

The Mamur Zapt and the Night of the Dog

Reviewed by Kashani of Mas- Uda Dancers

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The Mamur Zapt and the Night of the Dog by Michael Pearce ©1989 ®1993 – Recorded Books. Recorded book/shelf #93125 (5 cassettes/6.5 hours)

This book is set, as was Pearce's first, in Cairo at the height of British rule, at about 1910. Pearce has direct experience with living in other cultures, having himself grown up in the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. As an adult, he returned to the area to teach and retained a life-long love of the area.

The main character once again is Captain Gareth Cadwallader Owen, the Mamur Zapt. The Mamur Zapt is the head of a sort of Criminal Investigation Department with the British government.

This book focuses less on the political tensions that were identified in the first book. It instead focuses on religious sects, which we find as the story progresses can also BE political. The main tensions in the book are between the Christian Copts and the Moslems (sic). There is a lot of information on religious practices: How the Coptic Christians honor their dead and descriptions of Moslem Zikh rituals. The rituals include frenzied dancing and stabbing themselves, placing hot coals in their mouths, thorn bushes on fire inside their shirts, all with no visible trace of injury. There is a strong dislike and distrust between the two religions along with a disappointment for the Copts in the rule of the British, whom the Copts feel should be more on their side since they're also Christians.

The Mamur Zapt and the Night of the Dog is another great 'whodunnit' with amazing twists and turns. Throughout the book, we are given a flavor of Cairo, the winding streets, the marketplace, the cafes and the pastimes of the people, including polo and opera. The first, of course, being mostly enjoyed by the British and the second enjoyed by the more well-to-do.

A Zikh dancer at a ritual is killed and Owen's attempts at solving the murder are further complicated by a lack of funds at the end of the budget year (sounds like those of us in Olympia today!) and the arrival of an MP from Britain specifically to 'look at the finances'. The MP brings along his niece, who needs to be squired around the sites of the city. This further complicates Owen's personal life – his Egyptian girlfriend sees the niece as competition!

In the end, of course, it all works out and we are amazed when we discover who, indeed, 'dunnit'!