

## **BRINGING THE HILL PATWIN INTO THE NORTH COAST RANGES CULTURAL REGION**

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*Much of the contextualizing of the prehistory of the southern portion of the North Coast Ranges cultural region has been based on studies and ethnographies of the Pomo peoples. The Hill Patwin, their neighbors to the east in the periphery between the North Coast and the Central Valley, can greatly contribute to our understanding of the region by illustrating the flow of cultural influences across regional boundaries. This paper argues that instead of simply discussing the Hill Patwin in relation to their Central Valley linguistic kin, they must be included in the discussion of North Coastal peoples and prehistory.*

Research for an extensive prehistoric overview of the Indian Valley/Walker Ridge Recreation Area, located in the upper Cache Creek watershed in Lake and Colusa counties, prompted questions about the anthropological treatments on the Hill Patwin and the usual boundaries for the North Coast Ranges culture region. In the southern reaches of the North Coastal Ranges of California, the eastern edge of this region is often drawn following the eastern extent of ethnographic Pomoan habitation. The Pomo groups form the primary ethnographic resource that is used to try to contextualize the archaeological record of the region, especially for the Emergent period. It is my argument that the Hill Patwin, the Pomo people's immediate neighbors to the east, warrant a greater inclusion in the discussion of this culture region and through this can greatly contribute to our understanding of the region by illustrating the flow of cultural influences across regional boundaries.

### **CULTURE AREAS, REGIONS, AND BOUNDARIES**

The concept of the culture area has deep roots in the study of North American prehistory. By the 1890s, the idea had already developed in North American ethnography, advocated by Franz Boas. Following this, his student Alfred Kroeber further developed this concept, arguing that the significance of cultural phenomena should be understood within a context of space and time (Buckley 1988:15). Kroeber (1939:1, 4), building on work by Otis T. Mason and Clark Wissler, defined a culture area as a descriptive category that represents a region where the inhabitants are more similar to each other in their ecological, economic, social, and ideological systems than they were to the inhabitants of other regions. This concept came out of a desire to have greater inclusion of environmental factors in American anthropology, while not entirely depending on these factors to explain cultural development (Kroeber 1939:1, 3). This taxonomic system has become one of the predominant ways that the cultures of the North American continent are divided and classified (Fredrickson 1973:73-74, 96-97; Willey and Phillips 1958:21). In this system, the majority of California was designated the Central California culture area, with other parts of the state being in the Great Basin, Southwestern, and Northwest Coast culture areas (Kroeber 1939:53-54; Moratto 1984:3).

Willey and Phillips (1958:19) defined smaller categories that included that of the culture region, a division of a culture area that was confined to a smaller space that could be occupied by a social unit that was larger than the community. In culture areas beyond California, these could be associated with "tribes" or "societies," but in the Central California culture area, societies developed on a smaller scale, usually referred to as tribelets, and this area includes many tribelets and often many languages (Fredrickson 1994:33-34) (Figure 1). Culture regions are units that have a greater coherence and lend themselves more easily to use in an archaeological context. Two of the regions of the Central California culture area are the North Coastal region and the Central Valley region. The North Coastal or North Coast Ranges region was

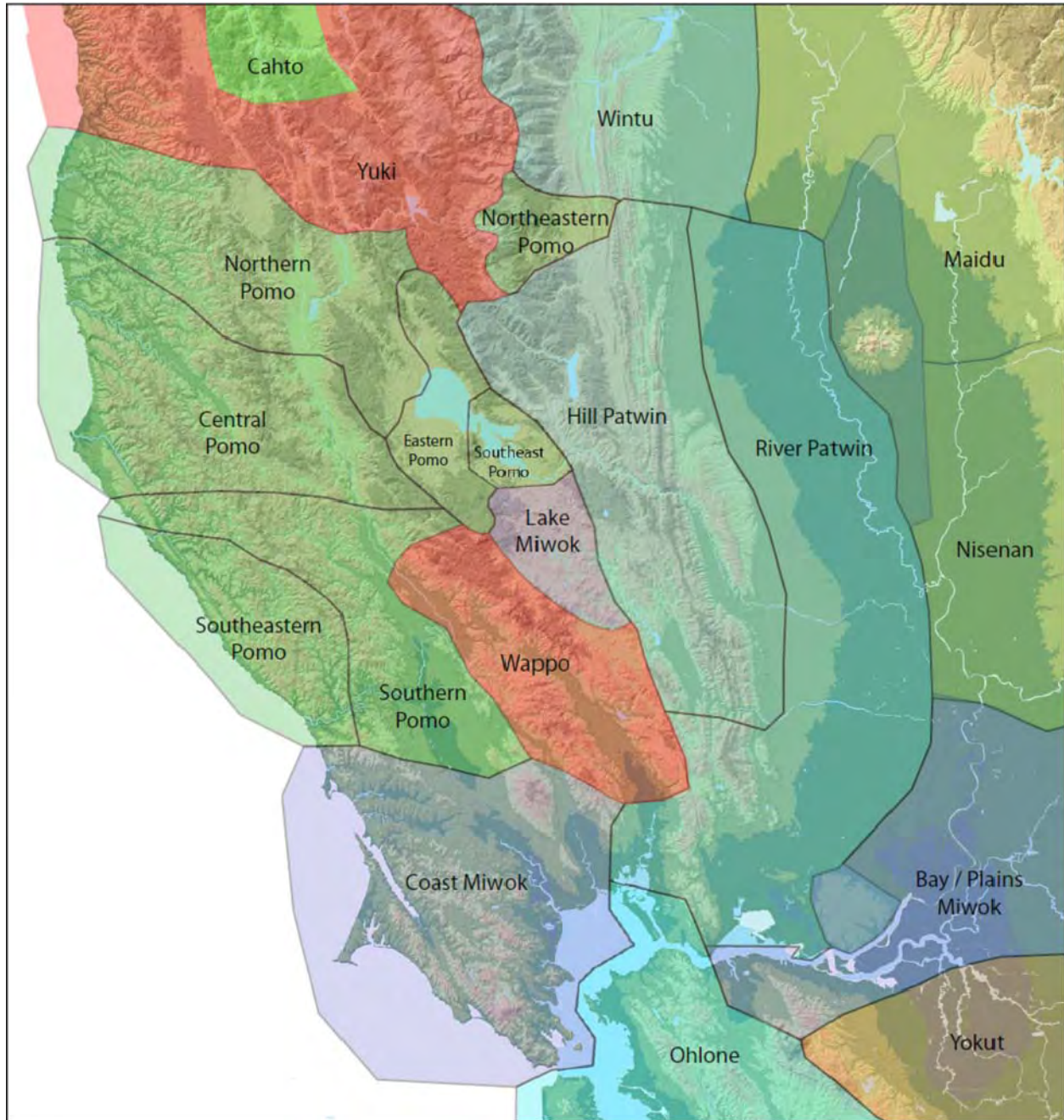


Figure 1. Ethnolinguistic groups of the southern North Coast Ranges and Sacramento Valley.

codified by Fredrickson (1973:97-98, 1984:471, 1994:34) as the northwestern portion of the state north of the San Francisco Bay and west of the Central Valley. Although Fredrickson (1973:146-148,150-152) included the Patwin in this region in his doctoral dissertation, this has been little followed, even in his own later work (Fredrickson 1984). A recent example of the trend of excluding the Hill Patwin from this cultural region is how in their recent work *California Indians and their Environment* Lightfoot and Parrish (2009:303) include the discussion of the Patwin in the Central Valley and Sierra Foothills region.

## REGIONAL TREATMENT OF THE HILL PATWIN

In the course of this research, I have identified two primary reasons that the Hill Patwin are usually discussed in the context of the Central Valley cultural region rather than the North Coastal region. The first is a problem in the ability to separate linguistic grouping from cultural identification, specifically in this case the fact that the Hill Patwin shared a common language with the River Patwin in the Sacramento Valley, although they spoke different dialects. The second is a problem with the ethnographic record in that the groups had often become combined in the same rancherias due to U.S. government actions and that in much of the early ethnographies the researchers and authors spent little effort in differentiating between the cultural practices of the inhabitants of the hills and the valley. The first problem is more easily managed than the second.

The term “Patwin” is a designation based on linguistic similarity rather than any acknowledged cultural affiliation. Such designations are of limited use for the examination of local anthropological and archaeological issues such as intergroup exchange systems, boundaries, and cultural transmission, but can be useful when dealing with large geographic areas or in investigating potential prehistoric migrations (Rehor 2008:12). It is precisely this limitation that affects the assignment of the Hill Patwin to the Central Valley culture region. There is no reason to assume that groups closely related linguistically lived their lives in the same ways using the same practices. There are plenty of contemporary examples that can be drawn from to illustrate this, especially considering those of the European colonial powers and their colonies. There is more direct evidence that the Patwin speakers of the hills and those of the valley did not see themselves as unified in any particular way. Ethnographies show that the River Patwin were more familiar with the cultures, societies, and tribelets of the Maidu and the Nisenan in the Sacramento Valley than with their linguistic kin in the hills. Together, these groups viewed themselves as having substantial uniformity with each other and some degree of group identity that excluded the people in the hills (Kroeber 1939:256).

The second reason that the Hill Patwin do not usually factor into overviews of this region is more difficult to deal with. Many of the ethnographers only consulted informants in River Patwin rancherias or glossed over any differences and conflated the two (McKern 1922:236, 1923:159; Kroeber 1932:253-254). This is partially due to the damage done to Native Californian society by the turn of the twentieth century when these ethnographies were being performed. Most of the rancherias in the hills were significantly reduced in population or empty of inhabitants by the time that Barrett, Merriam, and Kroeber visited them (Kroeber 1932:254-255). Even with these limitations, careful inspection of and comparison between ethnographies, historical documents, and archaeological records does make it possible to some extent to differentiate between the inhabitants of the hills and of the valley (Elliott 2011:9-24).

## INTERREGIONAL MOVEMENT AND CULTURAL EXCHANGE

The edges of culture regions are usually drawn on maps in the same fashion as national borders, but they really share very little with those sorts of hard boundaries. Kroeber (1939:5) identified this as the weakest part of the culture area concept. Peoples living across the boundaries are likely to share many of the same traits, often because the movement of groups was not prescribed to a particular area and as they moved about and interacted with their neighbors, cultural exchanges were likely to occur. The ethnographic sources inform us that there was often travel to a variety of resources that were not solely controlled and utilized by particular tribelets (Davis 1961:1; Gifford 1923:78-82; Kroeber 1932:262, 351). Even resources which did belong to certain groups were often exploited by other groups, either surreptitiously or with permission. This seems to be especially true in the Clear Lake basin. The vast majority of the lithics found in the upper Cache Creek watershed are manufactured from Borax Lake obsidian. This is ethnographically supported, as the upper Cache Creek tribelets had the right to use the source without specific permission from the *Elem* or *Koi* Pomo who lived adjacent to it. Another Clear Lake example comes from the fish and the fish runs that occurred several times a year. These resources were an important part of the Hill Patwin lifeway, a continuation of the long tradition of groups from

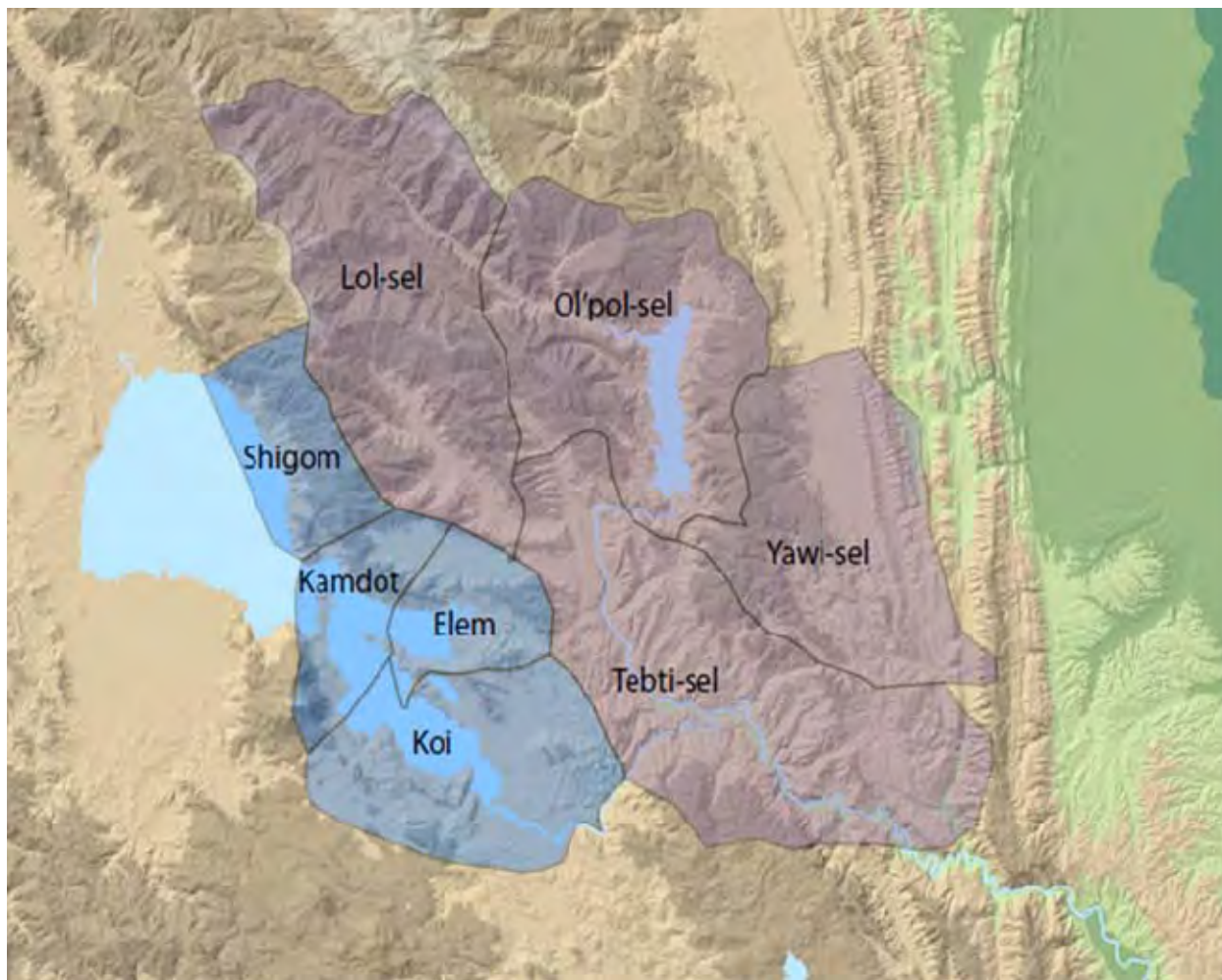


Figure 2. Hill Patwin tribelets of the upper Cache Creek watershed and Pomo tribelets of eastern Clear Lake.

outside Clear Lake basin coming for the fish runs. This can be seen as extending back to the Middle Archaic, attested by the contemporaneous use of the lake shore by both Berkeley-pattern and Mendocino-pattern peoples (Hildebrandt 2007:92-93; White 2002:550).

It is probable that the issue of accessibility was an important determinant of the close relations between the upper Cache Creek Patwin tribelets and the Clear Lake Pomo tribelets (Figure 2). The ethnographic routes traveled between the upper Cache Creek watershed and Clear Lake were shorter and easier than the ones that provided access to the Sacramento Valley floor to the east (Davis 1961:47, 72; Elliott 2011:14-18; Fredrickson et al. 1978:26-27, Maps 2, 3; Sample 1950:3, 24). The topography favored movement towards Clear Lake as well. In this area, the ridge lines tend to be steep and oriented in a north-south direction, obstructing travel rather than facilitating it as in other areas. The canyon carved by Cache Creek is very rugged and would have made travel along this corridor more difficult than other routes.

There are two primary types of trail routes in this area. The inter-tribelet trails were used for movement between primary villages of different tribelets as well as to the variety of satellite villages in the area. For the tribelets of Long and Indian valleys and the North Fork of Cache Creek, the *Lol-sel*, the *Tebti-sel*, and the *Ol'pol-sel*, these trails provided quick and easy access to the villages of the Eastern Clear Lake Pomo groups of the *Koi*, *Elem*, and *Shigom*. These trails traverse relatively easy terrain with

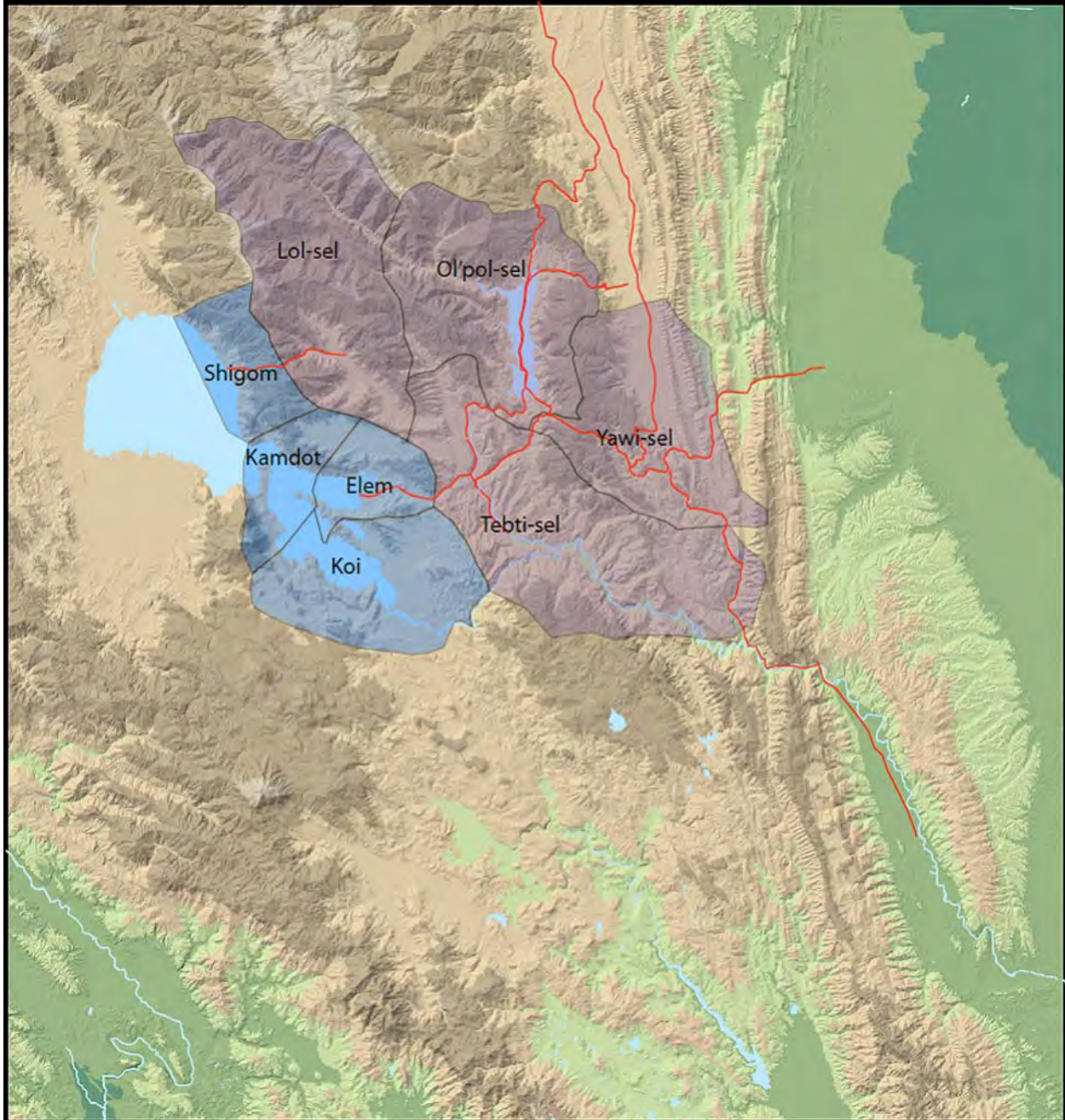


Figure 3. Inter-tribelet trail system.

much less change in elevation than trails to the valley. An often-traversed trail connected the *Lol-sel* principle village of *Ali'matinbe* with the principle village of *Shigom*, and another connected the *Ol'po-sel* principle village of *Tlotli* and the *Tebti-sel* principle village of *Tebti* with the principle villages of *Elem* and *Koi* (Figure 3; Fredrickson et al. 1978:26-27, Maps 2, 3; Orlins 1971:31). The *Yawi-sel* of the Sulphur Spring area had a more challenging route to travel, but still found access to Clear Lake and particular resources nearby it of great importance. Some of that differential ease of access to Clear Lake that the *Lol-sel*, the *Tebti-sel*, and the *Ol'po-sel* had compared with that of the *Yawi-sel* can be seen in cultural patterns such as burial practices. The three tribelets closest to Clear Lake all practiced cremation

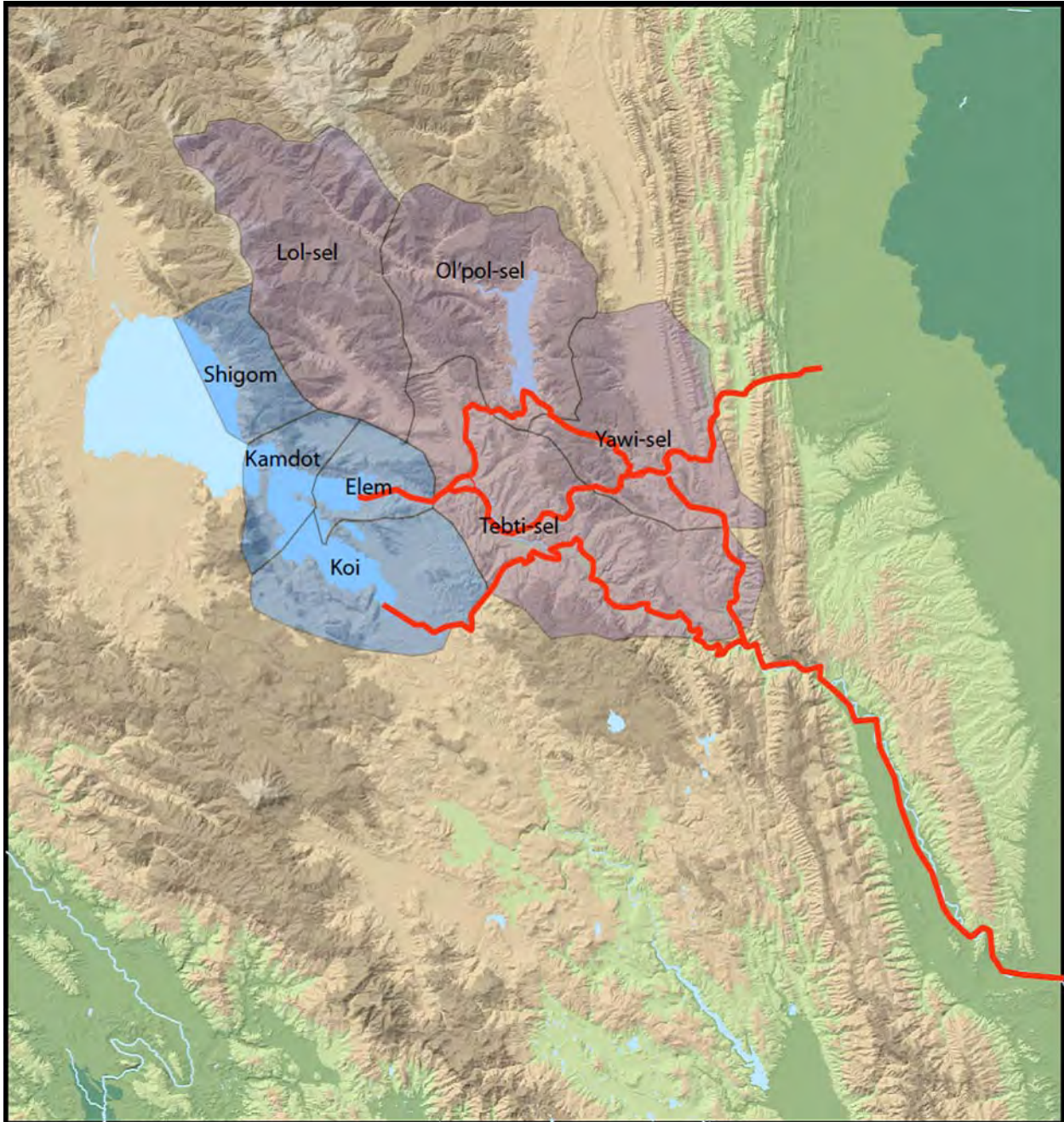


Figure 4. Interregional trail system.

like the Eastern Clear Lake Pomo groups, while the *Yawi-sel* buried their deceased in a fashion much like the River Patwin (Kroeber 1932:290-291).

The other type of trail route is the interregional trails which connected the valley to Clear Lake (Figure 4). These routes often follow similar paths as the inter-tribelet trails while in the territories of the upper Cache Creek Patwin (Davis 1961:47, 72; Fredrickson et al. 1978:26-27, Maps 2, 3; Sample 1950:3, 24). Again, these trails are easier to travel in their portion between Clear Lake and the upper Cache Creek area than from upper Cache Creek to the valley. Additionally, these trails guaranteed that a flow of cultural exchange occurred between the North Coastal region and the Central Valley and Delta regions.

These particular Hill Patwin tribelets were in the center of this exchange. Influences moving either way would have happened through this area.

The relations between the bordering groups of Pomo and Hill Patwin seem to have been particularly close and amiable. Gifford (1923:78-82) states that the *Lol-sel*, and to a lesser extent the other tribelets of the Cache Creek area, had the right to fish in Clear Lake, with or without permission, depending on the groups involved. Additionally, they had the right to come to Borax Lake to obtain obsidian, but needed permission to gather seeds or acorns. In the same fashion, the Pomo groups needed permission to gather seeds and acorns in Long Valley. The relations between the *Lol-sel* and the *Shigom* Pomo were particularly close, and intermarriage between them practiced on a regular basis. An often-traversed trail connected the *Lol-sel* principle village of *Ali'matinbe* with the principle village of *Shigom* (Gifford 1923:77-92; Kniffen 1939:359-360). Similarly the *Tebti-sel* could gather obsidian but needed permission to fish in Clear Lake. They also intermarried frequently with the Pomo groups. This close relationship contrasts with those with the River Patwin. Those relations seemed more strained and included several feuds over access to resources such as water fowl and tule elk (Gifford 1923:79; Kroeber 1932:262, 351).

### MATERIAL CULTURE

The arrival of the Patwin ethnolinguistic group in the Sacramento Valley, Suisun Bay, and adjacent upland areas of the eastern North Coast Ranges is often tied to the appearance of the Augustine pattern in this region of California. The picture is painted of bands of newcomers armed with the heretofore-unseen bow and arrow entering the area and pushing out the previous inhabitants (Golla 2007:77-78). Not only did they bring archery technology, but they may have brought many of the cultural traits that make up the Augustine pattern. The full set of Augustine material culture has yet to be found in either the Clear Lake basin or the upper Cache Creek area (Hildebrandt 2007:94-95). Instead, an abridged version is present, known as the Clear Lake aspect (Fredrickson 1984:496).

The artifacts found in the upper Cache Creek area and the ones that were ethnographically described as being used by the Hill Patwin show closer ties to the Southeastern Pomo and the Clear Lake aspect of the Augustine than to the full Augustine pattern in the Sacramento Valley and Delta. This predominance of western styles of artifacts again links the Hill Patwin to the Clear Lake Pomo. This can be seen in a variety of examples, including food preparation and projectile point styles.

The methods of gathering, storing, and preparing food are examples of the influence back and forth between the upper Cache Creek watershed and the Clear Lake basin. Particularly, the influence of the Clear Lake aspect on the Hill Patwin can be seen in their use of milling technology. The Hill Patwin did not use the wooden log mortars preferred by the River Patwin (Kroeber 1932:296). Instead they used flat stone slab-and-basket hopper mortars like those of the Southeastern Pomo, a typical artifact type of the Clear Lake aspect (Fredrickson 1984:498; Kroeber 1932:296). The basketry produced by the Hill Patwin shared more in common with Clear Lake Pomo basketry, in both design and choice of material, than it did with the baskets produced by the River Patwin (Kroeber 1932:362). A unique type of acorn and seed granary that is theorized to have originated among the Hill Patwin was adopted by the Southeastern Pomo groups (Barrett 1952:22). Other features, such as the earth oven recorded along Cache Creek by Jackson and Fredrickson (1978:84-85), show additional ties to the Pomo. Pestles consisted of unmodified elongated stream cobbles.

The same western-leaning focus of the upper Cache Creek Patwin tribelets can be seen in their choice of projectile point styles. One of the important point styles in the North Coastal region is the Rattlesnake series point, which is indicative of the Augustine pattern north of the San Francisco Bay to roughly the Mendocino border (Fredrickson 1984:496-498; Hildebrandt 2007:94). This point series includes the Clear Lake corner-notched points and the Rattlesnake corner-notched points. It is tied ethnographically with the Pomo peoples (Meighan 1955:15, 31), and several arrows collected by the Russians at Fort Ross and now in the Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography in St. Petersburg are

equipped with this type (Blackburn and Hudson 1990:Fig. 9, cited in Justice 2002:407). The Gunther barbed series point, associated with the Gunther pattern further to the north, is a tool type found throughout the North Coast Ranges from Mendocino north, as well as in the Sacramento Valley in the River Patwin area (Fredrickson 1984:496; Hildebrandt 2007:93; Justice 2002:416-417). The Delta side-notched point is also usually found in the Central Valley in the River Patwin area (Justice 2002:393-395). In the upper Cache Creek drainage both the Gunther and the Rattlesnake series are represented, but it does not appear that the Delta side-notched is present. The majority of the Emergent period points in the area are Rattlesnake types, with a lower number of Gunther points found mainly in the Cache Creek corridor and on the eastern side of the mountains (Elliott 2011:54, 56, 60; Greenway 1988:150-151; Jackson and Fredrickson 1978:56-60). While the use of a particular point type does not automatically equate with a particular culture, their presence and absence can give us an idea of the mixing of cultures in this region. In this case, it illustrates again the cultural ties between the Hill Patwin and the Pomo, rather than between the Hill Patwin and the River Patwin.

## CONCLUSIONS

Cultural identity does not necessarily have anything to do with materials, language, or shared heritage; instead, it is based on ideology, a difficult thing to examine archaeologically (Rehor 2008:30). Artifacts do not equate with culture, as much as we wish they would (Fredrickson 1994:93). However, that is not to say that these factors do not co-occur with each other (Fredrickson 1984:508). By using ethnography, historical documentation, archaeology, and linguistics as tools to examine cultural identity, a better understanding can be gained about how people in the recent past constructed such concepts. It is through such a process that the orientations of the Hill Patwin tribelets, especially in the upper Cache Creek watershed, can be investigated.

It is tempting in the present to assume that groups in the past who spoke closely related languages shared almost identical cultures. This is often not the case and leads us to make incorrect inferences about the past. By grouping the Hill Patwin with the River Patwin in the Central Valley cultural region, just such a mistake has been made. Ignoring the residents of the boundaries between culture regions does a disservice to the discipline, as it is precisely these spaces that can be zones of increased social interaction and exchange that can give insights into the greater social organization of the area and the ways that cultural traits are transmitted (Lightfoot and Martinez 1995:471, 488). Certain cultural processes may be unique to such marginal areas, and that may be influential on the development of the surrounding cultures as well. Population movements, territorial expansion, and cultural exchange are some of the processes that may be most observable archaeologically in these peripheries (Fredrickson 1973:81). This makes the upper Cache Creek watershed and the eastern slopes of the North Coast Ranges ideal places to undertake such studies. By bringing the Hill Patwin into the North Coastal cultural region and looking at their culture not as simply the materially poorer version of the River Patwin, but instead to view them as the nexus for the movement and transmission of cultural practices and elements between these two regions, we will have a better basis for analysis. Ultimately, through doing this not only can we gain a better understanding of the Hill Patwin, but also their Pomo and River Patwin neighbors as well.

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