Colorado River Valley
Native Americans

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Settlements

Red = Yuma/Quechan: “kwuh-tsan,” meaning “those who descended” (preferred)
Purple = Mohave
Blue = Colorado River

- very little rain
- hot summers
- mild winters
- high ground during flood season - comes from Rocky Mountains
The Mojave’s had the largest mass of clan members. Because of this, they were in three subgroups.

- 1770: 3,000 people
- 1872: 4,000 people
- 1910: 1,050 people
  - The population decreased due to disease, and poverty that resulted from U.S. suppression
  - Over the years, these numbers have increased at a 500-member-stable rate
Language

- The Mojaves spoke the local language, Yuman
  - Yuman being part of the Hokan Siovan dialect
Gender & Age-Based Roles

MEN
Men cleared land areas for planting to take place.

- They were in charge of making houses, weapons, tools, clothes, skin, and pottery.

Men were the ones who hunted and fished.

Men were always the ones to be titled with leadership roles.

- All tribes were patrilineal.
WOMEN

- Women took on harvesting, wild food collecting, food preparation, basket making, and doll making.
- They weren’t very respected from a religious point-of-view; however, they held a strong image in everyday life.

BOTH MEN & WOMEN took part in planting duties.
CHILDREN

- Kids were allowed free rein in regards to their sexual desires. This was viewed as healthy.
- Girls were forbidden when they first began their menstrual cycle.
- Land was inherited by the male children. Nevertheless, girls were allowed to do the same; they just never did.
Political Organization

- Loosely organized into three regional groupings or bands, each composed of several local groups.
- A head chief, whose position was inherited but he exerted little authority.
- Leaders
  1. Religious leaders who were the managers of entertainment and festivals,
  2. Shamans, each of whom gained prominence and influence through dreaming.
  3. Below the head chief were sub-chiefs of the various regional bands and, below them, local group leaders who gained influence through dreaming and demonstration of oratorical skills.
Social Organization

- Mohave settlements constituted local groups or neighborhoods (2,000-3,000)
- The cores of which were patrimonial and biological extended families.
- Women occupied a relatively high status in day-to-day life, but in the religious realm they held a distinctly subordinate position.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4ZtQOh1z_sk
Mohave Tribe Homes

- Permanent homes must be located above flood level
- Made out of crude brush and thatched
- They were clustered tightly together in very small villages
In each village...

- There was one teepee
- It was 30 ft high by 25 ft across
- It was made out of wood poles that were fastened at a point at the top for structure and then the sides were thatched into a cone shape
- There was no chimney- smoke filtered through the holes made by thatching
- There was one low entrance
- When it was cold, the entire village would sleep around the walls
large village teepee
Quechan

- They were nomadic because of the floods of the Colorado River.
- Along the river, during the late spring to fall, they lived in a log-and-pole, dome-shaped arroweed shelters covered in sand.
- They were 20-by-25 ft and had a rectangular base.
- They lived in small settlements of about 100 people, divided into groups of 25.
- The door always faced south to keep cool and the cooler land near the river was a type of air-conditioner.
Mohave tools

- They used bows and arrows to hunt game that were made out of Honey Mesquite trees (they did not use a lot of bone)
- Their arrowheads were made of stone and glued with pinyon pine resin.
- Nets and quail traps were made from Joshua tree fibers and they would fish with these.
- Joshua trees were used to make sandals.
- They used a Metate, which is like a mortar and pestle, but wide and flat and used to grind mesquite beans or pinyon pine nuts. The more it was used, the better it became because it would create a well to put the nuts and beans.
- They would hollow out the barrel cacti to cook or store food.
- Baskets were made from Pinyon Pine needles and arrowweed.
- They did not build boats, but occasionally they would make rafts.
- They made pottery out of clay found near the river.
Quechan tools

- They caught salmon with nets made of Joshua tree fibers
- In order to irrigate crops they would dig ditches from the lakes left after the flooding to their crops
- They used bows and arrows to hunt game and fight
- They made pottery out of clay found by the river and used them to hold nuts and beans
- They made shields of rawhide with handles on the back with abstract shapes painted on them
Mohave and Yuma/Quechan Trade

- Trade was done between Mohave and Quenchen and also between the east and the west of them
- They had scarce resources so they would trade with coastal tribes (Chumash)

- Traded:
  - animal skins
  - clay pots
  - crops for shell beads and other food sources

- Quechan received blankets from the Hopi and Navajo

- Traded agricultural products with tribes near the Gulf of California and Pacific Ocean for shells and feathers

- Yuma/Quechan grew mostly wheat and traded with the Mohave
Religious Beliefs, Values, Perspectives

- **Yuma/Quechan:**
- Both tribes believed their knowledge were based on dreaming
  - Kukumat 1st man who bestowed the dream power
  - Dream Power: Successful Leaders, cures, warriors, and ritual specialties
- **Major ceremony** was the Kar’`uk - honor the memory of deceased tribal members
  - late nineteenth/early twentieth century, carved wooden images of deceased along with new clothing laid out as an offering to the spirits of the dead
  - Dead and afterlife: would believe that the souls would pass through four layers (The land of the dead, far to the south, a land of plenty and happiness, best time enjoyed by those who killed in battle)
  - Body is usually cremated
- **Medicine:**
  - Blowing of smoke and massaging the patient also followed by sucking out the intrusive substance
Mohave

- Happy hunting
- departed souls could visit the earth through eyes of a certain animals
  (eyes of a snake, small lizards, bobcats, mountain lions, coyotes)

- Funerals:
  - Funeral feasts, usually cooked the horse it was said that eating the horse would accompany the dead man in happy hunting ground
  - they would throw gifts into the funeral pyre so that it would be for their use in their future life

- Dancing

- Dreams:
  - Dreams were the source of courage, knowledge, skills, success in love and war, and shamanistic power
  - two types of dreams, omen dreams - foretold the future and great dreams - source of power
The Yuma Tribe Food

The most popular food the Yuma Tribe planted and harvested were melons, corn, beans, and pumpkins. Crops that grew abundantly along the river were beans, wildgrass seeds, and tobacco. Game was not abundant where the Yumans lived, in the form of deer, antelope, rabbits, so they caught salmon due to the vast amounts of fish reproducing at certain times in the year.
Quechan Food

Along the river, the Quechan tribe grew all different varieties of seeds, and several kinds of cactus with edible fruits. The beanlike pods of the mesquite plant were pounded and crushed so that the pulp could be removed. The pulp was dried and ground into flour, which was mixed with water to make cakes.
Clothing

Mohave and Quechan

Women: Skirts made from the inner bark of willow trees which they pounded until soft.

Men: Usually without clothes, but sometimes wore girdles.

Children: Usually no clothes

Everyone: If cold, they wore robes.

Some were made from rabbit skin.
Body Adornments/ Face designs

Men wore beads and shells in their ears and nose. Men and Women painted designs on their faces that were kept there for months. Plants were used to make the colors. They had red, yellow, green, black, and white.

The paint also protected them from the sun.
They would roll their hair into long strands that looked almost like dreadlocks.

Hair was usually long. They used a reddish mud and sap from willow trees to treat their hair.
Mojave Petroglyphs

Picture Canyon, Dead Mtns

- 6 miles NW of Needles, CA
- Jedediah Smith and fur trappers found site near a spring in 1826
- Mostly geometric designs, some stick figures and bighorn sheep
- “Grapevine Style” matches designs in nearby Grapevine Cyn, NV
Yuman/Quechan Petroglyphs

Mule Tank Spring

- Trail 15 miles SW of Blythe, CA
- Mostly geometric designs, some figures including female shaman
- Evidence of repecking, and designs drawn on top of others
- Designs attributed to both Quechan and Chemehuevi tribes
Geoglyphs

Blythe Intaglions

- Site 15 miles north of Blythe, CA
- Figures include man, and animal believed to be a mountain lion
- One of about 60 sites in region, with a total of maybe 200 geoglyph designs
- Largest figure in the Colorado River region is 171 feet in length
Geoglyphs

Needles Intaglios

- Kokopelli flute dancer, foot, along with other designs
- Designs not visible even from hills, rediscovered by pilot in 1932
- Colorado River region geoglyphs estimated from 900 CE - 1200 BCE
- Sites currently threatened by solar energy projects
Fisherman Intaglio

- Site located near Quartzsite, NV east of Blythe and the Colorado River

- Fisherman may represent the God Kumastamo (or Mastamho), one of the twins in the Mojave creation myth, who “thrust a spear into the ground to make the mighty Colorado River flow.”