

Cocaleros

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Violence, Drugs and Social Mobilization in the Post-Conflict Upper Huallaga Valley, Peru

Cocaleros

Geweld, drugs en sociale mobilisatie in de postconflict Alto Huallaga Vallei, Peru

(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

Proefschrift

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In memory of Samuel Mendoza Medino

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Maps

Map 1: Location of fieldwork in Peru

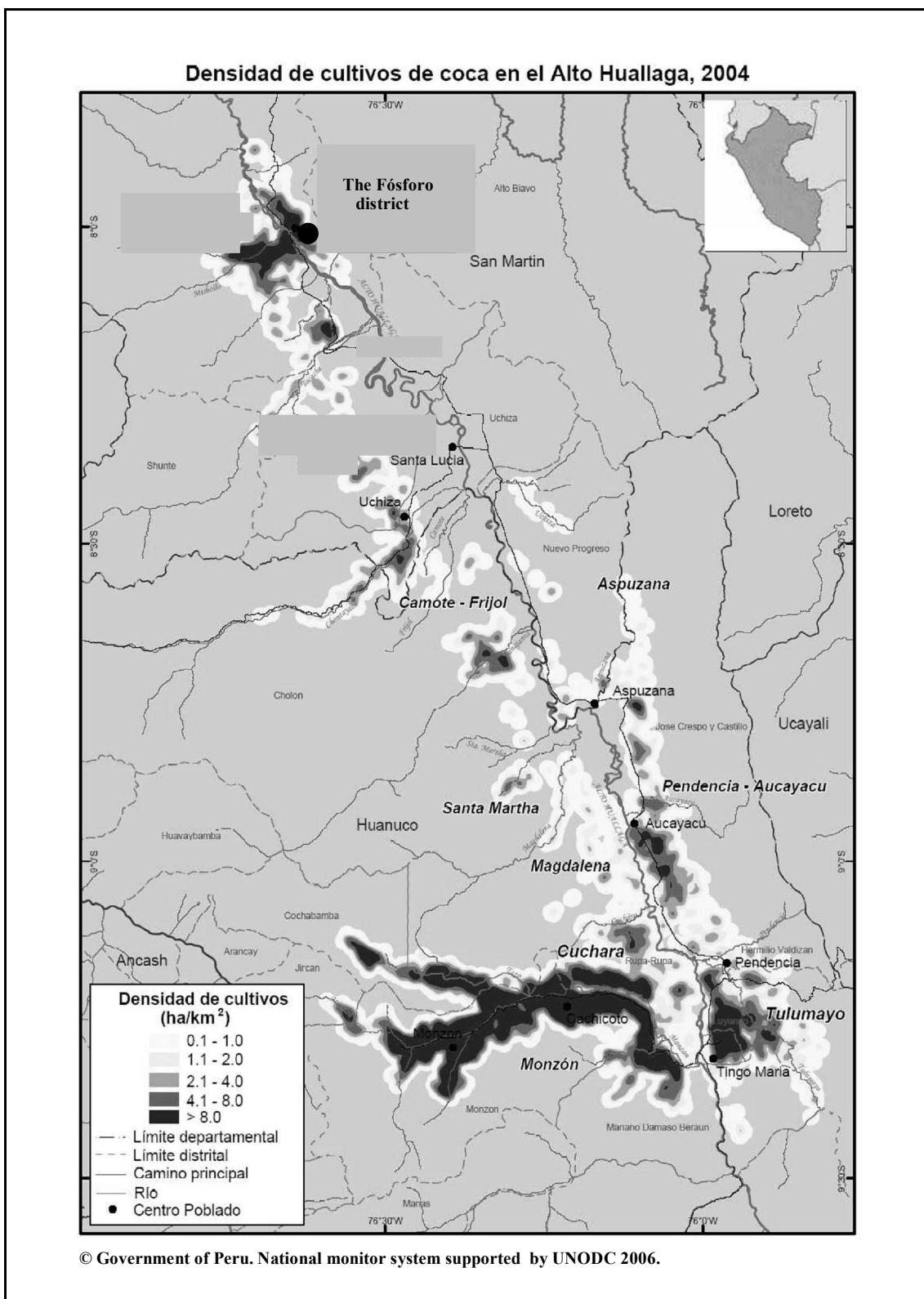


Map 2: Coca cultivation in Peru.

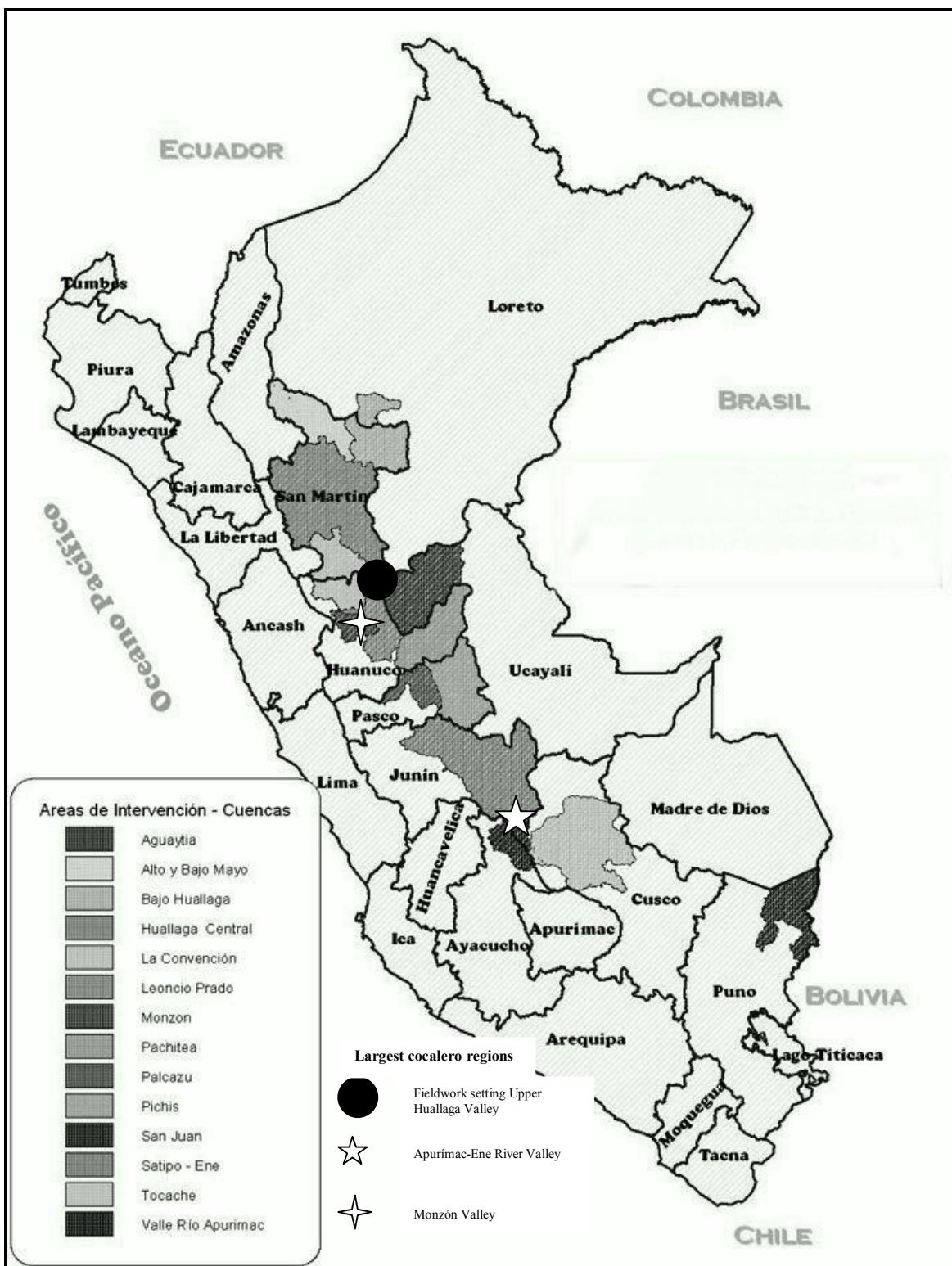


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Map 3: The Fósforo district in the Upper Huallaga Valley



Map 4: Peruvian cocalero regions.



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Introduction

“You should never trust these men”, was the categorical statement of one campesino (i.e., peasant) I had befriended. When he pronounced the term “these men” he cautiously glanced at the group of men, who were standing on the opposite side of the main road through the small village. The group appeared to have stepped out of a Hollywood movie, wearing colorful shirts, baseball caps, oversized pants and white sneakers. All had hidden their guns under their clothes, and the bulges of the poorly concealed weapons remained clearly visible underneath their shirts. Their appearance gave the impression they were largely out of place in the isolated and remote jungle hamlet, where worn-out jeans and faded t-shirts constituted the typical attire. When the group noticed I was staring at them, they turned towards us, laughed, and made some inappropriate remarks, referring to my companion with vulgar and insulting language. “Let’s just go to a calmer place”, he grunted, perhaps sensing that the situation might get out of hand. As we walked together down the main street, he went into further detail. “Well, groups of these men come here, create problems for us, make stacks of money and, afterwards—at least if they are intelligent—end up leaving the village. Ever since I’ve lived here, I have seen them come and go. But I will tell you one thing: In that business, there are very few people that can really be called winners.”²

The true meaning of the above episode can only be grasped if it is placed in its local context. The man whom I befriended is a coca farmer (i.e., a cocalero) living in the Upper Huallaga, Peru’s largest cocaine producing region. Until the late 1990s the Upper Huallaga remained the world’s largest coca-producing region, a status it only lost to Colombia’s coca cultivating regions after the so-called “coca bust”, when the prices paid for Peruvian coca leaves dropped severely. However, the drop in prices never resulted in any discontinuation of coca cultivation. When the “war on drugs” in Colombia intensified in 1998, prices for coca began to rise again. As a result, Peru consolidated its position as the world’s second largest producer of cocaine. The fieldwork episode recounted above serves as an example of how the cocaine industry continued to be a phenomenon in the Upper Huallaga during Peru’s post-conflict period (2000-present). Yet it also gives rise to an important question: Who were “these men” and why were they in this part of the jungle? These real conditions of daily life for the region’s residents have until now not been examined. Still further questions arise within the broader context of the country’s post-conflict process. For example, how illegal activities in the region and state-led repression against these activities contribute to the continuation of violence in a post-conflict period, and how this dynamic poses a distinct challenge for conflict settlement and peace-building, is a matter that has not hitherto been fully explored.³

In the Peruvian media, the cocaine industry is portrayed as tucked away in the country’s remote regions, where the state control had been weak ever since the country gained independence. This remoteness is characteristic of much of Peru as a whole, as Klarén (2000 xi-xii) notes in the introduction to his brilliant book on Peruvian history: “Westerners have perceived Peru as a country not only shrouded in mystery and the exotic, a mirror of their own dreams and desires, but [also as a nation] of extremes. For Western observers-travelers, journalists, businessmen, and others, Peru down through the years was a country of legendary

² Conversation with unnamed *cocalero*, Puerto Mal Abrigo, September 8, 2005.

³ See on the economic reasons for internal armed conflicts Ballentine and Nitzschke 2005; on an anthropological view of post-conflict reconstruction see Beneduce 2007. See Cooper *et al.* 2004; Cornell 2005; and Studdard 2004; on the drug trade and its relation to internal armed conflicts, although all of these studies focus on “spillover” effects of the drug trade into other countries, rather than attempting an analysis of local contexts.

wealth, called *El Dorado*;⁴ of bloody conquest; of lost Inca cities; of seigniorial Catholic Spanish nobility; of violent, fanatical revolutionaries (the Shining Path guerrillas); and of drug traffickers pursuing the “white gold” of the international cocaine trade”.

Consistent with Klarén’s statement, until the 20th century, for Peruvians themselves the country’s Amazon remained a vacant territory, exotic, dangerous and largely unknown. Until about thirty years ago, many Peruvians had little or no knowledge of the Upper Huallaga Valley, the country’s largest coca valley, located in the *selva alta* (tropical highland forest) in the north of the country. For many years, national images of the Upper Huallaga was portrayed in two diametrically opposed extremes: As either *El Dorado* –a Golden Land full of unexploited richness, or as *Infierno Verde* – a Green Hell plagued by dangers—not only those of the uncongenial environment, but also those of “other radicals” or “armed savages” (Calderón 2005: 235; Ruiz 2006). The Upper Huallaga especially became assimilated—with a pronounced negative connotation—to the myth of *El Dorado*: From the time of its colonization by the Spaniards in the sixteenth century, it was portrayed as a mystical land that only brave man dared to enter (Morales 1996: 165). Later it mainly has been closely identified with conflict and violence.

Geographically, the Upper Huallaga Valley extends from the south of the department of San Martín to the northern part of the department of Huánuco (see Map 1), some 700 kilometers north of the country’s capital, Lima. It is located on the eastern slopes of the north-eastern Peruvian Andes at altitudes ranging from 1,500 to 6,000 feet above sea level and borders the *selva baja*, the Amazon’s tropical plains, on the east. Only by the 1960s did the region become more accessible, and that decade saw increased migration to the region on the part of those attracted by the prospect of quick wealth. The influx of independently minded people, combined with a generally weak government presence, often led to open violence and the establishment of the law of the strongest (see Haring 1986: 6). By the 1970s, more and more people began to cultivate coca for the illegal cocaine industry, as the prices paid for coca leaves soared during the coca boom. By the 1980s, coca cultivation dominated the local economy. The Upper Huallaga was transformed into a no-man’s land where chaos and disorder attracted both drug cartels and guerrilla groups.

During Peru’s internal armed conflict (1980s-1990s) the Upper Huallaga became one of the most violent theaters of conflict, with political violence and violent crime becoming causally related phenomena.⁵ Adding to the problems, the power vacuum and the presence of a possible mass base drew Shining Path into the region in the 1980s. The attraction of guerrillas to such regions can be explained by the wealth represented by its coca crops: Guerrillas are often attracted to areas rich in materials that can be easily looted (Klare 2004: 118). Nevertheless, the cocaine industry cannot be identified as the sole cause of the violence in Peru, as the Upper Huallaga was far from the Peruvian *sierra* (highlands) where the country’s internal armed conflict began, motivated by endemic social exclusion, marginalization and a radicalization of leftish intellectuals.⁶ Yet it was in the Upper Huallaga where different sorts of armed actors (whether their motivations were political, ideological or financial) came into contact with one another, as boundaries between political and non-political violence in these regions became more and more porous, and at times even disappeared entirely. As a result, power and control grew more and more diffuse, and the situation often disintegrated into lawlessness and chaos. The presence of numerous armed actors was in part responsible for the duration of the regional armed conflict. Violence

⁴ The myth of El Dorado (literally the “Place of Gold”) arose during the Spanish colonization of South America, when numerous adventurers entered the Amazon region in search of a “Golden Empire”. More recently, the myth of El Dorado was used to refer to those places in the Amazon where economic opportunities were abundant.

⁵ See Human Security Centre 2005; Cornell 2005.

⁶ See Degregori 1990; Fumerton 2002; Stern 1998.

lingered longer in the Upper Huallaga than in other affected regions: In contrast to the national internal armed conflict that was said to have ended in 1992, in the Upper Huallaga it was in the late 1990s that political violence began to decrease and only in 2000 did the national government order an end to the state of emergency over the region.

Even in post-conflict Peru, the Upper Huallaga remained one of the country's most violent areas, as the legacy of the internal armed conflict and new anti-drug operations led to new social tensions. The region's negative image was reflected in the fictional village of Naccos in Mario Vargas Llosa's novel *Death in the Andes*. He describes Naccos as a frontier encampment, where barbarism, terrorist violence, and the persecution of the civilizing forces of white, educated innocents—representatives of the modern state—remain commonplace (Vargas Llosa 1996). As reflected in *Death in the Andes*, the region was controlled by guerrilla bands and drug lords. The popular perception of the Upper Huallaga as inaccessible and dangerous contributed to it becoming a place that academics and journalists tended to avoid. As a result, the stories of the region's inhabitants largely remain untold. The situation "on the ground" of the Upper Huallaga during and after the internal armed conflict remains an important gap in scholarly writings.

As will be argued, an in-depth account of the local narratives about internal armed conflict, the villagers' responses to the ongoing violence, and the relations between the local post-conflict processes and the parallel national processes all constitute elements that are indispensable for a deeper understanding of violence in post-conflict societies where an illegal industry dominates the local economy. The intention of the present study is to fill in this scholarly gap, and to show how a partial power vacuum in post-conflict settings, along with the existence of a powerful illegal economy, the presence of different armed actors, and the obstacles faced by social mobilizations and civil protest by the cocaleros (i.e., coca farmers), contribute to a regional continuation of violence.

I Significance of the study

In 2001, in the wake of the demise of the Fujimori regime (1990-2000), Peru was a country immersed in a post-conflict transition. After Fujimori's government collapsed and he himself fled the country, peace-building processes and reconstruction began, civil society and social movements reconstituted themselves or were newly created, and the network of national corruption that had previously been in place was investigated. A national truth and reconciliation commission was established to determine what crimes had occurred. For a long time, it was assumed that such post-conflict consolidation processes created nationwide conditions for a deepening of democracy and the broadening of citizenship, as demonstrated by social and institutional reforms and the incorporation of previously excluded social actors. Yet, although Latin America has experienced a variety of democratic consolidation and peace-building processes, in most cases these didn't lead to the complete integration of all citizens. Post-conflict periods and parallel transitions to democracy were not peaceful. On the contrary, such periods are often plagued by legacies of the previous conflict; social unrest, criminal violence and inadequate security. Consequently, in post-conflict societies, these problems constituted the basis for citizens' new demands on the state, and for a different conceptualization of the relationship between the state and its citizens.⁷

Shortly after Peru's internal armed conflict came to an end, and the transition to democracy and the road to peace had been embarked upon, it became apparent that the country remained divided into two socially and economically distinct parts: Its center (the capital of Lima and adjacent coastal regions) and its hinterlands (the *sierra* in the south and

⁷ See Koonings and Kruijt 1999; Koonings 2001.

the *selva* in the north). Paradoxically, it is these hinterlands that were most affected by the country's internal armed conflict that lasted for nearly twenty years, from the early 1980s until the late-1990s. There are numerous scholarly studies written on the different stages of the internal armed conflict, its influence on Peru's society and politics, and its aftermath, but most largely focused on the *sierra*, especially the Ayacucho department, which is where the Shining Path organization first arose.⁸ The region of Upper Huallaga, however, remains largely undocumented. This area of Peru is one of the most complex and dynamic post-conflict zones, and continued to be dominated by the cocaine industry during the post-conflict period. There is no better laboratory for exploring the dynamics and complexities in post-conflict peace processes away from the political center than the Upper Huallaga Valley, where the government's apparently definitive crushing of the Shining Path did not automatically lead to an end of either the illegal economy or outbreaks of the violence. There have been very few anthropological field studies about the regional violence and post-conflict peace processes in the Upper Huallaga. Those studies that are available tend to portray the region as a failed case in the national peace process, largely ignoring the local conflict settlements, local post-conflict changes, and post-conflict reconstruction efforts that were initiated by the inhabitants themselves.

Scholarly literature dealing with connections between illegal industries and transformations of violence in conflicts is in itself hard to come by.⁹ Yet systematic studies dealing with precise relationships between local conflict transformations and their consequences for local conflict resolution and ongoing violence are even more rare.¹⁰ But, as the Upper Huallaga case will demonstrate, national post-conflict processes do not have a uniform effect upon a nation's entire territory. The present study also shows that regional dynamics and complexities within internal armed conflicts can lead to partial conflict settlements that can severely disrupt local peace if managed ineffectively by the state. To gain a better understanding of the post-conflict continuation of violence, it is important to have some knowledge of both how the previous internal armed conflict is understood by villagers and of the ways they are coping with the legacies of the internal armed conflict (Pouliquen *et al.* 2007). While other investigations have largely concentrated on consolidation processes and regional failures at the national level, this study attempts to provide an integrated local understanding of the complexities of post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation within one of the country's "margins of the state".¹¹

To analyze the post-conflict social changes in the Upper Huallaga, this study concentrates on post-conflict mobilization strategies of its population. The existing literature leaves the local post-conflict complexities, and their relation to the cocaine industry, largely unexplained, as anthropological studies have thus far not explored the social embeddings of the illegal cocaine industry in the region's villages. Scholarly work simply defines the violence plaguing the Upper Huallaga as an "endemic continuation of violence", but this statement obscures a number of important factors; the distinction among different types of violence, the post-conflict changes that have occurred, and, finally, the dynamic relationships among different armed actors. In order to investigate these dynamic relationships, this study

⁸ See Degregori 1990; 1997: 2005; Degregori, Coronel, Del Pino and Starn 1996; Fumerton 2002; Gorriti 1990; Laplante and Theidon 2007; Stern ed. 1998; Theidon 2003; 2004; 2006.

⁹ See Cooper *et al.* 2004; Cornell 2005 and Studdard 2004 on the drug trade and its relation to internal armed conflicts. See also Suárez and Fierro 1993 on the cocaine industry and conflict in Latin America and Weinstein 2007 on the Shining Path guerrilla movement in the Upper Huallaga.

¹⁰ See Ballentine and Sherman 2003; Ballentine and Nitzschke 2005; Beneduce 2007.

¹¹ It is important to understand that Peru's marginalized areas are not defined in terms of a power vacuum or merely by geography; instead, they are defined in terms of their relationship with the state. As a result, there exist different boundaries between the state and the country's peripheries (Das and Poole 2004: 4). The notion of "margins of the state" entails both the level of state penetration of a nation's peripheral regions; the spaces, forms and practices through which the state is experienced by the region's population; and the way people see themselves in relation to the state (Asad 2004: 279).

focuses on how violence has affected the daily lives of people living in the region and how they mobilize against violence and conflict. The numerous comparative studies about transitions to democracy and post-conflict reconstruction in Latin America¹² pay relatively little attention to these post-conflict grass-roots initiatives as a factor in democratic governance and broader civil society in general. To analyze the local post-conflict changes, the term “social reconstruction” is used to refer to a broad range of interventions, “such as security, freedom of movement, access to accurate and unbiased information, the rule of law, justice, education for democracy, economic development, [...] that work together and at multiple levels of society—the individual, neighborhood, community and state—to address the factors that led to the conflict” (Weinstein and Stover 2004: 5).

To gain an insight into these local post-conflict dynamics, research must focus on the realities of life in the Upper Huallaga. The general research problem may be formulated as follows: What is the nature and impact of conflict in the Upper Huallaga, how do people cope with violence, and how do their mobilization strategies relate to national processes of post-conflict reconstruction? The present study attempts to answer this question by exploring the consequences of the ongoing presence of the cocaine trade in the local process of post-conflict reconstruction, and by analyzing what occurs when the *national* state prevents the emerging cocalero movement from becoming part of civil society.

In Peru, surprisingly it was in the Upper Huallaga’s cocaine-driven “margins of the state” where social reconstruction became an even more dynamic, multilayered process entailing the reconstruction of local community feelings, leading to a newly formed collective identity. Amazingly, it was in these *narcopueblos* (drug villages) where coca cultivation provided the groundwork of one of Peru’s important post-conflict social movements. Nevertheless, the cocalero movement illustrates a complication, as an illegal activity became the foundation for the mobilization of thousands of campesinos to frame their demands. Still, the cocalero movement was created as a result of a complex process that took into account demands for post-conflict citizenship and integration, the ongoing importance of coca for rural livelihood and the international war on drugs that envisages forced and repressive and almost militarized coca eradication, along with proposed substitution by alternative crops and other economic activities of dubious effectiveness. But, because this cocalero movement is of fairly recent vintage, there are very few anthropological field studies about it,¹³ and none of the existing studies analyses the movement’s formation as part of local/regional social reconstruction efforts. In contrast, the present book defines the Peruvian movement as a post-conflict social reconstruction effort, since the movement has gained increasing prominence during recent efforts by the state to reassert civil governance.

By using the Upper Huallaga as case study, I seek to offer the reader a more detailed understanding about the difficulties and limitations involved in the implementation of post-conflict peace processes in drug centers, and at the same time to provide an analysis of the relationship among an ineffective state, political violence and crime that has obstructed efforts at conflict resolution in this outlying region. Studdard’s (2004: 9) notion of a “regional war complex” asserts the failure to take into account an analysis of local conflict economies and complexities in post-conflict peace-building—including challenges posed by “margins of the state”, the presence and vitality of economic shadow networks, and political, social and military linkages that comprise the key components of the regional conflict—all of which undermine the effective management of conflict. Such deficiencies are remedied in the present study. The analytical framework whereby this occurs will be presented in the following chapter.

¹² See Arnon 1999; Domínguez and Lowenthal 1996; Foweraker 2001; Koonings and Kruijt 1999.

¹³ See Antesana 2005; Durand 2005^a; Durand 2007.

II A roadmap to the book

This book is divided into seven chapters, which mainly consist of empirical material which is occasionally interwoven with scholarly analysis arising from the narrative (see Fumerton 2002: 31). Chapter 1 primarily describes the main points of the theoretical debate on the relation between conflict, criminal violence and regional dynamics in conflict, the significance of the local and social context in the analysis of violence and the post-conflict reconstruction processes; including its impact on democratic consolidation, nation-building, and citizenship. Secondly, the chapter links the theoretical discussion with the research setting, describing the villages, explaining the methodological approach and the encountered difficulties with research methods and relationships that needed to be established. Chapter 2 provides an insight into the violence, post-conflict reconstruction, democratization and citizenship in Peru generally and in the Upper Huallaga specifically. It describes the political and socio-economical character of the state and shows how events in the Upper Huallaga both differ from and interface with what is going on in the rest of the nation.

Chapters 3 and 4 draw on the notion that, when looking at the post-conflict peace processes, it is critically important to have a clear idea of what is going on at the local level. Chapter 3 offers an in-depth overview about post-conflict life in the Fósforo district. It is argued that, in these *narcopueblos*, the cocaine trade, far from being only an economical system, dominated local social relationships and networks, while at the same time being organized along strongly hierarchical lines. The story is told primarily from the vantage point of the lower echelons involved in the cocaine industry, explaining people's motives, goals and career opportunities, the dangers involved in this line of work, and people's individual coping strategies. The second part of this chapter concentrates on the higher echelons involved in the cocaine industry and their integration into the social life in the district. It is commonly assumed that the mere presence of an illegal industry leads to a disturbing of the peace. However, the contention there is that the cocaine industry has become a normal part of local life and does not automatically lead to violence. On the contrary, changes occurring in the post-conflict industry's social make-up could be seen as a cause of renewed tranquility in the villages involved. Additionally, the manner in which the cocaine industry influences local politics and how it also generally affects local and regional politics is described, as is the behavior of the security forces (i.e., military and police). In order to clearly understand why these problems related to coca couldn't be easily resolved or even ameliorated in the post-conflict period, it is necessary to attain a broader understanding about the regional events during the internal armed conflict.

Chapter 4 returns to the previous period, as it begins with a description of the villagers' experiences during the internal armed conflict. Using narratives that are embedded within the constructed local social memory, it portrays how the population lived under guerrilla rule and military control. In this connection, it should not be forgotten that the Shining Path in the Upper Huallaga at some points largely differed from the movement at the national level. This regional transformation of the internal armed conflict had serious consequences for the following period. When the violence waned, official policies in the rural areas of the Upper Huallaga continued to involve human rights violations committed against the population, while not threatening the higher-echelons of the guerrilla forces. Largely due to state ignorance following the internal armed conflict, no special attention was given to the additional difficulties, as processes of reconstruction and reconciliation became local practices, which in some instances ran parallel to national policies and laws. Nevertheless, the continuation of the illegal industry and renewed state-led anti-drug policies also motivated the population to organize themselves: They constructed a communal cocalero identity, which instead of only including those involved in the cultivation of coca, was constructed to include

all residents living in villages involved in coca-growing and cocaine production. Local mobilizations quickly turned into regional protests in the Upper Huallaga in which cocaleros demanded inclusion and a space in negotiations of the country's "war on drugs".

The following two chapters illustrate the rise and partial downfall of the Peruvian cocalero movement in detail. Chapter 5 describes the creation of the national cocalero movement and explains why it is defined as a post-conflict social reconstruction effort. It explores how the cocaleros strategically "framed" a collective identity that can be divided into two strategies: The pragmatic approach that asked for integration and alternative development projects and a discourse that integrated the tradition of the coca leaf in Peru. Both strategies emphasize the protest methods, like *marchas*¹⁴ and *paros*,¹⁵ that were employed and stresses how these changed over time in a way that generally depended on the state's reaction. It also describes how the cocaleros tried to establish bonds with broader sectors of civil society and how they strove to become "legal negotiators" with the state. But this chapter also focuses on the difficulties the cocalero movement encountered internally as well as in the organization of different coca-growing centers; its more obscure bonds and relationships involving guerrillas and *narcotraficantes*; and the stigmatizations that were used by the state and state institutes to impede the movement's integration into civil society.

Chapter 6 returns to the local context, as the cocaleros of the Fósforo district, along with other cocaleros from the Upper Huallaga Valley, came to constitute the majority of the cocalero movement's membership. This occurred due to internal divisions within the movement. Then the district was hit by a forced eradication of coca, resulting in diminished local willingness to protest or to engage in the cocalero struggle. These anti-drug operations, which had acted as a spur to cocalero organization before, now led to demoralization among the mass base and eventually a total refusal to participate in the cocalero movement. Paradoxically, at the same time, some national cocalero leaders managed to enter national and international politics. Meanwhile, a growing disillusionment among rank and file cocaleros led to the resignation of all of the old national cocalero leaders, mainly as a result of allegations of corruption.

Chapter 7 deal with the local consequences of this weakened power of the cocalero movement and the parallel forced eradication operation. A different kind of violence began to threaten residents' livelihood, but instead of receiving support from the state's security apparatus, the local population mobilized its own forces to fight the growing violence. A newly created civil-defense initiative walked the fine lines between legality and illegality as residents' responses to the increasing violence became more and more violent in turn. Meanwhile, at the national level, there was a growing concern about the "return" of Shining Path in the country's cocalero centers. A detailed description is given of affected residents' thoughts about this supposed "re-appearance" as this local view provides a completely different explanation of the violence.

Chapter 8 concludes that the problems described in this study are not limited to the Upper Huallaga Valley, but instead reflect increased post-conflict difficulties nationwide. It is asserted that Peru's cocaine-driven "margins of the state" need special attention in the post-conflict period. When such attention is lacking, post-conflict processes take on a local character and that caused various problems to fester. More importantly, it is asserted that post-conflict policies do not mesh well with renewed anti-drug policies that only alienate people from their national government.

¹⁴ Literally "marches".

¹⁵ Literally "stoppage"; protest method in which whole communities, villages and towns were paralyzed as a result of a stoppage of work and services.

1. Researching violence and mobilization in a cocaine enclave

The starting point for this study has been the problem of post-conflict social reconstruction. Scholarly attention for this complex issue has grown significantly over the past two decades, offering an initial entry point for my analysis of the post-conflict dynamics in the Upper Huallaga.¹ In general terms, post-conflict reconstruction entails a number of components. In the first place, the effective end of violence and the restoration or build-up of the legitimate security function of the state is essential in order to move beyond initial cease fire or peace agreements. Secondly, reconstruction means the rebuilding of the material conditions for livelihood, including the physical and productive infrastructure and the rehabilitation of human capabilities. In the third place, thorny issues related to reconciliation have to be addressed. This involves not only the problem of truth and (or: versus) justice and reparation, but also the more complex questions of ‘historical memory’ and social trust. Finally, political spaces have to be construed to enable participation and empowerment as sustainable alternatives for violence. Non-violent social mobilization within the parameters of democracy, citizenship and civil society is considered to be an essential part of political reconstruction, especially in order to incorporate former stakeholders in the conflict into non-violent and institutionalized arenas for interest representation, power sharing and policy making.

As a blueprint for post-conflict reconstruction, these elements seem fairly straightforward, if not self-evident. There are however, serious limitations facing such a framework if used in an overly one-dimensional way, not only in practical and political terms, but also from a conceptual perspective. Implicitly or explicitly, this framework presupposes a formal end to armed conflict and political violence, often ratified in a peace agreement that has the consent of all parties involved. A similar, equally problematic presupposition is that a reconstruction agenda—and therefore also an analytical framework to assess its progress and outcomes—can best be situated at the national level and hence viewed from the perspective of national (and international supervising) stakeholders and agencies. Much of the debate on reconstruction therefore has an institutional and top-down bias.

In the case of Peru and the Upper Huallaga, none of these presupposition go unchallenged. As I will show in detail, the official (but never formalized) end of the internal armed conflict in Peru did not bring an effective end to violence and insecurity in the Upper Huallaga. The national process of reconstruction appeared to be fragmented and incomplete at the local and regional levels. The reconstitution of civil and political spaces did not offer unequivocal conditions for incorporation and participation of the protagonists of the conflict in the Upper Huallaga, particularly the civilian population affected by the violence. As I will demonstrate throughout this book, two key issues lay at the heart of the problem; the importance of coca and cocaine as a largely illegal or extralegal (and therefore violence-prone) foundation for economic reconstruction and the relative fragility of the Peruvian state when facing the challenges of post-conflict reconstruction in the Upper Huallaga. I will refer to this problem as the “margins of the state”, a concept that has not only a geographical and institutional meaning but also important political, social, ideological and cultural connotations. This means, furthermore, that it is necessary to focus on other actors within post-conflict processes, especially those who operate “from below” at the grass roots, local and regional levels.

¹ See Pouigny *et al.* 2007; Ramsbotham *et al.* 2005; Richards 2005.

Before embarking upon a description of local conditions, it is important to examine the difficulties that the Upper Huallaga case study poses for this scholarly debate on violence and conflict, post-conflict processes and mobilization, and a comprehensive reinstatement of citizenship. I will do so in the first part of this chapter by critically re-examining key concepts within the debate; violence, reconstruction, social mobilization, and democracy and citizenship, and relate these concepts to the specific history and context of the Upper Huallaga. Then, in the second part of this chapter, I will describe the research setting. Researching violence and mobilization in such a post-conflict setting presents not only theoretical but also particular methodological challenges. In part 3, a detailed description is given of the used research methods, which are also largely influenced by the particular fieldwork setting and the theoretical and analytical choices I made. Parts 4 illustrates the character and extend of my relationships with the various groups within this setting.

1.1 Conceptualization: Post-conflict processes in a violent margin of the state

1.1.1 Conflict and violence

When looking at conflict and violence in the Upper Huallaga, it becomes clear that there is a process of dynamic transformation with respect to different forms of violence. When the internal armed conflict arose in Peru in the 1980s, it was generally asserted that the emergence of the guerrillas could be understood within the frame of reference of “old violence”, including political and ideological conflict, rebellion and guerrilla wars, which is largely related to Latin America’s background of lingering social exclusion, poverty and failed nation-building (see Koonings and Kruijt 1999; 2004). Within this frame of reference, it is assumed that the poor and oppressed use violence to become integrated into the political, economic and social institutions of the country. But in the case of the Upper Huallaga, the notion of old violence doesn’t take into account the presence of numerous non-political armed actors prior to the entrance of guerrilla fighters. The violence before the entrance of the guerrillas on the scene can be attributed to the region’s character as something of a frontier area and included criminal activity such as theft, burglary, prostitution, assaults, rape, and murder, all of which are included in the notion of “new violence”. This term conceives of violence as democratized because numerous actors are caught up in it.

Yet scholarly writings on “new violence” focus on the rise of urban violence in Latin America² and ignore the concentration of the drug industry in rural areas. Still, Moser and McIlwaine’s (2004: 8) argument about urban violence is perfectly applicable to the Upper Huallaga. These authors contend that violence is centered in peripheral areas characterized by a vacuum of the kinds of controls that tend to act as a bulwark against violent disturbances. This rise of criminal violence in Latin America often has been linked with the processes of globalization and neoliberalism (Moser and McIlwaine 2004: 14; Willett 2001), as these processes are seen as facilitating the spread of criminal networks. However, all these notions ignore how these new criminal groups can form relations with politically motivated armed actors. This is what happened in the Upper Huallaga where, after the entrance of guerrilla forces, a symbiosis between old violence and new violence emerged. This symbiosis led to a significant change in the character of the regional conflict, with the stakes and terms of armed actors altered as a consequence.³ It was precisely this confluence between old violence and new violence that made the Upper Huallaga one of the most dynamic settings of conflict transformation, a fact which had very serious consequences, as the simultaneous presence of guerrilla groups, counter-insurgency forces, and drug-related crime, along with the state’s

² See Briceño-León 2001; Koonings and Kruijt 2007.

³ See Davis and Pereira 2003; Koonings 2004.

repressive anti-drug policies, prolonged the violence and heightened its scope. Consequently, to better understand violence and conflict in the Upper Huallaga, it is important to realize that the nature of internal armed conflicts has changed in important ways.

A term that is often used to define these changes is “new wars”.⁴ Scholars emphasize that “new wars” are characterized by “zones of war and peace existing side by side in the same territory” (Kaldor 2006: 178), as was the case in Peru. However, there is considerable controversy as to whether the term “new war” in fact describes a new phenomenon although, within this notion, conflict is driven by political goals, external support (criminal mafia or regional powers), fragmented and dispersed modes of warfare, and the war economy.⁵ Many of its explanations for conflict derive from the politics of identity as it is argued that people resist against domination, exclusion, persecution, or dispossession of lands and resources (Ramsbothan *et al.* 2005: 82). It appears that the term “new war” describes the same phenomenon as “old violence” mixed with “new violence” given that it defines the causes of internal armed conflicts mainly in terms of ethnic divisions, state weakness and combatants’ identity. In contrast to “old violence”, however, scholars now argue that the identity politics that is a part of new wars is frequently backward-looking and exclusive (Kaldor 2006: 81). In contrast, scholars writing about new wars emphasize new features of internal armed conflicts that entail a relationship with globalization and neo-liberalism, as did the notion of new violence. But the notion of new wars alone fails to explain the causes of the complex relation between conflict and violent crime.

Another conceptualization of conflict, namely greed-based explanations, challenged this sole emphasis on grievances of an excluded population and the conflict’s political goals.⁶ Scholars working within this notion began to stress the importance of the economy of violence. This scholarly work emphasizing the factor of greed asserts that warlords find it difficult or impossible to continue fighting without any resources. As a result, illegal commodity markets, such as conflict diamonds, oil revenues, illegal logging and the drug trade, began to play a significant role in internal armed conflicts. Often these regions with prominent illegal markets are in areas with a historically weak state presence and, because of this weakness, can be easily converted into guerrilla strongholds. As seen above, the presence of an illegal commodity market is a factor capable of regionally transforming an internal armed conflict. Frequently, the scholarly work emphasizing greed drifts to another extreme, with warlords become identified as merely organized criminals, exclusively concerned with plunder, personal enrichment, with no interest in using their booty to pursue cherished political goals, or in winning the hearts and minds of the population.⁷ Such arguments fail to explain the factors that incite violence, since there is no evidence that greed alone causes internal armed conflicts. Thus, solely focusing on greed also becomes an oversimplification of the transformations occurring in these internal armed conflicts in areas rich in materials, such as cocaine, the illegal wood trade and conflict diamonds, that can be easily looted. Instead, economic exploitation appears to be but one factor in the dynamic context of internal armed conflicts (Richards 2005: 4). Additionally, the greed notion fails to include any historical background of the conflicts (Berdal 2003: 490). To merely focus on political or economic motives, or on processes involved in the “new violence” creates a distorted image of violence, conflict and even regional post-conflict processes, because all these emphases fail to include the social context of violence and conflict.

The above-described scholarly notions all fail to grasp the regional dynamics involved in the impact of violence because they largely concentrate on broader (i.e., national-level)

⁴ See Cramer 2006; Kaldor 2006; Kaldor and Vashee 1997; Rice 1988; Richards 2005.

⁵ See Kaldor 2006; Kaldor and Vashee 1997.

⁶ See Arson 2005; Ballentine and Sherman 2003; Collier 2000.

⁷ See Berdal 2003; Berdal and Keen 1997; Cramer 2006.

definitions. Consequently, they also fail to take account of the fact that an internal armed conflict can have a different character, and distinct impacts, in diverse affected regions. Therefore, the local forms that violence takes shouldn't be simplified through with universal explanations (Robben and Nordstrom 1995: 6). Instead, there is an urgent need to comprehend these differential regional impacts in the present case, since the Upper Huallaga doesn't conform to existing assumptions about distinct spheres of political conflict and criminal violence, as these increasingly became indistinguishable.⁸ The merger between armed actors of the illegal cocaine industry and the guerrilla fighters in the Upper Huallaga shouldn't be taken to mean that these conflicts can be identified as completely apolitical, as new wars, or as exclusively involving new armed actors. Internal armed conflicts are often simultaneously based on dynamic political goals, or on the consolidation of new forms of power and ideologies, and can include external support from, for example, criminal mafias, resulting in fragmented modes of violence (Ramsbothan *et al.* 2005: 82).

Within this regional context, theoretical distinctions among old violence, new violence and new wars prove to be untenable. In contrast to the use of these theoretical distinctions in attempting to provide a detailed analysis of violence and conflict in a regional context, it instead becomes important to follow Gilsenan (2002: 112) in his assertion that subtleties of violence and avoidance, conflict and complicity, talk and silence should caution against easy generalizations. It is important to acknowledge that violence is "constructed, negotiated, reshaped and resolved as the affected people try to define and control the world they find themselves in" (Robben and Nordstrom 1995: 8). A complete analysis of the local models of violence must include this dynamic interrelation between culture and social context, including structural factors such as inequality, state weakness, the utility and economy of violence, and demographic and contextual social structures.⁹ Accordingly, Robben and Nordstrom (1995: 6) hold that violence should be conceived as a "dimension of living" and studied "within the immediacy of its manifestation".

In accordance with this line of thinking, the emphasis on how residents of a given area perceive violence and conflict becomes important. But it is also important to recognize that civilians are no longer only victims but also perpetrators of violence. Because of the growing importance of people's motivations to engage in violence, recent anthropological research focuses more on clarifying how and why people both engage in and prevent violence. Scholarly research has emphasized the dynamic social process in which social structures, as well as people's attitudes and behavior, change constantly.¹⁰ Or, as Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2005: 3) assert, for most people involved, "Sadly, violence is not senseless". These authors further state that "most violence is not deviant behavior, not disapproved of, but to the contrary, is defined as virtuous action in the service of generally applauded conventional social, economic, and political norms" (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2005: 5). It is precisely a group's own perceptions of violence that give meaning to the use of violence. An understanding of the local meaning of violence and conflict is necessary to investigate its nature and impact within a region. It should be noted that, in this local context, people can understand violence or conflict in dissimilar ways, depending on the diversity of underlying power structures, along with different contexts, experiences and places.¹¹ Therefore, the present study follows Moser and McIlwaine (2004: 59), who argue it is more useful to define violence in terms of the motivations of those engaging in violent behavior, making the

⁸ See Human Security Report 2005; Cornell 2005.

⁹ On structural causes, see Sumner 1982; on regional state fragility, see Nef 1995; on the utility of violence, see Foucault 1977; on collective action and violence, see Tilly 2003; on economic advantages, see Berdal 2003; on demographic and cultural issues, see Fajnzylber *et al.* 1998; and on the relationships between culture and social structures, see Galtung 1996.

¹⁰ See Galtung 1969; 1996; Stover and Weinstein 2004.

¹¹ See Moser and McIlwaine 2004; Nordstrom and Robben 1995.

distinction among political, economic and social incentives. An understanding of these underlying structures can explain the social processes that lead people to employ violence.

1.1.2 Post-conflict reconstruction

This clarification of the approach that the present study takes with respect to violence brings us to one unanswered question that remains central to this study: How does violence transform, become controlled or ends in local and regional settings and what actually happens in regions like the Upper Huallaga during post-conflict periods? The scholarly literature doesn't provide a clear-cut answer to this question. When the literature on these processes in Latin America is examined, it becomes clear that long-term anthropological studies about post-conflict reconstruction has generally concentrated on periods of transition to democracy after authoritarian rule and military dictatorship in the countries of the Southern Cone.¹² However, these cases did not involve internal armed conflict, and thus fundamentally differ from the circumstances examined in the present study.

Countries that have endured internal armed conflict, despite formal peace agreements, often experience "dirty wars" in the immediate aftermath of these conflicts—dirty wars in which government security troops unleash their fury against citizens suspected of harboring the seeds of subversion (Arnson 1999; Sluka 2000: 2). One of the most significant concepts employed by anthropologists in the interplay between terror and resistance is that of the establishment of a "culture of terror",¹³ defined as an "institutionalized system of permanent intimidation of the masses or subordinated communities by the elite, characterized by the use of torture and disappearances and other forms of extrajudicial death squad killings as standard practice" (Sluka 2000: 22). The established culture of terror can lead to a collective fear, wherein some elite groups are willing to accept the brutal means of state control. In these situations, there always exists a large discrepancy between the official story and what actually happens in these regions with respect to the actions of state security services (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois 2005: 17; Poole and Rénique 2003). Within a given country, differences in the reality of those people living in the affected areas and those who live elsewhere can have very severe implications in the following post-conflict period.

There is no obvious prescribed course of action, given the complex nature of the post-conflict scenario, and processes of reconstruction often include both measures that fail as well as those that succeed. Complications in peace often occur because the state has to concurrently face a number of different post-conflict challenges. Making the process even more difficult is the fact that, in addition to mediating between warring parties, peace consolidation should also involve attention to the conflict's context, background, and structure, as well as the grass roots practices of conflict resolution (Ramsbotham *et al.* 2005: 184; Richards 2005: 3). In general, it is often asserted that peace-building should entail three main components: Conflict resolution entailing ceasefires, the scaling back of emergency legislation, and adherence to humanitarian standards. As various studies point out, preventive measures are vitally important.

An important task within a post-conflict scenario involves solving the structural problems that have contributed to the internal armed conflict. This must be done in order to remove or at least ameliorate potential causes of future conflict. Post-conflict consolidation should include the demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants of all armed forces involved in the war, through so-called disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration programs (DDR),¹⁴ but there should at the same time be a strong emphasis on relieving the

¹² See Hayner 2001; Lean 2003; Robben 2005.

¹³ See Corradi *et al.* 1992; Chomsky 1988; Robben 1995; Sluka 2000: 22; Suarez-Orozco and Robben 2000; Taussig 1984, 1987.

¹⁴ See Arnson 1999; Colletta *et al.* 2004.

suffering of the victims. These relief programs should include support for refugees and displaced people, including the return of refugees and the return of land, as well as transitional justice (i.e., the partial release of prisoners and amnesties) and the recovery and return of bodies of those who had been murdered (Bell 2005: 296). This brings us to the transition to democracy, taken broadly to include the reinstatement of human rights, citizen participation and the reinstituting of the rule of law. (Re)building democracy and reconstructing citizenship, thus appear as necessary components of post-conflict reconstruction. There should also be concomitant re-subordination of the military to civilian authority, whereby the military's tasks once again have to be restricted to the country's external security, and the police have to resume their function with respect to the nation's internal security.¹⁵ Additionally, the newly elected democratic government should also assume responsibility for material reconstruction and institutional reform.¹⁶ Finally, attention must be paid to processes of post-conflict reconciliation including notions such as memory, truth, justice, and reparations since, in a time of transition, people and societies begin to look back on the violent past as they try to understand the collective failure to control the violence that has been unleashed.

To construct an official version of the truth, Peru, as well as several other countries in Latin America, has instituted an independent truth commission, the purpose of which is to “unsilence” the past, analyzing common patterns of abuse and institutional responsibility.¹⁷ Often, truth commissions take on additional tasks, with many such bodies making recommendations for future reforms, proposing reparations for individual victims and affected families, and supplying evidence for trials. Through these additional tasks, truth commissions have become key mechanisms in the transition to peace.¹⁸ As they assumed these added responsibilities, truth commissions were often criticized for favoring truth over justice, as policies of transitional justice increasingly are perceived as willing to renounce the right to justice for individuals in the interest of national political expediency.¹⁹ As a result, the term “transitional justice” began to broaden its scope even further, and began to include political accommodation and the building of institutions, which means that peace-making and peace-keeping were transformed into institution-making processes (Bell 2005: 294). But seeing peace as a process solely driven by the state, or institutions related to the state, ignores the fact that peace can be implemented differently within the disparate territories of a given country. In the standard transitional model, post-conflict societies are perceived as passive or apolitical social vacuums (see Pouliquen *et al.* 2007). The traditional model also ignores differences in interpretations of justice that can exist in different regions within a single country.

When one focuses exclusively on the state-sponsored post-conflict processes, it is often forgotten that, on the local level, there can exist more scope for spontaneous peace initiatives than is commonly recognized. This can be the case because persons within a given locale can decide that reconciliation is, in terms of their own enlightened self-interest, preferable to continued anger and hostility (Daly and Starkin 2007: 83). Consequently, instead of concentrating on these state-sponsored national peace projects, this study emphasizes a “bottom-up” analysis of peace-building. I begin from the assumption that, in order to understand these local peace processes, one must “move between different levels of organization on the ground, and understand the multiple connections and disconnections between micro- and macro-dimensions of violence and post-violence” (Pouliquen *et al.* 2007:

¹⁵ For a detailed discussion of the processes involved, see Arnon 1999: 11; Glebbeek 2003; Rotberg 2003; Rotberg 2004; UNDP 2002.

¹⁶ See Arnon 1999; Widner 2004.

¹⁷ For detailed explanations of truth commissions in general, and on the Peruvian truth commission specifically, see Arnon 1999; Laplante 2007: 216; Laplante and Theidon 2007: 228.

¹⁸ See Arnon 1999: 456; Bell 2005; Laplante and Theidon 2007.

¹⁹ See Laplante 2007: 216; Weinstein and Stover 2004: 4; Rotberg and Thompson 2000.

15). As was the case with scholarly debates on violence and conflict, difficulties arise when peace-building is not placed in its proper social context.

In the Upper Huallaga, the partial state victory over guerrilla forces had important implications for regional conflict resolution, peacemaking and peacekeeping. On the national level, the sole emphasis was on military victory, largely neglecting the remaining regional problems. But it is these local spheres of peace consolidation that are of crucial importance, for it is here that perpetrators and victims come face to face (Lean 2003: 170). As a result, people become active participants in working toward peace, making choices about how to remember and confront the past, and how they choose to live together now and in the future (Weinstein and Stover 2004: 2). In this local context, general notions of post-conflict processes can be transformed and take on a totally different meaning. For example reconciliation, defined as the restoring of broken relationships among previously conflicting groups, and these groups learning how to live together in peace, can have multiple meanings on a local level (Weinstein and Stover 2004: 5). It might entail the reintegration of individuals, the strengthening of bonds between community members, or just the building or constructing of community bonds or communal goals, without any reference to justice (Daly and Starkin 2007: 69: 79). These processes of assimilating and reconstructing the past, and of the forging of bonds between persons and groups that were only recently implacable enemies of one another, offer a profound insight into diverse regional notions of justice, accountability, and reconciliation (Theidon 2007: 119).

It follows from this that, in these local post-conflict situations, “while learning the truth and [learning] about human rights violations is important, truth-telling isn’t enough to cancel debts to the past in a manner that enables societies to renew social bonds among their citizens and move forward from their violent past” (Lean 2003: 169). In the affected communities, people face additional tasks involving the reconstruction of the destroyed social fabric (Weinstein and Stover 2004: 1-2). The changes involved in this process include a whole range of social reconstruction issues, including the rebuilding of communal identity, the definition of forms of justice and reconciliation, and even the building of new political systems on the local, regional and national level (Pouliquen *et al.* 2007: 1). As a result, especially in post-conflict settings, people actively begin to redesign, re-frame and strengthen a popular identity, which is used to try to achieve social and political participation. Thus, identity formation plays an important role in the making of new community alliances. This brings us to the reconstruction of citizenship within the local context. Theidon (2001: 31) asserts that, as affected people began to see they had the right to demand services and to see themselves as deserving of them, this indicated a new sense of national integration and citizenship for traditionally marginalized sectors of the population. Consequently, in post-conflict settings, the forming of collective identities by social movements is often done alongside these movements’ integration into the country’s, local and regional political process. This phenomenon occurs because post-conflict processes may create conditions for a deepening of democracy, citizenship and the incorporation of previously excluded social actors.

1.1.3 Social mobilization

When concentrating on these local mobilization efforts, it becomes important to take into account the theory of social movements. Scholars interested in the emergence of social movements, and of their networks, objectives and goals have for many years been divided into those concerned with either structural approaches (i.e., the emergence and political processes of social movements) or, on the other hand, cultural approaches (which generally include an emphasis on collective identity and the competing interests of groups within a

given social context). It is therefore important to describe these different but complementary approaches.

To begin with the structural approach, there are three different methods that have been employed to analyze the emergence and processes of social movements. One of these looks at “political opportunities”, and asserts that social movements are shaped by the broader set of political constraints and opportunities that arise in different periods, and that are unique to the national context in which they are embedded.²⁰ This analytical framework holds that protests arise when changes take place that create opportunities for movements to emerge, such as during a transition to democracy (Goodwin and Jasper 2003: 12). But this “political opportunities” framework mainly concentrates on the creation of movements and their dynamic interaction with the state in the process of that creation, while ignoring the question as to *why* a particular movement arose. To answer this question, another line of inquiry within the structural approach concentrates on mobilizing structures, meaning the collective mechanisms through which people assemble and participate in collective action (McAdam *et al.* 1996: 3). This framework starts from the assumption that different groups have different opportunities or resources to mobilize. One of the most notable theories that has arisen from this research framework is the resource mobilization theory,²¹ which argues that there is never any shortage of discontented people within any given society, but that the willingness to mobilize varies with respect to the time and the available resources available to potential participants (Goodwin and Jasper 2003: 11). Yet both these lines of inquiry paid scant attention to movement participants’ self-definitions and shared meaning (McAdam *et al.* 1996: 5). Therefore, it is important to mention a third variant of the structural approach, one that focuses on framing processes. This framework holds that there are two necessary preconditions for the creation of a social movement: people must feel aggrieved about something and simultaneously optimistic that they can address or perhaps even resolve the problem through collective action (McAdam *et al.* 1996: 5). Scholars working within this framework emphasize the social networks through which people are mobilized (Goodwin and Jasper 2003: 12).

In contrast to the structural approach, the cultural approach concentrates on a movement’s goals and intentions, focusing on its efforts to control the direction of social change by redefining a society’s symbols and self-understanding (Goodwin and Jasper 2003: 13; Melucci 1996). An important object of study in this approach is that of collective identity, which can be created, formed and strategically used, given that collective identity emerges mainly from interaction among the members of a given movement, as participants collectively and dynamically transform their group identity. Cultural and structural factors are not mutually exclusive in terms of a movement’s functioning, but instead are inextricably intertwined with one another in all of a movement’s actions (Jasper 1997: xi). Frequently, a movement’s collective identity is grounded in its social location, including its structural position and common experiences (Whittier 2002: 302). But, as was previously noted, none of the variants of the structural approach provides a satisfactory explanation of the entire process of constructing, creating, organizing and maintaining a social movement: Instead, each form of structural approach provides only a partial explanation of these phenomena (Eckstein 2001: 1). In recent social movements—for example, the rise of *indigenous* movements in different parts of Latin America²²—it becomes important to link the shaping of collective identity, integrating processes and resource mobilization with what is going on at the political and governmental level (Whittier 2002: 289). Hence, the academically rigid separation of the different factors (i.e., collective identity, framing processes, political process, and resource

²⁰ On the structural approach see McAdams 1982; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: 3; Tarrow 1983.

²¹ See Jenkins 1983; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996.

²² See on Latin America Van Cott 2005; 2006; Yashar 2005; on Guatemala Rasch 2008; on Peru Garcia 2005; Larson 2002.

mobilization) is an oversimplification. Particularly in a post-conflict reconstruction of civil society, all of the frameworks referred to above are valid as partial explanations accounting for the rise of social movements. To analyze these post-conflict movements correctly, it is important to emphasize the growth trajectories of nascent movements with respect to their shaping of new identities, discourse, tradition, and organizational infrastructure, while simultaneously not losing sight of external political opportunities, resources, and the cultural possibilities and constraints of the environment within which movements arise (Whittier 2002: 291).

1.1.4 Democracy and citizenship

At the same time, it is also important to recognize that social movements are largely connected to other groups and entities, with the state being the most important of these.²³ It is especially in post-conflict societies that popular mobilization becomes a part of nation-building, it being generally agreed that a rise in post-conflict social movements and a strong civil society can result in increased government efforts toward democratic consolidation,²⁴ recognition of citizenship rights and enhancing citizens' security. Neither transition to democracy nor a systematic effort to encourage citizen participation is simple, especially in countries with a long-lasting tradition of authoritarian rule (Jelin 2003: xvi; Jelin 2007). Generally speaking, democracies in Latin America until 1978 had been short-lived and authoritarian regimes had been the rule rather than the exception. This pattern changed only in the period between 1978 and 1990, when democratic government became more widespread and authoritarian regimes became the exception. By 1990, most countries in Latin America had an elected government, although Peru under Fujimori relapsed into a civilian dictatorship (see Kruijt and Del Pillar Tello 2002). In general, democratic consolidation²⁵ is the end product of numerous factors; among the most important of these are general attitudes towards democracy, the presence or absence of capable leadership, and the effective functioning of political institutions.²⁶ Upon closer examination, it becomes apparent that, in the Latin American trend toward more inclusive democracy, several difficulties arose with respect to the incorporation of individuals and groups within each of the nation-states (Koonings and Kruijt 2004: 5). In many cases, the full integration of important groups of citizens has proved to be an insurmountable obstacle.²⁷

None of the countries engaged in the transition process have come close to consolidating democracy for all of their citizens. Some scholars assert that governments seem to be stuck in the process between a full-fledged authoritarianism that they have left behind, and a consolidation of democracy that has not yet been achieved (Ungar *et al.* 2002: 3). Peru is a perfect example of these processes, as it has, at various times throughout the past 28 years or so, been engaged in different transitions to democracy. None of the Latin American governments engaged in this process ever succeeded in consolidating citizenship, one of the reasons being they faced the difficulty of maintaining—or even establishing—effective control in much of their nations' rural areas (Burt and Mauceri 2004: 4; Méndez *et al.* 1999). As a consequence, in many Latin American countries, democracy remains largely restricted to elections, while other features of democratic government, including the rule of law, separation of powers, and freedom of association and expression have not been adequately or equitably

²³ See McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1998.

²⁴ Following Linz and Stepan (1996: 7) a consolidated democracy entails among other factors, a free civil society, a relatively autonomous and popularly supported political society, and an established rule of law to ensure legal guarantees for citizens' freedoms.

²⁵ See Agüero and Stark 1998; Diamond 1999; Linz and Stephan 1996.

²⁶ On governmental instability, see Linz 1978; Linz and Stepan 1989; O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986.

²⁷ See Bourgois 2001; Domínguez and Shifter 2003; Koonings and Kruijt 2004; Koonings 1999; Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2005; Ungar *et al.* 2002.

implemented with respect to all citizens and regions of the nation-state.²⁸ Scholars studying nation-building processes in Latin America have increasingly begun to notice that state-making and democratization are in fact an ongoing process of construction and reconstruction, and that the affirmation of state institutions is one among many possible outcomes. Especially in the countryside, the state remains only one of the power structures present and law and order has to be constructed and reconstructed in everyday practices.²⁹

1.1.5 Margins of the state and violence

Although there is a certain variation among nations with regard to overall degree of control, it is broadly true for Andean democracies that state power varies inversely with distance from a nation's capital. When lack of state control reaches a certain critical level, Mainwaring's (2006: 305-306) notion of "state deficiencies" becomes helpful. State deficiencies can affect a wide range of state institutions, including local law enforcement authorities and local courts, as responsible for ongoing shortcomings of public institutions, policies and political outcomes (Mainwaring 2006: 306). Frequently, this notion is placed within the context of a debate over state viability in instances in which the state is unable to fulfill even its basic functions and fails to provide its citizens an array of public goods—and yet is still able to function (Rotberg 2004; Zartman 1995). State deficiencies are less problematic than a failed state or state collapse, as they represent failures that are spatially and/or temporally limited (Koonings and Kruyt 2004). But the notion of state deficiencies doesn't recognize one problem that has specifically plagued Peru: The fact that, in some outlying areas of the country, as in the Upper Huallaga valley, state power is contested even more severely.

A concept that is increasingly used to indicate state weakness in significant parts of its territory is "regional state fragility".³⁰ This term is used to refer to instances in which the state has unevenly penetrated its territory, leading to large differences within a country's territory. Typically, state deficiencies aren't evenly spread within a country, and it is poorer regions that are most seriously affected.³¹ But the concept of regional state fragility ignores the different ways that the state tried to structure society throughout its territory (Yashar 2005)—disparities that reflect profound differences in ethnic-cultural identities, as well as a history of racial exclusion and discrimination (Degregori 2004: 24; Moser and McIlwaine 2004). The notion of "margins of the state"³² is used to take the regional state fragility and periphery notion beyond its simple geographical division, as the margins of the state are also significantly related to this long-lasting exclusion. The most important gaps between the country's center and its "margins of the state" remain economic, political and social (Degregori 2004: 24; Moser and McIlwaine 2004: 68). It thus follows that the margins of the state represents a real place where the state is only partially present, where the state fails to guarantee security, where roads do not penetrate, where essential commodities are scarce, and where educational institutions—when they exist—are typically deficient. The concept also is used to represent both the ways people living in "the margins" come into contact with the state, as well as how these people are thought of and treated by the state (Tsing 1993).

²⁸ On the state process see Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2005; Kaldor and Luckham 2001.

²⁹ On the state as a constructed entity see Alonso 1988; Asad 2004: 279; Burt 2007; Migdal 2001.

³⁰ See Kruyt and Koonings 2007; Luckham 2003.

³¹ On social exclusion, see Bejarano and Pizarro Leongómez 2005; Mainwaring *et al.* 2006; O'Donnell 1993.

³² O'Donnell (1999: 137-138) first made the point that states held irregular control over the territories. He used the definition of "brown areas" for those areas where the state has a weak presence and where "systems of local power" emerge (O'Donnell 1999: 135). However, it is important that Peru's marginalized areas are not defined in terms of a power vacuum or merely by geography; instead, they are defined in terms their relationship with the state. As a result, there exist different boundaries between the state and the country's peripheries (Das and Poole 2004: 4). The notion of "margins of the state" entails both the level of state penetration of a nation's peripheral regions; the spaces, forms and practices through which the state is experienced by the region's population; and the way people see themselves in relation to the state (Asad 2004: 279).

In emerging democracies without a democratic tradition, efforts to incorporate citizens are often plagued by both the legacy of a violent past as well as continuing violence in the post-conflict period (O'Donnell 1993). When the newly elected democratic government fails to live up to its own rhetoric, continuing chaos, disorder, economic distress and breakdowns in the political structure quickly lead to a rise of previously excluded sectors that may take to the streets to show their discontent, often leading to social unrest.³³ Because the government is unable to channel popular demands, a new movement's emerging outlook becomes increasingly contested by regional authorities or by national authorities (Zald 1996: 262). Destabilization and uncertainty produces a sense of ongoing insecurity and vulnerability, largely related to the failure of the state to impose public security within the marginalized region.³⁴ As Goldstein (2004: 221) asserts: "In response to the gulf between expectations and promises of inclusion and the lived reality of an ongoing exclusion from the benefits of membership in the national polity, the residents of these marginalized areas are employing the language of citizenship and rights to characterize their experience of poverty, violence and crime, and to coordinate their political protest". Protests can quickly turn into violent protests demanding civil rights when it becomes apparent that the transitional government isn't capable of addressing the increasingly insistent demands of marginalized citizens (Pinheiro 1993: 1997). Yet most of the academic literature on violence during transitions to democracy seem to entail a critical inconsistency. The majority of these studies limit themselves to an analysis of top-down violence by the state. However, Snodgrass (2004: 623) characterizes the violence arising in marginalized regions as "purposeful, powerful, and political", and as originating at "the bottom" (i.e., among the marginalized citizens themselves). This violence is often defined as civil disobedience,³⁵ which some scholars define as violent protest intended to increase citizenship participation, and to assert political and human rights. But, as argued earlier, when trying to explain any protest—even violent protest—it is critically important to closely examine the social, economic and cultural context from which such protests arise.

To summarize, the re-establishment of peace, democracy, justice and law doesn't automatically lead to the consolidation of democracy,³⁶ especially not in the "margins of the state". A government's failure to address what is going on in the margins of the state during a post-conflict period can lead to serious problems, since the processes of conflict resolution, democratic transition and consolidation of peace are all inextricably intertwined. In Peru, where no elected government has ever successfully exercised adequate control throughout the nation's territory, the country—and, more specifically, its coca producing basins (see Map 2)—remains plagued by different forms of bottom-up violence on the part of residents who feel that "their state" cannot effectively protect them or their economic livelihood. This brings us back to the case study of the Upper Huallaga, as this region is perhaps the most tragic and violent example of Peru's margins of the state. Here, threats against the state's hegemony are endemic, causing severe setbacks and threats to different regional democratization processes and the inclusion of its inhabitants in the Peruvian nation-state.

1.1.6 Research questions

Even in post-conflict Peru, the Upper Huallaga remained a "margin of the state" and, as a result, regional social changes remained largely unknown. But one has to travel to this perceived no-man's land in order to analyze how ongoing violence can affect regional post-conflict processes, as there is a causal interrelation among insecurity, state deficiencies, and

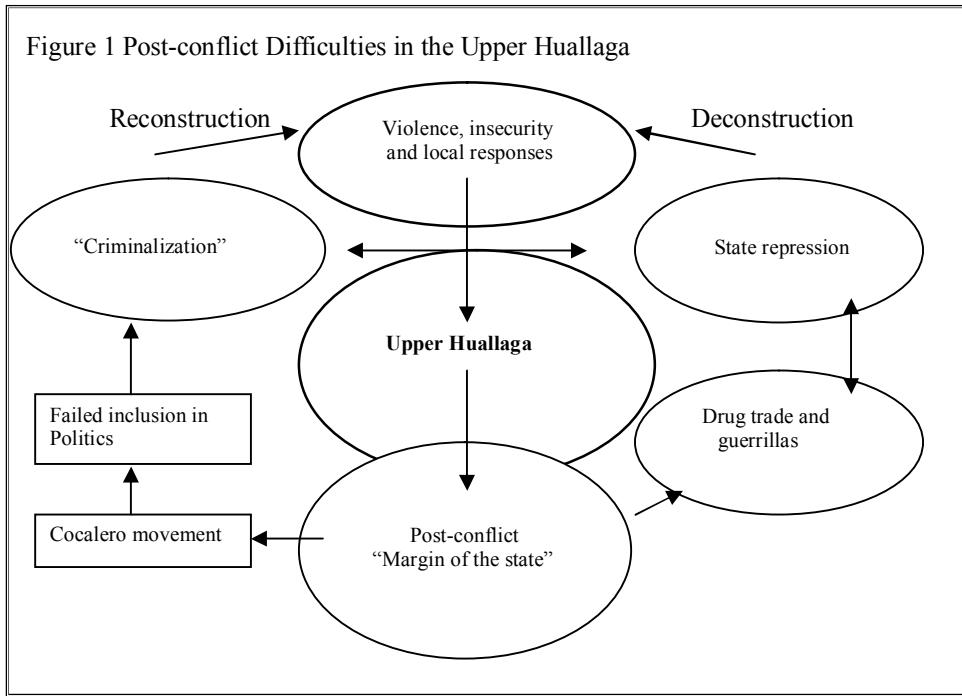
³³ See Burt and Mauceri 2004: 1; Drake and Hershberg 2006: 1; Goldstein 2004: 221.

³⁴ See Arriagada and Godoy 1999; Kaldor and Luckham 2001; Moser and McIlwaine 2004: 6.

³⁵ See Payne 2000; Keane 1998.

³⁶ See Arson 1999; Koonings and Kruijt 2004.

different cycles of structural, social, and political violence. There is, at the same time, a more shadowy, less investigated, post-conflict relationship between guerrilla remnants and crime. The cocaine industry and the state's repression of coca cultivation resulted in the Upper Huallaga becoming a complex, obscure and largely uninvestigated example of post-conflict consolidation. A supposed guerrilla resurrection in the Upper Huallaga, often perceived as related to the cocalero movement, is a theme that often makes headlines in the national newspapers, but the majority of articles in the mainstream print media fail to document the post-conflict changes in the social structures of *narcopueblos* (drug-villages). Consequently, post-conflict reconciliation and reconstruction efforts in the Upper Huallaga could be divided into two categories: reconstruction and deconstruction. Both categories are depicted in Figure 1. The reconstruction category represents the local, regional and national mobilization initiatives as a basis for new citizens' demands. In the case of the cocaleros, these organizations experience additional difficulties in becoming integrated into civil society because their activities were *criminalized* by the state. The concept of "deconstruction" encompasses the other factors that frustrate regional post-conflict processes; including the state's repressive anti-drug policies, guerrilla remnants, and the drug trade. As will be argued in this study, complex dynamic relationships are constantly "reshaped" among these different actors.



To gain an insight into these local post-conflict dynamics, research must focus on the realities of life in the Upper Huallaga. The general research problem is formulated as follows: What is the nature and impact of violence in the Upper Huallaga, in particular the legacy of the internal armed conflict and the impact of the illegal drug industry, how do cocaleros cope with violence, and how do their mobilization strategies relate to national processes of post-conflict reconstruction? The present study attempts to answer this question by exploring the consequences of the ongoing presence of the cocaine trade in the local process of post-conflict reconstruction, and by analyzing what occurs when the *national* state prevents the emerging cocalero movement from becoming part of civil society.

The following three research questions have guided the study. First, what factors and processes contribute to the continued precariousness of life and post-conflict violence and conflict in the Upper Huallaga? Secondly, how do cocaleros cope with and mobilize against

violence and insecurity in the Upper Huallaga and what are the villagers' possibilities as actors for peace-building? And finally, to what extent do post-conflict consolidation processes and the re-assertion of democratic governance offer prospects for social movement mobilization in these "margins of the state"? These questions are also related to the broader research theme that addresses the extent to which the end of an internal armed conflict and the re-assertion of democratic governance offer prospects for the inclusion of all citizens and state influence. In order to answer the questions that have been posed here, it is necessary for the researcher to venture into the region itself. Before describing the methodological challenges, to get an initial grasp of the real conditions in the Upper Huallaga, let us primarily embark the research setting.

1.2 Travelling into a margin of the state

It would seem incorrect to characterize the Upper Huallaga as "remote", since the region can be reached in about eleven hours by bus from Lima, the nation's capital. The poor condition of the region's main access road, the *Carretera Marginal*, along with the area's violent reputation, make the Upper Huallaga seem more remote than it really is. On the *Carretera Marginal*, which in some areas has deteriorated into little more than a dirt road, one sees fading guerrilla graffiti, barren hills and abandoned houses, all silent reminders of the so-called "coca boom" (1974- 1995) and the region's internal armed conflict (1984-2000). To get to the Fósforo district³⁷—where the fieldwork for the present study was done—from Lima, you have to pass through Tingo María, the "gateway" to the region. In the late-1970s this small town became nationally infamous as "Snow City", because of its crucial importance in the cocaine trade. It was, ironically, because of this reputation, that the town became a magnet for highland peasants and city dwellers, who established themselves in its surrounding mountain ranges, dreaming of making a fortune on cocaine, known as Peru's "white gold". Transportation from Tingo further into the jungle (via the *Carretera Marginal*) is offered by *colectivos* (shared taxis) and *combis* (minibuses). One hour north of Tingo María, there is a small police post where all people leaving and entering are interrogated as to where they are from, where they are going, and why they are going there (i.e., unless they are willing to pay a substantial bribe to avoid this ordeal). Eventually, the road passes through the village of Aucayacu, where large black and yellow concrete blocks have been placed on a bumpy paved road. These blocks were placed on the *Carretera Marginal* after it was discovered that it was being used as an improvised runway take-off and strip by drug traffickers who transported coca paste to Colombia. Around Aucayacu, the road is full of potholes, a reminder of the guerrilla activity that occurred some eight to 25 years ago.³⁸

Five hours after departing from Tingo María, the *colectivo* arrives in Tocache, a town of approximately 26,000 inhabitants located 955 km from Lima.³⁹ Tocache succeeded Tingo in the early-1980s as Peru's "Cocaine Capital".⁴⁰ The section of the *Carretera Marginal* that leads to Tocache passes through lush jungle, where there are signs of the decay of the cocaine industry and signs of the region's dark past. Large abandoned cement structures located

³⁷ Because of the personal character of my research, all of the names of sources of non-public figures and the locations within the main research setting are pseudonyms. Nonetheless, because in post-conflict Peru, the cocaleros of the Fósforo district became one of the most important support bases of the national, regional and local cocalero protests, there are limitations to the anonymity and the use of pseudonyms.

³⁸ Damaging roads was a tactic employed by Shining Path to obstruct passage of army vehicles. Often this was done by forcing peasants to dig holes in the road's surface.

³⁹ Source; www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to Census 2005).

⁴⁰ In Tingo María, due to the presence of the state's security forces, the drug trade was never able to operate openly. In 1979, when the state repression against the growing illegal industry increased in Tingo, cocaine production dispersed over the Upper Huallaga's rural territory, making Tocache, where state presence was practically absent and the drug trade could act openly, the new center of the cocaine trade.

alongside the road were originally built as luxurious villas for drug lords and drug traffickers. Stories about the early drug lords' wealth continue to abound, and they are often referred to by colorful nicknames like "*Vaticano*" and "*Vampiro*". Now, jungle vegetation all but obscures the cement structures. A number of the houses are covered by red-painted symbols of the "people's revolution", a reminder of guerrilla activity in the region in the not-too-distant past. The fronts of numerous wooden shacks and houses located on the *Carretera Maginal* are covered with even more recent graffiti calling for the renewal of Shining Path's revolutionary struggle. One can still make out texts that the owners of the structures unsuccessfully tried to obliterate: Slogans ranging from "*Viva el Presidente Gonzalo*" (Long live Gonzalo [nickname of Shining Path's captured leader]) to "*Viva la Lucha Armada*" (Long live the armed struggle). Upon arrival in Tocache, there is a sign that informs those entering its precincts that the town is now called the "*Tierra de Paz, Amor y Trabajo*" (Land of Peace, Love and Work) but the sights that meet the traveler's eye tells an entirely different story. Neglected buildings, some almost in ruins, and an unused municipal airstrip are reminders of the city's past as a hub of the cocaine trade. Tocache's citizens prefer to forget the previous period that eventually led to the decay of the once luxurious and modern jungle town that now lies in shambles—a half-forgotten place characterized by poverty and violence.⁴¹

The Fósforo district extends over 2174 km² and is one of five districts of the Province of Tocache (see Map 3). In 2005, the district had only 9017 officially registered inhabitants,⁴² but many people who live there—especially transients and recent immigrants—are not officially registered as inhabitants. The majority of Fósforo's inhabitants have their roots in the highland regions, where they found life impossible. They then migrated to Lima or other urban areas and, unable to make a decent living there, migrated to the jungle where, according to a widespread legend, money flows like water. Throughout all of Peru, from taxi drivers in Lima to field hands in Piura, all are familiar with the region's wealth. These images portray life in the region as easy, affording the opportunity of earning huge amounts of money without any hard work. For other Peruvians, the Fósforo district remains branded as a no-go area, stigmatized as a stronghold of both the drug trade and, until recently, of the Shining Path guerrilla movement. This national stigma is based on Fósforo's past, when the district succeeded Tocache as a center of the cocaine trade (1984). Shortly afterward, the area also became a center of guerilla operations (1986-2000).

In several important Peruvian newspapers, including *El Comercio* and *La República*, the Fósforo district continued to be identified as one of the country's main cocaine production centers and as the origin of tens of thousands kilos of cocaine smuggled to different places within Peru and abroad.⁴³ But, at the same time, the Fósforo district also became the center of the national cocalero movement, and of this movement's protest activity. When photos of these protesting cocaleros appeared in the national press, they had fierce, angry faces, and wielded slingshots, machetes and sticks. They were portrayed as a group of wild "savages", as Quechua-speaking backward campesinos who migrated to the jungle to escape the law. Photos of smiling cocaleros often revealed a golden tooth with engraved images of hearts, stars and dollar signs (i.e., indelible reminders of cocaine's "Golden Years") and stigmatized these individuals as drug traffickers. In the post-conflict period, this region also became

⁴¹ As had happened before in Tingo María, when the presence of the security forces increased in Tocache (1984) the cocaine trade dispersed over the rural countryside, where the police and the military were absent.

⁴² Source: www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to Census 2005).

⁴³ "[Mal Abrigo] city", Mónica Vecco; *La República*, February 25, 2005: "*En tierra de mama coca*", Mónica Vecco; *La República*, Februari 23, 2005: "*Narco sindicalismo*" Carolina de Andrea; *El Comercio*, February 26, 2005: "*Solo pararon en Tocache*" Mónica Vecco, Sheila Díaz and Marco Sánchez; *La República*, February, 24, 2005: "*Narcos infiltran el estado*", *Expreso*, February 25, 2005.

portrayed as a breeding place for campesino “revolutionaries” because the Shining Path, which had a base of operations there, was never totally defeated.

At first glance, Puerto Mal Abrigo appears to be a typical jungle village with the dull and lifeless atmosphere typical of jungle villages in Peru. Although the village of Fósforo is the district’s official capital, Mal Abrigo, an urban settlement with 253 households in 1999⁴⁴ and 229 in 2005⁴⁵ can be characterized as the district’s commercial center.⁴⁶ Mal Abrigo became a center of cocalero protest—including violent protest—that began in 2000 and continues to the present day. The village became increasingly stigmatized as a stronghold of both the cocaine industry and of guerrilla remnants.

Box 1.1 The village’s foundation

Puerto Mal Abrigo has a long history as frontier village. Its history appears to date back to 1777, when Jesuit missionaries founded the village, which was located in Orillas on the Guacamayo River. A priest took up residence there and a church was constructed. As the story goes, the majority of the people there were living in sin and every week big parties were organized, where they drank alcohol until they passed out. One weekend, a group of drunks arrived at the church. They dragged the priest out and took him to the river. Before they could throw the priest in the river, he cursed the whole village shouting: *Siempre vivirán en peleas, jamás encontrará la paz, la desgracia estará con ustedes* [You’ll never stop fighting; you will never know peace, and you will always be disgraced]. After these words, the priest disappeared in the current of the river. The people who stayed behind engaged in violent clashes which frequently divided the community. One day, a group decided to walk down along the riverbank to establish a new community, which today is known as Esperanza de Frontera. But conflicts continued to persist, and in fact grew even worse. In 1927, tired of fighting, one group of migrants decided to follow the river bank, ultimately reaching the left bank of the Frontera River, nowadays known as Monterrey (where the military base is still located). Here, as the story goes, battles over fertile land were continual and there were daily fights and murders. This new settlement was hit by a smallpox epidemic that killed the majority of the population, leaving only a few survivors. Mortified by the deaths, the surviving settlers decided to cross the river to the right bank of the Frontera. From 1947-1951, the new village was established where, years before, the Missionaries constructed their outpost. Nevertheless the violence continued. In 1951, some new settlers began to arrive. These newcomers established themselves at a location that wasn’t suitable for large settlements because it lacked the water needed for their agricultural activities. It was only in 1964 that construction began on the *Carretera Marginal*. Internally there were battles between the migrants from the *sierra* and those residents originally from the *selva* over the community’s government. After several battles, the population was divided into two groups: those from the highland established their community in Utopía Inca and the *Selváticos* crossed the Huallaga River and established themselves in the location now known as Puerto Mal Abrigo. In 1972, Mal Abrigo was recognized as a *Caserío*- a human settlement. By 1973, Mal Abrigo had become a desirable place to live because of its commercial location on the *Carretera Marginal* and its location close to the Huallaga River. Mal Abrigo became the region’s principal port for those traveling further into the jungle, as well as an obligatory stop for those travelling by boat on the Huallaga River. Only in 2002 was Puerto Mal Abrigo recognized as a *Centro Poblado Menor* (small population center), which entitled the village to a school-building for elementary and secondary students. At that time, Mal Abrigo also got its own health clinic and municipal office.

As the district’s principal village, Mal Abrigo has a small daily market, with several butchers, a sandal shop and a store that sells electronic merchandise. Several shops are located on its main road; the most colorful of these being the shop where pesticides are sold. Further

⁴⁴ Source; www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to pre-census in 1999).

⁴⁵ Source; www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to Census 2005).

⁴⁶ Mal Abrigo’s slight population decline over the years can be explained by its character as a migrant region, the coca bust in the late 1990s, and because the village was hit by another forced eradication operation of the coca plants in 2005, where, after some people took refuge in their regions of origin, or migrated further into the jungle.

down the main street there are a number of restaurants, which in the evening receive strong competition from a stand where women sell roasted chicken, one of Peru's signature dishes. A school building for both primary and secondary education is located in the center of town. A health clinic had initially been established on this main road, but is now located in a different part of town. The most common ailments treated in this clinic are diarrhea, dehydration and other typical jungle diseases, which are all potentially fatal without proper immediate treatment. On several occasions, victims of gun battles, men tortured by drug traffickers, and other critically wounded persons were brought into the clinic. Frequently these victims were unable to survive the hour-long trip to Tocache's main hospital.



Picture 1 Puerto Mal Abrigo

But, on the national level this dreary jungle village continued to be portrayed as a center of the cocaine industry. In an article in *La República* titled “[Mal Abrigo] City”⁴⁷ reporter Monica Vecco (2005) asserted that apparent indications of marginalization and poverty in the town were merely a cover. She wrote: “In Mal Abrigo, there is no drinkable water, no electricity, and there isn't even a sewer, but more money changes hands in its streets than on the *Bulevar de Asia* [a recently constructed, luxury beach resort in Lima]”. Actually, Mal Abrigo did owe some of its reputation to the first “Coca Boom” (mid 1970s- 1995), when small airplanes full of hundreds of thousands of dollars landed on the main road outside the village to purchase the coca paste—the second stage in cocaine processing.

Yet the majority of residents in this supposedly rich village are campesinos (i.e., farm laborers that work land owned by others for minimal wages). On a typical day in Mal Abrigo, campesinos walk off to the fields at 6 o'clock in the morning wearing old, tattered clothes and boots, and bearing machetes; they return to the village at about 5 o'clock at night, their faces dirty and sunburned after a long day of physical labor. After the campesinos have finished their work, the men bathe in the river, change their clothes and hurry to the football field,

⁴⁷ “[Mal Abrigo] City” By Mónica Vecco, *La República*, February 25, 2005.

while the women play volleyball until darkness descends upon the village. At night, numerous people gather on the so-called *Esquina de Movimiento*,⁴⁸ located on the *Carretera Marginal*. Here, the latest gossip and local news is discussed. Until 2006, Mal Abrigo didn't have electricity and radios were the inhabitants' main connection to the outside world, because national newspapers weren't for sale in town and the village's generator, which remained in operation four hours every night, was switched off just before the nightly newscast at 11 p.m. The television sets only broadcast the three national channels: The village's streets were typically abandoned at 7 p.m. as villagers gathered in homes and restaurants to watch the latest installment of the immensely popular telenovelas—soap operas typically produced in either Mexico or Brazil. While Mal Abrigo is a quiet village during the week, on weekends, campesinos from surrounding areas enter town to buy groceries, drink with their friends, play cards, shoot pool, participate in local meetings, or just to "hang out".

There were no longer many vestiges of the cocaine's "golden years", although one building did stand out in the village. This building had once been the home of a Colombian drug lord, who had constructed the cement structure as a fortress to defend against the periodic attacks of the police, competing drug traffickers, or other criminal groups. This edifice was now the home of one of the several *firmas* (drug trafficking groups) that operated in Mal Abrigo. Because of this ongoing presence of *firmas*, Mal Abrigo always remained one of those places government officials and most townspeople from Tocache only entered by day because that was the only time it was safe to go there (Kernaghan 2006: 131). By late-2005, the village was no longer safe even during the daytime, as those travelling through town by day were increasingly victimized by roving criminals. By then, life in Mal Abrigo had changed: When the sun went down and the numerous saloons and whorehouses opened their doors, men engaged in bar fights—fights that often ended with one of the combatants drawing a revolver. Nocturnal gunfire became so commonplace that it was no longer cause for alarm.

From Puerto Mal Abrigo, it takes 20 minutes via *colectivo*, or two hours on foot, to reach Santa María de Frontera, named after a tributary of the Huallaga River. A number of isolated communities and hamlets are located on the banks of the Frontera River, which are referred to collectively as the *Valle de Frontera*. In 1990, this valley reportedly was inhabited by 30,000 to 40,000 people but only a fraction of this number now remains. One of these, Santa María, went from being a blooming town in the early 1990s to a small rural hamlet with 120 households in 1999. By 2005, only 69 families remained.⁴⁹ The only visible reminder of the community's past now was a *Virgencita*,⁵⁰ a gift that had been donated by Colombian drug traffickers, which was housed in a small white building. These barren hills, only ten years earlier covered with coca leaves, tell the story of the "coca bust" at the end of the 1990s when people left the community in droves. At one point, nobody wanted to live in the community. This began to change in 2000, when prices paid for coca began to rise and migrant workers began flowing into the area once again. The campesinos now living in Santa María for the most part cultivate their coca in communities located West of Santa María, such as Las Palmas, California because the soils of the barren hills close to the village were no longer suitable. Santa María remained a famous village, mainly because it was the home of Nancy Obregón, a national leader of the cocalero movement who was elected to the Peruvian national Congress in 2006.

⁴⁸ Literally "Corner of Movement." Because of the lack of a central *plaza* in Puerto Mal Abrigo people gathered on this street corner located close to the municipality in the evenings.

⁴⁹ Source: www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to pre-Census 1999) and www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to Census 2005).

⁵⁰ Sculpture of the Virgin of Santa María, one of Peru's most venerated saints.

In contrast to Mal Abrigo and Santa María, the Frontera Valley has no significant presence of the police, soldiers of the national army, or any other state institution. Consequently, it is branded as a “no-go’ zone”, even by Mal Abrigo’s inhabitants. Utopía Inca, one of the hamlets of the Frontera Valley, was a rural agricultural settlement of 8 houses and 22 families in 2005.⁵¹ Although it can be argued that the number of Utopía Inca’s residents is many times higher, because many people live in the mountain ranges surrounding the community (people whose presence is generally unregistered during the national census) and these mountain dwellers also can rightly be considered part of the settlement. There had been settlements on the banks of the Frontera prior to the internal armed conflict (1984-2000), but many of these people left when this region became a guerrilla stronghold, taking up residents in other communities where military bases were established. By 2000, when the price paid for coca rose, countless new migrants settled in the community, where land was abundant in the surrounding mountain ranges. The hamlet’s center has a small shop where customers pay in dollars and the shop owner was aware of even the slightest recent changes in the exchange rate between dollars and Peruvian soles. A one-hour walk along dirt path that leads west out of Utopía ends at Esperanza de Frontera, a rural hamlet with approximately 120 houses in 1999 and 21 registered families in 2005.⁵² Esperanza, just like Santa María, had been a booming village during the coca boom when, according to villagers who had been around at the time, there had been great material abundance, including a beautiful *plaza*, a rudimentary health clinic, and numerous bars and brothels. During the internal armed conflict, the village was leveled by a military bomb attack because it was identified as a guerrilla stronghold. From then on, Esperanza has been a “forgotten community”, where there is nothing; no electricity, no health clinic, no running water, and no school. Because of the absence of any penetration road, the hamlet could only be reached by crossing the river, after which one has to walk one hour from Utopía. Food and other materials are transported by donkeys or horses bearing their cargoes in large plastic bags, the same plastic bags used in the district to transport the coca harvest.

Following the *Carretera Marginal* north out of Puerto Mal Abrigo, it is easy to pass the communities of Alto Mal Abrigo and 3 de Diciembre without even noticing. To reach each of these communities, one had to leave the main road and walk about 30 minutes uphill. At the time of this study, Alto Mal Abrigo was a small hamlet consisting of eight households,⁵³ and 3 de Diciembre was a rural community of 28 households,⁵⁴ reachable by turning right from the main road onto a little mud path, a 30-minute walk from Puerto Mal Abrigo. In 3 de Diciembre, coca is the only crop that is cultivated exclusively because the land alongside the mountain ranges of the *Cordilla Azul*, is unsuitable for other crops. The majority of men who work on *chacras* in 3 de Diciembre simultaneously rent a room in Mal Abrigo because many are single, and are looking for some distraction from work in Mal Abrigo. Paraíso, a small rural hamlet with 40 families in 1999, and 35 households in 2005,⁵⁵ lies on the main road that leads on to Tarapoto—reachable by a one-hour walk from Mal Abrigo on dirt roads that pass through the community of La Molina and lead to a cocoa farm. Together, these villages and hamlets were the origin of protesting cocaleros who, for the first time in Peruvian history, marched to Lima. Later, this region became a center of violent protests after the state refused to address the cocalero’s demands.

⁵¹ Source; www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to pre-Census 1999) and www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to Census 2005).

⁵² Source; www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to pre-Census 1999) and www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to Census 2005).

⁵³ Source; www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to Census 2005).

⁵⁴ Source; www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to Census 2005).

⁵⁵ Source; www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to pre-Census 1999) and www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to Census 2005).



Picture 2 A cocalero and his harvest

1.3 Methodology

One particular comment of Carolyn Nordstrom (2004) had a great influence on the present study. Nordstrom begins her book, *Shadows of War*, as follows: “Ethnography is a discipline sophisticated in its simplicity: it travels with the anthropologist to the front lines and across lights and shadows to collect these stories; to illuminate strange bedfellows, and, if one were to put it bluntly, to care” (Nordstrom 2004: 3). This remark, drawn from her personal research experiences in internal armed conflicts in Africa, proved very helpful in conducting research on the influence of a national post-conflict period in Peru’s Fósforo district, an area primarily dependent on an illegal economy, attracting different armed actors while also being targeted by the international war on drugs. As Nancy Scheper-Hughes (1995: 428) notes, “The idea of an active, politically committed, morally engaged anthropology strikes many anthropologists as unsavory, tainted, even frightening”. Because the majority of my fieldwork was carried out living among the villagers, I was never capable of assuming a neutral, distant, dispassionate attitude. Nor did I look upon such an attitude as a desirable goal. Instead, I have conducted my research along the lines of anthropologists such as Scheper-Hughes (1992; 1996), Taussig (1984; 1987) and Nordstrom (1997; 2004), dedicated researchers who believe that it is necessary to speak out against injustices that one encounters during fieldwork. Therefore, I follow the tradition of public anthropology, which seeks to describe life on the margins in human terms, but that simultaneously entails a commitment to reframe the terms of public debates. Using another book, Beatriz Manz’s *Paradise in Ashes*⁵⁶ as my guide, I assumed an active, politically engaged role. This author’s attempt to “capture

⁵⁶ Manz’s work described life in Guatemala’s Maya communities before, during and after the country’s internal armed conflict, and she constructs the events through the villagers’ accounts.

the spirit of what took place in the village by documenting discussions, arguments, interviews, observations, laughter and tears” (2004: 6) made a profound impression on me.

In addition, the observation of George Marcus (1998) that much ethnography is “overburdened by theory” was an important lodestar for this study.⁵⁷ To avoid the pitfall Marcus cites, I have tried to place the ethnographic fieldwork material at the very center of this book, the heart of which is the local context of a cocaine enclave. Therefore, the analytical method employed in this book is described by Geertz’s (1973: 6-7) term “thick description”, which refers to the explaining of the context of practices and discourse within a society. More than trying to give information about all actors involved, this study attempts to offer profound insight into the life of the people of the Fósforo district through telling the stories of people living in an area which is occupied by such diverse people as former guerrillas, ex-military men, cocalero leaders, cocaleros, day laborers, small-scale and large-scale drug traffickers, and local drug lords. The greatest space in this book is given over to residents’ own stories about violence, conflict, social reconstruction, peace, the cocaine industry, illegality, and criminality. Because the research directly involves persons engaged in illegal practices and activities, it took me a long time to obtain a detailed understanding of the local influence of the violence, social conflicts, structure of the cocaine industry, and the recently created local cocalero association and national cocalero movement. As a consequence, this book is based on information gathered during long-term fieldwork periods, divided into five periods, which all together comprised a full 26 months spent in Peru between 2003 and 2007.

This study attempts to give a detailed account of the post-conflict processes in the Upper Huallaga, while simultaneously following activities and changes in the national cocalero movement. The Fósforo district also seemed to be an ideal vantage point for following developments at the national level, as Nancy Obregón (the cocalero movement’s vice-president and a current member of the national Congress) lived in the district, and the residents of the Fósforo district were the most active members of the national movement. Consequently, I decided to give an in-depth account of events taking place in the Fósforo district during the years 2003-2007. My first fieldwork period, in 2003, lasted two months (August- October) my primary objective at that time was to personally determine whether research could be conducted in the Upper Huallaga region. At that time, the cocalero movement had only recently been created, and its leaders and members were enthusiastic about my intention to make them the subjects of my research. I was eagerly invited to join the newly elected cocalero leaders of the Upper Huallaga at a meeting with the cocaleros of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley taking place in Huamanga (in the department of Ayacucho) and urged to come to the festivities in Santa María de Frontera (the Fósforo district, Upper Huallaga) that took place on August 30. My second period of fieldwork lasted 12 months (February 2004-February 2005), during which I remained almost exclusively in the Fósforo district.

My third fieldwork period (June 2005-December 2005) was also mainly spent in the Fósforo district. During these six months, I left the zone for short periods of time when local conditions were particularly violent and unsafe, accompanying cocalero leaders to several events in Lima and in the Apurímac-Ene River valley. In addition to gathering a wealth of information about the Fósforo district, I visited Aucayacu, the Monzón Valley and the Central Jungle surrounding Satipo. In those areas, paid visits to several local cocalero associations which were part of the national cocalero movement. Moreover, with other cocaleros I visited their cities of origin, Huánuco and Huancayo. These were always short trips, though they gave me a general view about the cocaleros’ backgrounds, goals and family in the towns where

⁵⁷ See also Hylland Erickson 2006.

they had been born and raised. Having left the villagers behind in a newly declared state of emergency after an alleged guerrilla attack on a police convoy in December 2005, I was anxious to pay them a visit during my vacation in 2006. From August 2006-October 2006, I went to the Fósforo district again. By this time, the local situation was still very unstable, as criminal assaults, drug-related criminal activity, and gun battles had almost become features of daily life. In this highly charged environment, it was difficult to get detailed information about the violence that was going on, so I decided to extend my last fieldwork period to four months, from July 2007- November 2007, in order to get some clarification regarding what had happened in 2006. During this period of fieldwork, I got more than I bargained for, as villagers were very anxious to recount the violent events that had so recently taken place. Their forthrightness could be explained by the fact that, by then, the armed actors who caused the violence had for the most part left the district after the villagers had organized a civil defense force that quickly gained a well-deserved reputation for ruthlessness.

Additionally, the research setting did impose certain restrictions on the methods that were employed, although not all these restrictions were caused by the continuing violence. The material for this study is collected by several ethnographical fieldwork methods, some of which did not prove to be very effective. In the beginning, attempts were made to use structured and semi-structured interviews in order to attain a broader understanding of the local problems. This particular method quickly proved to be unproductive, as the villagers were generally suspicious about the questions that were posed to them. Moreover, they were aware that these interviews were being recorded. One man, for example, said in response to my question: "*I have to say*"⁵⁸ I only have one hectare of coca", with a sly grin on his face. Adding to the problems with the structured interviews, many of the villagers found them to be "too formal". Men regularly came dressed for such interviews in a suit and tie, and generally looked ill at ease throughout the process. Consequently, I found that I wasn't getting the detailed information that I needed. These interviews became the butt of jokes among villagers, as participants essentially admitted that they had presented misleading or incomplete information in the answers that they had offered. Therefore, I abandoned structured interviews for the duration of the study.

After this initial failure, the main information-gathering methods were more informal in nature: Chatting casually with people on the streets, in the market, or in restaurants. This less formal method proved vastly more effective, as interviewees began to talk openly about all facets of daily life in their villages and communities.

But it would be distorting the truth of the matter to state that it was only this methodological adjustment that "made the villagers talk". When I began my year-long fieldwork period, in February 2004, a second *Marcha de Sacrificio* (March of Sacrifice; a protest march in which large groups of campesinos walk to the country's capital to demonstrate) was organized. For three weeks, I walked among cocaleros, ate among cocaleros (actually I only ate if I had managed to arrive in one of small villages' restaurants a few seconds ahead of the hungry marchers, already occupying a seat and shouting our order before the other men arrived) and slept among cocaleros. By participating in this protest, I personally experienced how walking through the jungle and highlands created feelings of solidarity and belonging. After this powerful experience, I returned to the Fósforo district, and I found that, from that time forward, people were willing to speak much more openly. I started collecting life-histories and detailed information in interviews. Some of these interviews were recorded while others were not. I also continued to gather a great deal of information by engaging in and observing informal chats with Fósforo residents. During such interactions, the latest

⁵⁸ The phrase "*I have to say*" was used by many residents during interviews when their responses were recorded on tape as a rather overt admission that whatever assertions followed were untrue. Many of those interviewed expressed the plausible concern that the tapes, which included their names and location, would be confiscated by the police during one of my travels.

events and rumors were discussed, constructed, created and re-shaped. All of these methods draw upon on the population's social memory, which is created, constructed and dynamic. Nevertheless, observing the changes, contradictions, and alterations in the stories enabled the construction of a general conceptualization of life in the zone, and of the existing social relations and power constructs among the population there. The villagers' "narrative construction" of events, discourses, and protests captured how the dynamics changed over time, and proved invaluable for this research because it imbued the ongoing rush of events with coherence and comprehensibility within the framework of a post-conflict community identity.

Consequently, most material used for this book comes from hundreds of local stories, small-talk, conversations, and unstructured interviews. Some people became key informants, whose life-histories were collected during several long conversations. These included national and regional cocalero leaders, cocaleros, campesinos, other residents, and representatives of the local government. Most controversial of all, key informants also included current and former guerrillas, former military men, current and former workers in the *pozos* (pits used to process cocaine), small-scale drug traffickers, large-scale drug traffickers, chemists involved in the processing of cocaine, local drug bosses, and their *sicarios* (hit men; hired killers), all of whom gave me insight into both the reality of their daily lives as well as their motivations and goals. The participation of those actively involved in the cocaine industry came to assume the utmost importance because, without it, this study would have missed, ignored or oversimplified the role of the cocaine trade in local processes. Participant observation was also an important means of gathering information since, during these years, I went to local and national meetings of the cocalero movement, and attended organized festivities in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley and Satipo. In the Fósforo district, participant observation involved informal chats with the women of the village, watching Fósforo residents play volleyball, visiting and sleeping in the cocaleros' fields, spending idle time with the villagers, and accompanying townspeople during numerous local and regional protests, which occurred mainly in the 2004-2005 period.

The fact that this study addresses a subject that is highly sensitive—not only politically but also for research institutes, scientists, and national human rights organizations—largely precluded the gathering of "neutral" information and documents. Most research institutes I visited had abandoned their studies of the cocaine industry, either because it was too politically charged or too dangerous. In general, it was said that it was impossible to study the subject because, in the Upper Huallaga "*hay de todo*" ("there are all kinds"; i.e., the number and variety of the people involved makes the situation too complex to grasp). Therefore, it quickly became apparent that most Peruvian researchers working on this issue gathered information about cocalero communities from journalistic sources and reports published by anti-drug agencies, all of which could be conducted without leaving the safe confines of Lima. The problem was that this kind of research largely failed to describe what was happening in local communities. Therefore, for the present study, general information (e.g., about the war on drugs, the tradition of coca in Peru, cocaine laws and regulations) was gathered in Lima from interviews with a very select group of scientists, the majority of them supporters of the cocalero movement, many of whom had first-hand information as a result of numerous trips to various cocalero valleys. Hugo Cabieses in particular gave me a detailed account regarding issues such as alternative development and forced eradication, the Peruvian law with respect to coca cultivation and the cocalero movement (for which he was an "unofficial advisor" as he himself characterized his role). After spending several months in the Upper Huallaga, I made an effort to gather information from governmental agencies (such

as the anti-drug police forces, DEVIDA, CORAH and others)⁵⁹ but this proved unfeasible because it appeared that officials at these agencies were all aware I had spent considerable time in the Upper Huallaga and this fact, in their eyes, cast a cloud of suspicion over me. With the help of a former employee I had befriended, I managed to visit DEVIDA's headquarters in Lima, where I was given some general pamphlets about alternative development in coca regions and then quickly shown the door. Most information gathered about DEVIDA I therefore obtained in more covert ways (e.g. as downloaded from agency computers by agency employees who called themselves "the diabolical intelligence service").

I first met Enrique Fernández Chacón in Lima at the end of 2005. In the 1960s, Chacón had played a leading role in national workers' protests in Lima, following Hugo Blanco's revolution⁶⁰ in the Highlands, where after he ended up spending some time in prison. In 2005, backed by his newly founded social democratic movement, he became actively involved in the planning and organization of the national cocalero movement. By 2006, Chacón's living room in Lima's old center had become an unofficial office for numerous local and national cocalero leaders. Whenever we were in Lima, we tried to visit almost every day, as this room became a place where I could receive valuable information about Peru's history of social mobilization—both its accomplishments as well as its limitations. More importantly, I came to see it as a "safe haven", where I could let my guard down, laugh and cry about my worries and experiences, reflect upon my latest findings, listen to enthusiastic adolescents, and receive fatherly advice, as Chacón had adopted me as his "Dutch daughter".

The lack of studies about violence in the Upper Huallaga and the population's coping strategies and mobilization strategies is obviously related with the practical difficulties involved. Most anthropological and ethnographical publications ignore to write on the methodological dimensions of the research and how the project becomes "constructed" by the research setting.⁶¹ In the Upper Huallaga the used research approach was largely influenced by the setting, as they change when the local situation alters and are different depending on the subject that is discussed and the different people involved. Talks about the organization of the cocalero movement, its goals and organizations were done by open interviews, which in majority were being recorded, as these subjects were seen by my informants as a way to be recognized as something other than criminals. Information about the ongoing violence, drug-related violence and the internal armed conflict was gained by conversations, which were never recorded, as people changed their versions when they saw my tape-recorder. I didn't even make notes in front of those talking. Instead I listened and waited until the conversation ended, got back to my hostel room and tried to write down as much as I could recall. Living in Mal Abrigo, in the form of participant observation in the *Marcha* and as a fly on the wall when noticing fights between *narcos* e.g. offered me a unique insight. Questions about the internal armed conflict, previous alignments of people and what had happened in the district remained the most challenging. Some villagers provided long *testimonios* of the period but were hesitant to in-depth explain their own alignment.

After gaining the trust of people in and around Mal Abrigo following the *Marcha de Sacrificio*, the people there—from drug lords and local officials to humble campesinos—began to trust me more and more as I became increasingly involved in the daily life of the

⁵⁹ DEVIDA: *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas*: National Commission for Development and Drug-Free Living; the Peruvian state institute in charge of the war on drugs.

CORAH: *Control y Reducción del Cultivo de la Coca en el Alto Huallaga* Special Project for the Control and Eradication of Coca in the Upper Huallaga. Agency in charge of the eradication of the coca fields within Law 22095.

⁶⁰ In the period 1959-1963, Hugo Blanco (an agronomist) mobilized around 300,000 peasants in the Lares and La Convención valleys (Cusco department) and overran almost three hundred haciendas (see Campbell 1973: 45; Degregori 1999).

⁶¹ Three notable exceptions are Nordstrom and Robben 1995; Rodgers 2007; Venkatesh 2008.

region. The surprise of seeing a fair-skinned *gringa* walking in the streets of Puerto Mal Abrigo slowly diminished. Everywhere I went, people readily invited me into their homes to eat or drink, even when their economic situation was obviously dire. I practically never lacked food, or a stool to sit and rest, even while the family of the person who had invited me remained seated on the ground. I was also frequently offered a place to sleep at night by these people. Refusals of such offers of hospitality were not appreciated. At all times—whether peaceful or turbulent—these were the people with whom I spoke, gossiped for hours, laughed and even cried. During times of violent flare-ups, I tried to capture their coping strategies, as well as their framing, defining, containing or avoiding different kinds of conflict and violence within the local setting (see also Gilsenan 2002: 102).

Because of the personal character of my research, all of the names of sources used in this dissertation who are neither academic researchers nor public figures are pseudonyms, although this was against the wishes of some persons who I talked to, who argued that I should describe their suffering using their names and pictures. I hope these people will understand that, under the particular circumstances of the present study, this was impossible. All names of non-public figures, and the locations within the Fósforo district where they were observed and/or interviewed, are fictional. Additionally, any errors or misinterpretations of their words in either direct quotations or paraphrases of their speech remain my sole responsibility. I can only hope that I have done justice to the stories and conversations entrusted to me. In the next section, I attempt to explain the character and extent of my relationships with the various groups of actors within the fieldwork setting.

1.4 The unavoidability of *narco-anthropology*

In April 2004, two months after my initial arrival in the Fósforo district, the cocalero movement planned a *Marcha de Sacrificio*. I would be lying if I stated my choice to join the march was the product of carefully weighing all possible consequences of either going or not going. I had been present during the planning in Lima as well as during the local planning in Mal Abrigo and, by the time the march began, I was just as excited as the villagers. One evening, the final announcement that the march would start early the following morning was broadcast on the local radio. I quickly packed some clothes and other essential items, and was anxious to start walking. But this turned out to be my first encounter with the cocaleros' peculiar notion of punctuality. Late at night on the day the march was to have begun in the early morning hours, I found myself sitting with other march participants in a truck that was transporting us to Pueblo Libre. On that night, I slept amidst dozens of cocaleros on the sidewalks of Pueblo Libre. When I awoke the following morning, feeling cold and broken, I stared at dozens of concerned faces, who all seemed to be asking the same question: "Had 'the *gringa*' slept on the sidewalk? Didn't she see the hostel?" Apparently, it was not the intention of those organizing the march that I sleep on the sidewalk. After this incident, I was appointed a "personal assistant" who was in charge of looking after me. Carlos, the man to whom this task was entrusted, took his appointed task very seriously and did not let me out of his sight until we reached Tocache, where he joined a drinking party. The next morning, appearing a bit woozy, he resurfaced to wake me up at six o'clock in the morning, and hurriedly arranged for me to travel with a group of ten people in a collective taxi to Aucayacu, the next stop on the journey. From that point on, he and other cocaleros from different regions managed to get me safe and sound to Tingo María, Huánuco and, finally, Lima. These shared experiences forged powerful bonds of friendship.

Because the subject of this book remains an obscure part of Peruvian society and involves both national and international interests, the present study automatically takes on a political character. To paraphrase Theidon (2001: 20), who conducted fieldwork in the

Peruvian Ayacucho department in the aftermath of the internal armed conflict: One becomes, whether willingly or not, a participant. During the course of my fieldwork I frequently became outraged—at times amazed and appalled—by the stories I was hearing, stories that gave me an insight into the daily reality of the lives of the people among whom I lived. The government's reaction to the social changes in the Upper Huallaga often entailed repression and the proclaiming of a new state of emergency, measures which increased the power of the military. I'm aware that some might argue that, because of my focus, I'm largely ignorant of the stories of the state security forces. However, to be able to conduct in-depth research, it was necessary to state what my objective was, which from the beginning involved a strong emphasis on the villagers' narratives—here defined as *narco-anthropology*.⁶² By then, I had come to know the villagers, who continued to be portrayed as “drug traffickers and guerrillas” in government and media circles, as (generally speaking) friendly, appealing, humorous, enthusiastic men and women, as they listened to my complaints about the region's insects, always explaining which ones had a painful sting and which ones didn't, almost carried me to their *chacras* (when the hills were too steep for “the *gringa*”), endlessly explaining the differences among the different jungle plants that I never was able to entirely grasp, and telling me the names of the numerous animals. Through their enthusiasm to “explain” I began appreciate life in these jungle villages and communities.

The manner of exposition in this book is basically influenced by the research methods and *narco-anthropology* described above. Following Fumerton (2002: 31) the research for the present study was not generated from an initial hypothesis. Instead, the conclusions of this book emerged from the empirical information obtained as a result of my fieldwork as a participant-observer. Given that the research focus was on the population's own narratives, this book consequently tries to tell the story of cocaleros through their own accounts and experiences. Anthropologists who have employed this type of exposition have been faced with one important problem: How to integrate the narrative information with a theoretical analysis? Ortner (1989: 11) offers one solution to this problem, asserting that analysis shouldn't be seen as static but should instead entail “understanding how things generate other things”, exactly what is intended by the epistemological approach of “thick description” (Geertz 1973). Emphasis in the present study is on the everyday life in one cocaine enclave, in accordance with Robben and Nordstrom's (1995: 6) assertion: “War, rebellion, resistance, rape, torture, and defiance, as well as peace, victory, humor, boredom, and ingenuity, will have to be understood together through their expression in the everyday if we are to take the issue of the human construction of existence in earnest”. In the particular context of a Peruvian cocaine enclave, however, this focus raises some additional difficulties, which have to do with the terminology that is employed. I made the choice to define the cocalero movement as a post-conflict social reconstruction effort, a view that will be strongly disputed by the current Peruvian government as well as by some scholars. Even the very term “cocaleros” may be seen by some as a political statement, as not all of the people referred to by this term in the present book are coca-cultivating campesinos.

As this local scene is closely related to the international war on drugs and the Peruvian state's anti-drug programs, even in the smallest local villages or hamlets every notion, discussion and assertion could be seen as “political”. More than being just marginalized voices, the local cocaleros' narratives formed part of their own political discourse, resisting dominant national agendas and interests. The discourse they employed was not always factual, but it does give an understanding of the cocaleros' thoughts about their lives, worries,

⁶² The term *narco-anthropology* refers to the fact that the information used in this study is not collected exclusively from those villagers involved in the agricultural activities because, in order to gain a better understanding of life in these regions, it was necessary to include the stories of those involved in the processing of cocaine, the smuggling of cocaine, and other activities related to cocaine production.

experiences, actions, and mobilization strategies. From this it follows that, rather than trying to write about the cocaleros as an unheard or marginalized “voice”, I instead seek to describe them as engaged social actors/agents who strategically construct, shape, define and redefine not only their collective identity but also the narratives about their lives. As described in the methodology, a large part of the information was also gathered by means of participant observation. As a consequence, it should be noted that the information provided in this book also derives from my own experiences and interpretations during the fieldwork, which at some times largely differed from that of the local population. As previously noted, the rise in violence was no surprise for them, although it did affect my own interpretation and analysis of the local context. Following from this, I in no way want readers to think that this book describes heretofore unrevealed “Truth”. Instead, it contains my own interpretation of the villagers’ narratives, including my interpretation of their understanding of events in their environment and their own actions (see Geertz 1973).

But not all of my interactions with people whom I encountered were particularly pleasant. Manz (2004: 6) notes that is important to provide perspective and, accordingly, to not shrink from describing unpleasant interaction with villagers. One day, an event occurred that frightened me because I had by then spent a good deal of time in the Fósforo district. That day I was sitting at my usual spot in Mal Abrigo, when a drunken cocalero suddenly said: “When you first entered the region, we discussed whether we should kill you, or not. But I always defended you”. Such a remark in a different situation might have been dismissed as a bad joke of a hopeless drunk, but in the local context his blunt declaration bothered me constantly. By that time, I had learned drunk people told the truth, which became only more apparent when different villagers did not contradict his statement. On the contrary, they confirmed his assertion. As Theidon (2001: 25) argued, methodological challenges during this kind of fieldwork “go far beyond normal concerns of establishing trust”. After the remark of the drunken man, villagers explained to me that my being allowed to stay in the village was a democratic decision made by a large majority of villagers. Their explanation was intended to calm my nerves, but instead had a pervasive unsettling effect on me.

Even after I took part in the *Marcha de Sacrificio*, different assumptions about my identity were secretly spread in Fósforo’s villages and communities. Some time later, a few residents smiled as they told me that some thought I was a DEA agent of the US government, while others thought I was an international drug trafficker. Everyone seemed to be asking what I was up to. For campesinos, my visits to their farms were frequently followed by the arrival of several people who all wanted to know exactly what I was doing. “Was I buying coca leaf?” “Was I buying cocaine?” These were questions on the lips of those who were involved in the illegal cocaine industry. “Was I interested in continuing the “People’s War”? “Where did I myself stand politically on the issue?” These were the questions being asked by current and former guerrillas. As Theidon (2001: 27) said about her research in the post-conflict Ayacucho department, “If one wanted to stay, one had to take a stand and make it explicit”. Therefore, when conversing with the villagers, I never lied about my real intentions, and always repudiated the false identities that had been attributed to me. Only some time later did I understand just how much help we had received from local community leaders and cocalero leaders in fostering villagers’ acceptance of my presence. When visiting communities or local cocalero meetings, I was always briefly introduced and asked if I could explain my intentions. In communities that remained stigmatized as guerrilla strongholds, I was personally introduced to the communities’ authorities, some of whom had a “shady past”. Those whom I befriended early on covertly sought to enhance my safety by personally introducing me to anyone whom they thought that I might have problems with. One of my key informants was asked why he allowed a “foreigner” to visit his home. These comments made me think that we were putting these people in a compromised position. But, in some instances

my presence also provided a sense of security for those involved (see Obbo 1990). Villagers and cocalero leaders appeared to appreciate my presence during their protests and mobilizations, stating that, in some instances, the participation of a “foreign witness” sometimes prevented the police from employing violence.

I slowly began to experience firsthand the truth of one particular remark of Nancy Obregón: “It’s not easy to talk about the coca leaf”. In general, in the course of any social interaction, people produce, negotiate, and respond to stories (Tilly 2002: 7). As Robben and Nordstrom (1995: 5) note: “Vested interest, personal history, ideological loyalties, propaganda and a dearth of first-hand information ensure that many ‘definitions’ of violence are powerful fictions and negotiated half-truths”. Nordstrom (2004: 143) then goes on to say that, “When the truth is too dangerous to tell, people don’t stop talking. Instead, they shape truth into stories”. In the Fósforo district where people who had opened their mouths in the past often ended up getting killed, an elusive story-telling routine had arisen. The villagers’ stories about the causes of violence, and about what was going on in their communities, are not taken as a “fixed truth”, but instead as a useful heuristic that helped explain what was happening. To complicate the information-gathering process, there is a shroud of secrecy among villagers regarding certain matters that villagers feel it is too dangerous to discuss. Of course, what was considered “too dangerous” varied over the course of time, and I often observed people freely talking about matters that only a week before would never have been discussed openly.

The culture established in these communities, rather than being identified as a *cultura de silencio* (“culture of silence”) instead can more rightly be termed a *cultura de secretos* (“culture of secrets”), wherein the secrets are shared by all villagers. One important consequence of this culture, the widespread use of *chapas* (nicknames) among the prominent drug traffickers tended to frustrate my investigation, as people always introduced themselves using their real names—and villagers generally only knew their nicknames. I later realized that the use of *chapas* was an essential element of the villagers’ stories about the past and present. Some things were hidden and secret, which didn’t imply that the villagers wouldn’t speak about them. They would speak, but only in coded language that could not easily be deciphered by outsiders. When the villagers began to talk about the illegal cocaine industry, I at first remained largely unaware that they were doing so, as their phrases contained words that had a special shared meaning for them of which I was entirely oblivious. It was only after spending a considerable time in the district that I was able to distinguish when they were talking about normal events and when their phrases often contained coded language. This was also the case when some villagers tried to explain the current situation of the guerrilla forces in the region, which were often referred to as *La Familia*. Once again, I didn’t immediately grasp the true meaning of these common words until one man whispered: “*La Familia* are the guerrillas”. In this connection, the hours spent listening to the villagers casually chat and gossip among themselves proved to be of vital importance, as this casual conversation afforded an insight into what really was going on. Such communications provided important information regarding the daily alliances and affiliations of the community life. The villagers’ information began to include detailed stories about the identity of the guerrillas as well as of army soldiers who had displayed particularly brutal behavior. With respect to the drug industry, their stories offered detailed information about who was involved in the processing, selling and trafficking of cocaine, about the local structure and operations of this illegal sector of the nation’s economy, and of the government’s repressive policies.

The fact that the population of the Fósforo district—because it was a migrant region—was continually in flux added to the difficulties of conducting research. During the first fieldwork period, I had mainly established strong bonds with longtime residents and, to a lesser degree, with more recent migrants who had come to the region to work in the coca

fields. During my second period of fieldwork, the majority of people who had recently come to the region had already been involved in illegal activities in their places of origin (e.g., as members of criminal gangs or drug syndicates) and were attracted to the Fósforo district by the social disorder and weak government presence in the region. Many of the longtime residents warned me not to get involved with these newcomers because they were criminals who couldn't be trusted. The entrance of these new criminal groups disrupted the previously established power relations and increased the level of violence during periods of conflict. It is important not to assume that research in such dangerous settings is impossible (see Sluka 1990). Continuing with the research did mean that I had to become a "routine coward" (Lee 1992; 1995), meaning that I tended to be hyper vigilant, and that I would take preventive action at the slightest sign of danger. Adopting this attitude seemed to have a positive influence on my research, as it made me more sensitive to the coded messages in villagers' stories (see Reinhartz 1979).

The villagers by then had found a creative way to respond to the inquiries of these new criminals. They confided in me that, "We told them that you spent more time in this village than they will so that, if something should happen to you, they would be in trouble with the whole village". By that time, I had established a high degree of rapport with the local villagers, who happily told me how they avoided becoming victims or otherwise dealt with the situation (see Peritore 1990; Sluka 1990). Their tactics weren't always particularly effective, as some of them did indeed become victims during periods of increased violence. My own anxiety when things turned violent diminished quickly, as I noticed my security was being monitored by several different groups. Therefore, I never felt threatened in Mal Abrigo where I lived, or places where I visited. However, when I travelled, it was a different story. During periods of violence, leaving the region became an especially arduous task, as numerous armed assaults began to take place on the road from Tocache to Mal Abrigo. I received offers of help from local drug lords, who had to transport the cocaine from the valley accompanied by armed guards. In some instances, I accepted their offer to take us to Tocache during such transports, although I made sure I was never placed in the same car that carried the cocaine. I had never imagined that this research would put me in a situation in which, at every turn of the road, armed men would peer out of the window, their glances fixed on the road ahead to see if there was danger.

I never considered discontinuing the fieldwork, although I did leave the district for short periods of time. On December 20, 2005, as a result of renewed attacks by supposed Shining Path guerrillas, now mainly targeting the police forces, a state of emergency was once again declared in the Upper Huallaga. In the face of this renewed violence, the cocaleros reacted by attempting to go on with their normal daily lives in the midst of violent conflicts with the state and state-conducted eradication efforts. Their world didn't fall apart, but my previous perception of the Fósforo district as a quiet rural society was indelibly changed. Rumors about quarrels in bars ending in shootings and bodies being thrown into the Huallaga River became common, leading to my decision not to walk on the streets of Puerto Mal Abrigo at night. This didn't pose an immediate problem, as many of my most valuable informants usually visited me at the hostel. Yet these dangerous circumstances did generally hamper my freedom of movement in the village, and I became more careful when meeting or visiting new people. During the first fieldwork period, I eagerly accepted every invitation I received. But during the second period, I politely refused some of these invitations. To avoid becoming a victim of assault, I was only telling close friends when I was actually going to Tocache. But when I planned to visit communities, I would tell our friends to come the next day to check if I had arrived in Puerto Mal Abrigo. At other times, the villagers and other groups took it upon themselves to give me a sense of security during periods of violence in the district. For example: Some members of the newly established armed villagers' patrols

informed me in detail about possible upcoming threats. But then, one evening, I heard someone knocking on the door of our room, but I was too scared to open it. The next night, the same thing occurred but still I didn't dare open the door. It was only two days later that I found out who was knocking—a man who had been commanded to stand guard over the hostel by one of the local drug lords.

I always tried to avoid the security forces, something that might seem strange to people not aware of the local situation. In the Upper Huallaga, people were generally of the opinion that any interaction with law enforcement authorities would automatically lead to trouble. *¿Señorita, a donde van?* were the first words addressed to me by of the military commanders at the army base overlooking Puerto Mal Abrigo. Normally, my interaction with them consisted of mutual stares and silence, followed by the friendly waves of the soldiers who accompanied the commanders. The military commanders seemed to be making strenuous efforts to show that they were not interested in why I was in Mal Abrigo. Yet, to me, it was obvious that they were very much interested since, although they never asked me what I was doing there, they did ask some villagers what I was up to. One day, something changed. While we were on our way to Santa María de Frontera, my boyfriend and I unexpectedly encountered a military commander patrolling on Mal Abrigo's bridge. Responding to his inquiry, we said "Santa María de Frontera". "Well, *compadre*" he addressed my boyfriend, "why are you taking this *gringa* to Santa María de Frontera?" In his long response, my boyfriend, whose sister's husband serves in the Peruvian air force, began to include names of his *barrio* friends, all serving in the military, some of whom were acquaintances of this military commander. "In this country, everything depends on who you know", he reminded me later, after we had been allowed to cross the bridge. But the last comment of the military commander stuck in my mind. He had said: "Watch out, you never know who you might run into on this road". For the following thirty minutes, I walked silently, not having been able to get the image out of my head of men wearing military uniforms jumping out of the silent jungle, or marauders, whom I imagined with thick moustaches and old revolvers, lying in wait to ambush us. My boyfriend, listening to my wild ideas, laughed out loud and said, "Well, we'll see, but you might be disappointed". By then, we had been walking for 45 minutes without running in to anybody. Actually, the question in my head had turned into another as I asked my boyfriend "Why do you think he said that?" The answer seemed to be on the tip of my boyfriends tongue, as he quickly responded, "Just to scare you, to make you go away and never come back". As time passed, these words proved to be the last time we ever spoke with that particular military commander, since he was transferred out of the valley shortly afterward. For the most part, the military commanders we encountered thereafter were polite and formal, greeting us and then going about their business, even when we encountered them in compromising situations (e.g., enjoying a beer with local drug bosses or Colombian narco-traffickers).

In sharp contrast to this relationship with the military, my personal relationship with the police was more complex, which in my view was driven by our mutual dislike. My presence at cocalero protests raised suspicion among the police about the nature of my activities in the Fósforo district and, specifically during the protests themselves. One time, when the public prosecutor stated that we could not hang out with a group of cocaleros, I became very angry. He accused the cocaleros of being criminals, and he said that I could get hurt by a stone thrown by one of them. When I responded: "Or a police bullet..." he looked like he was going to arrest me on the spot but, after some quarrelling, I was kindly asked to leave and not participate in the protest marches again, and I followed this advice. Later, this became a story that was frequently told among the local cocaleros, who smiled as they recalled the day I was almost arrested.

Some police saw me—a European in this remote area of an impoverished country—as a target for financial exploitation. However, the local population was enraged about such police behavior. One day, when a policeman again asked me for 10 *Nuevo Soles*, this time to let me pass the checkpoint without my passport being examined, a local drug lord was so irritated that he took one of his cars and drove to the police station in Tocache. According to eyewitnesses, he shouted at the local police commander to leave the *gringa* alone and demanded the return of my 10 *Nuevo Soles*, which he received together with the apologies of the commander. From that day on, I was never again asked to pay a bribe in the Fósforo district.

But a year later, when a new state of emergency was declared in the region and the Fósforo district was being hit by a new state-led eradication operation, I frequently had to travel alone to the cocalero meetings, because people in the district had no money. I would urge some of our friends to travel with me, because if I travelled alone my baggage would be searched for pamphlets of the cocalero movement or any other potentially compromising material that could result in me being thrown in jail. Risking this danger, I often smuggled these pamphlets, tucked away in my luggage, because the cocaleros of the Fósforo district asked me to keep them informed about what had happened during these meetings. One day, when I was in Tingo María visiting the national cocalero movement congress, I went to the hostel where I was staying, and found its owner waiting for me. She told me that, while I was gone, the police entered the hostel demanding to search my room, which she had refused to allow them to do, politely asking them to come back when I was present. After hearing this story, one national cocalero leader, who had just been elected to the Andean Parliament, immediately called the Minister of the Interior, demanding that I be left alone. The police commander was even ordered to come to the cocalero event to offer his apologies, which he grudgingly did. From that day on, I was left alone. Never again did the police ask for my documents, and my luggage was never searched again. Moreover, as soon as police saw me, they would let the car I was in pass through, in most instances without even asking the driver for a bribe.

Still, the engaged/political attitude I took on also led to a number of hilarious situations, sometimes turning into the greatest compliment I could have ever received regarding my research. The first one of these took place in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, where we went with different cocalero leaders of the Upper Huallaga to see the international festival of the coca leaf, which was being held in Pichari (Aug. 2005; see Chapter 5). During one of the mass gatherings at this festival, Nancy Obregón, at that time still the national *sub-secretaria* of the cocalero movement, was asked to speak. As she began her speech, I saw her eyes fixing on me, as she explained to the present cocaleros of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, “The *gringa* sitting among you is an anthropologist from the University of ...” She paused for a few seconds, seemingly searching her mind to find the almost unpronounceable city-name: Utrecht. Then she continued, wanting to decrease the palpable discomfort of the new cocaleros about my presence there: “Well, she has spent quite a few months in the district, and at this moment I think she knows about everything, both good and bad, that is happening in my valley”. I smiled, imagining our first months in the Fósforo district and the changes that had occurred in our interaction with the population.

In September 2007, I attended the national congress of the cocalero movement, which was being held that year in the city of Trujillo. During this congress, a new national cocalero leader would be chosen, and I wanted to witness this event because, as a result of the forced eradication then taking place in the Fósforo district, the cocaleros of that region couldn’t be present. So my boyfriend and I made the trip to Trujillo and we invited two of our closest friends to travel with us. The congress was also a great opportunity to meet those cocaleros of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley and Tingo María whom we hadn’t seen for some time. The

congress was chaotic, but the enthusiasm of the participants was great since many of them saw this as a new beginning for the cocalero movement after a period of disorganization and internal schism. The elections of the new leaders followed the hierarchical line: first, the position of *secretario general*; second, the *sub-secretario* was chosen, and so on. Then the election of *Secretario de derechos humanos y relaciones internacionales* (secretary of human rights and international relations) came up for voting. Because I was not a cocalero and therefore had no vote in these elections, I had retreated to a seat in the back of the room. Because the elections were a long process, I managed to become engaged in a lively conversation about the climate in Puno with several friends from that town, along with Enrique Chacón, who was always good for a laugh. Then a young girl nominated someone in our row for the position and applause erupted. Several minutes later, nobody had yet walked up to the front where the voting was taking place. Then another man shouted in the microphone, “Will the woman in the blue sweater please come to the front”. Because nothing in this sentence indicated something out of the ordinary, I stood up, looked around at our group and saw Eva, a cocalera from the Fósforo district, just sitting there laughing. She had been wearing a blue sweater, which she had since removed, so I urged her to take her place among the other elected leaders. By that time, Eva’s laughter was so loud she couldn’t answer. What I had done resulted in a loud negative reaction on the part of the other attendees, and people now began to point their fingers directly at me. “What was going on? Had I insulted them in any way?” These were the questions that ran through my mind. The man with the microphone, now seemingly hurried, then asked, “Would the *gringa* please assume her position”. The only thing I could do was to look at my boyfriend helplessly, as I thought he would understand this would be impossible, as I was supposed to be only an observer—albeit an engaged observer. He suddenly rose to his feet and explained why I couldn’t accept the position: I was not a cocalero and it was my belief that only cocaleros should be eligible for leadership of the cocalero movement. He added that I would soon be returning to Holland to finish my dissertation, and therefore would not be available to accept the position. As my boyfriend stumbled over his words rejecting the urgings of the imploring cocaleros, I just sat there and blushed over the high praise that was being bestowed upon me.

2. Pathways to peace and violence in margins of the state

An extensive scholarly literature about Andean countries focuses on the issue of citizenship and problems with democratization, as these states remain examples of economic distress, deteriorating relations between state and society, an alarming citizens' dissatisfaction with democracy, a general breakdown of political parties and government functioning, social unrest, violence and internal conflict.¹ In Peru, these problems are often summed up in the famous question asked at the beginning of Mario Vargas Llosa's novel, *Conversation in the Cathedral* (Vargas Llosa 1969): At what moment did Peru fuck up? A profound examination of Peruvian history reveals that there was no single moment when disaster had struck. Instead, what becomes clear is that Peru's entire history is filled with unsuccessful attempts by elite groups and political regimes to form a nation-state (Abrams 1988: 76). Prominent examples of Peru's longstanding failure to create an inclusive citizenship are the country's "margins of the state", which closely reflect Peru's geographical divisions. Peru remains divided into three distinct regions; the *costa* (coastal regions: Lima and adjacent territory), the *sierra* (the southern highlands) and the *selva* (the vast Peruvian Amazon in the north of the country). As noted in the previous chapter, it seems generally true that the effective functioning of state institutions in Peru varies inversely with distance from the capital. Thus, for purposes of the present study, both the *selva* and *sierra* represent—with a degree of internal variation to be sure—"margins of the state" within the Peruvian context, as I discussed in the previous chapter.

Arguably, the country's *selva alta* is Peru's most violent example of margins of the state. Ever since the time of its settlement by *colonos* (i.e., settlers, migrants) in the 1940s, the Upper Huallaga Valley was subject to different forms of violence because of the cultivation of an illegal crop and the presence of drug smuggling. During the country's internal armed conflict (1980-late 1990s) the region became a battleground between Shining Path guerrillas and government forces. As seen in Chapter 1, during the post-conflict period, projects of reconciliation and reconstruction have implications in these areas that are different from those in areas of the country where the state has exercised relatively greater control. But the complexities of a conflict within a single region are often forgotten once peace has been achieved. As a result, even in post-conflict Peru, the Upper Huallaga remains a no-man's land. It is perhaps not surprising that it was in this relatively remote, half-forgotten, and underdeveloped region where the phenomenon of mass post-conflict mobilization was first observed after the government's crushing of guerrilla forces in the 1990s. Nevertheless, the regional movement and its attendant protests was characterized within government circles and in the national mainstream media as "uncivil", as organized by "illegals" who are involved in crime and violence, and as representing a deliberate attempt to embroil the country in long-term low-intensity conflict. This stigma tends to exacerbate post-conflict difficulties in the Upper Huallaga, as it hinders the integration of cocalero activists into the national political process.

In this chapter, a broad overview will be presented of the national history of Peru, focusing on how this history specifically impacted upon the Upper Huallaga. In the first section the creation of "margins of the state" is explained within a Peruvian context. As will be argued, in the Upper Huallaga it was largely related to the growing cocaine market. Secondly, Peru's internal armed conflict is described. But, as will be argued, this conflict was transformed in the Upper Huallaga, where it increasingly became influenced by the cocaine trade. Thirdly, as will be shown Peru's post-conflict period was driven by different "states of

¹ See Burt and Mauceri 2004; Drake and Hershberg 2006; Mainwaring *et al.* 2006.

denials” (Cohen 2001)² but, as was the case with the other themes, also these states of denials had a distinct effect in the Upper Huallaga Valley.

2.1 Margins of the state and cocaine

2.1.1 Prelude: Politics, exclusion and violence

To understand the situation in the Upper Huallaga, it is important to understand something of Peruvian history. Peru is one of those countries with a long history of authoritarian rule for much of the twentieth century. Most recently, in 1992, Fujimori—who had been democratically elected two years earlier—unilaterally dissolved the Peruvian parliament and temporarily arrogated all executive and legislative authority to himself.³ Under Fujimori, Peru became the most tarnished example of post-authoritarian democratic breakdown in Latin America. But actually the country’s historical political situation is full of lengthy periods of authoritarian government and only short-periods of more representative government.⁴ For much of the state’s history since it gained independence from Spain (1821), meaningful political participation tended to be limited to white and *mestizo* landowners and business interests, a fact that both reflected and reinforced disruptive social, cultural, political, economic, and regional cleavages (Palmer 1994: 4). Power dispersed and these cleavages became the basis of regional conflicts.⁵ Particularly in the highlands, extensive areas were ruled by numerous notables (*caudillos*) or landlords (*gamonales*) based on systems of clientelism.⁶ To maintain their domination, the *gamonales* used violent methods, constructing a system that was called *gamonalismo*. Later, during the Aristocratic Republic (1895-1919) Peru continued to be ruled by a small elite that controlled land, power and capital. The aristocrats placed the protection and extension of their personal interests above the obligation to build a nation-state. Political parties remained vehicles for personal power, and engaged in struggles that often culminated in military coups (Palmer 1994: 5). State power was based on the gap between the capital, where the elites ruled, and the country’s provinces, where the elite restricted citizenship and resorted to violence when their rule was challenged.⁷ The “Populist Challenge” that arose in Peru (1919-1945) for the most part failed in fostering an evolution toward truly representative government.⁸

² “States of denial” as Cohen (2001: 1) begins his book “One common threat runs through the many different stories of denial: people, organizations, governments or whole societies are presented with information that is too disturbing, threatening or anomalous to be fully absorbed or openly acknowledged. The information is therefore somehow repressed, disavowed, pushed aside or reinterpreted”. In this book the term is used because after internal armed conflicts, as in Peru, governments often deny their responsibility for atrocities, which can lead to “states of denial”.

³ Fujimori and his closest allies formed a new phenomenon which was defined as broadly as civilian dictatorship (Kruyt and Del Pillar Tello 2002), *Fujimorato* (Taylor 2007) or repressive *democradura* (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Stein and Monge 1988; Conaghan and Malloy 1994). These days the regime is labeled as “civilian authoritarian” by most scientist (see Conaghan 2006; Cotler 1994; Cotler and Grompone 2000; Tanaka 1998). Peru under Fujimori’s regime can be placed into a specific category of weak states, namely a strong controlling state, rigidly controlling dissident or political opponents (Rotberg 2004: 5). Fear for these “dangerous classes” controlled the citizens’ feelings on the national level, especially apparent in Peruvian society wherein social segmentation by race, geography and class were prevalent, as Fujimori installed a repressive system whereby fear exacerbates suspicion of the “other” and became a defining feature of daily life (Manrique 2002).

⁴ For a broader discussion on these subjects see Burt 2007; Crabtree 2001: 289; Palmer 1994; Stern 1990.

⁵ See Adelman 2006; Basadre 1980; Cotler 1978; Degregori 1991; Starn 1995.

⁶ Clientelism here is seen in the strict authoritarian form, “where imbalanced bargaining relations require the enduring political subordination of clients and are reinforced by the threat of coercion [...] It refers to a ‘subnational’ set of power relations, not necessary the regime as a whole” (Fox 1997: 393-394).

⁷ See Gootenberg 1989; Manrique 1989; Poole 2004.

⁸ During Peru’s Populist Challenge (1919-1945) different new political parties were founded, including the *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana* (APRA) by Haya de la Torre, the Socialist Party of Peru, and the Communist Party of Peru e.g. But the Peruvian state remained “syncretic structures, part liberal, part populist, and very much unformed and unable to universalize the rule of law within their territorial limits, not least because they were held together by the solvent of

Violence was used to exclude the “dangerous” classes (including campesinos and indigenous persons) from politics. Peru became a “Republic without Citizens”, as Quechua/Aymara-speaking campesinos were systematically excluded from participation in the nation’s political processes. This exclusion reflected inequalities that were based on geography and that had a profound economic, social and cultural character (De La Cadena 1998: 143; Seligmann 1995). Within the nation as a whole, the term “Indian” came to mean “a poor campesino” (Degregori 1998^a: 206). In the 1920s and 1930s, the emphasis on class as a cause for underdevelopment was emphasized as lying at the heart of the country’s gross socioeconomic inequalities by Peru’s most notable political theorists: Haya de la Torre (populist nationalist founder of the APRA) and José Carlos Mariátegui (a socialist political philosopher) (Edelman 2005: 414).⁹ It was mainly Mariátegui’s ideas that penetrated the countryside, where in the 1950s mass protests were directed against the society’s structure. Tensions had been growing between the *gamonales* and peasants, leading to mass mobilizations, and eventually resulting in Peru having the largest campesino movement in Latin America.¹⁰ Helped by different Marxist parties, rural syndicates, peasant unions, and intellectuals (most notably Hugo Blanco), thousands of peasants conducted organized takeovers of land—what became popularly known as “land invasions”. At the height of these land invasions, peasants occupied hundreds of thousands of hectares of lands, proclaiming their rights with the slogan, “*Tierra o Muerte*”- Land or Death.

Alongside these mobilizations was another phenomenon that profoundly altered the dynamics of Peruvian society; mass migration from the countryside to the cities—and especially to Lima, the nation’s capital. As was also the case in other Latin American nations, people driven by declining economic opportunities in the countryside migrated to cities; in Peru, this process resulted in thousands of highland people moving into the nation’s three largest cities, Lima, Arequipa and Trujillo. What was distinctive about this process in Peru was that the majority of these people did not move from the countryside to nearby cities, but instead took up residence in distant coastal cities.¹¹ Far away from their places of origin, these people felt they could become “citizens”, but they also typically held firmly to the belief that the path to progress involved the abandonment of their own cultural heritage and assimilation into the dominant Spanish Culture (Palmer 1994: 6). Hence, indigenous assimilation was not propagated only by the elite; many *indigenas* themselves also felt it would be easier for them if they suppressed their cultural heritage. Nevertheless no Peruvian government ever achieved the construction of an all-inclusive national identity, as racial and cultural difference was a fundamental basis of the state itself (Degregori 2004; Williams 2001: 265).

Paradoxically, popular reform wasn’t brought about by a democratic government but by a reformist military leadership. By the late-1960s, the highest echelons of the military became increasingly frustrated with the failure of the first Belaúnde administration (1963-1968) to foster national development (Kruijt 1994). During the land invasions (1950s-1960s) the military had been sent in to crush the campesino movements. The military leaders saw the grinding poverty and state oppression of the nation’s campesinos, which only deepened their belief in the interrelationship between national security and national development (see Kruijt 1994). This process ultimately led to a coup by General Velasco Alvarado (1968-1975) that sought to integrate the “masses” into national politics. Velasco’s most important social reform was land redistribution. But his progressive revolutionary model relied on weak state

clientelism” (Adelman 2006: 48). The new political parties were quickly banned from elections and there was a conservative populist drive plagued by a series of military revolts, social unrest and an enduring economic depression (Klarén 2000).

⁹ Haya de la Torre proposed a revolution by the middle class, known as *indigenistas* as the peasantry was too uncivilized to develop the country. In contrast Mariátegui argued that the violent exploitation of the indigenous peasantry was standing in the way of Peruvian development, and that development could be fostered by a “peasant revolution” by the masses.

¹⁰ See Degregori 1991; Klarén 2000; Starn *et al.* 1995.

¹¹ See Albó 2004; Martinez 1980; Matos Mar 2004; Thorp *et al.* 2006.

institutions and had more enemies than loyalists. Nor did the nation's campesinos benefit equally, as communities based in the country's coastal regions, where the state historically established a stronger presence, benefited more than their counterparts in the less-developed highlands, gained little or nothing from the reform (Klarén 2000: 342). Moreover, Velasco's failed revolution left the peasants behind on small *minifundias*,¹² which became new flashpoints of divisiveness and social conflict.¹³ But Velasco's regime had several implications for the social make-up of the indigenous population, as their oppression was believed to be socioeconomic and the term *indio* was officially replaced by the term *campesino* ("peasant") in governmental policies (Mallon 1998; Thorp *et al.* 2006: 468).

After seven years, the Velasco regime was deposed in another military coup by General Francisco Morales Bermúdez (1975-1980), who reversed many of Velasco's reforms. But his regime also paved the way for an inclusive constitution, set the stage for the transition to democracy, and installed a representative party system on the basis of elections and party competition.¹⁴ Numerous political parties appeared and resurfaced, including the *Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana* (APRA), created in the 1930s but previously banned from participating in elections. There were also Marxist groups that emerged in the 1970s.

The Velasco regime had fostered the development of citizen movements that aspired to effectively challenge the authoritarianism and elitism of traditional politics.¹⁵ In 1980, Belaúnde was elected president for the second time. But as a harbinger of things to come, there was an economic crisis at the same time as this transition to democracy, and the country slowly slid back into poverty, social unrest, strikes, violence and conflict.¹⁶ Women's organizations, neighborhood associations, and community-based organizations, along with traditional movements such as syndicates, campesino federations and student groups, began to express their discontent with the government in the context of the deteriorating economic situation.¹⁷

In 1985, a candidate of the populist APRA party was elected president of the nation for the first time. His triumph was seen as a victory for a more inclusive democracy. The APRA's leader, Alan García, believed that, in order to be able to create a more stable and enduring political coalition, the party had to establish an alliance with the popular sectors. But the country became plagued by a persistent economic crisis, an enormous hyperinflation in the late 1980s, widespread political corruption, unemployment and underemployment, an unprecedented rise of the informal economy, the erosion of political parties, and increasing guerrilla violence.¹⁸ The citizens' initially high expectations were cruelly dashed and the democratic period (1980 to 1990) became known as the "Lost Decade" (Starn *et.al.* 1995: 419). Activist groups throughout the country demonstrated their ability to organize, yet all these groups had one thing in common: They mistrusted the government's ability to solve their problems and turned away from the state, and toward grassroots groups, for support. As a result, there was little pressure from below to demand a higher degree of state responsiveness (see Grompone 1991). In the vacuum left behind after García's departure, independent politicians were elected into office. Because the traditional parties misread the country's social and economic circumstances, Alberto Fujimori, an agricultural engineer with no previous political experience, came out of nowhere and won the presidential elections in

¹² *Minifundias*: small plots of land.

¹³ See Kruijt 1994; Reñique 2004.

¹⁴ See Crabtree 2001; Tanaka 2005.

¹⁵ See Burt 2007: 72; Ballón 1986; Degregori *et al.* 1986; Cotler 1978.

¹⁶ See Drake and Hershberg 2006; Kruijt and Del Pillar Tello 2002; McClintonck 1999.

¹⁷ See Burt 2006: 36; Burt 2007: 71; Drake and Hershberg 2006: 10; Tovar 1985; Stokes 1995.

¹⁸ See Burt and Mauceri 2004; Degregori 2003; Kruijt and Del Pillar Tello 2002; Starn *et al.* 1995.

1990.¹⁹ In 1992, Fujimori dissolved parliament at a time when most Latin American countries were well along on the path to more representative government.

2.1.2 Turning into a margin of the state

The state's limited control over the Upper Huallaga continued to cause social unrest that can be seen as a prelude for the onset of violence.²⁰ State centralism and its limited capacity to regulate or control activities in its entire territory (see Nugent 1997) made these regions particularly vulnerable to violence. The Upper Huallaga's settlement, weak state control and eventually state abandonment largely followed broad national trends, as will be shown below.



Picture 3 El Dorado in the Upper Huallaga

The Upper Huallaga Valley, from early on, was described in negative stereotypes; for many Peruvians, the region tended to conjure up images of hostile indigenous groups that resided just a few day's walking distance from the "civilized" Tingo María (Morales 1989: 33). Growing demands for land resulted in state-led penetration programs in this remote corner of the country.²¹ In the 1940s, amid the more general phenomenon of migration to the cities, a small but significant number of Peruvians began migrating into the Upper Huallaga, which was erroneously seen as a vacant territory, with an abundance of resources that could be exploited. But the region wasn't uninhabited, as there were settlements there that had been established as early as the eighteenth century.²² The main instrument of the state's penetration effort into the region was the construction of a highway, the *Carretera Central* that in 1937 reached Tingo María, the Upper Huallaga's main gateway city. Travels to the region's inner

¹⁹ See Crabtree 2001; Tanaka 1998; Taylor 2007.

²⁰ See Burt 2007: 25; Palmer 1994: 4 on Peru in general.

²¹ See Foweraker 1981; Santos-Granero and Balclay 2000; Tsing 2005. For state-led penetration to the *selva* in Peru see Bernales and Rumrill 1989; Franco 1991; Scazzocchio 1981.

²² See Buitrón 1948; CEDISA 1993; González 1990; Magdaleno 1943; Saignes 1981; Volker 1974.

reaches remained possible only by river transport. But campesinos' pressure for land and the migrants' pressure on Lima forced the government to implement broader colonization projects, since opening up access to land politically was easier than wresting land away from the *gamonales* (Cotler 1996: 35; Klarén 2000: 332). Belaúnde's first government (1963-1968) implemented a colonization project, called *El Dorado* to close the gap between Lima's industrialized metropolis and the *selva alta*. The construction of the *Carretera Marginal* had been intended as a response to domestic pressure to facilitate access to, and economic development of, the region. By the 1960s, the region became a means for highland peasants and city dwellers to escape poverty. The state's development project guaranteed to support thousands of recruited *colonos* (i.e., settlers, migrants) lured by the promises of free land, schools, health care centers, farming equipment and agricultural credit (Tarazona-Sevillano and Reuter 1990: 102).

But the state assumed the Upper Huallaga could produce commercial products, including coffee and cocoa, destined for the international market. There was a lack of organization and planning, resulting in the irrational use of unsuitable land (see Román 1988). Another factor that contributed to the project's failure was the *colonos'* lack of agricultural experience. As the number of migrants steadily increased, the migrants' plots declined into *minifundias*—small landholdings. The campesinos, whom the state had hoped would support Peru's development, were left in a situation of extreme poverty. As a result, many left the Upper Huallaga, while the rural areas experiencing most of this out-migration, with towns like Tingo María, Tocache and Uchiza maintaining relatively stable populations. The trend of rural areas tending to dramatically wax and wane in accordance with the region's economic fortunes with the populations of the region's towns remains more stable has been continually observed until the present day. It can be explained by the fact that the towns are not exclusively dependent on agriculture.

These development plans changed after the military coup of General Juan Alvarez Velasco (1968-1975). Velasco's agrarian policy tried to "revolutionize" the campesinos by involving them in cooperative farming projects. This policy stood in sharp contrast to the self-sufficient agriculture that the *colonos* were accustomed to and neglected the different cultural backgrounds of the *colonos*.²³ The communal initiatives were implemented without carefully considering their potential effects.²⁴ Consequently, these policies only increased the *colonos'* poverty, leading many of them to abandon the region. Attrition mainly affected those *colonos* who had been recruited by the Belaúnde government, as those who settled in the Upper Huallaga spontaneously and who had never relied on state support were more likely to stay.²⁵ After these unsuccessful attempts to develop the Upper Huallaga, successive governments diminished their role in the region, leaving the *colonos* without state guidance and support. The second government of Belaúnde (1980-1985) gradually stopped granting agricultural subsidies. Small-scale campesinos struggled to establish markets for the crops of maize, rice, cocoa and yucca, which before were endorsed by government officials. Most campesinos were living in dire poverty, forcing them to sell their products before they were even planted, enabling corrupt middlemen to negotiate prices that were so cheap that they fell below the costs of production. The government never imposed regulations on these exploitative practices, leaving campesinos trapped in a never-ending spiral of excessive work and low wages.

²³ See Cotler 1996; Kay 1999.

²⁴ For example: Velasco declared the Upper Huallaga Project should be steered towards livestock production. Loans were given out to cooperatives to buy cattle, but these projects were deficient in any guidance for the inexperienced peasants. Velasco's communal initiatives were implemented before investigating the environmental problems. Additionally, in these development projects migrants were wrongly seen as a homogenous group, a characteristic that could be derived from the flawed view of highly egalitarian highland communities (see Starn 1991).

²⁵ See Aramburú 1981; Aramburú 1989^a; Clawson 1982.

The migration into the jungle generated a complex society (CVR 2003: 310). Groups of migrants continued to arrive throughout the 1960s and 1970s and claim plots of land, causing conflicts over land boundaries. The newcomers' made claims on the land they cultivated in the absence of an imposed legal system of land ownership. Only a few campesinos had received ownership papers, but since there was no official system controlling the plots' boundaries, new families occupied parts of their extensive estates. Vendettas arose among different people over land that often went on for years and that involved large numbers of persons. An additional problem was the high rate of abandonment and turnover of land among the *colonos*. Some men did not cultivate the land they occupied but wanted to sell it. Open conflicts arose among those who worked in the fields, those who had settled permanently and wanted to "develop" their community, and those who occupied and worked the land, but who had no interest in community development (Shoemaker 1981: 132). The region attracted mainly men in search of easy economic opportunities, men who left their native regions in search of *El Dorado*, and who instead encountered criminality, prostitution, conflict with their neighbors, and health hazards (Morales 1996: 164). Bars, discotheques and even brothels were overcrowded, and the heavy use of alcohol contributed to frequent fights among men over women, money and land boundaries. A typical *colono*'s first years were often marked by feelings of depression and loneliness. Life in the Upper Huallaga was largely seen in negative terms, and as inferior to life in the highlands (Skar 1994: 138-139).

This region's disorganization had additional effects, one of the most important of these important being alienation, including powerlessness, normlessness, social isolation, meaninglessness and self-estrangement (Dean 1961: 754-755; Durkheim 1984). Adding to this state of mind, the peasant communities lacked any legal support, because political parties and state institutions rarely came to the region. With few civic organizations, the valley's inhabitants were poorly positioned to advocate for their legitimate claims (Kay 1999: 102). Feelings of powerlessness are fundamental to understanding the causal factors underpinning violence. In crime theory, it is argued that the prospect of crime increases when an individual's social bonds are weak (see Brewer *et al.* 1998). Pécaut (1999: 159-193) emphasizes the characteristics of these frontier regions that contribute to rising crime and violence, including, "the absence of social relations and pre-existing collective identities; the opportunities violence offers as a business and a career; the heterogeneous dimensions of the violence; and the patchwork of local networks of control". Alienation, disorganization, the absence of formal conflict resolution and the absence of social bonds led to high levels of insecurity, violence and crime. There exists a relationship among violence, "margins of the state" and the weak ordering functions of the state (Das and Poole 2004: 6). The formation of the Upper Huallaga as a "margin of the state" came together with a weak or absent state control. Among the villagers' most important needs, Kay (1999: 102) has identified order, stability and protection, all of which are closely related to formal control by different state institutes and security forces. State ineffectiveness can partly explain the violence that plagued the country's margins of the state by the early 1980s. In the Upper Huallaga, regional frictions became extremely explosive because, by then, the economic survival strategy of thousands of *colonos* became the cultivation of coca.

2.1.3 Converting in a cocaine enclave

Although coca isn't the only drug plant that is cultivated in Latin America, it remains the one that causes the greatest degree of controversy and conflict (Chouvy and Laniel 2007: 142). Before the notorious Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar (leader of the Medellín cartel) was incarcerated and later shot dead in 1992 after escaping from prison, the cocaine industry had become firmly rooted in the Upper Huallaga. Gootenberg (1999; 2003; 2004) argues in historical studies about Peru's early relations with the illegal trade that the sub-tropical region

was home to the world's longest-running cocaine industry, both legal and illegal. As early as the mid-1880s, laboratories for *pasta básica* (coca paste)²⁶ were established in the region. Several families owning *latifundios* (large estates) received state credits to dedicate their fields to coca cultivation (Antesana 2005: 9). They sold their harvests through state-installed *estancos* that regulated the legal trade. Alongside these estates, there were also illegal *firmas de narcotraficantes*- drug trafficking groups that controlled prices and that were involved in arranging international shipments (Bedoya 1982). By 1945, groups of *pichicateros* smuggled small amounts of *pichicata* (raw cocaine) by foot and mule to buyers in the *sierra* and *costa* regions (Kernaghan 2006: 36). Yet there are many scholars who assert that the illegal cocaine business wasn't the primary cause of increased coca cultivation. Aramburú (1989) states that coca cultivation until the 1970s was principally used for traditional purposes.²⁷ This theory holds that coca was merely produced as part of the subsistence agriculture and used for personal consumption or legal trade.²⁸ Coca leaves were transported by "montañeros" travelling from Andean communities to buy coca leaves in the *Selva Alta*, which they then resold in consuming communities. But looking at coca as nothing more than a highland tradition may lead to a misleading romanticizing of the rise of coca cultivation and insufficient attention to the region's longstanding bonds with the illegal cocaine industry.

The indifferent attitude of successive governments changed the Upper Huallaga into the *El Dorado* for the illicit cocaine industry when the prices paid for coca rose. The first "coca boom" started at the end of the 1970s and reached its highest point in the 1980s. While the rest of Peru was severely affected by an economic crisis of the "Lost Decade", the Upper Huallaga experienced an economic boom. Because of this, migration increased dramatically (Zárate 1990: 50). People came to take part in the coca industry as small-scale campesinos, seasonal laborers on plantations, or as workers in the cocaine-producing laboratories. The *colonos'* attraction to coca was explained by the fact that coca "guarantees a continuous flow of income, and this continuity is almost as important as the amount of income" (Vellinga 2004b: 4). The income from cocaine cultivation far exceeded what could be earned with legal products. Moreover, coca was less subjected to price fluctuations than legal crops. Its cultivation required little investment, and only modest experience in agriculture. The crop could be harvested four to five times a year. It had an assured market in close proximity to where it was grown, and it could be easily packed and transported.²⁹ Additionally, the cocaine manufacturing process wasn't capital intensive, didn't require a great deal of skilled labor, and required a production process that was relatively easy to organize (Vellinga 2004a: 74; Vellinga 2004b: 5). Cocaine laboratories were located in remote parts of the Colombian jungle or even more remote places of the Peruvian jungle where the *droga base* was refined into the final product of cocaine (Kay 1999: 101; Kawell 1995: 403). The clandestine airstrips that were used were nothing more than parts of the *Carretera Marginal*, where small planes, bringing stacks of dollars, landed and left with the *droga base* within minutes. Hence, the drug industry was perfectly suited to the conditions of the underdeveloped jungle.

Driven by the cocaine industry, the Upper Huallaga developed into one of the country's most prosperous regions.³⁰ The domination of the cocaine industry led to an acceptance of illegal activities and established a social structure where everyone had direct or

²⁶ Semi-refined brown paste of coca leaves stamped in a pit with water and different chemicals. In a later stage, this brown pasta is converted into a white mixture, called *droga base* (unrefined cocaine). See Morales 1989; Hargreaves (1992: 37) and Léons and Sanabria (1997: 15-16).

²⁷ The traditional uses include, among others, coca chewing to fight hunger and fatigue during the work on the fields, drinking coca tea for altitude sickness but also the use of the coca leaf in ceremonies.

²⁸ See Morales 1989; Tarazona-Sevillano and Reuter 1990.

²⁹ See Clawson and Lee III 1998; Lee III 1988; Vellinga 2004a: 74; Vellinga 2004b.

³⁰ See appendix A for a chronology of the cocaine industry in the Upper Huallaga. See also Bernales and Rumrill 1989; De Rementería 1990; 2001; Rumrill 2005; 2007; Villanueva 1989; Weinstein 2007.

indirect relations with drug traffickers. By 1974 the valley's gateway city, Tingo María, became the center of the illegal industry. Tingo's prominence was reflected in the presence of numerous branches of national banks and intense commercial activity (González 1990: 208). Tingo itself, however, was not a cocaine-producing center, but rather a commercial market where drug traffickers, producers and others involved in the drug trade came to shop for expensive items (Kernaghan 2006: 37). Because the *sinchis* (battalion of Peru's *Guardia Civil* that specialized in anti-drug operations), soldiers of the Peruvian naval infantry, and agents of the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) were present, those involved in the cocaine industry in Tingo María were forced to operate in a clandestine manner. When state repression against the cocaine industry increased in this gateway city in the late 1970s, it began to shift its economic activities to the Upper Huallaga's rural hamlets and communities, where there was almost no state presence.

But the presence of the cocaine industry didn't automatically bring violence. At the beginning of the coca boom in the late 1970s, the cocaleros sold their leaves to Peruvian *firmas de narcotraficantes* (firms of drug traffickers), who were processing the *bruta* (another name for coca paste) (Kay 1999:101). The *firmas'* members were for the most part *colonos*, *pichicateros* or *montañeros*, and did not have a violent reputation; in contrast they conducted their operations in collaboration with the regional elite. These early drug traffickers generally conducted their operations in an outwardly pleasant and friendly manner, and negotiated price with the campesinos. They divided the control over the gathering of coca and the production of the *bruta* among the present groups as part of a "Pacto de Caballeros" (Gentlemen's Agreement), whereby the different *firmas* operated in restricted areas, and confrontations were rare. As Kernaghan (2006: 105) has noted, "Guns were rare in those days. Few had them and those who did had nothing bigger than a revolver". Those involved didn't walk through the streets armed and didn't mistreat the local campesinos. But in the course of the industry's development, these kinds of *firmas* began to experience competition over the local coca or *bruta* market from Colombian traffickers. The competition of the Colombians created a strong division of labor, with the workforce separated into those producing the *droga base* and refining the powder, and foreigners involved in the international smuggling, shipping and dealing of the final product.³¹ It was only with the Colombians' entrance that the illegal cocaine industry turned violent. Because the Colombians had no social bonds among the population, they started a campaign of terror. From then on, the traffickers walked on the streets with armed groups of Colombian *sicarios* (hit men, hired killers or armed bodyguards), and introduced the death penalty for those who refused to participate in coca cultivation or who simply resisted the operational rules that they imposed (CVR 2003: 384).

The presence of competing drug trafficking groups resulted in violent vendettas, rivalries and conflicts that, in many cases, ended with gun battles and deaths. Because of the state weakness in the region, murders were ordered and carried out with impunity.³² During the height of the "coca boom" in the mid-1980s the Upper Huallaga was characterized by lawlessness, corruption, and violence (Weinstein 2007). Local campesinos were alarmed by the violence but found themselves unable to do anything about it. The cocaine industry provided the peasants their income and, without the Colombians, they faced a life of extreme poverty (Weinstein 2007: 91). Those who dared to question the Colombians arbitrary and violent rules ran the risk of being killed. Consequently nobody spoke out. Representatives of different Colombian cartels (mainly Cali and Medellín) exercised a strong influence over the urban areas, such as Tocache and Uchiza. Yet their power over the rural villages was total. In these rural areas, people lived in a "subculture of death, where being killed came to be considered a daily prospect, and violence was no longer something that could be controlled or

³¹ See Poole and Rénique 1992: 173-177; Soberón 1992: 561; 1996.

³² See Kawell 1995; Morales 1989; CVR 2003.

regulated” (Martín 2000: 181). But what is often neglected is the fact that, for those confronted with violence on a daily basis, it becomes a way of life, which leads to the further degradation of societal norms and values, and which increases violence even further, as happened in the Upper Huallaga.

As the amount of cocaine produced increased, the United States increasingly pressured the Peruvian state to restrict the production and sale of the drug. By 1975, all those involved in illegal drug activity, including coca growers and other lower-level operatives, came to be seen as engaging in criminal activity. During the first anti-drug policies of the Morales Bermúdez regime (1975-1980), the cocaleros were encouraged to voluntarily abandon coca cultivation after coca cultivation was criminalized. No cocalero voluntarily cut down his plants to start a new life within a legal but insecure economy. Because of international pressure, in 1978 the Morales regime passed a new law³³ which proposed the total elimination of coca in Peru. To combat the growing illegal industry, this law included the establishment of a specialized police force to fight drug traffic, named *Unidad Móvil de Patrullaje Rural* (UMOPAR; Rural Patrol Mobile Unit), a program of substitution for coca cultivation and the creation of the *Control y Reducción del Cultivo de la Coca en el Alto Huallaga* (CORAH), in charge of the eradication of coca in the Upper Huallaga Valley. The law also entailed the creation of a state entity called ENACO (*Empresa Nacional de la Coca*), replacing the early *estancos* in charge of the legal coca trade. ENACO’s main function was the registration of all legal coca producers, to exercise monopoly control of coca leaf production and distribution, and to control the traffic in industrial inputs required in the production of legal products made with coca (CVR 2003: 732; Cotler 1996).

In 1979, the Morales’ regime initiated the first forced eradication operation in the Upper Huallaga called “*Verde Mar I*”, wherein state forces confiscated lands, destroyed coca crops, and arrested cocaleros.³⁴ While the operation was being carried out UMOPAR, backed by Peruvian Naval Infantry, *Sinchis* and DEA agents, used aggressive methods whereby they violated the elementary rights of the population (CVR 2003: 336). In 1980, another operation called “*Verde Mar II*” followed, carried out by the second Belaúnde government (1980-1985), during which the abuses of the state forces increased. Throughout “*Verde Mar II*” hundreds of campesinos were detained on false charges of drug trafficking. CORAH forced the campesinos to cultivate legal products as a sign of repentance, and this was their only option to escape from juridical processes (CVR 2003:337). The police forces involved in the anti-drug operations became notorious for their brutal methods, which included violent assaults, rapes, confiscating material goods, and killing the campesinos’ livestock. The police justified such actions by claiming that the campesinos were criminals and that whatever they owned, they had obtained through criminal activity (CVR 2003: 279; Kernaghan 2006).

These state-led eradication operations caused hardship among the rural *colono* families, while they left the drug traffickers unaffected. The implementation of these anti-drug policies proved to be complicated and risky, leading to unrest and violence. The operations caused violent confrontations between the security forces and *firmas de narcotraficantes*, who defended their power base with militias that consisted of groups of heavily armed *sicarios*. The battles were frequently won by the *firmas*, who became the strongest actor in a region where the “law of the strongest” ruled (CVR 2003: 384). In 1980, the second Belaúnde government (1980-1985) responded to the violence with a law that prohibited ENACO’s legal activity in the Upper Huallaga. Although this measure was intended to halt coca cultivation altogether, the policy only affected the legal market and didn’t affect the illegal market. Instead, the measure had a reverse effect, as during the next two years coca leaves were only sold to the illegal market. As a result, production and trade experienced enormous growth. In

³³ Named the Decree Law 22095 passed in 1978.

³⁴ See Gonzales 1987; Tarazona-Sevillano and Reuter 1990.

1982, a new law³⁵ once again legalized ENACO activity, but the law stated that the registration of 1978 would be binding and no new inscriptions were allowed. Consequently, the majority of cocaleros in the Upper Huallaga continued to be defined by the state as illegal cultivators.

To summarize, the state's failure to recognize a number of important underlying problems turned the Upper Huallaga villages' into violent cocaine enclaves. Some studies argue that there is a connection between margins of the state and the emergence of an internal "peasant war" (see Wolf 1999).³⁶ In the Upper Huallaga, regional state fragility allowed a new armed actor—the Shining Path guerrilla movement—to establish a base of operations and to spread devastation and death. Yet, it should be noted that the guerrilla movement did not originate in the Upper Huallaga and neither should Peru's internal armed conflict be identified as a peasant war.³⁷

2.2 The internal armed conflict

2.2.1 Guerrillas and the state's fear of an Inkarrí³⁸

In Peru, the start of the internal armed conflict did not take place after decades of intense political violence, although regional social unrest had plagued the country ever since the 1950s (Degregori 1999: 254). The most cited cause for Peru's internal armed conflict, which is described as the most intense, extensive and prolonged violent episode in the nation's history, was the decision made by two guerrilla movements to start a "popular war". The period chosen was striking, as the country was attempting a return to democracy after a twelve-year period of military rule (Burt 2007: 5; Stern 1998). Guerrillas launched their "war" on the same day, May 17, 1980, that Peruvians were voting for the first time in seventeen years. The guerrilla movements used the transition period under Francisco Morales Bermúdez (1975-1980) to organize and strengthen their organizations. Hence, in Peru the political violence started in a non-revolutionary setting (Degregori 1999: 252). The scope and intensity of political violence weren't only influenced by structural economic and social inequalities that for long had spurred unrest, but also by problems arising from the transition to democracy in the late 1970s.

By 1984, the Peruvian state became threatened by two guerrilla movements. The MRTA (*Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru*) was the smaller, weaker and the more predictable one. As was the case with other Latin America guerrilla movements, the MRTA was seen as part of a leftist front in which popular organizations, unions and parties would combine political, electoral and armed actions with mass mobilization. Remarkably, in the transition to democracy, the MRTA excluded their organization from the elections. But, as did other Latin American guerrillas, at every stage of the internal armed conflict, the MRTA claimed responsibility for its actions, and its members wore uniforms to distinguish themselves from the unarmed population although they also resorted to such strategies as kidnapping, murder and involvement in the drug trade. The more prominent of the two groups, the Shining Path, started their "popular war" in the rural highland regions in the Ayacucho Department.³⁹ As Starn (1991:63) argues, anthropologists missed the "revolution's meaning, as they attributed it to the Incan myth of Andean resurrection [*Inkarrí*]". Shining Path's discourse was a constructed ideology that drew from Marx, Lenin and Mao Tse-Tung

³⁵ Law (23505) passed in 1982.

³⁶ In his book *Peasant Wars of the twentieth Century* (1999) Wolf describes the participation of peasants in a number of political uprisings, among others in Mexico, Russia and China.

³⁷ See Fumerton 2002; Kay, C. 2000; McClintock 2005.

³⁸ Incan resurgence.

³⁹ See CVR 2003, Degregori 1997: 1998: 2005, Gorriti 1990, Palmer 1986; 1992, and Stern 1998.

but was mainly formed around its leader, Abimael Guzmán Reinoso's "Gonzalo Thinking", which held that the country's problems were economic, and not cultural, as the movement displayed a blindness and hostility towards indigenous cultural identity and aspirations.⁴⁰

Nonetheless, within government circles and in the mainstream media, blatantly racist thinking was used to explain Shining Path's emergence as well as its violent actions; highlanders' primitiveness and savagery, and the generally violent nature of the country's Indigenous population as a whole, were cited as the causes for conflict (Theidon 2001: 23). Because of the guerrillas' concentration in the country's highlands, their activities were sometimes relegated to secondary importance by the government and media (CVR 2003: 56). The state followed the notion that "as long as [only] Indians were dying, there was no real problem" (Degregori 1999: 255).⁴¹ For example, President Belaúnde (1980-1985) underestimated the threats posed by the guerrillas, dismissing them as bands of common delinquents or cattle thieves, referring to bandits, mafia, cattle rustlers or peasant revolutions. As Stern notes, "Few predicted that the self-styled revolutionaries from an extremely impoverished and largely indigenous highland region could effectively spread a ruthless war through much of the country's territory, sustain it until the 1990s, then provoke a sense of imminent government and social collapse in the capital" (Stern 1998: 2). When the guerrilla violence increased to disturbing levels that even threatened Lima, Belaúnde refused to send in the military, and had no option other than to send the police.⁴² But the police lacked the proper training and resources to effectively confront Shining Path. The guerrillas only grew stronger as a result of the police repression. To prevent the growth of Shining Path, the police sent more officers recruited from among adolescents from popular *barrios* in Lima. Neither these officers, nor those in charge of them, seemed to have the slightest sensitivity to the culture and living conditions of the region's natives, and this often led to the authorities conducting punitive operations that were directed against the population, rather than the guerrillas themselves.

In the Shining Path's revolutionary program, violence soon became an end in itself (Theidon 2001: 21). When the violence increased, scholarly literature emphasized the group's cruelty, despotism and bloodshed, but ignored the support that Shining Path enjoyed among a significant segment of the population. For many years, there was a vast ignorance of Shining Path's not only within the nation as a whole, but also within political and academic circles (Burt 2007: 5; McClintock 1999). Only later different scholars who studied the events in the Ayacucho department gave numerous reasons for the population's involvement in and support for guerrilla operations.⁴³ Shining Path proved to be a magnet for university professors, students and the peasantry, and was able to convert the marginalized peasant population into a mass support base, driven by aspirations of advancement and social mobility. The guerrilla movement was able in some locales to replace arbitrary and corrupt authorities, and punish thieves, violent husbands and other who were harming communities. In the regions that they controlled, they imposed order, something which had for many years been absent in those places.

It was not until 1982 that the national political elite gave more leeway for a military response, a decision that caused an escalation and expansion of the conflict (Burt 2007: 56; CVR 2003). The decision was a sign of Lima's altered political climate, where growing numbers were calling for *mano dura* ("iron-fisted") policies that instituted repression for any

⁴⁰ See Degregori 1999; Garcia 2005; Mallon 1998.

⁴¹ See also Basombrio 1998; 1999; Manrique 1989; Manrique 2002; Theidon 2001.

⁴² Given that Belaúnde had been ousted from the presidency by the military in 1968 he did not want to either confront the military or to provide military commanders with an opportunity to increase their power (Burt 2007: 56). The *Docenio* (twelve years of military rule from 1968-1980) had left the military divided and reluctant to re-enter the political arena (Mauceri 1991:89; Obando 1998).

⁴³ See Degregori 1998; 2005; Del Pino 1992; 1996; 1998; Isbell 1992.

cause (Basombrío 1999: 210). The military continued the police's repressive approach, although they executed it in a much more devastating and efficient manner.⁴⁴ Soldiers committed different kinds of abuses in the name of legitimate political aims, including sexual violence against women, human rights violations, racist violence against campesinos and *indigenas*, class violence against the poor, extra-judicial executions, torture, and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment (CVR 2003). In 1985, a law promulgated by the Belaúnde government in its final hours, gave more power to political-military commanders in regions under a "state of emergency" that was simultaneously declared. The law also ensured military impunity from prosecution for human rights abuses by mandating that the military forces could only be tried in military tribunals (Burt 2007: 60-61).

In 1985, in the midst of the unfolding conflict, Alan García won the presidential elections. This was the first time in Peruvian history that one democratically elected government was followed by another (Burt 2007: 6). But together with an increasing economic crisis, García's APRA government inherited the internal armed conflict. President García was an opponent of Belaúnde's "militaristic approach", which entailed "fighting barbarism with barbarism" (Basombrío 1999; McClintock 1999). He proposed an integral approach, lifted the state of emergency, curtailed the military's power and removed officers responsible for massacres. These measures left the affected communities without any state presence, as resentful military officers withdrew their troops. The military withdrawal gave Shining Path the opportunity to re-enter areas from which they had been expelled. As the violence increased, in 1986 the García government opted for a stepped-up militaristic approach.⁴⁵ But it was only in 1989 that the security forces began a more systematic counterinsurgency strategy, wherein the main objective was Shining Path's elimination. This strategy entailed isolating and slowly eliminating the guerrilla movement by gaining the population's support and trust. This strategy led to the formation of rural self-defense committees (*Comités de Autodefensa* or *Rondas Campesinas*) to fight Shining Path.⁴⁶

When Fujimori was elected in 1990, the Peruvian state was on the brink of collapse. In the late-1980s Shining Path announced in its newspaper *El Diario* that it was moving from defensive to offensive operations—i.e., that the organization saw itself as posing a direct threat to the state (Basombrío 1999: 207-208; McClintock 1999: 225). The guerrillas at that time controlled the country's coca-producing regions and carried out terrorist operations in the nation's capital. The guerrillas had the whole country in the grip of its terror. It was as though the only solution was for the government and the military to closely cooperate. Fujimori drew up the November Decrees (1991), which increased the military's powers while it limited the judiciary's powers. The congress refused to approve these decrees, and this inaction was later seen as the proximate cause of Fujimori's "self-coup". This *autogolpe* occurred on April 5, 1992 when Fujimori suspended the congress. The president justified the coup in terms of needing freedom in the fight against the Shining Path guerrillas, drug trafficking groups and state corruption (Burt 2007: 7). Drastic measures were implemented to end the guerrilla violence, and this—according to Fujimori—involved the need to temporarily

⁴⁴ The Belaúnde government transferred the responsibility for resolving the internal armed conflict to the Peruvian Armed Infantry, which was widely seen as the military's most racist branch (Degregori 1998: 146; Mauceri 1991: 90).

⁴⁵ The state's ineffective counterinsurgency gave rise to different paramilitary groups, sometimes directed by political parties, whose violent tactics only exacerbated the spiral of violence.

⁴⁶ The *comités de autodefensa* were embraced by the military as valuable instrument for confronting the guerrilla peasant and they played an important part in the decrease of violence (Degregori *et al.* 1986; Fumerton 2002; Kruijt 1999). During the Fujimori regime the *comités de autodefensa* became official state policy and were converted into official counterinsurgency forces. But because their diverse nature with respect to factors such as origin, organization, dependency on the military, relations with the community, presence of drug traffic, use of violence and different other characteristics, the *comités de autodefensa* can hardly be described as one organization (see Basombrío 1999; Basombrío 2003; Fumerton 2002).

suspend democracy.⁴⁷ The most famous event used to justify the *autogolpe* was the capture of Abimael Guzmán (Shining Path's leader) on September 12, 1992. The state's triumphal posture was clear when President Fujimori publicly presented a letter written by Guzmán in which the guerrilla leader declared that the "popular war" was over and called for peace negotiations. Just two years after Shining Path announced it was moving to the offensive, the movement was in shambles and the Fujimori regime had no reason to negotiate (McClintock 1999: 223). But while violence in the highlands decreased, violence was on the rise in the Upper Huallaga, which now became the most important guerrilla stronghold. To explain this increase in the regional violence, it is primarily important to notice that there are important differences between Shining Path's behavior in the Ayacucho highlands and in the Upper Huallaga.

2.2.2 The Upper Huallaga's cocaine-driven conflict

Today's armed actors frequently resort to the economic exploitation of commodities such as diamonds, timber, oil, and narcotics, to finance their military programs.⁴⁸ It is important to notice that there is one crucial difference between alluvial diamonds and timber on the one hand, and coca, on the other. The production of cocaine requires extensive and sustained labor that cannot be carried out by the guerrilla fighters alone, and thus necessarily involves the labor of unarmed villagers—and hence, by extension, the indirect involvement of these villagers in the armed conflict (Weinstein 2007: 192-193). In the 1980s, concurrently with the government's first forced eradication operations, Shining Path militants came to the Upper Huallaga to launch the *Comité Regional del Alto Huallaga* (CRAH; Regional Committee of the Upper Huallaga).⁴⁹ Shining Path followed the same organizational strategies as it had used in other regions, including an emphasis on local contacts, establishing schools, and mobilizing peasants to support its cause. Its organizational structure was similar to that of the other regional committees. But, in the Upper Huallaga, the guerrilla militants faced a situation that was far different from that which they had seen in the highlands, as they now found themselves squarely in the middle of an unfolding "war on drugs" involving different groups of armed actors, including drug traffickers, criminal gangs, the police and the military.

Some historians contend that the guerrillas collaborated with cocaleros to construct "liberated zones" (i.e., areas where the Shining Path exercised territorial control; Weinstein 2007). The Shining Path had established a presence in the Upper Huallaga as early as 1979, when the Peruvian state began the anti-drugs campaigns in the region. They managed to establish a stronghold in Tingo María, where the protests against the state-led operations were centered. By December 1982, Shining Path's growing presence became clearly visible during regional cocalero strikes, as groups of Shining Path guerrillas infiltrated the protest and carried out violent actions. Other researchers contend that there was a significant conflict between the drug traffickers' interests, on the one hand, and the police and military on the other, which led to collaboration between drug traffickers and the CRAH (CVR 2003; Soberón 1992). Nevertheless, in the *Comisión de Verdad y Reconciliación*'s (CVR's) official version, it was only in 1984, during an anti-drug operation, when guerrilla schools were found

⁴⁷ The juridical system was transformed into a machine to produce mass convictions, trials were set in military tribunals, which together with civilian courts became secret and carried out by "faceless judges", the right to defense was restricted and the length of trials shortened, bail was stopped, new types of crimes were added, and punishments increased for all crimes up to life imprisonment. All these measures put thousands of innocents in jail. There were arrests without warrants, torture to get a confession, and "guilty ones" were paraded before the press undermining presumptions of innocence (Laplante 2006: 91).

⁴⁸ See Studdard 2004; Ballentine and Sherman 2003, Ross 2003; 2004. For information about parallel economies, see Collier 2003, Juscamaita 1983, Nordstrom 1997; 2004, Nordstrom and Martin 1992, Leeds 1996, Summerfield 1996. See Páucar 2006 for events in the Upper Huallaga.

⁴⁹ See appendix B for a chronology of the internal armed conflict in the Upper Huallaga.

along the Huallaga's river banks. In July 1984, after different assassinations of officials and cocalero leaders, the region was placed under a state of emergency in which the military took control. People working for the anti-drug agencies and other state employees were pulled back to Tingo María, where the military established a permanent base. But this withdrawal allowed the CRAH to become the only permanent force in the rural zones (see González 1990). The guerrillas openly established bases along the left bank of the Huallaga River, creating the *Comité Zonal Principal*, which extended as far as Uchiza, where coca was cultivated and labs for the processing of *droga base*⁵⁰ were located.

CRAH reconstituted itself as an organization independent of *Sendero Luminoso Nacional*, rejecting the Central Committee's demand to move the campesinos away from coca cultivation. The CRAH instead worked closely with cocaleros, developing resources, recruiting members, building bases of support, and planning military actions without interference from Shining Path's national committee. The simultaneous presence of an illegal cocaine industry and guerilla forces in the Upper Huallaga posed something of a dilemma for Peru's state security forces, which had to decide whether to prioritize the fight against the drug trade or the guerrillas. By continuing the war on drugs, the military commanders knew they would drive the campesinos into the ranks of the guerrillas. As a result, the military consciously decided to ignore coca cultivation, a strategy that proved effective in scattering the guerrilla militants (Weinstein 2007: 91). But after García's critique, the military withdrew and the police forces were placed in charge. The military's retreat and the police ineffectiveness allowed Shining Path cadres to continue to branch out northwards, strengthening their influence over the so-called *Comité Zonal Fundamental*, surrounding Tocache (CVR 2003: 281; Weinstein 2007: 255). The relationship between the guerrilla forces and drug traffic became particularly visible in this small provincial capital, where coca had totally displaced all other agricultural crops. Stories about the guerrillas' entry into Tocache included an account of Shining Path militants going to a meeting of several drug lords. The guerrilla fighters wanted to establish an alliance with the drug traffickers in order to help them to impose order in the town and fight the police forces. The drug lords accepted this offer (CVR 2003: 287). There is also another version of this story, which describes how CRAH's militants entered the town and violently seized control of Tocache from the drug traffickers. In this version, the guerrillas started a fierce gun battle that took several hours, and numerous people were killed (Kawell 1995: 405). In both versions, the outcome was the same: Shining Path dominated the zone, while the population, either because they truly did sympathize with the guerrillas or out of fear for their lives, had no option other than to accept the transfer of power.

To further complicate the situation, by the mid-1980s Shining Path wasn't the only guerrilla force in the Upper Huallaga's northern parts. MRTA also tried to control the population. In the lower parts of the San Martín department, MRTA supported existing campesino federations, neighborhood associations and self-defense committees, as their militants began to participate in popular meetings to broaden their support base (Poole and Réique 1992: 182; Zárate 2003). The organizations' leaders found themselves in a complex situation, confronted by guerrilla pressure, whose support changed from coordination to imposition (Durand 2005: 17). The movements lost autonomy and were assimilated into the MRTA movement. The MRTA strategy couldn't be used to enter the Upper Huallaga, as here popular organizations were non-existent. But like Shining Path, the MRTA was attracted to the growing illegal cocaine market in Tocache as a possible source of economic support for their organization. During an armed battle in 1987, a platoon of approximately 100 MRTA guerrillas entered Tocache, by then already a stronghold of Shining Path and drug traffickers.

⁵⁰ Unrefined cocaine.

MRTA's entrance turned out to be a failure and the platoon withdrew. This battle divided the San Martín department into two parts: The Upper Huallaga, Shining Path's base, and the Central Huallaga and the Lower Huallaga, which were used as bases of operations by the MRTA.

By the late-1980s, the *Comité Regional del Alto Huallaga* (CRAH) controlled the Tocache region and became involved in coca production, producing coca, requiring payments from traffickers who wished to buy cocaine in Shining Path areas, and demanding money for the flow of goods and services (Weinstein 2007: 124). Drug traffickers were only allowed to continue their business if they paid a tax to the guerrillas (Kawell 1995: 405). Through the cocaine trade, the CRAH gained financial strength, which allowed it to launch more frequent attacks on police stations and military installations. After several armed attacks in 1987, a state of emergency was declared in the region. With the military's re-entrance, the guerrillas lost their control over the region's small towns. Because of this change, Shining Path expanded its presence north from Tocache, establishing a base in the Fósforo district. Puerto Mal Abrigo had become important for the CRAH; in the mid-1980s, the village emerged as an important center for the drug trade. Aided by the presence of the illegal cocaine industry and a total absence of state institutions in these rural areas, the Fósforo district became a zone of total guerrilla control. The Fósforo district became Shining Path's very own fiefdom, where their guerrilla fighters made all the rules, controlled economic and agricultural activity, and formed *Comités Populares*, which supervised all villagers' activities, with any persons who expressed opposition to their program running the risk of summary execution (see González 1990).

With their domination over the rural zones surrounding Tocache, the CRAH was able to increasingly control and monitor the trade in coca leaves and coca paste, control access to runways, and charge landing and license fees to Colombians who wanted to purchase crops. In contrast to this total control over the countryside, Shining Path only launched attacks against the established police stations in the small towns. One famous example was Shining Path's attack on a police post in Uchiza on March 27, 1989 (Burt 2007: 53). Guerrilla and police forces engaged in a gun battle, during which ten high-ranking police officers were killed. The Prime Minister had promised to send in reinforcements, but military commanders of nearby posts refused to send their men. The Uchiza raid became a symbol of a decade of failed counterinsurgency, caused by the lack of coordination and support among the state forces (Burt 2007: 53-54). In national newspapers and some academic publications, the whole Upper Huallaga became identified as the "Huallaga Republic", indicating that the government had lost control over this part of its territory. It was called a parallel state (see Leeds 1996) but as Arias (2006: 206) remarks: "Although parallel states may exist at times, as with the *Sendero Luminoso* in Peru in the 1980s, these are uncommon phenomena that don't characterize most organized violent actors". But even within the Upper Huallaga, there was no long-standing period of total Shining Path domination, as they only were able to control the rural zones.

In the Upper Huallaga, violence grew out of control, as "Sendero's attacks in the jungle were consistently more deadly than those in other areas, including Ayacucho" (Weinstein 2007: 217). The most bloody period of the internal armed conflict in the Upper Huallaga started in 1987 and ended in 1992, and included selective assassinations, confrontations resulting in numerous deaths on both sides, and the reprisal killings of numerous inhabitants by guerrilla forces, the Peruvian military's forces, and pro-government paramilitary forces⁵¹ (CVR 2003: 323). Shining Path's public display of arbitrary violence

⁵¹ Such as the famous *Comando Rodrigo Franco* a paramilitary group that came into being after the García government (1990) when the APRA political leaders expressed they had to defend itself against the assassination campaigns Shining Path organized against party members. These paramilitaries carried out a series of bombings and assassinations mainly against

against its former allies, the drug traffickers, led some angry traffickers in several of the drug *firmas* to cooperate with the police. But President García's decision to resume anti-drug operations in 1989 led to new violent tensions. These were the years President George H.W. Bush announced the war on drugs and an "Andean Strategy" that aimed to reduce the volume of the airborne drug transport to Colombia from the newly established military base of Santa Lucía in the Upper Huallaga.⁵² Immediately after the resumption of the state's anti-drug operations, the Shining Path resumed its own attacks. There were further setbacks in the counterinsurgency efforts when the military battled both guerrilla forces and drug traffickers. In the mid 1990s, violence in the Upper Huallaga produced a disproportionate number of the total victims of Peru's internal conflict (Weinstein 2007: 252).⁵³

During the presidency of Fujimori (1990-2000), the military slowly began to steer towards a strategy that was based on long-lasting tactical alliances with the drug traffickers and, to a lesser extent, cocaleros (Palmer 1996: 184). The military's tolerance of coca may have offended policymakers outside Peru, but it managed to engage the population as allies against the guerrilla forces. According to the CVR (2003: 318), the government's creation of the *Comando Politico Militar del Frente Huallaga* (or *Frente Huallaga*) at the beginning of the 1990s marked a turning point in the regional violence. The strategy of the *Frente Huallaga* began to include new development projects, with political, juridical, social, economic and cultural components. Another part of Fujimori's strategy involved enabling current and former Shining Path guerrillas to receive pardons or reduced penalties in exchange for information about guerrilla operations (Basombrío 1999: 216). In June 1992, the government promulgated Law N° 25499, which established the aforementioned benefits for the former combatants. This *Ley de Arrepentimiento* (Repentance Law) also promised to give the *ex-senderistas* a chance to re-integrate into society (Kernaghan 2006: 58-59). The announcement led to increasing numbers of former combatants coming forward to report guerrilla activities. Although the Repentance Law was a national strategy, the Fujimori regime claimed it had the greatest impact on the Upper Huallaga. It was believed that, after the announcement of the *Ley de Arrepentimiento* "soldiers and civilians began to defect from the rebel side in droves" (Weinstein 2007: 280). But it soon became clear that only 10% of the people who repented were Shining Path militants, while 90% were peasants who had been forced to collaborate with the guerrillas (CVR 2003: 363). Then rumors arose that people were actually being forced by the government to come forward. At that time, the safety and security of entire families depended on the *Ley de Arrepentimiento*, as supposed Shining Path members were used as spies for raids against the guerrilla strongholds. Because of the growing sentiment against this policy, it ended in late 1994. The policy had very different implications in urban areas, on the one hand, and in the countryside, on the other. As Kernaghan (2006: 110) has written, regarding the state of affairs in Aucayacu: "Those *senderistas* people had come to know fled or died or landed in jail. It was in the large towns that *senderistas* became scarce, first because that was where the army began its offensive in earnest". But because the *Ley de Arrepentimiento* concentrated on the urban areas, the military never was able to gain effective control of rural areas.

labor and political leftist leaders (Mauceri 1991: 97). The presence of the *Comando Rodrigo Franco* in the Upper Huallaga was no important theme in other testimonies I received from the cocaleros of the Fósforo district but the final report of the Peruvian Truth Commission described; "Diverse testimonies in the Upper Huallaga talk about the paramilitary commando 'Rodrigo Franco' also as an actor in the assassinations", however this proposed paramilitary activity could easily be disguised violent military actions.

⁵² The state policies to curtail the illegal industry of successive governments included "spraying with herbicides, applying military pressure toward the cocaleros, and shooting down cocaine transporting planes" (Vellinga 2004b: 6). They also included the creation of a police operation that under the guise of anti-drug efforts strived to dismantle guerrilla strongholds through repression, intimidation and violence against the local population (González, R. 1987; González, M. 1990).

⁵³ See Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, *final report*, chapter 3, pp. 178-179.

In rural areas, the state's actions were different. Until the late-1990s, the military strategy included carrying out numerous arbitrary detentions, systematic violence and bombings of communities. The military tended to view the local population as *terrucos* (guerrillas). The government allowed representatives of the national press to be present during these military operations in order to demonstrate that the Shining Path was receiving the coup de grace. What some of the journalists witnessed instead were acts of extreme cruelty and violence perpetrated against innocent civilians. After these accusations were published, the state prohibited the entrance of human rights organizations into the region. But the military's violent repression was unable to defeat the CRAH, which maintained a column of militants in the jungle and which continued to control coca production and trafficking in the rural zones.⁵⁴ While Shining Path's strength subsided within the nation as a whole, guerrilla attacks in the valley continued and were responded to by brutal military counterinsurgency operations (*Coordinadora de Los Derechos Humanos* 1994). Only in the late-1990s did violence in the region decrease, as the internal armed conflict appeared to abruptly come to an end.

As seen previously, the cocaine trade's presence cannot be linked with the conflict's onset but it does have a clear link with the conflict's regional evolution, as well as its long duration.⁵⁵ During the late 1980s, coca cultivation began to experience some temporary downturns, but it was only in the 1990s that the coca boom steadily declined until some even began to speak about a coca bust (Kay 1999: 106; Soberón 1992: 566). In 1992-1993, following the breakdown of the Medellín cartel in the wake of Pablo Escobar's death, there was a sharp decline in prices. Prices plummeted as it became difficult to move cocaine paste out of the Upper Huallaga because of the presence of the Drug Enforcement Agency of the United States and the Peruvian Air Force, which was carrying out operations from its base at Santa Lucía.⁵⁶ In a reaction to this control, smaller Colombian trafficking organizations began to promote coca production in Colombia, reducing risks associated with transport.⁵⁷ In 1995, this change was followed by a new fall in the coca leaves' prices because of overproduction in Bolivia and Peru, along with the explosive rise of coca cultivation in Colombia. Traffickers were now no longer dependent on Peruvian coca. At the same time, a fungus called *fusarium oxysporum* attacked the Upper Huallaga's coca crops, killing a significant proportion of it. It is often said that "the coca economy's collapse, coupled with aggressive institutional reforms, altered the regional opportunity structure, weakening a critical rebel stronghold and reducing violence" (Kay 1999: 100). But this view is far too simplistic, and neglects important differences between the Upper Huallaga's rural and urban areas.

Kernaghan (2006: 76) has noted the perception among residents in cocaine-producing areas that the presence of coca resulted in state repression and police abuse; "It had brought ruthless, unscrupulous people to town. It had brought the Shining Path and its resolutely brutal and cruel Maoist armed struggle; which in turn had brought the military and its own particular violent routine". *Colonos* abandoned the region. As a result, commercial activity in towns like Tocache, Aucayacu and Uchiza was paralyzed. Moreover, this migration can explain why visible traces of the wealth generated by cocaine were largely absent in the Huallaga, while those who were left behind complained that the "Golden Years" had brought nothing in the way of running water, electricity or paved streets (Kernaghan 2006: 224). In Kernaghan's (2006) view, the villagers had been longing for some peace and tranquility. But

⁵⁴ See Weinstein 2007; Mineo 1994.

⁵⁵ See Cornell 2005: 751; Fearon 2004; Ross 2003.

⁵⁶ The Santa Lucía military base was supported by the US until 2002, when a plane of US missionaries was mistaken as a drug fight, shut down killing all passengers, including a month-old baby. The event received international media attention and led to critique against this strategy, where after the base was no longer financed by the United States. However, the base at Santa Lucía is still used in the Peruvian war on drugs and anti-drug operations in the Fósforo district are organized from Santa Lucía but without US support.

⁵⁷ See Cabieses 1998; Ronken 1999; Thoumi 2003.

instead the countryside was still plagued by the state's absence and consequently events followed a different path. The coca bust brought poverty and hunger in the rural areas and there was no other crop that could take its place (Zárate 1990: 55). Consequently, coca never disappeared from the countryside. In the eyes of those who stayed behind in the countryside, the "coca bust" was not a peaceful period. There was an increase in crime and violence because numerous gangs of *narcos* and drug *firmas* abandoned the urban areas and moved to the rural villages, such as Mal Abrigo, to fight over what was left of the illegal industry. Crimes, such as highway assaults and violent robberies increased. Moreover, it soon became obvious that the guerrillas had not been defeated in the Upper Huallaga.

2.3 Fragile peace and social unrest in margins of the state

2.3.1 Fujimori's 'state of denial' and violence in margins of the state

In Peru, the gradual breakdown of democratic institutions and respect for human rights following Fujimori's April 1992 *autogolpe* and the capture of Abimael Guzmán later that year set the stage for a state-led "state of denial" (Cohen 2001). These states of denial affected the construction of official memory of the internal conflict in the sense that the Fujimori regime declared victory and did not see the need for a peace process. From that point forward, the Fujimori regime became increasingly repressive and corrupt. Reflecting the existence of the "state of denial", as early as 1992, some scholars began to remark that, for most people, the internal armed conflict belonged to a past that they preferred to forget (Basombrio 1998: 442). Fujimori's military triumph remained central to the construction of an official narrative in which Shining Path and, to a lesser extent, MRTA, were portrayed as the only forces responsible for the internal armed conflict, and the state forces were portrayed as defenders of the rule of law and national honor (see Burt and Mauceri 2004). The country's elite, who favored harsh military intervention, supported and reinforced this dubious version of events.⁵⁸ In this context, during the period 1992-2000, the dominant narrative about the violent conflict remained that of "the winners".

Meanwhile the guerrilla problem in the margins of the state wasn't resolved. Guzmán's proposed peace was rejected by small armed fractions that had taken refuge in the Peruvian jungle. In the Upper Huallaga, the state security forces continued to be attacked by different armed actors, including drug traffickers, criminals, guerrillas or an explosive combination of all these forces; this prevented the state from establishing and maintaining a strong presence in the region. In 1997, when military forces were pulled out of the Upper Huallaga to defend the northern border with Ecuador, Aucayacu, on the *Carretera Marginal* one hour driving north from Tingo María, was raided by Shining Path guerrillas (Kernaghan 2006: 222). As Kernaghan (2006: 223) writes, "The attack made national news, though its impact locally was promptly overshadowed the next day when President Fujimori himself made a surprise visit and gave a speech in the main *plaza*, which overflowed with astonished town-dwellers. He promised to bring the soldiers back". There remained large differences between the urban areas and the countryside. In the countryside, the only story about a presidential visit to the region was a frequently recycled apocryphal anecdote about ex-president Alan García buying cocaine in Campanilla. The overwhelming majority of villagers had never seen a president, a minister, or the department's congress member. And regional or local authorities only visited towns and communities in the company of armed guards. This ignorance of the reality of daily life in the region on the part of local, regional, departmental

⁵⁸ See Burt 2006; 2007; Carrión 2007; CVR 2003; Mauceri 2004.

and national authorities was a clear sign that these villagers were considered by the state to be outside their sphere of concern.

Nationally the Upper Huallaga had become infamous when, during Fujimori's second term (1995-2000), reports of high-level military corruption surfaced. But one factor remained a constant: Impunity. Because the judiciary was controlled by the Fujimori regime and processes were executed in military courts, drug traffickers who had bribed government officials were tried on charges of treason (linking them to Shining Path), and no mention was made in the processes about existing alliances with the head of the Peruvian intelligence service (S.I.N.), Vladimiro Montesinos, and the army's commander-in-chief, Nicolás De Bari Hermoza Ríos (Sobéron 1996). When this large-scale corruption was made public, the military flatly refused further involvement in the war on drugs, restricting its mission in the Upper Huallaga to the fight against the guerrillas. Only in 2000, when running for his third term as president, did President Fujimori order an end to the state of emergency. But the state's partial victory seemed to point to a difficult period ahead because, as Ramsbotham, Woodhouse and Miall (2005: 9) argue, regions of states characterized by weak governance, fragile bonds and little consensus on national values and tradition are more vulnerable to conflict and less able to establish a peaceful change after this violence. In the Upper Huallaga, the state was fighting a completely different struggle, as during the course of the internal armed conflict in the Upper Huallaga, Shining Path took an a radically different character, as we will see in Chapter 4.

The military's partial victory and Fujimori's authoritarian rule led to a post-conflict period without a viable peace. The Fujimori regime managed to instill fear among Peruvians, and this fear appeared to be in large part responsible for a widespread indifference to—or even support of—the anti-democratic measures of Fujimori. Many Peruvians simply feared a return to “the past” (Basombrío 1999: 218). There had been a devastating decline in both campesino organizations and labor unions, as both the state and Shining Path deployed fear, violence and intimidation to destroy the civil society.⁵⁹ Participating in any political organization or social movement remained a hazardous activity, and few such efforts were undertaken (Albó 2004: 23; Burt 2004). People had withdrawn from politics, the party system collapsed, civil society was curtailed or its leaders were eliminated by death-squad activity, and political allies were bribed or violently removed (Conaghan 2006). There was no mass outrage in the face of these events. On the contrary, for a decade Fujimori enjoyed a high degree of popularity among Peruvians nationwide. Public opinion of Fujimori only soured in 2000, in the face of his attempt to perpetrate blatant electoral fraud when he ran for an unprecedented third term of office.

2.3.2 The national transition to democracy and reconciliation

Fujimori's fall from power began in 2000, when he ran for a third term of office, after having engineered a constitutional amendment allowing him to do so. This decision did not lead to social protests. It was only when it became apparent that the 2000 electoral process was marred by fraud that popular discontent emerged. Fraud, intimidation and repression began to show the weakness of the state (Beneduce 2007: 51). Still, Fujimori managed to win the first round of elections; after this, Alejandro Toledo, his main opponent, declined to participate in the second round. With no opposition in the second round, Fujimori won the election but Toledo vehemently protested that fraud had been perpetrated. On July 28, 2000 Fujimori was sworn in for his third presidential term, an event that became marked by protests including the so-called “March of the Four Corners” led by Toledo himself. Clashes between protesters and the police led to violent riots. These images somewhat obscured the more

⁵⁹ See Burt 2007: 4; Koonings 2003; Palmer 2000: 5-6; Mauceri 2000: 29; Tanaka 2002.

important news: For the first time in ten years, hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets, with the mass demonstrations involving broad sectors of society, from middle-class families to working-class single mothers; from soup kitchen organizers to university students; from residents of urban shantytowns to rural campesinos in traditional Andean dress, all demanding democracy (Burt 2006: 33). But, despite the mass protest, it was another event that came to be seen as the proximate cause of the Fujimori regime's collapse. In September 2000, a scandal erupted after the television broadcast of one of the thousands of so-called *Vladivideos*, which showed how Vladimiro Montesinos, Fujimori's advisor, bribed a member of the political opposition (González- Cueva 2006: 73). The tape showed Peruvians that the accusations of fraud and corruption during the Fujimori regime were true (Burt 2007: 240). Fujimori's initial reaction was to do damage control, which led to the announcement that the president would drastically abbreviate his term and that new elections would be held within a year. On November 13, 2000, Fujimori fled to Japan and claimed Japanese citizenship in an attempt to shield himself from possible extradition and prosecution. It was at that point that the Fujimori regime imploded from within (see Tanaka 2005) but it is argued that the *Vladivideos* scandal wouldn't have had the same explosive impact had it not been for the mass mobilizations that had previously taken place.

The congress appointed Valentín Paniagua (*Acción Popular*) as interim president to oversee the transition to democracy. From November 2000 to July 2001, the country slowly started its transition to democracy. Paniagua managed to organize the most transparent elections in the nation's history. He also replaced the military's high command, and began the process of bringing Vladimiro Montesinos and many other key figures of Fujimori's corruption network to trial (although military officers were prosecuted on charges of corruption and not for their behavior during the internal armed conflict [Degregori 2003: 242]). Yet there was now a political vacuum in the country. After ten years of Fujimori's rule, the traditional political parties had disintegrated, giving rise to a new personalization of politics. The numerous small political parties that emerged from this process tended to confuse voters, with politicians shifting from one party to another, and alliances among them constantly being forged and broken (Burt and Mauceri 2004: 7). In this situation, it is easy to initiate a democratic process but difficult to institutionalize or consolidate it successfully (UNDP 2002: 86).

The transition of power ended on July 28, 2001, with Alejandro Toledo's inauguration following free and fair elections. Political science literature emphasizes the problems of empowering democratic governance in countries where political parties are frail and fragmented.⁶⁰ Toledo was confronted by Peru's troubled legacy, as he inherited a party system in shambles, fragile democratic institutions, and weak and ineffectual political actors (Tanaka 2005: 264). Because he did not have a substantial political party base in congress, he had to align with politicians from other parties, including APRA. When he failed to deliver on his campaign promises, the population began to lose hope for a democratic revival (Orias 2005: 75). The weakness of democratic institutions was even more glaring in the "margins of the state", where the military remained the dominant institution and popular mobilization was seen as dangerous and potentially "subversive" (Basombrío 1999: 219).

The country's post-conflict peace project only began in 2001, when Paniagua established a *Comisión de la Verdad* (truth commission) charged with investigating two decades of violent conflict (1980-2000) among guerrilla groups, the state forces and the *comités de autodefensa*⁶¹ (CVR 2003). The truth commission's mandate called for analyzing and clarifying the processes, background and the identification of those responsible. During Toledo's government, the term "reconciliation" was added to its name, changing it into the

⁶⁰ See Burt 2007; Cameron 1994; Hagopian and Mainwaring 2005.

⁶¹ Self-defense committees to fight Shining Path during the internal armed conflict.

Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación (CVR) (Guillerot and Margarrell 2006). It was also the CVR's task to obtain the population's support for the prosecution of perpetrators (González- Cueva 2006: 70; Méndez 2006: 136). Therefore, the CVR began a public process, as it was the first time in Latin American history that the testimony of victims and witnesses was made public. The proceedings of the commission were carried live on national television and covered by the press (Méndez 2006: 136). For many of the victims and survivors, the Commission testimony represented the first recognition they had ever received from a state entity.

On August 28, 2003, the commission's final report was publicly presented to President Toledo. The Final Report documented that 69,280 Peruvians had been killed.⁶² Before this final report, it had been generally asserted that 30,000 had died. It had also been claimed that the casualties of the internal armed conflict in Peru had been, by comparison with similar conflicts elsewhere in the world, rather low.⁶³ Nationally, the CVR's numbers caused widespread shock. This reaction was most evident in Lima since, in the affected rural areas, people were all too familiar with the devastating violence of the internal armed conflict. The CVR concluded that Shining Path was responsible for 54% of the victims, while the state security forces were responsible for 40%, and the MRTA for 1.5% (CVR 2003). The CVR (2003) also stated that the political violence had disparate effects upon the various geographical regions and social classes of the nation, while strongly emphasizing the racism and socioeconomic discrimination that plagued Peruvian society (Guillerot and Margarrell 2006: 24). These characteristics had made it possible to hide both the violence and the fact that that 30,000 Peruvians had "disappeared" with hardly a murmur of protest from their fellow countrymen.

But another problem arose with what the commission's Final Report called "economic and symbolic acts of reparation for survivors and devastated communities" (Minow 1998: 91). The Peruvian case studies of Laplante (2006) and Laplante and Theidon (2007) reveal the shadow side of transitional justice, as they argue that, especially "among the rural poor, demands for justice are overwhelmingly expressed in an economic idiom: The struggle to survive results in practical considerations such as the need for farm animals, suitable housing, or education for their children" (Laplante and Theidon 2007: 243). They continue: "Indeed, while many victims-survivors indicated the hope that the violence would never occur again, the absolute majority explicitly justified their participation in the public testimonies on the basis of their hope for some concrete redress from the government" (Laplante 2003; Laplante and Theidon 2007: 240). One danger of economic reparations is that it can foster the perception that the harm and suffering can simply be reimbursed. But victims in Peru, the majority of whom hail from the poor highland or jungle regions, are not in a position to refuse economic reparations. Nor are they in a position to protest against ongoing injustice (Laplante and Theidon 2007: 243). To respond to the massive damages left in the wake of the violent conflict, the CVR designed a Program of Integral Reparations (PIR)⁶⁴ as a form of reaffirming

⁶² These numbers don't quantify other forms of violence that did not lead to death. Hence, they do not include torture, sexual violence, forced displacement of individuals and communities; and arbitrary detention (see Guillerot and Margarrell 2006; Laplante and Theidon 2007; Magarrell and Filippini 2006).

⁶³ See Degregori 1999; Basombrío 1999; McClintock 1999.

⁶⁴ The *Programa Integral de Reparaciones* (PIR in Final report CVR, supra note 5, Vol. IX, chapter 2) was the most comprehensive reparation program to date. As Laplante and Theidon (2007: 234) describe: "Its definition of victims and beneficiaries is one of the most inclusive, which includes symbolic reparations (e.g. public gestures, acts of recognition, memorials etc.), reparations in the form of services like health and education, restitution of citizen rights, individualized economic reparations, and collective, community-wide reparations. In its introduction, the PIR presents the ethical, political, psychological, and juridical justifications for its proposals, linking reparations to the prevention of violence and the promotion of national reconciliation. It clarifies that the implementation of PIR should include the participation of victims, taking into special consideration issues related to culture and gender, noting that this inclusive process has its own potential symbolic and psychological benefits".

the dignity and status of the victims, and offering hope for the future despite the loss of loved ones or the interruption of life projects (CVR 2003; Guillerot and Margarrell 2006). But in the aftermath of the Final Report, the government refused to start a reparations program leading to new “states of denial” during the Toledo government.

2.3.3 Toledo’s new ‘state of denial’ and violent unrest

The main slogan the CVR (2003) used to emphasize its importance was a paraphrase of philosopher George Santayana’s famous maxim: “*Un país que olvida su historia está condenando a repertirla*” (A country that forgets its past is condemned to repeat it). Many Peruvians were left unsatisfied by the conclusions of the CVR. The report was thought to be far from complete and, following its release, people continued to come forward, new crimes were being uncovered and investigated, and the numbers of those “disappeared”, executed, tortured, or raped increased (Reinsinger 2005: 7). This dissatisfaction only grew when it became apparent that the transition to democracy and post-conflict policies provided relief to the nation’s citizens in an inequitable manner. Although the Truth and Reconciliation Commission addressed issues such as interethnic integration, reform of local administration and security forces such as the police, and local and community development, Toledo’s weak government found it difficult to follow their recommendations. For example, Toledo only reacted officially to the CVR’s Final Report three months after its publication. He issued an apology on behalf of the state to those who suffered, for the deaths, the disappeared, the displaced; for those tortured; and, in general, to all victims of the violence and terror (Guillerot and Margarrell 2006: 58). Toledo also announced the *Plan de Paz y Desarrollo* (Plan of Peace and Development; PDP). The first project would concentrate on the departments of Apurímac, Ayacucho and Huancavelica, some areas of Satipo province in the Junín department and of La Convención in the department of Cusco. But it largely concentrated on general development, sidestepping the recommendations of the CVR’s Program of Integral Reparations and proposed steps for reconciliation (Guillerot and Margarrell 2006: 60). The plan did not address the rural areas of these regions that had been most affected during the internal armed conflict. In response to criticism of these programs, the government reacted by implementing the *Plan de Paz y Desarrollo II* in the departments of Junín, Pasco, Huánuco and San Martín (making up the Upper Huallaga Valley) and the province of Padre Abad (Ucayali department). In the Upper Huallaga, the “development” was directly linked with forced eradication operations of coca, which quickly led to new tensions and violence (as we will see in chapter 4 and 5).

In April 2005, the “2005-2006 Plan of Reparations” was presented, but it fell short of the ambitious reparations proposed by the CVR. There was insufficient government funding for its implementation, as Toledo was more prone to spend money on more popular projects (Laplante and Theidon 2007: 247). Because of government inaction, much of the nation’s population lapsed back into indifference about the past atrocities. Government failure to meet their expectations led to widespread assertions in media and government circles that the Toledo government was displaying a great deal of tolerance for impunity, since he had failed to bring those most responsible, including ex-president Fujimori, to justice.⁶⁵ Meanwhile in

⁶⁵ Fujimori continued to live in Japan until November 2005, when Japan began preparing to extradite him to Peru. He sought asylum in Chile, where he expressed his wish to participate in the Peruvian presidential elections of 2006. Chilean authorities arrested Fujimori but then released him in May 2006, after he promised not to leave the country while awaiting the verdict regarding Peru’s request for extradition. The Peruvian government was slow to ask for a formal request for his extradition, fearful of what might happen if he actually was brought into Peru. Academics and government officials quarreled about the possible consequences if Fujimori were extradited, expecting mass protests. Peru’s request for extradition was denied on July 11, 2007, after which the Peruvian government appealed to the Chilean Supreme Court, which approved the demand for extradition on September 21, 2007. Finally, on December 10, 2007 the trial of Fujimori for human rights violations and abuse of power began.

the most affected areas of the countryside, the lack of reparation efforts left behind a suspicious and embittered population. People began to organize their own grassroots efforts to advocate for their own interests. For example, in the Upper Huallaga, and in emulation of the cocalero movement in Colombia (see Ramírez 2001) and Bolivia, the cocaleros organized as a response to repressive policies, which included fumigations of coca plantations, the manual eradication of coca plants, and the control of the selling of cement and gasoline, ingredients necessary for the production of coca paste. The Upper Huallaga Valley became the center of the post-conflict struggle to secure constructive state efforts to help resolve their plight. But when the government reacted with forced eradication operations, the region also became the scene of the post-conflict continuance of violence.

As the Upper Huallaga case will show, there exists a strong relationship between conflict resolution and democratic transition within a nation (Arnson 1999: 2). Peru's fragile peace meant that the root causes of the internal armed conflict were not properly addressed, and this created a distance between the government and society. Alejandro Toledo's rise to public prominence during and after the 2000 elections led many Peruvians to believe he was the man who would restore democracy, stability and employment (Orias 2005: 76). But when he failed to implement the measures that he had promised, social protest increased.⁶⁶ The Toledo government was confronted on a daily basis by mobilizations of different sectors of society, including teachers, campesinos, health care workers, judiciary employees, union members, and, most visibly, the national cocalero movement. In his efforts to deal with the demands of all of these different groups, Toledo kept on dismissing and reforming his cabinet, which prevented his government to carry out stable policies. His government became characterized as directionless, disorganized, and incompetent to govern. At certain points, the social movements seemed so strong that they could easily have unseated President Toledo in a coup—as had often occurred in the recent history of the neighboring countries of Ecuador and Bolivia. But the protesters were not sure they wanted to force Toledo's resignation since, because of the political parties' breakdown, there was no way of knowing what would happen if such an action were undertaken (Burt 2007: 241). Symptomatic of the disintegration of Peruvian political parties generally, the protests themselves were not driven by political parties; it was largely for this reason that they were too weak to demand an effective state response. Peruvian civil society remained heterogeneous, fragmented and disconnected to the political system (Burt 2007: 241).

Violent protests started as early as June, 2002, when demonstrations in Arequipa against privatization led to violent disturbances (Orias 2005: 78). The government's reaction to this regional unrest was to declare a thirty-day state of emergency in the department (APRODEH 2007). The government also increased the severity of punishments for participation in protests, allowing those in charge of instigating the disturbances to be immediately imprisoned (APRODEH 2007). Nevertheless, protests continued, and on April 26, 2004, in the town of Ilave (Puno department), a regional *alcalde* (Mayor) was dragged from his house and beaten to death. When the police tried to arrest those suspected of the crime, the population launched a mass protest demanding their release. The military was sent in to help restore order after the police were attacked by angry mobs. On January 1, 2005, the country was shocked by another violent incident against state authority, as Antauro Humala led a raid of a police post in Andahuaylas (Department of Apurímac). Antauro organized the *Movimiento Etnocaserista* (Nationalist-ethnic Homeland Movement), which has been characterized as an “irregular armed force”.⁶⁷ Antauro's violent attack on the police station in remote Andahuaylas was organized as a vehicle to demand the resignation of the unpopular

⁶⁶ See Remy 2004; 2005.

⁶⁷ Armed forces that are not included among the conventional categories of uniformed armed forces (Davis and Pereira 2003).

Toledo, and represented the use of left-wing populism as a means of seizing political power. After only 36 hours, Antauro surrendered and was later imprisoned. Antauro's violent attack proves that when certain social movements are excluded from civil society and at the same time confronted by growing violence in their community, they may choose to undertake local initiatives aimed at defending their livelihood and security—initiatives which can easily lead to radicalization and the creation of an “uncivil society” or “uncivil movements” (Payne 2000).

While the violent incidents were of short duration, episodic, and regional in scope, similar grievances existed elsewhere. Consequently, it was feared that social unrest would explode across the country. After the violent events described above, a lively discussion arose about the state absence in certain parts of the country, as described by Shifter (2004: 126): Peru became “a broken nation, struggling to become a coherent, well-functioning state”. But, as argued above, this “broken nation” discourse is only partially true, as the state had never truly become a “nation”. Taking a rather different view, Degregori (2005^a; 92) contends that it is endemic state inefficiency that was largely responsible for the regional violent eruptions in the country’s margins of the state. Threatened by these violent protests, the Toledo government began to portray the social movements as a “source of instability, chaos, and ‘ungovernability’ that was working against the common good” (Burt 2007: 241). The cocalero movement was particularly affected: As their protests increased, the media and government officials alike began to portray the movement as a critical obstacle in the country’s path toward greater democratization.

The cocaine industry and state repression against coca made the Upper Huallaga a rather complex and murky arena of peace consolidation. In general terms, Peru’s Upper Huallaga followed the stages of reconstruction and reconciliation observed in other countries following periods of internal conflict,⁶⁸ but here the process was being implemented only by the local residents—unaided by the central government—and a workable program of alternative development was not part of the local initiative. As a result, the Upper Huallaga’s rural villages remained totally dependent on the cocaine industry that will be described in detail in the following chapter.

⁶⁸ See on peace processes in general Bell 2005; Borer 2006; on peace processes in Latin America see Arson 1999; on Guatemala see Manz 2004; Jonas 2000; on Colombia see Riaño-Alcalá 2006.

3. The Fósforo district: A post-conflict coca/cocaine enclave

At first glance, there is not much difference between the village of Puerto Mal Abrigo and other rural jungle communities. In the early morning, peasants leave bearing their machetes to work the fields, while their children make their way to the school. In the afternoon, men with colorful t-shirts and designer tennis shoes make their appearance on the streets. Their presence can be easily explained: During the second “coca boom”, which began in 1999, Puerto Mal Abrigo and, to a lesser extent, the whole Fósforo district, emerged as an important center of wholesale cocaine. On March 6, 2004, when I checked in at the small hostel in Puerto Mal Abrigo, ready to begin my long fieldwork period, I was largely unaware of the general situation of the residents of the village or of the area’s main source of revenue. I only knew, because I had been told by some of the residents, that our hostel had originally been built by a Colombian drug lord who had since left the region because of the coca bust.

The village’s inhabitants assured me that the building remained the safest structure in Mal Abrigo, but they never explained why. In its front wall there was a niche that was reserved for the village’s patron saint, *Señor Cuativo de Ayavaca*. The owner, El Adusto regularly asked his maids to assure that candles, which were placed close to an image of the Saint, were constantly kept burning. But none of the maids honored this wish. One even exclaimed in ridicule, “We cannot betray the saint. What does he expect? Burning candles in this house of sin!” Then the true meaning of the resident’s claims about the safety of the house suddenly hit me: I had unwittingly taken up residence in the “fortress” of a local drug boss. At first, both El Adusto and his wife found it shocking news that his hostel had a new long-term tenant: A Dutch anthropologist. They distrusted me from the start and became even more suspicious when I started visiting the cocaleros’ *chacras*- i.e. their agricultural fields. At times, El Adusto wandered outside my room and attempted to furtively glance inside. Soon I was also told that he had asked some cocaleros for more information about me. But, as was the case with the inhabitants in general, after I participated in the second cocalero march to Lima, his suspicion vanished. After El Adusto’s suspicion subsided, the others involved in his *firma* took on a different attitude. Then, the hospitality and friendship I was shown by El Adusto, his wife, and everyone else involved in the *firma* afforded me profound insight into a world in which I had previously thought I would always be regarded as an outsider.

In the post-conflict Upper Huallaga’s rural areas, new Peruvian small-scale *firmas*, like El Adusto’s, employing people who had previously worked in the lower echelons of the cocaine business, began to increase their power and domination. The rural areas remained cocaine enclaves, but this did not lead to the expected violence, because of the extensive participation of Peruvians in processing and trafficking operations. Even though more locals, such as El Adusto, became involved in the higher echelons of the cocaine industry there still exists a well-defined hierarchy in the cocaine industry. The structure of this hierarchy is explained in different sections of this chapter. The first section of this chapter describes the substantial migration of settlers (*colonos*) to the region, and detail the events that led to these people becoming cocaleros. Although economic opportunity is frequently seen as a sufficient reason to explain involvement in the illegal industry, I argue that additional causes are involved. For those persons lower on the economic scale, involvement in an illegal industry involves an ongoing sense of economic and physical vulnerability. Therefore, the insecurity in this industry and the coping strategies employed by different cocaleros is also described. To understand the villagers, it is necessary to analyze their backgrounds, choices, coping strategies, and motives. The coping strategies and motives must then be seen as the product of long-term processes of social exclusion, marginalization and stigmatization. The second section of the chapter moves up a step in the existing hierarchy of the illegal cocaine industry

and describes those groups who are either involved in the processing of cocaine or in the smuggling of small quantities of cocaine.

The chapter goes on to provide a broader understanding of the relationship within the illegal cocaine industry between those running it (i.e., the bosses or *patrones*) and the local population. This relationship had fundamentally changed over time. The most notable difference was that, when the Colombians left in 1995, there was a growing influence of numerous smaller Peruvian *firms*, which largely changed the social make-up of these cocaine enclaves. Most local *patrones* and *traqueteros* (drug traffickers) are not viewed negatively by the local populace. Instead, there is a general measure of respect for them. Yet these individuals, who were at the top of the cocaine industry's hierarchy, lived under a constant threat of violence. This section ends with a renewed presence of Colombian traffickers.

The final section of this chapter describes the relationships among the Peruvian *firms*, the villagers and local and regional authorities. Analysis of the structures of local society and politics, and of the role of the present security forces and their relations with the villagers and those in charge of the cocaine industry, are important to attaining an understanding of the local situation. It is argued that the local structures are formed by a so-called *Esprit Mafioso* (Vargas 2004: 108), which wasn't only influencing the higher echelons of the cocaine trade but which also became part of the local patterns, networks, relations, thought and discourse.

Although the interrelations between the present legal authorities and illegal forces have been described as "parallel politics", which asserted that the emergence of the illegal cocaine syndicates led to the disappearance of legal authority (see Leeds 1996), local data suggest that it is more accurate to speak in terms of a mix of interrelations and dependence between legally constituted authorities, the present security forces and the illegal *firms*, similar to those analysed by Arias (2006) in Rio de Janeiro. This chapter tries to capture how, in the Fósforo district, the illegal cocaine industry became integrated into the daily lives of local residents. It also attempts to provide the reader an insight into the residents' practices, networks, relationships, and rules.

3.1 The Poorest Criminals? *Peones* and *Cocaleros*

3.1.1 *Images of the coca boom as an ongoing magnet for migration*

The first coca boom (1970s-late 1990s) marked a turning point for the Upper Huallaga Valley, which led to new ways of living as well as new value systems. At first, the whole population of the region, even those not directly involved in the illegal economy, benefited. In those days, work was plentiful and the wages, even in the legal sectors, were better than elsewhere in the country. Nevertheless, the wages in the illegal industry were so high that hardly anybody could resist. Within the Upper Huallaga, the money coming from illegal drug trafficking created an economic bonanza that served as a stimulus for campesinos to substitute coca for their traditional crops in order to obtain incomes heretofore unimaginable (Zárate 1990: 50; see box 3.1). Even in the region's rural communities, the coca boom flushed the local economy with *narcodollars*.

Box 3.1 Colonos' entrance into the illegal industry

Alfonso Reyes Coca (locally more famous by his pseudonym *Pepa*) is a migrant living in Mal Abrigo. Once, while we were drinking beer, the generator that provided electricity for the village broke down and we were sitting in the candle light. Alfonso began to tell me about his decision to move to Puerto Mal Abrigo in 1989. A cousin of his wife, who migrated to the Upper Huallaga before, told Alfonso about the opportunity to earn money in the illegal coca industry. Alfonso started dreaming about a new life in the jungle:

“I came for the same reason everyone came to Puerto Mal Abrigo, to make some money and to make my future a bit easier economically. My life wasn’t bad at that time. I had work and everything, but we came for one reason; I wanted to be more comfortable... When my cousin told me about the coca cultivation here... I started to get excited about moving here, where everybody became a millionaire. I said to myself, just a few years of hardship and I will be living the life of a rich man...”¹

After spending some time in Mal Abrigo, Alfonso noticed that it was not the campesinos who were making the money. He recalled:

“It soon became clear to me that I would never get rich just by growing coca... So I became involved in the cocaine market. I sold drugs. That was when I actually made money! I had numerous properties, such as coca fields and houses. My wife had a disco and a restaurant where we sold chicken... These were our best times here...”²

The cocaine industry created new economic opportunities in the Upper Huallaga that allowed some of the *colonos* to make a lot of money. Then *bruta* was openly sold on Mal Abrigo’s streets, as Alfonso recalled:

[...] it was impressive to see how many drug firms there were in Puerto Mal Abrigo; all of the streets of this little village were full of stalls that sold drugs as if it were fruit. Nobody left their house without their scale and little plate. People would stop in the streets and the buyers would come to you asking you how much you wanted to sell. It was surprising to see that everyone selling coca paste had to rent a piece of street where he could set up his table and a chair. Just to be able to sell his drugs he had to pay \$5 a day³. But at that time, this wasn’t a problem.”⁴

The exorbitant amounts of money that could be earned in the illegal industry quickly changed the isolated, marginalized jungle hamlets. People remembered how the cocaleros were paid in US dollars for their harvest. One farmer said:

“Here in Mal Abrigo, millions of dollars poured into the town at that time, arriving in the black bags that the peasants nowadays use to collect their coca leaves.”⁵

At that time, Mal Abrigo had a lively daily market, but instead of selling food or other groceries, some inhabitants remembered the colorful stalls were stacked with coca paste or *bruta* on the one side and packs of dollar bills on the other side; a large scale, for weighing the coca paste, was placed in the middle. The new middlemen, frequently *colonos*, *pichicateros* or *montañeros*⁶ openly sold the illegal product in these stalls.

The coca boom had created an absurd consumers’ paradise. To entertain the crowds, even in the smallest hamlets, discos, bars, restaurants and brothels were established, and these places became centers of social activity. In the early days, everybody seemed to benefit from the illegal market and even some *colonos* drank imported whiskey and purchased foreign cars, since there was an abundance of foreign consumer goods. Confronted with this rapid, often

¹ Conversation with Alfonso Reyes Coca, Puerto Mal Abrigo, July 14, 2005.

² Conversation with Alfonso Reyes Coca, Puerto Mal Abrigo, July 14, 2005.

³ In Alfonso’s story, the money was paid to the local authorities, who in these times were no more than puppets of the drug traffickers. Other informants, however, stated that the money for the stall had to be paid to the people living in the houses near the stalls.

⁴ Interview with Alfonso Reyes Coca, Puerto Mal Abrigo, November 1, 2004.

⁵ Conversation with Hector, La Molina, November 22, 2005.

⁶ *Colonos*: migrants. *Pichicateros* and *montañeros* are names for old drug smuggling networks.

chaotic, socioeconomic and cultural change, people often find a variety of ways to “normalize the aberrant”.⁷ One farmer illustrated this principle in the following way:

“In Tocache, five trucks came every day with beer … Here in Piuca,⁸ they were going to construct a Nissan car dealership. In those days a new truck sold for 25,000 dollars, today the same truck costs 18,000 and nobody is buying one, because nobody has the money...”⁹

The people’s spending habits may seem extravagant, but since their earnings were illegal, there was a certain logic to spending the money quickly in order to avoid the scrutiny of tax authorities or to arouse the suspicions of the police, and the people of this region generally did not have the resources or connections to either launder their money or stow it away in safe foreign accounts.

Some of the long-time residents’ stories reflected the precariousness of work in the drug industry, as many had lost everything in an instant. The following is a life history of a woman who had been the wife of a Peruvian drug trafficker for many years. Her story began in the late 1980s, during a small decline in the coca boom, when Peruvians once again began to play larger roles in the cocaine industry, and ends in 2003. Juruá was married to a man who worked with Colombian drug traffickers. Her husband was at first a *químico* (chemist), who processed cocaine in the vast jungle close to the village where they lived, Aguaytía. Later, he helped organize plane transports of cocaine to Colombia and other neighboring countries. For years, Juruá lived in the remote jungle in a house that was protected against armed attacks of competing drug traffickers. She sold chicken soup and other prepared food to the Colombians, a thriving business since, in those days, she could sell a bowl of soup for \$25 because of the absence of competition. As a coping strategy to protect her against sporadic police raids, she had an agreement with her closest neighbor, which entailed shooting in the air two times when something out of the ordinary happened.

One night, thanks to shots fired from her neighbors’ homes, she became aware of the DEA’s presence. Juruá, having been left alone with her children by her husband, who was away on one of his drug flights, wasn’t sure what to do. She vividly described the DEA’s entrance into the community as “*Gringos* looking for Colombians, *pozas* (maceration pits used to make coca paste) and money, and burning everything else”. They entered the campesinos’ houses, searched their possessions and afterwards burned everything. If the DEA were to find her, she was sure they would put her in jail. Juruá had learned to use a shotgun to defend herself but now only owned a revolver, which she did not know how to use. She urged her children to leave the house and went to a secret hiding place where she took the US\$ 150,000, placed the money in a plastic bag, and hid it in the jungle surrounding her property. Afterward, she walked with her children to the river bank, an escape route to the village of Aguaytía, where she arrived at 4 o’clock in the early morning. She left her children with acquaintances and asked the family’s son to accompany her to the location where she left the money. She didn’t tell the boy what exactly she was looking for, because otherwise he would claim a part. She told him they lost some documents when they escaped the night before. They searched everywhere, but it took some time until Juruá found the bag. She returned to the village, where in the safety of her hostel room she counted the money to make sure that it was all there, and then hid it under her bed. In the days that followed, she noticed some Colombians following her when she entered the village. They were looking for their money.

⁷ See Whiteford 2002 on Colombia; Campbell 2005 on Mexico.

⁸ Small rural hamlet, close to Puerto Mal Abrigo on the *Carretera Marginal*, which consists of eighteen households (www.inei.gob.pe; information corresponding to Census 2005).

⁹ Interview with Hector, Puerto Mal Abrigo, November 21, 2005.

Juruá told them what happened but didn't tell them she had taken the money from the *caleta* - (secret hiding place). She told them that all she could do was save her children and that she didn't have time to take the money. The money's owners quickly left the region because the DEA and the Peruvian military were actively investigating and scrutinizing the activities of the remaining Colombians.

Some days later her husband, who had followed the events on television, arrived. She told him about the money, which she had saved that evening. Her husband wanted to *trabajar la plata* (term inhabitants use to describe investments in the cocaine industry). He started to help organize drug flights that departed from Uchiza. On the third flight, he was captured and the entire cargo was confiscated. Juruá later remarked: "I wasn't surprised this happened, the money wasn't ours, so it wasn't ours to spend". She went to the jail in Uchiza, where her husband was imprisoned for six months, and paid \$10,000 as a bribe for his release. After these events, she wanted to work legally out of fear of being arrested, but her husband started to buy and resell cocaine locally to earn some *puntos* (term used for profits in illegal drug industry). After some time, he wanted to travel again but this time he left for Brazil. Months went by without any news from her husband, and his friends began to say that they had seen him with another wife in Brazil. Two years passed, when one day her husband appeared again. He explained that *la mafia* (term used for drug trafficking groups) killed his Brazilian wife, and that he had barely escaped. He insistently asked Juruá to resume their relationship, which they did shortly thereafter. He continued to be active in drug trafficking and once again was arrested in Bolivia. This time, he was sentenced to nine years in jail. In 2003 Juruá, with the last of her money, went to visit him but heard he had gotten married again, this time to a Bolivian woman. This time, she didn't have any money to pay his bribe and simply stated: "Some day, you'll get out". They were arguing when, suddenly, her husband grabbed her by the neck and tried to strangle her with his bare hands and the prison guards had to intervene to save her. This was the last time she had seen the man who was by now her ex-husband. As she summed it up, her life story was "full of ups and downs".¹⁰

As Juruá's story showed, the money earned in the cocaine industry went as quickly as it came. During the first coca boom large stacks of dollars were hidden in their homes—in baskets, plastic bags and other unimaginable places. The circulation of vast amounts of money in the region had inflated the prices of all consumer goods and services (such as the food prepared by Juruá, mentioned above), with the result that the cocaine economy eventually determined every aspect of the lives of those families involved, directly and indirectly. Families came to depend on large sums of dollars, which were often spent rather extravagantly.¹¹ The money earned in the illegal industry was rarely used to improve the family's living conditions. It seemed especially to be men who fell victim to the magic of money, wastefulness and the wealth that many people during the first coca boom thought would last forever. Values and orientation that had been important in the context of the family and community quickly deteriorated. Yet it was the abundant wealth, rather than its negative sequelae, that tended to be remembered in the community, that was at the center of conversation when people discussed the Upper Huallaga, and that drew more people into the region.

3.1.2 Shattered dreams

Migration in search of work opportunities was a common experience among Peruvians, although most of the movement tended to be from rural areas into the larger cities—principally Lima. In the Upper Huallaga, even when the first coca boom ended, migrants entered the rural villages and communities where the illegal industry had never

¹⁰ All information gathered during conversation with Doña Juruá, Puerto Mal Abrigo, October 21, 2007.

¹¹ Information gathered during several conversations with inhabitants from different communities of the Fósforo district.

disappeared. Their attraction can be explained because the myth of a dollar economy tucked away in isolated hamlets and communities was continually circulated in the villages of Peru's highland and coastal regions, even during the coca bust. But, as became clear, some migrants had different reasons to migrate. Carlos said that he migrated to the community of 3 de Diciembre in 1995, to earn money. This reason seemed dubious because he had arrived during the coca bust. Travelling into the Upper Huallaga at that time was considered dangerous, because the region at that time served as a base of the Shining Path:

"When I travelled, I was continuously looking through the window, but when I was about an hour and a half outside of Aucayacu, I saw an enormous red flag with a hammer and sickle. Under the waving flag, lay a man with his hands and feet bound. He was dead! It frightened me a lot, but the driver of the car told me that this was normal...It happened every day in this region. He also said that if I wanted to go to Tocache, I had better get used to it! As he said: 'Here one body lying on the road is nothing, there are worse things that can happen here.' But at the time, I couldn't imagine anything worse..."¹²

Carlos made it to Mal Abrigo without any problem, and he bought a *chacra* (farm) of eight hectares in the community of 3 de Diciembre. His ability to buy this *chacra* shows that he was no normal rural migrant, most of whom came to the Upper Huallaga without any money. Moreover, when I first met him, he couldn't stop talking about his life in Huancayo, where his father was a wealthy landowner. This made me wonder whether his life improved economically after migrating. It was only when I travelled with him to Huancayo to visit his family that Carlos told me the real reason behind his migration. His whole family, who were wealthy landowners, had received several death threats. When his cousin was murdered by Shining Path, he sought refuge in this part of the jungle. Fighting back tears, he told me that many of his closest relatives did not even know that he was alive.

Yet Carlos was in the minority. Most migrants were attracted to the region by the prospect of easy money (CVR 2003: 385). The region continued to be seen as *El Dorado*, despite important changes that were taking place there beginning in 1995. Those like Juruá and Alfonso Reyes Coca, who had been in the area relatively longer, endured hardship during a coca bust that had grown worse by 1996, when forced eradication was resumed. Some inhabitants even moved out of the region when the economic opportunities decreased (although some came back when circumstances improved). Most persons who came to settle in the Upper Huallaga had previously lived in the *sierra* or in Lima's popular *barrios*, but had been unable to carve out a life for themselves in either of these regions. Shortly after the internal armed conflict, their luck began to change when, in 1998, coca cultivation experienced a new boom that was in large part triggered by two major US-sponsored anti-drug efforts in Colombia.¹³ Attempts to eradicate coca crops in Colombia had the effect of increasing the prices paid for coca leaves in the Peruvian and Bolivian cocalero regions. This led to the planting of more coca crops, and the influx of more migrants to the region (see Rumrill 2007).

There was also another reason for the large flow of migrants, namely the state-led forced eradication operations in other areas of Peru. In 2000, a forced eradication program

¹² Interview with Carlos, 3 de Diciembre, December 21, 2004.

¹³ Starting in the late-1990s, there was a new coca boom when Colombia began implementing two US-sponsored anti-drug strategies, including "Plan Colombia" (1998) and the "Andean Initiative" (2001) which was also largely directed against Colombia. The Colombian government's aggressive attempts to eradicate coca had an unwanted side effect. Prices paid for coca leaves in the Peru (and Bolivia) began to rise. In Bolivia this second coca boom coincided with *Plan Dignidad* (1998-2001) executed by the Banzer government (1997-2001), which can also explain why Peru consolidated its position as the world's second largest producer of cocaine.

was carried out in Ongón in the neighboring Libertad Department,¹⁴ which was located three days' walking distance from Esperanza de Frontera. Ongón was a community where coca was produced mainly for the traditional market. But the cocaleros there were not registered with ENACO,¹⁵ the state institute in charge of collecting, classifying, storing, transporting and selling coca for the traditional market. After their coca crops were eradicated, many of the young men of Ongón migrated to the nearby Frontera Valley. They sought refuge in communities like Esperanza de Frontera and Santa María de Frontera. One expert on forced eradication and ex-worker of DEVIDA stated:

“In this region DEVIDA, through CORAH¹⁶, eradicated land and forced out 250 campesinos. Some of them went to Puerto Mal Abrigo, some to Trujillo, and others to the *sierra*, to cultivate other crops. Nancy Obregón told me that approximately 150 campesinos and their families migrated to the Frontera Valley; these are the people from Ongón whose crops were eradicated.”¹⁷

Another example of this dispersion was the migration of some of Fósforo's population to the *Selva Central*. When the Fósforo district was hit by forced eradication in 2000, some families migrated to Satipo's surrounding communities and started to cultivate small parcels of coca.¹⁸ The jungle around Satipo traditionally had been an important region for the country's coffee production. When the international prices for coffee plummeted in 2001, the local campesinos increasingly began planting coca crops, which were often hidden under coffee plants. The population of the Satipo region, although never reaching the heights of coca cultivation in the Upper Huallaga or other large cocalero regions, increasingly became involved in the cultivation of coca.

Rodrigo's migration story perfectly explains how these new migrants pass through different migration stages, a process that he and others described in terms of suffering and hardship. Rodrigo, who had recently arrived in Utopía Inca from San Ignacio (Cajamarca department), lived about forty minutes' walking distance from the small community, amid unspoiled jungle. In his hometown, he and his brother had been coffee growers and Rodrigo also had a position with the town government. When the coffee price declined and his job at the municipality ended, Rodrigo needed money to provide for his family. He was desperate because his savings were rapidly disappearing. Then he remembered hearing people talk about all the money that could be made in the Upper Huallaga and, together with his brother he decided to move there. He informed his wife of his decision. At first, she was shocked and refused to let her husband go, but Rodrigo remembered responding:

“I have to look out for my family, and if I don't find any work soon we will die of starvation!”¹⁹

After these words, his wife agreed with her husband's adventurous plans. He left San Ignacio in February 2003, leaving his wife and children behind. Like the majority of the *colonos*, Rodrigo left his birthplace in the hopes of returning within a short time, after he had saved

¹⁴ Although in some writings on the Tocache region, the Ongón region is falsely said to be part of the Fósforo district.

¹⁵ Empresa Nacional de la Coca: state entity charged with the authorization to buy and sell legal coca.

¹⁶ Control y Reducción del Cultivo de la Coca en el Alto Huallaga: Special Project for the Control and Eradication of Coca in the Upper Huallaga. Agency in charge of the eradication of the coca fields within Law 22095 (see Chapter 2).

¹⁷ Interview with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, October 13, 2005.

¹⁸ This increase in coca cultivation in Satipo led to a forced eradication campaign that began in 2005, five months after the first forced eradication operation entered the Fósforo district as described in chapter 6. Large-scale cocaleros and small-scale cultivating families in Satipo were eradicated totally because they weren't selling to ENACO. Information gathered during visit to Mazamari in October 2005.

¹⁹ Interview with Rodrigo, Utopía Inca, June 15, 2004.

some money. He left with 200 soles in his pockets but by the time he and his brother arrived in Tocache, he had only 20 soles. People in the Tocache province largely mistrusted newcomers and refused to give the two brothers work in the coca fields. Every day they were getting more desperate as their money began to run out. Only after an arduous search were they able to find work on a large-scale coffee plantation, where they were paid ten soles per day, of which they spent three soles for food. Because they also had to pay 20 soles per month to rent a house, they were unable to send any money back home. Disappointed about these wages, they returned to Tocache, but here they were told there weren't any coca plantations left. After several attempts to enter Puerto Mal Abrigo, which all failed, they returned to work on the coffee plantation. A few weeks later, Rodrigo became restless again, but this time, he and his brother decided to travel directly to Mal Abrigo. When they arrived, they saw people transporting large bags of coca, coming and going, and Rodrigo remembered he sensed that this was their final destination. After working for months as *peón* (day laborer) he started to grow coca. When we first met him, he resided on his field in a modest *tambo* (a small house on a *chacra*) with his two oldest sons. Rodrigo slowly constructed a home. The *tambo* was no more than four poles and an iron roof, but Rodrigo was proud of his accomplishments. It was his dream to expand to four or five hectares, so he would be able to secure his children's future. The day his family, wife and two youngest children arrived, he was in high spirits. When his family arrived, the modest *tambo* had been turned into a wooden house with several rooms, a kitchen and a second floor. Rodrigo had settled permanently.

As seen in the story of Rodrigo, the individual migration process to the Fósforo district can be described in different stages, beginning with the journey to the region and first encounter with the inhabitants, often followed by the agricultural worker stage, which only in some cases was followed by permanent settlement or semi-permanent migration (see Vellinga 2004b: 8). The most recent migrants occupy the lowest echelons of the coca industry as so-called *peones* or *jornaleros* (journeymen or day laborers). The *peones* were hired for work that took more than a day, while the *jornaleros* were given a daily wage, but this distinction is not as strict in the Fósforo district, where the term *peones* is used for both groups. Most new migrants, such as Rodrigo, started working as *peones* on the fields of cocaleros. This period working as *peones* was considered to be the most difficult period in the migration process. The *peón* was paid ten soles²⁰ and was provided two meals a day for physically exhausting work. In comparison, in other parts of Peru, landowners paid their *peones* three soles²¹ a day, an amount that certainly was not enough to sustain a family. Thus, the wage of ten soles was far above the national average. But in regions where coca cultivation, coca paste production, and cocaine dominated the local economy, the cost of living was generally also much higher than the national average. Ten soles is barely enough for one person to survive in the Fósforo district, let alone for a whole family. The only way that *peones* could make more money was to find fixed work on a *chacra* of a large landowner (most of whom were involved in the higher echelons of the drug industry). The *peones* who were hired for this work earned about 30 soles²² a day, but this work was only given to those *peones* who had spent more time in the district, not to those who had recently arrived.

Most of the *peones* were hired as *cosecheros* (harvesters). In contrast to Colombia, where the leaves are harvested with a machete that kills the plant, Fósforo's cocaleros used the traditional method, which entailed pulling the leaves of the plant's branches, a time-consuming job. The greater the time spent on the harvest, the greater was the risk of rain ruining the leaves' drying process. Because of the method used, the coca harvest involves intensive manual labor requiring large numbers of temporary workers (Soberón 1992: 266).

²⁰ 10 Nuevo Soles equals \$3.22.

²¹ 3 Nuevos Soles equals \$0.96.

²² 30 Nuevos Soles equals \$9.67 a day.

Usually, the cocaleros hired groups of eight to ten men to help them during the harvest. To reduce the risk during the harvest and to finish the job as quickly as possible, the *cosecheros* started their work at six o'clock in the morning and finished it at six in the afternoon. Another factor that increased the risk of problems during the harvest was that the majority of *colonos* had no previous experience with this kind of agricultural work. The new *colonos* chances of being hired for the work depended on the amount of leaves they could harvest in one day. Those who were known for the large amounts they could harvest in one day, frequently had no problem encountering work opportunities on different fields. In the words of one of these workers:

"The first day that I worked on the *chacra*, I picked 18 kilos of leaves. My *compañeros*, who were working on the same field, were doing 70, 80 or 100 kilos. I asked them, 'why can't I do that', because my goal was to save some money and leave. I told myself, if today I can harvest 18; tomorrow I will do 20, until I reached 140 a day. Therefore I got famous among the *patrones*. I was going from *chacra* to *chacra*..."²³

As can be seen here, the *cosechero's* work did require some skills and experience. New *peones* frequently complained that their hands were scratched and cut by the branches. These minor physical injuries involved a possible major risk to their security, as they were visible evidence of their involvement in the harvesting of coca. Experienced *cosecheros* used pieces of cloth to prevent these injuries. Since cocaleros wanted to avoid inexperienced workers, and because they tended to distrust newcomers in any case, they tended to hire more experienced laborers who could finish the harvest in less time. It was hard for new *peones* to be hired to harvest coca. More frequently, the inexperienced *peones* were hired to clear land, which was an even more arduous and dangerous task.²⁴

Although all migrants coming to the region had the same migrant's dream as the earlier settlers, it had become more difficult to realize this dream. It was almost impossible to save money during the wage laborer stage, as some landowners delayed payments or never paid at all and there was no legal control over the labor system. The *peones* were the hierarchical bottom and had no rights or job security. In addition, many stated that complaints about poor treatment could mean losing their jobs. Because of the many setbacks the *colonos* experienced in pursuing their dreams, there were numerous laborers who never reached the stage of owning their own *chacra*. The low wages for *peón* labor were the primary reason for this. In addition, the jungle life's hardship was mentioned as well as the readily available—and expensive—distractions in Puerto Mal Abrigo, in the form of numerous bars, nightclubs and brothels. Numerous *colonos*, after spending some time in the region, silently disappeared. Others, after months of suffering as *peones*, started planting their own coca crops, as seen in the case of Rodrigo. But, even when this stage was reached, they soon discovered that the best agricultural lands were already being cultivated by those who had arrived before them, as will be explained below.

²³ Interview with Don Quadrado Cruz, Paraíso, October 26, 2004.

²⁴ Accidents frequently occurred when land was cleared. The majority of the new migrants came from highland communities in the *sierra*. They were largely unaware of how dangerous the work was. In Esperanza de Frontera one migrant family was devastated when their father was buried under large trees when trying to clear his land. Neighbors who had seen the accident freed the man from his painful position and transported him to Tocache. In the hospital, he was diagnosed with a fractured arm and leg, an injury the doctors in Tocache could not operate on. He was transported to the larger community hospital in Tingo María, where an operation was performed, which resulted in a complete inability to use his injured arm. This meant he could not return to Esperanza de Frontera to work on his *chacra*. His dream was shattered and he and his young family moved back to his place of origin in the Peruvian *sierra*. These kinds of accidents happened regularly and often had disastrous consequences because of the remoteness of the communities.

3.1.3 Local distinctions in land distribution

In the various rural communities of the Fósforo district, different land distribution systems are utilized, although none of these are actually stipulated in national or regional property laws. For example, in the Frontera Valley, new migrants and *peones* could enter and start a *chacra*, without having to worry about registering their tract of land with local or regional authorities. The Frontera communities, including Santa María, Esperanza, and Utopía Inca, among others, were those that were most affected by the internal armed conflict, resulting in a drastic reduction in population. After the violence subsided, new people were welcomed, as it was thought that they would be helpful to the villagers' post-conflict efforts to reconstruct their valley. Therefore, the only requirement to become a community member was participation in community service, including the clearing of jungle paths, as well as the coordination of activities contributing to the community's development. In the Frontera Valley, no restrictions were imposed on those who entered. Instead, if the villagers were convinced that newcomers wanted to settle permanently, they helped them set up a *chacra*. But the land most suitable for agriculture had already been taken, and most newcomers thus ended up taking residence in the community's mountainous surroundings. One disadvantage of establishing farmland in these unoccupied regions was that the options for legal crops were practically non-existent, because this soil was only apt for coca. Even if the new settlers wanted to cultivate legal products, they had no way of getting these products to market. Thus, these new *colonos* had no option to cultivate anything other than coca.



Picture 4 A coca field

But the Frontera's welcoming attitude was exceptional in the district and stood in sharp contrast to Mal Abrigo, where the villagers' mistrust of newcomers was high. In this centrally located village, where the majority of the inhabitants were involved in the illegal cocaine industry, newcomers were viewed with a very high degree of suspicion. As a result, in Mal Abrigo the *colonos* generally did not become accepted members of the community until it became clear that they were just small-scale campesinos. In 3 de Diciembre, located

north of Mal Abrigo, there is a different land distribution system. In this community, several cocaleros owned large *cocales* (large coca estates) but, in contrast to Frontera valley, there was not sufficient virgin land. The land of 3 de Diciembre bordered the *Cordilla Azul*, which was a protected nature reserve. The prohibition against planting in the reserve severely curtailed available virgin jungle land. New *colonos* could enter but they had to buy a field from a villager who had left the region. This was an opportunity only available to those *colonos* entering the valley with money. In addition, because of the villagers' extensive involvement in the illegal cocaine industry, newcomers were the subject of a high degree of suspicion, and a more strict system of who was allowed to enter the community was in place. People who entered were immediately invited to community meetings, where they had to reveal who they were and what they were doing in the area.

In none of Fósforo's villages and communities was land ownership based on national policy. The majority of inhabitants did not have official ownership papers for their land (with the exception of a very small group of established peasants who were recruited by Belaúnde's first government [1963-1968]). But these first state-recruited *colonos* had for the most part left the region and sold their land rights to newer settlers. In general, there was a big difference between those *colonos* who wanted to occupy farmlands and establish themselves with their families (e.g., men such as Rodrigo) and those who were primarily interested in participating in the illegal cocaine economy (e.g., men like Carlos), and who usually entered the region with large sums of money, buying large *cocales*. Those in the latter group were generally not interested in participating in local civilian development efforts. Especially in the communities that for the most part involved large-scale coca cultivation, such as 3 de Diciembre, the establishment some kind of social cohesion remained difficult. According to the *Juez de Paz* (local juridical authority) of Mal Abrigo, land division was a continual source of problems in the town:

“The majority of problems we have here are land problems—specifically, problems with land boundaries. This land has been abandoned, and the people who have abandoned the land have returned. For example, nowadays there is a law that says that the owners need to have somebody working the fields. But the guy that spends his time working the fields doesn't have rights, so he isn't protected. So, we think that, if the plot is large, he should be entitled to get a part of the land, but with the permission of the owner.”²⁵

The most striking thing about his statement was the fact that neither the absentee owner nor the new settler had official land ownership documents. Carlos in 3 de Diciembre was a common example of how even those with official documents had difficulties, because such documents in this region outside state control were easily rejected. When Carlos bought his field of eight hectares, he decided to cultivate three hectares and rent the other hectares to two young *colonos*. One of the boys respected the land boundaries set by Carlos, but the other tenant cultivated more land than Carlos had granted him. A dispute arose between the two men, and at that point Carlos tried to revoke the deal. This proved to be difficult when the man's family refused to move. The other inhabitants were aware of the problems, but they didn't want to become involved, since there was the distinct possibility that the dispute could turn violent—as land disputes in the region so often do. Circumstances such as these created a situation of long-lasting insecurity because *colonos* such as the man in the example above remained illegal land occupants on their *chacras* that, in some cases, they had worked on for

²⁵ Interview Don Emmanuel, *Juez de Paz*, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 6, 2007.

many years. But even when the *colonos* did legally acquire the property, the following period of “becoming a cocalero” was hardly without difficulties.

3.1.4 Becoming a cocalero

In the Upper Huallaga, coca isn’t generally grown on large land estates but instead, for the most part, by small-scale producers on family farms as in Bolivia (Léons and Sanabria 1997: 8). The majority of *chacras* in the Fósforo district ranged from 0.25-3 hectares. A small group of both recent and earlier *colonos*, owned larger *cocales* (3-7 hectares). Even small-scale cocaleros remarked they weren’t Peru’s poorest peasants, but the path they needed to cover from their actual migration towards owning a coca field was long, arduous, and hazardous. Most new migrants initially cleared a plot of mountain land, a dangerous undertaking that involved a special technique to remove jungle growth.²⁶ The majority of new migrants were originally from highland communities and had no experience working on the jungle soil. The land clearing, which employs a slash and burn method, could take up to thirty days of manual work, depending on the number of people involved (Morales 1989: 52). Sometimes, experienced *peones* were asked for help at this stage. But, as seen above, these men had to be paid ten soles per day, worked only exact hours, and demanded food and drinks. The cost of such labor was thus prohibitive for many new settlers.

Starting a coca field involved a large financial investment. Once a *colono* successfully cleared the land, he quickly entered the dollar economy—at least when it came to spending. It could cost as much as \$1,000 to plant a *chacra* of approximately one hectare. Prices paid for coca seeds and *malqui* (coca seedlings of approximately two to three months old) could be as high as \$20²⁷ for one bushel containing approximately 20 to 25 seedlings. In the Frontera communities, the newcomers could count on the support of their neighbors, who would give them some coca seeds or even *malqui*. In those communities that were dominated by the illegal cocaine industry, however, *malqui* or coca seeds needed to be purchased. Before use, the coca seeds need to be dried indoors for about 20 days. Experienced campesinos planned ahead so that this stage of seedling preparation, which involved the cleaning of the seeds, was often carried out at the same time that the land was cleared.

After these stages, the coca planting begins. This step involves digging small holes, or *camas*; one for every 2 to 4 *malquis*. During the first weeks, the *malqui* is protected from rain and sunlight by a piece of wood that is placed over the *camas*. Because of the high workload during the preparation and the coca planting, more experienced cocaleros often hire laborers to help them at this stage. But, as was the case with the land clearing, the newly established *colonos* frequently couldn’t afford laborers. Often, their wives and children helped instead. Once the coca has been planted, it takes three to six months before the coca can be harvested, depending on whether *malqui* or coca seeds were planted. During these months, no income was generated. Still the cocaleros needed to buy pesticides because the small coca plants were vulnerable to diseases. Because most cocaleros cultivate for the illegal market and because of the vast influence of the dollar economy of the illegal cocaine industry, even the materials for agricultural work are expensive. Most migrants remembered the period before harvesting as a miserable time, with a chronic lack of food and money. During this stage, the whole *colono* family stayed on the *chacra* for months, ate one meal a day, and worked the entire day in their field. A popular opportunity to earn some money during this period is the so-called *tripleo*, which entails picking all leaves individually with the fingernails when the coca plants are

²⁶ Because the jungle growth is thick, it is important to calculate where exactly to begin the cutting of the trees, because when cutting one tree, other trees fall down as well. When a worker is situated in the wrong place, he can be injured by the falling trees.

²⁷ According to Morales (1989: 53) young plant prices are equivalent to the going rate for coca leaves. One of seedlings costs the same as the black-market value of one *arroba* (equals 12 kilos) of coca leaves. But these prices can rise rapidly, for example after forced eradication campaigns.

about 50 centimeters high. It is important to abstain from picking the leaves at the top. Otherwise, the young plant will stop growing. The larger *tripleo* leaves are coveted by the *firmas* because they contain higher cocaine levels.²⁸ Because of the time-consuming, labor-intensive process, profits can only be gained by selling the *tripleo* leaves to the illegal market, and the money earned is then typically used to buy pesticides and food.

As a consequence of the high costs involved in the early stages, the majority of *colonos* cannot afford any wage laborers to help them with the first harvest. When no *peones* are hired, the whole family or the unaccompanied *colono* pick leaves for days or even weeks. After the leaves are picked, they have to be dried for several hours. In years past, there were *secadoras* (small shacks that was used to dry the leaves, and which were usually owned by legal cocaleros). But in 1978 and 1979, during the *Verde Mar* eradication operations, these buildings were destroyed, after which the construction of *secadores* was prohibited (Morales 1989: 56). As a result, the cocaleros had to dry their leaves outside. The leaves need to be dried in full sunshine for some hours and tossed several times. Frequently, the humidity and jungle rain ruin part of the harvest. In 2007, a new illegal *secadora* was constructed by a *narco* from the village of 3 de Diciembre. The cost to dry the coca leaves in the *secadora* was rather high and, consequently, not many cocaleros used the building. These larger *secadores* were often used by the illegal cocaine industry because they make the drying process faster and can be used to dry large quantities of coca leaves.

In contrast to what might be thought, not all coca cultivated in the Fósforo district is destined for the illegal cocaine industry. In 2001, the local cocalero association of the district (see Chapter 4) signed an arrangement with the ENACO directorate which granted member coca growers the option to sell their harvest to the legal state institute. But the agreement never led to changes in the institute's statute established in 1978, which stipulated that only those cocaleros associated with ENACO at the time of its establishment were considered legal cocaleros by law. Even if the cocaleros of the Fósforo district bring their entire harvest to ENACO, they are not considered to be legal cocaleros if they had not registered with ENACO in 1978.

There are also problems with the legal coca industry, which helps explain why not many cocaleros choose to bring their whole harvest to the legal state institute. First, ENACO only receives harvests three times a year, while in Fósforo the cocaleros could harvest up to four times a year. Secondly, because of prohibitions on ownership of *secadores*, it was difficult or even impossible to cultivate for the legal market. As stated before, the cocaleros dry their leaves on the ground, or on a plastic surface underneath the ground. This method often proved less than totally successful, and often made the harvest unsuitable for the traditional coca market. Moreover, when the coca leaves come into contact with rain, which often happens in these unprofessional drying places, the leaves turn black and cannot be sold to ENACO. "Ruined" leaves are sold to the illegal market because this market can use leaves of all qualities. Finally, at the ENACO office in Tingo María, Fósforo's coca leaves were typically classified as second (40 soles per *arroba*)²⁹ or third class (30 soles per *arroba*), a rate which didn't pay the cocaleros' costs. Because of prohibitions and excessive costs associated with the use of *secadores*, it is difficult to dry leaves that even meet the criteria for second class. What all of this meant in practice is that it was often easier for cocaleros with large *cocales* to sell a small part of their harvest for the low legal price. For the small-scale cocaleros, however, sale of part of their harvest to ENACO entailed a severe decline in their income.

²⁸ Conversation with Andrea, cocalera and restaurant owner, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 18, 2007.

²⁹ One *arroba* equals 12 kilos.



Picture 5 Gathering coca leaves destined for ENACO

Earlier studies argued that cocaleros are forced by local drug bosses to cultivate coca, but this popular perception is largely refuted by Fósforo's cocaleros, who can now choose between farming coca or any other legal product. There existed large differences within the campesino population with respect to the willingness to cultivate legal products. The period of migration, the amount of land owned, the location of their land, whether or not people had official land titles, the amount of coca cultivated, and their level of involvement in the illegal industry, were, among others, the important factors which determined if the campesinos would be willing to produce legal products or dedicate a part of their land to cultivate coffee, cocoa or rice. In general, to cultivate any legal crop would entail a significant loss of income for the campesinos. Not many people elected to cultivate a legal crop, because the legal products lacked a market and, in addition, it was difficult to transport such products to their destination markets. They remained dependent on middle-men in Tocache, who still paid low prices for coffee and cocoa. The state neglect after the internal armed conflict heightened the campesinos' attraction to coca and cocaine.

The cocaleros can even exercise some choice as to who buys their coca leaves. Established drug lords send young boys, so-called *acopiadores del hoja de coca* (coca leaf gatherers), to the fields of cocaleros at harvest time to negotiate a good price. From 1998 to 2005, the illegal market for coca leaf in Peru was booming, and campesinos usually had a buyer before harvesting. The price paid for coca leaves by the illegal cocaine trade fluctuated between 120 and 150 *nuevo Soles* (between \$ 38 and \$48) per *arroba*. With improved cultivation techniques, one hectare of coca plants can now render between 60 and 80 *arrobas*.³⁰ One hectare generated between \$ 2,300 and \$ 3,800 worth of coca leaves, minus the labor costs and other expenses. The illegal industry, even in bad times, paid as much as three to four times more than ENACO did for coca leaves. Moreover, as we have seen, they were far more relaxed in their criteria as to what constituted acceptable quality for the coca

³⁰ 60 *arrobas* equal 720 kilos and 80 *arrobas* equals 960 kilos.

leaves. This motivated small-scale and large-scale cocaleros alike to sell their leaves to the illegal cocaine industry. But this involvement in the illegal cultivation of coca also led to high levels of insecurity.

3.1.5 Coping with insecurity and the cocalero's motives

All statistics with respect to those directly or indirectly involved in the agricultural activities related to the illegal cocaine trade must be treated with caution because of the secrecy existing in the region and the lack of any detailed local studies. Because people "float" between different regions, the numbers of those involved can experience sudden and dramatic shifts, depending on the prevailing work opportunities. But some estimates show the magnitude and influence of the illegal industry in the Upper Huallaga. At the present time, it is estimated that between 300,000 to 500,000 people are directly dependent on the coca economy in Peru (Felbab-Brown 2006: 79). But what is perhaps more important to note is that there are important differences in the socioeconomic status of people involved in the cultivation and harvest of coca and, concomitantly, in the extent to which they are threatened by the insecurities involved in this agricultural activity. The most prosperous of those involved in coca farming are the owners of vast *cocales*. In the middle are those campesinos who own and farm small plots of land. Those occupying the bottom rungs of the socioeconomic ladder when it comes to coca farming are the *peones* who work for rather low wages on fields that they themselves do not own. The lowest on the socioeconomic ladder are those who only find temporal work as *cosecheros* or land clearers.

As previously indicated, during the first coca boom, coca growers became accustomed to the dollar economy. Even now, in the smallest hamlets of the Fósforo district, proprietors are not fazed when customers pay for their meals with greenbacks. Everybody, even in the smallest communities, is aware of the latest exchange rate. Another thing has remained unchanged over the years: When coca prices rise, the high profits that result tends to be spent on luxury items, including contraband DVD-players, contraband televisions, imported liquor and beer, and prostitutes. As noted earlier in this chapter, these spending patterns can in part be explained in terms of the cocaleros' limited options as to where they can spend their illegally earned money. Cocaleros and consequently also *peones* that work for fixed rates on the chacras of large-scale landowners are given a part of the harvest money, and are often paid in US dollars. There are no banks located in Puerto Mal Abrigo, thus these *peones* and cocaleros alike have to travel to Tocache, two hours away, to deposit their money in the closest village with a branch of the *Banco de la Nación*, where the money can be sent to relatives. But in the small commercial urban centers of the Upper Huallaga, Tocache and Tingo María, a campesino with US dollars is frequently suspected of involvement in the illegal cocaine trade. Fósforo's cocaleros do not have the opportunity to bring their dollars to a branch of the commercial banks, which are only located in Tingo María, because this can lead to a police investigation, arrest, or the money being confiscated without an explanation at one the numerous police posts on the *Carretera Marginal*. But when cocaleros and *peones* are paid in *soles*, they also do not typically deposit the Peruvian currency in the commercial banks in Tingo either. In general, transporting money (in whatever currency) to these faraway commercial banks involves a high risk of robbery and, thus, of losing everything. And any such theft could not possibly be reported to the police, because doing so would likely draw unwanted attention to the illegal source of the money that was stolen. Many cocaleros opt instead to stash the money in secret hiding places in their houses. Once again, the difficulty of laundering their money or of arranging to deposit it in "safe" banks helps explain the extravagant spending patterns that have previously been mentioned.

As Soberón (2005: 189) argues, especially for those involved in the lower echelons of the cocaine industry, coca constitutes an enormous paradox. On the one hand, it has provided

many people who would otherwise be struggling a certain economic “stability”, but on the other hand it has also been a source of extreme insecurity. This is because coca growers engaged in illegal activity could not have recourse to the law to protect their own rights. And, in any case, the presence of law enforcement authorities in coca-growing regions of Peru is very weak. In the words of Kernaghan (2006: 3), this “illegality [...] pushed the Upper Huallaga as a region and, more importantly, the settlers who lived there, beyond the formal guarantees of state justice”. State anti-drug policies continue even today to target cocaleros as guilty parties, severely effecting what is the livelihood of thousands of campesinos in the Upper Huallaga and creating new social tensions. State-led eradication remains largely concentrated in the Upper Huallaga, even when other Peruvian cocalero valleys began to cultivate more coca for the illegal market. Forced eradication operations leave the affected cocaleros in dire poverty, and implodes the entire structure of a local economy that has been entirely based on the illegal cocaine industry. Ignoring underlying structural problems and repeated failures of implementation, successive Peruvian governments (for example Toledo 2001-2006 and García 2006-...) have continued to pursue eradication policies, at times trying to eradicate the cocaine industry by manually removing coca plants, one at a time.

One thing important to note is the fact that diverse groups of cocaleros and *peones* were differently affected by eradication efforts. During the forced eradication campaigns, the *peones* who were contracted by a cocalero or large landowner did not receive payment for their work, which left them utterly destitute and without any other possibility of earning money. These landless men were not considered in the alternative development programs. Frequently the *peones*, after a forced eradication operation, have no other option than to leave the region to search for work. In sharp contrast, large-scale cocaleros probably have enough money saved to survive for several months after these campaigns. Small-scale cocaleros, however, would typically not have such a safety net. The small-scale cocaleros were left behind in the same situation as the *peones*. Often during the periods after a forced eradication of their crops, the small-scale cocaleros try to find work as *peones* on the fields of large-scale cocaleros, but these opportunities severely decline during these periods. Some small-scale campesinos temporarily dedicate at least a small part of their *chacra* to other staple crops such as yucca, tomatoes and plantains. Because of these differences in their involvement in coca cultivation, the groups have different coping strategies. Many people left the region after a forced eradication operation, while others depended on the small-scale production of legal crops to survive, while others cultivated twice as much coca, and still others became more deeply involved in the illegal industry by smuggling cocaine.

The one thing all those involved in the illegal cocaine industry share is a high degree of economic insecurity. Why, then, did so many of them continue to live in this situation? This was a question that continued to weigh upon my mind, even after I had spent several months in the Fósforo district. At first, the general answer seems economic. In the words of one cocalero:

“Because we can’t find other work in Peru. If there is work, they pay you a miserable salary, from which you can only pay your travel to work, breakfast, lunch and it’s gone, you don’t have any money. Do you think that you can support and educate children with the 3 or 4 soles that you take home everyday? I don’t think so. Therefore people stay in this region, in a place that’s dangerous.”³¹

But the best explanation I heard about these people’s motives for participating in the illegal industry came from an adolescent cocalero, when we asked him why he came to the Upper

³¹ Interview with Molotov, Esperanza de Frontera, July 12, 2004.

Huallaga, as in May 2005 the level of violence rose and the region was threatened by a new eradication operation. After I posed the question, he sat quietly listening to the answers of other cocaleros present. But after several minutes, he explained his motives, using this metaphor:

“Imagine yourself, you are standing in Lima and they say there is only one bus to, let’s say, Huánuco. You want to go there because you know in this region there are work opportunities. They say this bus is going to fall in a ravine, and you know this will happen. The bus is going to have an accident...The only thing that they can’t tell you is where or when the bus is going to fall. Do you get on that bus? We do, because we know that we are going to a better place than where we are right now. Then you start thinking, how am I going to survive this trip? Those who have more money buy one of those expensive seats which, at least gives them some opportunity to survive. Those without money decide to take the bus but don’t sleep all night, so they can react quicker when the accident actually happens, and survive...Those who don’t take any measures at all will not survive... [After a long pause:] Maybe you cannot understand why we get on that bus because your own reality is different. We Peruvians think: What the hell do we have to lose?”³²

As vividly depicted in this quotation, there existed large differences within the population, who in the national policies were all defined as cocaleros. They had different backgrounds, economic positions and resources. Consequently, each group was differently equipped to handle difficulties. Length of residency in the region, the amount of land owned, the amounts of coca cultivated, and the level of involvement in the illegal industry were among others, important factors which to a large extent determined how these people perceived themselves, and which coping strategies they could employ in difficult periods.

But there is another crucial difference within the group defined as cocaleros: namely, between those only involved in the cultivation process and those who were involved in the processing of the leaves into coca paste or *bruta*, the second and third stages of cocaine production.

3.2 Careers in cocaine

3.2.1 Pasteleros; from coca pasta to droga base and (eventually) cocaine

During the first coca boom, it was often asserted that the work force in these cocaine enclaves was strictly determined by long standing ethnic divisions within the country: *Indigenous* peasants were involved in coca cultivation and the making of coca *pasta* or *bruta*; *mestizos* were involved in the later stages, such as cocaine manufacturing, marketing and exporting.³³ It was also generally held that, during the period of Colombian domination, it was mainly Colombians who were involved in the processing of coca paste into cocaine. This strict work hierarchy is said to have changed in the late 1990s, when the Colombian cartels disappeared from the valley. It was then that “drug production became accessible to a wider sector of micro- entrepreneurs, who at that time may be coca-cultivating peasants and managers of small coca-paste producing facilities” (Vellinga 2004b: 5). Thus, the coca bust and the second coca boom that succeeded it, resulted in some fundamental changes in the illegal industry, with *indigenous* and *mestizo* Peruvians coming to occupy the higher echelons in the illegal cocaine industry. But the involvement of Peruvians in the illegal cocaine

³² Contemplation of adolescent cocalero, La Molina, November 12, 2005.

³³ See Morales 1989; Morales 1996; Thoumi 2003.

industry had not always been limited to the cultivation of coca leaves or the production of coca paste, as already seen in the story of Juruá. The demise of the Colombians in the Upper Huallaga had been a gradual process. Thus, there were a number of Peruvians who had been involved in cocaine processing prior to the final departure of the Colombians. Yet it remains generally true that the majority of cocaleros in the Upper Huallaga Valley were, prior to the Colombians' departure, primarily involved in coca cultivation and the making of the coca paste—those assuming this latter function were called *pasteleros*.³⁴

The majority of *pasteleros* are cocaleros, because the transformation of coca leaves into *coca pasta* is an easy process involving an uncomplicated formula. There exist numerous recipes since the chemicals that must be used vary by location of the *poza de maceración* (-maceration pit) and the kind of coca leaves being treated. For example, some use water in the first step, while others do not. In addition, the amounts and types of chemicals used vary widely. The only items needed to construct a *poza de maceración* were pieces of plastic, a few poles and sticks. The whole process of producing *coca pasta* took four to five days, depending on the coca leaves' quality and the *poza*'s location. Once the coca leaves are gathered in the pit, the *pastelero* adds sodium carbonate and water to the leaves. This mixture is left for several hours. Then kerosene is added, which allows the freed alkaloids to be extracted from the water. This mixture is "stamped" and shoved around by hand by several men. After the stamping, the water is drained off. The mixture that remains is then filtered and dried, which transforms it into a brown paste, called *coca pasta* or *bruta*. Often the local drug bosses (*narcos*) process this *pasta* into unrefined cocaine (*droga base*).



Picture 6 Drogen base (unrefined cocaine)

The production of *droga base* involves the mixing of the coca paste with sulphuric acid (or hydrochloric water) and water. A potassium permanganate solution is added to the coca paste and an acid solution. This mixture has to stand for several hours, after which it is

³⁴ See CEDISA 1993; Kawell 1995.

filtered and the precipitate is discarded. Ammonia is then added, after which the liquid is, once again, drained from the solution. Thereafter the solution is dried (usually by using a standard household oven). This resulting thick white mass, is the so-called *droga base* (cocaine base), which is often rolled in balls that are collected by the *droga base* gatherers, hired by local *narcos*. These gatherers work in restricted areas divided among the different *firms*. The narcos further process the *droga base* into cocaine by adding acetone, ether and hydrochloric acid. For the *pasteleros*, being involved in the making of *droga base* meant earning a greater share of the profits.

But for those people involved, working in the *pozas* or processing *bruta* entailed certain risks. The so-called “stampers”, hired to stamp the brown soup in the first stage, and mixers, could easily be recognized because the chemicals used in the process left brown stains on the parts of their body that came in contact with the mix, mainly their feet and hands. Still, it was possible to earn good money for performing this task, and therefore it was very popular. But it was generally not easy to find this kind of work. It was difficult for new *peones* to find work in this process because normally only family or friends were hired. The *pasteleros* worked in very small groups, established on the basis of previous successful work relations and long-term feelings of trust, because anyone who knew the pit’s location could go to the police, who actively searched for *pozas*. When a *poza* was found, all those encountered even in close proximity to it were arrested and received long sentences.³⁵ One cocalero, by now a middle aged man, remembered the day of his arrest in 1997, when the *pozas* were not hidden in remote parts of the jungle, as is now the case. This particular man was one of the few cocaleros who had even established his own cocaine laboratory. He said:

“I was working with the chemicals... ammonia. There were also four *peones*. Then the police entered unexpectedly and shouted: ‘Police. Put your hands up!’ They first arrested my *peones* and threw them on the floor, then they asked: ‘Who is the boss?’ I knew I couldn’t escape so I told them right away that I was the boss of the *poza*. [...] They searched my house and I knew it was over, because I had hidden \$10,000 and 7 kilos of cocaine. I had been making cocaine for years. Nobody ever came to this region to see what was going on. I became overconfident, just leaving things lying around.”³⁶

This cocalero reflected on the three years he had spent in jail.

“[...] my time in jail was the worst time of my life... I paid lots of money to be in a comfortable cell, far away from the violence of the dangerous delinquents. I couldn’t sleep, couldn’t eat, there was always lots of noise, and I was afraid to eat the food in the jail so I stopped eating, I was always hungry and sleepy. It was unbearable...”³⁷

After his time in jail, this cocalero returned to the Upper Huallaga and started up a new coca plantation. From then on, this was the extent of his involvement in the cocaine industry; he never again got involved in the processing end of operations, because he did not want to risk being sent back to jail. Locally, there were some cocaleros who resisted the construction of *pozas* because of the danger that their presence represented for the entire surrounding community. But for others, the construction of *pozas* and the making of *bruta* and *droga*

³⁵ In majority the arrested people were not sentenced during a trial, they were just imprisoned. Because they had been arrested close to a *poza* it was just assumed they were guilty of cocaine processing. Locally there exist numerous stories about people who have innocently spend time in jail.

³⁶ Interview with Juan Espinoza, Diluvio, October 7, 2004.

³⁷ Interview with Juan Espinoza, Diluvio, October 7, 2004.

base was hard to resist because the money that could be earned was so much greater, and therefore the individual processing of small quantities of cocaine, and consequently also the smuggling of cocaine, as described below, became more widespread by February 2005 (see Chapters 6 and 7).

3.2.2 Burros: Small-scale cocaine smugglers

Worldwide, in regions in some way involved or related to illegal narcotics, smuggling small quantities of drugs is a widespread practice among poor people trying to earn quick cash.³⁸ In the Fósforo district, there are two different kinds of *burros* (i.e., small-scale cocaine smugglers); namely, those who smuggle small amounts of cocaine independently on a regular basis by buying cocaine from *firmas*, and those who smuggled small quantities once or twice for a *firma*, who are also called *mochileros*.³⁹ For the independent group, often including recent migrants or those who ventured into the district only temporarily smuggling cocaine is the only activity they are involved in (as they aren't cocaleros and aren't involved in another economic activity). These people often come to the region to be involved in smuggling. Those smuggling for a *firma* are often those who are familiar to the *firma* (often long-time residents such as cocaleros or local women). They engage in smuggling activities only occasionally, and mainly because they are involved in another activity, such as the cultivation of coca. They only engage in smuggling activities when they desperately need money as a result of a setback in their normal activities. Neither group should be confused with *traqueteros*, who transported larger quantities and who were part of the *firma's* inner circle. The majority of *burros* belonged to the first mentioned group and were independent entrepreneurs who bought the cocaine from sellers in the district. These days, some of Fósforo's *narcos* dedicate themselves to the buying of cocaine from independent cocaine makers, which they then quickly resold for so-called *puntos* (small profits made on the sale of cocaine), mainly to independent smugglers. Because of the absence of any police controls within the Fósforo district, these local *narcos*, who were not involved in the actual smuggling, significantly decreased their chances of being arrested. In contrast to the independent *burros*, who buy cocaine from the *patrón* and kept the profits they made selling cocaine in Lima or other places, the *mochileros* are paid a fixed price by the *patrón* to deliver the cocaine to a particular location. Their profit depended on the destination: Those who were asked to deliver the drug to a location in Peru were paid less as those who had to cross a national border to deliver the cocaine.

It is frequently argued that coca cultivation was the main attraction for impoverished highland campesinos and that work in the processing and smuggling of cocaine was work that mainly attracted marginalized slum dwellers from Peru's larger cities. When cocaine prices rise, new permanent rural migrants enter to start their own *chacras*, while other newcomers from Peru's larger cities were mainly interested in working as *burros*, and therefore entered the region only temporarily. The lack of alternative and legal opportunities on the national level made cocaine smuggling even more attractive. But one cannot define the attraction to the illegal cocaine industry quite so neatly. For most *mochileros*, cocaine smuggling is a practice they engage in no more than a few times, and only in periods of extreme economic hardship (e.g. during the state's eradication campaigns), when there are few opportunities for gainful employment. Especially at such times, it is hard to resist the temptation to earn significant amounts of quick cash. But others admitted that they had varying different motives, largely related to the social changes that occurred in the local cocaine industry. In the Fósforo district, most of the current local *patrones* (bosses of the local *firmas*) had not been

³⁸ See Campbell 2005: 327 on Mexico. This kind of small-scale smuggling was depicted in the 2004 Colombian movie *Maria Full of Grace* (2004), directed by Joshua Marston.

³⁹ This term is derived from the word *mochila* (backpack) which refers to the way these people often smuggle, taking small amounts of cocaine hidden in backpacks or handbags.

born into prosperous middle class families; they were instead people from the lower class who had acquired wealth only in the course of their illegal careers.⁴⁰ Fósforo's established local *patrones* often started their careers as poor small-scale traffickers who transported small amounts of cocaine or *bruta* during the first coca boom. Their careers, which usually were successful, served to encourage many villagers that work as a *burro* represented an opportunity for economic advancement. Some *burros* declared that they had migrated to the region to become part of the country's largest drug *mafia*, without realizing that small-scale smuggling was already being done by others who were willing to resort to violence to defend their positions in the illegal cocaine trade.

During the first stages of my fieldwork, it appeared that local adolescents were especially attracted to this practice, which after Shining Path's demise they saw as their only opportunity to "get ahead in life". Many young adults between 25 to 35 years old were involved, but even adolescents as young as 13 years old smuggled cocaine. Some adolescents who once transported cocaine said that it was "boredom" that made them participate in the illegal business.⁴¹ Others explained they had wanted to use the money they made from smuggling cocaine to pursue legal employment or university or vocational education, which was impossible if they did not have any money. But those with such motivations were often frustrated in the attainment of these goals, and opportunities for legal employment and advanced studies typically receded from their horizons the longer they remained involved in the illegal cocaine trade.⁴²

During the course of my fieldwork, it became apparent that small-scale drug smuggling was an activity that nearly everyone in the villages and communities seemed to have done at least once or twice. Even some of Mal Abrigo's older inhabitants would regularly leave the region for two to three days, saying they had "gone on vacation". In the Fósforo district, a more detailed distinction can be made. The *traqueteros*, those who smuggle larger quantities for larger *firmas*, consisted exclusively of men. The group that smuggled smaller quantities was highly diverse, and included large numbers women, including mothers and grandmothers who were considered to be less vulnerable to searches at police checkpoints. Hence, all inhabitants of the Fósforo district had extensive knowledge about the money that could be quickly earned, about the easiest routes to travel, and about the points of the sale of cocaine in different parts of Peru. Most transported the "*merca*", derived from the word merchandise, or "*goma*" (both pseudonyms used for cocaine in the Upper Huallaga Valley) to the borders with Brazil, Ecuador or Colombia. By only doing so once or twice and by emphasizing the economic hardship they faced when they decided to do so, they reduced the cognitive dissonance regarding the illegal activity they were engaged in.

Box 3.2 The life of an ex-burra

Paula and her husband Adonis came to Puerto Mal Abrigo after a failed drug smuggling attempt which left them penniless. With three kids to feed, they were desperately looking for work opportunities. Paula later said she was looking for work as a *burra*. Adonis, Paula's husband, had also previously been arrested while stamping coca leaves in a *poza* close to Síon, a cocalero community located in the district of Campanilla (province of Mariscal Cáceres San Martín department). The couple was now living in a plywood shed. Their "home" was furnished with a bed, an improvised kitchen and a small cupboard. Paula wanted to work to earn some extra money, and she proved to be a skilled cook. Saturdays she put a table outside the shed and sold *caldo de gallina* (a rich chicken soup, with noodles, potatoes and vegetables). Paula's soup was the best in town, and it immediately became a popular place. When the weather was nice, people often fought over a seat at the table, over the chicken pieces left in the soup, over whether or not they had gotten their complementary egg and,

⁴⁰ See Vellinga 2004a on *firmas* in Bolivia : 74. See Hess 1998: 14 on a description of this phenomenon in the Sicilian mafia.

⁴¹ See Leeds 2007 on youths in Brazilian *favelas*.

⁴² Information gathered during informal conversations with different *burras*.

after eaten everything to the last drop, some of the customers even argued over the price. Prices were the only thing that was not open to discussion and Paula complained about some of the customers being rich cheapskates. Frequently, while the others ate, paid and saluted, I stayed longer to listen to her fascinating stories, often involving the times when she had been a *burra*. Once, while doing her laundry, she told me how she had escaped from a police station:

“Once I was arrested, but we escaped. I had been turned in by a police informant. We went from Ayacucho to Lima with several people, including the owner of the cocaine. We all entered the bus and they accused us immediately of drug smuggling. You, you and you and they took us to the police station. The owner of the cocaine had a stack of dollar bills, so the police wanted some kind of arrangement. They accepted his money and some people were allowed to go. I had to stay. While the police were making these arrangements, we saw that we were standing close to the door and nobody was paying attention. So one of my companions slowly opened the door and we left, escaping to Lima. Our case was shown on national television and everybody was looking for us. Friends lent me a nurse’s uniform, and I arrived in Lima, where my family was waiting, wearing it.”⁴³

In May 2005, her legal business declined because of another forced eradication operation. At that time, nobody could afford to pay 5 soles for breakfast and consequently she stopped selling the *caldo*. In 2006 when we visited the region for a short time, Paula greeted us with some terrible news. Her husband Adonis had been injured during an accident and lost three of his fingers. He underwent surgery but lost the ability to work with his injured hand. At that point, Paula was seriously considering whether she wanted to transport some cocaine to Lima or the northern borderlands, because she had experience with this kind of smuggling and was sure she would not be caught because, as she said, “Women with little children were not searched”. Adonis disagreed. Previously, they had organized their cocaine smuggling together. Don Adonis would travel in a *colectivo*, to see if the police were patrolling the road. Paula would later follow with the *merca* in another collective taxi. But Adonis refused to collaborate with her and Paula refrained from smuggling because going on her own would entail too many risks.

Although, as stated above, the majority of *burros* worked individually, a few worked in small groups smuggling cocaine by river transport. These loosely organized small-scale drug trafficking groups, made up of local men, would initially travel by *balsa* raft, not motorized canoe. Afterward, they often purchased a motorized boat, which reduced the risk of being caught. Inexperienced people made their first trip with an experienced *balsero*, who was acquainted with the different currents in the river. Navigation was the most important task during this drug transport. While travelling on the Huallaga River, one has to navigate in the middle of the river to avoid the possibility of being heard by the patrolling police on the *Carretera Marginal*.⁴⁴ Larger towns were passed at night to reduce the risk of being caught by the police, who had a stronger presence in these towns, including Juanjui, Yurimaguas and Iquitos, among others. By canoe, the travel to Leticia (a Peruvian town on the border with Colombia) took approximately 25 days. Smugglers have different rituals that are thought to avoid danger during the travel. Some kill a chicken by cutting off its head, hanged the dead chicken upside down in the canoe, and cooked a soup from the chicken’s head and blood. It was thought that drinking the soup would help ward off fear. Other traffickers, however, believed it was purely a matter of luck whether one completed the journey successfully. Further difficulties awaited in Iquitos, located on the Amazon River, in the region bordering Colombia and Brazil. In this remote jungle city, the Peruvian Naval Infantry was in charge of the war on drugs. This force had a reputation for ruthlessness, and was often known to have shot dead suspected drug traffickers without any warning. Many who had previously been involved in smuggling activities remarked that everything depended on money. If one had enough money, these officers could easily be bribed.⁴⁵ But the small-scale drug trafficker

⁴³ Conversation with Doña Paula, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 8, 2007.

⁴⁴ Conversation with Gabriel Romero, Aucayacu, June 22, 2005.

⁴⁵ Conversation with Gabriel Romero, Aucayacu, June 22, 2005.

normally did not have money and ended up either dead or in jail. Another kind of violence that had to be taken into account was the threat of assault by criminal groups on the Amazon River:

“One day, a trafficker noticed that he was being followed by another canoe with five people on board. He thought they wanted to steal his cocaine. A fierce gun battle began, which was won by the drug trafficker...and while the bodies were floating in the river, he continued on to Leticia.”⁴⁶

The dangerous river journeys made finding dead people on the Huallaga shores an ordinary event in villages located on the river banks. But the price paid for *merca* or *goma* sold in this border region was so much higher compared to the prices paid in the Upper Huallaga, which can explain why cocaine smuggling remains popular. But because of increased patrols on the Amazon River, the majority of *burros* nowadays conducted smuggling on another route.

3.2.3 “It’s never a sure thing”: Dangers and coping strategies in overland smuggling

Given the dangers just described, smuggling on the Amazon River was generally eschewed in favor of overland routes.⁴⁷ These days, the majority of cocaine from Fósforo is transported by car to coastal ports in Northern Peru, such as Chimbote, Piura and Tumbes. From there, the contraband is clandestinely shipped or transported overland into Ecuador.⁴⁸ Another favorite smuggling location remains the border region with Colombia and Brazil, because of long-established drug-trafficking networks located there.⁴⁹ But the money made from smuggling cocaine across international borders is much higher than the money earned by smuggling within Peru. Thus, increasing numbers of Peruvian *burros* cross international borders. Using new overland routes, the *burros* travel to Bolivia, where under the government of Evo Morales the borders weren’t controlled, and Argentina, a new target market, where *Barrio 1-11-14* in Buenos Aires is a center for the trafficking of Peruvian cocaine.⁵⁰ The role of Argentina and Brazil rapidly changed from that of transport routes to target markets where, because of their proximity and their weak border controls, they attracted more and more Peruvian *burros*.

Because of the steadily increasing price of cocaine and increased police patrols in 2001 (when the Toledo government resumed the war on drugs), established drug *firmas* began to hire more *mochileros*, who smuggled small quantities of cocaine. Those *mochileros* who travelled only within Peru earned less, but had a decreased risk of being caught. Conversely, those that delivered contraband to other countries earned more, but had a greater risk of being caught. Drug bosses pay as much as \$5,000 to transport a kilo of cocaine from Peru to a neighboring country. In contrast to what some people may think, the *burro* (or *mochilero*) hired by the drug *firma* did not run a lesser risk of being caught when smuggling cocaine outside of Peru than did large-scale smugglers, who typically made careful security preparations. During the large-scale transports, the drug boss would pay a certain amount to

⁴⁶ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Alto Mal Abrigo, March 24, 2004.

⁴⁷ River trafficking never stopped. Even today, some groups undertake these travels to the Amazon Trapezoid because prices paid for cocaine rise significantly when a border is passed. For example, a kilo of cocaine in most cocalero regions costs US\$800, while in Iquitos, it costs US\$2,000. In Brazil, the same kilo sells for US \$7,000 (Soberón 2007).

⁴⁸ As Soberón (2007^a) asserts, cocaine from Peru is usually shipped by sea. There is a steady flow of migration from the Piura department to the Upper Huallaga (although this never reached the levels of highland peasants’ migration). The interrelations between the departments of Piura and San Martín continues, as numerous *burros* and *mochileros* travel east from the Fósforo district to the Piura department.

⁴⁹ Information gathered during different conversations with cocaleros who had made the trip, and fieldwork observations of the travels of numerous *burros*.

⁵⁰ Only on February 23, 2008 the Bolivian government signed an agreement with the government of Argentina to jointly fight against drug trafficking on their common borders.

the police. This bribe was paid so that the police would not search the particular car that carried the cocaine, and let the driver through the checkpoint unmolested. *Burros* and *mochileros* alike smuggled smaller quantities and, consequently, had no money for bribes.

Especially for small-scale operators, cocaine smuggling is an enterprise fraught with difficulties. In the illegal business, it was the independent *burros*, who formed the lowest echelon, who were betrayed by the buyers who sold them the *merca*. As one ex-*burra* who now works as a school teacher said:

“I smuggled just two to three kilos. I sold the cocaine in Campanilla. This place was like a market: Smuggling, selling and buying, and the whole deal was over. One time they betrayed me. I gave my money, the \$5,000 I earned smuggling, to a man to reinvest in the cocaine trade, but I never saw him again. I only knew his *chapa* [nickname] but the local people knew who he was.”⁵¹

Still, police corruption (i.e., willingness to accept bribes as well as the use of repression when no bribe is paid) was seen by *burros* as the greatest potential obstacle to successful smuggling operations. Police checkpoints are widely seen as a corrupt plot to collect the villagers' hard-earned money, either from their sale of coca leaves or from small-scale smuggling activities (Kernaghan 2006: 102). As described before in the case of cocaleros and *peones*, *mochileros* were also often paid in dollars, which increased their vulnerability to police inclined to extract bribes. Nationally and even in the Upper Huallaga, it is illegal to search people's clothes and bodies without a warrant from the public prosecutor but this illegal practice became common among the police forces based in the Upper Huallaga.⁵²

If, during a police search, a campesino or woman was found with a large amount of cash, the currency was often confiscated without any explanation or accusation. The *burro* had no right to complain when this happened. As seen above, this was also a common complaint among another group, namely the cocaleros, even those who were not involved in smuggling. Because these police searches for easy money are a daily practice “carrying even moderate amounts of cash was a bad idea without some very convincing way of demonstrating that the money had been legally obtained” (Kernaghan 2006: 103). For those involved in the illegal industry, this is next to impossible, as the police don't even take the time to listen to their explanations. Both *burros* and *mochileros* knew who the boss of the *firma* was, but did not dare to reveal this information. By giving the name of the persons behind the deal, the *burro* lost the opportunity to ever work again in the business or even to enter Mal Abrigo safely after being released from prison. If caught, *mochileros* or *burros* (hired or independent) often spent several years in prison, while the higher echelons were left unharmed. Because of the higher risks of being caught, in recent times the *burros* used various strategies aimed at making them less vulnerable. These included smuggling together with more experienced *burros* and smuggling with babies to avoid searches by the police. But the most important change that took place over time was that the *burros* started to smuggle in groups, where someone was on the look-out for police patrols.

The independent *burros* increasingly became part of loosely organized networks. When entering the district, the *burros* spent considerable time in Puerto Mal Abrigo, earning money to buy the cocaine and, after having saved the amount, waiting for their load. They frequently work on the *chacras* of cooperative cocaleros, where they help to pick the coca leaves during the harvest. Two women coming from Lima were good examples of the group's dangerous lifestyle. When they first established themselves in Mal Abrigo, they worked on a

⁵¹ Conversation with Magdalena, Puerto Mal Abrigo, October 15, 2007.

⁵² Information gathered during informal conversations with different *burras*, particularly a conversation with Paula, an ex-*burra*, Puerto Mal Abrigo, September 29, 2006.

chacra by day. Their evenings were usually spent in a local bar. At that time, Mal Abrigo's generator was only used until approximately 11:00 p.m., but these *burras* usually got home after 1:00 o'clock in the morning. These two women were assumed by many of the other residents to be prostitutes, because they brought different men home every night, maybe to earn some extra money to be able to buy more cocaine. But one day they disappeared from the village. The residents just assumed they would eventually return when they ran out of money. But it was particularly these independent smugglers who were frequent victims of assaults by criminal groups who, after finding the *merca*, killed the *burros*. In Puerto Mal Abrigo, stories about such assaults were common, but nobody seemed to care much because it was considered a normal risk of this kind of undertaking. Shortly after the departure of the two *burras*, rumors spread that they had "disappeared" and never showed up at their destination. This worried me, so I went to *La Grandita*'s restaurant, two houses down the block from the hostel, where *La Grandita* was sitting outside on a plastic rocking chair, taking her break from a busy morning of serving breakfast. Having a restaurant that was frequently visited by those involved in the cocaine trade, she always was aware of the latest rumors. When asked whether she knew something, she whispered: "*¿Estas Chicas? Los han matado, dicen...*" ("These girls...They have killed them, they say...") and, more assertively she continued:

"Obviously, those who attacked them knew they were smuggling cocaine, because the whole village was aware of their involvement. One night when they were at the local bar, they told the whole crowd when exactly they wanted to transport their *merca*. These girls were asking for it..."⁵³

Although many inhabitants told exactly the same story, I had no way to check whether the two victims were the same two women. I awaited their return but they never did come back.

Not only the police but also feuds between different drug traffickers, revenge attempts, violent assaults and robberies were named as major inconveniences for the *burros*. Frequently the unarmed small-scale *burros* were the fatal victims of this violence. New waves of people continually entered the illegal cocaine trade. Moreover, *burros* usually returned to the village after their first transport, and some even increased their involvement. The money they earned during their last trip never was enough. It was a vicious circle: Smuggling, spending the money and, once more, having to smuggle again to make more money. It was difficult to return to a normal life once accustomed to an income far in excess of what they could possibly earn in the legal economy. It was also difficult to leave the illegal cocaine trade without repercussions once a person had gained considerable knowledge regarding its inner workings.

3.3 Fósforo's cocaine network

3.3.1 Patrones: Local drug bosses

As mentioned previously, there had been some major changes in the cocaine industry, especially in its social make-up. The set-up of the large-scale Colombian cartels was only functional during the first coca boom. Growing police and military repression and the coca bust in the 1990s reduced the survival opportunities for the cartels and eventually led to the arrest of its most important leaders (Vellinga 2004b: 5). By the late 1990s, the cartels had largely been dismantled. Colombian, Peruvian and Bolivian *firmas* took over the business, all

⁵³ Conversation with La Grandita, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 2, 2006.

organized in a mafia-like manner (Vellinga 2004b: 5). Because of the presence of several of these *firmas*, Mal Abrigo can rightly be characterized as a *narcopueblo*.⁵⁴ Even after reading available general information about the Upper Huallaga, my image of drug operations was largely drawn from Hollywood movies in which local drug bosses are depicted as living in luxurious, heavily guarded villas in remote rural areas, and as being accompanied by bodyguards and hired killers when they walked through the streets of villages. All of these images quickly proved to be untrue. In the Fósforo district, the illegal drug business is visible on the streets, but only when one knows where and how to look. In contrast to the popular idea, there were no public transactions by men carrying kilos of white powder to others with suitcases full of money. Nevertheless, those involved in the lower echelons of the illegal business, including *peones*, *cocaleros*, *pasteleros* and *burros* could be easily recognized on the streets because they were often dressed in worn-out clothes. As described in the introduction, another glance at the village streets revealed another group of people, who were dressed in expensive colorful shirts, white tennis shoes, baseball caps and baggy trousers, which became something of a statement of social status among those Peruvians involved in the cocaine trade's higher echelons. With their peculiar jargon (which in essence consisted of curses accompanied by emphatic arm movements), they could also be immediately distinguished from the *burros*, *cocaleros*, and *peones*. It was precisely because of these visible social and economic differences that my interest in the interactions between the two groups increased. But before turning to the interactions between the groups, the organization, structure and activities of these local *firms* must first be described.

Locally, cocaine production and trafficking consists of individuals and several small *firms* of smugglers headed by drug bosses (*patrones*) who operate entrepreneurially and in competition with other locally established *firms*. But it is important to notice that, among the present *firms* two different types of groups are active. The first type comprises those who became active in the illegal drug industry during the first coca boom, who previously worked in the lower echelons of the Colombian cartels or who had established relationships with the Colombian cocaine cartels. These groups consisted of local men, often old *colonos* or those with deep roots in the region. When the Peruvians completely took over the Colombian posts and started to construct their own *firms*, it was often these previously established men who became the local *patrones*. In the Fósforo district, these long-standing *firms* are mainly established in Mal Abrigo (where four of such *firms* are active), and to a lesser extent in Santa María de Frontera. The second type included more loosely organized *firms*, who had established their strongholds in other regions of the Upper Huallaga, such as Aucayacu or Tingo María, and only temporarily entered the Fósforo district when the economic opportunities in their own areas declined, or when the competition there grew particularly intense. *Firms* of this second type, when trying to expand their business into the Fósforo district, are frequently dependent on close cooperation with the workforce of the first-mentioned group, which had already established local bonds and relationships.

These first named *firms*, with deep roots in the region are characterized by a less hierarchical “*esprit mafioso*”, which results in huge profits for individuals and consequently increases the personal risks for its members (Vargas 2005: 123). The term “mafia” here is not meant to characterize their organization, but instead refers to a “form of behavior and a mode of power” (Vargas 2004: 107-108). These *firms* use characteristics of *mafioso* behavior and forms of established power, which entails living the life of gentlemen in the village, while at the same time demanding the respect of those who competed for this local power (see Hess 1998). The *patrones*' relations with their workers is the most important element in this type of organization. It appears to generally be the case that “the extreme illegal nature of their

⁵⁴ See McDonald 2005 on *narcopueblos* on the Mexican-US border.

activities makes these individuals cluster together both for business and social relations, forming a deviant sub-culture which reflects common norms and values, and which provide guidelines for their activities, outlining members' rules, roles, and reputations" as Adler (1993: 1) remarks on drug trafficking groups in the US. When a *patrón* is threatened, he knows that it was necessary to use violence, without showing vulnerability.⁵⁵ Hence, the *patrón's* reputation for using violence against those who threaten his position is also an important component of such an organization. But because of this component, a safe career in the illegal business is hard to maintain. Local inhabitants remarked that one should not get accustomed to a certain drug boss because, in most cases, they would end up meeting a sudden and violent death. There were two possibilities, either they would end up in jail or they would killed by others involved in the business. "Getting out alive" once one has become so deeply involved is thought to be almost impossible.

This group of established local *patrones* for the most part permanently lived in Puerto Mal Abrigo, or at least in the vicinity of that town. In Puerto Mal Abrigo alone, there were four *patrones* in 2004, among them El Adusto. The *firmas* that they operated are low profile, cautious, and are organized along rather informal lines.⁵⁶ People actively involved in the *firma* are only known to the local villagers by their *chapas*. Nevertheless, because Puerto Mal Abrigo is not a large village, inhabitants certainly know who the local drug bosses are and which men belong to the different *firmas*. The *patrones* live a modest, low-key life within the village and also have interests in several legal businesses. Hence, their illegal practices were hidden behind a veneer of legality and respectability; this enabled the local *patrones* to obstruct police investigations about their involvement in the cocaine trade (see Zárate 1990: 51; Lee III 1988: 89). In Mal Abrigo, for example, two *patrones* owned a shop where they sold groceries and luxury items. In one of these shops, it was not uncommon for customers to be waited on by the *patrón* himself. One of the drug bosses owned a fleet of collective taxis and a hotel. His *colectivos* became the largest such transportation service in the district, as he expanded his route from Tingo María to Tarapoto. This legal taxi service was strictly separated from the *traqueteros*, who owned cars used to smuggle the *merca*. In most cases, in order to reduce the risks of losing everything, these legal businesses and legal possessions were registered in the name of someone else in their families, often their wives; this allowed the legal businesses to continue to operate unimpeded in the event that the patron himself were arrested.

Hence, the local *patrones*, their families and their workers for the most part were either born in the district or have lived there for many years. *Patrones* construct bonds of loyalty with their employees that are based on mutual respect and friendship. The employees themselves were aware of this, and knew that any act that could even be perceived as a betrayal could threaten not only their livelihood, but their physical wellbeing. In El Adusto's case, having grown up in the region was an important aspect of his social standing within the village. El Adusto was a good example of a migrant who had realized his most cherished dream. As a genuine *tocachino* (native of Tocache), he became aware of the cocaine trade's possibilities at a very early age. "Wandering around", he said, in the border regions of Colombia, Brazil and Peru, he established bonds with Colombian drug cartels and worked with different smugglers. But because of the high degree of competition in this border region, as well as the high level of violence there, he returned penniless to the Fósforo district after his first such venture into those perilous borderlands.⁵⁷ He bought a *chacra* that was planted with coca in the community of 3 de Diciembre, but soon he also started to buy coca from his neighbors and he processed the coca leaves into cocaine. Nonetheless, El Adusto did not set

⁵⁵ See Bourgois 2003: 82 on crack selling in the US.

⁵⁶ See Vellinga 2004: 374 on Bolivian *narcos*.

⁵⁷ Conversation with El Adusto, Puerto Mal Abrigo, December 12, 2004.

up his own *firma*. Instead, when the cartels disappeared, he emerged as the “drug boss by default”, naturally filling the vacuum left by the demise of the Colombians. Many myths about El Adusto were fostered among the inhabitants of the village, most of them having to do with his initial appearance in the village, how he was dressed like the humblest of campesinos, his face streaked with dirt after long days of travel and weary with hunger and thirst. In these early days, nobody thought he would turn out to be one of the most powerful and feared drug bosses of the region. But after a year, he had earned a large measure of respect among the villagers. Although El Adusto earned large amounts of money, villagers remarked that he never forgot his humble roots in Tocache. El Adusto’s behavior in Puerto Mal Abrigo fostered loyalty and respect for him on the part of the village’s inhabitants. El Adusto, a typical self-made man who had known poverty all his life, knew from experience about the problems that existed in the region. Because of his friendliness, some cocaleros or even *peones* came to his house to ask for work, a loan or even an outright donation of money, requests that he typically did not turn down. Therefore, he was widely respected in the village. In the words of one cocalero:

“There it is *muchacha*, we all know what kind of work El Adusto is involved in. Those who don’t know will soon find out, because everyone talks about it. Tell me; who has the money here to own several cars, two *chacras*, a house in Lima, and to afford bodyguards all the time? We should be thankful that El Adusto lives in Puerto Mal Abrigo because, with his presence, everything will be quiet here. He is a man with a good heart.”⁵⁸

Established drug bosses like El Adusto were seen by many of the villagers as hard workers—people who had achieved the success that many migrants had dreamed of when they first set out for the Upper Huallaga. They were self-made men who created their own wealth and were widely admired for what they had achieved. El Adusto had a charming personality, was constantly in high spirits, and a boyish lust for life. Odd though it may seem for a man of his great wealth, his pride and joy was his vast collection of baseball caps and his fighting cocks, subjects that he could talk about for hours. As in Latin America’s northern regions, in the Fósforo district cockfighting was a favorite leisure activity, and was enthusiastically practiced by the men of the district. Because of his line of work, El Adusto travelled a lot, but his return was always awaited by a group of men, who urged him upon his return to Mal Abrigo to organize a cockfight. El Adusto was famous for not only his own large bets (ranging from \$250 to \$1,000) but also for his honest conduct of the fights—which meant that campesinos had a fair chance of winning their bets. Frequently, a group of village men chose a fighting cock and collected the bets from the spectators, who were willing to take this risk because they felt that they had a fair chance at winning, and the contest always ended in a party that, no matter who won or lost, ended up being paid for by El Adusto.

Although El Adusto achieved a lot in the eyes of the *colonos*, he frequently expressed the insecurity that he felt as a result of his involvement in the illegal cocaine trade. He was aware he was engaged in a business where his wealth could be lost in the blink of an eye; he himself had seen this happen to other bosses. There was no sure path to success in this line of business, and from his own experience, he knew the competition could be harsh and even lethal.

⁵⁸ Group conversation with several cocaleros, Puerto Mal Abrigo, February 9, 2005.

3.3.2 The firmas' structure

The *patrones* live in a world filled with multiple layers and types of relationships.⁵⁹ Although the Peruvian *firmas* are often described as largely depending on larger Colombian counterparts, in 1995, after the Colombians had largely abandoned the region and the Colombian cartels had broken down, the *firmas* began to operate independently and they improved their organization (see Thoumi 2003; Vellinga 2004). Nowadays, they are operating independently, and therefore need strict operating rules and secrecy among their members in order to survive. The partnership bonds among the persons within a drug trafficking group were defined by Adler (1993: 63) as: "the most closely entwined business relations, being characterized by equality, sharing of profit, and self-interest". Inside Fósforo's trafficking *firma*, a clear hierarchy of trust could be distinguished. Working with the *firma* to *trabajar la plata* (invest money in the *firma*'s cocaine trade) was relatively easy, but actually becoming part of the inner circle was nearly impossible. In order to *trabajar la plata* one only had to be willing to invest a large sum of money. The *patrón* "invested" this money in a transport of *merca*, after which the money would be returned with a certain interest rate, depending on the investment's amount. With this payback, the transaction was concluded.⁶⁰

As has been noted repeatedly throughout this chapter, *firma*s were organized along strict hierarchical lines. At the top was the *patrón*, followed by trusted deputies involved in the various processing stages, along with some *traqueteros* (large-scale cocaine smugglers); this constitutes the inner circle of the organization. There are, in addition, temporary collaborators that come and go, but it is only the inner circle that is fixed, permanent and is totally trusted. This group often consists of family relations, close friends and long-time business associates. The inner-circle partners have different expertise in several fields of the process. Those within the inner circle are entrusted with the most important tasks. For example, they are put in charge of scouting locations for a *poza* or cocaine laboratory, transporting the necessary materials (often by motorized boat necessary to reach the remote locations in the unspoiled jungle) and are in charge of planning transport of the *merca*. The most trusted man of the inner circle is the *tesorero*—"treasurer", who is responsible for safeguarding the *firma*'s money and cocaine in a secure hiding place. Frequently, such hiding places consisted of a hole in the wall of his own house; this was often considered the safest kind of hiding place. The *tesorero* is in charge of making payouts to the *firma*'s workers, and of properly distributing the profits of the organization's operations. Relationships within the *firma* often overlap. The majority of people living in the hostel have an employer-employee relationship with El Adusto. The relationships between the boss and his crew are close and emotional because the majority had been working for El Adusto for years. Those employees who temporarily lived in the hostel were his most trusted associates. The woman who served as a manager of the workforce was El Adusto's wife, Claudia although she wasn't involved in the business. She was an iron lady, a woman who didn't tolerate any nonsense. When Claudia was present, even the most seasoned drug traffickers and hired assassins watched what they said. In contrast, less trusted employees are often asked to rent a room in another hostel. Trust and respect are important values within the *firma*, because the life and fate of each of its members is intimately connected with those of all other members. There is daily contact between the *patrón* and those within his inner circle. The *patrón*'s most important task in the inner circle is to maintain good relations with, and foster good relations among, those in his inner circle.

The inner circle in turn is responsible for maintaining the image of the *patrón*, and of the *firma* as a whole among villagers. In the Fósforo district it was a custom to use *chapas* (nicknames). Some men working in the illegal industry were only known by their *chapas*.

⁵⁹ See Adler 1993: 63 on drug smuggling and dealing in the US.

⁶⁰ That is, provided the transport was carried out successfully.

USAID (pronounced locally as “oo-sa-íd”), was for some time the most trusted employee of El Adusto. He was given this name by villagers because of his white skin color, which made villagers think of the workers of the US governmental organization “US Aid for International Development”. He was in charge of operations when El Adusto was out of town. But *USAID* did not mix all that much with the local population, and spent most of his time in the hostel. How the *patron-* employee relations could quickly turn sour became apparent in 2005, when it was discovered that *USAID* had stolen a large amount of cocaine, sold it and gave the profit to his girlfriend.⁶¹

Another important element in each *firma*’s operations was the relationship with other *firmas* that operated in the Fósforo district. The villages, communities and hamlets of the Fósforo district were divided among different *patrones* in a gentlemen’s agreement. Among the different *firmas* there existed strict rules, agreements and arrangements. Each *firma* restricted its activities to its own recognized territory. There was interdependency among the different *firmas*. The *patrones* of the Fósforo district lack strong international connections and are thus unable to transport their cocaine directly to the US or European consumers. They instead depend on intermediaries or other *firmas* located in the Peru’s border regions. Because of this, drug smuggling crews with international connections are granted space to operate by the established drug bosses or even allowed to share the space under the *patrón*’s control, depending on the particular arrangements agreed to. In other cases, bonds were established between different *firmas* to transport the *merca* abroad. Such relationships are “marriages of convenience” and are typically characterized by a high degree of suspiciousness. On the one hand, the newcomers need the rapport of the established *patrón* with the local population, along with his specific knowledge of the local smugglers. On the other hand, the *patrón* needs the newcomer’s international connections to increase his profits. In these (often temporary) relationships, the established *patrón* is usually in charge of the cocaine processing, while the newcomer is in charge of the transport, selling or dealing of the cocaine.

3.3.3 Small-scale and large-scale cocaine trafficking

Drug trafficking is inherently international in nature. Peruvian drug smugglers cross the borders of Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia, Colombia and Brazil to sell their cocaine on the other side of the border. As seen in the case of the *burros*, the “favorite” border crossing points change over time. Those involved are largely familiar with these changes and constantly looking for other selling points in order to reduce their vulnerability to capture. Hence, these changes can be seen as a collective coping strategy of the *firmas* to prevent the arrest and capture of their workers. Another strategy of the *patrón* is to use different methods to smuggle cocaine, which can be differentiated by the quantities of cocaine involved. As noted earlier in this chapter, these operations were also hierarchically organized. The lowest rungs were occupied by the *mochileros*, those who smuggled small quantities once or twice for a *firma*.⁶² The men and women who acted as *mochileros* did much of their smuggling on foot, in this way bypassing police checkpoints. These *mochileros* are not a part of the *firma*’s inner circle and are usually only contracted for a few trips.

Young people were especially attracted to this opportunity to earn quick and easy money, and some became regular couriers for various different *firmas*. Those with the most

⁶¹ This episode led to *USAID* being expelled from the organization, and being forced to temporarily leave the district.

⁶² In a recent Report of the ICG (2008: 15) on the Latin American drug industry it was asserted that, after it became more difficult to transport larger amounts of cocaine by cars and trucks, *mochileros* were increasingly used to transport cocaine. This change also became apparent in the Fósforo district, where people began to travel more in recent years (including travels to Bolivia and Argentina, where Peruvian drug firms are said to control the cocaine market in Buenos Aires). But in the same report, it is also asserted that Shining Path remnants protect these transports, a practice that never occurred in Fósforo. However, there continues to be a close relationship between the criminal groups that use the name of “Shining Path” (see Chapter 7) and the cocaine trade, but I never heard that *patrónes* hired Shining Path guerillas to protect *mochileros*.

experience were in the greatest demand by the *firmas*. However, the national newspaper, *La República* remarked in an article about these *mochileros* that “they are sent off with the drugs, a gun and a threat”. However, because the *mochileros* of the Fósforo district generally smuggled without any sort of protection, they were vulnerable to arrest, and the majority involved ended up spending some time in jail. The article said that the *mochileros* were often threatened that harm would come to their families if they betrayed anyone else in the organization.⁶³ But in the Fósforo district, threats against the *mochileros’* families and children were never used by the local established *patrones*, whose ability to carry out their operations was, as stated above, dependent upon their maintaining good relations with the villagers. In contrast, in the Fósforo district if a *mochilero* was caught the local *patrones* hired some of their family members to work for them, including captured persons’ wives, who were sometimes hired as domestic help. In the end, the *mochilero* could be forgiven for getting caught, but not for betraying the *firma* and the *patrón*. These differences between the statement in the article and the local situation derive from a difference between Peru’s cocalero valleys. The article in *La República* describes events in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley and not in the Upper Huallaga. The Apurímac-Ene River Valley at this moment is experiencing a “boom” in smuggling activities, which led to numerous drug smuggling *firmas* entering the region (even some *firmas* of the Fósforo district expanded their activities into the Apurímac-Ene River Valley). These *firmas* don’t have the close bonds with the population. In contrast, in the Fósforo district the smuggling activities were mainly conducted by the established *firmas* with deep rooted relations among the population. This can explain why violence against *mochileros* was absent in the Fósforo district.

The *traqueteros* (large-scale smugglers) occupied the higher echelons of the *firma*. The attraction to this work is easily explained by the fact that it offered the opportunity to earn a great deal of money. But within the *traquetero* group itself, there are also distinctions with respect to the quantities of cocaine involved. *Paisa* was one of El Adusto’s small-scale *traqueteros*. *Paisa* smuggled a few kilos of cocaine hidden in a *caleta* under his driver’s seat while posing as the driver of a *colectivo* (shared taxi), hoping in this way to avoid police searches. Because of their work, these small-scale *traqueteros* never stayed at any one location for very long. They were constantly on the move. Therefore, it was these *traqueteros* who were most likely to be arrested by the Peruvian anti-drug police. Those transporting *merca* to the border regions with Brazil, Colombia, and Ecuador were especially vulnerable. The risk of arrest was considered to be less if one smuggled cocaine through Bolivia and Argentina.⁶⁴ It is hard to find a *traquetero* who has never spent time in prison (or, as it was called in the district, “the university of life”). But, as was the case with the *burros*, there were many other dangers involved. *Traqueteros* tell stories of gun battles, violence and attempted escapes from the police. *Traqueteros* displayed various ways of coping—both practically and emotionally—with the real and potential dangers inherent in their work, where one could not show any nervousness or fear during an operation because doing so would greatly increase the possibility of being stopped and searched.

The importance of the transport depended on the quantities of cocaine involved. The planning of these important transports was more difficult than moving lesser quantities. Very large quantities were transported in convoys that included three or more armed men. The large quantities are also transported in specially prepared cars, so-called *camiones cargados* (“loaded trucks”—cars loaded with cocaine). In a typical operation involving large quantities, the *camión cargado* would drive ahead with two *sicarios* (here; bodyguards) sitting inside,

⁶³ See *Les dan la droga, un arma y una amenaza: Conozco a tu familia*, *La República*, January 22, 2008.

⁶⁴ Those smuggling cocaine to Argentina were less vulnerable because this route went through Bolivia, where Evo Morales’ policies, until late-2008, did not include border controls. This made the route very popular among the different trafficking groups, including *mochileros*, *burros* and *traqueteros*.

their windows open and their guns loaded, with the barrel of the guns pointing out the window. These measures were taken mainly to prevent armed assaults by criminal groups, rather than to protect convoys against police action. At times, the *firma's* *patrón* bribed the police to give these large convoys free passage, without being searched.

The danger of being involved in this line of business became apparent when, at the end of 2004 and beginning of 2005, several large-scale *traqueteros* from El Adusto's inner circle were arrested. When arrested, the golden rule was never to snitch on the others involved in the crew. *Soplones* (snitches; informants) were used to arrest whole *firmas* during police raids, as one inhabitant of the Fósforo district described:

“Some days ago, they captured a *narco* close to Huacahuasi. I don't know how the hell he was captured. There must have been some *soplones* because this man had been moving a lot of cocaine and his house was well hidden. How could the police suddenly know where he was? Nobody had seen them when they passed. They must have entered at 4 o'clock in the morning when everybody was sleeping. His wife, children and *peones* were arrested. But the *patrón* managed to escape, and they are still looking for him. The problem is that, nowadays, the police work with everyone.”⁶⁵

The quotation, once again, shows the importance of trust among the workers in the illegal industry. Ex-*traqueteros* or ex-*mochileros*, who became police informants during their jail terms, were no longer welcome in the Fósforo district. The usual punishment for those accused of being *soplones* was death. The seriousness of the arrest of several of the large-scale *traqueteros* of El Adusto's inner-circle quickly became apparent, as after the arrest El Adusto temporarily left the village amid growing rumors that the police were actively searching for him.⁶⁶ As a response to these rumors, El Adusto's *firma* dispersed their activities over a larger territory to decrease the risks of being caught. Some of his *traqueteros*, including men with pseudonyms like *El Chibolín* and *Café*, ventured into Tingo María but in this gateway city the competition in drug-trafficking was fierce and here El Adusto's *firma* was the newcomer, which meant they had to do all of the ground work necessary for setting up operations: Establishing a reputation for violence, forging bonds with different *firmas*, and maybe even engaging in violent battles with the competition. Rumors arose in Mal Abrigo that during one of these battles *El Chibolín* was killed by a competing *firma*. Although it was never possible to confirm the rumor, it is a fact that *El Chibolín* was never again seen in Mal Abrigo.

Asides from these *traqueteros*, the *firma* also included members that were not engaged in the trafficking of cocaine, but in related activities, such as the smuggling of chemicals and the processing the coca paste into cocaine. Both of these activities are described below.

3.3.4 Chemicals smugglers and quimicos

The whole cocaine production process began with the smuggling of chemicals to remote and isolated places in the jungle. This activity entailed one of the largest controversies in the Peruvian war on drugs. The majority of *quimicos*- “chemists” in the Upper Huallaga still use domestic kerosene, to decompose the coca leaves, because it is cheaper and sold on the legal market without any restrictions (see Morales 1989: 69). When the cocaine industry experienced a second boom, the amounts of kerosene needed also rose. Hence, large amounts of kerosene were brought to the region, supposedly, to be sold as domestic fuel, even though the majority of inhabitants still preferred to cook with timber. However, on a daily basis several trucks with the lettering “Hazardous Materials” entered Puerto Mal Abrigo and other

⁶⁵ Conversation with Magdalena, Puerto Mal Abrigo, October 15, 2007.

⁶⁶ Conversation with different *traqueteros* of the *firma* of El Adusto, Puerto Mal Abrigo, Februari 4, 2005.

smaller jungle communities. Clearly, the large quantities of kerosene were used in the *pozas* or in cocaine laboratories. Additionally, in the whole Upper Huallaga, but especially in areas with direct access to the Brazilian border (Pucallpa and Tingo María), there was a great deal of smuggling of black-market kerosene. Huge quantities of black-market kerosene sold in Tingo María were illegally smuggled into Peru from Brazil, and were illegally resold in small stalls on the *Carretera Marginal*. Policemen were largely aware of these illegal stalls, but either ignored them or asked the illegal sellers for a portion of their profits.⁶⁷ Because the illegal sales were a highly profitable market, the sellers were also subject to violent assaults; during one such incident in 2004, a seller was shot and killed. Tingo María's citizens were outraged when police did not investigate the murder.

Most of the chemicals⁶⁸ used in cocaine processing were illegally transported or smuggled because their sale was generally controlled by the state. This created an opportunity for an illegal market in these chemicals to arise (Morales 1989: 68-69). This practice involved large-scale corruption in the chemical industry that continues even today. The methods for smuggling chemicals tended to be the same as those used for smuggling cocaine, although the flow of the contraband was of course in the opposite direction. Local *patrón* inner circle crews smuggled chemicals into the Fósforo district by car or public transportation. Shared taxis or buses coming *into* the region were only searched sporadically. From Lima to Tingo María and onwards to Tocache, only the passengers' names were checked and their luggage was pushed and poked a little. Someone with something to hide would place money in the policeman's hands and their journey continued as normal. Sometimes, a drug trafficker travelling in a car would communicate to the police officials a *camion cargado* with chemicals was coming in from Lima and would proceed to pay the necessary bribes. Only in 2007 did the state's total prohibition on transporting the chemicals needed for cocaine (even for the legal kerosene) and a simultaneous growing police control lead to violent clashes with state authorities (see Chapter 7). However, the prohibition also demonstrated the highly ingenious nature of those involved in the cocaine processing, who were able to easily circumvent such restrictions. A national news program showed how Peruvian *narcos* started to buy old storage batteries from a company in Lima. These legal batteries are transported freely on the *Carretera Marginal*, after which the acid within the batteries was siphoned out and used in cocaine laboratories.

While Peruvians now seem to dominate the cocaine market within Peru, there are some exceptions. Even in the remote Fósforo district, a Colombian element was also noticeable, particularly in one part of the cocaine processing. The majority of the cocaine laboratories were owned by the different *firmas* operating in the district, but recently cocaleros formed small collectives to produce cocaine, which in this case was later sold to the local *firms* or was transported to the border by independent *burros*. But Peruvian cocaine is generally lower in quality than its Colombian counterpart, and consequently also has a lower street value. There are *químicos* in Peru who know the exact formula for processing purer cocaine, and who are thus able to produce a better end product (which is still somewhat inferior to the Colombian product). But the *químicos*, Colombians and Peruvians alike, never stay involved in such work for very long. Some local men who had previously worked as *químicos* said that this work was more dangerous than either smuggling or being a *patrón*. They said that when workers in a cocaine laboratory are caught by the police their first question always is: "Who is the *químico*?" The chemist would receive the longest prison sentence, which in many cases is even longer than the cocaine laboratory's owner. Because of

⁶⁷ Information gathered during conversation with several illegal kerosene sellers during several trips made from Tingo María to Tocache during fieldwork in 2004, 2005, and 2006.

⁶⁸ Although there are differences in recipes, the processing of cocaine always requires sodium carbonate (which is the only substance that is available in the Upper Huallaga), sulphuric acid, potassium permanganate, and hydrochloric acid.

this high risk, many former *químicos* refuse to go back to working in laboratories after their first arrest. In the words of the wife of one former chemist:

“My husband was a *químico* and many people wanted him to work for them, including Colombians, so that he would once again make cocaine. He earned lots of money with this work, but nowadays he doesn’t want to hear anything about drugs...”⁶⁹

Because of frequent police raids, those cocaine laboratories that are owned by long-established *patrones* are now more carefully hidden, and are typically located in remote and isolated parts of the jungle that are only reachable by boat.

Therefore, the cocaine laboratory’s construction involves more planning and organizations in comparison with the construction of a *poza*, which is frequently constructed in a location that is closer to communities and villages where people live. Moreover, the construction of a laboratory meant that the *patrón* had to hire a number of different people: Trusted laborers to clear the location for the laboratory and to construct the building that would house it, trusted security guards, an experienced river navigator to take the men to that location, someone to cook food for the workforce, etc. A qualified chemist and other experienced workers were also required to work in the laboratory. During the construction period, those in the *patrón*’s inner circle need villagers for some of these tasks. These work opportunities were popular because even the people who worked in the more menial tasks that were required, such as clearing the area for the location, were paid \$10 per kilo of cocaine, meaning an income of approximately \$4,000 per month, since even a medium-sized laboratory could produce about 400 kilos per month. The daily income of these workers was more than hundred times higher the income of a *cosechero*.

Once again, in this highly secretive operation, hiring “unknown” people increased the risks of detection by law enforcement authorities. Therefore, when El Adusto’s *firma* began the construction of a new cocaine laboratory in 2005, the *patrón* only hired men he trusted because this was a clandestine operation and all of the workers that he hired would be aware of the laboratory’s location.

Box 3.3 A DEA agent, a drug trafficker, or just an anthropologist?

Indeed some Peruvian law enforcement authorities, mainly the national anti-drug forces, ventured into the region assuming the identities of as *peones*, ice-cream sellers, maceration pit/laboratory workers or salesmen of one kind or another. Because of this espionage practice, every newcomer is viewed with suspicion in communities involved in the cocaine trade, and the *firms* largely rely on already established contacts. When I entered the district in 2004 for my first long-term fieldwork period, I myself was the object of mistrust. Primarily, the general suspicion was that I was secretly working for the DEA. People often mentioned the DEA to me in a joking way, or told me that “others” suspected me. Yet I could tell that they were genuinely suspicious. After some time I was able to refute these accusations by telling my interlocutors that the DEA would never send an agent that was so visibly different from those living in the district. Whenever the DEA did send someone, it was a person who did not look markedly different from the locals.

The suspicion of the local *patrones*, mainly El Adusto, followed a different line of thought. The *patrones* seemed more worried that I had come to the district to take over their business. Because many Peruvians knew of Holland’s liberal drug policies, the *patrones* seemed to think that my purpose was to buy the cocaine directly from the cocaleros involved in this process, ship it to my country (where the prices were so much higher) and deprive them of their profits. It was only after several months of showing that I had no interest in their cocaine, and their suspicions gradually subsided. El Adusto later joked about his first suspicion. One day in 2005, when I was visiting the Apurímac-Ene River Valley (Peru’s second largest coca region), I called his hotel to tell them about

⁶⁹ Conversation with Magdalena, Puerto Mal Abrigo, October 16, 2007.

my location, as many of my friends in the Fósforo district had the habit of regularly visiting the hotel to ask him about my plans. That day El Adusto ended our conversation by shouting: “*Todo que te están ofreciendo alla te puedo vender mucho más barata aca, sobrina!*” (- Everything they are offering you there, I can sell you for a much cheaper price here, niece!)

In this line of business, newcomers, who often were accused of working for the Peruvian state intelligence forces, were most unlikely to be hired for these jobs. In 2005, the new cocaine laboratory’s construction can be seen as an attempt to re-establish the local reputation of El Adusto’s *firma* which, as previously described, had been severely weakened by several arrests and had widely dispersed their activities. The news that a local drug lord would construct a new laboratory rapidly spread in Puerto Mal Abrigo. By then, because of a new forced eradication operation, the possibility of working in coca cultivation was low and many men were looking for another opportunity to work (see Chapter 6 and 7). But at that time, El Adusto had left his business in the hands of *USAID*, who mistrusted the locals and only worked with people already in the *firma*’s inner circle or those working for other *firmas*. This decision was especially resented by those inhabitants of Mal Abrigo who had worked for El Adusto before. After everything was arranged, the workforce started transporting motors for a boat, plastic barrels and other materials.

The presence of *Becko*, a 22 year-old chemist from Colombia who was staying in my hostel, led me to suspect that El Adusto’s associates had some new plans. But the attitude of those in the inner circle towards the Colombian *químico* was rather strange. *Becko* had come to Mal Abrigo on the recommendation of outsiders and therefore was never trusted. At the same time, the Colombian *químicos* are very secretive about their formula and therefore *Becko* also mistrusted the crew, whom he accused of trying to steal his formula. Because of this mutual mistrust, *Becko*’s work was strictly limited to cocaine processing. One day *Becko* was standing at the place where the hostel residents washed clothes. When I greeted him, he looked shocked. Walking away, I smelled a strong chemical odor. *Becko* later explained that he was mixing chemicals that would later be shipped to the laboratory in large plastic barrels. When he worked, various people from El Adusto’s inner circle surrounded him, trying to see which chemicals he used. Because of this mutual mistrust, even when not working he lived with severe restrictions. Because *Becko* was hired at a time when there had recently been violent incidents in Puerto Mal Abrigo, he wasn’t allowed to leave the hostel on his own. He himself did not want to visit the village. Because he came from Cali, he was used to drug violence, but he expressed surprise at the chaotic, abusive and violent situation that he encountered in the Peruvian jungle. He admitted being scared of leaving the hostel because he was told violent assaults occurred on a daily basis (see also Chapter 7). He stayed in Puerto Mal Abrigo several weeks but when his work was done, *Becko* quickly disappeared. According to some sources, he had found other work processing heroin, located in Peruvian communities close to the Ecuadorian border with one of El Adusto’s acquaintances. But in 2007 there were rumors that *Becko* had been arrested, and that he was in prison in the department of Piura.

3.4 The cocaine industry’s crimes and related violence

3.4.1 Narcopoder, sicarios and weapon smugglers

Local *narcopoder* presents ample opportunities for generalized corruption, which generates complex conflicts that are difficult to resolve. But the presence of the cocaine industry doesn’t automatically lead to violence. Although, because of their involvement in criminal activities, *patrones* often react violently to threats, as they do not have the

opportunity to settle matters legally.⁷⁰ The disputes have to be settled without the involvement of the state security forces or the courts.⁷¹ The use of private violence to exercise dominance are important elements of the *esprit mafioso* (Vargas 2005: 107). Acts of vengeance and the violent settling of scores are common among those working in the cocaine industry (Vargas 2005: 123). The illegal cocaine industry employs *sicarios* for the purpose of carrying out violent assaults and murders but also as bodyguards for *patrones*.

But, once again, there are a number of nuances. Actually, the hiring of *sicarios* for personal safety was not widely seen until May 2005, as from 1999 onwards cocaleros in the Fósforo district began planting larger quantities of coca because of lower production in Colombia (as a result of Plan Colombia [1998] and the Andean Regional Initiative [2001]). By 2000, the competition between the different *firms* had relaxed somewhat, as there seemed to be ample opportunity for all of the *firms* to make money. Until May 2005 the local drug lords did not use professional *sicarios* and instead relied on local people with some experience with weapons for their protection. The regions of Peru that had been affected by the internal armed conflict created a certain familiarity with weapons among a large sector of the population. Because of the lack of any post-conflict disarmament by the national state, rifles, pistols and even automatic machine guns were still widely available in the Fósforo district. Often, the men hired for protection were already involved in cocaine-related activities but these local men didn't have a violent reputation as they had deep-rooted relations with the villagers. Life was considered tranquil in the Fósforo district and was only disrupted by small-scale sporadic feuds between drunks in local bars and state-led forced eradication operations.

From 2005 through the end of 2007, delinquency and violence were features of daily life in the Fósforo district, especially after forced eradication operations began in the valley in May 2005 (see Chapter 6). After May 2005, Mal Abrigo was also plagued by competing drug traffickers and common criminal groups, who came to the village temporarily. It is in such times of rising competition over the local cocaine market that *patrones* feel that they must project a violent image in order to keep their enemies at bay. In the Fósforo district, in an effort to reduce their heightened chances of being arrested during the forced eradication campaigns or, more importantly, of being kidnapped or murdered when the competition over the decreasing cocaine between different smuggling groups increased, local *patrones* hire *sicarios* (hired killers or bodyguards). As Topalli *et al.* (2000: 341), writing on US drug violence, state: "For individuals who live and die by their reputations, the experience of fear goes beyond the symbolic. It is palpable. Exhibiting fear is to be avoided because it indicates weakness and invites further attacks". Locally, the *patrones'* fear only increased when rumors about kidnappings, and murders became a daily occurrence. If, in these times, the *patrón* shows any weakness, he can become an easy target for numerous criminal gangs roaming the region. Because of this new unwanted competition, the established *patrones* hired professional *sicarios*, and the streets were quickly filled with armed newcomers.

It is especially established *firms* that can potentially be identified as weak or weakened targets by criminal groups because of their peaceful way of operating. Hence, in response to the local changes, El Adusto hired two *sicarios* from Tingo María. *Popeye* and *Bizcocho*,⁷² obviously pseudonyms, looked terrifying and were stern, unsympathetic men, who visibly carried weapons everywhere they went. Specific *sicarios* are hired because they have a violent reputation, and many of these men are trigger-happy. *Popeye* and *Bizcocho* were chosen because of their expertise in gun battles, one of them even specialized in steering

⁷⁰ See Arias 2006: 41 on drug violence in *favelas* in Brazil.

⁷¹ See Jacobs 2000; Jacobs *et al.* 2000; Topalli *et al.* 2002.

⁷² These were the actual pseudonyms both men used. *Popeye* was given his nickname because of a resemblance with the famous cartoon character. The pseudonym of *Bizcocho* (meaning "handsome" or "cutey pie" in Peruvian slang usage) is more difficult to understand.

motorized boats and shooting simultaneously. *Popeye* and *Bizcocho*'s work involved nightly patrols of the territory surrounding the hostel, accompanying El Adusto everywhere he went. Both men slept in the *patrón*'s hostel. One particular morning *Bizcocho*, sitting outside, seemed distressed. When the maid asked why, he responded: "There are some ghosts in my room who don't let me sleep in peace". She jeered and shouted at him: "What do you expect, when you have killed so many people? There will always be ghosts that will never leave you in peace". Silently, I awaited *Bizcocho*'s response, but his face only showed a faint smile while he stretched his weary body. By then, El Adusto had concluded that both the staff and the guests of the hostel needed protection. From then on, whenever I left the hostel, especially at night, I was accompanied by either *Popeye* or *Bizcocho*, who followed my conversations with the inhabitants from a respectful distance. Later, after their contract with El Adusto ended, I ran into *Popeye* in Tingo María. He proudly introduced his wife and children, while he explained why he no longer worked in Puerto Mal Abrigo: At heart, he was a family man and he had missed his children.

Once the need for more weapons increases they quickly become just another element in regional smuggling practices and trade networks, which already involve smuggling other products across international boundaries. Such networks are frequently characterized by flexibility and resilience (Studdard 2004: 4). With the rise in "cocaine violence" and threats in the Fósforo district, the smuggling of illegal weapons grew into a very profitable business. The majority of weapons owned by drug lords, *sicarios*, *traqueteros* criminal groups and others were unregistered, illegal weaponry, including AK-47's, and Uzis. Currently, most weapons are smuggled into Peru from bordering countries, especially Brazil. The Brazilian Amazon had become a safe haven for numerous criminal activities, including the smuggling of weapons (Mason and Tickner 2006: 89). In the Fósforo district, the *patrones* depend on the vigorous trade of these illegal Brazilian weapons in the Peruvian city of Pucallpa. Of course, weapons bought in Pucallpa had to be smuggled into the Upper Huallaga Valley. Some professional arms smugglers bought the weapons in Pucallpa, and then sold them in Tocache without any ownership papers and, surprisingly, without any problem. Smuggling from Tocache to Mal Abrigo also proved to be relatively unproblematic. The buyers in Tocache would usually ask a *colectivo* driver that they trusted to hide the weapon in his taxi to avoid detection during police searches. As seen above, the *patrones* already had employees who were experts in these smuggling practices. They normally smuggled the weapons under the passengers' seats or hidden in the baggage, as these bags filled with rice were, practically speaking, unsearchable. It was often said by people involved in this line of business that, once the weapons were detected by the police, they were used in other illegal practices, such as armed robberies and assaults, evidence of the corruptive power of the money generated by the illegal drug industry.

3.4.2 "All good things must come to an end"

Local *patrones* often use blood vengeance or other violent punishments for those who threaten their business. An example of vengeance in practice was Maradona's "disappearance". Maradona was a leader of a *pandilla* (a criminal gang) who was originally from Juanjui (a town north of Mal Abrigo on the *Carretera Marginal*). When Maradona and his gang entered Puerto Mal Abrigo in April 2005, rumors arose about an attempt to kidnap El Adusto's family. These threats are not uncommon for people involved in illegal businesses as gangs attempt to gain respect through intimidation, and also use such tactics to extract protection money.⁷³ After his criminal gang established themselves in the hostel, Maradona practically took over the business. For example, he answered the phone and made decisions as

⁷³ See Jacobs *et al.* 2000 on violence and drug dealing in the US.

to could stay in the hostel, severely weakening El Adusto's reputation. Maradona also began to mock, insult and verbally threaten El Adusto and his wife. One night, El Adusto organized a party for his inner circle. While the men stood outside the house, the women were dancing inside. But Maradona went inside and pointed his gun in the direction of the guests. He then pointed it at El Adusto's wife, who screamed.⁷⁴ El Adusto's crew came in and confiscated Maradona's gun. After this episode, villagers largely stated that from this point on, it became an open question as to whether El Adusto had control of his *firma*. After the party incident, El Adusto disappeared from the village and Maradona's group acted like they owned the hostel and the village. The *firmas* reputation as a power group was seriously contested by Maradona's behavior. This led to embarrassment and humiliation felt among those involved in El Adusto's *firma*.

Maradona's aggression was not only directed against El Adusto. His gang members spent hours on the streets, menacing all the villagers:

"This man was terrible. People could no longer tolerate his behavior. He was shooting at everybody. Pum, pum, pum. He got drunk, entered a house and scared the hell out of the owners. He entered restaurants, shot in the air and made everybody, including the staff, run outside."⁷⁵

Rapidly Maradona's behavior began to enrage the whole population but, at that time, they lacked an effective way of responding to him. Nevertheless, some village men did attempt to respond to the aggression. One day, two brothers encountered Maradona in Mal Abrigo, as one of them later recalled:

"My brother said [to Maradona] 'I'm going to kill you' but I whispered to him 'Who are you going to kill, *idiota*?' because I was afraid. Maradona responded 'Do you think I'm scared? If you want to throw me out of this village, I'm going to kill you and I will keep your head as a memento'. After that, Maradona wanted to leave but we reacted quickly, threw him on the ground and took his gun away. We took him to the school's auditorium where he was forced to ask for the villagers' forgiveness. This was the first and the last time... but he didn't change his behavior so the *ronda*⁷⁶ of Santa María and the *ronda* of Mal Abrigo got involved. These *ronderos*, well-armed, went to look for him in *Vladimiro*'s house [i.e., the house of a local *patrón*] and said '*Compadre*, open the door'. Maradona cried but he continued to terrify the population. Even the military intervened to calm things down."⁷⁷

But neither the *ronda campesina* nor the military's attempt to talk some sense into Maradona had been able to stop his threatening behavior.

After weeks of terrorizing the village, Maradona abruptly disappeared and his body was never found. After his disappearance, Maradona's criminal gang organized searches for their leader but, to no one's surprise, hardly anyone was upset by his disappearance. The general comment was that "he got what he deserved". Maradona's gang members stayed in Puerto Mal Abrigo but quickly noticed that the villagers had openly turned against them. When El Adusto, after the assassination, reappeared as if nothing had happened, the villagers continued life as normal. What really had happened between Maradona and El Adusto became clear only months later, when the *pandilla* of Maradona finally left the district. Different villagers

⁷⁴ Conversation Doña Alegría, Lima, August 12, 2006 .

⁷⁵ Conversation with unnamed inhabitant, Alto Mal Abrigo, August 25, 2007.

⁷⁶ *Ronda campesina*: The self-defense group of the villagers (see Chapter 7).

⁷⁷ Conversation with unnamed inhabitant, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 23, 2007.

with apparently good sources then revealed that the “disappearance” was an *arreglo de cuentas* (a settling of scores). They related how the established drug firms of Puerto Mal Abrigo had united their forces against Maradona’s threat and planned the assassination campaign. Different local *firms* united when threatened by these criminal “outsiders”. But El Adusto’s *sicarios* from Tingo María actually carried out the hit. The *sicarios* were paid by a number of different *patrones*. This kind of direct violent retaliation is seen as the best solution to serious challenges to the authority of the *patrones* because it not only takes care of the immediate problem but shows everyone who witnesses or hears of the events exactly what the *patrones* are capable of doing. In the words of Topalli *et al.* (2002: 337) writing on US drug violence, “One’s of criminology’s dirty little secrets is that much serious crime, perhaps most, takes place beyond the reach of criminal law because it is perpetrated against individuals who themselves are involved in lawbreaking”. As a consequence, in the Fósforo district the different *firms* felt that they had no option other than to get rid of the *pandilla*’s leader, since “people who operate outside the law cannot really be ‘victims’ in the eyes of the criminal justice system” (Topalli *et al.* 2002: 337).⁷⁸ The assassination of Maradona didn’t completely solve the problem, as it only caused some confusion in the *pandilla* for a short time. Quickly the members reorganized and continued to dominate the village.

Moreover, Maradona’s disappearance did not resolve all of El Adusto’s problems. When I wanted to return to the Fósforo district in June 2005, I unknowingly became part of El Adusto’s permanent escape from the district. I met him in Tingo María, where he was attending a cocalero protest with a group of cocaleros from the Fósforo district. When he saw me, he immediately asked me to accompany him to Lima, a request that I did not take as a warning sign of a change for the worse in Mal Abrigo. I politely refused, but when I arrived in Mal Abrigo, there was an unmistakable tension and threat of violence in the village. Members of Maradona’s *pandilla* once again controlled the streets and harassed the villagers. USAID was left in charge of El Adusto’s *firma*. He and some inner-circle *traqueteros* guarded the hotel like an armed citadel.

But this new turf war between Maradona’s *pandilla* and the *firma* was not the only reason why El Adusto decided to leave Puerto Mal Abrigo, although surely this new threat contributed to his decision. What eventually led to El Adusto’s retreat from Puerto Mal Abrigo was the shortage of coca leaf caused by the forced eradication operation in May 2005 (see Chapter 6). By then, Mal Abrigo’s days as a tranquil drug haven had come to an end. At first, El Adusto laughed, saying it would only take six months before coca was harvested again. But there were repeated forced eradication operations in the region that continued until 2007, severely reducing the campesino’s opportunities to successfully cultivate coca. The quantities of coca that were harvested became so small that no *firma* could continue to conduct business as usual. In 2007, two years after his escape, another reason for El Adusto’s escape became clear when rumors were spread he owed approximately \$200,000 to another *firma*. El Adusto’s economic decline had repercussions for his entire family. One local woman explained what had happened when Claudia, El Adusto’s wife, visited Mal Abrigo for a few days:

“They threatened her at night. She didn’t recognize the men because they wore masks. The men entered her house to ask where her husband was hiding. They planned to kill El Adusto and her because he owed them lots of money. She told them she was separated from him, so killing her wouldn’t do them any good. Killing her wouldn’t help them get their money. The next day, she escaped to Tocache and later to Lima.”⁷⁹

⁷⁸ See also Méndez 1999.

⁷⁹ Conversation with Doña Tarcela, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 14, 2007.

Meanwhile, El Adusto ended up in the region of Peru that bordered Brazil and Colombia where, years before, his career in the cocaine industry had begun. But in this region, El Adusto was one of many traffickers, because there was a great deal of competition among *firmas*. El Adusto had left with *Bizcocho* and *Cacao*, his most trusted employees, while his other employees left for other regions within Peru, or decided to sit out the period in Puerto Mal Abrigo, working on their *chacras*. El Adusto's *firma* was a perfect example of the disintegration of most of Mal Abrigo's long-standing local *firmas*. After this major setback, numerous other people tried to take over the high-level positions in the cocaine industry throughout Peru. *Paisa*, the small-scale *traquetero*, started his own trafficking group, which smuggled cocaine from Síon⁸⁰ to the border with Ecuador. Another change was the increased numbers of several small-scale cocaine "sellers", who processed cocaine or locally bought cocaine which they quickly resold to those working for larger (international/Colombian) *firmas*. The forced eradication campaign had led to drug scarcity, but also raised the prices paid for cocaine. Accordingly, profits multiply and even more people will be willing to take the risks and enter the business of cocaine processing and smuggling.⁸¹ The continued presence of more established entrepreneurs and the emergence of new ones led to a violent and deadly competition over the market.

Hence, the *firma's* collapse showed how the cocaleros and the local *patrones* were interdependent: Without cocaleros, El Adusto had no business, and the cocaleros had no sense of security when the established *firma* was ousted from the district. It is something of a contradiction to the general view that the cocaine industry automatically leads to violence that, in the Fósforo district, periods of coca abundance were described as peaceful and prosperous. Conversely, periods of anti-drug operations were seen as causing a rise in competition and, consequently, violence. But normally, the *patrones* adapted quickly to these changes and quickly continued their business elsewhere.

3.4.3 General changes and a dreaded re-entrance of Colombians

El Adusto wasn't the only *patrón* from Mal Abrigo who experienced a reversal of fortune. In August 2007 when Guerra (another local *patrón*) was arrested by the police with 125 kilos of cocaine and stacks of dollars in his possession close to the Bolivian border,⁸² it seemed that the peaceful period of the old established *patrones* was now over for good. In addition, Guerra's arrest demonstrated an important change in the local practices of cocaine smuggling. More and more local people started to smuggle cocaine to Argentina because the frontier with Bolivia⁸³ wasn't as strictly controlled as the borders with Ecuador, Brazil and Colombia. Moreover, in recent years, Argentina had emerged as an important target market for cocaine. Mal Abrigo's inhabitants mourned the loss of Guerra, who had, like El Adusto, established friendly relations with the villagers. But others said that Guerra would soon be in Mal Abrigo again. They proved to be right, as Guerra reappeared after only two weeks. In contrast to El Adusto, Guerra continued his business in Mal Abrigo, although in a smaller and more secretive manner than previously. El Adusto and Guerra were not the only *patrones* who faced hard times in this period. In Santa María, the most important local *patrón* was caught by the police. Several lesser *patrones* were also captured in different police raids. Because of the forced eradication campaign, the local population was easily recruited for these dangerous endeavors. Increasingly, they were also contracted to smuggle small balls of cocaine in their stomachs to Europe, the US, or Asia. This kind of work was better paid than internal

⁸⁰ A cocalero village located in the district of Campanilla, Province of Mariscal Cáceres in the San Martín department.

⁸¹ See Zaluar 2000: 653 on the cocaine trade in Brazilian *favelas*.

⁸² Conversation with unnamed woman, Puerto Mal Abrigo, June 7, 2007.

⁸³ The route the Peruvian smugglers had to make to Argentine goes through Bolivia, where border controls weren't part of Evo Morales' anti-drug policies until February 2008.

smuggling within Latin America. Rumors arose that people from the Fósforo district had been arrested in South Africa, Asia and France. Still the majority were arrested at the international airport in Lima, where their passports gave them away, as customs officers became suspicious about people from Tocache travelling abroad.

With the breakdown of power of the established *firmas*, another social change became very noticeable, especially in Mal Abrigo's streets. Because of the *firmas'* economic setback and the emergence of local cocaine sellers,⁸⁴ Colombian trafficking groups were able to easily re-enter the district. A group of approximately 15 Colombians entered Mal Abrigo and established themselves in El Adusto's hostel. These men crossed the Peruvian border illegally and, for that reason, were careful about whom to trust. Additionally, Colombian trafficking organizations use different methods of control and domination than the established *firmas* of Mal Abrigo, and never took part in the social life of the village. Because of the Colombians' behavior during the first coca boom, these men continued to be considered "true killers" and their cruel treatment of those who stood in their way was frequently commented upon. There were numerous rumors about their appalling and violent behavior. Moreover, in contrast to the *firma's* inner-circle, the Colombian traffickers publicly spent their money on drinking parties and visited the village's prostitutes, behavior that was strongly criticized by locals.

But there was an additional reason why the Colombians' presence was seen in negative terms. As the district was hit continuously by forced eradication campaigns, the Colombians were seen as the reason why forced eradication would return to Mal Abrigo. Because of their distinctive accent, their way of dressing and their behavior they, far more than the members of the Peruvian *firmas*, stood out from the district's campesino population. Actually, the fact that Colombians were in these small and remote jungle villages were seen by the anti-drug police as a sign that the cocaine industry was still operating. But their way of operating was different of that of the established Peruvian *firmas*. Although the Colombians rejected any kind of social interaction with the villagers, the military seemed to be more involved in their illegal practices. Soldiers often accompanied the Colombian *narcos* in bars and restaurants. Some local inhabitants remarked the Colombians traffickers would flee if the police, the security force in charge of the war on drugs, entered the district. The villagers' assumptions was accurate, for when the CORAH⁸⁵ re-entered the district, the Colombians disappeared.

Still, these negative feelings were not only directed against Colombians but also against the new small-scale cocaine processors, new sellers and buyers for *puntos*, and owners of maceration pits and cocaine laboratories, who, according to the villagers, did not adequately conceal their operations. For example: One of these small-scale cocaine producers came to stay in the hostel of El Adusto. He openly processed cocaine in the hotel's kitchen and allowed his sellers and buyers to enter the hotel at all hours of the day. Other residents of the hostel, who stayed behind after El Adusto left, complained about this practice because they feared a police raid during which everyone would be arrested. Many of those residents with previous records faced possible lengthy prison sentences. They could therefore not ignore this new threat, and urged the small-scale producer to take his business elsewhere:

"It's prohibited to make drugs in this house, he has no right to come here, live here and make his stupid cocaine here. We have seen his stuff all over the house: The chemicals, the acid, the petrol, kerosene and he was drying the cocaine where we do

⁸⁴ These cocaine sellers, in majority long established inhabitants who were already involved in the process of cocaine making, bought the cocaine from a fixed group of *pasteleros*, aligned with the cocaine seller, for a lower price. They sold the cocaine to (Colombians) *narcos*, without relations or knowledge about the *pasteleros* in the district, for a profit (called *puntos*).

⁸⁵ *Control y Reducción del Cultivo de la Coca en el Alto Huallaga*: Special Project for the Control and Eradication of Coca in the Upper Huallaga. Agency in charge of the eradication of the coca fields within Law 22095 (see Chapter 2).

our laundry. This is very bad because—just imagine—we could all end up in prison after a police raid, and he would be the only one able to escape because he has the money.”⁸⁶

In addition, numerous villagers began to complain about the unconcealed transport of large quantities of coca leaves to *pozas*, and of coca paste to cocaine laboratories. Previously, such transports had only been carried out at night, but the new operators ignored these local security measures. The population started to urge those people involved to make their business “more covert”. But some adventurous illegal workers refused to take these risks into account, thereby endangering the security all of Fósforo’s villagers. It is important to emphasize here that the villagers did not condemn the practice of making cocaine per se, but that they insisted it be done in the unspoiled jungle, far away from their villages and communities.



Picture 7 Ingredients for cocaine processing in the hostel

Thus, as new entrepreneurs arrived on the scene, the previously established bonds between the villagers and *patrones*, discussed below, partly disappeared. What arose instead was a new set of dynamic interrelationships that are important to understand in order to attain a complete picture of cocaine operations in the Fósforo district.

3.5 Cocaine power and social relations in the Fósforo district

In the Fósforo district, the influence of the national government only began to be felt with the implementation of anti-drug policies that were sporadically conducted throughout the 2000s. But these police raids never managed to effectively stop the cocaine trade. Instead, they only drove it further underground. Thus, as seen above, the “coca bust” had led to the

⁸⁶ Conversation with Doña Paula, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 4, 2007.

creation of smaller, and consequently more elusive, *firmas*. Because it had been in place for so long, the illegal drug industry infiltrated every aspect of social relations in the Fósforo district. Leeds (1996) has argued on drug gangs operating in Rio de Janeiro that the emergence of these illegal groups leads to the disappearance of legal authorities, a phenomenon she calls “parallel power”. But because this expression suggest a parallel socio-geographic representation of effective power, the critical question remains: If these illegal groups exercised *sole* control over an area, could their power rightly be called “parallel power”? To be able to analyze whether the Fósforo district can be characterized by this term, a question that frequently came to my mind was, “Who is in charge?” Later, this question became: “Is there anyone in charge?” I continued to try to analyze the social chaos everywhere around me, where unspoken and complex bonds and secret agendas seemed to be the most common features. Arias (2006: 40), also writing on Brazilian drug gangs and their relation to local politics, notes that it is important to recognize that “illegal networks mobilize resources and create and spread the norms and ideas necessary to sustain criminal activities”. They do so also by establishing bonds with local and regional legal authority structures. In the Fósforo district it became clear that the presence of the illegal groups did not lead to the disappearance of the legal authorities. Moreover, as I will argue here, the actions of both the legal and illegal actors were interdependent, as the illegal industry was entrenched in everything. As seen above, the *patrones* are dependent on the villagers, who therefore become a local power group. But were the inhabitants the ones in power and can we rightly speak of a “criminal network” (Arias 2006), including the *narcos*, the *patrones*, the villagers, and the local authorities/ administration? Or were those who operated the cocaine industry, along with the legally constituted authorities, both “parallel powers”?

As will be argued below, in the Fósforo district, the cocaine industry became and remained a normal part of daily life, wherein the negative stigma of the cocaine industry eroded and the presence of *patrones* was not seen as socially disruptive.⁸⁷ Mutual respect is the key to maintaining social order.⁸⁸ The cocaine industry’s participants, structures and organization were communal secrets, and stories about the illegal industry demonstrate that those involved are brothers, sisters, fathers, mothers, sons and daughters. This can explain why the population often sympathized more with law-breakers than law-enforcers.⁸⁹ The interrelationships among the main groups of actors in the Fósforo district are described in detail below.

3.5.1 Patrones, narcos and villagers’ power

“You should never totally trust these men”, said the cocalero that I met when I entered Mal Abrigo.⁹⁰ When he pronounced the term “these men”, he had cautiously glanced at a distinct group, standing at the opposite site of the *Carretera Marginal*. The men he referred to had hidden their guns under their clothes, but the weapons’ contours were visible underneath their shirts. The cocalero continued:

“Well, *estos hombres* come to Puerto Mal Abrigo, create problems for us, make stacks of money and afterwards—if they are intelligent—end up leaving the village. Ever since I’ve lived here, I have seen them come and go. But I will tell you one thing: In that business, there are very few people that can really be called winners.”

When I asked him for an explanation, he grinned: “Well, dear, these men may think that all of the inhabitants have sold their souls to the devil...that we are living a hell

⁸⁷ See Campbell 2005 on Mexico.

⁸⁸ See also Anderson 1999: 33 on street culture in a US inner city.

⁸⁹ See Fitzgerald and Threadgold 2004: 416 on the US street heroin market.

⁹⁰ See Introduction.

on earth, where they can extort, steal and rob but these men aren't those who survive this misery... *We* are, the most quiet people! I have nothing to hide and nobody to fear. They, in contrast, will always meet someone who is even worse. Many of these men don't even survive their first month in this village."

After pausing several minutes he went on: "You see, actually they never leave this place. After their disappearance, their bodies are found by fishermen. Until now, their bodies have been dumped in the Huallaga River [a frequently used method during the internal armed conflict; see Chapter 4]. That is what you get in this village, when you choose the wrong side... When you are working against the will of the villagers. In many cases, their families don't even come to collect their bodies... Nobody cares."⁹¹

This quotation reflects the fact that, in the Fósforo district, two realities existed side by side: The reality of the cocaleros, and the *narcos'* reality. The man quoted above was focusing only on those new entrepreneurs that only temporarily entered the village and were considered to be far more dangerous than the established *patrones*.

In contrast, although the *patrones* and their crews had created a distinct subculture, both groups, the cocaleros and the established *firms*, lived together in the villages, established bonds and interacted on a daily basis. Therefore the local population, totally aware of the illegal dealings, links, ties, connections and enemy feuds, frequently closed their eyes to what was going on in order to stay out of trouble. The population's negative reactions to the cocaine industry's presence tended to be limited to newcomers to the industry. For instance, when *La Grandita*, the owner of a popular restaurant, was asked to rent a room to a *traquetero* who had recently come to Mal Abrigo, it became clear that villagers had their limit as to what constituted acceptable behavior:

"We have always lived here, but we never established a close relationship with any of the *patrones*. Live and let live. We don't want to get involved... Once I rented a room in my house to one of them, but after a few nights, I asked El Adusto to let him sleep in his hostel. The nights he stayed here, I didn't even dare to close my eyes. I was thinking what we were going to say when the police came... They once did, you know, when we rented the room to a youngster. The police came and accused him of drug trafficking. They searched his room and found money. So he was guilty and he was staying in my house. From that day on, I decided never to rent my room again, but then El Adusto came with this request, he was desperate and we could use the extra money. Business is slow, you know."⁹²

The *traquetero*, who had spent some nights in the house of *La Grandita* at the request of El Adusto, was a man named Guairanga (slang for a large wasp that has a painful sting). He was an inner-circle member of a new drug *firma* entering the region from Aucayacu. This new group was viewed with suspicion and, because of his violent behavior; Guairanga was disliked by the local population. But the local *patrones*, including El Adusto, Luringancho and Guerra, tried to establish close relations with Guairanga, because this *firma* had international connections and directly transported cocaine to Europe, which could increase the local *patrones'* earnings. Different *patrones* tried to manipulate fictive kinship arrangements with the new *firma*'s important employers, a phenomenon also described by Bourgois (2003: 82) for drug dealers in the US. For example, El Adusto became the godfather of one of Guairanga's sons in the hope that the *firma* would do business with him. But meanwhile, Guairanga's behavior in the village was getting out of hand. He threatened campesinos,

⁹¹ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Puerto Mal Abrigo, September 8, 2005.

⁹² Conversation with La Grandita, Puerto Mal Abrigo, November 13, 2005.

waving his weapon at a few of them, while drinking in a local bar. The villagers put up with this behavior for several weeks. But when a rumor reached Puerto Mal Abrigo that Guairanga previously had been involved in several armed robberies, the population's patience disappeared. The villagers organized a group of armed men, who were given the task of ordering Guairanga to leave their village immediately, and he quickly departed.

But one important distinction has to be made. Other *patrones*, mainly those with strongholds in the Fósforo communities other than Mal Abrigo, also frequently ignored the local rules of respect. They organized drinking parties with their *sicarios* but never mingled with the communities' population. These drinking parties were hazardous because they often resulted in gun battles, quickly leading to the death of one or two members. The history of El Chivo is a good example of this violence in the smaller communities. El Chivo was Santa María's largest *patrón*. He was defined as a "fosforito", a man who easily lost his temper; especially when he was drunk, he had the habit of swaggering in the streets with guns in both of his hands. Therefore, Santa María's population tried to avoid El Chivo as much as possible. Mal Abrigo's established *firmas* also did not have close relations with El Chivo. One day, he arrived at El Adusto's hostel at night, obviously drunk and demanding a room, swearing while wielding guns in both hands. The hostel's staff, wanting to avoid a violent confrontation, silently locked all of the doors and withdrew, leaving El Chivo swearing in the streets. After approximately fifteen minutes, El Chivo drove away. But this behavior was not tolerated by everyone. One night, El Chivo was drinking with his wife's brother in Santa María de Frontera. When an argument arose, the man fatally shot El Chivo. Villagers were shocked but stated that El Chivo "got what was coming to him", as they felt that his behavior had been disrespectful. El Chivo's lack of popularity among the population became clearly visible during his funeral, where his *traqueteros* and some local *patrones* were present, but the local population was largely absent.⁹³

In the Fósforo district, the illegal industry had created a local economical elite, which included the *patrones* and their families, large-scale *traqueteros*, owners of large *cocales*, and *pasteleros*. Wealth brought with it prestige and respect. But relationships existing between villagers and the long-established *firmas* were important for attaining a better understanding of local power relations. Nowadays, in contrast to the events during the first coca boom, the villagers demanded respect, no longer tolerated extreme violence, and wanted to live peacefully. Because of the general knowledge about the *patrones'* identity, the drug bosses were largely dependent on the local population to keep their business secret, to sell them their coca leaves or *coca pasta* and to work in the coca fields. Therefore, the local *patrón* knew he could not operate without the population's support. It was part of the long-established *firma* members' behavior to establish a good rapport with villagers, and they never denied help when asked to become godparents of babies and *quinceañeros*,⁹⁴ to sponsor local soccer teams or local schools' graduation classes. The *patrones* were also often asked to participate in village activities, for example parties, the construction or restoration of bridges, etc. Local *patrones* were expected to contribute large sums of money to important infrastructure projects. Residents also turned to the local *patrón* with requests for help, and El Adusto knew that his help would increase his power and popular support in the village. Part of the local *patrones'* behavior in the villages can be explained because they are very aware they have to contribute to the villages' maintenance of order and safety in order to preserve the existing economic and social system.⁹⁵

⁹³ Statement made by several cocaleros of Santa María, who all said they had been absent during the funeral, and of different people working for the *firma* of El Adusto, who were present during the funeral.

⁹⁴ *Quinceañeras*: The fifteenth birthday of girls, which is celebrated in a big event as it represents the year that a girl becomes a woman.

⁹⁵ See Hess 1998 on his descriptions of the phenomenon in the Sicilian mafia.

But within the whole Fósforo district, even in Mal Abrigo, people who wanted to smuggle cocaine or process cocaine could freely enter and start working. But if the conduct of some people who were becoming involved in the cocaine industry for the first time outraged a substantial proportion of the local population, they and those associated with them were forced to leave the village. The following quote reflects the general sentiment of villagers toward those newcomers who violated expected standards of moral and social decorum:

“These are people who think they are better than the other inhabitants. Many before have been my friends, we walked together everywhere, but when they came into money, nothing. They don’t even salute me. They change when they have a wad of cash. They own their car and think they are *narco* big shots in Mal Abrigo. But life will show them some day.”⁹⁶

Many inhabitants complained about the newcomers’ self-centered behavior. The majority of these small-scale cocaine sellers were part of village life before. People knew them but, as stated above, when they earned some money, they were no longer concerned about anyone else. These new *narcos* were blamed for the rise of violence in the communities. But it was not only those involved in the illegal industry who misbehaved. A good example of the misconduct of men in Mal Abrigo was the cousin of El Adusto’s wife. When Claudia was present in the hostel, even the most terrible *traqueteros* and *sicarios* behaved themselves. But her patience was severely tested when Alfredo came to Puerto Mal Abrigo to take care of El Adusto’s cattle. Alfredo flouted the hotel’s strict rules, invited prostitutes and spent entire nights drinking. But soon after his arrival, he was accused by some local inhabitants of beating various women. One day, two local men had seen a drunk Alfredo dragging a woman by her hair. The men recalled cursing and shouting at Alfredo, urging him to stop this behavior, but they knew he was armed and did not want to approach him. Enraged Alfredo pointed his gun at the two men, who quickly walked away. Alfredo’s behavior greatly angered Claudia, who asked El Adusto to discharge Alfredo and ban him from the hostel. Never again would Alfredo return, because he knew that people in Mal Abrigo would not give him a second chance. But the illegal industry did not only influence life in the villages: It also affected local politics.

3.5.2 Local cocalero politics

Especially in the Upper Huallaga’s rural areas, such as the Fósforo district, the illegal industry’s influence was enmeshed in present state institutes and politics. As the candidate of the newly independent political movement *Nueva Amazonia*, Nancy Zamora was elected in 2002 as mayor of the district of Fósforo. Zamora was the first *alcaldesa* (—mayor) of the Fósforo district who lived in the village of Puerto Mal Abrigo and she was known for being accessible for the local population to address any problem. Previously, the mayors were unknown to the residents of the villages. Nancy Zamora stated:

“I’m the only *alcaldesa* in any of the Tocache province’s districts who walks the streets alone. Other authorities are walking around with armed bodyguards, who have to look out for their safety. I always thought this behavior was absurd. If you try to work with the people, get the people involved, nothing will happen to you. These villagers will only act violently and kill you if you try to deceive them.”⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Puerto Mal Abrigo, October 18, 2007.

⁹⁷ Conversation with local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora and husband Hector, Puerto Mal Abrigo, November 19, 2005.

During her time in office, Zamora tried to increase the inhabitants' participation in local politics. She started a decentralization project and established municipalities in the two largest population centers, Puerto Mal Abrigo and Nueva Vista. Before Fósforo, as the district capital, was the only city with a municipal office. To carry out her plans for decentralization, Nancy Zamora had to work with *alcaldes delegados* (deputy mayors), who assumed her duties when she stayed in other villages. Her efforts improved the relations between the local authorities and the population and enabled the authorities to directly monitor what happened in the district on a daily basis.

Because of the high degree of influence of national anti-drug policies and the monopoly that DEVIDA⁹⁸ had for initiating development projects in the district, other national development institutes had no representation in the district. Contributing to the underdevelopment of the district was the national rule that local authorities in these rural parts of the Upper Huallaga were not permitted to request funds from international sources (e.g., NGOs); it was required that all such requests and arrangements be mediated by DEVIDA. Thus, out of all of Tocache's districts, the Fósforo district receives the least economic support. Yet the Fósforo district was Tocache province's largest district, with 11,000 unofficial inhabitants. But only 1,040 people actually voted in the Fósforo district, while others travelled to their communities of origin to vote. The problem of inefficient funds of the local *alcaldesa* arose because money the municipality received from the FONCOMUN⁹⁹ was based on the numbers of voters. Therefore the district only received funds for 1,040 inhabitants, something that largely frustrated Zamora's plans.

Zamora proposed a plan of integral development, wherein the most important agricultural problems were addressed, including the absence of personal land ownership. With a personal land title, people would be able to get credits. Because of the lack of these land titles, peasants who wanted to diversify their products would go in vain to these institutes that handed out credits. The *alcaldesa* proposed a project in which the peasants could use credits to start small farms producing cocoa, coffee, palm trees, plantains and other crops that would enable them to sustain their livelihood in a legal way. But the state refused to approve the project because it did not include forced eradication of the coca crops. Thus, Fósforo's inhabitants remained dependent on DEVIDA's alternative development projects (see Chapter 6).

It was getting more and more difficult for many Peruvian local mayors or regional governments to get elected while supporting forced eradication of the coca crop (see Felbab-Brown 2006: 81). Therefore, the independent political party of *Nueva Amazonia* actively defended the right to cultivate coca. In the words of Nancy Zamora:

“*Nueva Amazonia*'s policies concerning the coca leaf are clear. We defend coca as a plant of our ancestors, in the same way that we defend the campesino cocalero. This plant offers the opportunity for a good livelihood in this district. We are often mistakenly seen as defenders of drug trafficking, or as guerrillas. This is not the truth, we are the district's communicators; we broadcast the idea that if we don't have development, if we don't have positive state intervention, the campesino is never going to exchange coca cultivation for another crop. We will always be a cocalero zone...”¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ DEVIDA: *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas*. National Commission for Development and Drug-Free Living; the Peruvian state institute in charge of the war on drugs (see Chapter 1 note 56).

⁹⁹ The *Fondo de Compensación Municipal* (Municipal Reimbursement Fund): An organization that directed transfers from the government to municipalities to support regional development (including projects to install sanitation and electricity).

¹⁰⁰ Interview with local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora, Puerto Mal Abrigo, November 21, 2005.

Even more importantly, *Nueva Amazonia* stated that the problem with the drug trade was a state problem but not a matter of local governance. When asked what she thought about the fight against drugs undertaken by the Peruvian state, Zamora firmly stated:

“Well, as a local authority I don’t have any function in the situation of drug traffic, or in the war against it. This is a problem of the national state and I don’t get involved...”¹⁰¹

Thus, those involved in the illegal cocaine industry could continue their activities and had nothing to fear from the local *alcaldesa*.

Because of her willingness to give the villagers a voice in local politics, because of her general involvement in the district’s life, and because of her opposition to DEVIDA’s eradication plans, Zamora became one of the most respected people in the district of Fósforo. She had also participated in different local, regional and national cocalero protests, which only increased her popularity. One cocalero said:

“Nancy Zamora has shown us that she is on the side of the cocaleros. She has shared her bread with us, slept next to us during the marches. She is a fighting woman and I think she has earned the respect of the population because of her attitude.”¹⁰²

Moreover, Zamora refused to cooperate with DEVIDA in carrying out forced eradication efforts. Out of the five districts of Tocache province, only the Fósforo district refused to sign the *Acuerdo Común* of 2002. In this *Acuerdo Común*, it was agreed that coca eradication would not be carried out by state agents, but that cocaleros would eradicate their own crops, which the cocaleros refused to do. But development projects would only start in the districts where the local *alcalde* had approved the *Acuerdo Común*. Government representatives were sent to the Fósforo district to convince the cocaleros to accept the *Acuerdo Común*. But before their arrival, Nancy Zamora visited different communities and hamlets and gave the inhabitants the choice of whether or not to accept the state’s offer.

3.5.3 Authority figures

In addition to the local mayor, all villages in the Fósforo district have a *teniente municipal* (community administrator), whose power is restricted to a particular village. These local political authority figures are elected during community meetings and frequently they were respected community members, who in one way or another contributed, or who were willing to contribute, to the community’s development. The influence and power of these *tenientes municipales* over the communities varied. In Puerto Mal Abrigo and Fósforo their influence was small, because these towns had their own municipal offices. In communities located further away from Mal Abrigo or Fósforo, people would make their demands during the community meetings and the *teniente municipal* would travel to Puerto Mal Abrigo or Fósforo to convey their demands. The *tenientes municipales* came from a variety of different backgrounds. Some were longtime residents who were widely respected, some were wealthy landowners, and some were even *patrones*, who often assumed the post in order to gain social recognition and create good will.¹⁰³ For example: During the 2002 communal elections, El Adusto was chosen by the majority of villagers for the position of *teniente municipal*. Villagers commented that El Adusto was the best choice because he showed a great commitment to the village and he was a reliable person. Yet it also appeared that he was

¹⁰¹ Interview with local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora, Puerto Mal Abrigo, November 21, 2005.

¹⁰² Interview with Carlos, 3 de Diciembre, December 25, 2004.

¹⁰³ See Vellinga 2004b: 12 on Bolivian *firmas*.

chosen because he had money that could possibly be used to contribute to infrastructure improvements in the village. El Adusto's position of *teniente municipal* in Mal Abrigo was primarily symbolic, and he generally kept out of politics.

Mal Abrigo also had a *Juez de Paz*. In 1999 a new law decreed that these *Jueces de Paz* be elected by the local population to administer justice. These judges were appointed by the villagers themselves but did form an official part of Peru's judicial system. Nationally, the *Jueces de Paz* were designated to handle legal cases which involved claims of less than 2,900 Nuevo Soles, some minor notarial claims, and claims of domestic violence. But in the Fósforo district, all claims were addressed by the *Juez de Paz*, since people mistrusted the "official" justice system. The majority of the *Jueces de Paz* do not have any formal legal education. Being elected depended on trust, honesty and respectability. Until the end of 2004, the Fósforo district had a *Jueza de Paz*, who attended local community meetings, helped the local cocalero association (see Chapter 4) with official documents and presided over civil and criminal cases. Because of her sheer enthusiasm and highly professional demeanor, the local inhabitants were pleased with her involvement in all these initiatives. But one day, she unexpectedly left the region. For several months, the village went without a *Juez de Paz*. But then it was decided to elect someone to fill the post. Mal Abrigo's villagers elected Don Emmanuel, a calm, middle-aged man. El Adusto supported Don Emmanuel and allowed him to use one of the hostel's rooms as an office. Don Emmanuel pushed some furniture aside, with the help of some villagers carried some heavy wooden benches inside, cleaned the desk, tacked the document with Don Emmanuel's credentials to the wall, and put a sign on the front door which read: *Juez de paz 9:00-12:00*. Don Emmanuel was ready to administer justice. Villagers entered freely to present their complaints or problems, and after the office's hours they knew they could find Don Emmanuel in the village, playing cards. Nobody seemed surprised or bothered by the fact that the office had been established in El Adusto's headquarters. None of the *Jueces de Paz* were expected to criticize the illegal activities that occurred right under their noses. Actually, this modus operandi helps explain why the population trusted the *Juez de Paz* to solve their problems, as some disputes involved coca, which gave the complainant no option other than going to the *Juez de Paz*.

For example: One day a cocalero from Piuca hurried to Don Emmanuel's office. When he saw us, he explained that he was looking for the *Juez* to solve a problem having to do with a stolen bag of coca leaves he had left behind in 3 de Diciembre. The people who were left in charge now denied ever having seen the bag. This cocalero couldn't travel to Tocache to make this claim in the regional police station, because the subject of his claim was an illegal bag of coca leaves. Illegal coca cultivation was a criminal activity according to Peruvian law, which made the cocaleros easy victims of crimes because they are in no position to report offenses committed against them. The only way to accuse the perpetrators was to go to the *Juez de Paz*. But there were also issues that the *Juez de Paz* did not get involved in; namely, issues involving *patrones* and criminals. Only by late 2006, when the hostel began to be used as a cocaine processing laboratory, did Emmanuel move his offices to a different location. But because of this defense or deliberate ignoring of the activities of the local cocaine industry, local officials such as the *alcaldes*, *alcaldes delegados*, and *Jueces de Paz* don't have a very good relationship with the authorities established in Tocache, as will be explained below.

3.5.4 The politics of the Tocache elite

In the Tocache Province, of which the Fósforo district is a part, the political scene is controlled by an elite that lives in the town of Tocache. During the first coca boom (end 1970s- 1999) an urban elite emerged that controlled the urban commercial opportunities.¹⁰⁴ In

¹⁰⁴ Often towns in the region are "gateway towns", as explained for Tingo María in Chapter 2, where the population is not exclusively dependent on agriculture. These towns are not cocaine-producing centers, but rather a commercial market where

towns such as Tocache and Uchiza, everybody, legally or illegally, benefited from the illegal money of the cocaine industry during the first coca boom, because even those who functioned within the legal economy were able to make a good deal of money because of the presence of the cocaine trade. In the town of Tocache, this power of the *tocachino* urban elite only somewhat declined during the coca bust (1999-2000), when many of them left the town of Tocache. Consequently the town was left abandoned. Those who stayed behind were hit hard when coca prices declined. Today, Tocache remains for the most part economically dependent on the illegal cocaine industry. Only when the second coca boom started (1999) did the economic elite return to Tocache. One cocalero said of this return migration:

“I can remember that there was a time when nobody wanted to live in Tocache. It was like a ghost town. They would rent you whole houses, beautiful homes. But now, with the return of the cultivation of coca in this region, the people came back to Tocache...well the old owners now tried to sell you their house for twice as much...Before people rented these houses to sell food or to start a shop... This only happened with the return of coca. Tocache only blossoms with the cultivation of coca...”¹⁰⁵

Nowadays, the regional elite denies their (former) involvement in the cocaine industry. All urban areas in the Upper Huallaga, including Huánuco, Tingo María, Uchiza and Tocache, had their own hostile, violent and unsafe countryside. The relations between the regional elite and the rural villagers continue to follow pervasive patterns of rural discrimination and established negative stigmatizations of the rural inhabitants. Even today, a discriminatory separation continues to be made between the “original” *tocachinos* and the *colonos*, who worked in the rural regions. The regional elite of Tocache continues to stigmatize the inhabitants of the Fósforo district as drug traffickers and guerrillas. This perception of the elite tended to reflect how the whole Upper Huallaga was perceived by the national press: As a lawless region of generalized violence where drug traffickers and *guerrilleros* lived and worked together (Kernaghan 2006: 130). These ongoing stigmatizations of the *colonos* as *narcos* and guerrillas was based on the urban concentrated presence of military, police and legal outposts of the Peruvian state and the countryside. In places such as the Fósforo district, however, the different state forces and institutions remain largely absent. The elite continues to display contemptuous attitudes toward the people of the Fósforo district, who are dependent on the market in Tocache to buy food and other essential items, and where they tend to be looked down upon and treated as criminals or subversives.

Because of the ongoing fear of the lawless and dangerous countryside, the urban elite totally controlled regional politics by installing *caciques* (local strongmen) in power. These *caciques* are usually wealthy men who exercise a high degree of political influence in the province. Consequently, in contrast to local politics, the inhabitants of the Fósforo district criticized the bureaucratic system established in Tocache. The rural inhabitants of the Fósforo district felt excluded from this power group. They also felt excluded from the regional political system. One local cocalero leader said:

“It shows that, in this region, there were always double standards. Well, how do they say it? They will drive the people living here into abject poverty; only a few

drug traffickers, producers and others involved in the drug trade come to shop. Because the state security forces have a larger presence in these towns those involved in the cocaine industry in these towns are forced to operate in a clandestine manner. Nevertheless, the economic activities in these towns are largely related with the cocaine industry.

¹⁰⁵ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Alto Mal Abrigo, September 15, 2005.

individuals will be able to earn money. To be honest and not holding anything back, not one *tocachino mafioso* will ever allow the people who are now living in this region, those who have worked on their *cocales*, their servants, and their *peones* to have a good position. Not one *cacique tocachino* allows the *cholos*,¹⁰⁶ those who have come to Tocache to conquer the countryside, to have a political position, not one of them...”¹⁰⁷

Hence, regional policies that were seen as important and decisive were controlled by the elite in the Province capital, Tocache.

Because Pedro Bogarín, the regional *alcalde* of the independent political movement *Ahora el Sol* from 2002-2006, was part of the regional elite, he neglected to negotiate with the rural inhabitants. He did sign the *Acuerdo Común*, something that the local *alcaldesa* Nancy Zamora refused. This *Acuerdo Común* meant that the entire Tocache province (including the Fósforo district) would cooperate with the national programs of (forced) coca eradication and alternative development. The signing of the agreement resulted in Tocache province receiving money from international sources for the purposes of alternative development. But this aid was rejected by Fósforo’s cocaleros, because they knew from previous experience that aid for development would only be given in exchange for the eradication of coca. These programs always included a component of forced eradication. But in the post-conflict period, something changed in these power relations, as the rural cocalero association began to organize protest actions (see Chapters 4 and 5).

In contrast, it was surprising to see that local drug lords of the Fósforo district had good relations and bonds with this regional elite. If seen from the side of the local *patrones*, this really was not surprising, but instead was in their own self-interest. By forming close relationships with the regional elite and, more importantly, the political elite, the *patrones* widened their base of support and solidified their own position within local society (see Hess 1998). This support was often based on mutual friendships. The discrimination was mainly directed against the *peones*, cocaleros, and other agricultural workers. Moreover, the state security forces, as will be described below, also tended to stigmatize those who lived and worked in rural areas.

3.5.5 Military and police forces

As seen above, the established patterns of discrimination between the urban towns and the countryside by the elite of Tocache were also based on the relative presence of state security forces in the two areas. But in sharp contrast, local villagers frequently remarked that, if it were not for the presence of police and soldiers, their region would be an *El Dorado* (since they would be able to earn more money without the interference of the legal authorities). In the Fósforo district, state institutes, such as police and development agencies, are absent. The military is the exception, as a base is located on the hilltop overlooking Puerto Mal Abrigo. The soldiers’ presence doesn’t have a significant influence on the village. It is interesting that in the literature about the internal armed conflict, the military is generally defined as the most violent state security force (see CVR 2003). But Fósforo’s inhabitants clearly had learned to live with the military’s presence. The military’s involvement in the community’s security and control was linked to participation in the *ronda campesina* of Puerto Mal Abrigo (see Chapter 7). Moreover, at present, the young men that were recruited as soldiers mainly come from the San Martín department, and are thus familiar with the jungle region and the communities’ mores. The soldiers frequently spend their free time in Puerto

¹⁰⁶ *Cholos*: term to indicate to dark-skinned people from the Andes, usually used in reference to migrants to the cities (see Albó 2004: 21; García 2005). The term generally has a pejorative connotation.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with local cocalero leader, Santa María de Frontera, November 28, 2005.

Mal Abrigo or Santa María de Frontera, visit the local bars, and flirt with local girls. In doing so, they integrate themselves into these communities. The relations between the *firmas* and the soldiers became apparent, as some soldiers purchased and delivered groceries for the local *patrones* in order to earn extra money. Even the local commander walked through Puerto Mal Abrigo without guards.

But this largely changed in late-2005, when Shining Path made a statement indicating their intention to murder “corrupt state officials” and carried out several armed actions in the Upper Huallaga, all of which were directed against the police. From then on, there were increased security measures for military personnel in the Upper Huallaga. The military did not show any sign of preoccupation about the illegal cocaine trade that was going on right under their noses, as their primary mission entailed the prevention of a Shining Path resurgence. It was thought in government circles that any active military participation in the war on drugs would drive the population back into the arms of the guerrillas. Successive military commanders, who were changed every year in an attempt to counter corruption, seemed to have very friendly connections with the local *patrones* who, after a change in command, were the first to be visited by the new commander. Hence, this relationship implies that, in these cocalero zones, corruption has penetrated the military base (see Soberón 2007^a). None of the military commanders were worried about the cocaine industry. On the contrary, since they seemed to be profiting from it.

A close examination at the police presence in the region leads to a somewhat surprising revelation. Although the Fósforo district is part of the San Martín department, in terms of the internal organization of the Peruvian police, the Province of Tocache falls under the jurisdiction of the Huánuco department (*Comisión Multipartidaria* 2004: 76). The reason for this is unclear, although it might have something to do with fostering cooperation to combat drug trafficking. Relations between the cocaleros and police forces are characterized by mutual dislike and mistrust. A distinction must be made here between the permanent police forces, who were based in Tocache, and those who entered the region temporarily during forced eradication operations along with CORAH¹⁰⁸ forces. The permanent police had their police station in town of Tocache. They were engaged in patrolling the roads leading into and out of the town, but remained close to the town and did not venture into the district. They only entered the Fósforo district after a murder was committed, or when they functioned as security guards for NGO workers or regional and national authorities travelling through the district. In 2007, the majority of the Shining Path’s attacks targeted victims among these permanent police forces. The inhabitants see these permanent police forces as being heavily involved in drug trafficking, arguing that they were either active participants themselves, or that they were usually willing to accept bribes from those who were actively involved in the drug trade. As seen above, *patrones* paid large bribes to the commander and the officials who were on duty on the specific day the *traqueteros* were transporting cocaine.¹⁰⁹ El Adusto frequently travelled from Puerto Mal Abrigo to Tocache but never forgot to give the officers on duty a bottle of alcohol or money.¹¹⁰ In the Upper Huallaga, the illegitimate behavior of the police forces is so endemic that it became part of their normal practices. Because the cocaine industry is capable of “buying the soul of the people”¹¹¹ a policeman officially cannot stay more than a year in this zone, after which he is sent to another part of the country.

¹⁰⁸ *Control y Reducción del Cultivo de la Coca en el Alto Huallaga*: Special Project for the Control and Eradication of Coca in the Upper Huallaga. Agency in charge of the eradication of the coca fields within Law 22095 (see Chapter 2).

¹⁰⁹ Conversation with El Adusto, Puerto Mal Abrigo, February 10, 2005, who also once said that the police forces were those that earned the most money, although he did not elaborate on that statement.

¹¹⁰ Fieldwork observation during my trip to Tocache with El Adusto, where a car loaded with chemicals needed to process cocaine was following us. Therefore, El Adusto had to pay bribes, so that the loaded car would be allowed to pass through.

¹¹¹ See “*La Vendetta de Ocobamba*” Caretas (Lima) November 6, 2007.

The state's fear of a new outbreak of violence after the internal armed conflict remained permanent, as preparation to prevent such an outbreak also permeates the daily life of all villagers, in the form of police checkpoints where guards demand identification and search and interrogate everybody who enters the region.¹¹² When travelling through the Upper Huallaga, one frequently encounters police checkpoints, where *colectivos* are often searched for cocaine, a process that may take up to several hours if the driver of the vehicle refuses to pay a bribe. The officers who patrol checkpoints are often seen as abusive, corrupt and violent. In the words of one woman:

“Adelanto was the place where the fat, abusive *tombo* [policeman] had his post. Several of us travelled by car: A campesino, a *campesino de chacra* [small-scale peasant], not one of us were big shots. He had 300 soles and 500 dollars. The police stopped the car and asked everybody to step out, starting to search the old campesino. Seeing his dollars, they questioned him: ‘Why are you travelling with dollars, if you aren’t a *gringo*?’ they shouted. They intended to rob his money, their normal practice. They shouted that he was a *tradicante* because he travelled with dollars. The man cried and told them it was to buy things for his home and give money to his son who was studying in Tingo. He sold his coca, therefore he had the dollars. The rest of the passengers pleaded with the fat *tombo* to let him go. But he responded: ‘This man has to be imprisoned’. We managed to prevent this, but he did steal \$100 from the man.”¹¹³

As seen in this quotation, it was especially rural villagers involved in the lower echelons of the cocaine trade who were frequently criminalized, both by the police, the regional authorities and in the regional public discourse, as seen in Tocache above. Therefore the police were able to continue their repressive practices in the name of their fight against the cocaine industry.¹¹⁴ The lower echelons involved in the illegal cocaine industry remain the main victims, while crimes committed by the local elites, such as large-scale drug traffickers, *poza* owners and *patrones*, can continue their practices with impunity. For example: To avoid long-prison sentences, captured *poza* owners paid large bribes to police:

“On one occasion, my husband, together with various men, was arrested for working in a *poza*. The police arrested him and I just waited, not sure what I was supposed to do. Eight days later, I went to the police station and I spoke with the policeman in charge. I asked if there was an opportunity to release my husband. ‘Yes’, he responded, ‘if you bring me 1,000 soles and 0,25 kilo of cocaine’. ‘But if I bring you the drugs, you will detain me as well’, I responded, ‘so I will give you half of the money and the drugs, after I see my husband, I will give you the other half’. This was how it happened...they threw my husband out wearing nothing but his underpants.”¹¹⁵

Moreover, in contrast to the military, the police forces don't participate in any of the local self-defense initiatives, stigmatizing them as Shining Path's attempts to regroup in the valley (see Chapter 7).

But some inhabitants had found humorous ways to deal with the police corruption. One day, after one of *Pepa*'s trips to bring legal coca leaves to the ENACO¹¹⁶ office in Tingo

¹¹² See Pereira 2003; Poole 2004.

¹¹³ Conversation with Doña Juruá, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 14, 2007.

¹¹⁴ See Davis and Pereira 2003; Frühling 2003.

¹¹⁵ Conversation with Doña Chavela, Alto Mal Abrigo, October 17, 2007.

¹¹⁶ Empresa Nacional de la Coca: state entity charged with the authorization to buy and sell legal coca.

María, we saw him walking through Mal Abrigo with a big smile on his face. As usually happened, he had been stopped by a police patrol during this trip. The police officers never asked directly for the bribe. Instead, they asked for money for soft drinks or food, for example. Police typically say that “they cannot buy luxury items with their low salaries”.¹¹⁷ The police threatened to search *Pepa*’s whole carload of coca leaves. They said that if they found one leaf that was illegal, he would have to pay a bribe. The police officer demanded money for soft drinks in exchange for foregoing the search of the truck. *Pepa* had quickly searched his pockets and had found 50 cents, which he gave to the police officer. When the officer protested the small amount, *Pepa* remarked that this was the price of a soft drink in Mal Abrigo. The officer would have to visit this village because obviously prices were lower. In *Pepa*’s story, the police officer just watched him in silence, staring, knowing that entering Mal Abrigo as a policeman would entail certain dangers.

3.6 Cocaine as a daily reality

The end of the internal armed conflict in the Upper Huallaga coincided with the coca bust and the breakdown of several Colombian cartels. But with the illegal drug industry’s second boom the obscure, incomprehensible, secretive, indistinguishable situation, once again penetrated every aspect of social life. The “million dollar industry” in these margins of the state created stigmatizations and dubious stereotypes of the local inhabitants. But in reality, the population of these *narcopueblos* consists of numerous groups, with different relations, bonds and diverse motives. The *colono* category includes people from the *selva*, Lima, coastal cities, highland peasants, and others, who for the most part ended up in the region as a result of successive national economic crises.¹¹⁸ As time passed, migrants became even more diverse in their provenance. They came to include, among others, victims of the internal armed conflict who fled their place of origin, conflict victims who returned to the valley, urban or rural migrants who wanted to settle in the district, and migrants who were only temporarily residing in the district. It is striking that, even today, national fear is mainly directed against this stigmatized “other” working in the lower echelons of the cocaine industry, including the *peones* and cocaleros.

Locally, people understand the cocaine industry, violence and illegality in very different ways, depending on socially constructed identities, context, location, and personal experience with violence.¹¹⁹ The population’s experiences with conflict and state repression, combined with various forms of other violence, led to adaptation to these processes and changes in the social structure. To better comprehend the local situation and the embeddedness of the illegal industry in these *narcopueblos*, it is important to analyze the structures and relations of the actors involved in the cocaine trade, as the ongoing domination of the illegal industry in the Fósforo district led to changing ideas, thoughts, attitudes, behavior and actions.¹²⁰ In these cocaine enclaves, there are numerous social and political practices that do not exist in the formal system (see Vilas 2004).

It is important to remember that, within the make-up of the cocaine industry, some important changes had occurred. The *firmas* that took over the cocaine industry have a different style of operation than the drug lords in the epoch of the big Colombian cartels. The *firmas* tend to maintain a much lower profile, conduct their operations in a more cautious manner, and organize their activities more informally. After the collapse of the Colombian

¹¹⁷ This was a sentence everybody travelling through the Upper Huallaga heard several times a day, because of the numerous police checkpoints.

¹¹⁸ See Parkerson 1989 on Bolivia.

¹¹⁹ See Moser and McIlwaine 2004; Nordstrom and Robben 1995.

¹²⁰ See Bernales and Rumrill 1989. See Appendix C for a comprehensive overview of all those involved in the cocaine industry in the Fósforo district.

cartels, the local situation began to look like the situation in the Chapare (Bolivia), where the absence of large-scale violence is largely related to the domination of small and large-scale drug trafficking by organizations characterized by close family and long-established business ties (see Vellinga 2004: 6). The Peruvian *firmas* that have been described in this chapter were for the most part led by men with a long presence in the region. They operated like the traditional mafia and were organized around close familial and friendship bonds. All of the *firmas*' members and even the *patrones* were men from lower- and middle-class backgrounds, who had worked their way up the hierarchy of the illegal cocaine industry. These groups are not organized along strictly hierarchical lines, since they are open for cooperation with other *firmas* and have many local associates that invest their money in cocaine. Because of the presence of these new *firmas*, drug smuggling and trafficking became socially accepted behavior, and gave way to an explosive growth of criminal underground economies.¹²¹

As Leeds (2007) notes on Brazilian *favelas*, the relationships between the villagers and the drug *patrones* is complex, reciprocal and to some degree mutually beneficial. In the Fósforo district, contact and a good rapport with villagers became important, as these local *patrones* ability to continue their work depends on the cooperation of the villagers. Only when threatened, mostly by outside criminal groups, did *patrones* sometimes feel that they had no other option than to use violent methods to defend their business. When the old-established *patrones* were threatened by growing violence, the general feeling of insecurity increased. When some of the *patrones* left, people began to comment that they were worse off, as these new groups were seen as consisting of drunk, cruel men who didn't have any bonds with the local population. Hence, the assertion that the presence of an illegal industry in the post-conflict period will always lead to violence appears to be false. As long as these illegal/informal structures were not threatened from the outside (i.e., by state-led anti-drug operations, criminal groups) large parts of the local population characterized their quality of life as good.

Bonds and relations were also formed between these illegal forces and the legal authorities. Local authorities integrated the coca industry into their policies and refused any national policy that would endanger this illegal business. Zambrano's (1994: 77) description of mafia practices, as "criminal networks that are spread out in a network of local agents and bosses in municipal districts where, using traditional godfather ties and offering their services to the local people and politicians, achieve a great popularity and, in some cases, establish a powerful social base", perfectly described the local situation. But the illegal cocaine industry also fosters corruption of police forces and [...] the military, leading to pronounced discontent with these state forces among the population (Sobérón 2005: 188). As Jacobs (2000: 125) remarks on areas largely involved in drug dealing in the US, in these involved regions, law is present (although in the Fósforo district largely restricted to the urban areas), "but not granted legitimacy, such as when police are perceived to be an occupying force, or when the formal authority is perceived to be capricious, random and inequitable". Given the failure to reinstate a state presence and control in the post-conflict period, the Fósforo district remained dominated by the illegal cocaine industry.

Many scholars¹²² fail to look beyond the notion of the coca leaf as an Andean *costumbre* and follow stereotypical characterizations of the inhabitants of the Upper Huallaga. The current scholarly debate merely focuses on coca in Andean culture but ignores the embedding of the cocaine industry in the involved regions. They place the Upper Huallaga's cocaleros in a criminal discourse contrasting them with the notion of coca as a part of the "ethnic" highland culture. Nevertheless, this one-sided view fails to explore how and why the cocaine industry has become a normal part of daily reality in the involved regions. Moreover,

¹²¹ See Drake and Hershberg 2006: 22; Vellinga 2004b: 3 on the Andean cocaine trade.

¹²² See Dean 2002; Mayer 2002.

these scholarly notions based on Andean *costumbre* create a “state of exception” wherein the inhabitants of the Upper Huallaga cannot be seen as part of the country’s citizenry; on the contrary, they are seen as criminals or those who live outside the country’s laws. These kind of stigmas did cause the local post-conflict reconstruction efforts to experience additional difficulties in becoming integrated into civil society (see Chapter 4 and 5), which can lead to partial conflict settlements that can severely disrupt local peace if *criminalized* by the state.

As a consequence of the illegal cocaine industry’s presence, the villagers of the Fósforo district were placed outside the national post-conflict reconstruction, reparation and reconciliation programs. Especially in these rural areas of the Upper Huallaga, the state was never able to control the population’s daily behavior (Migdal 1988: 261). The region had become a prototypical “state of exception” during the country’s internal armed conflict and continued to be so in the country’s post-conflict period. In general, it is assumed that to “live in insecurity, with the sensation of a permanent threat, or close to pain and death, all contribute to the breakdown of basic solidarity, and commiseration with the suffering of others” (Torres-Rivas 1999: 294). In the Fósforo district, however, the situation of endemic insecurity led to another change. The repression of the lower echelons involved in the cocaine industry began to provoke a variety of collective responses. As will be described in the following chapters, the resumption of forced eradication immediately after the internal armed conflict provided community leaders with the resources to organize the villagers and different social sectors took on a new collective identity, which was based upon the one thing that had excluded them for the national programs; coca cultivation.

4. Local conflict legacies and post-conflict reconstruction

Given the fact that in post-conflict Peru, the Fósforo district remained a no-man's land, one can argue that it became the Achilles heel of the national post-conflict peace and reconstruction process. One fieldwork experience perfectly encapsulated the region's post-conflict process. In 2005, when I visited the *Centro de Información para la Memoria Colectiva y los Derechos Humanos*,¹ an office in Lima of the *Defensoría del Pueblo*,² where the information gathered by the National Truth and Reconciliation Commission (August 2003) could be viewed, I was astonished by pictures I saw there of a meeting that had been held in Tocache. The photos showed a venue equipped to accommodate hundreds of affected persons and observers. But it also illustrated that only five of the numerous seats were occupied, certainly no sign of mass participation of the population. None of the cases that the *Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación* (CVR) gathered came from this region. Seeing my surprise, one of the employees tried to explain the general absence of any written record of victims' testimonies in the Tocache region and, not wanting to disturb the other visitors, whispered, "Many of these cases were tried in a criminal court, because they involved accusations against *narcos*. Out of consideration for the safety of witnesses in these cases, their testimonies weren't made public". But it was precisely this secrecy that enabled the residents of the region to live in harmony following more than a decade of internal conflict. For example, in the national truth and reconciliation commission's report, the Upper Huallaga was described as a place where the internal armed conflict's negative influence was felt in a complex scenario in which Shining Path, drug traffickers, and cocaleros all acted side by side. But did this actually represent the experience of the inhabitants? Although the truth and reconciliation commission's report broadly described the historical background and entrance of Shining Path, it left the most important question unanswered: How had people been able to survive in this situation? To understand what happened in post-conflict Fósforo, it is important to describe how the preceding violence was understood by the inhabitants. This description will enable us to attain a deeper understanding of both the conditions in which peace had to be constructed, and of the various ways that people have tried to cope with the violence that surrounded them (see Pouliquen *et al.* 2007).

It should be noted that when I entered the district for my first long-term field period in 2004, a distinctive narrative of the internal armed conflict, which in the Upper Huallaga had ended about four years earlier, had for the most part already taken shape among the local population. Theidon (2000: 541) notes that, in post-conflict societies, "memory is central to questions such as, 'Who are we?', 'What have we done and why?', and 'What sorts of stories do we tell ourselves and others about the past?'" To answer these questions with respect to the Upper Huallaga, it is important to analyze how the social, economic, and geographical location plays a role in the construction of memory and the local conception of justice (Laplante and Theidon 2007: 243). It must of course be recognized that personal memory is a slippery medium, as it entails not only personally lived experiences, but also incorporates second-hand experiences, resulting in expansion of memory and integration of past events that have, in some cases, not been directly experienced.³ Therefore, the use of the term "collective memory", which is defined as "incorporating knowledge, beliefs, behavior patterns, feelings and emotions conveyed and received in social interaction, in processes of socialization, and in the cultural practice of a group" (Jelin 2003: 9), might appear to be a more useful heuristic for

¹ Information Center for Collective Memory and Human Rights of the Ombudsman's Office.

² Ombudsman's Office.

³ See Jelin 2003: 4; Kalyvas 2006: 408.

the present study. But this term entails a widely shared view among a well-defined group, and the reality that I encountered is that there was no one widely shared view of the recent past among residents of the Fósforo district. Instead, there were several different versions of local memory. Therefore, in this chapter I will employ the category of “social memory”, which describes the “images of the past that commonly legitimate a present social order” (Connerton 1989: 12). As will be shown, people strategically used social memories to construct community feelings, thereby marginalizing or even suppressing events that do not fit an *a priori* constructed narrative (see Robben 1995).⁴ The social memory of Fósforo residents offers an insight into the connections and disconnections between the population’s memory and the national one, but it also shows that the population tried to frame their own social memory within the context of the national debate (Pouigny *et. al* 2007).

The question that arose among the residents of the Upper Huallaga was: How do you reconstruct a community without any direct support from national projects of post-conflict reconstruction?⁵ This is the question that will be the focus of the present chapter. Due to the continuation of the cocaine industry in the Upper Huallaga’s rural areas (analyzed in the previous chapter), scholars and government officials follow stereotypical characterizations of the inhabitants. Because of these stigmatizations and state neglect, national projects of reconstruction were largely absent in the Fósforo district. The case of the Fósforo district will demonstrate that peace can be established locally without any involvement on the part of the national government. Nowadays current and former guerrillas and current and former soldiers live side by side in peace. The leitmotif of the present chapter is a statement by Theidon (2003; 76): “Every community constructs a past for itself, as much to construct a sense of collectivity as to present a coherent identity to those on the outside”. This chapter will also show how the terms “reconstruction” and “reconciliation” change over time, and also how these terms are perceived locally, leading to new “community feelings”. In order to build a new sense of community, in this local scene questions like who was the perpetrator and who were the victims constituted a potentially volatile Pandora’s Box. The question was not so much one of morality and justice but rather of “what would work” in terms of rehabilitating shattered communities in the aftermath of the internal conflict. It was widely felt that fostering old resentments would not be conducive to recovery, but that it would make matters infinitely worse.

The present chapter is divided into four sections. Primarily, because the local events during the internal armed conflict remained largely obscured by national initiatives, stories about this period are chronologically described, explaining the stages in Fósforo’s internal armed conflict. Section 2 describes that the villagers don’t share the assumption widely held among Peruvians that there were strong relations in the district between drug traffickers, the villagers and Shining Path. Instead, the villagers tended to blame the cocaine industry and widespread corruption for problems in the district. The lack of national post-conflict policies created a population that was largely disapproving of the “official” truth. In section three, it is described how the villagers themselves started to re-build their villages, re-construct their lives and re-construct a new sense of community. It is argued there that forgiving and

⁴ In her study, Jelin (2003: xv) makes a number of observations about memory that are relevant to the present context: “First, memories are understood as subjective processes anchored in symbolic and material markers. Secondly, memories are the object of disputes, conflicts, and struggles. [...] Third, memories must be looked at historically: that is, there is a need to ‘historicize’ memories, which is to say that the meaning attached to the past change over time and are part of a larger, complex social and political scenario”.

⁵ During the country’s post-conflict period, it was not the main preoccupation of the majority of Peruvians how to construct their community without national projects of reconstruction (as the majority of Peruvians live in the coastal region, where most violence of Shining Path had a different character, consisted of sporadic violent attacks and there was no area under total control of the guerrillas as in Peru’s hinterlands). The Upper Huallaga is an exception, even among those regions that were once controlled by Shining Path, because in the Upper Huallaga the state never entered in the post-conflict period (in contrast to the Ayacucho department where several projects of post-conflict reconstruction were started).

forgetting were necessary to be able to live together peacefully, reconstruct villages, and create new community feelings. Section four describes how the dominance of the illegal cocaine industry and a resumption of forced eradication programs played a large role in the construction of a new dynamic post-conflict collective identity.

4.1 The armed conflict in the Fósforo district

4.1.1 Initial campesinos' support and growing discontent with Shining Path

This section will attempt to provide an overview of the stages of the internal armed conflict in the Fósforo district. The information in this section draws on the memories of Fósforo's inhabitants. It is hoped that these memories will engender an understanding of the regional difficulties in the post-conflict processes and how these difficulties influenced the people's choices after the internal armed conflict. In order to appreciate what happened in the post-conflict period, it is important to show the differences between the CRAH (*Comité Regional del Alto Huallaga*) and Shining Path operations elsewhere in Peru. According to testimony recorded by the CVR, the first guerrillas arriving in their district were strangers from regions like Ayacucho, Huancavelica and Pasco.⁶ A community leader from Aucayacu unequivocally stated that the first guerrillas who arrived in the community were from Chile and were not even Peruvians.⁷ Another statement that I often heard repeated was that the people who arrived to raise the awareness of the population were radical university students from Lima:

“Who were the people in charge of the guerrilla forces? It was people from the universities. That's why it makes me angry when they say that the people from *La Cantuta*⁸ weren't guerrillas. Clearly they were, but nobody wants to call his child—his own flesh and blood—a *guerrillero*....”⁹

All these statements must be taken with caution. It would be a gross distortion to describe Shining Path's entrance as a revolution from the “outside”, directed by “strangers” and to be blind to the participation of Upper Huallaga's population in the internal armed conflict.¹⁰ Many inhabitants stated that, during the internal armed conflict, they were caught between the armed actors but, on the other hand, they were suspected by each side of belonging to the other side. In the words of one cocalero:

“There were the army and the guerrillas, which meant that we were living daily with threats from either side. One couldn't do anything because we knew that both sides would punish us. If you wanted to help the army, you would be punished by Shining Path, and vice versa.”¹¹

⁶ Ayacucho, Huancavelica and Pasco are highland departments where Shining Path had established its presence. It was in the Ayacucho department that the Shining Path movement first arose in 1980; thereafter, it established itself in the other highland departments.

⁷ Conversation with Gabriel Romero, Aucayacu, May 23, 2005.

⁸ *La Cantuta* is a popular name for the “Universidad Nacional de Educación Enrique Guzmán y Valle”, one of the many universities in Lima. Because of its location in one of Lima's popular *barrios*, and the fact that most of its students came from the country's marginalized highlands, the university was a support base for both Shining Path and the MRTA during the internal armed conflict.

⁹ Conversation with Héctor, Puerto Mal Abrigo, November 21, 2005.

¹⁰ The statement that the guerrillas were people from the “outside” or even “foreigners” was popular among the affected population in the department of Ayacucho as well. The CVR (2003: 340) notes that the construction of social memory also led to the assertion that the *senderistas* were all foreigners.

¹¹ Interview with Andrés, Alto Mal Abrigo, October 25, 2004.

But as Theidon (2006: 439) says, this too “would be a simplistic reading that would reduce this to a war between the guerrilla forces and the armed forces, while seeing the villagers as helplessly caught between ‘the two armies’, ignoring their role in the conflict”. As Weinstein (2007: 90) says regarding the Upper Huallaga, only some previously formed cadres came to the region but the vast majority of Shining Path members were recruited locally. Shining Path had no other option than to include the locals into their ranks. If the guerrillas wanted to continue to control the coca trade, they needed extensive and sustained civilian labor (Weinstein 2007: 192) which could only be supplied by the local population. Consequently, a large proportion of the local population became involved in one way or another.

When Shining Path gained power and eventually dominated the Upper Huallaga’s rural zones, the inhabitants’ social reality changed. When the guerrillas’ power increased, “everybody” wanted to have a relationship with the guerrillas and spoke about “the revolution”, although the majority had no real grasp of the Shining Path’s revolutionary ideology. The youth of the region were especially in search of a new identity aimed at fighting backwardness, abandonment and marginality.¹² In the Upper Huallaga, the demographics also helped shape the membership in the guerrilla movement (Weinstein 2007: 122). The region experienced a massive migration starting in the 1970s, during the time of the coca boom. As a consequence, when Shining Path entered, the majority of the population consisted of recently arrived young adults. Shining Path’s growing influence on these adolescents followed the same social logic as their attraction to the illegal cocaine industry. In the beginning of the coca boom, people involved in the drug trade had acquired a heightened social status based on their wealth. One could become a small-scale drug trafficker, frequently including the possession of a shotgun, which in the eyes of the adolescents implied having more power and a higher status. In those days “everybody” wanted to be identified as part of the illegal drug business, because as a dangerous drug trafficker nobody dared bother you. The growing cocaine industry had already brought numerous adolescents and young adults into the cocaine industry as small-scale traffickers, armed guards or in other roles. But in 1986-1987 during the height of the coca boom, the jobs in the higher echelons of the cocaine industry were performed by the Colombians, which severely curtailed the young persons’ dreams of achieving social mobility through participation in drug trafficking.

It was at this same time Shining Path entered and the young people now felt that participation in the guerrilla movement provided a new opportunity for them to change their lives for the better, as expressed in the following quotation:

“...without this uniform they were just like everyone else; they didn’t matter, didn’t get attention. They were nothing...”¹³

Shining Path recruited mainly among adolescent males in the local population. Membership in Shining Path enabled these youth to carry guns and exercise power in villages and communities (Degregori 1998: 130). According to Kernaghan (2006: 56) in Upper Huallaga’s urban areas, “the urban guerrilla posts were occupied by no more than scrappy band of post-high school age kids in love with their own guns, who were more famous for charming the local girls and gunning down drifters on the off-handed chance that they might be informers, than for strictly enforcing *sendero* law”. The situation was similar in the rural areas. In these early days, these *guerrilleros* were said to get the most beautiful girls and the best clothes, and they were respected by the inhabitants. These were all possibilities that weren’t achievable as campesinos, and not even as cocaleros:

¹² See Degregori 1998: 130; Del Pino 1998: 161 on Ayacucho.

¹³ Interview with Don Juan Espinoza, Diluvio, October 7, 2004.

“In those days, everybody wanted to be a guerrilla leader. They boasted, they felt proud. They arrived at someone’s house and were given meals and other things. They were treated with respect. People liked terrorism. You could even say that they lived off terrorism. You didn’t have to work if you were a *terrucos*.¹⁴ You could just walk into a restaurant and they would give you a free meal. You would go to a clothing shop and say that you liked a pair of trousers, and they would give them to you. You could have any girl you wanted. This is what we call the power of the gun.”¹⁵

As seen here, participation in the Shining Path not only entailed material gain but greatly enhanced social status. A young cocalero recalled the days after he returned to the Fósforo district in 1991, after he had been enlisted in the military and was based in the department of Tumbes, on the northern border with Ecuador. He was approached by several peers who tried to convince him to participate in the “Popular War”. The guerrillas were interested in recruiting him because of his military experience:

“[...] they didn’t say I would have to participate in their war against the state. They only said that I could live better if I joined... I could have more money if I joined, because at that time I was working in my *chacra*, which in their eyes meant I was a poor man. They tried to persuade me. They said: ‘You know about weaponry, so you can become the boss of a firing squad, with 100 men at your disposal’... They tried to get you to believe their dreams, talking about the Old State and how they would change everything!”¹⁶

At first sight, it appears that the main objective for joining Shining Path was economic, as during the coca boom, a better economic position meant more prestige. Even within the guerrilla ranks, “just being a campesino” was considered to be a position of lower status, and being a guerrilla implied a dramatic leap forward. Hence, membership in the guerrilla forces became prestigious because it provided wealth derived from the cocaine trade (Weinstein 2007: 157-158). But support for the guerrilla movement wasn’t limited to the region’s young adults. In the beginning, Shining Path enjoyed widespread support among the whole population of the Upper Huallaga Valley.

As common criminality flourished alongside the coca boom that began in the 1970s, civilians increasingly became threatened by the Colombian drug traffickers and the numerous new *colonos* entering to compete over the cocaine business (Weinstein 2007: 255). To stop these abuses, Shining Path cadres put in place a system of rules and punishments. These measures increased the group’s popularity among the civilians of the region. The population saw the guerrillas as “peacekeepers” who dispensed justice in a lawless region. As they had done in the Peruvian *sierra*, Shining Path instituted punishments and penalties for those deemed undesirable, such as *fumones*;¹⁷ homosexuals; thieves; women suspected of sexual relations with police or the military; *traqueteros* who deceived cocaleros; and adulterers. The majority of those accused of violating the imposed guerrillas’ rules were recent *colonos* who had entered the region during the height of the coca boom to participate in the cocaine trade. In many cases, such offenders were murdered. Punishment of these groups was widely supported by the population, who saw such measures as justified to prevent the violence and social chaos the new *colonos* caused. To put it more strongly, the elimination of these

¹⁴ *Terrucos* term used for guerrillas derived from the Spanish word *terrorista* (terrorist).

¹⁵ Interview with Héctor, who was one of the oldest migrants still living in the Fósforo district, November 21, 2005.

¹⁶ Interview with Luis Paredes, Alto Mal Abrigo, September 26, 2004.

¹⁷ *Fumones*: term used for the cocaine/crack addicts.

elements was seen as exactly what society needed. The villagers' initial support for this "social cleansing" wasn't specific to the Upper Huallaga, but was also seen in the area of the *sierra* that Shining Path controlled. One cocalero remembered:

"A rapist was executed, and other criminals received the same punishment. The *terrucos* came from Lurigancho, Callao, Barrancos [popular *barrios* in Lima]...These people had been outcasts in Lima. Here these people behaved honestly, decently, like real workers... In these times, nobody stole anything—a big difference from what was going on before. These people who were once outcasts came to our region, found another reality and became decent people... If we advised them that some people were violating the rules, they killed them in a second..."¹⁸

In this region, where disorganization, violence and injustice were threatening the population, the rules and norms of the guerrillas were welcomed. Moreover, the population became active participants in Shining Path's "popular trials", where they could freely vent their scorn for the accused, the majority of whom were newly arrived migrants and thus unfamiliar people.

But Shining Path's "social cleansing" encompassed another category, the so-called *soplón*. In general these *soplones* were alleged informers, but this category could be applied to any random suspect on the spur of the moment (Kernaghan 2006: 320). To be called a *soplón* was the worst accusation, as for the villagers it was a category that often simply referred to "enemies of Shining Path" and being categorized in this way typically marked the accused for exile or summary execution. Second chances were rarely given. Increasingly, the *soplón* category was used to punish opponents and innocents alike with the death sentence. It was at this point that the arbitrary application of social cleansing broke with the strict moral codes and rules the guerrillas had initially brought to the villages, and seemed to suggest that control and terror were being used as ends in their own right. It was this increasingly arbitrary use of terror that in fact began to alienate the population of the regions that the Shining Path controlled—and that also increasingly angered the nation as a whole.

Box 4.1 Betrayed by friends and neighbors

Don Juan lived in Colina Alta, a little community close to the town of Aucayacu, where he had been involved in coca cultivation. When the guerrillas entered his community, he thought that his survival depended on his actively participating in Shining Path activities. When he was asked to fill several positions within the guerrilla ranks, he never refused. He reached the level of commissar, a high-ranking position that involved informing the Party about traitors and keeping the guerrilla leaders apprised of military activities. People who made negative comments about the guerrilla force could be denounced by commissars and then punished during a "popular trial". He indicated that at that time, mere rumors could result in the accused person being executed. For Don Juan, problems arose when he himself was accused of treason. He remembered that a majority of those who were his present neighbors and friends almost voted in favor of his death sentence: "I was never so frightened in my entire life... They asked the people: 'What will we do with this traitor?' All the people who were present that day started to scream: 'Death!' What surprised me more was that my neighbors were screaming as well. These were people who lived next to me. These were my friends."¹⁹ He was rescued by one of his neighbors, who at the last moment voted against the accusations and declared that Don Juan was innocent. After this incident, he had one thing on his mind: escape the arbitrary and violent guerrilla rule that threatened his survival. Pursued by the *guerrilleros* of Aucayacu, he decided it was better to live peacefully in Diluvio,²⁰ where he peacefully cultivates coca on his *chacra*.

¹⁸ Interview with unnamed inhabitant, Santa María, March 6, 2004.

¹⁹ Interview with Don Juan Espinoza, Diluvio, October 7, 2004.

²⁰ A cocalero community located on the *Carretera Marginal* between Tocache and Puerto Mal Abrigo.

Increasingly, guerrilla militants and the popular committees supervised the civilian population (Weinstein 2007: 255). In the organization and structure of the guerrilla movement, there is a strong difference with other regions under Shining Path control, as in the Upper Huallaga its military components increasingly began to overshadow the political components, which at some time were even totally eliminated (Marks 1992: 218). The guerrilla's armed faction became the most important force. As highly militaristic groups, the military faction of the guerrillas freely travelled through the district in large groups, regularly moving in and out villages to maintain order and authority. This free movement was possible because the military only sporadically patrolled these rural communities, afraid of entering "enemy ground". In these communities, Shining Path began to organize every aspect of the campesinos' lives, ranging from wedding celebrations to the supervision of local farming operations, the control of sexual behavior (prohibiting infidelity, prostitution and homosexuality). The consumption of alcoholic beverages was also prohibited. Additionally, the militants utilized popular committees to manage local villages and organize the civilians to assist the guerrillas. Small numbers of armed *delegados* or so-called local *mandos militares*²¹ maintained control in the community when the guerrilla militants were absent. Frequently these *delegados*, who did not wear uniforms, were residents who were responsible for enforcing the guerrillas' rules. With the installation of these adjunct offices, Shining Path managed to establish a more or less total control over the local population that was overseen and enforced by the local inhabitants themselves. Promotion in this system of villagers' participation wasn't based on ideological commitment, but on a willingness and ability to control the communities.

Joining the ranks of the guerrillas was seen by some of these *delegados* as the only way to survive. Such people could be identified as either victims or perpetrators, inhabiting Levi's Gray Zone²² of moral ambiguity (Levi 1989; Theidon 2006: 436). Shining Path "members" weren't permitted to desert, but those who served in a position for three or four years were discharged for any further obligations, and remained in the good graces of Shining Path as long as they gave no cause for being suspected informers.²³ In any conflict situation, as Levi (2005: 87) remarks "there exist these gray, ambiguous persons, ready to compromise". Some *delegados* saw in the particle of authority being offered to them the only possible escape from the "final solution" (see Levi 2005: 87). Many ex-*delegados* admitted that they hadn't left their positions even when allowed to do so, because being associated with the Shining Path gave them greater power and freedom. But their support for the guerrilla movement was limited, as they often became part of the *fuerza de bases*²⁴ but refrained from entering the *fuerza principal*.²⁵ The local population, local *mandos militares* and *delegados* described above included, placed limits on their participation in the Shining Path participation by refusing to participate in military actions. This *fuerza principal* or military wing of the guerrilla, consisted of those persons whom wore a uniform, were heavily armed and who carried out terrorist actions and engaged in gun battles against the state's military and the

²¹ *Delegados* (guerrilla representative) or *mandos militares* (military leader) were community members and weren't part of the armed faction of Shining Path.

²² The gray zone is, in Levi's mind, not only an actual region in the social space of a Nazi concentration camp. It is a conceptual tool that warns against overly rigid and misleading dichotomies. The gray zone, Levi writes, "is a zone of ambiguity challenging the pervasive we-they/friend-enemy separation which shuns half-tints and complexities: It is prone to reduce the river of human occurrences to conflicts" (Levi 1989: 22).

²³ Although, as we have seen, this provided only the most tenuous sense of security, as the accusation of being a *soplón* was often made on the most arbitrary of pretexts.

²⁴ Adjunct forces.

²⁵ Main force.

police forces.²⁶ But the function of a local *mando* did give a person the opportunity to exercise power in the communities. When the *mandos* noticed that somebody was questioning their rule, they would force this disbeliever to get on his knees and force him to give a speech admitting his error. If the offender was sufficiently abject in his apology, he might be forgiven. In the end, however, it was the local *mando* who decided whether to impose punishment. Those who voluntary entered the guerrilla force wouldn't hesitate to kill people questioning the party's strict rules. But, largely in contrast with the participation in the guerrilla movement as a personal survival strategy, these so-called "privileged ones" (Levi 2005) became targets of the military.

Box 4.2 Dangers of involvement in Shining Path

When Shining Path's influence spread throughout the Fósforo district, Aurelio, who had previously lived in Lima, migrated to a small village along the Huallaga River. In Lima, he had worked in a hospital and had never encountered guerrilla violence directly. After his wife died in a tragic car accident in front of the hospital where he worked and his children became self-sufficient, he decided to search for a better life in Tocache. He recalled his first day in Santa María de Frontera:

"[...] It is the tradition of Peruvians to wear black when somebody dies, so I was wearing black clothes when I arrived in Santa María de Frontera. Everybody in this place looked at me, but I didn't know that the guerrillas also wore black at that time. [...] I knew nothing... I had seen their flags and stuff, and that's about it. I always saw the phrase '*Viva el Presidente Gonzalo*' but I had never asked who this *Presidente Gonzalo* was. I really came there not knowing anything."²⁷

Some time later, Aurelio was assigned the position of local *delegado* of Utopía Inca, an important guerrilla stronghold. He was one of those who said he only joined Shining Path in order to survive. People had employed several personal forms of "resistant adaptation" (Stern 1990). Aurelio remembered that when the guerrillas tried to enlist him into the *fuerza principal* or military wing of the CRAH, he pretended to be deaf.

But Aurelio's position in the guerrilla movement also made him a target of the military. Often, Aurelio saw the military patrol pass, and was scared stiff, since he knew that they were looking for him. Years later, Aurelio was still angry that a boy had once identified him as a local *delegado* because such an accusation meant certain death. Tired of it all, Aurelio moved to Paraíso, a community controlled by the military, as it became safer to live in these zones. But he knew that the guerrillas practiced one "iron rule": The penalty for desertion was death. He continued to live in fear, as he dreaded someone would denounce him either to the military or to the guerrillas:

"When I moved to Paraíso, I was scared. One man knew that I had been associated with the guerrillas, and called me *Doctor*, which had been my nickname in Utopía but because I'm half deaf I just pretended not to hear him. That is what I continued to do until they had forgotten about me... Until they no longer remembered..."²⁸

Having partially clarified the population's (voluntary or involuntary) role in the guerrilla movement, one question emerges: Why didn't the population opt for the military? The answer to this is simple: During the years under discussion (1984-1992), the military offered no alternative for the villagers, so accommodation of one kind of another was often indeed necessary to survival.

²⁶ As stated above, the military wing of the guerrillas overshadowed the guerrillas' political components, which in the Upper Huallaga had been totally eliminated. In contrast to other affected (mainly highland) regions, in the Upper Huallaga Shining Path became a force driven by military objectives to control these cocaine enclaves by force.

²⁷ Conversation with Don Cuadrado Cruz, Paraíso, October 14, 2005.

²⁸ Conversation with Don Cuadrado Cruz, Paraíso, August 1, 2005.

4.1.2 The military's entrance

The military's first intervention (1987-1992) in the district only made the situation bloodier,²⁹ as the military's anti-terrorist strategy did not entail any concern for the local population; on the contrary, it was often local residents who became its main targets. The first soldiers that were sent in to fight Shining Path were largely unaware of the local situation in the region, had no connections to its people and started a campaign of terror, whereby they simply labeled all villagers as *terrucos* for willingly cooperating with the guerrilla force.³⁰ They started a general repression, wherein there wasn't any room for distinctions between the civilians and the guerrillas. In the words of one villager:

“Sometimes I would wonder if these soldiers in the helicopter, flying over our zone, didn't notice the clothes they were wearing because these *guerrilleros* all wore black ... but it looked like the soldiers in the helicopter didn't notice, or they didn't care who the real *terrucos* were...”³¹

With the military's entrance, the population could no longer distinguish between the armed groups because even the security force didn't wear a military uniform and instead dressed in a black uniform. In sharp contrast to the highlands, the Shining Path columns were large units, who also dressed in black clothing and, unlike their compatriots in the highlands, carried heavy weaponry (Weinstein 2007: 156). Thus, both forces wore black uniforms and were heavily armed. As one villager remembered:

“It was difficult in those days to identify these two groups because the *terrucos* wore the same clothes as the army; black pants, black t-shirts. They never wore clothes with the national military colors ...”³²

Primarily, the military didn't establish permanent bases and only sporadically entered the rural zones. These sporadic military patrols became dreaded by the villagers because they included random house searches. The soldiers were also dreaded for their brutal questioning. Rumors and hearsay became enough to detain people and, after their arrest, most suspects were taken to the military base. Many survivors of these interrogations spoke about the different torture methods, including rape, humiliation, and even disappearances. In sharp contrast to Shining Path, who publicly exposed their victims' bodies, the soldiers covered up, denied or rationalized their crimes. Under their control people began to disappear. As one of the residents stated:

“[...] When the army killed alleged *terrucos*, they didn't know what to do with their bodies. When they caught them alive, they would kill them right on the spot, before the human rights people arrived... [...] But all of the people who lived in this region those days were categorized as terrorists by the military! We lived with this fear, among these forces, who both stigmatized us as perpetrators. People had to live with

²⁹ As stated in Chapter 2: The most bloody period of the internal armed conflict in the Upper Huallaga started in 1987 and ended in 1992, and included selective assassinations, confrontations resulting in numerous deaths on both sides, and the reprisal killings of numerous inhabitants by guerrilla forces, the Peruvian military's forces, and pro-government paramilitary forces (CVR 2003: 323).

³⁰ The official story was that the Naval Infantry was sent into the villages that were thought to be guerrilla strongholds, including Aucayacu (Huánuco department) and Sión (San Martín department) (Conversation with member of the *Fuerza Aérea del Perú*, Lima, August 21, 2007). In sharp contrast, villagers' accounts about these first military forces often included the presence of tall white soldiers who violently repressed the local population, observations that could constitute evidence of the presence of Naval Infantry troops in a number of different areas of the Upper Huallaga.

³¹ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Paraiso, August 5, 2004.

³² Group conversation in Esperanza de Frontera, November 20, 2005.

the fear and the question of which group would come that day...one didn't have any time left to do other things...this was our whole life!"³³

People who had been taken away by the military weren't expected to return to their homes. Nor did people expect to hear what had happened to them.

The military's entrance began to have a marked impact on the campesinos' daily lives. When the military patrols became more frequent, it was no longer considered safe for a campesino to go out to his fields or walk around in the jungle because encountering military patrols could mean arrest or even death. Captured campesinos were forced to walk in front of the military patrol. When the military encountered a guerrilla group, both armed groups got involved in a fierce gun battle before the eyes of the campesinos, who were often taken hostage. The term the villagers used for this was "*carnada*" (bait, lure), because these campesinos were in effect used as human shields by both sides. Especially at the beginning of the "Dirty War"³⁴ much of the general population thought that the soldiers' behavior toward the local population was that they were even worse than that of the guerrillas:

"Because in those days when the military caught you, they would first beat you up and then take you with them... They would hit you and then put a barrel of their gun into your mouth. This was the only method they knew to make you talk because we, the campesinos, were supposed to tell them where the *terrucos* were hiding..."³⁵

When the captured campesinos returned from these patrols alive, they returned to their community fearing the possible murderous vengeance of guerrillas for allegedly "cooperating with the enemy" (since any campesino taken into custody by the military was *ipso facto* suspected of such cooperation).

The military used the same strategies as the guerrilla movement to force the population to cooperate with them. The military employed illegal forced recruitment of adolescents, which mainly affected those with no documents and new *colonos*. Such recruits appeared to be desirable because it was suspected that nobody would miss them if they were killed on the battlefield. One woman detailed how the military often entered their community to take away adolescents, who were unwillingly enlisted into their ranks. When any of the military forces would appear to carry out such a "round-up", men of eligible age tended to disappear from the streets. The Peruvian military also ordered the population to participate in "community meetings". During these meetings, they forced women and children to sit in the burning sun, where they silently watched the summary judicial proceedings against villagers. Just as the guerrillas did, the military carried out torture in public in order to serve as an example to others. One resident of Santa María de Frontera, an area that was also stigmatized as guerrilla ground, remembered a day when the soldiers entered in search of *terrucos*:

"In those days, they would cut off peoples' ears They would cut off your ears and then they would throw salt in your wounds....That day the whole *plaza* was full of blood, and children were lying on the ground in the burning sun. They learned that if they cried, they would be killed as well....Their mothers kept them quiet because otherwise they would kill the mothers too. Everybody was hungry but these military

³³ Interview with Luis Paredes, Alto Mal Abrigo, September 26, 2004.

³⁴ Dirty wars are those conflicts in which government security troops unleash their fury against citizens suspected of harboring the seeds of subversion (see chapter 2; Arson 1999; Sluka 2000). In Fósforo district the state's "Dirty War" started during the internal armed conflict when the military entered (1987) and began a campaign of terror mainly directed against the population, not against Shining Path's *fuerza principal*. In the region the "Dirty War" continued well into the post-conflict period, as will be explained in the following paragraphs.

³⁵ Statement of old migrant of the Frontera valley, during group conversation in Esperanza de Frontera, November 20, 2005.

men didn't have any compassion. They would just enter a store, would eat something and later would destroy the store... and they drank, took drugs, and by night they started to rape the local girls. It was a total tragedy. When the army entered, there always were two or three deaths because if they did not shoot these people, they wouldn't meet their quota. In those days, we lived with our backs against the wall... when the military men saw you running they would shoot you in your back...It didn't matter if you were a child...³⁶

Many eyewitnesses stated that this torture practice of cutting suspect's ears during meetings became a common practice. It was repeatedly remarked that one military officer wore the ears in a collar around his neck, publicly showing the ears as a sign of what the military would do if the people refused to follow their strict orders.³⁷ Hence, the military employed strategies used to terrorize the population that were almost identical to those of the guerrilla forces.

One former military commander acknowledged the use of cruel and arbitrary violence against the local population. At the present time, he lives in Tingo María, where he works as a journalist in defense of the cocaleros. About the role of the military during the internal armed conflict, he said:

"In the 1980s, I entered the Upper Huallaga. We were sent to Síon, a very remote place close to the Fósforo district, which was only accessible by the river. [...] In those days, Síon was a center of drug trafficking. The whole region was considered a 'Red Zone', which essentially meant that everybody living there was considered a *terruco* by the military. I was part of the unit that was sent to the regions to clear the zone of 'bad elements'.... Well, that is what they call it nowadays... Before I considered it as shooting anybody on sight because they might be guerrillas."³⁸

Within the Fósforo district, several hamlets (especially in the Frontera Valley) were stigmatized as guerrilla strongholds, which included the notion that in these areas no "normal" people resided. As a survival strategy against the military abuse, the local population hid in the virgin jungle when the soldiers approached their communities. One of the most horrific stories about the military's arbitrary use of force was told by a cocalero from the community of Esperanza de Frontera:

"It was night, we couldn't even light the flashlight because we were scared they would see us. [...] That day we tried to hide. My son tried to run away, but without warning they shot him in his leg. They showed no mercy. After he was shot, he fell on his head. They grabbed him, threw his body into the unspoiled jungle and left him for dead.... He was just a ten year old boy!"³⁹

During the presidency of Alan García (1985-1990), government forces frequently entered these communities by helicopter and bombarded the civilian population with gunfire from the air, forcing them to flee to the mountains. One villager described such an occurrence:

"Even now, when my children see a helicopter they say to me; 'Papa, papa, the army, let's go to the jungle!' When I try to tell them to calm down, they say, 'No, papa let's go to the jungle!' They scream. [...] Because before, when the army entered a village,

³⁶ Interview with Nancy Obregón, Santa María, March 6, 2004.

³⁷ Conversations with several cocaleros during fieldwork in 2006 and 2007.

³⁸ Conversation with Luis Cardoza, Tingo María, August 9, 2005.

³⁹ Interview with unnamed cocalero, Esperanza de Frontera, July 15, 2004.

we would go to the jungle at night or early morning. When we saw that the army returned, we would leave again...Imagine how we lived in those days....”⁴⁰

But during the first government of Alberto Fujimori (1990-1995), whole villages “disappeared” during scorched-earth-operations involving massive bombings. Esperanza de Frontera suffered such a bomb attack. Before the bombing, the entire population was ordered to evacuate their homes. Some remembered how the military entered and informed the locals that the bombing was planned for the next day. They quickly took their most important possessions and escaped. After a few hours of walking they arrived in Santa María de Frontera, where the military had established a base. The refugees still remembered how they were welcomed in Santa María:

“Everybody looked at us as if we were all *terrucos*. They even refused to let our children attend the school, as if they thought that the kids would blow up the whole building with a grenade.... But we were the people who had to seek refuge from violence. We left our community without anything. They bombed our whole village, nothing was left, so where were we supposed to go?”⁴¹

The majority of such scorched earth operations were carried out without warning. Cachayacu, a village that was situated on a hill, also suffered a bomb attack after an ambush against a military patrol during which only two soldiers, a captain and a sergeant, survived the ambush; the rest of the patrol died. In those days, Cachayacu was a larger village than Mal Abrigo, but the military destroyed it completely, throwing bombs and firing away, killing men, women and children, reducing it to rubble and ashes.⁴² It was only in 2007, years after the internal armed conflict had ended, that some inhabitants returned and tried to reconstruct their community.

The military continued to look at individual communities in a binary fashion—i.e., as either cooperating with the military or with the Shining Path. If a community was identified as sympathetic with the guerrillas, then all of its inhabitants—even women and children—were seen as enemy combatants, and were treated accordingly. At times, the military and guerrillas controlled zones that were located only a few kilometers from each other. Many people escaped from the district when the military entered and went to larger urban town, such as Tocache or Uchiza, places that the guerrilla movement did not control, and where the military repression was less severe. In the rural areas, the use of arbitrary violence by the military forced some villagers back into the arms of the guerrillas. Only years later, when the military changed its strategy and established a strong permanent presence in the zone, did the choice between the two armed forces became easier. By that time, the villagers had had enough of Shining Path’s violent and arbitrary rule, as will be shown below.

4.1.3 Shining Path’s violence led to their demise

In the Fósforo district, the population quickly understood that they were not benefiting from the guerrillas’ presence, but they also noticed that they couldn’t turn to the military for support. In areas under the control of Shining Path, there was widespread intimidation, false accusations, execution of innocents, public display of executed persons and, in general, a pervasive atmosphere of fear. All these strategies also affected the *fuerza de bases* (i.e., the adjunct forces). As noted above, joining Shining Path was often seen as an individual survival

⁴⁰ Interview with unnamed cocalero, Esperanza de Frontera, July 10, 2004.

⁴¹ Conversation with unnamed campesino, Esperanza de Frontera, November 19, 2005.

⁴² Interview with Ignacio Paredes, Alto Mal Abrigo, September 26, 2004 and unnamed women who had been a resident of Cachayacu, Puerto Pizana, September 21, 2005.

strategy. But, as Shining Path's violence increased, the villagers' circumstances became as precarious as those who were not affiliated with the guerrillas. The guerrillas' arbitrary use of force and violence (even against its own members) even deepened the separations between Shining Path and their campesino collaborators. Some of the guerrilla's daily practices began to clash with the local campesino culture. For example, Shining Path took advantage of the fact that some landowners fled the region to avoid their oppressive control by confiscating their abandoned lands and using them for their own benefit, forcing the campesinos that remained behind to work exclusively for the Party.⁴³ In the Fósforo district, campesinos were forced to harvest the products and bring them to the guerrilla camps in the mountains. The food was never shared with the local population, who had little time left to secure a livelihood for their own families. Increasingly, the local campesinos came to resent the Party's obligation to carry out communal work because it only benefited the Party's high cadres. Campesinos came to see their survival—and that of their families—as imperiled by Shining Path's arbitrary and repressive rule.⁴⁴

Another hated guerrilla practice was the holding of mandatory popular meetings. Even sick people were driven out of their homes to listen to the Shining Path's ideological speeches. Mandatory attendance at such speeches was an overt vehicle of intimidation, since those who did not attend were sometimes summarily executed. In the words of one cocalero:

“If you missed one meeting, the next time you would be killed. You couldn't disagree with them during these meetings because when you said anything, it would only take longer... People were tired and hungry, but nobody said anything in order to get it over with. ...”⁴⁵

It became clear that Shining Path's *escuelas populares* (i.e., popular meetings) weren't meant to “*concientizar*” the people into the guerrilla's ideology but were only used to instill fear. Stories about these meetings often involved descriptions about standing in the burning sun all day with nothing to eat or drink. After some time living under guerrilla rule, the majority of inhabitants said they considered such meetings a waste of time, especially when they became obligatory daily activities. The forced engagement in the collective work and these daily mandatory *escuelas populares* increasingly weighed on the inhabitants, who sometimes resorted to strategies such as taking refuge in the unspoiled jungle to avoid participation.

In addition to feeling oppressed by a pervasive intimidation that included lethal threats, and suffering under the burdens of compulsory work and attendance at the *escuelas populares*, the campesinos began to question the guerrilla idea of equality. Eventually, the *senderista* message of equality for all became regarded as an obscene lie, especially for those campesinos who were members of the guerrilla's *fuerza de bases*. In the words of one former member of this group:

“[...]The *terrucos* always talked about inequality, but on the other hand they were living like kings, sleeping with women, drinking, while we were sleeping on ‘beds’ made out of plastic bags. What kind of equality is that?”⁴⁶

Villagers who joined Shining Path never felt that they were part of the critical base that the guerrilla leaders talked about in their speeches. Instead, they felt that the guerrilla leaders saw them as a threat to their revolutionary project or as just a bunch of ignorant people, and they

⁴³ See Degregori (1998: 133) on Ayacucho.

⁴⁴ See Del Pino (1992: 488) on Ayacucho.

⁴⁵ Interview with Don Cuadrado Aurelio Cruz, Paraíso, September 6, 2005.

⁴⁶ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, La Molina, January 15, 2005.

began to feel that the *senderistas* in the community took advantage of them to benefit themselves, while they, the villagers, gained nothing in return. In the words of one villager who had served in the *fuerza de base*:

“They taught me how to assemble and take apart a gun [...]. They would never trust the population, they would give you a gun. But they could say that the ‘*la masa*’ had the weapons, but they would never give you bullets. There I was standing in these confrontations with an unloaded weapon...”⁴⁷

The campesinos started to feel that they were not being treated as equals, and this was a contradiction of the principles the guerrillas constantly expressed during their speeches. For a long time, the villagers had resented a national government that they found repressive at worst and unhelpful at best, and had contempt for their local police forces, which they widely viewed as highly corrupt. These were factors that had helped Shining Path gain a foothold in the district in the first place. But the guerrillas’ relations with the villagers mimicked state repression; i.e., in stark contrast to their promises to construct a more egalitarian state, the behavior of Shining Path’s higher cadres began to resemble the conduct of the resented authorities.⁴⁸ Shining Path’s higher cadres began to reproduce the double standard that was too familiar to these campesinos, wherein justice was only meant for those who had money, and those in charge had the power of life and death over everyone else (Theidon 2003: 440). At a certain point, the campesinos felt that the “popular war” was directly aimed against them:

“Here, if you were a poor campesino, you would die. It seemed that Shining Path’s ideology stated that the poor ones were the informers, thieves, violent criminals, bigamists...all of them were poor...The ones that had the money, the *narcos*, they didn’t die! They killed the poor ones and spared the rich because they wanted the drug money!”⁴⁹

As a result of such attitudes and behavior on the part of the higher cadres, their ideological class struggle became increasingly difficult to follow by the local campesinos. The guerrillas promises were mainly directed against the corrupt authorities and against the “old state”, but more and more inhabitants became aware that once the corrupt and resented authorities were gone, they themselves became the main victims of guerrilla violence.

The people of the Fósforo district were living in an ever-more corrupt environment because the Shining Path’s *Comité Regional del Alto Huallaga* (CRAH) increasingly began to lose its character as an ideological guerrilla movement and increasingly used involvement in drug trafficking, the power of the gun and arbitrary violence to maintain their control. Disappointment even affected those who had joined the guerrilla movement because they were attracted by its ideology. These *fanáticos* tended to blame the young people in the movement for the arbitrary violence. In the words of one such person:

“There were a lot of followers who didn’t know the movement’s real cause. When problems came up, they did not know how to handle them. They just knew how to handle a rifle, and that is what they did. This meant Shining Path’s end—the lack of real revolutionaries. Ignorant people cannot solve anything. They cannot start a revolution. When you give them a rifle, they only become more ignorant...”⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Utopía Inca, September 6, 2005.

⁴⁸ See also Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2005: 18-19).

⁴⁹ Interview with Luis Paredes, Alto Mal Abrigo, September 26, 2004.

⁵⁰ Interview with unnamed ex-guerrillero, Esperanza de Frontera, November 13, 2005.

Another ex-Shining Path fighter also blamed the failure on the local population's involvement. In his view, the "backwardness" of these people—their inability to understand the guerrilla ideology—was the root of the problem. He especially resented the adolescents who were given weapons, with which they started to kill innocent people arbitrarily, without taking into account Shining Path ideology. Prestige and power increasingly came out of the barrel of a gun, and nobody within the organization seemed to question the justice of the killings. It bears repeating that many of the inhabitants of the Fósforo district were initially sympathetic to Shining Path's ideology. Most of the residents there were *colonos* who came to the region because they dreamed of improving their economic lot in life. They therefore saw the fight against corrupt authorities who obstructed and drew bribes from the cocaine trade as an integral component of their struggle. Yet the people of Fósforo's inhabitants never did accept that the local rich people were their enemies. Instead, villagers increasingly came to see the arbitrary, oppressive, violent, and often lethal exercise of authority by Shining Path as the greatest impediment to their own progress (Weinstein 2007: 255).

Box 4.3 The summary execution of a rich man

The paradox in the regional implementation of Shining Path's ideology became clear in the case of a popular trial against a rich man in the town of Aucayacu, at that time a guerrilla stronghold. *Comisario Périco*, who was first drawn into the guerrilla force because of his attraction to Shining Path's ideology, still does not understand what crime this man committed. The day of the incident, *Comisario Périco* was standing in Aucayacu's *Plaza de Armas*⁵¹ when two guerrillas arrived escorting a bound man:

"They brought him to a tree and tied him to the trunk. The man was begging them to release him and even offered to pay a large amount of money, but they ignored his pleas."⁵²

A popular trial was started to decide the man's punishment but *Comisario Périco* remembered people didn't know what to vote and were unaware of the exact charges against him. People exchanged looks, not sure what they were supposed to do, and waited to see what other villagers decided. But it became clear that the sentence had already been decided by the guerrillas themselves: The death penalty. After the voting, the guerrillas walked up to a man in the audience who had voted against the death sentence:

"They shouted: 'take this knife and kill the miserable bastard'. The man asked them for a gun because he didn't want the other to suffer but they said: 'If you don't kill him fast, we will kill you because you are disobeying orders'. The man got nervous, took the knife and stabbed the chest of the man, who didn't die instantly."⁵³

The bystander who was asked to kill the victim with a knife was "betraying the Party", because he voted against the guerrillas' will. His punishment involved killing the man. What happened next shocked everyone who was there:

"They took the man's body off the trunk and started torturing him. He suffered a lot and it hurt me to see a human being suffer that way, but who was I to say something at that moment...."⁵⁴

The carrying out of death penalties, the use of arbitrary violence, and the deliberate prolongation of suffering were all for the most part rejected by the population. The Shining Path's notions of social justice were accepted in the Upper Huallaga in reference to corrupt local authorities or police, but were rejected when it involved people that had achieved the *colono*'s dream.

⁵¹ Main square.

⁵² Interview with Don Juan Espinoza, Diluvio, October 7, 2004.

The first ruptures between Shining Path, their local collaborators, and the villagers did not end the arbitrary violence against the inhabitants. On the contrary, the guerrilla methods to suppress the population became even more cruel. When the guerrilla movement became aware of their loss of credibility among the population, they changed the rules into even more brutal ones, as a warning to villagers not to go against the will of the guerrillas. As one inhabitant stated:

“When they were losing ground and credibility among the population, they were changing their strategy. ‘We have to analyze this problem at the root’, they would say. After that time they even became more cruel. But it was too late...”⁵⁵

Commanders and the local *delegados* increasingly began to abuse their own rules. By the late 1980s and early 1990s, the guerrillas in the Upper Huallaga began to employ much higher levels of violence and arbitrary assassinations than in the other affected regions (Weinstein 2007: 213). Shining Path killed an even larger number of unaffiliated victims in the Upper Huallaga than they did in the Ayacucho highlands (Weinstein 2007: 215).⁵⁶ Violence became the tool of choice to maintain the control over the region, and all threats—real or perceived—against the guerrillas were met with cruel reprisals. For all “crimes” (real or alleged) the same sentence was imposed—namely, the death penalty. In general, it is often stated that the phrase “punish but don’t kill” marks the limits of campesino acceptance, at least in the ambit of the so-called popular trials.⁵⁷ But, to be specific, Fósforo’s villagers were actually not opposed in principle to the death penalty, as long as it was not imposed on people that they clearly considered innocent. The guerrillas’ arbitrary and lethal exercise of their own perverted notions of “justice” appalled and alienated most of the local inhabitants, and led to a widespread rejection of Shining Path ideology.

Guerrillas began to increasingly employ the gruesome practice of exhibiting the bodies of those that they executed. Villagers were daily confronted with bodies lying exposed on the streets. One of the most cruel methods to instill fear among the local population was the prohibition against removal of these corpses. Or, as Kernaghan has written (2006: 169): “There were always bodies along the highway, two or three at the very least. Hands tied behind their back. Head smashed, more often than not. A piece of cardboard would always be laid on top of or next to the body with a message scrawled in magic marker”. Frequently, the sentence written on the cardboard was “this is how informants die”. Another method employed by Shining Path to instill fear in the rural areas of the Upper Huallaga involved carrying out executions during the *escuelas populares*. Those killed were usually thrown in the river after their stomachs were cut open (so the bodies would sink and never re-appear). The local population detested this particular method because it involved an unnecessary mutilation of the victims’ bodies. Even more cruel was the practice of forcing villagers to cut open the stomachs, carry the bodies to the riverbank and throw the bodies into the river. Those who refused these grim tasks were often killed themselves. One campesino remarked:

⁵³ Interview with Don Juan Espinoza, Diluvio, October 7, 2004.

⁵⁴ Interview with Don Juan Espinoza, Diluvio, October 7, 2004.

⁵⁵ Interview with Don Cuadrado Cruz, Paraíso, October 26, 2004.

⁵⁶ As Weinstein (2007: 213) further notes: “Violence perpetrated by Sendero’s national organization had its own unique character: Combatants tended to destroy large numbers of public and private buildings, while killing was part of less than 25 percent of Sendero incidents. Soldiers in the Upper Huallaga, however, employed much higher levels of violence, killing civilians in 40 percent of their attacks”.

⁵⁷ See Degregori *et al.* 1996; Degregori 1998.

“[...] They were killed like chickens, like they didn’t mean anything, were nothing.... They said to the people who were present that they had to dispose their bodies in the river. Then they cut their stomachs open and threw them in the Frontera. We saw their bodies flow away, their heads spinning because of the undercurrent in this river.”⁵⁸

Hence, during both the popular trials and the popular meetings, the campesinos became aware of what the guerrillas were capable of doing to those reluctant to obey their orders. The guerrillas used active participation of the local population in the killings as a way of implicating them directly in the murders and thus, in theory, unable to denounce the crimes. Because of the fear of becoming the next in line, most of those involved did not protest. Those who did publicly oppose the guerrilla orders were frequently asked to carry out the death sentence themselves (as in the episode described in Box 4.3, above). The practice of (forced or voluntary) collaboration was used by Shining Path because “the best way to bind them is to burden them with guilt, cover them with blood, compromise them as much as possible, thus establishing a bond of complicity so that they can no longer turn back” (Levi 2005: 85). Many people remembered how they stood rigid, afraid to make the wrong move, remained silent, while executions were taking place just a few meters away. The population secretly considered Shining Path’s penalties too cruel and arbitrary, loathed the public display of those who were executed, and resented the guerrilla’s disrespect for the dead bodies. One common remark was that in these times one was considered lucky if they were murdered without having to go through torment and agony or, in the words of one villager:

“...sometimes they would stab you with a knife but you were lucky if they shot... you died quicker...but it all depended on what they decided.”⁵⁹

Stories about the different cruel torture methods for those found guilty during a popular trial were numerous. One cocalero remembered what happened at the first popular trial that he witnessed:

“They told him what he had done wrong and stated they didn’t want to waste a bullet for a miserable bastard like him. So the leader ordered him to be killed with machetes, right in front of everyone.”⁶⁰

Another campesino described a different incident:

“They tied his hands and feet together and passed a rope through a beam. The signal was given and, within a second, the body of the man was hanging above the crowd. They let the body of the man drop on the cement floor, one, two three times...until he died. After this they shot three times in the air and shouted: *Viva el Presidente Gonzalo!*”⁶¹

Beginning in around 1988, it was no longer recently arrived *colonos* who were the main targets of *sendero* punishment. More and more often, long-term residents of the Fósforo district were being executed by Shining Path. In an environment that became increasingly pervaded by fear, “Words trigger terror. Rumor about who was seen where and doing what becomes a matter of life and death” (Theidon 2001: 26). At this stage, previously existing

⁵⁸ Conversation with Don Cuadrado Cruz, Paraíso, January 12, 2005.

⁵⁹ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Pueblo Libre, January 20, 2005.

⁶⁰ Conversation with Joaquín, Lima, June 30, 2007.

⁶¹ Interview with unnamed cocalero, La Molina, October 9, 2004.

feuds among villagers, jealousy and revenge were all cited by Fósforo's villagers as motives for reporting innocent people to the guerrillas. In such cases, the community members who claimed to have been victimized were asked to carry out the punishment. One villager recounted:

"[...]I saw that they had cut off the breasts of a woman. I saw how her breasts just fell on the ground and how her daughter tried to embrace them, shouting, crying... The child was three years old! The *terrucos* shouted to the woman: 'On your knees, on your knees!' but the woman responded, 'Never I will go on my knees in front of you, I will only go on my knees for God'. So the *terrucos* started shooting at her two legs and she immediately fell on her knees. Then a man killed her with one bullet aimed at her head. Who killed her? It was her own husband, who denounced her for being unfaithful, claiming that she was cheating on him with another man."⁶²

Hence, in some cases both the victims and perpetrators were family members. Women were especially vulnerable to violence, and were victimized by mass rape, sexual exploitation and abuse. Gender-based violence heightened during the revolutionary struggle, as women were often accused of having extramarital affairs and of sleeping with the enemy, even if they were only seen talking to soldiers. On the other hand, the military raped local women to force them to give some information about the guerrillas. Yet if the guerrillas found out that this had happened, these women ran the risk of being sentenced to death because they had had sexual relations with the enemy.

In contrast to other affected regions, there was never a campesino initiative to fight the guerrillas in the Fósforo district. Lack of social cohesion meant that it was difficult to trust anyone, and therefore everyone tended to adopt an individual survival strategy. Any given person could be a guerrilla member, a spy for either side, or simply someone willing to inform to either side in order to gain personal advantage. Some locals attempted to establish a popular defense committee that was independent of the military, as was done in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, where money from the drug trade successfully was used to keep both the guerrillas and the military away from their valley (see Fumerton 2002). This initiative failed miserably because of pervasive feelings of mistrust; moreover, none of the villagers were willing to engage in another battle, neither against the military nor against the guerrillas, because they felt that they could not win.

In addition, the extensive participation of villagers—and especially of young people in the village—in the guerrilla movement can explain why the population, at every stage, refused to actively fight against the guerrillas. Those in the best position to be familiar with the guerrillas' whereabouts and activities might be their own parents or family members, who were understandably not willing to turn in their own children, husbands or wives. The practice of youth participation was a particularly objectionable practice (on the part of both guerrilla forces and the military), given that it fomented youth contempt for community members, local authorities, and even family members. Shining Path turned these adolescent boys and young men into fighting machines, willing to kill or be killed for the Party. When the population's support declined, Shining Path changed strategies and started to carry out forced recruitments. It was no longer support for guerrillas that led adolescents to enter the guerrilla forces, but rather fear of retaliation (Del Pino 1998: 164). This practice was particularly evident in the rural zones that were totally controlled by Shining Path, where young recruits were immediately forced to participate in the armed struggle. As one inhabitant stated:

⁶² Interview with Luis Paredes, Alto Mal Abrigo, September 26, 2004.

“The *terrucos* would come up to your house and ask how many children you had... if one of them was fourteen years old they had to go to the ‘war zone’. [...] They just gave you a rifle and off you went! You would receive an instruction about the route to take and, after only a few hours, you would find yourself in the middle of an army ambush.”⁶³

This forced recruitment caused a major alteration in support for the guerrillas because it shattered the local campesinos’ dreams of prosperity and peace for themselves and their children. In the Fósforo district, this practice met with small-scale, individual, silent resistance. Parents began to send their children away to family members living in more tranquil places and told them to escape to the unspoiled jungle or hide in their homes when Shining Path cadres entered their community. Many parents did what they could to prevent the guerrillas from taking their children to what many at that time saw as a “failed war”. It was widely thought that silence was the best way of surviving the arbitrary rules of the guerrillas and the military alike. And this was the route generally taken by Fósforo’s population, which outwardly complied with whatever was requested of them by either the guerrillas or the military. Most campesinos shared the assumption that they had no power to immediately change their situation without placing their lives, and those of their immediate family, at risk. This assumption seemed to indeed be empirically true. Thus, the campesinos of the Fósforo district had to fall back on the “weapons of the weak” (Scott 1986). As one cocalero explained:

“All houses in those days had their *caletas* [secret hiding places] so that the people, in times of confrontations with the military and the *terrucos*, could hide. Those who didn’t have this *caleta* would most likely die.”⁶⁴

But when the population started to refuse to fight and instead hid it became clear that the “Revolution of the Peasantry” in the Upper Huallaga was a lost cause. In sharp contrast to the general view and many academic investigations about the Upper Huallaga,⁶⁵ which argued that there existed a “relationship” among the campesinos, drug traffickers and Shining Path, the population passed through the same stages, which can be summarized as initial attraction, disappointment, and finally silent resistance as a survival strategy against the arbitrary violence of the guerrilla movement. But villagers remarked that they did have another option: to move to communities with a military base. This leaves us with the question: What had changed in the military’s strategy?

Suddenly Shining Path, who had been on their way to constructing the “Huallaga Republic”, by 1995 were themselves in a struggle for survival. Campesinos were sensitive to these transformations and “this attentiveness made very clear which group had the most firepower” (Theidon 2006: 440). Because of changing national policies and the coca bust, the military slowly began to win over the confidence of the Upper Huallaga’s population. As part of its efforts to win over the local population, the Fujimori government in 1993 ceased all efforts to interfere with coca cultivation. Instead of fighting against those involved in this agricultural activity,⁶⁶ Fujimori’s anti-drug policies attacked the activities of the Colombian traffickers (including interdicting cocaine flights, occupying air strips, destroying landing

⁶³ Interview with Luis Paredes, Alto Mal Abrigo, September 26, 2004; this view was shared by several others during different conversations.

⁶⁴ Conversation with Ignacio, La Molina, October 17, 2007.

⁶⁵ See among others Cotler 1996; CVR 2003; González 1990; Kawell 1995; Kay 1999; McClintock 1999; Páucar 2006; Weinstein 2007.

⁶⁶ Only in 1996 the forced eradication campaigns were re-started.

strips, etc.).⁶⁷ As stated before, these Colombians were notorious for using violence against the population. By attacking the higher echelons of the cocaine industry, Fujimori was able to gain support from the population. But, because of widespread military collusion with drug traffickers, during the years 1992-1995, state policies to curtail the Upper Huallaga's cocaine industry had only a small impact. But it was because of this failure that the government was able to gain more control over the region.

Additionally, the military, when entering the region in 1984, had only established a presence in the larger towns of the Upper Huallaga. While the guerrilla violence in the rural areas continued and even increased, it slowly declined in the urban areas, including Tocache and Uchiza. The inhabitants began to identify the towns as safe areas, and some people secretly left the countryside and moved to the towns:

"In the Fósforo district, the violence became more dangerous because the *terrucos* began to kill the campesinos. The road leading from Pueblo Libre to Santa María via Puerto Mal Abrigo remained controlled by Shining Path. When the *terrucos* left, the military entered and killed everybody, including women and children. In Uchiza, in contrast, both the *terrucos* and the military were largely involved in the drug trade, and were less interested in the war."⁶⁸

Until 1995, the military strategy in the rural areas of the Upper Huallaga continued to entail numerous arbitrary detentions and systematic violence. But one thing changed: By 1995, there was widespread support among the population for Fujimori's harsh methods to defeat Shining Path:

"I thank Fujimori because he liberated us from these murderers. Shining Path killed people. You have to understand that we had forced community work to get rid of the bodies of the victims. There were numerous deaths, and every day we encountered approximately six to ten bodies."⁶⁹

Because of intense international pressure,⁷⁰ the military changed its strategy from attempting to directly root out guerrilla strongholds and punishing the civilians among whom the guerrillas lived, to providing a safe living place for the residents of the region, urging them to move to villages under military control. In 1995, the military stopped participating in the war on drugs and began placing more emphasis on respecting human rights.

By 1997, the soldiers present in the Upper Huallaga were for the most part recruits from the region (or from other jungle regions), a factor which fostered greater understanding between the villagers and the soldiers, as one man recalled:

"They gave us the opportunity to live without fear and they made it possible to survive here. They were working with the population. They defended us and respected our rights..."⁷¹

During the years 1995-2000, as control over power and influence slowly shifted to the military, individuals began to move to communities where military bases were located. This

⁶⁷ These policies partially led to the decrease in influence of the Colombian Cartels over the Upper Huallaga's cocaine trade, as described in Chapter 3.

⁶⁸ Conversation with Don Lucio, Puerto Mal Abrigo, April 19, 2004.

⁶⁹ Conversation with cocalero, Alto Mal Abrigo, October 17, 2007.

⁷⁰ Mainly by the Clinton administration 1993-2001, but regrettably the concern for human rights always remained weaker than the call for a continuation of the war on drugs.

⁷¹ Interview with Don Cuadrado Cruz, Paraíso, October 26, 2004.

move was most noticeable in Puerto Mal Abrigo and Santa María de Frontera, the larger villages of the district, where permanent military bases were located. After others observed that these persons were not harassed by the military, many of them began to follow. This shift had only been possible when the military tried to win the hearts and minds of the population. What at first the military had attempted to achieve by indiscriminate persecution of the population they now achieved by suspects of whom they had a well-grounded suspicion.⁷² The military strategy entailed moving civilians out of *sendero*-controlled areas, while not directly attacking the Shining Path guerrillas themselves. As a result, the guerrillas were never entirely shattered and, when the military influence over the rural areas increased, the guerrillas blended in with the population to escape prosecution.⁷³ Guerrilla attacks and guerrilla/military violence against civilians continued to occur in rural areas of the Upper Huallaga. It was only in 2000, during the electoral campaign, President Fujimori ordered an end to the state of emergency in these remaining guerrilla zones, including the Upper Huallaga. We must now turn to what occurred during the post-conflict period.

4.2 Failed integration in the national post-conflict justice and truth process

4.2.1 The cocaine-crazy conflict and impunity

Even the local villagers often remark that the saddest thing about the internal armed conflict was that “everything happened because of the cocaine”, a phrase that wasn’t only directed against the guerrillas, but also at the state security forces. At a certain point, control over the illegal business became more important, as all armed actors increasingly were driven by the dollar stacks that could be earned with the “white gold”. This leaves another question largely unanswered, namely: What had actually happened in these villages during the internal armed conflict? At some time during the internal armed conflict, it was said that the *Comité Regional del Alto Huallaga* became the wealthiest guerrilla movement in Peruvian history because of their domination of the cocaine industry. As Weinstein (2007: 93-94) states, by the late 1980s, Shining Path took over control of the major towns and villages in the valley. But contrasting this view, there existed some geographical differences between the urban and rural regions. Shining Path never managed to control the Upper Huallaga’s larger towns for long periods of time. For example, in Tingo María, Tocache and Uchiza, Shining Path experienced difficulty in exercising control because heavily armed *firmas* in those areas contested Shining Path’s dominance. In these urban zones, there was a permanent presence of the police and military that was totally lacking in the rural zone. Thus, only in the rural areas did Shining Path actually manage to control the coca market, establishing structures of hierarchical military control for a considerable time (CVR 2003: 291). Only in the rural areas could Shining Path control and closely monitor the process of coca cultivation, the production of coca paste and, by the late-1990s the processing of cocaine. This system prevented the cocaleros from finding another market where they could sell their leaves and simultaneously prevented the creation of autonomous cocalero organizations from competing for control of the cocaine industry.

Cocaleros had to pay tax to the guerrillas, but many investigators held that this never led to conflict as “they now had an advocate as they bargained with traffickers for higher prices and a ‘government’ that would eliminate the criminality that plagued their villages”

⁷² At this stage, the military was keeping its hands off the upper ranks of Shining Path and was targeting collaborators in the general population.

⁷³ Because of this partial military victory and for the government’s inability to find a solution to the country’s profound social, economic and cultural problems, the Upper Huallaga remains plagued by sporadic acts of violence carried out by either remnants of Shining Path or by other heavily armed groups that operate under its name. As will be shown in Chapter 7, these attacks markedly increased after 2005.

(Weinstein 2007: 92-93). Yet many of those whom I interviewed in the Fósforo district made it clear that they never saw Shining Path as an advocate or ally. Instead, the guerrillas forced the campesinos not to sell even if they wanted to, as one ex-cocalero stated:

“In those days, the drug traffickers paid you 2,000 dollars for one kilo of *bruta*! But then Shining Path entered the region. The price fell to 1,600 dollars and the *terrucos* said that nobody could sell. They confiscated the drugs, took your *bruta* away and gave the profit to their leaders!”⁷⁴

This guerrilla practice was actually one of the most important reasons for the rupture between the population and the guerrillas, as the set prices began to frustrate the cocaleros, especially during the different small coca busts in the 1990s. The representatives of cartels, *firmas* and others involved left the valley and began to buy coca leaves and cocaine elsewhere. The cocaleros claimed that the guerrillas were obstructing the free coca market, forcing drug traffickers to leave for other regions. At that time, coca cultivation had spread to other remote locations in the Peruvian High Amazon, giving the drug traffickers enough options to take their business elsewhere.

Generally it is asserted that these drug funds enabled Shining Path to pay for cadres' salaries, food, housing and cash to cover expenses, purchase arms, and finance operations against the state (Kay 1999: 103-104). But in sharp contrast to McClintock's (2005: 54) argument that greed never became a key *Sendero* objective, Fósforo's cocaleros frequently indicated that the leaders of the Shining Path forces abandoned the guerrilla troops after they had made small fortunes from confiscated coca and their taxation of the cocaine trade. The local stories sharply reject McClintock's (2005: 60-61) view that the Shining Path's cadres' “purpose had never been personal enrichment but the bolstering of its organization, to facilitate its expansion in other parts of the country, and ultimately achieve state power”. For Shining Path, territorial control over the Upper Huallaga entailed an access to a consistent flow of resources that from the beginning was used to finance growth, operations, and, most importantly, personal enrichment (Weinstein 2007: 91). The guerrillas became the direct buyer from the cocaleros and the seller to international cartels and national *firmas*, without any other intermediaries, making a large profit that was, according to Shining Path leaders, to be used for the exclusive purpose of financing the “Popular War”. In the words of one campesino:

“If you think about it, the truth is that the guerrillas came to our region for the cultivation of coca. [...] They earned 100,000 to 150,000 dollars and then they would disappear from this region. In Mal Abrigo, everything happened because of money.”⁷⁵

The growing resentment against the guerrillas, in contrast to McClintock's (2005) view, was a consequence of the personal greed among the higher cadres of the guerrillas. Shortly after entering the Fósforo district, Shining Path militants began to disregard the party's ideology and largely benefitted personally from the illegal market.⁷⁶ But this point remains controversial. Weinstein (2007: 93) contends that the guerrilla's revenues remained in the CRAH, while most of the villagers that I spoke to stated that only high-ranking *guerrilleros* typically earned a great deal of money from the illegal drug trade and then fled the region. In contrast to Weinstein's comment, in the inhabitants' stories there was a strict distinction between those guerrillas occupying the *fuerza principal* who became heavily involved in the

⁷⁴ Conversation with Héctor, Puerto Mal Abrigo, November 21, 2005.

⁷⁵ Interview with unnamed cocalero, Alto Mal Abrigo, November 19, 2005.

⁷⁶ Information gathered during multiple conversations and interviews with local inhabitants during fieldwork.

cocaine trade, and those in the *fuerza de bases* (in majority cocaleros), who were mainly involved in agricultural activities.⁷⁷

Nevertheless, it is clear that, in the Upper Huallaga, Shining Path typically did not act in accordance with its stated ideology, and stories of corrupt behavior among its higher-echelons were numerous in the valley. Here, in contrast to other affected areas, the guerrillas did not even attempt to justify their activities in ideological terms, but instead pursued wealth through the cocaine trade. Individuals who wanted to enter the CRAH did not have to demonstrate any commitment to the ideological or political goals of the movement, as the CRAH acted outside the control of the national leadership and little was done by the national organization of the Shining Path to control what they did (Weinstein 2007: 157). In short, the guerrilla leadership's behavior in the Upper Huallaga was characterized by rank opportunism. Corruption within the higher echelons of Shining Path in the Upper Huallaga reportedly continued during the post-conflict period. Surely, the presence of drug-crazy guerrilla remnants severely affected the regional post-conflict period as it "reduced rebel incentives for a negotiated solution" (Cornell 2005: 755). As Cornell (2005: 755) notes, "If rebels become less interested in justice than in money, offering them justice is unlikely to end a war". According to the local villagers, when the guerrilla violence decreased, some of those who had formerly held high positions within Shining Path on a local level became common criminals. Some became involved in assaults on drug transports, willing to kill people solely for personal gain, while others became involved in smuggling or manufacturing cocaine. One cocalero described the changes in the former guerrillas' activities:

"During the conflict, Marvin⁷⁸ [Shining Path's Local Commander of the *fuerza principal*] was a tall and skinny guy. I used to play football with him when he came to our community. Well, my house was the first they saw when they entered Utopía Inca, so the first person they would encounter was me... They came from the unspoiled jungle, in numerous groups, during the daytime. They came down to play football. I was living alone, so when they said 'play', I had to... When Marvin was captured, he escaped and became involved in the assaults on plane transports of illegal drugs or drug money.... They first made the plane land, then they told the pilot a lie, and left with the money or the drugs, which had to be worth close to \$800,000 per plane. Marvin became a common criminal and even the army was afraid of him..."⁷⁹

There were a number of different stories as to what eventually happened to Marvin. According to some, he managed to escape justice and still roamed around the Peruvian jungle. Another version told a very different story:

"After he escaped from prison, they again caught Marvin in Pucallpa. That day he was alone, without his *sicarios* [armed guards]. He was glad to be captured by the military because his own people were also looking for him... He had stolen their money, and betrayal for this group meant the death penalty. If he had been found by his *compañeros*, he would have been dead by now; they didn't accept any excuses. A thief couldn't be rescued by anyone in those days..."⁸⁰

Such stories about Shining Path's high-level officers turning into common criminals abounded after the official end of the internal armed conflict, even in the relatively small

⁷⁷ Information gathered during multiple conversations and interviews with local inhabitants during fieldwork.

⁷⁸ This is the actual pseudonym the man used.

⁷⁹ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Utopía Inca, September 11, 2004.

⁸⁰ Interview with Don Cuadrado Cruz, Paraíso, October 26, 2004.

Fósforo district. These higher cadres were often left alone by the military and could earn substantial money in the illegal cocaine industry, while others involved in the industry trained routinely and faced the very real danger of arbitrary detentions.

But the guerrilla forces were certainly not the only ones struggling with personal greed among its forces. In the state security forces, greed was also a feature of many of the stories told by residents of the Fósforo district. The government's security forces proved to be highly vulnerable to corruption, a fact that profoundly influenced their confrontations with Shining Path and drug traffickers (CVR 2003: 385; Weinstein 2007: 90). For example, according to many local residents, the military was "paid to look the other way". One cocalero recounted the following episode:

"When the DEA helicopters came, the military guard who was on watch duty was the first one to notice. He would let the lieutenant know, and the lieutenant would then give the orders to the soldiers to start firing. There were five or six short bursts of automatic gunfire, and the people knew what this meant. The DEA helicopter flew over, but everybody had already secured the drugs, which only took seconds. Nobody was left on the streets, not even a dog... The village looked like a ghost village. The helicopter would fly over Puerto Mal Abrigo three or four times and then had to go back to their base. When the military saw that the danger was over, they would shoot three or four times. People were coming out of their hiding places and the cocaine selling and buying continued as usual. [...]In those years, nothing happened, the army officers passed and turned their heads, ignoring the drug industry, but they would come back and ask for their cut of the profits..."⁸¹

But as in the guerrilla forces, only the higher ranking officials earned money by imposing bribes on the *narcos*. For the lower ranks, this was impossible. But in this group, the ease whereby the cocaine industry corrupted those who were sent to fight Shining Path became apparent in the large numbers of soldiers who deserted from duty. Most of the soldiers sent to the region by the Peruvian government were young men from Peru's marginalized regions (either from the popular *barrios* of Lima or, later during the conflict, from the San Martín department), who frequently came from impoverished backgrounds. Military life was difficult, the enlisted men earned minimal wages, ran the highest risk of being killed during daily Shining Path ambushes, and were often beaten or abused by their superior officers. Seeing the economic opportunities of the cocaine trade, some let it be known that they could be paid to look the other way, others deserted to start their own coca field, while still others became involved in small-scale cocaine smuggling.

One of the many good examples of this practice is Jason, a former soldier, who lived in the community of 3 de Diciembre and now is a cocalero with a large estate. He was attracted by the possibility of making money by cultivating coca and he was highly resentful of what he considered the disrespectful treatment he had received from his officers. After leaving the military, Jason took up residence in the Fósforo district, where he had married an ex-guerrillera who became involved in smuggling cocaine after the internal armed conflict. To outsiders, this might seem strange, but in the Upper Huallaga, nobody was surprised about compromises between those who had previously stood on opposite sides of the battlefield. Many could not resist the attraction of the money that could be made in the illegal cocaine industry, as a former army commander acknowledged:

⁸¹ Conversation with Alfonso Reyes Coca, Puerto Mal Abrigo, December 19, 2004.

"In all these villages involved in drug trafficking, people have everything, even in the most remote communities. Literally everything, cable TV, electricity, water and large beautiful *plazas*. In the 1980s, when I entered the Upper Huallaga as a military commander, my troops went to Síon, a very remote place that was only reachable by air or river. When we entered the village, we were very surprised because Síon in those days was a very small village. It had only two streets, but I will tell you one thing... They had the largest discotheque of the region. Síon was the center of drug trafficking, and many soldiers had never seen this kind of wealth before.... No wonder many of them stayed behind or became involved in trafficking."⁸²

Hence, it was in the Upper Huallaga where the military suffered the highest numbers of desertions.

On the national level, the region only became infamous because of highly publicized corruption cases involving high-level military men. The story of the Upper Huallaga's most important drug lord exemplifies the kind of collusion that took place. This drug lord was a Peruvian who operated under the pseudonym *Vaticano*. On his own, he won a bloody conflict with the Colombian drug traffickers, after which he totally dominated the thriving cocaine industry in the region surrounding Campanilla, a village that Shining Path had not been able to control. Different stories about his opulent lifestyle reached mythical proportions among Fósforo's cocaleros:

"He was crazy, but also a friendly man. He helped people when they came to ask for some money. But he had a strange way of giving it to you. I have seen people who came to him to ask for 50 soles. He took the bill from his pocket and threw it backwards over his shoulder, and the supplicant picked it up from the ground. *Vaticano* said that he handed over the money in this way for superstitious reasons—so that the recipient would not later lose the money."⁸³

Other stories reported how he constructed the *Plaza de Armas* in Campanilla. The village for a long time remained the only one with electricity, which had also been paid for by *Vaticano*. These stories reflect, on a much smaller scale, what was happening in Colombia, where Escobar controlled the city of Medellín, built hospitals, schools, soccer stadiums, etc. as a way of garnering the support of the poor residents of the region, and engendering good will toward himself. During the Golden Years (1986-1995) *Vaticano* controlled a clandestine airstrip located right next to a military base where counterinsurgency operations were launched. When it became clear that his influence over the region was growing, the state tried to impose sanctions. *Vaticano* responded by buying off the state functionaries. He brazenly transported cocaine, using his cartel's recognizable seal of a scorpion so that everybody knew that the shipment was his and would therefore leave it alone. In return for large payoffs to the military, he was allowed to freely transport cocaine to Colombia. In 1995, *Vaticano* was arrested and, oddly, received a life sentence on terrorism charges. He was sent to military prison, evidence was withheld, and witnesses faced troubles when they came to testify (Sobéron 1996). Six years later, in 2001, *Vaticano* became a key witness in the prosecution of Vladimiro Montesinos, the head of Peru's intelligence service under Fujimori, whom he had paid thousands of dollars to facilitate his illegal business. Currently *Vaticano* resides in the Castro-Castro maximum-security prison in Lima, where political prisoners are incarcerated. His life sentence was reduced to a 30-year prison term on drug-related charges. Locally, there are still rumors that he was drugged so that he would be unable to confess the details about his

⁸² Conversation with Luis Cardoza, Tingo María, August 9, 2005.

⁸³ Conversation with Don Valdermoro, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 8, 2007.

relationship with Montesinos. The villagers of the Fósforo district are aware of the threat that *Vaticano* posed for the Fujimori regime and the García government. While the national government worried about what the local drug barons would expose about their corruption, the internal armed conflict in the Upper Huallaga continued. In the partial ending of the regional armed conflict, the differences between the towns and the rural areas of the region became especially apparent. In the provincial towns, including Tingo María and Aucayacu, the military had a permanent presence (already in the beginning of the conflict in 1984), and this fact gave the local population the option of resisting guerrilla rule. In contrast, the campaigns of government forces in the rural countryside were killing campaigns in which civilians were shot on sight. Later, there were arbitrary detentions of suspects (rural residents were automatically suspect of collaboration with Shining Path).⁸⁴

Civilians of the rural areas of the Upper Huallaga did indeed live in fear from either state forces (who saw them as collaborators with the Shining Path) or the guerrillas (who imposed a Stalinist system of social control and arbitrary legal enforcement on their villages). This was the state of affairs until the state of emergency was ended in 2000.

4.2.2 Arbitrary prosecutions of villagers

As seen above, it is beyond doubt that, in the Upper Huallaga, villagers were actively involved in the internal armed conflict. This was a theatre of war where Shining Path recruited mainly from the civilian population, and many local residents accepted leadership roles, whether as a personal survival strategy or out of ideological motivations. But what happened to these villagers when violence waned in the rest of the country? A good example of a rather complicated arrest and trial in the rural zones of the Upper Huallaga is the case of Molotov,⁸⁵ who received this *nom de guerre* during the internal armed conflict, when he was a local base guerrilla leader. He was a young man living in Esperanza de Frontera during Shining Path's occupation in 1986. He was one of those who were fascinated by the guerrilla group's ideology. As a local *mando militar*, had established close relations with the *fuerza principal*. Some former guerrillas declared that he had been the Frontera Valley's *mando superior* (i.e., regional commander), but Molotov had never been included within the guerrillas' principal directorate. Molotov had been a *fanático*, a term which was used to identify those who embraced Shining Path ideology and had voluntarily participated, but he never benefitted from the guerrillas' cocaine corruption because he was never a part of the CRAH. He was later remembered by villagers as one of the most brutal guerrilla commanders, a man who unquestioningly carried out orders to kill. Molotov's own story begins on a day that he was working on his *chacra* together with his ten-year old son. In the evening, father and son decided to call it a day and went to sleep in their shed:

“[...] I went inside and lay down.... A few minutes passed, when I felt a gun pushed against my chest. They didn't give me time to do anything. ‘What is happening’, I said this like I had been sleeping for a long time.... They grabbed me and took me outside. ‘You are a *terrucos*’, they said. I responded, ‘Jefe, why are you accusing me of being a *terrucos*? Look at the way you found me here. Have you seen any evidence that I'm a

⁸⁴ Amnesty International (1996) report about complaints of torture by military detainees. “In August 1996 a military patrol reportedly arrested 32 men and nine women from a village in the district of Fósforo, San Martín department, and transferred them to a military base in the town of Tocache. A group of soldiers were said to have beaten and threatened to kill them with their firearms. The following day the men were apparently beaten on their buttocks and backs with a strip of wood and a sand-filled leather tube. One of the detainees survived near-drowning in a water-tank and strangulation with a cord. All the detainees were said to have been forced to sign a document in which they admitted to being subversives”.

⁸⁵ Slowly during my fieldwork Molotov's life began to unfold and began to entail more paradoxes. Although he never spoke to me directly about why he joined the guerrilla forces, his current wife and father clarified his case. The data presented here have been gathered during different conversations with Molotov, his wife and father. Most information comes from a personal conversation with Molotov, when he, one night, told me what had happened during the internal armed conflict.

terrucos? Do I have any guns? Do I have any propaganda? Don't call me a *terrucos*, God damn it! I'm not a *terrucos*, I'm here with my son!" They did not believe me and started to torture me and hit me with their guns..."⁸⁶

They tortured Molotov in front of his son, hoping the boy would confess. But he only answered that his father was a campesino. Then they started to torture Molotov's son in front of his father, and Molotov confessed.

Molotov was taken away by the soldiers. While they were walking, they asked him where he hid his weapons, and about guerrilla bases. Knowing the answer to the last question, he tried to give them some innocent responses but was only beaten up again. As they walked, the soldiers urged him to confess:

"[...]They tortured me again and again. I said to myself, they are going to kill me.... I have seen them kill innocent campesinos many times. [...] Later, they tied my two feet together. My hands were already tied. They pushed my mouth down into the dirt. One soldier shoved my face into the ground, another pushed my legs on the ground and then they started hitting me with their guns....It took only two punches, and then I fainted. 'Please', I said to them, 'I have children and they have no mother'. 'Please', I pleaded, 'Stop this. I don't know anything'. I wanted to stand up, but they hit me and I would fall back on the ground again."⁸⁷

After several beatings, they came to a small hill, where they set up camp. They tied Molotov's hands and feet together, so that he could not escape. The next day, the soldiers took him to Esperanza's center square, where he saw his mother, who had been searching all night for her son. Molotov recalled:

"They made me walk in between two rows of soldiers. One grabbed his gun and hit me in the waist. I felt down. They grabbed my hair and lifted me up.... Whenever I looked at them, they would hit me in the mouth. One of my children came closer, at that time they were 6 and 7 years old, and cried; 'Papito, Papito, what have they done to you?' All I could do was hug them. My mother started to get down on her knees and beg: 'Please, Captain, let go of my son, he is not a *terrucos*. Did you find something in his house? He has children and he works hard to support them!' At that moment, I couldn't stand it anymore and I said; 'Mother, don't beg on your knees. Don't waste your tears'."⁸⁸

Then the soldiers pulled a rope around Molotov's neck and forced him to walk. They walked to the place where the *chimbas*⁸⁹ cross the Frontera River to reach Santa María de Frontera. A healthy person can normally make this trip on foot in 30 minutes, but Molotov was stumbling, fell down, was pulled up by the soldiers and was exhausted :

"They wanted me to cross the river, but not by boat. 'Please, I don't know how to swim. Have mercy on me, I don't know how to swim, I'm going to drown'. I pleaded with them. They pushed me in the water but my hands were bound together. They pushed me down and pulled the rope again, various times, like they were playing with

⁸⁶ Interview with Molotov, Esperanza de Frontera, July 8, 2004.

⁸⁷ Interview with Molotov, Esperanza de Frontera, July 8, 2004.

⁸⁸ Interview with Molotov, Esperanza de Frontera, July 8, 2004.

⁸⁹ *Chimbas* are wooden boats (from the verb *chimbar*, literally, "to reach the opposite bank of the river").

me. One soldier told the others to stop. If he hadn't said something, I would have been dead.”⁹⁰

As Molotov entered Santa María de Frontera, the villagers watched silently from a distance. From Santa María, he was transported to the army base in Puerto Mal Abrigo and put in the *pozo* –a pit the military had constructed to detain prisoners. He remembered hearing a helicopter approach:

“I heard people shouting: ‘Get the *terrucos*!’ They liberated me from the ‘*pozo*’ and I saw that all the soldiers were standing in two lines. I was the only prisoner. I had to walk in between the lines. All the soldiers were hitting me when I passed through. They hit me on my head, waist, shoulders, everywhere...until I reached the door of the helicopter. I had to climb in...and then they threw me in the helicopter as if I were a bag of potatoes. The soldiers were sitting face to face and I was lying on the floor in between them. They even stepped on my head with their boots.”⁹¹

In Tocache, the military forced him to sign a confession. Sometimes, these captured campesinos were violently coerced to sign a blank piece of paper, upon which their “confession” would later be written. Others were forced to sign a piece of paper with their “testimony” already on it, without them saying a word. Forced confessions were a very common practice of the military:

“They told me that I had to say that I was a high-level member of the *terrucos*, that I had killed many people, soldiers. At the same time, another soldier was typing these lies on a piece of paper, so I said; ‘Why is he writing this? These are all lies!’ [...]They wanted me to sign this paper, but I said; ‘How am I going to sign this paper? These are all lies!’ ‘You have to sign’, they said, so they used force to make me sign...”⁹²

After this “confession”, Molotov was sentenced by the military prosecutor to 30 years in prison. He was taken to the “Picsi” prison in Chiclayo, where he stayed approximately three years, without due process or visitation rights. Molotov lost all hope and thought that he would end up spending the rest of his life in prison. In Mal Abrigo and Santa María, his relatives were harassed if they went to the military base to ask questions about his whereabouts. It was only in 1997 that the Fujimori regime began to display any real concern about human rights abuses. Molotov’s case was taken on by the International Red Cross, which put pressure on the Peruvian government to improve the situation of “innocent” prisoners. He was assigned a new lawyer, who quickly moved for a new trial. After the second trial, in which he was found innocent, Molotov left the prison after three years and returned to the Frontera Valley.

Molotov remained someone whom the Peruvian government still stigmatized as a *terrucos*. Molotov’s identity card is marked by a red cross, which identified him as a former guerrilla fighter. Because of this stigma, he would not open a bank account or make any other financial transaction, refused to vote, and would not show his card at the police checkpoints. Even after his discharge from prison, his name stayed on the army’s and police’s lists of suspicious persons. Thus, for all practical purposes Molotov remained, even with the prison’s release papers in his hands and even though he had been found innocent in a court of law, a

⁹⁰ Interview with Molotov, Esperanza de Frontera, July 8, 2004.

⁹¹ Interview with Molotov, Esperanza de Frontera, July 8, 2004.

⁹² Interview with Molotov, Esperanza de Frontera, July 8, 2004.

guerrillero. When in 2005, a special unit of the police forces ransacked his house in search of Frontera's "guerrilla leaders" or current "cocalero leaders", it was evidence that Molotov's history was even known by the police who headed the forced coca eradication operation. After this episode, Molotov sought refuge in the unspoiled jungle.

The ambiguity in this case deepened even further when one day, Molotov told me:

"I know they made some terrible decisions before when *La Familia* tried to take over the Peruvian state. I have even lost three years of my life for them, spending this time in prison. Unfortunately it is clear they are the only ones that care about the campesinos in Peru...so we have not been given any other option."⁹³

Seeing my confusion, he whispered: "*La Familia* is the word we use for the guerrillas these days". Molotov's remark clearly reflects the feelings of exclusion and repression, which were the incentive for many campesinos in the Upper Huallaga to join Shining Path in the first place. It showed the consequences of the total national neglect of the region after the internal armed conflict. Moreover, when Molotov told this story, the national truth and reconciliation commission (CVR) had long since adjourned. But the CVR was not a popular subject of conversation in Fósforo. Why was this the case?

4.2.3 Local perceptions of national truth and reconciliation

Most scholars, state officials and politicians, without having visited the Upper Huallaga, adopted the version of the "official truth", which held that the complex conflict situation caused a "generalized violence" in which the protagonists were the population, drug traffickers, and Shining Path on the one side; and, on the other side, the police and the military forces (CVR 2003). The CVR concluded in its Final Report (August 2003) that the thousands of testimonies received in the Upper Huallaga Valley represented a record of intense violence. The report continues that many acts of violence are likely still unknown, in part because of the vastness of the region and in part because much of the violence took place within the context of the cocaine trade. Moreover, the report argued that this complexity and ambiguity continued during the post-conflict period because of the limited presence of human rights organizations and journalistic coverage, in contrast to other affected regions (CVR 2003: 309). But, strangely, these CVR findings were largely rejected by the local population. It was the public *testimonios* that the residents of Upper Huallaga found most objectionable:

"They came to make you remember the thing that you wanted to forget, a history filled with sadness. It's hard for us to remember these times and the Commission makes you remember. This is what the Commission did. They asked you questions, like; 'What happened during those times? How many deaths? Did your family stay behind? Did they beat you?' One has to remember these things and suffer. I think that, with everything that we have already suffered, we shouldn't have to remember them...."⁹⁴

But these kinds of remarks only showed that some cocaleros made a personal choice not to participate in the public testimonies, because they did not want to dredge up painful memories. But it doesn't explain why all villagers felt excluded.

A more general statement against the public *testimonios* was that they only included the Upper Huallaga's urban population, while they excluded those of the rural areas, as the testimonies were held in Tingo María and Tarapoto, the Upper Huallaga's gateway towns. The rural campesinos were expected to travel to these towns, which in my view could explain

⁹³ Conversation with Molotov, Esperanza de Frontera, November 29, 2005.

⁹⁴ Interview with unnamed cocalero, Esperanza de Frontera, July 10, 2004.

their feelings of neglect. Neither this possible geographical explanation, nor any other economic restriction, was ever mentioned. As it turned out, the rural inhabitants frequently travelled to these small towns to buy groceries, work equipment or other items. So the location of the public testimonies also does not accurately explain why they did not participate. Therefore, the question as to why they had generally refrained from participating was left unanswered. One day, a cocalero summarized the existing feelings with this statement: "Who would believe the story of a poor campesino in Peru?" These campesinos were largely aware of and sensitive about the ongoing stigmatizations existing in the country, even in the gateway towns where the rural inhabitants, as seen in the case of Tocache in the previous chapter, were stigmatized as *terrucos*. They had been afraid that the public, even in these gateway towns, would not believe their stories. This, then, was the reason why so many campesinos refused to participate.

There are several important differences in the post-conflict process between the rural areas and the towns. These differences mainly came into being because the government's strategies to defeat the guerrillas were concentrated in small urban towns. For example: In Tingo María *Comités de Autodefensa* were created and there was a high level of participation in the *Ley de Arrepentimiento*⁹⁵ program that was implemented by the military. While in the urban zones, the military came to be considered the lesser evil, because at that time they were working with the population, in the rural zones there were, until the partial ending of the conflict,⁹⁶ stories of military abuses, as described above in the case of Molotov. The rural population was convinced that the CVR, by not having received the *testimonios* of the rural population, had documented only one side of the story, and had ignored the military abuses during the internal armed conflict's final years. Hence, the CVR became seen as an attempt to deny the state's responsibility for the violence that had occurred, covering the crimes committed by the military, and exaggerating the role of Shining Path.

Box 4.4 A Commission of Lies

A cocalero remembered: "I saw the abuses the military committed in my community. My friend was a merchant who sold papayas. One day, he asked me to accompany him to get some money people owed him. I was eating my breakfast, but he was in a hurry and didn't want to wait. He went alone. A few hours later, I heard several gunshots close to my house. I waited for my friend, but he never returned. I went to look for him. I ran into a woman on the road. I asked her what happened and she responded: 'Don't go to the village, the military is there and they are killing everybody'. But I continued accompanied by another woman, whose husband did not return to his house. On our way, we saw bodies lying in the mud, on one side of the road: all dead. A man walked towards us and the woman asked about her husband. The man responded they had killed him and the woman started to cry uncontrollably. He was only a merchant selling corn, but they had killed him. I was looking among the dead people and noticed they all had their hands tied behind their backs. Some men were carrying a body but I continued to look for my friend. Then I saw an acquaintance standing there and asked for *Cupiño* (friend's pseudonym). 'He's dead' he responded and told me the exact location of his body. I only recognized my friend because of the shorts he was wearing.... I saw his face. He had two bullet holes in his neck and one in his forehead. I felt enraged and hurt. I carried him on my shoulders, but after a while I could not carry his dead body's weight and I asked some people to help me. Afterward I bathed him, cleaning his body before his family would see it, but when I tried to put his clothes back on, I saw his back. There he had two other bullet holes. So in total he was hit by five bullets. He was shot while his hands were tied behind his back."

When the Truth Commission opened their office in Tingo María, I told them about my friend's case, but they responded they could not help me because those who killed the man had obeyed the orders

⁹⁵ Repentance Law. Because of the growing sentiment against this policy, it ended in late 1994.

⁹⁶ The term "partial ending of the conflict" is used because, in the rural areas of the Upper Huallaga, Shining Path was never completely defeated by the military.

⁹⁷ Conversation with Joaquín, Pumahuasi, June 26, 2007.

they received from the government in Lima. It was all a big lie. I wanted to see whether it was bullets from the military because on that day, all of the victims I saw had been shot in the back. It was a mass assassination by the military. But the Truth Commission was not interested in knowing the truth, therefore we called it the Commission of Lies.”⁹⁷

Although the CVR’s report included recommendations about reparations (economic and otherwise), reconciliation and transitional justice, the inhabitants’ view about its implementation in their villages and communities can be summarized by a statement of Nancy Zamora, Fósforo’s local *alcaldesa*:

“In Ayacucho, I can see that they are helping the people, the victims of the political violence.... They receive substantial economic support from the national government. Before, they stated that only 23,000 Peruvians had died during the times of the ‘Dirty War’, but I told them, you have *not counted*⁹⁸ our victims here, in the Upper Huallaga, the Fósforo district, nobody.... If you walked to the Huallaga River in those days, you could see 20-30 dead bodies floating in the river. In the village, you could also see bodies lying in the streets.... They never came here to Puerto Mal Abrigo. They never visited. I will tell you what they have done here.... When they arrived in Tocache, these people from the national Truth Commission brought a document in which they only talked about 14 deaths in the Tocache province. I couldn’t listen to these lies, and I stood up and told them: ‘You are simply some bureaucratic functionaries who only come to this region for the money, for a compromise. You don’t even want to know the truth....’”⁹⁹

This quotation shows that the state-sponsored post-conflict reconstruction efforts were non-existent in the Upper Huallaga. Additionally, the local *alcaldesa*’s statement contained a truth that had heretofore remained unspoken: Most victims were unidentified because the *Carretera Marginal* was considered to be an area too dangerous to travel by the CVR’s officials (Kernaghan 2006: 122). Making the situation even more complicated, many victims had migrated from the region since the events under investigation, and were almost impossible to trace.

In the Upper Huallaga’s rural areas, the waning of the violence did not change the long-existing negative stigmatizations and, as a result, the state didn’t venture into these regions and nor did any investigators. Kernaghan’s study (2006), describing life in the region after the coca boom, was one of the few exceptions. Kernaghan (2006: 131) explains this neglect on the part of researchers as follows: “It is easy to imagine the Upper Huallaga as a place where danger came with the territory, and killing was no more than a regular or natural event”. Instead of travelling inland into the region, Kernaghan stayed in Aucayacu (located near Tingo María) while he carried out his field work. Another good example of the negative image of the region, even after the internal armed conflict, is provided by Weinstein (2007: 357) who writes: “With the insurgency still going on in some parts of the country, access to rebel combatants was more restricted and, given the anti-American views of *sendero* rebels in the Upper Huallaga, potentially more dangerous”. Consequently, Weinstein (2007) only visited the gateway town, Tingo María. Many political scientists, most of whom had never ventured into the rural zones, quickly embraced the “official memory”, which stated that the region’s economic dependence on coca had led to alliances between the local population and the guerrillas but, as seen above, these alliances between the population and the guerrillas had never been that strong. Still, all that the written documents about the Upper Huallaga

⁹⁸ Strong emphasis in original.

⁹⁹ Interview with local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora, November 21, 2005.

demonstrate is a strong relationship between guerrilla groups and organized crime. But none of the documents explained or described how this had severe implications for the duration of the internal armed conflict, and, more importantly, for regional conflict resolution. There had been no efforts toward demilitarization or re-integration of ex-combatants e.g.. Hence, paradoxically, after the violence waned in the Upper Huallaga instead of giving more attention to the district, the national government never managed to establish any kind of presence there, especially in the region's rural areas.

4.2.4 The break-down and re-establishing of authority

State and local authorities had always been weak in these rural areas of the Upper Huallaga. When the guerrillas established control of Puerto Mal Abrigo in 1986, there was only one deputy governor present, and he was engaging in large-scale extortions. It was said that he demanded bribes from drug traffickers, prostitutes, and gays, who became the main victims of his corrupt practices. Some of his friends warned him to leave the village, but he neglected all of this advice. One day, he and his whole family were found murdered in his house: Each member had been shot once in the head. At first, the villagers were blamed for the murders, but it later became apparent that Shining Path was the perpetrator. In the whole course of the internal armed conflict, Shining Path and the military attacked people in authority positions in the village, including doctors, mayors, and social activists. Consequently, many of such figures left the region.

Effective local authority can be one of the key factors that contribute to the ending of the violence. In a late stage of the regional armed conflict (1997-2000), Fujimori did manage to re-establish some kind of control over the rural Upper Huallaga, including the Fósforo district, when he started to implement different projects that involved the development of infrastructure. During this period, years after the original deputy governor's assassination, new authorities were elected, namely a *teniente gobernador* and *delegado*. Their positions mainly consisted of presiding over groundbreaking ceremonies for development projects such as the construction of new bridges. This was part of Fujimori's strategy to show that he had won the war. During 1997-2000 these events remained dangerous to attend because, especially during these inaugurations, remnants of Shining Path showed that they had not been totally ousted from the region. The *teniente* and the *delegado* were forced by the military to be present to confirm their support for the military, although in many events military officers were never present. One explanation for the military's refusal to attend is that Shining Path often used these inaugurations as occasions to demonstrate their presence (by, for example, ambushing military officials as they travelled to the ceremonies). Because it could be estimated at which time the military convoy would pass a particular point on the road, the military officials were easy targets for a guerrilla ambush. Both the *teniente* and the *delegado* vividly remembered how they had been caught in the crossfire of long gun battles between remnants of Shining Path and military soldiers. But by then, the guerrilla's ideological aim of destroying the "Old State" was highly resented by both the population and local authorities alike. On one such occasion, the *delegado* remembered thinking:

"It takes months to construct a bridge, and then they destroyed it in only a few seconds. The *guerrilleros* responded that, at the end of the 'war', everything would be constructed. Instead of helping they took things away from those who didn't have anything. If they had only used their power to construct and not to destroy..."¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Conversation with ex-*delegado de la municipalidad*, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 12, 2007.

By then, the guerrilla's destruction of the state-sponsored development projects only led to a growing resentment among the local population. It should be remembered that, by 1997-2000, the guerrilla movement consisted of no more than small armed groups who were no longer capable of threatening the national state and had lost its regional popular support but still controlled the rural areas of the Upper Huallaga with an iron hand.

But the newly elected legal authorities felt that they were never totally trusted by the military either. One day, the *teniente* was arrested by the military on charges of providing aid and comfort to the guerrillas. He was accused of helping *guerrilleros* to escape military raids that had taken place close to his house. But no evidence was found and he was released. Finding out whether the *teniente* was or was not helping Shining Path was an impossible task. Because they were caught in the middle of the armed actors, they were forced by both the guerrillas and the military to choose sides. Stories of both men, the *teniente* and the *delegado*, who are both now widely respected older men, showed the difficulties that they had to confront:

“We had problems with the guerrillas and the military. Sometimes, I would confront the military men because they were abusive. They robbed and raped women. On the other hand, I confronted the guerrillas because they killed without warning...”¹⁰¹

As legal authority figures, they were used as strategic pawns by both sides, and they both lacked effective tools to properly carry out their roles as legal authorities in the village.

There is another interesting theory; that the local population can benefit more by the reform of local government (Richards 2005: 19) which, as seen in Chapter 3, meant that the local authorities in the Upper Huallaga did not condemn the cocaine trade. But the re-establishing of local government authorities in the Fósforo district remained complicated by an incomplete state victory over the guerrillas. On October 13, 1998, the first post-conflict elections for a new local mayors were held. Before these elections Nancy Zamora (mayor of the Fósforo district: 2002-2006) tried to launch a campaign for local office, as candidate for Fujimori's political movement (*Cambio 90*). Shining Path did not permit residents of the Upper Huallaga to vote in the 1998 municipal elections. In the words of one cocalero:

“In times of elections, people who came with a stained finger, clearly an indication they had voted because the ink that was used couldn't be removed, would lose this finger.”¹⁰²

After Nancy Zamora received several death threats during her 1998 campaign, her family convinced her not to participate in the election and to disappear from the political scene. It was only in 2002 that Nancy Zamora was elected as mayor of Fósforo, but after three years in office, she remarked:

“In this district, we have 11,000 inhabitants who are totally forgotten by their national government.”¹⁰³

After Fujimori's ouster in 2000 and the national transition to democracy one year later, state-sponsored development projects were discontinued and were never resumed thereafter. Moreover, as will be shown below in section 4.4.1,¹⁰⁴ they were replaced by new forced

¹⁰¹ Conversation with ex-*delegado de la municipalidad*, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 8, 2007.

¹⁰² Interview with Luis Paredes, Alto Mal Abrigo, September 26, 2004.

¹⁰³ Interview with local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora, November 22, 2005.

¹⁰⁴ See also Chapter 6.

eradication programs that were imposed upon the district after the internal armed conflict. Then all local hope that the national state would enter the Fósforo district to start any development faded. The state's inattention resulted in widespread local rejection of the new democratic government. One event that clearly demonstrated the villagers' rejection of the state was the weekly raising of the national flag on the *Esquina de Movimiento*¹⁰⁵ in Mal Abrigo. Normally, the military came down from its base on Sundays, shut down the public streets so that nobody could leave or enter the village and the ceremony began. Many villagers saw the event as a nuisance because it prevented them from travelling to Tocache to do their weekly shopping. Consequently, the whole ceremony was carried out very quickly, and most local inhabitants did not attend it. The ongoing fragility of the Toledo government during the national democratization period did cause some serious problems, negatively affecting economic reparation projects, projects for those victimized and reconstruction programs. Moreover, the conflict's aftermath left behind a distrustful population, and the focus of their anger was the new democratic government that had forgotten them during this national reconstruction and reconciliation period. But at this same time, many local residents began to lay the foundations of the cocalero movement that would come to dominate the regional scene for years to come.

4.3 Local versus national reconstruction

4.3.1 Local reconciliation: No space for truth and justice

As a consequence of this national neglect, the local processes of reconciliation and social reconstruction in these regions began to take a totally different form. One characteristic of Upper Huallaga's rural areas was that, because of its ongoing character as a margin of the state, the large majority of those killed there during the guerrilla's popular trials were unidentified campesinos and recently arrived *colonos*. This unfamiliarity with the victims led to a lack of empathy for them, which became expressed in the widespread notion that the murder victims had somehow done something to deserve their fate. This idea was expressed in the popular saying "*Nadie mata por nada*" - nobody kills for nothing. Those who survived in their midst knew that, in order to continue to survive, it was best to feel nothing or at least to give that impression (Kernaghan 2006: 213). As a consequence, the inhabitants' stories left one question largely untouched: Who were the ones doing the killings? This question was simply answered by the short remark "*los otros*" - the others, who in different times of the conflict could either be Shining Path guerrillas or the Peruvian military. Villagers became accustomed to the sight of the corpses of victims. A horrific example of this normalization of the dead in Mal Abrigo is the use of a skeleton of an anonymous victim during biology classes in the local school. One day during the internal armed conflict, as some remembered, the corpse was just dragged into the school building by a group of local children.

Given that the majority of murder victims in the Fósforo district during the internal armed conflict tended to remain anonymous, there was an absence of the kind of grief and mourning that are typically seen in human societies when those who have been known and loved within a group have died. Numerous people died during both the internal conflict, as a result of the cocaine industry's administration of their own "private justice", or as a result of anti-drug repression on the part of the police and the military. My queries regarding these deaths were often responded to with comical stories that largely obscured the real reason. For example: There was the "invincible soldier". Villagers light-heartedly remarked that because

¹⁰⁵ Literally "Corner of Movement". Because of the lack of a central *plaza* in Puerto Mal Abrigo people gathered on this street corner located close to the municipality in the evenings.

he knew his way around the jungle so well, he couldn't be shot by the guerrillas; some described him as being "invisible", so the guerrillas couldn't even see him coming. In this story, there was an outright denial that the person in question had even died.

Theidon (2000: 550) poses three different questions, which can also be used to shed some light on the post-conflict occurrences in the Fósforo district, namely; "What counts as a good reason to forget? When is memory placed in the service of repairing social relations? When can people remember shared interests and not just enmity?" Although all those who had been living in the region certainly knew who had been among the various armed actors, collectively it was decided not to speak about individuals' past affiliations. Some villagers were not even willing to speak with their closest friends about the most fundamental question of all: What were you willing to do to survive? Because of the complexities of the internal armed conflict in the Upper Huallaga, there existed an overall willingness to forget the past. Consequently, there are several gaps in the social memory. It was thought to be better to close the book on some questions without resolving them, an attitude that excluded commemoration of the events that had occurred. It also led to most campesinos describing their involvement in the conflict with words such as "forced" and "involuntary". Such characterizations tended to relieve them of guilt; after all, one could not be held accountable for acts of violence that were committed as a result of having been coerced. These practices largely blurred boundaries between perpetrators and victims (see Daly and Sarkin 2007: 172). Moreover, the shame felt about the local occurrences tended to reinforce the tendency of villagers to claim that they had no idea of what was going on. Those who had been forcibly recruited into the ranks of the guerrillas often felt shame, a feeling which seemed to naturally lend itself to claims that they simply "forgot" what had happened. Those who had been willingly recruited also felt shame—perhaps even more intensely, since they could not truthfully claim that they had been forced to collaborate with Shining Path. Ex-soldiers also felt shame over the often arbitrary acts of violence which they had been asked to commit, or over having deserted and joined the ranks of the guerrillas—or perhaps over having taken part in drug trafficking, either in uniform or after deserting. There was plenty of shame to go around; there was no shortage of skeletons in the closet. And thus, it seemed that everyone had a vested interest in maintaining a pact of silence over what they had really done.

But strangely, the villagers' previous alignments with the different armed actors, which resulted in them having been on opposite sides during the internal conflict, did not seem to hinder the reconstruction and reconciliation process in the communities. This reality appeared to contradict the notion that, in the affected rural communities, the internal armed conflict created a complex and charged social landscape because "the present charged social landscape reflects the lasting damage done in the recent past when people saw just what their neighbors could do" (Theidon 2006: 433). People in the Fósforo district had seen what their neighbors were willing to do but, in the majority of cases, hadn't been closely acquainted with these neighbors, and this was a factor that contributed the local post-conflict reconciliation process. Locally, former guerrilla fighters, current guerrilla sympathizers, widows, widowers and orphans lived among military veterans. In some cases, former guerrilla fighters even married former soldiers. Oddly, no conflict was ever mentioned to have arisen among the different groups, not even in the immediate aftermath of the internal armed conflict in 2000, although sporadic guerrilla attacks continued to plague the region in the first years of the twenty-first century. Still, those who did tell their stories about this dark period gave the impression that they hadn't come to grips with their past. The statements that they offered about what had happened were interspersed with tense and prolonged silence. Three such conversations with one former guerrilla fighter are summarized here because they serve as excellent examples of the apparent necessity for post-conflict silences.

The sun was setting as I continued my walk from Santa María de Frontera, where I had attended a meeting with women from the village, toward the village of Puerto Mal Abrigo: I made my way on a dirt road that winds its way through the jungle, accompanied by Aurelio, then Paraíso's cocalero leader. I enjoyed the light breeze after a hot, humid jungle day. Aurelio urged me to hurry along, because at 5 o'clock in the evening the poisonous snakes would be out searching for food. Nevertheless, Aurelio seemed serious and he said that smoking would help us to keep the snakes at bay. We paused for a few minutes while Aurelio repeatedly tried to light a cigarette, protecting it with his hands from the breeze. After he finally succeeded, we were ready to continue, but Aurelio suddenly insisted we wait until the campesinos coming from their *chacra* and walking towards Santa María passed us by. Only later did I understand why he did this. After we exchanged the usual greetings with the men, Aurelio began to speak:

"You know that I have been a *mando militar* [Military Leader] here in the region, don't you?" he asked as if to check my reaction to the fact that he, a man I knew as one of the most honest, benevolent, and kind-hearted people, had previously been on the "wrong side". Looking at me with his sad, deep-set eyes, he awaited my reaction. After I nodded, he continued:

"You also know that I didn't have a choice, don't you?"

I again nodded my head. He gazed at the barren mountains that surrounded the road, and, as if to postpone what would be the most difficult declaration of all, he explained that these hills had previously been covered with coca plants, but nowadays nothing could be cultivated here because of the national government's fumigation program. The sun had by now set behind the mountains, and we were walking only by the light of Aurelio's flashlight. In this darkness Aurelio appeared to find it easier to make his final statement:

"Well, it is just that I don't want you to think I was a bad person, as if I was the one who ordered all these people to be killed... I was just trying to survive myself...."

As was the case with many others in the Fósforo district, Aurelio did not give the impression of having come to terms with his past experiences. His stories were haphazard statements that were rich in meaning but that told no coherent story. Aurelio later admitted that he was speaking about these events for the first time. When I reflected upon our conversation afterward, I was struck by the fact that, when speaking about this subject, he always looked around nervously to make sure that nobody was around. This behavior stood in sharp contrast to the occasions when he talked about the cocaine industry, when he freely spoke in front of anyone who happened to be present. Aurelio was one of those inhabitants who always started conversations with me about the internal armed conflict when we were alone, but who quickly changed the subject when others were around.

"Look, there they are", Aurelio whispered one day when he accompanied me over the bright orange steel bridge connecting Puerto Mal Abrigo with Tocache. When he saw that I had no idea what he was talking about, he pointed to some circled holes in the steel. "These are the bullet holes I was telling you about earlier", he said quietly. "The military used to stand on that hill", he said, nodding toward the steep hill only 20 meters away, where nowadays a small military camp was located, "and shoot at the people in Puerto Mal Abrigo". "Their bullets penetrated the steel of the bridge...It goes without saying that in those days the military wasn't fooling around, like they do today"¹⁰⁶. After a few minutes of staring silently at the holes, we saw some men approach to salute us. Aurelio whispered hastily: "Just pretend you are looking at the Huallaga River and don't let anybody know what I just told you"! "A

¹⁰⁶ Some local inhabitants liked to mock the soldiers, whom are now often adolescent boys from the region, about their posture and other physical weaknesses, asking mockingly: "With this lot, who would have won the War?" But as others remarked, it was only when this "chaotic, badly organized lot" entered, aware of the local situation and the villagers' rules and way of conduct, that guerrilla violence and control over the villages had decreased.

good day for fishing, hey!” we heard a man who had crept up on us from behind suddenly shout enthusiastically, “or was Aurelio showing you the bullet holes”. I felt my face redden and, out of the corner of my eye, I saw Aurelio nervously looking away. He used the same method that had saved him several times during the internal armed conflict and pretended to be even harder of hearing than he really was in order to avoid having to respond.

There were evidently people in the area who knew Aurelio had been the *mando militar* of Utopía Inca for several years, because they had lived in that community. Aurelio especially remembered one day when the *mandos superiores* of the *fuerza principal* entered the community and attempted to forcibly recruit several teenagers. He recalled how he had deceived these youths because, at that time, nobody was willing to enter the guerrilla ranks voluntarily. Aurelio told the people of the village he had caught one of the guerrilla’s youth delegates breaking the Shining Path rules. He said he needed some men to be able to take the accused youth delegate to the guerrilla camp in the jungle, where he would receive his punishment. Some of the local adolescents volunteered to help Aurelio bring the youth delegate to the guerrilla camp. Once there, they were themselves forcibly enrolled in the Shining Path and given an ultimatum “join or die”.¹⁰⁷

Aurelio looked depressed about the fact that he had deceived three of his fellow community’s members into a situation in which they could have easily lost their lives. But one day, when we were sitting on the *Esquina de Movimiento*, some men walked by smiling and shouting greetings. Aurelio whispered that these were the men he had tricked into joining the *fuerza principal*. When I asked about how he got along with them now, he said:

“When they see me now, they just laugh as if to say: ‘You scared me big time!’ Thank God that nothing happened to them, and all three returned alive. They still live in Utopía. I know that they don’t blame me because they know life was different before, but I blame myself for sending them...”¹⁰⁸

As seen in these images, ambiguity and secrecy were the words that best characterized the social memory in the Fósforo district. The key pillars of the post-conflict period at the national level, namely truth-telling and justice, were not particularly valued at the local level. Only by communally burying their worst secrets were the villagers able to live together peacefully and achieve a kind of local reconciliation based upon a collective silence about these horrific past events. This was a community that ended up being largely ignored by the national government in the aftermath of the conflict, as even Toledo’s promised post-conflict development projects never penetrated these rural regions of the Upper Huallaga. Instead, the people of the region reconstructed their own communities, without any governmental support.

4.3.2 We are reconstructing our community

Fósforo’s villagers carried out their own reconstruction project, and they received no government support. In the words of one woman:

“The *Plaza* and the streets bear silent witness to the things that happened here...all the murders that took place. *We*¹⁰⁹ are constructing the village so that it can become what it was before, little by little.”¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ Conversation with Don Cuadrado Cruz, Paraíso, January 12, 2005.

¹⁰⁸ Conversation with Don Cuadrado Cruz, Paraíso, February 2, 2005.

¹⁰⁹ Emphasis in original.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Nancy Obregón, Santa María, March 6, 2004.

The phrase “we are constructing” is important because it showed the population’s feelings of alienation from the national scene. However, it also demonstrated some changes at the local level, where people (neighbors or community members) began to re-build their community from scratch. In Esperanza, the community that was totally destroyed during the internal armed conflict, people returned after the violence decreased, and on their own initiative started to construct a *Plaza de Armas*, their houses and a communal building for meetings. As time went by, the inhabitants ignored the national debate as their own attempts to rebuild their lives were already underway. However, there were vast differences between Mal Abrigo and the surrounding communities, such as Esperanza, which is described above. It was especially in this central village where social disorganization continued and even increased during the post-conflict period. Mal Abrigo once again was overwhelmed by the numerous new migrants, who moved to the village when prices paid for coca and cocaine began to rise in 2001. As a consequence of this constant migration, community work¹¹¹ in this village has, until the present time, been organized and controlled by the military, who patrolled Mal Abrigo’s streets and conscripted new migrants to participate.

The post-conflict absence of any human rights organization (such as the *Defensoría del Pueblo*) in the Upper Huallaga’s rural zones meant that the villagers received no official support in the resolution of problems arising after the internal armed conflict. These named institutes are located in the towns but their employees never even visit the countryside. During the internal armed conflict, many people abandoned the region and migrated to other areas of the country, mainly to Lima and highland cities. Often, those who abandoned the region in the early period of the internal armed conflict left their *chacras* and other goods behind. These abandoned lands had been confiscated by Shining Path or divided among the campesinos who stayed behind. When these refugees returned, in many cases after fifteen years or more, their land was taken over by others, who had constructed houses and cultivated the land. In the following example of the community of Bello Horizonte, the difficulties arising in the post-conflict period became apparent. Pilar’s husband had been a community leader and became a main target of Shining Path. According to some villagers, he had been a local MRTA leader who had established a small presence in Bello Horizonte in 1984.¹¹² But Pilar rejected active engagement in either guerrilla group. She said:

“In 1990, Shining Path entered my house and killed my cousin, burned my house and my little business.... They killed my cousin right there in my house. One day, guerrillas took my husband to the school-building to kill him. I didn’t understand what was happening. He was not a thief, he was not a rapist. He was fighting for his village, for the people’s well-being, defending the villagers’ rights. The villagers followed him to the school building and pleaded with the guerrillas not to kill him. After this event, the massacre in the community started....The military entered and killed people, Shining Path entered and killed people. Afterwards, there was only silence.”¹¹³

In 1990, Pilar’s family escaped from the violence, walking in the jungle for days, before they finally reached a point where they could safely take a bus to Lima, where they moved in with some relatives. Prior to leaving, the family had owned a *funda*,¹¹⁴ where they mainly cultivated rice, and which they had left in the care of her husband’s cousin.

¹¹¹ Including the coordination of activities contributing to the community’s development: for example the construction of the community’s water supply.

¹¹² Information gathered during conversations with different community members, Bello Horizonte, July 19, 2005.

¹¹³ Interview with Pilar, Bello Horizonte, July 19, 2005.

¹¹⁴ Large estate.

Prior to returning to the community, she found out that her cousin had sold part of the land, and approximately fifteen new families now occupied part of the *funda*. After fifteen years, on July 19, 2005 Pilar returned to Bello Horizonte to claim her land. When she asked her husband's cousin to return the land he had sold illegally to the fifteen families, she received a death threat. During the weeks that followed several people involved in the conflict came to the *teniente gobernador*'s house to communicate their different versions of events involving the property. It was only after Pilar left that several villagers told me that, when Shining Path had assumed control of the community, Pilar's family was the first to disappear, leaving the others behind to, in their view, endure the guerrillas' cruelty and arbitrary violence.¹¹⁵ In the opinion of the villagers, Pilar had returned to demand her land with the goal of selling it to a large land-owner. Because it was believed that Pilar wouldn't permanently resettle in the community, the villagers declared that she did not need the land.

These cases are very complex because Pilar had the official ownership papers of the *funda* and, in April 2005, the national Plan of Reparations stated that internal armed conflict victims who had suffered some kind of financial loss would be paid compensation. In Pilar's case, this meant that she had the legal right to claim her land. But the families who stayed behind had maintained and cultivated the land for fifteen years while, according to the villagers, Pilar was living a quiet life in Lima. The majority of the families were willing to pay her money for their fields, which they had previously purchased illegally from her cousin. They knew if the case went to trial they would in all probability lose their land. But the husband's cousin, who had been trusted to take care of the family's possessions, was against any settlement. The local *teniente gobernador* did not know what to do. Should he side with Pilar and tell the families to leave? Should he order the families to pay the money to Pilar, a ruling the majority of the other villagers would not agree with? Or should he side with the villagers and ask Pilar to leave, which was legally not possible because she had legal title to the land? He tried to resolve the conflict but stated:

“Regrettably, this community suffered a lot from the political violence. This was also the case with the cousin and husband of *Señora* Pilar, who were killed during this period. Therefore, her family went to a place where there wasn't any political violence. She returned and, unfortunately, found her land occupied by other people. But ten years have passed and we cannot force these numerous families to leave their land.”¹¹⁶

This example shows the complexity inherent in local reconstruction, as the case became even more complicated when it became apparent that Pilar filed a complaint against the families who had occupied her land at the regional office of the *Defensoría del Pueblo* located in Tocache. After the ruling of the *teniente gobernador*, she was no longer allowed to enter the community, because her presence would only lead to new conflicts. In the opinion of most of the villagers, by going to the regional authorities she lost all her rights in the community, a viewpoint that directly contradicted national policies of economic reparations. But no representative of the *Defensoría* actually visited the rural zones to impose these national policies and, as a consequence, local land conflicts have since that time been resolved by the villagers themselves. In some instances this led to violence, as in the case of a similar dispute about land in Mal Abrigo that led to a fight involving two armed groups that both claimed to be the rightful owners of the same tract of land. Only in cases when the original owners who returned were willing to leave their *chacra* to those who had occupied it years before, were they allowed to stay. If they were not willing to do so, they in many cases were made unwelcome, asked to leave—or, in some instances—forcibly evicted from—the community.

¹¹⁵ Group conversation with some cocaleros and *arrozeros* – laborers on rice plantation, Bello Horizonte, July 19, 2005.

¹¹⁶ Conversation with *Teniente Gobernador*, Bello Horizonte, July 19, 2005.

As seen above, in many of these cases the local population, in sharp contrast to the national post-conflict policies, largely supported those who stayed in the region against those who had chosen to leave. After the internal armed conflict, there were distinct terms used for those who stayed, all of whom (even those that had joined the armed forces) were identified as conflict-victims, and those who left, who were said to have lived in peace. Those who had not shared the fate of the villagers had therefore lost the right to make any claims in their communities. One cocalera explained:

“Our people are different from the people who live in Lima. But many people left in the times of the *terrucos*. In 1990, the Fósforo district had 30,000 to 40,000 inhabitants. Now, only 4,000 to 5,000 live in the same region.¹¹⁷ But in recent years, many of the refugees came back, and we are still hoping that our region will flourish again. But during hard times, one could recognize the people who were really helping you, who stayed behind with you to fight these problems...”¹¹⁸

In communities where there was sufficient access to uncultivated lands, those who left during the internal armed conflict were welcomed back, but only if they did not harbor the expectation of finding everything they left behind and were willing to farm land in a new location. When the internal refugees returned, they were looked upon by the residents who had not left like any other *colono* in a region that attracted numerous migrants. Because of the ongoing migration, it was hard to find a common denominator for those living in the district. But these different groups collectively experienced a new threat against their livelihood, namely forced eradication, and at the same time, one thing began to unite them, namely their involvement in the cocaine industry.

4.4 A post-conflict cocalero identity

4.4.1 Saúl Guevara Díaz: A military initiative to form a cocalero association

To the surprise of many, in 2000 it was the military that, in an attempt to win the hearts and minds of the population, first created a campesino association. In those days, the prospect of a guerrilla resurrection in the Upper Huallaga was perceived as a continuous threat to national security, as Shining Path was at that time carrying out sporadic armed attacks directed against the security forces. As part of the military’s strategy, they established a local villagers’ association that would enable the military to maintain their influence over the local communities. But by imposing ideas of organization, the military was reinforcing the kind of identities it sought to replace (see Richards 2005: 19). In Mal Abrigo, approximately 5,000 people were present during a gathering convened by military commanders.¹¹⁹ Eventually, the population was asked to elect a president of the villagers association. Nancy Obregón, a woman who had previously organized a mothers’ club in Santa María de Frontera, was elected as leader. But she certainly was no advocate of a strong military role in the local organization. Consequently, she immediately began to protest against the military authority. She later recalled her first speech:

¹¹⁷ These are not the official numbers of the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática* (INEI).

¹¹⁸ Interview with Nancy Obregón, Santa María, September 28, 2004.

¹¹⁹ It should be noted that these events had become part of the social memory of the population. Therefore it was very difficult to reconstruct the chronology of events. When asked about the months the different events had taken place, villagers would often explain it had taken place during the “rainy season, because it rained a lot that day” or “when the military changed”, giving no specific month.

"I said; 'Well, I want to thank you all for showing faith in a woman and voting for me. It's a great surprise that you have considered me trustworthy enough to become the president of the campesino association'. I was looking each of them in the eyes: 'This means that I'm not alone. You have chosen me and you will help me. From now on, you will be my eyes, my ears, my arms and my legs, because without your help I'm nothing, but in the same way, without me you are nothing'. All of these were terms that the guerrillas used, but now I was using them to make the people feel that we were like a family, so they looked at me, and they laughed when they heard these words. So after the meeting, the military lieutenant said: 'I want to have a word with you, please'. 'Very well, lieutenant, but before we do I want to arrange some things with my people. They are my people, aren't they?' 'In fact, they are', he had to respond, and that was all we said to each other that day. They say that this lieutenant went to his commander to tell him about the elections we had that day, and that he had said to his commander that they had elected a very strong woman, who used the language of Shining Path [laughs]."¹²⁰

With Nancy Obregón's election as leader, the military influence over the association in the district declined. The new villagers association took on goals, which all emphasized the defense of coca, as following the decline of Shining Path's influence in the Upper Huallaga, the Fujimori government in 1996 resumed forced eradication operations in an attempt to improve its relations with the United States (Cabieses 2005: 17).

Whether or not the military intended the initiative to become a strong cocalero association remains unclear. Because they were aware it would endanger their position among the villagers, the military rejected participation in anti-drug operations. The military commander was, in fact, the person who first informed the cocaleros that a forced eradication campaign was heading their way. In August 2000,¹²¹ the police entered Fósforo's communities and initiated a campaign of violence against cocaleros (including beatings, entering private properties, etc.), which quickly heightened tensions in the region. Fósforo's recently organized association mobilized a massive force against these actions. The police reacted to the villagers' mobilization by using tear gas to keep the enraged villagers at bay. In a final attempt to stop the forced eradication, the new community leaders went to the military base to ask for support. Because the military had retreated from the war on drugs in 1995, they were unable to stop the forced eradication operation. Although the cocaleros' anger was mainly directed against the police forces who carried out the forced eradication, it also caused a severe decline in the villagers' confidence in the military, who could do nothing to prevent police abuse during these anti-drug operations. As proposed by the military commander, the cocaleros organized a commission, including the local *Jueza de Paz* and the association's leaders, who travelled to Tocache's *Defensoría del Pueblo*¹²² to demand that the forced eradication be stopped. But they quickly noticed that none of the legal authorities were willing to condemn the police abuses.

Without the authorities' support, the cocalero leaders returned to the rural district, where the villagers were still engaged in daily confrontations with the police. These confrontations between the police and cocaleros turned increasingly violent as cocaleros began to use sticks and stones to keep the police at bay. Soon after the internal armed conflict, Fósforo's cocaleros were engaged in a new battle, as Nancy Obregón recalled:

¹²⁰ Interview with Nancy Obregón, Santa María, March 6, 2004.

¹²¹ There is disagreement among villagers as to when this took place. One local cocalero leader tried to recall the specific time that the CORAH entered, saying, "In the month of August, but this I can't remember well". Another cocalero stated : "I can remember that it was in October of that year".

¹²² Ombudsman's Office.

“In those days, our region looked like the Vietnam War. You could see how the people cried, how people suffered [...] I started to cry and a policeman walked up to me to console me. I pushed his hand away and said: ‘Take your hands off me, you miserable dog. Remember that, from now on, you aren’t going to come back to my village, not while I’m alive’! When I looked up I saw my mother sitting on her knees, crying and pleading with the policemen; ‘*Papito*, please, how can I provide food for my children?’ At that moment I was filled with an unspeakable anger, indignation and rage.”¹²³

In those days, many villagers of Santa María were aware that the guerrillas had hidden weapons on the banks of the Frontera River. When CORAH¹²⁴ entered their district, different groups of men actively searched for the locations where the guerrillas had left their weapons. According to some people, there was one man in Santa María who knew the exact place, but he was tortured and killed by the military before he could tell the other villagers where the weapons were hidden:

“In those days, we were searching like idiots, but, thank God, we never found these weapons... What did we use to defend ourselves? We used sticks and stones, because in those days we didn’t even have slingshots. I can remember that the people working for CORAH were standing on one side and we came running towards them with all of our people, between 1,000 and 1,500 men... so we didn’t have a lot of people.... So we were running, and when they went to Puerto Mal Abrigo, we were running after them.”¹²⁵

Because of their previous experiences, the villagers knew what would happen if they threw in their lot with the guerrillas. After the first forced eradication operation in 2000, the cocaleros constructed the *Asociación de Campesinos Cocaleros y Productores Agropecuarios Saúl Guevara Díaz*, which was a continuation of the military’s initiative, although it operated totally independently of the military. The organization was led by Nancy Obregón, who had been chosen during the military gathering. The cocaleros used the name of Saúl Guevara Díaz, a man who had been crippled for life during mobilizations against the forced eradication in August 2000. The inhabitants began to see the fight against the forced eradication operations as a community struggle.

4.4.2 A post-conflict communal cocalero identity

During the regional post-conflict period in 2000,¹²⁶ the residents of the Fósforo district seemed to suddenly become aware that nothing had fundamentally changed in their living situation. To state it even more strongly, the post-conflict situation seemed to be no different from the conditions that existed during the late-1970s, when coca cultivation was the livelihood for most of the residents, the cocaine industry dominated the region’s economy and the national government’s presence was weak. Moreover, right after the guerrilla violence in the Upper Huallaga decreased in the late-1990s, the economic sustenance of all villagers became threatened by the national government’s forced eradication operation. The villagers’

¹²³ Interview with Nancy Obregón, Santa María, March 6, 2004.

¹²⁴ *Control y Reducción del Cultivo de la Coca en el Alto Huallaga*: Special Project for the Control and Eradication of Coca in the Upper Huallaga. Agency in charge of the eradication of the coca fields within Law 22095 (see Chapter 2).

¹²⁵ Interview with unnamed cocalero leader, La Molina, March 8, 2004.

¹²⁶ In contrast to the national post-conflict period that began in 1995 during the second government of Fujimori. In the Upper Huallaga, the violence continued and the regional post-conflict period only started in 2000, when the state of emergency over the region was discontinued.

feelings of alienation changed into outrage against the national government, because in 2000 they were hit by eradication efforts shortly after they had started to reconstruct their lives, homes, villages and communities, efforts that were severely affected by the anti-drug campaigns. A resident stated:

“They left us with nothing, in 2000 it was *coca cero*.¹²⁷ We saw many children who couldn’t go to school because their parents didn’t even have money for pencils and books.... To see this happening before your eyes, one feels ashamed... Children ended up in prostitution because of the eradication...this was the only opportunity left in the region to earn some money. It was a total disaster...”¹²⁸

The images described contributed to a communal sense of indignation but also enabled the new association’s leaders to effectively transform cocalero identity into a communal identity, which began to include all villagers.

In other studies about the rise of cocalero associations, cocalero identity was often seen as imposed on people, and thus as having generally negative connotations.¹²⁹ But in the Fósforo district, it was used by the villagers as an incentive to strengthen community feelings—to create stronger relations and bonds among the villagers. Whatever their feelings about the term cocalero, most of the local population did enthusiastically identify with the new association, and this included those persons who were not directly engaged in coca cultivation. The term “cocalero” became a general term that was used to identify persons in the region who shared a common fate and who were locked in a common struggle. In the words of one local woman:

“The creation of our association has come with blood, hurt and hope. This association isn’t only an organization. This is the organization that was created by the whole population, by all of the villages and hamlets.”¹³⁰

The term cocalero began to include everyone; it created a new sense of unity among different people. It was often stated that in the beginning everybody actively participated, as Nancy Obrégon once described a community meeting;

“Even the girls [read “prostitutes”] that work in the bars in Puerto Mal Abrigo had come that day, with their boots and machetes.”¹³¹

Moreover, the newly created collective identity began to penetrate different aspects of village life. It began to play a part in religious celebrations, such as the yearly celebration surrounding the village saint of Santa María de Frontera on August 30, during which all activities were organized by the cocalero movement, and revenues of a music group’s performance late that night were contributed to the association. Whole villages and communities were turned into *cocalero pueblos* or *cocalero comunidades*. This was the case because the economic life of these places was centered on the cocaine industry and was fueled by the money generated from that industry.

Nevertheless, even within the Fósforo district, there were vast differences among communities with respect to the ways that they were organized. In some communities,

¹²⁷ *Cero Coca* literally means “Zero Coca”. In Peru the term was used for the government policies that were aimed at totally eradicating all of the illegal coca in the country.

¹²⁸ Conversation with *Pepa* and his wife, Puerto Mal Abrigo, July 14, 2005.

¹²⁹ See Ramírez 2001; 2001^a on Colombia.

¹³⁰ Interview with unnamed woman, Utopía Inca, March 14 2004.

¹³¹ Interview with Nancy Obregón, Santa María, March 6 2004.

including Santa María de Frontera and Esperanza de Frontera, the population was made up mainly of migrants who had come to the region during the coca boom and the internal armed conflict. These groups of people were more inclined to participate actively in the new cocalero association, and they comprised a large proportion of the local directorate. Together with Esperanza de Frontera, 3 de Diciembre is famous as being one of the two communities that were organized in a strict way, maybe these strict structures were related to the background of the local cocalero leader, who in Esperanza was an ex-guerrilla, and who in 3 de Diciembre was an ex-soldier. People were forced to participate and collaborate in the cocalero struggle, a structure that was largely respected by people from other areas, where no such strict structures had been established. But in general, the new cocalero identity gave all rural villagers, newly entered *colonos* and old migrants alike, who had previously felt ignored by the national government the idea that they could change this situation. Differences among communities were never emphasized because, as they effectively needed to fend off forced eradication operations, the association's leaders needed the participation of the entire district's inhabitants. Particularly during the first years after its creation, the local cocalero leaders managed to mobilize all inhabitants against different state-led eradication operations.

In 2001,¹³² in accord with the national government's "*coca cero*" policy, another forced eradication operation hit the Fósforo district. CORAH troops entered the district on a Sunday, when several local leaders of *Saúl Guevara Díaz* were attending a regional meeting in Tingo María. After the announcement, CORAH entered the Fósforo district, after which the cocalero leaders travelled to Mal Abrigo, where at that time villagers were already engaged in mass mobilizations against the entrance of the CORAH troops. Participants remembered how they joined the mobilizations filled with fear about the possible reaction of the policemen. But they also proudly recalled how this time they fought back as a united force. Different communities in the region quickly formed groups of about 500 men, who were communicating among themselves by the smoke of burning tires.¹³³ When CORAH tried to enter a *chacra* close to Mal Abrigo, the villagers quickly mobilized. Those residents of Mal Abrigo who owned trucks¹³⁴ organized transport, bringing more men to the field. They were awaited by heavily armed police forces but remembered how the prospect of more poverty and hunger was seen as worse than dying in a violent confrontation. The police commander, seeing that his position was getting weaker by the minute with the arrival of more men willing to engage in a conflict, tried to negotiate with Nancy Obregón. He attempted to force her to make the masses retreat. Otherwise, he threatened, the police would begin shooting directly at the protesters. Obregón recalled shouting at the commander:

“You won't leave here alive. You and I are going to die here together, today; I will die defending my village, and you will die persecuting them. But the one thing I guarantee is that you will die!” Well then, the people who were standing around started screaming: ‘Coca or Death!’ and started to use their slingshots.”¹³⁵

Meanwhile, some local men had transported barrels filled with gasoline to the field, and were looking for a lighter (which, in all the confusion, they were unable to find). Then it dawned on Obregón that what was happening represented the first ever cocalero victory. She recalled:

¹³² Once again the villagers didn't agree on the specific month the forced eradication began but, in contrast to 2000, they did not even mention a specific month.

¹³³ By the smoke of burning tires the men knew where the forced eradication operation had entered. They could quickly organize the villagers to go to the place where the CORAH had entered a *chacra*.

¹³⁴ Actually the cocaleros did not own trucks; they used the trucks of two local *patrones* residing in Puerto Mal Abrigo, who helped them during their fight against forced eradication.

¹³⁵ Interview with Nancy Obregón, Santa María, March 6, 2004.

“Then it hit me....the captain pissed in his pants out of fear, and some other policemen that were present did so as well...They were all *cholos*¹³⁶ and they were all very scared [smiles]”¹³⁷

This time, the cocaleros emerged as the dominant force in the confrontation. Consequently, by 2001, Fósforo’s local cocalero association had turned into a movement that included all villagers, whose collective actions were mainly aimed at keeping forced eradication out of their region.

4.4.3 Cocalero protest and dialogue

After the internal armed conflict in the Upper Huallaga, the cocaleros also staged large regional protests which were concentrated in towns such as Tingo María, Monzón and Tocache. These were protests against the government’s plans for the Upper Huallaga. For example, in February 2000, word spread throughout the Upper Huallaga that special police forces were spraying coca crops with the deadly fungus *fusarium oxysporum*.¹³⁸ The accusations were followed by different protest by different local cocalero associations in different regions (i.e., the Monzón, Tingo María and the Fósforo district) that forced the Fujimori government to pass a Supreme Decree in March 2000 that prohibited the use of chemicals and biological defoliants in coca eradication efforts (Rojas 2003). The subsequent resumption of forced eradication, which involved manually plucking the coca plants out of the ground, began in August 2000 and also led to the kinds of protests that had previously been seen in the Fósforo district (see previous section). In September, more than 2,000 cocaleros from Aucayacu and Tingo María participated in protests against the eradication effort that CORAH was planning to carry out in their regions (Antesana 2005: 13). A general strike was called in Tingo María, followed by another in the Fósforo district shortly thereafter.

After these local uprisings, contact between the different local cocalero associations increased, and a general regional *paro*¹³⁹ was called over the whole Upper Huallaga. Approximately 30,000 people participated in this protest, only three weeks before President Fujimori fled the country (Rojas 2005: 213). This protest was concentrated in Tingo María, where daily violent confrontations between the police and cocaleros had severely disrupted daily life. On the first day of the strike alone, several policeman and cocaleros were injured, and numerous protesters were arrested. On the second day, more than 18,000 cocaleros participated in a march to the regional police station in Tingo María and demanded that the detainees be released. Different accounts of what happened during the second day appeared in the national press. The police forces argued that a violent clash had occurred between the police and the cocaleros during which nobody was injured. The cocaleros declared that more than twenty of their people were wounded during several confrontations with the police forces. Eventually, after three days of confrontations, the cocalero leaders agreed to suspend the strike, but only after the national government promised to stop forced eradication and agreed to form a “*Mesa de Diálogo*” (dialogue group) to discuss and resolve the region’s problems.

It was only in November 2000 that the *Mesa de Diálogo*, which comprised both government officials and cocaleros, was finally established. The cocalero demands entailed

¹³⁶ Term to indicate dark-skinned people from the Andes, especially those that have migrated to the city (Albó 2004: 21; García 2005). The term, which is widely used in Peru, often has pejorative connotations.

¹³⁷ Interview with Nancy Obregón, Santa María, March 6, 2004.

¹³⁸ Most likely the fumigation was done by DIRANDRO, a state agency that was created in 1991 as a combination of the two previous existing police anti-drug units; namely the anti-drug police and the Bureau of Illegal Drug Trafficking Investigation (see Rojas 2005: 192).

¹³⁹ Literally “stoppage”: protest method in which whole communities, villages and towns were paralyzed as a result of a stoppage of work and services.

the following: An investigation of the damages caused by chemical and biological fumigations, the forced eradication's temporary suspension, the replacement of forced eradication by gradual and planned eradication, a debate about a new law on drugs to replace Law 22095,¹⁴⁰ an increase in the price for coca leaf paid by ENACO,¹⁴¹ and an investigation of what happened to national and international funds for alternative development. It was at that point that Fujimori fled the country after a national scandal had erupted. After Fujimori fled to Japan, Paniagua's interim government continued to participate in the *Mesa de Diálogo*, which by then included representatives from thirteen Peruvian cocalero districts, municipality delegates, the *Defensoría del Pueblo* and diverse government authorities. These negotiations were seen as a huge step forward in the relationship between the state and the cocaleros since, for the first time in Peruvian history, the government appeared to acknowledge "the cocaleros as legitimate negotiation partners" (Rojas 2003; Cabieses 2003). But the dialogue group made a number of important mistakes. For example, the investigation to determine whether there had been chemical and biological fumigation in the Upper Huallaga, a principal cocalero demand, never occurred. Clearly the cocalero problem wasn't Paniagua's main concern. Instead, he was preoccupied with disentangling Fujimori and Montesino's web of corruption, the organization of new democratic elections, and the total reconstruction of many state institutions (Rojas 2005: 215). Also contributing to the *Mesa*'s failure was the continuation of forced eradication. President Paniagua had to comply with eradication targets that had been set in a U.S. agreement with President Fujimori (2000). Resumption of eradication efforts in Aguaytía (Padre Abad Province, Department of Ucayali) led to protests in May 2001. For nine days, Aguaytía's cocaleros closed the main road between Tingo María and Pucallpa, which caused shortages in both towns and which enraged Pucallpa's urban population. A high-level commission was sent to negotiate with the cocalero leaders and, during these talks, it was decided to continue the *Mesa de Diálogo*.

When Alejandro Toledo took office on July 28, 2001, the cocaleros' confidence in the *Mesa* had severely declined. One cocalero leader said:

"The *Mesa de Diálogo* didn't strengthen us. It weakened our associations because during that time we weren't part of any strong organization. Before, we never had any strong regional organization but we knew we had to fight for one cause...because we did not have anything. With the establishment of the *Mesa de Diálogo*, we lost the willingness to fight, because at that point nobody saw the use of strengthening our own cocalero organization. Now people do understand because of the lies of the government. These people have been waiting for twenty years for a change of policies, now they are sick of waiting."¹⁴²

Moreover, as had been the case with Paniagua, President Toledo had to act in accordance with the eradication targets set by the United States government. Because of US pressure to continue forced eradication, the *Mesa de Diálogo* was discontinued, and the dialogue group held its final meeting in October 2001. By participating in the *Mesa de Diálogo*, the cocaleros undoubtedly had sought to have a voice in the application of national anti-drug policies. But their demands for inclusion were largely ignored and never again did the national government consider the cocaleros valid negotiating partners. As will be argued below, it would be misleading to argue that these protests were only organized against forced eradication operations.

¹⁴⁰ Law which proposed the total elimination of coca in Peru. To combat the growing illegal industry; see Chapter 2 section 2.1.3.

¹⁴¹ *Empresa Nacional de la Coca*: state entity charged with the authorization to buy and sell legal coca.

¹⁴² Interview with Nancy Obregón, Santa María, August 18, 2003.

4.4.4 The broader motives of cocalero mobilization

Starting in 2000 and continuing into 2003, the Upper Huallaga's cocaleros organized different local and regional protests. This emergence of cocalero protest raised questions, first and foremost among them the following: Why did these cocalero associations arise during Peru's post-conflict period? According to Eslava's study (2005) of Aguaytía,¹⁴³ the answer is simple; he argued that the local cocalero association was organized out of necessity to construct a communal defense against forced eradication. This line of thought follows Jenkins (1982: 487-488) who argues: "Peasants rebel because of threats to their access to a means of economic subsistence, not because of the particular form or class relations in which they are enmeshed. Peasant grievances are seen as structurally based on conflicts over interests between peasants and more powerful groups". Indeed, as seen above, during the creation of *Asociación Saúl Guevara Díaz*, the repression employed by CORAH and the accompanying police led directly to the strengthening of the local association and the planning of collective action.

Most investigators believe that the forced coca eradication fueled the cocaleros' anger against the national government (Felbab-Brown 2006: 79). Nevertheless this answer to the question why frequently seemed to fail to take into consideration the region's recent history and social reality. In Eslava's study (2005) the goal of putting an end to forced eradication is portrayed as even more important than the poverty in which the cocaleros lived. In his view, the rural cocalero associations' goals were different from those of the Upper Huallaga's urban movements, such as the *Junta Vecinal*¹⁴⁴ or the *Comedores Populares*¹⁴⁵ that were organized to help meet the population's basic needs in the absence of effective state organizations that would do likewise. This explanation also ignored the relationship between forced eradication, economic insecurity, poverty, violence and state fragility in these margins of the state. Undoubtedly, the importance of forced eradication as an incentive for the rise of local cocalero associations cannot be denied, but behind this primary incentive, there were also other motives. Eslava's (2005) view does not accurately explain why, if the cocaleros viewed the ejection of the police and the CORAH from the Fósforo district as their only goal, the local association continued to function after this goal had been realized in 2001.

As Jasper (1997: 13) argues, "The targets often change during the course of the protest, as participants actively—and collectively—rethink and reframe their beliefs and passions". In order to maintain the masses' commitment to the organization, the association's issues must be transformed so that they again fit the beliefs, feelings and desires of its members (Goodwin and Jasper 2003: 52). Consequently, the cocalero leaders, after the threat of eradication subsided, began making broader demands, which have to be seen as part of their general quest to resolve the underlying issues of reconstruction, development, legality, inclusion and citizenship rights. To summarize, the collective cocalero identity was shaped by the sense of exclusion, as well as post-conflict state abandonment, which all can be seen in the light of ongoing "marginalization" as a state technique (see Poole 2004: 38). Their fight against "marginalization" meant that the cocaleros began to resist the stigmas imposed on them, including terms such as "*guerrilleros*", "drug traffickers", "uncivilized people who lived outside the law", and "bad citizens".¹⁴⁶ In the words of one cocalero leader:

"I don't want people to see us as criminals, as bad people. If they visited my modest house, they would see that we are poor, honest campesinos. We aren't the drug

¹⁴³ Capital of the province Padre Abad in the Ucayali department.

¹⁴⁴ Self-defense groups of villagers in towns.

¹⁴⁵ Community kitchens run by voluntary groups of women.

¹⁴⁶ See Ramírez 2001^a: 2 on Colombia.

traffickers or the terrorists of Peru! [...] Our slogan is: “An honest Peruvian like you couldn’t possibly be a drug trafficker or a terrorist.”¹⁴⁷

Some of the cocalero leaders argued that these stigmas were ascribed to their group because of discrimination against campesinos as a class, since campesinos were still seen as backward, barbaric and unintelligent. The cocalero elaborated upon what he considered the cause of this stigma:

“We have been marginalized and abused simply because we are *campesinos cocaleros*. Maybe because we don’t speak perfect Spanish, because we don’t use big words, because we are not at the same level as the rich people, the people who wear a necktie and suit to work. But, I am a simple cocalero, I only ask for equality...That the cocalero be respected and protected, that we be supported by our national government, damn it!”¹⁴⁸

But the national and regional elites¹⁴⁹ continued to exploit the stigmatization of drug traffickers and guerrillas. The regional elite wanted to exclude this group from regional politics, and they successfully achieved this goal by using the stigma of uncivil, barbaric people, living in the remote backlands of their region, where legality and the rule of law were largely absent and, more importantly, unwanted by the inhabitants. On the national level, seeing the cocaleros of the Upper Huallaga Valley as drug traffickers and guerrillas, and thus people who lived outside the rule of law, implied that they never needed to be integrated into the wider society. Moreover, such a stigma meant that the cocaleros remained easy targets of state repression and abuse. For example, the police never needed to show respect for human rights during the forced eradication. Because of the stigmatization, apparent abuses against cocaleros weren’t questioned: After all, these were actions that had been committed against an illegal group that was living outside the law.

The creation of the cocalero associations and, especially, their emergence at a particular moment in history, need to be seen in the light of political conditioning. As analyzed by the political opportunities approach,¹⁵⁰ the rise and protests of the cocalero association reflected developments within the nation as a whole (McAdam *et al.* 1996: 3). For example, Alejandro Toledo’s (2001-2006) election as president was an event that many cocaleros were said to have facilitated with their protest during the final stage of the Fujimori period. Hence, when the national political situation changed, the cocaleros wanted to be included. In the words of one cocalero:

“Before, the cocaleros of our region didn’t listen to the national government, but this has now changed. Now we do listen to and respect our national government but, in exchange they also have to listen to all their citizens, including the cocaleros.”¹⁵¹

After the internal armed conflict, the cocaleros were looking for new, non-violent ways to be included, or just to be heard. In the first stage of his governing period, President Toledo gave the impression of being willing to listen to their demands. In the words of one anonymous cocalero:

¹⁴⁷ Interview with Molotov, Esperanza de Frontera, June 5, 2004.

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Molotov, Esperanza de Frontera, September 28, 2004.

¹⁴⁹ The *tocachino* urban elite (see Chapter 3).

¹⁵⁰ See Chapter 1, section 1.1.

¹⁵¹ Interview with Luis Paredes, Alto Mal Abrigo, September 28, 2004.

“Toledo said that he wanted to put an end to all of the *mentiras*.¹⁵² We were very glad Toledo said: ‘You aren’t *narcotraficantes*, you are legal cocaleros. You aren’t *terrucos*, you are legal citizens.’ He started to work this way, during his first year, but afterwards, unfortunately, he stopped. A *terruco* isn’t a cocalero who is defending the coca plant. [...] We don’t want to be *terrucos* and we have shown that we aren’t drug traffickers, because we have taken our coca to ENACO. So the government pays us and in this way we pay national taxes... So to say that we are *terrucos*? Do we have guns? Do we promote terror in this region?”¹⁵³

Right after his first year, President Toledo was criticized for ignoring civil demands. Because of Toledo’s rapid decline in popularity and failure to resolve a number of critical problems facing the nation, the government was confronted by daily protests. As Remy (2004; 2005) argues, the new fragile democratic government couldn’t effectively neutralize the numerous mobilizations and social protests that began to arise. Because of his lack of a strong political party and coherent governmental politics, which largely limited his options, Toledo was unable to meet the rising demands that had accumulated during the Fujimori years (Rojas 2005: 186). This left several social sectors without any other way of making itself heard in public decisions other than by engaging in protest.

When the Toledo government neglected the popular demands, the protests, including those of the cocaleros, became more violent, a tactic that appeared to be more effective in getting the attention of the national government (Remy 2005: 149-150). Moreover, if the protesters used violence, they were at least sure that they would receive media attention. Thus, their protest would not have been totally in vain (Tilly 2002^a: 16). The cocalero protests formed part of a growing unrest among different social sectors, including physicians, schoolteachers, truck drivers, and campesinos, all of whom employed violent methods during their protests. The government’s neglect of the region’s problems caused Fósforo’s population’s trust in democratic processes to fall precipitously. In the words of Nancy Obregón:

“We are fighting a Dirty War in our region.... We lived through ten years of standing here and seeing our people being murdered, ten years of seeing how these men were beaten by the military. Ten years when our *compañeros* learned to change their mentality and say; ‘We have hope for this democratic government’. But nowadays, these men say; if this is democracy, I would rather live under dictatorship because at least my children had something to eat.”¹⁵⁴

But something important had changed in the minds of the local population. In the post-conflict period, the previously unorganized cocaleros began to believe in themselves as part of a national movement, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

4.5 Local post-conflict changes in perspective

In the Upper Huallaga during and after the internal armed conflict, the cocaine industry was the cause of a number of different kinds of violence. While its role in the onset of the internal armed conflict was indirect, regionally the presence of the cocaine industry did affect both the character and the duration of the violence. The participants’ motivations

¹⁵² Literally “lies”. In this quotation the term is used to define the system of corruption and limited freedoms established during the Fujimori regime.

¹⁵³ Interview with unnamed cocalero, Paraiso, June 17, 2004.

¹⁵⁴ Speech of Nancy Obregón, March 14 2005, during the third CONPACCP congress in Pampa de Quinea.

evolved in the course of the internal armed conflict, as violence in these regions encompasses a variety of armed actors (legal and illegal) that are related through a dynamic web of alliances and enmity (Studdard 2004: 4). The relationships that existed among different warring parties were highly localized (Berdal 2003: 287) but, in general, these relationships prolonged the violence, and changed its character. Easy revenue led to opportunistic defection and fragmentation of combatant groups, whereby all present armed actors (illegal and legal ones) were increasingly driven by the cocaine industry. Starting in the mid-1980s, the Upper Huallaga became one of the most violent arenas of the internal armed conflict (CVR 2003), and the Huallaga River was transformed into a mass grave.

Most importantly, these regional conflict complexities have serious implications for regional conflict resolution (Cornell 2005: 755). Some argue that promoting peace is more important in regions where organized crime and violence are rampant and where crime and violence are likely to increase, as communities are flooded with among others, former guerrillas and former soldiers (UNDP 2002: 95). But more likely, these problematic regions are forgotten during post-conflict peace processes, leaving many causes of the violence unaddressed. On the national level, “we didn’t know” might be true because public knowledge about the violence varies in different settings, as it is influenced by the duration of the violence, media bias, and geographical regions, among other factors (Cohen 2001: 78). Within the context of the Upper Huallaga, it is not difficult to validate the phrase “we didn’t know”. But in any “states of denial”¹⁵⁵ cynicism is justified (Cohen 2001: 78-79). As a consequence of the Peruvian “states of denial” of the Fujimori and Toledo governments, the Upper Huallaga remains portrayed as an impenetrable and dangerous area, a characterization that is often used to justify the absence of post-conflict reconstruction and development projects in the region. Even now, the region does not feature a strong presence of journalists, human rights organizations, civil and criminal courts, and other state institutions, even in comparison to other zones affected by the internal armed conflict. The absence of such entities led to the institution of local practices that frequently contradict both the national law and national reparation policies.

Even in these areas with regional conflict complexes, combatants began to weigh the benefits of peace. The increasing cruelty of the guerrillas led to a re-thinking among campesinos drawn (voluntarily or involuntarily) into the guerrilla ranks. As this chapter has demonstrated, villagers can establish peace without any interaction with the state. As Richards (2004: 19) remarks, there is, on the local level, more scope for this “spontaneous peace process” than is often recognized. In these complex local settings, the most dynamic processes of post-conflict social reconstruction takes place, as choices have to be made regarding how to remember previous times and how to confront this past, and how to live together, and what to forget (Weinstein and Stover 2004: 2). In the Fósforo district, a good justification for forgetting seemed to be the blurring of relations that had occurred during the internal armed conflict, as many people, some to survive, some for economic reasons, and some because they had been ideologically attracted, had participated in the guerrilla force. Boundaries between victims and perpetrators are unclear in most situations in which there is internal armed conflict: Perpetrators can actually become victims and vice versa (see Cohen 2001). Because of the numerous complexities, the relevance of Levi’s (2005) gray zone¹⁵⁶ actually increased during the post-conflict period, as there were in the region many former participants,

¹⁵⁵ “States of denial” as Cohen (2001: 1) begins his book “One common threat runs through the many different stories of denial: people, organizations, governments or whole societies are presented with information that is too disturbing, threatening or anomalous to be fully absorbed or openly acknowledged. The information is therefore somehow repressed, disavowed, pushed aside or reinterpreted.” In this book the term is used because after internal armed conflicts, as in Peru, governments often deny their responsibility for atrocities, which can lead to “states of denial”.

¹⁵⁶ As previously noted, the gray zone is a conceptual tool that warns against overly rigid and misleading dichotomies (see Levi 1989; 2005).

including those bystanders who were forced by Shining Path to kill their enemies; or those who betrayed community members to the military. This reality blurred boundaries in Fósforo between the victim and perpetrator categories and a willingness to recreate community bonds led to a post-conflict culture of silence and secrecy.

In these local settings, it is important to understand people's capacity to reconstruct their lives, make the transformation to peaceful coexistence and forge new social ties (Pouliquy 2007: 3). In contrast to other affected regions, people in the Fósforo district did not have a previous relationship to restore, so they had to create a new collective identity. In effect, they were faced with the challenge of redefining and strengthening their traditional identity. As the Fósforo district case demonstrated, to end these complex regional war scenes, it is important to "know how and when *not* to intervene" (Richards 2004: 19). There is a close relationship between peace and a cocaine industry that is allowed to operate without government interference: When the military refrained from attacking the illegal industry, people chose to live in communities under military control. At first, the military played a major role in the creation of a local cocalero association, but when the state opted for forced eradication, these relations came to an end. Residents of the region opted for a collective identity as "cocaleros" rather than choosing to see themselves primarily as conflict victims. With this new collective identity, the association's leaders were able to include not only long-term residents of the area in their association, but also those who had recently arrived in the district. Right after the ending of the internal armed conflict, this local cocalero association assumed an active role in the national cocalero movement, when the cocalero protest for the first time in Peruvian history became visible on the national level. As will be described in the following chapter, the creation of a national cocalero movement has to be seen as part of both the transition to democracy and the resurrection of Peruvian civil society, and it transformed the cocaleros into a social force that in 2003-2005 the government could no longer ignore.

5. A Peruvian cocalero movement?

In the Andean countries involved in the cocaine trade, the terms “cocaine” and “drug trafficking” have become negative symbols of national identity, plaguing the national consciousness, the daily news, and even daily conversation (Thoumi 2003: 2). They also remain topics that dominate national political discourse in Peru, involving accusations and counter accusations among politicians, and debates on the formulation of policy to deal with the problem.¹ For a long time in Bolivia, popular opposition of cocaleros arose against these negative and illegal images. In Peru, in the 1980s there had been attempts to organize, but because of the internal armed conflict, those involved became invisible actors, as guerrilla violence and state repression prevented these early movements from getting off the ground. As seen before, periods of post-conflict social reconstruction and transition to democracy often lead to the construction of new social structures, new forms of social interaction, new demands or claims made to the national government and new collective identity formations. The Peruvian cocalero movement, which had previously been non-existent, quickly rose to become one of the country’s most visible post-conflict social movements, questioning the state deficiencies and the marginalization of different cocalero regions by organizing numerous activities and protests. The movement’s mass base rose to such levels that some began to speak of a “Bolivianization”² of Peru’s cocalero struggle.

To understand the sudden rise of the movement and its evolving claims, this chapter employs the “structural approach”, which focuses upon the contextual and historical factors of the cocalero movement. Concomitantly, the “cultural approach” to social movement theory is also utilized because it stresses the importance of the participants’ perceptions, desires and fantasies (Goodwin and Jasper 2003: 13).³ What is possible, desirable, and effective are important considerations for participants in collective action efforts, which are called the “making of popular identities” (Vilas 2004). The key concept of the “cultural approach” is that of “agency”, as the increasing capabilities of individuals, groups and communities to respond to insecurity in the broader socio-economic and politico-institutional context. The cocaleros’ principal demand was that the government would increase its social spending in their region, but soon were organized around broader issues, including ongoing police corruption, a failing government policy, a weak anti-drug institution and misappropriation of funds destined for alternative development projects. The emergence of a national cocalero identity can be explained in terms of social exclusion, feelings of injustice and state abandonment in the different “margins of the state”⁴ involved. Nevertheless, in sharp contrast to Bolivia’s *colonos*, who organized by forming fixed organizations of *comunidades* and peasant and miners’ unions (Vellinga 2004b: 9), the Upper Huallaga’s cocaleros came from different regions, had different backgrounds and, most importantly, in Peru the cocalero regions were geographically divided among 14 regions in 10 departments (see Map 4), which complicated the constructing of a shared identity.

¹ See Laserna 1992; Léons and Sanabria 1997 on Bolivia.

² The “Bolivianization” (or *Bolivianazo* in Spanish) of the Peruvian cocalero struggle was used to indicate the similarities between the organization that arose in the Peruvian cocalero regions after the internal armed conflict (2000) with the protests of the Bolivian cocaleros that had started in the late-1980s. The Bolivian cocalero movement, through protests, managed to gain the political power to influence national policies. In Peru, when the cocaleros of different regions organized a national cocalero movement, it appeared as though the Peruvian cocaleros would follow the path of their Bolivian counterparts.

³ See beginning of Chapter 1, section 1.1.3, for a more detailed description about the different approaches on social movements.

⁴ As argued before, it is important to understand that Peru’s marginalized areas are not defined in terms of a power vacuum or merely by geography; instead, they are defined in terms their relationship with the state. The notion of “margins of the state” entails both the level of state penetration of a nation’s peripheral regions; the spaces, forms and practices through which the state is experienced by the region’s population; and the way people see themselves in relation to the state (Asad 2004: 279).

A complex national debate about the cocalero movement's emergence in Peru focused on the question of whether these protests and mobilizations should be seen as an effort on the part of civil society. This national debate follows discussions about the legality versus illegality, and incivility and civility, but the debate's participants were mainly located in Lima and included politicians, journalists and scientists, but never cocaleros. As a result, the debate ignores the local, regional and national complexities involved in the creation of a "cocalero identity". Therefore, the question that runs through this chapter has to do with how the dependence on an illegal industry influences the cocaleros' ability to organize and mobilize. As will be shown, it has been difficult for cocaleros to pursue legitimacy in processes of democratization and to be placed in the context of an emerging civil society, because the chosen identity of "cocaleros" is based on an illegal activity. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) argue that a collective identity is constructed in relation to ascribed meanings, which in the case of the cocaleros were often negative and included stigmatizations on the national level of the entire population as drug traffickers or guerrillas. The largely illegal character of the foundation of their collective identity interfered with their inclusion in the mainstream civil society and placed their demands, needs and the construction of a collective local identity into the dynamics of (often violent) confrontation with the state.⁵ For this group, the dynamic process of forming a collective identity required the adoption and modification of shared stories about the boundaries between legality and illegality.

This post-conflict cocalero movement wasn't the first initiative in Peru to form an organization of cocaleros. In the first section of this chapter, early attempts in the late 1970's and the 1980's to form a unified movement are explained in detail. Section 2 describes in detail how these participating cocaleros started to frame their identity. Additionally, an overview is given of its discourses and mobilization strategies which, as will be shown, are strategically used by the movement's leadership. In the third section of this chapter, a detailed description is given of the cocalero movement's first march to Lima, which represented the first time they staged their protests in the country's capital. The cocalero organizations attracted national and international public attention with this protest march to Lima. At the same time, this event also caused a schism within the movement. Section four of this chapter describes the aftermath of the *Marcha*, when the cocalero leaders, after losing a significant proportion of their adherents, looked to form new coalitions, bonds and relationships that were in some respects morally compromising. Some Peruvian politicians and academics refuse to call these efforts of the cocaleros an effort of civil society or even a "social movement" because of the campesinos' role in the cocaine commodity chain. It is held by such people that such a stigma reduces the cocaleros' social legitimacy and restricts their choices for broader alliances within civil society. In section 5, the second march to Lima is described. In contrast to the first march, the second march only included the cocaleros of the Upper Huallaga Valley. The dramatically reduced participation in this second protest severely affected the cocaleros' power to demand negotiations and, as a result, it met with a state refusal to negotiate. This refusal resulted in increasingly violent protests in the Upper Huallaga. In the final section of this chapter, the separations that existed in the different cocalero regions is explained in detail. I will argue that this national cocalero confederation, after enduring schisms caused by differences in beliefs and objectives, was not able to defend the local cocaleros from threats to their livelihood and safety. The chapter concludes with a description of the most recent efforts to unite the different cocalero regions under the umbrella of a single movement.

⁵ See Ramírez 2001^a: 2 on Colombia.

5.1 Formation of a cocalero movement

5.1.1 Early attempts to form a national and international cocalero movement

In 1979, the cocaleros of the Upper Huallaga organized the *Comité Regional de Productores de Coca de la Provincia de Leoncio Prado y Anexos*. Under the leadership of Tito Jaime Fernández, the committee accomplished numerous mobilizations and protests between 1979 and 1980 against the forced eradication campaigns *Verde Mar I* and *Verde Mar II* and state repression of the cocaleros during these operations, including menacing as well as arbitrary arrests (see also chapter 2). The Committee developed different protest activities, including general *paros*,⁶ mass mobilizations, and negotiations with the Peruvian government. The first protest of the *Comité* was organized in 1979 after *Verde Mar I*, including thousands of people who demonstrated against police abuses and violence during this forced eradication operation.⁷ The cocaleros' presence in Tingo María, blockading roads and obstructing free transportation, got the attention of the national press. But in their reports about the region, the press presented the protests as defending the interests of drug traffickers, and ignored the mobilizations' broader economic and social aspects. This general *paro* led to negotiations with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Defense, but none of these talks had any positive result (CVR 2003: 316). When the protests became violent, the Morales regime (1975-1980) placed the departments of Huánuco, San Martín and Ucayali under a state of emergency, curtailing the population's liberties and placing law enforcement responsibilities in the hands of the military.

But despite these measures, cocalero protests continued. In March 1980, the cocaleros organized another *paro* during which thousands of cocaleros gathered in the city of Tingo María. As soon as the cocaleros gathered in Tingo, airplanes and helicopters of the police and army flew over the city. According to one eyewitness who participated in the *paro*, cocaleros who were armed with sticks and stones faced large numbers of police officers armed with automatic weapons (CVR 2003: 336). This witness said that the protesters interpreted the arrival of heavily armed policemen as a declaration of "war against the cocaleros", who, in response, organized *Frentes de Defensa*-armed campesino groups who were engaged in confrontations with the police forces (CVR 2003: 314/337). The continued forced eradication weakened the local population's trust in the state forces and increased the power of different radical leftist groups, but the state did not react to the social unrest in the Upper Huallaga. In 1982, as a reaction to President Belaúnde's (1980-1985) prohibition against selling their leaves to ENACO, thousands of cocaleros marched to Tingo María to announce an indefinite general *paro*, directed against the state's exclusion of the Upper Huallaga's cocaleros from the legal coca trade. With their slogan "Better to die on your feet than to live on your knees",⁸ the cocaleros announced to the national government that their struggle would continue. After eleven days of protests, the government gave in to the cocaleros' demands and promulgated a new law⁹ (González 1990: 209).

On April 17, 1984, Tito Jaime Fernández, who in 1982 had resigned from the cocalero committee and had become the regional mayor for the province of Leoncio Prado (the capital of which is Tingo María), was assassinated. Fernández' death caused widespread shock throughout region. His assassination was at first attributed to an important drug cartel

⁶ Literally "stoppage": Protest method in which whole communities, villages and towns were paralyzed as a result of a stoppage of work and services.

⁷ See Cabieses 2005; 2007; Rojas 2003; Rojas 2005.

⁸ In Spanish: "*Más vale morir de pie que vivir de rodillas*".

⁹ Law 23505 lifted the state of emergency and resumed legal ENACO activities in the Upper Huallaga, but the law also entailed that the registration of 1978 would be binding and no new inscriptions would be allowed. As a consequence, the majority of cocaleros in the Upper Huallaga remained illegal cultivators.

operating in the area, but later rumors arose that guerrillas were the culprits. Twenty-four years later, no one knows for sure who killed Fernández, but numerous factors led to the belief that Shining Path was responsible. After the assassination of Fernández, several cocalero leaders admitted that the committee had initially formed a secret pact with Shining Path. Guerrillas had participated in the cocalero protests and part of the contribution paid by members was given to the guerrilla movement. When Fernández became a local authority in 1982, he became part of the local authorities that Shining Path targeted for assassination. Moreover, in line with their objective of wiping out all kinds of popular organizations, Shining Path also increasingly turned against the cocalero leaders who succeeded Fernández. After the assassinations of three cocalero leaders in 1984, others leaders fled the region fearing for their lives, bringing the regional cocalero movement to an end. As a result of Shining Path's assassination campaign, the government renewed the state of emergency over the Upper Huallaga Valley.¹⁰ But it was too late as Shining Path's growing dominance over the area totally annihilated other autonomous social organizations.

Only when the internal armed conflict waned in the late-1990s was there a new opportunity for the state re-enter the area and implement development programs. During this period, the cocaleros themselves asked for the help of the United States to search for feasible alternatives to the coca crop (Rojas 2005: 211-212). Even people from the US embassy who visited the affected regions said that, "Without credit, title to lands, seeds and technical assistance, many campesinos simply cannot make the transition" (quotation in Rojas 2005). Paradoxically, at that very same time, the Fujimori regime was ignoring the campesinos' calls for alternative development and thus lost a perfect opportunity to strengthen the national government's presence in the region.

After this failure, various attempts to organize a national and even international cocalero movement emerged. By March 1991, the *Consejo Andino de Productores de Hoja de Coca* (CAPHC) was organized. This organization included representatives from Bolivia and Colombia, as well as Peru. In the Upper Huallaga and other Peruvian cocalero regions related to the illegal cocaine industry, this initiative failed to gain ground because the internal armed conflict still continued in these regions.

Nationally, CAPHC did gain some momentum, mainly in the cocalero regions in the Cusco department that for the most part functioned within Peru's legal coca market and produced less coca. The Cusco department was also an area where Shining Path had never managed to establish a strong presence. In 1993, CAPHC planned its second international Andean meeting in the city of Cusco, the capital of the department of Cusco. During this meeting, a council was elected comprising nine representatives: Four from Bolivia, four from Peru, and one from Colombia. Evo Morales, at that time Bolivia's national cocalero leader, was elected as CAPHC's president. It was agreed that leadership would rotate among the three member nations every two years. In 1995, the leadership rotated to Peru. But because of important differences among the participating Peruvian cocalero federations, no consensus was reached about who should be elected leader. Because of these divisions, CAPHC lost momentum in the Peruvian cocalero regions. Hugo Cabieses, a Peruvian economist and expert on coca and agricultural development, made extensive efforts to form an international cocalero movement, was confident that any problems could be resolved, and in May 1998 personally organized an international meeting of CAPHC in Puno (the capital of Puno department, in southern Peru). But then something strange happened. Because of the lack of consensus regarding a Peruvian candidate to succeed Evo Morales, Cabieses was elected as the next cocalero leader while he was lying in bed suffering from a bout of high-altitude sickness:

¹⁰ See CVR 2003: 322; Palmer 1992; Stern 1998.

“I came to the meeting and they had already elected me to the post of *Secretario Ejecutivo del Consejo Andino de Productores de Hoja de Coca*. I was elected by Evo Morales himself, but I went up to him and said: ‘Evo, I’m very sorry but I can’t be the next leader’. He answered: ‘What do you mean? Are you afraid?’ I responded: No, brother, but I’m not even a campesino. Please, you have to elect someone from within your own ranks!”¹¹

The succession crisis and the reluctance of Cabieses to serve as leader led to the demise of the CAPHC after the last meeting in Puno in May 1998.

In Peru it took until the end of the country’s internal armed conflict, before a group of cocalero leaders organized the *Coordinadora Nacional de Productores Agrícolas* (CONAPA) in February 1998. This organization was said to bring together different regional cocalero federations and was said to include about 56,000 members. The regions that participated in CONAPA were the main coca-producing regions, namely the department of Cusco including La Convención, Yanatile y Lares, which formed the *Federación Provincial de Campesinos de la Convención, Yanatile y Lares* (FEPCACYL).¹² Cocaleros in the Apurímac-Ene valley formed the *Federación de Productores Agropecuarios del Valle del Río Apurímac y Ene* (FEPAVRAE).¹³ Those in the Upper Huallaga, Monzón and Padre Abad formed the *Asociación de Agricultores y Productores de Hoja de Coca del Alto Huallaga, Monzón y Padre Abad* (AAPHC-AHMPA),¹⁴ and the cocaleros from Puno department formed the *Asociación de Productores y Agricultores de Hoja de Coca de la Selva de Puno* (APCOCAS).¹⁵ Despite its mass base in the cocalero regions, CONAPA never succeeded in forming an alliance with the *Movimiento Campesino Nacional*. In 2000, the government’s installation of the different regional *Mesas de Diálogo*¹⁶ was the *coup de grace* for the organization (see Cabieses 2003). The creation of different negotiating groups in the cocalero regions fractured the unity of the different cocalero regions. After the implementation of these *Mesas*, CONAPA continued to exist, but only in name. Different regional cocalero leaders and mayors negotiated with representatives of *Contradrogas*,¹⁷ the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Agriculture and ENACO¹⁸ but the different negotiating groups failed to support the proposals of the cocaleros (see Cabieses 2004). The last formal meeting of the *Mesas de Diálogo* was held in Lima on October 5, 2001.

5.1.2 CONPACCP and its bases

On September 11, 2002, 35 cocalero leaders from different regions were invited to Lima to negotiate with a representative of DEVIDA.¹⁹ Ironically, it was in DEVIDA’s office where the idea of creating a new national cocalero confederation was first expressed. Nancy Obregón, who had been present as leader of *Saúl Guevara Díaz*, remembered:

“What we didn’t know was that DEVIDA had arranged meetings with different cocaleros from the various regions of the country. But, as you will know by now, the

¹¹ Interview with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, November 11, 2005.

¹² The Provincial Federation of peasants of Convención, Yanatile and Lares.

¹³ Federation of Agricultural Producers of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley.

¹⁴ Association of cultivators and producers of the coca leaf of the Upper Huallaga, Monzón and Padre Abad (Aguaytía).

¹⁵ Association of producers and cultivators of coca in the jungle regions in Puno.

¹⁶ Negotiating groups integrating cocaleros, local authorities and state representatives; see Chapter 4 for a detailed description of the *Mesa de Diálogo* in the Upper Huallaga.

¹⁷ *Contradrogas*: Committee for the Fight Against Drug Consumption. In May 2002 its name was changed into DEVIDA.

¹⁸ *Empresa Nacional de la Coca*: National Coca Company.

¹⁹ *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas*: State institute in charge of the ‘War on Drugs working under the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior.

cocaleros from Tocache are always late. So we arrived late at the office of DEVIDA and we saw a line of people waiting to go inside.... ‘Who the hell are they?’ we thought.... So I asked one of the men who was waiting. The man turned out to be Nelson Palomino,²⁰ who said they were cocaleros from Ayacucho. It turned out nobody had time to speak to us that day, so we met with a *compañero* who was working for DEVIDA. He said: Well *compañeros*, I’m going to introduce you to other cocaleros. We had already presented ourselves but he wanted us to sit down and really have us get to know each other. He made us explain to the other group the goals, aims and hopes of our association. During that first meeting, we came to the conclusion that we couldn’t go on this way, divided into two large organizations.”²¹

At this meeting, the cocaleros made plans for a first national congress, which took place January 20-21, 2003. At this congress, they officially formed the *Confederación Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios de las Cuencas Cocaleras de Perú* (CONPACCP).²² This organization became the mobilizing structure for thousands of cocaleros, as for the second time in Peruvian history it tried to unite the three largest cocalero valleys; the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, the Monzón and the Upper Huallaga. But these regions had important differences among them with respect to their history and their experiences in the internal armed conflict, and these differences had a marked impact on the ability of each of them to participate in a national movement.

In contrast to the Upper Huallaga, most migrants to the Apurímac-Ene River Valley came from the nearby highlands of the Ayacucho department. Starting in the 1950s, thousands of migrants from the highland provinces migrated temporarily or permanently to the tropical valley. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Apurímac-Ene River Valley experienced a new wave of mass migration, as people escaped from the evolving internal armed conflict in the department’s highlands. The migration to the Apurímac-Ene River Valley was also to a large extent related to the rise of the illegal cocaine industry, but coca cultivation was also a longstanding tradition there (Del Pino 1996: 122; Fumerton 2002: 107). Moreover, in the Apurímac-Ene, coca is not exclusively cultivated: Most of the local peasants own 5-10 hectares of land, of which only 1-2 hectares are used for coca. In 1978, the first regional cocalero organization, *Federación de Productores de Hoja de Coca del Río Apurímac* (FEPHOCRA) was created as a direct response to the promulgation of a new law²³ which proposed the total elimination of coca in Peru. But the rise in political violence, during 1983 and 1984, meant the end of this federation. As was the case in the Upper Huallaga, this cocalero valley also suffered greatly from the internal armed conflict, although the population’s response to the guerrillas significantly differed. In the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, heavily-armed *comités de autodefensa* were organized with the help of local *patrones* to keep Shining Path out of their valley (see Fumerton 2002). When violence had begun to wane in 1991, the *Federación de Productores de Hoja de Coca del Río Apurímac* (FEPHOCRA) was re-organized. Because of the coca bust, four years after its creation, the leaders changed the name into *Federación de Productores del Valle del Río Apurímac-Ene* (FEPAVRAE) to include all campesinos of the region, irrespective of whether they cultivated coca. In the post-conflict period, several NGO’s and governmental institutes entered the valley to start post-conflict development projects that were part of the plan to eradicate coca although, in contrast to the Upper Huallaga, the eradication was done voluntarily. But even the voluntary eradication of coca was severely resented by the population and, at the end of

²⁰ Cocalero leader of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley.

²¹ Interview with Nancy Obregón, September 14, 2004.

²² National Confederation of Agricultural Producers of Peruvian Coca Basins.

²³ Named the Decree Law 22095 and passed in 1978.

2001, the population turned against any influence of NGOs and the national government. One large difference between the regions was that in the Upper Huallaga and the Monzón, cocalero protest began to arise after the resumption of forced eradication operations, but these anti-drug operations never entered the Apurímac-Ene River Valley. The decision not to enter the Apurímac-Ene River Valley can be explained because the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, in contrast to the Upper Huallaga Valley, is nationally perceived as being populated by poor highland migrants, who were the main victims of the internal armed conflict. Hence, it was thought that the start of forced eradication operations in this region would cause a broader opposition on the national level. Instead of the forced eradication operations, the state started different projects of alternative development. But a number of recent reports indicate that the Apurímac-Ene River Valley produces approximately the same amount of coca as the Upper Huallaga Valley and the Monzón valley.²⁴

In some studies, the Monzón district (Province of Huamalies in the Huánuco department) is recognized as part of the Upper Huallaga, but in others it is seen as an autonomous region. Although the region shares a number of characteristics with the Upper Huallaga, it seems more appropriate to think of it as an independent region because the cocaleros living in the Monzón district for longer periods of time were organized in cocalero organizations that were independent of those of the Upper Huallaga Valley. The Monzón district has about 18,000 inhabitants²⁵ but, as in the Fósforo district, this number is subject to sudden increases or decreases as a result of immigration to or emigration from the area (see Soberón 2000). From early on, peasants began to grow coca leaf for the traditional markets of Ancash, Huánuco and Junín but, as in the Upper Huallaga, there was also an illegal market (Soberón 2000). Until the 1960s, a state-led *estanco de la coca*,²⁶ in charge of the gathering and marketing of legal coca, was located in the district (Antesana 2005: 8). During the coca boom, production sharply increased. As in the Upper Huallaga, the local economy became completely dependent on the cocaine industry until the coca bust. Before the internal armed conflict, a cocalero association was created, which began to operate clandestinely during the political violence but, in the course of the internal armed conflict, it totally disappeared. After the political violence waned, in 1994, the *Asociación de Agricultores y Productores de Hoja de Coca del Alto Huallaga, Monzón y Padre Abad* (AAPHC-AHMPA) was created. Prior to the creation of this association, Monzón's local associations had been re-organized, but these had been presented as campesino initiatives, and not as part of the cocaleros' agenda. By November 2001, the AAPHC-AHMPA disintegrated as the cocaleros of Monzón withdrew from the association and organized their own autonomous organization, the *Comité de Productores Agropecuarios del Valle del Monzón*. In CONPACCP, and even in these regional organizations, the Monzón's support was seen as indispensable because it was one of the largest cocalero regions, with approximately 5,000-10,000 cocaleros.

Because of the Monzón's early ties with coca cultivation for the legal market, its leaders demanded that their coca cultivations should be considered as ancestral, traditional and legal. ENACO, which concerned itself with the collecting, classifying, storing, transport and sale of coca for the traditional market, continued to have a strong presence in the Monzón valley. Still, the majority of coca there is destined for the illegal cocaine market. Moreover, many considered the Monzón to be the most radical cocalero valley, as it was here that the cocaine industry protected their illegal economy with weapons, while blocking any kind of state presence. There is a system of mutual defense between the *patrones*, the local cocalero association and villagers. Someone who wanted to "do business" in this zone had to pay a

²⁴ See UNODC 2006; UNODC 2007.

²⁵ Source: www.inei.gob.pe (Information corresponding to Census 2005).

²⁶ These state-installed *estancos de la coca* regulated the legal trade until the creation of a state entity called ENACO (*Empresa Nacional de la Coca*), which in 1978 replaced these *estancos* in charge of the legal coca trade.

certain amount to the local cocalero association that “granted” the right to start “working”. The population protected the *patrón* from repressive anti-drug operations directed against *pozos* and laboratories. In this system, the *patrón*, by buying automatic weapons, gave the population a way to defend themselves against forced eradication campaigns. As was the case with the cocaleros of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, the cocaleros of the Monzón steadfastly rejected any government interference in their valley. Ibúrcio Morales, the local cocalero leader, successfully prevented the government, NGOs, and the press from entering the Monzón.²⁷

CONPACCP²⁸ included the country’s large coca cultivating regions, the Upper Huallaga, Apurímac-Ene Valley, and the Monzón, with the exception of cocalero organizations from Cusco, who pledged their support but never officially joined the confederation. However, the majority of these valleys, mainly the Apurímac-Ene River Valley and the Monzón, defend their traditional rights to cultivate coca. Nevertheless, the main demands of the Upper Huallaga’s cocaleros initially focused on more state influence and spending in their region, which may also explain why the Monzón retreated from AAPHC-AHMPA. But when the cocalero leaders of different regions started to articulate new proposals and demands, due to the large participation by cocaleros of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley and the Monzón, CONPACCP’s discourse became radicalized (Antesana 2005: 24). In accordance with the goals of FEPAVRAE and the Monzón, the confederation’s principal demand became unimpeded coca cultivation. The claims also included the immediate deactivation of DEVIDA, the suspension of eradication, the immediate withdrawal of the NGOs operating in the cocalero valleys, the declaration of the coca leaf as a national legacy, and the immediate suspension of Law 22095, which called for all coca in Peru to be eradicated. The demands, following the Upper Huallaga’s cocalero leaders, also proposed a new ENACO registration, demanded an in-depth investigation of the alternative development programs, and asked for the formation of a commission in charge of the evaluation and sanctioning of the failure of these programs.

The rapid rise of CONPACCP’s influence over these different valleys can be explained by political conditioning. After the September 11, 2001, terrorists attacks in the United States, the US government reintroduced the strategy whereby they thought of drug trafficking and terrorism as inextricably linked in Latin America,²⁹ and increasingly began to force the Peruvian government to return to a hard-line approach that left little room for negotiation with the cocaleros (Rojas 2005: 214). When the Toledo government failed to comply with the moderate accords reached in the regional *Mesa de Diálogo* and resumed forced eradication operations, these state actions were followed by a radicalization of the cocalero bases. For Peru’s cocaleros, especially those of the Upper Huallaga, who were continuously hit by forced eradication operations, the most important act during the first national congress in January 20-21, 2003, was the signing of a Gentlemen’s Agreement among the newly elected cocalero leaders that called for a national general *paro* if the government resumed forced eradication in one of the associated cocalero regions and rejected or ignored the cocalero demands. In the words of one cocalero leader:

“They might have thought our new confederation was a joke, but we were mobilizing cocaleros on a national level! And this time, we had something in common, when the

²⁷ The single entrance road into this district is controlled by the district’s cocalero association. Groups of approximately 20 cocaleros daily control all cars and people who enter the district. But this initiative is successful because of an understanding between the cocalero association and local *patrones*, who have provided the cocalero association with weapons to fight off any state interference in the district.

²⁸ National Confederation of Agricultural Producers of Peruvian Coca Basins.

²⁹ Linking drug trafficking and terrorism this way is called the narco-terrorism approach.

eradication would come to one of the regions that had signed the Gentlemen's Agreement, we would revolt.”³⁰

But CONPACCP was not initially directed against the national government. For example, after their first national congress, the newly elected national cocalero leaders wanted to hand over documents calling for new negotiations between the cocaleros and the state to different state institutions, including the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Peruvian national Congress. However, when the cocaleros tried to enter the Congress building to hand over their documentation, they found the doors closed. One cocalero leader remembered thinking that the members of congress might be “afraid that the dirty and stinking highlanders would ruin the carpet”. From its very inception, CONPACCP met with opposition. According to some opponents, the cocalero platform was an open cry for war against the state, as indicated by its slogan: “*Coca o Muerte*” (Coca or Death). With its creation, CONPACCP also became an umbrella organization of numerous regional and local cocalero associations, which will be explained below.

5.1.3 Dealing with organizational changes

After joining to form CONPACCP, the local associations began to face some changes. It is important to describe how their integration in the national cocalero movement influenced these local cocalero associations.³¹ Many examples are taken from *Saúl Guevara Díaz* because the kinds of problems that arose within this local association are representative of those observed in other organizations. Moreover, Nancy Obregón’s role in CONPACCP expanded, and this expansion coincided with a number of changes in the district. Many of these local cocalero associations had been part of large regional committees, which created disorganized decentralization structures, as well as differences with respect to adherence to the organizations among the local populations. In the Fósforo district, the association *Saúl Guevara Díaz* was officially part of the regional umbrella organization *Comité de Lucha por la Defensa del Medio Ambiente y la Ecología de la Provincia de Tocache*,³² which assembled the different cocalero associations of Tocache province. In reality, however, the regional committee was inferior in power and importance to the local *Saúl Guevara Díaz* association. Additionally, from its inception, the majority of *Saúl Guevara Díaz*’s members could be found in the communities of Santa María, the Frontera Valley, Puerto Mal Abrigo, 3 de Diciembre, and Paraíso. Other local cocalero communities did not participate in a consistent manner in the movement’s activities, which severely weakened *Saúl Guevara Díaz*’s position in the remote rural communities and in the district’s mountainous regions. Hence, local power was centralized in larger villages, in Tingo María and the town of Monzón. Because of its centralized structure, the local cocalero leaders were never able to include all cocaleros.

An example of these problems was the fact that, in the Fósforo district, as in other local cocalero associations, there was never a coherent list of people who were members of the local association. Nor was there a consistent system on the national or local level of payment for membership. In the Fósforo district, the confusion and mistrust of the population increased when the membership costs for participating in *Saúl Guevara Díaz* were raised, which led to persistent rumors of the leadership’s corruption. One longstanding member said:

“These days, people want to associate with one another in the easiest way possible, without participating in the marches, protests and general *paros* that we

³⁰ Interview with cocalero leader, Tingo María, October 15, 2004.

³¹ See Appendix D for the structure of the cocalero movement on the national level, the cocalero associations in the districts and the differences in community organization.

³² Committee for the defense of the environment and ecology of the Tocache province.

organized...without even having walked a mile. Then we came along and said that, to become a member, you have to pay \$100. In this way, they can compensate us for the suffering we endured during these protests..."³³

As this statement makes clear, duration of membership played an important role in the feelings of solidarity that were felt among members of *Saúl Guevara Díaz*. Communities that had been involved in the struggle from the beginning were able to register new adherents more easily and were more likely to have close friends who were either ex-leaders or leaders of the association: This proved to be an important advantage in a political system where there was a great deal of corruption. But *Saúl Guevara Díaz* wasn't the only association confronted with these kinds of problems. In the various regions united in CONPACCP, there existed various methods of recruiting members. The most radical system was instituted in the Monzón Valley, where the leadership forced the local cocaleros to pay monthly contributions. If the cocaleros refused, local cocalero leaders would enter their *chacra* and harvest an amount of coca which was considered to be equal in value to the monthly contribution. In Tingo María, in contrast, no membership payments were demanded because this would have been an unpopular measure that would have drastically reduced cocalero participation. There were important power struggles with each of the organizations; therefore, no cocalero leader dared make any demands that could be effectively opposed. In the Fósforo district, the population did not appreciate being pushed to engage in economic activities that were part of the national leadership's agenda. In other cocalero valleys that participated in CONPACCP, such as Tingo María, there was no collaboration at all. Locally, these payments and the absence of them in other bases affected the cocaleros' trust in the leadership, which became worse when some of the associates questioned the collaboration of the association and confederation. No reliable figures could be provided. After this event, many members refused to pay their contributions, leaving the directorate in a severe financial crisis.

The social make-up of each region constituted the most important difference among the different cocalero valleys. I saw a particularly striking example of this in August 2005, when I first visited the village of Pichari,³⁴ part of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley cocalero region, when some of the Upper Huallaga's cocalero leaders were invited to participate in the first International Festival of the Coca Leaf. The parade at the conclusion of the festivities was supposed to start at 8 o'clock in the morning and I planned to leave Pichari shortly after its conclusion so that I could arrive in Huamanga before dark, as the route back involved was a long and arduous journey over a dirt path leading over Andean mountains. Unexpectedly, my travel plans changed, because the parade had not even gotten under way by 10 a.m. Nancy Obregón remained positive, stating: "How long could a parade possibly take? About one hour or so...." However, Obregón's assumption based on the parades in Puerto Mal Abrigo proved wrong, as in Pichari the whole village participated in the parade for the assembled guests. For five hours, I watched different mother's clubs, schoolchildren, teachers, transport companies, agricultural associations, federations, confederations, and heavily-armed *comités de autodefensa*³⁵ march by. Obregón was impressed and whispered:

"See, here they all speak Quechua, all come from the Ayacucho department, all talk about the tradition of coca, and all *chacchan*.³⁶ The people who live in the Fósforo

³³ Conversation with Don Cuadrado Cruz, Puerto Mal Abrigo, November 26, 2005.

³⁴ A jungle village with 1336 households (source; www.inei.gob.pe Information corresponding to Census 2005) in the La Convención province, Cusco.

³⁵ Self-defense committees to fight Shining Path during the internal armed conflict.

³⁶ Traditional way of chewing the coca leaf to fight feelings of hunger and thirst while working.

district, however, are a real mixed bag: They come from all over Peru, don't speak Quechua, and do not even know the traditional use of the coca leaf..."³⁷

In the Fósforo district, *Saúl Guevara Díaz* was, from its inception, plagued by the difficulties of the involved population, who originated from the *sierra*, the coast and the jungle. According to Tanaka (2001), participation in a social movement is conditioned by the level of complexity of the involved population; this implies that the more diverse a potential member base is, the more difficult it is to secure their complete participation. Locally, the cocalero leadership attempted to recruit people who had rather diverse geographic, economic, social and cultural backgrounds. The integration of cocaleros coming from the *sierra*, Peru's coastal regions and the jungle into one association led to the use of prejudiced remarks to explain the failure to include all people from different communities in the Fósforo district. One cocalero from Peru's coastal region explained why *Saúl Guevara Díaz* didn't have numerous associates in his village:

"[...]In Diluvio, it looks like the people who live here have come from the *punas* [Andean mountain regions] where they didn't have anything resembling a neighborhood, and therefore never learned to collaborate with one another, or even to understand what their needs are as Peruvian citizens."³⁸

Although the quotation carries certain discriminatory connotations, it is presented here because this was a common sentiment among local cocaleros from Peru's coastal regions. The quotation shows that the association's creation was seen as absolutely necessary, but the perceived backwardness and incivility of the "*serranos*"³⁹ who participated was used to explain why the task of organizing a strong local association was inordinately difficult.

These stigmas became even more complex on the national level, where different customs, norms and values all had to be integrated into CONPACCP. On the national level, the stigmatization of cocaleros from the Upper Huallaga (which, in contrast to some other valleys, was never strongly aligned with the traditional market) revolved around accusations of drug trafficking activities and alliances with guerrillas. For example, Iburcio Morales, the local leader of the Monzón, once stigmatized Tocache's cocaleros as follows:

"These cocaleros from Tocache can say they are legal, but they aren't.... These are migrants who came to this region to cultivate coca illegally. In the Monzón, people cultivated coca even before the Incas' arrival. For those from Tocache, it isn't a tradition. They only say this to support their argument... It is our tradition; they are only selling their coca to the illegal market!"⁴⁰

As the quotation shows, the internal stigmas denigrated Tocache's cocaleros. They were largely aware that these kinds of stigmatizations were also used by other cocalero leaders, who derided them as *guerrilleros* and *narcos* based on their real or alleged associations during the internal armed conflict. But the use of these kinds of derogatory characterizations led to mistrust and even conflict among different regional leaders, which severely affected the unity among cocaleros affiliated with CONPACCP.

³⁷ Conversation with Nancy Obregón, during meeting International Festival in Pichari, August 11, 2005.

³⁸ Interview with unnamed cocalero, Diluvio, July 7, 2004.

³⁹ Literally highlanders; the terms is often used to indicate to dark-skinned people from the Andes and generally has a pejorative connotation.

⁴⁰ Conversation with Iburcio Morales, Monzón, November 7, 2004.

As the role of CONPACCP grew in importance on the national level, another important change occurred in the local cocalero associations. During the movement's early stages, regional and local meetings were planned to stress the importance of mass participation of the population. Thus, in the Fósforo district, mass meetings were organized on Sundays, as this was the only day people didn't go to their *chacras*. They largely were social events, where women exchanged the latest rumors, where men exchanged tips about the best pesticides to use on their *chacras*, and where food and sweets were consumed in abundance. When Nancy Obregón arrived, it became clear why people had elected her: She was a charismatic speaker, and would immediately rouse and excite the crowd with exhortations such as the following:

“I want to address myself to this fighting village, filled with people who have a pugnacious and indomitable spirit. We have always resisted tyranny when we've had to. We've shown our dignity, courage and force!”⁴¹

These phrases typically were greeted by a thunderous ovation from the throngs of people who were present. But the growing prominence of CONPACCP on the national scene led to changes in these rallies. “Professionals”, including journalists, lawyers, and politicians who were supposedly sympathetic with the cocalero struggle, tried to get more influence over the local cocalero associations. There were vast differences between the “old advisors” who were involved from the start and who had only offered advice, and these new professionals who became involved only after CONPACCP had already acquired a certain amount of prestige. The former advisors' motive was to help the cocalero leaders form a strong campesino movement, which in their view should be organized by the cocaleros themselves. But the professionals were attracted to the mass movement out of personal motives, including political influence, personal power over the masses, and the possibility of earning money.⁴² Previously, meetings were events in which the whole village participated, and were held outside, on the village's *Esquina de Movimiento*. By June 2004, meetings were held before a limited audience, and ordinary residents could no longer reply to statements with which they disagreed. It was made clear that this was neither the time nor place to make negative comments. As a result of their growing influence, negative feelings arose when the members felt that they had lost their say in the association. Consequently, fewer associates participated, leaving the directorate and the professionals alone to decide. This increasing influence of professionals also became noticeable during CONPACCP's national meetings. While these annual gatherings had previously been encounters among cocaleros from different regions, by 2004 they had become events where cocaleros only listened to the speeches of professionals, including lawyers with a dubious reputation,⁴³ and politicians representing radical political movements⁴⁴ only participated in these cocalero meetings to gain support for their own causes.

Adding to the problems, the increasing importance of professionals in different cocalero valleys led to a splintering of viewpoints throughout the different cocalero regions. This phenomenon became very clear during the workshop “*Erradicación, Concertación y Negociación de Propuesta*” organized by the NGO World Vision in Huamanga on August 12-

⁴¹ Speech during local cocalero meeting in Puerto Mal Abrigo, Nancy Obregón, June 30, 2004.

⁴² Some of these “professionals” were aware that the local cocalero associations could generate money. For example, during the period from 2002- May 2005 the Fósforo district wasn't targeted by new forced eradication operations and the cocaleros did have money. In the Fósforo district alone, many different parties proposed development projects, and some were paid by the cocaleros to execute their projects, but then disappeared after receiving the money.

⁴³ i.e., those previously associated with the Fujimori regime.

⁴⁴ For example the political leader of *Patria Roja* (the self-described communist party of Peru) and Antauro Humala, the leader of the *Movimiento Etnocaserista* who on January 1, 2005 raided a police station in Andahuaylas.

14, 2003. Cocaleros from different valleys participated in this gathering, but the Upper Huallaga group immediately separated itself from the “others”, stating that they were perceived by these others as “drug traffickers”. The cocaleros of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley were by then advised by professionals who opposed the more pragmatic ideas and demands for development projects of the Upper Huallaga’s leadership.⁴⁵ Hence, in sharp contrast to the general assertion that campesino movements need advice to help them shape their organization (see Scheiner 1973), in the cocalero movement, the participation of different professionals actually reduced the population’s willingness to participate. An understanding of the evolution of the cocaleros’ collective identity will afford us profound insight into the problems they had to confront in order to form a national movement.

5.2 Framing a cocalero identity and discourse

5.2.1 National cocalero leaders

To explain the differences in the cocalero’ leaders discourses, it is first important to describe these leaders, because their personal background, as well as their social, economic and cultural characteristics, help explain the dissimilarities in discourse and the confederation’s internal struggles. CONPACCP’s⁴⁶ first national leader was Nelson Palomino. He was born in the community of San Francisco, located 200 kilometers from Huamanga (in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley), and was the youngest son of a cocalero family. His father died when he was six.⁴⁷ Palomino’s influence among the population increased only in 2002, and was largely facilitated by the broadcasting of his radio program “*La Voz del Campesino*”, transmitted from Kimbiri. The campesino association in his region was at that time involved in serious disputes over the leadership, and accusations arose against the different cocalero leaders. These accusations ranged from being “corrupt”, to criticism that the leaders didn’t speak Quechua, weren’t cocaleros and didn’t “*chacchar*”⁴⁸ coca. Because the internal differences couldn’t be resolved, the members demanded elections to select new leaders. Despite the fact that Nelson Palomino wasn’t a cocalero, but a schoolteacher, he was chosen as a campesino leader.⁴⁹

On November 3, 2002, Palomino called a general *paro* throughout the region and declared that two demands, the withdrawal of DEVIDA,⁵⁰ and the departure of all NGO’s and alternative development organizations had to be met; otherwise, all the valley would be shut down by an indefinite general *paro*. When the government didn’t respond, armed protesters issued threats to destroy the regional coffee cooperative. Although Palomino’s demands were never met, the protest ended without violence.⁵¹ However, after the failed *paro*, Palomino began to demand through his radio program that his supporters boycott the municipal

⁴⁵ The cocaleros of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley instead began to demand the free cultivation of coca in Peru. They strongly opposed the execution of projects of alternative development in their region, and opposed any state influence over their region.

⁴⁶ *Confederación Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios de las Cuencas Cocaleras de Perú*: National Confederation of Agricultural Producers of Peruvian Coca Basins.

⁴⁷ Conversation with Nelson Palomino, prison cell in Yanamilla, August 2003.

⁴⁸ Traditional way of chewing the coca leaf to fight feelings of hunger and thirst while working.

⁴⁹ Only after Palomino’s inauguration was FEPAVRAE was converted into a federation that only included cocaleros.

⁵⁰ *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas*: National Commission for Development and Drug-Free Living; the Peruvian state institute in charge of the war on drugs.

⁵¹ The population’s willingness to participate in the *paro* was driven by rumors that a forced eradication operation would enter the Apurímac-Ene River Valley. When it became apparent that no such programs were planned for the region, the population’s willingness to participate decreased. It became apparent that Palomino’s objective behind the protests was that the money of the alternative development would be given directly to the FEPAVRAE. The government never agreed with these demands, and therefore the *paro* was stopped.

elections. As he began to mount a resistance against the actions of local and regional government, he became perceived by the authorities as a subversive threat:

“He had a political goal and was willing to look for people who could help him achieve this goal. Palomino put pressure on the government because he felt that we could no longer live in a society where some people are second-class citizens!”⁵²

But Palomino’s rising influence over FEPAVRAE also led to rumors ranging from extortion to instilling fear among the members who opposed his plans. Palomino was said to employ tactics that had been used by Shining Path. For example, in November 2002, he forced the local population to boycott regional elections. Some observers watched Palomino’s rise with suspicion:

“Nelson Palomino is a very militant leader. He even forced some campesinos to join. Nelson is a native of the Apurímac-Ene, an area that was totally militarized during the ‘Dirty War’, which can explain his radicalism. He is more of a *caudillo* than a community organizer.”⁵³

Some scholars (see for example Antesana 2005) began to remark that Palomino’s influence over the Apurimac-Ene River Valley verged on a total control which threatened to loosen the grip of the police and the military on the cocalero villages and communities. This reaction has to be seen in the light of growing national worries about a possible renaissance of Shining Path. In the cocalero regions, these national concerns weren’t shared; instead, Palomino’s influence over the discourse used in the CONPACCP increased.



Picture 8 Nelson Palomino during speech in Tingo María (Huánuco department: 2006).

⁵² Personal conversation with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, August 12, 2003.

⁵³ Personal conversation with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, August 12, 2003.

After his election as CONPACCP's leader, Palomino strategically employed traditional symbols to reinforce the claim that coca was a traditional part of life for cocaleros. He portrayed himself as a traditional cocalero, who wore a *chullo* (knitted hat associated with indigenous inhabitants of the Andes), and always carried the *Tawantinsuyo* (the multicolored campesino/Inca flag). During speeches, he spoke with his mouth full of coca, while he explained his "*Hoja Sagrada*" (Sacred Leaf) discourse to his followers. The "*Hoja Sagrada*" discourse held the recognition of the coca plant as part of the identity and cultural patrimony of Peru's Andean-Amazon regions. When Palomino took over, he converted the coca leaf into an important aspect of Peruvian identity and culture. Additionally, Palomino used this discourse to legitimize the production of all coca, legal and illegal. With these changes in the discourse, he could capture the imagination of many of the Upper Huallaga's cocaleros. One of them said:

“He is a leader with indigenous blood.... This is blood with enough energy and vigor to move forward in the campesino struggle.”⁵⁴

As Nelson Palomino's fame in different cocalero regions increased, the Peruvian government came to view him as an “enemy of the state”.

On February 21, 2003, Palomino was arrested in Huamanga, the capital of the Ayacucho department. Palomino's arrest was a shock for other national cocalero leaders including Nancy Obregón:

“It was played up by the media as if another Abimael Guzmán had been captured. It was horrible.... I was in shock when I saw him in police custody.... What had Nelson done to receive this punishment? They wanted to make him out to be some kind of devil after all he had achieved. We were paralyzed.”⁵⁵

The following night, the chief of the national police and the Minister of the Interior made nationally televised statements detailing the charges against the cocalero leader, which included support for terrorism, disturbance of the electoral process, the kidnapping of journalists, extortion, grand theft, domestic violence, and creating public disturbances. Several days after Palomino's arrest, the Minister of the Interior declared that the charges of “support for terrorism” had been a mistake (Cabieses 2004: 20). The Toledo government could not sustain this charge because the category itself was suspect: It had been created and used by the Fujimori regime to curtail basic civil rights. Because the other charges were retained, the general belief among other national cocalero leaders and their advocates was that the detention of Palomino was a strategy of the government to stop the cocaleros' public protests that had been staged at the time of his arrest. Palomino later stated that his arrest was an attempt of the government to divide the different coca-growing regions:

“This is pure manipulation they are using to confuse the leaders of the coca movement. Their ultimate goal is to weaken the movement.”⁵⁶

Palomino seemed to suggest that his arrest and imprisonment was related to Toledo's weak government. Having no effective solution to the cocalero region's problems and confronted by the increasing social unrest in the cocalero valleys, the government simply attacked its

⁵⁴ Interview with unnamed local cocalero leader, Puerto Mal Abrigo, July 21, 2004.

⁵⁵ Conversation with Nancy Obregón, March 6, 2004.

⁵⁶ Conversation with Nelson Palomino, prison cell, Yanamilla, Ayacucho, August 13, 2003.

leaders in an attempt to weaken or even stop the cocalero mobilizations. Consequently, supporters of the cocalero movement argued that Palomino was the first “political prisoner” of the democratic Toledo government. In the words of one supporter:

“He became a symbol of the coca struggle. We all know he was sentenced simply because he defended coca. Confrontations like these with protagonists of the Peruvian state have occurred in many campesino movements. The main reason why they incarcerated him was that they thought it would leave CONPACCP without a leader. Fortunately, this didn’t happen...”⁵⁷

Palomino’s detention was thought to be a government attempt to reduce his popularity among the cocaleros but instead it had the opposite effect and only increased his stature as a cocalero leader. Despite mass protests by the cocaleros, in May 2004, Palomino was sentenced to ten years in jail, which under Peruvian law meant three years actual prison time.

After Palomino’s imprisonment, leadership of CONPACCP was assumed by two women: Nancy Obregón (the Fósforo district) the national sub-secretary, and Elsa Malpartida (Tingo María), the administrative secretary. It is rather surprising that the national cocalero movement, with a large majority of male members, for several years re-elected these women leaders. Nelson Palomino explained the benefits of women leadership of the cocalero movement:

“I think women are more honest. When defending coca, they think about their family and children. The majority of men involved in coca cultivation are corrupt. They are only interested in the money they can earn in the illegal cocaine industry and they are more easily persuaded.”⁵⁸

When the women assumed their leadership role, they were inexperienced leaders who had only been elected because they were widely respected by the residents of their home regions. They could be defined as what Ramírez (2001:25) has termed a self-styled natural leader. The leadership of these natural leaders is based on their position in the community and contact with the other villagers. These leaders are often respected villagers or those who have been living in the region for many years. Obregón, for example, had been living in the district for over 15 years, and had lived through many of the same experiences as the majority of the inhabitants of the Fósforo district.⁵⁹ For these leaders, it is important to gain and keep the recognition, because it enables them to claim legitimacy as representatives (Ramírez 2001: 25). For example, Obregón’s charisma was an important component in her local leadership role. Among the villagers, her act of courage during forced eradication operations in 2001 turned her into something of a hero. Obregón was seen as a “señora con cojones” (literally, a “woman with balls”) who was willing to take courageous and decisive action on behalf of the people that she represented. When the imprisoned Palomino met the police commander who had been in charge during this local forced eradication operation, he said:

“The police officers who met Nancy Obregón face-to-face say: ‘This woman is very dedicated, it appears that she is fearless’.... They expect a woman to be crying when

⁵⁷ Interview with Baldomero Cáceres, Lima, October 12, 2005.

⁵⁸ Conversation with Nelson Palomino, prison cell, Yanamilla, Ayacucho, August 13, 2003.

⁵⁹ Moreover, while living in Santa María, she could always be found conversing, arranging things, planning her next speech, cooking for her large family, or behind the counter of her shop selling beer or *chicha* to peasants.

she witnesses the eradication. Nancy responded and fought back. They didn't expect to be hunted out of this valley by a woman!"⁶⁰

The growing importance of these two women in CONPACCP changed the character of their personal relationships with the rank-and-file members of the cocalero associations in their regions. The time that they had to listen and discuss their problems and propose solutions drastically decreased.



Picture 9 Nancy Obregón during speech in Pampa de la Quinua (Ayacucho department: 2005)

Thus, paradoxically, while her fame grew nationally, Obregón's popularity somewhat subsided locally. The inhabitants of the Fósforo district respected Obregón for what she achieved, but her family was no longer defined as a typical "cocalero family" that had one hectare of land and lived in poverty. They increasingly became stigmatized as an arrogant family, who refused to speak with simple campesinos. In Tingo María, the same comments were made about Elsa Malpartida. Because she was so often out of town dealing with problems on the national level, Obregón increasingly came to be seen as a dominant leader who refused to listen to others' opinions. One community leader recalled how they had strongly encouraged broader participation on the part of the villagers:

"We have said during various meetings that we should be more united to organize a large mass protest against the political repression of the government. On various occasions, we have tried to communicate our proposals to *Saúl Guevara Díaz*, but our suggestions were always refused."⁶¹

⁶⁰ Conversation with Nelson Palomino, prison cell, Yanamilla, Ayacucho, August 13, 2003.

⁶¹ Conversation with President of association *Cerro Azul*, November 23, 2005.

Obregón eventually was accused of abusing her power in the cocalero movement in order to promote her personal advancement.

Even the national CONPACCP became plagued by internal power differences among the leaders. Nancy Obregón and Elsa Malpartida refused to follow Nelson Palomino's more radical approach. Obregón argued that with a less radical approach, including negotiations with the government and peaceful protests, they were able to achieve more than Palomino ever accomplished with his "radical dogma". Obregón once said to Palomino:

"You look like a boy of 17, thinking that tomorrow you will change everything, thinking that tomorrow you will lead the revolution. But I have news for you, maybe you think that the revolution started recently, but for me it started years ago. They sentenced you because they were afraid of your big mouth when you were saying; we will take up arms! We [meaning Obregón and Malpartida] have backed up our words; we have organized protests, making the people of Lima aware of the cocalero problem in Peru."⁶²

The demands and action plans of the two women from the Upper Huallaga were less radical than Palomino's had been: They, in their moderate discourse, demanded more government influence in the valley, conducted peaceful protests, and in general were more open to a dialogue with the government. But the two women did not always agree about organization, planning and even ideology. These differences were in part due to the differences in personal background between the two women. Elsa Malpartida came from Tingo María, the gateway city, and Nancy Obregón from the Fósforo district, a remote and isolated jungle region, their perceptions about a solution were somewhat different. During small disputes, Obregón would often accuse Malpartida of having no idea what the rural cocaleros experienced, downplaying Malpartida's personal experience with police abuse and forced eradication. But some of the differences had to do with the personalities of the two women:

"They have different leadership styles, and this is evident in their relationship with their organizational base, in their intuition and in their training as leaders. [...] The youth of Nancy makes her react impulsively, and sometimes she is a little bit hard to figure out. Elsa is more peaceful, maybe as a result of their age differences, because Elsa is a little bit older than Nancy. I can explain it this way: Nancy is a hurricane of disorder and disorganization. On the other hand, Elsa is more systematic, more organized. Elsa, I think, does more actual work for the people she represents, while Nancy tends to be more show than substance."⁶³

Many people found Obregón's propensity for verbal indiscretion frustrating. However, she also had at least one very important strength: She was an inspired orator who knew how to reach her audience on an emotional level. As explained below, this proved to be a critically important skill for the cocalero leaders.

5.2.2 The framing of a mixed identity

Tarrow (1998) has shown that factors important in the creation of social movements include deeply rooted feelings of solidarity, collective identity and political opportunity structures. Collective identity in turn is based upon the group's location, structural position, common life experiences and dominant definitions or stigmatizations (Whittier 2002: 302). The integration of numerous local and regional associations into one national cocalero

⁶² Interview with Nancy Obregón, Santa María de Frontera, November 28, 2005.

⁶³ Interview with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, October 13, 2005.

movement, in combination with the different organizational structures in different coca-growing valleys encompasses a diversity of collective identities and discourses. In the Upper Huallaga alone, the “us” in this collective identity were people from different Peruvian regions with diverse economic, social and ethnic backgrounds. As a consequence of the integration of these different people, it is important to be able to change or take on different kinds of identities, which implies the use of different discourses (Goodwin and Jasper 2003: 53). The discourse that is employed at any given time is also influenced by national political discourse and stigmas (Whittier 2002: 304). For the cocalero leaders, the framing of identity became a dynamic process, and was influenced by the national and international political debate on coca, on the one hand, and internal processes such as the evolving self-perceptions of the movement’s members, on the other.

To achieve unity among the different members framing their discourse becomes important for the movement’s leaders (Goodwin and Jasper 2003: 52; Whittier 2002: 297). The use of a particular discourse is determined by choices made by the leadership, as they strategically calculate which direction the movement can and should take at any given moment. The dominant use of a particular discourse can change over time and can even differ among sub-populations of a movement’s base. From the inception of the cocalero movement, there were two dominant discourses that were alternately featured at different times. The first discourse, which was influenced by the regional background of cocalero leaders from the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, emphasized the centuries-old coca tradition in Andean-Amazon regions.

In September 2002, several regional cocalero leaders had been invited to an indigenous gathering in the city of Andahuaylas (Ayacucho department) where they met Evo Morales, at that time the leader of Bolivia’s indigenous political party, the *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS). After this meeting, the cocalero leaders of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley expressed the will to follow the example of the Bolivian cocaleros. Following Bolivia, they adopted the slogan “*Coca o Muerte. Venceremos*” (Literally: “Coca or Death. We Shall Prevail”). Because of its use of ethnic symbolism, it made the cocaleros collective identity part of an indigenous ideology. Nelson Palomino converted the *hoja sagrada* into an important aspect of Peruvian identity.

With Palomino’s election as leader, his “ethnic” discourse became dominant in CONPACCP. In this discourse, largely based on ethnic and traditional sentiments, coca was portrayed as the Inca’s Sacred Leaf, and Andean Culture was used to legitimize coca cultivation. In the words of one supporter of this discourse:

“The coca plant comes from ancient times, from our Inca ancestry. The coca leaf has to exist in Peru, because it is part of us, it is part of our history, it is part of every Peruvian campesino. Coca cannot disappear from Peru because, for us, the disappearance of the coca plant would be like the destruction of Machu Picchu.”⁶⁴

This “ethnic” discourse found followers among former campesino leaders, most notably Hugo Blanco, who in the late-1950s was the leader of a large campesino rebellion in Cusco. He began an article on the cocalero struggle in Peru as follows: “We are involved in a war in defense of the interests of the Peruvian village and our environment, and against the multinational companies, fundamentally represented by the imperialism of the US and its Peruvian clients; including the government, the Parliament, the courts, armed forces, police and the national press” (Blanco 2005). As in Bolivia this discourse included a strong rejection of the “new imperialism” of the United States, or as one cocalero said:

⁶⁴ Interview with unnamed cocalero, La Molina, June 5, 2004.

“Regrettably, our government is manipulated by the US government. Our president only follows the orders he receives from President Bush. I want to ask Bush one question: If Peruvians went to his country, would he allow us to take the bread out of his farmers’ mouths?”⁶⁵

But for many members of the movement, especially those residing in the Upper Huallaga, the *hoja sagrada* discourse was a challenging one to internalize. Here, in contrast to the Andean highlands, most cocaleros saw the coca plant as a source of income to cover the cost of food, education and healthcare, but not as part of their culture or tradition. Not even the Upper Huallaga’s cocalero leaders appeared to buy into the cultural importance of coca. In the words of one researcher:

“They themselves, in their cocaleros zones, with honorable exceptions, don’t *chacchan* coca [i.e., chew coca]. So how can they possibly convince others that it is a symbol of identity, when they themselves do not even *chacchar* coca? I have seen Nancy [Obregón] *chacchar* coca a few times, but the truth is that their children don’t *chacchan* coca, so if they want to come and sell the idea to the rest of the country to *chacchan* coca, they have to start doing so themselves.”⁶⁶

Especially in the Upper Huallaga, with its diverse population of migrants, the *hoja sagrada* discourse emphasized internal differences among members. For those cocaleros who migrated from the Peruvian *sierra*, the government’s refusal to negotiate this traditional stance was seen as an insult to their customs and traditions. But migrants from other areas of Peru did not perceive a threat to their traditional identity as such, for they did not come from backgrounds that *chacchan* coca.

Moreover, the first organization of regional and local cocalero associations in the Upper Huallaga had been driven by a more pragmatic and moderate discourse. Because most cocaleros sold their coca leaves to the illegal market, their demands concentrated on ending forced eradication and police abuses, demanding more government spending in their region, as well as direct negotiations with the government on a new coca law. The Upper Huallaga’s cocalero organization had revolved around the opposition to forced eradication:

“[...] The government was always in a hurry to conduct eradication in the Upper Huallaga. They will say that this is because they want to put an end to terrorism, that these cocaleros help drug traffickers and support terrorism. With the organization of the cocaleros’ association, it has become more difficult to eradicate the crops of the cocaleros of the Upper Huallaga. When there was terrorism, there also was drug traffic, but the main reason for this was that there wasn’t any support for this region on the part of the government...”⁶⁷

As this was the region that was hardest hit by the forced eradication operations, the cocaleros’ demands included other claims. This pragmatic discourse was mainly directed against ongoing marginalization, as one cocalero leader stated:

“The only thing we have been demanding is bread to feed our children. The only thing we want is for Tocache’s inhabitants not to die of hunger. What we know is that when

⁶⁵ Interview with unnamed cocalero, Paraíso, June 7, 2004.

⁶⁶ Interview with Hugo Cabieses Cubas, Lima, November 11, 2005.

⁶⁷ Interview with Carlos, 3 de Diciembre, August 3, 2004.

we are hit by another eradication, our children don't go to school, and don't have anything to eat.”⁶⁸

In this pragmatic discourse, no mention was made of the coca tradition. On the national scene, mainly by scientists and politicians, this discourse was seen as a less radical discourse, as it demanded negotiations with the government. But the cocaleros' willingness for negotiations changed over time, mostly as a direct function of the relative flexibility of the government's stance.

Nationally, the cocalero discourse that came to be considered the most radical of all was the *hoja sagrada* discourse. It was also the discourse that received the most criticism, especially among academics. As seen before, this discourse modeled itself on an ideology that enjoyed wide acceptance in Bolivia, where “this tradition is known and is part of the discourse of all Bolivians, most of whom interpret it positively, although some continue to be critical of its use [...]” (Léons and Sanabria 1997: 4). In Peru, coca chewing was tolerated by, but looked down upon by, “white” society (Cotler and Zárate 1993). One Peruvian critic of the *hoja sagrada* discourse said:

“Coca isn't a custom of the majority of Peruvians. [...] Coca in Peru is part of the heritage of the *indios* and the *indios* in our country are looked down on by 75% of the national population because of the racism here. One expression of this racism is that we hate the symbols of the *indios*. The cocalero leaders have to convince the world of the justice of their cause. When they lie, 75% of the population says they are dishonest because they are *indios*. Nowadays there is the idea that because I'm *indígena*, I have to be understood by the *blancos*. [...] But here the *blancos* have to be convinced as well as the *criollos*. This isn't a war of conquest, but of persuasion. War should not be part of this cocalero struggle. One has to try to convince others that the path you take is the right one. It should not be the path of radicalism or the path of violence.”⁶⁹

The radical stance was encapsulated in the slogan “*Coca o Muerte*”, perceived as a demand for free coca cultivation. As one opponent of the movement said, “This is a discourse exacerbating the cultural aspects in relation to coca, idealizing and even turning them into myths; taking the issue into the cultural and political arena” (Antesana 2005: 35). He went on: “With the *hoja sagrada* discourse and the ‘*Coca o Muerte*’ slogan, the cocalero leaders were trying to erase the differences between traditional coca and the illegal coca. Within this cultural perspective, it was not important that the primary destination of coca production was the illegal market” (Antesana 2005: 35). The national media, politicians and directors of anti-drug institutes dismissed CONPACCP's discourse as violent, and its leadership as a bunch of radicals who were trying to create a drug state.

However, these two discourses are not necessarily mutually exclusive, and in fact elements of both views were at times blended together. National cocalero leaders frequently mixed elements of both discourses during speeches, in this way attempting to address their diverse constituencies in the various cocalero valleys. Because of this “framing”, the cocalero leaders, especially those who used a mix of the *hoja sagrada* and the pragmatic discourses, were criticized for using a more pragmatic discourse on the national scene, while they employed a more radical discourse in their local valleys. Different methods of protest, at times violent and at other times peaceful, were also employed at different times, depending on the government's response.

⁶⁸ Interview with unnamed cocalero leader, Utopia Inca, May 17, 2004.

⁶⁹ Interview with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, November 11, 2005.

5.2.3 A proclaimed “war against the state” or a “call for citizenship”

The term “repertoires of protest” has been used to explain the different protest methods (Tilly 1978).⁷⁰ Selection of particular methods within a “protest repertoire” have to be seen in the context of the changing reaction of the national government, changing opportunities, and changing ideas and discourses of the movement’s leadership (Goodwin and Jasper 2003: 222). Inspired by Bolivia’s success, Peru’s cocalero leaders began to organize different protests during the years 2003-2006, but the cocalero regions’ remote location restricted the kinds of methods that the cocaleros could use. The first regional protests included mobilizations, local and regional protest marches and blockades. In the Fósforo district, these protest methods included peaceful marches through the town of Tocache, where participating cocaleros marched in three orderly columns, shouting slogans. In this method, the protests’ success depended on the response of the masses to their calls for participation. But these peaceful marches proved not to be the most effective means of furthering the cocaleros’ agenda, because they were largely ignored by the government and had no visible national impact.



Picture 10 A peaceful cocalero march in Tingo María (2005)

These peaceful marches were partly abandoned by 2004 in favor of region wide general *paros*. During these protests, the cocaleros’ power to close down the whole city included tactics of intimidation and persuasion. The presence of hundreds of often enraged cocaleros in their town caused many of Tocache’s residents to fear the declaration of a new general *paro*. Shop owners, restaurants, market vendors, *mototaxistas*⁷¹ and other urban inhabitants loathed the general *paros* because they brought life in the town to a standstill. The shopkeepers were warned to close their establishments, restaurants had to close down because

⁷⁰ More detailed Tilly (1978) substantiates “a repertoire is shaped by society’s sense of justice, the daily routines and social organization of the population, their prior experience with collective action, and the patterns and forms of repression they are likely to face” (Goodwin and Jasper 2003: 221).

⁷¹ Drivers of motorcycle that are used as a taxi.

no customers came there, and *mototaxistas* had no customers who were interested in their services. In general, pressure was brought to bear upon business that attempted to stay open by cocalero organizers, and this pressure usually had its desired effect. Confrontations between the cocaleros and the police often included violence. General *paros* did not only affect people in the town. The high degree of dependence on imports in the Fósforo district meant that roadblocks that were typically put up during general *paros* led to increased prices for, and shortages of, food and other essential items. Women complained that the price of chicken rose during these roadblocks and that they weren't allowed to travel to Tocache to visit the market because road transport into the districts was paralyzed. Numerous inhabitants of the Fósforo district disagreed with the calling of general *paros*, arguing that they were suffering the most, while the roadblocks in the Upper Huallaga had no negative consequences in the rest of the country.



Picture 11 A road blockade on the Carretera Marginal during the Marcha de Sacrificio 2004

From the beginning, all these cocalero protests, violent or not, were portrayed in the national press as actions on the part of radicals, in some cases even as evidence of a renaissance of Shining Path. In reality, during the general *paros*, both sides employed violence, as police forces sometimes shot directly at protesters, while cocaleros used slingshots, sticks and stones to keep police from dismantling their blockades. All those involved—the government, the police and the cocaleros, had a tendency to exaggerate the violence that the other side employed. In the words of Hugo Cabieses:

"I think that the cocaleros shouldn't do what the government has done, which is to tell lies or exaggerate. I think many leaders fell into this trap all too easily. For example, they come out and announce that 'in my zone, there were three deaths' but then one starts to investigate and there was one wounded cocalero, who broke a finger because he resisted arrest....There were no deceased cocaleros. I think there is a strong

tendency to exaggerate things on the part of the cocalero leaders, in the same way that there is a strong tendency to lie on the part of the government...”⁷²

From 2004-2005, there were also numerous regional and local actions that reflected the new radical discourse of CONPACCP. By then, actions were being organized without any demand for a dialogue with the national government. Even a number of the cocalero movement’s allies began to see such protest actions as counterproductive. In the words of one of the movement’s supporters:

“In some instances, it will be necessary to organize a general *paro*, but I personally think they have organized enough protests. They have done a great deal of shouting while accomplishing nothing. [...] In my opinion, it is not the time for protests. Instead, I think that this is the time to start a debate or dialogue, and to refrain from violence.”⁷³

Locally, this view was largely rejected because the cocaleros argued that the government had not been willing to negotiate, which ironically was a consequence of the cocaleros’ radical discourse. Still, the Toledo government was widely blamed, as he had ignored the cocaleros’ demands presented during peaceful protests, and the general *paros* came to be seen as the only way for cocaleros to get attention at the national level:

“The cocaleros use these means because otherwise their protests aren’t heard in Peru, especially not in Lima. They have to organize roadblocks; otherwise, the government would do nothing! What happens when the cocaleros make peaceful demands? They are ignored.... The only time that this government pays any attention at all to these villages is when there are disruptive actions, such as roadblocks.”⁷⁴

In this view, the violent cocalero uprisings had at least led to more national attention. But this argument is a one-sided view. Instead, it seems more productive to see the radicalization of protest as part of a dynamic interaction within the cocaleros’ discourse, their “repertoire of protest”, the reaction of the national government to these protests, and evolving public opinion. It was one particular protest method that showed Peruvians a different side of the cocaleros: The so-called *Marcha de Sacrificio* to Lima that took place in April 2003. Initially the *Marcha* was portrayed by the national media as a violent action against the national government. But the cocaleros themselves saw the march as a peaceful method focusing attention on the suffering that they had endured as a result of the ongoing state repression. This different ways that this watershed event was viewed are illustrated in the following section.

5.3 *Marcha de Sacrificio* (2003)

5.3.1 The reasons for the march

In June 2002, the continuation of forced eradication led to new cocalero mobilizations, which began in the Monzón valley. The cocaleros of Upper Huallaga quickly joined the protests and they were followed by the cocaleros of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, who joined the protests in solidarity with other coca valleys, even though their own valley was not

⁷² Interview with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, November 11, 2005.

⁷³ Interview with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, October 13, 2005.

⁷⁴ Interview with local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora, November 21, 2005.

directly threatened by the forced eradication efforts. This mass mobilization in different valleys was very successful and on July 13, 2002, resulted in an accord between CONPACCCP and DEVIDA, which stipulated that the forced eradication operations would be replaced by voluntary self-eradication. According to the terms of the agreement, the cocaleros would eradicate their coca plants in return for government support for a transition to legal crops. The changing eradication effort would first be tested in a pilot project slated to be implemented in the Aguaytía district with the direct involvement of the *Asociacion de Agricultores Agropecuarios y de la Hoja de Coca de la Provincia de Padre Abad* (Cabieses 2004: 18). But the government wasn't able to execute the agreement because USAID (United States Agency for International Development) refused to cooperate because of the active participation of the cocalero association in the project. USAID refused to work with these "drug traffickers", which was a blow to the region's cocaleros. At the same time, the Toledo government failed to comply with other accords that were reached in other cocalero valleys, including Tingo María, Aucayacu, Puerto Mal Abrigo, Uchiza and the Apurímac-Ene valley, which caused increasing social unrest.

In February 2003, forced eradication was resumed in the communities surrounding Aguaytía, capital of the province Padre Abad in the Ucayali department. The cocaleros whose *chacras* were eradicated had membership cards for the local association and could show official ENACO receipts to prove their involvement in the legal coca market (Cabieses 2004: 20; Valderrama and Cabieses 2004). During this operation, the police forces and the CORAH troops ignored the previous agreements made with the cocalero leaders. Violent confrontations immediately followed between the cocaleros, on one side, and the police and CORAH workers, on the other. After these confrontations, the local cocalero leader organized a peaceful march, which was ignored by the government. It was only after the government's failure to respond that the cocaleros initiated an indefinite general *paro*, blocking the main road from Tingo María to Pucallpa. Cocaleros from other valleys, especially the Upper Huallaga, joined the protests, in accordance with the Gentleman's Agreement, and blockaded the road between Tingo Maria and Huánuco. But more surprisingly, cocaleros from La Convención, who belonged to FEPCACYL (regional peasant association in the Cusco department) who had previously limited their activities to defense of their own department's legal cocaleros, conducted regional protests to show their solidarity with the cocaleros in Aguaytía. The cocaleros set up roadblocks at entry points to the La Convención Valley, preparing for a possible military intervention.

At the national level, statements made by authorities showed that the regional protests were being viewed in a negative way. The head of the government institute DEVIDA, Nils Ericsson, stated that the driving force behind these protests were drug traffickers. Similarly, Peruvian Prime Minister Solari De La Fuente said that the cocalero leaders were associated with "narcoterrorists", implying a link among cocaleros, drug traffickers and remnants of Shining Path guerrilla forces. Government officials rejected protesters' demands for a dialogue with the government, saying they would not be coerced into negotiations under the threat of violence.⁷⁵ On February 27, after several days of minor clashes between the cocaleros and the police forces, three police helicopters threw tear gas grenades at protesters who had blockaded the *Carretera Central*, seriously injuring ten of the cocaleros. After this police repression, the mood in the different cocalero valleys grew even more tense, and neither side was willing to move an inch. But when rumors began to circulate that the government would be launching a major military intervention, the cocalero leaders agreed to suspend the protest for 72 hours in order to negotiate with representatives of the government. The Minister of the Interior then started a dialogue with different local and regional

⁷⁵ Those who opposed a dialogue, among others, included the Minister of the Interior and head of antidrug institutes including DEVIDA, Nils Ericsson.

authorities, some of whom weren't cocalero advocates, resulting in different agreements with regional authorities to reduce coca cultivation that were signed in February-April 2003 that only further enraged the cocaleros.

Initially, the cocalero association of the Apurímac-Ene Valley announced that it would support the general *paro* in Aguaytía but, immediately following this announcement, the news of Nelson Palomino's arrest spread throughout the different cocalero regions. On February 21, 2003, Palomino was detained in Huamanga. After his arrest, the other national cocalero leaders went into hiding and refused to participate in a dialogue with government officials. Meanwhile in the Upper Huallaga, during negotiations between the cocaleros and a congress member, Ibúrcio Morales (the cocalero leader of the Monzón), convinced by this national congress member that the government was willing to negotiate, allowed 650 policemen through the blockade of the *Carretera Central* to Aguaytía, which severely weakened the cocalero protests in the Upper Huallaga. After this decision, the cocaleros acknowledged their defeat and returned to their respective valleys. After this failure, the Upper Huallaga's cocaleros waited for the cocaleros of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley to make the first move, but did not immediately protest against Palomino's imprisonment.

It was decided that several of Upper Huallaga's cocalero leaders would visit the Apurímac-Ene River Valley in order to organize protests against Palomino's imprisonment. One participant stated:

“We went there to join forces with the indigenous cocaleros so that we would be more organized. We went in different groups and visited bases in various places in the Apurímac and close to the river Ene. We went to visit them as a sort of cocalero commission of the Amazon. So we let them see the problems that we were dealing with, to get on the same page, so that we could help our brothers, the *indigenas campesinos*.⁷⁶

The Upper Huallaga's cocaleros stayed for over a month, walking from community to community, organizing people to participate in the upcoming protests. As was agreed, more and more cocaleros started to gather in Huamanga and organized daily marches through the department's capital. On April 8, 2003, approximately 17 cocaleros were injured when the police used tear gas and iron bars and fired into the air to disperse the protesters. This police action was the beginning of another general *paro*: The cocaleros threatened to blow up a gas station, and plans were made to storm the Yanamilla prison and free all of its inmates. But this led to more police repression. One participant remembered how things had turned violent:

“The stadium where we had set up camp was attacked by police helicopters. I shouted to the women present that we had to go and stand in the middle of the stadium. Surely they would not kill us...”⁷⁷

And they didn't, because Obregón arrived in Huamanga, and an agreement with regional authorities brought the regional protest to an end. But they did organize a national *Marcha de Sacrificio* to Lima in an effort to draw the attention of the entire nation to their plight.

5.3.2 “De pie, marchar y el pueblo va a triunfar”⁷⁸

As part of the mobilization history in different Andean countries, the tactic of a *Marcha de Sacrificio* was used by various groups, among others campesinos and miners.

⁷⁶ Interview with Molotov, Esperanza de Frontera, August 17, 2004.

⁷⁷ Conversation with Eva, Esperanza de Frontera, August 18, 2004.

⁷⁸ Translation: “Walk ever onward on the path to victory.”

Following these early examples, in early April 2003, the cocaleros began their first *Marcha de Sacrificio* to Lima. For weeks, thousands of cocaleros walked through the Andes, slowly making their way to the nation's capital. The national press captured images of thousands of people making their way across the rugged Andean terrain towards Lima. Images of the peaceful marches through Tingo María and Huánuco appeared on national television. One cocalero of the Upper Huallaga recalls:

“During this march, we had to take rest periods at various places along the way, but at that time it was winter in the *sierra* and it rained a lot. Our clothes were soaked; some of us got sick and could not walk any further. Altitude sickness was bothering many of us...but finally, with the support of the police,⁷⁹ we arrived in Lima.”⁸⁰

The protesters comprised a considerable proportion of the population of the largest cocalero regions in Peru, including the Upper Huallaga Valley, the Apurímac-Ene River Valley and the Monzón. They had two principal demands: The liberation of Nelson Palomino and putting an end to forced eradication. The photos on the front page of the nation's newspapers showed hundreds of men and women packed into large, dirty old trucks, and endless columns of stoic-looking men walking. The cocaleros arrived in Lima in two large groups: One led by Elsa Malpartida, that included cocaleros from the Upper Huallaga, the Monzón and Aguaytía; and the other led by Nancy Obregón and Marisela Guillén⁸¹ that included cocaleros from the Apurímac-Ene River Valley.

Both Obregón and Malpartida made numerous headlines in the national newspapers as they were portrayed as the driving force behind the march. On the morning of April 22, 2003, inhabitants of Lima awoke to the arrival of thousands of cocaleros in the capital city. The protesters waved the multicolored *Tawantinsuyo* flag alongside the country's red and white flag. The march included numerous women and children, who travelled for three weeks through the country's jungle and highlands, to demonstrate their displeasure with the Toledo government. Images on national television showed dirty, grim-faced men, women and children shouting slogans like: “*De pie, marchar y el pueblo va a triunfar*”, (“Walk ever onward on the path to victory”), “*No somos terroristas, somos campesinos*”, (“We aren't terrorists, we are campesinos”), “*El Pueblo unido jamás sera vencido*” (“A people that stands united can never be vanquished”) and of course the CONPACCP's slogan “*Coca o Muerte*” (Coca or Death). This colorful and largely symbolic march slowly made its way through Lima, only stopping to establish their camp close to the Sheraton Hotel, one of the most luxurious places of lodging in the city's center, located in front of the *Palacio de Justicia*. Here, the group organized the women into brigades, who started to cook on open fires, while the men ate their meals in the park located between the *Palacio de Justicia* and the Sheraton. While *limeños* viewed the scene in amazement, the police accompanying the protesters were engaged in lively conversations with some cocaleros, asking about the instruments the police carried to remove people if the occupation turned violent. National and international press were fighting to get the best photos, while the cocaleros laid out their blankets and set up their cardboard boxes that served as their own makeshift “hotels”. These peaceful images stood in sharp contrast to the portrayals of the cocaleros in the national media.

There are disagreements among both friend and foe of the cocalero movement as regards the number of participants in this first *Marcha de Sacrificio*. While some supporters

⁷⁹ As different participants of the march remembered, the police officers had marched beside them and had even helped them to arrange transport for those cocaleros who were too exhausted to march. Information gathered during conversations during fieldwork in 2004.

⁸⁰ Interview with Luis Paredes, Alto Mal Abrigo, July 16, 2004.

⁸¹ Marisela Guillén was the leader of the FEPAVRAE, the cocalero federation of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley.

stated that at least 10,000 cocaleros took part in the event, others argued that this was a gross overestimate, and that the protests only received so much media attention because of this overestimation (Antesana 2005: 26). Some argued that fewer than 1000 people actually participated. But for many cocaleros, this march was remembered as their first experience of actually being noticed by the broader Peruvian nation, as their first chance to show the inhabitants of Lima how the country's cocaleros were suffering. In the words of one participant:

“I think that these people [before the first march] believed that the negative things they said about us were true, but the only ones who can really tell you the truth are the cocaleros themselves, the ones that live here in this region. Through this first march, we were able, for the first time in the history of Peru, to show the people of Lima how the people from the countryside are suffering.”⁸²

Taking advantage of the media attention, Obregón and Malpartida declared that they had only come to the capital because they wanted to speak with President Toledo. Feeling pressured by the presence of thousands of cocaleros in the capital, the government agreed. On April 22, the Minister of the Interior and DEVIDA's and ENACO's directorates met with a delegation of cocalero leaders. When the meeting was about to start, Marisela Guillén (FEPAVRAE) left because Toledo had not shown up, as he had promised. Other leaders, including those of the Upper Huallaga, stayed behind to convey the cocaleros' demands. On April 23, a new meeting was planned with the leaders of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, who had also left the previous day's meetings. During both meetings, the president read the proposed supreme decree, called DS 044-PCM 2003, without any objection of the present cocalero leaders (Antesana 2005: 27). This decree contained the following provisions: First, gradual reduction of coca; second, restricting CORAH's⁸³ activities to the destruction of *pozos* and new coca cultivations that were not registered by ENACO;⁸⁴ third, an investigation and report about Peruvian traditional/legal coca use by DEVIDA; fourth, an update of ENACO's legal coca registries; fifth, a study about coca's production chain in Peru by the Ministry of Agriculture; and, finally, the suspension of previous national laws about coca that in any way contradicted Supreme Decree 044-2003, such as those including a “*cero coca*” policy. During both meetings, the government refused the cocalero demand for the release of Palomino.

On April 23, 2003, at midnight President Toledo declared on national television that he had reached an “agreement with the poor, not with drug traffickers”.⁸⁵ The speech ended with Toledo standing on the steps of the Palace, his hands filled with coca leaves, a symbolic gesture that traded back to Inca rituals. On the steps of the governmental palace, surrounded by cocalero leaders who were not used to all this media attention, Toledo proclaimed that coca was a Peruvian tradition. But his performance stood in contrast to his actions, as the government failed to implement *Decreto Supremo* 044-PMC.⁸⁶ All the different cocalero organizations that participated in the *Marcha de Sacrificio* also rejected the Supreme Decree, causing large divisions within the movement.

⁸² Interview with Don Juan Espinoza, Diluvio, October 7, 2004.

⁸³ *Control y Reducción del Cultivo de la Coca en el Alto Huallaga*: Special Project for the Control and Eradication of Coca in the Upper Huallaga. Agency in charge of the eradication of the coca fields within Law 22095 (see Chapter 2).

⁸⁴ *Empresa Nacional de la Coca*: State entity charged with the authorization to buy and sell legal coca.

⁸⁵ “Cocaleros resuelven parcialmente sus reclamos en Dialogo con el Gobierno” Expreso, April 24, 2003.

⁸⁶ The government failed to implement the decree and resumed general forced eradication operations. There was never a new update of ENACO's legal coca registries; nor was there ever an investigation started about the coca production chain. The only thing that was done by DEVIDA was that they published a book on traditional coca use in Peru, which argued that the traditional coca use in Peru was actually lower than previously estimated, and that it was seen as a backward tradition (see Rospigliosi *et al.* 2004).

5.3.3 Internal division

Unity among the different cocalero regions was short lived. Not long after this encounter with the president, internal disagreement surfaced among the component organizations of CONPACCP. Because of widespread opposition to Supreme Decree 044 in FEPAVRAE,⁸⁷ Marisela Guillén, who had taken over the leadership of the FEPAVRAE but who had no official position within CONPACCP, publicly denied that she had ever agreed with the decree, placing the sole responsibility on Malpartida and Obregón for entering into the agreement with the government. But it would be misleading to contend that the associates in the Upper Huallaga agreed with the Decree, as Fósforo's cocaleros were equally disappointed with the results of the *Marcha*. Immediately after being confronted with the population's reaction, Obregón and Malpartida wrote a statement directed to the President, rejecting Supreme Decree 044.⁸⁸ But the event already led to a break-up within the CONPACCP, which became more visible in the following months. One advocate of the cocalero movement remembered what happened:

“In the end, Toledo was a lot smarter about things: He arrived at the stadium, took the coca leaves he brought with him out of his pocket and didn't allow anyone to speak to him.... He didn't want to have to listen to their reaction to DS-044. But Marisela Guillén was already very angry about the whole issue of leadership, and thought that she was standing in the shadow of Nancy and Elsa.... So instead of trying to convince Elsa and Nancy to stand united against DS-044, she instead decided to compete with them.”⁸⁹

Marisela Guillén's withdrawal from CONPACCP was followed by that of other cocalero leaders, including Iburcio Morales (from Monzón), who had taken a radical stance against any form of eradication (i.e., forced or voluntarily). The different leaders became involved in personal battles, discrediting one another and showing an unwillingness to resolve their differences. The battle for personal leadership over the national confederation created schisms, which in many cases amounted to nothing more than personal battles. The different leaders were accusing the others of corruption and cooperation with the anti-drug police, leading to a general breakdown in relations among organizations representing the different valleys.

During the second national CONPACCP congress, which was held in Lima February 18-20, 2004, these rifts among the national leaders became publicly visible. The FEPAVRAE's local and regional leaders refused to participate in CONPACCP's congress and instead took part in a regional congress of coca growers⁹⁰ organized by the FEPACYL.⁹¹ Monzón's cocalero organization also refused to attend the second national congress, although a number of cocaleros from Monzón showed up on their own. It turned out that the cocaleros of Monzón conspired to prevent Palomino's re-election as national cocalero leader. They demanded that Iburcio Morales be elected as national leader; otherwise they would retreat from the confederation. The cocaleros present, the majority of whom came from the Upper Huallaga, voted against Morales' election and instead re-elected Palomino as their national leader. After this, Iburcio Morales withdrew his group from the congress, leaving those from

⁸⁷ Federación de Productores Agropecuarios del Valle del Río Apurímac y Ene; Federation of Agricultural Producers of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley.

⁸⁸ Conversation with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, November 13, 2005.

⁸⁹ Interview with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, October 13, 2005.

⁹⁰ Called the VI Congreso de Productores y Consumidores de Hoja de Coca de la Federación Provincial de Campesinos de la Convención Yanatile.

⁹¹ Federación Provincial de Campesinos de la Convención, Yanatile y Lares: The Provincial Federation of peasants of Convención, Yanatile and Lares.

the Upper Huallaga and Aguaytía behind. For the cocaleros who remained behind, this was seen as a severe blow for CONPACCP. Meanwhile, rumors emerged that a forced eradication campaign would start in the Upper Huallaga. It was important for the cocaleros of the Upper Huallaga to quickly resolve the internal dispute, as they needed the mass bases of the Monzón and FEPAVRAE to stage protests if such a forced eradication were in fact to occur. One cocalero explained:

“The Monzón has organized close to 4,000 or 5,000 cocaleros. They think that with these numbers they can defend themselves because they have so many people. In contrast, we don’t have that many people, and therefore we embrace CONPACCP.”⁹²

After the congress, FEPAVRAE publicly denounced any attempted forced eradication in any Peruvian cocalero region, and called for both the deactivation of DEVIDA and the withdrawal of NGO’s working in some cocalero zones. But FEPAVRAE didn’t return to CONPACCP. Marisela Guillén and Iburcio Morales continued to contest CONPACCP’s national leadership. They formed a new alliance to increase their personal power and control over the Apurímac-Ene River Valley and the Monzón.⁹³ These separations intensified, when the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, together with the Monzón Valley and La Convención (Cusco department) formed one faction,⁹⁴ leaving CONPACCP to represent only cocaleros from the Upper Huallaga and Aguaytía. Many saw this internal division as heralding the end of Peru’s national cocalero movement, but CONPACCP continued to function, and its leaders established relationships with broader sectors of Peruvian civil society.

5.4 Broader relations and tenuous bonds

5.4.1 Difficult integration in civil society

Because of CONPACCP’s internal division in the wake of the first *Marcha de Sacrificio* (2003), its leaders were searching for other relationships, to make up for their substantial loss of adherents. Consequently, it became important to consider their position and alliances with the country’s broader civil society. CONPACCP worked on forming partnerships with different social movements, intellectuals, journalists and students. The cocalero leadership managed to achieve some support and solidarity from CGTP,⁹⁵ SUTEP,⁹⁶ CCP⁹⁷ and some *Frentes de Defensa Regionales*.⁹⁸ The CGTP, SUTEP and CCP all organized protests directed against Toledo’s government but no coordination existed between the different groups. While most organizations promised to support and participate in joint actions on behalf of cocaleros as a whole, in reality they never did, which led to more localized protests in the Upper Huallaga. A good example is the nationally announced protest against the Free Trade Agreement that the Peruvian government had negotiated with the United States, and that was supposed to take effect on June 27, 2005. Almost immediately, it turned out that the Upper Huallaga’s cocaleros were the only ones who protested, as the rest of the country remained quiet. As a result, the protest received minimal attention on the national

⁹² Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Esperanza de Frontera, November 21, 2005.

⁹³ For example: They started to spread rumors about the leadership of CONPACCP, they organized meetings wherein they urged the cocaleros of their regions not to participate in any actions of CONPACCP, they started to strengthen their relations with the cocaleros of the Cusco department, whom never had participated in CONPACCP.

⁹⁴ For details on this separation, see Section 5.5.

⁹⁵ *Confederación General de Trabajadores del Perú*: General Confederation of Workers of Peru.

⁹⁶ *Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores por la Educación del Perú*: National Syndicate of workers in Education.

⁹⁷ *Confederación Campesina del Perú*: National Campesino Federation of Peru.

⁹⁸ Regional Defense Fronts: Regional organizations of inhabitants often created to defend certain regional demands. In the cocalero regions, these demands were often related with the cocalero struggle.

level. The government saw the protest as just another cocalero action, while ignoring the broader demands against the Free Trade Agreement, which was implemented on schedule.

Box 5.1 Violent protests, while the country remains quiet

On July 1, 2005, protesters in the department of Huánuco made their way from remote jungle areas to the department capital of the same name to demonstrate against the Peruvian government's assigning of a Free Trade Agreement with the United States. One afternoon, I was standing on a remote hilltop watching this protest. In the valley below, I saw people running from gunshots fired by the police. As some of my fellow travelers tried to point out to those beneath a path where they could take cover, I noticed the rage, fear and disgust on their faces. As the shooting continued, a police truck headed up the road. "We have to go", our driver shouted. When I did not react at once, he loudly ordered: "Now!" When I entered his car, we saw the police truck making the last turn in the road before reaching our destination. We speedily escaped, as being interrogated by the police was something that everyone in our car wanted to avoid. We sat in silence for several minutes. Arriving in Huánuco, the city nearest to where the event took place, the driver asked where I wanted to be dropped off. Suddenly, I saw a police truck parked in front of us, with some familiar faces sitting in the back. When the detainees noticed me, they smiled and one raised his hands to show his handcuffs. I got out of the truck and approached them. One of them whispered to me "Go to the hospital! They shot one of us!" Inspecting his frayed t-shirt more closely, I noticed it had dark-red bloodstains, which I had assumed were dirt stains from his escape into the mountains. The police officers nervously ordered us to leave, pointing their shotguns in the direction we were supposed to take. Shocked by the news, I urged the driver of our truck to drop us off at the regional hospital.

I became scared once again when I saw that the entrance of the hospital was being guarded by four policemen, armed with revolvers, shotguns and teargas bombs. "Who are you looking for?" one of them shouted, walking toward us holding his shotgun. "We heard one of our friends was brought to this hospital," my boyfriend answered. "Where are you coming from?" the policeman asked (he could see that I was obviously a foreigner). "Lima," my boyfriend answered, before I could say anything. This was an outright lie which did not seem to totally satisfy the officer. "And her?" he shouted, pointing in my direction with his shotgun. "Holland," I whispered softly, understanding that I was not supposed to tell him where we had just come from. But this honest answer only seemed to increase his anger. "Who are you looking for?" he once again shouted. Then one of our fellow passengers entered the hospital and started an argument with the police officer. This gave us the chance to ask a doctor whether he knew if an adolescent was brought in with a shot wound. Seeing all the commotion, he pointed toward an operating room and said, "There he is...." We looked inside and saw an adolescent lying in the middle of a puddle of blood that oozed from the bullet wound in his stomach. The doctor continued, trying to calm us down; "They are going to start the operation right now...do you know what happened? Maybe you can contact his family?" We said nothing while the doctor turned over the victim's possessions to my boyfriend; a ripped and bloodstained t-shirt, torn jeans and a bloodied blanket. Alone and not quite sure what we were supposed to do, we sat down on the sidewalk outside the hospital. When our fellow passenger approached, he was closely followed by the four policemen. "We have to go!" he urged us, "they want to know what we saw!" In our rush to get away, we left some of the clothes behind.⁹⁹

On July 6, the cocaleros organized another protest march through the streets of Tingo María. Gas bombs were fired into the crowd by the police that were standing on the sidewalk, and two adolescent boys were injured. During these protests, daily life in Tingo María was severely disrupted; prices for food and other items rose because of roadblocks, and people avoided leaving their homes, after bullets were fired by the police in the middle of the afternoon to stop supposed participants from arranging new roadblocks. Bullets were fired by the police when people gathered, roads were blocked, restaurants and shops were closed, children stopped going to school, an explosion destroyed the office of a transport company, and hundreds of protesters were arrested. By July 7, 120 people had been arrested in the Upper Huallaga during several violent confrontations. While the rest of the country remained quiet, the protests meanwhile had the Upper Huallaga's population in the grip of violence.

⁹⁹ Descriptions taken from fieldwork notes: July 1, 2005.

Because of lack of support from national social movements and unions, CONPACCP's advisors feared that the cocaleros would establish bonds with more radical social and political movements. In their view, these bonds would jeopardize any possibility for a dialogue with the government. Consequently, they tried to convince the cocalero leaders to opt for other, legal alliances, which were never established. In the words of Hugo Cabieses:

"I have put Nancy and Elsa in contact with the Bishop of Lima and they had two or three meetings after which they didn't follow up....It isn't like the Monsignor is going to come looking for them! These people believe in the fight against poverty, but they belong to the church....I think that they should always try to get the *Defensoría del Pueblo*¹⁰⁰ involved, but Nancy and Elsa have always been suspicious of the *Defensoría* and the church."¹⁰¹

The *Defensoría* is a group closely aligned with the national government.¹⁰² Therefore the cocalero leaders always mistrusted the organization and didn't want to establish bonds. The Catholic Church isn't well represented in the Upper Huallaga's rural areas, and therefore especially Obregón was suspicious about forming closer relations with the Church.

As is typically the case with social movements, the cocalero movement was constantly looking for an opening to exercise some direct influence on the government, and therefore constantly searching for sympathetic politicians (Goodwin and Jasper 2003: 257). Because of the "politicized" coca debate that existed in Peru, it was no surprise that they found allies in several political parties, especially those on the left fringe of the political spectrum. For example, CONPACCP's third congress (Lima, March 14-18, 2005) was visited by political figures with a dubious reputation. Ricardo Noriega Salaverry, the lawyer who defended Palomino, and the political leader of the independent party *Todos por la Victoria* that participated in the 2001 national elections, was a key speaker during this congress. He was widely suspected of having had links with the Fujimori regime. There were also other representatives of more radical leftist parties, among them the political leader of *Patria Roja*, the self-described communist party of Peru, and Antauro Humala, the leader of the *Movimiento Etnocaserista*, who later led the attack on the police station in Andahuaylas (January 1, 2005).¹⁰³ However, many cocaleros, from the beginning, were highly skeptical about the participation of politicians in these congresses, as they felt that the cocalero regions were only incorporated in the political discourse of these parties during times of elections. As Toledo's popularity dropped to an all-time low, all of his opponents were engaged in a permanent campaign struggle. Establishing bonds with the cocaleros became a way for politicians to attain a measure of national media attention, and to secure political gain.

¹⁰⁰ Ombudsman's Office.

¹⁰¹ Interview with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, October 13, 2005.

¹⁰² See also Section 4.4.1.

¹⁰³ On October 29, 2000, both Antauro and Ollanta Humala had planned an uprising against the Fujimori government, for which they were pardoned by Interim President Paniagua (2000-2001). After the failed uprising, Ollanta returned to the military (and became a serious candidate for the 2006 elections), while Antauro organized the *Movimiento Etnocaserista* (Nationalist-ethnic Homeland Movement). The *Movimiento Etnocaserista* used symbolism, including; military uniforms, red berets, and the *Tawantinsuyo* flag, in an attempt to identify with the "indigenous" population. On January 1, 2005 Antauro Humala assailed a police post in Andahuaylas (Apurímac Department). Antauro's violent attack on the police station in remote Andahuaylas was organized to demand the resignation of the unpopular Toledo, and involved the use of left-wing populism in a bid for political power. Antauro was able to take over the Andahuaylas police post for two days. The population largely supported the violent attack and backed Antauro's *etnocaseristas* for 36 hours, after which Antauro surrendered to the authorities, was flown to Lima and incarcerated in a maximum security prison. During the attack, four policemen and two *etnocaseristas* had been killed. After the attack the police confiscated assault rifles, grenades, pistols, four vehicles and a large amount of ammunition from the *etnocaseristas*. After the events in Andahuaylas, it was alleged the *Movimiento Etnocaserista* was financed by drug traffickers/cocaleros because Antauro supported the cocalero protests and the cocalero movement, which severely weakened the cocalero movement's integration in civil society.

But the bonds with radical leftist parties restricted the kind of discourse the cocalero leaders could use. When Obregón and Malpartida wanted to propose a less radical platform, Antauro Humala's *etnocaserista* movement and other radical alliances withdrew their support from CONPACCP (Antesana 2005: 26). It was only when they changed their discourse into a more radical one that the *etnocaseristas* again supported the CONPACCP. But when the cocalero leaders employed this radical "*Coca o muerte*" discourse, it left them with no other option than to establish bonds with radical leftist political parties, as other parties, institutes and movements refrained from supporting these radical demands. Consequently, their main political supporter became the *Partido Nacionalista Peruano* (PNP)¹⁰⁴ headed by Ollanta Humala, as this party integrated these radical demands, placed within the framework of an ethnic discourse, directly into their political platform. After the establishment of these alliances, the national press began to warn of an upcoming "Bolivianization" of the cocalero struggle in Peru. But their alliance with Ollanta Humala couldn't be compared with the events in Bolivia, where the cocaleros had formed their own political party. Yet it was true that the cocalero leaders, faced with the schisms within the Peruvian cocalero movement, tried to strengthen bonds with Bolivia and Colombia, and to reshape the movement in such a way as to give it a more indigenous character.

5.4.2 Shaping Peru's cocaleros into an indigenous group

In frequent personal discussions that I had with both Nancy Obregón and Elsa Malpartida, it became clear that they were aware they had to tailor their discourses to different audiences. During one particular event, the importance being able to do this became apparent, as they suddenly began to portray the Upper Huallaga's mass base as an indigenous and multinational movement during the third national congress of the CONPACCP (14 March 2005) in Lima when they invited two representatives of Bolivia and Colombia to the event. CONPACCP invited Dionisio Núñez Bancada, the Bolivian Secretary of the *Comité de Lucha contra el Narcotráfico* and former cocalero leader, and Diana Perafán, the Colombian representative of the *Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca*. In this setting, both of these leaders strongly emphasized their Andean identity and background. During her opening speech to the congress, Obregón stated:

"We can be mistreated, fumigated, eradicated, insulted and have our rights violated by every government, only because we don't have any power...because we are campesinos, because we are *andinos*, because we come from the provinces. Many of us have sought a better future in the capital, and what did we find there? Oppression, mistreatment and discrimination. The only thing we know is poverty and oppression. They will tell us that we cannot speak about coca because it is a national disgrace; because, according to them we are fighting to defend drug trafficking in Peru. When the leaders, the cocaleros, and the peasants; when these *indigenas* rise up to protest, it is because the power of the village knows no barriers or boundaries..."¹⁰⁵

With this discourse, Obregón featured the component of ethnic struggle in the cocalero movement. She used the indigenous and social class terminology to form stronger bonds with the representatives of Bolivia and Colombia.

¹⁰⁴ In 2005, the *Partido Nacionalista Peruano* aligned with the *Unión por el Perú* (formed in 1994 by Javier Pérez de Cuéllar; former-UN Secretary who ran unsuccessfully against Fujimori in the 1995 national elections). During the 2006 national elections Ollanta Humala ran under the UPP-PN (*Unión por el Perú-Partido Nacionalista*) banner in the national election because his *Partido Nacionalista Peruano* did not meet the registration deadline.

¹⁰⁵ Press conference during the third CONPACCP congress, Nancy Obregón, March 14, 2005.

During his speech, the Bolivian representative, Dionisio Núñez, emphasized the ethnic bonds between Bolivia and Peru:

“We organized ourselves to conduct talks directly with the Bolivian government. We have gained social power against the oligarchic state and against the power of traditional and conservative parties. This experience, *compañeros*, obviously has been a long road, with pain and suffering. [...] Descendents of the Aymara and Quechua cultures know that we have to defend this sacred plant.”¹⁰⁶

He used every aspect of the *hoja sagrada* discourse, placing the cocalero struggle into the framework of a struggle against colonization, cultural citizenship rights and self-determination for indigenous peoples, all themes that had never had more than secondary importance for the Peruvian cocalero struggle, but that were now given prominence by the present cocalero leaders. Diana Perafán, being the representative of an indigenous movement, also stressed the importance of indigenous identity for the unification of these Andean countries. But were they aware that they were delivering their speeches to cocaleros from Peru’s largest illegal cocaine producing valleys? Had they been told that, in the Upper Huallaga, cocaleros hail from a number of different regions of the country and not just from the highlands? Had they been told that the majority came to illegally cultivate the coca plant? Did they know that they were delivering their speeches to a majority of cocaleros who didn’t use the coca leaf in the traditional way? And, if they had known, would it have mattered?

As stated before, the cocaleros of the Upper Huallaga had never previously organized around the theme of an indigenous identity. But the cocalero leaders were aware of what had been happening in Bolivia and, to a lesser degree Colombia, where there was a powerful emergence of social movements (including the cocaleros) who demanded greater inclusion through using “the transitional language of human rights” (Goldstein 2007: 49). Evo Morales successfully placed the cocalero struggle within the framework of a broader discourse of human and citizens’ rights in the context of a larger indigenous struggle against “marginalization” (see Goldstein 2007; Goodale and Merry 2007). The cocaleros of Peru quickly followed his example, at least in terms of their rhetoric, as exemplified in this statement Palomino made from prison:

“We have to construct a new country, in which we will have equality, peace and justice. This justice has to involve the most poor and humble and we won’t allow the persecution of leaders, who are only defending their rights!”¹⁰⁷

They reframed their struggles into a struggle for political recognition and social inclusion of the marginalized/or indigenous peoples, using terms of democratic citizenship and their rights to participate in shaping the Peruvian nation (Goldstein 2007: 50). In her speech Obregón integrated all these aspects, and also included the gender perspective:

“It isn’t easy for the one who stands before you....It isn’t easy to keep on struggling. They say we are subversives because we walk in the streets to make our voices heard....The only weapon we have in the *campo* to fight against this repression is our voice of protest and resistance. They will tell you that we are drug traffickers because we try to denounce the violations of human rights that the government has committed against us. Day after day, the people are living in misery and oblivion. The only reason

¹⁰⁶ Speech during the third CONPACCP congress, Dionisio Núñez, March 14, 2005.

¹⁰⁷ Speech during the third CONPACCP congress, Nelson Palomino (while imprisoned in Castro-Castro, Lima) March 14, 2005.

why I became a cocalero leader is to give an answer to the racism and discrimination of the government because I think that as a woman, as a leader, as a mother, as a wife I have all the right to do this. I have the right to come to Lima with my people to solve these problems.”¹⁰⁸

But something else had also affected their use of words. As one cocalero leader admitted, when meeting with cocaleros of Colombia, one doesn't speak about cocaine because this subject is too dangerous. When speaking to a cocalero leader of Bolivia, one doesn't speak about cocaine, because one cannot certainly know if this Bolivian cocalero is involved. Therefore, the *indigena* discourse remained the only one that could unite the representatives of both countries. But despite these efforts to form more and broader legal alliances, the cocaleros' most important alliances were of a morally ambiguous character.

5.4.3 Relations between cocaleros, terrucos¹⁰⁹ and patrones

From the beginning, opponents of CONPACCP contended that the cocalero protests were organized as an intimidation against the Peruvian state and should be seen as the threats of an uncivil movement, trying to turn the country into a “*narcoestado*” (drug state). This is also the view that tended to be conveyed by the national media, and that was in general widely held among ordinary Peruvians, and it severely reduced the cocaleros' social legitimacy, giving their protests the character of an insurrection rather than social protest (see Durand, U. 2005). The government's refusal to negotiate (or, more accurately, their willingness to negotiate and subsequent failure to carry out agreements) with the Upper Huallaga's cocaleros opened the way for a more “radical discourse”, especially in those cocalero valleys previously affected by the internal armed conflict. Facing diminishing support among the national cocalero regions, Obregón and Malpartida changed their moderate attitude against eradication into an attitude of “no tolerance” for eradication. Their pragmatic claims for more government support was transformed into a discourse that rejected any kind of dialogue, but this time without reference to any ethnic dimension. As a consequence of this radicalization of the pragmatic discourse, the government refused to negotiate. This particular discourse emphasized that neither the regional authorities nor the national authorities would be allowed gain control over the district. In the Fósforo district particularly, feelings of frustration and anger about a continuing forced eradication (May 2005-present) and the severing of ties with the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, opened the way for a more radical response. The inhabitants' fury was used to motivate the masses to adopt a more violent way of defending their coca cultivation. Supporters of this radical discourse stated that they were willing to fight to the death against the national government:

“They will never touch our coca again without a confrontation, because we will defend our coca with our blood and our tears....”¹¹⁰

For the weak Toledo government, this change meant that they could plausibly portray the cocaleros as terrorists who posed a national security threat. In the following years, the Upper Huallaga's cocaleros were increasingly stigmatized as a guerrilla movement, as part of drug trafficking groups, or as a mix of both defined by the term *narcoterroristas*. Simultaneously, the national press began to report increasingly on a “dangerous alliance” that was formed between the cocaleros and remnants of Shining Path and drug traffickers.

¹⁰⁸ Speech during the third CONPACCP congress, Nancy Obregón, March 15, 2005.

¹⁰⁹ Term used for Shining Path guerrillas.

¹¹⁰ Interview with unnamed cocalero leader, Esperanza de Frontera, June 17, 2004.

This led to the general view that the cocalero movement was supported by guerrilla forces. But there was no such alliance. Certainly the legacy of internal conflict influenced the cocalero movement in different ways. Some local cocalero leaders were former guerrillas but only in isolated cases did such leaders promote a new armed revolution against the state. The accusations of the government and the press enraged the villagers, who saw such a stance as an expression of ingratitude, given that they strongly believed that they had been instrumental in diminishing Shining Path's presence in the Upper Huallaga Valley. As Obregón stated:

“They can call me a drug trafficker, and I won't be able to deny this. But to call me a *terrucos*? We have won this war, together with these idiots, whom they call soldiers. This “vanguard” and the villagers contributed to the state's victory. To be called a *terrucos* by the national government is a great insult.”¹¹¹

But by 2005, it could no longer be denied that Shining Path was a growing force and, as was revealed by several sources, that they had infiltrated the cocalero organizations. As a journalist based in Tingo María stated:

“It becomes clear that Shining Path is regaining strength. They are helped by the government's current attitude against the Upper Huallaga. Some villages even have become completely red again, which means that they are controlled by Shining Path. The *terrucos* infiltrate the cocalero movement as well; they secretly participate in the marches and are keeping an eye on CONPACCP's leaders.”¹¹²

Others remarked that some cocaleros had meetings with Artemio¹¹³ (regional Shining Path leader) and that several associates were participating in violent armed actions (2005-present; Chapter 7). Still, the local cocalero associations remained autonomous organizations where the complex legacy of the internal armed conflict and the unfinished post-conflict period became clear.¹¹⁴ The national press and a number of prominent academics relentlessly simplified these local circumstances in order to discredit the cocalero movement's rise as part of civil society's spectrum, an attitude that betrayed ignorance of recent violent history and its victims, which led to more radical responses in the cocalero valleys.

Alongside the growing reports of Shining Path's ties with the cocaleros, other rumors began to arise about the influence of another illegal armed group on the cocalero movement. With the radicalization of CONPACCP against the forced eradication and alternative development programs, rumors arose that cocalero protests were directed and organized by local *patrones* who were protecting their business interests by supporting the cocaleros' resistance against the forced eradication. But in the Fósforo district, the *patrones* never encouraged the cocalero leaders to organize general *paros*, they were not present during their meetings, and did not conspire with them in any way. They were not secretly organizing or structuring the cocalero protests, but to say they had *nothing* to do with these protests would be a mistake. As explained earlier, the relationship between the *firmas* and the cocalero association was based on reciprocity. The *patrones*' economic cooperation with the cocalero

¹¹¹ Conversation with Nancy Obregón, December 4, 2006.

¹¹² Conversation with Luis Cardoza (journalist), Tingo María, August 14, 2005.

¹¹³ *El Abuelo* (“Grandfather”) became a commonly used nickname for “Artemio”. Some people stated he was given this nickname because he had an old war wound that never healed properly and was limping with one leg.

¹¹⁴ Although different local cocalero leaders in some cases were ex-guerrillas these weren't the people who proposed and executed the continuation of the violent attacks of Shining Path in the cocalero regions (see Chapter 7). Moreover, the CONPACCP during its protest marches always refused the participation of the *Comité Regional del Alto Huallaga* (CRAH; Regional Committee of the Upper Huallaga) headed by Artemio. Although some individual members of the cocalero movement might have supported the CRAH, the CONPACCP never established a relationship with the guerrilla movement.

association was another way to gain the population's respect. The cocalero' actions were for the most part organized against forced eradication campaigns, a communal goal favoring the business of the *patrones*. In exchange for allowing the cocaleros to use their cars during the general *paros*, *traqueteros* were allowed to continue their business and could freely pass the road blockades during general *paros*. Hence, it was true some *patrones* economically collaborated in the cocalero protests but they had no direct say in planning the protests.

National newspapers frequently stated that drug lords organized, planned and headed the cocalero struggle. In the Fósforo district, this was generally false, although there were some exceptions that lent credence to the allegation. Once, I was travelling with El Adusto and several local cocalero leaders during one of the cocalero marches to Huánuco. While we were driving, we passed several police trucks outside the town of Huánuco. As the police trucks approached our car, we saw the face of El Adusto getting pale. It was only after the police trucks had passed our car that El Adusto relaxed. We reached Huánuco and El Adusto quickly continued his journey to Lima, and we then understood the kind of package we had on our hands. The smuggling of cocaine during cocalero protests took place on a regular basis. *Patrones*, *traqueteros*, *burros*, some *pasteleros* and cocaleros alike participated in the regional and national marches while carrying cocaine, as during these protests the police control posts were abandoned. The cocalero marches were seen as an easy opportunity to get the drugs to their destination. When one of these people carrying cocaine was caught, this arrest was described in detail in national newspapers, emphasizing the cocaleros' participation in the cocaine trade. These practices severely tainted the cocalero protest, especially the second *Marcha de Sacrificio* in April and May 2004, described below, and gave rise to rumors that the cocalero leadership was being controlled by *patrones* or guerrillas.

5.5 A march without mass support

5.5.1 The reason for the march: state ignorance of regional economic paralysis

During the second CONPACCP congress, which took place February 18-20, 2004 in Lima, the cocalero directorate agreed on a short-term plan of action.¹¹⁵ This proposal entailed five key demands: First, Nelson Palomino's immediate liberation; second, the suspension of coca eradication (voluntary or forced); third, the deactivation of DEVIDA and the expulsion of NGOs operating as part of the 'war on drugs'; fourth, a new ENACO registration; and, fifth, a new coca law (CONPACCP 2004). The Toledo government was given 60 days to comply with these new demands, otherwise, a *Marcha de Sacrificio* would start from different coca-growing valleys on April 21, 2004. The government, aware of the important divisions within the confederation, refused to address any of the demands or negotiate. In response to this refusal, CONPACCP's members began to stage local and regional protests. On April 20, hundreds of Fósforo's cocaleros marched silently through Tocache, protesting against the regional authorities' neglect. The march was a colorful parade, headed by several local women who carried colorful *banderolos*.¹¹⁶ After the protest, the participants were assigned various tasks; women were placed in charge of the communal kitchen and men were assigned guard duties. Some cocaleros slept on the *plaza*, while others visited bars and discotheques, partying until dawn. The guards helped assure that the drunk cocaleros did not get out of hand.

The next morning, the cocaleros travelled to Aucayacu, a city that was often stigmatized as Shining Path stronghold. During Nancy Obregón's speech on Aucayacu's *Plaza de Armas*, she stressed that the protest would remain peaceful:

¹¹⁵ Plan de Lucha Inmediata de la CONPACCP 2004-2005: Plan for the CONPACCP's immediate struggle 2004-2005.

¹¹⁶ Flags with the names of different local associations that participated in the protest.

“We have come without weapons to defend ourselves, and we only want our voices to be heard. On the radio and in the newspapers, they said that *terrucos*¹¹⁷ are blocking the roads in Tingo María but we are not *terrucos*! We are people who are trying to solve our problems with the current government!”¹¹⁸

The gathering in Aucayacu was an impressive spectacle; several hundreds of cocaleros cheered and waved *Tawantinsuyo* flags, Peruvian flags and colorful *banderolos*. When these cocaleros travel on to Tingo María, this mood changed. In Tingo María, the 48-hour *paro* that had initially been declared was extended indefinitely. Elsa Malpartida had an agreement with the *Frente de Defensa de los Intereses de Tingo María*¹¹⁹ that the roadblocks would be removed after two days. On the protest’s first day, some violent acts had occurred. DEVIDA’s¹²⁰ regional office was attacked by a group of enraged cocaleros, who also set fire to a car and motorcycles that were parked nearby. The subsequent violent confrontation with the police left several wounded among the cocaleros and twelve arrested. Afterwards, the *Frente de Defensa* organized a *Marcha por la Paz*, in which 3,000 people participated, including Catholic priests and merchants, all showing their solidarity with the cocaleros.

On April 22, when Tocache’s cocaleros arrived in Tingo María, the city was totally paralyzed, the principal entrance roads remained blocked, and all economic activities were suspended. Almost 2,000 cocaleros organized a protest march through the town, shouting slogans mainly directed against the current president: “*Urgente, Urgente, Un Nuevo Presidente*” (“We must have a new president”), and “*Toledo Escucha, Tu Papa Chacchaba Coca*” (“Listen, Toledo: your father chewed coca”). The latter slogan referred to the fact that the president was descended from indigenous Peruvians from the highlands. At night, *piquetes*,¹²¹ equipped with sticks and slingshots, patrolled the streets of Tingo. But, in sharp contrast to the first *Marcha*, they were awaited by police vehicles, carrying teargas canisters.

Huánuco’s regional authorities decided not to become involved, and waited until the national government made attempts to negotiate. But the government refrained from any attempt to start a dialogue. In *La República*, an important national newspaper, the Minister of the Interior (Rospigliosi) threatened to arrest Elsa Malpartida if she did not stop the protest immediately.¹²² But there were important disagreements among the cocaleros of Tingo María. Some protesters had been engaged in violent confrontations against police forces for days, and this group wanted to refrain from further protests. After a heated discussion, it was decided to ask the *Frente de Defensa de los Intereses de Tingo María*, to endorse an additional 24 hours of protest. Because of the tense local situation, and the failure of the national government to take action, these regional strikes became the basis of the second *Marcha de Sacrificio* to Lima.

5.5.2 The second Marcha de Sacrificio: *Urgente, Urgente un Nuevo Presidente*

On April 23 2004, the second *Marcha de Sacrificio* began with the participation of approximately 2,000 cocaleros from the different bases of the Upper Huallaga, who walked in

¹¹⁷ Term used for Shining Path guerrillas.

¹¹⁸ Speech Nancy Obregón, *Plaza de Armas* Aucayacu, April 21, 2004.

¹¹⁹ Defense Front of Tingo María: organizations of inhabitants often created to advocate for certain regional demands. As stated before, in the cocalero regions these demands were often related to the cocalero struggle but in Tingo María, the defense front also defended the rights of *mototaxistas*, salesmen and market vendors. Therefore, they had made an agreement with Malpartida that the protests would only take 48 hours, after which the road into town, and the roads within the town, would be cleared.

¹²⁰ *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas*. State institute in charge of the ‘War on Drugs working under the supervision of the Ministry of the Interior.

¹²¹ Groups of participating cocaleros who were in charge of preserving tranquility during the protests.

¹²² “*Ministro Rospigliosi: Malpartida debe buscar el dialogo*” *La República*, April 22, 2004.

three orderly columns, slowly making their way to Huánuco. *Piquetes*¹²³ carrying large sticks walked on either side. Women and men carried backpacks filled with blankets, clothes, and pieces of plastic to protect themselves from the rain, as well as radios, little bags of coca, and a few soles in their pockets. Several trucks carrying food followed the marchers. But, in sharp contrast to the first *Marcha de Sacrificio*, one hour after they departed from Tingo, the cocaleros were confronted by a group of approximately fifty heavily armed policemen equipped with shields, teargas canisters, and automatic weapons. The marchers in the front lines quickly started waving their slingshots but a cocalero leader managed to defuse the situation. After a brief discussion, the cocaleros continued their march without further incident. The police demanded a truck to transport them to Cayumba, where they awaited the group of cocaleros at the community's entrance. When entering the little community, several women set up communal kitchens and prepared food, including plantains, yucca, rice and corn, which were rationed among the cocaleros. Meanwhile, the cocalero leaders obtained permission from the local mayor to sleep in the school-building (because the building was not large enough to accommodate all of the marchers, some men slept outside on cardboard boxes they received from the local population). The march continued on to Huánuco, a town where the cocaleros enjoyed considerable support. The cocaleros' entrance into the city was accompanied by applause and shouts of support by the local population, such as "*Denle duro a Toledo*" ("Give Toledo hell"), and "*Estamos con Ustedes*" ("We are with you"). From the very beginning, this march was directed against the government of Toledo.

In Huánuco, the marchers had the support of the regional mayor, who permitted them to sleep in a local sports stadium, where Huánuco's residents helpfully provided food and blankets. The cocalero leader decided to call for a day of respite, and the cocaleros spent the day washing clothes, bathing and resting. The following morning April 26, when the national leaders planned to continue their march to La Oroya, a terrible accident occurred.

Box 5.2 Samuel Mendoza Medino

A terrible accident caused a severe delay in the cocalero march. Samuel Mendoza Medino, a 66 year-old cocalero from Nueva Vista (the Fósforo district) died after he fell on a cement floor. When he awoke in the morning, he slipped on the stairs heading to the bathroom. The stairs were dirty with mud, and slippery because of a heavy rain fall. Some friends who were sleeping close by immediately knew something was terribly wrong, because blood was running from his nose, eyes and mouth. The cocaleros were shocked and upset by his death. Because of his age, they had urged him to support the march by providing food or blankets, but not to participate himself. This group immediately blamed Samuel's death on the government, whose forced eradication had forced Samuel, a peaceful man who spent his days working in his fields to make a small profit, to participate in the march. Samuel had ignored their advice to stay at home. As he said in Cayumba, one day before his accident:

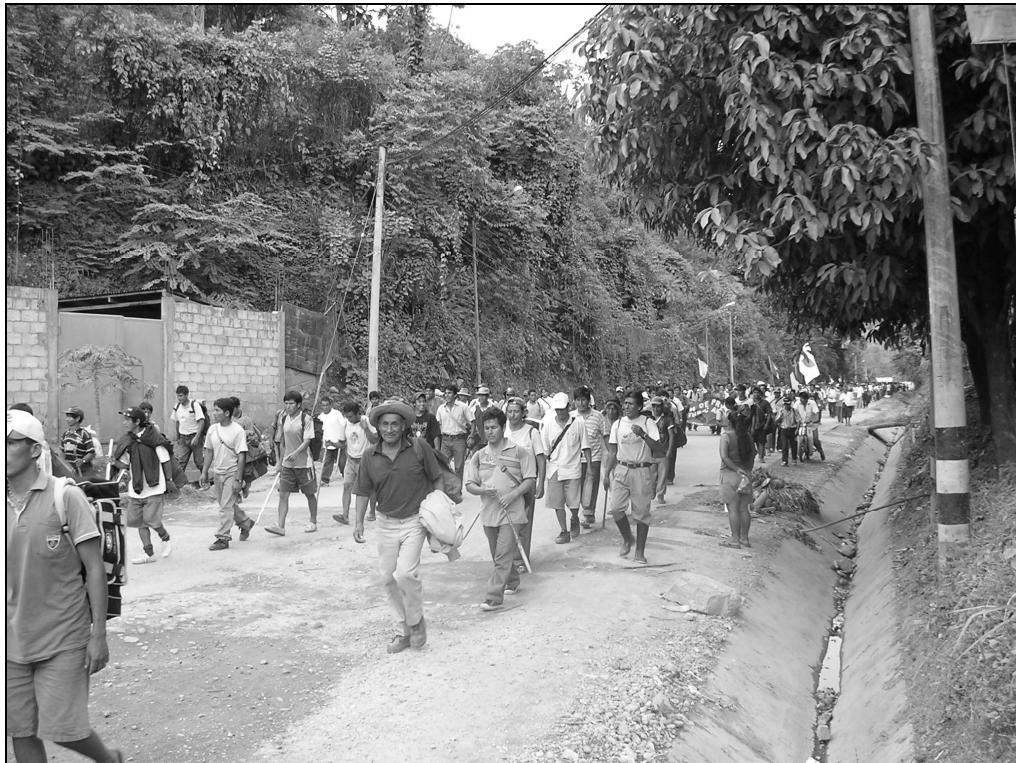
"I didn't cultivate coca last year. Therefore, I didn't participate in the march last year. But because of economic problems, I started cultivating coca this year and I think that every cocalero who is involved in coca cultivation should defend this plant and participate in the cocalero struggle against the government."¹²⁴

After the incident, local policemen took Samuel's body to the morgue, where several local leaders waited until the doctors released it. Later, it turned out that Samuel was a recent *colono* and didn't have family in the region. He had given some other participants his family's telephone number. His family agreed that CONPACCP would arrange the coffin's transport to Trujillo, where Samuel's family lived. But the majority of cocaleros didn't have any money to contribute to meet the costs that this entailed. Nancy Obregón and Elsa Malpartida arranged with Luzmilla Templo, Huánuco's regional mayor and a supporter of the cocalero movement, for his coffin to be transported by air to Trujillo. A short service was arranged in a Catholic church in Huánuco. The coffin was carried through the city in a silent march, in which cocaleros, people of the main market and other civil

¹²³ Groups of participating cocaleros who were in charge of preserving tranquility during the protests.

¹²⁴ Conversation with Samuel Mendoza Medino during the Second March of Sacrifice, April 25, 2004.

society leaders participated. In the evening, back at the stadium his companions had a chance to say their last goodbyes. Nancy Obregón wept as she said: “Samuel Mendoza Medino was a very important man for us. He was the one who urged us to go ahead with our struggle, pushing us to continue walking, telling others not to stay behind, because we had to reach Lima. This man gave us the power and will to go on. We have to remember this man and fulfill his last wish...to reach Lima and let the government know how difficult it is to be a simple campesino.”¹²⁵



Picture 12 Samuel Mendoza Medino during the Marcha de Sacrificio 2004

Finally, on April 29, the first groups of cocaleros arrived in Chosica, a village on the outskirts of Lima, where they were awaited by a group of Antauro Humala’s *Etnocaseristas*, who supported the cocalero struggle and participated in the protests planned in Lima for the following days.

5.5.3 The cocalero protests in Lima

During this second march, the repression of the government shifted focus: Whereas before, they had tried to wipe out the organization form within by negotiating with one region while ignoring the others, this time the severely weakened Toledo government focused “on reprisals against public demonstrations or other protest” (Whittier 2002: 298), a tactic that they were able to implement with relative ease because the number of participants was so much lower than it had been during the first march. But this repression of popular protest caused a conflict between two government ministries. When the cocalero march approached Lima, the cabinet ministers were embroiled in a fierce discussion. On the one side, there was the Minister of the Interior, Rospigliosi, who stated that if the cocaleros didn’t stop their protest he would employ an “iron politics,” rejecting any kind of negotiation, and, on the other side, the Minister of Agriculture, Jose León, who argued that his ministry should open its doors to start a dialogue and search for a solution together with the cocaleros. The anti-

¹²⁵ Speech of Nancy Obregón, Coliseum in Huánuco, April 26, 2004.

drug institutions took the side of the Minister of the Interior and refused to negotiate with the cocaleros. Moreover, DEVIDA's representatives proclaimed that they couldn't stop the forced eradication because the cocaleros wanted to turn Peru into a *narcoestado*. On April 30, 2004, approximately 4,000 cocaleros marched to Santa Anita, where they received the support of the producers of the *Mercado Mayorista*,¹²⁶ located just outside Lima. It was obvious that there were far fewer participants than there had been during the first *Marcha de Sacrificio*, and Minister of the Interior Rospigliosi remarked in the press: "[...] They are unable to pressure the government and the police will take measures to assure that order is maintained. If accidents occur, the police will handle them, and I don't think we will have any problems".¹²⁷ On May 3, 2004, thousands of cocaleros, accompanied by a special police force, initiated a march to the Government's Palace and the Peruvian congress waving sticks and slingshots above their heads, and shouting familiar slogans like "*Somos Campesinos, no somos terroristas*", "*El Pueblo Unido jamás sera vencido*", but this time they added "*El Pueblo ya llegó, Toledo se jodió*" ("The people have arrived, and Toledo is screwed"). In various national newspapers, the head of DEVIDA stated that drug traffickers were the big winners in this conflict and Rospigliosi even characterized the cocalero masses as criminals. Nancy Obregón said:

"They were describing the cocaleros as if they all were devils who cultivated the evil coca leaf. We were described as drug traffickers and *mafiosi*. But we only went to Lima to defend our right to survive, which we think is a just struggle!"¹²⁸

But the government had changed its view of the cocalero struggle, and in sharp contrast to the first *Marcha*, every time the cocaleros started new marches to Lima's center, the president ordered the closure of the *Plaza de Armas*, which meant that the cocaleros couldn't get near the Government's Palace. The cocaleros continued their march to the Congress, where representatives agreed to talk with their national leaders. The cocalero masses, awaiting the outcome outside, closed down one side of *Avenida Abancay*, an important road of ingress to the capital's center. Inside, the cocalero leaders agreed to the formation of a congressional commission, to consist of representatives of the Ministry of Agriculture, and the *Defensoría del Pueblo* (National Ombudsman) that would work toward meeting the cocaleros' various demands.

Later that night, on May 3, the march slowly made its way to the *Paseo de los Héroes Navales* in front of the *Palacio de Justicia*, an action that, once again in sharp contrast to the first *Marcha*, resulted in a violent confrontation between the cocaleros and the police. Cocaleros sat on the pavement, organized their communal kitchens, and began getting ready to sleep, putting cardboard boxes and blankets on the pavement. Some cocaleros sat quietly conversing and reading the coca leaf, a highland tradition. But meanwhile Rospigliosi, the Minister of the Interior, ordered the police to forcibly evict them from the area. At about 1:30 in the early morning, when most of the women and men were soundly asleep, approximately 500 policemen entered the park. The police paralyzed the sleeping cocaleros with teargas and those who resisted were beaten. Some men were arrested by the police and spent the night in prison. Some people remembered that they had been paralyzed by fear and, more importantly, that they had been defenseless because, at the moment of the police action, they had been asleep. There were many injured people, especially women, including Malpartida and Obregón, who were both hospitalized because of breathing difficulties. Rospigliosi later justified the action, saying: "[The law] states that nobody can obstruct public roads, nobody

¹²⁶ *Mercado Mayorista Santa Anita* was a marketplace where producers could directly sell their products.

¹²⁷ "Mas de diez mil agricultores cocaleros a un paso de Lima: Llegan el lunes" La Razón, May 1, 2004.

¹²⁸ Conversation with Nancy Obregón, Santa María, July 16, 2004.

can sleep and set up an encampment on an important street, such as the *Paseo de los Héroes Navales*. They broke their promises, and set up camp in front of the *Palacio de Justicia*, after causing a traffic jam while they prepared to spend the night there, as a pressure tactic”¹²⁹. Rospigliosi talked about the non-violence pact that was signed with the Ministry of the Interior, wherein both parties agreed to refrain from violent acts during the protest. But, in the cocaleros’ view, it was the government that had broken the pact with this forcible eviction. The cocalero leaders responded:

“Rospigliosi brutally assaulted us; he assaulted us like we were animals. But we were campesinos and cocaleros who were protesting on the streets.”¹³⁰

On May 4, after the violent confrontation, the Ministry of Agriculture expressed a willingness to negotiate with the cocalero leaders. But when the cocalero leaders learned that a representative of the Minister of the Interior would also be present, they refused to engage in a dialogue. On May 6, Rospigliosi resigned, but not because of anything to do with the cocalero protest in Lima.¹³¹

The action against the cocaleros constituted a black page in the annals of the Toledo government, which had already been highly unpopular. Obregón, fully aware of Toledo’s difficulties, said:

“We have seen the government’s desperation, with its 6% popularity rating. Every time we got close to the *Plaza de Armas*, they closed it down with iron bars as if dangerous bandits were coming.”¹³²

The protest of the cocaleros was the population’s response to a government that had failed to exercise its authority in important regions of the nation, and that had squelched the peaceful protest that had occurred in response to this protest. Meanwhile, many of the participating cocaleros started to get desperate: They had left their families and fields for over a month and were losing their harvests, and some marchers were running out of food and money. Some marchers began to return to their regions. Faced with the local and regional disturbances in different cocalero regions and continuous disturbances in the Puno department, Toledo declared that it was time for the government to take action. But the action that was taken wasn’t what the cocaleros expected. On May 27, 2004, the executive sent a proposal to the congress to increase the prison term for organizing and provoking public disturbances from three years to eight years. A day later, Obregón announced that the cocaleros would return to their valleys because they lost all hope of negotiating with the government. The cocaleros left Lima without having resolved the growing problems in their valley. When the cocaleros left Lima, violent protest continued regionally.

5.5.4 Continuing regional protests

While dialogues in Lima ended without any accords, regional and local *paros* began in the Upper Huallaga and Aguaytía, which escalated into several clashes between the cocaleros

¹²⁹ Fernando Rospigliosi in La Nación, May 5, 2004.

¹³⁰ Speech Nancy Obregón, during meeting International Festival in Pichari, August 10, 2005.

¹³¹ Rospigliosi was censured by the Congress for the mishandling of the violent incidents in Ilave (Puno department); where on April 24, 2004, an angry mass had protested against a local mayor, accused of corruption and other criminal charges. After several days of mass protest, largely ignored by Rospigliosi, because he ordered the national police to concentrate on the cocalero protest in Lima, on April 26, 2004, a furious mob lynched the mayor of Ilave. Rospigliosi was blamed for an indifferent attitude in the face of the violent confrontations that followed the lynching. This was the end of Rospigliosi’s political career, but even after his removal, Rospigliosi didn’t admit his responsibility; he also did not apologize for the events in Ilave or for the excessive physical force the police used against the cocaleros.

¹³² Speech Nancy Obregón during press conference in Tocache, June 9, 2004.

and the police. President Toledo called on Obregón and Malpartida to stop these general *paros*, but the women responded that the cocaleros were acting on their own, in response to the suffering of their fellow cocaleros in Lima and the government's unwillingness to resolve their problems. The cocaleros who stayed behind in the Fósforo district established a commission in charge of the daily coordination of the regional protests in Tocache, and formed groups of one hundred *piquetes*. With the general *paro*, they hoped to get the regional mayor's attention. On May 29, 2004, there were confrontations between cocaleros and police forces on Tocache's *Plaza de Armas*, when additional police troops arrived from Tarapoto to forcibly stop the *paro*. The cocaleros were removed from the city and three cocaleros were arrested. The protests continued and the cocaleros re-organized the *piquetes*, who gathered on the *Plaza de Armas* of Tocache to demand the release of the three arrested cocaleros. One cocalero recalled:

“It was life or death for us because we couldn't leave our *compañeros*, who had been captured. We knew it would be impossible to get them out of jail if we waited.”¹³³

The regional police commander complied with the cocalero demands, and the three captured cocaleros were released. The police publicly offered their apologies for the harsh treatment and the imprisonment. The next day, local cocalero leaders were invited to a meeting with the regional mayor, Pedro Bogarín, because by then the general *paro* had paralyzed the whole town. Bogarín threatened that more cocaleros would be arrested if the march continued as planned. Tocache's authorities stigmatized the march as illegal and aggressive:

“Our mayor wanted to shut down the cocaleros' protest. He even announced that 100% of the cocalero demands were false and didn't have any foundation!”¹³⁴

On May 31, 2004, the protests turned violent in Tocache when 600 cocaleros were attacked with teargas, even though they had not been obstructing traffic. During these confrontations, five cocaleros were severely injured. After this action, there were no further protests.

In Tingo María, the refusal of the government to negotiate with the cocaleros in Lima caused violent confrontations between the cocaleros and the police from May 5-21, 2004, when the local *piquetes* constructed roadblocks between the towns of Tocache and Pucallpa. There were reports in the national press that these protests were organized, sponsored and financed by drug lords—reports which enraged the cocaleros. Confronted by angry mobs, the police reacted by using teargas and firing plastic bullets at the protesters' bodies. On May 21, a group of cocaleros¹³⁵ burned one police vehicle and attacked various. Seventeen cocaleros were arrested and three policemen were wounded. During the protests, 53 cocaleros were detained by the police and accused of disturbing the public order. These arrests were a blow to the morale of the region's cocaleros. The accused cocaleros were brought to trial in Lima and Tingo María, where they faced possible maximum prison terms of eight years. When asked, they tried to laugh about the situation, saying that they had been accused dozens of times in the past but were still free men. But families were worried and urged their men to refuse to participate in any cocalero protest. After the violent confrontations, the cocaleros decided to retreat, and calm was temporarily restored.

¹³³ Speech at local reunion in Puerto Mal Abrigo, Luis Cabrera, June 30, 2004.

¹³⁴ Speech at local reunion in Puerto Mal Abrigo, leader of the *Frente de Defensa de Tocache*, June 30, 2004.

¹³⁵ In the press these attacks were said to be perpetrated by so-called *pandillas armadas* (armed criminal groups) infiltrated by *narcos*. See “*Pandillas armadas por los narcos enfrentan a la policía en Tingo María*” El Correo, May 21, 2004.

5.6 Two cocalero movements

5.6.1 The real division

On April 25, 2004, even before the *Marcha* of the Upper Huallaga's cocaleros arrived in Lima, another group of cocalero leaders organized an *Encuentro Nacional de Cuenca Cocaleras del Perú*,¹³⁶ where cocaleros from different coca regions, including the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, Monzón and the FECACYL (cocalero federation of the Cusco department) participated. During this gathering, Marisela Guillén (FEPAVRAE) made a public declaration about Obregón's and Malpartida's alleged misconduct and opportunism. Two options were proposed during the gathering. The first was to continue to operate under the banner of CONPACCP, and the second was to organize another organization. The participants unanimously voted for the second option and Ibúrcio Morales and Marisela Guillén announced the formation of the *Junta Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios y Cocaleros*.¹³⁷ In contrast to CONPACCP, which re-elected Nelson Palomino as general secretary every year, the *Junta Nacional* did not recognize Palomino as national cocalero leader. Nevertheless, the *Junta*'s leaders did adopt Palomino's slogan ("Coca o muerte. Venceremos") and demanded the unimpeded cultivation of coca. Opponents saw this as a logical move, because the *Junta Nacional* united two of the three valleys with the highest illegal coca production (Antesana 2005: 40). But the *Junta*'s relationship with the cocaleros of the Cusco department, often related with Peru's legal coca market, remained strange (Felbab-Brown 2006: 80). With the creation of the *Junta Nacional*, the influence of the CONPACCP was severely curtailed, being limited now to only the Upper Huallaga and Aguaytía (Padre Abad).

These divisions among the different cocalero basins enabled the Toledo government to negotiate with weakened and divided movements. As Felbab-Brown (2006:80) noticed: "the diversity of various protest' groups' interests and their lack of unity made it possible for the Peruvian government to attempt to play divide-and-conquer, and perhaps to co-opt some of them". On May 13, 2004, while the Upper Huallaga's cocaleros marched through Lima, as described above, the *Junta*'s leaders united with the Minister of the Interior and the Minister of Agriculture. The *Junta*'s leaders signed an agreement with the national government in which the government recognized them as valid interlocutors and agreed to visit their valleys (Antesana 2005: 40-41). At that point, the cocalero movement was at its weakest:

"These were the happiest days of ex-Minister of the Interior Rospigliosi, because it divided the organization and the coming *Marcha*. One group had a meeting with the ministry, while on the streets the protests continued. This was a very sinister trick, trying to divide the cocalero movement and exaggerating the discrepancies within the cocalero leadership....I hope they learned they don't have to play innocent....Everybody wanted to appear in the newspapers, the radio. It's part of being human. But clearly when this issue isn't addressed, one can play people off against each other...."¹³⁸

The *Junta*'s establishment had severely weakened the cocaleros' position during the *Marcha*, curtailing their options for negotiations with the government and diminishing the numbers of cocaleros that took part in protests. The government, largely aware of the discrepancies among the CONPACCP's former support base, tried to play the different cocalero movements against one another, agreeing to negotiate with one side while arranging different agreements

¹³⁶ National Meeting of Peruvian Coca Basins.

¹³⁷ National Council of Agricultural and Coca Producers.

¹³⁸ Interview with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, October 13, 2005.

with the other side. After the establishment of the *Junta*, the cocalero protests were reduced to regional *paros*, which were easily repressed by local police forces and which did not have any impact on the national level.

But what was the real reason for the schism? One reason could be the competition between Peru's three largest cocaine valleys over their share in the cocaine trade. For example, if the Upper Huallaga's coca was eradicated, the other valleys could cultivate more and drug traffickers would be willing to pay higher prices because of the decrease in coca offered (see Felbab-Brown 2006). But in the cocalero valleys, the conflict over leadership was usually perceived as personal power struggles. In 2003, Iburcio Morales began to spread rumors about the possibility that the national leaders had received bribes from DEVIDA and were working with the government, an act that was considered to be a crime in the cocalero valleys. Morales implied that the leaders should be punished as *soplones*. When I visited the Monzón in 2004, I heard Iburcio Morales deliver long speeches on several occasions about Obregón's corruption and betrayal. The most striking thing about these accusations was that he had no evidence to back up his charges, but the Monzón's cocaleros seemed to agree with him. Iburcio Morales stated during a speech where many cocaleros were present:

“What she is trying to do is become a famous politician. This struggle is about Obregón’s political ambition.... How can it be that she accepted money from our enemies? [loud applause from the cocaleros present].... Our struggle, the struggle of Monzón’s cocaleros, is the only honest fight, because we aren’t going to accept money from DEVIDA. We never have, and never will accept money from our enemies! [loud applause]. Nancy and Elsa have accepted money. I know Obregón, she has lived in the Monzón and I know what her weaknesses are... Her weakness is money...”¹³⁹

Different national and regional cocalero leaders tarred the reputations of other leaders. Therefore, when the cocaleros of the Monzón organized protests demanding unhindered cultivation of coca in their valley, which were slated to begin on July 20, 2004, and would involve blocking access to their valley, the protests were carried out without any participation by other valleys, neither FEPAVRAE nor FECACYL. With this loss of national support, Iburcio Morales tried to strengthen his influence in the Upper Huallaga, as he tried to re-establish relations with the city of Aucayacu, which he achieved as from that point in time, the Aucayacu base never again participated in actions of the CONPACCP. The conflict between the different leaders reached its climax on May 12, 2005, when Obregón travelled to Monzón because she received an invitation for an emergency meeting. After her arrival, crowds of people began to shout demands that she leave their valley. She and a group of Fósforo’s cocaleros were forcibly expelled from the village. She and her entourage had bottles thrown at them, and some of the men who accompanied her were physically attacked.

Additionally, within the membership base of different cocalero associations, there was a pervasive sense of disappointment and loss of morale. As was previously stated, the Monzón was closed to policemen, the military, and people working for NGOs who were involved in Alternative Development projects. It was said that groups of approximately 40 armed *piquetes* daily guarded the main entrance bridge leading into the town. A rotation system was created and different communities were responsible for maintaining this blockade. But when we travelled to the region, we only saw five men sitting next to the bridge, drinking coffee and playing cards. One had even fallen asleep. “Was this Monzón’s famous barricade?” I asked the sub-secretary of Iburcio’s movement to see whether this was a normal day at the guard post. He immediately called the guards and reprimanded them for their

¹³⁹ Group conversation with cocaleros of the Monzón and Iburcio Morales, November 7, 2004.

behavior. We drove further into the region, arriving in the town of Monzón (capital of Monzón province), where an important meeting was taking place. While we passed through different towns and hamlets, the driver of the collective taxi had to stop frequently so that the sub-secretary of Ibúrcio's movement could issue further reprimands to people who were obviously not planning to attend the meeting. Ibúrcio Morales' "iron rule" had created internal problems and, during the meeting, the turmoil in the local association became clear, as several local cocalero leaders resigned from their positions. On the national level, the diminishing influence of the national cocalero movement became visible, as there were no further cocalero marches to Lima and media attention once again focused on violent confrontations between the cocaleros and the police. Although these separations and failures were seen by some as signaling the end of the cocalero movement, an event that took place in August 2005 suggested that the force of the cocalero movement in Peru was far from spent.

5.6.2 A modest success: The unification of the Upper Huallaga and the Apurímac-Ene Valley

The separation between the two largest coca producing regions, the Apurímac-Ene River Valley and the Upper Huallaga, was about to end when the First International Festival of the Coca Leaf was organized in Pichari (Province of La Convención, Cusco) in August 9-11, 2005. The festival was organized by FEPAVRAE, now headed by Alejandro Gutiérrez, who refused to participate in the *Junta Nacional de Productores de Hoja de Coca*. The festival's main organizer, Pichari's newly elected mayor, invited the Upper Huallaga's cocalero leaders to attend. Both men were closely aligned with Palomino, and were strongly opposed to any splintering in the movement. During the first International Festival, several cocalero leaders, including those from FEPAVRAE, FECACYL and the CONPACCP, met for the first time since the first *Marcha de Sacrificio* in 2003. The Upper Huallaga's leaders were viewed with suspicion by the other two organizations—especially FECACYL (Cusco department).

Throughout the discussions, it became clear that the main resentments of the Apurímac-Ene Valley's cocaleros were caused by Supreme Decree 044-2003.¹⁴⁰ In FEPAVRAE, it was still thought Obregón and Malpartida signed the agreement for concerted and gradual eradication, which was perceived as betrayal of the cocalero cause. But Malpartida explained:

"We were in the Palace and we didn't have advisors on our side, so we asked ourselves, 'Will this be alright?' Everybody said it would be alright. Not just Elsa Malpartida and Nancy Obregón. Everybody said it would be fine and the others would just listen and say nothing. Now my question is: why should we only blame this on Nancy and Elsa? Anybody could have said something that day. *Señora* Marisela Guillén could have said; 'No señor Presidente, I don't like this and I don't want to sign it.' Clearly, without any doubt only Nancy and Elsa are *soplones*."¹⁴¹

There was another issue that FEPAVRAE's cocaleros wanted to clarify. The corruption allegations continued to be expressed in the other regions. Leaflets had been distributed in their region accusing Malpartida of working for DEVIDA or receiving money from the anti-drug state institute. These accusations were also spread in Tingo María, and had caused Malpartida's resignation from her position in CONPACCP. It seems clear that the main reason she resigned was because of the accusations levelled against her—although her resignation should certainly not be taken as an admission of guilt. Both women admitted that they had made some mistakes. Malpartida said:

¹⁴⁰ See section 5.3.3.

¹⁴¹ Speech during meeting International Festival in Pichari, Elsa Malpartida, August 10, 2005.

“We made a mistake. I should have said; ‘No, *compañeros* if you don’t have the money I won’t go,’ but people thought that maybe we would be able to solve our problems in Lima. We were thinking, at that time I was a new leader, so I thought we could trust the government. This was another mistake, but we really wanted to solve our problems. By now I have learned that our government is a total mess.”¹⁴²

It was painful for Obregón to be standing there listening to the accusations, and even Malpartida, normally a stoic woman, broke down. After their explanations and emotional confessions, the majority of FEPAVRAE’s cocaleros were convinced that CONPACCP’s national leaders had made these mistakes because of their inexperience. But the cocaleros of FEPACYL, the legal producers with a long-standing tradition of protests, still mistrusted them and didn’t totally align themselves with CONPACCP. Both women said that the cocaleros of the Upper Huallaga made great sacrifices to stay in CONPACCP. Obregón wept as she spoke:

“We understand that our confederation nowadays doesn’t have one prisoner named Nelson Palomino but 280 prisoners who have been fighting in this great struggle. The confederation has one martyr [Samuel Mendoza Medina], who in the second *Marcha de Sacrificio* gave his life for the cocaleros of Peru. This confederation has been born in tears and paid for with sacrifice, but it has brought joy as well. [...] These days, our members say that if FEPAVRAE doesn’t want to belong to CONPACCP, that’s okay, because it was not their blood that was spilled; it was our blood, the blood of our *compañeros* of the Upper Huallaga that was spilled.”¹⁴³

Approximately a month later, on September 26-30, 2005, at CONPACCP’s fourth national congress, which was held in Pampa de la Quinua (Ayacucho department) Obregón spoke at length about Fósforo’s inhabitants, who were arrested during the different protests, participated in the Second *Marcha de Sacrificio* and now were being hit with a new eradication campaign (May 2005-present). No cocaleros from the Fósforo district participated in the congress because they were hit by forced eradication. During this national congress, Elsa Malpartida wasn’t even present because she had been threatened with arrest for disturbing the public order in Tingo María. Obregón and Malpartida understood the workload and anxiety involved in the confederation’s continuation. The two valleys were located two days’ distance from one another, and in both regions some people were against the reunification in one CONPACCP. Meanwhile the national government was trying to foment division between the two largest cocalero valleys.¹⁴⁴ But the reunification was equally important for the Apurímac-Ene River Valley’s cocaleros, because their local associations had been disorganized, and some local cocalero associations had even completely disappeared.

After the fourth congress, CONPACCP’s reunification became a reality, when the Apurímac-Ene River Valley’s cocaleros voted in favor of the proposal to break with the *Junta Nacional*. CONPACCP was recuperated as Peru’s only cocalero confederation because the *junta* ceased to exist, which left Ibúrcio Morales without a proper base in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley or in any other national cocalero region. With this decision out of the way, the reunification also meant that it was time to elect the new directorate of CONPACCP because Obregón had resigned from her position before the congress (as had Malpartida). CONPACCP’s national leadership returned to FEPAVRAE as Walter Hacha (from the

¹⁴² Speech during meeting International Festival in Pichari, Elsa Malpartida, August 10, 2005.

¹⁴³ Speech during meeting International Festival in Pichari, Nancy Obregón, August 10, 2005.

¹⁴⁴ As will be explained in Chapter 6, the government negotiated separately with leaders of the different cocalero regions and tried to make agreements with them so that some of their members would not participate in the protests.

community of Sivia in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley) was chosen by a large majority of the organization's voting members. For Obregón, the partial unification was bittersweet since, during the congress, she received the news from her bases that a forced eradication campaign had entered Esperanza de Frontera, and some men had been wounded during violent confrontations with the police. But the resignations of Obregón and Malpartida did not mean they disappeared from the national scene. They continued to harbor political ambitions, as will be seen in the next chapter.

5.7 Social mobilisation and the limits of post-conflict reconstruction

In the immediate aftermath of the conflict period, inhabitants from the main coca-producing regions collectively began to identify with the term “cocaleros”, and a new national cocalero movement emerged. The emergence of the movement has to be seen within the context of the post-conflict reconstruction process.¹⁴⁵ Prior to this process, the people from Peru’s cocalero regions had been considered “outsiders” by many of their fellow citizens, and by the national government. The term “cocalero” encompassed people of varying cultural backgrounds who engaged in a variety of different activities and who represented a wide range of economic circumstances. It is generally understood that the chosen identity of cocaleros entailed identification with an illegal activity. But as Whittier points out, “Collective identity [...] is an *interpretation* of a group’s collective experience: who members of the group are, what their attributes are, what they have in common, how they are different from other groups, and what the political significance of all this is” (Whittier 2002: 302). As illustrated in this chapter, the cocaleros strategically began to relate their struggle to fundamental questions about legality, livelihood security, and marginalization. For the cocaleros, constructing their identity on the basis of a variety of different elements became crucial. As Vilas (2004: 7) remarks, “The popular is constituted on the basis of multiple reference points situated in a complex web of complementarities and contradictions, in which subjects ‘choose’ those ingredients that best express their condition of oppression and exploitation”. Like other social movements, the cocalero movement used strategic framing, as all social movements “create boundaries and reject undesirable traits by creating opposition to them” (Ungar *et al.* 2002: 8). Consequently, the movement’s creation can be seen as an effort to be included in the nation-state in which the constructed cocalero identity must be seen as a mixture of socioeconomic, political, cultural and symbolic elements, strategically mixing class elements with ethnic claims (see Vilas 2004: 6-7).

Peru’s cocaleros framed a discourse wherein they rejected stigmatizations and stressed the difference between coca and cocaine, defining coca as ancient, traditional, and legal (Yashar 2005: 185). As in Bolivia, they emphasized their cultural background, stressing their bonds with traditional coca use. This integration of ethnic claims into issues of socioeconomic importance is by no means unique to the Peruvian context. For example, Evo Morales managed to become president by framing old grievances within a human rights framework (see Goodale and Merry 2007; Radagopal 2004). Bolivia does not stand alone, as social movements increasingly organize by mobilizing an ethnic discourse in the service of defending their rights (de Sousa *et al.* 2005: 2; Yashar 2005: 185). But Peru differs from Bolivia (Van Cott 2005: 59) in that ethnic claims and the defense of coca on traditional grounds do not resonate with the majority of Peruvians. In contrast, it was the cultural claims that were seen as radical. Unlike Bolivia, the Peruvian cocaleros failed to incorporate broader demands, as their claims remained focused on coca. Numerous sectors of Peruvian society, such as politicians and social scientists, refused to characterize cocalero mobilizations as civil

¹⁴⁵ See Appendix E for an overview of the chronology of the Peruvian cocalero movement.

efforts because of the cocaleros' role in the cocaine commodity chain—a role that was widely seen as reducing the cocaleros' legitimacy. This stigmatization made it difficult for cocaleros to define and project a “legal” identity.

CONPACCP leaders also formed other alliances. But the coalitions that the cocaleros could form were with organizations of dubious public reputation. Some of these, such as Antauro Humala's *Movimiento Etnocaserista*, can be identified as uncivil movements (Payne 2000). Associations with movements of dubious legitimacy understandably further cast aspersions on the legitimacy of the cocalero movement. Meanwhile, the Toledo government faced growing difficulties in meeting popular demands and did not always react with a single voice (Vilas 2004: 3-6). After the government rejected the cocaleros' demands for negotiations, they radicalized their protests. In general, suppressed groups that begin to publicly express their feelings of neglect do not initially resort to more intrusive methods (Eckstein 2001: 9; Goldstein 2004: 223). The cocaleros' more intrusive methods of protest followed national changes. When the numerous peaceful protests were left unanswered by the weak government, movements used intrusive forms of contention, such as road blockades and *paros*. But these more intrusive forms of protest only led to more state repression and ignorance. Meanwhile, the cocaleros were also losing substantial numbers of adherents to their cause. After the internal division in the national cocalero movement, the cocaleros of the Upper Huallaga were powerless when a forced eradication operation entered the Fósforo district. It was eradication that caused these cocaleros to organize, and it was also eradication that then became the reason for a severe disorganization of the national cocalero movement, as will be described in detail in the following chapter.

6. Failed cocalero politics

In post-conflict Peru, the cocaleros of the Fósforo district had become one of the most important support bases of the cocalero protests. But just after the unification with the *Federación de Productores Agropecuarios del Valle del Río Apurímac y Ene* (FEPAVRAE),¹ described in Chapter 5, people in the Fósforo district increasingly became disappointed with what they had achieved by the protests, as they failed to attain any of their initial demands.² The course that the cocalero movement took paralleled that of social movements in Peru generally: Even after the reunification in CONPACCP after August 9-11, 2005, protests by the cocalero movement took on a more regional character. A number of different regional groups³ expressed their discontent about the neglect of the national government, but their protests never reached Lima (see APRODEH 2007). As this disappointment was beginning to take root, another forced eradication operation entered the Fósforo district in May 2005. In the local cocalero association, the state-led anti-drug operation caused so much disunity that it could be seen as the final blow against the association that had been one of the main participants in two *Marchas de Sacrificio*.⁴ The government policy that had united them before also caused a new disunity among the different cocalero regions as the only cocalero base that protested against the forced eradication in Fósforo was Tingo María.

At this same time, some cocalero leaders launched candidacies for major political office. Upper Huallaga's cocalero leaders entered the regional elections in an attempt to gain power at the local and regional level. But after several failures on the part of cocalero leaders to do so, the two national cocalero leaders (Nancy Obregón and Elsa Malpartida) participated in the national elections. In contrast to Bolivia, they didn't form their own political parties but aligned themselves with Ollanta Humala,⁵ an action which led to new division as another faction constructed their own cocalero party, *Kuska Perú*. Moreover, in contrast to Bolivia, where the coca issue unites a sufficient number of people to present a foundation for political action (Van Cott 2005: 156), in Peru it does not. Peruvian cocalero leaders who entered national politics were only able to do so by emphasizing the underdevelopment of their regions, and not their cocalero identity, as in Peru the coca issue continued to evoke associations with cocaine trafficking, especially in reference to the Upper Huallaga. Contrary to Van Cott's (2005: 157) contention that entering the political arena allowed the cocalero leaders to make cultural claims, in reality, proposing a political debate on coca and cocaine remains impossible in Peru. Parallel with the entry of Obregón and Malpartida on the national political scene was also an initiative in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley to form a national political party based on the cocalero identity, *Kuska Perú*, a development which threatened the fragile reunification which had taken place on August 10, 2005 in Pichari, and which was described at the end of the previous chapter.

In this chapter, a broad overview of these new divisions, which were often related to the political projects of the different cocalero leaders, will be presented. Following the chronological order of events, in part one of the chapter, Fósforo's villagers' reactions to the forced eradication operation, events which led to divisions within the movement, will be presented. As will be shown, disappointed about what their protests had achieved, many

¹ Federation of Agricultural Producers of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley: See chapter 5 for further details.

² As described in Chapter 5, the demands of the cocaleros of the Upper Huallaga (of which the Fósforo district was part) included the cessation of the forced eradication operations and more state influence in the district.

³ Including the cocaleros of the Fósforo district and the cocalero organizations of the Puno Department.

⁴ Literally Marches of Sacrifice that had taken place in April 2003 and April- May 2004; see Chapter 5 for further details.

⁵ Leader of the *Partido Nacionalista Peruano*: Peruvian Nationalist Party (PNP). During the 2006 national elections Ollanta Humala ran under the UPP-PN (*Unión por el Perú-Partido Nacionalista*) banner in the election because his *Partido Nacionalista Peruano* did not meet the registration deadline.

people after the operation opted to enter programs of alternative development. In the second section of this chapter, Obregón's and Malpartida's attempts to enter the national political arena will be described. Differences between the country's coastal regions and its rural hinterlands with respect to political orientation, showing Peru's ongoing division into two distinct parts, will also be described in this section. It was, in fact, solely due to strong support in cocalero regions that Obregón and Malpartida managed to get elected. In the third section of this chapter, it will be described how Obregón's and Malpartida's primarily led to a new visibility of the cocaleros' problems. Yet only months later, support for Obregón in the Fósforo district had severely decreased, a process that will be described in the final section of this chapter. Meanwhile, the internal power struggle for domination of the national cocalero movement continued. In the Fósforo district, because of increasing internal struggles within the cocalero leadership, fewer people identified with the cocalero identity. Rumors, disputes and quarrels transformed people's perceptions of their national leaders, negatively influencing the number of people who were willing to participate in CONPACCP's organized actions. Only after the old national cocalero leaders were changed, and a new directorate was elected, was the cocalero movement able to continue its struggle. But by that time, the newly elected second García government adopted a radical stance against the country's mobilizations, and refused to participate in any dialogue with the cocaleros.

6.1 Illegal fumigations and forced eradication

6.1. *Illegal fumigations*

In February 2005, the *Asociación de Campesinos Cocaleros y Productores Agropecuarios Saúl Guevara Díaz*,⁶ accused the police forces of using chemical fumigations in an operation against drug trafficking. This police operation was named "Huallaga I" and was mainly directed against maceration pits located in the Frontera Valley. According to an article in the national newspaper *La República*, the police operation was successful and had destroyed 26 cocaine laboratories, 2,650 gallons of kerosene, 682 kilos of oxide calcium, 246 kilos of sulphuric acid, 127 kilos of ammonia, 234 kilos of sodium carbonate, 71 kilos of dried coca leaves and 17,155 kilos of macerated coca leaves.⁷ These quantities seem exorbitant and it wasn't indicated whether these amounts were found in the Frontera Valley alone, in the Fósforo district, in Tocache province, or in the entire Upper Huallaga Valley.

The cocaleros' story about the police operation was different. They proclaimed that on February 10, 2005, police helicopters were flying over the community of Utopía Inca spraying white powder over the coca fields. In March 2000, this kind of aerial fumigation with chemicals had been prohibited in Peru. Eyewitnesses of the illegal fumigation stated that all plants on the fumigated land dried out immediately, not only affecting the coca plants but also coffee, cocoa, and other legal crops. The same day, Esperanza de Frontera was also fumigated. After the fumigations, the local campesinos, including women and children who had been working on their *chacras*, suffered from stomach pains, vomiting, headaches, burning eyes, and diarrhea. Victims arrived in Puerto Mal Abrigo, the only village in the Fósforo district with a health clinic; from there, the affected villagers were transported to a hospital in Tocache. The cocaleros claim that the helicopters' flights continued until February 13, 2005. Fósforo's mayor Nancy Zamora said that the fumigations had continued three days and that the chemicals had poisoned the communal water basin used by Mal Abrigo's population.

⁶ Association of cocalero peasants and agricultural producers *Saúl Guevara Díaz*; Fósforo's local cocalero association.

⁷ See 'Con mamá coca' by Mónica Vecco, *La República*, February 23, 2005. It was stated in this article that these numbers were for the *Policía Nacional del Perú*, and more specifically the division that worked together with DEVIDA.

Two days later, on February 15, 2005, 1,500 cocaleros from the Fósforo district arrived in Tocache carrying documentary evidence of the fumigation. They demanded that the government send a commission to investigate the illegal fumigations, which had contaminated both their crops and their living environment. The district's remoteness made it difficult for the protesting cocaleros to communicate their claims to the national government and press, because their protests were concentrated in the Fósforo district. The cocaleros' accusations didn't reach the national press until Obregón and Malpartida announced that a protest would start in Tingo María. Only then did the national press publish the cocaleros' accusations about illegal fumigations in the Fósforo district. But the national government rejected the cocaleros' demands. As a result, on February 23, the 48-hour regional *paro*⁸ began. The *paro* consisted of blockades and protest marches through Tocache and Tingo María. But, afraid the protests would turn violent, Malpartida promised the *Comision por la Paz y Desarrollo*⁹ in Tingo María not to use the prohibited road blockades. In Tingo, the cocaleros formed a human barricade, sitting on the road to prevent traffic from passing. Afterwards, they marched through Tingo María demonstrating their support for the victims. Malpartida declared that their protests would be followed by protests in cocalero bases in six other departments. But such protests never materialized.

Pedro Bogarín, the regional mayor of Tocache, part of the region's political elite,¹⁰ refused to back the cocaleros' protests. Bogarín stated that there was a connection between the cocalero protest and drug traffickers when he said to a national newspaper: "We are in favor of protecting the environment, but we aren't in favor of drug trafficking. Among these protesting cocaleros you have drug traffickers who incite the population".¹¹ Because of his rejection of the cocaleros' demands, the situation in Tocache became tense. Bogarín demanded more police reinforcements. By then, public life in the town was shut down. Shops and restaurants were closed. The government ordered the arrival of 100 additional police agents of DIROES¹² to stop the cocaleros' road blockades. Police patrols cleaned the streets, removing cement blocks, stones, and burned tires. Obregón declared that their protests were an expression of "civil resistance" against repressive state policies. In a national newspaper, she stated: "The government waits until we arrive in Lima carrying cadavers... What they have done to us is unspeakable: They poisoned our water, they are trying to kill us".¹³ She announced that their protest would continue if the government continued to neglect their demand to send a commission to investigate the fumigation. The situation in Tocache degenerated into complete chaos. Instead of trying to stop the protest, Bogarín started attacked Obregón, declaring that 80 percent of the population was against "Obregón's dictatorship". Bogarín's accusations were followed by articles in the national newspapers accusing Obregón of forcing the cocaleros to participate in the protests. If they refused, they had to pay a \$100 fine.¹⁴ When the violence continued, Bogarín urged the government to declare a state of emergency in the region.

During the protests, the national government and anti-drug agencies refused to negotiate until the cocaleros stopped their protests. On the national level, DEVIDA¹⁵ denied

⁸ Literally "stoppage": Protest method in which whole communities, villages and towns were paralyzed as a result of a stoppage of work and services.

⁹ Literally: Commission for Peace and Development. After the *Comission de Verdad y Reconciliación* these commissions were established in the regions affected by the internal armed conflict to look after the peace and development projects. In the Upper Huallaga, their offices were established in Huánuco and Tingo María.

¹⁰ See Chapter 3; section 3.5.4.

¹¹ "Amenazan de muerte a alcalde de Tocache" El Correo, February 21, 2005.

¹² Dirección de Operaciones Especiales; Police Division of Special Operations.

¹³ "Cocaleros bloquean vías en zonas de la Selva Central" Perú 21, February 24, 2005.

¹⁴ "Con mama coca: Nancy Obregón Peralta, la dirigenta cocalera que tiene llave del Alto Huallaga" by Monica Vecc, La República, February 23, 2005.

¹⁵ Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas. The national drug control commission.

the cocaleros' accusations and stated that neither the police nor DEVIDA used chemicals because every eradication of coca was carried out manually.¹⁶ The Ministry of the Interior confirmed that the police actions had been only directed against the maceration pits. A representative of the Ministry of Agriculture accused the cocaleros of creating a smoke screen with their accusations in order to bring about national legislation permitting the cultivation of coca. The cocaleros' accusations did lead to a political discussion about the failure of alternative development projects among members of the national Congress. But this discussion was dismissed by the head of DEVIDA, who countered that the congress members attempted to transform Peru into a “*narcoestado*” (drug state).

Fósforo's local authorities, including Nancy Zamora, the local *alcaldesa*, and a municipal councilor, travelled to Lima to defend the cocaleros' demands for a high-level commission to be appointed by the national Congress to investigate their charges. They were immediately confronted by photos taken during the police operation, which clearly showed a maceration pit that had been constructed near Mal Abrigo's water reservoir, tapping the necessary water to macerate coca leaves. The municipal councilor stated:

“What did these people do? They put their maceration pit on their neighbor's fields. One of them even managed to use Mal Abrigo's communal water as a drainage for his pit! We looked like fools in Lima trying to defend the cocaleros' rights!”¹⁷

The population was infuriated by the behavior of the pit's owner, which led to a violent retaliation against him, as one cocalero described:

“The guy is a goddamned idiot, constructing pits close to the village and *chacras* that don't belong to him. We captured him and gave him three lashes with a whip. He was trembling with fear and pain. We forced him to walk through Mal Abrigo wearing only his shorts. We then threw him in the river, after which we took him to Mal Abrigo and put him in jail for a day.¹⁸ I think that he learned a valuable lesson....”¹⁹

Because of the presence of *pozas* in the affected area, the government didn't send a commission to investigate the fumigation charges, and also refused to meet the cocaleros' other demands. There was another event that compromised the cocalero protest. On February 27, 2005, Prime Minister Carlos Ferrero, accompanied by the head of DEVIDA, presented a video. On this video, Nancy Obregón was filmed during a cocalero meeting in Mal Abrigo saying: “Directly or indirectly, our coca leaves go to the maceration pits. This is known by the government, the police, the mayors, and by all of us!” The cocalero meeting was filmed by a journalist from Tocache who had been invited to the meeting by Obregón. The journalist sold this material to the government. After the filming, he immediately sought refuge in Lima and accused Obregón of giving orders to kill him. The broadcast of the tape on national television caused a national scandal that turned public opinion against the cocaleros. On February 28, 2005, a day after the telecast of the meeting, the cocalero protests in Tocache stopped. But this wasn't the end of the anti-drug operations that targeted the Fósforo district.

¹⁶ “Presidente de DEVIDA niega tajantemente que policía realize fumigaciones en zonas cocalera” www.mininter.gob.pe February 24, 2005.

¹⁷ Conversation with Maria Teresa, Puerto Mal Abrigo, November 15, 2005.

¹⁸ Room in the office of the *Juez de Paz* where he was guarded by some men.

¹⁹ Conversation with unnamed *rondero*, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 15, 2007.

6.1.2 Forced eradication followed by localized resistance

Three months after these protests, in May 2005, CORAH²⁰ entered the Fósforo district and began a forced eradication operation. The choice to enter the Fósforo district was beyond belief for the cocaleros living in the Fósforo district. As was explained by a government employee working at the DEVIDA²¹ office in Lima where these operations were planned:

“Why did we enter Fósforo? Because coca cultivation increased significantly in this district in recent years.”²²

His argument doesn't explain the particular choice to re-enter the Fósforo district, because this district had already suffered several efforts to curtail coca cultivations, while the quantities of coca cultivations in other cocalero valleys, such as the Apurímac-Ene River Valley²³ at the same time had risen to the levels of coca cultivations in the Upper Huallaga. Coca crops were never eradicated in either the Apurímac-Ene River Valley or the Monzón Valley. When confronted with these facts, the DEVIDA employee admitted that coca cultivation was on the rise in all cocalero valleys, mainly because of Plan Colombia (1998) and the Andean Regional Initiative (2001). Only then did he explain the rationale behind the anti-drug agencies' choice of which regions to enter. For example, CORAH forces couldn't enter the Monzón because of high “social costs” (meaning the high level of casualties among the police) that such an operation would entail. The DEVIDA employee believed that the cocaleros of the Monzón and the Apurímac-Ene River Valley would take drastic and violent measures to defend their crops, which would result in many casualties among the CORAH troops.

The vision surely had its foundation, as from previous experiences DEVIDA knew that any attempt by state forces to enter the Monzón had met with violent resistance from the local cocaleros. The Monzón's cocaleros had a reputation for violently responding to governmental measures. In 2005, attempts to search for stolen cars in the region were carried out by employing helicopter reconnaissance. But the helicopter was fired upon by local citizens because it was interpreted by the population as an attempt to undertake an eradication of coca crops. As described in the previous chapter, the Monzón's cocaleros forced drug traffickers to pay a contribution to the cocalero association, which was believed to be used to buy weapons to fight the police troops and CORAH forces that were entering the valley. The Monzón installed a *narcoestado* within Peruvian territory, where state presence was totally driven out. In contrast, Mal Abrigo's geographical location on the *Carretera Marginal*, made it impossible for local drug traffickers and cocaleros to control all traffic passing and entering the district. The residents of Mal Abrigo also did not want to establish a blockade, because they had demanded greater state presence in their region and negotiations with the government, apparent through the demands they had previously made of the national government and continuing participation in CONPACCP. It was, paradoxically, this openness

²⁰ *Control y Reducción del Cultivo de la Coca en el Alto Huallaga*: Special Project for the Control and Eradication of Coca in the Upper Huallaga. Agency in charge of the eradication of the coca fields within Law 22095 (see Chapter 2).

²¹ *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas*: The national drug control commission.

²² Conversation with the man in charge of *Dirección de Control de la Oferta*, DEVIDA, October 10, 2005.

²³ Although the level of coca cultivation until 2008 never surpassed the amount of coca produced in the Upper Huallaga. Something strange occurs in national and international statistics. While, when speaking about the *social* changes in the largest cocalero regions, the Monzón was never said to be included in the Upper Huallaga. At the same time, when measuring the amount of coca produced in these regions, the Monzón was included in the statistics of the Upper Huallaga. Therefore the Apurímac-Ene River Valley never surpassed the amounts of coca produced in the Upper Huallaga; the added amounts of coca produced in the Monzón Valley made the difference. In the Fósforo district something similar happens with the coca amounts produced in the Ongón valley. The Ongón valley is located in La Libertad department but, when measuring the coca amount cultivated in the Fósforo district, the amounts cultivated in the Ongón is added to this number.

to the involvement of the national government that made them more vulnerable to forced eradication operations.

On May 28, 2005 CORAH troops accompanied by the DIRANDRO²⁴ police, first entered the community of 3 de Diciembre, arriving with *toco-tocos*²⁵ and constructing their camp on a hillside. In contrast to the mass mobilizations in 2001,²⁶ disorder and separations in the local cocalero association resulted in protests against this first entrance being of rather short duration. The accompanying police forces entered the *chacras* without regard for the rights of the residents of the area. As one local cocalera recalled:

“We were just standing here,²⁷ when they started to beat us with poles and threw tear gas canisters at us. My brother-in-law wanted to stop them but they shouted, ‘You old bastard!’ and beat him up pretty bad. He was left lying on that spot. We were pleading with them to stop, even my old mother-in-law. They responded: ‘Get the fuck out of here, old lady! Go home!’ Totally lacking respect. They made her kneel and hit her in the face with a stick.”²⁸

Legally, CORAH and DIRANDRO troops were only allowed to enter the *chakras* and it was forbidden to enter the campesinos’ houses during forced eradication operations. But in 3 de Diciembre, these rules were disregarded and the police destroyed the campesinos’ personal belongings. These practices resulted in confrontations between the community’s inhabitants and the police, resulting in two wounded villagers.

On the afternoon of May 28, 2005, the inhabitants of 3 de Diciembre arrived in Puerto Mal Abrigo because the police forced them to leave their community by firing tear gas canisters. One cocalero from Mal Abrigo described the scene:

“The police fired in order to be sure they left. People fled to the jungle. When they arrived in Puerto Mal Abrigo, they were all crying: Men, women and children alike...”²⁹

After these occurrences in 3 de Diciembre, the population of Mal Abrigo and other nearby communities organized a march against these police abuses. The next day, the cocaleros, headed by the local mayor, marched to the community of 3 de Diciembre to demand that residents be allowed to return to their houses without being attacked. One cocalero recounted what happened next:

“When we were 15 to 20 meters away from entering the community, the police started firing bullets. [...] There were policemen everywhere, shooting at everybody who was moving!”³⁰

The DIRANDRO police forces, afraid that the cocaleros would attack their temporary camp, forcibly prevented the men from entering the community. During the confrontation that

²⁴ DIRANDRO, Dirección antidrogas de policía nacional de Perú: Peru’s anti-drug police.

²⁵ In this part of the Upper Huallaga a helicopter was referred to as a “*toco-toco*”. This term is a legacy of the internal armed conflict, when it was used to indicate the entrance of the military into particular communities. Some people explained that the name was acquired because of the sound the helicopters’ propeller blades, “Listen, you hear *toco-toco-toco-toco*”, as one local woman explained when a helicopter flew over Mal Abrigo. This sound, which had previously been associated with government action during the internal conflict, continued to have grim associations in the post-conflict period, when it usually heralded the arrival of the CORAH troops or police forces.

²⁶ See Chapter 4.

²⁷ Pointed at a spot on her *chacra*, which was totally cleared.

²⁸ Conversation with unnamed cocalera, 3 de Diciembre, October 15, 2005.

²⁹ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Puerto Mal Abrigo, October 16, 2005.

³⁰ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Puerto Mal Abrigo, October 10, 2005.

followed, the police had shot directly at the bodies of the men, leaving several wounded. One local cocalero leader said:

“When the cocaleros didn’t back away, they fired plastic bullets that burned your skin and left a white residue on it. One of our *compañeros* was hit by one of the DIRANDRO men in the face....and today he has no vision in one of his eyes... They noticed that these bullets couldn’t stop the cocaleros, and started firing directly at people...this time with real bullets!”³¹

During these confrontations, a *peón*, not engaged in the confrontation but working on a *chacra* close by, was hit by a bullet that fractured his skull.

The violence in 3 de Diciembre lasted five days, during which the population of 3 de Diciembre, the local mayor and cocaleros from other nearby communities were constantly at risk of being fired upon by the police. After these five days, the cocaleros managed to stop the forced eradication in 3 de Diciembre. But this cessation was part of a larger strategy on the part of CORAH, which moved its forces from one community to another within the Fósforo district throughout this operation.³² Consequently, the localized cocalero protest hadn’t been able to stop the continuation of the operation. After the first violent confrontation in 3 de Diciembre, many people, frightened by the police actions, refrained from participating in actions protesting forced eradication operations. As a result, after these violent confrontations CORAH and police met with little resistance on the part of the population.³³ It was only when CORAH and DIRANDRO troops entered the Frontera Valley on August 11, 2005, that there were renewed violent confrontations between the police and the cocaleros. As was the case in 3 de Diciembre, these Frontera communities, including Utopia Inca and Esperanza de Frontera, were totally dependent on coca cultivation. Consequently, some cocaleros were not willing to surrender without a fight. Even before CORAH’s entrance, the local *faenas*³⁴ concentrated on planning resistance against the upcoming eradication. Small groups of men were in charge of bringing stones to strategic locations to prevent DIRANDRO³⁵ helicopters from entering the valley. But morale among the local cocaleros was low because they were disappointed about what they had been able to achieve through participating in CONPACCP.³⁶ Instead of organizing the resistance, the majority of the men in these communities concentrated on clearing and harvesting their *chacras*. Fósforo’s mayor explained:

“They started to clear their *chacras* and prepared for the harvest. The *chacras* in Esperanza had been covered by the jungle because this whole community participated in the cocalero protests. By participating, they lost time during which they could have planned their actions against the upcoming eradication.”³⁷

As a result, when CORAH and DIRANDRO troops entered the Frontera valley, only individuals were engaged in small-scale sabotage and ambushes. DIRANDRO police and

³¹ Conversation with Alfonso Reyes Coca, Puerto Mal Abrigo, November 18, 2005.

³² By quickly moving from community to community, CORAH was able to disperse and confuse the protesters.

³³ For example: When the forced eradication operation entered the area of Alto Mal Abrigo, a base of the *Saúl Guevara Díaz* organization, there was they confronted by only a minimal number of protesters.

³⁴ “Community service” before the forced eradication entered the district had been concentrated on the clearing of jungle paths, as well as the coordination of activities contributing to the community’s development.

³⁵ DIRANDRO, Dirección antidrogas de policía nacional de Perú: Peru’s anti-drug police.

³⁶ Confederación Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios de las Cuencas Cocaleras de Perú: National confederation of agricultural producers of the cocalero regions of Peru.

³⁷ Interview with local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora, November 21, 2005.

CORAH entered the *chacras* surrounding Utopía Inca, where police entering local *chacras* were fired upon by snipers who had taken up positions in the surrounding mountains.

These actions inflicted only slight damage on the police forces, but they did lead to violent reprisals on the part of the police. The police responded by flying over the valley with a helicopter and firing randomly at the villagers below. After the attack against CORAH personnel in Utopía Inca, the CORAH commander in charge of the operation refused to respect the inhabitants' legal ENACO receipts.³⁸ In contrast to 3 de Diciembre, legal receipts of coca sold to ENACO were no longer respected. Some landholders responded to such measures by booby-traps on their *chacras*.³⁹ Rumors grew in Puerto Mal Abrigo that on August 26, 2005, several of the eradicators were wounded by these hidden explosives in the community of Utopía Inca. Obregón and another cocalero from Santa María de Frontera were accused of having set booby traps. But when the police actually entered the village, Obregón was nowhere to be found and could not be taken into custody.⁴⁰



Picture 13 An eradicated chacra in Utopía Inca

When, after these occurrences, the DIRANDRO police and CORAH entered Esperanza de Frontera, they immediately used violent methods because they thought that it had been the local cocalero leader who had organized the first shooting in Utopía Inca. When residents of the village threw stones at helicopters that attempted to land in their community, the antidrug

³⁸ Empresa Nacional de la Coca: state entity charged with the authorization to buy and sell legal coca. In 3 de Diciembre, the amounts of coca the cocaleros brought to this state agency were respected. For example, if the cocalero had brought two *arrobas* to ENACO and he could show an ENACO receipt for this amount, the coca plants necessary to harvest two *arrobas* of coca leaves were not eradicated.

³⁹ Interview with unnamed local cocalero leader, November 23, 2005.

⁴⁰ This all took place during the festivities of the community's *Virgencita Santa María*, August 30. Many cocaleros refrained from going to the festivities because there were rumors that the police would enter the village the same night. Nancy Obregón called me in Puerto Mal Abrigo asking me to come to her village, but I was warned by Mal Abrigo's inhabitants not to go, because the entrance of the police could lead to a escalation of violence. When I went to Santa María the next day, Obregón wasn't in her house and couldn't be found in Santa María de Frontera.

forces responded by firing on the crowds of stone throwers. Several people were wounded, and the resistance rapidly subsided.⁴¹ These events took place when Obregón and Malpartida were meeting with the cocaleros of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley on the Pampa de la Quinua (September 26-30, 2005). Esperanza de Frontera had been one of those communities where the whole population had participated in CONPACCP's actions. The local mayor, Nancy Zamora, later said:

“Esperanza was the center of the cocalero movement, but it was hit hard. [...] The people of Esperanza were escaping to the jungle after several confrontations with the police.”⁴²

In this community, CORAH and DIRANDRO illegally entered the inhabitants' houses to search for chemicals used for cocaine, and for weapons and ammunition. For several of the community's leaders, the CORAH's operation posed a special danger because of their history as former guerrilla fighters. The police searched Molotov's house, where they found books about coca cultivation and alternative development, and a summary of Shining Path's fifth national congress. They confiscated the books but couldn't arrest Molotov because he had already fled into the jungle to avoid being found by the police.

Another big shock occurred when the residents of Esperanza saw familiar people.⁴³ The fact that such former residents were participating in the forced eradication had a strong emotional impact on many of the residents. In the words of Nancy Zamora:

“The villagers saw men among the CORAH forces who had been living in their community. To make matters worst, Esperanza's people then noticed there had been former *soplones*⁴⁴ among them. Just imagine: The same man you hired a week ago to help on your *chacra* is standing among the eradicators. CORAH knew everything; who was working in the maceration pits, where these pits were located, how much coca was being cultivated, which *chacra* belonged to a cocalero, and so on, and so on...People could not deny anything....”⁴⁵

Not even the resistance of Esperanza's cocaleros could prevent CORAH from entering and eradicating the coca plants. But many cocaleros in other areas of the Fósforo district reacted differently.

6.1.3 Confusion and the failed “weapons of the weak”

In the wake of the confrontations in 3 de Diciembre, the fear of getting wounded or even killed severely weakened morale among Fósforo's cocaleros. Following the first confrontations in 3 de Diciembre on May 28, 2005, CORAH forces entered Alto Mal Abrigo. Because of the absence of support from different cocalero communities, Alto Mal Abrigo's population looked on helplessly as CORAH workers began to manually uproot their coca plants. The inhabitants decided not to resist as long the CORAH respected their legal ENACO⁴⁶ receipts. Alto Mal Abrigo's cocaleros only had to demonstrate legal receipts for

⁴¹ Conversation with different cocaleros, Esperanza de Frontera, November 19, 2005.

⁴² Interview with local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora, November 21, 2005.

⁴³ They saw people standing among the CORAH forces whom they recognized as former residents of their village. These people had been working as temporary *peones* in the community.

⁴⁴ Literally: Traitors. In the community of Nuevo Vista, the same rumors arose when a so-called *soplón* showed CORAH forces the location of a maceration pit, and subsequently disappeared. People began to speculate as to how much money the CORAH forces had offered him to make him risk his life.

⁴⁵ Interview with local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora, November 21, 2005.

⁴⁶ *Empresa Nacional de la Coca*: state entity charged with the authorization to buy and sell legal coca.

2005, and were left with the quotas of coca that they regularly sent to ENACO. CORAH personnel estimated how many coca plants on the *chacra* were needed in order to yield the weight of coca leaves needed to meet their ENACO quota, and that portion of the chacra was left undisturbed. Women and children, pleading with the CORAH personnel to leave more than the ENACO quota, were ignored. CORAH did respect the cocaleros' legal amounts, at least before the shooting in Utopía Inca had taken place. Yet there were exceptions. For example: The eradicators were given orders to eradicate all coca on the *chacra* of the Paredes family, even though they regularly brought coca to the ENACO office in Mal Abrigo. Their two sons had been seen during the confrontation in 3 de Diciembre and were even accused of organizing the resistance there against the forced eradication. The family resented the members of the local cocalero association because nobody helped them resist the total eradication of their coca, even though the family had always participated in the cocalero protests. From the day that their field was eradicated, the two Paredes sons refrained from any participation in the local cocalero association. Because of the absence of any resistance, the forced eradication in Alto Mal Abrigo only took one day. This caused growing numbers of people to believe that it was better to let CORAH forces accomplish the forced eradication operation, so that they could re-plant coca as soon as they left the village.

Another practice began to be seen with increasing frequency, a practice which can be seen in the light of Scott's (1986) expression "weapons of the weak". To avoid a total eradication of their *chacras*, people whose fields hadn't been eradicated yet started to gather their coca and brought large amounts to ENACO's office in Puerto Mal Abrigo, in an attempt to salvage at least some part of their harvest. Alfonso Reyes Coca (alias *Pepa*), in charge of the ENACO office in Mal Abrigo, decided to cheat the legal system. He began to transport larger quantities of coca to the central ENACO office in Tingo, making the trip there nearly every week.⁴⁷ Having a legal receipt from ENACO was thought by numerous families to be one way of escaping total eradication. But *Pepa*'s efforts were unsuccessful. Becoming aware of this practice, CORAH workers began to demand receipts for the years 2003, 2004 and 2005 in order to corroborate whether the legally sold quantities were consistent over time. In the majority of cases, the coca amount before eradication was considerably lower than the amounts that were now being submitted. It was only when there was substantial evidence that fraud was not being perpetrated that these residents were able to avoid eradication.

At the same time, there began to arise a growing confusion, mostly in the group that had regularly gathered part of their coca for ENACO, even before the forced eradication operation. Nancy Zamora explained this confusion:

"The cocalero leaders said that everyone that was registered at ENACO would save their coca from eradication, but this was a lie. Do you know why? When I started visiting different state institutions involved in the war on drugs, they were very clear. They said: 'Mayor, the day the eradication starts, whether someone is registered at ENACO or not, we are going to eradicate'. But the cocalero leaders repeatedly said that the cocaleros who were registered at ENACO didn't have anything to worry about, because their coca would be saved...."⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Because the agreement made between the cocaleros of the Fósforo district and the previous head of ENACO (Nils Ericsson) was only an oral accord and was never included in the registration of ENACO, no further restrictions on the amounts the cocalero could bring to ENACO were ever instituted. When the forced eradication operations entered the Fósforo district, people who had never brought coca to ENACO and those who had only brought small amounts, just started to sell more to ENACO, thereby trying to save some of their coca plants.

⁴⁸ Interview local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora, November 21, 2005.

The majority of Fósforo's cocaleros sold only small quantities of their coca legally, for example 6-10 kilos of the 60-80 *arrobas*⁴⁹ that they harvested per hectare of land. Many cocaleros began bringing increasing quantities of coca to ENACO, thinking that this would result in their being considered "legal cocaleros" by the authorities. But, as seen before, the establishment of a local ENACO office was only an agreement between the *Saúl Guevara Díaz* organization and a director of ENACO, and was never officially sanctioned. The law stated that only the cocaleros who had been registered with ENACO in 1978 were considered legal. No cocalero in the Fósforo district, even if he sold his whole harvest to ENACO, was ever a "legal cocalero" according to Peruvian law.

After the first wave of forced eradication temporarily withdrew from the Fósforo district, the cocalero leaders of *Saúl Guevara Díaz* changed the position of the association. They opposed defending the cocaleros who cultivated coca for the illegal market.⁵⁰ The cocalero association hereafter only included those who were registered with ENACO, and who sold to this government entity. The people who were not registered (the majority of whom were recent migrants and small-scale cocaleros) were no longer included in the association and became considered, even by the local cocalero association, "illegal cocaleros". This change in the association's position created a system that only defended the large-scale cocaleros, who were able to sell quantities to ENACO without losing a great deal of profit. On the other hand, it rejected the families with small *chacras*, who were really dependent on coca cultivation for their livelihood. These small-scale campesinos constituted the majority of the population in the Fósforo district. Previously, *Saúl Guevara Díaz* had depended on these "illegal cocaleros" during their marches and protests, because small-scale cocaleros particularly had been willing to participate in the protests. For the cocalero leadership, it had been important that "the masses" participate in the protests. But, in reality, the majority of the cocaleros who took part in protests were in fact small-scale illegal cocaleros, *peones* and *jornaleros*. A local cocalero leader said:

"When they call a *paro*,⁵¹ who participates? The so-called illegal cocaleros, because nothing can be achieved with only a small group of legal cocaleros. When they organized the strike in Tocache, who participated? The illegal cocaleros who weren't associated in the ENACO. The majority of the legal associates of *Saúl Guevara Díaz* stayed on their *chacra* and worked, while the illegal ones were beaten by the police."⁵²

During the cocalero actions that I witnessed (including the *Marcha de Sacrificio* 2004, and other local and regional *paros*), I noticed that some large-scale cocaleros did not participate in the marches and *paros* but paid one of their *peones* to participate. The small-scale cocaleros who joined the protests often found their *chacras* abandoned when they returned, and many of them lost at least one harvest. Many families depending on small-scale coca cultivation felt obliged to send at least one family member to participate in the protests, often their adolescent sons. Given that the demands of the cocaleros never were met, and the fact that the sacrifices they had endured were so great, many felt that their actions had been in vain.

During the forced eradication operation, the DIRANDRO⁵³ policemen who accompanied CORAH began to explain to some cocaleros that they should not replant their fields right away. The policemen said that the eradication operation would return to the

⁴⁹ One arroba equals 12 kilos. Thus 60 arrobas would 720 kilos and 80 arrobas 960 kilos. During several conversations with different cocaleros, they stated that these quantities were a normal yield for 1 hectare of coca in the Upper Huallaga.

⁵⁰ This was a strange change as the large majority of cocaleros of the district cultivated for the illegal market.

⁵¹ Literally "stoppage": Protest method in which whole communities, villages and towns were paralyzed as a result of a stoppage of work and services.

⁵² Conversation with President of association *Cerro Azul*, Puerto Soledad, November 23, 2005.

⁵³ Dirección antidrogas de policía nacional de Perú: Peru's anti-drug police.

district in several weeks to see whether the cocaleros had replanted, a practice that in fact has continued until present time. Ignoring these comments, the majority of cocaleros replanted their *chacras* as soon as the CORAH forces left the district. But after several months had passed, the CORAH did in fact return to eradicate the newly planted *malqui*.⁵⁴ The quantities of coca that cocaleros brought to ENACO were not taken into account in this process. Cocaleros who had re-planted were left with nothing. *Malqui*, seeds and plants became scarce, causing their prices to skyrocket.

The devastating consequences of the first eradication operation soon became visible. After the forced eradication Mal Abrigo, which had been a lively village, became a ghost town. Those working in the illegal industry disappeared. Cocaleros with large *cocales* left to establish a *chacra* in another community. Cocaleros who had saved some money returned to their places of origin. Only those without money, and old *colonos* who thought of the Fósforo district as their home, stayed behind in desperation, living from hand to mouth and trying to make ends meet. The morale of cocaleros in the Fósforo district was at an all-time low. Those who were left behind received no support from cocaleros in other regions, and were ignored by human rights organizations, political parties and the national press.

6.1.4 Resentment and scapegoats

While the forced eradication operation in the Fósforo district was taking place, government officials launched a slander campaign against the cocaleros, publicly accusing them of ties to Shining Path or to drug traffickers. Some days after the confrontations in 3 de Diciembre, the Minister of the Interior declared that several policemen were injured during violent confrontations with the cocaleros, who, he said, defended their *chacras* with guns.⁵⁵ Several national newspapers published articles in which it was argued that the cocaleros' actions had been supported by other illegal forces, including Shining Path and drug traffickers, who urged the cocaleros to use violence during their protests. Nancy Obregón said:

“There is no alliance with the *mafia*⁵⁶ or Shining Path. We did have large sticks and stones but we weren’t the ones fighting with guns! The television networks don’t broadcast this reality. We now have 33 wounded because of the police bullets. Many of the affected cocaleros were harassed because they didn’t let them eradicate their *chacras* easily, because they didn’t let them invade and ransack their homes, because they defended our rights. But now they are criminals!”⁵⁷

The cocaleros stated that their version of the events never appeared in the national press. The national press published articles stating that the cocaleros leaders had exaggerated the numbers of villagers wounded, while highlighting the casualties suffered by DIRANDRO.⁵⁸

In the Fósforo district, the situation began to resemble the time after the coca bust in 1995, when the state had closed the door on negotiations. As in the late 1990’s, the state refused to start alternative development programs. The department’s regional authorities ignored the victims of police repression during the forced eradication operation. Tocache’s *Defensor del Pueblo*⁵⁹ didn’t investigate the cocaleros’ accusations of human rights abuses

⁵⁴ Term used for coca seedlings of approximately two to three months old.

⁵⁵ Although this statement was partially true, as the police had been shot at in Utopía Inca, however, this violent reaction was the only incident and, during this attack, nobody was injured.

⁵⁶ Term used for drug traffickers.

⁵⁷ Conversation with Nancy Obregón, Tingo María, July 6, 2005.

⁵⁸ DIRANDRO, Dirección antidrogas de policía nacional de Perú: Peru’s anti-drug police.

⁵⁹ Public prosecutor.

during the forced eradication operation. The Red Cross was the only organization that offered some sort of limited support for the victims, as Nancy Zamora remembered;

“After some pleading, I was able to convince the Red Cross to take care of the three wounded men. The Red Cross made it clear that they were making an exception for these three men because their policy didn’t allow them to help cocaleros who were wounded in confrontations with the police...They only help victims of the guerrillas....”⁶⁰

The population began to think that the forced eradication operation had a political goal and was used to cause division among the cocalero association. According to the population, the eradication campaign entered the Fósforo district because it was the home of one of the most important cocalero leader, Nancy Obregón. According to the local population, another objective of the operation was to prevent the association from planning protests against the struggling Toledo government, which in 2004-2005 experienced a severe decline in popularity.⁶¹ As we saw in the previous chapter, before the forced eradication entered the district, Fósforo’s cocalero association played an important role in the national cocaleros’ *Marchas de Sacrificio*, and became an important base for CONPACCP. The eradication operation was thought to be another instrument used by the government to frustrate the cocalero movement.

After the forced eradication operation, Fósforo’s cocaleros also resented the attitude of the other cocalero regions that had re-joined CONPACCP on August 10, 2005, but that still had not participated in any of the cocalero protests.⁶² These cocalero regions did not comply with the *Pacto de Caballeros*.⁶³ Nancy Zamora said:

“There were immense struggles within CONPACCP. Before, the leaders of different regions had made a pact that stated: When a coca plant was eradicated in one of the associated cocalero regions, all fourteen Peruvian cocalero regions would go on an indefinite strike. But nothing happened. [...] My people, who had gone to every one of these marches and protests, have been completely forgotten by the others.”⁶⁴

While the forced eradication campaign repeatedly returned to the Fósforo district, Obregón participated in the fourth national congress of CONPACCP⁶⁵ to celebrate the recent reunification with the cocaleros of the FEPAVRAE.⁶⁶ During one of her speeches, Obregón declared:

“How many cocaleros went to jail during the last *Marcha de Sacrificio*; how many cocaleros have gone to prison during our recent protests? We have had 140 people arrested recently in the Upper Huallaga.⁶⁷ How many wounded have we had in our

⁶⁰ Interview with local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora, November 22, 2005.

⁶¹ Because of his inability to effectively cope with the increasing protests, President Toledo’s popularity rapidly descended, with polls in 2004-2005 indicated that the population’s approval for his government stayed close to a meager 6% of the population. Adding to the trouble, the government was consistently rocked by scandals and resignations of ministers. Captured in an uneasy situation, Toledo kept on dismissing and reforming his cabinet, not allowing the congress to form stable policies.

⁶² As seen above, the only cocalero region that organized protests was Tingo María.

⁶³ Literally: A “Gentlemen’s Agreement.” Agreement made between the cocalero leaders of different regions calling for a national strike if the government re-started forced eradication in one of the associated cocalero regions.

⁶⁴ Interview with local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora, November 22, 2005.

⁶⁵ Taking place on September 26-30, 2005 on the Pampa de la Quinua (Ayacucho department),

⁶⁶ *Federación de Productores Agropecuarios del Valle del Río Apurímac y Ene* (Federation of Agricultural Producers of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley).

⁶⁷ All arrested during the cocalero protests against the forced eradication.

valley recently? We have three wounded and the other cocaleros live in extreme poverty. At this moment, nobody is helping them. They started to fumigate our crops and we held a big protest, an indefinite strike starting on June 27, 2005. There were more than 14 days of protests and, during these times, Elsa Malpartida and the association of the Upper Huallaga were looking after our wounded. Who has helped us? The International Red Cross.... Our members couldn't work for months, our *chacras* are abandoned, all the men and women of my region were picking up stones and seeking refuge in the hills. We had to hide ourselves very carefully, and we had to defend ourselves with our slingshots, but we couldn't prevent them from carrying out their eradication.”⁶⁸

Her statement can be seen as an outpouring of rage on behalf of those who continued to participate in the cocalero protests, and who had suffered the consequences of doing so.

After the eradication operation, large numbers of Fósforo's cocaleros withdrew their support from CONPACCP. At the same time, the forced eradication operations also severely affected the local cocalero association and weakened the social bonds among community members. People started to look for a scapegoat, someone to blame for their misery. Among the residents of the district, it became a common practice to blame Obregón. People began to say that she had known about the eradication operation beforehand, and that she had made a deal with the government to rescue her own *chacra*. Another rumor was that Obregón, knowing that forced eradication was coming, started to gather large amounts of coca (according to some as much as 40 to 50 *arrobas*)⁶⁹ to sell to ENACO, and had prevented her whole *chacra* from being eradicated. This rumor appeared to be at least partially true. Obregón was one of those cocaleros who brought large quantities of coca leaf to ENACO. But she had urged the other cocaleros to follow her example; some did, and some did not. Another frequent criticism gained currency during her candidacy for the national Congress during the 2006 national elections; that she used the cocalero association to gain personal fame at the national level. Negative sentiment toward Obregón led to violence on one occasion in Santa María. On November 16, 2006, a cocalero who had been drinking all day in Santa María went to Obregón's house and attempted to stab her with the jagged edge of a broken beer bottle. As eyewitnesses of the event remembered, Obregón just stood there, trembling, her face turning white, waiting for some people to help her. The spectators only watched from a distance and nobody offered a helping hand.⁷⁰ After this incident, Obregón hardly left her house, refused to organize local meetings, and was only occasionally seen in Puerto Mal Abrigo. Her opponents commented that everybody who lived in the Upper Huallaga knew one rule: “Those who betray the village will die”.

Another example of the population's anger toward the cocalero leaders was the case of Alfonso Reyes Coca (alias *Pepa*). Ironically, he was the man who tried to help campesinos to prevent the total eradication of their *chacras* by bringing the coca leaves to the ENACO office in Tingo María. *Pepa* was involved in the cocalero association for five years, and had always held some position of importance. He was present during the negotiations with the government and had organized the people from the Fósforo district during the *Marchas de Sacrificio*. But during these five years, he had never received any payment for his work, transporting the legal coca leaves to ENACO in Tingo María. *Pepa* once admitted that he felt ashamed to enter his house because everything in it was paid for by his wife, and because he was frequently absent when something happened to his children. By September 2006, his vivacious family had turned into quiet people, who were not often seen in the streets of Puerto

⁶⁸ Speech during meeting International Festival in Pichari, Nancy Obregón, August 10, 2005.

⁶⁹ One *arroba* equals 12 kilos.

⁷⁰ Conversation with several eyewitnesses of the event in Santa María de Frontera, November 18, 2005.

Mal Abrigo. I decided to visit their house. In an emotional conversation with María Teresa, *Pepa*'s wife, she started to cry and whispered:

“These people are so ignorant! I feel ashamed to live in this village.”⁷¹

She explained that when she was walking on the streets of Puerto Mal Abrigo people would comment, behind her back, that she had constructed her new house with the money *Pepa* received from the CORAH.⁷² According to those who made these comments, *Pepa* had been secretly working for CORAH and informed CORAH forces about the locations of the *chacras* of the cocaleros. Several times, her two sons and daughter were called traitors and came home crying. Drunkards would pass their house at night shouting that they were going to kill “the traitor that had sold out the village”. During the conversation, *Pepa* entered the house and, with the sadness visible in his eyes, he said, “Here, your life isn't worth anything”. This comment appeared to suggest that he took the threats seriously. *Pepa* wanted to resign from his position with the local cocalero association. *Pepa*'s situation was a perfect example of the weakening social relations that affected life in the district after the forced eradication.

When these rumors about the betrayal of Obregón spread throughout the Upper Huallaga, the situation became even grimmer. In Mal Abrigo, rumors arose that Ibúrcio Morales⁷³ had promised a large amount of money to the guerrilla leader “Artemio” to kill Obregón and Malpartida, who had “betrayed” the cocaleros. Pamphlets with the phrase: “*Muerte a los Traidores*” (“Death to Traitors”), which included pictures of the two women, had been distributed throughout the Upper Huallaga Valley. Nevertheless, for a long time, Obregón refused to resign from her leadership of *Saúl Guevara Díaz*. But during the fourth national congress, she opted not to run for re-election as CONPACCP's national vice-president.

6.1.5 The local defeat: Rising participation in alternative development

In the Fósforo district, the forced eradication operation led to one more change that had a significant impact upon the cocalero association. Months passed after the first forced eradication before any projects aimed at alleviating the population's poverty and suffering were launched. Agricultural planning experts proposing projects of alternative development only entered the district several months after the forced eradication operation. When the agricultural planning experts initially entered the district, they visited the community of Cedro. No trouble occurred when the agricultural planning experts came to Cedro because these campesinos never cultivated large quantities of coca. For years, the local campesinos had mainly cultivated plantains and cocoa, which they sold for low prices to middlemen in Tocache. In Cedro, there were only insignificant quantities of coca. Because the local campesinos had never been totally dependent on coca cultivation, and because, by launching the alternative development project, they would receive a fixed amount of money monthly, they eagerly cooperated with the agricultural planning experts.

To understand the events in the rest of the Fósforo district, it should be noted that, even before the forced eradication entered the Fósforo district, there had been internal dissension within the local cocalero association. Because of important differences between local community leaders and the cocalero leaders of *Saúl Guevara Díaz*, the population of Puerto Soledad had in May 2004 created an autonomous cocalero association named *Cerro Azul*. There were two communities that had followed the example of the association *Cerro*

⁷¹ Conversation with María Teresa, Puerto Mal Abrigo, September 29, 2006.

⁷² *Control y Reducción del Cultivo de la Coca en el Alto Huallaga*: Special Project for the Control and Eradication of Coca in the Upper Huallaga. Agency in charge of the eradication of the coca fields within Law 22095 (see Chapter 2).

⁷³ The cocalero leader of the Monzón valley: One of Obregón's main critics.

Azul, and organized their own local association. In contrast to 3 de Diciembre and Esperanza de Frontera,⁷⁴ these communities with autonomous associations were located on soils suitable for alternative development. For example, some campesinos from Puerto Soledad owned large flat fields suitable for cattle ranching. These differences between communities with respect to soil and geographical location⁷⁵ contributed to disorganization in the *Saúl Guevara Díaz* association. The cocaleros associated with *Cerro Azul* were willing to negotiate with the government about alternative development projects. Yet, because three cocalero communities had withdrawn from *Saúl Guevara Díaz* the government refused to accept this organization as a negotiating partner. Meanwhile, the other new associations⁷⁶ had adopted a more pragmatic stance on issues such as alternative development, and had agreed to negotiations with the state.

But in contrast to Cedro, in Puerto Soledad the appearance of the agricultural planning experts met with resistance and even an attempt to eject them from the community. This resistance was not organized by the local population of this community. The treasurer of *Cerro Azul* remembered:

“We invited agricultural planning experts of the alternative development projects to our community, so the campesinos could listen to their story and decide if they approved of these programs. There was a large group of people in Mal Abrigo who didn’t agree that these people should enter our village, because the cocalero leaders lied to the people that we⁷⁷ had already received money. A group of Mal Abrigo’s men came to Puerto Soledad and wanted to prevent the agricultural planning experts from entering. They awaited the arrival of the agricultural planning experts with machetes and poles. It turned into a violent confrontation. They hit us⁷⁸ with their poles and machetes. Fortunately, nobody was hurt that day.”⁷⁹

The differences between the various associations were strategically exploited by the agricultural planning experts. In the beginning they only entered those communities, where, as in Cedro, coca was only planted in small quantities, and those communities such as *Cerro Azul* in Puerto Soledad, that were involved in associations that had already asked for alternative development prior to the forced eradication. The agricultural planning experts avoided Puerto Mal Abrigo, 3 de Diciembre and the Frontera Valley, where residents were primarily involved in coca cultivation, and which were aligned with *Saúl Guevara Díaz*. As a result, in the communities where a majority of residents were members of *Saúl Guevara Díaz*, including Santa María, the Frontera Valley, Puerto Mal Abrigo, 3 de Diciembre, and Paraíso, no projects of alternative developments were initiated.

In addition, during the implementation of the alternative development projects, it was the communities aligned with *Cerro Azul* that were the beneficiaries of the most extensive development. The communities on the banks of the Huallaga River,⁸⁰ including Puerto Soledad, California and Cedro,⁸¹ signed an accord in 2006 which included the construction of a direct road from Puerto Soledad to Tocache. At that time, the *Carretera Marginal* ran along the Huallaga River’s opposite bank, connecting the villages and communities of the Fósforo

⁷⁴ See Chapter 3.

⁷⁵ Puerto Soledad was located closer to Tocache. As a result, the local campesinos had less problems in bringing the legal products to Tocache.

⁷⁶ *Cerro Azul*, and the association created in Vista Bella, and Buenos Aires.

⁷⁷ The leaders of *Cerro Azul*.

⁷⁸ The leaders of *Cerro Azul*.

⁷⁹ Interview with Jésus de Castro, California, August 17, 2007.

⁸⁰ With the most fertile land for legal products.

⁸¹ All communities that produced less coca than the communities aligned with *Saúl Guevara Diaz*.

district with Tocache, but it had to make a large detour. The new road would mean the time to travel from Puerto Soledad to Tocache would be shortened to 15 minutes, instead of the three hours previously required.⁸² The accord for alternative development consisted mainly of the construction of the road to Tocache, but as one campesino said:

“I told them: ‘We can’t eat the road and we have to be able to eat to survive.’ Then they included the hectares of cocoa, coffee and palm trees.”⁸³

The community’s leaders also signed an agreement that only local inhabitants of their communities would be hired for the construction of the road. Once again, the residents of Mal Abrigo were excluded.⁸⁴

In the communities refusing alternative development, forced eradication operations continued to enter the campesinos’ *chacras* unexpectedly, thereby severely curtailing their opportunities to replant coca. As a result, after months of forced eradication, the will to enter the alternative development projects increased because inhabitants felt that they had no other choice. Therefore, starting from October 2007, Fósforo’s inhabitants enrolled en masse in alternative development projects.⁸⁵ This cooperation of numerous campesinos with alternative development had an important consequence for the collective “cocalero identity” in the district. Previously, if I asked a question concerning the cocaleros, inhabitants responded by using the word “we”. But, by October 2007, when I asked the same question, many responded in the “they” form. The local association that previously had managed to organize the whole community had now become reduced to a much smaller group of actual cocaleros who seemed unable to agree among themselves as to which path to follow.

Campesinos participating in the alternative development programs received help cultivating coffee, cocoa or palm trees. Campesinos were said to receive seeds and technical assistance to transition from coca to legal crops. They also received a monthly stipend as an incentive. But according to those accepting alternative development assistance, the largest advantage of this project was the inclusion of a *Program de Titulación de Terrenos Agrícolas* (PTT),⁸⁶ which enabled participants to receive official title to their *chacras*. Additionally, two groups received special attention: Young people and women. The project gave youth in the region a chicken or pig which they could raise and sell.⁸⁷ Women in the local Women’s Club were provided with assistance in setting up and maintaining a community kitchen and bakery, in addition to other forms of assistance.

Critics argued that the alternative development projects were carried out without a thorough investigation of the local soil. According to Cabieses (2005: 25), “The first step for all alternative development strategies required a soil study, a process of economic–ecological planning, and a restructuring of land parcels in a region that has been disorganized by the ongoing colonization process”. But, although the alternative development initiated in the Fósforo district included technical assistance, no such investigation or assistance was started. The problems with projects concentrating on export products, including coffee and cocoa,

⁸² People from Puerto Soledad who wanted to travel to Tocache first had to take a *mototaxi* to Puerto Mal Abrigo and thereafter had to take a *colectivo* (shared taxi) to Tocache.

⁸³ Interview with Jesús de Castro, California, August 17, 2007.

⁸⁴ When the agricultural planning experts first entered the region, they avoided going to Mal Abrigo because the village was seen as centre center of cocalero protests, and because of the presence of numerous of *firmas* and *narcos* in this village.

⁸⁵ Communities like Fósforo, Paraíso, Puerto Soledad, California, Huacahuasi, some people of 3 de Diciembre, Alto Mal Abrigo and even some inhabitants of Mal Abrigo began to cooperate with the agricultural planning experts. But in these communities, in contrast to Puerto Soledad, only agricultural projects were started. This left the communities of Santa María, the Frontera Valley, the majority of Puerto Mal Abrigo, 3 de Diciembre, where the majority still refused any support from the agricultural planning experts.

⁸⁶ Program for the ownership of agricultural fields.

⁸⁷ These projects were concentrated on small businesses but ignored to set-up educational opportunities for these adolescents.

were already clear. In the 1980s, several studies had been conducted about the environmental problem in the Upper Huallaga. Most land isn't fit for extensive agriculture of any kind (see Dourojeanni 1989 in Thoumi 2003: 249). Even at that time, it was argued that "only through an integral development of the jungle, as well as national development for impoverished urban areas in the *Sierra*, the main source of the migrations, can these projects be effective" (Zárate 1990: 51). None of these problems were adequately addressed in the alternative development projects after the forced eradication operations. In 2006-2007 the agricultural planning experts entering the Fósforo district only seemed concerned with the number of participants. Until that time, the projects concentrated on the planting of cocoa, coffee and palm trees, all export products. Although for years, the alternative development programs concentrating on the same products and the same projects in other valleys had largely failed, DEVIDA, the institute that planned both the forced eradication and the alternative development projects, never changed its course. Residents of the Fósforo district were aware of the numerous coffee busts and the expansion of USAID-sponsored cultivations in other regions of Latin America and Asia, a fact which helps explain why most campesinos opted for cocoa, a crop that was thought to be less vulnerable fluctuations in price. But, according to critics of these programs, the cultivation of cocoa was destined to end in failure:

"The zone of the *Selva Alta* is a fragile zone from an ecological viewpoint because in this globalizing world there are three important things: quality, quantity and time to bring the product to market. The products' quantity has to be very high and this can only be achieved with a large-scale economy, on large tracts of land, and through labor-intensive cultivation of the soil. This is not possible with the soils in the *selva alta*."⁸⁸

Previous experiences with alternative development in Bolivia and Peru had demonstrated that the regions located far from potential markets had achieved poor results (Vellinga 2004b: 7).

In the Fósforo district, numerous participants in the alternative development programs admitted that they initially had been impressed by the rise in cocoa prices on the world market in 2007. This price increase was used by the agricultural planning experts as a way of convincing the participants to start cultivating legal crops. Nevertheless, it would take three years before the new cocoa plantations would yield any beans, which made participants think about the real economic advances of these projects. Other important questions that remained unanswered in the Fósforo district had to do with how program participants were supposed to get their products to the market and what export markets would be interested in the project. Part of the problem was thought to have been solved because of the efforts to improve by the construction of a direct route to Tocache, but this did not resolve the difficulty of finding an export market. Because the majority of campesinos in the district only owned a small *chacra* these export products were cultivated on numerous small-scale *minifundias*,⁸⁹ a fact that hindered the campesinos' ability to receive a fair price for his products. How would individual campesinos get a price for their cocoa that would be high enough to keep them from re-planting coca? Several cocaleros stated that the agricultural planning experts told them they had to organize a cooperative to sell their cocoa, coffee or palm oil for the highest possible prices. It was promised that technical assistance would be provided in order to determine which kind of organization would be best for the different crops. But there was no concerted effort made to establish a cooperative.

Previously, small-scale organizations had been carrying out projects of alternative development, which had led to a strong presence of supposed NGOs in Tocache, but most

⁸⁸ Interview with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, October 13, 2005.

⁸⁹ *Minifundias*: small plots of land.

seemed to have been phony organizations that never actually carried out developmental work of any kind. During the most recent project, this all changed. Instead of being carried out by a number of different NGOs the alternative development projects were carried out exclusively by DEVIDA, which is a branch of the Ministry of the Interior and not with the Ministry of Agriculture. In contrast to the cocalero demands, which entailed the supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture in projects of alternative development, the Ministry of Agriculture never assumed any role in the Peruvian war on drugs. For every branch of the alternative development program, different names were used. According to some critics, the names were only used to confuse the campesinos:

“Here we only have one state institute in operation—DEVIDA—but we have small organizations that are helping campesinos. They use different names but they are all financed by DEVIDA with the intention of presenting these projects for the cocaleros with a different name, and these people think ‘it is not DEVIDA, these are NGOs that want to help the campesinos’. In the end, it is all the same: They are lying to the campesinos.”⁹⁰

The numerous names used did confuse the campesinos and none of the participants could name the institute that carried out the alternative development project in their community. DEVIDA worked directly with the regional authorities in Tocache, which as seen in Chapter 3, had no strong presence in the countryside. The financial matters of the alternative development project were supervised by the municipal government in Tocache, which was a fact that was largely unknown by the campesinos cooperating in the projects. In Puerto Soledad, some problems arose when the local men working on the penetration road did not receive their wages on time. When the community authorities went to Tocache to demand that workers be paid on time in order to prevent social unrest, they were surprised when the problem had to be resolved by the regional municipality. The local leaders hadn't previously been aware that the elite regional authority was involved in their local project.

Soon after the start of the projects, rumors arose about the corruption of the government's workers in these projects. Inclusion in the projects began to rely on personal relations and bonds. In Tocache even schoolteachers, trying to pass themselves off as poor *peones*⁹¹ working on the fields of others to survive, entered the alternative development program because of their personal relationships with the agricultural planning experts or Tocache's elite authorities.⁹² They received financial support so that they could buy a *chacra*, even though they had never been involved in agricultural activities. They were eligible to receive a *chacra* with official land ownership papers, which could lead to severe problems in the division of land, an issue that had already created social tensions among the inhabitants (see Chapter 3 and 4).

Many considered the promise of sustainable regional economic recovery to be the biggest fraud of all. Critics argued that most of the money spent in these programs did not even reach the Fósforo district. One expert explained:

“The truth is that the majority of the money spent on these programs stays outside the affected region. They state that only 20% is used for administrative expenses, and the other 80% goes to the affected region, but this is a lie. Why? Because results show that in these regions they don't have people educated to work in these projects. They hire people from outside the region, mainly from Lima. And where do they spend the

⁹⁰ Conversation with Doña Rufina, schoolteacher in Tocache, August 4, 2007.

⁹¹ Journeymen or day laborers.

⁹² Conversation with Doña Rufina, schoolteacher in Tocache, August 4, 2007.

money they earn? In Lima. They don't spend their money in the zone. The international funds for alternative development bring nothing in to the local economy.”⁹³

Even among those who participated in the projects of alternative development, there were those who were skeptical about the project's outcome, which led to deceptive practices:

“Most campesinos don't want to be dependent on coca, but I always said that it is good to have all kinds of crops: To have coca, but to be discreet about it. And, on the other hand, to have our cocoa and coffee *and* receive assistance for alternative development.”⁹⁴

Many participants in the alternative development programs admitted that they had merely changed the location of their coca fields, relocating them to more remote parts of the jungle. It was argued by several participating campesinos that even the agricultural planning experts involved in the projects avoided using the term “*coca cero*” recognizing this would lower the numbers of participants. The agricultural planning experts appeared to understand and accept that the participating campesinos continued to cultivate coca. But in the agreement the participating campesinos had to sign, it was stated that participants in the alternative development project could not cultivate coca and would be arrested if the agricultural planning experts found out that they were doing so.

Meanwhile, in 2006, another important change occurred, which led to cocalero leaders participating in the national congress. As will be argued below, for many inhabitants of the Fósforo district, political participation became their only hope for change.

6.2 The pathway to cocalero politics

6.2.1 Failed attempts to dominate regional politics

An important factor in the success of a social movement is the relationships that leaders are able to establish with local, regional and national political authorities. In the Peruvian cocalero regions, for example, the regional governments in Huánuco and Cusco⁹⁵ supported the cocalero associations. In contrast, Tocache's provincial authorities never aligned themselves with the cocaleros. In Tocache, a regional elite controlled the state institutions (see Chapter 3). As a result of the provincial authorities' lack of support, *Saúl Guevara Díaz*'s first political actions were aimed at gaining control over provincial politics. During the 2002 municipal elections, the cocaleros had thought that they had put an end to the *caciques*⁹⁶ control over provincial politics with Nancy Obregón's election as provincial mayor.⁹⁷ But it was all too evident when Obregón campaigned in Tocache and other urban towns in the province that there continued to be an abiding prejudice against the rural inhabitants. On a number of occasions, urban villagers said that a *serrana*⁹⁸ would never be able to become Tocache's provincial mayor. Obregón described one incident that occurred in the town of Tocache:

⁹³ Interview with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, October 13, 2005.

⁹⁴ Interview with unnamed cocalero, Puerto Soledad, August 15, 2007.

⁹⁵ Both regional governments had at one time during their period supposed a project to legalize the cultivation of coca in these departments.

⁹⁶ Local strongmen.

⁹⁷ She became part of the independent political movement *Nueva Amazonia*, which is based in the whole San Martín department.

⁹⁸ Term used for the *sierra* migrants to the Peruvian jungle. The term generally has a pejorative connotation.

“One day, I was standing on the main square of Tocache and I heard a woman making comments behind my back about my clothes. I can remember what she said: ‘This woman wants to be Tocache’s mayor and she doesn’t even know how to dress...’ because I always wear clothes that are comfortable out in the country. I turned around and saw a woman I had known when she was a prostitute on the streets of Tocache. I asked her: ‘Are you talking to me?’ ‘No, to the air’, she responded. At that moment, I saw that she was standing there with her daughter but I was so angry that I didn’t care and I shouted: ‘Who do you think would make a better mayor: a campesina or a whore?’ After that, I heard the daughter ask her mother; ‘Are you going to let her talk to you that way?’ But the woman had already turned and walked away. It appears that these people have forgotten where their money came from: Coca. To cultivate this plant, we have to work on *chacras*....”⁹⁹

During the campaign, Obregón’s support base was concentrated in the rural areas, while the urban inhabitants for the most part refused to support her candidacy.

But it was in the rural areas where she had made the greatest mistake of her campaign, alienating her cocalero base. For example, many residents of Fósforo’s rural areas were upset that Obregón’s party list of municipal councilors did not include local cocalero leaders, people who were involved in the local cocalero association, or residents of the Fósforo district.¹⁰⁰ Instead, she allied herself with the provincial elite of the town of Tocache. As a result, during the election, Obregón didn’t get the votes from people living in the Fósforo district. A local woman explained her choice not to vote for Obregón:

“Many people supported her campaign. We went from Santa María de Frontera, Puerto Mal Abrigo and even Esperanza de Frontera to Tocache....We took taxis to go to Nancy’s meetings, where we cheered for her. The problem occurred when we wanted to return to our villages. We each had to find a way to return to our communities. If you couldn’t find a car, it was your problem. If you didn’t have any money left to pay for the journey, it was your problem, and so on. Meanwhile, Nancy was drinking beer in her room in Tocache. But only with her closest friends, the people with money.... The campesinos who supported her were not invited to drink beer, and she didn’t want to talk with them.”¹⁰¹

Other villagers said that Obregón adopted an arrogant attitude toward Fósforo’s population. They said that she no longer greeted those from the *campo* and that her behavior toward small-scale campesinos had also changed. Obregón’s failure to win the support of the majority of residents in her own Fósforo district in effect cost her the election, which was won by Pedro Bogarín, who was part of the regional elite (see Chapter 3). In essence, Obregón lost these provincial elections because, in the eyes of the rural villagers, she had become part of the provincial elite.

In the 2002 elections, Nancy Zamora was the candidate of *Nueva Amazonia* in the district of Fósforo. In sharp contrast to Obregón, Zamora won the hearts of the cocalero masses with her cocalero-oriented politics. Some problems arose when the *Saúl Guevara Díaz*’s leadership, headed by Obregón, began to oppose her projects, arguing that she hadn’t been the candidate of the cocaleros. Although Zamora and Obregón were working to achieve the same goal, which included better conditions of life for the district’s cocaleros, there

⁹⁹ Conversation with Nancy Obregón, Santa María de Frontera, September 2, 2005.

¹⁰⁰ Group conversation Eva and Molotov, Esperanza de Frontera, November 20, 2005.

¹⁰¹ Conversation with Eva, Esperanza de Frontera, November 19, 2005.

appeared to be a political power struggle between the two women. Zamora wanted to avoid such a power struggle, stating:

“We, the cocalero leaders and authorities, have to assume our responsibilities. We have to prevent this from degenerating into a fight between different leaders. Such internal division creates confusion and unrest in the community.”¹⁰²

But when Zamora was district mayor, she was forced to work with some local allies of Obregón. The municipal councilors supporting Obregón didn’t want to work under Zamora because Obregón disagreed with her ideas and resented her development projects, even though these projects appeared to be effectively responding to the cocaleros’ demands. Zamora felt she was sabotaged by Obregón’s supporters.

The change in the discourse of the local cocalero association, which now drew a distinction between “legal cocaleros” and “illegal cocaleros”, led to even more serious differences between Zamora and Obregón. In the opinion of Zamora, Obregón appeared to be undermining her official authority in the district and making a special effort to convince district residents that Zamora’s view of the inevitability of forced eradication was wrong. Obregón tried to convince the population that forced eradication could be stopped, a lie in the eyes of Zamora. Zamora remembered how she explained the misunderstanding to residents of the district:

“I tried to explain to these people that the fact that they participated in the *paros*, protests and marches was not going to shield them against the forced eradication operation.... The only legal cocaleros we have in Peru are those who had registered in the year 1978.¹⁰³ [...] From 1978 onwards, there wasn’t any other legal registration.”¹⁰⁴

These rumors and misinterpretations led to a polarization among the population, some of whom supported Zamora and some of whom believed the cocalero leaders.

6.2.2 The cocalero leaders’ bid for national political office

Through their leadership of CONPACCCP¹⁰⁵ Nancy Obregón and Elsa Malpartida had become the most visible faces of the Peruvian cocalero struggle. They gained national recognition as opponents of the unpopular Toledo government. In the three years they had been national cocalero leaders, they organized two national *Marchas de Sacrificio*, and several regional and local cocalero protests. The protests the women organized made the cocalero protests visible on the national level. Because of their leadership of these protest activities, by the end of 2005, Obregón and Malpartida were being monitored closely by Tingo María police and prosecutors. A long ordeal began for the two women when the prosecution started a media campaign against them in which they were portrayed as the two women who had forced the cocaleros to destroy bridges and roads. These accusations enraged Obregón:

“The prosecutors were shown in the newspapers and on the television stating that we would soon be locked up. But I haven’t committed any crime.... I haven’t defrauded

¹⁰² Interview with local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora, November 21, 2005.

¹⁰³ The year of the first ENACO (*Empresa Nacional de la Coca*: state entity charged with the authorization to buy and sell legal coca) registration.

¹⁰⁴ Interview with local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora, November 22, 2005.

¹⁰⁵ *Confederación Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios de las Cuencas Cocaleras de Perú*.

anyone, and I haven't killed anyone. I'm aware of what we have done and I know very well that I'm innocent. But because of these accusations, I could spend twelve years in jail. These are twelve years for somebody who just wanted her rights to be respected, for someone who said, let's stop the violence...¹⁰⁶

While rumors were spread that Malpartida was hiding in the mountains around Tingo María to escape legal scrutiny, Obregón remained in her house in Santa María. She was angry about the rumors that she was hiding from the police. On December 15, 2005, Obregón was arrested by the national police in Tingo María, where she had gone to one of the commercial banks to make a money transfer. She was accused of organizing riots that had taken place there.¹⁰⁷ But, in contrast to Nelson Palomino's arrest on February 21, 2003, Obregón's arrest received the national attention of social advocacy organizations, who accused Toledo government of taking another "political prisoner". But because of mounting pressure from local cocaleros, Obregón was released within a few hours.

In November 2005, Obregón explained her decision to participate in the national elections as a move to prevent being prosecuted on the charges that had been made against her in Tingo María. But in all likelihood, both women, Obregón and Malpartida, had already made the decision to enter national politics before being monitored by the police and prosecutors.¹⁰⁸ After they resigned from their leadership of CONPACCP in August 2005, they travelled to Lima and met with several representatives of the *Unión por el Perú-Partido Nacionalista* (UPP-PN)¹⁰⁹ the political party aligned with the two Humala brothers, Ollanta and Antauro.¹¹⁰ During the 2006 national elections, both Obregón and Malpartida became candidates for the UPP-PN. Obregón ran for the national congress for the department of San Martín and Malpartida for the *Parlamento Andino*.¹¹¹ But they weren't the only cocalero leaders who had been included in the party. Iburcio Morales¹¹² was the first cocalero leader who was included in the candidates list of the *Unión por el Perú- Partido Nacionalista*, but he withdrew from the candidacy when it became apparent that Obregón and Malpartida were also included, and that they in fact occupied higher positions on the list.¹¹³ Ironically, accusations of political aspirations had previously caused the main schism between the CONPACCP and the *Junta Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios y Cocaleros*.¹¹⁴ But in 2006, most national cocalero leaders opted for participation in national, regional or local political elections.

After their decision to enter politics was made public, Obregón's and Malpartida's candidacy was criticized by other cocalero leaders. These opponents were convinced that they carefully planned their political career and had used the cocalero association in order to gain recognition throughout the whole country. One critic of the political aspirations of Obregón

¹⁰⁶ Interview with Nancy Obregón, Santa María de Frontera, November 28, 2005.

¹⁰⁷ Along with Elsa Malpartida, she was accused of planning the riots that had occurred on July 1, 2005 during the cocalero riots against the Free Trade Agreements with the US (see Box 5.1). Additionally, she was accused on the riots that had occurred in Tingo María on May 21, 2004 when a cocalero group had burned a police vehicle (see section 5.5.4).

¹⁰⁸ Observation made since we travelled with them to Pichari and after the festival to Lima.

¹⁰⁹ In 2005, the *Partido Nacionalista Peruano* aligned with the *Unión por el Perú* (formed in 1994 by Javier Pérez de Cuéllar; former-UN Secretary who ran unsuccessfully against Fujimori in the 1995 national elections). During the 2006 national elections Ollanta Humala ran under the UPP-PN (*Unión por el Perú-Partido Nacionalista*) banner in the national election because his *Partido Nacionalista Peruano* did not meet the registration deadline.

¹¹⁰ The last-named was already imprisoned for the violent attack against the police station in Andahuaylas on January 1, 2005.

¹¹¹ Parliament of the Andean countries, including Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia and Venezuela.

¹¹² The cocalero leader of the Monzón.

¹¹³ Iburcio Morales did manage to be elected as region mayor of the Monzón province, showing his mass support in this cocalero region.

¹¹⁴ Cocalero movement created on April 25, 2004 and headed by Iburcio Morales and Marisela Guillén (Apurímac-Ene River valley).

and Malpartida was Nelson Palomino, the imprisoned CONPACCP¹¹⁵ leader. His main concern was that the alliance which both the cocalero women had made with Ollanta Humala, a man in whom Palomino had little confidence, as he stated during a conversation with several cocaleros in his prison cell in Castro Castro:¹¹⁶

“He¹¹⁷ is trying to use the cocalero movement as a springboard and these are the kinds of things I don’t like.... If he wants an alliance with the cocaleros, he has to be firm and sincere in his convictions.”¹¹⁸

Obregón acknowledged afterward that it would have been more effective for the cocaleros to form their own political party, organized by and for cocaleros, but she argued that this had been impossible because of the differences between the cocaleros of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley and the Upper Huallaga.

On the national level, despite the fact that they had experienced a decrease in their local support, the existing discrepancies with other cocalero leaders and their withdrawal from their leadership roles in the CONPACCP, Obregón and Malpartida continued to be seen by most Peruvians as the most important cocalero leaders. During their political campaign, they strategically used this reputation, which was mainly based on their strong opposition to the weak and unpopular Toledo’s government. Obregón admitted that her leadership in the cocalero movement had enabled her to become a candidate in the national elections:

“I can go to a village and they recognize me. They might be speaking badly about me, but that hardly matters. This has been one of our concrete achievements. When the press isn’t talking positively about you, it is something to be concerned about. But if the day comes when the press isn’t talking about you at all—that is even worse. It is important that they keep writing about you....”¹¹⁹

This quotation can be seen as an admission by Obregón of having used her previous role in the cocalero movement to promote her political career.

At one point, Obregón, Malpartida and Palomino set aside their differences and Palomino actively supported their campaigns as UPP-PN candidates. Despite his initial criticism, Palomino asked the cocaleros of Peru to support Ollanta unconditionally, a change that was instrumental in the victory of the two cocalero women. An article in *La República* predicted that both women could generate about 50,000 votes during the elections,¹²⁰ with most of the support concentrated in the Upper Huallaga. Surprisingly, even in the department’s largest town, Tarapoto, people supported Obregón’s campaign.

For the political campaign’s closing day, on April 8, 2006, Obregón planned a rally in Tocache, neither the largest nor the most influential town in the department. Her closing presentation became a mass event, in which cocaleros, *mototaxistas*, merchants and other social sectors all participated. During her speech in the *Plaza de Armas*,¹²¹ she was handed a shawl made out of coca leaves by the villagers of Esperanza de Frontera. Although Obregón’s leadership had been widely criticized, Fósforo’s population gave her solid backing during the

¹¹⁵ *Confederación Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios de las Cuencas Cocaleras de Perú*: National Confederation of Agricultural Producers of Peruvian Coca Basins.

¹¹⁶ Castro Castro: prison in the San Juan de Lurigancho district of Lima used for political prisoners and criminals, where Nelson Palomino by then was imprisoned.

¹¹⁷ Meaning Ollanta Humala.

¹¹⁸ Group conversation with Nelson Palomino and cocaleros of Sión and Tingo María, cell in Castro-Castro, August 14, 2005.

¹¹⁹ Interview with Nancy Obregón, Santa María de Frontera, November 28, 2005.

¹²⁰ “Precandidatos cocaleras de la lista de Humala enfrentan ocho juicios” *La República*, January 28, 2005.

¹²¹ Main square.

national campaign. Her campaign was popularly viewed as a protest against the Toledo government. After Toledo's failure to address their demands, the country's rural population demanded a change, and voted in overwhelming numbers for Ollanta's *Unión por el Perú-Partido Nacionalista*. The whole department of San Martín represented 306,000 votes, which were divided into 58% for the UPP-PN and 41% for APRA.¹²² In the Tocache district, the tally was 65% for the UPP-PN and 27% for the APRA.¹²³ Hence, cocalero support had paved the way for Obregón's entrance into the Peruvian national congress.

6.2.3 The cocaleros' votes

Peru's continuing deep divisions became particularly clear during the presidential elections in 2006. While Ollanta's strongest support could be found in the countryside and the marginalized classes in Lima, Peru's upper and middle classes were deeply disturbed by the prospect of this radical nationalist and ally of Evo Morales and Hugo Chávez. Not that the urban elite was crazy about García, who was still plagued by the failure of his first presidency (1985-1990) during which Shining Path gained strength and hyperinflation created economic chaos. After his term expired, García fled the country in a self-imposed exile, leaving behind a country that was far worse off than it had been when he took his oath of office in 1985. During his election campaign in 2006, García asked the Peruvian population for forgiveness and promised to do better this time. García aligned himself with the country's elite. In the larger coastal cities, including Trujillo, Ollanta was perceived as a "rural threat". With these two candidates, Alan García and Ollanta Humala, in the second round on June 4, 2006, many Peruvians complained that their choice was between "AIDS and cancer" and neither man was thought to be a particularly strong candidate.

The sharp national division between the political support of the countryside and the urban regions became apparent in the departmental outcomes. For example, in the department of Huánuco, Ollanta received 63% of the vote, while García received 36%.¹²⁴ In Lima, García had 61% against 38% for Ollanta.¹²⁵ The importance of Ollanta's support in the cocalero valleys was most striking in the Fósforo district, where the *Unión por el Perú-Partido Nacionalista* received 86% against a mere 9% for APRA.¹²⁶ Clearly, the 2006 elections revealed a Peru that was polarized along geographic, social and class lines; Humala was supported in the countryside while García was the favorite candidate of the country's upper and middle classes. Because of Peru's high degree of urbanization, the support of the countryside alone was not enough for Humala to win the elections. Nationally, Humala won 47.3% of the vote, while García won 52.7%. Alan García (APRA) became Peru's next president, while the *Unión por el Perú-Partido Nacionalista* won a plurality of seats in the Peruvian congress (30.62% against 24.33% of the APRA).¹²⁷

These elections did show a strong cocalero participation in national politics, despite the fact that they never formed their own national political party. Thus, rather than attempting to establish good relations between local, regional and national authorities, the cocaleros had opted to promote their political agenda by participating as candidates in elections. Furthermore, what the 2006 election demonstrated was that the cocaleros of Peru had become transformed from an excluded and marginalized group into a group that actively participated in the election process on the national level. There were three cocalero leaders on the pre-candidates list of the *Unión por el Perú-Partido Nacionalista*: Malpartida, Obregón, and

¹²² Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana: Political party headed by Alan García.

¹²³ Numbers taken from "Coca, Votos y Muerte" Caretas, September 14, 2006.

¹²⁴ The remaining votes were invalid billets and people who had refrained from voting.

¹²⁵ Once again the remaining votes were invalid billets and people who had refrained from voting.

¹²⁶ Information ONPE (*Oficina Nacional de Procesos Electorales*) Segunda Elección Presidencial 2006: www.onpe.gob.pe.

¹²⁷ Information ONPE (*Oficina Nacional de Procesos Electorales*) Segunda Elección Presidencial 2006: www.onpe.gob.pe.

Morales.¹²⁸ Additionally, there were two indigenous leaders on the pre-candidates list: Juana Aidé Huancahuari Páucar¹²⁹ and Hilaria Supa Huamán,¹³⁰ who both defended the coca leaf as an Andean tradition. It became apparent that UPP-PN's success in the cocalero regions was to a large extent dependent on whether the region had an actual cocalero leader representing them as a candidate. For example, when their regional cocalero leader, Iburcio Morales, resigned his candidacy, the cocaleros of the Monzón valley felt betrayed. As a result, Humala won in all of the cocalero valleys, except the Monzón valley, where Humala only received 36% of the votes, while in other Peruvian cocalero valleys the *Unión por el Perú- Partido Nacionalista* achieved a large majority.¹³¹ After the national elections, as a result of a serious disagreement, the coalition with the UPP-PN broke down. Ollanta's *Partido Nacionalista Peruano*¹³² remained aligned with the cocalero movement and even includes the cocalero demands in its program. For example, in their party program they included the free cultivation of coca as part of the country's indigenous heritage.

Within a week of García's victory on June 4, 2006, Nelson Palomino was released from prison. He was pardoned by the government of García. In some national newspapers, a short message was printed, which stated only that Palomino had been released. It seemed a clever political decision to release Palomino in the immediate aftermath of García's victory, knowing the national press would focus on the newly elected president. After his release, Palomino began to form a cocalero party, *Kuska Perú*, in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley. It was in these bases where the cocaleros' attempt to integrate themselves in the political process began to resemble developments in neighboring Bolivia, where Evo Morales with his MAS¹³³ initially had participated in local and regional political elections and eventually won the presidential elections. But was it possible for the Peruvian cocaleros to follow Morales' example?

6.2.4 National success followed by local failure

Encouraged by the result of national elections during which the local population supported Ollanta's cocalero candidates, several cocalero associations in different cocalero regions participated in the local and regional elections for mayoral posts on November 19, 2006. In the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, they were all candidates of Palomino's independent party, *Kuska Perú*. Strangely, all eight candidates other than Palomino himself won elections in their districts.¹³⁴ Palomino failed to launch *Kuska Perú* in the other cocalero valleys, although a cocalero candidate in the Fósforo district managed to launch himself as candidate of Ollanta's *Partido Nacionalista Peruano*.

As a result, active participation in local and regional elections followed a different path in the Fósforo district. Saúl Guevara Díaz's cocaleros decided to put forward a cocalero candidate and Molotov was chosen in a general meeting of the cocalero association. Whereas before the population had complained that candidates were unknowns, during these elections the majority of political candidates were respected village men either from Mal Abrigo or the village of Fósforo. But the familiarity of all candidates divided the district's population into several blocks, based on personal contacts, family ties and social relations. Moreover, Molotov had suffered financially from the forced eradication operation and even the members

¹²⁸ Who had later resigned from candidacy.

¹²⁹ Representing the department Ayacucho department.

¹³⁰ Representing the department of Cusco.

¹³¹ Information ONPE (*Oficina Nacional de Procesos Electorales*) Segunda Elección Presidencial 2006: www.onpe.gob.pe.

¹³² An independent political movement led by Ollanta Humala.

¹³³ *Movimiento al Socialismo*: Movement toward Socialism.

¹³⁴ *Kuska Perú* won in Llochegua, Sivia, Santa Rosa, Anco, Kimbiri, Pichari and Chungui but not in San Francisco where Nelson Palomino himself was the party's candidate. The explanations later given to me about his failure by cocaleros of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley followed the failure of Obregón during the provincial elections. Palomino had aligned himself with the regional elite, and not with the cocalero masses.

of *Saúl Guevara Díaz* lacked money to support his political campaign. As Molotov himself said:

“We didn’t have money Even in the beginning, we were organizing our political campaign with 300 soles: For gas, for our mobilizations, for everything.”¹³⁵

A rumor arose that Molotov, as the cocalero candidate, had been offered money by the long-established *patrones* but that he rejected this bribe. Other candidates, conversely, did accept the *patrones*’ money, which they used to expand the profile of their campaigns. In the Fósforo district, people were confused as to which symbol they had to choose to select the cocalero candidate, as one party was UPP that used a “frying pan” as a symbol, and another was Ollanta’s party, which used the letter “O” as symbol. The local UPP candidate increased their confusion by stating that he was the candidate of the *Saúl Guevara Díaz* organization.¹³⁶

Even Palomino, who visited the Fósforo district after his release from prison, contributed to the local confusion. Many local residents expected him to support the cocalero candidate but, because this cocalero candidate was from a political party other than his own recently organized *Kuska Perú*, he did not actively support Molotov. At the same time, it became clear that Obregón’s promised economic support for Molotov’s campaign would never materialize. Meanwhile, the cocalero candidates for municipal councilor were engaged in personal struggles over the best posts, and the group had fallen apart. Disappointed about the course of events, Obregón’s lack of support, and Palomino’s negative interference, Molotov was defeated by a margin of only 18 votes by Fósforo’s relatively unknown independent candidate, Victor Córdova. This defeat can be seen as part of a broader phenomenon: Nationally, both of the large national political parties were losing a good many¹³⁷ municipal elections to regional independent movements, like *Kuska Perú*.

6.3 Nationwide visibility of the cocalero problem

6.3.1 “We continue to attack the state”

With the election of Nancy Obregón and Elsa Malpartida, the cocaleros gained representation in both the national Congress and Andean Parliament.¹³⁸ The two women claimed that their victory was a means of continuing their cocalero struggle on a different level. But their first actions after being elected were not focused on the cocalero demands but on a broader issue, the government’s negotiations of a Free Trade Agreement with the United States.

On June 27, 2006, fifteen elected congress members¹³⁹ of the *Partido Nacionalista Peruano* stormed the congress, where the old congress members were voting on the Free Trade Agreement with the US. According to different newspapers, the protesters were headed

¹³⁵ Conversation with Molotov, Esperanza de Frontera, August 5, 2007.

¹³⁶ Confused about the difference between the two political parties, some villagers of the cocalero candidate’s community, Esperanza de Frontera, allowed UPP followers to paint their houses with a “frying pan”, believing this was the sign of Molotov’s party, but he was the candidate for the PNP which had the “O” as symbol. Some had wrongly marked the “pan” on their voting billet, hereby not voting for Molotov but for the UPP candidate.

¹³⁷ The results showed that in only eight of the 25 departments of Peru, the regional candidates of national political parties, including the APRA and the PNP, were chosen. The APRA had won in three departments, while the PNP won in one department (see www.onpe.pe). Hence, this trend was visible in almost all departments of the country, where the majority of people had voted for the candidates of regional independent political movements.

¹³⁸ The *Parlamento Andino* was created on October 25, 1979 in la Paz. Primarily the parliament only addressed economic issues, but slowly it began to include other aspects, including education, health and justice e.g.. In 1996 it was decided that all the member countries (Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela) should organize elections to vote for their members of the Andean Parliament.

¹³⁹ They had not yet begun serving their terms because their inauguration took place on July 26, 2006.

by Obregón and Malpartida. Body guards accompanying the two women became engaged in an altercation with a security guard whose nose was broken. In the ensuing confusion, Obregón and Malpartida managed to escape from security personnel and marched through the congress chamber, shouting slogans against the Agreement. They managed to paralyze the debate, taking away the chairman's documents. In their view this congress, given its lack of popularity among Peru's population, did not have the legitimacy to approve this Free Trade Agreement. Only several minutes after their entrance were the police able to remove both women.

The day after the event, a warrant was issued for the arrest of both Obregón and Malpartida. Horror-struck by the event, members of the current congress asked to temporarily lift immunity for recently elected congress members so that the two women could be prosecuted for their disruption of government proceedings, but the two women were never arrested. Malpartida publically apologized for her involvement but when asked about these events, Obregón never showed any remorse, although she did admit that she might not have made the best choice, and acknowledged that she had to adjust to her new role as a congresswoman. Obregón only grinned when I reminded her that she probably was now the most talked about politician in Peru. She responded: "We continue to attack the state". On June 28, 2006, Obregón and Malpartida headed a popular march against the Free Trade Agreement. Numerous representatives of the leftist political parties participated, including a large contingent from *Partido Nacionalista Peruano* (PNP), as well as representatives of unions, civil society and social movements. Although there was widespread protest against the Free Trade Agreement, the accord was approved by the Garcia government and signed on December 14, 2006.

At her inauguration on July 26, 2006, Obregón swore to serve as a congresswoman "in the name of God and in the name of the coca-growers".¹⁴⁰ But her oath wasn't accepted, until Obregón changed the phrase into "in the name of the marginalized campesinos of San Martín". Her own marginal position within the Congress was made painfully evident when all of the speeches of new congress members except her own were shown on national television. When I met her after the inauguration ceremony, she expressed her displeasure that her speech that had tried to express the suffering of the cocaleros in San Martín wasn't shown. After several months in Congress, it became obvious that her time in the national congress would be a difficult period, because internal divisions within the *Partido Nacionalista Peruano* (PNP) totally left her without any support for her political agenda. This became apparent when even the members of the PNP¹⁴¹ didn't support her proposals for a new law on coca, or back her when she demanded a debate about the coca leaf. Because of this lack of support among her own party members, her proposals never were discussed in the national congress.

One of the things that she was able to do during her term in congress was draw attention to the police repression that had occurred during the forced eradication campaigns, as will be described below.

6.3.2 Nationally telecast human rights abuses

The significance of having political representatives became evident on September 11, 2006, when the community of Síon¹⁴² was shocked by the appearance of heavily-armed DIRANDRO policemen. These policemen were an element of CORAH's forced eradication operation. As described before, there were numerous police abuses during these operations,

¹⁴⁰ For God and the cocalero classes.

¹⁴¹ Many of the candidates of the PNP before had been aligned with another political party. After being elected, they didn't support the proposals of the PNP, but re-aligned themselves with their old political parties.

¹⁴² A cocalero village located in the district of Campanilla, Province of Mariscal Cáceres in the San Martín department.

but they never received any media attention. But, in those previous cases, police action had been directed against a group that many Peruvians considered “undesirable” or even “criminal”: People who did not deserve to be included in the guarantees of the rule of law (Pinheiro 1999: 7). In other words, the previous violent practices had been committed in a context of impunity. But a forced eradication effort in the remote and isolated village of Sión unexpectedly turned out to be the one that received the attention of journalists and politicians. In Sión the DIRANDRO troops directly entered the village (and not the *chacras* surrounding the village) to start the eradication, and used excessive violence to prevent the cocaleros from entering the village, directly firing at people that were present in the village or who wanted to enter the village to protect their houses. One cocalero, a man approximately 60 years old, received a severe blow to his head when he tried to stop the police officers from entering his private property. The CORAH and DIRANDRO forces are not allowed to enter villages during these forced eradication operations; they are only allowed to enter the *chacras* to eradicate the coca plants. After several minutes, the policemen withdrew from the village, chased out by an angry stone-throwing crowd, after having fired tear gas.¹⁴³ During their retreat, the police fired live ammunition. After the confrontation, several wounded among the cocaleros were dragged to the *plaza*.¹⁴⁴ After these confrontations Sión’s mayor confirmed to the national press that 30 cocaleros had been wounded (with 12 having been seriously injured). Police sources insisted on the truth of the official version, posted on the website of the Ministry of the Interior, that the only persons wounded during the operation had been two police officers and a CORAH worker.

What made the events in Sión different? As seen above, during the forced eradication operation in the Fósforo district, DIRANDRO forces had acted in largely the same way, and yet those events had never received any national attention. The main difference in Sión was that a schoolteacher in the village owned a digital video camera and had recorded the confrontation between the police forces and the cocaleros. His recordings showed the police forces entering the village. The images showed that when the police entered the village, they mainly encountered women and children because, when the men heard helicopters approaching the village, they returned to protect their *chacras*. The video also showed how the police shot directly at the men, who were returning to the village, while trying to enter the church building. Women, preparing lunch outside their homes, were caught in the crossfire. The video then showed how police continued to shoot at the assembled crowd with tear gas and live ammunition. Later it was argued that the police suspected the church was being used as a place to store cocaine, but no cocaine was found when the building was searched. Some cocaleros’ houses were searched without a warrant, an illegal practice even during these forced eradication campaigns. The images also showed that the cocaleros did not use any firearms and only fought with sticks, stones and slingshots. The last segment of the tape showed the wounded cocaleros, including several teenagers with their t-shirts’ stained with blood and several injured women.

Immediately after the confrontation, the leader of Sión’s cocalero association informed Obregón about the events that had occurred in his village. It was agreed that the cocalero leader would send the tape to Lima as soon as possible. This took a few days because Sión was only reachable by boat and the cocalero leader had to travel to Puerto Mal Abrigo or Tocache in order to send the images to Lima. Obregón, who had established warm relations with Minister of the Interior, Pilar Mazzetti, informed her of the police action in Sión. But Pilar Mazzetti asked her to provide evidence. When Obregón handed over the tape, the state

¹⁴³ But outside Sión a large river passed, and from previous experience the cocaleros knew teargas could only be washed away with large quantities of water. The teargas bombs weren’t effective in keeping the population at bay, and then the police began firing live ammunition.

¹⁴⁴ Main square.

could no longer ignore the cocaleros' accusations. On September 15, 2006, the Minister of the Interior held a press conference during which she admitted that the police had used excessive violence during confrontations with the cocaleros. She said: "It is one thing to fight against the illicit traffic of drugs and to carry out eradication in locations where there are *pozas* and clandestine laboratories to process cocaine, and it's another thing to involve the population and to have interventions that go further than was authorized".¹⁴⁵ During this statement, Mazzetti acknowledged that police entry into population centers was prohibited. She also indicated that she had initially been informed of what had transpired by representatives of DIRANDRO and CORAH, who falsely testified that they were initially attacked by the cocaleros. After the video was telecast, the CORAH commander, together with the police officials in charge of the interdiction operation, all submitted their resignations. The policemen, who were involved in the violent confrontation, were removed from the anti-drug base in Santa Lucia and reassigned to other locations. Afterwards a high-level investigation commission comprising Obregón, Malpartida, representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and police representatives, visited Sión to investigate the villagers' accusations. For the cocaleros, another result of the national telecast of the police action was even more important: After these events, it was agreed that the forced eradication operation would be temporarily halted. The Minister of the Interior confirmed that the forced eradication projects would only continue in zones where *pozas* and cocaine laboratories were found, but would not re-enter the villages and communities.

The telecast of the events in Sión constituted a victory for the cocaleros and Obregón. Even *El Comercio*, a widely respected national newspaper, which had previously been critical of the cocalero protests against the forced eradication operations, headlined its article on the events with the phrase: "The Video Says it All".¹⁴⁶ On the other hand, in an opinion column in *La República*, a long-time opponent of the cocalero leaders, former Minister of the Interior, Fernando Rospigliosi, argued: "The people attacked the policemen and the CORAH personnel who were carrying out an eradication in Sión. Therefore, they must be investigated by the Public Ministry. What we have here is a group of armed people who are financed by drug traffickers".¹⁴⁷ In his view, the decision to stop the forced eradication would only contribute to the strengthening of drug traffickers.¹⁴⁸ But this time, his stigmatization couldn't prevent *limeños* from being confronted with the grim reality of a forced eradication operation. The majority of Peruvians condemned the police action against the cocaleros.¹⁴⁹

After these events, the national government started a dialogue with the different cocalero leaders, including congresswoman Obregón, member of the Andean Parliament Malpartida, Palomino and several local cocalero leaders from different regions, mainly the Apurímac-Ene River Valley and the Upper Huallaga Valley. But these negotiations did not result in any agreement. While CORAH operations never again entered Sión, the forced eradication operations continued in the districts of Tocache Province. The cocaleros of the Fósforo district were infuriated when, during an operation in Las Palmas (west of Santa María) in March 2007, a girl was raped by two policemen. The cocaleros urged journalists from Tocache to make the journey to the community and film the human rights abuses, but were disappointed when journalists did film the scene but then demanded thousands of dollars for the footage. As a consequence, these local abuses in Las Palmas were never publicized, not even regionally.

¹⁴⁵ "Ministra reconoce excesos policiales" La Razón, September 15, 2006; "Ministra del Interior reconoce excesos de policía contra pobladores en Sión" La República, September 15, 2006.

¹⁴⁶ "Destituyen al jefe del CORAH debido a los excesos en Sión" El Comercio, September 15, 2006.

¹⁴⁷ "Rospigliosi: Pobladores atacaron primero a los policías" La República, September 15, 2006.

¹⁴⁸ "Rospigliosi: Pobladores atacaron primero a los policías" La República, September 15, 2006.

¹⁴⁹ In different broadcasts of Radio Ideele the actions of the police were condemned, as well as different newspapers.

Meanwhile, the García government had taken a political turn to the right and, as a result, began to stigmatize the Upper Huallaga as a “Red Zone”, as the center of the country’s continuing problems with the guerrillas and drug traffickers. The president even proposed a hard-line approach against these “*narcoterrorists*”, which quickly began to lead to more problems, as will be described below.

6.3.3 *The Acta de Tocache*

On March 8, 2007, another strike broke out in Tocache after a new forced eradication campaign started. Four days later, a fierce battle broke out between the cocaleros and the DIRANDRO police forces in the Fósforo district, during which the police fired directly at protesters. García immediately refused to engage in any dialogue with the protesting cocaleros in the wake of this episode. But there was internal disagreement within García’s cabinet. The Minister of Agriculture, Juan José Salazar, who rejected García’s “iron-fisted” policies, was willing to negotiate with the cocaleros, and travelled to Tocache accompanied by Obregón and Malpartida. The protests appeared to have been successful when, on March 15, 2007, an agreement was signed by Obregón, Malpartida, several regional cocalero leaders and the Minister of Agriculture. One cocalero leader remembered the events:

“Nancy promised us that she would bring the Minister of Agriculture...and she did in fact bring him. The meeting was planned to be held in city hall, but we didn’t accept this location. Tocache airport is where it happened. On that day, the whole field was filled with cocaleros. We demanded an end to eradication; if not, we were going to take the minister as a hostage. He said he had to consult with his employees in Lima. He consulted and consulted, looking frightened. Afterward he signed an agreement to stop the eradication!”¹⁵⁰

But this description also shows that the Minister of Agriculture maybe hadn’t signed the accord because he wanted to, but because he had been coerced. The following day in the Tocache region, people celebrated the signing of the accord, together with their congress member and their Andean parliament representative.

The signed accord demonstrated that CONPACCP had re-adopted its pragmatic approach, which was directed at stopping forced eradication operations through negotiations with the government. The accord, called the *Acta de Tocache*, included the following agreements; an updated cocaleros’ registry in ENACO¹⁵¹ to be compiled within 30 days; the temporary suspension of forced eradication operations, excluding the *chacras* close to *pozas* and cocaine laboratories; an interdiction policy directed against chemicals used to process cocaine; compensation for the cocaleros affected by the forced eradication who were legally registered with ENACO; and the inclusion of representatives of the local cocalero associations in meetings about regional development. But the last point of the signed agreement proved to be the most important one, at least for the national government. In this point it clearly stated that the cocaleros who were members of the *Asociación de Campesinos Cocaleros y Productores Agropecuarios Saúl Guevara Díaz* would no longer organize protests or use forceful means, including roadblocks, to attempt to force the government to engage in negotiations. Cocaleros aligned with *Saúl Guevara Díaz* who were seen in protests would be arrested immediately.

Meanwhile, in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, it was rumored that Nelson Palomino, together with some local cocalero leaders, had secretly met with the director of DEVIDA and

¹⁵⁰ Interview with Alfonso Reyes Coca, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 12, 2007.

¹⁵¹ This new registry in ENACO was important for the cocaleros because the old registry from 1978 included only a tiny percentage of current coca growers.

a commission of the Council of Ministers, and that he had proposed different projects of alternative development. Palomino's willingness to negotiate with the state frustrated the cocaleros' demands for inclusion in the revised ENACO registry. The day after Palomino's supposed meeting, García announced that the forced eradication of coca plantations in the Upper Huallaga would continue. Meanwhile, on the local level, the disappointment in the national cocalero leaders and the two new congresswomen grew, as will be described below.

6.4 From empowerment to disillusionment

6.4.1 Continuing power struggles within CONPACCP

In the following months, while the forced eradication continued in Tocache, the national cocalero leaders became involved in a personal battle over control of the cocalero movement. The conflict reached its boiling point when Nelson Palomino began to declare that Nancy Obregón and Elsa Malpartida were no longer cocalero leaders and had lost the right to speak or make decisions on behalf of cocaleros. He publicly announced this stance in the national newspapers. Obregón and Malpartida in turn accused Palomino of authoritarianism and a personal drive for power and control over the cocalero regions. The self-serving nature of Palomino's leadership seemed to be on full display during CONPACCP's fifth national congress organized in Tingo María (September 21-23, 2006), where he showed up a day late and proceeded to talk for hours on end about all of the sacrifices he had made for the cocalero struggle while ignoring the current predicament of the cocaleros that he presumed to represent. On the second day of the conference, he arranged for his re-election as leader of CONPACCP without any other candidate having been proposed. After being re-elected, Palomino urged the cocaleros of Tingo María not to re-elect Malpartida as their local cocalero leader. He argued that she was disqualified from leadership of a local cocalero base because she had aligned herself with a political party. The cocaleros present argued that they could give Malpartida a symbolic position in their association, but this gesture was immediately rejected by Palomino, who stated that the Peruvian cocaleros should not be related to the PNP. Because Malpartida was present during the cocalero congress, she managed to calm the situation by offering her resignation.

After this congress, Palomino travelled to Mal Abrigo, where he managed to prevent the re-election of Obregón as local cocalero leader. Palomino proclaimed in front of all cocaleros that neither CONPACCP nor *Saúl Guevara Díaz* should have any representatives in national politics. Palomino was thus able to set the agenda for the newly elected local cocalero leaders. After this meeting Fósforo's cocaleros were divided into groups, the so-called *nancistas* (Obregón's supporters) and *nelsistas* (Palomino's supporters).¹⁵² But Palomino's arrival had another negative result: The majority of the cocaleros decided not to become involved and reacted to these internal disputes between the national cocalero leaders by withdrawing their support from both CONPACCP and *Saúl Guevara Díaz*, distancing themselves from the cocalero struggle entirely.

With Palomino's takeover of CONPACCP, a problem arose that increasingly threatened the cocalero movement: *caudillismo*. Starn (1996: 247) contends that *caudillismo* has plagued the organization of Peruvian communities because "the rural population has always been less egalitarian and harmonious" than they were perceived in many scholarly writings.¹⁵³ Nelson Palomino did not respect the leadership of the various cocalero valleys, not even of his own FEPAVRAE,¹⁵⁴ and he personally controlled everything, including the

¹⁵² Conversation with Alfonso Reyes Coca, August 8, 2007.

¹⁵³ See also De La Cadena (1998); Flores Galindo (1994); García (2005).

¹⁵⁴ Federación de Productores Agropecuarios del Valle del Río Apurímac y Ene.

organization of protest and economic resources. Some of the locally elected CONPACCP officials complained:

“Why do we need to elect different sub-secretaries if he wants to do everything himself?”¹⁵⁵

When numerous CONPACCP sub-secretaries began to complain about the lack of coordination and communication, this led to widespread demoralization within the organization. For example: The local cocalero leader of Sión who had been elected as CONPACCP’s Secretary of Organization stated he had never even seen Palomino after the meeting in Mal Abrigo (August 2006). Afterward, this same leader tried several times to organize a national meeting but, when all his attempts were ignored by Palomino, he gave up and concentrated instead on the organization of the cocaleros in Sión.

Both the authoritarian leadership of Palomino and the corruption among the national leadership generally were factors mentioned by Fósforo’s leaders who withdrew their support. Illicit spending of funds, or abuse of authority by the local leaders, in associations and social movements, constitute a familiar phenomenon in Peru (Starn 1996: 247-248). During his year-long leadership of CONPACCP, the local cocalero leaders remained largely uninformed about the decisions Palomino had taken. Only later did it become clear that Palomino had organized several secret meetings with the Ministers of the Interior, Agriculture, and other ministries and, most surprisingly of all, with representatives of DEVIDA and ENACO.

6.4.2 Why Fósforo’s inhabitants could no longer identify with the cocalero struggle

After Palomino’s visit to Mal Abrigo, it was believed that he had only come to their district to sow confusion among the masses. During the general meeting in Mal Abrigo, he proposed that the whole cocalero leadership of *Saúl Guevara Díaz* be completely overhauled. He ordered the cocaleros present to stop Obregón and other old leaders of *Saúl Guevara Díaz* from resuming their roles in the association. Alfonso Reyes Coca, who had been involved in the cocalero association from its inception, had also been part of the old leadership being attacked by Palomino. But the local cocaleros wanted to re-elect him as cocalero leader. Tired of the disputes, he refused, arguing that if they wanted to change the association, they shouldn’t re-elect a man whom they called an “informer” behind his back.¹⁵⁶ Those present were shocked by Alfonso’s angry speech, and tried to convince him not to abandon the association. With tears in his eyes, Alfonso rejected their pleas.

The search for a new leader continued, but the majority of men who were put forward by their community members as possible candidates refused to be considered. Their refusal could be explained, as people had become aware of the workload of a local cocalero leader, as they stated it entailed abandoning one’s *chacra* while not receiving any economic compensation. Gustavo, a local cocalero from 3 de Diciembre, was designated by Palomino as the next leader in Fósforo. Within a few minutes, while Gustavo stammered apologies as to why he couldn’t accept, he was chosen as the new leader of *Saúl Guevara Díaz*. But with Gustavo’s election, the division within *Saúl Guevara Díaz* increased, as Gustavo was a fervent supporter of Palomino’s discourse, while a majority of the members of that organization had turned away from Palomino in disgust. One member said:

¹⁵⁵ Conversation with local cocalero leader Sión and sub-secretary of the CONPACCP (2006-2007), Sión, August 27, 2007.

¹⁵⁶ See this Chapter, section 6.1.3.

“Palomino doesn’t have people in the Upper Huallaga who support him. He is two-faced. Here the people detest him. In the Upper Huallaga, we don’t want him. We hate him.”¹⁵⁷

Palomino’s visit severely affected his image. Even his most fervent supporters began to remark that “the Nelson they had known before” had changed. He was no longer identified as a typical man from the *campo*.¹⁵⁸ During his visit in Mal Abrigo, he hadn’t even engaged in conversations with the cocaleros, some of whom he had known for five years. Before his visit, Palomino had been portrayed as an engaged person, concerned with the problems of ordinary cocaleros, but after his visit he was stigmatized as dominant dictatorial leader. But while Palomino ignored the calls for national meetings with other CONPACCP leaders, he did closely advise those local cocalero leaders who supported him.

In late 2007, it was revealed that the Venezuelan socialist government of Hugo Chavez had been economically supporting the Peruvian cocalero regions for years. This led to a question among Fósforo’s cocaleros; if Venezuela was sending money, why hadn’t the cocaleros received any economic support? When Palomino had visited Mal Abrigo, he promised five scholarships for studies in medicine and engineering for cocalero children from the Fósforo district. But where were the scholarships that Chavez had had set aside for the Fósforo district? No scholarships had been awarded to the local population. Some local inhabitants were sent to investigate. One of them, Alfonso Reyes Coca, said:

“We have gone to the commander,¹⁵⁹ who has close ties with Chávez. So we told him, ‘We know they have asked for scholarships in the name of the cocaleros, but you aren’t giving them to us’, because I knew that Nelson Palomino personally went to this commander to ask for economic support. The commander responded, ‘Excuse me, what about Palomino?’ and I said, ‘He is the general secretary of our organization but he doesn’t have any potential. Don’t give money to the cocaleros because they will never see the money’. He immediately invited us to visit a young woman who works for the embassy of Venezuela and we told her the same thing. She said she appreciated my honesty....”¹⁶⁰

This quotation shows that the population accused Palomino of receiving funds that were destined for the cocaleros. After their meeting with Chavez’s representatives, in Lima Fósforo’s cocalero leaders, including Gustavo, definitively turned their back on him.

Meanwhile, in Tocache, a regional cocalero federation was formed. Nancy Obregón supported this so-called *Federación Saúl Guevara Díaz*, which was created as an umbrella organization that integrated the cocalero associations of the Tocache Province. But the name of the federation “Saúl Guevara Díaz” met with resistance in Mal Abrigo and as a result they changed the federation’s name into, *Federación Samuel Mendoza Medina* (see Box 4.2). The federation was headed by one of Obregón’s followers, Jason, who had lived in 3 de Diciembre, but who later moved to Tocache to organize the federation there. It even became clear that the federation tried to attract members by giving the cocaleros an opportunity to sell their coca to ENACO, a right that was only given to members of the *Saúl Guevara Díaz* association. To register the federation’s members in ENACO, the federation’s leadership duplicated¹⁶¹ the existing numbers of associates from *Saúl Guevara Díaz*, a practice that was

¹⁵⁷ Conversation with cocalero, Esperanza de Frontera, August 12, 2007.

¹⁵⁸ Countryside.

¹⁵⁹ Man from Venezuela who was directing the funds of Chavez’s ‘Bolivarian Revolution’ in Peru.

¹⁶⁰ Conversation with Alfonso Reyes Coca, Puerto Mal Abrigo, October 15, 2007.

¹⁶¹ In 2001, the *Asociación de Campesinos Cocaleros y Productores Agropecuarios Saúl Guevara Díaz* had agreed on an arrangement with the ENACO directorate which granted member coca growers the option to sell their harvest to the legal

illegal. The cocaleros of the federation were those cocaleros living close to the town of Tocache and in other districts, including Nuevo Progreso and the district of Tocache, who had not previously supported the cocalero protests. As a result, the creation of the federation was not well received in those cocalero communities that had previously had participated in *Saúl Guevara Díaz*. Moreover, the federation had been formed without the participation of Fósforo's cocaleros. No leader of this federation came from the Fósforo district. Nor were Fósforo's cocaleros asked to participate in the federation's meetings.

Many inhabitants of the Fósforo district believed that they were deliberately excluded from the federation because they questioned the effectiveness of Obregón's leadership. It was thought that Obregón had only created the federation because she didn't want to lose her personal influence over the province, whose support she needed for a possible re-election to the national congress in 2011. Numerous cocaleros in Mal Abrigo and the surrounding communities refused to join the new federation, in contrast to other cocalero communities, most notably that of Sión, Bello Horizonte and Utopía Inca, that did opt for the federation, because the local cocalero leaders were opposed to Gustavo's leadership. But the separation between the local association and the regional federation was mainly caused by personal disputes between Gustavo¹⁶² and Jason.¹⁶³ By late-2007, the federation desperately tried to oust Gustavo from his position as leader of *Saúl Guevara Díaz*.¹⁶⁴ Gustavo once said about these problems:

“Sometimes, with all these problems, it will take away my will to work, sometimes I have to leave my *chacra* behind. I had two parcels of land, but I had to sell one. I sometimes have to leave my family behind, and sometimes I fight with my wife... But you know what they say: When you are honest, they will shoot you and when you lie they will applaud....”¹⁶⁵

The population rejected the election of the candidate proposed by the federation. They were suspicious of the man because, during the municipal elections, he had caused divisions within the group of Molotov, the cocalero candidate. The proposed candidate was already working as municipal councilor in the village of Fósforo, and it was thus assumed that he only wanted the leadership position in order to advance his political goals.

But the divisions between the local association and the regional federation had another important consequence. They led to growing numbers of people refusing to attend the local meetings, and even abandoning both organizations altogether. Alfonso Reyes Coca captured the prevailing mood among the local cocaleros:

“Lots of things have happened with the cocaleros....They don't trust anyone anymore and they don't believe anyone anymore. Today, if we call a meeting of the 150 associates,¹⁶⁶ only 50 show up. Well, the last meeting was worse: There were only

state institute. Only the members of the local association, who were given a numbers to register their coca sold to ENACO, were granted this right. The provincial *Federación Samuel Mendoza* used the numbers of the members of *Asociación de Campesinos Cocaleros y Productores Agropecuarios Saúl Guevara Díaz* to sell coca to ENACO.

¹⁶² Cocalero leader of *Saúl Guevara Díaz* (Fósforo district).

¹⁶³ Cocalero leader of *Federación Samuel Mendoza* (Tocache Province).

¹⁶⁴ Supporters of the federation turned up during meetings of the association and tried to convince the people present to align themselves with the federation instead of the association. Moreover, during all meetings, the supporters of the federation stated that Gustavo had not been elected for the leadership of the association, because he was elected by Nelson Palomino. Therefore supporters of the federation stated new election should be held during which the people could vote.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with Gustavo, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 20, 2007.

¹⁶⁶ Still only entailing the “legal cocaleros” who gathered their coca for ENACO.

five associates, the rest were people who don't bring their coca to ENACO. So what kind of power base are we talking about?"¹⁶⁷

The divisions, fights, rumors and mistrust had caused a severe decline in the participation in both cocalero initiatives, the association and the federation. The population's disillusionment with both of these efforts severely affected the choices of the association's and federation's leaders, Gustavo and Jason alike, who both began to see that protests no longer attracted the broad-based participation of cocaleros. They organized small-scale actions that weren't even noticed on the regional level, not even in Tocache.

Meanwhile the national cocalero movement was threatened by the same unresolved internal division, as will be shown below.

6.4.3 *The fall of the first cocalero leaders*

Fósforo's cocaleros began to remark that it was strange that CONPACCC under Nelson Palomino's leadership didn't organize any national, regional or local protests. While the forced eradication in Mal Abrigo and the surrounding communities continued, no other cocalero region, whose leaders had signed the *Pacto de Caballeros*,¹⁶⁸ organized protests. Palomino's attitude of indifference led to growing rumors that he had made some kind of political arrangement with APRA, García's political party. As Alfonso Reyes Coca said:

"When he left jail he said to me 'I used all my political influence' and therefore he was released. But why would APRA do this? They knew Palomino could go and ruin Ollanta's campaign, just at a time when Ollanta was the favorite. APRA said 'Let's liberate Palomino and he will kill Ollanta's local candidates, one by one', and he did. Nelson was released from jail, and the first thing he did was to talk with Alan García. Why? In whose name? In the name of CONPACCC? Or in his own name? I think that García gave him the green light to create his political party *Kuska* because he organized this so-called cocalero party to ruin and divide the forces of the cocaleros."¹⁶⁹

Any collusion between the García government and Palomino might seem strange at first, as García's politics included an aggressive stance against unions and campesino organizations (APRODEH 2007). However, it can be argued that García used Palomino to cause chaos and disorganization in the different cocalero regions, as the Fósforo district wasn't the only area where internal strife existed among cocalero organizations. There was internal conflict within Palomino's own region, the Apurímac-Ene River Valley. When it was announced that Palomino had signed an agreement proposing projects of alternative development, called *Plan VRAE*, without consulting the local cocaleros, there was popular outrage against his leadership. Local cocaleros alleged that Palomino was corrupt, and that he was only engaged in the cocalero struggle for personal financial gain. Afterwards several local cocalero leaders, out of frustration with Palomino, created their own autonomous cocalero association. Palomino's regional support declined so steeply that, in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, even *Kuska*'s elected mayors refused to cooperate with him. These local divisions may also explain why the Apurímac-Ene River Valley never organized any protests when the Fósforo district was hit by forced eradication operations.

¹⁶⁷ Conversation with Alfonso Reyes Coca, Puerto Mal Abrigo, October 15, 2007.

¹⁶⁸ Literally: A "Gentlemen's Agreement." Agreement made between the cocalero leaders of different regions calling for a national strike. If the government resumed forced eradication in one of the associated cocalero regions. The *Pacto* was even re-installed in October 2005 during the CONPACCC's national congress on the Pampa de la Quinoa. See Chapter 5, section 5.6.2.

¹⁶⁹ Interview with Alfonso Reyes Coca, August 12, 2007.

While Nelson Palomino's power over his base declined, Obregón encountered the same problems in the Fósforo district. After one year in office, Obregón had lost all of the support she had previously had in the Fósforo district. Her year in congress had been full of well-intentioned proposals, including the call for a new coca law, and calls for a halt to forced eradication, but the cocaleros in her home region grew increasingly frustrated. One reason for their frustration was that Obregón had promised to establish an office in Tocache where local residents could present proposals for projects in the district. But after just a few weeks, she didn't pay the rent for the office, leaving the employees behind with a large debt. Local cocaleros who visited Obregón in her office in Lima were disappointed. They were met with suspicion and were told that what they were asking for was unrealistic. More than once, these cocalero leaders had been accused of visiting Obregón only to ask for money. People were insulted because they hadn't come to ask for money, but wanted instead to see how their community member and old local leader was doing. Even her most loyal companion in the cocalero struggle, Alfonso Reyes Coca, began to feel disillusioned, stating:

“She has lost her support because we don't hear from her and we don't see her doing anything. Most importantly, she doesn't visit us. She doesn't even visit Tocache. Therefore people say: ‘Why have we voted for her? We should have voted for another candidate’. Well she sometimes forgets, she has only a few years left. It will be difficult for her to clean up her image here.”¹⁷⁰

Obregón's victory had turned out to be a big disappointment for the local cocaleros, who felt frustrated because her initiatives were concentrated in Tarapoto,¹⁷¹ where she did support civilian initiatives and organizations. Fósforo's population became enraged when Obregón publically stated she had won her seat in congress because of the support of Tarapoto's population, while failing to mention the cocaleros. The local frustration came to a head on August 30, 2007, when Obregón was present during the festivities of Santa María. A priest scolded her because people who wanted to visit the church had to stand, and during her campaign she had promised to buy seats for the local church. The failure of Obregón to keep her campaign promises, her neglect of local problems, and her haughty attitude towards those who visited her in Lima, were the reasons cited most frequently for the decline of her popularity. Rumors began to circulate that Obregón was involved in a financial scandal involving ENACO officers and the reselling of legal coca to illegal drug traffickers, which was thought to be the reason behind Obregón's efforts to control the cocalero association and the construction of the regional cocalero federation.

CONPACCP held its sixth national congress in Trujillo¹⁷² on September 10-15, 2007. Nelson Palomino had tried to frustrate the organization of this congress by sending out an e-mail to all national and local cocalero leaders in which he accused the organizers of the congress of corruption. Therefore, he wrote, he was refusing to participate in the congress and he urged the other cocalero leaders to do the same. But the local and regional cocalero leaders ignored his letter and participated in large numbers, coming all the way from Puno, the *Selva Central*, the Upper Huallaga (mainly Tingo María) and the Apurímac-Ene River valley, to see what was going on with their national confederation. The congress began to appear like the first national congresses, in which the cocalero representation from different regions was the most important. But the national congress became famous for another event. Palomino arrived two days after the official opening date, and his reception stood in sharp contrast to that in Tingo María a year before, when he was embraced by numerous cocaleros. This year, his

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Alfonso Reyes Coca, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 12, 2007.

¹⁷¹ The largest city of the San Martín department.

¹⁷² Capital of La Libertad department.

entrance went unnoticed, or so it seemed. Later, it became clear than many local cocalero leaders had deliberately ignored Palomino. They had had enough of his leadership and when the time came to choose new national leaders, Palomino wasn't elected for any. He wasn't even praised for his past contributions to the cocalero cause. Obregón, who only was present for 30 minutes, was given the same treatment.

Of the three leaders who had dominated the cocalero movement over the course of the previous six years, only Elsa Malpartida was applauded when she presented her projects.¹⁷³ By 2007, the quiet, self-composed Malpartida had earned a position of respect by remaining untainted by scandal and by fearlessly leading protests. At the end of 2007, she spearheaded the resistance of Huánuco's cocaleros to forced eradication. When CORAH eradicated a *chacra* of a cocalero in Alto Limón¹⁷⁴ who brought his coca to ENACO, Malpartida responded by circling the field where the eradicators were working with several of her followers. They managed to get their hands on the CORAH workers' food, which they threw on the ground, while others tried to burn down the workers' cars. Although not everybody agreed with these violent methods, she was thought to be the only cocalero leader who truly remained dedicated to the cocaleros' cause.

During the congress in Trujillo a new directorate was chosen. Once elected, the new CONPACCP leaders¹⁷⁵ adopted a pragmatic stance, which sought to halt the forced eradication. It was agreed to support the *Acta de Tocache*, and to organize protests to demand that the national government honor this agreement, which had been signed in Tocache in November 2007. The newly elected cocalero leaders announced a series of steps they would take new actions if the national government failed to comply with the provisions of the accord. While the new CONPACCP leaders assumed their posts, they noticed that the majority of cocaleros refrained from participation in any kind of protest. Only the cocaleros of the Fósforo district and Puno, both regions that were hit by forced eradication operations, organized protests.¹⁷⁶ The decreasing will to participate in any protests can also be explained because state repression against protesters markedly increased during the García government, as will be shown below.

6.4.4 García's hard-line response

Under Alan García, it became a crime to supply, produce, collect and commercialize raw materials destined for the illegal manufacture of drugs in any of their stages. Thus, for all intents and purposes, it became illegal to be a cocalero. In October 2006, the *International Human Rights Federation* (FIDH) expressed concern regarding the human rights situation during social protests in Peru and, in 2007, APRODEH (*Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos*) stated that the human rights situation in the country had become considerably worse in comparison to the previous year, and further stated that this was especially true for cocaleros. García even made involvement in the cocalero movement a criminal activity. Resisting arrest by authorities who seek to eradicate illegal crops became considered a crime, leading to immediate arrest without any form of investigation (APRODEH 2007). Police action was

¹⁷³ Her plans involved meeting with Evo Morales, Bolivia's president, who would attend an important meeting of the UNOCD (*United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime*) to try to get the coca leaf off the list of drugs. Malpartida, through her position as member of the Andean Parliament, tried to get Morales to make a reference to the Peruvian cocaleros in his speech. Furthermore, although she didn't receive a fixed payment for her political activities, she never stopped contributing financially to CONPACCP.

¹⁷⁴ Cocalero community on the *Carretera Marginal* between Tingo María and Tocache (Huánuco department).

¹⁷⁵ Pedro Pérez of Aguaytía (Ucayali department) was chosen as the leader of the CONPACCP; Walter Acha (Apurímac-Ene River Valley and main opponent of Nelson Palomino) was chosen as sub-leader; and Molotov (the Fósforo district) was chosen as the head of protests and mobilizations.

¹⁷⁶ In the Fósforo district, the protests didn't receive regional attention because only the road between Tocache and Tarapoto was blocked, and because the cocaleros from Tingo refrained from protesting. Thus, the protest did not cause any serious disruption of traffic in the district.

increasingly employed to prevent popular mobilizations. On July 22, 2007, the García government approved eleven legislative decrees announced as a mechanism to fight against organized crime. These decrees were largely defined by employing terms such as “guerrilla violence” and “drug trafficking”, and were primarily used to suppress cocalero protests. But the García government wasn’t the first Peruvian government to introduce severe penalties for participating in protests. When confronted by constant protests, President Toledo (2001-2006) approved several repressive laws directed against the protest forms most used by the cocaleros (including road blockades and *paros*). Only days before leaving office, Toledo issued a law increasing the severity of penalties for protesters.

The most severe example of state repression during protests was seen in the cocalero region of Puno. As early as October 20, 2004, a confrontation between police forces and cocaleros protesting against the forced eradication operation turned violent in the town of San Gabán.¹⁷⁷ During these protests, the cocaleros occupied an electric power plant and other buildings in the city. When the angry crowd tried to take over the police station, the police fired on the crowd and killed three cocaleros. The Toledo government then declared a state of emergency in the San Gabán region, placing the military in charge. On September 23, 2005, the forced eradication operation re-entered the region of San Gabán. The cocaleros’ local leader, returning from CONPACCP’s fourth national congress¹⁷⁸ was immediately arrested by the police. He was taken to a military base in Puno, where he was sentenced without a trial. He spent more than a year in prison, during which time the local cocalero association that he had led disintegrated. After his release, the cocalero leader tried to re-organize the San Gabán region and the Sandía¹⁷⁹ region. He received support for his reorganization efforts from Malpartida, who traveled to both regions.¹⁸⁰

In November 2007, the cocaleros of the department of Puno department considered a new and imaginative way to show their displeasure with the García government. They decided to walk through the streets wearing absolutely nothing but their underwear. In this way, they symbolized the government’s “fleecing” of the country’s cocaleros. Their creative protest was organized by Joaquín, a cocalero leader from Pumahuasi (Huánuco department), who until the congress in Trujillo had been the “protest organizer” of CONPACCP. After the congress in Trujillo, Joaquín travelled to Puno with other cocalero leaders to organize the protests. But during the peaceful march of cocaleros, Joaquín was one of four protesters who were arrested. The following day, the protesters set up roadblocks and demanded the release of the four detained people (including Joaquín). Going against the government’s policies, the regional police commander decided to negotiate with the cocalero leaders. It was agreed that the cocaleros would stop the roadblocks if the police released the four men. Joaquín was released from jail. But in other regions, in sharp contrast to the police response in Puno, the government endorsed the use of violence to end these kinds of protests.

As had been the case with Toledo, García was primarily responsive to demands of Lima’s middle and upper classes, who supported hard-line policies against popular protests (APRODEH 2007). Currently, protesters can be arrested without a warrant, the protests’ leaders can be brutally beaten and detained by the police without any consequences, and the leaders’ arrest records can be traced by intelligence forces. In recent years, there have been numerous casualties, which have increased since the departure of the former Minister of Interior, Pilar Mazzetti, who was replaced after the events in Sión. After she was replaced, the police were given more leeway to use force to deal with protests. In 2007, police and military

¹⁷⁷ The largest cocalero region of the Puno department.

¹⁷⁸ On September 26-30, 2005, at CONPACCP’s fourth national congress that was held in Pampa de la Quinua (Ayacucho department).

¹⁷⁹ The province of Sandía is part of the department of Puno. It is located in the north-east of the department bordering on Bolivia.

¹⁸⁰ Speech of local cocalero leader San Gabán during National Congress of the CONPACCP in Trujillo, September 11, 2007.

forces were even given immunity for killing citizens during protests. During the Toledo government, 14 people were killed during protests, all by the police forces trying to control popular protests. During the García government's first year [until 2007] at least ten people died (APRODEH 2007).

In April 2007, after cocalero protest in Tocache, the Fósforo district, Huánuco and Aguaytía, García suggested that the new Minister of the Interior, Luis Alva Castro, bomb the cocalero valleys with jet fighters in the hopes that this action would bring the problem to a speedy conclusion (see APRODEH 2007; ICG 2008^a: 22). In the ICG report, the president's remarks were placed in the context of cocalero protests on the national day of protest (October 29, 2007), when 17 policemen were injured in Aguaytía. Even more shocking than the statement was the answer of the Minister of the Interior. He didn't condemn García's remarks, which were an egregious violation, and perhaps even incitement to commit a war crime, but he rejected the proposal because on the grounds that the Peruvian Air Force lacked the means to carry out the bombing.

6.5 Failed cocalero politics leading to violence

In Peru, the forced eradication operations continued to threaten the same cocalero regions, including the Fósforo district and the cocalero regions in Puno. In some regions, the cocalero leaders, in an alliance with drug traffickers, had totally driven the state out of their region. Here the Peruvian state refrained from the war on drugs because it was thought that the entrance of the police and CORAH troops would be followed by violent retaliation by the cocaleros. Hence, even after the ending of the internal armed conflict, the Peruvian state did not control its entire territory. As a result, the state's forced eradication operations remained restricted and only entered some cocalero regions.

One of CONPACCP's main demands continued to be the end of forced eradication operations. The forced eradication operation in the Fósforo district was followed by attempts on the part of various cocalero leaders to become involved in national politics. It was thought that the presence of cocaleros in politics at a national level would hasten the end of the government's eradication efforts. Because CONPACCP did not create its own political party, the Peruvian cocaleros did not follow the example of Bolivia, where in 1995 Evo Morales formed MAS, became a regional political leader, and eventually was elected president. In Peru, the cocalero leaders were dependent on Ollanta's party, an independent movement with a diverse membership that had previously been aligned with different national parties. After the elections, groups of UPP-PN members changed their voting behavior, which left Obregón with only minimal support for her proposals for dealing with the cocalero problem. Although the political project of Obregón and Malpartida initially had some success, they only managed to stop the forced eradication temporarily; they never were able to stop it completely. Cocalero candidates aligned with Ollanta Humala's party were not elected in the municipality elections of 2006. With this failure, Fósforo's cocaleros lost another chance to advocate at the national level for a halt to forced eradication in their district.

"Living in insecurity, with the sensation of a permanent threat, contributes to the breakdown of basic solidarity" (Torres-Rivas 1999: 294). This could indeed be said to be the situation of the inhabitants of the Fósforo district. Moreover, a large percentage of the population no longer embraced the collective cocalero identity. Ineffective, corrupt and disunited leadership had a demoralizing effect on ordinary cocaleros. In September 2007, an overhaul of cocalero leadership appeared to inject new life into the movement, although the effectiveness of the new leaders in pursuing the movement's agenda and igniting the enthusiasm of the masses remains to be seen. Some of Fósforo's inhabitants, worn down by

years of seemingly futile struggle, have made the transition to the cultivation of legal crops.¹⁸¹ The García government increased penalties for participation in protests and criminalized the cocaleros. With these changes, the cocaleros became “re-marginalized”. Only a decade after ending the violence, Fósforo’s cocaleros increasingly asked themselves what had changed, as events began to resemble more and more the years before the internal armed conflict, when the cocaleros were continuously threatened by forced eradication operations. The diminishing coca cultivation also left many residents bereft of any opportunity to make money, other than through the illegal cocaine industry.¹⁸²

As a result, when the competition over the diminishing cocaine industry grew, this led to growing levels in crime and violence. This rise in violence and crime gave different illegal armed actors an opportunity to strengthen their presence, as will be explained in the following chapter. As I will show, this gave a new twist to the post-conflict process in the Upper Huallaga, maybe even to a point where the notion of “post”-post-conflict has become appropriate.

¹⁸¹ Sometimes this was accomplished with government assistance, and other times without such assistance.

¹⁸² With the cultivation of coffee, cocoa, or palm trees they weren’t making a profit, as these crops require at least three years to generate a profit. They did receive a monthly salary but this was nothing in comparison to what they earned before. So, many of these men, even those who entered the alternative development programs, began to smuggle small quantities of cocaine.

7. Life and death in a post-conflict “red zone”

One largely undocumented consequence of the war on drugs was the fact that violence sharply increased during the forced eradication operations¹ in the affected communities of the Fósforo district. Pécaut's (1999: 141-142) description of localized violence in parts of Colombia could be applied to the situation in the district, where murder, thuggery, and intimidation became daily events. Anyone could become a victim in the arbitrary violence by drug traffickers, *sicarios*² and criminal groups. As will be described in this chapter, most of the violent incidents were closely related to the diminishing cocaine industry, but they were also related to the actions of the state security forces in the district. As argued in Chapter 1, this violence must be investigated in its local context in order to be understood. In the Fósforo district, during the most recent forced eradication operations, people lived in a situation where insecurity went beyond its ordinary limits (see Beneduce 2007: 48). In the previous chapter I showed that this rising insecurity led to the breakdown of basic solidarity and, as a result, the cocalero association was torn apart, leaving the population to its own devices to deal with their mounting problems.

After the forced eradication in May 2005, the rising levels of violence led the residents of the Fósforo district to initiate their own efforts to maintain security in the district, and this led to the formation of *rondas campesinas*.³ These self-defense groups of villagers were a new response to the refusal of the state security forces to respond to the violence. It was the first time most of Fósforo's residents became involved in such self-defense groups, as neither *rondas campesinas*⁴ nor *comités de autodefensa*⁵ had been commonly utilized in the Fósforo district. By the creation of the *ronda*, the inhabitants took a leading role in the mobilization against violence against their persons and property. But soon the state interpreted the population's self-defense initiatives in the Upper Huallaga as evidence of Shining Path's re-emergence. Additionally, the initiative met with suspicion on the part of the regional authorities, civil society and police forces, who stigmatized the campesino patrols as an uncivil movement (Payne 2000). But, as will be explained, because the population was confronted by deadly violence, the self-defense groups were converted into armed campesino patrols, which eventually led to radicalization and the creation of an “uncivil society”.

¹ As seen in Chapter 6, the forced eradication operations began in May 2005 and the operations continue until present day.

² Hit men, hired killers or armed bodyguards.

³ In the 1970s, because of an inadequate police and justice system, some communities in the Cajamarca and Piura departments began to face growing threats from cattle thieves. In these Northern provinces, the first rural civilian associations called *rondas campesinas* were formed to protect campesinos' property and livestock, and to defend against common thieves, bandits and cattle rustlers (Starn 1991^a; 1992; 1999). Soon the *rondas* took over all practical police tasks of protecting the public, in some regions even totally replacing the police force (Basombrío 2003: 163). These local associations proved successful in their initial goal, which gave them additional legitimacy in the rural areas, and they eventually expanded their duties to include provision of mediation services to resolved disputes and the administration of justice (Basombrío 2003: 161; Starn 1992; 1999). These self-defense initiatives became widespread in different campesino communities. In the 1980s and 1990s, the organization of the *rondas campesinas* served as a model for the formation by the Peruvian military of the so-called *comités de autodefensa* in the Ayacucho department. These self-defense groups were created in order to combat the growing influence of Shining Path in campesino communities. In the Ayacucho department these groups became actively involved in fighting against the guerrillas of Shining Path that had started their popular war against the state in the 1990s-2000s (see Fumerton 2002; Starn 1995; 1996). These growing practices of “popular justice” or “private justice” are deeply rooted in specific historic state formations and the pervasive lack of relations with the wider society (Burt 2007: 51). The *rondas* increasingly imposed sanctions without asking for police interference, and consequently the government was “forced” to relinquish its monopoly on the use of violence (Basombrío 2003: 162; Burt 2007: 51). To understand the importance of these initiatives it is important to take into account the “cultural power of law”, as the *ronda campesina* and its “peasant justice” produced local meanings, shaped collective identities, and defined endemic relationships among regional fragile state power, villagers and growing crime (Goldstein 2003: 23; Merry 1993). It is important to bear in mind that, in the Fósforo district, the *rondas campesinas* were primarily organized in April 2004, decades after their appearance in other parts of Peru.

⁴ Self-defense initiatives of peasants.

⁵ Self-defense committees to fight Shining Path during the internal armed conflict.

At the same time, state power and rule of law were increasingly contested by numerous armed actors.⁶ The precariousness of the situation in the Upper Huallaga, after the internal armed conflict's partial ending, became apparent when in 2005 new armed groups re-entered the valley, all using the name of Peru's infamous guerrilla movement. As will be shown later in this chapter, the majority of these illegal armed forces are dependent on drug money. This chapter will describe in detail the relationship between the cocaine trade and the small, but heavily-armed, actors called "Shining Path". In addition, the villagers' reaction to violence, as well as their narrative constructions of this violence, will also be examined. The first section of this chapter will provide an overview of the increasing everyday violence and its impact on the district. The second section will provide a detailed examination of the different groups engaging in criminal activity in the district, and of the population's changing view of these groups. The third section of the chapter describes the creation of the *rondas campesinas* in April 9, 2004 during a meeting in Mal Abrigo and their relationship to the cocalero association. It will be explained that the *ronda* was not primarily directed against the violence but was an attempt of the cocalero leaders to get more popular support for their protests. Shortly thereafter, the *ronda* had become a violent actor in a district that was plagued by violence daily. Section 4 proceeds to discuss the *rondas'* relationship with drug traffickers, civil society, the police and the military. The stigmas imposed upon, and the accusations leveled at, the participating *ronderos* for alleged ties to terrorist activity or drug trafficking will be discussed there. The fifth section of the chapter discusses events during the period in August 2006-August 2007, when the *ronda* surpassed its legal limits, leading to decreasing support for its activities on the part of the district's population. In the final section of this chapter, the alleged rebirth of Shining Path is described by using the villagers' own narratives and opinions. But, first and foremost, it is important to understand the different kinds of violence which began to threaten the population in the Fósforo district.

7.1 Growing violence

7.1.1 Cocaine violence

It has been argued that, in cocalero regions, the highest levels of violence emerge during periods in which there is a power struggle among contending dominant actors (see Reyes 1994: 126). In situations where the cocaine industry can function unchallenged, incidents of violence are less frequent (see Shannon 2002: 43-44) and limited to a small subset of the population. Violence in Fósforo through 2005 was limited, due to the established relationships between the population and the old established drug *firmas* (see Chapter 3). The cocaine industry was highly organized: For example, there were certain agreements between the established *firmas* about the areas under their control. These agreements were respected by the *firmas* involved. Even cooperation among the different *firmas* was routine: If, for example, one *patrón* planned the large-scale *merca* transportations, he might invite other *patrones* to collaborate in the transport (i.e., giving them the opportunity to move their own *merca*). The *patrones* were only threatened by criminal groups that entered the region.⁷ The relation between competition, violence and growing conflict became apparent in the Fósforo district during the forced eradication operations conducted in May 2005, after which different trafficking groups entered the district.⁸ As a result of the entrance of competing groups,

⁶ See Appendix F for a detailed overview of all these armed actors.

⁷ As seen in the case of "Maradona," who was the leader of a gang from Juanjui.

⁸ It might seem strange that these groups entered the Fósforo district during the forced eradication operations. But during these operations the local *firmas* were severely damaged and lost their power. During these periods, it became easier to become involved in the higher echelons of the cocaine trade.

violence in the illegal cocaine industry and other related crime increased. The decreasing supply of cocaine diminished the power of the established *firmas*, who became challenged by new drug trafficking groups coming from Tocache, Aucayacu, Juanjui or foreign trafficking groups, mainly Colombians. It was these new drug trafficking groups, which had no bonds with the local population, that were accused of being abusive, thuggish, and violent, terrifying the population. These new groups were blamed for causing the local chaos and violence.

Undeniably, the dependence on the illegal cocaine industry brought problems to the region, including alcoholism, violence against women and children, and prostitution,⁹ but these problems increased during the periods when forced eradication was taking place. These problems increased with the entrance of new trafficking groups without any established relationships with the local population. The changes were most evident in bars and discos, where numerous adolescent girls tried to help their families survive by selling their bodies to *traqueteros* and large-scale cocaleros—or to any man with money. Teen pregnancies, rising levels of domestic violence, and child prostitution were changes brought about by the economic upheaval resulting from forced eradication. Another consequence of forced eradication was that more and more villagers became involved in smuggling and other criminal activities related to the cocaine trade.

After experiencing a relative peaceful period from 2002-2004, when the cocaine industry was unchallenged, villagers were shocked in 2005 by a sudden rush of killings. A violent turf war erupted among different armed groups as small-scale, large-scale, local, and foreign traffickers all began competing for domination of a cocaine industry that was in disarray as a result of the forced eradication campaigns. There were battles over routes and territory, which frequently led to assassinations of members of competing groups. In such a social context, a cycle of revenge in which demonstration of lethal force becomes seen as an essential means of protecting one's territory, reputation, and power can easily gain momentum (see Jacobs 2000: 111). In such an environment, anyone can become a victim of violent reprisals. The danger and fear of becoming the next victim increased while the struggle for cocaine, *droga base, bruta* or coca paste became more violent every day. During this time, anyone involved in the illegal cocaine industry—as well as some villagers who had no direct involvement—began to carry guns for their protection. The villagers began to call this period “*la guerra de los narcos*” (the war of the *narcos*). In Mal Abrigo, the bars and discos had always been the places where the feuds got resolved. Yet it was now more frequently the case that, unlike before, when conflicts were resolved in a fistfight, guns and deadly force were employed. Particularly in Mal Abrigo, gunfire was heard—and murdered corpses were witnessed—on a daily basis.

In most cases, the violence that occurred during forced eradication operations was linked to the dwindling cocaine industry, which was no longer large enough to economically support as many people¹⁰ as it had previously. Such broad groups as *burros*, *traqueteros*, and the *firmas*' crews saw their profits drastically decrease, while at the same time more people entered the smuggling and processing activities and violently competed over what was left of the industry. Suspicions, hearsay and rumors about betrayal or stealing quickly led to assassination of the alleged perpetrator. During forced eradication operations in 2005, Puerto Mal Abrigo's shadow side took over daily life, including kidnappings, hired-killers, cold-blooded assassinations and even a drive-by shooting. This period made clear how quickly things could change in these cocaine enclaves. The cases that are presented in the following paragraphs all occurred within a span of approximately three months.

⁹ It was often children of small-scale cocaleros or *peones* who engaged in prostitution because, as argued before, these groups were more vulnerable to the forced eradication operation.

¹⁰ e.g., new trafficking groups, numerous independent smugglers, old established *firmas*.

The first event happened in the early morning of September 6, 2005, in the small hamlet of Paraíso. That morning, I was eating breakfast in *La Grandita*'s restaurant, when I saw Aurelio pass by, walking with a limp and with several bruises on his face. I shouted his name, and the young man who accompanied him tapped him on his shoulder. Aurelio made a gesture to indicate he would be returning shortly. Five minutes later, both men entered the restaurant and silently sat down. Aurelio asked for some water so that he could take his pills. I ordered breakfast for the two men while they sat quietly and stared outside. As he ate his meal, Aurelio talked about what had happened in his house in Paraíso that early morning. When the people present in Aurelio's house were getting ready for another day of harvesting coca, they were assaulted. A group of six heavily armed men entered the house and pointed their automatic guns at the head of the man sleeping closest to the door. The young man who accompanied Aurelio to Puerto Mal Abrigo was the first one who was beaten up by the assailants. Aurelio, who was sleeping on the second floor of the house, at first only heard some indistinct noise. Knowing something was wrong, he looked around but found only a flashlight, which he grabbed and thought of using as a weapon. Aurelio went downstairs, where he was abruptly thrown on the floor by two of the assailants. He was then savagely beaten, as were the other persons in the house.

When they discussed what had occurred, the two men said that they suspected the assailants were looking for El Perro, the son of the man who owned the house. It was known that El Perro had some problems with a Colombian drug trafficking group that recently had started working in the district. There were rumors that El Perro was the mastermind behind a violent assault on the *Carretera Marginal* a few days before involving the heist of cocaine that was being transported on a truck to Juanjui. The cocaine on that truck belonged to a small Colombian drug *firma* operating in the Fósforo district. But none of the villagers were sure whether El Perro had been involved. After the heist occurred, some Colombian traffickers had visited Paraíso and asked for cocaleros who were harvesting coca, saying that they wanted to buy large amount of coca leaves. Aurelio stated:

“They were white men, so everybody noticed they were Colombian traffickers and they were passing the night in our house. Surely the assaulters that entered our house this morning thought the Colombians were still hiding in our house. It is better that the next time, when these people come to our community to buy coca, they sleep in Puerto Mal Abrigo, because their presence has put us in a dangerous situation.”¹¹

It was believed that the armed group had entered the house to settle scores with El Perro. They took a young man hostage whom they probably thought to be El Perro. Aurelio said that he feared the worst:

“They have taken another young man with them and I’m scared that something will happen to him.... He doesn’t have anything to do with this, at least if I’m right about the reason of the assault on our house. But here in our region, you never know...”¹²

The assailants quickly left the house, and a boat was waiting for them on the Huallaga River’s shore, and they disappeared down the river. During the attack, Aurelio recognized one of the assailants. He was a man Aurelio employed as a *peón*, but on the day of the assault, the man had not turned up for work. Aurelio asked around in Puerto Mal Abrigo as to whether anyone there knew anything about the man. Men working for El Adusto’s *firma* were also asked to organize a manhunt for the kidnapped young man.

¹¹ Conversation with Aurelio Cuadrado Cruz, September 6, 2005.

¹² Conversation with Aurelio Cuadrado Cruz, September 6, 2005.

The above story demonstrates how confused people initially were about the reason for the attack. Each day, a different version of the story was told. In all of these versions, it became clear there was some kind of feud between different small-scale drug trafficking organizations operating in the Fósforo district. For days, several people searched the area looking for the young man who had been taken as hostage, but nobody was found. People feared for the man's life because, in the past, any hostage taken by drug traffickers had always ended up being murdered.¹³ The man's family members searched frantically for him in and around Mal Abrigo, but their efforts were unsuccessful. After five days, the young man finally was found: Bruises covered his whole body, and his face was hardly recognizable, but he was alive and able to speak. When some men found him, the first words he uttered were:

"They said it was a mistake and let me go!"¹⁴

This young man was one of the lucky ones. He had survived a dispute in the illegal drug business. In most cases, those who are targeted are killed, as will be seen in the following two cases.

On August 16, 2005, a few weeks before the attack described above, I went to the Frontera River to bathe because Puerto Mal Abrigo's communal water had been cut off. When I returned to the village, I saw Manuel standing on the road. I asked him how he was doing. Without answering, he motioned for me to enter his house. I walked inside and stood motionless. In his living-room there was an iron coffin that had been placed on a table. Some candles were burning while Manuel asked tearfully if I wanted something to drink. But he noticed my gaze was fixed on the coffin. Body fluids dripping out of this coffin fell on the wooden floor and the room was filled with a terrible stench. Manuel apologized. An awkward silence followed. After a few minutes, he told me what had happened.

Manuel's son Alfonso, who was about 22 years old, was an independent *burro*, involved in small-scale buying, smuggling and selling of cocaine. One day, two young men offered him a substantial amount cocaine for a low price, an offer Alfonso quickly accepted. What these two boys didn't tell him was that the cocaine had been stolen from their father's supply, and that their father, Juan, was a prominent drug trafficker who lived in Tocache. When their father noticed that a large amount of his cocaine was missing, the boys blamed Manuel's son for stealing it. Immediately after these accusations, Juan organized a retaliatory action against the young man. Alfonso was tricked into coming to a remote jungle location by Juan's two sons, who convinced him they had more cheap cocaine for sale. Once again, Alfonso quickly agreed. But when he showed up at the agreed spot, he was overpowered by Juan's *sicarios*. They forced him to climb into a black nylon sack¹⁵ after which the *sicarios* beat him up so badly that all of his bones were broken. After this, the *sicarios* shot the sack repeatedly at close range, to make sure that they killed him.

Two weeks later, his lifeless body was found in the sack, close to the shores of the Frontera River. His body was totally decomposed and they had to open the sack to see whether it was the body of Alfonso.¹⁶ Manuel cried when he said that it had only been possible for him to identify his son's body because he recognized his clothes. Alfonso's remains were brought to the health clinic in Mal Abrigo, where they were placed in an iron coffin that was brought to Manuel's house. After a very short mourning period (i.e., because the decomposed body became a public health risk) a funeral was held and Alfonso was

¹³ Information gathered during several conversations with the family of the young man and other inhabitants of Puerto Mal Abrigo, September 7-9, 2005.

¹⁴ Conversation with Aurelio, who was present when they had found the young man, September 13, 2005.

¹⁵ These sacks are called *costales* and are normally used to transport large amounts of coca.

¹⁶ Conversation with several friends of the young man, who participated in the search and found the body, cemetery Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 17, 2005.

buried. A group of Alfonso's friends who were present during the informal burial ceremony tried to console Manuel. The adolescents helped Manuel drill a hole in the coffin, dribbled the victim's favorite whiskey into the hole, and then sealed the hole. Everybody present mourned in silence but then, suddenly, Alfonso's friends vowed that they would exact vengeance. They proclaimed that they would not allow Juan to enter the Fósforo district again. Some of the boys even said they would travel to Tocache to find his hiding place and avenge their friend's murder. But Manuel remained inconsolable. When the burial was over and people started to leave, Manuel kneeled next to me and whispered: "The youth in this region don't seem to realize that I have lost my son because of drug trafficking...and revenge or no revenge...I will not get my child back".¹⁷ After the funeral, nobody ever heard Manuel speak about his son's death.¹⁸

The third violent event also shocked the whole village of Puerto Mal Abrigo. On the afternoon of August 28, 2005, a man was shot while he was sitting on a bench in front of one of the shops on Mal Abrigo's *Carretera Marginal*. Bystanders saw a car with blackened windows approach. As the man tried to escape his attackers, the hired killers lowered one of the windshields, pulled an automatic gun and shot the man at point-blank range. The victim was hit in his chest and the bullet penetrated one of his lungs. Bystanders carried the victim to the health clinic, where it became clear that the man would not survive unless he was taken to the hospital in Tocache immediately. Among the bystanders were some owners of *colectivos*, who transported passengers to Tocache. The medic asked if one of the men were prepared to transport the victim to Tocache. Unwilling to be dragged into the conflict, most of the drivers murmured something about "getting their car dirty" and refused. But one driver didn't hesitate and helped the victim into his car. Meanwhile, large groups of people had gathered on Mal Abrigo's streets. On every street corner, people whispered their theories of the shooting. Because nobody in Mal Abrigo seemed to know the victim, the sentiment most commonly expressed was that "nobody is shot without a reason; there must have been a reason".¹⁹ The villagers' explanations were all related to the cocaine industry. For example, one possible explanation that arose immediately was that the victim hadn't settled his debts with a drug trafficker. A couple of hours later, when darkness fell over Puerto Mal Abrigo, the message arrived that the victim had not survived the trip to the hospital. But then another act of violence occurred on the *Carretera Marginal*. The *colectivo* transporting the victim to Tocache was followed by the *sicarios'* car. On the road to Tocache, the *sicarios* overpowered the driver and one of them shot the victim in his chest, killing him immediately. The driver was brutally beaten by the perpetrators, because if he wasn't able to speak, he would not be able to make a statement to the police forces in Tocache.²⁰ El Adusto's *firma* immediately arranged transportation to bring the injured driver back to Puerto Mal Abrigo safely. When news reached the village, a number of women began weeping convulsively because they knew the victim—a longtime resident of the village—very well.²¹

¹⁷ Observations during the burial of Manuel's son, August 17, 2005.

¹⁸ The perpetrators were never brought to justice because, as argued before, the disputes involving cocaine have to be settled without the involvement of the state security forces or the courts (Jacobs *et al.* 2000; Topalli *et al.* 2002). In the words of Topalli *et al.* (2002: 337), "One of criminology's dirty little secrets is that much serious crime, perhaps most, takes place beyond the reach of criminal law because it is perpetrated against individuals who themselves are involved in lawbreaking".

¹⁹ Explained by the sentence "*Por algo habrá sido*". The same sentence was also used to explain deaths during the internal armed conflict. Observation and conversation on the street of Puerto Mal Abrigo after the event took place, August 28, 2005.

²⁰ Because the violent act against the *colectivo* driver wasn't related with the cocaine industry, he could have gone to the police forces in Tocache to report the violent attack.

²¹ Fieldwork notes made during the night of August 28, 2005. The driver did survive the attack but his recovery from his injuries took weeks. The perpetrators of the violence were never brought to justice because it was assumed that the drive-by shooting was related to the cocaine industry. The driver of the *colectivo* never reported the incident to the police in Tocache because this would lead to a police investigation in the district. More police presence was not appreciated as in the district, law is present (although largely restricted to the urban areas), "but not granted legitimacy because the police are perceived to be merely an occupying force" (Jacobs 2000: 125).

Another event took place only a few weeks after this drive-by-shooting. By then, violence had become a daily occurrence. In some cases villagers were eyewitnesses, as in the event described below:

“This is the place where they killed *Anibal*²²...They waited for him here. Afterwards, they dragged him to his house so that he could show him where he had hidden the cocaine they supposed he had stolen two or three days before. But they killed him in vain. They killed him but they didn’t say that they found the cocaine the very next day. The poor man. I saw how they killed him. They dragged him to his house and they shot him there. He almost suffocated, but he was holding on to a large pole in his house. He didn’t want to let go of the pole because he didn’t want them to take him to another place.... They were struggling, but he wouldn’t let go. They shot him various times in different parts of his body, but he still didn’t die.²³ There were people watching, standing there, making jokes. But when they fired into the air, everyone disappeared.”²⁴

Disputes that arose among those involved in the cocaine industry were sometimes settled by vigilante justice (Kernaghan 2006: 82). By publicly executing the victims, the drug traffickers served notice to everyone of what they were capable of doing, and such actions usually had exactly the effect they were intended to have; that of intimidating the villagers and thus of preventing them from even thinking of doing anything that might get in the way of the traffickers’ operations.

Most villagers adopted the explanation that “it must have happened for a reason”, a phrase that had been previously used only in reference to unknown victims during the internal armed conflict. In discussing the significance of this phrase, Kernaghan (2006: 204) observed: “Instead of outrage, instead of any questioning of what might have happened, a swift judgment determined that the victims must have *done* something to deserve such a terrible fate”. When the established *patrones*’ power over the district declined and feuds arose between different new trafficking organizations, the majority of victims were no longer acquaintances, friends or families but strangers who recently ventured into the district. As seen above, in the case of the drive-by shooting, the villagers did not mourn the deaths of persons whom they did not know. But such a reaction left an important question unanswered: namely why and by whom were these people killed? Because of communal secrecy, there were always different stories about the reasons for violence. Nothing was an obvious fact. During my fieldwork in 2006, when the violence reached its peak, the villagers of the Fósforo district were highly suspicious about my determination to write down at least some of the details of such episodes, since they generally clung to the belief that “it must have happened for a reason”. Holding such a belief made it unnecessary to inquire too closely into what was going on because, they said, “It was possible to know too much in this district”.

²² This was the actual pseudonym of the man who was murdered.

²³ *Anibal* wasn’t killed in his house but after being shot several times, he was unable to resist, and he was taken to the shore of the Upper Huallaga River, where he was murdered.

²⁴ Conversation with Alcino Paredes, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 10, 2007.

7.1.2 Creeping anomie²⁵

During the different forced eradication operations in the Fósforo district, the social actors that had previously determined the course of social life there were all profoundly affected.²⁶ The continuance of forced eradication operations caused the breakdown of the previously established system of local society regulation that had been organized by the *patrones*. At the same time, the cocaleros association that also had played a large role in the regulation of the society broke down because of fights among the cocalero leaders. Mayor Zamora's term in office ended, and she was replaced by Victor Córdova, who was an ally of the cocaleros, but who established his office in the village of the village Fósforo and not in Mal Abrigo. The context of anomie continued well into 2007, by which time it became clear to the villagers that forced eradication operations would continuously target their district, and that there was no other regulating actor that could take in the place of the *patrones* of the established *firmas*. For the population, the continuing of forced eradication operations meant that they had lost all hope of achieving their dream of financial prosperity. The hopelessness of the situation led to increasing numbers of murders, rapes and other violent crimes, as well as to a rise in alcoholism, domestic abuse and spousal abandonment. According to Mal Abrigo's *Juez de Paz*,²⁷ domestic violence became an especially frequent problem:

“Since I've been the *Juez de Paz*, we have sent four people to prison for physically abusing their wives. These are men from the rural communities as well as men from Mal Abrigo.”²⁸

Suicide attempts, especially among the district's youth, also appeared to increase. I was never able to directly talk with those involved and I could never analyze the exact numbers, but, by August 2005, I heard more and more people saying that they knew someone—or knew of someone—who had attempted suicide during the forced eradication operations. A significant proportion of these attempts were successful.

One story involved a mother of four children. One day, after returning from their *chakras* a group men from Mal Abrigo had seen a woman, carrying four small children, standing on Mal Abrigo's bridge. The woman shouted that she wanted to jump off the bridge, taking her children with her. The jump would mean certain death because of the dangerous currents in this part of the Huallaga River. The men convinced her to release the children, and one of them brought them to his home. Meanwhile, the others tried to convince the woman, who by then had climbed over the bridge's railing, not to jump, arguing that she shouldn't leave her children behind. But the woman jumped, and horrified witnesses saw her body washed downstream by the river. Afterwards, the woman's husband was informed of the tragedy. Devastated by his wife's death, he had no idea how he would be able to take care of his children while having to work on his *chacra*.²⁹

²⁵ Durkheim (1984) used the term *anomie* to describe a condition of deregulation occurring in society. In Merton's view (1938), anomie accounts for high rates of deviant behavior. To explain the changes in Fósforo's social context, the explanation of Durkheim (1984) is used because in the Fósforo district, as explained before, the engagement in the cultivation of coca and cocaine industry is not perceived as deviant behavior by the inhabitants.

²⁶ As described in Chapter 3, the *patrones* of the established *firmas* had gained a large role in the regulation of the society (in terms of economic support for the cocaleros and social support for the cocalero association. These local *firmas* were severely weakened by the continued forced eradication operations in the Fósforo district.

²⁷ In 1999, a new law decreed that these *Jueces de Paz* be elected by the local population to administer justice. These judges were appointed by the villagers themselves, and formed an official part of Peru's judicial system. Nationally, the *Jueces de Paz* were designated to handle legal cases which involved claims of less than 2,900 Nuevo Soles, some minor notarial claims, and claims of domestic violence.

²⁸ Interview with Don Emmanuel, *Juez de Paz*, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 10, 2007.

²⁹ Conversation with several eyewitnesses, October 19, 2005.

In October, 2006 a 21 year-old young man attempted suicide by swallowing poison. When his relatives found him, he was unable to speak. His family took him to the health clinic in Puerto Mal Abrigo but the doctor, fearing for the man's life, ordered them to take him to Tocache, where the hospital was better equipped to deal with these cases. In Tocache, he received treatment and slowly began to recover. After spending a week in the hospital, the doctors released him, even though the family did not believe he had completely recovered. They were reluctant to take him home because, once he was back in Mal Abrigo, he would not be able to receive any medical help. But the doctors convinced them that the young man had recovered. After his arrival in Puerto Mal Abrigo, relatives noticed that his ability to speak deteriorated and he began to look more confused. A day later, he died because the poison had affected his internal organs.³⁰ Later it was asserted that the boy had committed suicide because his *chacra* was eradicated and as a result of his economic difficulties, his girlfriend left him. The son's death was the third tragedy this family had suffered in the past three years. The father had "disappeared", and was presumed dead, apparently because of his involvement in illegal drug smuggling. In 2004, a daughter had died as a result of heart disease.³¹ Only the mother and one daughter were left behind.

In September 2007, a 13 year-old boy committed suicide. His father, a local *traquetero*, after having spent years in jail in Bolivia, had recently returned to his house in Mal Abrigo. The day of his suicide, the boy's mother scolded him because he hadn't cleared the dinner table. Then she sent him to a store to buy food. But instead of buying the groceries, he bought a fishing line and, after returning home, hung himself in the family home. The whole event hadn't taken an hour. He was still alive when he was found, but it was too late to save him.³² He died a few minutes after arriving at the health clinic. After his death, a large Catholic memorial service was held, which was attended by numerous villagers. A few days after this event, I was awakened one night by shouting in the street. Reluctant to go out and see what was going on, I asked some villagers the next morning what had happened. They told me that some men had found a drunken woman in the street. She carried a cup filled with rat poison in one hand and a crying infant child in her other hand. She was shouting that she did not want to live anymore. After a struggle, the men were able to forcibly take the cup from her hand and calm her down. The woman's suicide attempt was stopped by the men and a day after this episode, I saw her walking on the streets of Mal Abrigo. When I asked what had happened she explained that her family's *chacra* had been totally eradicated. Because of this eradication she wasn't able to open a day-care center, something that she had been dreaming of doing for a long time.³³

In the small villages surrounding Puerto Mal Abrigo, suicides in which rat poison was used became more frequent. These communities often suffered from rat infestation, which caused the families to store large amounts of this poison in their homes. During forced eradication operations in 2005, many people had abandoned their land and tried to make a living in Mal Abrigo. Because of the people's move to Mal Abrigo and the lack of food on the abandoned *chacras*, the rats followed the people to Puerto Mal Abrigo. Therefore it wasn't unusual for anyone there to buy large quantities of rat poison. Several people that I knew admitted that they had thought about committing suicide indicated that rat poison was their preferred means of doing so. In a very emotional conversation, a cocalera told me that her teenage cousin had committed suicide after the forced eradication of 2000. In that case, her cousin had not used rat poison, but had gone to Puerto Mal Abrigo to buy lethal pesticides—the kind used by campesinos to spray their plants against funguses and vermin that were

³⁰ Conversation with Magaly, sister of the youth, Puerto Mal Abrigo, October 10, 2006.

³¹ Although some people stated that it was her drinking behavior and lifestyle that had caused her death.

³² Conversation with Luz, Puerto Mal Abrigo, September 8, 2007.

³³ Conversation with unnamed woman, Mal Abrigo, September 13, 2007.

present in the jungle.³⁴ As became apparent, these suicide attempts took place within a context of economic hardship, as in 2000 everybody was involved in the cultivation of coca.³⁵ As described in Chapter 4, in August 2000, the police entered the Fósforo communities and initiated a campaign of forced eradication; the cocalero association had not been capable to stop the eradication. As a result, the campesino families were left facing economic hardship, during which numerous people had committed suicide. In 2004, prior to forced eradication, suicides in the Fósforo district had been quite rare, but they rose again after May 2005, when a new operation of forced eradication entered the district.

But one question remains unanswered: Who were the main groups that so quickly turned Fósforo's situation into one of anomie and violence?

7.2 Bandits and thugs

7.2.1 Legendary tales

Assaults on the *Carretera Marginal* have taken place ever since it was first constructed in 1964-1968.³⁶ As a result, stories about highway robbery on that road were frequently told. Before the rise in violence, there were stories of bandits who in some cases took on mythic proportions. Gallant (1999: 25) has noted that the archetypal bandit was described as “resplendently adorned with gold and silver and accessorized with an outrageous array of weapons or the black-eye-patched visage of a ruthless buccaneer”. Because of their recurrent presence in folklore and popular media, this “exotic” representation penetrated the consciousness of local residents. Some cocaleros in Mal Abrigo recounted stories of one assailant who acquired the pseudonym of “Rambo”.³⁷ It was said that Rambo robbed *colectivos* by himself. It was said that he deliberately chose locations on the road where drivers had to slow down (i.e., because of bumps or curves), and waylay the taxis there. It seemed incredible to the residents of the district that Rambo was actually able to stop a *colectivo* containing up to 12 persons, take all of the passengers’ money, and then get away without having encountered any resistance. As a result, Rambo’s reputation grew as he continued to carry out numerous robberies.³⁸ The latest story included his final assault:

“One day he stopped a *colectivo* in which three *traqueteros* were travelling. The car driver hit the breaks. The *traqueteros* reacted more quickly than Rambo, because, if you are involved in drug trafficking, you learn how to defend yourself. *Traqueteros* usually carry weapons wherever they go. They knew there were assaults in this region, so they were on their guard. For them, losing money might involve losing their lives, because they are carrying their bosses’ money. No *patrón* is going to buy the excuse that you were robbed. Therefore, the *traqueteros* live by one rule: ‘Kill or be killed’. So Rambo was shot and killed that day.”³⁹

Another story about a group of bandits that was even more amazing gained currency among the local population of the Fósforo district. Most storytellers began their versions of

³⁴ Conversation with Eva, Puerto Mal Abrigo, September 16, 2005.

³⁵ Conversations during fieldwork with relatives of people who attempted suicide, in some cases successfully. In the majority of cases, those who attempted to take their own lives survived, but had moved away from the region.

³⁶ From the time it was constructed, travelers on this road had been vulnerable to assaults because the region has never been well-policed. But it became apparent in the villagers’ stories that the increasing numbers of assaults in the district coincided with the decline of the local cocaine industry. As stated before, the number of assaults increased during the “coca bust” in 1995 and after the forced eradication operations in May 2005.

³⁷ This man’s appearance was in fact described as an exact copy of the well-known movie character.

³⁸ Conversations with several inhabitants of Puerto Mal Abrigo during fieldwork in 2004.

³⁹ Conversation with Alfonso Reyes Coca, Puerto Mal Abrigo, May 14, 2004.

this particular story with the statement that the group in question never targeted the local population, but instead only victimized people working for NGOs,⁴⁰ and the local and regional governmental authorities—in other words, rich people. It was said that this group was eventually captured in a peculiar way. The story went that these bandits donated some of the money they had robbed to the children of a nearby community. One day, the group was discovered by the police because the village's children started to shout enthusiastically when another car approached the location where the bandits were waiting. There is no way of verifying the story, but during different travels from Puerto Mal Abrigo to Tingo María accompanied by different inhabitants of Mal Abrigo, I was repeatedly shown the exact spot where this group typically staged their robberies, and where they were supposedly caught.⁴¹

Stories of other bandits also conformed to the Robin Hood archetype. Both stories can be interpreted in accordance with Eric Hobsbawm's (2000) concept of social banditry. Hobsbawm claims that "social banditry is a universal and virtually unchanging phenomenon which embodies a rather primitive form of organized social protest of campesinos against oppression. [Social bandits] are robbers of a special kind, for they are not considered simple criminals by the general public. They are persons whom the state regards as outlaws, but who remain within the bounds of the moral order of the peasant community". But for the inhabitants, the stories probably entailed another meaning: It was their way of remembering times when violent criminal groups had been largely absent in the district. The concept of social banditry is tinged with romanticism and mythmaking, according to Anton Blok (1972), who argues that "the absence of outlaws from ordinary day-to-day life facilitates the formation of myths and legends in which the bandit appears as a man fighting the rich to succor the poor".

Therefore it is important to state that there existed other explanations for the "Robin Hood bandits". The stories about these "gentlemen thieves" can be explained in terms of the region's background of the "coca bust" in 1995. Although initially the "coca bust" had led to an increase in violent assaults, after some years of receiving lower prices for coca leaves, coca paste and cocaine, the cocaleros and drug traffickers alike did not have as much money as they used to. So it is not particularly surprising that, during this period, they hadn't been the main victims of the armed robbers. The only ones travelling with large amounts of money must have been those working for NGOs or the regional or national government. Therefore the assault groups mainly began to target these people.⁴² Until 2003, Shining Path had a marginal presence in the district.⁴³ According to several inhabitants, until then the guerrillas sporadically patrolled the *Carretera Marginal* and from their previous experience during the internal armed conflict, it was believed that "even to steal a needle and thread of from your neighbor would mean certain death".⁴⁴ As a result, people refrained from criminal activity. In the Fósforo district, the "Robin Hood" stories were told during the tranquil period that began in early 2002, after several forced eradication operations had occurred and the road from Tingo María to Mal Abrigo via Tocache was considered relatively safe, and ended in May 2005.

By the end of 2005, the *Carretera Marginal* had become the scene of daily assaults by armed groups. As one inhabitant of Mal Abrigo recalled:

⁴⁰ In the Upper Huallaga, the operations of such organizations were often related to the war on drugs.

⁴¹ However, this doesn't mean the story is based on a real occurrence because the point indicated on the *Carretera Marginal* has a sharp turn and, on numerous occasions during my fieldwork, cars were held up at that spot.

⁴² Several conversations with residents of Mal Abrigo during fieldwork in 2004.

⁴³ Several conversations with cocaleros, Fósforo district during fieldwork in 2004.

⁴⁴ Several conversations with residents of Mal Abrigo during fieldwork in 2004.

“After the death of Rambo,⁴⁵ it got quiet in this region. We didn’t hear about robberies but now they’ve started again. First, they happened only at night. But not many people travel by night any more, so a lot of incidents are again happening during the daytime.”⁴⁶

In general, the individual methods to deal with the robberies were aimed at safeguarding money and personal possessions. Some residents, while travelling themselves in a more comfortable *colectivo*, sent their bags to Puerto Mal Abrigo by bus. When robberies initially increased, these buses were frequently left unmolested. Another frequently used strategy was to ask the driver of a *colectivo* to hide ones’ most valuable possessions, often including stacks of money. The motor, the top of the car and the paneling were turned into hiding places until thieves became aware of this practice and threatened to shoot the driver if he didn’t reveal the hiding places. After that tactic no longer worked, villagers sometimes carried no more than 50 soles in their wallets, while hiding the rest of their money in a sack of rice or cocoa beans,⁴⁷ which any assailant would likely neither take time to sift through, nor be interested in trying to carry off.

7.2.2 *The entrance of violent “common criminals”*

Who, then, were the people carrying out the assaults? As the assaults became more frequent, popular rage against the new *pandilleros*⁴⁸ became increasingly evident. There was a pervasive feeling of vulnerability to criminal activity throughout the Fósforo district. Until May 2005, the sporadic assaults had not involved the use of violence. When they had been accosted by thieves in previous years, villagers just handed over a small part of the money they had on hand, after which they were allowed to continue their journey. But by late-2005, robberies were being carried out by heavily armed groups. By December 2005, the large majority of inhabitants could claim to have been held up at least once.⁴⁹ By August 2006, there were daily reports about robberies on the road from Tocache to Mal Abrigo. Rapes of adolescent girls, murders and torture also appeared to be more frequent.⁵⁰

But as was the case with so many other questions in the Upper Huallaga, the question of who was involved in the armed robberies was not an easy one to answer. Initially, the majority of Fósforo’s population answered that those committing these crimes were people coming from other regions, strangers and outsiders. Others said that the assailants were drug traffickers who had previously belonged to *firmas* that had dissolved in the wake of eradication efforts. The members of these groups became involved in other criminal activities, such as kidnappings. Their previous involvement in the illegal cocaine industry meant they had firearms, which they now used to blackmail, carry out violent assaults, or murder the competition. What becomes apparent from these statements is that for the population, there existed a direct relationship between forced eradication operations and the rise in criminal activity. Several armed groups based in Tocache that had previously been involved in the transportation of cocaine from Mal Abrigo and other villages and hamlets in the eradicated areas became involved in carrying out robberies.

⁴⁵ In different stories, it was stated that Rambo had died in 2004, after which for a long time no assaults took place on the *Carretera Marginal* because other criminals had seen what had happened to Rambo.

⁴⁶ Conversation with unnamed inhabitant, Puerto Mal Abrigo, December 11, 2005.

⁴⁷ As previously observed, these bags were almost impossible to search.

⁴⁸ Gang members.

⁴⁹ Information gained during numerous of conversations with inhabitants of the Fósforo district during fieldwork period in 2005.

⁵⁰ Information gained during numerous of conversations with inhabitants of the Fósforo district during fieldwork period in 2006.

The persons carrying out the robberies and other crimes seemed to know which cocaleros harvested their coca, or which *traquetero* transported large amounts of money, or even which car was carrying a transport of cocaine. These facts showed that they had a detailed knowledge about the local cocaine industry. One attack showed this quite explicitly. One day, El Adusto and his family travelled from Tocache to Tarapoto. Several minutes after their departure they were stopped by armed men demanding money. In his confusion, he gave a one-dollar bill to the approaching men. Seeing the bill, his assailant shouted “Do you think you can get away with this, we know you must have more”. El Adusto quickly gave them 200 dollars, to be able to continue his journey. Mal Abrigo’s villagers argued this was information only insiders or those living in the Fósforo district knew.⁵¹ Consequently, it can be argued that some of Fósforo’s inhabitants were actively involved in the assaults. This view wasn’t shared by the population, who argued that the assailants were professional criminals and weapons experts. Hence, there existed no clear-cut answer to the question of who was conducting the robberies.

On the road from Mal Abrigo to Tocache the robberies were executed professionally, as the assaulters were said to use automatic guns, strategic escape routes and a motorized boat⁵² to get away and dispose of the money quickly. Those carrying out such robberies often spent the stolen money on drinking parties. In those days, spending money on beer, expensive clothes or jewelry was a sure way to become identified as a thief (see Jacobs 2000: 112-113). As one cocalero stated:

“Look, these are terrible criminals, but I know what they do with all the money they steal. When we captured one assailant, we entered his house and saw his family had nothing. His children were running around naked, without a thing to eat. He had spent his money on drinking and prostitutes.”⁵³

What the assailants were most afraid of was being recognized by their victims. With the rise in robberies, the residents of the Fósforo district became increasingly vigilant whenever they were out in public. Rumors—sometimes well-founded, other times less so—as to the identity of persons taking part in robberies rapidly spread throughout the district. Not even the town of Tocache was considered to be a good hiding place by the assailants, as Fósforo’s *firmas* had close relationships with residents in that town. Whenever a group of men spent a considerable sum of money, suspicions arose. As one victim said:

“They were robbing money, clothes, shoes, everything. For weeks, the robberies were occurring every day. Until one day, one of the men lost the handkerchief he wore to cover-up his face. A man in the car they held up saw his face and recognized him. But that day, the thieves managed to escape. It was too late: All of the villagers of a nearby place knew who the assaulters were, and the men in the group were all killed.”⁵⁴

During some assaults, the victims recognized particular physical traits of the assailants, including missing teeth, tattoos, jewellery, clothes, or even their height and weight. All these traits were used to track the assailants down. Because drivers of collective taxis were often the victims of robberies, they were often able to give a very detailed profile of the assailants.

⁵¹ As seen in Chapter 3, the *firmas* that they operated are low profile and cautious (Vellinga 2004: 374). The *patrones* live a modest, low-key life within the village. Their identity wasn’t known to those who didn’t live in the Fósforo district, because when traveling through the Upper Huallaga and visiting the gateway town of Tingo María they maintained a low profile, not showing their prosperity to anyone.

⁵² Before used to decrease the possibility of getting caught by the police when transporting cocaine.

⁵³ Group conversation with Luis Paredes and Leiva, Puerto Mal Abrigo and Nuevo Vista, August 12, 2007.

⁵⁴ Conversation with Alfonso Reyes Coca, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 15, 2006.

Box 7.1 The danger of trusting too much

A driver of a *colectivo* in Puerto Mal Abrigo once said: “I knew *Shoba*.⁵⁵ He lived a double-life. He was a violent criminal, but I didn’t know this. I always saw him in Nueva Vista. I remember that he invited me to lunch in his house. I went and he continued to invite me. I thought: Where is he getting all this money from? I knew he didn’t *trabajar la plata*.⁵⁶ One could notice his front teeth were missing. During the time that robberies were a daily occurrence, I once nearly became the victim myself. They forced me to step out of my car and pushed me to the ground. I was able to see who the assailants were. They didn’t rob my money, but when one of the men laughed, I had the strange feeling that I knew him. He was missing his front teeth..... Some days later, I returned to *Shoba*’s house because he had invited me again. But this time I was watching his gestures and his manners, which seemed similar to those I saw during the assault. A few days later, my car was stopped by the same group of men. They dragged me out of my car and pushed me on the ground. One of the armed men put his hand on my shoulder and whispered: ‘Nothing will happen to you’. From that moment on, I never returned to visit *Shoba*. I was afraid people would get the wrong idea. Maybe they would think I was involved in the assaults. Afterwards I heard *Shoba* had been involved in an assault close to Aucayacu. There was a gun-battle, people were killed, but *Shoba* survived and was arrested by the police.

Another time, I recognized one of my passengers as someone from *Shoba*’s group. That day, I was transporting some people working for an NGO to a village close to Nueva Vista and a man wanted to go to Mal Abrigo. I told the man I would spend some time in Nueva Vista because I had to buy some groceries, but he said ‘I’m not in a hurry’. I left the NGO people in the village, they paid me and I was putting my money in my hiding place in the motor. The man was watching me hiding my money. I continued on the main road and on my way to Nueva Vista I picked up an old man. Before arriving in the village I saw a truck with several men slowly driving towards us. Some of these men were armed. Both of my passengers ducked down, but then the truck approached rapidly. They first captured the old passenger. But the armed men approached. ‘He isn’t the one’, they shouted. Meanwhile, the other man had tried to escape from the car. ‘Stop him’, someone shouted. They captured the other man. ‘Wait’, I shouted. ‘This is my passenger, you can’t blame him. What if you are wrong, you aren’t going to get anything out of him’. They told me to mind my own business and then explained everything to me. This man was a thief. He had killed a child, a 6 year-old boy. I responded; ‘Kill him in my name, but shoot him quickly’ because in the Upper Huallaga, Mal Abrigo, assailants are killed. In the end, they took him away. I never saw the man again. I think they killed him because, *caes ya fuiste* [once you’re caught, you’re dead meat]....⁵⁷

In Mal Abrigo, as the threat of becoming a victim of a robbery increased, more and more men began carrying weapons. But when the use of weapons became normal it only increased the violence used during the assaults. Some individuals began to resist during the assaults. One longtime resident of Mal Abrigo said:

“They killed a man in Nueva Vista. He was a brave man because he drew his weapon once he saw he was being attacked. He must have waited too long to shoot, because he was killed, and his son was also shot. I think that when you draw a weapon in an assault, you have to shoot to kill right away. Otherwise, you will be killed.”⁵⁸

There were many similar stories about individual resistance against the assaulters but in all these stories, it seemed that the “brave men” who resisted were shot dead. Therefore the population began to argue it was safer to do nothing, and to simply wait until the assault was over.

⁵⁵ Pseudonym of the leader of an assault group.

⁵⁶ Term inhabitants use to describe investments in the cocaine industry.

⁵⁷ Conversation with *El Tenedor*, *colectivo* driver and peasant, Puerto Mal Abrigo, October 16, 2007.

⁵⁸ Conversation with *Profesora Magdalena*, Puerto Mal Abrigo, October 16, 2007.

The assailants were able to commit these crimes without much interference on the part of the police. The police only controlled the *Carretera Marginal* heading out of Tocache to Mal Abrigo up to the bridge over the Huallaga River, some 15 minutes outside of the town. As the number of armed robberies rose in the region, residents demanded an increased police presence, but the police commander refused. After the police refusal Fósforo's population demanded that the military organize road patrols. But the commander refused because he claimed that the proper sphere of military action was limited to fighting the guerrillas. After the refusal of both legal security forces, some people believed they should ask for the support of Shining Path to patrol the road between Tocache and Mal Abrigo. This was never done in the Fósforo district however, because residents there feared that it would create more problems than it would solve.⁵⁹ In other places between Tocache and Tingo María, where violent assaults had led to the deaths of several taxi drivers and passengers, small armed groups of supposed "Shining Path" remnants⁶⁰ filled in the existing security gap. For a short time, there were men wearing black clothes and carrying automatic guns, standing close to an improvised check-point and requesting donations of money from motorists whom they stopped. A short time later, the police forces of the Huánuco department extended their patrols. Because of this increased control between Tocache and Tingo, the problems on that section of the *Carretera Marginal* decreased.

In the Fósforo district, one rumor was increasingly spread by several of the victims of the armed robberies. They remembered having seen the boots of the attackers. These boots eventually gave rise to the suspicion that state security forces were actively involved in the attacks.

7.2.3 Police involvement in armed robbery

Victims of these armed robberies complained when they went to the police station in Tocache to report what had happened to them, they were sent away without their complaints receiving serious consideration. As a result, the crimes remained uninvestigated and the perpetrators remained unpunished. Because of this reaction, the police became seen as even more incompetent and corrupt. But the accusations began to include another component: Increasingly, the police were accused of participation in the assaults. The police became seen as unable to reject bribes from criminal groups.⁶¹ In the Fósforo district, the inhabitants believed that there was a clear connection between the police force and the attackers:

"These attackers are no strangers to the area. How do the criminals know the roads? How do the criminals know who carries money? Sometimes, I think the police warn them. Because when, for example, you go to Adelanto, the police search your bags, isn't that right? So, for the police, it is easy to call their criminal accomplices to tell them a car is leaving Adelanto and that it is carrying money. The assailants then just have to go to Piuca⁶² to wait for the car to pass by. It's easy."⁶³

This possible police involvement in the assaults can be explained by the changes that forced eradication operations had caused. As described before, the police had received bribes from

⁵⁹ During several conversations with inhabitants of the Fósforo district, they explained that in their view the presence of Shining Path would lead to a heightened military and police presence in their district. As stated before, a heightened presence of the state security forces was not desired by the district's residents.

⁶⁰ The term "Shining Path" is placed in quotation marks because, as will be explained in detail below, it had become simply a name that came to be employed by several armed groups that employed some of the tactics and strategy of the old guerrilla movement in order to gain some control over the local cocaine industry.

⁶¹ See Goldstein 2005 on Bolivia.

⁶² A location where the *Carretera Marginal* from Tocache to Puerto Mal Abrigo makes a U-turn, so drivers have to reduce their velocity, which makes this an attractive location for highway robbers.

⁶³ Conversation with Alfonso Reyes Coca, Puerto Mal Abrigo, May 12, 2004.

those involved in the higher echelons of the cocaine industry. They also confiscated money and items from the people travelling in the region. During forced eradication operations, it was impossible to continue these practices, as the inhabitants of the Fósforo district and other affected regions refrained from travelling, which can explain why police were searching for new ways to increase their income.

Before the rise of the assaults, it was often argued that the Tocache police loaned their guns to different groups of drug traffickers in return for a large payment. The villagers' suspicion was based on an event that had occurred during a cocalero strike in Tocache in 2004. Some of the cocaleros participating in the protest visited a bar in the town to close it down, but when they entered they saw an armed man who was harassing the other customers:

“Our people responded quickly when the man held up his gun and fired in the air. One of our guys grabbed his hand and took it away. They beat the hell out of him, and very nearly killed him. But afterwards, we turned him in at the police station in Tocache. The police looked surprised when we entered with the man; he turned out to be the leader of a criminal gang. I will tell you one thing: The gun that he had turned out to belong to the policeman standing right there in the station. What did they do about it? Nothing.”⁶⁴

Some district residents said that criminals were carrying the same brand of automatic weapons as had been used by the police forces. It was commonly stated among the population that numerous police officers loaned their weapons to the criminals groups.⁶⁵

Another group of residents argued that policemen actively participated in the assaults. By 2006, when the assaults began to take place daily, not only the local inhabitants of the Fósforo district accused the provincial police forces of involvement in the violent assaults, but also the population of Tocache. As a response to the violent assaults and robberies that were taking place in the town, the population formed a *junta vicinal*,⁶⁶ to protect themselves against the rising crime. As one cocalero said:

“Before, the people who had the power in Tocache were the rapists, the assaulters, the murderers. A group of assailants were staying in Tocache. They were bastards. But they were killed by the *junta*. Then something happened that even the people of Tocache don't know about. The day that the *junta* killed five of the assailants, the police noticed that some officers didn't show up for work. The assailants that were killed were Tocache police officers.”⁶⁷

This event increased the rumors that the police forces actually organized and carried out the robberies. In the Fósforo district, many victims of the assaults began to remark that they had seen the assailants wore police boots. One police officer, now working as a personal security guard for the national congress, wasn't surprised at all about the villagers' accusations. When asked about the police forces and armed robberies, he stated:

“In every attack, you can be sure that there is at least one police officer involved. What do you expect with the wage we receive? Before, when I was working on the road...we used to stop cars and make them pay to continue their travel...But nowadays, the police employ more coercive methods.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Interview with unnamed cocalero leader, Santa María de Frontera, November 14, 2005.

⁶⁵ Several conversations with different inhabitants of the Fósforo district during fieldwork in 2005.

⁶⁶ Term used for the self-defense initiatives in the neighborhoods of towns, which are organized the same way as the *Ronda Campesina* in the countryside.

⁶⁷ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Puerto Mal Abrigo, December 3, 2005.

⁶⁸ Conversation with security guard, national congress, Lima, August 27, 2006.

By 2006, Tocache's provincial police commander was accused of corruption. A common policy of the national police force was the yearly reassignment of officers to different regions within Peru. This policy was implemented in order to fight corruption within the police force. But the chief of police made sure that the Tocache commander was reassigned to another area of the country. For approximately ten years, he had only been assigned to stations within the region, travelling back and forth between Juanjui⁶⁹ and Tocache. Because the police station of Tocache was part of Huánuco's police division, and the station in Juanjui was part of the San Martín departmental police, the corruptive practices of the Tocache police commander went unnoticed.

When the Tocache police commander's involvement in armed robberies⁷⁰ became apparent, regional mayor Pedro Bogarín started an investigation. The commander had bribed several high officers within the police forces to protect his own involvement in the drug industry. After this investigation, the commander was forced to resign. Although his removal was seen as a positive event in Puerto Mal Abrigo, people remained pessimistic as to whether this action alone would end police involvement in the criminal actions. There is an obvious relationship between police corruption and the impulse of ordinary citizens to take the law into their own hands, especially when the people's vulnerability to official corruption and criminal violence increases (see Goldstein 2005). In the case of the Fósforo district, this impulse was expressed by the formation of *rondas campesinas*.

7.3 “We will defend our village with weapons!”

7.3.1 *The construction of ronderos cocaleros in the Fósforo district*

In contrast to Piura and Cajamarca,⁷¹ the Upper Huallaga's rural villages had no customary law or *rondas campesinas*⁷² to settle conflicts, and to punish criminal offenders. In contrast to the department of Ayacucho,⁷³ no *comités de autodefensa*⁷⁴ had been created in the Upper Huallaga's rural areas during the internal armed conflict.⁷⁵ Only in April 9, 2004, there was a first attempt to organize *rondas campesinas* in the Fósforo district. But this attempt had nothing to do with citizens seeking to defend themselves against violence. This first attempt was largely related to the CONPACCCP's internal division in the wake of the first *Marcha de Sacrificio* (April 2003), when its leaders were searching for other relationships, to make up for their substantial loss of adherents.⁷⁶ The inhabitants of the Fósforo district began to

⁶⁹ Capital of the province Mariscal Cáceres in the San Martín department.

⁷⁰ Mainly occurring on the *Carretera Marginal* between Juanjui and Puerto Mal Abrigo or from Tocache to Puerto Mal Abrigo.

⁷¹ Departments in the Northern region of Peru, where the *rondas campesinas* were first organized in the 1970s.

⁷² Self-defense initiatives of campesinos.

⁷³ Department in the Central Sierra of Peru where the *Comités de Autodefensa* were widespread during the internal armed conflict.

⁷⁴ Self-defense committees to fight Shining Path during the internal armed conflict.

⁷⁵ The absence of *rondas campesinas* in the Fósforo district in the 1970s and 1980s can be explained. In the 1970s, because of the coca boom, migration increased dramatically (see Chapter 2). In the following years, common criminality flourished alongside the coca boom that began in the 1970s. Civilians increasingly became threatened by the Colombian drug traffickers and the numerous new *colonos* entering to compete over the cocaine business. But there was no incentive to form a *ronda* because the inhabitants of the district didn't know or trust each other. At the beginning of the 1980s, Shining Path entered the district and put in place a system of punishments. In the Fósforo district, there was never a campesino initiative to fight the guerrillas because of the lack of social cohesion (see Chapter 4).

⁷⁶ When the two CONPACCCP leaders, Nancy Obregón and Elsa Malpartida, planned the second *Marcha de Sacrificio* to Lima in 2004, they were aware the cocaleros of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley and the Monzón wouldn't participate because of their withdrawal from the national confederation. Recognizing their loss in masses, both women tried to form bonds with other social movements, campesinos' organizations, political parties and advocates within civil society (see Chapter 5).

explore other opportunities to establish broader relations with regional organizations. Some cocalero leaders began to participate in departmental congresses of the *rondas campesinas*, trying to expand their collective identity into “cocaleros *ronderos*”. It was thought that by aligning them with the region’s *rondas campesinas*, the support for their cocalero protests would increase. As one cocalero leader once stated:

“Many Peruvians are looking at us differently because about the whole issue of coca is complex. When we talk about coca, they think that we are talking about cocaine because everybody confuses these two very different things. We have to strengthen our organization and identify with the *rondas campesinas* in Peru. In this way, our struggle to defend coca is going to be different. I consider coca as part of the cultural legacy not only of this community but of humanity. But, regrettably, the people of our government don’t see it this way. They only see snowy white powder. I see a coca leaf with its natural color, green.... As *ronderos*, we have the right to defend the legacy of our community. What we have to do in order to prevent the forced eradication operation from entering our community is organize into *rondas campesinas*. When they come to eradicate our fields, we *ronderos cocaleros* and the *rondas campesinas* in the San Martín department are going to protest.”⁷⁷

But this initiative largely failed because *ronderos* from other communities in Peru did not participate in any of the cocalero protests⁷⁸ that followed.

But the organization of *ronda campesinas* in the Fósforo district continued. Between April 2004 and May 2005, numerous *rondas* were organized in Mal Abrigo and the rural communities surrounding Mal Abrigo, including 3 de Diciembre, Santa María and Esperanza de Frontera, to solve problems and petty crimes in these areas where the police was absent.⁷⁹ One woman explained:

“This is the power of the village. With the *rondas*, nobody, not even a drunk, can spend the night on the streets. After 11 o’clock at night, everybody is forced to go home...Even the girls working in these bars, even they go home at 11 o’clock so that their parents can sleep happily with their children at home.”⁸⁰

Hence, the activities of the *rondas campesinas* were directed against those local people, who “behaved badly”. *Ronderos* leaders stressed the role of the self-defense organizations in reintegrating these “bad elements” into village life, as one ex-*rondero* leader stated:

“If somebody behaves badly in our communities, the *ronda* will re-educate this person so that he can be reintegrated into the community. So these are the things we are trying to accomplish with our *rondas campesinas*. With the organization of the *ronda*, we want to achieve the ability to live in peace in our communities. And we hope that, one day, everything will be normal again.”⁸¹

But after May 2005 the numerous stories about the vengeance murders of bandits by different *rondas campesinas* in other districts of Tocache reinforced the belief of the population of the

⁷⁷ Molotov during a meeting about the re-organization of the *rondas* in the Frontera Valley, November 19, 2005

⁷⁸ For example the Marcha de Sacrificio in April 21, 2004 – May 28, 2004; the protest against the Peruvian government’s signing of a Free Trade Agreement with the United States in July 2005.

⁷⁹ Until then the majority of problems in the district derived from issues such as land disputes, domestic violence, robberies of agricultural products of chacras, local men who were misbehaving when drunk.

⁸⁰ Interview with local woman, Puerto Mal Abrigo, November 15, 2005.

⁸¹ Interview with ex-*rondero* Leader, Puerto Mal Abrigo, November 30, 2005.

Fósforo district that the recently organized local activities of the *rondas campesinas* would not be enough to defend them from the different armed groups that were carrying out armed robberies and kidnappings.⁸² When such events became a daily occurrence, it was thought that, if it were not for the fact that the *rondas* were armed, the Fósforo district would again become a safe haven for criminals.

7.3.2 Altering structures and organization of the *ronda campesina*

After April 9, 2004, the initial attempts to create *rondas campesinas* in the Fósforo district, the structure, and organizational setup was the same as those of the famous *rondas* from the Cajamarca and Piura departments.⁸³ The elected *rondero* leaders created rules for the informal policing of the district in collaboration with the population in popular meetings. In creation of the rules, emphasis was placed on each *ronda*'s autonomy from other state institutes, NGOs, and local and regional authorities. Rules were created that governed the behavior of area residents and the *ronderos* themselves, and that specified penalties for various different crimes. When "criminals" are caught, their punishment was decided in popular trials. As one cocalero leader stated:

"About these regulations and principles, all the *ronderos* have to pledge not to deviate from the rules. The rules that were created carried the force of Moses' Ten Commandments.... These rules of the *ronda* have to be approved by the population. We affirm that we are autonomous and democratic. We, as community members, can make our own rules and our own norms."⁸⁴

For the *rondas campesinas* of the rural areas of the Fósforo district, the priority was to impose communal justice. Because many of the problems in these rural communities involved less than 1,000 *nuevo soles*,⁸⁵ these cases were not even listened to by the police or heard by the official court system. These two institutions only prosecute cases in which the amounts involved exceed 1,000 *nuevo soles*, leaving the victims of these small crimes without any legal solution. Hence, in the Fósforo district the *ronda campesina* filled what Goldstein (2005: 395) for the case of Bolivia has called a "gap left by the state's withdrawal from the delivery of legal justice". In some villages of the Fósforo district, the *ronda campesina* worked closely with the *Juez de Paz*,⁸⁶ as he administered the communal justice. In Mal Abrigo and the nearby communities, when the *ronderos* arrested people they would be taken to the office of the *Juez de Paz*, who would then decide on the punishment. One *Juez de Paz* described how the process worked:

"People can have a problem and nowadays it is not necessary to go to the police. Hearing the accusations I make a document, which I give to the *ronda*. They are entrusted with bringing the suspect here for his trial."⁸⁷

Punishments for minor crimes often entailed the forced participation in the *ronda*'s night patrols. Another punishment that was used was the detainment of a "suspect" for 24 hours in

⁸² As seen in Chapter 3 the *ronda* of Mal Abrigo was involved in the battle against the *pandilla* of Maradona, which was said to have planned a kidnapping of the family of El Adusto. After May 2005, numerous rumors were spread about successful kidnapping attempts in Uchiza and Juanjui. Many of the victims of these kidnappings were said to have been killed even before their families could have paid the ransom.

⁸³ Departments in the Northern region of Peru, where the *rondas campesinas* were first organized. For further information, see Starn 1999.

⁸⁴ Interview with Molotov, Esperanza, February 13, 2005.

⁸⁵ 1000 Nuevos Soles equals \$322.

⁸⁶ Local judicial authority.

⁸⁷ Interview with Don Emmanuel, Juez de Paz, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 6, 2007.

the office of the *Juez de Paz*. Major crimes were punished by the imposition of the so-called *Cadena Ronderil*, which required the suspect being forced to travel to the different *rondero* groups until the suspect confessed and his sentence could be determined. In contrast, in the smaller and remote communities that did not have a *Juez de Paz*, the administration of justice was the responsibility of the local *rondero* leader. The punishment for crimes and even the organization of the *ronda* was different in each of Fósforo's villages and hamlets. In contrast to Mal Abrigo, in Esperanza de Frontera, the villagers decided on the punishment for crimes, including fights between neighbors about land boundaries, during community meetings.

After May 2005, mainly in Puerto Mal Abrigo, the *ronderos* had to confront different armed groups and different kinds of violence, including an increasing frequency of turf wars between different drug trafficking groups, common criminal groups and armed assaulters. As a consequence of the presence of numerous armed actors, the *ronda campesina*'s organization in this village became transformed into an armed campesino patrol. The *rondero* leaders complained that conducting night patrols with sticks, whips and slingshots, as was normal during the first *rondas campesinas* that had been established in the department of Piura and Cajamarca during the 1970s-1980s, wouldn't enable them to solve the problems in Mal Abrigo. The criminal groups present in Mal Abrigo after the forced eradication operation in May 2005 would not be chastened by campesino justice. The *ronderos* refused to become easy targets in battles and started to carry guns during their night patrols. In these first instances, they used the guns that they already had. But they quickly compiled a small arsenal.

One important question has to do with how the *ronderos* got access to these weapons. As in other parts of Peru, the *rondero* groups "managed, via the black market, to acquire modern arms" (Basombrío 2003: 161). In the Fósforo district, acquiring weapons illegally was commonplace (see Chapter 3). Moreover, in Mal Abrigo when the assaults became more violent after May 2005 the *rondas* received the support of the established *patrones*, who contributed to the local self-defense initiative by donating weapons. In some cases, they even permitted their armed *sicarios*⁸⁸ to participate in night patrols. At the end of 2005, the planned hijacking of a *patrón* was prevented by the *ronderos* of Mal Abrigo. The *ronderos* felt that the *patrón* was indebted to their group and had to donate a gun to the self-defense initiative. In other instances, the *ronderos* simply confiscated guns from criminals and inhabitants. In the popular meetings where, in contrast to the *rondero* meetings in other rural communities, only the leaders of the *ronda campesina* participated, it was usually ruled unanimously that the confiscated weapons could be kept by the *ronda*.

Because of this change in the *ronda campesina* in Mal Abrigo, the self-defense initiative began to look more like the *comités de autodefensa*⁸⁹ in which heavily armed patrols were allowed. In the smaller communities and hamlets that were not directly threatened by different criminal groups, there was increasing criticism of this practice, as one *rondero* leader of Esperanza de Frontera explained:

"A man doesn't have to use his weapon to capture a criminal. We have to use our minds to disarm the bad elements. But here in the *campo* and in the jungle, people have always used weapons. They use them for hunting for food. We don't have the right to aim our weapon against a campesino because this wouldn't be justice. We would be violating his rights. We shouldn't accept torture against people with these weapons, because the *ronderos* are identified by their whips. But sometimes people identify themselves with the system of the *autodefensa*. But we have to explain to them that there are many differences..."⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Here; bodyguards.

⁸⁹ Self-defense committees to fight Shining Path during the internal armed conflict.

⁹⁰ Interview with Molotov, Esperanza, November 29, 2005.

But, in sharp contrast, in Mal Abrigo the population largely agreed with the use of weapons during the night patrols. They responded to the crimes committed against them by attempting to consolidate justice and security in their village.⁹¹ Their acts of vengeance, including the murder of alleged assailants, were initially accepted and even applauded by large parts of the population. For the villagers, who wanted their basic sense of security restored, the *ronderos* became an important means of self-defense and empowerment. But, at the same time, the *rondas campesinas* of the Fósforo district became stigmatized by different legal institutions.

7.4 Legitimate self-defense, or the lawlessness of guerillas and narcotics

7.4.1 Clashes between the police and civil society

When they were first created, the *rondas campesinas* in the Fósforo district were organized with the consent of the Fósforo district's mayor and with the help of the local *Juez de Paz*. But the self-defense was met with suspicion on the part of the regional police and regional political authorities. The main reason that the *ronda* was viewed with such suspicion had to do with the district mayor's attitude toward the *ronda* and her role in the defense of coca. But most regional authorities, including the regional *alcalde*, Pedro Bogarín, and the *Defensoría del Pueblo*⁹² located in Tocache, agreed with the eradication policies of the state and stigmatized the mobilization initiatives of the rural population as an action that was in the interest of drug traffickers and guerrillas. The population's feelings of exclusion and failed justice were for the most part directed against regional authorities and the regional justice system, not against Fósforo's local authorities. The organization of *rondas campesinas* in the Fósforo district was also criticized by the police.⁹³

Eventually, once they realized that the *ronderos* could actually be valuable allies, the police adopted a more cooperative attitude toward them. For example, when investigating murders in the Fósforo district, the police had to depend on the *ronderos* because they had detailed knowledge about the people involved in illegal practices, knew who was involved in the murders, and were aware of the disputes that had led to the murders. The *ronderos* were able to identify assailants and people who worked as *sicarios*. Because of this knowledge, the *ronderos* often knew something was going on even before the actual crime occurred. All this was information that the police forces in Tocache lacked. In some cases, the *ronderos* and the police formally collaborated to resolve an assassination by armed *sicarios*, although that level of cooperation seldom occurred.

Box 7.2 Ronderos and police raids against sicarios

One *rondero* said: "Close to Huacahuasi, *ronderos* followed some *sicarios* who had killed someone. It all began on the day we had the meeting with Nelson Palomino in Mal Abrigo (see Chapter 6). But while I was at the meeting with Nelson, I saw three men who had come there from Nueva Vista. Knowing they were *sicarios*, I wondered what they were doing here. I was surprised to see them at the meeting, but when I asked them why they were there, all they said was that they had 'work' to do. The day after this meeting, they killed the father-in-law of *El Gordo Blanco*⁹⁴ over a dispute about a

⁹¹ See Goldstein 2005 on Bolivia.

⁹² Ombudsman's Office.

⁹³ The suspicion was mutual, as the *ronderos* never trusted the police forces in Tocache. After the police set free (on dubious grounds) a number of suspects that had been brought in by *ronderos*, the latter refused to take their any suspects to the police station in Tocache. *Ronderos* generally believed that the any suspects that they turned over would be set free after paying a bribe. Fósforo's population felt that, in the legal justice system only corrupt police officers, criminals and *patrones* were "allowed" to use weapons and subsequently to kill.

⁹⁴ Pseudonym of an inhabitant of Mal Abrigo who before had been a notorious drug trafficker. He was arrested but after his arrest returned to the village. He became a respected village man, who was no longer involved in the cocaine industry.

chacra. The man who hired these *sicarios* was the victim's own cousin. At 6:00 a.m. on the morning after the meeting, the father-in-law of *El Gordo Blanco* and his cousin left their house. The cousin took him to this place where the *sicarios* were waiting to kill him. After hearing some gunshots, the *ronderos* immediately informed the police that gunshots had been fired in Huacahuasi. Together with the police we went to Huacahuasi to see whether we could find the *sicarios*. But the policemen were scared to enter the jungle. We were caught in a terrible gun battle in which one of our *ronderos* heard a bullet whiz by his ear. The *sicarios* escaped into the jungle. If we made some noise or came closer, they could kill us. The *ronderos* divided into two groups: One group went into the jungle and one group stayed behind. I stayed behind with a policeman. He was too afraid to do anything. So I asked him, 'Give me you're AK [automatic rifle] and I will give you my shotgun of the *ronda*', but he refused my offer. With a weapon like that, I would have walked into the jungle and shot the *sicarios* right away. But the policeman didn't. He was too scared to move. So we couldn't capture the *sicarios* that day. But some day, they will pay for their crime.⁹⁵

Before her election to the national congress, Nancy Obregón personally denounced regional authority's resistance against Fósforo's *rondas campesinas*. Obregón remembered how the mayor of Tocache responded:

"He said; 'Obregón is manipulating every one of these men. Maybe they don't have a brain themselves. This *ronda* has been created by this woman and therefore I will never consider it legitimate'."⁹⁶

The regional authorities made no distinction between the protests and demonstrations organized by the cocalero association, on the one hand, and the establishment of the *rondas*, on the other. As seen before, the *rondero* identity had initially been equated with cocalero identity, even when by August 2005 the cocalero identity no longer included the whole population of the Fósforo district. The reaction of the regional authorities to the *ronderos* followed pervasive patterns of urban discrimination against the rural population (as had their earlier reaction against the cocalero association). The regional authorities stigmatized the population's initiative against violence and crime as a sign that residents of the countryside did not respect the duly constituted authorities and insisted on taking the law into their own hands. This view largely ignored the fact that the security forces in the district had not only repeatedly shown that they were incapable of maintaining law and order, but also that they were rife with corruption. As a result, Fósforo's population organized the *rondas* in order to protect their economic interests, their families, their communities, and themselves.

The use of weapons in several of Fósforo's *rondas campesinas* met with growing criticism from *rondero* leaders of other regions and from the departmental governments. But residents of the Fósforo district stood firm in their contention that they needed to defend themselves against heavily armed criminals with something a bit more effective than sticks, whips, slingshots and stones. As one *rondero* stated:

"One day, the *rondero* leaders from Moyobamba⁹⁷ came to our region and watched our *ronderos* while they were patrolling. They said: 'These *ronderos* shouldn't patrol with shotguns, the *ronderos* should use sticks'. One of our *ronderos* turned around and said; 'Well, maybe that works in your region. But in my village, we don't want to lose our lives'. The man from Moyobamba just stood there with a surprised look on his face. 'This isn't the way we should protect the people', said the man from the *Defensoría del*

⁹⁵ Conversation with *rondero*, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 15, 2007.

⁹⁶ Interview with Nancy Obregón, Santa María de Frontera, November 18, 2005.

⁹⁷ The capital of the San Martín department.

Pueblo,⁹⁸ who also sounded like an idiot. He said we shouldn't use weapons; according to him, weapons are forbidden in the *rondas*. But the actual law does not prohibit the use of weapons by the *ronda*.”⁹⁹

Despite the criticism, Mal Abrigo's population continued to carry firearms during the *ronda* patrols. Villagers argued correctly that the right to establish a *ronda campesina* is grounded in Peruvian law but the right to carry weapons during patrols was only granted to the *comités de autodefensa*¹⁰⁰ during the internal armed conflict. It is probable that the *rondero* in this quotation refers to the law imposed during the internal armed conflict, when the *comités de autodefensa* were allowed by the Fujimori government to organized armed patrols against the guerrillas. But after Fujimori's ouster in 2000, this law was abolished and it was declared illegal to involve civilians in the military's task to fight Shining Path. The use of firearms by the *ronderos* was also declared illegal. Moreover, in the Fósforo district the firearms were not used to fight Shining Path but they were used to defend the villagers from the violence of different armed criminal groups.



Picture 14 An armed Rondero in the Fósforo district

7.4.2 A guerrilla attempt to organize the villagers?

In the rural communities, the majority of men who were elected by the population as *rondero* leaders were also the local cocalero leaders. In the rural communities, which did not suffer as much from the criminal groups as Mal Abrigo, the *ronderos* cocaleros' anger became directed mainly against the national government. One *rondero* cocalero leader stated:

⁹⁸ Peruvian human rights ombudsman.

⁹⁹ Interview with *rondero* Leader, Puerto Mal Abrigo, December 4, 2005.

¹⁰⁰ Self-defense committees to fight Shining Path during the internal armed conflict.

“What we do with *rateros*¹⁰¹ is throw them into the river and nobody ever hears from them again...but it shouldn’t be this way. Therefore the *ronda* shouldn’t only catch petty thieves, but the major bandits. And who is the biggest thief of all? The Peruvian state....”¹⁰²

In some communities,¹⁰³ those cocalero leaders who were organizing the *rondas campesinas* were ex-Shining Path members who as youth had been reared in the guerrilla group’s ideology. They had previously been the guerrilla’s armed *delegados* or so-called local *mandos militares*.¹⁰⁴ These cocalero leaders often took an active role in organizing the *rondas campesinas*, and often stated that these *rondas* were seen as a way to keep the state out of the communities. In their speeches, they not only emphasized the *ronda*’s role in solving robberies and crimes, but also the *ronda*’s role in the mobilization of citizens against forced eradication operations. A cocalero and *rondero* leader from one of the communities in the Frontera valley said:

“This is campesino justice. It is directed against those people with collars and neckties that we call thieves. This includes the state, the regional mayors, and the police. The *rondas campesinas* administer justice that upholds the rights of the people who live in our communities—something that the corrupt authorities will not do.”¹⁰⁵

As a result, the organization of *rondas* in the district started to feed rumors that Shining Path was re-organizing and attempting to penetrate communities in the Fósforo district.

In November 2005, one cocalera argued that the police had sent numerous agents to the region to investigate the *ronderos*’ connections with Shining Path. Police spies, especially women, came to the region with the story that their husbands had raped a child. One woman told me how she had responded to one of the police spies who had visited the community of Santa María de Frontera:

“I said ‘We will force a rapist to go to every community of our district. He will be brought to every group of *ronderos*, where he has to ask forgiveness for his crime. Here we have 15 groups; the rapist has to give a speech to each group. Afterward, we will either kill him or make him work, depending on his crime’. Then I said to this woman, ‘We are going to kill him’, I will not lie to you. ‘We will send him to Chota’,¹⁰⁶ I threatened, because sending these rape suspects to Chota would be like killing them. But I continued: ‘Nobody wants to be arrested by the *rondas* in the Fósforo district, *mamacita*’, because in Chota these suspects only have to ask for clemency in four different locations. But imagine having to come before 15 groups of angry men who all have children!”¹⁰⁷

But after saying this, the woman then began to talk about the supposed presence of guerrillas, as the cocalera remembered:

¹⁰¹ Term used for petty criminals.

¹⁰² Interview with *rondero* leader, Esperanza de Frontera, November 19, 2005.

¹⁰³ Mainly in the Frontera Valley, which during the internal armed conflict was controlled by the guerrillas.

¹⁰⁴ *Delegados* (guerrilla representative) or *mandos militares* (military leader) were community members and weren’t part of the armed faction of Shining Path.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with Molotov, Esperanza de Frontera, November 19, 2005.

¹⁰⁶ A town in Northern Peru, the capital of the province Chota in the Cajamarca department. It was here that the first *rondas campesinas* were formed by the villagers.

¹⁰⁷ Interview with unnamed cocalera, Santa María de Frontera, November 19, 2005.

“She starts talking about the rumors that the guerrillas have a camp on the other side of the Frontera River, and that different people told her that they knew these guerrillas, and that I was working with these guerrillas. I answered: ‘The only man that I know who can help you is the president of the *ronda campesina*. These things you are talking about happened many years ago. Nowadays, we don’t have these kinds of people here in my village’.”¹⁰⁸

Ronderos always denied that they had any relationship with the guerrillas, but things were happening in the Fósforo district that did seem to constitute grounds for legitimate suspicion. During the four years preceding the rise in violence that began in May 2005, villagers were overwhelmingly against Shining Path—including most former members of the organization. The increasing possibility of becoming a victim of crime, however, made residents think differently about Shining Path. Inhabitants began to argue that life had been more peaceful when Shining Path was the principal power in their district. The guerrilla’s strict rules and regulation—and draconian punishments for those who broke these rules—were thought by many to be what was needed to end the reign of criminal terror in the district. Yet this nostalgia for Shining Path, and sympathy for some of their methods, did not usually translate into actual support for the terrorist organization. One cocalero remarked:

“Here, our people believe in justice. They believe in their *ronda campesina*, and nothing more. If the guerrillas come to our village, the people will decide what to do with them.... Here in this region, things only happen as a result of the vote of the people. When the village wants something, it will happen. When the village does not want it, nothing happens. These days the villagers are organized in their *rondas*, and that is what the people want—and that is all that they want.”¹⁰⁹

The cocalero making these remarks had been a local *mando militar*¹¹⁰ of Shining Path himself during the internal armed conflict. His statement, however, summarized the sentiments of most of Fósforo’s inhabitants about any possible resurgence of Shining Path.

Many scholars were concerned about the establishment of armed *rondas campesinas* in the Fósforo district, as one of them remarked:

“[...] it doesn’t look like these are autonomous *rondas campesinas*. To me, and I may be wrong, it looks like these *rondas* are organized by Artemio.¹¹¹ I think this means the resumption of Shining Path’s political activity—which will later mean the resumption of their military activity. They will take advantage of the disorderly situation that prevails in these regions because of the absence of the state. But I think that it is a mistake on the part of the cocalero movement to let itself be convinced of the necessity of taking this path....”¹¹²

But Shining Path’s involvement in Fósforo’s *rondas* was never shown to be particularly substantial. Only in the communities where Shining Path had a significant presence, such as the Frontera valley, did the guerilla movement visibly participate in the *rondas*. In Mal Abrigo, in contrast to the thought that the *rondas* were organized by Shining Path, the military

¹⁰⁸ Interview with unnamed cocalera, Santa María de Frontera, November 19, 2005.

¹⁰⁹ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Puerto Mal Abrigo, December 4, 2005.

¹¹⁰ *Mandos militares* (military leader) were community members and weren’t part of the armed faction of Shining Path.

¹¹¹ Leader of the *Comité Regional del Alto Huallaga* (CRAH; Regional Committee of the Upper Huallaga).

¹¹² Interview with Hugo Cabieses Cubas, Lima, October 13, 2005.

became actively involved in this civilian initiative. But there was at the same time another armed group that competed with the *rondas campesinas* for influence in the Fósforo district.

7.4.3 Narco or military influence

In Puerto Mal Abrigo, there was a power struggle between different armed groups,¹¹³ mainly drug traffickers and criminal groups, which led to several outbreaks of violence. As a result, it was not only the inhabitants who were concerned about the arrival of these criminal gangs: Even the different *patrones* and those otherwise involved in the illegal cocaine economy were worried. Their concern increased when the *traqueteros* driving *camiones cargados*¹¹⁴ became frequent victims of assaults. From the beginning, the *ronda campesina* in Mal Abrigo did not consist exclusively of campesinos. Some of the men participating in the *ronda* worked as *sicarios* of long established *firmas* during the day and patrolled the village as *ronderos* at night. In addition, several agreements for cooperation were made between the *patrones* and the *ronderos*. While the *ronderos* would keep their eyes and ears open about rumors arising in the bars during their night patrols, the *patrones*, because they had closer bonds in Tocache, would investigate the supposed hiding places of the assault groups in this town. The findings of these investigations would be passed on to the *ronderos*. The *ronderos* used this information during their patrols, for example, when they spotted a person accused of being an assailant in Tocache, they warned the *patrones*.

Because of these agreements between the *ronderos* and the *firmas*, Mal Abrigo and Tocache were no longer considered to be a good hiding place for armed robbers. Whenever a group of men spent large amounts of money, it would be noticed by the *patrón*, those working for the *firmas*, or the villagers. Soon after the hiding place of a gang of alleged armed robbers was identified, a group of *patrones* assembled a unit of armed men and started to plan a drive-by shooting in which hired killers often took part. After one such retaliatory murder in Pueblo Libre, the assaults temporarily stopped. On August 10, 2006, rumors began circulating in Mal Abrigo that *ronderos* and several drug traffickers of Pueblo Libre, a small village located between Tocache and Mal Abrigo, had caught some members of an assault group, killed them, and then threw their bodies in the Huallaga River. These revenge killings served as a warning to other criminals, some of whom did in fact leave the region. There was a brief respite in highway robberies, but criminal activity resumed within approximately two weeks on the road from Tocache to Mal Abrigo.

Because these robberies began to endanger the cocaine industry, even some *firmas* that had recently entered the region tried to gain influence over the *rondas campesinas* in Mal Abrigo. They wanted to establish closer bonds with the *ronderos* by letting *sicarios* train the *ronda* leaders, and they wanted to help the *ronderos* formulate tactics and strategy. They even offered to buy a building where the captured criminals would have to face their trial. But the *ronderos* rejected these offers because it was thought that the *narcos* wanted to take control over the village from the other long-established *patrones* who were already supporting the *ronda*. The *narcos'* offers also met with skepticism on the part of the population, who were suspicious of all newcomers to the cocaine industry. It was thought that the *ronderos* could be used as *sicarios* in the acts of vengeance attempts that typically occurred between different drug trafficking groups.¹¹⁵ In Mal Abrigo, it was only the growing rumors about *ronderos'* acceptance of the *narcos'* offers that led to a decline in the population's support for the self-defense initiative.

¹¹³ For example, the battle between Maradona and El Adusto described in Chapter 3.

¹¹⁴ Literally “loaded trucks,”—cars loaded with cocaine.

¹¹⁵ This had happened during the internal armed conflict in the Apurímac-Ene River valley, where coca was used as a source of income for the *ronda* leaders and personal feuds arose among the different *ronda* leaders over influence on the cocaine industry (see Fumerton 2002; Starn 1996).

Instead of accepting the offers of the *narcos*, the *ronderos* had accepted the help of the military for their night patrols. The inhabitants generally endorsed this choice because there was widespread favorable sentiment in the village toward having a permanently present state force. Moreover, the support of the military for these civilian initiatives is also prescribed by a law¹¹⁶ established during the internal armed conflict, in which it is stated the military has to control these civilian self-defense initiatives. The military commander also had to register all the weapons used by the *ronderos*. But in Mal Abrigo, the *rondero* leaders asked for more support of the military. The military commanders complied with these demands and engaged in frequent meetings with the *rondero* leaders to discuss planning and organization of the *rondas*. But the military commander always refused to participate in the nightly patrols. This refusal to fulfill an active role can be seen as their commander's acceptance of the *ronda campesina* as a civilian initiative. The military's highest level of involvement in the night patrols was limited to the temporary participation of soldiers in night patrols at times when the *ronderos* suspected the situation in the village might turn violent.

Mal Abrigo's inhabitants were initially pleased with these arrangements between the military and the *ronda* leaders, but when the frequency of assaults on the road between Puerto Mal Abrigo and Tocache reached an all-time high by August 2006, the villagers urged the commander to permanently patrol the *Carretera Marginal*. Once again, this request was rejected on the grounds that tracking down common criminals wasn't part of the military's task in the region. After the commander's rejection, the *ronderos* more and more took the law into their own hands and increasingly used brutal violence to stop the crimes and punish the offenders. But this use of violence by the *ronda* led to internal chaos and disorganization.

7.5 “The *ronda* is doing the killing”

7.5.1 A temporary halt to robberies

By August 2006, armed robberies were occurring daily on the road between Tocache and Mal Abrigo. When the violence used during these assaults increased, the *ronderos* stopped taking the alleged assailants they had caught to the police station in Tocache, or to the office of the *Juez de Paz* in Mal Abrigo. The *rondero* leaders also did not ask the population what kind of punishment these supposed criminals should get. When they captured a suspect, the *ronderos* applied an immediate punishment, which often was summary execution.¹¹⁷

When robberies began to occur on the road between Mal Abrigo and Santa María de Frontera, the inhabitants of both villages reacted with outrage. People from the Frontera Valley were frustrated because they were dependent on the daily market in Puerto Mal Abrigo to purchase their food.¹¹⁸ When the robberies increased and became more violent, the drivers of *colectivos* refused fares to Santa María de Frontera because the route was too dangerous. After several weeks of daily robberies, the villagers of Santa María began to suspect who was organizing the assaults. Some villagers reported their suspicion to *ronderos* that an impoverished campesino family was organizing these robberies. It was said that they even used their children as look-outs during the robberies. The *ronderos* of Santa María de Frontera were given the task of capturing the suspects. On August 27, 2006, these *ronderos* confronted all of the family members as they attempted the robbery of a *colectivo* travelling to

¹¹⁶ See Decreto Legislativo n° 741.

¹¹⁷ In the whole Fósforo district but especially in Mal Abrigo, the daily occurrence of violent assaults greatly increased the frustration of district residents, leading to an increase in the violence used to confront these crimes (see Goldstein 2003). The *ronda*'s retaliatory actions quickly degenerated into grisly spectacles of wonton brutality.

¹¹⁸ To explain why assaults did take place on this road: The road between the villages was often used to transport coca leaves, *coca pasta* or *droga base* to locations on the Frontera River, from where it could be shipped to the cocaine laboratories further into the jungle.

Santa María. After seeing what was going on, the *ronderos* killed the assailants right on the spot. Many residents of Santa María and Mal Abrigo reacted with shock and dismay when it became known that the victims group had included three children. Afterwards their bodies were thrown into the Frontera River.¹¹⁹

But this violent retaliation didn't stop the violent assaults on the road from Tocache to Puerto Mal Abrigo. On August 30, 2006, a terrible act occurred that put an immediate halt to the armed robberies. Six bodies were found, each with a bullet wound in the forehead, close to a small rural hamlet called Kilometro 18 on the road from Tocache to Puerto Mal Abrigo in the district of Fósforo.¹²⁰ Later it was revealed that three of the victims had been minors. There was only one survivor—a 23 year-old man. A bullet that had been fired at his head had not penetrated his brain. After the perpetrators disappeared, the survivor was able to escape to Tocache, where he reported what happened to local police. Several days later, a cocalero from Mal Abrigo discovered the bodies (see box 7.3). An investigation of the incident was conducted after articles about the killings appeared in several national newspapers. In the national press, the event was generally portrayed as a Shining Path attack on innocent campesino victims.¹²¹

Mal Abrigo's *ronderos* strongly denied their involvement in these particular murders. Those involved in the drug business, they stated, had a specific modus operandi for their executions: They shot their victims right between their eyes and then left the bodies exposed, as had been done in the present case. If the killings had been the work of the *ronderos*, it was argued that they would have disposed of the bodies.¹²² One *rondero* argued:

“If we had had anything to do with it...these bodies would be thrown into the river and nobody would have known about what happened. This was a transparent attempt to blame us for these murders!”¹²³

The young man who had survived the attack did identify several men from Mal Abrigo, who weren't involved in the cocaine industry, as having been involved in the murders. He identified suspects who were known *ronderos*, and were arrested in Puerto Mal Abrigo. Nevertheless, residents of this village continued to point the finger at Tocache's *narcos*, whom the police had never questioned. The arrested men were later released because their involvement could not be proven.¹²⁴ The young man's accusation caused widespread outrage among the population of Mal Abrigo. There were residents who said that it would be better if the survivor left town and never returned. Some even went so far as to say they would kill him if he ever showed his face again in their community.¹²⁵ The event also weakened the

¹¹⁹ Although the execution of the family aroused mixed feelings, many villagers did express relief that it seemed that they would now be able to travel freely to Santa María or Mal Abrigo without fear of being assaulted. Conversations with several cocaleros from Puerto Mal Abrigo and Santa María de Frontera, September, 2006.

¹²⁰ *Coca, votos y muerte. Los dilemas sangrientos de una estrategia electoral* Caretas, September 14, 2006.

¹²¹ *Coca, votos y muerte. Los dilemas sangrientos de una estrategia electoral* Caretas, September 14, 2006. In this article the murders were described as a gangland slaying by one of the region's *patrones*. The article also claimed that the car belonged to the *firma* known in the area as *Ocotillo*, based in Tocache. Whether or not this was the case remained unclear after several conversations with various residents of Fósforo, who did declare it had been a retaliation attempt, but only later indicated which local *sicarios* had carried it out.

¹²² It was also thought the involved drug *firma* wanted to put the blame on Mal Abrigo's *ronderos* because the bodies were found on a river shore close to the village.

¹²³ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Puerto Mal Abrigo, October 2, 2006.

¹²⁴ By Mal Abrigo's population it was thought the victim had appointed some village men whom he knew were living in Mal Abrigo (close to the place where the victims' bodies were found). He knew that he would be putting his life at risk if he had identified those who had executed the murders (as his group had assaulted their *camion cargado*) and he must have been aware of the fact that they would be quickly released by the police in Tocache (as this group was a large-scale drug trafficking organization coming from Aucayacu and could have paid a large bribe to be released easily). Identifying some village men seemed to be the safest option.

¹²⁵ Conversations with several cocaleros of Puerto Mal Abrigo and Santa María de Frontera, September 2006.

cooperation between the different *firmas* and the *ronderos*, as the *ronderos* felt they could not trust the newly entered *firmas* because, in their view, they had tried to blame the murders on the *ronda campesina*. After this event, the *sicarios* of *firmas* did not participate in the night patrols of the *ronda*.

Box 7.3 The discovery of the bodies

For a long time, the events surrounding the murders remained vague. It was only during my fieldwork in 2007, a year after the murders had taken place, that a cocalero from Mal Abrigo revealed: “After they killed these six teenagers, there were no more armed robberies. The group was already suspected of being the bandits because, during one of the *ronda* patrols, a *rondero* had entered the house of one of the suspected assailants and he had seen a new television. But that day, nobody was present in the house. The young man who survived had been shot as well, you know, but who would have believed that he would survive? They shot him right in his face, close to his ear. He fell, and his brother, who was next in line, felt over his body. So they didn’t even check whether all victims had actually died. The next day, the police were looking for the victims. They came to Mal Abrigo...but neither the police nor their families could find the bodies. The next day, a friend of mine wanted to go to Kilómetro 18. My father told me to be careful because people said that the *narcos* had killed six or seven bandits on the *Carretera Marginal*. But we travelled to Kilómetro 18. Even when we passed the bridge of Piuca, we said to each other that ‘nothing is going on, let’s go’. But when we passed this community, I looked into the jungle because I saw a dog running away. My friend shouted, ‘Over there!’ And I saw a bullet laying on the road. I thought: This is the place where they killed them. I saw one bullet and then another one and a little bit further on, another one. ‘They were killed here!’ my friend shouted, but I already had seen three drops of blood. I then came across two bodies. I found the other four bodies when I walked closed to the River’s shore. The four bodies were covered by some jungle plants. I walked toward the bodies, but I almost fell when I stepped on a foot. ‘Let’s go’ my friend shouted. We returned to Mal Abrigo, but everybody already knew in Mal Abrigo.... They all asked me what I had seen. So I told him we had found the six bodies. The group of *Guairanga*;¹²⁶ they were the ones that had carried out the murders. But *Guairanga* was also the one who informed the military that the bodies were found. The military called the police in Tocache and told them where the bodies could be found. Afterward, we quickly returned to the location, but when we arrived, the bullets were gone and the bodies were not lying in the same place, while we were passing time in Mal Abrigo. Once again, *Guairanga*’s group had tried to hide the bodies...”¹²⁷

After the murder of the six assailants, there were no further assaults on the road from Tocache to Mal Abrigo for approximately a month. The murders continued to be frequently discussed subject during conversations in the Fósforo district, even a year after the events. A large majority of the population approved of the murders because they did restore order to the district. They showed no empathy for the murder victims, who in their eyes were dangerous criminals who deserved to be killed. Although the murders shocked much of the nation, many inhabitants of the Fósforo district remained entirely unfazed. One resident said:

“If you are involved in armed robbery, you know what is going to happen to you. They will track you down and you will never live in peace.... You know they will hunt you down and kill you.”¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Guairanga was an inner-circle member of a new drug *firma* entering the region from Aucayacu. This new group was viewed with suspicion and, because of his violent behavior, Guairanga was widely disliked by the local population. When a rumor reached Puerto Mal Abrigo that Guairanga had previously been involved in several armed robberies, the population’s patience disappeared. The villagers organized a group of armed men, who were given the task of ordering Guairanga to leave their village immediately, and he quickly departed (see Chapter 3).

¹²⁷ Conversation with Ignacio, Alto Mal Abrigo, August 19, 2007.

¹²⁸ Conversation with unnamed cocalero, Puerto Mal Abrigo, September 21, 2006.

By September 2006, a group of assailants led by *Shoba*¹²⁹ (see box 7.1) began to scare the population. This particular *pandilla* had approximately 30 members and wasn't only involved in highway robberies. They also conducted robberies in Tocache and kidnappings of wealthy and influential people throughout the district. They were said to have smuggled numerous AK assault rifles into the region to use in their robberies and kidnappings. Rumors arose that they were planning kidnappings of the main *patrones* in Mal Abrigo: *Chisme* and *Guerra*. But the heavily armed *ronderos*' presence in this village prevented such kidnappings from ever taking place.¹³⁰ In the inhabitants' view, stopping armed robberies became a question of "us against them". But the vigilante justice that the *ronderos* dispensed had become disproportionate to the crimes that had been committed. Eventually, many of the inhabitants of Mal Abrigo began to see the *ronda campesina* as just another criminal group.

7.5.2 From rondas to trigger-happy psychopaths?

Starn (1996: 252) has observed that "every discussion about *rondero* violence runs the risk of reproducing the old-fashioned and prejudicial vision of the essential brutality of the Andean campesinos". But, as will be argued, in the case of Mal Abrigo it would also be a mistake to view the *ronderos* as merely a self-defense group that was meting out punishment commensurate with the crimes that had been committed. Soon after its creation, Puerto Mal Abrigo's *ronda campesina* gained a reputation for deadly violence throughout the entire department of San Martín. Villagers proudly stated that strangers were aware that, in Mal Abrigo, "the *ronda kills*". These days, captured criminals feared being sent to Mal Abrigo in their *Cadena Ronderil*¹³¹ because rumor spread that no criminal would ever get out of Mal Abrigo alive. In the words of one cocalero:

"The *ronda* of Mal Abrigo is very famous in the Upper Huallaga. It is considered to be one of the most violent, bloody and terrible.... In Mal Abrigo, they kill, people say. The captured criminals are sent by the *Cadena Ronderil* from Nueva Vista to Tocache, from Tocache to Pueblo Libre, to Juanjui, to Adelanto, to Mal Abrigo. But, you know something? The criminals who arrive in Mal Abrigo never leave. Even the police are afraid of entering Mal Abrigo, because they know about its reputation. Therefore, the criminals here think long and hard before starting any trouble. Because if they are captured by the *ronda*, they'll end up sleeping with the fishes."¹³²

In this quotation it becomes clear that, from August 2006 on, all crimes were punished by death. In many cases, the victims were thrown in the Huallaga River only after their stomachs were cut open, so that they would sink to the bottom of the river. For some time, the violent retaliatory actions of the *rondas* did restore peace to the Fósforo district. But many villagers became increasingly uneasy with the mounting death toll throughout the course of August 2006 until August 2007.

As time went on, a number of criminal groups reacted with violence against the *ronderos*' actions. Thus, a cycle of violence was set in motion. Within this context, more villagers, who were still forced to participate in the night patrols, got drawn into the intensifying conflicts between the *ronderos* and different criminal groups. Several criminal groups began to promise rewards for those who killed one of the *ronda* leaders of Mal Abrigo. Fear of these criminal groups increased when several victims of armed robberies stated that

¹²⁹ Pseudonym of the leader of an assault group.

¹³⁰ Before, the *ronda* had also prevented the kidnap attempts of Maradona's *pandilla* group (see Chapter 3).

¹³¹ Punishment that included the suspect being forced to travel to the different *rondero* groups until the suspect confessed and his punishment could be decided.

¹³² Conversation with unnamed *rondero*, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 13, 2007.

their assailants were in the possession of automatic guns, while the majority of the *ronderos*' weapons were old rifles and two shotguns—weapons which they had obtained from different local *patrones*. The danger involved in the participation in the *ronda* led to the refusal on the part of numerous villagers to participate in the night patrols. Their refusal created opportunities for a number of young adults¹³³ who were willing to participate—for money. They charged 40 *Nuevo Soles* per night to assume the villagers' turns in the patrols. Most villagers by then had come to see the *ronda* as a group of trigger-happy, undisciplined individuals.¹³⁴ This view was also shared by some ex-members of the *ronda* leadership, who now refrained from participation in the night patrols. At the same time, the *Juez de Paz*'s influence over the *ronda* declined and, eventually, accused criminals were no longer brought to the village to await their trial. The new *rondero* leaders rejected any kind of legal influence over the *ronda*, and did not meet regularly with the military commander or with the *Juez de Paz*. They began to simply function as a law unto themselves. They were largely mistrusted and even feared by the people of the village. In some cases, newly entered migrants attained a powerful influence over the *ronda*, but the population argued that they didn't even know who these men were. Rumors circulated that some *ronda* leaders were ex-bandits, and some were accused of using their leadership role in the *ronda* to settle old feuds.¹³⁵

In Mal Abrigo, the *rondero* leaders increasingly began to violate the *ronda*'s own rules. According to the *ronderos*' rules in Mal Abrigo, the *ronda* leadership had to control the daily community's security but the rules also stated that they could not influence or arrogate to themselves the decision-making powers of the local authorities. But some new *rondero* leaders began to search for ways to get around these rules and sought to exert control in the villages. They began to influence the communities' political organization and decision-making in different communities by threatening violence. Puerto Soledad's local community leader, who was an advocate of alternative development, became one of the main targets of growing *rondero* violence. As he said:

“We held a meeting with the agricultural planning experts of the alternative development, here in the village. But there were some people who opposed their plans. But these opponents were armed men with machetes and shotguns who came from Mal Abrigo, not from our village. We had to defend the agricultural planning experts.”¹³⁶

Mal Abrigo's *ronda* leadership had made a visit to California. The violence was mainly directed against the popular leaders of communities where the people had accepted the projects of alternative development.

Box 7.4 Deadly threats against alternative development

A community leader of Puerto Soledad said: “They had recently changed the *ronda* leaders in Puerto Soledad, and had elected a leader who didn't want us to sign the alternative development project. One day, he asked the *ronderos* of Mal Abrigo for help. *Fuerte*¹³⁷ came... He arrived with a group of teenagers at about 9 o'clock in the evening. They came along with some ‘local authorities’, who were

¹³³ These young adults were looking for other opportunities to make a wage because the forced eradication operations still continued, and this diminished the opportunities to work in the cocaine industry. Many of these young adults, after their *chacra* was eradicated several times and the work opportunities on other cocaleros' fields decreased, saw no other option to make money, and accepted such offers to serve as substitutes.

¹³⁴ Conversations with several cocaleros of Puerto Mal Abrigo and Santa María de Frontera, September 2006.

¹³⁵ Conversation with several men who had been actively involved in the organization of the Ronda Campesina, September 2006.

¹³⁶ Interview with Jésus de Castro, California, August 17, 2007.

¹³⁷ The *ronda* leader of Mal Abrigo.

all *rondero* leaders. *Fuerte* said that they, together with the population of Mal Abrigo, had decided to send me to the *Cadena Ronderil*.¹³⁸ But I hadn't committed any crime. They wanted to take me but the villagers did not accept their decision. Some of Mal Abrigo's *rondero* leaders were armed because they thought this conflict could only be resolved with a gun battle. If *Fuerte* at that moment had reacted aggressively, there would have been a gun battle because our people were against the *ronda*'s decision. While we were arguing, some *ronderos* from Puerto Soledad, who were also armed, had hidden in the jungle, while another group of *ronderos* was here in the village; they were also armed. *Fuerte* chose to negotiate. They spoke to us for about an hour and then returned to their car. *Chisme*,¹³⁹ who had taken them there, was waiting in his car. He was sleeping in the car, unaware that the villagers at one time were preparing to throw gasoline on his car and burn it. That day, *Chisme* was almost murdered by accident! It was all the fault of the *ronda* leader of Puerto Soledad, who had gone to Puerto Mal Abrigo to denounce us. [...] Afterwards, the same *ronda* leader tried to cause problems because, as a *rondero*, he wanted to change the local authorities. He called a new meeting and now *Fuerte* and *George*¹⁴⁰ from Mal Abrigo were present. At that time, I didn't know *Fuerte* was the leader of the *ronda* in Mal Abrigo, but I knew *George* was involved in the leadership, so I asked him 'What crime have I committed?' 'You have signed an agreement for alternative development', he responded. So I shouted: 'But I didn't sign that agreement; the villagers have signed it'. And I told him to his face: 'If anything happens to my family, my wife or kids, you will be the one responsible'. Because of these problems, it became impossible for my family to live in Puerto Soledad. We were forced to move to California."¹⁴¹

Crime prevention, conflict resolution and the administration of social justice, which before had been important tasks for the *ronderos*, were all abandoned during this stage. Moreover, as seen above, in some cases the *rondero* violence even became directed against the population of the Fósforo district. Even the night patrols were discontinued because so many villagers refused to participate in the violent practices endorsed by the *rondero* leadership of Mal Abrigo.

7.5.3 The reassertion of legal control

The problems that threatened the continuation of the *ronda* in Mal Abrigo centered on corruption and *caudillismo*. But Mal Abrigo was no exception. The abuse of authority in the case of the *rondero* leaders' use of firearms was a common problem in the whole country (Starn 1996: 247-248). In the case of the *ronda*, because weapons were involved, the abuse of authority in some cases became lethal. But, as seen above, the violent practices of the *ronda* leaders became severely resented by the population. As had been the case with CONPACCP,¹⁴² villagers began to support the *ronda* again only after its leadership had been completely overhauled. By August 2007, there was once again a high level of participation in the *ronda campesina* on the part of the villagers of Mal Abrigo. As the *Juez de Paz* said:

"We have approved a new *ronda* statute. Now, anyone who lives in this village for three months has to participate in the *ronda*. If somebody does not want to participate, this person loses his rights in this community. We still have some deficiencies and some excesses, but these mostly occur because of lack of knowledge and experience. For example: Every group of patrolling *ronderos* has a leader. These leaders are men with more experience in these kinds of organizations, and every leader clearly explains to this group what they have to do and what they cannot do. But our *ronda* has only

¹³⁸ Meaning that the community leader would be forced to travel to the different *rondero* groups until he had confessed his crime and his punishment could be decided.

¹³⁹ One of Mal Abrigo's *traqueteros* who had brought the *ronderos* of Mal Abrigo to Puerto Soledad.

¹⁴⁰ The vice-president of the *ronda campesina* in Mal Abrigo.

¹⁴¹ Conversation with Jésus de Castro and Ignacio, California, August 17, 2007.

¹⁴² *Confederación Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios de las Cuencas Cocaleras de Perú*; see Chapter 5.

been in existence for three years, and we are working very hard to resolve the problems that we've had.”¹⁴³

As can be seen in this quotation, the new *ronda* leaders worked together with the *Juez de Paz*. Additionally, they now regularly organized meetings to discuss the *ronda*'s rules and strategies. The previous leaders were replaced by people with more experience in the organization of *rondas campesinas* and communal justice, and who were willing to work according the traditional rules. The practice of paying others to serve as replacements on patrols was stopped. Everybody living in the village was forced to participate.

The new *ronda* leaders also reinforced their bonds with the military. It was once again required that the *ronda*'s weapons be registered at the military base before being used during the night patrols. But the military's control over the *ronda* remained minimal and did not involve their participation in the community meetings or mandatory meetings.¹⁴⁴ The *ronda* leadership did hold weekly meetings with the military commander, but these were held at the request of the *ronderos*, and not of the military. All these changes were seen as a restoration of the *ronda*'s legitimacy and allowed the group to resume their night patrols. Additionally, by August 2007, because the forced eradication operations continued, new drug trafficking groups had disappeared from the district. Those who stayed behind were some long-established *firmas* and *patrones*, quietly biding their time.¹⁴⁵

During the times that violence was on the wane, Mal Abrigo's citizens to a large extent lost their enthusiasm for participating in night patrols. People complained it was tiring after working all day on their *chacra* to patrol their communities. In the words of one *rondero*:

“At first, they were afraid to patrol because there was so much crime and we didn't have any weapons, only sticks. But nowadays, when the violence diminished, everyone gets bored and nobody wants to go on patrol.”¹⁴⁶

In August 2007, the new *rondero* leader, listening to the villagers' complaints, curtailed the hours of the night patrol.¹⁴⁷ In Mal Abrigo, the night patrols were cut short by several hours, ending at two clock in the morning on weekdays (with patrols lasting longer on weekends). At times of high tension, or when there were rumors that a particular criminal action would take place, the patrols lasted longer.

In August 2007, when the *rondero* leader became aware that these changes did not completely solve the problem, he implemented another change. From that time on women were ordered to actively participate in the night patrols. From then on, the *ronderos* night patrols were easily noticed as they always included two local women noisily exchanging the latest gossip during the night. In Mal Abrigo, the women's active participation in the night patrols can be seen as a positive contribution to their involvement in the community's organization.¹⁴⁸ Even before their participation in the night patrols in Mal Abrigo, women had already played an important role in the establishment of the *rondas campesinas*. In Santa María de Frontera Nancy Obregón, before her election in the national congress, had been the

¹⁴³ Interview with *Juez de Paz*, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 6, 2007.

¹⁴⁴ See Stern 1996 on *rondas campesinas* in the northern parts of Peru.

¹⁴⁵ In 2008 more cocaine was processed in the Fósforo district, although the forced eradication operations still sporadically re-entered the district. It was said that the local *firmas* and *patrones* had moved their laboratories further into the jungle, where they were safe from the forced eradication operations.

¹⁴⁶ Conversation unnamed *rondero*, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 22, 2007.

¹⁴⁷ Conversation with Jésus de Castro, California, August 17, 2007.

¹⁴⁸ Following Starn (1996: 247), the absence of female participation in the *rondas campesinas* is often seen as a continuation of male domination in areas like public leadership and strengthens the old tradition of subordination of women in the community's organization.

rondero cocalero leader. In Mal Abrigo, Nancy Zamora was elected as *rondero* leader in November 2007. Zamora was widely applauded by the residents of the village when she demanded that drug traffickers treat the population with respect. Some villagers smilingly remarked she had been seen shouting in the streets to some *traqueteros*, who the population considered to be the most violent, threatening them with communal justice.

By November 2007, the frequency of armed robberies once again increased, as they were taking place at numerous points along the *Carretera Marginal* between Tingo and Tarapoto and even on the section of the *Carretera Central* between Huánuco and Tingo María. There were some visible changes in the reaction of the villagers. On the road from Huánuco to Tingo, the site of numerous armed robberies, the *ronderos* came up with an additional way to earn extra money for their organization. Armed *ronderos* accompanied the bus and collective taxis, asking for money from travelers to help support the *ronderos'* patrols. This initiative met with considerable success. By the end of 2007, the *ronda* in Puerto Mal Abrigo had extended their patrols into the daytime in order to prevent a new violent outbreak. This initiative was organized by Fósforo's *Alcalde*, Victor Córdova. The men involved in the day patrols were paid 10 *Nuevo Soles* to patrol the village from ten o'clock in the morning until seven o'clock in the evening. They were also given a free breakfast, lunch and dinner. Not surprisingly, the village men stood in line to participate in these day patrols.

7.6 Red flags, hammers and sickles revisited

7.6.1 Early signs of Shining Path followed by a state of emergency

But by the end of 2007, another armed group had re-emerged from the shadows. After the internal armed conflict had come to an end in most of Peru, it was asserted that guerrilla activity no longer endangered the stability of the national state, but that the guerrillas continued to cause terror in some particular regions of the country (see CVR 2003; Reyna 1996). According to the final report of the CVR (2003: 294), Shining Path continued to act like an authority in the rural areas and hamlets of the Upper Huallaga, but it was thought that their power had been steadily declining. The violent actions of supposed guerrilla remnants that remained in the Upper Huallaga were never placed in the context of a failed post-conflict situation and a national neglect of the local situation. As described in Chapter 4, in the Upper Huallaga, post-conflict reconstruction projects had been absent in the rural regions or had failed in the urban towns. For example, there had been no efforts to improve the economic situation, or improve infrastructure, and the region was forgotten in national reconciliation projects. In addition, villagers' attempts to engage in governance and civil society had been largely suppressed by the two successive governments of Toledo and García. To demonstrate the government's stance, Toledo stated in an annual message to congress in 2003 that the government would start a new strategy against "*narcoterrorismo*" concentrated in the cocalero regions (Rojas 2005: 185).¹⁴⁹ This narco-terrorist discourse of the government of Toledo was mainly used as a justification for refusing to negotiate with CONPACCP¹⁵⁰ during the second *Marcha de Sacrificio*¹⁵¹ in 2004.

The term narcoterrorism was used to explain all changes taking place in the Upper Huallaga: The cocaleros' reactions against the forced eradication, the local *rondas campesinas*, the cocaleros' protests and the growing criminal violence were all interpreted as

¹⁴⁹ Although this speech came after an attack against some workers on an oil pipeline in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, by a supposed "Shining Path" column, the Upper Huallaga was always included in the government's fight against this so-called *narcoterrorismo*.

¹⁵⁰ Confederación Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios de las Cuencas Cocaleras de Perú.

¹⁵¹ March of Sacrifice: see Chapter 5.

signs of Shining Path's growing influence in this region. Once again, in 2005 the national press started to comment on a re-appearance of armed groups connected to Peru's most infamous guerrilla movement, Shining Path. Nevertheless the term "re-appearance" to describe the growing influence of the guerrillas is largely controversial, because Shining Path was never totally defeated in the Upper Huallaga. By late-2005, national newspapers began to speculate that whole villages, involved in the cultivation of coca, in the Upper Huallaga had turned into "liberated zones". It was also asserted that Shining Path's remnants groups, headed by Artemio, had established a stronghold in the jungle surrounding Aucayacu.¹⁵² One candidate for the post of mayor in Aucayacu said that any political appointments in the communities and hamlets surrounding Aucayacu needed the approval of Artemio, were forced to pay collaborations and were closely monitored by the guerrilla organization. Increasingly the guerrilla force began to publicly display their presence in the town of Aucayacu. Shining Path guerrillas painted houses, churches and public schools with their slogans, distributed pamphlets and organized marches carrying the red flag with a hammer and sickle through remote communities. The Shining Path was not welcomed back by the villagers, who in fact rejected identification with this terrorist organization in overwhelming numbers. After their houses were painted, they quickly tried to wipe out the painted slogan, fearing violent repression from the military.



Picture 15 A house in Aucayacu painted with Shining Path slogans

When after late-December 2005, the national press started to publish these articles about the growing influence of the guerrillas in Aucayacu, some journalists and cocalero leaders in Tingo María and Aucayacu remarked that Shining Path had already expanded their control over the whole Upper Huallaga.¹⁵³ For example, right after the national press began to publish articles about Aucayacu, it appeared that Shining Path had recovered some force in

¹⁵² Town close to Tingo María in Huánuco department.

¹⁵³ Conversation with journalist, Aucayacu, June 24 2005 and Luis Cardoza, journalist, Tingo María, August 14, 2005.

the Fósforo district. On November 15, 2005, Aurelio, who was an *ex-guerrillero*, visited me in my hostel and told me that Shining Path militants had visited his house in Paraíso. He said that these militants were asking questions about the cocalero organization and the *rondas campesinas* and were engaging in gossip about corruption and betrayal by the cocalero leaders. As one of Fósforo's inhabitants stated:

"They are here and getting closer [...] We previously had one meeting with Shining Path in Paraíso. Shining Path told the people there that they had changed their strategy and this time they were not going to commit any abuses against the villagers. In my view, this is only their strategy until they have once again won the population's confidence. Then there will be trouble again..."¹⁵⁴

A few days later, rumors spread in Puerto Mal Abrigo that Shining Path had marched through the streets of Piuca¹⁵⁵ carrying red flags and shouting slogans in favor of "President Gonzalo".¹⁵⁶ At about the same time, rumors surfaced about the presence of remnants of Shining Path in Esperanza de Frontera, and communities further down the path into the Ongón Valley.¹⁵⁷ Mal Abrigo's villagers were shocked when a group of Shining Path guerrillas marched through the village, within view of the military base. However, this march was described by only one inhabitant, which made the verification more difficult because other inhabitants never spoke about this particular event. Probably this last event never took place, as a military camp was established above Mal Abrigo and controlled the village constantly from above. Marching through this central village would have been suicide for the Shining Path guerrillas. However, there were numerous reports that the guerrillas had begun to enter a number of rural villages, including 3 de Diciembre, Santa María, Esperanza de Frontera, without a permanent presence of the military.

It became increasingly clear that the failed post-conflict reconstruction, the state's ongoing neglect and the guerrillas' relations with the cocaine industry had enabled Shining Path to curtail government control over small parts of the Upper Huallaga. By 2005, in several of the Upper Huallaga's remote communities, campesinos were forced to pay for Shining Path protection. Meanwhile several villages in the Upper Huallaga Valley were stigmatized in the national press as "Shining Path strongholds" such as Yanajanca, a community close to Madre Mía.¹⁵⁸ As one young cocalero who had fled Yanajanca explained:

"I left Yanajanca because the guerrillas wouldn't allow me to live in peace. They didn't allow us to drink. We had to pay the 'Party'.¹⁵⁹ They would not let me live in peace."¹⁶⁰

In the Fósforo district, there was renewed support for Shining Path. Some supporters of the group began to proclaim that Shining Path had changed their ideology. They believed that this time they wouldn't kill campesinos, but would protect them from robberies and assaults. Having heard about this renewed presence of Shining Path when I began my fieldwork in June 2005, I called some Mal Abrigo villagers to ask whether it would be safe to enter the district. My questions were greeted with laughter and the phrase: "Don't worry. You know

¹⁵⁴ Interview with Hector, November 21, 2005.

¹⁵⁵ Located on the *Carretera Marginal* between Tocache and Mal Abrigo. The community is approximately ten minutes away by car from Mal Abrigo.

¹⁵⁶ *Nom de guerre* of Abimael Guzmán Reinoso, the national leader of Shining Path.

¹⁵⁷ Cocalero community in the Libertad Department.

¹⁵⁸ Village in the Huánuco department in the border zone with the San Martín department.

¹⁵⁹ Shining Path guerrillas.

¹⁶⁰ Conversation unnamed cocalero, Yanajanca, September 2, 2007.

these guerrillas and have spoken to them before. They already know you". At that time, the supposed Shining Path emergence seemed to consist of ex-guerrilleros, who in some meetings of the cocalero association and *ronda campesina*, began to use language reminiscent of the guerrilla movement. At this stage, the supposed guerrilla emergence in the Upper Huallaga was not seen by most of the area's residents as a hazard and certainly was not seen as the re-appearance of a "deadly guerrilla force".

On December 20, 2005, an act occurred that strengthened the national perception of the Upper Huallaga as a safe haven for the guerrillas. On that day, a group of twenty armed men had ambushed a police patrol. The attack occurred at five o'clock in the afternoon in the zone of Angashyacu, two kilometers down the road from Aucayacu. The police had been patrolling the area in a truck, but when they were returning to Tingo María, they were surprised by approximately 20 armed men. During this attack, eight policemen were killed. It was the largest "guerrilla" ambush occurring in the Upper Huallaga in years. After the attack, some residents of Angashyacu warned the regional police forces in Tingo that the attack had taken place.¹⁶¹ The following day, the Toledo government declared a state of emergency over the whole Upper Huallaga for 60 days.¹⁶² In his speech explaining the government's decision. President Toledo declared that this measure would help the state security forces to combat the guerrillas. But the proclamation of the state of emergency met with criticism from several scholars. Hugo Cabieses, an economist and expert on the cocalero movement:

"This is only a pretext for a larger police and military presence in the zone so that they can control the resources there.... To broaden the net of corruption and increase involvement of the armed forces in drug trafficking."¹⁶³

When, a month before the attack on the police patrol in Angashyacu, Fósforo district mayor Nancy Zamora was asked if she would agree with the declaration of the state of emergency, she said:

"Imagine what would happen if they declare an emergency in this zone. People will be deprived of all of their rights. I think that our lives should be protected and respected by the state. We shouldn't be the ones that the government attacks... We are very worried about this because we are survivors of the *terrucos*.¹⁶⁴ In those times, we lived among violence and corpses. Shining Path was destroying everything. I think that nowadays we are a peaceful village. We want development. We only want a better life. But the situation is troublesome, and the national government should be worried...."¹⁶⁵

With the declaration of the state of emergency, the military took control over the Upper Huallaga. Additionally, the state of emergency included the prohibition of gatherings, an increased police control over the transport routes, and random searches of houses where supposed Shining Path members lived. Heavily armed military and police personnel participated in raids, entering homes and arresting people. After the announcement of the state of emergency in the Fósforo district, the military withdrew their presence from the villages and withdrew their support from the *ronda campesina*.

¹⁶¹ See 'Senderistas asesinan a ocho policías en la selva de Aucayacu' La República, December 21, 2005.

¹⁶² The state of emergency was later prolonged several times.

¹⁶³ Interview with Hugo Cabieses, Lima, October 25, 2005.

¹⁶⁴ Term used for the guerrillas.

¹⁶⁵ Interview with local Mayor (2002-2006), Nancy Zamora, November 21, 2005.

By August 2007, some villagers began to worry about Shining Path's¹⁶⁶ growth. Supposed Shining Path militants entered Santa María and posted a red flag with a yellow hammer and sickle on the school building. A few hours later, the military arrived on the scene and removed the flag, reprimanding the population for having allowed Shining Path to carry out such a dramatic performance. The villagers who had seen the Shining Path guerrillas said that they didn't know these people. Even several ex-guerrillas remarked that they did not know these men, who were visiting villages throughout the Fósforo district to rouse the masses to carry out a "peasant revolution". Nor did the inhabitants know where they had come from, or why they had come to their district. Hence, they had no idea about the intentions of these groups of armed men. Consequently, when entering the district during my last fieldwork trip in July of 2007, I was increasingly warned by villagers to be careful when making trips to the cocaleros' *chacras* because there was no way of knowing what this new group was going to do. At the same time rumors began to arise about the possible hiding place of these Shining Path groups. In 2005, the general opinion was that whatever guerrillas there were in the region lived in the Frontera Valley, where Shining Path had established total control during the internal armed conflict. By July 2007, several worried people remarked that they had spotted some groups hiding in the mountains of the *Cordillera Azul*, near the community of 3 de Diciembre. It is noteworthy that, in both of these communities described as hiding places of the newly entering groups, the *rondas campesinas* had been a failure. In Mal Abrigo, where the *ronda* was strengthened and re-aligned with the military, there was never any talk about the presence of these new guerrilla groups.

But when more of these unknown people entered the district, many district residents argued that they weren't really members of Shining Path, as they claimed, but instead were heavily-armed groups that merely operated under the name of Shining Path. They were said to consist of new, unknown and unfamiliar members, whose interest in the region was largely driven by the illegal cocaine industry. To confirm this view, some newly arrived young adults acknowledged that they had been interested in joining the guerrilla force. Yet many of these youths who joined quickly became disappointed. One of them stated:

"There is a lot of corruption among these groups. I was disappointed because I was interested in their ideology, but they were more interested in earning money by participating in the drug trade...."¹⁶⁷

In the opinion of many villagers, "Shining Path" was simply a name that came to be used by several armed groups that employed some of the tactics and strategy of the old guerrilla movement in order to gain some control over the local cocaine industry. As Cornell (2005: 754) argues: "It is difficult to know whether a violent group's actions are motivated by ideological or criminal aims". There were many different reactions to the events taking place in the Upper Huallaga in general and in the Fósforo district specifically. But one thing became increasingly apparent: The various groups operating under the name of "Shining Path", were driven more by profit than ideology.

7.6.2 The villagers' opinion: "Por algo habrá sido"

One supposed Shining Path attack that took place after the events in Angashyacu may clarify the relationship between these armed groups and the cocaine industry. On February 20,

¹⁶⁶ By then, the use of the name Shining Path became highly controversial, as it began to be used for all violence that occurred in the Upper Huallaga. For example, it was used to explain the murders that had occurred on August 30, 2006, murders which in fact had been carried out by a local *firma*. It was also used to explain the protests of the cocaleros, and it was used to explain the numerous attacks against the police that occurred in the Upper Huallaga Valley.

¹⁶⁷ Conversation with *Leroy*, new migrant to the Fósforo district and Sión, Tingo María, October 1, 2007.

2005, three policemen were murdered in an ambush in Pumahuasi. This attack immediately led to speculation in the national press about relations among Shining Path, cocaleros, cocaine *mafias*,¹⁶⁸ and smugglers of illegal chemicals. A Pumahuasi villager who had been an eyewitness during the unfolding of this violent attack told us his version of the events. One day, he headed towards a restaurant where the policemen were also eating their lunch. After a few minutes, the three policemen left the restaurant, and the villager continued to observe them from a distance. A few seconds later, he heard an explosion and a prolonged staccato of gunshots directed at the police vehicle. When he arrived at the location where the attack took place, he saw the policemen's bodies in a pool of blood and the police car was still burning. He told me that the bodies were already covered with a Shining Path flag. In the national press, the event was described as Shining Path's attempt to win over the support of the local population, as were most violent attacks on the police forces in the region. But in many cases, such an explanation was too simple and the reasons for the attacks were actually more complicated. One eyewitness stated:

“Four or five months later, we learned the truth about these attacks. The problem started because the police had been a group of extortionists, who patrolled the whole region where trucks passed with the illegal chemicals. They had an agreement with those who smuggled these chemicals, but this time the police demanded more money than usual. The transporters refused to pay. So the police officers involved took the truck to the police station. Some time later, the transporters found out they had taken the truck and resold it to a third party. These were the events that led to the deadly attack.”¹⁶⁹

As stated before, the corrupt practices of the police at checkpoints on the road between the cocalero valleys, and from the cocalero valleys to the capital, were rampant. Many area residents pointed to such corruption as the immediate cause for many of the supposed guerrilla attacks and assassinations. Hence, people involved in the illegal cocaine industry, defending the route through which illegal chemicals were brought into the village, appear to have played an important role in this attack.

On April 12, 2007, Yanajanca¹⁷⁰ became the scene of an attack against the state policy of forced eradication, during which one CORAH worker was killed.¹⁷¹ This attack reinforced the view that Shining Path had established bonds with the cocaleros. But this wasn't the first attack that had occurred in Yanajanca. Back in July 2005, a truck transporting a *Juez de Paz*, a medic and a police sub-official, travelling to the village to investigate a murder involving a villager, had exploded. After this attack on the vehicle, the surviving victims were shot by *sicarios*.¹⁷² The only survivors were two policemen who were accompanying the commission. After these attacks, Yanajanca was described as a “village of terror and death”. The violence was perpetrated by a locally established Shining Path¹⁷³ nucleus, which was able to increase

¹⁶⁸ Drug trafficking groups.

¹⁶⁹ Conversation with unnamed inhabitant of Pumahuasi, July 26, 2007.

¹⁷⁰ Village in the Huánuco department in the border zone with the San Martín department.

¹⁷¹ Although attacks against CORAH workers had become common. For example: in the Fósforo district, on July 2, 2006, a CORAH worker was killed when a group of CORAH workers entered a *charca* close to Mal Abrigo. However, this attack was never made public.

¹⁷² Hit men.

¹⁷³ Once again, the use of the name Shining Path is controversial, as there are no indications that the group based in Yanajanka was aligned with the Shining Path movement that had been active during the internal armed conflict. However, after May 2005, when the forced eradication first entered the Fósforo district, some local villagers had moved to Yanajanka to continue working in the cocaine industry. It was frequently noted that one needed the recommendation of a local villager of Yanajanka to even be allowed to enter this community, as in the Fósforo district it was frequently remarked that Yanajanka was a guerrilla stronghold (information gathered during conversations with inhabitants of the Fósforo district during fieldwork in 2006 and 2007).

its influence over larger regions in the Upper Huallaga when the state ignored the general outbreak of violence. These early signs of the rising violence were ignored by the Toledo government and, because of the state's failure to intervene, the violence continued. In the national news magazine *Caretas*, it was argued that Shining Path was continuing its low-intensity war in conflict-ridden areas of the country. But the magazine described the rise of Shining Path violence as being closely linked with the cocalero leaders of CENACOP,¹⁷⁴ an organization that had been created by Ibúrcio Morales¹⁷⁵ as a counterweight to CONPACCP. CENACOP had a base of support in the Monzón region and the region surrounding Aucayacu, regions that were nationally stigmatized as guerrilla strongholds.¹⁷⁶ However, no evidence was provided that the Shining Path nucleus in Yanajanca had bonds with the Shining Path groups operating in the above-mentioned areas.

In a *Caretas* article¹⁷⁷ that was published in July, 2007, the tactics of Shining Path were described. However, once again no distinction was made between the groups that operated in different areas of the Upper Huallaga.¹⁷⁸ They were said to cultivate coca in Yanajanca, while trying to expand their control of the crops' commercialization throughout the entire Upper Huallaga, protecting their business with automatic weapons.¹⁷⁹ They were said to place homemade bombs on coca *chacras*, which were intended to explode when CORAH personnel entered the fields. The national government used these attacks to stigmatize the cocalero movement as an uncivil movement that was trying to violently dominate the region. But, as seen in Chapter 5, the cocaleros always refused the support of Shining Path for their movement. After several of these attacks against CORAH personnel, the US ambassador in Peru asserted that Shining Path managed to gain support in the Upper Huallaga, but his remark seemed to be of dubious validity. Although the practice of planting homemade bombs on *chacras* became more common in the Frontera Valley, it was done by individual cocaleros. In Esperanza de Frontera, a former guerrilla had established a booming business making and planting homemade bombs, utilizing knowledge he gained during the internal armed conflict. He placed homemade bombs on the *chacras* of different cocaleros and received a substantial payment for his activities. This practice of individual cocaleros increased when the police and CORAH personnel, during one of the forced eradication operations still taking place in the communities in the Frontera Valley, raped a girl and violently attacked the population. By that time, the relationship between the cocalero association and Nancy Obregón had turned sour and the journalist whom the cocaleros took to the region to report the wrongdoings of the police forces demanded a large amount of money for the tape. The cocaleros rejected this demand and, as a result, the actions of the police in the Frontera Valley were never publically denounced.

There were vast discrepancies in the versions of the national press, writing about a re-appearance of Shining Path and its influence on the cocalero movement, and the opinion of the population, stating that the groups identifying themselves with the rubric Shining Path were in fact heavily armed groups driven by the money that could be earned by involvement in the cocaine industry. Armed splinter movements, calling themselves Shining Path were

¹⁷⁴ Central Nacional Agropecuaria Cocalera del Perú: A new division of the CONPACCP after the failure of the Junta Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios y Cocaleros (see Chapter 5).

¹⁷⁵ Cocalero leader of the Monzón, these days Alcalde of the Monzón.

¹⁷⁶ See 'Coca: Guerra avisada' *Caretas* April 19, 2007.

¹⁷⁷ See "La despensa de 'Artemio'. La batalla por Yanajanca, el bastión senderista en el Valle del Huallaga, se torna sangrienta" *Caretas*, July 26, 2007.

¹⁷⁸ A more detailed view would notice that Shining Path had been dispersed into several groups that had no relations. Moreover, as already noted before, the term Shining Path was used for numerous of armed groups operating in the Upper Huallaga, including *firmas*, common criminal groups and guerrilla remnants e.g., who had different motive to employ violence.

¹⁷⁹ See "La despensa de 'Artemio'. La batalla por Yanajanca, el bastión senderista en el Valle del Huallaga, se torna sangrienta" *Caretas*, July 26, 2007.

using the illegal cocaine industry to enrich themselves and were involved in the protection of *patrones* and *narcos*. Because of these connections, the actions of Shining Path groups cannot be understood without also considering developments in the illegal cocaine industry and ongoing state repression against the cocaine industry. Scholars often argue that ideological groups often engage actively in criminal operations (see Dishman 2001). But in the Upper Huallaga, it remains largely unclear whether these new splinter movements called Shining Path had once been involved in an ideological struggle. In July 2007, *Caretas* published an article in which the Shining Path group¹⁸⁰ was portrayed as one more *firma* of drug traffickers providing cocaine to international cartels.¹⁸¹ As argued before in Chapter 4, the relations between Shining Path and the cocaine industry, even during the internal armed conflict, had been entirely motivated by the guerrilla group's greed. Hence, state policies directed against the cocaine industry were the most important incentive for "Shining Path" attacks.

More recent attacks show that there were close relationships among these Shining Path groups and drug traffickers and not, as the national press and the government often asserted, between the cocalero movement and Shining Path. When in 2007, the national government of President García prohibited the transport of illegal chemicals through the Upper Huallaga Valley, this measure was thought to resolve the problems with drug trafficking. In actual practice, the measure led to more violent attacks against the police. On June 14, 2007, the whole country was shocked by another episode of violence. The attack occurred close to Shapaja, a cocalero community in the Tocache province that was reportedly a Shining Path base of operations. According to the official version, Tocache's prosecutor and some police officers were patrolling the road in order to prevent illegal chemicals transports from being smuggled into the valley. During this patrol they were ambushed and the prosecutor and four policemen were killed. After this attack, the perpetrators were called *narcoterroristas*, instead of Shining Path guerrillas, in the national newspapers. But the local version of the events was somewhat different, although it also included the illegal transport of chemicals, as one woman from Mal Abrigo recalled:

"It was a problem about chemicals but not about how the national press described it. The day of the attack, a truck filled with chemicals was heading to the Uchiza junction¹⁸² when policemen stopped the transport. They asked for their documents to see whether this transport was legal. The truck drivers showed their documents, but the police stated that their documents were forged. Some police officers stayed behind to guard the truck while other police officers took the two drivers to the police station in Tocache. There the prosecutor got involved. He was a man who had previously been implicated in numerous instances of police abuse. The prosecutor was thinking about the money he could earn by transporting chemicals. He demanded to be taken to the location where the truck was located. There, he looked around and told the drivers that this transport was illegal. One of the drivers got angry and told them he wasn't going to pay another *Nuevo Sol*. The prosecutor called out the order to take the truck to Tocache, still hoping to earn something. They were arguing for hours. When they finally returned to the police station in Tocache, the police had to drive slowly because of the condition of the *Carretera Marginal*. Then all the tires of the car carrying the prosecutor were suddenly punctured. I think that those who wanted to kill him had put

¹⁸⁰ As argued before, the statement of one Shining Path group is highly questionable. There isn't only one Shining Path group operating in the whole Upper Huallaga Valley. Villagers of the Fósforo district often remarked that small heavily armed groups entering their region did not seem to have connections with, for example, the Artemio group in Aucayacu. Hence, it is more probable that there are numerous unconnected armed groups operating under the name of "Shining Path".

¹⁸¹ See 'La despensa de 'Artemio'. La batalla por Yanajanca, el bastión senderista en el Valle del Huallaga, se torna sangrienta' *Caretas*, July 26, 2007.

¹⁸² Crossroad on the road Tingo María- Tocache located close to Shapaja.

spikes on the road to make sure the car stopped at that exact location, so they could easily ambush the prosecutor. The prosecutor and the police officers stepped out of the car to see what was going on. While they were checking the car, gunshots were fired from all sides. Numerous shots were fired from different directions. The prosecutor and four policemen were hit immediately, but the attackers fired more bullets. The two policemen who had followed the car of the prosecutor were also wounded but they weren't killed in the attack. The main target had been the prosecutor. This was another attack to demonstrate that the authorities have to behave themselves because here, nobody kills you only because they like to kill. In this region they only kill you if you are involved in 'bad things'. In the national press, the attack was described as a Shining Path action. We saw his family, friends and colleagues cry and shout 'We are going to kill Artemio!' But what has Artemio to do with these events? We all know they killed him because he was corrupt."¹⁸³

Here, the victims of the attack were characterized as stealing, lying and corrupt men. Moreover, as became apparent in the quotation, these attacks against corrupt officials seem to be celebrated by the population but, as Pécaut (1999: 150) states, this "does not automatically imply ideological affinity".

The violent attacks by criminal organizations against the police seem similar to recent occurrences in Mexico, where violence against the police is concentrated in zones involved in drug trafficking.¹⁸⁴ In the Upper Huallaga, the police remained the most unpopular state force. The population's thoughts about the police resemble those in the Ayacucho department, where as Fumerton (2002: 75) says, "Most policemen are seen as corrupt, exploitative, often abusive and inconsiderate of the campesinos". As Fumerton (2002: 75) further argues, this stereotyping of the police seems not to be without foundation. Policemen are frequently not from the region, in contrast to the army soldiers. They are only stationed in the region for a very short time, which does not give them the opportunity to establish a relationship with the local residents. Additionally, the police was often the state force that was sent in to break up cocalero strikes and to arrest cocaleros. The corrupt and abusive image of the police only changed after the García government took measures to fight drug smuggling. As a consequence of this history, armed attacks against the police force frequently received the approval of the residents of the Upper Huallaga.

But even in the cases where inhabitants were murdered, the villagers continued to take the view: "*Por algo habrá sido*".¹⁸⁵ This view was also used to explain the deaths during the internal armed conflict and the more recent rise of murders resulting from battles related to the diminishing local cocaine industry. However, even villagers not involved in this illegal industry ran the risk of being murdered, which is described in the following case in which a traveling salesman, who visited different locations in the Upper Huallaga, was said to be murdered by Shining Path in Aucayacu. A family member and another local resident related different versions of the events leading to the murder. Although the data used in both stories was the same, the reason given for the murder was different in each version. Magaly, the victim's sister-in-law, stated:

"They recently killed my sister's husband. He was a salesman who sold his merchandise in several local communities. In his sales group, there was also a man who always sold his merchandise quickly. He spent his time in the local bar, where he

¹⁸³ Conversation with unnamed woman, Santa María de Frontera, August 3, 2007.

¹⁸⁴ See '*Hay un embrión de crimen organizado parecido a México*' Interview with Ricardo Soberón by Milagros Salazar, La República, June 26, 2007.

¹⁸⁵ "There must have been a reason".

had met and fallen in love with the wife of the local community leader. He continued to visit this community, close to the bank of the Huallaga River in Aucayacu, where the woman lived. He went there and bragged loudly that nobody could hurt him because he had money. This man was an ex-policeman so he was a great liar.... When, after the murder, we went to this community to pick up the bodies of my brother-in-law, another salesman and this ex-policeman, we met with an old man who said that he had seen everything. I asked him why they had been killed. He told us the following: ‘The ex-policeman had been drinking with a group of criminals. After a while, there was an argument and then a fight’. My brother-in-law and another man defended the ex-policeman, and the criminals shot the three men. My brother-in-law was shot in his head once, the other man as well, but the head of the ex-policeman was punctured by several bullet holes. His head was totally destroyed. ...”¹⁸⁶

But a cocalero, who had heard the story of the sister-in-law and who had been living in Aucayacu when these murders occurred sternly contested Magaly’s version and gave the following version of events:

“These men weren’t what the lady said; they weren’t ordinary salesmen. They were killed because they were *soplones*.... That is why they were murdered. When they were found, they had a sign around their necks stating ‘*Así mueren los que se venden por un Sol*’.¹⁸⁷ In that community, the people are terrible. One has to be very careful there. You can only enter this community when you are recommended by someone who is living there. But those men were clearly *soplones*, ex-policemen who wanted to earn money by informing the police. But that day, they visited the wrong community. This place is terrible, a place where God himself dare not enter....”¹⁸⁸

Nevertheless, in both quotations, Shining Path wasn’t mentioned directly as the perpetrator, although in the last quotation the signs the victims wore around their necks can be an indication that the cocalero meant that the guerrillas did the killing. But he didn’t mention Shining Path, so the party responsible for the murders could instead have been a drug trafficking group that used this guerrilla symbol to camouflage their involvement. In many of these murders, the perpetrators were not identified. These above examples did show that it is erroneous to understand the guerrilla emergence and drug trafficking as two independent phenomena. In the Upper Huallaga, another assertion made about the presence of these different armed groups in cocaine regions is more useful, as Cornell (2005: 754) states that “organized crime and subversive groups are indistinguishable from one another”.

Regrettably, the violence in the Upper Huallaga can be used to explain the changes occurring in other cocalero regions, where the violent attacks against the police forces also augmented. But the violence does not only occur in the Upper Huallaga or in the other cocalero regions. The violence has quickly spread to other regions that are located on drug transporting routes in the Peruvian *sierra*.

7.6.3 Narcoterrorismo: *A new threat?*

By 2007, not only the Upper Huallaga Valley, but also the Monzón and the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, Peru’s three largest cocalero regions, were confronted by the phenomenon

¹⁸⁶ Conversation with Doña Magaly, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 8, 2007.

¹⁸⁷ “This is how those who sell themselves for one *sol* die”.

¹⁸⁸ Conversation with unnamed ex-inhabitant of Aucayacu, Puerto Mal Abrigo, August 8, 2007.

defined as *narcoterrorismo*.¹⁸⁹ In all three of these regions, the dependency on the illegal cocaine industry is total.¹⁹⁰ In addition, the presence of the cocaine industry continues to create economic incentives for all kinds of armed actors (including the drug traffickers, “guerrillas” and the police). The violent attacks therefore mainly arise if the government applies repressive strategies to combat the cocaine industry. But one can question whether there is one unified national guerrilla movement operating in the different valleys. Such appears not to have been the case. In contrast to what had transpired during the internal armed conflict, there was no communication between these small-scale “guerrilla remnants” that continued to operate in the different cocalero regions. One occurrence in 2003 can clarify this remark and it can also clarify why it appears mistaken to talk about the “re-appearance” of Shining Path, as the guerrillas were never totally defeated in these regions.

As described in Chapter 5, in March 2003, different cocaleros of the Upper Huallaga Valley visited the Apurímac-Ene River Valley in order to promote mass participation in the upcoming march to Lima. A large group of Fósforo cocaleros had participated together with a smaller group of Tingo María’s cocalero communities. When they arrived in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, the participating cocaleros of the Upper Huallaga were divided into small groups, who would visit different villages and hamlets. One of these groups was taken to a small, isolated hamlet in the middle of the jungle. A woman of the Fósforo district recalled how she was warned by an ex-guerrilero of the Fósforo district not to talk about the internal armed conflict, as he stated one could never be sure about the population’s sympathies during the conflict. But during his speech, a cocalero of Tingo María talked about his participation in the *comité de autodefensa*¹⁹¹ installed by the military in this town. After these speeches, night fell and the group from the Upper Huallaga withdrew to the school where they were to spend the night. Suddenly, they noticed that the cocalero from Tingo María was missing. None of the men were willing to search for the cocalero. Only the woman from Fósforo left the building and shouted his name. After a few minutes, she saw three men walking towards her. She was forced to accompany them to a clearing in the jungle, where she saw a station wagon and a group of men who were all wearing masks. The cocalero from Tingo María stood there, severely beaten and hardly moving, surrounded by the masked men.¹⁹² Both the woman and the beaten man were forced to accompany them to another community nearby. She immediately knew what they wanted to do with the cocalero from Tingo María, who had spoken about his fight against Shining Path. She remembered how she pleaded to allow them to return to the school and she promised that the next morning they would accompany them. She managed to persuade the group to release the cocalero and herself. Back in the school, she urged her fellow travelers not to go out that night and, early the following morning, she and the cocalero secretly escaped from the region.¹⁹³ Surprisingly, the woman who told this story comes from the Frontera valley and was said to be a Shining Path sympathizer. Her story demonstrates that the small Shining Path remnants groups operating in the different

¹⁸⁹ It is still important to note that there were important differences during the internal armed conflict among the Peruvian cocalero regions, which need to be explained before looking at the phenomenon of *narcoterrorismo*. First, during the internal armed conflict, the distinct social composition leads to different reactions against Shining Path violence. At the end of the 1980s, the campesinos of the Apurímac River Valley organized the collective coping strategy against Shining Path’s domination over their valley, the so-called DECAS (*Defensa Civil Antisubversiva*) whose members confronted the guerrillas on their own (see Fumerton 2002). This became a war of life and death, between Shining Path and these self-defense groups, in which the campesinos bought weapons and munitions with revenues from the illegal cocaine industry. In this process, the Apurímac-Ene River Valley differed from the Upper Huallaga valley because, as seen before, in the latter it was a local *narco-capitalist* “Vaticano” in Campanilla that confronted Shining Path. But, in contrast to the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, there was no organization of campesinos that conducted this war against Shining Path.

¹⁹⁰ In recent years, the dependency on coca had even sharply increased in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, where coca production almost reached the level of the Upper Huallaga Valley.

¹⁹¹ Self-defense committees to fight Shining Path during the internal armed conflict.

¹⁹² Conversation with unnamed cocalera, Esperanza de Frontera, September 15, 2007.

¹⁹³ Conversation with unnamed cocalera, Esperanza de Frontera, September 15, 2007.

cocalero regions did not cooperate with one other—and in some cases, were not even aware of one another's existence.

In recent years, it has become increasingly clear that the problem wasn't concentrated in the cocalero valleys alone, as in 2007, another shocking event took place in Ocobamba.¹⁹⁴ This village is located on a drug-smuggling route that begins in the southern part of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, and that leads to cocaine laboratories in remote regions of the Andahuaylas province, from where the cocaine is smuggled to the border region in Puno. During the second coca boom, this smuggling route became increasingly used, because of the absence of police patrols. On the morning of November 1, 2007, the Ministry of the Interior received a phone call during which a police officer from Ocobamba only stated, "They have attacked us". Several national news programs later that night revealed that on the early morning of that day, the police station had been attacked by heavily armed "campesinos" wearing "ponchos, sombreros and rubber sandals".¹⁹⁵ It was reported that a group of 150 campesinos participated in the attack against the police station. Only several days later, this number was reduced to a group of 30 heavily armed men. It later turned out that they were only actively searching for one officer, who they referred to as a thief. After the officer was killed, the assailants ignored the other three policemen present, relieved the officers of their officers' weapons, and left.

The armed men had disappeared driving a 4x4 station wagon with blackened windows, not typically a vehicle used by campesinos. Only after this evidence was released to the press was it assumed that the attack was a vengeance killing carried out by drug traffickers. It became clear that before the event took place, on October 18, 2007, the police victim had organized an action against drug smugglers, who were transporting *droga base*¹⁹⁶ from the Ayacucho department. They were surprised by the police operation headed by a police officer from Ocobamba. A gun battle followed, after which the drug smugglers opted to leave the *droga base* behind and escape. After this event, the policeman had asked to be removed from the village, but his request wasn't granted. After the attack, it became clear why he wanted to leave the region. The reported amount of drugs captured from the drug traffickers was remarkably smaller than the amount that had originally been brought to the police station. The drug traffickers had raided the police station to recover the *droga base*.¹⁹⁷ Hence, in these villages located on smuggling routes, drug traffickers began to attack the police forces.

National reports were broadcast analyzing the relationship between the attack in Ocobamba and the "re-appearance" of Shining Path in the cocalero zones. In several of these reports, the Upper Huallaga Valley was used to demonstrate that there was a relationship between cocaine-related violence that had occurred in the *sierra* and the coastal regions of Peru and the guerrillas "re-appearance" in cocalero valleys. But these documentaries portrayed the ambiguous role of the media in the investigation about the rise in violence. One evening in October 2007, I saw one of the news items shot in the Upper Huallaga, where a reporter claimed to have interviewed *guerrilleros* that were belonged to the Artemio group. To my surprise, the Shining Path members were all large men, and the majority of them had a relatively light skin tone. When I asked the following day if some villagers had seen the news item, their comments were the same: "Government propaganda, in which they use policemen to portray *guerrilleros*". There were obvious physical differences between the *guerrilleros*

¹⁹⁴ Villages located in the Peruvian *Sierra* in the province of Andahuaylas, Apurímac department.

¹⁹⁵ All mentioned are typical campesino articles of clothing.

¹⁹⁶ Unrefined cocaine.

¹⁹⁷ For further information see 'La vendetta de Ocobamba' Caretas, November 6, 2007; 'Terrorista dice que alcalde de Ocobamba tiene relación con atacantes de comisaría' La República, January 22, 2008, see also 'Alerta roja en el VRAE: columna de 80 senderistas prepara' in La República, December 12, 2007; 'Sendero sería responsable de ataque en Ocobamba' La República, December 17, 2007.

portrayed in the news item and the men that had been shown on television days before as captured Shining Path members, all of whom were dark-skinned village men.

7.6.4 President García's mano dura response

Even after the official ending of the internal armed conflict, state fragility remained high in the cocalero regions. The latest increase in violent attacks in the Upper Huallaga Valley can even be characterized as the state falling back into a situation of regional state failure (see Rotberg 2004). This regional state failure occurs in all of the country's largest cocalero regions¹⁹⁸ because of the enduring character of the regional violence and conflict, the fact that the violence is mainly directed against state presence, and the presence of different armed groups that use ideology to rationalize or justify their violence (see Rotberg 2004: 5).

Shortly after his inauguration on July 28, 2006, President García spoke about what he termed a “narco-terrorist threat”. He acknowledged that the violence no longer only affected Peru’s cocalero regions and declared they had to fight against narco-terrorism throughout the entire nation. But the police actions against the “narco-terrorists” remained concentrated in the country’s cocalero regions. The national police operations aimed at hunting down Shining Path guerrillas in the Upper Huallaga were called *Huracán* and *Volcán*, both of which were carried out in 2007. In the *Operación Huracán*, all of the different divisions of the Peruvian National Police (PNP)¹⁹⁹ worked together. During both operations, approximately one hundred villagers were arrested as guerrillas, the majority in Tingo María and the Monzón Valley. Among the arrested *guerrilleros* had been physicians, mayors, cocalero leaders and community leaders. Even more importantly, the villagers argued that the majority of the arrested people were innocent. In Tocache Province, the searches were conducted by a combination of the police and military forces. There were numerous raids occurring in villages close to the town of Tocache, during which heavily-armed soldiers and policemen entered the campesinos’ houses, searching every house on the street and arresting numerous suspects.

Only after the operations did it become apparent that human rights abuses had been committed against the population. But only one case of police repression was published in a national newspaper. On December 21, 2007 the population of the rural hamlets Gossen and Consuelo²⁰⁰ informed the *Defensoría del Pueblo*²⁰¹ that they had been victims of excessive police violence. It was assumed by the police that both communities were Shining Path strongholds. Before the police raid, the campesinos of Gossen had signed an agreement with DEVIDA²⁰² to voluntarily eradicate their coca crops, a decision that was rejected by Shining Path. After the signing of the agreement, it was assumed that Shining Path remnants had entered the hamlet during a community meeting. After the community meeting, a police patrol entered the village, but they immediately resumed their patrol. Some time later, the police returned with reinforcements, so there were then a total of about 200 men that entered both communities to search for Shining Path guerrillas. The police were accompanied by two previously arrested *guerrilleros*, who had decided to cooperate with the security forces in order to have their prison terms reduced.²⁰³ These *guerrilleros* stated that the two villages collaborated with Shining Path and he accused several villagers of offering food and a hiding

¹⁹⁸ The Upper Huallaga, the Apurímac-Ene River Valley and the Monzón.

¹⁹⁹ Including DIRCOTE (*Dirección contra el Terrorismo*; anti-terrorist police), DIRANDRO (*Dirección Antidrogas*; anti-drug police) and the DIROES (*Dirección de Operaciones Especiales*; police force for special operations).

²⁰⁰ Both communities located in the district of Aucayacu.

²⁰¹ Peruvian human rights ombudsman.

²⁰² *Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas*: The national drug control commission.

²⁰³ This was possible because there was a new version of the *Ley de Arrepentimiento* (Repentance Law). The so-called *Ley de Colaboración Eficaz* promised to give captured *guerrilleros* who opted to cooperate with the police and the military in their search for narco-terrorists a reduction in their prison terms.

place for weapons and ammunition to Shining Path fighters. Without further questioning, this accusation led to the arrest of several villagers, including the local community leader. In Gossen, the police detained mainly men, tortured them publicly and asked them about the location of “*Camarada Izula*”.²⁰⁴ In Consuelo, the same human rights abuses were committed against several villagers. Here the community leader was forced to confess that he was a *guerrillero*, and he was arrested following this confession. There were also accusations that the police had robbed the local stores, entered houses and stole the campesinos’ possessions. Several villagers declared that the police directly attacked the population and stated that they had feared for their lives during the police raid.²⁰⁵ The police commander in charge denied the villagers’ accusations. He remarked that the police force had learned from previous mistakes, respected the population and would not repeat the mistakes of the past. But the villagers persisted in their accusations and lodged a complaint with the *Defensoría del Pueblo*.²⁰⁶

On November 27, 2007, the Minister of the Interior of the García government announced another action directed against the growing narco-terrorist threat. In the Upper Huallaga Valley and the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, new police bases were to be established.²⁰⁷ But, as argued before, this continuation of the ineffective forced eradication operations and the corruption of the police forces only contributed to the violence and to regional state fragility in the cocalero regions. A few months later, the national commander of the Peruvian military asked for a unification of different state security forces in the struggle against Shining Path and drug traffic. In December 28, 2008, the Minister of Defense announced that the police and military actions in the cocalero regions would lead to “the elimination of terrorism and the affirmation of national peace, with full respect for human rights and the national process of reconciliation”.²⁰⁸

It was especially the use of the terms “reconciliation”, “peace” and “human rights” that seemed incongruous in a statement that announced a continuation of military and police actions in the cocalero valleys. On January 3, 2008, the union between the Peruvian military and the police in the fight against narco-terrorism was formalized.²⁰⁹ The anti-drug and anti-terror projects seemed to involve mainly repressive measures by the state’s security forces, which 20 years before also had devastating consequences, while the underlying causes of the ongoing violence, including economic insecurity and social exclusion, remained largely unaddressed. According to Soberón (2007), the only possible way to end the violence was to implement broader measures, including an improved state presence in the cocalero regions and the separation of the population from the armed actors.²¹⁰ Instead of opting for social and economic projects, García argued that he had to fight narco-terrorism. These measures left no room for the civilian initiatives that had been taken during the past seven years.

7.7 Sliding back into a regional armed conflict

Violence again flared up in the Fósforo district after May 2005, a time when the local cocaine industry had been in steady decline because of ongoing forced eradication operations. The eradication of coca not only increased the campesinos’ economic insecurity, but also led to violent competition among different drug trafficking groups. Because these anti-drug

²⁰⁴ The supposed second in command of Shining Path in the Upper Huallaga.

²⁰⁵ See ‘*Pueblos del Alto Huallaga denuncian abusos policiales*’ María Elena Hidalgo, *La República* (Lima), December 12, 2007.

²⁰⁶ See ‘*Pueblos del Alto Huallaga denuncian abusos policiales*’, María Elena Hidalgo, *La República*, December 12, 2007.

²⁰⁷ See ‘*Ministro del Interior anuncia implementación de bases policiales en Alto Huallaga*’ *La República*, November 27, 2007.

²⁰⁸ See ‘*Donayre plantea unificar lucha contra SL*’ *La República*, December 28, 2008.

²⁰⁹ See ‘*FFAA and PNP se comprometen a terminar con el narcoterrorismo*’ *La República*, January 3, 2008.

²¹⁰ See ‘*Hay un embrión de crimen organizado parecido a México*’ Interview with Ricardo Soberón by Milagros Salazar, *La República*, June 26, 2007.

policies mainly affected the *firmas* with close bonds with the population, they left behind a local power vacuum which was filled by different small trafficking groups that had no social bonds with the population. When the control of the established *firmas* over the local cocaine industry dissolved, violence grew out of control because of an overall breakdown of the relationships that regulated the social order (see Pinheiro 1999: 1; Torres-Rivas 1999: 295). The Fósforo district became plagued by different sorts of crimes including, among others, theft, prostitution, assaults, and murders. But the majority of the “legal” reactions against violence, such as complaints about police brutality, are not available to those living in areas where there is an absence of state institutions. Moreover, these legal reactions cannot be used when those affected by the violence are identified as criminals by the state. Fósforo’s villagers, who were affected by the growing violence, were seen as criminals by the state and national authorities. This severely curtailed their options for a “legal” response against the rising violence. In the Fósforo district, the villagers’ reaction against the violence can be summarized by Goldstein’s (2005: 398) phrase on Bolivia: “Abandoned and victimized by the state and its policing and judicial apparatus, many citizens felt that the only viable option for attaining security appears to be self-help justice-making”.

After the cocaleros’ attempts to integrate into civil society failed, a re-emergence of violence and coercion in May 2005 caused the population to fall back on the *rondas campesinas*, which in the beginning maintained close ties to the local cocalero association. The *rondas* were organized to “create some semblance of order in their community, though this strategy tends to perpetuate the cycle of violence within which communities were ensnared” (Goldstein 2005: 398). When by late-2005, the violent threats increased, the *ronderos* began to increasingly employ violence in their responses to crimes committed in their region. For example, they began to use weapons in their patrols. But during this violent period the military withdrew from daily life in the Fósforo district because of the state of emergency that had been proclaimed. This withdrawal only increased the villagers’ feelings that the state wasn’t willing to help them confront the violence. Thereafter, perpetrators of assaults were punished by death, with a large support of the population. The assassinations of assaulters can be seen as a “reaction against violent acts by notoriously dangerous people in the community” (Handy 2004: 542). But, as has been seen, between August 2006 and August 2007 the *ronda* of Mal Abrigo temporarily moved beyond its originally stated purpose and started to control the villages’ political strategies by force. The civilian initiative at times engaged in conduct characteristic of an “uncivil movement” (see Payne 2000). When this happened, the villagers’ support for the self-defense initiative decreased, and was only restored after a new leadership had been installed.

In the Upper Huallaga, all of the armed groups that were present, including criminal gangs, drug traffickers, and Shining Path groups employed violence in defense of their economic interests.²¹¹ For a long time, Shining Path was thought to be ideologically driven, rather than motivated by the quest for profit. Yet this assertion appeared not to be true, neither during the armed conflict nor afterward. Because of the partial defeat of the organization, absence of peace negotiations and ineffective post-conflict programs, Peru’s cocalero regions remain threatened by what Cornell (2005: 758) described as “perhaps the most dangerous impact of the link between narcotics and conflict [...]: The potential for changing motivational structures within insurgent groups arising from involvement in the drug trade”. Cornell’s description can be perfectly applied to Shining Path’s actions in the Upper Huallaga, as these small “guerrilla” groups were nowadays largely tied to the cocaine industry and the criminal community, not unlike the situation in Colombia (Pécaut 1999: 143). Fragmentation and geographical separations had split the guerrilla remnants in the Upper

²¹¹ See Martín 2000: 174 on Colombia.

Huallaga into smaller armed fractions and units²¹² that became more and more preoccupied with economic gain, and that no longer had a national directorate or a shared ideology. Hence, Shining Path has become a rubric that was utilized by different armed groups. Some of these groups might still be somewhat ideologically motivated, while growing numbers of them are not.²¹³ In the case of Shining Path groups, the majority of them are totally dependent on the cocaine industry for survival. As a result, violence is increasingly used as a way to gain control over the production of cocaine, to protect their activities in the illegal industry, to protect the smuggling of the chemicals needed to process cocaine, or to defend the cocaine industry against anti-drug operations.²¹⁴ Hence, the majority of Shining Path violence is not related to the cultivation of coca *per se*, but to the cocaine industry in general.

In these regions state violence remains mainly directed against the cocaine industry, which lead to a violent response directed against the state presence. The mere presence of various non-state armed actors threatens the state's control over these territories.²¹⁵ The government's reaction to the rising problems in the cocalero regions remains focused on the use of violence. But this state violence that continues in Peru's cocalero regions can cause regional reversals in the post-conflict process (UNDP 2002: 94). Moreover, the violent state response will in no way solve all of the problems plaguing the cocalero valleys. In the repressive discourse taken by the García government, the villagers of the cocalero regions were largely identified as *narcoterroristas*. The media often incites the fear of the villagers of these margins of the state while they ignore the reality on the ground. The stigmatizations of the population cause a general panic, whereby those unfamiliar with the reality on the ground believe that they are threatened by these "others" (Keane 2002: 239).

Hence, the low-intensity conflict plaguing Peru's cocalero regions remains a fight of the state security forces against the heavily armed groups that violently defend their interest in the cocaine industry. But the continuation of this violence has meant that regional legitimacy, power and the reach of the state is disputed while the underlying social and economic problems remained unaddressed.²¹⁶ It is precisely the endemic ignorance and regional state absence that allows different armed groups to establish a presence in these regions. The fact that "guerrilla activity", cocaine trafficking and other crimes are no longer restricted to the Upper Huallaga or Peru's other cocalero regions, but increasingly occur in the villages located on drug smuggling routes is a serious national concern.

²¹² See for a theoretical explanation of these processes Berdal (2003: 287).

²¹³ It can be argued that that Artemio's group in Aucayacu was ideologically motivated (because, during different cocalero protests in 2004 and 2005, Artemio tried to establish bonds with the cocalero movement, based on an ideological motivation of the class struggle in Peru). But such a view would be a gross simplification of Artemio's actions in the Upper Huallaga, as even the violent actions the Artemio group admitted to have executed were mainly related to threats against the cocaine industry (and had nothing to do with forced eradication operations).

²¹⁴ See Ballantine and Sherman 2003; Cornell 2005.

²¹⁵ See Cornell 2005; Davis and Pereira 2003; Fearon 2004; Ross 2003.

²¹⁶ See Cornell 2005: 751; Davis and Pereira 2003; Fearon 2004; Luckham 2003; Ross 2003.

8. Reflections: An indecisive post-conflict peace in margins of the state

In terms of drug trafficking worldwide, the case of the Upper Huallaga is by no means exceptional: The majority of illegal drugs today are cultivated and produced in conflict zones, where violence is prevalent. In Latin America no longer are the problems with the cocaine trade confined to coca-producing countries such as Bolivia, Colombia and Peru. Countries such as Ecuador, Brazil, Argentina and Mexico, which are also heavily involved in cocaine distribution networks, experience violence related to the cocaine trade as well.¹ Many popular works produced by journalists present the argument that, in some of these countries, the cocaine industry jeopardizes the consolidation of democracy, as well as overall social and economic stability.² Journalistic attention to the cocaine industry is usually driven by sensational stories about internal feuding among drug lords, vengeance killings, and massive transports of dozens of kilos of cocaine.³ Yet such stories often fail to tell the stories of the many different kinds of people—some of them quite ordinary and unremarkable citizens—who are involved in the cocaine industry. Disturbingly, most scholarly literature on the cocaine industry is based on these writings. Because of the lack of any in-depth research on the social networks of the cocaine industry in the processing regions and on social changes of the drug trade, scholarly books on the cocaine industry are full of assumptions and speculation.⁴ As a result, it has long been an open question as to *how* the cocaine industry and state-led repression against these activities contribute to the continuation of violence. In Peru's Upper Huallaga Valley, the question was even broader, as it included the issue of *how* the illegal industry poses distinct challenges to post-conflict reconstruction.

Most scholarly literature on post-conflict processes is focused on the national scene and ignores regional post-conflict difficulties. My findings, however, drive home the need to adapt peace consolidation to the local context. I argue that regional conflict complexities, such as the presence of the cocaine industry in the Upper Huallaga, pose particular challenges for post-conflict reconstruction, because regional conflict transformations complicate the reassertion of the state's presence. The conventional lack of attention to events at the regional level can have implications for conflict resolution, as regional circumstances should be taken into consideration when any state sets about the task of establishing a viable peace.⁵ To fill the

¹ See on Latin America; Bagley 2006; Reuter 2008; Youngers 2004; Youngers and Rosin 2004; on Brazil; Arias 2006; Arias 2007; Schepers-Hughes 2006, on Argentina; Taylor, G. 2008; on Mexico; Freeman 2006.

² See for example ‘Think Bush has it Bad? Look at Peru’s President’ Time US, October 14, 2008; “Latin America: The hidden war on democracy” John Pilger, New Statesman US, April 24, 2008; “Peru’s Shining Path guerrillas on the rise again” Miami Herald US, May 31, 2008; ‘Primer contingente de soldados de EEUU se instala en Ayacucho’ La República, May 30, 2008; ‘La Guerra en Viscatán’ Gustavo Gorriti, Caretas, December 18, 2008; ‘Guerra y coca en el VRAE’ Gustavo Gorriti, Caretas, May 22, 2008; ‘Narcos 4x4’ Enrique Chávez, Caretas, August 14, 2008; ‘Guerra desatada’ Caretas (Lima), October 16, 2008.

³ Two notable exceptions are Gay 2005 and Molano 2004.

⁴ For example: The growing influence of Peruvians over this kind of trade became clear in Argentina, where *firms* are said to dominate the market in *Barrio 1-11-14*, one of Buenos Aires *villas*. The Argentine press, worried about the increase of violence in the cocaine trade, reported on the Peruvian origin of these “new smugglers”. The majority of these smugglers are said to come from Lima’s *barrio popular* San Juan de Lurigancho, portrayed as a place that has experienced a renewal of Shining Path activity. This view of the origin of the “new smugglers” ignores the “floating population”, neglecting the various backgrounds of the men and women involved in the smuggling practices. Cocaine produced in Peru’s largest coca basins isn’t only smuggled to and from Lima, as traffickers are known to search for new routes. This problem isn’t specific to Lima but is also noticeable in Piura, Tumbes, Huánuco, Iquitos, Puno, among other cities. The relationship that is described among San Juan de Lurigancho, guerrillas and the drug trade (although the *barrio* was one of those areas of Lima with a guerrilla presence) is farfetched and speculative. At the same time, articles began to appear in the US on the growing influence of Mexican traffickers over Peru, painting a picture of cocaine labs being constructed in the Peruvian jungle. Yet these labs had been there before, and the majority of them had not been constructed by Mexicans or Colombians, but by small-scale Peruvian trafficking groups.

⁵ See Cooper *et al.* 2004; Cornell 2005; Studdard 2004 for writings on this subject, although paradoxically they concentrate on the above-described “spill-over” effects into other countries.

existing scholarly gap, one should consider how ongoing violence and illegal activities are embedded in the local context. As a result, the intent of this book was to analyze the impact, motives and causes of violence in the local context of a cocaine enclave. At the same time, the book set out to describe the cocaleros' coping strategies and mobilization efforts against violence, because certain critical issues had remained unstudied.

In these final reflections, I will first present a succinct overview of the complexities and contradictions of violence and reconstruction in the post-conflict dynamics of the Upper Huallaga. In the first section, as became clear throughout the course of my investigation, it will be shown that there is a complex and dynamic interrelationship among the following factors: The failure of post-conflict reconstruction projects, a fragile and lopsided regional foundation for livelihood rooted in an “illegal” and volatile commodity, the uncertain prospects of social movements, and the continuation of violence and conflict in Peru’s cocaine-driven “margins of the state”.

In the subsequent sections, an answer will be given to the three research questions set forth in Chapter 1 (section 1.1.6). I will attempt to address several particularly vexing problems that bedevil any serious investigator of the Upper Huallaga: What is the nature and impact of violent conflict in the region? How do its residents cope with violence? And how do their mobilization strategies relate to national processes of post-conflict reconstruction? In the second section, a detailed summary of the factors and processes that contribute to the precariousness of life in the Upper Huallaga will be provided.⁶ In the third section of the present chapter, I will return to the population’s mobilization strategies, placing particular emphasis on the cocalero movement and on the challenges this movement faced with respect to integration into the national process of post-conflict reconstruction. I will then proceed to show how the state increasingly became merely one of the armed actors engaged in the regional violence, which led to problems with respect to effective reconstruction and the reassertion of democratic governance in the Upper Huallaga.

In the final section of this chapter, I integrate recent developments into the findings of my research in order to show that it became more and more complicated to see the country’s cocalero valleys as post-conflict regions, as these areas had become states of exception in the national territory; areas where violence is employed by government troops, drug traffickers and “guerrilla remnants” who are all involved in regionalized armed conflict.

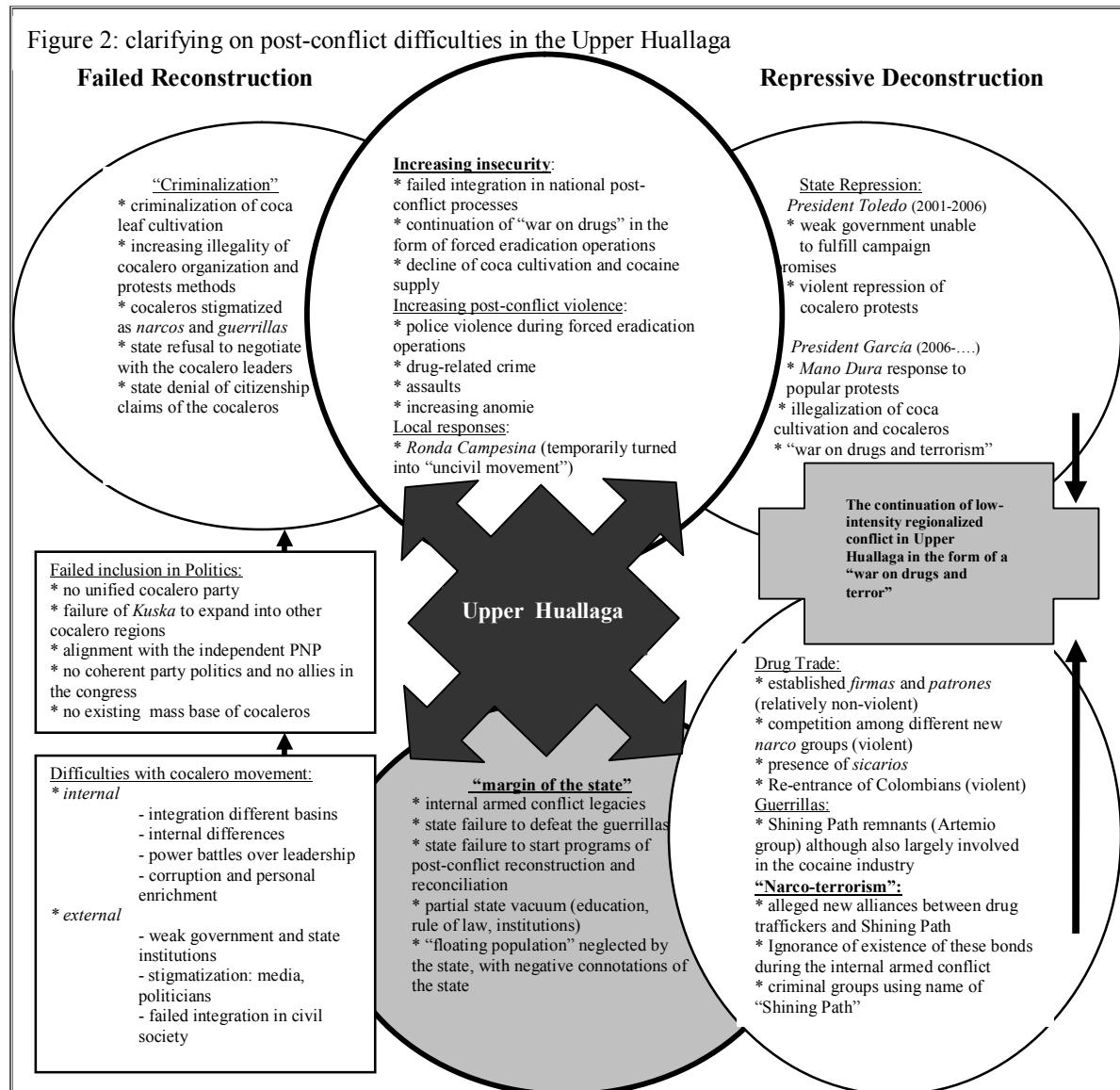
8.1 Post-conflict difficulties in a violent margin of the state

As the Upper Huallaga demonstrated, the end of the conflict doesn’t automatically lead to the consolidation of democracy and, when not properly planned, post-conflict reconstruction can even become part of a recurring or new struggle.⁷ Figure 2 specifies in some detail the processes that I outlined on a theoretical level in Figure 1 (Chapter 1, section 1.1.6). As demonstrated in the Upper Huallaga, these processes, defined as “failed reconstruction” (characterized by the internal difficulties of the cocalero movement, its failed inclusion in national and regional politics, and the subsequent “criminalization” of the cocaleros) and “repressive deconstruction” (entailing state repression, the drug trade and “narco-terrorists”), had the effect of frustrating comprehensive reconstruction in the region. As has been shown in the different chapters, these two concepts of “failed reconstruction” and “repressive deconstruction” are inextricably linked. For example, “criminalization” of the cocaleros was employed in the service of increasing state repression. Because underlying

⁶ Precariousness of life can be framed in terms of ‘human insecurity’ as understood broadly by UNDP (1994) to cover a wide range of aspects from personal, economic, human, social, political and protective hazards and risks.

⁷ See Arnson 1999; Koonings and Kruyt 2004; Kriesberg 2003: 268.

problems resulting from the region's *de facto* status as a margin of the state were ignored, the population remained plagued by insecurity and heightened violence.



Many researchers subsume all of the different kinds of violence that plague Peru's cocalero regions under the rubric of narco-terrorism. The scholarly problems arising from the use of the term is that its definition remains confusing, as it has been used over the years to describe different phenomena. In 1983, the term was first used in a speech by Peruvian president Fernando Belaúnde Terry (1963-1968/1980-1985) to refer to violent attacks against the anti-drug police.⁸ Right after the president's speech, scholars began to employ the term to describe the violence used by drug traffickers, and it became widely used to characterize their efforts to influence governmental policies by threats and violence. Within this view, violence and terrorism were seen as something the drug traffickers *were likely* resort to (Björnehed 2004: 306). But it was only in September 2001, after the tragic events in New York and Washington, that the term narco-terrorism became employed by US anti-drug agencies to describe the engagement of "terrorist" organizations in drug trafficking activity, directly

⁸ In some scholarly studies, Belaúnde's discourse was said to be related to Shining Path guerrillas, although protests against forced eradication were organized by the cocaleros and Shining Path didn't control the cocalero regions yet.

linking the “war on drugs” to the “war on terror”.⁹ It is striking that none of the scholarly writings on narco-terrorism are based on empirical research in drug producing regions (see Bovenkerk and About 2004). Additionally, it is a disturbing fact that scholarly writings ignore to explore how the term can be used as a political discourse by governments in order to both continue a militarized war on drugs and terror, and exclude particular regions and categories of people from a national post-conflict reconstruction process.

8.2 Linking fragile post-conflict peace and violence to the local context

The whole population that lives in an area where “narcoterrorism” occurs becomes tainted by association with a group that is seen as a menace by most of the nation. People involved in the illegal industry aren’t necessarily the ones who aggravate the conflict, provoke violence, or frustrate peacemaking efforts. But in Peru, the “myth of narco-terrorism”, whereby linkages among the cocaleros, Shining Path and the illegal drug industry are exaggerated, was used by successive governments to obscure the underlying social and economic distress and popular mobilizations of the inhabitants.¹⁰ The tragic reality has been, and continues to be, that the partial state vacuum in the Upper Huallaga and the consequent absence of the rule of law contribute to a situation in which informal control is the only kind available and in which various armed groups can establish some kind of control (see Shannon 2002: 45). It remains important to understand how the illegal activities are embedded in the local context and why they remain impervious to the efforts to combat them on the part of the national government.

Coca cultivation, as well as drug processing and smuggling, have a long history in the Upper Huallaga (see Chapter 2). For the illegal drug industry to be able to function, it requires a territory that isn’t, or at least not effectively, placed under state control. In Peru, such conditions obtained in the *selva alta*. Coca is mainly cultivated in “outlying areas” or “margins of the state” on the eastern foothills of the Andes. Although there had been some state control of the region during the settlement of the Upper Huallaga in the 1940s, the majority of the villages in this region were formed without state support. By 1980, there was almost no state presence in the region, and migrants were left to fend for themselves, without regulation, control, or a state providing security (both economic and social). By the late-1970s, cocaine smuggling and processing became more profitable, which drew a variety of armed actors into the region. By the early 1980s, numerous armed actors were present, including drug traffickers, *sicarios*, common criminals, and different anti-drug agencies. Despite the presence of soldiers and police, drug traffickers increasingly managed to control growing parts of the region. In contrast to popular belief, these traffickers managed to expand their power in this margin of the state without the mediation of guerrilla groups. Then, beginning in 1984, Shining Path guerrillas entered the region and within a few years came to control large sections of it.

To understand the continuation of violence in a post-conflict period, it is important to understand the relations between the drug trade and guerrilla groups during the internal armed conflict in these particular regions (see Chapter 4). Yet, because of a lack of in-depth studies, these relations are poorly understood. For example, it is often remarked that Shining Path merely established bonds with cocaleros in order to protect their coca cultivations. This may have initially been the case when the guerrillas entered Tingo María, where, drawing on the anti-state sentiments of the cocalero organization, they could infiltrate the cocalero protests

⁹ Alongside those countries known for this phenomenon, such as Colombia and Afghanistan, there are some among the less-known countries embroiled in conflicts in which politically motivated armed forces are said to be closely aligned with an illegal drug economy, namely Burma, Chechnya, Uzbekistan, and the Philippines, among others.

¹⁰ See Miller and Damask 1996.

(see Chapters 2 and 5). But this view ignores the fact that there were important differences within the region. In the Upper Huallaga Valley's rural areas, where such cocalero organizations were absent, as in Tocache, Shining Path established an alliance with different drug trafficking groups that controlled the territory.¹¹ As it expanded its operations in the Upper Huallaga during the late 1980s, Shining Path transformed itself from an ideologically based guerrilla force into an armed actor that became more and more driven by the cocaine industry. As different local narratives have demonstrated, when Shining Path control over the territory increased, it became more actively involved in the cocaine industry. Scholarly literature largely ignores these relations between Shining Path and the drug traffickers. As a result, many researchers fail to understand that the cocaleros weren't the main actor in the guerrilla violence.¹² But even in post-conflict Peru, the publication of the final report of the truth and reconciliation commission (August 2003) as well as numerous scholarly writings on the Upper Huallaga,¹³ contributed to the image that the "cocaleros" had been powerful and active participants in the violence. This view is based on false assumptions, as it ignores the fact that the violence the guerrillas employed in the Upper Huallaga was dynamic, changed over time, was closely related to the illegal cocaine industry and, as in other affected regions of Peru, was eventually directed in large measure against the local population itself.

It is often argued that the presence of the cocaine industry led to a heightened military capacity of the guerrillas, as in the Upper Huallaga the drug trade "strengthened the capacity of the guerrillas while weakening that of the state" (Cornell 2007: 207). Most scholarly literature emphasizes the effects of the drugs industry on guerrilla forces¹⁴ but fails to include the effects the cocaine industry had on the state security forces (i.e., the police and the military). None of the existing writings pay detailed attention to the way the cocaine trade penetrated the local society *and* state security forces and state institutions; they thus ignore how official corruption has become an entrenched part of the illegal cocaine industry and how this affected the state forces in the Upper Huallaga during the internal armed conflict. It is simply asserted that those state officials and security forces that were present in this "ungoverned space" have no other choice than *plata o plomo*,¹⁵ as their corruption isn't seen as a failure of law enforcement but as a consequence of the regionally constructed "culture of lawlessness" (Millet 2007: 167). But to understand the internal armed conflict in the Upper Huallaga, one has to recognize that all armed actors (i.e., whether they are politically and ideologically motivated or not, and whether they are legal or illegal) were affected by the permeable boundaries between political violence and non-political violence. During the internal armed conflict, the Upper Huallaga simultaneously turned into a sanctuary for combatants, a safe haven for the million-dollar cocaine industry, *and* a money-maker for corrupt and repressive state security forces. Hence, rather than simply stating that the cocaine industry generated the internal armed conflict, it is more accurate to conclude that the internal armed conflict and the armed actors involved in that conflict were profoundly affected by the cocaine industry. It was the presence of the cocaine industry and the involvement of all present armed actors in this industry that turned the Upper Huallaga into an area characterized by prolonged and intractable violence; by the mid-1990s, the region had become Peru's most violent theatre of conflict. As the Upper Huallaga's guerrilla force had been operating independently from Shining Path's national directorate, it was not adversely impacted by the capture of Abimael Guzmán's capture in 1992, and their influence in the region was only substantially diminished when the cocaine industry experienced a "bust" in 1995.

¹¹ An exception was the region around Campanilla, which was controlled by "Vaticano" (see Chapter 2).

¹² See González 1990; McClintock 2005; Kawell 1995; Páucar 2006; Suárez and Fierro 1993.

¹³ See Kay 1999; McClintock 1999; McClintock 2005; Mineo 1994; Palmer 1996; Páucar 2006; Reyna 1996; Thoumi 2003; Weinstein 2007.

¹⁴ See Cornell 2005 and 2007; Kramer 2007; Ross 2003 and 2004.

¹⁵ Literally: "silver or lead"; "Accept a bribe or take a bullet".

Because the cocaine industry continued to operate in the region after the internal armed conflict had come to an end, the political violence had consequences in the Upper Huallaga that were different from those in the rest of the country. An understanding of the local interactions between the cocaine industry and local violence is necessary in order to attain an insight into the problems of regional conflict resolution. There is an observable interaction between a conflict's duration and transformation, on the one hand, and the presence of numerous armed actors related to the drug industry, on the other.¹⁶ After 1995, Shining Path was widely seen as having been definitively vanquished by the military. Nevertheless, some weakened guerrilla cells operating under the name of Shining Path continued to operate. These cells were strengthened by the fact that the state did not aggressively prosecute Shining Path's higher cadres during the post-conflict period. Instead, these former guerrillas were able to continue their business and in many cases became ordinary drug traffickers, common criminals or local authority figures (see Chapter 4). State repression during the post-conflict period was mainly directed against Shining Path's lower cadres, who had participated (or who had been coerced to participate) in guerrilla activities. This "criminalization" of guerrilla activity can alter the population's perceptions about the guerrilla force (although this is often ignored in the literature).¹⁷ Locally it became clear that, in the post-conflict period, the "Shining Path" groups use violence as a way to gain control over the production of cocaine. There existed no communication among these so-called "narco-terrorist groups" and there are differences with respect to the roles they assumed within the cocaine industry: Some groups were involved in the cultivation of coca, while others became involved in drug trafficking, and still others offered protection to drug traffickers. Because of the ineffective policies of the state, the Upper Huallaga continued to offer these groups a source of income that was largely related to the resumption of the war on drugs.

Collier (2003) has argued that drug production persists after conflict because in many cases the violent conflict had placed the involved regions even further beyond the pale of state control. The mere presence of illegal economies in post-conflict regions is said to have negative effects upon peace-building efforts. For example, Ballentine and Nitzschke (2005: 15) argue that "criminality, once entrenched, can seriously undermine peace building and post-conflict recovery". This statement ignores the fact that the cocaine industry (or any other criminal activity) can also function in environments where conflict is not present. As is the case with much of the other scholarly literature,¹⁸ they don't take into consideration either the illegal industry's local embeddings or the dynamic changes occurring within it. The view that only the continuation of the cocaine industry contributes to violence ignores the local context, in which state governance "dissolved" and other groups moved in to fill the vacuum. In the cocaine-driven margins of the state, non-state organizations can have a greater importance to community organization than the state.¹⁹ In the post-conflict Upper Huallaga, the illegal industry, which was already deeply entrenched, also underwent important social changes. As I showed extensively in Chapter 3, in the Fósforo district, established small-scale *firmas* also contributed to regional social reconstruction, as their way of operating only included violence when threatened from the "outside" (mainly by the state) or by "outsider groups" and was largely based on cooperation with the population (or with the local cocalero association in the form of economic support). As criminal networks, these *firmas* have remained focused on profit, but their interests extended beyond a mere economic interest, as money can also be a

¹⁶ See Cooper *et al.* 2004; Cornell 2005; Studdard 2004 for comparative studies about this subject although these largely concentrate on the so-called spill-over effects into other countries and not on the local implication of this merger.

¹⁷ See Cooper *et al.* 2004; Cornell 2005; Studdard 2004.

¹⁸ See Björnheged 2004; Dean 2002; Kawell 1995; Mayer 2002; McClintock 2005.

¹⁹ See Moser and Rodgers 2005.

means to achieve status, influence and security. Although these *mafia*-style groups thrive on their ability to operate outside the state realm, they aren't the ones that propose the continuation of conflict; instead, they can regulate conflict, as their main objective is not to challenge the national state. The *firmas*' main objective is to minimize threats to their business, an objective that was largely shared by the population.

Because the state was unable to guarantee a secure livelihood in these cocaine-driven villages, the *firmas* managed to fill the local power vacuum, consolidating their influence over the economic, social and, to a lesser extent, the political life of these villages. Because of the regional "crisis of the state", other non-state forms of social governance could amplify their influence, with a negative side effect that state-based forms of governance were increasingly being challenged (Latham 2000). To better understand this capacity of the drug industry, it is important to understand that, in the Fósforo district alone, thousands of people are involved. As was discussed in Chapter 3, this mass involvement leads to changing ideas, thoughts, attitudes, behavior and actions, as the illegal drug industry penetrates every aspect of life, social relations and bonds. In these regions, the activities that are defined as illegal and criminal are daily activities and provide the large majority of inhabitants their livelihood. But for the local residents of a region where the cocaine industry operates, that industry is more than merely an economic system. It involves broader ranges of behavior and social relations and, in the Fósforo district; it even became the foundation of post-conflict social mobilization.

One of the little known facts of the war on drugs is that, during times of abundant coca harvests, life is relatively tranquil in the involved villages. This is the case because, during such times, trafficking groups can employ a *mafia*-style operation. Within these shadowy local networks, state-sponsored forced eradication operations not only lead to increased violence, but also disturb social relations. When looking at the consequences for drug trafficking groups, it becomes clear that forced eradication unevenly targets those (basically non-violent) *firmas* and traffickers who maintain close bonds with the population, and thus disturbs the previous social network and leaves behind a local power gap, which is then filled by small trafficking groups that have no bonds with the local population. Thus, the forced eradication campaign in the Fósforo district caused a rise in numbers of those involved in small-scale smuggling of cocaine and, as a result, heightened the competition over the already diminishing cocaine trade. As the amount of available cocaine decreases, the competition and violent retaliation among the different groups increases. The manifestation of numerous new groups increased the competition over the severely reduced cocaine industry that was left behind, and the level of violence dramatically increased (see Chapter 7). When the level of violence rose, both state security forces ignored the villagers' demands for protection and refused to increase their roles in maintaining regional security. The fragility of both security forces led to citizens' perceptions—justified or unjustified—that state power is corrupt.²⁰ As seen in the Fósforo district, these perceptions led to growing distrust of the police, and a widespread sense of impunity for the perpetrators of violence (see Moser and Rodgers 2005: 24).

Additionally, the illegal nature of the cocaine industry and the population's involvement in this illegal activity prevents the victims of this violence from resorting to state law enforcement authorities, including the police and regional courts. Because of the fact that, within national Peruvian law, the lower echelons involved in the cocaine industry are criminalized, even these groups feel that they can only defend their interest by violent means. As a response to the increasing violence, many villagers began to create local self-defense groups that took the place of the police and the judicial branch in delivering justice. Feeling left without any other option, the population became active participants in "peacekeeping".

²⁰ See UNDP 2005; Yashar 2005.

The creation of self-defense groups was in accordance with the contemporary establishment of such organization in other regions of Peru, as well as in other Latin American countries such as Bolivia and Guatemala, where citizens increasingly began to “take justice into their own hands”.²¹ This kind of “popular justice” has become part of the social, political and economic life in regions within national territories where the state has a weak presence (Stavenhagen 1990: 31). Initially, the mixture of cocalero/*rondero* identity even offered a new local identity of citizenship based on the villagers’ efforts to create “bottom-up” social justice. But, as was shown in Chapter 7, in the cocaine-driven enclaves, the nature of the local self-defense groups can quickly change.

In general, the rules of “popular justice” tend to change when the needs and interests of the group change (Ambia 1989: 69). “Popular justice”, as described by Bourdieu (1977: 16) is “the product of a small batch of schemes enabling agents to generate an infinity of practices adapted to endlessly changing situations”. The perceptions of the population about what is legal and illegal behavior for these self-defense groups is important. Especially in cocaine-driven regions, the people involved in these “peacekeeping” initiatives will likely employ high levels of violence because the villagers’ groups there don’t have a monopoly over the use of violence, their reach of violence is limited and they are highly vulnerable to counter-reactions on the part of different criminal groups.²² When the *ronderos* began murdering criminals in an attempt to put a stop to the assaults, such vigilante action was initially supported by a large segment of the population. The murder of accused criminals was seen by the residents as “reactions against violent acts [...] by notoriously dangerous people” (Handy 2004: 542). But in some villages of the Fósforo district, social justice quickly became chaotic and uncontrollable, as the violence that was primarily aimed at protecting the community began to be directed against villagers. Especially in Mal Abrigo, with its marked presence of other armed actors, the *ronderos* seemed to cross the line from legitimacy to overtly illegal behavior and a reliance upon violence as a way of increasing their political influence and control. The *ronda* violence became directed against state initiatives of alternative development, and the villagers who wanted to cooperate with these programs. In effect, the *rondero* leaders used popular justice as a means of violent control. This resulted in their coming to be seen by the villagers as actively carrying out a militarization of society.²³ When the *ronda* leaders seemed to be acting in ways that were clearly outside the bounds of their stated intentions, they became seen by residents as an “uncivil movement” (see Payne 2000).

Hence, the causes of violence in the Fósforo district are part of a dynamic interaction among many factors—an interaction that is influenced by the local context, a partial state vacuum, and the social utility and the economic advantages of violence.²⁴ As was asserted in Chapter 1, it is critically important to analyze how these causes of violence and conflict are interpreted by the population. Figure 3 shows how the population of the district understands the different motives for violence, following Moser and McIlwaine (2004) in its division into political, social and economic motivations. These different motivations have to be seen as an “interrelated continuum with reinforcing connections between the different types of violence” (Moser and Rodgers 2005: 4).

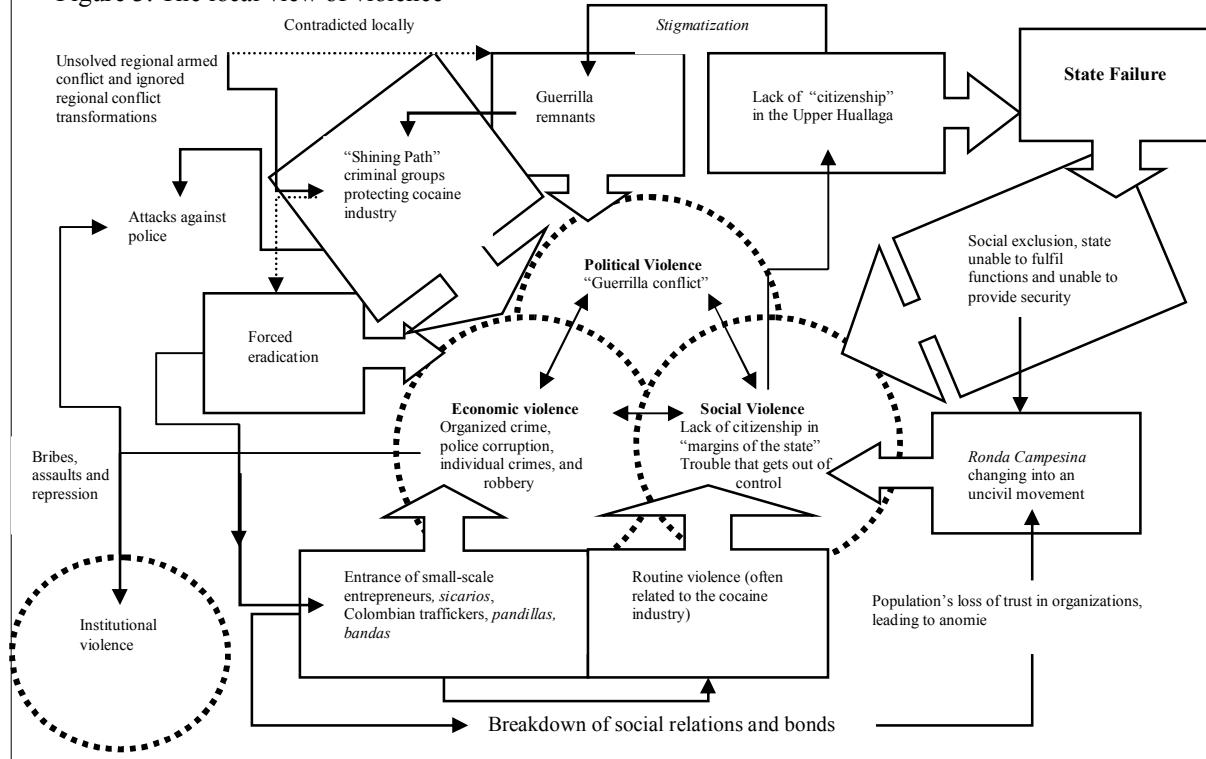
²¹ See Goldstein 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2007 on Bolivia. See Snodgrass 2004; 2006 and Handy 2004 on Guatemala. See Fumerton and Remijnse 2004 on Peru and Guatemala.

²² See Moser and Rodgers 2005.

²³ See Huggins 1991; Koonings 2004; Payne 2000; Vargas 2004.

²⁴ See Berdal and Keen 1997; Foucault 1977; Moser and McIlwaine 2004; Nef 1995.

Figure 3: The local view of violence



Institutional violence, perpetrated by the police and other institutions (see Pinheiro 1993; 1997), is added because this kind of violence was mentioned by the population as an underlying cause of a violent reaction of other groups. Figure 3 demonstrates one difficulty within this theoretical approach: For the residents of the region, social, economic, political, and institutional violence are not seen as separable. Thus, violence plaguing the Upper Huallaga can be defined in terms of the motivations of those who engage in the violent behavior. Yet one needs to be aware that motivations can change over time, as underlying power structures are influenced by changes in local conditions.

As also becomes apparent in Figure 3, the cocaine industry does foment violence as a factor of legitimization of armed groups, as a source of income for those groups *and* as a corruptive element in the security forces. In these cocaine enclaves, the state remains stuck in a “Catch-22”²⁵ situation. If the state chooses to fight the violence and allow the drug economy to operate freely, this will lead to international pressure to continue the war on drugs. If, on the other hand, the state chooses to fight the cocaine trade, this will cause grievances among the population that can increase the population’s support for different armed actors, such as guerrilla remnants, *rondas campesinas* and drug traffickers. Until now, because of the lack of an appropriate state response and the state’s weak ability to control these cocaine-driven territories, violence continues to be employed by an array of shadowy forces. Some of these are organized or controlled by the state (including police, military and sometimes the *rondas*), while others (e.g., *firmas*, criminal groups, and “guerrilla remnants”) are not. These different types of violence plaguing the Upper Huallaga Valley show that the ending of the internal armed conflict, the country’s transition to democracy and to the construction of a durable post-conflict peace were never effectively implemented within the region. This failure may be

²⁵ Catch 22 (see Joseph Heller 1961) is common term for "a no-win situation". It is also often used to justify various ineffective bureaucratic actions.

due to the fact that the state has failed to form alliances with those groups which could have contributed to bringing about a real and durable peace within the region.

8.3 Cocaleros: From peace agents to secluded politicians

The long duration of the internal armed conflict and the continuation of violence in the post-conflict period in the Upper Huallaga conformed to larger pattern. “Rural areas are the arenas of long-running and brutal internal armed conflicts and can experience significant levels of violence in certain post-conflict situations” (Moser and Rodgers 2005: 5).²⁶ According to the UNDP (2002: 95), promoting peace is important in regions, like the Upper Huallaga, where crime and violence are rampant. In recent years, a growing body of research has accumulated on the relationships between political conflict and the drug industry, although this literature tends to concentrate more on general notions than on post-conflict reconstruction in the local context. As a result, it fails to take into account the views of ordinary citizens, views which must be considered in order to adequately explain the processes of regional peace consolidation. In post-conflict Peru, the Upper Huallaga became a perfect setting for studying a dynamic regional process of social reconstruction that appeared to hold promise for the creation of a just and lasting peace among the previously warring parties within this particular region.

To explain these local forms of social reconstruction, it is critically important to look at the state’s weak attempts to resolve the internal armed conflict in the Upper Huallaga. These state-led attempts remained urban-based policies, because the programs were concentrated in the valley’s towns, and they failed to gain support in the rural areas, which the state still tended to consider “enemy territory.” But in the early 1990s, these post-conflict state policies were not even being implemented effectively in the towns of the Upper Huallaga. In Tingo María, the “Repentance Law” (1992-1994) led to hundreds of campesinos turning themselves in, while those who had committed the most serious crimes remained at large (see Chapters 2 and 4). Additionally, the state-led policies failed to address the underlying problems and causes, and they also ignored the conflict’s changed nature and impact in the region. Because of the absence of state regulation in the Upper Huallaga’s rural areas, post-conflict reconstruction and reconciliation became local processes. As seen in Chapter 4, citizens in the region with varying “conflict backgrounds” were integrated into local society without difficulties. The “blurring” of past alignments became part of the building of the local society, as it was quickly discovered that dwelling on past animosities was an impediment to constructing a society that required civil relations among all parties in order to function. In this local context, the national justice process of punishing guilty parties, or compensating those who had been victimized, were not seen as particularly helpful. In contrast, it was the national policies that led to heightened tensions in some communities. In the Fósforo district, national repatriation and rehabilitation projects caused severe tensions because, at the local level, the social reconstruction excluded those who had left the region during the conflict. The solutions to these tensions included practices that transcended national law and that attempted to equitably impose what could be called “transitional justice”, particularly within the realm of property restitution. In the post-conflict Fósforo district, the state remained unable to regulate the local social reconstruction practices. As a result, locally the post-conflict reconstruction totally depended on the continuance of the cocaine industry.

Peace-building strategies might have worked if state-led projects had primarily been directed at combating underdevelopment in these regions. A successful and lasting peace process would probably also have had to include negotiations with the population, even those

²⁶ See the aftermath of the conflict in El Salvador, Guatemala and arising *pandilla* violence in the Ayacucho department (Strocka 2008)

established drug traffickers or *mafiosi*, and this in turn would have required resisting intense international pressure for a war on drugs. Even though the majority of ordinary citizens in the region were involved in illegal activities, they represented a group that probably could have been persuaded to participate in the post-conflict processes, if the state had not decided to resume the war on drugs. For example, in the Fósforo district in 2000, the cocalero association arose as a result of a military initiative to gain more influence over the region. This military initiative could have been successful if it had (at least temporarily) decriminalized those involved in coca cultivation, but not in cocaine production. In contrast, the national government's resumption of forced eradication operations in 2000 frustrated the military's attempts to gain more influence over the district. During the forced eradication operation that followed, the cocaleros became involved in violent confrontations against the police but they had not managed to stop the eradication operation. Nonetheless, the resumption of forced eradication of the coca crop had negative consequences for the military, as it lost its influence over the local association. The military initiative turned into a cocalero association driven by widespread and deeply felt anger toward the state. When a new forced eradication campaign re-entered the district in 2001, the police were confronted by angry cocaleros who took active, and sometimes violent, measures to expel the police and CORAH²⁷ workers from the district.

This continuation of anti-drug operations turned the Upper Huallaga Valley into the Peruvian coca-producing area with the most visible post-conflict mobilizations, as cocalero strikes grew into massive protests. But it is important to recognize that, at first, the cocalero protests were directed against the state's inability or unwillingness to recognize the problems in the region, and were shaped by area residents' feelings of exclusion and state abandonment (see Chapters 4 and 5). The cocaleros' initial demands included more state influence and even the start of alternative development programs. After a number of regional riots, the cocaleros of several different valleys organized a national confederation, CONPACCP.²⁸ As seen in Chapter 5, when confronted by thousands of cocaleros in Lima during the *Marcha de Sacrificio* in 2003, Toledo made a small step towards the decriminalization of the cocaleros, as he announced that he had reached an "agreement with the poor, not with drug traffickers". But negotiations between the cocaleros and the Toledo government never properly addressed the regional problems, including the legacies of the internal armed conflict, the regional underdevelopment and cocaine, as the talks merely concentrated on coca cultivation. Both the cocalero leaders and government failed to see the cocalero movement as a post-conflict movement that could have become an important actor in the consolidation of peace and the construction of a more effective and positive state presence in these regions. After being confronted by daily protests and failing to effectively address the cocalero protests, the Toledo government opted to resume forced eradication operations, a decision that reversed course with respect to decriminalizing the cocaleros.

The cocalero movement arose alongside large popular mobilizations, such as those in highland communities involving citizens clashing with mining companies; those in rural communities involving demands for roads, schools and health centers; and demands across the nation on the part of victims of the internal armed conflict for compensation from the state for damages incurred. The cocalero movement, in contrast to other movements that arose as part of Peru's revived culture of protest, was never seen as part of the country's civil society and the post-conflict reframing of citizenship. One thing is important to remember: The national cocalero movement did not initially resort to violence during their protests. The use

²⁷ *Control y Reducción del Cultivo de la Coca en el Alto Huallaga*: Special Project for the Control and Eradication of Coca in the Upper Huallaga. Agency in charge of the eradication of the coca fields within Law 22095 (see Chapter 2).

²⁸ *Confederación Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios de las Cuencas Cocaleras de Perú*: National confederation of agricultural producers of the cocalero regions of Peru.

of violent protest methods and a radicalization of the discourse in the cocalero movement followed well-established patterns on the national scene. When state-civilian relations worsened during the Toledo government, and that government increasingly ignored popular demands, most social movements in the country began to use violent protest methods. The cocaleros' violent protests led to more state repression and, additionally, to a renewed stigmatization of the movement. The media, politicians and state officials alike began to stress the cocaleros' role in the cocaine industry, the crime of drug trafficking and the "re-appearance" of Shining Path. Moser and McIlwaine (2001) labeled this kind of stigmatization as "area stigma", which in the Upper Huallaga embraced the notion that the population of these areas merely consisted of guerrillas and *narcos*. This created an image of the cocalero movement as a conspiracy between drug smugglers, *narco-campesinos*, and *guerrilleros* proposing to turn the country into a *narcoestado*.

To explain how the state could easily turn against the cocalero movement, it is important to take account of the fact that there are large differences within the movement among its various component groups. These differences were based on geography, as well as on varying cultural, economic and social backgrounds, among other factors. As was described in Chapter 5, the background of the majority of cocaleros from the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, for example, was different from those of the Upper Huallaga. Moreover, the different cocalero regions each had distinct motives for organizing their national movement. These differences were owing to differences in state presence and experiences with forced eradication operations, among other factors. As the forced eradication operations remained mainly concentrated in the Upper Huallaga, the primary motivation for these cocaleros to organize CONPACCP was putting a stop to these repressive measures. The cocaleros from the Apurímac-Ene River Valley had a different set of motivations altogether. Because no forced eradication operation had ever entered this region, their anger was primarily directed against ineffective alternative development projects. Driven by the demands of the Monzón and the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, cocalero leaders began to emphasize the traditional (and legal) elements of coca cultivation. Ignoring their initial demands for a greater state presence, the cocalero leaders of the Upper Huallaga began to claim that they served the highland indigenous community with their coca cultivation and began to defend coca as part of Peruvian culture and tradition (see Yashar 2005: 185). But the reality was that CONPACCP only united Peru's largest cocalero valleys that were largely related to the illegal cocaine trade. As a result, CONPACCP was seen as representing only drug traffickers.

Disunity among the different valleys undermined the movement's effectiveness (Felbab-Brown 2006: 79). Accusations against cocalero leaders delegitimized the leadership of the movement, and heightened divisions within it. For example, Tocache's cocaleros increasingly came to be seen by the cocalero leaders of other regions as "criminals" who were largely aligned with the illegal cocaine industry and the guerrilla movement. Although these statements can be rejected as "the pot calling the kettle black", they are significant in that they point to an important internal division within the cocalero movement. Those cocalero regions, including the Monzón and the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, where the migrants consisted primarily of highland campesinos, used an *indigena* discourse, hereby largely excluding the cocaleros of the Upper Huallaga. CONPACCP unsuccessfully sought to overcome personal power struggles within the organization, leaving behind a weakened mass base as their regional leadership increasingly began to resemble *caudillismo*²⁹—that is to say, the leadership was increasingly driven by the protection and extension of personal interests above the obligation to unity within the movement. These divisions, and the creation of two "national" cocalero movements, made it possible for the Toledo government, already

²⁹ See Mallon 1995 on *caudillismo*.

weakened by daily protests, to play a game of divide-and-conquer with both cocalero movements, negotiating with one while refusing to negotiate with the other. Hence, the disunity of the cocalero valleys and the creation of a second “national” cocalero movement diminished CONPACCP’s effective space within the national sociopolitical scene.

While the situation in the cocalero enclaves turned more violent, the national cocalero leaders looked to become actively involved in national politics, largely ignoring the need to reorganize the cocalero movement and associations in their regions (see Chapter 6). Cocaleros launched two different political projects. *Kuska Perú* won a number of municipal elections in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, but as one of many independent political parties that represented the *indigenous* population, it had a limited regional success, and ultimately failed to extend its influence over other cocalero regions (Van Cott 2005: 141). But during Nelson Palomino’s path to regional political power, the popular resentment against his leadership increased. Even those *alcaldes* who had won the municipal elections with *Kuska* began to reject Palomino’s leadership when rumors about embezzlement of funds arose. Reports of Palomino’s corruption, as well as of his ties to the García government, eventually led to his replacement as leader of CONPACCP in 2007.

Attempts to follow the path of the Bolivian cocaleros had a deleterious effect on the Peruvian cocalero movement, which by 2007 had lost its mass base of support. By that time, protests were only being held in the cocalero valleys themselves, and these protests were largely ignored by both the national media and the national government. These failures are the outcome of numerous differences between Peru and Bolivia; including differences between the cocalero leaders of the two nations, and the Bolivians’ effective use of *indigena* symbolism in pursuing their agenda. The use of *indigena* symbolism in the cocalero movement is part of a larger phenomenon, as many social movements are formed to improve their members’ social-economic situation, and ethnic symbols are strategically used in pursuit of socioeconomic interests (Baud *et. al.* 1996). Evo Morales, on his way to political power in Bolivia, tapped into the long-lasting grievances of Bolivia’s indigenous majority.³⁰ In Peru, however, CONPACCP never successfully integrated the cocalero organizations of the Cusco department, which had closer ties with the traditional coca market than with the illegal drug trade. Neither did they manage to integrate Peru’s Aymara, Quechua or highland campesino organizations. Another dissimilarity between Bolivia and Peru is the geographical location of the cocalero regions within these countries. In Bolivia, both cocalero valleys are located relatively close to La Paz,³¹ while in Peru the cocalero valleys are much farther away from the nation’s capital, in an area widely considered a dangerous no-man’s land. Because of this image, the effects of forced eradication operations in the Upper Huallaga tended to be only felt in jungle towns like Tocache, Tingo María, and Tarapoto, while remaining hidden from the majority of Peruvians (see Chapter 6).

But most importantly, Evo Morales thrived on his resemblance—both physically and in terms of his socioeconomic circumstances—to poor Ayamara- and Quechua-speaking campesinos, but in contrast, the Peruvian cocalero leaders in their communities were already identified as being economically “better-off”, as they often had received an education, and usually owned relatively large fields. For example, Nancy Obregón did not conform to the typical image of migrant highland women, as she lived the majority of her life in Lima, received an education in the capital, wore modern clothes, didn’t speak Quechua (although she did understand the language) and didn’t normally chew coca. She could be identified as a

³⁰ See Monasterios *et al.* 2007; Robins 2006

³¹ One of the country’s capital cities: La Paz is Bolivia’s administrative capital while the judicial branch of the state is based in Sucre (making it Bolivia’s constitutional capital).

typical Peruvian *chola*³² but not as an *indígena*, which restricted her ability to plausibly make use of ethnic symbolism. Nelson Palomino, in contrast, strategically used ethnic symbols; yet he was not a typical highland campesino but a rural teacher. Another important difference is that in Peru, in contrast to Bolivia, the traditional use of coca is not a part of the culture of the majority of the nation's inhabitants. In Peru, coca-chewing was generally considered a backward tradition of highland peasants, and was not an activity widely embraced by the protesting cocaleros. Consequently, the *hoja sagrada* discourse failed to resonate with the majority of Peruvians. But even within the cocalero regions, both leaders were unable to maintain their image as small-scale cocaleros, and instead tended to be increasingly viewed as part of a new regional elite,³³ who were said to be exploiting their status and fame in the service of personal ambition. Rumors of their corruption severely affected the credibility of both Obregón and Palomino, and eventually led to their ouster from CONPACCP.

Bolivia's MAS slowly but surely progressed from local to regional to national politics. However, when Peruvian cocalero leaders entered the national political scene, the cocalero base lacked cohesion, unity and organization (Felbab-Brown 2006: 79). The political projects deriving from the Peruvian cocalero movement failed, in the same way that most Peruvian indigenous movements have failed to have anything more than a superficial impact on national politics. As has historically been the case with numerous indigenous movements in Peru, the Upper Huallaga cocalero leaders made alliances with political parties because they were unable to launch their own national party (Van Cott 2005: 141). Nancy Obregón and Elsa Malpartida were elected to the national congress and the Andean Parliament respectively, driven by a “*patria chica*”³⁴ thinking that focused merely on gaining political influence through entering national politics. In contrast to the situation in Bolivia, their emergence on the national political scene was not backed by a political party that had arisen from cocalero syndicates, but was instead supported by a populist independent political movement. It soon became clear that the *Partido Nacionalista Peruano* didn't share the cocaleros' agenda. This shows one of the weaknesses of independent political parties, who have a diverse membership base that had previously been aligned with different national parties. After the elections, groups of PNP members changed their voting behavior, which left Obregón with only minimal support for her proposals for dealing with the cocalero problem. As a result, Obregón merely took one seat in a national congress that was largely oppositional. When it became apparent that the integration into politics wouldn't lead to change in the Fósforo district, disappointment increased. Additionally, the entrance of Obregón onto the larger stage left a power vacuum in the local cocalero association, leading to internal power struggles. Hence, both the cocaleros' integration into national politics and Kuska's takeover of municipalities in the Apurímac-Ene River valley were followed by frustration and disappointment on the part of the cocaleros (see Chapter 6).

The cocalero mobilization failed to open up effective channels of representation and recognition to Peru's cocaleros. The individual success of its local leaders paradoxically confirmed the flaws of electoral democracy, and weakened the nascent grass roots organization in the Upper Huallaga. At the national level, the foray into political participation did not offer the kind of empowerment necessary to bring the cocalero agenda to the forefront of the government's—and the nation's—concerns.

³² *Cholo-a*: Term to indicate to dark-skinned people from the Andes, usually used in reference to migrants to the cities (Albó 2004: 21; García 2005).

³³ Through their leadership over different cocalero regions and thus thousands of people, the cocalero leaders acquired the potential to enter the national political scene..

³⁴ Literally “little motherland” thinking, which held that the entrance of Obregón and Malpartida into Congress and the Andean Parliament respectively would automatically lead to more integration of the cocaleros in Peru.

8.4 The state's response: A (militarized) “war on drugs and terror”

The process of establishing a “viable peace” is nowadays seen as largely driven by either the state, or by institutions related to the state, as post-conflict reconstruction has been largely transformed into constitution-making processes (Bell 2000: 294). Therefore, in order to explore the extent to which the Upper Huallaga’s local post-conflict dynamics offer prospects for reconstruction, especially the provision of security and the reassertion of democratic governance, it is important to look at governing processes.

The complex and ambivalent environment of cocaine-driven margins of the state makes their inclusion into the national reconstruction processes a matter fraught with difficulties and controversy. Rejecting the view that coca cultivation and the cocaine industry can foster peace and tranquility in the cocaine enclaves, post-conflict governments in Peru tended to view coca and cocaine as something that needed to be rooted out. As a result, national post-conflict processes were transformed and took on a different meaning and form, as they were completely replaced by state-led anti-drug operations. This resumption of the war on drugs is driven by different simplifications of the complex and dynamic local context in cocaine enclaves because it assumes that the end of the cocaine industry will automatically lead to the end of violence. Successive Peruvian governments followed the misconception that, in the post-conflict period, the illegal industry would be easier to combat. Driven by international pressure (mainly coming from the United States), the interim government of Paniagua (2000-2001) had no option other than to continue the anti-drug policies previously agreed upon by Fujimori. The Toledo government (2001-2006) was also severely pressured by the US to continue the war on drugs, as the Bush government threatened to suspend all development projects in the country if the Toledo government failed to comply with the anti-drug accords that had previously been signed. As a result of this pressure, operations of forced eradication of the coca crop remained the primary point of contact between cocaleros and their national government after the internal armed conflict.

But effective projects to establish a viable regional peace in the Upper Huallaga must do more than concentrate on implementing anti-drug policies; they must also entail knowing *when* and *how* to intervene in the cocaine industry. By merely continuing to implement forced eradication operations, and by failing to launch post-conflict development projects, successive national governments missed important opportunities to foster a more positive state presence in the cocalero regions. One of these opportunities occurred in the mid-1990s, when the coca bust (which was caused by overproduction in Peru and Bolivia) lowered the prices paid for coca and, in addition, had the effect of weakening the *Comité Regional del Alto Huallaga* (CRAH; Regional Committee of the Upper Huallaga). During this period, the villagers pleaded for alternative development projects. Instead, the Fujimori regime resumed forced eradication in 1996. Again in 2003, the Toledo government (2001-2006) missed an important opening for a more positive state presence, when it failed to launch a project for alternative development in Aguaytía. This particular project had never been started because of the US government’s refusal to work together with Aguaytía’s cocalero association, which they said was organized by “drug traffickers”. Instead, a forced eradication operation entered Aguaytía. But although forced eradication operations are incapable of rooting out all coca and cocaine production, they do seriously disturb socioeconomic life in the affected regions,³⁵ and this can lead to greater resistance against the state in these regions.

What is forgotten is that the cocaine enclaves reflect deeper social inequalities and failures of democratic governance in margins of the state.³⁶ The growing disillusionment with

³⁵ As seen in Chapter 7, which described these changes in the Fósforo district

³⁶ As must be remembered, this notion of “margins of the state” entails the level of state penetration of a nation’s peripheral regions; the spaces, forms and practices through which the state is experienced by the region’s population; and the way people see themselves in relation to the state (Asad 2004: 279).

President Toledo and the subsequent election of Alan García, reveal that Peru's "geographical cleavages in patterns of political allegiance" (Crabtree 2008) are showing a widening gulf between Peru's coastal regions and hinterlands. Especially in the country's hinterlands, the population's perception of ineffective state performance has caused a severe decline in citizens' confidence in democracy.³⁷ As has been previously argued, in the cocaine-driven margins of the state, the transition to an all-inclusive democracy is even more complex, as the cocaine industry can be used to blur popular mobilizations, and can negatively influence citizens' ability to make claims upon the state. Especially when politicians, social scientists and journalists focus exclusively on the role of campesinos in the cocaine commodity chain, they reduce the cocaleros' social legitimacy, leading to a characterization of the cocaleros' protests as guerrilla activity or violent disturbances led by drug traffickers rather than as legitimate social protest. Such a characterization obscures the fact that the social distress in these regions also derives from the failure of the state to effectively deal with regional underdevelopment. Increasingly, the power of the state in these cocalero regions is not based upon on the consent of its citizens but upon the state's capacity to employ coercion.

Scholars, journalists and the state alike increasingly labeled the cocalero organizations and mobilizations as a form of narco-terrorism. By using this term, they further alienated the cocaleros from the state. Even after the post-conflict transition to democracy, successive governments weren't willing to give the cocaleros a place in the national society except as actors who disturb the country's peace, as guerrilla remnants, or as drug traffickers. The use of the term "narco-terrorism" to apply to the cocalero movement can be explained by the assertion that, in these remote regions, the guerrilla project of alternative state building can indeed often find fertile ground among a local population that so often feels left behind by the national state (see Klare 2004; Kalyvas 2006). But this assertion is based on an oversimplification of the local context. Recent violent attacks in the Upper Huallaga and other cocalero regions demonstrate that it was state action aimed against cocaine labs, the smuggling of chemicals, and other activities directly related to cocaine processing that led to the violent retaliation of self-styled "guerrillas" who were in fact almost certainly intimately tied to the cocaine industry" (see Chapter 7).

The third research question that I posed was: To what extent do post-conflict consolidation processes and the re-assertion of democratic governance offer prospects for social movement mobilization in these "margins of the state"? This question could currently justifiably be reformulated as follows: How does the country's low-intensity conflict in the cocalero regions affect the reassertion of democratic governance? Until now, Peru's so-called *narco-guerrilleros* have peopled the darkest nightmares of the nation's presidents, and not without a reason: In recent years, attacks by "guerrilla" groups have risen steadily. In the Upper Huallaga and the Apurimac-Ene River Valley, different armed actors, all identified as "guerrillas", increasingly combat the activities of the anti-drug police with violence. Confronted with this rising violence against the state security forces in the country's cocalero regions, President García did what most Latin American presidents tend to do: He sent in the military to deal with the problem. Most recently, García has granted the military an extensive role in the war on drugs, although the Peruvian military doesn't exactly have a stellar record when it comes to remaining free from the taint of corruption related to the cocaine industry.³⁸ Even more disturbing was the fact that García increased the penalties for coca cultivation and for engaging in non-violent protest, while allowing the police to react with deadly violence when confronted by protesters.

³⁷ See Mainwaring and Pérez-Liñán 2005; Kaldor and Luckham 2001.

³⁸ It must not be forgotten that García's response wasn't the first policy that led to the militarization of the regional conflict, as the Toledo government had placed the different cocalero regions under a state emergency numerous times.

Recent violent attacks related to the cocaine industry were primarily referred to as a “reappearance” of Shining Path guerrillas in cocalero regions, which obscured the fact that one can no longer speak of one Shining Path organization. As has been made abundantly clear in this volume, the Upper Huallaga alone has seen numerous groups of diverse ideology, operational modes, and ethnic composition which have operated under this infamous name. The violent attacks being perpetrated today, and which are mainly directed against the police, are the work of different groups of actors: actual “guerrilla remnants”; cocaine-industry operatives or drug traffickers who call themselves “guerrillas”. But by employing increasingly higher levels of violence, the state actually transformed itself into one of those groups that constituted an obstacle to the re-emergence of democratic government in these regions.

There has been growing criticism against this kind of militarized response in areas where “terrorist groups” coexist with an illegal industry. Recent occurrences in Peru’s cocalero regions, described below, demonstrate that repressive state policies directed against the present armed actors have done nothing to solve the problem.

8.5 Post-scriptum: An uncertain (violent) future

García’s “war on drugs and terror” continues in the Peruvian cocalero regions as this book is going to press (2009). Although numerous “*senderistas*”³⁹ have been assassinated or (to a lesser extent) captured during military campaigns, the state hasn’t been able to make the problem disappear. Some things have changed for the worse, as the state isn’t threatened by one Shining Path but by numerous groups operating under this infamous name, all of which employ violence for different purposes (whether economic or political). Meanwhile, the state response is driven by the simple assumption that narco-terrorism, including all these different “illegal” armed actors, is like some sentient being that can be deprived of life if only enough ammunition is employed. Actually, the government’s military response in the Upper Huallaga is two-pronged: Fighting the cocaine trade through increased operations of forced eradication on the one hand, and searching for and destroying “terrorists” on the other. One disturbing change that has recently been observed in the Upper Huallaga is that military officers mention that the members of “Shining Path” are for the most part adolescent boys and, therefore, they are much easier to capture. The statement ignores the troubling reality that “Shining Path” has been successfully recruiting numerous teenagers who are once again voluntarily joining the guerrilla ranks, just as was the case thirty years ago when disaffected youth comprised the majority of the guerrillas’ mass base. In contrast, in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, the government’s strategy is aimed at fighting terrorism and until now has not included forced eradication operations. Instead, efforts in that region are mainly directed against cocaine-smuggling activities, which are now largely related to Shining Path guerrillas (read, all those involved in smuggling activities). Disturbingly, García’s solution to the violent attacks is again driven by the assumption that, in order to defeat narco-terrorism, one needs the active participation of the population, who are encouraged to participate in the conflict. In the Apurímac-Ene River Valley, the state measures alarmingly entailed a close cooperation with the *comités de autodefensa*.⁴⁰ In that region, the new military role in the war on terror was ironically conceived within a discourse of regional “reconciliation”. The *ronderos*, learning from having been shunted aside after the internal armed conflict, are largely refusing to participate in the fighting.⁴¹

³⁹ Term for guerrillas.

⁴⁰ Self-defense committees to fight Shining Path during the internal armed conflict.

⁴¹ Although some *ronderos* did participate as guides in a military operation in Anco (Ayacucho department), searching for terrorists. The result, two *ronderos* were killed when they stepped on a mine. Their deaths led to a renewed debate as to whether these *ronderos* should be reincorporated into the fighting force or whether they should act as mere informers for the soldiers. But even this last-named strategy ignores the local context, as involvement poses a serious security threat.

Another worrying development needs to be mentioned. Most recently, the violence has not been limited to only the cocalero regions, but has been spreading to other areas of the country. Villages on trafficking routes, as well as remote hamlets and border towns, are experiencing increasing levels of violence related to the war on drugs and the war on terror. “Guerrilla” attacks are spreading to the highlands of Huancavelica, Huancayo, and Junín, among other areas. And military operations are being undertaken in such places as well. In one of these jungle villages, Vizcatán (in the Junín Department), a military operation in September 2008 killed five people who, according to APRODEH (*Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos*, a Peruvian human rights group) had been campesinos but not guerrillas, as the national newspapers and state forces had contended. As was the case thirty years ago, the government found an answer, as the Minister of Defense explained that, in these villages, there is no civilian population or campesinos: In a terrorist stronghold, there are only combatants. On October 9, 2008 a “guerrilla” ambush occurred in Tintaypunco (Huancavelica Department) causing the death of at least 16 people, including 12 soldiers. The Ministry of Defense was quick to denounce this ambush as another attack of carried out by “narco-terrorists”. This attack caught the attention of the international media, which continued to spread an image of Peru as threatened by the re-emergence of Shining Path, without taking into account the background and context of the event in question. One statement made by Tintaypunco’s mayor demonstrates the complexities in the battle that the Peruvian state is waging. The mayor said that it was not known who was behind the violence. Government explanations of the violence began to allege the involvement of a number of different groups. On November 28, 2008, when four policemen were killed and five were injured by gunfire and grenades in a “Shining Path” ambush near Tingo María, García reacted by making a statement that there was an increasing violent influence of Mexican trafficking groups within Peru.⁴²

There continues to be an urgent need to investigate these events within their local contexts, as the villagers’ opinions can often afford insight into the rising violence. Instead of taking into account the villagers’ view, national and international anti-drug agencies and the Peruvian government point to the decline of coca cultivations as a measure of the “success” of their efforts. Driven by the desire to totally eradicate coca, the Fósforo district was repeatedly hit by new forced eradication operations. But Fósforo’s economic woes come at a time when the national government faces numerous challenges. Alberto Fujimori, who is currently on trial, seems to be enjoying increasing levels of support, while García’s popularity has steadily declined. Meanwhile, food prices are increasing while salaries remain low, causing growing hardship for many families. In late 2008, a number of large-scale protests were organized. Confronted with the protests, President García did what most Latin American presidents tend to do. He sent in the military to deal with the “disorder”. Alongside these protests, an oil kickbacks scandal involving the alleged provision of hush money to a number of government ministers weakened the García government and led to the resignation of his entire cabinet. In the meantime, the problem of a large sector of the nation’s economy continuing to be dependent on the commerce in illegal drugs festers within Peruvian society, like some persistent and tenuously managed cancer that defies all attempts at treatment.

⁴² Although these only remain assumptions, one cannot say that these are new occurrences, as for years national newspapers have published articles on the influence of FARC in the Northern jungle of Peru, and on the growing influence of Mexican cartels over the cocaine trade in Peru’s costal region (including Piura and Tumbes). The influence of Mexican cartels only became a serious concern when a number of smugglers, including Colombians, Mexicans and Peruvians, were murdered in broad daylight in Lima (see ‘*Crimenes de sierra*’ Caretas, July 31, 2008; ‘*Ajustes de cuentas*’ al estilo del cártel mexicano de Sinaloa en Lima’ Caretas, August 21, 2008; ‘*La Huella del Pistolero: Qué hacia en Lima un ex miembro del cártel colombiano de Medellín?*’ Caretas, April 17, 2008; ‘*Los ‘reyes de la cocaína.’ Seis carteles mexicanos dominan el mapa del negocio*’ Caretas, October, 4, 2007; ‘*Silenciador Mexicano. Asesinato de presunto emisario del cártel de Tijuana confirma que la guerra del narcotráfico charro también se libra en Lima*’ Caretas, October 4, 2007).

List of acronyms

AAPHC-AHMPA	<i>Asociación de Agricultores y Productores de Hoja de Coca del Alto Huallaga, Monzón y Padre Abad:</i> Association of growers and producers of the coca leaf of the Upper Huallaga, Monzón and Padre Abad (Aguaytía).
APCOCAS	<i>Asociación de Productores y Agricultores de Hoja de Coca de la Selva de Puno:</i> Association of producers and growers of coca in the jungle regions in Puno.
APRA	<i>Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana:</i> American Popular Revolutionary Alliance; traditional political party founded by Victor Raúl de la Torre (1895-1979) and currently led by Alan García (president 1985-1990 and 2006-present).
APRODEH	<i>Asociación Pro Derechos Humanos:</i> Peruvian Human Rights Association.
CAPHC	<i>Consejo Andino de Productores de Hoja de Coca:</i> International cocalero movement (including representatives of Colombia, Bolivia and Peru)
CCP	<i>Confederación Campesina del Perú:</i> National Campesino Federation of Peru.
CENACOP	<i>Central Nacional Agropecuaria Cocalera del Perú:</i> A new division of the CONPACCP, concentrated in Monzón and Aucayacu, after the failure of the <i>Junta Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios y Cocaleros</i> (see Chapter 7).
CGTP	<i>Confederación General de Trabajadores del Perú:</i> General Confederation of Workers of Peru.
CONAPA	<i>Coordinadora Nacional de Productores Agrícolas:</i> National Coordinating Body of Agricultural Producers. Organization brought together different regional cocalero federations from 1998-2001.
CONPACCP	<i>Confederación Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios de las Cuencas Cocaleras de Perú:</i> National Confederation of Agricultural Producers of Peruvian Coca Regions (see Chapter 5).
CORAH	<i>Control y Reducción del Cultivo de la Coca en el Alto Huallaga:</i> Special Project for the Control and Eradication of Coca in the Upper Huallaga. Agency in charge of the eradication of the coca fields within Law 22095 (see Chapter 2).
CRAH	<i>Comité Regional del Alto Huallaga:</i> Regional Committee of the Upper Huallaga; part of the national Shining Path guerrilla movement.
CVR	<i>Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación:</i> Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2001-2003; see Chapter 2).
DEA	US Drug Enforcement Agency.
DECAS	<i>Defensa Civil Antisubversiva:</i> Self-defense committees to fight Shining Path in the Apurímac-Ene River Valley during the internal armed conflict.
DEVIDA	<i>Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo y Vida sin Drogas:</i> National Commission for Development and Drug-Free Living; the Peruvian state institute in charge of the war on drugs.
DIRANDRO	Dirección antidrogas de policía nacional de Perú: Peru's anti-drug police.
DIRCOTE	<i>Dirección contra el Terrorismo:</i> Anti-terrorist police.
DIROES	<i>Dirección de Operaciones Especiales:</i> Police division for special operations.
ENACO	<i>Empresa Nacional de la Coca:</i> state entity charged with the authorization to buy and sell legal coca.
FEPAVRAE	<i>Federación de Productores del Valle del Río Apurímac-Ene:</i> Federation of Agricultural Producers of the Apurímac-Ene River Valley.
FEPACACYL	<i>Federación Provincial de Campesinos de la Convención, Yanatile y Lares:</i> The Provincial Federation of peasants of Convención, Yanatile and Lares.
FONCOMUN	The <i>Fondo de Compensación Municipal</i> (Municipal Reimbursement Fund): An organization that directed transfers from the government to municipalities to support regional development (including projects to install sanitation and electricity).
INEI	<i>Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática.</i>
MAS	<i>Movimiento al Socialismo:</i> Movement toward Socialism. Political movement founded and led by Evo Morales in Bolivia.
MRTA	<i>Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru</i>
PIR	<i>Plan Integral de Reparaciones:</i> Program of Integral Reparations.

PNP	<i>Partido Nacionalista Peruano</i> : Peruvian Nationalist Party headed by Ollanta Humala.
PPD	<i>Plan de Paz y Desarrollo</i> : Plan of Peace and Development.
SIN	<i>Servicio de Inteligencia Nacional</i> ; Peruvian intelligence service (until 2001).
SUTEP	<i>Sindicato Unitario de Trabajadores por la Educación del Perú</i> : National Syndicate of workers in Education.
UMOPAR	<i>Unidad Móvil de Patrullaje Rural</i> : Rural Patrol Mobile Unit.
UNODC	UN Office on Drugs and Crime.
UPP	<i>Unión Por el Perú</i> : Union for Peru. Political movement formed in 1994 by Javier Pérez de Cuéllar.
UPP-PN	<i>Unión Por el Perú- Partido Nacionalista</i> : Union for Peru- Nationalist Party. During the 2006 national elections Ollanta Humala ran under the UPP-PN banner in the national election because his <i>Partido Nacionalista Peruano</i> did not meet the registration deadline.
USAID	US Aid for International Development. Foreign aid organization of the United States government.

General Glossary

<i>acopiador del hoja de coca</i>	<i>lit.</i> coca leaf gatherer.
<i>alcalde~sa</i>	mayor (local/district or regional/province).
<i>alcalde delegado</i>	deputy mayor
<i>arreglo de cuentas</i>	<i>lit.</i> a settling of scores.
<i>arroba</i>	twelve kilos.
<i>autogolpe</i>	Fujimori's "self-coup" on April 5, 1992.
<i>balsa</i>	wooden boat.
<i>balsero</i>	<i>lit.</i> boatman, navigator. <i>Upper Huallaga</i> ; often related with cocaine smuggling on the river.
<i>banderolos</i>	flags with names of different associations that participate in a protest.
<i>barrio</i>	part of town; district of town.
<i>blanco</i>	<i>lit.</i> "white". <i>Latin America</i> ; Spanish descendants.
<i>bruta</i>	coca paste.
<i>burro~a</i>	small-scale (independent) cocaine smuggler.
<i>cadena ronderil</i>	punishment that included the suspect being forced to travel to the different self-defense initiatives of peasants until the suspect confessed and his punishment could be decided.
<i>caldo (de gallina)</i>	rich chicken soup.
<i>camas</i>	small holes for <i>malquis</i> (see below).
<i>campesino de chacra</i>	small-scale peasant.
<i>campo</i>	countryside.
<i>caleta</i>	secret hiding place.
<i>camion cargado</i>	<i>lit.</i> "loaded trucks". <i>Upper Huallaga</i> ; cars loaded with cocaine or chemicals used for cocaine processing.
<i>campesino~a</i>	peasant.
<i>"carnada"</i>	<i>lit.</i> bait, lure. <i>Upper Huallaga (slang)</i> ; term used for the practices of using campesinos as human shields during the armed conflict.
<i>caserio</i>	<i>lit.</i> a human settlement.
<i>caudillo</i>	regional notable.
<i>centro poblado menor</i>	<i>lit.</i> small population center.
<i>chacchar</i>	<i>lit.</i> verb. Chew. <i>Peru</i> ; traditional way of chewing the coca leaf to fight feelings of hunger and thirst while working.
<i>chacra</i>	agricultural fields; farm.
<i>chapa</i>	<i>Peru (slang)</i> ; nickname.
<i>chimba</i>	<i>Upper Huallaga (slang)</i> ; wooden boat.
<i>chimbar</i>	<i>Upper Huallaga (slang)</i> : literally, "to reach the opposite bank of the river by wooden boat" (verb).

<i>cholos</i>	<i>Peru</i> ; term to indicate to dark-skinned people from the Andes, usually used in reference to migrants to the cities. The term generally has a pejorative connotation.
<i>coca cero</i>	lit. “Zero Coca”. In Peru the term was used for the government policies that were aimed at totally eradicating all of the illegal coca in the country.
<i>cocal</i>	<i>Upper Huallaga</i> ; large coca plantation.
“Coca o Muerte. (Venceremos)”	lit. “Coca or Death. (We shall Prevail)”. Slogan used by cocalero movement in Peru proclaiming their rights.
<i>colono</i>	settler, migrant.
<i>colectivo</i>	<i>Upper Huallaga</i> ; shared taxi.
<i>colono</i>	migrant.
<i>comedor popular</i>	community kitchens run by voluntary groups of women.
<i>Comision por la Paz y Desarrollo</i>	lit. “Commission for Peace and Development”. After the <i>Comision de Verdad y Reconciliación</i> these commissions were established in the regions affected by the internal armed conflict to look after the peace and development projects.
<i>compadre</i>	lit. godfather. <i>Peru</i> ; form of address (men).
<i>compañero~a</i>	lit. mate. <i>Peru</i> ; form of address (men-women).
<i>comité de autodefensa</i>	Self-defense committee to fight Shining Path during the internal armed conflict.
<i>comunidad</i>	community.
“Concientizar las mases”	consciousness-raising of the people into the guerrilla’s ideology.
<i>cosechero</i>	harvester (<i>Upper Huallaga</i> often related to the harvest of coca leaf).
<i>costa</i>	lit. coast. <i>Peru</i> ; Lima and adjacent territory.
<i>criollos</i>	lit. Creole. <i>Peru</i> ; syncretic culture of the <i>costa</i> with Spanish, African and Indigenous elements.
<i>Defensor del Pueblo</i>	public prosecutor.
<i>Defensoría del Pueblo</i>	Ombudsman’s Office.
<i>delegado</i>	<i>internal armed conflict</i> ; Guerrilla representative (often community member who wasn’t part of the armed faction of Shining Path). <i>at present</i> ; representative of legal authorities in rural communities.
<i>droga base</i>	unrefined cocaine; cocaine base.
<i>El Adusto</i>	<i>pseudonym</i> ; ‘The strict one’.
<i>El Dorado</i>	lit. Place of Gold. The myth of El Dorado arose during the Spanish colonization of South America, when numerous adventurers entered the Amazon region in search of a “Golden Empire”. More recently, the myth of El Dorado was used to refer to those places in the Amazon where economic opportunities were abundant.
<i>escuelas populares</i>	popular meetings of Shining Path.
<i>esquina de movimiento</i>	Lit. “Corner of Movement”.
<i>etnocaseristas</i>	members of the Nationalist-ethnic Homeland Movement.
<i>fanáticos</i>	<i>Upper Huallaga</i> : Term used for people who had joined Shining Path because they were attracted by its ideology.
<i>firmas</i>	drug trafficking groups.
<i>firmas de narcotraficantes</i>	firms of drug traffickers.
<i>frente de defensa (regionales)</i>	<i>Peru</i> ; regional defense fronts. Organizations of inhabitants often created to advocate for certain regional demands.
<i>fuerza de bases</i>	<i>during protest</i> ; armed campesino groups.
<i>fuerza principal</i>	adjunct forces of Shining Path.
<i>fumones</i>	main military force of Shining Path.
<i>funda</i>	cocaine/crack addicts.
<i>gamonales</i>	large estate.
<i>goma</i>	landlords.
<i>gringo~a</i>	<i>Upper Huallaga</i> ; pseudonym used for cocaine.
“hay de todo”	<i>Latin America</i> ; term used to indicate foreigners. <i>Peru</i> ; frequently used without pejorative connotation. lit. “there are all kinds”; phrase often used for the situation in the Upper Huallaga, i.e. the number and variety of the people involved makes the situation too complex to grasp.

<i>hoja sagrada</i>	<i>lit.</i> “sacred leaf”; term often used to recognize the coca plant as part of the identity and cultural patrimony of Peru’s Andean-Amazon regions.
<i>indio</i>	<i>lit.</i> Indian.
<i>Inkarri</i>	Incan myth of Andean resurrection.
<i>jefe</i>	<i>lit.</i> “boss”. <i>Peru</i> ; form of address authority figures.
<i>jornalero</i>	journeyman or day laborer.
<i>Juez de Paz</i>	<i>Peru</i> ; local judicial authority.
<i>junta vecinal</i>	self-defense groups of villagers in towns.
<i>Kuska</i>	<i>lit.</i> “united or together” (<i>Quechua</i>).
“La Familia”	<i>Upper Huallaga</i> ; term used for remnants of Shining Path.
<i>la mafia</i>	term used for drug trafficking groups.
<i>Ley de Arrepentimiento</i>	Repentance Law (1992-1994).
Mal Abrigo	<i>pseudonym</i> research setting: <i>Peruvian slang</i> ; ‘bad hiding place’.
<i>malqui</i>	coca seedling of approximately two to three months old.
<i>mando military</i>	military leader of Shining Path (often community member who wasn’t part of the armed faction of Shining Path).
<i>mando superior</i>	Regional commander of Shining Path.
<i>mano dura</i>	“iron-fisted” policies.
<i>Marcha de Sacrificio</i>	<i>lit.</i> “March of Sacrifice”; a protest march in which large groups of campesinos walk to the country’s capital to demonstrate.
“mentiras”	<i>lit.</i> “lies”. <i>Peru (slang)</i> ; the term is used to define the system of corruption and limited freedoms established during the Fujimori regime.
<i>merca</i>	<i>Upper Huallaga (slang)</i> ; pseudonym used for cocaine, derived from the word merchandise.
<i>Mesa de Diálogo</i>	dialogue group.
<i>minifunda</i>	small plot of land.
<i>mochilero</i>	<i>Peru (slang)</i> ; small-scale cocaine smuggler. The term is derived from the word <i>mochila</i> (backpack) which refers to the way these people often smuggle, taking small amounts of cocaine hidden in backpacks or handbags.
<i>montañeros</i>	<i>Peru (slang)</i> ; men travelling from Andean communities to buy coca leaves in the jungle, which they then resold in consuming communities.
<i>mototaxista</i>	driver of motorcycle that are used as a taxi.
<i>Movimiento Etnocacerista</i>	Nationalist-ethnic Homeland Movement.
“nadie mata por nada”	<i>lit.</i> “nobody kills for nothing”.
<i>narco</i>	drug trafficker.
<i>narcopueblo</i>	drug village.
<i>narcoestado</i>	drug state.
<i>narcoterroristas</i>	mix of guerrillas and drug traffickers.
<i>narcotráfico</i>	drug traffic.
“pacto de caballeros”	<i>lit.</i> “gentlemen’s agreement”.
<i>pandilla</i>	criminal gang.
<i>pandillero</i>	gang member.
<i>paro</i>	<i>Lit.</i> “stoppage”; protest method in which whole communities, villages and towns were paralyzed as a result of a stoppage of work and services.
<i>pasta básica</i>	coca paste; semi refined brown paste of coca leaves and chemicals.
<i>pastelero</i>	<i>Upper Huallaga</i> ; people involved in the making of coca paste.
<i>patria chica</i>	<i>lit.</i> “little motherland.”
<i>patrón</i>	<i>lit.</i> boss; <i>Upper Huallaga</i> ; boss of local <i>firma</i>
<i>peón</i>	day laborer.
<i>pichicata</i>	<i>Peru (slang)</i> ; term for raw cocaine.
<i>pichicatero</i>	<i>Peru (slang)</i> ; smugglers of small amounts of raw cocaine; name derived from <i>pichicata</i> .
<i>piquetes</i>	<i>Upper Huallaga</i> ; groups of cocaleros who were in charge of preserving tranquility during the protests.
<i>Plan de Paz y Desarrollo</i>	Plan of Peace and Development (Toledo government 2001-2006).

<i>“plata o plomo”</i>	<i>Lit.</i> “silver or lead”. Accept a bribe or take a bullet.
<i>plaza de armas</i>	main square.
<i>“por algo habrá sido”</i>	<i>lit.</i> “there must have been a reason”. <i>Upper Huallaga</i> ; phrase used to indicate that victims of violence must have <i>done</i> something to deserve the punishment.
<i>poza (de maceración)</i>	maceration pit used to make coca paste.
<i>Presidente Gonzalo</i>	<i>Nom de guerre</i> Abimael Guzmán Reinoso, the national leader of Shining Path.
<i>Programa Integral de Reparaciones</i>	Program of Integral Reparations (CVR 2003).
<i>puntos</i>	<i>regionally</i> term used for profits in the illegal drug industry.
<i>químico</i>	<i>lit.</i> “chemists”, <i>regionally</i> ; people involved in the final stage of processing of cocaine.
<i>ratero</i>	<i>Peru (slang)</i> ; term used for petty criminal.
<i>ronda campesina</i>	self-defense initiatives of peasants.
<i>secadora</i>	small shack that was used to dry the coca leaves.
<i>selva</i>	jungle.
<i>selva alta</i>	eastern slopes of the north-eastern Peruvian Andes.
<i>selva baja</i>	Amazon's tropical plains.
<i>selva central</i>	jungle region surrounding Satipo.
<i>selváticos</i>	people with an Amazon origin.
<i>senderista</i>	Shining Path integrant.
<i>Sendero Luminoso</i>	Shining Path.
<i>“señora con cojones”</i>	<i>lit.</i> “woman with balls”.
<i>serranos</i>	<i>lit.</i> highlanders. <i>Peru</i> ; the term is often used to indicate dark-skinned people from the Andes or <i>sierra</i> migrants to the Peruvian jungle. Generally has a pejorative connotation.
<i>sicario</i>	hit man, hired killer or <i>regionally</i> armed guard, bodyguard.
<i>sierra</i>	highlands.
<i>soplón</i>	<i>internal armed conflict</i> ; alleged informer/ enemy of Shining Path).
<i>tambo</i>	<i>currently</i> ; snitch, informant (often related with the cocaine industry).
<i>tawantinsuyo</i>	a small house on <i>chacra</i> .
<i>terrero</i>	the multicolored campesino/Inca flag.
<i>tesorero</i>	<i>nationally</i> : guerrilla forces.
<i>testimonios</i>	<i>lit.</i> treasurer. <i>Upper Huallaga</i> ; man responsible for safeguarding the <i>firma's</i> and cocaine in hiding place.
<i>teniente municipal/</i>	<i>lit.</i> testimonies (in Latin America often related with truth commissions).
<i>teniente gobernador</i>	community administrator.
<i>“Tierra o Muerte”</i>	<i>lit.</i> “Land or Death”. Slogan used by peasant movements in Peru proclaiming their rights.
<i>toco-toco</i>	<i>Upper Huallaga (slang)</i> : helicopter
<i>tombo</i>	<i>Peru (slang)</i> ; policeman.
<i>trabajar la plata</i>	<i>Upper Huallaga (slang)</i> ; invest money in the <i>firma's</i> cocaine trade.
<i>traquetero</i>	large-scale drug trafficker.
<i>tripleo</i>	<i>Upper Huallaga</i> ; picking all leaves individually with the fingernails when the coca plants are about 50 centimeters high.
<i>“Verde Mar”</i>	<i>lit.</i> “Green Sea”; forced eradication operations in the Upper Huallaga in 1979 and 1980.

Appendices

Appendix A: Chronology of the cocaine industry in the Upper Huallaga

	1777
<u>Mal Abrigo</u>	Entrance of Jesuit missionaries
	mid-1880s
<u>Huánuco and Monzón Valley</u>	Laboratories for coca paste and cocaine to supply the world demand for cocaine used for medicines
	1920s
<u>Huánuco and Monzón Valley</u>	Cocaine industry suffered an economic downfall because of a decline in the international market and the large-scale coca cultivators diversified their production and swiftly changed to tea and coffee plantation
	1940
<u>Tingo María- Pucallpa</u>	Construction of <i>Carretera Central</i>
	1945
<u>Upper Huallaga</u>	Increase in the coca cultivated and increase in smuggling groups including <i>pichicateros</i> and <i>montañeros</i>
	1949
<u>Peru</u>	During military dictatorship of Odría (1948-1956) cocaine became illegal and Peru joined international anti-narcotics prohibition programs
	1963-1968
<u>Tingo María- Tarapoto</u>	President Belaúnde: construction of <i>Carretera Marginal</i> and state-led <i>El Dorado</i> development project which guaranteed to support the thousands of recruited <i>colonos</i>
	1964-1965
<u>Fósforo district</u>	<i>Carretera Marginal</i> reaches the villages
	1968-1975
<u>Upper Huallaga</u>	General Juan Alvarez Velasco revolutionizes the countryside from private land ownership into cooperative farming. The result: poverty for the migrant families
	1972
<u>Mal Abrigo</u>	Village recognized as a <i>Caserío</i> - human settlement
	1974
<u>Tingo María</u>	Start coca boom wherein the town became the centre of the rise in the illegal industry
	1975

Peru

All those involved in illegal drug activity, including coca growers and other lower-level operatives, came to be seen as engaging in criminal activity

1975-1976

Upper Huallaga

During the first anti-drug policies of the Morales Bermúdez regime (1975-1980), the cocaleros were encouraged to voluntarily abandon coca cultivation after coca cultivation was criminalized

1978

Peru

Morales regime passed Decree law 22095 proposing the total elimination of coca in Peru.

late-1970s

Upper Huallaga

Spread of coca cultivation and cocaine industry to the Upper Huallaga's rural hamlets and communities, where there was almost no state presence

1979

Upper Huallaga

First forced eradication operation in the Upper Huallaga called "*Verde Mar I*"

1980

Upper Huallaga

Second forced eradication operation called "*Verde Mar II*" followed by violent unrest. The second Belaúnde government (1980-1985) responded to the violence with a law that prohibited ENACO's legal activity in the region

1980-1985

Upper Huallaga

Second Belaúnde government: gradual stop in state-led development projects

early-1980s

Upper Huallaga

Growing influence of Colombians traffickers over the drug trade together with early entrance Shining Path guerrillas

1982

Peru

Law 23505 passed legalizing ENACO activity in the Upper Huallaga, but the law also stated that the registration of 1978 would be binding and no new inscriptions were allowed

mid1980s- late1990s

Upper Huallaga

During the height of the "coca boom" the region became characterized by lawlessness, corruption, and violence. Especially in the rural zones people lived in a "subculture of death" also caused by the internal armed conflict (see appendix b)

late-1980s

Peru

Coca cultivation began to experience some temporary downturns

1992-1993

Peru and Bolivia

Following the breakdown of the Medellín cartel in the wake of Pablo Escobar's death, there was a sharp decline in prices

1995

Peru and Bolivia

Overproduction of coca leaf along with the explosive rise of coca cultivation in Colombia causing the "coca bust"

Upper Huallaga

A fungus called *Fusarium oxysporum* attacked the coca crops, killing a proportion of it

2000

Peru and Bolivia

Beginning of the second "Coca Boom"

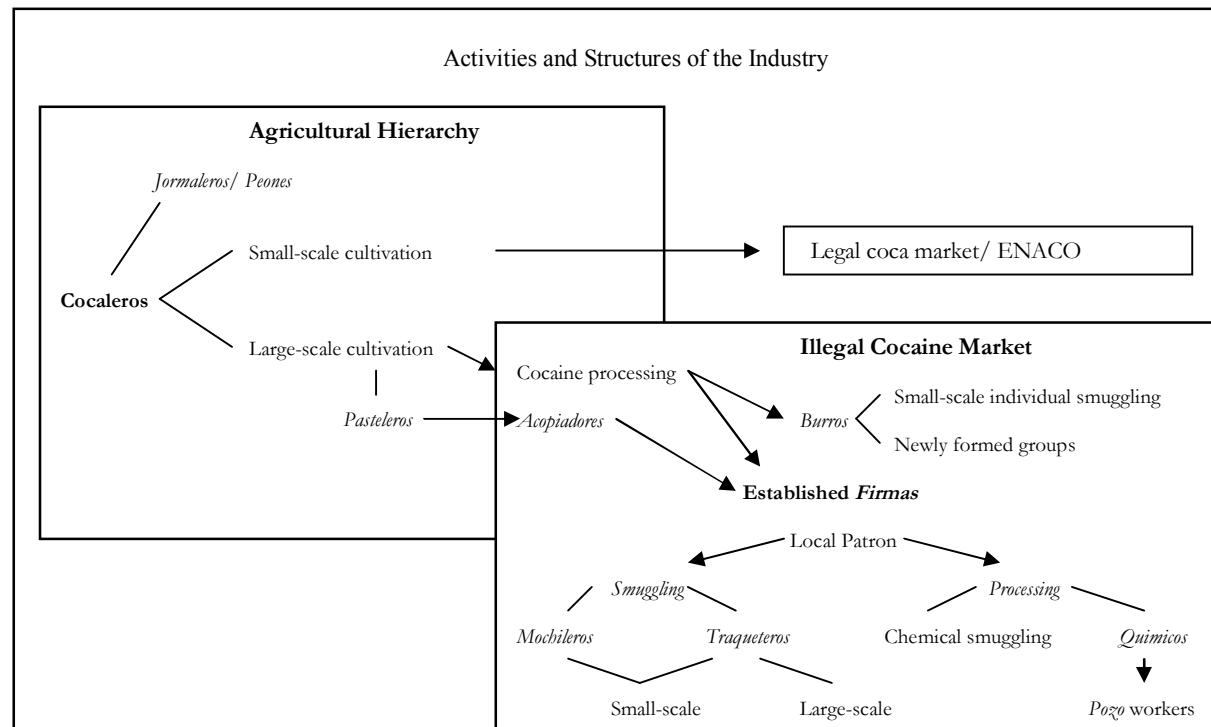
Appendix B: Chronology of the conflict in the Upper Huallaga

	1970-80s
<u>Upper Huallaga</u>	“Coca boom” and mass migration
<u>Tingo María</u>	±1980
	Entrance of first guerrilla militants to launch the <i>Comité Regional del Alto Huallaga</i>
<u>Tingo María</u>	1982
	Growing infiltration of Shining Path in cocalero protests
	Organization of the <i>Comité Zonal Principal</i> on the left bank of the Huallaga River
	Growing involvement in coca/ine trade
<u>Tingo María</u>	1984
	Assassination of several regional authority figures
<u>Upper Huallaga</u>	State of emergency declared over the whole region
<u>Tocache</u>	1984-1986
	Following Tingo María as cocaine stronghold
	Organization of the <i>Comité Zonal Fundamental</i> surrounding Tocache
<u>Fósforo district</u>	1986-1987
	Growing presence of cocaine trade
	Growing presence of Shining Path after different battles between MRTA and Shining Path
<u>Tocache</u>	1987
<u>Upper Huallaga</u>	Battles between MRTA and Shining Path
	Increasing attacks of Shining Path
	State of emergency again declared over the region
<u>Fósforo</u>	Re-entrance of the military in the internal armed conflict
	Growing Shining Path control because of absence military
<u>Uchiza</u>	1989
<u>Upper Huallaga</u>	Shining Path attack on police post, famous example of counter-insurgency failure
	Re-start of anti-drugs policies (García)
<u>Upper Huallaga</u>	early-1990s
	Increasing violence of Shining Path
	Creation of the <i>Comando Político Militar del Frente Huallaga</i> (Fujimori) in the region's towns
	Beginning of coca bust
<u>Lima</u>	1992
<u>Upper Huallaga</u>	Capture Abimael Guzmán
<u>Rural zones</u>	<i>Ley de Arrepentimiento</i> installed in regions controlled by the <i>Frente Huallaga</i>
	Large-scale scorched earth operations
<u>Coca basins</u>	2000-...
	Second coca boom and sporadic attacks of Shining Path groups

Appendix C: The make-up of the coca/cocaine trade in the Fósforo district

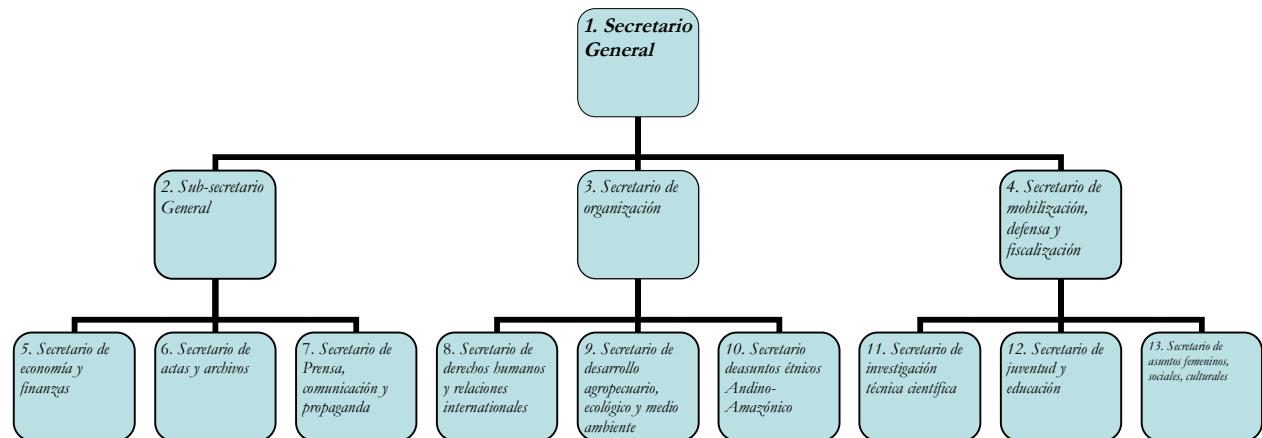
Groups involved in the coca/ine industry

Type of Activity	Type of group and activity
Agricultural	Jornaleros: day laborer, working by daily agreements Peones: journeyman often hired for work that took more than a day Cocaleros: coca cultivating peasants (large-scale and small-scale)
Cocaine Processing	Pasteleros: processing coca <i>pasta</i> (professionals and peasant entrepreneur) Stampers: workers in maceration pits
Gathering/ Smuggling	Mixers: professionals in mixing chemicals for coca <i>pasta</i> or <i>bruta</i> Acopiadores: coca <i>pasta</i> or unrefined cocaine gatherers Burros: small-scale cocaine smugglers (independent or working for <i>firma</i> , road smuggling) Mochileros: small-scale cocaine smugglers (working for <i>firma</i> , road smuggling) Balsero: experienced boatman (river travel) Patron: local drug lord
Smuggling/ processing (<i>firma</i>)	Traqueteros: cocaine smugglers working for <i>firma</i> (small-scale or large-scale) Tesorero: treasurer; man who hides the money Quimicos: ‘chemists’ hired to process cocaine Chemical smugglers: those who transport the chemicals needed for cocaine Sicarios: hired killers or bodyguards Weapon smugglers: those who smuggle weapons in the region
Safety (<i>firma</i>)	

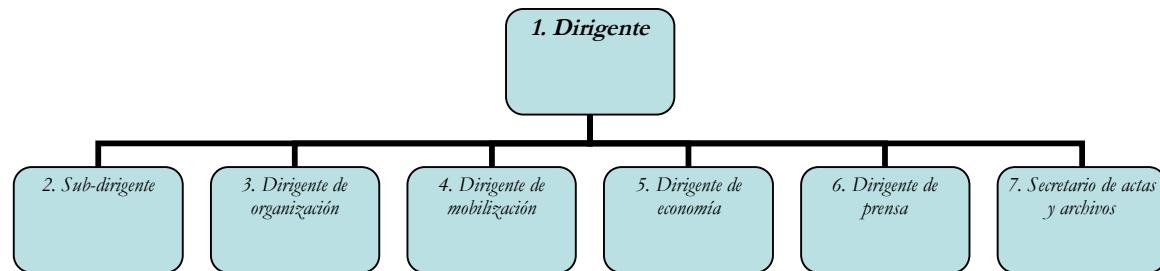


Appendix D: National, regional and local structures of the cocalero movement

CONPACCP Confederación Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios de las Cuencas Cocaleras de Perú

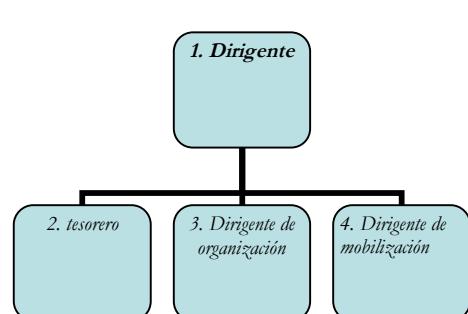


Asociación de Campesinos Cocaleros y Productores Agropecuarios Saúl Guevara Díaz

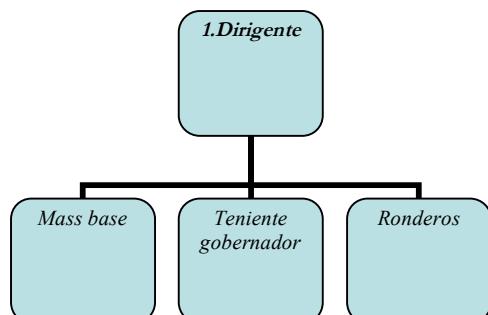


Differences in communities' structures

3 de Diciembre



Esperanza de Frontera



Appendix E: Chronology of the cocalero movement (2000-2007)

		2000
Fósforo	<u>August/ October</u> * Military organization of peasant organization * <i>Asociación de Campesinos Cocaleros y Productores Agropecuarios</i> <i>Saúl Guevara Diaz</i> created * A new forced eradication operation enters Fósforo	
Upper Huallaga	<u>February:</u> Accusations of chemical spraying during eradication <u>September:</u> Mass protests against eradication followed by police repression <u>November:</u> <i>Mesa de Dialogo</i> installed	
National	<u>July 27:</u> Mass protests against the Fujimori regime <u>September:</u> Scandal erupts after broadcasting of the first <i>Vladivideo</i> <u>November, 13:</u> Fujimori flees to Japan <u>November, 16:</u> Paniagua is elected as interim President	
		2001
Fósforo	No specific month mentioned: new forced eradication operation enters the district followed by mass protests against this operation, which end in the disappearance of the CORAH from the district	
Upper Huallaga	<u>October:</u> Last meeting of the <i>Mesa de Dialogo</i>	
Cocalero Basins	<u>August:</u> Cocaleros of the FEPAVRAE organize protests, after which a <i>Mesa de Dialogo</i> is installed	
National	<u>July 28:</u> President Toledo's inauguration	
		2002
Cocalero Basins	<u>September:</u> 35 cocalero leaders meet in Lima, where the idea is formed to create the CONPACCP * Several cocalero leaders meet with Evo Morales (MAS) <u>November:</u> Cocaleros of the FEPAVRAE refuse to vote massively during the regional elections	
National	<u>June 18:</u> Mass protests in Arequipa followed by a declared state of Emergency	
		2003
Cocalero basins	<u>January:</u> CONPACCP officially created during the first national congress in Lima <u>February:</u> Forced eradication re-started in Aguaytía	
Upper Huallaga	<u>February:</u> Cocaleros of the Upper Huallaga assume protest against forced eradication in Aguaytía <u>February 21:</u> Nelson Palomino arrested in Huamanga <u>February 27:</u> Protests turn violent in Tingo María	
National	<u>April:</u> Cocaleros start first <i>Marcha de Sacrificio</i> <u>April 21:</u> Cocaleros arrive in Lima <u>April 22:</u> Meeting between cocalero leaders and representatives of Ministry of Interior, DEVIDA and ENACO, ending in DS. 044-2003	
National	<u>August:</u> The national truth and reconciliation commission presents its final report	

2004

National	<u>February 18-20:</u> Second national Congress of the CONPACCP in Lima
Upper Huallaga	<u>April 21:</u> Start of the second <i>Marcha de Sacrificio</i>
National	<u>April 25:</u> <i>Encuentro Nacional de Cuencas Cocaleras del Perú</i> organized by cocalero leaders from the Monzón, VRAE and Cusco, during which the <i>Junta Nacional de Productores Agropecuarios y cocaleros</i> is presented
National	<u>April 26:</u> Lynching of <i>Alcalde</i> in Ilave
National	<u>April 29:</u> Cocaleros arrive in Lima and organize several protests
National	<u>April 30:</u> Confrontations between the cocaleros and the police, after which the cocaleros are violently removed
National	<u>May 13:</u> <i>Junta</i> leader meet with the Minister of Interior and Agriculture
Upper Huallaga	<u>May 29:</u> Mass protest of cocaleros of Fósforo and Tingo María in response to the government's refusal to negotiate

2005

National	<u>January 1:</u> Antauro Humala assails police station in Andahuaylas
Fósforo	<u>February 10-13:</u> Accusations of illegal fumigations of coca crops in different communities of the district during a police operation directed against the drug industry
Fósforo	<u>February 15:</u> Protest by cocaleros in Tocache against illegal fumigations
Upper Huallaga	<u>February 23:</u> Regional protests in Tingo María and Tocache against fumigation
National	<u>March 14-18:</u> Third National Congress of the CONPACCP in Lima
Upper Huallaga	<u>May 12:</u> Nancy Obregón expelled from the Monzón Valley
Fósforo	<u>May:</u> New forced eradication operation enters the district
Fósforo	<u>May 28:</u> Entrance of CORAH troops in 3 de Diciembre is followed by massive resistance of the cocaleros but the forced eradication continues
Upper Huallaga	<u>June 27- July 7:</u> Cocalero protest against Free Trade Agreement with the United States turn violent
National	<u>August 10-15:</u> International Festival of the Coca Leaf in Pichari, the event that led to the re-unification of the Upper Huallaga and the VRAE
National	<u>September 26-30:</u> Fourth national congress of the CONPACCP on the Quinua with the participation of cocaleros from VRAE, Puno, Selva Central and Tingo María. Nancy Obregón resigns from cargo.

2006

National	<u>April 9:</u> Nancy Obregón elected as national congress member and Elsa Malpartida elected a member of the Andean Congress
National	<u>June 4:</u> Alan García elected as new president of Peru
National	<u>June 27:</u> Nancy Obregón and Elsa Malpartida disturb congress meeting about the Free Trade Agreement
National	<u>June 28:</u> Mass protest against the Free Trade Agreement, headed by Nancy Obregón and Elsa Malpartida
National	<u>July 26:</u> Inauguration Nancy Obregón as congress member
National	<u>August:</u> Fifth national congress of the CONPACCP in Tingo María
Fósforo	<u>August:</u> Visit of Nelson Palomino in Puerto Pizana
Upper Huallaga	<u>September 11:</u> A forced eradication campaign enters Sión, followed by violent repression by the police against resisting cocaleros, women and children
National	<u>September 15:</u> Minister of Interior condemns the police actions in Sión
Fósforo	<u>November 19:</u> Cocalero candidate in local elections does not get elected

2007

Fósforo	<u>March 8:</u> New protest against ongoing forced eradication in Fósforo and Tocache
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Tocache	<u>March 15:</u> Signing of the <i>Acta de Tocache</i> with the Minister of Agriculture
National	<u>September 11-15:</u> The CONPACCP's sixth national congress in Trujillo during which the whole old directorate is changed

Appendix F: Organized violence in the Fósforo district

Type of violence	Type of group and activities
Supposed political	Guerrillas: Shining Path remnants, and recently (2007) a supposed influence of the Colombian FARC (<i>Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia</i>) although it is asserted they are trying to establish a free cocaine cordon to Colombia and no political projects are reported.
Mainly economic	Ladrones: petty criminals. Sicarios: hired killers/ bodyguards often working for <i>Patrones</i> . Bandas: criminal groups of adolescents involved in different crimes, especially in assaults, and other acts of violence. Can also hire their services to others. Pandillas: common criminal groups, more violent as <i>Bandas</i> , involved in assaults, robberies, kidnapping and bank robbery. Shining Path: criminal groups using name of the guerrilla, often involved in the cocaine industry. External cocaine firmas: often identified as more willing to use violence as the established <i>firmas</i> . Colombian Traffickers: organized groups of cocaine traffickers, often indicated as far more violent as the stabled Peruvian <i>firmas</i> . Rondas campesinas: civilian-defense group organized against the increasing violence (with the threat of becoming an uncivil force).
Mainly social	

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Cocaleros

Geweld, drugs en sociale mobilisering in de postconflict Alto Huallaga Vallei, Peru

In 2001, na de val van de Fujimori regering (1990-2000), onderging Peru een volledige postconflict transitie. Na Fujimori's vlucht naar Japan kwamen verschillende wederopbouwprocessen op gang. De civiele maatschappij en verschillende sociale bewegingen kwamen (opnieuw) naar voren en Fujimori's netwerk van corruptie werd onderzocht. Tegelijkertijd werd een nationale waarheidscommissie opgezet om misdrijven te documenteren die gedurende 1980-2000 hadden plaatsgevonden. Lang werd aangenomen dat deze postconflict processen belangrijke voorwaarden zouden scheppen voor een verdieping van democratie en een verbreding van burgerschap, bijvoorbeeld door sociale en institutionele hervormingen en de participatie van voorheen buitengesloten groepen. Hoewel verschillende Latijns-Amerikaanse landen deze wederopbouw processen doormaakten, werd duidelijk dat in veel gevallen de processen niet automatisch leidden tot de integratie van *alle* burgers. Bovendien was de transitie naar democratie vaak geen vreedzame periode maar werden vaak geplaagd door verschillende ervenissen van het voorafgaand conflict, zoals sociale onrust, crimineel geweld en onveiligheid. Deze problemen werden vaak de grondslag van nieuwe burgerclaims aan de staat, naar voren gebracht door de nieuw opgekomen sociale bewegingen.

De thesis van dit boek is dat nationale postconflict processen geen eenvormig effect hebben in de door gewelddadig conflict getroffen regio's van Peru. Kort na het einde van het Peruaanse intern gewapende conflict (1980-2000) werd duidelijk dat het land verdeeld bleef in twee sociaal en economisch verschillende gebieden; het centrum (de hoofdstad Lima en de nabijgelegen kustregio's) en de achterlanden (de hooglanden in het Zuiden en de jungle in het Noorden). In deze studie betoog ik dat, om het wetenschappelijk inzicht in postconflict wederopbouw te vergroten, onderzoek zich moet richten op een analyse van de realiteit van de lokale bevolking. In tegenstelling tot bestaande studies, die zich grotendeels concentreren op nationale wederopbouw processen en regionale mislukkingen, illustreert deze studie de lokale dynamiek van postconflict wederopbouw en verzoening in de Alto Huallaga.

Het veldwerk voor dit onderzoek vond hoofdzakelijk plaats in het Fósforo district, deel van de Alto Huallaga Vallei, één van de meest complexe en dynamische postconflict gebieden in Peru omdat de lokale economie, ook na het einde van het interne gewapende conflict, afhankelijk bleef van de cocaïne-economie. Tijdens Peru's interne gewapende conflict was de Alto Huallaga één van de meest gewelddadige regio's omdat hier verschillende soorten gewapende groepen (guerrilla, drugshandelaren, criminelen) met elkaar in contact kwamen. Tot laat in de jaren 1990 bleef de Alto Huallaga 's werelds belangrijkste coca-producerende regio, een status die de vallei pas verloor aan Colombia, toen in 1995 de prijs van cocabladeren in Peru sterk afnam. Maar deze afname leidde nooit tot een totale beëindiging van coca verbouw in Peru. Toen in 1998 de strijd tegen drugs in Colombia intensifieerde, gingen de prijzen voor coca in Peru opnieuw omhoog. Als resultaat van deze prijsstijging kon Peru zijn positie als één na grootse producent van cocaïne handhaven.

De bestaande wetenschappelijke literatuur over postconflict processen laat de relatie tussen wederopbouwproblemen en de cocaïne-economie doorgaans onverklaard. Dit komt omdat deze studies de sociale verankering van de illegale cocaïne-economie in de betrokken gemeenschappen niet beschrijven. Gebruik makend van lokale verhalen en analyses van de bewoners van de Alto Huallaga Vallei, beoog ik de lezer een meer gedetailleerde verklaring te geven over de problemen en beperkingen van postconflict vredesprocessen in drugsgebieden, en tracht ik een analyse te geven van de relaties tussen een ineffectieve staat, politiek geweld

en criminaliteit in lokale conflict resolutie. Daarom was er in Peru geen betere regio voor een onderzoek naar de lokale dynamiek van postconflict vredesprocessen in afgelegen regio's dan de Alto Huallaga, waar de staatoverwinning over de guerrillabeweging Lichtend Pad niet automatisch leidde tot het einde van het lokale geweld. Bij de analyse van de voortgang van geweld ligt de nadruk op de lokale visies over verschillende soorten geweld, lokale postconflict veranderingen die in de regio plaatsvonden en de relaties tussen gewapende groepen. Om deze relaties te analyseren, concentreert deze studie zich op de vraag hoe geweld het leven van mensen beïnvloedt en hoe de lokale bevolking zich mobiliseert tegen geweld en conflict.

Het was verrassend dat postconflict sociale reconstructie juist in de cocaïne-enclaves van de Alto Huallaga een dynamisch proces werd. In deze *narcopueblos* (drugsdorpen) bleek de verbouw van coca het fundament voor één van de meest zichtbare postconflict sociale bewegingen in Peru. Maar omdat de basis voor deze mobilisatie van duizenden boeren gebaseerd was op de illegale cocaverbouw kreeg de zogenaamde *cocalero* beweging ook meteen te maken met problemen. De opkomst van de *cocalero* beweging was het resultaat van een gecompliceerd proces dat aanspraken op burgerschap inhield, maar tevens gerelateerd was aan de internationale strijd tegen drugs. Deze internationale strijd tegen drugs wordt in Peru nog steeds uitgevoerd door middel van een gemilitariseerde uitroeiing van de cocaplant en ineffectieve alternatieve ontwikkelingsprogramma's. Hierbij negeert deze strijd het belang van coca voor het levensonderhoud van duizenden boeren. Omdat de opkomst van de Peruaanse *cocalero* beweging recentelijk heeft plaatsgevonden, bestaan er nog niet veel wetenschappelijke studies over de beweging. Geen van de verschenen wetenschappelijke studies analyseert de formatie van de beweging als een deel van Peru's lokale en regionale postconflict wederopbouw. Daarom tracht ik een beeld te geven van wat er gebeurt als de nationale staat voorkomt dat de postconflict *cocalero* (cocaboeren) beweging een deel wordt van de Peruaanse civiele maatschappij.

Dit boek is verdeeld in zeven hoofdstukken, die grotendeels bestaan uit empirisch materiaal, af en toe verweven met theoretische en conceptuele analyses. Hoofdstuk 1 geeft eerst de belangrijkste punten aan in het bestaande theoretische debat over de relatie tussen conflict, crimineel geweld en regionale conflict dynamiek. In dit hoofdstuk wordt het belang van de lokale en sociale context in de analyse van geweld en postconflict reconstructie beargumenteerd, inclusief de impact van deze processen op de consolidering van democratie, sociale bewegingen en burgerschap. In het tweede gedeelte van dit hoofdstuk relateer ik de theoretische discussie aan de veldwerksetting door een schets te geven van de verschillende dorpen van het Fósforo district. Hierna wordt de methodologische aanpak en de moeilijkheden met deze empirische onderzoeksmethodes beschreven. Hoofdstuk 2 geeft een overzicht van het interne gewapende conflict, postconflict reconstructie, democratisering en burgerschap in Peru in het algemeen, maar meer nadrukkelijk in de Alto Huallaga. Bovendien wordt het politieke en sociaaleconomische karakter van de Peruaanse staat beschreven en wordt geanalyseerd hoe gebeurtenissen in de Alto Huallaga verschillen van en tegelijkertijd ook te koppelen zijn aan de nationale context.

Hoofdstukken 3 en 4 gaan uit van de notie dat, om een breder inzicht te krijgen van postconflict processen, het belangrijk is om een duidelijk beeld te hebben van wat er in de veldwerksetting gebeurde na het officiële einde van het interne gewapende conflict. Hoofdstuk 3 geeft daarom een gedetailleerd overzicht van het leven in het Fósforo district. Om te verklaren waarom de problemen in de regio niet eenvoudig oplosbaar zijn en zelf verslechterden in de periode na het interne gewapende conflict, geef ik een gedetailleerde analyse van de werking van de lokale coca en cocaïne-economie, die verschillende sociale veranderingen doormaakte tijdens de postconflict periode. In hoofdstuk 3 argumenteer ik dat, in deze *narcopueblos* de cocaïne -economie meer is dan alleen een economisch systeem. Ook

de lokale gemeenschapsbanden en sociale netwerken worden beheerst door de cocaïne - economie, alhoewel deze nog steeds sterk hiërarchisch georganiseerd is. Het verhaal over het leven in deze *narcopueblos* wordt ten eerste verteld vanuit het standpunt van de betrokken lagere rangen in de cocaïne-samenleving. Het beschrijft de motieven, doelen, carrière mogelijkheden en de gevaren van betrokkenheid van deze mensen bij de cocaïne-economie. Het tweede deel van dit hoofdstuk richt zich op degenen die deel uitmaken van de hogere rangen binnen de cocaïne-economie en op hun deelname aan het sociale leven in het district. Over het algemeen wordt aangenomen dat alleen al de aanwezigheid van een illegale - economie leidt tot een ordeverstoring van postconflict vrede. Maar deze algemene aanname kan niet bewezen worden op lokaal niveau, waar de cocaïne - economie een normaal deel van het leven is en dus niet automatisch tot geweld leidt. Integendeel, veranderingen die in de cocaïne - economie plaatsvonden na het intern gewapende conflict kunnen gezien worden als het lokale fundament voor vrede. De manier waarop de cocaïne--economie de lokale en regionale politiek beïnvloedt wordt ook beschreven, evenals hoe de cocaïne - economie het gedrag en beleid van leger en politie in de vallei bepaalt.

Hoofdstuk 4 keert terug naar de conflictperiode en begint met een beschrijving van de ervaringen van de inwoners tijdens het interne gewapende conflict. Gebruik makend van de verhalen die verankerd zijn in de sociale herinnering van de bevolking, beschrijft dit hoofdstuk hoe de bevolking van het Fósforo district leefde onder de guerrilla en het leger. Men moet echter niet vergeten dat Lichtend Pad in de Alto Huallaga op sommige punten erg afweek van de beweging op nationaal niveau en dat deze regionale conflict transformaties serieuze consequenties hadden voor het daaropvolgende lokale postconflict proces. Toen het geweld op nationaal niveau afnam, bleven de strategieën van het leger en politie in de Alto Huallaga mensenrechtenschendingen en geweld tegen de lokale bevolking inhouden, terwijl deze strategieën de hogere rangen van de Lichtend Pad guerrilla ongemoeid lieten. Omdat de staat de regio na het interne gewapende conflict geen speciale aandacht schonk, werden de postconflict processen van wederopbouw en verzoening bovenboden deel van de lokale gewoontes en praktijken, die soms in strijd waren met het nationale beleid en de wet. De afhankelijkheid van de illegale cocaïne-economie industrie en de beslissing van de staat om antidrugs operaties te herstarten motiveerden de lokale bevolking om een organisatie op te zetten. Zij construeerden een gemeenschappelijke *cocalero* identiteit en creëerden lokale *cocalero* associaties. Maar meer dan alleen een organisatie van degenen die betrokken waren bij de verbouw van coca, groeide de associatie uit tot een initiatief van alle inwoners, zelfs degenen die niet direct betrokken bij de verbouw van coca en de cocaïne-economie. Deze lokale *cocalero* associaties maakten al snel deel uit van regionale protesten in de Alto Huallaga, waarbij de inwoners van de regio de staat verzochten om meer insluiting en ruimte voor de *cocaleros* in onderhandelingen over het antidrugsbeleid.

De volgende twee hoofdstukken beschrijven de opkomst en gedeeltelijke ondergang van de Peruaanse *cocalero* beweging in detail. Hoofdstuk 5 beschrijft de vorming van de Peruaanse nationale *cocalero* beweging en verklaart waarom de beweging in deze studie gezien wordt als een postconflict sociaal reconstructie initiatief en hoe juist de *cocaleros* deel gingen uit maken van één van de meest zichtbare sociale bewegingen in Peru. Dit hoofdstuk beschrijft bovenboden hoe de *cocaleros* de collectieve identiteit aanpasten aan verschillende situaties, die onderverdeeld kunnen worden in twee strategieën: Aan de ene kant zien we de pragmatische aanpak die probeert om diverse alternatieve ontwikkelingsprogramma's uitgevoerd te krijgen en aan de andere kant een discours dat de traditie van het coca blad in Peru gebruikt om verdergaande eisen te stellen aan de staat, zoals het stopzetten van de uitroeiingprogramma's en de vrije verbouw van coca. Bij beide strategieën maakten de *cocaleros* gebruik van verschillende protestmethodes, zoals protestmarsen naar Lima maar ook andere, meer agressieve methodes. De meest gebruikte methodes verschilden in periodes

maar waren sterk afhankelijk van de reactie van de staat. Hoofdstuk 5 beschrijft ook hoe de *cocaleros* relaties probeerden aan te gaan met bredere sectoren van de civiele maatschappij en hoe zij probeerden legale onderhandelaars met de staat te worden. Tegelijkertijd geeft dit hoofdstuk ook een beeld van de specifieke problemen die de *cocalero* beweging op haar weg vindt, zowel intern in de verschillende coca producerende gebieden, als extern (relaties met de staat en media e.g.). In dit gedeelte worden ook de meer obscure banden en relaties met de guerrilla en drugshandelaren beschreven, en de stigma's die worden gebruikt door de staat en staatinstituten om te voorkomen dat de beweging kan integreren in de burgermaatschappij.

In hoofdstuk 6 verplaatst het verhaal zich weer naar de Alto Huallaga. Door verschillende interne ruzies in de nationale beweging en de opkomst van andere regionale *cocalero* bewegingen was hier de meerderheid van leden van de *cocalero* beweging gevestigd. Ook vonden in de Alto Huallaga belangrijke veranderingen plaats in deze periode. Toen een nieuwe uitroeiingscampagne van het coca gewas het Fósforo district bereikte, resulterde dit in afnemende bereidheid van de bevolking om te participeren in de protesten. Deze antidrugs operaties, die in de eerste plaats geleid hadden tot de organisatie van de *cocalero* beweging, leidden nu tot een demoralisering onder de leden en dit had uiteindelijk tot gevolg dat een groot deel van de inwoners weigerde langer deel uit te maken van de *cocalero* beweging. Op hetzelfde moment namen de *cocalero* leiders van de Alto Huallaga en het Fósforo district deel aan de nationale en internationale verkiezingen. Maar de groeiende teleurstelling onder de leden leidde tot een vertrouwensbreuk tussen de oude leiders en hun leden, die uiteindelijk het ontslag van alle oude leiders uit de beweging tot gevolg had.

Hoofdstuk 7 handelt over de lokale gevolgen van de uitroeiingscampagne van coca in het Fósforo district. Na de eerste uitroeiingscampagne begon een ander soort geweld, vaak gerelateerd aan de cocaïne-economie, de inwoners van het district te bedreigen. Toen de inwoners geen steun ontvingen van het leger en de politie om dit geweld tegen te gaan organiseerden zij hun eigen zelfverdedigingcomité. Maar dit initiatief van de bevolking passeerde de scheidslijn tussen legaliteit en illegaliteit op sommige momenten omdat het antwoord van de inwoners op het groeiende geweld steeds meer geweld opriep en zelfs probeerde de lokale besluitvorming te domineren. Op hetzelfde moment was er op het nationale niveau, mede op grond van deze nieuwe vormen van geweld, een groeiende bezorgdheid ontstaan over de terugkeer van Lichtend Pad in de coca producerende gebieden van Peru. In dit hoofdstuk wordt een gedetailleerde beschrijving gegeven van de lokale gedachte over deze vermeende terugkeer, omdat de lokale protagonisten een totaal andere verklaring hebben van het groeiende geweld in het district.

Hoofdstuk 8 besluit met de conclusie dat de beschreven problemen niet beperkt zijn tot de Alto Huallaga Valle, maar dat ze verschillende regionale postconflict moeilijkheden in Peru weerspiegelen. Zoals ik aantoonde in de verschillende hoofdstukken bestaat er een complex verband tussen de volgende factoren: de mislukking van nationale postconflict wederopbouw processen, een zwak en eenzijdige regionaal fundament voor levensonderhoud geworteld in een illegaal product, de onzekere vooruitzichten van sociale bewegingen, en het voortgaande geweld en conflict in Peru's cocaïne enclaves. Ik betoog dat Peru's cocaïne enclaves speciale aandacht nodig hebben in een postconflict periode; wanneer er geen speciale aandacht is voor deze gebieden krijgen postconflict processen een lokaal karakter waardoor de specifieke problemen in deze regio's onopgelost blijven. Bovendien argumenteer ik dat postconflict beleid niet goed samen gaat met een hernieuwd antidrugsbeleid dat, zoals is aangetoond in de Alto Huallaga, alleen leidt tot een nieuwe vervreemding van de *cocaleros* van de nationale regering, waardoor andere gewapende groepen hun invloed en aanwezigheid in deze regio's kunnen vergroten.

Curriculum Vitae

Mirella Elisabeth Henriette van Dun was born on October 18, 1976 in Geldrop, the Netherlands. After her secondary school education she studied Cultural Anthropology at Utrecht University and received her MA degree in 2000. From 2003 to 2008 she did PhD research at Utrecht University and carried out fieldwork in Peru on five occasions between 2003 and 2007.

