



# Playing the Game: Western Women in Arabia

*Penelope Tuson*

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## **Playing the Game: Western Women in Arabia** Penelope Tuson

The extraordinary Gertrude Bell, Freya Stark, Rosetta Forbes and Mary Curzon are the best known protagonists in this history and biography of the Western women who lived, worked and travelled in Arabia in the first half of the twentieth century. Largely ignored by historians, they were sometimes flamboyant and unconventional, sometimes conservative and conformist - and all of them wanted to be a part of British imperial life. Some were prepared to 'play the game', others, like the American missionaries whose stories are told here, were not and were regarded as difficult and dangerous. *Playing the Game* explores how they negotiated power and position in the Empire. It reveals how conventional female roles were defined by the masculine culture of imperial authority and how while at times these women actively colluded with this, at others they successfully subverted the stereotypes.

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