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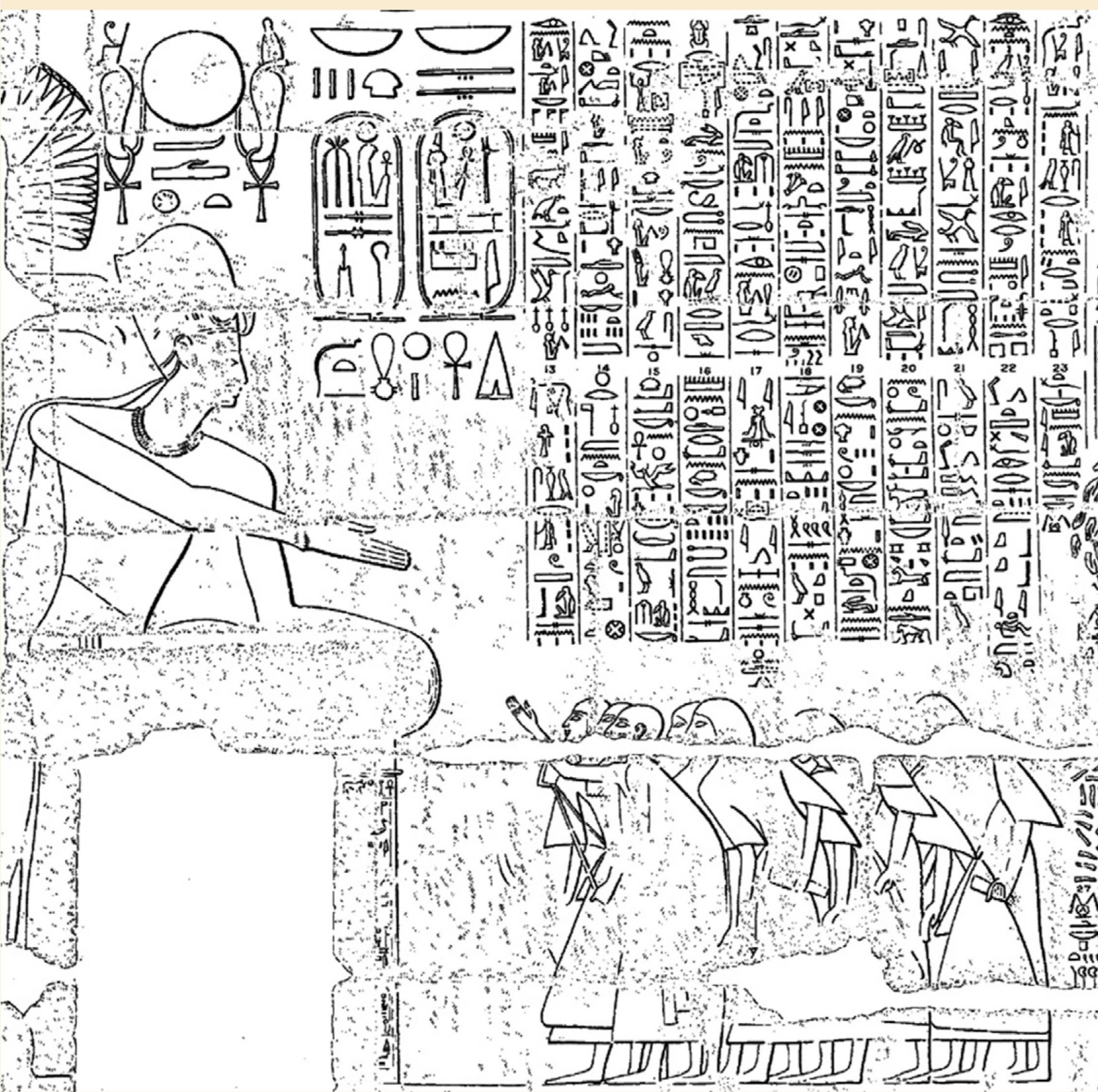
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ACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOUR IN THE PRESENCE OF THE KING DURING THE NEW KINGDOM

1. INTRODUCTION

This topic explains one of the aspects of my actual PhD project, which is entitled 'Social protocol in ancient Egypt: The system of rules and acceptable behaviour between classes of society during the New Kingdom (ca. 1550 to 1070 BC)'. The PhD project aims at understanding social dynamics and hierarchy among the elites and at the court of the ancient Egyptian New Kingdom. The objective of this poster is to discuss the social protocol between the king and his high-ranking officials in different contexts during the New Kingdom. There are many individuals of different social categories participating in the events in which the king appears. Certain standards had to be followed for these events and each individual had his own task, place, attire, and attitude.

The poster aims at understanding the system of rules governing the appropriate behaviour of individuals around the king in formal situations, in addition to examining the possibility for the officials to have a close contact to the king according to textual and iconographical sources.



(Fig. 1)

Nelson, H. H. Medinet Habu I: Earlier historical records of Ramses III, OIP 8, 1930, Chicago, pl. 22.

2. WORKING METHODS

For this research sources are essentially textual and iconographical. Textual sources can be literary or non-literary, since rules of protocol are indeed sometimes described in there. For example, in the Quban stela of Ramesses II, the protocol of the entry of the dignitaries into the palace has been mentioned as follows:

"His Majesty said to the seal bearer who was by his side: 'Now, summon the grandees of the court so that his Majesty may deliberate with them about this country. It is I who shall put the needed arrangements into effect'. (They) were immediately ushered in before the good god, their arms (raised) in praise of his spirit, jubilation and paying homage to his fair countenance". (Translation after Kitchen, A. *Ramesseid inscriptions translated and annotated*, Oxford, 1996, p. 191.)

Another example can be mentioned from the Edict of King Horemheb, in which measures are taken to reorganize practices of the protocol for the court ceremonies as follows:

"[...] They [the dignitaries] enter through the gates of the palace, speedily, by chariot, up to the sublime place, with a greyhound as a companion following each of them, [...] throne hall, clothed in [...], shod with sandals, with a staff as *Imy-lyf* like the one of shepherds [...] in its right place as before. I have pointed out the protocol for the inner palace and given instruction for the house of the princes. I have [...] the heralds of the court according to their function, opening the way through the whole palace; the courtiers of the palace are in their right place and the members of the counsel [...]" (Improved translation based on Pflüger, K. "The Edict of Haremhab", *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 5, 1946, p. 266–7).

As for the iconographical sources, they are found in tombs and temples, where scenes show different social groups interacting with the king. Thus, one of the scenes on the exterior wall of Medinet Habu Temple (Fig. 1) shows King Ramesses III being addressed by a group of high-ranking officials as well as addressing them. The officials are arranged in four rows according to their ranks. The king and the first official of the first row are extending their right hands toward each other, a conventional gesture indicating that they are talking together. All officials are bare footed and bowing respectfully. The first three officials in the first row have shaven heads and appear in attire different from the other officials behind them.

Another example includes obvious signs of the ancient Egyptian proper decorum toward the king, situated on the west wall of the first hall in the tomb of Khaemhat TT 57 at Sheikh Abd El-Qurna (Fig. 2). The scene depicts King Amenhotep III seated on his throne and rewarding the leaders of the estates as well as the chiefs of Upper and Lower Egypt, after the statement of the overseer of granaries that they increased the harvest of year 30. Khaemhat is paying homage in front of the king after he has received the gold of honour, whilst there are three registers of individuals behind him.

The top register shows Khaemhat being rewarded together with other officials. He raises both hands expressing rejoicing, while an official is placing a collar around his neck. Another official stands while receiving a cone of ointment above his head. The other officials stand respectfully with one hand grasping the opposite shoulder and the other hand extended in front of the body.

The middle register consists of sixteen officials expressing homage before the king, two of them kissing the earth, four of them kneeling and raising one of their hands outwards, whilst the rest of the officials raise both hands outwards toward the king.

The bottom register shows a group of nine officials expressing obedience toward the king by bowing deeply with both hands extended in front of their knees.

3. DISCUSSION

A correlation between textual and iconographical sources leads to understand and imagine the sequence of rules that were followed to enter the palace and meet the king as follows:

1. Summoning the officials by the seal bearer who stands by the side of the king.
2. Ushering the officials by the door keepers to enter for the meeting of the king.
3. Arranging of the officials according to their ranks in front of the king.
4. Certain gestures and postures were made by the officials when they approach toward the king, whether to express respect such as bowing, kneeling, kissing the earth, stretching on the belly, grasping the opposite shoulder, or to express different actions according to the nature of their meeting with the king such as addressing, praising, adoring, and rejoicing.
5. There are some rules that organise the spatial and temporal sequence of officials around the king in the formal events. Fan bearers walk by the right side of the king. High ranking officials such as viziers always stand in front of him, whilst the lesser officials and servants stand behind the king or on his left.

4. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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(Fig. 2)

Champan, L. "The Amenhotep III enthronement scene in the tomb of Khaemhat (TT 57)", *Nile magazine* 23, 2020, London, p. 36.