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The Inquisitor at the Table: Food and Identity in the Mediterranean Tribunals of the Roman Inquisition

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Abstract: This article explores the Roman Inquisition's interest in the dietary practices of suspected heretics throughout the Roman Catholic Mediterranean. In an era marked by rampant religious nomadism and a deep uncertainty about assaying and fixing confessional identity, dietary practices were often used to determine religious belonging. For the Roman Inquisition, non-conforming diets served as a clue to potentially more serious spiritual infractions. In the early modern Mediterranean, what one ate was considered a sign of what one believed.

Keywords: Mediterranean; roman inquisition; food; identity; cross-cultural encounters; confessionalism; renegades

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In 1605, a 26-year-old soldier from Trikala in eastern Greece who was serving in the Spanish army in Naples, Giovanni Mangiali, appeared spontaneously before the Holy Office and recounted the story of his life. As a ten-year-old boy, he had been enslaved and taken to Istanbul, where he quickly converted to Islam and took the name Alibascià. Unlike the other boys captured at the same time, he avoided being circumcised by "feigning as if I felt the pain," even though he had not been cut. During his fourteen years as a renegade, Mangiali served as an Ottoman soldier and repeatedly fought against Christians: while he was unsure if he had ever killed any, he acknowledged having "mistreated many Christians, giving them beatings and injuring them like dogs." He readily admitted to having adhered to the "Turkish sect" during his captivity: the very first evidence that he offered of his having "observed the Turks' law just like the Turks" was that he ate "meat on Friday, Saturday, vigils, Ember Days, and Lent." When queried if he ate pork, he replied that "in the presence of Turks I did not eat pork meat because it is prohibited by the Turkish sect," but he did eat it with Christians when other Muslims were not present. Asked if he observed Ramadan, and if so, "what he hoped to receive from it," Mangiali replied, "I observed Lent in the Turkish fashion, namely I fasted during the day and at the appearance of the stars I ate all night long, and I did not do it for any benefit, but because it was a Turkish custom, and to do what the other Turks did" (Rostagno 1983, pp. 88–92).

While on the surface, the curiosity of the Neapolitan inquisitors about Mangiali's dietary practices during his Muslim life may seem unusual, it was quite common. During the early modern era, in fact, the inquisitors of the Holy Office of the Roman Inquisition in the Mediterranean had food on their minds a great deal.[1] On the island of Malta on Epiphany in 1595, for instance, a Greek man was denounced after being seen strolling through the marina with a sausage in his hand.[2] At other times of abstinence, a woman reported observing a priest through a window drinking wine and eating "the pork sausage that we make here in Malta,"[3] and several French men were noted in a pie shop eating "meat pies when there were also fish pies" readily available.[4] To suss out other malefactors, in 1592 a call was issued to the island's inhabitants to immediately report any person "who eats meats and forbidden foods during Lent, the Ember Days, and other prohibited days."[5] The Holy Office's attention extended to the "liquid landscape" (Sutton 2000) of the Mediterranean too, where several men were accused of eating "salted beef" on forbidden

days.[6] Inquisitorial alimentary attention was not limited to Malta: in Udine, a peasant farmer was accused of eating pork chops on a meatless day,[7] while on Good Friday another man popped several whole boiled eggs intended for a savory Easter pie into his mouth, shells and all.[8] In Florence and Siena, on feast days, representatives of the inquisition patrolled the streets sniffing for odors emanating from kitchens that might reveal anyone who was preparing meat, a practice endorsed by inquisitorial manuals of the day (Becattini 1797, p. 218; Montanari 1996, p. 114).

These were not isolated incidents: scholars have identified hundreds of such cases during the early modern period (Tedeschi and Monter 1991, pp. 89–126). In Venice, for instance, there were over 35 denunciations for eating prohibited foods from 1547 to 1630; in Friuli from 1557 to 1636, there were 276 (Cauz 2008, p. 81, n. 1; Black 2004, p. 187). These statistics are only impressionistic and are now viewed as highly problematic (Kamen 1997, p. 198; Kissane 2018, p. 23; Jacobson Schutte 2007, p. 103), in part because they mask the much greater number of cases in which food offenses figured but were not the primary charge. Very few cases focused solely on food: more often, culinary transgressions figured as "inadvertent heresies" (Prosperi 2001, p. 151) or "partial crimes" (Del Col 1991, p. 112), secondary offenses that were paired with other more prominent transgressions, such as Judaizing, apostasy, heresy, witchcraft, or blasphemy.[9]

While culinary infractions featured in a broad range of cases brought before the era's inquisitions, in particular those involving Jews (Foa 2002, pp. 13–25; Barnett 2021, pp. 200–7) and witchcraft (Durrant 2007, pp. 129–151; Kissane 2018, pp. 105–55; Cashmere 1999, pp. 39–51), this article will focus on how food figured in the less studied cases of renegades such as Mangiali. In these cases, inquisitors' preoccupation with food was less about its theological or religious significance and much more about concerns regarding heterodoxy, identity, and the articulation and preservation of boundaries. While initially linked to the rise of Protestantism, because ecclesiastical definitions were quite "elastic" in equating apostasy from Islam to heresy, unorthodox food practices became central to the discourse surrounding renegades (Schaposchnik 2015, p. 38; Plakotos 2018, pp. 278–79. For examples, see Masini 1730, p. 7; Lerri 1608, p. 9). The inquisition's interest in food was a product of the unease about the rampant religious nomadism of the early modern era and the deep uncertainty about assessing and fixing confessional identity. In a religiously splintered age, embodied everyday actions such as foodways were decisive in assaying confessional identity, and non-conforming consumption served as a clue into potentially more serious infractions (Pettorru 2010, p. 482).

While the spread of Protestantism has received the majority of attention, the religious self-refashioning of renegades such as Mangiali was also widespread along the Mediterranean "frontiers of heresy" (Monter 1990). For example, between 1577 and 1670, 922 renegades appeared before the Maltese inquisition, representing between 14 and 23 percent of all cases (Ciappara 2016, pp. 511–2; Ciappara 2013, p. 270; Gambin 2006, p. 18). In a much larger and more populous Sicily, from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century 846 renegades abjured their apostasy (Messana 2007, pp. 746–47; Fiume 2009, pp. 97–98). Overall, hundreds of thousands of men and women "turned Turk" in the sixteenth century alone (García-Arenal 1999, pp. 276–77). There were a variety of economic, social, and political push and pull factors behind this exodus (Fiume 2016, pp. 47–52); however, one element of the Islamic world's "fatal attraction" was that it represented for many "an attainable utopia" of sexual and alimentary liberty (Del Col 2006, p. 476). Giovanni Romeo has argued that food trumped sex: the allure of being able to eat "what one wanted when one wanted" was more attractive than imagined erotic possibilities (Romeo 2008, pp. 64–65, 70–71; Scully 2009, pp. 94–95). Whatever the motivation, there are few cases of renegades appearing before the inquisition in which foodways did not play a role (Seidel Menchi 1987, p. 111; Rostagno 1979, p. 308; Barnett 2021, p. 187).

Mariano de Paulo Mariano, for instance, claimed that he had "always lived as a good Christian," but converted to Islam due to the violent influence of a renegade brother. He insisted, however, that he never participated in Muslim religious rituals, was never

circumcised, and twice emphasized that he "did not commit any other error except eating meat every day."[10] Mario Speri maintained he too was forcibly converted, made "to dress like a Turk," and "to live as a Turk, eating meat at all times, including Friday and Saturday." Niccolò Speranza admitted that he "lived as the Turks lived, [and] I ate meat Friday and Saturday" (Rostagno 1979, p. 309). Luigi Hernandez claimed to have been forcibly converted as a child but admitted that after being freed he remained in Ottoman lands and "still ate meat and prepared foods indifferently, like them."[11] In one of the few capital sentences issued by the Maltese inquisition, Giovanni da Paros was convicted of recidivism and corsairing, which was evidenced in part by his confession that he "used to eat all sorts of food prohibited to Christians indifferently on all days" (Gambin 2006, pp. 75–87).

This notion of eating "indifferently" appeared repeatedly:[12] it was so common, in fact, that it may have been part of an abjuration formula provided to guide supplicants' framing of their apostasy (Rostagno 1979, p. 297; Audisio 1992, p. 51). The approach of Michele de Orlandi from Messina was typical: he admitted to "eating meat indifferently at all times," but asserted, "I never embraced their sect with my heart."[13] Giovanni of Voinich, a Venetian soldier born to parents who "nourished and raised him in the Christian faith," was captured at age twenty and pressured to convert "with persuasions and threats," including, he claimed, in a scene that evoked the martyrdom of Saint Lawrence, being placed on a spit over a burning fire. When he finally capitulated, he was circumcised, "and from then on I always lived with them according to Turkish customs, eating meat every day and doing everything that the others did." Despite this, however, he insisted that his conversion was "with my mouth, and not my heart" (Minchella 2003, pp. 151–53). This distinction is evident in the case of Stanislav, who declared, "I never believed in Muhammed's sect, nor held this sect to be a good law, and although I extrinsically performed the actions of a Turk in food and dress, nonetheless in my heart I considered myself Christian, and at night I made the sign of the holy cross because I do not know how to recite any prayer."[14]

The distinction between internal faith preserved in the heart, "the locus of the true religious self" (Dursteler 2015, pp. 493–94), and external actions was almost universal: Renegades seeking reconciliation broadly held that adopting certain Islamic practices did not equate with abandoning their birth faith (Scaraffia 1993, pp. 114, 136, 169). Slaves often encouraged new captives to convert because it was widely believed that performative conversion to preserve life was acceptable: as one slave confided, "God [knows] the secret of our hearts."[15] That renegades dissimulated conversion was understood by their captors: Giovanni Paulovich was told by the men who enslaved him that when converting, "I needed to do it with my heart" (Minchella 2003, pp. 162–64). In general, however, conversion in the Ottoman world was understood as consisting of "the acceptance of new ritual practices," rather than some profound spiritual transformation.[16] This is how renegades qualified their conversions before inquisition tribunals: they presented themselves as not "mori di cuore (Moors in their heart)," but rather "mori di bocca (Moors with their mouth)," that is, Muslim by word, and, by extension, in their choices of food (Fiume 2009, p. 72; Minchella 2003, p. 111). The true mark of the religious self was internal, in other words, and the popular belief was that this was not compromised by what one ate.

While many renegades acknowledged that their embrace of Muslim foodways was voluntary, others claimed that they were compelled by fear and violence to openly reject Christian alimentary practices. One renegade maintained that he was tied up and circumcised, forced to lift his finger and recite the shahada, and "made to eat meat on Friday and Saturday" (Rostagno 1979, p. 309). A boy from Marseilles was captured and forcibly converted, and while he admitted he had eaten meat on prohibited days, he protested that he "could not do otherwise because of his master" (Fiume 2009, p. 98). An enslaved Palermitan clothworker asserted that "he did nothing against the holy Christian faith," including reciting Muslim prayers or attending mosque; his only sin was eating "meat on forbidden days." He too claimed that he "could not do otherwise," though he eventually acknowledged, "I could have sustained myself by eating bread alone."[17] Gianmarco Betti's captor demanded that he eat meat on Friday and Saturday and pushed him to convert by

denying him meat on other days (Sarti 2001a, pp. 459–60). A Franciscan renegade claimed that he was instructed that part of being a Muslim included eating meat on Friday, and he was told that "cursed is he who invented not eating meat," to which he was instructed to respond, "amen" (Messana 2012, p. 227).

The confessions built on claims of compulsion and the internal preservation of faith that renegades made as part of their abjurations were largely accepted by inquisitors. On the one hand, as one inquisitorial manual held, it was generally agreed that even if renegades did not "have in their hearts the yeast of heresy," they were nonetheless "heretics in the eyes of the church, which judges by external acts." Fear was no justification, because as Saint Ambrose declared, "it is better to starve to death than to eat meat offered to idols" (Eimeric 1821, p. 103). Thus, inquisitors were admonished to exercise "extreme mistrust" in dealing with renegades to ensure that they were not "wolves covered with lamb skins" (Eymerich and Peña 1973, pp. 153–54). The reality, however, was that from the last decades of the sixteenth century on, inquisitors' dealings with penitent renegades were much more in line with the Tridentine decree that "benevolence toward those to be corrected often effects more than severity, exhortation more than threat and charity more than force" (Schroeder 1941, p. 81). As a result, when penitent renegades claimed that they had converted out of fear and had consistently preserved the true faith in their hearts, the process of abjuration and reintegration was largely a pro forma "bureaucratic process" (Romeo 2004, p. 46; Fiume 2009, pp. 43–44; Dursteler 2015, pp. 490–92).

If some renegades acknowledged their failure to observe Catholic dietary practices, others tried to prove their Christian bona fides by emphasizing their continued secret observance of the faith's food strictures, notwithstanding the risks. A Venetian soldier admitted he had voluntarily converted for economic reasons and had lived in Ottoman territory for such a long time that he had assimilated many of their customs, but he emphasized that he "had preserved the Christian faith and observed the fasts on Friday and other days as inspired by God" (Minchella 2003, p. 115, also Fiume 2009, p. 98). A young man enslaved as a teen and coerced to convert fled to Christendom as soon as he was able, and since then had been "living catholically, and in particular observing the vigils and fasts established by the holy church."[18] An apprentice in Austria who lived with his Protestant employer was given the option to eat bread on prohibited days, but because of his "gluttony," chose to eat meat. In his defense, however, he claimed that on the "Fridays and vigils that I remembered, I did not eat meat, but just eggs."[19] The renegade Domenico de Zorzi confessed that he ate meat on prohibited days when in the company of Muslims, but as a small gesture of rebellion, he ate pork when he was alone with Christians.[20] A young Greek captured as a child admitted that while he was "missing a few things" in terms of knowledge about purgatory and the Holy Spirit, as a renegade he had always believed that "the Turkish sect was bad," and that he had not "believe[d] in Muhammad" and had "not observe[d] their fasts."[21]

Because conversion to Catholicism required "a radical change in diet" (Villani 2005, p. 379), foodways were also important in "renegade" Protestant converts' cases, which in the late sixteenth century became a matter largely under inquisitorial control (Plakotos 2018, p. 271). Protestants who appeared before the inquisition to abjure were required to recant their heretical views regarding food and embrace Roman Catholic ritual foodways (Villani 2018, pp. 381–82). This linkage between conversion and the adoption of the "Lenten diet" had, in fact, deep historical roots (Montanari 2012, p. 75). Katherine Schidmad, the wife of an English captain living in Livorno, confessed that "when I first came here I ate meat several times on Friday and Saturday, but when I discovered that Catholics were not allowed to eat it, I did not eat it."[22] Like the 17-year-old Englishman, Thomas d'Antonio Elcocke, who converted after five months in Italy, she was ordered to fast for five Fridays, including "one with bread and water."[23] A Genevan Calvinist, Gioanni Coschet, admitted his erroneous belief that it was acceptable to eat "every sort of food" on any day of the week, and his penance included fasting "on bread and water" on the next three Holy Fridays.[24] The same penance was assigned to two Florentine soldiers, a "Bohemian Hussite heretic" and

self-described "persona idiota" who had blindly followed his parents' religious traditions and a German "Lutheran" who confessed he "always ate meat everyday, and believed that it is never necessary to fast."[25] For individuals who passed through a catechumen house, a key component of their conversion included consuming taboo foods and performing Catholic ritual fasts as part of their "alimentary re-education" and integration into their new religious community (Sarti 2001a, pp. 459–60; Campanini 1996, pp. 174–75).

In contrast to the cases of Protestant converts to Catholicism, inquisitors were not interested in whether renegades adopted Muslim ritual foodways but only whether they had rejected Christian ones. Indeed, Mangiali's case is quite exceptional: inquisitors almost never questioned whether renegades ceased eating pork or drinking wine as a means to assimilate more easily into Muslim society (Graf 2017, p. 72; Scully 2009, p. 99). In general, they did not inquire about the observance of Ramadan either, though questions about this practice were somewhat more common. For example, Paolo Scoroporich from Senj admitted to having lived for several decades "according to Turkish custom, eating meat every day indifferently, observing their fasts, going to the mosque and participating in the orations and ceremonies of the Turkish rite" (Minchella 2003, pp. 111–13; 2009, p. ccxiv). In part, this indifference on the part of inquisitors may be because Ramadan observance in the early modern era could often be uneven (Trépanier 2011, pp. 5–8; Quataert 2005, p. 168), though from the perspective of some Muslims, the performance of the Ramadan fast was considered a clear sign of conversion (Baer 2004, pp. 15–16).

As the cases of renegades make clear, for the Roman Inquisition, the most distinctive and consequential Christian foodway was fasting, voluntary abstention from all food for a specific period of time, and the associated practice of abstinence, the temporary or permanent elimination from the diet of certain foods, often the most nutritious or desirable (Ferlan 2017, p. 5; 2018, p. 199). Fasting and abstinence were considered the "basic marks of the Christian" (Walker Bynum 1987, pp. 40–41; also Monteserín 1980, pp. 503–16; Albala 2011b, pp. 44, 56); their potency derived in part from the fact that they were both individual acts of corporal discipline but also highly communal practices due to the shared nature of food consumption and the common calendar which governed it (Heyberger 2020, pp. 218, 221). The violation or rejection of these collective rituals represented both a fundamental threat to communal bonds and the most concrete means of signaling religious separation. For these reasons, fasting and abstinence were considered matters of "great seriousness" by inquisitors and both a barometer of religious attitudes and evidence of confessional identity (Kissane 2018, pp. 53–54, 71; Villani 2005, pp. 379–80; Cavallo and Storey 2013, p. 217).

The centrality of fasting and abstinence in Christianity traces back to its earliest centuries (Grimm 1996; Grumett and Muers 2010). Although the position of the first Christians was one of complete culinary liberty so as to distinguish themselves from the intricate complexities of the Jewish dietary code (Albala 2011a, p. 11), from very early on fasting came to occupy an important position (Walker Bynum 1987, p. 33, also Robinson 2020, pp. 22–45; Deseille 1937–1994, pp. 1164–75). Over time, more elaborate dietary laws and rituals developed (Mentzer 2007, p. 332; Montanari 1996, p. 78; Moroni 1840–1861, p. 54; Ciappelli 1997, pp. 35–36), so that by the end of the Middle Ages, an "alimentary calendar" and general set of practices (with significant local variations) (Vanasse 2004, p. 237) had evolved and become the distinguishing ritual practice of Latin Christianity (Quellier 2007, p. 126). Fasting consisted of bypassing the midday meal (with lighter fare permitted in the morning and evening), and abstinence required "eschewing the flesh of warm-blooded animals" as well as animal byproducts such as butter, cheese, or eggs, the so-called white meats or *lacticinia* (Clifton 1998, pp. 399–400; Vanasse 2004, pp. 247–48; Bossy 1985, p. 51). The liturgical year centered on an elaborate cycle of fasts and feasts: Christmas and Easter were prefaced by lengthy periods of collective fasting and abstinence during Advent and Lent. Additional days of abstention included Fridays, some Saturdays, the vigils of certain feast days, and the *quatuor anni tempora*, or Ember Days, which marked the seasonal transitions (Montanari 2017, pp. 123–25; Quellier 2007, pp. 127–28; Albala 2011a, pp. 15–16; d'Ambrosio 2015, pp. 240–41). Latin Rite Christians fasted for between

140 and 160 days annually, while in eastern Christian communities the number of fast days was even higher, arriving at an incredible 250 days among the Copts (Montanari 1996, p. 78; Sarti 2001b, p. 15; Heyberger 2006, p. 11). From its rather modest beginnings, fasting had clearly evolved into one of the most important banners of confessional identity, as well as a "gesture" of cultural and social conformity (Montanari 2017, pp. 125–26).

The medieval culture of fasting and abstinence came under intensive scrutiny during the "food fights" of the reformation era; indeed, the importance of food is often overshadowed by other theological issues (Albala 2011b, pp. 41–42). As the famous Zurich "sausage incident" of 1522 and many subsequent examples illustrate, from very early on foodways were weaponized in the era's religious debates (Ozment 1980, p. 325; Wandell 1995, p. 182). Because of its scriptural precedents, Luther and other leading reformers did not reject fasting outright but rather condemned the elaborate superstructure of "absurd" regulations (Ferlan 2018, p. 200), the misguided belief that justification came through their slavish observation, and the questionable trade in dispensations to eat prohibited foods (Mentzer 2007, pp. 330–35; Montanari 2017, pp. 135–36; Gentilcore 2016, pp. 99–101). Protestants were not the only critics: Erasmus, who had a dispensation because of his aversion to fish, condemned the Church's dietary restrictions as "human institutions" and "unwarranted behavioral restrictions" that ought to be considerably reduced (Clifton 1998, pp. 400–4; Albala 2011b, p. 46). Other leading ecclesiastical figures also called for a reconsideration of this "hotly debated" issue (O'Malley 2013, pp. 67, 244).

Certain adaptations were made, including reducing the number of fast days (Watts 2011, p. 108; Vanasse 2004, p. 251), but ultimately there was no real retreat, and in many ways Rome doubled down on fasting and abstinence. Various ecclesiastical councils reaffirmed the fundamentality and centrality of these practices to Roman Catholic identity and religiosity (Moroni 1840–1861, p. 54), and the Jesuit order played a leading role in their promulgation and defense (Hendrix 2000, p. 572; De Franceschi 2019, pp. 69–93). While not one of its primary areas of consideration (De Franceschi 2019, p. 72; Watts 2011, pp. 1–8), the fathers of the Council of Trent addressed fasting and its devotional importance in various sessions (Ferlan 2018–2019, p. 7). They commended Lent as "that most sacred and most acceptable period," and the 1563 degree *De delectu ciborum, ieiuniis et diebus festis* enjoined priests to "sedulously commend to all the faithful" and "make every effort that they comply with" the long-established practices of fasting and abstention, that is, "the choice of foods and fasts," which "mortify the flesh" and "increase piety" (Schroeder 1941, pp. 94, 254). In response, numerous reform-minded ecclesiastics attempted to reinvigorate the practices throughout Catholic Europe (Bossy 1985, p. 132; De Boer 2001, pp. 76–77, 175–76; Albala 2011b, p. 49; Kissane 2018, p. 159). This ultimately resulted in what Camporesi has described as a regime of "compulsive ritual fasting" regulated by "meticulously comprehensive" rules and observed with "obsessive scrupulousness" (Camporesi 2009, pp. 67–69).

The Council of Trent aimed to "fix the frontiers of orthodoxy," however, it was the Inquisition that ultimately implemented this by attempting to impose "clear confessional border(s)," and foodways were an important brick in the wall (Kahn 2006, pp. 134–35; Firpo 2016, pp. 297–99; Bonora 2019, p. 277). Inquisitorial manuals of the day make this linkage clear: the *Directorum Inquisitorum*, the most authoritative and widely diffused medieval inquisitorial manual, which experienced a revival in several popular sixteenth-century editions, notes that among the "external signs by which one recognizes a heretic" is that they "did not fast and did not observe abstinence during the prescribed days and periods" (Eymerich and Peña 1973, p. 135; Borromeo 1983, pp. 499–521; Errera 2004, p. 678, also Peters 1974, pp. 95–107). An anonymous seventeenth-century Italian manuscript guide acknowledges that "many are denounced for having eaten meat on prohibited days," but these cases "are often set aside" because they frequently result from infirmity or confusion about the complex calendar of abstinence. In these instances, admonition and perhaps a penitential fast were all that were required. In cases of intentional flouting or open ridicule or questioning of the practice, which the author indicates was common among apostates, a deeper inquiry, potentially even involving torture, and a more substantial abjuration was

indicated (Mirto 1986, pp. 120–21). According to the most famous seventeenth-century inquisitorial manual, Eliseo Masini's 1621 *Sacro Arsenale overo Prattica dell"Officio della Santa Inquisitione*, suspected heretics and apostates were individuals who "notably distance themselves from the *viver comune* of Roman Catholics; such as not confessing and taking communion once a year; eating prohibited foods unnecessarily on days determined by the Holy Mother Church; never going to mass" (Masini 1730, pp. 7–8, also Lerri 1608, pp. 9–10). Among the beliefs and practices considered "indices of guilt" among unrepentant apostates were vilifying the rosary and other Christian cultic objects, condemning Christian rites, and "boasting . . . of having lived 'turchescamente', or of having eaten meat on Friday" (Masini 1730, pp. 349–50; Fiume 2009, p. 97).

As the inquisitorial guides and experiences of renegades clearly indicate, early modern religion was profoundly embodied in "corporeal practices" and performances (Benveniste and Plakotos 2017, p. 254; Von Tippelskirch 2021, p. 4). Circumcision, sexual mores, baptism, hairstyle, pilgrimage, ritual washing, making the sign of the cross, all occupied a fundamental place in the lived religion of the age and were some of the primary ways that confessional identity was most clearly articulated and acknowledged (Barbierato 2017, p. 71). Foodways were among the most important components of embodied belief and identity (Barnett 2021, p. 209). Food is, of course, deeply interlaced with and embedded in religion, and food-related rituals and taboos are among the most "symbolically charged" religious acts (Launay 2003, pp. 27–28). Food's "everydayness" imbues it with a unique potency as a form of "sacred cement" that serves to both unite and demarcate confessional communities (Tompkin 2012, p. 185; Meigs 1997, p. 103; Anderson 2005, pp. 155–56, also Scholliers 2001, pp. 7–10). This was not unique to the Mediterranean; however, the region's rich cultural diversity and high degree of entanglement and mobility imparted to food an especially potent status as an exterior clue to a more elusive interior self.

For this reason, food was a recurring concern for the inquisitors of the Roman Inquisition, and foodways were integral to the inquisition's indentikit for cracking the code of confessional fidelity and identity in the religiously promiscuous "geography of peril" that characterized the early modern Mediterranean (Romeo 2004, pp. 35–6; Minchella 2009, p. ccvii). In the high-stakes game of altering and shifting religious identities, conversion was an embodied process, and foodways functioned as an explicit "embodied language" of intent (Barnett 2021, p. 208, also Hwang Degenhardt 2010, p. 131; Foa 2002, p. 20; Plakotos 2018, p. 290). One reason for ecclesiastical preoccupations with food was that the culinary barrier to religious mobility was so low for Christians: they could largely eat anything "without raising questions of conscience," whereas for Muslims and Jews, adapting to different food customs presented a significant obstacle to integration (Scaraffia 1993, pp. 60–62, 66). Indeed, in contrast to renegades, Muslim slaves in Christian hands often retained their foodways, notwithstanding their captive status (Santus 2011, p. 459, n. 45). Christians could slip between faiths more seamlessly, and this ease in shapeshifting was part of the reason for the inquisition's food fixation.

While they had long occupied an important place in Christian ritual practices, in the second half of the sixteenth century fasting and abstinence took on a new "doctrinal character" (Albala 2003, pp. 201, 205). No longer purely metrics of morality, these practices now served as essential and emblematic "confessional marker[s]" and gauges of confessional conviction (Barbierato 2017, p. 72; De Franceschi 2019, pp. 82–83). Thus, as one of the clearest and most tangible expressions of confessional identity, their renunciation now became "a concrete indication of guilt" that carried a greater weight than had been the case in earlier times (Romeo 2008, pp. 64–65; Schlögl 2015, p. 309). As one influential contemporary cleric asserted, "abstinence from meat distinguishes the Catholic from the heretic" (De Franceschi 2018, p. 73).

The prominence of foodways, and in particular fasting and abstinence, in inquisitorial cases involving renegades was rooted not in the foods themselves but rather in their function as external articulations of internal beliefs. Actions spoke louder than words: orthodoxy was much more imprecise and difficult to assay than orthopraxy. Thus, what

ultimately distinguished a good Catholic from an unrepentant renegade for the officials of the Roman Inquisition, but also for broader society as a whole, was not a knowledge of fundamental doctrines, which was often quite tenuous and imprecise, but rather the performance of embodied, everyday practices and ritual acts. Identity was an "act of doing" (Takahashi 2010, p. 202). Because of their quotidian character, foodways, and in particular those associated with fasting and abstinence, occupied a prominent and determinative place in the great majority of inquisition cases involving renegades. In the early modern Mediterranean, eating was an explicitly "religious act" (Benkheira 2000, p. 43), and the "omnivore's dilemma" of what to eat and when to eat it was at its core a question of community, confession, and identity (Pollan 2006, p. 11).

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Notes

1 The Roman Inquisition was active primarily in Italy and Malta, but also "to a lesser extent" in southern France, along the Balkan coast, and on some eastern Mediterranean islands. Its influence, however, extended well beyond these centers (Bonora 2019, pp. 251–52, 268).

2 Cathedral Archives, Mdina, Archivium Inquisitionis Melitensia (hereafter AIM), *Processi e denunzie*, b. 13, case 68, 11 Jan 1595, cc. 264r–270r.

3 Hill Museum and Manuscript Library (hereafter HMML), AIM, *Processi Criminali*, b. 147B, Case 85, 1 May 1599, cc. 195r–199r.

4 AIM, *Processi e denunzie*, b. 15B, case 12, 4 May 1598, cc. 154r-v.

5 AIM, *Processi e denunzie*, b. 13, case 22, 20 Sept 1592, cc. 9r–10r.

6 AIM, *Processi e denunzie*, b. 14B, case 43, 25 Sept 1596, cc. 737r-v. See also, Archivio storico diocesano di Pisa (hereafter ASDP), *Tribunale dell'inquisizione*, f. 3, 13–14 Mar 1600, cc. 467r–476v; ASDP, *Tribunale dell'inquisizione*, f. 3, 7 Jul 1596–5 Aug 1597, cc. 129r–164v; (Buttigieg 2016, pp. 43–44; 2011, p. 42; Solinas 2005, p. 75).

7 Archivio della Curia Arcivescovile di Udine (hereafter ACAU), *Acta S. Officii*, b. 1291, #281, 3 Jan 1596.

8 ACAU, *Acta S. Officii*, b. 1292, #312, 2 June 1597.

9 See for several examples, among many, Archivio di stato di Venezia (hereafter ASV), *Santo Uffizio*, b. 32, 21 Aug 1572 ca.

10 ASV, *Santo Uffizio*, b. 97, 6 June 1641.

11 ASV, *Santo Uffizio*, b. 68, 4 July 1591.

12 ASV, *Santo Uffizio*, b. 98, 3 Feb 1643; ASV, *Santo Uffizio*, b. 98, 12 June, 1642; ASV, *Santo Uffizio*, b. 68, 4 July 1591; ASV, *Santo Uffizio*, b. 88, 12 Oct 1632. See also (Scully 2009, pp. 90–91).

13 ASV, *Santo Uffizio*, b. 88, 5 Oct 1532.

14 HMML, AIM, *Processi Criminali*, b. 148B, Case 36, 26 Oct 1607, cc. 173r–182v.

15 ASV, *Santo Uffizio*, b. 98, 21 Jan 1642 (MV); (Bennassar 1992, p. 75; Wratislaw 1862, pp. 89–94).

16 (Rothman 2012, p. 96). See similarly (Heyberger 2001, p. 250; Krstić 2009, pp. 35–63).

17 ASDP, *Tribunale dell'inquisizione*, f. 5, 19 Mar 1611, cc. 366r-v.

18 ASV, *Santo Uffizio*, b. 86, 23 June 1628.

19 ACAU, *Acta S. Officii*, b. 1294, #362, 21 Apr 1599.

20 ASV, *Santo Uffizio*, b. 77, 23 Nov 1621.

21 ASV, *Santo Uffizio*, b. 97, 22 Mar 1640.

22 ASDP, *Tribunale dell'inquisizione*, f. 5, 3 Apr 1610, cc. 40r-v.

23 Archivio arcivescovile di Firenze (hereafter AAFi), *Tribunale dell'inquisizione*, b. 5, 22–24 Sept 1616, cc. 432r–435r.

24 ASV, *Santo Uffizio*, b. 79, 26 Mar 1624. See also, HMML, AIM, *Processi Criminali*, b. 148B, Case 34, 24 July 1607, cc. 167r–172v; (Minchella 2003, p. 97).

25 AAFi, *Tribunale dell'inquisizione*, b. 34, #3, 6–7 July 1637, cc. 13r–17v; AAFi, *Tribunale dell'inquisizione*, b. 34, #2, 16 May 1637, cc. 9r-12r.

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