

**THE
WINTUN
INDIANS
OF CALIFORNIA
AND THEIR NEIGHBORS**

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Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data CIP

Knudtson, Peter M 1947—
The Wintun Indians of California and their neighbors.

(American Indian map-book series; v. 3)

Bibliography: p.

1. Wintun Indians. I. Title. II. Series.

E75.A53 vol. 3 [E99.W79] 970'.004'97s [970'.004'97] 76-5635

ISBN 0-87961-062-X

*To moments sh
mad rush of time —
Malcom, and Humbc*

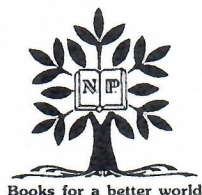
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Sixth printing, 2002

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Printed in USA by Mosaic Press.

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Happy Camp, CA 96039
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14 The Wintun Indians of California

small game. They lived in independent tribelets led by village headmen. Villages consisted mostly of blood relatives. These families lived in oval-shaped dwellings thatched with bundles of wormwood (*Artemisia sp.*). Baskets were manufactured in the coiled style—in contrast to the twined basketry of the Wintu—using a deerbone awl; only their most crude containers were open-twined. A male secret society with traumatic sweat dance initiation was observed and tended to control wealth and to stratify Central Wintun society. Known as the *Huta*, it probably represented an early offshoot of the Kuksu Cult complex of the Patwin. The Central Wintun as a whole may be described as an intermediate cultural stage between the sparser and more individualistic Wintu and the more densely populous and socially elaborate Patwin.

The Patwin division of the Wintun lay to the south of the Central Wintun, along the west side of the lower Sacramento River as far as Suisun and San Pablo bays. Like the Central Wintun, they could be readily separated into hill and river divisions (southwestern and southeastern) with corresponding cultural and linguistic discontinuities. The Patwin subsisted mostly by gathering acorns, hunting, and fishing—the river Patwin enjoying large seasonal pulses of salmon and waterfowl along the Sacramento and its adjacent marshlands. Associated with this productivity were a number of cultural developments including large winter settlements of earth-covered dwellings, a hereditary division of labor which tended to partition wealth and status along lines of family specialties or trades, and the Kuksu Cult religion with its secret societies, initiation ceremonies, and spirit impersonations. The river Patwin also used the wooden mortar, and navigated the Sacramento River in tule balsas constructed of bundles of tule rushes lashed with grapevine. Hill Patwin culture tended to be simpler, especially in details of ceremonial organization and importance of wealth. Both groups apparently recognized *Katit*, a hawk, as a creator-spirit, and envisioned a world originating from a turtle's dive into a primeval sea. As was characteristic throughout most of Wintun territory, the dead were buried, cremation being reported only rarely among some southern Patwin.

With regard to the native Kuksu Cult, a religious system restricted to central California, the Patwin clearly became cultural innovators in

the ethnic province. The cult served the dead, and, with its cycle of dances and rituals, it reached its greatest complexity in the Sacramento River, who possessed the *Hesita* or North Spirits; the *Kuk* character; and the *Hesi* with its pre-adolescent adults through rituals of control upon a less traumatic initiation of spirits like *Moki* with its radiating feather-tipped headdresses.

The Kuksu Cult reemerged in the Wintun neighbors, including some of the *Wintu*. This variability and broadness of the Religion to absorb and help to shape the 1870's, which swept from a large area much of northern California. The old Kuksu Cult—such as the hill Patwin's earth-covered dance house—it introduced a more unified and unsegregated audiences, the *Huta* or *Hesi*. Over the decades that followed, the ceremonies and prophecies of the wintun, including the Wintu, beyond the range of the

Although Europeans are recorded as early as 1542, most Wintun were not invaded. Initial encounter with the Spanish mission at Sonoma in 1823 was probably peaceful for the most part. The Wintun to relentless forces of the Central Wintun were located far from the influence of missionaries for a time.

By 1833 river-dwelling population were being devastated by warfare between whites and Indians over land. Unlawfully or overtly sanctioned, punishment uncommon features of California were the often violent influx of ethnolinguistic displacement of Wintun culture re-