

## NEVERS FAIENCE IN WILANÓW COLLECTION

The dishes used in Poland in 17th century were made of metal or else it was Eastern and Dutch pottery. That is why the baroque French faience is one of the real rarities in the Polish collections. (see: "Sztuka francuska (...) Katalog wystawy. Poznań 1973, parts concerning pottery). Thus the Wilanów group of several dishes from the second half of 17th century, made in Nevers, the capital of Nivernais is very valuable indeed. They illustrate the changing fashions in ornamentation: from Italian style "istoriati" brought in the times of Louis Gonzaga, through "Persian" and "Chinese" style to the special French-Nivernais style.

The earliest is the flat pilgrim bottle from about the year 1650 (Fig. 20). The decoration on its sides had the same original as one of the ceramic plates from Gonzaga Glorietta, so it might have come from the same workshop. The second object decorated in the narrative style is the water container (unfortunately not complete) from the second half (last quarter?) of the century. Its paintings are a skillful imitation of the scenes with the images of the sea gods as well as of Bacchanalia.

The "Persian" decoration is represented by two objects: a small ewer decorated with a linear floral motif and a bottle with "decor à la bougi".

A jug from about the year 1670 is a typical example of "chinoiseries". It also shows quite well the influence of the shapes of metal dishes on the pottery.

A dish with a hunting scene is a very interesting object (Fig. 21). The artistic level of its decoration is higher than the most of faience of that type. At the bottom of it we have a closed crown with the clear elements of the French lily and a sceptre. One can assume that it was ordered by the royal court.

The last dish (mentioned only briefly) is a "chevrette" made in Saint Verain in the beginning of 18th century.

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The described group of Nivernais pottery is very interesting for Polish researches, especially because it seems to suggest what kind of production which queen Marie Loise, the granddaughter of prince Louis of Mantua and Nevers, expected when she wanted to start a majolica factory in Warsaw in the year 1663 (she used the term "majolica" not faience). It would have probably been the faience with narrative decoration and the "Persian" faience. It was still too early for chinoiserie at that time - this fashion just began to gain popularity in France.



20. Pilgrim bottle. Nevers. Dated at the middle of 17th century



21. Ornamental dish. Nevers. Dated at the 2nd half of 17 th century