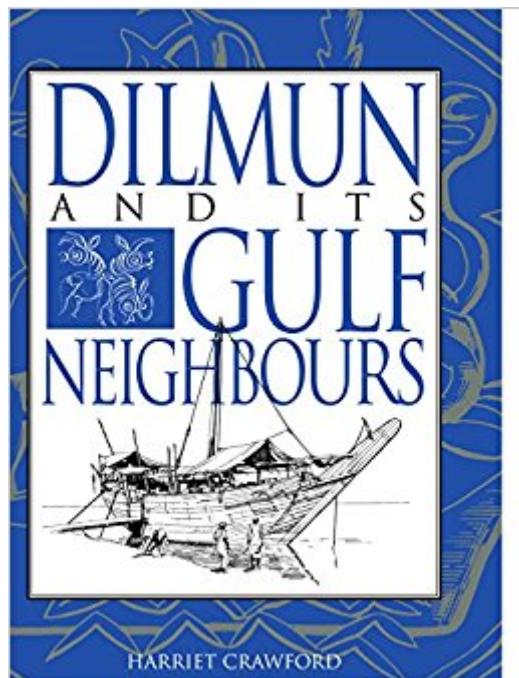


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Dilmun And Its Gulf Neighbours



Synopsis

Harriet Crawford presents a scholarly and up-to-date account of the archaeology of the Arabian Gulf from c. 4500-1500 BC. She offers a new interpretation of the structure of the urban, centralized and probably literate society of the Early Dilmun period (c. 2000-1800 BC) using material from the recently excavated site of Saar on the main Bahrain island. Like the neighboring societies in Oman and the Emirates, Dilmun was greatly influenced by its participation in the complex trade routes linking it to Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley.

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Customer Reviews

"Crawford provides an authoritative summary of the archaeological past of an intriguing and little-known country, Dilmun....Crawford's book is a well-illustrated introduction to the archaeological 'problem' of Dilmun. Clearly a scholarly work, it deserves a place in college and university libraries. All levels." Choice"...both the thorough updating of all the available information and the richness of her remarks and working hypotheses have resulted in a very stimulating contribution for her own colleagues in the field..." Pierre Lombard, American Journal of Archaeology

Harriet Crawford presents a scholarly and up-to-date account of the archaeology of the Arabian Gulf from c. 4,500-1500 BC. It offers a new interpretation of the structure of the urban, centralized and probably literate society of the Early Dilmun period (C. 2,000-1500 BC) using material from the recently excavated site of Saar on the the main Bahrain island.Like the neighbouring societies in Oman and the Emirates, Dilmun was greatly influenced by its participation in the complex trade

routes linking it to Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley.

In this book, Professor Crawford provides an excellent, up-to-date report on what is presently known about the ancient society of Dilmun and others in the Persian Gulf area. Three areas are reported upon: North-western Arabia, Bahrain (Dilmun), and Oman (Magan). The author exhaustively reports on archaeological findings (including architecture, burial items, pottery, and more), analyzing their significance, but avoiding any broad speculation. I can't say enough about this book. If you want to know what is presently known about Dilmun and Magan, but wish to avoid the extreme speculation (if not outright guesswork) of many books, then this book is for you!

In my studies of Mesopotamia, I had never really known much about Dilmun and Magan, places which are mentioned in several Mesopotamian texts. My choice was between Geoffrey Bibby's book on Dilmun published in 1972, and this book which was published in 1998. Having read Professor Crawford's book 'Sumer and the Sumerians' I finally decided on her book primarily because it was more recent. The book, which focuses on the period 5000-1700BC, is a detailed survey of the findings from about 125 archaeological sites on the Arabian side of the Persian Gulf from the island of Falaiqa at the head of the Gulf, the 'Eastern Province' of Arabia including Tarut Island and the Bahrain Islands, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates to the Musandam at the Straits of Hormuz, the interior sites of Oman and the coastal sites along the east side of that peninsula down to the most easterly point of the Arabian Peninsula at Ras al Junayz. Chapter 1: The Setting, describes the physical setting of the area, and provides the rationale for identifying Dilmun with the Eastern Province and the islands of Bahrain, while noting that references to Dilmun in the Mesopotamian texts may have referred to different parts of this area at different times. The copper rich sites in Oman is the reason for identifying it with Magan whose copper mines were of considerable importance to the Sumerian and Akkadian dynasties. Chapter 2: The Earliest Settlements, covers the archaeological sites for the earliest period of human settlement in the Eastern Province and Bahrain from about 5000BC to 3000BC which is the time of the Ubaid, Uruk, and Jemdat Nasr periods in Mesopotamia. Current archaeological evidence is sparse, but it seems that after the initial settlement phase during the 5th millennium, these were largely deserted during most of the 4th millennium until the Jemdat Nasr period when contacts between these areas and Mesopotamia revive. Chapter 3: The Development of Dilmun, covers the archaeological sites and textual evidence of the 3rd millennium. There is little evidence of settlement in the Eastern Province and Bahrain until about 2500BC, when the first urban settlement developed on Tarut Island where

workshops for pottery manufacture, and other material such as lapis lazuli, copper, and steatite have been excavated. On Bahrain Island itself, the vast area of ancient burial mounds at Saar date from around 2500BC and were built and often reused over a period of about 2000 years lasting into the Hellenistic age. Professor Crawford points out that over the past 30 years surveys and excavation of newly identified towns and villages show that enough local people lived on the island to fill the graves, arguing against the hypothesis that Bahrain was a necropolis for Mesopotamian royalty and aristocracy. Chapters 4 and 5 cover the period 2000-1750BC when there was a dramatic expansion of settlement on Bahrain. This is the so-called period of 'Early Dilmun', when it appears that Bahrain traders acted as the middlemen between the states of lower Mesopotamia and the mining businesses of the Oman Peninsula. The evidence for settlement, the architecture of domestic, workshop, and temple buildings, graves, and artefacts is described in considerable detail. Chapters 6 and 7 cover the same things for the Oman Peninsula, where direct contact with Mesopotamia seems to have been replaced by contacts with cities in Central Asia and with the Harappan cities on the Indus River. Chapter 8 provides an overview of the Development and Decline of Dilmun. This is a thorough and up to date study of the findings from the archaeological sites along the south side of the Arabian (Persian) Gulf and the Oman Peninsula. Of the 250+ references in the bibliography, fully two thirds were published in the 15 years immediately prior to the publication of this book in 1998. The descriptions of the architecture of buildings and tombs is well supported by photographs and illustrations, and the differences and similarity in styles between the two areas is also very clear. There are several maps showing the general area of most settlements, but only about half of the named sites are shown on any map. I eventually found a more detailed map of Oman and the UAE on the web, but still had to resort to Internet searches for information on those sites which I couldn't find on this map. Even so, this left about a dozen which were not listed in the index, and for which I have no idea as to even their general location. A small point perhaps, but I find that knowing where things are is helpful to my understanding. A similar observation can be made about dates. I recognize that it is obviously very difficult to pinpoint 3rd - 5th millennium dates with any certainty, but it would have helped if the author had included some kind of dating line even if it was broken down into every 250 years. I eventually developed one for myself but I still have some doubts about its accuracy. This is a fairly short book (the main body of the text is only 156 pages), but the level of detail is such that I found a single reading was insufficient for me to truly absorb what I was reading. As a result I had to reread it several times and make copious notes on the findings by site and time period. While this is not a criticism of the book it does mean that if you want to get the most from this book, then a quick read through is not going to do it unless you are

very familiar with the latest archaeological information.

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