# French Infantry Flags: From 1786 to the End of the First Empire

Ludovic Letrun

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As witnesses to History's ups and downs, flags - and in particular infantry flags - reveal how short-lived ideas and their symbols can be when they are the unfortunate victims of auto-da-fés thought up by different regimes. Today museums have only managed to preserve a few rare specimens and the period texts and documents are mostly incomplete. This is particularly true for the Army of Italy flags, those of the volunteers and those of the half-brigades from 1794-1803, which are still mainly unknown to this day.

Faced with this type of major difficulty, and if a coherent picture of the flags is to be painted, a whole gamut of particularly inescapable assumptions has to be made. Nevertheless since historical exactitude does not allow for even the smallest unverifiable interpretations, it is up to us to warn our readers that the flags illustrated here are those that our research has enabled us to reproduce. Each individual regimental history has been established so as to follow the trail these flags left as they changed from regiment to half-brigade. These histories are not always able follow the rank numbering in the corps since there was often no direct association between them. For the reader to find his way around, an asterisk designates a battalion which was in at the foundation of the new regiment, and also shows that this unit's flag was most certainly adopted provisionally.



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