

## Words with [š] in the Sandoval dictionary: Canxul

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A festive dish, *canxul* is cited only by Sandoval and Rubio. Sandoval has it as a synonym for two other words.

\*CANXUL, m. = Lo que en las casas se da el día de todos los santos (primero de noviembre) a los que llegan a pedir las cosas que se obsequian en esa fecha. "*Cabecera*". *Calavera*, en México.

CABECERA = Ayote y camote cocidos, frutas, caña y varias golosinas más que en algunas poblaciones se acostumbra regalar el día de todos los santos o primero de noviembre. "*\*Canxul*". "*Tziquín*". *Calavera*, en México.

TZIKUÍN, m. = "*\*Cabecera*". "*\*Canxul*".

Rubio has an entry for *canshul* and also records *cabecera*. In both cases the definitions are slightly different from the ones given by Sandoval, and Rubio does not relate them to each other.

*Canshul*. Arroz en leche ahumada. Se acostumbra como bebida para el 1º de noviembre.

*Cabecera*. Postre que se hace con calabaza y panela. Se acostumbra consumirlo el Día de los Santos y el de Difuntos (1o. y 2 de noviembre, respectivamente).

Armas and Morales Pellecer both record *cabecera*. Armas gives additional information and a possible etymological source for this meaning, the third one associated with the word in his dictionary. His editorializing in this entry is somewhat atypical for him.

*Cabecera*: s.f. 3) Plato de alimento que los campesinos de algunos lugares, mayormente indígenas, llevan a la tumba de sus muertos el Día de Difunto (2 de nov.), colocándolos en la *cabecera* de las tumbas. Tienen la creencia de que el alma de los muertos sale por la noche a comer el contenido de los recipientes que, en verdad, es engullido por gatos y perros hambrientos.

Morales Pellecer also records only *cabecera*, with the following details (also the third meaning given):

Dulce de ayote cocido con panela y jocotes previamente cocinados con azúcar y canela.

Special foods associated with the Day of the Dead are found all over Central America. The particular one referred to by the term *canxul* was probably not in fact the same as the one called *cabecera*. In any case, *canxul* is probably a regionally specific name. A recent article in the Guatemalan *Prensa Libre* describes Day of the Dead customs in San Luis Jilotepeque, and

mentions the dish, spelled canshul: (<http://www.prensalibre.com/pl/2005/noviembre/03/126950.html>, last access June 2006). A short story by Wilbert Duarte in the school magazine of the Colegio Suizo Americano in Guatemala is titled "Lluvia de los canshules." It seems to associate the term only with the notion of an offering that can be of any type but the location of the described events is not given: (<http://www.internaciones.edu.gt/Enlace/2002/09/leyendas.html>, last access June 2006). There are also hamlets and archaeological sites in Guatemala that carry the name Canxul.

A possible Mayan etymology is suggested by my linguist colleague Ajpub' Pablo García Ixmatá (personal communication 25 June 2006), who points out that KAN is the root meaning 'yellow' in many Mayan languages. Yellow is the color ritually associated with offerings. XUL means 'flute' or 'whistle,' and music is always associated with Mayan ritual, including ritual that pertains to communication with the ancestors. The imposition of the Catholic calendar converted public ritual related to the dead to the first and second days of November, but Mayan ritual observance prior to European contact included many occasions on which ancestors were invoked, and special days in the ceremonial calendars are associated with the ancestors. In pre-contact times, these days would have been celebrated with special household and community rituals, just as is the case in the present by those who continue to observe traditional spiritual customs. It is worth noting that the day name, KAN, in the ceremonial calendar means snake, and the snake is a symbol of rebirth from the underworld.