The role of women in the advancement of Modern Greek dialectology: the case of Melpo Merlier
Karatsareas, P.


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The role of women in the advancement of Modern Greek dialectology: the case of Melpo Merlier

Petros Karatsareas
University of Westminster
...not a drop of genuine and unmixed Hellenic blood flows in the veins of the present Christian population of Greece ... Scythian Slavs, Illyrian Albanians, children of the most northerly lands, blood relations of the Serbs and the Bulgarians, the Dalmatians and the Muscovites – these are the peoples whom today we call Hellenes, and whom, to their own amazement, we elevate to the pedigree of a Pericles and Philopoemen.

Jakop Philipp Fallmerayer (1830)
Disprove Fallmerayer!

- A direct and unbreakable relation of cultural continuity between the ancient and modern-day Greeks

- Μνημεία λόγου [mní mia lògu] ‘monuments of the word’: music, songs, verbs, proverbs, tales
Melpo Merlier: early life

- **1889**: born in Xanthi/İskeçe as Melpo Logotheti
- Studied piano and music in Dresden, Vienna, Geneva
- **1919**: moved to Paris to study musicology under André Pirro
Melpo Merlier: **early life**

- **1920**: joined *Institut Néo-Hellénique* of the Sorbonne as the assistant of Hubert Pernot
- **1922**: collected folk songs in Central Greece
- **1923**: married Octave Merlier
- **1925**: relocated to Athens
The beginning

- **1929**: Pernot asked Merlier’s help to create a permanent record of Modern Greek folk songs

- **1930**: *Syllogos Dimotikon Tragoudion* [Folk Song Society]

- 595 folk songs, 66 hymns
A turning point

- **1919–1922**: Greco–Turkish War

- **1922**: *Mikrasiatiki Katastrofi* [Asia Minor Catastrophe]

- **30 January 1923**: *Convention Concerning the Exchange of Greek and Turkish Populations*
Article 1
As from the 1st May 1923, there shall take place a compulsory exchange of Turkish nationals of the Greek Orthodox religion established in Turkish territory, and of Greek nationals of the Moslem religion established in Greek territory.

These persons shall not return to live in Turkey or Greece respectively without the authorisation of the Turkish Government or of the Greek Government respectively.
A turning point

- **1933**: *Archeio Mikrasiatikis Laografias* [Asia Minor Folklore Archive]

- **1945**: *Kentro Mikrasiatikon Spoudon* [Centre for Asia Minor Studies; CAMS]
... a duty, to study the folk culture of these Greek populations, to also collect, ..., everything that they can teach us about their regions and their villages, some of which would not even be found on maps.

Merlier (2011 [1951]: 16)
To repopulate the villages and towns of Asia Minor such as they existed there, within their geographic and historical contexts, in order to make possible the study of the life and civilisation of the last Greek populations of Asia Minor.

Merlier (1958; cited in Petropoulou 1998: 120)
A new mission

**Geography**
Physical geography
Human geography
Topography

**Dialects**

**Everyday life**
The house
Human life: from birth to death

**Worship**
Religious life
Local worship

**Monuments of speech**
Oral literature
Folk art
Folk music

**Economy and society**
Economic and social life
Institutions
Local law
Agricultural life
Professions
A new mission

Informants:
(a) were born and had spent all their lives up to the exchange in Asia Minor
(b) came from rural areas and had preferably worked as farmers
(c) had been displaced in a relatively peaceful manner

(Papailias, 2005)
Cappadocia as a case-in-point

- Geographically and historically more uniform than Pontus

- «ἐσωτερικὸθὰπῆΚαππαδοκία»
  ‘inner [Asia Minor] means Cappadocia’
  (Merlier, 1948: 17)
Cappadocia as a **case-in-point**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek locales</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pontus</td>
<td>1485</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cappadocia</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
May I say at once that some competent linguist ought to go as soon as possible to the Pharasa people at Moschato and collect a grammar of their dialect before it is too late. ... Moschato is very near Athens and do I beg you get someone to do this work and collect the grammar; any number of points in the inflexions of the verbs and nouns are unknown.

Richard M. Dawkins (1933; published in Kitromilidis 1986)
I may therefore remind you, and ask you to pass on, that there is quite near Athens an opportunity to do a most valuable piece of work. Of all the dialects of Cappadocia the most important is one of which we know least, the dialect of Pharasa (Φάρασα). ... Someone should go there to Moschato and collect material from them and write out as full a grammar as he can of the dialect; ... Do please get someone to undertake this piece of work and give a prize for it.

Richard M. Dawkins (1934; published in Kitromilidis 1986)
Melpo Merlier, Dimitris Loukopoulos and a singer
the natural environment, the sky, the mountains, the rivers, the animals, and the plants; ... the streets and alleys; ... the church, the school, the houses; ... neighbourhoods ... communities

Merlier (1948: 21)
we are primarily interested in the content and not in the linguistic form

... peculiar language, language that is incomprehensible by other Greeks

Loukopoulos (1990: 241)
(1) Pharasiot Greek

\[ \text{δαδά} \quad \text{το} \quad \gammaεμέκι_{i} \quad \chiαζιρλάτε \quad \text{δα}_{i} \]

a'da  to  je'meci  xazir'late  da

DEM.PROX  DEF.N.SG.ACC  food(N).SG.ACC  prepare.IMPV.2SG  OBJ

‘Prepare this food.’ (Dawkins, 1916: 518)
An obstacle

(1) Pharasiot Greek

\[ \text{ἀδάτο γεμέκις χαζιρλάτε \ da}_i \]
\[ \text{α'da to je'meci xazir'late da} \]
\[ \text{DEM.PROX DEF.N.SG.ACC food(N).SG.ACC prepare.IMPV.2SG OBJ} \]

‘Prepare this food.’ (Dawkins, 1916: 518)
An obstacle

(1) Pharasiot Greek

ἀδά το γεμέκι, χαζιρλάτε δα
a'da to je'meci xazir'late da
DEM.PROX DEF.N.SG.ACC food(N).SG.ACC prepare.IMPV.2SG OBJ

‘Prepare this food.’ (Dawkins, 1916: 518)
(1) Pharasiot Greek

\( \dot{a}d\dot{a} \) \( \text{to} \) \( \gamma\epsilon\mu\acute{e}k\text{}_{i} \)

a'da to je'meci

DEM.PROX DEF.N.SG.ACC food(N).SG.ACC

‘Prepare this food.’ (Dawkins, 1916: 518)
An obstacle

(1) Pharasiot Greek

\[ \text{'Prepare this food.'} \] (Dawkins, 1916: 518)

\[ \text{‘Prepare this food.’} \] (Dawkins, 1916: 518)
(1) Pharasiot Greek

\[ \dot{a}d\acute{a} \quad \tau o \quad \gamma e\mu \acute{e}k\_i \quad \chi a\varsigma i\rho\acute{a}t\acute{e} \quad da_i \]

\[ a'da \quad to \quad j e'meci \quad x a z i r'late \quad da \]

DEM.PROX  DEF.N.SG.ACC  food(N).SG.ACC  prepare.IMPV.2SG  OBJ

‘Prepare this food.’ (Dawkins, 1916: 518)
An obstacle

(1) Pharasiot Greek

\[ \acute{a}d\acute{a} \quad \tau_{o} \quad \gamma\epsilon\mu\acute{e}k_{i} \quad \chi\acute{a}z\acute{e}r\acute{l}\acute{a}t\acute{e} \quad \text{da}_{i} \]

\[ \text{a}'\text{da} \quad \text{to} \quad \text{i}e'm\text{eci} \quad \text{xazir}'\text{late} \quad \text{da} \]

(2) Standard Modern Greek

\[ \alpha\nu\tau\acute{o} \quad \tau_{o} \quad \phi\acute{a}i'/\phi\acute{a}g\eta\tau\acute{o}_{i} \quad \epsilon\tau\acute{o}i\text{m}\omega\acute{a}\acute{e} \quad \tau_{o}_{i} \]

\[ \text{a}'\text{fto} \quad \text{to} \quad \text{fai}/\text{faji}'\text{to} \quad e_{i}\text{tima}'\text{se} \quad \text{to} \]

‘Prepare this food.’
A necessary solution

- The documentation and study of the dialects of Asia Minor Greeks becomes as important as that of their folk culture.

- Merlier commissions Nikolaos Andriotis to produce a grammatical description of the dialect of Phária.
Τον Καρποτόλη μπήκε η τούφη. 
Το τηγάνι μακαριστά, τσακοστά. 
Διάφανη στο φανάρι. 
Βεγγάλη είναι το φανάρι. 
Είχε διάφανη την καρποτόλη. 
Το φανάρι της έπεσε. 
Το φανάρι της έπεσε. 
Το φανάρι της έπεσε.

Το φανάρι της έπεσε. 
Το φανάρι της έπεσε. 
Το φανάρι της έπεσε.
A necessary solution

The dialect of Pharasa

- The first work to be published based entirely on material collected by Merlier and her collaborators
- Prompt for Merlier to publish her programmatic paper on the theoretical and methodological principles of the CAMS (Merlier, 1948)
A necessary solution

The dialect of Pharasa

1. Historical introduction
2. Phonology
3. Morphology
4. Syntax
5. Glossaries
6. Texts (fairy tales, fictitious narratives)

➤ Only material considered to be dialectal is included
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialect</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pharasa</td>
<td>Andriotis (1948)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ulaghatsh (Cappadocian)</td>
<td>Kesisoglou (1951)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Axos (Cappadocian)</td>
<td>Mavrochalyvidis &amp; Kesisoglou (1960)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aravan (Cappadocian)</td>
<td>Fosteris &amp; Kesisoglou (1960)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livisi</td>
<td>Andriotis (1961)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anaku (Cappadocian)</td>
<td>Kostakis (1964)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silli</td>
<td>Kostakis (1968)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The contribution

- Invaluable addition to the record of the Asia Minor Greek dialects
The contribution

Early ethnographic studies (Karolidis, 1855; Alektoridis, 1883; Archelaos, 1899)

Dawkins (1916)
The contribution

Early ethnographic studies (Karolidis, 1855; Alektoridis, 1883; Archelaos, 1899)

Dawkins (1916)

CAMS descriptions (1951–1968)
The contribution

- High quality of documentation and correction of errors made by Dawkins
The contribution

(2) Ulaghatsh Cappadocian

τράνσε κει ἕνα φί
'transe ci 'ena fi
see.PST.3SG DIST INDF snake.SG.ACC

‘He saw there a snake.’ (Dawkins, 1916: 376)
The contribution

(2) Ulaghatsh Cappadocian

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{dράνσε} & \quad \text{κι} & \quad \text{έν’} & \quad \text{να} & \quad \text{φί} \\
'dranse & \quad ci & \quad en & \quad na & \quad fi
\end{align*}
\]

see.PST.3SG   COMP   COP.PRS.3   INDF   snake.SG.ACC

‘He saw that there was a snake.’ (Kesisoglou, 1951: 133)
The contribution

- CAMS informants were more reliable in reporting their native dialects than Dawkins's informants
Ulaghatsh Cappadocian

\( \phi\'a\dot{\iota}\sigma\epsilon\nu \quad do \quad \epsilon\iota\varsigma \quad \tau \eta \quad \gamma \dot{\iota} \)

\( \text{'faisen} \quad do \quad i\acute{f} \quad ti \quad ji \)

dash.PST.3SG 3SG.ACC LOC DEF.F.SG.ACC ground(F).SG.ACC

‘She dashed it on the ground.’ (Dawkins, 1916: 362)
The contribution

No overt locative/allative marker (Karatsareas, 2016; Karatsareas & Georgakopoulos, 2016)

(3) Ulaghatsh Cappadocian

φαῖσεν  do  εἰς  τη  γῆ
\[ˈfaisen\]  do  \[if\]  ti  ji

dash.PST.3SG  3SG.ACC  LOC  DEF.F.SG.ACC  ground(F).SG.ACC

‘She dashed it on the ground.’ (Dawkins, 1916: 362)
The **contribution**

(3) Ulaghatsh Cappadocian

\[ \phi\'ai\sigma\varepsilon\nu \quad do \quad \epsilon\i\varsigma \]

\'faisen \quad do \quad i\j\]

\textit{dash.PST.3SG \ 3SG.ACC \ LOC \ DEF.F.SG.ACC \ ground(F).SG.ACC}

‘She dashed it on the ground.’ (Dawkins, 1916: 362)

No gender distinctions (Karatsareas, 2009, 2011, 2014)

No gender distinctions (Karatsareas, 2009, 2011, 2014)
Ψήφισμα...

"Ο Βαρασός μας πέμεινε σίς Τούρτζοι γιά μά χάθει, νέ πάλι ζελμωνέθη; "Εν σήν καρντία μας πέσου ἄρο! Αρωσές τα το’ ἥφαρες τα ἀδὲ Κυ ’Ε Μαντάμα Μέλπω Μερλιέ!’ Κυ τά ἐξκαλες σή μέση, σὸν κόσμο γνέντα τζεί σις Ψαλτάροι! Μò Κυ δώτζες σοὐ κόσμου τ’es ἀκρες ἀλία τοῦ ἔτουν ὁ Βαρασός ἦ Ρωμάκο χωρίος τοῦ κράτσεν σῶς στέρου τή Χριστενοσύνη τοῦ τζεί το παλὸν το Ρωμάκον τή γουώσσα.

Απιδού στήν ἀκρα, τσίπ οἱ Βαρασώτοι, ποίκαμ μό τήν καρντία μας το κατζί νά Κε είπουμ τοῦ Βαρασό μας το ΜΕΓΟ Η ΜΑ τζεί ΤΟ ΠΡΩΤΙΝΟ Η ΒΑΡΑΚΟΤΣΑ.

Σήν’Αθήνα σ’Απρίλη τὰ 4 τοῦ 1954

The contribution

Resolution...

Varasos was left to the Turks, but was neither lost nor forgotten. It is alive in our heart.

You, Madame Melpo Merlier, resurrected it and brought it here. You presented it to the whole world and to the scholars. Only you sent to all corners of the world the message that Varasos was a Greek village that preserved Christendom and the ancient Greek language until the end.

In view of this, all us Pharasiots have decided from the bottom of our heart to declare you the GREAT MOTHER and the FIRST PHARASIOΤ of our Varasos.

Athens, 4 April 1954
An insightful and dynamic scholar
- Shouldered the burden of salvaging the cultural characteristics of Asia Minor Greeks
- A researcher on a quest for authenticity
- The linguistic materials that were published under her auspices made an invaluable contribution to our knowledge of Asia Minor Greek
- Highly regarded by the Asia Minor Greek refugee communities
Thank you

Any questions?

You can find me at
- P.Karatsareas@westminster.ac.uk
- westminster.academia.edu/PetrosKaratsareas
Acknowledgments

I am indebted to the Centre for Asia Minor Studies and especially to Markos Dragoumis for granting me access to the Centre’s material and for providing me with a wealth of information on Melpo Merlier’s work and contribution.


References


Karolidis, Pavlos. 1885. *Glossarion Sygkritikon Ellinikappadokikon Lekseon, itoi i en Kappadokia Laloumeni Elliniki Dialektos kai ta en Afti Sozomena Ichni tis Archaiais Kappadokikis Glossis* [Comparative Glossary of Cappadocian Greek Words, that is, the Spoken Greek Dialect of Cappadocia and the Traces of the Ancient Cappadocian Language that are Preserved in it]. Smyrna: O Typos.


