

Pins and powders, pots and pendants

Valuable parts and durable dispositions in an ancient Andean burial offering at Pashash (AD 300–600, Ancash, Peru)

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This essay investigates an ancient burial offering in Peru's north highlands. It focuses on its contents and how its material forms and associated properties facilitated and oriented human engagements and understandings (see Hodder 2012, 48–50; Knappett 2005, chap. 4; Chapman 2000; Gell 1998; Gosden 2005). By reconstructing how they may have worked and signified together for an archaeological culture, the study moves the focus away from a single artifact, artwork, or iconography to the overall material corpus, and to the formal relations between objects and their contexts, in space and through time.

The study draws from archaeological investigations at Pashash, a monumental hilltop center of the Recuay culture in Pallasca province, Ancash Department, north central Peru (Grieder 1978; Lau 2011a). The context comprises a rich noble burial, to which at least four discrete caches of offerings were dedicated. The

arrangements of their contents reveal distinct approaches to humans and things, based on part-whole relations. The offering practices were recursive and multiscale (e.g., paired, groups, smaller, sequential, additional). The materials, I argue, helped articulate new social understandings emerging in the ancient Andean world during the first millennium AD—namely, that the offering and its components were cultural expressions of a kin-based collectivity and ancestor-led polity.

Framing part-whole patterns

To make sense of a fragmentary record of a prehistoric culture, I base my approach on key comparative concerns, outlined in four strands as follows. The first is concerned with linguistic operations that oriented understandings of “parts” and “wholes” in the Andean past. The second strand examines part-whole relations as seen archaeologically. A common way to recover “mind” settles on a “type-site” or “type-work,” which comes to the fore as representative or diagnostic of the culture and sample (Boone 2006, 23). This essay shifts the view away from specific individual objects as the unit of analysis (the “whole”), to multiple components (“parts”) that compose the record of the ancient past.

One common Andean tradition involving parts and wholes concerns complementary pairs, or opposites. Additional organizing principles, rarely studied at the archaeological feature level, are revealed in the Pashash burial offering. Because the context developed over several centuries, the study details the evidence for stratigraphic and temporal distinctions, as well as formal properties and relationships between constituent artifacts—what Gell (1998) called “the inter-artefactual domain.” The offering was comprised of parts, but also something collective that was periodically in-progress, recursive, and future-looking.

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The fourth strand centers on a linguistic comparison to theorize the patterning of this work, or “whole.” Namely, I look to ethnographic studies of Quechua traditions, which accord synecdochal value to forms of stone—from mountains and boulders to tinier bits, such as pebbles and (as I will argue) powders. The scalar homology is crucial, since the scheme for stone mirrors, essentially, that of kin collectives and their organization:

Mountains → powders : Lordly ancestors → descendants

The positions manifest as ranked relations, and have associations having to do with size (large to small); spatial location (centrality; far to close); numbers (singular to numerous and variable); and time (e.g., oldest to youngest). The offering’s sundry evidences of material parts and wholes can be ascribed to newly emergent ancestor cults in the region. Not coincidentally, these took root during the early first millennium AD, when native lords of the highland Andes consolidated their power and innovated new ideological expressions for their authority.

Having outlined the flow of my argument, it is opportune that I first expand on how language might intervene in understandings about material forms and part-whole relations in the Andean past. Semiotic affordances, of course, are often directly tied to material things (Keane 2003; Crossland 2014; Baron 2021; Preucel 2010). Two widespread language-based concepts are of special relevance. “Synecdoche” refers to how a part of something may refer to a whole—for example, how “wheels” can refer to a car or “vinyl” to one’s music collection. Metonymy, meanwhile, describes when the word for one thing refers to something related to that thing. For example, “a pint” in a pub would be understood as a beer. Another expression, “Purple and Gold,” refers to the Los Angeles Lakers basketball team, by dint of their uniform colors. Metonymic practices derive meanings from a physical, formal relation (e.g., a liquid measure or color).

It should be noted that there is no agreement as to what language(s) was spoken in the case-study region in pre-Hispanic times. Historical records and toponyms indicate that, before the advent of the Spanish language, Pallasca’s native peoples used Quechua and Culle (Adelaar 1989; Cuba Manrique 2017; Andrade Ciudad 1995). Quechua is very rarely spoken today. Culle, known mainly from colonial-era word lists, is now extinct. Mapping historical linguistic distributions to archaeological patterns provides insights, but it remains uncertain what language Pallasca-based peoples spoke, especially for the deeper past (Lau 2011b).

The most instructive studies for my comparison are ethnographic studies of native Andean linguistic traditions bearing on issues of materiality (e.g., Howard-Malverde 1997; Arnold and Yapita 2006; Salomon 1998; Cereceda 1987; Itier 2023), especially for the region in question (Howard 2006; Walter 2006). Allen’s influential essay (1997, 81) on Quechua speakers in Peru’s southern highlands emphasized physical forms of synecdoche, which understand small stone objects as parts arising from the same vital and consubstantial forces responsible for mountains and other stony forms; for Allen, rather than a “figure of speech,” this principle of scalar encompassment emerges out of a “figure of thought.” A recent essay added relevant concerns about the fractality of the parts, that is, the resemblance of forms across varying scales, which recapitulate and animate the whole (Allen 2024, 281, 289ff.).

In Andean archaeology, part-whole relations and linguistic comparisons have been particularly prominent in iconographic studies, where visual imagery is taken as text-like records for recovering meaning. Iconographic patterns and compositions may be modeled on linguistic operations, through grammars and metaphor (e.g., Urton 1996; Peters 1991; Rowe 1962; Jackson 2008). Landscape and settlement planning have also been studied using explicit linguistic models (e.g., Jennings and Swenson 2018; Swenson and Roddick 2018; Coben 2006; Dean 2010; Koons 2022).

In general, diachronic patterning of how a whole might be constituted over time has seen less study. The previous example, “vinyl,” remains instructive. Not only does it convey the notion of being multiply-comprised; it also connotes a process of accumulation, curation, and personal dispositions over time. What’s more, at any point in its formation, “my vinyl” can stand as a whole, its contents roughly marked by and increasingly old over time.

In essence, this essay focuses on the formal relations between things, what Gell (1998, 216) called the “inter-artefactual domain”—a space where common cultural dispositions linking things are socially meaningful and agentive practice, and lead to collective style. This study concentrates on an archaeological feature (burial offering) as the unit of analysis, as a relatively bounded “whole” that saw episodic and recurrent interventions with things through time. The analytical unit informs broadly on Recuay motivations, just like burial practices and offering contexts exemplify value systems and cultural choices of neighboring traditions (e.g., Donnan 2009; Castillo and Rengifo 2008).

Important studies of part-whole relations in the Andes already exist, most prominently concerning dual organization. Broadly, this principle perceives the world as made up of paired, opposed forces (e.g., Platt 1986; Isbell 1977; Burger and Salazar-Burger 1993). Neither identical nor always harmonious, the two together are required for balance, completion, or being effective and whole. Key complementary wholes consist of male and female, but also right and left; wild and domestic; agriculture and herding.

In central Peru, including Ancash, highland communities often organized themselves into upper/lower halves, or moieties, with paired ritual and work obligations (e.g., Venturoli 2011, 103–59; Zuidema 1973; Duviols 1973; Salomon 2018, fig. 1.5; Lau 2013, fig. 4.1). Studies have noted dualism in architecture or imagery of stone sculpture (e.g., Burger 1992; Isbell 1977; Urton 1996; Moore 1995). Metalworking traditions also combine metals (e.g., gold, silver, copper) for desirable properties, such as color and durability (Lechtman 1988; Helms 1981; Carcedo Muro 1998). As we will see, paired artifacts and other relations of complementarity were critical to the Recuay offering context.

Stone was the material *par excellence* for instantiating key concepts and forces for indigenous highland groups during pre-Hispanic and colonial times (Duviols 1977; Dean 2010; Lau 2016; Salomon 1998; Allen 2015; Sillar 2012; Janusek et al. 2012; Protzen and Nair 2013). Stone was seen to be infused with an internal life and potency to transform, and to act and have agency in the world. Valuable minerals and rocks were precious concentrates that precipitate in special beings and places (Salomon 2004). Importantly, sacred landforms also beget stony elements at reduced scales (mountains, outcrops, boulders, pebbles). But each element can still stand for the original (Allen 1997, 2015). Because of its status as progeny, each part also embodies the original's overall being and potency (its "distributed personhood") across the landscape (Gell 1998). Hamilton (2018, 6, 241) adds that the Inca manipulated scale as a "recursive mode of expression," where purposefully scaled things like miniature effigies and carved stone outcrops, large and small, effectively emphasized "the relationships that the objects gave access to and leverage over."

Howard's linguistic study (2006) of oral traditions of Pariarca, Huánuco, is particularly relevant. Its villagers speak a Huaylas-Conchucos (Ancash) dialect of Quechua, and a range of special terms and grammatical constructions emphasize stone's various forms and

capacities. Crucially, terms have both verb and noun constructions, which express stony transformative processes with size (from boulders to pebbles) and temporal implications (from younger to older) (Howard 2006, 238–42). For example, *qallan* (boulder) derives from *qallay* (to begin); *wanka* (standing, upright stone) is from *wankaray* (to remain stock still), a recent large-sized emergence and instantiation (Howard 2006, 241). Notably, these contrast with the term *qulluy* (to disappear, die out):

The root *qullu-* is used in the construction of words and expressions referring to notions of disappearance. . . . By metaphorical extension, it gives rise to a word that designates a pebble-like stone: *qullush* in Ancash. . . . The etymology doubtless derives from the characteristics of a pebble which has been worn away over time, almost to the point of disappearance. . . . [Yet] the transformatory function of the *ullush* in daily life: grinding . . . the seasoning of food . . . milling grain into flour for the preparation of chicha or bread . . . gives the humble pebble conceptual status as a dynamic generator of new life. (Howard 2006, 241–42).

Qulluy-related terms include: *qullana* (utterly eternal; tiny, on the point of disappearance) and *qollana*, in being ancestral (ancient, remote in time) (Howard 2006, 240). The term for star is *quyllur*, being "minuscule, to the point of disappearance but never actually becoming extinct." Howard (2006, 241) likens *qulluy* to the verb *illaqay*, also "to disappear," and *illa*, referring to a small "amulet" and "charm" in diminutive, concentrated form (also something "valuable" and "treasured of its kind"; Salomon 2004, 115).

Yet rather than being opposed, Howard (2006, 242) observes that such lithifications (large or small; recently big or vanishingly remote and small, like sand or powder) "mutually contain each other, are reversible [and 'interchangeable'], each in its way representing growth and regeneration" (see also Allen 1997, 81). The various stony forms also help to convey a larger order: as locatives and events in oral traditions and also as cumulative temporal evidences in physical space and landscape. I am reminded of Salomon's analysis of the Quechua stories in the Huarochirí manuscript, in which, "The *huacas*¹ have, in some contexts, individuality and

1. Ancestral superhumans who lithify into sacred cult objects and places in the narrative (Salomon 1998, 8).

properties, but in others they are seemingly imagined as long-term overarching sequences of phenomena or deeds” (Salomon 1998, 9). Can such wholes take material form? As we will see, archaeological materials also intervened to mark ritual space and episodes at Pashash, contributing, bit by bit, to the burial offering’s being and place over time.

In Andean scholarship, despite the great emphasis on pigments (e.g., Siracusano 2011; Galicia and Sepúlveda 2024; Young and Kaplan 2023), there has been surprisingly little discussion about powdered or other milled/triturated materials (e.g., flour, metal filings, sand) as an artifact or material form, with affordances beyond their color or coloring significance. This is notable given that traditional religious practices with powders were so prominent, that colonial authorities went to extraordinary lengths to demonize and outlaw them. Powder offerings were blown or thrown into the air/wind in ritual, sometimes by sorcerers to harm and kill their victims. *Spondylus* powder was seen to help bring rains (Duviols 2003, 352; Cobo 1990 [1653], 166); quinoa and coca powders were also efficacious and auspicious if bits landed on the idol (Polia 2017, 467). Differently colored powders would be gathered on flat stones and then blown together toward the cult images or places, especially in festivals and curing rituals, to beseech their favor (e.g., Arriaga 1999, 54, 57; Cobo 1990 [1653], 166). Multiple powders were combined for greater and desired effect (Ávila, in Arguedas and Duviols 1966, 256); each had its own color and associations but, when combined, created a different and more complete presencing, such as a rainbow or weaving. Archaeological cases show colored powders carried in wraps (e.g., Conlee et al. 2021, 1535) and sprinkled over high status burials, especially crania (see Nagaoka 2020, 15). These practices indicate that the affordances of powders and powdered forms may have drawn from the same logic behind pebbles and boulders: as potent parts of valuable parent materials that can be distributed and rearranged for ritual and symbolic effects.

Investigations at Pashash

Having identified the core concerns of my framework, we can now turn to the case study. The Recuay cultural tradition (ca. AD 1–700) developed in the north highlands of Ancash Department (Lau 2011a; Gamboa and Lau 2022). The culture characterized many independent chiefly groups who shared basis in their corporate arts, material culture, and iconography—much of it associated with prosperous kin groups and

their burial cults. Recuay’s contemporaries (Moche, Cajamarca, and Nasca) maintained very different elite cultural practices and customs (e.g., Castillo and Rengifo 2008; Peters 1991).

Among the best-known Recuay centers is Pashash, near the town of Cabana (Pallasca province) (fig. 1). Famous for its monumental ruins and monolithic stone carving (Raimondi 1873; Wiener 1880), archaeologists contended that Pashash was the regional center of a large northern ‘*etnia*’ or ‘*señorio*’ (ethnic polity or lordship) of the Recuay culture (Schaedel 1952; 1985, 443, 446; see also Smith Jr. 1978). From 1971 to 1973, excavations discovered a very elaborate burial, one of the richest funerary contexts ever scientifically excavated in the Peruvian highlands. The contents helped substantiate Recuay political centralization and an elite class at Pashash (Grieder 1978, 181). Its rise to prominence has been the focus of new fieldwork (Lau et al. 2022).

Pashash, approximately twenty-eight hectares, occupies a prominent ridgeline in the Cabana river basin, in the headwaters of the Río Santa. Its high location (fig. 2), at 3,170 meters above sea level, was advantageous for defensive purposes, with a nearly 360-degree strategic vantage. It also had easy access to vital land-use zones: riparian zones below, nearby arable slopes, and high steppic grasslands (above ca. 3,900 meters above sea level) favored for camelid herding. Recent mapping and surveying revealed that Pashash formed part of a basin-wide settlement system over time, which included farmsteads, defensive and water management sites, corrals, and hilltop shrines (Lau et al. 2022). Bridging the geographic zones and their respective groups is also highlighted in local oral traditions about Pashash’s founding and intermediate position in the landscape (Cuba Manrique 2017, 274–76).

Pashash saw a long history of pre-Hispanic use, radiocarbon-dated from 1600 BC up to Inca times. By the seventh century BC, the main “La Capilla” hilltop was home to a relatively modest agro-pastoral hamlet, showing general domestic use, pre-Recuay “Formative” pottery, and camelid bone refuse in small, irregularly shaped walled spaces.

The hamlet was leveled and built over sometime between the second and third century AD by Recuay people, which ushered in unprecedented prosperity and impressive building projects until about AD 700. From the onset, the newcomers used fancy kaolin pottery and carved stone blocks, especially for architectural decoration. Pashash also saw considerable Middle Horizon occupation, but as yet no Wari or Cajamarca

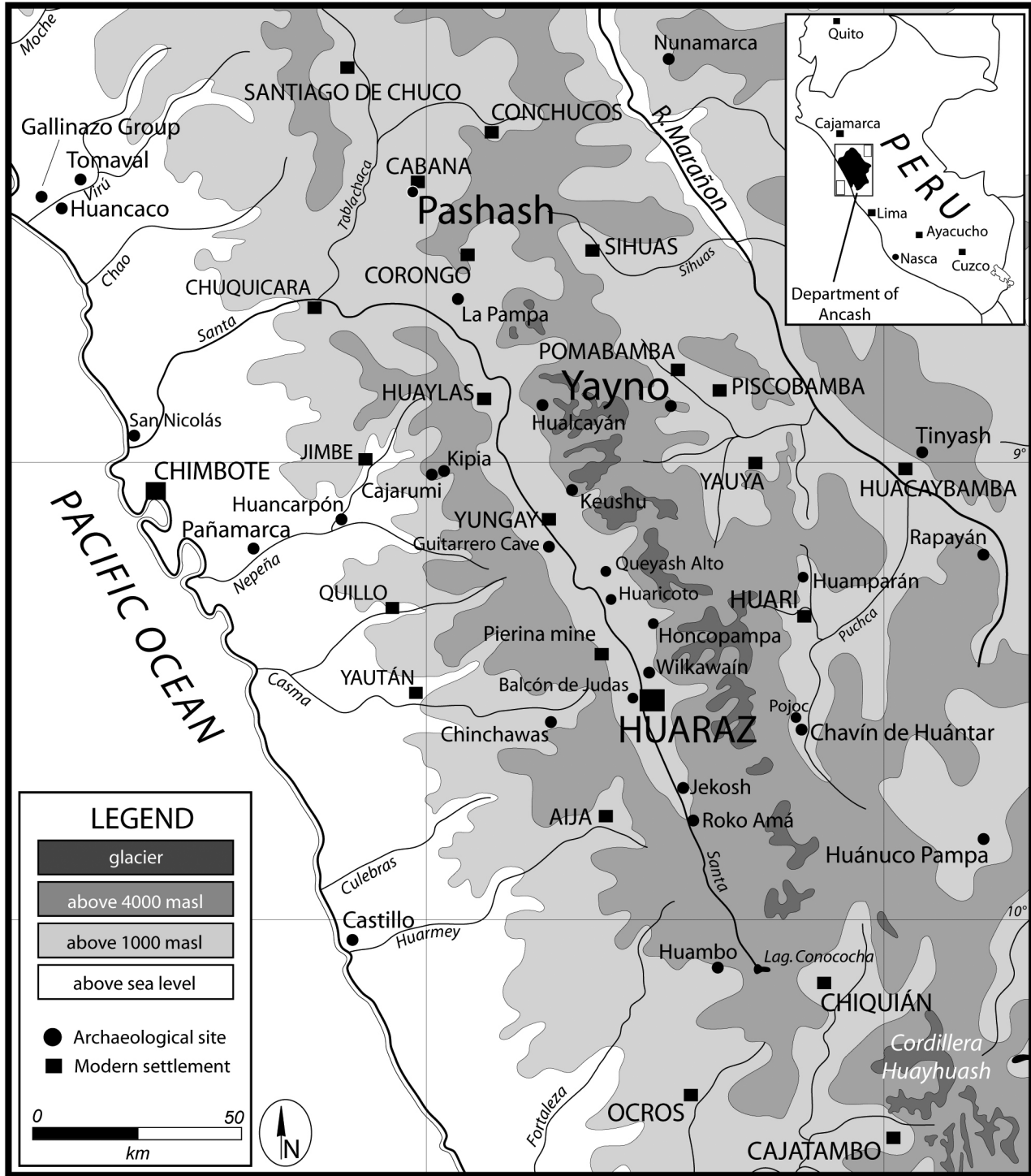


Figure 1. Map of northern Peru and places mentioned in text. Illustration: Author.



Figure 2. Aerial image, view looking north toward La Capilla sector, and excavations of Compound 1, Pashash. Photo: Author.

style pottery, and relatively light Late Intermediate Period and Inca presence.

Burial cult in Compound 1: The “pin offering”

Compound 1 was an imposing and windowless walled complex, designed as the primary edifice crowning Pashash (figs. 2–3). With a quadrangular plan and roughly 30 meters on a side, its size and overall construction quality were unprecedented for the Cabana basin. Builders extended the hilltop outward with retention walls and flat terraces. Key parts of the building used fine ashlar of light grey granitic rock and block-and-spall stonework. Stone sculptures found within Compound 1 almost certainly adorned the original interior walls.

Sections of its main surviving façade measure over 9 meters tall. Some sections show doubling of outer

walls (up to 2 meters wide), to support upper stories and also to provide buttressing for additions or renovations. Rectangular rooms feature along the sides and have doorways that opened into an interior, enclosed courtyard. The main entrance was probably on the north side (Grieder 1978, fig. 13). Recent excavations did not reveal a central staircase but, rather, multiple walled spots with steps that zigzagged up through narrow terraces and rooms.

Compound 1 is a particularly elaborate example of a building form, the walled residential compound with central courtyard, which became popular in Peru’s north highlands after Chavín (Lau 2010a) and widespread by the Middle Horizon (Topic 2009; Herrera 2008; Berquist 2021). Featuring very fine stonemasonry, multiple stories, and architectural sculpture, it is one of the clearest examples of a monumental, palatial version. Domestic refuse

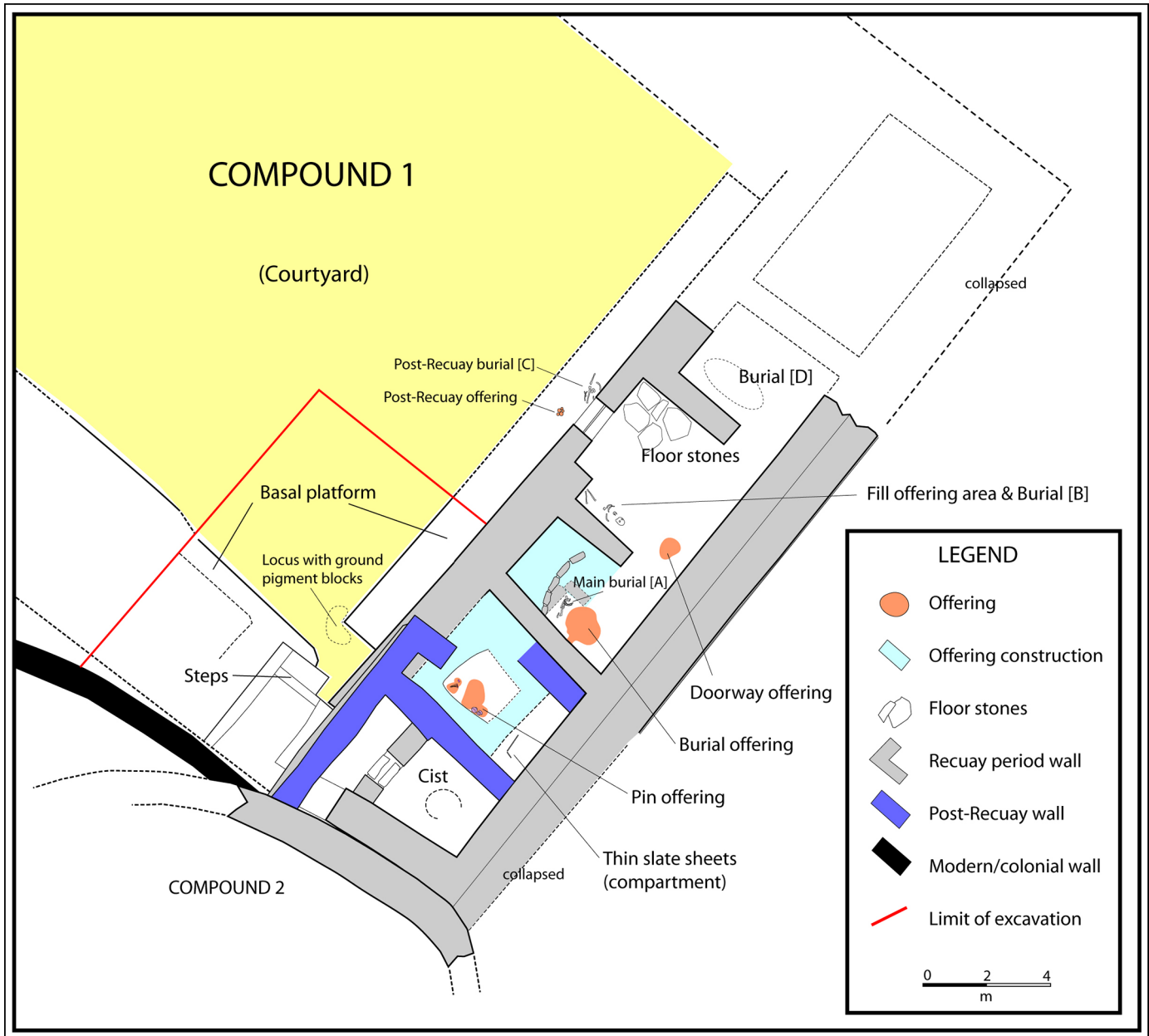


Figure 3. Plan of Compound 1, showing contexts revealed through excavations, including burials and offering caches in relation to nearby rooms and large open courtyard. Illustration: Author.

and features were common in Compound 1, indicating that most of its rooms were used for everyday residential activities. Given the overall size, Compound 1 was probably for an extended family or kin collective who shared the courtyard space. Its tremendous labor investment is consistent with very high-status indicators of social differentiation on La Capilla, and not found elsewhere at Pashash.

Early in its history, by about AD 250–300 (Lau et al. 2022), several rooms against the eastern wall were sealed off for use as a burial repository and shrine. The main Burial A—a flexed individual, and probably an important noble and ancestor—was placed in a stone-lined and roofed interior chamber. Poor preservation did not allow sexual identification, but teeth wear indicated an individual of advanced age; for Grieder (1978, 45,

54–55, 58, 181), earplugs suggested a male, while weaving equipment indicated a female. A second mandible fragment, slightly smaller but also with worn teeth, suggests an additional individual (represented only by this element; Grieder 1978, 45). Subsequent burials were then added nearby (fig. 3). This included an extended individual (Burial B), buried with only a few items (Grieder 1978, 52). Two other burials in adjacent spaces are known, a flexed bundle roughly coeval with the main burial (Burial D) and another associated with later post-Recuay ceramics (Burial C) (Grieder 1978; Samuel Castillo, personal communication, 2019).

Grieder (1978) recorded three offering caches near the main burial (fig. 3), including the “burial offering” (lowest and nearest to the burial) and a cache just outside the entrance to the inner burial space, called the “doorway offering” (fig. 4). These were extraordinarily rich caches, each with many dozens of the finest Recuay style kaolinite clay vessels. Figurines, gilt copper pins and fine groundstone bowls and spindle whorls were also recovered (table 1).

Like the burials, the offerings resulted from a process of episodic additions/interventions (Grieder 1978, 39–58). Discrete offering episodes were distinguished stratigraphically, from lower to upper, and closer to farther away from the main burial. These were also effectively marked by rock fill, stone pavements, cloth layers (some intact), and sediments, some containing yellow and red pigment concentrations. Apart from whistles and miniature vessels, a third “fill offering” consisted mainly of intentionally broken and curated pottery. Grieder (1978, 58) observed “its casualness [. . . as if] . . . family members gathered around the grave, smashing vessels and tossing them in or laying down treasured objects.”

Excavations in 2019 uncovered a small chamber, just southwest of the main burial, formed by partitioning an older space and reusing existing walls (see fig. 3). While the construction was unremarkable, the excavation unearthed a very elaborate offering deposit, called the “pin offering” (Lau et al. 2022). This comprised a fourth discrete cache made to Burial A.

The pin offering contained over 330 registered finds.² The materials and the stratigraphic context are worth summarizing, because they bear directly on the innovative cultural patterns underpinning Recuay burial cults (Wegner 1988; Lau 2000, 2011a; Gamboa

2009). Though spared from looting, the pin offering’s stratigraphy and recording were nevertheless complex, because of revisitation and subsequent ritual interventions, typical in burial cult, and ensuing taphonomic processes (also Grieder 1978, 39–44). All materials were excavated in soil buildup that had seen at least some disturbance, not least by humidity, root movements, and maybe subsidence. Still, preservation was, in general, surprisingly good: even organic remains were recovered, which is exceedingly rare for Recuay sites in the seasonally rainy Andean highlands.

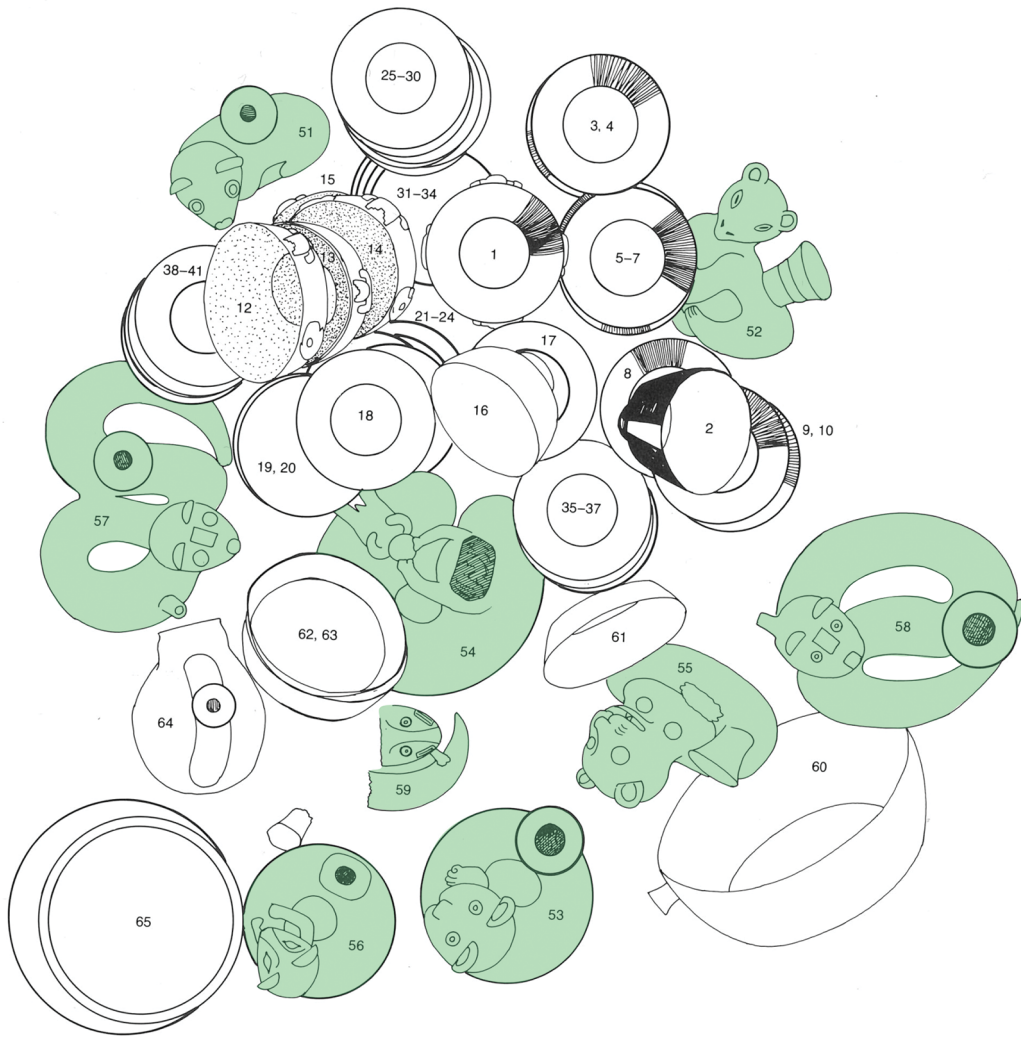
Most of the offering was found in the southern portion of the compartment. No human remains were identified. The lowermost offerings were laid on a regular dirt surface and were probably left exposed for at least some time (Grieder 1978). At some juncture, large flat rocks and sediment covered over the deposits, and another stratum and find layer (“upper offering”) developed around and above the rocks. Several of the stones are laid flat, but no pavement was detected. The stones marked an intentional change and also probably served as makeshift surfaces to stand and place additional items. A much darker soil developed on and around the stones, perhaps the disintegration of organic matter, like wood, basketry, and/or cloth. How much time passed between the lower and upper deposits is unclear, but camelid pendants and hammered gold items found in both are stylistically identical.

At least thirteen whole pottery vessels were found in the pin offering (see fig. 3), most pushed up against the southern edge. These included typical fine kaolin bowls with ring bases (Grieder 1978). More unusual were shallow incurving bowls, one with a corniform handle and two with looped handles. One of the latter contained wood fragments, a sample of which was dated (table 2). These are all fairly small (ca. 5–9 centimeters in diameter); full-sized bowls tend to measure around 11–14 centimeters (e.g., Grieder 1978, 250–53). Two bowls are probably “miniatures”: one circular and the other triangular-shaped (fig. 5b).

The more elaborate vessels have modeling and three-color resist painting. One was a flange-rim jar, covered with its custom bowl lid (fig. 5d). There were also two small effigy bottles, one depicting a llama and the other a condor. The camelid lies in prone position and bound in a net (sacrificial, offering position). Inside the condor were two small camelid figurines/pendants (Lau 2021, fig. 7).

The excavation also uncovered five modeled pottery human figurines, around 6–9 centimeters tall (Lau and Brito 2023, figs. 13, 49–51). Two are standing male figures who hold shields. Another three figures, also

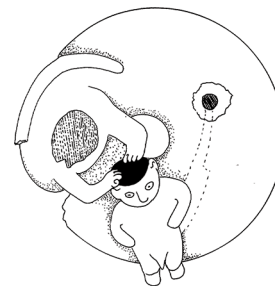
2. Some finds contain specimens found and grouped together (e.g., lapidaries, hammered *láminas*, wooden artifacts, and materials removed *en bloc*).



a



b



c

Figure 4. Top view of “Doorway offering” showing accumulation of fine pottery vessels. The nine effigy pots (*shaded*) all depict mythical feline creatures, including one (*center*) holding a human victim (illustration by the author, based on Grieder 1978, fig. 31). Insets: (a) feline-serpent effigy vessel (photo: author); (b) feline-serpent effigy vessel (photo: author); (c) feline creature grasping human figure (drawing by the author, adapted from Grieder 1978, 220).

Table 1 Summary of offerings, carefully curated in the Pashash burial context; reports mainly complete items

	Burial offering	Doorway offering	Fill offering	Pin offering
Ceramic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 44 ring-base bowls • 11 handled bowls • 6 bowls • 1 necked jar • 3 whistles • 5 spindle whorls • 1 spouted bowl • 2 spouted basins • 1 flange-rim jar (w/ bowl lid) • 1 ring-base bowl (w/ bowl lid) • 10 ring-base bowls (triangular) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 ring-base bowls • 9 zoomorphic effigy vessels • 3 bowls • 1 spouted basin • 1 handled jar with spout • 2 flange-rim jars • 1 necked jar • <u>3 plainware bowls</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 complete vessel • Miniatures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 ring-base bowls • 2 bowls with loop handle • 2 zoomorphic effigy jars • 1 flange-rim jar with bowl lid
Ceramic miniatures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 7 ring-base bowls • 5 ring-base bowls (triangular) • 5 necked jars • 1 ring-base bowl (w/ bowl lid) • 1 bottle with long spout 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>1 triangular ring-base bowl</u> • <u>1 ring-base bowl</u>
Ceramic figurines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 zoomorphic figurines/<i>adornos</i> • 2 human figures 			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 109 camelid figurines/pendants • 5 human figures
Metal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 feline head pins • 6 nail head pins • 5 solid cast pins • 14 hollow cast pins • 2 gold foil strips • 1 gold sheet bead (human head) • 8 gold foil earspools • Gold earspool bands (edges) • 1 pyrite mirror 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 copper bells 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 24 pins (solid head) • 23 pins (hollow head) • 200+ gold <i>láminas</i> and hammered sheet objects (perforated & unperforated discs, convex & misc. forms) • 32 rolled tube frags. • 6 repoussé items (butterfly, frontlet, birds, bifurcated form) • 20 danglers (3 complete, 17 missing disk) • 34+ zoomorphic pendants (gilt copper) • 1 pair Moche earspools • 2 ring-base bowls (triangular) • 1 necked jar • 1 possible necked jar • 3 pins (avian) • 4 pins (conical heads) • 2 pins (human head) • 1 pin (feline head) • 3 complete pins • 4 pinheads (incompl.) • 3 <i>Nectandra</i> seed carvings
Metal miniatures				
Wood	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 dowel-shaped wood pieces 			
Unfired clay		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 ring-base bowls (1 red, 1 brown, 2 yellow) 		

Table 1 (Continued)

	Burial offering	Doorway offering	Fill offering	Pin offering
Stone & lapidary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 ring-base bowl • 2 spindle whorls • 1 bead • 1 flat slate piece • 1 tablet/palette • 1 pyrite mirror • 7 earplug disks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 stone ring-base bowls • 2 large stones with square openings (prob. to “feed” burial) 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 blue stone frontal head • 120+ greenstone beads • 39 pendants • 4 lozenge shaped beads • 1 rock crystal bead • 2 tablets/palettes

Note.—Items underlined held powder offerings.

well-attired males wearing fancy headgear (with war trophies), hold small camelids in their left arms and shields with the right (fig. 5a). Two other human figures are known (Grieder 1978, 143, 154). There were also over a hundred small, handmade camelid representations, each unique. Most were pendants, and the rest were freestanding figurines. These modeled items signaled a dramatic change in the ideology of authority during early Recuay times, for the arts began to highlight how local leaders began to perceive themselves: namely as chiefly nobles holding and wearing expressions of herd wealth and warriorhood (Lau et al. 2022).

The lower deposit also included three wooden pins with feline heads, and other pin fragments. The heads and stems, including a conical head, feature delicately carved cavities for small stone inlays. There were also three carved pendants, made from *Nectandra* species seeds, showing a zoomorphic creature top-down with a triangular head. The ears and snout/mouths had inlays. *Nectandra* seeds, commonly “*ishpingo*,” have never been identified before in Recuay sites. In the past they were valued for their medicinal properties, for curing, funerary, and sacrificial ritual, especially among coastal groups (e.g., Eeckhout 2006; Montoya Vera 2015).

Also near the southern wall were two extraordinary earspools (fig. 6). These were made of mosaic stones (greenstones and turquoise) and hammered gold, with hollow balls (each with two halves joined) circling the outer edge.³ When worn, the rampant felines would flank either side of the wearer’s head. While the “flanked by felines” design is characteristically Recuay, such earspools were made by Moche peoples of Peru’s north

coast, some 200 kilometers away. Such items indicate very unique exchange ties with Moche nobles or artisans.

Interspersed throughout the offering deposits were lenses and colored mottling of powdered materials (fig. 7). They were the most prominent in the lower pin offering, near the flat stones, darker soil, and disintegrated organic remains. The colors were very distinctive: bright vermilion red (probably cinnabar), a dusky-to-brownish red, pinkish purple, and yellow ocher.⁴ Grieder (1978, 44, 47) also recorded “common” yellow spotting and red pigment “sprinkled” in different levels of the doorway offering and burial offering. It stands to reason that the powders helped consecrate activities at key junctures of the offering’s life.

By far the most numerous items in the pin offering consisted of metalwork. This included hundreds of hammered gold foil items or “*laminas*.” Most are circular, sequin-like discs, usually less than 1 centimeter wide and perforated. Others are capsule- or almond-shaped with slightly curved edges, without perforations (fig. 8). Also found were gold tubes (32 fragments, each ca. 3–4 millimeters wide and up to 7 centimeters long), made by rolled, hammered sheet. The most elaborate featured repoussé and cut-sheet designs. This includes a winged insect (butterfly?), rarely depicted in Recuay culture. There was also a miniature frontlet-like adornment showing a human head flanked by birds. Most *laminas* were probably adornments attached to clothing or other perishable objects.

The lower materials contained at least thirty-four small pendants of cast copper metal, most around 2–3 centimeters long (fig. 9). Most were gilt and probably formed pairs, but corrosion limits more certain

3. At least eight Recuay-style earspools, probably four pairs, were found in the “burial offering” (Grieder 1978, 55).

4. Samples are currently under analysis at the University of East Anglia.

Table 2 Radiocarbon dates from burial context

Lab ID	Date	1 sigma	2 sigma	Context / additional information
OxA-41441	1806±19	220–250 AD (48.9%) 295–310 AD (19.4%)	210–256 AD (59.3%) 284–325 AD (36.1%)	“Pin offering.” Operation 8 (East Extension). Capa D, Locus 9. Plant charcoal found in Locus 9 of offering ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$: -23.58). See Lau et al. (2022, 45).
OxA-41442	1792±19	236–252 AD (25.4%) 290–320 AD (42.8%)	218–258 AD (38.3%) 280–330 AD (57.2%)	Same as OxA-41441. ORAU duplicate lab quality check. ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$: -24.18). See Lau et al. (2022, 45).
OxA-44202	1499±19	565–596 AD (68.3%)	546–606 AD (93.6%) 627–634 AD (1.9%)	“Pin offering.” Operation 8 (East Extension). Capa E. Wood fragment found in shallow, loop handle bowl ($\delta^{13}\text{C}$: -24.49). See Lau et al. (2022, 45).
Tx-1824	1590±60	422–543 AD (68.3%)	266–272 AD (.5%) 354–600 AD (95.0%)	Cut 12, Level 4. Charcoal, in fill above main burial. Recalibrated from Grieder (1978, 192).
Tx-1329	1400±60	590–673 AD (68.3%)	549–707 AD (86.0%) 729–774 AD (9.5%)	Cut 10, Level 4. Charcoal sample, in fill covering doorway offering of mid-Recuay materials. Recalibrated from Grieder (1978, 192).

Note.—See also Grieder (1978, 192) and Lau et al. (2022, 45). Calibration via OxCal online 4.4, build version 171 (SHCal20 curve).

identification. Most are zoomorphic: avians, reptilians, and felines. Mythical subjects are also depicted: crested felines; creatures with a feline body and human head (or monkey?); and an owl perched atop a prone human. About a dozen others show predators holding another element with all four limbs as if to eat it; some predators are discernibly felines while others have longer narrow snouts and more convex heads, perhaps foxes, dogs, or weasels. The held prey element is a reptilian, human, or what appears to be the animal’s own tail. All the pendants were found together, suggesting they may have been strung together or kept together. Many have fine spun cotton thread surviving in the holes.⁵

There were also thirty-two stone pendants; these are more variable in size and form. These were made out of variously colored stone (red, brown, and black with white streaks; fig. 9*h–j*); they depicted felines and

zoomorphic heads. Others are miniature representations of necked jars (see also Larco Hoyle 1962).⁶

The excavations also unearthed over forty-six copper metal pins, which measure up to about 25 centimeters long (figs. 10–12). They were found mainly together in two clusters, an “upper” and “lower” set. The upper set was probably tied together, for traces of fine cotton and camelid-fiber cloths and threads stuck to several stems. All were cast copper metal and gilt (electrochemical replacement). At least twenty-three featured hollow conical heads, including the largest pins (figs. 10 and 11). The rest have solid cast heads. The lower set was found near the flat stones. These were much less well-preserved, and most were at least partly broken and heavily encrusted by copper oxidation. Notably, the lower set of pins had intentionally bent stems, the point curling back toward the pin top (figs. 7 and 12).

The offering also contained miniature or reduced-scale pins (fig. 13). These included examples that replicated conical head pins: two were of gold foil, and another pair were cast versions with twisted stems. The artisans

5. In addition to a series of spun thread fragments, microscopic analysis reveals fragments of cotton plain weaves and camelid-fiber cloth (M. Brito, personal communication 2023). Both alpaca and llama animals were reared locally at Pashash (A. Alaica, personal communication 2024).

6. Larco (1962) found very similar lapidaries in burial contexts in mid-valley Santa.



a



b



c



d

Figure 5. Pottery artefacts from the “Pin offering”: (a) three figures in the form of warrior-lords (H: 8.9 cm, 7.3 cm, 8.4 cm); (b) two miniature vessels containing bright red powder (mouth widths: 5.6 cm, 6 cm); (c) three ring-base bowls (mouth widths: 9 cm, 11.4 cm, 9 cm); (d) flange-rim jar with bowl lid (W: 15.2 cm). Photos: M. Brito.

emphasized the spiky crown and a knobby top. Other miniatures include a pair of perched avians (emulating full-sized pins) and a pair representing human heads resembling human tenon-heads. Also, there are two miniature triangular vessels (pendants) made from hammered sheet metal, plus at least one necked globular jar.

Most of the pins, small or large, occurred in pairs. Such pins were worn at the shoulders, with their heads (tops) facing forward. Small holes on their stems helped to attach them to clothing. The solid heads depict the heads of felines, foxes, and the Recuay crested animal motif (fig. 13, right); a pair also depicts a human head with a stepped headdress. Some pins portray full-figure birds and pairs of birds. Characterized by aquiline beaks

and cropped tails, most appear to be condors (with caruncle), hawks, or macaws. A pair features two birds atop “swimming” human figures (fig. 13, left).

The hollow conical head pins show the most technical sophistication and elaborate imagery (see fig. 11). The side reliefs typically feature three crested animals in profile; the counterpart pin shows the animals facing the other direction. The top is more variable in imagery: frontal human and feline heads, crested animal heads, profile felines, and standing frontal human figures. Small cavities were fitted with tiny stone inlays.

At least eleven of the pins were also rattles. Small stones, which clink against the walls of the pinhead, must have been inserted during the fabrication process.



Figure 6. Pair of Moche earspools, made of hammered gold foil and mosaic (black backing, restoration material). Rampant felines are a common motif in Recuay imagery. Diameter: 6 cm. Photo: Author.

Such pins required at least three sequential castings to join the three discrete elements: shaft, pinhead, and crown of spiky projections (Velarde and Castro de la Mata 2010). The sonic qualities of metal items may have been particularly unusual given their fineness and rarity for the time (Carcedo Muro 1998, 256–62). Other sound devices are known in the overall offering: ten copper bells (~5.5 centimeters wide), strung together as hand or body bells, found in the doorway offering (Grieder 1978, 118–19). Three pottery whistles were found in the burial offering (Grieder 1978, 235).

It is not known whether the bending was done during or after manufacture. But since the upper cache contained only straight specimens, and the bent ones characterized the lower, it is reasonable to believe that the bending was a regular and important distinction in their functional life. I suspect that the bending may have been related to completion ritual or to signal its spent utility; perhaps they adorned an esteemed ancestor but were retired and saved when refreshing the corpse's new attire.

Over fifty radiocarbon dates have been analyzed for Pashash; four of these date the burial contexts described here (table 2). One sample (OxA-44202, 1499±19) dated a wooden artifact fragment found within a small kaolin bowl with a looped strap handle. The latter date is consistent with the pottery associations and also nearby Moche earspools. Another assay (OxA-41441, 1806±19) dates a sample from the southern corner of the

compartment, from upper-level sediments (Lau et al. 2021, 45). Sample TX-1824 (1590±60) was from the fill sediment directly above the main burial (Grieder 1978, 192). Overall, these assays help to bracket the early foundation and subsequent reuse of the context from about AD 300 to 600. After the main burial offering, the pin offering was added, followed by the doorway offering, at locations slightly farther away from the main burial. Finally, after some time, veneration of the location and its main burial resulted in the “fill offering,” represented by the assay (TX-1329, 1400±60).

The Pashash burial context, involving the four known caches, stands as one of the best early examples of pre-Inca highland Andean burial cult. It presages cultural practices that would become routine in later ancestor veneration, including serial additions of burials; compartmentalization of spaces; revisitation for votive and commensal interventions; and discrete caches of ritual equipment and wealth items developed over generations. It is notable that this context emerged near the onset of Pashash's consolidation and relatively early in the Recuay tradition, but even then was quite well-developed as a coherent system of ritual practice. It was accompanied by abundant access to fancy kaolin pottery and many carved monoliths, all within the palatial grounds of a monumental compound. More broadly, the case also demonstrates that burial cult developed hand-in-hand with the emergence of early lordships. Based in



Figure 7. Image showing lower stratum, with pins (bent stems) and a large patch of bright red pigment, above scale. Photo: Author.

walled compounds, the most powerful Recuay collectives began to venerate but also protect and limit access to their most treasured forebears.

Durable dispositions in the Pashash offering

The contents of the pin offering and the previous three caches differ considerably in their contents (table 1). The “burial” and “doorway” offerings revealed stone bowls, stone spindle whorls, whistles, carved stone blocks, and carved bone objects (Grieder 1978, 51–58), none of which featured in the pin offering. Most notably, the burial offering and doorway offering contained many more pottery vessels, particularly fancy bowls with ring-bases. These were recipients for foods and liquids almost certainly served from other vessels found in the offering: large spouted basins, handled bowls, and jars.⁷ The

corpus of materials was essentially a table service, which facilitated libations and commensal acts of drinking and eating together. The Recuay themselves sometimes depicted scenes of ceremonial feasting and libation on their vessels, with hand-modeled figures holding cups or open bowls together, while presided over by well-attired lords (e.g., Lau 2011a, fig. 46, pl. 8). At the end of feasting and libation rituals, the vessels were routinely smashed and deposited, often just outside the burial repositories, a pattern found both in Recuay and elsewhere in the Andes; the “fill offering” likely resulted from such practices.

None of the offerings (table 1) contains the large plainware pottery vessels needed to cook and prepare food and beverages, like stews, porridges, and maize beer. Curiously, the only representation of cooking wares was in pottery miniatures and small stone pendant forms, showing miniature vessels with single-, double-, or triple-globular bodies. It is also worth noting

7. None of these forms were found in the pin offering.



Figure 8. Top-down photo of in situ hammered gold ornaments and paired red stone feline pendants (bottom left), adjacent to large flat stone slab, in pin offering. Photo: Author.

that the vessels in the caches were largely pristine, without much wear, breakage, or staining. Indeed, there is little indication that the bowls were ever used, much less intensively all at once. In the caches, a handful of vessels were used as receptacles for nonfood items (e.g., wooden and metal objects, ground pigments; see fig. 5*b*); none seemed to have contained liquid or food offerings. In fact, most of the vessels were carefully stacked and in piles, as if in storage (see fig. 4), awaiting future use.

Meanwhile, the pin offering contained many more lapidary and metal items (table 1). Cast gilt copper pins, especially, were numerous. Also, the array of hammered metal and gold foil objects and the set of copper pendants were unprecedented. The Moche-style earspools indicate special, long-distance connections to Recuay's powerful neighbors to the northwest. The bead miniatures also suggest coastal connections, and the

Nectandra species items were probably products of the forested Andean flanks (Montoya Vera 2015, 246).

In addition, items with camelid imagery were abundant in the pin offering (Lau 2021). Because camelids did not feature much in his materials, Grieder (1978, 134) concluded that Pashash's art and imagery were fundamentally about "spiritual life" that was "far-removed from mundane activities," as well as animals "not used for food." This is now untenable.

Clearly, the overall offering contained a wealth of diverse and unprecedented materials. But it was not merely gross accumulation of unrelated or alienated, impersonal wealth. If the numbers and kinds of artifacts help to indicate functional orientations, the plentiful pottery recipients in the "doorway" and "burial" offerings highlighted commensal practices; they were devices to engage others in festive hospitality. Meanwhile, the "pin offering" emphasized adornment



Figure 9. Composite image of pendants in the pin offering, including stone (*h–j*) examples. Panels *a–g* show copper metal examples, and were probably gilded. The imagery was diverse: (*a*) triangular ring-base bowl (W: 1.6 cm); (*b*) rampant feline (H: 2.2 cm); (*c*) bird (H: 2.1 cm); (*d*) feline eating a reptile (H: 3 cm); (*e*) human-feline (monkey?) (L: 2.4 cm); (*f*) frog or reptile (L: 2.5 cm); (*g*) crested animal (L: 2.4 cm); (*h*) feline or snake head (L: 2.6 cm); (*i*) feline (L: 2.1 cm); (*j*) rampant feline (H: 1.8 cm). Photos: Author.



Figure 10. Photo of upper pin set and stone tablet in situ. The pins were bundled together with thread and cloth. Photo: Author.

and signs of identity worn on the body. One impulse may be seen as outward-looking, to distribute personhood; the other is inward, to construct it.

At this point, I want to reflect on the broader cultural practices and dispositions that guided the form and arrangements of the offering's materials. The inclusions were patterned in special ways to reveal core values and dispositions in Pashash's noble burial cult.

Pairings and variations

Probably the most salient and ubiquitous part-whole relation is that of pairing. This manifests, of course, in the many *pairs* of pins, which are fasteners and

adornments worn on either shoulder. Recuay figurative pottery sometimes shows high-status women donning elaborate attire in this manner. The round pinheads may emphasize the position and shape of their breasts, perhaps a strategy of visual substitution surviving from earlier Chavín period iconography (Lyon 1978, 99; Rowe 1962, 15).

There are solid pin pairs with fox, feline, and crested feline heads (fig. 10). Other sets shows two avians side-by-side, as well as two birds, each standing over two prone human figures. Notably, small size differences (esp. stem length) and casting variations make the pins slightly different from its counterpart in the pair (fig. 11). Thus, the various pairings broadly manifest concerns



Figure 11. Photo of gilt copper pins, including side and top (head) detail (diameter: 3.9 cm). Gilt copper, stone inlays. The pins were also rattles. Photo: M. Brito.

with dualism. Still, it is fair to observe that Pashash artisans were less interested in identical elements or mass reproduction of the same pair than in variations on a form.

There was stress on making formally similar items (the same kind) that were at the same time individually different. This manifests, for example, in the doorway offering's nine zoomorphic vessels (see fig. 4). One shows a feline creature with four legs; the others show creatures with feline heads and bodies with forelimbs, which morph into curling snake bodies. They seem to depict incremental transformations from feline to serpent (or vice versa; see also Burger 1992, 158).

In the pin offering, the only zoomorphic vessels paired a bound camelid and a condor. Their opposed ecological domains are of importance. The camelid is associated with the land as a herded domesticate. When

shown with humans in the small figurines (fig. 5a), the camelid is held by the left arm, signaling its ancillary status (Lau and Brito 2023, figs. 49–51). The raptor, meanwhile, is a wild creature, associated with the sky and flight. It is also carnivorous. Both feature as images of offerings made to the burial. The camelid is bound in a net while we know that condors are captured after having fed on carrion, being so engorged that they are unable to take off. The two camelid pendants found inside may be signs of this practice. Ultimately, the two vessels seem to play on the metonymy of predatorial feeding and nourishment, and also echo the subject of capture and predation seen in other parts and items in the offering (see figs. 4c and 9d). These, evidently, were recursive expressions articulating the basis and justification for the burial and, by extension, its lordly authority.

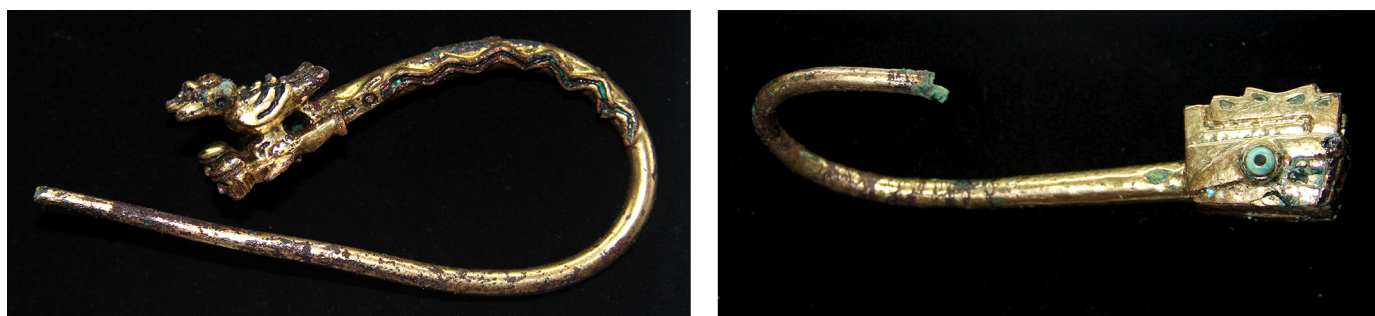


Figure 12. Composite image of two cast solid pins with bent shafts. The left shows paired avians atop a pair of nude men, followed (chased?) by a feline-serpent *amaru* creature on the stem; L: 12 cm. The right shows the head of the crested animal, one of the most important motifs and beings in Recuay art; L: 10.5 cm. Photos: M. Brito.

Replications

Another prominent practice was to include scalar replicas (miniatures) and versions in alternate materials. There are pin miniatures and wooden pins, and hammered metal replicas of pottery vessels. Several copper metal pendants have versions in carved stone. Stone pendants replicate, in miniature, necked jars. There are abundant small-scale ceramic pendants and figurines of camelids (Lau 2021).

Although their precise meanings remain uncertain, it is clear that key forms were reproduced. Artisans did this in alternative materials and at different sizes, but insisted that the form remained continuous (e.g., Lau 2010b; Houston 2014). Given the likelihood that many items were manufactured separately and at later points in time, we can postulate that at least some of the reduced-scale items emulated existing forms, referencing itself in a new iteration or expression (e.g., triangular bowls, pins, tenon heads).

Replicated objects also emphasized relations of change and transformation. The intentional smashing of pots of the fill offering reflects one such change. Also, the nine zoomorphic effigies showing mythical feline-

serpent creatures are distinct variations on the subject of creatures with feline (head)/serpent (body) components. Grieder (1978, 56) surmised that the feline-serpent grasping the head of a small human figure was the central deity (see fig. 4c), who was surrounded by “alternative and subsidiary images”; these, together, were “an expression of the enduring and the immediate, or Being and Becoming, of the eternal and the temporal aspects of divine power.”

The offering also clearly shows physical transformation in the group of bent pins. Found in the lower cache, the bent pins contrast with those of the upper group, which were all straight. It is not so far-fetched to note the resonance between the complementary notions of upper (upper = recent = unused/complete) and lower (lower = old = spent/fragmented), already mentioned for human communities and of stone (Duviols 1973; Howard 2006). The new replaces, but also encompasses, the old.

Parts, individuals, and sets

It bears noting that gathering individual elements into discernible sets was fundamental to the Pashash offerings. I want to focus on the pigmented powders to



Figure 13. Images of miniature pins, with birds and conical heads. Full-sized versions were found. Note the complementary twisting (*right*), which occurs only on this miniature pair (from pin offering) and several full-sized pins in the “burial offering” (see Grieder 1978, 241–42). Sizes: left, top, L: 5.2 cm; right, left, H: 5.6 cm. Gilt copper, colored stone inlays. Photos: Author.

exemplify the larger part-whole relations of the offering context.

Ritual pigments and powders at Pashash were evidenced in different ways. Some items contain trace red pigments, mainly on gold foil sequins and several incised stone artifacts (pendants and tubes). They were also found as discrete lenses, left in receptacles, and scattered as inclusions over the earth and offering items to mark episodes of ritual work (Grieder 1978, 44–47, 56). In the pin offering, two miniature ring-based bowls, one triangular and another round, contained bright red powders, perhaps cinnabar (see fig. 5*b*). Grieder also encountered plainware bowls containing red pigment in the “burial offering” (1978, 55).

Excavations also recovered irregular, small stone blocks, probably yellow and red ocher, that were ground down on various surfaces (fig. 14). A handful of them were found in the open courtyard (see fig. 3), suggesting that people ground down colored blocks on the spot (with handy sitting platform) and perhaps as a communal activity, not unlike preparing food offerings or *chicha*.

Pashash people also took care to keep the ground pigments discrete and integral: vermilion-like red, pinkish metallic purple, red ocher, and yellow ocher. Colored powder offerings are known from other traditions and archaeological contexts and traditions, from earlier and later periods (e.g., Matsumura 1997; Conlee et al. 2021; Nagaoka et al. 2020; Rowe 1948). Expressing a group of colors is mirrored in the collection of ground stone bowls and spindle whorls from the “burial offering” and “doorway offering,” which favored

differently colored stone types (Grieder 1978, 197, 209–10, 234, 236, 248, 262). In the pin offering, groups of stone pendants and beads also reflect a disposition to bring together diversely colored raw materials.

Two small flat stone “palettes” were found near the upper cache of pins (fig. 15). These were of light brown stone (sandstone?), carefully ground flat and to a trapezoidal form. Several lenses of bright pinkish ground pigment, heavy and probably with metallic content, were also encountered nearby. The palettes may have been used as small objects to hammer flat materials and grind down powders, or on which to temporarily place them. Grieder (1978) also found evidence of pigment offerings and also several palettes and flat stones in the burial and doorway offerings.

The uses of powders at Pashash rituals is surprisingly consistent with the *Idolatries* accounts of traditional highland ritual practices of the 1600s. Specifically, they noted how powders featured in at least three ways: their offering as votives; their airborne suspension when blown; and their grinding down (trituration) on the spot. The *Idolatries* accounts also mention powders being blown from flat stones (e.g., Arriaga 1999, 54, 57). It is not impossible that the palettes served this function, though none shows staining.

Finally, the approach to powders resembles the logic behind the quantities of camelid figurines (Lau 2021). Made and painted expediently, each figure has very different arrangements of anatomical details (e.g., tail, facial features, limbs, teats) and fleece coloration, which are crucial today for individual naming and group



Figure 14. Chunks of red and yellow stone materials, ground down into blocks and powders, found in excavations (left, base width: 9 cm). Photo: Author.



Figure 15. Ground stone tablets, or “palettes,” found in the pin offering (dimensions: left, 3.8 x 7.4 cm; right, 4.8 x 9.3 cm). Photo: Author.

classifications (Flores Ochoa 1981). Some were left plain in their white/cream kaolinite paste. Most were painted with dabs of red paint to mark their coloration, but with no duplication or regular patterning (Lau 2021). The little camelids composed a herd—and, curiously, like powders, their presence highlighted unique individual affordances while simultaneously constituting a collectivity.

* * *

In summary, this essay studied the contents of a major burial offering of the Recuay culture, in Peru’s north highlands. It focused on formal relations between objects to help detect long-lived cultural dispositions. The offering resulted from the actions of descendants who took great pains to remember and honor the noble(s) and burial place over generations. The offerings basically contained small, largely redundant bits gathered together and arranged in patterns to accomplish this end. Distinctive object juxtapositions and interventions based on form were emphasized, including scalar replications, pairings, sets and series of

things, and redundant themes and compositions. Various objects and groups of objects composed parts of a larger, in-process “whole” to venerate the interment. Evidence also indicates replications of previous procedures, items, and compositions.

Why were Recuay peoples so insistent on establishing part-whole relations through materials? I suspect that the main aim was to reinforce the social whole, taken as the lineage or corporate group, at the center of which were chiefly nobles and their close relations. It concerned a cultural framework that valued how parts are effective and potent together in a system where recognition of the whole is premised on recurring contributions of each other. This may have been important to maintain legitimacy during a time of great change due to increasing social differentiation and displays of unequal wealth.

If the “whole” was the burial context, it was ever in the process of being added to and completed, just like the collectivity or lineage for which the burial was its *raison d’être*. In this way, I contend that the artifactual record counts as a social record: the parts of the offering

go some way in reflecting the logic of Recuay social relations (Gell 1998, chaps. 8–9). This study centered its attention on the offering's "inter-artefactual domain" to discern enduring value systems embedded through iterative social practices, like ancestor cult. Notably, it involved more than Gell himself would have envisioned. The inter-artefactual domain concerned not only formal relations between the elements (what could be a largely synchronic, acontextualized exercise); it involved stratigraphy, taphonomic processes, and time-contingent interventions as Pashash's nobles worked out a style for making and remaking the world of the offering.

Crucially, sometime during the seventh century, veneration of the Pashash burial ceased, for reasons unknown. But there are indications that its inhabitants had every intention to return to the burial and render cult again. They left valuable pigmented powders, unfired vessels, and pristine, straight pins at the ready for the next ritual cycle. The stacks of carefully made and painted bowls, especially, anticipated a useful future.

It is salutary to return to the conceit and evidence of powders as reflecting Andean part-whole social relations at Pashash. If pebbles stand for mountains through a "figure of thought" (Allen 1997), the tiny bits of powders also helped to do this job, of presencing and composing a whole. In fact, I would contend this is true for most of the artifacts in the Pashash context, both literally and metaphorically. These small agents had the benefit of instantiating their parent materials or prototypes, and effectively distributing their generative potency and special associations. Ultimately, these offerings were valuables and bits of substances to which people committed great effort, and then gave away (or gave back) as gifts and obligations.

That all the highly curated categories (e.g., sets of pins and vessels, herds of camelid figurines and pendant animals) conform to part/whole dispositions adds strength to the argument and focus on the ritual context. It also indicates that synecdochical arrangements operated across a range of materials, media, and beings, and not just of stone.

To be sure, neither the pins and powders, nor the pots and pendants, worked alone. Nor were they, in and of themselves, the principal agents or subjects of cult. Being simultaneously composite and individually potent, their status was as catalysts for larger-scale intentions involving lords, ancestral effigies, and their descendants. Yet they had a vital purpose: each part was a small addition that owed and contributed to the greater body, refreshing and reconstituting the whole, through ritual work. All helped to bring people to remember their key

deceased. No matter how tiny or vanishingly remote, little bits together hoped to keep them "utterly eternal."

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