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How to Make the 72 Seasonal Spells

by Shokan Tadashi Kondo

Classification of season words is perhaps one thing that Carl von Linne (1707~1778) did not try. I wish he were here to help us. We are celebrating his 300th anniversary this year, and I hope this year will be the beginning of the study of classification of season words in Europe.

I am going to talk about the 72 Seasonal Spells, which is a classical Japanese calendar. One year is divided into 72 five-day spells, and each of the spells is called by a typical seasonal phenomenon. It looks like a necklace of 72 different jewels. This provides the basis for the season words of Japanese haiku.

First we have Four Seasons in Japan. Now divide each season into six segments, and you have the 24 Seasonal Segments (or 24 Chi Segments). Again divide each of the 24 Seasonal Segments into three, and you have the 72 Seasonal Spells (or 72 Kou).

The philosophy behind the 72 Seasonal Spells is Cosmic Realism. Imagine that you are looking down upon the solar system where the Earth is revolving around the Sun. It looks like the face of a watch, and this watch can tell you the real time. The 72 Seasonal Spells will help you to remember where you are on this cosmic watch. Haiku is Ecological Poetry, and season words reflect a temporary fashion of time-space at a certain point on this timetable.

Henry David Thoreau had a philosophy of seasons which is similar to that of the 72 Seasonal Spells. I gave a talk about it at an HSA conference in Hot Springs, Arkansas, in 1998. Susan Delaney was there, and a couple of years later she came up with her version of 72 Seasonal Spells in Plano, Texas.

I would like to invite you to make your own version of 72 Seasonal Spells in Europe. I think of two different methodologies; one is diachronic, and the other is synchronic. I think most of haiku poets are interested in the synchronic studies, which will allow us to compare different seasonal cultures around the world. A diachronic study, on the other hand, will help us see historical changes of seasonal phenomena. This may be interesting to some people who are concerned about recent global warming.

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I have two pieces of practical advice to help the project:

Team work:
The project can be carried out by a single person, like Susan Delaney did, but it is ideal to have a research team that would reflect various fields of arts and sciences, such as botany, biology, geology, meteorology, anthropology, folklore, history, etc., not to mention poets and writers.

Haiku Mandala and Ecology:
This has to do with which season words to pick for the names for 72 spells. Haiku has developed a set of traditional categories which I call Haiku Mandala. This will provide an overall framework to classify all the seasonal phenomena. To narrow down to a specific season word representing each spell, we need a philosophy of ecology. The kaleidoscopic changes of the seasonal phenomena consist of light, heat, water, heavenly bodies, lands, plants, animals, human activities, etc. As we go through this field of seasonal phenomena, we will find a single trail by connecting landmarks along the course of one year cycle. Which landmark to pick depends on its value or significance in a culture.

Haiku Mandala (part)
Heavenly Bodies; Weather; Mountains; Waters; Animals; Plants;
Seasons; Precipitation; Evaporation; Time of the Day; Night Time;
Travel; People; Residence; Country Name; Place Name; Personal Name;
Gods; Buddha; Love; Transience; Lament; Reminiscence;
Foods; Drinks; Sickness; Accident; War; Ghost; Monster

Good luck with your project of 72 Seasonal Spells in Europe. Please let me know when you have made one. Here is my address: kondo@econ.seikei.ac.jp
Thank you very much.

二十四節気： **24 Seasonal Segments**

節名	Names of Periods	Date (1996)	Celestial Longitude	Temp (Tokyo) Av.	Lo-Hi	Classical Seasons	Modern Seasons
立春	Coming of Spring	2/04	315	04	00-09	--------	Winter
雨水	Rain Water	2/19	330		01-10		
啓蟄	Out of Hibernation	3/05	345	07	02-12		
春分	Spring Equinox	3/20	0		04-14	Spring	--------
清明	Serene & Bright	4/04	15	13	08-17		
穀雨	Grain Rain	4/20	30		10-19		
立夏	Coming of Summer	5/05	45	17	13-22	--------	Spring
小満	Increasing Heat	5/21	60		14-23		
芒種	Grain Planting	6/05	75	21	17-24		
夏至	Summer Solstice	6/21	90		19-26	Summer	--------
小暑	Slight Heat	7/07	105	25	21-28		
大暑	Intense Heat	7/22	120		24-31		
立秋	Coming of Fall	8/07	135	26	24-31	--------	Summer
処暑	Sporadic Heat	8/23	150		23-30		
白露	White Dew	9/07	165	23	22-28		
秋分	Autumn Equinox	9/23	180		18-26	Fall	--------
寒露	Cold Dew	10/08	195	17	15-22		
霜降	First Frost	10/23	210		12-20		
立冬	Coming of Winter	11/07	225	11	10-19	--------	Fall
小雪	Light Snow	11/22	240		07-15		
大雪	Heavy Snow	12/07	255	06	03-13		
冬至	Winter Solstice	12/21	270		02-11	Winter	--------
小寒	Moderate Cold	1/05	285	03	00-09		
大寒	Severe Cold	1/20	300		-1-09		

Note: Temperature in Tokyo shows the monthly average on the left and the lowest-highest in each segment on the right. I have lost the data source, but it is enough to get the basic idea of temperature changes. The dates, as they were in 1996, show the beginning of each seasonal segment, and they vary every year by one up to three days.

[End of 24 Seasonal Segments]

本朝七十二候：Japanese 72 Spells (by Ranzan Takayama)

節名	24 Seasons	Celestial Longitude	Japanese 72 Spells	Date
立春	Coming of Spring	315	East Wind Melts Ice	2/ 4-- 8
		320	Warbler Sings	2/ 9--13
		325	Fish Come up to Ice	2/14--18
雨水	Rain Water	330	Earth Vein Moistens	2/19--23
		335	First Mist	2/24--28
		340	Budding Starts	3/ 1-- 5
啓蟄	Out of Hibernation	345	Bugs End Hibernation	3/ 6--10
		350	First Peach Blossoms	3/11--15
		355	Caterpillars to Butterflies	3/16--20
春分	Spring Equinox	0	First Sparrow Nests	3/21--25
		5	First Cherry Blossoms	3/26--30
		10	First Thunder	3/31--4/4
清明	Serene & Bright	15	Swallows Arrive	4/ 5-- 9
		20	Geese Head North	4/10--14
		25	First Rainbow	4/15--19
穀雨	Grain Rain	30	Reed Horn Shoots	4/20--24
		35	Last Frost; Seedlings Out	4/25--29
		40	First Peony Flowers	4/30--5/4
立夏	Coming of Summer	45	First Cry of Toad	5/ 6--10
		50	Worms Come Out	5/11--15
		55	First Bamboo Shoots	5/16--20
小満	Increasing Heat	60	Silkworms at Mulberry Leaves	5/22--26
		65	Benibana (safflower)	5/27--31
		70	Autumn of Barley	6/ 1-- 5
芒種	Grain Planting	75	Praying Mantis Hatches	6/ 6--10
		80	Decayed Grass to Fireflies	6/11--15
		85	Plums Turn Yellow	6/16--20
夏至	Summer Solstice	90	Dry Brown Grass	6/21--26
		95	Iris Flowers	6/27--7/1
		100	Hangesho Grows (Saururus Chinensis)	7/ 2-- 6

小暑 Slight Heat	105	Hot Wind	7/ 8--12
	110	Lotus Flowers	7/13--17
	115	Hawks Learn How to Fly	7/18--22
大暑 Intense Heat	120	Paulownia Flowers	7/24--28
	125	Earth Wet and Humid	7/29--8/2
	130	Occasional Heavy Rains	8/ 3-- 7
立秋 Coming of Fall	135	Cool Breeze	8/ 8--12
	140	Tsukutsukuboshi Cicada Cry	8/13--17
	145	Fog Rises and Falls	8/18--22
処暑 Sporadic Heat	150	Cotton Flowers	8/24--28
	155	Heaven and Earth Calm Down	8/29--9/2
	160	Rice Grains Ripen	9/ 3-- 7
白露 White Dew	165	Dewy Grass White	9/ 8--12
	170	Wagtails Twitter	9/13--17
	175	Swallows Leave	9/18--22
秋分 Autumn Equinox	180	Thunder Utters No More Sound	9/23--27
	185	Bugs Get to Hibernation	9/28--10/2
	190	Streams Get Dry	10/ 3-- 7
寒露 Cold Dew	195	Geese Arrive	10/ 8--12
	200	Chrysanthemums Bloom	10/13--17
	205	Crickets Come to Door	10/18--22
霜降 First Frost	210	First Frost	10/23--27
	215	Occasional Drizzle	10/28--11/1
	220	Maples and Ivies in Yellow	11/ 2-- 6
立冬 Coming of Winter	225	Camellia Blooms	11/ 7--11
	230	First Frozen Ground	11/12--16
	235	Narcissus Fragrant	11/17--21
小雪 Light Snow	240	Rainbows Hide Away	11/22--26
	245	North Wind Blows Leaves	11/27--12/1
	250	Wild Orange in Yellow	12/ 2-- 6
大雪 Heavy Snow	255	Get to Winter Seclusion	12/ 7--11
	260	Bears Hibernate	12/12--16
	265	Salmon Gather	12/17--21

冬至 Winter Solstice	270	Selfheal Grows	12/22--26
	275	Dear Antlers Fall	12/27--31
	280	Wheat Sprouts Under Snow	1/ 1-- 5
小寒 Moderate Cold	285	Parsley Grows	1/ 6--10
	290	Waters and Springs Move	1/11--15
	295	First Call of Pheasant	1/16--20
大寒 Severe Cold	300	Silver Leaf Flowers	1/21--25
	305	Ponds with Thick Hard Ice	1/26--30
	310	Chickens Brood	1/31--2/4

[End of Japanese 72 Spells]

テキサス七十二候 72 Spells in Plano, Texas

太陽黄経 Celestial Longitude	月・日 Mo/Day	七十二候 72 Spells
315	**2/04**	**Sunny and mild**
320	2/09	Cedar wax wings strip berries
325	2/14	Clear ice on birdbaths
330	**2/19**	**Plum trees bloom (first fruit blossoms)**
335	2/24	Cottonwood bark turns green
340	3/01	Buds swell (maple, Bradford pears)
345	**3/06**	**Peach blossoms**
350	3/11	Pussy willows
355	3/16	Holly flowers draw bees
0	**3/21**	**First sparrow nests**
5	3/26	Crabapples bloom (last fruit blossoms)
10	3/31	Pink grape leaves (thunder all year!)
15	**4/05**	**Hummingbirds migrate through**
20	4/10	Peonies (safe to plant seedlings)
25	4/15	Storms
30	**4/20**	**The sound of wind in newborn leaves**
35	4/25	Plant portulaca (a hot weather annual)
40	4/30	Grape berries
45	**5/06**	**“summer has hit”**
50	5/11	Hot. Sunflower shoots under birdfeeder
55	5/16	New bamboo five feet tall
60	**5/21**	**Daylilies bloom (fireflies)**
65	5/26	*
70	6/01	*
75	**6/06**	**First morning glory**
80	6/11	Crepe myrtles bloom
85	6/16	Grackles bathe in puddles
90	**6/21**	****
95	6/27	*
100	7/02	*

105	**7/08**	**High 96**
110	7/13	Muggy, no wind
115	7/18	First moonflower
120	**7/24**	**Morning hints of autumn**
125	7/29	Orb weavers build webs
130	8/03	Heavy dew
135	**8/08**	**Cool breeze in morning**
140	8/13	Cricket song
145	8/18	Crickets come to door
150	**8/24**	*****
155	8/29	Autumn clematis; Moonflowers
160	9/03	Autumn's golden light
165	**9/08**	**Dusky purple returns to sunsets**
170	9/13	Breezy wetness raises goose bumps
175	9/18	Crabapple harvest
180	**9/23**	*****
185	09/28	Ants come inside
190	10/03	Tassels on maidenhair grass
195	**10/08**	**Mist and rainbows around moon and sun**
200	10/13	Chrysanthemums bloom
205	10/18	Crashing thunderstorms
210	**10/23**	**Milkweed pods burst open**
215	10/28	Gingko leaves fall in one day
220	11/02	Maples red
225	**11/07**	**Camellia blooms**
230	11/12	High 72, low 44
235	11/17	Black-eyed Susan pods chatter in wind
240	**11/22**	**Emerald moss on statues**
245	11/27	Lavender fog at sunrise and sunset
250	12/02	Cold rain
255	**12/07**	**Convection fog over creeks**
260	12/12	*
265	12/17	First junco (snowbird)
270	**12/22**	**Fog and drizzle**
275	12/27	First robin
280	01/01	Winter wheat grows

285	**01/06**	**Parsley grows**
290	01/11	Branches begin to sway as sap rises
295	01/16	Pansies recover from the cold
300	**01/21**	**First daffodil**
305	01/26	High 52, low 31; skin of ice on birdbath
310	01/31	Sparrows courting

[End of the 72 Spells in Plano, Texas, made by Susan Delphine Delaney]

ケルト暦：**Celtic Calendar**

Month	Celtic Concept	Celtic Names	Annual Cycle
Jan	Cold Air Month		
Feb	Whirling Month	First Month of Spring (Scottish)	[Feb. 1] dark half
Mar	Busy Month	Seed Time (Scottish)	
Apr	Primrose Month		
May	Beltane Daily Month	First Day of Summer (Welsh)	[May 1] light half begins
Jun	Month of Midsummer	Midsummer (Welsh)	
Jul	Month of Hunger	End of Summer (Manx)	
Aug	Harvest Month		[Aug. 1]
Sept	Mid-Autumn		
Oct	Watery Month	End of Autumn (Irish)	
Nov	Summer's End	Winter Calends [Nov. 1]	[Nov 1] Year Begins darkness begins
Dec	Mo of Black Storms	Midwinter (Scottish)	

A Celtic Book of Days, Sarah Costley and Charles Kightly
New York City: Thames and Hudson, 1998

[End of Celtic Calendar]