

ANCIENT HISTORY: EGYPT

Assess the role and contribution of prominent Egyptian officials within Egypt and the empire.

Prominent Egyptian officials were vital within Egypt and the empire as their separate contributions to the differing roles hugely assisted in the maintenance of ma'at during this period. The administrative duties of the officials during this period were vital to ensure the smooth running of the empire to maintain ma'at and Egypt's ongoing prosperity. Furthermore, their contributions to foreign policy were similarly essential to maintain the empire's dominance and power. Lastly, the role played concerning the implementation of religious policy was especially significant during this period due to the enormous impact of the Amarna period upon traditional society.

Egyptian officials played a significant role within Egypt as their contributions to the administrative aspects of society ensured the smooth running of the Egyptian empire and the maintenance of ma'at. During Amenhotep III's reign, many officials were promoted and dismissed based on merit which guaranteed that key positions were fulfilled by the best possible officials, such as Amenhotep, son of Hapu, who, as Scribe of recruits and Overseer of all the king's works, played a vital role in the workforce of the country by being in charge of recruitment of labour for both military and civil purposes: "My lord again showed favour to me; King of Upper and Lower Egypt, he put all the people subject to me, as superior king's-scribe over recruits." The official Mahu, Commandant of the police at Akhetaten, similarly played a vital role in the administration of the empire during Akhenaten's reign through his fulfilment of defensive and protective duties in the empire, such as protecting the palace and the Aten temple, and his maintenance of the system of defences around the city. His prominence is evidenced by his tomb at Akhetaten in which he is depicted receiving the customary honours from the 'window of appearances' in the palace, a custom suggested by Redford as the king's means of ensuring the officials' support. The officials during Tutankhamun's reign played a hugely significant role in assisting with the shift to traditional administration after the Amarna period. This included the officials Aye and Horemheb who would have had enormous power at court due to the young age of the pharaoh, allowing them to influence decisions such as moving the royal court to Memphis, away from Akhetaten, which was a vital contribution to restoring ma'at after the disruption to society during Akhenaten's reign. Furthermore, during the reigns of Seti I and Ramesses II, the prominent official Paser played an essential role in the administrative aspects of the empire via his contributions as the Vizier and Governor of Thebes as he was responsible for the departments of justice, agriculture, home affairs and government communications. His importance is emphasised by his tomb which records his duties as supervisor of the workshops of Thebes and is rewarded and acclaimed before Seti I, showing his close contact with the pharaoh. Therefore, the prominent officials were hugely important concerning administrative aspects of Egyptian society through their contributions in separate contexts which ensured the smooth running of the empire, thus significantly assisted in the pharaoh's maintenance of ma'at.

Furthermore, the contributions of officials concerning foreign policy were essential to the prosperity of the Empire, thus the maintenance of ma'at. During this period, prominent civil and military officials were crucial to ensure a good system of communication and to monitor the flow of tribute from all parts of the empire. Vital officials included the governors appointed by the pharaohs to act on their behalf. These men were essential concerning foreign relations as they significantly assisted in both ensuring good communications between the states and Egypt, and maintaining Egypt's control and dominance throughout the land. For these purposes, Nubia was controlled by the viceroy of Kush and governors were stationed in Syria-Palestine to supervise the local vassal princes; however, the presence of these officials did not guarantee Egypt's assistance to these vassal states, as demonstrated in the Amarna letters during Akhenaten's reign as Rib-Addi complained about Egypt's lack of assistance during the increasing prominence of the Hittites in Syria. As the officials played

such an important role concerning foreign relations, it was vital that they remained loyal. However, due to the radical changes in the Amarna period, Akhenaten may have lost support from some of his officials and, according to Redford, used the frequently distributed gold jewellery to ensure their support. The officials during this period were hugely important concerning the collection of tribute from vassal states which was essential to ensure that the state treasury was always plentiful which contributed to the continuation of Egypt's dominancy over neighbouring states. However, it is clear that these officials and governors were not always enough to instil Egypt's superiority, evidenced by the revolts in Palestine, depicted in reliefs at Karnak, faced by Ramesses II after the failure of the Battle of Kadesh in which, according to Wilson, Ramesses was a "stupid and culpably inefficient general". However, as these revolts were mostly likely due to the brief show of the decrease in military prominence of the Egyptian army, the officials had minimal power to hinder any rebellions whilst the empire was viewed as weakened. Therefore, prominent officials were essential during this period as their contributions to the role of assisting the pharaoh in foreign relations were vital to ensure the continued power and prosperity of the nation concerning external affairs which significantly contributed to the maintenance of ma'at.

Moreover, officials played a significant role in the implementation of religious policy throughout this period which was pivotal, especially concerning the aftermath of the Amarna period. With the exception of the Amarna period, the chief priest of Amun had a hugely significant role regarding religion throughout the Egyptian empire as he controlled all the cults and was above the organised hierarchy of priests, stewards and scribes. This role was eliminated in the Amarna period as the Aten was the sole god to be worshipped thus the chief priest of Amun had no influence over religious policy. Despite this, the religious officials still existed during this period; however, this was concerning only the worship of the Aten, an unsympathetic god according to Redford, and their power was severely limited due Akhenaten being the sole intermediary between the people and his god. In contrast, after this period, prominent officials were extremely influential regarding religious policy. This is especially demonstrated during Tutankhamun's reign who, due his young age at his accession and his only religious knowledge based on the Amarna period, was clearly guided by the officials Ay and Horemheb to restore the traditional gods and move the royal court away from Akhetaten to Memphis. The importance of the religious officials was continued throughout the remainder of this period as the pharaohs increasingly began to promote the officials based on merit as well as tradition, to ensure that the important roles which they carried out were fulfilled to in the best possible way. The enormous power of the chief priest of Amun is especially clear during the new dynasty when the pharaohs had to legitimise their reigns as the priesthood had become even more powerful than prior to the Amarna period. As a result of this, Ramesses II promoted officials who supported him to key positions in the priesthood such as high priest of Amun. Therefore, it is clear that the officials during this period were hugely important as their influence and power over religious policy significantly impacted the empire and, considering the enormous role which religion played in Egyptian society, their contributions to pleasing the gods were vital in the overall maintenance of ma'at.

Therefore, the prominent officials were hugely significant within Egypt and the empire as their contributions to the differing roles were vital to ensure the continued development of the nation and in assisting the pharaoh to uphold ma'at. By fulfilling their roles concerning administration, foreign affairs and religion, the officials had a significant influence over the prosperity of the nation. Thus, the roles and contribution of prominent Egyptian officials within Egypt and the empire were essential.