

University of Alberta

Remaking the Slave Past in the Present:
Representations of Afro-Peruvian Men in the Church of Cristo Kyrios

by

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For Kern

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the representations of Blackness constructed and embraced by Saadakeem Papa Kyriakos, the prophet and leader of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, a marginal organization located in Lima, Peru. Saadakeem proudly claims to adhere to the religion practiced by plantation slaves in Peru in the sixteenth century. This thesis presents and analyzes some of Saadakeem's divine messages about slavery as well as the images of Black men he creates, adopts and employs to symbolize the sacred Black figures the Church worships. This thesis contends that Saadakeem's representations of Blackness not only exclude women, but also reinforce deeply entrenched racial conceptualizations that depict Black men as mindless, primitive and sexual bodies.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Presenting the Church of Cristo Kyrios.....	10
CHAPTER ONE- Excavating Afro-Peruvian History by Other Means: The Church of Cristo Kyrios and the Revision of the Memory of Slavery	18
CHAPTER TWO- Saadakeem’s Collection of Visual Media: the Black Man as Body	59
Contradictions in Saadakeem’s Racial Conceptualizations.....	61
Representations of Blackness.....	66
Conclusion.....	115
CONCLUSION-Who has Control Over Black History?	123
BIBLIOGRAPHY	128

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Kyrios on the cross.....	68
Figure 2: La crucifixión de Kyrios.....	76
Figure 3: Kyrios.....	79
Figure 4: La crucifixión del divino Kyrios.....	81
Figure 5: Kelinda ad.....	94
Figure 6: The Church of Cristo Kyrios.....	105

INTRODUCTION

Saadakeem Papa (Pope) Kyriakos (birth name: Manuel Jesús Palomino Berríos; hereafter Saadakeem), the prophet and pope of the Church of Cristo Kyrios (la Iglesia de Cristo Kyrios) in Lima, Peru, proudly claims that he adheres to the religion practiced by plantation slaves in Peru in the sixteenth-century.¹ Saadakeem contends that the existence of the Church of Cristo Kyrios is proof that Black slaves cleverly maintained their rich religious culture.² Saadakeem voices a belief system that mobilizes a memory of slavery that illuminates the male slaves' perspective. This serves to valorise the Black male body and reinforce Saadakeem's position as the head of the Church of Cristo Kyrios. The significance of examining Saadakeem's religious narratives and representations of Blackness lies within his assertion that his primary role is that of an educator.³ As such, Saadakeem desires to inform the public about Black history, especially Afro-Peruvian history. Examining Saadakeem's historical perspectives elucidates how race ideology can be embedded in notions of religion, gender and sexuality. Significantly, analyzing Saadakeem's representations of Black slaves, and Black males more generally, reminds us of the importance of acknowledging, understanding and rising above racist stereotypes.

This thesis analyzes the Church of Cristo Kyrios's representations of Blackness by examining its historical messages about slavery and its visual portrayal of Black male bodies. I approach Chapter One, an exploration of how the Church of Cristo Kyrios remembers the slave past through the invention of Saadakeem's sacred historical messages, from the perspective of "reflective history of the slaving past" within the present.⁴ This is crucial for several reasons. First, in reconstructing the slave past

Saadakeem attempts to challenge the notion that Blacks are primitive, savage and immoral brutes. Second, Saadakeem weaves himself into his slave narratives by proclaiming that he is the descendent of the sacred religious figures featured in the Church of Cristo Kyrios's divine spiritual family. Third, by focusing on slavery, a traumatic memory knot that demands attention in the present, Saadakeem addresses the enduring wounds of the slave past.⁵ By examining some of Saadakeem's most prominent, comprehensible and historical religious messages, I outline how he argues that slaves were intelligent, organized and capable of resisting Spanish-imposed Christianization. While I acknowledge Saadakeem's followers' comments regarding how the messages uplift their Black pride, I also point out how aspects of the messages concomitantly reinforce stereotypes of Black men.

In the second chapter I interpret Saadakeem's representation of the Black man with a critical eye and illustrate how the images of the Black man presented and embraced by Saadakeem and the Church of Cristo Kyrios echo, perpetuate and reinforce the very same stereotypes that they claim to be fighting against: the unintelligent, mindless Black man. Saadakeem's representation of Blackness is masculine; women are notably absent. I contend that when Saadakeem does deviate from historical stereotypes of the Black man he does not escape the scaffolding of racist thought because he simply inverts, he does not overcome, pre-existing racist conceptualizations. Chapter two of this thesis therefore localizes Saadakeem's visual representations of the Black man within a historical continuum of images that construct Blacks as primitive and sexual "body people."⁶ This chapter also reviews the comments and impressions that the broader community has formed towards the Church of Cristo Kryios: that it is a façade for engaging in deviant

sexual acts. I conclude that overall the Church of Cristo Kyrios and its leader, Saadakeem Papa Kyriakos, unsuccessfully contest stereotypes of Black people because the unilateral focus on the Black male body overshadows any possible sincere efforts in fighting against anti-Black racism.

I arrived in Peru in June 2011 to learn about the Afro-Peruvian experience and the role Afro-Peruvian organizations play in the fight against racism. For the subsequent three months I conducted interviews throughout Lima and in the northern department of Piura. I also sifted through newspapers housed in the National Library of Peru (Biblioteca Nacional del Perú – BNP). I was determined to write my thesis about a unique and unexplored Afro-Peruvian organization. This opportunity unexpectedly revealed itself after Afro-Peruvian activist and lawyer Jorge Ramírez Reyna recommended that I attend the lecture series (ciclo de conferencias) hosted by the National Afro-Peruvian Museum. I took his advice and attended a lecture entitled “The Black Presence in the Bible: An Inconvenient Truth” (Presencia negra en la Biblia: una verdad que incómoda).⁷ I arrived early to view the museum’s slave history display and spoke to the presenter, Javier, an Afro-Peruvian choreographer, drummer and actor who comes from a large musical and dance organization.⁸ He also teaches Afro-Peruvian dance at a Peruvian university. Javier agreed to an interview to talk about his artistic endeavours and share his experiences as an Afro-Peruvian man. When I arrived at the Church of Cristo Kyrios Saadakeem informed me that Javier wanted to postpone the interview for another day. Despite Javier’s absence my visit was still productive because Saadakeem was eager to talk about Afro-Peruvian history and therefore invited me into the Church. The willingness of Church members to be interviewed multiple times combined with their unconventional

historical perspectives and representations convinced me to choose the Church of Cristo Kyrios as my thesis topic. I decided to wrap-up the interviews after about three-weeks of regular communication with the Church for two central reasons. First, I felt I had gathered enough data to write a thesis and second, the process to recruit me into the Church reached an uncomfortable level.

I conducted approximately seventy-two hours of interviews. While I interviewed other Church members, Saadakeem was my primary informant. He told me that he wanted to “share this knowledge of African heritage” and referred to me as his “student.”⁹ Saadakeem’s interviews were lengthy monologues. Saadakeem either spoke freely or read sacred messages from his digital “Bible,” a series of Word documents that included photos of Black men. Saadakeem converted parts of these Word documents into Power Point presentations to share with other members of the Church as well as with the public. In addition to conducting interviews, I accompanied Saadakeem and Javier to public venues where they spoke about Black history. I also spent time with Church members during informal social gatherings.

To my knowledge, only local and national Peruvian magazines, newspapers and articles address the Church of Cristo Kyrios. For example, *Caretas*, a major Peruvian magazine, published an article about the eccentric clergy in 1998 entitled “Black Faith” (Fe Negra).¹⁰ The fact that such a distinguished magazine as *Caretas* dedicated an entire article to the Church of Cristo Kyrios suggests that despite its small size, the group provokes discussion. Peruvian anthropologist Sabrina Arroyo Aguilar published what seems to be the only academic article written in Spanish that addresses the Church of Cristo Kyrios.¹¹ In contrast to the attention the Church of Cristo Kyrios has managed to

attract in Lima, the group is not well known internationally and this thesis appears to be the first English academic publication concerning the Church of Cristo Kyrios. The attention given to the Church of Cristo Kyrios is significant because there is a paucity of Afro-Peruvian historiography. This is partly due to the fact that the Peruvian population is considered to be predominantly Mestizo (of mixed European and Indigenous ancestry) and Indigenous.¹² According to the internationally sponsored Afro-Peruvian census conducted by the Centre of Ethnic Development (el Centro de Desarrollo Étnico - CEDET), an Afro-Peruvian organization, there are approximately 2 500 000 African descendents in Peru (roughly 10-12% of the population). CEDET's population map indicating the geographic areas populated by people of African descent is on display in the National Afro-Peruvian Museum located in Lima. As the observations of sociologists Martín Benavides, Máximo Torero and Néstor Valdivia confirm, this number exceeds previous estimates that ascertained the Afro-Peruvian population to be anywhere between 1% to 9% of the Peruvian population.¹³

Notwithstanding the lack of attention devoted to the Afro-Peruvian community in terms of slave memory, racial conceptualizations of Blackness and representations of Blacks, my thesis corresponds, echoes and builds upon aspects of the work of such scholars as Heidi Carolyn Feldman, Tanya Maria Golash-Boza and Deborah Poole.

The first chapter of this thesis supports Heidi Carolyn Feldman's findings regarding the prominence of slavery in the memory and reconstruction of Black history in Peru. For example, in her musical exploration of a Black movement(s) in Peru, Feldman observes how Afro-Peruvian musical groups and organizations excavated and reconstructed Black musical rhythms out of scanty documentation. She observes that when academic

historical documentation was lacking some artists turned to legends, myths, rumours, imagination, creativity, elaboration and even received inspiration from other communities in the Black Diaspora.¹⁴ Feldman stresses that music and dance considered purely Afro-Peruvian are sometimes recent recreations derived from a plethora of geographic and ethnic sites. For example two Afro-Peruvian siblings and artists, Victoria (b 1922-) and Rafael Nicomedes Santa Cruz Gamarra (1925-1992), often utilized European aesthetic styles, such as the *décima* (a Spanish derived poetic pattern of ten-line stanzas).¹⁵ Moreover, some critics refute Nicomedes's claim that Black slaves from the Congo performed *festejos* (rooted in the Spanish verb *festejar*, meaning to celebrate), a dance form the siblings frequently included in their repertoires.¹⁶

Pertinent to this thesis, Feldman also notes that despite the desire for Afro-Peruvian artists of the revival movement to place Black culture on the map, they were not immune to some of the stereotypes of broader society. For example, Victoria Santa Cruz Gamarra declared that “the knowledge is within us” (*el conocimiento está dentro de nosotros*).¹⁷ In so doing, she reinforced the idea that dance, music and essentially an African spirit were “in the blood” and inherent aspects of the souls of Black folk.

The work for this thesis is also anchored in the research of Tanya Maria Golash-Boza who underscores the salience of skin colour as a primary marker of Blackness in Peru. Golash-Boza's claim is groundbreaking for two reasons. Firstly it contests the widely held belief that Blackness in Latin America is a flexible identity construct that can fluctuate according to such cultural and social factors as language, education, dress and wealth. Secondly, it demonstrates that the Afro-Peruvian experience is distinct from the Peruvian Indigenous experience. Golash-Boza maintains Blackness in Peru is primarily

based on skin colour whereas Indigeneity is predominately based on cultural and social conditions.¹⁸ As a result, Golash-Boza advances the argument that Blacks and Indigenous people in Peru experience the process of *mestizaje* (racial and cultural mixing) differently.¹⁹ For example, Golash-Boza posits that while Indigenous people gain inclusion into the broader society via acculturation (or de-culturation, depending on one's perspective), Blacks gain entry into the broader society via miscegenation.²⁰ This experience contrasts sharply with the Indigenous experience presented by scholars such as Marisol de la Cadena. De la Cadena contends that in the Indigenous case, *mestizaje* involves shedding one's supposed poverty stricken and backward rural condition via exposure to an urban environment where one can learn Spanish, adopt city attire, learn "proper" etiquette and "improve" hygiene habits.²¹ In direct opposition to the Indigenous experience, Golash-Boza observes that Blacks are already culturally amalgamated; they speak the same language, wear the same clothes and eat the same foods as the dominant class.²² Thus, for Blacks the Whitening process (*blanqueamiento*) is literal whereas for Indigenous people the Whitening process is more figurative.

While the representations of Blackness created, adopted and embraced by the Church of Cristo Kyrios emphasize the darkest shades of Black skin tones, they stand out from other marginal religious groups in Peru. For example, unlike the group of young Rastafarians in Lima, the Black male body is central to the Church of Cristo Kyrios. To the broader public, this uniqueness tends to define the Church of Cristo Kyrios as "a strange group of Blacks" (*un grupo de negros raros*).²³ Thus, while this thesis generally corresponds to Golash-Boza's assertion that skin colour is an important aspect of the

definition of Blackness in Peru, it also echoes traces of de la Cadena's argument concerning the role of culture and the construction of the "Other" as a racialized body.

While the representation of the Black man advanced by the Church of Cristo Kyrios overwhelmingly confirms Golash-Boza's observation that the visibility of Blackness plays a crucial role in identity construction, there are many similarities regarding how Indigenous and Black people have been portrayed. For example, the work of Mariselle Meléndez and Deborah Poole elucidates how representations of Indigenous and Black Peruvians denote primitiveness. However, as the work of Deborah Poole indicates, the representations of Black and Indigenous Peruvians generally depart at a crucial juncture: the sexualisation of the body. For example, in her examination of mid-nineteenth century paintings of Lima, Poole observes that artists routinely depicted people of Black and mixed Black and White ancestry in ways that hinted at their "morally dubious character" and supposed sexual promiscuity.²⁴ Poole observes that paintings depicting Black women often placed them in festive scenes and prominently illustrated their breasts protruding from their clothes. Poole notes that the portrayal of Black men also accentuated their supposed ravenous sexual appetite by exposing their chests and surrounding them with Black women.²⁵

In terms of the sexualisation of the Black body, this thesis is indebted to the work of Vanessa Verástegui Ollé and Sylvanna M. Falcón who underscore how race and sexuality are interconnected in the Peruvian context.²⁶ Indeed, the original inspiration for this project came from Sylvanna M. Falcón's investigation of gendered racism. Falcón interviewed several key female leaders in the Afro-Peruvian social movement. One interviewee, Mónica Carillo Zegarra, the founder and director of the Centre for Afro-

Peruvian Studies and Empowerment (Centro de Estudios y Promoción Afroperuano - LUNDÚ), recounted the sexually offensive racial slurs hurled at her while working on an economic justice project in Yapatara, Piura (located in northern Peru). While walking down the street a man shouted “Black woman! You have a rubber vagina!” (¡Negra! ¡Tienes vagina de jebe!), a highly offensive comment that referred to her assumed promiscuity, relating her vagina to overused rubber.²⁷

The sexualisation of Afro-Peruvian men has received very little attention. In terms of representations of the Afro-Peruvian man, Carlos Aguirre stands out with his research concerning criminalization from 1850-1935.²⁸ His work illustrates how society constructed Afro-Peruvian men as fierce, strong, barbaric, dangerous and animalistic bodies. Aguirre’s work has implications in the current battle against anti-Black racism as evidenced by Jorge Ramírez Reyna’s observation that the minority Afro-Peruvian prison population is disproportionately represented in images that accompany news reports featuring the penitentiary in Lurigancho, Lima.²⁹

Scholarship concerning homophobia and homosexuality in Peru is even scarcer than research about the sexualisation of Afro-Peruvians. Presently, no monographs exist that explore these topics as primary research areas; however, some scholars incorporate a discussion of homophobia into their research regarding such themes as political culture and healthcare. For example, the Institute of Peruvian Studies argues that homophobia is a form and manifestation of authoritarianism.³⁰ Homophobia is also discussed within the context of public health and sexually transmitted diseases. For example, Ximena Salazar examines how hegemonic socio-cultural gender norms and internalized homophobia negatively impact the decisions and abilities of marginalized homosexual males to

negotiate sexual practices and prevent HIV infection.³¹ Through such avenues as the Internet, Peruvian activists are working to galvanize the public in the fight to eradicate homophobia. Moreover, the media is gradually including articles about discrimination based on sexual orientation as evidenced by the article published in *El Comercio* that highlights how a government document of the municipality of Lima underscores the need to expunge “indecent” people such as homosexuals from Lima; calling for “the eradication of seedy people – delinquents, drunks, drug addicts, prostitutes and homosexuals – from downtown Lima” (erradicación de gente de mal vivir - delincuentes comunes, ebrios, drogadictos, meretrices y homosexuales - del centro de Lima).³²

PRESENTING THE CHURCH OF CRISTO KYRIOS

The Church of Cristo Kyrios is situated in a quaint middle-class neighbourhood in the Lima district of Pueblo Libre (“Cristo” is the Spanish word for “Christ” and “Kyrios” is generally accepted as a Greek word and is often translated to English as “God,” “Lord” or “Master”; “Señor” in Spanish). The Church of Cristo Kyrios is located in a large home with an elaborate temple on the rooftop where the faithful gather every Saturday to celebrate mass. Saadakeem is in his mid to later fifties and told me that he is married to a Black Haitian woman who teaches Spanish in Jamaica. He does not have any children. Saadakeem is a registered architect in Lima and claims to have a doctorate degree. He describes himself as “a historian and professor” (un historiador y un catedrático).³³ Saadakeem generally refers to himself as Peruvian, but sometimes discards his Peruvian identity and instead presents himself as Jamaican. For example, during a presentation about the Jamaican architectural and cultural influences in Peru that Saadakeem delivered as a guest lecturer at a university in Lima, Saadakeem stated “us Jamaicans” (nosotros,

los jamaicanos).³⁴ Religion is a topic that has fascinated Saadakeem throughout his life. He claims to have received his first vision at about twelve years of age and in 1981 he placed second in an ecumenical competition that tested the biblical knowledge of 300 competitors in Peru.³⁵ Writer and journalist Garciela Mochkofsky published an article in *El Clarín*, an Argentine newspaper, in 2008 featuring the religious life of the winner, in which he described Saadakeem as “an eccentric leader of a minute church, who can recite the entire Leviticus by memory” (excéntrico líder de una iglesia diminuta, que podía recitar de memoria el Levítico entero).³⁶

Saadakeem is not anti-Christian, but he is anti-Catholic Church. Saadakeem describes the Church of Cristo Kyrios as a Jerusalem born, Afro-Israeli Christian faith. He explains that the first pope was of Ethiopian origins and asserts that the popes of the Roman Catholic Church were and continue to be “anti-popes.” Saadakeem argues that the Romans created White supremacy and deliberately mistranslated the Bible in the fourth century: “They created a White version of Christianity and removed Black Jesus.”³⁷ Saadakeem affirms that the Romans based their belief system on the ancient Afro-Christian Church of Jerusalem.

Saadakeem occupies the apex of the religious hierarchy of the Church of Cristo Kyrios. The other clergy members include Javier, the second in command, who has no official title and is the only member of the clergy who does not reside in the church; Bernardo, the Cardinal/Priest, in charge of transposing Saadakeem’s older written messages into Word format and completing the household chores; and the Prince, Luis, an important recruiter.³⁸ Ascertaining the quantity of Church members is a confusing task since Saadakeem communicated vastly different numbers throughout our interview

sessions (anywhere between 70 to over 100).³⁹ Moreover, Saadakeem also progressively augmented the number of countries where the faithful reside. He mentioned that, in addition to Peru, believers are scattered throughout Colombia, Mexico, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and New Jersey.⁴⁰ In my limited experience with the Church, I only met a handful of members. The Prince indicated that several of his female relatives in Chincha (a predominantly Afro-Peruvian community located south of Lima) are also members. In a video recording of one of their masses, I observed the clergy as well as approximately three men, five women, four children and one infant. Confirming if the Church of Cristo Kyrios only has a branch in Lima, Peru also proved difficult as Saadakeem frequently referred to a branch in Kingston, Jamaica.

As the reader proceeds with this thesis it is important for her/him to understand that Saadakeem's religious narratives and explanations are riddled with contradictions and tangents. Saadakeem and the other members of the Church of Cristo Kyrios do not seem to have a clear understanding of the identity or history of the religious figures they worship. For example, after trying to explain the sacred religious figures to me, Priest Bernardo, sighed and explained that they are still investigating: "The thing is that we are still researching all of this" (lo que pasa es que todavía estamos investigando todo esto).⁴¹ By "investigating" Bernardo was referring to the divine messages Saadakeem receives about the slaveholding past and the history of the Church of Cristo Kyrios.

The most consistent explanation of the core divine spiritual family of the Church of Cristo Kyrios indicates that Yawah is God, Iseaous As-Saadiq Addo is the son of Yawah and Kyrios Zulu is the Holy Spirit. Iseaous and Kyrios are Vodunes, powerful supernatural beings who transmit the word of God.⁴² The world projected by Saadakeem

is a world where the supernatural is omnipresent. Crucially, for Saadakeem, the ulterior realm serves as the principal guide to the excavation of the history of Black slavery in colonial Peru. Saadakeem constructs what I refer to as the group's "sacred texts" via historical messages about slavery he claims to receive in a variety of forms from divine beings called Orishas.⁴³ In the context of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, "Orishas" refer to Kyrios's sons, the seven Holy Spirits of the Religion of the Plantation that essentially serve as guardian angels, protectors and messengers of God⁴⁴

Recurrently, historical information is transferred to Saadakeem via telepathy, dreams or daydreams resembling trances, or more customarily, Orishas apparently enter the body of an unsuspecting local Black man who fulfils the groups' physical criteria of perfection and divinity: youthful, Black, exceptionally muscular and well-endowed. The Orisha, unbeknownst to the medium, appears to Saadakeem in human form.⁴⁵ The possessed man then guides Saadakeem to abandoned chapels where slaves once practiced the Religion of the Plantation. It is in these sacred locations where the possessed man shares divine historical messages with Saadakeem.⁴⁶

One of the most important religious ceremonies of the Church of Cristo Kyrios includes the annual re-enactment of the crucifixion of Kyrios. This ritual involves tying a naked or semi-naked young Black man to a cross for several hours. This performance is fundamental to believers because they expect that Kyrios will return to Earth to exact revenge upon anti-Black racists.

The clergy mentions the history of the Church of Cristo Kyrios before the sixteenth-century and claims that Blacks arrived in Peru before the Spanish colonizers, but due to the enormous gaps, inconsistencies and lack of attention they place on this time period, I

choose to focus on the narratives and representations Saadakeem most frequently and consistently conveyed and shared with me during our interviews: the sixteenth-century plantation life in Lima. Saadakeem asserts that the slave trade forced a Ghanaian Pope of the Church Cristo Kyrios named Babakwame to Peru where he established the Religion of the Plantation.⁴⁷ Saadakeem states that the Church of Cristo Kyrios that exists today is based on the Religion of the Plantation that thrived on Peruvian plantations in the sixteenth century.⁴⁸

Saadakeem possesses an insatiable zeal for continuous monologues that leap from one topic to another in an unpredictable fashion. Due to the often incoherent and contradictory nature of Saadakeem's monologues, I present his narratives in summary format rather than quoting them at length.

In addition to attempting to introduce the Church of Cristo Kyrios, it is also relevant to address Saadakeem's self-constructed "racial" identity versus how many other people perceive him. While Saadakeem, his followers and the public tend to refer to the Church of Cristo Kyrios as an Afro-Peruvian organization, generally, only Saadakeem's followers, predominantly African descendents struggling to make financial ends meet, believe he is Black. To my knowledge Sabino Arroyo Aguilar from the Universidad Nacional de San Marcos is the only person not affiliated with the Church of Cristo Kyrios who acknowledges Saadakeem's identity as Afro-Peruvian: "his mother is from Chiclayo and is of Afro-Peruvian origins and his father is of Ayacuchan Andean descent" (*su madre es de Chiclayo y tiene origen afroperuano y su padre es de ascendencia andina ayacuchana*).⁴⁹ None of the magazine or newspaper articles written about the Church of Cristo Kyrios describe Saadakeem as Afro-Peruvian. For example, if they refer to

Saadakem's origins at all, they describe him as Mestizo (of mixed Indigenous and European descent).⁵⁰ Furthermore, one of the most prominent Afro-Peruvian activists I spoke to does not consider Saadakeem an African descendent and does not believe that Saadakeem descends from sacred Black religious figures.⁵¹

When I first met Javier, a prominent member of the Church of Cristo Kyrios in the Afro-Peruvian museum in Lima, I had no idea that I was about to embark upon an unforgettable experience. The subsequent chapters explore Saadakeem's verbal and visual representations of Blackness. In so doing this thesis underscores the importance of embracing and promoting a multidimensional history of Afro-Peruvians that rises above deep-seated racist conceptualizations of Black people.⁵²

Notes

¹ Saadakeem Papa Kyriakos (Pope of the Iglesia de Cristo Kyrios), in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011. Saadakeem prefers to be called by his first name.

² Kyriakos, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

³ Kyriakos, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.

⁴ Meera Venkatachalam, "Slavery in Memory: A Study of the Religious Cults of the Anlo-Ewe of Southeastern Ghana (C. 1850-Present)," dissertation, University of London, 2007, 24.

⁵ Steve J. Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds: Memory Struggles in Pinochet's Chile, 1973-1988* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 83; Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Struggles for Memory* (London: Social Sciences Research Council, 2003), 17.

⁶ Dwight N. Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," in *Loving the Body: Black Religious Studies and the Erotic*, ed. Anthony B. Pinn and Dwight N. Hopkins (Gordonsville: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 183.

⁷ Javier, "Presencia negra en la Biblia: una verdad que incómoda" (lecture, Mes de la Cultura Afroperuana, National Afro-Peruvian Museum, Lima, June 14, 2011).

⁸ While "Javier" gave me permission to use his real name, I decided to give him a pseudonym.

⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, & June 30, 2011.

¹⁰ "Fe Negra," *Caretas* (Lima), June 18, 1998, 98-100.

¹¹ See Sabrina Arroyo Aguilar, "Formas de vida e integración de los afroperuanos de hoy," *Investigaciones Sociales* 10, no. 16 (2006): 17-50.

¹² Instituto Nacional de Estadística e Informática, *Estado de la población peruana: Indocumentación y grupos étnicos* (Lima: Dirección técnica de demografía e indicadores sociales, 2007), 15, <http://www.inei.gov.pe/biblioineipub/bancopub/Est/Lib0735/Libro.pdf>.

¹³ Newton Mori, "El Pueblo Afroperuano: Principales Comunidades," map, in *Boletín De Derechos Humanos Del CEDET*, 3rd ed., vol. 2 (Lima: CEDET, 2009), 24. The same Afro-Peruvian estimates and population map located in CEDET's bulletin are also displayed in the Museo Nacional Afroperuano in Lima; Martín Benavides et al, *Más allá de los promedios: Afrodescendientes en América Latina, pobreza, discriminación social e identidad: el caso de la población afrodescendiente en el Perú*, ed. Josefina Stubbs and Hiska N. Reyes (Washington, Grupo de Análisis para el Desarrollo, 2006), 9, http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLACAFROLATINSINSPA/Resources/FINAL_Peru.pdf.

- ¹⁴ Heidi Carolyn Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru: Reviving African Musical Heritage in the Black Pacific* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), 4.
- ¹⁵ Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 87.
- ¹⁶ Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 92-93.
- ¹⁷ Mercedes Mendoz C (Meche), "Victoria Santa Cruz," *Associazione Culturale Italo-Peruviana*, November 19, 2002, accessed April 19, 2011, <http://www.peruan-ita.org/personaggi/victoriase.htm>.
- ¹⁸ Tanya Maria Golash-Boza, *Yo soy negro: Blackness in Peru* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 9.
- ¹⁹ Golash-Boza, *Yo soy negro*, 10.
- ²⁰ Golash-Boza, *Yo soy negro*, 26.
- ²¹ Marisol de La Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos: the Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919-1991* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000), 30.
- ²² Golash-Boza, *Yo soy negro*, 186-187.
- ²³ Peruvian man, in discussion with the author, July 29, 2011. This man was Catholic, middle-aged and did not identify as Black.
- ²⁴ Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 94.
- ²⁵ Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity*, 97.
- ²⁶ See Vanessa Verástegui Ollé, "Racismo y sexualidad a tres horas de Lima, la capital del Perú," *Adital*, January 25, 2007, <http://www.adital.com.br/site/noticia2.asp?lang=ES&cod=26160>; <http://vanessaverasteguiolle.blogspot.ca/>.
- ²⁷ Sylvanna M. Falcón, "Mestiza Double Consciousness: The Voices of Afro-Peruvian Women on Gendered Racism," *Gender & Society* 22, no. 5 (October 2008): 668.
- ²⁸ See Carlos Aguirre, *The Criminals of Lima and Their Worlds: The Prison Experience, 1850-1935* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).
- ²⁹ Jorge Ramírez Reyna, *Racismo, derechos humanos, inclusión social Afrodescendientes en el Perú* (Lima: Instituto Internacional de Relaciones Públicas y Comunicaciones, 2006), 95.
- ³⁰ See Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, *Cultura Política en el Perú tradición: autoritaria y democratización anómica*, ed. Gonzalo Portocarrero, et al (Lima: Red para el desarrollo de las ciencias sociales en el Perú, 2010).
- ³¹ Ximena Salazar and NIMH Collaborative HIV/STI Prevention Trial Group et al, "Influencia del contexto sociocultural en la percepción del riesgo y la negociación de protección en hombres homosexuales pobres de la costa peruana," *Cadernos de Saúde Pública* 22, no. 10 (2006): 2097-2104, <http://dx.doi.org.login.ezproxy.library.ualberta.ca/10.1590/S0102-311X2006001000015>.
- ³² "Municipalidad de Lima pidió perdón por documento que dispone la 'erradicación de homosexuales'", *El Comercio*, June 28, 2012, <http://elcomercio.pe/actualidad/1434716/noticia-municipalidad-lima-pidio-perdon-documento-que-dispone-erradicacion-homosexuales>.
- ³³ Iglesia de Cristo Kyrios, *Presencia negra en la Biblia: una verdad que incómoda* (Lima: Museo Nacional Afroperuano, 2011).
- ³⁴ Saadakeem Papa Kyriakos, lecture, Universidad del Norte, Lima, June 21, 2011.
- ³⁵ Garciela Mochkofsky, "Un dios propicio," *El Clarín*, April 20, 2006, Zona <http://edant.clarin.com/suplementos/zona/2008/04/20/z-04015.htm>.
- ³⁶ Garciela Mochkofsky, "Un dios propicio," *El Clarín*.
- ³⁷ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ³⁸ Despite the fact that "Javier," "Bernardo" and Luis" gave me permission to use their real names I employ pseudonyms.
- ³⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 25, 28, 2011.
- ⁴⁰ Saadakeem claims that the Church of Cristo is a registered charity in Lima and told me that all members must donate 10% of their salary to the Church. I did not see any evidence of charity work.
- ⁴¹ Bernardo, in discussion with the author, June 25 & July 2, 2011.
- ⁴² Saadakeem describes his religion as being the opposite of Voudou. In so doing he dismisses Voudou as a non-religion. He declared that "Vodunes are religion". See Jean Price-Mars, *Ainsi Parla l'Oncle* (Ottawa: Editions Leméac, 1973).
- ⁴³ I employ Saadakeem's spelling of "Orishas".
- ⁴⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, July 2 & July 3, 2011.

⁴⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 3 & 7, 2011; Bernardo, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.

⁴⁶ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 3, 2011.

⁴⁷ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011. Saadakeem affirms that the Afro-Israeli group fled from Jerusalem to Ghana after a European emperor attacked their religious community. For a historical overview of slavery in Peru see Federick Bowser, *The African Slave In Colonial Peru, 1524-1650* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1974); Peter Blanchard, *Slavery & Abolition in Early Republican Peru* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, 1992).

⁴⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁴⁹ Sabino Arroyo Aguilar, "Formas de vida e integración de los afroperuanos de hoy," *Investigaciones sociales* 10, no. 16 (2006): 32. Saadakeem told me that he inherited the building that houses the sanctuary from his mother.

⁵⁰ "Fe Negra," *Caretas*, June 18, 1998, 98.

⁵¹ Afro-Peruvian activist, in discussion with the author, July 3, 2011.

**Excavating Afro-Peruvian History by Other Means:
The Church of Cristo Kyrios and the Revision of the Memory of Slavery**

Con frecuencia se cree erróneamente que el pueblo negro y su cultura Africana no han sido capaces de producir algún tipo de filosofía con pensamientos sapiensales que sean expresados en proverbios o máximas morales. Por lo cual siempre han calificado a la cultura negra Africana de “primitiva y salvaje” y a los negros de individuos moralmente inferiores.¹ –La Iglesia de Cristo Kyrios

Frequently, people erroneously believe that the Black community and its African culture have not been capable of producing any type of philosophy with wise thoughts expressed in proverbs or moral maxims. As a result, the Black African culture has always been categorized as “primitive and savage” and individual Blacks as morally inferior.² –The Church of Cristo Kyrios

Written in the first and only edition of the Church of Cristo Kyrios’s journal, these statements reflect the racist ideas that Saadakeem and the Church of Cristo Kyrios claim to be fighting against: the notion that Blacks are unintelligent, brutish and immoral.³ In 1885 Haitian anthropologist and lawyer Anténor Firmin observed the same racist ideology noted by the Church of Cristo Kyrios.⁴ Firmin accused many “defamers of the Black race” (*rompeurs de nègres*) of playing a role aimed at misrepresenting and erasing Blacks.⁵ Firmin argued that the “defamers of the Black race” supported their claims of intellectual superiority by arguing that people of African descent were incapable of rising above fetishism or delivering justice.⁶ Indeed, José Carlos Mariátegui, one of Peru’s most prominent twentieth-century intellectuals, described the Black slave as fetishistic and darkly superstitious.⁷ In addition, Peruvian writer Clemente Palma (1872-1946) declared that “the Black race is an inferior race because it does not meet the intellectual and character conditions that sociology assigns to the improvable races” (*la raza negra es una raza inferior porque no reúne las condiciones de intelectualidad y carácter que la sociología asigna a las razas perfectibles*).⁸ Furthermore, Palma described Blacks as

“cowardly, resentful and lackluster” (cobarde, rencoroso y sin energía).⁹ Saadakeem’s divine messages attempt to contest such racist assertions by illustrating Blacks as religious, intelligent and blessed by a God willing to exact divine justice against anti-Black racists. In addition, Saadakeem’s divine messages challenge the image of Black slaves as socially dead and incapable of resisting Christianization.¹⁰ Social death refers to the conviction that isolation from Africa permanently destroyed slaves’ sense of community and independence.¹¹ The social death theory does not consider slave resiliency, strength or ability to forge a coherent social community. Saadakeem contends that the religious history of the Church of Cristo Kyrios is testament to slaves’ profound cultural bond.

Crucially, Saadakeem weaves himself into his religious slave narratives as the sole descendent of the sacred figures the Church of Cristo Kyrios worships. As such, Saadakeem is the inheritor of supernatural gifts, namely the ability to communicate with divine messengers. Furthermore, by locating himself within the sacred genealogy of the Religion of the Plantation, Saadakeem is not only reconstructing slave history, but also asserting his position of power within the hierarchy of the Church of Cristo Kyrios. Saadakeem looks towards the slave past to create narratives that remake his present. This chapter is less concerned with the historical “truth” of Saadakeem’s messages, than with how Saadakeem employs history to shape the Church of Cristo Kyrios as a vehicle to learn about the slave past and to assert how Black history is still silenced in Peru.

In addition to inserting himself into the divine genealogy of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, Saadakeem also integrates several documented historical figures into his religious stories. Drawing upon aspects of research conducted by scholars helps validate and

contextualize the historicity of his messages. The first message of this chapter introduces Babakwame, a supernatural African religious leader who became a slave in Lima after being captured by John Hawkins, a significant slave trader frequently studied by historians. The subsequent message this chapter explores concerns a maroon from Panama named Bayano who was eventually captured by colonial officials and transported to Lima.¹² While historical records indicate that Bayano was indeed a maroon from Panama who eventually arrived in Peru by force, his fate remains a mystery to historians.¹³ Thanks to divine messages, Saadakeem is confident that he knows the details of Bayano's life in Peru. The Babakwame and Bayano messages represent slavery in Peru in the sixteenth century. Saadakeem also integrates concrete physical spaces into his messages. The backlash the Church of Cristo Kyrios bravely confronted when attempting to re-appropriate the Maranga Chapel in the twentieth century is the theme of the last religious message this chapter explores.¹⁴ The Maranga Chapel is an abandoned sanctuary located mere minutes from the Church of Cristo Kyrios. Saadakeem directed me to the chapel where the events of the Bayano message transpired.¹⁵ "Maranga" is not only the name Saadakeem bestowed upon the Chapel, but also the name he uses to refer to the geographic location of the Church of Cristo Kyrios and its surroundings.¹⁶ Saadakeem claims that the area under scrutiny was once the domain of the Maranga Plantation.¹⁷

Saadakeem relayed the sacred messages presented in this chapter to me at his kitchen table as well as at the grounds of the Maranga Chapel. He also shared these same messages to his congregation and presented aspects of his version of slave history to the public at such venues as the National Afro-Peruvian Museum. Each time Saadakeem

reiterated these messages to me the details differed. I therefore chose the most consistent versions to analyze in this chapter.

Before Saadakeem related the Babakwame message to me he asserted that “people have an extremely incorrect view that all slaves were Catholic” (se tiene una impresión muy equivocada de que todos los esclavos eran católicos) and articulated that Blacks cleverly practiced their religion in secret: “Blacks maintained their religion in secret [...]. They were very intelligent at hiding their things [beliefs]” (los negros mantuvieron su religión en secreto [...]. Ellos eran muy inteligentes para esconder sus cosas).¹⁸

Saadakeem’s statements directly contest the views articulated by Peruvian historian José Antonio del Busto Duthurburu (1932-2006) who strongly argues that Catholic conversions were both ubiquitous and genuine.¹⁹ While del Busto Duthurburu acknowledges that some people believe that Blacks in the Diaspora practiced African religions under the guise of Christianity, he declares that no such ruse occurred in Peru:

Se ha dicho que el negro vivió en América una religión africana disfrazada. Que en el Dios cristiano adoró a Olofin, que en la Virgen veneró a Yemayá y que en los santos oró a los Orichás. Nada de esto, que se sepa, ocurrió en el Perú colonial. Aquí la conversión fue masiva, sincera, ortodoxa, aunque, naturalmente, teñida por la superstición. La prueba la ofrece la Inquisición: nunca quemó a un negro por hereje o por idólatra.²⁰

They say that the Black in America practiced a clandestine African religion. Under the guise of the Christian God they worshiped Olofin, under the guise of the Virgin they venerated Yemayá and under the guise of saints they prayed to the Orichas. Nothing similar, as far as one can determine, occurred in colonial Peru. Here, conversion was massive, sincere, orthodox, although, naturally, coloured with superstition. The Inquisition offers proof to support this argument: a Black was never burned for heresy or for idolatry.²¹

Unlike the above passage cited from the work of del Busto Duthurburu, James Sweet uses the Brazilian case to resolutely emphasize slaves’ ancestral ties and ability to think independently. Sweet acknowledges that most Blacks refused to abandon their traditions

and beliefs and provides anecdotal evidence from mid-seventeenth century Angola to support his stance.²² Sweet relates that when the Catholic priest Father Antônio Romano attempted to convert Malumba a Cambolo, the soba (village headman) of the province of Kisma, he was shocked to learn that the African leader had already received baptism in the Holy Spirit.²³ Immediately upon discovering this news, the priest scolded the headman for failing to uphold Christian law. The soba retorted that salvation was not his priority and added that he yearned to be near his ancestors.²⁴ Father Romano countered “[They are] in hell, burning in the infernal fire with the demons for eternity.”²⁵ Unperturbed by the threat of eternal inferno and determined to maintain a close connection with his ancestors, the soba declared that he wanted to go where his ancestors were.²⁶ As Sweet observes, Malumba a Cambolo preferred eternal damnation with his ancestors than a Christian heaven isolated from his people.²⁷ Like Saadakeem’s messages, the dialogue between Father Romano and Malumba a Cambolo conveys how much slaves valued their ancestors and staunchly maintained their religious convictions; despite superficial Christian conversions, Blacks sustained their own faith.

While Saadakeem asserts that Afro-Peruvian slave history is silenced or misrepresented, there are historians who objectively research this topic. For example, Carlos Aguirre contends that Black slaves in Peru diligently resisted slavery and engaged in both direct and indirect forms of resistance.²⁸ Aguirre explains that while marronage (cimarronaje) and flight (fuga) were often the most effective and frequent forms of resistance, remaining under the dominion of a slave owner did not necessarily reflect or translate into utter ideological control.²⁹ Aguirre cites James Scott when he reasons that surviving everyday life as a slave can be a result of a series of pragmatic adaptations to

extremely adverse situations.³⁰ While there are a plethora of monographs and historical literary works that document and discuss the inhumane and abominable practices and conditions of slavery in such countries as Haiti and Brazil, the torture of slavery and the punishments doled out by slave owners and the colonial legal system are also evident, albeit to a less extensive degree, in historical research regarding slavery in Peru.³¹ For example, Christine Hünefeldt's investigation of slavery in Lima reveals that bakeries (panaderías) served as both a bread-making business as well as a detention centre for "unruly" slaves.³² The punishments endured by slaves in these peculiar bakeries included whipping and shackling.³³ Despite the extreme adversity of slavery, Hünefeldt reveals how slaves rebelled against a seemingly insurmountable system. Hünefeldt presents the case of Julián, a slave who suffered severe abuse in a bakery in Lima in 1810.³⁴ His mother complained to authorities that her son was lashed brutally, "almost to the point of murdering him, tearing his buttocks to ribbons, with no attributable reason."³⁵ Upon confirming Julián's brutalized physical condition, the judge granted him permission to receive medical treatment in a hospital.³⁶ Julián subsequently recovered and thanks to his mother's protests, managed to avoid his slave owner's attempt to transfer him to another hacienda.³⁷ Hünefeldt concludes that it was common practice to deposit slaves in bakeries in order to prevent them from fleeing or to shape their reputation as disobedient, thereby building and inventing an argument to justify sale.³⁸ In the case of Julián, his mother managed to gain legal permission to release him from the bakery and to "match" him with a "suitable" slave owner.³⁹ As Hünefeldt illustrates, some slaves managed to escape from the bakeries with the help of loved ones. Slaves challenged their status by whatever means possible and strove to take advantage of any avenue that might lead to a better life.

Other historians such as Denys Cuche also highlight how many Blacks in Peru engaged in subtle forms of resistance and expressions of protest. Cuche's interpretation of Blacks' behaviour during Saint's Week in Peru illustrates this point:

De manera inversa, su odio por el personaje de judas revelaba la frustración y la agresividad reprimida de los negros. Durante la Semana Santa, el muñeco gigante que representaba a judas era víctima de los negros que lo insultaban y golpeaban. Al destruir a judas, hombre blanco, los negros [...] se vengaban simbólicamente de sus patronos blancos sin ningún riesgo.⁴⁰

In a reverse manner, Blacks' hate for the Biblical character of Judas revealed their frustration and repressed aggression. During Holy Week Blacks victimized, insulted and beat up the figure that represented Judas. Upon destroying the White man, Judas, the Blacks symbolically took revenge against their White owners without any risk.⁴¹

The manifestation of contra-ideologies can be overt or covert. Both forms serve to question the dominant values demonstrated by colonial slave societies.⁴² Aguirre alludes to James Scott's insistence that daily acts of resistance that may appear trivial upon first glance are nevertheless valuable expressions of rebellion.⁴³ Saadakeem's Babakwame message depicts how slaves in Lima steadfastly rebelled against oppression by engaging in both explicit and covert tactics. The Babakwame message contends that the desire and determination to practice the Religion of the Plantation motivated slaves to rebel.⁴⁴ Rather than wholeheartedly adopting the religion of their enslavers and of colonial society more broadly, Saadakeem contends that slaves in Peru created and maintained a veneer of Catholicism to protect their right to practice their own faith, the Religion of the Plantation. Saadakeem's arguments correspond with Aguirre, Hünefeldt and Cuche's historical examples that demonstrate how slaves cleverly used any avenue possible to contest their position of servitude.⁴⁵

In the process of remaking the slave past, Saadakeem incorporates John Hawkins, a significant player in the slave trade, into his Babakwame message. The work of many professional historians, like Harry Kelsey, attests to John Hawkins's prominence in the slave trade. Kelsey confirms that the profits that Hawkins earned from slavery delighted investors.⁴⁶ Hawkins's reputation eventually led Englishman Williams Garvey, Clarenceaux King of Arms, to grant him a coat of arms.⁴⁷ Garvey declared that Hawkins was "lineally descended from his ancestors a gentelman" of "courageous worthe and famious enterprises."⁴⁸ Hawkins's coat of arms included a prominent depiction of a Black male slave with a thick rope tied around his torso.⁴⁹ Apparently revenue triumphed all other concerns and was a marker of a true "gentleman." The harsh tone Saadakeem used when he pronounced Hawkins's name was perhaps an expression of his disgust at the slave trade.

Saadakeem's Babakwame message is an origins narrative that explains how Babakwame clandestinely inaugurated the Religion of the Plantation in Peru. In the Babakwame message Saadakeem asserts that Queen Elizabeth the First financed John Hawkins to travel to Ghana where he captured Babakwame, a prestigious priest of the Afro-Israeli Religion.⁵⁰ Hawkins subsequently forced Babakwame onto a slave ship bound for Jamaica.⁵¹ Saadakeem related that for fear that Babakwame, a man with an impressive muscular stature, would escape or attempt to rebel, Hawkins attached his ankle chain to a massive rock.⁵² Unbeknownst to Hawkins, Babakwame considered the rock sacred.⁵³ Shortly after arriving in Jamaica, Spanish slavers purchased Babakwame, along with seventy other Akan slaves, and shipped him like disposable cargo to the

Hacienda Maranga, a sugar and cotton plantation located in Lima, Peru.⁵⁴ Saadakeem explained,

Nuestra iglesia llegó acá en Perú en el siglo 16 con Babakwame que fue un hombre capturado en Ghana. Él era un gran sacerdote. Fue capturado por John Hawkins que fue enviado por la Reina Isabel I [...de] Inglaterra. Este pirata negrero captura a Babakwame y lo pone en un barco y lo lleva a Jamaica. Fue vendido en Jamaica a los españoles en tiempo cuando la isla de Jamaica era propiedad española. Y los españoles trajeron Babakwame y 70 negros akán acá a Perú a la hacienda Maranga.⁵⁵

Our church arrived in Peru in the sixteenth century with Babakwame who was a man captured in Ghana. He was a great priest. He was captured by John Hawkins who was sent by Queen Elizabeth the First [...of] England. This slave trader pirate captured Babakwame and put him in a ship and took him to Jamaica. He was sold to the Spanish in Jamaica during the time when the island of Jamaica was a Spanish property. And the Spanish brought Babakwame and 70 Akan Blacks here to Peru to the Maranga Hacienda.⁵⁶

While Saadakeem acknowledges that slaves originated from a variety of African countries, he prioritizes the Akan community in his message.⁵⁷ Due to Babakwame's threatening physical size and obvious prowess, the *hacendado* (landowner) of the Maranga plantation, don Marcus Oleste, chose to keep Babakwame chained to the cumbersome rock.⁵⁸ Saadakeem claims that Babakwame is the slave depicted on John Hawkins' coat of arms.⁵⁹ Perhaps this affirmation is not solely an attempt to assert the historical existence of Babakwame through Hawkins' involvement with the slave trade, but is also an attempt to restore the humanity of slaves by endowing a precise history to the nameless Black slave prominently featured on Hawkins' coat of arms.⁶⁰ Saadakeem names the slave displayed on the coat of arms "Babakwame" and depicts him as a remarkable Black man who possessed tremendous religious strength that transcended slavery and mortality. Indeed, Saadakeem and his followers celebrate Babawame and his descendents as divine figures of the Religion of the Plantation.

In contradistinction to “defamers of the Black race” who declared that Blacks were incapable of meaningful religion, Saadakeem emphasizes that Babakwame had tenacious religious convictions.⁶¹ Babakwame adamantly rejected pork and refused to engage in slave labour on Saturdays, a holy day of rest for believers of the Religion of the Plantation.⁶²

Saadakeem’s message continued, relaying that plantation owner don Oleste was infuriated by Babakwame’s demonstration of independence and subjected him to brutal beatings.⁶³ One day, perhaps tired of attempting to demoralise a man of such mental fortitude, don Oleste decided to permit Babakwame the right to practice his faith.⁶⁴ As a result “God blessed the plantation” (Dios bendigó la plantación) and the sugar cane and cotton grew profusely, thereby substantially increasing the plantation’s revenue.⁶⁵ Don Oleste believed that Babakwame and the Religion of the Plantation blessed the harvest.⁶⁶ Accordingly, he awarded Babakwame a piece of land not only for personal cultivation, but also to build a religious sanctuary for the slaves.⁶⁷ In order to complete this task Don Oleste granted Babakwame permission to break loose from the ankle chains and rock.⁶⁸ In a symbolic act of freedom Babakwame buried the chains in the soil where he would begin constructing the chapel.⁶⁹ He carved an altar out of a section of the rock and used the remaining piece as the chapel’s foundation.⁷⁰

Babakwame’s act of constructing the foundation of the Chapel of the Religion of the Plantation with a sacred rock from Africa strikes me as a representation of Black power. This interpretation corresponds to Hayden White’s understanding of the role of tropes such as synecdoche and allegory in narratives. Synecdoche is derived from a Greek word meaning “taking up together” and is defined as “a figure of speech in which the part

stands for the whole, and thus something else is understood within the thing mentioned.”⁷¹ Allegory refers to a story that conveys both a perspicuous and underlying meaning. According to Hayden White, synecdoche plays an important role in historical expressions because such figurative tools aid the author or speaker in representing “(human) events in such a way that their status as parts of meaningful wholes will be made manifest.”⁷² Keeping the tropological strategies of synecdoche and allegory in mind, the rock in Saadakeem’s Babakwame narrative may figuratively represent Africa as a pillar of eternal strength, a foundation of the Religion of the Plantation and the essence of Black Peru. According to this interpretation, the Church of Cristo Kyrios is a manifestation of the strength of Blackness and the power of Africa through the ages. Hayden White posits that the importance of representations in narratives lie in their ability to reflect, even if only indirectly, how an individual or group of people imagine/s a reality.⁷³ Moreover, Hayden White exclaims that “language is more adequately characterized as being neither a free creation of human consciousness nor merely a product of environmental forces acting on the psyche, but rather the *instrument of mediation* between consciousness and the world that consciousness inhabits.”⁷⁴

Saadakeem’s messages do indeed act as a mediator between his hate of anti-Black sentiments and his desire for a Blacker world, a world where anti-Black actions are punished and eradicated to pave the way for a more just and promising future for Afro-Peruvians. This hope is exemplified in Saadakeem’s revelation of the return of Kyrios Zulú to exact revenge upon racists and improve the world for Blacks.⁷⁵ The first and only journal launched and published by the Church of Cristo Kyrios explains that “the religion of Kyrios arises from the Black soul” (La religión de Kyrios surgida del alma negra). The

journal adds that “Kyrios defends the spiritual values inherited from African culture and protects the Black man from racial attacks” (defiende los valores de la espiritualidad de la herencia cultural Africana, protege al hombre negro de los ataques de racismo).⁷⁶ By referring to a “Black soul” in positive terms the journal challenges what the clergy refer to as the misguided and ubiquitous belief that “everything that is beautiful, just, good and holy is White” (todo lo bello, justo, bueno y santo es blanco).⁷⁷

Saadakeem evinced that don Oleste did not grant rewards to Babakwame without guidelines and stipulations. For example, the hacendado demanded that the chapel of the Religion of the Plantation replicate the architecture of Catholic churches in order to protect the hacienda (and the hacendado himself) from the Inquisition’s wrath: “the owner of the plantation told Babakwame that the chapel must have the appearance of a Catholic sanctuary in order to protect them from the Inquisition’s persecution” (el dueño de la plantación le dijo a Babakwame que esta capilla tenía que tener la apariencia de un santuario católico para protegerse de la persecución de la inquisición).⁷⁸ In this manner, the slaves could minimize unwanted attention to their faith and the hacendado would evade repercussions from the Inquisition.⁷⁹ By giving the hacendado, not the slaves, the credit for devising the plan to disguise the chapel of the Religion of the plantation as a Catholic church, this message misses out on an opportunity to present slaves as intelligent.

Slaves yearned for freedom and devised and pursued methods that widened any openings within slave society that might lead to an increase in sovereignty. However, as Hünefeldt acknowledges, even when colonial courts granted and created freedom cards, owners did not necessarily administer them to their slaves.⁸⁰ This historical occurrence

also transpires in the Babakwame message. According to Saadakeem, don Oleste died before he could bring the promise of freedom he made to Babakwame to fruition.⁸¹ Although don Oleste signed a freedom card and saved money for Babakwame's return to Africa, he did not get the chance to give these valuable items to Babakwame.⁸² He did, however, inform Babakwame of his decisions.⁸³ The hacienda administrator hid the freedom card and money destined to Babakwame and the new hacendado feigned ignorance of these events and ushered in an era of bloody abuse.⁸⁴ The entrance of such a cruel slave owner suggests that don Oleste was an exception. An increase in physical violence combined with neglect, including a precarious food supply and a severe reduction in sleeping hours, made an already wretched environment even more nefarious.⁸⁵ Babakwame was particularly affected by the hacendado's insistence that slaves labour on Saturdays, a holy day of rest in the Religion of the Plantation.⁸⁶ The hacendado's decision to abolish the slaves' right to practice the Religion of the Plantation was the breaking point that compelled Babakwame and his followers to act: "he rose up in rebellion" (*él se levanta en rebelión*).⁸⁷ This revolt demonstrates the religiosity, agency and solidarity among slaves. Far from passive, Black slaves astutely coordinated a rebellion against the horrendous injustices they suffered.⁸⁸

The hacendado feared the power of "Babakwame, an African warrior" (*un africano guerrero*), and sought help from colonial officials. Unable to combat this increased resistance Babakwame sought the help of an obliging local Indigenous cacique.⁸⁹ Saadakeem asserted that alliances between Africans and Indigenous peoples were not uncommon because they understood that in uniting against the common oppressor, the White European, they stood a better chance in procuring their freedom.⁹⁰ Such an alliance

would help Blacks preserve their African heritage and more importantly, safeguard their religion.

Hayden White asserts that narratives are data that reflect how their creators perceive and articulate the meaning of their cultures and notions of reality.⁹¹ Saadakeem's messages certainly express his idea of reality and vision of Black culture. For Saadakeem, culture and religion are synonymous. According to Saadakeem, fighting for religious freedom was fundamental to slaves because religion is the equivalent of culture.⁹² Thus, Saadakeem believes that if the Spanish succeeded in destroying Black religion, they would have also annihilated Black culture.⁹³ Furthermore, Saadakeem opines that preserving religion and culture fosters Black unity.⁹⁴ In other words, preserving the Religion of the Plantation fosters and leads to Black solidarity today.⁹⁵ This concept is vital because in a country where music, dance and sometimes cuisine are considered central components to Afro-Peruvian culture and often treated as the only contributions Blacks offered the nation, other aspects of Black culture are not acknowledged. By emphasizing Black religion, Saadakeem suggests that Black culture includes much more than the musical, artistic and culinary talents that some members of the Afro-Peruvian community exhibit. In other words, Saadakeem strives to broaden Peruvian society's definition of Afro-Peruvian culture by focusing on religion.

Saadakeem's assertion that Blacks have culture because they have religion rises above many racist views expressed by influential Peruvians. For example, José Carlos Mariátegui, one of Peru's most distinguished twentieth-century writers and intellectuals, articulated the worthlessness of Blacks and their alleged hindrance to the cultural growth of the nation in the following manner:

El aporte del negro, venido como esclavo, casi como mercadería, aparece más nulo y negativo aún. El negro trajo su sensualidad, su superstición, su primitivismo. No estaba en condiciones de contribuir a la creación de una cultura, sino más bien de estorbarla con el crudo y viviente influjo de su barbarie⁹⁶

The contributions of Blacks, who arrived as slaves, almost like merchandise, appears even more null and negative. Blacks brought their sensuality, their superstition and their primitiveness. They were not in any condition to contribute to the creation of a culture; instead, they impeded culture with the crude and vigorous influences of their barbarity.⁹⁷

By asserting that the Religion of the Plantation (and its current manifestation, the Church of Cristo Kyrios) was and continues to be Black culture, Saadakeem challenges the distorted image of the worthless, moronic, uncultured and brutish Black. In addition, Saadakeem's emphasis on the Peruvian origins of the Religion of the Plantation and the Church of Cristo Kyrios supports his argument about Black culture on a national level. Although Saadakeem acknowledges the influence of African and Afro-Israeli beliefs, he also affirms that "we are original and indigenously Peruvian. We do not come from a foreign and international group that arrived [in Peru]. We are a native church [...]. We are unique" (nosotros somos original[es] y autóctonamente peruanos. Nosotros no procedemos de ningún grupo foráneo o extranjero que haya venido [...]. Somos una iglesia nativa. Somos únicos).⁹⁸ In underscoring the Church of Cristo Kyrios as the only indigenous religion to Peru, Saadakeem is not only dismissing Indigenous cultures, but also highlighting the valuable role Blacks played and continue to play in Peru. Saadakeem's Babakwame message demonstrates that slaves possessed a myriad of intellectual capabilities.

Babakwame also underscores slaves' desire to protect their community. Saadakeem narrates that while the slaves prepared for battle against the hacendado and his men, the women and children hid in a secret tunnel from which they would eventually escape.⁹⁹

Saadakeem stressed that the slaves' ability to organize and defend their rights illustrates that they were not primitive, simple-minded, passive savages. Indeed, he emphasized that before being trafficked into slavery many Blacks were military generals, doctors, scientists, warriors, artists, magicians and religious leaders. Saadakeem reiterated "they [the slaves] were not empty" (no eran vacíos).¹⁰⁰

Saadakeem explained that Babakwame and his generals fiercely led the other slaves against the cruel hacendado and his men.¹⁰¹ Fearing defeat, the hacendado requested help from colonial troops.¹⁰² Saadakeem narrates:

El dueño de la plantación sabía de que no iba poder someter a Babakwame porque era un hombre guerrero africano y que tenía mucho valor, mucho *pride* [...el dueño de la plantación] luchaba mucho entonces pidió ayuda de las tropas militares de la colonia. Babakwame sabía esto y dividió sus tropas [...]. Esto te demuestra de que los negros estaban bien organizados, o sea, los esclavos no eran gente primitiva [...], tonta, salvaje [...o] pasivas.¹⁰³

The owner of the plantation knew that he would not be able to conquer Babakwame because he was a male African warrior and he had a lot of courage, a lot of pride [...]. He [the plantation owner] fought a lot then asked the colonial military troops for assistance. Babakwame was aware of this and divided his troops [...]. This shows that the Blacks were well organized, or in other words, slaves were not primitive [...], stupid, savage [or] passive people.¹⁰⁴

This quote indicates that at the onset of the rebellion the slaves had the upper hand and demonstrated their combat abilities. However, when colonial troops intervened in order to ensure the hacendado's victory, Babakwame and his generals were captured, chained and executed in a gruesome public spectacle ("They were crucified" – fueron crucificados).¹⁰⁵ Given the paucity of historical scholarship that addresses the abuses suffered by Black slaves in Peru, the fate of Babakwame serves to remind the listener of the horrors and consequences of slavery. While Babakwame only appears in Saadakeem's messages, Babakwame represents the many Black slaves who struggled for

their human rights. The construction of the Babakwame message is a strategy to remember the many Africans who died from the horrors of slavery. Perhaps constructing religious slave messages is Saadakeem's way of demonstrating that Afro-Peruvians do indeed have their own philosophy, history and moral maxims. Significantly, in executing Babakwame, colonial officials did not succeed in eradicating the Religion of the Plantation as evidenced by the existence of the Church of Cristo Kyrios. Nor did colonial officials destroy the divine family line of Babakwame. Saadakeem professes that both his sacred blood as a descendent of Babakwame and the Church of Cristo Kyrios are surviving manifestations of the Religion of the Plantation.

Elizabeth Jelin's description of narrative construction can help elucidate why slavery is such a central component to Saadakeem's messages. Jelin expounds that narrative memories, specifically the "wounds of memory," lead to traumatic ruptures and dangerous silences and excesses in historical accounts.¹⁰⁶ In the case of Saadakeem's narration of the colonial period, the inhumane and abominable practice of slavery serves as the traumatic rupture that is associated with feelings, events and actions that are unexpressed or inadequately articulated in the historical record.¹⁰⁷ According to Paul Gilroy, Black slavery is the quintessence of "Black victimage" and racism is the driving force for the blatant erasure of the cultural revenues of Black life, a tremendous component of humanity's history.¹⁰⁸ Jelin defines "victim" as "a passive being, harmed by the actions of others. The victim is never an agent, never productive."¹⁰⁹ He or she receives blows but is construed as incapable of provoking or responding."¹¹⁰ Since historical events gain meaning in the present via the processes of forgetting and remembering, the one-dimensional vision of Black slaves as passive victims can invade how people and

societies think about Blackness in general.¹¹¹ Saadakeem attempts to combat this tendency by presenting Black slaves as capable of asserting their rights, resisting slavery and acting in solidarity against injustices.

In an effort to force Peruvians to rethink any negative perceptions they may have towards Afro-Peruvians, as well as how many Afro-Peruvian men may view themselves, Saadakeem and the Church of Cristo Kyrios strive to re-present colonial slaves. Paul Connerton defines “re-presentation” as the reappearance of that which has previously vanished.¹¹² In the context of colonial history that which has vanished includes the dignity, integrity and value of Blacks. Central to Saadakeem’s discourse is Black resistance and power. Saadakeem places slavery and the contributions and resiliency of slaves at the centre of his monologues because he believes that the “slave mentality” continues to plague Blacks in Peru. In so doing, Saadakeem hopes to awaken Afro-Peruvian consciousness and encourage Blacks to join the Church of Cristo Kyrios.

Saadakeem maintains that he unearthed the life of Bayano, an Afro-Panamanian leader who was enslaved and taken to the Maranga Hacienda in Peru, via celestial messages.¹¹³ Bayano developed a close friendship with Babakwame and thanks to the efforts of both Babakwame and a local marquis, Bayano managed to escape from slavery.¹¹⁴ Saadakeem remarked that some administrators deplored slavery and secretly helped Blacks escape this abominable system.¹¹⁵ Since they also had to protect themselves, Saadakeem explained that anti-slavery administrators hid and/or destroyed all evidence of their involvement in liberating slaves.¹¹⁶ He exclaimed that this is yet another reason for the paucity of records that explicitly document Black history.¹¹⁷

By dedicating an entire message to Bayano, Saadakeem not only asserts his own unique access to the supernatural, but also contends that he is a credible historian because he has the ability to “solve historical mysteries.”¹¹⁸ Saadakeem excavates Afro-Peruvian history by combining supernatural methods with research documented by professional historians. This process is most conspicuous in Saadakeem’s Bayano message.

Saadakeem draws and elaborates upon existing historical research. Professional historians like Christine Hünefeldt acknowledge that a Panamanian slave route existed until the port of Buenos Aires surpassed and replaced the Panamanian port in 1779.¹¹⁹ Given the salient role of Panama in the slave trade, Bayano’s slave route trajectory is representative.

According to historian Ruth Pike, Bayano was a maroon in Panama in the sixteenth century who fought for many years against the Spanish colonial government.¹²⁰ Bayano and his band of maroons defeated three military raids sponsored by the Governor of Panama.¹²¹ Six years later officials finally succeeded in capturing Bayano via a ruse.¹²² In 1558, the general who led the expeditionary force against Bayano and his maroon stronghold took Bayano to Peru as proof that he captured the legendary maroon.¹²³ Pike notes that the maroons continued to revolt even after Bayano left.¹²⁴ In fact, the rebels even attracted more slave fugitives.¹²⁵ As Pike observes, there are several versions of the fate of Bayano that circulate among historians.¹²⁶ Saadakeem told me that he enjoys solving historical mysteries that baffle historians.¹²⁷ Saadakeem shares his version of Bayano’s fate with the intent of completing Bayano’s biography.

Saadakeem’s Bayano message conveys the intelligence, rebelliousness, power and success of Bayano when he was a slave in Lima. This message also demonstrates the cooperative work among slaves in their struggle for freedom, especially religious

freedom. In order to escape slavery and protect his fellow slaves, Bayano feigned his own death and subsequently lived in the secret basement of the Maranga Chapel.¹²⁸ Saadakeem stresses that without the help of other slaves Bayano would not have been able to escape slavery.¹²⁹ Fleeing slavery was not Bayano's only objective, he also wanted to protect the Religion of the Plantation, the same religion that the Church of Cristo Kyrios perpetuates ("Bayano protected the Religion of the Plantation" – Bayano protegió la Religión de la Plantación). Saadakeem told me that each night Bayano covered his naked body with white flour and roamed throughout the neighbourhood like a zombie in order to deter Whites from daring to enter and investigate the plantations' religious activities.¹³⁰ Bayano successfully prevented colonial authorities from discovering the true identity of the chapel; non-Blacks shrieked and ran away in terror when they encountered Bayano's zombie persona.¹³¹

I interpret Bayano's act of covering his body in white flour in multiple ways. Firstly, Bayano's version of whiteface strikes me as an attempt to reverse the "vile racist mockery" inherent in Blackface.¹³² This is pertinent because according to Heidi Carolyn Feldman "there has never been a widespread public outcry against blackface as a form of racism in Peru."¹³³ She adds that few voices protested when a White actor performed Black face to represent a slave character in a 1988 television miniseries based on the novel *Matalaché*.¹³⁴ Furthermore, José Durand, founder and director of the *Pancho Fierro Company* embraced blackface.¹³⁵ Many accredit this company for initiating the 1950s artistic "Afro-Peruvian revival."¹³⁶ By creating a white-masked Black man who frightens Whites with their own image, the mocked becomes the mocker, thereby shifting the balance of power.¹³⁷ In this manner, I feel that the "zombie" Bayano can be indirectly

interpreted as a protest against the use of blackface. Furthermore, Bayano's actions can be understood not only as a stance against slavery and colonialism, but also as a sign of racial mutability, blurring the boundaries between White and Black.¹³⁸ Unlike the traditional artistic theatrical and musical use of Blackface, however, Bayano employs whiteface in an extremely serious context, far removed from the entertainment business.

Saadakeem reasons that the zombie performance exerted an enduring psychological effect on the community: Whites avoided the plantation and Bayano's actions became legendary.¹³⁹ Saadakeem affirms that the success of the zombie practice is evidenced in the decision of many subsequent slaves to continue the zombie tradition after Bayano left the plantation and permanently escaped slavery.¹⁴⁰ This indicates that Bayano was not an exception; many other slaves possessed the same courage, determination and resourcefulness as Bayano. Bayano's emancipation from slavery can be interpreted as a symbol of hope because it suggests that freedom is attainable.

In the Bayano narrative Saadakeem reverses the common definition of zombie as an evil spirit. Rather than simply "flesh that takes directions from someone," the zombie in Saadakeem's story demonstrates that a slave can take control of his own life while concomitantly deceiving enemies into believing he is simply part of the "animated dead," the "soulless husk[s] deprived of freedom."¹⁴¹ Moreover, instead of fearing the possibility of a zombie transformation, the slave in Saadakeem's message transforms himself into a zombie. In representing or reimagining the zombie in this manner, Saadakeem questions the idea that slaves were incapable of asserting their power. In other words, Saadakeem challenges the image of slaves as helpless victims and instead purports that slaves were clever, brave and steadfast rebels.

The zombie tactic expressed in Saadakeem's message is not without its disadvantages since it can alternatively be interpreted as a reaffirmation of Blacks as evil and vindictive creatures. Joan Dayan points out that in present-day Haiti the figure of the "zombi" conjures up terror and symbolizes apathy, anonymity, and loss.¹⁴² These are the exact feelings and images that the Church of Cristo Kyrios claims to want to eliminate and prevent. Moreover, Dayan underscores that Haitians are horrified by both the idea of crossing paths with a zombi as well as being transformed into one.¹⁴³ As Kate Ramsey's research suggests, a possible motivation for this fear is well rooted in Haiti's history. Ramsey illuminates a connection between the image of the "zonbi" and the Haitian sugar cane labourers who toiled under U.S. run companies during the American occupation (1915-1934).¹⁴⁴ Ramsey notes how people in Léogâne often pejoratively referred to Haitian American Sugar Company's (hereafter HASCO) agricultural day labourers, former independent farmers who came from surrounding communities, as "zombies."¹⁴⁵ Ramsey argues that the image of the slaving zombie symbolizes unequal capitalist relations and development under the U.S. occupation.¹⁴⁶ Despite their extremely disadvantageous position, however, some "zombies" demonstrated strength, courage and independent thought. For example, a group of HASCO workers demanded reduced hours and a 10% wage increase.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, they threatened to quit and find an employer who offered better working conditions if their demands were not met.¹⁴⁸ Thus, just like the multiple interpretations of the "zombie" Bayano, HASCO's "zombies" can also ambiguously represent servitude as well as resistance. Notwithstanding, the zombie generally elicits an image of a colonized body caught by the yoke of oppression.¹⁴⁹

Like the opposing interpretations of the zombie, the physical appearance of Bayano, like some of the other Black antagonists in Saadakeem's messages, has the contradictory potential to both reinforce and contest stereotypes of Black men. On the one hand, representing Black men as muscular, robust and healthy figures of admiration reinforces the idea that Black men are strong and powerful. Indeed, Saadakeem affirms that the Black characters in his messages are "the image of total perfection: Black, young, healthy, muscular and strong" (la imagen de perfección total: negro, jovén, sano, musculoso y fuerte).¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, such emphasis on the Black male body can also perpetuate the stereotype of the Black man as an object, only useful for what he can offer physically.

The happy ending of the maroon Bayano (he finally escaped slavery and returned to Africa) does not correspond to the fate of many maroons in Peru. For example, the life of one of the most celebrated maroons in Peruvian history, Francisco Congo, also known as "Chavelilla" ends in a gruesome spectacle.¹⁵¹ Aguirre notes that in approximately 1711, Francisco Congo escaped from a slave owner in Pisco and eventually sought refuge in the Huachipa Palenque (a maroon stronghold).¹⁵² Francisco Congo defeated the powerful leader of the Huachipa Palenque and defended his position of political, military and perhaps even religious dominance.¹⁵³ Francisco Congo reportedly referred to his men as soldiers (*soldados*) and severely punished those who ignored or disobeyed his orders.¹⁵⁴ Francisco Congo successfully led the *palenqueros* until the authorities captured him in 1713. Francisco Congo was sentenced to death by hanging and dismemberment for such crimes as sedition, robbery and homicide.¹⁵⁵ The other inhabitants of the *palenque* were pardoned and sold back into slavery.¹⁵⁶ Unlike the fate of Bayano in Saadakeem's

narrative, Francisco Congo died tragically. Notwithstanding this difference, examining the life of Francisco Congo highlights the slave's ability to organize against oppression. This is a key point that Saadakeem strives to enforce in his messages.

Disseminating personal or sealed memories can sometimes lead to what Steve J. Stern refers to as “emblematic memory,” “a socially influential framework of meaning.”¹⁵⁷ Stern explains that memory is emblematic because it purports to capture an essential aspect of a collective experience of society.¹⁵⁸ The process of constructing emblematic memories involves anchoring memories located in the realm of personal and private knowledge into the socio-public domain.¹⁵⁹ Thus, the creation of emblematic memories obscures the line between personal and social experience by granting a certain amount of staying power to loose memories.¹⁶⁰ Stern's historical criteria for the capacity to convert loose memories into culturally acceptable “knowledge” include historicity and authenticity.¹⁶¹ Saadakeem is determined to transform the historical messages and beliefs of the Church of Cristo Kyrios into emblematic memories. After sharing the Bayano narrative with me, Saadakeem stressed that when two prominent clergy members jumped up and down on the Maranga Chapel's floor they heard echoes.¹⁶² This, according to Saadakeem, was proof that a hollow space existed beneath the chapel's floor.¹⁶³ In this way Saadakeem attempted to convince me of the credibility of his story by “confirming” the existence of the sacred secret basement. Saadakeem also frequently used the term “evidence” when relating his messages.¹⁶⁴ Additionally, Saadakeem directed and accompanied me to the chapel where the events of the Bayano message transpired. In Saadakeem's historical vision, the Bayano message corresponds to actual geographical locations that serve as easily accessible “evidence”. Furthermore, Saadakeem instructed a

member of the clergy to give me an article that addressed Bayano as well as other historic Black figures. One of the publications he gave me included an essay entitled “Blacks in Latin America” written by the well-known Afro-Peruvian poet, Nicomedes Santa Cruz Gamarra. The article reiterates the details of Bayano’s Panamanian background that Saadakeem narrated.¹⁶⁵ By supporting his Bayano message with respected secondary sources and actual geographical spaces, Saadakeem attempts to substantiate his claims.

Although Saadakeem presents the Bayano and Babakwame messages as counter-narratives to the conviction that slaves were socially dead and incapable of resisting Christianization, he does not completely defuse stereotypes of Black men or significantly loosen the traumatic memory knot of slavery. Saadakeem’s messages are manifestations of what Stern would denote as “memory knots,” places that “express and project into the public domain counterofficial visions of reality.”¹⁶⁶ Memory knots can be understood as sites “where the social body screams” as a consequence of traces of historical tragedies that are “absorbed by the mind and animated in the gut.”¹⁶⁷ Stern argues that memory knots “demand attention to the past within the present.”¹⁶⁸ Stern suggests that memory knots form when a collective history fails to adequately structure and equalize an individual’s disposition and representations towards a particular historic event.¹⁶⁹

While Saadakeem’s Bayano and Babakwame messages challenge racist notions of Black men as weak, passive, unintelligent brutes, they do not fully disentangle the memory knot of slavery that plagues emblematic memory. Stern remarks that a framework of remembrance is emblematic because many people regard the associated memory as representing a concrete reality. The Church of Cristo Kyrios has failed to untie the memory knot of slavery as evidenced by its modest number of believers.

Nevertheless, Saadakeem's messages do appear to loosen the memory knot of slavery for his followers. For example, Óscar, a thirty-year-old Afro-Peruvian male who joined the Church of Cristo Kyrios in 2002, revealed how Saadakeem exposed him to a history that enhanced his pride and self-esteem. For example, during a discussion about his experiences at the Church of Cristo Kyrios Óscar declared:

Gracias a Dios sé [de]donde vengo. Sé mucha [sobre nuestra] cultura, como vinieron los negros y esto me llena de satisfacción. Antes me sentía de repente como si fuera un poco prohibido, pero a partir de que comencé a leer, a buscar, a experimentar, todo nuevo, con todo el conocimiento que tengo me siento ya más orgulloso de mi raza. Es una historia totalmente oculta, esclavos mentalmente.. no tienes cadena pero..en la escuela secundaria no me enseñaron nada de nada. Solamente que los negros llegaron como esclavos.¹⁷⁰

Thanks to God I know where I came from, I know a lot about culture, how the Blacks arrived and this fills me with satisfaction. Before I felt as if [Black culture & history] was kind of forbidden, but after reading, researching and investigating, everything was new. With all the knowledge I now have I feel much prouder of my race. This is a completely hidden history. We might not have been chained, but we were like slaves, mentally. In secondary school they did not teach me about anything at all, only that Blacks arrived as slaves.¹⁷¹

As Óscar's comments imply, some of Saadakeem's followers might embrace his memory of slavery because it captures meaningful messages about Black history: specifically, the conviction that slaves were much stronger, more intelligent and perseverant than the colonial records or current racist beliefs depict. To adopt Paul Ricoeur's Freudian inspired idea of memory as a "work of recollection," a therapeutic process of "working through" a traumatic state of memory, Saadakeem's followers might be working through their negative feelings regarding their Black identity that are perpetuated by ubiquitous stereotypes in society.¹⁷² Within the Church of Cristo Kyrios, Saadakeem's messages are exemplary: they present proud and intelligent Black role models that, despite the pressure exerted by society, never abandon their religious convictions.¹⁷³ It is noteworthy that the

research Laura Alicia Valdivieza conducted in 2006 concludes that the curriculums taught by Peruvian public schools fail to include or even reference how Afro-Peruvians contributed to the nation.¹⁷⁴ She adds that when textbooks do address the role of Afro-Peruvians they restrict the discussion to the economic functions of slavery.¹⁷⁵ Given the exclusionary school curriculums, it is perhaps not surprising that Saadakeem's followers of African descent feel uplifted upon hearing his messages that accentuate positive qualities of Black slaves.

Perhaps Óscar's comments attest to how Saadakeem instils pride among some believers and forges a link between the past and the present to legitimize the Church of Cristo Kyrios. By sharing his revisions of slave memories, Saadakeem attempts to insert the past into the present in order to create a world where Afro-Peruvians feel proud and respected as Blacks. This idea corresponds to Jörn Rüsen's understanding of the experience of time and the role of historical consciousness in critical narratives. Rüsen expresses that "historical consciousness should be conceptualized as an operation of human intellection [understanding] rendering present actuality intelligible while fashioning its future perspectives."¹⁷⁶ Pierre Nora describes this process as " 'rememoration'— a history that is interested in memory not as remembrance but as the overall structure of the past within the present: history of the second degree."¹⁷⁷ Saadakeem's alleged supernatural experiences attempt to link the present with the past in order to awaken racial consciousness and build a less racist future. The trance-like states that Saadakeem claims to enter before a divine messenger guides him to a forgotten historical site blends the past with the present. With the objective of rectifying the image of the Black man, Saadakeem transposes events that allegedly transpired in colonial times

into the present. In this manner, whether successful or not, Saadakeem works towards improving the amount of power and respect African descendents in Peru enjoy in the present and the future. Saadakeem brings the past into the present with the aim of altering the balance of history. To adopt and adapt Stern's metaphor of a memory box - an immense collectively built memory chest that houses a mosaic of albums, which represents the competing narratives that define and give shape to a traumatic historic event like slavery - the Church of Cristo Kyrios constructs a doctrine whereby Saadakeem is chosen by a higher being to peer into a memory box to unearth a narrative that was sealed by the victors of history, the Spanish conquistadores and the Catholic Church.

The overlap, influence and power of the past in the present are exemplified by Saadakeem's story regarding how he tried to legally appropriate the Maranga Chapel in the 1980s. I interpret this narrative as another one of Saadakeem's sacred messages. I was unable to corroborate the contradictory details of Saadakeem's history surrounding the Maranga Chapel. Saadakeem claims that his dreams to restore the Maranga Chapel and operate a museum and Assistance/health Centre would have materialized if a racist and conniving Catholic priest from Spain did not instigate the residents of Pueblo Libre to rise up in protest.¹⁷⁸ Saadakeem states that this incident is testament to the fact that the memory of Bayano survives.¹⁷⁹ Saadakeem related that the priest was aware of the "professional trickster," Bayano, and used the fear of ghosts to mobilize the community against the Church of Cristo Kyrios.¹⁸⁰ Saadakeem accused the priest of inciting and leading the violent protest that resulted in the physical assault of the chapel's young Black male caretaker.¹⁸¹ The mob shouted that the chapel had always belonged to the

Catholic Church.¹⁸² Saadakeem narrated that the mob created such a scene that the police arrived and instead of detaining the violent protestors, took the caretaker into custody.¹⁸³ Saadakeem managed to convince the authorities to release the caretaker by showing them the documents that proved he received permission from the Institute of Culture (Instituto de Cultura) to own and operate the chapel.¹⁸⁴ According to Saadakeem, the board of directors of the Institute were fully aware that the chapel was a sanctuary for the slaves who practiced the Religion of the Plantation, not Catholicism.¹⁸⁵ Despite this apparent knowledge, however, the municipality sided with the Priest and Saadakeem's neighbours.¹⁸⁶ As a result, the government annulled the documents that served as proof that the government approved the Iglesia de Cristo Kyrios's possession of the chapel.¹⁸⁷ As a consequence, the government indirectly revoked the grant and donation that Saadakeem was supposed to have received.¹⁸⁸ The Catholic Church never restored the chapel and it remains abandoned to this day.¹⁸⁹ In fact, Saadakeem indicated that even before he was granted ownership of the chapel, prostitutes, drug dealers and drug addicts routinely engaged in shady transactions, drug use and sexual acts inside the place of worship.¹⁹⁰ This comment suggests that the authorities preferred criminals and prostitutes to an Afro-Peruvian religious group.

Saadakeem pronounced that in the end, God was on their side. The same priest who instigated the protest hung himself on a tree located on church grounds.¹⁹¹ Saadakeem expressed that the suicide was a punishment propelled by divine intervention. Saadakeem took me to an abandoned and dilapidated chapel and pointed to the very tree where the priest committed suicide. He explained that the seed for this ancient tree was brought to Peru from Africa during the colonial period. The Church of Cristo Kyrios interprets the

priest's suicide as an act of retribution exacted by the Heavens. The Spanish priest represents the legacy of racism and religious intolerance inherited from slavery and the colonial period. By highlighting the tree's African origins and presence during colonial times, Saadakeem alludes to the power of Africa in avenging injustices exacted against African descendants.

This section of Saadakeem's narrative appears to counter the idea of divine justice against the Black community prominently figured in a legend studied by Denys Cuche. Cuche explains that, according to legend, the following narrative was initially expressed by White creoles after a tsunami swept over the Lima port of Callao in 1746:

Los negros festejaban a un dios desconocido, danzando los bailes más inmorales, que causaban escrúpulos entre los chalacos que lo presenciaban. Quiso Dios poner fin a esta fiesta escandalosa de los negros, y para borrar esta falta puso todo su vigor sobre las aguas tranquilas del océano, haciendo que crecieran enormemente las olas, invadiendo extensas áreas del Puerto y destruyendo a muchísimos negros.¹⁹²

The Blacks celebrated an unknown God, dancing the most immoral dances and provoking objections among the passersby who witnessed the event. God wanted to put an end to the Blacks' scandalous festive gathering and therefore directed all his vigour towards the tranquil waters of the ocean, making the waves rise tremendously, causing the ocean waters to invade the extensive areas surrounding the harbour and killing many Blacks.¹⁹³

Cuche explains that many Blacks resided near this port. The legend, however, does not refer to the earthquake that preceded the wave of destruction that destroyed the homes and lives of many people, not only members of the Black community located in the port of Callao. This legend of divine vengeance exacted against the Black community for believing in a faith and God that differed from Roman Catholicism articulates and reinforces the notion that Blacks are immoral "others" who deserve punishment. Saadakeem racially flips the idea of divine vengeance against Blacks by exposing the

White priest as a target of divine intervention in his story concerning how a Spanish priest rallied locals against the Church of Cristo Kyrios's attempt to re-appropriate the Maranga Chapel.

Saadakeem explicitly wove a tale of conspiracy that pits the Peruvian government and Catholic Church against Blacks and the Church of Cristo Kyrios. This is particularly apparent in his statement about the Aeronautic Military Club located near the Maranga Chapel. Saadakeem claimed that the building that now houses the Military Club used to be the "cruel slave master's home."¹⁹⁴ He declared that the military knows the history of this building and is in cahoots with the Catholic Church in their mission to suppress Black history from reaching the masses.¹⁹⁵

Saadakeem's emphasis on divine intervention to right wrongs committed against Blacks in Peru is echoed in the colonial narrative featuring an enduring image of the crucifixion of a Black Jesus painted on a Lima wall during colonial times. As the frequently repeated narrative recounts, in approximately 1651 an African slave from Angola painted an image of a Black Jesus on the cross that withstood several destructive earthquakes, the first of which struck Lima in 1655.¹⁹⁶ In 1670 a local man of unconfirmed ancestry commemorated the painting by creating a shrine that encompassed the image. The shrine was a place of refuge and solace and the man frequented the shrine to pray to God to cure his malignant tumour.¹⁹⁷ Miraculously, his prayers were answered and he fully recovered.¹⁹⁸ Historian Leslie K. Best indicates that the majority of worshipers of the image were African descendants and underscores that the colonial ecclesiastical hierarchy's numerous attempts to erase the image proved ineffectual; each time authorities commissioned painters to alter the image they were afflicted with a

mysterious and debilitating illness.¹⁹⁹ Eventually, after three earthquakes, the Catholic Church finally decided to embrace the image of Black “Jesus” by building the Church of the Nazarenas around the painting. In addition, the Catholic Church heralded the figure featured in the painting as the Lord of Miracles (el Señor de los Milagros) and the patron saint of Lima.²⁰⁰

Saadakeem’s narrative of the painting of the Black Jesus is similar to the popular version with several key differences. Firstly, Saadakeem claims that the image of the crucifixion was a depiction of Babakwame’s execution at the centre of the Maranga Plantation.²⁰¹ Secondly, Saadakeem’s version of events also narrates how the Catholic Church did not succeed in erasing the image of the Black Jesus; the figure was not Whitened (“they worked hard to erase the figure [...but] since they did not manage to erase it they ordered its Whitening” - se esforzaron por borrar la figura. [...pero] como no lograron borrarla, ordenaron blanquearlo”).²⁰² Saadakeem revealed that Christ’s skin is darker than the two figures that accompany him, María and Magdalena.²⁰³ According to Saadakeem, this is because the dark colour underneath the white paint shines through.²⁰⁴ Saadakeem claims that the Catholic Church inserted María and Magdalena to mitigate the focus from Black Jesus.²⁰⁵ Saadakeem adds that Christ’s face is too small for his muscular body, a sure sign that his face was altered.²⁰⁶ Saadakeem surmises that these “cosas sospechosas” (suspicious things) are manifestations of the Catholic Church’s refusal to embrace the fact that Jesus was Black.²⁰⁷ Furthermore, Saadakeem states that the man who painted the image was Black.²⁰⁸ By deviating from the popular narrative in these details, Saadakeem retells his version of events to support his argument that the Catholic Church erased Black history in Peru. In this manner Saadakeem’s version criticizes and

attempts to invalidate the popular narrative. These objectives correspond to Jörn Rüsen's understanding of critical narratives as breaking patterns of historical significance by denying their validity.²⁰⁹ Whether successful or not, Saadakeem goes to great lengths to discredit and invalidate stereotypes that portray Black men as incompetent.²¹⁰ As Rüsen points out, this requires declaring and providing evidence that suggests that the dominant narrative is incorrect.²¹¹ Rüsen describes this process as creating a counter-narrative.²¹²

The uniqueness of Saadakeem's construction of his counter-narratives is that supernatural and divine forces guide the content of his messages. Saadakeem's narrative is oriented towards the past, towards slavery in sixteenth-century Lima because he declares that, to date, historians and the powerful Catholic government officials have presented a grossly inaccurate account of slaves that continues to poison society and maintain an unofficial colour bar in Peruvian society. According to Saadakeem, a major component of this inaccuracy also involves the deliberate erasure of Blacks from historical records. Saadakeem declares that "many documents have been hidden, denied [and] concealed" (*muchos documentos han sido escondidos, negados [y] ocultados*).²¹³ Saadakeem takes the erroneous idea that Black slaves were simply passive victims and counters it with his own narrative. In this manner, Saadakeem attempts to highlight the official narrative's rupture with his construction of the religious history of Black slaves.²¹⁴ Saadakeem contends that his version of history is virtuous while the dominant narrative is racist. In so doing he presents a tale of morality, one that advocates for the elimination of racism against Black men.²¹⁵ For Rüsen, this moral component is essential to critical narratives because it has the potential to seduce the reader or listener into agreement.²¹⁶

Notwithstanding the moral of Saadakeem's messages - anti-Black racism is a wrong punishable by God - by presenting the Catholic Church as evil and as the antithesis of religion, Saadakeem reverses the stereotype presented by such intellectuals as José Carlos Mariátegui who paint Blacks as incapable of rising above fetishism.²¹⁷

Saadakeem maintains that he has the ability to illuminate Peruvian history by revealing the lives of Black slaves in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the darkest and most hidden centuries of Peruvian history ("los siglos más oscuros del Perú").²¹⁸ In this sense, Saadakeem attempts to unearth what Elizabeth Jelin refers to as the "catacombs of history," the buried mazes of stories and narratives that are not included in the dominant version of history.²¹⁹ Saadakeem's divine messages about slavery attract a scant number of followers to the Church of Cristo Kyrios where they respect him as a prophet and memory box of Black history.

Catherine A. Reinhardt's historical research regarding slavery and memory in the French Caribbean confirms that in order to illuminate aspects of a historical event like slavery and arouse Black consciousness, one must conjure up silenced collective memories.²²⁰ The exploratory process of uprooting and reshaping latent memories is a crucial component in healing painful memories.²²¹ For Saadakeem, an interminable conversation with the past via supernatural avenues awakens a concealed memory of slavery and strives to transform it from a disturbed memory into a liberating memory.²²² As Reinhardt concludes, in order "to cease being the slaves of slavery, the people must experience a healthy memory of slavery, a memory that truly liberates."²²³ Saadakeem's followers relish in pride and feel a sense of peace upon learning about the memories of slavery revealed in Saadakeem's messages. Their new historic gaze, one that values

Black slaves for their perseverance, strength and intelligence, silences the persistent hissing of inferiority and difference that has echoed in many of their minds.²²⁴ According to believers, the riches inherent in the memory of the Church of Cristo Kyrios release them from mental slavery and endow them with a healthy memory of slavery.²²⁵

Despite the unequivocally positive remarks expressed by Saadakeem's few followers, the messages of the Church of Cristo Kyrios are ambiguous. While the Babakwame and Bayano messages generally challenge the erroneous notions that slaves were passive, simpleminded poltroons incapable of religion, the Maranga message reinforces the unfounded idea that the Black man is vengeful. The Maranga message did not successfully argue against Clemente Palma's description of Blacks as "resentful" because Saadakeem articulated the value in vengeance against the racist priest.²²⁶ Moreover, the return of Kyrios, one of the most crucial aspects of the belief system of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, advocates for the punishment of anti-Black racists and portrays the anti-Christ as White. In so doing, it reverses the racial hatred historically directed towards Blacks, but it does not cease the perpetuation of discrimination. In addition, by describing the anti-Christ as White, Saadakeem only addresses the wrongs of anti-Black racists, he does not consider the discrimination experienced by other marginalized groups such as Peru's mosaic of Indigenous peoples. Significantly, messages of racial vengeance dismiss the notion of forgiveness and perpetuate racist hatred. As Martin Luther King Jr. articulated in his "I Have a Dream" speech, on our way to the "palace of justice [...] let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking from the cup of bitterness and hatred."²²⁷ Despite the ambiguity of Saadakeem's representations of Black male slaves, Saadakeem's followers' faith in his words solidifies his position as supreme leader of the

Church of Cristo Kyrios. As the next chapter demonstrates, the Church of Cristo Kyrios fails to lift its followers “from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood.”²²⁸

Notes

- ¹ Azumah Ugandana, “El pensamiento negro,” *Kyrios Zulú: El enviado final de dios* 1, no. 1 (August 1998), 30.
- ² Azumah Ugandana, “El pensamiento negro,” *Kyrios Zulú: El enviado final de dios* 1, no. 1 (August 1998), 30.
- ³ Jaymie Patricia Heilman, *Before the Shining Path: Politics in Rural Ayacucho, 1895-1980* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 121.
- ⁴ Anténor Firmin, *De l'égalité des races humaines (anthropologie positive)* introd. Ghislaine Géloin (Paris: Librairie Cotillon, 1885), 302-303.
- ⁵ Firmin, *De l'égalité des races humaines* 297.
- ⁶ Firmin, *De l'égalité des races humaines*, 304; Kate Ramsey, *Vodou and Power in Haiti: The Spirits and the Law* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 55.
- ⁷ José Carlos Mariátegui, *7 ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 2007), 146.
- ⁸ Clemente Palma, *El Porvenir de las razas en el Perú*, BA thesis, Universidad Nacional Mayor De San Marcos, 1897, 1, 13-15.
- ⁹ Clemente Palma, *El porvenir de las razas en el Perú*, 15.
- ¹⁰ Alessandro Portelli, *The Order has been Carried Out: History, memory, and Meaning of a Nazi Massacre in Rome*, (Gordonsville: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 16; Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982), 38.
- ¹¹ Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death*, 38, 46.
- ¹² Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹³ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011; Ruth Pike, “Black Rebels: Cimarrons of Sixteenth-Century Panama,” *The Americas* 64, no. 2 (2007): 251, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30139087>.
- ¹⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹⁵ Saadakeem has been documenting his messages since the 1970s.
- ¹⁶ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 30, 2011.
- ¹⁷ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 30, 2011.
- ¹⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20 & 28, 2011.
- ¹⁹ José Antonio del Busto Duthurburu, *Breve historia de los negros del Perú*, (Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú, 2001), 55.
- ²⁰ Del Busto Duthurburu, *Breve historia de los negros del Perú*, 55.
- ²¹ Del Busto Duthurburu, *Breve historia de los negros del Perú*, 55.
- ²² James H. Sweet, *Culture, Kingship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World, 1441-1770* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, 2003), 194.
- ²³ Sweet, *Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World*, 194.
- ²⁴ Sweet, *Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World*, 194.
- ²⁵ Sweet, *Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World*, 194.
- ²⁶ Sweet, *Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World*, 194.
- ²⁷ Sweet, *Culture, Kinship, and Religion in the African-Portuguese World*, 194.
- ²⁸ Carlos Aguirre, *Agentes de su propio libertad: los esclavos de Lima y la desintegración de la esclavitud: 1821-1854* (Lima: Fondo Editorial, 1993), 243-244.
- ²⁹ Aguirre, *Agentes de su propio libertad*, 243. According to Nicomedes Santa Cruz Gamarra, the term “cimarrones” refers to rural slaves that escape from plantation slavery and hide in the mountains, while the urban slave that escapes slavery and hides in various villages is simply called “a Black runaway” (“un negro huído”). Notwithstanding these differences, the term “cimarrón” is popularly employed to refer to

Blacks that escape slavery and seek refuge in maroon strongholds. See Nicomedes Santa Cruz Gamarra, "El negro en Iberoamérica," *Cuadernos Hispano-Americanos*, nos. 451-453 (enero-febrero 1988): 33.

³⁰ Aguirre, *Agentes de su propio libertad*, 244.

³¹ See C.L.R. James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the Santo Domingo Revolution* (Toronto: Random House, 1963); Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: The Story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Robert Edgar Conrad, *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983);

³² Christine Hünefeldt, *Paying the price of Freedom: Family and Labor among Lima's Slaves, 1800-1854* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 18.

³³ Hünefeldt, *Paying the price of Freedom*, 195.

³⁴ Hünefeldt, *Paying the price of Freedom*, 184.

³⁵ Hünefeldt, *Paying the price of Freedom*, 184.

³⁶ Hünefeldt, *Paying the price of Freedom*, 184.

³⁷ Hünefeldt, *Paying the price of Freedom*, 184.

³⁸ Hünefeldt, *Paying the price of Freedom*, 170, 184.

³⁹ Hünefeldt, *Paying the price of Freedom*, 184.

⁴⁰ Denys Cuche, *Poder blanco y resistencia negra en el Perú: un estudio de la condición social del negro en el Perú después de la abolición de la esclavitud* (Lima: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 1975), 169.

⁴¹ Cuche, *Poder blanco y resistencia negra en el Perú*, 169.

⁴² Aguirre, *Agentes de su propio libertad*, 244.

⁴³ Aguirre, *Agentes de su propio libertad*, 244.

⁴⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20 & 28, 2011.

⁴⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20 & 28, 2011.

⁴⁶ Harry Kelsey, *Sir John Hawkins: Queen Elizabeth's Slave Trader* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 33.

⁴⁷ Kelsey, *Sir John Hawkins*, 33.

⁴⁸ Kelsey, *Sir John Hawkins*, 33.

⁴⁹ Kelsey, *Sir John Hawkins*, 32.

⁵⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20 & 28, 2011.

⁵¹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20 & 28, 2011.

⁵² Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20 & 28, 2011.

⁵³ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁵⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20 & 28, 2011.

⁵⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁵⁶ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁵⁷ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁵⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁵⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁶⁰ Renny Golden, *The Hour of the Poor, the Hour of Women: Salvadoran Women Speak* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 108.

⁶¹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁶² Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁶³ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁶⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁶⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁶⁶ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁶⁷ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁶⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁶⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁷⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

⁷¹ Cuddon, J.A., *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory*, 4th ed., s.v. "Synecdoche," London: Penguin Books, 1999.

⁷² Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1987), 50.

- ⁷³ Hayden White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation," in *The Houses of History: a critical reader in twentieth-century history and theory* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 214; White, *The Content of the Form*, 46.
- ⁷⁴ White, "The Fictions of Factual Representation," 219.
- ⁷⁵ Priest of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, in discussion with the author, June 25, 2011.
- ⁷⁶ Azumah Ugandana, "La Salvación final viene del Africa negra," 32.
- ⁷⁷ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ⁷⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ⁷⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ⁸⁰ Hünefeldt, *Paying the price of Freedom*, 133.
- ⁸¹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ⁸² Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ⁸³ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ⁸⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ⁸⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ⁸⁶ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ⁸⁷ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ⁸⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011. Babakwame's physical strength, charisma, desire for justice and role as a Black religious leader resemble those of Boukman, a voodoo high priest and Jamaican maroon who galvanized Blacks to fight against slavery at the dawn of the Haitian Revolution. While historians continue to debate the historicity of Boukman, the public has embraced him as a legendary figure who represents Blacks' drive for freedom. For example, Haitian writer and diplomat Stephen Alexis describes Boukman's ceremony to encourage Blacks to rise up against slavery as a large scale oath to fight for freedom
- ⁸⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ⁹⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ⁹¹ White, *Content of the Form*, 1, 6.
- ⁹² Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ⁹³ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ⁹⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ⁹⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ⁹⁶ Mariátegui, *7 ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana*, 288.
- ⁹⁷ Mariátegui, *7 ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana*, 288.
- ⁹⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ⁹⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ¹⁰⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ¹⁰¹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ¹⁰² Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ¹⁰³ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ¹⁰⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ¹⁰⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ¹⁰⁶ Elizabeth Jelin, *State Repression and the Struggles for Memory* (London: Social Sciences Research Council, 2003), 17.
- ¹⁰⁷ Jelin, *State Repression and the Struggles for Memory*, 16.
- ¹⁰⁸ Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 188, 189.
- ¹⁰⁹ Jelin, *State Repression and the Struggles for Memory*, 54.
- ¹¹⁰ Jelin, *State Repression and the Struggles for Memory*, 54.
- ¹¹¹ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 16.
- ¹¹² Connerton, *How Societies Remember*, 69.
- ¹¹³ Kyriakos, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹¹⁴ Kyriakos, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹¹⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹¹⁶ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹¹⁷ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.

- ¹¹⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹¹⁹ Hünefeldt, *Paying the price of Freedom*, 10, 221.
- ¹²⁰ Pike, "Black Rebels: Cimarrons of Sixteenth-Century Panama," 247.
- ¹²¹ Pike, "Black Rebls: Cimarrons of Sixteenth-Century Panama," 247.
- ¹²² Pike, "Black Rebls: Cimarrons of Sixteenth-Century Panama," 249, 250.
- ¹²³ Pike, "Black Rebls: Cimarrons of Sixteenth-Century Panama," 250.
- ¹²⁴ Pike, "Black Rebls: Cimarrons of Sixteenth-Century Panama," 254.
- ¹²⁵ Pike, "Black Rebls: Cimarrons of Sixteenth-Century Panama," 254.
- ¹²⁶ Pike, "Black Rebls: Cimarrons of Sixteenth-Century Panama," 251.
- ¹²⁷ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹²⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹²⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹³⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹³¹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹³² John Strausbaugh, *Black Like You: Blackface, Whiteface, Insult & Imitation in American Popular Culture* (New York: Penguin Group, 2006), 70.
- ¹³³ Heidi Carolyn Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru: Reviving African Musical Heritage in the Black Pacific* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), 145.
- ¹³⁴ Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 145.
- ¹³⁵ Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 18-19, 145.
- ¹³⁶ Feldman, *Black Rhythms of Peru*, 147, 26.
- ¹³⁷ Homi K. Bhabha, "Framing Fanon," foreword to *The Wretched of the Earth*, by Frantz Fanon (New York: Grove Press, 1963), xxxiii.
- ¹³⁸ Jill Lane, *Blackface Cuba, 1840-1895* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 67.
- ¹³⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹⁴⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹⁴¹ Joan Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 37.
- ¹⁴² Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, 37.
- ¹⁴³ Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, 37.
- ¹⁴⁴ Ramsey, *Vodou and Power in Haiti*, 172-176.
- ¹⁴⁵ Ramsey, *Vodou and Power in Haiti*, 174.
- ¹⁴⁶ Ramsey, *Vodou and Power in Haiti*, 174.
- ¹⁴⁷ Ramsey, *Vodou and Power in Haiti*, 174.
- ¹⁴⁸ Ramsey, *Vodou and Power in Haiti*, 174.
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- ¹⁵⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 30, 2011.
- ¹⁵¹ Carlos Aguirre, *Breve historia de la esclavitud en el Perú: Una herida que no deja de sangrar* (Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú, 2005), 148; Carmen Rosario Tocón Armas and Margarita Petrera Pavone, "La población afrodescendiente: Perú y Bolivia, Una Mirada comparativa" (working paper, Faculty of Social Sciences, Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos, 2002), 19.
- ¹⁵² Aguirre, *Breve historia de la esclavitud en el Perú*, 148; Tocón Armas and Margarita Petrera Pavone, "La población afrodescendiente: Perú y Bolivia," 19.
- ¹⁵³ Aguirre, *Breve historia de la esclavitud en el Perú*, 148; Tocón Armas and Margarita Petrera Pavone, "La población afrodescendiente: Perú y Bolivia," 19.
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- ¹⁵⁵ Aguirre, *Breve historia de la esclavitud en el Perú*, 149.
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- ¹⁵⁷ Steve J. Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds: Memory Struggles in Pinochet's Chile, 1973-1988* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 5.
- ¹⁵⁸ Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds*, 113.
- ¹⁵⁹ Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds*, 5.
- ¹⁶⁰ Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds*, 45, 114.
- ¹⁶¹ Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds*, 114-119.
- ¹⁶² Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
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- ¹⁶⁵ Nicomedes Santa Cruz Gamarra, "El negro en Iberoamérica," *Cuadernos Hispano-Americanos*, nos. 451-453 (enero-febrero 1988): 38.
- ¹⁶⁶ Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds*, 83; Dayan, *Haiti, History, and the Gods*, 28.
- ¹⁶⁷ Stern, *Battling for Hearts and Minds*, 121.
- ¹⁶⁸ Steve J. Stern, *Reckoning with Pinochet: the memory question in democratic Chile, 1989-2006* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 156.
- ¹⁶⁹ Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 85.
- ¹⁷⁰ Church member, in discussion with the author, July 6, 2011. "Óscar" gave me permission to use his real name, but I chose to give him a pseudonym.
- ¹⁷¹ Church member, in discussion with the author, July 6, 2011.
- ¹⁷² Paul Ricoeur, "Memory—Forgetting—History," in *Making Sense of History: Meaning and Representation in History*, ed. Jörn Rüsen (New York: Berghahn Books, 2008), 13.
- ¹⁷³ Jörn Rüsen, "Historical Consciousness: Narrative Structure, Moral Function, and Ontogenetic Development," in *Theorizing Historical Consciousness*, by Peter C. Seixas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 73.
- ¹⁷⁴ Laura Alicia Valdiviezo, "Interculturality for Afro-Peruvians: Towards a racially inclusive education in Peru," *International Education Journal* 7, no.1 (2006): 32.
- ¹⁷⁵ Valdiviezo, "Interculturality for Afro-Peruvians," 32. El Movimiento Negro Francisco Congo published brief books designed to create Afro-Peruvian leaders and educate the public on Afro-Peruvian historical contributions and the contemporary presence of Blacks in Peruvian society. According to Valdiviezo, one such publication was distributed in the Peruvian school system and advanced various problematic assertions.
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- ¹⁷⁷ Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past, Vol .1, Conflicts and Divisions* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xxiv.
- ¹⁷⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
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- ¹⁸⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹⁸¹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹⁸² Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
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- ¹⁸⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹⁸⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹⁸⁶ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹⁸⁷ Saadakeem in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹⁸⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
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- ¹⁹⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹⁹¹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹⁹² Denys Cucho, *Poder blanco y Resistencia negra en el Perú: un estudio de la condición social del negro en el Perú después de la abolición de la esclavitud* (Lima: Instituto Nacional de Cultura, 1975), 165.
- ¹⁹³ Cucho, *Poder blanco* , 165.
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- ¹⁹⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ¹⁹⁶ Leslie K. Best, *The Afro-Latino: A Historical Journey* (Matteson: Becsle Publishing, 2010), 105; del Busto Duthurburu, *Breve historia de los negros del Perú*, 86.
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- ¹⁹⁸ Best, *The Afro-Latino*, 105.
- ¹⁹⁹ Best, *The Afro-Latino*, 105.
- ²⁰⁰ Best, *The Afro-Latino*, 106.
- ²⁰¹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²⁰² Saadakeem in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²⁰³ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²⁰⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

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- ²⁰⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²⁰⁶ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²⁰⁷ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²⁰⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²⁰⁹ Rösen, "Historical Consciousness," 72.
- ²¹⁰ Rösen, "Historical Consciousness," 74.
- ²¹¹ Rösen, "Historical Consciousness," 74-75.
- ²¹² Rösen, "Historical Consciousness," 75.
- ²¹³ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²¹⁴ Rösen, "Historical Consciousness," 75.
- ²¹⁵ Rösen, "Historical Consciousness," 75.
- ²¹⁶ Rösen, "Historical Consciousness," 65.
- ²¹⁷ Mariátegui, *7 ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana*, 146.
- ²¹⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²¹⁹ Jelin, *State Repression and the Struggles for Memory*, xviii.
- ²²⁰ Catherine A. Reinhardt, *Claims to Memory: Beyond Slavery and Emancipation in the French Caribbean* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 11.
- ²²¹ Nora, *Realms of Memory*, xviii; Reinhardt, *Claims to Memory*, 11.
- ²²² Patrick Chamoiseau, *Chronique des sept misères* (Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 1986), 183; Maeve McCusker, *Patrick Chamoiseau: Recovering a Memory* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007); Reinhardt, *Claims to Memory*, 11.
- ²²³ Reinhardt, *Claims to Memory*, 11.
- ²²⁴ Chamoiseau, *Chronique des sept misères*, 149, 127.
- ²²⁵ Chamoiseau, *Chronique des sept misères*, 149.
- ²²⁶ Clemente Palma, *El porvenir de las razas en el Perú*, 15.
- ²²⁷ Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream Speech" (speech), accessed September 4, 2012, Academic Search Elite.
- ²²⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr., "I Have a Dream Speech."

Saadakeem's Collection of Visual Media: The Black Man as Body

A slow construction of my self as body [...] by the Other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, and stories.¹ —Frantz Fanon

Increasing the speed of his voice to emphasize his frustration and the gravity of anti-Black racism, Saadakeem told me that “people think that everything Black is bad, that everything that is dirty, impure, ugly and negative is Black!” (la gente piensa que todo lo negro es malo, que todo lo sucio, lo impuro lo feo y lo negativo es negro!)² Saadakeem's comments echo Frantz Fanon's painful description of the “negrifying” White gaze that communicated: “The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is wicked, the Negro is ugly.”³ Both Fanon and Saadakeem's statements push for a closer consideration of the mechanics of a racial category.⁴ Race is not a fixed attribute, but is rather a malleable construct that is imagined, formulated and in continuous flux.⁵ The fluidity of race is a result of its almost empty connotative body.⁶ In other words, conceptually, race is vacuous.⁷ The theoretical flexibility of the concept of race means that it can undergo processes of renewal, refinement and redefinition.⁸ As David Theo Goldberg warns, this theoretical fluidity can be deleterious because it can encourage more acceptable conceptual schemata to superficially coat, overshadow and hide the exclusionary significance embedded in the concept of race.⁹ Goldberg explains that the power of race lies in “its adaptive capacity to define population groups and, by extension, social agents as self and other at various historical moments.”¹⁰ The fabrication of race can be a group or individual project and can be either self-ascribed or ascribed by others.¹¹ As Eduardo Bonilla-Silva points out, understanding race as a construction does not render it an unworthy category of analysis, or imply that deconstructing such a crafted concept

somehow makes it legitimate.¹² In a word, race is an invention and like many inventions it has concrete ramifications in reality.¹³ This is why I refer to such terms as “race,” “Black,” “Blackness,” “non-Black” and “White” in this chapter. My objective is not to reinforce essentialist constructions and schemas, but to examine the consequences of their realities within the Church of Cristo Kyrios.

This chapter explores how the images of Black men and the representations of Black slaves that Saadakeem embraces, creates and re-creates in photos, pictures and sculptures can be located within a historical continuity of racist thought and deep-seated stereotypes that imagine the Black man as an animalistic, primitive and exotic sexual beast only valuable for his body. Stereotypes are beliefs and “arrested modes of representations” that classify people into (pre-)defined groups based on supposed fixed characteristics and attributes.¹⁴ Judith Wilson defines stereotypes as forces that “flatten-squash a world of troublesome variety, an extravagant range of depths, substances, textures into smooth, neat, intellectual fast-food orders that [...] dull our senses and clog our mental arteries.”¹⁵ Saadakeem embraces stereotypes that signify Blackness as a naked package of dark skin, developed muscles and an erect penis in order to underscore the beauty and physical strength of Black men. The stereotypes of the Black man discussed in this chapter are not restricted to country or continental borders. By engaging with such theoretical frameworks as Dwight N. Hopkins’s understanding of “religious erotic of the Black male body” and with analyses of the photographic work of Saadakeem’s primary “artistic” influence - Robert Mapplethorpe - this chapter illustrates how Saadakeem’s muscular, nude/semi-nude and sexual representations of Black men fail to unite the spirit with the body and the mind with the brain.¹⁶ Ultimately, this chapter argues that, whether

unconscious or not, Saadakeem's construction of the Black man is corporeal, one-dimensional, exclusionary and fails to overcome the racist scaffolding historically employed to mark the Black body as "Other."¹⁷

CONTRADICTIONS IN SAADAKEEM'S RACIAL CONCEPTUALIZATIONS

Before exploring Saadakeem's visual representations of Blackness we must first address how Saadakeem's verbal expressions of race and Blackness are riddled with contradictions. For example, Saadakeem oscillates between articulating notions of equality versus articulating race as a biological construction. Saadakeem declared that "we [the Church of Cristo Kyrios] are not close-minded or racist" (no somos cerrados ni racistas) and added that the clergy of the Church of Cristo Kyrios never rejects a potential member based on his skin colour. (Given the Church of Cristo Kyrios's sparse membership, this is perhaps not surprising.)¹⁸ Despite Saadakeem's anti-racist claims, his comments regarding the *ubwenge* reveal that a certain racial hierarchy exists within the Church of Cristo Kyrios. The *ubwenge* are a pair of sacred rocks that the acting pope employs to connect to the will of God. Saadakeem stressed that the *ubwenge* must remain in the Church of Cristo Kyrios's Jamaican branch because it is paramount that Black people with the darkest skin tones surround the rock.¹⁹ According to Saadakeem, the special energy emitted by Black people maintains the rock's powers: "The energy from Blacks charges the rocks" (se carga de la energía de los negros).²⁰ If White-skinned people surrounded the rock it would rapidly lose its power.²¹ When I asked Saadakeem if White and Black people have different energy he responded affirmatively.²² His response exposed the idea of a certain inherent biological trait that sets Black people with dark skin tones apart from their lighter-skinned counterparts. It also suggested that Blacks are

superior to non-Blacks. As Saadakeem's logic reasons, the special energy supposedly inherent in Blacks increases in power according to skin tone: the darker the skin, the more potent the energy.²³ This alleged unique energy seems to have a spiritual component as evidenced by Saadakeem's assertion that "the Black race is the most religious race" (*la raza negra es la raza más religiosa*).²⁴

This apparent racial hierarchy within the Church of Cristo Kyrios can be interpreted within David Theo Goldberg's framework of racial exclusion. Goldberg defines racism "as the set of racialized exclusions" and emphasizes that its determinants are diverse and "situational specific."²⁵ Goldberg suggests that classifying people according to perceived, but by no means accurate, biological and physical characteristics, such as skin pigmentation and body size, propel racial exclusions.²⁶ He remarks that this so-called natural ordering correlates with behavioural expectations.²⁷ Goldberg declares that this "metaphysical pathos, an aesthetic apathy or aversion" promotes racial differentiation and can imply a racial hierarchy of races.²⁸ Furthermore, Goldberg purports that systems of human classification combined with historically rooted ideas of "order, value and hierarchy authorized the various forms of located racial exclusions in the name of difference."²⁹ For example, Charles White's study entitled *The Regular Gradation of Man, and Different Animals and Vegetables* (1799) thoroughly embraced the notion of a "chain of being" in which Europeans occupied the most civilized position and "Negroes" sat next to, and even possibly mingled with, the small-brained and sexual monkeys and orangutangs.³⁰ Saadakeem's notions of race try to flip the idea of a racial hierarchy, but do not rise above the concept of racial gradation. For example Saadakeem's presentation of the *ubwenge* reverses such racist ideas as those published in *El Comercio*, a reputable

Peruvian newspaper, in 1999, which included Marco Aurelio Denegri's assertion that an element inherent in Black skin prevents Blacks from becoming skilled swimmers.³¹ Notwithstanding Saadakeem's deviation from Aurelio Denegri's anti-Black criticisms, precluding non-Blacks from protecting the *ubwenge* and equating dark skin pigmentation with special energy is evidence of exclusionary practices based on an erroneous conviction of biological difference. In addition to suggesting that Blacks are superior to non-Blacks, Saadakeem's explanations of the *ubwenge* also suggest that not all Blacks are equal. By placing an enormous amount of emphasis on the darkest shades of Black, Saadakeem neglects other shades of Blackness and remains in the colour trap because he only reverses, but does not escape from colourism. Margo Natalie Crawford defines colourism as "the privileging of lighter shades of blackness within the palette of shades of blackness."³² By insisting that Black people with the darkest skin tones emit special energy and are inherently more spiritual than people with lighter skin shades, Saadakeem replicates racist thought.

"Black Faith" (Fe Negra), an article written and published by *Caretas*, a major Peruvian magazine, in 1998, observes how some aspects of the Church of Cristo Kyrios's belief system can be interpreted as reverse racism. "Black Faith" presents the Church of Cristo Kyrios as a sect that embraces Kyrios, a Black God destined to change the world.³³ "Black Faith" acknowledges that Saadakeem and his few followers maintain that the history of the Americas reveals how Black slaves spoke about Kyrios as the Saviour that would free them from oppression (sostienen que en América las historias de los esclavos negros hablan [de] que Kyrios es el Salvador que los sacará de la opresión).³⁴ "Black Faith" discloses that in addition to Kyrios, the sect also believes in a White Antichrist.³⁵

The article remarks that this racialized religious dichotomy can be perceived as reverse racism.³⁶

An obvious exception to Saadakeem's supposed notion that Blacks with the darkest shades of skin are superior is that even though he does not possess Black skin, he occupies the highest position within the Church of Cristo Kyrios. As Priest Bernardo accurately stated "Saadakeem is the supreme leader of the temple" (Saadakeem es el jefe supremo del templo). As an Afro-Peruvian who is not involved with the church opined: "he thinks he is God!"³⁷ In addition, framing himself as Black implies that Saadakeem understands that one can have seemingly "White" skin and still be of African descent. Thus, Saadakeem may not consistently articulate Blackness as a skin colour since he self-defines as Black, yet does not possess dark skin.

Saadakeem's claim that he is the only member of the Church of Cristo Kyrios blessed to receive supernatural messages also contradicts his idea that Black people with the darkest skin tones have special spiritual energy.³⁸ After Saadakeem asserted: "I am the only member of the Church who receives messages. It was always like that" (Yo soy el único miembro de la iglesia que recibe mensajes. Siempre era así), a Church member spoke to me in private to inform me that there was indeed another prophet.³⁹ The person explained that when a young Black member of the Church of Cristo Kyrios reported that he too received messages, Saadakeem ex-communicated him from the Church for allegedly living an immoral life style: dancing and drinking at bars and stealing from the Church.⁴⁰ This incident paints Saadakeem as an authoritative figure who takes strict measures to maintain his hold over the Church of Cristo Kyrios. It also suggests that

Saadakeem does not necessarily adhere to a racial hierarchy where Black men with the darkest skin tones are placed at the apex.

Tanya Golash-Boza's research concerning the definition of Blackness in Ingenio de Buenos Aires, a village with a considerable African descendant population located in northern Peru, also identifies the ambiguity produced by embracing competing racial conceptualizations. For example, while Ingenieros often favoured lighter skin, as evidenced by comments such as "Black but beautiful" (*negra pero bonita*), they sometimes concomitantly embraced a Black discourse that depicted Blackness as superior to White *Serranos* (In Ingenio this term refers to people from the Andes who generally possess light complexions, eyes and hair).⁴¹ Golash-Boza also notes the paradox between presenting oneself as an anti-racism activist while concomitantly perpetuating beliefs rooted in race ideology. For example in a workshop organized by The Centre of Ethnic Development (El Centro de Desarrollo Etnico-CEDET) that transpired in El Carmen, Chincha in 2007, Golash-Boza observed an activist noting the names of attendees that she did not classify as "Afro" in order to exclude them from future meetings.⁴² The activist employed ideas of physical attributes to define who was and was not Afro.⁴³ Hair seemed to be a crucial factor in her definition of Blackness since the activist did not consider a woman with "copper skin and sleek Black hair" Afro-Peruvian while she deemed a woman with fair skin, freckles and curly long hair an "Afro."⁴⁴

REPRESENTATIONS OF BLACKNESS

The attention Saadakeem gives to Blacks who possess the darkest shades of skin is evident when examining his collection of visual media. For example the skin colour of the statues of Kyrios that Saadakeem designed and created is consistently very dark. In

fact, Saadakeem strongly believes that “Black is beautiful.” In a country like Peru where beauty is frequently defined in contradistinction to Black skin, depicting Black men with the darkest skin tones as strong and beautiful can be positive. Ben Arogundade asserts that while there are many other battles to fight besides the beauty question, “the right to be beautiful and to be acknowledged as such whoever you are, wherever you are from is not so much a folly as a human-rights issue.”⁴⁵ Pondering Arogundade’s comments can be useful when exploring how Peruvian media *poses* beauty.⁴⁶ Prominent advertisements in Peru often feature people with White skin, blond hair and blue eyes. The Peruvian jewellery company, *Illaria* has slightly departed from this tendency since their models tend to have brown eyes, black hair and olive skin tones. Models who are considered Indigenous or Black are generally not featured in non-touristic advertisements. When Blacks are depicted in Peruvian newspapers and magazines it is often in the context of athletics, music and exotic dancing. An Afro-Peruvian female nurse I spoke to regarding women’s rights was very proud to show me a picture of her child. I could not help but notice that the first thing she said about her child was how beautiful his White skin was: “Look at my son, he is White. He is very handsome” (Mira a mi hijito, es blanco. Es muy bonito).⁴⁷ Specifically “showing-off” his White skin struck me as a consequence of the restrictive beauty ideal. Similarly, in her research concerning the predominantly Black sugar region of the Brazilian Northeast, Nancy Scheper-Hughes noticed how class, gender and race were embedded in the dominant beauty standard. For example, Scheper-Hughes observed some Afro-Brazilian woman praising the beauty of upper-class infants by describing them as “fat, strong, fair, unblemished, [and] pure.” In contrast to this image of “perfection,” these same women described their own babies as “weak, skinny,

ugly, already blemished with marks and spots.”⁴⁸ Another illustration of the misconstrued and exclusive beauty ideal in Peru includes the explicitly racist comments articulated by a Lima police officer in his mid-forties, who identifies as a Spanish descendent and who lived in the United States for many years. He expressed disgust at the idea of having a Black girlfriend: “I would never be with a Black. Blacks are *el cuco* (“the boogiemán”).⁴⁹ This remark suggests that some Peruvians perceive Black skin negativity. Widening conceptualizations of beauty would be helpful in mitigating such an erroneous idea. Replacing one beauty ideal with another, however, is just as delimiting.

Saadakeem’s representations of Black men are more complex than mere declarations of beauty. Saadakeem appears to be striving to construct the Black man as the supreme beauty ideal. He explicitly states that the religious figures of the Church of Cristo Kyrios have to be tremendously muscular, young and very Black because they are the image of perfection.⁵⁰ Saadakeem explains that Kyrios Zulu, the holy Spirit of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, has not humanized yet and since he is still in the state of heavenly being he is pure and therefore very Black in colour.⁵¹ For Saadakeem, Black skin is the equivalent of purity: “the features of the black people are the divine pattern of harmony, perfection and beauty.”⁵²

Immediately upon entering the Church of Cristo Kyrios it becomes quite clear that phenotypical markers are central to Saadakeem’s definition of Blackness and perfection.⁵³ On the first floor of the Church of Cristo Kyrios one comes across such Black figures as a life size nude, muscular and well-endowed Kyrios nailed to the cross:



Figure 1: Kyrios on the cross, The Church of Cristo Kyrios. Personal photograph by author. June 2011.

Besides a couple photos of a young Saadakeem dressed in religious attire, every other photo, picture, sculpture and mask exhibited in the Church of Cristo Kyrios are of people and figures, the overwhelming majority of whom are males who have Black skin.

According to Homi K. Bhabha, skin is generally the primary signifier of cultural and racial differences conveyed in stereotypes.⁵⁴ The Black bodies of Saadakeem's photographed subjects are oiled, thus bringing attention to their skin. Kobena Mercer argues that some Black nudes that highlight the "sweaty" skin of their subjects allude to sexual activity.⁵⁵ In her analysis of visual representations of Afro-Mexicans, Wendy Phillips observes that dark gleaming skin can also represent the exotic and mystical ability supposedly inherent in Black skin.⁵⁶ In addition, sweat can also signify the physical strain of labour. In the case of Saadakeem's depictions of slavery, sweat could represent the plantation labour performed by slaves.

Saadakeem does not reserve his Black, muscular and well-endowed beauty ideal only for the male religious figures that the Church of Cristo Kyrios worships. Saadakeem also admires any Black man that possesses the body of a "God." Throughout the entire upstairs hallway and in several rooms of the Church, Saadakeem showcases portraits of American and Caribbean Black male amateur body builders posing in Speedo-like garments as well as photos of famous Black American musicians and sex symbols such as Tony Terry and Bobby Brown. In the Church of Cristo Kyrios's written media, such as pamphlets, posters and journals, it is not unusual to find other Black American icons and sex symbols such as singer, actor and model Tyrese Beckford. Indeed, Saadakeem's visual representations of the Church of Cristo Kyrios's religious figures boast of a muscle-to-fat ratio that any man competing for the title of Mr. Universe would envy.

Saadakeem's image of perfection is corporeal and is part of a continuum of stereotypes that depict the Black man as a muscular Hercules.

Robert L. Sánchez identifies the Black man as Hercules stereotype in his analysis of how Peruvian newspapers documented a Lima murder that transpired in 1910. The case involved an Afro-Peruvian man named Arzola Arpolinario (aka José Martínez) who strangled a rich Spanish immigrant with the intention of robbing his lucrative pawnbroker establishment.⁵⁷ The newspaper *El Comercio* described the Afro-Peruvian man as a strong and muscular Ethiopian (a term used to denote his dark skin colour, not a reference to his national origin) who was able to fight off four men before authorities eventually captured and sentenced him to life imprisonment.⁵⁸ Sánchez remarks that the most common adjectives that Lima newspapers employed to describe Arpolinario included “herculean,” “robust” and “Samson.”⁵⁹ These terms illustrated Arpolinario as a super-human beast.⁶⁰ Sánchez himself adopts the newspapers' habit of exaggerating the size of “criminal” Black men and attributing specific character traits to their physical appearance when he describes Arpolinario as “in his early to mid thirties, athletic, tall, heavily muscled [...with] broad and serious features that contributed to his menacing demeanor.”⁶¹ The descriptions of Arpolinario illustrate how a certain body type - Black and strong - was linked to specific character traits: fierce and dangerous.

The clergy of the Church of Cristo Kyrios describes Kyrios in much the same way *El Comercio* described Arpolinario. In 2002 one of the members of the clergy responded to Peruvian journalist Leonardo Aguirre's inquires regarding the exceptional bodybuilding physique of Kyrios:

Según hemos investigado, la tribu zulú, de donde nacerá Kyrios, fue originalmente la tribu de Dan, una de las 12 tribus de Israel. Como se sabe, Sansón pertenecía a esa tribu. Por eso Kyrios será como Sansón.⁶²

According to what we have researched, the Zulu tribe, where Kyrios was born, was originally the tribe of Dan, one of the 12 tribes of Israel. As we know, Samson belonged to this tribe. Therefore Kyrios would be like Samson.⁶³

In one of Saadakeem's pamphlets entitled "The African Presence in the Bible" (Herencia Africana en la Biblia) he refers to men from the "Zulu nation" as robust and tall with glistening Black skin (robusto negro [...] de alta estatura y piel brillante).⁶⁴ Peruvian anthropologist Sabino Arroyo Aguilar repeats Saadakeem's description of Kyrios when he employs such adjectives as "muscular" (musculoso), "Herculean" (herculano) and "vigorous" (vigoroso).⁶⁵ In addition, the notion that Black men are physically threatening is reiterated in one of Saadakeem's pamphlets, which describes the son of God, a Black man, as possessing "an intimidating physical appearance" (una presencia física atemorizaba).⁶⁶

In addition to presenting Kyrios as exceptionally robust, the clergy (Saadakeem, Javier, Bernardo and Luis) also stresses that Iesus As-Saadiq Addo (the son of God) was physically strong. However, instead of accentuating his Zulu roots, the clergy claims that Iesus As-Saadiq Addo's body-builder physique was a result of his physical labours, which included carpentry work. Kwame Nsonowa, a member of the clergy of the Church of Cristo Kyrios and head of the Jamaican branch, is one of the group's principal models. He also posts many of the Church of Cristo Kyrios's representations of Black men, including himself, on a website called *Arte & fotografía*. In response to an admirer's inquiries regarding how he maintains his lean figure and extraordinary muscle mass, Nsonowa, replies that

El buen físico es resultado de una combinación de ejercicios, comida apropiada rica en vitaminas y proteínas. Evita comer tarde de noche. Las comidas pesadas y abundantes no ayudan al contrario solo te dan mas grasa. Ejercicio con mucha disciplina y PERSEVERANCIA. Si quieres te puedo dar un programa de entrenamiento.⁶⁷

A good physique is the result of a combination of exercises, well-balanced meals rich in vitamins and proteins. Avoid eating late at night. Heavy and plentiful meals don't help, on the contrary they only make you fatter. Exercise with a lot of discipline and PERSEVERANCE. If you like, I can give you a training program.⁶⁸

The obvious amount of intense training and strict dietary habits necessary to build and maintain a physique like Nsonowa's illustrates the value that the Church of Cristo Kyrios places on the body. It also contradicts the Church of Cristo Kyrios's argument that their sacred Black male figures possess Herculean physiques without specifically aiming to build muscle mass. For example, the clergy (Saadakeem, Javier, Bernardo and Luis) explained that the son of God was a carpenter and therefore looks like a bodybuilder.⁶⁹

The portrayal of Black men as strong and muscular is also evident when examining visual representations of Black male slaves from colonial times. For example, when Theodor de Bry (1528-1598) decided to publish a new edition of Girolamo Benzoni's *Historia del mondo nuovo* (History of the New World) in 1565, he added a series of engravings that depicted Black male slaves as strong.⁷⁰ Benzonia was a sixteenth-century Milanese man who recorded his thoughts, observations and experiences while travelling throughout Central and South America sometime between 1541 and 1556.⁷¹ Bry's engravings depicted Black slave bodies as robust and remarkably more muscular, fit and younger than their Spanish overseers.⁷² An engraving depicting African slaves in a Spanish-owned mine in Hispaniola highlights the well-developed oblique muscles and arms of an almost-naked Black slave pouring a precious metal (gold or silver) from a bucket placed over his head.⁷³ Similarly, the engraving of a male slave receiving a

whipping in Hispaniola emphasizes his large back and leg muscles.⁷⁴ Such depictions suggest that Blacks are “body people,” only valuable for labour-intensive work that does not involve much intellectual effort.⁷⁵ The physical strength of these images may also reflect the slave’s ability to resist.

Slave overseers and masters frequently controlled slave bodies by inflicting pain, yet no significant scars, marks or scratches are evident on the bodies illustrated by de Bry or in Saadakeem’s images of flagellation or crucifixion. Indeed, the figure of Kyrios tied to the cross that appears in the first and only journal of the Church of Cristo Kyrios actually displays a massive grin, perhaps in mockery of his oppressors’ vain attempts to inflict pain upon his superhuman body. Given Girolamo Benzoni’s description of slave punishments, portraying slave bodies as strong, healthy and athletic seems misleading.

Benzoni explains that slave punishments consisted

of being thrown down on the ground, he had his hands and feet tied to a piece of wood laid across [...], then with a thong of rope he was beaten, until his body streamed with blood; which done, they took a pound of pitch or a pipkin of boiling oil, and threw it gradually all over the unfortunate victim; then he was washed with some of the country pepper mixed with salt and water. He was left on a plank covered over with a washcloth, [...]. Others dug a hole in the ground and put the man in upright, leaving only his head out, and left him in it all night.⁷⁶

Benzoni’s alleged eyewitness account of slave tortures in Hispaniola correspond with Laurent Dubois’s eighteenth-century sources that describe slave murders and cruelties that involved burning slaves with boiling cane juice; rubbing hot peppers, salt, lemon and even ashes into the open wounds of slaves; and burying slaves alive after forcing them to dig their own graves.⁷⁷ In addition, Dubois relates that a brutal technique used to murder slaves included inserting gunpowder into the anus of a slave and then lighting it.⁷⁸

In contrast to the image of the Black male slave as a bodybuilder, a medical report studying plantation slaves in the Province of Rio de Janeiro in 1853 declares that excessive labour, poor nourishment, damp quarters and lack of sleep contributed to illness.⁷⁹ Similarly, a Brazilian medical thesis published in 1847 underscores how slaves suffered from food poisoning as a result of eating meat from sick animals and poorly prepared manioc.⁸⁰ With such challenges it is difficult to envision plantations filled with slaves who resembled Mr Universe. Indeed, by portraying slaves with Olympic bodies, Saadakeem is reiterating and reinforcing the misconception that slavery was mild and that Black bodies were naturally suited to the physical strains of slavery. Indeed, in our interviews, Saadakeem spent quite a long time arguing that Latin American slavery was much milder than slavery in the English colonies. For example, he suggested that the lack of absenteeism in Peru meant that abusive overseers had fewer opportunities to beat slaves. In addition Saadakeem stated that in contrast to English plantations in the Caribbean,

en las haciendas del Perú los negros tenían acceso a un sistema de educación básico. Sí se les enseñaban el español, sí se les enseñaban algo de la cultura española. Podían algunos incluso aprender a leer y escribir [...]. En la colonia peruana eso era [...] casi parte del sistema normal [...]. En Latina América era normal [...] era una costumbre general.⁸¹

in the haciendas in Peru Blacks had access to a basic educational system. Yes, they taught them Spanish. Yes, they taught them aspects of Spanish culture. Some could even learn how to read and write [...]. In the Peruvian colony this was [...] almost part of the normal system [...]. It was normal in Latin America [...]. It was a general custom.⁸²

By emphasizing how Latin American slavery was better than the slavery practiced elsewhere, Saadakeem reiterates Frank Tannenbaum's problematic assertion that South American slavery was one of the more "humane" types of slavery.⁸³ Rather than

overcoming the need to focus on gradations of slavery, a task that is both pointless and repetitive, Saadakeem remains constrained to a way of thinking that minimizes the tragedies and atrocities of slavery in Peru.

Saadakeem's drawings that he illustrated and hung on the wall of the first floor of the Church of Cristo Kyrios feature robust Black slaves enduring flagellation and crucifixion. The slaves in Saadakeem's depictions frequently grin back at their oppressors, mocking them for even trying to abuse their superhuman bodies. For example figure 2 on page 76 depicts Kyrios on the cross with a very wide smile. This image is from the first and only journal issued by the Church of Cristo Kyrios and is in a comic book format. The drawing communicates that "the almighty Black Mandingo Kyrios Zulu from his cross happily exclaimed":

I will not die, rather I will live to proclaim the work of Yhaveh! For he was triumphant on the cross! I will never die because I am the living Incarnated Spirit of God sent to Earth to remain here nailed to the cross, shining for the rest of eternity.⁸⁴

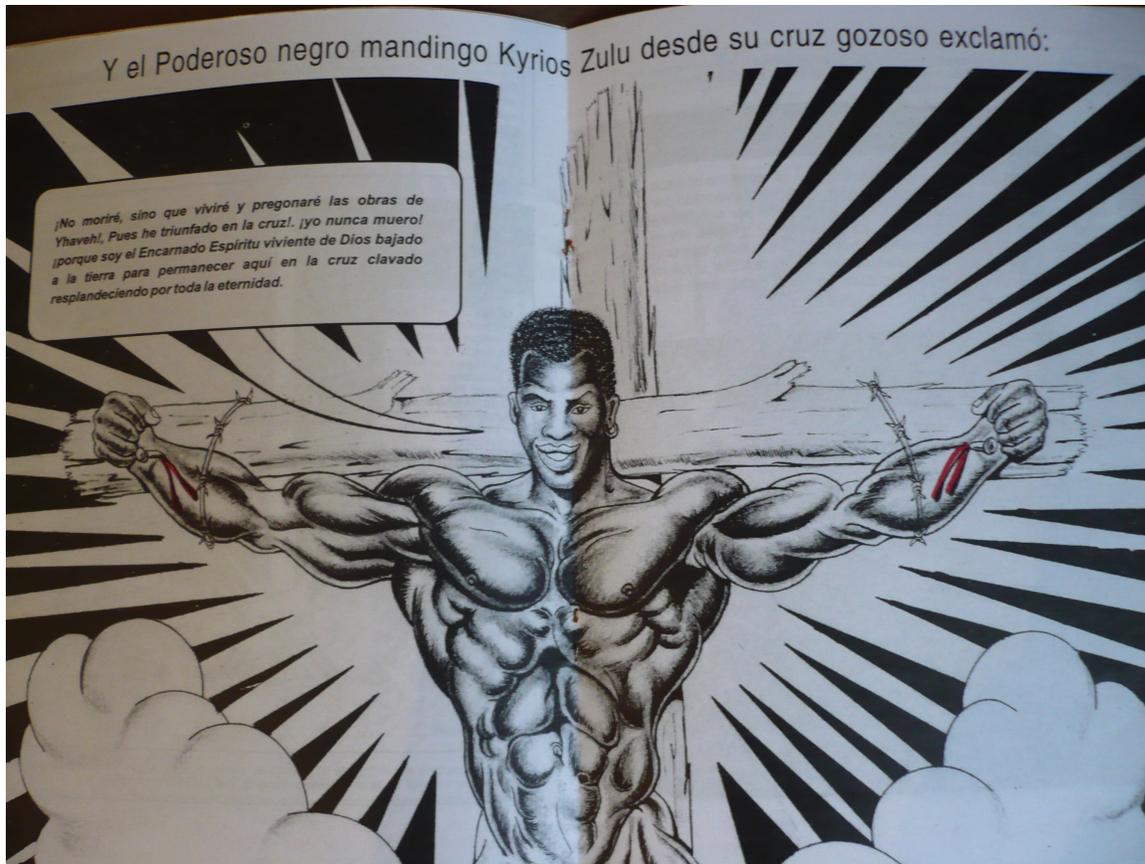


Figure 2: Palomino Berríos, Manuel Jesús. "La crucifixión de Kyrios." Comic strip. In *Kyrios Zulu: El Enviado Final De Dios*. 1st ed. Vol. 1. Lima: Iglesia De Kyrios Zulu, 1998.

According to Saadakeem's narratives Black leaders and slaves could only be murdered via crucifixion. Like the depictions of slave whippings, Saadakeem's drawings and sculptures of Black leaders who died on the cross do not appear to be in a state of agony. One can, however, discern the strain of re-enacting the crucifixion in Saadakeem's collection of photos of the performance of the crucifixion of Kyrios, which the Church performed annually. When I observed a photo of a slender and naked young Black male tied to a cross I felt that he looked absolutely exhausted, hungry and painfully uncomfortable. The Black male looked like an adolescent to me, but Saadakeem informed me that he was between 21-23 years old.⁸⁵ Saadakeem stated that "one of the strong youths, the most robust and Blackest perform the crucifixion" (uno de los jóvenes

fuerte, más robusto y negro hace la crucifixión).⁸⁶ In this particular photo, the male who performed the crucifixion of Kyrios was young and Black, but far from robust. This photo therefore contradicts and perhaps also challenges the accuracy of Saadakeem's drawings that depict Black slaves as superhuman and therefore immune to physical strain. Saadakeem informed me that the annual re-enactment of Kyrios's crucifixion lasts at least three or four hours.⁸⁷ The other people depicted in the background of the photo I viewed of a re-enactment of the crucifixion were all youthful Black men. Women are not allowed to participate in this ceremony.⁸⁸

Saadakeem revealed that "this man, in the moment that he is on the cross, is the Vodún, a human Vodún, a Vodún slave" (este hombre, en el momento que está en el cruz, es el Vodún [...] un Vodún humano [...] un esclavo Vodún). Perhaps Saadakeem describes the young Black male on the cross as a "Vodún slave" because Kyrios (a Vodún, a powerful supernatural being) possesses his body. Saadakeem emphatically repeated that the term "Vodún" means religion and is far removed from "Voudou," which he defines as "witchcraft."⁸⁹ Saadakeem is essentially the "director" of the crucifixion ceremony, or "Vodún Mass" (Misma de Vodún). This mass is celebrated clandestinely and involves props and several offerings. Two machetes are placed above the altar to symbolize the slaves. In addition, a mask representing Africa as well as seven candles that symbolize the Orishas decorate the room where the crucifixion is performed. Like Catholic masses they offer wine and bread, but in stark contrast to any religion I am aware of, they "conclude with the delivery [ejaculation] of his [crucified Kyrios's] semen as a symbol of the complete surrender of his life to God" (y para concluir con la entrega de su semen [...] cómo símbolo de la entrega completa de su vida a Dios).⁹⁰

The lack of pain conveyed in Saadakeem's representations of the crucifixion of a religious figure is in stark contrast to Christian re-enactments of the crucifixion of Christ. In Lima those who re-enact the crucifixion of Christ tend to be actors and they go to great artistic lengths to convey pain and suffering. For example, the photos of a group of actors who re-enacted the crucifixion of Christ in 2010 portray the use of a red substance to symbolize blood.⁹¹ A more extreme example includes the performance of the crucifixion of Christ in Kapitangan, a village in the Philippines, where the crucified are predominantly female and where the re-enactment includes hammering nails into their hands.⁹² For this painful sacrifice divine powers purportedly grant the crucified the ability to heal the sick.⁹³ To my knowledge those who re-enact the crucifixion of Kyrios do not receive special capabilities to help others, nor do they subject themselves to such a degree of pain as the woman who perform the crucifixion of Christ in Kapitangan.

In addition to their incredible muscular build, there is another very prominent feature of Saadakeem's representations of Black male bodies: the penis. In Saadakeem's photographs, sculptures and drawings, the penis, whether explicitly shown or suggested, tends to be a central focus of his images. For example, the figure of Kyrios displayed in figure 3 on page 79 clearly showcases his partly aroused penis. This particular figure is located in Saadakeem's bedroom. I saw the figure when Saadakeem gave me a tour of the Church.



Figure 3: Kyrios, The Church of Cristo Kyrios. Personal photograph by author. June 2011.

In Saadakeem's picture entitled "The Crucifixion of the Divine Kyrios" (La crucifixión del divino Kyrios), located in the "living room" of the house/sanctuary, Kyrios's penis is fully erect (see figure 4 on page 81).



Figure 4: La Crucifixión del divino Kyrios, The Church of Cristo Kyrios. Personal photograph by author. June 2011.

By advocating and obsessing over the idea that “Blacker is better” and by hyper-sexualizing the Black male body, Saadakeem clearly articulates the connection between beauty and desire.⁹⁴ In projecting such a narrow definition of beauty (dark Black skin, muscular and with a large penis), Saadakeem leaves no room for discussing other possible elements, both tangible and intangible, that can comprise beauty such as mental intelligence, kindness, maturity, green eyes or even women’s bodies. In other words, Saadakeem’s strict definition of beauty is heavily painted with a gendered edge and creates the impression that Blackness is static, fixed and male.⁹⁵ In his analysis of colonial discourse, Homi K. Bhabha understands fixity as a sign of cultural/historical and racial difference.⁹⁶ By only declaring one form of beauty acceptable, people who do not match the ideal are cast away as inferior. Bhabha recognizes that the stereotype is an essential component to colonial discourse and “a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always ‘in place,’ already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated.”⁹⁷ In consistently presenting the Black man in naked poses, Saadakeem emphasizes the Black male body and fetishizes the darkest shades of Blackness.⁹⁸ Margo Natalie Crawford understands fetishism as reducing the fetishized subject to a body part, or transforming the entire body into a fetishized part.⁹⁹ In Saadakeem’s depictions of Black males, the entire Black body, including the penis, becomes fetishized parts.¹⁰⁰ Crawford remarks that “racial fetishism sometimes becomes a very specific type of sexual fetishism.”¹⁰¹ When examining Saadakeem’s representations of Black men it is difficult to ascertain which fetish came first, the Black skin or the Black penis, or perhaps each fetish developed simultaneously.

Dwight N. Hopkins believes that a positive mode of Black masculinity is “constituted by at least healthy eroticism and empowering religion.”¹⁰² Hopkins defines eroticism as “pleasurable life force internal to the body [that draws upon] history, knowledge, desire, pleasure, wholeness, and creativity.”¹⁰³ Thus for Hopkins, healthy eroticism does not only include accepting sex as an act and expression embraced by the mind, but also includes the idea that the Black body is capable of thinking, executing choices, impacting history and forging its own spirituality.¹⁰⁴ According to Hopkins, “religion is orientation toward the ultimate in one’s life and death” and “erotic religion or religious erotic of the black male body concerns the ultimate living in the body and a spirituality clinging to every dimension of the flesh.”¹⁰⁵ The representations of Black male bodies put forth by the Church of Cristo Kyrios do not marry Black men’s flesh with Black men’s minds. In failing to unite the body with the mind, the Church of Cristo Kyrios’s images of Black men erase the spirituality of their subjects. In so doing they present a one-dimensional representation of Black men.

As demonstrated in chapter one, at least some of Saadakeem’s religious messages appear to try to rewrite slave history in Lima by depicting Black male slaves as intelligent, creative, independent and emotionally and physically strong. Thus, the Church of Cristo Kyrios does seem to aspire to the utopian goal of marrying the spirit with the body. The problem, however, is that Saadakeem fails miserably in promoting and embracing what Hopkins describes as the two essential components of Black masculinity: a healthy eroticism and empowering religion.¹⁰⁶ This is because possible good intensions are overshadowed by stories of nakedness and an overwhelming focus on the Black body, especially the Black penis. By failing to connect the intellectual faculties

of the Black man with his body, Saadakeem's portrayals of Black male bodies reinforce the myth that Black men are lascivious "body people" who are only concerned with satisfying their carnal tastes.¹⁰⁷

Saadakeem admired and was clearly influenced by Robert Mapplethorpe's photographs of Black men, especially those depicted in the *Black Book*. This is evidenced by the fact that he included Mapplethorpe's photo of Roedel Middleton on the back cover of the first and only issue of "Kyrios Zulu: God's Final Descent" (Kyrios Zulú: El Enviado Final de Dios), a journal created by the Church of Cristo Kyrios.¹⁰⁸ If I recognized the models in Saadakeem's images he would admit that he did not shoot the photos, otherwise, when I asked Saadakeem who the models in his photographs were he responded "they are church members from Jamaica or from [the Afro-Peruvian community of] Chinchca" (son nuestros miembros de la Iglesia. Son de Jamaica o de Chinchca).¹⁰⁹ He added that "the photos are original representations" (las fotos son representaciones originales).¹¹⁰ He never once mentioned Mapplethorpe's name and I did not realize the connection until I returned to Canada.

When I saw an older photo (older because its quality was less vivid and it was kept in an album, whereas the majority of Saadakeem's photos are saved on his computer) of a close-up of a White male hand gently holding a Black penis, Fanon's declaration that "unfortunately [...] Black man is genital" popped into my mind.¹¹¹ Imagining the Black man as a penis underscores the idea that the Black man is purely and solely biological and corporeal. As Fanon explains, the Black man does not only symbolise a penis, but also denotes negativity.¹¹² Thus, the image of the Black man as a penis symbolises his alienation and intellectual and social castration.¹¹³ While Fanon and other theorists such

as Homi K. Bhabha perceive the White man's preoccupation with the Black man's penis as a manifestation of fear and sexual rivalry, Black sexuality is not considered a threat in the Church of Cristo Kyrios. On the contrary, the Black penis is a sacred "specimen." Saadakeem's photograph of an isolated Black man's penis (in a sense castrated from the body) suggests that the Black man is nothing more than a large Black penis.¹¹⁴ In documenting the cultural history of the penis, David M. Friedman observes that about fifty years before Fanon articulated that many Whites imagined the Black as genital, William Lee Howard declared that "it is the large black penis that renders any chance of civilizing the Black man absolutely absurd."¹¹⁵ This remark suggested that Black men did not have the intellectual capabilities to learn how to act in a manner that Howard viewed as "civilized." Saadakeem's photo of the white hand gently holding a non-erect Black penis also recalls how White slave buyers inspected naked Black men's penises at slave markets and auctions in the United States.¹¹⁶ Walter Johnson observes how antislavery journalist James Redpath noted the curiosity, sexual undertones and erotica characteristic of the "inner room" of a Richmond, U.S. slave market. Redpath understood the "inner room" as a place where slaves were indecently examined. While the majority of Redpath's attention was directed towards female slaves, he also acknowledged that "the slaves were there — the males —stripped naked, and carefully examined."¹¹⁷ Perhaps some slave buyers determined to select and purchase the man with the largest penis associated large penises with virility and strength. This might have been important to some slave buyers because the more slaves reproduced the less they would have to purchase.¹¹⁸ On the other hand, as Walter Johnson contends, the preoccupation with the association between fertility and bodies was often a façade for indulging in erotic

fantasies.¹¹⁹ For example Redpath observed how potential buyers made “brutal remarks” and flashed “licentious looks” towards slaves.¹²⁰

Saadakeem seems determined to draw and capture the largest Black penis in his images. In Patricia Morrisroe’s biography of Mapplethorpe she includes Black and gay rights activist and writer Essex Hemphill’s critical comments regarding Mapplethorpe’s attention to the Black penis, especially to isolated shots of the Black penis:

Mapplethorpe’s eye pays special attention to the penis—at the expense of showing us the subject’s face, and thus, a whole person. The penis becomes *the* identity of the black male, which is the classic stereotype re-created and presented as art in the context of a *gay* vision... what is insulting and endangering to black men on one level is Mapplethorpe’s conscious determination that the faces, the heads, and by extension, the minds and [the non-sexual] experiences of some of his black subjects were not as important as close-up shots of their penises. It is virtually impossible to view Mapplethorpe’s photos of black males and avoid confronting issues of exploitation and objectification.¹²¹

Hemphill’s criticisms of Mapplethorpe’s depiction of Black men seem to echo Hopkins’s emphasis on the importance of linking the Black spirit with the Black body. Hopkins recognizes that the reasoning behind the mind-body split was partially influenced by such thinkers as René Descartes who concluded that the body’s characteristics signify “passion, biology, the inside, otherness, inertness, unchanging stasis, matter—a more primitive way of being. To the mind is attributed reason, the self, the same, action, movement and intelligence, a more developed way of being or not being.”¹²² According to Hopkins the bifurcation of the mind and body laid the foundation for European Enlightenment’s comprehension of what it meant to be human.¹²³ European Whites represented the mind, ambition and ultimately the human race, whereas non-Whites and non-Europeans symbolized mechanical instruments, uncivilized animals and expressions of the carnal.¹²⁴ If Blacks are simply represented as bodies, pure materiality, then the

Black body cannot think for itself and therefore becomes the object that thrives on raw, animal eroticism.¹²⁵

Symbolizing a man as a penis does not always denote his inferiority and lack of power, nor is this representation restricted to Black men. In order to further understand how and if Saadakeem's emphasis on the Black penis can be interpreted as a symbol of physical and racial strength, it might be valuable to ponder the work of Edward E. Baptist. In contrast to Fanon's understanding of how White society viewed and treated Black men as nothing more than penises, Baptist observes that White male slave traders and buyers from the Southern United States proudly identified themselves "as if they were animated, erect penises, one-eyed men" on alert to use and rape Black bodies.¹²⁶ Indeed, Baptist's analysis of written correspondence among the owners and operators of an American slave firm indicates that they actually referred to themselves as "one-eyed men."¹²⁷ This custom is especially evident when examining how White men described their interactions with maids, generally light-skinned female sex slaves. Rather than representing inferiority, White men who called themselves "one-eyed" men, essentially penises that entered whichever Black body they desired, demonstrated their power and authority over Black bodies. If they coerced sex from another man's domestic maid, they also displayed power over a White rival. After all, Black bodies were considered packages, commodities and ultimately property. Baptist contends that domination of any kind over slaves inflated the trader's identification with the penis: he felt in control over his pleasure and he was the progenitor of his own history. In essence, he was a one-eyed man.¹²⁸ Baptist concludes that "the historic penis, the one-eyed man, of earlier generations had in fact fathered the maid - creating in the flesh a symbol of the history of coerced

sexuality to which men like the slave traders could return to at will.”¹²⁹ While it is impossible to determine Saadakeem’s motivations and intended messages, like the men of the American slave firm studied by Baptist, one could interpret Saadakeem’s emphasis on the Black penis as an attempt to convey Blacks as powerful. It could also be a unique way to proclaim that African descendents are alive and reproducing in Peru.

On the other hand, Baptist’s description of “one-eyed” men as rapists heavily involved in the inhumane business of slavery also suggests that the penis does not simply represent power, but also evil. This observation echoes Fanon’s analysis of how White society not only represents the Black man as a penis, but also as evil.¹³⁰

Whatever Saadakeem’s objectives may or may not be, there is ample evidence that points to the problems associated with representing Blacks as naked. Jan Nederveen Pieterse observes that “the icon of the nineteenth-century savage is determined by *absences*: the absence, or scarcity, of clothing, possessions, attributes of civilization.”¹³¹ Thus, nakedness can symbolize savageness and that which is deemed to be uncivilized. In Pre-Columbian Peru, depictions of naked captured warriors on Moche ceramics reveal that nudity was often perceived as a symbol of vulnerability.¹³² The captured naked men were portrayed in compromising positions, for example, with their hands tied behind their backs. In *Historia del mondo nuovo*, Girolamo Benzoni notes that nakedness was an important part of slave punishments:

When a man occasionally wished to punish a slave, either for some crime that he had committed, or for not having done a good day’s work, or for spite he had towards him, or for not having extracted the usual quantity of silver or gold from the mine, when he came home at night, instead of giving him supper, he made him undress, if he happened to have a shirt on.¹³³

Mariselle Meléndez's investigation of representations of the female body in eighteenth-century Peru demonstrate that within the colonial system, naked bodies symbolized the lowest degree of civilization within the social strata.¹³⁴ Minimal clothing, or the complete lack thereof conveyed the worth and potential of the individual. For example, Meléndez argues that attire, especially expensive fabrics and elegant accessories, indicated the value of people as active consumers.¹³⁵ Naked or semi-naked individuals were labelled as poor consumers and therefore considered as poor contributors to the economy.¹³⁶ Meléndez also notes how such ideas became institutionalized when a law was implemented in 1716 to restrict *mestizos* (people of Spanish and Indigenous descent), *mulattos* (generally people of Black and Spanish descent), Blacks and other marginalized groups from wearing clothing only deemed appropriate for people that occupied the highest positions in society.¹³⁷ Historically, depicting Blacks as naked or semi-naked symbolized social immobility, inferiority and worthlessness.¹³⁸

Ironically, through her analysis of *Tapadas* (upper-class White women who wore veils), Deborah Poole reveals how fears of the naked Black woman pervaded European's curiosity regarding the skin colour that lay beneath Tapadas' fully clothed bodies (only their eyes were visible).¹³⁹ The anxiety that surrounded the inability to determine the skin colour of the Tapada demonstrates the primordial role skin colour played in character analysis. Poole cites the nineteenth-century French traveller Maximilian Radiquet to illuminate how Black skin signified imperfection: "a long sleeve goes just up to the glove in such a way that it does not allow [one] to guess the color of the skin. Have no doubt, the treacherous shawl conceals an African, black as the night [and] flat-nosed as death."¹⁴⁰

These comments expose how Blackness was associated with treachery and even death. They also suggest how the ability to identify one's "race" assured onlookers how to classify and treat the subject. A mysterious racial identity unsettled the usual codes of interaction.

Scholars such as Henry Louis Gates Jr. claim that the sixteenth-century anonymous French travel manuscript entitled *Histoire naturelle des Indes* to contain the first (known and preserved) visual representations of African slaves in the Americas.¹⁴¹ One of the illustrations is entitled "How the negro slaves work and look for gold in the mines of the region called Veragua [Panama]" (Come les esclaves naigres trauaillent et cherchent lor aux-mynes en la terre nommee veraugue) and portrays the social status of Blacks as well as the association drawn between primitiveness and Blackness.¹⁴² The picture depicts four strong and completely nude male slaves digging, washing and weighing gold.¹⁴³ The viewer can only decipher the facial features of two of the slaves. Conversely, the overseer is fully dressed, including shoes and a hat, and is diligently overseeing the gold weighing process.¹⁴⁴ The overseer stands out due to his bright red pants and grey hair. The African slaves, on the other hand, blend into the earth tones of the natural scenery.¹⁴⁵ This suggests that nudity can symbolize primitiveness. Mariselle Meléndez reflects upon the association between nature and primitivity in her deconstruction of painted colonial depictions of Peruvian families. For example she observes that Spanish families in Peru were illustrated inside their homes, whereas Indigenous families were positioned in the environment where the ruling class believed they belonged: the valley.¹⁴⁶ Similarly, continuously portraying Blacks in jungle environments suggests that they come from the wild and belong in the wild. Pieterse explains that

The iconography of Africans as savages was determined by the association with nature and flora - often the kind of wild and overwhelming landscape which makes humans appear small. To the image of Africa as wilderness belongs the tropical rain forest with its lush vegetation, and the jungle which is proverbially ‘impenetrable.’¹⁴⁷

Many of Saadakeem’s digital photos depict Black men in jungle environments, surrounded by tropical plants with a small piece of leopard print scarcely covering their penises. These representations are saved on memory sticks (and perhaps also on his computer) and are located in Saadakeem’s office on the second floor of the Church of Cristo Kyrios. Saadakeem inserts such photos into what I refer to as his “Bible,” his collection of sacred messages written in Word documents. After Saadakeem completes a message he may read it to Church members or deliver history presentations at such establishments as the National Afro-Peruvian Museum. Saadakeem summarizes his photos of Black men in the jungle when he states that Blacks have “a jungle spirit” (un espíritu selvático).¹⁴⁸ This notion reproduces Clementa Palma’s assertion that Blacks only brought the “savage life” (la vida salvaje) to Peru.¹⁴⁹

The historical roots of Saadakeem’s depiction of the Black man as an inferior jungle beast are evident in the late eighteenth-century watercolour illustrations of the Peruvian Bishop, Baltasar Jaime Martínez Compañón y Bujanda (1782 or 1785). The watercolour depicting the Black man is significantly different from those illustrating the men of mixed ancestry (Black and White as well as Black, Indigenous and possibly White). In the picture entitled “Negro” the man is so dark the viewer cannot even decipher the man’s features; his skin appears as a mysterious dark blob. Moreover, his clothes are tattered and the scenery is telling: the figure is located among jungle trees. Depicting a Black man in this manner suggests that he is primitive, exotic and animalistic. Moreover,

blurring his facial features suggests that he is not worth knowing on an individual basis. In contrast to the black man, the men of mixed ancestry are located in “civilized” scenery. No plants, rivers or anything else from the wild are depicted in the pictures. Moreover, their attire more closely matches that of the European and the viewer can clearly see all of their facial features and expressions. Martínez Compañón’s watercolours classified Peruvian peoples according to their socio-economic class utility and potential for profit.¹⁵⁰ As Meléndez astutely contends “for many intellectual and colonial authorities, the body came to represent an instrument to explain and to categorize society.”¹⁵¹ Similarly, Deborah Poole interprets Johann Moritz Rugendas’s nineteenth-century paintings of Lima’s central market as visual depictions of Lima’s class and racial hierarchy. For example, in one of his market paintings the upper-class women are wearing hats, sitting on horses and are elevated from the chaotic (lower-class) market crowd.¹⁵² In contrast to the upper-class women, the “mulatas” are depicted among the hustle and bustle of the market with “dark, exposed bodies.”¹⁵³

Saadakeem’s representations of the nude and sexualized Black man in the jungle mirror contemporary Peruvian images of the Black woman. For example portrayals of Blacks as wild jungle animals in Peru includes the nude photographs of Vera Lucía de Silva and Araujo Recé Fátima, two Brazilian dancers who performed for a 1980 New Years’ Eve party hosted by the Sheraton in Lima. *Caretas*, a reputable Peruvian newspaper, featured the women on two pages and in four photos.¹⁵⁴ The anonymous authour wrote that “for them [the Brazilian dancers], the barmen of the Sheraton have prepared an explosive cocktail dubbed coco-loco” (Para ellas, los barman del Sheraton han preparado un cóctel explosivo denominado coco-loco, y los decoradores se hallan

importando todo tipo de exóticas plantas arborescentes).¹⁵⁵ “Coco” is a direct reference to the women’s skin colour and “loco” (crazy) refers to the absence of their minds, they are simply mindless bodies. Furthermore, the article quotes a businessman (presumably from the Sheraton) as stating: “the Rio girls are traditionally beach goers, they favour topless” (las chicas cariocas, tradicionalmente playeras, son partidarias del topless.”¹⁵⁶ In the most prominent photo of Recé Fátima she is only wearing a limited amount of exotic jewellery.¹⁵⁷ In another nude photo of Recé Fátima her hand is lightly placed on one of her bum cheeks in such a manner that the eye is drawn to her behind.¹⁵⁸ Correspondingly, one of the nude photos of de Silva showcases her glistening Black skin and a parted gold scarf that strategically covers her nipples and genital area.¹⁵⁹ Her hand is placed over her genitals in a seductive manner.¹⁶⁰ These poses underscore Black nakedness as a symbol of corporal availability and promiscuity. The photos and the organizers’ remarks send the message that Black women are “naturally” nude, primitive, exotic and extremely sexual. While it is possible that Vera Lucía de Silva and Araujo Recé Fátima intentionally sold themselves as lascivious and exotic stereotypes to earn a living, the Sheraton and *Caretas* certainly exaggerated the samba show into a wild exhibition of the Black female body straight from the “jungle” of Rio.

In the history of Black representations in Peru there are not only images that associate Blacks with the jungle, but there are also images that clearly depict Blacks as jungle animals. For example, in the 1970s an advertisement produced by the store Kelinda unequivocally represented a “moreno” (a Black man) as a monkey.¹⁶¹ While the ad attempted to appeal to “all Peruvians” by depicting a White, a Japanese and an Indigenous man, only the Black man was illustrated as an uncivilized jungle beast. All

the other men were clearly human with visible human facial features and expressions (see figure 5 on page 95).

¡VIVA EL PERU!!
Y TODOS LOS
PERUANOS

CRIOLLOS...BLANCOS
RUBIOS y MORENOS

TODOS GOZAN CON NUESTRAS
PATRIOTICAS OFERTAS
DE 28

kelinda
HUALLAGA 270 (Calle Judios) al costado de la Catedral

Figure 5: Kelinda. "¡Viva el Perú!! Y todos los peruanos." *La (Nueva) Crónica* (Lima), July 25, 1973.

Many of Saadakeem's digital photos not only depict Black men in the jungle, but also portray muscular Black male slaves grasping long and shiny machetes.¹⁶² This depiction may represent the Black phallus. Meléndez contends that work tools that repeatedly appear in visual images of certain pre-defined groups of people can symbolize racial and social identities.¹⁶³ By routinely representing Black male slaves with machetes, Saadakeem is silencing their other activities and duties. For example, Saadakeem fails to address domestic slavery and argues that domestic slavery only existed in northern Peru.¹⁶⁴ He also neglects to visually represent male slaves performing tasks related to family life and personal survival, such as tending to children or cultivating small vegetable gardens.

The attributes Saadakeem grants his Black male historic figures also illuminate the one-dimensional jungle stereotype. Saadakeem's brief story, related to me in an interview, about an Afro-Latino warrior (guerrero) who killed a leopard, skinned it and proceeded to cover his body with the fresh hide is particularly revealing.¹⁶⁵ As a result of the leopard skin the guerrero became endowed with the strength of an animal and established a secret leopard fraternity designed to protect Blacks and avenge slave owners.¹⁶⁶ Such a narrative clearly animalizes a human. Only robust Black males who passed a series of tests that confirmed their loyalty, strength, combat skills and ability to endure pain could join the society.¹⁶⁷ Saadakeem affirmed that the leopard fraternity often killed their slave masters and anyone who abused their family.¹⁶⁸ Saadakeem stated that this leopard society was like Malcolm X's Black Panther Party.¹⁶⁹ It appears that Saadakeem perceives the Black Panther Party as a militant group prepared to strike out

against White society with violence. Unlike the Black Panthers, the leopard fraternity did not have a concrete plan of action, interest in politics or a desire to implement community programs. In neglecting to associate other forms of protest besides violence and revenge with the leopard fraternity, Saadakeem presents the organization as superficial. By imagining the members of the leopard fraternity as physically threatening and fierce like leopards, Saadakeem underscores the purported close connection between the Black man and the wild. By attributing a “jungle spirit” to Blacks Saadakeem reinforces the notion that Black men are primitive, barbaric and dangerous.¹⁷⁰

As Carlos Aguirre illustrates, the stereotype of Black men as violent fighters is deeply rooted. Aguirre examines how members of Lima’s upper class from 1850-1935 exaggerated the idea that Black men were excellent fighters by detailing the duels and criminal activities of Black *faites* (bullies) from Malambo, a predominantly Black neighbourhood established in the early colonial period.¹⁷¹ Even Aguirre describes the winner of one particularly well-known duel as possessing “feline agility.”¹⁷² Employing the adjective “feline” reflects how the image of the Black man as a wild animal can be so engrained in the imagination that it can manifest itself almost automatically.

Despite the historic and current representation of Blacks in Peru as uncivilized jungle animals, some Peruvians try to evade such depictions. For example, when Ricardo Pereira, husband of Afro-Peruvian musician Susana Baca, viewed Luaka Bop’s vision for his wife’s *Eco de sombras*’ album cover, he was appalled by the sketch of his wife in the middle of tropical plants and trees.¹⁷³ Pereira protested that “Susan is not a little Black girl in the South American jungle. She is a mature woman, 50-some years of age, who is a mestiza, a mix of cultures. Do not exoticize her.”¹⁷⁴ Pereira wanted Luaka Bop to present

Susan Baca as an individual, not as part of an Afro-Peruvian stereotype.¹⁷⁵ In the end, Baca's album cover depicted her in a wheat field.¹⁷⁶

Pereira's comments can be alternatively viewed as a denial of his wife's Blackness. Describing Baca as Mestiza could be an attempt to downplay her African heritage. Significantly, depicting Baca in a wheat field may symbolize the racial identity of *trigueño*, a Spanish term that can be literally translated as "wheat-coloured." As Tanya Golash-Boza points out, while *trigueño* can be employed to denote extremely light-skinned people of African descent, it can also refer to people of European or Indigenous ancestry who possess tanned skin.¹⁷⁷

In addition to jungle imagery and representations showcasing muscles and nakedness, Saadakeem does not simply emphasize the body, but places special attention on the penis, especially the rising penis. Presenting the penis as fully or partially erect gives the viewer the impression that the subject is well endowed and highly sexual. The attention historically given to Black genitals is well documented by cultural and literary historian Sander L. Gilman. Gilman observes that in an early nineteenth-century publication entitled *Histoire naturelle du genre humain*, Julien-Joseph Virey writes that the medical and scientific community believed that Black genitalia were "more developed than those of whites."¹⁷⁸ In the analysis of the treatment of Saarje (Sarah) Baartman, the South African Black woman who travelled to England for employment, Gilman describes how the Black body came to signify "primitive" and "sexual."¹⁷⁹ In the early-nineteenth century Baartman was exhibited naked for curious Europeans to gaze at her supposed corporeal anomalies: a voluptuous bottom, a hypertrophy of the labia and a nymphae caused by a beauty regime.¹⁸⁰ Gilman concludes that "her physiognomy, her skin color,

the form of her genitalia mark her as inherently different.”¹⁸¹ While Baartman was a woman and the overwhelming majority of Saadakeem’s images concern the Black male body (we will examine Saadakeem’s representations of females near the end of this chapter), the representations of Baartman’s ‘exotic’ and ‘large’ sexual organs, like Saadakeem’s images of the large penis, defined muscles and oiled skin, accentuate and mark the Black male body as different.

The focus, isolation and display of the Black anatomy, especially the Black genitalia, demonstrated in Saadakeem’s images, are also evident in the Baartman case, albeit to a much more explicit and profound degree. After Baartman died in London in 1815 scientists proceeded to scrutinize and describe her body.¹⁸² Henri Ducrotay de Blainville wrote the results of the autopsy in 1816 and one year later, Baron Georges Cuvier (1769-1832) revised the autopsy results.¹⁸³ Examining Cuvier’s work helps reveal the historical roots of associating Blacks with primitive jungle imagery. Cuvier linked Blacks with orangutangs and in *Le Règne Animal* he indicated that the vulgar name for orangutangs was “hommes sauvages” (wild men).¹⁸⁴ Moreover, Cuvier’s comparison between Blacks and monkeys set the stage to paint the Black population as barbaric animals: “in the structure of its skull and in its brain size, of all the animals, this well-known monkey is the one that most closely resembles man” (Ce singe célèbre est de tous les animaux celui qui ressemble le plus à l’homme par la forme de sa tête et le volume de son cerveau.”)¹⁸⁵

Furthermore, Cuvier declares that

The Negro race [...] its colour is black, its hair crisped, its cranium compressed, and its nose flattened. Its projecting muzzle and thick lips clearly approximate it to the Apes: the tribes of which it is composed have always remained barbaric.¹⁸⁶

La race nègre [...] son teint est noir, ses cheveux crépus, son crâne comprimé, et son nez écrassé; son museau saillant et ses grosses lèvres, la rapprochent

manifestement des singes: les peuplades qui composent sont toujours restées barbares.¹⁸⁷

Thus, the evidence of animalization in Saadakeem's narrative of the Black leopard society combined with his continuous focus on the Black man's body, at the neglect of showcasing his mind, reinforces Cuvier's association between the Black man and the jungle animal.

Whether conscious or not, Saadakeem's tendency to depict the Black man as a naked, uncivilized body reiterates many racist nineteenth-century ideologies. While Saadakeem claims that his representations convey the Black man's strength and rebellious slave history, by simply perpetuating the same racist images of the Black body as nineteenth-century raciologists, Saadakeem's possible desire to elevate the Black man backfires.

Studying the Baartman case reveals how Saadakeem's representations of the Black man are rooted in images that were propelled by racism. Gilman surmises that dissecting Baartman's dead body was driven by two major goals: the desire to compile "evidence" that would support the idea that females, particularly Black females, were inferior beings who could be placed on the same animal hierarchy as the orangutang.¹⁸⁸ Secondly, Gilman contends that the desire to underscore the supposed anomalies of Baartman's genitalia propelled the autopsy forward.¹⁸⁹ Gilman purports that for the majority of European viewers, Baartman "existed only as a collection of sexual parts. She was a body. Her mind was irrelevant."¹⁹⁰ In fact, according to numerous studies that examined, measured and compared the skull structure and size of various "races," Blacks purportedly lacked the so-called more developed brain of "Caucasians." Comparably, Saadakeem's photos strip Black men from their minds by detailing the curvature of their

muscles and the length of their penises. In this manner, the Black man becomes a collection of material and sexualized parts.

Analyzing the Baartman case is relevant because as Gilman believes, the treatment of Baartman and the racial myths that enveloped her enormously impacted ideas about Black people. Indeed, Gilman declares that “the nineteenth century perceived the black female as possessing not only a ‘primitive’ sexual appetite, but also the external signs of this temperament, ‘primitive genitalia.’”¹⁹¹ Gazing at Bartmaan’s naked body and dissecting her like a diseased dog not only racialized her body, but served as further “proof” that the Black body was primitive.¹⁹² Examining the treatment of Bartmaan exemplifies how physical characteristics can clearly define the idea of Blackness. Traces of race ideology frequently manifest when deconstructing visual stereotypes of Black men because the ideology is embedded in nearly every brush stroke and in nearly every camera flash. Saadakeem’s camera flash is not immune to deep-seated stereotypes of Black people.

Saadakeem’s nude and semi-nude photographs of Black men also mirror the primitive and erotic imagery visible in “scientific” slave portraits. This is evident when examining the slave daguerreotypes of Cuvier’s student/disciple, Louis Agassiz. Brian Wallis outlines how so-called racial science and photography can overlap. Agassiz photographed plantation slaves in Columbia, South Carolina in 1850. Wallis asserts that Agassiz wanted to photograph the bodies of naked and scantily clad slaves in order to prove the theory of polygenesis.¹⁹³ For Wallis, Agassiz’s slave daguerreotypes attest to the lack of objectivity inherent in the photographic process and final aesthetic result.¹⁹⁴ Moreover, Wallis declares that while there is no concrete connection between nude photographs and

pornography, the hint of erotica displayed in slave daguerreotypes insinuates the voyeuristic manner with which the photographer surveyed his Black subjects.¹⁹⁵ Agassiz observes that “the subject’s clothes were often shown torn, partially removed, or missing altogether.”¹⁹⁶ Indeed Wallis affirms that the “unprecedented nudity” of slave daguerreotypes presented the Black slave as a seductive object that appealed to the erotic senses of its viewers.¹⁹⁷ Many of the photos Saadakeem shared with me were what I deem “suggestive” due to their sexual overtones. They depicted robust, extremely muscular and well-defined, dark-skinned men with only a meagre piece of material over their penises. The photos call attention to the genital area by barely covering the penis or by chopping the photo in such a manner that pubic hair and/or razor bumps are exposed, thus the penis was almost but not quite exhibited. Naked or semi-naked depictions of Black men that draw an unusual amount of attention to the genital area transform the subject of the image into “an object and a mechanical instrument.”¹⁹⁸

The photographs of Black men shot by Mapplethorpe fixate upon the Black penis in the same manner I observed in Saadakeem’s photos. In the foreword to the *Black Book*, Ntozake Shange dedicates a poem to Mapplethorpe which implies that his collection of Black male bodies is a form of “niggahfied erotica.”¹⁹⁹ Moreover Arthur C. Danto declares that “cocks were the centre and focus of Mapplethorpe’s universe. He was, one feels, a worshiper.”²⁰⁰ Saadakeem himself told me that many of his neighbours believe that the Church of Cristo Kyrios’s representations of Black men are pornographic.²⁰¹ He decries this stance as “any excuse to disguise racism.”²⁰² In fact, Saadakeem routinely categorizes non-Blacks who do not agree with his presentation of Blackness as “racists” (racistas) and accuses Blacks who refuse to join the group as exhibiting a slave mentality.

When Saadakeem employs the phrase “mental slavery” (*esclavitud mental*) he is emphasizing how the yoke of White racism still penetrates many Black minds. As a result of “mental slavery” Saadakeem asserts that many Blacks in Peru feel that Blackness is not desirable.²⁰³ Saadakeem explains the disinterest that Afro-Peruvian activists have towards the Church of Cristo Kyrios as a fear of being different. Proclaiming to be a believer of a marginal religious organization would surely convince their European and North American Christian sponsors to back away.²⁰⁴ By categorizing Blacks who do not believe in or agree with the Church of Cristo Kyrios as “mental slaves,” Saadakeem implies that there is only one correct way of thinking and that there is only one image of Blackness.

Both Black and non-Black people in Lima have suggested that the Church of Cristo Kyrios is involved with sexually deviant behaviour. With shock rising in her voice, one Afro-Peruvian activist, who is among the few who ventured into the sanctuary, asked me if I had seen the Black Jesus’s penis (*¿has visto el pene de Jesús negro?*).²⁰⁵ She further exclaimed: “Saadakeem is obsessed with the penis” (*¿Él [Saadakeem] está obsesionado con el pene!*).²⁰⁶ She informed me that if she could prove what exactly was going on behind the scenes she would denounce the group to the authorities.²⁰⁷ This comment implies that the group uses religion as a façade for sexual acts among men. It also underscores how people can interpret the accentuation of the penis of a religious figure as sacrilegious. In addition, her remarks suggest that homosexuality is a taboo topic in Peru.

It is noteworthy that a South American Latino gay male gym and pornography buff who goes by the online names “Cazador” (hunter) in Spanish and “Chaser” in English follows the blog of the Church of Cristo Kyrios. This blog displays several semi-nude

photographs of Black men.²⁰⁸ For example, one photo showcases a Black man with oiled skin and wearing skimpy leopard underwear. According to his profile and related personal Internet links, Cazador is in search of a male companion who shares his passion for the male body.²⁰⁹ Cazador obviously admires the muscular and youthful bodies displayed in the Church of Cristo Kyrios's blog. Rather than using the Church of Cristo Kyrios's blog for religious purposes, Cazador appears to be using it as a porn site. The images of naked and semi-naked muscular Black men that the Church of Cristo Kyrios posts on the website *Arte & Fotografía* also attract attention. For example, the nude photo of Nsonowa on a cross (representing the crucifixion of the son of God) stirred a couple of members of the same site to share their frank opinions. Nsonowa does not shy away from the negative comments, but instead calmly explains or defends his poses. For example, in response to an extremely pejorative comment that denigrates gays, the leader of the branch of Cristo Kyrios in Jamaica declared: "I am not homosexual, far from it" (No soy homosexual y muy lejos de serlo).²¹⁰ In so doing he denied that his nude photographs had sexual undercurrents and perhaps even shared the homophobia articulated by the person who expressed the anti-gay comment. In addition, a woman who is a member of a photographic group called "erótica" (eroticismo) described the photos of Nsonowa as "shameless" (descarado) and "dirty" (cochino).²¹¹ Despite Nsonomwa's attempts to squash these comments, the fact that they exist suggest that the representations of Black slaves presented by the Church of Cristo Kyrios do not encourage viewers to discuss religion or Black history. Instead, the Church of Cristo Kyrios's representations of Black men seem to stir conversation regarding the boundary between art and pornography.

In 2004 *Alternativa Libre: Informativo vecinal del distrito de Pueblo Libre*, Saadakeem's neighbour, Armando Gomez Miraval, describes the Church of Cristo Kyrios as "a clandestine sect in a middle-class district, displaying the strange image of a dark-skinned, nude, crucified and corpulent man in an erotic pose" (una secta oculta en un distrito de clase media, guarda la extraña imagen de un hombre de tez oscura, desnudo, crucificado, corpulento y en actitud erótica).²¹² Gomez Miraval and other neighbours denounced the Church of Cristo Kyrios for violating a national construction code that prohibits the creation of non-residential buildings or attachments in residential areas. In June 30, 2003, the municipality of Pueblo Libre ruled in favour of the neighbours and ordered Saadakeem to demolish the rooftop temple within fifteen days.²¹³ Eight months before this ruling, however, Saadakeem, registered the temple in the Public Registry office. After this detail came to light the demolition was stalled.²¹⁴ Gomez Miraval informs the readers of *Alternativa Libre* that he and his neighbours are working towards removing the temple from the Public Registry.²¹⁵

Saadakeem blames the neighbours' intolerance to the rooftop temple and to the statue of Kyrios as racial and religious discrimination:

This is a real abuse that they are committing against us simply because the neighbours are saying they are not pleased with Black beliefs of a Black messiah and a Black Jesus, of a Holy Spirit Kyrios, African beliefs. [...] Because they are definitely White [...] They are Whites [...] with that philosophy that being White is the best. They don't like Black people coming here because they said that Black beliefs and African beliefs do not match with upper-class standards.²¹⁶

Saadakeem's version of events coincides with Gomez Miraval's article which notes that the members of the Church of Cristo Kyrios filed their own complaint against the actions of their neighbours in May 2004.²¹⁷ Saadakeem expressed that "we were very astonished by that [the decree for the demolition of the temple]" and added that "we had

to defend ourselves and we presented a defence claim with an attorney in the court against this abuse.”²¹⁸ Gomez Miraval’s article confirms that Given that the courts approved the neighbour’s denunciation of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, Saadakeem informed me that “we are asking now to pass this into the next level in the court [...] probably we are going to end in the Supreme Court.”²¹⁹ To mitigate the tension with his neighbours, Saadakeem removed the naked statue of Kyrios that was placed on his doorstep and erased the name of his sanctuary from the plaque nailed to his home. (See figure 6).



Figure 6: Church of Cristo Kyrios, The Church of Cristo Kyrios. Personal photograph by author. June 2011.

Saadakeem stated that the Church of Cristo Kyrios continues to be a major topic during the biweekly neighbourhood meetings.²²⁰ While the battle continues in the courts, the members of the Church of Cristo Kyrios practice their faith every Saturday on the roof top temple.

In 2002 Leonardo Aguirre from *El Comercio* commences his article entitled “¿Qué será lo que quiere el negro?” by speaking about how an anonymous neighbour of the Church of Cristo Kyrios “remembers that a drop of silicon hung from the phallus” (recuerda que del falo colgaba una gota de silicona).²²¹ These comments likely refer to the naked statue of Kyrios that Saadakeem removed from his doorstep. The scandalous image of the “super endowed” (superdotado) Kyrios with his exposed and semi-erect penis casts a shadow of shyness over Aguirre who addresses the issue of semen in an indirect manner:

Nos pareció casi un sacrilegio preguntar entonces cuál era el sentido de la gotita de silicona. Pero quizá baste con algunos versos de sus letanías habituales: ‘Oh Kyrios Zulu, poderoso mandingo, moreno musculoso, fuerte como un toro, eres untado con aciete de oliva para que brilles y resplandezcas en la cruz eternamente.’²²²

It seems to us almost sacrilegious therefore to ask what was the meaning of the drop of silicon. But maybe it is sufficient simply to quote some verses of their habitual litanies: “Oh Kyrios Zulu, powerful Mandingo, muscular Black man, strong as an ox, you are oiled by a drop of olive oil in order that you eternally shine and gleam on the cross.”²²³

This image of Kyrios’s semen described by Aguirre mirrors Mapplethorpe’s photos of highly sexualized shiny-tipped penises.²²⁴ Given Aguirre’s description of the statue of Kyrios as “sacrilegious” it is perhaps not surprising that *El Comercio* published “¿Qué será lo que quiere el negro?” in their Sunday paper *El dominical* in the *Extravagancias* section.

Sabrino Arroyo Aguilar astutely recognizes the sexual implications of the title “¿Qué será lo que quiere el negro?”. He points out that Afro-Colombian Calixto Ochoa composed a song by the same title in the 1980s that focused on the sexually enraged “rabioso” Black man and articulated how women are obsessed with the energetic and romantic “Moreno” (a Black man, or a light skinned Black man).²²⁵ The title of the article concerning the Church of Cristo Kyrios therefore implies that the group is highly sexual. In addition, by employing the term “el negro” instead of “la Iglesia de Cristo Kyrios” or “Manuel Jesús Berríos Palomino Berríos” (Saadakeem’s birth name), the title suggests that the Church of Cristo Kyrios is representative of all Black people and insinuates that all Black people are highly sexualized. Bernardo, the priest of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, took great offence to this article as evidenced by the letter to the editor he sent to

El dominical:

Su contenido ha sido distorsionado en su integridad y no ha sido tratado con el debido respeto que merece nuestra iglesia, por tal motivo nos sentimos totalmente defraudados, ya que concedimos la entrevista con la mayor objetividad y profundo sentimiento de nuestras creencias.²²⁶

Its content was completely distorted in its integrity and it was not treated with the rightful respect that our Church deserves. As a result, we feel completely defrauded since we granted the interview with the greatest objectivity and deepest feelings of our beliefs.²²⁷

In response to Bernardo’s reaction, *El dominical* stated “obviously we did not want to offend anyone’s faith, we just wanted to introduce some peculiar aspects of a unique sect” (Obviamente no quisimos offender la fe de nadie, solo dar a conocer algunos aspectos peculiars de una secta singular).²²⁸

Despite the rumours that the Church of Cristo Kyrios is a sexual and gay cult, the priest and Saadakeem informed me that they do not accept homosexuality.²²⁹ The priest

indicated that “God created two species: man and woman and he did not create homosexuality. Homosexuality is not an option” (Dios hizo dos especies: hombre y mujer y no hizo homosexualidad. La homosexualidad no es una opción).²³⁰ Priest Bernardo believes that people have the power to choose their sexuality: “you choose” (tú eliges).²³¹ Hypothetically, the Priest explained that if a homosexual wanted to join the Church of Cristo Kyrios he would have to “revert to his manly state, as a male” (retomar su condición de hombre, de varón).²³² The same applies to lesbians. The priest’s comments reflect the idea that homosexuality is an immoral “lifestyle option.” In so doing, he replicates the homophobia dominant in Peruvian society. Moreover, referring to men and woman as different species reveals the notion that men and woman are radically distinct from one another.

The lack of female representations in the Church of Cristo Kyrios is striking. I only saw two representations of Black females and both were simply busts. One was a mother with a small baby tucked into her neck and the other was of a very youthful looking Black woman. Each bust was made and bought in Jamaica.²³³ In contrast to the Church of Cristo Kyrios’s numerous images that feature the Black male body, the Black female body is largely invisible. Saadakeem married a Haitian woman in her twenties in 2009 who currently teaches Spanish in Jamaica and has no interest in the Church of Cristo Kyrios. In the words of Saadakeem, “she is simply my wife” (simplemente es mi esposa).²³⁴ No photos of Saadakeem’s wife or any wedding pictures are displayed in the living quarters of the Church of Cristo Kyrios. Nor are there any photos of Saadakeem’s mother, who he claims is a direct descendent of the sacred religious figures the Church of Cristo Kyrios worships.²³⁵

Despite the lack of female representations, the all-male clergy permits the baptism of women. Women can pray in the temple and are encouraged and welcomed to engage in tasks such as cooking and cleaning. Above all, the clergy considers motherhood an important duty and excellent way to increase the organization's sparse membership. Educating the youth is women's primary religious role in the Church of Cristo Kyrios.²³⁶ Notwithstanding, Saadakeem indicated that women could potentially occupy administrative roles.²³⁷ Saadakeem stated that "God created man and then a woman. Women are complementary agents under the protection of men [...] Women cannot lead" (Dios hizo el hombre y la mujer después. La mujer es un agente complementario que está bajo la protección del hombre [...] la mujer no puede liderar).²³⁸ Saadakeem did not explicitly underline why women are inferior to men, but given the emphasis that he places on the Black male body, I infer that women are secondary because they do not match his corporeal image of perfection.

In a photo of the Church of Cristo Kyrios displayed in "¿Qué sera lo que quiere el negro?" a spouse of one of the clergy members is shown wearing a veil over her head.²³⁹ The Church of Cristo Kyrios only requires women to wear a veil when they are in the part of the temple where the altar is located. The priest and Saadakeem stressed the importance of modesty, unanimously stating that women cannot wear miniskirts and other provocative clothing inside the temple.²⁴⁰ The priest added that make-up and sexy clothing are unacceptable because "the eye always strays" (el ojo siempre se va).²⁴¹ It is noteworthy that while photos of semi-naked Black amateur athletes are plastered on the walls of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, female members are not permitted to wear short skirts. While the Church of Cristo Kyrios places restrictions on the visibility of female

bodies, the clergy (Saadakeem, Javier, Bernardo and Luis) is not concerned about people who admire the numerous naked or semi-naked bodies of Black men.

When I asked Saadakeem who the most prominent woman in the Church was he responded “that’s a good question that you don’t [shouldn’t] ask.”²⁴² While I will never know exactly what Saadakeem meant by this response, I had the impression that women were not worthy enough to be a topic of conversation. Despite his initial reluctance to answer my question, Saadakeem surmised that an unmarried Jamaican woman who performed administrative tasks in Kingston was one of the most important women in the Church of Cristo Kyrios.²⁴³ Saadakeem also gave credit to one of the Prince’s relatives in Chinchu for organizing and teaching a group of about twenty believers.²⁴⁴ In a previous interview Saadakeem mentioned that his late mother was a descendent of Babakwame, one of the Church of Cristo Kyrios’s sacred Black figures.²⁴⁵ Moreover, Saadakeem also informed me that his mother taught him the histories of Babakwame and many other sacred figures.²⁴⁶ Placing his mother within the divine group of men contradicts the lack of female representation and power currently evident in the Church. Giving his mother credit for transmitting Afro-Peruvian history also contradicts and minimizes his supernatural experiences and abilities.

When I questioned Saadakeem about the absence of female representations he stated “there aren’t any female representations because there are no sacred female religious figures.”²⁴⁷ This statement suggests that while his mother was a descendent of Babakwame, her gender disqualifies her from sacred status. The unequivocal absence of a holy female religious figure sharply contrasts with the prominent role of the Virgin Mary in Latin American Catholicism. This clearly sets the Church of Cristo Kyrios apart from

the Catholic Church. Saadakeem notes and confirms this absence: “we do not believe that she [the Virgin Mary] influenced the destiny of souls. What one calls the cult of Mary does not exist” (no creemos que ella influyó el destino de las almas. No hay lo que se llama un culto María).²⁴⁸ Saadakeem adds that “since we do not have this concept of Mary, nuns obviously do not exist [in our church]” (Como no tenemos este concepto de María, obviamente no existen monjas [en nuestra iglesia]).²⁴⁹ Notwithstanding the absence of the Virgin Mary, female virginity is prized. Saadakeem asked me several times if I was a virgin and the Priest declared “that is important: marrying virgin women” (esto es importante: casarse con mujeres vírgenes).²⁵⁰ While virginity is viewed as a symbol of purity in the Church of Cristo Kyrios, it is not a requirement to join the group.²⁵¹ I felt that Saadakeem and some of the other church members wanted to pair me with a member of the Church as a way to recruit me into their belief system.

Saadakeem explained that Kyrios gave birth to the six male Orishas (the seventh one is still inside his penis) without the assistance of a partner.²⁵² Kyrios releases the Orishas “by discharging his semen, the liquid of life.”²⁵³ There are “seven corporeal activation spots” (siete centros de activación del cuerpo) and the genital area is one such activation spot, perhaps because, according to Saadakeem, it is the symbol of life and “the most powerful organ” (el órgano más fuerte).²⁵⁴ While waiting for Saadakeem in his library I came across a photo of a young Black male dressed in religious attire and looking down to where a white paper cup was placed near his feet. I was not able to confirm what this ritual entailed (for example, if ejaculation was a component), but I had the impression that the cup was somehow associated with his penis, a sacred activation spot. Saadakeem informed me that women cannot participate in their rituals, ceremonies or offerings and

added that I could only learn more about the mysteries of the Church of Cristo Kyrios if I became a member.²⁵⁵

It is clear that the Church of Cristo Kyrios's representations of Blackness centre around the penis and the sexualized male body in general. This sexual and gendered lens differs greatly from the manner in which other Afro-Peruvian organizations explore and express Blackness. For example the Afro-Peruvian organization called the Centre of Ethnic Development (el Centro de Desarrollo Étnico - CEDET) embraces and creates a wide spectrum of images that portray the multifaceted lives of Black people in non-sexual ways. CEDET compiled and produced a book of images of Afro-Peruvians by Peruvians entitled *SHINING BLACKNESS: a collective photographic display (NEGRO LUMINOSO: muestra colectiva de fotografía)*. In the written explanation regarding the historic vision of this collection, the editors assert that *NEGRO LUMINOSO* presents a thought-provoking spectrum of Black images:

Son diversas las dimensiones culturales que se expresan en las imágenes: vida familiar, religiosidad, música, danza, deportes, trabajo rural, arte culinario y el amor maternal. Los rostros y figuras de ancianos negros, con su silencio nos transmiten su mensaje de valentía para enfrentar la vida en medio de carencias y muestran serenidad para encarar el futuro.²⁵⁶

The cultural dimensions expressed in these images are diverse: family life, religiosity, music, dance, athletics, rural work, culinary arts and maternal love. The faces and figures of older Blacks, silently transmitting their message of courage to confront life in the midst of scarcity, portray calmness in facing the future.²⁵⁷

NEGRO LUMINOSO fulfills its claims. The mosaic of images presented in this collection opposes Saadakeem's partial and full male nudes. While Saadakeem's photos exclusively showcase young Black men with athletic bodies, the photos of Black males and females, young and old fill the pages of *NEGRO LUMINOSO*. The photos feature such famous figures

as the poet Nicomedes Santa Cruz, the political activist María Elena Moyano Delgado, military commander Juan Carlos Urcariegui as well as everyday people such as student Perico León, a religious sister from Hermana Zahumadora and Afro-Peruvian families.²⁵⁸ Pain, poverty, strength, hard work, joy, wisdom and hope leap from these photos. In contrast to Saadakeem's sexualized semi-nude photos that focus on the genital area, where men are shown shirtless in *NEGRO LUMINOSO*, the viewer does not feel that the image was created with lust or desire. For example, a photo taken of a man in Yapatera in 1996 by Segundo Carrasco depicts a shirtless man with a pleasant expression carrying two large and heavy containers in each hand.²⁵⁹ The barren, dry, dusty and hot surroundings attest to why the man may be shirtless.²⁶⁰ The photo also depicts the man in action: he is working hard, carrying heavy containers.²⁶¹ A sense of daily duty strikes the viewer. In no way does the subject appear in a sensual pose or setting. Rather than being presented in a one-dimensional manner, objectified and symbolized as a penis, the Black man in Carrasco's photo is whole, with body and mind intact and united. Similarly, the drawing that accompanies the short story "Los duendes juguetones" in *Cuentan los antiguos: Añoranzas y tradiciones ancestrales* depicts a strong Black male *campesino* (agricultural worker, peasant)²⁶² While he is a sturdy man with large hands he does not resemble Mr. Universe or Mr. Olympia and is fully clothed.²⁶³ In addition, while Saadakeem hung pictures of Tony Terry and Bobby Brown in the living quarters of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, Jorge Ramírez Reyna displays photos of Martin Luther King and Nelson Mandela in his Afro-Peruvian organization. Admiring sex symbols versus Human Rights leaders that represent justice and freedom is telling. Thus, while many viewers of Saadakeem's images of Black men tend to conclude that he is obsessed with

the Black body, particularly the Black penis and involved with homo-erotica, other depictions of Blacks created or embraced by members of the Afro-Peruvian community do not provoke such impressions.

CONCLUSION

Examining the Church of Cristo Kyrios demonstrates how conceptualizations of race do not exist in isolation but are often interconnected with and embedded in other constructions and beliefs such as gender, sexuality and religion. Given that Saadakeem's representations of Blackness essentially exclude Black women — there are only two representations of females and they are both bodiless — it is clear that women occupy a low status in the Church of Cristo Kyrios's gender and religious hierarchy. In fact, women in general have no place in Saadakeem's fantastical image of perfection or representations of Blackness.

Exploring Saadakeem's conceptualizations and articulations of Blackness also demonstrate the fluidity of the idea of race. Studying Saadakeem's representations of Black men, especially the photo of the isolated Black penis resting on a White hand, suggest that ideas of sexuality can be firmly embedded in the concept of race. By repeatedly representing Black men as incredibly muscular, nude or semi-nude with an exceptionally large penis, Saadakeem reinforces stereotypical images and beliefs regarding Black men as animalistic and sexual "body people." Saadakeem's version of Black history and Black men overwhelmingly draws upon his imagination, his desires and his creativity.²⁶⁴ It is not a multidimensional history because Saadakeem's apparent fascination of the Black male body, especially the Black penis, overshadows the idea that the Black body is capable of thinking, deciding, impacting history and forging its own

spirituality.²⁶⁵ Saadakeem's depictions of the Black male body do not indicate that the Church of Cristo Kyrios is a healthy erotic religion because Saadakeem fails to unite and marry Black men's bodies with Black men's minds.

For those who sincerely want to fight against anti-Black racism, or any other form of discrimination, it is paramount to recognize that embracing a one-dimensional and therefore exclusionary representation of a predefined group of people stagnates change.²⁶⁶ Representations will not cease defining, promoting and perpetuating stereotypes until the racist representation habit is uprooted and unmasked.²⁶⁷ Thus, without systematically transforming the racist scaffolding historically and currently employed to construct the image of the "Black man" as an uncivilized body unable to control his sexual urges, one risks perpetuating the same negative significations that the images scrutinized in this chapter project.²⁶⁸

Notes

¹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (New York: Grove Press, 2008), 91.

² Saadakeem & Luis, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.

³ Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, 91, 93.

⁴ Jaymie Patricia Heilman, *Before the Shining Path: Politics in Rural Ayacucho, 1895-1980* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010), 14.

⁵ Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2010), 9; David Theo Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning* (Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1993), 3, 81.

⁶ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 80.

⁷ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 3, 81.

⁸ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 3.

⁹ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 3.

¹⁰ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 80.

¹¹ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 81.

¹² Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 8.

¹³ Bonilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists*, 9; Goldberg, 6.

¹⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, "The other question: the stereotype and colonial discourse," *Screen* 24, no. 4 (1983): 27; Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 122.

¹⁵ Judith Wilson, "Stereotypes, Or a Picture Is Worth a Thousand Lies," in *Prisoners of Image: Ethnic and Gender Stereotypes* (New York: The Alternative Museum, 1989), 20-21. Quoted in Kianga K. Ford, "Playing with Venus: Black Women Artists and the Venus Trope in Contemporary Visual Art," in *Black Venus 2012: They Called Her 'Hottentot'*, ed. Deborah Willis (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 101.

- ¹⁶ Dwight N. Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," in *Loving the Body: Black Religious Studies and the Erotic*, ed. Anthony B. Pinn and Dwight N. Hopkins (Gordonsville: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 191, 192.
- ¹⁷ Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 188.
- ¹⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20th & July 7th, 2011.
- ¹⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20th & July 7, 2011.
- ²⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 7, 2011.
- ²¹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 7, 2011.
- ²² Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 7, 2011.
- ²³ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 7, 2011.
- ²⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 25, 2011.
- ²⁵ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 11.
- ²⁶ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 50.
- ²⁷ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 50.
- ²⁸ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 50, 52.
- ²⁹ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 52.
- ³⁰ Winthrop D. Jordan, *White Over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro 1550-1812* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 490.
- ³¹ Tanya Maria Golash-Boza, *Yo Soy Negro: Blackness in Peru* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 185.
- ³² Margo Natalie Crawford, *Dilution Anxiety and the Black Phallus* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2008), 65.
- ³³ "Fe Negra." *Caretas* (Lima), June 18, 1998, 100.
- ³⁴ "Fe Negra," 100.
- ³⁵ "Fe Negra," 100.
- ³⁶ "Fe Negra," 100.
- ³⁷ Afro-Peruvian activist, in discussion with the author, July 20, 2011.
- ³⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 7, 2011.
- ³⁹ Member of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, in discussion with the author, 2011.
- ⁴⁰ member of the Church is Cristo Kyrios, in discussion with the author, July 7, 2011.
- ⁴¹ Tanya Maria Golash-Boza, *Yo Soy Negro: Blackness in Peru* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011), 143-169. The literal translation of the term "serrano" is "mountain person" and is generally employed to refer to Andean Indigenous people. Ingenio, therefore, appears to be an exception.
- ⁴² Golash-Boza, *Yo Soy Negro*, 203.
- ⁴³ Golash-Boza, *Yo Soy Negro*, 203.
- ⁴⁴ Golash-Boza, *Yo Soy Negro*, 203.
- ⁴⁵ Ben Arogundade, *Black Beauty: A History and a Celebration* (New York: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2000), 8. Quoted in Deborah Willis, *Posing Beauty: African American Images from the 1890s to the Present*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), xv.
- ⁴⁶ Deborah Willis, *Posing Beauty: African American Images from the 1890s to the Present*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), xiii.
- ⁴⁷ Female Church member, in discussion with the author, June 11, 2011.
- ⁴⁸ Nancy Scheper-Hughes, *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 189.
- ⁴⁹ Member of the Lima police force, in discussion with the author, June 11, 2011.
- ⁵⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 30, 2011.
- ⁵¹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 25, 2011.
- ⁵² Iglesia de Cristo Kyrios Blog; "Historical Evidence," blog entry by Church of Cristo Kyrios, July 17, 2009, <http://churchofkyrios.blogspot.com>.
- ⁵³ Goldberg, *Racist Culture*, 124.
- ⁵⁴ Homi K. Bhabha, "The other question: the stereotype and colonial discourse," in *Visual Culture: the reader* ed. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1999), 376.
- ⁵⁵ Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies*, (New York: Routledge, 1994), 187.

- ⁵⁶ Wendy Phillips, "Representations of the Black Body in Mexican Visual Art: Evidence of an African Historical Presence or a Cultural Myth?" *Journal of Black Studies* 39, no. 761 (2009):799, DOI: 10.1177/0021934707301474.
- ⁵⁷ Robert L. Sánchez, *Black Mosaic: The Assimilation and Marginalization of Afro-Peruvians in Post-Abolition Peru, 1854-1930*, diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2008 (Urbana: University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2008), 103, 99, doi:3337913.
- ⁵⁸ Sánchez, "Black Mosaic," 98, 101-102.
- ⁵⁹ Sánchez, "Black Mosaic," 102.
- ⁶⁰ Sánchez, "Black Mosaic," 103, 102.
- ⁶¹ Sánchez, "Black Mosaic," 97.
- ⁶² Leonardo Aguirre, "Qué sera lo que quiere el negro?," *El Dominical*, June 2, 2002.
- ⁶³ Aguirre, "Qué sera lo que quiere el negro?"
- ⁶⁴ Saadakeem Papa Kyriakos, *Herencia Africana en la Biblia* (Lima, Iglesia de Cristo Kyrios).
- ⁶⁵ Aguilar, "Formas de vida," 30.
- ⁶⁶ Saadakeem Papa Kyriakos, *¿De qué color es cristo, el hijo de Dios?* (Lima, Iglesia de Cristo Kyrios).
- ⁶⁷ Kwame Nsonowa, "El Poder Del Ubwenge," *Arte & Fotografía*, August 9, 2009, comentarios, <http://www.arteyfotografia.com.ar/12956/fotos/233657/engrupo-447/>.
- ⁶⁸ *Arte & Fotografía*; "El Poder del ubwenge."
- ⁶⁹ Members of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, in discussion with the author, June 14 & 20, 2011.
- ⁷⁰ Jean Michel Massing, *The Image of the Black in Western Art From the "Age of Discovery" to the Age of Abolition: Europe and the World Beyond*, vol. 3 Part 2, ed. David Bindman and Henry Louis Gates Jr., in collaboration with Karen C. C. Dalton (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 2011), 151-153.
- ⁷¹ Massing, *The Image of the Black*, 149.
- ⁷² *Discovering the New World: based on the works of Theodore De Bry*, ed. Michael Alexander (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 138-141.
- ⁷³ *Discovering the New World*, 139.
- ⁷⁴ *Discovering the New World*, 138.
- ⁷⁵ Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 183.
- ⁷⁶ Girolamo Benzoni, *History of the New World: Shewing his Travels in America, from A.D. 1541 to 1556, with Some Particulars of the Island of Canary*, ed. W. H. Smyth (London: Hakluyt Society, 1857), 93-94, http://openlibrary.org/books/OL24332030M/History_of_the_new_world.
- ⁷⁷ Laurent Dubois, *Avengers of the New World: the story of the Haitian Revolution* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 50.
- ⁷⁸ Dubois, *Avengers of the New World*, 50.
- ⁷⁹ Reinhold Teuscher, "A Medical Report on Slaves on Five Coffee Plantations in the Province of Rio de Janeiro (1853)," in *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil*, by Robert Edgar Conrad (Princeton: Princeton University, 1983), 90.
- ⁸⁰ David Gomes Jardim, "'There are Plantations Where the Slaves are Numb with Hunger': A Medical Thesis on Plantation Diseases and Their Causes (1847)" in *Children of God's Fire: A Documentary History of Black Slavery in Brazil* by Robert Edgar Conrad (Princeton: Princeton University, 1983), 92, 93.
- ⁸¹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.
- ⁸² Saadakeem in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.
- ⁸³ See Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992).
- ⁸⁴ Marques P. Richeson, "Sex, Drugs, and...Race-to-Castrate: A Black Box Warning of Chemical Castration's Potential Racial Side Effects," *Harvard Blackletter Law* 25 (Spring 2009): 104-105, Academic Search Complete. The term "Mandingo" is deeply entrenched with racist notions that imagine the Black man as primitive and hypersexual.
- ⁸⁵ Saadakeem in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.
- ⁸⁶ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.
- ⁸⁷ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 7 & 2, 2011.
- ⁸⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.
- ⁸⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011; Stephan Palmié, "Conventionalization, Distortion, and Plagiarism in the Historiography of Afro-Caribbean Religion in New Orleans," in *Creoles and Cajuns: French Louisiana - La Louisiane Française*, by Wolfgang Binder (Frankfurt Am Main: Peter

Lang, 1998), 317; See Jean Price-Mars, *Ainsi Parla L'oncle*, foreword by Robert Cornevin (Montréal: Leméac, 1973). Saadakeem reiterates colonial perspectives of "Voodoo".

⁹⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011. See

⁹¹ "Viernes santo: la muerte de Cristo fue escenificada en Lima," *El Comercio*, April 2, 2010, <http://elcomercio.pe/lima/455561/noticia-viernes-santo-muerte-cristo-fue-escenificada-lima>.

⁹² Peter J. Bräunlein, "Negotiating Charisma: The Social Dimension of Philippine Crucifixion Rituals," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 37, no. 6 (2009): 899, doi: 10.1163/156848409X12526657425262.

⁹³ Bräunlein, "Negotiating Charisma," 899.

⁹⁴ Willis, *Posing Beauty*, xxvii

⁹⁵ Margo Natalie Crawford, *Dilution Anxiety and the Black Phallus* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2008), 73.

⁹⁶ Bhabha, "The other question," 370.

⁹⁷ Bhabha, "The other question," 370.

⁹⁸ Crawford, *Dilution Anxiety and the Black Phallus*, 63.

⁹⁹ Crawford, *Dilution Anxiety and the Black Phallus*, 7.

¹⁰⁰ Crawford, *Dilution Anxiety and the Black Phallus*, 7.

¹⁰¹ Crawford, *Dilution Anxiety and the Black Phallus*, 10.

¹⁰² Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 190.

¹⁰³ Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 190.

¹⁰⁴ Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 182, 183.

¹⁰⁵ Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 190-191.

¹⁰⁶ Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 190.

¹⁰⁷ Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 183.

¹⁰⁸ Iglesia de Kyrios Zulu, *Kyrios Zulu: El Enviado Final de Dios* 1, no. 1 (August): 1998.

¹⁰⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 30, 2011

¹¹⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 30, 2011.

¹¹¹ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 157.

¹¹² Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 140, 157.

¹¹³ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 140, 157.

¹¹⁴ David M. Friedman, *A Mind of its Own* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 142. Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 157; Patricia Morrisroe, *Mapplethorpe: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 1995), 248.

¹¹⁵ David M. Friedman, *A Mind of its Own* (New York: The Free Press, 2001), 142.

¹¹⁶ Robert Staples, *Exploring Black Sexuality* (Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC, 2006), 24.

¹¹⁷ Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 130, 148.

¹¹⁸ Robert Staples, *Exploring Black Sexuality*, 24.

¹¹⁹ Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 149.

¹²⁰ Johnson, *Soul by Soul*, 149.

¹²¹ Morrisroe, *Mapplethorpe*, 248-249.

¹²² Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 181.

¹²³ Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 181.

¹²⁴ Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 181.

¹²⁵ Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 181.

¹²⁶ Baptist, "'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids,' and 'One-eyed Men,'" 1640.

¹²⁷ Baptist, "'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids,' and 'One-eyed Men,'" 1619, 1634, 1638-1639.

¹²⁸ Baptist, "'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids,' and 'One-eyed Men,'" 1648.

¹²⁹ Baptist, "'Cuffy,' 'Fancy Maids,' and 'One-eyed Men,'" 1648.

¹³⁰ Fanon, *Black Skin White Masks*, 140, 157.

¹³¹ Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 35.

¹³² Christopher B. Donnan, *Moche Portraits From Ancient Peru* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2004), 117-121.

¹³³ Benzoni, *History of the New World*, 93.

- ¹³⁴ Mariselle Meléndez, *Deviant and Useful Citizens: The Cultural Production of the Female Body in Eighteenth-Century Peru* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2011), 54-55, 62.
- ¹³⁵ Meléndez, *Deviant and Useful Citizens*, 54.
- ¹³⁶ Meléndez, *Deviant and Useful Citizens*, 54.
- ¹³⁷ Meléndez, *Deviant and Useful Citizens*, 61.
- ¹³⁸ Meléndez, *Deviant and Useful Citizens*, 62, 47.
- ¹³⁹ Deborah Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity: A Visual Economy of the Andean Image World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), 87, 94.
- ¹⁴⁰ Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity*, 93-94.
- ¹⁴¹ Massing, *The Image of the Black*, 145.
- ¹⁴² *Histoire Naturelle des Indes: The Drake Manuscript in the Pierpont Morgan Library*, trans. Ruth S. Kraemer (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1996), 100.
- ¹⁴³ *Histoire Naturelle des Indes*, 100.
- ¹⁴⁴ *Histoire Naturelle des Indes*, 100.
- ¹⁴⁵ *Histoire Naturelle des Indes*, 100.
- ¹⁴⁶ Meléndez, *Deviant and Useful Citizens*, 63.
- ¹⁴⁷ Pieterse, *White on Black*, 35.
- ¹⁴⁸ Kyriakos, in discussion with the author, June 25, 2011.
- ¹⁴⁹ Clemente Palma, *El Porvenir de las razas en el Perú*, BA thesis, Universidad Nacional Mayor De San Marcos, 1897, 1, 13-15.
- ¹⁵⁰ Meléndez, *Deviant and Useful Citizens*, 41-42, 47, 73, 79, 80.
- ¹⁵¹ Meléndez, *Deviant and Useful Citizens*, 79. Eighteenth-century Peru witnessed the birth of *casta* paintings, illustrations that hierarchically depicted and classified different “racial” groups.
- ¹⁵² Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity*, 94.
- ¹⁵³ Poole, *Vision, Race, and Modernity*, 96.
- ¹⁵⁴ “Bellezas del oro negro,” *Caretas* (Lima, Peru), December, 1980.
- ¹⁵⁵ “Bellezas del oro negro,” *Caretas*
- ¹⁵⁶ “Bellezas del oro negro,” *Caretas*
- ¹⁵⁷ “Bellezas del oro negro,” *Caretas*
- ¹⁵⁸ “Bellezas del oro negro,” *Caretas*
- ¹⁵⁹ “Bellezas del oro negro,” *Caretas*
- ¹⁶⁰ “Bellezas del oro negro,” *Caretas*
- ¹⁶¹ Kelinda, “¡¡Viva el Perú!! Y todos los peruanos,” *La (Nueva) Crónica* (Lima), July 25, 1973.
- ¹⁶² Haitian artist Ulrick Jean-Pierre’s oil paintings of Boukman encouraging slaves to rise up in rebellion correspond to Saadakeem’s representations of slaves: immensely strong, muscular, powerful and shirtless, with one earring. Moreover, Jean-Pierre’s images of Boukman portray his subject firmly grasping a machete in the air. Notwithstanding the similarities between Jean-Pierre and Saadakeem’s images of Blacks from the days of slavery (emphasis on the body), Only Saadakeem’s images appear sexualized.
- ¹⁶³ Meléndez, *Deviant and Useful Citizens*, 136.
- ¹⁶⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ¹⁶⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 25, 2011.
- ¹⁶⁶ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 25, 2011.
- ¹⁶⁷ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 25, 2011.
- ¹⁶⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 25, 2011.
- ¹⁶⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 25, 2011.
- ¹⁷⁰ Heidi Carolyn Feldman notes that a lyric of one of the songs composed by Perú Negro associates Blacks with panthers: “We were ancestors of the Baobab and the panther. But suddenly we were others, and another land was ours.” *Back Rhythms of Peru: Reviving African Musical Heritage in the Black Pacific* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), 134.
- ¹⁷¹ Carlos Aguirre, *The Criminals of Lima and Their Worlds: The Prison Experience, 1850-1935* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 8, 125.
- ¹⁷² Aguirre, *The Criminals of Lima and Their Worlds*, 127.
- ¹⁷³ Heidi Carolyn Feldman, *Back Rhythms of Peru: Reviving African Musical Heritage in the Black Pacific* (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 2006), 246.
- ¹⁷⁴ Carolyn Feldman, *Back Rhythms of Peru*, 246.

- ¹⁷⁵ Carolyn Feldman, *Back Rhythms of Peru*, 246.
- ¹⁷⁶ Carolyn Feldman, *Back Rhythms of Peru*, 247.
- ¹⁷⁷ Golash-Boza, *Yo soy negro*, 96.
- ¹⁷⁸ Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1985), 85.
- ¹⁷⁹ Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, 85.
- ¹⁸⁰ Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, 85.
- ¹⁸¹ Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, 85.
- ¹⁸² Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, 85.
- ¹⁸³ Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, 85.
- ¹⁸⁴ Georges Cuvier, *Le Règne Animal* (Paris: Chez Deterville, 1817), 102.
- ¹⁸⁵ Cuvier, *Le Règne Animal*, 102.
- ¹⁸⁶ Cuvier, *Le Règne Animal*, 95.
- ¹⁸⁷ Cuvier, *Le Règne Animal*, 95.
- ¹⁸⁸ Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, 85.
- ¹⁸⁹ Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, 85.
- ¹⁹⁰ Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, 85, 88.
- ¹⁹¹ Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, 85.
- ¹⁹² Gilman, *Difference and Pathology*, 85, 88, 90. An example of how so-called scientific writings by such people as Cuvier served as ammunition for oppressing Black people is evident in Georgian native Thomas Reade Rootes Cobb's (1823-1862) pro-slavery treatise entitled *An Inquiry into the law of Negro Slavery in the United States of America. To Which is prefixed, An Historical Sketch of Slavery* (pp143). Significantly, to support his pro-slavery stance Cobb quoted Cuvier's comments associating Blacks with wild animals.
- ¹⁹³ Brain Wallis, "White Science: Louis Agassiz's Slave Daguerreotypes," *American Art* 9, no. 2 (1995): 40, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3109184>.
- ¹⁹⁴ Wallis, "White Science," 40.
- ¹⁹⁵ Wallis, "White Science," 54.
- ¹⁹⁶ Wallis, "White Science," 54.
- ¹⁹⁷ Wallis, "White Science," 54.
- ¹⁹⁸ Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 181.
- ¹⁹⁹ Ntozake Shange, foreword to *Black Book*, by Robert Mapplethorpe (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986). Aspects of Mapplethorpe's work echo the photos of late nineteenth-century photographer F. Holland Day.
- ²⁰⁰ Arthur C. Danto, "Playing With the Edge: The Photographic Achievement of Robert Mapplethorpe," afterword to *Mapplethorpe*, by Robert Mapplethorpe (New York: Random House, 1992), 336.
- ²⁰¹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 30, 2011.
- ²⁰² Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 30, 2011.
- ²⁰³ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²⁰⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²⁰⁵ Afro-Peruvian activist, in discussion with the author, July 20, 2011.
- ²⁰⁶ Afro-Peruvian activist, in discussion with the author, July 20, 2011.
- ²⁰⁷ Afro-Peruvian activist, in discussion with the author, July 20, 2011.
- ²⁰⁸ *Iglesia de Cristo Kyrios*, "miembros," The Church of Cristo Kyrios (blog), August 1, 2009. <http://iglesiadecristokyrios.blogspot.ca/>.
- ²⁰⁹ *Iglesia de Cristo Kyrios*, "miembros," The Church of Cristo Kyrios (blog), August 1, 2009. <http://iglesiadecristokyrios.blogspot.ca/>.
- ²¹⁰ Kwame Nsonowa, "El sacrificio del vodun," *Arte & fotografía*, May 24, 2010, <http://www.arteyfotografia.com.ar/12956/fotos/314212/>.
- ²¹¹ Nsonowa, "El sacrificio del vodun."
- ²¹² Armando Gomez Miraval, "Secta se oculta en Calle Salinar: Extraña imagen causa malestar en el vecindario," *Alternativa Libre: Informativo vicinal del distrito de Pueblo Libre* (Lima), May 2004.
- ²¹³ Gomez Miraval, "Secta se oculta en Calle Salinar".
- ²¹⁴ Gomez Miraval, "Secta se oculta en Calle Salinar".
- ²¹⁵ Gomez Miraval, "Secta se oculta en Calle Salinar".
- ²¹⁶ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20 & 30 2011.

- ²¹⁷ Gomez Miraval, "Secta se oculta en Calle Salinar".
- ²¹⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28 & 30, 2011.
- ²¹⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ²²⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.
- ²²¹ Leonardo Aguirre, "¿Qué será lo que quiere el negro?," *El dominical*, June 6, 2002, sec. Extravagancias.
- ²²² Aguirre, "¿Qué será lo que quiere el negro?".
- ²²³ Aguirre, "¿Qué será lo que quiere el negro?".
- ²²⁴ Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle*, 187.
- ²²⁵ Arroyo Aguilar, "Formas de vida," 32.
- ²²⁶ Priest of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, "Kyrios", *El Dominical*, June 16, 2002, Cartas sec.
- ²²⁷ Priest of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, "Kyrios", *El Dominical*.
- ²²⁸ "Respuesta," *El Dominical*, June 16, 2002, Cartas sec.
- ²²⁹ Priest and Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.
- ²³⁰ Priest, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.
- ²³¹ Priest, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.
- ²³² Priest, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.
- ²³³ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²³⁴ Saadakeem and the Priest, in discussion with the author, July 2, July 3 & 30, 2011.
- ²³⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²³⁶ Priest, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.
- ²³⁷ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 7, 2011.
- ²³⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 7, 2011.
- ²³⁹ Aguirre, "¿Qué sera lo que quiere el negro?".
- ²⁴⁰ Priest and Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.
- ²⁴¹ Priest and Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.
- ²⁴² Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 30, 2011.
- ²⁴³ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 30, 2011.
- ²⁴⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 30, 2011.
- ²⁴⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²⁴⁶ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 2011.
- ²⁴⁷ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 7, 2011.
- ²⁴⁸ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 6, 2011.
- ²⁴⁹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 6, 2011.
- ²⁵⁰ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.
- ²⁵¹ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 2, 2011.
- ²⁵² Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 25 & July 7, 2011.
- ²⁵³ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 25 & July 7 2011.
- ²⁵⁴ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 4 & 7, 2011. Saadakeem appears to incorporate the idea of the seven Chakras from India, but states that Chakras are derived from Africa, not India and asserts that India was populated by Black people
- ²⁵⁵ Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, July 7, 2011.
- ²⁵⁶ Carlos "Chino" Domínguez, Lorry Salcedo, Jaime Rázuri, Mónica Newton, and Oscar Chambi, *NEGRO LUMINOSO: muestra colectiva de fotografía*, ed. el Centro de Desarrollo Étnico-CEDET (Lima: Embajada de España en Perú, 2004).
- ²⁵⁷ *NEGRO LUMINOSO: muestra colectiva de fotografía*.
- ²⁵⁸ *NEGRO LUMINOSO: muestra colectiva de fotografía*.
- ²⁵⁹ *NEGRO LUMINOSO: muestra colectiva de fotografía*.
- ²⁶⁰ *NEGRO LUMINOSO: muestra colectiva de fotografía*.
- ²⁶¹ *NEGRO LUMINOSO: muestra colectiva de fotografía*.
- ²⁶² Abelarado (Abel) Alzamora Arévalo, "Los duendes jugu-tones," in *Cuentan los antiguos: Añoranzas y tradiciones ancestrales*, by Abelarado Alzamora Arévalo (Lima: CEDET, 2009), 67.
- ²⁶³ Alzamora Arévalo, "Los duendes jugu-tones," 67.
- ²⁶⁴ Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 190.
- ²⁶⁵ Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body," 182,183.
- ²⁶⁶ Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 53.

²⁶⁷ William Edward Burghardt Dubois, *Writings* (New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 1986), 1220.

²⁶⁸ Dwight N. Hopkins, "The Construction of the Black Male Body: Eroticism and Religion," in *Loving the Body: Black Religious Studies and the Erotic*, ed. Anthony B. Pinn and Dwight N. Hopkins (Gordonsville: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 188; Carter Godwin Woodson, *The Mis-education of the Negro* (Washington: The Associated Publishers INC, 1969), xxxiii; Butler, *Bodies that Matter*, 53.

CONCLUSION: WHO HAS CONTROL OVER BLACK HISTORY?

Black thinkers have long pondered the question of who has control over Black history. “Until lions have their historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunter” is a widely repeated African proverb that refers to how silencing a people’s history casts them in a distorted light.¹ Many prominent Black intellectuals have voiced their concerns over the control of Black history and the construction of the Black man. Carter Godwin Woodson, William Edward Burghardt Dubois, Marcus Garvey, Frantz Fanon and Dwight N. Hopkins are among some of the many Black intellectuals who acknowledge how society constructs and illustrates the Black man as a fixed inferior body, “unable to subject passion to reason.”² This thesis argues that Saadakeem Papa Kyriakos and the Church of Cristo Kyrios continue to follow the legacy of imagining Black men as mindless, uncivilized bodies. Thus, this thesis concludes that, overall, Saadakeem’s claims that the Church of Cristo Kyrios presents a culturally rich history that paints Blacks as highly intelligent, independent thinkers do not correspond to the actual images and representations of the Black man it creates, embraces and projects.

Saadakeem’s images of extraordinarily strong, well-endowed Black men can be viewed as a sort of colonial plagiarism, an unsettling repetition of deeply rooted barbaric and uncivilized images of Blackness that are evident in such historic representations as Baltasar Jaime Martínez Compañón y Bujanda’s watercolour illustrations of Blacks in Peru and Theodor de Bry’s portrayal of slaves in Haiti.³ The “primitive” and “carnal” Black man described by Peruvian intellectual Luis Alberto Sánchez (1900-1994) reappears in the Church of Cristo Kyrios’s collection of media such as in the robust figure of the nude Kyrios.⁴

Saadakeem claims to be a “historian” and “professor” (*historiador y catedrático*) who excavates hidden Black history to give Blacks proper credit for their rich religious culture.⁵ Similar to Marcus Garvey’s declaration that “the white world has always tried to rob and discredit us of our history,” Saadakeem, an admirer of Garvey, denounces Spanish colonial officials, the Catholic Church and the Peruvian government for deliberately hiding and silencing Afro-Peruvian history.⁶ By making such denunciations, Saadakeem is appealing to existing sentiments regarding the unjust treatment of Afro-Peruvians in both the past and the present, especially within the religious domain. A prominent Afro-Peruvian human rights activist in Lima related that she felt a weight lift from her chest when she first heard Pope John Paul II acknowledge the atrocities and mistreatment of Blacks.⁷ Soon after, however, she concluded that the pope’s speech was purely a public relations move (*políticas públicas*) and remains isolated from the Church.⁸ Her remarks demonstrate how the memory of slavery is still a tenuous and sensitive memory knot.

According to both Saadakeem and his followers, the Church of Cristo Kyrios disseminates and teaches Black history. Óscar’s remarks cited in chapter one reveal how Saadakeem exposed him to a history he never knew, a history that he thought meagre in substance and worth. In addition, Óscar’s comments regarding how the school system failed to include Black history in the curriculum suggests that some of Saadakeem’s followers might treat the Church of Cristo Kyrios as an educational institution, a place where they can learn about their history and the accomplishments of their ancestors. Saadakeem’s followers revealed that they are proud to learn about Black culture. But does the Church of Cristo Kyrios really embody Woodson’s definition of education as a

“means to inspire people to live more abundantly, to learn to begin with life as they find it and make it better?”⁹ According to the testimonies of Saadakeem’s few followers, they believe it does. But as the term “follower” suggests, they do not have much, if any, input in the excavation and analysis of the version of Black history Saadakeem presents. When I snacked on buns and jam with members of the Church of Cristo Kyrios, Saadakeem spoke continuously and the others only contributed when he gave them permission to do so. I had the distinct feeling that Saadakeem was perfectly aware how they would respond. When I conversed with members in private they often revealed perspectives and narratives distinct from those articulated by Saadakeem. For example, one Church member revealed that Saadakeem banned a young Afro-Peruvian man from the Church because he too received divine messages. Another member informed me that Saadakeem receives messages concerning how Church members should act. An additional member privately told me that “Blackness is not a skin colour, but a mentality.”¹⁰ Excommunicating competition and suppressing alternative opinions suggest that Saadakeem is the picture of an authoritarian leader who is interested in controlling people’s minds. As Woodson reasons “When you control a man's thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him not to stand here or go yonder. He will find his ‘proper place’ and will stay in it. You do not need to send him to the back door. He will go without being told. In fact, if there is no back door, he will cut one for his special benefit. His education makes it necessary.”¹¹

In describing how broader society views the Church of Cristo Kyrios, Saadakeem informed me that “they think we are a brainwashing cult.”¹² As Saadakeem acknowledges, many people doubt the sincerity of his supposed historical and religious

endeavours. Indeed, some vocal members of the community suggest that the Church of Cristo Kyrios is a sexual cult that is not designed to help the Black community, but rather a strategy to ensure that Saadakeem surrounds himself with Black penises.

We may never know or fully understand Saadakeem's intentions and motivations for perpetuating supposed divine messages and polemical images of Black men. It is clear, however, that many of his representations of Black men grossly reinforce problematic stereotypes that fail to unite Black men's bodies with Black men's minds. It is also evident that women do not occupy a significant role in Saadakeem's image of perfection. These two crucial aspects of Saadakeem's thought contribute to the exclusionary nature of the Church of Cristo Kyrios. Although not all anti-Black racism is attributable to the legacy of slavery, the Church of Cristo Kyrios reminds us that the racist conceptualization of the Black man as an uncivilized, primitive, animalistic and sexual object is still circulating. The Church of Cristo Kyrios also reminds us that racial conceptualizations can pervade organizations that try to promote Black history and Afro-Peruvians' place in Peru.

Notes

¹ This proverb has several variations and is generally considered to be Ghanaian. It is employed colloquially as well as academically. For example, this proverb appears on the website to the homepage of the Black Cultural Centre of Nova Scotia. "Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia," Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, accessed August 20, 2012, <http://www.bccns.com/>.

² Carter Godwin Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro* (Washington: Associated Publishers, 1933), 21, 22.

³ Kate Ramsey, *Vodou and Power in Haiti: The Spirits and the Law* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 186.

⁴ Luis Alberto Sánchez, *La literatura peruana: derrotero para una historia espiritual del Perú*, Tomo 1 (Asunción: Editorial Guaranía, 1950), 93.

⁵ The Church of Cristo Kyrios, “Presencia negra en la Biblia: una verdad que incómoda” (lecture, Mes de la Cultura Afroperuana, National Afro-Peruvian Museum, Lima June 14, 2011).

⁶ Marcus Garvey, *Selected Writings and Speeches of Marcus Garvey*, ed. Bob Blaisdell (Mineola: Dover Publications, 2004), 120; Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 20, 28 & 30, 2011.

⁷ Afro-Peruvian activist, in discussion with the author, June 11, 2011.

⁸ Afro-Peruvian activist, in discussion with the author, June 11, 2011. Some of Pope John Paul II’s specific apologies addressed to Black communities include his 1985 apology to Black Africa for the Catholic Church’s involvement in slavery and the apology he delivered in 1993 in Jamaica. See E. J. Dionne, “Pope Apologizes to Africans for Slavery,” *New York Times*, August 14, 1985; Robert McCabe, “Pope Acknowledges Effects of Slavery in Jamaica,” *Sun Sentinel*, August 11, 1993, http://articles.sun-sentinel.com/1993-08-11/news/9301290222_1_pope-jamaican-catholics-slavery.

⁹ Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, 29.

¹⁰ Afro-Peruvian activist, in discussion with the author, June 25, 2011.

¹¹ Woodson, *The Mis-Education of the Negro*, xxxiii

¹² Saadakeem, in discussion with the author, June 28, 2011.

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