

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR ARMENIAN STUDIES AND RESEARCH

PRESENTS

**VOICE SIGNATURES:
RECORDINGS OF RUSSIAN ARMENIAN POWS IN
GERMAN CAMPS, 1916-1918**

by Dr. Melissa Bilal

Visiting Scholar, Dept. of History, MIT

Thursday, March 30, 2017, 7:30 p.m., at the NAASR Center

395 Concord Avenue, Belmont, MA

During World War I, the initially secret Royal Prussian Phonographic Commission (Königlich-Preußische Phonographische Kommission) made recordings of prisoners of war held in various different camps across German territories. Among the detainees held in these camps were Russian Armenian soldiers.

In this lecture, Dr. Melissa Bilal will present samples of songs and speech in Armenian, Georgian, and Turkish captured a century ago from these men by the use of phonograph and gramophone technologies and provide information about the lives of these soldiers. While questioning the conditions under which captives were turned into research subjects, Dr. Bilal will interpret the repertoire through which the Armenian soldiers expressed themselves in the specific historical moment of 1916-1918, and she argues that the written documents and the voices passed onto us by the phonographic commission challenge the idea of an “archive” and/or a “museum” that the commission originally intended to put together.

Melissa Bilal is a Visiting Scholar in the Department of History at MIT for Spring 2017. She received her BA and MA in Sociology from Istanbul’s Boğaziçi University and her Ph.D. in Music from the University of Chicago. She was a Mellon Postdoctoral Teaching Fellow in Music at Columbia University and has also taught at the University Chicago and Boğaziçi. Commissioned by Berliner Phonogramm-Archiv in partnership with the Orient-Institut Istanbul and Lautarchiv of Humboldt University, she prepared the CD “Voice Signatures: Recordings of Russian Armenian POWs in German Camps, 1916-1918” (forthcoming, 2017) and is now planning to extend the project into an exhibition and a documentary film. She is the co-author of two books in Turkish and is currently working on her monograph *The Wake Up Lullaby: Gender Politics of the Armenian Revolution* and a co-authored book (with Lerna Ekmekcioglu) *Feminism in Armenian: A Sourcebook*.

Admission free (donations appreciated). Doors open at 7:00 p.m.

Contact NAASR at 617-489-1610 or hq@naasr.org for more information.