

Gertrude Bell is an English writer, scholar, archeologist and politician who lived at the beginning of the 20th century and enormously influenced the political situation of the postwar Middle East. She literally drew the borders of the newly-emerging state of Iraq and advised the appointed King Faisal in political matters.

Long before Gertrude Bell took her role in the high politics, she traveled across the Middle East to learn the Arabic language, to get to know the Arabic culture as well as to photograph, work on excavations and, very importantly, to spy. She never failed to keep a diary of some sort to remember her individual journeys and adventures for her beloved ones. Her book of letters addressed to her parents consists of hundreds of letters which introduce us to the Arab world of the early 20th century. The Arabian Diaries, which she wrote in the year of 1914 give us a chance to take a glimpse at the most important, the most adventurous but also the most dangerous journey she undertook in her life - the journey to the city of Ha'il, which lies in the middle of the Arabian desert.

This work will examine Gertrude Bell's life and travels before her journey to Ha'il, her reasons for 'visiting this city and her political activities prior to the visit. The focus then will be on the Diaries, which is a collection of daily entries in the form of letters addressed to her lover Doughty-Wylie. I will examine the language and style of the Diaries to stress its specifics. The analysis of this work will then be divided into two parts: Bell's description of the desert country and her attitudes towards the desert from the point of view of the European imperial traveler, and Bell's accounts of the Arabs that she meets in the desert, her description of Arab men and women, as well as Bell's role within the Arabic society.