

Words with [š] in the Sandoval dictionary: Calpixque

Laura Martin, Ph.D.

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This word is one of the many adopted by early Spanish *cronistas* to describe positions related to government activities in the new colonies. Often translated as *mayordomo* or *estanciero*, the *calpixque* worked for the *encomendero*, or finca owner, and supervised indigenous workers.

*CALPIXQUE, m. = Capataz o sobrestante de indios, en las fincas. Procede del mexicano *calpixqui, compuesto de calli = casa + *pixqui = el que guarda.

Although the etymology suggests a kind of guard or steward, the word actually referred to the Aztec tax or tribute collectors. *Calpixque* ~ *calpisque* appeared often in early colonial reports. For example, in a royal *cédula* written in Valladolid on 7 June 1550 and concerning language use in the new colonies, we find the following:

Para introducir nuestra lengua y aun nuestra policía y costumbres entre éstos, será: lo primero, que no se prohíba la conversación y trato de españoles con éstos, sino que indistintamente el encomendero, el *calpisque*, el clérigo y el fraile, todos vayan y vengán a sus pueblos, hablen y conversen con ellos, y españoles que entre ellos hablen siempre nuestra lengua... *

An internet search under either spelling turns up numerous other citations from colonial documents. Because of its utility, it was early accepted by the Royal Language Academy. The current DRAE entry uses orthographic *x*, evidently to reflect the archaic palatal pronunciation. For the DRAE, the word is associated only with Honduras and Mexico, but the entry and proposed etymology are almost identical to Sandoval's.

calpixque.

(Del nahua *calli*, casa, y *pixqui*, guardián).

1. m. *Hond.* y *Méx.* En la época colonial, capataz encargado por los encomenderos del gobierno de los indios de su repartimiento y del cobro de los tributos.

By now, *calpixque* should probably be considered archaic. My own notes suggest that few people without advanced education in history recognize it nowadays. It is included in a useful on-line dictionary of now largely forgotten colonial Spanish terms, to be found at <http://www.tamut.edu/academics/mperry/ColAm/Spanish%20Terms.htm>.

*Cited by César Hernández in "Métodos y actitudes lingüísticas ante la difusión del español en América", *El español de América*, Actas del IV Congreso Internacional de 'El español de América', Santiago de Chile, 1992, pp. 99 – 118. Santiago: Ediciones Mar del Plata, 1995.