Essay

The Tcheonzamun (the thousand character essay)

Hyeonhi, R. Park¹, Jieun, A. Kim², Kunjoo, D.A. Kim³, Jiah A. Kim⁴, Sohwa, T. Kim⁵, Alain Hamon⁶, Rosa Kim⁷ and Sangdeog A. Kim⁸

¹Department of Elderly Care and Welfare, Joongbu University, Kumsan, Republic of Korea, South Korea.
²Department of Economics, Seoul National University, Seoul, South Korea.
³FarmHannong, LG Chemicals, Seoul, South Korea.
⁴Département d’Expertise economique, Université de Paris-Est Creteil, Paris, France.
⁵Department of French language and Literature, Seoul Women's University, Seoul, South Korea.
⁶L’Ecole Internationale Jean-Mermoz, Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire.
⁷L’Ambassade de la République de Corée en Côte d’Ivoire, Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire.
⁸Department of Companion Animal and Animal Resources Science, Joongbu University, Kumsan, South Korea.

Received 25 October, 2016; Accepted 14 December, 2016

‘To our enemy Yeon’ with an apparent title of ‘If you want to solve this bad relation between somebody and you’ is the theme of this study. The present research is carried out during the translation of a poem (721st to 736th) in Tcheonzamun (The Thousand Character Essay). In this article, the researchers showed two sides of Tcheonzamun (the thousand character essay) interpretation: one is through Chinese character; the other is through Korean pronunciation. The researchers wanted to know if the meaning of the two interpretations was similar. And the researchers observed which translations of the two is the better one for knowing the real intention of the author. When the author of Tcheonzamun wrote the poem, did he think Korean pronunciation (the words of Maeg country) at first or the meaning of Chinese characters is more important? The researchers think that ‘The Tcheonzamun’s author wanted to write the general meaning and the title in Chinese characters, while he wanted to express his real intention in Korean pronunciation. The meaning of Korean pronunciation is written for his colleagues and for his descendents to express his real mind. Even though the author expressed in Chinese characters politely to solve the bad relation with somebody, the author showed in the poem his deep hatred for Yeon country’s people through Korean pronunciations.

Key words: Chinese character, translation, essay, poem, interpretation.

INTRODUCTION

Reischauer and Fairbank (1972) wrote that:

“For the humanist interested in art, literature, philosophy and religion, the ancient societies of China, Japan and Korea hold the mirror up to our own Western culture”, that “We know very little about the social and political organization of the early Korean tribes”, and that “The Koreans had proved brilliantly creative in adapting Chinese civilization in earlier centuries, but in the late Yi dynasty (It was to remain in existence for 518 years from 1392 to 1910, almost twice as long as any of the dynasties of imperial China), the dead weight of the

*Corresponding author. E-mail: kimsd@joongbu.ac.kr.

Authors agree that this article remain permanently open access under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License 4.0 International License.
Chinese language and the heavy hand of China's classical tradition seem to have inhibited all creative endeavor in Korea."

Dallet (1874) wrote that "In China there were several books for a child who started to study the characters. The most common book for the children in China to study Chinese character is the Tcheonzamun (The Thousand Character Essay; Tchouen-ly in Cantonese pronunciation in the 19th century and Qian Zi Wen in Mandarin), and this dated from Chin and Han (Tsin and Ha"n in Cantonese pronunciation in the 19th century)."

In Republic of Korea, Tcheonzamun (book of ‘The Thousand Character Essay’) is sold in each book store and in street store (Kim, 2002); therefore nearly everyone has a Tcheonzamun book at home. But the Tcheonzamun book does not give the Korean people special interest, because the meaning is difficult. And this is filled with unknown Chinese names of man and those of places. The researchers saw that it is similar in English translation (Sturman, source: www. oocities. org/npsturman/tce.html). The researchers suggested through internet that Tcheonzamun has been written by ancient Korean, Maeg country's author (Park and Kim, 2015; Park and Kim, 2016 a, b; Kim and Park, 2016 a, b).

In this study, the researchers showed two sides of Tcheonzamun interpretation; one is through Chinese character; the other is through Korean pronunciation. The researchers wanted to know if the meaning of the two interpretations was similar. And the researchers observed which translations of the two is the better one for knowing the real intention of the author.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The researchers used the common Tcheonzamun (The Thousand Character Essay) book (Kim, 2002) which can be bought in Korean street as a Korean version of Tcheonzamun. And the present researchers utilized Sturman’s Theonzamun (Source: www. oocities. org/npsturman/tce.html,) as an English version. The present researchers investigated and tried to find out the appropriate method for translating Tcheonzamun poem (Kim and Park, 27 February 2013).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There is no research until now about this subject, because all Koreans believe that Tcheonzamun is written by Chinese (Park and Kim, 2016 a). And no one thought that the Tcheonzamun has 63 poems in 1,000 characters.

Furthermore, no one wrote about the Korean languages in Tcheonzamun. It is the present researchers at first time that have found the poems in Tcheonzamun. And the present researchers have found that the whole Tcheonzamun is written in Korean language (We found that these 5 continuous poems are written in Korean language until now).

At first, the present researchers translated into English the common meaning on Korean version of our present poem (721st to 736th) in Tcheonzamun (The Thousand Character Essay) (Kim, 2002).

兩疏見機: After the two men, SoKwang and SoSu, have reported the machine to the King, they returned to a local, a country side.

解組誰逼: Who can scold them because of their resignation?

索居閑處: After their resign they spent their lives freely in a peaceful place.

沈默寂寥: We must in public do carefully our behavior and saying.

This same part of the Tcheonzamun in English version (Sturman 2009, Source: www. oocities. org/npsturman/tce.html.) is not exactly the same with that of Korean version earlier mentioned, but the whole meaning of the two versions is similar.

Park and Kim (2012) found that Tcheonzamun poem is composed of 16 characters. After that, the present researchers found that there are two systems of poem composition in Tcheonzamun (Park and Kim, 2012; Kim and Park, 2016 b). Each line of 4 Chinese characters is composed of two sentences; (verb A + noun B, verb C + noun D), or (noun E + verb F, noun G + verb H).

Most of the poems in Tcheonzamun are constructed on the first type; (verb A + noun B, verb C + noun D). The present researchers have translated them as follows; If we want to do (B) a thing (A), we must do (C) the other thing (D). And the translating method for the second type (noun E + verb F, noun G + verb H) was contrary to the first type.

The present researchers have translated them as follows; If we want a thing (G) to be done (H), we do (F) another thing (E). And there is a difference between Chinese language and Korean language. Each Chinese character shows its own independent meaning(s), Korean word on the contrary starts to express its own meaning as a group or a block of several Korean characters. The present researchers have also found that there are bilingual efforts by the Tcheonzamun author to hide their real emotion (Park and Kim, 2016 a; Kim and Park, 2016 a).

Reischauer and Fairbank (1972) wrote that in the far north around modern Peking (Beijing) and in southern Manchuria appeared the state of Yen (It is called Yeon in Korea), which probably was of “barbarian” origin though it claimed descent from the Chou line (of old China). This poem composed of 16 Chinese characters from 721st to 736th. (- / V /) shows the Chinese characters tone. The present researchers begin from now on with the translation through Chinese character (No. of character; Korean alphabet; Korean pronunciation; Chinese
character; translation).

721-724 양소견기(YangSoGyeonKi) 兩(V)疏(-)見(가)機(-)
If you have a bad relation(疏) with somebody(兩), there
must have been(見) a reason(機).

725-728 해조수벽(HaeZoSuByeog) 解(V)組(V)誰()/逼(-)
If you want to solve(解) this bad relation between
somebody and you(組), some one(誰) must come to you,
but who wants to come to you(逼)?

729-732 색거한처(SaegKeoHanTcheo) 索(V)居(가)處(V) If you search(索) for some place to stay(居),
you hope there(處) must be calm without battle(闘).

733-736 침묵적요(TchimMugZeogYo) 沈(/)默(가)寂(/)寥(/)
If you want to be easy in your mind(寥) without loud and
unhappy voices(寂), the angry expression(沈) must
disappear(默).

The next is the interpretation through Korean
pronunciation (No. of character; Korean alphabet; Korean
pronunciation; Chinese character; translation)

721-724 양소견기(YangSoGyeonKi) 兩疏見機 In
modern Korean, it is ‘AngSugYeonEge (양속 연에게)’
with the meaning of ‘To our enemy Yeon.’

725-728 해조수벽(HaeZoSuByeog) 解組誰逼 In modern
Korean, it is ‘HaeZyeosEuMyeon (해 집으면)’ with the
meaning of ‘I hope that you will do that to them!’

729-732 색거한처(SaegKeoHanTcheo) 索居闘處 In
modern Korean, it is ‘SaeGgiHanTae (색거한테)’ with the
meaning of ‘To bastard!’

733-736 침묵적요(TchimMugZeogYo) 沈黙寂寥 In
modern Korean, it is ‘TchimEulZwoYo (침을 잡요)’ with the
meaning of ‘Give them saliva!’

This is full of truly rough languages! Now it is difficult to
understand this poem’s meaning. We can not certify that
this interpret is wrong or right. Therefore, it is necessary
for the present researchers to explain the theme of the
other poems. Here, the theme of those poems is the
meaning through which Korean pronunciation interpret.
The theme of another poem (673rd to 688th) is ‘we
seriously defeated!’ (Kim and Park, 2016 a), and the

theme of the following poem (689th to 704th) is ‘Fight
again!’(Park and Kim, 2016 b).

In another poem (705th to 720th) just before this poem,
the Tcheonzamun author tried and tried again in order to
give full bless to their descendents (Kim and Park, 2016
a), as shown on ‘Edel Weiss’ song in the film of ‘Sound
of Music’. But now in the present poem (721st to 736th) the
author gave malediction, full of curse, to his enemy, Yeon
country’s people.

When the author of Tcheonzamun wrote the poem, did
he think Korean pronunciation (the words of Maeg
country) at first or the meaning of Chinese characters is
more important? The researchers think that ‘The
Tcheonzamun (The Thousand Character Essay) author
wanted to write the general meaning and the title in
Chinese characters, while he wanted to express his real
intention in Korean pronunciation. The meaning of
Korean pronunciation is written for his colleagues and for
his descendents to express his real mind.

Conclusion

When the author of Tcheonzamun wrote the poem, did he
think Korean pronunciation (the words of Maeg
country) at first or the meaning of Chinese characters is
more important? The present researchers think that ‘The
Tcheonzamun (The Thousand Character Essay) author
wanted to write the general meaning and the title in
Chinese characters, while he wanted to express his real
intention in Korean-phonology. The meaning of
Korean pronunciation is written for his colleagues and for
his descendents to express his real mind. Even though
the author expressed in Chinese characters politely to
solve the bad relation with somebody, the author showed
in the poem his deep hatred towards Yeon country’s
people through Korean pronunciations.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author’s sincere appreciation goes to Professor
YeongHo Jeong, Professor InHag Choi and Professor
TaeHo Chung. And they also appreciate the students of
Department of Companion Animal and Animal Resources
Science in Joongbu University.

Conflicts of interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

REFERENCES

Kim SA, Park HR (2013). If you want to make your mind happy, you must make the Lord’s mind pleasant – It is the grace of our father YeongHag Park (Nae Maeumeul Kibbeuge Mandeullyeogeodeun Haneunim Maeumeul Kibbeusige Haedeuryeora – Uri YeongHag Abuzi Deogbunanegaerau l). http://cafe.naver.com/angolstar/1518


Park HR, Kim SA (2015). Zarangseureon Hankugeui Ddal Annaya! (Namdeulege Yogeul Bagaziro Eoteomeogeul Zeongdoro Motdoin Sarami Itgeona Ddoneun Azu Himdeun Zottchi Aneun Illeonal Ddaee) [Our daughter Anna, our pride! (When there is near to you a very bad man who used to get lots of critics from other persons, or when there occurs a very bad thing to you.)]. http://www.ofskorea.org/xe/163418.

Park HR, Kim SA (2016a). Uriga Ilbon Yeohaengeul Danyeoon Nal Zeonyeog Rosaga Bonaezun Keul (“Zunim Tcheonzamune Urinara Iyagiga Nawayo! - Tcheonzamun Zeozaeui Aezeolhan Zeolgyuyo!”) [An E-mail letter from Rosa on the night when we returned from Japan journey (The sorrowful voices of Tcheonzamun’s author in a Tcheonzamun poem and the petition of ancient Koreans to God)]. http://cafe.naver.com/angolstar/2763.

