A GUIDE FOR PLANT COLLECTORS TO SPECIALIZED SUBSTRATE TERMS OF USE IN LATIN AMERICA: SUBSTRATES OF ANIMAL ORIGIN

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Elaborate vocabularies for subjects of supposedly limited amplitude are well known to anthropologists, linguists, botanists and computer engineers, among others. The more than 20 words for snow in the languages of the Eskimo tribes (Whorf, 1940) and the 490 terms for various kinds of plant trichomes and indumenta (Payne, 1978) are merely two examples, among many, that come to mind.

Through the diverse regions of Latin America a relatively rich terminology has evolved to refer to substrates of animal origin, be they excrement, bones, regurgitated stomach contents or carcasses. Dung, particularly that of domestic herd animals, has long been of interest to anthropologists and students of human ecology intent on analyzing the energy equations of rural or pre-industrial cultures (Winterhalder, Larsen & Thomas, 1974). The use of dung among such peoples as a fertilizer, fuel or insect repellent (when dried and burned) is well documented in the anthropological literature.

Little formal attention has been paid to the terminology of use in Latin America that refers to substrates of animal origin, yet the subject cannot fail to hold interest for botanists who study coprophilous floras and who inevitably encounter the subject, either in the field, when talking to local inhabitants, or on herbarium labels where such terms appear. While many of the terms are of wide currency and can be found in any reasonably complete dictionary, others are of restricted use, limited to certain regions, or are orthographic or phonic variants of French (Creole), Portuguese or Spanish words and normally do not figure even in unabridged dictionaries. Unfamiliar words for such substrates are the source of some confusion when taken from field notes, or other original sources, and translated into English onto specimen labels. The author has come across several

examples of such substrate terms being misinterpreted as the name of some other kind of substrate or as the name of a nearby village or other landmark.

In order to ameliorate this situation and provide a working list of terms for students of neotropical coprophilous floras, the following abridged glossary is offered. These terms were compiled from the author's own notes made over a period of 25 years while engaged in field work in Latin America and from information solicited from colleagues living in or knowledgeable about Latin America and whose collaboration is recognized elsewhere in this paper.

The glossary makes no pretensions to completeness nor to the degree of accuracy which philologists would require. Each term is identified by gender, masculine (m) or feminine (f), and language, Creole (C), Portuguese (P) or Spanish (S). Notes are provided which give some notion of the regionality of each entry and, in some cases, additional meanings associated with a particular term.

Abono (m, S). General term for fertilizer. Note that in Portuguese this term means a bonus or warrant.
Bolitas (f, S). Excrement of somewhat spherical shape, as that of rabbits, sheep or goats. Chile.
Boñiga (f, S). Excrement, especially that of cattle, but used locally to refer to that of any large animal. Of general use. Not common.
Boñigo (m, S). Orthographic variant of boñiga.
Bosta (f, P, S). Excrement of domestic animals, especially of large herd animals or, occasionally, of wild species. Common term, particularly in Northern South America.
Boyo (m, S). Excrement of humans. Chile.
Buñiga (f, S). Orthographic variant of boñiga. This is the form encountered in Central Mexico, often used in reference to the dried dung of cattle.
Caca (f, C, P, S). General term for the excrement of mammals, including that of humans. Common term throughout Latin America.
Cacarrutas (f, S). Excrement of small size, as that of mice, rats or insects. Of general use throughout Latin America.
Cagajón (m, S). Excrement of large size, as that of mules, horses or cows. Common in Northern Latin America.
Cirre (m, S). Excrement of goats. Extremely local in occurrence. Apparently limited to Northeastern Mexico and likely represents a phonic variant of the Spanish word sirle, meaning the excrement of sheep and goats.

Cocô (m, P). Used colloquially in Brazil to refer to animal excrement, but also meaning (in Portuguese and Spanish) the fruit of any of a number of Arecaceae.
Esterco (m, P). General term for excrement in Brazil.
Estiércol (m S). General term for excrement in Spanish-speaking countries.
Estrume (m, P). Excrement of oxen, cows, horses or any other large animal. Brazil.
Fezes (f, P). Used in the plural form, meaning feces or excrement. Brazil. Carries offensive implication in particular contexts.
Guano (m, P, S). Excrement of avian or mammalian origin, but mostly reserved for accumulations of excrement that result from high concentrations of animals, whether living in natural bands or rookeries or in artificial enclosures.
Heces (f, S). Plural form of hez, and, when used in the plural, referring to excrement in general. Used colloquially in derogatory contexts.
Huano (m, S). Orthographic variant of guano.
Merda (f, P). Offensive term for excrement. Brazil.
Mierda (f, S). Offensive term for excrement in most Spanish-speaking countries; however, accepted in polite conversation in certain areas (e.g., Loreto, Peru).
Meca (f, S). Excrement in general, but particularly that of birds, cats, dogs or humans. Chile.
Pecueca (f, S). Excrement in general. Limited to Andean Colombia, particularly to Cundinamarca.
Pepas (f, S). Excrement of the guinea pig (Cavia spp.). Limited to Andean Colombia. More widespread meaning is as variant of pepita, the seed of any of a variety of fruits, including squashes, apples, pears, etc.
Píldoras (f, S). Excrement of rabbits, goats or other species producing small droppings. Costa Rica. More general meaning is pills.
Plasta (f, S). Excrement that is fresh or semi-liquid. That which is voided in a single mass. Costa Rica, Chile.
Polvarón (m, S). Excrement of horses or mules. Costa Rica.
Popó (m, S). Colloquial term for human excrement. Mexico.
Raja (f, S). Colloquial term for excrement in Central Mexico. More widespread meaning is that of slices of a variety of objects from firewood to fruits, roots, stems, fish or meats.
Títica (f, P). Excrement of birds in general. Brazil.
Tolhedeira (f, P). Excrement of birds of prey. Also refers to vomited mass of fur, bones or teeth. Brazil.
Vidrio inglés (m, S). Animal excrement. Costa Rica. Also used colloquially in that country in humorous contexts.

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