

## Pacha and Ch'i: A Vision from Peru

### Pacha 和 “气” : 来自秘鲁的观点

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#### Pacha

In our work in the expressive arts in Peru, we include the resources present in our territory: the geography of the place, traditional and contemporary arts, the myths, histories and existing world-views. All this is what I have called the “Peruvian imaginary,” that is to say, the creative resources present in our country. We can relate the notion of the Peruvian imaginary to the Pacha concept of the Andes and the Amazon. Pacha means earth, world, space, time, and cosmos; Pacha is a deity with whom people of the Peruvian highlands dialogue; it manifests itself through nature. The Pacha provides protection and care and is present in all activities carried out by men and women. To take into account the Pacha in our work as expressive arts therapists is to include the energy of our geography, the interrelated vision of the Andean world and the creative resources present in the territory where we work.

What is the relationship between the notion of *ch'i* and Pacha? How do they both manifest in Peru? What implications does all this have in our work as expressive arts therapists?

#### The Ch'i of the Pacha

We could see Pacha as the manifestation that *ch'i* takes in Peru. The Pacha can be understood as a creative energy present in all the places of our country. The *ch'i* of the Pacha helps expressive arts therapists connect with the creativity present in nature, the myths and ways of creating that exist in every town in the Andes or communities of the Amazon. Our mega-geographical diversity and the infinite cultural wealth present in many cultures that have developed in our country is a powerful *ch'i* that is offered to us as a great resource for our work.

#### The Pacha of Ch'i

One of the peculiarities of our Pacha is the possibility of dialoguing with her constantly, asking her permission to start any work that we are going to carry out, to seek her for protection. If we are not in harmony with her, we enter into “dis-balance” because we are disconnected to what our land wants to tell us. What can the *ch'i* learn from this? As expressive arts therapists we must learn to dialogue with *ch'i*. If *ch'i* could speak, what would its message be? Starting a dialogue with *ch'i* will not only allow us to reactivate our healthy capacity to imagine, but also to get in balance with our planet. The Pacha of

*ch'i* has therapeutic and ecological implications at the same time. It gives us a broader view of health and transformation that puts the emphasis not only on the individual but also on the planet.

### **The Flow of *Ch'i* and Pacha**

In Peru and Latin America many aspects of our Pacha are colonized. Access to our imaginary is sometimes blocked, as other forms of expression are imposed. The Peruvian sociologist Aníbal Quijano calls this process the “coloniality of power,” where a few impose power and their way of being, creating, knowing and imagining on a large majority. This is also called “Pacha’s disease,” since we are dislocated from the soul of our land. This dislocation has consequences in the way that people are inhibited from expressing their inner imaginary (*ch'i*), because it will not be well seen or accepted by those who sustain power. In some schools in the Amazon region, teachers do not allow children to speak in their own language, and their culture and traditions are not well received. This blockade caused by the coloniality of power has sometimes generated violent and destructive responses that unfortunately were generalized in our country.

Fortunately in Peru there are multiple initiatives of groups that work with the arts in various parts of the country, re-activating our *ch'i*, returning to listen to our Pacha. Many of these groups work in vulnerable areas, taking the arts to the streets and re-signifying our traditions, creatively defying those who hold power arbitrarily by giving voice to those who are silenced. Children and adolescents can thus re-signify their cultural identity and reconnect with their desire to transform their lives and their environment. These cultural organizations manage to transform the problems of poverty, discrimination, isolation, violence and drug use present in their neighborhoods. These are concrete examples of the potential that exists when the creative energy of *ch'i* is released and the dialogue with the Pacha returns to a condition of flow. This is the challenge in which expressive arts therapists are involved, seeing the multiple ways to allow our Pacha to flow back and unlock the transforming potential of our *ch'i*.

### **About the author**

José Miguel Calderón is director of TAE Peru, has a Phd in Expressive Arts Therapy at the European Graduate School and a master’s degree in Theoretical Psychoanalytic Studies at University College London. He works as an expressive arts therapist with people, groups and communities.