

11. Possible identification of porcelain from Holland

The “general specification of acquisitions bought in Holland by the Count of Lagnasco for His Majesty”,¹⁸² sent along with the first lot of acquisitions, lists at least 819 porcelain objects, with descriptions in varying degrees of detail. Although most of these are very superficial, it seems that the the information regarding the heights, decorations, and purposes of the exceptional pieces was more comprehensive. For example, the specification names the birdcage vases, identifiable from their description as “rouleaux à cages”.¹⁸³ Although most items unfortunately remain unidentified, it is at least possible to gain an impression of their colouring from the descriptions of the decorations. Hence, the six table services mentioned in the general specification could today be identified as belonging to the groups of underglaze blue-and-white porcelain, *famille verte*, and porcelain decorated with iron red and gold.¹⁸⁴

Other than the first purchases made between 1716 and 1717, no general invoices or receipts for larger amounts have survived for the acquisitions made via the St. Martins, with the exception of the list of 482 objects described in chapter 8.1. In addition to this, the shorter lists that still exist – usually sent along with the St. Martins’ letters – sometimes specify the acquired objects along with their value. One of these invoices lists a group of porcelain vases: “2 other garnitures of 10 pieces, a little smaller, with monkeys on their covers”,¹⁸⁵ bought on 13 November 1717, for 5000 guilders. The high price of 500 guilders per item indicates that these must not only have been sizeable objects, but also richly decorated. There is only one entry in the Palace Inventory describing a group of vases with this kind of decoration: a set of “2 garnitures, [...] each a set of 5 comprising: 3 jars with short necks and round covers, each surmounted by an old monkey made of wood holding a baby monkey”.¹⁸⁶ Considering that both the number of items and the description of the decoration are identical to the



Fig. 17. Covered vase. Japan, Arita, 1690–1720.

annotation in the invoice, it is very likely that these are the items purchased in 1717. Two of these vases are still kept at the Porzellansammlung, but are unfortunately in poor condition (fig. 17).

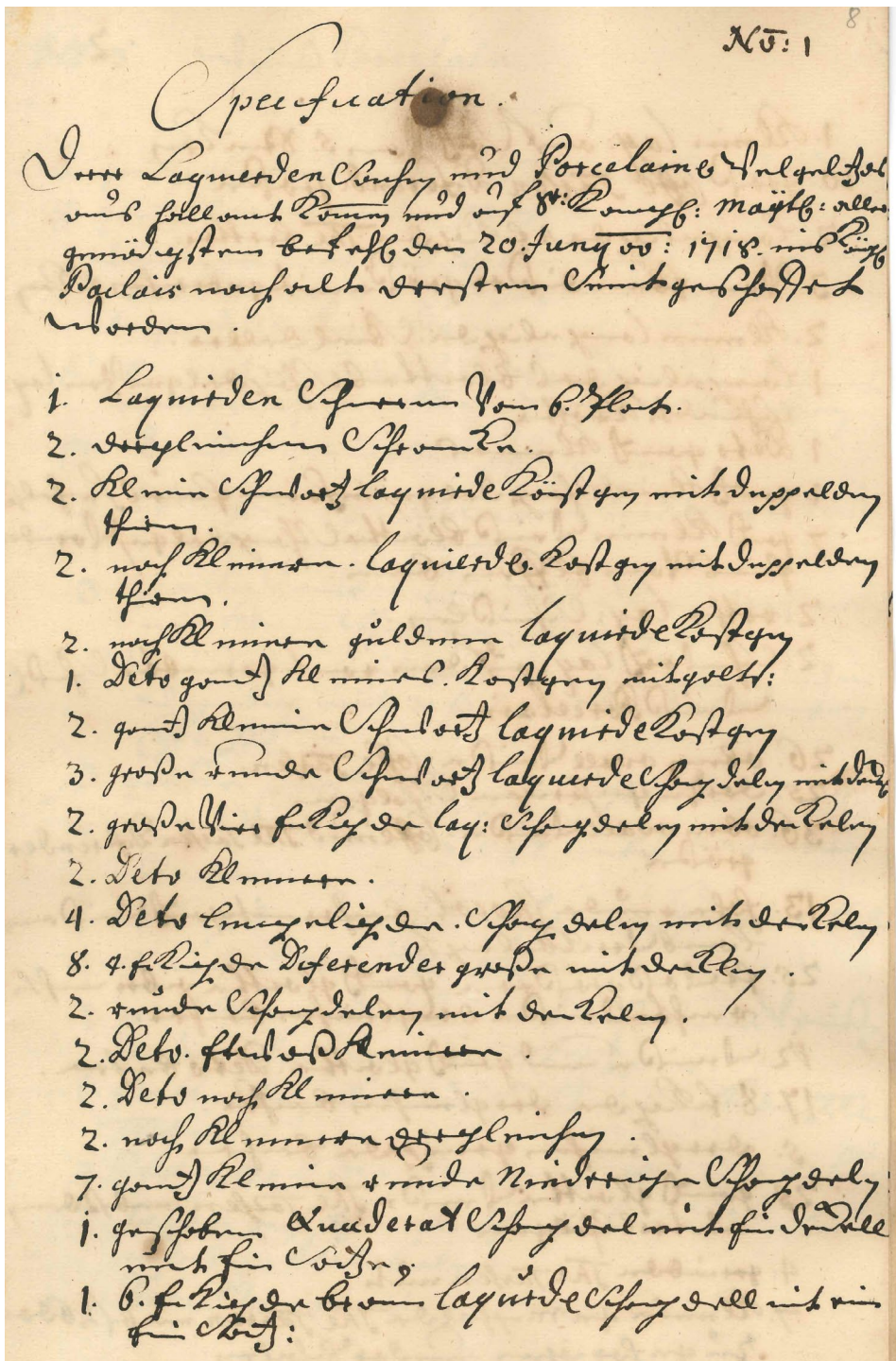


Fig. 18. Front page of the specification of objects brought to the Dutch Palace on 20 June 1718.

11.1 The “Dutch” specification

A specification compiled by Saxon court officials, and currently stored in the Porzellansammlung archives, records “those lacquered objects and porcelain [...] that come from Holland and which [...] were brought to the Royal Palace in Alt-Dresden on 20 June 1718” (fig. 18).¹⁸⁷ No dealers or suppliers are named, but the specific reference to “Holland” as the origin and the close timing of both the St. Martin’s last letter of 8 April 1718 and the specification suggest that these objects are porcelains acquired with their help, as they arrived in Dresden shortly thereafter. The list mentions 1209 objects, divided into lacquer works, *weiß Porcelain* (white porcelain), *alt blau Porcelain* (old blue porcelain), *Goboisch*¹⁸⁸



Fig. 19. Teapot. China, Dehua, 1675–1720.



Fig. 20. Covered box. Japan, Arita, 1700–1720.



Fig. 21. Covered box. Japan, Arita, 1700–1720.

Porcelain and Japanisch Porcelain (Japanese porcelain). Since these objects were taken to the Dutch Palace, it can be assumed that they were included in the Palace Inventory, possibly in chapters one, three and six.¹⁸⁹ Due to the overly general description of the objects in the specification, not all of them can be matched with their entries in the Palace Inventory, although a concordance can be established for those entries that were in the collection before 1721. Following this system, the investigation could be limited to matching objects that lack provenance information. In this way, it is possible to match an entry in the specification describing “2. hexagonal coffee pots with white figures, covers, grips and a spout, from one a piece is broken off”¹⁹⁰ with two inventory records, each describing a “hexagonal teapot having cartouches sprigged with moulded figures, a grip, a spout and a flat hexagonal cover”.¹⁹¹ Both items are listed in the Palace Inventory without acquisition information in the third chapter under Palace Numbers N. 1 [Triangle] and N. 3 [Triangle], of which only the former is still extant in the Porzellansammlung (fig. 19).

Likewise, the specification’s listing of “2 butter boxes, each one with 3 blue feet and small figures on the cover”¹⁹² can be identified as two Imari boxes,¹⁹³ described in the Palace Inventory as “2 butter boxes, each with 3 small blue feet and a bowl-shaped cover upon which 3 small pagodas sit”,¹⁹⁴ listed under Palace Number N. 28 + (figs. 20 and 21).



Fig. 22. Plate with coat of arms of Charles VI. China, Jingdezhen, 1714–1721.

Similar wording in the specifications and the inventory simplifies the identification of the objects in both documents, which implies that the writers probably referenced the specifications while drawing up the Palace Inventory. Thus, “6 plates with the imperial coat of arms”¹⁹⁵ correlates with the “½ doz. brown-rimmed plates painted with the Spanish coat-of-arms [...]”,¹⁹⁶ in the chapter “Kraak” under Palace Number N. 11 [square] (fig. 22).¹⁹⁷ The “11 small bottles with pointed necks, of which 7 with moulded flowers and 4 plain ones”¹⁹⁸ are similarly described in the inventory as having “moulded florets whereas the others are plain and unmoulded”.¹⁹⁹