“God Lives in Peru Today”

The *israelita* religious movement and the transmission of faith across digital and transnational networks

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**Abstract**

After emerging from the central Peruvian Andes in the 1950s, the *israelita* religious movement has expanded across Latin America and beyond, reaching the urban centers of the Global North. The growth of the Peruvian *israelitas* makes part of a regional trend that has transformed the Latin American religious field. A decline in Catholic adherence has benefited the rise of a diversity of protestant faiths that, within a few decades, have secured large followings as well as economic, media and political power. These transformations contradict theories of secularization that posit the decline of religion as concomitant with processes of modernization. This research project aims to provide insight on how the expansion of the *israelita* religious movement prompts alternative ways to think about modernity and contemporary religiosity. Through an interpretative qualitative exploration of the *israelita* presence in two spaces considered to be quintessential products of modernity, the Internet and a European cultural capital, Barcelona, this project identifies some of the characteristics that have facilitated the religious movement’s expansion and adaptation to different environments. The examination of the processes of transmission that underlie the *israelitas’* expansion also motivate a consideration of the innovations and transformations that have taken place in the *israelita* faith, particularly after the death of their founder and leader, Ezquiel Ataucusi Gamonal, in 2000.

**Keywords**

AEMINPU; religious transmission; transnationalization; embodied religious practice; modernity.
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# Table of Contents

Introduction: Latin America as the New Promised Land .............................................. 1
A Theoretical Discussion on Science, Rationalism and Religion ................................. 5
Who are the Peruvian israelitas? ..................................................................................... 12
A Review of the Literature on the Israelita Religious Movement ................................. 17
Reflections on Methodology ......................................................................................... 24
Exploring the Digital Hermandad: A Virtual Ethnography ........................................ 29
   A multiplatform approach to community building ....................................................... 30
   The construction of an israelita Spain within a sacred digital geography ............... 33
   At the margins of the marginal: schismatic israelita religiosity online .................... 35
   Identifying and placing Piedra Angular in the hermandad’s cyberspace ............... 37
An Ethnographic Approximation to Piedra Angular in Barcelona ............................. 40
   Piedra Angular: an israelita temple burrowed into the hills of Barcelona .............. 41
   The Living God is in Peru and his name is Ezequiel Jonás Ataucusi Molina .......... 44
   Fraternal Love? Navigating a culture of suspicion within the hermandad ............ 47
   Israelita divine corporality as a challenge to mind-body dualism ........................... 49
   From Huancayo to Barcelona: israelita bodies in motion in time and space ...... 54
Conclusions ................................................................................................................. 60
Reference List .............................................................................................................. 64
Annex A: Territorial Distribution of Israelita Historical Landmarks in Peru ....... 70
Annex B: Unstructured Interview Schedule .................................................................. 71
Annex C: Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España ....................................................... 72
Annex D: Official Communication and Institutional Censure .................................... 73
Annex E: Piedra Angular Family Tree and Intergenerational Mobility .................. 76
Annex F: Piedra Angular Temple Layout in Barcelona ............................................ 77
Introduction: Latin America as the New Promised Land

With the turn of the century, rapid transformations driven in part by the burgeoning information society and processes of globalization led to theorizations of the start of a new, postmodern era (Giddens, 1990). What characterizes this postmodern era would be the loss of faith in the grand narratives of modernity (Lyotard, 1984). Giddens (1990:1) defines modernity as the “modes of social life or organization which emerged in Europe from the seventeenth century”. One of the grand narratives that emerged from Europe entailed the possibility of continued human development through scientific and technological advancement. This idea of progress is described by Giddens (1990) as part of social evolutionist narratives that must be displaced to understand modernity itself, which to him is constituted by discontinuities, rather than by the continuous progression from primitivity to advancement. Yet, there is a paradox in theorizing a contemporary postmodernist era that has “surpassed” the limited grand narratives of Western modernity, as it replicates the very same evolutionist idea of unidirectional advancement.

In conceptualizing the postmodern, Lyotard (1984) indicates that the postmodern is not be found at the end of modernism, rather the modern and postmodern coexist and replicate each other constantly. Narratives of modernity, while they are questioned, continue to underlie how contemporary sociocultural phenomena is theorized about. The resulting juxtaposition of continuities and discontinuities is particularly salient when considering the recent history of Latin America. Theorized to be the “extreme Occident” by Rouquié (1998), the region’s ambivalent place due to its colonial history and sociocultural hybridity exposes the paradoxes in the perceptions of what constitutes modernity. In its economic development, Latin America has defied theories of development that foretold economic convergence with the Global North¹. In the recent mobilizations of its indigenous populations, Latin American has defied theories of cultural homogenization and social amnesia. In other words, the socioeconomic and cultural phenomena that Western modernity relegates to a pre-modern or primitive state have thrived and developed in Latin America alongside processes considered to be essentially “modern”, such as urbanization or democratization.

¹ I invoke the Global North and Global South distinction that arises from an economic division of the world. While this categorization generalizes and oversimplifies, the countries considered to make part of the Global North tend to be linked with the “successes” of European values. As such, it serves as a useful shorthand to map out the geographies of ideals of modernity. For a more in-depth discussion, see Jackson, Dellinger, McKee & Trefzer (2016).
A glance at the current state of the religious field in Latin America further expounds these contradictions. In accessing the premodern and modern, Giddens (1990) reveals an important characteristic associated with modernity: the dislodgement of religion as the framework for interpreting the meaning of existence. Even though certain postmodern perspectives argue that now science has been dislodged from its central place and that there is a multiplication of sources of authority, an enduring association between religiosity and “backwardness” remains imbedded in discourse in the West (Cantón, 2008; Giddens, 1990). Consequently, when Latin American nation-states began to remove the Roman Catholic Church from its privileged social and political position at the start of the 20th century, this secularization process was associated with the arrival of laic modernity to the region (Marzal, 1996; Bastian, 1994). But instead of catalyzing secularization similar to European sociohistorical trajectories, the decline of Catholicism was accompanied with the popularization of a variety of religions, especially Protestant religious movements (Bastian, 1994; Semán, 2019). The growing influence of these religious actors in Latin America has been a cause for concern within the political, intellectual and public discourse (Semán, 2019). In effect, they have been depicted as retrograde and dangerous social forces that undermine personal liberties and democracy (Cantón, 2008; Semán, 2019; Villasante, 2020). This discursively places these contemporary forms of religiosity in opposition to and outside of the bounds of “modernity”.

Despite the exclusion of religiosity from an ideal of modernity, these contemporary religious forces arise from historical processes modeled after the European modernity that Latin America elites aspired to (Quijano, 1993). The study of contemporary religious movements offers the opportunity to comprehend the tensions between discontinuities and continuities that derive from the globalization of the Western ideal of modernity (Giddens, 1990). These tensions are key to comprehending Latin America as a region of contrasts with a complex cultural and socioeconomic rapport with the Global North.

This project explores these dynamics through an examination of the Evangelical Association of the Israelite Mission of the New Universal Covenant (Spanish: Asociación Evangélica de la Misión Israelita del Nuevo Pacto Universal, AEMINPU). This Peruvian religious movement2 was founded in the Andean region by Ezequiel Ataucusi Gamonal during the second half of the 20th century. Since then, the movement has expanded throughout Latin America and beyond, congregations popping up in the US and Europe. In addition to this expansion, the AEMINPU is politically engaged, represented by its own theocratic political party the Agricultural People's Front of Peru

2 The term “New Religious Movement” has been used pejoratively and associated to term cult or sect (Barker, 2001). However, I would like to repurpose this term to place emphasis on the idea of movement, as it describes well the dynamism that characterizes the israelitas and their decentralized processes of religious transmission and innovation.
In the Peruvian legislative elections of 2020, the FREPAP was able to elect 15 representatives to Congress, achieving equality with Keiko Fujimori’s establishment party Fuerza Popular (Bocanegra & Rousseau, 2021). Sworn in as the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in Latin America, the israelitas, as adherents self-denominate, played an important role in governing the country at a time of economic, social and political crisis.

Israelita practices and beliefs combine elements from Andean, Adventist, Catholic, Pentecostal and even Jewish tradition. From this combination, emerges a messianic-millenarianist faith that posits Peru as the new Israel, and the israelitas as a new chosen people. Their faith in modern day prophets and ritualistic practice is considered exotic, retrograde and strange both in public and academic discourse (Désilets, 2006; Meneses, 2022). Still, the AEMINPU arose from the context of intense internal migration that urbanized the Peruvian coast, a key process in the country’s “modernization”. Today, the israelitas have transcended the borders of the Global South, even integrating themselves into the urban, cosmopolitan societies of the Global North. However, the israelita religious movement continues to be discussed as a marginal phenomenon, belonging to “remote areas” such as the Andes or the Amazon and to a “remote” mythical Incan or Biblical past.

At the start of the current century, certain scholars hypothesized the decline of the AEMINPU, due to its “effervescent” and ritualistic nature as well as the death of the “charismatic leader”, Ezequiel (Désilets, 2006). The objective of this project is to understand how the continual expansion of the israelita religious movement disrupts conventional Western notions of religion and modernity by examining its presence in spaces considered to be quintessentially modern: online and in urban Europe. This exploratory study represents the first effort in the literature on the israelitas, known to the author, to examine the way they organize virtually and outside of Latin America.

To achieve this goal, I focus on the ways that religious innovation and religious migration intersect through the following research question: what characteristics have permitted the israelita religious movement to expand and adapt to different settings? I provide insight to this problematic through a qualitative case study of an israelita congregation in Barcelona, Piedra Angular Ezequiel Jonás. An initial digital ethnographic account provides an overview to the israelitas’ construction of a sense of community across geographic distances, as well as a description of the current state of the AEMINPU in Spain. Locating the Piedra Angular community within the broader hermandad [spiritual family] also allows me to consider a pertinent secondary question: What have been some of the changes within the beliefs and practices of israelitas during the last two decades? Through

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3 I utilize “remote” as a descriptor that conveys perceived distance, rather than actual physical distance. For further discussion on remote areas, see Ardener (1967).
the second ethnographic account of the congregation in Barcelona, I focus on religious innovation and on how the experiences of the hermanos [brothers/sisters] of the congregation offer a distinct way of understanding “modern” migration through a religious framework.

This project begins with a general theoretical discussion of the anthropological and sociological study of religion, which accounts for the historical relationship between Western science and religion. After defining these broader issues, I then provide background on the origins, beliefs and developments of the israelita religious movement. The subsequent review of the literature explores the small, but diverse corpus on the israelitas, as well as the opportunities for research that remain unexplored. Then, through a reflexive discussion of methodology, I detail the advantages and limitations of a double ethnographic approach to address overlapping gaps in the literature. The text culminates in the two ethnographic accounts, the virtual analysis setting up a broader environment in which to examine and understand the case of the Piedra Angular congregation in Barcelona, a small community executing a divine mission by following paths traced by virtual connectivity and transnational migration.
A Theoretical Discussion on Science, Rationalism and Religion

One of modernity’s most enduring narratives remains the secularization thesis. Derived from Max Weber’s (1930/2001) writings on rationalization and disenchantment as products of the development of civilizations, this theory posits religion to be incompatible with modernity and, therefore, destined to decline as societies “progress” (Swatos & Christiano, 1999). Its proponents claim that empirical observations of a dramatic decline in religiosity support secularization, especially in the “more modern” societies of the Global North. Yet, detractions to this theory have gained force as religious plurality in a globalized world has produced contrary effects within and outside of the Global North, sometimes labeled “desecularization” or the “redeployment of the religious” (Bastian, 2002; Semán, 2019).

In conceptualizing a different sort of modernity, one that accounts for human prehistory, Watkins (2002:4) characterizes “modern human minds” by their ability to “construct, imagine and symbolize an understanding of themselves, their world and their universe”. Whether it be in the paleolithic or the 21st century, the ubiquity of religiosity among humans has prompted thinkers of all traditions and disciplines to pose questions about the origins, functions and true nature of religious belief and practice. As complex systems of thought and action, religions pose inherent challenges to their study, complicating basic tasks of definition and delimitation. The fraught relationship between the Western scientific tradition and religion, illustrated in part by the secularization theory, further complicates this endeavor.

A principal objective of this theoretical discussion is to engage critically with this tradition by first examining the main theories and debates on religion that have emerged from anthropology and sociology. This analysis then leads to reflections on the legacy of the Enlightenment and how it operates upon the scientific production of knowledge. Finally, I consider the implications of this intellectual heritage on the study of the religiosity within communities forged under colonial experiences, a special focus on the Andean context. This discussion concludes by recognizing the resulting limitations in conducting this academic inquiry, without neglecting to highlight the importance of studying how religion operates alongside the quintessentially “modern” processes of globalization. Religious minorities often dismissed as anomalies, like the israelita religious movement, in their refusal to conform to categories and theories, present researchers with the
opportunity for intellectual collaboration and challenge us to redefine our most basic, cherished concepts: science, knowledge, truth.

The principal theories on religion proposed by prominent anthropologists and sociologists in the 20th century need to be understood within the context of the broader “rationality debate”. At its core, it concerns the scientific community’s attempts to grapple with the inexplicable, the strange, the “irrational”. To illustrate, Dennett (1998:116) describes religion as an “expensive” phenomenon that “exceeds the functional” and so it “cries out for explanation”. One explanation provided by influential scholars such as Lévi-Strauss (1962), but chiefly Lévy-Bruhl (1923), is that religion belongs to the realm of “magical thoughts” inherent to the primitive, prelogical mind, whereas scientific thought has been developed by the modern, logical mind. Cantón (2008) refers to this radical dichotomization as the thesis of rupture: not only are religion and science irreconcilable ways of explaining reality, but science, the rational approach, is also considered to be superior to religion, the irrational approach.

Even among other thinkers, similar notions of primitivity and modernity (so-called “evolutionist” perspectives) influenced theories of religion (Cornejo, 2016). While Durkheim (1912) argues that all religions are “true” due to the intrinsic truth in the act of believing, one of his seminal works relies upon distinguishing “primitive” and “advanced” religions. In describing “primitive religions”, Durkheim’s (1912) diction possesses connotations of the irrational: “barbarous” or “fantastic”. Subsequent transformations in the study of religion, such as adopting relativist or intellectualist approaches, have prompted scholars like Geertz (1984) to consider anthropology an academic vanguard. Social scientists contributed to breaking down the solidity of Western grand narratives (Cornejo, 2016). However, deconstruction does not entail elimination—these notions linger in our collective imaginary.

The intellectual legacy that informs the production of theories like the theory of rupture and the secularization thesis can be traced back to the Enlightenment. Durkheim (1912) recognizes this in critiquing a “Voltairean” prejudice against religion. One of the hallmarks of contemporary anthropology is reflexivity, which entails rendering transparent investigators’ biases and how these operate upon the production of knowledge (Bourdieu, 1998). However, reflexivity risks being reduced to subjectivism if it does not account for how internal prejudice connects to the social conditions that produced them. As a product of a set of social conditions and historical processes, scientific practice in itself continues to harbor presuppositions that need to be accounted for (Bourdieu, 1998; Cantón, 2008).
Regarding the “Voltairean” prejudices embedded into Western science, Durkheim (1912) emphasizes how they can render academic work “unscientific”, a concern echoed in Bourdieu’s (1998) reflections on establishing the scientific legitimacy of sociology through self-vigilance. In questioning the aims of reflexivity, Cantón (2008) remarks that, even in exercises of self-reflection and recognition of subjectivity, scientific discourse continues to operate under the assumption that it monopolizes access to truths in its pursuit of objectivity. The pervasive epistemological ramifications provoke the question: does the academic study of religion necessarily entail subordinating religion to science?

As part of this discussion, Cantón (2008) omits an issue that I consider indispensable in thinking about religion, rationalism and anthropology: European colonialism. If the gestation of modern anthropology dates to the Enlightenment, its birth and early development correspond with European imperial projects of the 19th century. Anthropology, along with other disciplines like psychology and biology, served to legitimate notions of European superiority through unilinear theories of development (Buskell, Enquist & Jansson, 2019). Dichotomy underpinned this unilinear temporality: the past as primitive, irrational, immoral, incapable; the present as modern, rational, moral, capable. This division of time was superimposed upon geography. In line with Said’s (1977) theorization on the construction of a temporally-spatially distant “Orient”, European societies discursively constructed large temporal and spatial distances to separate themselves from their brutalized colonial subjects.

An important element in the conception of the “other” was irrational religiosity. A notable example is Weber’s (1930/2001) conception of “cool” religions that promoted rationalism and self-control. The products of institutionalization and civilization, Weber (1930/2001) considered Protestantism the archetypal “cool” religion. The idea of “progress” is also apparent in his assertion that Judaism and then Catholicism “had not carried [rationalization] nearly so far” (Weber, 1930/2001:71). It is notable, however, that Weber (1930/2001) claims to abstain from judgement, even considering the “modern” man to be at a spiritual deficiency. Even if “cool” religions are not judged to be better than what Durkheim (1912) called “warm” religious expression, this dichotomization in itself is problematic as it essentializes the “other”. Scholars impose prefabricated theories and notions upon individuals and communities, that thus remain unseen and unheard (Cantón, 2008).

The rationalist bedrock of the Western scientific tradition poses special issue to the study of alternative forms of religiosity emerging from the colonial experience. Latin America’s contested position at the peripheries of the West generates possibilities to both complicate but also be susceptible to these dominant narratives. For example, to explain the explosion of popular Protestant...
movements in the region, the literature is full of descriptions that recycle diction from Durkheim (1912), Weber (1930/2001) and other older sources. These movements are “effervescent” and “seductive” (Bastian, 1994) as well as “exotic” (Désilets, 2006). Emphasis is placed upon practices perceived as “irrational” like glossolalia, speaking in tongues, which Bastian (1994) considers a response associated with the illiteracy of adherents. Beyond diction, theories also replicate certain rationalist and unilinear evolutionist notions. The poor and uneducated turn to these “hot” religions seeking defense against crisis and precarity (Bastian, 1994; de la Torre, 2004; Désilets, 2006; Ossio, 2014).

To further illustrate the way the cultural and lexical baggage of the scientific tradition impacts the study of alternative religiosity, I provide an overview of messianism and millenarism as well as Andean messianism, key concepts in the literature on the israelitas. The theoretical development of messianism and millenarism, as well as related terms (e.g., chiliasm, apocalypticism), presents a heavy Christian bias evident in the lexical derivations from Biblical language (messiah and apocalypse) or prophecy (the millennia or chilha of Christ’s reign) (Greisiger, 2015; Millones, 2015). Despite these origins, Greisiger (2015) and Millones (2015) argue that these terms can be applied outside of the Christian context due to a set of similar characteristics present within religions that have preceded and succeeded Christianity. These concepts are all housed within eschatology, which refers to the “last things” of both individual and universal existence, along with what comes beyond (Greisiger, 2015). Apocalypticism generally implicates the arrival of a human-divine intermediary to reveal truths about the end of times, and in the case of messianism, this intermediary is attributed the power to reign over an eschatic kingdom or territory (Greisiger, 2015). Millenarism frequently accompanies messianism, indicating the existence of an interim period that must pass to achieve the eschatic state (Greisiger, 2015; Millones, 2015).

Despite stemming from the hegemonic Christian tradition, Greisiger (2015) observes how messianic-millenarist beliefs today are often associated with radical and fundamentalist “fringe” groups. This is reflected in Millones’ (2015) assertion that it is commonplace for messianic movements to result in the destruction of their followers and leaders. The view of messianism as volatile and dangerous possess deep roots in sociology and anthropology, as ethnographic accounts of messianic movements were accompanied by the development of the “crisis cult” concept (La Barre, 1971; Barker, 2001). This theory views messianic religious practices as collective “psychic defense mechanisms” to respond to culture shocks or other forms of crisis (La Barre, 1971:9). While Swatos and Christiano (1999) note that scholars have shifted away from terms such as cult, which Cantón (2008) identifies as a label that discredits and stigmatizes, researchers have still referred to the israelita religious movement as a “crisis cult” in the 21st century (de la Torre, 2004; Désilets,
And even if “sect” and “cult” have gone into academic disuse, the enduring theoretical association between crisis and messianism serves as a testament to the legacy of a time in which the terms “messiah” and “cult leader” or “sectarian” and “milenarian” were used interchangeably (La Barre, 1971).

The baggage of irrationality that clings onto conceptualizations of messianism-milenarianism gains weight when reflecting upon the Andean context. In a survey of the historical manifestations of Andean Messianism, Millones (2020:119) sustains that messianism represents a “supernatural refuge” that is the “obligatory response” to crisis or generalized dissatisfaction. While Ossio (2014) provides a more nuanced perspective that accounts for Andean conceptions of time, space, order and interpersonal ties, he also identified crisis as the catalyst for messianic movements, such as the Taki Onqoy. The first recorded instance of a messianic movement in the Andes, this “sickness of dance or song”, involved rituals of dance and song to empower prehispanic deities to destroy the Spanish god and the colonizers in the latter half of the 16th century (Millones, 2015, 2020; Ossio, 2014). Messianism in the Andes thus gained a connotation of grassroots political resistance in which traditional values of the Tahuantinsuyo, the period of Incan governance, such as ayllu [communal ties entrenched in collective territorial attachment], represented alternatives to colonial organization of space, people and time (Ossio, 2014). In associating these interesting theories of resistance to the legacy of rationality, I do not intend to discredit them, but to complicate held assumptions that characterize this resistance as emotional and irrational.

The paradoxes inherent to the position of Peruvian thinkers like Ossio and Millones, can be observed in the historical processes of reclaiming indigenous identities. In the 20th century, the indigenous past was incorporated into the Peruvian national identity through work of scholars, but also through political discourse, like the one that sustained Juan Velasco’s agricultural reform (Marzal, 1996; Ossio, 2014). However, the reindications appealed to an idealized Incan past that elite Cuzqueños claimed to descend from, leading to the discursive erasure or caricaturizing of other indigenous identities (de la Cadena, 2000). Even while critiquing Eurocentrism, Mariátegui (1968:223) referred to his Andean contemporaries as possessing “a primitive and peasant imaginism”. In idealizing this “pure primitivism”, he continued to theorize within the categories inherited from the Western tradition.

Furthermore, the discourse surrounding Sendero Luminoso serves as a key example as to how reclaiming indigenous identity and popular religiosity can still operate within rationalist framework. Ossio (2014:353) reiterates the widely held assertion that Sendero Luminoso was an Andean messianic movement, stating the affected populations were “Andinos al fin y al cabo” [ultimately
Andean], who sought “an escape from their anguish”. For Ossio (2014), the AEMINPU represented an alternative for the vulnerable, basing his theory on the idea that adherence to these religious-political movements is above all an emotional response to crisis.

Uncomfortable echoes exist between the assumptions nested within these anthropological theories of Andean religiosity and the ways modern day militant atheist thinkers attempt to explain religious adherence. For instance, Blackmore’s (2016) theorization on memetics, a mode of transferring ideas modeled upon genetic transmission, includes the concept of “meme tricks” that presumes that religious ideas play tricks on the mind to spread. Watkins (2002:3), theorizing from outside of New Atheism but within memetics, states that religious memeplexes (complex systems of ideas) “have evolved to take advantage of the psychology of the human mind”. Across disciplines, there exists the preconception that vulnerable human minds are for different reasons (cultural or psychological) susceptible to be “taken in” by the magnetism of religion. Evans-Pritchard (1965) noted this tendency to explain religion as an illusion, thus arguing for the need to distance anthropology from the natural sciences. A distance that has materialized, in rejection to Social Darwinism and other racist theorization associated with evolutionary perspectives (Buskell, Enquist & Jansson, 2019).

Yet, even Evans-Pritchard’s (1965) perceived alternative to theorizing religion as illusion, viewing religion instead as a method to relate to reality, entails gaging valid results through a scientific method that is often at odds with the truths held by the communities and individuals being studied. The current anthropological convention in relation to religion involves taking a position of agnostic relativism that doesn’t pass judgement on the validity of faith (Cantón, 2008). However, when scholars propose that israelita glossolalia derives from Pentecostalism, is that not an implicit negation of the israelita explanation that speaking in tongues is a manifestation of God? What researchers consider unexplained, may in fact already be explained, but not in a way that corresponds with the values of Western science.

Anthropological rejection of the natural sciences has not sufficed to eliminate the continued influence of the social conditions in which scientific method and thought were constructed. Instead, the resulting blind spots can obscure the influence of the past, as well as opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. The scientists working within the cultural evolution perspective today ask many of the questions that sociologists and anthropologists continue to ask: how do religions emerge? how is belief transmitted? (Cornejo, 2016; Watkins, 2002).

Anthropologists and sociologists grapple with this paradox in a variety of ways, for Brandão (2007), the response partly lies in an emphasis on description and interpersonal relations over theory.
Rejecting the systematic revealing of everything would entail adopting an approach of infinite attributing meaning through description (Brandão, 1995, as cited in Cantón, 2008). The current discussion does not provide the space to deepen examination into the possibility of alternative scientific practice. Nonetheless, it serves to illustrate the limitations of the tradition that this project is inscribed into. The acts of formulating my research questions and proposing arguments based on empiric observation carry inherent ideological weight. While self-awareness modifies my approach, it does not change my *locus of enunciation*, rationality and empiricism underlie my own analysis. I still consider it important to attempt to build a bridge to a different place, one that has emerged at the margins of dominant narratives, but also under the influence of these same narratives. In reflecting on the normative impositions of the scientific tradition, it is also important to consider Western science as a subversive force. It has dislodged certainties, reoriented perspectives—which is what this inquiry into the unfamiliar familiarity of the *israelita* religious movement aims to accomplish.
Who are the Peruvian *israelitas*?

The 27th of October 1968, Ezequiel Ataucusi Gamonal, a shoemaker turned prophet, formally founded the AEMINPU in Lima (de la Torre, 2019; Ossio, 2014; Scott, 1990). The central church of Cieneguilla had just been established in the outskirts of the capital (see Annex A) and, according to testimony, the movement already counted with at least a thousand followers across Peru’s three regions: *costa, sierra, selva* [coast, highlands, jungle] (Menenses, 2015; Ossio, 2014). Yet, to grasp how this came to be and the subsequent expansion of the AEMINPU, I first describe Ezequiel’s origins and the religious influences that acted upon his teachings.

The prophetic leader of the Peruvian *israelitas* was born the 10th of April 1918 in Huarhua, a Quechua monolingual community niched in the Cotahuasi Canyon of the Arequipa department (see Annex A), located in southern Peru (Désilets, 2003; Ossio, 2014; Scott, 1990). Ezequiel underwent a difficult childhood as the eldest of a numerous household that suffered from the early abandonment of the paternal figure, prompting him to leave his community as an adolescent to work in mining and agriculture (Désilets, 2003; Ossio, 2014). After his military service, he took on jobs in carpentry, stock management and shoemaking to support his wife and seven children (Désilets, 2003). While the specific accounts vary—testimony to Ezequiel’s shifting use of narrative to present himself—itinerance, economic precarity and social exclusion would characterize much of the first half of his life.

In the mid-1950s, Ezequiel underwent a revelation after acquiring a leadership position in an Adventist congregation in Chanchamayo (de la Torre, 2005; Ossio, 2014). He had been raised in an Andean Catholic faith that appears to have been shaken by hardship, particularly the death of his first wife (Désilets, 2003). After a vision that is often described as an ascension to heaven and the reception of the decalogue from Jehovah, Ezequiel adopts alternative practices, such as letting his hair grow and dressing in tunics, causing his expulsion from the Adventist community (de la Torre, 2005; Ossio, 2014). He then gathered his own following in the Chanchamayo river valley region (see Annex A), which led to the founding of the first *israelita* congregation in the Junín department between 1956 and 1958 (Désilets, 2003; Ossio, 2014).

As a result, Andean values deriving from communal relationships with *Pachamama* [Mother Earth] such as *ayllu*, which articulated Ezequiel’s rural world, along with Adventist notions of Biblical authority, both played crucial roles in the development of the *israelita* doctrine. Ezequiel also visited Pentecostal congregations in the outskirts of Lima with his followers, from which the *israelitas* adopted practices inspired by the “baptism in the Holy Spirit” (Birckel, 2017; Meneses,
2015). As a testament to his charisma, Ezequiel took over a Pentecostal church and converted it into his first bible study center, CECABI (Ossio, 2014).

Furthermore, Ezequiel may have assisted services of the Iglesia Israelita del Nuevo Pacto and interchanged with the group’s founder, José Loje, an ex-Adventist influenced by the Chilean cabañista religious movement (Meneses, 2015; Ossio, 2014; Scott, 1990). Public detractors of each other, Ezequiel always denied any past proximity with Loje and dismissed any similarities in name as mere coincidence. What is notable about the possible cabañista influence is its probable colonial roots in Jewish communities escaping the Inquisition, rendering more complex the religious genealogy of the israelitas, who incorporate Jewish symbols and temporality into their faith (González, 2017a). Despite the difficulties in identifying the varied sources that nourish israelita doctrine, Ossio (2014) highlights the importance of recognizing how religious discourse that comprised concepts such as “new pact” or “Israel” had become commonplace in the improvised urbanizations that popped up around Lima the latter half of the 1900s, the environment in which the israelita faith reached maturity. The resultant doctrine’s diversity was nurtured by this urban migration.

The basis of israelita faith rests on the belief that in the 1950s, Jehovah forged a new pact with humanity in Peru, through Ezequiel (Birckel, 2017; de la Torre, 1996). With the reformulation of the Ten Commandments into La Ley Real, a new chosen land and people were designated: Privileged Peru and the Peruvian israelitas, the spiritual kin of the original Israelites. All israelita temples feature large reproductions of La Ley Real, which in addition to the decalogue, also includes a compilation of biblical verses that correspond to each commandment (de la Torre, 1996). The extracting of individual biblical verses to construct their narratives creates a unique process of biblical exegesis that involves taking “a little from here” and “a little from there” to understand the lesson or message (Birckel, 2017).

Their nominal divine mission consists in proselytism, which is tinged with urgency due to notions of salvation through faith and the approach of the end of times (Birckel, 2017). While different prophecies have been promulgated among israelitas, notably that they are the final generation before seven years of drought and war that mark the Apocalypse, the eschatological components of the doctrine have suffered from prolongations imposed by Ezequiel’s death (Birckel, 2017; de la Torre, 2005). In his mercy, Jehovah has provided more time for the israelitas to spread the new truth and salvation to the “four corners of the Earth” (González, 2017a). While the intensity of apocalyptic urgency varies among congregations, it represents a latent element that can be tapped into depending on exterior circumstances.
In the literature, this millennialism, along with Ezequiel’s status of messiah, are emphasized as the basis of doctrine. However, even during Ezequiel’s lifetime, ambiguity persisted as to his identity, evident in the proliferation of his titles from “Biblical Compilator” to “Father Israel” and veritable “Christ of the Occident” (González, 2017a; de la Torre, 1996). This ambiguity has been accentuated by the passage of time, bringing into question if the perception of Ezequiel as the reincarnation of Jesus⁴ truly remains a cornerstone of israelita belief. What is consistent is that israelitas regard Ezequiel as a divine figure. Even if the degree and nature of his divinity vary, he remains a charismatic and inspirational figure that provides a sense of unity to the AEMINPU (González, 2017a; Meneses, 2015).

Israelita religious practices derive from biblical literalism, the individual verses justifying behaviors as varied as refusal to wear jewelry or celebrating animal sacrifice (Birckel, 2017; González, 2017a). Many israelitas can be easily identified their physical appearance: colorful tunics, veils for the women, ojotas [sandals] and uncut hair and beards (Désilets, 2006). Their public and musical preaching style also renders them very visible (Figure 1).

**Figure 1**

*Note. Depiction of israelitas at the central temple of Cieneguilla (Aeminpu Filial en España, n.d.)*

The scope of this work does not permit a complete description of the intricate rituals and rules that structure israelita practice. However, it is pertinent to consider how these practices inform israelitas’ notions of time and space. Derived from the Old Testament, israelitas have their own calendar, April 1st marking the new year (Ossio, 2014). They celebrate three fiestas every year, Pascua in April, Pentecostés in June and Tabernáculos in October—usually consisting in week-long retreats to campos santos [holy fields] where they practice animal sacrifice, which they

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⁴ The israelitas I worked with held trinitarian beliefs in the unity between Jehovah, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.
denominate *holocausto* from the Greek term for burnt offering, among other rituals that tend to incorporate chanting and dancing, as well as Pentecostal elements such as glossolalia (González, 2017a). They also celebrate Sabbath or *reposo* on Saturday with a full day of service, which derives from Adventist faith (González, 2017a).

After what Ossio (2014) labels the “gestational period” of the 1950s, Ezequiel took an active role in leading religious expansion nationally. Even before relocating to the margins of Lima in 1964, Ezequiel had already set in motion one of the AEMINPU’s key ventures: *Proyecto Integral de Fronteras vivas* [Integral Project of Living Borders] (Meneses, 2015; Ossio, 2014). Considering the impending period of famine, the *israelitas* were tasked with setting up self-sufficient colonies in the Amazon. The burgeoning movement’s original location in *selva baja*, straddling the border between the Andes and the Amazon, made it so Ezequiel was able to undertake various expeditions with his followers (Désilets, 2003; Ossio, 2014). This endeavor resulted in a first settlement in 1962, Boca Samaya, near the Neguachi River in the Cerro de Pasco department (Ossio, 2014). The Amazon is conceptualized as the new Promised Land but also as a new Eden, “virgin” land that Jehovah has set aside for the *israelitas* (Désilets, 2006).

When Juan Velasco came into power in 1968, these colonization projects were formalized, aligning with the regime’s nationalistic and agricultural focus (Scott, 1990). Ezequiel would alternate between overseeing the foundation of new colonies and the expansion of the faith among the marginal neighborhoods of Lima, generating a positive economic and spiritual feedback loop (Ossio, 2014). The height of AEMINPU’s rate of growth corresponds with the 1980s, when the conflict with *Sendero Luminoso* accelerated the migratory processes from the countryside to the city. In that time of sociopolitical turmoil, Ezequiel founded another pillar of *israelita* religiosity in 1986, the FREPAP (Ossio, 2014). Represented by the Christian fish symbol, the FREPAP labels itself as a theocratic political party and contends that political life in Peru should accord itself with *La Ley Real* and the values of the *Tahuantinsuyo* (Frente Popular Agrícola FIA del Perú, n.d.). These doctrinal and cultural influences result in a religious party that is also nationalistic and agrarian.

Yet, *israelita* political involvement precedes the FREPAP and formed part of a strategy to secure territorial gains and protect small Amazonian industries (González, 2017a). The growth of the AEMINPU had also generated conflict that necessitated involvement in local government: territorial clashes with indigenous communities and traffickers, accusations of criminal activity and discrimination in public spaces due to their “subversive” image (Ossio, 2014). The decision to seek legal recognition for the AEMINPU, as well as negotiations to inscribe the *israelita* colonies into national agricultural policies under Belaúnde and Velasco, demonstrate that Ezequiel and other
leaders viewed government institutions as instrumental to protecting the expansion of the *israelita* religious movement (Ossio, 2014).

The FREPAP’s theocratic vision naturally put its prophet and/or messiah at its head—Ezequiel ran unsuccessfully for presidency twice, in 1990 and 2000 (Meneses, 2015). The party’s inability to make significant national electoral gains, besides two Senatorial seats obtained between 1995 and 2000, lead it to be regarded as a “fringe party”. This public dismissal overlooked one of the FREPAP’s main goals: to render the *israelita* movement visible not only to Peruvians, but also to the world (González, 2017a). By the last decade of the 20th century, the *israelitas* had already settled in the Colombian and Brazilian Amazon and established a missionary presence throughout South America (González, 2017a; Meneses, 2015). However, the AEMINPU saw the overall growth of its *hermandad* slow, a decline exacerbated by Ezequiel’s death from cardiac arrest in 2000 (Désilets, 2006).

Even though certain *israelitas* awaited the western messiah’s resurrection, Ezequiel himself had arranged to place his youngest son at the head of the AEMINPU (de la Torre, 2013). Ezequiel Jonás Ataucusi Molina, born in Lima the 22nd of January 1972, was only 27. The doctrinal justification consisted in the necessity of conducting a spiritual transfer from father to son, as the *israelitas* required more time to complete their mission (González, 2017a). The succession did not only generate doctrinal fragmentation, but also contestation from his siblings. They accused the Molina clan, the family of Ezequiel’s second wife, of making a grab at power. In addition, Jonás has proved to be an absent leader, refusing to appear and speak in public, a stark contrast to his charismatic father (González, 2017a).

Despite the turmoil with which the AEMINPU entered the 21st century, the movement has managed to continue expanding, creating a particularly strong following in southwestern Colombia (Meneses, 2015). After the FREPAP’s shock electoral victory in 2020, the *israelitas’* continued national and global influence cannot be denied. Today, AEMINPU and FREPAP flags fly in places as diverse as the *Puerta del Sol* in Madrid or the streets of Union City, New Jersey. The *israelitas’* ability to endure and expand has intrigued some of Peru’s most prominent anthropologists as well as young researchers from across the world. The following review of the literature explores the rich, but small corpus on the AEMINPU—revealing a complex and niche area of study ripe with research opportunities.
A Review of the Literature on the Israelita Religious Movement

Throughout the past four decades of academic inquiry into the AEMINPU, the degree of scholarly enthusiasm for the israelitas has oscillated, producing a varied but limited corpus that illustrates the complexities of defining, describing and analyzing this dynamic religious movement. The perceived novelty of the AEMINPU as well as its rapid growth initially attracted both national and international attention (Espinoza-Benavides, 1984; de la Torre, 1996; Granados, 1988; Marzal, 1988a; Masson & Valiente, 1991; Scott, 1990; Skar, 1987), yet due to Ezequiel’s death and the ensuing internal fragmentation, interest waned. Notwithstanding the uncertainty that clouded the AEMINPU’s doctrinal and organizational future (Birckel, 2017; Espinoza-Benavides, 2005; Désilets, 2006), the israelitas’ persistence in expanding their Fronteras vivas colonization project piqued international curiosity, chiefly in neighboring countries (Chaumeil, 1997; de la Torre, 2009; Désilets, 2008; Meneses, 2005; Teixeira, 2014; Téllez-Méndez, 2010). In addition to the heightened scrutiny directed towards the transnationalization of the AEMINPU, it is ultimately the FREPAP’s 2020 electoral tour de force that further consolidated the israelita movement as a pertinent, but challenging object of study (Dargent Bocanegra & Rousseau, 2021).

This review of the literature traces both the historic and thematic evolution of the research on the israelitas. I identify five major areas of academic interest and present them in an approximative chronological order: the origins of the AEMINPU, the doctrine and practices of the israelitas, the cultural and socioeconomic make-up of the movement, the colonization of the Amazon and the transnationalization of the AEMINPU. While the structure of this review seeks to isolate salient topics for the sake of providing clarity and of accentuating significant shifts in academic focus, two notable features characterize the literature: overlapping descriptive content and thematic plurality. Prior to any analytical work, it is essential to provide context on what remains a minoritarian and miscomprehended religious movement (González, 2017a; Meneses, 2022). Most importantly, as the israelita rapport to individual existence and agency is permanently mediated through their belief system (Ossio, 2014), meaningful analysis of the israelitas must consider how different facets of their mutable worldview converge and morph to produce complex and diverse social phenomena. Having established these important commonalities, I shift my focus to the evolving set of research aims and questions, which correspond to varying degrees with both changes in the scholarly zeitgeist as well as to new developments from within the israelita movement.
The researchers who first encountered the israelitas sought to define and describe what was perceived to be a singular and novel “discovery” (de la Torre, 1996; Granados, 1988; Masson & Valiente, 1991; Skar, 1987). It quickly became apparent that what the israelita movement was had everything to do with who the founder of the AEMINPU was. This precocious interest in the burgeoning religious mobilization made it possible for researchers such as Birckel (2000), de la Torre (1996), Marzal (1988b), Ossio (1990) and Scott (1990) to accompany and interview Ezequiel throughout the last two decades of his life. This proximity to Ezequiel permitted the elaboration of comprehensive (albeit inconsistent) biographical accounts (de la Torre, 2013; Marzal, 1988b; Ossio, 2014). This early primary source material not only offers insight into the formation of the israelita identity and doctrine, but also reveal how Ezequiel and other israelita leaders instrumentalized narrative and language to justify their existence, craft a worldview and install the AEMINPU in the collective consciousness (Meneses, 2022). While the relationships between researchers and israelitas have been characterized by variable degrees of openness and distrust, israelita participants inscribe scientific queries into their theocentric worldview, thereby appropriating academic interest to advance their divine missions (González, 2017b; Meneses, 2018).

I present here a brief interlude on academia and the AEMINPU to dialogue with the initial theoretical discussion on the relationship between science and religion. In reviewing the corpus on the israelitas, it is pertinent to continue highlighting the interpersonal dynamics and traditions that have operated in the production of knowledge (Bourdieu, 1988). For instance, Ossio’s (2014) affirmation that the israelita religious movement provided an ideological alternative to the violence of Sendero Luminoso, also implicates the AEMINPU in contributing to bring peace to Peru. This claim is reiterated by Ossio (2018) in the media, along with a tendency to heroize Ezequiel (Hidalgo, 2015). However, such a strong causal relationship remains scientifically unsubstantiated. These observations demonstrate that not only “dominant” structures, such as scientific tradition, exercise influence on academic inquiry. González (2016) states that some hermanos were so enthused by Ossio’s book that they considered it to be required reading along with the Bible. Recognizing the possible influence of Ossio’s proximity to the hermandad and Ezequiel is not meant to invalidate his work. I consider that researchers’ diverse social and academic conditioning not only generates limitations and errors, but also produces different analytic strengths. In its diversity of approaches, the corpus sheds light on the AEMINPU’s innate complexities.

A critical engagement with the literature is particularly relevant in considering the second thematic interest of early researchers: the israelita doctrine and religious practice. In effect, comprehending what israelitas believed, where these beliefs originated and how these beliefs materialized into practices proved vital to defining the movement. Beyond mere description of doctrine and practices, Birckel (2000), Espinoza-Benavides (1984), Granados (1988), Marzal (1988a) Ossio (1973), Scott
(1990) and Skar (1987) all analyzed Ezequiel’s life and inner circle to identify the varied cultural, religious and ideological influences.

The analyses of *israelita* doctrine and religious practice accentuate differently the varied contributions deriving from Andean values, Adventist doctrine, Pentecostal practices, North American protestant ethics, Catholicism and Judaism (Birckel, 2000; de la Torre, 2004; Désilets, 2006; González, 2017a). Ossio’s (2014) provides a strong argument for the idea of a coherent and continuous Andean cultural matrix that underlies *israelita* doctrine. At the same time, in emphasizing the transatlantic dimensions of the AEMINPU and its doctrine, González (2020) questions the conceptualization of the *israelita* religious movement as an essentially Peruvian religion. Not only do the diverse emphases often serve to advance specific scholarly arguments, but they also derive from the authors’ own academic backgrounds. Combined with the complex ways these traditions interact within specific social structures and the varied ways *israelitas* self-identify, the literature is characterized by a certain lack of consensus on how to categorize to the *israelita* religious movement: autochthonous mobilization? eschatological sect? messianic movement?

The diversity of labels applied to the *israelitas* and their religious practices hints at features of the context in which early research took place. Due to Roman Catholicism’s longtime religious monopoly, Marzal (1996) considers the first half of the 20th century to be the “prehistory” of scientific religious investigation in Peru. While the legalization of other religious practices in 1918 and the establishment of anthropology as an academic discipline in the 1940s generated more favorable conditions for scientific inquiry (Marzal, 1996), early work on the *israelitas* took place when studies on both religion and ethnicity in Peru were relatively novel. Indigenous identities were only legally recognized in the 1920 Constitution, as part of a wider discursive “discovery” of the country’s ethnic plurality (Marzal, 1996).

This historical backdrop rendered the AEMINPU a twofold novelty for researchers: the *israelitas*, in their beliefs and practices, noticeably embodied the ethnoreligious pluralities that had been rendered invisible for centuries. As a result, a tendency to exoticize the *israelitas* tinges certain descriptions, choice of terminology and theorizations. For instance, Espinoza-Benavides (1984) initially used the loaded term *secta* to describe the AEMINPU and other authors have used the similarly loaded term “cult” (Swatos & Christiano, 1999). Similarly, in her description of *israelita* practices, Désilets (2006, p. 40) affirms that “leurs cultes ne sont pas moins « exotiques »” [their religious practice is not any less “exotic”]. This perception of otherness, with which the once-isolated Andean populations were viewed, coexisted with the attempts to reformulate Peruvian national identity through the appropriation of the Incan past. The very first works on the AEMINPU were elaborated under Velasco, who placed indigeneity and nationalism at the forefront of political
discourse (Désilets, 2003). Authors were quick to label *israelitas* and their doctrine as “Andean”, “Peruvian” and/or “indigenous” (Espinoza-Benavides, 1984; Birckel, 2000; de la Torre, 1996; Marzal, 1988b; Ossio, 1973), yet offer differing ways of understanding these categories in relation to the AEMINPU. Identifying *israelitas* as essentially Peruvian also served as a reaction against opposing tendencies that sought to align the AEMINPU with the North American and European protestant traditions and ethics (Désilets, 2006).

A final factor to reflect on regarding the *israelita* belief system is doctrinal transformation and innovation, principally after Ezequiel’s death. The comprehensive works published recently by early scholars represent culminations of fieldwork essentially conducted before Ezquiel’s death and attempts to elaborate theories based on this consolidated knowledge (Ossio, 2014; Scott, 2016; Scott, 2019). And while researchers have briefly alluded to recent modifications to *israelita* doctrine and practices (Birckel, 2017; Espinoza-Benavides, 2002; González, 2017a; Ossio, 2014), contemporary focus has shifted from doctrinal scrutiny.

The third thematic focus that articulates this review, the cultural and socioeconomic composition of the AEMINPU, also explains the early emphasis on the Andean doctrinal components. Researchers quickly observed that the *israelitas* tended to be impoverished and marginalized highland peasants (Espinoza-Benavides, 1984; de la Torre, 1996; Granados, 1988; Marzal, 1988a; Ossio, 1990; Scott, 1990). Early texts noted associations between *israelita* adherence and urban poverty, marginalization and processes of modernization (Curatola, 1997; de la Torre, 2002; Espinoza, 1984; Granados, 1988; Marzal, 1988a; Masson & Valiente, 1991; Scott, 1988; Skar, 1987). Yet, the doctrinal focus of early scholars made it so that cultural differentiation received more analytical attention than the socioeconomic dimension. Ezequiel’s movement was in fact composed of individuals similar to him, who for most of the country’s history, however, had been characterized by their socioeconomic condition, rather than by their ethnic identities. Désilets (2003) thus addresses the dilemma of labeling people, beliefs and practices as autochthonous or indigenous when the *israelitas* themselves might not revindicate these categories.

The first robust observations on the socioeconomic dimension of the AEMINPU were provided by Marzal (1988a) and Ossio (1990), the latter enlarging and elaborating theories throughout his career. In fact, Désilets (2006) identifies Ossio (1990) as the first author to explicitly link *israelita* religioscity with the internal displacement caused by the armed conflict with Sendero Luminoso. This association with violence and impoverishment has led certain authors like de la Torre (2009) and Désilets (2006) to label the AEMINPU a “crisis cult”. It has thus often been theorized that the *israelita* religious movement had served as a form of crisis management, particularly from a
doctrinal framework, citing past messianic and Andean messianic movements (de la Torre, 2004; Marzal, 1988a; Ossio, 1990; Scott, 1990).

As a consequence, the socioeconomic dimensions of the israelita religious movement remain an unexplored and promising avenue of research. It is thus important to revisit the link between these theories of crisis and the wider tradition of conceptualizing religion as a mechanism for survival, which I examined in the theoretical discussion. The oft unrecognized contributions of evolutionary perspectives provide both possibilities for insight, as well as limitations deriving from a tradition of Western rationality. These limits may perhaps be most explicit in Désilets’ (2006) hypothesis of the possible disappearance of the AEMINPU. In the absence of crisis, with the death of Ezequiel and with the social integration of the displaced, could a “crisis cult” or “hot” religion survive? (Désilets, 2006). While this skepticism of the AEMINPU’s survival was not unfounded, it may have been accentuated by Western scientific notions of the functions that religion serves. These considerations must be kept in mind when theorizing about the survival, spread and evolution of the AEMINPU.

Seeking to remedy the absence of research focusing on israelita socioeconomic dynamics, Désilets (2006) and Menenses (2016) both have examined the instrumentalization of concrete israelita practices for survival and adaptation among marginalized populations in crisis. In fact, Menenses and Barrera (2020) propose that these socioeconomic motivations and practices must be understood as an integral part of the israelita religious expression. Notably, all three texts also feature the topic of migration prominently, due to israelitas’ tendency to be displaced persons, exacerbating their socioeconomic and ethnic marginality.

Migration, as a matter of fact, underlies all three of the thematic foci that have been presented in this review of the literature. Early authors’ attempts to retrace Ezequiel’s itinerant life trajectory and to systematize Andean values represented efforts to academically reconstruct a world threatened by disintegration. The violent uprooting of highland communities is cited as a catalyst for the socioeconomic precarity and cultural alienation that motivated AEMINPU’s growth and doctrinal maturity in the 1980s and 1990s (Désilets, 2006; Marzal, 1988a; Ossio, 1990). Given this context, Gonzalez (2019) considers the israelita religious movement to have been born as a diasporic community, with diaspora at the heart of its mission. The final two themes included in this literature review consist of the two forms of migration that have most drawn the attention of contemporary scholars: Amazonian colonization and the transnationalization of the AEMINPU.

The Amazon’s protagonism in the historical development and practices of the AEMINPU had longtime been undeniable (Masson & Valiente, 1991). Not only did it contribute to the “exoticism” with which israelitas are sometimes regarded, but it also served as proof of the resources and agency of the movement. Negative reactions to the israelitas’ activity and political weight in the Amazon
became commonplace in the press, accusing settlers of criminal activity and environmental harm (Meneses, 2015; Villasante, 2020). This pejorative view is also present in certain academic texts. To illustrate, Désilets (2008) refers to an israelita “expansionism” that menaces indigenous communities. And while the literature does consistently identify consequences produced by israelita settlement (Chaumeil, 1997, 2000; de la Torre, 2009; Rivas, 2005), scientific observation also reveals the complexities of a phenomena that incorporates both displaced victims of violence and converted local populations (Meneses, 2015). For a more nuanced approach, Rivas (2005) presents substantial criticism on israelita land use, but also provides suggestions to improve agricultural practices (Ossio, 2014). In producing academically and ethically sound research on these processes, it is important to not serve as an echo for negative oversimplifications.

At the turn of the century, academic production on the israelita presence in the Amazon multiplied. While French language researchers were at the forefront of this trend (Birckel, 2000; Chaumeil, 1997, 2000; Désilets, 2008), scholars from the countries of the Amazonian basin have been most consistently involved in this research (Meneses, 2005; Rivas, 2005; Teixeira, 2014; Téllez-Méndez, 2009). A principal concern of researchers has been detailing and examining the processes of settlement and expansion (de la Torre, 2009; Désilets, 2008 Meneses, 2015; Teixeira, 2014). Some authors have also taken the Amazonian space as a launchpad to innovate and begin filling gaps in the corpus on the israelitas. For instance, Rivas (2005) looks at the soil usage of israelita settlers from the perspective of agricultural engineering. At the same time, Téllez-Méndez (2009) offers a public health outlook on the israelita sanitary and healing practices in the Colombian Amazon. Finally, the theme of gender is briefly explored by Meneses (2009), Téllez-Méndez (2010) and Ossio (2014), with Bedoya (2005) dedicating a study to the issue.

Of special interest for this project is the role that studies on Fronteras vivas have had in formulating concepts to describe more generally the relationship between israelitas and the territories they occupy. For instance, Désilets (2008) dissects the processes of israelita territorialization, in other words, the ways symbolic and discursive constructions trace new borders, generating new spaces and identities. These concepts tie in with González ’s (2019) theorization on transnational territorial narratives and the israelita creation of new “sacred geographies”. Meneses’ (2005, 2009, 2015) work has forged bridges between the former’s focus on Fronteras vivas and the latter’s focus on the transnationality of the AEMINPU. In examining the israelitas’ settlements in the Colombian jungle, it became necessary to study Amazonian colonization with a transnational lens (Meneses & Barrera, 2020).

Despite transnationality and religion coming into academic fashion in the contemporary context of globalization, González (2019) along with Menenses and Barrera (2020) and Cornejo, Cantón and
Blanes (2008) argue that religious migration is neither novel to the israelitas nor when considering religion generally. Religion has never been static, which is what rendered the israelita doctrine so hard to place in the religious field from the start (Menenses & Barrera, 2020). Despite attempts by hegemonic religious institutions to impose visions of immutable and universal faith, the transnationality of alternative and younger religions lays bare the kinetic nature of religion. This is what risks being overlooked when the “local” Andean components of the AEMINPU are overemphasized. The focus on transnationality is also linked to the relative ease with which connections can now be forged globally, intensifying religious mutability.

Despite their focus on South-South israelita migration, Menenses and Barrera (2020) observe that South-North religious flows also constitute AEMINPUs processes of transnationalization, however the volume, nature and success of these migratory streams has yet to be thoroughly investigated. González (2017a; 2019) is the only author so far to have analyzed South-North israelita migration. Despite undertaking most of the fieldwork in Peru, her brief ethnographic work in Madrid and Barcelona provides the first academic discussion of the israelita presence in Europe, one that extends back to migratory fluxes of the 1980s and 1990s, but that was consolidated with the legal founding and recognition of the first AEMINPU headquarters outside of Latin America, located in Barcelona (González, 2017a).

In the seven years since González (2017a) concluded her groundbreaking research, the israelita hermandad in Europe has undergone important transformations. In providing an updated look at the AEMINPU in Barcelona and Spain, I contribute to the understanding of South-North religious migration, of the implantation of exogenous religious movements in Europe and of the characteristics that have permitted israelita belief and practice to travel across space and time for over half a century. As part of this objective, I also provide insight into the doctrinal innovations that have occurred since Ezequiel’s death, with particular focus on the transformations that take place when people, narratives and faith travel. To accomplish this, I have set out to give the voice of the israelitas a central place in this academic space that I have constructed, following in Ossio’s (2014) and González’s (2017a) commitment to placing the israelita’s own words in principal sections of their work. In undertaking a close reading of israelita narratives, I shed light on how individuals discursively insert their personal journeys into a wider theocentric framework that informs how they experience life and migration.
Reflections on Methodology

This ethnographic study focuses on two scarcely studied facets of the israelita religious movement, namely its presence in Europe and the doctrinal innovations of this century. As such, it represents an exploratory effort that proposes possible theoretical and conceptual perspectives for further research. Cantón (2008) describes the task of the anthropologist as a provider of context that makes intelligible the internal logics and complex relationships of sociocultural phenomena. To achieve this, I adopted a qualitative approach online and offline that produced two complementary ethnographic accounts. This entailed a combination of participant observation as well as unstructured interviews. My fieldwork and analysis ultimately generated an interpretive case study centered on the Piedra Angular congregation in Barcelona. In approaching a minoritarian, immigrant religious group, I had to employ a high degree of reflexivity and personal judgement to maintain an ethical rapport with my interlocutors as well as to produce a truly insightful interpretative analysis. In this methodological overview, I detail both the strengths and limitations of this qualitative single case study. I also reflect upon my position as a researcher and the discourse surrounding subjectivity, methodological relativism and validity.

Initiating my research online allowed me to address a gap in the literature on the israelitas, which has tended to neglect online spaces, in addition to helping me overcome the limits associated with single case studies. Specifically, it compensates the difficulty of generalizing from a particular case or small sample size (Noor, 2008). By triangulating data, which is to say collecting data from distinct sources, it is possible to offer a greater degree of validity (Désilets, 2003). Both a participant observation of israelita cyberspace as well as online communication with experts on the AEMINPU such as Carmen González and Carlos Ráez permitted me to place the discourse and practices that I observed on the ground within the wider picture of the contemporary israelita hermandad. Moreover, to establish contact with the hermanos in Spain, social media communication channels and the contacts that Carmen and Carlos provided proved to be instrumental to my research.

The virtual ethnographic account focused on two of the most popular and widely accessible social media platforms in Latin America, WhatsApp and Facebook, with complementary observations from YouTube. Although I also identified israelita presence on Instagram, the accounts tend to be inactive. For future, more in-depth work on the AEMINPU online, TikTok presents interesting possibilities due to the musical features that align with israelita cultural production and values. I began my incursions into israelita cyberspace in February 2022, before arriving in Barcelona. Whenever possible, I accessed these spaces through anonymous accounts to protect my privacy and
I refrained from most active participation. At the same time, my decision to use an anonymous account made it more difficult to establish virtual contact with the congregations in Spain. While many hermanos are very public about their identities online, whenever possible I have also refrained from including names and faces of the hermanos that publish public content in this work.

My fieldwork on the ground in Barcelona began through contact with hermano Samuel online, after I identified him as a person of interest on Facebook. From the start, I wished to be transparent, even if it took repeated attempts to clearly convey my aims. We progressed from chatting on Messenger, to WhatsApp phone calls to meeting in-person at cafés before I was invited to attend service at Piedra Angular. As a congregation abroad that promotes doctrinal change within the israelita religious movement, Piedra Angular proved ideal for an exploratory case study of religious migration and innovation. The fieldwork formally lasted from the end of March until May, however I continued to communicate with the hermanos through WhatsApp. During my participant observation of services, dinners and community bonding events, I took notes in my field journal and, whenever the circumstances allowed it, pictures. In addition to this immersive work, I also engaged in eight unstructured interviews with the hermanos, five of which were planned and recorded, while the other three were spontaneous. The size and newness of the congregation did set limits to the number of interviews I could undertake. As such, I shifted my focus to a close reading of the way the hermanos constructed their own narratives, which prompted me to choose the non-directive approach. Annex B contains the interview schedule that illustrates how I engaged with my interlocutors to encourage narrative construction.

Working with the hermanos of Piedra Angular also presented a unique set of ethical and logistical challenges, which rendered more difficult my goal of redacting a tangible ethnographic description grounded in lived experience. I quickly realized that many of the hermanos were in a situation of migratory and economic precarity. Consequently, I have fabricated pseudonyms for the hermanos, which correspond to their cultural milieu, age and gender identification. I also do not include any pictures of the individuals themselves. The decision to share the location and physical description of Piedra Angular in Spring 2022 comes from the fact that the hermanos have moved out. Furthermore, the informal situation in which they found themselves also produced a degree of unpredictably in their schedules and availabilities. It was necessary to find a balance in which my academic work would not occupy time of vital importance for the subsistence of these families.

Both Désilets (2003) and Cantón (2008) note that while ethnographic production of knowledge takes on the form of a textual account, it is much more than text. It is constructed from a researcher’s personal investment of time and of the self, in which the investigator must reorder their life and
undergo processes of socialization to produce academic data (Désilets, 2003; Cantón, 2008). Because “the personal process of knowledge acquisition is indissociable with the product of this process” (Cantón, 2008:150), it was important to be constantly exercising practical reflexivity to understand the biases at work. Considering the ethnographic, reflective practices proposed by Clifford (1988), this project required me to simultaneously undergo familiarization and defamiliarization processes.

On the one hand, when I descended into the basement in El Carmel, I entered a cultural and religious milieu that was foreign to me. However, my life experiences as a Latin American immigrant and as a former member of a minoritarian protestant religious group made it so that I also had to deconstruct certain elements that resulted very familiar to me. In particular, I held a negative personal bias against religion stemming from my personal struggle to leave a religious community. It was this experience that first prompted my interest in the study of religion. My ambivalent position permitted me to quickly adapt to the community and its rituals, as well as to create personal ties based on shared experiences of migration. Simultaneously, I had to also learn to tactfully navigate the attempts of the hermanos to preach to me and involve me in their rituals (e.g., trying to anoint me with oil).

For Cantón (2008), these interactions make part of the instrumentalization of social relationships for the production knowledge, which at times requires “imposture or simulation” as method. In adopting methodological relativism (Cantón, 2008; Geertz, 1984), imposture would describe the way a researcher suppresses certain innate reactions of judgement. To do this, Cantón (2008) describes the need to deploy empathy as method. I do recognize that a double-ended instrumentalization of social relationships did occur in my fieldwork with Piedra Angular, which permitted me to collect and analyze data, all the while the hermanos considered my project a vehicle to spread their divine message. Still, I reject the idea of imposture as method in this project. I deployed empathy as part of a method, but I felt driven by a genuine desire to understand and learn from my interlocutors. I saw this reflected in the trust that the community placed in me, both expressed to me directly in their words, but also by their actions in sharing their time and private spaces with me.

In my efforts to be conscious of the implications of my subjectivity, I do not wish to err and deploy what Bourdieu (1988) calls “narcissistic reflexivity” and what Cantón (2008) calls “subjectivism”, in which reflexivity is coopted into a purely autobiographical exercise. Transcending the focus from my personal subjectivities provoked the consideration of broader social conditions in which I was
producing knowledge, which led me to theorize on the relationships between scientific tradition, Western modernity, migration and religion.

These reflections affected the way I approached qualitative data collection and analysis. In her discussion of the study of religion, Cantón (2008:151) pointed out that even postpositivist methods, which do take into account the subjectivity of the researcher, often represent an attempt to “banish subjectivities by revealing them”, in a continued pursuit of an ideal of objective, scientific truth. Manning and Kunkel (2014:435) make a similar observation, stating that postpositive studies limit themselves to exploring “inherent meanings that might be found in a person, object, or idea” in the way individuals make interpretations, thus aiming to uncover a “social truth”. An interpretative qualitative approach brings attention to how meaning is constantly being constructed through interpersonal interaction, conceptualizing meaning as a reflexive and continuous process rather than as a static product of research (Manning & Kunkel, 2014). This approach proved fitting for a study on migration and religious transformation, as it permitted to account for the paradoxes and tensions that arose within meaning as a process driven by the interpersonal interactions between hermanos online and offline.

The need to adapt my method to the great degree of mutability that characterizes the israelita religious movement also motivated me to undertake a case study. Noor (2008) emphasizes that an important benefit of this type of research is providing an opportunity to be highly responsive to quick changes. Furthermore, as a novice researcher, with a limited time frame and resources—I prioritized providing an in-depth exploratory, descriptive and interpretive analysis to begin filling a gap in the literature, as such, a single case proved to be the most apt (Wolcott, 1994). To ensure that my approach was academically rigorous, I incorporated triangulation of data and a reflexive and ethical rapport with the participants as described above. While I recognize the underlying issues of validity in single case studies, within anthropology and sociology there are discussions as to whether validity is an appropriate parameter to consider in the study of complex sociocultural phenomena. Wolcott (1994) highlights qualitative research’s potential to subvert rigidity and preconception in scientific convention by defying notions of validity.

Nonetheless, as Geertz (1973:322) eloquently recognizes, “interpretative anthropology, is a science whose progress is marked less by a perfection of consensus than by a refinement of debate”, as such, it is “intrinsically incomplete”. This sensation of incompleteness points to the limits of this study. For one, as the process of being integrated into the community took several weeks, my fieldwork neared its end at a moment that the hermanos had become most comfortable with me and were more eager to share their experiences with me. Furthermore, I do also recognize the necessity
of undertaking multisite and multicase approaches to deepen the understanding of transnational israelita connections within Europe and between Peru and Europe, of which this project only provides an initial sketch of. Also, the characteristics of the hermanos I worked with in person excludes the perspectives of certain israelitas: for instance, I do not account for experiences of elderly israelitas or non-Peruvian israelitas. Finally, while the inclusion of a virtual ethnography provided a broader context to place my case study into, it also reduced the time and space that I could dedicate to personal narratives of the hermanos of Piedra Angular. These narratives proved to be key in inciting me to question assertions present within the academic literature and suggest alternative conceptualizations of movement and faith.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the following discussion of the data features two ethnographic accounts that bring the academic study of the israelitas into spaces considered to be products of Western modernity: the internet and the urban Global North. The analysis of the internal group dynamics that result from expansion and transnationalization provoke considerations about the continuities and discontinuities within the religious movement. Ultimately, the narratives of the hermanos of Piedra Angular encourage a distinct conception of the relationship between the body, faith and migration, challenging the essentially secular notions of multiculturalism and globalization.
Exploring the Digital *Hermanadad*: A Virtual Ethnography

The rapid incorporation of the internet into global quotidian routine has generated meaningful social impact that, despite eliciting general alarm, remains little studied by academia. However, attempts to comprehend collective belonging today tend to be incomplete without analysis of virtual spaces. I consider this to be particularly true for the *israelita* religious movement, as one of social media’s most notable effects is its ability to channel the demands of communities excluded from traditional spaces of power (Schroeder, 2018; Heldt, 2019). Research on this phenomenon typically centers on political consequences (Heldt, 2019). Yet, one example that illustrates this effect, Jair Bolsonaro’s election, also points to the relevancy of thinking about the religious field in the digital realm (Villasante, 2020). Access to the WhatsApp networks of Brazil’s Pentecostal churches was a key factor in his victory, as these institutions have proved capable of activating formerly disengaged populations (Oro, 2003).

In the case of the equally surprising FREPAP victories of 2020, it is probable that a symbiosis between religion and social media also played an important role—a search on Facebook reveals dozens of FREPAP pages. The *israelitas* are in fact present across multiple platforms and share content varying from religious music production to small business promotion. González (2017a) also noted how *israelitas* instrumentalize digital spaces to advance their divine mission of evangelization. Such a complex topic merits scientific inquiry in its own right. For what the scope of this project allows, the digital space serves as an entry point to understanding the current situation of the AEMINPU in Spain, so as to be able to place the *Piedra Angular* congregation within the transnationalized *israelita* religious movement.

In her analysis of *israelita* narrative construction of sacred geographies, González (2019), identified two apparently contradictory forces at the heart of their discourse: a centripetal impulse of national exceptionalism and a [reactive] centrifugal impulse to render Ezequiel’s teachings global. I consider this to be a specific expression of a more general tension between urges of contention and of multiplication. These forces underlie the problem of transmission—the endeavor of perpetuating identities and ideas to ensure their survival inevitably produces mutations, which threaten preestablished categories.

This tension expresses itself in opposing trends that characterize AEMINPU’s processes of transnationalization. To comprehend *Piedra Angular* and its religious milieu, I examine the virtual
manifestation of the urges of contention and of multiplication. The first consists in a totalizing
tendency that makes use of digital tools to not only project the image of the titularly universal
hermandad, but also to promote a sense of belonging among hermanos. The second involves
dynamics of fragmentation, when schismatic doctrine and practices are amplified online, menacing
the sense of a coherent israelita identity.

This virtual ethnographic account begins with an overview of how israelitas construct what
González (2017a) denominates a “religious cyberspace”. Then, I identify the virtual spaces that
israelitas in Spain have carved out within the global israelita network, providing updates to
González’s (2017a) initial remarks on the hermandad in Europe. Finally, after analyzing fissures
among israelitas globally and in Spain, I describe Piedra Angular’s online presence and its role in
the virtual manifestation of the tensions between contention and multiplication.

**A multiplatform approach to community building**

A constellation of israelita groups, pages and channels generate significant quantities of content
every day on Facebook, YouTube and WhatsApp. Through a brief, but attentive survey of diverse
forms of engagement, I demonstrate how israelitas’ overlapping and differentiated use of social
media creates a common identity online, while also building bridges across distinct virtual
infrastructure to facilitate varied collective action.

Access to the israelita online community tends to be unrestricted, making it possible to gage its
vitality and scope. On Facebook, there exist over 100 pages and groups that brandish the name
AEMINPU or FREPAP, the most successful ones garnering over 30,000 followers. Similarly, the
vast israelita audiovisual repertoire on YouTube encompasses both personal videos with no views
and fully edited productions with over a million views. Lastly, visualizing the WhatsApp network
is complicated by the application’s architecture. From the observation of a dozen group chats, the
member count can range from 50 to 300 individuals, larger groups generating over 1000 messages
per day. Although within the wider social media landscape these numbers represent a minor
presence, the hermandad commands a robust, delimited virtual space in which multifaceted
israelita religiosity can be expressed.

Across the three online platforms, israelitas employ a common visual language that González
(2017a), Ossio (2014) and Teixeira (2014) have previously identified in printed material. Digital
visual production features representations of israelita-specific elements combined with common
Christian and Andean-Peruvian imagery (Figure 2). As a result, pictures of Ezequiel, Jonás, altars
and AEMINPU seals tend to be superimposed onto backdrops of Machu Picchu and blue heavenly
skies. These are often paired with doves (the holy spirit) and rainbows (Jehovah’s promise to humanity). In addition to a common pictorial identity, israelitas employ unique terminology to demarcate online territory. Perú Privilegiado or simply Ezequiel Ataucusi Gamonal are examples of group names only fully comprehensible to other hermanos. Within the bounds of these markers, israelitas can digitally congregate with others that share a common theocentric worldview. This engenders overlapping content across platforms that blends together: videos of hermanas singing, flyers promoting charity-proselytization events, clips of veils and tunics for sale, pictures of altars.

Figure 2

Note. Diptych of the profile pictures of two israelita WhatsApp groups.

As a compliment to this consistency in imagery, language and content, there exists a differentiated use of platforms to optimize collective initiatives. For instance, YouTube provides ideal conditions for promoting israelita musical production; dance and song are considered divine dones [gifts] that structure ritual. In addition, israelita music strengthens collective identity through its aesthetic and lyrical uniformity, incorporating traditional and modern Andean musical styles: huayno, chicha and cumbia psicodélica (González, 2017a). Other uses of YouTube include sharing videos of services.

Facebook and WhatsApp both facilitate broad use of multimedia content. Yet, WhatsApp group chats represent more intimate environments than Facebook groups, which tend to reach wider audiences and entail greater anonymity. For example, israelitas utilize the voice note function in group chats to spontaneously intone chants or share prayer. The greater intimacy of WhatsApp also means that it is the preferred method of one-on-one communication among israelitas, as it is among most Latin Americans. When israelitas want to be contacted directly, they invite others to message them on WhatsApp by sharing their numbers on Facebook or YouTube—and essentially, this is what a multiplatform approach consists of.
Israelitas digitally weave together content from within sites and across different platforms, encouraging a deeper engagement. It is common for individuals to share music and sermons from YouTube on Facebook, or Facebook posts and videos on WhatsApp. I first accessed the WhatsApp group ‪Ezequiel Doctrina Santa‬ through links that hermanos posted on public Facebook groups. I then gained access to other parts of the israelita WhatsApp network as members shared links to other groups like ‪Tierra Privilegiada‬, which hosts digital community events like singing contests and raffles. The constant relocation of content creates an intertextuality that enriches the virtual experience of community by fostering a sense of belonging that surpasses the limits of individual groups, applications and websites.

Bridging together distinct israelita digital spaces often operates in parallel to the AEMINPU’s efforts to bridge together distinct territories through Ezequiel’s teachings. The way that israelitas organize themselves on Facebook renders most palpable how cyberspace and territory overlap. While israelitas do create pages based on specific interests (e.g., Aeminpu - Himnos Celestiales), the most common form of demarcating digital space is by association to a physical territory. This can be on a national scale, Aeminpu - chile, or on a local scale, Aeminpu cotahuasi. Organizing by geography provides logistical benefits, allowing hermanos to locate each other and plan local events. Still, the online followings of certain groups are disproportionate to the physical israelita presence in the corresponding territories, indicating that territorialization of cyberspace serves functions beyond logistics.

A glance at the make-up of international AEMINPU Facebook groups makes it evident that most members remain in Peru. Thematically ambiguous WhatsApp groups also point to the hermandad’s general concentration within Peru. For example, of the 117 members of La santa escritura es la Biblia, only 13 members did not have a Peruvian country code (+51). Out of these, only two were from outside of Latin America, +1 (US) and +20 (Egypt).

Small populations of israelitas abroad can thus carve out large and heavily populated online territories supportive of their venture. Beyond sharing general, overlapping israelita content, group administrators often mix in pictures and videos of their personal practice and proselytization efforts set in the distant places they inhabit, eliciting prayers and encouragements in the comments. Witnessing and virtually participating in the AEMINPU’s divine mission of global evangelization generates a positive feedback loop that, on one hand reinforces the legitimacy of its claims to universality and that, on the other hand, encourages greater participation in a venture that seems especially feasible due to modern connectivity.
At the same time, this phenomenon illustrates the imperfect ways that digital spaces map onto territory. In addition to social media’s potential overrepresentation of minorities, a virtual analysis also excludes those who choose not to engage publicly online. Even so, an inquiry, conscious of the online warping of territory, proves invaluable to understanding AEMINPU’s transnationalization. Online tools, with all their limitations, have been key to accelerating these processes. Therefore, while the hermandad in Spain possesses an online reach that does not correspond exactly with its territorial presence, examining the ways it presents virtually can provide meaningful insight into how South-North migration and insertion into the European context have impacted israelita practice, doctrine and identity.

**The construction of an israelita Spain within a sacred digital geography**

Through a search on Facebook, it is possible to initially sketch out the virtual borders of the israelita Spain in 2022. Four pages and one group include “AEMINPU” or “FREPAP” in relation to Spain as part of their names: Aeminpu España-Barcelona Iglesia Piedra Angular Ezequiel Jonás, Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España, Aeminpu filial en España, Frepap – España and Aeminpu filial en España - Pamplona. As a first step to charting out the AEMINPU in Spain, this section will provide updates to González’s (2017a) initial survey of the *hermandad* by examining Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España. This page is in fact run by the congregation that González (2017a) visited in Barcelona in 2015 and identified as the first and only AEMINPU filial [branch] with legal recognition outside of Latin America.

At first glance, the page brandishes its officiality by providing robust contact information, not typical of israelita online spaces that tend to be informal. Their markers of officiality include opening and closing hours, an email address, a phone number, a YouTube channel, a website and an online privacy policy (Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España, n.d.) With this information, I identified the congregation by verifying the listed address at L’Hospitalet del Llobregat and their religious entity inscription number with the registry information that González (2017a) obtained from the Spanish Ministry of Justice. Throughout its various sites, Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España (n.d.) reiterates that it is the sole official representation of the AEMINPU in Spain. Claiming legitimacy under the Spanish state corresponds with Ezequiel’s own concern in inscribing the israelita religious movement into Peruvian legal framework. Just as the burgeoning AEMINPU needed to defend itself vis-à-vis the miscomprehension of other Peruvians, israelitas in Spain occupy a vulnerable position as a foreign collective (González, 2017a). Earning endogenous credibility serves as both a defense mechanism and a strategic component of proselytization.
On the other hand, this process of legitimation entailed concessions from the *hermanos* of L’Hospitalet. For example, the practice of *holocausto* did not conform to the Spanish legal regulations on animal sacrifice. As a result, the congregation replaced physical practice with virtual requests for *hermanos* in Peru to make offerings in their names (González, 2017a). The internet thus facilitated both solidarity and adaptation to face the challenges of transnationalization, demonstrating that these contradictory forces need not be at odds. Nonetheless, the potential for conflict is latent, as innovations always risk being rejected by others. When tensions arising from a fragmenting collective identity remain unresolved, they can produce schism. I faced this reality early in my fieldwork, when *Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España* (n.d.) responded to my requests for information with this message:

“[…] Currently our institution is independent of another institution of a similar name in Latin America. […] And without leaving out that the Peruvian presence within our community is minor” (personal communication, 25 March 2022). (For the original, untranslated message see Annex C)

This response is remarkable because, in addition to maintaining the trappings of officiality deriving from its institutionalization as an AEMINPU filial in 2008, *Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España* (n.d.) also preserves the symbols of *israelita* identity. It features the official *israelita* seal of the decalogue in its logo and a picture of a typical *israelita* altar with *La Ley Real* as its banner (see Annex C). These images remain unchanged since March 2020, when the page was created, probably in response to the spread of COVID-19 in Europe. In fact, the main purpose of the page is to share recordings of the online Saturday services published on YouTube. *Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España*’s (n.d.) latest virtual services, dating from April 2022, reveal an upkeep of *israelita* practices: the Sabbath is celebrated on Saturday, the service is structured by characteristic singing that bookends Bible study and prayer. Concerning doctrine, the commandments and biblical authority remain central. However, any references to Ezequiel are absent. Notably, the Peruvian flag does not accompany the Spanish and AEMINPU flags on the altar, as it does for other altars.

The administrators of *Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España* (n.d.) ignored all further contact, making it difficult to identify the timing and causes of the break. Their website, copyrighted to 2015, still explicitly mentions both Ezequiel and Jonás. This corresponds with the moment in which González (2017a) conducted her fieldwork. Both in her work and through online conversations, González affirms that fissures among *hermanos* in Spain were already apparent, some having set up a *campo santo* to conduct informal *holocausto*. One of her old contacts confirmed the rupture, only revealing that few *hermanos* remained in the group and that they primarily assembled online (personal communication, 7 April 2022).
These events can be interpreted as a failure for the AEMINPU, but I propose a less definitive reading. While I identified institutionalization as a key strategy, informal initiatives, like the ways hermanos weave digital networks, are at the core of the israelita religious movement. Transnationalization in Spain has been driven by hermanos who migrated for personal reasons, not as missionaries (González, 2017a). The AEMINPU has instrumentalized this informality by inscribing only certain congregations into its institution. To finish mapping the virtual hermandad in Spain, it is vital to gage the placement, depth of its internal borders.

At the margins of the marginal: schismatic israelita religiosity online

Birckel (2017), Désilets (2006), González (2017a) and Meneses (2015) have theorized that Ezequiel’s death and Jonás’ absent leadership contribute to ongoing israelita disunity, the institutionalized AEMINPU sometimes viewed as distant, ineffective, or in extreme cases, a force for evil. The decentralized nature of the israelita religious movement creates ambiguity as to what constitutes schism. A large variety of rifts are palpable online, WhatsApp group chats and Facebook comment sections rendering disagreement highly visible. This visibility, along with the speed of virtual changes, intensify the online experience of fragmentation. For instance, less than a month after I joined 🔷Ezequiel Doctrina Santa🌈, the chat dissolved due to internal disarray. Members leveled accusations against each other, arguing that fake israelitas mislead the new hermanos. Just as social media allows israelitas to amplify their minoritarian movement, minorities within a minority also benefit from amplification.

Yet, the opportunity for personalized engagement and innovation in a decentralized and popular israelita religious movement can also be considered a characteristic that has permitted the AEMINPU to spread and perdure. Informality entails increased flexibility and adaptation. In virtual spaces, informal community policing behaviors arise as creative responses to contain fragmentation. In the successful group 🌍Tierra Privilegiada, administrators remove members deemed problematic and created rules, such as no chatting on the Sabbath, which they enforce by disabling members’ ability to send messages on Saturdays.

The complex ways that formality and informality interact within the israelita religious movement has resulted in an unstable and inconsistent relationship between the institutionalized AEMINPU and the hermandad in Spain. This can be observed in the online presence of the different congregations, as well as the ways they interact with the OFICINA CENTRAL – AEMINPU (n.d.) Facebook page. Currently, there are visible attempts to reestablish the institutional presence of the AEMINPU in Spain through Aeminpu filial en España. This Facebook page, run by a congregation
in Santander, has over 30,000 followers and claims to be “[non for profit, working jointly with the Central Aeminpu of Peru]” (translated, Aeminpu filial en España, n.d.). They also share pictures of comunicados [announcements] from the Lima office that attribute the title of “president of the AEMINPU in Spain” to an hermano that posts often on the page (see Annex D). The documents all date from 2022 and the new official logo dates only to July 2022 (Aeminpu filial en España, n.d.). This page also appears to be affiliated with two other pages Aeminpu filial en España – Pamplona (n.d.) and Frepap – España (n.d.), which post almost identical content and were both founded in early 2021.

However, Aeminpu filial en España (n.d.) was founded in 2015, when Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España (n.d.) was still the official filial. A look at its past events shows a convocation for hermanos to gather at a campo santo in Santander in 2017. This matches González’s (2017a) description of hermanos in Spain informally setting up campos santos, at a moment when Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España denied the legitimacy of these territories. All of this indicates that Aeminpu filial en España once found itself outside the bounds of officiality and now they are being inscribed into the institutions of the AEMINPU—undergoing a similar process to that of Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España. At the same time that institutionalization can provide credibility and protection to israelita grassroots initiatives in Spain, the AEMINPU central office also benefits from appropriating informal efforts that have thrived in their new environments.

The value of the informal israelita effort in advancing official goals may account for the institutional AEMINPU’s relative tolerance towards a diversity of israelita congregations online and offline. Even though the Lima office issues comunicados warning about unofficial AEMINPU pages, these admonitions usually remain general and entail no real consequences. Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España (n.d.) continues using the name AEMINPU and the official symbols of the israelitas without any backlash. This can also explain how Aeminpu filial en España (n.d.) continued celebrating fiestas in the informal campo santo. On the other hand, this tolerance can also be attributed to institutional weakness and the ensuing difficulty of establishing a meaningful presence in its territory—a characteristic of many Latin American institutions (Désilets, 2006).

A series of events that transpired between February and March 2022, which modified the online geography of israelita Spain, serve to disprove claims of total institutional incapacity. In addition to the five Facebook pages and groups that I identified as conforming the cyberspace of the hermandad in Spain, two additional pages existed: Aeminpu España Israel Congregación de Jehová and a second FREPAP Spain page. Both very active, they were run by one hermana residing in Irun. However, on 16 February 2022, OFICINA CENTRAL – AEMINPU (n.d.) posted a comunicado
that denounced Aeminpu España Israel Congregación de Jehová and threatened judicial action. Aeminpu filial en España (n.d.), Aeminpu filial en España – Pamplona (n.d.) and Frepap – España (n.d.) all reshared this comunicado, identifying the hermana by name. At the end of March, her two pages were removed (see Annex D for the original documents and text shared online).

This rare incident of censure demonstrates that, despite the uneven ways the institutional AEMINPU wields influence, the central office possesses real legal and financial resources to exert agency in the world. The visibility of the hermana in Irun is perhaps what distinguishes her from Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España (n.d.). The L’Hospitalet congregation has maintained a reserved virtual presence with little reach (less than 1000 likes), which both obscures its origins as an unofficial israelita congregation as well as the current fracture. Conversely, the hermana residing in Irun was vocal in criticizing the central office and its decisions, such as enacting changes to the israelita calendar. As she counted with a considerable following, her words held special weight in discrediting the AEMINPU in a territory that is eyed as a prized acquisition to the hermandad. The hermana continues practicing as a dissident israelita in Irun, appealing to Ezequiel as the only true authority and publishing on a new page that only bears her own name, but already has 2,600 likes, outperforming both Frepap – España (n.d.) and Aeminpu filial en España – Pamplona (n.d.).

Therefore, informality generally, but particularly its online manifestations, may not only be tolerated by the institutionalized AEMINPU due to a lack of means of exerting complete control, but also because individuals can approach the movement’s “divine mission” in ways that a more rigid institution cannot. Essentially, the tolerance of a certain degree of fragmentation may serve as a way to establish and maintain the AEMINPU’s presence in diverse and distant territories.

**Identifying and placing Piedra Angular in the hermandad’s cyberspace**

This online ethnography thus reveals a digital israelita Spain divided principally between a re-nascent institutional space and a reduced space for schismatic religiosity. The first is constituted by the very popular Aeminpu filial en España (n.d.), with minor contributions from Aeminpu filial en España – Pamplona (n.d.) and Frepap – España (n.d.). The space for dissidence is most evidently inhabited by the hermana from Irun. Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España (n.d.) could also be considered part of that territory, but as a tolerated dissidence: they have rejected the institution but preserve many elements of the israelita identity without contention.

Locating Piedra Angular in this virtual space requires a close look at its Facebook group: Aeminpu España-Barcelona Iglesia Piedra Angular Ezequiel Jonás (n.d.). Founded 24 October 2020, it counts with approximately 2,000 members that are very active, publishing dozens of posts daily. In
accordance with the other observations, most content originates from Peru and does not have any relationship to Barcelona or Spain. But beyond this overlapping israelita content that ties Piedra Angular with the general hermandad, its name and banner set it apart from the rest of the virtual hermandad in Spain. Named in part after Ezequiel Jonás, the group banner represents an altar with a picture of Jonás and headed by the phrase “Santidad a Jonás” [Sanctity to Jonás]. In this way, the congregation announces its affiliation to the jonasista movement, which proclaims Jonás as living Christ on Earth. Gonzalez (2017a) and Birckel (2017) have identified jonasistas as a “fringe” group within the movement, without providing a more detailed description of this emerging doctrine. Carlos Ráez, an anthropologist from UNMSM, refers to the jonasistas as an “extreme minority” group that originates from early, abandoned attempts to place Jonás as Christ from within the institutional AEMINPU (personal communication, 7 July 2022).

The members of the Piedra Angular congregation do not label themselves as dissidents, claiming to accept hermanos of different doctrinal tendencies. Nonetheless, this survey of the digital construction of an israelita Spain does locate them outside the bounds of officiality and thus in the territory of schismatic practice. There exists a dialogue of symbols and images that further illustrates how officiality and doctrinal differences overlap to generate the internal borders within the virtual space of the israelita hermandad in Spain. On 17 July 2022, Aeminpu filial en España (n.d.) transmitted livestreams of a service in Santander that features the phrase “Santidad a Jehova” [Sanctity to Jehovah] above the altar. This contrast highlights a distinct doctrinal position, in which Jonás is recognized as the head of the AEMINPU but is not deified—only Jehovah and Jesus considered divinities. In addition, while the AEMINPU’s comunicados have not targeted worshipers of Jonás directly, the central office’s espousal of the Santander group signals an alignment with their doctrine. Both comunicados issued in the name of the new president of AEMINPU Spain also include a reminder to use the “correct” greeting that names Jehovah and Jesus, not Jonás (see Annex D).

While the comunicados confirm the current trajectory of the institutional israelita doctrine, placing Piedra Angular among the dissidences, they do not directly denounce Piedra Angular, which can continue bearing the name AEMINPU within israelita cyberspace as a tolerated dissidence, along with Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España. However, within the realm of schismatic practice, Piedra Angular stands out in its reverence of Jonás, a figure shunned by both the hermana in Irun and Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España. Therefore, this unofficial virtual space of religious innovation is in itself internally demarcated by doctrinal differences and the variances of toleration from the institutionalized AEMINPU.
This complex online spatial distribution illustrates the constant mediating and reevaluation provoked by the tensions of containment and multiplication that underly the act of transmission. This analysis explored the juxtaposition of approaches that actors take in response to the amplification of these tensions online, from the promotion of a coherent virtual visual identity to communal policing strategies to institutionalization of unofficial initiatives in attempts to legally restrict the use of israelita markers by non-tolerated dissidents.

The following section of the data analysis will nuance the understanding of religious innovation and transmission by highlighting the importance of embodied religious practice among all israelitas. While their online presence hints at this characteristic, due to the vast multimedia representation of ritualistic song and dance, through my field work in Barcelona with Piedra Angular, I examine how corporality facilitates direct access to transcendence and divinity, thereby generating opportunities for religious innovation. Building off this emphasis, I then suggest migration as a key form of embodied israelita religiosity. Both virtual and transnational networks are conceptualized to be hallmarks of a modernity driven by innovations from the Global North. This modernity that was supposed to be characterized by increased secularization and deterritorialization, does not account for the israelita religious movement, its endurance and expansion. Piedra Angular’s presence online and in Barcelona defies assumptions, and as a result, can generate understanding as to how collectives at the margins insert themselves into and appropriate mechanisms of modernity.

The ethnographic account of Piedra Angular features a first attempt, known to the author, at an academic examination of the worship of Jonás. I focus on how the hermanos inhabit faith in Jonás and narrate these experiences. The doctrinal exploration into schismatic religious practice then ties into personal stories of the hermanos of Piedra Angular, which serve as a cornerstone on top of which the congregation is founded and built.
An Ethnographic Approximation to *Piedra Angular* in Barcelona

Constantly in motion, the *israelitas* transit within and across borders to preach, attend ceremonies, hold charity events, teach at CECABIS, construct congregations and colonize Amazonian territories (González, 2017a; Meneses, 2015). Observing this migration prompted González (2017a) to label the AEMINPU as a diasporic religious movement, instead of “a purely Peruvian religion” (de la Torre, 1996). However, this experience of migration is not unique to Peruvian *israelitas*, but rather a common trait of many Peruvians today. As a product of the mass internal migration that Matos Mar (1984) dubbed the “*desborde popular*” [overflow of the popular/population], family networks bridge the country’s territorial divide and transcend state borders. “Secular” equivalents of *israelita* migration exist among most Peruvians: travel to the *sierra* or *selva* for holidays, circular economic migration to Chile, rural exodus to Lima and South-North migration.

For *israelita* and non-*israelita* Peruvians alike, migration is therefore not just an individual experience. There is a collective culture as well as an intergenerational memory of migration, transcending the individual. Yet, in questioning the “Peruvian” emphasis, González (2017a) referred to the tendency that authors and *israelitas* themselves have to define the “essentially Peruvian” as Incan-Andean. In this way, she contributes to dislodging the *israelitas* from a remote place within the imaginary of national identity, locating them instead within a contemporary regional reality. González’s (2017a) observations elucidate how the *israelita* religious movement emerges from the itinerant experiences of the three generations of Peruvians that starred in the country’s urbanization and modernization processes.

Instead of presenting them as the grounded experiences they are, academic theorization risks rendering both migration and faith abstract. In examining religious innovation and *israelita* migration, I present doctrinal practice and innovation as embodied, challenging mind-body dualism. This challenge arises from the *hermanos* of Piedra Angular themselves. Their stories of migration, territory and transcendence convey an understanding of the body, especially of the body in motion, as a site of spiritual epiphany, labor and transformation. In turn, their perspectives prompt me to rethink migration as embodied religious practice. Tracing back to the life of Ezequiel himself,

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5 Even though this project does not focus on the small but growing population of non-Peruvian *israelitas*, these communities tend to be mainly Latin American, thus sharing similar experiences of internal migration.
physical movement permits israelitas to inscribe their individual experiences into an intergenerational collective memory that serves as a reservoir of meaning and to access to divinity.

This ethnographic analysis of Piedra Angular begins by introducing the congregation, through a brief description of the worshipers and their temple. I then examine what faith in Jonás as the Western Christ entails based on the discourse and practices of the Piedra Angular community, with brief considerations of this doctrinal current’s online manifestation and observations from other scholars. As the first academic analysis focusing on the worship of Jonás known to the author, the discussion accounts for how the hermanos relate with other israelitas who do not share their beliefs, and how this is also reflected in the way they perceive themselves—tying back to the tensions of transmission examined in the virtual ethnography. I then propose that comprehending the israelita religiosity requires breaking down body-mind dualism and placing emphasis on the body, rather than the disembodied mind, as the site of access to the essential truths of existence. The discussion of the data concludes in examining the narratives of the hermanos of Piedra Angular. In grounding abstract concepts of religious transmission and transnationalism in the bodies that are in motion, I offer insight on how modern migration can be a considered form of embodied religious practice.

Piedra Angular: an israelita temple burrowed into the hills of Barcelona

Located in a slanting, narrow bystreet of El Carmel, the temple Piedra Angular Ezequiel Jonás made part of the neighborhood’s modern history as a migratory crossroads. Yet, the nature of the building that housed the temple, and its lack of any external markers, obscured the israelita contribution to this legacy. From the exterior, Piedra Angular appeared to be a garage or storage space. Instead of an entry for individuals, it possessed a large, gaping garage door that the hermanos covered with wooden panels to separate interior from exterior, without completely cutting off access to ventilation and the outside world (see Figure 4). To enter, it sufficed to budge a panel. While a subsequent plexiglass and metal door provided an additional barrier, it had no lock. On Saturdays, echoes of music bled through the crevices of the juxtaposed wooden panels, the only hint to the existence of the congregation.

This degree of invisibility contrasted notably with the congregation’s very public online presence, but it proved necessary due to many of the hermanos’ irregular migratory statuses. Inhabiting outside the margins of government institutions, most of their proceedings were informal, such as the renting and occupying of this improvised space. Stepping inside, everything was dimly lit, and the layout was difficult to gage. First, a short corridor led from the entrance to a windowless room with a couch, a kitchen and a table. At the other end of the room, a staircase led down to the
basement that housed the space of worship. In effect, to access the temple itself, it was necessary to transit through the living space of the hermanos who founded the congregation. As a consequence, the limits between private and public space blurred once the initial barrier from the outside was breached.

When the congregation was first founded in August of 2020, the principal inhabitants of this space consisted in hermana Sara, her husband hermano David, their newborn son and Sara’s brother, hermano Samuel. However, over time, more family members arrived, and the two-level space was eventually inhabited by seven adults and four children. As my main interlocutors, it is the stories of this “founding family” that articulate much of my analysis. In my time as a guest to their services, but also to their home and dinner gatherings, I noted a scarcity of visible signs of bedrooms or other private spaces. Hermana Sara disclosed that she sometimes slept in the basement-temple in a sleeping bag. These cramped conditions led them to move out June 2022.

Before descending to the space of worship, I pause my spatial description to briefly introduce the whole congregation. Over the two months that I spent in Barcelona with the hermanos, I observed a total of seventeen adults and seven children attend service at Piedra Angular. Six of these adults and four of these children belonged to what I refer to as the “founding family”. The core members of this family consist of four siblings: Sara, Samuel, Yoana and Yesica. Their extended family included hermana Sara’s husband, David and their three children, as well hermana Yoana’s husband, William and their one child (see Annex E). They all lived in the “temple” along with hermano Jhon, a young man from Huanuco with whom they share no family ties. The rest of the worshipers mostly consisted of israelitas who had immigrated to Spain long before the first members of the founding family. Two households were particularly consistent in attending both Saturday services and Sunday community bonding events, sharing ties of friendship with the
founding family. One consisted in a young couple, *hermano* Anderson and *hermana* Betty, with two children; the other consisted in two adults, *hermana* Mary and *hermano* Lucho and a teenager, their precise parentage to each other remained unclear to me. The additional six adults that attended service did so only once in the time that I spent in Barcelona and did not participate in any external activities. In contrast to the founding family, who’s eldest members were in their late 30s or early 40s, these more detached members tended to be older adults who attended service by themselves. This brief overview thus reveals differing levels engagement split along generational divides (apart from Mary and Lucho, both in their 50s).

The *israelitas* of *Piedra Angular* gathered in a basement fashioned into a worship space through symbolic distribution of space and visual markers of faith. The stairwell first led to a posterior seating area that consisted in rows of plastic chairs that were divided by gender through a large space in the middle. This empty dividing corridor permitted *hermanos* to approach the sacred anterior area that housed the altar and the material for ritual. In between the seating area and the sacred area, there were the podiums from which to lead religious practice, as well as a musical set up composed of amplifiers, Jhon’s keyboard and Anderson’s electric guitar; music also served to bridge the divide between the profane and the holy. This symbolic division of space was physically demarcated by tape of the floor (see Annex F).

**Figure 5**

*Note. The altar of *Piedra Angular* in El Carmel (photograph provided by *hermana* Sara in May 2022)*

The altar itself corresponded to the picture the congregation used as its banner on Facebook. On the left side, there were the two flags of the earthly territories of Peru and Spain, which are the sites for spiritual transcendence and labor. On the right, there were the two flags that correspond to
immaterial-cultural territories of the celestial AEMINPU and the Tahuantinsuyo. In the middle, La Ley Real surrounded the image of Jonás, his divine centrality reenforced by the heading “Sanctity to Jonás” (see Figure 5). Additional markers of identity included FREPAP stickers on the podiums as well as a large FREPAP flag on the left wall. Comparisons online to other israelita temples reveal an adherence to israelita convention for all spatial and symbolic elements, with exception to the references to Jonás. Despite economic and legal precarity, the hermanos of the founding family took pride in both the upkeep of “the home of the lord” and in providing other israelitas the conditions for the communal worship of Jonás, which I describe in the next subsection.

The Living God is in Peru and his name is Ezequiel Jonás Ataucusi Molina

“Jesus lives in my heart”. My gaze wandered over the stanzas of the coros celestials [celestial choirs] when hermana Sara took the old, tattered book from my hands and presented me with brand new, pocket-sized copy. It was mine to keep. Thanking her silently as the congregation continued chanting, I turned to the coros celestials once again and this time encountered “Jonás lives in my heart”. This alteration of one word, four letters, exemplifies what the worship of Jonás entails within the wider israelita community: real continuity that coexists with fundamental, and arguably irreconcilable, transformation.

In their services, the hermanos of Piedra Angular utilize a diverse set of biblical editions and AEMINPU hymn books, brought from Peru and very difficult to replace in Spain. On one hand, the continued use of the books that omit Jonás can be attributed to the lack of access to materials. However, this mix of texts, at times used indiscriminately, at other times deliberately to cite specific wording or footnotes, illustrates a general approach to mediate the tensions between contention (belonging) and multiplication (fragmentation). Outside of replacing Jesus and Jehovah with Jonás, the rest of the alabanza lyrics remain unchanged. Similarly, the slow, drawn-out intonation and repetition that characterizes typical israelita alabanzas, which can be listened to online, is still replicated by the hermanos of Piedra Angular. These examples illustrate a continued feeling of identification with the wider hermandad, as hermana Yoana asserted in her narration “Yes, we are israelitas” (italics for inflection).

As israelitas that worship Jonás, however, they appropriate typical israelita concepts, biblical exegesis and practice, but with differentiated intent and objectives. One important example is the reformulation of the divine mission. Beyond spreading awareness of La Ley Real and the reconstitution of the chosen people in a new chosen land, the core of the mission for Piedra Angular is to proclaim that God lives today, in Peru and that his name is Jonás. Accordingly, the preachers
of Piedra Angular utilized conventional israelita theological argumentation, but with the intent to justify Jonás’ divinity. In the service of 30 April 2022, hermano David reiterated the interpretative approach of taking “a little bit from here” and “a little bit from there” to discover biblical truths, an isrealita hermeneutics that has been well documented by Birckel (2017) and Ossio (2014). Through an overview of their Bible studies, I explore how the hermanos of Piedra Angular put some israelita conventions into practice to textually justify their divergent faith as an expression of religious innovation.

Piedra Angular hosted full Sabbath service that lasted until sunset on Saturdays. While reposo strictly begins when the sun sets on the previous day, the congregation worked within the constraints of the lifestyle they have had to adopt in Europe. The hermanos expressed displeasure in having to adhere to an inflexible weeklong work schedule that interfered with divine responsibilities, a remark that González (2017a) also noted in her fieldwork in Spain. As a result, service chiefly took place Saturday afternoon and evening. It was structured by an initial alabanza that consisted in nearly 45 minutes of slow chanting and prayers. The remaining hours were divided between alternating biblical study and hymns. In contrast to the alabanzas, these hymns were upbeat, with faster tempos and greater presence of electric instruments, bearing the influence of chicha music. The service ended with another 45 minutes of alabanzas and prayer, during which hermanos would sometimes kneel facing the portrait of Jonás and undergo mystical experiences. For instance, one of the hermanos would also be responsible for ungimiento, anointing the worshipers with a drop of olive oil on their heads, a healing practice. As part of a gendered division of spiritual labor, the men dominated preaching while the women led in song, however I witnessed a couple of instances in which the roles were switched. Nonetheless, considered to have divine talent or don for preaching, hermano Samuel and hermano David gave most of the Bible studies and I will focus on their preaching in presenting the doctrinal biblical support of Jonás’ divinity.

On 23 April 2022, hermano Samuel presented the textual argument as to why Jonás was Christ. He began with the assertion that there will be a second coming of Christ based on Hebrews 9:28, and then followed that up with a set of questions: where? when? who? To answer where, Samuel cited Matthew 24:27 and Job 23:8 to indicate that the “Son of Man” would reappear in the West, and Ezequiel 20:46 to justify that it must be in Southern “austral” part of the West. Finally, he completed the spatial trajectory with Ezequiel 38:12, which alludes to the inhabitation of “the navel of the Earth” (Biblia RVA, 1909). The precise diction in this biblical edition, particularly ombligo [navel], resonates with the meaning of Cuzco in Quechua, “the navel of the world” (Ossio, 2014). This is the same line of argument that has been used to justify Ezequiel as a Western Christ (Birckel, 2000;
It is in identifying the moment of the Western Christ’s appearance and his identity that worshipers of Jonás offer a differing reading of the Bible but maintain the same hermeneutics. Hermano Samuel turned to Hosea 6:2 to answer when Christ would return: on the third day. He then refers to 2 Peter 3:8 to sustain that for God, a day is a millennium (Biblia RVA, 1909). Which is to say that in the third millennia Christ would effectuate his return, in our current time (and not the previous millennium that would correspond to Ezequiel). In a different service, hermano Samuel proposed that Ezequiel should be thought of a figure like Moises or John the Baptist that prepared the way for Jonás. Finally, hermano Samuel presented two basic justifications as to why the name of Christ is now Jonás. First, he emphasized the messiah’s name upon his return would be new and unknown, based on Apocalypse 2:17. Then he cited Lucas 11:29 in which there is an exhortation to seek “the signal of Jonás” (Biblia RVA, 1909). It is notable that these lines of argument, can be readily found online in the audiovisual and textual production of different groups that promote the worship of Jonás, denoting a degree of doctrinal consistency and maturity.

Towards the end of the same service on 23 April 2022, hermano David presented the millenarianist component that the literature identifies as typically concomitant with messianism. He explains that Jonás does not emerge and speak publicly, as his role now is that of judgement. The israelitas must prepare for that judgement through personal effort, self-improvement and spreading knowledge of his name. Israelitas thus inhabit the moment before a final judgement and must act accordingly. However, compared to the apocalyptic emphasis in the literature and the press, the hermanos of Piedra Angular seem to be moved not so much by fear or apocalyptic urgency, but rather from a desire and sense of responsibility to transmit the special knowledge they have acquired. And despite the central authority of the Bible and their elaborate lines of argument, like the ones I have reconstructed, ultimately this special knowledge is embodied rather than a set of disembodied ideas.

Even before touching upon obviously embodied practices, such as trance-like dancing, the theological arguments already reveal a focus on materiality. The core of their conceptual and textual work serves to prove that God is currently a material being, located in a specific place, at a specific moment. The emphasis on the physicality of divinity is well illustrated by hermano David’s Bible study on 30 April 2022, in which he sought to justify why Christ took on the form of Jonás. He began with the question: why do we think of Christ as a blond, light skinned, clear-eyed and long-haired man? Hermano David claimed that biblical description supported this image of Jesus. First, he points out that Jesus was known as Jesus of Nazareth, and Nazareth was known for having a
light skinned, “beautiful” population, citing Lamentations 4:7. Then, he mentioned Isaiah 52:14, which he interpreted as a prophecy of Jesus’s “beautiful” face being disfigured in crucifixion (Biblia RVA, 1909). For hermano David, these biblical references to Jesus’s beauty confirmed that Christ had possessed European features. He then cited Luke 24:16 to point that when Christ resurrected, he was unrecognizable, which demonstrates an ability to change appearance and signifies that Christ would return in a different form. Hermano David concluded his Bible study with Isaiah 53:2, in which a return without any sort of beauty or attractiveness is mentioned (Biblia RVA, 1909). After reading the verse, he turned towards the picture of Jonás and then gestured towards the varones “this is why he looks like you or me”. With his darker skin, dark hair and glasses, Jonás “was lacking any sort of attraction”. Then hermano David gestured to the side of the room where I was sitting, the varona side, and said: “Ask any hermana, if instead she saw a blonde, white, light-eyed man, then she would be attracted.”

This moment not only illustrates the central and meaningful role the physical body plays in the belief in Jonás, but also the importance of perception: the perception of others, the perception of the self and the perception of the self through the gaze of others. In this case, the Bible study revealed how Western standards of beauty have been internalized by the hermanos of Piedra Angular, which is typical of many Latin Americans, who consider blond hair or light skin as synonymous to beautiful or attractive (Jones, 2017). As much as the israelitas disrupt dominant narratives, they also operate within these narratives and possess an acute awareness for how they are perceived by others as outliers. This is particularly true for worshipers of Jonás, as they must also negotiate with the judgement of other israelitas, who may view them as either mistaken or extremists. For a fuller comprehension of what worship of Jonás entails, it is important to take a deeper look at how the hermanos of Piedra Angular mediate resulting feelings of shame, hostility and exclusion.

**Fraternal Love? Navigating a culture of suspicion within the hermandad**

Israelitas have faced a history of being exoticized or demonized by social actors nationally and internationally (González, 2017a; Ossio, 2014). From being called “nefarious colonizers” and a threat to democracy by academics online (Villasante, 2020), to being threatened with stones while preaching on the streets in Peru, as retold by hermano Samuel, the israelitas face multilayered hostility and miscomprehension. It could also be considered that the physicality or embodied practices of israelitas, particularly in the way they dress and occupy public space, render them particularly visible, and thus vulnerable. At the same time, the hermandad is not merely susceptible to a negative public discourse, but also is comprised of active actors that exert agency in presenting themselves and confronting hostile narratives. Part of the response has resulted in what Cantón
(2008) calls a culture of suspicion, which emerges both between a religious minoritarian group and outsiders, as well as within the group.

Conscious of the bad press and discrimination, there is special care to try to control the group’s image, which once more ties into the tensions of contention (belonging) and multiplication (fragmentation). Online, worshipers of Jonás are subject to communal policing. When they post prayers or messages in the name of Jonás, other hermanos are quick to accuse them of blasphemy, idolatry, misleading new members and spreading an “incorrect” image of the hermandad. Furthermore, the accusations of irrationality and extremism that are leveled at the AEMINPU generally, are also replicated internally, other israelitas mocking and ridiculing the “craziness” of worshipers of Jonás. Tellingly, the hermanos of Piedra Angular regularly prefaced their explanations of doctrine or practice to me with phrases such as “this might seem crazy” or “this may be hard to believe”, demonstrating a keen awareness of how they are perceived.

Being subject to a double hostility, the hermanos of Piedra Angular adopt attitudes and discourse to reconcile their ultra-marginality with their sense of israelita identity. First of all, they promote a very strong discourse of unity. In a Bible study of 14 May 2022, hermano David spent nearly an hour preaching the biblical exhortations for unity, peace and fraternal love. This discourse is matched by action. In Spain, they regularly interact with other congregations, celebrating fiestas together at campos santos. In Peru, they welcomed israelita pilgrims of all beliefs into their homes and attended services at Cieneguilla alongside all other hermanos. In effect, the collaboration between israelitas of different beliefs proved vital to the creation of Piedra Angular. This collaboration among hermanos of different beliefs complicates the divisions that seem so clear cut online.

However, this desire to belong to the wider community cannot be placed above the seminal mission of spreading the name of Jonás. In the same Bible study on unity, hermano David also stated that even if they are not well received, they “must speak” and have the “responsibility of preaching”. This generates a tension that the hermanos diffuse in various ways. Hermano Samuel and hermana Sara argue that in reality, all hermanos know who God really is, they just don’t use the same name. They attribute this to shame or to a fear of scaring people away if the real name is used. Online, worshipers of Jonás reiterate this reasoning in their rebuttals to critics, accusing hermanos of being ashamed to speak the name of God. On the other hand, hermana Yoana speaks differently about the distinctions among israelitas, recognizing that those who believe in Jonás are a minority. But she considers it to be a growing minority, as Jonás gradually reveals himself to more hermanos. In both cases, worshipers of Jonás inscribe the rest of the hermandad into their belief framework.
As part of reconciling tensions, the hermanos of Piedra Angular displayed a lot of patience and tolerance regarding a diversity of ways of doing and believing. Not only towards other hermanos who may “be ashamed” or “not be ready”, but also among each other. Hermanos recognized and accepted weaknesses within their own faith. For instance, while hermana Sara strictly adhered to wearing the veil, the rest of the hermanas of the congregation made inconsistent use of the veil, hermana Mary never wearing it. Concerning her own inconsistent use of holy clothing, hermana Yoana expressed frustration with her “weakness”, but also patience and acceptance with herself for “not being ready yet”. In this way, while they define a correct way of doing things, the tolerance of variation, within a discourse of eventual progression towards the same goal, actually served to create belonging by appropriating fragmentation or divergent practices into the belief system. Piedra Angular thus both included hermanos who attended service and did not adhere to the other rules, and hermanos who strictly followed all divine laws. It could be argued that this parallels the tolerance that the AEMINPU shows towards many dissidents, as explored in the virtual ethnography.

The religious patience among the hermanos of Piedra Angular also derives from how they conceptualize divine revelation of truths. In her narrative, hermana Yoana asserted that: “You can’t make people believe through arguments or explanations. They need experience it”. In other words, Jonás must reveal himself to individuals. Yoana admitted that it had been very difficult for her to believe in Jonás, she had even considered it a betrayal of Jehovah. She only converted after Jonás revealed himself in her dreams. This emphasis on personal experience with the divine was reiterated by the rest of the hermanos. At a moment that hermano David was preaching the justification of Jonás’ divinity to me, he added “you will only believe if the Lord wishes to”. While this may seem more akin to Calvinistic determinism, there is a distinct emphasis on the possibility of the individual physical and sensorial experience of the divine. Dreams, feelings and bodily movement are the true vectors of spiritual epiphany and universal truths, not the “rational” mind and its argumentation. Thus, the hermanos do not blame others for not “believing” or “being convinced” by their preaching, but rather count upon the truth being revealed to them as embodied epiphany. This view of sensorial experience and spirituality is not unique to worshipers of Jonás, making part of broader israelita embodied religious practice

**Israelita divine corporality as a challenge to mind-body dualism**

Cartesian mind-body dualism makes part of the Enlightenment rationalist discourse that I reflected on in the theoretical discussion. While a dualist manner of viewing existence is not exclusive to the Western tradition, and even within the tradition it is varied and nuanced (Forstmann, Bugmar &
Mussweiler, 2012), in the scope of this work, I use the term to refer to the conception of the mind and body as separate entities in a context of the extolment of reason. The mind, as the entity with ability to reason, is thus considered to be the point of access to essential truths, with the body serving as a mere vessel. However, dualism that subjects the body to the mind has a long history in European thought, preceding the Enlightenment and running through Christian theology in the form of the opposition between sinful flesh and pure spirit (Baker, 1995). As a Christian religion, how can the israelita faith destabilize mind-body dualism?

As illustrated by the other tensions of belonging and self-perception, the israelitas are subject to and operate within dominant narratives, at the same time that they challenge these narratives. It is possible to identify several israelita practices that do align with the tradition of rationalistic mind-body dualism. Biblical authority and the practices that accompany it, such as exegesis and the construction of arguments based on textual interpretation, can be considered as disembodied religious practice. It could also be argued that it is varones, holding a gendered position of authority, who mainly lead preaching. This could replicate ideas of men being charged with reason, while women are charged with what is bodily, emotive, and less important, such as song. As a matter of fact, in the service on 30 April 2022, hermano Samuel exhorted the Piedra Angular congregation not to neglect doctrine and the study of the Bible in favor of “prophetic” or mystical religiosity.

The testimony of the hermanos of Piedra Angular and a close look at israelita religious practice demonstrate the contrary—emotion, sensation, materiality and corporal acts are respected and revered. “Visions are what move israelitas,” asserted hermana Sara in her personal narrative. “An hermano must do something he has seen for himself”. She spoke with decision and authority. As the eldest sibling of the founding family, she had fashioned herself into the matriarch of both her reconstituted family and the congregation. In this case, neither Sara’s gender nor her emphasis on sensory religious experience detracted from her position. In effect, not only was she respected due to seniority and her strict keeping of israelita law, but part of the spiritual authority she wielded derived from her divine don or gift for visions and dreams. Ultimately, even hermano Samuel, who placed weight on Bible study, narrated that some of his most important life decisions have been informed by sensations of tugging in his chest or of being chased, which he ascribed to divine origin

Identifying and highlighting the centrality of what I call embodied religious practice within israelita religiosity serves to offer insight into how the hermandad challenges and appropriates the codes of a Western idea of modernity that excludes them (Quijano, 1993). It is this emphasis on corporality and materiality in religious practice that receives the most attention in the press and public discourse. In her analysis of how the Colombian press depicts the hermanos, Meneses (2022:430,
mentions how the israelitas are described as living “in the Ancient Testament” or “lost in time”. For one journalist, seeing them is like “rememorating Biblical times” because of their dress which can “never go unnoticed” in the busy streets of Medellín (Meneses, 2022:426). Not only does this speak to the disruptive power of practicing faith through the presentation of the body and the inhabitation of anonymous, modern urban spaces, but also how the israelita’s corporal emphasis is used to exoticize them, and in many other cases, to disparage them as irrational, dangerous and retrograde (Villasante, 2020).

I propose that embodied israelita religiosity consists in two key elements: that faith and worship are not principally acts of the mind, but also of the body and that the body, not just the mind, can be the site of divine knowledge acquisition. This corresponds with two sets of religious practices that I have observed. One set consists in conscious bodily acts of worship, such as wearing the tunic, singing and kneeling. The other set can involve bodily acts experienced as uncontrolled sensatory input, such as visions and dreams but also spasms. Often these practices are intertwined, as such this distinction only serves to offer insight and is not meant to strictly dichotomize. A brief examination of how hermanos in Piedra Angular incorporated and thought of the body in their religious practice will elucidate further the distinct but overlapping ways the body serves as a vector to the divine.

I consider that israelita embodied faith permeates quotidian existence—from growing out hair to not consuming pork nor shellfish. As a result, the hermanos communicated experiencing the divine in unexpected moments of their everyday life. Yet, there are moments in ritual and ceremony in which deliberate bodily acts facilitate the corporal experience of the divine. At Piedra Angular, these moments consisted in the intonation of hymns and alabanzas in the Saturday services. The ubiquity of musical production among israelitas gains new weight when considered to be a form of embodied religious practice. Hermano Anderson, who interpreted the electric guitar at services, explained to me that his divine don for music had been cultivated at an early age through dreams in which a bearded elder taught him to play chords. When Anderson then practiced, he felt as if his fingers moved on their own. Considering bodily ability to produce high quality music as an expression of proximity to the divine was an idea echoed by hermana Sara, who explained that before converting she sang very badly. Even though she did not possess a musical don like hermano Anderson, she affirmed that her singing had improved drastically as she became “stronger in the faith”. Conversely, hermano Anderson lamented that he had “moved away” from the faith and thus had lost part of his virtuosity.
Concomitant to the collective act of standing, singing, clapping or playing an instrument, I witnessed a range of embodied religious practice at Piedra Angular that hermanos experienced as partially or wholly involuntary. During the hymns or alabanzas, the hermanos often allowed their bodies to be guided by sensations and emotions, kneeling, gesticulating or even crying spontaneously. Often there was a progression of embodied worship that led towards decreased bodily control the longer the time spent singing and chanting. Towards the end of the day, it was common for hermanos to begin experiencing fortalezas [strengths], which is how they refer to uncontrolled and often repetitive physical movements. For example, hermano David’s right arm would start making circular, sweeping motions over his head. Similarly, hermano William would shake his right hand back and forth, even when carrying his daughter in his arms. In the case of hermano Jhon, he would sometimes develop guttural spasms and start gagging.

The intensity of israelita embodied religious practice can be much stronger than what I witnessed in Piedra Angular. In her personal narrative, hermana Yesica explained that she experienced fortalezas from her early adolescence. But a couple of instances it affected her entire body: she had two to three episodes of fainting and seizure-like symptoms, even having to be transported to the hospital. This first occurred to her in the context of a vigilia, which is a type of israelita ceremony that entails spending all night awake, usually without sitting, and being constantly surrounded by music, dancing and incense. Hermana Yesica’s experience gestures towards the unique relationship between israelitas and health. They consider that their embodied practice can serve to heal both the body and spirit, some hermanos possessing the don of healing. However, those who tangle with divine forces can be susceptible to falling ill or suffering bodily accident, which is why the hermanos of Piedra Angular also told me the faith could be “dangerous” and thus needs to be taken seriously.

While this project must limit its incursions into the complex israelita rapport with health, I find it a key element in how embodied religious practice challenges mind-body duality. The health of the spirit and the body are tightly intertwined. At Piedra Angular, I observed embodied practice of healing during the closing alabanzas of the service of 24 April 2022. After kneeling in front of the altar, hermano Jhon began experiencing the fortaleza of gagging. His body arched and bent over with each guttural spasm. An elderly hermana then approached the altar, held her palm up in greeting to Jonás, and then knelt next to hermano Jhon, who draped his left arm around her and with the right hand, he drew circles over her head. Suddenly, the guttural spasm began again, and

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6 González (2017b) experienced these israelita health practices firsthand when she fell ill in her fieldwork among israelitas in Cieneguilla.
he retrieved his right arm. Due to where I was standing and out of respect for the semi-private spiritual moment, I did not see exactly what took place. But I understood that through the saliva of the young hermano, there had taken place a ritual meant to transfer vitality to the hermana.

Just as embodied religious practice is not unique to the worshipers of Jonás within the wider hermandad, it is also not unique to the israelitas within the bounds of the contemporary Latin American religious field. As mentioned in the introduction, the israelita religious movement developed alongside other protestant faiths that constitute the pluralization of the religious offer in the region. Notably, embodied religious practice is most associated with Pentecostal churches, that like the AEMINPU, have sometimes been depicted as extreme fanaticisms of the popular classes. In explaining the rapid expansion of these movements in Latin America and the decline of Catholicism, many scholars refer to Weberian and Durkheimian categories. For instance, Semán (2019:36) argues that these “popular religious sensibilities” produce a reenchantment of the world that is more appealing than Catholicism’s hierarchical detachment that “makes enormous concessions to science”. These explanations based on rationalistic concepts often lend themselves to associating the poor, uneducated and “popular” to embodied religious practice (Bastian, 1994), and thus cementing preconceptions that these irrational practices can only appeal to the vulnerable.

The value of countering these preconceptions can also be seen in Semán’s (2019) analysis, as he proposes that Pentecostal churches actually democratize faith, despite fearmongering against these institutions in the media. He points to similar dynamics to those that I have described within the israelita religious movement: tolerance for a degree of informality and fragmentation that serves as a mechanism for expansion (Semán, 2019). But beyond thinking of institutional aspects, I propose that embodied religious practice itself can be divinely “democratic”, as it permits individual access to the divine through the body. Despite the hierarchies that inevitably exist within the communities, all israelitas live with the material possibility of encountering God and communicating with divinity in material ways. And for the worshipers of Jonás, it is exactly this communication that led to the new revelation of Christ.

In this way, it is possible to think of embodied religious practices as facilitating religious innovation within the israelita hermandad. This is reflected in the way worshipers of Jonás emphasize these experiences, which cannot be explained but must be felt. As a result, the expansion, and transformations of israelita religious faith cannot be thought of as just a movement of ideas, but rather the movement of bodies that through their physicality can access spiritual truths. In the concluding analysis of the migratory trajectories that lead to the creation of Piedra Angular, I
propose grounding migration in the intergenerational memory and experiences of the hermanos, considering migration itself as embodied religious practice.

**From Huancayo to Barcelona: israelita bodies in motion in time and space**

While the motivations and paths of religious migration today are shaped by contemporary social dynamics, Cornejo, Cantón and Blanes (2008) rightfully point out that religion possess a kinetic energy that precedes “modern” processes of globalization and transnationalization. Sometimes at odds with preexisting territorial demarcations, the propagation of religious belief has generated sacred geographies and borders of faith (Cornejo, Cantón, & Blanes, 2008; González, 2019). Yet, the religious journey in itself is less so an object of interest, with the emphasis usually placed on the effects of religious migration for the points of origin and destination. I propose a consideration of israelita migratory journeys as bodily experiences that draw upon intergenerational memory and as embodied religious practice, which like music, enables communication with the divine.

Internal migration in Peru, as well as South-North migratory flows, tend to be driven by socioeconomic considerations, which is no different for most israelitas (González, 2017a). These are the same concerns that drove the itinerance of Ezequiel, during which his divine revelation took place. Thus, it is essential to breakdown the dichotomy that pretends to differentiate secular and spiritual motivation. Beyond challenging the subordination of the irrational (body) to the rational (mind), israelitas also disrupt rationalist mind-body dualism by blurring the general distinction between the material and the immaterial. This manifests in the ways that the religious sphere englobes all aspects of life.

This integration of the earthly and spiritual is reflected in the three paths of divine salvation for israelitas, as exposed by the hermanos of Piedra Angular in the Saturday service of 14 May 2022. The first way to salvation is through agriculture and this corresponds with the Fronteras vivas project in the Amazon. An israelita who desires to dedicate themselves to agriculture must move to the “virgin lands” to work. The second way to salvation is through political mobilization, which involves campaigning or becoming a candidate for the FREPAP. Finally, the third way to salvation entails “salir a predicar”, which is to say spreading the name of God to new lands: from preaching on the streets of Lima to journeying to new villages or countries to found churches. All three ways mobilize the hermandad in very tangible forms, whether it be over short or long distances. For the hermanos of Piedra Angular, they have embarked on this third way in journeying to Europe.

To understand how Piedra Angular came to be in El Carmel at the start of this decade, it is necessary to travel back nearly 70 years in time and space to the 1950s-60s and the Peruvian province of
Huancayo, located within the region of Junin (see Annex E). In one of the many rural, Quechua speaking communities, lived a young woman who, after being the first to convert to the *israelita* faith, would go on to become the matriarch of vast family network of *israelitas*. Sara, Yoana, Samuel and Yenifer are four of her twenty grandchildren, and they speak of her life trajectory in imprecise terms. This is telling of the large cultural distances and silences that exist between generations that have been displaced in Peru. Still, even with the added transatlantic distance that now divides the *hermanos* from their paternal grandmother, I observed how through narrative they inscribed themselves into an intergenerational journey of faith that created a discursive filial proximity. In presenting her story, the *hermanos* emphasized two key moments: her conversion and her migration to Lima. This emphasis mirrored the ways the *hermanos* framed their own personal stories, focusing on their experiences of the revelation of Jonás and their journeys to Barcelona.

Depicted as unwavering in the faith, *hermana* Sara explained that her paternal grandmother used to attend an Adventist church in rural Huancayo, that one day was visited by Ezequiel Ataucusi Gamonal himself. Receptive to Ezequiel’s preaching, she converted and joined the *israelita* religious movement. In her own narrative, Yoana added that Ezequiel would even visit her grandmother’s home and stay overnight. Sara also indicated that when her grandmother moved to the capital, she was involved in the founding of *Cieneguilla*. Whether the *hermanas’* narratives about their grandmother are completely factual can be questioned, but it is notable that precision or factuality isn’t what concerns the *hermanos* the most when invoking their paternal grandmother. Rather their grandmother’s story of conversion in the *sierra* and then migration to the Lima metropolitan area serves to forge links between themselves, their family, the wider *hermandad* and even to Ezequiel himself.

The story of the founding family of *Piedra Angular* continues in Huaycán, an urbanization that started out as an informal “invasion” at the very outskirts of the Lima metropolitan area. Notably, it is to the east of the capital, in the area where Cieneguilla is also located (see Annex A). Huaycán served as the stage for the founding of, what the *hermanos* claim to be, the very first temple to proclaim the sanctity of Jonás. This temple was established by the *hermanos’* paternal uncle, adding to the family lineage of *israelita* piety. Just as their grandmother had had direct contact with Ezequiel, their Uncle Danny received the revelation of Jonás in vision—creating intergenerational proximity with divinity. Yoana’s husband, *hermano* William, described Uncle Danny with awe, as an individual with the *don* to read minds, who sharpens his spiritual abilities through fasting and who actively spreads the divine revelation. As of July 2022, he was reported to be in Ecuador founding a new temple for Jonás.
As well as serving as the location for the divine revelation of Jonás, Huaycán is also the original home of the founding family of Piedra Angular. It is where their grandmother settled with her numerous children after migrating from Huancayo, and where they have constructed a multistory home with extra rooms to house weary israelita travelers who journey from all over to visit Uncle Danny’s temple. Therefore, it is also the setting for the conversions of my interlocutors to the worship of Jonás. Having considered how the hermanos frame their family narratives, I now examine how they construct their own biographies by placing conversion and migration as the two central narrative blocks. The stories of conversion, or congregación, provide insight into understanding the implantation of the religious in an urban space and what secularization theory and crisis cult theories failed to foresee. Moreover, their testimony reveals the visceral and corporal nature of the experiences that sparked their conversions.

At first glance, the hermanos’ personal stories appear to follow predictions of reduced religiosity among populations that are less vulnerable and received more institutionalized education. This third generation, born in Lima, went on to partake in conventional “modern” urban life: attending university, buying their own homes, and in some cases, establishing their own family life with mundanos (non-israelitas). The hermanos of Piedra Angular grew up taking part of israelita services and fiestas as family activities, rather than strict adherents to the faith. Hermano Samuel explains that, like most of his siblings, he completely stopped going to israelita services around early adolescence. Despite continuing to live at the margins of Lima, this is a generation that does not correspond to traditional descriptions of members of the israelita religious movement. They have had education, certain economic stability and community support that extends beyond the hermandad.

The hermanos veered away from the path towards secularization within the last five years, and as hermano Samuel and hermana Sara both noted, eventually every single one of their eight siblings and their parents se congregaron [converted] to the worship of Jonás. Their mother was the first of the family to convert and begin frequenting her brother-in-law’s new temple. The next to convert was hermano Samuel. He explains that at the time he was a 20-year-old university student with a part time job, having a supposedly normal life. However, his mother would ask for help going to the temple on Saturdays, because it was located atop a cerro or big hill. After accompanying his mother for a while, he began to enjoy being in services, ultimately leading to his conversion during a fiesta when he decided to adopt the nazareato (grow out his hair). Samuel’s narrative emphasizes movement and corporality in describing how arriba or high up the temple was, how steep the cerro was and how his mother instrumentalized the fear of falling to convince him to accompany her. Ultimately, the act of conversion through nazareato itself consisted in a type of body modification.
It took hermana Yoana and hermana Sara longer to convert to the worship of Jonás. They both assert to always have had faith in Jehovah and Jesus, but they describe themselves as very mundanas in the past. For hermana Yoana, the conversion only took place two years ago. She narrated that while arguing with her mother on the street, an israelita rode up to them in a motorcycle and asked them to stop fighting. After that event, Yoana explains that Jonás revealed himself in a dream. Similar to her brother, she emphasized the spatial and physical description of the events that catalyzed her conversion: being at the doorstep of her house and seeing the man in the flowing tunic and long hair and beard suddenly ride up on the motorcycle.

The narrative of Sara’s conversion also involved a series of strong sensory and emotional visions and experiences, which caused a great deal of suffering the hermana. Her family credits her propensity for vivid dreaming to a ritual she underwent as a baby in Cieneguilla. Being her grandmother’s eldest born grandchild, she was expiada, which entailed being sprinkled with sacrificial blood while being blessed. One of her dreams marked the start of a series of events that led to Sara’s adult conversion. She dreamt that her closest childhood friend fell off a motorcycle into a pool of mud, but that Sara had managed to hold on to her friend’s wrist. Unable to decipher the dream, but troubled by it, she approached Uncle Danny for help. After listening to her dream, he told Sara that her best friend would die in the next six months and that she should go to Cieneguilla with flowers. Despite not fully believing her uncle, she felt fearful and warned her friend, who did not take the dream seriously. Within the following months her friend died in an accident, falling off her husband’s motorcycle. This incident deeply affected hermana Sara, who then proceeded to experience more dreams of her friend warning her of her own death as well as seeing herself and her children in danger of falling into the muddy pit. This prompted Sara to travel to Cieneguilla and ultimately convert to the worship of Jonás. Hermana Sara’s detailed personal testimony is marked by the vivid description of spatial and sensory details of her visions, along with the intense feelings of fear, despair and sadness that accompanied them.

Hermana Sara’s story of conversion also involves her husband’s conversion, hermano David. At first, he did not accompany his wife on the spiritual path. Sara explained that this changed when David became very ill, so much so that he was unable to work, and the doctors had been unable to help him. Sara’s mother recommended that David attend a vigilia, during which the hermanos could heal him. While skeptical, David attended the vigilia. As varones and varonas must remain separate during the ceremony, hermana Sara did not see her husband until the next day. He claimed that he fell asleep and did not receive any help from the hermanos. Yet, Sara described a miraculous change in her husband’s health. Then, she received a video from the hermanos that showed her husband spasming on the ground while an hermano waving his arms stood over him. Considering himself to
be cured by the grace of israelita healing practices that invoked Jonás, hermano David converted. It is notable that in this case of embodied religious practice, the unconscious mind did not participate in enlightenment, it is rather the body through healing that revealed divine truths.

The hermanos’ decisions to leave Peru for Europe took place within the two to three years that followed their conversions. Their ways of narrating their migratory experiences also draws upon the sensory and corporal language and description that characterized their stories of conversion. This provides grounding to understand migration as a form of embodied religious practice.

The mission to establish a temple abroad was led by hermana Sara, who described being inspired by dreams to take on this venture. Receiving a letter of invitation to visit an aunt who lived in Italy, she left the country and her entire family behind for the first time in 2019. This marked the start of journey that would take her from Genoa to Milan and Torino, through the south of France and ultimately to Barcelona. Despite initiating the trajectory on her own, hermana Sara successfully recruited other members of her family to join as well as procured support from other israelitas.

A key moment that determined the course of Sara’s spiritual venture was when she began receiving visions that she interpreted as divine messages to recruit more hermanos who worshipped Jonás from Peru. While she got along well with the israelitas in Italy who helped and supported her, they “did not know the name of the Lord”. Finally, she dreamt of her brother Samuel, who presented a loaf of bread to her and said, “I have learned to prepare delicious bread”. Sara interpreted this as a sign that her brother had gained the spiritual maturity to help her in her mission. At the time, Samuel was in the north of Peru, in Piura, helping a more experienced hermano set up a new temple. They were supposed to continue traveling north, through Ecuador and Colombia, setting up new temples along the way. However, hermano Samuel narrated an experience that led him to abandon that project and return to Lima. During a visit from his mother, who had come to wish him luck on his journey, he felt as if he was being tugged in his chest. This was combined with the feeling of someone chasing him when he took his mother to the airport. He took these persistent sensations as a divine sign that he needed to return to Lima. Upon his return home, his sister reached out to him, and he described that once more he felt that internal tugging in his chest that this time nudged him in the direction of Europe—despite never having traveled outside of Peru before.

Today, hermano Samuel has spent two years in Europe alongside his sister and brother-in-law. He played a key role in the decision to immigrate from Italy to Spain, once again guided by the sensation in his chest. While he recognized the situation in Italy was difficult because of the language barrier and the lack of job opportunities, he attributes the decision to leave to that sensory
experience that is a sign of God for him. Still, even living in Spain, he described missing his family
and Peru deeply. Even though he felt unhappy, he explained that he cannot leave until he receives
that feeling of tugging in his chest that catalyzes journey. When hermana Sara exclaimed that
“visions moved israelitas”, she was referring to a very literal notion of movement. Through these
visions, sensations and divine messages, she has brought over to Spain six family members and two
hermanos with no blood relation. And the hermanos of Piedra Angular envisioned that these paths
of religious migration would continue to multiply.

Hermana Yenifer depicted her image of the future for Piedra Angular as setting up a large temple
in Spain, where israelitas will have the space to dance and sing for Jonás. Hermanos from all over
would be able to seek hospitality as well as proximity to the Lord in their temple. In this way, it
would replicate how their family home in Huaycán serves as point of transition for israelitas in
motion, moved by visions and corporal experiences of Jonás’ divinity. This academic project only
begins to present an image of the complex dynamics of israelita South-North migration. Still,
through an exploration of the hermanos’ intergenerational stories of movement and faith I propose
the concept of embodied religious practice for future investigation. Placing emphasis in the body
can allow for alternative ways of conceptualizing immigration and physical displacement as forms
of embodied religious practice.
Conclusions

Contemporary processes of desecularization and religious diversification, along with a continued involvement of religion in typically secular fields, point to the pertinence of the study of religion today. From the election of Jair Bolsonaro to the assassination of Abe Shinzou, religious forces continue to move humans to action, particularly in ways that result shocking. This communal shock reflects the ways that intellectual and public discourse has failed to give religion its due importance in the contemporary world, generating blind spots in societies that consider themselves modern or on the cusp of modernity. Despite the academic intentions to decenter the regard, the grand narratives of Western modernity continue to make part of collective imaginaries globally in contemporary societies (Giddens, 1990). Consequently, Latin America’s ambivalent position, which manifests in strong economic and sociocultural contrasts, offers an opportunity to gain insight on the current configuration of the religious field and how it intersects with the mechanisms and discourses of Western modernity.

The fragmentation of the Latin American religious field has produced new religious actors with wide reach, transcending national and regional borders. Yet, theorization on this phenomenon can replicate rationalist and evolutionist notions of religion as irrational, and thus “backwards”. For instance, popular religious movements are often attributed the principal function of “crisis management” for the most marginal sectors of Latin American society that lack resources and education (Bastian, 1994; Désilets, 2006; Meneses, 2016). This enduring association between precarity and religiosity leads authors, like Dennett (1998) and Blackmore (2016), to propose education and science as antidotes to the dangers of religion, which “takes advantage” of the weaknesses in the human brain. As an academic, it is thus important to adopt a reflexive approach that is conscious of the rationalist bias against religion within scientific discourse, which itself is a product of the same sociocultural processes that produced the grand narratives of modernity.

This particular exploration of the israelita religious movement provides understanding about a precise manifestation of Latin American religiosity, that exerts agency in the contemporary world and emerges from processes of “modernization”, but also challenges assumptions of what a modern society should be. In the media discourse and the academic literature of the past few decades, the israelitas have remained out of reach. They have remained nested in a mythic, timeless Andes, under the cover of Amazonian foliage, or in the precarious borders of an overflowing Lima. The perception of these territories as remote stems from perspectives that place the Global North and its conception of urban modernity at the center. Which is why, in creating a space for themselves online...
and at the heart of Barcelona, the *israelitas* of *Piedra Angular* both negotiate with internalized dichotomies, all the while disrupting the boundaries between the margins and the center. In examining the *israelita* virtual transnational network and then their physical presence in Europe, this project contributes to extracting the *hermandad* from a perceived spatial and temporal remoteness.

The core of the *israelita* challenge to Western modernity lies in their continued existence, despite the discursive and conceptual attempts to exclude them from the “modern” present. The research question that thus drove this study is: what characteristics have permitted the *israelita* religious movement to expand and adapt to different settings? As part of questioning the continued influence of the discourses of modernity, the settings that I observed and analyzed consisted of the digital space and urban Europe—Barcelona. The survey of these two “territories” revealed internal group tensions that emerge from the processes of expansion and of transmission of the faith. On one hand, there exists a desire to establish a clear *israelita* identity that agglutinates and contains. Still, the persistence of the faith across time and space has also been accompanied by important religious innovation, which generates internal fragmentation.

This observation prompted me to consider a secondary research question: what have been some of the changes within the beliefs and practices of *israelitas* during the last two decades? While certain authors like González (2017a) and Birckel (2017) have mentioned doctrinal change, the *israelita* faith continues to be described by academics and the media in the same ways it was last century, as an Andean messianic-millenarianist faith that posits its founder, Ezequiel, as the new Christ. At the same time that I did identify important continuities within the *israelita hermandad*, I discovered that within the online and physical spaces I accessed, very few or almost no one considered Ezequiel as Christ. Rather, Ezequiel is thought to have been a prophet or important spiritual teacher. On the other hand, I observed a doctrinal division between those who believed that Ezequiel’s son, Jonás, was the new Christ and those who worshipped in the name of Jehovah and Jesus, rejecting the divinity of Jonás. This project therefore provides the first detailed description, known to the author, of a new *israelita* doctrinal tendency.

Exploring religious innovation among the *israelitas* also allowed me to address my main research question apropos the characteristics that facilitate the persistence and expansion of the AEMINPU. Despite some institutional censure and communal policing practices, I discovered a degree of tolerance for differences within the *hermandad*, one that is constantly being renegotiated. From the perspective of the institutionalized AEMINPU, tolerating dissent and informality creates opportunity for individual *israelita* ventures in new territories to be eventually inscribed and aligned.
within the institution, as has been the case in Spain. Regarding the hermanos of Piedra Angular, as a dissident minority due to their worship of Jonás, they also displayed patience and tolerance for differences, which served to inscribe the rest of the hermandad into their religious framework. In considering that they are among the first to receive new divine revelations, worshipers of Jonás consider that other israelitas will also be eventually enlightened. This degree of flexibility in the israelita identity serves to contain forces of fragmentation as the religious movement expands. Furthermore, the individual and informal initiatives that characterize the transnationalization of the AEMINPU possess a dynamism and adaptability that institutional action constrained by laws and statures does not.

Beyond the structural “democratization” of faith (Semán, 2019) that make this flexibility possible, I also identified that israelita religious practice and belief promotes the possibility of an individual rapport with divinity, facilitating religious innovation and adaptability. Namely, israelitas emphasize embodied practice, in which sensory experience of the divine can serve to access essential truths. Placing importance on the body and its sensations challenges the legacy of rationalist mind-body dualism, that not only sets up a strong dichotomy between the body (material) and the mind (immaterial), but that also subordinates corporality to reason. As the human body itself is latent with the possibility for enlightenment, any individual possesses the ability to propose religious innovation justified in lived experience. Moreover, this individual “democratization” of faith is paired with a strong collective component, israelitas partake in embodied practice together—interpreting music, dancing, healing, migrating. As such, the individual sensory experience is justified and reenforced by similar experiences within the community.

The disruption of rationalist mind-body dualism also blurs the boundaries between the earthly and spiritual, making it so that the israelitas integrate their faith into quotidian action and consider “earthly” ventures, such as politics or agriculture, as ways of accessing divine salvation. Considering this totalizing religious framework, I propose grounding the understanding of an abstract spread of beliefs into the concrete experiences of the bodies in motion. To conceptualize religious migration as a form of embodied religious practice illustrates how israelitas insert themselves into contemporary migratory flows, conceptualized to be the fruit of a “modern” globalization, while also providing an alternative vision of the significance of migration. Ultimately, the embodied nature of israelita religious practice, along with the religious diversity it helps legitimate within the transnationalized hermandad, serves as a factor in the expansion of the AEMINPU today.
Rather than provide conclusive answers, this exploratory interpretive qualitative case study on the israelitas online and in Spain uncovers a host of investigative opportunities on the AEMINPU as well as further questioning about religion and the contemporary world. First of all, the development and spread of the worship of Jonás in itself can be further examined through a study on the expansion of this doctrinal current within Peru and the role of the temple in Huaycán, as well as the intergeneration dynamics that underpin transmission of the worship of Jonás. Also, this project only offers a sketch of the hermandad’s European network, with the Italian congregations being a completely new terrain of research. Therefore, multisite and multicase approaches can offer more insight on the implantation of the israelita faith in Europe and its implications.

Additionally, in reviewing the scientific literature I noted a lack of comparative work. While the israelitas were accounted for in the discussion of the diversification of the Latin American religious field, I propose that comparing the spread and practices of contemporary religious movements is essential. In particular, I observed similar overlap in the way other transnationalized faiths from Latin America, such as Afro-Brazilian religions of Umbanda and Candomblé, also incorporate a relationship between the body and the mind that defies mind-body dualism. To study religious embodiment and migration can offer distinct ways of understanding “modern” globalization and deterritorialization as well as the enduring role of religious faith in human societies.
Reference List


https://doi.org/10.51440/unsch.revistaalteritas.2020.10.24


Ossio, J. (1990). La Misión Israelita del Nuevo Pacto Universal y su composición social. In M. Valcarcel (Eds.), Probreza Urbana (pp.11-167). Lima: PUCP.


Annex A: Territorial Distribution of *Israelita* Historical Landmarks in Peru

Geographical representations self-elaborated on Google Earth.
Annex B: Unstructured Interview Schedule

The unstructured interviews with the hermanos of Piedra Angular consisted in lengthy autobiographical monologues intercepted with dialogue in which they asked about my life and during which I prompted further narrative construction from my interlocutors. As such, the interview schedule contains topics that I followed up on based on the hermanos’ stories and experiences. I possess recordings and notes that I do not share in full to protect the anonymity of my interlocutors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic or Theme</th>
<th>Examples of Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Migration</td>
<td>Tell me about your journey to Europe. How have you felt adapting to Spanish society? Was this your first-time leaving home/your native country?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Faith</td>
<td>Tell me about what the israelita faith means to you. What type of discrimination have you suffered because of your faith? How did that experience make you feel?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family</td>
<td>How do you keep in contact with your family? How have you coped with being so far from your family for the first time?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The israelita community</td>
<td>Did the hermanos that help you also worship Jonás? Do the hermanos that seek shelter in your family home in Huaycán all worship Jonás? Can you explain the difference to me between israelitas who believe in Jehovah and those who believe in Jonás?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future Plans and Aspirations</td>
<td>How do you envision the future of Piedra Angular? What are your personal goals for yourself and your family?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Annex C: Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España

I provide the original message I received from Comunidad Religiosa Aeminpu España in which they deny affiliation with AEMINPU. Below I share a picture of their banner that contains israelita symbols such as the altar and La Ley Real.

Disculpe Andrea,

Tenemos dificultades para poder procesar su solicitud. Actualmente nuestra institución es independiente de otra institución de nombre similar en Latinoamérica.

Como doctores universitarios (nivel académico) nos parece que nuestra pequeña comunidad no justificaría una tesis doctoral (al menos desde el punto de vista institucional). Por no comentar que la población peruana registrada en nuestra comunidad es anecdótica.
Annex D: Official Communication and Institutional Censure

I share the text censuring the *hermana* from Irun, as well as the picture of the original document for the central AEMINPU that was shared along with the text. In this annex, I also include the picture of the document shared by *Aeminpu filial en España* that names an individual from the Santander congregation as president for AEMINPU Spain.

_Frepap - España_  
16 de febrero · 😊

👋 La gracia de nuestro Señor Jesucristo sea con todos vosotros 👋


😄 Se les comunica a no dejarse sorprender de cuentas falsas que desprestigian y toman la imagen de nuestra institución la siguiente página: 😄

🚫 Aeminpu España Israel Congregación de Jehova. NO ES UNA PÁGINA AUTORIZADA Y TAMPOCO COMUNICA ALGO POR NUESTRA INSTITUCIÓN. 🚫

👉 Se les pide a tomar en cuenta el siguiente comunicado y NO SEGUIR DICHA PÁGINA. 👈

🙏 Dios les bendiga amados hermanos. 🙏 Para todos los hnos y hñas que son sorprendidos por dicha página..

🔴🔴AEMINPU ESPAÑA ISRAEL CONGREGACIÓN DE JEHova🔴🔴 CUYA AUTORA Y CREADORA ES LA SRA [REDACTED] La cual es una página que va en contra de nuestra Grey y Principios de nuestra Congregación AEMINPU así que no se dejen sorprender por esa página y TENGAN MUCHO CUIDADO EN CONSUMIR SUS CONTENIDOS DE PANTALLA Y DIFAMACIONES DAÑINAS.. QUE EL SEÑOR Y SU DIRECTIVA YA ACTUÓ JUDICIALMENTE EN CONTRA DE ESA PAGINA..
"AÑO DEL REINADO DEL MESIAS IS 32:1"

COMUNICADO NACIONAL E INTERNACIONAL

002- AEMINU – 2022

LA VICEPRESIDENTA Y SECRETARIA GENERAL DE LA JUNTA DIRECTIVA NACIONAL E INTERNACIONAL DE LA ASOCIACIÓN EVANGÉLICA DE LA MISIÓN ISRAELITA DEL NUEVO PACTO UNIVERSAL - AEMINU, COMUNICA A LA HERMANDAD EN GENERAL, LO SIGUIENTE:

1.- QUE SE HA IDENTIFICADO A LA PÁGINA DE LA RED SOCIAL DE FACEBOOK CUYA DENOMINACIÓN ES “AEMINU ESPAÑA ISRAEL CONGREGACIÓN DE JEHOVÁ”, QUIEN VIENE REALIZANDO PUBLICACIONES DIFAMATORIAS, A NUESTRA INSTITUCIÓN, ASOCIACIÓN EVANGÉLICA DE LA MISIÓN ISRAELITA DEL NUEVO PACTO UNIVERSAL- AEMINU, POR LO QUE SE RECOMIENDA A LA HERMANDAD EN GENERAL, NO DEJARSE SORPRENDER CON LAS EXPRESIONES VERTIDAS POR ESTA CUENTA DE LA RED SOCIAL.

ASIMismo, AClARAMOS QUE LA DENOMINACIÓN “AEMINU ESPAÑA ISRAEL CONGREGACIÓN DE JEHOVÁ”, NO ES UNA PÁGINA AUTORIZADA POR NUESTRA INSTITUCIÓN.

2.- LA AEMINU HACIENDO USO DE SUS FACULTADES AMPARADOS EN SU ESTATUTO Y DE LA PROTECCIÓN Y GARANTÍA CONSTITUCIONAL Y PENAL QUE OBTENGA, PROCEDERÁ DE MÁNERA JUDICIAL CONTRA LA RED SOCIAL, ASÍ COMO DE LOS QUE RESULTEN RESPONSABLES, POR DAÑOS Y PERJUICIOS POR EL DELITO DE DIFAMACIÓN, CON EL FIN DE HACER PREVAILER EL DERECHO FUNDAMENTAL QUE TENEMOS TODOS A LA HONRA Y AL BUEN NOMBRE, PARA QUE SE EVITE REALIZAR IMPUTACIONES FALSAS Y AGRAVIANTES SIN FUNDAMENTO ALGÚN.

SANTIAGO DE SURCO, 16 DE FEBRERO DEL 2022.

ATENTAMENTE,

HNA. CARMEN YANET CHUCHEY QUIÑOS
VICE-PRESIDENTA NACIONAL E INTERNACIONAL
DE LA AEMINU

HNA. JESSENA YOCE AYLAS GOMEZ
SECRETARIA GENERAL NACIONAL E INTERNACIONAL
DE LA AEMINU

OFICINA CENTRAL: AV. MORRO SOLAR Nº 1234 URB. LAS GARDENIAS SANTIAGO DE SURCO; Telf.: 275-3647/ Cel.: 936262289 LIMA - PERÚ.
E-mail: asociacionaeminpu@hotmail.com
OFICIO CIRCULAR N.º 0372 - AEMINPU - 2022
HNO. JOSE LASTARRIA OBLEA
PRESIDENTE DE LA AEMINPU DEL PAIS DE ESPAÑA
Presente. –

Es grato dirigirnos a Usted y a su Junta Directiva en pleno, asimismo a la hermandad en general, para saludarlos muy cordialmente en el Bendito Nombre de Nuestro Señor Jesucristo y a la vez reciben los cordiales saludos de nuestro EXCELENTÍSIMO SEÑOR EZEQUIEL JONAS ATACUSI MOLINA, MISIONERO GENERAL DE LA AEMINPU, y a Nombre de la Junta Directiva Nacional e Internacional de la AEMINPU, luego permitan manifestarle lo siguiente:

1. A la Hermandad en general, se comunica que en el mes de JULIO se acercan fechas importantes de guardar a Jehová Nuestro Dios. Por lo que se recomienda a los Hermanos Pastores de cada Iglesia y hermandad en General, estar apercibidos para dar cumplimiento a los días santificados que se aproximan. Y es como sigue:
   • Reposo General de Nueva Luna: Jueves 28 de Julio de 2022 (Is. 66:23; Ez. 46:6)
   • Reposo General de fin de mes: Sábado 30 de Julio de 2022 (Ex 31:13 al 16)


3. Asimismo, pedimos MANTENER EL ORDEN Y LA DISCIPLINA CORRESPONDIENTE EN EL SÁBADO DE REPOSO, conforme testifica en el libro de 1ra. Corintios 14:40, en cuanto a los estudios impartidos dentro del programa del sábado se deberá tener en cuenta las enseñanzas de Nuestro Señor, con el fin de velar y mantener la Unidad Espiritual dentro de la hermandad. Para lo cual la Directiva Administrativa, Cuerpo eclesiástico de la jurisdicción, como los Hnos. Misioneros, Pastores, Diáconos y Ancianos son los encargados de ayudar a velar por la Ley de Dios.

4. Se recomienda a la hermandad en general, que conforme a nuestra fe, amor para con nuestro Dios y a nuestros semejantes, dar cumplimiento a las enseñanzas impartidas por nuestro Señor, ayudando a las madres viudas, huérfanos y ancianos, prestando siempre para ayudar a los más necesitados, orando por los enfermos, como testifica en las santas escrituras en el libro de Santiago 1:27; Deuteronomio 15:11; Isaías 1:17; Isaías 58:7; San Mateo: 25:42 al 45; Salmos 68:5; Salmos 41:1; 2 Corintios 8:14; Marcos 11:24; (lectura los textos bíblicos).


Agradeciendo su atención prestada, aprovechamos la oportunidad para manifestarle la muestra de nuestra consideración y alta estima personal.

Atentamente,

HNA. RUTH MYRIAM INGA ALARCON
PRESIDENTA NACIONAL E INTERNACIONAL
DE LA AEMINPU

HNA. JESSENIA YOCÉ AYLAS GOMEZ
SECRETARIA GENERAL NACIONAL E INTERNACIONAL
DE LA AEMINPU

OFFICINA CENTRAL: AV. MOIRO SOLAR N°1234 URB. LAS GARDENIAS SANTIAGO DE SURCO. Tel: 275-3847/Cel: 936262289 LIMA- PERÚ.
E-mail: asociacionaeminpu@hotmail.com
Annex E: *Piedra Angular* Family Tree and Intergenerational Mobility
Annex F: *Piedra Angular* Temple Layout in Barcelona