

In Egypt

Several scholars have investigated various aspects of the cat in ancient Egypt. General contributions include DE MORANT (1937), LANGTON and LANGTON (1940), ABOU-GHAZI (1963), STORK¹⁰³⁰ and MÁLEK (1993), whilst HERMANN (1937), BALDWIN (1975), HORNUNG and STAEHELIN (1976:119–121) and TE VELDE (1982) have investigated more specific topics.¹⁰³¹

Two native wild or feral species of cat were the ancestors of the Egyptian domestic type. One, *Felis silvestris libyca* or ‘African wild cat,’ is native to the savannah areas of western India and Turkestan through southwestern Asia, as well as southern Europe and most of Africa, including Egypt where it mainly inhabits the desert regions either side of the Nile. A fairly large cat, it has large pointed ears, a striped ‘tabby’ (yellow to orange-brown with black markings) coat with black rings near the dark tip of the tail, and a lighter stomach and throat.

The second species, *Felis chaus* (swamp or jungle cat) is found in low marshy areas and river valleys of south-east Asia, India, central and south-west Asia, and in the Nile Delta and river valley of Upper Egypt. Considerably larger than the *libyca*, it has a generally monochrome yellow to dark brown coat that is lighter on the stomach and throat, and usually with less distinguishable dark spotting on the legs and rings on the tail than the *libyca*. Its pointed ears, proportionately longer legs and ears, and its shorter tail are other distinguishing features.

A third species, *Felis serval*, also was known, but was a Nubian import from farther south¹⁰³² and still

is found only in open savannah areas south of the Sahara.¹⁰³³ It is still larger in scale than the other two, with quite large but more rounded ears, long legs and neck. It is yellow to brown in colour, with fairly regular black spots, bands and stripes in rows along its body and legs, several black rings around its tail and a lighter stomach.¹⁰³⁴

It is therefore difficult to distinguish the various species in illustration, for the coat markings and profile are similar and the scale cannot be used. The only recognisable distinguishing feature is the coat, generally more monochrome for the *chaus*, and less obviously distinguishable between the others – irregularly spotted/striped for the *libyca* and more regularly spotted for the *serval*. Distinction between the wild and domesticated cat too is not possible in archaeological contexts. Cat bones have been found at several Predynastic habitation and cemetery sites,¹⁰³⁵ but whether they were wild, domesticated, wild but symbiotically interacting with the inhabitants, or the remains of food is impossible to tell. Mummified cats dating to the Late and Ptolemaic periods have been distinguished by species, the vast majority being *libyca*, with a few *serval* and only one *chaus*. Although relative percentages of these periods need not necessarily represent those of earlier date, nonetheless the vast majority of cats that can be distinguished in pharaonic art also are *libyca*, with only a few *serval* and even fewer *chaus* represented.

The cat appears has a limited repertoire in tomb iconography, most commonly in the ‘marsh’ or ‘fowling’ scene, with the tomb owner flushing birds from their nests or hiding places, and that of the tomb

¹⁰²⁹ Part of the present chapter was presented at the Seventh International Cretological Congress in Rethymnon in August 1991; see PHILLIPS 1995.

¹⁰³⁰ *LÄ* III.3:367–370.

¹⁰³¹ References to earlier discussion are found in the essays mentioned above or are noted below. All references noted above were consulted for pertinent aspects of the present chapter. See also DORST and DANDELLOT 1970:136–138; HALTENORTH and DILLER 1980:226–231; CLUTTON-BROCK 1981:106–112 for discussions of the various species of cats.

¹⁰³² *LÄ* III.3:368.

¹⁰³³ The only Egyptian representations appear to be on faience plaques found at Serabit el-Khadim in the Sinai; see PETRIE 1906b:fig. 154. However, not all may depict the *serval*, for the ears sometimes are quite pointed and the coat

markings could well represent the *libyca*. MORGAN 1988:pl. 53 illustrates the living animal.

¹⁰³⁴ A fourth species mentioned by BALDWIN 1975:430, the *Felis margarita Loche* or ‘sand cat,’ was unknown to the ancient Egyptians; see also DORST and DANDELLOT 1970:136, 167, who limit its distribution to two small areas of the sub-Sahara far removed from Egypt; also HALTENORTH and DILLER 1980:227–228, with a more extensive distribution covering the interior Sahara.

¹⁰³⁵ At Abydos, Badari, Merimde and Mostagedda near the Nile, and in Nabta Playa and the Dakhleh Oasis in the Western Desert; see HOULIHAN 1996:81; OSBORNE and OSBORNOVÁ 1998:107. At Badari and Mostagedda, cats were interred in human graves together with the occupant.

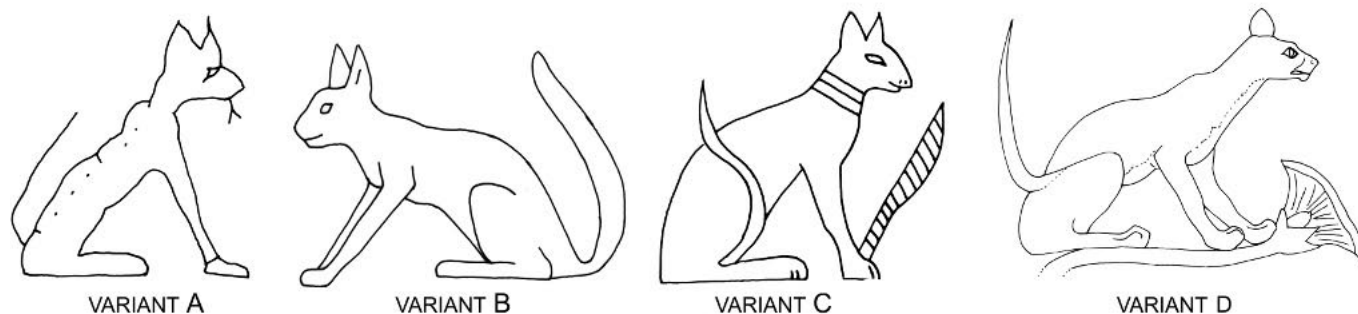


Fig. 27 Typology of the seated cat, as illustrated on ‘magic wands’ and a wall painting (based on the typology of ALTENMÜLLER 1986:6–7): Variant A (‘magic wand’) (ALTENMÜLLER 1965:fig. 12); Variant B (hieroglyph) (GOEDICKE 1971:52 no. 26); Variant C (‘magic wand’) (LACOVARA, D’AURIA and ROEHRIG 1988:128 #59); Variant D (wall painting, Tomb of Khnumhotep at Beni Hasan, Dynasty XII) (DE MORANT 1937:31 fig. 1)

owner and wife seated at banquet or receiving offerings or the products of their estate. Nonetheless, they also are found in some other activities.

‘Fowling’ cat image

All preserved Old Kingdom tomb scenes said to depict a cat are ‘marsh’ or ‘fowling’ scenes, and all actually depict either the ichneumon or the genet, a wild animal with a similarly long pointed head and nose, with upright ears, long body and tail. Identification remains far from certain, but recent literature generally has discounted the animals formerly considered to be cats.¹⁰³⁶ The earliest known ‘fowling’ scene to include an unmistakable *Felis* cat also is the only known example dated to the Middle Kingdom. The Dynasty XII (reign of Senwosret II) tomb of Khnumhotep III at Beni Hasan, depicts a probably

wild cat seated alertly but placidly on a papyrus stem (see Fig. 27:Variant D).¹⁰³⁷ Its greyish and fairly monochrome coat seems to identify it as the *chaus*, seen in its natural habitat, and not the *libyca* later depicted as domesticated animals.¹⁰³⁸ Other possible painted Middle Kingdom cats clearly are wild, one of many different wild animals being hunted by (not hunting with) the tomb owner in a desert environment.

This same ‘fowling’ theme is quite popular throughout the dynastic era but, other than Khnumhotep, all such scenes that include a cat date no earlier than the reign of Thutmose III (mid-New Kingdom) and continue into Dynasty XIX. They also are limited geographically only to elite tombs in the Theban area.¹⁰³⁹ The cat is rarely shown on the boat interacting with the tomb owner, but rather in the papyrus marsh with its prey, so even these scenes need not necessarily

¹⁰³⁶ Three representations once identified as Old Kingdom cats have recently been discredited. Colouration is not recorded for any of them. 1) A relief fragment in the Vatican, formerly dated to Dynasty V and clearly depicting a cat, recently has been re-dated and identified as originating from the tomb of Montuemhat (TT 34), a Theban official who lived at the end of Dynasty XXV and beginning of Dynasty XXVI, c. 650 B.C. (ANON. 1936:pl. 189; MÁLEK 1993:38, 39 fig. 21). 2) The clear lines of the published drawings of a reconstructed relief scene from the Dynasty VI tomb of Meryrepher (G7101) at Giza belie the surviving record, a sketch in the excavation register book, of relief fragments that cannot now be located. The sketch is unclear, and genets are more likely the animals represented (PORTER and MOSS 1960–:III.1:184 Tomb G7101 #2; SIMPSON 1976:fig. 6; MÁLEK 1993:38). 3) The animal on a similar relief scene from the Dynasty V or VI mastaba of Rakhafankh (G7948) at Giza more likely is an ichneumon. This fragment also is lost, and known only from a sketch. As seen in the only recorded drawing (LEPSIUS 1913:pl. XXVI-

II), the blunt-faced head profile seems typical of the cat, but the tail is tufted at the end like the ichneumon. See also SMITH 1946:189; PORTER and MOSS 1960–:III.1:208 #12. Note that this animal may not even be part of the ‘fowling’ scene, as papyrus-stems are not shown behind it, although they are shown above. The tail of another animal also is illustrated with papyrus stems behind.

¹⁰³⁷ NEWBERRY 1893:11, pl. XXXIV; GRIFFITH *et al.* 1900:pl. V; DE MORANT 1937:fig. 1.

¹⁰³⁸ The assumption of a monochrome coat is based on the famous watercolour by Howard Carter (see n. 1037, above) usually reproduced in later publications. The recent publication of colour photographs of this cat seems to suggest that it is not entirely monochrome (SHEDID 1994:62–63 figs. 106–107), but certainly it does not show the brightly multi-coloured ‘tabby’ coat that clearly indicate their owners elsewhere are the *libyca*.

¹⁰³⁹ MÁLEK 1993:65–66 lists the sum known total of these New Kingdom ‘fowling’ scenes that include a cat; PORTER and MOSS 1960–:I.1:454 list further references to these tombs.

depict a domesticated cat.¹⁰⁴⁰ The best argument for domestication is that they all are depicted with a tabby-striped coat which, unlike the *chaus* in Khnumhotep's tomb, indicates either the *libyca* in an unnatural environment or its domesticated descendant.

'Pet' cat image

Cats *may* have been domesticated by Dynasty XII,¹⁰⁴¹ for a reused stela fragment from Koptos of that date shows a rather chubby (pregnant?) cat under the chair of its mistress and master.¹⁰⁴² This is, however, the only known Middle Kingdom representation of this theme, so early full domestication at this period remains questionable. As with representations of the cat in a 'fowling' scene, it is not until the New Kingdom that the 'pet cat-under-chair' motif becomes popular in tomb illustrations. The cat is found under the double-chair of its mistress and master while they are at banquet or receiving offerings or the products of their estate.¹⁰⁴³ Some cats play with other creatures also under or near the chair, or otherwise amuse themselves; occasionally the head is shown frontally in some Dynasty XIX scenes, but most often in profile like the rest of the body.¹⁰⁴⁴ The presence of the cat suggests peace and quiet as opposed to noise and confusion, and some erotic connotation is assumed for their presence in the scene, as the cat is never found under a man's chair but rather always beneath the seated wife.¹⁰⁴⁵

When paint is preserved in both the 'pet' and 'fowling' scenes, cats retain the colouring of their wild *silvestris* ancestor. They are yellow to golden brown, with or (rarely) without the variegated black stripes throughout the body, legs and tail. Eyes always are outlined in dark paint, but the pupil can be either black or merely itself outlined, suggesting both dark- and light-coloured eyes were known.¹⁰⁴⁶ Curiously, dark-coloured eyes appear more often in religious vignettes and light-coloured eyes in secular scenes, although this is not a universal distinction.

The symbiotic relationship necessary for animal domestication undoubtedly was instigated by human appreciation of the cat's instinct for hunting and killing snakes and rodents.¹⁰⁴⁷ Their usefulness in granaries and around other stored food would soon have been welcomed, but strangely was never illustrated. One vignette scene at Beni Hasan depicts a cat facing an overly large rodent¹⁰⁴⁸ and a Dynasty XIII scaraboid is in the form of a cat catching a mouse.¹⁰⁴⁹ Nonetheless, again it is not until the New Kingdom that texts and (mostly satirical) scenes depict the rodent-hunting cat, although it undoubtedly is the main reason for earlier, less secular, depictions.¹⁰⁵⁰

Small (hieroglyph and amuletic) images

By the Middle Kingdom, the hieroglyph seated cat sign *miw* (E 13) was in use. Even as early as Dynasty VI, the private feminine names *Miit* and *Miwt*

¹⁰⁴⁰ An exception, in the Dynasty XVIII tomb of Simut (TT A.24), depicts the cat standing in the boat on its hind legs, its front paws on Simut's front leg; see MÁLEK 1993:65 fig. 41.

¹⁰⁴¹ A 'civet-cat giving birth' relief fragment of a 'fowling scene' from the Dynasty V tomb of Idut at Saqqara (PORTER and MOSS 1960–III.2:619) preserves only the hindquarters and tail of the parent, and the head and forepaws of its young. Its neck is damaged, and BALDWIN 1975:432 rightly is sceptical of its reliability as evidence for "cats being under some sort of human control and protection." Unlike the cats discussed in the present chapter, the civet-cat is an entirely different and undomesticated animal of the genus *Viverra*; see DORST and DANDELLOT 1970:109–110, 119, pl. 14.1.

¹⁰⁴² UC 14323. See STEWART 1976–1983:II:21 #87, pl. 19.1. Originally dated to Dynasty XI on stylistic grounds, but lexicographically of Dynasty XII date; see FISCHER 1978: 178 n. 32. No colour is retained in the stela, if it had ever been painted.

¹⁰⁴³ See PORTER and MOSS 1960–I.1:467 #19(a) ('Cats').

¹⁰⁴⁴ See BROVARSKI *et al.* 1982:273, fig. 67. Cats with their heads facing the viewer are found in the tombs of Ipyu (TT 217), Penbuy and Kasa (TT10) and Nefronpet Kenro (TT 178); see MÁLEK 1993:figs. 32, 33, 37.

¹⁰⁴⁵ A unique exception is in the Dynasty XIX tomb of Ipyu (TT 217), where a kitten plays on his lap although its mother is found in the usual place beneath his wife's chair; see also below, n. 1051. See TE VELDE 1982:131, 136 for further discussion, but note that on the latter page he almost entirely employs TIP and later evidence, beyond the chronological scope of the present study. MANNICHE 1987 does not discuss the cat as an erotic symbol.

¹⁰⁴⁶ The pupils of a surprising number of cats on tomb paintings have been wholly or partly obliterated, so that difficulties arise in attempting to comment on their eye colour. However, the remaining portions do suggest both light- and dark-coloured eyes were painted. At least one cat's eye was gilded; see MILLER and PARKINSON 2001.

¹⁰⁴⁷ For a more detailed discussion of the process of cat domestication in ancient Egypt, see BALDWIN 1975: 435–442.

¹⁰⁴⁸ NEWBERRY 1894:48, pl. VI; PHILLIPS 1995:pl. III'.fig. 5. The inscriptions above unequivocally identify both animals.

¹⁰⁴⁹ PETRIE 1925b:16, pl. IX:312.

¹⁰⁵⁰ BALDWIN 1975:433–434; FREED 1987:186–187 #57. See also discussion below.

(‘Pussy,’ ‘Kitty’ or ‘Cat’) are known.¹⁰⁵¹ The private feminine name *T3-miit* (‘The Cat’) also is known from Dynasty XI.¹⁰⁵² A masculine version, *P3-miw*, appears only from Dynasty XIX through the Late Period, including one Dynasty XX pharaoh.¹⁰⁵³ A tomb of 17 cats dated to Dynasty XII at Abydos contained an offering recess with rough clay pots. Although this particular instance is unique at this date, it may suggest that the cat already was worshipped for its own sake.¹⁰⁵⁴ Also unique is the Dynasty XVIII sarcophagus of an obviously beloved pet cat of a Prince Thutmose (probably a son of Amenhotep III), with an inscription indicating the animal was accorded all the rites of human interment, including mummification.¹⁰⁵⁵ Oddly enough, and in contrast to the multiple instances of named dogs, only one cat has been given a ‘proper’ name rather than a variation of *Miw*; this is *Ndm* (‘The Pleasant or Sweet One’) in the mid-Dynasty XVIII tomb of Puimre (TT 39).¹⁰⁵⁶

Cat amulets are known from the late Old Kingdom on.¹⁰⁵⁷ Scaraboids and figurines in the form of a cat are known from Dynasties XII–XIII, in a variety of poses and attitudes, but were never very common.¹⁰⁵⁸ The fashion for cat beads/amulets,

scaraboids and small figurines in various materials and poses, seated and otherwise, increased considerably in the late SIP and New Kingdom, especially during the reigns of Amenhotep II and III.¹⁰⁵⁹ The cat is found on scarab face designs of usually symbolic or hieroglyphic type,¹⁰⁶⁰ several pieces of royal jewellery, including Dynasty XVII bracelets of Queen Sobekemsaf and of the Thutmose III queens,¹⁰⁶¹ and on toilet vessels.¹⁰⁶²

Amulets gained even greater popularity after the New Kingdom, being especially common in necklaces in Dynasties XXII–XXIII; so did cat images in all media.¹⁰⁶³ New poses include the cat seated atop a column or within a shrine, and surrounded by kittens.¹⁰⁶⁴ Large three-dimensional representations are unknown until after the end of the New Kingdom; generally these objects and images are personifications of a number of goddesses of whom the best known is Bastet.¹⁰⁶⁵

Cat as personification of deities

Although the cat personifies several goddesses, including Bastet, Hathor, Mafdet, Mut, Tefnut and Sekhmet, the majority of all these associations date no earlier than Dynasty XXII, a dynasty originating from

¹⁰⁵¹ See RANKE 1935–1977:II:184 (*‘mjj.t,’ ‘mjw.t’*). LANGTON and LANGTON 1940:2 identify the name *Miwt* from the Dynasty VI tomb of Imery at Giza, a tomb not mentioned in PORTER and MOSS 1960–:III.1. Ranke also notes Middle Kingdom examples of both writings, but notably does not indicate the cat determinative on most Old and Middle Kingdom names. The determinative is found on the Dynasty XI coffin of a five year old child named *Miit*, now TBM 52.157.

¹⁰⁵² NAVILLE 1907:8; RANKE 1935–1977:II:185 (*‘t3.mj.t’*). Ranke indicates a New Kingdom source, but Naville identifies it from a Dynasty XI coffin.

¹⁰⁵³ RANKE 1935–1977:II:184 (*‘p3.mjw’*). It is interesting, in view of the restricted position of the cat only below the wife’s chair (with the exception of the kitten on Ipy’s lap in his Dynasty XIX tomb [TT 217]; see MÁLEK 1993:57 fig. 32), that all known private names incorporating ‘the cat’ until this period are feminine.

¹⁰⁵⁴ PETRIE 1925a:11, pl. XXX:1 (pl. XVII:Tomb 171), who dated the tomb. He suggested the pots contained offerings, presumably of milk, for them.

The practice of the mummification and burial of sacred cats was incredibly popular in the TIP and later, beyond the chronological scope of the present study; see BALDWIN 1975:434; D’AURIA, LACOVARA and ROHRIG 1988:231, 232–234 #189–190. One cannot help wondering if the 17 Abydos cats were an intrusive burial of this period rather than Dynasty XII.

¹⁰⁵⁵ CM CG 5003/JE 30172. See ABOU-GHAZI 1963:15–16; TE VELDE 1982:130. Unlike the later burials of mummified cats, this seems to have been a personal gesture towards a favoured pet. Other pets also were accorded mummifica-

tion by an obviously bereaved owner; see HAYES 1953–1959:II:111.

¹⁰⁵⁶ DAVIES 1922–1923:I:37, II:pl. IX.lower right; MÁLEK 1993:51. The animal is little preserved, and is thought to be a cat.

¹⁰⁵⁷ ANDREWS 1994:33; see, for example BRUNTON 1928:11, pl. XCVI:26, dated to Dynasty VI–IX.

¹⁰⁵⁸ In addition to the mouse-catching cat scaraboid mentioned above, a cat and kitten pair dates from early Dynasty XII (PETRIE 1917:21, pl. XVI:T), and a cat *couchant* from Dynasties XII–XIII (PETRIE 1925b:16). Figurines are illustrated by HAYES 1953–1959:I:224 fig. 140:lower right.

¹⁰⁵⁹ See PETRIE 1906b:fig. 153:6–11; 1914:46 #224; HAYES 1953–1959:II:77, 126, 180, 299; BROVARSKI *et al.* 1982:275 #378. PETRIE 1914:46 notes that the cat amulet usually was found at the feet of the mummy.

¹⁰⁶⁰ PETRIE 1925b:24–25, pl. XIV:893; HAYES 1953–1959:I:195.

¹⁰⁶¹ HAYES 1953–1959:II:134, 135 fig. 72; ALDRED 1978:215–216, pl. 84.

¹⁰⁶² E.g., HAYES 1953–1959:II:192, 193 fig. 108:right.

¹⁰⁶³ PETRIE 1914:46.

¹⁰⁶⁴ E.g., REISNER 1907–1958:I:177–179 #12381–12398, pl. XXII:12381–12398; II:12–14 #12623–12636, pls. III:12623–12636, XXII:12623–12625, 12627, 12636; PETRIE 1914:46 #225–227; LANGTON and LANGTON 1940:*passim*; HERMANN 1985:67 #260–261, all almost certainly of post-New Kingdom date.

¹⁰⁶⁵ E.g., D’AURIA, LACOVARA and ROHRIG 1988: 234 #191; see also DE MORANT 1937:36.

Bubastis, the city whose major deity was Bastet.¹⁰⁶⁶ Its association with Hathor and Mut seems to extend farther back, to Dynasty XIX if not Dynasty XVIII.¹⁰⁶⁷ All these goddesses were originally associated with larger ‘cats,’ the lion or (in the case of Mafdet) the ‘panther.’¹⁰⁶⁸ None of these personifications relate to representations of the cat before this date.

However, the cat is associated with other deities in earlier periods. As early as the Middle Kingdom the cat is illustrated as a personification of two male gods, Re and Atum.¹⁰⁶⁹ The visual image of the cat holding a long broad knife is associated with Re as the defeater of the snake ‘Apep (or Apopis) in Chapter 17 of the New Kingdom *Book of the Dead*,¹⁰⁷⁰ often illustrated with vignettes of the seated cat decapitating ‘Apep with a knife held in one forepaw, with an *išd*-tree as background.¹⁰⁷¹ This motif is the later development¹⁰⁷² of a Middle Kingdom *Coffin Text* spell, in which the *miw* 𓆎 (‘The Great Cat’) already is identified specifically as the god Re:

“I am that great Cat who split the *išd*-tree on its side in On [i.e., Heliopolis] on that night of making war and of warding off the rebels, and on that day in/on which were destroyed the foes of the Lord of All.”¹⁰⁷³

‘The Great Cat’ is identified specifically in the gloss that follows immediately in some, but not all, texts:

“What is that Great Cat? He is Re himself; he was called ‘Cat’ when Sia spoke about him.”

This event also is reflected elsewhere in the *Book of the Dead*.¹⁰⁷⁴

The vignette figures that sometimes accompany certain Middle Kingdom *Coffin Text* spells include a cat holding a long broad knife in direct proximity to Spell 1063 on the coffin of Sepi III from El-Bersheh, dated to the reign of Senwosret III.¹⁰⁷⁵ The spell reads:

“I have inherited the horizon of Re. See I am indeed the Lord of All. I am one who reveals what has been said to him, for I am the heir of the horizon. A path is prepared for Re, when he comes to a halt. O ..., I know your name.”¹⁰⁷⁶

Although neither the name nor epithet of the speaker is identified on this particular example of the text, the outer coffin of Gua (also from El-Bersheh and dated to Dynasty XI–XII) identifies the speaker as the ‘Lord of Khenset’ rather than ‘Lord of All.’¹⁰⁷⁷ Its variant text more specifically identifies the speaker as ‘Atum, Lord of Khenset.’¹⁰⁷⁸

¹⁰⁶⁶ HORNUNG and STAEHELIN 1976:120; *LÄ* III.3:368. See also *WB* II:42.7. BALDWIN’s (1975:439) contention that Bastet is associated with the cat as early as Dynasty XII has no contemporary support. All references to Bastet prior to Dynasty XXII associate her with the lion and never the cat. See also discussion below on ‘magic wands.’

¹⁰⁶⁷ TE VELDE 1982:132. A Dynasty XIX stela with the cat as Mut together with the goose of Amun is illustrated by GRÉBAULT 1890–1900:pl. III. A large calcite bowl fragment having the seated cat with head turned back to face a Hathor head (TBM 16.41) is dated to the reign of Amenhotep III by inscription on further fragments in the CM, and the kohl tube case illustrated by HAYES 1953–1959:II:fig. 108:right, dated to late Dynasty XVIII, also depicts the cat and Hathor head combination; see also *Ibid.*:316.

¹⁰⁶⁸ Probably the genet or ichneumon (*LÄ* II.4:597–599; III.8:1132). The animal’s face is quite pointed, and cannot be a cat of the *Felis* species: compare the cat and ichneumon illustrated in ANON. 1936:pl. 189, with the Mafdet symbol in PETRIE 1901a:pl. VII:7.

¹⁰⁶⁹ No associative references are found in the Old Kingdom *Pyramid Texts*.

¹⁰⁷⁰ ALLAN 1974:30 Spell 17:a.S15: “I am this (big) cat beside whom the *išd*-tree was split in Heliopolis on this night (of battle and of guarding the rebels, on this day) wherein the enemies of the Lord of the Universe were annihilated.” A gloss explains: “[Who is] he? (As for) “this (big) cat,” he is Re himself. He was called Cat when Perception said of him:....” See also ALLAN 1960:95 Spell 17:M15, pl. LXI; ABOU-GHAZI 1963:9 Fig:lower, 10 Fig:middle, lower.

¹⁰⁷¹ ‘Apep is identified in variant text glosses slightly later in the spell; see ALLAN 1974:30.b:S1.

¹⁰⁷² Despite the assertion in BALDWIN 1975:139 that the earliest association of Re and the cat is in the New Kingdom.

¹⁰⁷³ FAULKNER 1973–1978:I:261, 264 Spell 335; for a transliteration, see DE BUCK 1935–1961:IV:282–287 Spell 335. Note, however, that ‘Apep is not mentioned in this spell.

¹⁰⁷⁴ ALLAN 1974:99 Spell 125:c.S4, where the event is described by the deceased (‘Osiris N.’) as ‘witness’ to the event: “...because I heard this conversation that the ass held with the cat in the house of the open-<mouthed> one. I saw the splitting of the *išd*-tree within Rosetau.” See also ALLAN 1960:200 Spell 125:c.S4.

¹⁰⁷⁵ DE BUCK 1935–1961:VII:plan 1.34.

¹⁰⁷⁶ FAULKNER 1973–1978:III:141 Spell 1063. For a transliteration, see DE BUCK 1935–1961:321–322 Spell 1063.

¹⁰⁷⁷ BM 30839. See FAULKNER 1973–1978:III:142 Spell 1063 n. 1. The coffin is illustrated by DE BUCK 1935–1961:VII:plan 9; no figures are depicted on it. The ‘Lord of All’ also is an epithet for Re, amongst other gods; see *WB* II:230:15–16.

¹⁰⁷⁸ FAULKNER 1973–1978:II:186–187 Spell 1174; for a transliteration, see DE BUCK 1935–1961:VII:514 Spell 1174. The relevant text reads: “... Spell for the heritage of the fugitive because of the lustral basins(?). O heir of the horizon of Re, I am Atum, Lord of Khenz(et), and I have spoken, for I am the heir of the horizon. I prepare a path for Re when he comes to a halt; O heritage, I know your name.” For discussion of variant texts, see Chapter 12.

Both cat figures, personifications of two different gods, exhibit a protective function in the spells that is emphasised by the knife seen in the vignette of the ‘cat-as-Atum,’ and in the knife presumably used to fell the *isd*-tree in the *Coffin Text* spell as illustrated in the vignette of ‘cat-as-Re vs. ‘Apep’ in the *Book of the Dead* development of the spell.

Other *Book of the Dead* spells identify ‘Cat’ as one of the many names of Amun¹⁰⁷⁹ and as the guardian of the 12th Portal of the House of Osiris.¹⁰⁸⁰ Although these spells have no precursors in the *Coffin Text* spells, it is notable that the protective function of the cat remains emphasised in these personifications, and it is maintained on some mid-Dynasty XVIII–XIX doorway ‘windows,’ where cats are found as painted architectural details over the entrance,¹⁰⁸¹ and on a similar position on some Dynasty XIX votive stelae.¹⁰⁸²

The cat is depicted on a dozen or so ‘magic wands’ of the latter half of Dynasty XII–XIII together with other ‘demi-deities’ of generally similar protective function, where it always appears in a seated position similar to the hieroglyph. Altenmüller, who has studied these objects in detail,¹⁰⁸³ has indicated four variants of the cat image there: Variant A, with forelegs together and tail rising directly from the rear; Variant B (of which no examples are known) with both forelegs separately indicated and tail rising directly behind the rear; Variant C, with forelegs together and tail wrapped around the haunch before rising behind; and Variant D, with forelegs separately indicated and tail wrapped around the rear haunch before rising behind (see Fig. 27). Variants A and D are common, whilst only one example of Variant C is known, a ‘magic wand’ of Dynasty XIII date possibly from

Nagada and now in Boston (Fig. 27:Variant C). The seated cat most commonly has either a long broad knife rising from between its forepaws or holds a snake in its mouth, and often both. It occasionally wears a collar and one example sits behind a *s3*-sign of protection (V 17). The earliest example has no attribute.¹⁰⁸⁴

These seated cat figures on the ‘magic wands’ otherwise are not common until the New Kingdom, when small figurines in that pose become somewhat popular, as do cats in other poses seen earlier, including stalking and *couchant*. Until this period, the few amulets and seal designs are too few in number and too rough in execution for distinction or comment. The only detailed Middle Kingdom representations of the seated cat are the two Beni Hasan paintings, likewise shown in Variant A and D poses, and one travertine vessel in the round. The New Kingdom cats, when formally seated, also are shown in one of these two variants; Prince Thutmose’s cat shown on its sarcophagus is in the Variant D pose.

None of the many figures on ‘magic wands’ is identified by name. The cat ‘demi-deity’ here and elsewhere may not actually represent either Re or Atum, although the presence of both knife and snake together is suggestive. As no female deities are associated with the cat until late in the New Kingdom, the ‘magic wand’ figures should be considered male.¹⁰⁸⁵ Its protective function could have developed easily from its snake- and rodent-killing activities, and its perceived protection of both home and storeroom. The cat also is depicted in a stalking position on ‘magic rods,’ perhaps but not necessarily representing the same protective deity as the seated cat figure.¹⁰⁸⁶

The cat therefore was viewed as a protective force in the Middle and New Kingdoms, in addition to its

¹⁰⁷⁹ ALLAN 1974:217 Spell Pleyte 167:a.S2.

¹⁰⁸⁰ ALLAN 1974:127 Spell 145 (Dynasty XIX):m.S.

¹⁰⁸¹ HERMANN 1937:pls. VIII:a, IX:c; TE VELDE 1982:134; BROVARSKI *et al.* 1982:35–36 #3. Interestingly, the sphinx and jackal also retained that role. All are unaccompanied by a knife. Other symbols also are found.

The later ‘regenerative’ associations attributed to the cat may also be reflected in their presence on tomb entrances, which “are not just realistic representations of everyday things, but have a symbolic value which...links with the significance of the door in the tomb as a passage from this world to the next” (TE VELDE 1982:136).

¹⁰⁸² BROVARSKI *et al.* 1982:302–303 #411.

¹⁰⁸³ See Chapter 12, where ‘magic wands’ are discussed in greater detail.

¹⁰⁸⁴ ALTENMÜLLER 1986:6–7. The single Variant C example is in D’AURIA, LACOVARA, and ROEHRIG 1988:127–128 #59; it

has a knife in its front paws and wears a collar. See also HAYES 1953–1959:I:249 fig. 159:centre. The genet or ichneumon probably representing Mafdet also is illustrated on the ‘magic wands,’ but is entirely different; it is depicted standing on hind legs only, with forelegs in front of body. It is thinner, has a pointed face and rounded ears, and often is ring-tailed; see HAYES 1953–1959:I:249 fig. 159:second from top, left (attacking prisoner).

¹⁰⁸⁵ An early representation of the snake-killing cat as a female personification of the goddess Mut is the Dynasty XXI vignette on the papyrus of Tawedjare in TE VELDE 1982:133; he also mentions a Dynasty XIX stela depicting two male cats. See also n. 1066, above.

¹⁰⁸⁶ E.g., HAYES 1953–1959:I:228 fig. 143; BOURRIAU 1988:115–116 #104.b. The latter displays the *s3*-sign (V 17) behind the stalking cat.

assumed erotic connotations in the latter period. It is not identified with female deities until well into the New Kingdom, although its identification with male deities apparently was maintained throughout the Middle Kingdom and Dynasties XVIII–XIX. Its deified role was, however, restricted to the single act of protection, and required the knife as an attribute. Its secular role, as represented, seems to have been limited to accompanying the tomb owner on ‘fowling’ scenes, and contributing to the impression of a happy and contented home life.

On Crete

The ancestor of the modern European cat, *Felis silvestris silvestris* (European wild cat), native to the entire continent, had a compact body, short legs and tail, comparatively short but pointed ears and thick fur of short black stripes over a yellow to orangey coat. It is the northern sub-species of the *Felis silvestris*, of which the southern is *Felis silvestris libyca*, proportionately a more elongated animal.¹⁰⁸⁷ BATE (1905) identified a semi-domesticated Cretan cat, the *Felis agrius*, on the island, apparently now called the *Felis silvestris silvestris*.¹⁰⁸⁸ Numerous other names for various sub-species also are known, none of which are particularly important in the context of the present study.¹⁰⁸⁹

These are wild or feral species, from which the modern domestic varieties developed. Whilst even a symbiotic relationship with humans is uncertain in Minoan times, references to the varieties of cats on Minoan representations in the present study will refer to the species mentioned above, using that with the nearest physical similarity to the representation discussed.

The only modern study of the cat in the Bronze Age Aegean is that of MORGAN (1988:41–44), as part

of her thematic investigation of the miniature frescoes from Akrotiri on Thera.¹⁰⁹⁰ Minoan images of the cat on Crete otherwise have not been subjected to specific study, although some are standard ‘icons’ in even the most rudimentary introduction to Minoan and other Aegean art.

Scientific studies also are limited. The only specific study seems to be BATE (1905), although more general monographs include the island within their scope. Physical evidence for the cat in Bronze Age Crete is limited to faunal remains reported from Smari, an MM–Late Geometric site in north-central Crete, as well as in a mixed Minoan and Roman deposit at Knossos, at LM III–7th c. BC Kavousi (Kastro), and at Byzantine Gortys. The bone(s?) at Smari are very limited, but were identified as “*Felis silvestris*” and said to be wild, the Kastro example stated to be “*Felis sylvestris* (wild cat),” the Gortys bone as “*Felis catus* (domestic cat),” whilst the Knossian mandible could be either wild or domestic.¹⁰⁹¹ The cat therefore existed on Crete in ancient times, and likely but not demonstrably (until the specific Kavousi and Smari context dates are clarified) during the Minoan period. Yet its depiction in various artistic media but general lack of presence in archaeological excavation strongly suggests that the cat was present on the island, but either was wild (feral) or had a symbiotic relationship with man but was not yet domesticated there.

Pre-Palatial

One possible representation of the cat *may* be recognised on Pre-Palatial Crete, a small zoomorphic seal in the form of a feline head {573} without context. Nonetheless, its stylistic dating is EM III–MM IA(–?). If so, it is the earliest representation on the island.

¹⁰⁸⁷ The *Felis silvestris libyca* has already been described above, as it was native to Egypt. Only recently have the *silvestris* and *libyca* been regarded as two sub-species of the same *Felis silvestris* species; see CLUTTON-BROCK 1981:107. MORGAN 1988:184 n. 6 alludes to this changing opinion.

¹⁰⁸⁸ BATE 1905:317–318. She notes it also is identified as *Felis catus*, an early name for *Felis silvestris*; see CLUTTON-BROCK 1981:108. Presumably she in fact refers to the *Felis silvestris silvestris* as she comments on the “long-haired Cretan skin” in comparison to the “short-haired” examples from Egypt and Abyssinia. On the other hand, her comments describe colour differentiation, and this she attributes to climatic differences; the length of the fur may be related to this factor, not a sub-species distinction. Bate also used other terms for the cat on Crete; see JARMAN 1996:214.

¹⁰⁸⁹ See comments of CLUTTON-BROCK 1981:107–108.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Her study is a primary information source for the present

study, but is limited mostly to material comparative to the subject matter of her monograph. It might be noted that the Akrotiri frescoes date to late LM IA, in Egyptian terms not later than the very beginning of Dynasty XVIII and long before ‘fowling’ cats re-appeared on tomb walls during the reign of Thutmose III.

¹⁰⁹¹ As stated in publication. JARMAN 1996:212 table 18.1, 214, 219; SNYDER and KLIPPEL 1996:284; TSOUKALA 1996:273, 279 fig. 2.2.p (a mandible fragment); WILKINS 1996:250, 250 table 20.7, 253. On the identification of *felis catus*, see n. 1088, above. Other cat remains have been reported at Ayia Irini on Kea and on Thera, but were insufficient to identify whether the animals were wild or domesticated, nor could the species be identified; see MORGAN 1988:42; DICKINSON 1994:28. MORGAN 1988:41–42 earlier had noted the probability of both wild and domesticated cats in the Bronze Age Aegean area.

*Proto-Palatial (and Proto-Palatial/Neo-Palatial)*¹⁰⁹²

The earliest clearly recognisable representation of a seated cat figure appears at Malia **{383}**, in *Quartier* Θ, possibly dated to MM IB but more likely MM II, as an appliqué detached from a (now-missing) probable vessel. Similar appliqués also were found at the same site in *Quartier* Mu as part of the decoration on two elaborately appliquéd cups and a jug **{379–381}**, in an MM II context.¹⁰⁹³ The pose is identical in all examples: the cat is seated with its head and body in profile, tail between its rear legs and wrapped around its rear haunch. In the *Quartier* Mu examples, it is seated in front of a disproportionately small tree indicated by overlapping branches in low raised relief. The Monastiraki seated cat appliqué **{414}**, probably also from a vessel, has its tail in an entirely different position, one not found in Egypt at all; it too is of MM II date, contemporary with the Malia pieces.

The arrangement of motifs for these appliqués **{379–381}** disregards logical progression and actuality. Marine motifs cover one side while the other displays cats and trees. A murex shell is placed immediately behind a cat. Two different moulds were employed for the cats – one for the jug **{379}**, a second smaller mould for the two cups **{380–381}** – but all three trees were made in a single mould. The cats are applied separately over the trees, providing a very real sense of depth through superimposition little displayed by the Minoan artist up to this time. Fragment **{383}** is from a third mould, as the cat faces left whilst the others **{379–381}** all face right, and it indicates *both* forelegs. The Monastiraki cat **{414}** also faces left, but is not from the same mould as **{383}** and the tail is positioned differently. No background tree is attached to **{383}** or **{414}**, but it may not have survived.

Slightly later (MM II(B?)) representations of the

seated cat are known as the face design on two seals **{70; 525}** from Goulas and ‘Central Crete.’¹⁰⁹⁴ Both depict the cat with its head shown frontally but body in profile, unlike the Malia appliqués **{379–381; 383}**. A distinct sense of three-dimensionality is implied by both seal images, provided on the clay vessels by the background tree. Also dated to MM II is a third seal design, of a cat having characteristics similar to the seated figures but standing apparently in arrested movement (‘startled’), on one of three faces of seal **{575}**. It is firmly associated with the seated representations on seals by the similar engraving techniques employed, and more specifically in its use of the frontal face, but the implied movement suggests a further development. It appears to be the earliest ‘active’ representation.¹⁰⁹⁵ This image may be viewed as an iconographical ‘bridge’ between seated and active animal.

The other possibly ‘earliest active representation,’ is the rather strangely displayed pair of ‘felines’ applied to the vessel at Praisos **{493}**. They are rather difficult to envisage (as published), but certainly neither is ‘seated’ in the manner similar to the Malia and Monastiraki figures. Their direct association with a ‘horns of consecration’ and presumed ritual context strongly suggest a religious significance to the animal during the MM period that is echoed elsewhere by the circumstances of the cat figures and cat’s head representations.

In addition, three clay model cat’s heads have been recovered from Proto-Palatial contexts at Malia **{377}**, Mavrikiano **{397}** and Prinias Siteias **{496}**, the first from an MM II context and the other contexts dating to MM II–III.¹⁰⁹⁶ Head **{377}** appears to have been a vessel (probably kernos) protome, for a hole drilled in the back and open area of the neck together suggest some kind of unusual pouring spout more appropriate for a kernos. It was recovered from

¹⁰⁹² See Distribution Map 33. Note this map also includes **{573}**.

¹⁰⁹³ IMMERWAHR 1985:44 n. 12 notes “several unpublished facing cat’s heads from Knossos’ in the HM and “another on the foot of a Kamares cup” in the HNM. None were located by the present author, and are not included in the present discussion or catalogue.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Yule also has identified some ‘cat masks’ on some 12 seal designs of MM IB–II date; see YULE 1981:130, pl. 7:Motif 9:A. They are identical to the seals of complete cats under discussion, but are not included in the catalogue. No Egyptian cat’s head seal designs or other images are known. The Minoan ‘cat’s head’ seal designs are entirely unrelated to the ‘*Pantherkopf*’ terminals of the ‘magic

wands’ (ALTENMÜLLER 1986:21–22) and scaraboids of Dynasty XVIII date (LANGTON and LANGTON 1940:59 #230, pl. XIV:230; HORNING and STAEHELIN 1976:129–130, 349 #808, pl. 90:808).

¹⁰⁹⁵ The two running animal appliqués on an LM I clay rhyton from Malia (CHAPOUTHIER and DEMARGNE 1962:54 #8632, pl. X, XXXIX:8632) do not represent cats. Their small low ears and elongated snout may or may not mark them as feline (as termed by FOSTER 1982:86, 111, 122, 171), but are at variance with all Minoan depictions of the cat.

¹⁰⁹⁶ They may be as early as MM II but might be of MM III date, and thus Neo-Palatial. They certainly are not earlier than **{377}**.

a large storeroom. Head **{397}** also may have been a kernos protome, whilst head **{496}** appears solid and thus a ‘model,’ although it too may have been a detached protome.¹⁰⁹⁷ The last clearly came from a religious context, and was one of numerous ‘offerings’ at a peak sanctuary shrine.¹⁰⁹⁸ The features of all three heads are rather rough, especially **{377}**, and some appear to have been scratched in after the initial mould had been completed, by the artisan to accentuate certain features.¹⁰⁹⁹ The few flakes of dark paint remaining on **{496}** imply either a monochrome dark surface or – less likely – the dots or dashes of secondary paint. Its quite large ears parallel those represented on contemporary seals.¹¹⁰⁰

A fourth Proto-Palatial head is without context **{574}**, an appliqué with extremely long pointed ears. Much flatter in profile than the others, due to its function as the foot of a small possible pyxis, it so far is unique representation, for it is painted a monochrome black with red ears.

Moulds for similar cat’s head models have been recovered in an MM IB Perivolakia **{441}** burial context and at Petras **{442}** in an early Neo-Palatial habitation context (but possibly of Proto-Palatial date), but are as yet unpublished. Their very existence indicates that these heads were made in some quantity throughout the entire Proto-Palatial period, apparently from early Proto-Palatial times and through into Neo-Palatial, despite the paucity of individual examples that actually have been recovered.

*Neo-Palatial*¹¹⁰¹

Similar in presentation to the cats on the MM II(B?) seals **{70; 525}**, but different in execution is the seated cat supported by the headdress of one of the MM

IIIB–LM IA faience ‘snake goddesses’ from the ‘Central Shrine’ at Knossos **{157}**. The cat’s body again is shown in profile but the head is turned to display the head frontally. This moulded figure, separately attached to the ‘goddess’s’ headdress, is the earliest small Minoan image of a cat in colour. The body is yellow with black spots. The tail was not recovered and its colour and position both are unknown.

Other representations of the cat are markedly different from those already discussed. The introduction of pictorial wall frescoes in the Neo-Palatial period allowed greater scope for illustration of themes previously known only from small objects such as seals and figurines. Two frescoes of the cat have survived, a fragment from Knossos **{162}** and others of a large wall composition from Aghia Triadha **{9}**,¹¹⁰² the first dated to LM I(A?) and the other slightly later at the end of LM IA/beginning of LM IB. Fragments indicate that there were three cats in the composition of fresco **{9}**,¹¹⁰³ other portions of which include a woman dancing in front of a shrine, an attendant crocus-picker and deer leaping, all amongst a variety of foliage. Whether or not the two frescoes both represent the ‘cat stalking a bird’ motif,¹¹⁰⁴ the cats represented are not of the same species. Fragment **{162}** depicts an animal with coat markings, as does the earlier ‘snake goddess’ headdress cat, with rounded ears, a yellow coat with evenly distributed large white spots framed in black, and blue eyes surrounded by a similar but larger white ‘patch.’¹¹⁰⁵ The Aghia Triadha cat **{9}**, on the other hand, has quite distinctly pointed ears and a smooth monochrome coat.¹¹⁰⁶

The Neo-Palatial period continued the tradition of model clay cat’s heads, now represented by a rhy-

¹⁰⁹⁷ Not, however, used as a pouring spout like **{377}**. Cat’s head **{397}** is published only in a drawing, and its specific characteristics are not stated.

¹⁰⁹⁸ The site is yet to be published, but the excavator noted the figurine’s votive nature.

¹⁰⁹⁹ Unlike the cat’s head seal designs, these objects are included in the catalogue, chiefly because of their religious connotations, their elaboration and decoration, and as a supplement to the meagre number of painted cat representations from the island.

¹¹⁰⁰ Vessel protome **{377}** is quite battered and the ears are lost, although the remaining scars also suggest quite large ears.

¹¹⁰¹ See Distribution Map 34.

¹¹⁰² The ‘Landscape’ fresco from the West House at Akrotiri on Thera also depicts this theme; see MARINATOS 1968–1976:VI:col. pl. 8; MORGAN 1988:pl. 181.

¹¹⁰³ Only one fragment is illustrated in publication and is preserved well enough for comment, but the remaining fragments are incorporated within the restoration displayed in the HM, and by both CAMERON (see EVELY and JONES 1999: 241–243, #86) and MILITELLO (1998:pl. 6; 2000:79 fig. 1).

¹¹⁰⁴ Evans recalled the ‘cat stalking a bird’ motif of **{9}** in his conjunction and reconstruction of the two distinctly separate fragments of cat’s head **{162}** and bird-feathers from the palatial dump head (see Knossos N).

¹¹⁰⁵ The smaller rounded ears also are found on the kernos protome from Mavrikiano **{397}** and the bowl appliqué from Vathypetro **{517–518}**. See discussion below.

¹¹⁰⁶ Presumably this is yellowish in colour, although its burnt condition precludes certainty.

ton and vessel protome from Palaikastro {431; 438}, bowl appliqués from Vathypetro {517–518} and ‘models’ from Gournia {77} and Kato Zakro {113}. The last two are hollow but not pierced, so may or may not be kernos protomes. Unfortunately, none are recovered in a clear or clearly published context, although all are recovered in habitation areas or contexts. They are dated to Neo-Palatial, but some might be Proto-Palatial.¹¹⁰⁷ All are moulded from clay and of varying scale, and two {77; 113} are completely undecorated as preserved. Two {431; 438} are painted in a light yellow colour with short dotted or dashed lines similar to the much smaller ‘snake goddess’ headpiece {157}. All have – or indicate – extremely large ears relative to the head, seen also on the earlier appliqués and seal designs. The Palaikastro protome fragment {438} (like the earlier Malia protome {377}) has a ‘collar’ around its neck, which may actually represent a collar (suggesting domestication?) or, far more likely, articulation of the juncture at which it was attached to the vessel. Larger and made of faience rather than clay is another rhyton in the form of a “wild cat’s head”, from the ‘Treasury’ of the Kato Zakros palace {107}, with some coat markings similar to those of cats. The partial preservation may be excused as the reason for its restoration based on the travertine lioness-head rhyton from Knossos and its relatives, but the preserved areas clearly indicate ears too small for the characteristically large ears of the cat as seen elsewhere on Crete.¹¹⁰⁸

*Final Palatial/End Palatial*¹¹⁰⁹

In the Final Palatial and End Palatial periods, the ‘cat stalking a bird’ theme expressed on the Aghia Triadha fresco {9} continues, but only in a quartet of related seal face designs, stylistically dated within LM II–III B.¹¹¹⁰ Unfortunately, none have a specific context, although one is from Archanes {63}, another from the Knossos area {319}, and a third from Mirabello Province in eastern Crete {530}. The fourth and last has no provenance beyond ‘Crete’ {572}. The bird actually has been caught, with one exception

{572}, an artistic motif not chosen earlier but related in theme to the New Kingdom ‘fowling’ scenes. The bird – a partridge-type at Aghia Triadha {9} – has become a waterfowl of swan-like proportions, and the landscape appropriately ‘marshy’ as indicated by groupings of tri-stemmed plants probably representing reeds. The sinuous animals and birds exhibit a freedom of movement not seen in earlier examples, and are characteristic of the period.

Seal {63} differs from the rest on several points. It is a green jasper lentoid, in a clearly different and earlier style (LM IB–III A1) and two rows of dots emphasise the cat’s back. It may depict the multi-coloured rather than monochrome cat, although the lack of specific indications on the amygdaloids is no guarantee that they were intended to have a monochrome coat. The others are all haematite amygdaloids, appear to be in the same artistic style, and portray the cats with no further articulation or detailing; they may have been produced at the same workshop or perhaps even by a single artisan.

Post-Palatial

No examples can be cited in this period.

Commentary

Three separate and distinct images of the cat appear on Crete, the seated (‘domestic’) type, the fowling (‘wild’) cat and the cultic implications of the cat’s head. They do not appear in Minoan art at the same time, and only the second exhibits any sense of creative development. None can conclusively be shown to have originated from Egypt, nor indeed can the animal itself. The evidence points more securely to an indigenous development, although the Minoans may have imported some (sub)-species from beyond the island – not necessarily from Egypt – by the early Proto-Palatial period. The different images appear both in observed poses and as a symbolic representation that must have had some religious meaning. Most images first appear within the Proto-Palatial period and extend into Neo-Palatial, and one even to the End Palatial period.

¹¹⁰⁷ Vathypetro appliqués {517–518} certainly are LM IA in date, by both context and decoration. The Gournia {77} and Palaikastro {431; 438} pieces are assumed to have come from the main period of site occupation, MM III–LM I and LM I respectively. Proto-Palatial levels were excavated in the Kato Zakro town, so the model {113} may be either Proto-Palatial or Neo-Palatial although more likely

of LM I date. The Prinias Siteias model {496} and Mavrikiano protome {397} have already been discussed as probably Proto-Palatial, but might be MM III.

¹¹⁰⁸ See WARREN 1969:90 Type 34:E for lioness-rhyta.

¹¹⁰⁹ See Distribution Map 35.

¹¹¹⁰ The lentoid from Archanes {63} might be earlier (and Final Palatial) in date.

Cat's head image

It has been assumed or implied in the past that the domesticated cat on Crete was imported from Egypt but, as no indubitably domesticated cats in the Bronze Age Aegean are known, the intimation and its implications both are questionable. It seems logical to assume that the Minoans would soon have appreciated the cat for the same reasons as the Egyptians. The means employed to import and export objects on Crete, certainly by ship, would have been the same means of importing the cat if the wild animal was not actually resident on the island by the Bronze Age.¹¹¹¹ Whether the Pre-Palatial small seal without context {573} is in the form of a cat's head may be questioned, but it bears a remarkable resemblance to the later Proto-Palatial cat's head 'models' that this interpretation is a likely possibility. Nonetheless, enough 'models' of cat's heads in comparatively large scale were needed in MM IB that use of a mould {441} was required to fulfill demand. Although no actual model cat's head (or, unless {383} is MM IB), seated cat figure can be dated this early, whatever meaning the cat already had acquired on Crete by this time seems to have been entirely divorced from Egyptian religious connotations of the cat. We would never find an Egyptian cat's head without a cat's body to go with it. Even large bronze cat's heads (or, more properly, hollow masks) of Late Period date were for attachment to a mummified cat's body.¹¹¹² Cat images in scale and detail sufficiently large to serve as a model for the Minoan cat's heads are extremely rare in Middle Kingdom Egypt – only the travertine cat-shaped vessel can be cited, and this seems to be a one-off product – that the cat image in Egypt is entirely unrelated to the earliest (known) appearance of a cat's head image on Crete. Either the image itself was of entirely indigenous origin, or initially was adopted on eastern Crete from elsewhere. It seems most likely that the cat itself already was resident on the island by this time.

Seated cat image

Even the apparently earliest cat figures, apart from the questionable seated cat from Quartier Θ at Malia {383}, are appliqués, produced from a mould. The visual models immediately recalled for the cat-and-tree motif of the Malia {379–381; 383} and Monastiraki {307f} appliqués are Egyptian tomb paintings, particularly the 'marsh' scenes of the bird-flushing cat and, for the seated cat alone, scenes of the pet cat under the mistress's chair. These motifs are associated strongly and immediately with Egypt in the modern mind, chiefly because the image is represented almost exclusively there, but the images being recalled are of New Kingdom date. The earliest examples of the seated cat in Egypt are earlier, but it must be stressed that images of the seated cat generally are quite rare until the New Kingdom – a period chronologically post-dating the Malia {379–381; 383} and Monastiraki {414} pieces, and the appearance of the seated cat image on Crete. Altenmüller notes the dearth of examples of the specific pose and presentation shown in all but one of these appliqués, namely his Variant C (the seated cat with tail wrapped around its rear haunch and forelegs indicated as one) on the 'magic wands',¹¹¹³ and it is not found elsewhere in Middle Kingdom or Second Intermediate Period Egypt. The specific pose of the Malia {379–381} and Monastiraki {414} appliqués could not have been based on an Egyptian original, especially in such detail and with a thicker fur indicated.¹¹¹⁴ The only Egyptian example, a 'magic wand' now in Boston, depicts an extremely thin cat with both large pointed ears and pointed face, wearing a collar and carrying a knife, all details not seen in the Malia {379–381} and Monastiraki {414} appliqués, although found on a portable medium.¹¹¹⁵ Nor are contemporary alternatives apparent in the Near East or even elsewhere in the Aegean. If a species could be implied from a colour-

¹¹¹¹ The usefulness of having a cat aboard a cargo-carrying ship would itself have soon become obvious to the voyagers. Nonetheless, no illustration of a cat aboard an Egyptian (or any other) ship can be cited in ancient Egyptian art.

¹¹¹² E.g., MÁLEK 1993:128–130, figs. 102–105.

¹¹¹³ ALTENMÜLLER 1986:6. Note that one Malia cat, from Quartier Θ {383}, has two forelegs indicated and thus is Variant D.

¹¹¹⁴ It might also be noted that the famous sphinx appliqué from MM II Malia shows the same tail position and indication of a single forepaw as the Quartier Mu cats {379–391};

see KARETSOU *et al.* 2000:57 #33, with further references. All were recovered in the same space. Egyptian sphinxes in this position inevitably have the tail always visible, curling around and *over* the right flank, not under and between body and lower leg as on the Malia sphinx and cats. This seems to be typical of these felines in the Proto-Palatial period, at least at Malia.

¹¹¹⁵ Ellen Davis (personal communication, 07 February 1991) also notes correctly that there are no specific parallels for the detailing of the tree appliqués shown behind the cats on these vessels. The disproportionate relative scales of the cat and tree too are not found in Egyptian scenes.

less image as found in these earliest Aegean representations, the most likely possibility would be the *Felis silvestris silvestris* sub-species, with its long thick body fur and small ears, despite the rather thin tail seen wrapped around the body, originating in Europe rather than Egypt.

The two generally contemporary MM II(B?) seal face designs {70; 525} are shown in three-quarters view, with their tails placed elsewhere,¹¹¹⁶ forepaws indicated separately and the face frontal, combinations of detail also unknown in contemporary Egypt. They (and the cat's head images as seal face designs, not included in the present catalogue) depict a different type of cat with large and distinctly pointed ears. The yellowish coat and black dots or dashes and proportionately large ears seen in the Knossos 'snake goddess' headdress {157} also might represent any of the *silvestris*, *libyca* or again even the *seval*. Morgan notes correctly (and unfortunately) that the species are "mostly....too similar for artistic differentiation,"¹¹¹⁷ but overly stresses the plausibility of the *seval* over the closer-to-home species of similar colouring. Generally contemporary also is the earliest 'active' illustration {575} in a 'startled' pose.

Therefore it may legitimately be questioned whether Minoan representations of the seated cat are derivative of Egyptian iconography, or from direct observation on Crete. Both are far more likely to have been developed and realised independently. Had the Cretan representations been derivative, surely either the Variant A or D pose would have been used for all early examples, as both are common Egyptian representations, rather than the Variant C pose, of which only a single Egyptian example can be cited. On Crete, the image of the *seated* cat is limited to the Proto-Palatial period, after which cats are illustrated in 'active' poses.¹¹¹⁸ Bronze Age Cretan evidence is limited to iconographical representations, but the accuracy of the animal shown is virtually conclusive of the artisan working from a live or otherwise accurate model even in the earliest examples. The lack of colour on early representations precludes any attempts as specific species identification – the only preserved coloured image is the faience headdress

{157} – but it is probable that the cat was indigenous to, and its image depicted in, both cultures.

'Fowling' cat image

If the cat was not an actual or iconographical import to Crete from Egypt, it follows that the image of the 'wild' or 'fowling' cat too more than likely was indigenous. Imported Egyptian representations of both the seated and 'fowling' cat have not been found in the Aegean. The 'fowling' image appears on Crete in Neo-Palatial with fresco {9}, but probably the earliest example is seal {575} without context, quite obviously depicting the same animal as contemporary (MM II) seal designs of seated cats {70; 525} and without its prey. Their importance for the present study is soon supplanted by the detailing inherent in the frescoes {9; 162} that are impossible to achieve in miniature. Nonetheless, they illustrate the beginning of an iconographical development leading to the LM I frescoes, and again are extremely rare in Middle Kingdom representations.

Although the two frescoes {9; 162} may – or may not – represent the same iconographical scene, they clearly do not represent the same type of cat. Fragment {162} from Knossos might depict a mixture at least partly but not entirely *seval*, the only species mentioned having rounded ears, although the white patching and small ears are antithetical to the *seval* and its (present) distribution south of the Sahara would argue against the identification. Evans assumed the species depicted was that identified by BATES (1905), but the white patching certainly is not characteristic and the rounded ears unlike those of the other cat species mentioned; it may not even represent a cat. There seems to be no known source for the white patching, and it is likely this feature was either a depiction of a sub-species not otherwise attested or the painter's artistic license. The latter is not implausible, as imaginary features appear in commonplace depictions elsewhere in Minoan art. The blue pupils too are quite unusual, but the distinction between light- and dark-coloured pupils in Egyptian illustrations suggests that both were known on live animals at the time.¹¹¹⁹

The Aghia Triadha fresco cat {9} is entirely different, with pointed ears and smooth monochrome

¹¹¹⁶ Rising directly from behind on {70}; resting on the 'ground' behind the body and legs on {525}.

¹¹¹⁷ MORGAN 1988:41.

¹¹¹⁸ See below for discussion of the 'active' cat image. The faience headdress {157} is a later example of the type.

¹¹¹⁹ Neither DORST and DANDELLOT 1970 nor CLUTTON-BROCK 1981 mention or discuss feline eye colour.

coat, possibly related to the *chaus*.¹¹²⁰ The Prinias Siteias head {496}, if indeed painted in a monochrome colour, may also represent the same species. The markings still visible on the other painted cat's heads mark them as *silvestris*, *libyca* or less plausibly even *seval* types. Their wildness or domesticity is indeterminate.¹¹²¹

The later (Neo-Palatial/End Palatial) seal designs {63; 319; 530; 572} are far removed from the earlier engravings {70; 525; 575}, in technique and technical ability, observed characteristics of both cat and birds, design and format. While obviously not as detailed as the frescoes {9; 162}, they also provide considerable information on the animal, its generally elongated body and large eyes and ears, in its restriction to salient characteristics. These animals, in short, are related strongly to the Aghia Triadha fresco {9} type, not only in their profile but also in their (apparently) monochrome colouring. The Archanes lentoid {63} is an exception only in its dotted detailing of a *seval*(?). If they are monochrome (and therefore presumably of the *chaus* species), the marshy landscape implied by the waterfowl and reed-like plants would be their natural habitat, and they may be considered wild.

In subject matter both the fresco(s) and seals are generally reminiscent of Egyptian 'marsh scenes of the 'bird-flushing cat,' but are far removed from the 'original.'¹¹²² It is not impossible, although unlikely, that these later seals and possibly the fresco(s) were inspired by the Theban tomb paintings that had appeared during the reign of Thutmose III but, even

if so, they again are depicted in positions not found in Egypt. These tombs are unlikely to have been visited by any artisan-travellers there.¹¹²³ It is far more conceivable that their inspiration on Crete (and the rest of the Aegean) was closer to home, probably direct observation of the cat itself. There are decidedly few examples of the genre and a considerable number more of waterfowl without the cat, especially as seal designs.¹¹²⁴

Similar scenes of the 'cat and bird' combination are quite uncommon elsewhere in the Aegean but some are depicted in greater detail, examples including the famous 'Nilotic' dagger from Mycenae,¹¹²⁵ another inlaid dagger and a comb handle from Rutsi near Pylos¹¹²⁶ and the Akrotiri 'Nilotic Landscape' miniature fresco at the focus of Morgan's discussion. All display a river scene with papyrus, cat or cats, flying birds and other details 'egyptianising' to the modern eye, but *all* predate the New Kingdom tomb scenes with 'bird-flushing cat.' The 'Nilotic' dagger even distinguishes two different types of cat on both sides of the blade – one with spotted coat and thick ringed tail (the *silvestris* type) and the other with lightly spotted coat and tail that is much thinner and not ringed, and stomach, paws and inner legs differently 'coloured' (possibly a variant species or a different feline type). The less specific Egyptian 'marsh' scenes without the cat present, in wealthy tombs or perhaps adorning palaces and other wealthy homes, are unlikely to have even partly or indirectly influenced the genre.¹¹²⁷ Any visiting Minoans would more likely observe such scenes in palaces or other wealthy homes than in

¹¹²⁰ The *chaus* does not seem to have been a native of the areas surrounding Crete and therefore must have been an import, if the identification is correct. It also is native to Lower Egypt, and is discussed above; it need not have been imported from there, as it also was native to the Near East. Note that its natural habitat is low marshy ground and fields, a reasonable description of the Mesara Plain area that surrounds Aghia Triadha.

¹¹²¹ MORGAN 1988:185 n. 20 is correct in her disregard of the monochrome coat of the cat as evidence for its domestic status at this time.

¹¹²² MORGAN 1988:146 considers the inspiration for the genre of cat chasing waterfowl can be traced to Egypt.

The large and probably Minoan pendant from Aegina {577} does not include a cat representation, but the combination of the standing man in a kilt grasping two waterfowl by their necks, on a long 'boat' with papyrus terminals also must have developed from the 'marsh scene' genre, yet it too is far removed from the original.

¹¹²³ Or, just possibly, in palaces or wealthy homes, where they might have been seen. The scant knowledge we possess of domestic and palatial fresco decoration suggests extremely few such scenes, however, and frescoes appear to consist

almost solely of decorative patterns rather than scenes, but see below, n. 1127.

¹¹²⁴ YULE 1981:132 Motif 11:A, pl. 8–9; Motif 11:A; YOUNGER 1988a:196–201.

¹¹²⁵ HOOD 1978:180 fig. 179, among others, suggests the dagger possibly is Cretan work of LM IA date. However, no example of niellowork is recorded from Crete, and therefore this object is not included in the present study. Nonetheless, it may have been the work of expatriate Minoan artisans at Mycenae, as has been suggested. See also DAVIS 1976; XENAKI-SAKELLARIOU and CHATZILIOU 1989: *passim*. A different type of feline, with thin tail and circled spots on the coat is found on a dagger from Routsis; see *Ibid.*:27–28 #10, pl. V:2.

¹¹²⁶ SMITH 1965:fig. 105b; MORGAN 1988:pl. 186; MILITELLO 2000:82–83 figs. 8–10.

¹¹²⁷ Although later in date, contemporary with LM IIIA2, the non-aggressive 'marsh' scenes from the floor of the so-called *haviim* (PETRIE 1894:pl. II–IV) and wall composition in the North Palace (FRANKFURT 1929b:pl. V) at Amarna, and the palace at Malkata, are indicative of such a genre in non-funerary contexts. Cats are not amongst the animals depicted in these scenes.

wealthy tombs, but palaces and houses were far *less* likely to include a ‘marsh’ scene in their décor. However, this type of activity is not confined to Egyptian cats, and the scene equally – and even more plausibly – could have been developed locally on the island or elsewhere in the Aegean. The flora of the seals, frescoes and dagger also could well have been growing in the Bronze Age Aegean, probably in a garden rather than ‘wild’ or ‘natural’ conditions, where the artisan could have observed them.¹¹²⁸ The Minoan artisan also must have been observed the cats at first hand, and then captured their likeness and their lithe movements with only a few masterful strokes of his tool.

Morgan’s conclusion that the cats were “observed but not always accurately” by Aegean artists springs from her implied contention that they must have existed there but probably were not domesticated, and stated contention that “their iconographic role was limited and generally lacking in profound or religious implications.”¹¹²⁹ That they must have had some religious implications is baldly stated by the cat crowning the ‘snake goddess’ headdress {157}, and in the Aghia Triadha wall composition {9} that included the probable goddess in front of a shrine and an attendant crocus-picker.¹¹³⁰ Further religious implications are indicated by the choice of a cat’s head for the rhyta from Kato Zakro and Palaikastro {107; 431} and kernos from Mavrikiano {397}, the presence of a cat’s head model amongst the offerings found at the peak sanctuary of Prinias Siteias {496} and the cat’s head appliqués on the bowls from the ‘bench sanctuary’ storeroom at Vathypetro {517–518}, to mention only those having directly attributable religious connotations. Others also may have had such connotations through their original (but unrecorded) contexts. The moulds from Petras and Perivolakia {442; 441} suggest that the model-type was required in enough quantities to warrant mass-production at least throughout the entire Proto-Palatial period, and likely later as well. If the stated MM IB context date of the Peravolakia mould {441} is correct, sufficient quantities of a cat’s head (only) were required in that region for a mould to be

made in order to produce them, at a time when virtually all Egyptian images of the (entire) cat were in miniature scale (i.e., amulets, ‘magic knives,’ and hieroglyphs). These were hardly sufficient to be used to produce the detailed image seen on the Minoan cat’s heads of much larger scale, had they been the source of inspiration. It is highly unlikely that they were.

The cat’s head model (and cat heads on seals), seated cat in profile, seated cat in three-quarter and frontal view, and ‘active’ cat in similar perspective, all are introduced on Crete during the Proto-Palatial period and continue into Neo-Palatial. The only image missing is the ‘fowling’ cat, not introduced until the Neo-Palatial on frescoes and, apparently, Final Palatial on seals. Of all these types, only the seated cat in profile has any visual relationship to the image in Egypt; all others are unrelated to Egyptian representation. Their first appearance in the early Proto-Palatial period suggests that cat’s themselves may have been introduced onto the island at this time, probably by ship from abroad where cats already existed, and probably from the Near East or Egypt where cats seem to have existed in a largely feral state, or possibly in symbiotic relationship with man, but were not yet fully domesticated.

The seated cat and cat’s head images must be seen as local East Cretan manifestations of some religious importance within the Proto-Palatial and Neo-Palatial periods in that part of the island.¹¹³¹ Seal {525} also was claimed by Evans to be a royal badge and, if so, the cat must have had some high importance – secular if not religious – attached to it in Proto-Palatial times. Whilst this specific theory is less than plausible, some recognition of the cat’s instinctive hunting of rodents and snakes, and consequent perceived ‘protection’ of the home and crops, may have developed on Crete which was, after all, basically an agrarian society. Although such a development parallels the Egyptian, no direct or indirect influence need have spurred it. The association would be natural for any sedentary culture living in a region also inhabited by cats, either feral or in symbiotic relationship.

¹¹²⁸ See WARREN 1976b; MORGAN 1988:21–24, 147; also BETTS 1978.

¹¹²⁹ MORGAN 1988:44. She is discussing their poses and setting as much as their physical attributes, and refers only peripherally to the clay cat-head pieces and the ‘snake goddess’ headdress, *Ibid.*:184 nn. 14–15.

¹¹³⁰ The missing portions of the wall composition in *Xeste 3* at Akrotiri on Thera (N. MARINATOS 1984:66–67 fig. 44), which includes the presentation scene described in Chapter 12 and a large number of crocus-picking girls, might also

have included a bird-stalking cat, if the combination of scenic elements at Aghia Triada {9} is considered to be a possible parallel. N. MARINATOS 1984:68 notes the remains of a fowling scene and a marshy landscape with reeds and flying ducks as part of the composition; see also SP. MARINATOS 1968–1976:VII:34.

¹¹³¹ The horned scarab-beetle rhyta and models also were found in religious contexts of Eastern Crete in the Proto-Palatial and Neo-Palatial periods. See also Chapter 7.