

develop better relations between the Armenian *millet*, of which they were the leaders, and the other two *millets*.³⁹

At the time, churches were under the authority of *mütevellis*, “executors of the will.” According to the *sharia*, the Islamic law, when a property or institution was built or bequeathed for religious or charitable purposes (in Islamic terminology, made *vakf* or *vakif*), it was to be managed by or entrusted to a *mütevelli*, charged with carrying out the donor’s stipulations. Under Ottoman rule, churches, as religious institutions, were *vakfs* and, therefore, were supposed to have their *mütevellis*. Without delving into the legal ramifications and nuances of this system suffice it to mention that the *mütevellis* of Armenian churches were appointed for life by the Patriarch and sanctioned officially by the government. The Patriarch was the chief *mütevelli* of all *millet* institutions and properties which fell under *vakf* rules.⁴⁰

As a general rule, the Patriarch would appoint an *amira mütevelli* for a specific church, choosing him from a list of candidates submitted to him by the council of *amiras*. The *mütevelli*, in his turn, appointed his deputy, *vekil*, whose term of office was limited to three years and who was accountable to him. The *mütevelli* also appointed a body comprised of four to twelve members, called *ekeghetspan*, literally “guardian of the church,” whose main function was to look after the affairs of the church, in a supervisory capacity. The tenure of this body was also three years. The appointments of the *mütevelli*, who would make his selection from a list of candidates submitted by his *vekil*, were confirmed by a Patriarchal bull.

Although the report submitted by the *ekeghetspans* was to be approved by the Patriarch, the *mütevelli* was the ultimate authority in his church. The *vekil*, the *ekeghetspans* and other officials of the church were all accountable to him. The *mütevelli*’s accountability to the Patriarch was more of a formality than a regulation of some consequence, since he was appointed for life, unless he committed a major fraud; in such a case the Patriarch

³⁹ It is worth noting the case of Pilibos *Amira* Arpiarian and his son Kasbar *Amira*, who built “a magnificent mosque, the Ulu Cami,” at Gaban, near Akn, “to avoid the jealousy of the [local] Turkish people.” A. Ketchian, *Akn*, p. 226.

⁴⁰ F. Ketchian, *Patmutiun Hivandanotsin*, pp. 42-46; Asadur, *Polsoy Hayere*, pp. 154-155. Ormanian cites as synonymous to *mütevelli*, a Turkish word of Arabic origin, the Armenian words *varitch*, “director,” and *ishkhanaped*, “chief ruler;” *Azgapatum*, 2:3372.