

## Temple of the Moon: Part Four



### **Celestial Tides Days of Light, Dark and Balance Session One**

Light strains to take hold  
As darkness spreads her wings  
Of Divine shroud.

Darkness seeks its mate  
Of brilliant light  
And both weave the  
Dance of courtship and  
Consummate Union.

Darkness lifts a wing ready to  
Molt its downy blackness  
And Light kisses one  
Last time lips that seek the hermit's solace.

Light coils within the shadows  
Spiraling out and reaching  
With tendrils of inky  
Stain that becomes the  
Beauty of a palette of  
Misty grey.

**Overview of Course**

*Spring Equinox*  
**Experiential**  
*At the Center of it All*

**Expectations and Goals**

**Archeoastronomy**  
(Handout)

**Each are Hemispheric Based...**

**Northern Hemisphere**

**Southern Hemisphere**

Winter Solstice

is

Summer Solstice

Vernal Equinox

is

Autumnal Equinox

Summer Solstice

is

Winter Solstice

Autumnal Equinox

is

Vernal Equinox

**The Days of Light and Dark**

**The Solstices**

Twice in the year the sun apparently changes its course. In midwinter, having reached the lowest point in its path, it turns about and begins to mount the skies; in midsummer, conversely, having attained the highest point it reaches, the sun seems to turn about once more, and descend the steep of the firmament. These two epochs, the winter and summer solstices as they are called, that mark the sun's annual course, were regarded as supremely important by the ancients and gave rise to great national festivals that were celebrated

## Lore : Evolved From Sun Worship

### The Winter Solstice

(1.)...To the inhabitants of **Greenland** it meant the early return of the hunting season, and all nations regarded it as a sign that springtime and harvests were on the way, and the dormant life of the winter season was on the wane.

In many countries this festival season was known as "Yole," or "Yuul," from the word Hiaul, or Huul, which even to this day signifies "the sun" in some languages. From this we get our word "wheel," and the wheel is one of the ancient symbols of the sun, the spokes representing the sun's rays. As we shall see later this symbol was a prominent feature in one of the great solar festivals.

Procopius describes how the men of **Thule** climbed the mountain tops at the winter solstice, to catch sight of the nearing sun after their thirty-five days of night. Then they celebrated their holiest feasts.

Plutarch, referring to the solar festivals of **Egypt**, says, that "about the winter solstice they lead the sacred cow seven times in procession around the temple, calling this the searching after Osiris, that season of the year standing most in need of the sun's warmth."

**In China**, the Great Temple of the Sun at Peking is oriented to the winter solstice, and the most important of all the State observances of China takes place there December 21st, the sacrifice of the winter solstice.

The **Roman** winter solstice, as celebrated on December 25th (VIII Kal. Jan.) in connection with the worship of the Sun-God Mithra appears to have been instituted in this special form by Aurelian about A. D. 273, and to this festival the day owes its apposite name of 'Birthday of the Unconquered Sun.'

The solar origin of the great feast is attested in **Europe** by bonfires, and the burning of the Yule log, and in the Christmas service chant, "Sol novus oritur."

Even the sacrifices offered to the Sun in pagan times at the great solar festivals find their survival in the sacrifices of a lamb which we offer at Eastertide, and an ox at Christmas. The lighting of the Christmas tree is but the light to guide the Sun-God back to life, and the festival cakes of corn and fruit, made in honour of the Sun in ancient times, and laid on the sacred altars of the Persians as an offering of gratitude to the Lord of Light and Life, find their prototype in the plum pudding that graces the board at our Christmas feasts of rejoicing. Christmas is, therefore, nothing but an old heathen celebration of the winter solstice, the feast of rejoicing that a turning point in the sun's course has been reached, and that the life-giving orb has attained the end of its journey of dwindling hours of daylight, and has started back on a course that brings with it each day an increase of warmth and light. (1.)

## The Summer Solstice

### A MIDSUMMER NIGHT'S DREAM.....

...In fairy legends and folklore, this is supposed to be a night in which the 'veil' between our world and the world of fairy and nature spirits are thin.

It's said that if you hope to catch a glimpse of a fairy, this is the best night. You would first have to find a fairy circle-- a circle of stones in which fairies gather. Or, you'd need to create a place that would attract fairies. Ideally, this should be a natural area of your yard.

Leaving out offerings such as shiny things to play with (crystals, glittery balls) as well as food offerings like honey, milk and fruit will also be inviting to these spirits. One thing you should know, though-- fairies are thought to be very tricky, and have even been known to kidnap humans.

Also be wary of other little people, or 'hidden folk' on this night; along with fairies, you might run into trolls or evil nature spirits in the midst of this night. (4.)

### The Standing Stones, Pyramids and More..

#### The Great Pyramids of Egypt

- Are aligned to the rising of the Sun;
- the sun of the summer solstice sets precisely between the largest of the great Pyramids.

#### Stonehenge

- The solstice sun rises between the two heel stones and at mid-day shines directly overhead.

#### Nabta Playa- Egyptian Megolith

- Stones align to the rising Summer Solstice Sun and the stars Sirius, Dughe (Ursa Major) and the stars in the belt of Orion.

#### Ajanta Caves in India

- 30 manmade caves. Cave twenty-six aligns to the Summer Solstice sunrise. The statue of Buddha within the cave is illuminated by the Solstice sun.

(1.)... the great celebration of the summer solstice was recognised **throughout Europe**. This was preeminently a fire festival, for the ceremonies featured the lighting of huge bonfires on the hilltops, leaping through the flames, and rolling blazing wheels of fire from the summits of the hills, indicating the sun's descending course in the heavens.

These ancient rites attached themselves in **Christendom** to St. John's eve. It seems as though the same train of symbolism which had adapted the midwinter festival to the nativity, may have suggested the dedication of the midsummer festival to John the Baptist, in clear allusion to his words, 'He must increase, but I must decrease.'

Durandus, speaking of the rites of the Feast of St. John the Baptist, informs us of the curious custom that prevailed of rolling fire wheels down from the hills. This practice was common in **France, and many North German** examples of it are on record. The following is an account of one of these festivals, which took place at Conz on the Moselle, in 1823, as described by Grimm:

"Every house delivers a sheaf of straw on the top of the Stromberg, where the men and lads assemble towards evening, whilst the women and girls gather about the Burbacher fountain. A huge wheel is now bound round with straw in such a manner that not a particle of wood remains visible; a stout pole is passed through the middle of the wheel, and the persons who are to guide it lay hold on the ends of the pole, which projects three feet on either side. The rest of the straw is made up into a great number of small torches. At a signal from the mayor of Sierk (who, according to ancient custom, receives a basket of cherries on the occasion), the wheel is kindled with a torch and set rapidly in motion. Everybody cheers and swings torches in the air. Some of the men remain above, others follow the burning wheel down hill in its descent to the Moselle. It is often extinguished before it reaches the river, but if it burns at the moment it touches the water, that is held to be prophetic of a good vintage, and the people of Conz have a right to levy a fuder of white wine upon the surrounding vineyards. Whilst the wheel is passing before the female spectators, they break out into cries of joy, the men on the hilltops reply, and the people from the neighbouring villages who have assembled on the banks of the river mingle their voices in the general jubilee."

There is a striking analogy between the St. John fire celebrations and the **Vedic legend** of Indra's fight with the midsummer demons.

"In this legend, the demon Vritra possessed himself of the sun wheel and the treasures of heaven, seized the women, kept them prisoners in his cavern, and laid a curse on the waters until Indra released the captives and took off the curse."

The significance of the ceremony lies in the details that enter into it, the key to which is found in the following passage from a Vedic hymn: "With thee conjoined, O Indu (Soma), did Indra straightway pull down with force the wheel of the sun that stood upon the mighty mountain top, and the source of all life was hidden from the great scather."

The wheel of fire on the hilltop represents the sun resting on the crest of the cloud mountain. Both the wheel and the sun descend from their positions of prominence and are extinguished, the wheel by the waters of the stream at the base of the hill, the sun by the sea of clouds.

The elements of strife and warfare enter into the scene. The descending wheel is pursued to the water's edge by a crowd of men brandishing torches; Indra and his hosts wage successful warfare against the army of the demon Vritra. The fact that women are excluded from the ceremonies emphasises the idea of a combat, for it is their province solely to watch the battle as spectators and cheer the victors.

Another notion associated with this rite of the blazing wheel was that, as the wheel went rolling away from them in its descending course, it symbolised a wheel of fortune, and the ill luck of the people went rolling away, a signal for great rejoicing.

This ceremony of the descent of the wheel was anciently observed on St. John the Baptist's Day at **Norwich, England**, and even to this day it is the custom to light huge bonfires on the hilltops in Ireland, according to the ancient pagan usage when the Baal fires were kindled as part of the ritual of Sun worship. Around these fires the peasants dance, and when the fire burns low, it is the custom to lift children across the glowing embers to secure them good luck during the year, which is similar to the custom practised by worshippers of Baal and Moloch in ancient times of passing children through the fire that burned at the feet of the cruel and insatiable god.

There was also practised in **Ireland**, in connection with the midsummer festival, which celebrated the turning-point of the sun at the summer solstice, a strange dance which was religious in its character, and solar in its origin. The Greeks called this "the Pyrrhic dance" from "pur" meaning fire, and practised it from the most ancient times. The feature of the dance was its serpentine character, as the dancers circled about in a long line simulating the coils of a serpent. In Ireland the dance had the same characteristics, and though the esoteric meaning of the dance had been lost, it was in all probability a mystic rite symbolic of the course of the sun, for the dancers invariably circled from east to west.

In **Wales**, the custom of lighting bonfires on Midsummer Eve is still kept up in many villages, and the peasants gather about them dancing and leaping through the flames. The leaping through the flames is supposed to ward off evil spirits, prevent sickness, and bring good luck.

The **Scandinavians** believed that when midsummer came the death of their Sun-God Balder took place, and to light him on his way to the underworld they kindled bright fires of pine branches, and when, six months later at the winter solstice, he regains his life and mounts to greet them, they burn the yule log and hang lights on the fir-trees to illuminate his upward course.

(the author of the Golden Bough) Frazer tells us how the fern seed, the oak, and the mistletoe are

closely associated as symbols with the solar festivals celebrated at the winter and summer solstices: The two great days for gathering the fabulous fern seed, which is popularly supposed to bloom like gold or fire on Midsummer Eve, are Midsummer Eve and Christmas, that is, the two solstices. We are led to regard the fiery aspect of the fern seed as primary, and its golden aspect as secondary and derivative. Fern seed, in fact, would seem to be an emanation of the sun's fire at the two turning-points of its course, the summer and winter solstice. This view is confirmed by a **German** story, in which a hunter is said to have procured fern seed by shooting at the sun on Midsummer Day at noon. Three drops of blood fell down, which he caught in a white cloth, and these blood drops were the fern seed. Here the blood is clearly the blood of the sun from which the fern seed is thus directly derived. Thus it may be taken as certain that the fern seed is golden because it is believed to be an emanation of the sun's golden fire.

The most important date of the **Egyptian** year was the twentieth of June, that marked the summer solstice, but more especially the rise of the all-fertilising Nile. This was the New Year Day in Egypt. The greatest solar festival of the Egyptians, however, was the festival of Osiris, and the special feature of this occasion was the procession in which the sacred ox Apis appeared.

The following description of this festival is taken from *Mythology and Fables* by the Abbé Banier:

"The ox whom the priests nourished with so much care, and for whom all Egypt had such a veneration, was looked upon as a god. To gain some credit to this superstition, they said he represented the soul of Osiris. Herodotus tells us that this ox was to be black over all the body, with a square white mark upon the forehead. Upon the back he was to have the figure of an eagle, a knot under the tongue in the figure of a beetle, the hairs of the tail double, and according to Pliny a white mark upon the right side, which was to resemble the crescent moon. Porphyry says that all these marks had reference to the sun and moon, to whom the ox Apis was consecrated, that the black hair which was to be the colour of his body in general represented the scorching influence of the sun upon bodies, and that the white spot which he had in his which he bore upon the side, were symbols of the moon. The eagle and beetle were also symbols of the sun."

"The festival of Apis lasted seven days. The people went in crowds to bring him from the place where he was found, the priests led the procession, and every one was desirous to receive him into his home. On the day of the Osiris festival the priests conducted the ox Apis to the banks of the Nile and drowned him with great ceremony. He was then embalmed and interred at Memphis. After his death the people mourned and made lamentation as if Osiris had been now dead. The priests cut off their hair, which in Egypt was a sign of the deepest mourning, and this mourning lasted till they got another ox to appear resembling the former in the same marks, when they began to make merry as if the Prince himself had arisen from the dead. The superstition of the Egyptians in relation to the ox Apis was carried to great excess. They honoured him as a god, and consulted him as an oracle; when he took what food was offered to him it was a favourable response, and his refusing it was looked upon as a bad presage."(1.)

## **The Days of Balance**

### **The Equinoxes**

Simply put, an equinox occurs twice a year – spring and autumn – when the Sun crosses the plane of the Earth's equator. Derived from a Latin term meaning "equal night", an equinox is not actually an entire day, but happens at two specific moments each year when the centre of the Sun is observed directly above a certain location on the Earth's equator. **(2.)**

### **Nabta Playa Megolith**

... the stones also marked the heliacal (star in conjunction with the Sun) rising of stars in the constellation Orion on the Vernal Equinox and Vega on the Autumnal Equinox.

### **Lore**

#### **Echoes The Duality Of Light And Dark**

In Japan, for instance, Vernal Equinox Day (March) and Autumnal Equinox Day (September) are national holidays, spent visiting family graves and holding family reunions. Meanwhile, in Iranian/Persian tradition, the Earth (symbolised by a fighting bull) and Sun (a lion) are considered equal in power on the day of an equinox. **(2.)**

#### **The Vernal (Spring) Equinox**

### **Heralds the Coming of Spring**

... the egg is full of strong symbolism. The yellow yolk of the egg represents the Sun God, while the white of the egg represents the Maiden Goddess. Together, with the shell, the egg represents rebirth and creation. It is interesting to note that left to their own devices, hens produce eggs only when they receive 12 or more hours of sunlight a day—Spring Equinox is when the time of day and night are equal, producing ever lengthening days of more than 12 hours. **(3.)**

#### **The Autumnal (Fall) Equinox**

### **Marks the Second Harvest**

A festival in honour of the Sun was held on the thirtieth day of Epiphi, called the "birthday of Horus' eyes," when the sun and moon were supposed to be in the same right line with the earth. On the twenty-second of Phaophi, after the autumnal equinox, there was a similar ceremonial to which,



according to Plutarch, they gave the name of the "nativity of the staves of the sun," intimating that the sun was then removing from the earth, and as its light became weaker and weaker, that it stood in need of a staff to support it. (1.)

## The Great Wheels

### **Astrological and Illuminated Celebration** (Handout)

#### **Lore Resources:**

1. *Sun Lore of All Ages*, by William Tyler Olcott, [1914]
2. Tom Moran: Urban Ghosts Article
3. Silverlotus.net
4. psychicsuniverse.com

***Next session:  
Days of Light and Dark  
The Solstices***

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