency here does not mean repeating one word. It means keeping the architecture of the source system intelligible.

4.2 Textual-Function Terms: Differences in Textual Nature and Function

Textual-function terms present a related but distinct problem. Their titles often remain recognisable across translations, yet the English wording may disclose only part of what the text actually does. *Li* and *Chunqiu* make this tension particularly clear.

4.2.1 *Li*: Institutional Order, Ritual Procedure, and Normative Interpretation

Li ranges across ritual action, social norm, ethical relation, and political order. That breadth becomes visible when the Three Rites are placed side by side. *Zhouli*, *Yili*, and *Liji* share a key term, but the texts differ so much in organisation and purpose that the repeated English word *rites* cannot be assumed to communicate the same thing in each title.

The Rites of Zhou, the usual English title of the *Zhouli*, preserves the connection with *li* but can sound more ceremonial than the work itself. Much of the text arranges offices, duties, and the machinery of government (Vogt, 2022). Its institutional concerns are therefore easy to miss if the title is read as referring chiefly to ritual performance. The conventional title remains useful, provided that an introduction or note makes the administrative and political scope explicit.

Steele's (1917) *The I-Li, or Book of Etiquette and Ceremonial* points readers in another direction. The *Yili* is built around prescribed actions: who participates, in what order, and according to which detailed forms. Its accounts of capping, marriage, mourning, sacrifice, and related rites are procedural at their core. *Etiquette and ceremonial* does not cover every ethical implication of *li*, but it gives a fair indication of how this particular text is organised.

The *Liji*, conventionally known as *The Book of Rites*, has a more discursive character. Legge's (1885) translation appeared under the title *The Li Ki*. The collection contains discussions of education, ethics, political order, and the reasons ritual matters, alongside descriptions of practice. A reader who sees only *rites* in the title may therefore miss its role as a work of interpretation as well as record.

Taken together, the three works trace a movement from institution, through procedure, to reflection on normative meaning. This distinction should not be turned into three newly invented titles, since established titles have their own scholarly history. It should, however, guide the explanatory language that accompanies those titles. Continuity in naming and precision in description need not be in conflict.

4.2.2 *Chunqiu*: The Constraints of Annalistic Form

The title *Chunqiu* is composed of the names of two seasons, yet in the title of the classic its English treatment cannot stop at the seasonal meaning of *spring and autumn*. English-language scholarship generally uses *Chunqiu* or *The Spring and Autumn Annals*. The latter is now a stable scholarly title, and Van Auken (2023) also employs it in discussing the work's annalistic form and textual hierarchy.

History, chronicle, and annals can all refer to historical writing, but they organise reader expectations differently. History is the broadest term and may include narration, interpretation, and evaluation without specifying how material is arranged. Chronicle emphasises temporal sequence. *Annals* more specifically denotes a year-by-year record of discrete entries. It is commonly used for concise historical texts from antiquity and aligns closely with the structural features of the *Chunqiu*. Because the *Chunqiu* is structured by the chronology of the state of Lu and records major political, military, and ritual events in compressed form, annals provides a direct cue to its documentary organisation.

The Spring and Autumn Annals thus retains the traditional name while using *annals* to supply information about form. *Spring and Autumn* alone can initially look like a seasonal phrase to readers unfamiliar with the text, whereas the more general *history* does not convey its brief, year-by-year mode of recording. *Chronicle* also marks temporal sequence, but *annals* is more firmly connected both with the established English title and with the work's ancient annalistic character.

Later Confucian interpretation associated the *Chunqiu* with the 'method of praise and blame' and with morally charged meanings conveyed through terse wording. Such claims belong to the history of reception and classical exegesis; a title need not carry them all. The established rendering can first identify the basic form of the text, while an introduction or commentary explains its canonical status and interpretive afterlife.

This case shows that the translation of a classical title should respect scholarly convention while also providing an economical cue to textual form. A title opens the path to recognition; fuller intellectual meaning is developed through context.

4.2.3 Prioritizing Functional Correspondence

Li and *Chunqiu* demonstrate that textual function directly constrains translation. The principle of functional-correspondence priority requires the translator to identify the role a text performs within its original cultural and intellectual setting, and then to ask whether the English title signals that role adequately. When visible formal consistency conflicts with the representation of function, identical Chinese characters need not be assigned identical English words. Translators must ask not only what a text is called, but also what it does.

4.3 Culturally Loaded Terms: Conceptual Non-Equivalence and Explanatory Translation

The chief difficulty in this group is the absence of target-language concepts that match both the semantic range and the cultural associations of the source term. Xiao and *Zhongyong* show how inherited English vocabulary can guide interpretation while also redirecting it.

4.3.1 *Xiao*: The Cultural Shift Introduced by *Filial Piety*

Xiao is most often introduced to English readers as *filial piety*. The phrase is familiar, but *piety* carries devotional and religious overtones that can shift attention toward inward reverence or unquestioning obedience. The Chinese concept also involves conduct, obligation, family roles, and the possibility of remonstrance.

Knapp (1995) argues that the meaning of *xiao* changed across early Chinese social and political contexts. Confucian discussions link it not only to respect for parents, but also to care, material support, and appropriate correction. The *Xiaojing* extends these family relations into a wider account of social and political order. No single element of *piety* conveys that combination.

The alternatives redistribute the emphasis rather than solving the problem once and for all. *Filial duty* brings obligation to the foreground, though it can sound narrowly rule-bound. Rosemont and Ames's (2008) *family reverence* highlights respect within a network of relationships, but leaves some political implications implicit. Keeping *xiao* in transliteration preserves the term's cultural identity, at the cost of requiring more explanation.

The choice should therefore depend on the text and its readers. In philosophical or historical discussion, *xiao* can be retained and glossed at first use through family respect, role-based responsibility, and relational ethics. A general introduction may prefer a familiar expression such as filial piety, but it should clarify the limits of that phrase. The goal is not to find a single definitive equivalent, but to manage the assumptions that English wording invites readers to make.

4.3.2 *Zhongyong*: Established Titles and Conceptual Misreading

Zhongyong is conventionally translated as *The Doctrine of the Mean*. The title is firmly established, yet *mean* in modern English readily evokes an average, a midpoint, or a compromise between extremes. It can therefore encourage a static interpretation that does not match the source concept.

In context, *zhong* refers to a state of timely and fitting centrality—*shizhong*—in which judgement responds appropriately to circumstances rather than settling at a fixed middle point. *Yong* denotes an enduring principle realized in ordinary practice, not mediocrity. *Zhongyong* is consequently not a doctrine of passive compromise, but an ethical intelligence concerned with timing, proportion, and the maintenance of harmonious order.

The Golden Mean makes moderation more visible, but it can also invite an analogy with ancient Greek ethics that reframes the Chinese concept. Ames and Hall's (2001) *Focusing the Familiar* offers a deliberately interpretive alternative and illustrates why the established title has not closed the debate. The transliteration *Zhongyong* preserves cultural identity and is particularly useful in philosophical discussion, though it still requires an account of the concept.

An established rendering should thus be treated as an entry point rather than a complete definition. When *The Doctrine of the Mean* is retained, the introduction, notes, or argument should make clear that *mean* does not signify a numerical average. When *Zhongyong* is used, its associations with fittingness, ordinary

practice, and context-sensitive judgement should likewise be stated.

4.3.3 Prioritizing Cultural Explication

The cases of *xiao* and *Zhongyong* show that a single target-language word often captures only one part of a traditional Chinese concept. The principle of cultural-explication priority therefore asks the translator to balance cultural specificity with intelligibility and to supply explanation when no established English expression can carry the essential conceptual load.

Transliteration, semantic translation, and conventional titles should not be treated as mutually exclusive. They can be combined according to genre, purpose, and readership. A translation names the concept and gives readers an initial route into it; it need not pretend to replace the concept's full definition.

5. Conclusion

This article has treated twenty *Jingbu* terms as elements of a structured field rather than as entries in a bilingual list. The six cases point to three conclusions. First, translation of hierarchical terms depends on how the term is positioned within a catalogue or canon; *bu* and *jing* cannot be translated well without that information. Second, a title should be read against the work it names. The institutional, procedural, interpretive, and annalistic features of *li* texts and the *Chunqiu* are not secondary details but part of the translation problem. Third, where English lacks a comparable concept, explanation becomes part of responsible naming: *xiao* and *Zhongyong* show why a familiar equivalent may need transliteration, qualification, or both. The resulting principles - systemic position, functional correspondence, and cultural explication - do not offer a mechanical formula. They provide an order of attention that keeps translation choices accountable to the structure and use of the source terms.

Two key limitations of the study should be acknowledged. First, the argument is based on the *Jingbu* branch and on cases chosen because their difficulties are especially visible. Whether the same framework works equally well for the historical, philosophical, and literary branches of the traditional fourfold classification remains to be tested. Second, the evidence base of the study is primarily qualitative in nature. This article does not measure how frequently competing translations occur in large corpora or how different readers understand them. Future research could combine close textual analysis with corpus data, translation history, and reception studies, comparing usage across published translations and English-language scholarship.

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