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Matthew C. Guebard

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# During the Migration Time: Oral History, Violence, and Identity in the Prehistoric Verde Valley

MATTHEW C. GUEBARD

*National Park Service, Camp Verde, AZ, USA*

[matt\\_guebard@nps.gov](mailto:matt_guebard@nps.gov)

Archaeological data supports Native American oral histories recounting violence, arson, and the abandonment of the Montezuma Castle (AZ O:5:14 [ASM]) and Castle A (AZ O:5:95 [ASM]) dwellings at the end of the fourteenth century. Oral histories provide context for this event by revealing larger patterns resulting in population emigration and the formation of cultural identities in the Verde Valley of central Arizona. The coordinated analysis of archaeological data and oral histories presented in this paper provide an accurate and insightful representation of past events and illustrate a strong connection between contemporary Native American communities and the archaeological sites at Montezuma Castle National Monument.

Los datos arqueológicos respaldan las historias orales de los nativos americanos que narran episodios de violencia, incendios provocados y el abandono de las viviendas del Castillo de Montezuma (AZ O:5:14 [ASM]) y del Castillo A (AZ O:5:95 [ASM]) a finales del siglo catorce. Las historias orales dan un contexto a este suceso al revelar las pautas que provocaron la emigración de los pobladores y la formación de identidades culturales en el Valle Verde. El análisis coordinado de los datos arqueológicos y las historias orales presentadas en este documento hacen una representación precisa y reveladora de eventos pasados e ilustran una fuerte conexión entre los nativos americanos que viven hoy y los yacimientos arqueológicos del Monumento Nacional Castillo de Montezuma.

**KEYWORDS** Apache, Hopi, Yavapai, Cultural identity, Montezuma Castle National Monument, Oral history, Social violence, Southern Sinagua

This paper uses Native American traditional knowledge and archaeological data to interpret events noted in the archaeological record at the Montezuma Castle (AZ O:5:14 [ASM]) and Castle A (AZ O:5:95 [ASM]) sites, located at Montezuma

Castle National Monument. Oral histories presented here are compared with archaeological data suggesting that intentional fire and violence resulted in the abandonment of both dwellings in the late fourteenth century. This paper discusses only one event in the history of the Montezuma Castle village. The implication, however, is that oral histories can provide useful information necessary for inference at a larger scale. The goals of this paper are to address the following statements: (1) archaeological data support oral histories recounting violence at the Castle A site, (2) oral histories provide insight into behavior not evident in the archaeological record at Castle A and Montezuma Castle, and (3) oral histories suggest larger patterns resulting in population emigration and the formation of cultural identities in the fourteenth-century Verde Valley.

## The Verde Valley and Montezuma Castle National Monument

The Montezuma Castle cliff dwelling and Castle A are located in the Verde Valley along Beaver Creek, a tributary of the Verde River (Figure 1). The valley is in a transitional zone below the Mogollon Rim to the north and above the Basin and Range deserts to the south. The Verde River creates broad alluvial terraces and flows around bedrock cliffs and rolling desert foothills as it travels southeast through the valley. Archaeological sites, many consisting of stone masonry pueblos, are situated in caves or on top of buttes and foothills. Structures and associated artifacts represent the Southern Sinagua archaeological culture, specifically the Honanki and Tuzigoot phases (A.D. 1150–1400) as defined by the Museum of Northern Arizona (Breternitz 1960; Colton 1946).

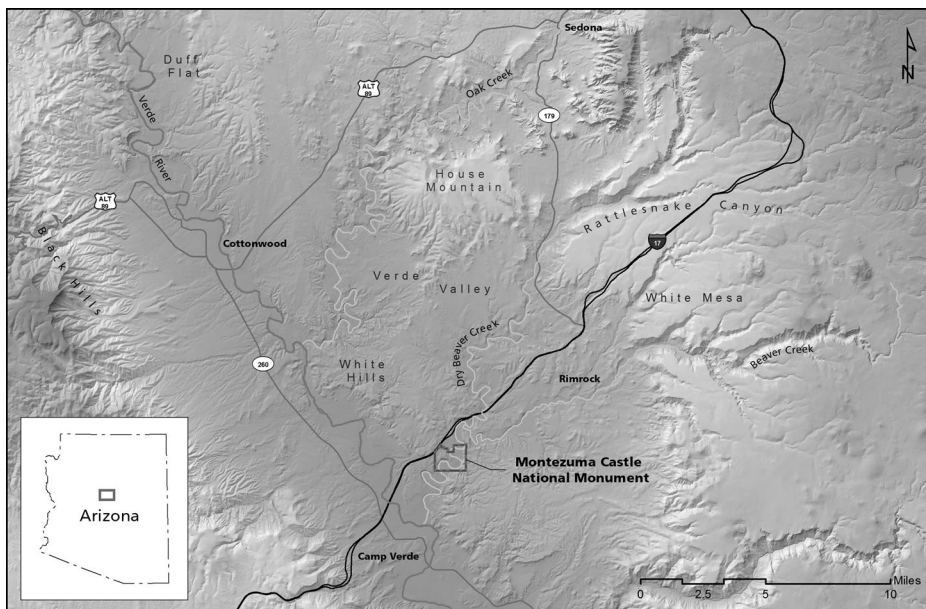


FIGURE 1. Map showing the Verde Valley and the location of Montezuma Castle National Monument.

Montezuma Castle and Castle A were both built during the Honanki phase (A.D. 1150–1300), but construction started perhaps as early as the Camp Verde phase (A.D. 900–1150), according to the radiocarbon dating of wooden architectural elements (Windes and Doleman 2015). Each dwelling was built into an alcove on the banks of Beaver Creek approximately three miles from its confluence with the Verde River. Both sites are part of Montezuma Castle National Monument, which was established in 1906 to specifically protect the Montezuma Castle cliff dwelling (Powers and Pearson 2008; Wells and Anderson 1988). The Montezuma Castle cliff dwelling consists of five architectural stories and 20 well-preserved rooms in an alcove more than 30 meters above Beaver Creek. Approximately 120 meters west of the Montezuma Castle cliff dwelling is Castle A, a dwelling originally consisting of cavates,<sup>†</sup> natural alcoves, and open-air masonry architecture (Figure 2). Roof-beam sockets and wall alignments suggest that Castle A was at least five stories tall and may have consisted of as many as 45 rooms (Jackson and Van Valkenburgh 1954:9; Wells and Anderson 1988:28).

It is important to note that Montezuma Castle and Castle A are part of the same prehistoric village, although each dwelling was assigned a different archaeological site number. In this paper, both sites are referred to collectively as the Montezuma Castle village or by their individual names. Despite their labels, the recent history of each site is very different. The Montezuma Castle cliff dwelling was heavily impacted by looting before the National Park Service acquired it in 1916. As a result, very little is known about the artifacts found within the site. At Castle A, however, an excavation funded with New Deal money provided much of the information available for future study. For this reason, archaeological data reported in this paper primarily originates at Castle A.

Formal investigation of Castle A began in 1927 when George Boundey, a park ranger from Casa Grande Ruins National Monument, began collecting artifacts from the site (Protas 2002:98). Soon thereafter, Boundey complained of being haunted by Castle A's original inhabitants. As he told the park custodian, "I am kept awake by the Old People. They talk to me and I can't sleep and can't rest, so I've got to go" (Jackson 1957:1). Unfortunately, Boundey left little documentation of his work at Castle A.

Civil Works Administration (CWA) funding was acquired six years later to continue work at Castle A. Earl Jackson was hired to excavate the site in December 1933, and Sallie Pierce was hired as laboratory assistant in January 1934 (Bostwick 2006:240; Jackson 1934:3; Jackson and Van Valkenburgh 1954:8; Kaufman 2006:83). Ten local laborers were hired to help with digging. Nine rooms, several large test trenches, and many human burials were excavated. Well-preserved artifacts, including cotton textiles, basketry, and intricate mosaic pendants, were also found (Jackson and Van Valkenburgh 1954; Kent 1954). In addition, Jackson and Pierce were also the first to discover evidence of a catastrophic fire that destroyed the dwelling (Jackson and Van Valkenburgh 1954:49–50):

Castle A fell from the cliff as the result of a great fire which razed the structure from top to bottom. It was at first believed that this fire was the cause for the abandonment of the building; research here has shown this not to be the

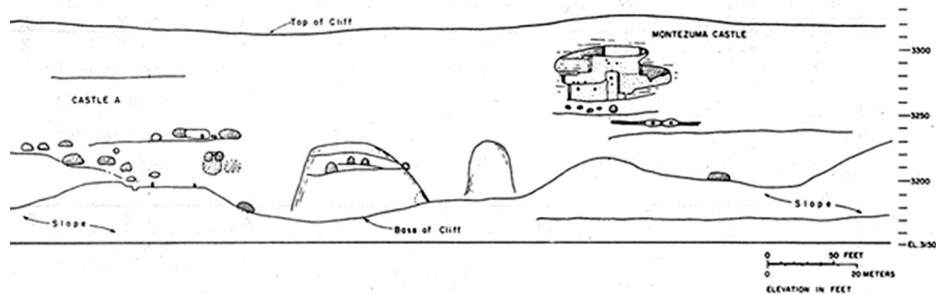


FIGURE 2. Elevation drawing of Montezuma Castle and Castle A (National Park Service 1932).

case. The weight of evidence, as seen in the silt accumulation underneath the charred ceilings, shows the ruin to have been abandoned, perhaps for a considerable time, before the firing occurred.

Jackson and Pierce found abundant archaeological evidence of a large and destructive fire at Castle A. Burned and collapsed roof material was found in seven of nine (78 percent) excavated rooms (Jackson and Van Valkenburgh 1954:9–20). In a recent paper, Guebard (2015) argues that ceramic data, archaeomagnetic dates, and the reanalysis of Jackson and Pierce’s excavation data suggest that a fire destroyed Castle A while it was occupied. Furthermore, osteological data indicate that the fire was also associated with physical violence.

Archaeomagnetic dates for samples collected at Castle A in 2011 and 2013 suggest that the fire occurred in the interval from A.D. 1375 to 1395 (Cox 2011, 2014; Guebard 2015).<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the latest dated diagnostic ceramic sherds originally collected from the site include Jeddito Yellow Ware, Jeddito White Ware, Roosevelt Red Ware, and White Mountain Red Ware, all of which were produced within the date ranges proposed for the fire (Guebard 2015:94). Additionally, de facto refuse deposits described by Jackson and Pierce in at least two rooms suggest that the dwelling was occupied at the time of the fire. Most importantly, osteological evidence collected during the CWA excavation indicates that at least four individuals were killed during the catastrophic Castle A fire. Three skulls with cranial fracturing, cut marks, and singed bone indicate the fire was associated with violence (Guebard 2015:95–96). Similarly, one complete skeleton lying under collapsed and burned roofing was found, further indicating the dwelling was inhabited at the time of the fire (Guebard 2015:95). Taken together, this evidence strongly suggests that Castle A burned in a violent event that occurred during its occupation.

Native American oral histories support archaeological evidence from Castle A and recount a violent attack wherein the dwelling was destroyed by fire. This story also recounts attempts to burn the Montezuma Castle cliff dwelling. If oral histories and archaeological data record the same event at the Montezuma Castle village, then perhaps additional insight can be extracted from a coordinated analysis of the two resources. The use of oral history as a source of research data is not without problems, however, as discussed below.

## Oral History and Historical Accuracy

Many scholars argue that oral history provides a reconstruction of past events and social processes (Anyon et al. 1997; Bernardini 2005; Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006; Lyons 2003; McPherson 2014; Teague 1993; Vansina 1985; Whiteley 2002). Many oral histories consist of mythic, legendary, religious, or historic subtexts that reinforce bonds of ethnic and cultural identity among participants (Malotki 1993; McPherson 2014; Teague 1993). However, several variables impact the historical accuracy of traditional knowledge. Bernardini (2005:22) reports that variability results from “historical veracity of different categories of oral tradition, differences in authority among narrators, information distortion over time, and the influence of contemporary issues on ‘traditional’ accounts”. Similarly, Vansina (1985) argues that oral histories are a complex mixture of past and present events in which storylines are condensed or restructured to include additional cultural information.

Many archaeologists find the inherent variability of oral history concerning, particularly because knowledge is inconsistently curated among tellers, and the anecdotal nature of the story is often more important than details relevant to archaeological research and the chronological organization of events. Mason (2000:263) summarizes this concern by stating that Native American traditional knowledge is “foreign to and independent of the body of axioms, postulates, corollaries, reductive reasoning, canons of evidence, and commitment to testing that unite physics, chemistry, geology, biology, archaeology, etc. into a common, coherent, consistent way of comprehending the world.”

Traditional knowledge is clearly different from recorded Western history and, from an archaeological perspective, is a potentially misleading record of past events. Despite these fundamental differences, oral histories and archaeological data are not irreconcilable. According to Teague (1993:435), oral histories contain a “historical core” comparable to events in the archaeological record. In a groundbreaking article, Teague (1993) argued that oral history is outside the boundary of archaeological methodology but showed convincingly that it can be analyzed in tandem with scientific data. This approach has been useful in developing and discussing complex problem statements and providing insight into social processes not evident in the material culture record (Bernardini 2005; Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006; Lyons 2003; Mason 2000; McPherson 2014; Teague 1993; Whiteley 2002).

### *Oral History as Evidence*

From 2013 to 2014, the National Park Service conducted interviews with members of the Hopi Tribe and the Yavapai–Apache Nation. Separate interviews were conducted with representatives from each tribe in 2013. In 2014, members from both groups participated in a single consultation meeting. All interviewees filled out standard release forms before each session. Interviews were conducted in an informal style in which participants were asked to discuss tribal interpretations of archaeological data collected at Montezuma Castle and Castle A. All interviews were video recorded, and video copies, together with transcriptions, were sent to the tribes

for review and approval. Information deemed inappropriate was edited or redacted as requested.

In June 2013, Guebard interviewed Hopi tribal representatives from the Bearstrap Clan. Bearstrap is one of 30 clans with a migration history that encompasses areas in central and southern Arizona (Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006:98). Members of the Bearstrap Clan specifically trace their ancestral lineage to the people who constructed and occupied Castle A and Montezuma Castle. Additional clans who lived in these dwellings also included Parrot, Bear, Water, Cloud, Bluebird, and Spider (Kralj KenCairn and Randall 2007:38) as well as Butterfly (National Park Service 2013:10).

Floyd Lomakuyvaya, Antelope Priest for the Bearstrap Clan at the village of Songòpavi, makes an annual pilgrimage to Montezuma Castle and Castle A. This trip commemorates the clan's affinity to each site and the central role of the village within the clan's migration history. This history includes a story recounting an attack on Montezuma Castle and Castle A and the narrow escape of inhabitants. The following story was passed to Mr. Lomakuyvaya by his maternal uncle during a visit to the site in 1965 (National Park Service 2013:3):

Well, the way our uncle had explained a lot of things to us when we were down there that one time, he said that they spent some time living in this area...they stayed here for a while and I think what you're asking too is about the fire that went on in there and he said that the way that happened is when they were living here then, you know, they had another tribe came around and tried to, you know, attack them or invade them. So...Uncle was saying...what they did is they locked themselves in their home, you know, I'm talking about the Castle, Montezuma Castle, and he said that they got the ladders and they pulled them up and they just stayed in there and all these invaders were down at the bottom where all the fields were.

According to Lomakuyvaya, some of the village's inhabitants eventually escaped although fires were lit at both Montezuma Castle and Castle A. Lomakuyvaya therefore attributes archaeological evidence of fire at both sites to events related in oral histories. Below, I analyze archaeological evidence in concert with Apache, Hopi, and Yavapai oral histories to build on the argument that Castle A was destroyed in a violent event. This approach provides an accurate and insightful representation of past events and illustrates strong connections between descendant groups and the archaeological sites at Montezuma Castle National Monument.

### ***Oral History as Eyewitness Account***

Hopi oral histories support archaeological evidence for violence at Castle A. Furthermore, oral histories provide insight into associated events not visible in the archaeological record. For instance, ethnographic evidence suggests that raiding is more characteristic of Native American conflict than the siege scenario described by Mr. Lomakuyvaya (LeBlanc 1999:14–17; Wilcox and Haas 1994:235). Ostensibly, a siege-like attack may be supported by Hopi oral histories. The story told by Mr. Lomakuyvaya is from the perspective of someone inside the

Montezuma Castle cliff dwelling. From this vantage, activity around Castle A is visible below.

To successfully burn Castle A, attackers would need to enter the dwelling, where fuel could be strategically positioned. Burned human remains with traumatic injuries, some found inside rooms, suggest that attackers entered the dwelling and that victims were injured or killed immediately before or during the fire (Guebard 2015). Because attackers would not bring bulky and flammable materials with them, considerable time would have been required for gathering, positioning, and lighting fuel. From the perspective of those trapped in the Montezuma Castle cliff dwelling, the time and effort needed to enter and set fire to Castle A might have appeared more as a siege than a quickly executed raid.

No archaeological evidence of fuel loading or the use of pitch to burn rooms at Castle A was reported by Jackson and Pierce. This is not surprising, because fire would have likely destroyed or obscured this evidence. Additionally, looting or excavation with incomplete documentation could have obliterated clues to the cause of the fire. According to Mr. Lomakuyvaya, flaming arrows and cedar bark were used to start fires at Montezuma Castle and Castle A. As he states, “they (attackers) were shooting their arrows with...cedar bark, and shooting it up there with the fire going and that’s how the fire started” (National Park Service 2013:10). To date, only one charred arrow main shaft has been found at Castle A, although its original context is not well understood.<sup>3</sup>

Four rooms inside the Montezuma Castle cliff dwelling also have evidence of burning. Wooden beams within these rooms have deeply charred surfaces on the upward facing side of each beam (Figure 3). One room has clear evidence of burning in place, with a number of charred secondary beams surrounding a central, burned primary beam (Wells and Anderson 1988:197; Windes and Doleman 2015: 6–7). Lomakuyvaya explains these burns as the result of the attack. Early archaeologists, however, interpreted charring as evidence of hot coals dropping from a hearth located on the floor surface above (Pinkley 1928). There is no existing hearth feature on the floor above this ceiling. This area, however, is poorly preserved and a feature, if it existed, is now destroyed. It is therefore unknown if evidence of burning is associated with an accidental ignition, the fire described by Lomakuyvaya, or another, undefined event.

It is unlikely that flaming arrows could be solely responsible for destroying Castle A or for burning wooden beams at Montezuma Castle. If shot from outside the dwellings, many of the locations where these arrows would land were mud mortar, rock masonry, or slab-lined ceilings, making the dwellings nearly impervious to flaming arrows. Furthermore, most flammable materials, like wooden roof beams, are located on the interiors of rooms, which would have been difficult to reach with arrows. In 2006, archaeologists and structural fire experts conducted experiments to investigate evidence for fires at prehistoric pueblo buildings. By constructing and burning replicated pueblo rooms, researchers concluded that destructive fires would likely require large fuel loads within rooms (Icove et al. 2006). Additional research suggests that any form of closed room is difficult to burn completely without fuel (LeBlanc 1999:75). Although the cause of a specific fire may be difficult to prove, Hopi oral histories recount the use of fuels such as shredded bark, kindling, and





FIGURE 3. Original wooden ceiling at the Montezuma Castle cliff dwelling. Note evidence of burning on primary and secondary beams, right of scale card. Photo: M. Guebard.

flammable pitch to intentionally burn Awat'ovi pueblo in the early eighteenth century (LeBlanc 1999:81; Malotki 1993:401; McPherson 2014:46). It is therefore reasonable to conclude that the large fire at Castle A was more likely caused by intentional fuel loading and ignition than flaming arrows. The specific cause of fires in each dwelling cannot be determined for certain but is perhaps less important than the impact of the conflagration on inhabitants and on the development of cultural identities.

### Who Did It?

Oral histories suggest that violence and emigration led to the development of cultural identities in the Verde Valley. Determining who was responsible for the violent event noted at Castle A is a critical issue that may provide clues to prehistoric social and political interactions. When asked who was responsible for attacking Castle A and Montezuma Castle, Hopi participants answered “the Apache” (National Park Service 2013:10). Hopi oral histories recounting attacks by the Apache are common in *Palatkwapi* stories (Lyons 2003:94). *Palatkwapi* refers to an ancestral Hopi site and means the “Red Land of the South”, although its exact location is unclear (Lyons 2003:89; Mindeleff 1891:25). *Palatkwapi* stories typically describe catastrophic events such as natural disasters and social violence as well as the role of migration in the formation of clan identities (Courlander 1971, 1982; Lyons 2003; Nequatewa 1936). This suggests that groups identified as ancestral Apache participated in violence and may hint at larger social processes, particularly the breakup of social cohesion, occurring throughout the Verde Valley.

Oral histories of both the Verde Valley Apache and Yavapai recount the creation of an alliance and the use of physical violence to forcibly remove ancestral Hopi groups from cliff dwellings in the Verde Valley (Gertrude Smith, personal communication 2014; [Ruland-Thorne 1993:14](#); Vincent Randall, personal communication 2013). During an interview in 2013, Apache elder Vincent Randall shared a story detailing alliance formation between ancestral Apache and Yavapai groups during the occupation of cliff dwellings in the Verde Valley. This story was told to Mr. Randall by his maternal grandfather, Harrington Turner, Sr. According to Turner, a disagreement caused by cliff dwellers resulted in alliance formation between the ancestral Yavapai and Apache. The alliance evicted cliff dwellers from the Verde Valley by “burning them out” (Vincent Randall, personal communication 2013).<sup>4</sup>

### ***The Apache?***

The identity of the ancestral Apache as possible attackers depends on the presence of Apache people in the American Southwest by A.D. 1375. Although archaeological hypotheses of nomadic warriors attacking pueblo villages were once widespread, more recent thought suggests that the ancestral Apache did not enter into what is today central Arizona until the sixteenth century ([Herr 2013](#); [LeBlanc 1999](#); [North et al. 2003](#); [Schroeder 1963](#); [Wilcox and Haas 1994](#)). The arguments for a later arrival include a lack of recognizable Apache material culture and the absence of Spanish written accounts describing Apache camps. However, is it possible that ancestral Apache people were in the American Southwest before the sixteenth century?

Apache oral histories recount the emergence of ancestors from a subterranean world through a geological feature identified as Montezuma Well ([Kralj KenCairn and Randall 2007:7](#); Vincent Randall, personal communication 2013). These stories support the tribal belief that Western Apache people in the Verde Valley, known as the *Dil'zbe'e*, have always lived in the area. Oral histories also suggest that the Apache witnessed the Spanish *entradas* through Arizona ([Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006:194](#); [Kralj KenCairn and Randall 2007:6](#)). Similarly, [Goodwin \(1942\)](#) argues that small Apache groups could have easily hidden from Spanish soldiers.

Interestingly, Hopi oral histories tell of Apache nomads passing through the Homol'ovi villages during the occupation of those settlements in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries ([Leigh Kuwanwisiwma, personal communication 2013](#); [National Park Service 2013:11](#)). These stories describe small family groups of Apache hunters and gatherers. According to the Hopi, these small groups eventually continued south on a migration path to the Verde Valley ([Leigh Kuwanwisiwma, personal communication 2013](#)).

Among archaeologists, Western Apache origins within the American Southwest are still widely debated. Apache artifacts and camps are notoriously difficult to identify in the archaeological record, making evidence for their arrival in the American Southwest contentious ([Benaron and Whittlesey 1997](#); [Herr 2013](#); [Seymour 2012a](#)). Still, there is growing support for the appearance of ancestral Apache people before the sixteenth century. [North et al. \(2003:113\)](#) argue that a synthesis of oral history and yet-unrecognized proto-Apachean artifacts may prove that Apache groups interacted

with ancestral Puebloans. Similarly, [Seymour \(2012b\)](#) argues that material culture traits identifying the ancestral Apache must be assessed independently from earlier archaeological notions of Apache ethnogenesis or later ethnographic descriptions of Apache culture. Other researchers have utilized genetic and archaeological data as well as oral history to further develop theories explaining the prehistoric arrival of Athapaskan speakers into the American Southwest ([Magne 2012](#); [Malhi 2012](#); [Seymour 2012b](#)).

### ***The Yavapai?***

The *Yavepés*, or Northeastern Yavapai, consist of groups loosely tied to lands that include the middle Verde Valley ([Benaron and Whittlesey 1997](#); [Kralj KenCairn and Randall 2007](#)). The Yavapai are often associated with prehistoric culture groups on the basis of similarities in artifacts and typological distinctions. These groups are variously referred to as the Hakataya ([Schroeder 1957, 1960](#)), Southern Sinagua ([Pilles 1981](#)), and Patayan ([Euler and Dobyns 1985](#)). Despite their various archaeological labels, ancestral Yavapai groups might have been in the Verde Valley by the beginning of the fourteenth century, as indicated by the presence of Yavapai-style ceramics, projectile points, and other features ([Pilles 2015](#); [Pilles and McKie 1998](#)).

Like the Apache, Yavapai oral histories also recount the emergence of ancestors from Montezuma Well ([Gifford 1936:307](#); [Khera and Mariella 1983:51](#)). This reinforces the tribal belief that ancestral Yavapai people have been in the Verde Valley indefinitely. Similarities in Yavapai and Apache emergence stories attest to a strong cultural connection to the Verde Valley landscape and to each another. Oral histories from both groups also recount an alliance that resulted in violence and the burning of the Montezuma Castle village.

### ***Yavapai and Apache?***

Yavapai groups were first recorded by the Spanish in 1583 and named the *Cruzados*, although confusion between the Yavapai and Apache subsequently occurred ([Benaron and Whittlesey 1997:144](#); [Powers and Pearson 2008:34](#)). Following the arrival of the Spanish, the term Apache was used for all nomadic groups encountered, regardless of language or ethnicity ([Kralj KenCairn and Randall 2007:55](#)). To this day, modern Yavapai and Apache consider themselves separate and distinct people, although differentiating these groups in the archaeological record is difficult and results from a similar material culture created by years of close interaction. As an example, protohistoric Yavapai and Apache sites typically display similar settlement patterns and ceramic assemblages ([Ahlstrom and Roberts 1995](#); [Ferg 1992](#); [Pilles 1981](#); [Wood 1987](#)). Ethnographically, intermarriage and bilingualism among these two groups is well documented in the Verde Valley, although identity is traced through matrilineal bloodlines ([Kralj KenCairn and Randall 2007:56](#)). In a discussion of protohistoric Western Apache and Northeastern Yavapai material culture, [Ferg and Tessman \(1997:277\)](#) succinctly conclude that the umbrella term “Yavapai–Apache” is most appropriate when describing what appears to be the permanently integrated Yavapai and Apache community. Although this conclusion is largely dismissed by the tribal members themselves, it does explain one way that material culture does not reliably differentiate Yavapai and Apache people in the archaeological record.

## Alliance Formation and Prehistoric Identity

Oral histories recount events and processes involved in the formation of cultural identities. Histories from the Apache, Hopi, and Yavapai recount alliances and a multicultural constituency in the Verde Valley. Ethnographic research has shown that cultural and ethnic identity is complex (Duff 2002; Lyons 2003). In this paper, I use the term “identity” frequently and somewhat loosely and intend it to encompass the many ways that the concept may be expressed. In a general sense, identity is a social construct and is therefore multifaceted and mutable. Group identity is also fluid and can be expressed in many different ways and in different social situations (Neuzil 2008). In multicultural and multilingual areas, individuals and groups may express multiple cultural identities interchangeably. For these reasons, modern tribal designations, linguistic groupings, and anthropological categorizations cannot adequately describe prehistoric group or individual identity.

It can be difficult to impose modern tribal designations on prehistoric groups. Oral histories and ethnographic information may provide clues helpful for making these connections. Yavapai oral histories describe the *Ichikiyuka*, identified as the first people to build masonry sites in the Verde Valley (Gifford 1936:252). Kwiatkowski (2004:5) reports, based on statements from Yavapai elder Ted Vaughn, that a relationship between the *Ichikiyuka* and modern Yavapai is implied within the structure of the word. Hopi traditional knowledge supports this conclusion by describing ancestral clans within the Verde Valley as consisting of Hopi and Yavapai people (Leigh Kuwanwisiwma, personal communication 2013). Mr. Lomakuyvaya explains this complicated relationship by stating, “Yavapai at one time mingled with the Supai people, but then actually they were our ancestors, they were with our ancestors at that time but they settled along this area” (National Park Service 2013:24). Yavapai etymology and traditional knowledge suggest that the ancestral Yavapai and Hopi interacted while living in the Verde Valley. Furthermore, these stories suggest that different cultural groups were integrated into a complex system that is difficult for archaeologists to differentiate using material culture.

Ethnographic research shows that Hopi clans are “highly variable in size, organization, and degree of integration” (Bernardini 2005:31). Oral histories also suggest that clan membership consisted of groups from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds (Bernardini 2005:7–8; McPherson 2014:56). Furthermore, enduring cultural similarities between Yavapai and Apache people suggest that the two groups could have participated in a system with shared material culture correlates but distinctive identities. This highlights the complexity of prehistoric identity and the difficulties associated with recognizing distinct prehistoric groups in the archaeological record. In short, it is conceivable that what archaeologists call the Southern Sinagua archaeological culture consisted of ancestral Apache, Hopi, and Yavapai peoples.

### *The Short Term*

Violence at Castle A resulted in short- and long-term impacts that influenced group identity in the prehistoric Verde Valley. Pauketat (2009:256) explains that, “violence has a spatiality that directly impinges on the history of entire

cultural landscapes, memories, and peoples.” In the short term, stories of the violent attack would have moved quickly throughout the valley, instilling an emotional response and reinforcing feelings of group cohesion. Perhaps these feelings caused neighboring villagers to construct defensive features or participate in retaliatory violence. Archaeological descriptions of possible defensive architecture and evidence for violence exist at other sites in the valley but are not yet well understood (Bartlett 1954; Pilles 2015; Pilles and McKie 1998; Wilcox et al. 2001).

According to Hopi oral histories, attacks on the village resulted in the abandonment of Montezuma Castle and Castle A as well as the emigration of the Bearstrap Clan from the Verde Valley. Although the remains of some victims were removed from the rubble and buried, archaeological evidence suggests that Castle A was left to languish as a burned-out ruin. Anthropological studies and ethnographic evidence suggest that Hopi and Apache groups attach historical significance to the landscape and individual places within it (Basso 1996; McPherson 2014:40; Whiteley 2002:411). In this way, the tangible evidence of violent conflict was a strong reminder of the social events that caused the catastrophe.<sup>5</sup>

Oral histories recount that a portion of the prehistoric population in the Verde Valley eventually became modern-day Hopi clan groups. Before reaching the Hopi Mesas, these groups continued to produce distinctive artifacts and architecture, leaving a migration path connecting ancestral and modern people. The migrations of Hopi clan groups are recorded in oral histories and have been studied by numerous archaeologists (Bernardini 2005; Bernardini and Brown 2004; Clark 2001; Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006; Lyons 2003, 2013; Lyons and Clark 2012). Some clans from central Arizona moved north to the villages at Homol’ovi and Anderson Mesa, whereas others moved south (Bernardini 2005; Clark 2001; Lyons 2003). Oral histories are replete with accounts of clans splitting up, reuniting, and reoccupying previously inhabited sites (Bernardini 2005; Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006:101; Lyons 2003). These histories illustrate the complex movement of people across the landscape during the fourteenth century.

Archaeologists have conservatively suggested a Tuzigoot phase (A.D. 1300–1400) population for the Verde Valley of between 3600 and 4600 people (Pilles 2015:109; Wilcox et al. 2001:160). This estimate is based on the total number of rooms in known Tuzigoot phase pueblos and does not account for upland locations with poorly dated plain ware ceramic assemblages. It is widely accepted, however, that Tuzigoot phase pueblo dwellings were abandoned by A.D. 1400. While this emigration could have happened over the span of several decades, it seems unlikely that the entire Verde Valley, an area of abundant water and natural resources, would be completely abandoned. While oral histories suggest that ancestral Hopi clan groups emigrated from the Verde Valley, it is reasonable to assume that a large number of people stayed within the area. This remaining population would be comprised, in part, of ancestral Yavapai and Apache peoples.

### ***The Long-term***

Castle A helped to solidify ancestral group identity by imposing a dramatic example of violence on the populace. The account of this event is only one of several Hopi

migration stories belonging to the *Palatkwapi* genre. These stories include numerous different topics, all involving catastrophic events such as natural disasters and social violence (Courlander 1971:56, 1982:16–32; Lyons 2003:94; Nequatewa 1936:85–102). Hopi scholars suggest that *Palatkwapi* represents a specific period of Hopi history as well as a physical location (Ferguson and Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2006:33). Perhaps it was a time when emigration and violence were common occurrences or were perceived dangers in the everyday life of prehistoric people. This sentiment was expressed by Mr. Lomakuyvaya; when discussing Castle A, he stated, “during the migration time...we have these Apaches invading our people...and so a lot of these kind of invasion just goes on even among each other too just even I heard talk that even our own people sometimes invade one another. It’s part of survival” (National Park Service 2013:14). Hopi oral histories recounting events at the Montezuma Castle village include subtexts involving the formation of clan identities in the face of difficult circumstances. As the above quote illustrates, many stories deal specifically with the survival of clan members and, by extension, the beliefs and traditions they maintain. In this way, survival at Montezuma Castle and Castle A was one step in the physical movement toward the Hopi Mesas and metaphysical movement toward becoming a Hopi clan.

Although *Palatkwapi* is a distinctly Hopi name and concept, it is directly related to the formation of an identity relevant to other ancestral groups in the Verde Valley. According to oral histories, violence and alliance formation also directly impacted ancestral Yavapai and Apache people. As Neuzil (2008:9) states, “Identity is necessary for individuals to understand who they are in relation to those who interact with them, particularly in social situations where notions of identity are challenged.” Perhaps events at Castle A and Montezuma Castle challenged long-held perceptions of group cohesion as represented by the Southern Sinagua concept.

### ***Archaeological Culture Areas and Group Identity***

Cultural and ethnic identities are complex and difficult to decode in the archaeological record. The Southern Sinagua archaeological culture area was created by Harold S. Colton in 1946 to explain broad similarities in material culture found throughout the Verde Valley. These concepts are, by definition, broad and reduce archaeological variability to a few general cultural characteristics such as architecture, ceramics, and mortuary practices (Cordell 1997; Kantner 2004). According to Colton (1946), the Southern Sinagua were defined by the presence of paddle-and-anvil finished ceramics, pueblo-style architecture, and extended inhumation burials.

The Southern Sinagua concept does not fully represent the inherent diversity and complexity within the prehistoric Verde Valley. Oral histories explaining the abandonment of the Montezuma Castle village suggest that the region was home to many different ancestral groups. This idea has been suggested by other archaeologists but remains tenuous (Gladwin and Gladwin 1934; North et al. 2003; Pilles 1981, 2015; Pilles and McKie 1998; Schroeder 1957, 1960). Although numerous studies recognize classificatory differences in architecture and artifacts, the resolution necessary to connect behavior, material culture, and ancestral people in the Verde Valley is not well developed. This is perhaps a result of limited excavation data from prehistoric sites in the area as well as the limited use of traditional knowledge in interpreting archaeological data.

Oral history provides important evidence for understanding past events, but creating meaningful definitions for ancestral groups on the basis of material culture is difficult. Many researchers argue that it is the production, as opposed to the acquisition and use, of distinctive artifacts and architecture that represent group identity (Bernardini 2005; Clark 2001; Lyons 2003; Lyons and Clark 2012). This may help explain how groups with separate cultural or ethnic identities, all using similar artifacts, could erroneously be defined as only one distinct archaeological culture. Future research and analysis may provide guidance for understanding and differentiating ethnic and cultural diversity in the prehistoric Verde Valley.

### Conclusions: During The Migration Time

At Castle A, archaeological evidence for violence is tied to specific oral histories recounting social stress and emigration. Specifically, these stories provide a witnessed account of an event identified in the archaeological record and establish a possible motivation for violent behavior. In this way, research at Montezuma Castle and Castle A shows that Native American traditional knowledge can be used to tentatively interpret specific events using information that would not be available through the analysis of material culture.

Oral histories also provide a forum for hypothesizing about social interaction and the development of cultural identities at a larger scale. Apache, Hopi, and Yavapai oral histories suggest that the Verde Valley was a multicultural area, and that events leading to violent conflict at Castle A may have resulted from a larger breakdown of social cohesion. The argument that ancestral Apache and Yavapai people contributed to prehistoric events in the Verde Valley will undoubtedly be challenged by other archaeologists. From an archaeological perspective, oral history alone cannot fully account for the presence of ancestral groups in the area. The current absence of evidence supporting the presence of these groups, however, does not constitute clear evidence of their absence. Future archaeological work in the area will determine the historical accuracy of the traditional knowledge presented here.

It is also clear that prehistoric identity does not conform readily to archaeological culture-area models or modern tribal designations. Oral history can provide insight into social interactions that may not be apparent in the archaeological record and suggest possible explanations for the development and maintenance of prehistoric cultural identities. On this note, oral histories do not depict Apache, Hopi, or Yavapai people per se, but rather, they depict the ancestors and accompanying stories which eventually came to define these modern groups. As with many other events in the histories of each group, events at Montezuma Castle and Castle A set the course for the formation of modern tribal identities.

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## Notes

- 1 Cavates are culturally modified alcoves and architectural spaces hollowed out of bedrock or other geologic layers. In the Verde Valley, cavates are carved into the soft Verde Formation limestone. These spaces comprise storage and habitation rooms.
- 2 Two archaeomagnetic sets consisting of 10 samples each were analyzed by the Archaeomagnetic Dating Laboratory at the New Mexico Office of Archaeological Studies in 2011 and 2013. The 2011 set (ADL 1353) produced three date ranges compared with the Wolfman Virtual Geomagnetic Pole (VGP); A.D. 945–1020, A.D. 1330–1365, A.D. 1375–1415. The 2013 set (ADL 1367) produced one date range compared with the Wolfman VGP; A.D. 1370–1395. For more information on sampling methods and results, see [Guebard 2015](#).
- 3 Accession MOCA-00057, Catalog Number 1499 was originally collected from Castle A by George Boundey in 1927. It is now located at the Western Archeological and Conservation Center in Tucson, Arizona.
- 4 A similar story explains the abandonment of the Tonto National Monument cliff dwellings in Roosevelt, Arizona. This story recounts a similar conflict in which cliff dwellers were forced to emigrate from the area by the ancestral Apache. For more information, see [Goodwin \(1942:62\)](#).
- 5 It is important to note that the violent event described in this paper does not necessarily imply warfare throughout the valley. The events at Montezuma Castle and Castle A may have created a heightened awareness or fear of social violence. Perhaps this was a catalyst for additional emigration from the Verde Valley.

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