

HELLFROST LAND OF FIRE

• REALM GUIDE #17A •

THE SNAKELANDS OF OLD WEB UPDATE

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PHARAOH PERENMAAT III

Born over a century before Hekata turned to necromancy, Perenmaat III (whose name translates as “Source of balance” in Sandspeech) was a warrior pharaoh. Perenmaat is actually the pharaoh’s official name. His given name was Sekhemib, which translates as “Powerful heart.” This does not imply he was physically fit. Rather, it refers to the metaphysical heart, which in pre-necromancy Hekatic beliefs was the source of emotion and will. As modern Faithful will tell you, it is also the memory store of one’s sins.

Like all pharaohs, Perenmaat was also a high priest. As his name implies, he was a follower of Tammuz, god of balance and death, and once the chief deity of Hekata. Perenmaat’s death has not altered the relationship between mortal and deity.

Following his demise at the Battle of Relentless Fangs, Perenmaat was denied funeral rites by his successor, an act that consigned his soul to the endless void, an area of the universe far from the reach of the gods. That his soul has recently returned to his withered corpse was not down to necromancy.

Pharaoh Perenmaat III is undead, he is arrogant (a trait found in many kings), he craves revenge, and he commands a legion of snakeblood zombies (see p. 3), but he is not evil—his soul has never been judged as such by the gods and it has never entered the Bottomless Pit. Drawn back to the mortal realm by the emergence of the ophidae, his hated enemy from their subterranean domains, Perenmaat is an undead still in the grace of Tammuz, in whom the pharaoh never lost faith. Thus, he continues to be able to invoke miracles. He is still affected by spells that harm or hamper undead, though—the cosmic balance must be maintained lest chaos ensue and Iblis gain strength.

The pharaoh’s only goal is to reach the Afterlife. He is convinced he can achieve this by destroying the ophidae, the task he failed some 2400 years ago. Currently his plans are thwarted by his being unable to leave the site of Pharaoh’s Ruin. He vents his frustration by ordering his minions to attack any creature that trespasses on his army’s mass grave.

Despite this, he could make a valuable ally for a party of adventurers powerful, skilled, or lucky enough to gain audience. In return for helping lure the ophidae out into the open for a return battle, Perenmaat might reveal the location of pharaonic tombs (he has little love for the people that betrayed him after his death). Of course, he cannot say whether or not the tombs are still intact—he has no knowledge of what transpired in the world between his death and rebirth (the latter occurring only in 508 CJ).

Perenmaat’s “natural” form is a shade, a ghostly echo without shape or substance. He is

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HEKATIC ROYAL NAMES

Why are we discussing Hekata here? Because Perenmaat is the first pharaoh with unique stats.

Hekata is modelled on ancient Egypt, and thus it should come as no surprise to readers that many of the Hekatic pharaohs' names have their origins with the ancient rulers of Egypt. This is quite deliberate—I studied Egyptology at college and worked as a personal assistant to an Egyptologist before becoming an RPG writer.

While some might consider taking names straight from history lazy or showing a lack of imagination, it can be argued that doing so gives GMs a ready source of interesting and colorful names. For a full list of Egyptian pharaohs head to Wikipedia and search for "List of Pharaohs."

Like most names, the various pharaohs' names mean something—they're not just a random collection of letters. In many instances clicking on a pharaoh's name on the Wikipedia list will take you to a page that (somewhere) gives the English translation of the name. For instance, Shepseskare (a pharaoh of the 5th Dynasty) translates as "Noble is the Soul of Re." Here the GM has a choice. He can use the name as is, perhaps on the assumption that Re is merely the Hekatic name for Shamash (you'll see Re crop up in several pharaonic names in *Realm Guide #1: Hekata*). Alternately, you might want to swap deity names for those in *Land of Fire*. For instance, Re was the Egyptian sun god, but Shamash fills that role. Thus, the GM might opt to call him Shepseskashamash or Shepseskaash.

Once you know a few common Egyptian elements you can pick and choose to create unique names. For example, *sekhem* means "power" while *per* means "house, origin, or source." *En* is usually translated as "of," so Perensekhem would give the name "Source of power." Similarly, *nefer* means "beautiful or beautiful one," so Neferentamarni would mean "Beautiful one of Tamarni."

What's most important to remember is that there is no definitive right or wrong way to combine or exchange elements—just go with what fits best and is easiest to pronounce. It is probably best to avoid well known names like Ramesses or Tutankhamun, though, at least in unadulterated form.

Note also that pharaohs, especially in later dynasties, usually had multiple names. Some might sound better than the commonly known name. For instance, one of Pepi II's name was Netjerkhau, which is certainly more Hekatic in tone than Pepi. Conversely, some of the names are best avoided. One of Tutankhamun's official names was Wetjeskhausehetepnetjeru Heqamaatsetepnetjeru Wetjeskhauitefre Wetjeskhautjestawim—it sounds impressive, but it doesn't exactly trip off the tongue easily.

not without a physical presence, though, for he can take possession of any minor undead, destroying its spirit and claiming the body as his own. Within seconds of this occurring, the corpse takes on the physical features of Perenmaat as he was in life—tall and powerfully built, and clad in the finery, armor, and weapons of his high station.

Attributes: Agility d8, Smarts d8, Spirit d12, Strength d10, Vigor d10

Skills: Faith d10, Fighting d10, Intimidation d10, Knowledge (Battle) d8, Knowledge (Religion) d6, Notice d12, Shooting d8

Charisma: +2; **Pace:** 6; **Parry:** 8; **Toughness:** 12 (3)

Hindrances: Arrogant, Death Wish, Vengeful (Major)

Edges: Ambidextrous, Arcane Background (Miracles: Tammuz), Block, Command, Favored Foe (Ophidae), Fervor, Noble, Quick Draw, Strong Willed, Two-Fisted

Languages: Hekatic, Sslaniss

Gear: Bronze breastplate (+3), pair of bronze short swords (Str+d6)

Treasure: Rich (jewelry)

Special Abilities:

- * **Hardy:** Does not suffer a wound from being Shaken twice.
- * **Powers:** *Arcane Resistance, armor, bolt, boost/lower trait, dispel, quickness, smite, warrior's gift, weaken undead.*
- * **Transfer Essence:** Pharaoh Perenmaat III can transfer its essence to any Extra undead within 5" as an action. This requires a Faith roll. On a success, his old body crumbles to dust and the new body immediately gains this stat block. The new Perenmaat is fully healed of any wounds. On a failure, Perenmaat must remain in spirit form for 10 years before he may attempt this again.
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage. Immune to disease and poison. Suffers no wound penalties.

SNAKE

TOMB

The withered pharaohs of Hekata, fixated with ensuring their earthly remains and fabulous wealth remained undisturbed, created tomb snakes, animating the skeletal remains of serpents using dark spells and transforming their venom into a necromantic poison. The method their creation is now (thankfully) lost, but untold numbers still haunt the dusty crypts and pyramids of the cursed realm.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d12, Stealth d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 5

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Str+d4.

The Snakelands of Old Web Update

- * **Necromantic Poison (0):** A character Shaken or wounded by a tomb snake's bite must make a Vigor roll. With success, the bite area swells and becomes numb. The victim becomes Exhausted until healed. On a failure, the victim cannot benefit from any healing, magical or mundane, for 24 hours. If he dies while the poison is in his system, he rises 2d4 rounds later as a zombie. Cumulative bites on a poisoned character have no effect.
- * **Quick:** Tomb snakes are notoriously fast. They may discard action cards of 5 or lower and draw another. They must keep the replacement card, however.
- * **Size -2:** Tomb snakes measure 5-7' in length.
- * **Small:** Attackers are -2 to attack rolls due to the creature's size.
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage. Immune to disease and poison.

WHIP

Whip snakes are non-venomous. Their head is brightly colored, with hoods similar to those of a pharaoh cobra. When ready to attack, a whip snake rears up, its long, thin, muscular tail concealed beneath a thin layer of sand. While its intended prey keeps a watchful gaze on the serpent's head, believing it is about to bite, the creature whips its tail, which is tipped with a bony lump, to batter its prey to death.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4, Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d12, Stealth d8

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 4

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Quick:** Snakes are notoriously fast. They may discard action cards of 5 or lower and draw another. They must keep the replacement card, however.
- * **Size -1:** Whip snakes measure around 9' in length, though only 4' is usually visible.
- * **Tail:** Str+d4.

WINGED

Save for their feathery wings, winged snake appear similar to cobras. Winged serpents are not true fliers, and are capable of only short duration flights.

Attributes: Agility d10, Smarts d4(A), Spirit d6, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d8, Notice d12

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 3

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Bite:** Str+d4.
- * **Flight:** Pace 6. Can maintain flight for three rounds only. If it does not land at the end of the third round it falls. Once on the ground, it must remain there for an entire round before it can take off again.
- * **Poison (0):** Venomous type poison. A character Shaken or wounded by a winged snake's bite must make a Vigor roll.

- * **Quick:** Snakes are notoriously fast. They may discard action cards of 5 or lower and draw another. They must keep the replacement card, however.

- * **Size -2:** Winged snakes measure 5' in length but are thin.

- * **Small:** Attackers are -2 to attack rolls due to the creature's size.

ZOMBIE

SNAKEBLOOD

Created from the corpses of the Hekatic warriors who fell to the venomous bites of countless serpents at the Battle of Relentless Fangs (circa -1914 CJ), snakeblood zombies are found only in the region of Pharaoh's Ruin in the Snakelands of Old.

They owe their existence to the return of Pharaoh Perenmaat III's shade to the mortal realm after many centuries wandering in the great void. Denied burial rites in the same manner as their master, their souls slumbered in their lifeless flesh and bones, awaiting either a call to arms or the embrace of the gods. When pharaoh returned and summoned his legion to his side, they dutifully obeyed.

Despite not being evil souls plucked from the Bottomless Pit by spawn of Iblis or khem-hekau mages, they are still counted as undead, both in terms of vulnerabilities. The cult of Tammuz knows nothing of their origins, and thus treats them as it does all undead.

Naturally mummified by the hot sand, the zombies have hard, withered skin. Through their veins flows a thin, black ichor, an unholy blend of serpent venom and necromantic energy. By slicing their flesh, they can coat their weapons in this deadly fluid. So potent is it that it can actually harm undead, creatures normally immune to poisons.

Attributes: Agility d6, Smarts d4, Spirit d4, Strength d6, Vigor d6

Skills: Fighting d6, Intimidation d6, Notice d4, Shooting d6, Stealth d4

Pace: 4; **Parry:** 6; **Toughness:** 8 (1)

Gear: Small shield (+1 Parry), short sword, axe, or short spear (Str+d6; Reach 1 for spear), 25% have bows (Range: 12/24/48, Damage 2d6)

Treasure: None

Special Abilities:

- * **Armor (+1):** Hard, withered skin.
- * **Poisonous Blood (-1):** As an action a snakeblood zombie can coat its weapon in its blood. The blood is Lethal poison that can also harm undead (but not other creatures immune to poison). The poison remains potent for the entire combat.
- * **Undead:** +2 Toughness. +2 to recover from being Shaken. Called shots do no extra damage. Immune to disease and poison.