

# **US - Skull and Bones, the Elite of the Empire** ([voltairenet.org](http://voltairenet.org))

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*Within the very exclusive and puritan Yale University, every year 15 children of very wealthy families are co-opted. They are members of a secret association of ghoulish rites: the Skulls and Bones. Throughout their lives, they support and assist each other in view of the democratic flightiness of the masses they detest. The next president of the United States is one of the 800 initiated: George W. Bush and John Kerry are members since 36 years ago.*

The association Skull and Bones has inspired an important conspiratorial literature that holds responsible its members with the Watergate scandal, the Bay of Pigs invasion and even with the assassination of John F. Kennedy. Thanks to its links with the business sector, especially with the banking sector, these old «pals» of Yale University would control the world finances, and even the future of the world. The Skulls & Bones would have infiltrated into the Council on Foreign Relations, the Trilateral Commission, the CIA, etc.

It is not about discussing in Voltaire a secular publication about the esoteric practices of this organization during the initiation rites, or its annual ceremonies, but to analyze its social character and possible political role. The Skull & Bones is above all the example of how the United States has improved a reproduction system of elites through a selection that, contrary to the myth of self-made man, does not have anything to do with the fate or individual qualities. In fact, as underlined by Anthony Sutton, the most active members of the organization come from a “group of 20 or 30 families”, very interested in the defense of their legacy and descent. That is why there are a lot of marriages among the representatives of the families which the members of the Skull and Bones belong to, although only male students were admitted, till recently, in the organization.

## **Yale, Exclusive and Puritan University**

The Skull and Bones was born in the campus of Yale University, and, according to an outstanding investigation conducted by the journalist of the Atlantic Monthly, Alexandra Robbins, it is nothing accidental. [1].

At the beginning of the 18th century, the number of American universities like Harvard, Williams, Browdoin, Middlebury or even Amherst, were founded by Congregationalists. But they faced the competition of the Presbyteries, who encouraged the president of Harvard, Increase Mather, to take actions. In 1701, he resigned from his post and created a new university “so that the interest of Religion be preserved, and the Truth be transmitted to future generations”. With the assistance of 10 pastors, nine of which lived in Harvard, he was then able to found the Collegiate School of Connecticut.

In 1711, Issac Newton, Richard Steel and Elihu Yale were contacted to transfer some books of their personal collection to the new institution. The contacts with Yale, that had become extremely rich due to his business within the Company of West Indies and as governor of the colony of Madras, were particularly fruitful. Apart from providing books, Yale generously funded the university, which paid tribute to him adopting his name, Yale University, as of 1720.

The ties with the Congregationalism would ensure Puritanism in the teaching process and functioning of Yale. Students and teachers were obliged to take the profession of faith to be admitted in the establishment and would be expelled if their sincerity was questioned. It may be added to this Puritanism a fierce elitism: the students were classified, upon their arrival to Yale, not based upon their capacity but

upon the social class of their parents.

First, it was the children or grandchildren of governors or deputy governors. Then, the relatives of the judges of the Supreme Court. A bit lower, the children of pastors and former students. At the end, the children of farmers, traders and craftsmen. The classification would determine where every student would seat in the classrooms, the chapel and dinning hall. The most amazing thing, said Alexandria Robbins, is not that such initial classification would be depending on the social status of the family of the student, something very usual in the 18th century, but it is maintained during the studies.

Yale became then in the typical ideal example of an institution that produced the elite and its internal hierarchy. The loss of the initial rank is the result of some kind of discipline breach and the student who had tarnished the honor of his family was punished.

It may be added to this unusual functioning of freedom granted specially to the elder students to haze, even in the most humiliating and cruel way, the students of lower classes. The rule provided a number of measures to ensure respect for the most arbitrary hierarchy, based only on the age. Lyman Bagg illustrated in the work, *Four Years in Yale*, anonymous published in 1871, how he analyzed the methods established by the institution. These authorized practices showed, according to him, the "big power of the 'habits' of the school in the creation of a temporary madness that turned weak men into cruel beings and good men into beings without mercy".

This tendency to elitism, brutal hierarchy and Puritanism encouraged the students, at the end of the 18th century, to create several associations parallel to the university. At the beginning, it was about literary associations, such as Linonia and Brothers in Unity. The students were urged to become members of any of these associations, something that did not seem elitist enough for those who wanted to have a strict reproduction of the new American "aristocracy".

In 1780, the branch Alpha of the organization Phi Beta Kappa was founded in Yale. Other associations emerged at that time: the Beethoven Society, the Hexahedron Club...Eventually, the literary circles lost their relevance, and were replaced by secret associations, more elitist and restricted. By the mid of the 19th century, the three main ones were Skull and Bones, the Scroll and Key and Wolf's Head.

At the same time, the faculty of Yale decided to follow the trend. Six years after the creation of the Skull and Bones, six members of the faculty elite met in the "Club", that quickly began to be called the "Old Man's Club". Among its six founder members were the professors Josiah Willard Gibbs and Theodore Dwight Woolsey. The organization would have soon as member William Howard Taft, the future Chief Justice of the State of Connecticut Simeon E. Baldwin, the university graduate Thomas Bergin, the neurosurgeon Harvey Cushing and the founder of the Skulls & Bones, William H. Russell. From this group, Thomas Bergin and Harvey Cushing would not become members of the Skull & Bones.

## **The Opium War**

The Yale University is a especially fertile ground for a secret association so exclusive and influential such as the Skull & Bones. But the success of this secret organization is greatly due to the powerful Russell family. One of its members, the reverend Noadah Russell, eminent member of the Congregationalist church, participated in the creation of Yale. The Russell family was also involved in the great war on opium that confronted the United Kingdom and China during the first half of the 19th century.

By the end of the 18th century, the monopoly of opium exploitation grown in Bengal with England's approval has been granted to the Company of West Indies, an association that was dependent directly on the British crown and in which Elihu Yale had been involved. The opium war that began by the year 1815 was aimed at imposing the introduction of the said drug to the huge Chinese market. From 320 annual tones in 1792, opium smuggling increased to 480 tones in 1817 and amounted to 3200 tones in 1837.

China then requested the Queen Victoria to end the smuggling. The sovereign announced that the revenues for the United Kingdom were too important for her to decide to put an end to it. Tensions raised

between Beijing and London: in January 1839, a Chinese smuggler was executed across from the offices of British businessmen in Canton. In June 1839, the Crown accepted to dismiss important opium shipments.

A lot of English people then left Canton and Macao to take up the drug smuggling a bit further, under the official protection of the British navy. The confrontation was already inevitable: on September 4, the first naval battle of the opium war took place. Several Chinese boats were destroyed. The confrontations showed «the fragility of the war junks and the cruel determination of the English Protestants to come out victorious the principles of liberalism founded in the opium smuggling» [2].

Samuel Russell, cousin of William Russell, was a major figure in the opium war. American national, he founded in 1813, the Russell & Company, which would compete in 1820 with the British control of drug smuggling into China. One of the eminent members of the association was Warren Delano Jr., grandfather of Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

### **From the Eulogie Club to the Skulls and Bones**

It was in this context that William Russell created the Skulls & Bones in 1832. It was difficult to establish the circumstances accordingly. At the beginning, it could be about the reaction to the exclusion of one member of Phi Beta Kappa, Eleazar Kingsbury Forster. Annoyed with such procedure and willing to give new vitality to Yale, William Russell had condemned the decision of Phi Beta Kappa, housed Forster and founded, together with other 13 students of Yale (among which was Alfonso Taft [3]), a more secret and stronger association, originally called Eulogie Club, name of the Greek Goddess of eloquence. Still impressed with a recent trip to Germany, Russell included a great amount of German references in the ritual.

In 1833, the young members adopted the skull and bones as the symbol. At that time, the number 322 became the “key figure” of the organization. The 322 BC was actually the year in which the Greek orator Demosthenes died. According to the “tradition of Skull and Bones”, the Goddess Eulogie went then to the paradise to return in 1832 and join the secret association.

In 1856, the Skull and Bones was officially registered under Russell Trust, owned by William H. Russell, thanks to Daniel Coit Gilman (Bones 1852), founder president of the John Hopkins University. On March 13 of the same year, the organization changed its head quarters and moved into an impressive building within Yale University, pompously called “the Tomb”.

The place was filled quickly with warlike and macabre relics: it could be seen, according to the testimonies of some members that were taken by Alexandra Robbins, an accumulation of flags, of black hangings and weapons collected in battle fields. In order to always remember that it is about the students’ fraternity, a number of basketball balls coming from mythical matches won by Yale, are exhibited in a hall.

The skull logo appeared practically in all empty spaces and the animal bones were exhibited in several walls. Some human skulls and bones could also be seen. Most of the pictures displayed in the campus represented Death meeting with various celebrities. The environment was similar to that of Adam’s family, said Marina Moscovici, an art curator of the State of Connecticut who worked in the restoration of about 15 pictures in 1999. A controversy broke out in the early 80’s about the skull of Jeremy, when the Skull & Bones claimed to have it in their possession. They even showed it to a chief of an Apache Tribe from Arizona, Ned Anderson. When they were asked to return the skull, the members of the organization gave a different one. An analysis showed that it was the skull of a 10 year-old boy, and not that of the Indian chief. The authenticity of the relic that was brought back to the «Tomb», is therefore doubtful.

Today, the functioning of the organization is better known. Every year, 15 members are recruited, which allows drawing an estimate of roughly 800 the number of members who are alive in the organization. Under the authority of the elder members, the 15 happy ones that are chosen meet twice a week for a year to talk about their lives, studies and personal projects. There are also debates about social and political matters.

Once a year, the association holds a retirement function in Deer Iland, a vast island located in Saint Laurent river, near New York, where a stately club with an English style has been built. The name of the island is Deer Iland, not Deer Island, because that was the will of George D. Miller, member of the Skull & Bones and generous donor of the residence [4].

The initiation ritual was object of the most ridiculous thoughts by the detractors of the organization. However, as in the Masonic ritual, its secret is its most deciding factor and, it is effectively possible that the ceremonies held in the campus of "the Tomb" had had some kind of pagan connotation, and even satanic. It should also be recalled that the jokes inflicted upon the new students of Yale were, in the past, particularly cruel. Yet, it is also difficult to demand from the chosen students today that in order to become a member of the organization, they have to get involved in unpleasant sexual games before the initiated ones.

## **The Network**

The most fascinating thing is not what happens within the organization, but rather in the coherence of its member list, which reveals the talent of the Skull and Bones in the training of the elite of tomorrow. As such, all presidents of the United States who have gone to Yale have been members of the Skull & Bones: William Howard Taft, Georthe H. W. Bush and George W. Bush. There are countless of personalities members of the organization who have been posted later in important jobs of political nature, diplomacy, media, an even, espionage.

The organization has important contacts in the diplomatic field, especially in the Council on Foreign Relations. For example, Henry Stimson, Secretary of War to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the Ambassador of the United States to the Soviet Union Avarell Harriman and Richardson Dilworth, administrator of the Rockefeller family's interests, were members of the Skull and Bones [5].

Several members of the Skull & Bones have also become famous in the media sector. It seems that Henry Luce and Briton Haden, members of the organization since 1920, have come up together with the idea of creating the Time magazine during a meeting in "the Tomb" whereas Avarell Harriman was the founder of the daily Today, that merged with another magazine in 1937 and became the Newsweek.

The contacts with the CIA are particularly impressive: William F. Buckley, ultra-conservative member of the Agency and notorious propagandist, was member of the association, as well as his brother, James Buckley, undersecretary of State for Security, Science and Technology, in the government of Ronald Reagan, a post from which he monitored the US military aid to right-wing regimes.

Hugh Cunningham (Bones 1934) had also a long career in the US services from 1947 to 1973. William Bundy, Bonesman of the promotion of 1939, is the same case, including Dino Pionzio (Bones 1950), head of the CIA office in Santiago de Chile in 1970, where he collaborated to destabilize the government of Salvador Allende.

Since it is a reproduction means for the economic and political elite of the country, the organization has ensured some kind of benevolence that the authorities are not very familiar with. In 1943, in a special legislative act adopted by the State of Connecticut, the associates to the Russell Trust Association were examined, which among other things, administrates the work of the secret association, and the presentation of the activity report that is demanded to any other association. During the second half of the 20th century, its funds were administrated by John B. Madden Jr., member of the Brown Brothers Harriman, an association that is the result of the mergence in 1933 of Brown BROS & Company and W. A. Harriman & Company. Madden worked then under the orders of Prescott Bush, father of the future president George H. W. Bush and grandfather of the current president of the United States.

Obviously, all these important figures are members of the Skull & Bones.

Another source of funds: the Rockefeller. Percy Rockefeller was member of the Order and linked the organization to the properties of the Standard Oil. Another important family linked to the Skull & Bones is

the Morgans. J.P. Morgan was never a member of the association, but Harold Stanley, member of the leading group of Morgan's Guaranty Trust, was a member since 1908. W. Averell Harriman, from the graduation of 1913, was also a member of the administrative council, as well as H.P. Whitney and his father, W.C. Whitney. The organization has been able to benefit indirectly from the funds of the Ford's family, apparently against its will. McGeorge Bundy, member of the Skull & Bones, was in fact the president of the Ford Foundation from 1966 to 1978, after being the national security advisor under John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson.

### **Presidential 2004: Skull and Bones Face to Face**

The Skull & Bones does not have truly an ideological discourse, although it is not common to revere a financier of the opium war or utilize as a ritual object the skull of the last chief of a population recently exterminated. Contrary to what the conspiratorial literature has mentioned, it is not about a neonazi club of ultra-conservatives or even hawks. Yet, as representative of the future elite (which already implies belonging to a social class with sufficient socio-cultural capital to triumph in the different fields of power), the members of the Skull & Bones share the same vision of the world and relations within society.

All of them are capitalists who champion a pseudo-liberalism and the values of Freedom that allegedly incarnates the United States. Even having responded recently to the chanting sirens of the "politically correct" by progressively admitting some representatives of the ethnic and sexual minorities, and later women, in 1991- causing dismay, among others, at the former president George H.W. Bush-, the elite under the Skull & Bones is the almost perfect incarnation of the unique thought of the leading class in the United States.

The fact that the two passed candidates who ran for president of the United States in 2004, George W. Bush and John Kerry, are members of the organization, cannot be interpreted as a sign of an election arranged in advance by two accomplices. However, we can legitimately be worried about the way in which the selection in the political sphere of the United States takes place because, if the two candidates are able to face each other seriously, there is no doubt that they both belong to a narrow and homogeneous social environment which is the reason why they defend, despite of their differences, similar interests. Somehow, to paraphrase a French politician, the presidential election of 2004 was "Skull and Bones or Bones and Skull".

In addition, it is the same reason why the Order calls so much the attention, because it incarnates the quintessence of the most favored social class of the United States and whose points of view are far from representing the democratic ideal that the rest of the population hopes to achieve. On an individual basis, several members of the organization have been involved in most of the "dirty actions" of the United States in the last 50 years, from the Bay of Pigs invasion to the creation of a nuclear doctrine, including the overthrow of Salvador Allende. And they have been able to do it only out of the framework of the democratic institutions, protected by the secrecy of their complicity and on the basis of an old fraternity. However, no decision of this kind has been made within the association itself of the Skulls & Bones. It is not about a hierarchical structure designed to make such decision and ensure its implementation.

Whatever the case may be, the secret Order is still the most evident façade of the "enemy of classes" that represents the "imperial aristocracy" of the United States.

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[1] Alexandra Robbins: *Secrets of the Tomb*, Little, Brown and Company, 2002

[2] Michel Tibon: *The absolution of crime favors its repetition - «The ethical weapon in the new West wars»*, unpublished thesis, 1999.

[3] Alphonso Taft, future Secretary of the War in 1876, later Secretary of Justice and US Ambassador to

Russia, is the father of William Howard Taft, the only US politician who was president of the Supreme Court after being president of the United States.

[4] It is a pun difficult to translate: Deer Island and Dear I Land.

[5] Anthony C. Sutton, "America's Secret Establishment: An Introduction to the Order of Skull & Bones", Liberty House Press, 1988

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<http://www.voltairenet.org/article30109.html>

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