

A Further Note on ΕΠΟΙΕΣΕΝ Signatures

In a recent issue of this journal (xci [1971] 137-8), R. M. Cook argued convincingly that the term *ἐποίησεν* should not be taken to mean the craftsman who threw the vase but rather should be taken as a sign of ownership by the head of the workshop producing the pot. While in agreement with Cook's rejection of *ἐποίησεν* as a term referring to the craftsman who threw the vase, I am not altogether satisfied with his alternative proposal. Why was the designation of ownership painted on the vase, and by whom was it painted? Cook's suggestion would have the signature act as a trade name to identify the product. If so, why were so few pots designated in this manner? We would expect that a trade name would almost automatically be placed on all goods emanating from a workshop and that if this became customary in the more prominent workshops it would have been adopted in the lesser ones. In short, why were not all Greek vases so designated—at least in the second half of the sixth and the first half of the fifth century?

The only *ἐποίησεν* signature to appear with any frequency or consistency is that of Nikosthenes on the special amphora form which now carries his name. Other workshops do not provide the extensive signatures; however, if we can determine the meaning of the signature in the Nikosthenic shop we will not be far from the use of *ἐποίησεν* in other workshops. In the Nikosthenic workshop there are other vases which have been attributed to the same workshop either because they are stylistically by the same painters or by the same potters who worked on the signed vases, yet they remain for the most part unsigned.¹ There does not seem to be an observable rule by which we can determine *a priori* which vases were to be signed and which were not. In this light the question of who actually signed the vase gains some importance. The signatures *Νικοσθένης ἐποίησεν* and its variants are not all by the same hand. A quick look through Hoppin's *A Handbook of Attic Black-figure Vases* reveals that there are a number of different hands making the same signature² and

¹ Most Nikosthenic amphora are signed and almost all of the work of the 'Painter N' is signed. Only five kyathoi attributed to 'Painter N' and one attributed to Oltos are signed out of about 400 known kyathoi painted by various painters and painter groups working in the Nikosthenic workshop (see Eisman, *Attic Kyathos Painters*, [1971] diss. U. of Penn. and *AJA* lxxiv [1970] 193). Other shapes which were produced in the workshop have varying percentages of signed to unsigned vases.

² The 'normal' signature can be seen on Louvre F100, Hoppin, *op. cit.*, no. 33 and *ABV* 216, no. 2. (Hereafter Hoppin will be noted as H with the appropriate Nikosthenic vase number and *ABV* simply with the page number followed by the vase number.) Contrast the signatures on the following vases with the 'normal' signature and with each

several variant spellings including one vase with a double signature and the spelling *Νικοσθένης*.³ In addition one signer tends to make his sigmas backwards.⁴ The conclusion must be made that, whatever the *ἐποίησεν* signature refers to, it was not necessarily painted by the person whose name is given.

On many black-figure vases there is reason to believe that the painter of the scene and the signer were two different individuals. The signer, in these cases, seems to have had little regard for the painted scene or the integrity of the words themselves. One kyathos in the Villa Giulia⁵ clearly shows the placement of the *Νικοσθένης ἐποίησεν* signature in a manner which destroys the artistic sense of the painted scene. The contrast with *ἔγραψεν* signatures and other types of dipinti which were obviously put on the vase by the painter of the scene becomes clear when the concern for the overall compositional effect is considered. Cook's assertion that the painter also makes the dipinti is valid when there are dipinti other than the *ἐποίησεν* but beyond this it is not. Where there are dipinti other than *ἐποίησεν* or on a red-figure vase the painter and the signer are the same regardless to whom the signature refers. However, it would seem that the signer is not the potter, only sometimes the painter and because of the multiplicity of hands with the same signature, not always the owner.

I would suggest that the signed pieces are either inspection pieces signed by a foreman, owner or some other person in control of the manufacturing process or that the signed pieces were made to be used as identification pieces for a shipment. In the latter case only one signed vase per crate would be necessary and the quality of the individual signed vase would not be important. While the evidence precludes any certainty, I would tend to see the signed pieces as identification vases for shipment. This would best explain their rarity and the lack of consistency in the signatures.

MICHAEL M. EISMAN

Temple University

other: Berlin 1805, H5, 223.65; Berlin 1806, H6, 223.66; Fogg Art Museum (Cambridge) amphora fragment H11,-; London B364, H20, 229.vi; New York 14.136, H26, 232.13; Oxford 215, H27, 216.3; Cab. Med. 258, H29, 232.14; Providence 23.303, H31, 220.34; Tarquinia RC 1076, H14, 223.59.

³ Berlin 1801, *ABV* 230, no. x, 1. Other spelling variants can be seen on Athens, Acropolis Collection *fr.* 1410, H1c, 233.xi.3; London B296, H18, 219.18; Louvre F102, H35, 216.2; Louvre F114, H47, 226.-; Louvre F123, H52, 231.8; Vatican G74, -, 233.19.

⁴ Athens, Acropolis Collection *fr.* 1409, H1b, 233.xi.2; Berlin 1801, H4, 230.x.1; Louvre F121, H50, 231.7; Philadelphia, American Philosophical Society, -, 231.9; Villa Giulia without number, -, 229.v.

⁵ Villa Giulia 50580, H59, 233.3.