

Sandoval and the Quijote

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Francisco Pérez de Antón's delightful 2005 book *Chapinismos del Quijote* <http://academic.csuohio.edu/guatespn/perez%20de%20anton/Comparison.html> presents the etymologies of a number of 16th century Spanish words, phrases, and even grammatical constructions that remain in common use in contemporary Guatemalan Spanish. Some of the words or forms have been lost from most other varieties of modern Spanish, and many of the expressions or lexical items have undergone semantic change in Guatemala. All are of great interest to students of Spanish language history and dialectology. Because of the way in which *Chapinismos del Quijote* is organized – 58 brief chapters, many of which deal with a variety of words and phrases, and no index – counting the individual items considered is no simple matter, but there are several dozen, all entertaining and instructive.

Unfortunately, Pérez de Antón does not seem to have had access to Lisandro Sandoval's *Semántica guatemalteca, o Diccionario de guatemaltequismos* <http://academic.csuohio.edu/guatespn/perez%20de%20anton/Comparison.html> or to its predecessor, *Vicios del lenguaje: provincialismos de Guatemala* published by Antonio Batres Jáuregui in 1892. Both these compilations of the lexicon of Guatemalan Spanish include interesting documentation and details on many of the items Pérez de Antón investigates. In most cases Pérez de Antón provides more reliable etymological analysis and devotes greater attention to accounting for the probable history of the development of contemporary patterns of usage and meaning. In some cases, the definitions and examples found in Sandoval or Batres offer convincing support for Pérez de Antón's analysis, and, in any case, present over a century's worth of additional documentation.

It is not the purpose of this essay to provide a full account of the Sandoval and Batres entries for the words and phrases included in *Chapinismos del Quijote*. Moreover, both dictionaries are available on-line at this site, <http://academic.csuohio.edu/guatespn/dictionaries.html> so it is now possible for anyone to search any of Pérez de Antón's items here. However, some of the words have especially interesting entries in Sandoval, and it seemed useful and pertinent to select a few for comment here as a way of demonstrating the usefulness of these dictionary resources as windows into both linguistic and social history.

For example, Pérez de Antón comments in passing (p. 11) on the word *chafarote*, used in Guatemala to refer to a soldier. According to Pérez de Antón, the word is originally Arabic and referred to the curved and pointed knife that eventually became the cutlass. He mentions the creation of a special police force during the 19th century Carrera regime, and cites the 1957 memoir of Ramón Salazar who describes the barefoot, straw-hatted Indians who made up the force as being "armed with a *chafarote* they dragged along the ground" (my translation). From here, he says, it is only a step to the application of the term *chafarote* to any armed military man.

Sandoval's entry for *chafarote* adds some local color, and, together with Salazar's description, perhaps contributes to our understanding of early 20th century attitudes toward indigenous Guatemalans among members of Sandoval's social class.

CHAFAROTE, m. = El militar de alta graduación, sin cultura ni educación, muchas veces analfabeto. "El general Reinoso es un *chafarote* de siete suelas".

Another interesting word discussed by Pérez de Antón is *azacán*, another word of Arabic origin that in Cervantes' era referred to the worker who carried water to market or private homes. Pérez de Antón makes clear that Don Quixote was himself the son of such a water-carrier. The *Diccionario de la Real Academia* confirms the Arabic etymology and the earlier meaning, and also provides evidence for semantic extension to the meaning of any onerous or humble occupation. In Guatemala, as Pérez de Antón indicates, the word *azacuán* refers to a certain migratory bird that appears at the beginning of the rainy season, and he surmises that the two words are one and the same, with the interesting water-related meaning shift. The DRAE also records the colloquial use of the term to refer to persons who are very engaged with their business and money-making activities, a meaning no doubt related to Pérez de Antón's observation that water-carriers in Cervantes' day were well paid and hard working.

Sandoval records the word *azacuán* and his entry not only provides additional information about the bird it names in Guatemala, but also demonstrates the lamentable tendency throughout much of traditional Hispanic dialectology to contrive intricately convoluted indigenous etymologies for regional vocabulary.

AZACUÁN = Especie de milano migratorio que vive en las zonas glaciales de América, en las que busca siempre los días más largos del año, y, por consiguiente, los más calurosos para la cría y desarrollo de sus hijuelos, ya en la Patagonia, hoy parte meridional de la Argentina y Chile, ya en Alaska y el Canadá. Los azacuanes pasan por el cielo de Guatemala, en grandes bandas, el 16 de abril (rumbo del sur al norte) y el 16 de octubre (rumbo de norte al sur), fechas que coinciden con el principio y la cesación de las lluvias; por lo que nuestros indios creen que estas aves traen y retiran el invierno (o estación lluviosa). Probablemente *azacuán* es epéntesis del vocablo mexicano *azacán*, que en azteca, significa "aguador o el que trae el agua". Según el "Diccionario de Mejicanismos", por Ramos Duarte, *azacán* se compone de *a*, por *atl* = agua, y de *zacán* = aguador. Según don Felipe Silva, guatemalense, *azacuán*, en cachiquel, quiere decir "los que abren y cierran las fuentes de las aguas", y se compone de *atza* = grande + *ku* = manantial. Según don Flavio N. Rodas, también guatemalense, *azacuán* significa, en quiché, "los agoreros o precursores de los manantiales, o los que anuncian la caída de los manantiales del cielo, las lluvias, el líquido que corre en sus cuencas, ya sea en el interior o en la superficie de la tierra"; y se compone de *atz* = agorar + *a* = aguas, líquido + *cu* = cuenca + *un* = partícula de pluralidad.

The etymologies offered by Sandoval's sources are completely wrong-headed and bizarre. Interestingly, Batres Jáuregui did not go in for such etymological discussion, but he does offer even more insight into the likely validity of Pérez de Antón's surmise regarding the relationships among *azacán* and *azacuán*.

Azacuán. Es el nombre vulgar de un milano que emigra en grandes bandadas. (*Rorthramus socialis*. – Veuillot.) Cuando allá por el 15 de abril y el 15 de octubre, cambia el tiempo, vense pasar por nuestro suelo millares de esos viajeros.

Creemos que se dió en Guatemala el nombre de *azacuán* á tales aves, porque pasan por esta zona cuando va á comenzar á llover, y cuando cesa la estación de lluvias, que impropriamente llamamos invierno; de tal suerte que con los AZACUANES viene y se va, por decirlo así, el agua lluvia; y como en español el que lleva agua ó el que la trae se llama *azacán*, hubo de designarse con ese vocablo ligeramente alterado, y por traslación, al *Rorthramus socialis*, que no tiene el Diccionario español un nombre propio. También dicen en España que "anda hecho un *azacán*" al que va y vuelve muy afanado en sus negocios; y como los *azacuanes* se van y vuelven todos los años, era propio darles ese nombre, á falta de otro que fuese peculiar á ellos.

Interestingly, the Bird List site for Guatemala (<http://www.birdlist.org/guatemala.htm#BIRDING> last access 3 September 2006) lists *azacuán* as the local name for the Swainson's hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*).

Just these two examples show how valuable the two early Guatemalan Spanish dictionaries are for anyone interested in Spanish lexicography, language history, and dialectology. Because they are such idiosyncratic documents, so much of their time and place, they are also exceptionally rich resources for insight into the social environment in which the regional particularities of Guatemalan Spanish have developed.

The last two examples are especially fine examples of their value. These are two words centrally related to modern Guatemalan identity: *chapín* and *ladino*.

Chapín is the nickname given to any Guatemalan but most strongly identified with the culture and people of the capital city. Pérez de Antón locates its ancestry in the name for a type of high-soled shoe, stylish in the Cervantine era (pp. 19-31). Such shoes apparently had cork soles and could reach heights of 20 to 30 centimeters. Pérez de Antón includes a number of amusing quotes showing how the use of such footwear was associated with ambitious social status and attitudes. Over time, he notes, it acquired negative connotations, and became linked with the terms *gachupines* and *cachopines*, all variant despectives for anyone who "se daba tufos de hidalgo" – gave himself airs. Pérez de Antón concludes that the "criollos guatemaltecos lo adoptaron con orgullo, pues, para ellos, ser chapines significaba a buen seguro reafirmar su linaje y su categoría social" (p. 30). In other words, although most *chapines* of today do not realize it, the word is a clear case of the familiar process of semantic reanalysis by which a stigmatized term is appropriated by its referents and given a positive interpretation.

Sandoval's entries for *chapín* are most interesting in this context. For one thing, the various meanings Sandoval records clearly retain an association with footwear that has been lost in later dictionaries and common usage. Furthermore, his comments about the negative connotations of the term when used by outsiders versus the positive ones associated with usage by Guatemalans themselves throws into clear relief the processes that Pérez de Antón only proposes to account for the contemporary meaning of *chapín* as a nationality nickname.

CHAPÍN, INA = En el Oriente de Guatemala se aplica este adjetivo a los patojos descalzos y nigüentos que por este motivo no andan bien. Asimismo se dice de los caballos que tienen los cascos muy planos y que no pueden caminar sin herraduras. En la misma región llaman chapines, especialmente, a los habitantes de la Capital, quienes, como romeros, van al santuario de Esquipulas y quienes, por el daño o maltrato de los pies, cojean mucho al marchar.

No sólo en los departamentos orientales de la República, como queda dicho, se da el nombre de chapín al vecino de la ciudad de Guatemala, sino que los mismos capitalinos se lo adjudican; y, para comprobarlo, transcribimos en seguida un párrafo del artículo "LECTOR ¿SABE USTED QUÉ COSA ES EL ZUBANICK?", publicado en el N° 5732 de "Nuestro Diario", correspondiente al 30 de octubre de 1939. El articulista, después de explicar que el zubanick es un plato regional, propio de San Martín Jilotepeque del departamento de Chimaltenango, dice: "Y viene ahora el motivo directo de esta actualidad. ¿Entrará el zubanick entre los platos regionales del concurso abierto para la Feria Nacional? Creemos que sí; porque no se trata de platos chapines (es decir de la ciudad de Guatemala); se trata de platos nacionales (esto es de todo el país) y la base segunda del concurso es muy clara y terminante; dice así: «Pueden tomar parte en este concurso (el del plato nacional) todas aquellas personas que hagan del negocio de restaurante o expendio de comida, su ocupación habitual".

CHAPÍN, INA, m. y f. = Apodo con que los habitantes de El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua y Costa Rica designan a los naturales de Guatemala; pero en la creencia de que éstos consideran o aceptan ese nombre con significación despectiva, denigrante o injuriosa, tal como aquéllos lo estiman; y esto no es exacto, pues los mismos guatemalenses se llaman entre sí *chapines* (diciendo, por ejemplo, "a nosotros los *chapines* nos encanta la poesía") y se usa constantemente el derivado *chapinismo*, por giro propio de los chapines o guatemalenses. No sucede otro tanto en los países centroamericanos mencionados con respecto a los apodos *guanaco* y *guájiro* con que nosotros los nombramos. Jamás hemos oído, ni visto escrito, que un salvadoreño, hondureño, nicaragüense o costarricense diga o escriba en un periódico, verbigracia, "Nosotros los guanacos amamos la libertad".

Ladino, on the other hand, offers another, and somewhat opposite, angle on the process of self-naming and term appropriation. *Ladino* is the standard term used to distinguish non-indigenous (primarily non-Maya) identity in Guatemala. Individuals in Guatemala self-identify as either ladino or as indigenous. The process of converting from indigenous identity to ladino identity is termed *ladinización* and is marked by changes in language, dress, hair style, and occupation as well as, often, by leaving rural villages for urban centers.

Pérez de Antón reminds us, though, that *ladino* was the label originally given to any non-Hispanic person in Moorish Spain who was able to speak and read languages other than his own, and thus served as translator and multilingual scribe (pp. 102-105). By extension, the word also meant astute, clever, or wise. The DRAE records exactly these meanings for *ladino* in modern standard Spanish, but notes that in Central America it specifically means mestizo or a mestizo who only speaks Spanish, a reversal of its original linguistic implications. Pérez de Antón finds references in the writings of the famous 17th century Guatemalan historian Fuentes y Guzmán to the neighborhood of Candelaria in what is now Antigua Guatemala as a new Toledo – referring to the status of Toledo as the great translation center of the caliphate – and the home of “hábiles ladinos indios,” a usage unimaginable today.

Sandoval has a simple entry for *ladino*: Persona mestiza o de raza blanca. "En las estadísticas, los habitantes de Guatemala se clasifican en ladinos e indígenas". For *aladinado*, he provides “Dícese del indio que se parece al ladino en su color, figura y, principalmente, en sus costumbres y modales.” Obviously, by the time of Sandoval’s word collection – most likely in the first decades of the 20th century – the association of *ladino* with clever indigenous bilinguals has been lost. Some decades earlier, when Batres Jáuregui was compiling his dictionary, the earlier source was still present. He writes:

Ladino. Significia en castellano antiguo “el que hablaba alguna lengua extraña, además de la propia” y de ahí vino que se diese el nombre de ladino al indio que hablaba el español, y que tenía ya las costumbre de la raza conquistadora. Hoy se llaman ladinos los nativos de estos países que hablan castellano y que no tienen el traje ni las costumbres de los indios. Ladino, en otra acepción castiza, vale *taimado, astuto, sagaz*.

But Batres Jáuregui shows that it had not been long since the awareness of the relationship between language and label had been, as Pérez de Antón would have it, “perverted” by the change from multilingual to a proud monolingualism. As Perez de Antón makes clear, what had happened was

Se había producido un nuevo desplazamiento léxico, una nueva perversión del lenguaje, por la cual, una parte de la población, la de sangre blanca y mezclada,

se adjudicaba a sí misma el nombre que le había asignado tiempo atrás a la sociedad indígena. Y a tenor de estos datos y motivos cabría preguntarse aquí y ahora, ¿es impropio llamar ladinos a quienes, no siendo indígenas, hablan hoy día español? (p. 105)

It has always been notable that in Guatemalan statistical accounting, the figures for “monolingüismo” have always referred only to the use of Mayan languages and never to the monolingual speakers of Spanish. In the modern era, when issues of multilingualism, bilingual education, and multiethnic national identities are so much at the forefront of Guatemalan politics and social discourse, Pérez de Antón’s question is well taken. And no doubt for many of his readers, the etymology of *ladino* will come as surprising news and the implications of the processes of language change this commonplace word exemplifies may even be empowering and liberating.

These few examples are intended to spark interest in *Chapinismos del Quijote*, a highly recommended and instructive work. Many more examples of the relevance to Pérez de Antón’s work of the early dictionaries could be given. His essays on such quintessential Guatemalanisms as *pantuflos* and *fiambre*, *primero diós* and *no tenga pena*, or the use of indefinite articles with possessives or *nosotros* instead of *yo* are always entertaining and insightful. Comparing them with the similarly personalized and memoirist entries of Sandoval and Batres Jáuregui only adds to the value and interest of his work.

My larger goal, however, is to persuade readers of the importance and urgency of pursuing the careful study and documentation of Guatemalan Spanish as a regional variety of world Spanish, before the processes of change and the loss of specialized meanings advance even further. And in that endeavor Sandoval and Batres Jáuregui are important guides.