The Napoleon Series

Uniforms of the Royal Guard of the Kingdom of Naples: 1806 - 1815

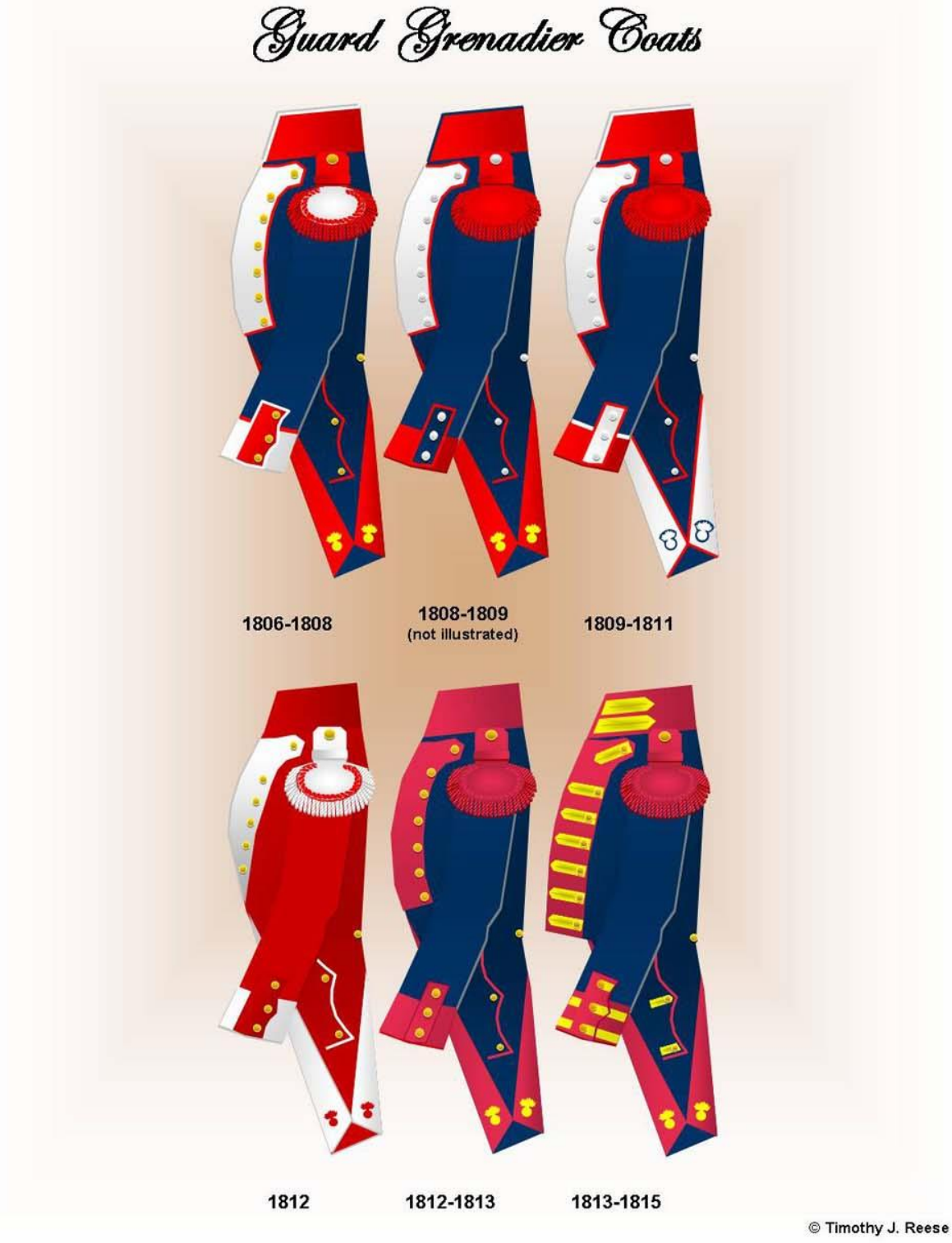
By Tim Reese

Where Neapolitan uniforms were concerned, Joseph Bonaparte, as newly minted King of Naples, tended to maintain the French status quo. His royal successor, Marshall Joachim Murat, was an entirely different matter altogether. Himself an inveterate clothes horse, Murat had a maddening, perhaps compulsive habit of perpetually tinkering with army uniforms. Charting his nearly annual changes in clothing regulations would be difficult under the best of circumstances. Nowhere is this more evident than among Royal Guard units.

The Neapolitan Royal Guard was conceived by Joseph Bonaparte as a small-scale replica of his brother's Imperial Guard. His reign was far too brief for his plans to reach fruition. Murat's vision for a Royal Guard was purely his own unique creation, but did not fully achieve coherence until the latter stages of his reign. Uniforms of both horse and foot regiments endlessly evolved into very showy affairs even for field service.

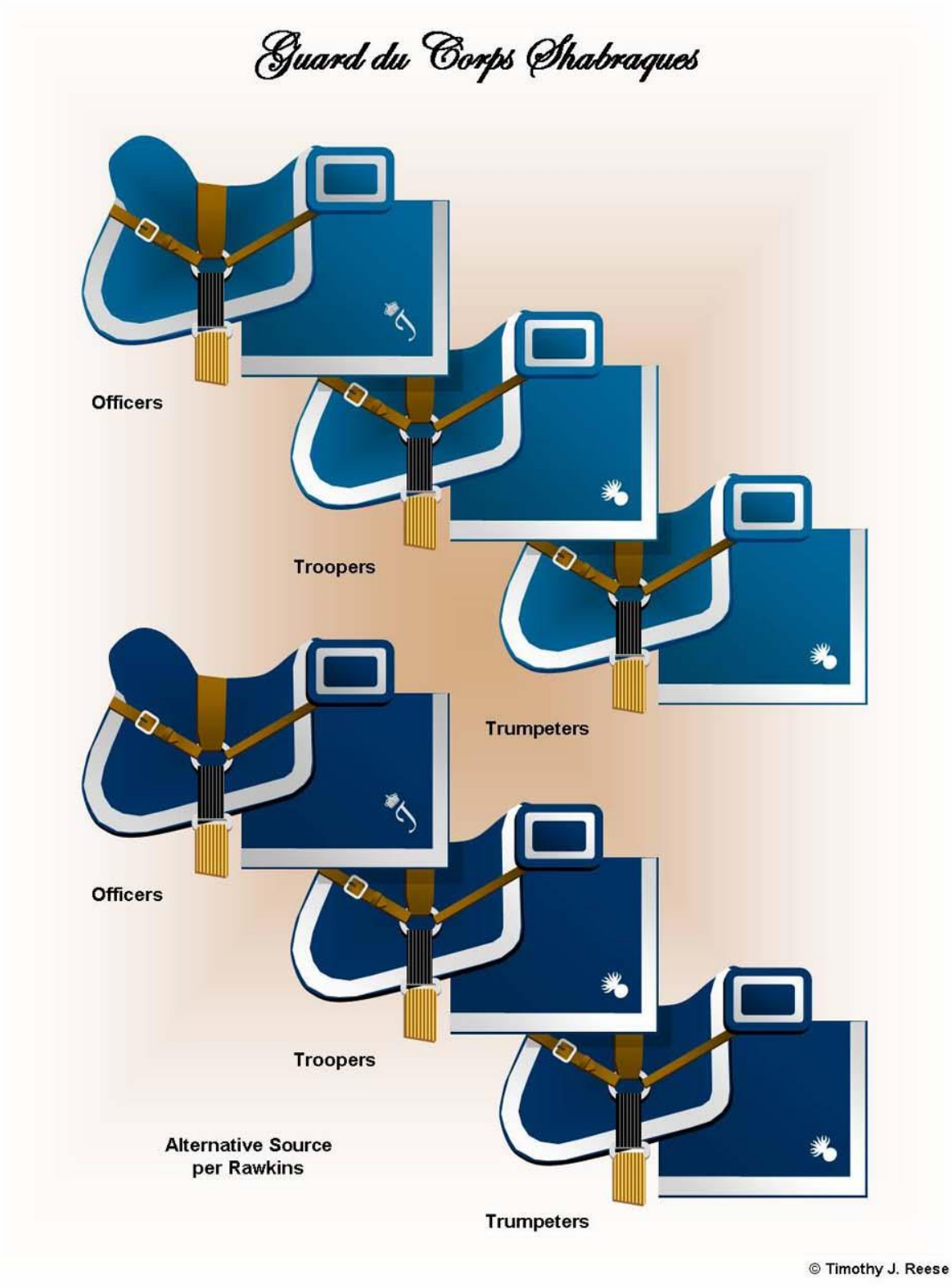
A new digital study attempts to illustrate the entire range of uniforms worn by soldiers of the Kingdom of Naples, 1806-1815 available from Art of Wars. The following Guard examples lend some idea of the complexities involved. This study may be viewed as an extensive upgrade of the famed work by Henri Boisselier (1881-1959), the only other artist to attempt such a thorough survey. The extensive research and notes of William J. Rawkins are used throughout.

Placed on the Napoleon Series: October 2015



Coats of the Guard Grenadiers

Grenadiers of the Royal Guard: 1813 - 1814



Guard du Corps Shabraques

Horse Artillery of the Royal Guard, 1809 - 1810

Light Cavalry Regiment (Lancers) of the Royal Guard, 1808 - 1810

Marines of the Royal Guard 1812 - 1813

Mounted Velites of the Royal Guard, 1809 - 1811

Voltigeurs of the Royal Guard, 1809 - 1811