

# Clarification of the California Wintu Northern Boundary

Various views: 1877-2007

## Alfred L. Kroeber's map

Drawing lines on the map of California to divide Indian tribal territory relied heavily on interpretation. Based on the theoretical background of the scholar – linguistics, ethnography, archaeology, or ecology – the boundaries won't be the same and the results may be subject to lively debate. Interestingly, the research, descriptions, and debates were by and among the scholars. The Indian tribes being studied, to the extent they did still exist, may have been consulted for reference, but were not generally consulted as expert authorities.

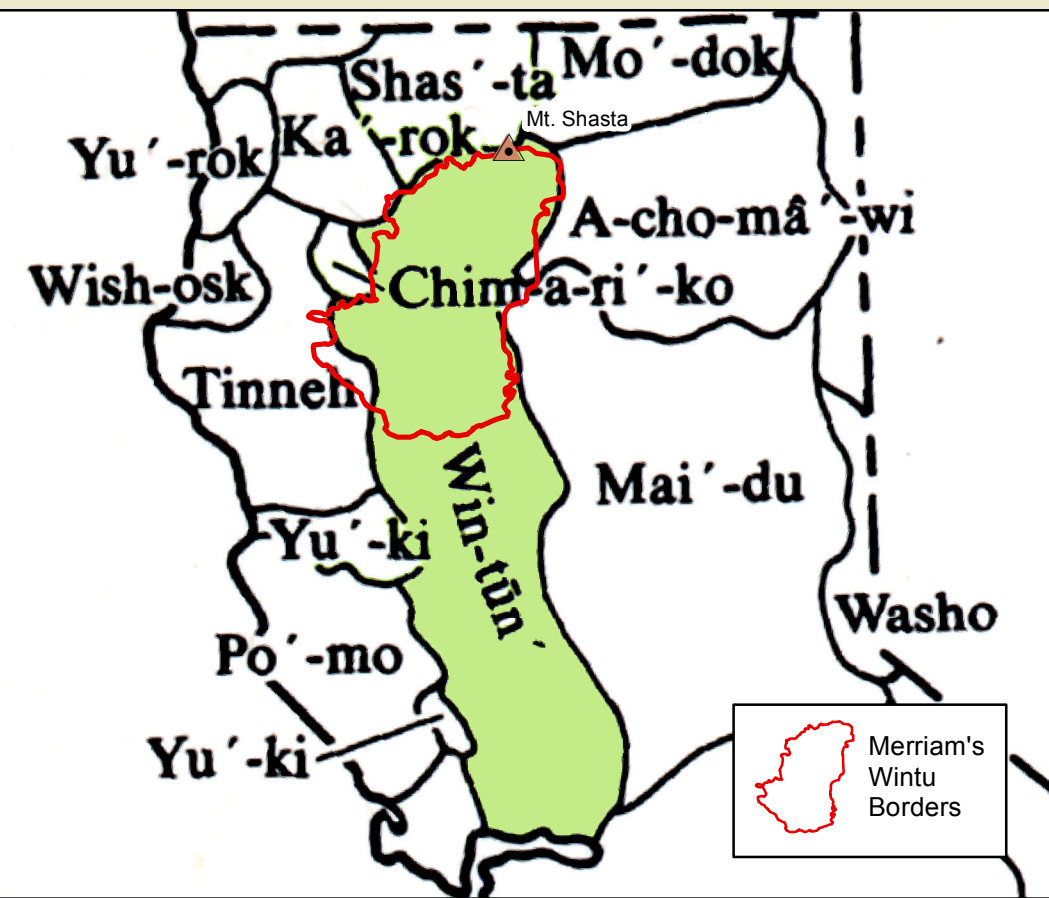
Alfred L. Kroeber (1876 – 1960) and C. Hart Merriam (1855 – 1942) were professional contemporaries. Both devoted much of their careers to studying Indian issues. Kroeber's *Handbook of the Indians of California* was first published in 1925; he introduced it as "the outcome of 17 years of acquaintance and occupation with the Indians of California." The data came primarily from ethnographers variously affiliated with the American Museum of Natural History, University of California, and Bureau of American Ethnology of the Smithsonian. Kroeber had worked closely with linguist Roland Dixon to establish the language families. C. Hart Merriam, from about 1902 to 1935, spent five to six months each year doing field work with various Native American tribes in western United States, including the Wintu. However, most of his research on Indians was published posthumously.

Prior to Kroeber's 1925 *Handbook*, Stephen Powers' 1877 report and map, *Tribes of California*, had been the only systematic study of California Indians. Where Powers' map didn't correspond to Kroeber's interpretation, Kroeber explained the differences were due to advances in the field of linguistics – his specialty. In Kroeber's writing about the Hoka family, he includes six Shastan language groups, including the Shasta Tribe to the north of the Wintu and the Achumawi to the east. Kroeber wrote in the 1925 *Handbook* that little was known about the Wintu, but he considered them valley people who had made their way into the hills. By the 1930s the Okwanuchu were extinct, if they ever existed. However, the Okwanuchu area provides a logical place on the map for a linguistic bridge between the Shasta and Achumawi. Differing in his belief about the northern Wintu boundary from Powers, Kroeber argued strongly that the extinct Okwanuchu tribe was part of the Shasta tribe. Kroeber's authority as an Indian linguistic expert, his widely published writings, and his position at UC Berkeley as both Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Museum of Anthropology gave his version of the Wintu boundary credence; it was cited and reproduced by subsequent authors. Merriam disagreed with Kroeber, but his work describing the Northern Wintu boundaries went unpublished until 1955, in *Studies of California Indians*.

The maps below document changes in Wintu tribal boundaries from Powers to Kroeber. Kroeber's version has been widely reproduced in subsequent publications, especially by those who worked closely with the staff and researchers of UC Berkeley. The maps below have been scanned and georeferenced and the Wintu territory was colorized to make it easier to see. Merriam's boundary, outlined in red, was added for comparison. Mount Shasta was added for reference.

Powers' and Kroeber's maps were originally drawn at a scale of ca. 1:1,810,000.

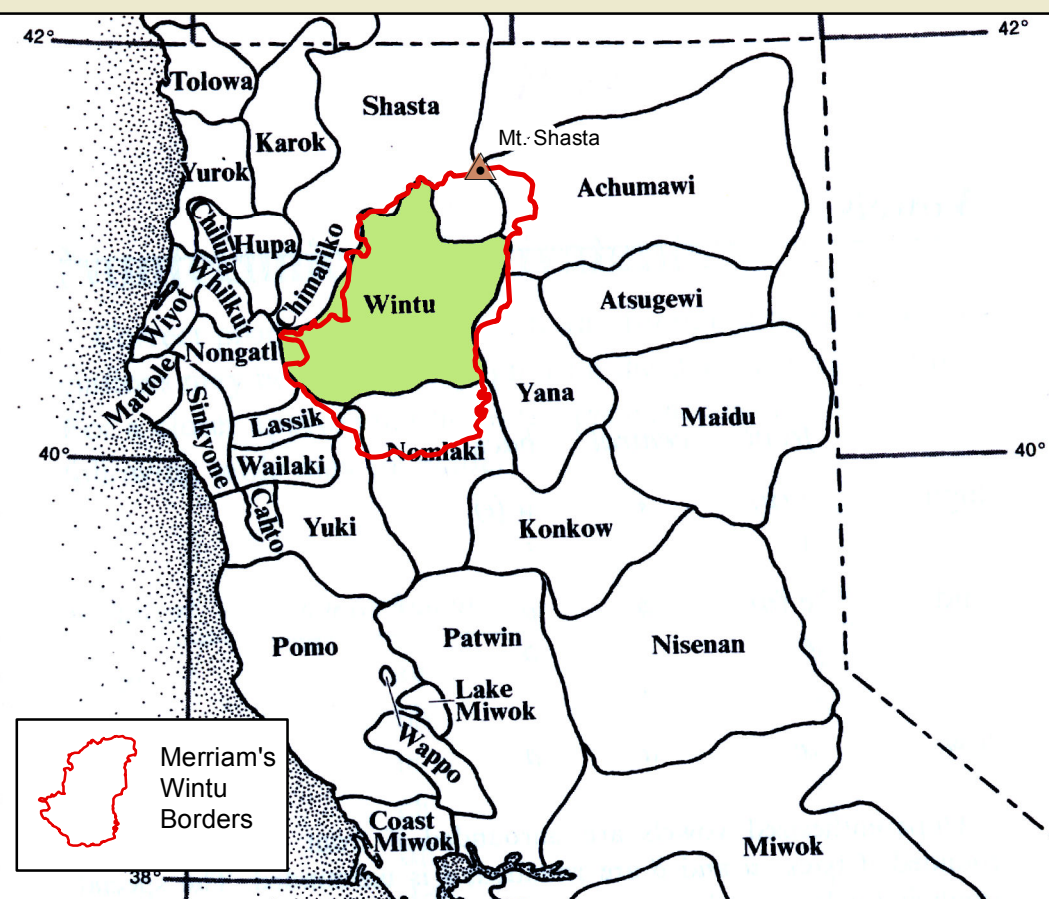
Source: Heizer, Robert F. 1978. "Introduction." In *Handbook of North American Indians*, Volume 8, edited by William C. Sturtevant, General Editor, and Robert F. Heizer, Volume Editor. p.1-5. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.



## Stephen Powers: 1877

Source: Powers, Stephen. 1877. *Map Showing the Distribution of the Indian Tribes in California*. To illustrate Report of Stephen Powers. Map. Washington, D.C.: Geographical and Geological Survey of the Rocky Mountain Region (U.S.). Drawn for Sturtevant, 1978 *Handbook of North American Indians*.

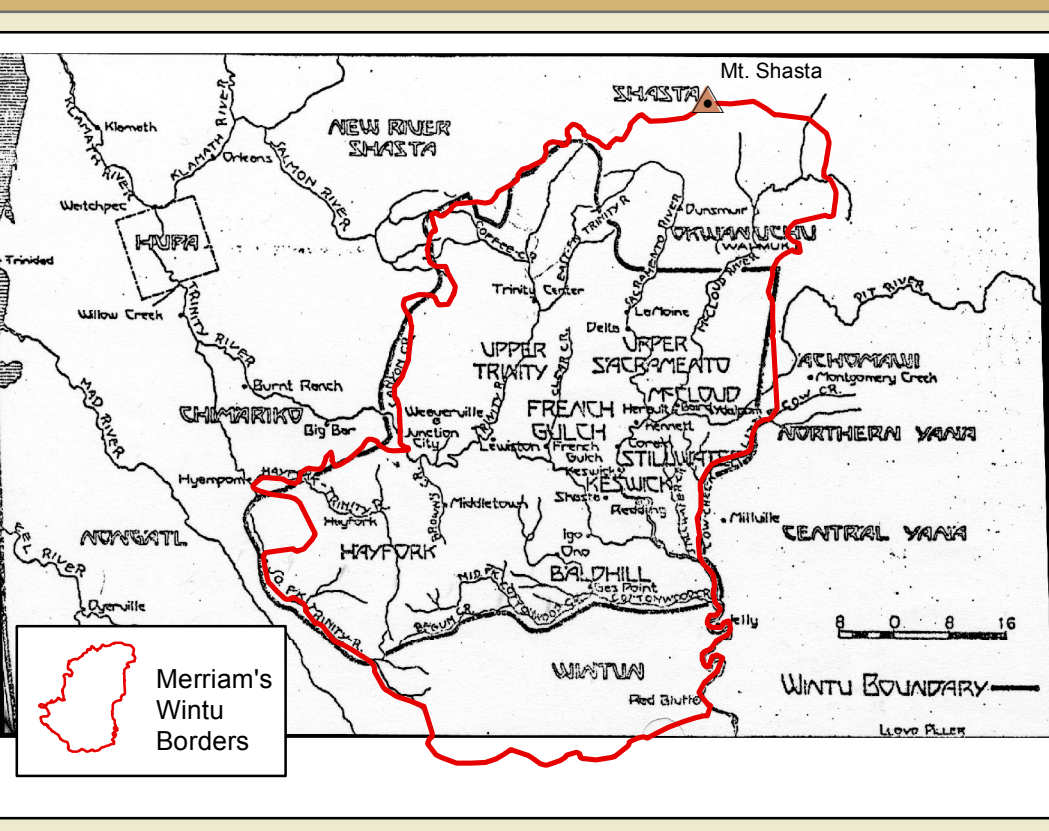
Stephen Powers made the first systematic maps of tribal boundaries in the 1870s, almost 30 years after most Indians had been moved from their ancestral lands. The Indian population had dropped from 310,000 before contact with Europeans to about 100,000 in 1850, and to 80,000 by 1870. Only about 16 percent of the Indians still remained when Powers collected his data. He traveled among the Wintu from 1871-1872. In 1875 he collected Indian artifacts for the Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia. In 1877 he published his observations. The Wintu-speaking Indians of the Sacramento Valley were later divided into three linguistic groups – the Patwin were to the south, the Nomlaki (Wintu) in the middle, and Wintu were to the north.



## Alfred L. Kroeber: 1925

Source: Kroeber, Alfred Louis. 1925. *Handbook of the Indians of California*. Berkeley: California Book Company.

To explain why the Wintu tribal boundaries differed so much from Powers' map, Kroeber wrote, "on older ethnological maps only two languages appear in place of the half-dozen now recognized... the reason... is simple... no vocabularies were recorded, the tribes being numerically insignificant, and in one case on the verge of extinction... Now they have dwindled so far – in fact to all practical purposes perished – that when we are hungry for any bits of information that would help to untangle the obscure history... we must content ourselves with brief, broken vocabularies and some general statements about their speakers obtained from the neighboring nations." He explained the reason early ethnologists separated the languages: "The Shastan habitat falls into two nearly identical halves – Klamath drainage... and the drainage of the Pit... The Okwanuchu held the upper Sacramento from about the vicinity of Salt and Boulder Creeks to the headwaters; also the McCloud River and Squaw Creek from about their junction up... There may have been a few dozen or two or three hundred Okwanuchu two generations ago; not more. There is not one now." Thus, part of the Wintu territory was attributed to the Shasta language group and territory.



## Cora DuBois: 1935

Source: DuBois, Cora. 1935. "Wintu Ethnography." In *American Archaeology and Ethnology*, edited by A. L. Kroeber, R. H. Lowe and R. L. Olson. Berkeley: UC Press.

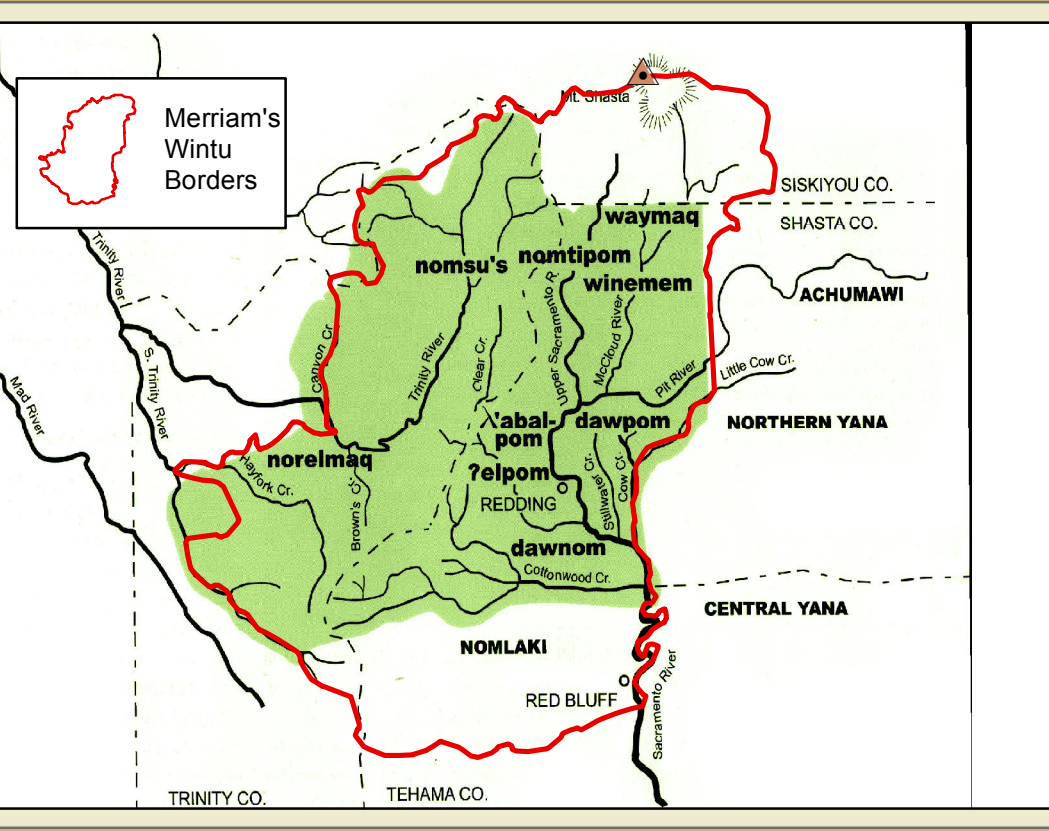
Working with Kroeber's guidance, DuBois did extensive field studies among the Wintu in 1935 and 1939. She wrote, "The Wainum were a people who lived in the narrow valley of the upper McCloud. They have now entirely disappeared with the exception of a few half-bloods. Their territory is generally reputed to have begun at Nososi creek and extended northward up the valleys of the McCloud and Squaw creek in Siskiyou county, and then broadened out to the east and west. The people living in the village at the juncture of Nososi creek and the McCloud apparently were very like the McCloud Wintu, but further north the language changed to a dialect of the Shasta Indians so that the inhabitants of the midpoints between the two areas are supposed to have spoken two languages, their own (or Shastan) and Wintu. I am inclined to identify these so-called Wainum of the Wintu with the Okwanuchu, and to consider them a transition people among whom one tribal unit gradually faded into another." p. 8



## Frank LaPena: 1978

Source: LaPena, Frank. 1978. "Wintu." In *Handbook of North American Indians*, Volume 8, CA, edited by W. Sturtevant, General Ed. and R. Heizer, Volume Ed. p. 324-340. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian.

LaPena updated DuBois' map by adding county boundaries and reservoirs. However, there are three discrepancies between the map as drawn and its description in LaPena's text. First, he used Merriam's (1955) description of the northern boundary in his text: "The northern boundaries of the region are the valleys of the upper Trinity River, extending up the Sacramento River to the high divide between the Trinity and Scott rivers, to Black Butte and Mount Shasta, passing a little north of Black Fox Mountain." The northern boundary Merriam described is not the one represented on LaPena's map. Second, he refers to the "north-people" as "waymaw," but leaves them off the map, thus only showing eight of the nine Wintu groups identified by DuBois and listed in his text. Third, the statement, "Wintu territory covered parts of what are now Trinity, Shasta, Siskiyou, and Tehama counties," is true for Merriam's boundaries, but his map shows the Wintu territory in only Shasta and Trinity counties.



## Frank LaPena: 2002

Source: Hoveman, Alice R. 2002. *Journey to Justice: The Wintu People and the Salmon*. Redding: Turtle Bay Exploration Park.

LaPena updated his version of DuBois' map for Hoveman's book, but there was no description of the boundaries in the text. The map was simplified, leaving off the reservoirs and most cultural references found in the 1978 *Handbook of North American Indians*. The nine regions of the Wintu, as identified by DuBois, were listed; this time the map included the "waymaw" Indian spelling was used, no English version was included. The general outline shape still followed the earlier maps by Kroeber, DuBois and LaPena (1978), but the north border was moved up to the Shasta/Siskiyou county line.

## C. Hart Merriam's map: 1955

C. Hart Merriam's unaltered description of the boundaries of the Wintu, "Tribes of Wintoon Stock," was published in *Studies of California Indians* (1955). Boundary features on this map are based on GIS layers of hydrologic drainage areas, rivers, streams, mountains, and cultural features that were described by Merriam. Differing from cartographic convention, the colors were varied in order to differentiate the segments referred to by Merriam, and his text is quoted to explain the location. If I had to interpret Merriam's writing, or used a source other than his text, I included that explanation as well.

Merriam began his career as a medical doctor but soon switched his research to biology, studying living animals. By the time he was thirty, Merriam was the director of the USDA Biological Survey, which specialized in mapping the geographical distribution of the animals of North America. In 1899 E. H. Harriman, the railroad financier, asked Merriam to organize and direct his summer vacation – an expedition to Alaska. This led to a lifelong friendship with Mrs. Harriman. In 1910 she established a trust for him, administered through the Smithsonian Institution, that enabled him to fully dedicate himself to research without financial worries.

At the time Kroeber and Merriam were doing their research, they were acutely aware of the race against time to try to record details from Indians who had first-hand knowledge of life before California became an American Territory in 1945. Merriam knew that his view of the Okwanuchu differed from Kroeber and others, insisting that "Okwanuchu" was simply a Shasta word for "south of here."

Robert Heizer, Professor of Anthropology at UC Berkeley, and former student of Kroeber, arranged for publication of much of Merriam's work. Merriam had stipulated that his Indian data could be published by others so long as they "should reproduce him exactly, without alteration." In 1966, for the Indian Claims Commission, California Dockets 31 and 37, Heizer and Kroeber published *Languages, Territories, and Names of California Indian Tribes*. Included were two maps prepared by Heizer and Kroeber. One map showed a revision of Kroeber's tribal territory map. The other map was based on Merriam's boundary descriptions as prepared by Dr. Merriam's daughter, Zenaida Merriam Tabot. Heizer explained these linguistic maps show language stock with subdivisions of tribal or dialect boundaries. While the 1966 map was based on Merriam's work, his boundaries of the Wintu were modified to conform to Kroeber's view, continuing to attribute the Okwanuchu area to the Shasta Tribe. Therefore, I believe this presentation may be the first time Merriam's boundaries have been mapped as he intended.

Source: Kroeber, Alfred L. 1955. "C. Hart Merriam as Anthropologist." In *Studies of California Indians*, edited by the Staff of the Department of Anthropology of the University of California. vi-xiv. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Heizer, Robert Fleming. 1966. *Languages, Territories, and Names of California Indian Tribes*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

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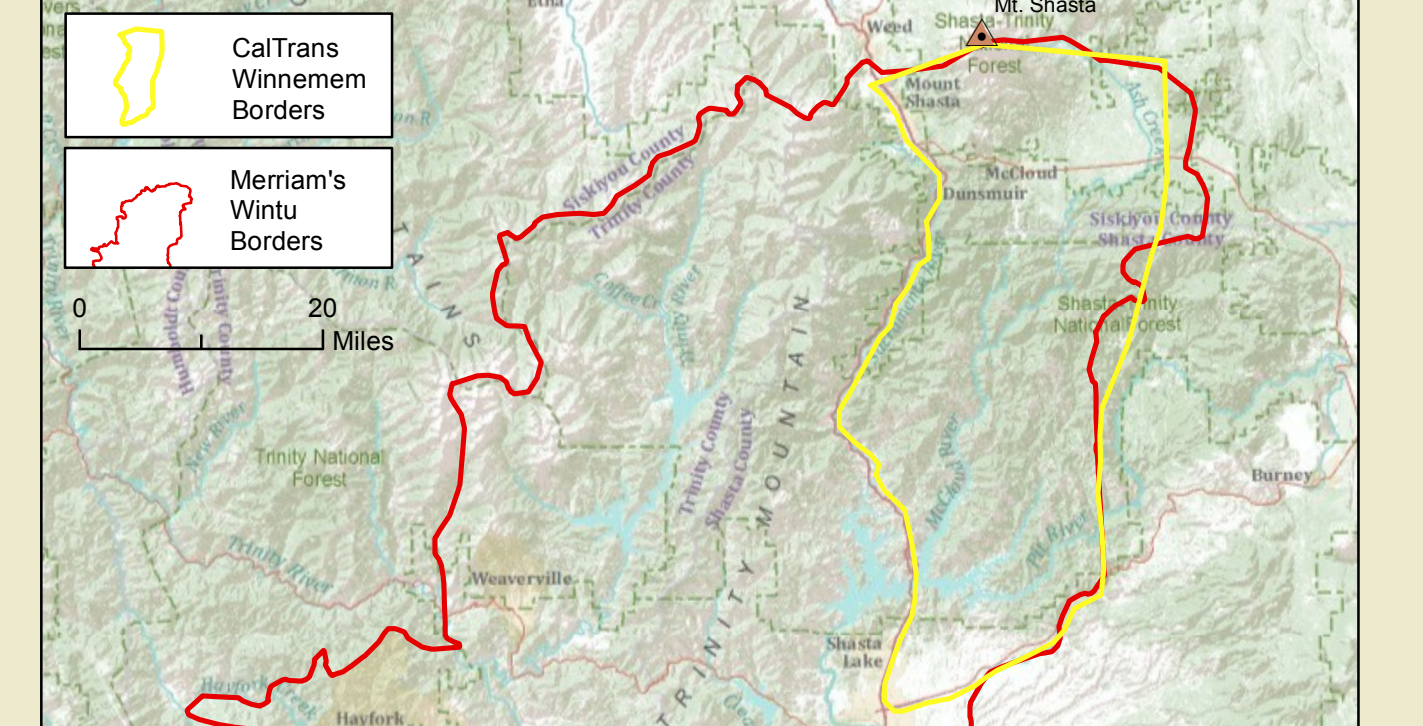
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## Winnemem Wintu map: 2007

In the process of writing my Geography MA thesis about the land-use conflict between the US Bureau of Reclamation (USBR) and the Winnemem Wintu regarding Shasta Dam, I was surprised to find various interpretations of the northern border of the historic tribal area. This map was done as a case study to explore how one tribe, the Wintu, were placed on the map. Authoritative references, such as *Handbook of North American Indians*, published by the Smithsonian, suggest that the work is comprehensive and the facts are undebatable. Yet Heizer (1966) wrote, "[much] has been veiled by the shrinkage, removal, and amalgamation of the natives in recent generations." The great frustration of scholars and researchers is "we shall not know as much as we want to know about the California Indians."

The Winnemem Wintu and other Wintu groups still exist and persist in their efforts to be recognized, to care for their people, and to maintain spiritual and cultural connections to their land and the creatures who live there, especially the salmon. Kroeber's boundary places Mount Shasta, an important sacred and cultural site for the Wintu, outside their tribal territory. Caleen Sisk-Franco, the leader of the Winnemem Wintu, contests the claims that the area referred to as Okwanuchu was ever anything but Wintu. She asks, "What other tribe has origin and death stories that directly relate to the waters of Mount Shasta? People were multi-lingual in the area because of trade and marriages but Tribes did not share hunting grounds or sacred sites. To go into another tribes area without permission was to risk punishment, even war."



To the Winnemem Wintu the issue of boundaries is still pertinent. The tribe regularly deals with Federal, State, and private agencies regarding a wide variety of issues. If a construction project digs up an ancient grave, which tribe should be contacted so they can be appropriately buried? If PG&E would like to put another hydroelectric plant on the McCloud, who should they contact? If Nestle, a Swiss company, plans to build a water bottling plant on the McCloud so they may move the water to markets that will pay top dollar for pure water, with whom should they negotiate?

To give Federal, State, and private agencies a reference map so they would know which tribe to contact, Mark Franco, headman of the Winnemem Wintu, worked with CalTrans to show the Winnemem boundaries as they are known from conversations with their elders. The borders drawn by CalTrans are remarkably similar to the border described by Merriam. One difference is the west border – CalTrans used Highway 5 instead of the mountain ridge, a change that is culturally relevant to both the agency and tribe, based on transportation by car instead of foot.