

# The Great Eagles of the Legion of Honour

MUSÉE  
DE LA LÉGION  
D'HONNEUR  
ET DES ORDRES DE CHEVALERIE



- Creation
- A new dignity for a new elite ?
- Different types of Insignia
- What remains ?

1686	En amette pt en coute 1098 1800	132	10
267,400	façon à 6 <sup>e</sup> Le maille	180	
388	une croix argent et 1/2 Sans Boul	16	
5200	une dite ydon 1/2 à Boul	18	
132	5 Croix argent et 1/2 à Boul a	90	
6	une dite 1/2 Sans Boul	16	
3	grande dite et 1/2 a Boul a	64	
10	sin dite june 1/2 a Boul	84	
46	Deux dite june 1/2 Sans Boul	26	
28	cinq dite june 1/2 a Boul	60	
52	trois dite june 1/2 a Boul	30	
4	trois dite june 1/2 Sans Boul	27	
7	Deux dite june 1/2 a Boul		
4	quatre dite june 1/2 a Boul a		
80	Deux dite june 1/2 Sans Boul a		
54	trois croix en argent n°1 à Boul avec finorine		
12	a parler à 30 <sup>e</sup>	90	
17	M <sup>s</sup> hallont Dait Deux thuelle en creux à 6	12	
6	Du 20 la garniture d'une paire boucle dorée luyser	12	
8	Quatre maille en amette garny en parler		
11	finer pour alouper un collier pt 12/1 69.00	16	
10	façon à 6 <sup>e</sup> pi	24	
20	un cadant en parler fine à	6	
24	une thuelle en creux		
25	un cadant et deux tyeux pour du grand lator	6	
28	une trèse en chereu pour un juyustien		
16	four pour un collier en chereu Deux	3	
6	tyeux et un Boul de chereu Le tout	4	10
3	une couronne uniforme four	18	
15	une frange avec garny de parler fin	130	
26	cinq croix uniforme à 26 <sup>e</sup>	26	
28	un cadant en creux maille avec croix	28	
	un dit june Sans maille avec croix		





- **Creation**

19<sup>th</sup> May 1802

A new “granit mass” :  
the Legion of Honour

Before 1804, no insignia was given to  
the recipients



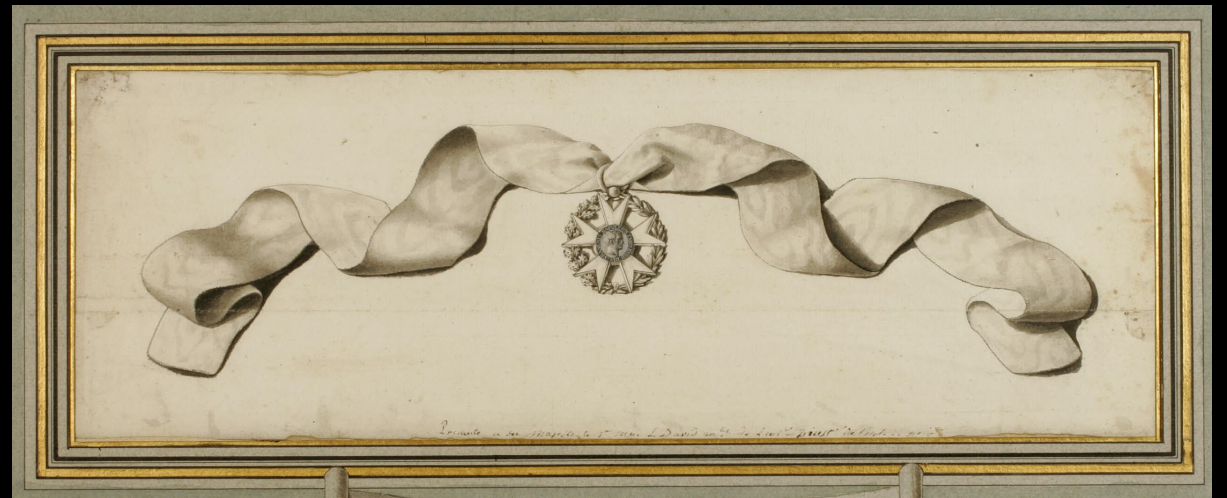
*Antoine-Jean Gros, Bonaparte First Consul, 1802  
Coll. MNLHOC*



*Robert Lefèvre, Napoléon in coronation costume,  
1802  
Coll. MNLHOC*

**11<sup>th</sup> July 1804**

Napoleon, as Emperor, creates the  
insignia of the Legion of Honour

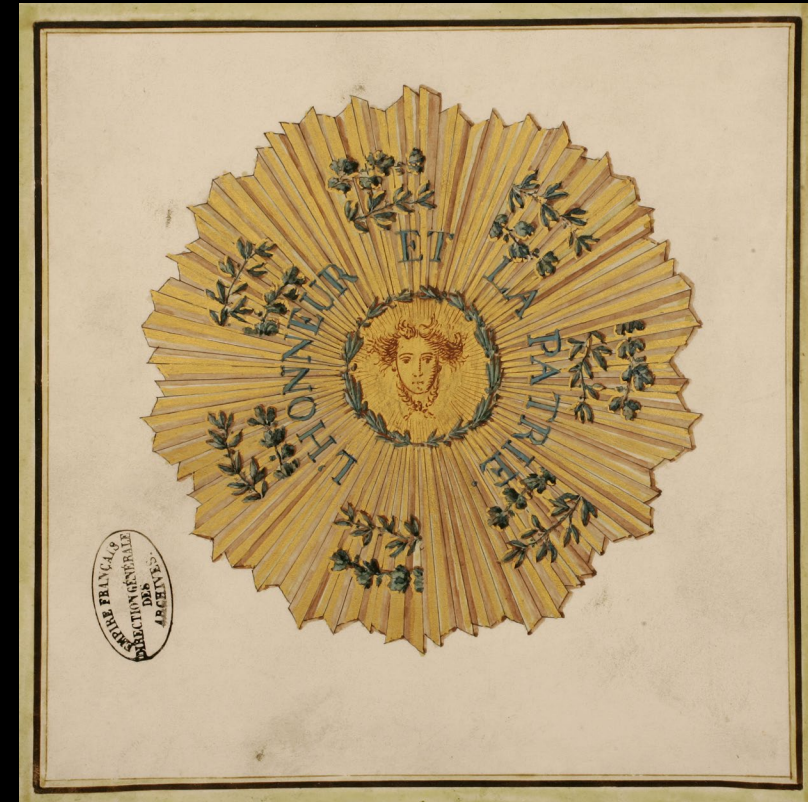


*Attributed to Jacques-Louis David,  
Insignia project for the Legion of Honour, 1804  
Coll. Part.*



- **Insignia's projects by Jean-Baptiste Chaillot  
1802/1803**

For the great officers : a sash badge and a star





Member



*Silver eagle*

Officer  
Commandant  
Great officer



*Gold eagle*



30<sup>th</sup> January 1805

Institution of the “Great decoration”

At first, limited to 60 great officers

Great Eagle insignia and star  
of Marshal Jean Lannes  
*Coll. MNLHOC*



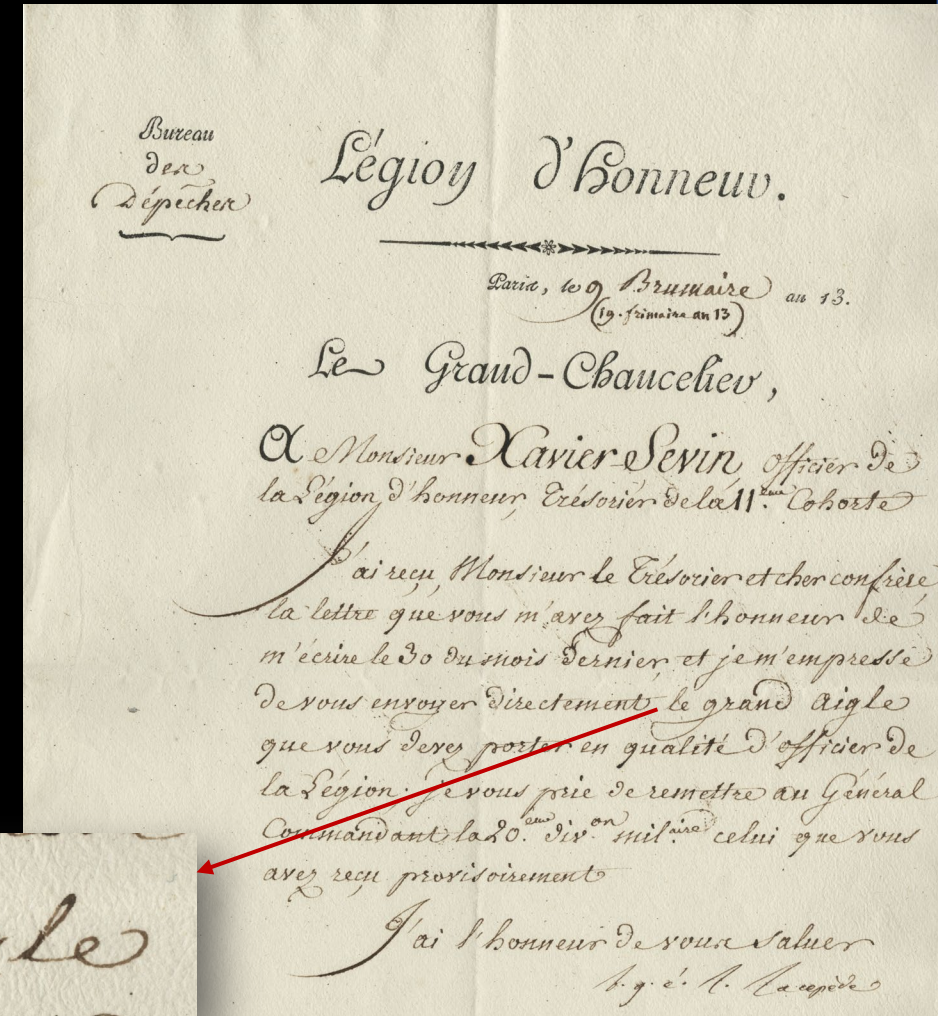


# “Grand cordon”, “Grande decoration”, Grand Aigle”, which name for this dignity ?

August 1807

In a letter to Marshal Brune :

“ The great decoration and star of the Legion of honour will now take the name of Great Eagle of the Legion of Honour instead of Great sash ”





- **A new dignity for a new elite ?**

## Nominations :

- *French : 85 Great Eagles (+ Napoleon)*
- *Foreigners : 71 (including 15 sovereigns)*





- **A new dignity for a new elite ?**

**French nominations : 85 greats eagles**

- *8 members of the imperial Family*
- *18 civilians*
- *59 military*

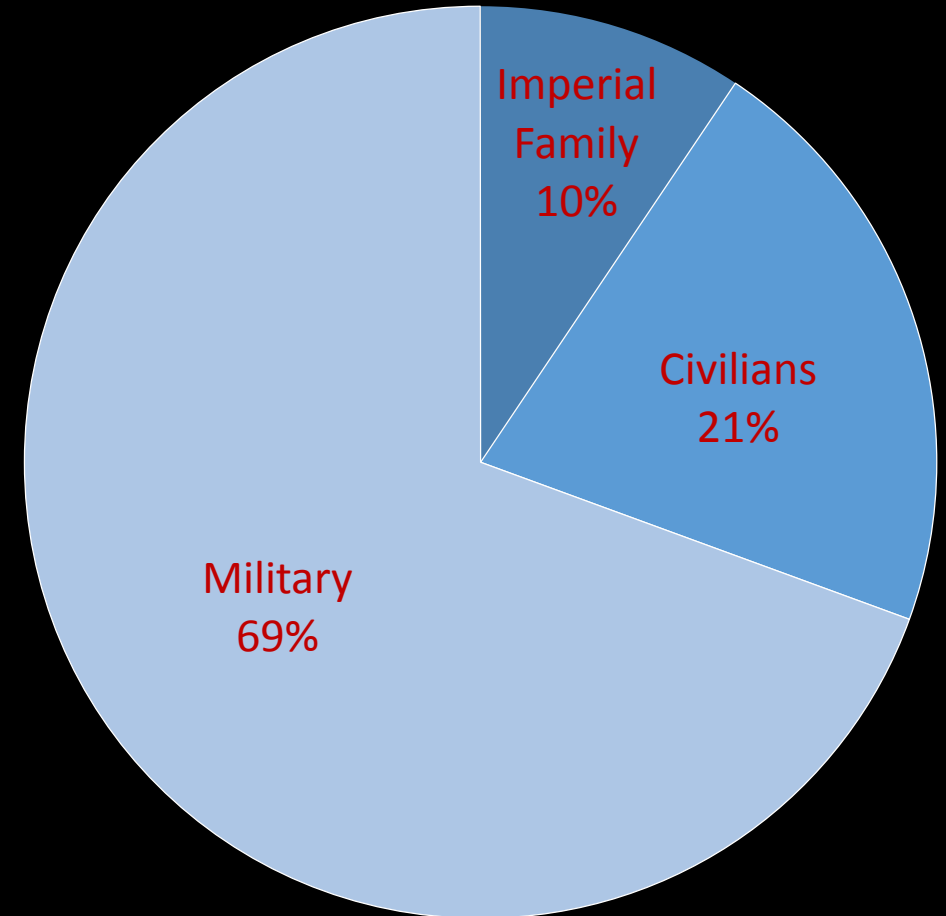
- **1805 : 58** (*including 49 for the promotion of the 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1805*)
- **1806 : 6**
- **1807 : 6**
- **1809 : 7**
- **1811 : 1** (The King of Rome)
- **1813 : 4**
- **1815 : 3**



- **A new dignity for a new elite ?**

A perfect symbol of Napoleon's new elite : **an elite of merit and of the function, mix of the new and old societies**

- *Around 25 are issue of the low bourgeoisie or of humble origin*
- *At least 40 will be made duke or prince*
- *Average age : 45 years old (only 11 are younger than Napoleon)*





- **Military Great Eagles**

- 50 were engaged or went to military schools before 1789
- 8 fought during the US independence war (and 2 the Seven years War)
- 9 joined the Army during the French Revolution



*Antoine Ansiaux,  
Portrait of Marshal Kellermann, Duke of Valmy  
Coll. MNLHOC*



- Some new research

Thanks to archives research we can suppose that three Great Eagle were appointed during the "Cent jours" :

- Lucien Bonaparte
- Pierre Claude Pajol
- Lazare Carnot

Ministère de la Guerre. *D*écorations de la Légion - d'Honneur accordées pendant les cent-jours de 1815. et Nominations faites du 8 Juillet 1815 au 1<sup>er</sup> Octobre 1831 à déduire de celles ci-dessus.

Nominations des 100 Jours	Nombre de					Total.
	Grands Croix ou Grands commandeurs	Grands officiers	Commandeurs	Officiers	Chevaliers	
1 <sup>o</sup> . Du 27 Février 1815 jour du débarquement à Cambray au 20 mars jour de l'arrivée à Paris.....	"	"	"	21	826	847.
2 <sup>o</sup> . Du 20 mars au 22 Juin, jour de la seconde abdication de l'Empereur.....	3.	7.	31.	487	4271.	4799.
3 <sup>o</sup> . Du 22 Juin au 7 Juillet poste provisoire.....	"	2.	8.	58	550	618.
	3.	9	39.	566.	5647.	6264.

2<sup>o</sup>. Du 20 mars au 22 Juin, jour de la seconde abdication de l'Empereur..... } 3.



- **Foreign recipients**

**71 Foreigners received the Great Eagle, including 15 sovereigns**

*“This Great Decoration also have the goal to link our institutions to the institutions of the different States in Europe”*

Napoleon, 10<sup>th</sup> February 1805



*Jean-Baptiste Debret,  
Napoleon at Tislitt,  
giving the Legion of Honour to Lazareff  
Coll. Palace of Versailles*



- **Different types of Insignia**

## First types



**Halbout**

*(Belonged to Jean-Étienne-Marie Portalis)  
Coll. Part.*



**Biennais**

*(Belonged to Marshal Jean Lannes)  
Coll. MNLHOC*



**Coudray**

*Coll. Part.*



- **Different types of Insignia**

## Revers



**Halbout**

*(Belonged to Jean-Étienne-Marie Portalis)  
Coll. Part.*



**Biennais**

*(Belonged to Marshal Jean Lannes)  
Coll. MNLHOC*



**Coudray**

*Coll. Part.*



- **Different types of Insignia**

1806 – Addition of the Crown – transformed model



*Belonged to Marshal Bessières  
Army Museum, Paris*



*Belonged to Marshal Ney  
Coll. MNLHOC*



**Coudray**  
*Coll. Part.*

- **Different types of Insignia**

1806 – Addition of the Crown



**Halbout**  
*Coll. Part.*



*Belonged to Marshal Grouchy*  
*Coll. MNLHOC*



- **Different types of Insignia**

## Biennais fabrication



*Belonged to Napoleon Bonaparte  
Coll. State Museum, Kremlin, Moscow*

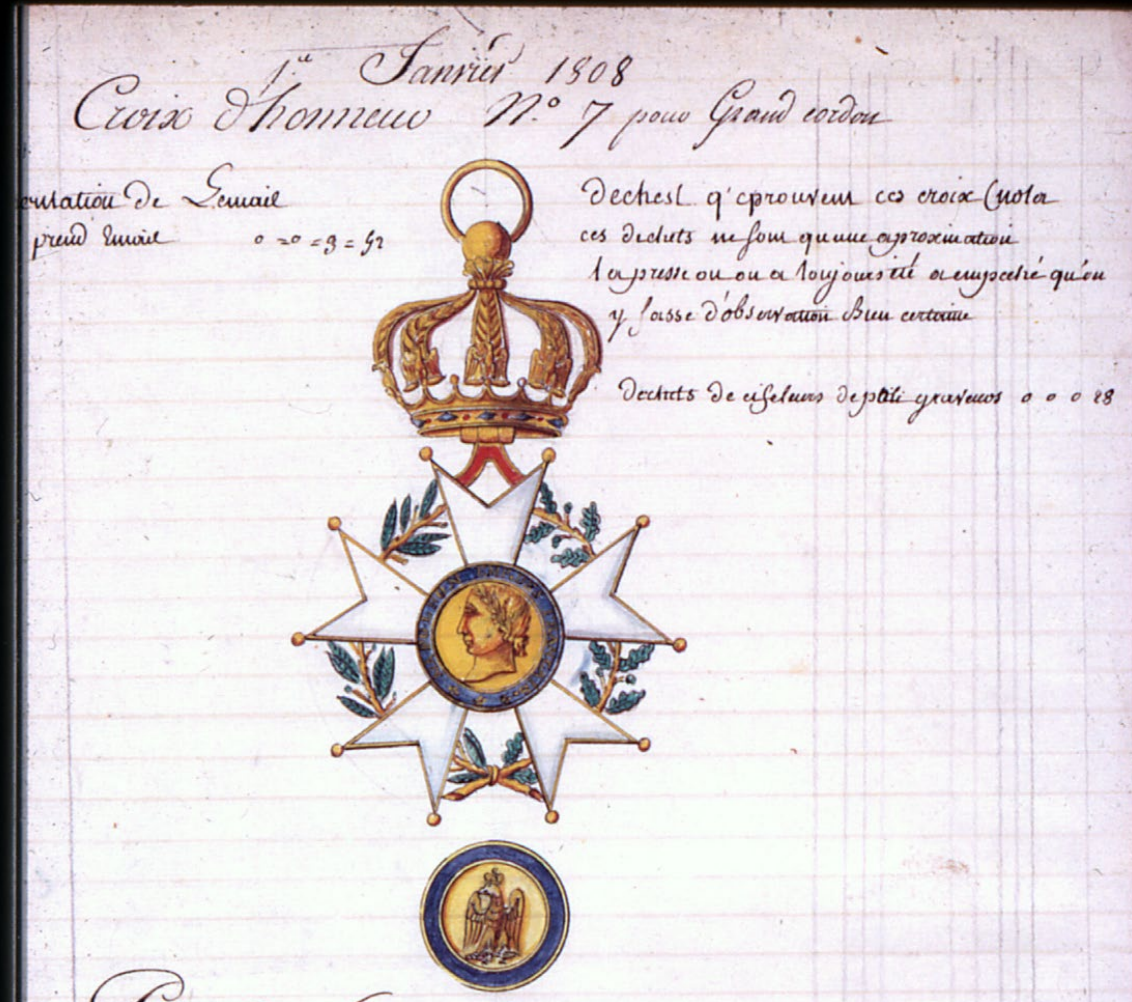


*Belonged to Lucien Bonaparte  
Coll. Part.*



- Different types of Insignia

## Biennais fabrication





- **Different types of Insignia**

## Post 1<sup>st</sup> Empire modifications



**Halbout**

*Belonged to Archichancellor Cambacérès  
Coll. MNLHOC*



*Belonged to Marshal Berthier  
Coll. Part*

- **Different types of Insignia**

## Post 1<sup>st</sup> Empire modifications



### **Biennais**

*Belonged to Marshal Macdonald*

*Coll. MNLHOC*



- **Different types of Insignia**

Great Eagles given to foreigners



**Halbout**

*Belonged to Emperor Alexander 1<sup>st</sup>  
State Museum, Kremlin, Moscow*



**Halbout**

*Grünes Gewölbe, Dresden*

- **Different types of Insignia**

Great Eagles given to foreigners



**Biennais (?)**

*Belonged to king Joao VI  
Palace of Ajuda, Lisbon*



- **Different types of Insignia**

## Collars insignia



*Belonged to Joseph Bonaparte  
Coll. Part.*



*Attributed to Napoleon  
Palace of Fontainebleau*

- **What remains ?**

**After the fall of the First Empire, among 85 French Great Eagles :**

- **17 died and 12 were exiled or not loyal to Louis XVIII**
- **56 might have modified their insignia**



*Guillaume Descamps,  
Portrait of French Marshal Clarke  
Coll. MNLHOC*



- **What remains ?**

**Almost 48 Great Eagles insignia known today :**

- **32 are well attributed (including 9 modified after 1814-1815)**
  - 10 in French National Collections (including 3 modified)
  - 14 in private collections
  - 8 in Foreign National Collections
- **16 are non attributed (including 6 modified)**

- What remains ?





- What remains ?





Thank you  
for  
your attention



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DE LA LÉGION  
D'HONNEUR  
ET DES ORDRES DE CHEVALERIE

