THE SCOTTISH RITE CAMP (PART 1):
THE MILITARY MIGHT OF THE NONAGON

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Abstract

The intent of this manuscript is to shed some light on the encrypted meaning of the nonagon—a strategically-placed, geometric shape within the Scottish Rite camp. Enigmatic and fascinating, the nonagon appears to be deliberately drawn on the outskirts of the camp to enlighten those who study its beauty of the importance of military positioning and combat preparedness. Moreover, as we journey counterclockwise around the nonagon, applicable lessons regarding morality and philosophy and camp commanders shall be provided so that the reader may ascertain and appreciate the significance of its placement and methods by which its embedded wisdom may be employed.

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Introduction

Linked to France during the middle of the 18th century, the origin of the Scottish Rite Degrees was conceived during a time when the Rite of Perfection was originally established. Consisting of 25 degrees which includes the first three symbolic degrees, the Rite of Perfection is believed to be the foundation of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite. Stephan Moran and Henry Andrew Francken, author of Francken Manuscripts, were major advocates of the Rite of Perfection. Stephen Moran was authorized by Grand Lodge of France in 1761 to establish the Rite within the Western Hemisphere. Instead, Moran introduced and established the Rite in the West Indies in Santo Domingo (Dominican Republic) and Kingston, Jamaica. Stephan Moran subsequently met a Dutch gentleman by the name Henry Andrew Francken and conferred upon him the position of Deputy Inspector General. As an advocate of the new Rite of Perfection, Francken traveled to Albany, New York and created the Lodge of Perfection in 1767. On May 31st 1801, the first Supreme Council of 33° Degree was founded in the city of Charleston, South Carolina and established a 33-degree system of high degrees, which included the foundational 25 degrees of Rite of Perfection.

The Camp

Exclusive to the 32nd degree, the Camp is a series of strategically-arranged tents and banners, which signify the encampments of masons. A picture of the camp may be found in FIGURE 1. On the surface, contemplation reveals a series of geometric shapes and designs; however, deeper evaluation of the underlying symbolism is requisite to comprehend the strategic purpose of shape and banner arrangements and their associated meanings. As such, included within this manuscript is a depiction of the symbolism illustrated by the nonagon and its surrounding military tents.

The Nonagon

The nonagon is composed of nine sides, including militia cleverly placed at each point and located at the outskirts of the camp. In order to mentally circumambulate and scrutinize the nonagon, color and meaning of the banners, commanders of the armies, and Masonic degrees represented must be elucidated. Moreover,
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careful consideration of the following information may aid the reader in ascertaining the reason why the emblematic military might of the nonagon is deliberately included at the outer perimeter. The nonagon may be seen in FIGURE 2.

Degrees 1-3

Marked by a blue banner, the first tent represents the first three degrees in Scottish Rite Masonry. Interpretation of the symbolic degrees and this tent may be described by disclosing the lessons learned: demonstration of man as uninformed and as one who longs to discover his purpose is the general aim of the first degree; the fellow craft degree subsequently facilitates an introduction to the presence of two symbolic pillars, three stages of life, five orders of architecture, and seven arts and sciences; and the master mason's degree affords one to be raised from a dead level of ignorance and bondage to a perpendicular of freedom and intelligence. On the banner of this tent are the letters "I" and "S." The Commander of this tent is Ezra, a high priest who was afforded permission to leave Babylon, under the direction of Artaxerxes, along with a host of other priests and Levites. They were allowed to journey back to Jerusalem to ensure that Hebrew captives were living according to the Laws of Moses.

Degrees 4 and 5

The next tent has raised from the earth a green banner, representing the 4th and 5th or Secret Master and Perfect Master degrees, accordingly. The Secret Master degree prepares one to begin an ascent towards new heights of understanding and wisdom and to maintain secrecy in the process. Additionally, Clavis Ad Mysterium or the “Keys to the Mysteries” are afforded to worthy candidates in the fourth degree. Further, a Perfect Master is taught that the most excellent virtue of mankind is the good will. Candidates are also reminded to do what is right because it is right. The banner for this army has on it the letter “N”. The commander of camp is Joshua. The son of Nun, from the tribe of Ephraim, Joshua was the Chief Judge and successor of Moses. Joshua was sent by Moses to capture the land of Canaan. After conquering Canaan, he divided the land into 12 provinces. In fact, God spoke with Joshua and provided him with his charge/duty to the children of Israel in establishing their land and territory which was occupied by other civilizations. Furthermore, Joshua learned that practicing faithfully the Law of Moses leads to prosperity and favor with God.

To be continued in the next issue of The Phylaxis