

## CONCERNING ROYAL ARCH INSTALLATIONS

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In the early periods of the Royal Arch there is a paucity of information regarding a ceremonial pattern for Installation, but we glean what we can from various Minute Books, looking for signs that may be classed as stages of development. Although a clearly defined sequence for Installation is recorded in Grand Chapter Minutes in 1810, the search is not really completed until the appearance of the first printed ritual in 1874.

The Antients' Grand Lodge paid close attention to Craft ritual and ceremonial but they recorded very little about the Royal Arch. However, two items are worthy of note, the first of which is dated 2 March, 1757:

"... Order'd the Masters of the Royal Arch shall also be Summon'd to meet in order to regulate things relative to that most valluable [sic] branch of the Craft ..."

The second is to be found in their Register of Members of the Royal Arch which was produced in their Grand Lodge in 1783, and the following is an extract;

"... Resolved, that the Excellent Masters Chosen & appointed . . . shall . . . Use their utmost endeavours to Study, Learn, Rehearse, and practize, the several Ancient Ceremonies . . . perform'd in the Craft: particularly, the Mysteries of the Holy Royal Arch, the Installations of Grand Officers in general, and processions ... In order that the ancient Landmarks may be faithfully preserved and handed down pure and undefiled to Our posterity for ever".

We are much better served by the Minutes of the Chapter from which the independent Grand Chapter of the Moderns was to arise.

In a *Manifesto*, which was virtually a self-conferred Charter, dated 12 June 1765, it was stated that each year an election of Officers was to be held; they were to be regularly chosen and invested; they were to continue in office for one whole year. If an Officer happened to be absent from a meeting the *Manifesto* authorised the Z. to appoint any able and experienced Brother to occupy the position that night, which meant that lay Companions could be appointed to occupy the Second or Third Principals' Chairs if they were not present.

The Grand Chapter was set up under the Charter of Compact in July 1766. The following December, Bro, Dunkerley was elected by Ballot to the office of Z., and,

"... was invested and installed accordingly with the privilege of appointing two M.E. & the rest of the E.G. Officers to which the Chapter unanimously consented . . ."

There is no evidence of an esoteric ceremony but the Z.H.J. sequence is made clear, as well as the seniority of the Officers, in a list bearing unusual initials:

P.T.H.I. = Prophet Haggai  
P.T.I.A. = Priest Jeshua  
p.I.S.E. = principal Scribe Ezra  
I.R.S.N. = Junior Scribe Nehemiah  
SNR = Sojourner (1st, 2nd, 3rd.)

According to the Minutes all were invested "and received their Charges".

It was not until 1796 that an entry appeared showing that elections for each of the Principals and Treasurer operated, also that a resolution was submitted for the appointment of other Officers be left with the M.E.Z.

In the Minutes of the Royal Arch Chapter of St. James, we find a reference in 1798 to Companions being "inducted into the respective offices of H. and J." I treat this entry as a development because prior to that the minutes had referred to "election" of Officers. The introduction of the word 'inducted' seems to me to imply some sort of ceremonial, however brief.

In the records of the same Chapter we read of eleven Installation ceremonies being performed, all by the M.E.Z., all on the same evening in June 1801. Those Minutes tend to read like a game of musical chairs with such references as "elected", "installed", and "resigned", liberally sprinkled throughout the report. However, one item is of special interest because certain Companions:—

"... were duly Installed, and pass'd the several Chairs Accordingly, and were respectively intrusted with the several signs and words thereto belonging ..."

Evidence now appears of signs and words for each of the three Principals.

According to the Minutes of Grand Chapter meeting on 10th May 1810, the ceremonial pattern had been developed in outline and a positive sequence had emerged. The following is an extract of considerable importance:-

". . . Those Companions who had not passed the Chair of Z. were requested to retire, when the Chapter proceeded to consecrate and invest H.R.H. the Duke of Sussex as G.M.Z. according to ancient form.

The Companions who had passed the second Chair were then admitted and the Right Honourable the Earl of Moira was invested and consecrated in like manner.

After which the Companions who had passed the Chair of J. were admitted and Companion W.R.Wright was in like manner invested and consecrated as G.M.J.

The Chapter was then thrown open to all other Companions thereof, the visiting Companions were next readmitted after which . . . M.E.Z., H. and J. severally . . . took upon themselves the accustomed Obligation.

The Provincial Grand Superintendents and Grand Officers now walked in procession three times round the Chapter, the other Companions saluting in ancient form . . .

The Companions generally having resumed their Stations the Grand Principal Sojourner proclaimed each Grand Master and they were reverently saluted . . ."

It fell to the lot of one man to set the pathway for uniformity in Royal Arch ritual in general and for Installation procedure in particular. He was Comp, Arthur L. Thiselton of Cyrus Chapter who, on 1st May, 1833, moved:

"That a Committee be appointed to take into consideration the Ceremonies for Installation of Principals as well as the various other Ceremonies of the Order."

The work of that Committee and of the subsequent Chapter of Promulgation is well known, but what is sometimes overlooked is the fact that for the meeting of Grand Chapter on 21st November, 1834, attendance was restricted to First Principals and Past First Principals, and it was at that meeting the whole of the Report was approved.

How dull life would be without a rebel or two! The M.E.Z, Elect of Chapter Fidelity No. 3 announced his intention "to conduct the discipline of the Chapter according to the former Athol system . . ." The members of that Chapter sought guidance and, on 4th November, 1835, it was announced in Grand Chapter:

"Some misconceptions having arisen as to what are the Ceremonies of our Order it is hereby resolved and declared that the Ceremonies adopted and promulgated by Especial Grand Chapter on the 21st and 25th November 1834 are the Ceremonies of our Order which it is the duty of every Chapter to accept and obey."

An abortive attempt was made to have the Minute not confirmed; a Motion for compliance to be a voluntary measure also failed.

The first printed Craft ritual to be accepted as such and not generally viewed as an exposure, was compiled, printed and published by George Claret, in London, in 1838. On the title page was the following:

"Of whom may be had the following Royal Arch Masonry, Opening and Closing, Ceremony of Exaltation, Passing the Veils, Prayers, Exhortation [sic] and the R.A Lecture."

Claret made no mention of Installation ceremonies for the Royal Arch. His first printed ritual for the Royal Arch appeared in 1845 but Installation ceremonies were not included then and they did not appear in any subsequent editions, of which there were many versions both authentic and pirated.

Royal Arch Installation ceremonies were printed for the first time by Lewis, London, and were contained in the Perfect Ceremonies published in Minutes of 1810.

One item of special importance from that publication is that at one stage of the Installation of Z. he was placed "kneeling on a chair before that in which he is to be installed, between two P.Z.'s." Evidence that at least two P.Z.s were in attendance upon the Installing Principal. Similar procedure was carried out for Second Principal and later for the Third Principal, after which the Companions were admitted and the newly Installed Principals were saluted "with seven". Another point worth noting is that two words were given to the newly Installed Z., the second of which was "believed to be the ancient word of a Past Principal Z." Both words were described as "mysterious names of the Divinity."

It must be extremely gratifying to Grand Chapter to know that the variations in Installation procedure, which were passed in November 1961, have now been widely adopted. The suggestions which came before Grand Chapter in November 1960 under Appendices "A" and "B", were considered for a period and then amended to become Appendices "C" and "D" in Grand Chapter Proceedings.

Under the form outlined in Appendix "C" the sequence of Installation is Z., H., J., the Chairs being occupied at appropriate times by Past Principals wearing robes and bearing the sceptres. Under the form for Appendix "D" the reverse sequence applies. After the Companions have retired from the Chapter, J. Elect is installed and he retires; the Third Principal's Chair is usually left unoccupied with the robe, collar and sceptre placed upon it. H. Elect is then installed, he retires; the Second Principal's Chair is left unoccupied with robe, collar and sceptre placed upon it. Z. Elect is then installed and when that ceremony has been concluded and the Conclave closed, the Second Principal, Third Principal, and the Companions are readmitted in separate stages.

We have now examined a few of the items that signified change or development in the pattern of Royal Arch Installations, all of which occurred in London. It may be that some rather strange procedures could be produced from other parts of the country but in this it is well to bear in mind that in places where it is difficult to exercise authority, the aberration of today becomes the "tradition" of tomorrow.