

# Colonial-Era Language Shifts and the Sources of Substrate Body Partonomy in the Spanish of Northwestern Colombia

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## 1 Introduction

The present analysis centers on the origins of semantic overlap in the use of the Spanish lexeme *mano* in its canonical sense of ‘hand’ as well as with a non-canonical sense of ‘arm, upper extremity’, and a parallel pattern for *pie* (‘foot’ and ‘leg, lower extremity’) in Spanish varieties of the departments of Antioquia, Córdoba, and Chocó, Colombia. Readily apparent in the examples (1-2) extracted from the *Corpus Sociolingüístico de Medellín* (PRESEEA 2014), the non-canonical senses of *mano* and *pie* are notably absent from prior work on Colombian Spanish (see e.g. Flórez 1969, 1983); indeed, the pattern has not been reported in any monolingual variety of Spanish to date.<sup>1</sup>

- (1) No podía mover la-s **manos** porque me quebré por acá.  
NEG could move DEF-PL hands because REFL.1SG broke around here  
‘I couldn’t move my hands/arms because I broke (one) around here.’
- (2) Se me partió la carne de-l **pie** izquierdo a-l lado de la rodilla.  
REFL.3SG DAT.1SG opened DEF flesh of-DEF foot left to-DEF side of DEF knee  
‘The skin of my left foot/leg was cut open on the side of my knee.’

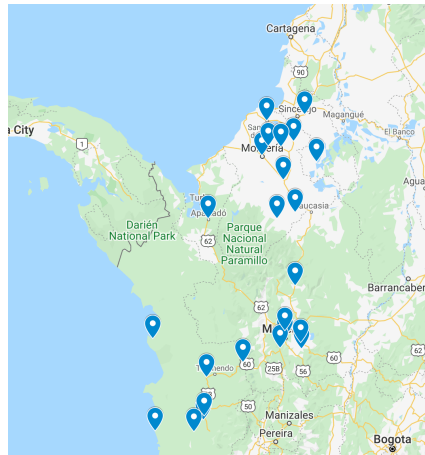


Figure 1: Judgments of *mano* for ‘arm’ and *pie* for ‘leg’ as acceptable (map data: ©Google 2020).

Nevertheless, acceptability judgments from informants in each of the locations shown in Figure 1

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<sup>1</sup>This is not to suggest that no such varieties exist; indeed, it is fairly likely that this pattern would be found elsewhere in the Spanish-speaking world, particularly in areas with similar histories of language contact and shift involving typologically similar substrates to those discussed in Section 2.2.

demonstrate that the use of *mano* with reference to ‘arm’ and *pie* for ‘leg’ is common to the three distinct dialect regions under discussion here (see Raynor 2019, forthcoming a).<sup>2</sup>

A language-internal explanation for this development is possible by way of part-for-whole metonymy, a common mechanism of semantic change; indeed, this is what has been proposed for a handful of diachronic ‘hand’ > ‘arm’ extensions in other parts of the world. For example, the reconstructed Proto-Austronesian lexeme *\*lima* ‘five, hand’ is purportedly the etymon for Palauan *ṭim* ‘hand, arm and hand’ (Wilkins 1996:275). A similar directionality is seen in the considerably more frequent metonymic change in which lexical items once exclusively referring to ‘finger’ extend their domain of reference to also cover ‘hand’ (Campbell 1998:272). Within Romance, however, only Romanian uses a single lexeme for reference to the upper and lower limbs, respectively, with *mână* covering both ‘hand’ and ‘arm’ and *picior* for ‘foot’ and ‘leg’ (McClure 1975:79).<sup>3</sup> Romanian, however, is inextricably tied to the Balkan Sprachbund, in which Albanian, Bulgarian, Macedonian, Greek, and Serbo-Croatian figured heavily; each of these languages has one lexical item that can be used to refer to ‘hand, arm’ and ‘foot, leg’ respectively.

Meanwhile, monolingual varieties of Colombian Spanish are not often (if ever) scrutinized through the lens of language contact, due largely to a focus among Ibero-Romance contact specialists on situations of bilingualism in North America, the Andes, and Mesoamerica, as well as more radical cases of restructuring through contact such as in Palenquero, Papiamentu, and several well-attested Portuguese-based Creoles in the Gulf of Guinea islands, Cabo Verde, and Guinea-Bissau. Regardless, it is argued here that an analysis involving substratum transfer through language shift(s) is the most plausible one on both linguistic and sociohistorical grounds for the origins of non-canonical senses of *mano* as ‘hand, arm’ and *pie* as ‘foot, leg’ in the Spanish of northwestern Colombia.

## 2 Sociohistorical and Demographic Context

### 2.1 European-descendant Settler Colonists and Priests, Indigenous Amerindian Groups, and Enslaved and Free African(-descendant)s

Sociohistorical data deriving from early censuses of Chocó and Antioquia are presented in Tables 1 and 2, below, adapted from McFarlane (1993:362-363).<sup>4</sup> Six representative settlements from each region have been selected in order to demonstrate general tendencies in terms of the size and demographic make-up of towns in each of the two regions.

	‘Whites’	‘Slaves of all colors’	‘Free people of all colors’	‘Indians’
Nóvita	39	1,129	460	--
Tadó	67	1,157	440	457
Sipí	11	27	273	640
Quibdó	50	714	400	1,077
Lloró	25	343	176	1,140
Chamí	10	10	--	993

Table 1: Demographic breakdowns of six settlements in Chocó, 1776.

By way of brief summary, in Table 1 it can be observed that very few European-descendant people

<sup>2</sup>See, e.g., Montes Giraldo (1982) for a broad overview of Colombian dialectology and discussion of specific isoglosses that distinguish the Spanish varieties of the highland (Antioquia), lowland (Chocó), and Caribbean coastal (Córdoba) regions of northwestern Colombia.

<sup>3</sup>Meanwhile, the lexeme *braț* ‘arm’ (from the Latin etymon BRACHIUM) is also available and may be considered more canonical and/or standard Romanian (Kevin J. Rottet, p.c.).

<sup>4</sup>No comparable data from this time period is available for the department of Córdoba, undoubtedly due to the fact that this region was not settled by the Spanish until considerably later (see Castro 2003). On the other hand, the data from both Chocó and Antioquia were verified by accessing the original archival documents from which they derive via the online database of the *Archivo General de la Nación de Colombia* (URL <http://archivogeneral.gov.co/>). The only modification made here is the label for the enslaved African(-descendant) group, which has been translated directly from the Spanish *esclavos de varios colores* ‘slaves of all colors’, as opposed to the blanket term ‘slaves’ in McFarlane’s (1993) tables.

were present in Chocó in the Spanish colonial era, while, on the other hand, varying by specific locality, the African(-descendant) or Amerindian communities vastly predominated with some amount of overlap in most cases; indeed, this remains the case to the present day (DANE 2010:26).

	‘Whites’	‘Slaves of all colors’	‘Free people of all colors’	‘Indians’
Antioquia (city)	1,235	8,121	6,360	--
Medellín	2,653	2,501	9,100	--
Rionegro	551	686	2,953	--
Peñol	1	--	--	696
Buriticá	1	--	--	364
Sabanalarga	1	--	--	547

Table 2: Demographic breakdowns of six settlements in Antioquia, 1776.

On the other hand, from the data Table 2 it is possible to see that in Antioquia two quite distinct types of settlements were present in the last quarter of the 18th century: one in which European-descendants were a relatively numerous minority alongside a large African(-descendant) population, versus the other type, where a single European-descendant oversaw a large Amerindian population.

## 2.2 Chocoan Languages, Kikongo, and the Upper Guinea Portuguese-Based Creoles

Plausible substrate sources of the non-canonical senses of *mano* and *pie* in northwestern Colombia, then, must be sought in both the Amerindian and West African languages spoken in this region prior to the turn of the 19th century. In the case of the Amerindian population, many languages including Zenú (Córdoba) and Nutabe (Antioquia) ceased to be spoken before any dictionaries or grammars could be compiled. However, the contemporary distribution of a diverse range of varieties of the extant Chocoan languages Emberá and Wounaan (González and Rodríguez 2000:54) as well as historical accounts of these communities’ predominance in the early colonial era (Williams 2004) provide strong evidence that these are plausible candidates for the transfer of substratum features as communities shifted to indigenized L2 lects and eventually (in some cases) L1 Spanish over time.

Table 3 shows patterns of limb partonomy in four Chocoan languages as compiled in the comparative dictionaries of Huber and Reed (1992:19,22,25,29) and Loewen (1957:44a,219a). All four languages listed here are spoken in contemporary Chocó, while varieties of Emberá Catío and Emberá Chamí are spoken in northwestern and southwestern Antioquia, respectively; Emberá Catío is also spoken in western Córdoba. In all four languages it is readily apparent that one lexeme each can be used for ‘hand, arm’ and ‘foot, leg’, respectively.

	‘hand’	‘arm’	‘foot’	‘leg’
Emberá Catío	<i>huwá</i>	<i>huwá</i>	<i>hérũ</i>	<i>hěrũ</i>
Emberá Chamí	<i>húa</i>	<i>húa</i>	<i>hĩrũ</i>	<i>hĩrũ</i>
Emberá Tadó	<i>húa</i>	<i>húa</i>	<i>hĩrã / bĩri</i>	<i>hĩrã</i>
Wounaan	<i>húa</i>	<i>húa</i>	<i>bi</i>	<i>bi</i>

Table 3: Limb partonomy in Chocoan languages of northwestern Colombia.

For the West African languages that would have been most widely spoken in the region, indirect evidence is available in the provenance of enslaved Africans arriving in Cartagena between 1550 and 1800, that is, the entire period for which data from Cartagena is reported in the *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database* (Voyages Database 2009). The percentages reported in Table 4 were calculated based on a total of 167,756 enslaved Africans for whom there is reasonable degree of specificity regarding their origin based on the listed place of purchase.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup>This condition of ‘reasonable specificity of origin’ excludes 36,133 individuals that the database has listed ‘Africa, port unspecified’ as the place of purchase, and about whom no assumptions can be made in terms of linguistic background. On the other hand, the qualifier ‘reasonable’ permits the inclusion of 40,430 people listed as having been purchased in ‘West Central Africa, port unspecified’. This categorization, while imprecise,

	Portuguese Guinea	Cape Verde	Luanda	West Central Africa
Raw numbers	35,286	24,899	32,737	40,430
Percent of total <sup>6</sup>	21.03%	18.84%	19.51%	24.10%

Table 4: Origins of enslaved Africans in Cartagena, Colombia.

In broad terms, then, the two ethnolinguistic backgrounds most likely to have been represented in greatest numbers among the enslaved African population trafficked to Colombia would have been speakers of Bantu H subgroup languages (e.g. Kikongo) from Luanda and West Central Africa (modern-day Angola, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Republic of Congo), followed by speakers of Upper Guinea Portuguese-Based Creoles (e.g. Cape Verde PC, Guinea-Bissau PC). Table 5, with data drawn from Laman (1964:303,304,328) and Parkvall and Baker (2012:237-8) demonstrates that each of these languages has no distinction between ‘hand’ vs. ‘arm’ and ‘foot’ vs. ‘leg’.

	‘hand’	‘arm’	‘foot’	‘leg’
Kikongo	<i>kóoko</i>	<i>kóoko</i>	<i>kiulu</i>	<i>kiulu</i>
Cape Verde PC <sup>7</sup>	<i>mo</i>	<i>mo</i>	<i>pe</i>	<i>pe</i>
Guinea-Bissau PC	<i>mõ</i>	<i>mõ</i>	<i>pe</i>	<i>pe</i>

Table 5: Limb partonomy in Kikongo and Upper Guinea Portuguese Creole (PC) languages.

### 3 Case closed?

The present analysis has been by necessity very brief, and thus no firm conclusions can be drawn. The phenomenon here described is not merely a matter for Spanish dialectology, since it involves a feature that has recently been used to class languages typologically in the *World Atlas of Linguistic Structures* database (Brown 2013). One would hesitate to make the argument that monolingual Spanish varieties of northwestern Colombia are typologically dissimilar from other regional dialects, particularly since the extent of substratum influence in these varieties is in fact rather limited. Antioquian Spanish in particular is generally considered to be a subregional standard. Nevertheless, concrete historical and linguistic data point to a scenario in which speakers of multiple substrate source languages (especially Emberá, Kikongo, and Upper Guinea Portuguese Creoles) very plausibly contributed to the transfer of a common, non-canonical semantic pattern into each of these three distinct Spanish varieties through large-scale and long-past language shift events.

If not them, then who?

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is deemed ‘reasonably-specific’ insofar as the assumption can be made with a certain degree of confidence that speakers of languages of the Bantu H subgroup including Kikongo and typologically similar languages/varieties would have been predominant. The vast majority of this group arrived in Colombia before 1650; thus, by and large they would have originated in the Kingdom of Kongo (Eltis and Richardson 2010:136).

<sup>6</sup>For reasons of clarity, columns demonstrating the origins of the remaining 34,404 enslaved people who arrived in Cartagena have been excluded. Also, given space constraints, it is not possible to demonstrate how discrete phases in the trafficking of enslaved Africans through Cartagena resulted in distinct linguistic ecologies with regards to the most prominent West African substrates in different regions of Colombia, for which one must factor local factors affecting the type and timing of their settlement. In Chocó in particular, where the resistance of the Amerindian population to colonization persisted through the late-17th century, archival records demonstrate that the presence of Bantu (e.g. Kikongo) language speakers would have been less numerous in comparison to the Gbe-speaking population (see e.g. Granda 1988, Raynor, forthcoming b).

<sup>7</sup>The gloss in Parkvall and Baker (2012) for the Santiago variety of Cape Verde PC *mo* is in fact ‘hand and lower arm’; a similar incomplete overlap is true for *pe*, which is glossed as ‘foot and lower leg’. On the other hand, the *Atlas of Pidgin and Creole Structures Online* (abbrev. *APiCS*) reports that the Santiago variety of Cape Verde PC has two distinct terms, *mo* for ‘hand’ and *brásu* for ‘arm’, differentiating the upper arm (Huber and APiCS Consortium 2013). However, the existence of a dictionary entry for both ‘hand’ and ‘arm’ does not mean that the former cannot be used in reference to the latter (see, e.g., Majid and van Staden 2015); indeed, this partial overlap is analogous to the pattern found in the Colombian Spanish varieties discussed here.

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