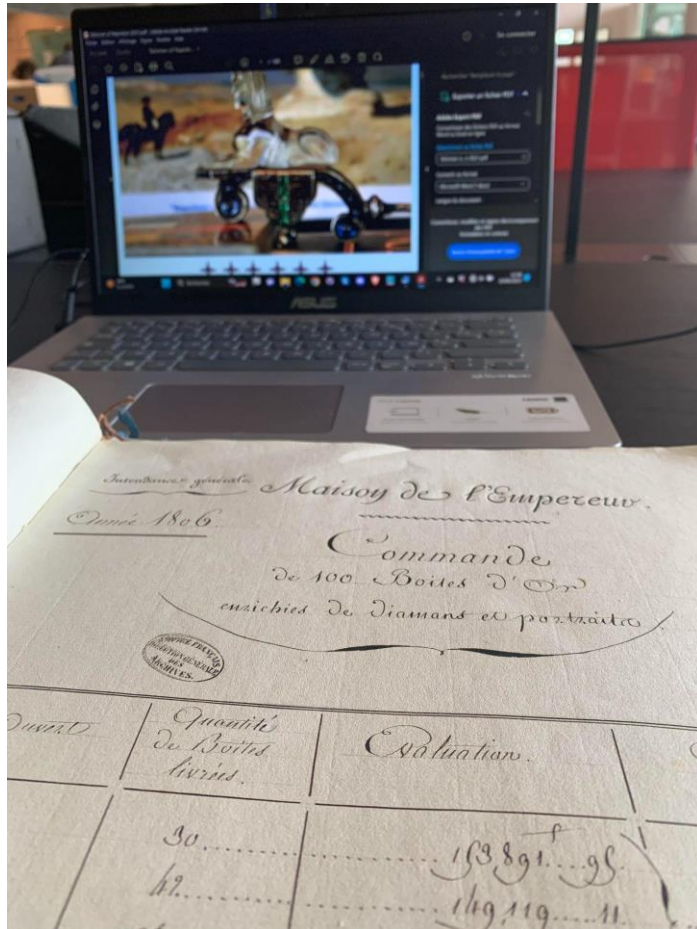


Historical research: The Talisman of Napoleon Bonaparte



Maëva Tarantini & Arthur Balssa

June- December 2023

This research project began with the collaboration of a team of professionals and enthusiasts gathered around a unique object: the talisman, along with a pair of French researchers specialized in historical studies.

It was in May 2023 that we were contacted through our professional social network, with a single objective that was not necessarily guaranteed to be successful: to attempt to find proof of purchase or an iconographic representation of this distinctive artisanal object.

These months of work were guided by a rigorous process of consultation and reflection on the historical artifacts we handled, and a collective effort to determine the right directions to explore in order to provide as much evidence as possible regarding the ownership of this talisman.

This research project is the result of a deep interest and curiosity for what turned out to be a genuine investigative endeavor. We have engaged with a multitude of documentary sources and various research methods in pursuit of our goal.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to the entire talisman team, who, despite the geographical distance that separates us, placed their trust in us to contribute to this project, which was also the culmination of several years of research by the owner, Glenn Randall Jensen.

We would like to extend special thanks to the following institutions:

The National Archives of Paris, for their guidance and invaluable assistance regarding the consular and First Empire archives. They helped us refine our research and expand our possibilities.

The Historical Library of the City of Paris and the Forney Library for their warm welcome and the wealth of their collections.

The Briar's Museum in Australia, for sharing their knowledge about their Napoleonic collections and for their responsiveness in addressing our inquiries.

The National Library of Canada, for promptly responding to each of our questions regarding the archives of the artist Canova.

The British Museum, for their responses and the solutions they proposed to facilitate our research.

Your support and cooperation have been instrumental in the progress of our work, and we are deeply grateful for your contributions to this project.

Summary

Introduction.....	11
I. Methodology and research.....	17
A. Decoding of the talisman	17
B. The need of a historical research.....	22
II. Official Archives, Letters, and Testimonials	25
A. Official Archives of Napoleon and the Maison de l'Empereur	25
B. Books and Historical Testimonies	32
C. Converging leads	38
III. Origins of the creation of the talisman.....	41
A. The historical context at the beginning of the 19th century	41
B. Which creator for the talisman ?.....	46
Conclusion	55

Historical Context

- ❖ **1769:** Birth of Napoleon Bonaparte
- ❖ **1793:** Napoleon is appointed as a brigadier general
- ❖ **1796:** Wedding with Joséphine de Beauharnais
- ❖ **1798-1799:** Bonaparte leads the Egyptian campaign
- ❖ **1799:** Assumed provisional control of France
- ❖ **1802:** Bonaparte is elected to lifetime consulate status
- ❖ **1802- 180?:** *Date of creation of the talisman*
- ❖ **1804:** Napoleon is crowned emperor of the French
- ❖ **1810:** Wedding with Marie-Louise
- ❖ **1811:** Birth of the king of Rome and trip to Holland
- ❖ **1814:** First exile in Elba
- ❖ **1815:** Hundred days, ended by the defeat at Waterloo
- ❖ **1821:** Dies in Exile in Saint-Helena

Introduction

According to previous research, the talisman is believed to have been conceived or designed upon Napoleon's return from his Egyptian expedition, starting in 1799. It was likely created between the end of the Consulate and the beginning of the Empire.

This talisman was directly inspired by the wave of Egyptomania that began to develop in the late 18th century, fueled by early works that would later inspire the expeditions. Works such as *Voyage en Égypte et en Syrie* (1787) and *Méditations sur les révolutions des empires* (1791) by Volney had a significant influence. The latter work influenced the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Talleyrand, who encouraged General Bonaparte to lead the Egyptian campaign from 1798 to 1801.

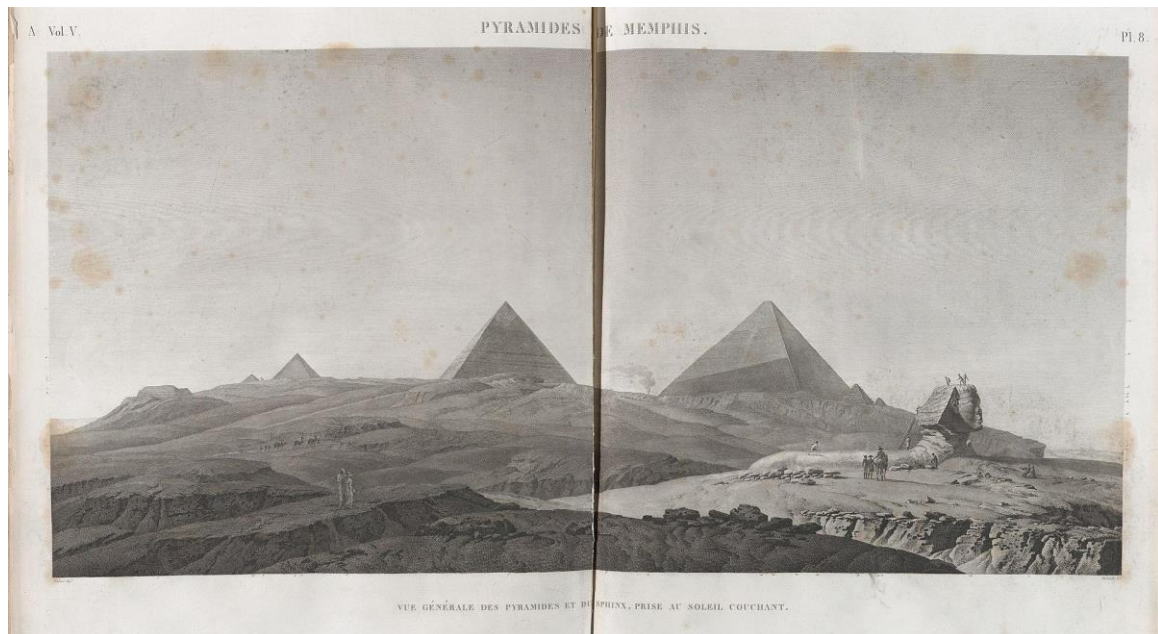
France, eager to weaken British influence in the Mediterranean and their trade routes to India, launched an invasion of Egypt, then a province of the Ottoman Empire. The expedition included an army of nearly 40,000 soldiers and more than 150 scholars, engineers, and artists.

Their mission was twofold: militarily, with notable battles such as the Pyramids and Aboukir, and scientifically and culturally. Specialists studied the history, language, customs, and monuments of ancient Egypt. This immersion in ancient Egyptian culture led to major discoveries, with the most famous being the Rosetta Stone, the key to deciphering hieroglyphs.

The expedition had a profound impact on France, sparking a wave of interest in ancient Egypt known as "Egyptomania." This fascination manifested in art, architecture, fashion, and literature, leaving a lasting influence on French culture and aesthetics¹.

¹ HUMBERT Jean-Marcel, LAURENS Henry, RAYMOND André, *Bonaparte et l'Égypte: Feu et lumières*, Hazan, 2008.

The expedition's cultural and scientific legacy stands as a testament to the intersection of war, science, and art at the dawn of the 19th century. Participants in this expedition produced rich documentation of a country that was both idealized, fantasized, and yet largely unknown at the time.



Overview of the Pyramids and the Sphinx, captured at sunset, in *Description de l'Égypte*, vol. V, 1809

Upon his return from the Egyptian expedition, Vivant Denon wrote his *Voyage dans la Basse et la Haute-Égypte*, published in two volumes in 1802 and reprinted forty times during the 19th century. Among the soldiers of this expedition, a young Italian, Bernardino Drovetti, was captivated by the beauty of the landscapes and fascinated by the pharaonic ruins. He returned to Egypt in 1802 as the French consul and, in the early months of his stay, spent a fortune on ancient objects, building a valuable collection.

Napoleon Bonaparte himself amassed a significant collection of art and artifacts, reminiscent of his Egyptian expedition. The Empire style is characterized by massive and imposing elements, with an abundance of military attributes. This style also spread throughout Europe thanks to the expansion of the Empire. Ornamentation centered around chimeras, specifically sphinxes, sphinges, "renommées" (creatures bearing angel

wings), lions, dolphins, swans, bees, and the popular colors of the Empire style were yellow (gold), green, crimson, purple, and violet².



Napoleon's Talisman in the Hands of its owner.

The talisman that is the subject of our research incorporates the codes of the Empire style and Egyptomania. This piece of art is a crystal sphinx with the body of a lion and the head of a woman, affixed to a silver base with two articulated panels visually divided into two, creating a total of four panels. The talisman contains a total of 114 gemstones: 20 sapphires, 84 rubies, 8 emeralds, and 2 pearls. Its dimensions are 49.5 mm in length, 20 mm in width, and 36 mm in height, with a weight of 97.1 grams³.

This talisman carries multiple meanings and codes that have been deciphered by the owner after years of research. The owner acquired the talisman in 2006 on eBay. According to the seller, Pieter E. Hegeman II, this object was found underground by his father in 1938 while digging a trench in the city of Noordwijk, Netherlands.

² JOANNIS Claudette. *Bijoux des deux Empires Mode et sentiment, 1804-1870*, Somogy éditions d'art, 2004.

³ JENSEN Glenn Randall, *The Talisman of Napoleon Bonaparte*, 2021, p.42.

These research efforts were conducted with the support of a diverse team of enthusiasts gathered in Napoleon's Talisman team. The team is made up of several people with diverse and unique skills. Logistics prevented us from working with all team members.

We worked with the following members of the association:

- The owner of the talisman, Glenn Randall Jensen. Jensen is a distinguished graduate of Creighton University in 1977 with honors, recognized for his remarkable intellect, as evidenced by his former affiliation with MENSA. He later led Classic Golf in Omaha, Nebraska, for 25 years, establishing the company as a reference in the golf world. His reputation as a world authority on antique golf clubs and memorabilia, as well as their appraisal, is unquestionable. His passion for history extends far beyond the golf course; he dedicated six years to exhaustive research on the talisman, a project that demanded over 40 hours of weekly work and took him to several countries worldwide, including France, as well as building a significant library around Napoleon Bonaparte.
- Norman B. Ratner is an entrepreneur in the entertainment industry, a record producer, marketing expert, and agent. He co-founded the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame with attorney David Braun. He served as the agent for Willy T. Ribbs, the first black driver in IndyCar and NASCAR, breaking racial barriers in motorsports. He was also a member of the executive team at UNI Records, launching artists like Elton John and Neil Diamond. Ratner led Trousdale-Wingate Music Publishing, representing famous artists like The Mamas & The Papas. His presence on the talisman team is indispensable for his expertise and experience in marketing, communication, and business.
- Jennifer Wallens, research and business consultant. She has genuine expertise in the spiritual domain. Jennifer Wallens, holder of a Bachelor of

Art degree from Rollins College obtained in 1983, has developed notable expertise in project management and leadership throughout her professional career. As a personal development consultant and professional artist, Jennifer Wallens has also demonstrated her ability to manage creative projects and lead teams toward achieving ambitious goals. Her certification as a Certified Floodplain Manager and her membership in various professional associations underscore her commitment to excellence and innovation in her areas of expertise.

- Monica Levin, consultant, and journalist. She is a native of Washington, D.C. She is a graduate of the University of Maryland, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Journalism. During her 40 years in media, she worked in newspaper, radio and television. While living in South Florida, she also had her own cable television chat show called “The Silver Scene” which also featured the topics of food, travel and decor.

After introducing the various individuals we collaborated with, here's a brief summary to get to know us better:

Maëva Tarantini, passionate about history since my childhood, I pursued a dual curriculum in France, specializing in Modern History at the University of Paris Saclay. I worked on the following topics:

- Luxury craftsmanship and Grenoble artisans (from the 17th to the 18th century)
- Study of the consumption habits of a noble couple at the Court of Versailles (the Briges family) in the 18th century.
- Study of correspondence and marital bonds (the case of the Briges family) in the 18th century.

My involvement in this research project regarding the talisman was a natural fit. All the thematic areas related to the talisman align with my primary research subjects:

analyzing documents whose structure, organization, and significance I had already studied. These documents primarily included post-mortem inventories, invoices, correspondences, purchase evidence, etc.

I also completed a program in Digital Technologies Applied to Historical Studies at the École nationale des Chartes. This training allowed me to critically assess and analyze the online databases we encountered during our research on the talisman.

Arthur Balssa, also passionate about history, particularly the 18th and 19th centuries. I hold a Master's degree in the History of Techniques from Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne. I conducted several years of research on the following topics:

- Demolitions and construction work around the Louvre in the second half of the 18th century
- The profession of archivist and intermediate archives in France

My background in the History of Techniques was particularly useful for these research projects, as it involved working on an object about which we knew nothing regarding its design and manufacture.

I. Methodology and research

A. Decoding of the talisman



The talisman seen from above, with both wings open.

The owner, Glenn Randall Jensen, acquired the talisman in 2005, an object about which nothing was known at the time. The study dedicated to this talisman was the result of many years of investigation, which compelled the owner to become fully acquainted with Napoleon's history before he assumed leadership in France, during the Consulate and thereafter under the Empire.

First and foremost, this research work comprises a technical and material analysis of the object. It is based on personal observations and knowledge of symbols, especially those surrounding intimate objects from that period, as well as potential mysteries associated with the talisman. These insights were enriched through extensive reading, particularly concerning Egyptian tarot. Indeed, Napoléon, who was not closed off to other "spiritualities"⁴, might have taken an interest in tarot and the symbolism surrounding certain cards, some of which hold eloquent meanings related to power.

To decipher and understand the code contained in the arrangement of stones and elements on the talisman, one must grasp the codes of tarot. The tarot code can be traced back to ancient Egypt (around 1500 BC); it consists of a set of 21 illustrated cards and one blank card. Each card in the tarot deck is numbered and associated with meanings and themes (3 = Empress, 4 = Emperor, 6 = Lovers, 13 = Death, etc.⁵). Using this method, it was possible to decode the initials of Napoléon (NB) and Joséphine (JB) on the talisman, as well as the themes of the Empress, Emperor, and Lovers, and the date of Napoléon's 33rd birthday, which corresponds to his appointment as First Consul for life. All these findings can be found in Glenn Randall Jensen's work⁶ and on the official website of the talisman association⁷. These results were analyzed by Dr. Shih-Chuan Cheng, a professor in the Department of Mathematics at the University of Creighton, Nebraska. According to him, the probability of this being a mere coincidence is only 1 in 44,100,722,636,800⁸.

Glenn Randall Jensen also conducted a comparative analysis between the talisman and the Mona Lisa⁹ (which could have served as inspiration for the talisman's creation, as this famous work by Leonardo da Vinci was said to be exhibited in the sovereign's

⁴ *Revue du Souvenir Napoléonien*, N°305, p.2-8, May 1979. (<https://www.napoleon.org/histoire-des-2-empires/articles/l'empire-et-le-saint-siege-napoleon-et-la-religion/>)

⁵ JENSEN Glenn Randall, *The Talisman of Napoleon Bonaparte*, 2021.

⁶ JENSEN Glenn Randall, *Napoleon's Talisman*, February 2010.

⁷ *Napoleon's Talisman, A 15 minute detailed explanation by Randy Jensen that demonstrates how he decoded the Talisman (video)* : <https://www.napoleonstalisman.com/authenticity>

⁸ JENSEN Glenn Randall, *The Talisman of Napoleon Bonaparte*, 2021, p.49-50.

⁹ *Ibid*, p.20-21.

apartments). This study draws a comparison between the two female portraits, whose faces seem to resonate with that of the famous Mona Lisa and/or Joséphine de Beauharnais.

Subsequently, Glenn Randall Jensen a comparative analysis between a medal of the Order of the Rosy Cross¹⁰, which had genuinely belonged to Napoléon (it was displayed at the Briar's Museum in Australia until it was stolen in 2014), and constitutes, according to Mr. Jensen, a potential point of entry into the creation of the talisman's style.

The Order of the Rosy Cross, also known as Rosicrucianism, is a philosophical and spiritual movement that emerged in Europe in the 17th century¹¹. It combines elements of Christian mysticism, Kabbalah, alchemy, and other esoteric traditions, along with a body of legends and secret doctrines.

This comparative study between the two objects demonstrates the use of Egyptian tarot to encode them, particularly using precious stones. For example, note the presence of green stones (Napoléon's favorite color¹²), and both pieces have four green stones each (the number 4 corresponding to the Emperor in the Egyptian tarot code and that of the Rosy Cross). This type of code is redundant in both pieces and is finely demonstrated in Glenn Randall Jensen's works.



Napoleon's Rosicrucian medal, Briars Museum, Australia.

¹⁰ JENSEN Glenn Randall, *The Talisman of Napoleon Bonaparte*, 2021, p.27.

¹¹ VANLOO Robert, KLEIN Philippe, *Les bijoux Rose-Croix, 1760-1890*, éditions Dervy, 2003.

¹² "Peut-être même Napoléon, emporté par le vert et l'arsenic contenu dans les murs qu'il avait fait repeindre de la couleur qui lui était si chère?" EFFE Frédéric, in PASTOUREAU Michel, *L'histoire des couleurs*, "Du vert empoisonné au vert salvateur", September 2017.



Reverse of the Napoleon's rosicrucian medal, Briars Museum, Australia.



The medallion is engraved on the reverse side and also along its lower rim. The inscription reads: Presented to Mich. Manning (reverse side) Napoleon 1st at Torbay, 28 July 1815 (lower edge). Napoleon's rosicrucian medal, Briars Museum, Australia.

In order to further document ourselves on this subject, especially to learn about the creator of Napoleon's medal, we contacted the Briar's Museum.

Their response regarding their Napoleon collections was as follows:

"The Napoleonic pieces were collected by Dame Mabel Brookes throughout her lifetime and were bequeathed to the National Gallery of Victoria after her death in 1978. The collection ultimately came for display at The Briars, a National Trust property, built c. 1850 by Dame Mabel's grand-father, Alexander Balcombe. Balcombe, born on the island of St Helena was the son of William Balcombe, host to Napoleon when he arrived on the island and later purveyor to Longwood. The Briars remained home to a number of generations of the Balcombe family. Dame Mabel's Napoleonic collection, a very mixed one of approximately 300 pieces, emphasized the link between the Emperor and her family.

The Rosicrucian Order was a silver medallion with paste gemstones, suspended on a 30 cm. brown moire ribbon. The original order would have had real gems but these had been replaced at some time. The medallion was 8 cm in length by 6 cm at its widest point and approximately 0.5 cm thick. Each element of the design is symbolic (even the color of the gemstones).

Dame Mabel bought the Order from a grandson of Michael Manning through the agency of Frank Maggs of London. There was also an accompanying manuscript which is now missing. The story behind the medallion is that Napoleon presented it to Manning who was Ship's Bosun on the Bellepheron. When Napoleon was transferred to that ship from the Northumberland it is said he was wearing the Order and took it off to place around the Bosun's neck. Another paper speculates that the Order may have been made c 1810 as the replacement of the Talisman of Napoleon upon Napoleon's divorce."

Despite the wealth of information provided, the museum had no information about the identity of the creator of the medal.

Glenn Randall Jensen's brilliant work was complemented by the invaluable assistance of professionals, artisans, and experts who were able to authenticate the age of the jewelry (dating it and estimating that it could have been created in the 19th century) and its silver composition. The composition of the jewelry was analyzed in 2014 by Midwest Laboratories Inc. in Nebraska. It was found to be composed of 96.46% silver, 3.39% copper, and 0.13% zinc¹³. These results were compared to the silver composition standards before 1789, which were as follows:

- In Germany: at least 80% pure silver and a maximum of 20% other metals.
- In Great Britain: 94.8% pure silver and 5.2% other metals.
- In France: at least 95.8% pure silver and a maximum of 4.2% other metals.

The silver composing the talisman exceeds the French standards established under Louis XVI. This demonstrates the likelihood that the talisman was made in France.

Glenn Randall Jensen's work is comprehensive, coherent, and certified by numerous experts.

The objective of our work is to form a historical analysis in order to obtain new information and to ascertain whether Glenn Randall Jensen's findings indeed coincide with historical sources.

¹³ JENSEN Glenn Randall, *The Talisman of Napoleon Bonaparte*, 2021, p.56.

B. The need of a historical research

The owner, Glenn Randall Jensen, has already conducted numerous studies and research on the jewelry itself and research on the codes related to such objects with the help of experts. Our objective was to find formal proof of the object's ownership by Napoleon. However, beyond that, we sought to gather as much information as possible about the craftsmanship, Napoleon, and anything that could either affirm or contradict the initial hypothesis. To achieve this, we used a variety of documents and conducted numerous studies.

As researchers, we naturally began with archival research. We relied on consulting historical archives and all available documentary resources to search for references to the talisman or similar object commissions. We compiled a list of all the places holding archives relevant to our research and related to Napoleon Bonaparte before embarking on our fieldwork.

The places we contacted for our research included:

- The National Archives (located in France, near Paris, in Pierrefitte-sur-Seine): We consulted the Archives of the House of the Emperor (First Empire), specifically references O/2/30 to O/2/32. We primarily accessed these archives on-site and occasionally online. The digitized collection of the National Archives is quite impressive.
- The Historical Library of the City of Paris (located at Hôtel de Lamoignon in the 4th arrondissement of Paris): This public library specializes in the history of Paris and the Île-de-France region. It is known for holding a rich collection of both ancient and contemporary works related to the First Empire.
- The Forney Library: It is part of the network of heritage and specialized libraries in the City of Paris, with its collections centered around decorative arts, crafts, techniques, fine arts, and graphic arts.

- The online library of the Fondation Napoléon: Napoleonica. This library allowed us to access Napoleon's correspondence and that of other key figures such as Denon, Canova, Monge, and Josephine.
- The National Library of France through Gallica: Gallica contains numerous digitized archives, 19th and 20th-century auction catalogs, and more.

In addition to these libraries, we consulted books on art during the First Empire, particularly on goldsmithing and jewelry, memoirs, correspondences, travel journals, and more.

We also looked into other sources such as museum collections and auction sites to find objects similar to or related to the talisman.

To obtain maximum information, we sent inquiries to institutions to access specific and difficult-to-reach information or collections (e.g., Briar's Museum in Australia, National Library of Canada, British Museum).

With all this information, we aimed to reconstruct the context of the talisman's creation and verify that the period was conducive to such creations. This involved studying styles, jewelry consumption, and techniques, as well as identifying jewelers associated with Napoleon. We also sought to determine the materials commonly used for such creations and favored by Napoleon.

Finally, we synthesized our data using mind maps to compile all the collected information into a coherent and readable overview for the entire team, enabling us to better understand the different leads.

II. Official Archives, Letters, and Testimonials

A. Official Archives of Napoleon and the Maison de l'Empereur

In the context of our research to prove the ownership of the Talisman by Napoleon Bonaparte, our investigation naturally turned to the official archives of the Napoleonic era, kept at the National Archives. This methodological choice is based on the necessity of relying on irrefutable primary sources to establish concrete historical facts.

The National Archives, located in Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, serve as the primary location for our research. These archives hold a substantial quantity of documents related to Napoleon and his Imperial Household, offering privileged access to direct and authentic information.

The relevance of turning to the National Archives is twofold. First, it lies in the possibility of tracing the provenance and history of the object through official documents. Second, it would allow us to contextualize the object within the broader framework of Napoleon's life and era.

The Imperial Household, as the central organ of the imperial administration, is particularly relevant in this context because it was responsible for managing the emperor's personal belongings, including his jewelry.

However, the supposed date of the object's manufacture falls between the Consulate and the beginning of the Empire. In fact, since we find the date August 15, 1802, it was conceived after and undoubtedly before December 2, 1804. The date in question is that of his appointment as Consul for life.

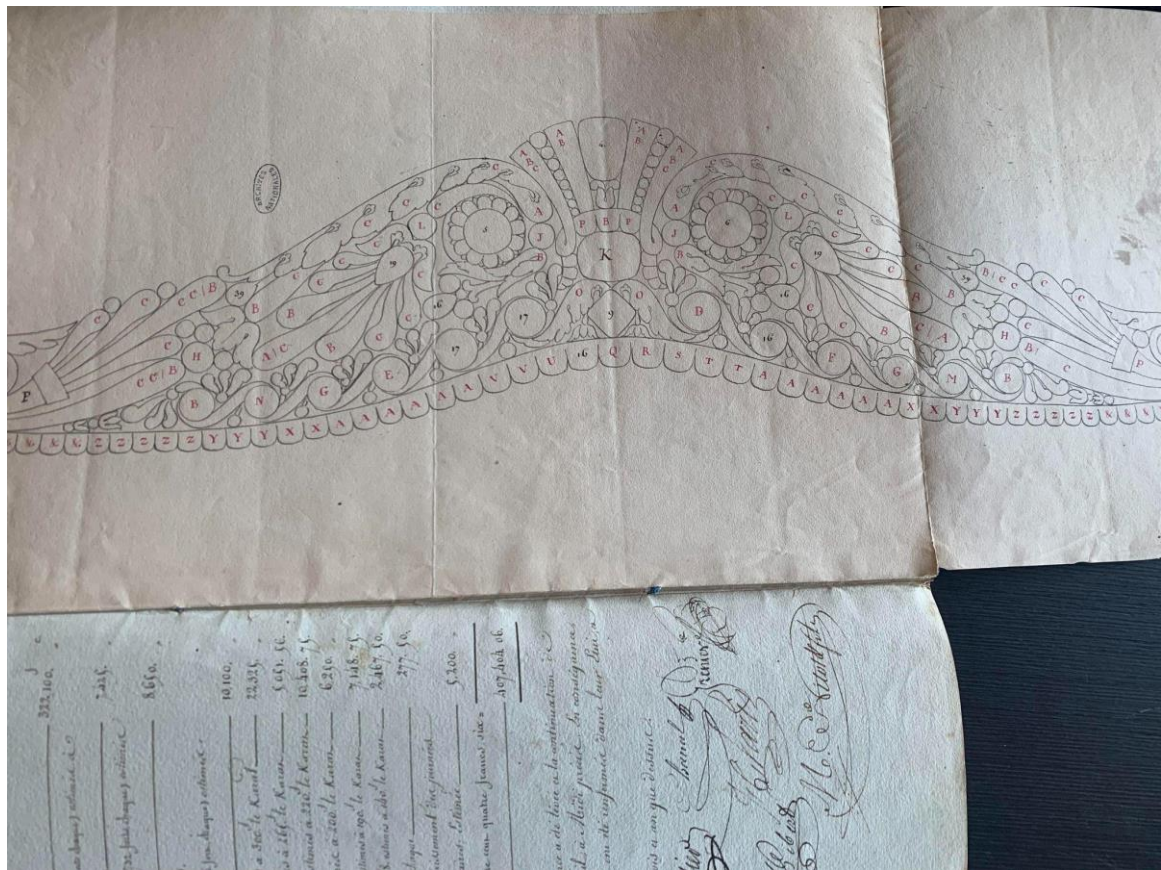
After inquiring with the archivists on-site, it appears that the archives of the First Consul, especially those concerning his expenses, are scarce and partly included in the O/2 series.

This O/2 series pertains to the Imperial Household. Within this series, we focused on subseries related to the Emperor's expenses. Specifically, we were interested in the cartons of the Grand Chamberlain, particularly those related to goldsmithing: cartons O/2/30, O/2/31, and O/2/32. Each of them contains just over 500 pieces, which we examined up to the period of 1811. We considered it inconceivable that an object representing Josephine would be ordered after Napoleon's marriage to Marie-Louise. This is especially relevant because it was during the period of the Napoleon-Josephine couple that the Empire style, with its ancient and Egyptian references, developed, which are prominently featured on the talisman.

There was no direct trace of the talisman.

Most publicly displayed pieces of goldsmithing and jewelry ordered and received by the imperial couple, Napoleon-Josephine and then Napoleon-Marie-Louise, were meticulously examined by experts from the administration. In the early Empire period, which is of particular interest to us, this was done under the supervision of Jacques Le Scène Desmaisons (who died in 1808), the secretary of the intendant of the Grand Chamberlain of the Emperor's Household.

For example, the order of around a hundred gold tobacco boxes, executed by the goldsmith-jeweler Marguerite, was studied by his experts. Each box was described, its quality verified, and each diamond and precious stone was removed, verified, before being reinserted into the piece. This allowed for valuable and precise inventories.



Drawing of a diadem by Nitot, O/2/30, National Archives, France

We also find this precious example of a diadem design, again from an examination by the Imperial Household. It's an annex to an expertise. Here again, each diamond is associated with a letter, studied, verified. The objective is primarily to protect the imperial family from counterfeits and to obtain the most accurate price for the imperial couple.

Indication des Brillans sur le Diamant ancien au piedmètre Royal.		Suite du Diamant.	
Diamant Jewels par M. N. N. N.			
Bandeau en bas.			
			322,100.
10.	Brillans posans ensemble 16 ^e / ₁₆ (soit 1 ^e / ₁₆ (soit chaque) estime C. à 5		
	742. 10. pieces (à raison de 158. le premier Karat)		742.
11.	Brillans posans ensemble 21 ^e / ₁₆ (soit 1 ^e / ₁₆ (soit chaque) estime C.		
	(à raison de 269. 74. le premier Karat)		8650.
Dans les Orfèvres.			
16.	Brillans recoups posans 26 ^e / ₁₆ (soit 1 ^e / ₁₆ (soit chaque) estime C.		
	(à raison de 36. 30. le premier Karat)		10100.
87.	Brillans recoups posans 74 ^e / ₁₆ estime à 300. le Karat		22321.
30.	Brillans recoups posans 10 ^e / ₁₆ estime à 266. le Karat		504. 50.
111.	Brillans recoups posans 37 ^e / ₁₆ estime à 220. le Karat		10308. 75.
123.	Brillans recoups posans 31 ^e / ₁₆ estime à 200. le Karat		6200.
337.	Brillans recoups posans 37 ^e / ₁₆ estime à 190. le Karat		7148. 76.
471.	Brillans non recoups posans 17 ^e / ₁₆ estime à 150. le Karat		2467. 50.
180.	Bozza de Hollande estime à 1. 16. chaque		277. 50.
Fait le Diamant au regard au renouveau en 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 19. 20. 21. 22. 23. 24. 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. 40. 41. 42. 43. 44. 45. 46. 47. 48. 49. 50.			
Total: Quatre cent dix mille quatre cent quatre francs six			5,200.
Le tout.			307,604. 06.

À cinq heures du soir, la séance a été levée, et la continuation de l'Exposition remise à demain, onze heures, au Palais National. En conséquence, tous les objets composant la séance ont été renfermés dans leur lieu respectif par M. N. N. N.

Le Secrétaire des séances, sous le sceau de l'Empereur.

(Signatures)

End of appraisal of the diadem, O/2/30, National Archives, France

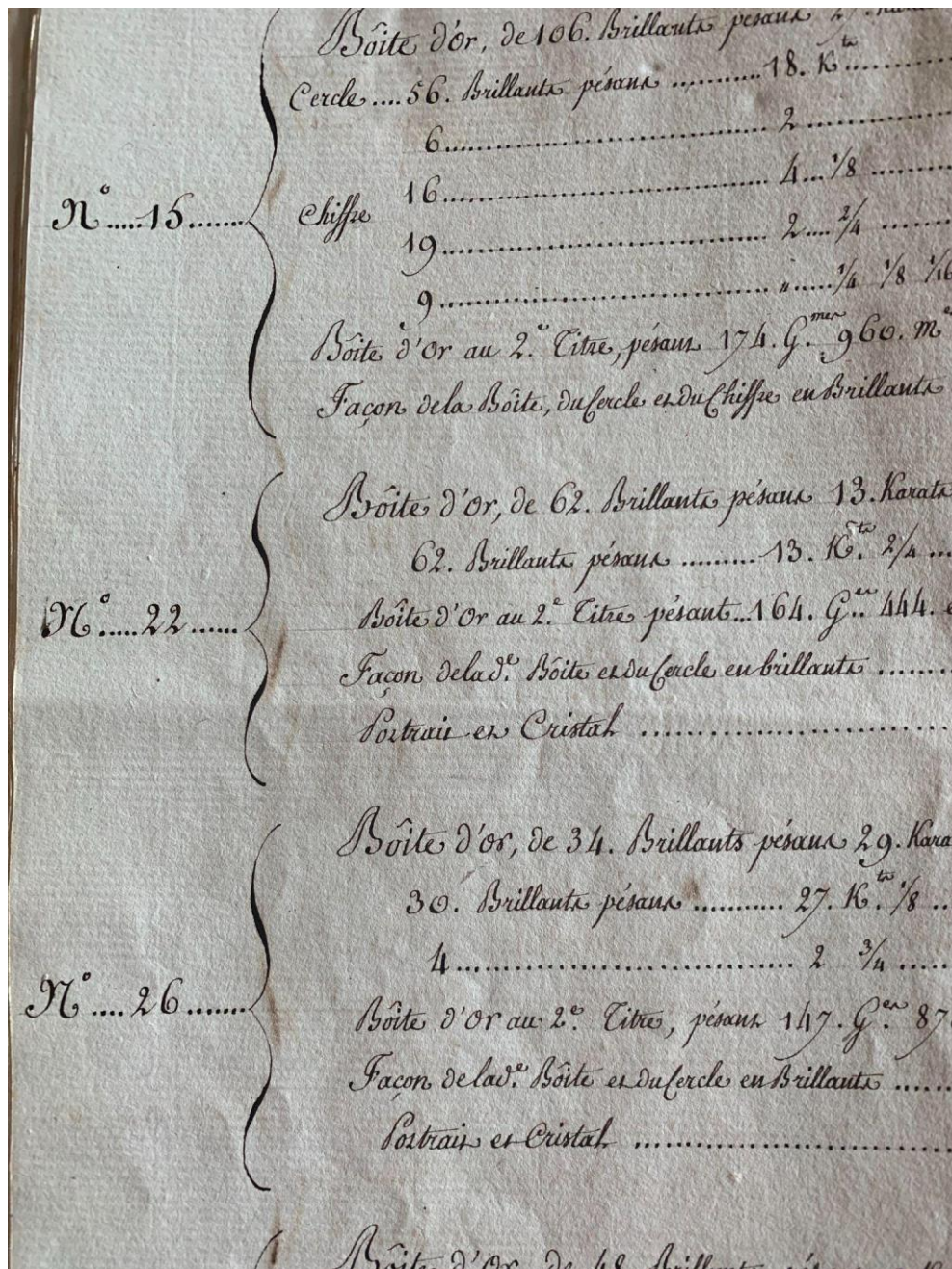
This type of expert verification seems to occur relatively frequently, several times a year, with numerous individuals, as evidenced by the large number of signatures.

Many letters are also found, including correspondence between the administration and artisans, whether regarding orders to be placed or orders already placed, mentioning the emperor's opinion. Some pieces are openly disapproved, such as portraits of Napoleon painted for Marguerite by Isabey, which the emperor does not particularly appreciate despite the painter's reputation.

However, the in-depth examination of these three cartons did not allow us to find proof of the purchase or possession of such a jewel by Napoleon.

During the examination of inventories and various purchases, we attempted to compare purchases of precious stones with the number on the talisman, namely, 8 emeralds, 84 rubies, and 20 sapphires. No concordance was found.

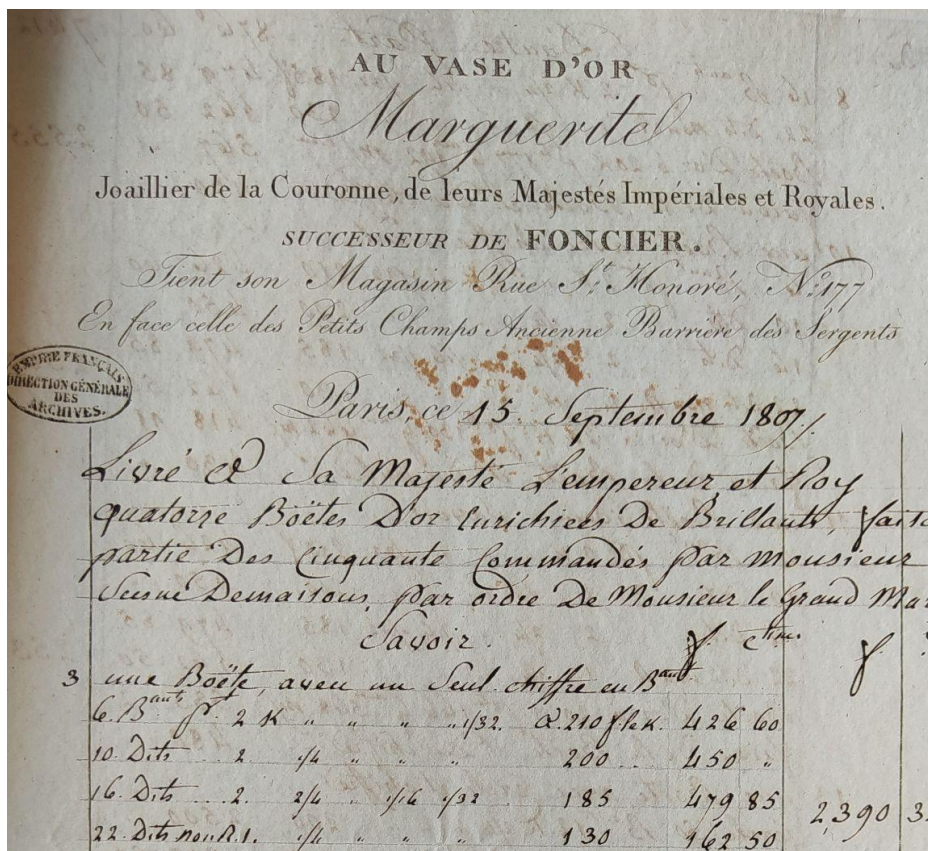
Nevertheless, as seen previously, some objects are interesting due to the presence of crystal portraits on tobacco boxes, for example.



Crystal boxes appraisal, O/2/30, National Archives, France

Although this does not prove a direct link between the talisman and Napoleon, it does allow us to visualize the tastes and expectations of the man for such consumer goods. Similarly, reading these inventories, letters, etc., highlights a number of artisans, including their principal productions. This varying degree of specialization among goldsmiths and jewelers can later be useful in the search for the manufacturer of the object.

Three names of goldsmith-jewelers frequently appear among the different orders and examinations. The name Nitot, the most famous. Marie-Etienne, and his son François-Régnauld, are often commissioned. We also encounter Martin-Guillaume Biennais, one of the great imperial goldsmiths. However, his specialization in goldsmithing, rather than jewelry, makes us consider him unlikely as the potential creator of the talisman. Finally, the name Marguerite, who became the jeweler of the crown in 1811 and was the son-in-law of Foncier, himself the goldsmith of Josephine and then the First Consul, established at the Vase d'Or.



Details of an order for 14 gold boxes made by Marguerite, at the Vase d'Or, O/2/30, National Archives, France

Other names also appear, and this list of jewelers is much longer.

The archives of the Imperial Household are not the only ones consulted. Having found no trace of the object in the examined cartons of the Imperial Household, we turned to the Napoleon collection, the more personal collection, with letters.

Since the talisman is supposed to be a personal object, consulting this collection seemed appropriate.

After reading the letters, no conclusive results were found.

However, the absence of mention of the object in these archives does not definitively mean that the object did not belong to Napoleon. These sources studied seem to be the most obvious, but they are not the only ones.

According to Glenn Randall Jensen, the jewel was supposed to be an intimate object to Napoleon Bonaparte. It is, therefore, necessary to consult sources that are also more intimate, more personal. Beyond seeking absolute proof of the talisman's ownership by Napoleon, this also allows us to better understand Napoleon's personality, his consumption of jewelry, his beliefs, as well as those of his entourage. Indeed, the fact that Napoleon was the owner of this object seems relevant when reading numerous testimonies and letters from his inner circle.

The individuals most capable of knowing him and proving this are his two wives. Josephine, to whom the talisman was dedicated, as well as Marie-Louise. But it is also to the men who were closest to him, to whom Napoleon entrusted, if not these secrets, his objects. We have thus read the memoirs of his most reliable valet, Constant.

B. Books and Historical Testimonies

Our investigation to determine the authenticity of talisman's link to Napoleon focused on several key aspects, involving in-depth exploration of archives, correspondence, and meticulous analysis of various literary and historical sources.

This task proved challenging due to the substantial volume of letters (approximately 3,900) listed by the Napoleon Foundation¹⁴.

We initially focused our efforts on Dominique Vivant Denon, suspected of being involved in the talisman's design. He was a prominent member of the Egyptian expedition, an evident influence on the talisman, and a close artist associate of Napoleon. Although his post-mortem inventory did not provide sufficient detailed descriptions, his correspondence, especially with the imperial family and other artists like Canova, was thoroughly examined.

The study of correspondence between Napoleon and Josephine (1799-1804) was undertaken in the hope of finding a mention of the talisman. The talisman appears to be a portrait of Josephine in the form of a sphinx, as suggested by the codes described in previous research by its owner.

The *Correspondance Générale de Bonaparte*, edited by the Fondation Napoléon in multiple volumes according to periods, was also studied. However, this correspondence is more political, diplomatic, and military in nature, focusing on the First Consul's official activities rather than personal matters.

Letters to Marie-Louise were also examined, but the most interesting aspect was the reading of the empress's travel diary.

We also delved into testimonials published in books. Jean-Antoine Chaptal's book, *Mes souvenirs sur Napoléon*, provided valuable insights into Napoleon's interactions with his contemporaries. These anecdotes highlighted the complexity of Napoleon's

¹⁴ <https://www.napoleonica.org/fr/collections/correspondance>

relationships with Marie-Louise and Josephine, suggesting potential tensions surrounding the talisman.

The reading of Marie-Louise's travel journal and her correspondence with Napoleon¹⁵ was considered a key source to better understand the personal and emotional context surrounding the object and to trace part of the emperor's journey, close to the location where it was found in Noordwijk, the Netherlands.

Special attention was given to the correspondence and memoirs of Constant, Napoleon's valet, in two volumes¹⁶. Louis Constant Wairy began his career in 1798 when he entered the service of Eugène de Beauharnais, who had left his own valet in Cairo suffering from fever. Upon his return in 1799, Eugène de Beauharnais placed Constant in the service of his mother, Josephine Bonaparte, as a groom. He later worked at Malmaison.

Upon his return from Egypt a few months later, Bonaparte expressed an excellent impression of Constant. He considered him skillful, smiling, polite, courteous, and above all, discreet. On May 6, 1800, he became the ordinary valet of the First Consul. Following Joseph Hambarde's resignation in February 1806, he became the emperor's head valet. Constant was also the guardian of the emperor's jewelry.

For a long time, Constant showed unwavering loyalty and boundless admiration for his master. He took great care to record as many details of his daily life as possible, noting his moods, good and bad days, reactions in moments of euphoria or anxiety. In his memoirs, he provides details about Napoleon's life, his food and clothing preferences, his quirks, faults, loves, and disappointments.

He wrote these memoirs in the 1820s, after Napoleon's abdication. However, for the most part, his writings are reliable and very precise. Indeed, he followed Bonaparte throughout his political career, and many of his accounts coincide with what we know

¹⁵ VIAL Charles-Eloi, *L'adieu à l'empereur, Journal de Marie-Louise, Vendémiaire*, 2015.

¹⁶ WAIRY Louis-Constant, *Mémoires intimes de Napoléon Ier par Constant son valet de chambre (Tome 1 & 2)*, Le Temps retrouvé, 2021.

from other sources and testimonies. Therefore, his text and testimony were used as a valuable resource while maintaining a critical perspective.

First and foremost, there is no direct or indirect mention of the talisman in Constant's writings. However, his writings provide numerous insights into Napoleon, making the possession of such an object relevant.

Constant describes on pages 282 and 283 (vol. I):

"The emperor never wore jewelry; he had neither purse nor money in his pockets, only his handkerchief, snuffbox, and bonbonniere. All he wore was a military decoration and two crosses: the Legion of Honor and the Iron Crown. Under his uniform and over his waistcoat, he wore a red cord, the two ends of which were barely visible. When there was a military review at the palace, he would put this large cord over his coat."

"The emperor had several watches from Breguet and Meunier; they were very simple, repeaters, without ornaments or numerals, with the top covered with a mirror, and the case made of gold."

"Monsieur Las Cases speaks of a watch covered on both sides with a double gold case, marked with the number B, which never left the emperor's possession. I have never seen him with such a watch, and yet I was the guardian of all the jewels. For several years, I was even the guardian of the crown diamonds."

He also wrote : *"The emperor often broke his watch by throwing it on the bed or against a piece of furniture."*

According to Constant, Napoleon rarely wore jewelry, which is in line with his military persona. His attire, as depicted in representations of him, except for his coronation attire, shows a man without adornment. He wore a military uniform, a long gray coat, his famous bicorne hat. None of these pieces were adorned with gold, fine embroidery, or other embellishments. He was primarily a military man. Napoleon seems to have focused on precious items when they held significant meaning. In the case of such representations, these would be his medals or his coronation attire. The talisman falls

into this category of objects with strong symbolic or sentimental significance, which the consul and later the emperor seemed to appreciate.

One of his most important pieces of jewelry was his watch, which had particular significance for him. This significant watch remained simple, devoid of ornaments or numerals. Its rustic appearance is confirmed by a watch of Napoleon preserved in Cuba, which, however, features numerals. The importance of the watch for Napoleon makes it plausible that he might have attached a symbolic element to his watch chain, as the talisman could have been a watch chain decoration.



Napoleon's watch, Museo Napoléonico, Cuba

On page 414 (vol. I)¹⁷, despite his love for Josephine, Constant shows us that she was not the only woman in Napoleon's life, even before Marie-Louise. He had many mistresses. He describes some of the jewelry he gave them:

"Madame V... had a gold ring made for the emperor, around which she wound her beautiful blonde hair. The inside of the ring bore her engraved words: 'When you cease to love me, do not forget that I love you.' The emperor only called her Marie. Perhaps I have dwelled too long on this affair of the emperor, but Madame V... was completely different from the other women whose favor His Majesty obtained. She was worthy of being nicknamed the La Vallière of the emperor."

These passages not only reveal Napoleon's numerous and well-known romantic adventures but also illustrate two points about the fashion of the time, which align with

¹⁷ WAIRY Louis-Constant, *Mémoires intimes de Napoléon Ier par Constant son valet de chambre* (Tome 1 & 2), Le Temps retrouvé, 2021.

what we know about the object. Objects with meanings and codes were common, as were those containing the braids of a loved one's hair¹⁸. The talisman appears to fit this type of object with strong symbolic meaning, incorporating various beliefs and superstitions, especially with the use of Egyptian tarot. Moreover, the object is coded with the date of Napoleon's 33rd birthday¹⁹, a date of great significance to him. On August 15, 1802, Napoleon became Consul for Life.

In volume II, page 189²⁰, Constant emphasizes the importance of watches for the Emperor.

"The emperor repeats his request, and in a more elevated tone, imagines that someone wants to surprise him in bed, escapes, and seizes only a large silver watch that he always had at hand."

Finally, on page 195²¹, we have a brief summary of the imperial journey to the Netherlands. *"Their Majesties left Holland via Harlem, The Hague, Rotterdam..."*. This journey is detailed in other accounts, as described later.

Reading Constant's *Mémoires de Constant, Valet de chambre de Napoléon Ier* provides us with numerous elements. While he does not mention the talisman, despite his precise descriptions of what the Emperor wore on and under his uniform, we can see that one of the most important items for Napoleon was his watches, as mentioned earlier.

Furthermore, although he was in charge of the jewelry and constantly by the Emperor's side, he claims never to have seen some of the jewelry mentioned elsewhere, such as the watch mentioned by Mr. Las Cases. Therefore, the possibility that this object truly belonged to Napoleon is not at all ruled out by the absence of mention.

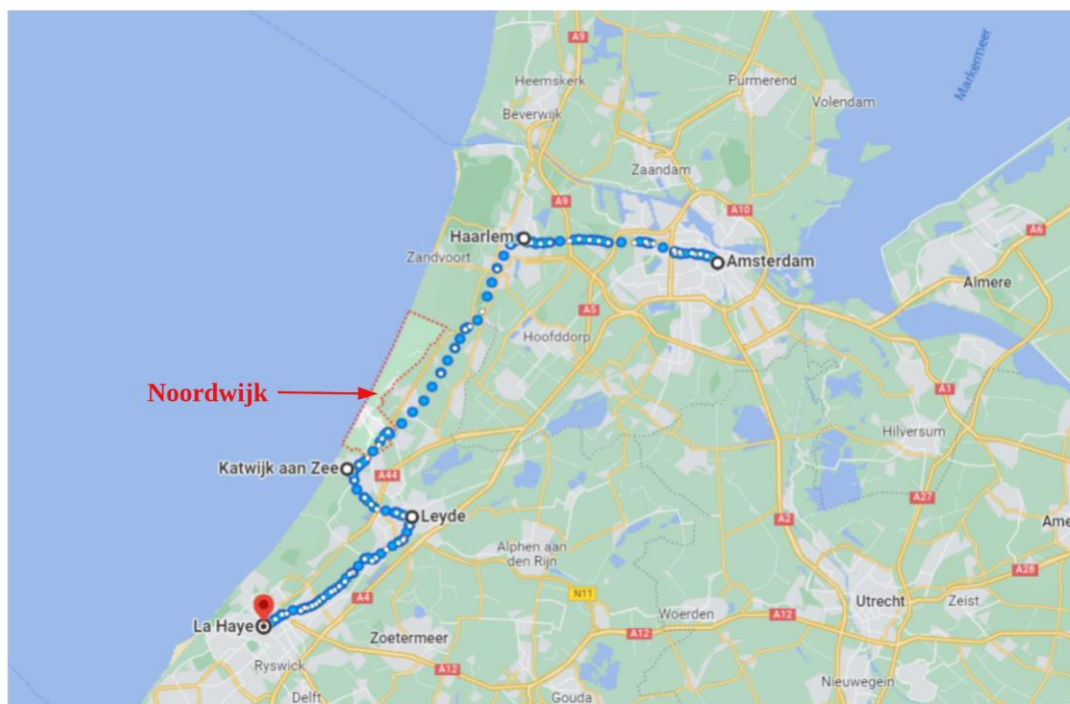
¹⁸ JOANNIS Claudette. *Bijoux des deux Empires Mode et sentiment, 1804-1870*, "Les bijoux en cheveux", p.46-47, Somogy éditions d'art, 2004.

¹⁹ JENSEN Glenn Randall, *The Talisman of Napoleon Bonaparte*, 2021, p.33.

²⁰ Wairy Louis-Constant, *Mémoires intimes de Napoléon Ier par Constant son valet de chambre* (Tome 1 & 2), Le Temps retrouvé, 2021.

²¹ Ibid.

This journey to Noordwijk is mentioned many times and described in these testimonies, as well as in the book "The Legacy of Napoleon in Dutch Society²²". A section is dedicated to his trip in 1811, following the abdication of his brother, King Louis of the Netherlands, and the annexation by the French Empire. Once again, his journey is accurately traced, allowing us to map it and show that Napoleon passed through Noordwijk, probably on October 24, 1811. This occurred during his journey from Haarlem to The Hague, where he made stops in nearby towns like Noordwijk and Katwijk aan Zee on October 24.



Reconstruction of Napoleon's journey from Amsterdam to The Hague in late October 1811, showing his passage through Noordwijk, on Google maps

This discovery is crucial. The fact that the Emperor himself passed through the town where the talisman was unearthed provides strong evidence of the credibility of the talisman's connection to Napoleon. At the time, Noordwijk was merely a collection of villages, of little importance. The talisman, a precious object from the Napoleonic period, displaying all the attributes of Napoleon's style, along with the codes deciphered by the

²² LOTTE Jensen (ed.), *Napoleons nalatenschap. Sporen in de Nederlandse samenleving*, De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam, 2020 quoted in ROORYCK Guy, *The Dutch Footprint of Napoleon*, 2021.

owner, could not have been randomly found in this town. This is evidence carries significant weight in its authentication.

Furthermore, this event occurred in 1811, just a few months after Marie-Louise gave birth to the King of Rome. This might have been the most opportune moment for him to finally let go of his connection to Josephine, as Marie-Louise had "fulfilled her part of the bargain." However, in the descriptions of the journey to Holland, both in Constant's account²³ and Marie-Louise's²⁴, there is no mention of the loss of a precious object. Napoleon did not confide in his closest confidants about it. As the last quote (p. 195) shows, the return from Holland via Harlem and The Hague appears to have proceeded smoothly.

However, this may have been Napoleon's own choice. Marie-Louise mentioned in her letters²⁵ that the Emperor often traveled on his own horse, not in his carriage.

C. Converging leads

Still no direct mention of the talisman, but the perceived secretive nature of the object may explain this absence of mention.

Despite this negative point, these researches helped identify converging points, such as Napoleon's visit to the location where the talisman was found or the presence of coded jewelry in Napoleon's entourage.

We now know that Napoleon considered his watch one of his most important possessions. Moreover, the talisman could have been a pendant attached to a watch chain. Associating this highly symbolic piece of jewelry with the item that mattered most to him is therefore probable.

Likewise, the tumultuous relationship between Josephine and Marie-Louise could have led Napoleon to abandon his talisman, which depicted Josephine. This may have

²³ WAIRY Louis-Constant, *Mémoires intimes de Napoléon Ier par Constant son valet de chambre* (Tome 1 & 2), Le Temps retrouvé, 2021.

²⁴ VIAL Charles-Eloi, *L'adieu à l'Empereur, journal de Marie-Louise*, Vendémiaire, 2015.

²⁵ HAUMONT Jacques, *Lettres de Napoléon à Marie-Louise*, édition Jean de Bonnot, 1968.

occurred during the first journey with Marie-Louise, shortly after the birth of the King of Rome, which she had given him.

This pushed us to delve deeper into the context of the talisman's creation.

III. Origins of the creation of the talisman

A. The historical context at the beginning of the 19th century

According to *A History of Jewelry* by Anderson Black²⁶, Napoleon's rise to power in 1799 marked a significant turning point in the world of jewelry. With financial and political stability, the jewelers of the Louis XVI era resumed their activities, shifting their focus towards gemstones in response to growing demand.

Napoleon supported craftsmanship by establishing art schools where the art of jewelry-making was taught. The style of Empire jewelry fused classical traditions with forms from the 18th century. The influence of antiquity, particularly Egyptian, thanks to the Egyptian campaign, was notable. The figure of the sphinx was highly prevalent in this period. This influence can be observed not only in furniture but also in buildings and cities. For example, in Strasbourg, the pavilion dedicated to Josephine is flanked by two female sphinxes : sphinges²⁷.

This mythical figure is highly associated with her person. This aligns with the representation of the sphinx on the talisman and further supports the authenticity of the object's connection to the emperor.



The two sphinxes at the Joséphine Pavilion in Strasbourg, France

Although Constant, his valet, mentioned that Napoleon rarely wore jewelry, imperial archives reveal that he frequently commissioned jewelry and luxury items, often

²⁶ BLACK J. Anderson, *A History of Jewelry: Five Thousand Years*, December 12, 1988.

²⁷ <https://napoleonprisonnier.com/lieux/pavillonJosephine.html>

given as gifts. This duality suggests an appreciation for jewelry not just for their intrinsic value but for what they represented: symbols of power, friendship, trust, and love, much like the talisman.

The significance of such objects is also observed because the Empire era coincided with a period when giving coded jewelry was fashionable²⁸. For instance, Josephine gifted her daughter, Hortense, with a similar type of jewelry²⁹.

In her work, Chief Curator Claudette Joannis cites the research of Simone Hatem in *L'Empire des Perles et des pierres précieuses*³⁰, published in 1956. The author notes, "These were as many amulets, and they were esteemed perhaps less for the beauty of the work than for the supernatural virtues attributed to them." Claudette Joannis adds that the development of amulets goes hand in hand with a warlike or troubled context, where death might be lurking, and people sought the support of engraved stones or jewelry often given by a friend or lover³¹. Love was believed to enhance the power of these talismans. She mentions that Napoleon I offered his lover, Marie Walenska, an amethyst talisman. This story was recounted by Georges Mauguin in his work *Napoléon et la Superstition : anecdotes et curiosités*³², published in 1946. This carved stone became her amulet, a precious cameo later passed down to her son. Interestingly, the themes of love and lovers are found in the code of the talisman deciphered by Glenn Randall Jensen³³.

Furthermore, the presence of talismans and good luck charms may have been popularized by Napoleon himself. For instance, Napoleon popularized flat repeating watches. Men's watches of this period were attached to a chain, often ending with a set of charms consisting of a good luck charm, a part of an animal's body, or a seal³⁴.

²⁸ JOANNIS Claudette. *Bijoux des deux Empires Mode et sentiment, 1804-1870*, Somogy éditions d'art, 2004, p. 41.

²⁹ HAUMONT Jacques, *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine et de Joséphine à Napoléon*, édition Jean de Bonnot, 1968.

³⁰ HATEM Simone, *L'Empire des Perles et des pierres précieuses*, 1956.

³¹ JOANNIS Claudette. *Bijoux des deux Empires Mode et sentiment, 1804-1870*, Somogy éditions d'art, 2004, p.51.

³² MAUGUIN Georges, *Napoléon et la superstition : anecdotes et curiosités*, Carrère, 1946.

³³ JENSEN Glenn Randall, *The Talisman of Napoleon Bonaparte*, 2021, p. 13.

³⁴ JOANNIS Claudette, *Bijoux des deux Empires Mode et sentiment, 1804-1870*, Somogy éditions d'art, 2004, p. 78.

Depending on its structure, the talisman could have been designed to be attached to a watch and serve as a "good luck" decoration for this precious object. Indeed, beneath the silver base on which the sphinx rests, hidden by articulated panels, there is a hook to which a watch chain could have been attached.



The underside of the talisman, showing the hook likely used to attach it to a watch chain.

Napoleon was not particularly described as a dandy, but it's not inconceivable to imagine him attaching a good luck charm to one of his precious watches. Watches were his favorite accessories, as evidenced by the orders he placed with suppliers such as Breguet, or their mentions in the memoirs of his valet, Constant.

Numerous accounts also attest to Napoleon's superstition. The end of the revolution and his anticlericalism gave rise to a series of beliefs, accentuated by the Egyptian campaign and the aesthetic and symbolic idealization of antiquity. These beliefs were visible in fashion: both men and women adorned themselves with watch charms or jewelry believed to transmit their power to their owner.

The choice of gemstones is also crucial in the design of jewelry and references the preferences of the beloved person. The choice of gemstones is an integral part of the talisman.

As we saw earlier, the talisman could have been the end of a watch chain, a very important item for the emperor. Beyond the logic of linking these two precious objects together, this kind of decoration was in vogue. The Mellerio house, which we mentioned earlier, specialized in such items. Furthermore, it was also a period when attaching a loved one's hair to a precious object was common. The talisman has a conduit at its end designed for this purpose.



Endpiece of the Talisman

Present Watch with the Monogram of Caroline Murat,
Queen of Naples and Sister of Emperor Napoleon I

Attributed to Nitot and son, 1810



Bréguet Tact Watch Medallion, No. 615,
Sold to the King of Westphalia,

Bréguet, 1809

M. Lapeyre Collection

Finally, the talisman incorporates symbols from Freemasonry and the Rosicrucians, both of which Napoleon was closely associated with. When combined with the meanings of the various deciphered codes - the emperor, the empress, his birthday on August 15th - it becomes entirely credible that the talisman belonged to the emperor.

All of these elements make the possession of this object by Napoleon entirely plausible.

B. Which creator for the talisman ?

This leads to the question of the creator, especially as identifying the creator would provide additional formal historical proof of the object's ownership by Napoleon.

To do this, we relied on numerous primary and secondary sources to compile a list of possible goldsmiths and jewelers of the talisman.

Léonard Pouy, a researcher at the School of Jewelry Arts in Les Echos³⁵, says :

"We have the complete list: Biennais, Depresle, Friese, Fister, Nitot, Pitaux, Cablat, Belhate, Perret, Tourner, Messin, the Marx brothers, Conrado, Hollander, Lelong, Meller, Mellerio-Meller, not to mention Capperone and Teibaker, cameo merchants, as well as Oliva and Scotto, coral merchants. It supported an industry."

Napoleon's first wife, Joséphine de Beauharnais, adored jewelry and gems. The variety and types of jewelry owned by the Empress are impressive. She wore sets, combs, tiaras, bracelets, earrings, and ornate coat clasps.

Jewelry was also a means for Joséphine to express her affection or demonstrate her love. For example, in the correspondence between Joséphine and her daughter Hortense (who left after marrying Napoleon's brother), it is revealed that she sent her a

³⁵ DE MONTMORIN Gabrielle, "Joaillerie : les fabuleuses parures de l'impératrice Joséphine", in Les Echos, 2nd May 2021, <https://www.lesechos.fr/weekend/mode-beaute/joaillerie-les-fabuleuses-parures-de-limperatrice-josephine-1311207>

necklace with a code. According to Claudette Joannis' book, Mlle Avrillion held the key to the jewelry chest installed in the Empress's bedroom and had an impressive collection of various gemstones³⁶. However, most of the jewelry owned by the Empress was sold, dispersed, dismantled, or stolen.

Joséphine had specific preferences for certain gemstones, including diamonds, sapphires, rubies, and pearls³⁷. These same sapphires, rubies, and pearls can be found in the talisman, along with emeralds, yet Napoleon's favorite color was green.

Joséphine also had a penchant for unique pieces, such as steel sets, necklaces with engraved stones, agate, petrified wood, malachite, scarabs, and carnelian³⁸.

It was not uncommon for Joséphine to change her jewelry several times a day, much like she did with her attire, and Napoleon was very generous with her, even though she seemed to conceal some of her more excessive expenses. She had the ability to place orders with her favorite jewelers, most of whom were located in Paris.

Joséphine also had a strong affinity for antique pieces. She could freely select jewelry from the crown jewels, but Constant, Napoleon's valet, wrote that she desired to own a genuine set of Greek and Roman stones. Denon was asked to "choose very beautiful ones." According to Claudette Joannis, the Emperor, after an initial refusal, instructed Duroc to go to the cabinet of antiques and choose the stones himself, which Nitot then mounted. The stones were frequently mounted and dismounted to create other high-value pieces³⁹.

Claudette Joannis' book also reveals the existence of a jewel offered by Napoleon to Joséphine: a gold enameled ring presented to her in 1796. This ring bears Napoleon's

³⁶ JOANNIS Claudette. *Bijoux des deux Empires Mode et sentiment, 1804-1870*, Somogy éditions d'art, 2004, p.21.

³⁷ JOANNIS Claudette. *Bijoux des deux Empires Mode et sentiment, 1804-1870*, Somogy éditions d'art, 2004, p. 22.

³⁸ Ibid, p.22.

³⁹ Ibid, p.23.

initials⁴⁰. This ring is now conserved in the Museum of Malmaison. Another ring is mentioned, the coronation ring, made of a ruby and blessed by the pope.



Wedding ring given by Napoleon Bonaparte to Josephine, with the initials JNB, Musée national du château de Malmaison, France

Joséphine's coronation ring, Musée national du château de Malmaison, France



According to the author, this ring may echo another ring worn by Napoleon, made of emerald and created by Marguerite. The presence of these different stones recalls the composition of the talisman, which is made of emeralds, sapphires, rubies and pearls. Joséphine also owned a few rare silver jewels, such as a ruby brooch designed by Nitot :

⁴⁰ Ibid, p.24.

As previously mentioned, talismans were not intended to serve as objects of display, but it seems that the commissioners of this intimate object wanted to reflect the preferences of their loved ones regarding gemstones. The talisman was not meant to be exhibited, yet it remains extremely rich and precious in terms of materials and symbolism.

The main body of the talisman, the crystal sphinx, is borrowed from Greek and Roman art. The art of intaglios and chiseling involved carving various motifs and characters into rock crystal. Their use was not so common in 19th-century jewelry, but we find multiple crystal carvings on small objects that Napoleon Bonaparte gifted to his close associates. This type of sculpture was also frequently used in Asian art, particularly Chinese art. Particularly in the Arab world, rock crystal was attributed with magical and mystical qualities. It was also a preferred material for men of power.

Rings, necklaces... As early as Antiquity, crystal was used to make a wide range of jewels. Around the year 1000, the Muslim world began to specialize in it: in Constantinople, Baghdad and Cairo, the Fatimids created flasks and sculpted lions of admirable beauty⁴¹. We could also hypothesize that the crystal carving was carried out in Egypt by specialized craftsmen, and that the rest of the talisman may have been designed in France, using French silver and stones.

⁴¹ BINDE Joséphine, "L'histoire millénaire du cristal au cœur d'une précieuse exposition au musée de Cluny", in Beaux Arts Magazine, 13th october 2023.



Front view of the talisman, showing the face of the sphinx.

We considered names like Canova or Houdon at the beginning of our research, as the style of the sculpture, especially its eyes, resembled their work, according to Glenn Randall Jensen. However, the size and nature of the object led us toward goldsmith jewelers, who were also capable of certain jewelry sculptures. We tried to match the jewelers who worked for Joséphine with those who worked for Napoleon, especially those found in the Emperor's orders at the National Archives, and we came up with a few names:

Marie-Étienne Nitot, the founder of the house that would become Chaumet, was Napoleon's personal jeweler known for his artistic finesse and involvement in imperial commissions. His close proximity to Napoleon and access to luxury materials positioned him well to create something as refined as the talisman. However, there's no direct documentation linking Nitot to the talisman, and his style might be too sophisticated for its more rugged design.

Jean-Baptiste Claude Odier, a renowned silversmith famous for his vermeil creations, had recognized expertise in working with precious metals and had commissions for the imperial court. The cons in his case include the lack of concrete evidence tying him to the talisman and a style possibly not quite matching the object.

Martin Guillaume Biennais, another renowned goldsmith specialized in tableware and decorative objects, worked closely with Napoleon, which could have included the creation of personal jewelry. However, he was more known for his work on larger items and less for delicate jewelry.

Mellerio, also known as Mellerio dits Meller, a jewelry house serving crowned heads since the 17th century, had a long tradition of creating exquisite jewelry and personal items for high society. The main drawbacks are the lack of specific documentation linking Mellerio to the talisman and their practice of signing all their art pieces.

Lastly, Edmé-Marie Foncier, a lesser-known jeweler active during the Consulate period, specialized in pieces made with crystal, potentially matching the talisman's profile. His son-in-law, Marguerite, continued his work and was also a jeweler of the imperial crown. However, the limited information about him and his work makes it difficult to establish direct links.

We continued our research to find out where the archives of the "Vase d'Or," Foncier's shop, and later Marguerite's shop might be. They are the most likely creators of this talisman based on our research.

The shop was located at 177 Rue Saint-Honoré, and it was owned by Widow Marguerite until 1854. It is assumed that she retained the archives of her late husband.

In 1855, there was expropriation to begin Baron Haussmann's Parisian works. At this point, we lost all contact with Foncier and Marguerite. It is also possible that when the "Vase d'Or" closed, the shop's archives were transferred to the Paris City Archives.

We examined these archives, which included guild records of merchants, artisans, etc. However, they were stored at the Paris City Hall. Unfortunately, the City Hall was burned down, along with the Tuileries, the Château de Saint-Cloud (Napoleon Bonaparte's residences), during the Paris Commune in 1871, taking with it all the archives dating back to before 1871. As a result, the Paris City Archives have almost no records of artisans in the city dating from before that date.

The closure of the shop may have also meant the destruction of the archives. This is the fate of most jewelers of the Napoleonic era whose houses did not continue.

The quest for the identification of the creator presents many difficulties.

Identifying the creator would have provided additional evidence of the ownership of the talisman by Napoleon Bonaparte. Indeed, if the craftsman is identified, we can prove the period of manufacture. This can also be verified through the style and materials used. Analyses conducted by the owner of the object demonstrate that it was indeed made in the early 19th century.

Identifying the artist would also have allowed us to focus our research in the archives of that particular artisan, such as drawings, account books, etc. More generally, it would provide stable and reliable information to rely on.

That is challenging for several reasons. Firstly, there is an absence of direct documentation linking any specific jeweler to the talisman. This lack of concrete evidence forces us to rely on conjecture, assessing the talisman's style and craftsmanship to speculate about its creator.

Additionally, the diversity in styles and techniques among artisans of the time further complicates matters. Each craftsman had a distinct approach and methodology, making it a complex task to definitively match the talisman's unique style to a particular creator.

Another significant hurdle is the preservation and accessibility of archives. The archives of jewelry houses and historical documents from the period are not always readily accessible. Moreover, some of this information might have been lost or destroyed over time. This loss could be attributed to various factors, including the closure of boutiques or events that occurred in 1870-1871.

Given these challenges, and in the absence of further evidence, it remains impossible to conclusively identify the creator of the talisman. This uncertainty persists despite the distinctive styles and techniques attributed to each potential artisan.

Conclusion

These five months of research have allowed us to explore a wide range of different sources, leading us to question and provide some additional authentication of the talisman. The owner's relevant and impressive research indicates a very clear connection to Napoleon, through the elucidation of codes and meanings, as well as the analysis of the materials that compose it. Our goal was to provide a historical analysis in order to find evidence, historical facts, whether they align with previous research or not.

These research efforts took us through French archives and also involved contacting foreign institutions, including Canadian, Australian, and British ones. One of the most interesting excavations was that of the archives of the Emperor Napoleon's household, which did not contain any direct mention of the talisman. Nevertheless, it allowed us to discern consumption habits of the time, including orders for crystal portraits, which were not commonly used at that time.

However, when reading other sources such as testimonies and specialized works, we realize that beyond the use of crystal, silver, emeralds, sapphires, rubies and pearls, many other elements related to the talisman emerge, despite some questions that remain unanswered.

When investigating whether Napoleon owned the talisman, it is important to approach the matter with an understanding that certain aspects remain unverifiable. This perspective arises from several factors that limit our ability to directly prove the link between the talisman and Napoleon.

Firstly, historical documentation related to Napoleon or the talisman has gaps, which can largely be attributed to fires in Napoleon's residences and the turbulent period in France following his reign, such as the Restoration and the events of 1870-1871, which resulted in the destruction of the Tuileries and the Saint-Cloud palace, Napoleon's main residences. These events likely led to the loss of documents that could have provided crucial insights.

Additionally, the absence of preserved payment records from artisans is notable. While such records could have offered definitive evidence linking an artisan to the talisman, their absence means that we cannot establish a clear link.

The scarcity of detailed archives about craftsmanship during that period, even from well-known artisans, further complicates the matter. This limitation makes it challenging to trace the origins of the talisman or confirm its association with a particular creator.

The lack of mentions in memoirs or personal testimonies is also significant. Despite extensive research, no direct references to this talisman have been found in the personal accounts of individuals close to Napoleon, although other talismans from the same era are documented.

However, the known use of another talisman by Napoleon, a scarab during his military campaigns, introduces ambiguity. This detail, not mentioned by his valet de chambre, suggests a variety of types of talismans associated with Napoleon, not all of which were known to his close associates.

Finally, the absence of a hallmark on the talisman is another factor that hinders definitive identification. Typically, hallmarks help identify the maker of an object, but in this case, their absence means that we cannot be certain of its creator. However, the fact that another known talisman of Napoleon, the scarab given to Marie Walenska^{42 43}, also lacks a hallmark indicating that this might have been an existing practice.

Yet, in spite of these gaps, a multitude of compelling factors strongly go in favor of the talisman's ownership by Napoleon.

⁴² Ring from the Battle of Dresden, a gift from Napoleon to Marie Walewska, Count Charles-André Colonna Walenski's private collection.

⁴³ Indeed, when his horse was killed under him by a cannonball at the Battle of Dresden, Napoleon was wearing a lucky scarab, a memento from his Egyptian campaign. In memory of this event, he had a scarab carved from the steel of that cannonball, with the reverse side bearing the date of the event: "Dresden, August 26, 1813." Upon his return, he gifted this talisman, mounted as a ring, to Marie Walewska. (JOANNIS Claudette. *Bijoux des deux Empires Mode et sentiment, 1804-1870*, Somogy éditions d'art, 2004, p.52.)

First and foremost: The talisman was discovered on one of Napoleon's travel paths in the Netherlands. He passed through a relatively small village at the time, Noordwijk, making it highly unlikely that another individual lost such a richly adorned object at this location. This is especially true considering the unique codes and symbolism associated with Napoleon.

The talisman in itself is directly linked to Napoleon. Gemstones were typically chosen for their symbolic meanings, and sapphires, emeralds, rubies, pearls, and crystal were materials frequently worn and used by Josephine and Napoleon, either as gifts or for personal use.

The style of the talisman is unusual, but this was the purpose of talismans – to emphasize symbols (in this case, the sphinx, a feminine symbol of power and protection, and a reminder of the Egyptian expedition). The possibility that the talisman's creation was the work of several creators cannot be ruled out. Our research led us to realize that crystal carving was the specialty of the Egyptians (particularly in Cairo). We can therefore hypothesize that this sculpture was brought back to France to be mounted as jewelry, with metal and jewels incusted in France. This possible foreign creation could also explain the sphinx's singular and unique appearance.

Plus, the material, silver, was present in Josephine's wardrobe⁴⁴. Silver may have been chosen for its durability compared to gold. If this talisman indeed belonged to Napoleon, he needed an object he could carry with him everywhere during his travels. Additionally, silver had strong symbolism in ancient Egypt. Also, crystal was not commonly used in 19th-century jewelry; it was more frequently used for silverware or tableware. However, in the archives, we find mentions of cut crystal gifts given by Napoleon to various individuals on multiple occasions. The fact that the talisman is made of a sphinx linked it again to Napoleon and its Egyptian expedition, but also to Josephine. She is often associated with the representation of the sphinx, a mythical figure common at Malmaison, but also in such place as the Pavilion Joséphine in Strasbourg⁴⁵. Also,

⁴⁴ A brooch designed by Nitot is made of silver and adorned with rubies

⁴⁵ The Sphinxes of the Joséphine Pavilion are located in the Parc de L'Orangerie in Strasbourg. The Joséphine Pavilion was constructed from 1806 to 1807 based on plans by the architect Valentin Boudhors.

according to Napoleon's valet de chambre, Napoleon was somewhat superstitious, particularly regarding anniversary dates. The talisman cryptically includes an important anniversary date, his 33rd birthday, marking his seizure of power as Consul for Life.

Furthermore, talismans were extremely popular during the Napoleonic era, even within Napoleon's close circle. His wife, his daughter-in-law Hortense, and his brother for example, owned talismans or gifted them to others.

In the fashion of the 19th century, talismans were usually symbolic decorative charms with gemstones and animal parts, things that we find on Napoleon's talisman. These talismans were often worn with a chain and attached to the watches of both men and women. And we now know Napoleon's love for watches. It is easy to imagine that he, like other upper-class men of the 19th century, may have decorated one of his precious watches with a symbol or lucky charm like this one and attached it as a pendant.

Finally, the absence of sources can also be considered as evidence that the object was intimate. Some intimate objects were neither documented in sources nor represented in art. This object was not intended to serve as a show of wealth and power. The absence of sources is also linked to the fact that people in the past did not have the same concept of craftsmanship as we do today. Some artisans could complete a craft task, receive relatively meager payment, and go unrecognized or uncelebrated. Collaboration between artisans was highly likely, especially when an object required various techniques like setting, crystal carving (sculpture), and small opening mechanisms on the sides. It's highly probable that the creator of some parts of the talisman remains unknown. Workshops that carved quartz or rock crystal were often composed of anonymous individuals, especially if the sphinx was carved in Egypt.

It was built to house the orange trees that had been confiscated by the republicans from the Château de Bouxwiller during the French Revolution and were offered to the city of Strasbourg in 1793. Originally, this pavilion had wooden elements. It was named after Joséphine de Beauharnais due to her fondness for this place where she had stayed.

Mr. Jensen's technical report and in-depth analysis, combined with our historical recontextualization work, allow us to consider the talisman's association with Napoleon as plausible and totally coherent, given our knowledge of the period and the person.

The association between Napoleon and talisman continued with the accession to power of his nephew, Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte. Together, they represent the 19th century, in search of glory, sentiment and belief.



Reverse side of a medal in honor of President Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte: "The name of Napoleon will always be a talisman for France", between 1848 and 1851, Musée Carnavalet, France

Sources and bibliography

Sources, memoirs and correspondences

- Emperor's Household fund, in the national archives :
 - . O/2/30
 - . O/2/31
 - . O/2/32
 - . AF/IV/1287-AF/IV/1589
 - . F/7/1058
- BOURGES (de) Charles Doris, *Mémoires secrètes de Napoléon Bonaparte, de la part d'un homme qui ne l'a pas quitté depuis 15 ans.*
- BOURRIENNE (de), *Mémoires*, Editions Marchandeaup, 2004.
- CHAPTAL Jean-Antoine Comte de, *Mes souvenirs sur Napoléon, 1756-1804*, Librairie Plon, 1893.
- Commission des Sciences et des Arts, *Description de l'Égypte, ou Recueil des observations et des recherches qui ont été faites en Égypte pendant l'expédition de l'Armée française*, 1809
- FIGEANC-CHAMPOLLION, *Fourrier et Napoléon, l'Égypte et les cent jours, mémoires et documents inédits*, 1844.
- DURAND (Gal), *Mémoire sur Napoléon et Marie-Louise 1810-1814*, consulté à la Bibliothèque Historique de la ville de Paris.
- HAUMONT Jacques, *Lettres de Napoléon à Joséphine et de Joséphine à Napoléon*, édition Jean de Bonnot, 1968.
- WAIRY Louis-Constant, *Mémoires intimes de Napoléon Ier par Constant son valet de chambre* (Tome 1 & 2), Le Temps retrouvé, 2021.

Books

- BEN TOUTOUH Hassan, *For honor and glory, Napoleon and the jewels of the Empire*, 2010.
- BLACK J. Anderson, *A History of Jewelry: Five Thousand Years*, December 12, 1988.
- BORNET Philippe, *Napoléon et Dieu*, Via Romana, 2021.
- BRANDA Pierre, *Joséphine, le paradoxe du cygne*, Perrin, 2015.
- BRANDA Pierre, *Les secrets de Napoléon*, Vuibert, 2014.
- BREGUET Emmanuel, *Watchmaker since 1775. Life and posterity of Abraham-Louis Breguet*, De Gourcuff Alain Eds, 2017.
- C.F. Gijsberti Hodenpijl, *Napoleon in Nederland*, De erven, 1904.
- CASTELOT André, *Bonaparte*, Perrin, 2023.
- GAUTHIER-VAILLARD, Monge, *le savant ami de Napoléon, 1746-1818*, 1954.
- HATEM Simone, *L'Empire des Perles et des pierres précieuses*, 1956.
- HUMBERT Jean-Marcel, LAURENS Henry, RAYMOND André, *Bonaparte et l'Egypte: Feu et lumières*, Hazan, 2008.
- JOANNIS Claudette. *Bijoux des deux Empires Mode et sentiment, 1804-1870*, Somogy éditions d'art, 2004.
- JOURDAN Annie, *L'Empire de Napoléon*, Flammarion, 2000.
- JOURDAN Annie, *Napoléon, héros, imperator, mécène*, Flammarion, 2019.
- LOTTE Jensen (ed.), *Napoleons nalatenschap. Sporen in de Nederlandse samenleving*, De Bezige Bij, Amsterdam, 2020.

- MAUGUIN Georges, *Napoléon et la superstition : anecdotes et curiosités*, 1946.
- NAUDON Paul, *Histoire générale de la Franc-Maçonnerie*, Office du livre, 1981.
- PASTOUREAU Michel, *Vert Histoire d'une couleur*, Seuil, 2013.
- ROMAIN Jules, de l'académie française, JUIN Le Maréchal, AARON Robert, AUDIBERTI Jacques, DE BEER Jean, BENOIST-MECHIN Jacques, BERL Emmanuel, DE BOISDEFFRE Pierre, DUNAN Marcel, DUBRETON-LUCAS Jean, D'ORMESSON Jean, SIR PETRIE Charles, *Napoléon*, Collection Génies et Réalités, Librairie Hachette et société d'études et de publications économiques, 1960.
- TULLARD Jean, GARROS Louis, *Itinéraire de Napoléon au jour le jour : 1769-1821*, Le Grand Livre du mois, 2002.
- VALOO Robert, KLEIN Philippe, *Les bijoux Rose-Croix, 1760-1890*, éditions Dervy, 2003.
- VEVER Henri, *La bijouterie française au XIXe siècle 1800-1900*, Hachette Livre BnF, 2016
- VIAL Charles-Eloi, *l'adieu à l'empereur, journal de Marie-Louise*, Vendémiaire, 2015.

Website articles

- BINDE Joséphine, *L'Histoire millénaire du cristal au cœur d'une précieuse exposition au musée de Cluny*, in *Beaux Arts Magazine*, 13 October 2023 :
<https://www.beauxarts.com/expos/lhistoire-millenaire-du-cristal-au-coeur-dune-precieuse-exposition-au-musee-de-cluny/>
- BOIVIN Claude, « La pensée religieuse de Napoléon », 8 November 2021 :
<https://laportelatine.org/formation/histoire/la-pensee-religieuse-de-napoleon>
- BOURGUET-ROUYEYRE Josiane, « Correspondance générale, publiée par la fondation Napoléon, Volume III, Pacifications, 1800-1802 », *Annales historiques de la Révolution française*, April-June 2007:
<https://journals.openedition.org/ahrf/9573>
- DE MONTMORIN Gabrielle, « Joaillerie : les fabuleuses parures de l'impératrice Joséphine » in *Les Echos*, 2 May 2021 :
<https://www.lesechos.fr/weekend/mode-beaute/joaillerie-les-fabuleuses-parures-de-limperatrice-josephine-1311207>
- DEWINTRE Hervé, « Joaillerie – Le talisman de Napoléon », in *Le Point*, 2 May 2021 :
https://www.lepoint.fr/mode-design/joaillerie-le-talisman-de-napoleon-02-05-2021-2424526_265.php
- EFFE Frédéric, « Du vert empoisonné au vert salvateur », in PASTOUREAU Michel, *Vert, Histoire d'une couleur*, September 2017 :
<https://www.moyenagepassion.com/index.php/2017/09/23/lhistoire-des-couleurs-par-michel-pastoureau-du-vert-empoisonne-au-vert-salvateur/>
- GOSSE (Col), « L'Empire et le Saint-Siège, Napoléon et la religion », *Revue du Souvenir Napoléonien*, n°305, May 1979 :
<https://www.napoleon.org/histoire-des-2-empires/articles/lempire-et-le-saint-siege-napoleon-et-la-religion/>
-

- JENSEN Glenn Randall, *Napoleon's Talisman*, February 2010 :
https://www.napoleon-series.org/research/napoleon/c_Talisman.html#_ftn18
- JENSEN Glenn Randall, *The Talisman of Napoleon Bonaparte*, 2021 :
<https://www.napoleonstalisman.com/file-share>
- *Napoleon Bonaparte artefacts stolen in Australia*, BBC, 15 April 2014 :
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-27023657>
- ROORYCK Guy, *The Dutch Footprint of Napoleon*, translated by Lucelle Pardoe, 2021 :
<https://www.the-low-countries.com/article/the-dutch-footprint-of-napoleon>
- VIRUEGA Jacqueline, « Bijou utilitaire », *L'Histoire par l'image*, March 2008 : <https://histoire-image.org/etudes/bijou-utilitaire>
- « Le collar de Napoléon... », 17 October 2011 :
<https://www.lebistrotdeharosecroix.com/article-le-collar-de-napoleon-86693558.html>

Institutions

- Briars Museum : <https://aumuseums.com/vic/melbourne/briars-park>
- British Museum : <https://www.britishmuseum.org/>
- Carnavalet Museum :
<https://www.parismuseescollections.paris.fr/de/node/91342#infos-principales>
- Fondation Napoléon : <https://fondationnapoleon.org> and their library ;
<https://www.napoleonica.org/>
- Historical libraries of Paris : <https://bibliotheques-specialisees.paris.fr>
- Napoleon's Talisman : <https://www.napoleonstalisman.com>
- National archives of France : <https://www.archives-nationales.culture.gouv.fr>
- National library of Canada : <https://bibliotheque-archives.canada.ca>
- National library of France : <https://gallica.bnf.fr>