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# L'Armée Française

SES UNIFORMES  
SON ARMEMENT  
SON ÉQUIPEMENT

## INFANTERIE FRANÇAISE

1720 - 1736.(I)

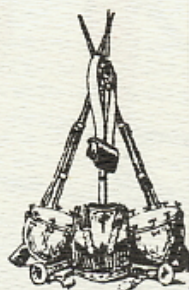


PLANCHE N° 93

### ERRATUM

Entre les planches 79 et 93,  
les numéros sont inversés.

1720 - 1736

PLANCHE N°79

1720 - 1736.(II)

PLANCHE N° 93



# FRENCH INFANTRY

1720-1736

FRENCH ARMY

PLATE No. 79

At the beginning of the Eighteenth century the uniforms of the French Army in general, and of the infantry in particular, were not governed by any Ordonnance.

Since the adoption of a uniform dress, about thirty years before, the practices established in each regiment had been retained and respected; they had solidified into traditions and it seems to have occurred to none to change them.

To the best of our knowledge the first Ordonnance dealing with infantry clothing dates from 10th March 1729.

It is not however properly-speaking an Ordonnance, and one cannot compare it with those published at a later date. Rather it is a set of directives leaving considerable latitude to the Colonels and respecting the traditions, but at the same time, in the King's opinion and in that of his Minister of War, it was an attempt to moderate the clothing expenses by laying down standards for the quality of the cloth used in infantry dress.

"...the clothing of the Sergeants and Private Soldiers of His French infantry will continue to be composed of a coat made of Lodeve cloth, lined with Aumale serge, or some other cloth of the same quality<sup>1</sup>, in white, red or blue according to the colour used by the Regiment; a waistcoat and a pair of breeches of Tricot stuff<sup>2</sup> and a pair of stockings in the same colours, and a hat bordered with false silver or gold braid. As an exception the hats of Sergeants will be bordered with fine braid, and the sleeves of their coats will also have a silver or gold border, or in place of a border they shall have brandenburgs according to the former usage of the Regiment. The buttons will be of tin or copper and, with regard to the Drummers, they will continue to be clothed as heretofore in the livery of their regiments, and without gold or silver lace."

"...and in so far as concerns the said powder flasks, their straps and cartridge pouches they should not be renewed but every six or seven years..."

"The officers of each regiment shall be obliged to provide themselves, at their own expense, with uniform clothing which will be similar to that of the troops with the sole exception that their coat will be made of Elbeuf cloth, or of other similar manufacture; that their waistcoats and breeches shall be of white, scarlet or blue cloth, that their buttons will be gilded copper or silver mounted on wood; the edges of their hats will be bound with fine lace of silver or gold. Their coats shall have no lining other than wool and no lace either of gold or silver will appear thereon."

Moreover it was forbidden to the Colonels to permit alterations or additions to the uniforms of the officers as well as those of Sergeants, Privates and Drummers. The officers however were able to continue to wear clothing which they had made before the order until these garments wore out, even if the old clothes did not conform to the new regulations.

This Ordonnance, like all the others of the first half of the Eighteenth century, gives no detail at all of the colours or peculiarities of dress affected by each regiment, and we have to look elsewhere to gain as accurate an idea as possible of the variety of clothing which existed in infantry uniforms before 1736.

The "Memoire concerning the Clothing of the Troops that His Royal Highness<sup>3</sup> has ordered to be sent to each Regiment with the order to conform thereto", dated 24th August 1720, advised the regiments that by reason of the high cost of fabrics the Regent had charged the Compagnie des Indes with the provision of the necessary materials for the clothing of both troops and officers.

"These fabrics consist, for the infantry, of Lodeve cloth for the outer part of the coat and for the cuffs and lining, as also the stuff for the waistcoat and breeches."

"The regiments which wish to reclothe this Winter or next Spring, either in whole or in part, will send in a roll of the number of men that they wish to refit, the quantity of the cloth required, as also of lining and the cloths for the waistcoats and breeches and they will signify how long it will take them to complete this reclothing."

"They will enclose with their rolls a sample of each cloth which they have been wont to use in their clothing, so that the colours may be matched, and they will attach to each sample a note as to whether it forms part of the outer of the coat or the lining, the waistcoat or the cuffs."

In fact the uniforms were a great deal more varied than after 1736, as besides the shape of the pockets and the number and position of their buttons, as also those on the cuffs, the colours of the coat linings, waistcoats, breeches and stocking frequently varied from one regiment to another; and in addition the waistcoats could also have coloured edging, buttonhole laces or even braid.

Some gouache paintings by Delaistre of about 1720 preserved in the Library of the Ministry of War provide us with a fairly complete record of eight regiments and some interesting details of several others.

Nevertheless accurate records are few, and there exists a great gap of thirteen years between these fascinating paintings and the second "Summary of the Composition of the Forces of France" published in 1735 by Lemaue de la Jaisse.



This work provides us with the details of the colours peculiar to each regiment in 1734, and despite many gaps, it is this document which permits us to represent with maximum accuracy the clothing of both metropolitan French regiments, and the foreign regiments in the service of France, in all their diversity.

The Regency period was one of elegance and refinement, as much in civil costume as in military dress, and the soldiers' coat was the same in cut as that of the bourgeois. The waist was cut low and two buttons were positioned on the haunches; the ample skirts were not very practical for a soldier's coat as they incorporated four and a half pleats which emanated from the rear buttons and descended to the hem. The sleeves terminated in wide and deep cuffs which could be either open at the rear seam or closed <sup>4</sup>.

The waistcoat also had long skirts and its narrow sleeves, slit up the back seam and provided with buttons and buttonholes, sometimes extended to a small degree beyond the cuffs of the coat.

Both coat and waistcoat could be buttoned down to the hem and, according to the schematic diagrams of the Minister of War of about 1720, the number of buttons varied between 14 and 16 for the former and 15 to 18 for the latter.

The broad brimmed hat had a bell-like crown and the three sides were drawn up quite high, so much so that the wings entirely obscured the crown.

The shoes fastened by means of a buckle over the instep of the foot; they had an extended tongue, square toes and a high, straight-sided square heel. Towards the end of the Regency the coat skirt pleats lost some of their fullness, the hat was reduced in height as were the shoe heels and the toes of the latter became more rounded.

The infantryman's equipment consisted of some "apparatus" and its carrying strap, a cartridge pouch, a waistbelt and a haversack. In the absence of official patterns for these items the regiments had them made up according to their own ideas.

The term "apparatus" embraced the powder flask, priming flask and bullet bag; they were suspended from their own carrying strap.

As Delaistre's paintings never show the priming flask we can only suppose that it was usually carried in one of the pockets of the ammunition pouch. The carrying strap was composed of two straps of buff leather of unequal length; the longer one had holes in its end to engage with a copper buckle sewn to an end of the shorter one, thereby giving adjustment according to the height of the soldier. At the lower ends the powder flask was suspended from two cords. Above this a cross strap of the same leather was fixed and to this was attached the bullet bag and the priming flask cords when the latter was not in the cartridge box.

Powder flasks were very variable in shape and contained enough powder for ten shots. The cartridge pouch had been taken into service in about 1703. It was a small, oblong leather bag furnished with a flap of varying size, commonly cut with a pointed lower edge, and decorated with trophies and the Arms of France. It was worn on the waistbelt, either in front or on the right side, and was slipped onto the belt through two flat loops sewn on the rear of the pouch.

Normally it contained ten made-up powder charges arranged in a single row, an insufficient number which obliged the infantryman to retain the priming flask, containing fine grain powder, the powder flask and the bullet bag.

The twenty round cartridge pouch used by some regiments brought about the obsolescence of the powder flask in these units. Eventually the invention of the combined ball and powder cartridge led to the abandonment of the bullet bag, but the increased weight of the ammunition rendered the waistbelt pouch inconvenient, and about 1730 it was replaced by the shoulder slung ammunition box, an arrangement which became regulation in 1736. The buff leather waistbelt fastened with a copper buckle and was provided with a double pendant serving to carry both the sword and bayonet <sup>5</sup>.

The haversack was a large, heavy-duty fabric bag, 4 feet long (1m 30mm), 2 feet 6 inches wide (81mm) which contained the soldier's necessities, and served in case of need, as a sleeping bag. It was carried on the back by one large strap and one small one provided with a buckle. Both were sewn approximately in the middle of the bag, and they passed bandolier-fashion over the right shoulder and under the left arm. The mouth of the bag fastened by means of a sturdy draw string.

Inside it would be found a small leather bag with a buttoned flap, which contained the soldier's spare clothing and protected it from the rain.

The armament consisted of a musket with bayonet and a sword or sabre.

At the beginning of the Eighteenth century there was no standard pattern of musket, each manufacturer making his own version without restriction except as to barrel length and calibre.

The musket Pattern 1717, overall length 4 feet 11 inches (1m 596mm) was a single shot smooth-bore weapon with a barrel 3 feet 8 inches (1m 191mm) long. The foresight doubled as the bayonet retaining lug.

The barrel was attached to the stock by three lugs and pins; the flat, square lock plate was rounded at the rear; the upper sling ring was fixed to a barrel strap and the lower one to a ring and eye screwed into the wood.

The crude ramrod in iron, or wood with an iron tip, slotted into ramrod tubes of the same metal.

The example of the pattern preserved at Darmstadt up to the last World War, measured 1m 586mm in total; its lock plate was pointed at the rear and its ramrod had a flat iron head.

The musket's inseparable companion, the bayonet, appeared in numerous variants before a pattern of improved design, matched to the Pattern 1717 musket, was put into production.

This first regulation bayonet had a triangular section blade, without fullers, 14 inches long (379mm) the neck branched 40mm from the socket and the latter was 3 inches (81mm) long and was provided with a two angled channel to lock it to the barrel lug.

Each infantryman was equipped with a sword which seems not to have been of regulation pattern. The brass guard initially had a double shell and pas d'ane, but was eventually replaced by a guard with one or two



side pieces and a flat quillon; the handle was normally cast brass and the pommel round. The blade measured about 2 feet 8 inches (864mm) and the handle 3 inches 6 lines (94.5mm)<sup>6</sup>; the scabbard was made of very dark brown leather.

The sabre seems to have been adopted by the Grenadiers about 1730. Hitherto they had carried the straight-bladed sword and are shown armed in that manner by Giffart in 1696 in his "Art Militaire François pour l'Infanterie" and by Surirey de St. Remy in his "Memoire d'Artillerie" of 1695, but Hermand's recollections do not show them at all. The Grenadier had to make use of a special piece of equipment comprising a large pouch for the carriage of his grenades, as well as the other apparatus described above. We know of no representation of it and we are therefore in the dark as to its design. It is probable that it was carried on the right hip above the powder flask etc. by means of a cross-belt wider than that described earlier due to the added weight it was intended to support.

Sergeants' special weapons were a halbard or partisan which measured 6 feet (1m 95mm) from point to butt cap.

In addition to the point the halbard blade consisted of an axe blade, with a concave cutting edge, and on the other side a sharp hook. Partisan blades were symmetrical. Furthermore Sergeants carried a sword whose guard emerged from the fan pleats on the left side of the coat as they wore their waistbelts under the justaucorps.

Sergeants of Grenadiers were equipped with muskets and carried equipment similar to the Grenadier Privates.

Officer's clothing was cut the same as that of the men, but had gilded or silvered buttons. All superfluous ornament was banned, but despite this braided waistcoats and even outer coats still appeared.

The Royal Ordonnance of 1st December 1710 bestowed spontoons/half-pikes on Colonels, Lieutenant Colonels and Captains and the Lieutenants were given muskets and bayonets. Spontoons were 7 feet 6 inches to 8 feet long (2m 430mm - 2m 592mm). The Officers' pattern musket could be slightly shorter than the Other Ranks model, was lighter in weight and had a much more crafted finish.

All Grenadier Captains were armed with muskets. An Ordonnance of 1716 re-iterated the regulations of 1710 as Fusilier Officers had abandoned the musket in favour of the spontoon which was more useful in peacetime.

Those officers armed with muskets had to have a cartridge pouch, and perhaps a powder flask. One of the officers shown by Delaistre wears at his waist, probably suspended from a strap attached to the belt, a cartridge box with a clasp and decorated with two intertwined L's.

All officers when on duty wore gilded gorgets, sometimes plain, sometimes highly decorated.

The coats of Drummers and Fifers were made up in the colours of the King's livery or those of the Queen, the Princes or the proprietary Colonel.

The style of braiding the coat varied from one regiment to another even amongst those units which wore the King's livery. Thus in the Regiment de Champagne the innermost vertical braids down the front stopped at the level of the first horizontal braids, but in the Regiment de Piemont the three innermost braids went all the way down to the hem. In this last unit the cuffs were open and the lace followed the top edge, turning at ninety degrees at the corner and falling vertically to the wrist.

We do not know what the special distinctions of Drum-Majors were, and none of the available texts mentions them. However we should note that Delaistre illustrates four of them, one of whom wears the King's livery; he belongs to the Regiment de Champagne. On the sleeves of his coat gold braid alternates with the double width livery lace, and the edge of the cuffs is covered with a wide gold lace which entirely overlays the strip of fabric normally left blank to accommodate the buttonholes.

As we have already said the second Summary published in 1735 gives the fullest details of the uniforms. We have transcribed exactly the descriptions relating to the first eleven regiments, and at the end we have added in brackets further information which we have been able to find. We have already used this method in plates 29, 43 and 67.

1st PICARDIE. The first regiment of France and the most senior of the Six Old Corps<sup>7</sup>. Coat, lining, cuffs, breeches and stockings grey-white. Buttons copper. Waistcoat red. Cuffs open, pockets vertical with buttonholes in crow's foot pattern. Hat edged with a false gold braid on silk. (4 buttons on the cuffs, double vertical pockets with 9 buttons each, set on 3 by 3 in crow's foot pattern).

2nd NAVARRE. Coat, lining, cuffs, breeches and stockings white. Buttons copper. Cuffs round, pockets in large escutcheon style. Waistcoat red. Hat edged with false gold braid on silk. (5 buttons on the cuffs and 9 on each pocket; 1 in the lower point and 4 on each side. One cuff button is missing on schematic drawing No. 2).

3rd CHAMPAGNE. Coat, cuffs, lining, breeches and stockings grey-white. Buttons copper. Cuffs open, pockets horizontal. Waistcoat red. Hat edged with false gold braid on silk. (In 1720 the pockets were vertical and double with 6 buttons set on 2 by 2 and 4 on the cuffs. It appears that the above description is inaccurate on this point).

4th PIEMONT. Coat, lining, breeches and stockings grey-white. Cuffs round, pockets in half escutcheon style. Cuffs black, buttons copper large and flat. Waistcoat red. Hat bordered with false gold on silk. (3 buttons on the cuffs and 5 on each pocket. Initially the pocket flaps were of different form and were positioned close to the hem. They changed in style in 1723 and it is the latter type which is illustrated. Although officers and sergeants had black cuffs in 1721 the Other Ranks seem not to have been given this colour until about 1730).



- 5th NORMANDIE. Coat, lining and cuffs white. Buttons tin, flat and plain. Breeches and stockings red. Waistcoat red with white woollen edging braid and brandenburgs. Hat edged with false silver on silk. (3 buttons on each cuff and 3 on each pocket which were horizontal).
- 6th LA MARINE. Sixth of the Six Old Corps. Coat, lining, cuffs, breeches and stockings grey-white. Buttons flat, copper. Waistcoat red. Cuffs black for Sergeants. Hat edged with broad false gold on silk. (3 buttons on the cuffs and the same on the vertical pockets. Officers had black cuffs like the Sergeants).
- 7th BOURBONNOIS. Coat, lining, cuffs, breeches and stockings grey-white. Buttons small copper, vertical pockets, open cuffs. Waistcoat red. Hat with a very broad gold border. (4 buttons on cuffs. Double vertical pockets with 6 buttons set on 2 and 2. One cuff button is missing from schematic drawing No. 7).
- 8th RICHELIEU. Coat, lining, cuffs, breeches and stockings grey-white. Buttons copper. Waistcoat red with white woollen buttonhole laces on both sides. The coat has a white collar lined red. Hat edged with false gold braid. (3 buttons on each cuff and 3 on each horizontal pocket).
- 9th AUVERGNE. Coat, lining, cuffs, breeches and stockings grey-white. Buttons flat tin. Waistcoat deep violet with brandenburgs in white woollen lace. Hat edged with false silver braid. (3 buttons on each cuff, the same on each horizontal pocket).
- 10th TALLARD. Coat, lining, cuffs, breeches and stockings grey-white. Buttons flat yellow brass. Waistcoat grey-white with golden yellow brandenburgs. Hat bordered with very wide false gold lace. (3 buttons on each cuff and 3 on each horizontal pocket).
- 11th PONS. Coat, lining, cuffs, breeches and stockings white. Buttons domed copper. Waistcoat green with golden yellow lace edging and brandenburgs. Pockets vertical, cuffs open. Hat bordered with wide false gold lace. (3 buttons on each cuff and 3 on each vertical pocket).

The figures on foot which illustrate this plate, with the exception of No. 2, are taken from Delaistre's gouache paintings preserved in the library of the Ministry of War in Paris.

L. ROUSSELOT  
Painter of the Army  
Member of "La Sabretache"

#### CAPTIONS TO THE FIGURES

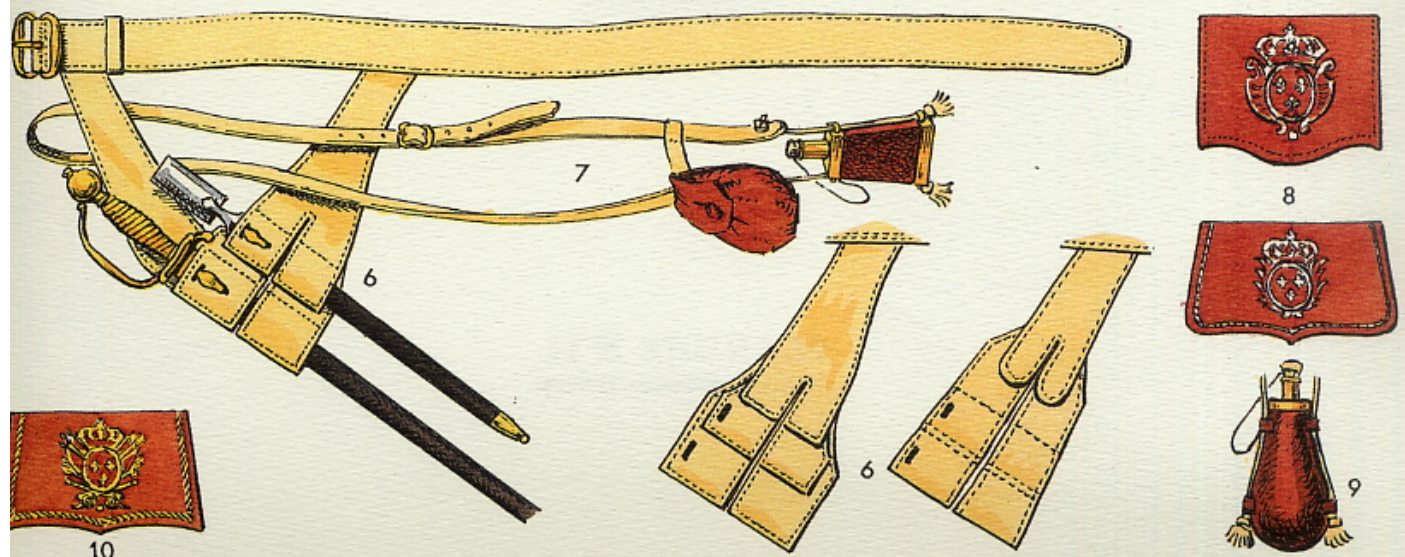
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|---|---|
| 1. Sergeant. Regiment de Champagne. 1721                              | 8. Cartridge pouches                                |
| 2. Private soldier in waistcoat. Regiment de Normandie                | 9. Powder flask (one of the many possible variants) |
| 3. Senior Officer. Regiment de Piemont                                | 10. Officer's cartridge pouch                       |
| 4. Drummer. Regiment de Champagne                                     | 11. Infantry Musket Pattern 1717                    |
| 5. Private soldier. Regiment de Champagne                             | 12. Drum-Major. Regiment de Champagne               |
| 6. Waistbelt assembly and alternative forms of sword/bayonet pendants | 13. Sergeant. Regiment de Piemont                   |
| 7. "Apparatus" comprising powder flask, bullet bag and carrying strap | 14. Private soldier. Regiment de Piemont            |
|   | 15. Lieutenant. Regiment de Piemont                 |
|   | 16. Lieutenant. Regiment de Champagne               |

#### NOTES

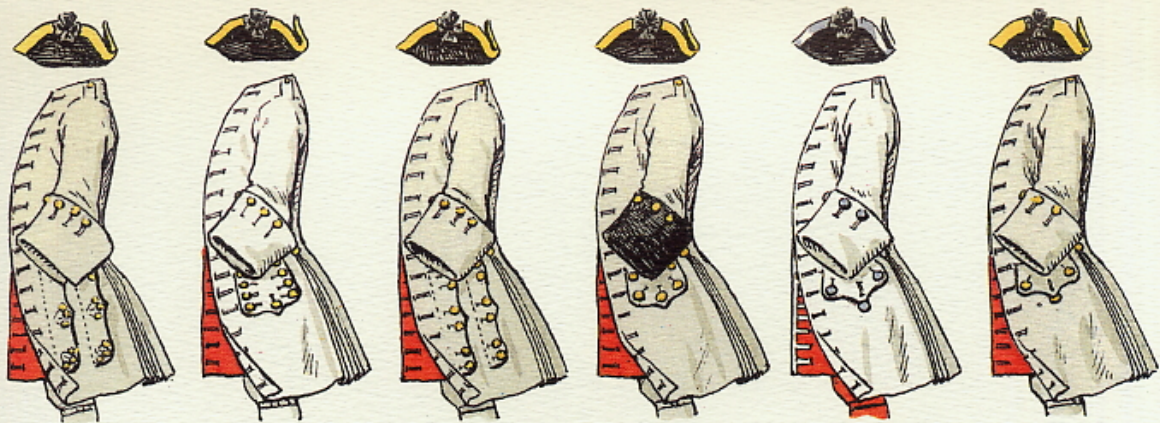
- Lodève, in the modern Département d'Hérault about 70 km due west of Avignon, supplied cloth to the Army from the late Seventeenth Century. Aumale is situated in Seine-Inférieure, north east of Rouen. Elbeuf is in the same Département on the river south west of Rouen.
- Tricot, the name is misleading as it is a woven not a knitted cloth. It came from Oise in the Beauvais-Montdidier area.
- When Louis XIV died in 1715 his great-grandson succeeded him as a minor of only five years. The government was entrusted to Philippe, Duc d'Orléans as Regent until his death in 1723, then to the Duc de Bourbon.
- There were two cuff styles at this period; "open" cuffs had the rear seam open and looked like gauntlet cuffs; round cuffs, the so-called "en botte" style had the rear seam closed and looked like a bucket topped riding boot, hence the name.
- An excellent study of French equipment was published in 1984 by Michel Petard entitled "Équipements Militaires de 1600-1870", Volume 1 deals with the period 1600-1750.
- The measurements in the French text are given in Old Style imperial measurements and in brackets in metric. The metric equivalents of the archaic measurements are one foot - 325mm, one inch - 27mm, one line - 2.25mm.
- The Six Old Corps as named in the text derived from the first three permanent regiments formed in 1569 - Picardie, Piemont and Champagne - to which Navarre was added in 1589, Normandie in 1615 and La Marine in 1635.

Translated with notes by  
Andrew Cormack

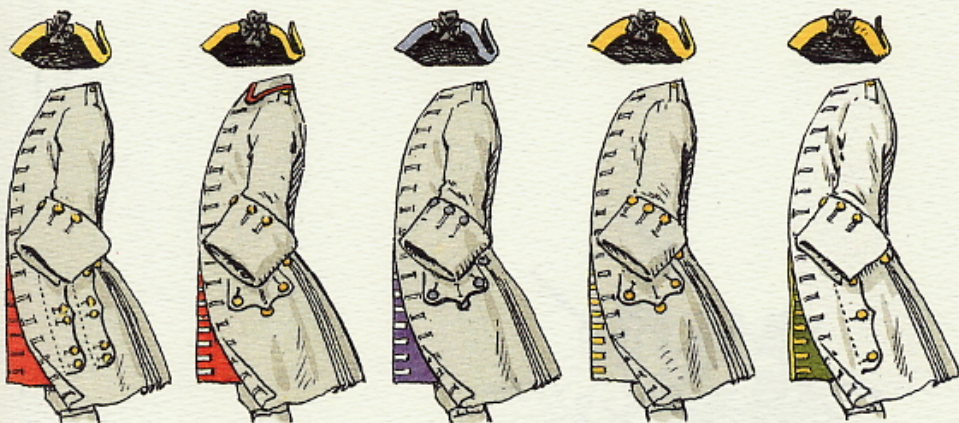








1. *Picardie.* 2. *Navarre.* 3. *Champagne.* 4. *Piémont.* 5. *Normandie.* 6. *La Marine.*



7. *Bourbonnais.* 8. *Richelieu.* 9. *Auvergne.* 10. *Tallard.* 11. *Pons.*



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*L. Rousselet*

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