

Danish naval officer uniforms in the Great Nordic War

by P. Kannik
(Chakoten 1963/2)

Tordenskjold (Wessel) was appointed sub-lieutenant (second lieutenant) in 1711 and thus, after having been month-lieutenant for some time, became a real officer. As is well known, he then rose quickly and by leaps and bounds so that, when the war ended in 1720, he had become vice admiral.



In 1711, the naval officers were regulated with red uniforms instead of the gray dresses with red insignia that they had previously had. The red uniform was worn until 1748, when gray dresses were reintroduced. It was not until 1753 that the naval officers were given blue (dark blue) dresses with red collars and insignia, the color combination still found on the naval officers' gala uniform.

As will be seen, the naval officer's uniform throughout Tordenskjold's time was red. Whether the red dress has had red notices from the start - as the gray one previously had - or whether these have been colored differently, I have not yet managed to ascertain. From 1722 there is a provision that the naval officers on their red dresses should have colored notices and collars - as was found on the crew's gray mouth rings - according to the division they belonged to. These colors were the following:

1st division orange notice and collar

2nd division red notice and collar

3rd division yellow notice and collar

4th division white notice and collar

5th division light blue notice and collar

6th division paille top and collar

Artillery violet notice and collar

The craftsmen green notice and collar.

Whether these colored notices and collars were a new introduction, or whether it is simply a matter of a new arrangement or determination of older practice, is not entirely clear to me yet, but it seems to be something new.

Between 1711 and 1722, the naval officers - by all accounts - had the following uniform: black triangular hat, edged with a gold galloon. Red dress with red panels and red lining, red waistcoat and red knee breeches - all studded with gold galloons and with gilt buttons. In addition, white, red or black socks depending on the occasion.

Whether the high boots, which almost always appear in later pictures, have been used to any great extent, I doubt.

However, one thing is quite certain, Tordenskjold has only worn a red uniform throughout his time as an officer.