A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF THE STYLISTIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN IN-COMING TRANSLATORS AND OUT-GOING TRANSLATORS FOR ENGLISH VERSIONS OF TIANWEN IN THE CONTEXT OF "TRANSLATING CHINA"[i]

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Abstract:

This study, based on a self-compiled parallel Chinese-English corpus of multiple translations of Tianwen and the Brown Reference Corpus, conducts an in-depth comparative analysis of the translation styles employed by in-coming and outcoming translators. The findings reveal that translations produced by in-coming translators exhibit a high degree of explicitation, with elevated language complexity, a more formal tone, diverse sentence structures, and a tendency toward foreignization, alongside frequent use of annotations. In contrast, translations produced by those out-coming translators demonstrate rich vocabulary and high information density, yet with simpler sentence structures and minimal variation in sentence length, enhancing readability. This group of translators also adopts foreignization strategies but uses annotations less frequently. As primary contributors to "Translating China," out-going translators should appropriately draw on the stylistic approaches of in-coming translators, strengthening audience awareness, adding contextual annotations, and enriching language expression, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of cultural dissemination.

Keywords: corpus; translator style; in-coming translation, out-going translation

摘要：

本文基于自建的《天问》中英多译本平行语料库及 Brown 参照语料库，深入对比分析了《天问》译入与译出群体的翻译风格。研究发现：译入群体译文呈现出显著的显化特征，语言复杂度较高，语体较为正式，句式多样，在翻译策略上倾向于采用异化，并善于运用注释。相比之下，译出群体译文用词丰富，信息负载量较大，但句式简洁，句子长短变化小，整体可读性较高，同样较多使用异化策略，但注释运用上相对不足。作为"翻译中国"的主力军，译出群体应适当借鉴译入群体的译者风格，强化受众意识，增加背景注释，丰富语言表达，从而更好提高文化传播效果。

关键词： 语料库；译者风格；译入与译出

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1. Introduction

The transition from "*translating the world*" to "*translating China*" has become a historical inevitability (Huang, 2022). While scholars, including the British Sinologist Graham, argue that Chinese classics can only be translated into English by in-coming translators, not by out-going translators, they emphasize that in-coming translation is more reasonable and acceptable from linguistic and literary perspectives. However, this is not necessarily the case from a cultural standpoint. Chinese translators should confidently undertake the task of external translation of Chinese classics, strengthening their command of both Chinese and English languages and cultures, to contribute to the promotion of Chinese culture in the new century (Pan, 2004). Chinese translators should be the main force of "*translating China*" (Huang, 2022).

Looking back, the research on in-coming and out-going translation has been fruitful, mostly focusing on the debate over their respective merits while seldom conducting empirical comparative studies of the styles of in-coming translator groups and out-going translator groups. Although there have been discussions on prose, novels, and drama (Huang, 2011; Wang & Huang, 2015; Zhao, 2019), studies on classical poetry and similar genres remain scarce.

When discussing translator style, Baker (2000: 245) first proposed the concept based on Hermans' theory (1996: 27). She likened translator style to the translator's "*fingerprint*," which manifests not only in linguistic features such as vocabulary, syntactic structures, and textual characteristics but also in non-linguistic elements like prefaces, postscripts, footnotes, preferences in source text selection, and translation strategies. Liu (2005: 238) further divided translator style markers into "*formal markers*" (including phonology, register, syntax, vocabulary, textual organization, and rhetoric) and "*non-formal markers*" in his Translation Style Theory. Since Baker's pioneering corpus-based comparative analysis of the styles of two translators of English literature in 2000, scholars worldwide have followed suit, leading to a surge of corpus-based studies on translator styles.

These studies have employed diverse methodologies, including analogical models (Olohan, 2003; Zhao, 2015; Mastropierro, 2018; Liu, 2020; Zhu, 2021), parallel models (Bosseaux, 2001, 2004a, 2004b; Winters, 2007; Liu, Liu, Zhu Hong, 2011; Hu, 2011; Huang, 2014; Zhang & Zhu, 2020), combined analogical and parallel models (Munday, 2007; Saldanha, 2011a, b, c; Huang, 2012; Wang & Huang, 2015), and multiple comparative models (Zhang & Liu, 2014; Wang, 2014; Li, He, Hou Lin, 2018). These approaches have yielded significant results, building a relatively comprehensive corpus-based framework for studying translator styles. Descriptive parameters have expanded from simple formal parameters to include linguistic, narrative, and integrated parameters (Huang, 2018). However, most studies focus on novels and individual translator styles or differences between individual translators, with little attention given to group translator styles, as proposed by Baker (2000).

Tianwen, a brilliant piece in *Chu Ci*, was praised by Guo Moruo as "*an unparalleled masterpiece*." The poem, structured in a question-and-answer format, poses over 170 questions.

It boasts immense literary value (Hu Yan, 2015) and profound historical significance (Wu, 2012). Its four-character verse, complex vocabulary, concise language, and multi-disciplinary, multi-interpretative features (Yang, 2005) leave ample room for interpretation.

Studies on the English translation of *Tianwen* encompass various aspects, including research on translators (Shen, 2017; Zhang & Yao, 2020), translation strategies and methods (Zhuo Zhenying, 2011; Yan Xiaojiang, 2017; Tan Honghui, 2020), and general evaluations of *Chu Ci* translations (Waley, 1960, etc.). However, research on translators remains weak. First, most studies focus on a few translators, such as David Hawkes, Zhuo Zhenying, and Xu Yuanchong, with little mention of influential translators from the past two decades, such as Gopal Sukhu, or recent translations by Morrow Williams (2022) and Zhao Yanchun (2023). Research perspectives and methods are also relatively narrow, lacking group-style studies. Second, most studies qualitatively analyze single or paired translations with limited sample sizes and insufficient quantitative analysis.

This paper adopts a combined analogical and parallel model, leveraging a parallel corpus and a reference corpus of the target language. It aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of translator styles by comparing translated texts with the source text and translated texts with original texts in the target language. By selecting the classical poetry *Tianwen* as the research subject, this study investigates and compares the styles of in-coming translator groups and out-going translator groups, contributing to corpus-based studies on group translator styles.

2. Research Design

2.1 Research Subjects

**Table 1:** Translators and Translation Versions of *Tianwen*

Translator Group/ Translation Information	Translator	Nationality	Publisher	Date	English Name
In-coming Translator Group	David Hawkes	British	Oxford University Press	1959	Heavenly Questions (*T'ien Wen*)
	Stephen Field	Australian	New Directions Publishing	1984	*Tianwen*
	Gopal Sukhu	Indian	Columbia University Press	2017	Ask the Sky
	Morrow Williams	American	Oxford University Press	2022	Heavenly Questions Attributed to Qu Yuan
Out-going Translator Group	Zhuo Zhenying	China	Hunan People's Publishing House	2006	Inquiries into the Universe
	Xu Yuanchong	China	China Translation and Publishing Corporation	2008	Asking Heaven
	Yang Chenghu	China	Thread-binding Books Publishing House	2008	Inquires of Heaven
	Zhaoyanchun	China	Shanghai University Press Co., Ltd	2023	Odes and Elegies by Yuan Qu in English Rhyme

This study focuses on analyzing the translation styles and characteristics of two translator groups, specifically including four in-coming translators—David Hawkes, Stephen Field, Gopal Sukhu, and Morrow Williams—and four out-going translators—Zhuo Zhenying, Xu Yuanchong, Yang Chenghu, and Zhao Yanchun. Detailed information about these eight translators is provided in Table 1.

2.2 Corpus Design and Analytical Tools

This study is based on a self-constructed corpus, which includes the translations of *Tianwen* by David Hawkes (1959), Stephen Field (1984), Gopal Sukhu (2017), Morrow Williams (2022), Zhuo Zhenying (2006), Xu Yuanchong (2008), Yang Chenghu (2008), and Zhao Yanchun (2023). The research design is as follows (see Figure 1):

1) A combined analogical and parallel research model is adopted to build a one-to-many parallel corpus of *Tianwen*, distinguishing between the in-coming translator group and the out-going translator group.

2) The Brown Corpus, created in 1961 by Henry Kucera and Nelson Francis, is selected as the comparable corpus. This corpus contains approximately one million words across 15 text types, including news articles, novels, and academic papers, offering diverse themes and styles. The texts are annotated and suitable for corpus linguistics studies.

3) The comparative analysis examines the translation styles of the in-coming translator group and out-going translator group with reference to the Chinese source text. Additionally, the translations are compared to the Brown Corpus, which represents English original texts, to further explore the characteristics of the two translator groups.
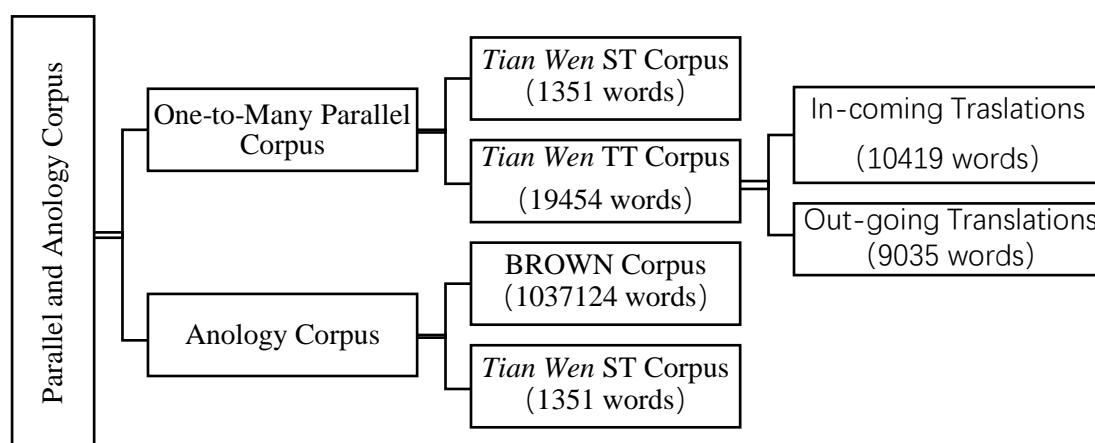
Figure 1: Design of the Self-Constructed Corpus

2.3 Data and Statistical Tools

The statistical tools used in this study include:

1) **Wordsmith 7.0.** To calculate word frequency (Frequency), number of tokens (Token), number of types (Type), Standardized Type-Token Ratio (STTR), Average Sentence Length, and Standard Deviation of Sentence Length.

2) **AntConc 3.5.9.** To measure Lexical Density and use its keyword list function, combined with manual filtering, to identify Culturally Specific Words in the source text. Translations of these words are retrieved using CUC_ParaConc_0.3.

3) **BFSU-HugeMind Readability Analyzer 2.0.** To comprehensively evaluate readability indices of the translations. The tool integrates multiple classical readability formulas, including Flesch Reading Ease Score, Automated Readability Index, Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level, Coleman-Liau Index, Gunning Fog Index, and SMOG Index.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This study establishes its theoretical framework based on Liu Miqing's Translation Stylistics Theory (see Figure 2).

- **Formal Markers**:

- Lexical Features: Described through statistical measures such as Type-Token Ratio, high-frequency words, and Lexical Density.

- Syntactic Features: Described through Sentence Count, Average Sentence Length, and Standard Deviation of Sentence Length.

- Textual Features: Described through readability indices.

- **Non-Formal Markers**:

Primarily analyzed by examining the translation strategies applied to Culturally Specific Words, showcasing the translators' stylistic techniques.
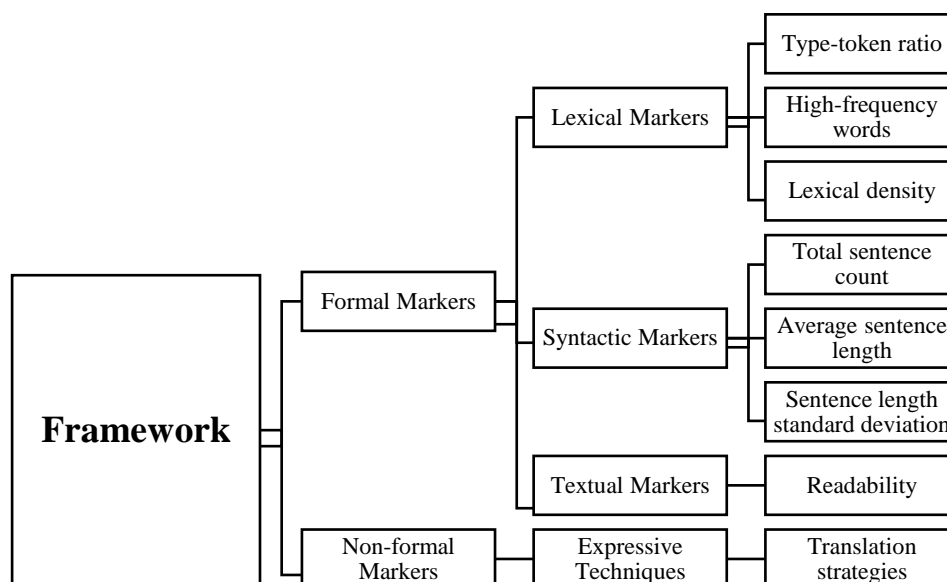
Figure 2: Theoretical Framework of Stylistic Markers

2.4 Research Questions

This study focuses on addressing the following research questions:

1) What group styles are reflected by the in-coming translator group and the out-going translator group in their translations of *Tianwen*?
2) What are the similarities and differences between the stylistic features of the in-coming translator group and the out-going translator group? What are the reasons for these differences?

3. Discussion

3.1 Style of In-coming Translators in English Translations of *Tianwen*
Through statistical analysis, the main translation styles of the English translations of *Tianwen* within the translated corpus are as follows.

3.1.1 Distinct Features of Explicitation and Higher Linguistic Complexity
This paper uses Wordsmith Tools 7.0 to calculate the number of form and category symbols for two groups of translators of *Tianwen*, with the results presented in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 2: Comparison of Type and Token between the
Two Translator Group in the Translation of *Tianwen*

Translator Group/ Translation Info.	Translator	Token	Type
In-coming Translator Group	David Hawkes (1959)	2684	855
	Stephen Field (1984)	2269	883
	Gopal Sukhu (2017)	2693	960
	Morrow Williams (2022)	2773	1027
Average		**2613**	**933**
Out-going Translator Group	Xu Yuanchong (1994)	2092	755
	Zhuo Zhenying (2008)	2688	973
	Yang Chenghu (2008)	2121	824
	Zhao Yanchun (2023)	2134	811
Average		**2258.75**	**840.75**

Table 3: Comparison of Type and Token between In-coming and Out-going
Translator Groups of *Tianwen*, Source Text, and BROWN Corpus

	ST	In-coming	Out-going	BROWN
Token	1351	2613	2258.75	1037124
Type	737	933	840.75	43047

From Tables 2 and 3, it can be observed that both the in-coming and out-going translator group have higher average values in terms of type and token compared to the source text, with the translations from both groups being significantly longer than the source text. Since the source text of *Tianwen* is written in Classical Chinese, this suggests that both groups of translators tend to explicitly express the implicit information in the source text in their translations, thereby enhancing the understanding and acceptance of the translation by the target readers. This aligns with the concept of explicitation in translation theory (Baker, 1993).

The in-coming translator group exhibits a higher average count of form symbols and category symbols than the out-going translator group, indicating more complex language and a more prominent use of explicitation. In contrast, the out-going translator group's translations are more concise. This is consistent with Jiang's (2017) analysis of two Chinese and foreign translators' renditions of Du Fu's poetry, where Chinese translators tend to preserve the brevity and neatness of the source poems, avoiding redundancy, while foreign translators are more inclined to adopt explicitation strategies.

Further validation can be achieved through sentence-level parameters such as sentence count and average sentence length, as presented in Tables 4 and 5.

Table 4: Sentence Count and Average Sentence Length
of Source and Target Translator Groups of *Tianwen*

Translator Group/ Translation Info.	Translator	Sentence Count	Average Sentence Length
In-coming Translator Group	David Hawkes (1959)	201	13
	Stephen Field (1984)	262	9
	Gopal Sukhu (2017)	244	11
	Morrow Williams (2022)	185	15
Average		**223**	**12**
Out-going Translator Group	Xu Yuanchong (1994)	204	10
	Zhuo Zhenying (2008)	200	13
	Yang Chenghu (2008)	202	10.5
	Zhao Yanchun (2023)	216	10
Average		**205.5**	**10.875**

Table 5: Comparison of Sentence Count and Average Sentence Length between
In-coming and Out-going Translator Group of *Tianwen* and the BROWN Corpus

Average	In-coming	Out-going	BROWN
Sentence Count	223	205.5	55655
Average Sentence Length	12.05	10.875	18.63

The statistical data in Table 5 shows that the average number of sentences in the in-coming translator group is higher than that in the out-going translator group. This suggests that foreign translators are more heavily influenced by Western poetics in their translation process, and their translated styles are closer to the original English poetry. This also aligns with translation conventions, as foreign translators often use additional logical connectors and explanatory language to convey the meaning of the original text more clearly and faithfully.

3.1.2 More Formal Register

Feng (2008) pointed out that the frequency of occurrences of "the" and "of" can reflect the difficulty level of phrases and syntactic structures, thereby revealing the formality of the translation. The most frequent words in the Brown corpus are also "the" and "of." By using Wordsmith 7.0 to perform a statistical analysis of the high-frequency words in both in-coming and out-going translator group, the results are shown in Tables 6, 7, and 8.

Table 6: High-Frequency Words in the In-coming Translator Group of *Tianwen*

TOP10	Hawkes			Field			Sukuhu			Williams		
	Word	Fre.	%	Word	Fre.	%	Word	Fre.	%	Word	Fre.	%
1	**the**	**192**	**7.15**	**the**	**174**	**7.67**	**the**	**187**	**6.86**	**the**	**194**	**7.00**
2	be	111	4.14	be	114	5.02	do	82	3.01	be	123	4.44
3	do	99	3.69	do	69	3.04	be	81	2.97	do	81	2.92
4	and	86	3.20	how	63	2.78	to	67	2.46	and	73	2.63
5	he	78	2.91	**of**	**58**	**2.56**	how	54	1.98	**of**	**64**	**2.31**
6	how	63	2.35	and	57	2.51	he	52	1.91	why	61	2.20
7	to	59	2.20	he	50	2.20	and	51	1.87	when	57	2.06
8	**of**	**55**	**2.05**	to	48	2.12	**of**	**50**	**1.84**	he	55	1.98
9	his	53	1.97	a	39	1.72	why	48	1.76	to	51	1.84
10	when	51	1.90	what	39	1.72	his	43	1.58	how	57	1.55

Table 7: High-Frequency Words in the Out-going Translator Group of *Tianwen*

TOP10	Xu Yuanchong			Zhuo Zhenying			Yang Chenghu			Zhao Yanchun		
	Word	Fre.	%	Word	Fre.	%	Word	Fre.	%	Word	Fre.	%
1	**the**	115	5.50	**th'**	**125**	**4.65**	do	84	3.97	**the**	81	3.80
2	how	74	3.54	have	124	4.61	**the**	**69**	**3.26**	be	67	3.14
3	and	68	3.25	**the**	**101**	**3.76**	be	67	3.17	why	62	2.91
4	do	67	3.20	be	72	2.68	he	55	2.60	do	58	2.72
5	be	60	2.87	do	67	2.49	why	55	2.60	's	51	2.39
6	's	46	2.20	to	61	2.27	**th'**	**53**	**2.50**	he	44	2.06
7	he	42	2.01	**of**	60	2.23	and	46	2.17	and	41	1.92
8	to	38	1.82	and	57	2.12	to	41	1.94	a	40	1.87
9	his	37	1.77	he	54	2.01	have	39	1.84	can	37	1.73
10	why	33	1.58	in	48	1.79	how	35	1.65	have	35	1.64

Table 8: Comparison of the Frequency of "the" and "of" in In-coming and Out-going Translator Group

Translator Group/ Translation Info.	Translator	the	Of
In-coming Translator Group	David Hawkes (1959)	192	55
	Stephen Field (1984)	174	58
	Gopal Sukhu (2017)	187	50
	Morrow Williams (2022)	194	64
Average		**186.75**	**56.75**
Out-going Translator Group	Xu Yuanchong (1994)	115	23
	Zhuo Zhenying (2008)	226	60
	Yang Chenghu (2008)	122	31
	Zhao Yanchun (2023)	81	9
Average		**136**	**30.75**

Table 9: Frequency of "the" and "of" in the Two Translator Groups and the BROWN Corpus

	In-coming		Out-going		Brown	
Word	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%
The	186.75	7.15%	136	6.02%	69999	6.75%
of	56.75	2.17%	30.75	1.36%	36471	3.52%
Total	**243.5**	**9.32%**	**166.75**	**7.38%**	**106470**	**10.27%**

According to the statistical results presented in Tables 6, 7, 8, and 9, the top ten high-frequency words in both translator groups consistently include "of" and "the," except for the translations by Xu, Yang, and Zhao, where "of" does not appear in the top ten high-frequency words. Therefore, individual searches were conducted using Antconc 3.5.9, revealing that the frequency of "of" in Xu's translation is 23, in Yang's translation is 31, and in Zhao's translation is 9. The average frequencies of "the" and "of" for both groups were then summarized in Table 8. The results show that the frequency of "the" and "of" is significantly higher in the in-coming translator group than in the out-going translator group, suggesting that the in-coming translator group generally exhibits a higher level of formality in terms of register. Furthermore, a comparison with the Brown Corpus reveals that the average proportions of "the" and "of" in the in-coming translator group are higher than in the out-going translator group and are very close to those in the Brown Corpus. This indicates that the in-coming translator group's register is more aligned with the characteristics of original English texts in terms of formality.

3.1.3 More Diverse Sentence Structures

The standard deviation of sentence length represents the extent to which sentence lengths fluctuate around the average sentence length in a text. A larger standard deviation indicates a greater variation in sentence lengths, while a smaller one suggests less variation. By examining the standard deviation of sentence length, we can analyze whether the sentence structures of two groups exhibit greater diversity and variation. The specific statistical results can be found in Tables 10 and 11.

In terms of standard deviation of sentence length, the average standard deviation of sentence length of the out-going translator group is generally higher than that of the in-coming translator group. This indicates that the sentence length variation in the out-going translator group is greater, while the variation in the in-coming translator group is relatively smaller. Therefore, it can be concluded that the translations of the out-going translator group exhibit greater variation in sentence length. This finding aligns with the studies of scholars Cai (2015) and Gao (2013), reflecting that target-language translators tend to approach the style of the original English texts, showcasing a blend of short and long sentences.

Table 10: Standard Deviation of Sentence Length of
In-coming and Out-going Translator Group of *Tianwen*

Translator Group/ Translation Info.	Translator	Standard Deviation of Sentence Length
In-coming Translator Group	David Hawkes (1959)	4.88
	Stephen Field (1984)	3.65
	Gopal Sukhu (2017)	5.55
	Morrow Williams (2022)	6.57
Average		5.16
Out-going Translator Group	Xu Yuanchong (1994)	4.25
	Zhuo Zhenying (2008)	4.51
	Yang Chenghu (2008)	4.11
	Zhao Yanchun (2023)	4.50
Average		4.34

Table 11: Comparison of Sentence Length Standard Deviation between
In-coming and Out-going Translator Group of *Tianwen* and the BROWN Corpus

Table 11. Average	In-coming	Out-going	BROWN
Standard deviation of sentence length	5.16	4.34	13. 37

Punctuation marks also reflect the number of sentence types and have distinct pragmatic functions, conveying different stylistic effects (Ge, 2020). The use of punctuation marks also reflects individual preferences (Sun & Wang, 2010). As shown in Table 12 below:

Table 12: Punctuation Statistics of In-coming
and Out-going Translator Group of *Tianwen*

Translator Group /Translation Info.	Translator	Question Mark	Full stop	Colon	Exclamation	Dash	Ellipsis
In-coming Translator Group	David Hawkes (1959)	158	43	10	1	0	3
	Stephen Field (1984)	169	94	0	0	0	0
	Gopal Sukhu (2017)	171	72	5	1	5	0
	Morrow Williams (2022)	172	13	15	0	0	0
Average		167.5	55.5	7.5	0.5	1.25	0.75
Out-going Translator Group	Xu Yuanchong (1994)	160	43	0	2	0	0
	Zhuo Zhenyin (2008)	158	37	12	5	0	0
	Yang Chenghu (2008)	173	29	1	1	0	0
	Zhao Yanchun (2023)	168	41	5	8	0	0
Average		164.75	37.5	4.5	4	0	0
Source Text		167	21	1	0	0	0

Table 11 shows that both translator groups used a higher average number of question marks, full stop, colons, dashes, and exclamation marks compared to the original text, indicating that they increased the use of various punctuation marks based on their understanding of the original, thus enriching the sentence structures. However, while the in-coming translator group utilized all five punctuation marks, the out-going translator group only used the first three. This suggests that the in-coming translator group demonstrated a richer and more varied emotional tone and mood.

3.1.4 A Tendency Toward Foreignization and Frequent Use of Annotations

The original text of *Tianwen* contains a large number of proper nouns with distinct Chinese cultural characteristics. The translation method used to convey information imbued with Chinese cultural nuances to the target audience reflects the translator's attitude toward translation. By employing regular expressions and using AntConc 3.5.9 to retrieve and code all the nouns in the source text, along with consulting the annotated terms in Ma's (1999) "*Annotations on the Songs of Chu"* we manually filtered and categorized the results. In the end, 94 culturally distinctive terms were identified. Table 13 is as follows:

Table 13: Cultural Specific Words in the Source Text of *Tianwen*

中医		阴阳、惠气、阳
天文		八柱、九天、十二（焉分）、角宿、曜灵
地名		汤谷、蒙汜、九州、昆仑、增城、黑水、玄趾、三危、蒙山、台桑、吴、南岳、有扈、有莘、南土、回水、荆、羽山、重泉、殷、岐
人名	神话传说	女岐、伯强、螽山女、鲧、康回、羲和、羿、河伯、雒嫔、浞、纯狐、浇、少康、妹嬉、女娲、简狄、喾、彭铿、禹
	历史人物	启、益、㻲号、少康、妹嬉、夏桀、恒、该、季、成汤、尧、叔旦、发、舜闵、昭后、穆王、周幽、褒姒、齐桓、纣、比干、雷开、梅伯、箕子、稷、伯昌、西伯、师望、伯林、阖、吴光、子文、堵敖
动物		顾菟、鸱龟、应龙、烛龙、虬龙、灵蛇、象、黄熊、鹿、鳖、雄虺、鲮鱼、乌、封豨、𧒂堆、玄鸟、苍鸟、白雉、蜂蛾
植物		靡蓱、枲、秬黍、莆藿

The corresponding translations of the two groups of translators were analyzed using CUC_ParaConc_0.3, and manual annotation was performed according to Xiong's (2014) classification of translation strategies. The statistical results of the translation strategies for the two groups are shown in the figure below.
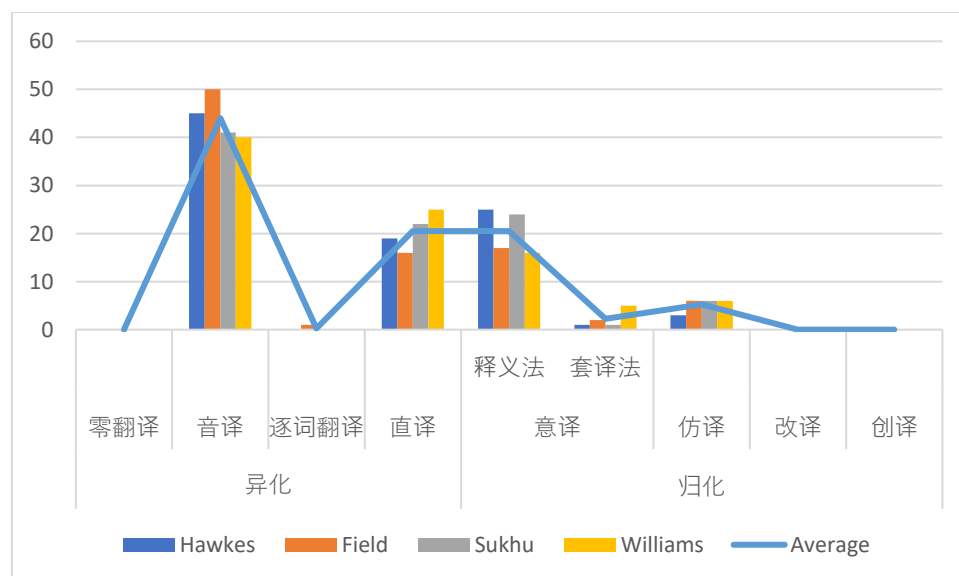
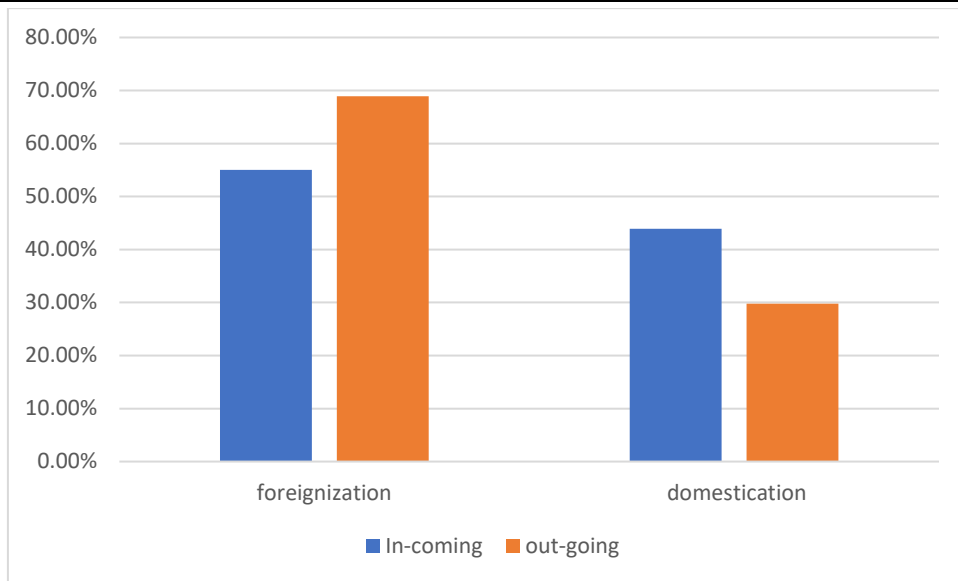**Figure 3:** Translation Strategy Statistics of the In-coming Translator Group of *Tianwen*
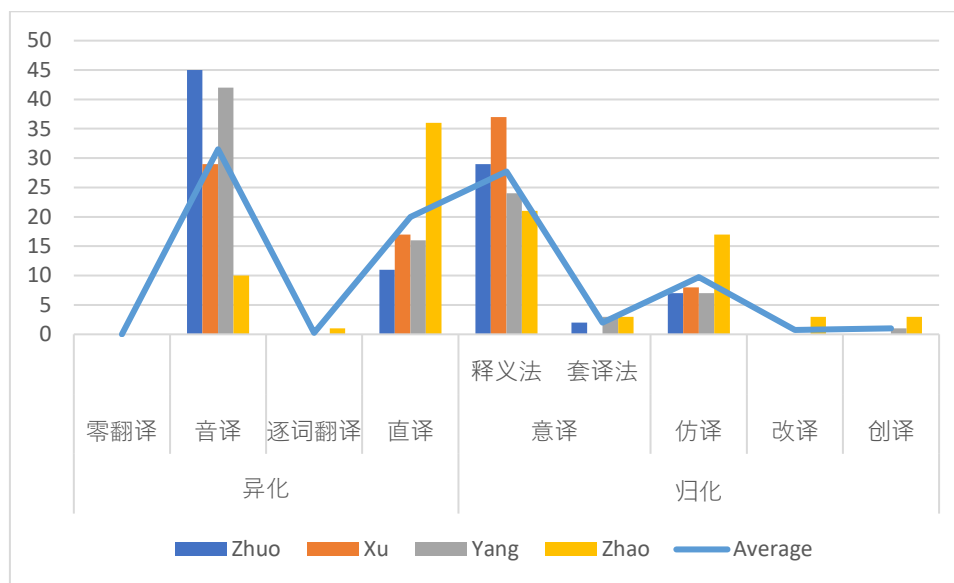
Figure 4: Translation Strategy Statistics of the Out-going Translator Group of *Tianwen*

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate that in the English translation of the cultural terms in *Tianwen*, both the in-coming translator and out-going translator groups employed strategies such as transliteration, word-for-word translation, direct translation, free translation, and imitation. The key difference lies in the fact that some translators in the out-going translator group made a small number of modified and creative translations. In terms of the frequency of strategies used, transliteration was the most frequently employed strategy by the in-coming translator group, while both transliteration and free translation (paraphrasing) had the highest average frequency in the out-going translator group. However, the in-coming translator group used transliteration more frequently than the out-going translator group. As for direct translation, word-for-word translation, free translation (paraphrasing), and imitation, the frequency of usage was quite similar between the two groups, suggesting that the in-coming translator group tended to use more foreignizing strategies.

By further analyzing the total frequency of domestication and foreignization strategies used by each translator, and comparing the overall average frequencies of foreignization and domestication strategies between the two translator groups, the results are shown in Figure 5.

Based on the summary statistics in Figure 5, it is evident that both translator groups predominantly employed foreignization strategies, further confirming that the in-coming translator group is more inclined to use foreignization strategies compared to the out-going translator group. The frequency of foreignization strategy usage by the out-going translator group is slightly higher than that of domestication strategies, but in terms of domestication strategy usage, it surpasses the in-coming translator group.

Figure 5: Comparison of Translation Strategies
between In-coming and Out-going Translator Group

Regarding the number of annotations, the author manually compiled the statistics by reviewing each translation, and the number and proportion of annotations for 94 cultural-specific terms are shown in Figure 6 and Table 14.
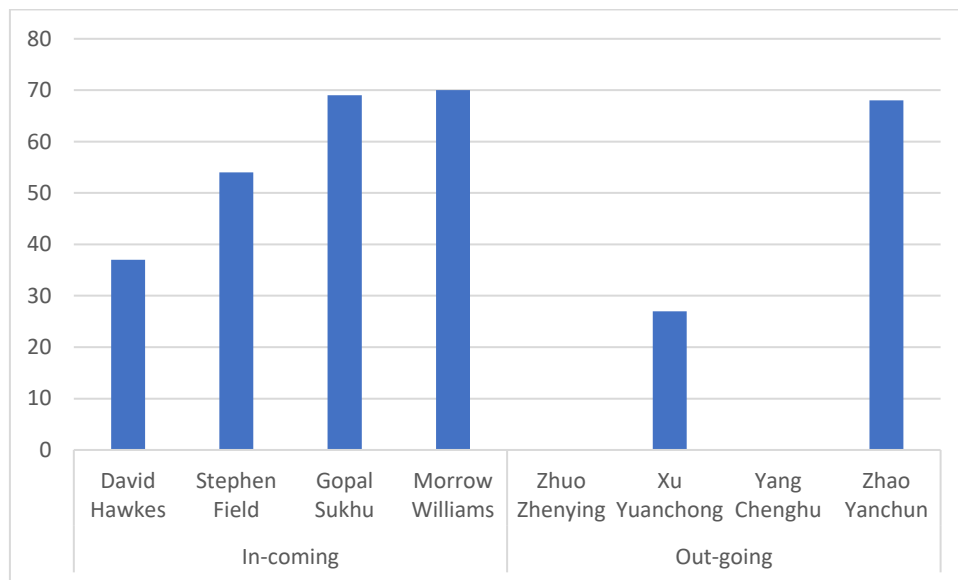
Figure 6: Comparison of Annotation Quantity
between In-coming and Out-going Translator Group

.

Table 14: Comparison of Annotation Proportions
between In-coming and Out-going Translator Group

	Average	%
In-coming	57.5	61.17%
Out-going	23.75	25.27%

The statistics on the number and proportion of annotations above clearly show that the average number and proportion of annotations in the in-coming translator group are significantly higher than those in the out-going translator group. Furthermore, within both groups, earlier translations tend to have fewer annotations, such as those by Hawks (1985) and Zhuo Zhenying (2006), while more recent translations feature a greater number of annotations, as seen in the works of Morrow Williams (2022) and Zhao Yanchun (2023), which have the highest annotation counts.

The in-coming translator group tends to adopt foreignization and annotation strategies, which undoubtedly align with the views of many Western translation theorists (Benjamin, [1923] 1963; Gentzler, 1993; Berman, 1984; Venuti, 1992, 1995a; May, 1994). For example, Benjamin (1921) argued that all translations conceal the light of the source language. He believed that true translation should be transparent, not obscuring the brilliance of the original text, but allowing the potential purity of the language's light to shine through. The translator's task, he suggested, is precisely to overcome the barriers of the target language, renewing it through contact with this "*language*." Ezra Pound (1993) also proposed that translators should uncover meanings that even the source text author may not have been aware of. Berman (1984), Venuti (1992, 1995a), and May (1994) all advocated a return to "foreignization" in translation practice, with Venuti (1992) emphasizing a foreignization strategy that involves using archaic language in the target language. He argued that poor translations neutralize the "otherness" of foreign cultures through familiar and comfortable ways, while good translations retain as much as possible the foreignness of the source text.

Similarly, Chinese scholars, when translating Chinese culture for foreign audiences, have also been considering how to guide readers to accept foreign cultures, attempting to bring their impressions and associations as close as possible to the source text. (Chen, 1999; Guo, 2005). In the study of translation strategies and methods for the English translation of *Tianwen*, Yang (2004) and Guo (2005) both emphasized the importance of annotations in the translation, suggesting methods such as phonetic transliteration with annotations and combining English poetic meter with phonetic notes to better convey the style of the source text. Therefore, although the out-going translator group does not exhibit foreignization as prominently as the in-coming group in terms of translation strategy, it still employs more phonetic transliteration compared to the domestication strategy. However, the proportion of annotated cultural terms remains relatively low.

3.2 Style of Out-going Translators in English Translations of *Tianwen*

Through statistical analysis, the main translation styles of the "*Tianwen*" English translation out-going translator group are as follows.

3.2.1 Richer Vocabulary

Table 15: Comparison of STTR between In-coming and Out-going Translator Group

Translator Group/ Translation Info.	Translator	STTR
In-coming Translator Group	David Hawkes (1959)	41.40
	Stephen Field (1984)	45.8
	Gopal Sukhu (2017)	44.65
	Morrow Williams (2022)	46.2
Average		**44.5**
Out-going Translator Group	Xu Yuanchong (1994)	43.9
	Zhuo Zhenying (2008)	44.9
	Yang Chenghu (2008)	44.55
	Zhao Yanchun (2023)	46.3
Average		**45.03**

Both the in-coming and out-going translator groups have lower STTR values than the original text (53.39), indicating that the lexical diversity of both translations is lower than that of the original text. This may be due to the high cultural load in the original text of *Tianwen*, which contains considerable cultural references. The translations incorporate many words that are either uncommon or absent in the original. For example, terms like "Yin-Yang" and "Nvwa" in the original text do not exist in the target language, so the translator often resorts to transliteration in these cases.

Nevertheless, the lexical diversity of the out-going translator group is still slightly higher than that of the in-coming group. As shown in Table 15, the average STTR value of the in-coming group is closer to that of the BROWN corpus, reflecting the influence of target language conventions on lexical richness.

3.2.2 Greater Information Density

Lexical density (Baker, 2000) reflects the information load of a text and serves as another important indicator of the text's complexity. In this study, eight English translations were tokenized using CorpusWordParser. Subsequently, part-of-speech tagging was performed using CLAWS7. Finally, the tokenized and tagged data of four English translations were analyzed for the frequency of nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs using AntConc 3.5.9. The number of lexical items in each of the four English translations was obtained, and lexical density was calculated using Excel functions. The results are shown in Table 16.

Table 16: Lexical Density of In-coming and Out-going Translator Group of *Tianwen*

Translator Group/ Translation Info.	Translator	Non.	Verb.	Adj.	Adv.	Total	Lexical Density
In-coming Translator Group	David Hawkes (1959)	634	337	108	171	1250	46.57%
	Stephen Field (1984)	601	337	103	150	1191	52.49%
	Gopal Sukhu (2017)	659	379	131	168	1337	49.08%
	Morrow Williams (2022)	641	379	144	203	1367	49.30%
Average						**1286.25**	**49.36%**
Out-going Translator Group	Xu Yuanchong (1994)	557	291	142	154	1144	54.68%
	Zhuo Zhenying (2008)	897	294	93	139	1423	52.94%
	Yang Chenghu (2008)	617	315	79	158	1169	55.12%
	Zhao Yanchun (2023)	547	316	118	185	1166	54.64%
Average						**1225.5**	**54.34%**

Table 17: Lexical Density of the BROWN Corpus

BROWN	Non.	Verb.	Adj.	Adv.	Total	Lexical Density
	269235	177334	80802	37265	37265	54.44%

As shown in Tables 16 and 17, the average lexical density of both translator groups is lower than that of the original text, which aligns with the lexical "simplification" characteristic found in translation universals (Baker, 1993).

The difference lies in the fact that the lexical density of the out-going translator group is higher than that of the in-coming translator group. This indicates that in-coming translators tend to use more content words. The more content words a text contains, the higher its information load. Therefore, the translations of the out-going group are generally simpler in language compared to those of the in-coming group. In-coming translators consciously reduce the information load in their translations to lower the reading difficulty, thus enhancing their acceptability (Wang, 2012). This finding is consistent with the research of other scholars (Zhao, 2015; Zhao, 2012; Jiang, 2017).

The translations of the out-going group predominantly use content words, whereas the in-coming group tends to add function words to make the implicit logical relationships in the original text explicit. This difference is influenced by the mother tongue of the two groups. English emphasizes form coherence, while Chinese emphasizes meaning coherence (Lian, 1993). The in-coming group consists of translators who were born and raised in English-speaking environments, and their translations align more with the language characteristics of the target language, which emphasizes form coherence. On the other hand, the out-going group of translators tends to focus on the characteristics of the Chinese language, which prioritizes meaning coherence and uses fewer function words, better aligning with the features of the source language.

3.2.3 Simpler Sentence Structures

Researchers can assess the difficulty level of a text by examining its average sentence length, and they can also infer the overall stylistic characteristics of the text by analyzing the distribution of sentences of varying lengths (Huang, 2021).

Table 18: Sentence Count and Average Sentence Length
Statistics of In-coming and Out-going Translator Group of *Tianwen*

Translator Group/ Translation Info.	Translator	Sentence Count	Average Sentence Length
In-coming Translator Group	David Hawkes (1959)	201	13.35
	Stephen Field (1984)	262	8.66
	Gopal Sukhu (2017)	243	11.21
	Morrow Williams (2022)	185	14.99
Average		**223**	**12.05**
Out-going Translator Group	Xu Yuanchong (1994)	190	11.01
	Zhuo Zhenying (2008)	197	13.64
	Yang Chenghu (2008)	202	10.5
	Zhao Yanchun (2023)	214	9.97
Average		**200.75**	**11.28**

According to the data in Table 18, it can be observed that, under the same conditions as the source text, the average number of sentences in the in-coming translator group is significantly higher than that of the out-going translator group. This result is consistent with the data on the average number of types, token, and the type-token ratio presented earlier in Table 2.

3.2.4 Higher Readability

The readability of English refers to the extent to which a reader can comprehend the meaning of a given text. It is inversely proportional to the difficulty of the English text, meaning that the higher the readability of a text, the lower its difficulty (Lin, 1995). This study employs the BFSU-HugeMind Readability Analyzer 2.0 to conduct a comprehensive assessment of various translations, yielding the following data:

Table 19: Readability Statistics of In-coming and Out-going Translator Group of *Tianwen*

Translator Group /Translation Info.	Translator	Flesch Reading Ease Score	Automated Readability Index	Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	Coleman-Liau Index	Gunning Fog Index	SMOG Index
In-coming Translator Group	David Hawkes (1959)	84.02	3.99	4.35	6.26	12.53	11.24
	Stephen Field (1984)	86.13	2.6	3.1	5.57	12.47	10.28
	Gopal Sukhu (2017)	84.78	3.12	3.64	5.97	12.63	10.78
	Morrow Williams (2022)	73.15	6.28	6.16	8.65	19.94	14.83
Average		**82.02**	**4.00**	**4.31**	**6.61**	**14.39**	**11.78**
Out-going Translator Group	Xu Yuanchong (1994)	94.65	1.31	1.56	3.9	7.98	8.02
	Zhuo Zhenying (2008)	94.14	2.68	2.15	5.58	9.7	9.27
	Yang Chenghu (2008)	92.88	2.54	2.13	5.5	9.58	9.05
	Zhao Yanchun (2023)	93.38	2.56	2.16	5.49	7.95	8.31
Average		**93.76**	**2.27**	**2.00**	**5.12**	**8.80**	**8.66**

Table 20: Readability Indices of the BROWN Corpus

	Flesch Reading Ease Score	Automated Readability Index	Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level	Coleman-Liau Index	Gunning Fog Index	SMOG Index
BROWN	56.65	10.67	10.50	9.89	27.38	20.16

From Tables 19 and 20, it can be observed that the average readability scores of both translator groups are lower than that of the original text, but the readability of the out-going translator group is generally higher than that of the in-coming translator group. This contradicts the findings of Huang (2015) in his analysis of the readability of in-coming and out-going translations in Jia Pingwa's novels, where he found that the readability of in-coming translations was higher than that of out-going texts. In both the in-coming and out-going translations of Jia Pingwa's novels, out-going translators tend to faithfully convey the content and form of the source text (Huang, 2015). The same holds true for the in-coming and out-going translations of *Tianwen*. However, due to the difference in genre between novels and poetry, out-going translators in novels typically use vocabulary and sentence structures that align with the conventions of longer sentences, whereas *Tianwen* is mostly written in short, concise four-character lines. As a result, out-going translators, in their pursuit of formal

consistency with the source text, employ simpler vocabulary and sentence structures, which leads to higher readability in terms of syllable count and sentence length.

In conjunction with previous analysis, the in-coming translator group exhibits a greater number of form symbols and class symbols, uses a more formal register, and has a more varied sentence structure, with greater variation in sentence length and a preference for foreignization strategies and annotations. In contrast, while the out-going translator group uses more complex and varied vocabulary, their use of form and class symbols is more limited, with less variation in sentence structure and sentence length, which aligns with the higher overall readability index of this group.

4. Findings and Implications

In the exploration of the translations of *Tianwen* by two translator groups, we identified both commonalities and distinctive differences. For both groups, the Token and Type counts in their translations significantly exceed those in the source text, reflecting a clear tendency toward explicitation. Moreover, their Lexical Density closely aligns with that of the original text, and both groups flexibly employ foreignization and domestication strategies, with foreignization being used more frequently.

However, deeper comparisons reveal notable differences. The translations by the in-coming translator group exhibit a higher degree of explicitation, more complex linguistic structures, greater formality in register, and diverse sentence patterns. They also show a stronger preference for foreignization strategies, often supplemented by annotations. In contrast, the out-going translator group demonstrates richer vocabulary and higher information density while maintaining simpler sentence structures. They balance the use of foreignization and domestication strategies but fall slightly short in providing annotations. Despite this, their translations achieve higher readability. These differences are closely tied to the cultural backgrounds of the two groups and their varied perceptions of the source text.

Currently, English translation of Chinese texts has become a mainstream practice in the field of translation. Ideally, the task should be undertaken either by the in-coming translator group or jointly by both groups. However, due to the unique characteristics of the Chinese language, the responsibility will likely remain with the out-going translator group in the short term.

This study provides profound insights: both translator groups possess unique stylistic characteristics that have garnered wide academic discussion and recognition. According to corpus-based statistical data, the translations by the out-going translator group are more concise and strive for formal fidelity to the source text. When translating texts like *Tianwen*, with their profound and intricate language, their translations achieve higher readability. Therefore, in the translation of Chinese classics, the out-going translator group has clear advantages in conveying the concise and succinct stylistic features of the source text. However, their shortcomings in annotations are also evident, which hinders a deeper understanding of the cultural connotations of the Chinese text. Future practices in translating

Chinese classics should seek to combine the strengths of both groups. Efforts should focus on leveraging familiarity with the unique features of the Chinese language while paying closer attention to annotation strategies, thereby better conveying the distinctive characteristics of Chinese culture and sharing the captivating stories of Chinese classics.

5. Conclusion

This study, integrating *Translation Stylistics Theory* with corpus-based methods, constructs a one-to-many parallel Chinese-English corpus and uses corpus retrieval tools to conduct an in-depth comparative study of the stylistic features of the in-coming and out-going translator groups in translating *Chu Ci: Tianwen*. Through this research, we aim to identify similarities and differences in the styles of the two translator groups and explore their underlying causes. The application of corpus-based research methods offers a novel perspective on the English translation of *Tianwen*, uncovering the distinctive stylistic features of the in-coming and out-going translator groups. In translating Chinese classics, the in-coming translator group aligns more closely with the linguistic habits of the target language and demonstrates meticulous attention to annotations for cultural words, effectively conveying the essence of Chinese culture. Conversely, the out-going translator group exhibits unique advantages, as their textual forms closely match the concise and succinct vocabulary and sentence structures characteristic of the *Tianwen* source text, highlighting the aesthetic form of the original poetry. These findings provide valuable insights for the English translation of Chinese classics, offering opportunities for mutual learning and collective improvement in future translation practices, ultimately enhancing the overall quality of translations.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The author declares no conflicts of interest.

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