The Kwapa people are the river. Our whole life was based on the river. By that I mean our food, shelter, and beliefs, since before the arrival of the Spaniards. When you take the river, the trees and the woods away, I have no identity. I have nowhere to go. If the river stops flowing, we will no longer exist.”

INTRODUCTION

These maps are the result of a participatory process involving the three Kwapa communities in Sonora, Mexico, El Centro, California, and Yuma, Arizona, as well as mapping experts from INEGI (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía, and Informática) from the Universidad de Baja California and the autonomous cultural institution Cosmocultural Observatories. The goal is to present a precise inventory of traditional knowledge and to increase the awareness of the Kwapa people of the importance of their cultural landscapes, and to increase the institutional capacity of the Kwapa to protect and preserve their traditional landscapes.

The above graphic mapping process included workshops that covered the history of the river, the first contact with Spanish colonialists in the 16th century and the history of mapping of the region, and identified key cultural and traditional features of the Kwapa landscape. These workshop findings were followed by field visits to various parts of the El Mayor, including the traditional Kwapa community of El Mayor, to identify key cultural landscapes and to assess the importance of the river in their local identity. The maps were created using a GIS and an open-source mapping tool. The mapping team also interviewed key informants about the region, resulting in a detailed understanding of its significance for the Kwapa people and their way of life.

The Kwapa community, known as the Cucapá in Mexico and the Cocomap in the United States, is a traditional indigenous group that has lived along the Colorado River for several centuries. They are known for their knowledge of the river and its ecosystem, and for their traditional practices such as collecting and using water for food and other purposes.

The Colorado River Delta, which is located in Baja California, Mexico, is a crucial part of the river’s ecosystem. It supports a diverse range of wildlife, including birds, fish, and other aquatic species. It is also an important source of water for irrigation and human use.

The importance of the Colorado River Delta is highlighted in the maps, which show the key features of the region, including the river, the delta, and the surrounding wetlands. The maps also show the traditional Kwapa communities and their cultural landscapes.

The goal of the maps is to promote the conservation of the traditional landscapes and cultural knowledge of the Kwapa community. It is hoped that the maps will raise awareness of the importance of the river and its ecosystem, and that they will help to promote the protection and preservation of the traditional landscapes.

IMPORTANCE OF THE REGION

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T H E C O L O R A D O R I V E R D E L T A

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**History**

The ancestors of the Kwapa are believed to have originated in the Colorado River Delta region sometime between 1500 and 1600 AD. The migration to modern-day Mexico is thought to have been caused by the rapid rise of lake levels in the 19th century, which led to the abandonment of their ancestral lands. The Kwapa are believed to be descendants of the indigenous peoples of the Colorado River Delta, and their culture is deeply intertwined with the river and its ecosystem.

**Energy**

The river was an integral part of their cultural and spiritual life. According to local legends, the river was a source of spiritual power that provided energy and sustenance for the Kwapa. The river was also a source of livelihood, with fishing being a major activity. The river's energy was believed to be a manifestation of the spiritual power of the river gods and goddesses.

**Fishing**

The river was a vital resource for the Kwapa, providing them with food and sustenance. They were skilled fishermen, using a variety of techniques to catch fish, including netting, spearing, and hook and line fishing. They also harvested other aquatic animals, such as shrimps and crabs, using traditional methods.

**Cultural Expressions**

The Kwapa have a rich cultural heritage, with traditions that have been passed down through generations. They have a unique language, traditional clothing, and a rich oral tradition, including chants and songs. The Annual Kwapa Festival brings together the three communities and celebrates Kwapa culture with traditional chants and dances.

**Adaptation to Modern Life**

The river's flow has been altered by damming and diversions, which has affected the Kwapa's way of life. They have had to adapt to modern life while still maintaining their cultural practices. They continue to fish, gather traditional foods, and celebrate their cultural heritage through festivals and traditions.

**Creation**

The river was a source of water and sustenance for the Kwapa, and their cultural practices were closely tied to the river's flow. The river was a symbol of spiritual power and was revered by the Kwapa. The river's energy was believed to be a manifestation of the spiritual power of the river gods and goddesses.

**Traditional Chants**

The Kwapa have a rich oral tradition, including traditional chants and songs. These chants were used in various social and cultural contexts, such as ceremonies, dances, and storytelling. They were passed down through generations and are an important part of the Kwapa's cultural heritage.

**Modern Life**

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