

The Mamur Zapt and the Camel of Destruction

Reviewed by Kashani of Mas-Uda Dancers

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The Mamur Zapt and the Camel of Destruction by Michael Pearce ©1993 ®1996 – Recorded Books. Recorded book/shelf #94701 (5 cassettes/6.25 hours).

This book is the seventh book I've read in the series of Pearce's 'Mamur Zapt' books.

The Camel of Destruction was a legend – an apocalyptic figure who ran amok at the beginning of creation or shortly thereafter. It's used in this book as a metaphor for...., well, I don't want to give the whole story away, so .....

It's 1910, at the end of the boom, cotton prices have dropped in half and this is causing major problems in Egypt, as cotton is the main agricultural product of Egypt.

The Mamur Zapt is the head of the Cairo secret police. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the Mamur Zapt had been the right hand man of the sultan and some of the fellahin still consider him as such. Some of them leave personal appeals in a box (sort of a suggestion box) outside his office door. One of them is from a widow who's son runs a school. The right to running the school had been in her husband's family for generations and had come about in the form of a waqf, or semi religious grant, of sorts.

In this volume Captain Owen (the Mamur Zapt) learns a LOT about agriculture and banking. He freely admits that he has no knowledge of agriculture and the monetary systems that are connected to it. The well being of the fellahin, is of course tied in to the success or failure of the cotton crop and they are continually borrowing money to be able to buy seed. Owen quickly becomes involved in the financing of agriculture and finds that it ties in not only to the recent suicide of an Agriculture Department official, but also to the appeal he received from the widow.

The Mamur Zapt accepts a payment for 'helping someone out' and this is almost his undoing. The 'someone' makes it appear that the Mamur Zapt was involved in bribery or some other scandalous activities.

Owen's personal dilemma this time is whether he can afford Zeinab's expensive habits – he's considering marriage. This of course plays a part in his desire to receive higher pay and to find additional sources of income. If you've read any of this series of books, you know that Zeinab has VERY expensive tastes!

I thoroughly enjoyed this installment of Owen's adventures, as I have all the others. I did, however, find some of the financial information to be a little dull (Captain Owen and I agree on this much!).