



## 2. Meroitic Period (ca. 295 b.c. - a.d. 320)

### **Karanog**

The objects found at Karanog provide information about many facets of life in Meroitic Lower Nubia. The buildings found in the town site show that the peshto had a palace at Karanog, a three-story building made of mud brick, with storerooms, domestic areas including kitchens, and administrative areas with a reception hall. The objects found in the Karanog cemetery give evidence about how people lived, Meroitic trade networks, burial customs in Lower Nubia, and local industries such as pottery making.

The cemetery at Karanog consisted of several types of tombs. Though simpler tombs included underground chambers without a superstructure, the most complex graves copied the royal tomb form used at Meroe: a pyramidal superstructure with underground burial chambers, which were filled with the objects the tomb owner would need in the afterlife. Against the side of the pyramid was a small chapel with a vaulted or flat roof, which contained a stela painted with a picture of the tomb owner. In front of the chapel was a low brick platform, upon which was placed a sandstone offering table, sometimes carved with a short inscription and a decorative scene.



Priests would use this offering table as a place to pour liquid offerings for the tomb owner. Set in a niche in the pyramid above the chapel was a funerary statue that showed the tomb owner as he or she looked when alive; the statues of the peshtos show them dressed in ornate robes and gold jewelry. However, the funerary statues also show the dead person as a spirit, because they always have wings: this may be the Nubian interpretation of the Egyptian belief in the ba, one aspect of the dead person's spirit that was thought to be winged like a bird.



The objects found in the Karanog tombs generally consisted of clothing, jewelry, and sandals for the tomb owner to wear; items needed for personal adornment, such as eye makeup containers and tweezers; and pottery vessels for the food and drink the dead person would require. Some of the tombs contained objects that hint at the occupation of the people buried within them. Women could be buried with domestic objects, such as wooden spindle whorls, which are small domed objects used in spinning. Some of the more wealthy tomb owners took imported objects to the tomb with them, such as oil flasks, bronze cups, or large wine jars. Among the most common objects found at Karanog were strings of beads, some of which were glass imported from Roman Egypt.