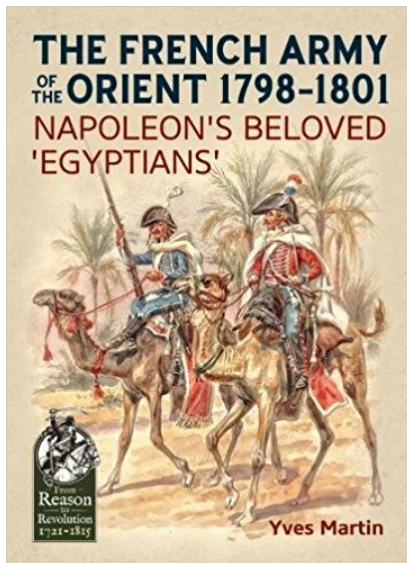


The Napoleon Series

Martin, Yves. *The French Army of the Orient 1798 – 1801: Napoleon's Beloved Egyptians*. Solihull: Helion, 2017. 128 pages. Paperback. \$31 ISBN: 9781911512714



Long time contributor to the Napoleon Series, Yves Martin, has written a gem of a book. He is one of the founders of the magazine *Soldats Napoleoniens* and has encyclopedic knowledge of uniforms of the Napoleonic Era. He is also an avid collector of uniform prints. When I saw that he had written a book on the French army in Egypt I knew it would be good.

I will first caution our readers who are looking for a book on Napoleon in Egypt. This is not the book for you. *Napoleon's Beloved Egyptians* is not a study of the campaigns and battles, but of the men and units who composed the army, how they were organized, and the uniforms they wore. It is based on hundreds of hours of research in the French Army Archives, plus memoirs,

letters, and diaries.

The book is divided into six chapters:

Chapter One provides an overview of the expedition and a timeline of the major events that occurred during the three years the French occupied Egypt.

Chapter Two “The Men and Their Daily Life” looks at the army’s leaders, both senior and junior officers, and a cross section of the soldiers – where they were from, their age, experience, etc. It ends with a section called “Sex, Drugs, and Rocks” which discusses their daily lives and how they entertained themselves when they were off duty.

Chapter Three “Doing Much with Little: Organization and Tactics” examines how the army evolved its formations and tactics to meet the demands of desert warfare. It also gives the organization and history of all the units in the army – not just the regular regiments, but such esoteric units as the Coptic and Greek Legions, the Dromedary Corps, and the Guides. The information on the organization often goes down to company level!

The French Army in Egypt was just not confined to Cairo and Alexandria. They went as far north as Acre in Israel and as far south as Aswan in Upper Egypt – a distance of over 1500 kilometers. The forces used in these expeditions varied. Chapter Four “Lining

Up the Troops: Orders of Battle” looks at the composition of these forces. What units were in them; who their leaders were, etc.

Napoleon’s Army in Egypt was well known for the exotic uniforms it wore. Chapter Five “Uniforms” covers many of them. Virtually every regiment had its own unique color. The infantry coats ranged from a bright red to light blue to olive to brown. And that is just for the infantry! Mr. Martin spent many hours in the French Army Archives researching the topic and has come up with a comprehensive guide to them.

The final chapter is called “Conclusion, Sources, and Further Reading”, which is self-explanatory.

Napoleon’s Beloved Egyptians is heavily illustrated with over 46 colored plates of which 36 are uniform plates, by such artists as Grasset de Saint-Sauveur, Boisselier, Lienhart & Humbert, Benigni, and Lelievre. Two of the uniform prints were done by the author based on actual uniform samples that have survived! There another 31 black and white images many of which are contemporary portraits drawn by André Duterte while he was in Egypt with the army.

On a final note, I am told that *Napoleon’s Beloved Egyptians* is the first in a three volume study on the forces that fought in Egypt. Subsequent volumes will deal with the British and the Ottoman Armies.

Napoleon’s Beloved Egyptians is an essential book for anyone researching the Egyptian Campaign. The large number of uniform prints will make it very useful for wargamers and military miniatures painters. Highly Recommended.

Reviewed by: [Robert Burnham](#)

Placed on the Napoleon Series: January 2018