Chapter Two

Cinema, State and National Identity

Section 1: Historical Overview

A survey of the major trends in the history of Peruvian cinema suggests that the relationship between the emergence of the moving image as a popular form, changes on the social and political landscape, and the development of national identity formation in Peru have been complex, contradictory and at odds with developments elsewhere. Many have suggested that the advent of cinema coincided in most parts of the world with the period when modernity was already 'at full throttle . . . a watershed moment in which a series of sweeping changes in technology and culture created distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space'.[1] However, the reality for the majority of Latin American countries was quite different. As Ana M. López points out, it simply is not possible to link the rise of cinema in this region to 'previous large-scale transformations of daily experience resulting from urbanization, industrialization, rationality and the technological transformation of modern life'.[2] Such transformations were only just starting to take place, so that just as cinema, the ultimate expression of cultural modernity, was launched across the world, the positive consequences of modernity in Latin America were 'above all a fantasy and a profound desire'.[3] As a result, the specific historical trajectory and circumstances of cinema in Peru and its impact both as an agent of social change and a reflection of the nation need to be taken into account so as to provide institutional context for the subsequent analyses of individual films. This chapter reviews some of the key developments in Peruvian

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[1] Kern cited by Ben Singer, *Melodrama and Modernity: Early Sensational Cinema and its Contexts* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), p. 19.

[2] López cited by Vivian Schelling, *Through the Kaleidoscope: The Experience of Modernity in Latin America* (London: Verso, 2000), p. 149.

[3] López in Schelling, p. 149.

cinema, considers its relationship with the state, and interrogates its contribution to building and reflecting a sense of national identity.

The arrival of cinema in Peru was warmly welcomed in Lima, in particular by the capital's social elite, who greeted the new technology as the very incarnation of the modernity to which they aspired. The first public screening in Peru took place in the capital city on 2 January 1897, using the Vitascope equipment developed by the acclaimed North American inventor Thomas Edison. It was attended by President of the Republic Nicolás de Piérola and consisted of two hours of rural and urban views. Electric power had to be specially installed and there was musical accompaniment using a phonograph, also a novelty for Peruvian spectators. When the Lumière brothers' French cinematograph invention arrived one month later, audiences were treated to much improved picture quality, wider screen formats and subjects which themselves celebrated movement and technology. The early Peruvian film spectator was affluent and belonged to Lima's aristocratic society, itself significantly modelled upon the European way of life.[4] Moreover, Piérola was inspired in the reconstruction of his capital city by the images of Paris that he saw on screen. For him, the capital of France was an iconic city of modern sophistication with its grand spacious boulevards and fashionable inhabitants that he would attempt to emulate.[5] As for domestic film

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[4] Ricardo Bedoya, *Cien años de cine en el Perú: una historia crítica* (Lima: Universidad de Lima, Fondo de Desarrollo Editorial, 1995), pp. 23-6.

[5] See Peter Elmore, *Los muros invisibles: Lima y la modernidad en la novela del siglo XX* (Lima: Mosca Azul Editores, 1993), a rich account of the development and display of modernity in Lima during the twentieth century. He describes, for example, how the most privileged families of the city enjoyed new public spaces in which to stroll and impress their peers. He draws attention to the attraction of the European way of life to Piérola's regime and records that many of the shops at that time 'exhibían las novedades parisinas añadían atractivo a esos recorridos amables, en los cuales se era espectador y actor al mismo tiempo' (Elmore, p. 16).

production, Piérola's regime (1895-1899) privileged and encouraged the newsreel and documentary forms as modes of expression ideally suited to flaunting the efforts made by the so-called Aristocratic Republic to modernize and expand its capital using funds raised from the export of its sugar, cotton, rubber, wool and silver. Furthermore, many of the early moving images made in Peru coincided with the first aviation flights in the country, with images of Lima taken from the air filling its inhabitants with pride at such an overt display of progress and modernity.

Demographic changes accompanied these technological and economic developments, with the emergence of an urban-industrial society that gave rise to new social groups such as the middle class, the industrial bourgeoisie and the working class. Nevertheless, for some considerable time, the nation continued to be ruled by the aristocratic elite, and participation in political decisions was restricted to the most privileged strata of society. Indeed, by the time that cinema was introduced to the country, still only five per cent of the population had the right to vote. Modernization and political agency had not yet reached the majority of the Peruvian people. Gradually, however, some of the authoritarian values and principles of colonialism were rejected, and gave way to the more positivist and liberal ideas of twentieth-century Europe. From 1900 onward, the middle classes made themselves felt as a political force, often by forming strategic alliances with peasants and factory workers. The complex issue of indigenous rights became increasingly important as interest was sparked in specific Latin American cultural identities, and more populist, nationalist regimes were established which 'sought to initiate a process of change which … democratized the political structures'.[6]

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[6] Jorge Larrain, *Identity and Modernity in Latin America* (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), p. 103.

During the first half of the twentieth century, cinema from the US, Mexico and Europe became increasingly popular with Peruvian audiences, while attempts to create a national film industry were compromised by political tensions and economic constraints. Construction of film exhibition spaces was the first priority, and a small number of companies were established by Peruvian businessmen who were eager to take financial advantage of the commercial opportunities provided by distributing and screening foreign films in Peru. At around the same time, production of documentaries by national film-makers was regularized as these were used as 'fillers' to complement screenings of foreign feature films. Most concentrated narcissistically on celebrating urban Lima society, and many were sponsored by the state to record the grand carnivalesque celebrations held in Lima to commemorate the centenaries of Peruvian Independence in 1921 and the battles of Junín and Ayacucho in 1924. In some of them, President Augusto Leguía (1919-30) was depicted speaking proudly of the growing grandeur and wealth of his country, sharing his vision of long-lasting prosperity thanks to collaboration with foreign capital and technology. As Bedoya explains, early national cinema in Peru found itself 'atado a la ideología e historia oficiales'.[7] Such films ignored the realities of hardship and social exclusion that prevailed throughout the country, especially outside Lima, and sidestepped the tension between nationalism and cosmopolitanism that marked Peruvian culture during the 1920s.[8]

Notwithstanding, these state-sanctioned films served a useful purpose as nation-builders in that they offered uncritical images of people sharing the celebration of a common history and contributed to the imagining of a nation that 'regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail … [was] conceived as a deep, horizontal

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[7] Bedoya, *Cien años de cine en el Perú*, p. 43.

[8] Elmore, p. 11.

comradeship'.[9] As Larrain points out, 'the power of an entertaining spectacle transmitted through images is very useful to create and maintain traditions that boost national feelings'.[10] But despite strong governmental support for the nation's documentary film-makers, the fact remains that as the rest of the world embraced the introduction of sound to the moving image medium, Peruvian film-makers were only just beginning to grapple with the production of the nation's first silent features. Such delay highlighted the real lack of technological resources, ongoing investment and experienced film-makers in a country still struggling with the pressures of US-led industrialization and the complications of social fragmentation. Leguía's approach to modernization was, it turned out, simply to block any radical change that would benefit the lower social classes, and to open the country to further investment by US companies.[11]

In stark contrast with the relationship between government and cinema in the field of documentary, Peru's first fiction films were quietly critical of the regime's national vision and in particular of the impact of Western-style progress on the social majority. They privileged instead the more traditional life experienced by the indigenous and *mestizo* masses living in provincial towns and rural communities, and thus presented a challenge to the very idea of a coherent, stable and homogeneous national identity that was at the heart of the regime's quest for recognition as a modern state. *Camino de la venganza* (Luis Ugarte and Narciso Rada 1922), for example, considered retrospectively to be 'película fundadora' focuses provocatively on the opposition between rural and

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[9] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London: Verso, 1983), p. 7.

[10] Larrain , p. 40.

[11] Orin Starn, Carlos Iván Degregori and Robin Kirk, eds, *The Peru Reader: History, Culture, Politics* (London: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 215-218.

urban life and values, contrasting the supposed innocence of the former with the apparent corruptive forces of the latter.[12] It tells a simple story of cruelty and revenge, depicting the kidnap of a young innocent girl from a highland community by a villainous military captain, who carries her off to the dangers and temptations of the capital city. Conflict is established between a morally idyllic rural life where work on the land alternates with collective gatherings for eating and dancing, and the dangers of Lima, a city replete with threat and temptation.[13] In reality, while Lima was regarded by some as a space of dreams and opportunities in contrast to the impoverished countryside, for others it quickly became a place where poor immigrants from the provinces would be forced to submit to various forms of exploitation and humiliation.[14] Bedoya explains elsewhere that the directors of these gently critical feature films intended the following with regard to their depiction of the Andean way of life in particular:

> … dejar constancia de la rudeza y testarudez del hombre andino, capaz de desafiar todos los obstáculos lingüísticos, sociales y culturales impuestos por la capital, percibida por entonces … como una urbe moderna y en crecimiento, pero también como un lugar propicio para la corrupción y el derrumbe de los valores morales.[15]

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[12] Bedoya, *Cien años de cine en el Perú*, p. 45.

[13] Note that many cultural producers during the 1920s and 1930s were linked to *indigenismo* and opposed Leguía's regime, so it was perhaps to be expected that they focus on the rural and the indigenous dimensions of Peruvian identity. Note that the making of Ugarte and Rada's film in the early 1920s, copies of which no longer exist, coincided with the formal legal recognition of the indigenous population of Peru and the initiation of official discussions on their situation.

[14] Bedoya, *Cien años de cine en el Perú*, pp. 44-5.

[15] Bedoya, *Un cine reencontrado: diccionario ilustrado de las películas Peruanas* (Lima: Universidad de Lima/Fondo de Desarrollo Editorial, 1997b), p. 34.

This symbolic conflict between urban and rural cultural values echoed the political stance of the *indigenista* movement which emerged in Peru during the 1920s, as it did in other Latin American countries with large indigenous communities. This movement, founded on the influential work of political organizer and cultural critic José Carlos Mariátegui, spoke out in favour of a return to indigenous, Andean values and customs, and rejection of the European cultural heritage that had been imposed violently upon the countries of Latin America.[16] While the definitions of these values and customs have been the subject of debate amongst many of those involved in the movement and its successors, its broadly 'anti-modern' stance and its privileging of the indigenous way of life are clear.[17] Moreover, the focus on the tension between urban and rural life was to become a recurrent theme of Peruvian cinema, as in other cultural forms, thereafter. Indeed, the complexities of cultural encounter between different social groups from different parts of Peru with different relationships to the state are investigated in the corpus of films under discussion in this study.

Throughout the 1920s, Leguía's government also actively encouraged the distribution in Peru of films from Hollywood. Audiences of all social backgrounds were thrilled by their stars and technical maturity, and the government considered investment by the US into the cinema business in Peru as a useful model to be replicated in all areas of Peru's economic life. Of course, the overwhelming presence of Hollywood was aided

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[16] Larrain, pp. 98-9.

[17] During this period, a new political party emerged that signalled the entry of the lower and middle-classes into national politics. The ideology of *APRA* (*Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana*), led by Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, was based on anti-imperialism and pan-Latin Americanism and a bringing together of all those who had been marginalized and excluded by the ruling elite. It should be noted, however, that APRA focused more on supporting the urban and coastal working class than the highland indigenous populations foregrounded by Mariátegui, and that Haya and Mariátegui went their separate ways after profound political disagreements in the 1920s.

somewhat by certain economic advantages: amongst other tactics, North American companies were able to offer their films at competitive prices, having already made substantial profit from their own domestic market. As Bedoya reports, the progressive establishment of subsidiary distribution companies in Peru also helped, as did the offer to waive the payment of distribution rights until after screenings had taken place.[18] The market soon became dominated by US films, and at the end of the decade, commercial attention turned to Mexican cinema that had the additional advantage of using the Spanish language, as well as backing from US investors. Such developments further stifled the chances of the serious emergence of a national cinema industry that might explore issues of national concern.

By the 1930s, governments and political leaders worldwide had become acutely aware of cinema's capacity to mobilize the masses as well as to delight the upper classes, and tried to harness it as the ideal medium through which to convey their dominant aims and aspirations. Peru's presidents were not immune to the temptation to appropriate cinema as a way of influencing the thoughts and actions of the nation's citizens. Indeed, in the early 1930s, President Luis M. Sánchez Cerro (1930-33) proposed legislation that supported the creation of a touring cinema school, a sort of 'servicio fílmico móvil cuya finalidad era "incorporar a la masa indígena al proceso nacional"'.[19] Cinema thus became central to the ambitious project of spreading mass education throughout the country and mobilizing an inclusive, albeit 'imagined', sense of national identity formation dictated by the state. The mobile units and their stock of 'instructional' films were to be financed by the taxes received by the censorship board in return for classification of films. However, the project collapsed as audiences paid little attention

[18] Bedoya, *Cien años de cine en el Perú*, p. 48.

[19] *Cien años de cine en el Perú*, p. 68.

to images sent from Lima that bore little relevance to their own lives. Nevertheless, the strictly instrumental and pedagogic approach to the development of a national cinema in Peru was one that would be taken up again a few decades later by the Velasco regime with more memorable results.

The early 1930s saw film activity virtually grind to a halt as the Peruvian economy, utterly dependent upon the export of its raw materials, was devastated by the effects of the Wall Street Crash. Attempts were made to sustain production by a handful of key individuals but these projects were doomed to failure in such unstable circumstances. Later that decade, the production company Amauta Films was established. Named after the journal founded by Mariátegui, who had set up the country's first Socialist Party in 1928, it continues to hold an important place in the history of Peruvian national cinema and influenced the direction this would take in reflecting and shaping a sense of national identity. As the government of the time, led by General Benavides (1933-39), became ever more repressive and intent on aggressive modernization of the country, Amauta Films made feature-length movies that offered a sentimental view of traditional middle and working-class life in the *barrios* of Lima, with 'anécdotas y episodios … modelados por el costumbrismo' that presented a challenge to the sense of nationhood desired by Benavides.[20] These were popular in some areas since they depicted local issues, but competition from the more glamorous fare offered by the US, Italy and Mexico in particular - countries whose film industries were actively supported by their governments - eventually contributed to the demise of the company at the end of the 1930s.

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[20] *Cien años de cine en el Perú*, p. 94.

Apart from a handful of notable exceptions, the few Peruvian films that were made from the 1940s to the 1970s tended to reproduce the conventions of popular European or US movies and were lacking in any distinctive local colour or national sentiment; indigenous communities were almost completely absent from the screen.[21] Films were amateurish and unsophisticated in quality, production was sporadic, and commercial investment was reserved for the distribution and exhibition of foreign films. Many film-makers left Peru, and their films were lost so that no infrastructure was left for their successors, who were forced to start again from scratch. As John King confirms, these years constituted a 'barren period for the development of cinema' in Peru (2000: 200).

Section 2: Crisis and Legislation

Given its turbulent history, it is difficult to disagree with Bedoya's assessment that for cinema in Peru, 'la inestabilidad de la crisis fue la condición habitual y el estado natural en todas y cada una de las etapas de su intermitente existencia'.[22] Certainly, Peru's early filmmakers left no legacy on which to develop a stable future, and the infrastructure and political support required for a national film industry are as absent today as they were at the beginning of the twentieth century. However, one important period appears to have been at odds with this general assessment of events. In the early 1970s, the populist military regime led by General Juan Velasco Alvarado (1968-75) took a longer-term interest in the capacity of cinema production to support its own modernization projects. Whereas in the past such support had been singularly self-serving, instrumental and

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[21] Eight feature-length films were made in Peru during the 1940s, one of which, *Alerta en la frontera* (Kurt Hermann 1941), a documentary about the war with Ecuador, was banned. Only two were made in the 1950s. Exceptional in terms of their portrayal of Peruvian cultural diversity are the remarkable *Kukuli* (Figueroa 1961) and *Jarawi* (Villanueva and Nishiyama 1966), both made under the auspices of the Cuzco Cinema Club and filmed in the Andean highlands.

[22] *Cien años de cine en el Perú*, p. 305.

short-lived, legislation passed in 1972 provided sufficient flexibility and longevity for a range of film-makers with varying ideological approaches to benefit from the scheme and develop a degree of continuity verging on the creation of a stable national film industry.

Velasco's shock seizure of power in 1968 changed the course of Peru's political and economic development, shifting away from traditional right wing pro-business policies to a more radical nationalist framework. Velasco promoted himself as defender of the poor; he redistributed land owned by the agricultural elite, and re-nationalised private oil and mining companies. His political intervention in the development of national cinema complemented his overarching socialist reform programme. According to observations by cinema lawyer José Perla Anaya, Velasco responded positively to appeals for support from businessmen and film-makers who had collaborated on draft amendments to existing legislation.[23] In particular, his regime felt it was time to start using Peruvian images to replace the foreign ones that had dominated national screens since the advent of cinema in Peru. With this in mind, his Minister for Industry, Jiménez de Lucio, urged national producers to create films that 'reflejen la realidad peruana y lleven a todos los rincones del país el mensaje humanista y solidario de la revolución'.[24]

Although the 1972 cinema law was set up as a matter of some urgency, it was by no means an isolated piece of legislation. In fact, it was part of an ambitious government project to intervene in the arena of mass communications intended to stimulate national media production, and to convert it into an educational tool for consolidating national

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[23] José Perla Anaya, *Censura y promoción en el cine* (Lima: Deyco Instituto Peruano de Derecho de las Comunicaciones, 1991), p. 115.

[24] Jiménez de Lucio cited by Bedoya in *Cien años de cine en el Perú*, p. 189.

culture and unity.[25] Furthermore, evidence of a healthy national film industry could be used by the state as official affirmation to potential investors of Peru's technological maturity and modernization, of its acquisition and mastery of technology on a grand scale.[26] In fact, Bedoya contends that the legislation was established primarily as a measure to ensure that national film-makers would use moving image technology to promote the state's radical nationalist programme of social reform both domestically and overseas.[27] In reality, the potential benefits of a national film industry in supporting Velasco's regime politically and economically were so wide-ranging that the supervision and monitoring of its development was placed at the heart of the government, within the Ministry for Industry. This uncomfortably prominent position threatened to leave little room for film-makers to challenge Velasco's social reforms via their films. Moreover, it suggested a lack of clarity regarding a national cultural role for cinema and was arguably at the root of much of the subsequent political confusion and artistic stagnation. Nevertheless, many film-makers were grateful for the financial and political support with which to pursue their art, and they did so enthusiastically.[28] As King states:

> Within a brief period, over a hundred and fifty production companies were set up to provide films […]. More than seven hundred shorts were produced

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[25] Christian Wiener, 'Tan duro de vivir, tan duro de morir: el cine en el Perú de los 1990', in *Changing Reels: Latin American Cinema Against the Odds*, ed. by Rob Rix and Roberto Rodríguez-Saona (Leeds Iberian Papers: University of Leeds, 1997), 17-32 (p.22).

[26] Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), pp. 24-9.

[27] Bedoya, *Cien años de cine en el Perú*, p. 188.

[28] Veteran director Armando Robles Godoy, for example, recalls that the Minister for Industry at that time, Jiménez de Lucio, was a university educated man who appreciated culture and loved cinema: 'Nos agarró afecto y empezamos a trabajar. Y trabajamos mucho'. See Ricardo Bedoya and Isaac León Frías, 'Entrevista con Armando Robles Godoy', *La Gran Ilusión*, 6 (1996), 94-106 (p. 101).

> in a decade and were shown throughout the countryside, the producer recouping his/her investment from box-office receipts. Cineastes could thus gradually afford to invest in equipment and began working in groups. Within a few years, the first features would be made.[29]

To set this all in motion, Law 19327 created a set of incentives which favoured the so-called 'Peruvian cinematic work' (article 4) and placed national identity and ownership at its heart. These incentives included the following points: the film should be made by a national film production company with at least 80% of the capital in the hands of Peruvian investors; the director must be Peruvian or a foreigner resident in Peru; at least 80% of the filming must have been carried out on national territory; the original script and the scriptwriter must be Peruvian; and the language used by the actors must be Castellano, Quechua, Aymara or another Peruvian language.[30] A new administrative organisation, *Coproci* (*Comisión de promoción cinematográfica*), was established to take responsibility for the bureaucracy and decision-making associated with the new legislation. This government-appointed body had the specific task of granting guaranteed screening rights for approved works. As well as nationality, *Coproci* based these all-important decisions on the potentially subjective criteria of artistic or educational value.[31] While their proclaimed aim was to ensure a high degree of objectivity in the certification of Peruvian films, elaborate explanations for controversial decisions were often required. The inevitable subjectivity of any classifying body, especially one that for a long time did not include a representative from the film-making community itself, would become the focus of much debate, and ultimately contributed

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[29] John King, 'Andean Images: Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru', in *Magical Reels: A History of Cinema in Latin America* (London: Verso, 2000), pp. 189-206 (pp. 201-2).

[30] See Perla Anaya, pp. 115-136 and Bedoya, *Cien años de cine en el Perú*, pp. 185-196, for full details of these incentives.

[31] See Perla Anaya, pp. 126-7 for a full explanation of these criteria.

to a loss of confidence in a system that was until 1986 regulated by civil servants unfamiliar with even the basics of cinematic production.[32]

Randal Johnson argues that 'outside of the United States, direct government support of national film industries is the rule rather than the exception'.[33] Protectionist measures in various forms have been a common feature of many so-called 'infant' film industries in Latin America, the general aim of which has been to encourage and boost a field threatened by foreign competition, enabling it to achieve economies of scale before moving to more independent models of operation.[34] However, despite all its supposed benefits, the first Peruvian Cinema Law gradually lost its claim to legitimacy amongst film-makers, exhibitors and viewers, the very people it was set up to serve. Directors ceased to trust the decisions made regarding guaranteed screenings, and protest groups challenged the perceived rigid bureaucracy of *Coproci*. Exhibitors refused to show many of the poor quality shorts which came their way, and in any case were simply unable to find slots in which to show them all. At the same time, they were tempted by lucrative offers from the distributors of US blockbusters, who strictly forbade any financial return to the maker of an accompanying locally made short. Meanwhile, audiences grew tired of low quality domestic fare that simply reminded them of the harshness of their own lives, and most provincial and suburban cinemas, where the appeal of locally made movies had been greatest, went out of business during the 1980s

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[32] See Bedoya, p. 191 for details of the composition of *Coproci*.

[33] Randal Johnson, 'Film Policy in Latin America', in *Film Policy: International, National and Regional Perspectives*, ed. by Albert Moran (London and New York: Routledge, 2006) pp. 128-147 (p. 133).

[34] Jorge Schnitman, *Film Industries in Latin America*: *Dependency and Development* (New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1984), p. 45.

and early '90s when the country's economic and political crisis was at its worst.[35] Cinema-going in Peru, as elsewhere, became a means to escape as opposed to a means to protest. Moreover, *Sendero* violence led to the imposition of curfews and other restrictions to movement, regular power cuts interrupted almost every screening, and ticket prices spiraled out of the reach of most people owing to the devastating effects of hyperinflation.

Section 3: Neoliberal Reforms

In 1992, the protective legislative framework of Law 19327 was suspended, and by the end of 1994, the neoliberal regime of President Alberto Fujimori (1990-2000) had introduced a more market-oriented cinema law that forced Peruvian film-makers to compete directly with their overseas counterparts without the kind of resources and political support that they enjoyed. In the event, by the time the new Cinema Law 26270 was in place, plans for US-financed and US-programmed multiplex cinemas in affluent areas of Lima were under way, audience demographics had shifted almost entirely to the middle and upper classes, and national film-making had all but ground to a halt.

A series of new measures was put in place to underpin national cinema in Peru. A new body, *Conacine* (*Consejo nacional de cinematografía*), based within the Ministry of Education, was set up to replace *Coproci* as the main administrative body charged with administering national film policy. Duties included the organization of competitions that would determine the recipients of the annual prize money of $1.5 million promised by Fujimori. According to the legislation, two competitions for feature proposals, and four

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[35] As will be seen in the analyses that follow, apart from Lombardi's *La boca del lobo* (1988), made when the Cinema Law remained buoyant, almost all of the national films that dealt with the *Sendero* conflict and its social consequences received mixed reviews, partly due to their perceived technical deficiencies but also due to their serious and topical content.

for short films already made would be held annually. In all, six feature projects and forty-eight shorts were to receive a financial reward from the state each year, and in this way, it was hoped that constant film production activity would be assured. This 'competition' funding model was based loosely on similar experiments set up in Europe and elsewhere in Latin America during the 1980s and '90s.[36] Other ambitious plans included a programme of cinema education, the organization of film archives, and the co-ordination of a national cinema register.

The key objective of the new legislation was that national cinema should be regarded principally as an important national cultural activity, and secondarily as an industrial activity and overt signifier of the country's progress towards modernization. The basic premise of the approved law was recognition of the cultural role played by film-making and the duty of the state to support and promote it.[37] In the new Constitution of 1993, Fujimori even proclaimed that one of the state's responsibilities was 'la de desarrollar, difundir y preservar la cultura con el propósito de afirmar la identidad cultural del país, sin buscar una retribución económica'.[38] Nevertheless, despite such fine words of support, no more than half a dozen feature films and around thirty shorts were awarded funding between 1994 and 2000, partly because of the government's consistent failure to make available the promised resources, partly because the Ministry of Education required them more urgently for basic education programmes, and also because the necessary matched funds were almost impossible to locate, especially for short films. Moreover, when compared to the annual sum of $40 million promised to Argentinian

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[36] Ricardo Bedoya and Isaac León Frías, 'Volver a vivir: cronología (accidentada) de la ley de cine', *La Gran Ilusión*, 3 (1994), 108-110 (p. 110).

[37] Bedoya and León Frías, 'Volver a vivir', p. 110.

[38] Cited by Wiener, 'Tan duro de vivir', p. 24.

film-makers in 1995, the $1.5 million promised by Fujimori in 1994 seemed woefully inadequate.

Outspoken national film-maker Armando Robles Godoy was emphatic in his criticism of the new system. He protested at what he perceived to be state indifference towards its national cinema, claiming that lack of financial commitment would lead to its complete abolition, a death throe that began in 1992, with the actions of the Ministry of Finance and what he saw as their sterile dogma of market-oriented policy (Leira 1998: 16). In the same article, producer Andrés Malatesta continued in a similar vein, protesting that national cinema was crucial to national identity. He, like several others at the time, pressed for a return to the 'clear quotas and guaranteed exhibition … [of] the 1972 Cinema Law' in spite of its acknowledged deficiencies.[39]

Since the mid 1990s, Peru's film industry has continued to struggle as it did in the 1940s and '50s. Despite much fanfare and excitement at the announcement of fresh legislation and economic investment, delays in administration resulted in four barren years for domestic film production.[40] In the end, the majority of the resources promised by the state for this law to be upheld were allocated to more urgent social programmes,

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[39] Cited by Milagros Leira, 'Entrevista con Robles Godoy', *El Comercio*, 22 November 1998, p. 17. Throughout the second half of the 1990s, critics and film-makers debated the value of the competitions that were at the heart of the second Cinema Law, mainly via the pages of the journal *La Gran Ilusión*. Perhaps the most provocative article appeared in 1998 in the form of a lively conversation between film-makers such as Emilio Salomón, who declared themselves 'en desacuerdo con los resultados de los concursos', and critics Bedoya and León Frías, who had been members of the jury that made those decisions. Emilio Salomón et al, 'Premios y desencuentros: conversación sobre el estado del cine peruano', *La Gran Ilusión*, 9 (1998), 122-129.

[40] Between 1993 and 1997, just four films were made and released in Peru: *Sin compasión* (1994) and *Bajo la piel* (1996) by Francisco Lombardi; *Anda, corre, vuela …* (Augusto Tamayo 1995) and *Asia, el culo del mundo* (Juan Carlos Torrico 1996). No Peruvian films were released in 1997.

with the result that between 1997 and 2001 just ten Peruvian feature films were produced and only five of those received partial funding from the state.[41] Since the 1994 Cinema Law stated that up to six feature film projects a year could be awarded funding from 1996, up to thirty-six projects could have been supported by the end of 2001. Hundreds of applications were in fact submitted by hopeful film-makers. However, *Conacine* was given little money to award and administer, and Fujimori's regime collapsed suddenly in 2000 amidst dramatic discoveries of widespread institutional and individual corruption. Without adequate resources, the quality of many projects continued to decline and most of those that were released failed to engage the interest of the Peruvian public.

Section 4: Impact of Political Turmoil

Since Fujimori's abrupt departure, the political turmoil and years of economic restructuring inevitably meant that plans for improved legislation to support national cinema were put on hold. Nevertheless, as in earlier times of crisis, Peruvian film-makers continued to make their case and to fight for funds and support to develop what they believe to be an important means of expression of national identity and cultural diversity. However, from year to year the situation fluctuates. For example, Isaac León Frías reported in his annual review of film activity in 2002 that some recognition had been made of the need to support national film-makers more actively:

> The Peruvian Film Congress stressed the need for a new legal framework to support production within the liberal economic model … and film-makers

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[41] 1998: *Coraje* (Alberto Durant), *La carnada* (Marianne Eyde) and *No se lo digas a nadie* (Lombardi); 1999: *La yunta brava* (Federico García) and *Pantaleón y las visitadoras* (Lombardi); 2000: *Ciudad de M* (Felipe Degregori) and *A la media noche y media* (Marité Ugaz and Mariana Rondón); 2001: *Tinta roja* (Lombardi), *El bien esquivo* (Tamayo) and *Bala perdida* (Aldo Salvini).

> [had] begun to put pressure on the new government of President Alejandro Toledo to do more for their industry.[42]

One year later, however, he reported that, yet again:

> The long-awaited new film legislation … remained in a kind of limbo, while Peruvian legislators [were] preoccupied with more pressing social concerns … that ma[d]e the plight of the film industry seem trivial, and ma[d]e it virtually impossible for *Conacine* to improve the situation.[43]

Notwithstanding, since 2000, a new generation of national film-makers has emerged, amongst them Fabrizio Aguilar and Josué Méndez, whose films are included in this study. Lacking sufficient domestic financial and political support, they have taken advantage of education and training opportunities in the US and Europe, and have gained experience within the domestic television and advertising sectors. These young directors, unable to rely upon the kind of state support enjoyed by their immediate predecessors, share with them nevertheless a determination to make innovative cinema that engages the public, and have turned to sources of funding beyond the national institutional framework. Such opportunities range from co-production arrangements with US and European media organisations, to awards and grants from festivals such as Sundance, Rotterdam and Cannes which have policies of supporting new film-makers from around the world. Transatlantic projects such as *Ibermedia*, which draw together and co-ordinate resources from Spain and Latin American countries, also actively support the development of a new Hispanic cinema and have provided funds for a

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[42] Isaac León Frías, 'Peru', in *Variety International Film Guide 2004: The Ultimate Annual Review of World Cinema*, ed. by Peter Cowie (London: Faber and Faber, 2004), p. 266.

[43] Isaac León Frías, 'Peru', in *The Guardian International Film Guide 2005: The Ultimate Annual Review of World Cinema*, ed. by Daniel Rosenthal (London: Button Publishing, 2005), p. 235.

handful of Peruvian films.[44] As a result, national film production (feature and documentary) gained a little momentum, with a few titles – including Aguilar's *Paloma de Papel* and *Días de Santiago* by Méndez – gaining international recognition via the festival circuit.[45]

All the same, the situation remains precarious for Peruvian national cinema as the current national government, led again by Alan García after a five year regime under the country's first indigenous President, Alejandro Toledo, continues to focus on more pressing social concerns and competition for external resources becomes increasingly fierce. A principal preoccupation must lie in determining the role national film-makers play in a world where on the one hand national boundaries are constantly eroded by the pressures of the global marketplace, but where, on the other hand, national identities and the comradeships they inspire remain perceived of as a force worth dying for.[46] While accepting that the context for the argument expressed by Anderson over two decades ago has changed considerably, nevertheless – as the conflict between state and *Sendero* and subsequent political election battles serve to demonstrate – the desire to belong to a

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[44] *Ibermedia* is a Hispanic co-production venture, established in 1997 in Venezuela, which focuses its efforts and resources on four support programmes for cinema: development; co-production; distribution and promotion; and training. For the first three years, benefits for Peru's film-makers were hampered both by a lack of state funds to match those offered by *Ibermedia*, and also by the failure of Fujimori's government to fulfil its own annual contribution of $100k to the overall pot of around $4million. Between 2001 and 2004, after Fujimori's regime had ended and the new government agreed to meet its commitments, around fourteen projects were successful with their bids although only a third of these have been completed and released. In 2005, no Peruvian bids were submitted.
See 'Histórico de proyectos' and 'Proyectos presentados: coproducción 06', *Programa Ibermedia*, 9 August 2006 <http://www.programaibermedia.com/esp/htm/home.htm> [accessed August 2006].

[45] Five national feature films were released in 2002; six in 2003; three in 2004; four in 2005; three in 2006.

[46] Anderson, p. 7.

national community and to take part in the shaping of national identity remains strong in Peru. Moreover, as Anne Marie Stock has acknowledged much more recently, 'despite the multicultural collaboration driving film-making in the [Latin American] region, critical discourse continues to privilege cultural authenticity' and production infrastructure tends to exclude those films that ignore the demand to be clearly distinguishable on a national level.[47] Finally, Joanna Page also notes that the trend towards transnationalist discourse in cinema, driven at least in part by a desire to undermine essentialist notions of the nation, 'seems oddly out of kilter with trends in film production at a time of increasing state involvement in the financing and promotion of national cinema in a number of Latin American countries'.[48]

Viewed historically within the Peruvian context, under Velasco's regime film-makers were granted a clear, if somewhat functional, nation-building role within the national political agenda, acknowledged via a protectionist legislative system and flexible financial support. Under Fujimori this shifted to the promise of a broader cultural role with competition-based funding support and a more independent administrative body. In the event, however, film-makers ended up isolated, and the administrative body set up to support them was left woefully underfunded and overstretched.[49] The result is that

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[47] Anne-Marie Stock, 'Migrancy and the Latin American Cinemascape: Towards a Post-National Cinema Praxis', in *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*, ed. by Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 157-166 (p.157).

[48] Joanna Page, 'The Nation as the *mise-en-scène* of Film-making in Argentina', *Journal of Latin American Cultural Studies*, 14:3 (2005), 305-324 (p. 305).

[49] Moreover, younger, emerging film-makers feel that the legislation set up in 1994 excludes them from developing their skills, and would like to see a return to the more supportive infrastructure for short film-making that guaranteed screening and a portion of the box office return for every short film made by a Peruvian director. See José Pérez Torres, 'La década del silencio', *Abre los Ojos*, 2 (2002), 36-38. Indeed, León Frías reports that, while an unprecedented 30 feature film scripts were submitted to the *Conacine* competition in early 2005, only three were selected to receive a sum that is just a part of the production budget. He lamented also that few of the other entries

Peru's film-makers have become even more pressed to compete with glamorous US products while attempting to portray issues and tell stories of national interest. The fact that they continue to want to engage in such a struggle is testament, perhaps, to the role of cinema not simply as marker of the nation's commercial and technical maturity, but more profoundly as symbol of democracy, freedom, creativity and humanity. On a personal level, Robles Godoy reveals that, for him:

> No me interesa que mi cine sea visto o no visto […]; lo único que quiero es tener la libertad de poder hacer mi cine y pienso que todo aquel que hace cine – unos por ganar plata, otros por expresarse – tienen el derecho de hacerlo. [50]

Despite these difficulties and pressures, many of the films that have been made by Peru's national film-makers since the late 1980s, when the protective Cinema Law of 1972 began to flounder, have repeated the exercise set by their predecessors of challenging the political status quo and interrogating issues of cultural diversity. They confront their spectators, whether from Peru or overseas, with ways of thinking about Peruvian culture and identity that sometimes contradict official political discourse, and act as reminders of the conflicts and divisions that are prevalent with Peruvian society, refusing to paper over the cracks or to offer cinematic illusions of unity. Indeed, the films discussed in this study are bound together by their direct address to a specific period of violent conflict that highlighted the racial and ethnic tensions between Peru's different social groups, and that tore apart any pretence of national cohesion. They serve as an uncomfortable, antagonistic reminder of a traumatic conflict, challenging the 'relatively coherent and stable structure of memories' upon which the exercise of

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would ever find the funding required to get produced. See 'Peru', in *The Guardian International Film Guide 2006: The Ultimate Annual Review of World Cinema*, ed. by Daniel Rosenthal (London: Button Publishing, 2006), p. 223.

[50] Robles Godoy cited by Bedoya and León Frías, p. 104.

national power is reliant.[51] Rather than working to 'construct imaginary bonds which work to hold the peoples of a nation together as a community', they threaten to expose the lack of such bonds in a nation where so many feel themselves excluded from opportunities, resources and political agency.[52] They refuse to fulfil the early role of national cinema as nation-builder by, as Jarvie suggests, contributing to the socialisation of 'newly emancipated populations away from radicalism and towards acceptance of the *mores*, outlook and continuing hegemony of the governing and cultural elites'.[53] Instead, these films reveal the nation's 'masquerade of unity' and draw pertinent attention to the deep-rooted cultural fragmentation.[54] As such, they work against 'the underlying principles of nationalism and [acting] at cross-purposes with the originating idea of the *nation* as a unified identity'.[55] Some of the key features of Peruvian identity, including issues of diversity and differentiation, are explored further in Chapter Three together with the development of violence as apparently integral to imagined notions of the Peruvian nation.

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[51] Karl W. Deutsch cited by Philip Schlesinger in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. by Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 20.

[52] Andrew Higson, *Waving the Flag: Constructing a National Cinema in Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 7.

[53] Ian Jarvie in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. by Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 81.

[54] Susan Hayward in *Cinema and Nation*, ed. by Mette Hjort and Scott Mackenzie (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 101.

[55] Hayward, p. 95