

# The Living Ones: Miniatures and Animation in the Andes

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In highland Andean communities, certain miniatures inspire complex emotions that go beyond the aesthetic. I have previously examined “pebble play” during pilgrimages, in which devotees make requests of a mountain/saint by building miniature stone house compounds. Here, I explore other types of miniature, in particular tiny stone camelids (*inqaychus*) considered as gifts from powerful places that invigorate the herds. Guided by Quechua terminology, I explore the ontological assumption that material things such as *inqaychus* possess subjective personhood. Materiality, composed of nesting hierarchies, is not independent of human activity and moral relationship. I amplify my earlier analysis—which interpreted “pebble play” as characterized by synecdoche and play with dimensionality—using terminology drawn from fractal geometry to approximate a world characterized by dynamic changes in scale and interchangeability of parts and wholes. I conclude by contrasting *inqaychus* with *alasitas* (mass-produced miniatures purchased on holy days, increasingly popular among urban migrants).

**Key words:** Andes, miniatures, materiality, fractals, animism, pilgrimage

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## BACKGROUND: PEBBLES AND MOUNTAINS

*What is the virtue of reduction either of scale or in number of properties?* Lévi-Strauss poses this question in his famous chapter on “The Science of the Concrete” in *The Savage Mind* (1966:23). He concludes that miniaturization facilitates instant apprehension of the whole and that this produces “a very profound aesthetic emotion.” I think of that emotion as “delight.” The miniatures I will discuss in this paper are certainly delightful. My acquaintances and interlocutors in the Andes share that delight as well, but their delight is mixed with other sentiments that are harder to pin down—elements of love, awe, reverence, gratitude, and, yes, anxiety and fear. In short, the living interactive relationship between certain small objects and human beings inspires complex feelings that go beyond the aesthetic. These sentiments arise not from the “apprehension of the whole” but from a sense of sacramental communion with a nonhuman being.

In the following pages I explore the ontological status of tiny stone animals from the perspective of Andean people who treasure them. I hope through this example

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to suggest more nuanced approaches to miniaturization that (1) focus on the materiality of the object as well its size and form and (2) explore in each case the culturally relevant understandings of that materiality. Davy writes that miniatures serve as conduits that “create an intimate link between the maker and the viewer” (2015:9). In the Andean context the “maker” is a powerful earth being and the “viewer” is a shepherd anxious to maintain a positive personal relationship with the tiny object. There is, indeed, an intimate link—yet it operates according to a culturally distinct semiotic. While the animal is “reduced in scale and number of properties,” it is magnified in terms of its dense materiality.

My interest in miniatures began in 1991 when I participated in a conference on textuality in Amerindian cultures organized by Rosaleen Howard and William Rowe. That conference gave rise to an edited volume, *Creating Context in Andean Cultures* (Howard-Malverde 1997), which included my contribution entitled “When Pebbles Move Mountains: Iconicity and Symbolism in Quechua Ritual.” The editors of this special issue of *JAR* have kindly asked me to consider how my thinking about Andean miniatures has developed or changed since the publication of that article. The following essay takes up that challenge.

For my participation in the conference on textuality I chose what seemed to be a text-like example—namely, the practice of “playing with pebbles” during the spectacular pilgrimage to the sanctuary of the Señor de Qoyllu Rit’i (Lord of Resplendent Snow), which I attended back in 1975 and 1978. On a flat stretch of scree called Puqllay Pampa (or Puqllanapata), “the playing ground,” adults play at make-believe like children (Figure 1). In 1975, for example, a young couple of my acquaintance who hoped to establish a household built a miniature house compound out of stones. With great intensity they searched for stones shaped like alpacas, llamas, sheep, and cows and carefully placed them in their little stone corral. Meanwhile, entrepreneurially minded pilgrims played energetically at commerce. Michael Sallnow, who attended the Qoyllu Rit’i pilgrimage in 1973, described this as a “surreal scene,” marked by “all kinds of horseplay. . . . One of our number bought a cow from a companion, in reality a lump of quartz, for which he gave a handful of scraps of paper representing money and which he tethered with a strand of wool from his cap. He then took his cow over to a [another group] and proceeded to sell it to them in turn” (1987:190). A more recent account comes from Astrid Stensrud, who attended in 2007 with pilgrims from a working-class neighborhood in Cuzco (also see Molinié 2012). Stensrud describes Puqllanapata as a kind of “virtual reality” (2010:54) in which various kinds of systematic relationships are played out at a smaller scale:

In this world you can do everything you aspire to do in real life, and buy the material goods you desire. Most of the players build miniature houses of pebbles, and some of them sell their houses to others . . . [using copies of real] bills of one hundred or one thousand US dollars made especially for the purpose of play at Qoyllu Rit’i. . . . [S]ome persons play the role of a notary,



Figure 1. Pukllay: “playing with pebbles” at the Qoyllu Rit’i Pilgrimage. Two brothers collaborate on building a house compound. The little white stones in the foreground are “sheep.” The man in the foreground is costumed as an Ukuku dancer (photo by the author).

judge, policeman . . . or priest. . . . Young persons who aspire for professional careers buy university diplomas. You can also buy furniture and electrical appliances for your house, all in the form of small stones/pebbles (Stensrud 2010:50; my translation).

Stensrud notes that “This playing has changed according to the processes of change in economy and technology and with the increase of pilgrims from the cities (cf. Poole 1988). Today there are [fewer] alpacas and more computers being traded in Pukllanapata” (2010:51). She describes a proliferation of vendors selling *alasitas*—tiny replicas of cars, trucks, houses, and other desirables typical of pilgrimages to the south in the Peruvian Altiplano and Bolivia.<sup>1</sup>

The “play” is serious, light-hearted, yet intense, for the playing ground provides a context that empowers human beings to define pieces of the powerful mountain for their own purposes. As Stensrud observes, playing with pebbles is a mimetic performance of the pilgrims’ desires, wordlessly declaring to the Lord of Qoyllu Rit’i (who is both mountain and saint), “This is what I want and need with all my heart. This is my dream house (truck, store, university diploma, commercial success, etc.)” If the request is communicated to the mountain/saint strongly enough, and with enough commitment, the pilgrim should attain the desired object.

The pebble play at Qoyllu Rit’i is a variant of widespread Andean practices linking miniatures to the acquisition of material prosperity. In many instances, as in

the “pebble game,” desires are expressed through the process of making objects and playing social roles; in these contexts the miniature creations are left behind when the “players” go home or return to their daily routines (Table 1). In northern Argentina, for example, pastoralists populate miniature stone corrals with pebble llamas as they celebrate their flesh-and-blood llamas in August (Bugallo and Tomasi 2012:11). Also in August, pastoralists in Apurimac, Peru, build little corrals for animals made of maize flour and grease (Tomoeda 2013). Agriculturalists in Apurimac celebrate their cattle during Carnival (February) and the feast of Santiago (July 25) by fashioning figurines of llama fat and maize flour, which they call *kallpa* (vital force); these are burned at the end of the ceremony (Gose 1994:20. For herders in Isluga, Chile, the Christmas season includes “playing with clay”—that is, modeling clay figures of animals and trucks (Van Kessel 1992). Penelope Harvey reports that in Ocongate, Peru, on August 1, people use wet clay from the riverbanks to make models of objects they would like to have, including houses and motor bikes. “They also libate the miniatures (as they would animals) to enhance their reproductive capacity” (Harvey 2001:201).

In addition to these temporary creations, many rural households treasure stone miniatures of a more permanent kind, called *inqaychu* or *illa* (Table 2). These are the miniatures I know best from my own fieldwork, and they provide the focus for this essay.<sup>2</sup> These little stone animals and plants have a long history in the Andes, reaching back from the present into pre-Spanish times. Although called by other names, they are virtually identical to the *conopas* mentioned by the Spanish inquisitor Pablo de Arriaga in 1621. He described them as small stones, notable for their striking colors and shapes (Figure 2), that the indigenous people would worship in order to have plenty of food and prosperity, adding “they have kept them as the most precious thing their fathers have left them. . . . There are particular conopas, some for maize . . . others for potatoes, others for the increase of the herds” (Arriaga 1968 [1621]:11–12, my translation).

In many contemporary communities, *inqaychus* for llamas, alpacas, and sheep are cherished family heirlooms passed down through the generations (Figure 3). Addressed by various terms—*kawsaq* (living one), *khuyaq* (caring one), *khuya rumi* (loving stone), *illa* (ray of light), *inqa*—they are felt to be, as Flores comments, “the source and origin of happiness, well-being and abundance” (1977:218, my translation). Their family treasures them, bedding them down in a nest of coca leaves, wrapping them in fine textiles and storing them “to sleep” well out of sight. They are awakened and join the family only on special occasions that mark crucial turning points in the sun’s annual circuit, including St. John’s Eve (June 23; winter solstice), the First of August (nadir passage), and during Carnival in February or March (zenith passage). I had the privilege of participating in several such occasions, all of which were characterized by excitement and delight (Allen 2002:130; Robin 2008:198). On a St. John’s Eve in the early 1980s, for example, Esteban and Inucha squealed in delight as they watched their father, Don Luis, unwrap his bundle. “*MuNAYcha!*”

Table 1. Temporary miniatures.

Material	Example	Name	Type of Object	Context	When
Stone (found by participants)	Qoyllu Rit'i Pilgrimage, Cuzco, Peru (Stensrud 2010)	No generic name	Pebbles defined by participants as animals and desired objects (e.g., llamas, houses, trucks)	<i>Pukllay</i> , collaborative play during pilgrimage	Corpus Christi (May–June)
Stone (found by participants)	Jujuy, northern Argentina (Bugallo and Tomasi 2012)	No generic name	Pebbles defined by participants, some as llamas; others are used to build a miniature corral	<i>Señalaky</i> , animal fertility rites; collaborative building of miniature corral	Carnival
Fat and corn flour (molded by participants)	Apurimac, Peru (Gose 1994)	<i>Kallpa</i> (Force)	Figurines made of llama fat and maize flour in the form of herd animals	<i>T'inka</i> , animal fertility rites; made by ritual leader, burned at end of ceremony	Carnival (camelids); San Juan (June 24, sheep); Santiago (July 25, horses)
Clay (molded by participants)	Ocongate, Peru (Harvey 2001)	No generic name	Figurines made of riverbank clay in the form of animals and desired objects	<i>T'uru Pukllay</i> , playing with clay; left as offerings to earth beings	August 1

Table 2. Permanent miniatures: Comparison of Inqaychu and Alasita.

Name	Inqaychu (also Illa, Enqa, Khuya Rumi)	Alasita
Material	Stone	Various: plastic, cardboard, plaster
Where	Rural Andean highland communities (e.g., Paratía, Peru; Flores Ochoa 1977)	Urban centers with commercial orientation: northern Argentina, Bolivia, Peru (e.g., Angé 2016; Golte and León 2014)
Type of object	Small stone in the form of a herd animal or cultivated plant	Mass-produced toylike objects: houses, cars, computers, and other desired objects
How obtained	Produced by earth beings who guide favored individuals to find them	Purchased from vendors at pilgrimage sites and at saints' day fairs; blessed with holy water
When obtained	Transitional solar passages: solstices, zenith (February), nadir (August), dawn, twilight	Festivals of female saints in August and January; pilgrimages; New Year's Day
When feted	Transitional solar passages: solstices, zenith (February), nadir (August), dawn, twilight	No specified dates; when possessor feels it is appropriate
Relationships with humans	Hidden from outsiders. Beloved source of vitality; also can withdraw vitality if not treated well	Displayed openly. Connects possessor with the saint of origin; reminder of the goal of obtaining it, and the effort required

(How pretty!) Luis let his children caress the stones as he set them on a fine textile, facing the doorway. "These are the Living Ones," he explained, adding, "They are caring for us tenderly (*khuyashanku*)." "*Michisunchis, michisunchis!*" (Let's go herding, let's go herding!) clamored the children. They helped Luis feed the inqaychus with a fresh pasture of coca leaves and a rain of alcohol droplets (rum or corn beer). Nevertheless, as in "playing with pebbles," a serious undercurrent ran through this joyful activity, for the Living Ones contain within themselves the lives of herd animals. If—and only if—an inqaychu feels well-disposed to its keepers (a more appropriate term than "owners"), it will extend its life force (*animu*) to make a flourishing herd of desirable animals.<sup>3</sup>

In what follows I amplify the analysis I offered in "When Pebbles Move Mountains," drawing on my own research and that of others, particularly Jorge Flores Ochoa (1977) and Xavier Ricard Lanata (2007), whose ethnographies of high-altitude pastoral communities in the department of Cuzco include rich information about inqaychus. In my earlier paper I described "playing with pebbles" and similar practices as characterized by "synecdoche (or envelopment of the whole as part



Figure 2. An Inka conopa in the form of an alpaca, made of stone (steatite) (© The Trustees of the British Museum).



Figure 3. An inqaychu acquired in Cuzco in 1955. Length: 1.65 inches. (© The Trustees of the British Museum).



of a larger whole), and play with dimensionality.” I emphasized that these are not tropes but strategies for changing the lived-in world, “premised on the assumption that all beings are intrinsically interconnected through their sharing a matrix of animated substance.” In this essay I express my understanding in different terminology, that of fractal geometry. Synecdoche and fractals are, as Vandenbeke argues (2004), equivalent modes of thought in which parts and whole imply each other. Fractal terminology, it now seems to me, more closely approximates the way Andean people experience the material world as characterized by dynamic changes in scale and interchangeability of parts and whole; it also engages better with recent work on similar issues (e.g., Dehouve 2015, 2016; de la Cadena 2015; Strathern 2004). I should emphasize, however, that I am not engaged in model-building; the following account is offered in the spirit of thick description. I employ analytical terms such as “fractal” and “distributed personhood” as heuristic tools in an attempt to translate what I understand to be my Andean interlocutors’ experience of being-in-the-world. As in any translation, these concepts are approximations and have their limits.<sup>4</sup>

#### THE PERSONHOOD OF NONHUMAN BEINGS

My experience of inqaychus goes back to 1975 when I first undertook field research in a Quechua-speaking community called Sonqo (department of Cuzco, Peru), located between 3200 and 3800 m above sea level, on the steep, almost treeless slopes of a small valley. Sonqo’s eighty-four households are devoted mainly to potato farming and the herding of sheep and camelids, supplemented by occasional wage labor in the city of Cuzco. Young people in their late teens or twenties often spend time working as domestics in Cuzco. Although most return to Sonqo after a few years, some settle in the city, providing important nodes in a rural-urban network of socio-economic relationships. Over the past forty years I have returned nine times (most recently in 2011). The community has undergone many changes since 1975, owing in part to completion of a road linking Sonqo with the city of Cuzco. Among these changes are a steep decline in pastoralism, the collapse of community-wide sectorial fallowing, and conversion of some families to a sect of evangelical Protestantism called Maranata (Allen 2002:203–47).

From the first, living in Sonqo required a reorientation in my assumptions about the material world, a reorientation that I still find fascinating, unsettling, and (from my “Western” perspective) paradoxical. The current “ontological turn” in anthropology seems to me overdue and highly relevant in an Andean context, but since I have discussed this point elsewhere, I will not dwell on it here (Allen 2015, 2016).<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless a brief consideration of what we might call an “Andean” ontological orientation is in order to contextualize inqaychus within the world in which they make sense.

In Sonqo, awareness of “the subjective personhood of non-human beings” (Sahlins 2014:281) permeated one’s activities; one did not so much act upon, as interact with, objects. This orientation, which I call “animism,” is neither mystical nor “pre-



logical.<sup>6</sup> It is rather a difference in attitude. To take a mundane example: nights are cold in the high Andes, so you sleep under a blanket. You treat that blanket with respect by keeping it clean and whole; the blanket responds by keeping you warm. Your *behavior* with regard to the blanket is no different from that of a sensible person anywhere, but the attitude informing that behavior is culturally specific: you feel a sense of responsibility to your *relationship* with the blanket. If it repeatedly slips off the bed at night, you will probably want to mentally review your treatment of the blanket. Because life consists of a myriad of such relationships, one becomes acutely attuned to nonverbal signs. If a rock rolls down a hillside and narrowly misses one's foot, chances are that the hill is displeased and one has to figure out why—that is, to arrive at an interpretation of the sign. On this point Penelope Harvey comments,

it is important to understand that the personhood of hills and pathways is not a metaphorical extension of human attributes. Personhood is literal. The reading of the signs that the landscape affords is less like reading a map and more akin to how one might try to interpret the feelings of others by looking at facial expressions and bodily postures (2001:198).

For example, during my first fieldwork session I asked Don Erasmo, a fine storyteller, to record the origin myth of Qesqay, a nearby lake. He refused, saying that Qesqay would be angered. In 1984, after I had returned to Sonqo several times, he volunteered to record the narrative. I asked him what had changed and he replied that by this time Qesqay knew me and would not mind having his history recorded.

Borrowing a phrase from Native American writer N. Scott Momaday, we might describe these relationships between people and places as “reciprocal appropriation” (also see Basso 1996:64). Momaday explains,

the Native American ethic with respect to the physical world is a matter of reciprocal appropriation; appropriations in which man invests himself in the landscape, and at the same time incorporates the landscape into his own most fundamental experience (1976:80).

Marisol de la Cadena uses the term “intra-action” to describe this relational mode in which the participants mutually constitute each other's being-in-the-world: “reciprocity is not a relationship *between* entities as usually understood in the Andean ethnographic record; it is a relationship from which entities emerge, it makes them, they grow from it” (de la Cadena 2015:103; also see Sillar 2004).<sup>7</sup> In the above example, I could record (that is, keep and carry with me) Qesqay's origins because, after years of returning to Sonqo, I had been integrated into the landscape of human and nonhuman entities that together compose the *ayllu* (that is, Sonqo as an Andean community; Allen 2002:75–101). In Momaday's terms, Qesqay and I had reciprocally incorporated each other into a shared, fundamental experience.

This mutual implicature of physical world and consciousness is inherent in the Andean concept of *pacha*. No single word in English (or Spanish) adequately translates *pacha*, which can refer equally to the entire cosmos or to a momentary event (cf. Salomon 1991:14). One sometimes finds *pacha* rendered as “space-time,” a partially accurate translation which nevertheless captures neither the fluidity of scale nor the presence of human and nonhuman consciousness inherent in the concept.<sup>8</sup> For example, my friend Luis Gutiérrez, reminiscing about my arrival in Sonqo, remarked “in that *pacha* (moment) we were holding a work party” (*Chay pachapin faenata ruwasharayku*). Although the work party obviously existed in time and space, it consisted more fundamentally of human beings plowing the soil with their tools—all of them (people, soil, and tools) sharing a common experience. It was a lived-in moment, a confluence of matter, activity, and moral relationship.

The earth as a whole is often personified as *Pachamama* (Mother Pacha). She is vitally important for agriculturalists but less so for the pastoralists who concern us in this essay (cf. Ricard 2007:73–74). On a cosmic scale, the word *pachakuti* (turning around of *pacha*) denotes an apocalypse. Sonqueños sometimes referred to a *pachakuti* that destroyed a pre-human age of the world lit by a copper sun and populated by giants. This widespread Andean “mythic history” tells how this *nawpa pacha* (preceding world) was destroyed when our fiery sun came roaring up from the east to displace the copper one, burning up the giants and bringing forth human beings. This narrative illustrates how, on a cosmic scale, each *pacha* has its own sun and therefore its own quality of light. To participate in a *pacha*—a lived-in moment at whatever scale—is to share in its particular kind of light—that is, its *sut’i* (clarity). Once, trying to improve my Quechua, I asked my friends to explain the meaning of *sut’i*. They offered two synonyms: *kunan* (now) and *chiquaq* (true or straight). In the immediate moment (*kunan*) one sees clearly (*sut’ita*) and truly (*chiquaqta*).

*Alqa* is an important concept related to the relationship of matter and light. In the interplay of earth and sun, even the smallest changes in the terrain produce a change in the tonality of light and shadow. This point of change is called *alqa*. *Alqa* is a defining rupture where something leaves off being what it is and becomes something else. In weaving, *alqa* is the point of color change (Cereceda 1990; Ricard 2007:72). In a landscape, *alqa* is an abrupt change in slope, the point at which the surface of the ground is broken, defining a distinct protuberance or declivity of some kind. Each of these distinct features in the earth’s surface, no matter how small, has the potential for personhood and agency.<sup>9</sup> Snowcapped peaks, barren hills, lakes, ridges, rock outcrops, springs, boulders—all have names and distinct personalities (Allen 2002 [1988]:82–87). These *apus* (literally, “lords”) are not spirits who dwell in places, but the places themselves.

Collectively the *apus* are called *tirakuna* (places), a hybrid word, from Spanish *tierra* and Quechua plural suffix *-kuna*. Sonqueños describe them as *uywaqniykuna* (those who nurture us, who make us grow up), a term applied to shepherds, parents, and guardians. Each place provides well-being for the totality of beings

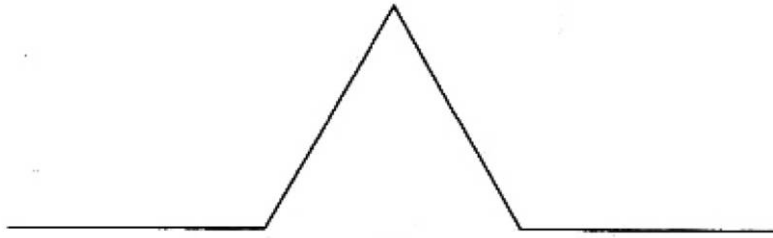
(humans, plants, animals) within the sphere of its authority. It makes the ayllu by feeding its people through flourishing crops and herds, and in return it demands to be fed with offerings of coca leaves, alcohol, fat, and appropriate behavior. Xavier Ricard recalls asking Braulio Ccarita, a llama herder, why he made offerings to some little hillocks protruding from the surface of a pasture. Were they *apus*? he asked. Don Braulio replied,

Yes, little ones, little protrusions, little irregularities in the terrain. We make offerings to them so that nothing will happen to the llamas, so they'll hold them up, keep them steady. . . . Of course they're powerful. Don't they care for the animals? Don't we walk on them? (Ricard 2007:70, my translation)

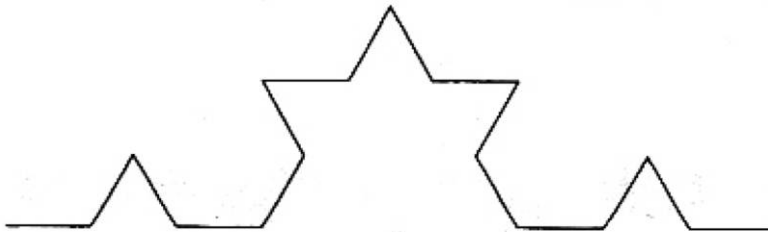
Braulio was concerned about the “little protrusions” because he lived in relationship with them. If he or his animals stumbled in the pasture, he would have to examine this relationship and modify his behavior accordingly. Little *apus* such as these have limited spheres of influence; they affect only the people and animals who actually come in contact with them. Outside the relational context, however, they are simply inert lumps; they hold no interest for people who have no contact with them or who—in Momaday's terms—have not “incorporated them into their fundamental experience.” On the other hand, a prominent hill named Antaqaqa has a wider sphere of influence that includes the whole community (*ayllu*) of Sonqo, which is made up of humans and places together, including “little *apus*” protruding from fields and pastures.

Each place is a *kamachikuq* (authority) over the ones within its sphere of influence. Great snowcapped peaks such as Mount Ausangate oversee a whole region, including local *apus* such as Antaqaqa. Thus small *tirakuna* are nested within more powerful ones, which are themselves nested within places of greater authority, and so forth. Authority generally increases with size because larger places, which can be seen from afar, tend to command a greater network of relationships than small ones.<sup>10</sup> Andean ritual specialists (*paqo*) know how to tap into this enchainment of authority. Say, for example, that a *paqo* is hired to divine the identity of a thief who robbed someone's house. Although the adobe house (*wasitira*) will have witnessed the robbery, it does not give up this knowledge easily. First the *paqo* has to call on Apu Ausangate, the towering snowcapped peak who dominates the region. Ausangate calls on lesser *apus*, who call on lesser ones right down to Apu Antaqaqa in Sonqo, who finally orders the house to identify the thief (Allen 2015:24).

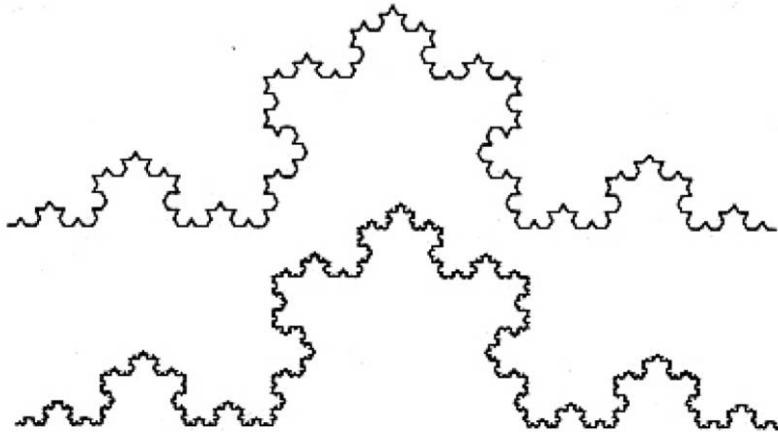
As I wrote in “When Pebbles Move Mountains,” the *tirakuna* are composed of “mutually enveloping homologous structures that act upon each other . . . the scale of one's purview can expand or contract endlessly. Every microcosm is a macrocosm and vice versa” (Allen 1997:81). In other words, the *tirakuna* can be described as *fractals* (Figure 4). Fractals are “characterized by the repetition of similar patterns at ever-diminishing scales” (Eglash 1999:4; Dehouve 2015, 2016). Mathematically,



Starting shape



Each line is replaced with an iteration of the starting shape (recursion).



And so forth, *ad infinitum*...

Figure 4. Example of a fractal pattern: the Koch curve (adapted from Eglash 1999:10).

fractals exhibit properties of scaling, self-similarity, and recursion. As illustrated in Figure 4, recursion is “a circular process, a loop in which the output at one stage becomes the input for another” (Eglash 1999:17).

Roy Wagner’s work on personhood in Melanesia introduced the concept of the “fractal person” to social anthropology. The concept resonates with Momaday’s “reciprocal appropriation” but goes a step further by addressing the common sociological distinction between individual and the collective identities. Wagner writes, “A fractal person is never a unit standing in relation to an aggregate, or an aggregate standing in relation to a unit, but always *an entity with relationship integrally implied*” (1991:163; my emphasis). Wagner illustrates his point with examples from reproduction and genealogy: “People exist reproductively by being ‘carried’ as part of another. . . . A genealogy is thus an enchainment of people, as indeed persons would be seen to ‘bud’ out of one another in a speeded-up cinematic depiction of human life” (Wagner 1991:163). Although tirakuna are only occasionally described as having genealogical relationships, they are inevitably described in terms of enchainment. And this, finally, is where inqaychus make sense—as active material nodes within an enchainment of fractal beings.

### LIVING STONES

Inqaychus emerge from powerful places. In Sonqo, for example, they are said to come from herds that Apu Antaqaqa keeps in his interior.<sup>11</sup> In the month of August, and at sunrise on St. John’s Day, some of these herd animals emerge from “water doors” (springs) on Antaqaqa’s slopes.<sup>12</sup> Don Luis and other Sonqueños claimed to have heard them bleating “prettily” (*munaychata*) but confessed ruefully that they had never managed to approach them. One has to be guided by the apu—that is, “made to find” an inqaychu (de la Cadena 2015:107). No one I spoke with in Sonqo had actually succeeded in acquiring an inqaychu in this way. Shepherds in higher-altitude communities devoted to pastoralism, such as those studied by Flores Ochoa (1977), Ricard Lanata (2007), and Bolin (1998), describe inqaychus as beautiful animals that emerge from springs and glacial lakes (also see Gose 1994:206; Sillar 2012). Although these animals are difficult to approach, a quick and lucky person may capture one by touching it with his foot or throwing a coca cloth over it. The beautiful creature proceeds to shrink and harden until it becomes tiny and dense—a stone. Still warm, it consents to be taken home to live in the heart of its captor’s household. There it stays of its own volition, for inqaychus cannot be lost or stolen against their will. Should an inqaychu go missing, its disconsolate family would have to question where the relationship had gone wrong. If, on the other hand, family members change their way of life and no longer pasture animals, their inqaychus pose a dilemma. Flores tells us that abandoned inqaychus “have neither value nor ceremonial interest, but nevertheless are dangerous because they are ‘starving’” (1997:227). A neglected inqaychu will draw out the vital force of the human beings in its vicinity. Better to let it go, perhaps sell it to tourists (Allen 2016:342).

The Cuzqueño anthropologist Washington Rosas witnessed the discovery of an inqaychu in yet a different manner.<sup>13</sup> He was helping his *compadre* (fictive kinsman) open a new field near an Incaic ruin when they came upon a small, white, llama-shaped stone buried in the earth. The *compadre* was overwhelmed with joy; leaving the stone in place, he rushed to his house for alcohol and coca leaf. For three days and nights he and his family sat next to the inqaychu, sharing coca and alcohol with the little stone in order that it might “ripen” (*poqoy*). Only then did they take it into their home.

Inqaychus make a brief but revealing appearance in Marisol de la Cadena’s recent book, *Earth Beings: Ecologies of Practice across Andean Worlds* (2015), which explores the Peruvian agrarian reform from the perspective of Mariano Turpo, an indigenous leader from a hacienda near Apu Ausangate. Mariano’s son recalled that after the land titles were finally transferred to the hacienda’s inhabitants, “At night we made a *ch’uyay* (ceremony) to the [alpaca-shaped] inqaychu that Ausangate had made my father find. We danced and drank all night” (2015:107). De la Cadena explains,

The Andean ethnographic record has translated inqaychu as a small stone in the shape of an animal or plant that earth-beings give some individuals (by making them find it); it is the *animu* or essence of that animal or plant. . . . With the help of my friends, I learned that the inqaychu is the earth-being itself—a piece of it, which is also all of it—but shaped in a specific form. . . . [L]ibations of liquid (the *ch’uyay*) were poured on it so that Ausangate—in its being as the place of alpacas—would come to inhabit the newly established cooperative alpaca herd (2015:107).

We can understand this relationship between Apu and alpaca in terms of *distributed personhood*. Alfred Gell (1998) developed this concept to address the way art objects are imbued with the agency of their creators, thus becoming secondary agents. “[A]s social persons, we are present, not just in our singular bodies, but in everything in our surroundings which bears witness to our existence, our attributes, our agency” (Gell 1998:103).<sup>14</sup> The apu distributes itself by means of the small, portable inqaychu which is easily incorporated into the heart of the household. In the inqaychu, a piece of the mountain is shaped and specifically directed to the pastoralists’ alpacas. An alpaca thus becomes a locus of *animu*.

The word *animu*, like many Quechua terms of ritual importance, has its origins in Spanish—in this case, *ánimo* (or *ánima*).<sup>15</sup> *Animu* is not the same as *sami*, a general enlivening force (Allen 2002:33–36), for *animu* infuses an object with its individual being. The inqaychu’s powerful breath infuses its possessor’s herds not only with *sami* but with shape and tangible characteristics—that is, with *animu*. A person’s *animu* is sometimes likened to a halo surrounding the body, the shadow attached to the body, or a small in-dwelling double (La Riva 2004:78; Ricard 2007:85). Unlike the

Christian notion of the soul, this *animu* has no eternal existence independent of the body. *Animu* and *kirpu* (body, from the Spanish *cuerpo*) are distinct but mutually constitutive elements; neither can survive for long without the other. *Animu* may travel from the body in dreams or severe illness, leaving the body dazed and dumb, like an empty suit of clothes (Arnold and Yapita 1998:73). Sometimes healthy people awaken with a sound, *thak*, in their ears; then they know that their *animu* has been traveling while they sleep, for *thak* is the sound made when the *animu* reunites with its body (Ricard 2007:181). Anger and fright may also induce the *animu* to flee; I once became withdrawn and silent after being mercilessly teased, and my erstwhile tormenters ruefully worried that my *animu* had left me.

Xavier Ricard includes an interesting discussion of *animu* in his study of alpaca herders near Ausangate. He likens *animu* to *entelechy* and glosses the word as “essence in action” (*esencia en acto*; Ricard 2007:83). He goes on to suggest that the Spanish term replaced a Quechua word *kamaq* (variant spelling, *camac*): “there is no doubt that the ‘animu’ of the [highland] pastoralists retains in large part the meaning of *camac* . . . as it was still used in the early colonial period” (2007:78; my translation). Indeed, Frank Salomon’s definition of the verb *kamay* (*camay*) as it appears in the colonial *Huarochiri Manuscript* (ca. 1600) is strikingly similar to Ricard’s “essence in action.” He glosses it as “a concept of specific essence and force, ‘to charge with being, to infuse with species power,’” and goes on to comment, “All things have their vitalizing prototypes or *camac*. . . . Religious practice supplicates the *camac* ever to vitalize its *camasqa*, that is, its tangible instance or manifestation” (1991:16; also see Taylor 1974). This last sentence still describes precisely the pastoralists’ practice of supplicating their *inqaychus* to vitalize their animals.

Although I described *inqaychus* as prototypes in my earlier work (Allen 1997:79), I no longer use the term with reference to *inqaychus*. The purpose of a prototype is to serve as the basis for more refined versions of its self. “What the prototype ‘prototypes,’ first and foremost, is its own re-appearance as prototypes, its own recursion” (Corsín Jiménez 2014:385). If we compare an *inqaychu* and the prototype of, for example, a self-driving car, we can see that they entail very different kinds of relationships. The car prototype has to be tested, refined, tested again, and so forth. The tests reveal problems to be solved in the next iteration. The *inqaychu*, in contrast, is like a sensitive family member who has access to special resources (the powerful *Apu*). The problems it presents are moral and affective (we want to keep on its good side).

Davy, in a delightful essay, describes a Lego snowmobile “as an icon of an entire class of vehicles” (2015:10). It is not helpful to understand *inqaychus* in these terms. An *inqaychu* is not a representation of an animal; it is simply a special kind of animal, an instantiation of the *apu*—“a piece of it, which is also all of it” (de la Cadena 2015:107). This recalls Wagner’s concept of the fractal person as an “entity with relationship integrally implied” (1991:163; also see Gell 1999:49–55; Dehouve 2016). A remarkable animal, an *inqaychu*, is born from the *Apu*; with human intervention



it turns into a small lively stone, condensing the Apu's powerful materiality. Its very materiality carries within it a potential flock of animals.

When shepherds feed and caress the inqaychus in household ceremonies, they tell them of their desires and make requests for the coming year; they might ask, for example, that their llamas be of certain colors, or that many young ones be born. If they speak honestly and with intensity, the inqaychu will respond with a forceful breath—*phaq!*—which vitalizes the herd and infuses the animals with desirable characteristics. Ricard comments, “The moment of the prayer is particularly important: in this instant is born, in the magic stone, the future form of animals in the flock” (Ricard 2007:211; my translation).

### DISTRIBUTING ANIMU THROUGH MINIATURES

Animu is what gives a being its distinctive characteristics. As mentioned above, it can be described as a halo or envelope around the body, as a shadow, and as a tiny, in-dwelling double (La Riva 2004:71–72). Most significantly for our exploration of miniatures, it can take the form of a doll. Curers use dolls to restore animu to a patient suffering from *mancharisqa* (fright), a state of debilitating malaise that occurs when individual's animu has been captured by an angry or malevolent place (Ricard 2007:180–81). First, the curer has to divine the identity of the place and assuage its anger with a special offering. Then it is necessary to “call” the animu home. To this end the curer makes a doll from scraps of the invalid's clothes, fills it with sweets, and puts it in the patient's bed. The animu returns, enters the doll with a sound of *thak!*, and soon the patient awakens, cured. “*Thak* designates the precise instant in which the body begins to move under the force of its own animation” (Ricard 2007:181).

Some ceremonial dancers, particularly the shaggy ritual clowns called *ukukus* (bears), carry tiny replicas of themselves which they describe as their animu (Figures 5 and 6). The performing *ukukus* during the Qoyllu Rit'i pilgrimage have elements of a rite of passage, for the dancers are expected to scale a perilous glacier, the abode of ravenous *kukuchis* (zombie-like individuals whose sins leave them unable to die). After spending a freezing cold night warding off these menacing creatures, the *ukukus* descend in a triumphant procession to rejoin their fellow pilgrims.

When I attended Qoyllu Rit'i in 1975 I wondered whether the *ukuku* dancers represented the protagonist of a widespread folktale about the sons of a bear and a shepherdess (Allen 1983, 2011:71–77; Morote Best 1957, 1988:179–240). After our return to Sonqo I asked an *ukuku* dancer whether he had been, in effect, “acting out” that story. He paused, perplexed, then blurted out, “You don't understand! We are bears, not *that* bear!” Indeed, I had to learn that representation was not the operative relationship. While performing *ukuku*, the dancer participates in the bear's nature, but does not represent any particular bear. That still leaves open the question, why does a bear need a little replica of itself? Interestingly, miniatures do



Figure 5. Ukuku dancers on the Qolqepunku Glacier during the Qoyllu Rit'i pilgrimage (photo by the author).

figure in the folktale. As it was recounted to me in Sonqo, the bear and shepherdess have two sons—one is the size of a human, and the other is about two feet tall (Allen 2011:90). Together they brave a series of humorous ordeals. Eventually the small one disappears from the story; his place is taken by two dolls, one made of wood and one of iron. Helped by these dolls, the bear's son manages to defeat a terrible kukuchi. With this victory his ordeals are finished and he comes of age as an adult person. The ukuku dancers at Qoyllu Rit'i face a similar ordeal on the glacier, and they are similarly accompanied by an animu-doll companion.

As an aside, it is worth noting how contemporary practices like these may cast light on the role of miniatures in Inka society. The tiny brother and helper dolls of the ukuku story bring to mind an Inka practice. Early chronicles tell us that each Inka ruler had as *wauque* (brother; male sibling of a male) an effigy of himself, carved from wood, stone, or precious metals, and usually containing hair or fingernails from the monarch's body (e.g., Cobo 1964 [1653], book 13:9–10; also see MacCormack 1991:269, 393; Steele 2004:183–85). This *wauque* was assigned lands, flocks, and servants; visiting lords would greet him before they greeted the Inka himself. He accompanied the ruler into battle, or even went in his stead, dressed in



Figure 6. A miniature Ukuku. This doll is part of the Ukuku dancer's costume and is considered to be the dancer's animu (vital force) (photo by the author).

a version of the ruler's clothing and shaded by a royal parasol. The wauque was not a representation of the Inka, but rather his instantiation, an extension of his person like the *inqaychus*, which are not representations but instantiations of the apu's animating presence.

It would be interesting to continue this foray into Inka times and explore, for example, the tiny silver and gold figures buried in sacrificial mountaintop burials (*capac hucha*). What was the relationship of these miniature burial goods to the beautiful child who was so lovingly "fed" to the mountain? Colin McEwan has observed that these assemblages are ordered internally in terms of size and material (gold, silver, bronze, and shell). Citing various ethnohistorical accounts, he suggests "that sets of figurines . . . may encapsulate fundamental aspects of Inka social organization" (2015:282). He goes on to posit that these assemblages of figurines were intended to "instantiate the Inka presence in the landscape" and in return "secure the allegiance and . . . productive capacity" of powerful places (2015:284). Pursuing these avenues, however, would take us far beyond the scope of this paper. I conclude with some thoughts about *alasitas* and what they may indicate about the future.

#### ALASITAS

*Alasitas* differ from *inqaychus* in many ways; the little houses, trucks, stores, diplomas (etc.) are not bestowed by a mountain but are manufactured in factories by human beings; they are sold for money, taken home, and often put on open display (e.g., Albro 1998; Angé 2016; Derks 2009; Golte and León 2014; La Serna Salcedo 2013; Martínez Espinoza and Castillo 2012; Stensrud 2010). Although their presence in Peru is fairly recent (they appeared at Qoyllu Rit'i in the 1980s), *alasitas* have a longer history in Bolivia and northern Argentina, dating back to the nineteenth century (Golte and León 2014:71). Bolivian celebrations such as the festival of Nuestra Señora de La Paz and the pilgrimage to La Virgen de Urkupiña near Cochabamba are famous for their *alasitas* markets. Angé (2016) describes an *alasitas* fair in a small Argentinean community during its patron saint's day festival. Also ubiquitous in these markets is Ekeko, bringer of abundance—a small, rosy-cheeked man laden down with the accoutrements of a prosperous life (foodstuffs, money, musical instruments, household items, etc.). Ekekos and *alasitas* are present in many working-class homes and sometimes share shelf space with small images of Catholic saints, also purveyors of abundance to well-ordered households.

Although, as Angé shows, *alasitas* markets are not exclusively urban phenomena, their growing popularity in Peru coincides with the burgeoning growth of urban centers (Golte and León 2014; Molinié 2012). *Alasitas* answer the concerns of city folk who are making their way in a semi-formal economy as market and street vendors, small shop owners, taxi drivers, carpenters, masons, and hairdressers. Stensrud comments, "This is an unstable economy, with a high degree of informality and insecurity" (2010:43). Living on the edge, as it were, naturally produces anxieties about material necessities, with concomitant longing for respectability, stability, and

independence. These longings are fulfilled by owning one's house, shop, or vehicle, and, in the second and third generation, by gaining a university diploma.

Inqaychus have no place in these household economies (indeed, as mentioned above, they would be problematic in this context). Nevertheless, in some respects *alasitas* resemble inqaychus. *Alasitas* are not purchased just any time or any place; they are "activated" as powerful objects through their connection with powerful times and places. According to Stensrud, who participated in the *alasitas* fairs at Qoyllu Rit'i and Huanca, "the sellers often bless the miniature, sprinkling it with water from a bottle as well as with yellow confetti to give the objects more force and to empower the desires. The pilgrims also take their *alasitas* to mass to have the priest bless the objects with holy water" (2010:52). Sanne Derks, writing about the pilgrimage to La Virgen de Urkupiña in Bolivia, observes, "*Alasitas* start their biography in shops and markets and do not gain any religious status unless they are blessed." In fact, outside the pilgrimage context, vendors sell the same miniature cars as toys for children (Derks 2009:100). Activated as an *alasitas*, however, a tiny car is connected to a source of well-being; like an inqaychu, it shares in the distributed being of the mountain/saint. With this in mind, Stensrud concludes that, for all their differences, inqaychus, pebble play, and *alasitas* are "expressions of the same ontology" (2010:58). In other words, urban migrants' strategies for enhancing well-being continue to express the Andean conceptions of materiality that I have explored in this essay. Similarly, Golte and León argue that practices surrounding *alasitas* and *ekekos* are "deeply rooted in long-standing [Andean] conceptions of the world" that link possession of miniatures to accumulation of wealth (2014:33).<sup>16</sup>

Stensrud describes a young man named Julio who went on pilgrimage to Qoyllu Rit'i and "played" in Puqllanapata in all seriousness. There he bought an *alasitas*, a miniature house with an attached business. Its purpose, of course, was to help him obtain his own house and business, and he kept it on a shelf in his home, "as a promise of a better future for his family" (Stensrud 2010:52). "This [house] is from my dear little god of Qoyllu Rit'i" (*es de mi diosito de Qoyllu Rit'i*)," he explained, speaking of the Lord of Qoyllu Rit'i with familiar affection. While Julio aspires to a future far different from the rural life of his grandparents, he nevertheless maintains an empowering relationship with Qoyllu Rit'i through its instantiations in tiny objects. It is striking that, for all the fundamental changes entailed in the move from rural to urban life, this orientation persists.

Yet I must conclude with a caveat, for the differences cannot be ignored. Julio keeps his *alasitas* in plain sight, as a promise and a reminder to himself that he must work toward his goal (Stensrud 2010:53). In this context the little object (house) symbolizes the thing desired (a real house). Indeed, the pilgrims' own discourse is often framed in these terms. For example, a woman who had just purchased a miniature university diploma explained to Sanne Derks, "For me it symbolizes that I will enrol for next year and study" (Derks 2009:102). In Corsín Jiménez's terms, "the artefact is prefigured in prototyping as social process" (2014:385). Inqaychus



operate according to a different semiotic, not as symbols but as literal instantiations of the apu. The idea of keeping one's inqaychus in plain view would be nonsensical; the beloved stones are too precious, private, and easily offended—and pastoralists need no reminders to tend their animals.

In other words, the actors' goals, and the way miniatures relate to these goals, are different. An inqaychu instantiates a powerful mountain in the heart of a household; the *alasitas* represents a contract between the pilgrim and the saint. The pilgrim holds up his or her end of the bargain by working hard and realistically toward the goal. The miniature house, car, or diploma sitting in plain view helps keep one focused and on track by symbolizing the goal. It appeals to the inner experience of an individual who, reminded of the vow, externalizes the commitment in hard work—and this, with the help of the saint, results in actual acquisition of the desired object. Thus, while there are real continuities between the *alasitas* and long-standing Andean understandings regarding miniatures, the shift toward a discourse of symbolism signals fundamental change.

#### NOTES

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1. Good photos of *alasitas* can be found online: for example, Dear 2014, accessed at <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-25949151>.

2. In this essay I do not concern myself with *retablos*, although these colorful boxes containing small figures are among the most vibrant and delightful of Andean miniatures. They originated as portable altars introduced by Catholic missionaries to rural communities. Currently they incorporate secular as well as religious scenes and are celebrated as a form of folk art as well as social/political commentary. They no longer are associated with the accumulation of wealth. On *retablos*, see Mendizábal 2003; Ulfe 2011.

3. The agency of inqaychus resonates with Pitrou's study of "life as a process of making" in Oaxaca, and his point that "an inquiry centred on action . . . [sheds] light on ethno-theories of life and the systems of power they include" (Pitrou 2015:90).

4. I think it possible that a kind of "Andean" fractal logic might be described mathematically, but this would take us beyond the scope this paper, as well as my own expertise.

5. On non-Western ontologies see Bird-David 1999; Brightman et al., eds. 2012; Descola 2013 [2005]; Kohn 2013; Santos Granero, ed. 2009; Viveiros de Castro 1998; Willerslev 2007.

6. While I agree with Philippe Descola's classification of Andean societies as "analogical," I see this analogical orientation as relying on an underlying animism (Allen 2016). Cf. Sahlins 2014:281.

7. Willerslev's comment regarding animism is apropos: "personhood, rather than being an inherent property of persons and things, is constituted in and through the relationships into which they enter . . . the relational context in which [something] is placed and experienced determines its being (2007:20–21).

8. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spacetime>, [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacha\\_\(Inca\\_mythology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pacha_(Inca_mythology)); also Manga Qespi 1994.

9. *Alqa* presents an intriguing parallel with Deleuze's discussion of singularities in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque* (1993:23, 60–64).

10. The sizable literature on place hierarchies in the Andes includes work by Earls (1969); Gose (1994); Martínez (1989); Núñez del Prado (1970).

11. In this respect Antaqaqa is reminiscent of the Masters of Animals, a common figure throughout much of Amazonia (e.g., Fausto 2012:29–47).

12. Valerie Robin Azevedo (2008:195) reports that in some communities inqaychus are said to be bestowed by *Gentiles*, ancient dead from a previous era who are closely associated with places in a community. In Sonqo the Gentiles are called *Machus*, and they are closely associated with the guardian hill, Antaqaqa.

13. Personal communication, 10/18/2015. I am grateful to Prof. Rosas for his generosity in sharing this information.

14. I use the term somewhat differently from Gell. His theory does not actually attribute life-force to objects, a move he says would invite "ontological havoc." Nevertheless, since I am writing from the perspective of Andean pastoralists I use *distributed personhood* in a literal sense.

15. Ethnographic studies of animu include Arnold and Yapita 1998; Gose 1994: 115–25; La Riva 2004; Robin 2005, 2008.

16. Interestingly, Golte and León see parallels between these "long-standing Andean conceptions of the world" and Weber's analysis of Protestantism; common to both is a "sacralisation" of material wealth, perceived as growing from a virtuous conjunction of human labor and divine agency: "it is exactly this sacralisation of accumulation that is at the nucleus of [Weber's] analysis of Protestantism" (2014:55).



Thus they argue that the Protestant-like work ethic long predates the migrants' experience of capitalism.

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