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Harriet Crawford

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Harriet Crawford presents a scholarly and up-to-date account of the archaeology of the Arabian Gulf from c. 4500–1500 BC. It offers a new interpretation of the structure of society in the Early Dilmun period (c. 2000–1700 BC) using material from the recently excavated site of Saar on the main Bahrain island. The urban, centralized and probably literate society in Dilmun is contrasted with the contemporary societies in Oman and the Emirates. Here there is evidence from buildings and graves for a loosely knit, apparently tribal society. Both societies were greatly influenced by their participation in the complex trade routes which linked them with ancient Mesopotamia to the north and the Indus Valley to the south east, but developed their own distinctive cultures. The reason for their divergent development seems to relate to the fact that Dilmun was an entrepot, while the Oman peninsula was a source of raw materials.

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## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In 1989 Robert Killick and Jane Moon invited me to join them in setting up the London–Bahrain Archaeological Expedition (LBAE) to study the economy and society of ancient Dilmun. Thanks to the Ministry of Information of the State of Bahrain we were granted a permit to continue work at the partially excavated site of Saar in the north-west of the island and so began the first extensive investigation of the social and economic structure of Dilmun. I am deeply grateful to my colleagues for offering me the opportunity to take part in this exciting and important undertaking which broke new ground for us all. It also led to my growing interest in the archaeology and social development of the adjacent regions of the Arabian Peninsula. This book is an attempt to synthesize a great deal of rather fragmentary material into some kind of coherent picture of the very different ways in which the two areas developed between the late fourth and the early second millennia. It will inevitably be somewhat out of date by the time it appears as new material is becoming available almost every month. This is the result of an upsurge in archaeological work over the last ten years which is intensifying rather than declining. In spite of this, I hope that students will find that this book fills a gap in the admirable framework provided by works such as Professor D.T. Potts' *The Arabian Gulf in Prehistory* which concentrate largely on the basic data, rather than its interpretation.

Many people have helped me in the preparation of this book and my deepest debt is to Professor Marlies Heinz and Michael Rice who found time to plough through early drafts of the manuscript. The finished product benefitted enormously from their kind, constructive, and knowledgeable criticism. It is a great pleasure to acknowledge my debt to them both. I have also been fortunate in being able to discuss many points with my colleague at the Institute of Archaeology, Carl Phillips, who has been most generous with his time and information.

The drawings and photographs come from many sources and once again I must thank Robert Killick and Jane Moon for allowing me to use so much of the Saar material. The interpretations are my own, and do not necessarily reflect their views. The drawings are the work of Ruth Carter, Tessa Rickards and Duncan Woodburn all of whom have shown themselves endlessly patient and skilful. In addition the following have kindly given me permission to use drawings or photographs of which they hold the copyright: The National Museum of Bahrain, Shirley Kay, Derek Kennett, Carl Phillips, Michael Rice and Michael Roaf.

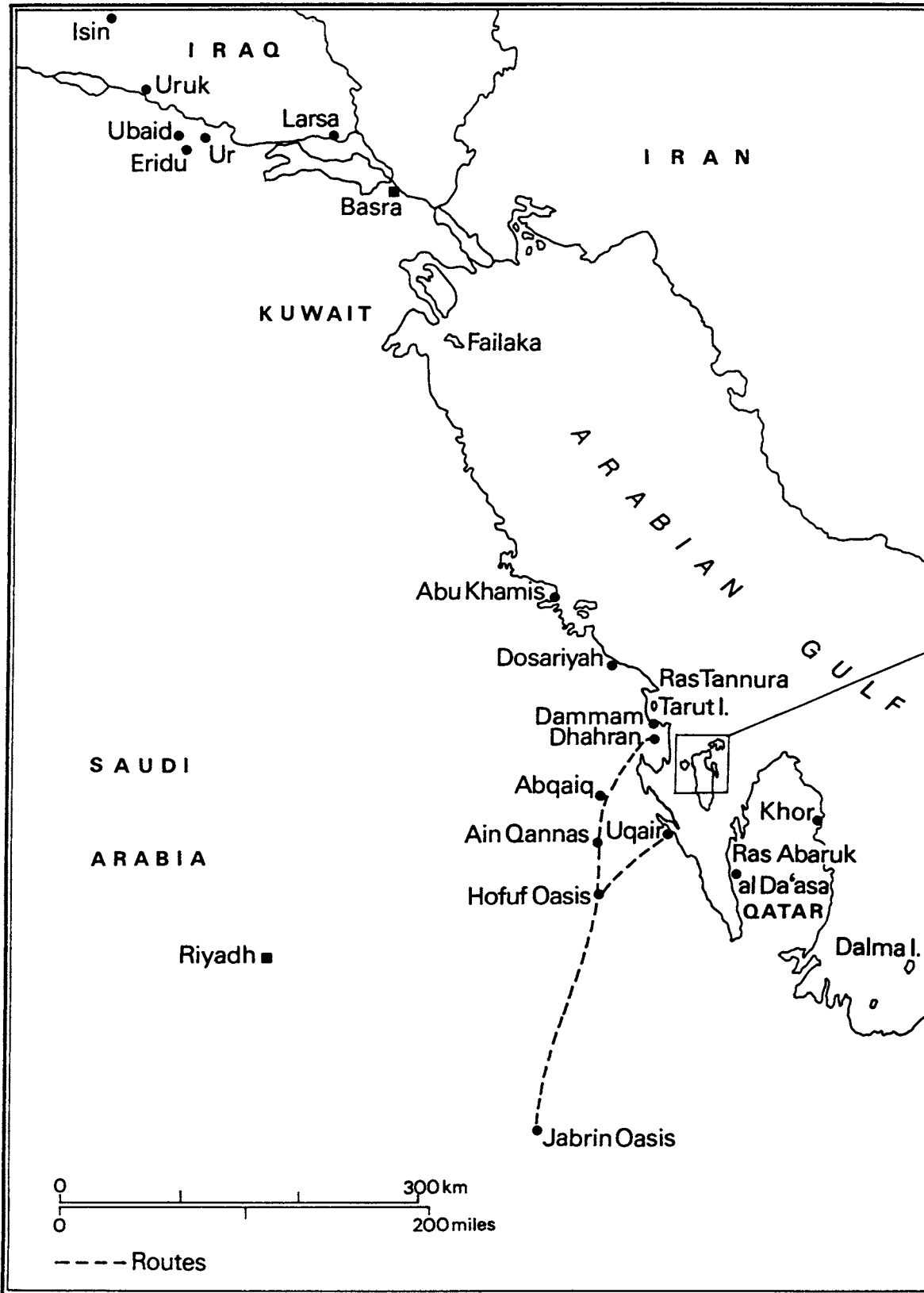
Finally, my husband Peter, who despairs of my punctuation, dealt with my commas with a kindly, but firm hand. Thank you all.

## ABBREVIATIONS

- AAE. Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy.  
 ARET. Archivi Reali di Ebla, Testi, Rome.  
 AUAE. Archaeology in the United Arab Emirates.  
 BASOR. Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research.  
 BBVO. Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient.  
 BTAA. Bahrain through the ages: the archaeology. eds. Al Khalifa, Shaikha Haya Ali and Michael Rice, Kegan Paul International 1986.  
 CNI. Carsten Niebuhr Institute Copenhagen.  
 DAFI. Délégation archéologique française en Iran.  
 JAOS. Journal of the American Oriental Society.  
 JASP. Jutland Archaeological Society Publications.  
 JOS. Journal of Oman Studies.  
 LBAE. London–Bahrain Archaeological Expedition.  
 Mus.Cat. *Bahrain National Museum. Archaeological Collections. PreIslamic antiquities from excavations 1954–1975 I.* eds. Pierre Lombard and Monik Kevran.  
 PSAS. Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies.

## GLOSSARY

- BARASTI – Light structure built of palm leaves or other organic materials.  
 FARUSH – Carbonate beach rock formed in shallow lagoons.  
 QANĀT – Underground water channels linked to a spring and maintained by means of vertical shafts at regular intervals. Together they form an irrigation system which minimises evaporation.



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