

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 were not 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.

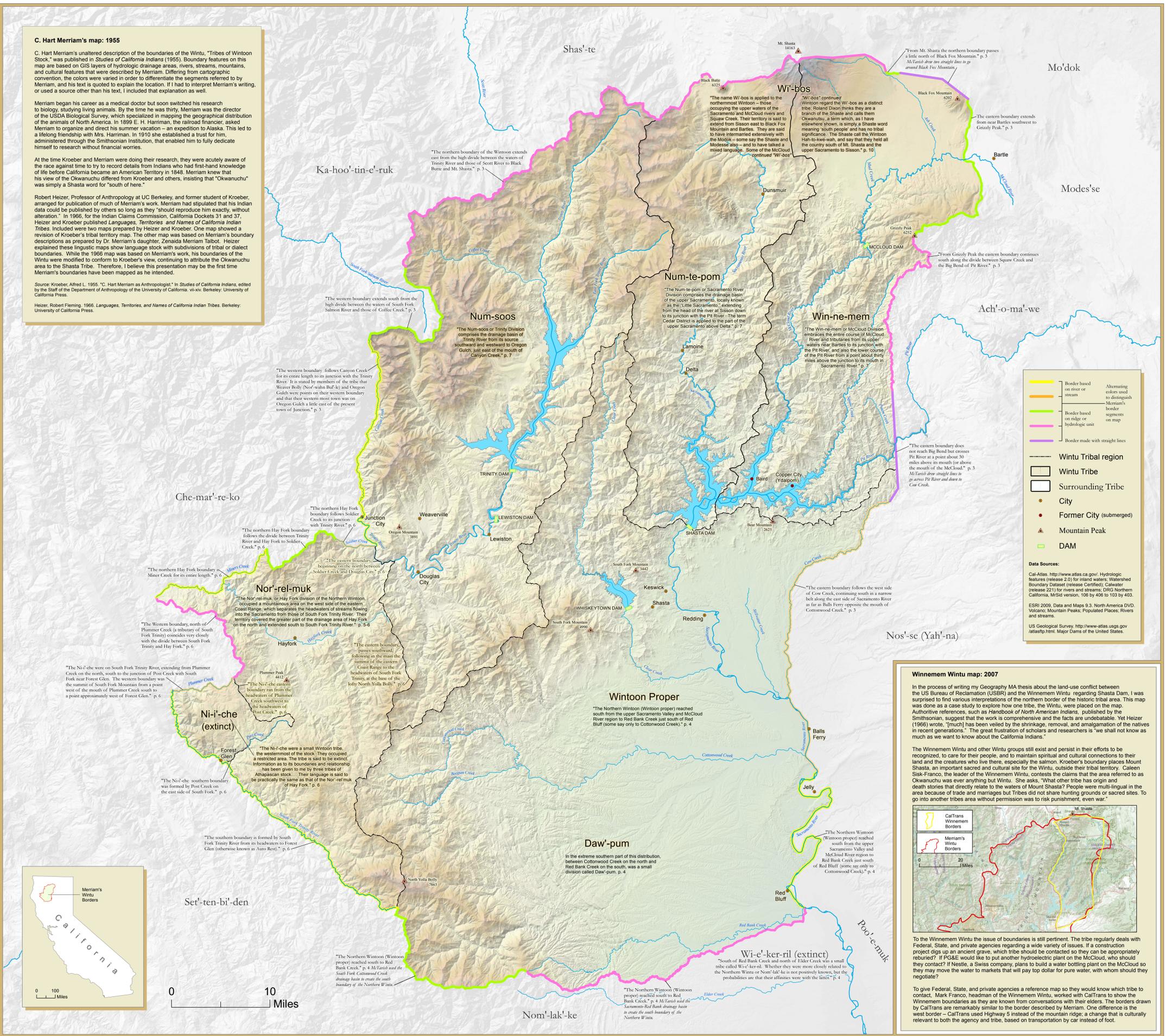
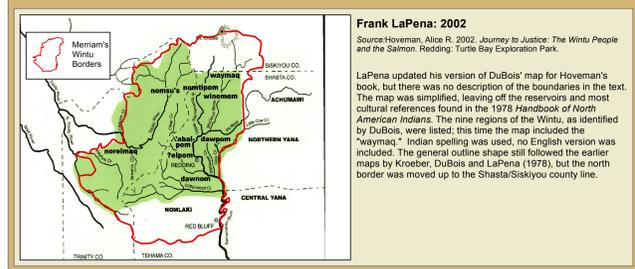
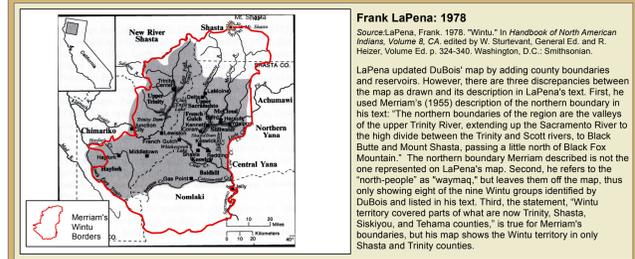
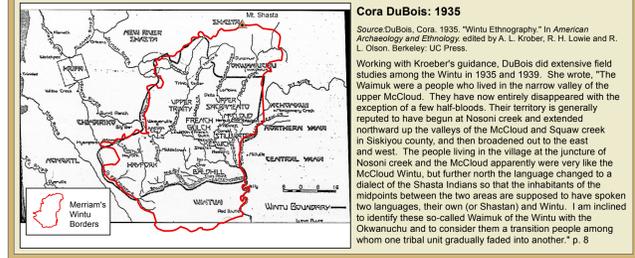
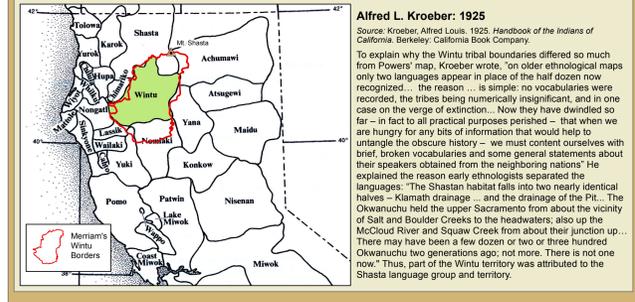
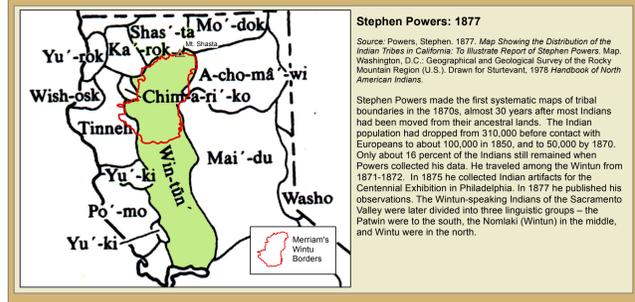
Alfred L. Kroeber (1876 – 1960) and C. Hart Merriam (1855 – 1942) were professional contemporaries. Both devoted much of their careers to studying Indian issues. Kroeber's *Handbook of the Indians of California* was first published in 1925; he introduced it as "the outcome of 17 years of acquaintance 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 boundary 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.



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, "[m]uch 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 cultural 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 risk hunting grounds or sacred sites. To go into another tribes area without permission was to risk punishment, even war."

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.