

Short Field Reconnaissance in Kuwait

Through the kindness of Dr. Thacher of Dumbarton Oaks, Harvard University, as well as the Oriental Institute, I was able to visit Kuwait briefly during the winter, to familiarize myself with its archeological sites and potential. A visit to the off-shore island of Failaka, where a Danish expedition has made some recent excavations, showed that remains there testified to pre-Sargonid influence from Babylonia and to trade across the Persian Gulf between Greeks living in an Iranian cultural milieu and the natives of the Arabian peninsula in the third century B.C. The remains did not reflect the trade down the gulf to India in Roman times, as I had hoped they might. For that trade, the first stations will therefore lie farther south and east. A secondary purpose—to look for the remains of a harbor city on the mainland as the terminus for the caravan traffic down the Euphrates road—was thwarted by circumstances. Such an overseas emporium is known to have existed here, corresponding to Charax Spasinu on the Tigris. It would necessarily lie at the end of a land route known to have water holes and at a point on the shore where there was access to deep water. Umm Qasr, above the island of Bubian, was indicated, but we never made it. My hosts of the Kuwait Department of Antiquities and I, traveling in a Japanese “Rover,” first got lost and then broke down completely during the effort to get there. It might be worth another try.

CARL H. KRAELING