

Ancient Egypt: The Libyan Period
The British Museum

The period is called 'Libyan' because many of the kings at this time had Libyan names. At the end of the New Kingdom, Egypt was divided between the northern kings ruling from their new capital of Tanis, and the high priests of Amun at Thebes. As the period progressed, the country became more and more fragmented. By the time the Kushite Piye invaded, there were four individuals calling themselves king, as well as princes, chiefs and other local dynasts.

The limited resources available to these rulers, caused by the fragmentation of the country, led to the reuse of building materials and statues. Original art of this period moved away from the opulence of the Ramesside period, and was more austere and traditional. Innovations in metalworking led to this medium becoming popular for statuary.

Tombs of the Libyan period were sometimes located within temple enclosures, perhaps as part of a change in religious belief. This, and the caching (gathering together for safety) of groups of coffins, may also reflect insecurity, perhaps due to the systematic plundering of the Theban necropolis. Inscriptions by private people within temples suggests a new relationship between ordinary people and the gods.