

The Limits of Napoleonic Centralization:  
Notables and Local Government in the  
Department of the Iserre from the Consulate  
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# The Limits of Napoleonic Centralization: Notables and Local Government in the Department of the Iserre from the Consulate to the beginning of the July Monarchy

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*French History*, Volume 19, Issue 4, 1 December 2005, Pages 463–481,

<https://doi.org/10.1093/fh/cri048>

**Published:** 01 December 2005

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## Abstract

The law of 28 Pluviôse VIII (17 February 1800), which installed a new administrative regime in France, appeared to establish an extremely centralized system in which the notables fulfilled no more than an honorific function. The Napoleonic period is thus regarded as the apogee of administrative centralization. On the basis of a study of the Isère from the Consulate to the July Monarchy, however, this article seeks to show the reality of elite participation in local affairs, the existence of a 'système des notables' from the time of Napoleon onwards, and the fundamental continuity in this respect with succeeding regimes. The notables did not hesitate to lobby the government in order to defend the interests of the department when this was necessary. They also played an essential role in the conduct of local administration and exercised a decisive influence over the choice of local officials before the advent of elections in the 1830s.

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Online ISSN 1477-4542

Print ISSN 0269-1191

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