



BACKGROUND GUIDE

WAMUNC XXIV

Avatar: The Last Airbender

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Delegates,

It is with great excitement that I welcome you to the Avatar: the Last Airbender committee at WAMUNC XXIV! It is my strong belief that Avatar is one of the finest pieces of art to ever grace the television screen and I am thrilled to have the opportunity to organize a committee centered around the amazing world constructed by Michael DiMartino and Bryan Konietzko.

As an Avatar-obsessed bunch, the crisis staff for this committee impatiently waits to see the avenues you choose to embark on as politicians, military officials, bending masters, and religious leaders amidst the tumult of the post-Roku global landscape. Because the Avatar universe is heavily rooted in real-world cultures and religions, we strongly encourage our participants to dig deeper into the origins of the show's contents – if you can reasonably use your knowledge of traditional Chinese warfare tactics or indigenous Inuit shamanism in your arcs, we will do everything possible to incorporate your ideas into the committee's plotlines. In the same vein, we ask that all delegates remain mindful of the real-world implications of their rhetoric and actions while in character.

It is my hope that throughout this committee, you will push yourselves to develop creative backroom arcs, innovative frontroom directives, and have an enormous amount of fun getting to know a previously unexplored side of the Avatar timeline. This is just as exciting for the chairs and crisis staff as it is for you!

We look forward to hosting you in our committee in a few months' time! In the meantime, please feel free to reach out to me at ysadoudi@gwmail.gwu.edu with any questions regarding the lore explored in this background guide or the scope of the committee.

Warmly,

Yasmine Sadoudi

Crisis Director - Avatar: the Last Airbender Inter-Nation Council

WAMUNC XXIV

COMMITTEE OVERVIEW

Committee Leadership Bios:

Cyrena Kokolis (Chair): Cyrena Kokolis, hailing from southern New Jersey, is a senior at GW's Elliott School of International Affairs concentrating in Conflict Resolution and minoring in Geographic Information Systems and French. She currently works as an investigative analyst at Miburo, a research and consulting firm that tracks digital disinformation and extremism. Outside of work and school, you can find her biking around DC, painting, playing the piano, or rehearsing with her a cappella group, the GW Pitches (trust her, it's just as embarrassing as it sounds). Cyrena has been competing in Model UN since middle school, and she is beyond excited to have the opportunity to chair such an amazing committee at her last GW conference.

Yasmine Sadoudi (Crisis Director): Yasmine Sadoudi is a senior in the Elliott School of International Affairs with interests in Middle Eastern politics, North African history, indigenous studies, and the intersection of security and environmental sustainability in post-conflict development. She has previously worked as a lead project consultant for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and a research assistant for the Sigur Center for Asian Studies. A rampant bibliophile, she's always on the hunt for her next literary hyperfixation. When she doesn't have her face buried in a book, she thoroughly enjoys figure skating, indulging in video games (especially those featuring dinosaurs), and exploring beaches around the world.

Introduction to Committee:

This committee will use standard crisis committee parliamentary procedure as described in the WAMUNC Delegate Guide. Additionally, the dais will make use of cartographic crisis updates to provide information on military movements in real time to the delegates. Throughout the course of this committee, delegates must engage in both frontroom debate and backroom arcs in order to successfully accomplish their self-prescribed objectives. While each position will receive a backstory in this guide, delegates will be responsible for setting, communicating, and achieving their goals to the backroom staff through crisis notes. Creativity and attention to detail will be rewarded above all else in the development of directives and backroom objectives, so feel free to write letters to advisors, draw maps, or use untraditional request formats in your crisis notes. We ask that all requests from the backroom staff remain respectful of the cultures represented in the Avatar universe at all times in accordance with WAMUNC's code of conduct.

Because this campaign takes place in 45 AG (After Genocide), the events described in the original Avatar: the Last Airbender show will not strictly be followed in order to allow for the creative freedom of delegates. As such, the plotline of Avatar Aang's re-appearance after 100 years will not be factored in the scope of this committee. Delegates will be able to pursue the option of searching for the new Avatar among the few remaining exiled air nomads if they so choose (see Historical Background and Questions to Consider sections below for more context).

The best preparation for this committee apart from reading this background guide is to watch the original Avatar: the Last Airbender show (available on Netflix, Amazon Prime, YouTube, and Paramount Plus). Though the background for this committee is rooted heavily in the lore covered in the first season of the original Avatar show, some of the historical and political background for this committee is headcanon developed specifically for this committee, all of which must be read thoroughly in order to succeed. Requests having to do with canon content from the Avatar comics, Avatar Wiki, the Kyoshi novels, or The Legend of Korra will be entertained by the dais and backroom staff in moderation.

BACKGROUND GUIDE

Historical Background

Committee Setting and Timeline of Events

This committee is situated within a conference in Ba Sing Se, the capital city of the Earth Kingdom, among military officers, governors, and other leaders from the Earth Kingdom and the Water Tribe, whose northern and southern components are still unified despite escalating tensions between the two territories. The following timeline describes the series of events leading up to the council's gathering (please note that in this timeline, the Avatar following Roku has not yet been discovered):

Timeline

12 Before Genocide (BG):

- Avatar Roku is killed while fighting a volcanic eruption at age seventy.

The Hundred Year War (0-100 AG)

- Fire Lord Sozin begins what will be the Hundred Year War by attacking the other nations. He uses the power of a comet, later renamed Sozin's Comet in his honor, to launch a genocidal attack on the Air Nomads in an attempt to kill the Avatar. Air Nomads are largely massacred during the initial attack and the Fire Nation launches campaigns to hunt and execute the few remaining airbenders who managed to escape.
- Simultaneous to the genocide, the Fire Nation launches attacks on the Earth Kingdom and Water Tribes. In the Earth Kingdom, the Fire Army is able to establish a strong foothold, slowly but surely advancing across the continent over the course of the next hundred years. Fire Lord-to-be Azulon is born.

15 AG:

- In an attempted invasion of the North, the Fire Navy and the Northern Water Tribe engage in battle, ending in Northern Water Tribe victory and the capture of Fire Navy troops and uniforms.

20 AG:

- Fire Lord Sozin dies at age 102; Fire Lord Azulon ascends the throne.

40 AG — 45 AG:

- The Fire Navy destroys the navies of the Northern and Southern Water Tribes in a series of massive naval battles. This leaves the South unprotected, while the North retreats behind its icy defenses. The Fire Nation is preparing to launch raids on the Southern Water Tribe, planning to destroy its city and capture its waterbending population.

Present Day

- Avatar Roku has been dead for nearly six decades and the new Avatar has yet to reveal themselves to the world. It is therefore unknown to the council whether they are living as an exiled air nomad or if they were killed and reincarnated as a member of the Water Tribe.

State of the Four Nations and Political Structures in the Avatar Universe

Sozin's Comet has empowered the Fire Nation to rapidly industrialize and launch a global war in pursuit of military hegemony. The destruction caused by the Hundred Year War has caused extensive resource scarcity in the Earth Kingdom's rural areas, accompanied by a significant uptick in banditry and gang activity as well. Several groups with the objective of overthrowing Earth monarchs have formed, making for a tumultuous political landscape and threatening the legitimacy of current royal leaders.

In the Water Tribe, the Hundred Year War has exacerbated socioeconomic debates to a dangerous extent. As the South continues to struggle, growing resentment from Southern tribal leaders over social and defense matters continues to be apparent in communications with the North. The destruction of the Water Tribe's navies has left the South vulnerable to attack by the Fire Nation.

With the full-scale genocide of the air nomads having taken place forty-five years ago, it is thought that the civilization as a whole is extinct. Rumors of exiled airbenders in the most rural areas of the Earth Kingdom have been circulated for decades, though there are few substantiated claims of their appearance. Leaders fear that the air Avatar was killed in the Fire Nation's attacks on the air temples, meaning that the new Avatar could potentially have been reincarnated in either of the two regions of the Water Tribe.

Water Tribes

At this stage in the Hundred Year War, the Water Tribe is a unified tribal chiefdom headed by the Chief, traditionally a male leader from the North who presides over the affairs of all members of the Northern and Southern sects of the tribe. The title of Chief is passed down through male members of the ruling family, thought to have been chosen by the spirits to lead the members of both the Northern and Southern members of the tribe. The Chief is the sole leader of the Water Tribe but is advised by a council of spiritual, military, and political figures from the Northern community. Due to the physical distance between the two sects of the Water Tribe, the South appoints a Tribal Leader (of any gender) to represent the region's interests while reporting to the Chief in the North.

The two sects of the Water Tribe are separated by more than just a world's worth of distance – the North's affluence and deeply traditional spirituality make for a socially conservative environment, whereas the South is economically underdeveloped and has embraced more unorthodox spiritual practices. For example, the South's training of

female waterbending fighters is generally frowned upon by Northern political figures. Cultural differences such as these have driven a wedge between the two sects of the Water Tribe, a division which is only further exacerbated by the drastic economic disparities between the two societies.

Earth Kingdom

Though the ruler of Ba Sing Se, titled as the Earth King or Queen, is the official overall leader of the Earth Kingdom, the country functions as a sort of confederation, with individual states, provinces, and cities given a great deal of autonomy. Outside of the cities, the central government has little influence. Furthermore, the Earth Kingdom has no unified system of laws, with each region having its own legal code. These territories do, however, provide support and troops to the Earth King whenever necessary and the military functions as a unified body.

Ba Sing Se

Executive power of the government of Ba Sing Se and, by extension, the entire Earth Kingdom is vested to the earth monarch. It should be noted that the day-to-day affairs of the city are managed by the Grand Secretariat, who answers only to the monarch. The power of the Earth Monarch was, until the reign of the 46th Earth King, largely absolute. This changed when both a war of conquest and a peasant uprising proved his authority less than legitimate, and Avatar Kyoshi intimidated him into accepting a more reduced role. As such, the monarchy became more constitutional and large amounts of power were ceded to the bureaucrats, with the monarch becoming more of a figurehead. As successive monarchs delegated more and more power to their underlings in favor of pursuing personal leisure and pleasures, the bureaucracy became highly corrupt and self-serving.

Omasu

Omasu, though part of the Earth Kingdom and therefore answerable to the Earth King in Ba Sing Se, has its own monarch and is relatively autonomous of the capital.

Earth Kingdom Provinces

The Earth Kingdom's various self-governing provinces represented in the Inter-Nation Council include Hu Xin, Gaoling, and the Eastern Provinces. These areas are ruled through a mixture of nobles and governors which administer the political, economic, and sociocultural affairs of the people within their territories.

Kyoshi Island

Kyoshi Island was once a peninsula whose largest settlement was Yokoya, and was largely impoverished with most eking out a living as farmers and sailors. Possessing little economic and strategic importance meant that it was ignored by the official government and left largely to its own devices. However, it gained notoriety when Avatar Kyoshi was discovered there, and she made it her adopted home. When the peninsula was directly threatened by Chin the Conqueror, Kyoshi responded by using the power of the Avatar State to separate the peninsula from the mainland and push it out to sea as an island, also indirectly killing Chin in the process. As a result of this act, the new island was named Kyoshi Island in her honor and the Avatar herself became its political governor, a position she ceded to her daughter Koko. Though Kyoshi Island is ruled by a governor, each village maintains its own leader who acts as an authority in local politics, settling legal disputes and overseeing the local chapters of the Kyoshi Warriors who serve as the island's police and security forces. Though the governor swears fealty to the central government of Ba Sing Se, it is largely lip service and the island is mostly autonomous.

Fire Nation

An autocratic monarchy, the Fire Nation was formerly ruled by a council of Fire Sages until the Fire Lord broke from the council and established a monarchy. The Fire Lord's authority is considered absolute and maintains control over the military and domestic politics, assisted by a council of trusted advisors. During the Era of Szeto, the Grand Advisor was the highest-ranking minister in the Fire Nation, although the office was defunct during the life of Avatar Kyoshi, with the Chancellor acting as the most senior Fire Nation official. Though the title is male-oriented, the position of Fire Lord itself is gender-neutral and females can inherit the crown without issue. The firstborn child is the Heir to the Fire Lord, usually referred to as the Crown Prince or the Crown Princess, though the firstborn can be passed over for inheritance at the discretion of the Fire Lord. The position is usually held for life, but incumbent Fire Lords can choose to step down and pass on the crown to their heirs.

Prior to the ascendance of Fire Lord Sozin to the throne, the Fire Nation maintained positive relations with the other three nations. The imperialist doctrine introduced by Sozin was challenged by Avatar Roku, a long-time friend of the Fire Lord's, until his death in 12 BG. Following the demise of Avatar Roku, no checks were left in place to prevent the Fire Nation from launching a genocide against the Air Nation and initiating the imperialism conquest of Earth Kingdom and Water Tribe territories. The Fire Nation will stop at nothing to gain hegemonic control of the world, and dissenters within its ranks and communities are subject to imprisonment and cruel punishment.

Committee Topics to Address

- Fire Nation encroachment on Water Tribe and Earth Kingdom territories
- Intra-tribal tensions between northern and southern regions of Water Tribe
- Resource shortages and their effects
- Search for the Avatar

Questions to Consider

- How can the committee best combat the Fire Nation's imperial campaigns?
- Should the Water Tribe separate into two sovereign territories or attempt to reunify?
- How can the Council best address resource shortages in the Earth Kingdom and Water Tribe? How can we best combat the instability they've caused in each Nation?
- Are resources best spent looking for the potentially exiled air Avatar or waiting for the next water Avatar to appear? Should the council give up its search altogether?

Character List and Position Descriptions

* *King Hanyu (Earth Kingdom - Ba Sing Se)*: Seen as a central pillar of stability in the central Earth Kingdom, King Hanyu is beloved by members of the Ba Sing Se community. Outside of the Earth Kingdom capital however, officials and citizens alike worry that his old age and dubious health has hindered his ability to serve as head of state. These concerns are furthered by his recent rhetoric regarding impending Fire Nation attacks on the Earth Kingdom, in which he described a slow and steady approach to resisting conquest. The legitimacy of Hanyu's rule lies in his ability to convince the remainder of the Earth Kingdom of the soundness of his politics and leadership.

- *Chief Inuksuk (Water Tribe - North)*: Descended from a long line of spiritual and political leaders, Chief Inuksuk commands the respect of the North's Tribal Council and its people. Under his rule, construction projects meant to militarily reinforce the walls and surrounding area of the Northern sect of the Water Tribe have proven successful in the face of Fire Nation incursions, earning him popularity and a protective reputation amongst his fellow Northerners. However, he has been accused of alienating members of the South by neglecting their economic and defense needs, leaving them unprepared to fend off the Fire Nation's powerful navy.

- *Tribal Leader Ahnah (Water Tribe - South)*: Having grown up in a Southern fishing town, Leader Ahnah earned her political position by endearing herself to the merchants within her community. Leader Ahnah has fiercely advocated for directing the Council's search for the new Avatar among the young members of the Southern sect of the Water Tribe in an attempt to lobby for increased protection of her people. She sees the economic development of the South as a matter of self-preservation and will do anything it takes to ensure her tribe's safety against the Fire Nation. Her relationship with Chief Inuksuk of the North is considerably strained by her implementation of waterbending training programs for the non-male members of the South against the will of Northern advisors.
- *King Ulagan (Earth Kingdom - Omashu)*: King Ulagan's good-hearted nature and political benevolence have earned him the love and respect of Omashu's citizens. His son, Bumi, is a cultural icon to Omashuans and the Earth Kingdom in its entirety. King Ulagan is largely apolitical as an authority figure, often opting to abstain from Earth Kingdom political discourse in favor of preserving the neutrality and sovereignty of his people. In recent years, Omashu's vulnerability to attacks by ground forces has become increasingly apparent, making it a prime target for the Fire Nation. Only time will tell the political direction Ulagan will take in upcoming talks on international defense initiatives.
- *Master Silla (Water Tribe - South)*: A long-time friend of Leader Ahnah, Silla is among the first female waterbending masters in the South. She currently serves as the inaugural headmaster of the South's Waterbending Academy for Girls, much to the dismay of Northern leaders. Though not officially politically active, she has been suspected of leveraging her relationship with Leader Ahnah to advocate for Southern sovereignty from Northern political structures. Her advocacy for the use of female waterbenders to expand the ranks of the tribe's fighting forces has drawn controversy from conservative members of the Southern community.

- *Master Tulok (Water Tribe - North)*: Master Tulok's commitment to tradition and his membership on the Northern Tribal Council make him a widely recognized figure in the North. A frequent proponent of the Water Tribe's status quo, he is considered one of the Council's most conservative members and adamantly opposes teaching forms of waterbending other than healing practices to women. His prior service in the Water Tribe's navy has hardened his disposition and earned him the respect of other tribal elders.

- *Captain Midori (Earth Kingdom - Kyoshi Island)*: As commander of the Kyoshi warriors, Captain Midori has proven herself as a terrifying force on the battlefield (especially impressive given her inability to earthbend). Her devotion to Avatar Kyoshi lends itself to her fierce advocacy for the continued independence of the island from the Earth Kingdom, though recent military posturing by the Fire Nation have left the inhabitants of the island concerned as to her force's ability to fend off full-scale military campaigns. Captain Midori must balance her people's need for protection and their desire to remain sovereign during her involvement in the Council's deliberations.

- *Governor Zhao (Earth Kingdom - Gaoling)*: A close friend of Gaoling nobility, Governor Zhao has served a record six three-year terms as the administrator-in-chief of the province. Despite being repeatedly re-elected to the governorship, public opinion on Zhao's leadership demonstrates plummeting approval rates amidst a flurry of hijackings perpetrated by bandits and commercial disruptions caused by Fire Nation attacks on peripheral trading routes. Ultimately, Governor Zhao seeks to expel disruptive forces from the region and repair her political reputation at any cost.

- *Shaman Nuvua (Water Tribe - South)*: A skilled healer and beloved religious figure, Shaman Nuvua takes a notably bold approach to bending and spiritual practices. Her communication with the spirits has convinced her of the need for spiritual support to restore balance to the world in the absence of the Avatar. Believing that desperate times call for desperate measures, she has consistently lobbied Southern community leaders to allow for the opening of spirit portals in the hope that the spirits would fight against the Fire Nation on their behalf. Though these claims have been met with severe skepticism by her fellow Southerners, several members of the Northern Tribal Council have demonstrated interest in her proposals.

- *Shaman Uki (Water Tribe - North)*: A staunch spiritualist, Shaman Uki is an ardent supporter of incorporating spiritual entities in the fight against the Fire Nation, believing that the direness of the world's circumstances outweigh the unpredictability of spirit portals. Additionally, Shaman Uki consistently advocates for searching for the Avatar amongst the youngest members of the North, hoping that adding another spiritual backstop against Fire Nation imperialism will prove more effective than the traditional warfare tactics employed by other members of the Inter-Nation Council.

- *Shaman Yura (Water Tribe - North)*: Shaman Yura is the seeming sole advocate for allowing women to learn combative forms of waterbending and join Water Tribe military units in the fight against the Fire Nation. She often communicates with her Southern counterparts on how to best represent their wishes to Northern Leaders, resulting in claims of her disloyalty to the Northern Tribal Council. With her seat on the Council seemingly in jeopardy, Shaman Yura must carefully balance her obligations to the North's commitment to tradition and her desire to implement progressive reforms.

- *Governor Li (Earth Kingdom - Hu Xin Provinces)*: One of the youngest governors in Earth Kingdom history, nineteen year-old Li struggles to maintain control over the anarchic, rural environment in the Hu Xin Provinces. Having inherited the governorship from his late father, he is under equipped to address upticks in Fire Nation aggression and banditry in the region. Above all else, Governor Li seeks to prevent the total collapse of the Hu Xin political apparatus by securing military alliances with the Kingdom's other leaders and encouraging earth monarchs to develop a unified, coherent military response to existing and emerging threats to his people's safety and resources.

Note: All characters and their descriptions are headcanon content. While their names may refer to existing characters or their families in Avatar: the Last Airbender, each of the listed positions was created specifically for this committee. All members of the committee are proficient in the bending art of their respective nations unless otherwise indicated.

