

The Mamur Zapt and the Girl in the Nile

Reviewed by Kashani of Mas-Uda Dancers

Originally published in Jareeda Magazine, July/Aug 2003 edition

The Mamur Zapt and the Girl in the Nile by Michael Pearce ©1992 ®1995 – Recorded Books. Recorded book/shelf #94512 (6 cassettes/7.75 hours). This book is the fifth book I've read in the series of Pearce's 'Mamur Zapt' books.

The year is 1909 and a mysterious young woman has just drowned in the Nile. The body washes up on a sandbar. The girl had fallen from a private boat hired by the prince of Egypt, but he appears to know nothing about her or even who she is.

The more of the Mamur Zapt books you read, the more you understand the power structure of Egypt in those days. The apparent power was the Khedive, but the consul-general (a Britisher) was the actual power. Each ministry was nominally headed by an Egyptian, and 'counseled' by a Brit. This system was set up ostensibly to get Egypt back in good fiscal condition, so that British interests would be repaid on loans given to the Egyptian government.

Pearce normally gives enough info about his characters so that those who haven't read his previous books can understand the personalities of the characters. Normally, he tells us some new information so that those who've read the previous books aren't bored by repetition. This time, he gets quite repetitive in his description of Zeinab, Owen's Egyptian girlfriend. This didn't bother me though as she's a fascinating character. I LOVE Owen's Egyptian girlfriend, Zeinab. She's an independent, modern woman, well before her time! She has her own 'apartemente' – Francophile that she is! This is very unusual for a woman at that time and in that place, but the story is that she grew up around her father, a local pasha. Her mother was a well-known courtesan, who had refused the offer of joining the pasha's harem. Her father doted on her and allowed her to be present during political discussions and she learned a lot about the how the world works from this.

I found that during this particular book, I was wondering what adventures were ahead in the next one – Will Owen and Zeinab last? And – what about Soraya, the Ghawazee girl who's so fond of Owen? Does Nichos 'have a life' outside the office? Will we find out more about Georgiades and his young wife? (She tricked him into marrying her in the second or third book!) I feel almost like a soap opera addict, even though the only 'soap' I was ever hooked on was 'Dark Shadows' many years ago! Pearce weaves a great series of stories that keep you hooked!

Now, I only have to wait for the next one to be 'in' at the library.....