

SAN ANTONIO TALK

I recently wrote that language scholars had noticed a trend of using the name *Itzel*, sometimes spelled *Ixchel*, among United States Hispanics. The scholars all agreed that the name seemed to reflect a similar revival of the use of Mayan and Aztec names throughout Central and Latin American countries.

Even so, I wrote, I had not been able to ascertain its use here in San Antonio. Readers, however, know what I do not.

How timely that you should write so recently about the trend among Hispanics of using Itzel (or Ixchel) as a girl's first name.

One of my colleagues at work just named her daughter Ixchel and I showed her your column. She really enjoyed reading about the history of the name. (Bonnie Mathre)

Bonnie's response was only the first. Read on.

Thank you for your interesting article regarding Itzel, Ixchel. Any information you have on this would be greatly appreciated, as I have three daughters with the names Xochilt, Ixchel, Araceli. Their ages are 12, 10, 8 respectively. They also have uncles with Aztec/Mayan names. If you have any information on these names, please feel free to call at your convenience. (Ruben A. Cortez)

I most certainly will call, Ruben. But I thought Times readers would also like to know that we have at least two San Antonians named *Ixchel*. San Antonio remains in tune with the rest of this continent--or two continents, to be precise.

In his excellent book title *Hispanic First Names*, Trinity University scholar Dick Woods agrees that your daughter *Xochil's*

name most likely does have an Aztec origin and means "where flowers abound." Dick also lists *Xochipil* and *Xochithil* as common variants of that same name.

Araceli's name, however, probably has a Latin origin--not Mayan/Aztec. The name in Latin meant "Altar of Heaven." In his book on Hispanic first names, Dick lists a host of variants for *Araceli*: *Aracelis*, *Aracely*, *Aranselia*, *Araseles*, *Araselia*, *Arcedalia*, *Arcelida*, *Arcelio*, *Arceye*, *Archelia*, *Aregelia*, *Argelia*, *Argelina*, *Argelisa*, *Ariselda*, *Arizala*, *Arizels*, *Arjelia*, *Arselia*, *Arsilia*, *Aurcelia*, *Ercelia*, *Ercilia*, *Erciliana*, *Haracelia*, and *Harcelo*. Many people also use shortened versions of Araceli's name: *Chela*, *Cheli*, *Cleli* and *Cleyo*.

While *Araceli* may have more kindred terms among Hispanics, your daughter *Xochilt* has other San Antonians sharing her name.

Enjoyed your article on Itzel, Ixchel. In 1978 when my daughter was born I named her Xochitl. I worried later about problems when she enrolled in school. However this was not to be as other Xochitls began showing up here and there. Now the only one who seems to stand alone is my younger daughter (1981). Her name is Yara. It is indeed a name, not one I invented. To date, however, I've come across no other Yaras in San Antonio. (Lucia Luna)

Sorry, Lucia. No help from either me or Dick Woods, I'm afraid. Maybe the readers can help us out with this name also.

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Scott Baird
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