

# Enemy – Stranger – Neighbour

The Image of the Other in Moche Culture

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Front cover image: Bottle ML001062 (Courtesy Museo Larco - Lima)

Back cover image: Finline painted scene decorating the bottle V A 62161 (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Ethnologisches Museum). After: Gerdt Kutscher 1983: Abb. 129.

Cover background image: Finline painted scene decorating the bottle V A 666 (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Ethnologisches Museum). After Albert Voss 1875: Taf. IV. Drawing by Colmar Schmidt.

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*To my Peruvian friends*



*My loyal comrades, stay here where you are.  
I'll take my ship and my own company  
and try to find out who those people are,  
whether they are rough and violent,  
with no sense of law, or kind to strangers,  
with hearts that fear the gods.*

Homer, *Odyssey*,  
Book IX: 223-228



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## Introduction

The history of research of the problem to which this study is dedicated began more than 140 years ago, in 1875, when the German consul general in Peru, Johannes Lührsen, donated a perfectly preserved, painted vessel – coming from the vicinity of Trujillo – depicting the battle of two different-looking groups of warriors to the collection of the Königliche Museum für Völkerkunde, which was just being established in Berlin (Figure I.1).<sup>1</sup> This object immediately aroused interest. A year after it was included in the collection, one of the museum's employees, the prehistorian Albert Voss, published a brief article dedicated exclusively to this particular artifact, providing it with a precise rollout drawing of the scene under discussion.<sup>2</sup> As the dating of the vessel was not yet known at that time, nobody knew who the fighting men represented on it were. Voss presumed that the better and more homogeneously armed fighters, who won this battle, may have been the Incas, the last pre-Hispanic rulers of those lands, but he simultaneously suggested that they could be representatives of some other important, earlier culture which had developed in this area before the Incas.

It was just a quarter of a century later that Voss' compatriot, a German archaeologist Friedrich Max Uhle, dispelled this doubt. After his pioneering excavations at Cerro Blanco in the Moche Valley, he presented the first general chronology of this region. In the early 20th century, Uhle described the creators of two-coloured pottery produced in the same style as the vessel from the Berlin collection as Proto-Chimú.<sup>3</sup> Today, they are known as the Moche, while their domination of the North Coast of Peru dates from around 100 to 800 CE, more than 600 years before the Incas.<sup>4</sup>



Figure I.1. Lührsen bottle V A 666 (Courtesy Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Ethnologisches Museum; photograph by the author).

It took much longer for the researchers to provide answers to the second question posed by Voss: who were the warriors on the opposite side of the conflict represented on the Lührsen bottle and where were they from? The scholars suspected that they were representatives of people neighbouring with the Moche, probably less organized, who, in the scene in question, stood to battle more poorly armed, mostly with bare torsos and no helmets, and they were defeated. The

<sup>1</sup> The Lührsen bottle can currently be found in the Ethnologisches Museum collection in Berlin (Inv. No.: V A 666). Until 1999, this museum was named the Museum für Völkerkunde.

<sup>2</sup> The drawing by Colmar Schmidt, with which Voss' article was illustrated (1876: Taf. IV), was one of the first and certainly the most perfect of the rollouts of the time, depicting a complex, painted scene captured on a Moche vessel. The first photograph of the Lührsen bottle was published a dozen or so years later by Eduard Seler (1893: Taf. 19, Fig. 3). A new rollout drawing of this scene was produced in the early 20th century by Wilhelm von den Steinen and was published by Arthur Baessler (1902-03a: I, Taf. 37, Fig. 196; 1902-03b: I, Pl. 37, Fig. 196). The Swedish researcher Gösta Montell was among those who used this drawing (1929: 104-107, Fig. 52) to discuss the details of the attire and armaments of the warriors on both sides of the presented conflict. It was also included in the catalogue of fine-line painted scenes published by Gerdt Kutscher (1954: Lám. 21). The latest rollout of the battle scene depicted on the Lührsen bottle was produced by Donna McClelland (Donnan and McClelland 1999: 218, Fig. 6.51). These three drawings differ slightly in their details.

<sup>3</sup> Uhle 1913, 1915.

<sup>4</sup> The Incas conquered the North Coast of Peru in the 1470s. The conquest of their empire by the Spaniards under the leadership of Francisco Pizarro began 60 years later.

answers to these questions were sought for over the next few decades.<sup>5</sup> A German Latin Americanist, Gerdt Kutscher, describing this scene in 1954, almost 80 years after Voss, based on analogies from the Aija district in the Ancash region, proposed that the homeland of these 'foreign warriors' was a mountainous region of the interior, lying to the east of the area occupied by the Moche.<sup>6</sup> However, it was not until 2004, namely half a century later, that George F. Lau presented convincing, meticulously documented evidence proving that they were – as, after all, it had been assumed for a long time – neighbours of the Moche, members of groups living in the higher areas of the Andean valleys, representatives of Recuay culture or tribes related to them.<sup>7</sup>

Shortly after Voss' publication, it turned out that the richly decorated stirrup-spout bottle donated to the Berlin museum by a German diplomat was not the only Moche vessel on which foreign warriors were depicted. It also became clear later that the iconographic corpus of this culture included numerous representations showing people who were clearly different from the typical coastal dwellers, not being exclusively warriors.<sup>8</sup> Foreigners were distinguished by their physical appearance, as well as their attire or the types of ornaments they used. They were depicted in Moche art in various roles and in various contexts. Alan R. Sawyer, an outstanding expert on pre-Columbian art, wrote about them in the mid-1970s, in one of his catalogues, as follows:

<sup>5</sup> Voss (1876: 165) described the sides of this conflict with the terms *das Heer der Bewohner Truxillos* ('the army of the Trujillo residents') and *die rohere Nachbarstämme* ('wilder neighbouring tribes'). Baessler (1902-03b: I, Pl. 37, Fig. 196) used the terms 'the Chimu nation' and 'an uncivilized people', respectively. In later literature, the Moche's opponents were defined in a more neutral manner as 'foreign warriors' or 'others', in Spanish: *guerreros extraños* (Kutscher 1954), *guerreros foráneos* (Pardo and Rucabado 2016), *Fremdkrieger* in German (von Schuler-Schömig 1979, 1981) and *иноплеменики* in Russian (Berezkin 1978).

<sup>6</sup> Stone sculptures of Recuay culture (also referred to as Santa, Huaylas or Pashash culture in the past) depicting warriors, which Kutscher (1954: 54–55) used in his interpretation, were published slightly earlier by Richard P. Schaedel (1948: 67, Fig. 56). In 1956, an article was published by Hans Dietrich Disselhoff, in which he discussed elements of the attire and armaments of the foreigners represented on the Lühsen bottle and appearing on Recuay pottery.

<sup>7</sup> Lau (2004: 174), arguing in favour of such an identification of the foreigners represented on the Lühsen bottle, simultaneously stipulated: 'It is more difficult to determine whether the scene represents a bounded historical event (i.e. the defeat of ten individuals), an abbreviated reference to a series of real events (e.g. the defeat of ten communities), or a more complex mytho-historical allegory. A fundamental problem is temporal. At present we cannot distinguish whether the action occurs in real time, synchronously, or as a narrative arc of separate but linked images [...]. It is also difficult to determine whether the scene shows actual Recuay people or people dressed up as Recuay, as in a masquerade or in a re-enactment'. Similar claims about the identification of foreigners in Moche art were also made by Immina von Schuler-Schömig (1979, 1981) and Elizabeth P. Benson (2012: 103), who believed that these depictions could represent some group of the Moche population.

<sup>8</sup> Baessler 1902-03a: I, Taf. 38, Fig. 197; Fuhrmann 1922: Pl. 18; d'Harcourt and Niqué 1934: Pl. II, Fig. 1; Tello 1938: Pl. 41–42.

A study of all Moche representations in which this alien group is depicted leads to some interesting conclusions. The combat scenes appear to definitely record an historic victory of the Moche army over one of its major rivals. The latter were evidently trading people from the interior for they are shown assembling their goods, transporting them across the mountains and displaying their wares: ornamental tunics, tropical birds, animals and other jungle products. They used coca, a narcotic jungle plant that when chewed with lime precipitated cocaine, that played a part in their religious ritual as well as sustained them during their arduous highland treks. The drug was probably as foreign to the Moche people as tobacco was to Europeans on the discovery of America, but it was eventually adopted by them as the conquered people were absorbed into the Moche population.<sup>9</sup>

The image presented by Sawyer corresponded to the prevailing vision of the time of the cultural development of the North Coast of Peru outlined several decades earlier by the father of contemporary Moche studies, an eminent Peruvian archaeologist and avid collector of pre-Columbian art, Rafael Larco Hoyle.<sup>10</sup> According to this model, the strong, centralized and expansionist Moche State, ruled by theocratic elites, in the first millennium CE conquered the whole of this region, successively annexing individual coastal valleys and gaining control over their inhabitants. The main source on which Larco based his hypotheses – presented in his books in the 1930s and 1940s – was the extremely rich and diverse iconography of Moche culture preserved to this day mainly on its pottery: painted, decorated with bas-relief and effigy vessels. The many themes it represented included numerous battle scenes, images of warriors and prisoners-of-war, as well as weapons and war trophies. This art read literally – especially during the Second World War and in the years immediately after the war – had to give rise to the conviction that the Moche were a courageous and aggressive people, while military action was one of the main areas of their activity.

Although this model was not questioned fiercely at the time, a radical breakthrough took place in the way of interpreting Moche iconography in the 1970s. For decades, the image presented by the art of the North Coast of Peru, which was preserved on thousands of artifacts scattered around museum and private collections all over the world, was treated as a faithful record of the realities of the everyday life of the inhabitants of these lands. The works of such researchers as Elizabeth P. Benson, Christopher B. Donnan and Anne Marie Hocquenghem meant that

<sup>9</sup> Sawyer 1975: 31.

<sup>10</sup> Larco 1938, 1939.

Moche art began to be interpreted in a completely different way, seeing in it more of a kind of symbolic language which was not used to describe all aspects of the lives of the ancient Peruvians, but was used by them to consolidate and disseminate messages that were the most important to them, mainly of a religious nature.<sup>11</sup> It was a tool used to record myths and immortalize their protagonists. It was also used to represent various activities of a ritual nature and to define the roles played by individual objects, plants and animals, representatives of various social groups, inhabitants of the world of the dead and supernatural beings in the general order of the universe. In this new perspective, the numerous battle scenes appearing in Moche iconography, in which very similarly clothed and armed warriors usually took part on both sides, began to be interpreted not as representations of battles aimed at conquering territories or wiping out enemies, but rather as depictions of ritual fights, the main objective of which was to capture prisoners-of-war as sacrifices for the gods.

The matter of presenting foreigners in Moche art was readily taken up by various authors from the mid-1970s through the 1980s. Non-Moche individuals were described in all the roles mentioned by Sawyer, namely as warriors, coca takers, or as so-called 'salesmen' (this is how characters holding exotic goods – originating in ecological zones, most probably not directly controlled by the coastal population – as if they were selling them, were called). New contexts, in which the representatives of this group were sometimes depicted, were also noticed: some of them were presented as prisoners-of-war, while others were shown in the company of large felines or as people who were sleeping or in a trance.<sup>12</sup> However, the symbolism of these images has never been analysed comprehensively, nor has an attempt been made to collectively describe various topics related to foreigners and discuss the matter of what type of ideological message these depictions could bring to the audience.

After all, this is hardly surprising. The main problem of Moche iconographers at the time was the difficult access to sources. Individual researchers usually studied objects housed in the collections in their home countries, collections which they visited personally abroad, and a small number of artifacts published in the literature. In particular, complex painted scenes produced using the fineline technique – which became known thanks to Kutscher's catalogues and Donnan's publications – were used (and often overused) in this research.<sup>13</sup> The hypotheses about the role that

foreigners and their images could play in Moche art and worldview were generally developed on the basis of the analysis of individual scenes (as was the case of the articles dedicated exclusively to the Lührsen bottle), selected themes (i.e. based on the results of studies of groups of representations, usually depicted on no more than a few vessels) or, finally, groups of themes, which, as was thought, were somehow related to each other. The whole of the discussion conducted in the literature of that period on the depictions of foreigners was, therefore, based on the conclusions drawn from studying no more than a dozen or, at best, several dozen artifacts.

The authors of those publications were still trying to determine who the strange-looking people represented in Moche iconography might be and where they may have come from, but they also started to ask themselves whether the status of foreigners should indeed be assigned to them. On the one hand, there were arguments supporting their possible identification with the representatives of Recuay culture, while, on the other hand, it was postulated that they could – despite being clearly different – simply be a part of the internally ethnically diverse population of the North Coast of Peru, governed by Moche rulers. This conviction was reinforced by the archaeological research conducted at that time. It concerned both the types of contact that could have taken place between individual coastal valleys (almost certainly being reasonably culturally uniform), as well as the relations that may have existed between the two neighbouring communities (i.e. social, political, economic and religious organisms, the material remnants of which are currently being identified by archaeologists as Moche and Recuay). These studies were no longer based only on iconographic data and museum artifacts largely deprived of their archaeological context, but mainly on an increasing amount of material from professionally conducted surveys and excavations.<sup>14</sup>

The end of the 1980s and the 1990s permanently changed the archaeology of the North Coast of Peru. After a series of spectacular discoveries of the rich tombs of the members of the highest Moche elite at the Sipán site in the Lambayeque Valley, several new long-term and large-scale international excavation projects were launched. Work conducted at numerous sites, which had not yet been studied or had only been partially explored, quickly brought a huge amount of

<sup>11</sup> Benson 1972; Donnan 1976, 1978; Hocquenghem 1972, 1973.

<sup>12</sup> Benson 1974, 1976, 1984a; Berezkin 1978; Reichert 1982; von Schuler-Schömmig 1979, 1981.

<sup>13</sup> Donnan 1976, 1978; Kutscher 1954, 1983.

<sup>14</sup> Bankmann 1979; Nersesov 1987; Proulx 1968, 1973, 1982, 1985; Wilson 1988; a summary of this research was presented by Izumi Shimada (1994a, 1994b). Attention was drawn in the iconographic studies, among others, to the borrowing of certain highland motifs appearing on Moche pottery (primarily the so-called 'Moon Animal') and the presence of ceramics combining the technological and iconographic features of both styles (cf. Mackey and Vogel 2003; Reichert 1982).

new data. First of all, after almost 50 years, it made it possible to question the model of a single state with centralized power, developing through military conquest, which was proposed by Rafael Larco Hoyle, and it opened a discussion about what the phenomenon referred to by archaeologists as 'Moche' really was.<sup>15</sup> The results of this research also shed new light on the problem of the relations between the two neighbouring communities. Among other things, it was established that the contact between them was probably much more intense than it had been assumed so far. For instance, it turned out that there were many more borrowings of highland motifs in coastal iconography than it had been previously believed and they did not appear on ceramics only. The walls of the most important Moche temples erected at monumental ceremonial centres (such as Huaca de la Luna in the Moche Valley and Huaca Cao Viejo in the Chicama Valley) which were unearthed during this research, proved to be covered with impressive, polychromed murals that represented images of deities of highland provenance.<sup>16</sup> The model of a multi-ethnic society whose members – the dwellers of the lower, middle and upper parts of the river valleys of the North Coast of Peru – lived in relative symbiosis, trading goods and ideas, gained strong source support in the following excavation seasons.<sup>17</sup>

This new way of looking at the social and political situation of the region in the first half of the first millennium CE meant that the problem of foreigners' depictions, which had been discussed for decades, lost its previous, confrontational dimension and the interest in it dropped practically to zero. Distinct differences between the representatives of both communities, clearly shown in the iconography, ceased to be interpreted in such an unambiguous manner as it had been to date and, in fact, ceased to be intriguing. Attributes, which were considered clear determinants of cultural otherness of foreigners, began to be treated by the majority of Moche scholars as a kind of 'folkloric' distinction of one of the groups constituting an undoubtedly internally diverse but ideologically – if not politically or economically – highly integrated society.<sup>18</sup>

The images of foreigners have been preserved to date mainly on pottery, with few representations made of metal or stone, as well as those on murals covering the walls of temples. The vessels representing foreigners already appeared in the early phases of Moche culture

dating back to 100–300 CE (Moche I and II according to Larco's traditional chronology), although their production peaked in the middle phases (Moche III and IV, 300–600 CE). They were virtually no longer made in the late phase, which was related to a strong influence of Wari culture (Moche V, 600–800 CE). They have been discovered almost exclusively at the sites lying in the so-called Southern Moche Region, primarily in the Chicama, Moche, Virú and Santa river valleys. The south-eastern part of this territory constituted a border area of two strong cultural traditions developing in the neighbourhood.

The representations of foreigners caught my attention a dozen or so years ago while working on a collection of almost 800 so-called Moche portrait vessels.<sup>19</sup> The production of this category of depictions developed almost identically, just as the production of vessels representing foreigners. They were created in the same area, mainly in phases III and IV, probably in the same pottery workshops, and by the same artists. As I demonstrated at the time, the portrait vessels did not represent members of the highest elite of Moche society (as would have been expected and as suggested by most of the previous researchers), but mainly anonymous and typical representatives of the middle classes and individuals of a lower status: priests of various groups (over 60%), captives (nearly 10%) and even women and children (approximately 10% in total). During these studies, it also turned out that images of men with clearly marked foreign attributes – such as the use of a hairstyle with a characteristic forelock over the forehead or a ponytail, the use of wire-and-drop circle earrings or long tubular earplugs, or the use of face painting with round spots or so-called Maltese-cross motif – constituted a large and extremely cohesive group in this category of depictions (approximately 13%).<sup>20</sup> Nearly three-quarters of this set were images of foreigners presented with an uncovered head, while approximately one quarter constituted their depictions with various types of headgear.

Such very high percentage of portrait vessels depicting representatives of the foreign group was surprising and difficult to interpret. This was due to the fact that

<sup>15</sup> Castillo and Donnan 1994; Castillo and Uceda 2008; Quilter and Castillo 2010; Shimada 1994a.

<sup>16</sup> Mujica 2007; Uceda 2001.

<sup>17</sup> Makowski and Rucabado 2000.

<sup>18</sup> The nature of the relations between the Moche and their neighbours currently begins again to be a subject of discussion, which was best evidenced by the exhibition at the Museo de Arte de Lima (MALI) organized in 2016 named *Moche y sus vecinos. Reconstruyendo identidades* (Pardo and Rucabado 2016).

<sup>19</sup> The so-called Moche portrait vessels (Spanish: *huacos retrato*) is a category of vessels that only represent human heads (over 98% being men's heads), often, but not always, characterized by a high degree of realism in providing the represented figures with individual characteristics. There are many indications that these were not portraits in the Western meaning of the word – i.e. images of specific, historically existing characters, as some researchers have argued (Donnan 2001, 2004) – but rather images of different types of people, in a way, nameless representatives of individual social groups fulfilling specific functions in Moche ritual life (Wołoszyn 2000, 2008a).

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix 1 – Glossary of Terms. Most of the non-Moche attributes mentioned here have been distinguished by earlier authors, among others, based on the analysis of the scene on the Lühsen bottle.

the literature of that time had two fundamentally contradictory views. On the one hand, it was claimed that portrait vessels only depicted members of Moche elites (i.e. deserving characters of this community or their spiritual leaders referred to as shamans or priests<sup>21</sup>), while, on the other hand, it was clear that the characteristics of certain individuals shown in precisely this form enabled them to be identified as foreigners or, possibly, as representatives of a culturally different non-Moche people subordinated to the dominance of a more powerful neighbour. Additionally, it was surprising that a large percentage of these foreign men did not have headgear, which was one of the most important status markers in Moche artistic canon.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, not only could they not be considered representatives of the upper classes of Moche society, but also nothing suggested that they were members of the elite of their own community.<sup>23</sup> On the contrary, it was conceivable that they were rather individuals of a fairly low social standing.

It was also striking that the fact that foreigners were different was not expressed only through the use of standard status markers. Many of their images were characterized by exceptional realism, which suggests that they must have been based on detailed observations of live models. The authors of these images were not satisfied with merely representing strange hairstyles or unusual ornaments used by non-Moche individuals (the marking of which would indeed have been sufficient to create a stereotypical and easily recognizable image of the 'other'<sup>24</sup>), they also noted their physical features that clearly distinguished them from the normative coastal residents. The obvious interest of Moche artists was caused by the different facial features of the foreigners and the fact that some of them had facial hair. Another striking issue that encouraged taking a closer look at this problem was the fact that the largest portrait vessels ever leaving the workshops of Moche potters represented precisely foreigners of a relatively low social status. They were men without headgear,

while their images were only decorated with a very characteristic forelock and two pairs of wire-and-drop circle earrings.

At this point, it is worth emphasizing that nowadays it is much easier to study the iconography of pre-Columbian cultures, including Moche culture, than it was several decades or even a dozen or so years ago. Online catalogues of the most important museum collections, which are widely available in the Internet, currently give easy access to materials and offer the opportunity to work on very large samples of hundreds of artifacts, constituting an aid, the value of which cannot be overestimated.<sup>25</sup> Unfortunately, the materials that are available in this way are deprived of context in most cases,<sup>26</sup> but the large quantity of sources sometimes makes it possible to capture regularities that are statistically significant.<sup>27</sup> It is also worth noting that such catalogues, especially those that present all the artifacts from a given collection, make it easier to find rare and unusual representations, as well as less-well-made artifacts (from an artistic or technological point of view) or items of which only fragments remain, and which have never been published or studied before. Currently, another thing that makes it easier to undertake this type of research is the large number of well-published, detailed and fully illustrated books and articles reporting the results of the work of individual excavation projects and providing a comprehensive body of sources from well-researched archaeological contexts.

The study presented here is mainly iconographic in nature. Its main objective is to attempt to read the meanings attributed to the representations of the foreigners in the symbolic language of Moche art. The nature of this art and the main tasks it had to perform are still under discussion, but it can be accepted without any major objections that it was both one of the important media of the content of the religion which gained particular popularity and many followers in the first millennium CE, as well as the official language of the elites which promoted this religion, building their own social, economic and political prestige on its basis.<sup>28</sup> The pottery created in the workshops of the North Coast of Peru was one of the most important luxury goods and was widely distributed throughout the large area under

<sup>21</sup> I have presented a discussion of the identity of the individuals depicted on portrait vessels in Wołoszyn 2008a: 49–72 (cf. *inter alia* Donnan 2001, 2004; Hocquenghem 1977; Larco 1939: 131–153; Makowski 1999; Sawyer 1966: 35–38; Sawyer 1975: 20–23; Ubbelohde-Doering 1947).

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Bawden 1996: 123–126; Donnan 1978: 73. Of the characters that do not have supernatural features, other than a large percentage of foreigners, only prisoners-of-war, women and children were represented without headgear in Moche art (Wołoszyn 2008a).

<sup>23</sup> Representatives of the elite of conquered people could theoretically assimilate quickly, adopting the patterns imposed by the victors and having the honour of becoming immortalized in the form of a portrait as loyal vassals and direct leaders of a new group of subjects.

<sup>24</sup> Today, this procedure can most often be found in caricatured depictions of the representatives of certain nations. So it is known that, for instance, in order to create an unambiguous, but obviously stereotypical and largely outdated image of a 'typical' Frenchman, it is enough to represent a man with a moustache, in a beret, with a baguette in one hand and a glass of wine in the other and, therefore, with elements of the physical appearance, outfit and food which are allegedly typical of this nation.

<sup>25</sup> See Appendix 2 – Online catalogues of Moche art collections.

<sup>26</sup> It is estimated that the share of Moche artifacts from grave looting that can be found in museums and private collections around the world, is around 95% (Donnan and McClelland 1999: 18). Based on various types of evidence, the number of looted graves of this culture, from which this material has been obtained to a large extent (from the time of the Spanish conquest to the present day), can be roughly estimated at several to a dozen or so thousand. Approximately 1000 Moche burials have been discovered so far during excavations managed by professional archaeologists.

<sup>27</sup> E.g. Giersz, Makowski and Prządka 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Bawden 1994, 1995, 1996; Bourget 2016; Quilter 2010.

Moche control. As an important status symbol and a valued export commodity, it also enabled building the prestige of the local elites in areas which came under Moche influence relatively late.<sup>29</sup> It can be assumed that it had to carry a clear and important ideological message. Numerous representations of foreigners that appeared in Moche art certainly constituted a noteworthy component of this message.

This study also addresses the issue of the relatively young areas of archaeology, such as archaeology of ethnicity, or more broadly, archaeology of identity. Although these approaches deal with topics that have long been of interest to archaeologists, they have only gained a certain amount of autonomy over the last two decades or so, trying to develop methodological grounds for researching these matters, including with respect to cultures for which – as for Moche – there are no written sources.<sup>30</sup> Studies on these issues have now started to be taken up by researchers dealing with the pre-Columbian past of the Central Andes.<sup>31</sup>

Why did artists working in the pottery workshops of the Southern Moche Region produce representations of foreigners? In what roles did they depict them? What function could these images have had in the everyday and ritual life of the coastal dwellers? Why were they placed in their graves? What elements made up the image of a foreigner in the eyes of the patrons, artists and the audience of this art? Which of them were the most important and why? Did Moche artists emphasize the otherness of foreigners for some specific ideological – political, social or religious – purposes, or did they simply show it because it was interesting to them for artistic reasons, it constituted a curiosity of some kind, an element of local colour or folklore? To whom could this message be addressed in the first place? How could it be perceived by the audience of this art? Finally, how could this message be received by the foreigners, who were certainly aware that they were represented in this original form and that their depictions – which were more or less faithful images of them – were used for various purposes by their neighbours?<sup>32</sup>

The matter of the actual status of foreigners represented in Moche art is, obviously, of fundamental importance to the problems addressed in this study, although it appears that it may still remain unresolved for a long time. This is because it is impossible to finally determine the ethnic, linguistic or religious

affiliation of the characters represented in art on the basis of archaeological research, or to specify the extent to which they participated in one or another culture. Only ethnographic research conducted on living cultures provides such cognitive possibilities. It is also impossible, just by using iconographic research, to conclusively answer the question of whether people of a different appearance (represented mainly on sculptural and painted Moche vessels) were in fact foreigners who lived in the highland regions, but visited the main coastal centres quite regularly (for example, as pilgrims going to the ceremonial sites located there), or residents of the buffer zone who travelled and constantly changed their place of stay as, for example, intermediaries in the trading of goods between two areas, or perhaps members of what various authors propose as being a multi-ethnic society, spending most of their lives on the coast, assimilated and well-known, but for some reason retaining certain elements of their native culture that testify to their otherness.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, since cultural or ethnic affiliation of the men and women in question cannot be unambiguously determined, I have decided in this study to refrain from linking them arbitrarily to Recuay culture (although I fully agree with the interpretation given by Lau and some earlier authors) and to interchangeably use two terms to describe them, namely ‘foreigners’ or ‘non-Moche’ individuals, that are not so definite and should not give rise to any significant controversy.<sup>34</sup>

In my opinion, the most important matter is that, for several hundred years, the representatives of this particular minority group were represented in Moche iconography clearly and consistently as others, who were different and clearly distinguishable from the ‘typical’ coastal dwellers, whose depictions were predominant in Moche art for obvious reasons. The status markers and attributes which demonstrated the distinctness of the former were carefully codified and used as part of the Moche artistic canon. They were clearly indicated and easy to grasp, even on small or miniature images, showing that the artist’s intention was to depict a member or members of this particular

<sup>29</sup> Chapdelaine 2008.

<sup>30</sup> Díaz-Andreu García *et al.* 2005; Insoll 2007; Jones 1997; Shennan 1989.

<sup>31</sup> Amaro 1994; Lau 2013.

<sup>32</sup> No realistic portraits can be found in Recuay art. The individualization of specific characters is minimal in it and is based exclusively on their status markers (various elements of their attire, headgear, types of ornaments used and facial painting motifs).

<sup>33</sup> Perhaps bio-archaeological research will contribute to a better understanding of this problem in the future, as it will make it possible to determine the place of origin of individuals discovered in graves or their genetic connections with the local population. It is possible to imagine that some special context will one day allow this type of data to be associated with iconographic information.

<sup>34</sup> While deciding to do this, I took into account the reservations cited above, which were voiced by such scholars as Benson, Berezkin, von Schuler-Schömig, and finally Lau himself, although I consider some of the hypotheses they put forward unlikely (such as the fact that, in the case of the representations of foreigners being considered here, we may be dealing with images of coastal dwellers only dressed as foreigners as part of a ritual which recreates events that passed a long time ago). I shall use the terms ‘foreigners’ and ‘non-Moche individuals’ throughout the study as synonyms for one specific cultural group that can most probably be identified with the Recuay. The words ‘other’, ‘otherness’ or ‘alterity’ will mean general sociological or anthropological categories.

non-Moche group. After all, the distinctive features of this group appeared not only in the depictions of human beings; they were also attributed to certain species of animals and plants, inhabitants of the world of the dead and even deities.<sup>35</sup> One of the main objectives of this study is to specify the scope of the meaning of these symbols and to establish the ways and purposes of their use in Moche art.

It should be noted at the outset that we are not going to deal with all types of representations related to foreigners here. This is a subject that requires many years of study, and it goes far beyond the scope of this book (which I regretfully had to admit during the research). In the following chapters, I shall want to deal more precisely with the most important groups of depictions of foreign men and women providing the reader with the fullest possible set of currently available sources showing them in individual, selected roles and to take up a discussion with their interpretations to date. This analysis will allow us to see how Moche artists perceived and presented foreigners and which – often surprisingly different – features they attributed to them. In the following chapters, I shall also try to answer the question of the content of the message (or messages) that Moche patrons and artists wanted to convey to the audience in this form.<sup>36</sup>

The Moche and the Recuay – like other pre-Columbian peoples of South America – did not leave any written documents. We do not know what language or languages were spoken by the representatives of both communities, how they described themselves and their neighbours. We do not know what features they attributed to them in their myths, stories or songs performed during ceremonies or in other solemn moments, we do not know how they described them in everyday stories, sayings or jokes. In our attempts to solve these problems, we shall primarily rely on physical documents (excavation material and extensive iconography), which – as we can already assume in advance – will unfortunately be unable to give us any final answers to many of the questions asked above. Therefore, it will be necessary to refer to other types of sources, sometimes distant analogies and results of studies conducted within other disciplines. I believe that the findings of anthropologists, sociologists and psychologists describing similar social situations, both in the form of a model and in many specific cases, will

be able to help us. A series of detailed studies have been dedicated in these disciplines to the description and analysis of such categories as ‘other’ or ‘otherness’, as well as ‘neighbourhood’ and ‘borderland’.

Drawing attention to the borderland category is not accidental. The influence of Moche culture – whatever this phenomenon described by archaeologists was – encompassed a long but very narrow strip of the Peruvian coast. Its meridional length was over 500km (from the Piura Valley in the north to the Huarney Valley in the south); however, the latitudinal width was incomparably smaller and was no more than a few dozen kilometres (from the Pacific coast through the central parts of the river valleys to the foothills of the Andes). Such a short distance could be travelled on foot – wandering alone, with a group of people or with a caravan of llamas carrying goods for trading or for offerings – almost certainly within a maximum of two or three days. The presumption arising from this fact is that the whole of the Southern Moche Region, which was subject to the political, economic and religious control of elites interested in propagating the ideology of this culture, could, in principle, be of the nature of a typical borderland. It was somehow doomed – to permanent contact with another, external world that existed and was developing on its periphery and constantly exposed to foreign cultural influences. I believe that the use of anthropological, sociological and psychological models describing social phenomena and types of behaviour that can take place in such or a similar cultural environment can greatly facilitate finding answers to some of the questions posed above.

I also hope that, despite being dedicated – at least at first glance – to a fairly narrow issue, this study will contribute to a better understanding of the symbolism of Moche art and will once again confirm the importance of iconographic research to the understanding of the worldview of the former inhabitants of the Central Andes. If this study should manage to solve even a few of the problems over which Moche scholars have been pondering for the last 140 years, its goal will have been achieved. I also hope that, despite being dedicated to such a temporally and spatially distant civilization, this study will allow us to see that the ways of thinking about ‘the Other’, regardless of the period and latitude, are largely comparable and governed by similar rules.

<sup>35</sup> Wołoszyn 2007.

<sup>36</sup> It is also worth mentioning a fact that is often overlooked in similar studies. It is currently known that, despite many similarities, the style in which Moche artworks were produced was not homogeneous. It evolved over more than five hundred years in a large coastal area of today’s Peru. Studies carried out in recent decades have demonstrated the existence of numerous local varieties of this style (e.g. Donnan 2011; Quilter 2010). The ideological messages conveyed by the individual pottery centres did not have to be exactly the same but could change both in time and space.