

**Subject:** Malta service ribbons

To answer several questions:

1. The "service ribbons" are about one-half inch wide and 1 1/4 to 1 1/2 inches long.
2. On the SMOM service uniform and service cape ONLY the ribbons and minatures of the Order and of the Church are worn.  
One does not wear military decorations, or those of other chivlaric orders.
3. **Knights** wear the service uniform of the Order. They wear their 'service ribbons' on the left breast, just above the breast pocket in the following order, starting from the center of the body:
  - 1) Class and grade in the Order (black with some type of cross in the center) -- this differentiates them from volunteers and other non-members in the uniform.
  - 2) then the highest grade of *pro merito melitensi* ribbon which you have (if you have received several over the years ONLY the highest grade -- not two ribbons);
  - 3) service ribbons for papal decorations (not the decorations);
  - 4) then campaign ribbons, such as service at the medical centers in Rome in the Holy Year, or for service after the Tsunami, or Katrina, etc. according to their chronology.
4. **Dames** wear the cape, not the service uniform. Because they do not wear the uniform, they do not wear these service ribbons.
  - 1) Instead, at church services they wear the Large Bow with the Cross according to their own grade.  
They may wear that at other times as well.
  - 2) It is not proper for Dames (or others) to wear anything else on the cape.
  - 3) Preferably they wear other things on their white aprons, or if necessary even on their sweaters: the minatures of:  
their grade in the Order; their highest *pro merito melitensi* award;  
papal decorations; service medals of the Order  
(Rome, Tsunami, Katrina, etc.).

**Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order  
of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta**

**SOME PROTOCOL MATTERS:**

**ROBES, UNIFORMS, INSIGNIA, FLAGS**

All members of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta should be very familiar with the Order's official garments, insignia and flags, and their proper usage. It is not authorized to wear or use the robes, uniforms or insignia of the Order for any purpose not connected with the Order or an event of the Order, or representing the Order at the event of another Order, or for certain religious or ecclesiastic activities.

**1. Dress: Church Robes and Capes**

1.1 Third Class (Magistral and Devotion): Knights wear the black "church" or "choir" robe, with white collar and cuffs, which may be trimmed with red piping. Dames wear either a black cape, lined in black or the Lourdes uniform cape lined in red (see below). The 8-pointed white Maltese cross is appliquéd on the center of the Knight's robe and on the left shoulder of the Dame's cape. It is a "voided" cross (only the outline). Only members in the 'noble' categories of 'Honor and Devotion' or 'Grace and Devotion' may display small white *fleurs-de-lis* between the four arms of the cross. In place of the *fleurs-de-lis*, double-headed imperial eagles are used by noble members of the Austrian and Bohemian Grand Priories.

1.2 Second Class (in Obedience): Over the church robe Knights wear a black scapular, trimmed in red, with the appropriate cross on the front. Dames wear the same cape as in the Third Class, but the voided cross is outlined with red piping (if there are *fleurs-de-lis*, they are not outlined).

1.3 First Class (Justice or Professed): Knights wear a black cassock-like church robe with sleeves and a short cape. A white Maltese cross (solid, not voided) is appliquéd over the left shoulder. Knights Professed in Perpetual Vows also wear a "*stola*" which hangs from the middle of the back of the neck and is draped over the left arm. It is embroidered with the symbols of Christ's passion. They may also wear a black velvet cap. [Note: certain members in the Spanish Association are permitted to use the solid cross but they are not in the First Class.]

1.4 When the church robe or cape is worn, a Knight or Dame always wears the large Cross of the Order, received at investiture. Knights wear it on the black ribbon around the neck; Dames wear it on the large black bow over the left breast of the cape. It is not a 'decoration' but an integral part of 'church' dress.

1.5 The church robe or cape is the religious garment of a religious order, and the large Cross is the religious insignia of that order, it is not a decoration. It is improper to wear

**SMOM**  
**Some Protocol Matters**  
**Robes, Uniforms, Insignia, Flags**

any other decorations, papal knighthoods or honors, *Merito Melitensi*, medals, pins, buttons or anything of the like on the Knights' church robe, the Dames' church cape, or the Dames' Lourdes cape.

1.6 Although not required, the Order encourages the members to wear the church robe at all appropriate events of the Order and its organizations. These would include most Masses, such as for: investitures, feasts of the patroness and patrons, saints and blessed of the Order; Mass and common prayers of the Daily Office at spiritual retreats; at funeral or memorial services when requested. The church robe (not the dress uniform) is always worn at official governing meetings of the Order as a religious order, such as Chapters General and Councils Complete of State, meetings of the Sovereign Council, Chapters of Pories and Subpories.

**2. Dress: Lourdes Uniforms and Capes**

While on the Lourdes pilgrimage, members wear a work uniform. While often know as 'the Lourdes uniform', it is in fact more than that. It is the Order's general work or hospitaller uniform. In addition to its use at Lourdes, it may be used on other occasions when members are involved in works of the Order, such as staffing first aid posts, assisting malades and others at anointing Masses, serving at a Order events at hospitals, nursing homes, and the like. The uniform for men varies by country and association, while the uniform for women is more standard.

2.1 Men. The uniforms of the three USA Associations vary a little, but in general Knights, male auxiliaries and some male volunteers wear: black trousers without cuffs or pleats; black military style jacket or blouse with lapels and sometimes epaulets; white shirt with tie (of the Association or black); wide black leather belt with buckle displaying the Cross of the Order; comfortable black shoes and black stockings; and a black beret with insignia on the left side.

2.2 Women. Dames, female auxiliaries and some female volunteers wear the black Lourdes cape with hood, both lined with red. Under the cape they wear a plain white dress or white blouse and white skirt, with no colored decoration of any kind; a white nursing style apron with the Association's identifying patch in the upper center may be worn; a white nurse's 'veil' or cap with a Malta pin; black or beige stockings (not white); comfortable black shoes (no sneakers); and optional red cardigan sweater or red blazer.

2.3 For all organizations, the following may be worn with the work or Lourdes uniform: the insignia of the Association (standardized for the USA) on the left sleeve just below the shoulder; the Lourdes service medal (red ribbon with medal and gold or silver crosses indicating number of pilgrimages); a name tag; merit and service ribbons of the Order of Malta and its relief organizations and projects (not the full medals); official

SMOM  
Some Protocol Matters  
Robes, Uniforms, Insignia, Flags

medals and insignia of the *Lourdes Hospitalité*, and service ribbons (not the medals) of papal knighthoods. It is the service ribbon of the Order which distinguishes Knights and Dames from volunteers and others who wear the same uniform or cape. Men wear all these on the upper left breast of the uniform jacket or blouse, with the name tag on the pocket flap, with the red Lourdes ribbon and medal hanging below it; with the service ribbons above the pocket. Women wear them in the same order, but centered on the bib of the apron or the white dress or blouse (or on the left breast of the sweater or cardigan). Women do not wear them on the cape. All may wear a color-designation of team assignment, such as a riband or band on the Knight's epaulet(s), or a colored ribbon close to the name tag. Knights do not wear both. Members may also, of course, wear the insignia provided by the *Hospitalité* to designate various leaders.

**3. Dress: Full Dress Uniform.**

3.1 All Knights are permitted to wear the Full Dress Uniform of the Order. It is basically black trousers with gold stripe; black stockings and shoes; red double-breasted coat with French collar (high closed collar), with wide outward turned lapels; heavy gold epaulets; sword belt and sword; white gloves. The color of the cuffs, collar and lapels is white for the First Class and Bailiffs of Honor and Devotion, and black for others; depending on grade and honors, there may be heavy gold embroidery on these. There is also a fore-and-aft dress hat with plume to match the lapel color. A long cape may also be worn with the appropriate cross on the shoulder.

3.2 It is worn also as a symbol of the Order as a 'sovereign entity'. The Grand Master and others present wear it for the presentation of credentials by ambassadors accredited to the Order, and for the official annual visit of the Government of the Order to the Holy Father (church robes are not worn for this).

3.3 It is worn by members very often in Europe, but it is expensive and not particularly comfortable, especially in warm weather. It may be worn in place of the church robe for some public occasions. A member may also choose to wear it for marriage.

**4. Cross of the Order**

4.1 Large Cross. The large Cross presented at investiture is not simply a "decoration", medal or honor. It is the symbol and insignia of a religious order of the Catholic Church. It was blessed before presentation and in effect is a sacramental. It is for this reason that it may be worn in the sanctuary and by a person with holy orders while celebrating Mass.

**SMOM**  
**Some Protocol Matters**  
**Robes, Uniforms, Insignia, Flags**

It is worn by Knights on a black ribbon around the neck and by Dames on a large black bow over the left breast. It is a sacramental, not 'jewelry', and is never to be worn on a chain around the neck or on a broach.

In addition to being worn on the church robe or cape, it may be worn with evening clothes and gowns (along with other decorations, medals and merits) when the invitation states "white tie with decorations" or "black tie with decorations". At an event of the Order it takes precedence, and a Knight of the Order should wear it on the neck ribbon and should not replace it with the *Merito Melitensi*, a papal knighthood, or any other decoration. At an event of another Order or not of the SMOM, a Knight or Dame may give precedence to the neck cross of that order or of another.

4.2 Miniature Cross. The Cross is also provided in miniature: depending from a small black ribbon for Knights and from a small black bow for Dames. These may be worn with "white tie" or "black tie", if "with decorations" is on the invitation. It is also worn by a Dame under the conditions when a Knight would wear a "lapel pin".

4.3 Wearing of Crosses. With "white tie" in addition to the large neck Cross, it is proper also to wear: miniatures of all other decorations, etc.; up to 4 "breast stars"; one appropriate wide riband; and one appropriate chain. With "black tie" in addition to the large neck Cross it is proper to wear miniatures; one breast star (Knights of Justice and in Obedience may also wear the 'cross of profession' or 'of the promise above' the star); but no chain or riband. With "black tie" events, a Knight or Dame may choose not to wear the large Cross on a neck ribbon or large bow, but only the miniature.

## **5. Lapel Pins**

In the Order there is a strict protocol regulating lapel pins. These rules are usually well known to confrères in Europe and other places, and wearing the wrong pin, especially if it is 'above' one's rank, will be noticed, and could prove embarrassing. There are differences in the pins according to Class, category and special honors. This paragraph will deal only with those most commonly used in the United States.

5.1 The rules and regulations of the Order in this matter follow the very traditional practices of old and established chivalric orders. Some newer groups may permit different practices, but these are not considered proper in the Order of Malta. Only Knights may use the lapel pin. It is to be worn on a suit coat, blazer or sports coat, not on a shirt or leisure wear. Dames are to wear the miniature of the bow and cross, not the lapel pin.

**SMOM**  
**Some Protocol Matters**  
**Robes, Uniforms, Insignia, Flags**

5.2 With the exception of those for members in the First Class Professed in Perpetual Vows, the pin is a black cloth rosette with an insignia of varying design. The grade of 'grand cross' or a special honor or dignity is signified by gold wreathing around the edge of the pin.

5.3 Third Class (Magistral and Devotion): Magistral Knights, Magistral Chaplains and Conventual Chaplains *ad honorem*: white cross with gold crown. Knights of 'Grace and Devotion' and of 'Honor and Devotion': white cross with gold crown, with gold fleurs-de-lis between the arms of the cross.

5.4 Second Class (in Obedience): white cross with gold fleurs-de-lis between the arms (no crown).

5.5 First Class (of Justice): Novice Knights and Chaplains, and Knights and Chaplains Professed in Temporary Vows: black cloth rosette with white cross (no crown, no fleurs-de-lis). Knights and Chaplains Professed in Perpetual Vows: white cross (no rosette, crown or fleurs-de-lis).

**6. Other Insignia of the Order**

It is inappropriate for anyone to use the flags or coats of arms of the Order or of one of its organizations on any form of personal or professional stationery, personal cards, business cards, license plates, bumper or window stickers, clothing or the like, except as permitted by the rules of Order. It is also inappropriate to use any parts of the arms or insignia of the Order on personal coats of arms, except as allowed by the Order's heraldic rules.

6.1 Coats of Arms. The official coat of arms of the Order is a red shield (may be of oval shape) with a plain white cross, the arms extending to the edges. It may be displayed superimposed on a white Maltese cross, surrounded by a rosary, and marshaled with crown, mantling, flags or panoply of arms. The coat of arms or insignia for works of the Order is a red shield with a white 8-pointed Maltese cross. The shield is outlined with red, separated from the shield by white. In addition to the Grand Magistracy and its organizations and offices, Associations, Pories and Subpories may use the official coat of arms, or the insignia of the works of the Order. Regulations were issued in 2006 for the use of the insignia of the Order on stationery and the like. Pories may have their own arms.

6.2 Flags:

6.2.1 Sovereign Flag. This flag reflect the coats of arms. The official flag "of sovereignty" is red with a plain white cross, with the arms extending to the edges of the

**SMOM**  
**Some Protocol Matters**  
**Robes, Uniforms, Insignia, Flags**

flag. [It looks much like the Danish flag, which was copied from that of the Order, but the arms of the cross are usually a little narrower, and the cross is always centered on the flag.] It is used by the government of the Order, that is, by the Grand Magistracy; headquarters of priories, subpriories and associations; diplomatic missions of the Order.

6.2.2 Hospitaller Flag. The Hospitaller Flag or flag of the works of the Order is red with a white 8-pointed Maltese cross in the center. It may be used also by government entities of the Order, and by Delegations, sub-organizations of those mentioned, at hospitaller and other works of the Order.

6.2.3 Use as funerary pall. A large hospitaller flag may be used as the pall in funeral rites for a deceased Knight or Dame. Either the flag of sovereignty or the hospitaller flag may be used for a member of the First Class.

6.2.4 The flags of the Order may be used at official events of the Order and its organizations.

6.2.5 The sovereign flag should be used or displayed only by persons who have an official capacity in the Order which supports its usage.

6.2.6 The hospitaller flag of the Order may be displayed in the private residences of members, but may not be used to imply any 'official' representation of the Order, such as on an automobile, boat, airplane or the like.

End

## The Sovereign Military Order of Malta

### CHURCH ROBE: Etiquette of Wearing

1. The robe or cape of the Order is the official "habit" of the members of our Order as a religious order of the Church. The large Cross of the Order is part and parcel of the habit. No other item or decoration or the like may be worn on the habit.
2. As such it is worn at official meetings of the government and administration of the Order: Chapters General, Councils Complete of State; meetings of the Sovereign Council; meetings of the Professed; and some other.
3. It is often called appropriately the "church robe" or "choir robe" [also *Kukulle*], because it is also to be worn at official spiritual events of the Order (or of its sub-organizations), including retreats, days of recollection, special Masses, etc..
4. It may be worn when the Order is participating as a group in some event, at the invitation of the authority for that event, such as a Mass in which our Order has been invited to participate, and has agreed to do so officially.
5. It may be worn by a person or persons representing the Order at some non-Order event such as being the representatives of the SMOM at an event of the *Johanniterorden* or the Venerable Order.
6. It may be worn by a member if participating in an official Church event such as the Red Mass or the Blue Mass, or the like, if invited to do so by the sponsors. It is not appropriate for an individual member to wear it while in the congregation or assembly unless as part of a group of the Order.
7. Members of the First Class may also wear their habit if participating as "religious" in a Mass or ceremony, and invited so to do.
8. It probably is acceptable in individual cases, such as participating in the baptism of a child, if a parent or more importantly a God-parent, but the robe should be removed immediately after the ceremony.
9. It would seem absolutely inappropriate for a member to wear it in place of an academic gown in an academic procession. It is NOT an academic gown.
10. It is absolutely inappropriate to wear the habit and Cross out in public without some official connection with the Order. One shows one's membership in the traditional and customary way of all chivalric orders: with the lapel button!!
11. It would be appropriate for the local area chair to advise the person in a diplomatic way that his action was not in keeping with the customs and practices of the Order. It often is not the person's fault, in that such information is not always provided during their time in preparation. It is obligation in confraternal charity to educate and guide the members in these matters.

End





## QUICK REFERENCE WEARING DECORATIONS

### 1. “With Decorations”.

Decorations are worn only if the invitation specifically states something to that effect, usually: “White tie with decorations” or “Black tie with decorations”. If that is not indicated on the invitation, only a boutonniere may be worn in the button hole of the left lapel, that is, a flower, or a lapel pin or recognition button of an “order”, such as that of the Order of Malta.

### 2. Decorations.

There are several types of “decorations”: Collars, chains, neck, chest, stars and badges, broad ribands (sashes), chest, medals, and miniatures.

Chain: chains are often large and worn over both shoulders; usually signifying some important, such as Chancellor of England.

Collar: the highest form of personal decoration, similar to a chain but usually smaller, worn around the neck, permanent possession of the wearer.

Cross or similar: the standard form of decoration in most orders. In some cases it has a shape of 5 points or more, but the term “cross” is still use as a generic because all stem from the design of the Cross of our Order St John, the original and oldest of all orders.

IMPORTANT: the Cross of the Order of Malta is often classified as a ‘decoration’, and spoken of in that term, BUT it is a blessed sacramental, the official insignia of the religious Order of St John of Jerusalem. It must never be removed from its ribbon or bow and worn as jewelry. [This does not prohibit the use of jewelry in the shape of the Maltese cross, but only the use of the official ‘decoration’ Cross.]

Neck Cross: Knights wear the Cross on a ribbon around the neck. Except with a military uniform, or when placed for viewing at one’s funeral, only one neck badge is worn at a time.

Chest bows: In most chivalric orders, only Knights wear neck crosses, while as in the Order of Malta, the Dames wear a similar decoration on a bow over the heart. A Dame of Malta never wears the Cross on a ribbon or chain around the neck, except when it is presented at investiture. At that time it may be on a temporary neck ribbon to facilitate its presentation.

Stars and badges: generally are worn on the left side, approximately just below the breast-pocket. With white-tie, no more than four are worn at a time, and with black-tie only one is worn. A Knight of Justice and a Knight in Obedience may in addition wear the Cross of Profession or of the Promise above the others.

## QUICK REFERENCE: WEARING OF DECORATIONS

Broad riband: some Orders grant a broad riband (about 4" wide) in colors specific to a decoration; traditionally, a "military" Order is worn over the right shoulder to hang over the left hip, as would be a band to hold a sword, while "non-military" Orders are worn over the left shoulder to hang over the right hip; only one is worn at a time; it is worn only with white-tie, not with black-tie; Continental custom is that it is worn under the vest except when in the presence of the head of the Order which presented it, in which case it is worn over the vest; English custom is always to wear it over the vest; Americans may wear it either way; it may also be worn with a dress uniform.

Medals: many of the lesser decorations of Orders are worn as a medal on a short ribbon. It is pinned over the left breast pocket. If the wearer has several, they hang in a horizontal line. However, they are usually worn only with uniforms or on special occasions even on a business suit. But normally they are included with the miniatures.

Miniatures: a person who has a number of decorations is clearly limited as to how many may be worn at one time, so it is permitted to mount miniatures of the medals and decorations on a bar (or small chain) which is worn on the left upper chest, attached to the coat lapel and extending to the left. A neck decoration and its miniature are not worn at the same time, unless the miniature is mounted with several other miniatures.

### 3. Gentleman's Evening Wear: a quick review.

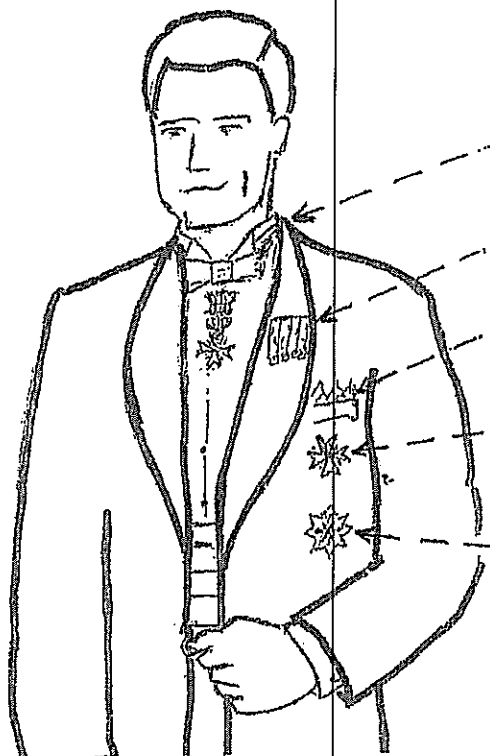
Evening "formal wear" is either: "White tie" or "black tie".

"White tie": black tail coat, with broad pointed lapels; white stiff front shirt with wing-collar and 'French cuffs'; dress cufflinks and shirt studs, usually pearl or heirloom gem; white pique bowtie; white pique or Marcella vest with pearl buttons; black cuff-less trousers with double braid running down the side, but "Tuxedo trousers" may be worn; black stockings; black plain-toed shoes, slip-on with no strings or straps showing, highly polished but patent leather is acceptable.

"Black tie": is what in the US is known as "Tuxedo"; black suit coat usually with satin lapels, pointed or shawl, single or double-breasted; white plain or pleated shirt with wing or fold-down collar, preferably with French cuffs; preferably dress cuff links and shirt studs usually black, or a colored non-clear precious stones or symbolic ones; black bow tie; if single breasted, black vest or black cummerbund; black cuff-less trousers with dress stripe down the side; black stockings; black patent leather plain-toed shoes, slip-on with no strings or straps showing. Although some wear a maroon cummerbund and tie, or even some more adventuresome colors, it is recommended that black is still the more correct color, and is required if wearing decorations.

### 4. Lady's Evening Wear: a quick review.

"Lady's wear" and "quick" are contradictions in terms. Unlike gentlemen's, ladies' attire varies. As a result, the space available for the display of decorations also varies. In general, the rules for gentlemen apply also to ladies. The exception being that ladies do not wear the Cross of the Order on a neck ribbon, but on a large bow. Miniatures may be worn above that bow, and breast stars below. The broad riband goes over the gown.



BLACK-TIE  
with decorations

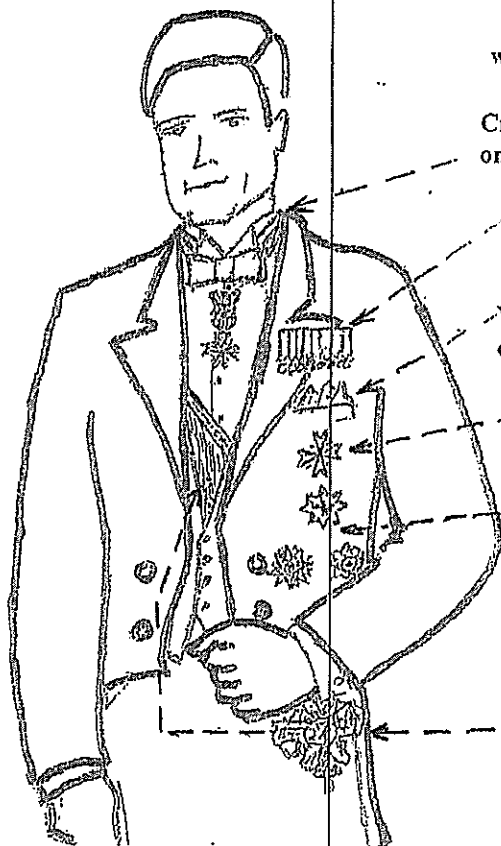
Cross of Order  
on narrow ribbon

Miniatures

White silk kerchief  
optional

Cross of Profession  
or Obedience

Only one  
breast star



WHITE-TIE  
with decorations

Cross of Order  
on narrow ribbon

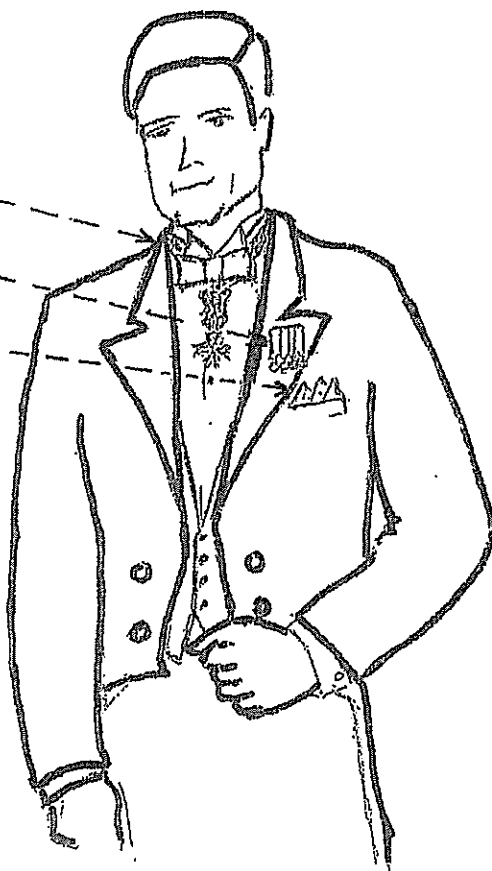
Miniatures

White silk kerchief  
optional

Cross of Profession  
or Obedience

1 to 4 breast  
Stars

Broad riband



PLACEMENT OF  
DECORATIONS

