

## The 'YORK RITE' as practiced in GUYANA.

By  
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No 3254 EC

GUYANA, 'Land of Many Waters', is well known for its diversity in cultures as a result of its historical past, and this has been reflected in the evolution of Freemasonry with the formation of Lodges that mirrored the society at large during the various stages of development of this Nation of One People with One Destiny.

There are FIFTEEN LODGES under the District Grand Lodge that falls under the jurisdiction of the United Grand Lodge of England. Another SIX LODGES have been formed in the District Grand Lodge of Guyana under the Scottish Constitution.

The fifteen Lodges under the English Constitution are as follows:-

1.	Union Lodge	No 247 EC	Emulation Ritual
2.	Mount Olive Lodge	No 385 EC	"YORK RITE"
3.	Ituni Lodge	No 2642 EC	Emulation Ritual
4.	Silent Temple Lodge	No 3254 EC	"YORK RITE"
5.	Concord Lodge	No 3508 EC	Taylor Ritual
6.	Roraima Lodge	No 3902 EC	Emulation Ritual
7.	Mount Everest Lodge	No 5868 EC	Emulation Ritual
8.	Kara Kara Lodge	No 8349 EC	Emulation Ritual
9.	Eureka Lodge	No 8515 EC	Taylor Ritual
10.	Guyana Lodge of Research	No 8525 EC	Emulation Ritual
11.	Lotus Lodge	No 8735 EC	Sussex Ritual
12.	Klubba Lodge	No 9103 EC	Logic Ritual
13.	University Lodge of Guyana	No 9331 EC	Taylor Ritual
14.	Guyana Wheel of Service Lodge	No 9431 EC	Emulation Ritual
15.	Phoenix Lodge	No 9517 EC	Taylor Ritual

As indicated before many of the new Lodges formed, literally targeted specific groups in the society and in this context, we hear terms like the "SUGAR LODGE" which in this case referred to Concord Lodge that attracted the staff in the Sugar Industry at the time of its formation. To become a member or join the Guyana Wheel of Service Lodge, No 9431 EC, one must be a ROTARIAN.

The Emulation Ritual is considered the '*standard*' simply because of the six Lodges that use it, in addition to the '*No1 Lodge in Guyana*', **UNION LODGE** which really practiced at one stage a form of the **NIGERIAN RITUAL** which itself is basically a modified Emulation Ritual. These seven Lodges however practice subtle variations to the Ritual, subject to the interpretations or misinterpretations that have now become accepted by a particular Lodge.

While the '*standard*' is well recognized and accepted by all, the other three rituals, TAYLOR, LOGIC and SUSSEX are practiced by those Lodges listed above, fully sanctioned by the District Grand Lodge as well as United Grand Lodge of England under whose jurisdiction we fall.

You may also note here that Ituni and Roraima Lodges were at one stage using the NIGERIAN RITUAL.

The 'YORK RITE' as practiced by Mount Olive and Silent Temple Lodges consists of adaptations for the ceremonies of Initiation, Passing and Raising, while the Opening and Closing of the three Degrees are done in accordance with the Emulation Ritual. It may be apposite to note here that in the same way each of the Lodges using the Emulation Ritual have adopted certain variations, Mount Olive and Silent Temple Lodges also have their own variations in the Opening and Closing of the three Degrees while purporting to be using the Emulation Ritual.

The origin of the use of the 'YORK RITE' is said to have taken place in 1900 when a Past Master of Mount Olive Lodge was on vacation in New York. He visited several Lodges and was so impressed with the workings that he brought back a script and persuaded the Brethren to accept it in Mount Olive Lodge. This was done with the relevant dispensation from United Grand Lodge of England, and it could also be assumed, the District Grand Lodge that was in its first year of existence, for technically speaking, there is no official work or ritual authorized by the Grand Lodge of England.

One of the most significant variations is '*squaring*' the Lodge during any movement and in the case of Mount Olive Lodge, the manner of changing the Tracing Board by the two Deacons. The irony of these not so subtle variations is that the newly raised Brethren are technically presented with the Emulation Ritual while being congratulated on having completed their TRS in Freemasonry.

Unlike the published Ritual that can be ordered and purchased in the regular Masonic Bookstores, the 'YORK RITE' as practiced in Guyana, consists of a series of typed scripts that originated from time immemorial, which were photocopied and handed down with awe and reverence from the '*Senior*' Past Masters, who are still considered the repository of all knowledge pertaining to the correctness of each ceremony that must remain inviolate.

Within recent years Silent Temple has '*published*' its version of the Second and Third Degree Ceremonies in a single booklet, while Mount Olive has just recently grudgingly accepted a booklet version of the Third Degree script that now includes the Third Degree Tracing Board and Traditional History. The full acceptance of any "script or booklet" by Mount Olive Lodge is likely to continue to be a difficult proposition, as it will involve Committee reviews which must then be accepted finally in Open Lodge. The

newly Raised Master Mason is generally not privy to these booklets and or scripts, literally until he is called upon to be actually involved in a ceremony especially since the Addresses in the NE and SE as well as the Working Tools are taken directly out of the Emulation Ritual.

In many cases the actual part of the script to be done by the newly made Master Mason was given to him and not the entire script of the respective degree. This unavailability should not be misinterpreted to be a deliberate attempt to keep the Master Mason 'in a state of darkness'; it is merely that an extra copy had not been printed or photocopied in time for the benefit of the new member. It however adds to the *mystique of secrecy and restriction in knowledge* that characterizes the perception the new member is forced to adopt, and to a greater extent, the deficiencies in the level of commitment of the respective Candidate's sponsor and seconder. Outside of the ceremonies of Initiation, Passing and Raising all other activities, including the Installation, are governed by the Emulation Ritual. Therefore it is quite possible that a new Master Mason would have no need to acquire a copy of the 'YORK RITE' script or booklet up to one year after he had completed his TRS in Freemasonry.

Having given you this scenario, it would not be surprising that very few Freemasons who are not members of Mount Olive Lodge or Silent Temple Lodge have ever had the opportunity to read the 'YORK RITE', as practiced, much less to have a personal copy. The satisfaction of seeing a well-conducted ceremony with the additional dramatic scenes is fixed indelibly in the mind of the Candidate as well as that of any visitor. It is the however the deep and lasting impressions on the Candidate which is of paramount importance, in that most of the 'YORK RITE CANDIDATES' feel a special relationship with their respective Mother Lodges especially after visiting the other Lodges when they then realize the extra effort put into the 'YORK RITE WORKINGS'.

One of the most significant aspects of the 'YORK RITE' as practiced in Guyana is that, the Candidate is received in each Degree with a greater sense of the philosophy of the Craft, compared to the silence in the other Rituals. The respective Tracing Boards are always presented as part of a working. The First Degree Tracing Board is taken straight out of the Emulation Ritual whilst the Second Degree has been adapted to have some interaction with the presenter and the Junior and Senior Wardens. The Third Degree Tracing Board is totally different from the one used when the Lodge is opened in the Third Degree. The actual Third Degree Tracing Board presentation [*Lecture on the Emblems*] is also significantly different between Mount Olive Lodge and Silent Temple Lodges.

During the perambulations in each Degree a passage of scripture is read, but Mount Olive Lodge now only reads the passage in the Raising. Strange as it may seem, Union Lodge has adopted the same passage in their Raising although it is not part of the Emulation Ritual.

The attractiveness of the 'YORK RITE CEREMONIES' to the Brethren in GUYANA at large, also attracted the attention of the United Grand Lodge of England, and through the District Grand Lodge, made several attempts to have the standard Emulation Ritual replace the 'YORK RITE CEREMONIES'. On his visit to Guyana in 1980, the R W Bro Sir James W Stubbs *PSGW*, Grand Secretary, noted in his address to the Brethren, as recorded in the minutes of District Grand Lodge, that the 'YORK RITE' had no place in the English Constitution under the United Grand Lodge of England, but had to accept that the Brethren so Initiated, Passed and Raised were as equal as any of the others under the accepted Rituals Ceremonies. It is said that one of the Brethren present at that meeting was bold enough to ask whether, from the tone of the observation, the Brethren of Silent Temple Lodge were to be now classed as Cowans.

On January 31, 1981, the Silent Temple Lodge Committee met under the Chairmanship of

W Bro T N Solomon	Worshipful Master
with a quorum made up of	
W Bro V M Young	IPM
Bro M F Singh	JW
W Bro C V Too-Chung	WM in 1946 and <b>Dep DGM</b>
W Bro N H Wong	WM in 1972
W Bro B A Ho	WM in 1976
and W Bro G C Chung	W M in 1978.

There was a full discussion on the 'YORK RITE' issues raised by the Grand Secretary and a decision was made not to vary the tradition on which the Lodge was founded since 1908.

[The Structure of American Freemasonry](#) resembles two sets of stairs that begin and end together. A Mason's first step is to become an Entered Apprentice. He climbs to the third step where most Masons stay. If he wants to go on in Masonic hierarchy, he enters either the SCOTTISH or YORK RITES.

Many authorities say the SCOTTISH RITE was begun by the Scots émigrés in France; the YORK RITE is named after York, England, where, by legend, the first Masonic body was organized. In the SCOTTISH RITE a Mason climbs 30 steps, or degrees.

A Mason in the YORK RITE advances 10 degrees, known by name and not by degree number: -

Order of Knights Templar  
Order of Knights of Malta  
Order of the Red Cross  
Super Excellent Master  
Select Master  
Royal Master  
Royal Arch Mason  
Most Excellent Master  
Past Master (Virtual)  
Mark Master

The Order of Knights Templar is considered equivalent to the 33 Degree Sovereign Grand Inspector General.

Queries on the 'YORK RITE' have always surfaced among the practitioners in Mount Olive and Silent Temple Lodges, and one formal answer in '[The Freemason at Work](#)' by Harry Carr, first published in 1976, was given to **question 116** on pages 237 and

**Question 116:** My Lodge works in the 'YORK RITE' and there is a dearth of information concerning this Rite in Guyana. Can you throw any light on its origin, history, etc? Is there any printed ritual for this Rite? **(From Bro C R Hopkinson, Guyana.)**

**Answer:** The title 'YORK RITE' presents many difficulties, because it arises NOT from fact, but from a tradition (in the *Old Charges*) that a great Masonic assembly was held in York by Prince Edwin, under a Charter granted by King Athelstan. Anderson in his *Book of Constitutions, 1738*, said that this took place in A.D. 926.

It is true, of course, that YORK is one of the oldest centers of Freemasonry in Britain but, although many of the *Old Charges* and other rare Masonic documents have come down from us from York, none of them relates to early or medieval ritual, and none of them could be described as forming the whole or part of a Rite. Indeed, the ritual now practiced even in the oldest Lodges at York, while it contains various slight differences from the more-or-less standardized versions, is largely identical with our modern rituals which were developed mainly in the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Laurence Dermott, who was Secretary of the Antients' Grand Lodge, fostered the idea that the Antients were preserving the ritual of the York (and Scottish) Masons, but despite his efforts to emphasize the notion that there were vast differences between the 'workings' of the Antients, and the Moderns' Grand Lodges, **the main differences were only two:**

- (a) The Antients adhered to the original sequence of the 'words' of the first and second degrees, which the Moderns had reversed.
- (b) The Antients held that the Royal Arch was an integral part of the Craft degree system; (the Moderns treated it, correctly, as a new addition).

Neither of these differences had anything to do with York, and the title 'YORK RITE' as the description of a system of Craft degrees has not been commonly used in England at any time. When it is so used, it is rather misleading.

In 1725 there was an old Lodge in the City of York, which constituted itself into '**The Grand Lodge of ALL England**'. Its influence was confined to the counties of York, Cheshire and Lancashire. It did not warrant or authorize dependent lodges until 1761; it was dormant from 1740 to 1761 and it finally ceased to exist in 1792.

In 1780, it gave its sanction to the working **offive separate degrees**, i.e.

Knight Templar  
Royal Arch and  
The three Craft Degrees.

On this basis it might seem possible to raise an argument for the existence of a genuine 'YORK RITE', but it must be emphasized that those degrees were all in existence before 1780 and they were by no means peculiar to York.

The York Grand Lodge constituted some thirteen Lodges during the whole period of its existence and one Grand Lodge. The latter was the '**Grand Lodge South of the River Trent**', William Preston's break-away organization which he erected in 1779; it lasted only ten years.

In the USA and other countries where the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite has established itself very strongly, the title 'YORK RITE' is applied to the older system of additional degrees which comprise the Mark Degree, with a cluster of degrees belonging to the Royal Arch and the Orders of the Red Cross, Knights of Malta, Knights Templar, etc., each with separate Statutes or Regulations.

**The A &ASR is bound by its Constitutions and have no jurisdiction whatever over the Craft Degrees.**

For both Rites the only link with 'blue' Masonry is that Brethren are unable to enter their Orders unless they have already acquired the three regular degrees of Craft Masonry.

Nowadays, therefore, the title 'YORK RITE' **when applied to Craft ritual**, represents an implicit claim that those who practise it are using the oldest and purest forms of the ritual. Unfortunately it is a claim that is virtually beyond proof.

Finally, so far as I am aware, there is no English printed ritual claiming to reproduce the whole of the 'YORK RITE', as understood in the USA. The rituals for the individual degrees or stages are certainly obtainable in England, but it would not be possible to confirm that they are identical with their American counterparts.

When the application to form Silent Temple Lodge was made in 1907 by the seven Brethren of Mount Olive Lodge, the District Grand Secretary, Dr F W Laws in his reply, stated that while there was no justification for the new Lodge, there would be no objection provided the new Lodge used the Emulation Ritual. The significance of the statement may be interpreted to confirm that since the seven Founders were all from Mount Olive Lodge, already using the 'YORK RITE,' it was likely that the new Silent Temple Lodge would adopt the same ceremonies or workings.

All subsequent written records up to the issue of the Silent Temple Lodge Warrant dated September 19, 1907, indicate no acceptance of the 'recommendation' from the District Grand Secretary, neither is there any record in the Minutes of Mount Olive Lodge that the Petition for the formation of Silent Temple Lodge was ever part of any of the proceedings in Open Lodge during 1907.

After its Consecration on January 28, 1908, the Minutes of Silent Temple Lodge likewise do not provide any evidence that the 'YORK RITE' was used in the Initiation, Passing and Raising the seven Candidates in 1908, all of which were done at special meetings approved by the corresponding dispensations given by the District Grand Lodge. It should be noted here that all nine of the Ceremonies were supported by the active participation of some Brethren of Mount Olive Lodge, since the seven Founders could not do all the work in each Ceremony.

It has been reported that in 1945, a visitor from Nova Scotia left a copy of that Lodge's script with the Brethren of Silent Temple, since it was the same as the 'YORK RITE' adopted from New York. It is also said that he had noted some variations as practiced by Silent Temple Lodge. In 1945 Silent Temple held six Regular meetings: -

- |                 |              |
|-----------------|--------------|
| 1. January 12   | Installation |
| 2. March 09     | Initiation   |
| 3. May 11       | Passing      |
| 4. July 13      | Raising      |
| 5. September 14 |              |
| 6. November 09  | Elections    |

An Emergency Meeting was held on Thursday October 25, 1945, *for the purpose of receiving the District Grand Master and Officers of District Grand Lodge to hold their Annual Meeting under our banner*'. At that meeting there was a Bro Sydney J Williams from **Scotia Lodge No 340** recorded among the visitors, but the brevity of the minutes makes confirmation of the report that a Nova Scotia script was handed over difficult. However there is no reason to discard the report and it could be acceptable to say that Silent Temple's scripts were influenced by that Nova Scotia script or whatever publication it was. There is no record of that visitor attending any of the three workings done in 1945. In this enlightened age today it may not be prudent to speculate that there seemed to be no effort at presenting uniformity in the 'YORK RITE' working at that time, and that Mount Olive and Silent Temple Lodges could continue to evolve their own variations in the future.

Thus while we are at great pains to retain distinctions among ourselves, from modification of the 'standard' Emulation Ritual, to the adaptation of some of the **'older ceremonies'** represented by the 'YORK RITE', we seem to be losing our ability to adopt the philosophy of Freemasonry as exemplified in the CHARGES given to the Entered Apprentice, the Fellow Craft and the Master Mason which are given straight out of the Emulation Ritual.

These distinctions, even between the ceremonies referred to as 'YORK RITE' in Mount Olive and Silent Temple Lodges, almost border on establishing levels of subordination among the Lodges, manifested subtly in the striving for perfection in our respective ceremonies and or performances, whether pure and unsullied or adapted. The text of the First Degree Tracing Board is straight out of the Emulation Ritual while the Second and Third are different. The physical Third Degree Tracing Boards [*Lecture on the Emblems*] are also different and the Silent Temple text has additional sections. The obligations likewise are out of the Emulation Ritual except an additional paragraph in the Third Degree.

The dramatic sequences in the Third Degree working and the enduring role of the third ruffian, who is usually represented by a selected Past Master of no mean order, has added such distinction to our workings that we would be so much the poorer if the 'YORK RITE' is allowed to be discarded for whatever reason.

In closing this presentation, I would like to quote from the **'Charge at Initiation into the First Degree'** given in **'Duncan's Masonic Ritual and Monitor or Guide to the Three Symbolic Degrees of the Ancient York Rite'** by Malcom C Duncan, Third Edition:

*"Such is the nature of our institution, that, in all our Lodges, union is cemented by sincere attachment, hypocrisy and deceit are unknown, and pleasure is reciprocally communicated by the cheerful observance of every obliging office.*

*Virtue, the grand object in view, luminous as the meridian sun, shines refulgent on the mind, enlivens the heart, and converts cool approbation into warm sympathy and cordial affection.*

*Though every man, who carefully listens to the dictates of reason, may arrive at a clear persuasion of the beauty and necessity of virtue, both public and private, yet it is a full recommendation of a society to have these pursuits continually in view, as the sole objects of their association; and these are the laudable bonds which unite us in one indissoluble fraternity."*

*The YORK RITE in GUYANA.doc*  
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