

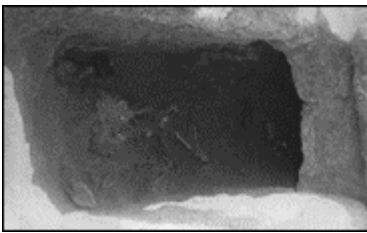


2. The Kerma Culture (2500-1500 b.c.)

While the C-Group had been developing in Lower Nubia, the Kerma culture was developing in Upper Nubia. Archaeologists still have much to learn about the Kerma culture and its origins. The most important town was located at the site of Kerma itself. Excavations there have revealed a large, complex cemetery, which developed over about a thousand years. Tombs there date from the Old Kerma through Middle Kerma to Classic Kerma. The Classic Kerma was the time of the greatest wealth and power of the Kerma kings.

The town at Kerma was the center or one of the centers of a Kingdom that was involved in trade with regions to the north. The Kerma kings traded products of Africa to Egypt and other countries of the Eastern Mediterranean region. The Egyptians called the kingdom of Kerma "Kush". Kush was the general name used by the Egyptians for Upper Nubia. Since the people of Kush did not have writing, we do not know what they called themselves.

By the time of the Classic Kerma (1800-1550 b.c.), the kings of Kerma were building tremendous tumulus tombs for themselves. These tombs were filled with many precious objects. The Kerma kings were buried on beds in chambers in the middle of these tumuli. The Kerma people also sacrificed hundreds of humans to be buried with their kings. The bodies of the sacrificial victims were found filling the corridors of the tumulus burials of the Kerma kings.



In the center of the Kerma town there was a large temple complex. The Kerma town was a religious as well as a political center for the Kerma kingdom. The power of the Kerma kings as leaders was connected with their religious functions.

During the Middle Kingdom (2000-1800 b.c.) the Egyptians built fortresses in Lower Nubia. These fortresses controlled trade with people to the south, such as the Kerma kingdom, and protected against the threat of invasion by these powerful kings. At the end of the Middle Kingdom, the Egyptian pharaohs lost interest in possessing Lower Nubia because Egypt was entering a period of fragmentation. At this time the Kerma kings extended their control northward into Lower Nubia. Kerma influence in Lower Nubia continued from around 1700 b.c. to 1550 b.c.