

Rise in power of the amun and amun priesthood essay sample

[Religion](#), [God](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Amun began as a minor god of Thebes, whose fortune was linked to that of the local Theban rulers. As they grew in importance so did Amun, eventually reaching the status of “ Supreme God.” Good morning teachers and fellow students, today I will be speaking to you on the growth in power of Amun and the Amun priesthood, and their political implications. Taylor Ray Ellison tells us that Amun’s growth to that of a national god mirrored the growth of Thebes, and gradually played an increasingly important political role. In the Jubilee chapel of Sensuret 1 (1965- 1920 BC) Amun is described as being the “ King of the Gods.” His name was found on the grave stela of the Middle Kingdom Pharaoh Intef 1 (11th Dynasty), and from then on pharaohs claimed divine right to the throne, as sons of Amun-Re. Amun became protector of the royal house. As a result, his powers and influence expanded substantially.

By the beginning of the 18th Dynasty Amun had assumed the role of god of warfare and directed the Pharaoh in his actions against the enemies of Egypt. The planning of many campaigns of conquest was credited to him: he was the essential divine inspiration behind Egypt’s successful strategies. The Pharaoh Kamose claims that he undertook the campaign to expel the 5. Hyksos “ through the command of Amun, the just counsels.” According to historian K. M. Jonsson the priesthood received large donations in gratitude for their assistance. In the Aswan Inscription Thutmose II claimed that both Re and Amun “ smite for him his enemies”, and that his victories resulted because “ his father Amun loved him so much more than any King who had been since the beginning.” Amun is even considered to have brought about

Egypt's expansion into Asia Minor. As a result of their involvement the priests accumulated great wealth and the right to supervise other deities.

In return for Amun's divine sanction the spoils of conquest were lavished on his temples and priesthood. The temple at Karnak became the centre of Egypt's national religion. They did not have to pay taxes. By the year 1160 BC approximately a third of arable land and three quarters of all the wealth of Egypt belonged to the priesthood of Amun-Re at Thebes.

Thutmose III's successors attributed their success, both at home and abroad, in favour of Amun. Amun's pre eminence also had much to do with his syncretism with Re. The Re priesthood had used the prestige of the cult Amun to legitimise their rivalry with the Pharaohs. At the end of the New Kingdom, one priest, Herihon, under Ramses XV, is specifically shown on the temple of Khons and Karnak as being the Pharaoh's equal and at other points in the temple Herihon is shown wearing the double crown.

The Papyrus Harris, a trustworthy primary source dating back to c. 1153 BC, shows the extraordinary wealth the priesthood had accumulated; the estate of Karnak employed a total labour force of over 81, 000 people. With all this power and wealth, Thebes became a semi-independent state within Egypt, ruled by the priests of Amun. Eventually, the office became hereditary. During the New Kingdom the Amun priesthood was supported by the monarch to ensure their allegiance to the Pharaoh.

By the time of the New Kingdom Amun-Re had grown so spiritually and politically important that, as Ellison states, " Egypt became something of a

Theocracy.” Ellison also tells us that at the height of Amun’s worship Egyptian religion approached Monotheism and the other gods became mere manifestations of Amun-Re. Ellison appears to be a reliable source because his information and website appeared professional and intellectual.

Under the 21st Dynasty, Amun intervened directly in daily life through an increasing number of oracles, notably concerning administration and politics. His cult spread as far as Libya, and Amun was adopted as supreme god by the kings of Ethiopia. As the power of Amun spread, his priests proclaimed him the creator of the universe. His followers claimed him, according to Clive Barrett, to be a more powerful manifestation of the mighty god Re.

Through divinely approving or disapproving the heir to the throne, the Amun priesthood soon controlled the country. Gods were asked for their opinions, and their answers were given as ‘ signs’, usually only visible to the priests. In this way the gods ‘ chose’ Thutmose III as Pharaoh. As Thutmose recorded in an inscription in the Temple of Amun at Waset, the god Amun ‘ chose’ him- a minor son of the then Pharaoh- as heir to Egypt’s crown. This source is reliable in that it shows us how it was claimed Thutmose III was chosen, but unreliable in that in reality it was the priesthood, not Amun, that chose him. This source does show us, however, that the priests had marked out the young prince and were prepared to back his claim to the throne.

The High Priest of Amun had charge of the royal tombs and memorial temples, as well as those of Nobles. And so, in the words of Barbara

Watterson, "...the dead as well as the living came under the jurisdiction of Amun's powerful priesthood."

The High Priest represented the Pharaoh within the temple. As the interpreter of the gods' will he held great political power. He was extremely wealthy and influential, and claimed precedence over all other temples and priesthoods. However, the Pharaoh could remove a high priest from office and appoint a new one.

Amun-Re was associated with the Egyptian Monarchy, and so therefore theoretically didn't threaten the Pharaoh's power. The pharaoh derived power from Amun-Re, and in return the Pharaoh supported the temples and the worship of Amun. According to official state theology during the New Kingdom Egypt was actually ruled by Amun-Re through the Pharaohs, with the gods revealing 'His' will through oracles.

In reality, however, it can be seen, as Dr Nicholas Reeves tells us, the god did threaten the monarchy. At one point during the 21st Dynasty priests of the deity actually came to rule Egypt. At other times, Amun-re created difficulties for the King, such as in the case of Arkhenaten, when he sought to change the basic structure of Egyptian religion. Jonsson suggests that we can see the short-lived cult of Aten as a counter-reaction to a centralised priestly power. In this instance, Reeves tells us, Amun-Re "Eventually proved more powerful than the King."

The priest of Amun forced the monarchy to buy their support by convincing the Pharaoh that Amun was solely responsible for their successes. The

Amun priesthood eventually came to have extreme political power, and so ruled Egypt by proxy.