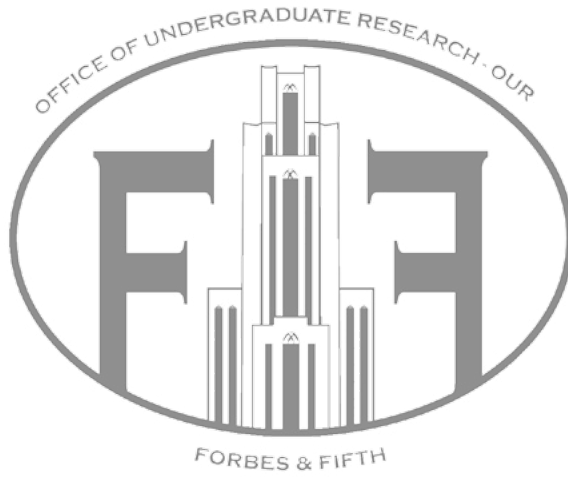






## **Evelyn F. McCoy**

Evelyn F. McCoy is a graduating senior at the University of Pittsburgh with a B.A. in Spanish and Music as well as a Certificate in Latin American Studies. She has studied abroad and conducted research in human rights issues both in Rosario, Argentina and Lima, Peru, especially focusing on victim's testimonies after periods of violence. While not researching and adventuring in Latin America, Evelyn devotes her time to playing piano, directing the University Handbell Ensemble, and singing in the Women's Choral Ensemble on campus.



## Ya ves, soy Asháninka: Terrorism and Testimony in Perú

### Introduction

During the late twentieth century, following severe eras of violence, either military or terrorist-provoked, in nearly every Latin American country we observe the emergence of a new genre to recount history: testimony, both in the literary and political arena. With the publication of Quiche Mayan woman Rigoberta Menchú's testimony, *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia*, accounted by Venezuelan-born anthropologist Elizabeth Burgos in 1983, the testimony genre became recognized in the international literary sphere. However, this testimony also incited vicious academic debates between herself and David Stoll who traveled to Guatemala himself in order to investigate the errors, partialities, and exaggerations of Rigoberta Menchú's testimony. In publishing his book, *Rigoberta Menchú and the Story of All Poor Guatemalans*, Stoll was attacked for his critiques to her testimony. Experts in the field of Guatemalan and indigenous studies became interested in her testimony as it spread worldwide, bringing attention to the horrific human rights violations in Guatemala. With her story, and the praise received by John Beverley, the testimony genre was recognized as a literary genre.\* This literary genre and the various debates that surround it will prove to be very important in our discussion and analysis of public testimonies collected by a body commissioned by the government.

As a result of Menchú and also the first Truth and Reconciliation Commission facilitated in post-apartheid South Africa, the personal narrative became the primary mode of memory construction and formalization. In this space, we witness “memorias prohibidas, indecibles o vergonzantes... o enterradas en huecos y síntomas traumáticos,”<sup>1</sup> “prohibited, unspeakable, or shameful memories... or [memories] buried in empty space and traumatic symptoms.” However, the testimony genre is highly politicized, because “las voces censuradas y prohibidas comenzaron a hacerse oír, pero las voces autoritarias no necesariamente de-

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\* For more information, see Beverley, John. *Testimonio: On the Politics of Truth*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004.

saparecieron del debate público,”<sup>22</sup> “the censured and prohibited voices began to make themselves heard, but the authoritarian voices do not necessarily disappear from public discussion.” We ask ourselves: Is the truth really being revealed in these victims’ testimonies? How can we be sure that the witnesses are not remaining censored and repressed? How does one learn to speak when they have been silenced for so long? This crisis of representation illuminated by the testimony genre has become an especially important theme for countries facing recuperation after periods of violence. In this essay, I intend to analyze the written testimonies collected by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that highlight the particular situation of the Asháninka community through the testimonies’ representation of three types of Asháninka memory: 1) memory of deception, 2) epic memory of warriors, and 3) immemorial memory.

### **The Communist Party of Peru-The Shining Path (PCP-SL)**

The political scenario in Peru before the internal war of 1980-2000 was highly unstable, complicated, and wrought with profound structural issues.

“How does one learn to speak when they have been silenced for so long?”

Sociologist José Carlos Mariátegui in his *Seven*

*Interpretative Essays on Peruvian Reality* (1928) presented a critique of the Spaniard-influenced hierarchal system that dominated the country since colonization, specifically focusing on the conflict of *el indio* and land. Within this issue, Mariátegui emphasized the importance of recognizing *el indio* as an integral part of the Peruvian identity and redistributing land taken from them during colonization. In reaction to Mariátegui’s proposal, political groups emerged such as the United Left, Democratic Christian, Alliance for Progress, Popular Democratic Unity, American Popular Revolutionary Alliance (APRA), the Revolutionary Socialist Party, and the Worker Peasant Student and Popular Front, among others. With the exception of the APRA, which elected President Alan García in 1985, not one of the aforementioned political parties was able to gain significant power. However, one extreme party incited a Marxist-Leninist-Maoist revolution on the country for twenty years that

resulted in thousands of deaths and destruction, making an unforgettable mark in Peruvian and Latin American history: The Communist Party of Peru-The Shining Path (PCP-SL).

The PCP-SL emerged under a fragile Peruvian state and exploited the country's institutional instability, absence of infrastructure, grave national debt, deficient communication and progress between Lima and the rest of Peru, and history of racial discrimination between citizens. On May 17, 1980 in Chuschi, Ayacucho, the PCP-SL made their first attack on the first day of democratic national elections in Peru for more than a decade by burning ballots and voter registrars.<sup>3</sup> In this very attack, we can observe the group's most fundamental characteristics: willingness for violence and destruction in achieving their objectives, indifference towards authority, disinterest towards participating in the previously established Peruvian political system, and furthermore, a carefully planned strategy and timeline. The PCP-SL planned to make their attack in the precise moment when Peru was beginning democratic transition after twelve years of dictatorship.<sup>4</sup> In the midst of this fragile transitional state, the PCP-SL's campaign became even more appealing and convincing when no other parties showed promising options. With their Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology,\* the PCP-SL and its leader Abimael Guzmán propagated the need of the *ultimate revolution and only solution*: a popular war supported by the masses.

The PCP-SL organized itself in military fashion with various committees in six main regions and even more subregions; each subregion was divided into local zones in order to maintain the group's secrecy. It was nearly impossible for a Senderista to recognize another, except the five to nine individuals in his own cell. This secrecy within the group itself contributed to its ultimate success. Additionally, the

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\* For an excellent analysis and understanding of the Marxist-Leninist-Maoist ideology of the PCP-SL, please refer to the following: Chapter 4: La Revolución de los Manuales: La expansión del marxismo-leninismo en las ciencias sociales y la génesis de Sendero Luminoso, pp. 161-180 in Degregori, Carlos Iván, *Qué Difícil es ser Dios: El Partido Comunista del Perú-Sendero Luminoso y el conflicto armado interno en el Perú: 1980-1999*. Lima, IEP, 2011. (Obras Escogidas I; Ideología y Política, 34). Also, refer to *La Escuela Militar*, pp. 67-76 in Gorriti Ellenbogen, Gustavo, *Sendero. Historia de la guerra milenaria en el Perú*. Lima, Editorial Planeta Perú, 2008.

PCP-SL gained support by taking violent control first in isolated areas of the *sierra* and *selva*, and then migrating to larger cities. With this geographical strategy, by the time the Peruvian government started their counterterrorism campaign, the PCP-SL was already very powerful; the devastation was unprecedented. According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR), a final count of 69,280 deaths were shared between the PCP-SL, the Armed Forces, and another active terrorist group during the internal war, the Túpac Amaru Revolutionary Movement (MRTA), causing severe political, social, cultural, and economic deterioration to an already fragile state.

### **National Recuperation**

After the internal war, Peru faced the difficult task of recuperation and reconciliation as well as developing a more promising future towards democracy. Peru entered “los procesos de (re)construcción de identidades individuales y colectivas... que emergen de períodos de violencia y trauma,”<sup>5</sup> “the processes of (re)construction of individual and collective identities... that emerge from periods of violence and trauma.” The country faced the challenge of looking backwards and documenting the horrors of violence. With this question of memory, we observe an evident plurality: “es imposible encontrar una memoria, una vision y una interpretación únicas del pasado, compartidas por toda una sociedad,”<sup>6</sup> “it is impossible to find one memory, one vision, or one interpretation of the past, shared by all of society.” With the construction of these individual and collective memories, Peru had to re-find and re-define their national identity and confront the recurring ethnic and social

“Memory presented itself as an overwhelming task because of its capacity to be affected by traumatic events, differences between its significance in specific cultures ... and furthermore, conflicted location between the past and present.”

divisions that were exacerbated during the war. Memory presented itself as an overwhelming task because of its capacity to be affected by traumatic events, differences between its significance in specific cul-

tures (this is an especially prominent issue in multicultural Peru), and furthermore, conflicted location between the past and present. However, these very conflicting factors augment its crucial role; especially after periods of violence, memory is vital in combating silence, oppression, ethnic discrimination, and the act of forgetting.

As a step towards recuperation, the Transitional Government under Dr. Valentín Panigua formed the Truth Commission on June 4, 2001, through the Supreme Decree N° 065-2001-PCM. Later, Dr. Alejandro Toledo renamed this project on September 4, 2001, through the Supreme Decree N° 101-2001-PCM as the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) (La Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación). The CVR had five principal objectives: 1) To analyze the context of the violence, including their political, social, and cultural conditions within the Peruvian government and society; 2) To contribute to the administration of justice, clarify crimes and human rights violations committed by the terrorist organizations and government agents; 3) To determine location, identification, and individual situation of victims, and if possible, determine the corresponding perpetrators. However, this responsibility does not replace the Judicial Branch of the government; 4) To formulate proposals to provide moral and material reparation to victims and their families; and 5) To recommend reforms as a prevention method so similar experiences are not repeated in the future (La Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación). The conducted CVR research from May 1980 to November 2000 to produce a *Final Report* of 8,000 pages with ten volumes focusing on the following areas of work: 1) National Process of the Violence; 2) Regional Histories; 3) In-depth Studies; 4) Consequences; 5) Mental Health; 6) Patterns of Crime and Human Rights Violations (La Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación). The CVR used testimonies of victims and witnesses as their main information base to analyze the conditions of the past years. Through these testimonies, the Peruvian population fosters the growth of national unity, facing our past errors and promising future, as Salomón Lerner Febres, President of the CVR, in the Preface of the Final Report, comments, “La historia que aquí se cuenta habla de nosotros, de lo que fuimos y de lo que debemos dejar de ser. Esta historia habla de nuestras tareas. Esta historia comienza hoy” (La Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación), “The history that is told here speaks to us, what we were and what we should stop being. This



story speaks to our tasks. This history begins today.”

### Methodology of the CVR

Before entering our corpus of testimonies, we must understand their formats. Investigators of the CVR, with the help of translators, conduct interviews with victims in the country’s affected regions in order to collect information about the internal war and additionally, in order to recuperate the dignity of each victim, their family, and their community. Although these interviews have intentions to help victims’ healing through testimony giving, investigators remain formal in trying to answer the who, what, where, when, and how of the recounts (La Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación 2002, 3). After the interview process, notes taken during the interview are sent to the Center of Information in the CVR’s principal office. There, a concise account of the testimony is written and registered within the office’s archives open for public access. Each registered testimony is stored in a manila folder alongside personal identification documents of the witness (birth date, fingerprint, province, native language, ethnicity, etc.). This folder also includes original notes and the handwritten manuscript from the investigator. In some cases, there are documents that have a drawing of a human figure and require the witness to mark any distinct physical characteristics of the victim as well as indicate articles of clothing the victim was wearing when last seen. The final pages within the manila folder are those of the written testimony. Each testimony follows the subsequent format:

Testimonio N° _____
Elaborado por: _____
Fecha de elaboración: La comunidad Nativa de { _____ }, distrito { _____ }, provincia { _____ }, departamento de { _____ } representada en los señores/señoras nombre de personaje, nombre de personaje... relatan los sucesos ocurridos durante el tiempo de violencia política, entre los años _____ a _____, realizado por integrantes de Sendero Luminoso/Movimiento Revolucionario Túpac Amaru/Las Fuerzas Armadas Peruanas/etc.
NOTAS INTRODUCTORIAS: _____
CONTEXTO Y ANTECEDENTES: _____
SECUENCIAS DE LOS HECHOS: _____
ACCIONES EMPRENDIDAS: _____
SECUELAS Y CONSECUENCIAS DE LOS HECHOS: _____
EXPECTATIVAS Y RECOMENDACIONES: _____

Although the majority of written testimonies follow the aforementioned format, many are missing basic details like the date of interview and investigator's name. Additionally, many written testimonies demonstrate spelling errors, grammatical mistakes, and unclear punctuation between quotes and non-quotes. These characteristics of our testimony corpus indicate the absence of a strong and consistent codification system used by CVR investigators that run the risk of misrepresentation of information in official government sanctioned public archives.

Although this essay will analyze only the written testimonies of the CVR that belong to members of the Asháninka community, totaling 72, it is pertinent to recognize the 223 hours (divided into eleven discs: Disco\_0910 to Disco\_0920) of audio testimonies collected by the CVR. Each audio testimony has a duration of between one and a half to three hours, thus intrinsically, we conclude the audio testimonies to be more indicative, and elaborative on the witness' story, not to mention that these audio files are unprocessed (raw material) while the written testimonies are those written and sanctioned by the CVR and should be understood as reports, and therefore, summaries. In a standard audio testimony, we observe the following format of questions:

Español (Temas)	English (Themes)
La comunidad antes/la comunidad después de vino Sendero Luminoso - ¿Cómo vivían? - ¿Cómo se organizaban? - ¿Quién dirigía la comunidad? - ¿Cómo y quién resolvía los problemas de la comunidad? - La brujería - Costumbres de la comunidad - La presencia de extranjeros	The community before/the community after The Shining Path came - How did they live? - How were they organized? - Who led the community? - How and who resolved the community's problems? - Witchcraft - Traditions of the community - The presence of foreigners
Nivel de educación del testigo	Informant's level of education
El escape para el monte	Escaping for the mountain

FORBES & FIFTH

<p>El desplazamiento</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- La vida en el monte</li> <li>- ¿Cómo funcionaban?</li> <li>- ¿Cómo sentían allá?</li> </ul>	<p>Displacement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Life in the mountain</li> <li>- How did they organize and function?</li> <li>- How did they feel there?</li> </ul>
<p>Las autoridades, los commandos, y los mandos</p>	<p>Authorities, commanders, and officers</p>
<p>Los militares y las relaciones entre los Asháninka y ellos</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Había violaciones sexuales a las mujeres Asháninka de los militares?</li> <li>- ¿Había confianza entre ustedes y los militares?</li> </ul>	<p>The military and its relationship with the Asháninka</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Were there sexual violations of Asháninka women by military personnel?</li> <li>- Was there trust between the Asháninka and the military?</li> </ul>
<p>Los ronderos, los comités de autodefensa</p>	<p>Rounds, committees of auto-defense</p>
<p>Los niños</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Cómo reaccionaban los niños a la guerra?</li> <li>- ¿Qué sabían ellos?</li> </ul>	<p>Children</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How did they react to the war?</li> <li>- What did they know?</li> </ul>
<p>Presidente Fujimori</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Qué piensa de él?</li> </ul>	<p>President Fujimori</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What did you think of him?</li> </ul>
<p>La CVR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ¿Qué quiere de la CVR?</li> <li>- ¿Cómo puede ayudarle la CVR?</li> <li>- ¿Qué quiere para la comunidad?</li> <li>- ¿Cómo podemos lograr la recuperación?</li> </ul>	<p>The CVR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What do you want from the CVR?</li> <li>- How can the CVR help you?</li> <li>- What do you want for your community?</li> <li>- How can we achieve recuperation?</li> </ul>

Additionally, in the audio testimonies, we can hear the interaction between three pertinent actors: investigator, witness, and translator. Elizabeth Jelin comments, “La discusión sobre la memoria raras veces puede ser hecha desde afuera, sin comprometer a quien lo hace, sin incorporar la subjetividad del/a investigador/a, su propia excelencia, sus creencias y emociones,”<sup>7</sup> “The discussion of memory rarely can be done from the outside, without compromising to whom it is done, without incorporating the subjectivity of the investigator, their own excellence, beliefs, and emotions.” While in the written testimonies it is not clear which actor (the investigator or the witness) is speaking, in the recorded audio testimonies, we can literally hear the difference between the voices.

Within the audio testimonies, we can also hear the silences, resistances, and process of memory, and forgetting, of each victim. When we analyze memory, this act of forgetting carries the same importance as remembering. In listening to the audio testimonies, we heighten our awareness of the information in the written testimonies. While we observe the process of remembering, telling, and translating in the audio recordings, the written testimonies are the final project, and in this sense, carry the possibility to dehumanize the victims giving these testimonies. These written testimonies take the personal voice and translate into a report of a few pages that does not provide justice to the testimony of the victim. In the following two examples, we can see a side by side comparison of an excerpt from an audio testimony vs. a written testimony.

	Audio Testimony	Written Testimony
Spanish	<p><b>Investigadora:</b> Y la comunidad que tú me decías en que allá ustedes llegaron y se quemaron todo y no había nada, qué comunidad era esa?</p> <p><b>Testigo:</b> Ahh, mmm, como te diría como era chico no sabía qué comunidad es, qué comunidad es... [silencio] no sabía, no sabía.</p> <p><b>Investigadora:</b> Mmhmm.</p> <p><b>Testigo:</b> Si esté más grande,</p>	<p>Aparece Sendero Luminoso primero de manera pacífica a inicios de 1990, diciéndonos que luchaban por nosotros y que por lo mismo debíamos entregarnos a sus causa, que ya estaban cerca de tomar el poder. Algunos de nosotros creímos en las palabras de los subversivos pero cuando ya empezaron a</p>

<p>así te puedo decir de todo, de todo qué he sabido yo.</p> <p><b>Investigadora:</b> Ahá, pero tú te acuerdas, o sea, ese tiempo en que estuviste que escapaste de Sendero en el monte y que estuviste andando con tu familia y pescando y comiendo sin sal, tú recuerdas cómo te sentías en ese entonces?</p> <p><b>Testigo:</b> Ahá [silencio] Sí, pero, mm, nada pes, y decías sí había eso [silencio] alguno pero ah como está quería saber dónde había sal, pero así era la gente sí.</p> <p><b>Investigadora:</b> Mmhmm, pero tú en este instante, tú extrañabas, extrañabas a alguien cuando estabas así comiendo sal cuando estabas escapando, cómo te sentías en ese entonces?</p> <p><b>Testigo:</b> Nada, nada. [silencio] Hm, nada ese ese, como dices, nada pes, no había sal, no había sal, nada.</p> <p><b>Investigadora:</b> ¿Qué pensabas tú en ese? ¿Qué pensabas entonces? ¿Qué pensabas? ¿Por qué había ocurrido ese que les habían llevado?</p> <p><b>Testigo:</b> Como te digo, yo era chico allá, yo no tenía pensamiento para pensarme.</p> <p><b>Investigadora:</b> Ahá.</p>	<p>llevarse a la fuerza a nuestros hermanos y asesinar nos dimos cuenta de la verdadera intención de ellos. Pero fue demasiado tarde, los terroristas empezaron a llevarse a nuestros familiares, muchas veces nuestros propias familias estaban concientizadas por estos terroristas. Nos llegamos a matar entre nosotros mismos, eso fue muy triste.</p>
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English	<p><b>Investigator:</b> And the community that you are telling me in which there you arrived and everything was burned and there was nothing, what kind of community was it?</p> <p><b>Witness:</b> Ahh, mmm, like I told you I did not know what kind of community it is, what kind of community it is... [silence] I did not know, I did not know.</p> <p><b>Investigator:</b> Mmhmm.</p> <p><b>Witness:</b> If I was older, then I would be able to tell you everything, everything that I have known.</p> <p><b>Investigator:</b> Ahá, but do you remember, o rather, in this time in which you were there and escaped from The Shining Path and were eating without salt, do you remember how you felt in this then?</p> <p><b>Witness:</b> Ahá [silence] Yes, but, mm, well nothing, and you said if there was this [silence] something but ah like I want to know where there was salt, but the people were like that.</p> <p><b>Investigator:</b> Mmhmm, but do you in this instance, did you miss, miss someone when you were there eating salt when you were escaping, how did you feel in that then</p>	<p>The Shining Path first appeared in a peaceful manner in the beginning of 1990, telling us that they fought for us and that therefore we should surrender ourselves to their cause, that they were already close to taking power. Some of us believed in the subversive's words but when forcibly take our brothers and assassinate them we realized what was their true intention. But it was too late, the terrorists began to take our family members, many times our own families were 'made aware' by these terrorists. We began to kill between ourselves, this was very sad.</p>
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	<p><b>Witness:</b> Nothing, nothing. [silence] Hm, nothing in that that, like you say, well nothing, there was no salt, there was no salt, nothing.</p> <p><b>Investigator:</b> What did you think about this? What did you think then? What did you think? Why had this happened that they took you?</p> <p><b>Witness:</b> Like I am telling you, I was a boy there, I did not have thoughts to think.</p> <p><b>Investigator:</b> Aha.</p>	
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Pero fue demasiado tarde, los terroristas empezaron a llevarse a nuestros familiares, muchas veces nuestros propias familias estaban concientizadas por estos terroristas. Nos llegamos a matar entre nosotros mismos, eso fue muy triste.

Obviously, in just these two examples, we can observe the profound difference between the emotion and information presented in an audio testimony versus the summarized, more report-like quality presented in the written testimony. This investigation will prefer the audio recordings for their capacity to transmit the story of each victim in a ‘more truthful’ manner. However, in the name of time restraints and analytical quality, this essay will only review the written testimonies. Thus, it is necessary for the reader to understand these implications of testimony, whether written or oral, and also consider that these written testimonies are officialized accounts by a Peruvian government institution; although we cannot quantify this influence, we must be conscious of its presence.

**The Asháninka Community**

This investigation will only focus on the testimony corpus that represents the Asháninka community. The ethnic group Asháninka constitutes the largest autonomous community of the Peruvian Amazon with a population of 51,063.<sup>8</sup> They live in homes with *chacra*, plots of cultivated terrain to sustain the nuclear family that form the most basic

social and economic institution of the community, along Rivers Ene, Tambo, Apurímac, Urubamba, and Perené in departments Junín, Loreto, Pasco, Huánuco, Ucayali, and Cusco. The Asháninka community demonstrates its own rhythm, mythical beliefs, agriculture, tradition, and social and political system, all of which accommodate changes in nature.

The Asháninka's economy is agricultural<sup>9</sup> and survives off hunting, fishing, and the farming of yucca, banana, peanuts, sweet potato, and sugar cane.<sup>10</sup> After Franciscan colonization, the community began to cultivate other products such as coffee, cocoa bean, and rice. With this economic dependence on land, it is not uncommon for the Asháninka

“Thus, it is necessary for the reader to understand these implications of testimony, whether written and oral, and also consider that these written testimonies are officialized accounts by a Peruvian government institution; although we cannot quantify this influence, we must be conscious of its presence.”

to move their *chacra* once land becomes infertile. The Asháninka may also move geographically because of social and religious-spiritual reasons. For example, with the death of a family member, the community will leave the land, believing it sacred, and start anew in another area.<sup>11</sup> Asháninka society also organizes itself to gender roles. Typically, according to anthropologist Enrique Carlos Rojas Zolezzi, the male gender controls the systems of production upon which women are dependent for domestic life. Thus, Asháninka women find themselves in a dependent and subordinate position in receiving materials to fulfill their duties, which traditionally include sewing, cooking, and carving utensils or other household items.<sup>12</sup>

Since colonization and evangelization, the Asháninka have had turbulent relations with foreigners (*los blancos*) to their community, including Spaniards, Franciscans, Peruvians, or *Colonos*. These *colonos*, the group with which the Asháninka have had the most conflict, is comprised of migrants from the Ayacucho region that moved to the Amazon in search of economic benefits; many were members of the PCP-SL. When the Franciscans invaded in the seventeenth century, the com-



munity suffered their first land invasion.<sup>13</sup> This land conflict has been a recurrent issue within the Asháninka community because they lack proper citizenship and property documentation, permitting themselves to be territorially and economically exploited by international companies such as the British-owned Peruvian Corporation with the guano industry. It was not until Juan Velasco Alvarado's presidency in 1974 that the Peruvian government made its first step towards recognizing the Amazonian community and their land rights with the *Ley de Comunidades Nativas de Promoción Agropeuaria de las Regiones de Selva y Ceja de Selva (D.L. 20653)*.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, this law was ineffective and many Amazonian communities remain without officialized papers even today.

The Asháninka community began their involvement within the PCP-SL in 1986 when the group arrived in search of financing their campaign through cocaine crops, once again presenting the Asháninka with land invasion.<sup>15</sup> In no time, the Amazon became the meeting point of four opposing groups: the PCP-SL, MRTA, the Sinchis (a counter-insurgent police force sent by the Peruvian government to combat the two terrorist groups), and the Asháninka rounds (an Asháninka military force created to combat the terrorist groups), thus placing the Asháninka in the middle of four flames and increasing violence in the area.<sup>16</sup> The PCP-SL's activity with the Asháninka can be divided into three stages. In the first stage, the PCP-SL started their armed fight with attacks against the native communities, religious missionaries, and internationally funded projects for developing infrastructure in the Amazon. In the second stage, the PCP-SL founded 'popular schools' in order to indoctrinate the youth to support the revolution. In the third stage of the PCP-SL strategy, the platform organized masses' support to achieve their ultimate Marxist-Leninist-Maoist revolution the way Guzmán intended.

As observed in Asháninka history, the people of the community are born warriors and have always defended their territory and community in the face of danger and invasion; the era of terrorism propagated by the PCP-SL was no exception.<sup>17</sup> Two specific events incited direct confrontation between the Asháninka and the terrorist groups. The first was the assassination of Alejandro Calderón, the president of the Apaty-awake Nampitsi Asháninka (ANAP), an indigenous federation of fifty-two native communities in Pichis.<sup>18</sup> In reaction, the community formed

the Asháninka Military on December 26, with the support of AIDSESP (Asociación Interétnica de Desarrollo de la Selva Peruana). The second event was when the PCP-SL took control of the capital of district Puerto Prado and forced two integral NGOs to leave the area: the CAAAP (Centro Amazónico de Antropología y Aplicación Práctica) and Save the Children.

The Asháninka Military, also called the 'Rounds' or the 'Committees of Auto-Defense,' organized itself according to different geographical zones of the community, with the objective of defending the community. The Asháninka Military formed a part of not only each Asháninka community's defense initiatives, but also the native federations such as CECONSEC (Central de Comunidades Nativas de la Selva Central del Perú) and the FECONACA (Federación de Comunidades Nativas Campa Asháninka), and additionally the Peruvian state and its counterinsurgent strategy, which supported the Asháninka Military in weaponry.<sup>19</sup> President Fujimore was especially known for working with the counterterrorism efforts in the Amazon, helping to fulfill regular tasks such as harvesting for sustenance and patrolling the area twenty-four hours a day to control who could and could not enter the community.<sup>20</sup> The Asháninka attribute the survival of their community primarily to the efforts of the Asháninka Military.

In the era of terrorism, the Asháninka community suffered various repercussions such as destruction of infrastructure and severe territorial displacement that affected 10,000 Asháninka overall, and forced 3,844 to move into five nuclear populations: Puerto Ocopa, Poyeni, Cutivireni, Beatnia, and Valle Esmeralda.<sup>21</sup> With respect to their culture, the fabric of the Asháninka society was gravely affected: families were separated or killed leaving a numerous infant population as orphans, gender roles drastically changed and social structure was permanently altered. The community also suffered severe emotional, mental, and psychological effects as well as physical effects.<sup>22</sup> Admittedly, the era of terrorism frustrated already existing problems within the community, such as displacement, territory conflicts, and racial discrimination between *los blancos* and Amazonian natives, and exploitation of land and native labor force. Thus, when the Peruvian state created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (CVR) to restore the memory, recognize violations of human rights committed by the terrorist group and the armed

forces, and conduct various investigations in the most isolated and affected areas of the Amazon, the Asháninka reacted by not entirely understanding the CVR's purpose. For the Asháninka, life has always been this way, and the era of terrorism was no exception: Why in this moment is the Peruvian state now showing sympathy and offering recuperation towards the Asháninka? Because the rest of the country was affected as well? This history became much longer than the Peruvian government anticipated when conducting the investigations of the CVR.

### **The Asháninka Concept of Memory**

An analysis of the Asháninka and their testimonies requires a basic understanding of their memory conception. Villapolo comments on an important characteristic of Asháninka thought, “Durante los años de violencia, la gente quería olvidar los estragos de la guerra interna, decían <<*recordar es volver a enfermarse*>> (Villapolo y Vásquez 1999),”<sup>23</sup> “During the years of violence, people wanted to forget the ruins of the internal war, they said <<remembering is becoming sick again>>.” The Asháninka community found itself many times unwilling and unable to remember their history. However, there are two principal categories of memory for the community: 1) Public memory and 2) Private memory.

Under the pressure of the CVR and its efforts for national recuperation, the Asháninka were forced to adopt a public memory different from their private memory. In this public memory, they were permitted to leave “la identidad guerrera, útil en tiempos de violencia, y presentándose como no violentos, para acercarse al Estado e insertarse en la sociedad nacional (Handler 1994),”<sup>24</sup> “A warrior identity, useful in times of violence, and present themselves as not violent in order to get closer to the state and insert itself in national society.” With this oversight of the Asháninka's warrior identity, the Asháninka community endangered the preservation of their true identity and the real history of the internal war. For some Asháninka, it became natural to negate and forget the violence, but for others it was not. Thus, a rupture occurred within the community.<sup>25</sup> In forgetting, the community was accepting their own silence within the public sphere; this silence had the objective of making an alliance with the Peruvian state and proving that the community was civilized and deserving to be considered a part of Peru.<sup>26</sup> With this

silence, the Asháninka community became not only victims of violence, but also victims of ignorance in the official Peruvian public sphere.

In the private memory, the pain and frustration of the community is evident. The era of terrorism strengthened a “memory of deception” facing foreigners to the community since colonization. In many testimonies, victims describe how the PCP-SL promised them a better future, property rights, liberty, and economic resources that would help them escape poverty. However, the PCP-SL tricked the Asháninka with their empty promises. This deception came from outside the community as Investigator Leslie Villapolo Herrera comments, “La comunidad construyó una narrativa que acentúa la idea de que ‘lo malo’ vino de afuera (Villapolo y Vásquez 1999),”<sup>27</sup> “The community constructed a narrative that accentuated the idea that ‘the bad’ came from outside.” The Asháninka continually suffered from this external ‘bad’ and formed an epic memory of warriors towards those vindicators that fought against the terrorists, the *Kichónhari* – anyone foreign to the Asháninka community. For example, *los rojos* (the reds – members of the MRTA), *senderistas* (PCP-SL), and *los colonos* and *ayacuchanos*. The vindicators of the Asháninka Military were viewed as the saviors of the community, despite their errors and excesses committed, because “se cometían en defensa propia y persiguiendo un fin superior: liberar a los asháninka del poder del SL,”<sup>28</sup> “They committed them in their own defense and in pursuing a superior end: to liberate the asháninka from the power of the PCP-SL.”

In addition to these two memories of deception and epic warriorism, another form of memory has proven to be especially important with regard to this investigation: “una memoria inmemorable que transmite las tradiciones consagradas, que repite lo que los ancestros hicieron y dijeron, que institucionaliza derechos y costumbres venerables,”<sup>29</sup> “An immemorial memory that transmits the consecrated traditions, that repeats what the ancestors did and said, that institutionalizes rights and venerable customs.” This immemorial memory is transmitted over generations. Within the Asháninka oral history, we observe that “La concepción de ciclos de violencia de relaciona con la idea de que cada generación familiar va a pasar por su propia experiencia de guerra,”<sup>30</sup> “The conception of cycles of violence relate with the idea that every family generation is going to pass through their own war experi-

ence.” In a testimony presented in the work of Villapolo, Nora, an ex-authority communal of fifty years old, tells us, “Ellos decían como los antiguos, nuestros abuelos, contaban que nunca va a acabar la guerra. Claro, puede calmar un rato, pero se levanta otra vez. Eso nos contaba la gente que está allá, estamos entrando en la guerra, vamos a seguir luchando,”<sup>31</sup> “They said like the people, our grandparents, related that the war is never going to end. Of course, it can calm for a short times, but it will rise up again. This is what the people told us that were there, we are entering the war.” In this, we observe how the internal war was not unique for the Asháninka, but rather a war for the current generation. Within this thought process, the Asháninka memory does not belong to the past or the present but rather forms “*una memoria activa, que elabora un <<pasado presente>>*”. Este concepción asume el pasado como producto de la acción humana, lo cual permitiría tomar distancia de la contingencia del presente y del futuro. Esta distancia permite enfocarlos como tiempos abiertos; es decir, disponibles y moldeables,<sup>32</sup> “*An active memory, that elaborates a <<present past>>*”. This conception assumes the past as a product of human action, which permits it to distance itself from the eventuality of the present and future. This distance permits itself to focus as open times, that is, free and malleable.”

Within this immemorial memory, the Asháninka women play a crucial role. It is their responsibility to defend the land and tradition of the Asháninka from invaders.<sup>33</sup> With this role, during and after the internal war, the Asháninka women protected the community using words as their primary tool; their responsibility was not in speaking, but rather keeping silent “y ocultar los hechos a sus hijos para evitarles sufrimiento,”<sup>34</sup> “And hiding the facts from the children, to avoid their suffering.” In silencing themselves, the Asháninka women were protecting their children from the horrors of terrorism. On the contrary, after the war, the Asháninka women assumed the obligation to speak about what happened “para que sus hijos no repitan la historia de engaño,”<sup>35</sup> “So that their children do not repeat the history of deception,” and to “proteger a los hijos de otro engaño en el futuro,”<sup>36</sup> “Protect the children from deceit in the future.” As Villapolo comments, “La transmisión de la memoria sería una herramienta para este fin,”<sup>37</sup> “The transmission of memory will be a tool for this end.” From here emerged the community’s motto: “recordar para no volver a ser engañados,”<sup>38</sup> “To remember in order to

not be deceived again.” The woman’s crucial role in memory served not only to recuperate the community and transmit memory to future generations, but also to maintain private memory against the propagated public memory.

“From here emerged the community’s motto: ‘recordar para no volver a ser engañados,’ ‘To remember in order to not be deceived again.’”