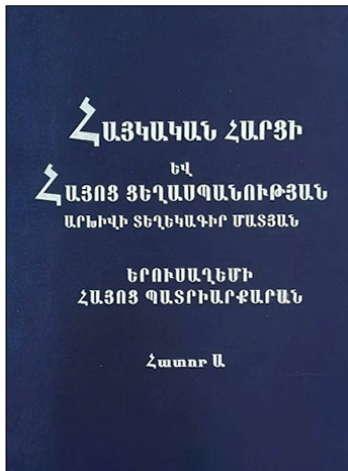


## ԳՐԱԽՈՍԱԿԱՆՆԵՐ

### BOOK REVIEWS

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### ARCHIVE FOR ALL TIMES

#### ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ՀԱՐՑԻ ԵՎ ՀԱՅՈՑ ՑԵՂԱՍՊԱՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԱՐԽԻՎԻ ՏԵՂԵԿԱԳԻՐ ՄԱՏՅԱՆ.

Երուսաղեմի Հայոց պատրիարքարան, հատոր  
Ա, Երուսաղեմ-Երևան, Լուսակն, 2024, 1038 էջ

The Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem and  
the Institute of Armenian Studies of Yerevan State  
University have published an unprecedented

volume, both in thematic completeness and richness, titled *The Information Register of the Armenian Question and Armenian Genocide Archive, Volume A* (Yerevan, Lusakn, 2024, 1038 pages). It should be noted that this collection of archival materials is a unique phenomenon in terms of quantity and content compared to all other primary source publications in this field.

The presented archival materials were initially digitized and cataloged by Lusine Sahakyan and Ani Sargsyan, and Ani Voskanyan joined in the further editing work. The is prefaced by Lusine Sahakyan.

It is difficult to overestimate the scientific and cognitive significance of the archive in the study of the Armenian Genocide, its historically and politically irrefutable value, particularly in recognizing and elucidating crimes against humanity. The materials of the archive, both in terms of content and scope, serve as a comprehensive collection that covers almost every facet of the genocide's more than a decade-long history (1913–1922). In other words, it illustrates a specific historical period, providing insights into the gradual development and unfolding of events and their consequences.

In its primary presentation, the archive mainly focuses on the massacres, murders, and atrocities committed against Armenians by the Young Turk perpetrators in Western Armenia and Armenian-inhabited regions of Ottoman Turkey, from the years leading up to World War I, during the war itself (1913–1918), and the subsequent events in Cilicia and Western Armenia (1919–1929). The multifaceted documents of the archive, being published for the first time and previously largely unknown to the researchers of Armenian Studies, shed new light on the actions of those responsible for the greatest crime committed at the turning points of the genocide. One can highlight the Ottoman local and central officials, named individually, who played decisive roles in the massacres and killings across various Armenian-inhabited settlements. Hence, the functional value of the materials of the archive which have specific attributions.

The immense diversity of the archive materials has been initially subjected to editorial processing, based on chronological sequence and, accordingly, the factual data that reflect the progression of events. From this perspective, the publication of the Information Register of the Armenian Question and Armenian Genocide Archive is completely justified. The preface written by Lusine Sahakyan is itself a thorough and comprehensive study grounded in substantial research. It also reveals the difficulties encountered in the process of the work by the trio of scholars and clarifies the approaches and principles employed in the preparation of the archive for publication. This hard, yet valuable publication required responsibility, dedication and selflessness throughout the whole process of the work.

To provide a more complete picture of this work, we would highlight the history of the “Information Bureau”, which is thoroughly presented to the reader in the Preface of the volume under review. The creation of the archive was initiated in 1919 by the “Information Bureau” established by the Armenian Patriarchate of Constantinople, under the leadership of Patriarch Zaven Archbishop Ter-Yeghiayan, shortly after the 1918 Armistice of Mudros. From the outset, it had specific historical and political significance, as it aimed to collect, compile, and present documents and reports that testified to the genocidal actions of the Ottoman Turkey – starting from the mass atrocities and massacres ordered by the genocidal rulers and ending with the private manifestations of genocide, the international political and official reactions

related to it, as well as the real accounts that exposed the genocide program of targeting the annihilation of the Armenian people.

The Preface also presents the journey of the "Information Bureau" during the complex and turbulent years after 1922: "Relocating from place to place and undergoing numerous struggles, even fragmented (due to the unavoidable difficulties of relocation – A. Kh.), it eventually found its way to the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem through various paths, finally arriving there in 1938." "Today, the entire collection is under the personal supervision of the Armenian Patriarch of Jerusalem, Nourhan Manougian," as stated in the preface (page 13). Upon the Patriarch's instruction, the professional team responsible for organizing the archive began the fundamental work of cataloging, and digitizing the documents stored in more than ten boxes. The further work with the archive, as seen from L. Sahakyan's informational narrative and the clear presentation of the documents in the pages of this work, has been developed by implementing principles to meet all the requirements of contemporary source criticism. It should be added that the professional team involved in cataloging the collection collaborated with the Armenian-Ottoman Studies Division of the Institute of Armenian Studies at Yerevan State University, sparing no effort to bring the work to a deserved completion.

The methods used by the professional team to describe the documents are unique. Each document is presented to the reader with its own "biography," including the exact creation time (with only rare exceptions), the names of the authors and recipients of the documents, a detailed description of the qualitative aspects of the document, and other features. This multifaceted presentation of the materials, supports the understanding of the documents making them as readable as possible. It also shows the compilers' independent and creative approach to this responsible work, and their intention to introduce the documents to the researchers in their entirety, without leaving out any characteristic feature.

Special attention should be given to the annotations in the information volume, which greatly contribute to assessing the historical value of the respective document, particularly its scholarly significance. These annotations often exceed the established boundaries of bibliographic descriptions, entering the realm of broader interpretations and, in some cases, even analyses, and this is the result of the publishers' devotion to a job of paramount importance. This

independence, and deviating from informational uniformity, is, in fact, nothing more than a brilliant example or adopted principle that overcomes that uniformity, enhancing the scientific value of this archival work and expanding its epistemological boundaries. And here, it is worthwhile to emphasize that in the publication of the information volume, both the descriptive method and the principle of scholarly analytical annotations prove their right to coexist side by side. In this way, footnotes present biographies of numerous Armenian and foreign political and state figures, evaluations of events and incidents, analyses of the attitudes of powers toward the issue, and so on. With the enumeration and appropriate arrangement of all these details, the footnotes alone, taken separately, could serve as an independent scholarly work on the subject field.

Of the 634 documents in the archive, 349 are in Armenian, while the remaining 285 are in French, English, Ottoman Turkish, and other languages. This reflects the political and international significance of the history of the Armenian Genocide, its reliability and credibility – criteria for which presenting counterarguments would signify an irresistible desire to falsify history. From this perspective, it is appropriate to highlight the description given by Patriarch Zaven regarding the completeness of the informational archive and its contents, as cited by the author of the preface, Lusine Sahakyan: “I was greatly surprised,” writes the patriarch in his memoirs, “seeing there a perfect collection of documents and reports on all the important events from 1918 to 1922” (page 75).

The archive covers documents reflecting the phases of the genocide, with their chronological and sometimes non-chronological sequence. Within this vast collection, there is also a group of documents related to the continuous progression of the Armenian Question and the activities of Armenian delegations in international forums during the periods of 1912–1914 and 1918–1922, which hold exceptional interest. The compilers have not spared efforts to provide the necessary information regarding the documents. Numerous footnotes, clarifications, and details about individuals, place names, and events give this publication a parallel scientific value, as often they complement and complete the content of the described documents when necessary. The compilers have given top priority to the accurate reproduction of the materials, possibly minimizing interferences and ensuring that the bibliographic material aligns with a single, cohesive structure, standing out primarily for its cognitive significance.

Following the Preface, the main content is presented under the title of the "Information Bureau" of the Armenian Question and Armenian Genocide Archive (p. 121), and the materials from the section "File E" are presented and commented. This section opens with a notable document titled "The Greek Metropolitan's Report on the Malkara Incident" (pp. 124–130). The report, dated 12 July 1913, reveals the massacre of the Armenian and Greek populations of the Black Sea town of Malkara and 18 surrounding villages, carried out by the Ottoman army and Turkish band. The picture is further completed by the reports from the Special Delegation sent by the Armenian Patriarchate to Rodosto, which are placed under File № 2 (pp.130–144), further attesting to the massacres of Armenians in Rodosto-Malkara.

The preface of the Information Register and the first documents from the file mentioned above, as well as the subsequent materials, demonstrate the remarkable efficiency of the compilers. This is especially noticeable due to the appropriate and even abundant number of annotations, which are based on their justified necessity. The annotations provide insights into the states and figures related to the Armenian question and genocide, the organizations, the individuals and groups involved in the extermination of the Armenian population, the brutal actions of the Ottoman state machinery, and more. Without exaggeration, it can be noted that, if packaged appropriately, these annotations could stand alone as a work full of numerous new insights. Furthermore, maintaining the utmost adherence to the standards, these annotative elucidations give a fresh and modern appearance to the work, elevating it to the level of contemporary archival science.

One of the distinctive features of the volume under consideration is the presentation of the archival material in an impartial manner, free from intervention as much as possible. It is self-evident that reproducing the original volume is not only impossible, but it also remains the researcher's task to address any remaining ambiguities. In this sense, the compilers have been guided by the principle of accurate and truthful depiction, which they followed to the greatest extent. This approach relates to, as we noticed, the footnotes, and more specifically, the compilers' unique approach by which they handle the original documents in foreign languages. These types of documents are presented through direct translation, rather than in a descriptive format.

The innovative value of the archive's publication is emphasized by the fact that most of its materials have yet to be explored by researchers. A passage from the preface illustrates this: "For about eight decades, since arriving in Jerusalem in 1938, the archive has remained largely inaccessible to the broader scientific community. Only a few specialists have conducted studies, placing important documents into scientific circulation, but many pages are still waiting for recognition and evaluation. Over these years, the archive has not been cataloged, despite some individual efforts, leaving it essentially unexplored." (p. 15). It is also noted that some of the archive's materials have been examined and used in research by the renowned historian Vahagn Tatryan, who utilized a number of unique documents related to the trials of the perpetrators of the genocide (p. 17).

The inclusion of such unique documents in the archive enhances its value even further. Among these is a copy of Enver Pasha's secret manuscript concerning the Armenians (pp. 695–697), presented both in its original Ottoman language and its Armenian translation. Another significant document is a covert letter from Talaat Pasha dated 25 January 1920, addressed to Wahid Bey, the owner of the *Tasvir-i Efkar* newspaper (pp. 830–831).

The first document summarized the imperial decree for the "total annihilation" of the Armenian population in Turkey, outlined in three main points (pp. 696–697). As indicated in the footnotes, this document was also referenced by Aram Antonian (p. 697). What is particularly striking is how the archive's compilers have provided details on how this document came into the hands of the Armenians. According to the text, at the end of the document, it is noted that Commander Lieutenant Colonel Nejat Bey, during a party, gave the telegram's content to the Zeytuni Karapet Efendi Cjulhayian (p. 697), and requested it back a day later.

The Information Register is meticulously structured, incorporating essential informational frameworks such as abbreviations, source lists, and bibliographies, along with dictionaries of Ottoman terms, personal names, and place names. These elements not only make the content more readable but also highlight the considerable effort of the compilers, ensuring that the presented material remains within the bounds of scholarly standards and provides thorough information. Particularly notable is the practical significance of the dictionary of Ottoman terms included in the document, which holds immense


value for Armenian Turkish studies. This may be the first instance where numerous Ottoman administrative, military, political, and official terms are translated into Armenian, bridging the gap between historical research and linguistic nuances in the discourse of the Ottoman Empire.

The Information Register of the Armenian Question and Armenian Genocide Archive is, undoubtedly, the most comprehensive collection of documentary materials in the field under consideration, setting a foundation and providing impetus for future research on the topic. It stands as a credible and promising work, ensuring its value as a reference for all future studies on the subject.

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