

10. Recording the acquisitions in the Palace Inventory¹⁷⁶

Once in Dresden the porcelain was recorded in what we know today as the Palace Inventory (fig. 15). Whether this happened immediately upon arrival, or if the actual compiling of the inventory only started around 1721, is unclear. No drafts or sketches with information about the overall process have survived.

The inventory recorded almost 25,000¹⁷⁷ East Asian porcelain objects porcelain objects on more than 800 pages before 1727, and considering that about 100 pages have been lost, the number must have been even higher than this. They were assembled under the supervision of Martin Teuffert (n.d.), castellan of the Dutch Palace between 1717 and 1763. Teuffert oversaw the palace's interior decoration, furniture and other fittings, including Augustus the Strong's extensive porcelain collection, for which he also had to draw up the inventory.

The original inventory probably encompassed more than 1000 pages, with the ceramic collection divided into ten chapters. Six chapters deal with the holdings of East Asian porcelain, whereas the other four document the collection of *Weiß sächsisch Porcelain* (chapter seven, white Saxon porcelain), *Braun sächsisch Porcelain* (chapter eight, brown Saxon porcelain or stoneware), *Terra Sigillata* (chapter nine, stoneware, known today as Yixing wares) and *Schwartz indianisch und sächsisch schwarz laquirtes Porcelain* (chapter ten, black Indian and Saxon black-lacquered porcelain). Although Augustus the Strong and his fellow porcelain connoisseurs must have had some knowledge of the different countries of origin in the early 18th century, one cannot speak of an accurate differentiation in the historical inventories. Despite a rough distinction between "Japanese" and "Chinese", the various types of porcelain are mainly grouped according to their colouring and decoration.

So far, no structure or system has been identified that could explain why some porcelain objects were defined as "Chinese" and others as "Japanese" or

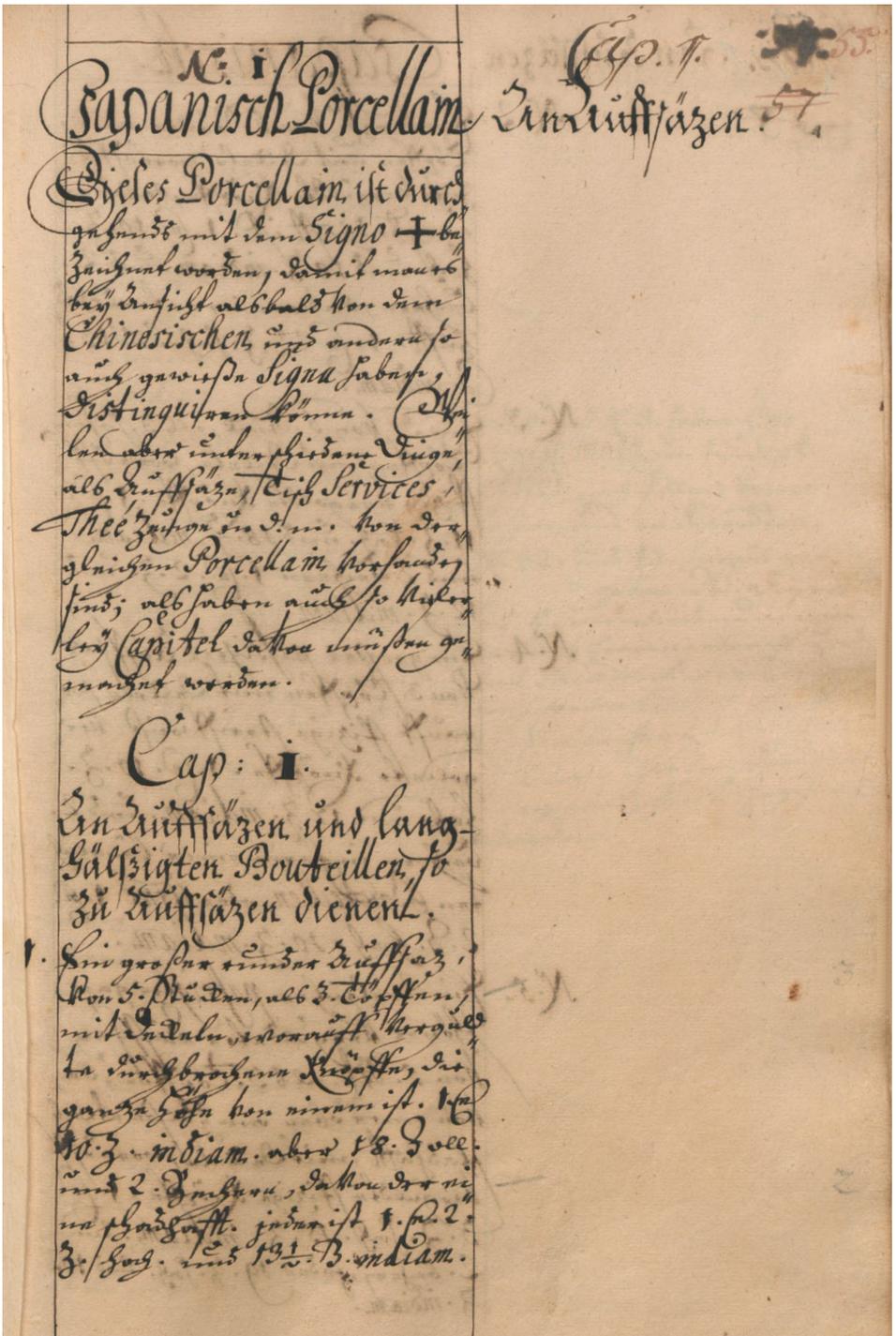


Fig. 15. Page from the Palace Inventory, chapter 1: Japanisch Porcellain.



Fig. 16. Base of a covered container with the Palace Number N. 51 [zigzag line] clearly visible.

“Indian” in 1721. The sorting of objects into colour categories is in keeping with the decoration of the rooms in the Dutch Palace, which are also described at the beginning of the inventory. Each room had its own colour scheme, and was accordingly furnished with matching wallpaper, tapestries, mirrors, and furniture.

Chapter one of the inventory, which is the compilation of the group *Japanisch Porcellain* (Japanese porcelain), includes wares that were decorated in the Imari colour palette. Imari – porcelain originally produced around Arita in Japan and named after the port from where it was shipped to Europe – has a distinctive colour palette of dark underglaze blue, overglaze red, and bright gold. The lavish motifs and often large sizes of 17th-century Imari porcelains were much to the taste of Baroque collectors. That is why this kind of porcelain, which was specifically produced for the foreign market, could be found in many European collections at that time. However, the Japanese were not the only ones producing porcelain with this colour palette. In fact, the Chinese manufactured very similar objects, although the underglaze blue is often of a lighter shade than its Japanese equivalent. Nevertheless, both groups, Japanese Imari and its Chinese adaptations, were recorded in the first chapter of the inventory, probably based solely on their appearance. The other chapters likewise treat the East Asian porcelains according to their colour schemes.¹⁷⁸

During the inventory process, every piece received a mark that consists of a number and a symbol indicating the chapter in which the piece was recorded. For example, the sixth chapter, by far the largest, with over 10,000 pieces of mostly blue-and-white porcelain, was assigned a zigzag symbol (fig. 16). Together the number and symbol form what is referred to today as the Palace Number.¹⁷⁹ It was either cut into the porcelain body and blackened for better visibility by the Saxon glasscutter Johann Daniel Springer (n.d.),¹⁸⁰ or painted on the piece.

Each of the ten chapters is divided into several subchapters, which list the objects by function, such as garnitures and single vases, figures, tablewares, tea and coffee services, or particularly large items like flowerpots. Today the Palace Numbers provide crucial information that aids in dating the objects, and proving their provenance.¹⁸¹ The inventory scribes recorded the names of dealers as well as the dates when the East Asian porcelain was delivered to the Dutch Palace. However, this information seems to only be available for objects that were added to the collection well into 1721 until the last extant entries in May 1727. No provenance is provided for the large number of objects Augustus acquired earlier than that such as the Lagnasco purchases. Therefore, the names of the Dutch dealers are not mentioned in the inventory, but through a comparison of the relevant specifications and the inventory, it is nevertheless possible to identify some of the objects in the Palace Inventory that were bought between 1716 and 1718, as well as single pieces that are still extant today.