

# AKHENATEN'S EGYPT

*DELEGATE BACKGROUND GUIDE*



# *Staff*

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## **MODERATOR:**

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# ***A Letter From Your Director...***

**Dear delegates,**

My name is Paul, and I'll be your director for this council. Also working with me are Nathan; our crisis manager, Auj; our moderator, and Ailin, Arielle, and Avel, who are crisis analysts. We're all very excited to meet you!

This is my second year working at UTMUN. Last year, I worked as the moderator for the Hannibalic War Crisis Committee, as well as the midnight crisis council. I also ran MUN conference for my school in my last year of high school. I acted as a delegate throughout that year as well. My experience has shown me how much I love setting up and planning crisis committees. I love coming up with crises, thinking of mechanics, and most of all, seeing what delegates (that's you!) do with councils that I had a part in planning. It may be a lot of work, but we as a staff do it for a reason!

But enough about me. This council is about you, the delegates. It is an opportunity to do what you all love to do while learning about a period of time that not many know too much about. And this isn't lecture style learning, you get to act the character that you've researched. You get to act as them and take history on a different course of action. Maybe your figure is now a power-hungry murderer? That happens! Isn't the best learning done where you get to usurp and undermine your peers?

Think about it. You're honing your historical knowledge and working on your diplomacy skills. You get to take on the role of someone who has been dead for over 3,000 years and pit your skills and your historical character against theirs. You, in every sense, get to train to be a leader by acting as a leader.

Well, what kind of leader are you? I speak on behalf of my whole staff when I say we're eager to find out. See you all soon.

***Paul Schweitzer***



Photo: Getty Images

## ***Background***

Amarna is a heavily studied period of time in Egypt. With that being said though, there are many gaps in our historical knowledge of the time. Much of the knowledge we do have about the time comes from the Amarna letters, a correspondence between Egypt and various vassals/ foreign powers. The period itself gets its name from the site of Amarna (Ancient: Akhetaten), a settlement constructed to replace Thebes as the capital of Egypt. Our council begins after Amarna has been built, in year 5 of Akhenaten's rule.

One of the most radical and well known of the changes during his reign is that of religion. While debatable, for the purpose of this council the religion shifted to will be called monotheistic Atenism. Akhenaten, after becoming Pharaoh, abandoned the previously powerful Amun cult (centered around the historical capital of Thebes, in Upper Egypt) and focused worship on the sun disc, Aten.<sup>1</sup> We do know that many did not approve of this

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<sup>1</sup> Hornung, Erik. "The Rediscovery of Akhenaten and His Place in Religion." *Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt* 29 (1992): 47.

change, due to support for removal of many of his monuments after his death.<sup>2</sup> During this council, though, people of the court are expected to show faith for Aten. Punishment for not doing so may be severe.

This religious reform has led to dissent in some areas of the highly traditional population, especially around the Amun Cult center in the old capital of Thebes. In addition, Kush (or Nubia) is under occupation by Egyptian forces, after years of campaigning, though our grasp on the region is slowly weakening.<sup>3</sup> Internal strife is particularly high in this region, but is adequately suppressed by the high military presence in this region. Meanwhile, around modern day Syria and Lebanon, a civil war rages between the Hapiru bandits and the city of Byblos, both petty vassals of Egypt.

Externally, nearby powers are shifting. Mitanni, a Syrian empire previously allied with Egypt, but has lost much of its ground to the rising Hittite Kingdom in Anatolia. Meanwhile, further to the east, Babylon and Assyria are in competition and would surely look for an opportunity to surpass their local rivals.<sup>4</sup> Greece is not yet properly unified in the north, leaving the Hittite borders relatively safe for now.

Economically, the empire is actually doing very well. Coffers are full as evidenced by the amount of architecture seen at this time.<sup>5</sup> This gives the council some liberty in deciding where to spend their money. It is notable though, that a few actions have drained the treasury to a small degree, such as conomic support being provided to Thebes and Upper Egypt, due to the failing of the Amun temple economy and the state patronage of the local, fledgling, Aten cult. Money is also being sunk into occupation of Kush.

Otherwise, much of what is going on in Egypt is left open ended.

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2 Mieroop, Marc Van De. *A History of Ancient Egypt*. Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell. (2011): 209-210.

3 Van Siclen, Charles Cornell. "The Accession Date of Amenhotep III and the Jubilee." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 32, no. 3 (1973): 290.

4 Van De Mieroop, 186-191.

5 Van De Mieroop, 185.



# ***Character List***

## **1. NEFERTITI, KING'S ROYAL WIFE**

The king's royal wife is a position of prestige and power, and Nefertiti's status was equal to that of her husband<sup>6</sup>. Nefertiti likely had enormous influence on Akhenaten himself, and vice-versa. For the purpose of this council, this means that she is an avid supporter of Akhenaten and any doctrines he has introduced, unless conflict with her interests directly. Her close relationship with the Pharaoh also gives her power in the council, receiving a vast amount of support from him. This, complemented with the power she has already cemented, makes her, arguably, the most influential person present at the council. This influence should be taken advantage of to accomplish whatever political goals she may have.

## **2. AY, KING'S UNCLE, GRAND VIZIER**

Ay had royal blood (possibly through his sister, Tiye), which put him in a good position to manipulate Egyptian politics the way he did historically. He did this well into his old age, taking advantage of the situation to place himself as Pharaoh before he died<sup>7</sup>. This, of course, did earn him some rivals, including Horemheb, who had his own eyes on the throne. At this council, Ay has many connections and, as the equivalent of Grand Vizier, has almost unrivalled power. He can use this to influence the outcomes of various interactions to be in his favour.

## **3. HOREMHEB, KING'S COUSIN, GENERAL**

Horemheb was Akhenaten's cousin, which was likely the reason he was made a general at first. Clearly, though, he had a talent for war, as he was trusted enough to be sent on campaigns against the Hittites once they attacked.<sup>8</sup> This gives Horemheb martial power in this council, though not exclusive control. He can ultimately decide military movements and

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6 Van De Mieroop, 201.

7 Van De Mieroop, 207.

8 Van De Mieroop, 207.

has sway with the army, and intervention on behalf of anyone else would mark an extreme circumstance indeed. The martial power Horemheb holds can be used to further his, and Egypt's, goals. Note, though, that soldiering is a dangerous life.

#### **4. SMENKHKARE, PRINCE**

Smenkhkare held the title of "King's Son," which was equivalent to a prince. Though his background is uncertain, he may have been a son of Akhenaten, but likely married into the family through Akhenaten's oldest daughter, Meretaten.<sup>9</sup> Nevertheless, he holds influence in the court and is a likely successor to Akhenaten. In addition, though it is difficult to tell, it is not a poor assumption to say he may have had rivalries with other potential successors. He should consider gathering support should any conflict arise.

#### **5. TUTANKHATEN, PRINCE**

Tutankhaten, who would later be known as Tutankhamun, married into the royal family through Ankhesenpaaten, one of Akhenaten's daughters. Though he did become Pharaoh, he is most known for his tomb, which survived free of looters until its discovery in 1922.<sup>10</sup> In this council, Tutankhaten is a potential successor with respectable influence in court. This makes him dangerous to many others, and he will need to make allies in order to accomplish his goals.

#### **6. TIYE, KING'S MOTHER**

Tiye is the King's mother, and wife to the late Amenhotep III (predecessor to Akhenaten, who reigns during this council).<sup>11</sup> The equivalent to Nefertiti in her day, she had seen Egypt transform under her husband's rule. Tiye is one of the older members of the court. Having this experience makes her a keen force and worthy ally. Perhaps espionage could entice others into aligning with her goals.

9 Rose, Mark. "Who's in Tomb 55?" *Archaeology* 55, no. 2 (2002): 24.

10 Van De Mieroop, 207.

11 Rose, 24

## **7. NAKHT, OVERSEER OF WORKS\***

Nakht is a fictional character, though an overseer of works certainly existed at this time. As overseer of works, much money goes through Nakht and he is in a position to move these funds unfairly, should he chose to do so. Monuments and propaganda remain important to the court and to Egypt, so perhaps Nakht can make allies through that. Compared to other council members, Nakht is relatively low ranked, giving less power. This can be a blessing however, as he is less suspect and less likely to be a target of assassinations.

## **8. PTAHMOSE, ROYAL SECRETARIAT\***

Ptahmose is a fictional character, though the position of Royal Secretariat was likely filled at this time. For this council, Ptahmose is in charge of overseeing records and smooth operation of the court as an organization. This means certain administrative duties may be passed to him. He should take advantage of his access to records and administrative talent to accomplish goals and build a network of allies, and perhaps spies.

## **9. RAHOTEP, OVERSEER OF THE GRANARY\***

Rahotep is a fictional character, as the Overseer of the Granary during the time of our council is not known by historians. He still has a difficult and important job, however, distributing food to the empire and keeping the people fed. He can use his role as justification for increasing his standing, as he is of a lower rank than most others at the court. The distribution of food should not be underestimated in terms of political power; an empire needs to eat, after all.

## **10. HUY, OVERSEER OF THE TREASURY**

Amenhotep-called-Huy, or Huy for short, was Overseer of the Treasury at the time of our council. This means access to a lot of money, and potential to fill the pockets of himself and his allies. However, any loss in the treasury, and blame will surely shift to him. Access



to money is of obvious benefit to anyone, and can be used to aid Huy in his endeavours.

### **11. AHMOSE, OVERSEER OF UPPER EGYPT\***

Upper Egypt holds Thebes, an important religious centre for the cult of Amun.<sup>12</sup> With numerous temples, and a temple economy, Upper Egypt has fallen on difficult times and many are unhappy, with some openly dissenting. Ahmose (a fictional character and stand-in for an unnamed historical Overseer) is, therefore, caught in a tough spot. His king calls for conversion to his form of religion, but the people he oversees would not take kindly to that. Ahmose should seek allies as he may soon fall out of favour with the court or with his people, neither of which are notably peaceful.

### **12. THUTMOSE, VICEROY OF KUSH\***

Thutmose, acts as Viceroy of Kush during the council. Thutmose has a difficult position; he oversees a region which has been recently campaigned in, leading to an unhappy populace who do not take kindly to years of campaigning under two successive Pharaohs. Kush is, luckily for Thutmose, under heavy military occupation and the hazard of a successful rebellion is low, at least for now.

### **13. RIB-HADDA, KING OF BYBLOS**

Rib-Hadda is King of Byblos, a vassal of Egypt. Byblos is further away from the Egyptian sphere of influence and can thus communicate with neighbouring empires. More immediate of a concern should be the Hapiru under Abdi-Ashirta, who are openly hostile toward Byblos and its land. Mentioned in the Amarna letters, land has been taken, and members of the royal family have been killed.<sup>13</sup> Rib-Hadda should find allies at court to help against the Hapiru. Alternatively, he could come to a peaceful solution with the Hapiru on

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12 Dorman, Peter. "Major Award for Egyptian Temple Conservation." *The Biblical Archaeologist* 59, no. 2 (1996): 126.

13 Na'aman, Nadav. "LOOKING FOR THE PHARAOH'S JUDGMENT." *Revue D'Assyriologie Et D'archéologie Orientale* 90, no. 2 (1996): 148.

his own, making or ceding concessions.

#### **14. ABDI-ASHIRTA, LEADER OF THE HAPIRU**

Abdi-Ashirta leads the Hapiru, a group of nomads in the Levant, north of the lands of Byblos. The Hapiru are openly hostile to Byblos and have seized some of Byblos' lands and killed members of Byblos' royal family. Because both Byblos and the Hapiru are vassals of Egypt, both petition Egypt to rule in their favour, as neither can stand up to Egypt alone. Abdi-Ashirta should attempt to find allies at the court or peacefully resolve the conflict with Byblos on his own, securing a favourable deal. Foreign powers may have an interest in this conflict too, including the Hittites, who may be persuaded to assist, at the ire of the Hapiru's Egyptian masters.

#### **15. ETAKKAMA, KING OF QADESH**

Etakkama is in a unique and somewhat favourable condition. His city, Qadesh, is not engaged in conflict unlike other Vassals of the area, and may be able to start opening up diplomacy to foreign powers, representing itself or Egypt in these interactions. It could profit off of the nearby conflicts too, but that requires a gamble on behalf of the winner that has grave consequences if done improperly.

\*These court positions are historically attested in the records of the Amarna Period, but their personal names have been reconstructed, as they are not present in the historical accounts.

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