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Translation Pathways and Cultural Imagery Transmission of Plant and Animal Knowledge in *Chu Ci*: From the Perspective of Transknowletology

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Abstract

Transknowletology is an analytical perspective conceptualizing translation as the cross-linguistic processing, restructuring, and re-dissemination of knowledge. Within this framework, this paper explores the English translation pathways and cultural imagery transmission of plant and animal knowledge in *Chu Ci*. Based on cross-cultural commensurability, plant and animal knowledge in *Chu Ci* is classified into three types: commensurable concrete-species knowledge, analogical symbolic imagery knowledge, and irreducible ritual-associative knowledge. Three corresponding translation pathways are proposed: re-localized adaptation, cross-local alignment, and local authenticity preservation. Four representative English translations by Xu Yuanchong, Zhuo Zhenying, David Hawkes, and Gopal Sukhu are selected for a comparative analysis of typical imagery passages from *Li Sao*, *Jiu Zhang*, and *Jiu Ge* sections of *Chu Ci*. The study examines translators' differentiated strategies in terminology conversion, image retention, and paratextual annotation. It finds that the three pathways center on the beauty of dissemination, the virtue of cross-civilizational dialogue, and the truth of historical cognition, together forming a layered analytical framework. This framework addresses the weaknesses of existing studies that stress literary imagery while neglecting local natural-history knowledge systems, and offers a reference for the cross-contextual construction and overseas transmission of traditional Chinese natural-history culture.

Keywords: Transknowletology, *Chu Ci*, Plant and Animal Knowledge, Translation Pathways, Cultural Imagery Transmission

1. Introduction

Mountains, rivers and lakes in the State of Chu abounded in natural resources. *Chu Ci* (楚辞, *The Songs of Chu*) employs fragrant plants, myth-related birds and rare wild creatures to express poetic feeling and ritual customs. Rather than purely literary techniques, its plant-and-animal descriptions record pre-Qin local natural-history insights formed by folk rituals and herbal knowledge in the State of Chu. It serves as a valuable source for exploring perceptions of the material world among ancient southern Chinese.

Research on the plants and animals in *Chu Ci* has long followed two separate tracks. For the textual identification of plant names, *Li Sao Cao Mu Shu* (离骚草木疏, *Commentary on Plants and Trees in Li Sao*) by the Song Dynasty scholar Wu Renjie (吴仁杰, 2004) stands as a representative work (Wu, 2004). Parallel to this tradition of botanical investigation runs a rich strand of literary exegesis. The foundational text in this regard is *Chu Ci Zhang Ju* (楚辞章句, *Sentence-by-Sentence Commentary on Chu Ci*), compiled by the early Eastern Han scholar Wang Yi (王逸) (Wang, 2017). Building upon Wang's work, the Song Dynasty scholar Hong Xingzu (洪兴祖) produced *Chu Ci Bu Zhu* (楚辞补注, *Supplementary Commentary on Chu Ci*) (Hong, 1983). Hong not only corrected and supplemented Wang's annotations but also extensively cited a wide range of earlier sources, preserving many fragmentary interpretations from the Han to the Song dynasties. This extensive exegetical tradition provided a crucial documentary basis for subsequent researchers to catalog plant imagery and unpack their profound literary connotations. Moving into modern scholarship, Zhou (1999) examined the original species and symbolic use of orchids in the text of *Chu Ci*. Pan (2003) detailed ecological features and documented numerous fragrant and noxious plants mentioned. Jiang (2017) traced how primitive flower-and-plant imagery evolved into figurative and associative symbolic imagery in *Shi Jing* (诗经, *Book of Songs*) and *Chu Ci*.

However, while these traditional philological studies provide essential textual foundations, they rarely engage with the complexities of cross-cultural translation and image reconstruction in English. Within translation studies, Li (2015)

conducted a statistical analysis of strategies for translating cultural imagery based on archetypal image theory. Zheng (2024) focused on translation approaches to ecological imagery from an eco-criticism perspective. Tian (2024) sorted out flower categories in *Chu Ci* and compared translations of "fragrant herbs" across English translations of *Li Sao* (离骚, *On Encountering Sorrow*). Most of these studies, however, still treat flora and fauna as general literary imagery, overlooking the complete local natural-history knowledge system of the Chu region behind them. There is still a lack of criteria for evaluating how such ancient-Chinese plant-and-animal names and associated knowledge are translated and mediated.

Accordingly, the paper adopts Transknowletology as its theoretical framework and poses three research questions:

(1)How can plant-and-animal knowledge from *Chu Ci* be categorized according to cross-cultural commensurability?

(2)What differentiated translation pathways and paratextual compensatory strategies have translators employed to render such knowledge?

(3)Drawing on the "truth-virtue-beauty" evaluative principles, how should we interpret the communicative value, core connotations and cross-cultural significance corresponding to each translation pathway?

Research question (1) is addressed in Chapter 2; question (2) is explored in Chapter 3 case studies; question (3) is discussed in Chapter 4 synthesis.

Four representative English translations by Xu Yuanchong, Zhuo Zhenying, David Hawkes, and Gopal Sukhu are selected. Their translations of knowledge of plants and animals in *Chu Ci* are compared to derive three translation pathways, namely re-localized adaptation, cross-local alignment, and local authenticity preservation. Paratextual aids such as Latin names and annotations are included. This approach addresses a common oversight in previous studies, which have paid more attention to imagery than to the natural-history dimension. Furthermore, "natural history" can be briefly defined as the knowledge involving the collection, identification, classification, and description of natural species such as animals, plants, and minerals (Yu & Zhou, 2023). The term "natural-history knowledge of plants and animals" as defined in this study refers to the composite pre-Qin local cognitive system embedded in *Chu Ci*. It integrates three interwoven dimensions: empirical observations of organismal morphology and ecological traits of flora and fauna, ritual-sacrificial functions within Chu folk customs, and moral-symbolic projections attached to living creatures. "Cultural imagery reconstruction" refers specifically to translators' efforts to reshape the symbolism and connotations of plants and animals from *Chu Ci* within English-language cultural contexts. These differentiated translation strategies ultimately facilitate the cross-cultural transmission of natural-history knowledge and the reconstruction of cultural imagery. The two are mutually constitutive: natural-history knowledge provides the static cognitive foundation, while image reconstruction is the dynamic outcome of cross-cultural communication. Together, these practices contribute to the overall reconstruction of *Chu Ci*'s cultural imagery in the English-speaking world. This enables the study to move beyond comparisons of translation techniques and delve into the cross-contextual construction and overseas transmission of Chinese local natural-history culture.

2. Theoretical and Analytical Framework for Plant and Animal Knowledge in *Chu Ci*

Transknowletology defines translation as a cultural act and social practice of cross-linguistic knowledge processing, restructuring, and re-dissemination (Yang, 2021). It distinguishes natural-science, social-science, and humanities knowledge, and proposes three evaluative principles: truth through factual fidelity, virtue through ethical grounding, and beauty through expressive grace. Natural-science knowledge is universal, so translation should prioritize factual accuracy; social-science and humanities knowledge are locally rooted, so their translation should balance equal dialogue with aesthetic effect (Jin, 2023).

The plants and animals in *Chu Ci* are a distinct body of natural-history knowledge from the pre-Qin Chu region. They are not equivalent to modern biological concepts and they carry multiple layers—species identity, symbolic meaning, and ritual function. Therefore, translations should not be judged merely by biological standards. This kind of knowledge is itself a blend of empirical observation, ritual imagination, and moral projection, and this mixture creates real translation dilemmas. For one thing, simplifying folk-custom dimensions would erase unique pre-Qin Chu cultural connotations as many of these plants and animals are native to the Jiang-Han area and were given mythical and sacrificial associations by the Chu people. For another, translators have to rely on historical and textual research to determine what the original name actually referred to. There was no unified terminology for these objects in the pre-Qin period, and there were multiple interpretations for the same term for centuries. Beyond that, the Chu people depicted these objects to convey moral virtues and values. Fragrant herbs, fierce birds, and the orange tree were all invested with moral metaphors. These ethical connotations cannot be conveyed by biological names alone; the translator also needs to keep the poetry readable and consider how readers in the target culture will receive it.

The paper adapts the three-dimensional framework to fit the specific subject matter. In terms of truth, we ground

ourselves in the native history of the Chu region and avoid arbitrary cutting or changing of local species concepts in translation, relying on annotations and textual research to restore the original look of the landscape. In terms of virtue, we call for equal dialogue between Chinese and Western natural-history knowledge, avoiding any imposition of Western frameworks that would dissolve the meaning of Chu imagery, and instead using shared parallels for mutual reference. In terms of beauty, we focus on the overseas reading experience: simplifying unfamiliar ancient names and smoothing out poetic rhythms while keeping the poetic form preserved, so as to widen the reach of Chu natural-history culture.

Based on the degree of cross-cultural commensurability, the paper divides natural-history knowledge of plants and animals in *Chu Ci* into three heterogeneous units, each matched with a corresponding translation pathway and value dimension. The first type is commensurable concrete-species knowledge. It includes entities, whether biologically real or mythological-cultural constructs, whose fundamental physical form and behavioural patterns are cross-culturally recognizable. For real-world organisms, formal biological or zoological names are available. For mythological beings, classification depends on shared perceptual and behavioural depictions rather than biological taxonomic status. Culture-specific symbolic connotations do not determine category membership. Instead, they are treated as supplementary layers to be mediated mainly through paratextual annotations. Knowledge of this type is processed via the re-localized adaptation pathway, whose core evaluative dimension is the beauty of cross-cultural dissemination. The second is analogical symbolic imagery knowledge, where the figurative reasoning paradigm rather than the ready-made cultural connotation of images shares structural affinities between Chinese and Western traditions. Though not fully equivalent, these images provide grounds for cross-civilizational dialogue, and they follow a cross-local alignment pathway, whose core value is the virtue of such dialogue. The third is irreducible ritual-associative knowledge. It is deeply tied to Chu rituals and customs, with no equivalent cultural carrier in the West, and it follows a local authenticity preservation pathway, whose core value is the truth of historical cognition.

A single sentence in *Chu Ci* often contains multiple layers of natural-history information, and translators tend to mix different strategies. Paratextual aids such as Latin names and annotations can supplement background information concerning species, symbolism, and textual research on names and objects. On this basis, we build an analytical framework that categorizes knowledge, matches each category with translation strategies, and applies the three-dimensional value framework.

Table 1. Analytical Framework for Plant and Animal Knowledge Translation in *Chu Ci*

Knowledge Type	Translation Pathway	Value Dimension	Strategy	Associated Translator(s)
Commensurable concrete-species	Re-localized adaptation	Beauty	Generalization or Latin names	Xu, Zhuo, Hawkes
Analogical symbolic imagery	Cross-local alignment	Virtue	Shared symbolic bridges	Zhuo, Hawkes
Irreducible ritual-associative	Local authenticity preservation	Truth	Paratextual research & retention	Hawkes, Sukhu

Translators listed employ the pathway in question to varying degrees and are ordered by the consistency with which they adopt it; the pathway-translator correspondence is indicative rather than exhaustive.

3. Translating Plant and Animal Natural-History Knowledge in *Chu Ci*: Case Studies

Drawing on the theoretical framework and layered criteria established above, this chapter conducts a comparative empirical analysis of representative imagery sentences from *Chu Ci*. It breaks down the natural-history knowledge units embedded in these texts layer by layer, matches them with corresponding translation pathways, and systematically identifies the cross-cultural translation patterns of plant and animal knowledge in the Chu region.

3.1 Corpus Transparency and Selection Criteria

To ensure replicability and adhere to journal ethics policies, this section provides a transparency statement regarding corpus selection. This study draws upon six representative passages excerpted from *Chu Ci* based on the following criteria: (1) high frequency of flora and fauna terms; (2) presence and comparability across all four selected English translations; and (3) coverage of the three major sections of the anthology, namely *Li Sao*, *Jiu Zhang* (九章, *Nine Pieces*), and *Jiu Ge* (九歌, *Nine Songs*). The four translators (Xu Yuanchong, Zhuo Zhenying, David Hawkes, and Gopal Sukhu) were selected to represent a balanced comparative design, reflecting both Chinese domestic translation

traditions and Anglophone sinological scholarship. Full original Chinese source sentences, together with word-oriented scholarly glosses for analytical reference, are provided in the Appendix. It should be noted that the conclusions of this study are bounded strictly by this small sample and the four selected English translations; broader generalizations require further corpus-based verification.

3.2 Translating Commensurable Concrete-Species Knowledge

For commensurable concrete-species knowledge, translators tend to adopt a re-localized adaptation pathway. They replace pre-Qin Chu names with modern general natural-history terms, polish the verse syntax and rhythm, and thus improve fluency without sacrificing species identifiability. Through this approach, they facilitate the transmission of Chu-Region natural-history knowledge for overseas readers.

Example 1

Source Text: 扈江离与辟芷兮，纫秋兰以为佩。

Translation 1: I weave sweet grass by riverside, oh!

Into a belt with orchids late. (Xu, 2009: 5)

Translation 2: For Selinea and Angelica I care,

And wreaths of Cymbidium flowers I oft wear. (Zhuo, 2006: 3)

Translation 3: I dressed in selinea and shady angelica,

And twined autumn orchids to make a garland. (Hawkes, 1985: 22)

Translation 4: I cover myself with lovage and fragrant wild roots,

And braid the autumn thoroughwort for belt charms. (Sukhu, 2017: 34)

Example 1 offers a highly representative case of natural-history imagery writing in *Li Sao* of *Chu Ci*. The plants mentioned, namely *jiangli* (江离), *zhi* (芷), and *lan* (兰), are all fragrant herbs in the Chu region. Pan (2003) identified *jiangli* as *Ligusticum chuanxiong* Hort, *zhi* as *Angelica dahurica* Benth, and *lan* not as the ornamental orchid of later times but as *Eupatorium japonicum* Thunb. All three have clear botanical counterparts in reality and thus fall into the category of commensurable concrete-species knowledge.

On the whole, the four translators follow the re-localized adaptation pathway, though they differ markedly in their handling of botanical terms. Xu's version leans toward poetic rhythm and does not specify the actual plant names. Xu employs generalized terms like "sweet grass" and "orchids late" to convey the poetic effect. The translation prioritizes rhythmic flow and reading enjoyment while weakening the botanical identification information embedded in the text. Zhuo and Hawkes adopt Latin-derived terms such as *Selinea, Angelica,* and *Cymbidium* to establish the species and preserve the narrative of wearing fragrant herbs. In contrast, Sukhu utilizes common English herb names like "lovage" and "thoroughwort", turning the Chu fragrant plants into herbs more familiar to English-language readers, and thereby grounding the natural-history knowledge in the target cultural context.

Example 2

Source Text: 凤皇翼其承旗兮，高翱翔之翼翼。

Translation 1: The phoenixes sing in accord, oh!

Their wings with rainbow banners blend. (Xu, 2009: 41)

Translation 2: The phoenixes hover on, their wings touching th' clouds,

And it is in a leisurely grace that they seem! (Zhuo, 2006: 31)

Translation 3: Phoenixes followed me, bearing up my pennants,

Soaring high aloft with majestic wing-beats. (Hawkes, 1985: 33)

Translation 4: With phoenixes winging in the train of my banners,

Flapping and gliding aloft in orderly ranks. (Sukhu, 2017: 46)

Example 2 presents a classic mythological narrative in *Li Sao* of *Chu Ci*. It depicts a grand scene of the phoenix spreading its wings, bearing cloud banners beneath them, and soaring in well-ordered formation through the sky.

Note that the *fenghuang* (凤皇) in this passage is a mythological construct rather than a real biological species. It is categorized as commensurable concrete-species knowledge not on biological grounds, but because its core behavioural features, such as soaring high and flying in orderly formation, remain perceptible and recognizable across cultural

boundaries. However, the *fenghuang* of the Chu region carries a distinctive indigenous symbolic layer. Specifically, it functions as an auspicious omen standing for virtuous ministers and sagacious rulers, embodying Qu Yuan's yearning for good governance. This indigenous symbolic dimension lacks direct counterparts in Anglophone cultural traditions. Crucially, such culture-bound symbolic content does not alter its category assignment. Instead, these unique connotations require supplementation via paratextual annotations.

Yan (2017) pointed out that in handling mythological bird and beast imagery such as that in *Chu Ci*, translators need to balance the reproduction of narrative scenes with the transmission of source-cultural symbolism. All four translators employ "phoenix" for *fenghuang* (凤皇) and generally follow the re-localized adaptation pathway, though they differ in reproducing action details and handling narrative logic. Xu adds "sing in accord", highlighting the auditory imagery of song and weakening the core action of "wings bearing the banners" (*yi qi cheng qi*, 翼其承旗) in order to enhance the aesthetic pleasure of poetry reading. Zhuo highlights its leisurely hovering flight but abandons the core episode of "bearing the banners" (*cheng qi*, 承旗), replacing the banner imagery with "wings touching th' clouds", thus weakening the original banner-accompanied narrative thread. Faithful to the source narrative, Hawkes translates *yi qi cheng qi* (翼其承旗) as "bearing up my pennants", fully restoring the key episode of the phoenix bearing the banners. Additionally, his use of "majestic wingbeats" corresponds to *yiyi* (翼翼), conveying the majestic and orderly state. Sukhu adjusts the syntactic logic and presents the phoenix as a retinue accompanying the banners. He uses "orderly ranks" to reproduce the disciplined formation indicated by *yiyi* (翼翼) and focuses on restoring the grand scene of the entire celestial voyage.

These translation instances illustrate the practical operation of re-localized adaptation. While Zhuo and Hawkes prioritize scientific accuracy (truth) through Latin nomenclature, Xu's generalized terms best embody the aesthetic value (beauty) of cross-cultural dissemination. By balancing target-language readability and poetic effect, these concrete rendering choices collectively give tangible expression to the core value of beauty in the transmission of Chu natural-history knowledge.

3.3 Translating Analogical Symbolic Imagery Knowledge

In *Chu Ci*, many plants and animals carry stable moral and ethical symbolism shaped by their biological habits and physical features. For this kind of analogical symbolic imagery knowledge, translators often take a cross-local alignment pathway. They build cognitive bridges through shared symbolic meanings between Chinese and Western imagery, preserve the core connotations of local imagery, and avoid one-way domestication by Western culture. This makes it possible for two natural-history symbolic systems to engage in equal mutual learning and highlights the virtue embodied in cross-civilizational dialogue.

Example 3

Source Text: 后皇嘉树，橘徕服兮。受命不迁，生南国兮。

Translation 1: Fair tree on earth without a peer,

Laden with oranges, you grow here, oh!

You are destined not to be moved

In the southern land you are loved, oh! (Xu, 2009: 179)

Translation 2: Oh, under th' sky and on the earth

Your solemn existence you claim.

You live in th' south with joy and mirth,

Adhering firmly to your aim. (Zhuo, 2006: 135)

Translation 3: Fairest of all God's trees, the orange came and settled here,

Commanded by Him not to move, but only grow in the south country. (Hawkes, 1985: 76)

Translation 4: The Lord August delights in planting,

So, orange tree, you came to serve.

You accepted his order but never changed,

You who were born in the southern kingdom. (Sukhu, 2017: 127)

Example 3 focuses on the orange tree, the central image of *Ju Song* (橘颂, *In Praise of the Orange Tree*) in *Jiu Zhang*. Through its biological trait "destined not to be transplanted" (*shou ming bu qian*, 受命不迁), the text expresses the

moral ideal of remaining loyal to one's homeland and unwavering in purpose. The old saying that "an orange planted north of the Huai River becomes a trifoliate orange" helped establish the orange tree as a cultural symbol of attachment to one's homeland.

The Chu orange tree carries a specific cultural connotation, loyalty to one's native land, which has no direct counterpart in Western literary traditions. Nevertheless, both traditions adopt the same figurative pattern. They draw upon inherent biological traits of plants to project human moral character and personal aspiration. This shared rhetorical mode, rather than identical symbolic content, establishes the interpretive basis for classifying the orange tree as analogical symbolic imagery knowledge.

The four translators generally follow a cross-local alignment pathway. They seek consensus at the species-identification level, yet differ in how much symbolic meaning they retain. Xu's version uses "Fair tree on earth without a peer" to stress the orange tree's distinction and translates the original phrase *shou ming bu qian* (受命不迁) as "destined not to be moved." It also preserves English poetic rhyme and rhythm, concisely conveying the core meaning that the orange tree cannot be transplanted. Zhuo's overall textual treatment leans toward re-localized adaptation to maintain poetic readability. Nevertheless, his interpretation of "Adhering firmly to your aim" successfully conveys the symbolic sense, achieving partial cross-civilizational alignment on the figurative level, though at the expense of the orange tree's botanical identity. Hawkes completes the translation of this line in a prose style. His "not to move, but only grow in the south country" fully captures the orange tree's biological attributes and retains both its physical traits and the symbolic meaning of heavenly command, balancing natural-history information and moral implication. Sukhu's version adjusts the subject logic and interprets *shou ming* (受命) as carrying the will of ancient rulers, strengthening the ritual narrative behind the text while retaining the core premise that the orange tree is rooted in the southern land.

Example 4

Source Text：鴩鸟之不群兮，自前世而固然。

Translation 1: The eagle cleaves alone the air, oh!

Since olden days it has been fleet. (Xu, 2009: 13)

Translation 2: It is indeed the course of nature from of old

That th' Eagle won't join Birds of Triviality. (Zhuo, 2006: 11)

Translation 3: Eagles do not flock like birds of lesser species;

So it has ever been since the olden time. (Hawkes, 1985: 25)

Translation 4: The buzzard does not flock,

It has always been so. (Sukhu, 2017: 38)

Example 4 finds its source in *Li Sao* and draws on the nature of a bird of prey that does not flock with other birds. This symbolizes the character of loyal and upright men who hold fast to integrity and resist worldly trends. This rhetorical paradigm of using bird traits to symbolize scholar-official ethics can be found in both Chinese and Western classical literature, marking it as typical analogical symbolic imagery knowledge. Li (2015) argues that when dealing with archetypal imagery, translators must consider target-reader reception while not dissolving the image's inherent local cultural traits.

The four translators generally adopt a cross-local alignment pathway, but they differ in noun choice, semantic explicitness, and poetic form. Xu selects "eagle" for the bird of prey, using "cleaves alone the air" to depict the solitary flight of the raptor and pursuing a poetic effect in translation. However, the latter part of the line, "has been fleet," merely describes the bird's physical swiftness, thereby weakening the metaphorical force of *bu qun* (不群, not flocking). Zhuo also chooses "Eagle" and adds "Birds of Triviality," directly externalizing the implicit opposition between the noble man and the petty man. This can lower the barriers English-language readers face in interpreting the metaphor. Retaining the original text's implicitness, Hawkes restores the contrastive sentence pattern by using "Eagles do not flock like birds of lesser species," without adding subjective judgment. Sukhu opts for the common English bird name "buzzard" and translates the line simply as "The buzzard does not flock," preserving the factual detail that the raptor does not flock.

The above translation examples show how cross-local alignment works in practice. By bridging shared figurative logic in concrete treatments, these translation choices give concrete expression to the value of virtue in cross-civilizational exchange.

3.4 Translating Irreducible Ritual-Associative Knowledge

Some plant and animal imagery in *Chu Ci* is closely tied to the Chu region's ritual sacrifices, mountain-god beliefs, and Jiang-Han folk customs. Western culture has no equivalent image carrier, ritual practice, or cultural interpretation for it. This falls under the category of irreducible ritual-associative knowledge. Translators primarily adopt the local authenticity preservation pathway, utilizing philological research and paratextual annotations to reconstruct the original historical contexts. They recover how the pre-Qin Chu people perceived the natural world and uphold the authenticity of historical cognition, thereby achieving the reconstruction of imagery.

Example 5

Source Text: 蕙肴蒸兮兰藉，奠桂酒兮椒浆。

Translation 1: We pour pepper sauce,oh! and laurel wine

And serve in orchids, oh! the spiced meat. (Xu, 2009: 45)

Translation 2: In orchids and on boneset is steam'd meat,

And brew'd with cassia is th' nectar sweet. (Zhuo, 2006: 35)

Translation 3: The meats cooked in melilotus, served on orchid mats,

And libations of cinnamon wine and pepper sauces! (Hawkes, 1985: 102)

Translation 4: Basil leaves cover the cooked meat offered on beds of thoroughwort,

With the sacrifice of cassia wine and peppered broth. (Sukhu, 2017: 4, 5)

Example 5 originates in *Jiu Ge* of *Chu C*i, a cycle of shamanic ritual songs. The ritual spices *hui* (蕙), *lan* (兰), *gui* (桂), and *jiao* (椒) were reserved for the ancestral temple sacrifices of the Chu State. The original poetic text carries the phrase "*lanjie*" (兰藉), denoting sacrificial mats woven from the fragrant *lan* herb of ancient Chu-a Eupatorium species rather than the modern orchid. Together with "cassia wine and pepper broth" (桂酒椒浆), these elements constitute a sacrificial system distinctive to Chu ritual practices. There are no corresponding ritual spices or ceremonial frameworks in Western culture, which makes this a typical case of irreducible ritual-associative knowledge.

All four translators preserve the core shamanic sacrificial framework and refrain from substituting Chu-ritual items with Western sacrificial spices. Nevertheless, they vary significantly in the level of specificity with which they render the distinct botanical identities of the ritual herbs. Hawkes employs precise botanical names such as "melilotus" and "orchid mats" to restore the sacrificial herbs themselves. Moreover, he translates the action of *dian* (奠) using the ritual-specific term "libations". Sukhu uses "basil leaves" and "beds of thoroughwort" to represent the sacrificial-material forms of *hui* and *lan*, and adds "sacrifice" to make the ritual dimension explicit. Xu places *hui* and *lan* under the general term "orchids" and retains the sacrificial offering pair of "pepper sauce" and "laurel wine". Zhuo distinguishes the two sacrificial herbs with "orchids and boneset" and uses "brew'd with cassia" to convey how cassia wine is made. Despite their differing levels of botanical specificity, all four translators successfully preserve the shamanic ritual objects and ceremonial connotations. By doing so, they avoid dissolving the distinctive ritual culture of Chu and collectively accomplish the reconstruction of sacrificial herb imagery from the Chu region.

Example 6

Source Text: 乘赤豹兮从文狸，辛夷车兮结桂旗。被石兰兮带杜衡，折芳馨兮遗所思。

Translation 1: Laurel flags spread, oh! over fragrant cars

Drawn by leopards, oh! dotted with stars.

Orchids as belt, oh! and crown above,

She plucks sweet blooms, oh! for her dear love. (Xu, 2009: 67, 69)

Translation 2: On th' leopard-drawn magnolia cart I make

A trip, musk foxes following in the wake.

Laurel flags waving, wild ginger wreaths I wear,

In hand a bouquet for th' one for whom I care. (Zhuo, 2006: 53)

Translation 3: Driving tawny leopards, leading the striped lynxes;

A car of lily-magnolia with banner of woven cassia;

Her cloak of stone-orchids, her belt of asarum:

She gathers sweet scents to give to one she loves. (Hawkes, 1985: 43)

Translation 4: Drawn by red panthers, followed by striped wild cats,

Her magnolia wagon flies a flag of woven cinnamon bark.

Cloaked in orchids, asarum sash around her waist,

She picks the sweetest flowers and herbs to give her love. (Sukhu, 2017: 17, 18)

Example 6 originates from *Shan Gui* (山鬼, *The Mountain Spirit*) from *Jiu Ge*, a piece centered on mountain-god sacrifice. *Chi bao* (赤豹, red leopard), *wen li* (文狸, striped wildcat), *xinyi* (辛夷, *Magnolia liliflora* Desr), *lan*, and *duheng* (*杜衡*, *Asarum forbesii* Maxim) together constitute a distinct system of ritual objects for mountain-god sacrifices in the Chu region. They are core carriers of Chu shamanic mountain worship. Western mythology has no equivalent objects or sacrificial paradigms, which makes this a typical case of irreducible ritual-associative knowledge.

All four translators adopt an authenticity-preserving approach, fully retaining the distinctive sacrificial beasts and fragrant herbs of Chu region without domestication or cultural dissolution. Hawkes translates *chi bao* and *wen li* as "tawny leopards" and "striped lynxes". He then renders these Chu-specific objects as "lily magnolia" for *xinyi che* (辛夷车, magnolia cart), "banner of woven cassia" for *gui qi* (桂旗, cassia banners), "stone orchids" for *shilan*, and "asarum" for *duheng*. Drawing on sinological research, he traces in his annotations the textual identification and mythological origins of the protagonist, *Shan Gui*. Sukhu renders the beasts as "red panthers" and "striped wild cats", and uses "magnolia wagon", "flag of woven cinnamon bark", "Cloaked in orchids" and "asarum sash around her waist" to represent the carriage, banner, and worn fragrant herbs. He likewise seeks to preserve the cultural elements of sacrificial objects and faithfully restores the Chu shamanic ritual scene through the text. Xu consolidates the beasts and various fragrant herbs into generalized imagery, reconstructing them with "leopards", "Laurel flags", and "Orchids as belt". Zhuo uses "leopard-drawn magnolia cart", "musk foxes", "Laurel flags", "wild ginger wreaths" for corresponding imagery. While moderately adapting syntactic structures to fit poetic conventions, these two translators fully preserve the core shamanic sacrificial narrative, thereby successfully reconstructing the Chu imagery of mountain-god sacrifice.

These analyzed examples show how local authenticity preservation works in actual translation practice. With main-text rendering and paratextual notes working together, these translation choices give concrete expression to the value of truth in recovering the ritual knowledge system of pre-Qin Chu.

4. From Translation Pathways to Evaluative Outcomes: Plant and Animal Knowledge in *Chu Ci*

This chapter synthesizes the three pathways identified above, revealing the underlying logic of translators' strategic choices.

4.1 The Re-localized Adaptation Pathway

The first is the re-localized adaptation pathway, which mainly deals with commensurable concrete-species knowledge. Translators use modern general natural-history terms to translate ancient Chu names while taking poetic rhythm into account. They fit local natural-history information into existing English cognitive frameworks, lowering barriers for overseas readers and giving priority to communicative effect. Yet simplification in the main text may lead to the loss of detail, so paratexts such as annotations and notes are needed to fill in the information. Xu's translation tends to adopt this pathway to a greater extent.

4.2 The Cross-local Alignment Pathway

The second is the cross-local alignment pathway, aimed at symbolic imagery with an analogical basis. Instead of one-way domestication, translators preserve local imagery by drawing on shared features of Chinese and Western figurative traditions, and use annotations to distinguish the connotations of the two symbolic systems. They strive to avoid the obscuring influence of Western cultural paradigms and pursue equal dialogue between civilizations. Hawkes' translations for the orange tree and the bird of prey serve as typical examples.

4.3 The Local Authenticity Preservation Pathway

The third is the local authenticity preservation pathway, intended for shamanic ritual objects. Translators retain the fragrant herbs and exotic beasts unique to Chu region. They rely on traditional annotations, notes and folkloric research on *Chu Ci*, and employ paratext to clarify ritual ceremonies and legendary backgrounds. They restore the natural-history cognition of pre-Qin Chu people and uphold the authenticity of historical cognition. Hawkes and Sukhu follow this pathway in handling the ritual imagery of *Jiu Ge*.

4.4 Integrative Patterns of Translator Strategies

The three pathways are not mutually exclusive, and a single passage often combines several strategies. These divergent preferences are shaped in part by each translator's professional identity, publishing context, and intended readership. Xu Yuanchong crafts poetic adaptations aimed at a general international literary audience. Zhuo Zhenying's translation is part of the *Library of Chinese Classics* bilingual series, which prioritizes poetic form for a broad bilingual readership. Operating within the Penguin Classics series, Hawkes balances rigorous philological accuracy with readability for scholarly audiences. Sukhu's scholarly monograph, published by Columbia University Press, is primarily directed toward Anglophone sinological circles, which explains his flexible, context-sensitive selection of strategies.

In short, Xu favors reader-oriented adaptation; Zhuo emphasizes poetic formal effects; Hawkes prioritizes philologically grounded local authenticity while employing cross-local alignment for a limited set of analogical-symbolic items; and Sukhu adjusts his strategies flexibly according to the category of knowledge. Translators attach different weights to the three values of dissemination, cross-civilizational dialogue, and historical truth. While their target readers and transmission goals vary, these distinct strategies collectively serve the reconstruction and re-creation of plant and animal imagery from *Chu Ci* in the English-speaking world. Furthermore, paratextual annotations frequently function as a compensatory device to address information losses incurred by specific translation choices.

4.5 Evaluative Outcomes and Counter-cases

Importantly, truth, virtue, and beauty function as evaluative outcome criteria, not as intrinsic properties mechanically attached to given translation pathways. A chosen pathway does not guarantee the expected value dimension. Under certain textual-cultural conditions, translators may follow the predicted pathway yet lose critical knowledge elements; conversely, an "unexpected" pathway can partially achieve an alternative value objective. This approach allows the analytical framework to remain falsifiable rather than purely descriptive.

To illustrate this, we can examine two counter-cases. First, in Example 2, Xu Yuanchong adopts the re-localized adaptation pathway, which is theoretically oriented toward the "beauty of dissemination." However, to achieve a rhythmic flow and auditory imagery ("sing in accord"), Xu retains the word "banners" but renders the line as "Their wings with rainbow banners blend." This rendering removes the narrative detail that the *fenghuang* bears the banners with its wings. Following the expected pathway thus results in a partial loss of source-text knowledge. Second, in Example 3, Zhuo Zhenying's overall translational strategy falls under re-localized adaptation, oriented toward the aesthetic value of "beauty". Even within this adaptation-driven treatment, however, his translation of "being destined not to be transplanted" (受命不迁) still effectively conveys the source-text moral symbolism. This illustrates how a translator working primarily within one pathway can still realize an alternative evaluative outcome. In this case, the outcome is the "virtue" of cross-civilizational dialogue, which was not the primary intended goal of his chosen strategy. Taken together, these counter-cases demonstrate that pathway choice and value realization are not deterministic. Evaluative judgment should therefore rest on the actual translation outcomes rather than merely labeling strategies.

5. Conclusion

From the three-dimensional framework of truth, virtue and beauty in Transknowletology, this paper uses four English translations of *Chu Ci* as its corpus and explores the cross-cultural reconstruction of imagery related to the knowledge of plants and animals. Based on the cross-cultural commensurability of knowledge, it sorts Chu plants and animals into three types, namely commensurable concrete species, analogical symbolic imagery, and irreducible ritual-associative knowledge. It then proposes three corresponding translation pathways, namely re-localized adaptation, cross-local alignment, and local authenticity preservation. These pathways work through terminology conversion, mutual learning among civilizations, textual research, and paratextual annotation to fulfill the values of dissemination, cross-civilizational dialogue, and the truth of historical cognition. Taken together, these pathways constitute a layered analytical framework. The framework effectively addresses the weaknesses in existing English translation studies of *Chu Ci*, which tend to stress literary effects while neglecting the translation and transmission of local natural-history knowledge systems. While this study focuses on the plant and animal knowledge in *Chu Ci* and its mainstream English translations, future research could extend the analytical framework to other pre-Qin classics, such as *Shan Hai Jing* (山海经, *Classic of Mountains and Seas*) and *Shi Jing*, as well as multilingual translations. This would further enrich the exploration of traditional Chinese natural-history knowledge in overseas dissemination.

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Appendix: Source Texts and Word-oriented Scholarly Glosses

Example	Source Text (Chinese)	Word-oriented Scholarly Gloss (English)
Example 1	扈江离与辟芷兮，纫秋兰以为佩。	Wear *Jiangli* and *Pizhi* (fragrant herbs), oh! String autumn orchid to make a pendant.
Example 2	凤皇翼其承旗兮，高翱翔之翼翼。	Phoenixes' wings bear the banners, oh! Soaring high and flying in orderly ranks.
Example 3	后皇嘉树，橘徕服兮。受命不迁，生南国兮。	August Lord's excellent tree, the orange serves here. Receiving the mandate not to move, it grows in the southern country.
Example 4	鴟鸟之不群兮，自前世而固然。	The eagle (bird of prey) does not flock, oh! Since former generations it has always been so.
Example 5	蕙肴蒸兮兰藉，奠桂酒兮椒浆。	*Hui* (herb) meats steamed, oh! On *lan* (orchid) mats. Libations of cassia wine and pepper broth.
Example 6	乘赤豹兮从文狸，辛夷车兮结桂旗。被石兰兮带杜衡，折芳馨兮遗所思。	Riding red leopards, followed by striped wildcats, oh! A magnolia cart tied with cassia banners. Cloaked in stone orchids, belted with wild ginger, oh! Plucking fragrant herbs to give to the one I long for.