

Ancient Egypt: 3rd Intermediate Period **The British Museum**

The early part of the Third Intermediate Period is characterized by its kings of Libyan descent.

During the Twenty-first to Twenty-fourth Dynasties the country was divided between several lines of kings, based in the Nile Delta, and the high priests of Amun at Thebes. Many of the northern kings, and some of the southern high priests had Libyan names, and were probably descended from slaves settled in this area during the New Kingdom. As the period progressed the country further fragmented, with many local rulers. The Kushite kings (Twenty-fifth Dynasty) united Egypt and governed from their capital in Kush. However, this remote rulership left Egypt vulnerable to invasion by the Assyrians, and eventually allowed a native ruler to seize power.

Tombs were often placed within temple enclosures, and burials were added to them over time. Legal inscriptions were sometimes placed on temple walls so that they could be witnessed and upheld by the gods. Frequently, the tombs were not decorated; instead, the required funerary scenes were placed on coffins and papyri. Statuary, often metal, was reused in this period. Inscriptions and literary works reflected the instability of the times.