



PAYAMATAHA

Chickasaw Leader and Diplomat

Payamataha was a fierce warrior who grew up at a time when the Chickasaw Nation was in constant warfare. He was a staunch supporter of the British and despised the French. He enjoyed British support and together they successfully fought off the French in the 1730s.

However, at the end of the Seven Years' War, the French ceded their land claims in North America. The British occupied former French sites east of the Mississippi River and the Spanish took over French posts west of the Mississippi River and New Orleans.

By this time, Payamataha had become the Hopayi' Minko', or prophet leader, of the Chickasaw Nation. Second only to Minko Homma, meaning Red Leader (also known as Red King), Payamataha's responsibilities included military and diplomatic strategy, leadership and external geopolitical relations.

As a Chickasaw prophet leader, Payamataha set out on a mission to make peace with Europeans and other First Americans. He thought that peaceful coexistence was the best course of action for his people.

Some First Americans believed that removing Europeans from their lands was the only answer, but Payamataha knew their lives were already too entangled with the new settlers to completely cut ties. The Chickasaw utilized the trade goods provided by their new neighbors.

Payamataha had experienced decades of warfare, and he believed that making connections with as many foreign nations as possible would bolster Chickasaw independence and stability. He led the Chickasaw Nation to make peace with the Choctaws, Cherokees, Catawbas, Quapaws, the Spanish and several tribes in present-day Illinois. Additionally, he advocated for peace with the Muscogee (Creeks).

Payamataha's efforts enabled the Chickasaw people to live in relative peace. Through his successor Piominko's continued diplomatic efforts, the Chickasaw population rebounded and was able to settle out across their Homeland to enjoy the livestock range and fertile soils it provided.

Accomplishments:

- Well-respected and skillful warrior.
- Served as Hopayi' Minko' (Prophet Leader).
- Established peace with European and First Americans and helped establish peace between the British and the Choctaw in 1765.



PIOMINKO

Chickasaw Leader and Diplomat

Chickasaw leader Piominko was born around 1750 at Chokkilissa'— Old Town, at present-day Tupelo, Mississippi. As a teenager, he earned the name “Mountain Leader” from the Cherokee and later the title Piominko from the Chickasaw. This title comprised of two Chickasaw words, “Hopayi' Minko'.” This was a title for a leader translating to “prophet leader.” His name prior to Piominko is believed to have been Tushatohoa. This name is also comprised of two Chickasaw words, “Tashka Aalhtoka,” meaning “selected warrior.”

During the 1780s, the United States was struggling as a new country. Piominko was faced with having to ally with the Spanish, who were still present in the Lower Mississippi Valley as the only other geopolitical world superpower in the young United States. In a bold move, based on faith and the need for the Chickasaws to ally with the ever-growing, technologically powerful new Americans, he signed the Treaty with the U.S. and Chickasaw of 1786 (Treaty of Hopewell), which formalized the tribe's alliance with the U.S. government.

Piominko established a personal relationship on behalf of the Chickasaws with President George Washington, visiting him officially in Philadelphia and also at Mount Vernon in Virginia. Piominko secured American support for the Chickasaws at a time when the Chickasaw population was very low.

Allegiances were split between the Chickasaws and the Muscogee (Creeks). The Creeks wanted the Chickasaws to get rid of American agents. But Piominko's loyalty to the U.S. was resolute. In turn, the Creeks and some Cherokees and other small parties of tribes came into conflict with Chickasaws and American settlers. As more issues arose regarding the safety of the Chickasaws, Piominko knew something had to be done. In 1794, he made his way to Philadelphia to meet with President George Washington. After meeting with Washington and other American officials for a number of days, more alliances were discussed and aid for the Chickasaws produced.

An influential Chickasaw leader, Piominko, was awarded a peace medal in 1792 from President Washington for military service to the U.S. in the Northwest Indian Confederacy War. Both Washington and Piominko died seven years from the peace medal date, and the promises were not kept.

Nevertheless, Piominko helped pave the way for Chickasaw prosperity into the new American century of the 1800s.

Accomplishments:

- Formalized Chickasaw's alliance with the United States government.
- The first to define the Chickasaw Nation treaty boundaries on a map drafted at the Hopewell, South Carolina, treaty proceedings in 1786. It is said that Piominko carried a copy of this map with him for the rest of his life, once requesting to have it redrafted after years because it was worn out.
- Signed the treaty with the U.S. and Chickasaw of 1786 (Treaty of Hopewell).
- Received a U.S. George Washington presidential peace medal.
- A statue in Tupelo, Mississippi, is a tribute to the Chickasaw leader.
- Inducted into the Chickasaw Hall of Fame in 2010.

Piominko statue by artist William Beckwith sits in front of the Tupelo City Hall in Tupelo, MS.



TISHOMINKO

Chickasaw Leader and Diplomat

Tishominko, meaning “speaker for the leader” in the Chickasaw language, is remembered as one of the last hereditary minkos (leaders) of the historic Chickasaw Homeland. There is some evidence that he was formerly known as “Tisshumastubbe” before attaining the title of Tishominko. He evidently retained the title of Tishominko so long that it stuck to him as a personal name.

Massive encroachment plagued Chickasaw communities during the early 1800s into the 1830s. American settlers tried to take over Chickasaw people’s fields, livestock and even homes. The times were becoming violent for Chickasaws as settlers blatantly disregarded tribal sovereignty or treaty stipulations. Tishominko began to take matters into his own hands to protect his Chickasaw people.

Tishominko discovered two peddlers illegally selling whiskey and merchandise within Chickasaw territory. He seized their goods and turned them over to an Indian agent, who was assigned by the U.S. government to assist the tribe. The peddlers filed a suit against Tishominko. Disregarding the Chickasaw’s sovereign rights and the binding force of Chickasaw treaties, Tishominko and U.S. Sub-Agent John Allen were arrested under state law and detained in the Monroe County (Mississippi) jail.

At his trial in November 1832, Tishominko claimed the peddlers were prohibited by treaty from doing business within Chickasaw territory. Not surprisingly, the jury found Tishominko guilty of violating state law and fined him and John Allen almost \$500. The state of Mississippi asserted its authority over federal law, just after the tribe had signed the Treaty with the U.S. and Chickasaw of 1832 (Treaty of Pontotoc Creek).

The case was appealed. John Allen secured his bond and George and James Colbert acted as sponsors. When the appeal was heard in Jackson, Mississippi, in January 1837, the guilty verdict was upheld.

Tishominko was admired for his integrity and wisdom, and he was a well-respected leader. Tishominko led by example, often heading into battle alongside his fellow Chickasaw warriors. The influential leader also served with special distinction in the U.S. military. Tishominko took part in signing several historic treaties throughout his lifetime.

He presided as leader of the Tishomingo District until the Chickasaws were forced to remove to lands in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma). It is believed that Tishominko completed the journey to Indian Territory during Removal and died in 1838 within the Choctaw Nation, Indian Territory, at an advanced age.

Today, the capital city of the Chickasaw Nation, Tishomingo, carries the name of this influential leader. Tishominko's likeness is featured on the Great Seal of the Chickasaw Nation, proudly symbolizing what it means to be Chickasaw.

Accomplishments:

- Served with distinction in the U.S. military, including the Battle of Fallen Timbers, the Red Stick Conflict with the Muscogee (Creeks)/the War of 1812 in the 39th U.S. Infantry.
- Principle signatory of the Treaty with the U.S. and Chickasaw of 1816 (also known as Treaty of the Chickasaw Council House), the Treaty with the U.S. and Chickasaw of 1818 (also known as Treaty of Old Town) and the Treaty with the U.S. and Chickasaw of 1832 (also known as Treaty of Pontotoc Creek).
- Exercised Chickasaw treaty rights by confiscating goods from illegal American traders.
- Tishomingo, Oklahoma, and Tishomingo County, Mississippi, are named after him.
- Inducted into the Chickasaw Hall of Fame in 2011.

Tishominko image by Chickasaw artist, Mike Larsen.