

**THE INFLUENCE OF THE  
THIRTEEN  
HOLY NIGHTS**



**UPON THE PHYSICAL, ETHERIC,  
ASTRAL AND SPIRITUAL PLANES**

by  
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# **THE THIRTEEN HOLY NIGHTS**

## **ON THE PHYSICAL, ETHERIC, ASTRAL AND SPIRITUAL PLANES**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The period between the 25th December and the 6th January has been considered a particularly significant season for thousands of years. The ancient Romans instituted the Feast of the Saturnalia to mark its importance. At this time they used to exchange small presents as physical tokens of the gifts that came from the cosmos to the Earth and its creatures. Everyone can see that the material aspect has increasingly replaced the sacredness of this time, almost obliterating all memory of it, but we are still left with a sentiment of peace, love and tolerance linked to the solemnity of the festival of the birth of Jesus.

This present publication is intended to contribute towards a new consciousness of the events of this period, a consciousness which allows us to relate anew to them, to garner in this way the maximum benefit as humans and creatures of God.

We are aware that the path of consciousness has barely begun to be followed, but we are also aware that it will open new perspectives with the deepening of meditative spiritual consciousness of the macrocosm.

The events that occur during what are commonly called the 'Thirteen Holy Nights' can be considered from at least four points of view:

Physical / Material

Etheric / Life

Astral / Psychic

Spiritual

We will consider these together.

### **2.1 THE PHYSICAL/PERCEPTABLE ASPECT OF THE THIRTEEN NIGHTS**

From this aspect we should understand the combination of events that are themselves beneath sense perception and which, properly interpreted, are able to give us a key to an understanding of the subtle occurrences of the thirteen nights. In effect, all that influences the Earth from a higher plane has to have a physical and thus perceptible component. Our usual level of consciousness is just able to

*The thirteen holy nights*

encompass the physical / perceptible but we have to move on from this in order to achieve wider levels of consciousness.

The first aspect we wish to show is of the thirteen nights as a festival (or mystery) of ‘hidden light.’ If we follow the arcs of the Sun across the December sky with more than the customary precision, we note something particular. It is commonly known that as winter approaches the days become shorter i.e, the dawn gets later and the sunset gets earlier. Observed more closely this phenomenon holds an interesting distinction. Whilst the dawn begins ever later until the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, the Sun sets earlier only until between the 7<sup>th</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> (Festival of the Immaculate Conception) and the 13<sup>th</sup> -17<sup>th</sup> of December, which is the time of St Lucia. The forces of the daylight begin to gain the strength so that the forces of the darkness do not gain upon it. The advance of the sunset is halted and after a few days the light begins to make the darkness retreat. In this way the nights shorten again.

Day	SUNRISE (HOUR – MIN.)	DURATION (HOUR – MIN.)	SUNSET (HOUR – MIN.)
1/12	7 26	8 57	16 23
4/12	7 29	8 53	16 22
7/12	7 33	8 48	16 21
10/12	7 36	8 45	16 21
13/12	7 38	8 43	16 21
16/12	7 41	8 40	16 21
19/12	7 43	8 39	16 22
22/12	7 44	8 40	16 24
25/12	7 46	8 39	16 25
28/12	7 47	8 40	16 27
1/1	7 47	8 44	16 31
4/1	7 47	8 47	16 34
7/1	7 47	8 50	16 37
10/1	7 46	8 54	16 40

The saying, ‘St Lucia the longest night,’ is thus partially justified. Since the dawn continues to retreat in a faster than the advance of the sunset the days do

continue to shorten. A simple calculation shows that this period begins one thirteen-day cycle before the thirteen Holy Nights. Is this just a straightforward coincidence?

If we think of the Nordic tradition in which children dress as representatives of the Saint and place a crown of four lit candles on their head, we can see how St Lucia is the festival of the victory of the light over the advancing darkness. In addition it is the protector of our eyes, of vision, of our capacity to perceive the light.

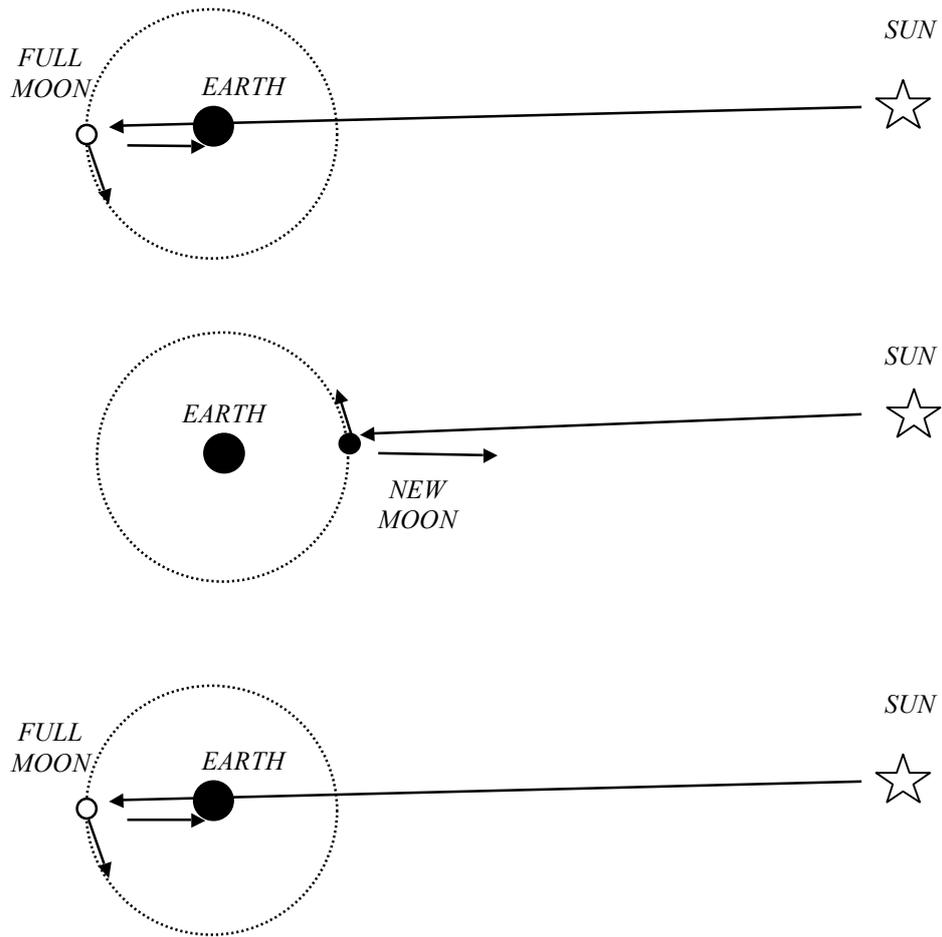
We can make use of astronomical precision to highlight the moments of the rising and the setting of the Sun between December and the beginning of January. The astrophysical data above refers to Trieste, Italy. We have added some lines to make it easier to see the phenomenon.

We will now go to a second aspect. Following anthroposophical terminology, we are able to name the worlds (or planes) that are higher than the physical and the biological or life plane, such as the psychic (or astral) and the spiritual plane. The first, the astral plane, is tied particularly to the macrocosm at the planetary sphere, the second or spiritual plane to the zodiac. Following the affirmation of Rudolf Steiner in his lecture ‘Solar Year, Cosmic Year’, it is possible to emphasize the passage which says that, in the period of the thirteen Holy Nights; *“the mineral consciousness of the Earth speaks to the Earth’s vegetable consciousness”*. We will see much later the importance of this statement for agricultural work. For now we will restrict ourselves to the perceptible aspects of this dynamic.

Students of astronomy know that it one can consider two different major cycles of the Moon: the synodic and the sidereal. The first indicates the relation between the Moon and the rest of the planets (*synod* = ‘encounter’); the second is that of the Moon with the stars (*sidera* = ‘star’).

The synodic Moon cycle refers to different phases in relation to the Sun and the other planets. We are able to say that the scope, the drama of these encounters, is within the planetary and therefore astral sphere. On the other hand the sidereal Moon cycle can only be interpreted in respect of the Moon’s movements in front of the belt of the zodiac, as it passes before the different constellations. This brings their related forces or impulses to the Earth. It acts as a bridge to this higher plane.

*In the synodic cycle the Moon returns to the same alignment with the Earth and Sun after 29.5 days.*

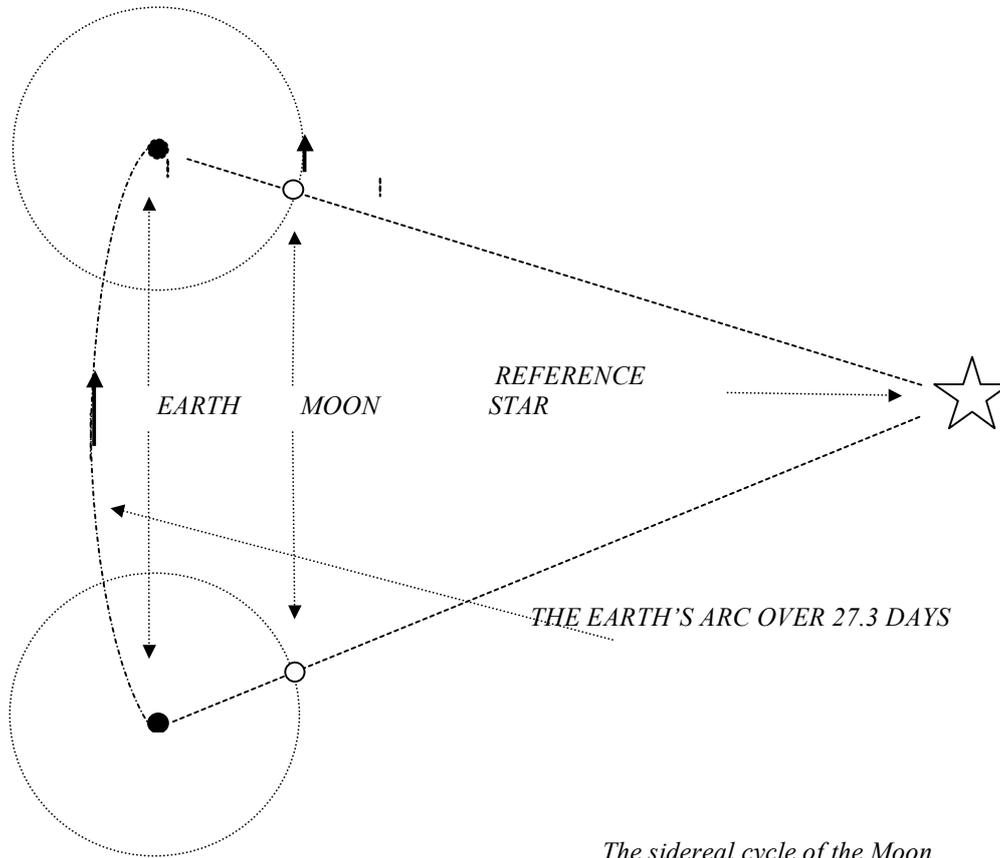


*The synodic cycle of the Moon*

It is well known that the Moon takes 29.5 days to complete its synodic cycle (for example, from full Moon to full Moon), whilst it takes only 27.3 days to complete the sidereal cycle (when it returns into alignment with the same star as seen from the Earth). The sidereal cycle is shorter due to the fact that the Earth also moves in the cosmos, and with this movement it meets the Moon's stellar alignment some 2.2 days before the synodic cycle is complete. A calculation ( $365 \div 29.5$ ) shows that, in a solar year, there is approximately 12.4 synodic cycles and 13.4 ( $365 \div 27.3$ ) sidereal cycles.

This simple piece of arithmetic shows that there is one more synodic lunar cycle in a year compared to sidereal cycles in the same time. This also implies that these two cycles will be in phase for one period of the year and, in contrast, six

months later, a period in which they will be out of phase. Six months afterwards again, they will return to being in phase. It is to be understood that the waning<sup>1</sup> synodic Moon coincides with the descending phase of the sidereal Moon.



*In its sidereal cycle the Moon has the same alignment with the Earth and a given star after 27.3 days.*

Observing the astronomical data for the Moon it can be seen that the cycles are in phase in December and out of phase in June. The fact is that the 'two Moons' are in contradiction and in some respects nullify each other's influence during the summer, thus suspending the Moon's characteristic influences in that part of the year. In other words it is as if the Moon forgoes its influence from the heavens at that time. Conversely these 'Moons' are able to co-operate and reinforce each other in the winter.

In this way we have shown that, for a period in December, the synodic Moon (planetary Moon) and the sidereal Moon (stellar Moon) are in agreement and then

<sup>1</sup> The waning phase is the period of ~14.7 days during which the illuminated part of the Moon reduces. The descending period of the sidereal cycle is that ~13.6 day period in which the arc of the Moon across the night sky is becoming lower.

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