

Council dealt with religious education, dogma and the ordination of clergy. This system continued until the adoption of a constitution in 1860. General assemblies were held biennially, each time electing the two councils. But the mechanism of this new system did not work smoothly; irregularities were committed because of the absence of clearly stated rules and regulations. The jurisdictions of the various bodies and their relationship were not clearly spelled out.

The establishment of the two councils had diluted and curtailed “to a considerable degree, the Patriarch’s authority and the *amiras*’ power and influence.”⁷⁸ But in practical terms, Patriarch Madteos acted on his own, arousing *amiras*’ opposition. Eventually he was forced to resign. This time, however, the order of resignation was presented to the Patriarch by Hagop Grdjigian, the logothete of the Supreme Civil Council. Thus some degree of legitimacy was introduced and a precedent was set.

On the other hand, *amiras* acted independently of the other members of the Civil Council. They appointed the members of the three committees: educational, economic and judicial, and dismissed them at will. This left them a power base from which they immediately tried to extend their authority even over the Spiritual Council. This is made clear in Krikor Odian’s letter, dated 15 February 1855, addressed to Khatchadur Bardizbanian in Paris (both were members of the Educational Committee):

Recently, Garabed *Amira* Balian and Hovhannes *Amira* Dadian illegally appointed three bishops to the Spiritual Council and empowered the Council with authority to administer the education and printing of the *millet*.⁷⁹

Despite all this, the trend indicating a decline in the power of *amiras* was already noticeable. On the one hand the number of *amiras* on the Civil Council was declining, from nine in 1847 to five in 1853 and only two in 1855, on the other, *esnaf* representation was getting stronger, from ten members on the Civil Council in 1847 to fourteen in 1855, not counting the intellectuals who were their allies.

⁷⁸ Artinian, “Historical Development,” p. 74.

⁷⁹ Torkomian, “Nahabed Rusinian,” *Handes Amsoreay* (Vienna), April 1902, p. 140.