

Naval Artillerist in Infantry Service

Winkler's "French Marine" is, in fact, a private of the *Artillerie de la Marine* (Naval Artillery), whose personnel are often confused with the *Marins de la Garde Impériale* (Seamen or Sailors of the Imperial Guard), a unit the name of which, in turn, is often erroneously mistranslated as "marines." Winkler evidently stumbled in his misunderstanding of the French word *marin*. Perhaps the artist may be forgiven his confusion, for the personnel he encountered were not present in Saxony as artillerists, but as infantry.

In January 1813, Napoleon decided to draw infantry from the 12 battalions of naval artillery protecting the coast from British naval raids. His plan called for 24 infantry battalions to be built, totaling 16,000 men, further augmented by 2,000 levies from the retroactive "levy of the four classes" of 1809–1812 authorized on 11 January 1813, and 2,000 more men from the conscription of 1814. However, when the four Naval Artillery Regiments (*Régiments Artillerie de la Marine*, sometimes noted as "RAMa") were finally formed, they reached a strength of only 12,080, in 17 battalions.¹ These regiments went on to earn a reputation for their fighting skills, valor, and steadiness in battle.

Sometimes referred to as "marines" in English language sources, the excellent battlefield performance of these troops added to their confusion with a unit of the Imperial Guard. Later iconography often wrongly depicts the *Marins de la Garde Impériale*, numbering a mere 50 men attached to the Reserve Artillery Park of the Imperial Guard, as involved in combats that actually were fought by these naval artillerists serving in the *Grande Armée* as infantry.

The Naval Artillery Regiments' uniform was very different from that of the Sailors of the Imperial Guard. In many cases shakos never replaced the artillerists' bicornes. The double-breasted dark blue greatcoat and earrings were possibly a reason for the impression that they belong to the Guard, as these were details otherwise only to be seen in Guard units.

The uniform worn beneath the greatcoat was nearly the same as that of the foot artillery: blue *habit*, waistcoat and trousers, blue lapels, cuffs and turnbacks with red piping, red collar, occasionally piped white, and red cuff flaps, yellow-metal buttons and shako chinscales. All of the naval artillerists were considered elite (there were no elite companies in the battalions), hence all wore the *sabre-briquet* (the hilt just visible here) with red sword knots instead of the non-regulation black one shown here, as well as red-fringed epaulettes. The pompom should be red as a result of their elite status, but perhaps service as infantry led to the use of different company colors, such as the light blue shown here.

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Brun's copy (above) from Plate 85.



84—Franz: Seesoldat

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¹ Bowden, *Napoleon's Grande Armée*, page 26.