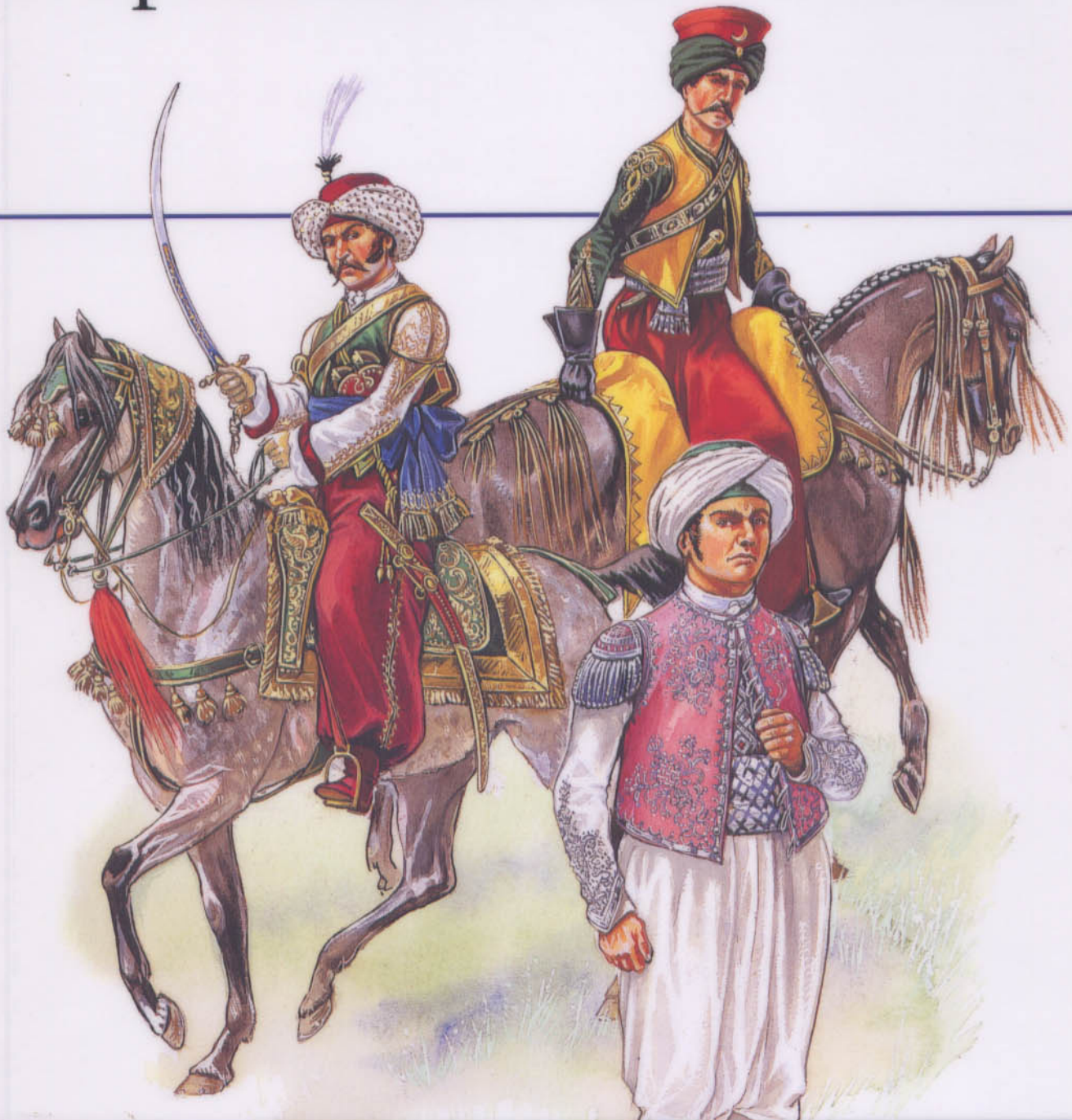


Men-at-Arms

OSPREY
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Napoleon's Mamelukes



Ronald Pawly • Illustrated by Patrice Courcelle



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OPPOSITE **Young Mameluke, after a drawing made in Cairo during the French occupation, by Dutertre, one of the scientists who accompanied Bonaparte's expedition to record Egypt's ruins, people, habitats, flora and fauna. All the collected material was published in three huge volumes entitled *La Description de l'Égypte*. This engraving shows some features of traditional Mameluke costume that would appear in the uniform of the Mamelukes of the Consular and Imperial Guard, including the turban, the wide trousers, and – during the early days in France – the long-sleeved coat. (*La Description de l'Égypte*: Collection of the Musée National du Château de Malmaison)**

NAPOLEON'S MAMELUKES

ORIGINS

After the death of Genghis Khan in 1227, the expeditions of conquest that he had launched a quarter-century before continued under his successor Ogedei, initially focused on European Russia and China. However, in about 1230 the Sultan of Egypt conceived the idea of profiting from recent Mongol victories in the Near East to raise an elite corps of warriors for his own service. In the course of their successful campaigns the Mongols had carried off huge numbers of men, women and children as slaves, and in around 1227–28 thousands of these captives

were put up for sale in the slave markets of the Near East. One of the Mongols' main customers was the Sultan of Egypt, who specified his interest in white-skinned (in practice, Seljuk Turkish) boys and adolescents between 6 and 16 years old.

After being converted to Islam if they were not already converts, these boys were trained to a high standard in the arts of horsemanship and warfare. Once trained and of age, they entered the corps of *mamluks* – 'bought soldiers', which was retained under the sultan's direct command. (Hereafter in this text the English spelling *mamelukes* is used; French sources give both *mamluks* and *mamelouks*.) The Egyptians themselves were not a martial nation, and for centuries their rulers had raised armies from an assortment of mercenaries and slaves; the Mamelukes would provide them with the only fully mounted corps in Egypt. Although their background was slavery, while they served the sultan the Mamelukes' status was far higher than that term implies to modern readers. Indeed, each of these privileged warriors himself had at least two servants (*serradj*) and might have additional slaves.

Raised as warriors from boyhood, it was not long before this most effective element of the Egyptian army took power for themselves. As early as 1252, after only two decades of existence, the Mamelukes assassinated Sultan Ashraf Moussa and created a Mameluke dynasty, which ruled Egypt and its extended empire for the next 265 years. However, even when Mamelukes rose to senior command or the head of government their





Seven portraits of Mamelukes drawn in Egypt by Duterte, showing different ethnic origins. By the beginning of the 19th century most Mamelukes came from the Caucasus region, with a few from the Russian coasts of the Black Sea and others from south-east Europe. (*La Description de l'Egypte*: Collection of the Musée National du Château de Malmaison)

status at first remained non-hereditary, and sons were strictly prevented from following their fathers into power. As the ranks of the corps were constantly refreshed with new captives, so power passed to a succession of the strongest *amirs* – the regional military governors set up by Saladin during his reorganization of the Egyptian army in the years after 1170.

In 1281, during the reign of Ogedei's nephew Kublai Khan, the Mameluke Sultan Kala'un defeated a Mongol advance into Syria at the battle of Homs; and by 1291 they had driven the last of the Christian crusaders from the Holy Land. But already, far to the north-east in the badlands on the Byzantine frontier in eastern Anatolia, their eventual nemesis was stirring – a Turkish warlord named Osman was carving out his first small kingdom. With astonishing speed and vigour this expanding state copied, defeated and absorbed the best regional armies to grow into the mighty Ottoman Empire, mounting conquests by land and sea and leading the region in the use of gunpowder weapons. By the mid-15th century the Ottomans had swept away the last remnants of the Byzantine Empire, capturing Constantinople and extending their power deep into the Balkans.

In the early years of the following century the Ottomans turned towards Egyptian territory; and on 24 August 1516 the Mamelukes were decisively beaten at Marj Dabik by an Ottoman army under Selim I. Driving the Mamelukes from Syria, Selim then invaded Egypt and, at Raydaniyah on 23 January 1517, the Mameluke Sultan Tuman Bey was decisively defeated, his army suffering huge losses to the arquebus volleys of the Ottoman Janissaries.

Thereafter the Ottomans divided Egypt into 24 provinces, each ruled by a Mameluke *bey* answering to a *pasha* in Cairo, who held power as a vassal of the sultan in Constantinople. This situation lasted until the mid-18th century, when the decline of the Ottoman Empire led to the *pasha* losing his supremacy over influential Mameluke regional leaders, who built up their personal power bases. The reality of power passed from hand to hand, usually to the bravest and most unscrupulous. By this time new slave recruits were mainly coming from the peoples of the Caucasus region (although men from as far afield as Spain and even Muscovite Russia could also be found in the ranks). One of those who rose to prominence after beginning as an enslaved soldier was one Ali Bey, who had been born in 1728 in Abkhazia (Georgia), the son of a Christian monk; taken captive by Turkish kidnappers, he was sold in Cairo in 1743 and bought as a Mameluke.

Ali gradually rose in influence and power, reaching senior command in 1760 by killing all his opponents and taking the title of *Cheik-el-beled*. Eight years later he deposed the Ottoman *pasha* in Cairo and assumed the post of acting governor of Egypt; he even withheld the annual tribute to Constantinople, proclaiming himself 'Great Sultan of Egypt,

ruler of the two seas'. In 1770 he gained control of the Hijaz, the north-west of present-day Saudi Arabia, and its all-important Muslim holy places; and a year later he temporarily occupied Syria, thus briefly reviving the former Mameluke empire that had fallen in 1517. However, Ali Bey lost power in 1772, and on 8 May 1773 he died in Cairo of wounds received in a skirmish with Ottoman rebels.

By the time the French General Napoleon Bonaparte invaded Egypt some 20 years later the country was ruled by two Mamelukes: Murad Bey, who held command of the army, and Ibrahim Bey, who dealt with the administrative tasks of ruling Egypt. Both tolerated the presence of a 'puppet' *pasha* who officially represented the Ottoman Sultan Selim III.

NAPOLEON'S EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN

In 1797 the young General Bonaparte was looking for a new outlet for his energies – and so were his political masters. He had gained glory and public acclaim by his triumphant campaign against the Austrians in Italy, and his growing popularity frightened the members of the Directory which had ruled the Republic since October 1795. They would rather see him campaigning in some far-off theatre of war than unemployed in Paris; but since both Austria and Prussia had sued for peace, France had a limited choice of enemies against whom to despatch her restless young hero. Bonaparte was ambitious, ruthless, and perfectly aware that his growing influence might lift him to the highest goal; but he also knew that the time was not yet ripe to confront his internal rivals. Both parties were looking for a suitably promising military opportunity for him. The obvious foe was Britain, still implacably hostile; but France's army was not yet ready to attempt an invasion of England. Therefore, French eyes turned towards the Mediterranean and beyond.

Even a century before the digging of the Suez Canal, Britain's vital commercial and colonial links to the East would be vulnerable to a French seizure of Malta, Egypt and the shores of the Red Sea. For centuries France had been interested in spreading its influence in the Middle East. Now Bonaparte and the Directory agreed that a conquest of

Egypt was within their means, and would strike a serious blow to Britain's political and financial interests.

Once the decision had been made, preparations started without delay. Troops, equipment, warships and transports were gathered in several Mediterranean ports; and on 19 May 1798, Gen Bonaparte sailed from Toulon, to be joined at sea by other convoys sailing from different harbours in the south of France. In all,

The Battle of the Pyramids, by Vivant Denon, showing the charge of Murad Bey's Mamelukes against Gen Dugua's division. Vivant Denon always remembered the élan with which these elite cavalry charged, but the massed volleys of musketry and the cannons in the corners of each French square stopped them. They endured terrible losses before finally accepting that the battle was hopeless, and retreating.





Murad Bey, by Dutertre; he is shown in this portrait with a long diagonal scar on his face, the result of a sabre cut received at the Battle of the Pyramids. He led the remnants of his forces south into the wilderness of the Upper Nile, fighting on for two years before signing a treaty with the French that brought peace to southern Egypt. (*La Description de l'Egypte*: Collection of the Musée National du Château de Malmaison)

Bonaparte's Army of the Orient would have some 40,000 men (plus 167 artists and scientists), carried and escorted by 280 cargo ships and 55 warships – an important force for France at that date. The strategic island base of Malta capitulated on 12 June after a two-day siege; the French armada arrived at Alexandria on 1 July, and had seized this vital port by the following day. On 3 July the march southwards towards Cairo began, with Napoleon moving up the west bank of the Nile; and on the same day Murad Bey set out to intercept the French. The vanguards of the two armies clashed at Subra Khit on 13 July, and the Mamelukes fell back.

On 21 July, Bonaparte's army met the Mamelukes at Giza, some 9 miles north of the Pyramids after which the battle would be named. Here Murad Bey and Ibrahim Bey had assembled an army of some 60,000 Mamelukes, janissaries and Egyptian militia on both banks of the Nile (Ibrahim's force, on the east bank, would not be engaged). The Mamelukes were perhaps the most fearsome warrior caste the French had ever yet encountered; and in a single day the 29-year-

old Corsican general practically ended their rule over Egypt. Napoleon sent his infantry into the advance in a checkerboard formation of squares, to turn the Mameluke left flank. He faced a highly developed cavalry, with little of his own; but by fighting in squares offering all-round defence his infantry could repel charges from any direction. This, combined with his artillery, enabled Bonaparte to resist the Mameluke attacks; he then proceeded to storm their entrenched camp, though without cavalry of his own he was unable to stop most of them from escaping to fight again – Murad towards Cairo, and Ibrahim towards the Sinai.

Cairo was taken on 23 July, and Bonaparte entered the capital; Murad Bey fled to the Upper Nile, and would continue to defy the troops of Gens Desaix and Kléber for the next two years. Bonaparte's army was not really equipped for campaigning in the desert or for long marches under the African sun, and casualties – mostly from the plague and other diseases – quickly began to mount among the French troops. Moreover, only a couple of weeks after his victory Bonaparte received the disastrous news of the destruction of his fleet by Adml Nelson's Royal Navy squadron in Aboukir Bay on the night of 1/2 August. Now there could be no hope of reinforcements from France, so native troops would have to be levied locally. On 7 September 1798, Bonaparte decreed the admission to the army of all young Mamelukes between the ages of 8 and 16, as well as all male former Mameluke slaves of the same age range, white or black.

After Bonaparte had defeated an army led by Ibrahim Bey at Salalieh on 11 August the latter fled into Syria, where a Turkish army under Achmed Bey was gathering. In January–March 1799 Bonaparte, at the head of an 8,000-strong force, advanced against them; he took El Arish

and Jaffa, and laid siege to Acre, where Capt Sir Sydney Smith, RN, inspired the defenders. Attempting to relieve Acre, Achmed Pasha was defeated by Bonaparte at Mount Tabor on 17 April. Unable to take Acre, however, and with his force ravaged by disease, which accounted for about 1,000 of his 2,200 dead, Bonaparte fell back to Cairo under constant pinprick attacks, arriving there on 14 June.

On 15 July a new Turkish army of some 18,000 men, assembled on the island of Rhodes and convoyed to Egypt by the Royal Navy, landed at Aboukir and entrenched. Bonaparte pulled back his forces from Upper Egypt, and moved against them with his remaining 6,000 men. On 25 July his infantry, led by Gen Lannes, broke into the Turkish position, and Gen Murat's cavalry completed his overwhelming victory, for a cost of some 900 French dead. However, a few weeks later he received, courtesy of the British commander, a parcel containing French newspapers which informed him of a disastrous political situation in France, and of French defeats in Italy at the hands of a Russo-Austrian army under Marshal Suvarov.

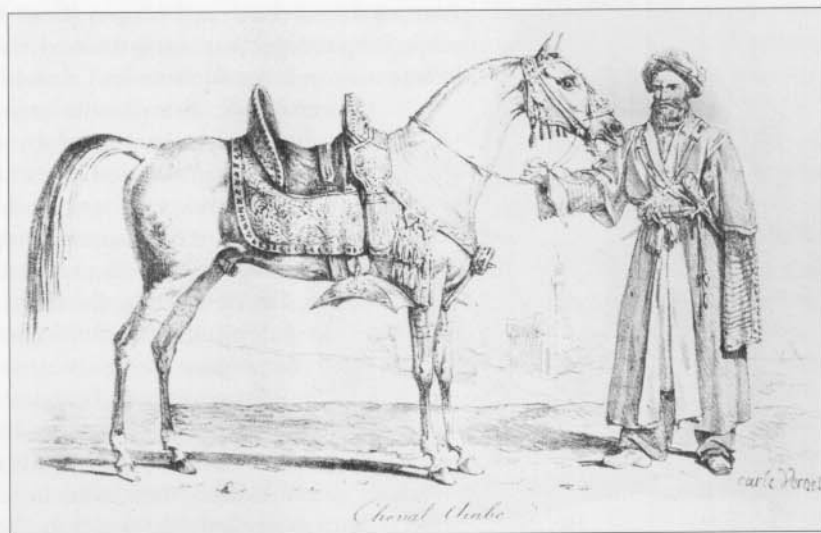
General Bonaparte decided to return to France, turning over his command to Gen Kléber. He left Egypt with his immediate entourage on the evening of 22 August 1799, arriving at Fréjus on 9 October. Just one month later the coup d'état of *Brunaire* made him First Consul and ruler of France.

Egypt after Bonaparte¹

In Cairo, on 17 October 1799, Gen Kléber ordered that from 6 November onwards all mounted orderlies to general officers had to return to their respective units. They were to be replaced by Mamelukes, personally selected by them from the newly formed native companies, excepting those of Hussein Kiâchef (the colonel of a local militia), or those Mamelukes already serving in Cairo or in the provinces. Generals of division could have ten Mameluke orderlies assigned to them, commanded by a *sous-kiâchef*; generals of brigade, six, also led by a *sous-kiâchef*. On 28 February 1800 it was recorded that 278 Mamelukes and Syrians were in service with the army in Egypt, with 163 horses.

General Kléber's attempt to conclude a treaty with the Turks in January 1800 was foiled by the British, and the Turks advanced on Cairo. On 20 March, Kléber defeated them at Heliopolis, but rebellion broke out in Cairo. General Kléber was stabbed to death by a fanatic on 14 June 1800, and was succeeded according to seniority by Gen Jacques Menou, who on 7 July

Drawing of a Mameluke Bey by Carl Vernet, showing details of saddlery; note the high front and back of the saddle, and the box-like Oriental stirrups. (Courtesy Musée de l'Empéri/former Brunon Collection, Salon-de-Provence)



¹ For operations between August 1799 and the French surrender in Egypt in September 1801, see Men-at-Arms 79, *Napoleon's Egyptian Campaigns 1798-1801*

Mamelukes displayed their elite status in all possible ways. Their saddles, shabraques and leather belts were made by the finest craftsmen, and some were decorated with semi-precious stones. Such fine pieces must have been so costly that it is hard to believe that they would have been left behind when the owners left Egypt for France, and drawings by Hoffmann, Zix and Swebach show them in use – though probably only for parade and ceremonial, and certainly not on campaign. Examples are displayed today in the Musée de l'Armée in Paris and the Château de Malmaison. (*La Description de l'Égypte: Collection of the Musée National du Château de Malmaison*)



ordered the organization of auxiliary troops in French service. Two companies of Syrian Janissaries and one of Mamelukes were to have equal pay and identical organization. One of the two former, already created by an order of the day of 25 September 1799, was commanded by squadron leader Sheikh Yakoub Habaïbi; the second was to be commanded by squadron leader Youssef Hamaoui. The Mameluke company would be commanded by *chef de brigade* (Colonel) Barthélemy Serra, a Greek by birth, who had been promoted to brigade commander by Gen Kléber.

(This is a French version of Serra's true name, Bartholomeos. Readers should note that nearly all Mameluke personal names from the French sources seem to be similarly approximate, or phonetic spellings from Arabic or Turkish. Some men were clearly listed under a single personal name followed by a version of where they came from – e.g. Nicolas Grec, Michel Hongrois, etc. Spellings also vary from one list to the next; for this reason, in this text we have quoted where available a place and year of birth.)

Each of these companies was to be made up of 100 men, including: one squadron leader or *chef de brigade*, one captain, one lieutenant, two sergeants, four corporals and 91 troopers. Their arms were to be issued by the arsenals of the Republic by order of the chief-of-staff, and the companies were to have a uniform headdress adapted to their customs and usage, but bearing a distinctive mark to identify them as auxiliary troops of the Republic. Officers and NCOs would bear the distinctive marks of their grades as used by French troops. In the end, they were to number 12 officers and 253 men.

On 26 October 1800 the French commander-in-chief, Gen Abdallah Menou (who had converted to Islam), ordered the creation of a regiment of Mamelukes by uniting Col Serra's company of Mamelukes and the two companies of Syrians. The new unit was to be organized like a French cavalry regiment, while keeping its own weapons.

The Mameluke craze

It is interesting to note that back in France, even before the first Mamelukes arrived in Europe, these Oriental warriors had acquired such a reputation that being dressed '*à la mamelouk*' became fashionable. Women wore large turbans and shawls, while children were dressed in Oriental style. Even in the army it became fashionable to have mounted kettle-drummers dressed in Oriental costumes. When Bonaparte returned to France, bringing with him two Mamelukes as personal servants, this fad spread like wildfire. Bonaparte's stepson and future Viceroy of Italy, Eugène Beauharnais, the future marshals Marmont, Lannes, Soult, Bessières, and even Napoleon's brother Joseph, the future King of Spain, all acquired Mamelukes as personal servants.

Even though Bonaparte destroyed the power of the Mamelukes in Egypt, he had no negative opinion of them; on the contrary, he openly admired them for the beauty of their horses, their fine horsemanship, their élan in battle and their disdain for death. They were born cavalrymen and,



The craze for all things Egyptian that swept Paris during and after Bonaparte's expedition extended beyond civilian fashions into the French army. Mounted kettle-drummers were fitted out as Mamelukes, like this drummer of the Mounted Chasseurs of the Imperial Guard drawn by Hoffmann. (Anne S.K. Brown Collection, Providence, USA)

with a little European discipline, he considered that they would make the best light cavalry in the world. Without really having thought about raising a native corps in the French army, Bonaparte would soon be confronted with the idea.

MAMELUKES IN FRENCH SERVICE

The first step towards the creation of a corps of Mamelukes in France was taken by Col Barthélemy Serra in Egypt. On 27 September 1800 that officer, serving as *chef de brigade* and ADC to the commander-in-chief, took the opportunity to write a letter from Cairo to the First Consul, couched in the most fulsome Oriental style. He expressed his regret at being so far away from Bonaparte, and offered his total devotion to the French nation, expressing the wish to be allowed to serve him with his unit of Mamelukes. Serra went even further, expressing, in the most flattering terms, the Mamelukes' wish to become the First Consul's bodyguard, serving not only as guards but also as living shields against any who would seek to harm him. This letter remained unanswered.

The situation in Egypt soon became desperate for the French. A British army under Gen Abercromby, sailing from recaptured Malta, defeated Menou's army at the battle of Alexandria on 21 March 1801. Besieged in Cairo, Gen Belliard and 13,000 men capitulated on 27 June, followed by Gen Menou in Alexandria on 31 August. Article 12 of the capitulation treaty stipulated that every inhabitant of Egypt, whatever his nationality, would be free to follow the departing French army without fear for his family or his property. This would set in motion the emigration of a large number of Egyptian soldiers who belonged to the former Syrian or Copt Legions and the Mameluke corps, alone or together with their families.

Colonel Serra embarked with Gen Belliard's division at Damietta on 10 August 1801. Apart from his family, he was accompanied by a group of officers and troopers of the former Régiment des Mamelouks de la République (with a strength of two weak squadrons), most of them bringing along their parents, brothers, wives and children. Other local troops – such as 339 men of Col Nicolas Papas-Oglou's Greek Legion, and the former Syrian Janissaries – also followed the French when Gen Menou's command finally ceased in mid-October 1801. In all the evacuated forces numbered 11,168 fit soldiers, 1,300 sick, 344 sailors, 82 civilians, and a total of 760 Mamelukes, Syrians, Copts and Greeks. (When the French troops departed in 1801, the Mameluke leaders whom Bonaparte had driven into Upper Egypt and Syria regained power, until their massacre in 1811 by Mehmet Ali.)

Organization

Landing in France on 29 September 1801, Barthélemy Serra had hoped to find some kind of orders from the First Consul. Concerned for the future of his Mamelukes, he wrote from Toulon, where they were being held in quarantine, to inform Bonaparte of their arrival. Describing the total destitution of the Egyptian refugees, he again expressed their devotion to the person of the First Consul.

This, like his letter from Egypt, failed to elicit a direct reply. Nonetheless, when the First Consul learned of the arrival of the native corps of his former Armée d'Orient, he became receptive to the idea of admitting a unit of carefully selected elite cavalymen to his personal guard. Without delay, on 11 October he ordered Gen Victor Léopold Berthier (1770–1806) – the youngest brother of the future marshal and chief-of-staff to the Emperor – to Marseille and Toulon. His instructions were to pay appropriate respects to the foreign troops depending on their former services during the Egyptian campaign, and to provide Bonaparte with a full report as to the numbers of refugee men, women and children, their ages and professions.

Just two days later, by decree of 13 October, Bonaparte ordered his *aide-de-camp* Jean Rapp to organize a 'Squadron of Mamelukes of the First Consul', 240 soldiers strong, under his own command. By giving overall control of the squadron to a French officer Bonaparte sought to avoid conflicts over precedence within the unit; personal rivalries and ethnic differences among the native officers would have hampered its formation and service, so native senior officers were accordingly dismissed, transferred, or had to retire from active service – these included Serra² and Yakoub Habaïbi.

Among the newcomers in Marseille and Toulon, Rapp discovered some disappointing candidates. More than one Mameluke was too old for active service; others, accustomed to the freedom of the desert, refused to submit to the rigours of European discipline, or proved incapable of following the cavalry drill manual. Consequently, on 7 January 1802, after reading his ADC's report, Bonaparte decreed that a squadron of just 150 Mamelukes was to be organized under the command of Col Rapp. The officers, NCOs and troopers had to be found among the Mameluke, Syrian and Copt refugees who had served with the French army in Egypt. Two officers, both French, would deal



ABOVE AND OPPOSITE Two more drawings of Mameluke Beys by Vernet. Note the long-sleeved coats, the low *tarbouche* cap under the turban, the wide trousers and the array of weapons. (Courtesy Musée de l'Empéri/ former Brunon Collection, Salon-de-Provence)

² He would live in Marseille until 30 September 1806, and after an 18-month stay in Paris returned there, where he died on 14 November 1813.



with administration, training, discipline and uniforms. In addition to these officers a quartermaster, also French, and two translator-secretaries – one for each company – were prescribed. The Mamelukes' uniforms would remain unchanged.

Three months later, on 1 April 1802, another decree settled their pay, bonuses, allowances and armament. Each NCO and trooper would receive 1,600 francs to equip and dress himself and buy a horse and saddlery, and officers would receive a bonus of 1,800 francs for the same purpose. As the Mamelukes were accustomed

to carrying a very varied arsenal of personal weapons, the decree ruled that the arms depots of the Republic were to provide each trooper and NCO with one carbine, one blunderbuss, two pairs of pistols, one Oriental sabre, one dagger, one mace, one powder horn, and lances for one (not yet specified) company.

Because a Mameluke's Oriental uniform was very elaborate and expensive, Bonaparte had to reduce their pay to allow for this exotic costume – he wanted the total cost of the squadron to be the same as in other cavalry units. To honour their loyalty to the French army it had originally been decreed that the men would wear green turbans – the colour of the Prophet; but this soon proved to be an error. It was the *cahouk* – the bell-crowned cap around which the turban was wound – that should be green, while the turbans would remain white.

On 15 April two decrees corrected this error, and also gave the unit a definitive status; this was the first date on which the Mamelukes were mentioned in combination with the Consular Guard (Article 11). Before this date, even when they were serving as a personal bodyguard, Bonaparte never considered them as part of the Guard, and one still has to wait until the decree of 1 October 1802 to see them listed as an actual part of the Consular Guard. The squadron's organization was as follows:

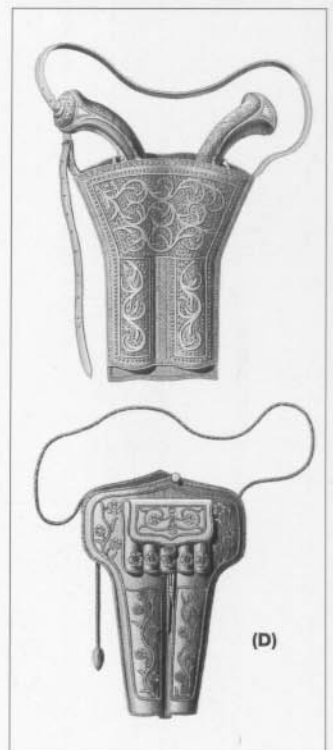
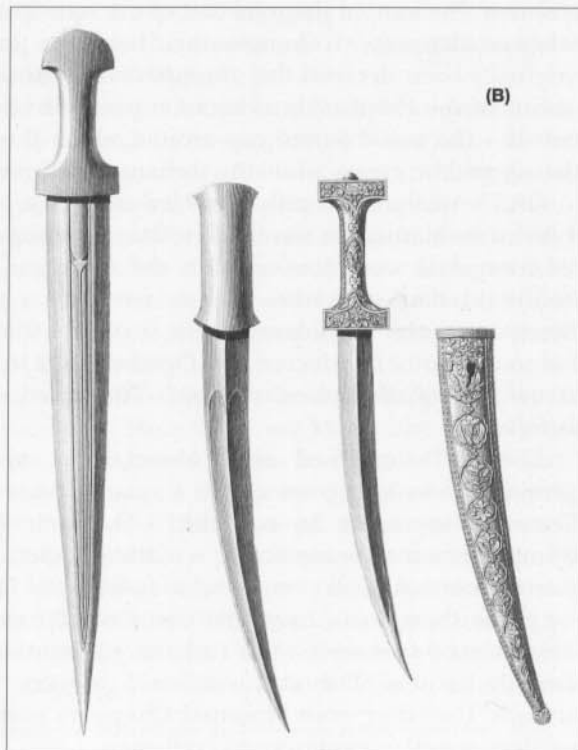
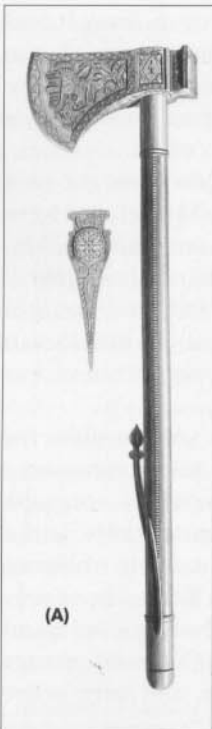
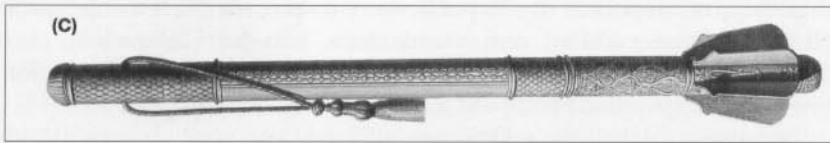
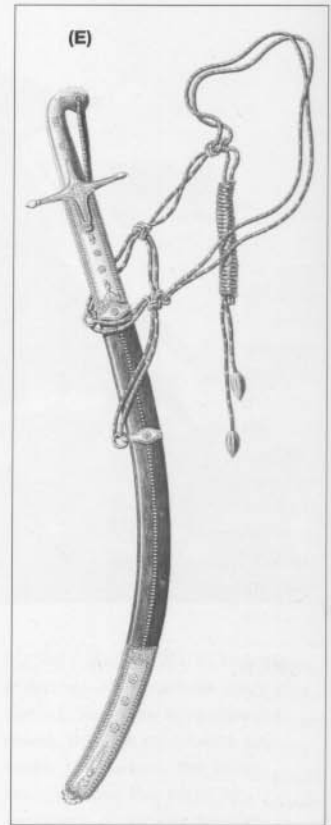
The staff comprised one colonel, one captain responsible for administration and good order, a quartermaster, a surgeon-major, a lieutenant-instructor, an *adjutant* NCO, a veterinary and a corporal-trumpeter; a master-armourer, a master-saddler, a master-tailor and a master-bootmaker; all competent to fashion the Oriental-style uniforms – e.g. the short boots, baggy maroon *saroual* trousers, sleeveless or very short-sleeved *yalek* vests, white turbans, gold-trimmed holsters, belts and Turkish harness. The staff totalled 5 officers, 7 NCOs and master artisans; the latter wore Mounted Chasseurs uniform, and were active soldiers as well as experienced craftsmen.

Each of the two companies had one captain, one first lieutenant, one second lieutenant, one *sous-lieutenant*, one *maréchal des logis chef* (sergeant-major), four *maréchaux des logis* (sergeants), one *fourrier*-interpreter (*fourrier* is normally translated as quartermaster-corporal), eight *brigadiers* (corporals), two trumpeters, 59 Mamelukes and one farrier: in total 4 officers, 76 NCOs and troopers.

The same decree also regulated the situation of the other immigrants from Egypt who had followed the French army to Europe. Old-age pensioners, women and children also received a pay allowance; when they reached the age of 16 the boys would have to serve in the unit if they were considered fit enough for military service.

The second decree commissioned the officers of the squadron:

- 1st Company: Ibrahim, Captain
 Jean Renno, 1st Lieutenant
 Chahin', 2nd Lieutenant
 Soliman, *sous-lieutenant*
- 2nd Company: Salloum, Captain
 Daoud Habaïbi, 1st Lieutenant
 Elias Massaâd, 2nd Lieutenant
 Abdallah d'Asbonne, *sous-lieutenant*



The French officers forming the staff were:

Charles Delaître, Captain-quartermaster
Edouard Colbert, Captain *adjutant-major*
Maréschal, Lieutenant-instructor
Mauban, Surgeon-major

The three French officers who were charged with the organization of the Mamelukes were former heroes of the Egyptian campaign. Serving with Gen Desaix, Jean Rapp had distinguished himself in engagements at Sediman and Samanhout. Delaître, former ADC to Gen Kléber, was wounded at Acre; he would later become a major in the 1st (Polish) Regiment of Lancers of the Imperial Guard. Edouard Colbert was a former *commissaire des guerres* and ADC to Gen Damas; he too would be a famous figure in the Imperial Guard, becoming the commander of the 2nd (Dutch) Regiment of Lancers, better known as Red Lancers.³

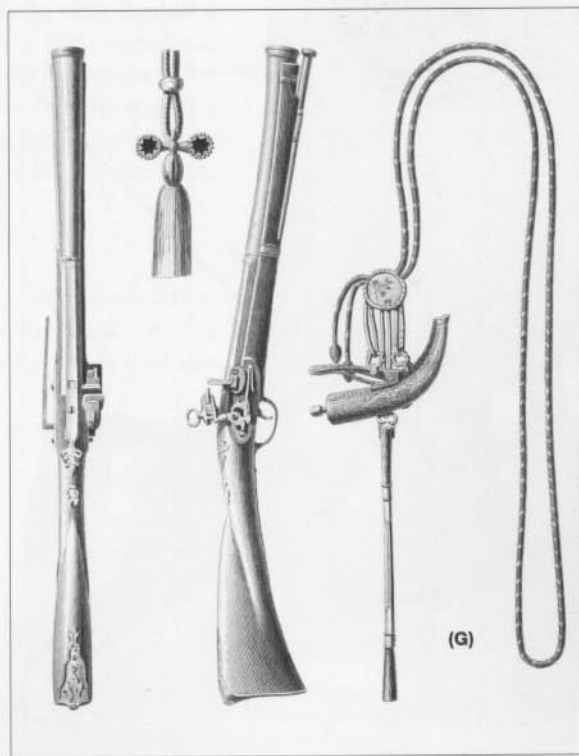
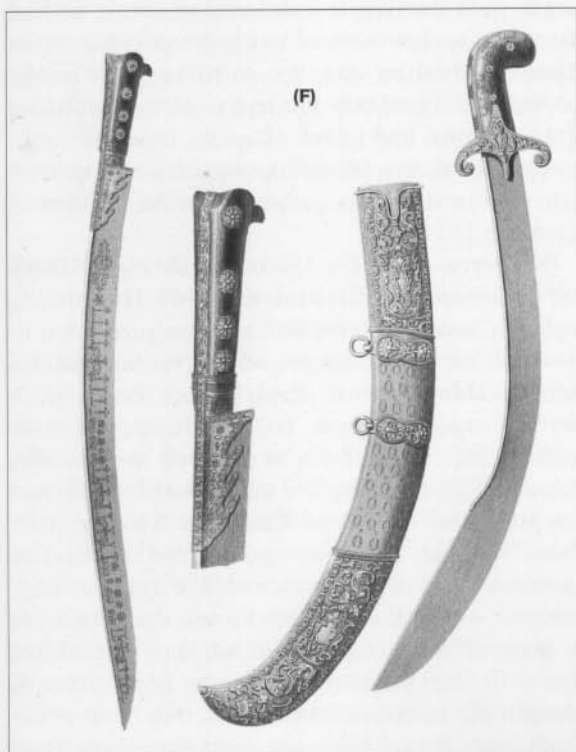
Becoming First Consul for Life, Bonaparte reorganized the Consular Guard into his own Guard by decree of 1 October 1802. This corps included the Mamelukes alongside the veteran units from both Italian and Egyptian campaigns, and he stipulated that they would be organized as follows:

Staff: 1 colonel, 1 quartermaster, 1 captain responsible for administration, 1 lieutenant-instructor, 1 surgeon-major, 1 *adjutant* NCO, 1 veterinary, 1 corporal-trumpeter, 1 master-saddler, 1 master-tailor, 1 master-bootmaker and 1 master-armourer.

Each company: 1 captain, 1 first lieutenant, 1 second lieutenant, 1 *sous-lieutenant*, 1 *maréchal des logis chef*, 4 *maréchaux des logis*, 1 *fourrier*, 8 *brigadiers*, 2 trumpeters, 59 Mamelukes and one farrier.

³ See MAA 389, *Napoleon's Red Lancers*

Although these drawings of Mameluke weapons were made by French artists in Egypt, the warriors certainly carried their arms with them when they took ship for France. The decree embodying the Mameluke Corps stated that the French government had to provide weapons, and for Mamelukes this meant a positive arsenal – an axe (A), mace (C), blunderbuss (G) and carbine, four holstered pistols (D), and a dagger (B), in addition to the scimitar (E & F). All were made to special Mameluke patterns at the Manufacture de Versailles. The axe and mace were probably more ceremonial than practical, and disappeared between 1809 and 1812 (though see Plate G3); the blunderbuss was carried on parades but replaced with a carbine on campaign. (*La Description de l'Egypte: Collection of the Musée National du Château de Malmaison*)



During the Consulate the Mamelukes still wore their Egyptian clothing, although from their admission to the Guard of the First Consul they started receiving more uniform issues. Here we see a blue shabraque of light cavalry style, edged with red and bearing a corner motif resembling the horn of the Mounted Chasseurs. The early *cahouk* under the turban is shown as red, although by decree it should have been green. The white *saroual* trousers suggest summer dress. The wide-sleeved *yalek*, worn open over the waist sash, is in the style of an earlier period; and note the V-neck of the *beniche* shirt, which was more typically cut round at the neck. Mamelukes always carried their sabres hilt forwards, cutting edge backwards. This rider also has a slung carbine and a lance; the latter was mentioned in a decree for one company, but there is no proof that this was ever organized. (Courtesy Musée de l'Empéri/former Brunon Collection, Salon-de-Provence)



In all, the Corps des Mamelouks had 13 officers with 40 horses and 159 Mamelukes with 156 horses. The same decree also mentions a *timbalier* or horse-drummer.

The Mamelukes were directed to barracks at Melun as their garrison town, while the non-combatant refugees and their families were sent to live in Marseille, where they remained until the end of the Empire; in 1811 they numbered 458 souls. Since the fierce and haughty Mameluke warriors and their new neighbours both faced a considerable 'culture shock', it was not surprising that clashes were reported between the exotic newcomers and the citizens of Melun and Paris. The Mamelukes still behaved as they had in the streets of Cairo, and on more than one occasion Napoleon himself had to intervene. Captain Parquin of the Mounted Chasseurs (*Chasseurs à cheval*) of the Guard recalls in his memoirs an incident involving Capt Ibrahim of the 1st Company. Recently arrived in Paris, this officer became lost, and his Oriental dress amazed the curious Parisians whom he passed as he wandered the streets. Ending up in the central district called the 'quartier de la Halle de blé', Ibrahim was surrounded by a crowd of workers who whistled at him, threw mud, and shouted that it was not carnival time, so why was he wearing Turkish costume? Captain Ibrahim did not understand French, nor the reason why they ridiculed him; believing his life to be in danger from this threatening mob, he drew his pistols and shot two Frenchmen dead. He then drew his sabre and dagger, ready to slaughter more of them in defence of his honour and his life, when a guard patrol arrived, and had to use more than words to calm him down. Word of this unfortunate incident spread swiftly, and when it reached the Tuileries, palace of the First Consul, Bonaparte summoned Ibrahim before him. After questioning him about the incident, and explaining that it was not a French custom to react to such a situation with lethal violence, he had

him sent to live with the Egyptian refugees in Marseille. Ibrahim was allowed to keep his pay of 6,000 francs, but 2,000 of it had to go to the widows of the men he had killed. (Captain Ibrahim would later return to the Mameluke squadron, in time to fight against the Allies gathering on the borders of France in 1814.)

By decree of 2 May 1803, *Chef de brigade* Rapp was transferred in this rank to the 7e Hussards to replace *Citoyen* Marisy, who had been promoted to the rank of *général de brigade*. To command his beloved Mamelukes in Rapp's place Bonaparte's eye fell upon *Chef de brigade* Dupas, *adjudant supérieur du Palais* and a veteran of the Bastille, Italy and Egypt; during the latter campaign he had defended the citadel of Cairo for 34 days, with some 200 invalid soldiers, against 2,000 Turks. The command of Col Dupas would not last for long, however; on 29 August 1803 he too was promoted to general rank. Command of the Mamelukes passed to Capt Delaître, and it was he who finally brought the squadron to order as, step by step, the Mamelukes found their way into French military

routines. However, more and more of them were considered unfit for service, and numbers dropped by about 40 troopers. Taking this into account, on 21 January 1804 Bonaparte decreed the corps' final organization, making it a part of the Mounted Chasseurs of the Guard. Apart from the officers, most of whom were of different ethnic origins – e.g. Palestinian, Georgian or Armenian as well as Egyptian – the number of troopers was reduced to 85 men, just enough for company strength. Article 2 of the decree stipulated that the company would be composed of:

- 1 captain commanding (French)
- 1 *adjutant sous-lieutenant* (French)
- 1 surgeon-major (French)
- 1 veterinary (French)
- 1 master-saddler (French)
- 1 master-tailor (French)
- 1 master-bootmaker (French)
- 1 master-armourer (French)
- 2 captains (Mamelukes)
- 2 first lieutenants (Mamelukes)
- 2 second lieutenants (Mamelukes)
- 2 *sous-lieutenants* (Mamelukes)
- 1 *maréchal des logis chef* (French)
- 8 *maréchaux des logis* (2 French, 6 Mamelukes)
- 1 *fourrier* (French)
- 10 *brigadiers* (2 French, 8 Mamelukes)
- 2 trumpeters
- 2 farriers
- 85 troopers (Mamelukes)

The same decree also stipulated that the French officers were allowed to wear a blue Chasseur-style undress uniform with *aiguillettes* when they were not on duty or at the head of their troops. The instructor of the corps, *Adjutant-major* Maréchal, was transferred to a Line regiment or to an army staff appointment; *Adjutant sous-officier* Rouyer became an *adjutant sous-lieutenant*, and Charles Delaître remained the commanding captain.

The Imperial Guard

On 10 May 1804 an order of the day informed the Consular Guard that the Senate had proclaimed Napoleon Bonaparte Emperor of the French and vested the imperial succession in his family. From that day onwards the Guard took the title of 'Imperial Guard', although this was only confirmed officially by the decree of 29 July 1804 which reorganized the corps. Only Articles Nos 12 and 13 were relevant to the Mamelukes, stating that in accordance with the decree of 21 January 1804 the Company of Mamelukes would be attached to the Mounted Chasseurs of the Imperial Guard, and that all legal provisions regarding the refugee communities remained unchanged.

By now the Mamelukes counted 109 men. Since their organization on French soil they had

The saddle of Gen Dupas, briefly commander of the Mamelukes under the Consulate. This was a period when officers expressed martial pride and confidence by display – and certainly if one was a member of the First Consul's Guard. This superb piece can be seen at the Musée de l'Empéri; the velvet cover today shows a blueish shade, but was originally green, richly embroidered with bullion thread – see Plate A1. (Courtesy Musée de l'Empéri/ former Brunon Collection, Salon-de-Provence)



only known garrison life, training in French military drill, or escort duty in attendance on the First Consul during his travels. Napoleon's coronation in December 1804, followed by the distribution of regimental 'Eagle' standards and a series of ceremonies, were opportunities for the Mamelukes to show off their flamboyant uniforms. Radiating 'all the colours of the rainbow', they were greatly admired by the crowds of spectators in the streets.

Ethnic origins

The nominal rolls of the Mamelukes of the Imperial Guard finally contained 583 names. Up to number 267, the Orientals and Africans are in the majority. Out of 215, 113 are Georgian, Circassian, Crimean, Arab and – mostly – Syrian; 57 are Egyptian, and 17 from Abyssinia and the Sudan, the latter being black. The remaining 28 are from Hungary, the Balkans, Albania, Malta, Tunis, and one from Algeria.

It was only from 1809 that Europeans started being admitted to the corps, and 50 European names can be found between that date and 1813. With the reorganization following the Russian campaign, 130 entered the corps as 1st Mamelukes (Old Guard) and 194 as 2nd Mamelukes (Young Guard); so even from 1813 onwards, the Orientals still represented a good one-third of the total personnel.

Personalities

Looking at the native officers of the corps, we find a remarkable collection of men, whose battle scars can only be proof of incredible bravery:

Abdallah d'Asbonne (or d'Osbonne) was a Syrian, born in Bethlehem on 26 October 1776, the son of a sheikh. He was studying in Rome when Gen Bonaparte took him with him to Egypt. Serving as an interpreter and scout in the Armée d'Orient, with which he fought bravely at the battle of Heliopolis, he followed the remnants of the army back to France and entered the Mamelukes as a *sous-lieutenant*. He was one of the first Mamelukes to be rewarded with membership of the Legion of Honour, on 14 June 1804. His bravery at Austerlitz was such that Napoleon promoted him to first lieutenant shortly afterwards. On 27 February 1811 he was commissioned captain and instructor of the corps. In 1813 he was sent to the Grande Armée to take command of the 2nd Mameluke Company. During the First Restoration he entered the Chevaux-légers Lanciers de France (the renamed Guard Lancers) and received the cross of the Royal Order of St Louis, but this did not prevent him from re-entering Napoleon's service with the Mounted Chasseurs in 1815. Falling ill just before the Waterloo campaign, Abdallah did not participate in it, and was put on half-pay on 23 December 1815.



Abdallah was one of those soldiers whom one might think enjoyed the protection of a guardian angel. He received seven sword cuts at Golymin. At Altemburg in 1813, saving the life of his commander *Chef d'escadron* Kirmann, he was wounded again; and once more, by a bullet in the lower belly, at Hanau. Abdallah also had six horses killed under him, once breaking his arm in the fall. Although placed on the non-active list after Waterloo and retired in 1828, he returned to the army in 1830 and followed it to Algeria.

Chahin', born at Tiflis in the Caucasus on 14 July 1776, entered French service six days before the battle of the Pyramids (15 July 1798). On 4 November of that year he was promoted to *maréchal des logis*, and in June 1799 to second lieutenant. Serving with Gen Kléber at the battle of Heliopolis, he received 35 wounds that day: 33 sabre cuts and lance thrusts and two bullet wounds. Quite understandably, he was left for dead on the battlefield. However, he recovered to be promoted to lieutenant in the Mameluke unit of Barthélemy Serra on 20 June 1800. At Austerlitz he saved the life of Gen Rapp, captured a cannon, and received another three bayonet wounds. Named a knight of the Legion of Honour for his bravery at Austerlitz, he received the officer's cross for his actions at Eylau, where he took a bullet in the chest and had his horse killed under him. In Madrid on 2 May 1808 he got a bullet through the cheek, but saved *Chef d'escadron* Daumesnil from being taken by the insurgents. Promoted to captain in 1813, he could boast at the end of the Empire that he had participated in every major engagement of the Mamelukes during the Napoleonic Wars, suffering some 40 wounds and having five horses killed under him. He was appointed ADC to Gen Lefebvre-Desnoëttes in 1815, but too late to participate at Waterloo.

Azaria 'le Petit' received his nickname 'the Small' because he measured only 4ft 11ins tall. Born in the Karabakh region of the Caucasus on 24 February 1787, he became a corporal at the age of 13 or 14 years, and was soon afterwards promoted to sergeant in 1802. After the battle of Eylau, on 16 February 1807 Napoleon signed his nomination to the rank of second lieutenant. Azaria followed the Emperor to Spain, and was present in Madrid during the rising of 2 May 1808; he was mortally wounded in the clash with British cavalry at Benavente on 29 December 1808, dying the following day. **Azaria 'le Grand'** was a cousin of Azaria 'le Petit' who also served in the corps. Promoted *maréchal des logis* on 16 February 1807, he served until 1815, but sickness kept him in Paris during the Waterloo campaign; he was discharged from active service on 1 October 1815.

Daoud Habaïbi, brother of Sheikh Yakoub, was born in Chefa-Amr, Syria, on 25 September 1777. Serving with the Armée d'Orient, he was commissioned *sous-lieutenant*, lieutenant, and, after arriving in France, first lieutenant of the 2nd Company of Mamelukes. Named a knight of the Legion of Honour after Austerlitz, where he was wounded in the groin by a bayonet thrust, he was promoted captain by Napoleon for his courage at the battle of Eylau. Seriously wounded once again – by three

Between 1800 and 1815 the engraver Jean published a series of military prints, including these Mamelukes from c.1804. Even though some kind of uniformity has been introduced we still find each trooper dressed and equipped to some degree of personal taste, although with less embroidery than had been worn in Egypt. One has a shabraque with drawn-out points like that of the Mounted Chasseurs, and with their horn insignia in the corner. The others have traditional Mameluke squared shabraques, one with the horn badge; and the colours of the different garments are varied. Note the low red *tarbouche* cap worn under the turban at this early date. (Courtesy Musée de l'Empéri/ former Brunon Collection, Salon-de-Provence)





One of the most glittering ceremonies of a glittering regime was Napoleon's coronation on 2 December 1804, and Hoffmann left us a number of drawings of the parading units, including this Mameluke officer. The white heron plume is the only distinction of rank, perhaps apart from the rich gold embroidery of his outfit. While sources show NCO sleeve stripes, officers did not wear them, or certainly not before 1813; however, a portrait miniature of Abdallah d'Asbonne (see Plate D3) shows a fringed epaulette on the left shoulder. The scarlet *cahouk* and white turban are both striped with gold. Two pistols are carried in the waist sash, another on each side of the saddle, and an axe ahead of the nearside saddle holster. Spurs were not used until Europeans began arriving in the unit. (Anne S.K. Brown Collection, Providence, USA)

sabre cuts – at Benavente in December 1808, he was obliged to remain at Melun when the rest of the Mamelukes marched off to Austria in 1809. He was appointed an officer in the Legion of Honour on 15 March 1809, but remained inactive at Melun, dying in Paris on 8 February 1824.

Yakoub Habaïbi, Sheikh of Chefa-Amr and brother of Daoud (see above), chose the French side during Gen Bonaparte's Syrian campaign – a decision that had catastrophic consequences for his family, since a large number of his relatives were slaughtered by the Turks in reprisal. He became colonel of the 1st Company of Syrian Janissaries, and fled to France when the remnants of the Armée d'Orient returned home. After arriving in France the Janissaries were amalgamated with the Mamelukes; Yakoub's high rank became a problem, since there was no vacancy for a colonel, and he was placed on the non-active list. He retired to Melun; after his brother Daoud was seriously wounded in Spain, Yakoub offered his services to the Emperor once more. He was listed as a *chef d'escadron à la suite* on 17 July 1813. He joined the Mamelukes at Dresden and served in all the battles of the second part of the Saxon campaign. In 1814 he followed the Young Guard

Company to Flanders, where he served in Gen Maison's 1st Army (Armée du Nord), distinguishing himself by his courage on more than one occasion. During the First Restoration Yakoub became *commandant d'armes* of Melun; he was placed on half-pay on 30 January 1816.

Elias Massaâd, a Syrian, was born at Ramleh, some 12 miles from Jaffa in Palestine, on 26 June 1776. He entered service in the Army of the Orient as an interpreter, working very closely with Gen Bonaparte and later Gens Kléber and Menou. He followed the latter to France; upon the organization of the Mamelukes of the First Consul Elias was commissioned a second lieutenant, and created a knight in the Legion of Honour among the first nominations. He was known as a '*sabre redoutable*', and Napoleon promoted him to captain after the battle of Eylau on 16 February 1807. On 2 May 1808, in Madrid, he was wounded in the upper jaw. Elias took part in nearly all Napoleon's campaigns, ending his career after Waterloo, where he suffered another wound. Discharged on 31 December 1815, he retired to Melun, with a list of 17 battle scars and three ribs missing due to grapeshot wounds. Elias died in July 1835.

Ibrahim – whom we have already met in the unfortunate encounter in the 'quartier de la Halle de blé' in Paris – was born at Deir-el-Kamar in Syria, and travelled to France in 1801. A knight of the Legion of Honour since 14 June 1804, he had to give up his company command on 1 October 1806, and a month later left Melun to live in Marseille with the non-combatant refugees. On 24 January 1814 he bade farewell to his family and left Marseille to rejoin the Mamelukes, being re-admitted with his former rank of captain and former appointment as commander

of the 1st Company. On 6 February a strong detachment of Mamelukes and Mounted Chasseurs led by the former's commander *Chef d'escadron* Kirmann left Paris to join the field army and the Emperor, arriving at the battle of Montmirail on 10 February. A few days later Ibrahim, who was out skirmishing, was surrounded by Cossacks; fighting like a lion until unluckily blinded by his unwinding turban, he was wounded and taken prisoner after killing six of his opponents.

Daniel Mirza 'le Petit' was so called even though he was a perfectly average 5ft 7½in tall, since there was another and noticeably taller Mirza serving with the Mamelukes. Armenian by birth, the shorter Mirza was born in Chouchia on either 20 March or 15 June 1784. After the battle of the Pyramids he left the army of the Beys and entered the *Armée d'Orient*, serving with Gen Bessières in all the major engagements in Egypt and Syria. When Bessières followed Bonaparte to France in the frigate *Muiron* Mirza could not accompany him, and stayed in Egypt until the surrender of Gen Menou. In 1801, still aged only 17, he followed Menou to France and joined the newly created Mamelukes as a trooper. Mirza had to wait until the battle of Austerlitz to be promoted to *brigadier*, but he was admitted to the Legion of Honour on 14 March 1806. He charged with his unit at Eylau, and became a *maréchal des logis* on 6 April 1807. Even when he served in the ranks of the company he was still popularly known as 'Marshal Bessières' Mameluke'; and even when the latter was not engaged at Friedland, Mirza stood close to the Emperor and helped Napoleon with his maps while Marshal Ney executed the Emperor's orders. Present in Spain and Austria, he was promoted to second lieutenant and followed Bessières to Russia in 1812. Standing close to the marshal when Bessières was killed by a cannonball in Saxony in 1813, Mirza returned to the company to serve at Dresden, Hanau and other actions. At Altenburg he received two lance thrusts to the stomach, wounds from which he would suffer terribly for the rest of his life. After Saxony, Mirza served in France and passed into the *Corps Royal des Cheveau-légers Lanciers de France* during the First Restoration. During the Hundred Days he served under Napoleon at Waterloo. On 20 December 1815 he was put on half-pay. He increasingly lost the use of his legs in later years, finally dying at Melun in July 1849.

Jouane (Jean) Renno was born on 5 May 1777, the son of a doctor. Renno had already joined the French army in Rome as a *sous-aide major* at the St Esprit Hospital when, during the planning of the Egyptian campaign, he was removed from this post and transferred to serve in the Army of the Orient. He was present at the brief siege of Malta, and in Egypt he was at first attached to the staff of Gen Desaix, and later to the general staff of the army. His father was then doctor to the Turkish Djezzar Pasha, who condemned him to death by drowning when he learned that his son was serving with Bonaparte at the siege of Acre. On the creation of the Mamelukes in France, Renno was commissioned a first lieutenant in the 1st Company under the orders of Ibrahim. Renno was present at all the unit's major engagements during the Napoleonic Wars, and was considered a *guerrier étincelant* – 'a dazzling warrior'. A knight of the Legion of Honour since 1804, he became an officer in the order on 14 March 1806, and was promoted captain and temporary commander of the Mamelukes in February

By decree, French officers of the Mamelukes were allowed to wear the undress uniform of the Mounted Chasseurs when off duty (the use of the bicorne hat was typical of that order of dress). The colour was dark blue trimmed with red, with a red waistcoat and gold lace and embroidery. Later during the Empire we find officers and NCOs wearing with undress a dark blue hussar-style pelisse (see Plate G2). Gold *aiguillettes* are the sign of a Guard unit, and note that the sabre is worn from a gold cord over the right shoulder. (Author's collection, Bucquoy card)





An engraving published in Augsburg c.1805 shows a Mameluke accompanied by an Elite Gendarme of the Guard, a cuirassier and (mounted) a dragoon. Here again the early Mameluke uniform retains some personal touches; it is interesting that the turban is knotted at the back and hanging down. The *tarbouche* and the *saroual* are scarlet, the *yalek* crimson over a green *beniche* (both heavily embroidered), the waist sash maroon with yellow stripes, and the short boots yellow. (Courtesy Musée de l'Empéri/ former Brunon Collection, Salon-de-Provence)

1807. At Pradanos in Spain, on 24 May 1809, he charged with his troopers and took 100 Spanish soldiers prisoner. At Courtrai in Flanders on 31 March 1814, while serving with Maison's 1st Army, he and a handful of Mamelukes captured a cannon plus some 150 Saxon cuirassiers; and in another action with the same army he and a platoon of Mamelukes charged some 180 Prussian cavalrymen, pursuing them for some time and killing or capturing every single enemy. This exploit was published by Gen Maison in the order of the day for 26 March 1814. During the First Restoration, Renno was transferred to the Lanciers Royaux de France and was rewarded with the Order of the Lily (5 August 1814) and the Order of St Louis (27 February 1815). When Napoleon returned from Elba a few weeks later Renno rejoined him, serving with the Lancers of the Guard at Quatre-Bras and Waterloo in June; thereafter Gen Colbert, commander of that regiment, granted him leave to stay in Paris to heal his wounds. Discharged on 22 December 1815 at Montpellier, Renno died at Melun on 10 April 1848.

Petros Roudjieri, a Greek born on the island of Tinos in 1781, served with the French army in Egypt and was admitted to the ranks of the Mamelukes on 21 June 1802. Promoted *brigadier* on 19 January 1806, he was to be taken prisoner in Germany on 5 March 1813. He managed to escape and rejoined his unit on 4 March 1814, just in time to be present at the last convulsions of the Empire. On 29 March of that year he was made a *maréchal des logis*, and he followed Napoleon to Elba on 20 April 1814. After fighting at Waterloo as a second lieutenant, he was one of the Mamelukes who fled to Egypt during the period of the 'White Terror'; but he was obliged to return to France in October 1825, at a time of Turkish repression against Mamelukes who had served with the French.

Salloum, a Syrian by birth, was born in Chefa-Amr on 8 January 1751. He entered the French army in Egypt as a captain, and passed in this rank into command of the 2nd Company of Mamelukes of the First Consul. A knight of the Legion of Honour, he served at Austerlitz; but that was to be his last battle, since Marshal Bessières asked the Emperor to grant the 55-year-old Salloum his pension. In September 1806 he bade farewell to his brothers-in-arms and retired to Marseille.

Séraphin, born in Acre on 17 July 1781, entered the Syrian Janissaries and later followed the evacuated army to France, where he was admitted to the Mamelukes of the First Consul as a *brigadier*. He lost his corporal's stripes for some unknown misdemeanour on 20 June 1805, but got them back a few months later on 18 December for his behaviour during the Austerlitz campaign. Admitted as a knight of the Legion of Honour on 14 March 1806, he was promoted *maréchal des logis* four months later. He followed the Emperor on all his campaigns from Prussia in 1806 to Waterloo, where he fought as a first lieutenant.

Soliman, born at Bethlehem in Galilee on 18 May 1777, entered French service in August 1798. He was admitted to the Mamelukes of the First Consul as a *maréchal des logis* in the 2nd Company, and was commissioned *sous-lieutenant* in June 1802. He was named a knight of the Legion of Honour and promoted to second lieutenant on 18 December 1805 after the Austerlitz campaign, remaining in this rank for seven years until promoted to first lieutenant in December 1813. After being wounded several times and having more than one horse killed under him, he entered the Chasseurs Royaux de France during the First Restoration. In June 1815 he charged at Waterloo as an officer of the Mounted Chasseurs of the Imperial Guard. In the 1830s he would again see action, serving with the French army in Algeria. He finally died on 22 November 1852 in Marseille, aged 75.

CAMPAIGNS

Austerlitz, 1805

By the end of 1805, after a long period of peace, the Mamelukes would experience their first continental war. Austria, Russia, Sweden and some minor German states, sponsored by Britain, formed the Third Coalition against France and her allies, and Napoleon marched eastwards. On 21 October 1805 the Mamelukes had their first engagement, at Nuremberg; and soon, on 2 December – the first anniversary of the Emperor's coronation – they would charge at Austerlitz in the same heroic manner as their forebears had done for generations in the Middle East.

By about 1pm on 2 December, Marshal Soult's IV Corps had been successful in their devastating eastwards attack on the Coalition centre on the Pratzen Heights. The only Coalition reserves within reach were the Russian Imperial Guard, a corps of 5,400 infantry, 2,600 cavalry and 40 guns led by the Grand Duke Constantine. From their positions along the Rausnitz stream east of the heights, Constantine launched his infantry at the slopes of the Staré Vinohrady hill, held now by Gen Vandamme's bloodied and weakened division of French infantry. The Russian fusiliers of the historic Semenovskiy and Preobrazhenskiy Guard Regiments rushed up the vine-clad hill with great élan, pushing two of Vandamme's regiments back; and when they rallied, Constantine personally led his heavy cavalry forward, sending squadrons of Prince Repnin's Chevalier Guards in a charge which smashed a French square and captured the Eagle of the 4th Line Regiment (the only French standard the Coalition took that day, to set against the many they lost). A second charge by the rest of the Chevalier Guards drove the French 24th Light Infantry back as well; and seeing this flight from his nearby vantage point, Napoleon ordered Marshal Bessières to counter-attack with cavalry of the Imperial Guard.

The Guard sat their saddles in battle order, waiting south of the village of Blasowitz behind the heights. Bessières picked out the first two squadrons of the Mounted Chasseurs to lead the charge, supported by three squadrons of the Mounted Grenadiers. The charge slammed into the Russian cavalry, who had become disordered in the course of their *mêlées* on the high ground; suddenly confronted with a wave of steel that nothing could stop, the Russian squadrons were driven right back

down the slopes. Following them, the French Guard cavalry ran into the Russian Guard fusilier battalions, who held firm. Constantine sent forward more squadrons of the Chevalier Guard and Guard Cossacks, and the struggle began to tip in the Russians' favour. Napoleon, in his turn, sent his ADC Gen Rapp to lead the last two squadrons of Mounted Chasseurs and the company of Mamelukes into the fray, which was now such a confused slaughter that the Russian infantry could not get clear shots at the enemy horsemen.

Lieutenant Renno of the Mamelukes launched his horse towards the bayonets of a Russian square, hacking at the heads of the fusiliers with his scimitar; his horse was killed and he himself took several wounds, but Renno forced a breach in the Russian formation which was exploited by his brothers-in-arms, who took 120 enemy prisoners back to the French lines. Rapp now faced the Russian Guard artillery but, although received with grapeshot, his troopers still managed to take the guns and decimate the gunners. Their horses were now becoming blown, however, and the Guard cavalry were relieved to be able to fall back for a respite behind the cover of Gen Drouet's arriving infantry division. Regrouping, they charged yet again, and although outnumbered, their greater discipline told in the end. Prince Repnin was captured, and the Russian Guard cavalry began to retire, followed sullenly by their infantry.

During this murderous engagement Gen Rapp was rescued by Lts Chahin' and Daoud Habaïbi, who themselves left the battlefield wounded, as did Lt Renno. Two Mamelukes captured Russian regimental standards which they took to the Emperor, throwing them at his feet. Among other casualties listed (with typically approximate spellings of Oriental names) we find, for instance, *Fourrier* Pierre Vestel, aged 39 and born at Dunkirk, killed; *Brigadier* Hovhannès Arménie, born in Chouchia, Armenia, in 1781, wounded by a bullet close to his left ear; and Ahmet Kitch, born in Cairo in 1781, wounded by five bayonet stabs, one in his left side and four in his left arm. (Years later, at Altenburg in 1813, the same Mameluke would receive a bullet wound in his right forearm.)

Prussia, 1806-07

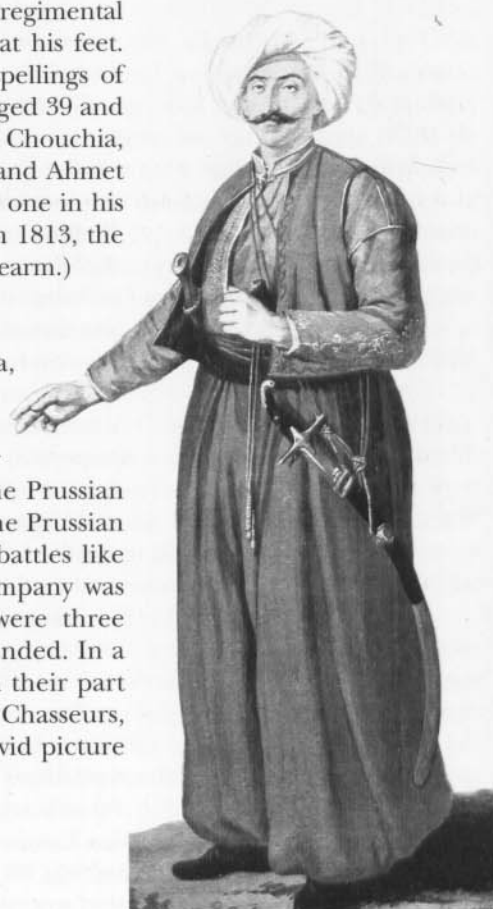
On 15 April 1806, during the campaign against Prussia, the company counted 13 officers and 147 troopers. With the Prussian army beaten at Jena and Auerstadt – where the Mamelukes were not engaged – they arrived on 27 October 1806 in Berlin, where they were ordered to parade into the Prussian capital in full dress. Following the retreating remnants of the Prussian army, the Mamelukes participated in several inconclusive battles like that at Pultusk in Poland on 25 December 1806. The company was heavily engaged against Russian cavalry, and casualties were three officers (including their commander) and 17 troopers wounded. In a report to the regiment's colonel-in-chief Prince Eugène on their part in the battle, Col Dahlmann, commander of the Mounted Chasseurs, lists the details of the Mameluke wounded – these give a vivid picture of cavalry fighting of the period:

Officers:

Delaître, Squadron leader: light contusion to thigh.

Mérat, standard-bearer: light sabre cut to arm.

A picture from a portrait of 'Ismaël, trooper in the *Corps des Mameluks*', from the archives of the Brunon Collection; additional information tells us that this was painted by Lassigny at Fontainebleau on 23 August 1805. Note the low collar on the *beniche*, a feature which became common from 1806 onwards, and its highly embroidered sleeves; the dagger tucked under the waist sash on his right hip, and the pistol on his left; and the Mameluke style of suspending the sabre. The white turban would be worn over a low red *tarbouche*. Ismaël, born in Bethlehem, does not appear in the nominal rolls; there was another trooper of the same name, born in Cairo in 1780, who deserted on 7 January 1809. (Courtesy Musée de l'Empéri/former Brunon Collection, Salon-de-Provence)



Abdala [*sic*], 2nd Lieutenant: 6 light sabre cuts to arm and body.

NCOs:

Anna Koubrousy [*sic*], Sgt: bullet wound to head.

Staphanie, Sgt: sabre cut to arm.

Azaria le Grand, Cpl: sabre cut to left hand.

Quanis Guirban, Cpl: sabre cut to right forearm.

Abouambard [*sic*], Cpl: 2 sabre cuts to head.

Mamelukes:

Nicolas Saboube: 6 sabre cuts to different parts of body.

Amzel Lafleur: leg bone broken by bullet.

Joseph Chame: sabre cut to left hand.

Michel Hongrois: sabre cut to left shoulder.⁴

Saman Koutsy: 2 contusions to head and one wound from a swab [i.e. an artillery tool]

Joseph Souhoubé: 3 deep sabre cuts – 1 to head, 1 to hand and another to elbow.

Lambre George: sabre cut to left shoulder.

Nicole Papaoglou: sabre cut to left forearm.

Cherkes George: bullet wound to left side of chest.

Musicians:

Lotz, Cpl-Trumpeter: 19 sabre cuts – 9 to the head, the others to the body.

Perrot, Tpr: sabre cut to right forearm.

Cristophe Olivier, Tpr: bullet wound through right shoulder.

On 21 January 1807 the strength of the unit was 10 officers of which 9 on detached duty, and 105 rankers of which 72 detached. Mamelukes who had recently died, apparently of illness, were Corandis, born in Constantinople, who died in hospital on 22 September 1806, and Hovhannès Magot, born in Circassia (Armenia) in 1779, who died in Warsaw on 13 January 1807.

With Berlin taken, the French still followed the surviving remnants of the Prussian army north and east. King Frederick William III fled to his ally Russia; and instead of taking to their winter quarters, the French found themselves forced to face a Russian threat from the Baltic coast. In terrible weather conditions of frost and blinding snow, Gen Bennigsen's Russian and Napoleon's French armies met near Prussisches-Eylau on 7–8 February 1807. Napoleon had 45,000 men and 200 guns at his disposal, plus the hope of the two army corps of Davout and Ney approaching in support (a vain hope, in Ney's case), while the Russians were able to field 67,000 men with 460 guns. Dangerously outnumbered, Napoleon accepted battle in weather that blinded both armies to each other's dispositions and movements. The engagement was extremely costly to both sides, as heavy artillery bombardments were the dominant feature. The French faced serious problems in holding their lines, and their predicament worsened as the battle wore on. To save the situation, Napoleon ordered Marshal Murat to lead his reserve



Detail from Baron Gérard's Austerlitz painting, showing Gen Rapp returning to the Emperor to report the success of his charge, bringing with him Russian prisoners and banners. This Mameluke carries a Russian standard, while his wounded horse collapses. Note the turned-back cuffs, the dagger in his waist sash, and the cord pouch belt. We even know his name: this is Mustapha Bagdoune, an Armenian born in Baghdad on 2 February 1777, who was among the first to enlist in the Corps of Mamelukes. He served in nearly all their campaigns until he was killed at Dresden on 27 August 1813.

⁴ Some sources state that this 'Hungarian Michel' (born at Bigor in that country in 1780) was wounded by a blow from a staff while capturing a gun on 25 November 1806, and sustained a bullet wound to the left ankle in the same engagement. At Altenburg in 1813 he would receive two sabre cuts, one to the right side of his neck and the other to a shoulder. These sources do not mention his shoulder wound at Pultusk.

The charge of the Mounted Chasseurs and Mamelukes of the Imperial Guard at Austerlitz, by Myrbach. The artist shows the Mamelukes with both types of shabraque – Oriental, and French light cavalry. The wide sleeves are correct for the date; and notice the officer in front, wearing some kind of shoulder ornaments that resemble embroidered 'swallows' nests' (compare with Plate A2). The *tug* standard was thought by Myrbach (and other artists) to approximate to a regimental 'Eagle', although in fact they were secondary to the squadron guidon; the Mamelukes did not receive their Eagle until after Austerlitz.



cavalry of some 80 squadrons (10,500 men) in a charge in two columns against a 70-gun Russian grand battery, to pierce the centre of the enemy line. Despite murderous losses the outcome of the battle was indecisive, and both armies returned to winter quarters.

Riding behind the Mounted Grenadiers and Chasseurs, the Mamelukes covered themselves with glory; Capt Renno's conduct was, as usual, magnificent; but at the end of the day Col Dahlmann's list of casualties was enormous. Four officers of the Mamelukes were wounded: Abdallah, already wounded at Pultusk and pierced seven times by lances at Golymin, was wounded once more; so were Chahin', Daoud Habaïbi and Rouyer.

Other casualties were:

Maréchal des logis Hanna Koubroussi ([sic]: see Pultusk casualty list above), born at Nazareth 1781: bullet wound to head and sabre cut to left shoulder; died at Melun after a long illness on 24 January 1812, probably from his wounds.

Porte-queue (i.e. *tug*-bearer: see end of text, 'Standards') Ratas El Fael, born in Chefa-Amr, Syria, in 1779: bullet wound to arm; died on 3 May 1807.

Ayoub Michalouat, born at Nazareth in 1775: bullet wound.

Boulous Baraka, born in Alexandria in 1786: sabre cut to right hand.

Ali, black, born in Darfur (present-day Sudan) in 1778: grapeshot wound to left leg.

Among the wounded listed without details are Salem Youdik, born in Cairo in 1789; Sgt René-Jacques Tertre, born at Maléra, France, in 1774; and Cpl Abou Ambar (see Pultusk list, 'Abouambard'), born in Chefa-Amr, Syria, in 1779, who died in Warsaw on 23 February 1807.

On 7 April 1807 the command of the Mamelukes passed once more when Delaître was transferred to the Polish 1st Light Horse Lancers of the Guard. In the absence of a replacement of suitable rank Capt Renno took over temporary command.

That spring the French and Russians met once more at the battle of Friedland on 14 June 1807, and this time Napoleon won such a decisive victory that it brought an end to the war. The Mamelukes were not engaged at Friedland. As noted above, the nominal roll on 21 January

1807 had listed 105 men; by 25 June it had dropped to 74, of which 15 were at the regimental depot at Mogilno. However, many of this little band of brothers were now proudly wearing the cross of the Legion of Honour on their chests.

Spain, 1808

Portugal was a thorn in the Emperor's flesh, resisting his 'Continental System' which sought to close all

(continued on page 33)

PERSONALITIES

1: Général Dupas, 1803-04

2: Ali, Mameluke of the Empress, 1803

3: Ali, 2nd Mameluke of the Emperor, 1813



1800-07

1: Officer, Napoleon's coronation, 1804

2: Officer, summer dress

3: NCO, Berlin, 1806-07



1800-07

1: Mameluke, Belgium, 1803

2: Mameluke, 1805

3: Mameluke, non-regulation dress



2

3

P. Louaiffe

1807-13

1: Mameluke, c.1807

2: Chef d'escadron Kirmann, 1809-10

3: Capitaine Abdallah d'Asbonne, 1813



F. Loupelle

MUSICIANS, 1807-13

1: Cymbalist

2: Kettle-drummer

3: Kettle-drummer, 1810-12



F. Loupelle

1807-13

- 1: Mameluke, regulation Oriental dress
- 2: Mameluke, regulation Oriental dress
- 3: Trumpeter, regulation Oriental dress



1813-14

- 1: Mameluke, campaign dress
- 2: Officer, campaign dress
- 3: French Mameluke,
Oriental campaign dress



FRENCH MAMELUKES, 1813-14

- 1: Officer, campaign dress
- 2: Mameluke, campaign dress
- 3: Trumpeter, campaign dress



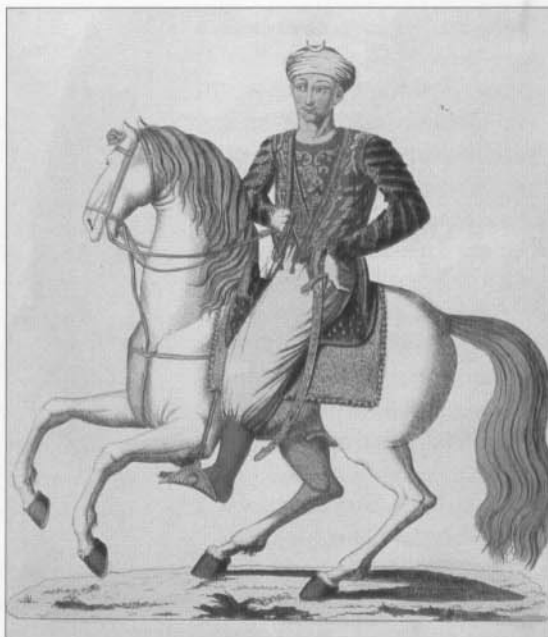
P. Loupelle

the ports of continental Europe to Britain's commercial and naval shipping. On 17 October 1807 Gen Junot led some 24,000 French troops into Spain, whose royal family the Emperor had made into a puppet ally; they marched south-west, to cross the Spanish- Portuguese border on 19 November, and entered Lisbon some 11 days later. To support the invasion of Portugal, Napoleon left garrisons in all major Spanish cities along his lines of communication. This first step towards *de facto* occupation, achieved by stealthy diplomacy, would soon become the powerful lever allowing him to manipulate Spanish internal affairs. Even the royal family was divided against itself, as Napoleon and his foreign minister, Tallyrand, pulled the strings. The political situation in Spain, and the Franco-Spanish relationship, soon deteriorated. On 16 February 1808, with a secure position in eastern Europe, the Emperor took the drastic step of occupying all key positions in northern Spain, ordering Marshal Murat into the country at the head of 118,000 more troops. This arrogant gamble would turn a grudging ally into an implacable enemy, starting a conflict that would be pursued with unique savagery for six years.

Madrid was occupied on 24 March, and the Spanish royal family soon became Napoleon's hostages. The atmosphere in the capital became unbearably tense, and on 2 May 1808 the citizens rose up en masse against the French garrison, using whatever means came to hand. Violent rioting spread like wildfire through the streets of the capital, triggering murderous attacks on any French troops the mobs could lay hands on, be they lone officers off duty, armed patrols, or sick soldiers in the hospitals.

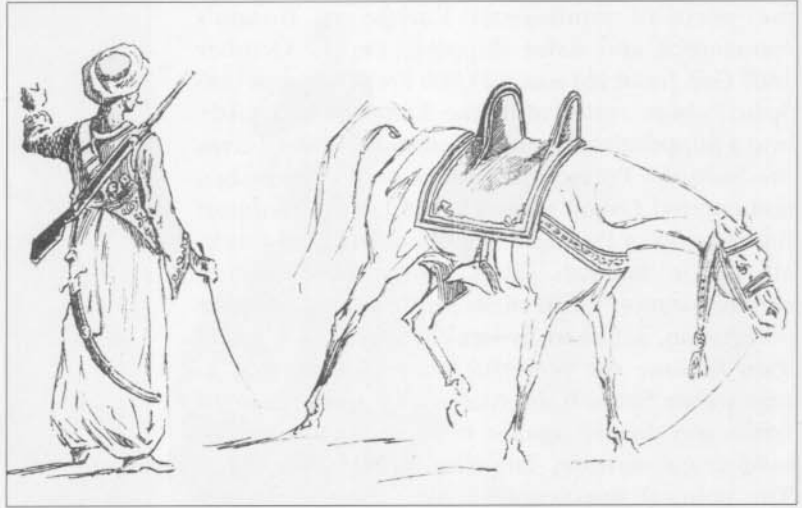
The Mamelukes and other Guard units had followed Marshal Murat, the Emperor's lieutenant and commander-in-chief, into Spain. They, above all, were a provocative unit to parade before the devoutly Catholic population of a country that had only driven out its Moorish occupiers at the end of the 15th century, and that still considered Muslims as limbs of the devil. The order was given to beat the general alarm; the Mamelukes, quartered in the south-east of the city, were called upon to help put down the riots, but first they had to reach the other French troops on the Retiro on the other side of Madrid. Commanded by *Chef d'escadron* Daumesnil, the Guard cavalry formed up in column of fours – first the Mounted Chasseurs, followed by the Mamelukes. For the latter this mission seemed a routine prospect, since they were accustomed to crushing unrest in Egypt; cutting down rioters meant no more to them than a farmer feels when mowing his fields.

To reach the Retiro they had to ride across the city from east to west, by way of the Calle de Alcalà and the Puerta del Sol. This long ride degenerated into one continual ambush; hardly had the column started before they received a hail of stones and tiles thrown down from roofs, and bullets fired from windows. When they arrived at the Puerta del Sol they were met by a large and furious crowd, and the sight of the



Perhaps the most famous Mameluke of all was the Emperor's personal servant Roustam – a gift to Gen Bonaparte in Egypt, who followed him to France. Roustam would become the Emperor's shadow, remaining close to him at all times. Although Napoleon himself preferred simple uniforms (except for Court ceremonial), he encouraged his marshals and ministers to spend lavishly on their dress. Roustam's were possibly the most expensive costumes at Court, sometimes costing more than a year's income for an ordinary family. Here he is shown wearing a red *yalek* and dark blue *beniche* richly embroidered with gold, white *saroual* and scarlet boots. (Anne S.K.Brown Collection, Providence, USA)

'Morescos' drove the rioters into a killing frenzy: men and women alike jumped up behind their saddles, clawing, stabbing, and trying to drag the troopers to the ground. The Mamelukes defended themselves with their scimitars and maces as best they could; they urged their horses into the crowd, sabring the rioters without mercy. Daumesnil had his horse killed under him; wounded in the knee, he was rescued by Lt Chahin', who had been hit himself and was blinded by his own blood.



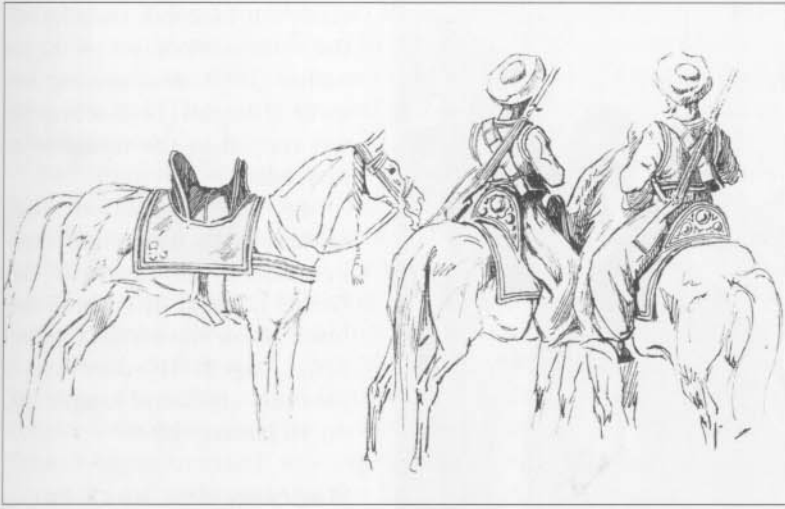
What would become infamous as the 'Dos Mayo' launched more than one story of atrocities committed in reprisal by the Mamelukes. One tale claimed that two Mamelukes fell to the cobbles in front of the convent of Sta Maria de Atocha, shot down by monks from the windows above. Furious, their comrades dismounted and forced their way into the convent, killing everyone they found there – monks, men and women – and throwing their severed heads into the street. The story is essentially true, but the building was not a convent – it was a large house in the Calle San Geronimo; and the Mameluke patrol did not see their comrades fall, but found them lying dead in the street, and were told by civilians that they had been shot from the house. When they had finished slaughtering and beheading the inhabitants without discrimination of sex or age, they mounted and continued their ride through the city. Daumesnil chose to remain blind to these atrocities; he knew too well that being shot in the back was something the Mamelukes considered an unworthy and dishonourable death.

Towards the afternoon the mobs were finally subdued, and the systematic French reprisals began. Tied in pairs to the stirrups of the Mamelukes and Chasseurs, the hastily condemned were dragged in front of the firing squads, which would remain busy until the next day. The Second of May became an important moment in Spanish history, inspiring artists to imagine the bloody scenes; the contemporary painter Goya represented civilians attacking Mamelukes, showing several of them being stabbed. In fact, however, the unit's casualties were fairly limited. Five officers present were wounded (Daoud Habaïbi, Elias, Chahin', Renno and Soliman). The other casualties were Antoun Chami, born in Cairo in 1784, who was mortally wounded and would die in hospital on 16 May; and the two Mamelukes killed and found by the patrol – Ayoub Michalouat, already wounded at Eylau, and Paskalis, born at Girgeh, Egypt, in 1782. Finally, at a later date, Petros Alak, born in Jerusalem in 1775, would be murdered in Madrid on 24 January 1809.

* * *

The company now counted 86 men. To fill up the ranks the Emperor agreed to sending Lieutenant Abdallah to visit the Egyptian refugeee

ABOVE AND OPPOSITE
Two studies of Mamelukes by Swebach, made at Ulm (left) and Austerlitz (right) in 1805. They show the high Oriental saddles and box-like stirrups, and the North African-style shabraque. Swebach was a fine craftsman with an eye for detail; note that he shows wide sleeves; slung carbines, instead of the blunderbusses of folklore; and (left) a shoulder belt supporting not a pouch but a pistol in a decorated leather holster. Again, the turban is worn over a low red tarbouche.



communities in Marseille and look for suitable replacements. However, Abdallah had so little success that he selected seven sailors from the crews of three Turkish ships that were anchored in the harbour. By now, little by little, soldiers from elsewhere within the Empire started to arrive in the company, receiving Oriental uniforms to fill the gaps in the ranks of the real Mamelukes.

Serving on in Spain under Marshal Bessières, the Mamelukes were present on 14 July 1808 at the battle of Medina

del Rio Seco, where the marshal soundly defeated the combined Spanish armies of Gens Cuesta and Blake. On 10 September the Mamelukes greeted their new commander, *Chef d'escadron* Francois Antoine Kirmann from the Mounted Chasseurs of the Guard; an Alsatian by birth, aged 40, he was a hero of Erbach, Delmesingen and Neumark. From that date onwards command of the Mamelukes did not change again; assisted by the officers Renno, Chahin', Elias, Abdallah and Georges, Kirmann would lead his exotic company through Spain, Austria, Russia and Saxony and in the final 1814 campaign in France.

At the end of 1808 the Mamelukes were to see action against the British expeditionary force led by Gen Sir John Moore, which was retreating through the snows towards the northern port of Corunna. On 29 December 1808 Moore's army crossed the River Esla; pursuing them at the head of Napoleon's vanguard were three squadrons of Mounted Chasseurs plus a small detachment of Mamelukes and Lancers – about 550 troopers in all, commanded by Gen Charles Lefebvre-Desnouettes. This force crossed the Esla on the British rearguard's trail, re-formed into squadrons, and were marching towards Benavente at a steady pace when British cavalry under Lord Paget, covering the retreat, caught them in a well-timed ambush. Paget led some 450 men of the British 10th Hussars in a charge that hit Lefebvre-Desnouettes' troopers in the flank, driving them against a 200-strong picket line from the 7th and 18th Hussars and 3rd Light Dragoons, King's German Legion. The French were driven back with heavy casualties: 165 men were killed, wounded or captured – among the latter the unfortunate Gen Lefebvre-Desnouettes, whose failure was reportedly witnessed by the Emperor himself from a hill beyond the Esla. The Mamelukes lost the 21-year-old Armenian 2nd Lt Azaria le Petit, mortally wounded; and Mameluke Yannis Demitri, born in Hydra in 1771 of Greek origin, who had had his right leg broken by grapeshot at Eylau, was killed at Benavente. Captain Daoud Habaïbi was seriously wounded, and would never see battle again. Sergeant Hovhannès Arménie, who had taken a bullet in the head at Austerlitz, was wounded again, by four sabre cuts to his head. Soliman Mouskou, born in the Crimea and aged 48, was taken prisoner



Engraving by C.G.Geissler: a Mameluke is surrounded by some strange-looking Polish Lancers, what seems to be a Mounted Chasseur, and a cuirassier. See reconstruction as Plate D1.

rest and re-equip, and to be brought up to strength with new soldiers. Yacoub Habaïbi returned to the officer corps to replace his brother Daoud, who was limited by his wounds to non-combatant duties.

In April the Austrians took up the long struggle against Napoleon once more, in the War of the Fifth Coalition, and invaded northern Bavaria. The Archduke Charles defeated Napoleon's attempt to lead his army across the Danube in the bloody two-day battle of Aspern-Essling. However, on the night of 4/5 July the Emperor crossed in force, and when Archduke Charles tried to cut him off from his bridgehead the Austrians were heavily defeated at Wagram on 5-6 July. The Mamelukes were present at this battle, after making a march of 1,700 miles in 68 days. Both armies suffered heavy casualties at Wagram; among the wounded was Mameluke Boulous Baraka, already wounded at Eylau, who received a bayonet wound in the chest. (Later, during the retreat from Russia, Baraka would lose five toes from frostbite.)

Once the campaign against Austria was brought to a successful close the Mamelukes found themselves returning to Spain. Their duties kept them out of the front lines of the major campaigns, but there were still dangers to be faced from the ubiquitous Spanish guerrillas. Mameluke Khalil Atoulis, born in Jaffa in 1778, was killed on 3 March 1810, and Thomas Masri, a 25-year-old from Cairo, took a sabre cut to his right wrist on 5 September 1810. Some names which had disappeared from the rolls suddenly reappeared, like Daoud Karm, a 39-year-old from Haifa, who on 11 January 1810 rejoined a Mameluke detachment passing by La Reole. This trooper was recorded as having deserted on 1 January 1809, but he claimed that he had in fact got lost, and that it took him a year to find his way back to his unit... It would be intriguing to know of his adventures.

Russia, 1812: *les disparus*

Reduced to 55 troopers, the Mameluke company left Spain for good on 1 March 1812, to join the rest of the Imperial Guard and Grande Armée

(later he escaped, re-entering the Mamelukes on 6 September 1810, and serving on until 1 August 1813 when he was retired to the refugees in Marseille).

We are reminded that soldiers often died other than in action by the deaths in the Guard hospital in Paris of two black Mamelukes from Darfur: Sélim, aged 31, died on 8 February 1808, and Joseph, 20, on 16 January 1809.

Wagram, and back to Spain, 1809-12

In 1809 the company of Mamelukes were ordered back to their garrison at Melun to

massing in Poland for the epic Russian campaign. By 1 July 1812 the company had been completed to a strength of 109 men of which 8 were *maréchaux des logis* (of whom two were Frenchmen), 4 *porte-queues* and a *porte-étendard*. The army crossed the River Niemen into Russia at the end of June.

Following the advance across the scorching summer steppes towards Moscow, these elite troops did not see much combat; at Vilna the Imperial Guard and the Italian Royal Guard paraded daily in full dress before the Emperor. Even at the battle of Borodino (7 September) they were kept in reserve. Arriving in Moscow a week later, they were quartered between the capital and Bezovska. Unable to secure a negotiated peace, and aware that he could never feed his army in Moscow throughout the forthcoming winter, Napoleon ordered a retreat little more than five weeks after his triumphant arrival, and the French began to march west on 19 October 1812. During the retreat the company assisted in saving the Emperor and his staff from being cut off by Cossacks at Gorodnya, a skirmish action during which their commander Kirmann was wounded. Up to this point the Mamelukes' casualties had been insignificant, but that would soon change.

By 16 December 1812, when the remnants of the once proud Grande Armée arrived at Insterburg, the cavalry division of the Guard had been reduced to 800 men in total, of whom 260 were Mounted Chasseurs and Mamelukes. The casualty lists are instructive. Only a minority are recorded as killed, wounded or taken prisoner; most of the losses are listed simply as *disparu* – 'disappeared'. This bleak term is the only epitaph for those who fell by the wayside and perished without any witness to their fate – from frostbite, starvation, disease, or at the hands of the Cossacks who harried the straggling columns.

Among the Mamelukes who never again saw the sunlight of Africa we find Idriss Johar, born in Abyssinia in 1779, who died on 4 October; Hanna Nadjjar, born in Cairo the same year, was taken prisoner on 11 October; the next day Joseph Sera, an Armenian born in 1790 or 1791, was captured near Moscow (remarkably, he would survive to return to his unit by 10 January 1815, and served during the Waterloo campaign). On 4 November, Trumpeter Pierre Jacques Alexandre Bonniaux de Longpré, born at Grandpré, France, in 1795, is listed as having disappeared. On the 15th of that month the Mameluke Assat, a Copt, born in Cairo in 1781, suffered the same fate.

Grisaille by Benjamin Zix, of the meeting of Napoleon and King Frederick William of Prussia at Tilsit on 29 June 1807. Zix represents a mounted Hussar with a shako, two Imperial Guard Mounted Chasseurs in undress, and two Mamelukes, the latter still wearing the low *tarbouche*. Another time-related change was the wearing of the *yalek* under the waist sash rather than open over it.





Goya's painting of the 'Dos Mayo' rising in Madrid on 2 May 1808 shows rioting citizens dragging Mamelukes from their saddles and stabbing them. Both sides would be accused of atrocities during this episode, but in fact the nominal rolls show only modest casualties among the Mamelukes.

would serve again in Algeria from 1830 to 1841, being wounded once more in 1830, and dying in Algiers on 22 July 1841.

The melancholy list goes on, cheered only by the occasional extraordinary survival. The 21-year-old Tunisian David Toubiane disappeared on 3 December, as did Thalouth Choukrallah, a Cairo Copt aged 43, and four other Cairenes – Faradj Thalouth, aged 33; Assad Adelmalak, aged 23; Ibrahim, aged 26, and Moussa Charaf, aged 30. Five days later a Cretan, Nicolas Grec, and Gabriel Koury, a 29-year-old from Cairo, were taken prisoner; Koury was one of the few to survive, returning from captivity on 8 September 1814 to be admitted into the Corps Royal des Chasseurs à Cheval de France.

On 9 December, Antouni Arménie, born in Chouchia in 1781, was written off the rolls '*disparu*'; so were Dimitri Jaffaoui, a 32-year-old from Jaffa; Guirguess Khouchoun, born in 1779 in Aleppo; Guirguess Masri, also known as 'George the Egyptian', born in Cairo in 1792 and recorded as only 4ft 2½in tall when he enlisted; Trumpeter Jean Etienne Baptiste Perrot, 28, from Melun; Victor Hippolyte Baudeuf, 25, from Brindisi in Italy; and the Sudanese Adrien Baraka, 24, from Darfur. That same day a 50-year-old Syrian, Youssef Zalaoui, was taken prisoner; yet he too managed to return to France by 10 January 1815, and served again during the Waterloo campaign. On 12 December two Abyssinians in their early 30s, Adel Thalouth and the black trooper Ghabrian, also disappeared.

Alexandre Lécuyer, a 42-year-old French master-bootmaker, was wounded at the crossing of the Beresina; Soubé Youssef, born in Chefa-Amr in 1775, was taken prisoner, to die of wounds in a hospital at Vilna on 16 February; another 37-year-old, the veterinary Louis Jacques Bourgois from Dôle, died of exhaustion at Bromberg on 8 January 1813. Another veteran Mameluke who survived the retreat only to die early in January was *Maréchal des logis* Gaspard Joseph Ayoub, 31, from Cairo; already bearing a sabre scar on his right arm from an action at Pradanos in Spain, he had been wounded again by a lance thrust to the head in the neighbourhood of Moscow but had struggled all the way back. On the same day, 3 January 1813, Hippolyte Louis Paillard, a 20-year-old from Melun, also died 'of exhaustion'.

The black Mameluke Calixte Jobert, born in Haiti and wounded more than once during his service, disappeared on 18 November; over the next two days so did Ibrahim, born in Egypt in 1782; Isaac Dayan, born in Tunis in 1791; and Hanna Nia, a Georgian. Nicolas Daboussi, a 34-year-old Greek from Cairo, was taken prisoner on 27 November at Borisov. Deported to Siberia, Daboussi returned to France by 10 December 1814, having lost both hands; yet despite this terrible disability, he

The twilight of the Empire, 1813-14

Early in 1813 the Emperor, aided by his Grand Marshal of the Palace Duroc, started rebuilding a new Grande Armée – not only the Line regiments, but also the Imperial Guard. This was done by transferring experienced soldiers from the Line into the Guard, and by levying new teenage conscripts; cities, institutions and enterprises were also encouraged to donate soldiers, horses or cash payments to support the war effort. The catastrophic losses of horses in Russia had left the cavalry, in particular, in a dangerously weakened state; but the Imperial Guard would become stronger than ever – at least on paper.

Under this reorganization the Mounted Chasseurs were increased, from 18 January 1813, to an establishment of ten squadrons with 2,500 men. The Mamelukes would be doubled from company to squadron strength, as the 10th Squadron of the Mounted Chasseurs. This was done by creating a 1st Company – also known as 1st Mamelukes – consisting of veterans and troopers from the Line, and a 2nd Company – 2nd Mamelukes – raised from conscripts. In Guard terminology these would be known as belonging to the Old and Young Guard respectively.

The latter company consisted mainly of conscripts from within the Empire, such as Italians, Belgians, Germans and Frenchmen; though all would be issued the Oriental uniforms, turbans and weapons, most of them were noticeably pale-skinned 'Mamelukes', and not a few of them spoke with a Parisian accent. In 1813 the officer corps of the Mamelukes was as follows:

Staff: Squadron leader: Kirmann
Captain, instructor: Abdallah
2nd Lt, *sous-adjutant major*: ?
2nd Lt, *porte-aigle*: Fonnade
Surgeon-major: Bockenheim

Squadron: Captains: Renno, Daoud Habaïbi
1st Lts: Chahin', Elias Massaâd
2nd Lts: Soliman, Gay, Kapfer, Mirza

During the first part of the 1813 campaign in Germany, before the armistice of Pleswitz signed on 5 June, the Mounted Chasseurs and Mamelukes were not engaged – the services of the Old Guard were limited to escorting the Emperor. When the armistice ended, one squadron of Old Guard Mounted Chasseurs and the 1st Company of Mamelukes were designated for service close to the Emperor; all the others would serve in Gen Lefebvre-Desnoëttes' division.

At Dresden, shortly before the armistice of Pleswitz, the Mamelukes received a welcome reinforcement of 125 men. Three were Greek-born members of the Albanian Corfu Regiment, whose services were presented by the president of the senate of Corfu, Baron Theotocki. They were admitted to the Corps of Mamelukes on 21 June 1813, and arrived with the squadron on 6 October. Yannis Phocas, born at Parga in 1791,

An impression by Job of Mamelukes charging through the streets of Madrid. The artist shows a blue *beniche* under a yellow *yalek*, crimson *saroual*, and the *cahouk* cap scarlet with a brass star and crescent – symbolism sure to attract the vengeful attention of the citizens of Madrid. The shabraque is in light cavalry style, of blue trimmed with a red stripe edged white, and gold or yellow fringes. (Author's collection)





Steadily, the Oriental specifics of the uniform were transformed into more suitable items for European climate and campaigning. The first signs came in 1806, and became increasingly obvious from 1809 onwards. The uniforms were mainly green and red, matching those of the Mounted Chasseurs with whom they rode; after 1808 the French light cavalry shabraque was used, and is shown here as green with a red stripe piped white along the edges, and red/white fringing. However, we must point out that this Martinet engraving is known in four differently coloured versions. (Author's collection)

was a former sergeant, and served in the rank of *maréchal des logis*; he would be discharged on 4 October 1814, as also was former Cpl Costa Yannis, born at Souli in 1789; Lolio Nacco, born at Argyrocastro in 1791, would be taken prisoner on 20 March 1814 near Méry.

The 1813 campaign would be a bloodbath, not only for the young and inexperienced conscripts, who were thrown into battle barely able to load and aim a musket, but also for some of the Emperor's closest aides. On 1 May at Weissenfels the Imperial Guard cavalry lost its commander, Marshal Bessières, killed by a Prussian cannon ball; that morning he had breakfasted with his ADC Baudus while his personal Mameluke Mirza le Petit held his horse, ready for him to ride out on his fatal last reconnaissance.

Following their climactic defeat at Leipzig in what was later called the 'Battle of the Nations' on 16–18 October, the weakened army retreated towards the Rhine and the French frontier. At Hanau on 30 October the road was blocked

by their former allies, the Bavarians. The cavalry of the Old Guard, supported by Gen Drouot's Guard artillery, advanced through woodland under heavy cannon fire, fighting their way through the Bavarian position to clear the road towards France. In this action Capt Abdallah of the Mamelukes was wounded. Casualties for 1813 were extremely high, and again, as in 1812, the rolls show most of them having 'disappeared'. However, while in the Russian context this had meant that soldiers had fallen behind and died of cold or starvation, in Germany the following year the term probably covered a good deal of desertion. Napoleon's empire was falling apart, with former allies rising against him at the approach of Coalition armies; as his troops were pushed back towards the borders of France itself, most of the conscripts from German states and the Low Countries had little incentive to remain in the ranks once they learned that their homelands were no longer under French occupation.

Other and more realistic casualties among the Mamelukes in this campaign included, for instance, the Cairene Greek soldier Michel Malati, who disappeared; and Greek-born *Brigadier* Petros Roudjieri, from Tinos, who had already been captured on 5 March. Returning to France on 4 March 1814, he would prove his loyalty by following the exiled Napoleon to Elba, and fighting at Waterloo as a second lieutenant. At one of the first battles of the 1813 campaign, Bautzen on 22 May, Stephanis Kosmas, born in Smyrna in 1777, was killed, and Ibrahim Erguiri, born in Cairo in 1784, was taken prisoner (he would return to France on 24 April 1815). On 14 August a French Mameluke named Louis Leclerc, but called Pinguet (born at Pierrefitte, 1781) died in Dresden. Two weeks later, during the battle of Dresden on 27 August, a 36-year-old Baghdad Armenian, Moustapha Salloum, and a 22-year-old Frenchman from Fay, René Auguste Varlet, were both killed; the Italian Charles Traglioni, born in Rome in 1781, would die in hospital in

Dresden on 18 September. Two days later the French Mameluke Nicolas Godard, 36, from Sapygnicourt, died of unspecified causes somewhere in Saxony; a week after that another Frenchman, 22-year-old Christophe Bordeaux from Cardanville, was taken prisoner. This spread of ages among the French names argues a range of military origins in recruitment to the corps.

For the battle of Leipzig itself we find only that *Maréchal des logis* Angélics Anastassis, 29, a Greek from Cairo, was made a prisoner of war; he would return to France on 27 February 1815 and serve at Waterloo. The origins of other Mameluke prisoners suggest that they may have been glad enough to surrender in hope of being allowed to return home: the 23-year-old Eustache Uyen, born in Beurgharen [*sic*], Holland, was captured on 23 October; and three days later two men from the Ruhr department of Germany both became prisoners – Chrétien Guillaume Bingen and Jean Peiffer.

Casualties in various rearguard actions during the retreat included the Frenchmen Barthélemy Marc Ferté, 23, from Pleurtruit, and Quérie Marie Rohan, 22, from Palais, both killed near Weimar on 27 October. A victim of the battle of Hanau on 30 October was Jean Marie Ambroise Ghillet, born at Belleville in 1794; and Antoine Priems, born in Holland, died from his wounds in a hospital in Mainz on 18 November. By the time they reached the Rhine frontier the nominal rolls show that 59 Mamelukes had perished in this campaign.

In 1814, with the Empire practically reduced to France's natural borders, Napoleon and his battered army were faced with defending the homeland in a series of brilliantly orchestrated but doomed campaigns against the several large Coalition armies converging towards Paris. The Mamelukes of the 1st Company were with the Emperor, while the Young Guard company served with Gen Maison on the northern borders around Antwerp and Lille.

On 27 January the Old Guard Mamelukes successfully charged Cossacks at St Dizier; they again distinguished themselves at Montmirail on 11 February. The following day they fought well against Prussian cavalry at Château-Thierry; here the strength of the combined regiment of Mounted Chasseurs and Mamelukes was recorded as 25 officers and 297 rankers. On 20 March the rolls showed 24 men missing; some of them were Mamelukes from the very first intake, like *Brigadier* Francis Nassar, born in Nazareth in 1781 and a corporal since 1 December 1809, who was killed on 28 January 1814. The Mamelukes fought at Brienne, and again at St Dizier on 26 March, where they captured 18 guns from the Russians. It was on 30 March, before the very walls of Paris, that the Mamelukes saw their last action, shortly before the city capitulated and Napoleon was forced to abdicate. Casualties during those last days were Trumpeter Antoine Alexandre Cottenet, a Frenchman born at Laon in 1796, who was taken prisoner on



Mameluke, by Raffet. The *cahouk* is scarlet, and most of the uniform is what we would expect from 1813 onwards; however, the yellow *beniche* and the sash still worn under the blue *yalek*, with hanging ends, may be artistic licence. The *shabraque* is green, edged and fringed scarlet and with scarlet Oriental tassels. Note the pair of pistols slung high under his left arm, presumably from one of the red leather shoulder belts. (Author's collection)

27 February; an Italian, Jean Marie Riva, born at Colsanzan in 1788, who was wounded no less than eight times at Arcis-sur-Aube on 20 March; the German-born Guillaume Finkein, taken prisoner near Méry on 30 March; and the veteran Mameluke Salem Youdik, already wounded at Eylau, who was wounded again and taken prisoner at Courtrai, Belgium, on 30 March.

The First Restoration

With the return of a Bourbon regime and the enthronement of King Louis XVIII, the Imperial Guard officially ceased to exist, but the Royalists in fact treated this crack corps with some care. The Mounted Chasseurs were renamed as the Corps Royal des Chasseurs à Cheval de France; most of the Mamelukes within its ranks were by now of French origin. Early in March 1815 the unit paraded before the Duc d'Orléans, later to become King Louis-Philippe. Still wearing the Muslim crescent on their turbans, they counted 41 Old Guard Mamelukes of whom 18 were still Orientals. The Young Guard Mamelukes were all transferred to the 7th Mounted Chasseurs of the Line.

Captains Renno and Abdallah, as well as 2nd Lt Mirza, served in the Cheval-légers Lanciers de France, the former Red Lancers of the Imperial Guard. Lieutenants Elias Massaâd and Soliman left the army to live within the refugee communities at Marseille. The former emperor was authorized to take a small contingent of his former Imperial Guard with him into exile on Elba. One of these units was the Escadron Napoléon, composed of 120 men, mainly Polish Lancers, but of whom eight men (a lieutenant, two NCOs and five troopers) came from the Mamelukes. The officer was Lt Séraphin Bagdoune; the NCOs were both Greek *maréchaux des logis*: Nicolas Papas-Oglou, born in Tchesme, Asia Minor in 1786, and Petros Roudjieri. The Mamelukes were Henry Dayet, a mulatto born in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in 1785; a 28-year-old Cairene Greek, Mikaël Masri, a veteran of the original intake who had taken a sabre cut to his forearm at Eylau; two Frenchmen, the 38-year-old Etienne Erard from Rosanne and Jean Rocher, 25, born at Pont; and a fifth trooper apparently called Michel Peros, whose name we cannot trace in the other records.

The Hundred Days

When Napoleon escaped from Elba and returned to France in March 1815, the Corps Royal des Chasseurs à Cheval de France mustered 67 officers and 1,200 men spread between five squadrons; *Chef d'escadron* Kirmann still commanded the Mamelukes. By a decree of 24 April, Napoleon ordered that the regiment of Mounted Chasseurs of the Guard should be augmented by one Mameluke squadron of two companies. Each company was to be organized like the others in the corps, and a squadron leader and a *sous-adjutant major* were to be attached to the Mameluke squadron. On 6 May the Corps of Mamelukes was reorganized at Versailles; 41 former Mamelukes of the Corps Royal des Chasseurs à Cheval de France were admitted, and another 94 returned to service. Next to those who were still serving in the Bourbon royal army and those returning with Napoleon from Elba, two other Mamelukes were admitted into the re-created corps, both



of whom would eventually be discharged to return to Melun on 1 November 1815: Joseph Brahim, from the 3rd Hussars, was accepted on 27 March 1815, and Ibrahim Guirguess, a former Egyptian refugee, was re-admitted on 30 May.

Serving under Gen Lefebvre-Desnouettes' orders, the Mamelukes entered Belgium and were present at Fleurus on 14 June. On the morning of Sunday 18 June, soaked by the heavy rain of the previous day and night, they took up position on the west side of the Brussels road facing Mont St Jean with the rest of the Guard cavalry. Like them, later that day, they took part – without written orders – in the desperate but futile mass cavalry charges against the British squares. The results of the battle of Waterloo are too well known to need repetition here. On 29 June we find the remnants of the regiment bivouacking on the heights of Charonne, mustering 30 officers and 688 rankers. The Mounted Chasseurs, and with them the Mamelukes, would finally be disbanded at Libourne and Agen.

The Second Restoration: the White Terror

The Mamelukes of Oriental origin returned to Marseille or to Melun to live within the communities of Egyptian refugees; but during the Second Restoration what was known as the 'White Terror' would split the country in two. Vengeful Royalists hunted down former Bonapartists who had helped Napoleon return to the throne in 1815. During this witchhunt both prominent leaders and humble soldiers would fall victim to the hatred of the restored Bourbon government or their supporters among the population. Generals and even marshals were brought before courts martial and sentenced to death or exile, like Marshal Ney and Gen de Labédoyère; Marshal Brune was shot and stabbed and his corpse thrown into the River Rhone. In Marseille royalist citizens, blinded by hate, started murdering Mamelukes and their families in the refugee communities. Seized by mobs which ransacked their houses, more than one died shouting '*Vive l'Empereur!*'. One black Ethiopian woman, injured and thrown into the water, continued shouting this slogan of loyalty to her idol until one of the enraged mob finally shot her dead.

To drive the Mamelukes from their refuges in France, King Louis XVIII decided to confine them on the isle of Ste Marguerite, near to Cannes. Some 40 were brought to this penitentiary from Melun; the numbers from Marseille are not known but were certainly larger. To escape from ungrateful France, some 50 refugees of both sexes left for Egypt on 23 June 1817. Arriving in what they expected to be a safe refuge, they soon discovered their horrible mistake. Within a short period the Turks began a murderous purge of those who had supported the French, and the survivors could do nothing but return to Marseille.

Although the former officers still received a small pension, the rankers and civilian refugees were left in poverty; knowing only how to fight, the formerly proud Mamelukes were soon reduced to beggary. Nonetheless, former generals of the Empire such as Colbert and Rapp supported them in their quest for better pensions, and in a number of cases these were successful.

Fifteen years after Waterloo, in 1830, some of the veterans or their sons would serve once again with the French army, which was now invading

OPPOSITE One of a series of photographs taken during the Second Empire of the last surviving veterans of Napoleon's army. The sitter is Francois Ducel, born at Touches, France, on 23 April 1789; he entered the Mamelukes as a volunteer on 7 March 1813, and after serving in the 1813–14 campaigns transferred to the Mounted Chasseurs following the First Restoration. It is most probable that much of this uniform was reconstructed for the occasion; however, some items give an interesting idea of how it was worn at the end of the First Empire. Notice the leather top band, like that of a shako, on the substantial *cahouk*; this headgear may be either black or scarlet, with brass star and crescent badges and a black plume. Ducel wears the St Helena Medal, given to all veterans of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars, and the large, round medal of one of the Napoleonic veterans' societies. (Anne S.K. Brown Collection, Providence, USA)

Answering Napoleon's appeal for recruits, horses and funds to rebuild – more accurately, replace – the shattered Grande Armée after the Russian campaign, the island of Corfu sent three Greek-Albanians to serve in the Mamelukes. This costume has an interestingly old-fashioned look to it, perhaps reflecting the Turkish influence on the Greek islands. The turban is large; the white shirt has a collarless neck and long, wide, embroidered sleeves; and the sleeveless blue waistcoat, trimmed yellow and with many tiny ball buttons, is worn open over the sash. (Author's collection; Bucquoy card)



Algeria. Among these veterans we find the following: Jacob (Yakoub) Habaibi, former colonel of the Mamelukes, now serving as a first class interpreter, and Abdallah d'Asbonne, former squadron leader, as a third class interpreter. Former Mamelukes served as scouts as well as interpreters, including Soliman, Azaria le Grand, de Soutzos and Abd el Malek.

Standards and honours

While organizing the corps in 1802, Col Rapp ordered a *guidon* plus four *tugs*, five trumpet-banners, a kettledrum-banner, a saddle for a horse-drummer, five trumpets and 'one' kettledrum (presumably a pair).

The *tug* was a traditional Turkish standard of ancient origins, symbolizing a command function, and the number carried increased with rank – e.g. a *pasha* had seven *tugs* carried before him. The four ordered for the Mamelukes were made to the correct Oriental design: a hollow brass staff 8ft 10in (2.7m) high was topped with a ball surmounting a hanging horsetail. Two of the horsetails were black, one red and one white, and all were carried around the *guidon* as a kind of colour-escort.

Pierre Serra had already been a *porte-guidon* in Egypt, and he kept this position until 1804. On 16 February 1807 we find that Mameluke Ratas El Faël is appointed as a *tug*-bearer, but he died shortly afterwards of his wounds received at Eylau. On 1 December 1809 we find the names Bagdassar, Hassar and Kosta listed as *tug*-bearers.

On 15 April 1806 the Emperor granted the Mamelukes an 'Eagle' as a reward for their bravery at Austerlitz, and the first official *porte-aigle* was 2nd Lt Mérat. The standard was of the regimental 1804 model, with a white central diamond and corner triangles of blue and red. The white fields bore the following inscriptions in gold:

(Obverse) L'EMPEREUR DES FRANCAIS /
A LA COMPAGNIE DES MAMLUKS /
DE LA GARDE IMPERIALE

(Reverse) VALEUR / ET / DISCIPLINE

By this same decree the Emperor, proud of his wild troop of exotic warriors, increased their numbers from 85 to 109 rankers, with four *porte-queues* to accompany the Eagle with *tugs*, two trumpeters and 24 more troopers.

On 25 November 1807, returning to Paris after its triumphant Austrian (1804), Prussian (1806) and Polish (1807) campaigns, the Imperial Guard was received at the gates of the city, at the Porte de la Villette, by the municipal government of the capital, which crowned each regimental eagle with a golden laurel wreath.

On 6 December 1811, Lt Fonnade replaced Mérat as *porte-aigle*, and would keep this post of honour until 15 August 1814. In 1813, the new tricolour-model Eagle banner, in vertical stripes of blue, white and red, was presented to the Mamelukes, with the following gold-embroidered inscriptions:

(Obverse) GARDE IMPERIALE /
L'EMPEREUR NAPOLEON /
A L'ESCADRON DES MAMLUKS

(Reverse) ULM, AUSTERLITZ, IENA, EYLAU, FRIEDLAND,
ECKMÜHL, ESSLING, WAGRAM, SMOLENSK, LA
MOSKOWA, VIENNE, BERLIN, MADRID, MOSCOU.



As in other corps of the Imperial Guard, more than one simple soldier – as well as officers and NCOs – wore the cross of the Legion of Honour. On 14 March 1806 several Mamelukes were rewarded with the cross of a knight of the Legion of Honour for their bravery at Austerlitz: *Maréchaux des logis* Azaria le Petit and Stephanis Kosmas, *Brigadiers* René Jacques Tertre, Séraphim Bagdouné and Hovhannès Arménie; and Mamelukes Nicolas Papas-Oglou, Ayoub Chamé, Soliman, Daniel Mirza le Petit and Ahmet Masri.

After Eylau, on 14 April 1807, it was the turn of *Maréchal des logis* Hanna Koubroussi, Mamelukes Boulous Baraka and Idriss Johar, and Trumpeter Antoine Jaure to be decorated with the cross of the brave. These awards were followed by Mameluke Youssef Zalaouni (25 November 1807), *Fourrier* Hippolite Caillet (7 June 1808), Mameluke Salem Youdik (28 February 1813), and *Brigadier* Francis Nassar (26 April 1813).

More than one officer also received a financial allowance; and at the end of the Empire in 1814, Abdallah, Renno and Kapfer of the Young Guard were rewarded with the cross of the Imperial Order of the Reunion.

A Mameluke NCO drawn by Henschel in Berlin, 1806–07; this figure is reconstructed as Plate B3.

THE PLATES

A: PERSONALITIES

A1: *Général Dupas*, 1803–04

This French officer commanded the Mamelukes of the Consular Guard, adopting their exotic dress and style of weaponry; note, however, that his gold-fringed sash is in the regulation blue of a French *général de brigade*. His saddle – which can be seen today in the Musée de l'Armée's former Brunon Collection at the Château de l'Emperi – is in fact French-made, despite its transformation to Oriental style. See photos on page 15.

A2: Ali, Mameluke of the Empress, 1803

This reconstruction is after a painting of this date by Van Bree. Information on the duties and dress of Napoleon's servant and bodyguard Roustam, and a uniform illustration, can be found in Elite 115: *Napoleon's Imperial Headquarters (1)*.

A3: Ali, 2nd Mameluke of the Emperor, 1813

This different 'Ali' – a Frenchman named Louis Etienne Saint Denis – entered Napoleon's service in 1811 as an assistant to Roustam. When the latter left the entourage after the First Abdication, Ali took his place, and accompanied Napoleon to Elba and during the Hundred Days. This reconstruction is based on a naïf contemporary painting showing the Imperial staff during the battle of Leipzig in 1813.

B: 1800–07

B1: Officer; Napoleon's coronation ceremonies, 1804

This costume is typical of the earlier styles, strongly reminiscent of what had been worn in Egypt: the large

turban is worn over a low cap, and a short jacket with wide elbow-length sleeves is worn over the long-sleeved shirt, both heavily embroidered with gold thread. The white heron or egret feather plume is the characteristic Turkish mark of officer rank.

B2: Officer in summer dress

Reconstructed after original period items and texts.

B3: NCO, 1806–07

This Mameluke was seen in Germany by the artist Henschel after the French entry into Berlin – see picture above. Under a deep yellow turban the *cahouk* is green, which was the regulation colour, out of respect for the Prophet; however, sources very often show them as red. The *beniche*, with a low collar, is in pearl-grey, with braiding at the collar, shoulders and sleeve seams; the sleeveless *yalek* in deep yellow, and both garments are decorated with silver embroidery. The sash – worn over the *yalek* – is striped in yellow, red, green and grey. A dagger, and pistols in a decorated red leather double holster, are tucked under the sash; the pouch belt may also support a carbine on a swivel hook.

C: 1800–07

C1: Mameluke, Belgium, 1803

This reconstruction, after a contemporary account, shows an early costume with long, wide-sleeved coat in the Egyptian style. Note the detail of the horse furniture, largely from drawings by Carl Vernet.

C2: Mameluke, 1805

This figure, after Gros, still wears a *beniche* with the early style of sleeves, long and turned back at the cuffs. The



Detail from an engraving by Kolb, 'Garde Imperiale de France', published c.1806; there exists a variation by Bance from c.1810. Notice the double-cord sash over the right shoulder, confined by the waist sash, and the double leather pouch-and-carbine belt over the left shoulder. The scarlet *cahouk* is very clear; the *beniche* is yellow with a capped effect at the top of the sleeves, the *yalek* dark blue, the sash a lighter blue, and the *saroual* scarlet. Decoration is visible on the sleeves – a feature that would be retained throughout the Empire – in this case in mixed green and yellow braid.

narrow green and gold lace borders on his *yalek* seem to indicate an NCO.

C3: Mameluke in non-regulation dress

Reconstructed from original contemporary items, this rear view shows the top of a *cahouk*; a *beniche* with lower sleeve decoration and the rear vent with many small ball buttons; the slung blunderbuss – probably only carried on parade rather than on campaign; the suspension of the scimitar from cords; and a decorated pouch slung in the same manner.

D: 1807–13

D1: Mameluke, c.1807

This figure is after a drawing by C.G.Geissler. Note the French carbine slung from the regulation issue belt, and the shabraque with drawn-out rear corners in light cavalry style. From about this date onwards the sources show the wide sleeves of the *beniche*, which sometimes hung over the hands, beginning to be replaced with a tighter-fitting



Trumpeter and Mameluke in stable dress. The trumpeter (left) wears a double-breasted stable jacket in sky-blue – the colour for trumpeters of the Guard cavalry – and grey campaign overalls with black reinforcement. His *bonnet de police* has a red 'flame' and sky-blue 'turban', with gold lace, piping, and crescent badge. The Mameluke's cap differs in having a dark blue turban and yellow trim; his jacket is also dark blue, worn with heavy white canvas stable trousers. (Author's collection; Bucquoy card, after Boissellier)

European style, and it begins to acquire a low standing collar. Here the *beniche* is yellow; the *yalek* is green with gold or yellow embroidery, the *saroual* scarlet and the boots crimson. The most noticeable change is the headgear; while the low scarlet *tarbouche* was retained for undress wear, it was replaced on duty by this taller, stiffer *cahouk* in green, yellow or scarlet. Again, the turban is shown as yellow.

D2: Chef d'escadron Kirmann, 1809–10

The commander of the Mamelukes 1808–14 is painted after a contemporary sketch, in his magnificent Oriental finery. His *cahouk* has a gold lace top band, and bears gilt star and crescent badges as well as the white plume of a field grade officer. Note the shabraque and saddle cover in the style of Kirmann's parent regiment, the Mounted Chasseurs of the Imperial Guard.

D3: Capitaine Abdallah d'Asbonne, 1813

This famous and much-wounded Syrian officer is painted after a portrait miniature of that year, in a uniform of

colours reflecting that of the Mounted Chasseurs. It is intriguing to note the French officer's fringed epaulette worn on his left shoulder, a rare instance of French officers' rank distinctions being incorporated into the Oriental uniform. Note that, like Kirmann, he wears the cross of the Legion of Honour, awarded in Abdallah's case as early as June 1804. The horse furniture is reconstructed from regulations.

E: MUSICIANS, 1807-13

E1: Cymbalist

E2: Kettle-drummer

Both these figures are after the Alsace Collections. The kettle-drummer's headdress is sometimes shown with heavier decoration.

E3: Kettle-drummer, 1810-12

After an engraving in the Dubois de l'Etang Collection. This exaggerated uniform and harness were seen for the first time at the wedding of Napoleon to Marie-Louise.

F: 1807-13

F1: Mameluke, regulation Oriental dress

The colours of the *beniche* and *yalek* continue to vary in the sources, suggesting that the freedom and diversity typical of the original Mamelukes of 1802 was retained, even if the cut became modified; the *cahouk* worn for parade is usually shown as scarlet. Note, again, the cord sling for the scimitar, worn with the cutting edge to the rear; and the regulation issue French cavalry pouch and carbine belts. The *yalek* is worn closed, with the sash over it and confining the sword sling.

F2: Mameluke, regulation Oriental dress

F3: Trumpeter, regulation Oriental dress

Both these reconstructions are after the Würtz Collection, one of the so-called Alsace Collections. Note the shabraques and valises. The trooper wears red leather belts for his pouch and weapon, here a simulated Oriental blunderbuss of the type made at the Versailles factory. The trumpeter wears a costume which, though of Oriental design, reflects the Imperial Guard cavalry trumpeters' regulation sky-blue, with mixed gold and red braid decoration.

G: 1813-14

G1: Mameluke, campaign dress

After the contemporary Freyberg manuscript. The most striking feature is the black shako worn with the turban and crescent badge, recalling the similar headgear of the so-called Lithuanian Lancers, whose remnants were serving at this date with the 3rd Scouts (Éclaireurs) of the Imperial Guard.

G2: Officer, campaign dress

This probably French officer wears the undress uniform of hussar style which was now regulation for all Mamelukes.

Mameluke NCO of French origin, in an illustration after a drawing made by Gen Vanson during one of the annual parades on the Place Vendôme to commemorate the Emperor's birthday. It shows a uniform worn at the end of the Empire, mainly in scarlet and blue, with French-style rank and service chevrons on the sleeves.

(Author's collection; Bucquoy card)

The Oriental dress was probably worn only on special occasions, and in the field only when the Emperor was present in person.

G3: French Mameluke, regulation Oriental campaign dress

Intriguingly, note that the axe is still carried attached to the saddle.

H: FRENCH MAMELUKES, 1813-14

H1: Officer, campaign dress

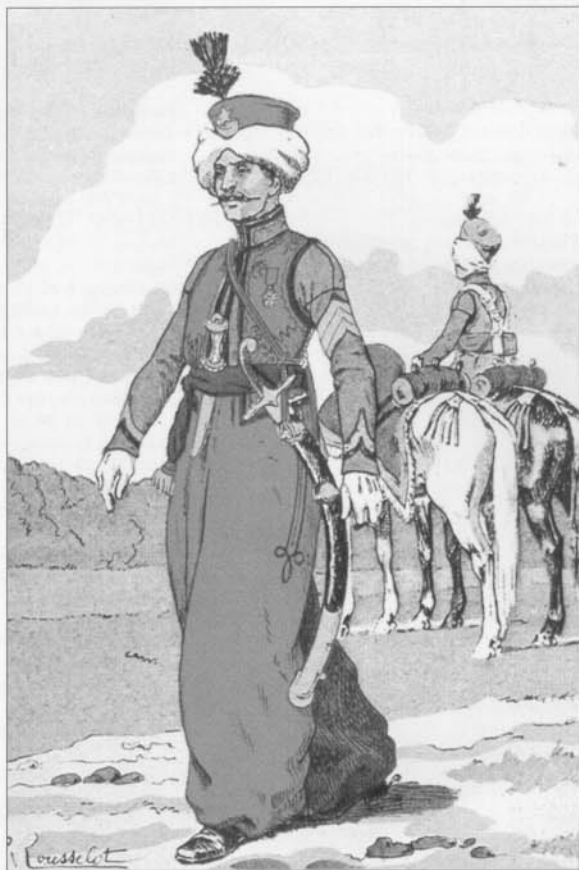
This regulation everyday and field uniform features the old cutaway *habit* of the Mounted Chasseurs, dating from the early Empire, worn over a scarlet waistcoat, although the coat and its piping and aiguillettes are in the dark blue and crimson reminiscent of the Polish Lancers. Despite the wholly French cut of the uniform, note that the sabre is still slung Mameluke-style, and that the harness retains Oriental features.

H2: Mameluke, campaign dress

This trooper wears an oilskin cover over his headdress and (oddly) its plume, and the regulation off-white sleeved and caped riding cloak – *manteau-capote*.

H3: Trumpeter, campaign dress

Regulation everyday and field uniform – a sky-blue *habit* decorated in gold and red, with crimson piping, worn over a scarlet waistcoat and dark blue overalls striped crimson and reinforced with black leather. His trumpet cords are also in mixed gold and crimson.



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