



# Horns and Trumpets of the Pacific Islands

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# Introduction

The earliest forms of instruments date back to the times of the Neanderthals and continue to be a prevalent part of all cultures around the world today. In the Pacific, these instruments served multiple purposes for music, signaling, and cultural gatherings. The people of the Pacific showed resourcefulness by exclusively using local materials to create a wide variety of instruments. For our research, we decided to narrow our focus on horns and trumpets from the Pacific islands. We used online museum databases to find a collection of over 30 artifacts to aid our research. We also utilized articles and books that discussed the instruments and music of the area. Our objective of this research is to explore the relationship between the materials of the instrument and where it was found in order to form a hypothesis on trends we may discover from our findings.



## Research Question and Background

From exploring online databases we have found that the earliest forms of trumpets and horns were made from shell, wood, and bamboo in the Pacific Islands. Most of these artifacts were found in the Melanesia and Polynesia regions, specifically from countries such as Papua New Guinea and Samoa. The most common form of horns were made from bamboo.

Our question looks to explore the earliest forms of horns and trumpets from Pacific Islands and what the materials of these instruments can tell us about the location of where it was made. We predict the instruments made from various shells originated closer to coastal cities, whereas instruments made from wood, bamboo, or other materials originated in more forested areas located inland.



## Methods of Procedure

We explored two different online museum databases, the Museum of Anthropology at the University of British Columbia (MOACAT) database and the American Museum of Natural History (AMNH) database. We used filters to narrow our parameters, searching specifically for horns or trumpets, in the Pacific Islands region. We noted down what the horn or trumpet was called, what materials it was made of and where it was found.

# Collection of Pacific Horns and Trumpets

Instrument	Material	Location
Didgeridoo (2)	Wood, Paint	Australia
Putona	Triton Shell	Polynesia, Marquesas Islands
Toul	Wood	Papua New Guinea
Milamalamu	Conch Shell	Papua New Guinea, Gulf, Manekea
Tawi	Triton Shell	Micronesia: Yap
Oguk	Triton Shell	Federated States of Micronesia, Caroline Islands
Trumpet, Bird's Head	Other/Unknown	Melanesia, Papua New Guinea
Tubular Trumpet	Bamboo	Melanesia, Bougainville Island

Wood, Didgeridoo



Triton Shell Trumpet, Oguk



# Collection of Pacific Horns and Trumpets

Instrument	Material	Location
Horn (10)	Bamboo	Melanesia, New Guinea, Indonesia
Horn	Whelk Shell	Melanesia, Republic of Vanuatu
Trumpet (4)	Bamboo	Melanesia, Sarua group
Trumpet (5)	Bamboo	Melanesia, New Guinea,
Horn	Bamboo, feather, bark	Melansia, Papua New Guinea
Horn	Gourd	Melanesia, Papua New Guinea
Trumpet (2)	Shell	Melanesia, Papua New Guinea, Kaup
Trumpet (3)	Conch Shell	Polynesia, Samoa,

Gourd



Conch Shell

Bamboo





## Discussion: Summary of Findings

We predicted that instruments made from various shells originated closer to coastal cities, whereas instruments made from wood, bamboo, or other materials originated in more forested areas. Our hypothesis was supported with artifacts made from various shells such as conch and triton. Trumpets made from triton shells were found in Polynesia and Micronesia such as the Marquesas Islands and Caroline Islands. Trumpets made from conch shells were found in Samoan islands and in Papua New Guinea near the gulf. Our hypothesis was not supported with the location of wooden and bamboo horns and trumpets. These artifacts were found in a variety of locations the majority being islands and coastal cities. A group of five bamboo horns were found in New Guinea in a part of the Asmat Region, located on the southwest coast. Two wooden Didgeridoo were found in Australia near the Arunta tribe which is located inland in the desert region.



## Discussion: Interpretation of Results

Our initial thought was that only artifacts made from shells would be found at the coast. However, the fact that many horns and trumpets made from bamboo were found both potentially near the coast, as well as inland lead to some questions. The shells were obviously found near the coast, that is where the shell materials would be located. But, the bamboo we assumed and predicted would be found more inland but, that was not always the case. This could mean that there was trade going on, or the local fauna had more forest leading up to the water than we were aware of. It could also be a combination of both. It would be interesting to look at and study further if there was any correlation between the different peoples and the horns and trumpets they used of the same materials. I think it is important to note, that the museum databases we used did not always give a specific place for where the artifact was found. It sometimes gave a region, and sometimes it was just a country. This made some of our findings come down to guesswork, and trying to find out exactly where these regions were located in the larger country.





## Discussion: Implications of Findings

- Ideas for Further Research
  - Studying designs on certain trumpets and horns to see if there are any similarities in multiple areas which might suggest trade
  - Studying instruments outside of just trumpets and horns (such as drums)
  - Researching further into what these instruments were used for and how they were used differently in various cultures
  - Local climates in the areas where bamboo and wooden horns and trumpets were found to determine if the materials were locally made or were a product of trade



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