

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

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In modern Guatemalan Spanish, this word exists only with the palatoalveolar pronunciation. It is in common use, although more common in the areas of the country where the garment it refers to is used. Sandoval describes it as follows:

\*CAPIXAY, m. = *Coton* de lana, grueso, de color \*ixcaco o café, usado por los indios de los departamentos occidentales de Guatemala.

Batres Jáuregui does not include it as an entry, although it may appear among the many lists of indigenous loans that are scattered among his essays and entries. Armas includes it in both the 1971 and 1982 editions, with slight, but peculiar, changes.

1971: Capishay: s.m. Abrigo más o menos corto, de lana negra, con o sin angas, que usan los indígenas de las regiones frías del país, en el Occidente. Tiene una abertura en la parte superior, para introducir la cabeza.

1982: Capishay: s.m. Abrigo más o menos largo, de lana negra, con o sin mangas, que usan los indígenas de algunas regiones frías del país, en el Occidente. Tiene una apertura en la parte superior para introducir [sic] la cabeza, y otras para los brazos.

Rubio records the following:

Capishay. Abrigo de lana similar a los tapados que se utilizan actualmente con un agujero para introducir la cabeza. Se usa en regiones frías del altiplano occidental.

Morales Pellecer's entry is

Capixay m especie de abrigo corto, de lana negra, que usa lo indígenas de las tierras frías.

The general confusion about length and number of openings is no doubt a result of the fact that in different communities, the shape and style of the capixay varies. The garment is of felted wool, usually black, but potentially in whatever color the sheep of the community produce. It is often decorated around the neck with machine stitched designs in colored thread that range from multiple lines to butterfly and flower motifs. The garment is a merger of some type of preexisting Mayan cape with the flowing capes of Spanish friars. Some Mayan capes were made of palm or other fibers and served primarily as protection against the rain. However, the *capixay* probably also derives from the style of heavily ornamented capes depicted in Mayan Classic-era figurines and paintings and associated with nobles and other important figures. These garments included feathers, jade, and other precious elements in their decorations.

The word *capixay* is actually Basque in origin and referred to the sort of poncho used by Basque sheep herders (see the essay on the Pérez de Antón work for further details). It was no doubt

used in early Guatemalan Spanish to refer to the garments of friars – the *capisayo*, as it appears in the DRAE – and then to the new woolen garments used by indigenous people in the cool highlands. It was not borrowed into local languages, all of which have their own terms for the male garment. The presence of the palatal pronunciation is almost certainly an archaic retention. ) The DRAE does not include an entry for *capixay* or *capisay*, in spite of its frequency in Guatemala. It does include the form *capisayo*: ‘vestidura corta a manera de capotillo abierto, que sirve de capa y sayo’ and notes that it is commonly worn by bishops.

The *capixay* is still used in several different Mayan communities today, both in Guatemala and in Chiapas, Mexico, although it is now less common in many towns than it was just a few years ago. Older men may still wear traditional clothing every day, but younger men may wear it only on ceremonial or festive occasions. The short version – about waist length – is used in the Q’anjob’al- and Chuj-speaking regions of Huehuetenano. This one has faux sleeves: the arms are inserted through slits underneath and the “sleeves” hang off the shoulders. You can see a photo of the well-known Q’anjob’al poet Gaspar Pedro González wearing his *capixay* at <http://www.csuohio.edu/english/Poet1.html> (last access June 2006). A longer version, and one that is commonly pictured in accounts of Mayan traditional clothing, is used in Mam-speaking San Juan Atitán. You can view a photo of this garment at <http://www.rutahsa.com/traje.html> by going to the section on San Juan and clicking for the images of men’s traje. Finally, the longest, knee-length version is associated most closely with the men’s clothing of San Martín Sacatepéquez, also known as San Matín Chile Verde. According to Matt Looper, a specialist in Mayan textiles and traditional clothing, the elegant *capixay* of San Martín is now almost completely out of use. (See [http://www.csuchico.edu/pub/inside/archive/98\\_11\\_12/top\\_story1.html](http://www.csuchico.edu/pub/inside/archive/98_11_12/top_story1.html), last access June 2006.)