

Do Post-Contact Changes in Hunting Tools Reflect European Influence on Indigenous Culture?

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Introduction

Our world has many unique historically important cultures. Some have been lost in time, some are still practiced just as they were long ago, and some have adapted to our modern era. It is important to learn about these past cultures and how they have changed overtime. With our world always changing, we seek to know how other cultures influence each other, and what types of changes occur. For this project, we analyzed artifacts from three different cultures: Solomon Islanders of the South Pacific; the Inuit, of northern Canada & Alaska; and the Wixárika (aka the Huichol) of western Mexico. We believe changes in indegenous culture due to European influence are reflected in the things they use, and, through the analysis of hunting tools, we can determine whether or not our hypothesis is correct.

Research Question & Background

European colonization impacted Indigenous cultures across the globe. Some Native peoples actively fought against colonization, while others were more tolerant, and some had no choice. Almost all Indigenous peoples contacted by Europeans adopted at least some aspects of European culture, things like Christianity, European language, or clothing. But to what extent did European influence reshape Indigenous cultures? Was it something that could be measured? We decided to look for archaeological evidence in everyday items used by Indigenous people.

Our Research Question: Are changes in indigenous hunting tools a direct measure of European influence on Indigenous culture?

Methods

Materials & Location

To test our hypothesis, we compiled data from credible online sources, primarily the WCC Library Database and the Smithsonian Institution Online Collection. We collected peer-reviewed articles and photographs of artifacts from all three cultures: Solomon Island fishhooks; Wixárika bows & arrows; and Inuit hunting tools. We examined each artifact, noting the materials from which it was made and any changes in design.

Procedure

To research and test our hypothesis, we scoured the internet for credible sources that would give us information on the fishing tools of the Solomon Islanders, the Inuit, and hunting tools for the Huichol people as well as information on how these items have changed and what might have caused them to change. After this, we took out information and compiled it together so we could compare our findings which gave us the information we used to create this poster.

Hunting Tools

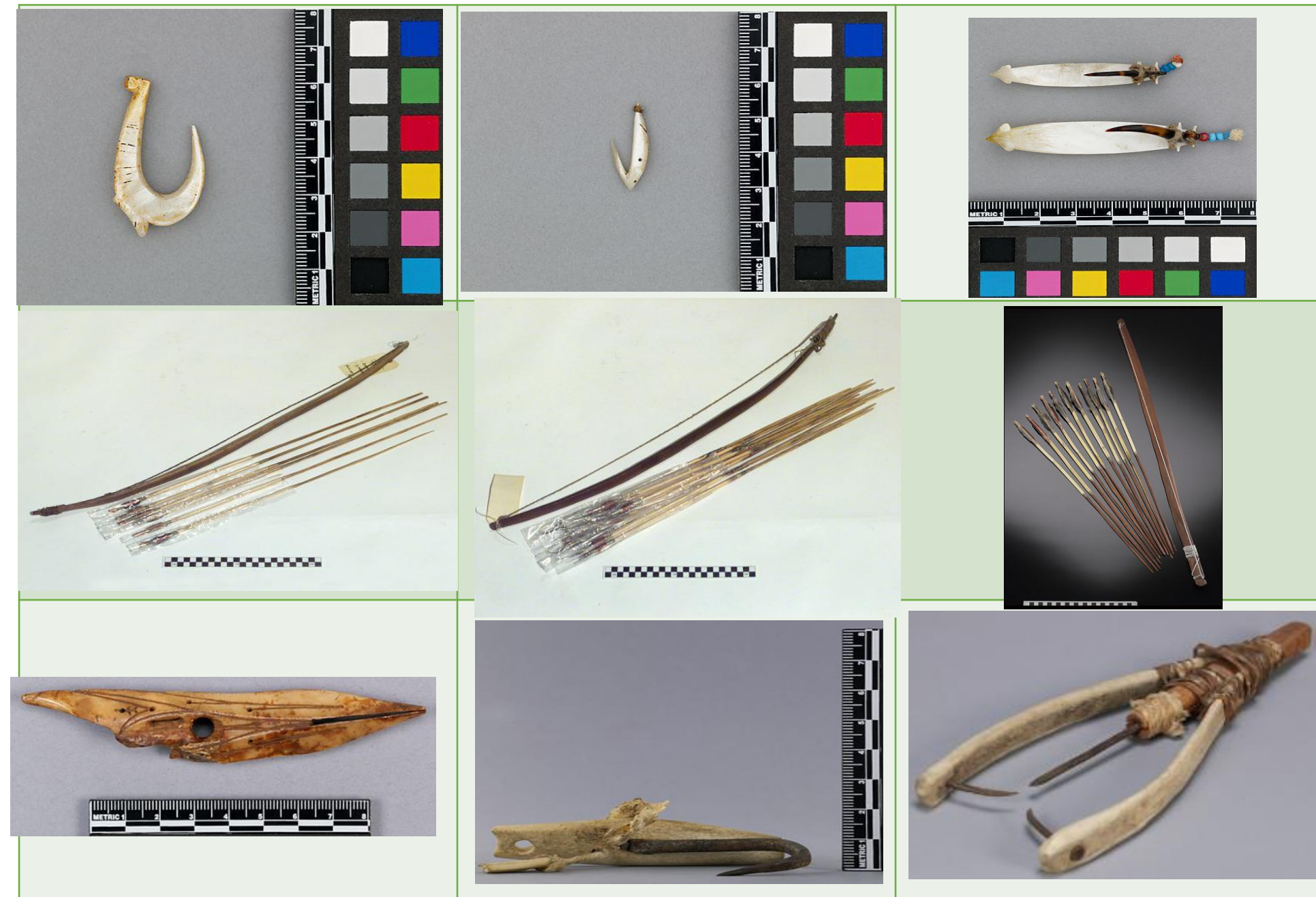


Table 1.

Top Row: Solomon Island fish hooks

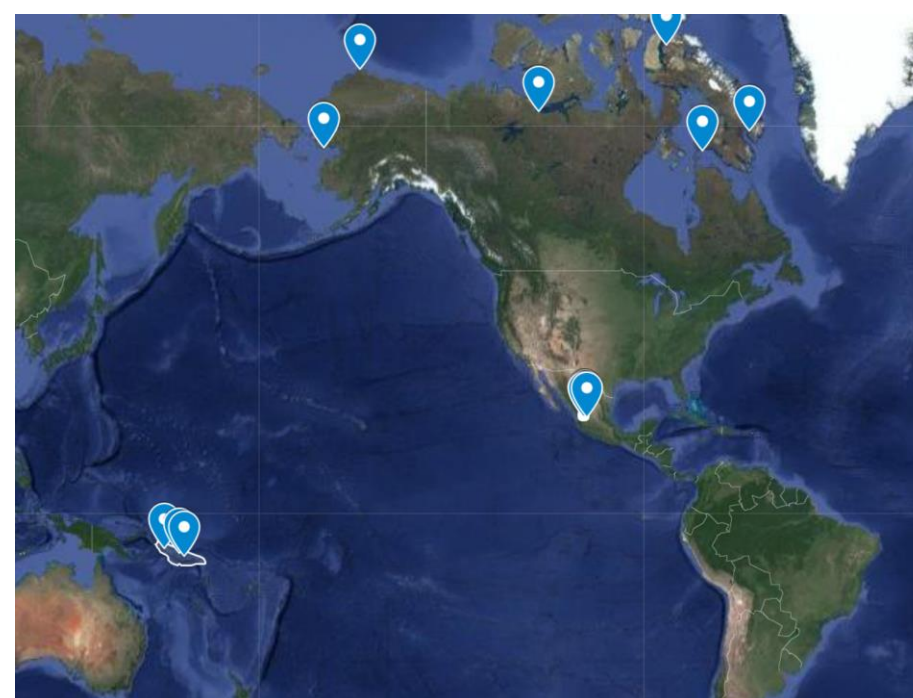
Middle Row: Wixárika bows & arrows: (L) collected 1923; (C) collected 1937; (R) collected 2003 (Smithsonian Institute, 2020)

Bottow Row: Inuit fishing tools: (L) traditional harpoon head; (C) fish hook; (R) fishing spear (Smithsonian Institute, 2020)

Post-Contact Indigenous Tools

	Solomon Islands	Wixárika	Inuit
Total Tools Examined	25	30	43
Use of Metal	0	0	Unknown
Design Changes	0	0	Unknown
Number of Tools Showing Changes	0	0	Unknown
Percentage of Tools Showing European Influence	0	0	Unknown

[Interactive Map of the Solomon Islands and select Inuit & Wixárika communities.](#)



Discussion: Interpretations, Implications & Limitations

From the data we collected, the Solomon Islands were colonized in 1568, but we did not see evidence that colonization changed the hunting tools they still use today. The Wixárika (Huichol) first encountered Europeans in 1531, but our research shows no changes in Huichol hunting tools. However, our research did reveal changes in Inuit fishing tools after European contact in the mid-16th century.

Our research yielded some very interesting results. We found that the Solomon Islanders were first contacted by a Spanish explorer but colonized by the British for use as a labor force. However, the Solomon Island culture did not adopt European fishing methods (Britannica). We also found negligible changes in Wixárika hunting tools. We believe this is because of their rejection of the outside world. Around the time of the arrival of the Spanish, the Huichol moved deeper into the Sierra Madre Mountains, where they still live in semi-autonomous communities today. The Wixárika resisted the Roman Catholic Church and have kept their traditional belief system firmly in place (Journal of Latin American Studies). Through their independence and isolation, they’ve maintained much of their traditional culture since contact. The third culture we researched had some different results. After analyzing 43 artifacts, we found that there were changes in the materials used for the Inuit tools. Their harpoons were originally made from wood, animal bone, and ivory but after trade was established with Europeans, the Inuit started using copper and iron to make the harpoons more durable and efficient (Smithsonian Institution). Looking at our hypothesis, we can see that only one of the three cultures changed their hunting tools after European contact. These results led us to believe that, while cultures can influence each other, there are most likely a number of variables that determine what, if any, cultural changes occur.

Our research supports our hypothesis that the level of influence from European culture is reflected in changes of Indigenous hunting tools. Future research in this area might include trying to determine which classes of objects are more likely to reflect that influence, for example: clothing, building materials, art, etc. In our study, two of the three cultures had extended contact with more than one European culture. The Solomon Islands were occupied by the Germans & British, and the Canadian Inuit have had extended contact with both English-speaking and French-speaking cultures. Perhaps future researchers can investigate which European cultures had greater influence over Indigenous cultures and why. Though our research reveals changes in Indigenous cultures due to contact with non-Indigenous cultures, we are unable to determine whether those changes are voluntary. More research is needed in this area.

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