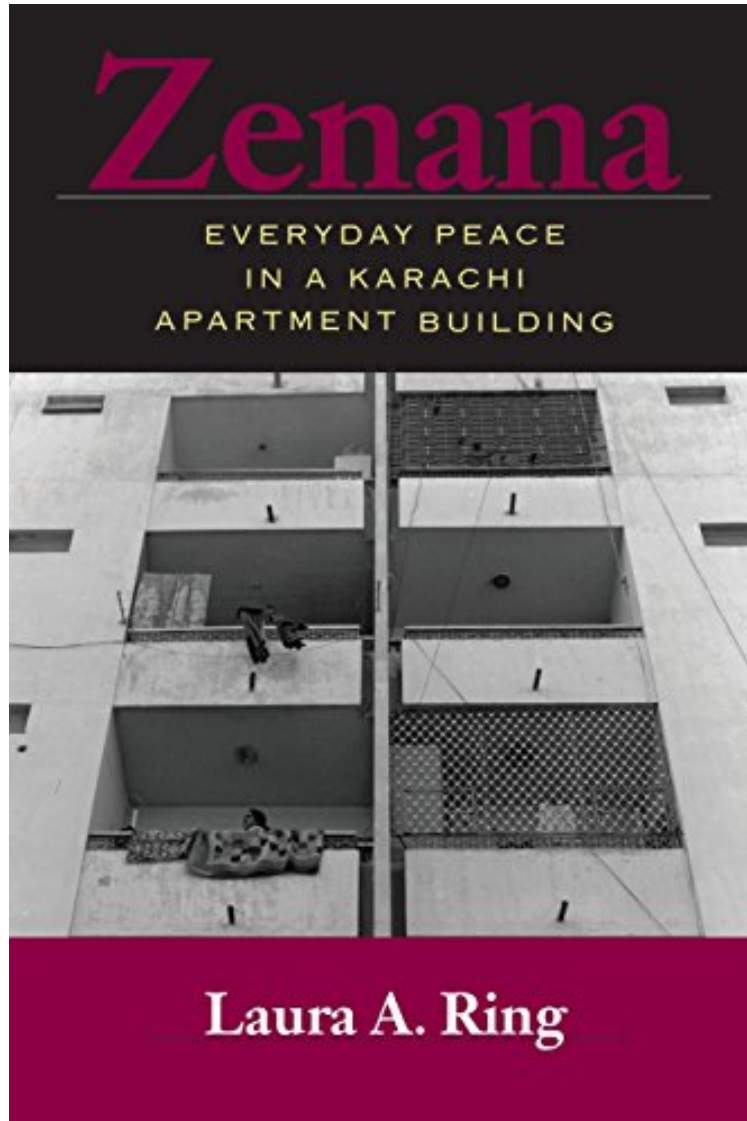


[Mobile book] Zenana: Everyday Peace in a Karachi Apartment Building

Zenana: Everyday Peace in a Karachi Apartment Building

Laura A. Ring

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Anthropology class, it read like a story. There are some parts that are more academic, but I still felt like I was learning a lot about Pakistani life.² of 4 people found the following review helpful. *Life in Karachi Apartment building* By Donald G. Jones I liked the book. It is a clear reflection of the interaction between neighbors in an apartment building in a city in Pakistan. The characters are described beautifully and the complex relationships between people of different cultures are explained in detail.

Ethnic violence is a widespread concern, but we know very little about the micro-mechanics of coexistence in the neighborhoods around the world where inter-group peace is maintained amidst civic strife. In this ethnographic study of a multi-ethnic, middle-class high-rise apartment building in Karachi, Pakistan, Laura A. Ring argues that peace is the product of a relentless daily labor, much of it carried out in the zenana, or womens space. Everyday rhythms of life in the building are shaped by gender, ethnic and rural/urban tensions, national culture, and competing interpretations of Islam. Womens exchanges between households visiting, borrowing, helping and management of male anger are forms of creative labor that regulate and make sense of ethnic differences. Linking psychological senses of "tension" with anthropological views of the social significance of exchange, Ring argues that social-cultural tension is not so much resolved as borne and sustained by womens practices. Framed by a vivid and highly personal narrative of the authors interactions with her neighbors, her Pakistani in-laws, and other residents of the city, *Zenana* provides a rare glimpse into contemporary urban life in a Muslim society.

. . . living among strangers remains an existential problem for many urban residents. In Karachi, a city riven by ethnic and sectarian violence since the 1980s, such problems take on added significance. In her gracefully written and incisively argued book, Laura Ring contends that the everyday efforts of women in Karachi to transform neighbors into if not quite kinsomething other than strangers, are the labors of peace. (*Anthropological Quarterly*) *Zenana* is a well-written and highly readable book that neither assumes prior knowledge of the literature on Karachi or Pakistan nor simply rehearses old debates about Pakistan's political history. Ring, rather, introduces the reader to issues central to Pakistani society through a careful consideration of ethnographic vignettes. Volume 44/22010 (*the Journal of Modern Asian Studies*) From the Publisher A rare, intimate glimpse into the daily lives of middle-class women in urban Pakistan. About the Author Laura A. Ring holds a Ph.D. in Anthropology from the University of Chicago.