

oksifoshi' chomak aapofa' pipe tomahawk

LEFT SIDE: forged iron, wood, metal inlay, pigment
NMAI Object 00/7319

Tomahawks, and pipe tomahawks in particular, became powerful symbols for American Indians and colonials by the eighteenth century.⁹ Archaeological, textual, and visual evidence, including paintings, suggest pipe tomahawks became a much desired trade item among American Indians by the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁰ The first textual evidence that explicitly mentions pipe tomahawks dates to 1748, from the journal of the German Moravian bishop Johannes von Watterville. The entry details a blacksmith named Anton Schmidt who was working at the native town Shamokin (located in present-day New York State) through the sponsorship of the Moravians, at the request of Oneida headman Shickellamy. Schmidt repaired the Indians' guns and forged hatchets for them without charge, but required pay for the newly fashionable "tobacco pipes with an attached hatchet, (which are presently the new fashion among the Indians)."¹¹

As blacksmiths were sent to live with the various tribes by colonial governments, including the Spanish, the French, and the English, it is only natural to assume that some Indians learned the trade. This pipe tomahawk is known to be the work of such a Chickasaw blacksmith, working under the tutelage of a British blacksmith.¹²

Acquired by the Heye Foundation in 1906, it is the only object in the NMAI Chickasaw collections with a relatively complete provenance including ownership by Chickasaw persons known by name and documented in the historical record, and one of only two objects not collected directly by Mark Raymond Harrington. The Joseph L. Jones collection notes state that: "(T)his tomahawk was made about 1765 by a Chickasaw Indian blacksmith taught the trade by a blacksmith of the British agent to the Chickasaws [sic] before the American Revolution of 1776. [Note that a

William Kemp was a British trader and agent to the Chickasaw in Mississippi from c. 1766 to 1787]. It belonged to Kemp, a "half-breed" chief of the Chickasaw, who killed a Creek warrior at the battle of Oak Tibbeehah (sp?) fought between the Indian tribes. It then belonged to the second Kemp (son of Chief Kemp), who was also a chief and who killed a panther with it. After the second Kemp's death, Judge Brooks of Pontotoc, Mississippi, purchased it from Kemp's negro for \$10 and presented it to Reverend Edward Fontaine in 1838. Jones does not mention how or when he acquired the tomahawk."¹³

Many facts about this pipe tomahawk are undisputed. It was made by a Chickasaw blacksmith who trained under a British blacksmith. It was created between 1765 and 1800.¹⁴ It was owned by two of the earliest progenitors of the Kemp family, a mixed-blood Chickasaw family that played a prominent role in Chickasaw politics before and after the tribe's removal, and whose members continue to play an active part in tribal political and cultural life.¹⁵ It was sold by an African slave owned by the Kemp family to a judge in Pontotoc, Mississippi, who in turn gave it to Reverend Edward Fontaine, who played an active role in surveying the Chickasaw land holdings prior to removal. The pipe tomahawk was later acquired by Dr. Joseph L. Jones, an American physician and active collector of American Indian objects, whose widow sold it to George Gustav Heye in 1906.

