

they ranked higher in the church hierarchy. For a short period in the late sixteenth century, during Ottoman rule over the Caucasus, even the *katholikos* of All Armenians at Etjmiadzin depended on the Patriarch's intercession with the Ottoman government for administrative appointments.⁴⁵

Among his jurisdictional protocols, the Patriarch was vested with the authority to grant permission for the construction and repair of churches, monasteries, convents, schools and printing establishments. In fact, he had absolute control over the religious and secular education of his *millet*, including publications. Nothing could be published without the Patriarch's written approval. As a student of the subject put it very aptly, "until the middle of the nineteenth century the Armenian patriarchate was, for all practical purposes, a strict censorship office for all types of publications."⁴⁶

Successive patriarchs applied themselves and successfully centralized in the patriarchate all the affairs of the Armenians living in the empire. As the boundaries of the Ottoman state stretched, new communities came under patriarchal authority. The Ottomans did not oppose this growth and centralization of patriarchal jurisdiction and power, which paralleled their own conquests. Consequently, as Armenian-inhabited areas of Persia, from Van to the Caucasus, were seized by the Ottomans in the wars of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Patriarch's power became enormous. The Ottomans helped and encouraged this increase in patriarchal power since this rendered the governance of the *millet* much easier and simpler. They need have dealings with only one monolithic institution and its representative, the Patriarch. Throughout this period contention and struggle around the patriarchate dominate Armenian national life, as the *amiras* strove and were eventually able to bring this powerful institution under their sway.

From the time of its founding, the laity had participated in the administration of the Armenian church, especially in the election of ecclesiastical office holders, from the parish priest to the *katholikos*. During the early period of Ottoman rule *hocas* and *çelebis* played an important role in the administrative affairs of the church. The first serious instance of

⁴⁵ Ormanian, *Azgapatum*, 2:2286.

⁴⁶ Vartan Artinian, "A Study of the Historical Development of the Armenian Constitutional System in the Ottoman Empire, 1839-1863" (Ph.D. dissertation, Brandeis University, 1969), p. 14.