

Essay

## The Tcheonzamun (the thousand character essay)

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**'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

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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](http://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](http://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](http://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(〃)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(-)  
)閑(/)處(V) If you search(索) for some place to stay(居), you hope there(處) must be calm without battle(閑).

733-736 침묵적요(TchimMugZeogYo) 沈(/)默(〃)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 (양숙 연에게)' with the meaning of 'To our enemy Yeon.'

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

729-732 색거한처(SaegKeoHanTcheo) 索居閑處 In modern Korean, it is 'SaeGgiHanTae (새끼한테)' with the meaning of 'To bastard!'

733-736 침묵적요 (TchimMugZeogYo) 沈默寂寥 In modern Korean, it is 'TchimEulZwoYo (침을 줘요)' 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 descendants (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-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 towards Yeon country's people through Korean pronunciations.

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## Conflicts of interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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