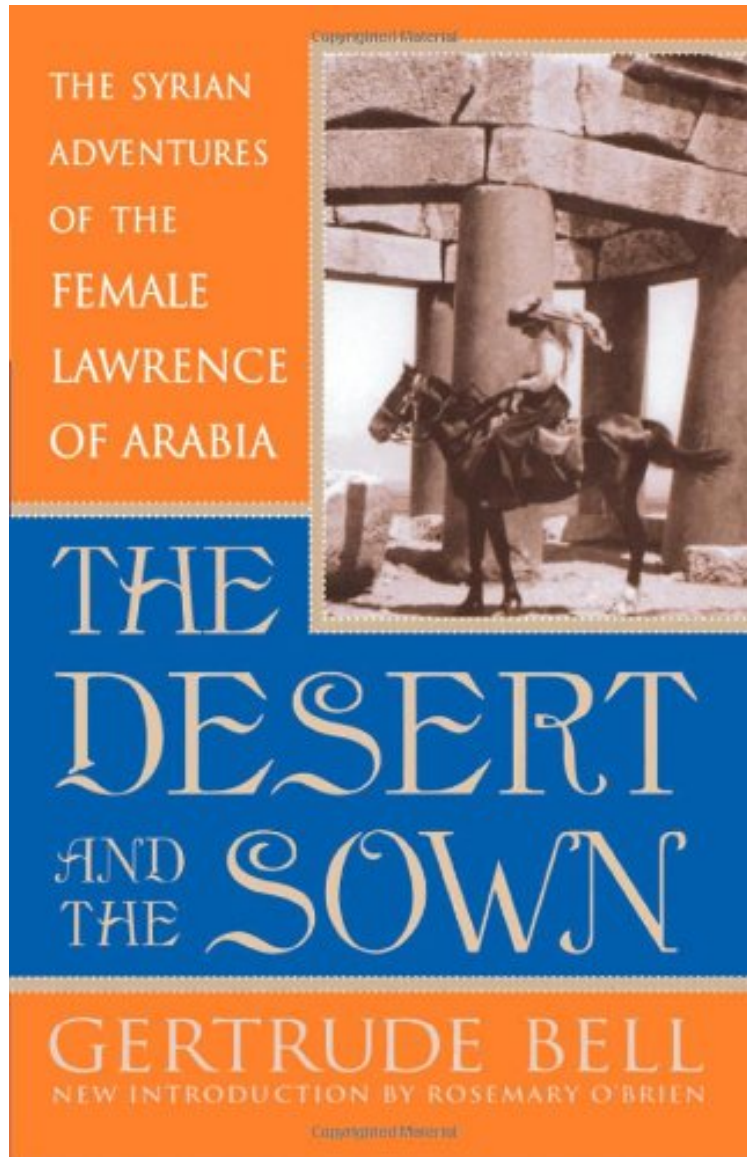


The Desert and the Sown: The Syrian Adventures of the Female Lawrence of Arabia

Gertrude Bell

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Gertrude Bell : The Desert and the Sown: The Syrian Adventures of the Female Lawrence of Arabia before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Desert and the Sown: The Syrian Adventures of the Female Lawrence of Arabia:

55 of 55 people found the following review helpful. Travels in Turkish SyriaBy Anthony CalabreseGertrude Bell is

probably one of the most interesting women of pre-World War I England. A daughter of privilege and she was educated and curious at a time when women of her class were expected to marry well and have children to police the Empire. Bell broke this mold and was the archetype of the "traveling Englishwoman" of the high British Empire. Bell is today best remembered for her role in building modern Iraq. But *The Desert and the Sown* takes place before World War I, and details her adventures in Syria. Bell was not a professional archeologist and you will need to look elsewhere for detailed scholarly studies of the places she traveled. Her usual method was to go off and visit some famous or not so famous ruin, spend a day or two there taking pictures and etching inscriptions, and then moving on. But this book is a remarkable travelogue of Syria and Palestine before World War I. She details her travels, the problems, the difficulties, who she met and what they talked about. The Turks rightly viewed her with suspicion - a child of the English ruling class, they saw her as an unofficial English agent, making contact with local tribal leaders who could be used against the Turks if war broke out. The book is a quite remarkable insight into the politics of the near East, and given the current crisis, one that should be read by all looking to figure out where to go next. My only complaint about the book is not Bell's writing, but rather the edition. The photographs would be better served on glossy paper, and better maps should be provided.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fascinating Story and Great Pictures
By S. Hamilton
I had loved "Gertrude Bell Queen of the Desert Shaper of Nations" by Georgina Howell. Fascinating story of an incredible British woman traveling through the Middle East on her own in the early decades of the 20th century often on camel, visiting various Bedouin and other Nomadic tribes on her own as well as her life in Middle Eastern capitols. So when I saw "The Desert and the Sown: The Syrian Adventures of the Female Lawrence of Arabia" by Gertrude Bell, herself, I knew I had to read it. Great History, fascinating story, particularly insightful and pertinent in view of the where we are in the Middle East today.
31 of 32 people found the following review helpful. A very innocent time
By J. Adams
Bell was one of many "arabists" who traveled throughout the Middle East near the end of the Ottoman empire. This book is really an interesting travelogue and insight into Middle Eastern culture from the view of a privileged English woman who was viewed as curiosity by those she visited and traveled with. In a way, this is a fairly innocent view of that part of the world, but you could do worse than read this book. Much of the clannish nature of the cultures she wrote about is unchanged from her era (and indeed, from centuries before) and is worth the couple of hours it will take to read this book.

A seeming contradiction, Gertrude Bell was both a proper Victorian and an intrepid explorer of the Arabian wilderness. She was a close friend of T. E. Lawrence, and played an important role in creating the modern map of the Middle East after World War I. *The Desert and the Sown* is a chronicle, illustrated by over 160 photos, of Bell's 1905 journey from Jericho to Antioch, a land of warring tribes under Turkish control.

Bell is a rare combination of the thoroughly feminine woman and the fearless, daring, and resourceful traveler.... Go and read the book for yourself. I cannot quote it all and unless all is quoted, you have lost the better part. (Nation) Contrary to the ordinary practice of travelers, Bell bestowed her attention upon persons rather than places, her chief concern being to study the character and customs of the people. This fact sharply differentiates her work from most books on travel, and gives it a peculiar interest. (The New York Times) Enchanting.... Bell has a keen sense of humor, and a memorable power of... snapshotting the conversations of the inhabitants of the mountains and the deserts whom she encountered on her travels. She has just that dramatic touch, which enables her to record a conversation as a living thing, and to bring before us a vivid picture of the speakers as well as of their words.... To her power of describing scenery, and of recording the living talk of men, Bell adds a wide knowledge of archaeology and a sound instinct for the politics of Asia. (The Spectator) Fascinating. (Times Literary Supplement) Listed as recently back in print. (Catherine Watson Star-Banner) This re-publication of Gertrude Bell's 1907 book, originally entitled simply and economically *Syria*, chronicles her seemingly meandering journey through the desert and countryside of Palestine, Jordan and Syria in the winter of 1906. (H-Gender-Mideast) About the Author Gertrude Bell (1868-1926) made six extended exploratory trips to Arabia. Rosemary O'Brien lives in Princeton, New Jersey.