

LOKSI HILHA

TURTLE DANCE

The Choctaw people honored the animals because they were almost totally dependent on them. Many of the tribal dances that are performed, derived from imitations of various birds, insects, mammals and reptiles.

Choctaw dances are divided into three categories: social, animal and war. Dances that honor animals and fowls are called: Duck Dance, Mosquito Dance, Quail Dance, Raccoon Dance, Snake Dance, Tick Dance, Turkey Dance, and the Turtle Dance. Each of the animal dances has its own special significance.

The following information is about the Turtle Dance, Loksi Hilha. This creature was honored and admired for its tenacity, long life, and as a food source. There are several shokka annopa (stories and myths) about the turtle. Some examples are the Turtle and the Turkey, Turtle and the Ants, and Turtle and the Rabbit.

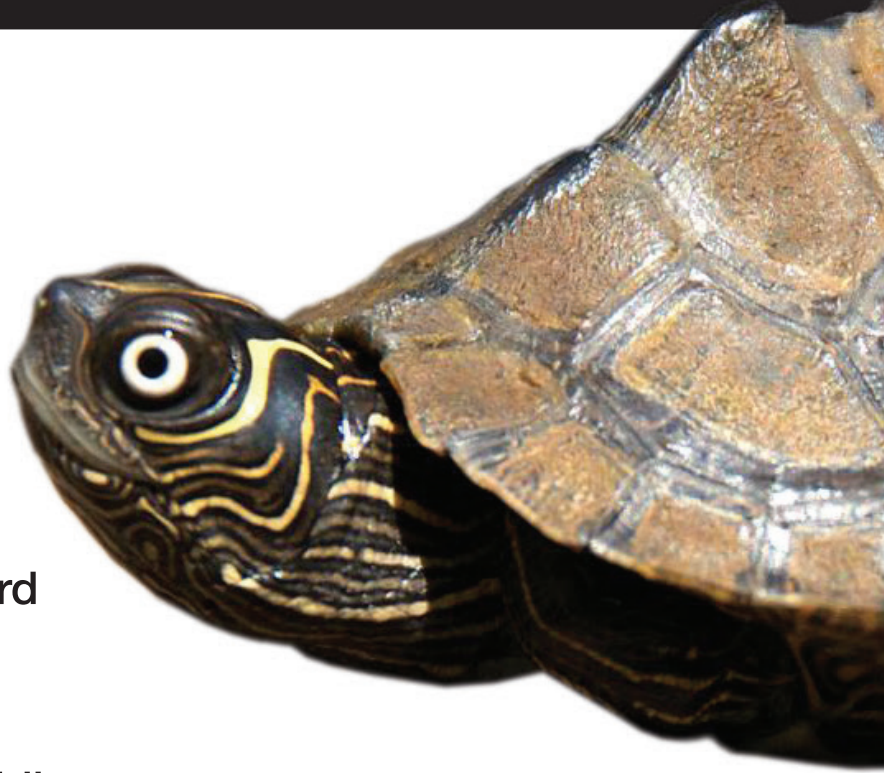
The following is a description of the Turtle Dance (from the Choctaw Cultural Affairs Program): “The dancers form two lines; a line of boys and a line of girls facing each other. The dancers hook elbows or link arms, with the person beside them. The lines should be from 15 to 25 feet apart if possible. Dancers remain standing in this position during the first few phrases of music. When the chanter is voice goes high, the boys’ line, in a straight row, moves across to the girls’ line, and then both lines move back and forth together, facing each other, about two feet apart. The lines change direction each time the chanting voice pitches high. The step used is a hopping step. When hopping forward, the dancers should have their weight on their left leg while their right foot advances three or four inches in front of the left, with the right heel slightly off the ground. When hopping backward, the dancers will have their weight on their right leg and hop with the left foot in front of the right leg, with the left heel raised slightly off the ground. The dancers should hop up and down together and to the rhythm of the music/chant.”



Practice at Home

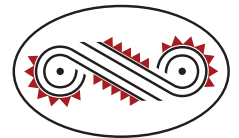
WORDS AND PHRASES

- loksi - turtle
- loksi hakshop – turtle shell
- hilha - dance
- shakba ᵢ shokani - elbow
- ittihoklih – hook together
- toloblih/toloplih - hop
- tikba iyah - go forward
- walhpílat iyah - go backward
- iyyi isht ᵗhi - right foot
- iyyi isht hafábik - left foot
- Loksi yat lomah. Turtle is hiding.
- Chiyyi isht ᵗhi ishit toloblih. Hop with your right foot.
- Chiyyi isht hafábik ishit toloplih. Hop with your left foot.



Insert from the Choctaw Cultural Curriculum - Choctaw Culture/Dances.

For more information contact the
Choctaw Tribal Language Program: (601) 650 - 7440



Resources:

Choctaw Cultural Affairs Program, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Choctaw, Mississippi.

Choctaw Indian Music, The Frances Densmore Collection, Choctaw Archives Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indian, Choctaw, Mississippi

Howard James H., and Levine, Victoria Lindsey. Choctaw Music and Dance, University of Oklahoma Press, Norman, Oklahoma, 1990.

Joe, Bobby. Chanter, Summer Choctaw Language Immersion Camps 1999, 2001. Choctaw Tribal Language Program,

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians, Choctaw, Mississippi.

Lewis, Thallis. Choctaw Directions for The Traditional Choctaw Dances. Choctaw Culture Coordinator, Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians Philadelphia, Mississippi, 1990.

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Page 1: https://www.wildlifedepartment.com/sites/default/files/styles/large_16_9_1280x720_/public/2022-04/MississippiMapTurtle_SteveWebber.jpg?h=2e3eca71&itok=pcwBLTjG