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Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery

The People of India, Volume Three

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A Kazi of Bareilly

the annual audit of revenue accounts the Kazi's seal was added to those of the hereditary executive officers.

Kazis held small courts of their own, in which they could try minor civil cases under consent of the litigants. In instances of offenses against public morality, such as drunkenness, brawling, or indecency, they had the power of fine and imprisonment. Breaches of betrothal or marriage contract also fell within their jurisdiction. The office was hereditary under the the Mahomedan government, and was well endowed by lands, held rent free, fees of office, and in many instances by a yearly salary, chargeable upon the revenue of the district; and in all cases the provision was sufficient to afford at least a respectable maintenance. The constitution of the office in hereditary tenure, however, produced a considerable laxity in the performance of the duties attached to it, as also a diminished scale of efficiency as regarded the education and qualification of the incumbents. Occasionally, therefore, the Kazis were obliged to attend at the capital, or at provincial cities or towns, to pass examinations as to fitness; and the certificates entered on the backs of many of the Imperial confirmations of grants, especially those of the Emperor Aurangzebe, specify the particular qualifications of the ancestors of the present incumbents in the early part of the seventeenth century. In all native Mahomedan and some Hindoo states, this system is still in force; and occasionally the superintendence of the higher officer, who is termed *Sadr-i-Soodoor*, is of a very strict character. For the most part, however, Kazis are wanting in education, and those attached to village communities are able to do little more than perform the most simple Mahomedan rituals. In native states their original jurisdictions have not been interfered with, and, on the whole, the Kazis form a very useful and indispensable class of district and village officers. In the British provinces, however, their executive character is not recognized, either as executors of public deeds or censors of morals; but as connected with the drafting of wills, contracts of betrothal and marriage settlements of dowry, and social questions belonging to their own faith, marriage, circumcision, and the rituals and services of the Mahomedan creed, their functions still continue. In the British provinces their sentences of divorce many not be strictly legal, but nevertheless are not disputed; while in native states their original powers are in no wise impaired.

It is in many respects strange that the British government should have neglected or purposely set aside this class of hereditary officers, and curtailed or abrogated powers which might have been turned to good account among the Mahomedan population of India, in a class of officials more closely connected with the people, rich and poor, high and low, in all relations of social life, than any other. While in most instances hereditary grants of land, and other vested rights, fees, &c., have been confirmed, it would have been advisable perhaps to have recognized the powers of the Kazis, and, while insisting upon full qualifications,

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