

Firmness in Adversity and Divine Beauty:

The image of the Chrysanthemum in Kim Si-s?p' s poems

The Chrysanthemum is one of the most popular topics in East Asian poetry. Among the great admirers of the chrysanthemum was Kim Si-s?p 金時習 (1435–1493) who has left us eight poems dealing specifically with this flower. Seven of Kim' s poems have the name of the flower in their titles. One poem is dedicated to the Ninth Day of the Ninth Month, a festival closely connected through various rituals with the chrysanthemum. In terms of the numerical dimension of its presence in Kim' s poems, the place of the chrysanthemum is only challenged by the plum (*mae* 梅) and bamboo whose occurrence roughly equates to that of the chrysanthemum in his extant poems.

This paper intends to examine what associations Kim Si-s?p made with the chrysanthemum and what the main characteristics of this flower in his poems are. The analysis will concentrate on four poems where the colour of the flower is indicated. They are included in the chapter “Flowers and Grass” (*Hwach' o* 花草) of Kim Si-s?p' s *Collected Works*. All of these are in the seven-character form and consist either of two verses with four lines or a single verse with eight lines.

Symbolically called one of the “Four Nobles” *sa kunjja* 四君子 and “the flower of hermits” *?nilhwa* 隱逸花, the chrysanthemum was well suited to Kim' s way of life. Kim had refused to serve under King Sejo 世祖 (1455–1468), who had usurped the throne of his fifteen-year-old nephew, King Tanjong 端宗 (1453–1455), and chose a life of reclusion instead. In monk' s habit Kim Si-s?p had roamed around the country for almost ten years before he took a rest from his wanderings and settled down on Mount K?mo 金鰲山 near the old capital of Shilla. During this, his first long-term sojourn (1465–1471), his favourite plants were the plum and bamboo symbolizing the steadfastness of a Confucian scholar. He cultivated these in the neighbourhood of his study and sang their praises. Moreover, the plum also served Kim as a component in his most widely-known pseudonym, Maew?ltang 梅月堂, meaning “Cabinet of the plum in moonlight”. In 1471, after the new King S?ngjong 成宗 (1470–1494) had ascended the throne, Kim Si-s?p left Mount K?mo to determine whether the political situation in the capital had changed so that he could enter office without giving up his high moral standards. The reality, however, appeared to be contrary to his expectations: Many officials who had supported King Sejo remained in office. Disappointed by this state of affairs, Kim Si-s?p gave up his ideas of civil service and returned to nature, this time forever. In the autumn of 1472, or slightly thereafter, he built a hut on Mount Surak 水落山 in Yangju county which was in the east of the capital. During this second long-term sojourn, Kim Si-s?p paid special attention to the life and literature of the great Chinese poet Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (365–427). Modelling his life-style on this famous predecessor of the Eastern Jin dynasty, Kim began to farm the land. In numerous poems he displayed his admiration for Tao' s philosophy of a simple, modest life in the countryside. He wrote some sixty six poems specifically in reply to Tao' s poems, among them “Answering Tao' s recommendation of farming” *Hwa*

ch?ngj?l kw?n nong 和靖節權農 and “Twenty poems on Tao’ s ‘Drinking Wine’ Poems” *Hwa y?nmy?ng ?mju si isip su* 和淵明飲酒詩二十首.

Naturally, Kim Si-s?p turned his interest to the Chrysanthemum as well, for this was Tao Yuanming’ s preferred flower. Chinese and Korean poets previous to Kim had always associated this flower with the great poet of the Eastern Jin. Kim followed this tradition imitating Tao Yuanming in everyday life and responding to his poetry. In the following poem he informs us of the fact that he is cultivating the chrysanthemum like Tao ? the only difference being that he is planting the flower not in his garden “by the Eastern hedge” , but in a flowerpot in his house.

(I) White Chrysanthemum *Paekukuk* 白菊

Being pure white, it itself keeps

the fragrance even in the cold season.

I plant it in a flowerpot

and put it on a little bench.

The vermilion kassia flower and the white flower of the winter plum

are its brothers.

It has nothing in common with the lush Japanese plum,

yet it envies its brightness.

The cold petals are stuck to

the sparse wilting leaves.

Lightly girded with cold frost

are the four or five stalks.

Even facing you all day long,

you do not display any vulgar attitude.

Your fragrant soul will never

give Qiongqiong pre-eminence.

In the first verse of this poem Kim Si-s?p records the chrysanthemum’ s beauty and fragrance stressing that it reveals its qualities despite the cold season which is so unfriendly to flowers. He compares it – the flower of late autumn – with other famous flowers facing similar conditions, as brothers in one family: the white winter plum (Kor.

mae, Chin. *mei*) which blossoms in winter and early spring when the snows have not yet melted away and the red kassia 丹桂 (Kor. *tan' gye*, Chin. *danguì*) which blossoms in the throes of autumn when the sun light is fading. On the other side, he contrasts the Chrysanthemum with the Japanese plum ? (Kor. *ch' e*, Chin. *dì*) which blossoms in the optimum season for flowers, the summer. The image of the Japanese plum is taken from the *Shijing* 詩經, the famous *Book of Songs*, where the brightness of its flowers is particularly noted, as in Kim' s poem:

“The flowers of the Japanese plum

do they not shine more than all the others?”

While the Japanese plum in the *Shijing* serves as a metaphor for brotherliness and brotherly love, Kim uses this connotation in the negative sense: as the chrysanthemum, the Japanese plum is not its brother, contrary to the flowers mentioned earlier.

In the second verse Kim Si-s?p depicts the chrysanthemum in more detail returning to the main idea in the beginning of the first verse. The expression “sparse wilting leaves” and various subjects bearing the attribute of “coldness” (cold petals, cold frost) show the chrysanthemum' s bitter struggle against the hostile conditions with which it is confronted – unlike the Japanese plum. However, the Chrysanthemum does not serve Kim just as an object of aesthetic contemplation, but also for reflection on moral standards. As he convinced himself through long-term observation, the chrysanthemum (= the Noble Man *junzi* 君子) does not lapse in integrity. The fragrant soul of the chrysanthemum, i.e. the beauty of a Noble Man' s high moral standing, exceeds that of Qionqiong 瓊瓊, a famous beauty in antiquity, and is comparable only to those two representing erudition and steadfastness (indicated by the kassia and the plum).

Outlining these particularities of the chrysanthemum, Kim Si-s?p clearly stands in the tradition of Kory? poets who, following the image widely praised in Chinese poetry, had emphasized the chrysanthemum' s beauty, fragrance and hardiness in the cold season (= the high virtues of the Noble Man). At the beginning of this tradition in Korea perhaps stands the great Shilla poet Ch' oe Ch' i-w?n 崔致遠 (857-?). In his poem “Azalea” *Tugy?n* 杜鵑 he compares the steadfastness of the chrysanthemum to that of the pine tree contrasting both with the fragility of the azalea. The similarity of Ch' oe' s and Kim' s approach to the chrysanthemum, perhaps, may not only be explained by the fact that both poets relied heavily on the Chinese literary tradition. Kim Si-s?p felt a great affinity for Ch' oe' s later life of reclusion and may have responded to his poetry.

It can be assumed that Kim did not speak about the chrysanthemum as the symbol of a Noble Man in abstract, but was referring to himself and his own commitment to Confucian virtues. Yet, there is an interesting additional note in the last line of the first verse which we should take seriously: Kim says, that the Chrysanthemum, struggling valiantly against the hostile conditions, envies the lush Japanese plum, for it requires no great effort to reveal its brightness. If we read this line as conveying Kim' s own experience, we cannot but interpret it as revealing some regret for his fate. Though he intentionally had chosen his path of reclusion, from time to time he felt somewhat envious of those who gained respect as outstanding Men without suffering hardships such as his. In the last line of the second verse, however, he again confirms his way of life. In terms of colour this idea is expressed in the contrast between the pure white (the chrysanthemum) and the red

(Qionggiong, literally the “Red Jade”). As equals of the pure white 眞白 (Kor. *ch?ngbaek*, chin. *zhenbai*) of the chrysanthemum appear the white 素 (Kor. *so*, Chin. *su*) of the winter plum and the vermilion 丹 (Kor. *tan*, Chin. *dan*) of the kassia which are associated with fairies and the Taoist idea of immortality.

The next poem we will examine also concerns the white chrysanthemum but its message differs quite starkly from the above poem of the same title.

(II) White Chrysanthemum *Paekkuk* 白菊

Having no goose-pimples on its jade skin,

it is leaning on the Eastern fence.

In the depths of autumn,

deep in the night it braves the frost.

It has already wanted nothing to do

with the cold winter plum.

All the more, how would it like

to adorn itself together with the lush plum //?

The icy figure

can be judged by its attitude towards the wind.

The pure elegance suits

the fragrance which can be detected beneath the moon.

On the other hand, it is like

the fairies in the Palace of the Wide Cold,

Flying on the back of the blue *luan*,

near the Qin tower dancing to the tune of the nichang melody.

In the beginning of this poem Kim again offers the image of the chrysanthemum as the flower which endures the cold. Adding some temporal attributes (deep in the night, in the depth of autumn), he depicts it at the coldest moment. The chrysanthemum's appearance is also described differently to that in the earlier poem. Kim turns his attention to its surface using an expression not usually applied to plants? “goose-pimples on the skin”. The expression “goose-pimples” 粟 (Kor. *sok*, Chin. *su*) relating to human beings can be found in a poem by the Song poet Su Shi 蘇軾 (1037–1101): “On the

freezen Jaden Terrace I get goose-pimples because of the cold.” The idea that severe natural phenomena could damage the “jade skin (flesh)” 玉肌 (Kor. *okki*, Chin. *yueji*) of the chrysanthemum, for instance, appears in a poem of the Song poetess Li Qingzhao 李清照 (1084–1155?). Instead of the character *yue* 玉 (Kor. *ok*) Li, however, uses the character *qiong* 瓊 (Kor. *ky?ng*) for “jade”, as Kim does in his other poems. Interestingly enough, Li’s verse is devoted to the same kind of chrysanthemum as Kim’s – the white chrysanthemum. And the natural phenomena mentioned in Li’s poem (wind and rain) are at work at the same time as the frost in Kim’s poem – in the night. This, then, like Kim’s is an autobiographical poem.

Tune: “A Galaxy of Beauties” *duoli* 多麗

White Chrysanthemums *Baiju*

The autumn chill steals into my small chamber

Curtains hang low as the long night drags on.

It grieves me to see your creamy flesh

Damaged overnight by the relentless wind and rain...

Whereas Li describes the harmful influences on the chrysanthemums’ exterior, Kim emphasizes that the harsh natural phenomena do not bother the flower. Without any sign of change in its exterior it is leaning on the Eastern fence. The “Eastern fence” 東墻 (Kor. *tongjang*, Chin. *dongqiang*) is an allusion to the famous fifth verse of Tao Yuanming’s “Drinking Wine” poems (*Yinjiushi* 飲酒詩).

I built my hut in an inhabited area

Yet hear no noise of passing carts and horses.

You would like to know how this is done?

With the mind detached, one’s place becomes remote.

Picking chrysanthemums by the eastern hedge (*dongli* 東籬)

I catch sight of the distant southern hills...

In this poem Tao Yuanming conveyed “the detachment and repose of the Great Recluse who makes his home among men yet remains uncontaminated by the world, whose communion with nature occurs as readily through the chrysanthemums by the eastern hedge as through the distant mountain scenery.” Such a hermit does not mingle with the crowd pursuing his high ideals and keeping his mind pure.

In comparison with the first poem on the white chrysanthemum, Kim endeavours more to stress the exclusiveness of the chrysanthemum. While he depicted the winter plum *mae* as the chrysanthemum’s brother in the first poem (based on the two flowers’ ability to

endure the cold), here he emphasizes their difference ? their affiliation with different seasons. The popular Chinese and Korean image of the chrysanthemum not mingling with other flowers is further represented in relation to a second flower, the plum // 李 which blooms in spring. Like the Japanese plum in the first poem, this is a flower which is able to bloom to its full magnificence thanks to favourable seasonal conditions. It is no accident that Kim applied the same attribute *nong*? (“lush”) to both flowers.

Thus, in the first four lines we have an extension of the main idea and artistic form of expression of the first poem “White Chrysanthemum” . Here, the chrysanthemum spurns the idea of sharing its life with all other flowers, instead deliberately waiting until autumn to exhibit its beauty. Taking into account the significant allusion to Tao Yuanming, we can say that Kim speaks of the hermit, and by extension, about himself, who has given up his ambitions of a worldly career and avoids submitting to the contamination of society, waiting aloof and alone, rather, for his time to display his qualities. As the *Shiji* 史記 instructs us: “When all the world is befuddled, then the gentleman of pure morals stands out.” Just the same Kim claims in the fifth line: The true nature of the hermit (“chrysanthemum”) becomes apparent when he withstands “the wind” (disorder in society/ cosmos). Under these conditions we can see his steadfastness, become aware of his pure mind and beautiful manners.

Until this place, Kim presents the chrysanthemum as the symbol of a Confucian hermit in the classical tradition. In the last two lines of the poem, however, he puts it in a Taoist context comparing it with heavenly beings, the fairies on the Moon. He refers to the fantastic journey of the Tang emperor Xuanzong 玄宗 (r. 712–56) to the Moon where he witnessed a magnificent spectacle of ferries flying on white phoenixes *luan* 鸞 and dancing to divine melodies. After returning to earth, he could not forget how the ferries, flying in the wind, danced with fluttering sleeves and capes. Inspired by this fantastic experience he composed the melody to the dance *nichang yuyi qu* 霓裳羽衣曲 literally meaning “Melody of the rainbow-coloured garments and plumage” .

At the end of his poem, it appears, Kim Si-s?p tried to escape to the supernatural world, to the pure world of Taoist immortals and heavenly beings. Disappointed by the “dirty real world” (as he qualified the actual state of society), the paradise of the moon ferries seemed to be the only place for him where he could find consolation. Turning back to the title, one can say that he chose the white colour for the chrysanthemum not without reason. As we have already pointed out, this colour has the connotation of purity. In various word combinations it is connected with the idea of a better, purer world. White is also the colour of autumn and age, approaching death – which the immortals have transcended.

For the next poem Kim Si-s?p chose another colour of the chrysanthemum, the yellow one.

The Deep Yellow Chrysanthemum *Simhwangguk* 深黃菊

The jade dew glitters plumply,

the autumn light shines wanly.

The golden wind strips off

all the yellow on several twigs.

Once the fallen petals

served Lingjun as food.

A handful of them floated

in the wine cup of the magistrate of Pengze.

The palace ladies tried to cultivate the flower

as golden ornaments for their hair.

The goddess Henge newly dyed

garments with its lustre.

Do not try to make its elegant appearance

into a spring flower!

Even when it comes to an end I will take a twig

and adore its old fragrance.

Kim Si-s?p begins with an aesthetic appreciation of the autumn scenery, and the chrysanthemum respectively. The accent here does not lie in the chrysanthemum' s ability to resist harsh natural phenomena. In this poem, there is no frost, but dew ? of a jade (= white) colour – glittering plumply on the chrysanthemum' s leaves and petals and as such conveying a positive image. It is late autumn, the sun has lost its power and some petals of the chrysanthemum have already fallen, striped off by the golden (= autumn) wind. Yet, there is no grieving over the negative influences of the external conditions to the chrysanthemum, no word of the flower' s need to struggle against them. The decay is described as a natural process which holds its own meaning. This idea is reinforced by the next four lines indicating the usefulness of the petals even when they have fallen.

First, Kim Si-s?p points out that “the fallen petals served Lingjun as food” . This is an allusion to Qu Yuan 屈原 (343(?) ? 290 v.u.Z.), Kim' s most favoured poet next to Tao Yuanming. Being repudiated by his sovereign, Qu Yuan wrote in his famous *Lisao* 離騷:

“... In the morning I drank the dew that fell from the magnolia:

At evening ate the petals that dropped from chrysanthemums.

If only my mind can be truly beautiful,

It matters nothing that I often faint for famine···”

In the Chinese literary tradition, this habit of Qu Yuan is understood not just as a means for stilling hunger, but as a dietetic treatment for prolonging life. The clearest evidence for this can be found in a letter by Cao Pi 曹丕 (186–226) concerning the ninth day of the ninth month:

“··· of the mass of trees and many plants there are none which shoot from the ground and grow. Yet the fragrant chrysanthemums abundantly bloom by themselves. If they did not contain the pure harmony of Heaven and Earth and embody the clear essence of fragrance, how could they do so? Therefore Ch’ u Ping (i.e. Qu Yuan) grieved at his steadily growing old and thought of eating the fallen blossoms of the autumn chrysanthemums. For supporting the body and prolonging life nothing is as valuable as these···”

That Kim Si-s?p surely had this connotation in mind, becomes clear from the rest of his poem. Next to Qu Yuan he cites the case of Tao Yuanming. In this poem he calls Tao by his last office from which he retired – the magistrate of Pengze 彭澤. The expression “(petals) floated in the wine cup” refers to Tao’ s seventh verse of the “Drinking Wine” poems. It is useful to quote the relevant verse in full.

The fall chrysanthemums have lovely colors.

I pluck the petals that are wet with dew.

And float them in this Care Dispelling Thing

To strengthen my resolve to leave the world.

I drink my solitary cup alone

And when it’ s empty, pour myself another.

The sun goes down, and all of nature rests.

Homing birds fly chirping toward the grove.

I sit complacent on the east veranda

Having somehow found my life again.

As J.R. Hightower states, Chinese commentators are unanimous in referring the opening two lines of this poem to the *Lisao* “where Qu Yuan was clearly working on longevity” . Chrysanthemum and dew, on which this reference obviously is grounded, also link up the poems of Qu Yuan and Tao Yuanming to those of Kim Si-s?p. Tao’ s and Kim’ s poem are additionally united by the common feeling of nature coming to rest: at the close of the day (Tao) and at the end of the year (Kim). In his poem, Tao Yuanming says that he puts the chrysanthemum petals in wine which he calls the “Care Dispelling Thing” . He is drinking to forget his cares, to strengthen his resolve to leave the world of activity and

striving, to find himself. Drinking the chrysanthemum wine, he feels himself in full correspondence with nature. Like the birds, he has come back home, to rest. And finally he gains a “degree of complacency”, forgetting all his cares, including death.

Both functions of the chrysanthemum wine ? to forget one’s cares and to prolong one’s life ? Tao rendered explicitly in his poem “Living in Retirement on the Ninth Day” *Jiuri xianju* 九日閑居:

Wine can drive out manifold cares,

Chrysanthemums may arrest declining years...

The idea that chrysanthemums help to stop ageing has been well-known to Korean poets since Koryŏ times. In fact this attribute was linked specifically to the yellow-coloured species, like in Chinese poetry. As such it is rendered, for instance, in Chŏng P’o 鄭? (1309–1345)’s poem “Praising the chrysanthemum” *Yŏngguk* 詠菊:

I love the golden yellow chrysanthemum (*hwanggŏmguk* 黃金菊)...

They are able to overcome age

And do not only save me from hunger.

The idea of the yellow chrysanthemum’s miraculous healing potential became so popular in Koryŏ that it entered even the vernacular poetry, as the *kayo Tongdong* 動動 demonstrates. This idea apparently was introduced into Korea in relation to the Double Ninth festival which by its origin aimed at the preservation of life. Besides preparing wine and several dishes, especially rice cakes, with chrysanthemum petals on this day, there was a custom of adorning one’s head with chrysanthemum flowers. Kim Si-sŏp probably refers to this custom in the fifth line of his poem when he relates that the palace ladies tried to cultivate chrysanthemums in order to use them “as golden ornaments for their hair”. Literally the characters *kŏmbo chŏn* (Chin. *Jinbao dian*) 金寶鈿 mean “hair ornaments of the golden treasure”, with *kŏmbo* being a metaphor for the chrysanthemum. In a way, the golden colour here replicates the title of the poem – “the deep yellow chrysanthemum”.

In the sixth line Kim mentions an immortal, the goddess Henge (Change) 姮娥, who had stolen the elixir of life from her husband, the archer Hou Yi, and fled to the moon. As he recalls, she dyed garments with the ornament of the (yellow) chrysanthemum. Obviously, the goddess’s work should be understood as a sign of ensuring life – longevity or even immortality.

After having depicted the usefulness of the yellow chrysanthemum as a so-called “elixir of life”, in the seventh line, Kim confirms his earlier opinion that this flower’s place is in autumn, not in spring. It appears to best advantage in this season when nature dies. In this poem, however, his accent lies on a different quality to that in the poems discussed above, for this is the yellow species: it helps man prolong his life.

In the closing line Kim completes the chain of his reflections about the usefulness of the chrysanthemum stating that he will “adore the chrysanthemum’ s old fragrance” . Taking the context of the whole poem into consideration, this line should be understood as somehow alluding to a longing for longevity. Perhaps, we should apply the interpretation of ?hdanova when she suggested with regard to Yi Kyu-bo’s poems about the yellow chrysanthemum that by contemplating the chrysanthemum’ s beautiful colour, tasting its flavour and breathing in its fragrance, man can transcend time and attain immortality, eternity. In any case, the fragrance of the yellow chrysanthemum helps man solve the problem of the passing time. In a poem by the Song poet Lu You 陸游 (1125–1209), for instance, it serves as a bridge between the past and the present. It enables him to remember his first wife “calling back a dream of forty–three years ago.” Lu’ s poem closes with the following lines which underlie Kim’ s poem, as well:

“All things of mankind fade and wear away;

Only the clear fragrance remains as it was before.”

Kim Si-s?p’ s next poem leads us further into a timeless state, into the world of divine beings which transcended the border between life and death.

The pink Chrysanthemum *Ch’ ?nhongguk* 淺紅菊

The divine man from the Guye Mountain

lightly put on rouge.

Briefly he leans on the Jade tower,

the vermilion colour on his chin being rubbed off.

The skin’ s brightness is not like

that of the beauty from the river in Yue.

It can simply be compared

to the child prodigy from Jiangxia who is not born twice.

In the dawn the exiled immortal

washes his face first.

Not caring about the frost,

it is like Sun Shou who sadly twisted her eyebrows.

Some day I will be able to become a constant partner

of Tao Yuanliang.

We will meet each other reeling,

and totally drunk.

For this poem, Kim Si-s? chose a colour of the chrysanthemum quite unusual for the Chinese and Korean poetic tradition: the pink or light red 淺紅 (Kor. *ch' ?nhong*, Chin. *qianhong*). The *Peiwen yunfu* does not give any example of the pink chrysanthemum in Chinese poetry. It lists only one example of the chrysanthemum having another kind of red colour ? the vermilion. The pink colour only appears as referring to the peach and a sort of mandarin named *ruishengnu*. Nor do we find poems with pink chrysanthemums in the Korean *hansi* of the Kory? and Early Chos?n or in the vernacular genres *sijo* and *kasa* of later times. As various scholars have pointed out, the colour spectrum there is reduced to the white and yellow.

Choosing the “pink/ light red” colour, Kim is clearly opposing this poem to the previous one: Besides the “yellow” ? “red” contrast there is the opposition between “light” 淺 (Kor. *ch' ?n*, Chin. *qian*) and “deep, intensive” 深 (Kor. *sim*, Chin. *shen*) shade. Through this contrast, it seems, Kim signals his moving to a still higher level of transcending the mundane. While in the previous poem he rendered his reflections on the autumn scenery which lead him to longing for longevity, here, in this poem he does not give any picture of the real world, but immediately begins with depicting the world of supernatural, divine beings.

In the first lines of this poem, Kim compares the pink (light red) chrysanthemum to the divine man living in the Guye Mountain *Guye xianren* 姑射仙人 “whose skin is as white as ice and snow and whose loveliness is like that of a maiden”, according to the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 and the *Liezi* 列子. Kim depicts the divine man as “lightly” 淡 (Kor. *tam*, Chin. *dan*) putting “rouge” 脂 (Kor. *chi*, Chin. *zhi*) on his face, thus repeating the “light red” of the chrysanthemum in the poem’s title. Though not lexically expressed, this implies the image of “(light) red on white”: The rouge on the divine’s man white skin and the light red chrysanthemum in the white frost. Subsequently, the red colour in various shades is repeated in the second line: by the Jade tower 瓊樓 (Kor. *Ky?ngnu*, Chin. *Qionglou*, literally the “Red Jade” tower) and the vermilion colour on the divine man’s chin. The “white” colour is only indirectly present in line three (the brightness of the skin) and line six (the frost).

The pink chrysanthemum constitutes the transition to the mystic world of immortals where one can meet such extraordinary beings as the divine man from the Guye Mountain. In the *Zhuangzi* and the *Liezi* he is described as a superman of strange behaviour who influences the cosmos by magical powers. His influence manifests itself as a kind of self-effacing force:

“... he eats not the five grains but lives only on air and dew, /.../ mounted on a flying dragon he rides above the clouds and wanders beyond the four seas, and /.../ his spirit is such that by concentrating its power he can stay the natural process of decay and insure plentiful harvests. /.../ the virtue of the divine man /.../ is such that he aims at the fusion of all beings into one. Why should he concern himself with the affairs of the world, troubled though it is? Nothing external can harm this being. He will not drown in a flood that rises up to heaven, he will not be burned in a drought that melts metal and stone and

consumes whole mountains. Out of his very dust and siftings one can mold a Yao or Shun. Why should he concern himself with external things?"

As the *Zhuangzi* further declares, the divine man impressed even the exemplary ruler of Chinese antiquity, emperor Yao, so that he converted to passivity and nonstriving (*wuwei* 無爲). After he had paid a visit to the divine man, he "had a mysterious look and forgot his empire." Forgetting all brooding about moral questions and turning to a mystical participation in the natural process of the cosmos are perhaps the essentials in the divine man's description that attracted Kim Si-s?p the most. Tired of grieving about his time, his fate, he searched for liberating himself of desire and strife, for transcending the ordinary life. He searched for the miraculous, both in extraordinary abilities and mental states, and found it in the Taoist literature ? as well as the Buddhist ? but the latter is not the subject of this paper.

Within the Taoist context Kim Si-s?p also developed his aesthetic ideals. He appealed to the divine beauty which he discovered both in the pink chrysanthemum and in the divine man from the Guye Mountain. Such beauty, he stressed, exceeds the beauty of ordinary human beings. Even the famous "beauty from the river in Yue" 越溪女 (Kor. *w?lkyeny?*, Chin. *yuexinu*), Xi Shi 西施, could not compete with it. There is just one possible comparison ? with the "child prodigy from Jiangxia" 江夏兒, Huang Xiang 黃香, who distinguished himself by his unique wisdom in all fields of knowledge including astronomy, fortune-telling as well as Taoist magic.

Then, in the fifth line, Kim Si-s?p again compares the pink chrysanthemum with a divine being, the "exiled immortal", specifically pointing out his pure character: "In the dawn the exiled immortal washes his face first." Here Kim Si-s?p also might have had in mind Li Bai 李白 (701?-762), Su Shi or some other sage-poets who were called "exiled immortals" for their having surpassed the mundane. In them he could have seen a model for himself.

In the next line, Kim Si-s?p compares the beautiful chrysanthemum ignoring the frost with Sun Shou 孫壽, the wife of an influential official of the Late Han, Liang Ji 梁冀. Sun Shou is famous for having increased her feminine charms by sorrowfully twisting her eyebrows.

After such an exalted appreciation of the chrysanthemum, rendered through excursions into the world of Taoist sages *xian* 仙 and divine beauties, Kim Si-s?p is prepared to meet his beloved poet Tao Yuanming (here called by his second polite name Yuanliang 元亮). Drinking wine is the way which enables him to get into contact with the poet who had lived more than a thousand years before him. Longing to "become a constant partner" of Tao, Kim hopes to achieve the same ecstatic state as Tao when he was drunk: where one is emancipated from false values, forgets his sorrows, his grief over the transitory character and the vanity of existence. In a state of total drunkenness, Kim Si-s?p will finally feel himself to be in harmony with existence. Drinking will also smooth his way to other spheres where he can meet the divine man from the Guye Mountain and the "exiled immortals". Perhaps all would agree with the assessment that this last poem shows the greatest power of imagination, more than all his other poems discussed here.

In his poems about the chrysanthemum, Kim Si-s?p relied on a rich Chinese and Korean literary tradition elaborately adapting it to his own ideas and feelings in the later period of his life. Kim made multiple associations with the flower. He praised its female beauty,

hidden fragrance and hardiness in the cold associating it with the steadfastness of the righteous man. For him, it was the flower representing the Noble Man *kunja* as well as the hermit *?nja*. He depicted it as the flower which helps to transcend the mundane and to attain longevity. In his most ecstatic state, he described it as the divine chrysanthemum comparing it to the *xian*, the immortals. Contemplating the chrysanthemum he felt close to Tao Yuanming, but he also recalled his other beloved poet, Qu Yuan, and other poets that had admired the Chrysanthemum. Kim' s poems about the chrysanthemum reflect the process of his steady liberation from the social world, his doubts and grief about his fate, his wavering between Confucian and Taoist concepts. His contemplation of the chrysanthemum finally lead him to a kind of mystic experience which reconciled him with the hardships of his existence. Each step of this process is rendered with a different colour spectrum. Especially in the last point he shows great originality.