

The Mamur Zapt and the Spoils of Egypt
Reviewed by Kashani of Mas- Uda Dancers

This review has not been
published elsewhere.

The Mamur Zapt and the Spoils of Egypt by Michael Pearce ©1992 ®1995 – Recorded Books. Recorded book/shelf #94581 (5 cassettes/6.25 hours). This book is the sixth book I've read in the series of Pearce's 'Mamur Zapt' books.

This book is set in the same time period as the other Mamur Zapt books, 1908, after 30 years of British control over Egypt.

For anyone who's interested in antiquities, this book is a treasure in itself. Captain Gareth Cadwallar Owen, the Mamur Zapt, is drawn into the international trade and smuggling of antiquities. Miss Skinner, an American whose uncle is running for president of the United States arrives in Egypt ostensibly looking into the smuggling of artifacts, in reality, she's been involved in the issue previously and feels responsible for the deaths of two men who had been 'spying' for her.

Ms. Skinner has several 'accidents' shortly after her arrival. She insists that she didn't stumble, but was PUSHED into an oncoming tram. A witness is found who verifies her story, but no suspect can be identified. A staffer from the Consul General's office decides to 'accompany' Ms. Skinner to some archaeological digs some distance from the city. She suffers another 'accident' and falls into a chamber of mummies, spending an entire night there. The mummies are those of cats, dogs and crocodiles – all revered by the ancient Egyptians. At first, she says that she was pushed, but then changes her story and says that she was just clumsy and fell. Owen is sure that her first story was accurate.

Alexandria and Herak are described beautifully and you get a feel for the varying climate of Egypt. Most of the wealthy Cairenes summer in Alexandria to catch the water-cooled breezes. Pearce describes the city as "A European city not an Arabic city", with wide streets, open squares and houses well spaced, French-style parks and public gardens. In Alexandria, he says, English is the third language, after French and Italian. Many Italians made Alexandria their home.

To keep things 'interesting' in Captain Owen's private life, Pearce introduces a new female character – the Italian Franchesca. She immediately stirs jealousy in Owen's paramour, Zeinab. To make matters worse, Zeinab's father may consider marrying her off to cement a relationship with another pasha. Owen thinks long and hard about his relationship with her and what he should do next.

Of course, as always, Captain Owen solves the mystery surrounding Miss Skinner's accidents, as well as cracking a major antiquities smuggling ring, although we're left to wonder what he does about Zeinab.