“And they make their *rescates*, exchanging a plate of fruit for a pot of stew; buy some salt with agi pepper, buy some meat with maize, and so on. In this way, they all get what they need in exchange for their surplus goods… It is done in the following way: the Indian women put all their goods, or part of them if they are fruits or things of this nature, in small piles arranged in a row… The Indian woman who comes to buy with her maize instead of money sits very slowly next to the one selling and makes a small pile of maize with which she plans to pay for what she is buying…The one who is selling looks at the maize, and if she thinks it is too little, she does not say a word… which from beginning to end are never spoken, even if the transaction lasts half an hour, but rather by deeds. The seller reaches with her hand and brings the maize toward her.”

On the subject of economic exchange in the Andes (Cobo 1979 [1653]:34-35)

**Introduction**

The Early Intermediate Period is an age of regional florescence in artistic styles. What had been somewhat unified under the Chavín cultural sequence now fractured into many local styles with a distinct similarity from the beginning. The period immediately after the collapse of the Chavín sequence, trade and exchange decreased dramatically. During this period the Huarás, Gallinazo, and Salinar cultures experimented and developed their regional style largely in isolation from one another. After around AD 500 trade increased in volume, variety, and distance. These local styles were now found abroad and in new contexts as the Recuay and Moche became close trading partners and rivals. Later, the trade would come to focus on the rising Wari culture. What followed was some conquests, but more cultural exchange. The Wari Chullpa burial and Wari artistic motif predated any direct confrontation between the cultures.

From the these early cultures the Recuay and Moche emerged as the dominant material culture in their respective highland and lowland niches. Highlands Kaolin represents a zenith of material and local craftsmanship. Ceramics of this era were among the finest produced in the Callejón. Coastal cultures too experimented and their styles developed significantly in this era in time producing the impeccable Moche fineware unrivaled in its time and place. Both cultures took to representing their worldviews, ideologies, mythologies, and places on their arts. The Recuay made beautiful models of cities and showed the Amaru serpent. There is also the enigmatic “moon animal” and the widely distributed “crested animal” both shown in varying contexts and representing something specific.

The Recuay were both producers of final products as well as materials for export. Kaolin vessels and raw clay were prized in the interfaces of Moche and Recuay cultures. Camelid wool from Recuay and highland pastures made their way to the coasts. In time, Obsidian traveled through the Recuay highlands into the Moche coastal valleys, the longest distance trading network the Recuay were enmeshed with. Of particular importance were coca leaves, only cultivatable in the highlands and with evidence for trade to all corners of the Andes. There are artistic and archaeological manifestations of the coca trade which further reinforce the trade networks visible.

Taken together the Early Intermediate Period does reflect a period of intense changes. The collapse of the great pan-Andean structures of Chavín left many peoples in relative isolation and so regional styles manifested out of that base history. But as the new styles emerged, trade eventually resumed and these materials became markers of alterity and a manifestation of cultural contact. Trade networks only grew larger and more prosperous until the Wari expansion took and fundamentally reworked these networks in orbit around their own heartland.

**Recuay Material Culture Exchange and Networks**

Early in the archaeological investigations of the Recuay, the Recuay were treated as one of many unique regional ceramic styles. Though early researchers understood the Recuay were in the same geographic region as the Chavín sequence, they also found they were unable to identify the relationship in the sequence. The distinct Recuay style of pottery was post-Chavín, but how long, or how closely related was unknown (Bennett 1943:324). Early in the archaeological investigation into the Recuay, the discussion was dominated by attempts to answer these questions and place the Recuay into the Pan-Andean Chavín sequence.

From the collapse of Chavín to around AD 500 the highlands fractured into a wealth of regional styles, sometimes referred to as a mosaic (Lau 2013: 33). During this time the Recuay and preceding Huaráz were largely insular, a commonwealth of polities (Lau 2011: 16). There is limited evidence for communication or trade outside the highlands and the political and social structures remain unclear (Lau 2012:28). The best evidence for exchange outside the Recuay highlands in this era comes from the Gallinazo. Gallinazo black on redware are found occasionally in the highlands, and Recuay ceramic bottle forms are occasionally found in the Viru Valley (Lau 2011: 246).

After AD 500 there is an incredible increase in trade both with the coast and with other highlands groups. Two main trade routes seem to be along the Callejón itself and through the Cordillera Negra (Lau 2012: 28). From the period between AD 500-600, the primary exchange was costal, with Moche Blackwares being highly valued among the Recuay (Lau 2012: 27). Though the Moche were known for combat imagery and seem to have fought with their neighbors, they also are known to trade with their neighbors. In the Chao Valley, north of the Callejón, the Santa Rita B site produced strong evidence of Moche and Recuay ceramic trade. Around AD 500 the Moche controlled the valley, having claimed or pacified the Gallinazo (Schwartz 2010: 13). The Santa Rita B site was framed as a trade post, evidenced by a wealth of Moche, Recuay, and other ceramics present. It is also located on the floodplain and may be the only place a city could possibly be built in the immediate area (Schwartz 2010: 8).

Out of 190 sherds sampled from Santa Rita B, around 3% were Recuay styled (Schwartz 2010: 13). When these were analyzed by X-Ray Fluorescence for chemical signature, the pieces of Kaolin ceramic were mostly made in a local Kaolin deposit. Critically six ceramics were made of this local Kaolin using Recuay form and motif (Schwartz 2010: 50). The implication of these findings supports the hypothesis of a rich trade network. Whoever made these Recuay ceramics in local clay would likely have been either a member of the Recuay culture or have traveled enough in the highlands to acquire the style and skill. Either case solidifies the understanding of an enmeshed Recuay and Moche trade network north and west of the Callejón (Schwartz 2010: 58). This finding introduces the chance of members of the Recuay culture making Recuay ceramics in foreign lands. Now the Recuay can’t be seen as members of a culture at one end of the network, but as actors in many facets at many locations.

The Nepeña Valley was a defined Highland-Coast interface during much of their early and later histories. There are many discrete sites showing only one culture’s influence, but also many which showed evidence of direct interaction (Proulx 1968: 27-28). The Moche inhabited the floor of the Nepeña Valley starting around AD 300 (Chicoine 2011: 535). There were 42 sites in the Nepeña Valley with Recuay ceramics. Most were hilltop settlements with architectural traits similar those found in the Callejón de Huaylas. These two traits introduced a clear cultural continuity with other sites in the highlands (Proulx 1982: 87-88). Significantly the Huancarpón site, the most monumental in the entire Nepeña Valley, contained the fired kaolin ceramics, galleries, and lithics associated with the highland Recuay (Proulx 1982: 86-87).

Ceramic vessels and especially Kaolin materials were exchanged or traded through the Nepeña Valley and many of these sites show a mixing of Recuay and Moche materials (Proulx 1982:88). In the Nepeña Valley Recuay potters made few local modifications to their style; though there were local artists they created ceramics within their cultural style (Proulx 1968: 39). Conversely the Nepeña Valley was on the southern periphery of the Moche world. Moche inspired vessels made locally were frequently influenced by the local Salinar style more than the Moche heartland (Proulx 1968: 38). The Salinar were another coastal culture emerging out of the Chavín cultural sequence. They were early in building fortified villages and became adept at metallurgy and ceramics during the early part of the Early Intermediate Period (Moseley 1992: 162-164).

At the Huambacho site, only eight kilometers from the Pacific coast in the Nepeña Valley, there is an unusual burial identified. The majority of valley floor burials are clearly Moche, either through grave goods or through sacrifice of captives (Chicoine 2011: 528). This single burial is unique for having no ceramic vessels, but simple cotton clothing and a leather bag with coca leaf. There was also a feline headdress and a pointed mace weapon (Chicoine 2011: 537). These features together have been identified as a highland individual, likely Recuay. The individuals were in excellent condition and accompanied by diverse grave goods. Grave 10 and 11 at the site contained the individuals associated with the highlands. Though both were associated with foreign Recuay materials and burial customs, there was scarce evidence of perimortem trauma or pathology to indicate violent deaths (Chicoine 2011: 535,539-541). This individual is evidence for the contact between Recuay and Moche peoples which is not overtly related to any combat. A likely explanation is this is a foreign merchant or traveler who died abroad and was buried at Huambacho (Chicoine 2011: 543). Together, these show the Moche and Recuay as actors in trade, and sheds some light on the complexity of the relationship. There is ritual combat and sacrifice, but also co-habitation and mutually beneficial relationships.

There is evidence for interaction in an even wider network. The Moche and Lambayque each represented highlanders in ceramics. These are generally identified by their non-coastal dress, including ornaments such as musical drums and labrets (Cordy-Collins 1002: 247). Though these representations are difficult to identify to a source, they are unmistakably highlanders. The figures carry drums foreign to the Moche coast and sacks with coca. These features indicate a northern Ecuador culture, likely La Tolita or Jama-Coaque both of whom are shown persistently in Moche arts wearing labrets (Cordy-Collins 2001: 254). Though these labret wearing foreigners likely do not represent the Recuay, they are evidence of the network the Recuay were a part of, albeit via the Moche. The people were interacting with cultures across the Andes, but not part of a pan-Andean sequence, merely as a function of exchange and representation.

The final key in Recuay material exchange is their eventual decline and supplantation by the Wari. By around AD 800 the highlands were inundated with Wari cultural materials and techniques for ceramic production. This era represents a broad cultural transformation from local autonomous styles and material culture to one dominated by foreign status goods (Lau 2016: 153-154). The motifs were changed slowly, starting even before the Wari expansion through trade. In time many icons of the older trading network were all but replaced by Wari expansion from the south (Giersz and Makowski 2014: 291). After AD 700 the Wari began to dominate the material trade as Wari polychrome ceramics became highly valued. The Wari also traded in *Spondylus,* turquoise, and obsidian (Lau 2012: 29-30). The Chullpa burial monument had expanded with the trade networks and by this era was the primary means of burial in the Recuay highlands (Lau 2012:41 and 2016:155-157).

By AD 800, the Wari had changed every cultural trajectory in the highlands. The Recuay styles had diminished and the sites were firmly transformed by the Wari bundle (Lau 2012: 32-33). Trade surged and Wari ceramics are found throughout the Callejón. Wari style finewares were also emulated using local materials and techniques (Lau 2012: 32). The largest Wari site in the Callejón is Honcopampa. This site was a Recuay village built around AD 400. Though there is abundant evidence of Wari materials, the architecture remained largely unchanged. Only two of the trademark Wari D-Shaped structures are present at Honcopampa (Lau 2012: 36-37). Critically, the Wari motif did not fully supersede the Recuay. Feline motifs and zoomorphs persisted long after the Recuay (Lau 2012: 40). This understanding of a Wari bundle gives an image closer to what is observed throughout the highlands: diffusion and synthesis of Recuay and Wari material culture.  
**Ceramic Exchange**

The Recuay had a distinct ceramic tradition characterised by Kaolin finewares with distinct highland motifs. One Recuay ceramic motif found not infrequently on fineware vessels is the so called moon animal. The context for this strange creature was not well known. Moon animals usually consist of a feline motif often with many other motifs around it. One common one is the guardian moon animal. The moon animal takes on many forms across representations. One version has human male figures accompanying or flanked by the moon animal. Another shows a human figure accompanying llamas with a moon animal adjacent. (Hohmann 2003). The moon animal is likely part of supernatural or ritual structures as it is shown highly stylized in some cases such as a rounded head with four moon animal emanations found on a sherd at Pashash (Figure XXX).

A black and white logo

Description automatically generated with low confidenceremember to modify

**figure XXX** Head with emanations, sherd 12/7 from Grieder 1978:139

There were a distinct similarity in style and decorative motifs between the Recuay and Moche. There are even a few hybrid vessels which exhibit styles from both cultures (Reichert 1982: 281). One of the most important motifs which appeared in Recuay, Moche, Gallinazo, and many cultures was the crested animal. generally show a jaguar or puma feline. Critically there is a divergence in how the creature is portrayed. The Recuay depicted primarily two-dimensional felines on their vessels. In some cases they are depicted in subordinate or even supporting positions to human figures. Other depictions show the creature anthropomorphized wearing checkered tunics (Reichert 1982:286-288). In addition the Salinar and Gallinazo used the crested animal in their ceramic motif along the coasts. Their styles included anthropomorphic depictions and carrying weapons or sacrificial knives. These depictions became common in later coastal Moche manifestations of the crested animal (Lau 2011:247). Moche iconography shows the same crested animal in a three-dimensional representation. Rather than a decorative motif of a crested animal, the Moche shaped entire vessels as the great felines. (Reichert 1982: 286-288). **I SHOULD GET PICS**

These motifs may not be evidence of cultural contact in the Early Intermediate Period, but rather a manifestation of the earlier diffusion of the Chavín style during the Early Horizon. The crested animal motif seemed to spread with the Chavín religion throughout the Andes. As the ancestral Chavín style declined and fractured, successors including the Huaraz, Gallinazo, Moche, and Recuay retained the style of the crested animal. Though the Recuay and Moche were distinct cultures, both were influenced by the ancestral Chavín styles. This is further reinforced by the rarity of true hybrid vessels, indicating diffusion of the technique, but sharing the motif, implying a possible common origin (Reichert 1982: 190-191). But as the style continued and other cultures developed, the crested animal appears to take on divergent meanings in the region (Lau 2011:247).

Among their most technically impressive are representations of Recuay cities and architecture complete with miniature warriors on parapets, and drummers in cities. Warriors tend to be displayed bearing shields and clubs. Occasionally these figures will be displayed in rich adornments carrying staffs and trophy heads (Cromphout 2017:38). Musicians are depicted with drums, pipes, and flutes of the highland style. Both male and females are shown as musicians, though whenever the musician is shown adjacent warriors he is always a male and wears a helm akin to other warriors (Cromphout 2017: 47-48). Recuay ceramic motif shows a trend of stratification with respect to wealth of ornamentation and ritualized combat though less understood than the Moche ritual combat (Cromphout 2017: 32-33).

Moche elites typically represent their worldviews on their finewares. Representations of the Moche, and their predecessor Gallinazo, represented mostly male figures in their art (Wolosyn 2011: 85-86). Sometimes they were warriors or prisoners, shown with some weapons and associated paraphernalia. These could have been scenes from a literal battle, scenes from a mythical battle, scenes from a ritualized form of combat, or scenes from an execution. Warriors identifiable as foreigners are relatively common, the key is that the Moche could identify their own people and the outsiders (Wolosyn 2011: 93).

**Non Ceramic Exchange**

Supplementing this distribution of ceramic and motif is Obsidian. Obsidian is traded archaeologically as a status good, but also has distinct chemical signatures from the very creation of the stone. There are several sources of Obsidian in the highlands, and it became a trade good we can observe as it moves around the landscape. The Chavín were unique in their heavy usage of obsidian. As the Recuay became central, obsidian declined until after the Wari were emerging as trading partners (Burger et.al 2006: 103). At Chinchawas, the period of intense trade with the Wari in AD 700-850 also saw the greatest amount of Obsidian. This Obsidian was chemically sourced to the Quispisisa source which is near Huanca Sancos in the Ayacucho province (Lau 2005: 90). This source is nearly 600 km from the Callejón and thus reflects the long distance trade network the Recuay were entangled in (Burger et.al. 2006:101). During this era the Recuay enjoyed cultural stability and prosperity being connected with such a vast network produced (Burger et.al 2006: 104). As the Wari declined, so too did Chinchawas and the trade network they represented (Burger et.al. 2006: 108). The requisite for such widespread Obsidian so far from the source is an economic advantage for the trade or exchange. In the Callejón this requires stability and prosperity such as the height of Chavín, and the Wari expansion. Nonetheless the Recuay would, at different points in their sequence, trade remarkable distances for it.

Wool was another material traded from the highlands to the coast. The Huaca Santa Clara in the Viru Valley and the Chancay Valley each produced well preserved assemblages of textiles (Szpak et. al. 2015: 451). The textiles in the Viru Valley were spun in local ties and textile technique. The textiles in the Chancay Valley were made in a style associated with the highlands (Szpak et. al. 2015: 455-456). Though there were local textile styles, the sources of the camelid wool were not from these areas. The samples have an isotopic signature of the highlands, and not to the wool found in the Viru Valley. The samples from Chancay resembled closely the isotopic signature of textiles from a sample of camelids recovered at the Chinchawas site in particular (Szpak et. al. 2015: 455). Other highland materials traded great distances include coca, mineral ores, and Kaolin (Szpak et. al. 2015: 457).

**Conflict**

There are two major sources of conflict within the Early Intermediate Period in the highlands. One is the age-old conflict between coastal lowlanders who spread along valley floors, and the highlanders. This manifested throughout the first millennia AD in confrontations between the Recuay and Moche (Arkush andStanish 2005:15-16). The other is the conflict spurred on by the expansion of the Wari into the highlands after AD 650 (Arkush and Stanish 2005: 12). There are several lines of evidence used to discuss conflict in this era: violent pathologies, settlement orientation, and representative combat imagery. Relatively little evidence of combat is visible throughout the Recuay world. Most of what is known and interpreted comes from more indirect methods such as representations in ceramic and statue, or the presence of vast walls around the hilltop cities (Lau 2000:181-182).

The Recuay and the Wari after dwelled in hilltop settlements. These are sites which are difficult to access from the valley floor and tend to have walls and other defensive structures (Arkush and Tung 2013: 25). The large Recuay settlement at Yayno included extensive fortifications. These fortifications encompassed the town and the population density (Lau 2010: 425). Residential compounds were large circular and quadrangular buildings with multiple individual residences within. These structures were connected together with terraces and causeways. The walls are able to limit and direct the flow of people through the city, towards distinctive plazas and causeways with gates and parapets (Lau 2010: 431-434). There were no weapons or points found along the walls (Lau 2010: 436). There are thirty peripheral communities within five kilometers of Yayno. Down the mountains are a series of drainage trenches which even today slow drainage. The trenches are also possibly part of this buffer ring of villages and other inhibitors to slow the attackers as they approached Yayno (Lau 2010: 428-428).

In reference to Yayno’s architecture as defensive or differentiation of space George Lau concludes: “Yayno’s architecture… is overbuilt if they were only for defensive purposes, and the fortified forms would be unnecessary if they were only ceremonial in function.” (Lau 2010:438). With this assessment in mind, it is probable the walls, parapets, causeways, and plazas of Yayno and the potential buffer ring of villages and trenches were primarily for both functions. These architectural elements both divided space by directing the living through their daily life and also could have been used as defensive structures whenever the need arose. Drainage was likely built into the design as a necessity for habitation in the mountains.

The Moche were known for having incredible combat imagery adorning their walls and ceramics. Until the 1970s, the general consensus was that these imagery indicated a highly militant population (Castillo-Butters 2014: 257-258). As research expanded and developed more examples were uncovered that showed both a commonality in motif as well as a profoundly individualistic aspect. Personal insignias, personal weapons, and anthropomorphic figures showed an individuality to many of the figures represented (Castillo-Butters 2014: 263). Discussions evolved into a division between the ritual combat most often displayed on ceramics and the secular combat associated with the spread of the Moche (Arkush and Tung 2013:23-24).

The ritual combat generally features foreigners depicted with headdresses and weapons not found in the Moche world. These figures were naked save for their headdresses and weapons (Castillo-Butters 2014: 264-265). The secular conflict is generally seen as Moche versus Moche. Commanding resources and trade routes were important facets of the Moche statecraft, and secular conflict allowed one polity to control others (Castillo-Butters 2014: 268-271). A third option could be, much like Homer’s *Iliad,* these are representations or allegories of some mythical or pseudo-historical battle or event (Lau 2004: 174). It is entirely probable the true nature of conflict in the Early Intermediate Period will remain shrouded and interpretive.

In these combat images, the Moche are identifiable by the Moche’s clubs, conical headdresses, and paint or tattoos on their faces. Recuay images are identifiable by having non Moche headdresses, occasionally including display of trophy hands without arms attached. Other Recuay images have rounded helmets or skullcap like hats (Lau 2004: 168-169). Recuay also would be displayed with earplugs and spools in addition to odd crescent shaped ornaments. When the Moche would display Recuay, or general foreigner, they would display the figure otherwise unclothed, a stark contrast with the colored tunics the Moche are depicted wearing (Lau 2004: 170-171). Recuay would bear shields, as corroborated by their miniatures guarding ceramic architectural models, while the Moche would never carry shields. The Recuay also have a distinctive highland star-shaped mace, allowing blunt-forced trauma of a club to become pointed trauma (Lau 2004: 171-172). Nonetheless, the Recuay are depicted in Moche ceramic as defeated, the scenes depict the Moche demolishing their opponents, claiming trophies, and sacrificing their opponents later (Lau 2004: 176-177).

The Wari Empire, Phenomenon, or Cultural Bundle expanded into the Recuay world and throughout the Calleojón. There are Wari influence into the Nasca and Ica Valleys (Cadwallader et.al 2018: 1). Whether by invasion of an empire or expansion of a cultural bundle, the Wari styles of building, mortuary treatment, and material culture would dominate much of the northern Andes. Though their expansion was far reaching, mortuary customs were incorporated rather than changed outright. In the Nasca Valley earlier custom of tombs oriented east to west and bodies deposited in bundles with arms folded across the chest persisted through the Wari incursion (Cadwallader et.al 2018: 9-10).

The Wari expansions resulted in a spreading material culture far and wide in the Andes. They continued building high settlements at hilltops with walls and defensive structures. The Wari era also saw an increase in trophies throughout the highlands and higher rates of cranial trauma (Arkush and Tung 2013: 27-28). Indeed the highest rates of cranial trauma are to be found not in the eras of hilltop forts and cities but in the eras of crisis and of major social changes. For instance, there was a surge in violent pathologies associated with the Inka arrival into the highlands, but once they were established there was a notable decline in violent pathologies at settlements and cities during the Pax Inka (Arkush and Tung 2013: 30-32).

**Coca Trade (I have this separate for now, a case in point)**

The highly valued trade good exclusively from the highlands were Coca leaves. They were used at all elevations as a mild stimulant and pain reliever, which when chewed on was said to enhance vigour and strength. Ethnographically Coca is used in marriages, rites of passage, and many ceremonies. Coca is also used for divination and healing among modern Quechua speaking peoples (Valdez et.al. 2015: 234). It was traded widely in historical and contemporary times. The crop had to be cultivated in the highlands, but below 2600 MASL as the crop is not frost resistant (Valdez et.al. 2015: 231-232).

Ethnohistorically Coca was also used widely. The Spaniards abhorred the practice as an indigenous means of intoxication. Bernabe Cobo referenced the leaves’ role in sacrifices made to the earth. While priests and nobles poured chicha libation from golden cups, many vegetables were offered including coca, red ochre, maize flour, and other fruits. The sacrifices were made sometimes as whole leaves, and sometimes as chewed pieces. The Coca was scattered on top of the sacrifices and then chicha was poured on top of all. These sacrifices appear to have been agricultural rituals to the earth (Cobo 1990 [1653]: 116). Naturally the plant’s role in religious custom, offerings, and mortuary rites made it a prime candidate for persecution as an aspect of idolatry and Satan worship. As time wore on though, the Spaniards learned to profit from the leaves, growing large coca plantations and trading it back to local workers, notably in the great mines at Potosi (Valdez et.al. 2015:232).

Throughout the entire cultural sequences of the Andes, Coca played a significant role in the development of cultures and religions. Coca was likely first cultivated in the Preceramic Phase around 5000-3600 BC likely on the eastern Amazonian slopes of the Andes. As such Chavín and the culture it spread would have had access to Coca. The temple itself is situated on a major trade route through the highlands. Beyond circumstantial there is limited evidence for Coca cultivation itself, but this likely is a survival bias at play more than evidence of disuse (Valdez et.al. 2015: 237).

The Moche and Nasca certainly had access to the crop, despite being coastal and well below where it could be cultivated. There is evidence for periodontal disease among the Moche a direct result of intensive Coca chewing. There have been Coca bags found in the late Classical Nasca, after AD 500 (Valdez et.al. 2015: 238). The Wari grew their Coca in the Apurimac Valley, and some researchers have suggested the need of additional Coca fields as a factor in the eastward expansion of the Wari state. In time the Ayacucho Valley would also be used by the Wari for intensive Coca agriculture, a trend continued through the Inka period (Valdez et.al. 2015:235-236).

During the Early Intermediate Period we have extensive evidence for trade in Coca from the highlands to the coastal lowlands. The highlands produced the mountainous crop while the coasts were the demand side. There is often some ambiguity about the origin of Coca as a trade good. There are significant portions of the Andes which can grow Coca but the leaves don’t tend to survive well enough for additional analysis (Valdez et.al. 2015: 240and246).

In addition to the archaeological evidence for the Coca, there is significant artistic representations of the material as well. The Moche depicted foreigners often in art, but sometimes there is evidence for Coca. One ceramic depicts pairs of warriors in the classic Moche Ritualised Conflict scene. Foreigners are shown with disk ornaments and trophy hands in ornate headdresses. These figures also carry small bags with a rounded bottom and decorations visible. These bags are carried around their necks, on their backs, or dangling from their mouths (Benson 1984: 368-369). There are some bags which take on the appearance of human heads. It is possible these are a representation of trophy heads. But there is also a tradition of small metal bags decorated with head-like effigy designs (Benson 1984: 371)

In any case these figures are marked as foreigners represented within Moche arts. Headdresses in the forms of trophy hands are common in representations of highlanders. Some of these figures also carry square shields, a style not found along the coast. The bags too are marks of foreigners (Benson 1984:272). It is likely these people are representations of Recuay people in the arts of the Moche. These motifs are seemingly too specific to be a general outsider, a representation of the relative alterity of the Recuay.

What is clear from this representation is that the Recuay foreigners were battling the Moche. The bags they carry in their mouths and around their necks are not dissimilar to bags used in transporting Coca. We know there was a rich trade between the highlands and lowlands in this era. The Moche used Coca, but they could not grow it on their coastal valley homes. While we know there was extensive trading for it, there are a multitude of battle scenes depicting these bags as well, implying conflict was a part of Coca procurement (Benson 1984: 372).

As with all the Moche ritual conflict art there is a question about how literally the scenes are to be taken. It is possible the Recuay and Moche were literally engaged in conflict over the Coca. As these two cultures were in close contact, there could have been struggles over valuable resources such as Coca (Benson 1984: 372). On the other hand Coca was said to be associated with Amaru: the two headed sky serpent. Coca was a gift from the sky and became associated with Amaru. There is a vessel which displays two figures with ear ornaments and clubs being attacked by the image of the Amaru. This points toward a mythical combat with the legendary snake who is associated with the Sky and Coca’s origin (Benson 1984: 373). In either case the Moche and the Recuay put time into representing and mythically contextualizing the Coca plant.

Another motif depicting foreigners could have been showing traders. As with the bags of Coca to identify highlanders, some imagery of the Recuay depicts men carrying strombus shells as horns. The motif is called a salesman because it shows a man holding products in his hands, like a salesman. This salesman motif also is shown flanked by birds or jungle felines. It is possible the salesman motif is indeed depicting merchants and their wares. Given the context and the presence of supernatural creatures, it is also possible they are involved in some type of ritual or sacrifice (Wolosyn 2011: 87-88). In either case the salesmen motif clearly indicates a foreigner with coca, highlands iconography, and likely a Recuay individual.

Across these examples of artistic representations of alterity it is clear there is an impulse to identify these foreign people as foreigners. A highlander is easily identifiable as “not Moche” but specific cultural affiliation is not always clear. These are two cultures with a common base of Chavín ideology, material culture, and motif. What separates them is the biological and ecological biomes the culture was forged in: Moche on the coastal valleys and Recuay in the highlands and mountaintops. These are different people with different arts and customs, but also different access to materials the other requires. Coca only grows in the highlands, and strombus shells belong to marine snails. When the Wari arrived they would establish themselves in both environments and greatly expand production, but in the Early Intermediate Period these areas are not unified. They are rivals, trading partners, sometimes enemies, sometimes sacrifices, but always separate peoples in this era.