

ARTICLE · CULTURA & SAÚDE

Croça vs. Crossa

The disputed spelling of a medical term, between etymology and usage

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ABSTRACT

The text discusses the controversy over the spelling of the anatomical term used to designate the aortic arch and the saphenofemoral junction, which fluctuates between "croça" and "crossa." The author presents the two meanings of "croça" in Portuguese — a peasant's straw cape and the episcopal crosier — and links the orthographic uncertainty to the word's unsettled etymology. He examines hypotheses of an origin in the Low Latin *crocia*, derived from *crux*; in the Latin *crocea*, tied to the color of saffron; and in the Germanic *krukka*, in the sense of a staff, concluding that these are etymologically distinct words. He notes the current preference for the form "crossa" and observes that, for the aortic arch, its yellow color and staff-like shape justify it, whereas for the saphenofemoral junction the French origin would be more fitting. The text includes lexicographic references.

KEYWORDS: *croça; crossa; etymology; medical terminology; aortic arch; crosier*

In Portuguese, perhaps under the influence of French medicine, the preferred comparison is likewise with the crosier, though there is disagreement over the spelling of the word, which is written both with a double s (*crosse*) and with a ç (*croça*). *Croça*, in Portuguese, has two meanings: the first, little known in Brazil, denotes a kind of straw cape or cloak that Portuguese peasants wear to protect themselves from the rain; the second means crosier or episcopal staff, corresponding to the French *crosse*. The uncertainty over the spelling naturally stems from the uncertainty over the word's etymology. Assuming an origin in the Low Latin *crocia* (derived from *crux*, in the sense of a stake), the correct spelling would be **croça**. However, etymology scholars derive the Portuguese **croça** from the Latin *crocea*, meaning a straw mantle or *of the color of saffron; yellow*, and the French *crosse* from the Germanic *krukka*, meaning a staff. Consequently, they are two etymologically distinct words. Nowadays, both spellings are accepted within the field, with a clear preference for "crossa" (7,000 articles on Google versus 900,000). When referring to the aortic arch, the yellow color and the staff-like shape may be justified, whereas for

the saphenofemoral junction the color does not apply, making the French origin more appropriate.

Source:

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