

HISTORICAL LEXICOGRAPHY AND DIMINUTION

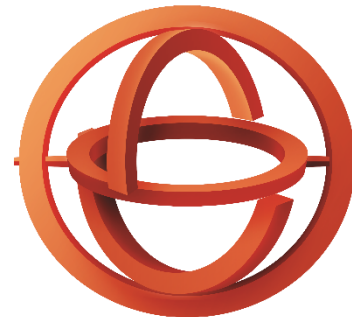
A CASE STUDY ON THE BASIS OF MODERN GREEK

Simeon Tsolakidis | Caen 24/6/2026

16th International Conference on Historical Lexicography and Lexicology



ACADEMY OF ATHENS
RESEARCH CENTRE
FOR MODERN GREEK DIALECTS
HISTORICAL DICTIONARY



H.F.R.I.
Hellenic Foundation for
Research & Innovation

Structure of the presentation

1) Introduction:

- a) Modern Greek (MG) suffixal diminution
and the project DIADIMA
- b) Older dictionaries of MG (+ vernacular vs. literary archaized MG)
written

2) Main part: Indicative “entries” of the Database of MG (suffixal) Diminution (DaMoGreD)

3) Concluding remarks



Diminution in Greek language

- Greek is a language where diminution is realized mainly through suffixation (cf. Grandi, Holton & Giannouloupoulou 2024; Melissaropoulou 2015, 270-273)
 - **Ancient Greek (AG)** ['ant^hro:pos] “man” > [ant^hro:'piskos] “1. little man, 2. petty man”
(1500-300 BC)
 - **Hellenistic Greek (HG)** [ama'nitis] “mushroom” > dim. [amani'tarion]
(300 BC - 400 AD)
 - **Medieval Greek (MedG)** ['psari] “fish” > dim. [psa'ropulo]
(400-1500 AD)
 - **MG** ['boyos] “bundle” > dim. [boy'a'laki]
(1500 AD - present)



Dialectal diminutives morphological analysis / mapping

- Aiming at a documentation and thorough study of dialectal diminutive suffixation in Standard MG, Common MG and MG dialectal varieties
- Funded by  **H.F.R.I.**
Hellenic Foundation for
Research & Innovation
- Studying and average user - friendly presenting:
 1. the structure and function of MG diminutive suffixes (selectional restrictions, segmentation, variation)
 2. the geographical distribution of diminutive suffixes and potential use as a dialectal isogloss
 3. The etymology **plus** the "history" of diminutive suffixes
- Main open access products:
 1. electronic dialectal atlas of MG diminutive suffixation,
 2. DaMoGreD: an electronic database of the MG (suffixal) diminution

Entry -ᾰκος (-'akos)

Headword

• Functions: a) diminutive, b) pejorative, c) affectionate

"Semantic" section

Gender of the diminutive: Masculine

- Gender of the base: Masculine
- Part of speech of the diminutive: Noun
- Part of speech of the base: Noun
- Stressed suffix
- Combinability: yes
- Borrowed: no
- Literature: Efthymiou (2024), Melissaropoulou (2015: 272-273), Setatos (1992: 392)

Entry -ᾶκος (-'akos)

- Etymology: < EMG -ᾶk(os) < -ᾶk(is) + -os. For its dating as an EMG suffix, cf. the personal name (surname or nickname) *Gherᾶkos* (lit. “nice old man”) in the *Chronography* of Papasynadinos (36.107, TLG) (first half of the 17th c.) or the name *Ghianᾶkos* (lit. “little John”) in a notarial document of 1696 (ILNE, s.v. *Γιαννᾶκος*)

- Dating: EMG

- Varieties:

○ forms: -ᾶkos

-ᾶkus

"Formal" section

○ examples: *ghiakadhᾶkos* "small collar" *ῥromᾶkus* "small street"

○ places: CMG etc.

Northern and Central Greece



Early Modern Greek (16th-18th c.)

Entry -ἄκος (-'akos)

Etymological field/section

- EMG -*ákos* < -*áki*/-*ákis* + masc. -os
- For the dating as an EMG suffix, cf. the personal name
MedG ['jeros "old man"] > (surname or nickname) *Gherákos* (lit. "nice old man") in
the *Chronography* of Papasynadinos (36.107, TLG) (first
half of the 17th c.), or the name *Ghianákos* ("Johnny") in a
MedG ['janis "John"] > notarial document of 1696 (ILNE, s.v. *Γιαννάκος*).

Thesaurus Linguae Graecae

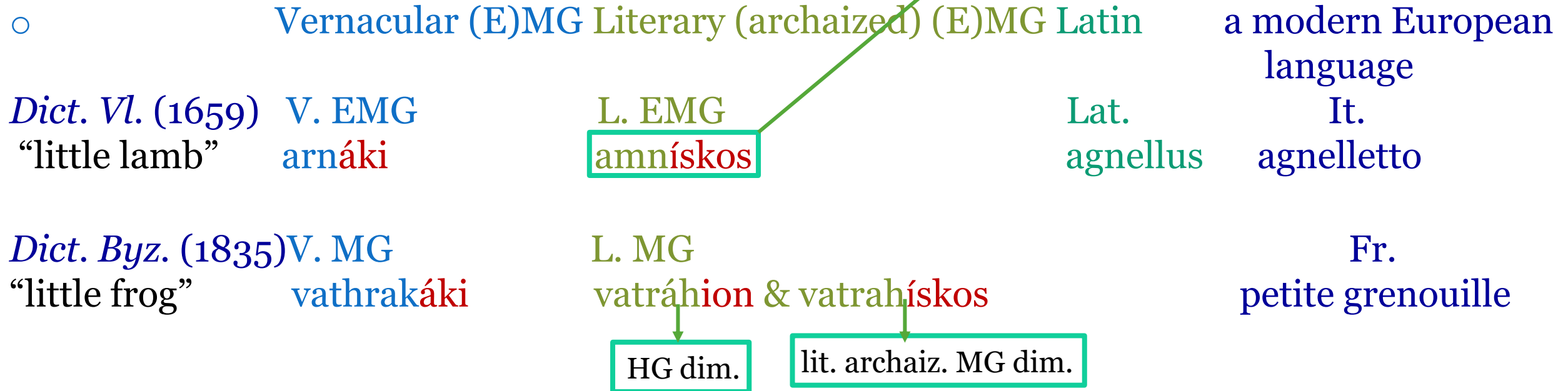
Historical Dictionary of MG



Older MG dictionaries - 16th-19th c. (Stathi 2006: 147; Lavidas 2019: 59-64)

- Multilingual dictionaries:

- They usually provide equivalents in



Literary archaized MG: the officially national language of the MG state founded in 1830.

Current SMG is a result of the parallel existence and the interaction between vernacular CMG and the official archaized MG of 19th and 20th c.



Entry -αλάκι [-a'laçi]

- Etymology: < EMG *-aláçi* through a reanalysis in cases of diminutives in *-áçi* of nouns ending in *-ál(in)*, for example EMG *ghreghaláki* “nice soft north-east wind”, originally a diminutive of *ghreghális*, was reanalyzed (*ghreghaláki*) as a diminutive of *ghréghos* “north-east wind”. For the dating as an EMG suffix, see *Dict. Vlach.*, s.v. *σπιθαλάκι* [spiθa'laçi] (“small spark”), *στιχαλάκι* [stixa'laçi] (“short verse”), *Dict. Weig.* *τειχαλάκι* [tixa'laçi] (“small or low wall”), s.v. *Τειχόπουλον*.
- Dating: EMG
- Varieties:
 - forms: *-aláçi* *-altáçi* etc.
 - examples: *vixaláçi* “slight cough” *muraltáçi* “little face”
 - places: CMG Astypalaia, Dodecanese



Dict. Vlach. (1659)

Et

Vernacular EMG

Latin

Italian

Σπιθαλάκι

Scintillula

Scintilletta

Dict. Weig. (1796)

Τειχόπουλον, τὸ, (τειχαλάκι). die kleine
Mauer 4. il murello, muricino

Literary (archaized) EMG

Σπινθηράκιον [spinθi'racion]

Σπινθηρίδιον [spinθi'riðion]

Ψέμαλος ['psemalos]

diminutive of *ghréghos* “north-east wind”.

✓ For the dating as an EMG suffix, see *Dict. Vlach.*, s.v. *σπιθαλάκι* [spiθa'laçi] (“small spark”), *στιχαλάκι* [stixa'laçi] (“short verse”), *Dict. Weig.* *τειχαλάκι* [tixa'laçi] (“small or low (city) wall”), s.v. *Τειχόπουλον*.



Entry -αλάκι [-a'laçi]

Etymological field/section

✓ < EMG -*aláçi*

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- Etymology: < AG -ískos. It continued to be productive in the MedG period; cf. *iatrískos* “contemptible physician, quack” (7th c.), *lithískos* “small stone” (13th c.). Its productivity appears to have been very limited in EMG (cf. *elevolískos* “small cannon” (16th c.)) and confined to formal registers (cf. *angelískos* as an archaized equivalent of Italian *angioletto* “little angel” in *Dict. Crus.*) and was likely used almost only in the Russian context of the knowledge of Greek, for example *dhondískos* as an archaized equivalent of Russ. *zubok* / Lat. *denticulus* “little tooth” in *Dict. Polik.*; see also *kodhonískos* as an equivalent of *kolokol'chik* “little bell, hand bell” in *Dict. Meth.*
-ískos was probably reintroduced into Modern Greek from the 2nd decade of the 19th c. onward, when there was a strong tendency toward the archaization of Common Modern Greek (see various examples in 19th c. literature and dictionaries such as *stolískos* “flotilla” (*Gen.Jour.Gr.*), *kapetanískos* “petty military chief of irregular forces” (*Kas., Memoirs*), *vatrahískos* “little frog” (*Dict. Byz.*), *molosískos* “a kind of puppy”, *piitískos* “petty poet” (*Dict. Rang.*). Since the 2nd half of 20th c., -ískos appears to be productive only as a pejorative suffix.
- Dating: AG
- Varieties:
 - forms: -ískos
 - examples: *imenískos* “little and thin membrane”, *trulískos* “small dome”,
apateonískos “small-time crook”, *arhighískos* “petty/minor leader”.
 - places: SMG



Dict. Polik. (1704)

зубόκѣ, δοῦτίσκος, denticulus

ry -ίσκος [-'iskos]

logical field/section

ive in the MedG period; cf. *iatrískos*

“small” (7th c.), *lithískos* “small stone”

Dict. Meth. (1793)

КОЛОКОЛЬЧИКЪ, а, οὐσ. ἀρ κωδωνίσκος, κουδοῦνι, κου-

δοῦνια, поношѹ κόγο, злослѡвлю,

κρεμῶ τὰ κουδοῦνια τινί.

- Its productivity ap
elevolískos “small
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Etymological field/section

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Dict. Rang.-Sam.-N.L. (1842)

Ροήtereαου, ἄρ. ποιητίσκος, (περι-
φρονητικῶς ἐπὶ τῶν κακῶν ποιητῶν)

IMA DaMo

ry -ίσκος [-'isk

logical field/

Dict. Rang.-Sam.-N.L. (1842)

Doguin, ine, οὐσ. μολοσσίσκος, εἴ-
δος κυνιδίου.

- *-ískos* was probably reintroduced into Modern Greek from the 2nd decade of 19th c. onward, when there was a strong tendency toward the archaization of Common Modern Greek (see various examples in 19th c. official documents, literature and dictionaries such as *stolískos* “flotilla” (*Gen.Jour.Gr.*), *kapetanískos* “petty military chief of irregular forces” (*Kas., Memoirs*), *angelískos* “little angel” (*Dict. Vlan.*), *vathrahískos* “little frog” (*Dict. Byz.*), *molosískos* “a kind of small-sized dog”, *piitískos* “poetaster” (*Dict. Rang.-Sam.-N.L.*).
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- Since the 2nd half of 20th c. -ῖσκος seems to be productive only as a pejorative suffix.

Concluding remarks

- 1) The etymological section of DaMoGreD could contribute to a more accurate presentation of the history of MG suffixal diminution and, consequently, of lexical items related to those suffixes.
- 2) Older dictionaries of MG could contribute valuable data to, amongst others, a more accurate dating of certain developments concerning morphology and lexicon.
- 3) The above mentioned contributions are of particular significance in the case of diminutives, if we take into account that diminutives are more commonly found in informal registers (poetry, fictional narratives, dialogue), and Greek sources of this kind are somewhat scarce in certain pre-modern periods. Besides, we do not yet have a satisfactory or adequate digital data or text corpus for the post-Byzantine period, and especially for the Greek language of the 18th and 19th centuries.
- 4) This presentation underscores the methodological importance of older MG lexicography for the reconstruction of MG linguistic history.



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- Dict. Crus. = *Vocabolario degli Accademici della Crusca*. Accademia della Crusca, 4th ed. Academia della Crusca. Venice 1729-1738. <https://www.lessicografia.it/pagina.jsp?ediz=4&vol=1&pag=1&tipo=1>
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TLG = *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*® Digital Library, Univ. of California, Irvine. <https://stephanus.tlg.uci.edu/>



*Thank you very much
for your attention !!!*

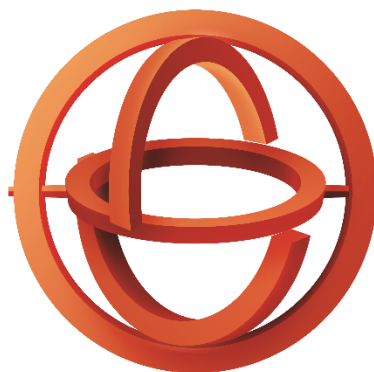
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<https://kendi.academyofathens.gr/pages/programma-diadima>



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