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UK'AY AJBUJ: OTHERWORLDLY OWLS IN THE MUNDO MAYA

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Abstract

Worldwide, owls are considered to be mysterious creatures that are regularly associated with darkness, death, and negative auguries, and the Maya area is not an exception. However, the relationship between men and owls appears to be somewhat ambiguous, as owls are occasionally attributed with positive connotations, especially among hunters. Ancient Maya relationship with owls appears to be reflected in modern beliefs, as is evident from linguistic and iconographic sources. However, as regards epigraphy, although Mayan languages abound terms for different types of owls, only a handful of these appear in the written sources. In addition, representations of owls in Maya writing and iconography share some common features with other traditions in Mesoamerica, as well as the rest of the world.

Keywords: owls, ethnozoology, ethnotaxonomy, Mayan languages, Maya epigraphy

Resumen

En todo el mundo los búhos se han considerado criaturas misteriosas que frecuentemente se asocian con la oscuridad, la muerte y los augurios negativo. El área maya no es una excepción. Sin embargo, la relación entre el hombre y los búhos parece ser más bien ambigua, ya que ocasionalmente se les atribuye connotaciones positivas, específicamente entre los cazadores. La relación de los antiguos mayas con los búhos parece reflejarse en las creencias modernas, como se evidencia en las fuentes lingüísticas e iconográficas. Sin embargo, en cuanto a la epigrafía, a pesar de que en los idiomas mayas abundan los términos que se refieren a diferentes tipos de búhos, solo algunos de ellos aparecen en las fuentes escritas. Además, las representaciones de los búhos en la escritura e iconografía maya comparten algunas características tanto con otras tradiciones en Mesoamérica como con el resto del mundo.

Palabras clave: búhos, etnozoología, etnotaxonomía, idiomas mayas, epigrafía maya

INTRODUCTION

Owls are enigmatic creatures that are worldwide considered to be bad omens and harbingers of death. According to Hull and Fergus (2011: 48):

Owls throughout Mesoamerica are negative auguries par excellence. [...] With the Ch'ol Maya, the kuj (tecolote in Spanish), or Mottled Owl (Ciccaba virgata) is said to be a "sabedor ('knower')." When it cries "jukuku jukuku," it is a sign that someone will die.

The aim of this article is to explore Maya concepts of owls, to map related linguistic terminology and ethnotaxonomies, and to study the artistic representations and epigraphy of owls in the Maya area. Connections to other Mesoamerican cultures and concepts are briefly mentioned – although more systematically to be discussed in a forthcoming study on owls in the Mesoamerican cultural area.

OWLS IN THE MAYA AREA

There are 18 species of owls in the Maya area and 11 in the Maya lowlands (König and Weick 2008; Howell and Webb 1995).¹ The American Barn Owl (*Tyto furcata*) is the only species in the family *Tytonidae* present in the area. Typical Owls (*Strigidae*), however, are abundant. The list below (Table 1) presents these species with their scientific names, followed by their English and Spanish names, based on König and Weick (2008).

It is noteworthy that while English has but one generic term for owls, Spanish has many across the Spanish-speaking world, such as *autillo*, *búho*, *cárabo*, *cuscungo*, *estucurú*, *lechuza*, *mochuelo*, *múcaro*, *ñacurutú*, *tecolote*, *tuco*, and *tucúquere*. In the Maya context *tecolote*, *búho* and *lechuza* are the most common, of which *tecolote* and *búho* appear to refer (generally) to larger “horned” owls (*i.e.*, owls with ear tufts) and *lechuza* to smaller owls without ear tufts and/or to Barn Owls with distinctive facial disks. However, in a strict (ornithological) sense, the Spanish *lechuza* refers only to the family *Tytonidae*, *i.e.* Barn Owls (Bernis 2000: 123), and not to the various owls in the *Strigidae* family that the term *lechuza* frequently refers to in common usage. What is important regarding the linguistic work done on Maya languages (and Mesoamerican languages in general) is that, when not specified, the term *lechuza* could refer to different owls in different areas, based on the identification of different informants.²

¹ If identifications or distribution differ between different sources, I follow König and Weick (2008) as the most up-to-date study on owls.

² Fergus (2010) narrates a telling story regarding the difficulty of identifying bird species in the Maya area: “On our second day of field work in Tucta, Tabasco, one of our Chontal friends told us a tradition about taking cuervo (crow) eggs from a nest for good luck. This was a bit puzzling, since there are no “real” crows in southern Mexico. When we asked about these crows, we were told that they were and black and like grackles, only bigger. What could they be? Later we heard from others that they often go around in groups, and that they hunt for fish along waterways. They fly up into trees, in groups. Still a puzzle. Then we heard that they actually swim. What? Swimming crows? By asking more questions, we were finally told that crows were very similar to the “pico fino” which we had already determined to be an Anhinga. That was the missing piece of the puzzle. By asking a few more questions we confirmed that the cuervo (crow) was the Neotropical Cormorant. So, how did a cormorant become a crow? If all you knew about crows were that they were big and black and fly around in groups (think Hitchcock), you could easily see how these birds could become crows. Especially when you see them sitting together on a bare tree, with their necks hunched in. They do kind of look like grackles – with longish tails, all black. And grackles can stretch out those necks, so that comparison isn’t even all that hard to see, from a certain point of view [...]. At any rate, another cautionary tale about inter-cultural communication. You can never assume that just because you are using the same word, that you are talking about the same thing. Even within the same culture. Follow up questions are key”. However, at the same time it is important to note that one of the terms for the double-crested cormorant (*Phalacrocorax auritus*) in Spanish is *cuervo marino*, as noted by Terry Kaufman (pers. comm. 2017), ultimately from Late Latin *corvus marinus*, ‘sea raven’. The cautionary tale by Fergus (2010) is important as regards intercultural communication but it also emphasizes the prerequisite of linguistic proficiency and interdisciplinary cooperation in various types of fieldwork, including ornithology and ethnoornithology.

Table 1. Owl species in the Maya area

Scientific name:	In English:	In Spanish:	Maya lowlands:	Maya highlands:	NB on distribution**:
<i>Tyto furcata</i>	American Barn Owl	Lechuza Común Americana	yes	yes	Western hemisphere excluding the northern parts
<i>Megascops trichopsis</i>	Whiskered Screech Owl	Tecolote Bigotudo	no	yes	SE Arizona to Nicaragua
<i>Megascops barbarus</i>	Bearded Screech Owl	Tecolote Barbudo	no	yes	Chiapas to Guatemalan highlands
<i>Megascops guatemalae</i>	Guatemalan Screech Owl	Tecolote Guatemalteco	yes	no	Mexican Pacific slope and Gulf Coast of Mexico to northern Costa Rica
<i>Bubo virginianus</i> ***	Great Horned Owl	Búho Americano	yes	yes	Widespread in the Americas, excluding western SA and Amazonia
<i>Pulsatrix perspicillata</i>	Spectacled Owl	Urucureá Grande	yes*	yes	*) Southern Mexico to Amazonian Brazil, excluding the Yucatan peninsula
<i>Strix squamulata</i>	Mexican Wood Owl	Cárabo Mejicano	yes	(partly)	Sonora and Nuevo León via Central America to NW South America
<i>Strix nigrolineata</i>	Black-and-White Owl	Cárabo Blanquinegro	yes*	yes	*) Central Mexico to NW South America, excluding the N Yucatan peninsula
<i>Strix fulvescens</i>	Fulvous Owl	Cárabo Guatemalteco	no	yes	Chiapas to Honduras, excluding the Yucatan peninsula
<i>Lophostrix cristata</i>	Crested Owl	Búho Corniblanco	yes*	(partly)	*) Locally from southern Mexico to the Amazonas (excluding, e.g., the Yucatan peninsula and most of the Guatemalan highlands)
<i>Glaucidium cobanense</i>	Guatemalan Pygmy Owl	Tecolotito Guatemalteco, Mochuelo Guatemalteco	no	(partly)	Chiapas to NW Honduras
<i>Glaucidium griseiceps</i>	Central American Pygmy Owl	Mochuelo Centroamericano	yes*	(partly)	*) Veracruz to Panama, excluding the Yucatan peninsula
<i>Glaucidium ridgwayi</i>	Ridgway's Pygmy Owl	Mochuelo de Ridgway	yes	(partly)	Southern Arizona and southern Texas to NW *South America
<i>Athene cunicularia</i>	Burrowing Owl	Lechuza Vizcachera, Mochuelo de Madriguera	yes*	yes	Widely distributed from western North America to Tierra del Fuego, excluding, e.g. central Yucatan peninsula
<i>Aegolius ridgwayi</i>	Unspotted Saw-Whet Owl	Mochuelo Moreno	no	yes	Chiapas to Panama
<i>Asio stygius</i>	Stygian Owl	Búho Negruzco	no*	(partly)	*) NW Mexico to SE Brazil, incl. Central Guatemala and Belize
<i>Asio clamator</i>	Striped Owl	Búho Gritón	(partly)	yes	Veracruz to Uruguay, excluding, e.g. the Yucatan peninsula
<i>Asio flammeus</i>	Short-eared Owl	Lechuza campestre, Búho campestre	(partly migratory)	(partly migratory)	Widely distributed in Eurasia and in northern and southern America; partly migratory

** Comments regarding the distribution are generalized for the purpose of identifying overall distribution. Detailed information regarding the distribution, habitat, and description of the owls can be found in König and Weick (2008).

*** König and Weick (2008: 319-321) recognize 12 subspecies of which only *Bubo virginianus mayensis* is present in Mesoamerica (distribution from Mexico to Costa Rica and western Panama). *Bubo virginianus mayensis* is smaller than the rest of the subspecies with a wing length of 297–340mm (males) and 303–357mm (females) – in contrast to the average wing length of the rest of the subspecies: 326–361mm (males) and 344–382mm (females).

OWLS IN MAYA ART

Beyond animal figurines, realistic depictions of owls are relatively rare in Maya art, especially in painted format. Exceptions include a set of thematically parallel scenes on Codex style ceramics (K1182 [see Figure 1], K1559, and K4012), as well as a related scene in the so-called “Munich vase” (Braakhuis 2001; Hellmuth 1992; Zender 2009).³ In all these scenes birds, including an owl, are enclosed inside a cartouche, cage, or, in the case of the “Munich vase,” what looks like an inverted *olla*. The role and meaning of the confined birds remains enigmatic.

Owls, or owl-like birds, have also been identified in Maya monuments and architecture. Dos Pilas Stela 2 portrays a frontal image of a bird with ear-tufts, Piedras Negras Stela 9 depicts a bird with large eyes in the headdress, and in the Terminal Classic Chichen Itza owls with spread wings adorn the West Pier of the Temple of the Owls (Stone and Zender 2011: 212-213). Some of these birds appear to represent owls but some could also refer to generic raptorial birds associated with Central Mexican imagery and militarism (see below). Furthermore, the black-tipped feathers on Piedras Negras Stela 7 have been identified as owl feathers by Karen Bassie (pers. comm., 2015), although the exact species of the birds cannot be confirmed based solely on iconography.⁴ In addition, other owl-like creatures in Maya art have been interpreted as owls, including the figure on K8797 as well as other related creatures. These, however, probably represent Teotihuacan-inspired motifs depicting butterflies (Jesper Nielsen and Christophe Helmke, pers. comm., 2016) rather than owls, though there is a possibility that the Maya re-interpreted the motifs as something else.

Other depictions of owl-like birds in Maya art include the famous headdress of God L (see Figures 2 and 3). Here, again, we cannot be certain whether the bird in question is an owl, another bird species, or a supernatural bird of prey. The bird is undoubtedly connected to the 13-“sky”-*kuy* (**13-CHAN/KAN/KA’N/KA’AN-KUY**) in the Dresden Codex where *kuy* is the Yucatek word for ‘owl.’ However, the term appears to be a distinctive name for a specific owl in the Maya thought with otherworldly connotations. It is also noteworthy that this term does not seem to appear in any other Mayan language besides Yucatek (and related Lacandon). However, as the term appears also in Classic Maya texts, it points towards a wider usage – at least in the pre-Columbian times.



Figure 1. Roll-out photograph of K1182 (photograph by Justin Kerr).

³ I would like to thank Marc Zender for pointing out this example to me.

⁴ Similar feathers were identified as eagle feathers to the author by a Lacandon informant in 2016.



Figure 2. Detail of the “Regal Rabbit Vase” (photograph by Harri Kettunen).



Figure 3. Details from K1398, K2796, and K7750 showing the owl-like bird in the headdress of God L (photographs by Justin Kerr).

The headgear belongs to God L, an Underworld deity, and the owls are, of course, related to underworld gods, as is evident in Popol Vuh:

Then was the arrival of the messengers of One Death and Seven Death:

“Go you war councilors to summon One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu. [...] They must come here to play ball with us that we may be invigorated by them. Truly we are amazed greatly at them. [...]. May they bring hither their implements—their yokes, their arm protectors, and their rubber ball as well. Thus say the lords, ‘tell them when you arrive there,’ the messengers were told.

These messengers were the owls – Arrow Owl, One Leg Owl, Macaw Owl, and Skull Owl – for so the messengers of Xibalba were called.

This Arrow Owl was like the arrow, piercing.

This One Leg Owl merely had one leg, but there were his wings.

This Macaw Owl had a red back, and there were also his wings.

Now this Skull Owl only had a skull with no legs; there were merely wings.

The burden of these four messengers was to be the war councilors.⁵ Thus they arrived there from Xibalba. They arrived suddenly, perching atop the ballcourt. One Hunahpu and Seven Hunahpu were playing ball at the court that was called Honor and Respect at Carchah when they came. The owls, therefore, alighted atop the ballcourt, where they delivered in order the words of One Death and Seven Death, Pus Demon and Jaundice Demon, Bone Staff and Skull Staff, Flying Scab and Gathered Blood, Sweepings Demon and Stabbings Demon, Wing and Packstrap.

(Christenson 2003: 119-120)

As to the identification of the bird of God L, a closer examination reveals that none of the depictions are naturalistic portrayals of owls. The same appears to be the case at Teotihuacan. According to Nielsen and Helmke (2008: 464): “[I]n Atetelco, owls and eagles are represented interchangeably, and the ancient Teotihuacanos seem to have stressed the qualities of raptorial birds in general rather than any specific species in particular”.

As regards the Postclassic Maya codices, depictions of owls are relatively frequent. In the Dresden Codex there are nine depictions of owls (three anthropomorphic owls, three actual owls, two owl heads, and one owl headdress) as well as seven textual references to owls, written five times as **KUY**,

⁵ The “war councilors” are translated in Tedlock (1996: 54) as the “Military Keepers of the Mat in rank”, pointing out to a martial association of the owls (literally the K’iche’ *E kajib’ri samajel, raj pop achijab’keqalem* translates as “They four the messengers, their councilors warriors their burden” [Christenson 2004: 70]).

once as **ku-yu** and once as **yu-ku**. The Madrid Codex (Figure 4) has seven owls (whereof two are ambiguous cases), including one anthropomorphic representation. Besides these, there are three written references above owl figures in a set of altogether eight birds on top of representations of the White Earth Goddess on pages 94-95 of the codex. Some of the references clearly mark the birds perched on top of the head of the goddess whereas others seem to refer to something else. The reference above the horned owl in frontal view reads **i-ki ku-yu** (*iki[n]? kuy*) whereas the two other (profile view) owls (or mythological [muwan?] birds) receive more problematic references, with the other one reading **tzu-lu** or **tzul**, glossed as *perro de meztizo* ('mongrel, mutt, or mixed-breed dog') in 16th century Yukatek (Ciudad Real 1577), *perro doméstico* ('domestic dog') in 17th century Yukatek (Barrera Vásquez 1980), as well as *espinazo* ('spine, backbone') in 17th century Yukatek (Barrera Vásquez 1980). Finally, the Paris codex (Figure 4) exhibits four potential owls but no textual references.

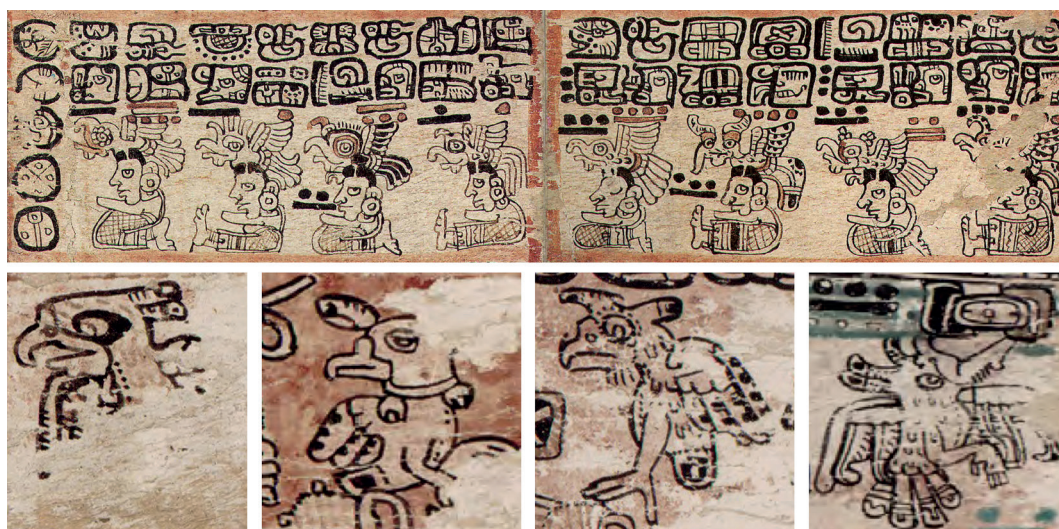


Figure 4. Excerpt of the Madrid Codex, showing pages (sections) 94c-95c (above) and the Paris Codex, details of pages 2, 5, 10, and 23 (below).

OWLS IN THE MAYAN LANGUAGES

Mayan languages have several words for various types/species of owls (see Table 2). At least two of these can be reconstructed all the way to Proto-Mayan, **xooch* and **ikiin* (Kaufman 2003). The Proto-Mayan **xooch*, and terms derived from it, appears to refer to the (American) Barn Owl (*Tyto furcata*).⁶ Wastek has *tz'uux/tx'uux* ($\phi'u:\check{s}$ in Edmonson 1988) and *tz'ux ~ ch'ux* (*ts'uš* and *č'uš*,

⁶ There is some confusion as to the nomenclature of the species: Barn Owls are sometimes – quite confusingly – referred to as “Screech Owls” although the two belong to different families altogether: Typical Owls (*Strigidae*) and Barn Owls (*Tytonidae*). For example, Kaufman (2003) has ‘screech owl (*Tyto alba*)’ for **xooch*, although the owl in question is the American Barn Owl (*Tyto furcata*). In addition, according to König and Weick (2008: 46-48), *Tyto alba* and *Tyto furcata* are different species (Old World and New World species, respectively), although the distribution of the former is often found in the literature to also encompass the Western Hemisphere.

respectively, in Norcliffe 2003, *ts'ūx* in Larsen 1955, and *ch'ūx* in Walker 2000) for 'owl' or, more specifically for 'screech owl' (Edmonson 1988) or 'lechuza' (Larsen 1955; Walker 2000).

Yukatek has *xoch'* (*xooch'*) as 'lechuza, ave nocturna, agüero de los indios' (YUK:1),⁷ 'lechuza, ave nocturna' (YUK:6), 'especie de lechuza' (YUK:8), 'lechuza' (YUK:9,11), 'mochuelo' (YUK:11), 'tecolote o búho' (YUK:11,13cob), and 'búho' (Gómez Navarrete 2009). Moreover, Itzaj (Hofling 1997) has *xooch'* and *ajxooch'* as 'lechuza, lechuza ratonera, barn owl, screech owl (*Tyto alba*)'. According to Hofling (1997), the word is onomatopoeic. Furthermore, it is worth noticing that although a Yukatekan language, based on a search in Ulrich and Ulrich (1976), Schumann (1997), and ALMG (2003f), a cognate of Yukatekan *xooch'* does not appear in Mopan. Nor does it appear in any Lacandon source (for the existing terms of owls in both languages, see below).

Besides Yukatekan languages, also Western and Eastern Mayan languages have cognates of the term. Based on Kaufman (2003), Proto-Ch'olan has **xoch'* for 'screech owl' (see footnote 12 for the discussion of the confusion of the terminology), producing Ch'ol *xoch'* (*xjoch'* [as 'lechuza chica (de color amarillo)'] in Aulie and Aulie 1978 and *x'joch'* [as 'lechuza chica'] in Josserand and Hopkins 1996) and Ch'orti' *xoch' ~ xo'ch'* (Hull [2016] has *xoch' / xoch' / xo'ch' / xo'ch'* for *lechuza* or 'unspotted saw-whet-owl [*Aegolius ridgwayi*]'). According to Hull (2016: 501), "The name is onomatopoeic. It sings "Xoooooch". It is said to be a *nagual*, an evil spirit. Sorcerers can also change into this bird." Hunn (1975) notes that: "The call [of *Aegolius ridgwayi*] is given by informants as 'šššt'". Similarly, Chontal has *xoch'* for *lechuza* (Keller and Luciano 1997; Pérez González and Cruz Rodríguez 1998), although (Knowles 1984) has *aj xoch'* (*?ah shoch'*) glossed as 'screech owl'. Tzeltal has an identical term *xoch'*, recorded as 'lechuza' in Slocum (1953) and León Trujillo and Vázquez Cruz (1995) and as 'barn owl' (*Tyto alba*)⁸ in Hunn (1977).

The term appears also in the Greater Q'anjobalan languages. Kaufman (2003) has *xotx'* for *lechuza* in Q'anjobal. However, the term does not appear in ALMG (2003b) nor in Cú Cab *et al.* (2003). Instead, we have *chulpop* for *lechuza* (Cú Cab *et al.* 2003) and *tonton* and *jorjowex* for *tecolote* (see below). In Diego de Diego *et al.* (1996), *xotx'* is interestingly glossed as 'animal de mal agüero, molestón, insultador'. Similarly, Akatek (Andrés *et al.* 1996) has *xotx'* for 'lechuza, animal de mal agüero, molestón insultador'. However, for Chuj, instead of a cognate term paralleling the above, ALMG (2003d) only records *kujub* (as *lechuza*). On the other hand, for related Tojolabal, Jackson and Supple (1952) and Furbee-Losee (1976) have *xoch'* for 'lechusa' and 'barn owl, screech owl', respectively.

Besides the aforementioned Wastekan, Yukatekan, and Western Mayan forms, also Eastern Mayan languages exhibit cognates of the same term. Ixil has *xotx'* and Poqomchi' *xooch'* for 'lechuza' (Cú Cab *et al.* 2003, Dobbels 2003). Kaufman (2003) also provides 'gavilán ~ lechuza' for the latter whereas Dobbels (2003) identifies it as *Strix fulvescens* and provides the following context: *Re'xooch' q'orol kimik inkih taqeh* 'dicen que la lechuza predice la muerte'.

Proto-K'iche'an (Campbell 1977) has *xooch'*, producing K'iche' *xoch' ~ xooch'* (ALMG 2004a; Christenson n.d.; Cú Cab *et al.* 2003), Achi *xoch'* (Shaw 1971: 231, 482) and *xoo'ch'* (ALMG 2001f) and Uspantek (Campbell 1977; Kaufman 2003), Kaqchikel (ALMG 2011; Cú Cab *et al.* 2003), and Sakapultek (Cú Cab *et al.* 2003) *xoch' ~ xooch'* for 'lechuza / Barn Owl'. In ALMG (2001d) the vowel is long (*xooch'*) for Sakapultek and the following context is provided: *Wá xab'on li xooch'yab'iil kirb'aj* 'Si la lechuza silva anuncia enfermedad'. For Tz'utujil, Campbell (1977) and Pérez Mendoza and Hernández Mendoza (1996) provide *xooch'* ('lechuza') but Cú Cab *et al.* (2003) *xo'uuch'*, whereas for Sipakapense, ALMG (2001e) has *xoch'* and Cú Cab *et al.* (2003) *sootz'* for 'lechuza'. The latter has to be a mistake as *sotz' ~ sootz'* is 'bat (*murciélago*)' in Sipakapense (ALMG 2001e; Cú Cab *et al.* 2003) – along with most Eastern Mayan languages.

⁷ For the key to sources and abbreviations, see "Dictionary abbreviations" at the end of this paper.

⁸ See Footnote 10.

Besides these, some Eastern Mayan languages, along with (Western Mayan) Mocho', have a variant with /i/ instead of /o/. Kaufman (2003) reconstructs the Eastern Mayan form as **xiich'*. This surfaces in Mam *xiitx'* 'lechuza, pájaro nocturno' in Maldonado Andrés *et al.* (1986) and *xiitx'* in Cú Cab *et al.* (2003), Awakatek *xiitx'* (ALMG 2001a) and *xiitx'* (Kaufman 2003), both as 'lechuza', and *xeech' ~ xiech' ~ xooch'* as 'lechuza' (McArthur and McArthur 1995, ALMG 2003e; Kaufman 2003) in Poqomam (*xiech'* in the San Luís Jilotepeque variant of Poqomam [McArthur and McArthur 1995]), as well as the Western Mayan Mocho' *xiich'* as 'lechuza chiquita (ahuizote⁹) [amber/brown color]' (Kaufman 2003). For Poqomam, (ALMG 2003e) provides the following context: *Junk'oh ma' xeech' xik'i purub'oh nupaat ture'aq'ab'* 'Anoche una lechuza pasó sobre mi casa'.

Another word for 'owl' in various Mayan languages is a diffused term that appears to be either a loanword or a(n) onomatopoeic term with independent origins. Kaufman reconstructs the Central Mayan term for 'horned owl' (*Bubo virginianus*) as **tuhkur(uu?)* (**tuhkur[uu']*). If the term is a loanword in Mayan, I surmise that it should have been borrowed before the split of Central Mayan into Western and Eastern Mayan, probably before 1000 BC. In Proto-Uto-Aztecan the word for (a type of an) owl is **tukur(i)*, temptingly reminiscent of the Central Mayan **tuhkur(uu')*. Another possibility is that the term was diffused at a later date into various Mayan languages but this would require further attestation. Moreover, if the word is a Central Mayan innovation, the two terms have to have emerged independently.¹⁰ On the other hand, the term (and its related forms) could be a *Wanderwort* without a known origin. According to Terrence Kaufman (pers. comm. 2017) "this *Wanderwort* may have been wandering for a long time" and there could be a "long string of undocumented steps" that lies behind the Uto-Aztecan and the Mayan forms.

Interestingly, the Nahuatl word *tecolōtl* is seemingly either of the same origin as the Central Mayan **tuhkur(uu')*, a diffused term, or an independent (onomatopoeic or imitative) term for an owl¹¹. Onomatopoeic or imitative names for birds are common around the world and one would

⁹ For *ahuizote*, see the discussion regarding the *tuukr* term in Sipakapense.

¹⁰ Gursky (1967) notes that "[the] Proto-Uto-Aztecan form **tukur(i)* [...] is curiously reminiscent of some words for owl in Californian languages. Thus compare the following forms: Penutian: Northern Sierra Miwok *tuk-u-li-*, Plains Miwok *tùk-ùl-i-*, Proto-Eastern-Miwok **tùk-ù·l₁i-*, Lake Miwok *tùk-uli*, Proto-Miwok **tùk-ù(·₁)₁i*, Proto-Yokuts **hutulu*, Reconstituted Rumsen †*túkun*, Proto-California-Penutian **tukun/l*; Hokan: San Louis Obispo Chumash *tukuna* great horned owl, Esselen *tukunupša* barn owl; Yukian: Wappo *hutúku-lu*." Furthermore, Gursky (1967) points out that "The Chukchee word for owl ('Polareule') is *tyqyl*, the oblique stem of which is *täql*, which points to Pre-Chukchee **täkul*. This is closely similar to Classical Nahuatl *tekulu-*, but of course there can be no historical connection between these forms. This shows convincingly that the possibility cannot be excluded that the resemblances noted above are independent developments." It is also worth noting that the name of the Magellan Horned Owl (*Bubo magellanicus*) is *tucúquere* (/túkúkere/) is Chilean Spanish, while the name of the same owl in Mapudungun is *tukuu*. Rozzi (2010: 82) notes that "[w]hen it is perched on a tree the Austral Great Horned Owl [Magellan Horned Owl] emits [sic.] loudly its characteristic call *tukuuhuhu*, *tukuuhuhu*... This [...] deep voiced ululation from which it gets its Mapudungun onomatopoeic name *tukuu*. When the voice of the *tukuu* is heard in the night, it seems to invoke a dense fog or *trukur* that makes the wayfarer become lost." Furthermore, in parts of Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay, the South American Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus nacurutu*) is known as *ñacurutú* (from Guaraní *ñakurutu*). Although not the same as *tukuu*, *túkúkere*, *tuhkur*, *tukuru'*, or *tyqul*, it shares a set of syllables, *ku*, *ru* (or *lu*), and *tu*, that are common for the terms for the Great Horned Owl across the landscape from Eastern Siberia to Southern South America, pointing towards a process of sound symbolic (imitative) terminology for the Great Horned Owl. This does not, however, exclude the fact that within this large area a *Wanderwort* could have traveled between different language groups in certain areas.

¹¹ According to Terry Kaufman (pers. comm. 2017), Nawa *tekol-o:-tl* can come from earlier **tukor-* (with the *-o:* as an augmentative suffix), while **tukor-* plausibly derives from **tukuri* (proto-Uto-Aztecan reconstruction by Terry Kaufman). Kaufman continues and observes that the reason why **u* would have shifted to /o/ is probably by harmony with the augmentative suffix *-o:*. Furthermore, /e/ and /i/ are normal Nawa reflexes of proto-Uto-Aztecan **u*. Most importantly, Kaufman also points out that the Mayan form(s) cannot come from the Nawa form.

assume that the sound that the owls make is even more important for naming primarily nocturnal birds. General terms for owl hooting across unrelated languages include: Bengali *huup huup*, Chontal *ju'ju'na* (*hu'hu'na*), Estonian *uhuu*, Hebrew, הוּוּוּהּ (“hu-huuu”), Japanese, ホウホウ (“hou-hou / hō-hō”), Portuguese, *u-huu*, and Turkish *gu guk guuk*.¹² Also the names of different owls in various languages around the world appear imitative: Amhara *gugut*, Cree *hohuw*, Finnish *huuhkaja*, Greek *κουκουβάγια*, Hawaiian *pueo*, Hindi उल्लू (*ulloo*), Igbo *ikwiikwi*, Ojibwa *kokoko*, Samoan *lulu*, Spanish *búho*, as well as the various names of owls in Mesoamerican languages discussed in this article.¹³

Different theories regarding the homeland of Proto-Uto-Aztecan and Proto-Aztecan (Campbell 1997, 2003; Davletshin 2012; Hill 2010; Kaufman 2001; Merrill *et al.* 2010) can yield various interpretations as to the origin of the term. However, if the words in different languages (of different language families) do not share a common origin, the analyses regarding the development of borrowing the term(s) are unproductive. According to Hunn (1975: 238): “[I]t is clear that names for owls are very likely to be onomatopoeic. The fidelity of imitation is often striking. This suggests that phonemic imitations will be severely restricted by the pattern of animal vocalization which serves as a model. Owls are perhaps universally objects of dread, and being nocturnal, they are best known by their calls. Thus the plausibility of apparent cognates arising by “independent onomatopoeic coinages increases”. Hunn (1975: 237-238) also advises us not to forget “to distinguish which owls are denotata of the terms being compared” and warns us of linguistic myopia, when he remarks that “it is still not clear whether the similarity in names for owls is due to historical contacts or to a common human response to similar stimuli. The ultimate solution to this and many similar issues at least requires that our linguistic sophistication not outstrip our knowledge of the world to which language refers”.

The term in question is quite widespread in the highland Mayan languages, possibly due to diffusion across language groups, but its absence in the lowlands is notable (unless the Yukatek *tunkuluchú* ~ *tunkuluchuj* ~ *tunkuruchú* [see below] is regarded as part of the same diffusion set rather than an independent [onomatopoeic] term). Wastekan, Yukatekan, and Greater Tzeltalan languages do not have a corresponding term, although Kaufman (2003) regards the Ch’orti’ term *tijkirin* (*tecolote* [see Wisdom 1950; Schumann Gálvez n.d.; Pérez Martínez *et al.* 1996; ALMG 2000; Cú Cab *et al.* 2003; Kaufman 2003; Hull 2016]) as part of the same set. However, Hull and Fergus (2014) regard it as an onomatopoeic word so we might be looking at an independent development of the term. Furthermore, Tzeltal has *tuhkul* (Kaufman 2003) and *tuhkulum pukuh* (Hunn 1977) for the great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*) – also written as *tuh kulum pukuh* and considered an onomatopoeic term by Hunn (1977: 25), but also incorporating the word *pukuh* for ‘devil’ (Hunn 1977: 87).

Greater Q’anjobalan languages, on the other hand, exhibit the term: Cú Cab *et al.* (2003) have *tukur* for *tecolote* in Q’anjobal, although the term does not appear in Diego de Diego *et al.* (1996), ALMG (2003b), nor in Kaufman 2003 (for other terms in Q’anjobal see below); Akatek has *tukulin* as *tecolote* (Cú Cab *et al.* 2003) and *lechuza* (Kaufman 2003), Tojolabal has *tujkul* (Jackson and Supple 1952), and Mocho’ *tuukul* (*tu:kul*) as well as *tukuruu’* for *tecolote* (Kaufman 2003). Kaufman (2003) associates Chiapas area **tuhkul* as the source for Tzeltal *tuhkul*, Tojolabal *tujkul*, Mocho’ *tuukul* (*tu:kul*), and Tusantek (Tuzantec/Tuzanteco) *tukul* and the Huehuetenango area **tukuruu’* as

¹² These cross-linguistic onomatopoeias include, besides animal sounds, also kissing, laughing, screaming, biting, eating, drinking, swallowing, burping, farting, snoring, yawning, sneezing, (baby) crying, and heart beating.

¹³ According to Keller (1984: 32), “[a] few animal names are suggestive of their calls. The cry of the *a?i?* “hawk” is *?i? ?i? ?i?*. The cry of the *hub* “a kind of owl” is *hub hub hub*; the sound is referred to as *hu?hu?na*. The cry of the *ahk’aw* “grackle” is *k’a? k’a? k’a?* or *k’a:k’ak’ak’a*. The name of the sound is *k’a?lawe*. The cry of the *ahpum* “monkey” when calling for rain is *u:\ u:\ u:\ u:\ u:* or *pum pum pum pum*. In each case, the name of the animal reflects the cry.” Interestingly, the /u/ sound for a monkey is embodied in one of the (rare) variants of **u** phonograms in Maya writing, representing a head of a spider monkey. (Note that the backslashes above represent Keller’s hand-drawn curved lines representing the direction of tone/pitch/intensity of the sounds in question).

the source for Mocho' *tukurujuu'* (*tukuruju:7*), Teko *tukuruu'*, Awakatek *tukuru' ~ tukruuj*, and the Mam dialectal variants *tukruu'*, *tukuru*, *tukru*, and *tokru*.

As regards the K'iche'an languages, Kaufman (2003) reconstructs Greater K'iche'an form as **tuhkur*, from where we get the variants of K'iche' *tukur*, *tukür*, *tuukur*, and *tuhkur* for both *tecolote* and *lechuza* (Campbell 1977; Christenson n.d., Kaufman 2003; ALMG 2004a) as well as the Achi and Uspantek *tukur ~ tuukur*, Poqomchi' *tuhkur*, Poqomam *tuhkur*, Kaqchikel *tukur ~ tukür ~ tukr ~ tukre*, Sakapultek *tukur ~ tukor*, and Sipakapense *tukr ~ tuukr*, all referring to *tecolote* (ALMG 2001e; ALMG 2001f; ALMG 2011; Campbell 1977; Cú Cab *et al.* 2003; Kaufman 2003; McArthur and McArthur 1995; Ruyán Canú *et al.* 1991). For Sakapultek, Kaufman (2003) also has *te't tukor* as *lechuza*. Furthermore, Christenson (n.d.) mentions *tukur* as "sound of owl." ALMG (2004a) provides the context for *tukür* in K'iche' as follows: *Kab'ixik are chi'ri tukür kab'ixonik chi unaqaj ri ja, kamikal kub'ij* "Se dice, que cuando el tecolote canta cerca de la casa alguien muere," ALMG (2001d) in Sakapultek for *tukur* as: *Li tukur kitaqa'n li kamnaqüib'* "El tecolote es mensajero de muertos," and ALMG (2001e) in Sipakapense for *tuukr* the following: *Ataq koq'ik ri tuukr k'olik chinaq xtchupik* 'Cuando el tecolote canta es porque hay muerto' as well as an enigmatic *Ri Tuukr b'aj* 'El tecolote es aguisote'. The term probably refers to *ahuizote* which in *Real Academia Española* is glossed as 'agüero, brujería' (for Costa Rica, Guatemala, Mexico, and Nicaragua), ultimately from Nahuatl *awitzotl*.

For Poqomam ALMG (2003e) has *tuhkur* for *tecolote* and provides the following context *Ihpani chahko junk'oh ma'tuhkur naah nupaat* 'Un tecolote llegó a pararse encima de mi casa'. Conversely, and strangely, ALMG (2001g) has a glottal in *tuhk'ur* as part of the entry *tuhk'ur chee'* 'palo de guarumo', where *tuhk'ur* is explained as *tecolote*. This has to be a plain mistake as none of the other languages have a /k'/ in the word.

Poqomchi' has also *tuhkur* for *tecolote*. Dobbels (2003) has 'tecolote, buho' for *tuhkur*, notes the following: '(ave nocturna, se le asigna poderes maléficis) = Buho virginianus [sic.]', and provides the following contexts: *Re'ruq'orb'al i tuhkur*, *q'orol kimik* 'el canto del tecolote es de mal agüero', *Re'tuhkur q'orol kimik, inki taqeh* 'dicen que el buho predice muerte', and *Warinik inkiq'or taqeh tuhkur; noq inokik pan paat* 'es de mal augurio cuando el búho entre en la casa'. According to Romelia Mo Isem (pers. comm., 2017) in eastern Poqomchi' (in the municipalities of Tactic, Tamahú, Tukurú, and Purulhá) the word *tuhkur* is used, while in western Poqomchi' (San Cristóbal Verapaz) *woroon* is used instead. Furthermore, in the latter area there is a village called Chi Woroon, which means 'At the edge of the place of owls'. Moreover, Mo Isem (*ibid.*) mentions that in the Poqomchi' area all owls foretell death, and a common belief is that if an owl builds a nest near your house, it means certain death for the whole family. Additionally, although the term does not appear in modern Q'eqchi' dictionaries, Stoll (1896) recorded *tukur* (*tucur* in Stoll) as *Nachteule* ('night-owl').

The third term for an owl that appears across different Mayan languages, although with a much more restricted distribution, is the word that Kaufman (2003) reconstructs all the way to Proto-Mayan as **ikiin* (**?ikiin*). This, according to Kaufman (2003), is the source of Yukatek *ikin*, Lacandon *ikim*, Tzotzil *ichin*, Mam *xhiin*, Tz'utujil *xkin*, as well as the Epigraphic (Yukatekan) Mayan *ikiin* ('<*?i-ki*> /*?ikiin*/ small owl').

In Yukatek the term has various manifestations. Barrera Vásquez 1980 (=YUK) lists *ikim* as 'una de las aves agoreras que temen los indios' (YUK:3-9,13 [in YUK:2 also for *ikin*]), 'lechuza, ave agorera' (YUK:4,5,7-9), and 'búho' (YUK:13), whereas the variant *ikin* receives 'especie de lechuza, ave nocturna, agüero de los indios' (YUK:1-3) and 'uno de los pájaros nocturnos, agüeros de los indios' (YUK:3). YUK:13 has also *ikim soots'* (*ikim sootz'*) as 'murciélago muy grande' or 'very large bat', and YUK:5 has *ikin chi'as* 'reclamo para llamar pájaros así [lechuzas]' or 'birdcall to call such birds [(barn) owls]', and YUK:4 provides *ikin ~ ikim chi'tah* as 'silbar como lechuza' or 'whistle like an owl'.

Other owl terms in the Mayan languages

Wastek

Besides the cognate sets of the abovementioned terms, individual Mayan languages have additional words for owls, as well as more detailed aspects of these terms¹⁴: Wastek has, besides the abovementioned *tz'ux* ~ *tz'uux* ~ *tx'uux* ~ *ch'ux*¹⁵ for 'screech owl', *wajutz* (*hujajuts* in Larsen 1955 in *wahuç* in Edmonson 1988) for 'tecolote' (Larsen 1955) or 'owl (onomatopoeic?)' (Edmonson 1988), *jukuy* (*hukuy*) for 'owl' (Edmonson 1988), *kuxkum* ~ *kuxkuumil* (*cuxcum* in Larsen 1955; *kuškum* ~ *kušku:mil* in Edmonson 1988) for 'tecolote chico' (Larsen 1955) and 'elf owl (small grey owl)' (Edmonson 1988)¹⁶, *thik'wik'w* ~ *thik'wiik'w* (*thic'uic'u* in Larsen 1955 and *θik'wik'w* ~ *θik'wi:k'w* in Edmonson 1988) for 'tecolote chico' (Larsen 1955) and 'small owl' (Edmonson 1988), and *t'ololo* for 'screech owl (onomatopoeia?)' (Edmonson 1988). Besides these, Walker (2000) has *ju'jum* for 'tecolote', and provides the following context: *Wa'ach taltsik xin ulal ke tam ka ulich jun i ju'jum tin k'imá', abtsidhk'i kwa'k'al jun i dhiman* 'Hay algunos que dicen que cuando llega un tecolote a su casa, que le ha sido enviado por un brujo'.

Yukatek

Yukatek has abundant owl terminology – partly due to extensive linguistic work in the area. Besides the *xoch'* and *ikim* ~ *ikin* discussed above, Yukatek has an ostensibly onomatopoeic/imitative *buh* (YUK:12,13: 'tecolote o búho') that appears in Itzaj and Mopan as well; (*ah*) *koo'ak'ab* (YUK:10: 'buhito chillador; *Otus guatemalas*', a likely reference to *Megascops guatemalae* [Guatemalan Screech Owl]), where the (*ah*) *koo'* = is either 'cunning' (YUK:2: Sp. 'astuto') or 'foolish, crazy' (YUK:7: Sp. 'desatinado'); *tsikim* [*tzikim*] (YUK:13ddp: 'especie de lechuza no identificada'); *t'oojka'x nuuk* (Gómez Navarrete 2009: 'lechuza [glaucidium]' – possibly *Glaucidium ridgwayi* [Ridgway's Pygmy Owl] as none of the other owls of the genus *Glaucidium* appear in Yucatan); *ah kulte' / ah ko'ti'ak'ab* (YUK:1: 'ave nocturna del monte, canta como lechuza y da gritos como niño'); and *ku* ~ *kuy* (YUK:13: 'lechuza, ave agorera' and 'lechuza, ave agorera en los textos de los libros de Chilam Balam'). *Ah kuy* is also recorded as 'especie de lechuza' (YUK:1), 'ave de rapiña nocturna no identificada del orden de los *Strigiformes*' and 'una especie de búho' (YUK:10). *Kuy* is also glossed in YUK:10 as 'patronímico maya, talón o calcañar' and recorded as a moth in YUK:8: 'una especie de polilla que dicen roen los troncos del pelo'. Furthermore, *kuy* is glossed as 'calcañar' (YUK:1), 'tobillo' (YUK:4,6,7,8,11), 'calcañar, tobillo' (YUK:9), and 'talón o calcañar; maléolo' (YUK:11), all referring to a heel/ankle/malleolus but possibly also to an owl talon.

The Yukatek *tunkuluchú* ~ *tunkuluchuj* ~ *tunkuruchú* mentioned above could either be connected to the "tuhkur diffusion set" or it is an independent (onomatopoeic/imitative) term. *Tunkuluchú* appears in YUK:7,13 as 'búho', YUK:7,8 as 'lechuza' and 'especie de lechuza', whereas *tunkuruchú* is glossed in YUK:13cob as 'tecolote o búho'. The variant *tunkuluchuj* appears Gómez Navarrete (2009). Note also that *tunkuy* is 'heel' (Sp. 'talón, calcañar') in YUK:8.

¹⁴ The variation within each language can be the result of naming different species (or types) of owls and/or based on dialectal variation.

¹⁵ Norcliffé (2003: 66, 199) notes the dialectal variation between the Veracruz Wastek *č'uš* (*ch'ux*) and the San Luis Potosí Wastek (*i.e.*, Potosino) *ts'uš* (*tz'ux*) for 'owl'.

¹⁶ Terry Kaufman (pers. comm. 2017) notes that the reason this bird is called *kuxkum* is because "it walks backwards".

Itzaj

In Itzaj the common name for (true) owls is *buj* (ALMG 2001b; Hofling and Tesucún 1997) whereas barn owls are referred to as *ajxooch*' (see above the discussion on cognate terms). Hofling and Tesucún (1997) identify owls as belonging to the class *aj'ak'ä'-ch'iich*' or 'nocturnal birds'. *Ajbuj* refers to both large and medium owls and is considered onomatopoeic by Hofling and Tesucún (1997), whereas the term *ixnuk* (also just *nuk*) refers to small owls in general and pygmy owls in particular. The latter term is glossed as 'tecolotito listado, ferruginous pygmy owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum*)' (Hofling and Tesucún 1997)¹⁷. Furthermore, Hofling and Tesucún (1997: 273) observe that: "[the *ixnuk*] [M]akes a sound like a woman tapping on her metate to abrade it" ("Hace sonido como una señora tocando su piedra para rasparlo"). The primary reference to *ixnuk* is, essentially, 'old woman' ('viejita') and 'old female' ('vieja hembra').

Mopan

Instead of the common Yukatekan *xooch*', Mopan has *ch'aaw* for 'barn owl' (Sp. *lechuza*) (ALMG 2003f). However, Kerry Hull¹⁸ has also recorded *sooch*' for Pygmy Owl (with a comment "It is a bad sign"). Besides these, Mopan has the common Yukatekan *buj* for 'owl' (Sp. *tecolote*) (Ulrich and Ulrich 1976; Schumann 1997; ALMG 2003f; Jones 2003: 121-125). In Ulrich and Ulrich (1976) *buj* is glossed as 'buhó [sic.], lechuza, tecolote' without making the distinction between true (typical) owls and barn owls. Likewise, Jones (2003: 121-125) assigns the term (spelled *bouh*) to a variety of owls, including the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba* [= *Tyto furcata*])¹⁹, Mottled Owl (*Ciccaba virgata*)²⁰ (also the identification by Kerry Hull on his Mopan field notes from 2008), Striped Owl (*Pseudoscops clamator*), Spectacled Owl (*Pulsatrix perspicillata*), and Vermiculated [=Guatemalan] Screech-Owl (*Megascops guatemalae*). Furthermore, Jones (2003: 122) has *ton ton* for Central American Pygmy-Owl (*Glaucidium griseiceps*). ALMG (2003f) provides the following contexts: *Ujaksaj inwool aj ch'aaw* 'La lechuza me asustó' and *Ti ak'ä'ä walakoo'ujok'ol aj b'uju* 'Los tecolotes salen de noche', and Ulrich and Ulrich (1976) note the following: *Walac u jantic a cho'oj aj buju* 'Los buhos comen ratones'. Besides, Kerry Hull²¹ notes the following for *buj*:

*Great Horned Owl. A good sign that game is coming to a hunter and so you must move quickly to shoot it. They say that if some kinds of buuj get into your house, it means that you will get sick*²².
When they sing at night for hunters, it means that a peccary is close at hand, so they are a good sign.

Lacandon

In Lacandon there are various terms for owls. One of them is the aforementioned *ikim*. Roeling (2007: 245) identifies it as the Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*). The identification is confirmed by Kerry Hull (pers. comm. 2017) through various Lacandon consultants. Besides this, Cook (n.d.)

¹⁷ See Footnote 23.

¹⁸ Mopan field notes from 2008.

¹⁹ See Footnote 9.

²⁰ According to the classification by König and Weick (2008), this should be the Mexican Wood Owl (*Strix squamulata*) rather than the Mottled Owl (*Strix virgata* / **Ciccaba virgata*) which is "very similar, but darker; pale scapular row less prominent; allopatric and vocally distinct" (König and Weick 2008: 368).

²¹ Mopan field notes from 2008.

²² Note the story below by Antonio Cuxil of an owl entering a house of a sick relative.

lists *buh* ~ *äh buj* as ‘owl / búho; Fam: Strigidae, Fam: Tytonidae; onom’, Canger (1969) *buh* as ‘tecolote’, and Roeling (2007: 245) *buh* as ‘Whiskered Owl (*Otus trichopsis*)’.

Furthermore, Kerry Hull²³ has *kulte’ buj* for ‘small owl’, *nut buj* for ‘small owl, maybe a crested owl’, *hach buj* for ‘screech owl’, *pojpuuy* as ‘spectacled owl’, and *nukuch buj* as ‘crested owl’. Likewise, Cook (n.d.) has *nukuch buh* as “long-eared owls / buhos de orejas largas; Fam: Strigidae and Tytonidae; long-eared owls, such as the crested owl, striped owl, and stygian owl”, as well as *ts’atache?* [‘*tz’atache*’] as ‘ferruginous pygmy-owl / tecolotillo rayado; *Glaucidium brasilianum*’,²⁴ and *kute* (*kuute*’ in Bruce 1979 and *kute*’ in Roeling 2007: 246) for ‘whiskered screech-owl / tecolito manchado; *Otus trichopsis*’. The latter is identified as an Elf Owl (*Micrathene whitneyi*) by Roeling (2007: 246).

Moreover, Bruce (1979: 210) lists *popohkuy* as an owl and Canger (1969) has *kat* [sic. (ought to be *k’at*)] in *ʔu-k’aʔtun kisin* as ‘lechuza del diablo’. Bruce (1979) informs us that in the Lacandon dream symbolism *popohkuy* ‘foretells illness’ (*u k’in ya’hil*). The same goes with (*äh*) *kuute*’ (‘screech owl’): ‘Like the (large) owl, it foretells illness’ (*p’iis buh, u k’in ya’hil*). For *buj*, Kerry Hull has recorded²⁵ the following: “They say ‘*Es muy sabe*’. It can prognosticate undesirable things, such as a fall, a sickness, or other similar events. They are closely associated with sorcery.” Ultimately, it seems that for the Lacandon, according to Bruce (1979), owls are not the only ominous creatures since ‘all birds foretell illness’ (*Wolol ch’ich’ u k’in ya’hil*).

Ch’olti’

In Morán (1695) the Ch’olti’ entry for *lechuza* is written as <Lechusa>, <Abu. Atelele>. The <abu> evidently refers to *ah buh* but the *ah telele* is more problematic (note the similarity to Poqomam [ALMG 2003e] entry *ate’i kaab* – a term that requires further analysis). Stross (1990) transliterates the entry as follows: “lechusa abu. atele” and annotates it in this way: *ah buh* ‘owl’; *ah te?le* ‘owl’. Boot (2004) follows Stross and transliterates the gloss also as *abu . atele* (rather than *atelele*). Interestingly, the Ch’olti’ *buh* is a generic Yukatekan, albeit imitative, word for owl, so the question remains how it arrived in Ch’olti’. Furthermore, the similarity to Spanish búho is noteworthy – although an unlikely source for the term in these languages.²⁶

Ch’orti’

As discussed above, the common terms for (typical/true) owl and barn owl in Ch’orti’ are *tijkirin* and *xoch’* (and its variants *xo’ch* ~ *xo’ch’*), respectively. *Tijkirin*, which has all the potential to be an onomatopoeic/imitative term, is glossed as ‘hoot owl’ by Wisdom (1950), who also records *chuchu’ tihkirin* as ‘tecolotillo (a small owl)’. Hull and Fergus (2014) note that: “Its call is a sign of a

²³ Lacandon field notes from 2015.

²⁴ Note that according to König and Weick (2008), the species does not exist in the Maya area. The scientific identification in Cook (n.d.) is outdated and the targeted species is in all likelihood *Glaucidium ridgwayi* (Ridgway’s Pygmy Owl) that inhabits the Lacandon area. Other possible, but less likely candidates, are *Glaucidium griseiceps* (Central American Pygmy Owl) and *Glaucidium cobanense* (Guatemalan Pygmy Owl). According to König and Weick (2008: 418), “[Ridgway’s Pygmy Owl is] very similar in size and plumage to Ferruginous Pygmy Owl and formerly usually considered conspecific with it”.

²⁵ Lacandon field notes from 2015.

²⁶ The Spanish búho is pronounced /búo/ (since the mediaeval times) so the h/j would need to be explained in the Mayan languages. However, in both cases (Maya or Spanish origin) the term is ultimately sound-symbolic, so at least theoretically the word could have been influenced from two directions. Furthermore, we need to take into account the fact that Mayan languages do not like diphthongs. In any event, and although Spanish is an unlikely source, the issue requires further scrutiny.

coming sickness that will soon appear in one's house, especially if it sings near or on that house. They occasionally catch and eat chickens. Sorcerers can take the form of this bird." The lexeme *xoch'*, on the other hand, is glossed as 'owl [generic, but not including hoot owls]' (Wisdom 1950). Wisdom (1950) also mentions *uxoch' ahk'ab* (*uo'ch ahk'ap'*), glossed as 'screech owl', *burem xoch'* (*p'urem o'ch*), glossed as 'black owl', *chakchak xo'ch'*, glossed as 'a dark red owl', and *tantan xo'ch* (*tantan xo'x*), glossed as 'gray owl'.

Besides these, Ch'orti' has *koxkox* ~ *kuxkux* (Hull and Fergus 2014) identified as *la aurora* in Spanish and Pygmy Owl (spp.) in English, recognized by Hull and Fergus (2014: 29) as "probably Ferruginous Pygmy Owl; Scientific: *Glaucidium* species". According to Hull and Fergus (2014: 29), the name is, besides many other owl names (or bird names in general), onomatopoeitic: "Its song is "koxkox" or "kuxkux"". Hull and Fergus (2014: 29) provide the following account:

It sings at night, especially when there is a full moon. It sings most often when there is not rain at that moment. Its physical characteristics are generally well known by the Ch'orti' since it is a nocturnal bird, though its call is readily recognized by most. It is said to be a nawal, or evil spirit. When it sings with a 'surprised' song, something bad is going to happen. Also, a sorcerer can talk to it and have it sing near a particular person's house to cause some sickness to come to them. If it sings happily it can be a good sign that something good will happen, like a visitor will soon come to your house. It chirps if there is a full moon and is nocturnal. It is usually seen in October and November.

Ch'ol

Besides the widespread term *xoch'*, Ch'ol has several terms for owls. Attinasi (1973: 281) has *kuh* (documented as <ku:>) for 'owl', Aulie and Aulie (1978) have *xku* (<xcu>) as 'lechuza' and *xkuj* (<xcu>) as 'lechuza grande' (probably the same term but recorded differently during the field research). Likewise, Schumann (1973) has *xku* for 'lechuza' whereas Whittaker and Warkentin (1965: 170) have *xkuj* as 'owl'. Besides these, Aulie and Aulie (1978) have *puyju'* as 'tecolote (medio grande, canta a medianoche)'. *Puyju'* is also glossed as 'caballero' in Aulie and Aulie (1978). In the re-edited version of Aulie and Aulie 1978 by Emily Scharfe de Stairs (Aulie and Aulie 1999) *puyju'* is glossed (besides 'caballero') also as 'chotacabra, ave nocturna' and identified as *Caprimulgus vociferus* [Eastern whip-poor-will]. Furthermore, both Aulie and Aulie (1978) as well as Josserand and Hopkins (1996) have *xtutuy* as 'lechuza chica'. In addition, Aulie and Aulie (1978) have *xt'ojt'objak* (<xt'ojt'objak>) as 'hormiga (negra, grande; pica)' as well as 'insecto parecido a la lechuza'. Note also that Josserand and Hopkins (1996) have *kuy* as "owl." This is unusual, as the term appears to be restricted to Yukatekan languages, as noted above. The entry appears in Josserand and Hopkins (1996: 68) in the section called "Preliminary Ethno-Classification of Chol Birds," analyzed by Lee Folmar and Ausencio Cruz Guzmán, and it has to be a mistake as the common Ch'ol term for owl is *kuj* rather than *kuy*. Furthermore, the fact that only the latter term is listed in the report (rather than both), points to an error in this preliminary research report. In Hopkins, Josserand, and Cruz Guzmán (2011) the entry is *kuj*.

Chontal

In Chontal one of the (onomatopoeitic/imitative) names for an owl is *buhu'* (or related terms). Knowles (1984) lists *?ah buh-up'* ('*ah buhup'*) as 'barn owl' whereas Hull and Fergus (n.d.) identify *bujú* as "large owls including both the Mottled Owl (*Ciccaba virgata*)²⁷ and Great Horned Owl (*Bubo*

²⁷ See Footnote 18.

virginianus)". Moreover, Keller and Luciano (1997) have *jub* glossed as ‘tecolote, búho’, whereas Pérez González and Cruz Rodríguez (1998) have recorded it in Tapotzingo and (quite aptly) in Tecolota as *tecolote*. In Tucta, however, the word for *tecolote* is *ju*’ (Pérez González and Cruz Rodríguez 1998).²⁸ Furthermore, Keller and Luciano (1997) provide the following terms for a small owl: *ajkotk’in* (ajcotq’uin) as ‘sorsolito (reg.), tecolotito (*Sant.*), tecolotillo cuatro ojos, tecolotillo rayado’ and *ixkotk’in* (ixcotq’uin) as ‘sorsolito (reg.; *ave*), tecolotito (*Sant.*; *lechucita*)’. In addition, Hull and Fergus (n.d.) expand the inventory of Chontal terms for owls with *p’ul* (identified as Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl [*Glaucidium brasilianum*]).²⁹

Besides these, Hull and Fergus (n.d.) identify *kotk’in*, and its variant form *koxk’in*, as a Pygmy-Owl, “most likely the Ferruginous Pygmy-Owl [*Glaucidium brasilianum*]”.³⁰ According to Hull and Fergus (n.d.): “Its cry announces a death. When it cries at 2:00 or 3:00 o’clock in the morning, it is a sign that the morning light is coming. However, if it cries at midnight, it signals death. Its cry can also signal “tiempo de verano” or “tiempo de sol,” *i.e.*, dry weather.” Furthermore, Knowles (1984) documents *?ah tensu* interestingly both as ‘owl’ and ‘witch’.

Additionally, Keller and Luciano (1997) include *ju’ju’na ~ ju’ju’ne* as ‘sonido que hace el tecolote cuando grita, ulular (*el búho*)’, similar to Knowles’ (1984) *hu?-hu?-na(l)* and *hu?-hu?-ne(l)* as ‘cry of an owl’. Besides these, Keller and Luciano (1997) provide the following contexts for the glosses (original orthography retained): *Sami ac’äb acubi que ya’an tä uq’ue jub tan te’e* ‘Anoche escuche que estaba gritando el tecolote en la montaña’ and *Ju’ju’na u yuq’ue ni jub* ‘El tecolote ulula’. They also refer to a bird that resembles an owl: *Ajcotq’uin es untu yoc p’i’ mut ca’a wälä jub* ‘El sorsolito es una ave pequeña parecida al tecolote’.

Tzeltal

Besides the aforementioned terms *xoch’* for American barn owl (*Tyto furcata*) and *tuhkulum pukuh* (also known as *tuhkulum mut*, *tuhkulum muk*, and *mukmuk mut* [Hunn 1977]) for the great horned owl (*Bubo virginianus*), Tzeltal abounds different terms for owls. One reason for this is the prolific documentation of animal species in the Tzeltal area, especially by Hunn (1977) who lists (besides the two terms above) *kurunkutz* (variant forms: *kurumkutz*, *turukutz*, *turunkutz*, *kurunkutzkutz*) as ‘screech owl (*Otus* spp.)’, *toytoy* as ‘pygmy owl / saw-whet owl (*Glaucidium* and *Aegolius* spp.)’, *k’alel toytoy* (literally ‘diurnal *toytoy*’) as ‘ferruginous pygmy owl (*Glaucidium brasilianum*)’,³¹ *?ahk’ubal toytoy* (literally ‘nocturnal *toytoy*’) as ‘northern pygmy owl (*Glaucidium gnoma*) / unspotted saw-whet owl (*Aegolius ridgwayi*)’, *xkuh* as ‘mottled owl (*Ciccaba virgata*)’ (recorded as *ixkuj* ‘tecolote’ by León Trujillo and Vázquez Cruz 1995), and, finally, *k’ahk’al wax* as ‘fulvous owl (*Strix fulvescens*)’, translated and described by Hunn (1977) as ‘fierce fox’, or ‘which barks like a fox’. Besides these, Slocum (1953) has *kujukjmut* for ‘tecolote’, and *malk’olech* for ‘lechuzza’ (besides *xoch’* and *toytoy*).

Kerry Hull (pers. comm. 2017) has *kolem (x)kuh* for a large owl and *wis xkuh* for a small owl in his Tzeltal field notes. As part of the same correspondence Hull notes that *kolem* means ‘big’ in Ch’ol, so the term could be a Ch’ol borrowing. In the same vein Hull points out that *wis xkuh* could be Ch’ol as well (since *wis* means ‘small’ in Ch’ol). One of his informants revealed that the term is used in Petalcingo and that in other varieties of Tzeltal they would use *tut xkuh* for a small owl instead.

²⁸ According to Hull and Fergus (n.d.): “The loss of a word-final /b/ is often shortened to a glottal stop in certain dialects in Chontal”.

²⁹ See Footnote 23.

³⁰ See Footnote 23.

³¹ See Footnote 23.

Hunn (1977: 199) also lists *himhim k'abal* as a possible owl, potoo (*Nyctibiidae*), or nightjar (*Caprimulgidae*), and observes that “[t]his name is ascribed to a large hawklike animal which calls out its name while flying overhead at night. It is widely known, but only as a sound or a glimpse in the night. It is said to be encountered frequently on ridges in high country. It is classified as *hlabtawaneh mut* ‘harbinger-of-evil bird’.”³²

Tzotzil

For Tzotzil, Hurley de Delgaty and Ruíz Sánchez (1986) have *kurutzuk* (<curutsuc>) as ‘buho, lechuza’. Other terms glossed as ‘lechuza’ include *kuxkux* (<cuxcux>), *kuxutzuktzuk* (<cuxutsuctsuc>), *tzurukuk* (<tsurucuc>), and *tuluk' spukuj* (<tuluc' spucuj>).³³ The last term is also glossed as ‘buho’. Note also that in the illustrations of the book you can find an image of an owl with a caption “lechuza de campanario (*cuxcux*)” (Hurley de Delgaty and Ruíz Sánchez 1986: 226). Besides these terms, Tzotzil (Hurley de Delgaty and Ruíz Sánchez 1986) has *ichin* glossed as ‘tecolote’, and *xkuj* (<xcuju>) and *xkujkuj mut* (<xcuju mut>) as ‘guía de león’,³⁴ *tecolotito*, *maullador*. Hurley de Delgaty and Ruíz Sánchez (1986) also provide context to the glosses (original orthography retained): *Li samele ica'i jun tuluc' spucuj li' no'ox ta nopol nae* ‘Anoche oí un búho cerca de la casa’; *Li ichine ja' no'ox ta ac'ubaltic xil* ‘El tecolote solamente ve de noche’; *Li ichine chc'opojic ta ac'ubaltic, li ta c'ac'altique ta xvayic* ‘Los tecolotes cantan de noche y duermen de día’, and *Li cuxcuxe ja' no'ox ta ac'ubaltic xc'opojic* ‘La lechuza canta solamente en las noches’.

Q'anjobal(an)

As regards the Greater Q'anjobalan languages, besides the derived forms of Proto-Mayan **xooch*' (i.e., *xoch*' in Tojolabal and *xotx*' in Q'anjobal and Akatek) and the diffused forms of the Central Mayan **tuhkur* or the (alternatively) potential onomatopoeic terms (*tukur* in Q'anjobal [Cú Cab *et al.* 2003], *tukulin* in Akatek [Cú Cab *et al.* 2003], and *tuukul* as well as *tukurujuu'* in Mocho' [Kaufman 2003]), we have *chulpop*, *jorjowex*, and *tonton* in Q'anjobal (the latter also in Akatek and Chuj), *no'ku'* and *no'huh* in Jakaltek, and *kujub*, *kuxup'* and *tz'ajuj* in Chuj. The Q'anjobal *chulpop* is glossed as ‘lechuza’ (Cú Cab *et al.* 2003) and *jorjowex* as ‘tecolote, cuerporin’³⁵ (ALMG 2003b), as in *Chi b'itni no jorjowex yet aq' b'alil* ‘Canta el cuerporin en la noche’ (ALMG 2003b). Jakaltek *no'ku'* and *no'huh* are glossed as “lechuza/screech owl” (Cú Cab *et al.* 2003) and Chuj *kujub* as ‘lechuza’ with the following context: *Tob'lab'nok'kujub'tik tato tz'ok'nok'* ‘¿Cuándo canta la lechuza dicen que es mal agüero?’ (ALMG 2003d). In addition, *tonton* is glossed as ‘tecolote’

³² Based on Hunn's (1977: 25) experiences among the Tzeltal Maya, the ethnotaxonomical research on owls can be rather challenging: “Owls were an especially difficult group to define. First, practically all are strictly nocturnal, and it is quite inappropriate to prowl about at night in Tenejapa. Second, owls are thought to be harbingers of evil. Third, many species are rare and local in distribution.”

³³ Note that *tuluk'* is ‘turkey’ in Tzotzil but it appears to produce terms for other animals as well, including *tuluk'chon* ‘armadillo,’ besides the term for an owl mentioned above.

³⁴ Enríquez Rocha and Rangel Salazar (2004: 45) observe the following on *guía de león*: “En la región de Sarapiquí se encuentran siete especies de rapaces nocturnas: una especie de lechuza y seis especies de búhos [...], pero sólo cuatro especies fueron bien identificadas por los entrevistados y presentaron varios nombres populares. Las especies fueron: *Tyto alba*: “cara de gato”, “cabeza de gato”, “guirina”, “lechuza real”, “legítima lechuza”, “lechuza corriente”, “lechuza mala” y “ojos de gato”; *Pulsatrix perspicillata*: “oropopo”, “olopopo”, “chancho”, “olopopa”, “pájaro chancho”, “bullicioso” y “come gatos”; *Strix virgata*: “hú de león”, “la hú”, “pájaro león” o “guía de león”; y *S. nigrolineata*: “lechuza cuijen”.”

³⁵ Also spelled as “cuerporruín”.

(ALMG 2003d) or ‘Screech Owl’ (Hopkins 2010) in Chuj, ‘lechuza/screech owl’ in Akatek (Cú Cab *et al.* 2003), and ‘tecolote’ in Q’anjobal (ALMG 2003d), with the following context: *Chi el yaw no’ tonton yet aq’b’alil* ‘El tecolote canta en la noche’. Finally, for the Chuj *kuxup*’ Hopkins (2010) provides the following description: ‘An owl about 8-10” tall; looks like the Screech Owl in bird books, but is gray-black and has no ear tufts. Found in San Mateo’. Furthermore, for the Chuj *tz’ajuj* Hopkins (2010) has: ‘Spanish *lechuza*. A large owl, like the Horned Owl but without the ear tufts. Song is repeated *tz’ajuj*’.

Eastern Mayan languages

In the Eastern Mayan languages there are various terms for owls, besides the derived forms of Proto-Mayan **xooch*’ and the diffused forms of the Central Mayan **tuhkur* discussed above. Mam has *tol* for ‘lechuza’ (ALMG 2003a), as in *Tuj qoniky’an nchib’et qe tol* ‘Solamente de noche caminan las lechuzas’, as well as *ōin* for ‘tecolote’ (ALMG 2003a), as in *Otzul jun ōin tib’aj qja* ‘Un tecolote ha venido sobre nuestra casa’.

Poqomchi’ has *woroom* ~ *woroon* for “tecolote, búho” (ALMG 2001c; Romelia Mo Isem, pers. comm., 2017). Dobbels (2003) records also *xihlik*’ for “lechuza” in Poqomchi’, identified as *Strix fulverscens* [sic.] (ought to be *Strix fulvescens*, *i.e.* Fulvous Owl) while ALMG (2003e) has *ate’t kaab* as “lechuza (que cuida el colmenero de abeja).” According to Romelia Mo Isem (pers. comm., 2017) both terms are dubious

In K’iche’ additional terms for owls include *muqur* and *k’urupup* as ‘barn owl’ (Christenson n.d.). Christenson (n.d.) has also *kurupup* glossed as ‘small owl’, although the two entries (*k’urupup* and *kurupup*) might refer to the same entity. In the Anonymous (n.d.) there appears to be some confusion regarding the term *lechuza* as it lists *xpa’ch* as ‘lechuza’ rather than ‘lagarto’ (in Christenson [n.d.] *ixpa’ch* is glossed as ‘newt, small lizard’).³⁶

Kaqchikel has, besides the aforementioned *tukur* and *xoch*’, also *kurkuwit* for ‘lechuza’ and *porpoweq*’ ~ *purpueq*’ for ‘especie de lechuza’ (Ruyán Canú *et al.* 1991), whereas Tz’utujil has *xkin* (Campbell 1977; Pérez Mendoza and Hernández Mendoza 1996), or *xken* (Cú Cab *et al.* 2003) for ‘tecolote’. Besides these, Kerry Hull (pers. comm. 2017) has recorded *t’ulul* for Vermiculated Screech Owl (possibly *Megascops guatemalae*) in Tz’utujil. He also provides the following regarding *t’ulul*: “If it calls when your children are sick, it means they may die. They sing from January to May during the dry season”.

Furthermore, in his unpublished Tz’utujil field notes Kerry Hull (pers. comm. 2017) provides further cultural context to the terms. For *xooch*’ Hull has the following: “When it sings, it is a sign of bad things to come. One informant called it a “*sanjorin*””. Hull notes that the same *sanjorin*³⁷ term applies also to *xkin*, and provides the following account:

If it cries, it means there is some problem somewhere. It is a sign that they must be careful. Perhaps their enemies are trying to do something bad to them, etc. When someone is sick and several xkin are calling to each other on opposite sides of the house, it means that person will die. It is also called a sign of sadness. It can mean that a robbery, an accident, a sickness, or a death will happen.

³⁶ In Achi (Cú Cab *et al.* 2003) the same term is glossed as *cutete* or “Jesus lizard” (basilisk, *Basiliscus* spp.), thus named for its ability to run across water.

³⁷ Spelled in Guatemalan Spanish also as *zajorin* (Terry Kaufman, pers. comm. 2017).

Table 2. A selection of terms for owls in Mayan languages

Language:	Terms for owls:
Wastek	<i>tz'ux ~ tz'uux ~ tx'uux ~ ch'ux, kuxkum ~ kuxkuumil, thik'wik'w ~ thik'wiik'w, jukuy, ju'jum, wajutz, t'ololo'</i>
Chicomuceltec	?
Yukatek	<i>xoch' ~ xooch', tunkuluchú ~ tunkuluchuj ~ tunkuruchú, buh, ku, kuy, (ah) koo'ak'ab, ah ko'ti'ak'ab, ah kulte', ikim ~ ikin, tzikim, t'oojka'x nuuk,</i>
Lacandon	<i>buh ~ äh buj, kulte' buj, hach buj, nukuch buj, pojpuuy, popohkuy, kute' ~ kuute', ikim, tz'atache', k'at</i>
Mopan	<i>buj, ch'aaw, sooch'</i>
Itzaj	<i>xooch' ~ ajxooch', buj ~ ajbuj, ixnuk ~ nuk</i>
Ch'ol	<i>xoch' ~ xjoch', kuj, xku ~ xkuj, kuy, xtutuy, pujyu'</i>
Chontal	<i>xoch', buhu' ~ buhup' ~ ah buhup', jub ~ ju', ajkotk'in, ixkotk'in, kotk'in ~ koxk'in, p'ul, ah tensu</i>
Ch'orti'	<i>xoch' ~ xoch ~ xo'ch ~ xo'ch', tijkirin, koxkox ~ kuxkux</i>
Ch'olti'	<abu>, <atelele>
Tzeltal	<i>xoch', tuhkul, tuhkulum pukuh, tuhkulum mut, tuhkulum muk, mukmuk mut, kujkujmut, xkuh ~ ixkuj, kolem xkuh, wis xkuh, toytoy, k'alel toytoy, ahk'ubal toytoy, kurunkutz ~ kurumkutz, turukutz ~ turunkutz, kurunkutzkutz, k'ahk'al wax, himhim k'abal(?), malk'olech</i>
Tzotzil	<i>xkuj, xkujkuj mut, ichin, kuxkux, kuxutzuktzuk, kurutzuk, tzurukuk, tuluk'spukuj</i>
Q'anjobal	<i>tukur, tonton, chulpop, jorjowex</i>
Akatek	<i>tukulin, tonton</i>
Jakaltek	<i>no'ku', no'huh</i>
Mochó'	<i>xiich', tuukul, tukurujuu'</i>
Chuj	<i>tukul, kujub, kuxup', tonton, tzulpop, tz'ajuj</i>
Tojolabal	<i>xoch', tujkul</i>
Q'eqchi'	<i>tukur, warom ~ kwarom, joch'baq ~ joobaq ~ hoobaq ~ jobaq ~ joch'ibaq, bubu te'</i>
Uspantek	<i>xooch', tukur ~ tuukur, wupup</i>
Poqomchi'	<i>xooch', tuhkur, woroom ~ woroon, xihlik'?</i>
Poqomam	<i>xooch' ~ xeech' ~ xiech', tuhkur, kuxkux, ate' kaab?</i>
K'iche'	<i>xooch', tukur ~ tuukur ~ tuhkur, muqur, k'urupup</i>
Achi	<i>xooch', tukur, koykoy</i>
Kaqchikel	<i>xooch', tukur ~ tukr ~ tukre, kurkuwit, porpoeq' ~ purpueq'</i>
Tz'utujil	<i>xooch' ~ xo'uuch', xkin ~ xkin, nim xkin, t'ulul</i>
Sakapultek	<i>xoch', tukur ~ tukor, te't tukor</i>
Sipakapense	<i>xoch', tukr ~ tuukr</i>
Teko	<i>tukuruu'</i>
Mam	<i>xitx' ~ xiiix', tukruu' ~ tukuru ~ tukru ~ tokru, xhiin, tol, ðin</i>
Awakatek	<i>tukuru' ~ tukruuj</i>
Ixil	<i>xotx', tuuqul</i>

Lastly, Q'eqchi' has *warom* ~ *kwarom* for 'tecolote' (Ponce e Hijos 1830 [spelled *guarróm*]; Sedat 1955 [spelled *cuarom*]; Freeze 1975 [spelled *varrom*]; Campbell 1977; Cú Cab *et al.* 2003; and ALMG 2004b [*warom*]) and *joch'* ~ *joch'baq* ~ *joobaq* ~ *jobaq* ~ *joch'ibaq* for 'lechuza' (Campbell 1977 [spelled *hoč'*]; Sedat 1955 [spelled *jobak* / *joch'ibak*]; Cú Cab *et al.* 2003 [spelled *hoobaq*]; ALMG 2004b). Besides these, Jones (2003: 122) has *bubu te'* for 'Spectacled Owl' (*Pulsatrix perspicillata*) – a term that does not appear in other sources. Furthermore, Jones (2003: 121-125) has both *warom* and *kwarom* (spelled *quarom*) for a variety of owls – corroborated by Kerry Hull's (pers. comm. 2017) fieldwork in the Q'eqchi' area. Jones (2003: 121-125) gives these terms for several owl species, including the Barn Owl (*Tyto alba* [= *Tyto furcata*])³⁸, Mottled Owl (*Ciccaba virgata*)³⁹, Striped Owl (*Pseudoscops clamator*), and Vermiculated [=Guatemalan] Screech-Owl (*Megascops guatemalae*).

Kerry Hull (pers. comm. 2017) refers to one of his Q'eqchi' consultants who said that the *warom* "will give you bad luck and [consequently] they chase it away if it gets near them". To this Hull adds that "when hunting, however, if you hear it, it's a good sign that a gibbon is close". Furthermore, ALMG (2004b) provides the following contexts: *Nake'xib'enk chi q'eq li warom* 'Los tecolotes asustan en la noche', *Anumink yookeb li warom* 'Lo que estan haciendo los tecolotes indica mal agüero', and *Nake'xk'ux tib li joch'baq* 'Las lechuzas comen carne'. The Q'eqchi' *warom* stems from the Proto-Eastern Mayan **wara'm* (Kaufman 2003) with K'iche' and Ixil forms *waraam* and *wata'm* ~ *vata'm* both meaning 'dream' (*sueño*). In Q'eqchi' *war* is 'to sleep' (as it is in Proto-Mayan) and *warom* is 'an owl'. The semantically related Proto-Mayan noun **wa(h)r* (Kaufman 2003) emerges as Yukatek *waay* 'witch' and appears in Tzotzil *wayijel* ~ *vayijelil* 'nagual,' and Poqomchi' *war* 'witchcraft'.

OWLS IN MAYA WRITING

In Maya writing there are relatively few references to owls and fairly few different spellings of potential terms for owls, both in the Classic Maya language and the regional vernaculars. In the Dresden and Madrid Codex we have **KUY** and in the Madrid Codex also **i-ki** (for *ikin* ~ *ikim*), both markedly present in Yukatek rather than any Ch'olan language. Interestingly, as noted above, on page 95c of the Madrid Codex we have **i-ki ku-yu** (*iki[n] kuy*) written above a horned owl, a possible reference to the Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*).

Looking at the terms for owls in Mayan languages, one would expect to find at least one example of *xoch'* in the corpus. However, so far it seems that the term *kuy* was the preferred term for an owl in the Maya inscriptions. Interestingly, although the term is relatively frequent in Yukatek (and Lacandon) sources, it is absent in other Mayan languages. The reason for this might be that the term *kuy* was a preferred term for mythological rather than factual owls.

Besides logographic spellings, *kuy* is also spelled phonetically as **ku** and especially as **ku-yu** in various occasions. On K3395 the name of a *wahy* owl, with a human head in its beak, is written with a profile bird head (similar to the *muwaan* bird) complemented with a sign that looks like an **o** feather. A similar creature appears on K1211 where we have two winged animals that share some features (wings, legs, and a snake necklace) but are different beings altogether. The one with an avian head is similar to the one on K3395 whereas the other creature has a zoomorphic skull as a head. The two associated captions provide the names of the creatures. The other one is quite straightforward and reads **ku-yu** for *kuy*, but the reading of the other one is somewhat more problematic. The name is written with a **ko** syllabogram followed by a bat sign that has several readings, including **xu**, **tz'i**, and

³⁸ See Footnote 9.

³⁹ See Footnote 17.

SUTZ'. Grube and Nahm (1994: 703-704) ascribe the **ko**-“bat” caption to the avian creature with a skulled head and the **ku-yu** caption to the bird in front of it. However, there is a possibility that the captions are to be read in the opposite order.

On K1228 the name of a winged long-necked *wahy* creature is written as **ko-ko**-“bat” and although the depiction is different from the creature on K1211, we might be dealing with a related entity (Helmke and Nielsen 2009: 62-64). The likely outcome of the sequence of the signs is *kok suutz'* where *kok* might be a reference to a Harpy Eagle (*kok mut* in Tzeltal [Hunn 1977: 142–143]), followed by the word for “bat” (Helmke and Nielsen 2009: 62)⁴⁰. However, if the bat head in both cases reads **xu**, another, although less likely, possibility is a term reminiscent of Ch'orti' *koxkox* for ‘Pygmy Owl’, a bird that, according to Hull and Fergus (2014) “is said to be a *nawal*, or evil spirit”. However, if this were indeed the targeted term, one would expect a Maya scribe to write it using syllabograms **ko** and **xo**, rather than **ko** and **xu**, so, to date, the *kok suutz'* reading seems to be the most viable option – and an apt term for a *wahy* creature.

In addition to these, we have two frontal view owl signs in Maya writing.⁴¹ One of them is the well known Teotihuacan-inspired owl sign with Tlaloc-style goggle eyes (Figure 5a) that still eludes secure decipherment. Another one is a recently found owl sign at Tonina with a **ji** phonetic complement (Figure 5b), pointing towards a possible *kuj* ~ *kuuj* reading for the owl sign.⁴²

Another avian creature with owl characteristics can be found in the Dresden Codex (pages 8, 16, 18 [Figure 5c], and possibly 56, 58, and 65), with a potential phonetic value *kuy*,⁴³ based on related occurrences on pages 7 and 10 (Figure 6), reading **13**-“sky”⁴⁴[?]-**yu-ku** and **13**-“sky”-T84⁴⁵ **ku-yu**, respectively. Interestingly, the bottom part of the sky sign on page 7 is different from all the other 43 occurrences of sky signs in the codex, pointing towards a possible conflated/infixed element that might correspond to T84 on page 10. If the T84 is read as **WIN(I)KIL**, as proposed by David Stuart (pers. comm. 2017), the loose translation of the nominal phrase would be along the lines of ‘Thirteen Sky Were-Owl’.

Yet another avian creature that has been suggested to represent an owl is a bird-eating bird in Maya writing (Figure 7). However, rather than an owl, this bird is probably a hawk (sparrow-hawk?) or a supernatural bird of prey.

Barrera Vásquez (1980: 531) justly observes that we are dealing with a mythological bird. However, he claims that it is possibly an owl. He also quotes Refugio Vermont Salas who mentions that “there is a black bird that resembles the pich’ (*Dives, Dives*) which in Cantamayek [Yucatan] is

⁴⁰ Note also the modern Yukatek (Barrera Vásquez 1980) term *ikim sootz'* for ‘murciélago muy grande’ or ‘very large bat’.

⁴¹ In general, frontal view of animals is rather rare in Mesoamerican writing systems, except in the case of owls. Examples can be found in Zapotec, Maya, and Aztec writing. In effect, the frontal view of the signs for owl is shared not only by Mesoamerican scripts but other writing systems and artistic traditions around the world, including Egyptian writing and the earliest known owl rendering at Chauvet-Pont-d’Arc (Chauvet *et al.* 1995; Clottes 2003), dating back to the Upper Paleolithic.

⁴² I would like to thank Albert Davletshin for pointing out this example to me and Carlos Pallán for providing me with a photograph of the glyph in question.

⁴³ The bird itself was recognized by Brinton (1895: 73) as a “horned or eared owl, a large raptorial bird of the genus *Bubo*, Maya, *coz*”. In the same source Brinton also notes also that: “He appears as an associate of the gods of death and war, and symbolizes clouds, darkness, and inauspicious events. His horns frequently appear on the head-dress of Cuculcan to indicate the departing sun and night, like the *akbal* sign. [...] He is often associated with the number 13, and may represent in the calendar the 13-day period.”

⁴⁴ The reading of the “sky” sign is uncertain without phonetic complementation, with **CHAN**, **KAN**, **KA’N**, and **KA’AN** being possible options, based on reconstructed Ch’olan and Yukatekan terms for ‘sky’.

⁴⁵ The reading **WINIK(IL)** for T84 was proposed by David Stuart in 2014. Whether the sign in the Dresden Codex is indeed this sign, requires further scrutiny.

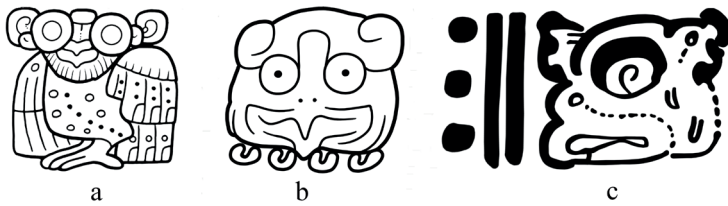


Figure 5. a) Owl sign on Tikal Marcador: F9 (drawing by Christophe Helmke). b) Owl sign on an unpublished monument from Tonina (drawing by Harri Kettunen; based on a photograph provided by INAH/Ajimaya/C.N.A./Carlos Pallán Gayol). c) 13-KUY on Dresden Codex, page 18 (drawing by Harri Kettunen).



Figure 6. Dresden Codex, details from pages 7, 10, 16, and 18.



Figure 7. Examples of *muwaan* birds in Maya writing (drawings by Harri Kettunen).

known by the name of moan” (Barrera Vásquez 1980: 531-532) This bird (the Melodious blackbird), does not, however, resemble the *muwaan* of Maya writing or imagery at all. Instead, as mentioned above, the *muwaan* bird appears to be a rapacious bird-eating bird. The various ways to represent the bird in writing all point towards a predator that ingests other birds.

Although various raptorial birds, including eagles, hawks, and owls, eat other birds, some hawk species are specialized in avian diet. One candidate is the Sharp-shinned Hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), present in the Maya area, whose diet consists primarily of small birds. As regards the name *muwaan* and its variants, the term appears also in other Mayan languages besides Yucatek. According to Hull (n.d.: 31): “In the Ch’orti’ area the Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) (*chackchack mwan* in Ch’orti’) is known as a “*nagual de brujo*”, or “sorcerer’s spirit”, and it is said that if it takes dirt off the roof of a house, something bad will happen to those that live there”.⁴⁶

However, we might be dealing again with a mythological bird, whose zoological origin is veiled in the past. The same applies to many other birds in Maya writing, including the graphic origins of avian forms of CH’EN, o, ki, and the so-called “k’atun” bird (Figure 8):

Another sign in the Maya script that has been suggested to represent an owl is the avian variant of the CH’EN glyph (Figure 9), although many representations of the sign are far removed from a naturalistic depictions of owls.

Many birds in the inventory of Maya writing are rather confusing as relates to the graphic motivation of the signs. However, at times it seems quite plausible that the ancient Maya scribes themselves were also confused with these signs.

As regards bird signs in Maya writing in general, we can identify some 15 of these, when it comes to knowing the reading of the sign and the type (species) of the bird. These include (in alphabetical order) *ak’* (‘turkey’), *i’* (‘hawk, falcon’), *kutz* ([Yucatek] ‘turkey’), *kuy* ~ *kuh* (‘owl’), *k’uk’* (‘quetzal’), *mat*



Figure 8. CH’EN, o, ki, and the so-called “k’atun” bird in Maya writing (drawings by Harri Kettunen).

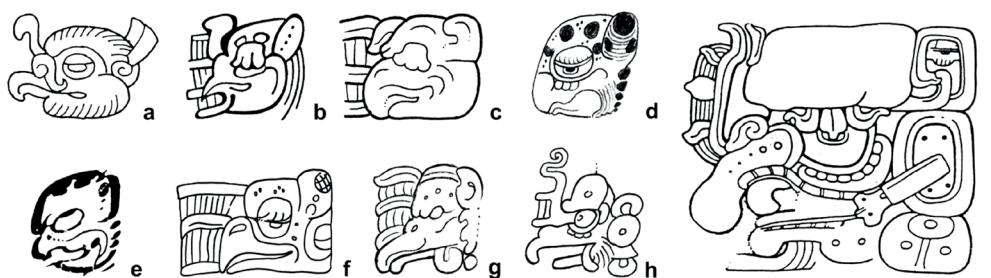


Figure 9. Avian head-variants of CH’EN logograms: a) Bearded Owl (PNK, Dumbarton Oaks Research Library & Collection); b) & c) Bearded Owl with Fasces and trilobate eye (Tikal, Hombre de Tikal & Dos Pilas, Hieroglyphic Stairway 4); d) & e) O’ Bird (PNK, K1183 & K6751); f) O’ Bird with Fasces (Yaxchilan, Structure 21, Stucco); g) Scroll Bird with Fasces (Copan, Stela 2); h) Late avian head-variant with modified Fasces (Dresden Codex); i) Skull with trilobate eye and Fasces (Arroyo de Piedra, Stela 4) (after Helmke 2009: Fig. 2.8).

⁴⁶ The segment “sorcerer’s spirit” may be taken to understand as an “animal spirit companion”.

(‘cormorant’), *mo* (‘macaw’), *muwaan* (‘hawk’), *tz’ikin* (‘type of an eagle’), *tz’unun* (‘hummingbird’), *usij* (‘vulture’), and *yaxun* (‘lovely cotinga’). Tentative readings include *kokaaj* (type of an eagle), while others include birds whose reading we know (such as the “o” bird) but the species are unknown, as well as birds whose reading is unknown but the species can be suggested, such as the Great Blue Heron. Moreover, there are bird signs in the writing system that do not necessarily refer to birds *per se*. These include the avian forms of **AJAW**, **MAM**, **CHAN**, as well as the “tun”, “baktun”, and “k’atun” birds. In addition, when it comes to syllabograms, we know even less of the targeted bird species. For example, although the graphic origin of the avian forms of syllabograms **a**, **o**, **be**, **ki**, **li**, **ti**, and **tzi** all derive from different depictions of birds, we cannot securely identify the lexical origin of any of these signs.

OWL ONOMASTICS

As regards the naming practices in the Maya area, few names incorporate terms for owls. In ancient Maya texts names that have owls in them can be found at Yaxchilan, La Corona, Rio Azul, Xultun, Caracol, and Jaina. It is also worth noticing that names with animal components on them are common around the Maya area but at the same time highly concentrated particularly in the Usumacinta area (Kettunen 2016).

One of the well-known names that has owl characteristic in it is Spearthrower Owl (**Figure 10**). However, in some cases Spearthrower Owl does not look like an owl, nor does the atlatl look like an atlatl. A possible reading of the compound comes from the Tikal Marcador (E3-F3) where the name is written as **ja-tz’o-ma ku?** cueing *Jatz’om Kuh?* as the phonetic rendering of the name (Stuart 2000: 481-490; Nielsen and Helmke 2008: 466-467). The *kuh* ~ *kuj* (rather than *kuy*) is a common word for ‘owl’ in Ch’ol, Tzeltal, and Tzotzil.⁴⁷

Another, and relatively widespread name is the aforementioned *Kuy* (or *Cuy*) found in the records from pre-Columbian era to modern times. Roys (1940: 39) states that:

In the Crónica de Calkini we read of still another kind of name called the coco kaba, or jesting name. No explanation of the term is given, but the present writer is inclined to associate it with certain dramatic organizations which played an important part in the social life of the Maya. [...] Ah Xocnil Ich, the jesting name of another Napue Uc, could mean ‘owl face’ or ‘owl eye.’

The Classic period offers various references to *Kuy* as part of a nominal phrase. On the Cuychen Vase (Helmke *et al.* 2012 and 2015; see Figure 11a) we have *K’ahk’ Uti’ Kuy* or ‘Fire is the Mouth of the Owl’ whereas Yaxchilan Lintel 45 (Figure 11b) has *K’ahk’ Ti’ Kuy* (probably cueing a namesake of the individual named on the Cuychen Vase). Moreover, K3500 (Figure 11c) displays *? Ti’ Kuy* ‘? Mouth Owl’, including an element yet to be deciphered. Besides these, *Kuy* appears as part of the name of a late 7th century La Corona ruler (Stuart *et al.* 2015; see Figure 12), *Chak Ak’ Paat Kuy* or ‘Great/Red Turkey Crested-lizard Owl’.

Yet another candidate for an owl name comes from Tikal (Stelae 21 and 31, roofcomb text of Temple VI, and Hombre de Tikal; see Figure 13): **SAK HIX? MUT** (note also the **CH’EN** owl as “city” on Hombre de Tikal) (Stuart 2007). Furthermore, the name is also present at Teotihuacan (Helmke in press). One candidate for the ‘White Feline Owl’, if a reference to an actual species, is an owl called *mutil balam*, or Mottled Owl (*Ciccaba [Strix] virgata*) (Hunn 1977) in Tzeltal. However, the name could also be a combination of different animal names, a common practice in Mesoamerica.

⁴⁷ Marc Zender (pers. comm., 2017) proposes that the trilobed elements at the four corners of the **ku** sign on Tikal Stela 31 (Left side at L4) might be the feet of iguana **hu**.



Figure 10. Variant spellings of “Spearthrower Owl” (drawings by Christophe Helmke).

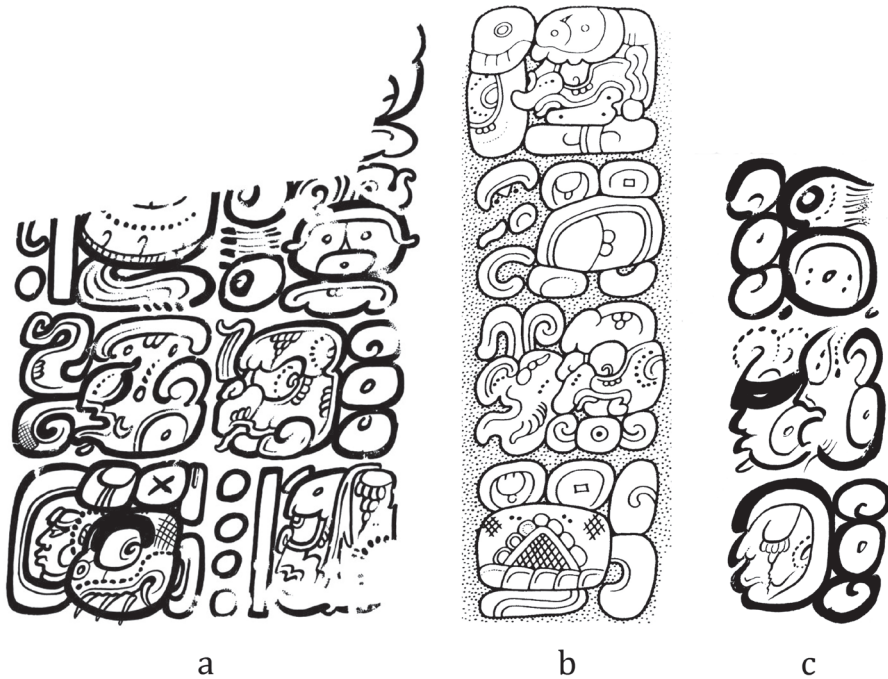


Figure 11. a) Text on the Cuychen vase (Q4-Q7) naming an individual as K'ahk' Uti' Kuy (drawing by Christophe Helmke). b) Yaxchilan Lintel 45 (C1-C4) providing an analogous name (drawing by Ian Graham). c) Part of the nominal phrase on K3500 (drawing by Christophe Helmke).



Figure 12. La Corona, Element 56 (pB1-pA2) naming Chak Ak' Paat Kuy (drawing by Harri Kettunen).



Figure 13. Hombre de Tikal (E6-F6) providing the name of an ancestral figure (Drawing by Harri Kettunen, based on a drawing by René Ozaeta, Rafael Pinelo and Rolando Caal).

FINAL THOUGHTS

As has been noted above, owls appear in Maya beliefs, myth, and folktales as bad omens. In Q'anjobal (Diego de Diego *et al.* 1996), *xotx'* is glossed as 'animal de mal agüero, molestón, insultador', as in the quote *Max oq' jun no xotx' kawilal inna* 'Cerca de mi casa grita un animal de mal agüero'. According to Hunn (1977: 98), birds considered to be an evil omen in the Tenejapa area include, besides owls, also the yellow-tailed oriole (*Icterus mesomelas*), known as *burúho mut* or 'witch bird'. Hunn (1977: 159) also points out that: "All taxa of this complex [owls] are also classified as *hlabtawaneh mut* 'harbinger-of-evil bird'", and adds that "None of the owls is considered edible". As regards the Ch'ol area, Hull and Fergus (2011: 48) note that when the owl cries, it means that someone will die: "If it circles around a house, it means that within 15 days someone who lives in that house will die". Similarly, according to Christenson (2003: 119): "Owls continue to be regarded as heralds of sickness and death by the Quichés, and they are extremely unwelcome anywhere near homes". Such beliefs are widespread in Mesoamerica and reinforced by actual incidents, such as the one recounted by Antonio Cuxil (pers. comm., 2015) of an owl entering a house of a sick relative – with consequent chaos in the house.

As regards the meaning of owls in dreams, Mary Shaw recounts a Rabinal story recorded by John and Alice Brawand in the 1960s, involving owls and eagle owls:

You may dream about an owl. When you are sleeping, the owl passes overhead. What does the owl do? It screeches above you. What kind of sound does the owl make? "Shhhhhhhh!" it says. Ah, now your death is near. What do we do when we hear it? Ah, we quickly prepare a defense. We go and grab a dog and pinch its ears. That is our defense against the owl. But the owl screeches. If we dream about an owl, it is very bad. Soon we will die. Death is very close indeed. To be more specific,

*"You, young man, will die, or you, young lady, will die, or you, woman, will die," declares the owl. This is the meaning of a dream about an owl.*⁴⁸

Shaw (1971: 231-232)

*You may dream about an eagle owl staring at you. Ah, that means a witchdoctor is on the scene. A witchdoctor has already come. He will cast some evil on you, he will cast an evil spell on you. That, then, is what a dream about an eagle owl means.*⁴⁹

Shaw (1971: 482-483)

Additionally, Hull (n.d.: 30) notes that: "Among the Ch'orti' Maya, birds are commonly referred to as *ajba'xmut*, lit. 'sorcerer-birds', since they possess the ability both to foretell and affect the future. So closely are birds and omens associated that the term for "bad omen" is also *ajb'a'xmut*." He adds that "In other cases, some birds have close mythological connections to evil or sorcery, such as many types of owls in many cultures. A third linkage between birds and sorcery lies in the mobility of birds to stealthily approach individuals targeted for a curse. Once transformed into a bird, shamans have a wide range of means available to them to place a curse on an individual, such as simply approaching or flying past a person, creating a dangerous spell through their flight pattern or actions, or cursing them through their vocalized call".

However, although owls are generally perceived as harbingers of death, they are sometimes viewed as auspicious among hunters. Hull and Fergus (2009: 23) note that:

While the Great Horned Owl (Bubo virginianus) is generally thought to be a bird that will bring you bad luck, it is a good sign for hunters. Among the Mopan, the presence of this owl during a hunt is said to signal the presence of game, but that the hunter must move quickly in order to shoot it. The Q'eqchi' of Belize also say that for hunters the cry of the kwarom, or Great Horned Owl, is a sign to hunters that a gibbon is nearby.

This association is not only shared among the Maya or Mesoamerican peoples. Virtanen (2016: 56) notes that:

[...] the Apurinã people [of Brazil] pay careful attention to the sounds and behavior of animals and other nonhumans as they are perceived to produce prognostications of the future. For instance, in the Tumiã indigenous territory it is common knowledge that the call of the caburé owl (musakury) is an important indication that peccaries are nearby; a hunter will therefore remain at home if the owl is silent. Indeed, adult Apurinã pay a lot of attention to the sounds of the animals in general, especially birds, because these sounds tell them about the presence of different types of game and also foretell many other events, such as an impending storm, rain, a forthcoming fight between people, or dangers awaiting in the forest: warning of an attack by jaguars or boas, or

⁴⁸ *Cawachic'aj ri xoch'. Ri xoch'echiri' catwaric pues quic'ow ri xoch'. Si'cu'an ri xoch'? Rire cach'aw can pa awi'. Sa ruch'awibal ri xoch'cu'ano? Shhhhhhhhh cu'an canok. Ah, ya nakaj c'o wi racamic. Sa'ri'ri caka'an ri'oj echiri'cakato? Ah, pues, na jampa ta ri'oj cakachomaj jun katobel. Que'kachapa'lo la tz'i', cakaq'uet la uxiquin. E katobel Ia'chwa ri xoch'. Pero ri xoch'cach'awic, pues cakachic'aj ri xoch'lic na utz taj. Ya cojcamic. Lic xa nakaj chi c'o wi ri camic. Mas utz ya catcamic ala, o ya catcamic ali, o ya catcamic ixok cu'an ri xoch'. Jela'cubi'ij ri wachic'cawachic'aj ri xoch'.*

⁴⁹ *Cawachic'aj ri coy coy catutzutza'lok. Ah, jun aj re winak. Ah itz ri'ya xc'unic. Cucoj jubik'mal chawe, cucoj jubik'poder chawe. Entonse e coy coy Ia'. Bueno.*

that the spirits of certain powerful trees are shooting their lethal arrows at persons moving in their vicinity. A tree may also fall on a person walking along the forest track, or a hunter's gun go off accidentally, or one might step on shamanic invisible stones (this would cause lethal illness) left on a forest path by a master spirit.

Besides the relevance to hunters, owls and other birds foretell the proximity of other animals and beings. Hunn (1977: 98) observes that in the Tenejapa (Tzeltal) area the appearance of the Mottled Owl (*Ciccaba virgata*) referred to also as *mutil balam* ('bird of the jaguar') or *mutil coh [choj]* ('bird of the cougar'), indicates that "these big cats are supposed to be close". Furthermore, various birds forecast a number of different phenomena in the Maya thought. Monika Banach, (pers. comm. 2016) notes that in the Ixil area a bird called *tx'a'l* or *ch'a'l* "notices when a snake or one of a twin brothers converted into a snake is nearby".⁵⁰ Similar accounts are common throughout the Maya area, and owls are not always seen in negative light in these stories.

Romelia Mo Isem (pers. comm., 2017) concurs that owls in the Maya area are not bad as such. If a person happens to be in the habitat of owls or meets one late at night somewhere, it is not considered bad. But if the owl comes close to the houses where people live, it is considered to be a bad thing. The reason why owls live deep in the forest is found in modern Maya stories. Mo Isem (ibid.) relates a story from the Q'eqchi' area where the animals organized a party in the mountains but the owl did not want to go because his clothes were not very pretty. The birds found out about this and asked each of them for a feather to dress the owl. The owl could then participate in the party, but he then left before the end of the party so that he would not have to return the clothes. He then went to a place far away where he could not be found and that is why he still lives deep in the mountains.⁵¹

In sum, owls are elusive, mysterious, and (mostly) nocturnal creatures that are considered to be bad omens and harbingers of death in the Maya area. However, the relationship appears to be somewhat ambiguous, as owls appear in the imagery also outside of these negative connotations. Furthermore, they occur as parts of personal names, and signal, besides destructive powers, also the proximity of good game for hunters.

While this article offered an introduction to the Maya concepts of owls based on modern languages, ancient writings, ethnotaxonomies, and artistic representations, future research on the topic will be extended deeper into various Mesoamerican cultures, traditions, and languages, as well as to areas beyond the Mesoamerican borders.

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⁵⁰ This could be the same bird as the *ch'ar* in the Nebaj area, glossed as 'urraça' or 'tipo de pájaro parecido al zanate' (Cedillo Chel and Ramírez 1999), possibly referring to *Quiscalus mexicanus*.

⁵¹ "Dice que en la montaña los animalitos organizaron una fiesta y el tecolote no quería ir porque su ropa no era muy bonita. Entonces dice, que los pájaros se enterraron y pidieron una pluma a cada uno para vestir al tecolote hasta hacerle un traje. Entonces el tecolote si pudo participar en la fiesta, pero dice que se fue antes de que finalizara la fiesta para no regresar el traje y que se fue a un lugar muy lejano donde no lo encontraran y por eso ahora vive lejos en las profundidades de la montaña."

DICTIONARY ABBREVIATIONS

ALMG: Academia de las Lenguas Mayas de Guatemala

YUK: Barrera Vásquez 1980*

*) Key to sources and abbreviations in Barrera Vásquez (1980):

1. Motul I, maya-español: 16th century
2. Motul II, español-maya: 16th century
3. Diccionario de Viena, español-maya: 17th century
4. Diccionario de San Francisco I, maya-español: 17th century (*1850)
5. Diccionario de San Francisco II, español-maya: 17th century (*1850)
6. Diccionario de Ticul, español-maya: 1690
7. Fray Pedro Beltrán de Santa Rosa: 1746
8. Juan Pío Pérez, Diccionario y correlaciones: 1866-1898
9. Mauricio Swadesh y otros, Diccionario de elementos: 1970
10. Ralph L. Roys, various works: 1931-1957
11. Ermilo Solís Alcalá, Diccionario español-maya: 1949
12. Otto Schumann G., “Dialecto del Petén”: 1971
13. “Maya moderno” (1980)

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