

There is more than one way to draw a cat (E13)




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Function
Classifier/Repeater

Value
[Cat]

The most familiar version of the cat hieroglyph (Gardiner E13) depicts the animal with its tail tucked. However, there are several common variations with the tail pointing upwards behind its body, as in a cippus (E16881) in the collection of the University of Chicago's Institute for the Study of Ancient Cultures () or with a tail stretching downward (see Lapp's Papyrus of Nu, pl. 6, line 60). Occasionally, these variants appear in the same text; for instance, there are two different versions across three (and a half) cats on plate 6 of the Papyrus of Nu alone, and a further one on plate 68 (; ). An even rarer variation is visible on the wooden funerary stela of Tabakenkhonsu (see figures 1 and 2), which portrays the cat with a long tail curled beneath its body and the end of the tail pointed upwards. Similar depictions can be found in some 18th Dynasty manuscripts of the Book of the Dead (Munro 1994: 47–49, lines 92–93; 65–67, line 763), but these have less curvature in their tails.

References:

- Pantalacci, L. 2023. "Of Cats, Mice and Men in Late Old Kingdom Dakhla." In: *Schöne Denkmäler sind entstanden: Studien zu Ehren von Ursula Verhoeven*, ed. by S. Gerhards et al.: 487–495. Heidelberg, Propylaeum [<https://books.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/propylaeum/catalog/book/1085/chapter/16617>].
- Lapp, G. 1997. *The Papyrus of Nu (BM EA 10477)*, Catalogue of Books of the Dead in the British Museum I, London, British Museum Press.
- Munro, I. 1994. *Die Totenbuch-Handschriften der 18. Dynastie im Museum Cairo*, ÄA 54: pls. 47–49, lines 92–93; pl. 65–67, line 763. Wiesbaden, Harrassowitz.



Document: Painted wooden panel of Tabakenkhonsu

Date: Third Intermediate Period, Dynasty 25 (Kushite), ca. 680–670 BCE

Provenance: From Thebes, Deir el-Bahari, Temple of Hatshepsut, Hathor Shrine, pit in hypostyle hall, Naville Excavations sponsored by the Egypt Exploration Fund, 1894–1895. Acquired by the EEF in the division of finds. Given by the EEF to the Museum for its contribution to the excavations, 1896.

Current location: New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Egypt Exploration Fund, 1896 (96.4.4)

Object type: Painted wooden funerary stela

Material: Wood

Hieroglyphic source



MdC: G1&X1*W19*M17*E13*B1

Transliteration: *T³-mi(.t)*

Translation: Tamit (PN)

Location: Final line