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## TRACKING THE ANCESTRAL PORTUGUESE NAME OF THE OSPREY ACROSS THE ATLANTIC: HINTS FROM LANGUAGE, LITERATURE, HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

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### ABSTRACT

Guincho, the traditional Portuguese name of the osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*) is unique and ancestral. It is found in several sorts of fictional literature from the 16<sup>th</sup> up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in the form of a metaphor born from an old popular proverb. The first time the name appears as the vernacular designation of the osprey is in a 17<sup>th</sup> falconry treatise, and then in old dictionaries and early ornithological monographs and catalogues throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In Portugal, however, the name barely survives, partly due to the species demise in the country during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but mainly because it was gradually replaced by an erudite term in ornithological literature since the middle 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, given the conspicuousness of the species and its nests, the name and its composites are retained in a number of places along the coast. And, following the Portuguese diaspora of the 16<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the term spread to the archipelagos of Madeira, Cape Verde and the Canaries where it impregnated the local vocabulary and again gave the name to many coastal places. Then, it moved from the Canaries to the Spanish speaking areas of the Caribbean riding the mass migration of Canary Islanders to the new colonies. In consequence, the traditional Portuguese name of the osprey is still fully used in several island countries across the Atlantic. The remarkable presence of the ancestral Portuguese name of the osprey in language, literature and geography allows its rehabilitation as the proper popular name of the species and sanctions its legitimacy as a tool for reconstructing the ancient historical ranges of the osprey. Ultimately, revaluing the name is also a matter of cultural preservation, which compliments and enriches the current efforts for the species recovery in Portugal.

KEY-WORDS: *Pandion haliaetus*; Popular name; Portugal; Atlantic; Linguistics; Literature; History; Toponymy.

### INTRODUCTION

“There is no doubt that scientific names are entirely in the hands of scientists, but it seems to be overlooked that popular names are just as completely in the hands of the people. Scientists may advise, but not dictate on this point” (Seton, 1885).

Joining data from linguistics, history and geography to biological sources in an integrative approach may be the best informative guess to unveil past demographic scenarios and former distributions of species (e.g., Clavero *et al.*, 2015). In the above context, historical names of species in particular may gain special relevance as a way to reconstruct lost species ranges by

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tracking them down in the roots of landscape features' names (e.g., Spens, 2007). From a wider perspective, traditional names of notable species have been used by people all over the world to name remarkable natural features of social significance for human geographic communication (Randall, 2001). Toponyms are a powerful source of landscape information (Fagúndez & Izco, 2016) and originate from the need to codify former descriptive references to the shape and nature of the land, its flora and fauna, or forms of human settlement (Assenza, 2014). At the same time, place names closely reflect the relationship between natural features and human history, i.e., between natural and cultural landscapes (Songlin, 2007), thus illustrating the human interaction with the environment (Fagúndez & Izco, 2016).

Phytotoponyms and zootoponyms have been increasingly used as a powerful tool to help reconstruct historical distributions of a large set of species and habitats (e.g., Aybes & Yalden, 1995; Moore, 2002; Yalden, 2002, 2007; Evans *et al.*, 2012). Similar approaches have been applied in studies on past land uses (Conedera *et al.*, 2007), vegetation cover and landscape changes (Sousa & García-Murillo, 2001; Guanghui *et al.*, 2015), and climate change (Sousa *et al.*, 2010).

However, recreating the history of a species where it became extinct long ago is even more constrained due to lack of observational evidence, paucity or even absence of references in scientific or grey literature, and because personal memories do not span longer than a few decades. Some inferences though can be drawn, besides place names, from references to the species in ancient fictional literature (e.g., Queiroz & Soares, 2016). Yet, to allow tracking back a species history without too much uncertainty it is mandatory that its vernacular name is largely unambiguous. The same is valid if we want to assure that using place names as a source of information to reconstruct past distributions of a species is a relatively sound approach. Indeed, to be valuable as research resources, toponyms should obey to the principles of transparency (be interpretable literally, without the need of etymological explanation), analogy (the meaning can be inferred based on the description that the place name suggests), exceptionality (reflects the exceptional characteristics of the place), territorial significance (one geographic aspect of the place stands out, or is relevant, even if not explicitly, with respect to its other features), and persistence (its tendency to endure over time) (Tort i Donada & Reinoso, 2014).

This is the case of the osprey (*Pandion haliaetus*), which was uniquely named as *Guincho* in the Portuguese language, a name unambiguously attributed to

the osprey until nearly the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, beyond which it began to lose ground due to several odd vicissitudes, explained ahead in the text. But because the osprey shows high nest site-fidelity across generations, builds large long-lasting nests positioned in very conspicuous and exposed places (Poole, 1989), it is a species whose nest sites are particularly prone to become notable landmarks acknowledged by human communities.

The osprey is a morphologically distinctive and highly specialised, almost fully piscivorous bird of prey, taxonomically arranged in a family of its own, the Pandionidae (Poole, 1989; Ferguson-Lees & Christie, 2001). Although the species is nearly cosmopolitan, its breeding range is almost entirely Holarctic and Australasian, and only marginally Afrotropical, Neotropical and Indomalayan; these regions are almost entirely used as dispersal and wintering grounds (Ferguson-Lees & Christie, 2001). Whereas northern populations are fully migratory, those from lower latitudes (the Caribbean, Mediterranean, Red Sea and Persian Gulf, Cabo Verde, and Indo-Australasia) tend to be resident or to perform small-scale interbreeding movements (Monti *et al.*, 2015). From the evolutionary perspective, the Pandionidae show a phylogenetically distant basal position relative to its sister family the Accipitridae from which it is estimated to have diverged 24-30 Mya (Seibold & Helbig, 1995). In turn, the origin of *Pandion haliaetus* is estimated at 3 Ma (Monti, 2015) and its intraspecific radiation began at 1.6 Ma during the Early Pleistocene (Monti *et al.*, 2015). Traditionally, four subspecies have been recognized: *P. haliaetus* (Palearctic), *P. carolinensis* (Nearctic), *P. ridgwayi* (Caribbean) and *P. cristatus* (Indo-Australasia) (Ferguson-Lees & Christie, 2001). Recent genetic studies revealed that *Pandion* is structured into four genetic groups representing almost non-overlapping biographical regions. Whereas the Indo-Australasian lineage fully matches *P. cristatus* geographically, *P. ridgwayi* does not differ from the Nearctic *P. carolinensis*, while *P. haliaetus* is actually composed of two haplogroups, one of which a previously overlooked Asian lineage at the eastern end of the Palearctic (Monti *et al.*, 2015). *Pandion* most likely originated in America, from where it colonised the Indo-Australasian region through the Asian Pacific coast, and from Indonesian-Oceania refugia it expanded to eastern Asia and the Western Palearctic (Monti *et al.*, 2015).

The osprey must have been a common breeding bird along the coast of Portugal until the beginning of the 20th century, not only along the tall cliffs of rocky coasts but also in some areas of low lying

shores (Cattry, 1999; Palma, 2001). Still, besides the published ornithological data and direct observation, a first historical reconstruction attempt (Palma, 2001) had to rely widely on other information sources such as from local witnesses, place names either written or mapped, or collected orally in interviews with elderly residents of the sea coast.

The present work aims at: (1) revaluing *guincho* as the Portuguese ancestral popular name of the osprey for its long-standing linguistic, historical and cultural echoes, and thereby reinstating it in modern ornithological nomenclature; and (2) validating *guincho*-related toponyms as a reliable source of information for future reconstructions of the historical distribution of the osprey.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

An extensive search was carried out for the name *guincho* and its meanings and connotations throughout all sorts of old literature, either available printed or online, namely dictionaries, novels, theatre plays, popular proverbs, toponyms, and natural history literature, and as far back as possible.

Additionally, (1) I extensively searched the internet for references to *guincho* and to what it was applied; (2) I questioned foreign ornithologists and other experts about the meaning of the word in the language and toponymy of their own countries, besides counting on my personal field experience in Portugal (Palma, 2001) and Cabo Verde (Palma *et al.*, 2004); and (3) I explored the linguistic and historical literature in an attempt to explain the etymology and wide geographic range of the name.

## RESULTS

### The Portuguese name of the osprey

The first Portuguese reference to *guincho* as the vernacular name of *Pandion haliaetus* appears in a falconry treatise (Ferreira, 1616) of the early 17<sup>th</sup> Century (Fig. 1A), which was reprinted in 1899 with a dedication to the Portuguese monarch King Carlos I, an enthusiastic patron of natural sciences. Chapter 13 is named *Dos Guinchos* “about the ospreys” (Fig. 1B) where the author describes the species roughly as follows:

*“Ospreys are maritime birds, of the size of our kites... They breed on rocks and in trees, and feed on fishes of the*

*sea, which they take by diving and carry in their claws... They are wise birds; when the weather is fine and the sea still they take home in just one day enough fishes for the whole week”.*

The author further explains:

*“Who has [nearby] a nest of these birds while they have young, has plentiful fish to eat for days; this gave rise to the women’s proverb: So-and-so, have not pity of her as she got in such person a “ninho de guincho” [osprey nest, metaphorically meaning a wealthy and providing person]”.* We will see later the relevance of this in literature.

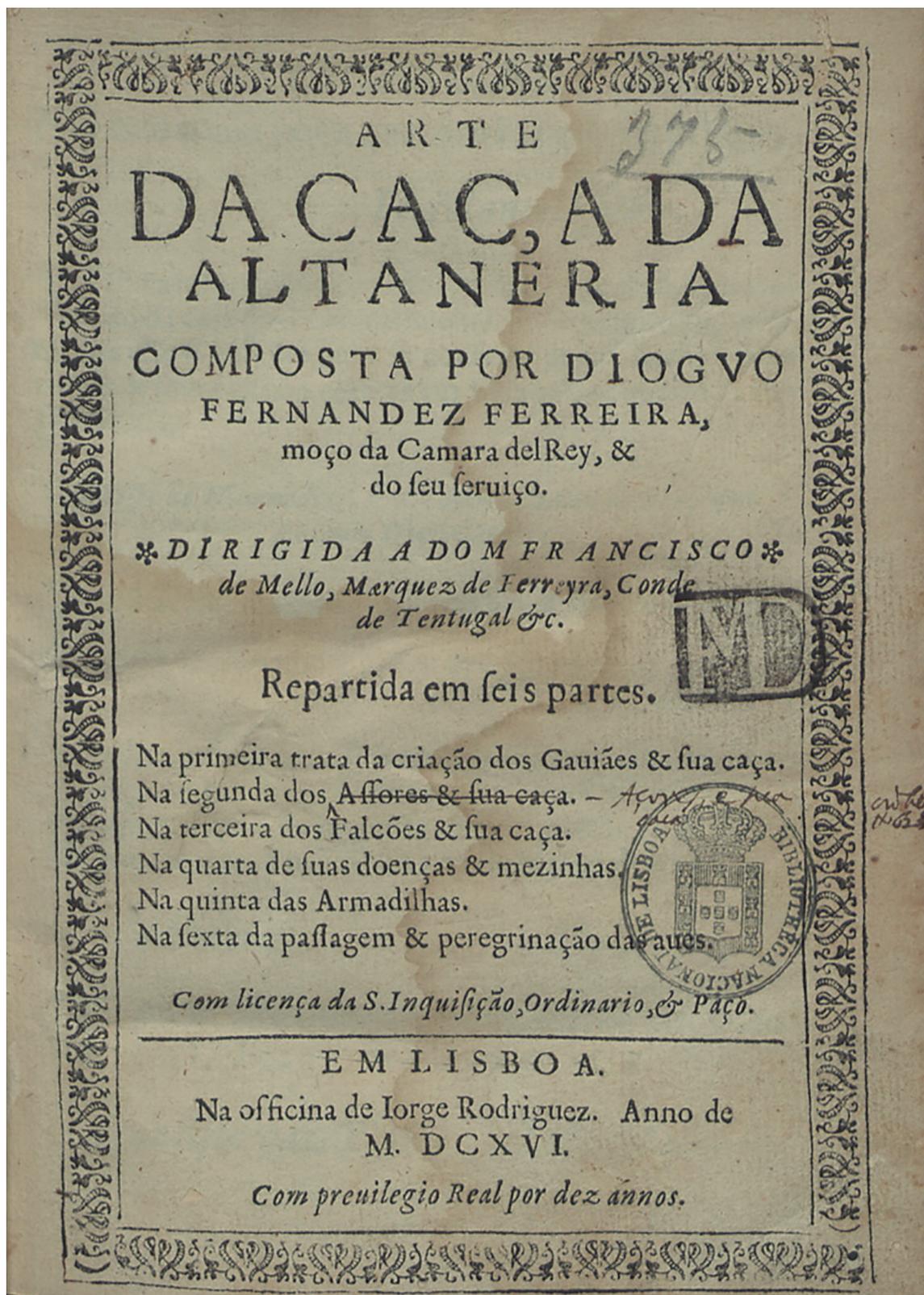
The above designation and description was later transcribed by the priest Raphael Bluteau into his extensive “Portuguese and Latin vocabulary [...]” dedicated to King João V, and which virtually covers all fields of knowledge (Bluteau, 1713).

Nearly over a century later, a similar description appears in a very interesting dictionary exclusively dedicated to a wide range of natural topics, with a highly comprehensive title which can be literally translated as: *Portuguese Dictionary of plants, bushes, woods, trees, four-legged animals, and reptiles, birds, fishes, shell fish, insects, gums, metals, stones, lands, minerals, etc., which the Divine Omnipotence created in the Earthly globe for the use of the living* [mankind] (Monteiro de Carvalho, 1765). Noticeably, this remarkable (and amusing) literary work was dedicated to the Marquis of Pombal, the famous and powerful Secretary of State of King José I who became the “architect” of Lisbon’s restoration and modernisation after the tragic 1755 earthquake that caused massive destruction of the city ten years before (Chester, 2001).

According to Almeida (2016) the word *guincho* may have originated from an Iberian pre-roman Semitic language, possibly from *guiimnse* or *guiâimnse* (phonetical transcriptions) meaning respectively a “falcon that lives off the sea” and a “wild-living animal of the sea”. Whereas interesting and possible, the above hypothesis remains controversial and obviously difficult to corroborate (Xosé-Henrique Costas, philologist, *pers. comm.*).

### *Guincho* in Portuguese literature since the 16<sup>th</sup> century

The *ninho de guincho* metaphor appears in fictional literature much earlier than within the species descriptions of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. To my



**FIGURE 1A:** Title page of the 1616's edition of the falconry treatise *Arte da Caça de Altanería* by Diogo Fernandes Ferreira, which includes a description of the osprey, under the ancestral Portuguese popular name of *guincho*. Source: Biblioteca Nacional de Portugal, Biblioteca Nacional Digital.

## CAPITULO XIII

*Dos Guinchos*

São os guinchos aves maritimas, do corpo de nossos milhanos, de côr sinzentos.

Criam em rochas e em arvores; seu mantimento são peixes do mar, elles os tomam de mergulho e os levam nas unhas, as quaes tem tão grandes como os Gaviões. São aves prudentes; o dia que veem bom e o mar quieto, metem-no em casa (*o mantimento*) trazendo peixes em um dia que bastaria para toda a semana; o que tem o ninho d'estas aves, emquanto elles tem filhos, tem de comer peixe para alguns dias em abastança; d'onde nasceu este rifão das mulheres:

Foão não hajais dó d'ella, que tem em tal pessoa um ninho de guincho.

## CAPITULO XIV

*Das gralhas, corvos e frouvas e pegas*

TODAS estas aves são pretas; a pega differe algum tanto, que tem a barriga branca, mas na voz, talhe e feição são quasi de uma similhaça, porque no grasnar e voar não differem muito.

Não são de comer, porque se mantem de bichos nojosos; são ralés dos Gaviões; de fama, mostradoras de annuncios tristes.

FIGURE 1B: Page with the description of the osprey in the 1899 edition of *Arte da Caça de Altaneria* by Diogo Fernandes Ferreira.

knowledge, it appears for the first time in a 16<sup>th</sup> century popular comedy of manners (*Comédia Eufrosina*: Vasconcellos, 1560), repeatedly re-edited up to 1918. In particular, this play portrays the liberal courting and sexual behaviour of Cariophilo, kind of a Portuguese predecessor of Tirso de Molina's D. Juan. At a certain point (3<sup>rd</sup> Act, 3<sup>rd</sup> Scene), he boasts of being himself a *ninho de guincho* as an asset in his seduction skills.

Despite the fact that the author's exact birthplace remains controversial, most of his life seems to have been spent between Lisbon and Coimbra or Aveiro (Pereira, 2010), that is, in middle coastal Portugal. This suggests that the metaphor and the proverb from which it derives, and used by the author in the play, originated in the northern half of the Portuguese coast. Indeed, according to Figueiredo (1913), the proverb, alluding to a bounteous person or the owner of a bountiful house, is a regionalism of the Minho, i.e., from the northwest of the country. This has implications on our current understanding of the original range of the species along the coast of Portugal, apparently much more extensive than previously assumed by Palma (2001).

The expression *ninho de guincho* reappears in a poem of a controversial satirical poet of the 17<sup>th</sup> century in colonial Brazil, Gregório de Matos (1633/1636-1696) or "Boca do Inferno" meaning hell's mouth. In one of his poems Chronicle of 16<sup>th</sup> Century Bahia's Life – The Good Men, Meritorious People (Matos, 1992) the author writes about his imprisonment condition: despite being accused of being a liar, a rogue, and a thief (but under the command of others, he clarifies) he considered himself instead a *ninho de guincho* "[...] who supported and provided with the sweat of my nails more than ten birds of prey [...]".

*Ninho de guincho* becomes the very title of a book of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century (Pimentel, 1903) a compilation of the author's thoughts about a wide range of issues (Fig. 2). Yet, he clearly ignores what kind of a bird the *guincho* is or to what the expression had been metaphorically applied (i.e., to someone wealthy). In his mind, it is said that someone has found a *ninho de guincho* when he found a hiding place full of varied objects; therefore, the author sees his book as a *ninho de guincho* because he filled it with a variety of subjects.

#### The expansion of the name across other linguistic geographies

The vernacular name *guincho* used to designate the osprey appears not only in Portuguese but also in

the Cape Verdean Creole, as well as in the Canarian and Caribbean Spanish variants. It seems plausible that, being a Portuguese term, the word *guincho* was first spread to Portuguese overseas territories, i.e., the Madeira and Cape Verde archipelagos.

#### Madeira and Porto Santo

Madeira was reportedly colonised during the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries by people of diverse Portuguese origin, chiefly from coastal areas of the country (Albuquerque & Vieira, 1987), most of them from the northwest (Ribeiro, 1955). At those times, the osprey was a widespread and conspicuous breeding bird along most of the Portuguese coast and well known to the people (Palma, 2001; text above), and it is thus likely that the incomers would easily identify the bird in the islands of Madeira and Porto Santo. The name *guincho* was certainly retained long enough for it to be applied to places where the osprey was seen breeding, before the bird became extinct.

#### Cabo Verde

In the case of the Cape Verde, a former Portuguese colony, populated since the middle 15<sup>th</sup> century mainly by Portuguese settlers and West African slaves, the Algarve was presumably the primary geographical origin of the Portuguese colonisers (Ribeiro, 1955), that is, a region where ospreys were at the time common (Palma, 2001) and well known to the residents. Additionally, Madeira (cf., above) was also a source of settlers in Cabo Verde linked with the introduction of sugar cane production (Santos, 1999). Therefore, it is easily conceivable that since their arrival in the archipelago the Portuguese quickly recognized the local ospreys, still plentiful today (Palma *et al.*, 2004), as the same species they knew at home as *guincho*. This designation of the osprey has persisted in the local Creole to the present day without any noticeable change either in its written or spoken forms, with the exception of some local variation in pronunciation.

From my own experience while studying ospreys in the Cape Verde since over a decade (Palma *et al.*, 2004), *guincho* is the only colloquial name of the species in the archipelago, and is regularly spoken by all kinds of social groups, either fishermen and peasants or the middle class and the elites.

#### The Canary Islands

Portuguese people were a notorious presence, as immigrants, in the Canary Islands since these were

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COLLECÇÃO ANTONIO MARIA PEREIRA

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ALBERTO PIMENTEL

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NINHO DE  
GUINCHO



LISBOA  
PARCERIA ANTONIO MARIA PEREIRA  
LIVRARIA-EDITORIA  
*Rua Augusta, 50, 52 e 54*  
1903

**FIGURE 2:** Inner front page of the book entitled *Ninho de Guincho*, published in 1903, whose title alludes to an ancient Portuguese popular proverb, which metaphorically calls *ninho de guincho* to whom like the osprey is a good provider of its home, a wealthy man, thus a “good catch” for women. Source: Internet Archive.

encountered by Europeans, and especially between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries (Pérez Vidal, 1968). Madeiran agriculture was already largely dominated by sugar production in the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and this crop gradually became an economic specialisation of the island (Albuquerque & Vieira, 1987; Magalhães, 2009). For this reason, Madeira was not only the source of the sugar cane introduced to the Canaries but also the origin of those workers recruited for the job by the government of the archipelago, for their expertise in sugar production and transformation (Pérez Vidal, 1968). Thus, many of the Portuguese who settled in or traded with the Canaries during the 16<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> centuries came from Madeira. And because of the intense maritime life occurring in Portugal during that period, also mainland coastal inhabitants such as sailors, fishermen and shipbuilders made a second source of Portuguese immigrants to the Canaries, many of them from the Algarve (Pérez Vidal, 1968).

This led to a strong linguistic influence, especially noted in the remarkable number of words of Portuguese origin still remaining in modern Canarian Spanish, including the seafaring terminology (e.g., Corbella, 1994; Moskalenko, 2013). Therefore, these islanders and continentals were highly likely to take the name *guincho* to the archipelago, and there it remains to designate the osprey, a “kind of fishing eagle” as mentioned by Trapero (1995). The osprey is usually referred as such in the specialised literature about the Canaries wildlife, like e.g., in Machado & Morera (2005). According to Manuel Siverio (*pers. comm.*), *guincho* is the most used vernacular name of the osprey in the Canaries. In contrast, *águila pescadora* (fishing eagle) is the term used in all of continental Spain and its Mediterranean archipelagos.

### The Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico

The Canaries provided most of Spanish speaking immigrants to the islands of the Caribbean. According to Parsons (1983), there was an “almost unbroken current of Canary Islanders to the New World in the nearly five centuries since Columbus” and this was closely linked with the expansion of the sugarcane production and sugar-making technology from the Canaries to the Greater Antilles. About half a million people are estimated to have migrated from the Canaries to the Americas from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, a disproportionate number comparing with their meagre fraction (0.5%) of the Spanish population in that period (Parsons, 1983). Given this strong migration of Canarian Islanders to

Central America it is not surprising that Caribbean Spanish would become close to the variant spoken in the Canaries (Trapero, 1995). Therefore, as Canarian Spanish is so much influenced by Portuguese, it is not surprising that words of Portuguese origin used in the Canaries, including *guincho* (Corrales & Corbella, 2013) were exported into Caribbean Spanish. Indeed, in the Spanish Royal Academy’s *Diccionario de la Lengua Española* (Dictionary of Spanish Language) *guincho* stands for the name of the osprey in the Canaries and Cuba (cf., Real Academia Española, 2014).

According to the Cuban ornithologist Freddy Rodríguez Santana (*pers. comm.*), “the word *guincho* is a linguistic loan from the Canarian Islanders who immigrated to Cuba in past centuries, and is much used above all in those places where Spanish influence is or was higher”, and it appears in the ornithological literature (e.g., Sánchez *et al.*, 2011). Because of the close link between Canarian Spanish and Latin American Spanish (Trapero, 1995) the same name is used for the osprey in other Spanish speaking Caribbean countries such as in Puerto Rico (Raúl Pérez-Rivera, *pers. comm.*), although descriptive names (e.g., *águila de mar*, sea eagle) are also used (e.g., Pérez-Rivera & Bonilla, 1980). *Guincho* is the usual osprey designation in the Dominican Republic as well (e.g., Sociedad Ornitológica de la Hispaniola, 2009) and is even used in Mexico (e.g., Sánchez, 1978), although apparently very uncommonly.

Finally, *guincho* appears as the osprey name in the Isleño dialect used by a small community of descendants of the 18<sup>th</sup> century’s Canary immigrants in St. Bernard Parish near New Orleans, State of Louisiana, USA (Armistead, 1992) among many other words borrowed from the Portuguese via the Canarian Spanish dialect (MacCurdy, 1975; Alayón, 1988).

### Brazil

To my best knowledge, the only reference to *guincho* as a popular name of the osprey in Brazil appears as a short citation in Helmut Sick’s *Ornitologia Brasileira* (Sick, 1997), alongside with *águia-pescadora*, *gavião-caipira* and *gavião-do-mar*. Conversely, the latter designations as well as *águia-pesqueira* and *gavião-pescador* are commonly cited as vernacular names of the osprey in Brazilian ornithological literature (e.g., Vieira, 1936; Ihering, 1968; Santos, 1979; Piacentini *et al.*, 2015).

There may be several reasons why *guincho* is so rarely used for the osprey in Brazil. Actually, it is not used for neither of the other bird species (Fernando Straube, *pers. comm.*). One of the possible reasons

may be that, in contrast with all other regions and countries where this is the only or primary popular designation of the species, the osprey does not occur in Brazil as a breeding bird. Therefore, settlers either failed recognising the bird as the same seen breeding at home or simply it was not acknowledged as noticeable, for the osprey remarkably conspicuous and persistent nest sites were lacking.

A second reason may have been the disuse of the name by settlers due to the fact that from the beginning of colonisation until the mid-18<sup>th</sup> Century the *Língua Geral* (General Language) spoken in colonial Brazil was the Tupi instead of the Portuguese, which only became current language following the ban of the Tupi in 1771 by the colonial authorities (Fernando Straube, *pers. comm.*). This may explain why the Madeiran diaspora to Brazil since the 16<sup>th</sup> Century linked with the sugar cane production (Santos, 1999) was not followed by the spread of the name *guincho* as it seems to have happened in the Canaries and Cabo Verde (see above).

### ***Guincho* as place name in Portugal and beyond**

#### **Portugal southwest and south coasts**

Along the Portuguese rocky coast there are at least 18 place names called *guincho* and as compound or derived designations (see Palma, 2001). Among the composite names we find *Penedo do Guincho* (Osprey Boulder), *Praia do Guincho* (Osprey Beach), *Pedra do Guincho* (Osprey Rock), *Palheiro* or *Leixão do Guincho* (Osprey Sea Stack), and *Ninho do Guincho* (Osprey Nest). One of the two extant “osprey beaches” is an internationally famous beach located north of Lisbon, which most likely took its name from the nearby *Guincho Velho* (Old Osprey) with its rock pinnacles typical of coastal nest sites in the Mediterranean region. The site also lent its root name to the nearby village *Figueira do Guincho* (Osprey Figtree) (Fig. 3). As names possibly derived from the former, we find e.g., *Ponta da Guincheira* suggesting a place frequently visited by ospreys. A few other place names referred in literature (Nunes, 1926; Correia, 1964) such as *Alagoa do Guincho* (Osprey Lagoon), *Serra do Guincho* (Osprey Hills) and *Guinchosos* (likely meaning a place with ospreys) could not be exactly located. Still, both authors are peremptory in attributing the origin of the names to the osprey. Ferreira (1917) also assumes the toponym *Aguincheira* as a contraction of *A Guincheira* meaning a place with abundance of *guinchos*, “a kind of hawks” he explains.

#### **Portugal northwest coast**

Osprey place names seem restricted to the rocky coast from the north of Lisbon south to the coast of western and southwestern Algarve. So far, no related coastal toponymy could be found further north along the coast but it seems likely that the species was once found breeding also in the low lying coastal areas of central and northwest Portugal. One example is the reported breeding of the species by the sandy sea shores of the Leiria district in a centuries-old pinewood until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (Felgueiras, 1919; see Palma, 2001). Also coming in support of the assumption is the fact that the 16<sup>th</sup> century-old or older *ninho de guincho* proverb is considered a local expression of the Minho region in the northwest (Figueiredo, 1913). This makes absolute sense as it seems unlikely that the proverb could get into the literature and theatre if coming from the much underdeveloped and less populated areas far to the South at that time, with which cultural contact by the elites would certainly be at least rare. Furthermore, Ferreira (1616) and other early authors (Bluteau, 1713; Monteiro de Carvalho, 1765) describe the species as breeding both on rocks and in trees. Yet, apart from the coastal Leiria pinewoods, breeding in trees was known only from very few places in the South where the species predominantly ranged along high cliffy shores (Palma, 2001). Much later, Reis Júnior, a field naturalist from the north of Portugal who became the curator of the Porto Zoological Museum during the 1920-1930s (University of Porto, 2015), and who seemingly knew the species first hand, wrote that the osprey preferably breeds on sea stacks “almost always a few meters above the water” (Reis Júnior, 1934). Breeding a few meters above the water clearly does not match the conditions found along the tall cliffs further south. Instead, the description points to the low stacks seen along parts of the coast north of the mouth of the Douro River. Evidently though, the species must have disappeared from the northern low-lying coasts in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century at the latest, and this, coupled with its presumable former rarity in the area, may explain the apparent absence of osprey place names. Yet, inland, at least one place name alludes to an osprey nest site, near the mouth of one of the Douro tributaries, the Varosa River, where a tall cliff by the shore is called *Penedo do Guincho* (Osprey Boulder, or Rock), as cited by Pinho Leal (1882). A recent visit to the area confirmed that the residents still apply that name to the cliff and relate it to a bird species, presumably a raptor that used to breed there in the past. Another boulder, the



**FIGURE 3:** Road sign indicating the small village of *Figueira do Guincho*, meaning Osprey Figtree, located north of Lisbon and close to an old osprey nest site called *Guincho Velho* at the sea shore below. A small stretch of the internationally famous *Praia do Guincho* is visible at the distance.

*Barroco do Guincho* lies not far from the Coa River, also a Douro's tributary.

### **Galicia, Northwest Spain**

Because Galician and Portuguese languages stem from a common trunk (e.g., Areán-García, 2011; Monteagudo, 2012), one could expect that places named *guincho* or likewise would also appear farther north on the coast of Galicia. The official online search engine of place names of the Galician regional government (cf., Xunta de Galicia, 2010) retrieves a few places along the coast named after *guincho* or akin: *O Guincho* and *A Barronca do Guincho* at a cape in Pontevedra province; and *A Guinchoeira* at a cape of A Coruña province. At the latter shoreline, there is also *O Aguiúncho* and *O Coidal do Aguiúncho* that might be related to the foregoing as “aguiúncho” seems to be a generic term used to designate a bird of prey, and could have derived from the Latin *aquilunculu*, meaning small eagle (Cabezas, 1992). Similar coastal names not listed in the cited search engine are

*Guiuncheiro* in Lugo province and a small offshore sea-stack called *Guiuncheiro* to the west-northwest of the island of Arousa (Pontevedra). Here one can also find the *Punta do Aguiúncho*, and in a map of the Xunta de Galicia the adjoining beach is called *Praia do Aguiúncho*. Whereas there is the possibility that *guincho* and similar place names on the coast of Galicia may simple refer to coastal points and promontories, an alternative meaning for the word in Galician, the most likely is that those place names indeed allude to former osprey nest sites like in coastal Portugal (Xosé-Henrique Costas, *pers. comm.*). Still, both in Galicia and Portugal, *guincho* place names appear also further inland suggesting other relationships and so far unresolved meanings.

### **Madeira and Porto Santo**

Along the maritime cliffs of the Madeira archipelago, there are at least 7 place names evoking the osprey, predominantly related to coastal sea stacks, typically the kind of nest sites selected by the species

in the tall rocky coasts of the Mediterranean and Macaronesia (Poole, 1989; Palma, 2001; Palma *et al.*, 2004). Among these there are three *Ilhéu do Guincho* (Osprey Islet) in Madeira and one *Pico do Ninho do Guincho* (Osprey Nest Pinnacle) in Porto Santo (cf., Silva, 1934; Silva & Meneses, 1940). For the latter in particular, such a detailed description is hardly attributable to any other species in the region, despite no written reference to the breeding in Madeira could be found as far back as the 19<sup>th</sup> century, including in specialised literature (Bowdich, 1825; Heineken, 1830; Newton, 1864; Godman, 1872; Hartwig, 1891; Schmitz, 1896a, 1896b, 1908, 1909). Nevertheless, two museum specimens from the extinct Museu do Seminário (Seminary Museum) in Funchal and presently kept at the Funchal Botanical Garden were collected at the same location on the Madeira coast in March 1908 and April 1910, thus suggesting that they possibly belonged to a native population. Apparently, one of these is the same bird shortly mentioned by Sarmento (1948) as carrying two fishes in its talons when shot. At the end of the volume, G.E. Maul includes the species in his systematic list of Madeira's vertebrates, but not as a breeder. Thus, it seems highly likely that the species was already at least nearly extinct in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and toponymy thus remains as the prime clue to the osprey as a former breeder in Madeira and Porto Santo.

### Cape Verde Islands

In the Cape Verde Islands, osprey place names are even more common than in Portugal. Throughout the archipelago at least 27 places are named *guincho* or its derivatives (Palma *et al.*, 2004), and in many of them one can still find occupied nests of the species. Examples are *Ponta do Ninho do Guincho* (Osprey Nest Point), *Tope de Guincho* (Osprey Top), *Monte Guincho* (Osprey Hill), *Baía do Guincho* (Osprey Bay), *Fio do Ninho do Guincho* (Osprey Nest Ridge), and so on.

### Canary Islands

In the Canary Islands, one can easily find *guincho*-like toponymy just looking at maps or searching the web. According to Manuel Siverio (*pers. comm.*) possibly over 160 coastal place names in the archipelago are allusive to the osprey, such as *Nido del Guincho* (Osprey Nest), *Punta del Nido del Guincho* (Osprey Nest Point), *Roque del Guincho* (Osprey Stack), and *Playa del Guincho* (Osprey Beach); some of them are coincidental with presently occupied nest sites and others with historical ones.

### Cuba and the Bahamas

Finally, on the opposite side of the Atlantic, the maps of Cuba (University of Texas Libraries, 1996) also reveal place names called *Punta Guincho* (Osprey Point), *Bahía del Guincho* (Osprey Bay) and *Cayo del Guincho* (Osprey Cay, or Key). Even in the adjacent English-speaking Bahamas, close to the maritime border with Cuba we find a cay called *Guinchos Cay* (Ospreys Cay).

### Vicissitudes of the name *Guincho* in Portuguese ornithology

Until the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the only vernacular name of *Pandion haliaetus* so far known in Portuguese was *guincho* (Ferreira, 1616; Bluteau, 1713; Monteiro de Carvalho, 1765). But in 1878, while preparing a catalogue of the bird specimens of the Zoological Museum of Coimbra University, its director mismatched the vernacular name of the short-toed eagle (*Circaetus gallicus*), naming it *guincho da tainha* despite de fact that “da tainha” means literally “of the mullet” a generic name for fishes of the family Mugilidae. In consequence, he had to apply an erudite alternative name to the osprey – *águia-pesqueira* (fishing eagle) (Giraldes, 1878). The error persisted during 50 years with a new museum director using the same wrong vernacular name for the short-toed eagle on his bird checklist, thence persisting on *águia-pesqueira* for the osprey (Oliveira, 1928).

Shortly after however, Reis Júnior, who was an experienced field ornithologist besides a curator at the Porto University Zoological Museum, in his remarkable work on the birds of Portugal (Reis Júnior, 1934), criticises the rough mistake stressing that “since the 15<sup>th</sup> century the bird called *guincho* was *Pandion haliaetus* and not *Circaetus gallicus*”, and clarifying that while mullet is a common prey of the first, the second is a predator of snakes. He recovers *guincho* as the vernacular name of the osprey, not without quoting a few regional names, besides the “fishing eagle” designation itself.

One would expect that this timely correction would thereafter contribute to recover the original terminology but that did not happen. Nearly 50 years later, Sacarrão & Soares (1979) disregarded Reis Júnior's rectification and brought back the erudite designation of *águia-pesqueira* instead of *guincho* as the “official” name of the osprey into their list of Portuguese vernacular names of European birds. At the same time, the authors named the small black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus*

*ridibundus*) with *guincho-comum* (common “guincho”), which turned out to be an extra obstacle to the rehabilitation of the traditional designation of the osprey.

Notwithstanding, the first time black-headed gulls were called *guincho* was by Reis Júnior (1931) himself, but only as the fourth among five alternative names, with *garrincho* as the primary designation and the others being *mascateira*, *gagosa* and *garragina*. Indeed before that, the species only appears as *gaivotas* a generic name for gull (Giraldes, 1878), or *gaivotas* and the regional names *gagosa* and *chapelbeta* (Oliveira, 1928). Previously, the similar name *guncho* that appears in Bluteau (1713) and Monteiro de Carvalho (1765) might also apply to *C. ridibundus* according to the morphological, ecological and geographical traits depicted. Bearing in mind the close similarity of *guincho* with *garrincho* and *guncho*, it looks like a possibility that the naming of the black-headed gull as *guincho* evolved from one of the two other names or from a mixture of both (by misspelling?). But only with Sacarão & Soares (1979) did it become the sanctioned vernacular name of the species. No matter how controversial the above choices may be, the fact is that they were uncritically adopted thereafter (Costa *et al.*, 2000).

## DISCUSSION

### Revaluing and rehabilitating the name

I have tried to demonstrate that *guincho* is the ancestral Portuguese popular name of the osprey and that its current falling into disuse is primarily the result of scientific inaccuracies and disregard of the name's cultural inferences during the two past centuries. This was compounded by the attribution of the name to another species.

Furthermore, the steady long-term decline of the native breeding osprey population until its complete extirpation at the beginning of the present century made the meaning of the word gradually disappear from the memory of coastal communities. Today, only along the southwest coast of Portugal, the last refuge of the species (Palma, 2001), do the coastal people still readily acknowledge the connotation of the name. Therefore, the likely initial “transparency” (*sensu* Guanghai *et al.*, 2015) of the allusive toponymy was progressively lost. As the authors stress, toponyms can lose their transparency over time because of changes in the original feature that inspired the name, changes in local languages or name distortion during oral transmission. Unfortunately, all this happened in the case of the osprey: the species gradually vanished

as a breeding species; and its ancestral popular name was put in disuse by ornithologists while being given to a different species, whose original names were also lost, possibly because they became corrupted.

An extreme case is the name of the popular *Praia do Guincho* (osprey beach) in the vicinity of Lisbon, whose real meaning is now indecipherable to the general public. In turn, fantasist legends tell us that the beach was named either after the distress neighing of a drowning horse at a cape four kilometres away (many, many years ago), or the anguished cry of a humble 13<sup>th</sup> century maiden fallen in love with a nobleman at the moment he got injured in battle with the Moors (Leite, 1921).

However, the fact that the *guincho* is a word full of linguistic, historical, geographic and literary resonances, and thus culturally remarkable not only in Portugal but also across much of the northern subtropical and tropical Atlantic, makes it fully worthy of rehabilitation.

### Applicability

The widespread use of *guincho* or related names in the coastal toponymy of Portugal, the Macaronesia and parts of the Antilles has a clear potential in recognising the species historical range, as attempted before (Palma, 2001), especially where it had disappeared long ago and no other information is available. This is the case of the Madeira archipelago, the northern coast of Portugal, possibly the Galician coast, and elsewhere.

Therefore, one primary aim of this work was to validate the word *guincho* when used in coastal place names (but not inland, with rare exceptions) as unquestionably pertaining to former breeding sites of *Pandion haliaetus*. This allows osprey toponyms to be used as valid sources in the reconstruction of lost historical distributions across the Portuguese and Spanish speaking areas of the species range. They are also important sources for language historiography (Særheim, 2014). As acknowledged by Fagúndez & Izco (2016), conservation planning should protect nature-related toponyms as both indicators of natural elements and of the cultural legacy; and ultimately they represent an intangible cultural heritage that should also be preserved for the future.

### Cultural and conservation implications

As shown above, resonance across languages, literature, geography, and the history of human

migrations has given to a humble name a cultural significance that should not be overlooked. The name in itself is a mirror of the primary and secondary spreading of the Portuguese lexis, directly or indirectly driven by the Portuguese diaspora across the Atlantic from the 15<sup>th</sup> century onwards. Whenever the immigrants found breeding populations of the same conspicuous coastal bird that they knew at home as *guincho*, like in the case of the Madeira, Canary and Cape Verde archipelagos, they passed the term into the local language and named geographically remarkable nest sites of the species after its traditional name. The same occurred with the Canarian diaspora to the Americas, since the word had previously been borrowed from the Portuguese into their own everyday language.

The cultural, historical and geographic relevance of the ancestral Portuguese name of the osprey could be an added value regarding the species recovery and conservation in Portugal. Native breeding ospreys became extinct in 2003 (Palma, 2001) but between 2011 and 2015 the species was reintroduced by translocation and hacking (Palma *et al.*, 2013). Owing to this and analogous projects in Spain, the osprey is quickly coming back to breed in Iberia, and already resumed nesting in Portugal in 2015. If at the same time its remarkable ancestral name could also be rehabilitated, correcting for the errors and cultural disregard of the past, this could add an extra and attractive envelope to the species recovery in Portugal, thus enhancing public interest and awareness. Hopefully, this study can be a contribution to the preservation and rehabilitation of the ancestral Portuguese name of the osprey and its remarkable Atlantic-wide cultural relevance.

## CONCLUSION

The osprey was singularly named as *guincho* in Portuguese popular language as shown by a popular proverb whose figurative metaphorical sense was inserted into erudite literature since at least the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and where it persisted up to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century though, the name started to fall into disuse due to both the osprey decline and the misnaming of vernacular designations in ornithological nomenclature.

However, during a long period, spanning from the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the name was carried along by Portuguese and Canarian economic migrants across the North Atlantic allowing it to spread out first to Madeira, the Canaries and the Cape Verde, and then to the Caribbean and the Gulf of Mexico. In

the Canaries, Cape Verde, and the Spanish speaking Caribbean countries the name still is the most common popular designation of the osprey.

Meanwhile, the conspicuousness and geographical remarkableness of osprey nest sites yielded a large number of coastal place names in Portugal and across most of the Portuguese, Creole and Spanish speaking North Atlantic archipelagos. This geohistorical legacy has the potential to help reconstruct the historical ranges of the species in the region, given the relatively strong unambiguity of its ancestral popular name.

Given the cultural relevance of the name and its widespread presence across languages and geographies, its rehabilitation is not only fully justified in order to repair the neglect of the past, but also an added-value to the current efforts to reinstate the species as a permanent breeder in Portugal.

## RESUMO

*Guincho, o nome tradicional português de Pandion haliaetus, é um nome ancestral e singular. Surge em diversos tipos de literatura ficcional, desde o século XVI até ao início do século XX, na forma de uma metáfora com origem num antigo provérbio popular. Como designação vernácula da espécie, o nome aparece pela primeira vez num tratado de falcoaria do século XVII e, posteriormente, em antigos dicionários e nas primeiras monografias e catálogos ornitológicos dos séculos XVIII a XX. Mas desapareceu quase totalmente na atualidade, não só devido ao declínio e extinção da espécie durante o século XX, como principalmente por ter sido gradualmente substituído na literatura ornitológica por “águia-pesqueira”, uma designação de origem erudita, a partir de meados do século XIX. Porém, dada a grande conspicuidade da espécie e dos respetivos ninhos, o nome guincho e seus derivativos mantiveram-se até aos dias de hoje num número importante de topónimos litorais. Entretanto, através da diáspora portuguesa dos séculos XVI a XVIII, disseminou-se pelos arquipélagos da Madeira, Cabo Verde e Canárias, tendo infiltrado o léxico local, ao mesmo tempo que intitulava muitos lugares costeiros. Em seguida, transitou das Canárias para as áreas de língua espanhola das Caraíbas, por intermédio da migração em massa dos ilhéus canários para as novas colónias. Em consequência, o nome ancestral português da espécie é ainda hoje amplamente usado de um lado ao outro do Atlântico Norte. A presença notável deste nome na língua, literatura e geografia justifica a sua reabilitação como legítimo nome popular da espécie e valida-o como instrumento para reconstrução de distribuições históricas da espécie, há muito perdidas. Por último, a sua revalorização constitui também um*

*fator de preservação da cultura, que pode acompanhar e enriquecer os correntes esforços de restabelecimento do guincho como reprodutor em Portugal.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Pandion haliaetus*; Nome ancestral; Portugal; Ilhas Atlânticas; Linguística; História; Toponímia; Literatura.

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